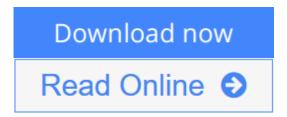


Once Upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone

By Christopher Frayling, Autry National Center's Museum of the American West



Once Upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone By Christopher Frayling, Autry National Center's Museum of the American West

In the mid-1960s an unknown Italian film director named Sergio Leone was given \$200,000 and some leftover film stock, and he went to make a Western. With an American TV actor named Clint Eastwood and a script based on a samurai epic, Leone wound up creating A Fistful of Dollars, the first in a trilogy of films (with For a Few Dollars More and The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly) that was violent, cynical, and visually stunning. Along with his later masterpiece, Once Upon a Time in the West, these films came to define the "Spaghetti Western," a genre that has influenced such contemporary filmmakers as Martin Scorsese, John Woo, and Quentin Tarantino.

Written by the preeminent Leone scholar, this is the first illustrated book to focus on his Westerns, illuminating his visual style, offbeat sense of humor, and sophisticated, elliptical way of telling stories. Augmenting the text are a wealth of visual materials, as well as interviews with Leone, Eastwood, Eli Wallach, Lee Van Cleef, Bernardo Bertolucci, composer Ennio Morricone, designer Carlo Simi, and others. The book accompanies an exhibition with the same title opening in July 2005 at the Autry National Center's Museum of the American West in Los Angeles.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Of Sergio Leone (1929–1989) and his legendary spaghetti westerns, director Martin Scorsese says, "he created a new genre... a major departure for Italian cinema." Frayling's history of Leone's life and work is a testament to that creation, an all-encompassing and carefully compiled book for fans and students. Besides telling the story of Leone's rise (in 1964, he made *A Fistful of Dollars* on \$200,000 and some leftover film stock), the book contains interviews with composer Ennio Morricone, star Clint Eastwood and Leone himself. Morricone explains that he wrote musical scores for Leone's films without a script, drawing only on the story and Leone's take on the characters. Eastwood defines Leone's westerns as operatic, and great movie villain Lee Van Cleef reveals that he turned down a role in the now classic and critically revered *Once Upon a Time in the West* because he didn't like the way it was written. Along with intriguing comments by writers and directors, and an essay by Leone about his idol, John Ford, this work provides visually arresting production stills, lobby cards, pictorial source sketches, costume and set designs and posters. This is a work of scholarship and depth on the Italian western and the man who pioneered it. (*July*)
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From **Booklist**

Sergio Leone had directed some dozen movies before his death in 1989, yet, almost entirely because of his five westerns, made between 1964 and 1971, constituting his take on an American cinematic mythology, his reputation remains lofty to this day. His second feature, *A Fistful of Dollars*, a violent yet humorous low-budget affair based on Kurosawa's samurai film *yojimbo*, became a runaway smash and launched the "spaghetti western" and the superstardom of erstwhile second-rate TV cowboy Clint Eastwood. *Fistful*'s two sequels were even more popular, but the ambitious *Once upon a Time in the West* (1968) flopped when first released in studio-butchered form (later restored, it is now considered Leone's masterpiece). This book, which accompanies a Leone exhibition at the Museum of the American West (Los Angeles), offers essays on his westerns; a wealth of photos and posters; interviews with Leone, Eastwood, and others, including the director's indispensable musical collaborator, Ennio Morricone; and Leone's essay on John Ford, the only other director, perhaps, who marked the western genre as indelibly as did Leone. *Gordon Flagg Copyright* © *American Library Association. All rights reserved*

About the Author

Sir Christopher Frayling has been rector at London's Royal College of Art since 1996 and a professor of cultural history for more than 20 years. He is the author of more than a dozen books on arts and culture, including Spaghetti Westerns and Sergio Leone: Something to Do with Death. He is currently chairman of the Arts Council of England.

Users Review

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