

Jack Brodsky

Publicist for Twentieth Century Fox's loss-making hit Cleopatra and producer of Funny Girl

In the course of his twin careers as film publicist and producer, Jack Brodsky worked with three of the biggest and most challenging female names in Hollywood history: Barbra Streisand, Liz Taylor and Cleopatra.

Getting publicity for the Ancient Egyptian epic was never going to be too difficult. It was then the most expensive film ever made and life mirrored art when romance blossomed between Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, both of whom were married to other people at the time. The film and the stars dominated the headlines. But, although *Cleopatra* was the biggest hit of 1963, it failed to recoup its \$44 million costs, forcing Twentieth Century Fox to sell most of its back lot to stay afloat.

Brodsky subsequently worked as publicist on *Funny Girl*, with Barbra Streisand, and set himself up as a producer with the diva's then-husband Elliott Gould. He went on to produce Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner's hugely popular comedy adventures *Romancing the Stone* and *The Jewel of the Nile* in the 1980s, and more recently the comedy *Black Knight*, with Martin Lawrence. His last film, *Daddy Day Care*, with Eddie Murphy as a father who loses his job and opens a nursery, opens in America in May.

The son of a vaudeville comedian, Jack Brodsky was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1932, and started in the film business in the advertising and publicity department at Warner Brothers in 1957.

At Twentieth Century Fox, he watched as *Cleopatra* spiraled out of control, and to the company's annoyance he and his assistant Nathan Weiss subsequently detailed their experiences in *The Cleopatra Papers*, in which they observed the excesses with detached humour, admitting their main priority was survival.

The experience persuaded Brodsky he could produce films better than some of the established producers and he and Elliott Gould formed Brodsky-Gould Productions in 1967. They joined forces with a view to filming Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant*, but instead made *Little Murders*, a black comedy with Gould reprising the role of a New York photographer bullied into marriage that he had previously played in a stage version.

By the early Seventies, Gould was poised to become a major star after the success of *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* and *MASH*. Brodsky-Gould had numerous projects in development and Brodsky saw his future very much in film production.

Fox put up the money for *Little Murders* on the condition Alan Arkin would not only direct it, but would appear in a supporting role. With production under way, however, Arkin decided he didn't want to act in it. Brodsky told him it was a legal obligation, but Gould sided with Arkin. It was the beginning of the end.

Among the ideas on which they had been working was a film based on the sex manual *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask* by Dr. David Reuben. The idea was picked up by Woody Allen, and turned into a series of sketches, with Brodsky-Gould retaining a credit and Brodsky serving as executive producer.

Brodsky subsequently produced the acclaimed drama *Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams* (1973), for which Joanne Woodward was nominated for the best actress Oscar. Later films included *King Ralph* (1991), in which John Goodman's Vegas entertainer becomes an unlikely king of England. Brodsky did not entirely abandon his publicity work, however. He was Streisand's publicity consultant and occasionally wrote about the industry for American newspapers. When Streisand was accused of taking an ego trip by both directing and starring in *The Prince of Tides*, Brodsky loyally sprang to her defense, pointing out that no such accusations were made when male stars took taken on directing duties.

Jack Brodsky, film producer, was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1932. He died in Los Angeles, on February 18, 2003, aged 69.