

# Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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## Three nights of Holiday Inn featuring three musical legends

Written by David on November, 18 2009

As the holiday season approaches, movie fans, music aficionados or just ordinary citizens will have three chances this weekend to see, hear and enjoy an icon of Americana as The Strand Theatre presents Holiday Inn, a 1942 black and white movie musical, which features the first version of Bing Crosby crooning Irving Berlin's timeless tune "White Christmas."

The third person of this musical triumvirate starring in this film is legendary dancer Fred Astaire who also sings two Berlin tunes in this movie which revolves around the trials, tribulations and joys of team of night-club performers.

As a creative sidebar, the soundtrack to this musical masterpiece was recorded by the Bob Crosby Orchestra, the younger brother of Bing, and each tune should ring resplendent across the acoustically enticing confines of the Strand.

Getting back to the seasonal festivities, the first viewing of this movie about music is free and will begin at the Strand Theatre Friday night at eight, following Shelbyville's "Holiday Celebration Parade." Like the melodic reprise of the tune "White Christmas" throughout the movie, this film will be shown twice again during the weekend: Saturday afternoon at 1 and Sunday evening at 5. Each of these showings will cost \$5.

For most people this movie is memorable for Bing Crosby's rendition of "White Christmas," which won Berlin an Academy Award for Best Original Song despite being only 13 lines long.

"My ambition is to reach the heart of the average American, not the highbrow nor the lowbrow but that vast intermediate crew which is the real soul of the country," Berlin said. "Usually I compose my tunes and then fit words to them, though sometimes it's the other way about. It's the lyric that makes a song a hit, although the tune, of course, is what makes it last."

And this song was an immediate hit, staying number one on the charts for 11 weeks after its 1942 debut. Significantly, it also reached number one for three weeks on the charts in Harlem and then returned to top the national charts in both 1945 and 1947.

Such success was nothing new to either Berlin or Crosby; as a point of fact, Crosby recorded 41 number one hits, 383 top 30 songs and had hits on the charts every year between 1931 and 1954. In the era before Elvis and the Beatles, Crosby fused popular music with artistry long before Warhol and proved that a pop star could be a true musician.

Equally famous was Berlin, and his rags-to-riches story. This son of an immigrant cantor went from a 14-year-old living on the streets of New York City to a Bowery singer and then became an international star at the age of 20 for his musical, ragtime tunes and scores for Tin Pan Alley musicals. Yet, this legendary maestro instantaneously knew that "White Christmas" was and would become, even as he wrote it and called his secretary.

"Grab your pen and take down this song," he said. "I've just wrote the best song I've ever written. Hell, I just wrote the best song that anybody has ever written."

Crosby, however, was not so ecstatic when he first heard the tune laconically saying, "I don't think we have any problems with that one, Irving." Crosby and nearly everyone else involved in the movie thought the hit would be the Valentine's Day song "Be careful, it's my heart."

Berlin considered Astaire the equal of any male interpreter of his song, as good as Crosby, Al Jolson or Frank Sinatra. Of the 15 songs in "Holiday Inn", Astaire sings two by himself and the opening tune with Crosby and co-star Virginia Dale. It was, however, the dancing of this inspired perfectionist that made him a super-star in his own right. In "Holiday Inn", Astaire dances four times and practically steals the show with his virtuoso performance during "Let's Say it with Firecrackers."

"Working out the steps is a very complicated process something like writing music," he said about his working methods."

You have to think of some step that flows into the next one, and the whole dance must have an integrated pattern. If the dance is right, there shouldn't be a single superfluous movement. It should build to a climax and stop!"

After such a legendary cast performing iconic roles to the music of man described by George Gershwin as "America itself," patrons of the Strand can walk out with these lines ringing with this classic refrain:

"I'm dreaming of a White Christmas

Just like the ones I used to know

Where the treetops glisten,

And children listen

To hear sleigh bells in the snow."

Submitted by: Terrance Aldridge

This preview does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

**Images on this post:**

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