

Singin' in the Rain Film Summary

Singin' in the Rain by Stanley Donen

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Context

Singin' in the Rain is one of the cheeriest, happiest films of the classic musical era. In the film, Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont are the two most famous Hollywood stars during the silent film era. Their premieres are the talk of the town, and Don gets mobbed if women see him on the street. This is exactly what happens one night when he jumps in the car with a stranger, Kathy Selden. The two have a hilarious conversation in which she refuses to give him the adoration he wants.

At an after-party, the head of Monumental Studios shows everyone a hilarious video of a man trying to convince him to buy into the idea of talking pictures. After another studio uses the technology and the public demands more, we watch the transition from silent films to 'talkies'.

Don and Kathy finally get together and begin to fall in love. When Lina's voice destroys all hope for the success of the new talking film, Kathy offers to use her lovely voice to mask Lina's. Finally, Kathy is awarded the praise she deserves for her work, and we watch while Don and Kathy's love grows. The film is filled with sweet and hilarious song and dance numbers that keep the audience dancing in their seats.

Because of Arthur Freed and Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen was able to work on three wonderful musicals: *On the Town* (1949), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), and *Love is Better than Ever* (1952). Donen also directed musicals such as *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949), *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), *Funny Face* (1957), *The Grass is Greener* (1960), *Charade* (1963), *Two For the Road* (1967), and *The Little Prince* (1974).

Gene Kelly not only directed the film but also has the lead role. Gene Kelly began as a star on Broadway and came to Hollywood after acting in the hit show *Pal Joey*. After starring in *Me and My Gal* with Judy Garland in 1942, Kelly chose to stay and use his creative powers in Hollywood. Kelly also appeared in *Pilot #5* (1943), *DuBarry Was a Lady* (1943), *Cover Girl* (1944), *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), *The Three Musketeers* (1948), *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949), *On the Town* (1949), and *An American in Paris* (1951); he also helped directed the latter two films. Kelly also directed *The Tunnel of Love* (1958) and *Hello, Dolly!* (1969).

Donald O'Connor plays the role of Cosmo Brown, Don's best friend. This is O'Connor's best known musical role, but he appeared in dozens of films in other genres. O'Connor is well-known for his role in the *Francis the Talking Mule* series. O'Connor also appeared in *Call Me Madam* (1953), *There's No Business Like Show Business* (1954), and *Anything Goes* (1956).

Debbie Reynolds is the final person of the trio in *Singin' in the Rain*. This film was her first major role and won her the love of audiences. Reynolds also appeared in *I Love Melvin* (1953), *The Tender Trap* (1955), *Bundle of Joy* (1956), *Tammy and the Bachelor*

(1957), *The Rat Race* (1960), *How the West Was Won* (1962), and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (1964), for which she was nominated for an Oscar.

Although *Singin' in the Rain* was loved by audiences, it received few awards and nominations. The movie did, however, get nominated for two Oscars - Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Jean Hagen and Best Music, Scoring of a Musical Picture for Lennie Hayton, and was nominated for two Golden Globes, Best Motion Picture - Musical/Comedy and Best Motion Picture Actor - Musical/Comedy for Donald O'Connor, which he won.

Summary and Analysis

When *Singin' in the Rain* begins, we see a Don Lockwood/Lina Lamont premiere while celebrities arrive. Lockwood and Lamont arrive, and the crowds go crazy; they are the most popular pair in Hollywood. Don gives credit to his friend, Cosmo Brown, who helped him start his career.

Don tells the crowd that his motto is "Dignity, always dignity." While he tells the story of his and Cosmo's career that makes them sound well-bred and loved, we see the true story on screen: two kids who worked their way up throw terrible vaudeville acts. After getting stranded in California, they finally get a job at Monumental Pictures. Don actually gets his big break as stunt man before being picked by R.F. Simpson, the head of the studio, to star in a picture with Lina Lamont. Don and Lina's relationship has always been rocky, but the studio continues to keep people believing that they are romantically involved.

Don makes the speech for the team, and Lina becomes extremely angry. However, Lina's voice is extremely high and irritating, so publicity doesn't want her to talk. Lina asks Don to stand up for her, and he explains that she can't believe the rumors of their relationship in the fan magazine. Lina refuses to accept the truth. After leaving the successful premiere of the silent film, Cosmo's car breaks down, and Don is mobbed by a group of desperate, female fans.

Don runs away and jumps into a car with a high-strung woman who accuses him of being a criminal, since she recognizes him. When she pulls over to tell a police officer, the officer recognizes Don. The woman agrees to drive Don to Beverly Hills, and she introduces herself as Kathy Selden. Don then plays his 'tragedy' for all it's worth, while he puts the moves on her. Kathy is annoyed by him and says that she saw one of his pictures once, and she believes that if "you've seen one, you've seen them all." They get into an argument when she pulls up at his house.

After dropping him off, Kathy goes to R.F.'s house for a show. Don arrives, and R.F. shows a video of a man who is demonstrating a talking picture, which R.F. thinks is crazy. After everyone has a good laugh, Kathy and the other dancers come out to perform. When Don recognizes her at the party, he begins to taunt her, since she went on and on about being a 'real' actor on the stage. Kathy gets angry, throws a pie at him, misses, and hits Lina in the face instead. Don tries to follow Kathy, but she has already run away.

Three weeks later, *The Jazz Singer*, the first talking picture by another studio, has received rave reviews. Don is also still looking for Kathy after she was fired from her job. Cosmo tries to cheer him by doing a hysterical song and dance number about never giving up and making people laugh. Then, Don begins preparing for his new film when Lina asks him to worry about her more than Kathy, because Lina made sure that Kathy quit her job. Don tries to romance Lina in the film while he really tells her how he hates her. Then, R.F. bursts in, tells them to stop taping, informing everyone that this will

become a talking film. Everyone becomes concerned, however, when Lina opens her mouth and her terrible voice is heard.

After the announcement, we see newspapers hailing talking pictures as the newest sensation in Hollywood. Then, a montage of scenes from the new talking pictures are shown. While Cosmo watches one group tape, he recognizes Kathy as an extra and hurries to find Don. R.F. talks to Kathy, and he is very pleased with her and wants to put her in Zelda's picture.

When Don and Kathy talk later, Kathy reveals that she has read the fan magazines and has watched all Don's films. Kathy apologizes for her words that night, but Don admits he deserved them and that he hasn't been able to think of anything but her since. Don realizes how he feels, but he takes Kathy onto a sound stage so that he can set the right mood to tell her that he loves her. Don begins to serenade her, and they dance together.

The newspaper reappears and we learn that diction coaches are making a fortune. A coach tries to work with Lina, but to no avail; Lina cannot seem to say anything correctly. On the other hand, Don does well, and he and Cosmo harass the coach and perform a short musical number.

On the set, everything has been set up for sound. They go through many hassles, however, since Lina cannot seem to talk into the microphone. They move it to her chest from a nearby bush, but it picks up her heartbeat. Then, they move it higher on her shoulder, but there are still many problems.

The day of the sneak preview arrives, and Don and Kathy cannot go in together, because of Lina. The film is a flop, however, because the sound is terrible. Lina's voice is atrocious and small sounds, such as her pearls, are picked up loudly. The sound also gets off track at one moment and a hilarious scene ensues in which Lina says yes to a man who attacks her in his voice while he says no in hers. The stars and R.F. hide their faces outside the theater afterwards, and Don goes home, downhearted.

At the house, the rain pours down, and Cosmo and Kathy try to reassure Don. They make fun of Lina, and they refuse to let Don quit. Cosmo tells Don that he can go back to vaudeville, and Don says that he should have made a musical. They suggest that he turn *The Dueling Cavalier* into a musical. Then, they realize that Lina is involved. It's 1:30 in the morning, and they begin to sing one of the best songs from this musical, *Good Mawnin' to You*.

After they finish their song, they remember Lina. Cosmo then shows Don that they could do something similar to what happened that night at the theater. They could use Kathy's voice to cover Lina's. Don doesn't want to do it, but Kathy reassures him that it will only be for this film and will not ruin her career. Don and Kathy say goodnight, and Don dances in the street as he begins *Singin' in the Rain*.

They go to R.F. the next morning, and they decide to keep everything quiet so that Lina doesn't know. They change the title to *The Dancing Cavalier*. Cosmo then comes up

with the idea that a young man is going to Broadway and then after being hit in the head with a sandbag while reading *A Tale of Two Cities*, the young man goes back to the time of the French Revolution that was first *The Dueling Cavalier*. Kathy tapes over Lina's voice, and they are happy with the film. R.F. decides to give Kathy a big buildup after the film is released. After R.F. asks about the rest of the film, we see Don performing in the section where the young man first comes to Broadway. R.F. sends them off to finish the film.

Unfortunately, Lina finds out about the plan. She sends a bunch of fake quotes to all the newspapers, and when the publicity department confronts R.F., Lina walks in and tells them what's going on. Lina informs him that she is in charge of her own publicity, and she plans to keep Kathy as her voice as long as Kathy has a contract, for at least the next five years. Lina threatens to sue him for the whole studio.

The premiere is a huge success, and everyone raves over Lina's voice and dancing. Backstage, Lina informs them that Kathy will keep singing for Lina, and R.F. admits that he isn't sure what to do. Kathy tries to refuse, but she is under contract. When they go out to take a bow, though, Lina wants to make a speech. Don and the others decide to let her, and everyone in the crowd is shocked by her voice. Everyone asks her to sing, and the guys create a plan. They force Kathy to sing for her behind the curtain, and because of this, she tells Don that she never wants to see him again.

After listening to Kathy's direction about the song through the curtain, Lina lets the orchestra begin. When Kathy begins singing and Lina begins performing, the men begin to laugh. After she sings for a few minutes, the men pull the curtain open, and the crowd begins laughing hysterically when they realize that Kathy is the real voice. Cosmo even goes to the microphone to embarrass Lina. Kathy is upset and tries to run away, but Don makes the crowd stop her and introduces her to everyone. Don then begins singing a love song to Kathy while she smiles and cries. Kathy goes to him and they begin a beautiful duet. The viewer then sees their profiles on a *Singin' in the Rain* billboard while they stand in front of it, embracing.

Characters

Don Lockwood, played by Gene Kelly

Description

Don Lockwood is the biggest movie star of his time. Don's partnership in films with Lina Lamont skyrocketed him to fame after a rough past. Growing up, Don and his friend Cosmo were constantly getting into trouble. They tried to make money by entertaining people from the time they were young children.

After going out to Hollywood, Don and Cosmo were finally able to get a job at Monumental Studios. When Don offered to work as a stuntman on one of the sets, he was quickly given the job. After R.F. sees Don's work, he makes him the new 'big thing' at Monumental.

Don and Lina have a difficult relationship. Don can't stand her, but Lina reads the fan magazines and begins to think they are romantically involved. When Don meets Kathy, Lina is terribly jealous. Finally, Don finds Kathy again, and she gets a great job at the studio.

When Don's new talking film is in trouble, Kathy offers to be Lina's voice and saves the show. Don and Kathy get into a bit of a spat at the premiere, but Don is able to win her over, after being sure she gets the praise she deserves.

Analysis

When we first meet Don, he is a spoiled, arrogant movie star. Don is willing to create stories about his past, so that he doesn't have to admit the truth about his humble upbringing. Don's acting does not seem to be anything wonderful, but fans adore him. All his fame has gone to his head.

When Don meets Kathy, she decides to break him down a notch. Kathy tells him exactly what she thinks of his acting, although she has actually seen all his films. Because she is the one girl who won't fall for him, Don quickly falls for her. After she is fired from her job, he spends weeks searching for her.

Don finally finds Kathy again, and he is a more humble man. Don begins to think about what is best for her, rather than thinking only of himself. In the end, he risks her anger so that he can be sure she receives the credit and fame she deserves. Kathy's presence in his life has helped him to make a complete 180 degree turn.

Kathy Selden, played by Debbie Reynolds

Description

Kathy Selden is a young actress who aspires to perform in great works on the stage. Kathy has come to Hollywood to find her dream, but she is still struggling to make it. When Kathy meets Don, she assumes he is a murderer, because she recognizes him from somewhere. When she realizes that she has a celebrity in the car, she is shocked, but she refuses to offer him the praise to which he is so accustomed.

Kathy is shocked to find that she then ends up performing in front of Don, a situation in which he humiliates her. After becoming angry, she hits Lina in the face with a pie, and Kathy loses her job. For weeks, Don looks for Kathy, only to discover that she has appeared in Monumental Studios in a small production.

Kathy finally forgives Don for his horrible attitude, and the two become friends, but that quickly changes when they fall in love. Kathy offers to help save Don's new film by becoming Lina's voice, but she becomes angry when Lina decides that Kathy will just continue being her voice. Don and the others make sure Kathy gets the praise she deserves.

Analysis

Kathy is a sweet, young woman, who is trying to make it in the big city. Kathy has her feet on the ground, but she still has big dreams. When she meets Don, she recognizes that he is arrogant and foolish, and she treats him as such. By not admitting to seeing his films and saying that he does little more than making foolish movies, she brings him down a notch, while at the same time, she ensures that he will not quickly forget her.

After Don apologizes and helps Kathy keep her job, Kathy softens toward him and admits that she is a huge fan. Kathy and Don begin to spend all their free time together. When they fall more deeply in love, Kathy steps in to save Don's film and almost loses her career for her trouble. Thankfully, the men step up and find a way to get her the credit she deserves, and she cries while Don sings of his love for her in front of a huge crowd in the theater.

Cosmo Brown, played by Donald O'Connor

Description

Cosmo Brown is Don's best friend. The two grew up together, performed in vaudeville shows together, and came to Hollywood together. They were actually working together when Don first got a job as a stunt man at Monumental. Cosmo has stayed by Don's side through everything.



Although Cosmo now has a much better job, he is still on the low-end of things at Monumental. However, when the studio decides to go to talking pictures, R.F. makes him the head of the new music and sound department. Throughout the film, Cosmo is a source of comic relief, even when things are looking dismal.

Analysis

Cosmo is sometimes the voice of reason and sometimes the source of laughter. When audiences become frustrated with Lina's attitude or Don is upset by Kathy's absence, Cosmo always comes in to brighten the dark spots.

O'Connor's song and dance numbers are hilarious and earned him a well-deserved Golden Globe Award as the Best Supporting Actor. O'Connor brings Cosmo to life and helps the viewer and the other characters to believe that there is a silver lining on every cloud.

R.F. Simpson, played by Millard Mitchell

Description

R.F. Simpson is the head of Monumental Pictures. R.F. makes all the major decisions, and he keeps the company afloat and headed in the right direction. R.F. is a brilliant businessman, and he is also the one who chose to skyrocket Don toward fame by having him work as Lina's partner.

R.F., however, does not see that the idea of talking pictures is going to be a big thing in Hollywood. Since the studios are so accustomed to silent films, the studio heads simply make fun of the man with the new talking picture toy. R.F. quickly gets the studio in line, though, when he realizes how much the public loves talking pictures.

Analysis

R.F. is intelligent, decided, and calm. R.F. hardly ever becomes flustered, so when he does, the viewers realize that there are major problems. The first time we see R.F. upset is when he comes in to put a halt to filming until they can get the studio set up for talking pictures. R.F. has been outsmarted by another studio, and he wants to correct the situation as quickly as possible.

R.F. also becomes upset when Lina tries to blackmail him. R.F. is excited to be giving Kathy a chance after *The Dancing Cavalier*, but Lina tries to change all the plans. For once, R.F. is not sure how to stay in charge or what to do. R.F. finally becomes his old self again, but because of his fear, the audience also fears that Kathy will miss out on her big opportunity for success.



Lina Lamont, played by Jean Hagen

Description

Lina Lamont is the biggest female star in Hollywood. Lina has been popular for years, even before she and Don became a popular team in film. Lina is the pampered, petted star of silent films. Although she has little real acting ability, she is beautiful, and the crowds love her. Lina's greatest flaw, besides her personality, is her voice. Unlike her outward appearance, her voice is atrocious and the studio must work hard to ensure that her fans don't discover the way she really sounds.

Lina gets reality and fantasy confused when she becomes convinced that she and Don are romantically involved. Because of the information printed in the fan magazines, Lina is jealous of Kathy and tries to destroy her life and career. Lina cares only for herself, and she imagines that she will have both Don and a glorious career.

Analysis

Lina spends her life being pampered by the studio and by her fans. The popularity goes to her head and she eventually believes that she is the greatest thing that the studio has to offer the public. Because of this, she feels invincible and tries to manipulate R.F. and the others into giving her whatever she wants.

Lina's voice and personality are her two worst traits. In order to cover the former, Kathy sings for her both in the film and at the premiere. Lina has convinced R.F. that he can do nothing to her, so he feels stuck in a tight spot. Thankfully, Don and Cosmo come up with a plan to expose Lina and help Kathy. Finally, Lina learns that she is not the only star in Hollywood, and she is brought down a few notches by the events at the premiere.

Roscoe Dexter, played by Douglass Fowley

Description

Roscoe Dexter is the director on Don and Lina's film. Although he is a very good director, he has very little patience. Roscoe becomes very frustrated with Lina when she cannot seem to talk into the microphone. After they see the premiere of the new talking version, Roscoe is completely depressed.

Analysis

Roscoe is the stereotypical director who is hard to deal with. Roscoe yells and screams and throws things when everything begins to go wrong on his set. Although he has a bad temper, he does create a wonderful film when Lina's voice is no longer an issue.

Zelda Zanders, played by Rita Moreno

Description

Zelda is Lina's best friend and another popular actress at the studio. At one point, R.F. puts Kathy into a minor role in one of Zelda's films.

Analysis

Zelda tries to be a good friend to Lina by telling her about Kathy becoming Lina's voice in the film. Zelda's efforts cause a lot of trouble for Kathy and the others when Lina's pride is insulted.

Themes

Revealing the "Real" Hollywood

Singin' in the Rain is all about the true Hollywood life. Generally, viewers only see the star-studded, fantasy world, and this film brings out the truth concerning the competition, the chaos, and the talent.

Unlike most films trying reveal Hollywood, however, *Singin' in the Rain* does it in a lighthearted manner. Instead of using hatred, suspense, and murder, *Singin' in the Rain* uses bad voices, bad shows, and funny song and dance numbers. We see the real Hollywood, while laughing and being entertained.

Hollywood shows itself to be a jealous and backbiting industry in this film, while at the same time, ridiculously concerned with itself. Don and Lina live in their isolated world of adoring fans and magazine interviews, and until their almost-failure, they had little understanding of the life outside the studio.

True Life and Love

During this movie, we see two major celebrities - Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont - experiencing the changes in their beloved Hollywood and their careers. Their reactions, though, are very different. Both Don and Lina seem to live charmed lives as celebrities, but we learn that Don, at least, grew up very poor and worked his way up to where he is now. Lina, on the other hand, seems to have no practical experience in the real world.

While Lina chooses to believe every story told about her in the fan magazines, including the rumors that she and Don are romantically involved, Don clings to reality and makes sure that his career and life proceed exactly like he desires.

Don learns that true life and true love have little to do with the movies. Although the way he meets Kathy may seem a bit romanticized, they experience similar struggles to any couple. Don finally realizes that, even if he has to put his own career on the line, his love for Kathy is worth any sacrifice.

Changes in Film

Singin' in the Rain chronicles a difficult, confusing time for Hollywood. We first see R.F. mocking the man with the talking picture equipment, but we quickly discover, along with R.F., that this technology will revolutionize the industry. The film helps viewers, who are many years removed from the experience, to understand exactly how Hollywood and the public felt about the first talking films.

Films are such an integral part of the everyday lives of thousands of people, both in the United States and around the world, that the lack of knowledge concerning film is shocking. Most people know little of the silent film era or the changes film has undergone over the years. *Singin' in the Rain* chronicles this change in a fun, entertaining way, while viewers laugh at the silly song and dance numbers.

Singin' in the Rain is a classic film, and its fun-loving nature never grows old to audiences. Whether they've seen it once or a hundred times, audiences still enjoy laughing while they learn more about the changes in film during just a few, short years.

Style and Cinematography

Singin' in the Rain is a delightfully funny and quaint production. Unlike many films of the area, this musical is never allowed to become too serious or drab. Instead, the directors choose to focus the audience's attention on the lighter side of life, and of Hollywood.

To enhance the lighthearted style of the film, each section is full of song and dance numbers that fit perfectly into the storyline. Cosmo's crazy dance to cheer up Don has delighted viewers for years as has Don's song and dance in the rain after he says goodnight to Kathy, and the trio's rendition of *Good Mawnin'* is sure to bring a smile to more than a few faces.

In addition, *Singin' in the Rain* chronicles the changes that took place in Hollywood during the time the studios moved from silent pictures to talking films. The transition has been related in many documentaries, books, and other films, but *Singin' in the Rain* creates a story that keeps the viewer interested and laughing while they experience the transition.

Motifs

Truth versus Pretend

Throughout *Singin' in the Rain*, the story is told using the differences between truth versus pretend. Like we all know, Hollywood is all about pretending and creating false worlds for the entertainment of others. Sometimes, though, truth and pretend become confused, not only in film, but in life as well.

One very basic example of the truth versus pretend idea is Lina's voice. Because Lina is beautiful on the screen and has become a major star, audiences expect her to have a beautiful voice as well. They don't even realize that they have never heard her speak in her years of performing.

Also, when Don must create a mood in order to tell Kathy about his feelings, we see that even their lives have to have an element of pretend for them to tell the truth. Don can no longer imagine a normal romance, so he has to create the same artifice used in the movies for his real life.

Dance Numbers

Singin' in the Rain is a good, old-fashioned musical, where a song and dance number appears every few minutes in the film. The great thing about this film is that most of the songs actually fit into the line of the story, instead of being random.

The dance numbers help to split the film into separate sections. The first main dance number is the scene where Cosmo tries to cheer Don up by doing a silly dance and song show. Audiences begin to laugh hysterically when they watch Cosmo attack himself with a doll and run into a door.

The most famous scenes are song and dance numbers such as *Good Mawnin'* and *Singin' in the Rain*. In these scenes, we see true friendships and true love at work in the lives of the characters. We truly appreciate that even celebrities and their friends have true relationships.

Film Shots

Singin' in the Rain uses film shots to show the storyline of the film. Not only are there film previews to enjoy, but also, there are the actual film shootings that go on at the studio. Through all these film shots, we learn more about the characters, Hollywood, and the relationships most important in life.

Some of the most important film shots are the ones we see in the premieres. The first premiere of the Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont film helps viewers to place them in the

highest realm of celebrity in Hollywood. The second premiere, on the other hand, shows how quickly a reputation can flounder with one bad film. Then, the final premiere lets viewers see the rising of the reputations again, as well as the new life open to Kathy, because of her sacrifices and great performance.

Finally, the actual scenes where the characters are shooting the films are important. We easily recognize Lina's flaws when we see how frustrated Roscoe becomes with her in just a few moments. When Kathy appears on a set, we learn the extent of Don's interest in her. We see the inside world of Hollywood during the transition from silent films to talking films.

Symbols

The Talkie Example

While we watch *Singin' in the Rain*, we see the transition from silent films in Hollywood to talking films. There was a time when no one, not even the greatest minds in the industry, could have imagined a talking picture. Thus, when the change came, only a few people saw it coming.

After the Don Lockwood/Lina Lamont premiere at the beginning of the film, R.F. throws a huge bash celebrating their success. In order to amuse the guests, R.F. has invited dancers, and he also has a very special clip to show. After everyone arrives, R.F. then presents his surprise.

The talkie example that the man has brought to R.F. makes everyone laugh. They don't believe it is real, and most of them think R.F. is doing the talking. When they realize the truth, they are not impressed; they simply laugh at this fun toy. This example is symbolic of the unexpected change that would eventually come about in Hollywood. This 'toy' became the next big thing.

The Sound Stage

Have you ever had a moment when you wanted to express your feelings but the timing seemed to be all wrong? Or maybe the setting just didn't fit what you wanted to say? Well, Don has this same problem when he wants to tell Kathy how he feels about her. Without the proper setting, he can't seem to express the words.

Instead of hiding his feelings or putting off telling them, Don decides to tell them in exactly the way he wants to share. Don takes Kathy to a sound stage and begins turning on lights, putting her on a ladder, and starting a fan so that he can simulate a beautiful evening; then he tells her of his love.

Although Don's gesture is romantic, the sound stage is also symbolic of the artifice needed in Hollywood. Without all the tools of an actor, Don does not know how to express himself like a normal person. The actors and actresses in the film seem to use their craft in every area of their lives, without ever knowing that they are doing it. They have become part of their art.

The Pearls

When *The Dueling Cavalier* first comes out in the theater for a preview, everyone, including the crowds, is appalled by the horrible film. One of the most amusing scenes is when Lina walks onto the screen, playing with her long strand of pearls, and each time she moves it, a sound like machine gun fire blasts across the theater.

From Lina's pearls to the messed up sound, the entire film is an absolute failure. Lina's pearls are the first symbol that not only is the film a failure, but also that those of the old theater, the silent films, are now antiquated and quaint.

Lina's pearls symbolize everything we need to know about the changes going on in the theater. The greatest star of her time, Lina is no longer useful on the screen. Lina can't get her lines right; she can't talk to the microphone; she can't even move without making a fool of herself. The days of silence are over, and those who can't be respectable 'talking' will not be around for long.

Essay Questions

Why does Lina not give the speech when she and Don arrive at the premiere?

How does Don's description of his life differ from the reality?

How do Don and Kathy meet?

Compare/contrast Lina and Kathy.

What attracts Don to Kathy?

Describe the change in opinion toward the talking movie and the impetus for change.

How do Don and Cosmo decide to save the film? What is the problem?

Why does Kathy agree to become Lina's voice?

How does Lina try to blackmail R.F.?

Describe the scene at the theater when Lina's true self is revealed?