

Document Citation

Title	French can can
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	French cancan, Renoir, Jean, 1955



FRENCH CAN CAN

1954 93 min. Color Rental: D

Directed by Jean Renoir; screenplay by Renoir, based on an idea by Andre Paul Antoine; photography by Michel Kelber. With Jean Gabin, Francoise Arnoul, Maria Felix, Jean-Roger Caussimon; appearances by Edith Piaf, Patachou. French dialog with English subtitles.

Jean Renoir is probably best known for his 30's masterpieces (GRAND ILLUSION, THE CRIME OF M. LANGE). However, many critics are currently rediscovering his several beautiful films of the 50's; among these, FRENCH CAN CAN is surely one of the most joyous. It is a colorful, splashy, loving portrait of shows and show people, set in Paris in 1888. In order to save his dwindling finances, a nightclub owner, Danglar (Jean Gabin), decides to revive the Can Can, and present it in a spectacular cabaret which he will build—the Moulin Rouge. The film is most vibrant in its scenes of rehearsal and performances.

Especially beautiful is the climactic opening night show in the final sequences, during which Renoir also makes a personal statement on art and artists. Danglar has built a pretty laundress Nini (Francoise Arnoul) into a star dancer. She has fallen in love with him, and has tried unsuccessfully to make him settle down. Since his life centers around the theatre, he cannot be faithful to one woman. He makes her realize this, and she overcomes her unwillingness to perform on opening night. While Nini goes on stage, Danglar remains alone backstage. Renoir intercuts scenes of the dancers with shots of Danglar, listening to the triumph of his creation. His life belongs only to his art; one senses from the sequence's great warmth and emotion that it is probably true of Renoir's own relationship to film.

"When saying that we have just made a film we are not exact; it is rather a piece of tapestry, a composition of colors. The music is not only used as an accompaniment and commentary, but rather as counterpoint."

—Jean Renoir