

Once Upon a Time in the West

Italy / US 1968

Director

Sergio Leone

Writing Credits

Dario Argento

Bernardo Bertolucci

Sergio Leone

Cinematography

Tonino Delli Colli

Original Music

Ennio Morricone

Cast

Frank

Henry Fonda

Jill McBain

Claudia Cardinale

Cheyenne

Jason Robards

Harmonica

Charles Bronson

Morton

Gabriele Ferzetti

168 minutes

Many thanks for all your support this season at the Screen. We've saved tonight's classic screening to go out on a high! But don't forget we've extended our season this year with two extra films at alternative venues – see box below. Would be lovely if you could join us! Have a great summer.

Sergio Leone made a fistful of great films, but none better than 1968's ode to the fading American frontier, *Once Upon a Time in the West*. Leone, an Italian stylist who made a career out of transforming melodramatic genre pictures into wild, fiery, violent statements about the country that had inspired his cinematic dreams, uses *West* as a means of dramatizing that fateful instant when the Old West of gunslingers and shootouts mutated into the New West of manifest destiny-inspired greed and corruption. But as its fairy-tale title implies, the film is also interested in casting this historical turning point as a parable about the death of the western itself. Much like *The Wild Bunch* (except with more beauty and pathos than Sam Peckinpah would ever deign to muster), Leone wants his multi-pronged fable to be not only history, but myth as well. Much has been made about the influence of Italian filmmakers Dario Argento and Bernardo Bertolucci - who are credited with

helping Leone conceive the story - on the film. Still, even though *West's* pensive, tragic romanticism recalls vintage Bertolucci, and its abundant use of visual and aural signifiers brings to mind Argento, the film's seductive interplay between image and sound - a relationship that would reach its apex with the director's final film *Once Upon a Time in America* - is trademark Leone. The director harmoniously links disparate sounds and images: the buzz of a fly or a gunshot segues into the howling whistle of a train and the squeaking of a weathervane becomes the plaintive whine of a harmonica. Leone similarly uses the sounds of the natural world as a means of slowly revealing information - when the crickets stop chirping while McBain and his kids prepare for Mrs. McBain's welcoming feast, it's clear that trouble is brewing - and punctuates the action with Morricone's passionate, haunting score.

Nick Schager, Slant Magazine

The Western is dead, they tell us. Long live Leone's timeless monument to the death of the west itself, rivalled only by Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* for the title of best ever made. Critical tools needed are eyes and ears – this is Cinema.

Paul Taylor, Time Out Film Guide

Our bonus screenings...

Waste Land (Bra/UK)

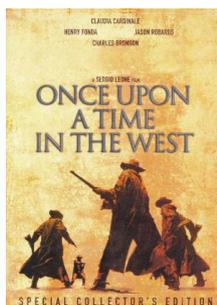
Wed 25 May 2011 7:30pm

Winch Discovery Centre

The Illusionist (Fr/UK)

Tue 28 June 2011 7:30pm

The Point, Eastleigh



Voting for *The Cove*: A-25 B-12 C-0 D-1 E-0 Attendance: 40 Rating: 90.1%