



Urban Optiques “Movies at the Marquis” Viewing Guide

Tonight's Feature

My Fair Lady

Viewing Notes

Released in December 1964, **My Fair Lady** was a musical film adaptation of the **Lerner and Loewe** stage musical, *My Fair Lady*, based on the film adaptation of **George Bernard Shaw's** stage play *Pygmalion*. The ending and ballroom scene are actually from the 1938 film *Pygmalion*, rather than Shaw's original stage play.

The film, which starred **Audrey Hepburn** and **Rex Harrison** was nominated for **12 Oscars** and won eight, including **Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor** and **Best Costume Design**

This witty adaptation of the Broadway musical follows **Professor Henry Higgins (Rex Harrison)**, an arrogant, misogynistic professor of phonetics, who believes that the accent and tone of one's voice will determine their prospects in society.

To prove his point, Professor Higgins takes a bet from **Colonel Pickering (Stanley Holloway)** that he can transform unrefined, dirty Cockney flower girl **Eliza Doolittle (Audrey Hepburn)** into a lady, and fool everyone into thinking she really is one, too. He does, and thus young aristocrat **Freddy Eynsford-Hill** falls madly in love with her. But when Higgins takes all the credit and forgets to acknowledge her efforts, Eliza angrily leaves him for Freddy, and suddenly Higgins realizes he's grown accustomed to her face and can't really live without it.

The plot of the movie -- taking an unrefined person and transforming them into someone successful -- is actually a frequent Hollywood film theme. In fact, the 1983 movie **Trading Places**, featuring **Eddie Murphy**, utilizes a similar plot to *My Fair Lady*, where two rich men make a wager that they can take a street beggar and make him a successful businessman.

Andrews vs. Hepburn

Julie Andrews had been Harrison's stage partner, playing the part of Eliza on Broadway, but, despite lobbying from screenwriter Alan Jay Lerner, **Jack Warner**, president of Warner Brothers and

FAST FACTS

Year: 1964
Studio: Warner Bros.
Length: 170 minutes
Director: George Cukor
Screenplay: Alan Jay Lerner, George Bernard Shaw (Play)
Color: Technicolor
Original Sound Mix: 4-Track Stereo
Genre: Musical/Comedy
Actors: Audrey Hepburn, Rex Harrison, Stanley Holloway, Gladys Cooper
Awards: Won 8 Oscars including Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Costume Design and Best Sound. Won Golden Globe in 1965 for Best Motion Picture Musical/Comedy.

Budget: \$17,000,000
Gross Revenue: \$72,000,000

Movie Taglines:

- *The Loveliest motion picture of them all!*
- *The most lovely motion picture event of all!*
- *More Lovely Than Ever!*



Original Studio Movie Poster for *My Fair Lady*

the film's producer, insisted on having **Audrey Hepburn** for the film version since she was a box office star while Andrews was an untested screen presence. **Elizabeth Taylor** reportedly fought long and hard for the role as well.

Andrews' subsequent **Academy Award for Mary Poppins** — and the lack of a nomination for Hepburn (due to her being dubbed by Marni Nixon) — was seen by many as vindication for Julie Andrews, though both actresses denied that there was ever any animosity between them.

Three years later, true vindication for Andrews occurred when Jack Warner offered her the role of **Guinevere** in the film adaptation of the Lerner and Loewe musical **Camelot** (which she also originated to great acclaim on Broadway). Andrews, remembering how Jack Warner had initially rejected her while casting *My Fair Lady*, refused to appear in the film, as did **Richard Burton**, who played King Arthur, and **Robert Goulet**, who played Sir Lancelot. It's been speculated that the three actors' absences caused the film to flop so badly at the box office that it led to **Jack Warner being ousted from power**.

Order of Music

The order of the songs in the show was followed faithfully, except for *With A Little Bit of Luck*.

The song is listed as being the third musical number in the play; in the film it is the fourth. Onstage, the song is split into two parts sung in two different scenes. Part of the song is sung by Doolittle and his cronies just after Eliza gives him part of her earnings, immediately before she makes the decision to go to Higgins's house to ask for speech lessons. The second half of the song is sung by Doolittle just after he discovers that Eliza is now living with Higgins. In the film, the entire song is sung in one scene that takes place just after Higgins has sung *I'm An Ordinary Man*. Also, the final verse, "He does not have a Tuppence in his pockets", which is sung in the stage version by other men and women as chorus, was omitted in the film version, since according to Cukor, dragged the song too long, as well as having no room for the crowds to fit into the limited space of the scenery.

The **instrumental *Busker Sequence***, which opens the play immediately after the Overture, is the only musical number from the play omitted in the film version.

In addition, the song "*Get Me to the Church on Time*", the line of the second stanza: "Drug me or jail me/Stamp me or mail me", was omitted because Cukor feared that the censors would not accept the lines about being drugged or jailed, in a song about getting married.



Dubbing

Hepburn's singing was judged inadequate, and she was dubbed by **Marni Nixon** who sang all songs except "*Just You Wait*," where Hepburn's voice was left undubbed during the harsh-toned chorus of the song and Nixon sang the melodic bridge section.

Some of Hepburn's original vocal performances for the film were released in the 1990s, affording audiences an opportunity to judge whether the dubbing was necessary. Less well known is the dubbing of Jeremy Brett's songs (as Freddy) by Bill Shirley.

Rex Harrison declined to pre-record his musical numbers for the film, explaining that he had never talked his way through the songs the same way twice and thus couldn't convincingly lip-sync to a playback during filming (as musical stars had been doing in Hollywood since the dawn of talking pictures). In order to permit Harrison to sing his songs live during filming, the Warner Bros. Studio Sound Department, under the direction of George

Groves, **implanted a wireless microphone in Harrison's neckties, marking the first time in film history that one was used to record sound during filming.** André Previn then conducted the final version of the music to the voice recording. The sound department earned an Academy Award for its efforts.

Goofs

Watch for the following "goofs" during the movie:



- In almost the final scene, when Higgins goes to open the door with the key, **he inserts the key, but doesn't turn it** before opening the door.
- In the number "**With a Little Bit of Luck**", as Alfred Doolittle walks to the left side of the screen and sings, "They're always throwing goodness at you, but with a little bit o' luck a man can duck," the camera pans far enough to the left to **reveal the tracks of a modern rubber tire in the dirt**, probably made by the camera dolly or a mobile light stand.
- When Higgins first asks Eliza to recite the verse, "**In Hartford, Hereford...**" and he makes the mirror rotate, **you can see the camera and the crew at times as it is reflected in the mirror.**
- **In the final scene** when Henry Higgins sits on the chair as he listens to her voice on the phonograph, **Eliza's shadow can be clearly seen on the carpet behind him**, to his left (screen right). In the next shot she is shown entering the room.
- Where Professor Higgins says, "**She should be hung**" that **is in fact incorrect grammar** - the correct term for a person is "hanged".

My Fair Lady Trivia

- **Jack L. Warner originally didn't want Rex Harrison to reprise his stage role as Higgins for the film version**, since he had seen *Cleopatra* (1963) and thought the actor looked too old to be believable as Audrey Hepburn's love interest. **Peter O'Toole** was considered for the role of Professor Higgins, but his salary demands were too high. Harrison responded in a letter to Warner that he had only looked old as Julius Caesar because he had been playing an epileptic at the end of his life, and after sending some publicity photographs of himself - minus his toupee - he was eventually cast.
- When asked why he turned down the role of Henry Higgins, **Cary Grant** remarked that his original manner of speaking was much closer to Eliza Doolittle.

Love the Movie? You'll Also Love Our Specials at Urban Optiques!

Turn Your Eyeglasses into Sunglasses!

Free Transition Lenses

(\$109 retail value)

with any purchase of new or vintage frames.

Bring in this coupon to save!

(Offer valid until 1/30/2010)



www.urbanoptiques.com

Urban Optiques Vision & Eyewear
Dr. Michelle Calder Cardwell O.D.

105 MainCentre
Downtown Northville
Phone: 248-347-9090
www.twitter.com/urbanoptiques
Become a Fan on Facebook!

