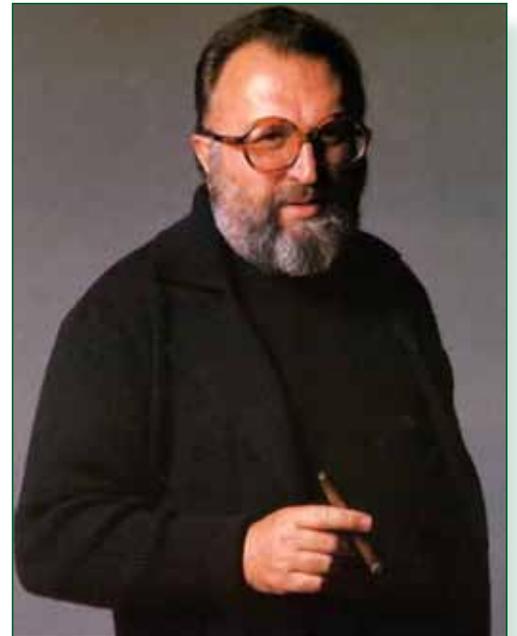


SERGIO LEONE
(1929–1989)

This month's essay deals with an Italian director who revolutionized the historically popular Western genre in cinema, giving it a new style and focus. He accomplished this by directing only five Westerns in his total director oeuvre of seven movies. In bringing back the revived and energized Westerns to movie audiences, he brought a form of Italian Neorealism to a classic cinema genre that had grown tired, unrealistic, and banal over the years.

Sergio Leone was born in Rome on January 3, 1929. He came from a family with roots deep in the Italian film industry. His mother, Edvige Valcarenghi (1886–1969), with stage name Bice Walerian, was a silent movie actress who gave up her profession when she married Vincenzo Leone in 1916. His father, Vincenzo Leone (1879–1959), with stage name Roberto Roberti, directed and acted in films during the silent era, but for reasons that are not entirely clear was prevented from working during the 1930s by order of Mussolini's Fascist regime. He did manage to direct three films between 1939 and 1945, although the last of these was not released until 1951.



During his schooldays, Sergio was a classmate for a time with Ennio Morricone, who would become his musical collaborator for his movies. Vincenzo tried to discourage Sergio from entering the world of cinema, and Sergio briefly studied law. However, having been intrigued with filmmaking by watching his father working on film sets, he decided at age 18 to drop out of law school and to try his hand at filmmaking. He began working as an unpaid, fifth assistant on Vittorio De Sica's Neorealism classic *The Bicycle Thief* in 1948. He also appeared fleetingly in the film, as part of a group of German priests sheltering from the rain.

Despite this beginning in the world of Neorealism, it was in the highly commercial realm of Cinecittà studio productions that Leone was to receive his training over the next decade. By his own reckoning, he worked on about 50 Italian and American films in the 1950s, mainly as an assistant director. Hollywood productions flocked to Rome during this period to utilize the cheap facilities and spend local profits from American films, which Italian law demanded be spent in Italy. Leone's credits from this time include Mervyn LeRoy's *Quo Vadis* (1951), Robert Wise's *Helen of Troy* (1955), William Wyler's remake of *Ben-Hur* (1959), and Fred Zinnemann's *The Nun's Story* (1959).



When his mentor, director Mario Bonnard, fell ill during the production of the 1959 Italian epic *Gli Ultimi Giorni di Pompei* (The Last Days of Pompeii), starring Steve Reeves, Leone was asked to step in and complete the film. The film was released under Bonnard's name, but Leone's work on the film and its box-office success in Italy equipped Leone to produce low-budget films which looked like larger-budget Hollywood movies when the time came for him to make his solo directorial debut. This occurred in 1961 with his [*Il Colosso di Rodi* \(The Colossus of Rhodes, 1961\)](#). It seems Leone never regarded these projects as anything more than workaday jobs, and he later claimed he made *The Colossus of Rhodes* simply to pay for a honeymoon in Spain, where it was filmed.

Beginning in the 1960s, especially with the catastrophic financial failure of *Cleopatra* (1963) and other big-budget films, the Hollywood studios withdrew from Cinecittà. The Italian film production industry experienced a sharp downturn as historical epics fell out of favor with audiences and world-wide ticket sales dropped significantly. Leone shifted his attention to another genre, which came to be known as the "Spaghetti Western," owing its origin to the traditional

American Western genre. He is often credited with starting the European Western craze that saved Cinecittà in the mid-1960s.

Leone immediately recognized the potential for a Western remake after Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's samurai film *Yojimbo* (1961) was released in Rome. The idea did not, however, come from nowhere. He was able to find backing for the project primarily due to the success of a series of German Westerns based on Karl May's pulp-fiction novels about Winnetou, last of the Mescalero Apache, and his blood-brother, 'Old Shatterhand.' The first of the Winnetou films, *The Treasure of Silver Lake* (1962), was a phenomenal success across Europe, and a further 11 Westerns based on May's books were produced between 1962 and 1968. Several cheap Westerns also came out of Spain in the wake of the first Winnetou films.



THE DOLLARS TRILOGY (AKA THE MAN WITH NO NAME TRILOGY)

In general, Leone, who co-wrote and directed the Dollars Trilogy, saw the trilogy as somewhat satiric: “All the killings in my films are exaggerated because I wanted to make a tongue-in-cheek satire on run-of-the-mill Westerns.” “The Old West” had always fascinated him as a child while watching the early Westerns of the 1930s and early 1940s. This fascination carried into his adulthood and influenced his films. He hailed John Ford as his mentor for the trilogy. “The cowboy picture has got lost in psychology,” he told an interviewer. “The West was made by violent uncomplicated men, and it is this strength and simplicity that I try to recapture in my pictures.” To this end, a guideline that underpinned his Westerns was that women were introduced only if they advanced the plots. Otherwise, he said, a love situation “arrests the rhythm of a story.”

The look of the first film of the trilogy, *A Fistful of Dollars* (*Per un Pugno di Dollari*, 1964), was established by its Spanish locations, which presented a violent and morally complex vision of the American Old West. The film paid tribute to traditional American Western films, but significantly departed from them in storyline, plot, characterization, and mood. Leone gains credit for one great breakthrough in the Western genre that is still followed today: in traditional Western films, many heroes and villains looked alike, often dressed as if they had just stepped out of a fashion magazine, with some singing several times during the movie (think Roy Rogers or Gene Autry). The characters were clearly drawn moral opposites, even down to the hero wearing a white hat and the villain wearing a black hat (except for the most successful of the ‘traditional’ Western cowboys, Hopalong Cassidy, who wore a black outfit and rode a pale horse).

Leone’s heroes and villains were, in contrast, more ‘realistic’ and complex: usually they were ‘lone wolves’ in their behavior. As a Western, the film broke a number of conventions. There were no Indians. The main character, the “Man With No Name,” does not pull out a guitar and start singing. The characters looked dirty, unshaven, and they sweated profusely. There was always a strong suggestion of criminal behavior, even with the hero. The hero was every bit as ruthless and money-hungry as the villains. The only difference was that he would spare the innocents. The characters were also morally ambiguous by appearing generously

compassionate or nakedly and brutally self-serving and money-hungry, as the situation demanded. Relationships revolved around power; retribution was emotion-driven rather than conscience-driven. Also, the film is considerably more violent than the usual American Western. Leone did not know the Hollywood rules about what is and is not acceptable violence; he did whatever he wanted. The results redefined the rules for depicting violence.

Some critics have noted the irony of an Italian director who could not speak English, and had never even visited the United States, let alone the American Old West, almost single-handedly redefining the typical vision of the American cowboy. However, Leone did know a great deal about the American Old West and the cowboys who populated it, shaped by his love of the Western movies he saw and the books he read. The image fascinated him as a child, and carried into his adulthood and into his films.



Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone as boyhood classmates and later as colleagues.

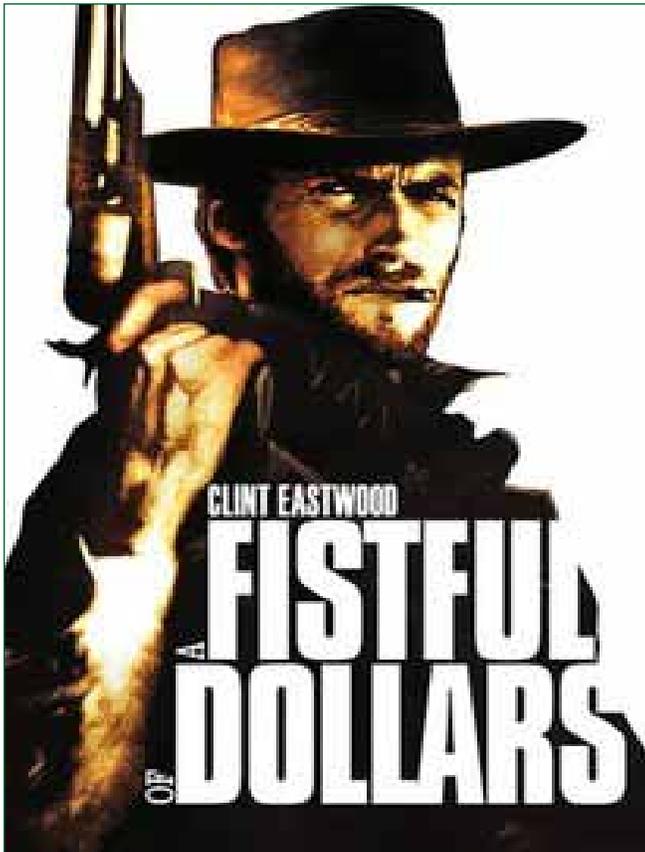
When deciding on the music for *A Fistful of Dollars*, Leone was planning to use Francesco Lavagnino, who had done Leone's score for *The Colossus of Rhodes*. Luckily, before signing the contract with Lavagnino, he met Ennio Morricone (left). Interestingly enough, Morricone remembered that they had known each other as boys when they had gone to the same school. However, Leone had disliked Morricone's scores for previous Westerns, which were at that time typical Western scores. But, when he heard an earlier Morricone experimental piece, he changed his mind. The score that Morricone created for *A Fistful of Dollars* was like no Western score before it. Previous scores sounded like popular American music, almost always pleasant, with male vocals. Morricone's score was in a Western style, and

sounded much like Mexican folk music—violent folk music. The main theme was punctuated by unintelligible shouts and calm whistling, the latter performed by Alessandro Alessandroni, a boyhood friend of Morricone.

For the release of *A Fistful of Dollars*, Leone was afraid that American audiences would not go to see a Western made in Italy. After all, the Western up to that point had been an American-controlled genre. So, to make the movie more palatable for the American audience, both Leone and Morricone changed their names, becoming "Bob Robertson" and "Dan Savio," respectively.

Promoting *A Fistful of Dollars* was difficult, because no major distributor wanted to take a chance on a faux-Western with an unknown director. The film ended up being released in Italy on September 12, 1964, which was typically the worst month for ticket sales. The film was shunned by the Italian critics, who gave it extremely negative reviews. Despite these negative reviews from Italian critics, at a grassroots level, its popularity spread and over the film's theatrical release, it grossed \$4 million in Italy, more than any other Italian film up to that point.

The release of the film was delayed in the United States because distributors feared being sued. Leone's film had been identified as an unofficial remake of Kurosawa's 1961 film, *Yojimbo*,



which resulted in a successful lawsuit by Toho, *Yojimbo*'s production company. As a result, it was not shown in American theaters until January, 1967, after Leone agreed to settle the lawsuit out of court. However, *A Fistful of Dollars* is not simply a copy of *Yojimbo*. Leone uses Kurosawa's techniques perfectly, but also uses elements of his own style: quick zooms and extreme close-ups of thin, squinty eyes of the characters.

The film grossed \$4.5 million for that year in the US. In 1969 it was re-released, earning \$1.2 million. It eventually grossed \$14.5 million in its American releases. Some American critics felt differently from their Italian counterparts, with *Variety* praising it as having “a James Bondian vigor and tongue-in-cheek approach that was sure to capture both sophisticates and average cinema patrons.”

Ultimately, the movie was a run-away popular and financial success, having been made on a low budget of \$200,000. It became the first of a

rapidly growing genre of “Spaghetti Westerns,” inspiring more than 200 Spaghetti Westerns in the following two years, (half of them with “dollars” in the title!) After this movie, Westerns would never be the same—there was no going back.

The movie also made an international star of Clint Eastwood. Prior to *A Fistful of Dollars*, Eastwood had done minor film roles, and even his one TV role on *Rawhide* was not billed as a starring role. Eastwood was not the first actor approached to play the main character. Originally, Leone intended Henry Fonda to play the lead character, the famous “Man With No Name.” However, the production company could not afford to employ a major Hollywood star on the low budget with which it was working. Next, Leone offered Charles Bronson the

part. He, too, declined, arguing that the script was bad. (However, both Fonda and Bronson would later star in Leone's [*Once Upon a Time in the West*](#), 1968). At least eight other actors were approached and all turned the role down. Leone then turned his attention to Richard Harrison, an expatriate American actor who had recently starred in the Italian Western, *Duello nel Texas* (Duel in Texas, also known as *Gunfight at Red Sands*, 1963). Harrison, however, had not been impressed with his experience on that previous film and refused. The producers later presented a list of available, lesser-known American actors and asked Harrison for advice. Harrison suggested Eastwood, who he knew could play a cowboy convincingly, having seen him on [*Rawhide*](#). Harrison later stated: "Maybe my greatest contribution to cinema was not doing *A Fistful of Dollars* and recommending Clint for the part." (Eastwood later spoke about transitioning from a TV Western to *A Fistful of Dollars*: "In *Rawhide*, I did get awfully tired of playing the conventional white hat...the hero who kisses old ladies and dogs and was kind to everybody. I decided it was time to be an anti-hero.") Eastwood was paid \$15,000 for his portrayal of the "Man With No Name," the ultimate Western anti-hero.

Since *A Fistful of Dollars* was an Italian/German/Spanish co-production, there was a significant language barrier on the set. Leone did not speak English, and none of the American actors, including Eastwood, could speak Italian. In addition, since the movie was mostly filmed in Spain, a large number of the crew spoke Spanish, and not Italian. Eastwood communicated with the Italian cast and the crew mostly through actor and stuntman Benito Stefanelli, who also acted as an uncredited interpreter for the production. Leone communicated with his English-speaking actors sometimes through Stefanelli, but mostly by using emphatic gestures to express what he wanted from them. Similar to other Italian films shot at the time, all footage was filmed silently, and the dialogue and sound effects were dubbed over in post-production. For the Italian version of the film, Eastwood was dubbed by stage and screen actor Enrico Maria Salerno, whose ["sinister" rendition of the voice of the "Man With No Name"](#) contrasted with Eastwood's cocksure and darkly humorous interpretation.

A Fistful of Dollars became the first film to exhibit Leone's famously distinctive style of visual direction. This was influenced by both John Ford's cinematic landscaping and the Japanese method of direction perfected by Kurosawa. Leone wanted an operatic feel to his Western, and so there are many examples of quick camera zooms and extreme close-ups of thin, squinty eyes on the faces of different characters, functioning like arias in a traditional opera. The rhythm, emotion, and communication within scenes can be attributed to his meticulous framing of these close-ups. This is very different from the way Hollywood incorporated close-ups, using them as "reaction" shots, usually to a line of dialogue that had just been spoken. Leone's close-ups, however, are more akin to portraits, often lit with Renaissance-type lighting effects, and are considered by some cinema critics as pieces of design in their own right.

Eastwood was instrumental in creating the distinctive visual style of the "Man With No Name" that would continue in the later two films of the trilogy. He bought black jeans from a sport shop on Hollywood Boulevard; the hat came from a Santa Monica wardrobe firm; and the trademark cigars from a Beverly Hills store. (On the anniversary DVD for *The Good, the*

Bad, and the Ugly, it was said that while Eastwood himself is a non-smoker, he felt that the foul taste of the cigar in his mouth put him in the right frame of mind for his character). He also brought props from *Rawhide* including a Cobra-handled Colt .45, a gun belt, and spurs. The poncho was purchased in Spain; it was Leone and costume designer Carlo Simi who decided on the Spanish poncho for the “Man With No Name.” Leone reportedly took to Eastwood’s distinctive style quickly and commented that: “More than an actor, I needed a mask, and Eastwood, at that time, only had two expressions: one with the hat and one with no hat.”

After the box-office success of *A Fistful of Dollars* in Italy, Leone and his new producer, Alberto Grimaldi, wanted to begin production of a sequel, but they needed to get Clint Eastwood to agree to star in it. Eastwood was not ready to commit to a second film when he had not even seen the first. Quickly, the filmmakers rushed an Italian-language print (a U.S. version did not yet exist) of *Per un Pugno di Dollari* to him. Eastwood then gathered a group of friends for a debut screening at CBS Production Center and, not knowing what to expect, tried to keep expectations low by downplaying the film. As the movie progressed, however, Eastwood’s concerns proved to be unfounded. The audience may not have understood Italian, but in terms of style and action, the film spoke volumes. “Everybody enjoyed it just as much as if it had been in English,” Eastwood later recalled. Soon, he was on the phone with the filmmakers’ representative: “Yeah, I’ll work for that director again,” he said.

With a higher budget than the first movie (\$600,000), Leone could look for a higher-priced co-star. Charles Bronson was again approached; this time for a co-starring role, but he passed on it, citing that the sequel’s script was like the first film. Instead, Lee Van Cleef (*right*) accepted the role. (Leone’s films made Lee Van Cleef a major star in Italy, resurrecting an acting career that had never risen above playing villainous bit parts in American films of the 1950s. After appearing alongside Eastwood in *For a Few Dollars More* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Van Cleef went on to make ten more Italian Westerns). Eastwood received \$50,000 for portraying the “Man With No Name” in the sequel, while Van Cleef received \$17,000 for portraying Colonel Douglas Mortimer. The sequel was titled *For a Few Dollars More* (*Per Qualche Dollaro in Più*, 1965), and became the second film in the Dollars Trilogy.



Stylistically, the movie is very similar to the first. The only real change between this film and *A Fistful of Dollars* is that Leone did away with most of his slow motion effects. Just like the first movie, *For a Few Dollars More* was shot in Almería, Spain, with interiors done at Rome’s Cinecittà Studios. The production designer Carlo Simi built the town of “El Paso”



in the Almería desert; the town of “Agua Caliente” was really Los Albaricoques, one of the White Towns of Andalusia on the Níjar plain. Like the entire Dollars Trilogy, the movie was shot without sound, with both the sound effects and the dialogue added in post-production. (Although it is explicitly stated in the movie that the Colonel Mortimer character is originally from the Carolinas, Van Cleef opted to perform his dialogue using his native New Jersey accent rather than a Southern accent).

In this movie the “Man With No Name” and Colonel Mortimer both set their sights on a recently escaped bandit, Indio (played by Gian Maria Volontè), who plans to rob the Bank of El Paso. They conspire to capture Indio and his men and turn them in for a huge reward. However, with such a huge reward, the two bounty hunters don’t trust each other and must watch each other as closely as they watch Indio.

For a Few Dollars More was released in Italy on December 18, 1965. At the time of its Italian release, the film proved to be even more commercially successful than its predecessor. By 1967, the film became the highest-grossing film in Italy with 14,543,161 admissions. The film opened in Spain on August 17, 1966 as *La Muerte Tenía un Precio* (*The Dead Had a Price*) and became the highest-grossing Spanish film up to that time, with a gross of 272 million pesetas. It was the seventh most popular film at the French box office in 1966. In the United States, the film debuted on May 10, 1967, four months after the release of *A Fistful of Dollars*, grossing \$15 million.

The last movie of the Dollars trilogy is a bit different than the previous two. It is titled: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (*Il Buono, Il Brutto, e Il Cattivo*, 1966). First of all, as you can see, the title doesn’t mention anything about dollars. Yet it is still considered part of the series due to the appearance of Clint Eastwood as the “Man With No Name,” and the similarity of the story line (all three movies concern the acquisition of large amounts of gold by the “Man With No Name” playing two sides against each other). Second, the budget is considerably larger (\$1.2 million), and therefore, for the first time, there are huge sets with many more people in them. Third, the film is known for Leone’s use of long shots and close-up cinematography, as well as his distinctive use of violence, tension, and stylistic gunfights.

This movie is the most famous of all of Leone’s seven films, and the one praised most highly, largely because of the incredible Ennio Morricone score featuring the modulated screaming

in the main theme that is [the most instantly recognizable Western theme of all time](#). There are only a few film scores that have risen beyond the films they are associated with to become part of our culture, and this is one of that very select group. Morricone's theme was the attempt to recreate a hyena's cry, and while most people don't recognize a hyena's scream, the pure energy and aggressiveness of the scream is a powerful motif in the film that Leone used to good advantage, punctuating scenes with it throughout the film.

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly is about three men searching for \$200,000 worth of gold (coincidentally the cost to make *A Fistful of Dollars*). Clint Eastwood is once again "The Good" ("Il Buono"), though he is really only relatively good. He is called "Blondie" by Tuco (below), although he once more is really the "Man With No Name." He discovers the identity of the grave under which the gold is buried while on a forced march led by Tuco. Lee van Cleef plays "The Bad" ("Il Cattivo") called Angel Eyes, a ruthless killer who relentlessly tracks down the thieves who originally stole the gold, and then pursues Blondie and Tuco after discovering that they know where the gold is hidden.

Finally we have the most interesting character of the bunch, Tuco Benedicto Pacífico Juan María Ramírez, known simply as "Tuco," or as Blondie calls him—"The Rat." He is a fast-talking, comically oafish yet also cunning, cagey, resilient and resourceful Mexican bandit who is wanted by the authorities for a long list of crimes and has a price on his head. He is "The Ugly" ("Il Brutto") of the title, and is played by Eli Wallach. Tuco manages to discover



the name of the cemetery where the gold is buried, but he does not know the name of the grave, which only Blondie knows. This state of affairs forces both of them to become reluctant partners.

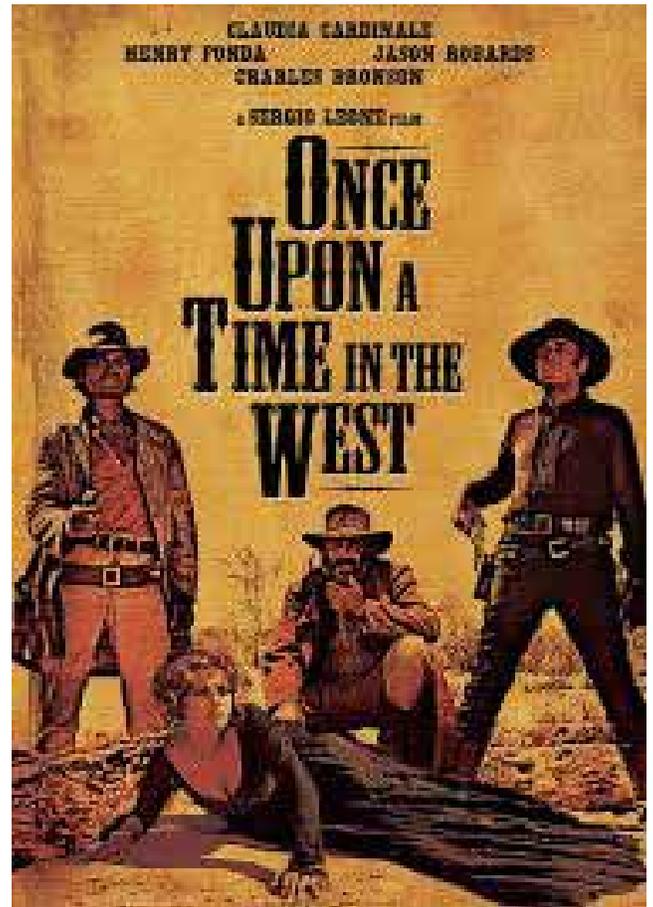
The [three-way duel finale](#) in the movie between the protagonists became a classic movie scene; certainly, the best shoot-out in any of Leone's works and one that cemented his reputation as a master of Western movies. It combined both

Leone's close-up techniques and editing with Morricone's music to create an emotional peak. For several minutes, there is no dialogue. Leone flashes in ever-increasing speed between close-up shots of the three duelists staring at each other and moving their hands slowly towards their guns. All this happens while Morricone's music plays, building the tension higher and higher until finally it erupts in a blaze of gunfire.

The movie was released in Italy on December 23, 1966 and was an immediate success. It became the best attended movie in Italy up to that point (11,364,221 admissions). It was released in the United States on December 29, 1967 and grossed \$25.1 million.

ONCE UPON A TIME TRILOGY

Based on the success of *The Man With No Name* trilogy, Leone was invited to the US in 1967 to direct *Once Upon a Time in the West* (*C'era una Volta il West*, 1968) for Paramount Pictures. The film was shot once again mostly in Almería, Spain and Cinecittà in Rome. It was also briefly shot in Monument Valley, Utah. The film starred Charles Bronson, Henry Fonda, Jason Robards and Claudia Cardinale. *Once Upon a Time in the West* was a long, violent, dream-like meditation on the mythology of the American Old West, looking especially at the decline of the myth of that period of American history. It contained many stylistic references to iconic Western films. Leone chose a woman to represent the end of the battles, a woman who in the film brings water to the cowboy, a metaphor of a love that breaks the violent fascination of the West. Audience interest was maintained throughout this nearly three-hour film by concealing both the hero's identity and his unpredictable motivation until the final predictable shootout scene. Perhaps unsurpassed as a retribution drama, the film's script was written by Leone and his longtime friend and collaborator Sergio Donati, from a story by Bernardo Bertolucci and Dario Argento, both of whom went on to have significant careers as directors. Before its release, however, it was ruthlessly edited by Paramount, which perhaps contributed to its low box-office results in the US. Nevertheless, it was a huge hit in Europe, grossing nearly three times its \$5 million budget among French audiences, and highly praised among North American film students. It has come to be regarded by many critics as Leone's best film.



The second film in this trilogy—*Duck, You Sucker!* also known as *A Fistful of Dynamite* or *Once Upon a Time... the Revolution* (*Giù la Testa*, 1971)—is the least seen of all Leone's Westerns, and for some reason, it has largely been forgotten. Leone was intending merely to produce the film, but due to artistic differences with then-director Peter Bogdanovich, he was asked to direct the film instead, which undoubtedly meant he had less creative say in how the story developed. *Duck, You Sucker!* is a Mexican Revolution action drama, starring James Coburn as an Irish revolutionary and Rod Steiger as a Mexican bandit who is conned into becoming a revolutionary.

Leone turned down the offer to direct *The Godfather*, in favor of working on another gangster story he had conceived earlier. He devoted ten years to this project, based on the novel *The Hoods* by former mobster Harry Grey, which focused on a quartet of New York City Jewish gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s who had been friends since childhood. The finished four-hour film, the final film in this trilogy, was *Once Upon a Time in America* (*C'era una Volta in America*, 1984), starred Robert De Niro and James Woods. It was a meditation on another aspect of popular American mythology—the organized crime syndicate with its greed and violence, and its uneasy coexistence with the meaning of ethnicity and friendship. In 1968, the elderly David “Noodles” Aaronson (Robert De Niro) returns to New York, where he had a career in the criminal underground in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of his old friends, like longtime partner Max (James Woods), are long gone, yet he feels his past is unresolved. Told in flashbacks, the film follows Noodles from a tough kid in a Jewish slum in New York’s Lower East Side, through his rise to bootlegger and then Mafia boss -- a journey marked by violence, betrayal and remorse.

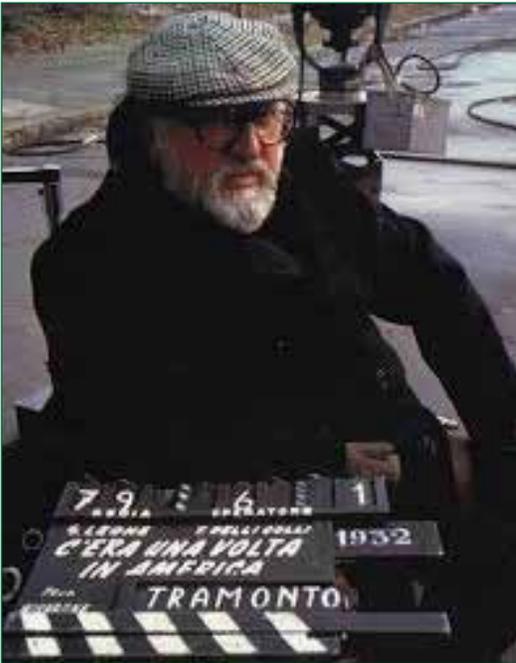
Leone dedicated most of the 1970s to preparing [*Once Upon a Time in America*](#). The strain of shooting the film in 1982-83 worsened an already serious heart condition. This was further exacerbated by



his legal fight with the studio and the distributor to preserve his 228-minute version of the film. He had originally envisaged two three-hour films, then a single 269-minute version, but was convinced and agreed to shorten it to 228 minutes. The American distributors, The Ladd Company, further shortened it to 139 minutes, and rearranged the scenes into a nonsensical chronological narrative, both without Leone’s approval or his involvement.

In the United States, the film received a wide release in 894 theaters on June 1, 1984, and grossed \$2.4 million during its opening weekend. It ended its box office run with a gross of just over \$5.3 million on a \$30 million budget, and became a box office flop. The shortened version was not only a commercial flop but was also a critical flop in the United States. Critics, who had seen both the original version and the shortened US version, harshly condemned the changes that were made. The original “European cut” has remained a critical favorite and frequently appears in lists of the greatest gangster films of all time.

Five years after the debut of *Once Upon a Time in America*, Sergio Leone suffered a massive heart attack at his home in Rome and died on April 30, 1989 at the age of 60. At the time of his death, he was survived by his wife of 29 years, the former principal ballerina at the Rome Opera House and later movie choreographer, Carla Ranalli Leone (d. 2017), two daughters—present-day movie director Raffaella (b. 1961), present-day actress Francesca (b. 1964) and present-day movie producer son Andrea (b. 1967). He is buried in the cemetery in Pratica di Mare, a part of the municipality of Pomezia in the province of Rome.



EVALUATION

Sergio Leone's films have become a template for directors who wish to imbue their self-conscious use of genre iconography with a sense of dream-like nostalgia for imaginary lost times. He did this especially in his Dollars Trilogy, redefining the West of his imagination, developed by viewing Western films of his youth in the 1930s and early 1940s, and combining these with elements of Neorealism. He sought to portray the American Old West realistically as a wild, lawless, and brutal place populated by men who were driven by greed, self-interest, and guile. Although he remains a controversial figure in critical circles, his stylistic influence is everywhere in contemporary cinema. Leone-like imagery and Morricone-sounding scores have formed the basis of countless movies, television shows, and even television commercials – all this surely the final proof that his

stylistic traits are now firmly entrenched in the lexicon of cinematic clichés. His Spanish-flavored images of the Western frontier complete with dramatic flourishes, prolonged pauses, broad panoramic shots, and intense close-ups have all become a thoroughly internalized part of the Western genre's iconography. The Leone style, some 55+ years after he made his first Western, has become absorbed into the same mythology of late 20th- and early 21st-century cinema.

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from:

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