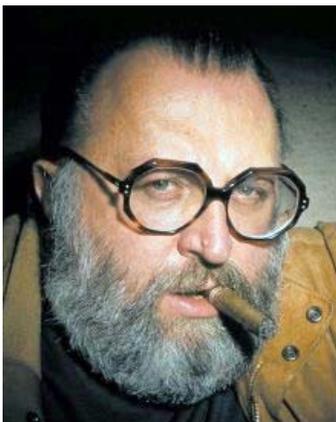


APRIL 10, 2007 (XIV:12)
**THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY/IL BUONO,
 IL BRUTTO, IL CATTIVO (1966) 180 minutes**



Clint Eastwood...Joe
 Lee Van Cleef...Sentenza
 Luigi Pistilli...Father Pablo Ramirez
 Rada Rassimov...Maria
 Enzo Petito...Storekeeper
 Claudio Sarchilli...Member of Angel Eyes' gang
 John Bartha...Sheriff
 Livio Lorenzon...Baker
 Antonio Casale...Jackson/Bill Carson
 Al Mulock...One-armed bounty hunter
 Eli Wallach...Tuco

Directed by Sergio Leone
 Written by Luciano Vincenzoni & Sergio Leone (story);
 Agenore Incrocci, Furio Scarpelli, Luciano Vincenzoni & Sergio
 Leone (screenplay)
 Produced by Alberto Grimaldi
 Original Music by Ennio Morricone
 Cinematography by Tonino Delli Colli
 Film Editing by Eugenio Alabiso and Nino Baragli; Joe D'Augustine (restored version)



SERGIO LEONE (3 January 1929, Rome, Italy – 30 April 1989, Rome, heart attack).
From Wikipedia: Born in Rome, he was the son of the cinema pioneer Vincenzo Leone (known as director Roberto Roberti), and the actress Edvige Valcarengi (Bice Waleran), and started working in the film industry himself at the age of eighteen.

He began writing screenplays in the 1950s, primarily for the so-called "sword and sandal" or "peplum" historical epics which were popular at the time. He also worked as an assistant director on several large-scale, high-profile Hollywood productions, a.k.a. runaway productions, filmed at Cinecittà Studios in Rome, notably *Quo Vadis* (1951) (in which a teenaged Sophia Loren appeared in a small role) and *Ben-Hur* (1959).

When director Mario Bonnard fell ill during the

production of the 1959 Italian epic *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (*The Last Days of Pompei*) starring Steve Reeves, Sergio Leone was asked to step in and complete the film. As a result, when the time came to make his solo directorial debut with *The Colossus of Rhodes* (*Il Colosso di Rodi*, 1961), he was well equipped to produce low-budget films which looked and felt like Hollywood spectacles.

In the early 1960s, demand for historical epics collapsed, and Leone was fortunate enough to be at the forefront of the genre which replaced it in the public's affections: the Western. His *A Fistful of Dollars* (*Per un pugno di dollari*, 1964) was an early trend-setter in a genre which came to be known as the "spaghetti western". Based upon Akira Kurosawa's Meiji-era samurai adventure *Yojimbo* (1961), it elicited a legal challenge from the Japanese director; the film is notable for its establishment of Clint Eastwood as a star. Until that time, he had been an American television actor with few roles to his name.

The look of the film was established partly by its budget, partly by its Spanish locations, and it presented a gritty, violent, morally complex vision of the American West which paid tribute to traditional American Westerns,

but significantly departed from them in storyline, plot, characterization, and mood. Leone deservedly gets credit for one great breakthrough in the Western genre that is still followed today: in traditional Western films, heroes and villains alike looked like they had just stepped out of a fashion magazine and the moral opposites were clearly drawn, even down to the hero wearing a white hat and the villain wearing a black hat. Leone's characters were, in contrast, more "realistic" and complex: usually "lone wolves" in their behaviour, they rarely shaved, looked dirty, and there was a strong suggestion of body odour and a history of criminal behaviour; they were morally ambiguous and often either generously compassionate or nakedly and brutally self-serving as the situation demanded. This sense of realism continues to affect Western movies today, and has also been influential outside this genre. Many have called it ironic that an Italian director who could not speak English and had never even seen the American West could have almost single-handedly redefined the typical vision of the American cowboy. According to Christopher Frayling's book *Something to do with Death*, Leone was an avid reader about the American West. He knew a great deal about the American West, and it was reflected in his films. It fascinated him as a child, and that carried into his adulthood and his films.

His next two films - *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966) - completed what has come to be known as the *Dollars trilogy*, with each film being more financially successful and more technically proficient than its predecessor. All three films featured scores by the prolific composer Ennio Morricone: Leone had a personal way of shooting scenes with Morricone's music ongoing. Critics have often said that *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* was the finest of the trilogy.

Based on these successes, in 1967 he was invited to America to direct what he hoped would be his masterwork, *Once Upon a Time in the West* (*C'era una volta il West*) for Paramount. Filmed mostly in Spain and Italy, and briefly Monument Valley, Utah, and starring Henry Fonda, Charles Bronson, and Claudia Cardinale it emerged as a long, violent, dreamlike meditation upon the mythology of the American West. It was scripted by Leone's longtime friend and collaborator Sergio Donati.

The story was written by Bernardo Bertolucci and Dario Argento, both of whom went on to have significant careers as directors. Before its release, however, the film was ruthlessly edited by Paramount, which perhaps contributed to its poor box-office results in America. Nevertheless, it was a huge hit in Europe and highly praised amongst North American film students, and it has come to be regarded by many as Leone's best film.

After *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Leone directed *A Fistful of Dynamite* (*Giù la testa*, 1971). Leone was originally producing the film, but due to artistic differences between its director Peter Bogdanovich, Leone was asked to step in. The film 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 continued to produce, and on occasion

stepped in to re-shoot scenes. One of these films was *My Name Is Nobody* (1973) by Tonino Valerii (though true participation of Leone in shooting is disputed), a comedy western film which poked fun at the spaghetti western genre. It starred Henry Fonda as an old gunslinger who watched 'his' old West fade away before his very eyes and Terence Hill as the young stranger who helps Fonda leave the dying West with style.

His other productions included, *A Genius, Two Friends* and *A Dupe*, (*Un genio, due compari, un pollo*, (1975), another western comedy starring Terence Hill. *The Cat/Il gatto* (1977) starring Alberto Sordi, *The Toy/Il giocattolo* (1979) starring Nino Manfredi, and three comedies by actor/director Carlo Verdone, *Fun Is Beautiful/Un Sacco Bello* (1980), *Bianco, Rosso e Verdone/White, Red and Verdone* - Verdone means "green", a pun referring to the three colours of the Italian flag and to the star and director of the film Carlo Verdone (1981) and *Troppo Forte/Great!* (1986). During this period he also directed various award-winning TV commercials for European television.

Leone had turned down the opportunity to direct *The Godfather*, but spent the ten years developing a new epic project, this time focusing on a quartet of New York City Jewish gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s who had been friends since childhood. This work, *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), was a project he had conceived before *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and it was for this very reason he turned down the offer to direct *The Godfather*.

Based on the novel *The Hoods* by Harry Grey, starring Robert De Niro and James Woods, *Once Upon a Time in America* was a meditation on another aspect of popular American mythology, the role of greed and violence and their uneasy coexistence with the meaning of ethnicity and friendship, and like the earlier film, it was too long and stately for the studio to stomach. The studio cut (only for the American market) its four-hour running time drastically, losing much of the sense of the complex narrative. The recut version flopped and received much criticism.

The original version, projected in the rest of the world, had great appreciation by the public and by critics. When the integral version of the film was released to DVD in the USA, it gained major critical acclaim, with many critical circles hailing the film as a masterpiece.

At the time of his 1989 death at the age of 60, Leone was part way through planning yet another epic, this time on the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War. Leone was infamous for his compulsive eating which led him to be borderline obese. This was no doubt a contributing factor in his early death of a heart attack. In his later years, Leone had a falling out of sorts with Clint Eastwood, his most famous actor. When he *directed Once Upon a Time in America*, he commented that Robert De Niro was a real actor, unlike Eastwood.

However, the two made amends before Leone's death. In 1992, Clint Eastwood directed *Unforgiven*, a revisionist Western for which he won the Oscar for best director. Leone was one of the people to whom he dedicated it.

CLINT EASTWOOD (31 May 1930, San Francisco) has acted in 58 films and directed 30. In the past decade he has acted in *Million Dollar Baby* (2004; Academy Award for Best Picture), *Blood Work* (2002), *Space Cowboys* (2000), *True Crime* (1999) and *Absolute Power* (1997) and directed *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), *Flags of our Fathers* (2006), *Million Dollar Baby* (2004), the segment "Piano Blues" on Martin Scorsese's "The Blues" miniseries, *Mystic River* (2003), *Blood Work* (2002), *Space Cowboys* (2000), *True Crime* (1999), *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997), and *Absolute Power* (1997).

Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie

Encyclopedia: "How many would ever have thought that a tall, laconic, squinty star of spaghetti Westerns and cop thrillers would end up directing art movies? Not many, we'd guess. In truth, though, that's been just another phase, just a natural extension of a career that has consistently confounded expectations. Reportedly an easygoing but shiftless young man who'd already worked in a variety of dead-end menial jobs (such as gas-station attendant) before reaching Hollywood in 1955, Eastwood wangled a contract at Universal thanks to director Arthur Lubin, and played bit parts that year in *Francis in the Navy*, *Tarantula* and *Revenge of the Creature*. Universal subsequently dropped Eastwood, but in 1959 he signed to star in the TV series "Rawhide," which kept him busy for the next six years. During the 1964 hiatus, he flew to Italy to star in a Western quickie, and thought no more of it until he found out that *A Fistful of Dollars* was a titanic success. He went back the next summer and again donned his flat-brimmed sombrero and ragged poncho in a sequel, *For a Few Dollars More* and again for *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (both 1966). That year, all three were finally released in the U.S., and "The Man With No Name" (as his character was billed) suddenly found himself atop the box-office charts. His icy, tightlipped, implacable character—a trigger happy gunman with his own moral code struck just the right chord with 1960s audiences, who were just discovering in Humphrey Bogart a Hollywood relic with similar existential appeal. (It hardly mattered that Eastwood's character parodied the traditional Western-movie hero.) Finally a star in his own country, Eastwood thereafter wisely varied his roles—though singing in the ambitious Western musical *Paint Your Wagon* (1969) may have stretched things a bit too far and began a fruitful collaboration with director Don Siegel that resulted in such excellent and distinctive films as *Coogan's Bluff* (1968), *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970), *The Beguiled* and of course, *Dirty Harry* (both 1971), which spawned four sequels, virtually invented the loose cannon cop genre, and gave him the screen character for which he will always be remembered. (Ironically, he only took the role after Frank Sinatra dropped out at the last minute.) In 1971, Eastwood made his directorial debut with the chiller *Play Misty for Me* and continued to wield the megaphone frequently thereafter. Eastwood also set up his own production company, Malpaso, and for the next 15 years churned out hit after hit, alternating action films with offbeat comedies; notable in this period were *High Plains Drifter* (1973), *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), *The Gauntlet* (1977), *Every Which Way But Loose* (1978), *Escape From*

Alcatraz (1979, directed by Siegel), *Tightrope* (1984), *Pale Rider* (1985, a return to Westerns and a thinly disguised reworking of *Shane*), and *Heartbreak Ridge* (1986). As Eastwood neared 60, his star began to dim, but he continued to surprise. He directed *Bird* (1988), a critically acclaimed biography of jazz great Charlie Parker; starred in and directed *White Hunter, Black Heart* (1990, playing a film director modeled after John Huston); and assumed the same chores on *The Rookie* (1991, with Charlie Sheen). Extremely canny about alternating mass-audience movies with more personal, limited-appeal projects, Eastwood managed to combine both types of films with *Unforgiven* (1992), a revisionist Western that won rave reviews—as well as Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director—and did extremely well at the box office. Following this personal triumph, he agreed to act in someone else's movie for the first time in years and delivered one of the best performances of his career as an aging Secret Service man (who just happens to play jazz piano) in *In the Line of Fire* (1993). Definitely on a winning streak, he then teamed up with Kevin Costner to costar in and direct *A Perfect World* (also 1993). In 1995, Eastwood won the Academy's Irving Thalberg award, then directed and acted opposite Meryl Streep in *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995). He has also served as mayor of his hometown of Carmel, California. It may be revealing that this superstar of shoot-'em-ups both urban and Western has said for years that his own favorite of his films is the cerebral and highly stylized *The Beguiled*."

LEE VAN CLEEF (9 January 1925, Somerville NJ—16 December 1989, Oxnard, California, heart attack) acted in 90 films and appeared frequently on television. His last role was as the rock-skipping grandfather in *Speed Zone!* (1989). Some of his other films were *Escape from New York* (1981), *The Magnificent Seven Ride!* (1972), *Per qualche dollaro in più/For a Few Dollars More* (1965), *How the West Was Won* (1962), *The Bravados* (1958), *The Young Lions* (1958), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *It Conquered the World* (1956), *The Conqueror* (1956), *The Vanishing American* (1955), *I Cover the Underworld* (1955), *Tumbleweed* (1953), *Jack Slade* (1953), *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), and *High Noon* (1952).

ELI WALLACH (7 December 1915, Brooklyn) has acted in 100 films and has appeared frequently on television. His most recent film is *King of the Corner* (2004). Some of the others are *Mystic River* (2003), *Night and the City* (1992), *Mistress* (1992), *The Godfather: Part III* (1990), *The Two Jakes* (1990), *The Executioner's Song* (1982), *Winter Kills* (1979), *The Deep* (1977), *Crazy Joe* (1974), *Poppies Are Also Flowers* (1966), *Lord Jim* (1965), *How the West Was Won* (1962), *The Misfits* (1961), *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), and *Baby Doll* (1956).

ENNIO MORRICONE (10 November 1928, Rome, Italy, sometimes credited as Leo Nichols and Dan Savio) is perhaps the most prolific film composer ever. His IMDB credits list nearly 400 theatrical and made-for-tv scores, as well as one TV series score – "The Virginian" in 1962. He scored all 5 of Leone's westerns, as well as *The Genius* and

Once Upon a Time in America. Some of his other film scores were for *Malèna* 2000, *Bulworth* 1998, *Lolita* 1997, *Wolf* 1994, *Disclosure* 1994, *Une pure formalité* 1994, *In the Line of Fire* 1993, *Cinema Paradiso* 1991, *Bugsy* 1991, *Hamlet* 1990, *Money* 1990, *State of Grace* 1990, *Casualties of War* 1989, *The Untouchables* 1987, *The*

from Sergio Leone Something To Do With Death. Christopher Frayling. Faber & Faber London 2000

Predictably, Sergio Leone's own account of the origins of the film [*The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*] was very different [from that of Vincenzoni the writer]. By the late 1960s he was presenting it to interviewers as an organic, 'authorial' progression from his previous two Westerns; and all his own idea: 'I didn't feel pressurized any more', Leone would assert, 'to offer the public a different kind of film. I could now do exactly the film I wanted...It was while I was reflecting on the story of *A Few Dollars More* and what made it work, on the different motives of Van Cleef and Eastwood, that I found the centre of the third film...I had always thought that the "good", the "bad" and the "violent did not exist in any absolute, essential sense. It seemed to me interesting to demystify these adjectives in the setting of a Western. An assassin can display a sublime altruism while a good man can kill with total indifference. A person who appears to be ugly may, when we get to know him better, be more worthy than he seems—and capable of tenderness...I had an old Roman song engraved in my memory, a song which seemed to me full of common sense:

E'morto un Cardinale [A Cardinal is dead, *che ha fatto bene e male.* Who did good things and bad things.

Il mal l'ha fatto bene The bad, he did well *e il ben l'a fatto male.* and the good, he did badly.]

This was basically the moral I was interested in putting over in the film.' In fact, the film was not originally to be called *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. The title *I due magnifici straccioni* (*The Two Magnificent Tramps*) was changed just before shooting began. Vincenzoni dreamed up the new title (literally) and Leone loved it.

At an early stage, Leone agreed with Vincenzoni that the story would mix the tragic historical events of the Civil War with a 'picaresque spirit': a series of chance encounters between cunning tricksters in the dusty Southwest. The picaresque and the *commedia dell'arte* were useful reference points, he felt, because 'they have this in common: they do not have true heroes, represented by one character'. With Vincenzoni's 'three rogues in search of some treasure' to build on, the conferences began. As Leone explained:

Mission 1986, *La Cage aux folles* 1978, and *Days of Heaven* 1978. Morricone and Leone would often work on the script and the score at the same time, with each writing into the other's ideas. Leone would then play the music to the actors during filming, much as music was played on the set by some early silent era directors.

'What interested me was on the one hand to demystify the adjectives, on the other to show the absurdity of war...The Civil War which the characters encounter, in my frame of reference, is useless, stupid: it does not involve a "good cause". The key phrase of the film is the one where a character comments on the battle of the bridge: "I've never seen so many men wasted so badly." I show a Northern concentration camp...but was thinking partly about the Nazi camps with their Jewish orchestras.'

Andersonville Camp in Confederate Georgia, and the atrocities that had occurred there (slaughter, starvation, even cannibalism) were well known in the historical literature, if not in the movies. Documentation had been examined by scholars, to fathom exactly what went wrong. Was it a lack of supplies and support, confusing policy directives. The Union decision to abandon exchange of prisoners, or just plain cruelty on the part of the officers concerned, including Camp Commandant Wirz? When John Ford had featured a refugee camp for native Americans in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), he had placed it under the command of a methodical German officer (Captain Oskar Wessels, a proto-Nazi played by Karl Malden) as if that was enough to explain everything to the audience. Asked by an army surgeon if he will take responsibility for locking the Cheyenne in a warehouse and starving them during a Nebraskan winter, Wessel responds: 'I am responsible for nothing. I have simply been the instrument of an order.' To which the surgeon replies: 'You say that as if you'd memorized it.' At the end of the earlier *Horse Soldiers* (1959), based on the historical Grierson Raid 300 miles into rebel Mississippi, Ford had explicitly referred to Andersonville. The cynical but humanitarian Union surgeon (William Holden) tells hard-nosed professional soldier John Wayne that he will risk staying behind Confederate lines, and parting company with the troops, saying, 'Medicine's where you find it.'

'Even in Andersonville?' Wayne asks. 'Even in Andersonville' is the reply.

But the subject seemed to bear a Hollywood taboo....In Leone's *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, not only was the 'Bettersville' Camp to be associated with the victorious side; the war itself was represented by a series of shocking details, involving both sides, indiscriminately. We see a one-armed Union



soldier, and a legless Confederate 'half-soldier'; a field hospital in a mission in San Antonio, where the Franciscan friars are completely out of their depth; a Confederate spy, strapped to the cowcatcher of a Northern troop train, and a looter of 'supplies and equipment' who carries his coffin to a wall before being shot against it; wounded civilians trying to evacuate a bombed-out town under intense mortar fire; unburied corpses strewn all over the countryside; and a huge military cemetery in the middle of nowhere.

Leone said, 'I want to show human imbecility in a picaresque film where I would also show the reality of war. I had read somewhere that 120,000 people died in Southern camps such as Andersonville. And I was not ignorant of the fact that there were camps in the North. You always get to hear about the shameful behaviour of the losers, never the winners. So I decided to show the extermination in a Northern camp. This did not please the Americans...The American Civil War is almost a taboo subject. Because its reality is insane and incredible. But the true history of the United States was constructed on a violence which neither literature nor the cinema had ever properly shown. As for me, I always tend to defy the official version of events—no doubt because I grew up under Fascism. I had seen first hand how history can be manipulated. So I always question what is propagated. It has become a reflex with me'

Betterville Camp consists of a stockade with watch-towers made of logs, a deep trench in which to bury the dead, and a small orchestra of Confederate musicians who play a sad 'ballad of a soldier' ('How ends the story?/Whose is the glory?') to drown the cries of tortured inmates. There is no shelter for inmates, though: only for Union officers. The design was based on steel engravings of Andersonville, made in August 1864 when the camp contained 35,000 prisoners of war. Why Betterville should be located in Texas is never explained. Perhaps it was because Leone's and Vincenzoni's knowledge of camps run by 'the North' (which Leone tended to present, conspiratorially, as if it was secret information) in part came from such films as Robert Wise's *Two Flags West* (1950), concerning Union prisoners in New Mexico, and Sam Peckinpah's *Major Dundee* (1964), where as often as not the setting was the arid Southwest. Historically, most of the action in the Civil War happened east of the Mississippi. When Hollywood produced 'Westerns' set at the time of the war, the stories tended to concern gun-running, horse-trading shipments of gold or the gathering of intelligence. Supply-lines, in other words, rather than battles; and certainly not concentration camps.

According to Leone, however, there was an historical justification for the setting as well: 'American authors depend too much on other screenwriters and don't go back enough into their own history. When I was preparing *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, I discovered that there had only been one battle in Texas during the Civil War, which was really about the ownership of goldmines in Texas. The point of the battle was to stop the North (or the South) from getting their hands on the gold first. So, when I was visiting Washington, I tried to get some more documentation on this incident. The librarian there, at the

Library of Congress, the biggest library in the world, said to me,"You can't be right about this. Texas, you say, signor? You must be mistaken. There's never been a battle fought over goldmines in America, and in any case the Civil War didn't reach Texas. Come back in two or three days and I'll do some checking for you. But I'm quite certain you are wrong." Well, I returned after two or three days, and this guy looked at me as if he'd seen a ghost. "I've got eight books here," he said, "and they all refer to this particular incident. How the hell did *you* know about it? You read in the Italian language, so how did you manage to find out? *Now* I understand why you Italians make such extraordinary films. Twenty years I've been here, and not a single American director has ever bothered to inform himself about the history of the West." Well, I've got a huge library myself now—they'll photocopy a whole book for you for eight dollars in Washington!'

Leone had made use of bizarre anecdotes about the Wild West in his previous films. But this time, his perverse version of American history would colour the entire story. *The Good, the Bad and The Ugly* may all be self-serving bums, but the Civil War through which they ride is an inferno of needless destruction and cruelty. And if the film would question and make arbitrary each of these labels (in the context of the Western, where they were usually fixed as 'absolutes'), it would at the same time question the received, popular version of historical events. Leone, who had started in the business with the mythologies of Roman baths, now found himself grappling with the *Mythologies* of Roland Barthes: 'As always, I took conventional cinema as a base. Then I set about demolishing the codes in order to play with appearances, while presenting a "comedy of murders" to sweep up all the untruths attached to the historical context. But I tried all the while to hang on to documentary reality...It was fascinating to demystify the archetypes and the adjectives. And I emphasized this principle in each situation of the film. Always a deceptive play on appearances, as in the scene where the dust covers the blue uniform of the Northerners to make them appear as grey as the uniform of the Southerners. It was a manipulation of the signs, which chimed in with all the other ingredients in the film.'

The Civil War had long provided scriptwriters with a credible setting in which to explore issues of commitment and 'destiny' at an individual rather than a national level. In Hollywood terms, the North was about progress, industry, the city, and the triumph of the national government from 1865 onwards. The South was about feudalism, moonlight and magnolia, 'the good old cause', slavery, and plantations exclusively given over to cotton growing. ...And yet Hollywood had largely steered clear of the war itself. While taking time out from his own war effort, Leone ran into Orson Welles at a restaurant in Burgos. Welles told him he was certifiable to make a film about the Civil War. Barring *Gone With the Wind*, the subject seemed to be box-office poison. Maybe the war between the states was too traumatic a subject: a war for the soul of America which was also the first 'total' war of modern times, involving civilians as well as brother against brother.



On these terms, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* was particularly heretical. In Leone's film, there is no moral touchstone—just a lot of dust. The Civil War is something very nasty happening in the background, against which the surreal adventures of the central characters can be played out, and to some extent judged. It is someone else's war; like the Second World War must have seemed to adolescent Leone, growing up in Rome. It is refracted through anti-heroes who are as suspicious of idealism as they are of rhetoric; again, like Leone during the political compromise period of the postwar period in Italy. The Civil War is not an obstacle to the long march of progress, an aberration. On the contrary, in Leone's film, the Civil War contains the seeds of the 'rule of violence by violence' which followed it, in the Wild West.

'The Good' steals a Confederate uniform, rides with a gang of Union renegades, helps a Union captain blow up a bridge, and gives a last puff on a cigar to a dying Confederate officer. 'The Bad' enlists in the Northern army as an NCO following a tip-off from a starving Confederate sergeant, becomes a concentration camp official, deserts when he feels like it, and is prepared to shoot anyone of either persuasion if the reward is high enough. 'The Ugly' also steals a Confederate uniform before enlisting with the North; but he isn't even sure what the war is supposed to be about. All three of them have the same motivation: they want to find the gold, which is buried in the tomb of an unknown soldier, a tomb with no name. So Vincenzoni's hastily improvised tale of 'three rogues who are looking for some treasure' endured as the spine holding the film together.

With a splendid sense of construction, the war enters the narrative to *save* the lives of Blondie and Tuco on various occasions.

The set-piece battle itself, as Leone and Vincenzoni intended, refers to the trench warfare of the First World War; just as Betterville refers to Auschwitz.

The credit titles of the film, designed by Luigi Lardini, would make still of the action look like sepia prints by the celebrated photographer Matthew Brady—albeit with garish colours splashed over them, Andy-Warhol-style.

Of course, this study of 'human imbecility' and brutality was made with the tacit blessing of the Franco regime and with technical help from the Spanish army. At an American Film Institute seminar in 1973, Eastwood was asked if the production had any trouble with the authorities. 'In Spain,' replied Eastwood, 'they don't care what you do. They would care if you were doing a story about Spaniards and about Spain. Then they'd scrutinize you very tough, but the fact that you're doing a Western that's supposed to be laid in Southwest America or Mexico, they couldn't care less what your story or subject is.'

Leone's previous Westerns had demonstrated something of a preoccupation with brutality. His third entry in the genre juxtaposed the violence of his treasure-hunters with the mindless and impersonal carnage of war. In developing this theme, Sergio Leone later claimed to have had in mind 'one of the finest films I know', Charles Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux*, made in 1947 and based on an idea by Orson Welles. 'This film looked at the chaotic and absurd aspects of an era in which a hero who had murdered several women could say, at his trial, "I am just an amateur compared with Mr Roosevelt and Mr Stalin, who do such things on a grand scale." Verdoux is the model of all the bandits, all the bounty-hunters. Put him in a hat and boots, and you have a Western.' At the end of Chaplin's film, Henri Verdoux tells the French court: 'As for being a mass killer, does not the world encourage it? Is it not building weapons of destruction for the sole purpose of mass killing? Has it not blown unsuspecting women and little children to pieces, and done it very scientifically? As a mass killer, I am an amateur by comparison.' There are interesting affinities between Chaplin's 'comedy of murders' and Leone's film: the idea that killings could be organized as 'a strictly business enterprise'; the humour of mixing the languages of business and murder ('You must have made a killing'); the changes of dress and uniform (Verdoux's different disguises); the structure of the film (built around the murderer's train journeys across country from one wealthy victim to another). But Luciano Vincenzoni waspishly denies the inspiration, saying, 'I wrote *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* in eleven days, and I didn't have time to refer to anything. I mean I have

too much respect for Charlie Chaplin to involve him with Sergio Leone Westerns.'

According to Leone, his battle sequence was also partly inspired by the similar scene in Buster Keaton's *The General* (1926) where a Civil War locomotive steams on to a burning trestle bridge, which then collapses spectacularly into the river below.

This was the first of his films to be 'amputated', not for reasons of squeamishness but because of the pace. It was reduced from 182 minutes to 148 ('to increase the sales of popcorn,' said Leone with some bitterness).

One major progression for Leone was that some of Ennio Morricone's music had been written (and partially recorded) in advance of filming: the budget was at last substantial enough to allow for this. 'In *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, said Leone, 'each character had his musical theme. And he was also a kind of musical instrument, who performed by writing. In this sense I played a great deal with harmonies and counterpoints...I was representing the route-map of three beings who were an amalgam of all human faults...And I needed crescendos and spectacular attention-grabbers which nevertheless chimed with the general spirit of the story. So the music took on a central importance. It had to be complex, with humour and lyricism, tragedy and baroque. The music even became an element of the action. This was the case with the concentration camp sequence. An orchestra of prisoners has to play in order to drown out the cries of the tortured.

In *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, Morricone's 'insignia' took the form of phrases from the opening bars of the main title theme, played in different registers for each main character: treble for 'the Good', bass for 'the Bad'.

Sergio Leone once said 'I was born in a cinema, almost. Both my parents worked there. My life, my reading, everything about me revolves around the cinema. So for me, cinema is life, and vice-versa.' He first wandered onto a sound stage at Cinecittà in 1941, at the age of twelve, to watch his father shooting a film. And he died watching a film on television, in Rome, at the age of sixty.

Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, 1872:

I was armed to the teeth with a pitiful little Smith

JUST TWO MORE FILMS IN THE SPRING 2007 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS (REDUX) XIV:

April 17 Robert Altman, *Nashville* 1975

April 24 Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, *Singin' in the Rain* 1952

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Wesson's seven-shooter, which carried a ball like a homopathic pill, and it took the whole seven to make a dose for an adult. But I thought it was grand. It appeared to me to be a dangerous weapon. It only had one fault--you could not hit anything with it. One of our "conductors" practiced awhile on a cow with it, and as long as she stood still and behaved herself she was safe; but as soon as she went to moving about, and he got to shooting at other things, she came to grief. The Secretary had a small-sized Colt's revolver strapped around him for protection against the Indians, and to guard against accidents he carried it uncapped. Mr. George Bemis was dimly formidable. George Bemis was our fellow-traveler. We had never seen him before. He wore in his belt an old original "Allen" revolver, such as irreverent people called a "pepper-box." Simply drawing the trigger back, cocked and fired the pistol. As the trigger came back, the hammer would begin to rise and the barrel to turn over, and presently down would drop the hammer, and away would speed the ball. To aim along the turning barrel and hit the thing aimed at was a feat which was probably never done with an "Allen" in the world. But George's was a reliable weapon, nevertheless, because, as one of the stage-drivers afterward said, "If she didn't get what she went after, she would fetch something else." And so she did. She went after a deuce of spades nailed against a tree, once, and fetched a mule standing about thirty yards to the left of it. Bemis did not want the mule; but the owner came out with a double-barreled shotgun and persuaded him to buy it, anyhow. It was a cheerful weapon--the "Allen." Sometimes all its six barrels would go off at once, and then there was no safe place in all the region round about, but behind it.

From Filmsite: In many ways, the cowboy of the Old West was the American version of the Japanese samurai warrior, or the Arthurian knight of medieval times. [No wonder that westerns were inspired by samurai and Arthurian legends, i.e., Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) served as the prototype for [Sergio Leone's] *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), and Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954) was remade as John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). *Le Mort D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory also inspired much of *Shane* (1953) - a film with a mythical western hero acting like a noble knight in shining leather in its tale of good vs. evil.] They were all bound by legal codes of behavior, ethics, justice, courage, honor and chivalry.