

= The Great Ziegfeld =

The Great Ziegfeld is a 1936 American musical drama film directed by Robert Z. Leonard and produced by Hunt Stromberg . It stars William Powell as the theatrical impresario Florenz " Flo " Ziegfeld , Jr. , Luise Rainer as Anna Held , and Myrna Loy as Billie Burke .

The film , shot at MGM Studios in Culver City , California in the fall of 1935 , is a fictionalized tribute to Florenz Ziegfeld , Jr. and a cinematic adaption of Broadway 's Ziegfeld Follies , with highly elaborate costumes , dances and sets . Many of the performers of the theatrical Ziegfeld Follies were cast in the film as themselves , including Fanny Brice and Harriet Hctor , and Billie Burke acted as a supervisor for the film . The " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " set alone was reported to have cost US \$ 220 @, @ 000 (US \$ 3 @, @ 751 @, @ 607 in 2016 dollars) , featuring a towering rotating volute of 70 ft (21 m) diameter with 175 spiral steps , weighing 100 tons . The music to the film was provided by Walter Donaldson , Irving Berlin , and lyricist Harold Adamson , with choreographed scenes . The extravagant costumes were designed by Adrian , taking some 250 tailors and seamstresses six months to prepare them using 50 pounds (23 kg) of silver sequins and 12 yards (11 m) of white ostrich plumes . Over a thousand people were employed in the production of the film , which required 16 reels of film after the cutting .

One of the biggest successes in film in the 1930s and the pride of MGM at the time , it was acclaimed as the greatest musical biography to be made in Hollywood and still remains a standard in musical film making . It won three Academy Awards , including Best Picture for producer Hunt Stromberg , Best Actress for Luise Rainer , and Best Dance Direction for Seymour Felix , and was nominated for four others . Although the film is still praised for its lavish production and as a symbol of glamor and excess during the Golden Age of Hollywood , today The Great Ziegfeld is generally seen less favorably and is considered by many critics to be excessively showy and long at just under three hours .

MGM made two more Ziegfeld films ? one entitled Ziegfeld Girl (1941) , starring James Stewart , Judy Garland , Hedy Lamarr , and Lana Turner , which recycled some footage from The Great Ziegfeld , and in 1946 , Ziegfeld Follies by Vincente Minnelli . In 1951 , they produced their Technicolor remake of Show Boat , which Ziegfeld had presented as a stage musical .

= = Plot = =

The son of a highly respected music professor , Florenz " Flo " Ziegfeld , Jr. yearns to make his mark in show business . He begins by promoting Eugen Sandow , the " world 's strongest man " , at the 1893 Chicago World 's Fair , overcoming the competition of rival Billings and his popular attraction , belly dancer Little Egypt , with savvy marketing (allowing women to feel Sandow 's muscles) .

Ziegfeld returns to his father and young Mary Lou at the Chicago Musical College , and departs to San Francisco , where he and Sandow are deemed frauds for putting on a show in which Sandow faces a lion who falls asleep as soon as it is let out of the cage . Flo travels to England on an ocean liner , where he runs into Billings again who is laughing at a newspaper article denouncing him as a fraud .

Flo discovers that Billings is on his way to sign a contract with beautiful French star , Anna Held . Despite losing all his money gambling at Monte Carlo , Flo charms Anna into signing with him instead , pretending that he doesn 't know Billings . Anna twice almost sends him away for his rudeness and for being broke , before revealing that she appreciates his honesty . Ziegfeld promises to give her " more publicity than she ever dreams of " and to feature her alongside America 's most prominent theatrical performers .

At first , Anna 's performance at the Herald Square Theatre is not a success . However , Flo manages to generate publicity by sending 20 gallons of milk to Anna every day for a fictitious milk bath beauty treatment , then refusing to pay the bill . The newspaper stories soon bring the curious to pack his theater , and Ziegfeld introduces eight new performers to back her . Audience members comment on how the milk must make her skin beautiful and the show is a major success . Flo sends

Anna flowers and jewelry and a note saying " you were magnificent my wife " , and she agrees to marry him , flaunting her new diamonds to her fellow performers .

However , one success is not enough for the showman . He has an idea for an entirely new kind of show featuring a bevy of blondes and brunettes , one that will " glorify " the American girl . The new show , the Ziegfeld Follies , an opulent production filled with beautiful women and highly extravagant costumes and sets , is a smash hit , and is followed by more versions of the Follies .

Ziegfeld tries to make a star out of Audrey Dane , who is plagued with alcoholism and lures Fanny Brice away from vaudeville , showering both with lavish gifts . He gives stagehand Ray Bolger his break as well . Mary Lou , now a young woman , visits Ziegfeld , who doesn 't recognize her initially , and hires her as a dancer .

The new production upsets Anna , who realizes that Flo 's world does not revolve around just her , and she becomes envious of the attention he pays to Audrey . She divorces him after walking in on Flo and a drunk Audrey at the wrong moment . Audrey walks out on Flo and the show after an angry confrontation . Broke , Flo borrows money from Billings for a third time for the new show .

Flo meets the red @-@ headed Broadway star Billie Burke and soon marries her . When she hears the news , a heartbroken Anna telephones Flo and pretends to be glad for him . Flo and Billie eventually have a daughter named Patricia .

Flo 's new shows are a success , but after a while , the public 's taste changes , and people begin to wonder if the times have not passed him by . After a string of negative reviews in the press , Flo overhears three men in a barber 's shop saying that he 'll " never produce another hit " . Stung , he vows to have four hits on Broadway at the same time .

He achieves his goal , with the hits Show Boat (1927) , Rio Rita (1927) , Whoopee ! (1928) , and The Three Musketeers , and invests over \$ 1 million (US \$ 13 @,@ 781 @,@ 008 in 2016 dollars) of his earnings in the stock market . However , the stock market crash of 1929 bankrupts him , forcing Billie to return to the stage .

Shaken by the reversal of his financial fortunes and the growing popularity of movies over live stage shows , he becomes seriously ill . Billings pays him a friendly visit , and the two men agree to become partners in a new , even grander production of The Ziegfeld Follies . But the reality is that both men are broke and Ziegfeld realizes this . In the final scene in his apartment overlooking the Ziegfeld Theatre , in a half @-@ delirium , he recalls scenes from several of his hits , exclaiming , " I 've got to have more steps , higher , higher " , before slumping over dead in his chair .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

Ziegfeld 's widow , Billie Burke , was keen to pay off Ziegfeld 's debts without filing for bankruptcy , and sold the rights to a biopic of him to Universal Pictures in late 1933 . As a result , the film went into the pre @-@ production phase in January 1934 . Macguire had initially proposed the biographical film to them in the form of a " filmusical entertainment " set in a " theatrical tradition " and William Powell was cast as Ziegfeld . However , by February 1935 , Macguire had fallen into disagreement with Universal over financial problems at the studio , and the entire production , including some already constructed sets and musical arrangements , were sold to MGM for US \$ 300 @,@ 000 (US \$ 5 @,@ 177 @,@ 913 in 2016 dollars) . As part of the deal however , Universal retained the services of Powell for the classic screwball comedy My Man Godfrey , which was released the same year as The Great Ziegfeld .

The film was shot at MGM Studios in Culver City , California mostly in the latter half of 1935 under a budget of US \$ 1 @,@ 500 @,@ 000 (US \$ 25 @,@ 889 @,@ 563 in 2016 dollars) , produced by Hunt Stromberg . The cost exceeded US \$ 2 million (US \$ 34 @,@ 519 @,@ 417 in 2016 dollars) by the end of the production in early 1936 , exorbitant for the period , and it was MGM 's most expensive film to date after Ben Hur (1925) . The principal cinematography was shot by Oliver T. Marsh , and George Folsey and Karl Freund were brought in to shoot the Ziegfeld Roof numbers .

Ray June shot the " Melody " number and Merritt B. Gerstad is credited for the Hooray Ballet .

In the advertising for the film , MGM boasted of the film 's ostentatious nature , bragging that it was " SO BIG that only MGM could handle it " , with its " countless beauties , trained lions , ponies , dogs and other animals " . Busby Berkeley , who had led Warner Brothers to become the leading producer of musicals in Hollywood in the 1930s , was a major influence on the producers which had " glamorous , excessive 1930s cinematic musical numbers " . The film also came at a time when producers had begun seeing the economic and cultural importance of the cinematic medium in comparison to theater . Variety notes that the film producers were likely very concerned with the presentation of the film after production was wrapped up , and that the long length of the film at 176 minutes was understandable in that they probably " wanted to preserve as much footage as possible " . William S. Gray was responsible for the editing of the film . Over a thousand people were employed in the production , and The Great Ziegfeld required 16 reels of film after the cutting .

By coincidence , Universal 's 1936 film version of the Ziegfeld musical " Show Boat " , the most faithful of all the film versions of the stage production , was filmed at the same time as The Great Ziegfeld and released in the same year .

= = = Screenplay = = =

The screenplay by William Anthony McGuire was a " novelty " to many audiences who were familiar with the theatrical Broadway shows of the follies . The script , although fictionalized with embellishments needed for the motion picture , did show some accuracies in the life of Ziegfeld . Frank S. Nugent of The New York Times said of the script : " What William Anthony McGuire has attempted in his screen play , and with general success , is to encompass not merely the fantastic personal history of Ziegfeld but the cross @-@ sectional story of the development of the Follies , the Midnight Frolic on the New Amsterdam Roof and the other theatrical enterprises floated under the Glorifier 's aegis during a span of about forty years . The two biographies ? of the man and of his creations ? are , naturally , inseparable ; but both have been told with such wealth of detail and circumstance (real and imaginative) that even the three @-@ hour film narrative is fragmentary and , in some places , confused . "

Although it has some accuracies , The Great Ziegfeld takes many key liberties with Ziegfeld 's life and the history of the Follies , resulting in many inaccuracies . The earlier scenes with Sandow , the milk bath advertising scenario , and many other sequences including several of the dramatic ups and downs of the film were fictional . George Gershwin 's Rhapsody in Blue was never featured in the Follies , and the number " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " was written for the 1919 Follies , not the first edition of the revue , as shown in the film . Ray Bolger was never cast in a " Follies " show , and although she was born in the U.S , Billie Burke grew up in England and spoke with a Mid @-@ Atlantic accent throughout her life ; Loy who portrays her clearly has an American accent in the film .

In the film , the last few lines of the song " Ol ' Man River " (from Show Boat) are sung by what sounds like a tenor , while the song was intended for bass Paul Robeson and sung in the original production by bass @-@ baritone Jules Bledsoe . Further , the screenplay also gives the impression that the successful original production of Show Boat , which Ziegfeld produced , closed because of the Great Depression . In fact Show Boat ended its original 1927 run in the spring of 1929 and the stock market crash did not occur until October of that year . It was the 1932 revival of the show (also produced by Ziegfeld shortly before his death) , not the original production , that was affected by the Depression .

In real life , Ziegfeld did not die in his room at the Hotel Warwick (not mentioned) which stood in front of the Ziegfeld Theatre ; he actually died in Los Angeles and had not even spent his last years in New York . However , McGuire did capture a number of Ziegfeld 's traits , such as sending telegrams to people even in close proximity , his belief that elephants were a symbol of good luck , his exquisite taste in costumes and design , and perfectionism over his productions , especially lighting and rostrum pedestaling . McGuire 's script , now in the Henry E. Huntington Library , San Marino , California , is dated September 21 , 1935 , probably the date when it was finalized .

== = Casting == =

Initially , the main cast proposed for the film included Marilyn Miller , Gilda Gray , Ann Pennington , and Leon Errol . Featured in the film are William Powell as Ziegfeld , Myrna Loy as Billie Burke , Luise Rainer as Anna Held , Nat Pendleton as Eugen Sandow , and Frank Morgan . Powell admitted to being " amazed " with the film after viewing it and was very grateful at having had the privilege to portray Ziegfeld , considering it to be a very important moment in his career . He said , " After seeing this film I can see that most of the characters I have played before were contrived . They had no ' folks ' , as the character of Ziegfeld had in this picture . Their father was a pen and their mother was a bottle of ink . Here was a character with flesh , blood and sinews . I felt for the first time in my acting career I had tried the full measure of a man , regardless of my shortcomings in playing him . "

Many of the performers of the earlier Broadway version of the Ziegfeld Follies were cast in the film as themselves , including Fanny Brice and Harriet Hctor , the ballet dancer and contortionist . The Great Ziegfeld marked Rainer 's second Hollywood film role after *Escapade* (also with Powell) . Fanny Brice appears as a comedian in the abridged song sequence " My Man " and played an effective version of herself in addition to her routine comic role as the funny girl . Nat Pendleton , a freestyle wrestler who had won the silver medal at the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp and had appeared alongside Powell in *The Thin Man* (1934) , was cast as the circus strongman Eugen Sandow .

Billie Burke objected to her role being cast with another actress (Myrna Loy) since she was also an actress under contract to the studio and could play herself , but the producers concluded that at that point she was not a big enough star to play herself in *The Great Ziegfeld* . However , according to Emily W. Leider , Burke was not keen on playing her younger self and says that Billie Burke 's biographer stated that Miriam Hopkins would have been her first choice to play her part , not Loy . Burke herself worked as technical consultant , and although she did not object to Marilyn Miller performing a number , she was influential in the studio 's refusal to give her the higher billing and salary she had demanded , which led to Miller walking away from the film .

Both Miller and Lillian Lorraine threatened legal action if so much as their names were mentioned in the film . Thus Miller 's character was renamed " Sally Manners " , and Lorraine 's character was renamed " Audrey Dane " (played by Virginia Bruce) . In real life , Ziegfeld had reportedly been obsessed with Miller , and was involved in numerous sex scandals . In 1922 Miller had given an interview in which she accused him of " making love to chorus girls " and sending her a diamond ring as " big as her hand " ; this essence of Ziegfeld 's character is captured in the film . Incidentally , Miller died from toxicity complications after surgery just before the release of the film on April 7 , 1936 , which led one reviewer writing in *Liberty* to denounce an urban legend which had arisen surrounding the timing of her death , saying , " It 's not true that Marilyn Miller died of a broken heart at not getting the lead in this . " Another myth surrounding her untimely death at the age of 37 is that she had contracted syphilis .

Frank Morgan , a stage and film character actor , played the role of promoter Billings in the film . Dennis Morgan , in an uncredited role , performs in " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " (dubbed by Allan Jones) . Pat Ryan , the future Pat Nixon , wife of Richard Nixon and First Lady of the United States , was an extra in the film . Will Rogers was to appear in the film , but he was killed in a plane crash in August 1935 . He was played by stand @-@ in A. A. Trimble .

== = Costumes == =

The extravagant costumes , which even Ziegfeld initially considered too flamboyant , were designed by Adrian , who had worked with many of the greatest actresses of the period including Greta Garbo , Norma Shearer , Jeanette MacDonald , Jean Harlow , Katharine Hepburn and Joan Crawford , and later designed for films such as *Marie Antoinette* (1938) , *The Women* (1939) , and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) . Howard Gutner documents that due to MGM 's wealth and the high budget , Adrian was able to indulge in " sheer lavishness " in making the costumes , surpassing anything he had

done previously . It took 250 tailors and seamstresses six months to sew the costumes that Adrian had designed for the film , using 50 pounds (23 kg) of silver sequins and 12 yards (11 m) of white ostrich plumes . The costumes worn by women in the film are diverse , varying from " puffy hooped skirts to catlike leotards " to " layers of tulle and chiffon " , with the men mostly wearing black tuxedos .

= = = Mise en scène and music = = =

Leonard , a film director who specialized in melodrama and musicals , anchored the music for the film , working with Walter Donaldson , Irving Berlin , and lyricist Harold Adamson . The extravagant dances and ensemble sequences were choreographed by Seymour Felix and Harold Adamson , including the song sequence of " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " (it was Irving Berlin 's 13th annual edition in 1919) . The " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " set , known as the " Wedding Cake " , involved several weeks of shooting time and was reported to have cost US \$ 220 @, @ 000 (US \$ 3 @, @ 751 @, @ 607 in 2016 dollars) . As many as 180 performers were involved in the scenes which included singers , dancers and musicians . The sequence presented started with the " Rhapsody in Blue " and concluded with Virginia Bruce descending from the volute as it rotated , a satin curtain being lowered from the top enclosing the volute .

The curtains , made of rayon silk , measured 4 @, @ 300 yards (3 @, @ 900 m) . Sheldon Hall and Stephen Neale note the theatrical sense that the cinematographers achieved through shooting the sequence in virtually a single take . They mention that " the camera traverses an enormous platform set contained within a curtained proscenium (also enormous) " , and that the " set itself revolves to meet the camera , rather than the camera entering the space of the set . " Linda Mizejewski , author of a book on the Ziegfeld girls , argues that the Pretty Girl sequence is more than just about being showy ; it is symbolic of womanhood which " powerfully visualizes women as the raw material for male aesthetic vision and design " . In the film she believes that womanhood is defined by the " young , white , blond and slender " female , which in the sequence are " delineated as the fluffy , artificial tiers of costuming and staging " .

The Harriet Hctor ballet music was scored by Con Conrad to lyrics written by Herb Magidson . The circus ballet was an adaptation from the old Ziegfeld stage shows . Variety called the Hctor ballet " in itself intricate with its maneuverings of six Russian wolfhounds in terp formations " , and said that the " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " sequence in the film is a " nifty Berlin tune [which] becomes the fulcrum for one of Frank Skinner 's best arrangements as Arthur Lange batons the crescendos into a mad , glittering potpourri of Saint @-@ Saëns and Gershwin , Strauss and Verdi , beautifully blended against the Berlinesque background . It 's a scenic flash which makes the auditor wonder ' What can they do to follow that ? ' meaning in this or future film production . " Juan Antonio Ramírez refers to the wedding cake as a " famous spiral column " , citing it as one of the best known pieces of mobile architecture in film , but notes that in design the cake was not exclusive to The Great Ziegfeld , explaining that a wedding cake , albeit less flamboyant , had appeared in previous films such The King of Jazz (1930) , The Kid from Spain (1932) , Top Hat (1935) , and Follow the Fleet (1935) . Ramírez describes the film 's Mise en scène as representing " the last word in flashy vulgarity , Surrealist kitsch , or perhaps both at once " .

Selected songs

= = = Aftermath = = =

Farida Mahzar filed a lawsuit against the filmmakers shortly before her death , claiming that they " presented Little Egypt as a lewd character " . 14 witnesses who had seen the act at the 1893 Chicago World Fair supported this , although the lawsuit was dropped after Mahzar died from a heart attack . Burke caused much controversy and upset among many of Ziegfeld 's friends and colleagues when she sold the rights to a production on Broadway , the Ziegfeld Follies , also starring Fanny Brice , at the time the film was released in 1936 , due to the fact that the show was produced by the Shubert brothers , whom Ziegfeld detested . Worse still for his associates , was that the show

was a bigger success than Ziegfeld 's last production of the Follies in 1931 . The Ziegfeld Follies under Vincente Minnelli was initially performed in December 1935 , before making its Broadway debut on January 30 , 1936 . It was performed in Boston and Philadelphia until the production was postponed after Brice collapsed on stage with exhaustion . When it reopened on Broadway in September 1936 , five months after the release of the film , it was retitled The New Ziegfeld Follies of 1936 ? 1937 , and was revamped considerably , with changes to the show 's humor .

In 1941 , Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer produced a sequel entitled Ziegfeld Girl , starring James Stewart , Judy Garland , Hedy Lamarr , and Lana Turner , which recycled some film from The Great Ziegfeld . In 1946 , MGM made another sequel , Ziegfeld Follies , directed by Vincente Minnelli , director of the stage show .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

According to MGM records , the film earned a then @-@ massive \$ 3 @,@ 089 @,@ 000 in the US and Canada and \$ 1 @,@ 584 @,@ 000 elsewhere resulting in a profit of \$ 822 @,@ 000 .

= = = Critical response at the time of release = = =

The film , which premiered in Los Angeles at the Carthay Circle Theatre , was the first musical film in history for which one of its cast members won an Academy Award . Luise Rainer received the Best Actress Oscar for her portrayal of Ziegfeld 's first wife , Anna Held . The film , the pride of MGM at a time when Warner Brothers and RKO Pictures were the leading studios in Hollywood for musical production , was a major commercial and critical success and one of the most successful films of the 1930s , grossing US \$ 4 @,@ 673 @,@ 000 (US \$ 79 @,@ 687 @,@ 537 in 2016 dollars) worldwide at the box office . It was acclaimed upon release as the greatest musical biography to be made in Hollywood and still remains a standard in musical film making . At just short of three hours , The Great Ziegfeld was also the longest talking film of the time . (D. W. Griffith 's The Birth of a Nation and Intolerance , both silent films , had each run over three hours .) TCM has acclaimed the " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " sequence as one of " the most famous musical numbers ever filmed " . Thomas S. Hischak has said that the film has rarely been topped for pure showmanship and glamor , and Variety considered it an " outstanding picture " , a " symbol of a tradition of show business " . Variety praised the performances of the cast , remarking that as Ziegfeld , William Powell " endows the impersonation with all the qualities of a great entrepreneur and sentimentalist without sacrificing the shades and moods called for " and noting that Luise Rainer is " tops of the femmes with her vivacious Anna Held " . Stanley Green cited the The Great Ziegfeld as " the first of a number of elaborate show @-@ business screen biographies " . Otis Ferguson , writing for New Republic magazine , remarked that the " musical numbers seem as irresistible as Ziegfeld himself " . The New York American said that the film is " pretty nearly everything such an extravaganza should be " , with " romance and reality , song and dance , gaiety and beauty , pathos and bathos " . Time magazine qualified it as " Pretentious , packed with hokum and as richly sentimental as an Irving Berlin lyric , it is , as such , top @-@ notch entertainment . " A reviewer for the Spokane Chronicle praised the film for its superb acting , writing that " [even] the great producer [Ziegfeld] would have been unable to produce scenes of magnitude and splendor that are given as part of the picture telling his life . " Frank S. Nugent of The New York Times was also highly praising of the film , noting that it had " more stars than there are in the heavens " and remarking that " the picture achieves its best moments in the larger sequences devoted to the Girls ? ballet , chorus and show . At least one of these spectacular numbers , filmed to the music of Irving Berlin 's " A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody " , with overtones of " Rhapsody in Blue " , never has been equaled on the musical comedy stage or screen . " John Mosher of The New Yorker called it " the most lavish display the screen has had to offer " with chorus numbers that were " gigantic and effective " ,

though he found the romance to be " peculiarly average screen @-@ story stuff . " Both The New York Times and Film Daily rated the film in the " Ten Best " of the year .

However , not all critics were as enthusiastic about the film ; Graham Greene of the British Spectator called it a " huge inflated gas @-@ blown object " and criticized its length , comparing it to the feat of a flagpole sitter . A number of critics , although praising the film in general , felt that Myrna Loy , who appears rather late on in the film , gave a lackluster performance as Billie Burke . Nugent said that " Miss Loy is a stately Bille Burke , and somewhat lacking , we fear , in Miss Burke 's effervescence and gaiety " , and Cecilia Agner thought she came across as " stilted , like her rigidly waxed and set blonde wig " . Harrison Carroll of the Los Angeles Herald @-@ Express , however , sympathized with the difficulty of her role in portraying a prominent living actress , confessing that he was pleased that Loy did not attempt to imitate Burke 's mannerisms . Emily W. Leider believes that any of her character flaws were due to a " mushy " script , rather than her performance as an actress .

= = = Critical re @-@ evaluation = = =

Although the film is still viewed as a symbol of glamor and excess during the Golden Age of Hollywood , today the film has more of a mixed reception , with many critics believing that the film relies on its (now @-@ dated) extravagance and is too long ; Christopher Null stated that The Great Ziegfeld is a " textbook case of how a film can lose its appeal over the years " . Since its release the film has been criticized in particular for being unnecessarily lengthy and its overacting (particularly by Rainer) , and is occasionally cited as a " prime example of the Academy 's fallibility " in a year when other critically acclaimed pictures such as Mr. Deeds Goes to Town were released , which some argue was more deserving of Best Picture . The consensus today on the review site Rotten Tomatoes is that although the " biopic is undeniably stylish " , it " loses points for excessive length , an overreliance on clichés , and historical inaccuracies " , and has a 61 % fresh rating . Emily W. Leider claims the film to be " more remarkable for its " legs and tinsel " extravagance than for its excellence . " David Parkinson of Empire magazine gave the film 3 out of 5 stars and concluded that it " Drags in places and doesn 't even try for a true @-@ to @-@ life portrait of the great theatre entrepreneur but it 's shiny and big spectacle with impressive choreography . " Dave Kehr of the Chicago Reader called it " amazingly dull , even with William Powell in the lead and guest appearances by the likes of Ray Bolger and Fanny Brice . " Emanuel Levy gave it a C grade and stated that it was " overlong and overblown but ultimately mediocre as a musical movie and as a biopic of the legendary showman . " James Berardinelli awarded it 2 @.@ 5 out of 4 stars and stated that " although some of the production 's technical aspects remain impressive , the dramatic elements come across as trite and many of the musical numbers are dated " , but said that it was a " reasonably competent ? albeit " airbrushed " ? presentation of the main character 's life . "

= = = Accolades = = =

The seven Academy Award nominations were announced on February 7 , 1937 , and on March 4 , 1937 , The Great Ziegfeld won three Oscars at the 9th Academy Awards for 1936 :

Although he was not nominated for an Academy Award for his performance , Powell did receive the Screen Actor 's Guild award for Best Actor in a tie with C. Aubrey Smith who was in Little Lord Fauntleroy . In addition the Guild 's Best Actress was given to Luise Rainer .