

How Long Did'ya Stay Fresh In That Can

Over 70 years and still as beautiful as ever. I may have seen *Wicked* on Easter Sunday. I may have enjoyed it... even appreciated it but there is not even a remote chance that I will ever LOVE it as much as the original 1939 masterpiece *The (Wonderful) Wizard of Oz*. I remember watching it as a young boy on CBS once a year on a Friday night pre-empting *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Dallas* (heartbreaking that my mother would miss a week of J.R.). I was one of those kids who held a cassette recorder up to the television every time a song came on. I memorized where every commercial break would be. Tonight, Turner Classic Movies had its first of two trips down the Yellow Brick Road over the holiday weekend (tomorrow at 8PM is the final showing this time around).

Why is the movie so beloved? I don't think any two people has the same reason. For me, there are many reasons why I watch it year in and year out. The theatricality for one. The set looks like it was created on a huge stage. Painted backdrops. You can tell that the land of Oz is created artificially and that is part of the movie's charm.

The casting is brilliant. Even at 17, Judy Garland portrayed a magnificent young Kansas farm girl. She won a special miniature Oscar for the role in Best Performance by an Adolescent (I believe the official award was). To generate the on-screen chemistry between Dorothy and Toto, the dog Terry lived with Garland for a time prior to filming. The actress became so enamored with the dog that she asked the owner for permission to adopt female canine. The trainer knew what a gold mine he had as he turned to offer down.

As has been reported quite frequently, the classic "Over the Rainbow" was actually cut from initial screenings of the film.

The song was thought to have slowed the action of the film. However, level heads soon prevailed and who can imagine the film without it. 1939 is considered to be the year of the classic movie. More classics were made during that year than any other in history. Another little film, *Gone with the Wind*, also premiered and was the odds on and run away winner at the Academy Awards. Oz was a cinematic hit from the start but it took a few years and re-issues before MGM felt that it was a financial success.

Of course my favorite part of the masterpiece, is one of my favorite character roles... The Cowardly Lion. But to carry around an 80+ pound costume must have needed a large amount of physicality. I could do it, though!

Who wouldn't mind getting up at 12; starting to work at one; taking an hour for lunch; and then at 2 be done? Or being clever as a gizzard? Wait a minute, clever as a gizzard? Unless there is a reference to something other than a bird's internal organs.