

# GOTTA DANCE!

## THE ART OF THE DANCE MOVIE POSTER FROM THE MIKE KAPLAN COLLECTION

### A NOTE FROM THE COLLECTOR

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Maybe I was born with a poster gene. As a child in Providence, R.I., I'd remove the full-page theater ads announcing a new play or musical from The Sunday New York Times, color them with paints or pastels and then compare the results with the printed versions when I visited New York with my parents. Though they were not then available for public purchase, movie posters could be easily viewed as they were prominently displayed in lobby frames and exterior display cases at every cinema.

I loved movies and movie posters equally and studied both. Whenever a new Otto Preminger film was announced, I would await its opening, but would be just as excited in anticipating the first look at the film's poster; for Preminger employed graphic master Saul Bass, and Bass's concepts were always bold, sophisticated and surprising, such as *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM* (1955), *ANATOMY OF A MURDER* (1959), and *ADVISE AND CONSENT* (1962).

Becoming part of the film industry in 1965 allowed me to collect new film poster favorites. This was still a period when a poster's key art, along with the trailer, were the main advertising tools in attracting audiences. My mantra was that a film's campaign could determine its success and that every good film could be a box office winner if it had the right poster. Then a transitional period occurred in which painting and illustration began to fade from view. But along with that came an exciting shift in poster work that was now being done by the music industry, with groundbreaking imagery coming to the fore from new artists as rock dominated mainstream culture. Album covers became works of art. I wanted the same for movie posters.

Discovering the availability of vintage movie posters through collectors and funky memorabilia shops, a new world of striking and lushly provocative poster art was revealed, one whose art blossomed during "The Golden Age" of the cinema poster (1930s-1950s). In many cases, examples from The Golden Age inspired new designs in later poster artwork. Design was what I responded to, regardless of nationality or whether I knew the film, and I relished finding and being inspired by these treasures from around the world.

When the opportunity arose to initiate or create unique poster art for new films, I gravitated to painters and illustrators who could interpret a movie's essence with inspired style and individuality – David Hockney (*A BIGGER SPLASH*, 1975), Don Bachardy (*SHORT CUTS*, 1994), Allen Jones (*MAÎTRESSE*, 1976), Philip Castle (*A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, 1971), John van Hamersveld (*WELCOME TO LA*, 1976), and André Carrilho (*NEVER APOLOGIZE*, 2008).

Movie posters have complex and competing elements – text in the form of title treatment, credits, and slogans that merge with visuals – they are a pre-Ed Ruscha construct. Nearly every poster took longer to produce than actually making the film. As an independent distributor in London, I delayed the release of Barbet Schroeder's *THE VALLEY* (*LA VALLÉE*) for a year until Philip Castle's airbrush artwork was finalized.

In "*GOTTA DANCE!: The Art of the Dance Movie Poster*," over 40 pieces are on view from ten countries. All have unique qualities in using dance imagery from both musical and non-musical films. Several are great posters from great films – a rare synthesis: the Italian *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* by Nano, the British *RED SHOES*, the Belgian *42nd STREET*, and Vandor's Astaire-Rogers image for the French *CAREFREE* (*AMANDA*). It shows Fred and Ginger in full flight in formal evening attire, an iconic image one knows from all their films.

In curating exhibits at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles, the Roy Furman Gallery in Lincoln Center, the Gallery of Film Poster Art at California State University, Northridge and now at the William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art, my hope is that the art of the movie poster will be recognized as a genuine art form, not a sidebar of popular culture, and that perhaps, painting and illustration may once again become part of today's movie poster mix.

A few years ago, the Odeon Cinema Circuit in Great Britain conducted a poll among their patrons to select the All-Time Best Film Poster. I collaborated on the one that topped their list, Stanley Kubrick's *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*. But picking "The Best" of anything is only an exercise. Robert Altman often said, "My movies are like my children. I love them equally, regardless of their success." Walking through *GOTTA DANCE!*, every wall is filled with favorites. With each piece I remember the excitement of the hunt for the acquisition, the exhilaration in discovering a knockout design, the surprise in learning an unexpected aspect of cinema history.

The movies have always been a prime source of escapism. The ideal movie poster is a microcosm of the movie itself, capturing with inventiveness the feeling one has after leaving the cinema. It should be both a work of art and a souvenir of one's movie experience.