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### Astaire & Rogers Collection, Vol. 1 (Top Hat / Swing Time / Follow the Fleet / Shall We Dance / The Barkleys of Broadway)

Rated NR » Grade: A

by Michael C. Sherrin  
 EDGE Entertainment Contributor  
 Tuesday Aug 16, 2005



They just look so cool. Sixty years later, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers project the timeless style and grace unmatched by any celebrity couple. Though they did date for a short time, the two made ten movies together over a fifteen year period with historic success. The films had an obvious template where Astaire would win Rogers' heart by a

series of dance moves amid a myriad of misunderstandings backed by classic songs from Irving Berlin and George and Ira Gershwin.

**The Astaire and Rogers Collection Volume 1** brings an assortment of classic films to DVD for the first time. "Swing Time," the best film to come from Astaire and Rogers' tapping feet, features some of the most memorable dancing moments from the fantastically energetic "Pick Yourself Up" to Astaire's first meeting with special effects in "Bojangles of Harlem" where he projected silos of himself dancing on a scrim behind him. The other films include "Top Hat" with Irving Berlin's "Dancing Queen to Cheek," "Shall We Dance" with George and Ira Gershwin's "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "They Can't Take that Away From Me," "Follow the Fleet" and their final collaboration, "The Barkleys of Broadway," which feels just as new and lively as their first (Top Hat in 1935 for you trivia buffs).

Beyond of the phenomenal dancing and unmatched chemistry, Astaire and Rogers show how magical movies can be. Few can imitate the tenacity of Astaire's commitment to rehearsal, demanding perfection from himself and Rogers. He wanted every dance to be filmed in one take with one camera to prove to the audience the dance happened right in front of them. Astaire refused to allow close ups on the dancers faces, not wanting the audience to miss any of the actual dancing bodies.

For their "Never Gonna Dance" number in "Swing Time," Astaire and Rogers took almost 50 takes before perfection. The rehearsals took so long, Rogers' feet bled from the effort. While not the creator Astaire was, Rogers was every bit the performer. As she put it "I did everything Fred did – backwards, and in heels."

Astaire and Rogers radiated style from his white tie and tails to her flowing cape and golden hair. Astaire crafted every dance with choreographer Hermes Pan creating physically feats with effortless grace. He and Rogers epitomize the dancing duo not seen again.

### Special Features

From enlightening commentaries to Merry Melodies cartoons, this box set literally has all you could want and more. Three films come with distinctly different commentary from film historian Larry Billman, songwriter Hugh Martin and Astaire's daughter. Documentaries provide additional insight, breaking down Astaire's meticulous choreography and explaining the duo's incredible success. A variety of musical shorts add to the fun, including a cameo from Bob Hope. Cartoons from

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Munich	A+
Brokeback Mountain	A+
Pride & Prejudice	A+
Match Point	A
Syriana	A
The Producers	A
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	A
The Passenger	A
Capote	A
King Kong	A-
Sarah Silverman:	
Jesus is Magic	A-
Rent	A-
Hostel	B+
Wolf Creek	B+
Breakfast On Pluto	B+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	B+
Good Night, And Good Luck	B+
Memoirs of a Geisha	B
Rumor Has It	B-
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Merry Melodies add some unique humor, though a documentary on the teams influence would be appreciated.

Nevertheless, these extras elaborate on the dance team's sensational run, showing how their influence affecting musical theater, fashion and nighttime activities. And these films are guaranteed to make you want to dance again.

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