

## Document Citation

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THE M. H. DE YOUNG MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
presents

BOUDU SAVED FROM DROWNING

Directed by Jean Renoir. Script by Renoir from a play by René Fauchois. Photographed by Marcel Lucien. Music by Raphael. With Michel Simon, Charles Grandval, Marcelle Hainia.

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"Jean Renoir's Boudu Saved From Drowning was made in France..when talkies were new and subtitling had not yet become a standard procedure, and so, like many other films of the early sound period, it was not imported. Some of those talkies waited a few years, some a few decades; others are still waiting...

"Boudu is a more leisurely film than we are used to now, not that it is long, or slow, but that the camera isn't in a rush, the action isn't overemphatic, shots linger on the screen for an extra split second - we have time to look at them, to take them in. Renoir is an unobtrusive, unselfconscious storyteller: he doesn't make points, he doesn't rub our noses in 'meaning'. He seems to find his story as he tells it...He is not a director to force things; he leaves a lot of open spaces. This isn't a failure of dramatic technique...Boudu is a ...story told in an open way, and it is the openness to the beauty of landscape and weather and to the varieties of human folly which is Renoir's artistry. He lets a movie breathe.

"Boudu is a tramp saved from suicide by a bookseller who takes him into his home and tries to do for him what decent, generous people would try to do - make him over in their own solid-bourgeois image, make him one of them. But Boudu is not a lovable tramp like Chaplin nor a Harry Langdon innocent nor a precursor of the artist-in-rebellion tramp like Alec Guinness's Gully Jimson or Sean Connery's Samson Shillitoe. Boudu, bearded and long-haired like a premature Hell's Angel, is a dropout who just wants to be left alone. And this may help to explain why the movie wasn't imported earlier: he doesn't want romance or a job or a place in society (like the forlorn little hero of A Nous La Liberté), he isn't one of the deserving poor. There's no redeeming political message in Boudu and no fancy Shavian double talk either.

"Boudu is the underside of middle-class life, what's given up for respectability. We agree to be clean and orderly and responsible, but there is something satisfying about his refusal. There's a kind of inevitability - like someone acting out our dream - about the way he spills wine on the table, leaves the water running in the sink, wipes his shoes on the bedspread. There's a kind of inevitability - like someone acting out our dream. There's some disorderly malice in him...The loose walk, the eyes that don't communicate, the Margaret Rutherford jaw and the Charles Laughton sneaky self-satisfaction are not those of a man who rejects society: rejection is built into him, he merely acts it out. This, too, does not make the film easy for audiences: it is so much nicer to respond to a Georgy Girl, knowing that a pretty actress is putting us on. One of ...(the)...reviewers complained that Michael Simon 'misses completely..He is gross where he should be droll. He does wrong all the things that Fernandel later was to do right.' That's rather like complaining that Olivier in The Entertainer is no Tony Bennett."

-Pauline Kael, Kiss Kiss Bang Bang



## THE FILMS OF JEAN RENOIR (1894 - )

- 1924: La Fille de L'eau
- 1926: Nana
- 1927: Charleston  
Marquita
- 1928: La Petite Marchande D'Allumettes  
Tire-au-Flanc
- 1929: Le Tournoi  
Le Bled
- 1931: On Purge Bebe  
La Chienne
- 1932: La Nuit du Carrefour  
Boudu saved from drowning (Boudu Sauve des Eaux)
- 1933: Chotard et cie
- 1934: Madame Bovary  
Toni
- 1936: The Crime of Mr. Lange  
La Vie est a Nous  
A Day in the Country
- 1937: The Grand Illusion
- 1938: La Marseillaise  
The Human Beast
- 1939: The Rules of the Game
- 1940: La Tosca (in Italy, unfinished)
- 1941: Swamp Water (in U.S.A.)
- 1943: This Land is Mine (in U.S.A.)
- 1944: Salute to France (in U.S.A.)
- 1945: The Southerner (in U.S.A.)
- 1946: The Diary of a Chambermaid (in U.S.A.)  
The Woman on the Beach (in U.S.A.)
- 1950: The River (in India)
- 1952: The Golden Coach (in Italy)
- 1954: French Cancan
- 1956: Elena et les Hommes (released in the U.S. in a dubbed  
version as Paris Does Strange Things)
- 1959: Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier  
Picnic on the Grass
- 1962: The Elusive Corporal