

Sergio Leone: **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST** (1968, 175m)

*Spelling and Style—use of italics, quotation marks or nothing at all for titles, e.g.—follows the form of the sources.  
Cast and crew name hyperlinks connect to the individuals' Wikipedia entries*



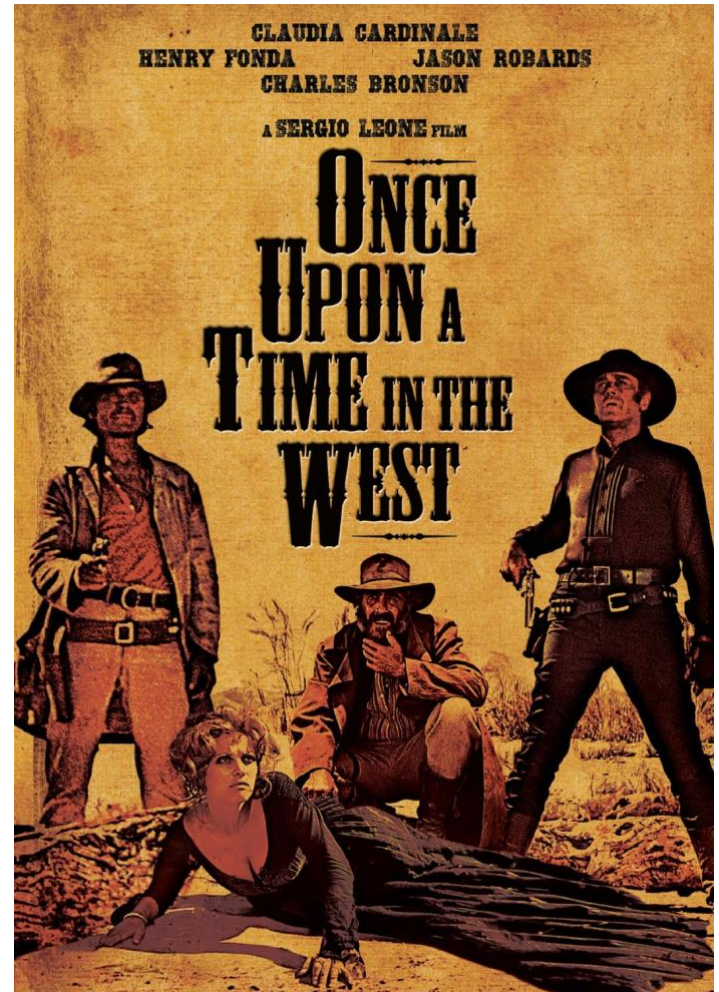
[Vimeo link for ALL of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the Fall 2020 BFS](#)

**Zoom link for all Fall 2020 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions:**  
<https://buffalo.zoom.us/j/92994947964?pwd=dDBWcDYvSlhPbkd4TkswcUhiQWkydz09>  
Meeting ID: 929 9494 7964  
Passcode: 703450

**Directed by** Sergio Leone  
**Written by** Sergio Donati & Sergio Leone (screenplay);  
Dario Argento, Bernardo Bertolucci and Sergio Leone  
(original story)  
**Producer** Fulvio Morsella  
**Music** Ennio Morricone  
**Cinematography** Tonino Delli Colli  
**Film Editing** Nino Baragli  
**Art Direction** Carlo Simi

Claudia Cardinale...Jill McBain  
Henry Fonda...Frank  
Jason Robards...Cheyenne  
Charles Bronson...Harmonica  
Gabriele Ferzetti...Morton - Railroad Baron  
Paolo Stoppa...Sam  
Woody Strode...Stony - Member of Frank's Gang  
Jack Elam...Snaky - Member of Frank's Gang  
Keenan Wynn...Sheriff - Auctioneer  
Frank Wolff...Brett McBain  
Lionel Stander ...Barman

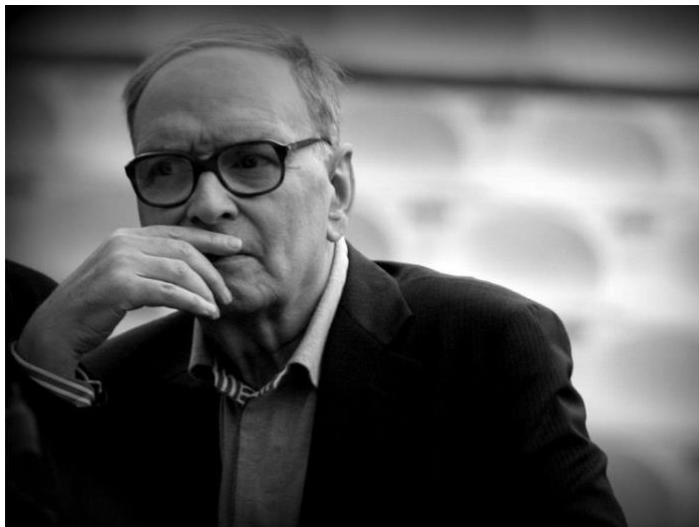
**SERGIO LEONE** (b. January 3, 1929 in Rome, Italy—d. April 30, 1989, in Rome, Italy) is perhaps the most well-



known spaghetti western director of all time. Leone entered films in his late teens, working as an assistant director to both Italian directors and U.S. directors working in Italy (usually making Biblical and Roman epics, much in vogue at the time). Towards the end of the 1950s he started writing screenplays, and began directing after taking over *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1959) in mid-shoot after its original director, Mario Bonnard, fell ill.

When he made *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), his stylistic influence switched from the more frenetic pace of Hollywood westerns (which he put on hyper-drive for the "Dollars" trilogy with Clint Eastwood) to the slower, tenser style of Japanese samurai films, mainly those of Akira Kurosawa. Characters in his films frequently play a musical device, with the music appearing also in the composer's score {Indio's watch chimes in *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), Harmonica's harmonica in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)}. He frequently used the "Mexican standoff," whereby three men each point a gun at each other at the same time

(adopted later by John Woo and Quentin Tarantino). Although they did not work together until 1964, as children Leone and composer Ennio Morricone were classmates. Morricone has said that Leone asked him to compose a film's music before the start of principal photography—contrary to normal practice. He would then play the music to the actors during takes to enhance their performance. . He directed *Duck, You Sucker!* (1971), reluctantly, and turned down offers to direct *The Godfather* (1972) in favor of his dream project, which became *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984). He died in 1989 after preparing an even more expensive Soviet coproduction on the World War II siege of Leningrad. He directed and wrote 12 films which are *C'era una Volta in America* (*Once Upon a Time in America*, 1984), *Un Genio, Due Compari, un Pollo* (*A Genius, Two Friends, and an Idiot*, uncredited, his last western, 1975), *Giù la Testa* (*Duck, You Sucker!*, 1971), *C'era una volta il West* (*Once Upon a Time in the West*, 1968), *Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo* (*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, 1966), *Per Qualche Dollaro n Più* (*For a Few Dollars More*, 1965), *Per un Pugno di Dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*, 1964), *Il Colosso di Rodi* (*The Colossus of Rhodes*, 1961) and *Gli Ultimi Giorni di Pompei* (*The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1959). He also directed (uncredited) *Afrodite, dea dell'amore* (*We Stole the Tram*, 1956). He was credited as a writer on 7 additional films: *Troppo forte* (1986), *My Name Is Nobody* (idea, 1973), *Le verdi bandiere di Allah* (writer, 1963), *Duel of the Titans* (dialogue – story/ screenplay, 1961), *The Seven Revenges* (1961), *Sheba and the Gladiator* (writer, 1959) and *Aphrodite, Goddess of Love* (screenplay, 1958)



**ENNIO MORRICONE** (b. November 10, 1928, Rome—d. 6 July 2020, Rome, Italy) is perhaps the Susan Lucci of the Oscars, having been nominated six times for Best Original Score, yet never won until 2016, when he received an Oscar for *The Hateful Eight*. His other films include, *Malèna* (2000), *Bugsy* (1991), *The Untouchables*

(1987) and *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *Days of Heaven* (1978). Contrary to Quentin Tarantino's claim at the Golden Globes this year that Morricone has never won an award for an additional film when he accepted the award on Morricone's behalf for *The Hateful Eight* (2015), the composer *has* won Golden Globes in the past. Specifically, he won for Best Original Score for *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* (1998) in 2000 and in 1987 for *The Mission* (1986). He was also nominated an additional four times. He has also won one Grammy for Best Album of Original Instrumental Background Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television for his work on *The Untouchables* (1987) and been nominated three additional times. A tireless worker, Morricone has composed for over 527 films and TV series, some of which are *Voyage of Time* (Documentary, post-production, 2016), *La corrispondenza* (2016), *Love Story* (2011), *Karol: A Man Who Became Pope* (TV Movie, 2006), *Ripley's Game* (2002), *Mission to Mars* (2000), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1998), *The Legend of 1900* (1998), *Bulworth* (1998), *Lolita* (1997), *Who Killed Pasolini?* (1995), *A Pure Formality* (1994), *In the Line of Fire* (1993), *Bugsy* (1991), *Hamlet* (1990), *State of Grace* (1990), *Casualties of War* (1989), *The Untouchables* (1987), *The Mission* (1986), *Red Sonja* (1985), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *Sahara* (1983), *White Dog* (1982), *The Professional* (1981), *La cage aux folles II* (1980), *Luna* (1972), *Corleone* (1978), *La Cage aux Folles* (1978), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *Orca* (1977), *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977), *1900* (1976), *A Genius, Two Friends, and an Idiot* (1975), *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), *The Devil Is a Woman* (1974), *My Name Is Nobody* (1973), *Bluebeard* (1972), *Duck, You Sucker* (1971), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1971), *The Decameron* (1971), *Sacco & Vanzetti* (1971), *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970), *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* (1970), *Machine Gun McCain* (1969), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968, music composed by), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), *The Big Gundown* (1966), *Navajo Joe* (1966), *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), *A Pistol for Ringo* (1965), *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *Eighteen in the Sun* (1962), *Crazy Desire* (1962), *The Fascist* (1961), *La signora delle camelie* (1992). For more on Morricone's incomparable contribution to film, see Dan Golding: [“Ennio Morricone and the Stuff of Cinema”](#) (*Senses of Cinema*).and Jeff Smith: [“The poet of dynamic immobility: Ennio Morricone”](#) (*Bordwell's website on cinema*)

**BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI** (b. March 16, 1941 in Parma, Emilia-Romagna, Italy) took after his father, a Roman poet and film critic, and became a celebrated published poet by the age of 20. He gave up poetry for the cinema after working as an assistant to Pier Paolo Pasolini on the



movie *Accattone* (1961). When the Italian Bertolucci was Oscar-nominated as Best Director for *The Last Emperor* (1987) (and won), his Best Director fellow nominees were all non-Americans: Adrian Lyne and John Boorman (UK), Lasse Hallström (Sweden) and Norman Jewison (Canada) making that particular instance unique in Oscar history. Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) was pronounced obscene and was banned 'forever' by Italian courts. The director lost his civil rights for 5 years and couldn't vote and received a four months suspended sentence. Conversely, the film was his only directed Oscar nominated performance for Marlon Brando and Bertolucci was nominated himself for Best Director. He was also nominated for an Oscar in 1972 for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium for *Il conformista* (1970). In 2007 he won the Venice Film Festival Career Golden Lion. He wrote five original stories for film: *Stealing Beauty* (1996), *Little Buddha* (1993), *1900* (1976), *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). Additionally he wrote screenplays for *Me and You* (2012), *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), *The Last Emperor* (1987) and *The Conformist* (1970). Bertolucci also directed 25 films, some of which are *The Dreamers* (2003), *Stealing Beauty* (1996), *Little Buddha* (1993), *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), *The Last Emperor* (1987), *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man* (1981), *Luna* (1979), *1900* (1976), *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), *The Conformist* (1970) and *The Grim Reaper* (1962).

**TONINO DELLI COLLI** (b. November 20, 1922 in Rome, Italy—d. August 16, 2005, age 82, in Rome, Italy) began his career as assistant cameraman at Cinecittà studios in 1938. He did his best work as Cinematographer for such directors as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Sergio Leone and Federico Fellini and is known for his sweeping, panoramic landscapes and detailed close-ups of actors' faces in the seminal spaghetti western *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). He was the Director of Photography on 7 films, which are *Life Is Beautiful* (1997), *The Name of the Rose* (1986), *Ginger and Fred* (1986), *Tales of Ordinary Madness* (1981), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), *Seven Hills of Rome* (1957). He was the Cinematographer on 120 additional films, some of which include *Death and the Maiden* (1994), *The Voice of the Moon* (1990), *Stradivari* (1988), *Intervista* (1987), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *Trenchcoat* (1983), *Lovers and Liars* (1979), *Blood Feud* (1978), *First Love* (1978), *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), *Seven Beauties* (1975), *Till Marriage Do Us Part* (1974), *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), *Come Together* (1971), *The Decameron* (1971), *Mafia* (1968), *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), *The Wonders of Aladdin* (1961), *The Thief of Baghdad* (1961), *Concert of Intrigue* (1954), *Nerone e Messalina* (1953), *Fame and*

*the Devil* (1951), *City of Pain* (1949) and *Finalmente sì* (1944).



**CLAUDIA CARDINALE** (b. April 15, 1938 in Tunis, French Protectorate, Tunisia) was 17 years old and studying at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome when she entered a beauty contest, which resulted in her getting a succession of small film roles. The same year she had a child out of wedlock, however she signed a contract forbidding her to cut her hair, marry or gain weight. Because of this, she told everyone that her newborn son was her baby brother. She did not reveal to the child that he was her son until he was 19 years old. After *Careless* (1962) she rose to the front ranks of Italian cinema with her beauty, dark flashing eyes and explosive sexuality. Long considered one of the world's great beauties, she has appeared on more than 900 magazine covers in over 25 countries. While considered one of the great sirens of cinema, she has never done a nude or topless scene in any of her films. became an international star in Federico Fellini's classic *8½* (1963) with Marcello Mastroianni, but American audiences may remember her most for tonight's feature. Though known for her bombshell characters, Cardinale has had a long acting career and in , she won an Honorary Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. Additionally, she has won two awards from the Venice Film Festival: a Career Golden Lion in 1993 and the Pasinetti Award in 1984 for Best Actress for *Claretta* (1984). She has acted in 117 films and TV shows, among them, *All Roads Lead to Rome* (2015), *Twice Upon a Time in the West* (2015), *A View of Love* (2010), *Brigands* (1999), *Son of the Pink Panther* (1993), *A Man in Love* (1987), *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), *La pelle* (1981), *Corleone* (1978), *Blonde in Black Leather* (1975), *The Red Tent* (1969), *The Conspirators* (1969), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *A Fine Pair* (1968), *The Hell with Heroes* (1968), *Mafia* (1968), *Don't Make Waves* (1967), *The Professionals* (1966), *Lost Command* (1966), *The Pink Panther* (1963), *The Leopard* (1963), *8½* (1963), *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960), *The Battle of Austerlitz* (1960), *The Magistrate* (1959), *Big Deal on Madonna Street* (1958) and *Goha* (1958).



**HENRY FONDA** (b. May 16, 1905 in Grand Island, Nebraska—d. August 12, 1982, age 77, in Los Angeles, California) was the oldest person, at 76, to win a best actor Oscar for his work in *On Golden Pond* (1981). That year before the Academy awarded Fonda the Honorary Award in recognition of his brilliant accomplishments and enduring contribution to motion pictures. Was twice a roommate and a very close friend of James Stewart. They met and shared a room when the two were both struggling young actors in the early 1930s. Fonda went to Hollywood shortly before Stewart. When Stewart arrived he shared Fonda's home, where they both gained reputations as ladies' men. After both married and had kids, the more mellow buddies still hung out, usually spending time building model airplanes. While Fonda is most known for his film work, he did periodically appear on stage. However, he missed out on the chance to create the role of George in the original Broadway production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* because his agent rejected the script out of hand, without consulting him. The agent gave as his reason the assertion that, "You don't want to be in a play about four people yelling at each other all the time." A friendship and collaboration of nearly 20 years was ended when director John Ford sucker-punched him while making *Mister Roberts* (1955). Three films of his are on the American Film Institute's 100 Most Inspiring Movies of All Time. They are: *On Golden Pond* (1981) at #45, *12 Angry Men* (1957) at #42, and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) at #7. Additionally, Fonda acted in 118 films, some of which are *Summer Solstice* (TV Movie, 1981), *Gideon's Trumpet* (TV Movie, 1980), *The Oldest Living Graduate* (TV Movie, 1980), *The Swarm* (1978), *Fedora* (1978), *Midway* (1976), *Clarence Darrow* (TV Movie, 1974), *My Name Is Nobody* (1973), *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1970), *There Was a Crooked Man...* (1970), *The Cheyenne Social Club* (1970), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *The Boston Strangler* (1968), *Madigan* (1968), *Welcome to Hard Times* (1967), *A Big Hand for the Little Lady* (1966), *Battle of the Bulge* (1965), *In Harm's Way* (1965), *Fail-Safe* (1964), *The Best Man* (1964), *Spencer's Mountain* (1963), *How the West Was Won* (1962), *The Longest Day* (1962), *Advise & Consent* (1962), *Warlock* (1959), *War and Peace* (1956), *Fort Apache* (1948), *The Fugitive* (1947), *My Darling*

*Clementine* (1946), *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), *The Lady Eve* (1941), *Chad Hanna* (1940), *The Return of Frank James* (1940), *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell* (1939), *Jesse James* (1939), *That Certain Woman* (1937), *You Only Live Once* (1937), *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1936), *The Farmer Takes a Wife* (1935)

**JASON ROBARDS** (b. July 26, 1922 in Chicago, Illinois—d. December 26, 2000, age 78, in Bridgeport, Connecticut) was a star athlete at Hollywood High School and served in the U.S. Navy in World War II as a radioman. Upon returning to civilian life, he attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and struggled as a small-part actor in local New York theatre, TV and radio before shooting to fame on the New York stage in Eugene O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh" as Hickey. Preferred working in the theater, and said once that he performed in Hollywood films so that he could "grab the money and go back to Broadway as fast as I can." Avoided films until age 37 because he felt his acting father, Jason Robards Sr., had sold out and tarnished his own reputation by "going Hollywood". However, Jr's long film and TV history is highly acclaimed, as he won the Oscar Best Actor in a Supporting Role in 1978 for his performance in *Julia* (1977) and for *All the President's Men* (1976). In 1988, he became the 11th performer to win the Triple Crown of acting: Oscar, Tony, Emmy. Robards was also the recipient of 22nd Annual Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime contribution to arts and culture, presented by President Bill Clinton in Washington, DC, Dec. 5, 1999. He acted in 130 films and TV series, some of which are *Going Home* (TV Movie, 2000), *Magnolia* (1999), *Beloved* (1998), *A Thousand Acres* (1997), *Crimson Tide* (1995), *Philadelphia* (1993), *The Trial* (1993), *The Adventures of Huck Finn* (1993), *Thomas Hart Benton* (TV Movie, 1988), *Bright Lights*, *Big City* (1988), *Inherit the Wind* (TV Movie, 1988), *The Long Hot Summer* (TV Movie, 1985), *The Atlanta Child Murders* (TV Mini-Series, 1985), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983), *Max Dugan Returns* (1983), *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* (1981), *Melvin and Howard* (1980), *Raise the Titanic* (1980), *Comes a Horseman* (1978), *Julia* (1977), *The Spy Who Never Was* (1976), *All the President's Men* (1976), *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973), *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971), *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970), *Julius Caesar* (1970), *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970), *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *Isadora* (1968), *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* (1967), *Divorcee American Style* (1967), *A Big Hand for the Little Lady* (1966), *A Thousand Clowns* (1965), *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1962), *Tender Is the Night* (1962), *By Love Possessed* (1961), *The Iceman Cometh* (TV Movie, 1960), *Omnibus*



(TV Series, 1958). *Armstrong Circle Theatre* (TV Series, 1955-1956), *The Man Behind the Badge* (TV Series, 1954), *The Magnavox Theatre* (TV Series, 1950) and *Follow That Music* (Short, 1947).



**CHARLES BRONSON** (b. Charles Buchinsky on November 3, 1921 in Ehrenfeld, Pennsylvania—d. August 30, 2003, age 81, in Los Angeles, California) was the archetypal screen tough guy with weatherbeaten features who one film critic described his rugged looks as "a Clark Gable who had been left out in the sun too long". He appeared on screen often early in his career, though usually uncredited. However, he made an impact on audiences as the evil assistant to Vincent Price in the 3-D thriller *House of Wax* (1953). His sinewy yet muscular physique got him cast in action-type roles, often without a shirt to highlight his manly frame and the 1960s proved to be the era in which Bronson made his reputation as a man of few words but much action. European audiences had taken a shine to his minimalist acting style, and he headed to the Continent to star in several action-oriented films, including *Guns for San Sebastian* (1968), tonight's cult western, *Rider on the Rain* (1970) and, in one of the quirkier examples of international casting, alongside Japanese screen legend Toshiro Mifune in the western *Red Sun* (1971). These foreign films helped solidify Bronson's reputation and became a bona fide American action hero through much of the '70s and '80s. Some of his 192 acting credits include *Family of Cops III: Under Suspicion* (TV Movie, 1999), *Breach of Faith: A Family of Cops II* (TV Movie, 1999), *Family of Cops* (TV Movie, 1999), *Death Wish V: The Face of Death* (1994), *Death Wish 4: The Crackdown* (1987), *Murphy's Law* (1986), *Death Wish 3* (1985), *The Evil That Men Do* (1984), *Death Wish II* (1982), *The White Buffalo* (1977), *Raid on Entebbe* (TV Movie, 1976), *From Noon Till Three* (1976), *Hard Times* (1975), *Death Wish* (1974), *Mr. Majestyk* (1974), *The Mechanic* (1972), *Chato's Land* (1972), *The Valachi Papers* (1972), *The Virginian* (TV Series, 1965-1967), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *This Property Is Condemned* (1966), *Battle of the Bulge* (1965), *Rawhide* (TV Series, 1965), *The Sandpiper* (1965), *Bonanza* (TV Series, 1964), *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Untouchables* (TV Series, 1962), *The Twilight Zone* (TV Series, 1961), *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), *Never So Few* (1959), *Gunsmoke* (TV Series,

1956-1958), *The Court of Last Resort* (TV Series, 1958), *Warner Brothers Presents* (TV Series, 1956), *Jubal* (1956), *Public Defender* (TV Series, 1955), *Big House, U.S.A.* (1955), *Vera Cruz* (1954), *Apache* (1954), *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953), *The Roy Rogers Show* (TV Series, 1952), *Diplomatic Courier* (1952), *Pat and Mike* (1952), *Red Skies of Montana* (1952), *The Mob* (1951), and *Fireside Theatre* (TV Series, 1949).

**GABRIELE FERZETTI** (b. Pasquale Ferzetti on March 17, 1925 in Rome, Italy—d. December 2, 2015 in Rome, Italy) was one of Italy's most prominent international stars of the 1950's and 60's.

Always elegant, urbane and well-spoken, by the early 60's, Ferzetti's distinguished features had him frequently cast in provocative political dramas as flawed men hiding behind charming, sophisticated facades. He also acquired an international following with character roles in *Torpedo Bay* (1963), *I Spy* (1965), as a cynical railway baron in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) and as syndicate boss Marc-Ange Draco joining forces with James Bond in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), although his accent was deemed to be too strong, and he was dubbed by David de Keyser. Ferzetti acted in 166 films and TV series, including, *18 Years Later* (2010), *Pope John Paul I: The Smile of God* (TV Movie, 2006), *Othello* (1995), *First Action Hero* (1994), *Julia and Julia* (1987), *Inchon* (1981), *Man of Corleone* (1977), *The Night Porter* (1974), *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973), *The Confession* (1970), *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), *Machine Gun McCain* (1969), *Bandits in Rome* (1968), *Escalation* (1968), *The Bible: In the Beginning...* (1966), *The Shortest Day* (1963), *L'Avventura* (1960), *Hannibal* (1959), *It Happened in Rome* (1957), *Donatella* (1956), *Sins of Casanova* (1955), *The Counterfeiters* (1953), *Puccini* (1953), *Strange Deception* (1951), *Sicilian Uprising* (1949), *William Tell* (1949), *Fabiola* (1949), *Les Misérables* (1948), *Lost Happiness* (1946), *Via delle cinque lune* (1942).

**WOODY STRODE** (b. July 25, 1914 in Los Angeles, California—d. December 31, 1994, age 80, in Glendora, California) was one of the first four African Americans who integrated professional football in 1946. Strode played for the Calgary Stampeders in the Canadian Football League from 1948-1949 before moving back to the United States and beginning his film career. Strode made his initial film appearance in 1941's *Sundown*, but it was not until the 1950s that he began to focus on acting. He landed small parts in films such as *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *Tarzan's Fight for Life* (1958), but his breakthrough came when Strode caught the attention of famed director John Ford, who cast him in the title role in *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960). Ford and Strode became close friends and stayed tight until the

director's death. A tall man, standing at 6'4", Strobe was frequently challenged to contests of strength by Burt Lancaster on the highly macho set of *The Professionals* (1966).



Lancaster was allegedly despondent to be repeatedly bested by Strobe. Strobe was nominated for a Golden Globe in 1961 for Best Supporting Actor for *Spartacus* (1960). He also acted in over 92 films and TV series, including *The Quick and the Dead* (1995), *Posse* (1993), *Storyville* (1992), *A Gathering of Old Men* (TV Movie, 1987), *The Cotton Club* (1984), *Cuba Crossing* (1980), *How the West Was Won* (TV Mini-Series, 1977), *The Italian Connection* (1972), *The Devil's Backbone* (1971), *Che!* (1969), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *Shalako* (1968), *Black Jesus* (1968), *Batman* (TV Series, 1966), *The Professionals* (1966), *Genghis Khan* (1965), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *Rawhide* (TV Series, 1961), *The Sins of Rachel Cade* (1961), *Spartacus* (1960), *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960), *Pork Chop Hill* (1959), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Son of Sinbad* (1955), *The Silver Chalice* (1954), *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (1954), *The Royal African Rifles* (1953), *Androcles and the Lion* (1952), *Bride of the Gorilla* (1951), *Sundown* (1941) and *Stagecoach* (1939).



**JACK ELAM** (b. William Scott Elam on November 13, 1920 in Miami, Arizona—d. October 20, 2003, age 82, in Ashland, Oregon) was a colorful American character actor equally adept at vicious killers or grizzled sidekicks. Made a career with his eerie, immobile eye, which was caused by a fight with another kid at age 12. It

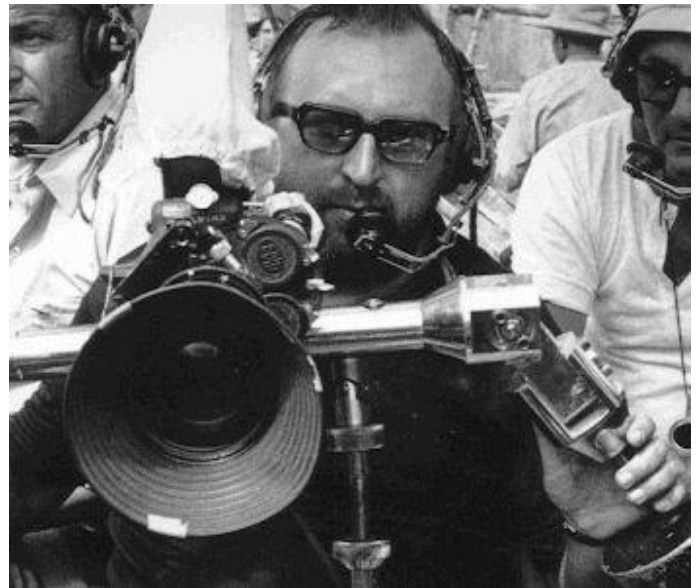
happened during a Boy Scout meeting when another boy took a pencil, threw it, and it jabbed his eyeball. When a movie director friend was having trouble getting financing for three western scripts, Elam told him he would arrange the financing in exchange for roles as a "heavy" in all three pictures. The first was *The Sundowners* (1950), starring Robert Preston, which helped launch his long career. Some of this other 206 acting credits are *Bonanza: Under Attack* (TV Movie, 1995), *Lonesome Dove: The Series* (TV Series, 1994-1995), *Big Bad John* (1990), *Simon & Simon* (TV Series, 1986), *Cannonball Run II* (1984), *Lost* (1983), *The Cannonball Run* (1981), *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (TV Series, 1978) *Black Beauty* (TV Mini-Series, 1978), *How the West Was Won* (TV Mini-Series, 1977), *Kung Fu* (TV Series, 1973), *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973), *Gunsmoke* (TV Series, 1959-1972), *Cat Ballou* (TV Movie, 1971), *Support Your Local Gunfighter* (1971), *Bonanza* (TV Series, 1970), *Rio Lobo* (1970), *The Virginian* (TV Series, 1970), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *The High Chaparral* (TV Series, 1968), *Firecreek* (1968), *The Way West* (1967), *F Troop* (TV Series, 1965), *Laramie* (TV Series, 1961-1962), *The Untouchables* (TV Series, 1960-1962), *Have Gun - Will Travel* (TV Series, 1959-1962), *The Comancheros* (1961), *The Twilight Zone* (TV Series, 1961), *The Rebel* (TV Series, 1960-1961), *Death Valley Days* (TV Series, 1961), *M Squad* (TV Series, 1958), *Baby Face Nelson* (1957), *Wagon Train* (TV Series, 1957), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *Jubal* (1956), *Kismet* (1955), *The Lone Ranger* (TV Series, 1954-1955), *Wichita* (1955), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *Man Without a Star* (1955), *The Man from Laramie* (1955), *Vera Cruz* (1954), *Cattle Queen of Montana* (1954), *The Far Country* (1954), *High Noon* (1952), *Rancho Notorious* (1952), *Rawhide* (1951), *High Lonesome* (1950), *Quicksand* (1950), *The Sundowners* (1950), *Trailin' West* (Short, 1944).

**KEENAN WYNN** (b. Francis Xavier Aloysius James Jeremiah Keenan Wynn, July 27, 1916 in New York City, New York—d. October 14, 1986, age 70, in Los Angeles, California) was the son of famed burlesque and TV star, Ed Wynn. The two appeared together in four films, *Son of Flubber* (1963), *The Absent Minded Professor* (1961), *The Great Man* (1956) and *The Patsy* (1964). At MGM Keenan became the utilitarian character player, adept at playing almost anything handed to him. Balding, homely but with real distinctive, imposing features, he made his unbilled debut in *Somewhere I'll Find You* (1942), and went on to play a grab-bag of shady brutes, usually in comic relief style. He was Gene Kelly's agent in *For Me and My Gal* (1942), a gangster in *Lost Angel* (1943), a soldier buddy to Robert Walker in *See Here, Private Hargrove* (1944) and its sequel; a drunk in a diner in *The Clock* (1945); Lucille Ball's tipsy beau in the Katharine

Hepburn / Spencer Tracy vehicle *Without Love* (1945); and a news editor paired up with Ms. Ball again in *Easy to Wed* (1946). He acted in 278 films and TV series, some of which are *Hyper Sapien: People from Another Star* (1986), *Black Moon Rising* (1986), *Quincy M.E.* (TV Series, 1983), *Taxi* (TV Series, 1983), *The Last Unicorn* (1982), *Just Tell Me What You Want* (1980), *The Bionic Woman* (TV Series, 1978), *Police Woman* (TV Series, 1978), *Orca* (1977), *The Killer Inside Me* (1976), *Nashville* (1975), *The New Perry Mason* (TV Series, 1973), *The Mechanic* (1972), *Alias Smith and Jones* (TV Series, 1971-1972), *Pretty Maids All in a Row* (1971), *Viva Max* (1969), *Mackenna's Gold* (1969), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *Finian's Rainbow* (1968), *The Falling Man* (1968), *Point Blank* (1967), *Welcome to Hard Times* (1967), *Stagecoach* (1966), *The Night of the Grizzly* (1966), *The Americanization of Emily* (1964), *Bonanza* (TV Series, 1964), *Operation Mermaid* (1963), *Rawhide* (TV Series, 1962), *The Untouchables* (TV Series, 1959-1961), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (TV Series, 1958-1961), *The Twilight Zone* (TV Series, 1960), *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* (1958), *Touch of Evil* (1958), *Don't Go Near the Water* (1957), *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956), *Running Wild* (1955), *Screen Directors Playhouse* (TV Series, 1955), *Men of the Fighting Lady* (1954), *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), *Skirts Ahoy!* (1952), *Three Little Words* (1950), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950), *The Three Musketeers* (1948), *Song of the Thin Man* (1947), *The Hucksters* (1947), *What Next, Corporal Hargrove?* (1945), *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945), *The Clock* (1945) and *Since You Went Away* (1944).

**LIONEL STANDER** (b. January 11, 1908 in The Bronx, New York City, New York—d. November 30, 1994, age 86, in Los Angeles, California) was perhaps best known for his role as Max on the long-running series, *Hart to Hart*, which earned him a Golden Globe in 1983 for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role. When asked about his role on the show, Stander quipped, "I'm in a television program that is always among the top 20, that's shown in 67 countries in the world, helping lobotomize the entire world". Prior to his TV series staple role, Stander had a long acting history, that was temporarily destabilized in the 1950's when he was blacklisted after being exposed as a Communist Party member during the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings. After being blacklisted, Stander worked as a broker on Wall Street and appeared on the stage as a journeyman actor. He returned to the movies in Tony Richardson's *The Loved One* (1965), and he began his career anew as a character actor, appearing in many films, including Roman Polanski's *Cul-De-Sac* (1966) and Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York* (1977). Some of the other films and TV series he appeared in are *Hart to Hart: Secrets of the Hart* (TV Movie, 1995), *Hart*

*to Hart: Old Friends Never Die* (TV Movie, 1994), *Hart to Hart: Crimes of the Hart* (TV Movie, 1994), *Hart to Hart: Home Is Where the Hart Is* (TV Movie, 1994), *Hart to Hart Returns* (TV Movie, 1993), *Dream On* (TV Series, 1991), *Moonlighting* (TV Series, 1986), *Hart to Hart* (TV Series, 1979-1984), *1941* (1979), *The Cassandra Crossing* (1976), *The Black Bird* (1975), *Mark of Zorro* (1975), *Treasure Island* (1972), *Don Camillo e i giovani d'oggi* (1972), *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight* (1971), *It Takes a Thief* (TV Series, 1969), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *Gates to Paradise* (1968), *Beyond the Law* (1968), *A Dandy in Aspic* (1968), *Promise Her Anything* (1965), *Two Gals and a Guy* (1951), *Unfaithfully Yours* (1948), *Call Northside 777* (1948), *The Sin of Harold Diddlebock* (1947), *The Kid from Brooklyn* (1946), *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), *Hangmen Also Die!* (1943), *The Last Gangster* (1937), *A Star Is Born* (1937), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *The Milky Way* (1936), *We're in the Money* (1935), *The Scoundrel* (1935) and *In the Dough* (Short, 1932).



**Sergio Leone from *World Film Directors, Vol. II.* Editor John Wakeman. The H.W. Wilson Co., NY, 1988**

Sergio Leone (1921-1981), Italian director and scenarist, was born in Rome, the son of a prolific pioneer filmmaker Roberto Roberti. Leone was apparently not himself interested in the movie industry at first, but studied law for a time at the University of Rome and otherwise drifted from job to job (though one account says that he served in his early teens as his father's script boy). He seems to have finally entered the film industry in 1939, at about the same time that his father left it on retirement.



Over the next twenty years Leone worked in various capacities on some sixty B features, serving as assistant to Mario Camerini and Vittorio De Sica among other notable Italian directors, and later to some American directors who came to Italy to film costume epics after the war, including Mervyn LeRoy (on *Quo Vadis*, 1951), Robert Wise (on *Helen of Troy*, 1955), and William Wyler (on *Ben Hur*, 1959). He also had small acting roles in several films—De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* among them—and collaborated on a number of scenarios.

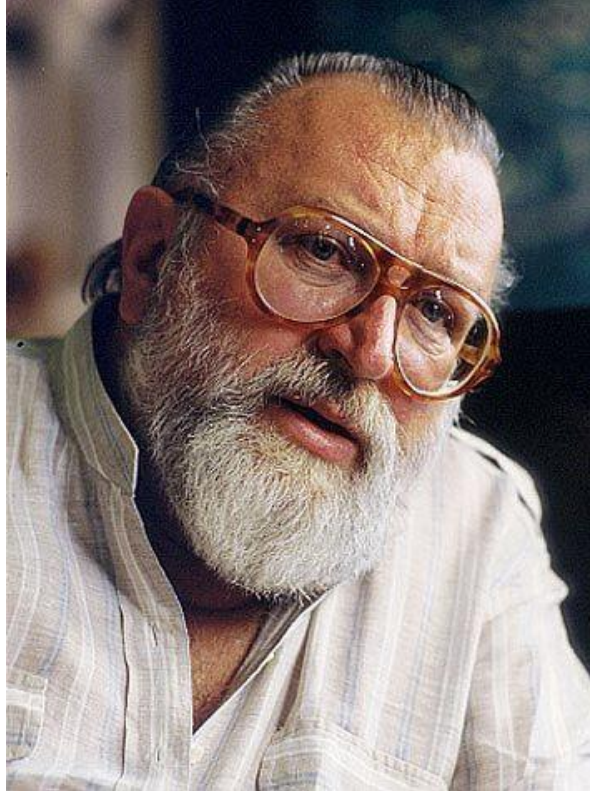
Some sources say that Leone's first film as director was a low-budget spectacular called *Nel segno di Roma* (*Sign of the Gladiator*, 1959), for which he had written the screenplay, and most agree that he codirected *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii* (*The Last Days of Pompey*, 1959). The latter—one of three Italian versions of Lord Lytton's novel—was credited to Mario Bonnard but brought Leone several offers of similar assignments. The one he accepted was *Il Colosso di Rodi* (*The Colossus of Rhodes*, 1960), starring Rory Calhoun, Lea Massari, and an international supporting cast in an action spectacular about court intrigue and revolution on the island of Rhodes, ending with the destruction of the great statue by a tidal wave. Filmed in Spain in 'scope and color, and directed with more style and spirit than most such programmers, it made a million dollars in Italy alone.

The success of the first movie actually to bear his name as director assured Leone of a career of sorts, but not one that appealed to him. He turned down an opportunity to direct epics in the Maciste series and trod water for a while, serving as second-unit director on Robert Aldrich's *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1961). At about this time, the success of a German television Western series (*Winnetour*) aroused the interest of Italian producers in the genre, and Leone saw his chance. In 1964 he directed his first Western, *Per un pugno di dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*), shooting it in Spain in English and Italian.

Akira Kurosawa's great *chambara* (swordfight) film *The Seven Samurai* had already been remade as an extremely successful Hollywood Western (*The Magnificent Seven*). This seemed to Leone a trick worth imitating, and he lifted the plot of *A Fistful of Dollars* from another of Kurosawa's *chambara* movies, *Yojimbo*

(1961). As adapted, it tells the story of a nameless gunman (Clint Eastwood) who rides alone into a Mexican border town where two rival gangs of outlaws are fighting for control. He soon demonstrates that he would be an invaluable ally, but will not commit himself to either side, instead using a variety of deceptions to ensure that they wipe each other out.

As Nick Barbaro pointed out in his program notes for *Cinema Texas*, Leone followed Kurosawa's



script very closely—sometimes line for line and shot for shot—but nevertheless produced something very different. Concerned to record the death of the samurai tradition, Kurosawa had used long lenses and deep focus to create an atmosphere of enclosure and claustrophobia, while Leone's visuals reflect, not only the openness, but the surreal anarchy of the setting. While Kurosawa's camerawork was very subdued, Leone is flamboyant.... The combination of wide screen, wide-angle lenses and unusual camera angles creates a feeling of large, open spaces." Leone had also made a number of startling alterations to the Western genre, the most shocking of which was the introduction of a hero who

morally is no better than the villain—an unshaven, cheroot-chewing, mean-looking killer, motivated by greed and unredeemed to the last. And yet this nameless loner, for reasons that are entirely unexplained, is given some of the attributes of Jesus Christ—he rides into town on a mule, suffers a near-crucifixion, and appears to rise from the dead. Beyond this, we are presented (often in a screen-filling close-up) with a gallery of ruffians beyond the wildest imagination of Central Casting, wearing clothes that look as real but as unfamiliar as the Spanish deserts and canyons of the exteriors.

And, as Richard T. Jameson wrote, Ennio Morricone's score "capped and integrated the real memories of the Mascot-Monogram stock libraries filtered through a modern and European sensibility, the result an idiosyncratic, eclectic, delaying-then-surging score full of war whoops, hoofbeats, church bells, and hammers snicking back to full cock; it was startling, unnerving and frequently breathtaking in its sense of aspiration and grandeur, and it somehow complemented the bizarre exoticism of the film, the familiar made fresh, new, and neurotically contemporary."

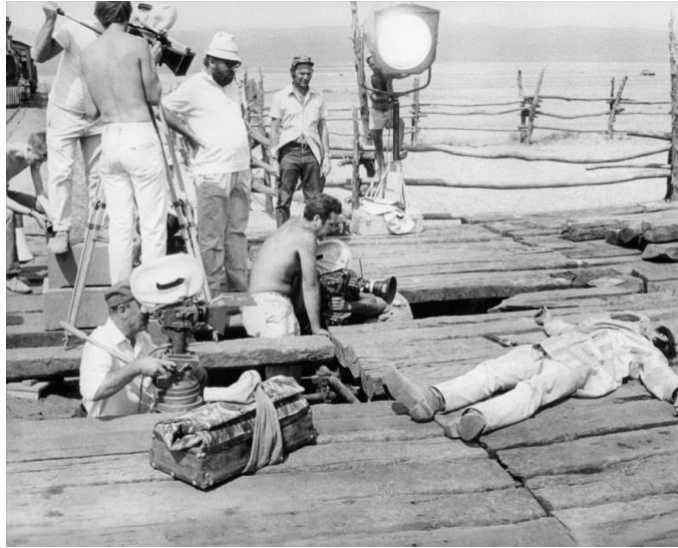


The Italian distributors were initially wary of this brutal and disorienting movie, but when it did open it was an instant smash hit, making two billion lire in Italy alone. Legal wrangles over the borrowing from *Yojimbo* delayed its United States release for two years but, once arrived, it fared as well there as in Europe, establishing Clint Eastwood as a box-office draw only equaled by Sean Connery as James Bond. The critical response was less clear-cut, reviewers seeming uncertain whether to treat the film as a renewal of the Western genre or as a cynically sadistic debasement of it. What confused them is that, as Nick Barbaro put it, Leone “doesn’t hide the inconsistencies, the clichés, myths, and rituals of the Western—he drags them out into the open, explains how they work, and then asks us to accept them anyway....It takes a pretty talented and audacious director, but after all, why not? Westerns have been on the defensive for too long. If a magician can’t tell you what he’s going to do before he does it, he’s not a very good magician.”

Whatever the critical establishment thought of it, the Italian filmmakers knew that they had witnessed a miracle, and a flood of ‘spaghetti Westerns’ followed, most of them inferior though by no means less violent. Leone himself followed his first Western with a better one, *Per qualche dollaro in più* (*For a Few Dollars More*, 1965). Eastwood is again the Man With No Name, now in business as a bounty hunter. His quarry is the psychopathic killer Indio (excellently played by the principal villain of the preceding movie, Gian Maria Volonté), and Lee Van Cleef appears as Colonel Mortimer, a rival bounty hunter with a more personal motive for hunting down Indio, who raped Mortimer’s sister and drove her to suicide. Sometimes in double-crossing competition and sometimes in concert, the two hunters wipe out Indio’s gang, and then Mortimer and Indio shoot it out. The signal for the crucial draw is an Ennio Morricone tune played on Mortimer’s watch—a central motif in the film (Indio carries an identical one, taken from Mortimer’s sister after she had shot herself to death with Indio’s gun).

Most critics found this film vastly superior to its predecessor. As Richard T. Jameson wrote, “Leone’s direction is more detailed, his pace more assured, his imagery almost constantly stunning in its size, sweep and singularity. More importantly, in his second western endeavor he discovers the past, and begins to realize how

a sense of the past—in his characters’ studied, ritual-like behavior and his own genre-conscious artistry—geometrically increases the resonance of his and his characters’ actions which, however violent, are always scrupulously considered.”



The growing preoccupation with the past is evident in a number of ways in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, 1966). The three men described by the title are Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, and Eli Wallach. While the War between the States thunders on around them, these three steadfastly pursue their search for a cache of stolen gold in a ridiculously complex series of double- and triple-crosses and shifting allegiances. The war

itself (and the pointlessness of all war) is evoked in large-scale set-pieces that would have done justice to Leone’s early “historical” spectacles, though here every building and costume had been scrupulously researched down to the last button by the director himself. The film was shot in Spain, only because Leone could find no suitable location in the United States where there were not “too many power lines crossing the horizon, too many highways and billboards.”

In spite of its great length (147 minutes), the film was another hit, and increased Leone’s critical following, though some reviewers continued to resist his operatic charms on moral grounds. James Price, taking a middle position, wrote that he “enjoyed it rather a lot, though it is maddeningly slow and melodramatic, and entirely devoid of the romanticism which attracts one in the genuine (Western) article. Its primary appeal lies in its strident violence, and in the way it pushes the conventions beyond the absurd, but there is more to it than that. The Man With No Name is not merely a dead shot. He’d be incapable of missing, and he cannot die....He is conceived on purely cut-out, comic-strip lines....Western myth becomes a series of western conventions (not the same thing) which are overlaid with an urban, post-war sensibility....Even more modern and European, I suppose, is the tone of private detachment....Wars are old-fashioned, clumsy and futile; moreover, they interfere with the pursuit of personal gain.”

The success of this film, which completed the Man With No Name trilogy, persuaded Paramount to part with an extremely large budget for the most ambitious of all of Leone’s films, *C’era una volta il West* (*Once Upon a Time in the West*, 1968), which was scripted by Leone,

Dario Argento, and Bernardo Bertolucci. A desolate piece of land becomes valuable because it has water and the new railroad must pass through it. The rightful owner, Brett McBain, is therefore murdered, with his children, by the railroad's hit man Frank, a sadistic killer who is played by Henry Fonda (a shocking piece of casting for lovers of *My Darling Clementine*, and no doubt deliberately so).

Unfortunately for Frank, McBain has entered into a marriage contract with Jill (Claudia Cardinale), who inherits the precious property. Technological progress is further endangered when Jill comes under the protection of the sentimental but formidable outlaw Cheyenne (Jason Robards) and the mysterious Man with a Harmonica (Charles Bronson). The winners in the end are the Harmonica Man, the railroad, and Jill, who winds up on the side of progress. Cheyenne and Frank represent different faces of the frontier past, and are therefore doomed.

In his article about Leone in *Film Comment* (March 1973), Richard T. Jameson devotes a good deal of space to describing the director's "infatuation with detail, and his genius for achieving emotional saturation through studied acceptance, almost stoical endurance of time and space as the key events in any scene.... Leone employs space not only for spectacle...but also for celebration and miracle.... The shot that dollies Jill up to the door of the Flagstone train station, adjusts to observe her through the window, then cranes up past the roof both to follow her progress out the other side and to create/reveal the teeming town site beyond is an expression of the sublime arrogance indispensable to great cinema." David Nichols has drawn attention to Leone's symbolic use of Bronson's harmonica which, like the watch in *For a Few Dollars More*, acts as a reminder of the past, links past and present, and represents Frank's nemesis, his past literally catching up with him."

*Once Upon a Time in the West*, which originally ran nearly three hours, was a commercial failure. Paramount cut 25 minutes (including Cheyenne's death) without increasing its box-office appeal. And yet many of Leone's most knowledgeable admirers regard it as his masterpiece. David Nicholls, for example, is tempted to see it "as the outcome of the meeting between Leone's cynicism and Bertolucci's Marxism," and goes on: "In its style and its ambitions it pushed the Italian western as

far as it could go.... Leone's style, evolved in the earlier films, expanded its spare outlines to grandiose but appropriate proportions. The film becomes an... emblematic tale, comparable with Italian political movies like *Quemada*, and also in a sense the ultimate Western. Most major Western themes are there, but, through Leone's artificial operatic style, the film becomes a view from Europe, based on American historical mythology but presenting it precisely as an alien mythology. The traditional function of the Western is undercut and its iconography used to say, in effect, that does not wash any more."



*Giù la testa* (*Duck You Sucker*, also known as *A Fistful of Dynamite*) appeared in 1971 after a three-year interval. It is set in 1911-1913 during the Villa Huerta civil war in Mexico. Juan (Rod Steiger) leads a gang of bandits (several

of them his illegitimate sons) who acquire an accomplished dynamiter in Sean (James Coburn), a graduate of the Irish Republican Army. Juan is interested only in profit, but Sean sees in him a potential revolutionary hero, and in the end has his way, with disastrous results for both of them. This is the most comically black of Leone's films, and the most overtly (and cynically) political. Andrew Sarris calls it a horse opera "with the emphasis on opera. Leone's frescoes of anguished close-ups providing the visual libretto to Ennio Morricone's music.... Leone is nothing if not ambitious and audacious, and I say more power to him in this era of emotionally paralyzed filmmaking."

In fact, recognizing that the spaghetti Western had had its day, Leone turned to production; he heads his own company, Rafran Cinematografica. As David Nicholls says, he both established the style of the Italian Western and took it to its furthest limits. "If Leone initially set out to exploit a popular form in order to grab a fistful of lire, as he had done earlier with epics, his true understanding of that form, combined with his tongue-in-cheek cynicism and the bigger budgets engendered by enormous international success, led him and his collaborators to change permanently the look of the western and to revitalize its subject matter.... Even critics who look down their noses at the Italian product cannot help but praise American films which would never have been made without it.... [like] *The Wild Bunch*, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, *High Plains Drifter*, *The Outlaw Josie Wales*, *Ulzana's Raid*, *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, [and] *Chato's Land*."



After a long hiatus from directing, Leone mounted the most ambitious film of his career, *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), a gangster sagas spanning the years from the early 1920s to the 1960s and set for the most part in the immigrant ghetto of New York. The central character, Noodles (Robert De Niro), a Jewish gangster turned stool pigeon, has taken refuge in an opium den, and the sensational flashbacks and flash-forwards that ensue have an hallucinatory quality. In its original form the film ran to 3 hours and 24 minutes, but was ruthlessly edited down for American distribution by the Ladd Company to 2 hours and 24 minutes, reducing Leone's intricate



structure to a flatly chronological account. Reviews of the film when it first appeared were based on the truncated version, which Leone protested had destroyed the integrity of his work. By and large, critics viewed the cut film as an ambitious failure. David Denby, for example, commented that "Judging from what's left of the epic, I'm not sure the film works at any length." The screenplay concocted by Leone and five other Italian writers is often ludicrous; the central plot mechanisms are murky and unconvincing." But Andrew Sarris, who had seen the 3 1/2 hour version, sanctioned by the director, at Cannes, felt that the film succeeded despite its offenses to realism: "I cannot imagine anyone who's ever been moved even slightly by Leone's work discounting his devotion and commitment to the dream movie he has made of *Once Upon a Time in America*...I was absorbed throughout by Leone's hauntingly guilt-ridden expressionism." And Pauline Kael, comparing the uncut original with the version first released in the United States, wrote, "I don't believe I've ever seen a worse case of mutilation. In the full version, the plot, which spans half a century, was still somewhat shaky, but Robert De Niro's performance...took hold and the picture had a dreamy obsessiveness." She felt that the uncut film failed in a number of respects, but admired its "mythic" sweep. "The movie might seem a compendium of kitsch—in a certain sense it is. But it's kitsch aestheticized by someone who loves it and sees it as the poetry of the masses. It isn't just the echoing moments that keep you absorbed. It's those reverberant dreamlike settings and Leone's majestic, billowing sense of film movement; the images seem to come at you in waves of feeling."

Richard Combs called *Once Upon a Time in America*

"the sequel to Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*—not in the sense of a progressive historical account of America, but as a valediction to *images* of America. Leone's historical recreations and evocations have a double-edged quality: they are extraordinarily lush and sensuous, but simultaneously distanced." The uncut film

was eventually screened in the United States and has also been shown on television.

**From Christopher Frayling, Sergio Leone: *Something To Do with Death* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000).**

**Frayling on Leone:**  
"Leone was drawn, throughout his filmmaking career, to artificial, faraway worlds

where realistic surface details were carefully researched, so as to chime with the audience's suspension of disbelief. But the stories belonged to the realm of myth, where the characters were not *bourgeois* Romans but giants and where theatre mattered more than the mundane. These were his fairy-tales for grown-ups. In this sense, it took him much of his life to see like a child, and to make the uninhibited Hollywood movies he, as an Italian, wanted to see...The words that critics were beginning to use to describe his world included 'mannerist,' 'carnavalesque,' 'exhibitionist,' 'excessive' (meaning bad), and 'excessive' (meaning good). What he was trying to do was to reenchant the cinema, while expressing his own disenchantment with the contemporary world and conveying the exhilaration he personally felt when watching and making films, a bridge between 'art films' and popular cinema, and a source of deep confusion to the critics" (Frayling, 2000, 487).

#### **Quoting Jean Baudrillard on Leone:**

The French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard called Sergio Leone 'the first post-modernist director'—the first to understand the hall of mirrors within the contemporary 'culture of quotations'" (Frayling, 2000, 492).

#### **Frayling quoting Leone:**

"The attraction of the Western, for me, is quite simply this. It is the pleasure of doing justice, all by myself, without having to ask anyone's permission. BANG BANG!"

“Naturally, it was not my business to write or make history—in any case, I had neither the inclination nor the right. So I made *Fistful of Dollars* starting from my own history—a history of fantasy...Nevertheless, it was necessary to present a very precise historical debate, thoroughly documented, in order to address the problem...Within this debate, I could look at human values which are no longer around today...”

When asked about the imaginary nature of his West, Leone answered by citing a famous passage from Karl Marx’s *Grundrisse*: “‘A man cannot become a child again unless he becomes childish. But does he not enjoy the artless ways of the child, and must he not strive to reproduce its truths on a higher plane? Is not the character of every epoch revived, perfectly true to nature, in the child’s nature? Why should the childhood of human society, where it obtained its most beautiful development, not exert an eternal charm as an age will never return?’ I believe that a film director who is on the point of shooting a Western must bear in mind, above all else, this truth. So, I haven’t chosen the West as physical, historical evidence of anything, but rather as representative, or as emblematic, of these artless ways of the child” (Frayling, 2000, 17).

“Marx’s conclusion—that the artifacts and myths of ancient Greece exert ‘an eternal charm’—was treated by most commentators [cultural theorists and structural anthropologists] in the late 1970s as a little too sentimental to be of much value as a tool of analysis.” For Leone, however, fable and myth were still the most suitable means of getting to fundamental problems deep rooted in society (Frayling, 2000, 18).

Marlaine Glicksman: [“Interview with Sergio Leone”](#)(*American Suburb X*)

The release of *Django: Unchained*, Quentin Tarantino’s most-recent mash-up of spaghetti western and blaxploitation genres, about a slave turned bounty hunter who seeks to avenge his wife’s enslavement, reminds us of the reach the cinema of Sergio Leone has had.

I had met with Leone in September 1987 to discuss his then upcoming epic, a Soviet coproduction. He resided in a Roman suburb that resembled a sort of Malibu minus the beach. His contemporary home was filled with antiques. (“Every antique has a history,” he

said, “a mystery about it: who owned it, who touched it. Every object could be a film in its story.”) His study was lined with books. It was there, behind a large desk, that Leone, addressed as “Maestro,” held court before family and friends, most clearly king. His friend actor Brian Freilino sat by his side, translating our interview as we spoke.



With late-eighties Glasnost, and with the assistance of the Soviet Union, Leone was in pre-production, preparing to bring the 900-day siege of Leningrad during World War II to the screen. For 40 years the story lay obscured by Soviet smokescreens, many of its witnesses silenced by firing squads or sent into exile, never to return. Though many films were previously proposed, his was the first project to be put into active planning. Inspired by Harrison Salisbury’s nonfiction book *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad*, the film would be shot in Russian and English, and largely within the

Soviet Union. The first Soviet co-production, it was rumored at the time to be the most expensive film ever. The movie also marked a turn for Leone, a step away from mythic America toward a new frontier.

In the winter of 1941–42, Leningrad, once compared to Venice, and the center of Soviet artists and intellectuals, was surrounded by a Nazi blockade determined to starve and shell it into annihilation. A bungle of Kremlin politics, power struggles, and poor planning left the Leningraders to defend their city on their own. The incessant squeal of children’s sleds against the snow was, at times, deafening, as they carried bodies, thousands a day, most of them victims of starvation. Corpses obstructed the streets, the hospital corridors, the riverbanks. The survivors pulled them as far as they could; starving themselves, they were too weak to bury the dead. The bodies would cover with snow and, with the below-zero temperatures, freeze to form an icy path for the next caravan of sleds, only to be uncovered by spring thaw. The living waited on breadlines, often targets of the daily shelling. The survivors would pick themselves up to rejoin the queue for their meager rations. Family pets were butchered. When none remained, there was evidence of cannibalism: Corpses were carved up, and it was said human flesh was being sold at the market. People were murdered for ration cards. Or, worse, the cards were lost or stolen: Lost cards could not be replaced, and this meant certain death by starvation. Many volunteered for the front, where food rations were larger.

That winter was the worst, but it was only the beginning of the 900-day siege. Many who survived would lose their lives during the final battle, in 1944.



Those who did survive did so on luck, love for their city, and energizing acts of heroism—and there were many: While war was waged, the library remained open; there were philharmonic concerts. The Leningraders succeeded in defending their city against Napoleon and during the Russian Revolution. They were determined to succeed again. Sergio Leone was determined that their story be resurrected as cinema.

A cult figure in the United States but an auteur abroad, Leone broke ground—and box-office records—with [\*Fistful of Dollars\* \(1964\)](#), the first in a series of westerns that would establish stardom for actor Clint Eastwood and legitimacy for the “spaghetti western” (a term coined by American film critics), even though several had already preceded it. The films that followed, *For a Few Dollars More* (1965); *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966); *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968); *Duck You Sucker* (a.k.a. *Once Upon a Time the Revolution* [1971]); and *Once Upon a Time in America* (1983) would establish the Leone style: the rapid editing of extreme close-ups, seamless transitions, mythic landscapes (most often shot in Almeria, Spain), mannered acting, super-natural sound, elaborately powerful Ennio Morricone orchestrations (composed before the films were shot), broad strokes of humor, and anarchic violence.

“I work with intuition. With interpreters. I have my own method. I know exactly what I want from actors. Sometimes, I even recite the role to the actor if it’s not clear.”

Sergio Leone was born in Rome in 1929 to silent-film star Bice Valerian (Edvige Valcarengi) and film actor/director Roberto Roberti (Vincenzo Leone). He was no stranger to fascism: His father stood firm in his opinions of Mussolini’s regime, and the family was forced into exile and placed under constant surveillance in Naples when Sergio was thirteen. He would attend law school and then begin work as an assistant director for, among others, Vittorio De Sica (and even had a bit role in *The Bicycle Thief*). Later, he would assist the many American directors who filmed in Rome, including Robert Wise, Fred Zinneman, and William Wyler. He would take over shooting *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1959) from director Mario Bonnard and then make his first film, *The Colossus of Rhodes* (1960).

Unlike many of his Italian contemporaries, whose work focused on Italy and the Italian family,

Leone set his films in America, creating epic fables documented with authentic detail. Settings and stories serve as context, however, as Leone’s Italian sensibility infused them with social and political implications. The director was a master at mining the past for contemporary mirrors, and his movies seem as modern and prescient today as they did at their height, in the 1960s and seventies.



In *Fistful of Dollars* (and in an easy parallel with the U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan), Eastwood arrives in a stagnant border town to be told, “You will get rich here, or you will get

killed,” then threatened, “Get out, Yankee.” *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* is set against the Civil War, while *Once Upon a Time in the West* parallels the Vietnam War. All are filtered through familiar cinematic myth, however, as Leone plays with archetypes and, often, turns them on end: Women rise above saloon-girl status to become the films’ central motivating force; the protagonist shoots first; and good-guy types like Henry Fonda are cast as the bad guy (a choice blamed for poor U.S. box-office draw for *Once Upon a Time in the West*). Nowhere is this more evident than *Once Upon a Time in America*, a reflection on Leone’s own life, and the life and (in Leone’s eyes) death of cinema. Ironically, as might befall a parable about cinema, American distributors cut the film from 420 to 135 minutes—a shorter film means more daily screenings, equals more box-office revenue.

Leone’s highly stylized mise-en-scène, plots, and characters, and his quick-fire cutting influenced the work of directors Sam Peckinpah, Robert Altman, and Alex Cox (whose *Straight to Hell* was also shot in Almeria). Similarities are found in George Lucas’s *Star Wars* and gangsta rap. Leone’s Ennio Morricone soundtracks still echo in music videos and in the work of contemporary composers like John Zorn.

Today Quentin Tarantino’s explosively idiosyncratic revenge-genre films owe a most-obvious nod to the Maestro, from their graphic title sequences to their unabashedly blood-spewing plots to their groovy soundtracks. (Tarantino claims *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* as his number-one favorite spaghetti western.) Django’s own ruffles, cinched peacock-blue suit, and Thom Browne-style cropped blazer clearly riff on Leone’s cinematic flair for fashion, with its leanings

toward long black dusters, draping ponchos, cigarillos, and chiseled cheekbones. In Tarantino's cinema, as in Leone's, man and gun are almost indistinguishable, and whether it's the man or the gun that inevitably fires first is never easily or entirely clear.

It is this unmitigated violence that marks and unites both Leone's and Tarantino's work. Though when asked by a Time critic why his films were so violent, Leone simply pointed to a double-page color spread of a young black man being gunned down by police and gave his famous reply: "Haven't you read your own magazine?" With the horrifying massacres in Newtown, Connecticut, and Aurora, Colorado, this response could as readily be Tarantino's own.

Sergio Leone died of a massive heart attack in 1989, at the age of 60. Unsurprisingly, the Maestro's untimely end paralleled that of his main character in what was to be his upcoming epic: the death of a man who gets so involved in the story, he loses his life in the process.

Marlaine

Glicksman: Can you tell me about the film you've initiated with the USSR and how the project came about?

Sergio Leone: The idea came to me ten years ago. I always fish out antique ideas, very old ideas. The original idea was this amazing story on the city of Leningrad holding out against the Germans, almost destroying themselves, consuming themselves to hold out again the Germans. But I don't want to do a war film per se. Nor do I want to do a political film. It's a little hard to avoid putting both war and politics in, in that they both come into the activity, but on their own. My basic idea is to do a great love film set in the hell of 1942. At that moment, hell was Leningrad. Underneath all this, of course, is a film about dissension between the two most important countries in the world, the United States and the Soviet Union. I think it is a must at this point to talk about cooperation instead of the rancor and hatred and competition between nations.

I will approach these themes through the story of a Russian journalist who calls in a cameraman during this particular period in Leningrad. The news cameraman expects to go and to do fifteen, twenty days, whatever it is, to cover something that is going on over there. Instead, he not only gets involved in the situation but overwhelmed by the amazing collective bravery of these people holding out against the Germans, He gets so involved, that he loses his life in the process. Because in

the last days of the siege—we don't have to tell the ending, but nonetheless—this man gets so involved with the entire thing that he stays longer than he thought, and his own personal sacrifice is much greater than he ever dreamed it would be.

MG: Is this project part of Gorbachov's Glasnost?

SL: No. It's a film that I've been thinking about and discussing for ten years, and there is no way I could have foreseen Gorbachov's arrival or this opening.

MG: Will you weave present U.S.-Soviet politics into the film?

SL: As I said, politics, if it enters this film, will come from under the door, after the door has been closed, as politics quite often seep its way into all types of places. It is difficult to exclude politics, but this is not essentially a political film; politics is a marginal factor. It's a film about this heroic, collective behavior, which is probably the greatest human act in the history of the world. Out of

three million people, one third were lost. One million died in three years. I don't know any other story that has so many deaths in order to protect and save something.

We are also going to respect historical facts. But it is not essentially a historical film, either, because I have no intention of doing a

historical film, or a war film. The film is humanistic in the respect that I want to take these two people, one Russian, one American, deal with them and their encounter, the contrast between them, and how they resolve it.

MG: It is not a metaphor for politics today?

SL: If anything, it might be some kind of example, but not a metaphor. What I hope, as a result, is that Reagan and Gorbachov, after seeing the film, would be a little friendlier between themselves.

MG: I understand that this will be your most pessimistic film. Is this true?

SL: If death is a sign of pessimism, I guess so.

But when I begin a film, I never start off thinking whether it is going to be optimistic or pessimistic. As the fable develops, it takes on one aspect or another. A story on one face or the other, optimist or pessimist, depending on which way it turns. Obviously, today's reality isn't very optimistic.

I admit that some of my ideas may have turned out to be pessimistic in nature. Because the life that I live—the life that we all live—is filtered through [one's





own] experience. It isn't necessarily optimistic when you look at the political phenomena, the different things that are going on in the world. If you filter those ideas through, they aren't going to come out optimistically. And that went into some of my characters and some of my films.

MG: It's said the film will cost \$100,000,000—the most-expensive film ever made.

SL: You can't qualify it in that sense. Because the Russians will be doing their costs in rubles, and we'll be doing our costs in lira. We don't control or evaluate what they are spending on their side. But they can certify and discuss what we are spending because we are going to budget our expenses.

The film will mostly be shot there. Therefore, our costs will mostly be the men that we take, the talent we bring, the organizers, and all that. Their costs are a city, extras, war costumes.... However much it is going to cost to rejuvenate a World War II tank is something that I don't think even they can evaluate.

MG: Will you have free reign over the film, or will it be with the participation of the Soviet authorities?

SL: Artistically, they have given me carte blanche. I've only asked for one thing, and that would be a historian, a writer who lived through that moment, who could also act as a referee for the historical points in the story that we are writing, who could collaborate with the Western writers. In that respect, we could arrive at an optimal product for us and for them in terms of historical and political values. But in requesting this collaborator, I've asked for one who has the ultimate word on it, in that, what we write together—we and the Russian collaborator—he is the last word. Someone cannot come in and say, "No, no. I don't like this. I don't like that." This man who I collaborate with is the last word.

MG: How do you work on a film and with actors when it is not in your own language?

SL: I've shot films in Africa. I've shot in America—English is not my language.

I work with intuition. With interpreters. I have my own method. I know exactly what I want from actors. Sometimes, I even recite the role to the actor if it's not clear. And I beg them not to imitate me, because I'm not a good actor. I tell them this is the idea, so they understand exactly what I want. And if they don't understand, they redo the scene until they understand [laughs].



MG: Previously, you've made films about the frontier. Is the Soviet Union then, for you, the new frontier?

SL: For me, it's not a new frontier. It's a very cosmopolitan world that all eyes of the world go and look at, just as they do with the United States. For one clear

reason: Either side pushing some button could destroy all of humanity.

MG: Have you made all the films you have wanted to make on America? Was *Once Upon a Time in America* your last?

SL: It's difficult to talk about the last film that is going to deal with America. Who knows. America is so varied and exciting that after six months, you go back and find it completely changed. America interests me above all because it is so filled with contradictions, interesting contradictions, which change constantly. Even if you've decided that you don't want to deal with that subject again, before you know it, the desire comes back to do it yet again.

MG: What type of contradictions?

SL: The world is in America. In Italy is only Italy. France is full of France. Germany is full of Germany. In a continent that contains the entire world, contradictions are, of course, constantly arising.

One of these contradictions that I like to sight is that two of the biggest moneymaking films in America were *Mary Poppins* and *Deep Throat*. One, of course, is the opposite of the other. But most likely seen by the same public.

They are alive, these contradictions. And they give vitality and fervor to the nation. But they are nonetheless great contradictions.

MG: You once said that America was the world of infants.

SL: I've always had the sensation that people in America are always avant-garde. Very attentive to all the new innovations. But it's very specialized. The American public is a very specialized public.

All the people I've met, many outside of cinema, knew everything perfectly about one thing or one subject or one area. And less about a lot of things. But the Jesuits use this kind of training, or, let's say it this way: The Jesuit General imposes this kind of structure; he encourages the young men to specialize. Because getting ten of them together, you have the best of everything. But this does not mean that this system is good for the Jesuits all over. They're all available to the cause.

I'm not saying that the Americans had the same impact as the Jesuits, but I do see them as a very

specialized populace, even in terms of being, to a degree, naïve. Because naïveté comes from lack of information. I'm not sure of this, but I think even in American schools, they must be studying in a specialized manner. We're talking a very cultivated people, but I found as cultivated as they were, they were uninformed about the personages who weren't American. They knew everything about America, but much less about other countries. We, on the other hand, probably know less about Italy, but we probably have a broader outlook. This doesn't mean that this is a better system, because I really do believe that the Jesuit system is better for a country.

The very fact of seeking specialization is probably what makes America so great in these two hundred years. But also, the sensation that somebody who wants to understand America doesn't really need to visit it much. Just go to Disneyland. You have the impact of how the Americans think, how they dream, what they desire, how they have a good time, what they prefer. I associate this with young people. But many times I think this infantile quality is much better than the false, incomplete concept of adulthood.

MG: Why did you decide to become a filmmaker?

SL: My mother was an actress. My father was an actor and a director. I am the son of filmmakers. I was born with this bow tie made of celluloid on my collar.

MG: And why did you decide to make westerns?

SL: I had never thought of making a western even as I was making it. I think that my films are westerns only in their exterior aspects. Within them are some of my truths, which happily, I see, belong to lots of parts of the world. Not just America. My discussion is one that has gone all the way from *Fistful of Dollars* through *Once Upon a Time in America*. But if you look closely at all these films, you find in them the same meanings, the same humor, the same point of view, and, also, the same pains.

MG: What would you say your discussion was? Is it about money? Violence?

SL: I have to be honest about one thing. When I want to America, no one asked me how I was. Everyone always asked me, "How much do you make?"

But, of course, this happens in other parts of the world, and not just in America. But in America, it is particularly sure that you'll hear this question asked. Therefore, I consciously chose a person like the bounty

killer [of the *Fistful* trilogy] because he was the street sweeper of the desert, a man who put his life at risk exclusively for the money. I'm not saying that he went against the law, but he put himself within the wings of the law only when it was something that he could profit by.

Of course, there was also the myth of the western films. But my films are borrowed not from the story of the West in America but from the story of cinema. So it is clear that the vehicle of the western was a very interesting vehicle for me to contraband some of my ideas.

Probably the greatest writer of westerns himself was Homer. His characters were never all good or all bad. They're half and half, these characters, as all human beings are. And I am searching as Diogenes did with his

lantern for all of these wonderful human beings. I haven't found them yet.

I've always had the sensation that people in America are always avant-garde. Very attentive to all the new innovations. But it's very specialized. The American public is a very specialized public. The reason it is taken as a realistic film is because

inside the fable, I've put that kind of reality in. And it could easily be called, instead of *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Once Upon a Time There Was a Certain Kind of Cinema*. Because it was also an homage to cinema. And there's my pessimism. Because I didn't know yet that type of film is always going to become more extinct, that there won't be anymore. Because there will always be more films that win five Oscars like *Terms of Endearment*.

MG: Which filmmakers influenced you, and what were your favorite films?

SL: I must be honest and say that I was under the fascination of films. I was fascinated by all films, even the words of them. If I was to do a more-precise analysis of the situation, I have to admit that I was more entertained by the bad films than the good ones. Because when something is beautiful, it is there; it is finished; it is done. It doesn't have to be touched or be worked upon. But if it is badly realized and not completely expressed, sometimes that is more provocative and interesting than when you see something that is perfectly and beautifully done. But if there is an auteur who influenced me—and there is only one—that is Charlie Chaplin. And he never won an Oscar.

MG: Why was Chaplin such a great influence for you?



SL: Because he, too, through spectacle, contrabanded certain ideas, put them through, ideas that even today are not being expressed by great statesmen and politicians.

When one goes to see *Modern Times*, for instance, one understands much more about socialism than listening to the man who was then head of the Socialist movement in Italy.

I think politics should be expressed in this way and not in other ways. And not just politics—sentiments, even certain states of being. Even when I read a book, if the book leaves me the possibility of finding certain solutions or working on my own toward a solution, I prefer that much more than if the book fills me with the answers, gives them to me directly.

I've always believed that true cinema is cinema of the imagination. Cinema through spectacle, through the entertainment of spectacle, tells the story of many actual problems in life. Because who ever doesn't want to read between the lines can just enjoy the entertainment and the show and can go home happy. On the other hand, whoever would like to look and see what someone is saying behind all the show, glitter, scenery, whatever it may be, and see what ideas are being expressed beyond and below and above that, can do that, as well.

The first must that any director has is to not force his public. He has to, I feel, be one step back, not only from cinema, but also from politics and all these issues in order to tell and depict the situation that spreads to people. It's very easy with the camera to show the positive side of something. If a director takes the time to document—to step back to observe—I think it I more honest. Because it has to be the public that makes the conclusions and who, possibly, resolves the situation.

MG: Many stylistic elements in your films seem as though they were the forerunners of music videos.

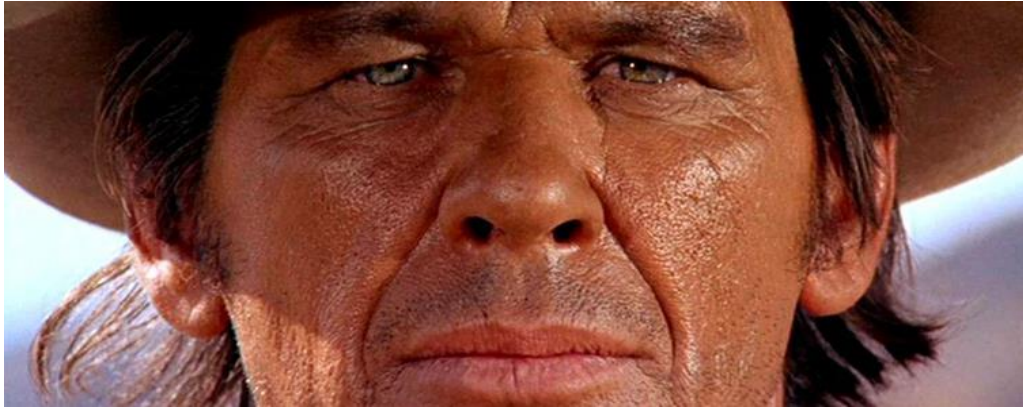
SL: Before I saw them in videos, I saw them in other films. It's natural to me that someone who loved that type of music or that type of spectacle would copy it, to do something, a video. It seems the most natural thing in the world to me.

MG: Your female characters are often very strong.

SL: My films are often characterized by the lack of women present in them, except for this last one [*Once Upon a Time in America*].

Would you like to know why I create the women as I do?

Well, because I think women have always been considered objects, especially in the genre of westerns. And especially in gangster films, with the gangster's moll—she would always be more or less of an



object. And I'm not convinced of this theory. Because I think even gangsters' women have brains. They think and even, as we say, have balls.

Virginia Woolf was one example. She was called the "Lover of 100 Gangsters." Which is why, in the context of westerns, when I used a woman in my films or wrote a woman into my film, I wanted her to be a central point and a motivating point or a catalyst to function in the film. I didn't want her just to be a woman standing at the window, waving hello and goodbye to men as they came and went in the world that they were struggling through. I wanted her to have a true function.

When I used Claudia [Cardinale] for example, in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, she represented the birth of American matriarchy. Because women had enormous weight in America. And they still have. Because they are truly the padrone [owners, masters] of America. Therefore, when they are put into a film, I think they have to be put in for a distinct purpose and have a reason to exist. Not as some superficial or gratuitous presence. You see in *Once Upon a Time in the West* the whole film moves around her [Cardinale]. If you take her out, there's no more film. She's the central motor of the entire happening. It's the same for Deborah [Elizabeth McGovern] and for Carol [Tuesday Weld] [in *Once Upon a Time in America*].

MG: You've made commercials, been a producer.

SL: Producing films was a distraction for me for which I paid dearly. Because I realized that an author cannot also be a producer. Therefore, I had more trouble than I had a sense of utility or satisfaction. But it served to occupy me and to keep me occupied in a field that I love—which was cinema—while I was waiting to realize the film that I wanted to do, which was *Once Upon a Time in America*, which took ten years of thinking and working to realize.



As far as commercials were concerned, I did very few, and I did them only when they gave me carte blanche to them the way that I wanted to. And I did them as an exercise, because I, who do very long films, never thought I would be able to tell a story in 30 or 40 seconds—you come across a whole new system and manner of approaching a subject. And it was interesting for me for that reason. I even had success with them, which is strange, because out of the six ideas, two won the platinum Minerva in France—it's the Oscar for their commercials. One was about the Renault diesel and the other about the regular Renault.

MG: You've always waited to make the film that you've wanted to make the way that you've wanted to make it. That is different than most directors' experience.

SL: Because there are directors, and there are authors. I think I am more of an author than a director. I've tried to consider stories that I have read, making them into films, but they would turn out unnatural. If a producer wants that, he should call other people. Not me.

MG: Why do you think your films are more widely received in Europe than they are in America?

SL: Because there is no Disneyland in Europe.

MG: Ennio Morricone writes the music to your films before you shoot them.

SL: From Ennio I ask for themes that clothe my characters easily. He's never read a script of mine to compose the music, because many times he's composed the music before the script is ever written. What I do is give him suggestions and describe to him my characters, and then, quite often, he'll possibly write five themes for one character. And five themes for another. And then I'll take one piece of one of them and put it with a piece of another one for that character or take another theme from another character and move it into this character.... And when I have my characters finally dressed, then he composes. And records with a small orchestra—12 pieces—and then we listen to it. And then we go on to the script.

I don't enter into particulars with him. I give him the feeling and the suggestions of the characters. This almost caused a scandal at one point, with some of the actors, when they first found themselves in front of a playback recorder for the rehearsals of a scene that was

just to be shot. But I have to say, in the end, that some actors even prefer to dub themselves later in the film in order not to lose the music underneath them while they are acting. They would rather have the soundtrack ruined by the music and dub themselves after. During shooting, it is very important and helpful for an actor to fall into an

atmosphere created and sustained by the music.

I've always felt that music is more expressive than dialogue. I've always said that my best dialogue and screenwriter is Ennio Morricone. Because, many times, it is more important a note or an orchestration than a line said.

When you manage

to express something with a look and the music instead of saying it with words or having the character speak, I think it's a more complete work.

MG: You've live through many difficult periods of history. What do you think of this period, the eighties?

SL: I think that men of my generation—not me in particular—are among the most fortunate men in the universe. Because I was born in 1929, and in the 50 years from 1930 to 1980, I've been able to live an unbelievably varied century. Before, you could never have seen such intense change in a 50-year span. Young people of this century, like my son, didn't live through all those things that went on during that period of time, from 1930 to 1950. They're missing that experience. To go from a bicycle to a vehicle that takes somebody to the moon—only we saw this kind of thing.

MG: Do you think it is become more difficult to make a film that says something today, during a time when so many people are concerned about money?

SL: It is hard to do a film that wants to say something because, unfortunately, most everything has been said. It's very difficult to be original; it's difficult to find new solicitations, new expressions. But this is talking about filmmaking. Cinema. Because I do think that less and less cinema is being done. And this is due to, of course, television, commercials. They are starting to rethink these things in America, as well, because I'm noticing that the cable stations are having more success, because of the non-interruptions, no commercials, than the national networks. And they are starting to talk about this and to discuss the problem.



I'm terrified by young people who are doing what they think is filmmaking. What they're really doing is taking that convulsed, fast rhythm of commercials. It's not filmmaking. I've seen films that have made as much as \$100, \$200 million, but they're not films. They're images. They're flashes. They're many beautiful images, lots of things to look at. They capture you. But it's not a film. It's not something that involves you in a story. They go to cinema now to be blown away by the effects. Just like you would if you would walk into a discothèque or anyplace else, with noise and lights. Because they need to get away for one or two hours. So they go, but nothing remains inside of them.

MG: Why, unlike many other Italian filmmakers, have you not made a film in Italy, about Italy? That's very unusual. What do your fellow Italian filmmakers think about that?

SL: I never worry about what they think about me. Because I feel so far away from what my Italian colleagues have done that I almost automatically become an isolated director. As Claude LeLouche said, his

favorite American director is Sergio Leone. Not because I would be American, but because I was dealing with subject matter that an American could have just as easily dealt with.

I think, to go to the bottom of it all, that the films I have made and my kind of filmmaking is a hybrid type of filmmaking—in that it isn't American, it isn't Italian. It really just has to do with my own ghosts and phantoms. And I have to say, in the end, it's just my way of seeing things.

An important Italian critic once gave *Fistful of Dollars* a very bad review when it came out. Then he became a fan of mine later. He went to the university here [Rome] with *Once Upon a Time in America*. We showed it to 10,000 students. And while the man was speaking that day to the students, with me present, he said, "I have to state one thing. When I gave that review about Sergio's films, I should have taken into account that on Sergio Leone's passport, there should not be written whether the nationality is Italian or anything else. What should be written is: 'Nationality: Cinema.' "

#### COMING UP IN THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS, FALL 2020, SERIES 41:

Oct 27: Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris/ Солярис* (1972)

Nov 3: Werner Herzog, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God/Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (1972)

Nov 10: Richard Rush, *The Stunt Man* (1980)

Nov 17: Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire/Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987)

Nov 24: Krzysztof Kiesłowski, *Three Colors; Red/ Trois couleurs: Rouge/ Trzy kolory. Czerwony* (1994)

Dec 1: Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator* (1940)

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