

= James L. Brooks =

James Lawrence " Jim " Brooks (born May 9 , 1940) is an American director , producer and screenwriter . Growing up in North Bergen , New Jersey , Brooks endured a fractured family life and passed the time by reading and writing . After dropping out of New York University , he got a job as an usher at CBS , going on to write for the CBS News broadcasts . He moved to Los Angeles in 1965 to work on David L. Wolper 's documentaries . After being laid off he met producer Allan Burns who secured him a job as a writer on the series My Mother the Car .

Brooks wrote for several shows before being hired as a story editor on My Friend Tony and later created the series Room 222 . Grant Tinker hired Brooks and Burns at MTM Productions to create The Mary Tyler Moore Show in 1970 . The show , one of the first to feature an independent working woman as its lead character , was critically acclaimed and won Brooks several Primetime Emmy Awards . Brooks and Burns then created two successful spin @-@ offs from Mary Tyler Moore in the shape of Rhoda (a comedy) and Lou Grant (a drama) . Brooks left MTM Productions in 1978 to co @-@ create the sitcom Taxi which , despite winning multiple Emmys , suffered from low ratings and was canceled twice .

Brooks moved into feature film work when he wrote and co @-@ produced the 1979 film Starting Over . His next project was the critically acclaimed film Terms of Endearment , which he produced , directed and wrote , winning an Academy Award for all three positions . Basing his next film , Broadcast News , on his journalistic experiences , the film earned him a further two Academy Award nominations . Although his 1994 work I 'll Do Anything was hampered by negative press attention due to the cutting of all of its recorded musical numbers , As Good as It Gets (co @-@ written with Mark Andrus) earned further praise . It was seven years until his next film , 2004 's Spanglish . His sixth film , How Do You Know , was released in 2010 . Brooks also produced and mentored Cameron Crowe on Say Anything ... (1989) and Wes Anderson and Owen Wilson on Bottle Rocket (1996) .

In 1984 , Brooks founded the television and film company , Gracie Films . Although he did not intend to do so , Brooks returned to television in 1987 as the producer of The Tracey Ullman Show . He hired cartoonist Matt Groening to create a series of shorts for the show , which eventually led to The Simpsons in 1989 . The Simpsons won numerous awards and is still running . Brooks also co @-@ produced and co @-@ wrote the 2007 film adaptation of the show , The Simpsons Movie . In total , Brooks has received 47 Emmy nominations , winning 20 of them .

= = Early life = =

Brooks was born James Lawrence Brooks on May 9 , 1940 in Brooklyn , New York , United States , and raised in North Bergen , New Jersey . His parents , Dorothy Helen (née Sheinheit) and Edward M. Brooks , were both salespeople (his mother sold children 's clothes ; his father furniture) . The Brooks family was Jewish ; Edward Brooks changed his surname from Bernstein and claimed to be Irish . Brooks ' father abandoned his mother when he found out she was pregnant with him , and lost contact with his son when Brooks was twelve . During the pregnancy , Brooks ' father sent his wife a postcard stating that " If it 's a boy , name him Jim . " His mother died when he was 22 . He has described his early life as " tough " with a " broken home , [and him being] poor and sort of lonely , that sort of stuff " , later adding : " My father was sort of in @-@ and @-@ out and my mother worked long hours , so there was no choice but for me to be alone in the apartment a lot . " He has an older sister , Diane , who helped look after him as a child and to whom he dedicated As Good As It Gets .

Brooks spent much of his childhood " surviving " and reading numerous comedic and scripted works , as well as writing ; he sent comedic short stories out to publishers and occasionally got positive responses although none were published , and he did not believe he could make a career as a writer . Brooks attended Weehawken High School but was not a high achiever . He was on his high school newspaper team and frequently secured interviews with celebrities including Louis Armstrong . He lists some of his influences as Sid Caesar , Jack Benny , Lenny Bruce , Mike Nichols

and Elaine May , as well as writers Paddy Chayefsky and F. Scott Fitzgerald .

= = Career = =

= = = Television = = =

In 1987 , the Chicago Sun @-@ Times described Brooks ' career as " a non @-@ stop crescendo . " Although he dropped out of a New York University public relations course , Brooks ' sister got him a job as a host at CBS in New York City , a job usually requiring a college education , as she was friends with a secretary there . He held it for two and a half years . For two weeks he filled in as a copywriter for CBS News and was given the job permanently when the original employee never returned . Brooks went on to become a writer for the news broadcasts , joining the Writers Guild of America and writing reports on events such as the assassination of President Kennedy . He moved to Los Angeles in 1965 , to write for documentaries being produced by David L. Wolper , something he " still [hasn 't] quite figured out how [he] got the guts to do , " as his job at CBS was secure and well @-@ paid . He worked as an associate producer on series such as Men in Crisis but after sixth months he was laid off as the company were trying to cut back on expenses . Brooks did occasionally work for Wolper 's company again , including on a National Geographic insect special .

Failing to find another job at a news agency , he met producer Allan Burns at a party . Burns got him a job on My Mother the Car where he was hired to rewrite a script after pitching some story ideas . Brooks then went on to write episodes of That Girl , The Andy Griffith Show and My Three Sons before Sheldon Leonard hired him as a story editor on My Friend Tony . In 1969 he created for ABC the series Room 222 , which lasted until 1974 . Room 222 was the second series in American history to feature a black lead character , in this case high school teacher Pete Dixon played by Lloyd Haynes . The network felt the show was sensitive and so attempted to change the pilot story so that Dixon helped a white student rather than a black one , but Brooks prevented it . On the show Brooks worked with Gene Reynolds who taught him the importance of extensive and diligent research , which he conducted at Los Angeles High School for Room 222 , and he used the technique on his subsequent works . Brooks left Room 222 as head writer after one year to work on other pilots and brought Burns in to produce the show .

Brooks and Burns were hired by CBS programming executive Grant Tinker to create a series together with MTM Productions for Tinker 's wife Mary Tyler Moore which became The Mary Tyler Moore Show . Drawing on his own background in journalism , Brooks set the show in a newsroom . Initially the show was unpopular with CBS executives who demanded Tinker fire Brooks and Burns . However the show was one of the beneficiaries of network president Fred Silverman 's " rural purge " ; executive Bob Wood also liked the show and moved it into a better timeslot . Brooks and Burns hired all of the show 's staff themselves and eventually ended it of their own accord . The Mary Tyler Moore Show became a critical and commercial success and was the first show to feature an independent @-@ minded , working woman , not reliant on a man , as its lead . Geoff Hammill of the Museum of Broadcast Communications described it as " one of the most acclaimed television programs ever produced " in US television history . During its seven @-@ year period it received high praise from critics and numerous Primetime Emmy Awards including for three years in a row Outstanding Comedy Series . In 2003 , USA Today called it " one of the best shows ever to air on TV " . In 1997 , TV Guide selected a Mary Tyler Moore Show episode as the best TV episode ever and in 1999 , Entertainment Weekly picked Mary 's hat toss in the opening credits as television 's second greatest moment .

With Mary Tyler Moore going strong , Brooks produced and wrote the TV film Thursday 's Game , before creating the short @-@ lived series Paul Sand in Friends and Lovers in 1974 . He and Burns moved on to Rhoda , a spin @-@ off of Mary Tyler Moore , taking Valerie Harper 's character Rhoda Morgenstern into her own show . It was well received , lasting four years and earning Brooks several Emmys . The duo 's next project came in 1977 in the shape of Lou Grant , a second Mary Tyler Moore spin @-@ off , which they created along with Tinker . Unlike its source however , the series

was a drama starring Edward Asner as Grant . James Brown of the Museum of Broadcast Communications said it " explore [d] a knotty issue facing media people in contemporary society , focusing on how investigating and reporting those issues impact on the layers of personalities populating a complex newspaper publishing company . " The show was also critically acclaimed , twice winning the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series and also a Peabody Award .

Brooks left MTM Productions in 1978 and formed the John Charles Walters Company along with David Davis , Stan Daniels and Ed Weinberger . They decided to produce Taxi , a show about a New York taxi company , which unlike the other MTM Productions focused on the " blue @-@ collar male experience " . Brooks and Davis had been inspired by the article " Night @-@ Shifting for the Hip Fleet " by Mark Jacobson , which appeared in the September 22 , 1975 issue of New York magazine . The show began on ABC in 1978 airing on Tuesday nights after Three 's Company which generated high ratings and after two seasons it was moved to Wednesday . Its ratings fell and in 1982 it was canceled ; NBC picked it up , but the ratings remained low and it was dropped after one season . Despite its ratings , it won three consecutive Outstanding Comedy Series Emmys . Brooks ' last TV show produced before he began making films was The Associates (1979 ? 1980) for ABC . Despite positive critical attention , the show was quickly canceled .

Alex Simon of Venice Magazine described Brooks as " [bringing] realism to the previously overstated world of television comedy . Brooks ' fingerprints can now be seen in shows such as Seinfeld , Friends , Ally McBeal and numerous other shows from the 1980 's and 90 's . " Brooks ' sitcoms were some of the first with a " focus on character " using an ensemble cast in a non @-@ domestic situation .

= = = Film = = =

In 1978 , Brooks began work on feature films . His first project was the 1979 film Starting Over which he wrote and co @-@ produced with Alan J. Pakula . He adapted the screenplay from a novel by Dan Wakefield into a film The Washington Post called " a good @-@ humored , heartening update of traditional romantic comedy " unlike the " drab " novel .

Brooks ' next project came in 1983 , when he wrote , produced and directed Terms of Endearment , adapting the screenplay from Larry McMurtry 's novel of the same name . It cost \$ 8 @.@ 5 million and took four years to film . Brooks won the Academy Awards for Best Picture , Director and Adapted Screenplay .

Brooks was fearful of the attention Oscar success would bring as he would be " deprived of a low profile " , finding it " hard to work with the spotlight shining in your eyes . " He added : " There 's a danger of being seduced into being self @-@ conscious , of being aware of your ' career ' . That can be lethal . " He also grew more concerned of the " threatening " corporate influence into the film industry at the expense of " the idea of the creative spirit " . He channeled this ambivalence into Broadcast News . As a romantic comedy , Brooks felt he could say " something new ... with that form " adding " One of the things you 're supposed to do every once in a while as a filmmaker is capture time and place . I was just glad there was some way to do it in a comedy . " He cast William Hurt , Holly Hunter and Albert Brooks in the three main roles .

He wished to set the film in a field he understood and opted for broadcast journalism . After talking with network journalists at the 1984 Republican National Convention , Brooks realised it had " changed so much since I had been near it " , and so " did about a year and a half of solid research , " into the industry . When he began writing the screenplay , Brooks felt he " didn 't like any of the three [main] characters " , but decided not to change them and after two months had reversed his original opinion . Brooks stated that this also happens to the audience : " You 're always supposed to arc your characters and you have this change and that 's your dramatic purpose . But what I hope happens in this film is that the audience takes part in the arc . So what happens is that the movie doesn 't select its own hero . It plays differently with each audience . The audience helps create the experience , depending on which character they hook onto . " He did not decide on the ending of the film until the rest of it had been completed . Brooks was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best

Picture and Best Original Screenplay for Broadcast News . At the 38th Berlin International Film Festival , the film was nominated for the Golden Bear and Holly Hunter won the Silver Bear for Best Actress .

His 1994 film I 'll Do Anything , starring Nick Nolte , was conceived and filmed by Brooks as an old @-@ fashioned movie musical and parody of " Hollywood lifestyles and movie clichés " , costing \$ 40 million . It featured songs by Carole King , Prince , and Sinéad O 'Connor , among others , with choreography by Twyla Tharp . When preview audience reactions to the music were overwhelmingly negative , all production numbers from the film were cut and Brooks wrote several new scenes , filming them over three days and spending seven weeks editing the film down to two hours . Brooks noted : " Something like this not only tries one 's soul ? it threatens one 's soul . " While it was not unusual for Brooks to edit his films substantially after preview screenings on this occasion he was " denied any privacy " because the media reported the negative reviews before its release and " it had to be good enough to counter all this bad publicity . " It was a commercial failure , and Brooks attempted to produce a documentary about it four years later but was scuppered by failing to obtain the rights to Prince 's song .

Brooks agreed to produce and direct Old Friends , a screenplay by Mark Andrus . Andrus ' script " needed you to suspend disbelief " but Brooks realised " my style when directing is that I really don 't know how to get people to suspend disbelief . " Brooks spent a year reworking the screenplay : " There were changes made and the emphasis was changed but it 's the product , really , of a very unusual writing team , " and the project became As Good as It Gets , taking a year to produce after funding had been secured . According to The New York Times , Brooks " was constantly experimenting , constantly reshooting , constantly re @-@ editing " the film , changing its ending five times and allowing the actors to improvise the film 's tone .

The film garnered more praise than I 'll Do Anything and Brooks was again nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay . As Good as It Gets received a total of seven Academy Award nominations , winning two , both for Best Actor for Jack Nicholson and Best Actress for Helen Hunt . Jonathan Rosenbaum of the Chicago Reader labelled it Brooks ' best film , stating " what Brooks manages to do with [the characters] as they struggle mightily to connect with one another is funny , painful , beautiful , and basically truthful ? a triumph for everyone involved . " It also ranked 140 in Empire 's 2008 list of " The 500 Greatest Movies of All Time " . Brooks cast Jack Nicholson in both Terms of Endearment and As Good as It Gets with the actor taking an Academy Award for each role .

Brooks did not direct and write a film again for seven years until 2004 's Spanglish . Filming took six months , ending in June with three days of additional filming in October ; Brooks produced three endings for the film , shooting several scenes in " 15 to 25 takes " as he did not feel the film was tonally complete , although the script did not change much during filming . He opted to cast Adam Sandler in a more dramatic role than his usual goofball comedy parts based on his performance in Punch @-@ Drunk Love and Sandler 's relationship with his family . Describing the length of production , Brooks said : " It 's amazing how much more perverse you are as a writer than as a director . I remember just being so happy that I 'd painted myself into some corners [while writing] . I thought that would make it interesting . When I had to wrestle with that as a director , it was a different story . " Brooks 's directing style " drove [the cast] bats " , especially Téa Leoni , with Cloris Leachman (who replaced an ill Anne Bancroft a month into filming) describing it as " free @-@ falling . You 're not going for some result . It 's just , throw it in the air and see where it lands . " The film was poorly received and was a box @-@ office failure .

His next film , entitled How Do You Know , was released December 17 , 2010 ; Brooks produced , directed and wrote it . The film stars Reese Witherspoon as a professional softball player involved in a love triangle . Brooks began work on the film in 2005 , wishing to create a film about a young female athlete . While interviewing numerous women for hundreds of hours in his research for the film he also become interested in " the dilemmas of contemporary business executives , who are sometimes held accountable by the law for corporate behavior of which they may not even be aware . " He created Paul Rudd and Jack Nicholson 's characters for this concept . Filming finished in November 2009 , although Brooks later reshot the film 's opening and ending . The New York Times

described it as " perhaps the most closely guarded of Columbia 's movies this year . " Brooks was paid \$ 10 million for the project , which cost \$ 100 million . The film was negatively received . Patrick Goldstein wrote in the Los Angeles Times that " the characters were stick figures , the jokes were flat , the situations felt scarily insular . " He felt the film showed Brooks had " finally lost his comic mojo " concluding " his films used to have a wonderfully restless , neurotic energy , but How Do You Know feels like it was phoned in from someone resting uncomfortably on his laurels . " Variety 's Peter Debruge also felt the film showed Brooks had lost his " spark " . Richard Corliss of Time was more positive , writing " without being great , it 's still the flat @-@ out finest romantic comedy of the year , " while " Brooks hasn 't lost his gift for dreaming up heroes and heroines who worry amusingly . "

Brooks started his own film and television production company , Gracie Films , in 1984 . He produced Big (1988) and The War of the Roses (1989) . Brooks mentored Cameron Crowe and was the executive producer of Crowe 's directorial debut Say Anything ... (1989) and produced his later film Jerry Maguire (1996) . Brooks also helped Owen Wilson and Wes Anderson after their feature @-@ length script and short film version of Bottle Rocket (1996) were brought to his attention . Brooks went to Wilson and Anderson 's apartment in Dallas after agreeing to produce the film . Wilson stated : " I think he felt kind of sorry for us " . Despite having " the worst [script] reading [Brooks] had ever heard " , Brooks kept faith in the project . Brooks produced and directed Brooklyn Laundry , his first theatrical production , in 1990 . It starred Glenn Close , Woody Harrelson and Laura Dern . In 2007 , Brooks appeared ? along with Nora Ephron , Carrie Fisher and others in Dreams on Spec , a documentary about screenwriting in Hollywood .

= = = Return to television = = =

Although Brooks " never meant " to return to television , he was helping Tracey Ullman start The Tracey Ullman Show and when she could not find another producer , he stepped in . On the suggestion of friend and colleague Polly Platt , who gave Brooks the nine panel Life in Hell cartoon entitled " The Los Angeles Way of Death " which hangs outside Brooks ' Gracie Films office , Brooks asked Life in Hell cartoonist Matt Groening to pitch an idea for a series of animated shorts to appear on The Tracey Ullman Show . Groening initially intended to present an animated version of his Life in Hell series . However , when Groening realized that animating Life in Hell would require the rescinding of publication rights for his life 's work , he chose another approach and formulated his version of a dysfunctional family in the lobby of Brooks ' office . After the success of the shorts , the Fox Broadcasting Company in 1989 commissioned a series of half @-@ hour episodes of the show , now called The Simpsons , which Brooks produced alongside Groening and Sam Simon . Brooks negotiated a provision in the contract with the Fox network that prevented Fox from interfering with the show 's content . According to writer Jon Vitti , Brooks contributed more to the episode " Lisa 's Substitute " than to any other in the show 's history . The Simpsons garnered critical and commercial acclaim , winning numerous awards and is still producing original content after 20 years . In a 1998 issue celebrating the 20th century 's greatest achievements in arts and entertainment , Time magazine named The Simpsons the century 's best television series . In 1997 , Brooks was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame .

In 1995 , Brooks and Groening were involved in a public dispute over the episode " A Star Is Burns " . Groening felt that the episode was a thirty @-@ minute advertisement for Brooks ' show The Critic (which had moved to Fox from ABC for its second season) , and was created by former The Simpsons showrunners Al Jean and Mike Reiss , and whose lead character Jay Sherman appears in the episode . He hoped Brooks would pull the episode because " articles began to appear in several newspapers around the country saying that [Groening] created The Critic " , and removed his names from the credits . In response , Brooks said " I am furious with Matt , he 's been going to everybody who wears a suit at Fox and complaining about this . When he voiced his concerns about how to draw The Critic into the Simpsons ' universe he was right and we agreed to his changes . Certainly he 's allowed his opinion , but airing this publicly in the press is going too far . [...] He is a gifted , adorable , cuddly ingrate . But his behavior right now is rotten . "

The Critic was short @-@ lived , broadcasting ten episodes on Fox before its cancellation . A total of only 23 episodes were produced , and it returned briefly in 2000 with a series of ten internet broadcast webisodes . The series has since developed a cult following thanks to reruns on Comedy Central and its complete series release on DVD . His early 1990s shows Sibs and Phenom , both produced as part of a multi @-@ show deal with ABC , and the 2001 show What About Joan for the same network , were all similarly short @-@ lived .

Brooks co @-@ produced and co @-@ wrote the 2007 feature @-@ length film adaptation of The Simpsons , The Simpsons Movie . He directed the voice cast for the first time since the television show 's early seasons . Dan Castellaneta found the recording sessions " more intense " than recording the television series , and " more emotionally dramatic " . Some scenes , such as Marge 's video message to Homer , were recorded over one hundred times , leaving the voice cast exhausted . Brooks conceived the idea for , co @-@ produced and co @-@ wrote the Maggie @-@ centric short film The Longest Daycare , which played in front of Ice Age : Continental Drift in 2012 . It was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2013 .

= = Personal life = =

Brooks was married twice . He was married to Marianne Catherine Morrissey and has one daughter with her , Amy Lorraine Brooks ; they divorced in 1964 . Marianne Brooks has donated over \$ 175 @,@ 000 to Democratic Party candidates . He was married to Holly Beth Holmberg from 1978 to 1999 ; they had three children together , daughter Chloe and sons Cooper and Joseph . He is also a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi .

= = Filmography = =

= = = Films = = =

= = = Television = = =