

Yankee Doodle Dandy Encyclopedia Article

Yankee Doodle Dandy by Michael Curtiz

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Yankee Doodle Dandy

In 1942, James Cagney starred in the Hollywood film *Yankee Doodle Dandy* —the story of the life of George M. Cohan. The title refers to Cohan's famous song, "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy," written for the Broadway play, *Little Johnny Jones*, in 1904. In this musical, Cohan sang the lyrics that would live through the century: "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy, / A Yankee Doodle, do or die; / A real live nephew of my Uncle Sam's / Born on the Fourth of July." It is one of several Cohan tunes that have been passed from generation to generation in celebration of the American spirit. Released shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* was warmly received by American wartime audiences, who were particularly receptive to the patriotic songs in the film. Cagney won an Oscar for his performance, and the movie won Academy Awards for Best Sound Recording and Best Scoring of a Musical Picture. On July 4, 1985, the Cagney film was rereleased as the first computer-colored production by Ted Turner.

Further Reading:

Buckner, Robert, and Patrick McGilligan. *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981.

James Cagney in a scene from the film 8.