

'Total environment' concerned French filmmaker Jean Renoir

By Ryan Scott

In the film world, only a handful of directors stand out as great. David O. Selznick, John Ford and Stanley Kubrick come to mind as great American directors. Premier foreign directors are Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffaut and Fredrico Fellini.

But one director transcends classification as merely great. Film professionals and ardent admirers the world over, for the past half-century have but one word for the man—legendary.

That man is French film director Jean Renoir.

Several Renoir films are being featured this semester at the Sheldon Film Theatre, including *Toni* this weekend.

Renoir could not avoid achieving fame, considering his background. He is the son of world-renowned French artist Auguste Renoir, and brother of famous foreign film actor Pierre Renoir.

Renoir summarizes his purpose in film in the opening pages of his autobiography, *My Life and My Films*.

God-instilled desire

"Throughout my life I have tried to make filmmaker's films, not from vanity, but because God instilled in me the desire to establish my identity and proclaim it to an audience."

"What I like about the filmmaker's form of exhibitionism is that he does not manifest himself physically but modestly conceals himself behind the characters who bring his works to life."

"The fact that I have no contact with the public during the execution of the work fills me with daring," he wrote.

Wanting to cultivate the realism and authenticity he witnessed in popular early American productions, Renoir skillfully guided his actors and actresses in his early silent films, capturing the "plastic value" of gesture.

Catherine Hessling, who later became Renoir's wife,

dominated his silent films.

Renoir's first sound film, *On Purge Bebe*, shot in six days, was famous for the recording of a flushing toilet.

Protest

The toilet recording protested the "unbelievable naivete" and incompetence of those setting the film's props, Renoir explained later. His annoyance with the incompetence is indicative of his concern for his films' total environment.

"We do not exist through ourselves alone, but through the environment that shaped us," said Renoir.

Many may recall Renoir's American films, among them *A Day In The Country*, *Swamp Water*, *The River* and *The Woman On The Beach*.

Swamp Water is credited for revolutionizing Hollywood. It was the first time a major company took exterior shots outside the studio.

Renoir is regarded in high esteem by peers for his never-ending search to renew himself. In a biography of Renoir, the late film critic Andre Bazin says Renoir's desire for self-renewal is "an integral part of his genius."

The essence of Renoir's work is said to be his film's social realism. In progressing, he has tended to become preoccupied with the moral perspective.

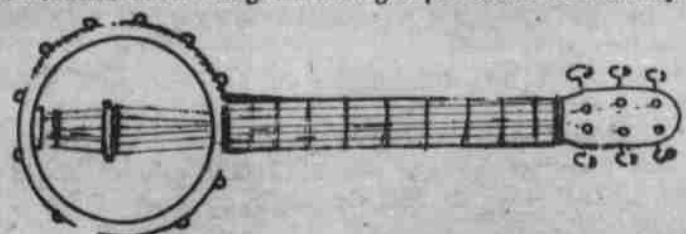
Bazin calls Renoir's works the "ethic of sensuality."

Crusade 'demon boogie' victim

By Michael Zangari

Local bands come and go. Most pass quietly into oblivion without causing so much as a ripple in the stream of events. It's not surprising; for every collapsed honky-tonk dream, at least three more bands would sell their mothers for a shot at the bright lights and big cities.

It's impossible to shrug off the passing of the Bluegrass Crusade as another casualty among bands who just did not make it. Anyone who attended their farewell performance at the second annual Walpurgisnacht in the Nebraska Union caught a brief glimpse of the reason why.



The Crusade was a taken-for-granted Lincoln institution, playing locally for the last four years.

What distinguished them from most bands was their overwhelming uniqueness, not only in their choice of music—bluegrass, of all things, in the age of disco-drainage—but in their ability to move the coldest audience and to have a good time doing it.

The band members, Stephen O. Hanson, banjo; Gary Howe, mandolin; John Ingwerson, guitar; Dave Fowler, fiddle, and Dave Morris, bass, combined fine musicianship with laser intensity harmonies to produce not only the area's finest bluegrass sound, but one of the best bands in



Photo courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive

French filmmaker Jean Renoir says in his autobiography that "The fact that I have no contact with the public during the execution of the work fills me with daring." His film *Toni* is featured this weekend at Sheldon Film Theatre.

the Midwest.

According to Hanson, a main factor in the band's separation was the desires of Howe and Morris to go their separate ways. They returned to do the last concert at the Union.

He doesn't discount the possibility of Bluegrass Crusade members resurfacing in another band in a few months.

What Hanson said he really wants to do is play traditional bluegrass, the type that he said has little exposure in the Midwest.

"I have to consider making a living though," he said.

Despite the Crusade's popularity, financial rewards were not overwhelming, Hanson said, and evidently band members were not making enough money to be "comfortable."

When the Crusade hit the stage for its final appearance, its members rambled into an easy pace, joking freely and roaring into favorites such as "Fox on the Run" and "The Orange Blossom Special."

The audience did not need cueing. There was scattered dancing, whole-scale hand clapping and foot stomping.

Interplay between Hanson's banjo and Fowler's high intensity fiddling seemed particularly sharp.

Called back for an encore, the band reminded the audience that they had to finish because the room was reserved for a "paper aviation contest."

Afterwards, the Crusade left the stage, possibly a victim of commercial shallowness, or another sacrifice to the demon god boogie. Live music in Lincoln will seem a little paler.

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