

'That's Entertainment' is

At last "That's Entertainment" has come to town, bringing a bit of relief to downtown movie going (eight of the 14 downtown theatres had re-releases in them last week). "That's Entertainment" has been a 'coming attraction' at the Stuart Theater for the past two months.

"That's Entertainment" is Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's look back in delight on the three decades when that studio produced some of the most enjoyable musicals ever made. It was written, produced and directed by Jack Haley, Jr. (son of the "Wizard of Oz's" tin woodsman). It features film sequences from the earliest years of sound, when musicals could finally become musicals and "Broadway Melody" won the first Oscar for best picture, all the way to the end of the 50s and the last of the MGM Cinemascope extravaganzas, "Gigi."

greg lukow
key grip

MGM family

The film is narrated by 11 former members of the MGM family. Some of them—Sinatra, Liz Taylor, Bing Crosby, Jimmy Stewart and Liza Minnelli—were only tangential to the whole area. But there are others whose names will be forever linked with the genre.

Gene Kelly, Mickey Rooney, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds and Fred Astaire (even though his most remembered years were with Ginger Rogers at the RKO studios) are not just paying homage to those years, they are reliving their pasts.

It is unfortunate that the movie is often more of a eulogy than a re-appraisal. The history of the musical

did not end with the last of the great MGMs. Films like "West Side Story" and "The Sound of Music" carried on the tradition for a while, but after the suicidal failures of overblown projects like "Paint Your Wagon," "Star!" and "Mame" the genre does indeed seem dead.

Even MGM itself is gone (having passed over into the hotel business last year), and "That's Entertainment" had to be distributed by United Artists. The studio is rising from the grave one last time, however, and this movie is grossing a surprising amount of money and may turn out to be the most popular compilation film made.

Natural problems

There is a natural problem inherent to this type of film clip movie and "That's Entertainment" succumbs to a few of them. It's difficult to choose how much of what movie to show and how often, with even the clips themselves being incomplete, we are seeing only fragments of fragments. A lot of neglected movies could have been mentioned or given more time while others were given too much attention.

It is useless to go into any depth on the many marvelous sequences in this movie. Some of the biggest highs involve Judy Garland (including the "Get Happy" number from "Summer Stock"), Fred Astaire (an incredibly graceful, featherweight dance with a hatrack from "Royal Wedding") and, of course, the inimitable Gene Kelly as he sloshes through the rain-soaked streets of Singin' in the Rain in that ultimate exercise of carefree, movie euphoria.

Perhaps there is a bit too much of the "Ah yes—those were the days—they don't make movies like that any more" attitude in "That's Entertainment". But everything is justified in this glorious, vintage experience because indeed, in its purest form, that was entertainment.

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