

# NEWS



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## BARBRA STREISAND OFFERS DIFFERENT SCREEN PORTRAIT OF FANNY BRICE

Barbra Streisand is playing Fanny Brice again -- but with a difference.

After portraying the popular entertainer of the Thirties and Forties in both the stage and screen versions of "Funny Girl," Ms. Streisand now takes up a later chapter in Fanny's biography in the new film, "Funny Lady." The musical romantic drama, a Columbia Pictures release in March, is a fictionalized account of the Billy Rose period in the comedienne's life and co-stars James Caan as Rose and Omar Sharif in a special guest appearance once more as Nick Arnstein.

"This is more of a real acting job for me," Barbra comments. "I have to deny a lot of myself. In 'Funny Girl,' I played a character who was more like me than Fanny Brice. She wasn't as durable as the real Fanny. The notes I read about her when she was older -- the period we cover in 'Funny Lady' -- interested me more than the earlier character.

"The first part of Fanny's life -- the 'Funny Girl' part, I guess you could say -- was dedicated to her fantasy, to the achievement of her career. She was almost totally obsessed with work. And her love life, I believe, was based on her self-deprecatory feelings about herself. Therefore, she was attracted to a man who was totally her opposite -- conventionally good-looking, not from the streets like she was. Sophisticated, polished fingernails.

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"In the second part of Fanny's life, I feel she starts to discover herself, gets into her own personal thing, and finally lets go of her illusions and fantasies about men. It bridges the kind of gap which she feels are negative qualities in her own personality -- being open to somebody who is like her, namely Billy Rose, tough and yet gentle.

"Altogether it's a most interesting framework for a film."

Be that as it may, the actress did not immediately embrace the plan to do a second picture about Fanny Brice.

"When (producer) Ray Stark first mentioned it to me, I told him I wouldn't do it," she reveals. "I said you can't capitalize on something that's worked before. But when I read the script which Jay Presson Allen wrote, I changed my mind. It was marvelous. And, now that the film is over, I know its better than 'Funny Girl.'"

"Funny Lady" also headlines Roddy McDowall, Ben Vereen and Carole Wells and features musical standards by Billy Rose and original songs by John Kander and Fred Ebb. Herbert Ross directed and Stark produced the Rastar Pictures, Inc., production for Columbia Pictures.

The combination of Barbra Streisand and Fanny Brice is one of the most fascinating parallels in acting annals. Ms. Streisand, herself, offers some cogent observations:

"Both of our careers started on a kind of funny-looking-girl-getting-famous basis. And she did crazy things like me. When I was a kid, I'd go up to a policeman and say, 'How do I get to Flatbush Avenue? I'd like to get home.' And he would say, 'You have to take two buses and get a transfer and go this way.' So, I'd say, 'But I don't have any money, just point the direction, and I'll walk. Then, the bus would come, and the policeman would tell the driver, 'Take this little girl to such-and-so

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and give her a transfer.' I had the bus fare. I just did it as a lark.

"Fanny used to sing in the streets of Coney Island and cry and say she was lost. People would give her money to get home.

"Spiritually, there's some kind of connection between us. I'll give you a wierd example. Gracie Davidson, who started as my dresser in "Funny Girl" on Broadway and has been with me ever since, lived for many years in the same Harlem building where Adele Moon, Fanny's maid for 25 years, lived.

"Another odd thing -- the first script for 'Funny Girl' was written when I was 11 years old. As I said when I received my Oscar for the part, 'Thank God it took them so long to get the script right.'

"There are other similarities between Fanny and me. She loved white; I love white. And I have the same kind of sense of humor.

"Of course, there are differences, too. For instance, she had her nose fixed to play leading parts, although she always was cast in character roles. I've been fortunate enough to play leading roles with my original nose!"

Barbra feels that "Funny Lady" is an especially appropriate project with which to close her first decade as a star. ("Funny Girl" opened on Broadway 10 years prior to the filming of "Funny Lady.")

"'Funny Girl' and 'Funny Lady' -- my first and last pictures about Fanny Brice," she remarks. "They're like a set of bookends."

Bookends that bracket one of the most phenomenal decades for a performer in entertainment history.

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