

Cleopatra Encyclopedia Article

Cleopatra

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The story of Cleopatra has been a perennial favorite for the Hollywood cinema. The most notorious version remains the 1963 epic starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton—a film whose box office failure is credited with helping to destroy the Hollywood studio system. Made for a then staggering 44 million dollars, the production was fraught with setbacks and scandals, and film historian David Cook noted that the "disastrous" four-hour film had not broken even, some thirty-six years later. Received badly by both audiences and critics, *Cleopatra* paled in comparison to the off-screen antics of its stars. The cast's real-life adultery, life-threatening illness, and the grand passion between Taylor and Burton provoked the first major paparazzi feeding frenzy of the 1960s.

Further Reading:

Brodsky, Jack, and Nathan Weiss. *The Cleopatra Papers: A Private Correspondence*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1963.

Cook, David. *A History of Narrative Film*. 2nd ed. New York, W.W.Norton and Company, 1990.