



BARBRA STREISAND

Born: Barbara Joan Streisand, April 24, 1942 (Brooklyn, New York, U.S.).

Star qualities: Popular singer; versatile leading lady of light comedies and romances; feisty; witty; comic timing; political liberal; director; producer; composer; writer.

More famous perhaps as a singer, Barbra Streisand has nonetheless made a significant mark on Hollywood filmmaking. Neither conventionally attractive nor particularly sexy, she was happily forced to take on roles in which these limitations would prove advantages. Impersonating Fanny Brice in both *Funny Girl* (1968) and *Funny Lady* (1975), Streisand proved talented at light comedy and romantic pathos. Although neither role required complicated acting, Streisand proved immensely popular as Brice, an easy choice for the Best Actress Oscar in *Funny Girl*. *Hello, Dolly!* (1969) perhaps tried too hard to work the same kind of magic.

On a Clear Day You Can See Forever (1970) showed clearly what Streisand could not do: convincingly portray a reincarnated Englishwoman. But two screwball comedies, *The Owl and the Pussycat* (1970) and *What's Up, Doc?* (1972) offered her ideal opportunities to display a talent for pure wackiness. She then went on to make one of the most profitable films of the 1970s, *The Way We Were* (1973), as her left-wing concerns and Jewish charm convincingly won over Robert Redford's priggish WASP. That same serious effervescence, and the fact that she looked good dressed in boys' clothes, made *Yentl*

(1983) a smash success, but she was less impressive as an abused woman turned bitter prostitute in *Nuts* (1987). She successfully impersonated a Jewish psychiatrist in *The Prince of Tides* (1991), and more recently, in perhaps her best performance since *Yentl*, Streisand reprises

the ethnically stereotypical role as psychiatrist for laughs in *Meet the Fockers* (2004), a film that allowed her to send up her intensity and her Jewishness as she became the cinema's most unabashed and celebrated sex therapist for seniors. **BP**

Top Takes...

- Meet the Fockers* 2004
- The Mirror Has Two Faces* 1996
- The Prince of Tides* 1991
- Nuts* 1987
- Yentl* 1983
- All Night Long* 1981
- The Main Event* 1979
- A Star Is Born* 1976
- Funny Lady* 1975
- The Way We Were* 1973 ☆**
- Up the Sandbox* 1972
- What's Up, Doc?* 1972
- The Owl and the Pussycat* 1970
- On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* 1970
- Hello, Dolly!* 1969
- Funny Girl* 1968 ★**

"I am simple, complex, generous, selfish, unattractive, beautiful, lazy, and driven."

RICHARD ROUNDTREE

Born: Richard Roundtree, July 9, 1942 (New Rochelle, New York, U.S.).

Star qualities: Handsome and suave; coolly stylish; athletic action hero; leading man and versatile character actor; icon of 1970s "blaxploitation" movies; magnetic screen presence.

"Who's the black private dick that's a sex machine to all the chicks?" It's John Shaft. But, more importantly, it's actor Richard Roundtree. Identification with a single character can be a blessing and a curse for an actor, and that couldn't be truer than in Roundtree's case. He's a gifted and complex actor who has appeared in dozens of movies and TV episodes since his breakthrough role in *Shaft* (1971), but he will always be remembered for that iconic performance. To those who didn't experience the film's presence in the early 1970s, the importance of *Shaft* may be difficult to understand, but it is a groundbreaking movie. It was arguably the first time that a sexy, strong, confident African-American male dominated the screen in an action film released by a big Hollywood studio.

Shaft was one of the earliest and most significant "blaxploitation" movies of the 1970s, and Roundtree was at its center, just as he continued to reprise his eponymous role in the two sequels, *Shaft's Big Score!* (1972) and *Shaft in Africa* (1973). Unfortunately, *Shaft* is not a particularly good film; originally a generic detective movie written for a white lead, it is plodding and dull. But Roundtree brings a charismatic presence and playful wit to the proceedings, and he deserved to be a bigger star. Much of his work following the *Shaft* trio is not memorable, but he has remained a solid working actor. He also has an underrated gift for comedy, a quality more evident in his TV work than in his big screen roles. But his filmography is proof that an actor is not always able to capitalize on a spectacular debut role. Other than sporadic supporting turns in titles such as *Se7en* (1995), the Samuel L. Jackson revival of *Shaft* (2000), and *Brick* (2005), much of Roundtree's work is in fare unworthy of his talents. **TC**



Top Takes...

- Brick* 2005
- Boat Trip* 2002
- Shaft* 2000
- Original Gangstas* 1996
- Theodore Rex* 1995
- Se7en* 1995
- Once Upon a Time... When We Were Colored* 1995
- Miami Cops* 1989
- City Heat* 1984
- Diamonds* 1975
- Man Friday* 1975
- Earthquake* 1974
- Shaft in Africa* 1973
- Shaft's Big Score!* 1972
- Shaft* 1971

"Number one, it put me on the map... To this day that film still works."—On *Shaft*