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## Tom Pollock, Former Universal Motion Picture Group Chairman, Dies at 77

Tom Pollock, the former chairman of Universal Pictures and the American Film Institute, died Saturday night of a heart attack at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. He was 77.

BY

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**Tom Pollock**, the former chairman of Universal Pictures and the American Film Institute, died Saturday night at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles following a heart attack. He was 77.

Director-producer Rob Cohen, Pollock’s close friend and former client, confirmed the news of Pollock’s death. “He was an amazing man,” Cohen said.

Pollock began his career as an entertainment lawyer, ultimately becoming senior partner at Pollock, Bloom and Dekom. As an attorney, he worked with filmmakers such as George Lucas, who was one of Pollock’s first clients. Pollock worked alongside Lucas while he worked on his film *THX-1138* and later helped Lucas in the negotiations of *Star Wars* merchandising and sequel rights. He also negotiated all the legal deals for Lucas’ *American Graffiti* and the *Indiana Jones* franchise.

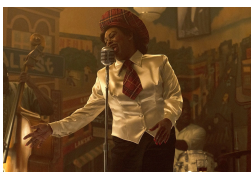
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Pollock later transitioned to become a studio executive and producer. He was named executive vp of MCA Inc. and chairman of Universal Pictures in 1986, where he oversaw the release of box office successes including *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler’s List*, *Field of Dreams* and the *Back to the Future* trilogy.

Spike Lee also has given Pollock credit for not only greenlighting but also standing behind what would become his 1989 masterpiece, *Do the Right Thing*. Lee **told** *The Hollywood Reporter* in a 2019 interview that Pollock didn’t back down when Universal was being pressured not to release the film, or at least push its release back out of the summer months, amid fears of racial unrest.

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The director continued: “People forget that Tom Pollock had just went through hell with Scorsese’s *Last Temptation of Christ* when he received death threats. So, he could have easily said to me, ‘Spike, I can’t put my family through this again.’ He didn’t do that. Tom Pollock was not scared at all.”

Born April 10, 1943, Thomas Philip Pollock grew up in Beverly Hills and went to prep school in Ojai, California, before graduating from Stanford and earning his law degree from Columbia Law School.

He started his career in Hollywood as an assistant to American Film Institute founder George Stevens Jr.

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Pollock went on to become a member of AFI’s Board of Trustees in 1985 and served on the board for 35 years. He became chairman of the board in 1996; during his tenure, AFI debuted its *100 Years...100 Movies* television special and its annual AFI Awards (a jury of which he chaired in 17 of the 20 years since its establishment). He most recently was the board’s vice chair.

“He had a long, great history at AFI,” current AFI chief Bob Gazzale told *THR*. “Tom’s lasting legacy at AFI and beyond will be the way that he focused his unmatched legal mind in service of great stories. He loved the movies like nobody else.”

In 1998, Pollock founded the Montecito Picture Co. with Ivan Reitman. The company produced the 2009 Oscar-nominated film *Up in the Air*. Its other films include *Road Trip*, *Old School*, *Disturbia*, *I Love You, Man*, *Chloe*, *No Strings Attached*, *Hitchcock*, *Draft Day*, *Baywatch*, *Father Figures* and 2016’s *Ghostbusters*.

Survivors include his children, Alexandra, Luke and Allegra, and grandchildren Benjamin, Haley, Amelia and Owen.