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# Abstracts



## DEEP ROOTS

*Jesús Palacios*

A considerable number of novels have been written about the West. However, this fact does not exactly imply an innocuous imitation of the American model, but rather a reinterpretation under a particular light which focuses on the adventurer component. The field has been cultivated by a number of different authors. Nevertheless, three of them, from three different countries, stand out in particular. One is the Italian Emilio Salgari, who outside the genre is known for his creation of Sandokan. Another is German-born Karl May, who deposited a virtuous German character, Old Shatterhand, in the Wild West and partnered him with the no less noble Indian, Winnetou. Finally, José Mallorquí invented the masked avenger, El Coyote, who enjoyed enormous popularity in the desolate Spain of the forties and fifties and who has today soared to the heights of national pulp novel idol.

## THE SPAGHETTI WESTERN

*Carlos Aguilar*

The European Western is not a gross deformation of the American model but rather a genre in its own right. The great Sergio Leone is the one who defined this particular way of cultivating the Western, followed by several other filmmakers who personalized the style, like Sergio Sollima and Tonino Valerii. Although the elements and features of the so-called Spaghetti Western are many and varied, the Latin mentality manages to clearly shine through the eclectic mishmash. Particularly noticeable is the significantly indirect sense of religion and sexuality.

## BEFORE LEONE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE

*Carlos Aguilar/Lorenzo Codelli*

Contrary to general belief, the European Western is as old as its American cousin, and is anything but a mere copy or mutilation of the American genre. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1964 triumph of *Per un pugno di dollari*, the film that first introduced the Spaghetti Western, France, the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain produced several films of the genre. In the first phase of Eurowestern history the best known characters generally took their inspiration from literature — El Coyote in Spain, and the Winnetou-Old Shatterhand duo in Germany. By the same token, the quintessential Spaghetti Western location was established in Almería in the Spanish region of Andalucía.

## I'LL TAKE THE GOLD... YOU CAN HAVE THE LEAD

*Javier G. Romero*

With the unexpected box office hit *Per un pugno di dollari* (1964) a number of production companies, on the lookout for fast and juicy profits, were encouraged to invest in EuroWesterns. Spain, which after all was a cohort in the phenomenon thanks to its piece of the action in the Leone film, set its machinery into motion quickly and efficiently. Barcelona production companies PC Balcázar and I.F.I.S.A. and Madrid-based Unión Films and Hispamer Films were to concentrate their activity on creating Spaghetti Western series. In fact, both Unión and Balcázar each built their own Western towns in Hoyo de Manzanares and Esplugues de

Llobregat respectively. Another case altogether was the “phenomenon of Almería,” a province that in just a few years’ time had gone from misery to industrial and economic euphoria, becoming the obligatory stomping grounds for an infinity of European Westerns including *The Bounty Killer* (Eugenio Martín, 1966), *La resa dei conti* (1967), *I giorni dell’ira* (1967), *Faccia a faccia* (1968), *Ognuno per se* (1968), *Spara, gringo, spara!* (Bruno Corbucci, 1968), *Dai nemici mi guardo io* (Mario Amendola, 1968), *La notte dei serpenti* (Giulio Petroni, 1969), *Un esercito di cinque uomini* (Don Taylor, 1969) and *E Dio disse a Caino* (Antonio Margheriti, 1969).

## THE MARK OF WINNETOU

*Christiane Habich*

Created by prolific writer Karl May, the heroic duo made up of pale face Old Shatterhand and Indian Chief Winnetou were the stars in a considerable number of films made in the 1960s. The movies, which turned actors Lex Barker and Pierre Brice into national idols, represent the most significant and relevant German contributions to the Eurowestern genre. The production of the films was the brainchild of Horst Wendlandt, who created yet another cornerstone in popular 60s filmmaking, a thriller based on the adaptations of another writer — this time English — Edgar Wallace.

## REMEMBERING “TRINITY”

*Ramón Freixas & Joan Bassa*

The memory is fragile, tenuous and deceptive as time creates distances and blurs the shapes and colours of specific moments. That is not the case with the two films starring the Trinity twosome Terence Hill (Mario Girotti) and Bud Spencer (a.k.a. Carlo Pedersoli), filmed by cameraman E. B. Clucher (alias Enzo Barboni). But accompanied by a feeling of surprise and wariness our final conclusions have been changed. Our memory of Trinity was tied to the transgression of dirty rude characters, virtuoso burpers, unpresentable, filthy, ragged slobs. An enthronement of the flea-bitten planet that does not honestly fit in with the reality of the images...although neither does it totally contradict them. Trinity is a product of three phenomena: the onslaught of the comic, with caricature type characters who put our universe right; a pale imitation of James Bond, without the glamour or arsenal of gadgets; and the thematic and stylistic exhaustion of the European Western.

## REFLECTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN WESTERN ON THE AMERICAN WESTERN

*Carlo Gabersek*

The commercial and industrial impact of the Spaghetti Western was so transcendent that it managed to completely change even the American Western. It did so in every way, from the technical aspect to artistic direction, but most notably in the treatment of violence and the type of locations. The fact that a European variant, modest in principle, could modify the very essence of a traditionally American genre is a unique phenomenon in film history. The transcendence of this fact reaches much further than the case of Clint Eastwood, the versatile American star who owes everything to Italian filmmaker Sergio Leone.



## LIVING JUST A LITTLE LONGER...

Rubén Lardín

The Western in Europe, especially from the time Leone and his aforementioned trilogy came on the scene, became the haunt of forlorn, resentful men, often forsaken and always adventuresome and instinctive. It is quite easy to figure out where the scars on these men came from. The hero of the Eurowestern is condemned to be free. He is a Sartrean hero, a man aware of his existential tragedy, a man who accepts his place in the world and who knows his fate has been decided. He is a man who knows that life is simply a matter of survival or perhaps an exercise in finding the path of least resistance. Only death (the awareness of death) will make sense out of his journey. Like a character from Hemingway, or Howard's Conan, or a cliché from a detective novel, the Eurowestern hero keeps on walking in order to understand. He is a stranger in a tragic, senseless desert. It is not a question of nihilism, but rather stoicism, resignation, searching... existentialism.

## BLOOD AT SUNRISE

Antonio José Navarro

Violence in the European Western emerges from the very outset as a variant of the genre. It is important to remind readers that the Eurowestern is actually a *different way* of understanding the genre, a *different focus* on the legendary West; it is different — neither better nor worse — from the genre made in Hollywood. Violence in European Westerns shied away from domestication, undermining the rational and positivist morale of the established Order. There are very few shades of colour separating good from bad and truth from lies — only those needed to make the story's narrative machinery run smoothly. The vital, revolutionary and somewhat anarchist violence in such titles as *Faccia a faccia* (Sergio Sollima, 1967), *Requiescant* (Carlo Lizzani, 1967) and *La banda J&S. Cronaca criminale del Far West* (Sergio Corbucci, 1972) provides the background for a clash between ways of life and for conflicting wills. Violence is not seen as a problem; it is not judged and sentenced based on logical or moral criteria. It is precisely this clash between wills that frees European Western violence from any moralistic shackles.

## IMAGINARY FOLKLORE

Roberto Cueto

It is indicative that virtually all of the more or less detailed studies done on the Eurowestern touch on the musical aspect of the films in general, and the collaboration by Sergio Leone/Ennio Morricone in particular. The curious thing is that the subject tends to be overlooked or underrated in monographs on other themes (including those dedicated to the American Western) and only dealt with in works dedicated to particular directors whose careers are linked to the work of particular musicians (Alfred Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann, Federico Fellini and Nino Rota, Tim Burton and Danny Elfman...). Leone and Morricone fall into the same category. However, there are other factors that come into play here, factors which have made the music in these films captivate the attention of a number of scholars and chroniclers who on other occasions were rather uninterested in the subject. One of them is the creation of a new and genuinely Spanish-Italian school of Western music that was used in an endless number of films and which was cultivated by a wide repertory of composers. Another was a new concept in the traditional image-music

hierarchy of classic cinema. The latter would prove to be of paramount importance in the aesthetics of modern filmmaking and in the more prosaic matters of product consumption, thanks to the mutually beneficial momentum experienced in the film and recording industry.

## THIS IS NOT WHAT IS SEEMS

Joan Ripollès Iranzo

Are the man-made stage sets used in *North West Mounted Police* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1940) more authentic than the natural Iberian landscapes in *La carga de la Policía Montada* (Ramón Torrado, 1966)? Is the Pancho Villa role played by Wallace Beery or Yul Brynner more licit than the roles of the Mexican revolutionaries and bandidos played by Tomás Milian, Fernando Sancho or Gian Maria Volonté? The problem here is not a matter of veracity, but one of credibility. Therefore the filmmakers on this side of the Atlantic are not guilty of not telling the truth but rather, in the worst case scenario, of not knowing how to lie to perfection. The Spanish Western was born with a complex and associated with a kind of picaresque pretence that would accompany it throughout its lifetime. However, when we talk about the natural outdoor locations and stage settings used in Spanish Westerns, we are only too often referring to foreign production companies. Not only did Spanish soil provide them with the perfect backdrops, but also legal leeway and cheap labour, neither of which were as readily available in the other parts of Europe due to political and economic reasons.

## SERGIO LEONE

Ramón Freixas & Joan Bassa

Sergio Leone brings together a number of traditions and innovations which he managed to piece together firmly and subtly, quite the opposite of the speculative exercise of rudimentary syncretism. In short, he was a filmmaker endowed with solid cultural baggage and a practical mastery of technique. Rather than seeking challenges or revolutions, Leone wanted to be true to both the genre and to himself. With a nearly purist respect — not reverence — for the generic blueprint, he shifted the focus, conquered the lighting (oh, those shadows!), transformed the stories and ruptured the precept of credibility. Leone's Wild West is a brutal one, to a large extent owing to the fact that it lacks the 'peaceful' counterbalance of schoolmarm, shopkeepers and unarmed ministers. As for women, there simply are none. Anyone who does not tote a gun in his work is a nobody. Moreover, his violence is seasoned with rancid cruelty as gratuitous as it is obscene, and only useful when it comes time for revenge.

## SERGIO CORBUCCI

Ángel Sala

Sergio Corbucci is one of the most important filmmakers in the history of the European Western. His work got underway at the same time as Sergio Leone's, and came to a close just as the genre was languishing in its final years. Corbucci's personal perspective on the genre is most clearly seen in his baroque sense of violence, his penchant for revolutionary Westerns with ideological messages and his black humour. His concept of characters was made patent through his antiheroes and a unique gallery of bad guys, as well as the importance he placed on female roles, unusual in the European Western. The precision of his work becomes



plainly evident in the vitality of his character Django, one of supreme icons of the genre, and which crowned Franco Nero the king of Spaghetti Western actors.

#### SERGIO SOLLIMA

*Antonio José Navarro*

The value of Sergio Sollima's contribution to the Eurowestern should not be measured in terms of quantity but rather quality. His three Westerns, *La resa dei conti* (1967), *Faccia a faccia* (1967) and *Corri, uomo, corri* (1968), are incontrovertibly on a par with the genre's best-known titles, whether European or North American. Why? Well, among other reasons, because of the complexity of his moral discourse — far from moralistic — and the beauty of the formal framework which gives it meaning. In fact, we would not be going too far in suggesting that Sollima is a curious cross between Emilio Salgari and Ugo Foscolo. Lover of adventure and action, the Roman director enjoys a certain physical corporeity when it comes to the portrayal of characters, environments and situations. Both sensitive and energetic, in spite of an aloof yet palpably tenebrous concept of the world and humankind, Sollima's Westerns leave room for the most diverse practical attitudes: asceticism and cynicism, fierce renouncement, frivolous joy, and the act of doing or being left undone. The filmmaker's solid cultural background played an important role in all of these aspects, enabling him to skilfully juggle the industry's commercial demands and the most stringent requirements of cinematographic entertainment.

#### DUCCIO TESSARI

*Rubén Lardín*

Duccio Tessari's contribution to the European Western is important on a number of counts. In addition to writing the screenplays for some of the most successful pictures in his own country and abroad, including *Per un pugno di dollari* (Sergio Leone, 1964) — the film that unleashed the phenomenon — his most interesting contribution to the Eurowestern can be found in his self-awareness as a craftsman and a 'rereader', and in his lucidity as a manipulator of someone else's game. "To us the West has always been a childhood dream." This explains why *Una pistola per Ringo* is a papier-mâché Western. The characters are as Manichean as they could ever be, death is scandalously trivialized and the dialogues are insubstantial and gratuitous. Only a certain crude and painful sense of humour breathes life into an insufferable character who has the dubious honour of having the film named after him.

#### TONINO VALERII

*Roberto Curti*

After working as a screenwriter and assistant director, Tonino Valerii worked under the supervision of Sergio Leone before going on to directing his own films. His five Westerns made him a name as one of the major filmmakers in the European Western panorama. Valerii's work is serious and ambitious, starring disenchanted antiheroes and with the frequent appearance of psychoanalytic elements. Particularly noteworthy are *I giorni dell'ira* and *Il prezzo del potere*, with Giuliano Gemma in the title role, and *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, produced by Sergio Leone and starring the extremely unusual combination of Terence Hill and Henry Fonda.

#### FRANCO GIRALDI

*Joan Ripollès Iranzo*

A filmmaker's territory is his imagination, a confusing land which over the years has been bought, sold, divided and ploughed by those who have no better qualifications than the power to buy it. Before setting up house in the comforting and creative parcel of public television, Franco Giraldi first had to walk the tightrope of the 1960s Italian film industry, where imagination managed to survive amidst institutional sclerosis and the brilliance of a handful of demigods and unclassifiable maestros. With the clear and decisive rhythm of a Warner Brothers cartoon, Giraldi used his humour and demystifying skills to give shape to such European Western titles *Sette pistole per i McGregor* and its sequel *Sette donne per i Mac Gregor*.

#### ENZO G. CASTELLARI

*Antonio Bruschini*

Linked to the world of cinema through family ties (son and nephew of directors, for example), Enzo G. Castellari has dedicated a good part of his filmmaking career to Westerns. His work in the genre enjoys a certain amount of diversity, although the common denominator has been his inclination towards action and baroque set designs. It should be pointed out that even after the Spaghetti Western fanfare had died down, Castellari continued cultivating the genre with his friend and partner Franco Nero in leading roles. Castellari has also incorporated Spaghetti Western features in other types of films he has made, including thrillers and post-atomic science fiction.

#### JOAQUÍN ROMERO MARCHENT

*Paxi Urquijo*

Joaquín Romero Marchent was a genuine pioneer of the Spanish Western, with *El Coyote* and its sequel, filmed in the fifties, and was one of the founding fathers of the Eurowestern, with another two-part picture about Zorro, filmed in the early sixties. Alberto Grimaldi, the producer who would later become one of Spaghetti Western's predominant figures, got started in the profession in Joaquín Romero Marchent's first Westerns. Those initial films were classically conceived and had nothing to do with the style that would later prevail under Sergio Leone or Tonino Valerii. One of the director's brothers, Rafael, also filmed a number of films of the genre.

#### CLINT EASTWOOD

*Christopher Frayling*

Clint Eastwood was a 34-year-old actor who enjoyed relative fame thanks to his role in the family television Western series, *Rawhide*. When Sergio Leone selected him for the leading role in *Per un pugno di dollari*, after having been turned down by James Coburn and Charles Bronson, Eastwood rose to stardom, backed by the extra momentum brought about by Leone's two sequels, *Per qualche dollaro in più* e *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*. The American distributor, United Artists, called the character 'The Man With No Name'. Armed with his unique talent, Eastwood rechannelled the persona that Leone discovered in him and went on to create his own personal and brilliant filmography, which continues to draw in crowds the world over.



## LEE VAN CLEEF

*Philippe Rège*

After working in several American pictures in the fifties, Lee Van Cleef was left by the wayside professionally at the early age of forty due to alcohol problems. However, Sergio Leone had the brilliant idea of offering Van Cleef a role as co-star in **Per qualche dollaro in più**, which turned him into a star. With his new standing, Van Cleef worked continuously for ten more years, becoming one of the most quintessential characters in Spaghetti Westerns, thanks to his ironic and threatening appearance. After the genre had run its course, John Carpenter paid tribute to Van Cleef by giving him a guest star role in **Escape from New York**.

## GIAN MARIA VOLONTÉ

*Pier Maria Bocchi*

The now legendary Gian Maria Volonté only appeared in four Westerns: two by Sergio Leone, one by Damiano Damiani and a forth directed by Sergio Sollima. Nevertheless, with his unique style of acting he was the embodiment of the Eurowestern genre, brilliantly interpreting a variety of characters and doing a remarkably convincing job in the role of a demented bandit. His much less known brother Claudio also participated in the genre, but curiously enough became involved in Eurowesterns after Gian Maria had decided to concentrate his efforts on socially and politically oriented films with a clearly leftist ideology.

## TOMÁS MILIAN

*Fabio Zanillo*

Born in Cuba and trained at the Actor's Studio, Tomás Milian came to the Western genre after proving his worth under the orders of a number of widely-known intellectual Italian directors in the 1960s. He soon became Spaghetti's fetish actor, closely associated with 'political' Spaghetti Westerns. Arrogant, exuberant and unpredictable as an actor, Milian held on to a certain typological coherence, although his most significant part was the role of Cuchillo, who he played twice with director Sergio Sollima. His recent role in Steven Soderbergh's **Traffic** seems to be a kind of tribute to Tomás Milian's Eurowestern past.

## GIULIANO GEMMA

*Olivier Billotet*

After gaining popularity in legendary Peplum adventure films, Rome-born Giuliano Gemma rose to the heights of Eurowestern hero extraordinaire, with top billing in over fifteen Spaghetti Westerns. Tall and handsome, muscular and always smiling, Gemma performed all of his own stunts, since he had come from an athletic background. He is best remembered for his two-time billing as Ringo in the Duccio Tessari series. As an actor, however, his best dramatic work was seen in his roles in the Tonino Valerii Westerns **Il prezzo del potere** and **I giorni dell'ira**.

## FRANCO NERO

*Antonio Tentori*

Franco Nero's first role in a Western was in Sergio Corbucci's **Django**. His international acclaim brought him a series of

similar roles as a laconic and independent antihero. Franco Nero worked again with Corbucci, but most particularly under the direction of Enzo G. Castellari, becoming one of the most emblematic figures of the Spaghetti Western. When the genre was laid to death, in a certain sense the actor carried his character over to the detective genre. Owing to his unconcealed keenness on Westerns, Nero not only promoted and starred in a comeback of **Django** but also took the title role in the last Italian Western produced to date, **Jonathan degli orsi**.

## KLAUS KINSKI

*Carlos Aguilar*

Thanks to a physical build that was a far cry from the classic Western cowboy, Klaus Kinski fit in perfectly with the European variant of the genre, characterized by a hybridization of codes and cultures. Kinski was like a disturbing demon taken right out of German expressionism and transplanted onto the Spanish desert of Almería. Kinski's gallery of Eurowestern characters includes all types of villains who always seemed to have some sort of psychological or even physical anomaly. Today an internationally acclaimed cult actor, Kinski has appeared in more than twenty Spaghetti Westerns, a genre which has provided him with some of his most stellar roles.

## GIANNI GARKO

*Antonio Bruschini*

Contrary to other emblematic Spaghetti Western actors, Gianni Garko played the part of both heroes and villains, but always with a certain degree of aloofness. Garko is an Italian actor of Slavonic background who had previously worked in a variety of genres. However, he is most keenly associated with the peculiar and elegant Sartana, a kind of enigmatic and invincible gambler. The actor was billed as Sartana four times, first for director Gianfranco Parolini and the other three for Giuliano Camimeo, in a series of films with a comic-book flair.

## ANTHONY STEFFEN

*Federico de Zigno*

Rome-born Anthony Steffen is the most quintessential of Italian, low-budget, Spaghetti Western actors. His trademark was a deadpan face with several days' stubble and a hat rim shadowing his eyes, in a kind of modest comic-book version of Clint Eastwood in Sergio Leone films. Steffen worked in some twenty Spaghetti Westerns, most of which revolved around the theme of revenge. One of the most interesting is Sergio Garrone's **Django, il bastardo**, written by Steffen himself.

## READY, AIM, FIRE... OR HOLD YOUR PEACE

*Ignacio Fernández Mañas*

The vast majority of Spanish actors working during the Eurowestern euphoria took part in the genre to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, Spanish actors made a notable contribution to the typology of the European Western, even though they tended to appear in supporting roles or as bad guys. Standing out above them all in terms of impact and number of films, is Fernando Sancho, Eurowestern's Mexican par excellence. Other Spanish actors of the genre include Eduardo Fajardo, Aldo Sambrell, José Manuel Martín and Frank Braña.