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The Rules of the Game

6:15 pm, Saturday
October 19
(A-14)

At the Tivoli



Director: Jean Renoir

Screenplay: Jean Renoir and Karl Koch

Cinematographer: Jean Bachelet

Cast: Marcel Dalio, Nora Gregor, Roland Toutain, Jean Renoir, Mila Parely, Paulette Goddard, Julien Carette, Gaston Modot, Anne Mayen

Print Source: Kino
1939, B&W, 113 min.

For more than half a century, imitators have nipped away at Jean Renoir's brilliant dissection of polite French society on the brink of collapse. But Renoir's astonishing range of tones — farce and tragedy, sweetness and cruelty — has defeated them all. More than that, his magnanimity has never been equaled. "Everyone is indispensable," he once said, so the deluded aristocrats and striving servants we encounter at the film's complex country house party are all treated with respect, dignity and humor. Renoir himself delivers a line which might summarize his view of the world. "On this earth, there is one thing that is terrible," the "extra man" Octave says, "and that is that everyone has his own good reasons." As a cautionary tale

about fascism engulfing Europe (this is 1939), *The Rules of the Game* survives intact. As a social comedy and masterpiece of humanism, set in what Penelope Gilliatt called "a perfect rococo frame," it is, arguably, an even greater film than *The Grand Illusion*. Little wonder, then, that the Paris premiere provoked public fury. Or that both the Vichy government and the Nazi occupiers banned the film for the duration of World War II. Little wonder that it inspired a later generation of artists — Truffaut, Rohmer, Godard, Malle — to reinvent French filmmaking as profoundly personal expression. Little wonder that it remains one of the greatest films of all time.

Introduced by Bill Gallo, *Westword*

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