

## **Footlight Parade (1933) Lloyd Bacon**

P Michell, 2014

Perhaps the first of the back stage musical genre ...

### **Warner Bros Studio & Lloyd Bacon / Busby Berkely:**

In this film there are two distinct directors – Bacon who did most of the film barring the musical numbers which were directed by Busby Berkeley (BB). Coming from Broadway and with a military background Berkeley went on to create a career in Hollywood almost unmatched for spectacle and innovation.

Arguably BB is one of the greatest artistic contributors to Hollywood from 1930 to mid 1950s.

Note the last three musical numbers run for almost 40 minutes. Estimated cost at the time \$10,000 / minute.

The Warner Bros production of both BB films and the gangster films have left a presence in movie history arguably unparalleled. The ensemble casting and crew that would be seen later in Casablanca (1942) is a direct result of the WB's work done earlier.

In 1931 WB moved to Burbank in the San Fernando Valley, where in isolation the studio had "a collective style - which was to be a major contribution to the development of American cinema. It was a style characterised at its best by fast-paced cutting, racy dialogue, naturalistic performances, a frankness towards sex, and scepticism towards authority in politics, business, law or culture." (Campbell – Warner Bros in the Thirties. Velvet Light Trap, June 1971)

### **New Book:**

[Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley \(Screen Classics](#)  
by [Jeffrey Spivak](#)

Characterized by grandiose song-and-dance numbers featuring ornate geometric patterns and mimicked in many modern films, Busby Berkeley's unique artistry is as recognizable and striking as ever. From his years on Broadway to the director's chair, Berkeley is notorious for his inventiveness and signature style. Through sensational films like 42nd Street (1933), Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933), Footlight Parade (1933), and Dames (1934), Berkeley sought to distract audiences from the troubles of the Great Depression. Although his bold technique is familiar to millions of moviegoers, Berkeley's life remains a mystery.

Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley is a telling portrait of the filmmaker who

revolutionized the musical and changed the world of choreography. Berkeley pioneered many conventions still in use today, including the famous "parade of faces" technique, which lends an identity to each anonymous performer in a close-up. Carefully arranging dancers in complex and beautiful formations, Berkeley captured perspectives never seen before.

Jeffrey Spivak's meticulous research magnifies the career and personal life of this beloved filmmaker. Employing personal letters, interviews, studio memoranda, and Berkeley's private memoirs, Spivak unveils the colorful life of one of cinema's greatest artists.

### **Significant contributors:**

Director - Lloyd Bacon

One of the workhorses in Warner Brothers' stable of directors including Curtiz and LeRoy. He directed 130 films but didn't have the career as loaded with classic films as many of his more famous contemporaries. What few "classics" he had his hand in ([42nd Street](#) (1933), [Footlight Parade](#) (1933)) are so overshadowed by the dazzling surrealistic choreography of [Busby Berkeley](#) that casual film buffs today often forget they were actually directed by Bacon. While his resume lacks the drama of failed productions and tales of an unbridled ego, he consistently enriched the studio's coffers, directing a handful of its biggest hits of the late 1920s and 1930s. Bacon's career amounts to that of a competent--and at times brilliant--director who did the best with the material handed to him in assembly-line fashion.

Trivia – worked with Mack Sennet as a gag writer. Navy theme in his films.

Frenetic worker - Cagney once remarked that the schedule on a picture was so tight that, one time after he and the cast had rehearsed a particular scene, Cagney said, "OK, Lloyd, are you ready to shoot?" Bacon grinned and said, "I just did!"

Dance Director – Busby Berkeley (1895 – 1976) –

Gene Kelly quote:

*"BB showed what could be done with a movie camera. He was the guy who tore away the proscenium arch. He tore it down for musicals ... Busby Berkeley did it. They would go five miles high and plunge down. They would go into an eye and open up on the streets of Broadway. He would turn pianos over into waterfalls and dames would be swimming in formation. The numbers weren't dance numbers. They were cinematic numbers. If anybody wants to learn what can be done with a camera they should study every shot BB ever made. He did it all. In the space of about five years he did every shot in the book."*

BB quotes:

*"What I wanted to do was create for the camera. The way-out musicals had never been tried. A lot of people used to believe I was crazy, but I can truthfully say*

*one thing: I gave' em a show. In those days we didn't wait for a NY show to become a hit before putting it on the screen. We were content to write original stories with original stories with original music scores and embellish them with unusually daring and spectacular musical numbers – and the audiences loved them. “*

*“In an era of breadlines, depression and wars, I tried to help people get away from all the misery ... to turn their minds to something else. I wanted to make people happy, if only for an hour.”*

After military service that included parade formations Berkeley started in NY theatre, brought out to Hollywood by Eddie Cantor to make his musical numbers. At Warner Bros and Gold Digger films. In 1932 WB made a loss of \$14.1 Million. Thanks to Berkeley and actors like James Cagney by 1935 they made a profit of \$750,000. Not a lot but the studio had been saved from bankruptcy. Then MGM for 'Babes' films with Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney in 1940s. Then in 1950s filmed the aquacades of Esther Williams. TV with Jackie Gleason show. In 1970 was back on Broadway with No No Nannette and Ruby Keeler. Figure head only as did not direct the musical numbers. He was passionate about the military and his grave gives this identification - “2 D Lt US Army. World War 1”

#### **42<sup>nd</sup> St – Broadway Musical:**

In 1980 the musical 42<sup>nd</sup> St **inspired** by the WB movie, but using Warren & Dubin's music selected from **all** the Berkeley WB musicals, opened with versatile Jerry Orbach. Was a huge hit ran for 3486 performances. Notable for opening night when cast took 11 curtain calls, then producer announced that Gower Champion (choreographer) had died that evening. It is often revived successfully. No wonder – fantastic songs and dancing.

#### **BB Legacy at WB:**

Warner Bros allowed him free reign for about three years.

Single camera – gives movement and fluid style. Liberates cinema when sound films had become moribund.

Developed Playback system for his numbers. Prerecording songs first. Now commonly used.

Highlighting individual dancer's face – personalises the dancer. Then highly innovative.

The 'blonde bomb-shell' female icon.

Sexual innuendo – he didn't invent this but got away with much more than most.

Overhead kaleidoscope shots of flowery patterns – of course

Larger than life dance numbers – often supposedly set in a theatre's proscenium arch (on stage).

Warner's numbers were often socially related – meshed well with the Berkeley and Warren & Dubin's numbers. Early realism;

Synchronised swimming invention – more than likely made this popular.

Carmen Miranda's unbelievable hat (not in Footlight Parade) in 'Girl with Tutti Fruti Hat' from 'Gangs All Here' (1943). Note bananas and strawberries in phallic presentations! Available on Youtube. Watch it!

Esther Williams aquatic feats- directed her later at MGM.

Judy Garland & Mickey Rooney films – BB directed most of their films at WB.

Army references – military marching

Long tracking shots / Elevated shots – special cages had to be built for camera

Designed girl's costumes

Total escapism – well suited for the Great Depression.

Enduring success of his numbers

Camerawork focused on dances' legs, groins, rears, breasts.

With Astaire / Rogers reinvigorated the movie musical form

Always wanted to 'top' himself. Name now part of the lexicon.

Interrupted musical number (sexual act) used for dramatic effect.

Use with [at WB] of Warren & Dubin's melodies artfully arranged by Ray Heindorf into up to eleven minutes of music for cinematic dances.

Legacy of W&D music with Bugs Bunny cartoons.

Rediscover in the mid 1960s by hippies and became a regular visitor to various universities including UCLA. His musicals were popular on TV here in the 1970s.

Many contemporary performers reference BB – from Miss Piggy (Muppets), 'Take That', 'Chemical Brothers', 'Bjork', 'Red Hot Chilli Peppers',

#### Cinematographer – George Barnes

Veteran cinematographer who began filming in 1918. Cinematographer for Hitchcock's Rebecca (1940) and Spellbound (1945). Worked at most of the studios. Seven marriages! Barnes' trademark soft-edged, deep-focus photography and intuitive composition and camera movement. Barnes was an expert at lighting. He often utilized curtains or reflective surfaces to create patterns of light and shade. Most importantly, he perfectly suited the required style of photography to each individual assignment. Greg Tolland was Barne's student.

Famous films – Jane Eyre (1943), then Goldigger films including Goldiggers of 1935, Meet John Doe (1941). Second last film was War of the Worlds (1953).

#### Art Direction – Anton Grot

Anton Grot was profoundly influenced by European modernism and expressionist art in both film and painting by the time he left Poland for the United States in 1909. Having studied illustration and design at Cracow and Koenigsberg, majoring in interior decoration, he was quick to embrace the burgeoning art deco movement and the low key, stylised design prevalent in early German cinema.

In 1927 joined First National later absorbed into Warner Brothers, Grot was appointed Head of the Art Department and held that position until his retirement in 1948.

While his work contributed to the gritty, realistic look typical of Warner Brothers films during this period, Grot was adaptable enough to handle glamorous subjects and musicals – Goldiggers Series.

Music – Warren & Dubin, Fain, Kahal

Significant contributions from Warren & Dubin.

Warren and Dubin are particularly remembered for writing scores for the films of [Busby Berkeley](#); they worked together on 18 films and 60 songs! The "up-tempo songs are as memorable as Berkeley's choreography, as [sic] for the same reason: they capture, in a few snazzy notes, the vigorous frivolity of the Jazz Age."<sup>[11]</sup> The 1980 stage musical [42nd Street](#) showcases his popular songs from these films. Harry Warren wrote over 800 songs between 1918 and 1981, publishing over 500 of them.

According to [Wilfrid Sheed](#), quoted in *Time Magazine*, "By silent consensus, the king of this army of unknown soldiers, the Hollywood incognitos, was Harry Warren, who had more songs on the Hit Parade than (Irving) Berlin himself and who would win the contest hands down if enough people have heard of him." William Zinsser noted, "The familiarity of Harry Warren's songs is matched by the anonymity of the man... he is the invisible man, his career a prime example of the oblivion that cloaked so many writers who cranked out good songs for bad movies."

Harry Warren quote – "Out here in Hollywood, a songwriter was always the lowest form of animal life."

Ray Heindorf – musical arranger. Later would become WB orchestra leader – worked often with black jazz musicians in his orchestras. Friend with Art Tatum and played together. Wrote – "Some Sunday Morning", "Sugarfoot", "Hollywood Canteen", "I'm in a Jam", "Some Sunny Day", "Pete Kelly's Blues", and "Melancholy Rhapsody". Scored Danny Kaye TV series and Wonder Man. Other movies included Giant and East of Eden, the Music Man (1962). Scored MGM's 'Hollywood Revue of 1929', Pajama Game, Them. Streetcar Named Desire (with Alex North). Worked at WB for almost 40 years. WB refused to let him use 'Musical Director'.

### 1933 Events

Jan – Darryl F Zanuck founds 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox – leaves Warner Bros.

Jan – David O Selznick (left RKO) hired to produce films for Louis B Mayer at MGM

Jan – RKO declared bankrupt – but recovers.

Jan – recently opened Radio City Music Hall in NY.

March – Studios must obey production code.

June – Death of Fatty Arbuckle.

June – Chaplin axes original negative of Chekhov's 'Sea Gull' (1926).

September – British Institute of Film opens (BFI).

September – Grierson promotes documentary films.

December – Mass exodus of German (predominately Jewish) film makers.

Films – 42<sup>nd</sup> St, Dames, She Done Him Wrong (West & Grant), King Kong, Cavalcade, Duck Soup (Marx Bros), Design for Living, State Fair, Wolf Dog (with Rin Tin Tin Jr!), Dancing Lady (introduces Fred Astaire), Zero de Conduit (Vigo), Testament of Dr Mabuse (Lang), Ecstasy (with 10 minute bathing nude scene), Lady for a Day (Capra). Bitter Tea of General Yen (Capra), Frisco Jenny (Wellman), The Bowry (Walsh), Our Betters (Cukor), Private Life of Henry VIII (Korda – UK).

**Trivia:**

In 1932 Daryl F Zanuck was producer at WB and asked Berkeley to come over. At the same time the song writers Harry Warren & Al Dubin came to. After 42<sup>nd</sup> St success all signed to 7 year contracts.

In 1933 when this film was released cost of cinema entrance was US 10c. (In the film marquees advertise 40c.) This was the cost of a loaf of bread. Berkeley's numbers cost at the time \$10,000 / minute.

Berkeley brought to Hollywood by Eddie Cantor who only wanted Berkeley to direct his numbers.

Cagney – “Once a song and dance man, always a song and dance man. Those few words tell as much about me professionally as there is to tell.”  
Salary around US\$3000 / week in 1933.

Cagney and best friends Frank McHugh & Pat O'Brien, were known collectively and affectionately as the 'Irish Mafia' and would often be seen out together around Hollywood nightclubs having a quiet drink and a chat. Other members of this close knit social group included actors Lynne Overman, Ralph Bellamy, Frank Morgan, Bert Lahr, Allen Jenkins and Spencer Tracy.

Appearance - Screen debut of Dorothy Lamour – find her!

Appearance - Billy Barty – who plays the dwarf – founded Little People of America. No one over 4' 10" could hold office.

Appearance - Herman Bing (Fralick) brother of the famous Rudolph Bing of NY (Metropolitan) Opera.

Busby Berkeley (drugstore clerk)

Appearance - Hugh Herbert – (Bowers) shy, stammering trademark. Also fingers fluttering together with “woo-woo” exclamation. The latter became the inspiration for Daffy Duck cartoon character. Extremely prolific actor in 1930s and 1940s Warner Bros films. Wrote over 150 plays!

Appearance - Joan Blondell (Nan) - Made six movies with [James Cagney](#) at Warner Brothers - more than any other individual actress. Cagney said that the only woman he loved other than his wife was Blondell. [on her husbands] - “[George] Barnes provided my first real home, [Dick] Powell was my security man, and [Michael] Todd was my passion. But I loved them all.”

In 1927, while closing the library she (Blondell) worked at, she was raped by a police officer. He told her he would kill her if she told anyone. She kept her silence for decades, until finally telling her grown daughter. She went public with this in her memoirs.

Ruby Keeler – (Bea) – Wife of Al Jolson – [on her stardom in the 1930s] Warner Bros. musicals] It's really amazing. I couldn't act. I had that terrible singing voice, and now I can see I wasn't the greatest tap dancer in the world, either. Dancing in speakeasies was a job, and none of us knew for sure who were gangsters. No one told us, so how could we know? My mother used to come and take me home. We thought nothing of walking home together at two in the morning. How different New York was then!

Note the wonderful character actors from the WB Stock Co – [Frank McHugh](#) (Francis) close friend with Cagney (as was Pat O'Brien) – made 11 movies with him) and [Guy Kibbee](#) (Gould). [Ruth Donnelly](#), [Claire Dodd](#)

Production numbers history – based on [Fanchon and Marco](#) musical numbers. Brother and sister producing team – “the standard by which stage shows are judged”. Active between 1920s – 1940s.

Talk given by American Cinematheque THIS YEAR at Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood followed by Footlight Parade!

<http://www.americancinemathequecalendar.com/content/“theatrical-pioneers-of-the-art-deco-era-fanchon-and-marco”-footlight-parade>

### **Reviews:**

[Cagney Struts His Stuff In Busby Berkley Spectacular](#)

[Ron Oliver \(revilorest@juno.com\)](mailto:revilorest@juno.com)

28 March 2000

The energetic young producer of theatrical prologues (those staged performances, usually musical, that often proceeded the movie in the larger cinemas in bygone days) must deal with crooked competition, fraudulent partners, unfaithful lovers & amateur talent to realize his dream of making his mark on the FOOTLIGHT PARADE.

While closely resembling other Warner's musical spectaculars, notably the GOLDDIGGER films, this movie had a special attraction none of the others had: Jimmy Cagney. He is a wonder, loose-jointed and lithe, as agile as any tomcat - a creature he actually mimics a few times during the movie. Cagney grabs the viewers attention & never lets go, powering the rapid-fire dialogue and corny plot with his charisma & buoyant charm.

The rest of the cast gives their best, as well. Joan Blondell is perfect as the smart-mouthed, big-hearted blonde secretary, infatuated with Cagney (major quibble - why wasn't she given a musical number?). Dick Powell & Ruby Keeler once again play lovers onstage & off; the fact that her singing & acting abilities are a bit on the lean side are compensated for by her dancing ; Powell still exudes boyish enthusiasm in his unaccustomed position as second male lead.

Guy Kibbee & Hugh Herbert are lots of fun as brothers-in-law, both scheming to cheat Cagney in different ways. Ruth Donnelly scores as Kibbee's wealthy wife, a woman devoted to her handsome protégés. Frank McHugh's harried choreographer is an apt foil for Cagney's wit. Herman Bing is hilarious in his one tiny scene as a music arranger. Mavens will spot little Billy Barty, Jimmy Conlin & maybe even John Garfield during the musical numbers.

Finally, there's Busby Berkeley, choreographer nonpareil. His terpsichorean confections, sprinkled throughout the decade of the 1930's, were a supreme example of the cinematic escapism that Depression audiences wanted to enjoy. The big joke about Berkeley's creations, of course, was that they were meant, as part of the plot, to be stage productions. But no theater could ever hold these products of the master's imagination. They are perfect illustrations of the type of entertainment only made possible by the movie camera.

Berkeley's musical offerings generally took one of two different approaches, either a story (often rather bizarre) told with song & dance; or else stunning geometrically designed numbers, eye candy, featuring plentiful chorus girls, overhead camerawork & a romantic tune. In a spasm of outré extravagance, FOOTLIGHT PARADE climaxes with three Berkeley masterworks: 'Honeymoon Hotel' and its pre-Production Code telling of a couple's wedding night; 'By A Waterfall' - dozens of unclad females, splashing, floating & diving in perfect patterns & designs (peer closely & you'll see how the synchronous effects were achieved); and finally, 'Shanghai Lil' - a fitting tribute to the talents of both Cagney & Berkeley.

**From Pre (production)-code.com:**

<http://pre-code.com/pre-code-follies-footlight-parade-1933/>



## Major Musical Numbers:

There are a lot of words that can describe *Footlight Parade*, but I'll go ahead and name the most important one: grandiose. This is a movie that was made with the full backing of the studio, sparing absolutely no expense on it, which makes it a wonder to behold.

It's impossible to discuss the film without going into its three climactic musical numbers, each spectacular in their own way. Since I have nothing but time, and, dammit, these things are worth talking about, let's talk about them!

### "Honeymoon Hotel"

The first (and my favorite of the three) musical numbers is a risqué, upbeat piece of music about a couple who are desperately trying to fornicate. They make an appointment to wed at the Honeymoon Hotel, a location filled with giggling phone operators and dumb hotel detectives, as well as a bevy of young brides enshrined in lingerie.

This is the least subtle of the three pieces, with double entendres and eyebrow raising blanketing the screen. Like a lot of the other numbers in the film, it's heightened reality – whenever Berkeley pulls back enough for us to see the actual stage space, it's of impossible proportions, where, from a member of the film's audience, it would be completely uninteresting.

But since Bacon and Berkeley are making a film instead, we're put in the middle of the action. I do find this interesting; there's the character of a theater owner who is watching all of these numbers, and after the first two both times comments that they were 'okay.' As a member of the film audience, it's a gag. From the film's perspective, since these numbers are so grand they lose any sense of intimacy, he may be right!

The music in and of itself for this number can be grating– take a shot every time they say "Honeymoon Hotel"!– but it's so upbeat it's hard to fault. Keeler and Powell run into a fair share of troubles as they try to conjugate, from parents arriving to a misunderstanding that nearly sinks the whole thing, but it tellingly ends with the two spooning in bed and the camera panning over to a magazine that flips open to a picture of a giggling toddler.

Subtle? No.

Also notable about this number is a young **Billy Barty** showing up as one of Keeler's younger brothers. Barty was nine years old when this was filmed, but plays a child who acts a bit younger, as he eagerly ditches his family and joins with all of the other John Smiths at the hotel in their pursuit of lingerie clad women. Barty would later pop up in *Gold Diggers of 1933* playing a similarly horny tyke, a kid who represents an unyielding sense of an impish id.

### “By a Waterfall”

Luckily, this one is on Youtube for me to prove I’m not making any of this up. Sorry for the low quality (the DVD is infinitely better), but [clicking here](#) (Paul – this link may not work) will give you an idea what I mean when I say ‘absolutely insane’.

Of the three numbers, “By a Waterfall” is easily the craziest. The entire number gives of a heavy “Garden of Eden” vibe, with Dick Powell sits by a brook and daydreams of his sweetheart, Ruby Keeler. Unfortunately for him, he nods off, and his imagination takes over. What was at first a rather ornate garden becomes a waterfall and lagoon, filled to the brim with cooing women in their most come-hither manner.

The waterfall becomes more and more elaborate, becoming an art deco swimming pool and eventually a spiral fountain of women as pictured at the top of this article. At this climax, Powell reawakens to find Keeler’s beautiful smile and they canoodle.

For anyone attempting to open a window into why Berkeley’s choreography is oftentimes considered so profound and over-the-top, this number can work as an instructional guide. The nymphs of this piece, often inserting themselves into various formations that seem more and more dirty the more you think about it.

One of his pet shots– the parade of smiling women– crops up here. Berkeley uses this shot to confront the audience with an abundance of feminine glee. They’re rarely smiles of any type but those of joy, love, and, occasionally, seduction.

The women’s voices throughout the entire number function in the same manner, soft and comely. It’s obvious that this number is meant to titillate but is just elaborate enough to make that seem almost subtle in comparison to its surroundings. That spiral fountain at the end, though, may cross the line; the women on their knees at the base of it is a nice but overt touch to suggesting worship of the male member.

Still, innocent of what it’s most certainly getting at, it’s still an impressive number.

### “Shanghai Lil”

The third and last number finally sees James Cagney getting to try out his dancing chops. You can see half this number in depressingly bad quality [over on YouTube](#).

So if the first number is about two people going along with society’s desire for marriage to get laid, and the second about the male libido unleashed, “Shanghai Lil” is a little more conventional than either: a sailor becomes a man because his love for a prostitute makes her respectable.

Mind you, the man's ability to tame the legendary Shanghai Lil certainly helps him regain his own masculinity. The idea of a man's own sense of himself being determined by the woman he's with is a theme that plays a lot into romantic comedies, and mirrors the real relationship between Kent/Nan that drives most of the plot.

But of course, Shanghai Lil is a different beast than Nan. For all you need to know about her, Marlene Dietrich played her in a film called *Shanghai Express*, noting, "It took more than one man to change my name to Shanghai Lily." Here, we have a bar full of patrons either despising or desiring her, with men of all races and creeds (including a Jewish colonialist (*see the comments below*)) drooling for the woman.

Cagney's sailor through the piece starts off in a suit and finally earns back his navy blues after he discovers Lil and convinces her to be his one and only. They dance to this news (like they'd do anything else) when roll is called for the naval ships preparing to leave Shanghai. They don sailor clothes and go through a patriotic dance number which involves a contingent of men forming the American flag and Franklyn Roosevelt's face.

This is not quite propaganda, but an exclamation of faith. Roosevelt's election was seen as a godsend after Herbert Hoover's vaulted plan of economic recovery of "I'm sure things will work themselves out" failed to inspire anyone. Roosevelt captured the imagination, and this film is all-too-happy to exploit that for its final uplifting song and dance number, which, subtly, is about a man with problems out of a job, who regains it once he proves his worth.

The number ends with Cagney and Keeler getting ready to board an American warship, and Cagney using an animated flipbook (again, probably not very helpful if this were the audience at a play). His transformation is complete: he's a real man again.

### The Moral of the Story ...

This is the third big number backed by Berkeley's choreography in a number of years, with the other two being *42nd Street* and *The Gold Diggers of 1933*. All three films are filled with lovely ladies, good music, amazing numbers and, most importantly, social commentary.

Okay, maybe not 'most importantly'. Regardless, each is a fantastic snapshot into the ideas that drove the early 30's. The villains of *Footlight Parade* in particular are easy marks for the common criminal of the 30's: cheating business men getting rich off the hard tireless work of one man. Even more to the point, Kent never investigates the fraud though it seems obvious to him, as he'd rather go about his hectic daily life than confront them.

The other issues that his bosses represent– ineffectiveness at confronting the rival studios and freeloading relatives– are also common tropes from the early 30's. Big business is ugly, and the person with the work ethic and spirit is being taken advantage of. I guess the nice thing about the way the film plays this is that it isn't even Kent who comes out and confronts them with their fraud, as Nan beats him to it.

This enrages him until he finally realizes why she did what she had to do, and realizes that he loves his work too much to cede it to a crew of incompetents. He fights for his job, secure in the knowledge that he'll be now the one making the decisions and the money which he can use to expand and grow rather than line his own pockets.

This touches on the other underlying theme, which is underlined by the film's huge cast and large scale. The whole thrust of the film, with all of the dancers, directors and musicians working together to create this elaborate set pieces is very telling of the spirit the country was heading toward. "We're in this mess together," the film says. "And together we'll get out of it."

So the film's humor is blue, its themes are red, and its color palette is half white. Coincidence? Yeah, probably, but the bones that hold together *Footlight Parade* are incontrovertibly those of the 30's ideal America, which make it just as interesting to analyze as enjoy.