



From *Once Upon a Time in the West*

Interview with Sergio Leone

By Marlaire Glicksman

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.



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.

Marlane 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 against 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 or 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 went 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.

When you asked me about the theme of money, maybe you are not aware of the fact that *Once Upon a Time in America* isn't about gangsters. It's really a film about memory, time passing, nostalgia. It's not realistic film; it's a surrealistic film. 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's 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?

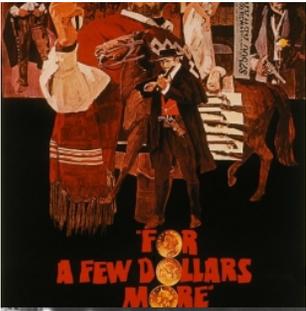
SL: I never worry about what they think about me. Because I feel so far away from what my Italian colleagues have done that I almost automatically become an isolated director. As Claude LeLouche said, his favorite American director is Sergio Leone. Not because I would be American, but because I was dealing with subject matter that an American could have just as easily dealt with.

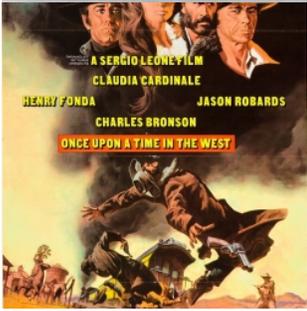
I think, to go to the bottom of it all, that the films I have made and my kind of filmmaking is a hybrid type of filmmaking—in that it isn't American, it isn't Italian. It really just has to do with my own ghosts and phantoms. And I have to say, in the end, it's just my way of seeing things.

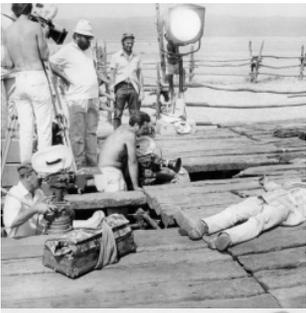
An important Italian critic once gave *Fistful of Dollars* a very bad review when it came out. Then he became a fan of mine later. He went to the university here [Rome] with *Once Upon a Time in America*. We showed it to 10,000 students. And while the man was speaking that day to the students, with me 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.'"

Marlaine Glicksman is a visual storyteller based in New York City: an award-winning filmmaker, screenwriter, photographer, and journalist who creates dramatic character-driven stories set in multicultural contexts both narrative and documentary and in moving images and still. She is currently in postproduction on The Commandment Keepers, a feature documentary on the highly observant African-American synagogue in Harlem.











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[INTERVIEW: "Extending the Frame: An Interview with Susan Meiselas" \(2006\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "An Uncommon Interview with Stephen Shore" \(2007\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "Stephen Shore with Noah Sheldon and Roger White" \(2005\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "Interview with Shelby Lee Adams" \(2010\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "Interview with Michael Schmelling" \(2007\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "Susan Meiselas in Conversation with David Company"](#)

[INTERVIEW: "A Dialogue Between Steven Cantor & Sally Mann" \(2004\)](#)

[ASX.TV: Sophie Calle - "Take Care of Yourself"](#)

[INTERVIEW: Stephen Shore - "The Apparent Is the Bridge to the Real" \(2007\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: Robert Frank - "Highway '61 Revisited" \(1987\)](#)

[INTERVIEW: "Interview with Ernesto Bazan" \(2012\)](#)