

The real summer blockbuster of the season

 By Johann M. Smith

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You can't help but feel that choreographer Andrew Wright and director Jonathan Church have started a cult movement with [Singin' In The Rain](#). One of Cape Town's 2015 to 2016 summer memories will no doubt be little yellow umbrellas and a huge billboard overlooking the V&A Waterfront bay like a morning sun. Not to mention that the Galileo Open Air Cinema, it would seem, has caught the tan.

Let it be known that Andrew and Jonathan did it first at [Artscape](#). They certainly saved the best for last, having made a splash at (as the press release so eloquently describes) Auckland, Singapore, Manila, Hong Kong, and the West End, snatching four Olivier Award nominations.

The talent and wit of the proudly South African team have made the best of America come to life.

Comparing it to the movie would be unfair, but the look and feel is uncannily close to classic musical cinema. Like 1952 - the year *Singin' In The Rain* was soaked up by fans worldwide - the play's aesthetic is as American and sweet as apple pie.



Grant Almirall as Don Lockwood - image by Hagen Hopkins

Silent era of movie making

For those unfamiliar with the plot, the story delves into the sheik-and-flapper silent era of movie making and follows a concerned film star Don Lockwood (Grant Almirall) who according to the tabloids is in relationship with co-star Lina Lamont (Taryn-Lee Hudson) - a certain yappy duck-voiced blond bombshell, who threatens everyone's careers (including the studio's) with the advent of talking movies. Until the new young thing arrives in the shape of Kathy Selden (Bethany Dickson).

Together with his friend Cosmo Brown (Steven van Wyk), Don orchestrates a plan to use Kathy's voice over Lina's. Hilarity and magic ensue.

American journalist and film critic Anthony Oliver Scott once said what makes *Singin' In The Rain* great is not that it's bigger than the sum of its parts, it is the sum of its parts.

From the title song, to the heart-warming Good Morning and upbeat wacky Moses Supposes, the musical performances are made up of one show stopper after the next, eternal ear worms you happily have tattooed on your brain. The energy is engrossing, grand and very Hollywood - and in this case, it's everything you could ask for.

The 12,000 litres of water used (don't worry, it's all recycled) and engineering powers of Simon Higlett and Tim Mitchell no doubt came in handy.

High praise

If Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds set the yardstick, Grant, Steven and Bethany of this rendition came close to touching it. Praise doesn't get much higher than that.

Special mention goes to Taryn whose Lina was acted out down to a tee - from vexing high-pitch yelps to clumsy comic charms, to singing (the best part). Bravo.

And much to the envy of the modern young man, the legs of Cyd Charisse will never be born again, but Mila De Biaggi made a fine minx and the double applause she received said everything the harsh critic would ever need to know.

Overall, Pieter Toerien has brought us something irresistibly good, 1950s' wow moments in a time when America couldn't look more un-golden.

Singin' In The Rain runs till the 10 January 2016 at the Artscape Opera House. To book tickets go to [Computicket](#).

ABOUT JOHANN M. SMITH

Johann MSmith is a music journalist turned content hacker. Known as the IDMMAG launch designer, Johann specialises in entertainment, travel and social commentary. Or as he puts it: "I speak as and for companies through social and design."

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