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In Search of a Cinema Canon

John Bailey · Thursday, September 8th, 2011

The September/October 2006 issue of *Film Comment* magazine featured what it calls its longest ever article: an exploration of a proposed "cinema canon" of the 60 greatest feature films as proposed by director/writer Paul Schrader. Even I, who have known and worked with Paul on five of his films since 1980, was surprised, and in complete accord, with his choice of Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*. He concludes his essay with this thought,"For me the artist without whom there could not be a film canon is Jean Renoir, and the film without which a canon is inconceivable is *The Rules of the Game."*

Schrader begins the article with an interesting anecdote:

In March 2003, I was having dinner in London with Faber and Faber's editor of film books, Walter Donohue, and several others when the conversation turned to the current state of film criticism and lack of knowledge of film history in general. I remarked on a former assistant who, when told to look up Montgomery Clift, returned some minutes later asking, "Where is that?" I replied that I thought it was in the Hollywood Hills, and he returned to his search engine.

…I'm neither a critic nor film historian, just an avid lover of movies like all of you who read these essays on a regular basis….

Jump to continue ? ? ? including John's picks for a cinema canon. Add your list in the Comments section!

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