
NANA

[I] shot [Nana] because I admired Stroheim and wanted to do something that would not be an imitation of Stroheim's art but an homage to Stroheim. And I did this thing with my own money and I lost that money. That's why it's a bad memory¹. Mind you, I don't regret it. I don't regret it because, not having any money, I was obliged to work for others, and working for others taught me cinematographic discipline. That was not a bad thing. It's very good to not do what you want. So, after Nana I made other films. I don't know what's become of them but having completely and professionally entered the trade I owe to Nana.²

Regarding *Nana*, Langlois wrote³:

Nana marks a look back ...

Without flouting the discoveries of his predecessors, Renoir makes use of them only for the needs of the cause: French Cancan. He is also halfway to German cinema; he takes from it only what is suitable for serving his subject. Nana is quite far from the naturalism of a Feyder, adapted to the study of a milieu, that of the Swedes. Renoir kept only the return to a certain simplicity. But this simplicity is stylized, whereby Renoir is very close to Copeau, Stanislavsky, and Antoine: the theatre.

But although he is far from Zola formally, he is quite close to Zola in spirit. Nana is a new step forward in cinematographic form. The work is quite close to Clarence Brown, quite close to this totally stripped-down classicism that was the strength of American cinema at the end of the silent era.

Renoir was able to see Chaplin's A Woman of Paris, its realism and its power of simplification. He was able to understand the full importance of the actor's human element, and it is there that the film marks a call to order and joins this trend of the return to classicism that was the renewal of cinema at the time.

To better mark the necessity of form over content, the importance of the living element of this actor, considered by some an object or a monkey, Renoir, who would be one of cinema's greatest landscape artists, one of those who best knew how to set an action in a determined setting, erase the landscape, project the world of Constantin Guys and the Second Empire into the background, and rediscover the simplification of [Delluc's] The Woman from Nowhere to light only the actors with all his sun lights.

From German cinema he took the greatest actor, Werner Krauss; he brought out Catherine Hessling and let her impose her personality as the Americans knew how to do with May Murray, Gloria Swanson, Lillian Gish; like they still know how to do with Garbo or Marlene Dietrich. He let her live in front of the camera. She was not Zola's Nana but what matter? She was Werner Krauss's Nana, Renoir's Nana; she explained the drama, justifying it by the admiration and fascination she exerted and still exerts on spectators.

Thus was the fruitful idea of scripts built according to the actors chosen going to impose itself. But one cannot be Auguste Renoir's son and get away with it: the film was full of images that continually evoked Manet, Degas and Renoir.

¹ The film was a box-office flop, which forced him to part with certain works by his father to pay his debts.

² Jean Renoir, *Entretiens et propos*, Editions de l'Étoile, 1979

³ Henri Langlois, *Écrits de cinéma*, texts collected by Bernard Benoliel and Bernard Eisenschitz, Ed. Flammarion/Cinémathèque française, 2014

JEAN RENOIR

Programming
Thanks to Henri Langlois

Nana

France, 1926 – 150 minutes

Direction and editing: Jean Renoir

From the novel of Emile Zola

Script: Pierre Lestringuez

Artistic Direction: Claude Autant-Lara

Assistant director : André Cerf

Production : Les Films Jean Renoir

Photography : Jean Bachelet, Edmund Corwin

Cast : Catherine Hessling, Werner Krauss, Pierre Lestringuez, Jacqueline Forzane, Jean Angelo, Raymond Guérin-Catelain, Claude Autant-Lara, Pierre Champagne

Under the Second Empire, Nana, a young, slightly vulgar actress seeks to play the *grandes dames*. Thanks to her success with men, she becomes a courtesan eager for luxury and pleasures and soon abandons the stage for the life in the fast lane. To keep her, a young suitor goes into debt, cheats at cards and commits suicide. Count Muffat, head chamberlain to the Empress, becomes the grovelling slave of this capricious child and generously caters for her extravagant tastes.

Nana was restored in 2002, a tinted 35mm print (3,450 metres) with French intertitles being established. The restoration was carried out by the Cineteca Comunale / L'Immagine Ritrovata (Bologna) for StudioCanal Image, with the participation of ARTE France and in collaboration with La Cinémathèque française.

