

Elton John

LESLIE BRICUSSE AND I BOTH GREW UP IN PINNER and will demand a blue plaque when we're gone! We were infatuated with cinema and music, and both became songwriters.

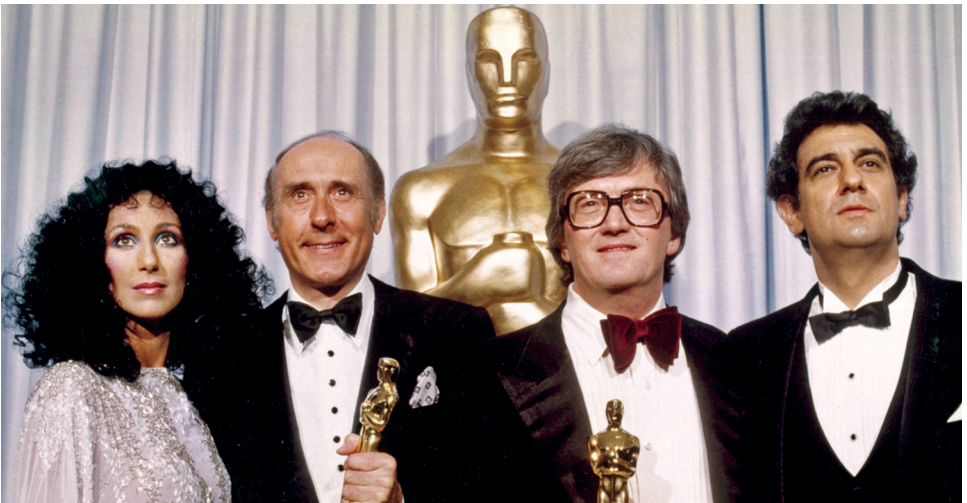
His friendship and encouragement have meant so much to me, and his career is one that I will always aspire to. What people he has worked with – such incredible tales of games, brilliance and fun. He has worked and written for the best, and in this brilliant book has chronicled it all for us to share. (Not Cher.)

His recall of events is crystal clear, and his irresistible take on people is fabulous.

Rule 1: *Never* turn down an invitation to lunch or dinner with Leslie and Evie. You listen and laugh and wish you had been there.

His catalogue of songs is enormous – his achievements endless. Anyone who has written 'What Kind of Fool Am I?' and 'My Old Man's a Dustman' should be revered for ever.

Bricusse is an amazing man full of life, love and, like me, is still searching for the perfect song. I love him dearly. After reading this book I love him even more. (And you too, Evie!)



56 Newley, Mancini and I congratulate Sammy for *Stopping the World*

57 Cher and Placido Domingo make my and Mancini's day at the Oscars!

58 Congratulating Dickie Attenborough on his double Oscar win for *Gandhi*

a meal as delectable as herself, and the three of us sat and ate and talked way past midnight in the kitchen of their flat in Westminster, until I had run out of killer persuasive chit-chat. I left Albie with the script and score of *Scrooge*, and went home to pray.

Happily, God, Albert, Charles Dickens and the Department of Fate were all listening. Less than twenty-four hours later, Albie was having his first costume fittings. Disaster went away with its tail between its legs, never to return. We opened at Radio City Music Hall on schedule the following November, broke all their box-office records, and Albert was nothing less than sensational. The film still plays on television every Christmas, and whenever I see it I remember what I now call ‘The Three Scrooges’ – Richard, Rex and Albie – my very own ghosts of Christmas Past.



I predicted to Evie when we arrived in California in 1965 that we would be lucky if the Hollywood craze for making musicals out of just about everything were to last another five years. Well, it did, but barely. It was becoming increasingly clear that film musicals were at their last gasp. The dinosaur was dying, to be replaced in the world’s affections by low-budget, money-making phenomena like *Easy Rider*, which was already revving up in the wings, ready to drive on and take over the cinema screens and box office of America.

It would soon be time to start thinking about the Tarzan-like pendulum swing back into the theatre, from one jungle to the other. Tony Newley and I met to consider the pros and cons of this move back to the future. I was more ready for it, perhaps, than he was at the time, to embrace the less luxurious but equally alluring hazards of putting together a stage show where, unlike a movie, you can continue to replace and improve the bits that don’t work, and where the writer’s opinions are the last things to be discarded, rather than the first. That said, my own experiences in Hollywood belied that perennial cliché. My producers and directors were always scrupulously fair to me in all creative areas, making me perhaps the exception that proved the rule.

Newley was at something of a crossroads in his career at this time. His recording career was past its peak, he had no plans, alas, to return to Broadway. His film career was in limbo after the multiple