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French Cancan

~~Capsule by Dave Kehr~~

From the Chicago Reader

This 1955 Technicolor musical is the easiest to like of Jean Renoir's late films, full of color, movement, and romance; it's also one of the hardest to appreciate: the bright, frivolous surface seems to mask the deepest currents of Renoir's art. But the currents are there, in the way Renoir intermingles episodes from the ever-evolving love lives of his characters with the story of a belle époque nightclub impresario (Jean Gabin) and his determination to transform an outmoded folk dance, the cancan, into the rage of Paris. The swirling spectacle of the dance (presented as crashing waves of color in the justly famous finale) finds its equivalent in the perfect fluidity of the romantic relationships, as Renoir suggests that fixity is the one quality most fatal to art and to love. With Francoise Arnoul and Maria Felix.