THE SWINGIN' DOORS...

Welcome to a special edition of WESTERNS...ALL'ITALIANA! What do you think of when you hear the name Tony Anthony? To me it meant, for a long time, the pure opposite of the name Clint Eastwood.

I remember waiting in anticipation for at least a week for the showing of a new type of Western "A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS." The ad campaign for this Western promised a new type of film hero and a new type of Western film. It also promised it was the first motion picture of its kind and "It won't be the last!" I saw the film on its opening night at a neighborhood theater in the San Fernando Valley, a suburb of Los Angeles. I was one of maybe 30 people in the theater. I was overwhelmed by the music of Ennio Morricone and THE MAN WITH NO NAME character portrayed by Clint Eastwood. I was a fan of the TV show RAWHIDE but not a real Eastwood fanatic. I remember telling many friends as I could that they had to see this film. When "FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE" came out about six months later, I again ran to the opening night showing but this time about 150 people filled the theater. I was hooked on this new type of film and felt any Italian or Spaghetti Western was going to be terrific. Then came the release of A STRANGER IN TOWN and I went to see it with great anticipation. What I thought I was seeing was a complete rip-off of the MAN WITH NO NAME character, but instead of seeing a gunman with complete control of any situation and an unbeatable gun-hand, I saw some type of gutless weasel who was a back-shooter and a con-artist. Boy was I disappointed not only in THE STRANGER but the entire Italian Western. Because of this I missed a lot of the Spaghetti Westerns that followed both at the theaters and later on television. I only went to see the Leone films and those which starred Lee Van Cleef.

It wasn't until a few years ago that in talking to Bill Connolly and Mark Sundown along with some of you other fans that I realized what Anthony was trying to do in those films and what they had seen in his films.

I thought about putting a special edition of WAI together to show our readers what his films and character was all about. Since I only saw his first STRANGER film and at that time hated it, I felt it wasn't fair to me to write about the films and show my distaste for them. So I asked Bill, Mark and Eric Mache to come up with an article for a specific film of Anthony's, and thanks to them we have this exciting edition on TONY ANTHONY.

In an upcoming issue I promise to do another Anthony Special and cover his other Westerns.

Hopefully I can correct my injustice to this actor and his character and set the record straight.

I hope you enjoy this edition as much as I did putting it together.

Adios amigo

Tom
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WESTERNS...ALL'ITALIANA!

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Tony Anthony was born on October 16, 1937, in the coal mining town of Clarksburg, West Virginia of Italian and Hungarian parents. Tony went to school while his father worked in the mines. His goal in life was to become an actor and escape the fate of becoming just another coal miner working his life away for the company store.

After graduation from high school in 1954, young Tony moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and enrolled at Carnegie Tech to study drama. He supported himself while studying by working as a bongo player in a local rock band and by selling encyclopedias door to door. He remained at Carnegie Tech for 2½ years and formed his own summer theatre group in order to sharpen his acting skills. He was also instrumental in creating one of the first musical theater-in-the-rounds during his stay in Pittsburgh.

In 1957 Tony moved to New York City and enlisted in the famous New York Actors Studio. While trying to get employment in a Broadway play he made a living as a theater usher and a jigsaw puzzle manufacturer. He also found time to write rock songs and landed a recording contract. He made one recording but left this venture because in his own words, "I couldn't sing." He did manage to land two off-Broadway roles.

He wrote and produced a short film entitled "The Boy Who Owned A Melephant", and it won a Golden Leaf award at the Cannes Film Festival. He also produced a short lived stage musical "Follies Of 1910", a film "Force Of Impulse" about juvenile delinquency, and "Without Each Other" which he wrote, produced and starred in. It won 11 awards throughout the world but was never distributed commercially.

By now it was the early 1960's and with no calls from Hollywood, he moved to Italy.
He appeared in three Italian movies and achieved some attention from the European critics. He went to Yugoslavia and starred in "Women On Loan", in France "The Beautiful Families", in Germany "This Time We Talk About Men".

He headed for Spain and the Spaghetti Westerns. He finally earned stardom by producing and starring in four films; "Wounds Of Hunger", "A Stranger In Town", "The Stranger Returns", and "Blindman".

He returned to Italy and helped produce the Beatles "Come Together", and a play with Marcello Mastroiani called "Ciao, Rudy". He returned to the U.S.A. in the mid 1970's.

He went on to star in three more Spaghetti Westerns; "Get Mean", "The Silent Stranger", and "Comin' At Ya". In 1979 he cofounded MAD EASY LTD. a publisher and distributor of games and books. In the mid 1980's he became president of JAD Films an international distributor of action films.

The following is list of Anthony's Spaghetti Westerns:

"A STRANGER IN TOWN" 1966
"THE STRANGER RETURNS" 1969
"BLINDMAN" 1971
"GET MEAN" 1975
"THE SILENT STRANGER" 1976
"COMIN' AT YA" 1981
Alternate titles: Un dollaro tra i denti (Italian), Ein dollar zwischen den zahnen (German), A Dollar Between The Teeth (English).
Producer: Roberto Infascelli
Director: Vance Lewis (Luigi Vanzi)
Screenplay: Jone Mang, Warren Garfield
Photography: Marcello Masciocchi
Music: Benedetto Ghiglia
Released by MGM (1966)
Running time 94 minutes

American actor Tony Anthony used to play street punks in films like Saul Swimmer's FORCE OF IMPULSE (1961). When A STRANGER IN TOWN opened in America, many critics took it for granted that he was ripping-off Clint Eastwood, but they failed to notice an important difference; Anthony never assumes the stature of a hero by taking command of the situation. His "stranger" character is more like a Western punk, who lies, fails, runs away, attacks from behind, gets beaten up, runs away and hides until the advantage is his. There is no "get three coffins ready" confidence in Anthony's character. The final showdown in this film mostly consists of our "hero" hiding until people walk in front of his shotgun. (He shoots people in the back, from under windows, and through a crack in the sidewalk, under which he is hiding.)

Presented realistically, this kind of carnage from a coward might have been distasteful, but Anthony brings a sly humor to the proceedings, which makes it (perhaps sadistic) fun. (Okay, I'll admit there is one scene where Anthony proves to be a fast gun when two men sneak up behind him, but he didn't call those fellas out, and it wasn't a fair fight.)
An unshaven and sullen gringo (Anthony) rides into an almost deserted, dust-blown town near the U.S.-Mexican border. (Rather than wearing a serape, Anthony has a blanket wrapped around his torso.) After passing one or two Mexican men who look to be taking their siestas, the gringo gives one fellow a nudge, and the Mexican falls over dead. (There is a Morricone like musical sting.)

Finding an inn, the gringo enters and gets himself a drink at the empty bar. Slowly, a Mexican man wearing bullet belts across his chest, Paco, enters and whispers that the Americano should leave. Saying that he didn't want any trouble, the gringo looks to be getting ready to leave, but suddenly, he shatters his whiskey bottle across the Mexican's face. (There is another musical sting.) Then acting as if nothing had happened, the gringo picks up his stuff and climbs the railless stairway to the second story rooms. Hearing a woman humming to herself, the man sneaks a peak into her room. Thinking that it is Paco again, the woman yells for him to close the door, and then throws something to force him to do it. Not one to give up so easily, the gringo opens the door for another look, and gets something else thrown at him. Finally, he retreats to an empty room, from where he looks out to see a troop of Mexican soldiers ride into town.

Suddenly, the Mexican soldiers are attacked and captured by a bandit led by Aquila (Frank Wolff of ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST), who then lines up his captives and machine guns them down. ("What kind of a man am I?" the leader asks his subordinate, who answers, "A fair man.") In the inn, the gringo, dressed in a U.S. Cavalry uniform, introduces himself as the man who can help the Mexican bandits capture the coming U.S. Army escorted gold shipment without any violence.
When the American soldiers arrive, the gringo greets their commanding officer, and, in a whisper, advises him to drop the gold and leave, pointing out the machine gun trained on his men. The officer agrees, and leaves. However, when the gringo tries to collect his share of the gold, Aquila and his men double cross him, telling him to leave empty handed. At first he agrees, but then he shoots out the light, and steals it all. However, Aquila shoots the horse out from under our escaping hero. Looking for a place to hide, the gringo discovers a young woman, Cica (Yolanda Modio) and her baby hiding under a bed in a small room. The bandits soon follow, take the woman prisoner, and threaten to kill her if the gringo doesn't surrender. While our hero throws back the gold, he makes a getaway across the town's roof tops.

Taking the gold and Cica with them, the Mexican bandits head back toward their hide-out. Seeing the gringo following them, Aquila sends three men to stop him. Two end up dead, and the other (Raf Baldassarre, who also appears in THE STRANGER'S RETURN and GET MEAN) is sent back to demand that Aquila give up all the gold.

That night, the gringo steals into the hideout and is captured. The bandit woman, Maruka (Gia Sandri), takes over torturing our hero, while Aquila sets out to bed Cica. Seeing the bloody and bruised
gringo very submissive, Maruka approaches him, and allows him to begin to caress her. Suddenly, the gringo slams the bandit woman's head on the floor, killing her.

Crawling, our hero is able to get a hold of some dynamite and a gun. The dynamite distracts all of the bandits, so that our hero can once again steal the gold. Cica also comes with him and it's a good thing, too, since she helps keep him on the escaping horse.

Back at the small town, the gringo has recovered enough to plan facing the sure-to-be-coming villains, and Cica, having recovered her hidden baby, gives our hero a shotgun and a bag of shells. The gringo takes off to hide, but the bandits arrive before Cica is able to. Aquila kicks her in the gut, and threatens the baby, but the gringo opens fire. During the shootout, the mother is able to run off with her infant.

One-by-one, the gringo kills the members of the bandit gang, until only Aquila is left. The villain has gotten behind the machine gun for the final confrontation. Using some coal cars that run through the middle of the town, our hero is able to get close to Aquila's position, and when the villain's machine gun hits empty, he steps out to get the drop on him. After repaying the Mexican for the earlier beating, the gringo (as Clint Eastwood did in A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS) challenges the villain to see who can reload fastest.
Of course our hero wins, and Aquila falls dead from a shotgun blast in the gut.

As the gringo recovers the hidden gold from the well, the U.S. Cavalry patrol arrives in town. Insisting that he has earned a fee for recovering the gold, and for killing the wanted outlaws, our hero takes half of the gold shipment as a reward. Ignoring the fact that the Cavalry officer had corrected him to say that his name is "Ted", the gringo mounts his horse and rides out of town saying, "Another time, George". Cica comes out of hiding in time to see him ride away.

Production-wise, this Italian-U.S. co-production makes A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS look like a film directed by David (LAWRENCE OF ARABIA) Lean. The mostly deserted border town here only has one gang, no bartender, no undertaker, no bell-ringer, and no husband for the pretty woman, Cica. We get a Mexican Army patrol, and then a U.S. Army patrol, but I'm convinced that it's the same bunch of extras who just switched uniforms, and that it only took one day per patrol to film their scenes.

Frank Wolff's portrayal of Aquila is memorable and effective, even if it lacks psychological subtext.

Perhaps in keeping with the small scale of the production, composer Benedetto Ghiglia's very tuneful score is performed by what sounds like a small combo rather than a full orchestra. It is
Alternate titles: Un Uomo, Un Cavallo, Una Pistola (Italian), Ride Benechi Spara Ultimo (Italian), Un Homme, Un Venait Pour Tuer (French), Western-Jack (German), A Man, A Horse, A Gun (English), Shoot First, Laugh Last (English).

Executive Producer: Allen Klein

Associate Producers: Juventus Film-Berlin, Reverse Producers-New York

Producer: Roberto Infascelli, Massimo Gualdi

Director: Vance Lewis (Luigi Vanzi)

Photography: Marcello Masciocchi

Film Editor: Renzo Lucidi

Screenplay: Bob Enescale, John Mang

Story: Tony Anthony

Music: Stelvio Cipriani

Released by MGM (1967)

Running time: 95 minutes

Cast: Tony Anthony, Dan Vadis, Daniele Vargas, Marco Gugielmi, Jill Banner, Ettore Nanni, Raf Baldassarre, Anthony Freeman, Marina Berti, Renato Mambor, Mario Dionisi, Roberto Chiappa, Filippo Antonelli, Luciana Antonelli, Franco Scala, Arnoldo Mangola, Fred Coplan, Giuseppe Addoratti, Silvano Balli, Antonio Daresi, Mario Castrichelli, Fortunato Arena

The story starts with the Stranger (Tony Anthony) riding through the desert of what is supposed to be the American Southwest, holding a tattered pink parasol. He stops to make camp and give his horse a rest. His horse's name is "Pussy" (Perhaps a foreboding a bit of humor which would appear years later, more prominently in "Blindman"). Something in the bushes is scaring his horse. The Stranger stands up, unlashes his pistol in the holster, and prepares to draw. He then shoots at his target, (which the audience still doesn't see what it is) and he brings out a rabbit.

As he's walking back to the campfire with his meal in hand, a Lee Van Cleef look-alike rides past him wearing a gray duster and black flat-brimmed hat, and says "Hi". This person is Inspector Ross.

While the Stranger cooks his rabbit, Inspector Ross rides up to an apparently deserted relay station to water his horse and refresh himself. It appears he's rendezvousing with someone. Five tough looking men appear from behind the shanty. The leader En Plein (played by tall, muscular Dan Vadis, who later was to play in "High Plains Drifter" and other Eastwood pictures), he only carries a Winchester rifle with a modified ring (ala Chuck Connors), so he can rapid-fire it. His right arm man is Chrysler (Raf Baldassarre, the laughing general in "Blindman" and the Mexican in "The Mercenary" that Franco Nero lites the match across his teeth, and "A Stranger In Town").
Inspector Ross informs En Plein that a stagecoach with $200,000 in gold will arrive, with an army escort, which will catch up to it at a small town called Moon Village. The owner, Mr. Stanley, wants to make it to the Mexican border in one trip. Ross has personally convinced Mr. Stanley to stop in Moon Village for a change of horses. Ross tells En Plein he must be quick before the soldiers catch up to the stagecoach.

As the Inspector is telling En Plein this information he has his back to him and is getting a drink of water from the trough. En Plein tells him he did a fine job and Ross replies that all he's waiting for is the sum of money they agreed upon. Then En Plein shoots him in the back with his rifle, with no warning. Ross falls dead.

En Plein starts to leave, first telling one of the men to climb up the hill and whistle when the coach arrives. He and Chrysler leave the other two men at the station. Before En Plein leaves he puts another bullet into the lifeless body of Inspector Ross, just for good measure.

At the same time, the Stranger hears the shots that were fired, and decides to find the source. He puts down his rabbit and goes to investigate.

On the way to the station, he sees a small boy who points his fingers at him and shouts "Bang, Bang". The Stranger playfully replies likewise.

The Stranger gets off his horse to get a drink of water and finds Ross in the trough face up, weighed down by a boulder on his chest. The Stranger proceeds to pull the Inspector out of the trough and notices a pistol fall from Ross' shoulder holster. Just as he picks up the pistol, the two men appear, one holding a shovel. The bandits don't see the pistol that the Stranger has in his hand because he is bent over with his gun hand still behind the body. He decides to see what these men want, so he leaves the pistol by the corpse, out of their sight.

The Stranger tells them he's never heard of a burying in a water trough before. The outlaw with the shovel orders him to dig the body a proper grave. The other tough takes his gun from his holster. Anthony complies quite willingly to dig a grave in the noon heat, while the two outlaws sit around in the shade, drinking water from their canteens. The gunmen are clearly gloating over what they are making this unfortunate do for them, with masochistic relish. The Stranger lets them know the grave is finished and one of them asks how tall he is, and he answers "Six feet, with the hat". (Actually, Tony Anthony appears to be only about 5'6".)

The bandit tells him to start digging another grave, the same size. The Stranger first draws the dimensions of this grave on the ground with the shovel, and one of the bad guys tells him it looks a little wide. Anthony assures him it isn't, with much confidence. When the Stranger finishes his task, he jokingly and calmly states he has finally found a profession.

His antagonists tell him to get the body. He acts as if he is going to pick up the dead body, but instead, grabs the pistol, he left lying there. While bent-over, Anthony, with both legs apart, fires between his legs and the first man falls into the open grave. The other gunman goes for his gun, but the Stranger shoots it out of his hand. The outlaw reaches for the gun on the ground, but Anthony shoots it away. Immediately, the man turns to run away, but catches a bullet in the back from the unfeeling Stranger, and falls into the grave with his partner. (Eastwood would never shoot someone in the back!)
The Stranger goes over and checks the pockets of Ross' duster, which he left draped over his horse. He finds identification that says he was a Postal Inspector, named Edward Ross.

At the same time, the gunman who was sent up the hill, is making his way down and sneaking up on Anthony's blind side. The boy on another hill sees what is about to happen and reflects a mirror into Anthony's face. He looks around to see what the boy wants and the boy points frantically to a location behind the Stranger. He spins around and kills the Stalker.

Anthony rides into Moon Village inconspicuously and sees En Plein and his men harassing the town's people. The Stranger gets off his horse and hears someone being mercilessly beaten by a gang in a nearby house. He sneaks around to the window to see what is happening. He doesn't want to be noticed. En Plein is relaxing, chewing on a cob of corn and smiling while his men are beating Good Jim (played by Daniel Vargas). He is a fat, bald man in his mid 40's. His wife and daughter are watching the brutal treatment. Chrysler is laughing hysterically with each punch delivered. Good Jim is stubborn and won't give into their demands.

Meanwhile, the Stranger has quietly went into an adjacent room of the house and watches the proceedings further, through a cracked door and picks up an ear of corn and decides to eat while the "slug fest" carries on. En Plein threatens Good Jim, he'll let Austin have his way with his beautiful young daughter (Jill Banner). In reading the biography of Marlon Brando by Charles Higham, it mentioned she was a girlfriend of Brando's in the late seventies. But sadly she was killed in a car accident at the time of their relationship.

Good Jim's family is pleading with him to give into the gang's wishes. En Plein also threatens him with massacring all the town's people, if he doesn't comply. Good Jim has no choice but to give in. The bandit leader tells him all he wants him to do is greet the passengers and change the horses as if nothing is about to happen. But in reality, they are going to be cold bloodedly ambushed by the ruthless gang for the gold on board.

The Stranger slips out of the house and into the street where a "Hellfire and Brimstone" type preacher is delivering a sermon, but no one is listening to him. (Played by Marco Guglielmi, with white hair, looking very much like Brian Keith). The Preacher pulls out a box, with shoulder strap, a firecracker to get some attention drawn to him. Unfortunately, it draws the interest of the gang inside.

The Stranger has taken a seat in a chair on the porch of the house where the beating was taking place, facing the Preacher. The gang comes outside and all of them stand next to Anthony who's got his serape wrapped around himself and his hat worn low over his face, trying not to be noticed.

Austin tells the profit to take a hike, he doesn't want to hear him babble on. The Stranger tells the Preacher that when he finally gets some ears to listen to him he shuts up. The Preacher is scared for his life and wants to leave but the Stranger tells him he likes listening to the word of God, to the chagrin of the gang. Anthony tosses the profit a gold coin for his trouble, but En Plein, the marksman he is, shoots it while it's still in the air. Anthony informs En Plein he just ruined one of those new Federal dollars. En Plein isn't amused.

Chrysler yanks the Stranger backwards in his chair and he falls on his back. Chrysler is busting-up, as usual, over his stunt. Anthony tells En Plein he doesn't want any trouble and all he had to do was ask him to leave, which he humbly does.
He catches up with the Preacher and asks him who they were. He informs Anthony the gang, all together, is worth $10,000.

Just then, three of En Plein's men ride up to Anthony and take his gun away. The Stranger has aroused the suspicions of the bandit leader. He's led over to where they are tormenting the little boy from earlier and asking him if Anthony is the one who killed his three men at the watering trough. En Plein tells the Stranger there were three men at the relay station outside of town. Anthony, not afraid to tell the truth, states that he is wrong, there were four. En Plein angrily shouts that he must pay for only three of the men's death.

Shortly afterward the outlaw leadre's lookout man, on top of the water tank, in the middle of the town, whistles to let En Plein know that the stagecoach is approaching.

En Plein smashes his rifle butt across Anthony's jaw and tells two of his men to kill him, but make no noise. En Plein climbs to the top of the water tank, to his snipers perch.

The two gang members lead the Stranger over to an alley, while one holds Anthony in front of himself, the other prepares to throw a machete at him. But Anthony side-steps the man and the machete goes into his captor. He pulls the machete out of him. The other guy is in a bad situation because he can't use his gun because of the noise and it would blow the preceding ambush. So Anthony throws the machete and returns it to its owner into his gut. As the man is dying, Anthony shushes him apathetically, with a finger over the mouth motion.

Good Jim reluctantly comes out to greet the unsuspecting victims. En Plein shoots Mr. Stanley, then the driver, shotgun rider and various other men riding with the gold shipment. En Plein doesn't miss once. In about thirty seconds, they're all dead. En Plein shoots Good Jim in the arm while Anthony watches nonchalantly.

The townspeople start placing the corpses in a row, on the porch. Good Jim feels bad because it was his giving into the gang that got them killed. He feels he should have warned them somehow.

Then the cavalry escort shows up, too late to be any good. Good Jim tells Lieutenant Stafford that the bandits did the massacre. The Stranger walks up wearing Ross' gray duster and tells the officer that if even he had been there, his soldiers would not have done much good against the desperados. Lieutenant Stafford asks him who he is and Anthony replies he's Postal Inspector Ross. Good Jim doesn't know what to make of this person, he's never seen before, who's coming to the defense of his actions.

Later Jim gets on board the stagecoach and heads rapidly out of town. Unbeknownst to him, the Stranger was taking a siesta in the back but didn't say anything because he was curious about where Jim was going.

On the road, Good Jim runs into the Preacher, out in the middle of nowhere, and tells him he can't ride unless he has money, company rules. The profit states he's broke, but the word of God will be sufficient. Jim disagrees as Anthony leans his head out of the window and says he'll vouch for the preacher's faith. He states he is Inspector Ross with the postal service. The Preacher looks at the Stranger and says suspiciously, he met an Inspector Ross in Salt Lake City. The Stranger informs him that in this day and age, everybody's going around pretending to be somebody else.

Back at the gang's hideout, En Plein sees a pretty Mexican peasant hanging sheets to dry on a clothesline. As he's sitting, he takes him and shoots the two phones that hold her dress up, at the
top of her shoulders. Her top falls open and she runs and hides. The peasant's husband is infuriated when he sees his wife shamed like that. He yells at En Plein that if he had a gun, he'd kill him. En Plein tells Chrysler to give him his pistol. The husband fires several times at the desperado, but the gun is empty, the gang starts laughing immediately. En Plein then shoots the peasant in the heart.

Good Jim rides to the villa where the gang is staying but before he stops, Anthony jumps out and ducks down an alley way.

Chrysler saw the Stranger and becomes suspicious because he thought he had been killed by two of their men. Good Jim is surprised to find no Inspector Ross, when he stops, aboard his coach.

Anthony is sneaking around the various buildings, following Chrysler, but what he doesn't know is that the bandit knows he's tailing him and leading him into a trap. Chrysler gets into a large two-story barn and locks the door behind himself. Anthony gains access through a hole in the roof.

It's dark inside the barn. The Stranger starts down a rope on a pulley. In the darkness, Chrysler uses a little mirror and a candle to reflect light on Anthony, who is halfway down the rope. The bandit starts snickering because he's gotten his adversary in such a nasty predicament. Anthony is hanging in mid-air, with both hands on the rope, truly at the mercy of the outlaw. Chrysler shoots the rope and Anthony goes crashing through a chicken coop, while Chrysler is laughing hysterically. The Stranger lands hard on a bunch of unsuspecting chickens.

The rest of the gang comes rushing in to see what the gunshot was all about, to find the Stranger lying in chicken dung. The gang shoves him outside where we realize that Good Jim is in cahoots with the outlaws, all along. He just didn't want his wife and daughter to know about his connection with the bandits. That is why they acted out a beating in front of them.

En Plein starts to remove these false sides of wood on the stagecoach to reveal a solid gold stagecoach. En Plein grabs the Stranger by the neck and jams his face against the side of the coach, several times, telling him, all the while, to look and feel the gold.

Good Jim and En Plein have had a duplicate stagecoach made to replace the gold one. The leader gives Jim his money, a sum for his participation in the scam.

En Plein walks over to the Stranger, who is on the ground, still recovering from having his head smashed into solid gold. En Plein stomps him in the face, with the heel of his boot.

The gang members then put the false sides back on the wagon and tie Anthony's hands together and start to drag him from the rear of the stagecoach. The Stranger is half-conscious from the beating he's taken. Jim is driving the coach while the bandits ride along side of Anthony to torment him.

As he is relentlessly dragged around, En Plein shoots the rope and sets the Stranger free of the punishment. Jim keeps going on in the stagecoach. Austin gets down off his horse and kicks Anthony in the face.

Good Jim has circled around and tries to run over Anthony with the coach, but he manages to roll over, in the nick of time.

The Stranger finds a piece of glass from a broken bottle and tries to cut the rope that's still around his wrists, but Jim comes around again and the lead horse hits him hard to the ground.
His hands land on the piece of glass he was holding. The Stranger's palms are bleeding badly now.

Meanwhile, as Good Jim is circling around to the back, he stops and switches the coach he was driving, so now he's in the fake wooden one. He doesn't realize the Preacher has seen him make the switch.

Good Jim relentlessly tries to run Anthony over with the team of horses, but the Stranger manages to free his hands with the aid of the glass and grabs hold of the side of one of the lead horses. It was a desperate move by the Stranger, but it works. Anthony jumps off the horse and leaps immediately into a window where a beautiful, naked woman was sleeping. He tumbles across her onto the floor and says excuse me. The bandits and En Plein take chase.

Good Jim jumps off and steers the coach out of town and hides. The gang is in hot pursuit of what they believe to be Good Jim and the gold stagecoach. Good Jim climbs back on the gold coach and takes off as fast as he can go in the opposite direction.

The Preacher and the Stranger meet up and he informs Anthony that Jim switched coaches right underneath En Plein's nose.

By now, En Plein and his men have caught up with the coach, out in the desert, and he soon discovers it's the fake and smashes the butt of his winchester through one of the sides, in a fit of anger. He can't believe he was so easily duped by the unassuming Good Jim.

The bandits now head after Good Jim and the gold, in the opposite direction. On the outskirts of town, the profit takes out of the box he's been carrying all through the film, a sawed-off, four barreled, 12 gauge shotgun, in which the barrels rotate manually. He announces it's the only thing his grandaddy left him and it works good at close range. He also pulls out a huge gun belt, loaded with about fifty shotgun shells. Anthony then smiles and tells the Preacher he's gonna raise some hell in Moon Village tonight.

Good Jim gets to his family's house and tells his wife and daughter they must all leave immediately. Just then En Plein walks through the door and asks him what he has done with the gold coach. (How he got to his house so quickly, is ridiculous.)

En Plein informs Jim that his wife, Ethel, knew what he was up to. He tries convincing the outlaw that the Stranger swapped coaches and has the gold but En Plein is too smart to fall for the lie. He asks again and gets no answer so he hits Jim across the face and tells Austin outside, to go ahead and start raping the daughter, Caroline. Austin is a real pig, as the family is told by En Plein. He starts ripping her clothes off and slapping her because she is fighting off his advances. Ethel then picks up En Plein's rifle and points it at her husband and tells him he better confe-s where the coach is, for the sake of their daughter. He gives in and says it's in the cemetery. En Plein then shoots him with the Stranger's pistol, that he's been carrying around in his pants belt, and orders his men to leave.

Austin rips the top off of Caroline's dress and shoves her into a haypile. Her mother then tries in vain to stop him, but he just punches her in the face. He starts digging into the pile of hay where he threw the daughter. He finds her legs first, then surprisingly, where about her head should be, a very intimidating four barreled shotgun penetrates through the hay. Austin can't see who is about to waist him. Anthony lets the two top barrels go and Austin is thrust back ten feet against the corral fence. Anthony
emerges out of the hay, and expecting to get thanks from the young, helpless girl, ends up getting slapped in the face for preventing what was about to happen to her.

The men run to find their horses but the profit has set them free. En Plein hears the loud shotgun blast, back at the ranch, where he left Austin to do his thing, and becomes wary. Then the Preacher starts sermonizing from the water tower. It is now night and En Plein tells his men to get the damn fool down. The outlaws start towards the tower. Anthony whistles from the darkness, for the Preacher to set off some of his skyrockets to light up the dark sky. The Stranger moves in behind two of them, at point blank range and blows one of them away, in the back, the other spins around and catches buckshot in his gut before he can draw his weapon.

One of the bandits follows Anthony into a bedroom, where he doesn't see the Stranger anywhere. He notices a large mirror on top of a dresser and starts to admire his looks, fixing his hair. He looks away, to observe an object that was on the dresser, and is puzzled when he turns back to look again in the mirror, he can no longer see his reflection. Then like earlier, only the four barrels of the formidable shotgun comes from behind the dresser. It goes off, one foot from it's victims stomach. The bandit is blown backwards into a chair, across the room. Anthony casually walks from behind his hiding place, over to the body and sees a gold earring he's wearing, he takes it off, bites it to see if it's real and puts it in his pocket. He then pats the man's face as if to say thanks and then calmly leaves the room.

One of the renegades is on the wooden walk in front of a building and walking from one end to the other slowly. Unaware to him, the Stranger is above him, walking on the roof, stepping in cadence with the bandit, directly below. The man comes to the end of the boardwalk and stops. Anthony jumps off and soon as he lands on the ground, fires his shotgun and kills his prey, without warning. Another gunman comes out firing his gun in the direction of the shotgun blast, runs past Anthony, and at the exact moment he goes by, he rips the unsuspecting gunman's back open, with another deadly blast. The man somersaults into the street, like a sack of beans. Anthony keeps the huge shotgun shell belt draped over his shoulder which reaches from the front of his thigh to the back of his thigh.

The bandit, Alvarez, follows Anthony into another room and looks around for him. He sees his hat on a wine barrel and fires through the barrel at his would be target. He walks over to see if he was there or if it was a trick. He moves in front of a large wicker, laundry basket, in which Anthony rises out of, behind Alvarez. He taps Alvarez's shoulder, who turns around rapidly, and too, is quickly gutted with the pull of a finger on the trigger. The bandit didn't stand a chance. Anthony gets out of the basket, and walks over and gets his hat.

The Stranger wanders into a kitchen where food has been prepared and starts chomping on a chicken leg, but stops when he hears Chrysler outside. Chrysler has walked in, sat down and started eating. A little later, two men barge through the door of a darkened room, which we can tell through the window. As soon as they get inside, they're two loud blasts, accompanied by two flashes of light. A moment later Anthony comes out sauntering indifferently.

The Stranger heads back to the kitchen, to eat the food he was eating earlier. He finds Chrysler chowing down the food at the table, like there's no tomorrow. Anthony comes up behind him and lets the four barreled shotgun rest on his shoulder to let him
know he's got company for dinner. Chrysler nervously manages to
swallow a huge mouthful of food. The Stranger sits down, across
from him and lets the shotgun rest on the table, aimed at Chrysler
hungry stomach. Anthony starts eating some chicken, with his left
hand, while his right remains on the triggers of the "scatter gun".
He is really enjoying the torment he's causing Chrysler. He motions
to the bandit to eat, but he has naturally lost his appetite. He
makes Chrysler stuff large portions of food in his mouth. Chrysler
is nervously laughing, thinking maybe he'll be spared. Anthony
steadily hands him potatoes and biscuits, one after another, before
he can chew them up properly, he's handed another one. He's
practically choking on the food, that's half chewed as it goes down
his throat. Anthony then nods to let him pour himself some wine to
wash it down with, but after he pours it Anthony picks it up and
drinks it. Suddenly, Chrysler goes for a knife that was in some
cheese that was on the table, in a last ditch effort to escape.
The Stranger lets a barrel fly, without ever lowering the cup of
wine from his mouth. Chrysler makes an attempt to get up, but
slumps over on the floor. Anthony then boringly, throws the half
eaten chicken on Chrysler's body, as if to say, "If you want it...
here, finish it". He then gets up and leaves.

En Plein is the last one left, and he runs to the cemetery
to find the coach. He finds the stagecoach and removes the panels
to see if it is the gold one.

The profit sets off a skyrocket, from the middle of the
cemetery, which temporarily lights up the night sky.

Anthony follows En Plein into a room where they make caskets.
It is dark, and the bandit is frantically shooting at the Stranger's
intentional noises. The outlaw is hurriedly opening caskets that are
standing on end, checking to see if his nemesis is inside one of
them. He fires into many of them, but with no luck. En Plein sees
an upright casket door move and starts fanning his winchester into
the door, about chest high. The door opens slowly to reveal Anthony's
body, slumping lifeless, into a squatting position. En Plein begins
laughing, then without warning, the Stranger aims the shotgun at En
Plein and pulls the trigger, without even looking up to aim. The
bandit is blown back into a coffin that was open and laying on the
ground. The bullets had passed over Anthony's head because he was
partia-ly bent over in the casket. He walks over and gazes down at
the dead man, and throws his belt with the shells into the casket
with the corpse.

Lieutenant Stafford is back in Moon Village, counting the
bandit's bodies, that have been lined up on the porch. The Preacher
and the Stranger ride up in the concealed gold stagecoach, with the
coffin of En Plein's body on top, where the luggage normally goes.
Stafford tells Inspector Ross (Anthony) that he's got $10,000 coming
to him, for the reward on the wanted men. He tells the officer that
he can't accept it because of the company. He reveals that he would
like the bounty to go to the Preacher, because he thinks he deserves
it. The Lieutenant complies and offers Anthony a cigarro and tells
him he must get the coach back to headquarters.

Unknown to the Stranger, the profit has put the remainder of his
fireworks on the floor of the stagecoach. As Anthony leaves, he
absentmindedly tosses the match into the coach. (like stagecoaches
can't catch fire.) As he's driving the coach out of town, with a
big smile on his face, the match catches the fireworks going off.
The explosions are blowing off the sides of the stagecoach and
reveals the hidden gold.

Stafford looks down the street to see where all the commotion is coming from, and sees where the missing gold has been all this time. He motions for Anthony to come back.

The Stranger meets up with the Preacher at the relay station and he knows why Anthony wants to see him. Anthony wants a cut of the reward money, being he didn't get to keep the gold. As he's leaving, he tells the Preacher to pray for him sometime. The Preacher replies he'll need it someday. The Stranger agrees...

SOMEDAY.

"I can remember seeing "The Stranger Returns", in the summer of '69, at the Fox Theatre in downtown Anaheim, with my kid brother. I was in Jr. High School at the time. I've enjoyed the movie ever since. It was billed with "A Stranger In Town", which I didn't enjoy nearly as much.

Granted, Anthony's "Stranger" character is based much on Eastwood's "Man With No Name" character, but much stands to separate him from the other Eastwood clones.

I feel their actions in certain situations, contrast considerably. In the Stranger films, there is very little gun play, in the classic sense, on Anthony's part. Anthony doesn't have quite the sense of fair play that Eastwood does. Anthony feels if the bad guys got it coming to them, he's gonna dish it out anyway, anyhow, anywhere he can. He'll have a glint of personal satisfaction in his eye, as he's doing it too. There's a touch of sadism in the Stranger when he makes the bandit stuff himself before he ultimately kills him. Anthony relies on his cunning and being sly to get the upper hand on the people that have wronged him. He figures if you're evil and you run from me, I'm gonna shoot you in the back, that simple.

A difference in moral attitude is shown when, at the end of "A Fistful Of Dollars", Eastwood returns the gold to Mexico. He prefers to just keep the money he got off both the Baxters and the Rojo's, by playing both ends against the middle. But Anthony isn't happy with just keeping the $10,000 he got for the bounty on the bandits. He also wants the $200,000 in gold that was Mr. Stanleys. The Stranger wants the whole pie.

The Stranger is not infallible either. His actions seem realistic like when he's sneaking up on the beating of Good Jim by the bandits. He accidentally, clumsily jangles some chains that were hanging on a post. He's all thumbs when he tries to roll a cigarette for himself. (His downfall at the end is accepting an Eastwood type cigar from Stafford and throwing the match carelessly away.)

He appears to be somewhat awkward around the women in his films. I admire how he's not afraid toemasculate his character by showing him with a pink parasol. Or being shown landing in some dung. An amusing thing about Anthony in this film is the times he chooses to eat, usually while he's viewing some kind of violence.

The Stranger is basically an unkempt appearing hero. The hat he wears is dusty and sweaty, he wears a serape wrapped around him, like a beach towel. A rawhide vest and
black pants and gun belt. Old boots with no spurs, his shirt he wears is greasy, sweaty and torn. It's a thermal undershirt, like the tops of a pair of longjohns. (It looks as if Anthony, a couple of years later, would hand over the shirt to Terence Hill, for his Trinity character). He has an unshaven beard and unruly blonde hair (Anthony had dyed his hair blonde for the part, but by the time filming had gotten underway, his dark roots were clearly evident). I felt that Anthony looked much better in the gray duster he temporarily wore (a cross between a duster worn by Eastwood during the beginning of "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly" and the one worn by Franco Nero in "The Mercenary").

Anthony has proven to be very athletic, agile and a good actor, who seldom uses doubles for his stunts. He's seen climbing down ropes, scaling up buildings, jumping on moving horses, and nearly being run over by a team of horses. I have a feeling that Anthony had considerable creative say during the filming, being it's his own original story.

I hopefully look forward, with anticipation, to another Western by this unsung star of Italian Westerns.
Alternate titles: "Pendez-le par les pieds" (French), "Vengeance of the Barbarians", (English).
Executive Producer: C. B. Seinik
Producer: Tony Anthony
Associate Producer: Terrance McGovern
Director: Ferdinando Baldi
Story: Tony Anthony
Screenplay: Wolfe Lowenthal, Lloyd Battista
Photography: Mario Perina
Music: Bixio-Frizzi-Tempera
Released by Strange Films (1975)
Running time: 90 minutes (color)
Cast: Tony Anthony, Lloyd Battista, Raf Baldassare, David Dreyer

"Get Mean" is a real oddity. Tony Anthony's "Stranger" character starts the film in the Wild West and ends up in ancient Spain. Make no mistake, this is a Western. Anthony wears his familiar scruffy pancho outfit and carries his multi-barrelled shotgun. Instead of Mexican bandits as his adversaries, however, we have various types of barbarians, Mongols, Vikings, Turks, Saracans, etc. Even though castles are used as settings, most of the action takes place in a small village which looks very much like an Old West town. Exactly why these various types of barbarians are thrown together in Spain is never clear. A futuristic sphere is shown to introduce and end the film, giving us a short narrative to the effect that Anthony is a man about to be thrust into his own "twilight zone". I guess this gives free reign for anything to happen in a zone where real time is nonexistent and historical accuracy means nothing.
"Get Mean" is pretty wild, with a lot of large-scale, imaginative action scenes. Obviously Anthony had a lot more money to work with here than in the previous "Stranger" films. His character is strictly a continuation of his "Stranger Returns" role, the wise cracking, somewhat bungling killer who will do most anything for money. Several of the supporting characters are veterans of other Anthony films.

As elaborate as this production is, "Get Mean" is still the old formula Tony Anthony plot, a stranger plays two warring factions against each other for money, and eventually kills them all off. The opening scene is very effective, Anthony, hands tied together is being dragged through the desert behind a riderless horse. The horse gallops into what appears to be a ghost-town and drops over dead. Anthony gets up and unties his hands, hardly worse for wear. He is befriended by a family living there who offer him a great deal of money to escort a Spanish princess home. They are suddenly attacked by Viking bandits, and Anthony wins the fight. He sails with the princess from North America to Spain.

They arrive at the princess' castle and encounter two warring medieval armies. There are some excellent battle scenes here, but it is difficult to keep track of who's who. There are too many different types of soldiers to tell the armies apart. In any case, the meaner-looking barbarians win the battle and capture Anthony and the princess. Anthony is hung upside-down and is later freed by a girl named Maria. A terrific scene follows as the barbarians invade Maria's town: Anthony rides through town on horseback, gunning them down.

Anthony eventually meets the barbarian leader, Diego, and
then frees the princess. The film takes a wierd supernatural turn here as Anthony is gassed in a palatial room, attacked by invisible assailants, and surrounded by skeletons. He is then attacked by bursts of fire which turn his skin black. A hilarious looking "negro" Anthony is chased around by a bull until he falls into a hole leading to an underground cavern. There he finds a vast treasure, but, returning to the surface, finds that the barbarians have been on another bloody rampage.

Anthony, Maria and the princess are captured by Diego. Anthony is tied-up and served on a platter with an apple in his mouth. Maria is killed in a fencing duel and Diego starts to roast Anthony on a spit. He is freed by Diego's traitorous gay sidekick. The sidekick is discovered by Diego, who ties him up, has sweet liquid dripped on his body, and threatens him with a jar full of scorpions.

Meanwhile, Anthony loads himself with dynamite. Miniskirted barbarian women capture and try to rape him. He escapes and positioning himself on one end of town, shoots lit dynamite sticks from a bow at the barbarian army, slaughtering them all. Eventually he has a final showdown with Diego. He pours the jar of scorpions down Diego's armor and blows him away very graphically with his shotgun.

Diego's head consul and the gay traitor team up against Anthony. They have the princess as hostage. They begin to destroy the town with a cannon and, in doing so, come across the huge treasure. Greed takes over, and the consul burns the gay traitor to death by locking him in a house and setting it on fire.

 Anthony makes a spectacular entrance into the streets of the burning town, shotgun slung over his shoulder, and dynamite blasting behind him. He saves the princess and kills his remaining
foe in a visually great duel, pitting his pistol against the
consul's cannon. His job finished, Anthony returns to North
America.

The music, by Bixio-Frizzi-Tempera, is a very effective
mix of Western and Epic film themes. The Western scenes are
accentuated with harmonicas and banjos, while the Epic battles
are lushly orchestrated. All in all, "Get Mean" is an exciting,
imaginative fantasy. The action slows down a bit in the middle
and it gets a bit talky, but the fast-paced ending more than
makes up for it. This is definitely one of Anthony's most
enjoyable efforts.

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