

The French film musical in the 1930s and 1940s

Phil Powrie

1. Introduction: The French film musical
2. 1934: *La crise est finie*
3. 1940s: Big band films
4. 1951: *Nous irons à Paris*

1

Introduction: The French film musical

Mainstream musical



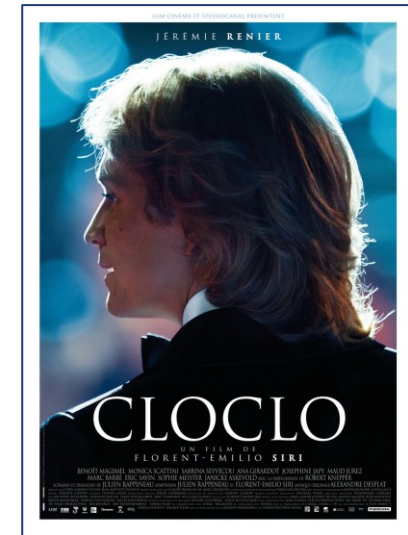
2006



2007



2008

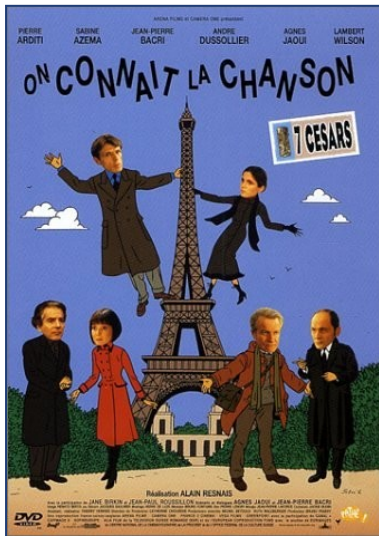


2012

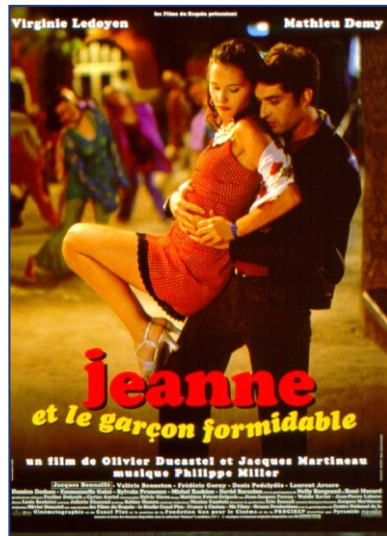


Studies
In
French
Cinema

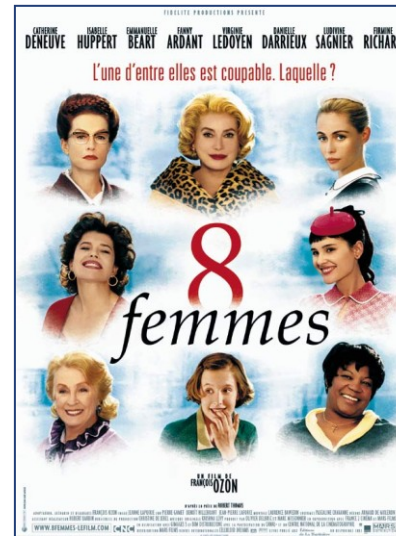
90s/00s auteur musicals



1997



1998



2002



2007



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1930



1964



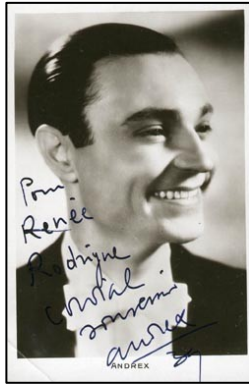
1967



Singers



Alibert



Andrex



Josephine
Baker



André
Baugé



Maurice
Chevalier



Damia



Fréhel



Henri Garat



Georges
Milton



Mireille

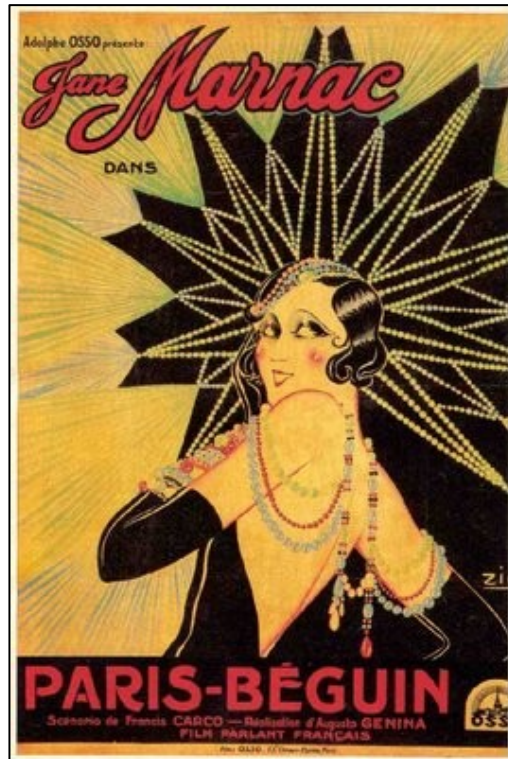


Mistinguett



Albert Préjean

The revue film



1932

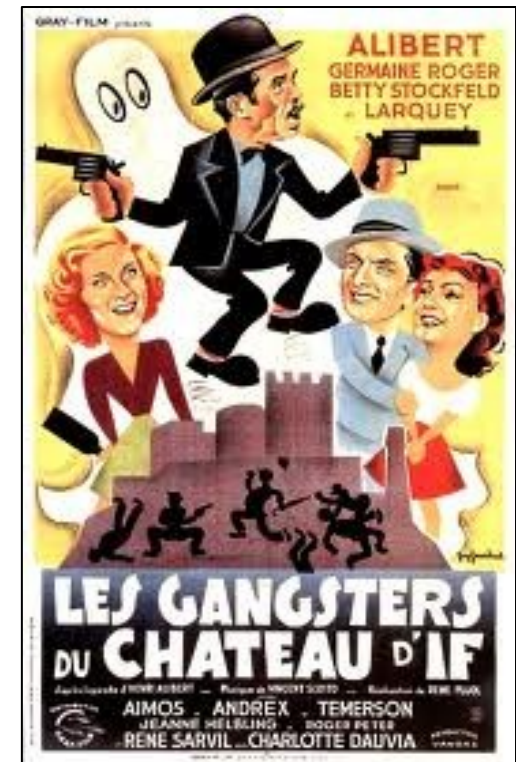


1934



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The Marseille operetta



1940s and 1950s operettas



1945



1945



1946



1946



1947



1949



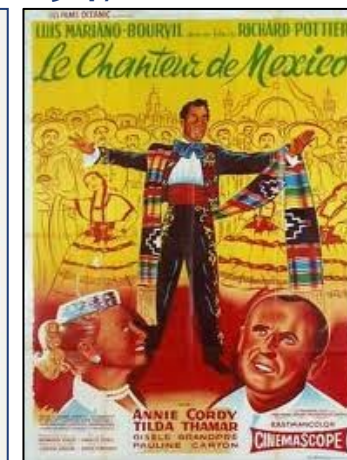
1951



1952



1953

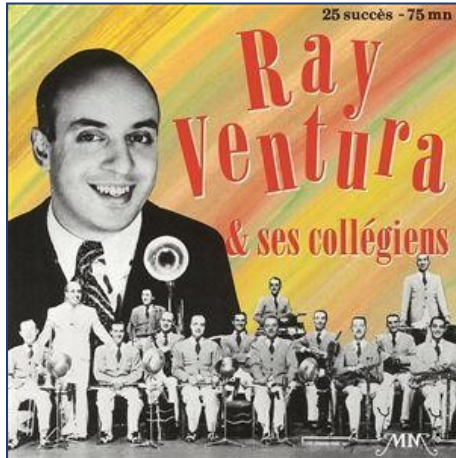


1956



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Ray Ventura et ses Collégiens



2

1934: *La crise est finie*

Robert Siodmak's French films



1933



1934



1936



1936



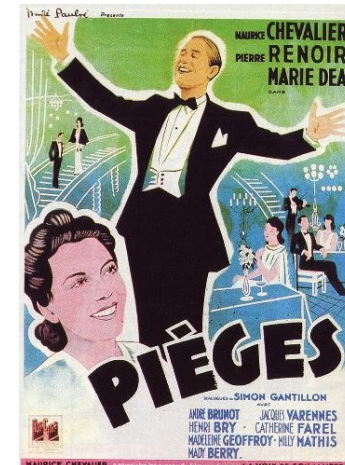
1937



1938



1938 (uncredited)



1939

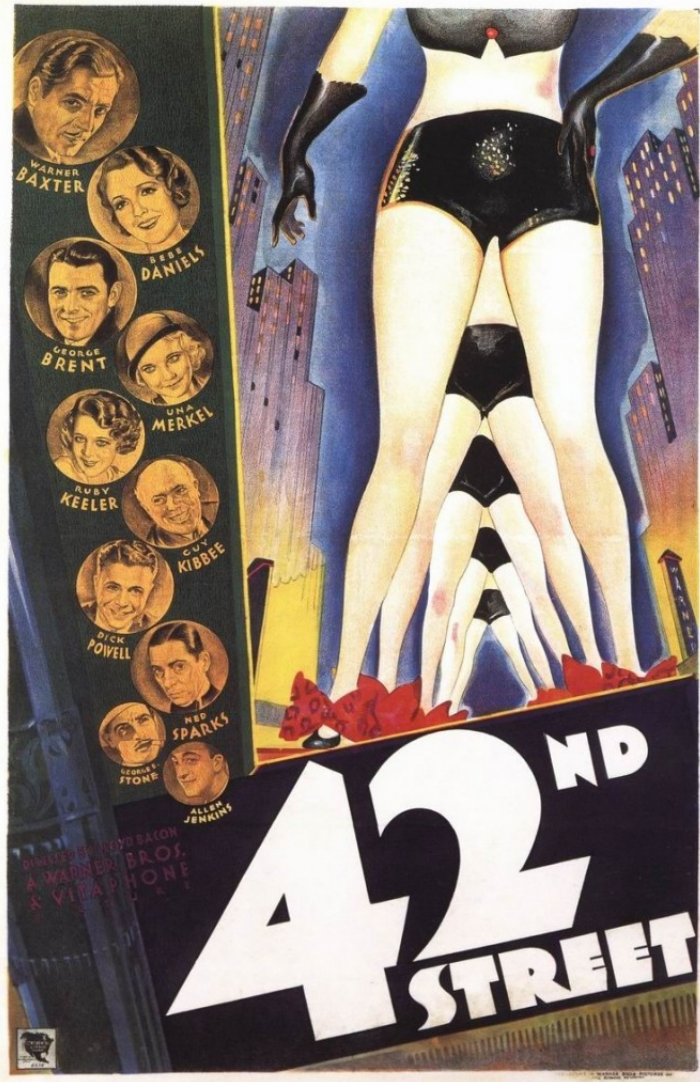


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La Crise est finie



'A French 42nd Street'



Gold Diggers of 1933



WARREN WILLIAM
ALINE MacMAHON
JOAN BLONDELL
RUBY KEELER
DICK POWELL
CUY KISSEE
HEN JONKAY & LOUIS ROBERTS
DIRECTED BY MERVYN LEROY
A WARNER BROS.
AND VITAPHONE PICTURE





Carol: This is the fourth show in two months that I've been in of and out of.

Trixie: They close before they open.

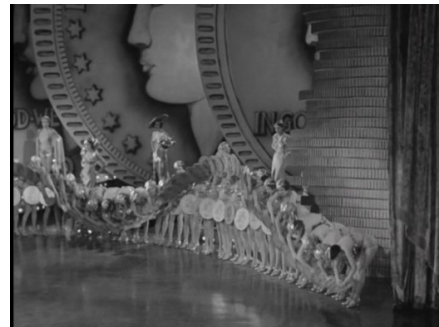
Fay: The Depression, dearie.

'It's the crisis'



Officer, we're just poor men out of work...It's the crisis

Gold Diggers of 1933

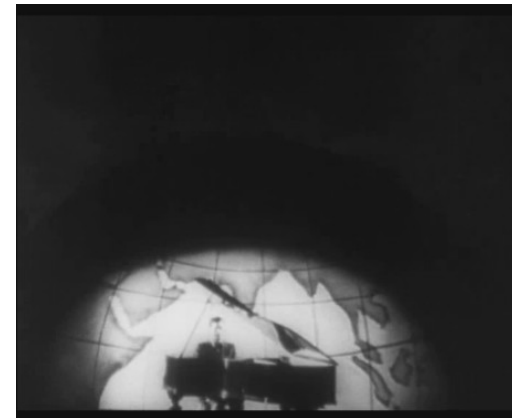


La Crise est finie



‘À Hollywood c’est un record/On fait des girls en or’
('In Hollywood it’s a record/They make girls of gold’)

The beginning of the final sequence



Money money money

Paris



Money money money

New York



Money money money

USSR



Money money money

London

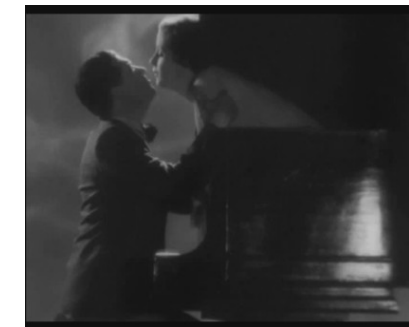




The Trick Girls



The tropical island

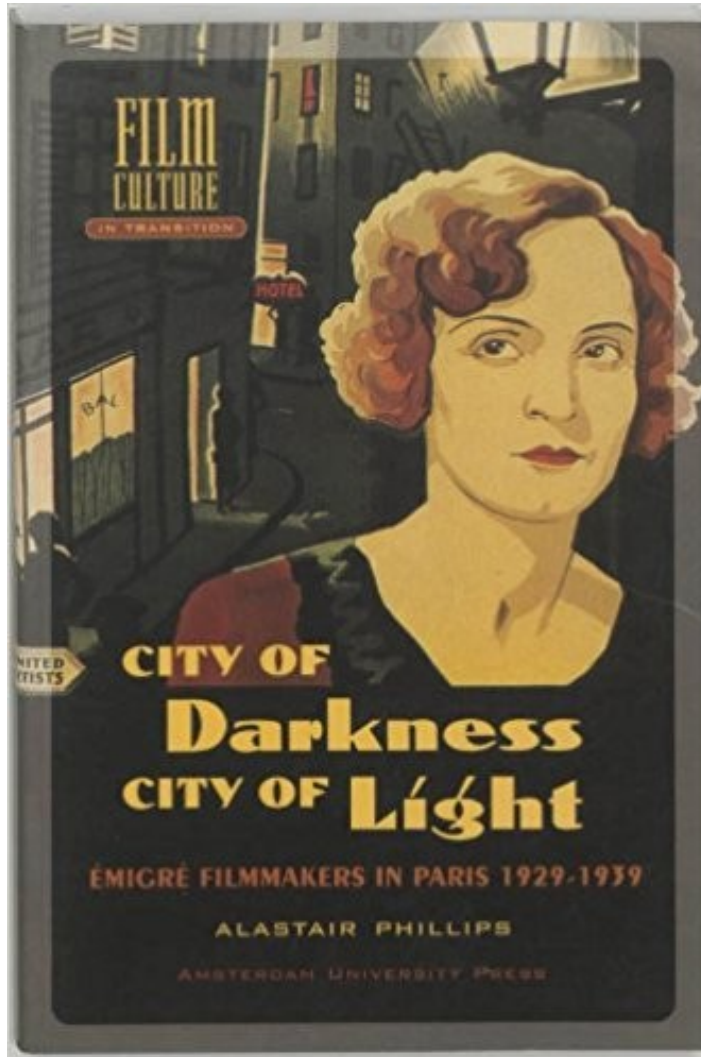


The finale



Expressionism





Eugen Schüfftan

An effective blurring of the French and German inheritances. Marcel is shot from straight on [...] The contours of his white tee shirt [...] are brightly illuminated against a background shadow [...]. Bernouillin, by contrast, is shot from a prominent high camera angle to emphasise his isolation and malevolent intent. [...] The contours of the shopkeeper's body as he moves amongst the pools of diffuse shadow are pitch black. (Phillips, p.86)



Three songs



‘We’re in the Money’

Gone are my blues
And gone are my tears
I’ve got good news
To shout in your ears
The silver dollar has returned to the fold
With silver you can turn your dreams to gold

‘La crise est finie’

Je ne peux plus voir tout cet or
Aussi je change de décor
Je serai mieux certes
Sur une île déserte
La crise est finie, la crise est finie
Et je n’aime plus l’or
[I’m fed up of all this gold
So I’m changing scene
I’ll be better off on a desert island
The crisis is over, the crisis is over
And I don’t like gold anymore]



3

1940s: The big band films



Ray Ventura's Big Band musicals



1936



1936



1938



1939



1948



1950



1951



1953



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Back-stage musicals



Feux de joie



Micheline (Micheline Cheirel) &
Roland (René Lefèvre)

Nous irons à Paris



Micheline Grosbois (Françoise
Arnoul) & Jacques Lambert
(Philippe Lemaire)

Feux de joie



Coco Aslan

Nous irons à Paris



Max Elloy

The father (Fred Pasqali) in *Nous irons à Paris*



'Tout mais pas ça' (Anything but that)

Nous irons à Monte-Carlo (3:20)



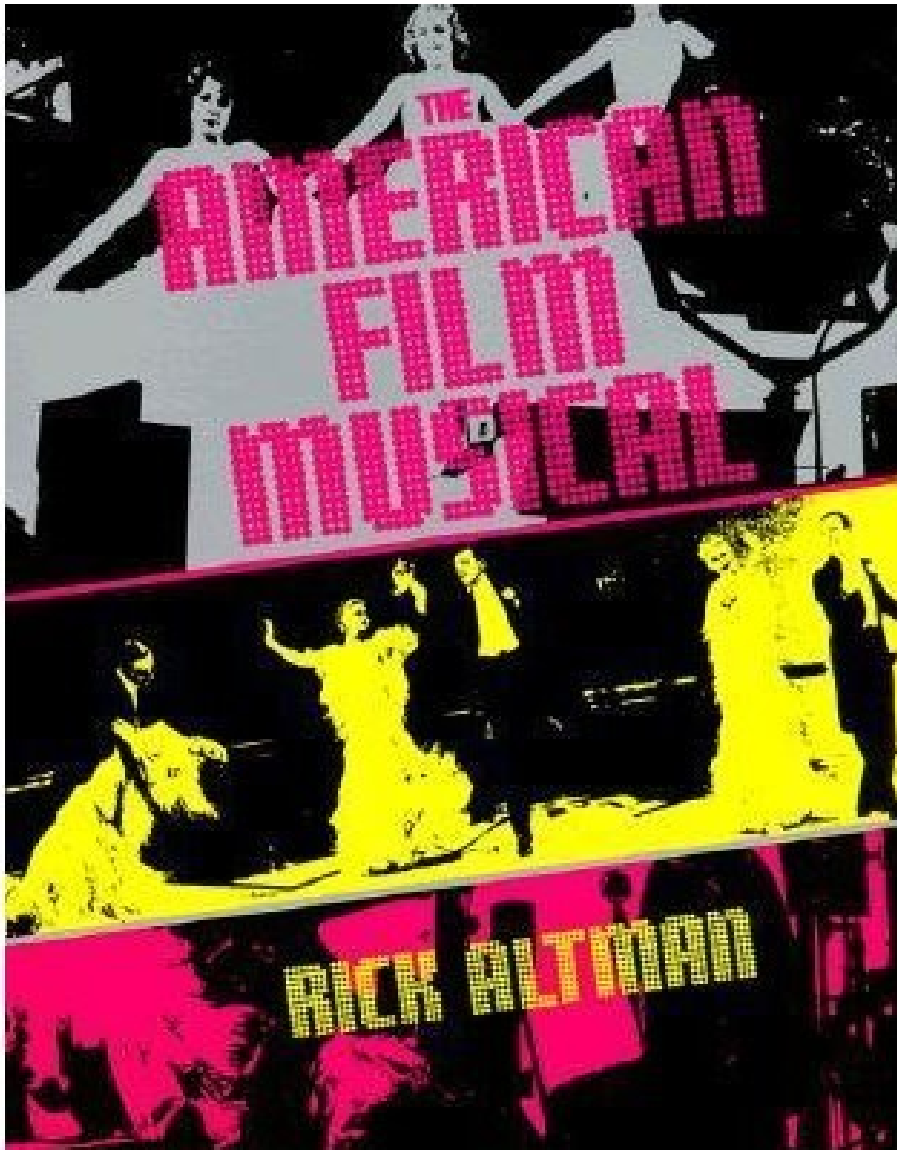
'Comme tout le monde' (Like Everybody)



'Comme tout le monde' (Like Everybody)

Feux de joie (4:22)





Mademoiselle s'amuse



Christine and black face in *Mademoiselle s'amuse*



Mademoiselle Swing



Armand de Vincy=Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931)





Real World Problem

- Exhaustion
- Dreariness
- Boredom
- Fragmentation/Loneliness
- Scarcity/poverty

Entertainment World Utopian Solution

- Energy
- Intensity
- Excitement
- Community/companionship
- Abundance/wealth

Ray Ventura's Big Band musicals



1936



1936



1938



1939



1948



1950

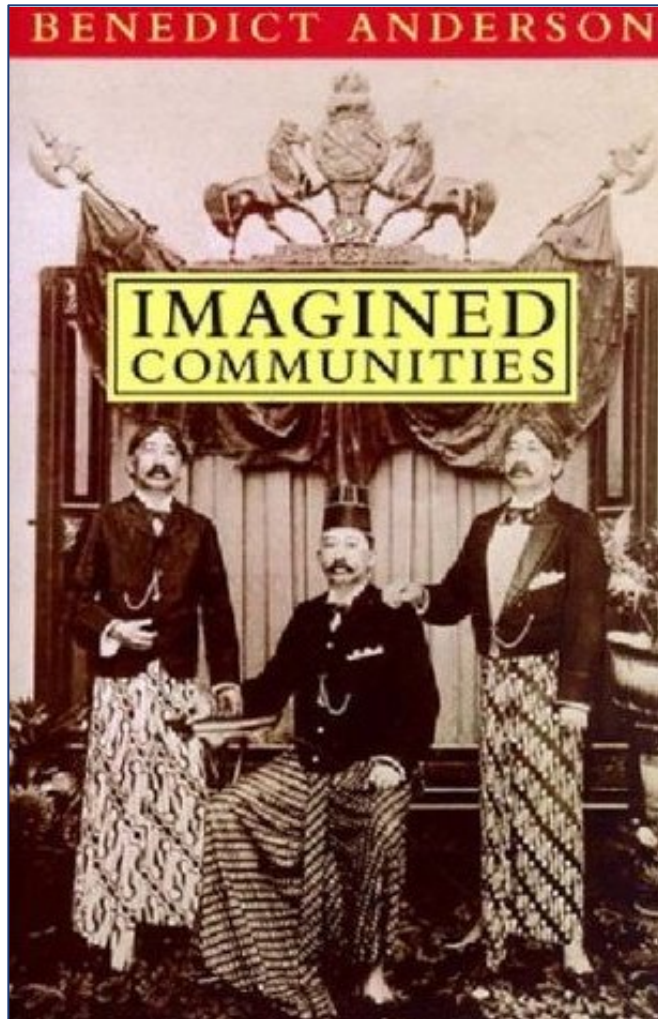


1951



1953





The imagined community

Nous irons à Monte-Carlo (1:09)



4

1951 *Nous irons à Paris*

Nous irons à Paris, top French film of 1950



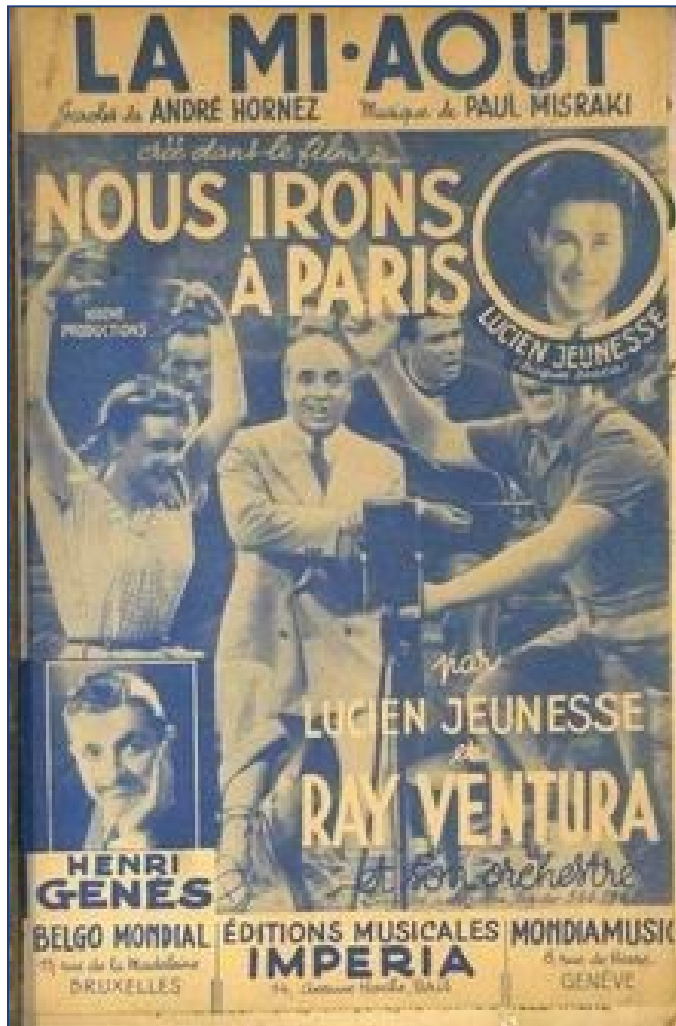
6.7 million spectators (cumulative
1950-1999, CNC)

Le Film français: ranked in the top
5 films of 1950 with:

- *Cinderella* (Disney)
- *The Third Man* (Reed)
- *Justice est faite* (Cayatte)
- *The Three Musketeers* (Sidney)



The medley in *Nous irons à Paris*



- ‘Comme tout le monde’ (*Feux de joie*, 1938)
- ‘Sur deux notes’ (*Feux de joie*, 1938)
- ‘Qu’est-ce qu’on attend pour être heureux’ (*Feux de joie*, 1938)
- ‘Le chef n'aime pas la musique’ (1939)
- ‘A la mi-août’
- The Peters Sisters



La Belle Équipe/They Were Five (Julien Duvivier, 1936)



'A la mi-août' (In Mid-August Time)

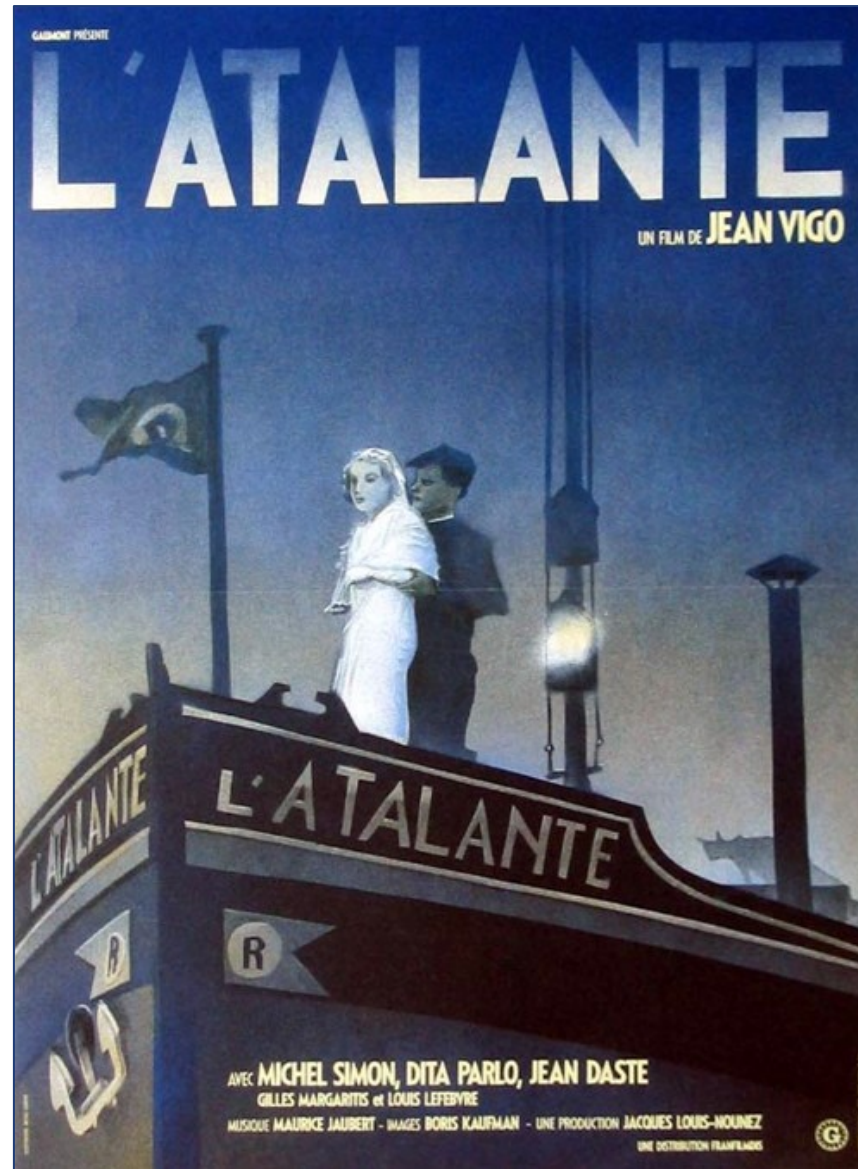
Nous irons à Paris (6:39)



The 'GIs' are parachuted in



L'Atalante (Jean Vigo, 1934)



The orchestra's triumphant arrival in Paris





Cameos by George Raft and Martine Carol



Mon oncle (Jacques Tati, 1958)



The End