

Blu-Ray Review: Pair of Oscar-Winning Musicals Tap to HD Beat

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 6, 2009 - 11:49am

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Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Two of the most beloved musicals of all time recently made their debut on Blu-Ray with extravagant collections of special features, beautiful HD, and crystal clear audio. All musical fans will want to add the Best Picture-winning “An American in Paris” and “Gigi” to their Blu-Ray collection.

One of my favorite musicals, 1951’s “An American in Paris,” an Oscar-winner for Best Picture, Art Direction, Cinematography, Costume Design, Score, and Screenplay, is such an essential film to the history of the musical genre that it seems like a no-brainer for HD Blu-Ray. It’s an undeniable classic featuring one of the great stars of the musical, Gene Kelly, at his athletic peak and includes the debut of the magical Leslie Caron.



An American in Paris was released on Blu-Ray on March 31st, 2009.

Photo credit: Warner Brothers

As if Kelly and Caron weren’t enough to entice musical fans, “An American in Paris” includes legends like Arthur Freed, Alan Jay Lerner,

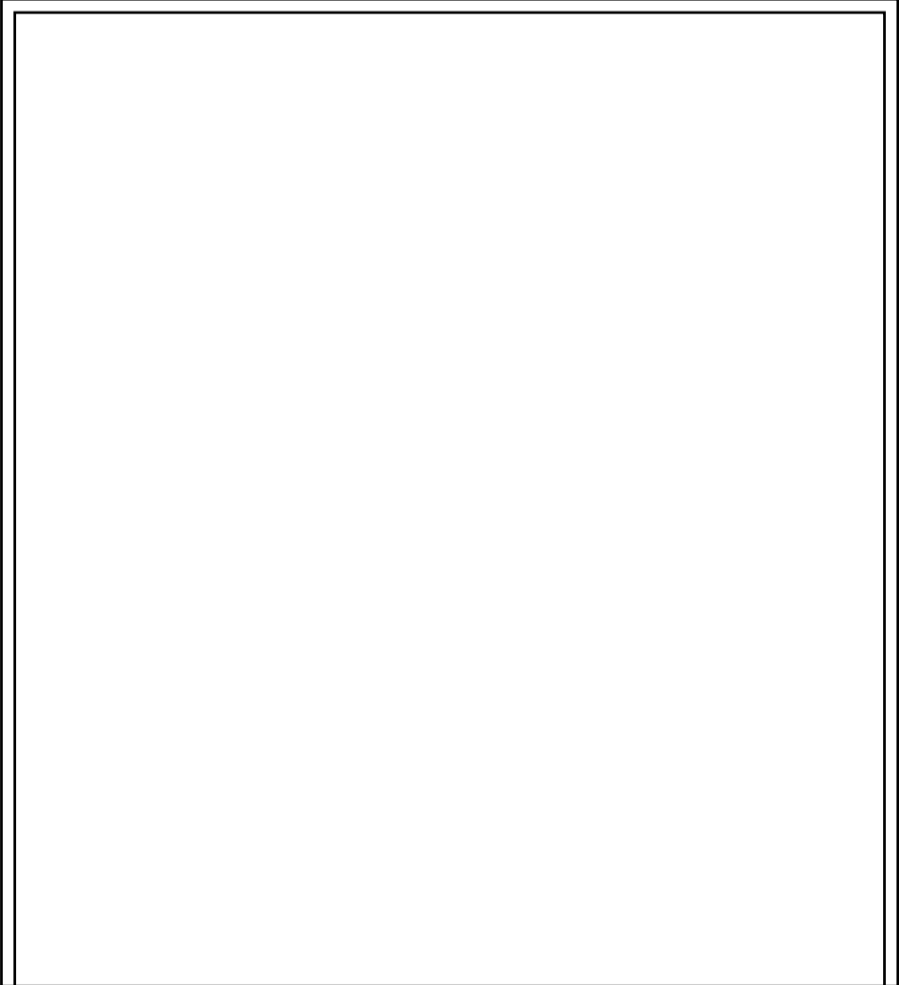
Vincente Minnelli, and George & Ira Gershwin behind the scenes. Kelly stars as an ex-GI who loves Paris and Caron plays an alluring but engaged perfume-shop clerk.



Based on a 1928 orchestral composition by George Gershwin, “An American in Paris” includes several classic musical tunes including “I Got Rhythm,” “S Wonderful,” and “Our Love is Here to Stay”. The climax of the film, an amazing 18-minute dance number between Kelly and Caron, is a must-own on its own for fans of the genre. It’s a better film than you even remember.

The special features are the same as the standard-definition DVD release from last year (same with “Gigi”), so if you bought it in 2008 and have a reasonably good upconvert capability, you may not want to make the Blu-Ray upgrade. But if you don’t own it, you’ll be very impressed by the 1080p High Definition full-frame picture (maintaining the way the film was shot and originally presented) and even the mono track, which suits the film perfectly.

The extensive special features on “An American in Paris” include “Concerto of a Commentary Hosted by Patricia Ward Kelly and Featuring Rare, Often Previously Unheard Interviews with Gene Kelly, Vincente Minnelli, Arthur Freed, Alan Jay Lerner, Johnny Green, Saul Chaplin, Michael Feinstein, Preston Ames, and Irene Sharaff and New Observations by Leslie Caron and Nina Foch,” “Vintage “FitzPatrick Traveltalks” Short “Paris on Parade,” “Classic Cartoon “Symphony in Slang,” Theatrical Trailer, “S Wonderful: The Making of An American in Paris”, “American Masters Career Profile: Gene Kelly: Anatomy of a Dancer,” ““Love Walked In” Outtake Song Sequence,” and “Audio-Only Bonuses: Outtake Songs Gallery and Gene Kelly/Leslie Caron/Johnny Green Radio Promos”.





Gigi was released on Blu-Ray on March 31st, 2009.
Photo credit: Warner Brothers

If I had to pick one of the new WB classic movie musical release, it would easily be “An American in Paris,” but “Gigi” has its charms too and the HD special edition is just as remarkable.

1958’s “Gigi” was the end of an era, the last great MGM musical and the last great achievement of Arthur Freed’s reign as a legendary musical producer. “Gigi” closed the door on a golden age and won an amazing NINE Academy Awards on its way out the door. Memorable tunes from “Gigi” include “The Night They Invented Champagne,” “I Remember It Well,” and “Thank Heaven For Little Girls”.

“Gigi” is presented in 1080p High Definition with a 16x9 2.40:1 aspect ratio and accompanied by a Dolby Digital 5.1 track.

Special features on “Gigi” include a commentary by Historian Jeanine Basinger with Leslie Caron, “Vintage Short - “The Million Dollar Nickel”,” “Classic CinemaScope Cartoon “The Vanishing Duck”,” Theatrical Trailer, “Thank Heaven! The Making of Gigi”, and the entire 1949 Nonmusical First Screen Version of “Gigi”.

‘An American in Paris’ is released by Warner Brothers Home Entertainment and stars Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, Oscar Levant, Georges Guetary, and Nina Foch. It was written by Alan Jay Lerner and directed by Vincente Minnelli. It was released on March 31st, 2009. It is not rated.

‘Gigi’ is released by Warner Brothers Home Entertainment and stars Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jourdan, Hermione Gingold, Eva Gabor, Jacques Bergerac, and Isabel Jeans. It was written by Alan Jay Lerner and directed by Vincente Minnelli. It was released on March 31st, 2009. It is rated G.



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