



MEMBER MONDAYS

Singin' in the Rain

Singin' in the Rain

Directed by: Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen

©: Loew's Incorporated

Production Company: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Produced by: Arthur Freed

Story and Screen Play by: Adolph Green,
Betty Comden

Suggested by the song by: Arthur Freed,
Nacio Herb Brown

Director of Photography: Harold Rosson

Technicolor Colour Consultants: Henri Jaffa,
James Gooch

Special Effects: Warren Newcombe, Irving G. Ries

Editor: Adrienne Fazan

Art Directors: Cedric Gibbons, Randall Duell

Set Decorations: Edwin B. Willis, Jacque Mapes

Costumes Designed by: Walter Plunkett

Make-up Created by: William Tuttle

Hair Styles Designed by: Sydney Guilaroff

Songs: Lyrics by: Arthur Freed

Songs: Music by: Nacio Herb Brown

Musical Direction: Lennie Hayton

Orchestrations by: Conrad Salinger

Vocal Arrangements by: Jeff Alexander

Orchestrations by: Wally Heglin, Skip Martin

Musical Numbers Staged/Directed by:

Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen

Recording Supervisor: Douglas Shearer

uncredited

Associate Producer: Roger Edens

Director of Photography, Pre-production:

John Alton

Camera Operator: Frank Phillips

Costumes: Elaine Davis Owen

Vocal Arrangements: Roger Edens

Assistants to Choreographers: Carol Haney,
Jeanne Coyne

Cast:

Gene Kelly (*Don Lockwood*)

Donald O'Connor (*Cosmo Brown*)

Debbie Reynolds (*Kathy Selden*)

Jean Hagen (*Lina Lamont*)

Millard Mitchell (*R.F. Simpson*)

Cyd Charisse (*dancer in ballet*)

Douglas Fowley (*Roscoe Dexter*)

Rita Moreno (*Zelda Zanders*)

uncredited

Madge Blake (*Dora Bailey*)

King Donovan (*Rod*)

Kathleen Freeman

(*Phoebe Dinsmore, diction coach*)

Bobby Watson (*diction coach*)

Tommy Farrell (*Sid Phillips, assistant director*)

Jimmy Thompson

(*male lead in 'Beautiful Girl' number*)

Dan Foster (*assistant director*)

Margaret Bert (*wardrobe woman*)

Mae Clarke (*hairdresser*)

Judy Landon (*Olga Mara*)

John Dodsworth (*Baron de la Bouvet de la Toulon*)

Stuart Holmes (*J.C. Spendrill III*)

Dennis Ross (*Don as a boy*)

Bill Lewin (*Bert, villain in western*)

Richard Emory (*Phil, cowboy hero*)

Julius Tannen (*man demonstrating talking pictures*)

Dawn Addams (*Teresa, lady-in-waiting*)

Elaine Stewart (*2nd lady-in-waiting*)

Carl Milettaire (*villain in 'The Duelling Cavalier'*)

Ben Strombach (*pilot in flying film*)

Tommy Walker (*footballer in film sequence*)

Jac George (*orchestra leader*)

Wilson Wood (*Rudy Vallee impersonator*)

It would be hard to find a more enjoyable, durable musical than this homage to Hollywood's bumpy transition from silent to talking pictures. Gene Kelly is at his charismatic best, especially during the euphoric title number, while Donald O'Connor uses every trick in his repertoire for 'Make 'em Laugh' and Debbie Reynolds captures a sweet innocence as an ingénue star on the rise. Then there's Jean Hagen, who pretty much steals all her scenes with that hilarious, screechy delivery. Simply joyous.

Heather Osborn, bfi.org.uk

The most enduring of the four MGM collaborations between Gene Kelly and his director and co-choreographer Stanley Donen, *Singin' in the Rain* rises ten places [in 2022's *Sight and Sound* poll] from 20th in 2012 to land in the top ten again. The film's ascent almost feels like a given, due to the effervescence that may be its defining characteristic and the scarcity of that quality in our trying times.

Yet, typically for anything that seems so effortless, Kelly and Donen's achievement was in fact the product of an enormous amount of toil and trouble. At the project's outset, the legendary writing team of Betty Comden and Adolph Green tried and failed to get out of the gig when MGM musical head Arthur Freed ordered them to build a new movie on top of a batch of tunes by Freed and his partner Nacio Herb Brown that were gathering dust. (Indeed, 'Singin' in the Rain' itself had made its screen debut in *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*.) Debbie Reynolds' ordeal filming the 'Good Morning' tap-dance number famously left her with bloody feet. As for the title song, six months of rehearsal culminated in Gene Kelly gamely splashing about while running a high fever.

None of that suffering is discernible on screen, which is one of the many delightful ironies about Hollywood's most deeply cherished movie about the making of a Hollywood movie. Pulling back the curtain to show yet more dazzling drapery, Comden and Green celebrate an earlier era of Tinseltown chancers and hustlers with a tale of a production caught between the silent and sound eras. Kelly's plucky hooper and stuntman-turned-star Don Lockwood leads the charge to retrofit a swashbuckler picture named *The Duelling Cavalier* to take advantage of the new vogue for sound, with his new sweetie Kathy (Reynolds) being his best means of disguising the squawky voice of his leading lady Lina (a hilarious Jean Hagen).

There are several movies besides Don's latest somehow contained within the text of *Singin' in the Rain* (including, if we are to believe the deliciously meta billboard in the final shot, *Singin' in the Rain*). Cheekily purporting to reveal its own means of production while still delivering one unabashedly theatrical showstopper after another, Kelly and Donen's masterwork anticipates the brassy postmodernism of *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). But like such fellow homage-payers as *The Artist* (2011) and *La La Land* (2016), Baz Luhrmann's rendition feels meagre compared to the original and its seemingly inexhaustible bounty of ingenuity, bravado and sheer unabashed joy.

Jason Anderson, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 2022-23

Brick Sullivan (*cop in title number*)
Snub Pollard (*recipient of umbrella, title number*)
Paul Maxey (*sceptical party guest*)
Dorothy Patrick, William Lester, Joi Lansing
(*spectators*)
Charles Evans (*irritated spectator*)
Dave Sharpe, Russ Saunders (*fencers*)
Patricia Denise, Jeanne Coyne, Joyce Horne
(*dancers*)
Bill Chatham, Ernie Flatt, Don Hulbert, Robert Dayo
(*male dancing quartet*)
David Kasday (*kid*)
Robert B. Williams (*traffic cop*)
Ray Teal (*employee*)
USA 1951©
103 mins
Digital

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Gene Kelly's very best dances are the ones he does by himself, for at heart he is a solitary figure, unable or unwilling to let go of the idea that he is a tough guy you don't want to mess with.

Kelly had a temperature of 103 degrees when he shot the song and dance in a downpour in *Singin' in the Rain* (1951) that became his signature number. It took a while to make sure the puddles splashed as much as he wanted them to, and the work was slow, but everyone involved knew they had created something special. I interviewed Betsy Blair when her memoir *The Memory of All That* came out in 2003, and she vividly remembered the filming of this classic sequence, which she referred to as 'the famous one, the really great one', with a little physical shiver that was partly reverential and partly mocking.

Kelly is alone for much of the title song number in *Singin' in the Rain*, which is one of the most unalloyed expressions of joy on film, especially when Kelly takes off his hat, and the camera moves in as he closes his eyes and sings, 'C'mon with the rain... I've a smile on my face,' with his light, high voice.

Dan Callahan, *Sight and Sound*, January 2017

Terence Davies on 'Singin' in the Rain'

I have a very clear memory of seeing *Singin' in the Rain* because it was the first time I was taken to the cinema, when I was seven years old. It was just after my father died, in 1952. I'm in the process of writing my autobiography, and it begins with that visit. It's one of those things in your life you never forget.

My sisters loved American musicals and from that point on I did too. Obviously the only thing I remember from the first time I saw the film is the title number being sung. I was too young to appreciate Jean Hagen's wonderful performance as Lina Lamont.

Was there a point later on when I was able to look at *Singin' in the Rain* more analytically? Yes and no. There's one level at which I can appreciate the way it's been put together, particularly the writing and the performances, but it's also very difficult not to be seduced by it, because if you love something and it's had a profound effect on you, it's very hard to be objective. For the film's fiftieth anniversary I did a radio programme in which we analysed Gene Kelly's famous dance sequence. But even when you see that perhaps Kelly overdoes the smile a bit, you say, 'Oh, I'll forgive this because it's so perfect.'

The overall structure is based on a wonderful and simple idea: the end of the silent era, the beginning of sound. Basically Adolph Breen and Betty Cornden were told by Arthur Freed, 'Here are the songs I wrote [with Nacio Herb Brown] and I want to put them in a film', and this is what they came up with. Jean Hagen saying, 'Why, I make more money than Calvin Coolidge put together' – it's a joy from beginning to end.

There are some films that have magic, either in their sheer entertainment value and bravura, or from something darker, as with Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter* or Hitchcock's *Psycho*. *Singin' in the Rain* has an immense magic, and I think the title number is one of cinema's great moments, as good as anything by Eisenstein, and a lot more entertaining.

Terence Davies talking to Nick James, *Sight and Sound*, September 2002