

Singin' in the Rain

Directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen
USA, 1952, 102 mins, Cert U
A BFI Release

Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor, Jean Hagen



Opening at BFI Southbank, Eye Galway, Belmont Aberdeen, GFT, Peckham Plex and more cinemas UK-wide from 18 October 2019 as part of BFI Musicals! The Greatest Show On Screen

As the autumn chill begins to bite, what could be better than a comfy seat in front of the big screen, friends, family and **Singin' in the Rain**. On **18 October 2019** the BFI will bring this beyond-iconic 1952 musical – perhaps even the greatest film musical ever – back to cinemas around the UK. The last time it was widely seen was in 2000.

Singin' in the Rain is the highlight of **BFI Musicals! The Greatest Show On Screen**, which celebrates the joyful, emotional, shared experience of watching film musicals; with the biggest stars, the most iconic scenes and the best-loved song and dance numbers back on the big screen. Running 14 Oct 2019 – Jan 2020, it incorporates a season at BFI Southbank, BFI UK-wide re-releases of classic musicals, hundreds of screenings and events at venues across the UK, DVD/Blu-ray releases and films to watch on BFI Player.

One of the most beloved performers of all time, **Gene Kelly** (1912-1996) was a multi-talented dancer, choreographer, actor and director. He had a long and hugely successful career in Hollywood, but is probably best-known for his work in the utterly joyous *Singin' in the Rain*, which he co-directed with frequent collaborator **Stanley Donen** and starred in with **Debbie Reynolds** and **Donald O'Connor**. Few pinnacles of creativity are as outrageously enjoyable as this Technicolor love song to Hollywood.

Kelly plays silent movie idol Don Lockwood, in love with chorus girl Kathy (Debbie Reynolds), at war with leading lady Lina (**Jean Hagen**) and desperate to save his career when the arrival of the talkies threatens disaster. The film easily qualifies as one of the best film comedies too – helium-voiced Lina's attempts to cope with the new-fangled

sound technology are belly-laugh funny. And then there are the songs! Not only the timeless title song, which would make anyone want to get up and dance, but the dreamily romantic 'You Were Meant for Me' and 'Broadway Melody' with its erotic tension between Kelly and Cyd Charisse. Unlike the other songs, 'Make 'Em Laugh' and 'Moses' were written specially for the soundtrack.

Singin' in the Rain was originated by the legendary MGM producer Arthur Freed who, while working with Kelly on *An American in Paris* had the idea of making a musical using songs already written by himself and composing partner Nacio Herb Brown. He hired writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green to come up with a storyline based around the songs. Written in the late twenties and early thirties, the songs reflected the era of the early talkies, inspiring the writers to set the story in Hollywood at that time, when the movie business was making a major transition from silent pictures into sound.

While Gene Kelly was working on *An American in Paris*, Freed suggested he look over this new script. Kelly and Donen were enthusiastic and the film was set in motion. Debbie Reynolds, cast as ingénue love interest Kathy, had a gymnastics background and was strong and fit, though not dance trained. She famously said "*Singin' in the Rain* and childbirth were the two hardest things I ever had to do in my life", but she pulled it off.

The film was initially a modest rather than smash hit when it opened in 1952. Donald O'Connor won the Golden Globe for Best Actor – Motion Picture Musical or Comedy and Jean Hagen was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. However, over time it has gained more and more plaudits, and achieved its classic status with the public, with film critics and with filmmakers. In 2005 it was included in the BFI's list of the 50 films that everyone should see by the time they reach 14. In 2006 it was No.1 in the American Film Institute's Greatest Movie Musicals list. In Sight & Sound's most recent *Greatest Film of All Time* poll (2017), it was No. 20, with directors Francis Ford Coppola, Terence Davies, Richard Eyre, Kevin Macdonald and Marc Webb all voting for it.

As part of BFI Musicals, on Friday 25 October, BFI Southbank welcomes Gene Kelly's wife and biographer **Patricia Ward Kelly** to introduce the 2pm screening of *Singin' in the Rain*. In the evening Patricia will be back onstage for a very special event, offering audiences a unique insight into the life of the Hollywood legend. Kelly brought astonishing grace and athleticism to the big screen, yet audiences know very little about him. **Gene Kelly: The Legacy - An Evening with Patricia Ward Kelly** will be an intimate portrait of this dynamic and innovative artist who created some of the most memorable and best-known scenes in film history. The BFI will also work in partnership with the ADHD Foundation, of which Patricia Ward Kelly recently became a patron, to present a special Relaxed Screening of *Singin' in the Rain* for neuro-diverse audiences, as well as displaying a bespoke version of the Foundation's [Umbrella Project](#) in BFI Southbank from **Friday 18 October** to mark the re-release of the film.

Singin' in the Rain will also be the centrepiece of two major events organised by Compass Presents in partnership with Tap Attack, Cirque Bijou, Christmas Spiegel tent and We The Curious. Expanded screenings of the film at Liverpool Spiegel tent on Wednesday 11 December and Bristol Spiegel tent on Wednesday 18 December will feature projection mapping and performance moments as characters escape the confines of the silver screen.

The esteemed Observer film critic, the late Philip French, once said, of his favourite film: "*I doubt if I could love anyone who didn't wish to see Singin' in the Rain again and again and again.*" The BFI's re-release gives both long-time fans and those who have never experienced it on the big screen the chance to sit back, relax and let it work its magic all over again.

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- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

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