

## Movie Musicals: Film As Song

# **An American in Paris** 1951

Friday, August 1 - Thursday, August 7, 2008



### **Film Information**

#### **Directed by**

Vincente Minnelli

#### **Language**

English

#### **Running Time**

113 minutes

### **Film Notes**

The year 1952 was a big one for Gene Kelly. *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* arrived at theaters that year, and *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* cleaned up at the Academy Awards, winning six Oscars and earning another two nominations. Kelly himself took home his first and only Oscar, an honorary award recognizing the star's "versatility as an actor, singer, director and dancer, and specifically for his brilliant achievements in the art of choreography on film."

That last part easily could have referred to his work in *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* alone, and, even more specifically, to the film's fantastic dance sequence near the end—a climactic, 18-minute ballet spectacle set to Gershwin's own "An American in Paris." The sequence, which reportedly cost half a million dollars to produce, is perhaps one of the most ambitious, artistic musical moments in movie history. The physical preparation for it was so extensive that director Vincente Minnelli supposedly was able to leave the project, make an entirely different movie for MGM (*FATHER'S LITTLE DIVIDEND*), and then return to finish *AN*

*AMERICAN IN PARIS* when the ballet was ready to shoot.

The idea for the sequence was to match the various sections of Gershwin's composition with the visual style of a different painter. Among those receiving tribute are Raoul Dufy, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Maurice Utrillo, Henri Rousseau, Vincent Van Gogh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (who will get a different sort of tribute later this series in *MOULIN ROUGE!*). See the reverse side for more about this extraordinary sequence, and for an exhaustively informative essay about the making of *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS*, check out the film's page on the Turner Classic Movies web site ([www.tcm.com](http://www.tcm.com)).

—Casey



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**More Information**

**Screenplay by**  
Alan Jay Lerner

**Featuring**  
Gene Kelly  
Leslie Caron  
Oscar Levant  
Georges Guétary  
Nina Foch

**Cinematography by**  
John Alton  
Alfred Gilks

**Original Music by**  
George Gershwin (music)  
Ira Gershwin (lyrics)  
Saul Chaplin

**Film Editing by**  
Adrienne Fazan

**Country of Origin**  
USA

“The decor of the ballet will be its most distinguishing feature as to uniqueness and originality, for each individual scene will be done in the styles of different painters which we will denote in the synopsis of the libretto... the ballet visually should reflect an artist’s viewpoint and both the scenery and the costumes should be done as they painted... In essence, the entire ballet is a representation of a painter thinking about Paris.”

—Original concept for the “American in Paris”  
ballet sequence, as submitted to MGM by Gene  
Kelly and Vincente Minnelli

**Also Recommended, by Vincente Minnelli**

- Meet Me in Saint Louis 1944
- The Clock 1945
- Father of the Bride 1950
- The Bad and the Beautiful 1952
- Lust for Life 1956
- Some Came Running 1958
- Gigi 1958