



Tony Anthony  
RETURNS

winter  
1989

no.  
20



# THE SWINGIN' DOORS..

HAPPY NEW YEAR! I want to wish all our readers the best for 1989.

Well here we come again with another year of Spaghetti mayhem. I hope you will all come a long for the ride. I have a few surprises that we are working on for you in the coming months. Hopefully now that I am back on schedule with the zine things will seem a little more orderly and we can improve on the fanzine more and more each issue.

I think you will enjoy this issue as we rap up the films of Tony Anthony. I received more mail on the first Anthony issue we did then for any single issue we've ever done except of course Tim's first edition.

We are also introducing a new feature taken from last issues small bio on Ursula Andress. Dale Pierce has sent me a number of small bits of information on where certain film stars are now living and what they have done since the days of the Spaghetti Westerns. We will run these under the "Contents" on the following page entitled WHAT EVER BECAME OF?

Again I want to thank you for your support as we've tried to catch up in 1988 with the issues. Remember this will be your last issue. I will send out renewal forms to all of you or a letter stating what I show in the books as how many issues you have coming.

Any of you who missed seeing "LONESOME DOVE" on TV really missed possibly one of the best American Westerns ever. I am not one for mini-series as I hate to tie up that much time for a week to sit down and watch television. This was an exception I made just because it was a Western, but I did not think it would measure up to the publicity it was getting in the media. I was wrong and pleasantly surprised. The acting was great (especially Robert Duvall and Tommy Lee Jones), and it really captured the feeling of the West. I just hope and pray this helps re-establishes Western film making on a large scale.

Well let's get going with this issue and kick off the new year by tying up some loose ends in the way of the last three films of Tony Anthony. Hopefully we can have at least one issue a year covering either a particular actor, director, composer or character. Let me know what you think. In the mean time put on your favorite Italian Western Soundtrack sit down in your easy chair and escape to the plains of Almeria, Spain. Oh yeah I can hear the wind blowing now...

Adios amigos,

Tom

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WESTERNS...ALL' ITALIANA!

Winter 1989  
#20 (24)

## *Whatever Became of...?*

FARLEY

GRANGER



The actor who played "The Major" in THEY CALL ME TRINITY, blending comedy at its best, with truly detestable villainry, with a performance that virtually drenched the air with elitist sliminess few other movie villains have ever achieved, evidently didn't think too much of the Italian western genre, or what it paid. Returning to the USA, he aimed not at film, but the stage and became a major star on Broadway. He remains active in drama to the present time and makes his home in New York City, in order to be close to the action. His one major role as "The Major" stands out, with his portrayal of the pompous, satirical rich man terrorizing settlers in order to gain their land. One laugh at him and finds him totally disgusting at the same time, a tell-tale sign of the man's genius as an actor. A pity he did not make more westerns, especially playing serious roles rather than tongue in cheek parts.

# "BLINDMAN"

By TOM BETTS

Blindman is probably the only Tony Anthony film that I can honestly say I like. It is filled with humor and wit. The blind hero is not the same as The Stranger character but an extension of that character to a higher and refined plain. We have here a filthy, battered drifter who talks to himself (indirectly the audience) almost constantly. Below his large sombrero are two sometimes crossed, blind eyes. He refuses to allow this small matter to stand in the way of making a small fortune as a hired gun.

As the film opens we see a panoramic view of the desert of the Great Southwest. A lone horse makes it's way slowly across the sunscorched earth. Suddenly it moves its rear end and we see a pathetic looking figure staggering along behind clutching the horses tail. The horse, "Boss" is better than any seeing-eye dog. Through various whinnies, head shakes and nudges this incredible animal not only takes Anthony where he wants to go but shows him where to shoot when the time comes. Beyond the horse, Anthony relies on an uncanny sense of hearing and a great intuition to make his way through life. He carries a Winchester rifle with a strange bayonet on the end which clears most obstacles from his path.

A group of Texas miners pool their resources and hire our hero to protect a shipment of fifty mail-order brides who are due to arrive from the East. According to the movie ads these are no ordinary women but "50 of the World's Most Beautiful Women," this pleases the husbands-to-be since the gunfighter is blind and won't be distracted during the trip.

Things go immediately wrong when the women are stolen and sold to two Mexican bandit brothers who intend to take them to their South of the Border brothel run by their sister "Sweet Mamma" (Magda Konopka). The two brothers (Lloyd Batista and Ringo Starr) keep the girls in a semi-prison condition similar to a prison of war camp. Our hero spends the rest of the picture avenging himself and trying to get the 50 women back so he can deliver them to the miners.

Anthony is captured by the bandits and put in a cell and offered food with a poisonous snake mixed in. He escapes this predicament only to be tortured by "Sweet Mamma" he almost meets his match and tells himself "When a woman's got you by the short hairs, you're dead." he manages to escape and humiliate the woman by stripping her and tying her to a post for all the bandits to see when they return from a raid. The younger brother (Ringo Starr) has a minor but effective role, is killed by Anthony and sent to his older brother in a coffin. Anthony manages to escape with the women by his favorite trick of using dynamite to blow up the stronghold to create a diversion. Then just as it looks as if Lloyd Batista will capture Anthony again our blind hero is saved by a troop of Mexican soldiers and the leader (Raf Baldassare) sadistically blinds Batista and rides off with the women so they can serve his men. This leaves Anthony screaming in a graveyard for vengeance and leaves open the possibility of a sequel....

Anthony originated the concept for "Blindman" and says "He's not your typical gunslinger. He's more of an existential hero, or really whatever you want to make of him. The point of the film is its simplicity. I never wanted to be a superhero; I felt audiences could relate to me as someone in the street."

On the chance a sequel would someday be made."They would have to do it without those damn contact lenses for my eyes. I hated those things, I mean I couldn't stand it. They were supposed to make my eyes look fluorescent blue, like I was really blind, and by the end of the picture I almost was. They rubbed against my eyes, and the sun got in there, and it was agony. My brother was on the set to put numbing solution in my eyes. I never suffered so much in my life. But in the end, I guess it was worth it."

The film had it's typical negative reviews (see critical reviews following this article), and disappointing business in the United States, "Blindman" which cost only \$1.3 million to produce, pulled in more than \$15 million in box office receipts from theaters around the world. In Karachi, Pakistan, for instance it emerged as such a phenomenal hit that it played to consistently packed houses in the same theater for six months. The producers unleashed the film for its third worldwide release in 1985 while Anthony threw up his hands and smiled. "It's unbelievable. New generations are seeing the picture all the time. It's like an animal that won't die."

BLINDMAN (1971) Italian, USA coproduction  
"Le justicier aveugle," "Le justicier aveugle; Blindman" (French titles), "Blindman, der Vollstrecker," (German title), "Il Cieco" (Spanish title)

Director: Ferdinando Baldi  
Screenplay: Piero Anchisi, Vincenzo Cerami, Tony Anthony  
Story: Tony Anthony  
Photography: Riccardo Pallottini  
Music: Stelvio Cipriani  
Producers: Saul Swimmer, Tony Anthony  
Location scenes filmed in Almeria, Spain; Interiors at Elios Studios (Rome).  
Running time 105 minutes

Cast:  
Blindman ..... Tony Anthony  
Candy ..... Ringo Starr  
Pilar ..... Agneta Eckemyr  
Domingo ..... Lloyd Battista  
Sweet Mamma ..... Magda Konopka  
Mexican General ..... Raf Baldassarre  
with; David Dreyer

NEWSDAY. "Gory western . . . Literally hundreds of carcasses litter the silver screen before *Blindman* has completed its 105 minutes. The film, which claims to present ex-Beatle Ringo Starr in his



ANTHONY

'dramatic' debut, is another western made-in-Spain-by-Italians-with-a-blood-lust, and we can all be grateful to 20th Century-Fox for bringing it to our shores. . . . The blood flows like tomato sauce (actually it is probably the other way around), dozens of beautiful girls are stripped and beaten, a man has his eyes put out with a lighted cigar, and, all in all, it is not the most appetizing pile of pasta you ever saw. Once in a while, someone says something, and then it is mostly likely to be 'you dirty s.o.b. — I'll break your ass!' . . . The star of this opus is not Ringo but Tony Anthony, a West Virginia-born American who studied drama at Carnegie Tech before going to Rome to make a fortune grinding out drech like this. For *Blindman* he was co-producer and screenwriter and he plays the title role, a sightless gunman who can shoot everything not in sight when he wants to. He's blind and never misses; all his foes don't seem able to hit the side of a barn . . . The credits correctly note that Ringo has appeared in six or seven previous films but insist that this is the first time he gets to play 'a character other than himself.' It is quite a change of pace for our boy — from funniest, most lovable Beatle to junior sadist. Ol' Ringo gets to belt around a sweet young virgin, knife her father, and come that close to sexually mutilating the Blindman. Anthony escapes with his privates intact and in one of several philosophical asides to the audience says: 'Being without eyes is one thing, but without that . . . whew!' Anthony constantly assumes a charisma he doesn't have, and may be the least likable actor I've ever seen. And shame, Ringo, shame." Jerry Parker (4/3/72).

CUE. "The absurd hero of this messy, guffaw-ridden Italian-made Western is a blindman who has to retrieve 50 marriageable women from a band of Mexican bandits . . . With the aid of his seeing eye horse, some dynamite, and a rifle, he offers us a cascade of killings and explosions as part of the ludicrous basic premise of the film and its complete

incredibility. Director Ferdinando Baldi has a penchant for excessive, pointless, and sadistic violence, as well as for undraping women in the most humiliating way. All of his leads have blue eyes, which must have some symbolic value. As the blindman, Tony Anthony is laconic and awful. Beatle Ringo Starr is now an evil cucaracha smitten by a blonde kitten. The actors perform in perfect harmony with their unappetizing and senseless material. No sequels, please!" Donald J. Mayerson (4/8/72).

#### N.Y. Times

"*Blindman*," one of those Spanish Westerns in English, bats out in almost every department except sadistic slaughter. See it, if you must, after you eat.

By the last reel, the picture drops that plot and lets fly with some murderous stalking. There's mangy Tony Anthony, droning away in a monotone as a sightless kill-

er. There's hairy Ringo Starr, snarling away and still looking like a parrot trying to thread a needle. Lloyd Batista, as another killer, does the only acting in the film, while Raf Baldassarri plays a braying army general.

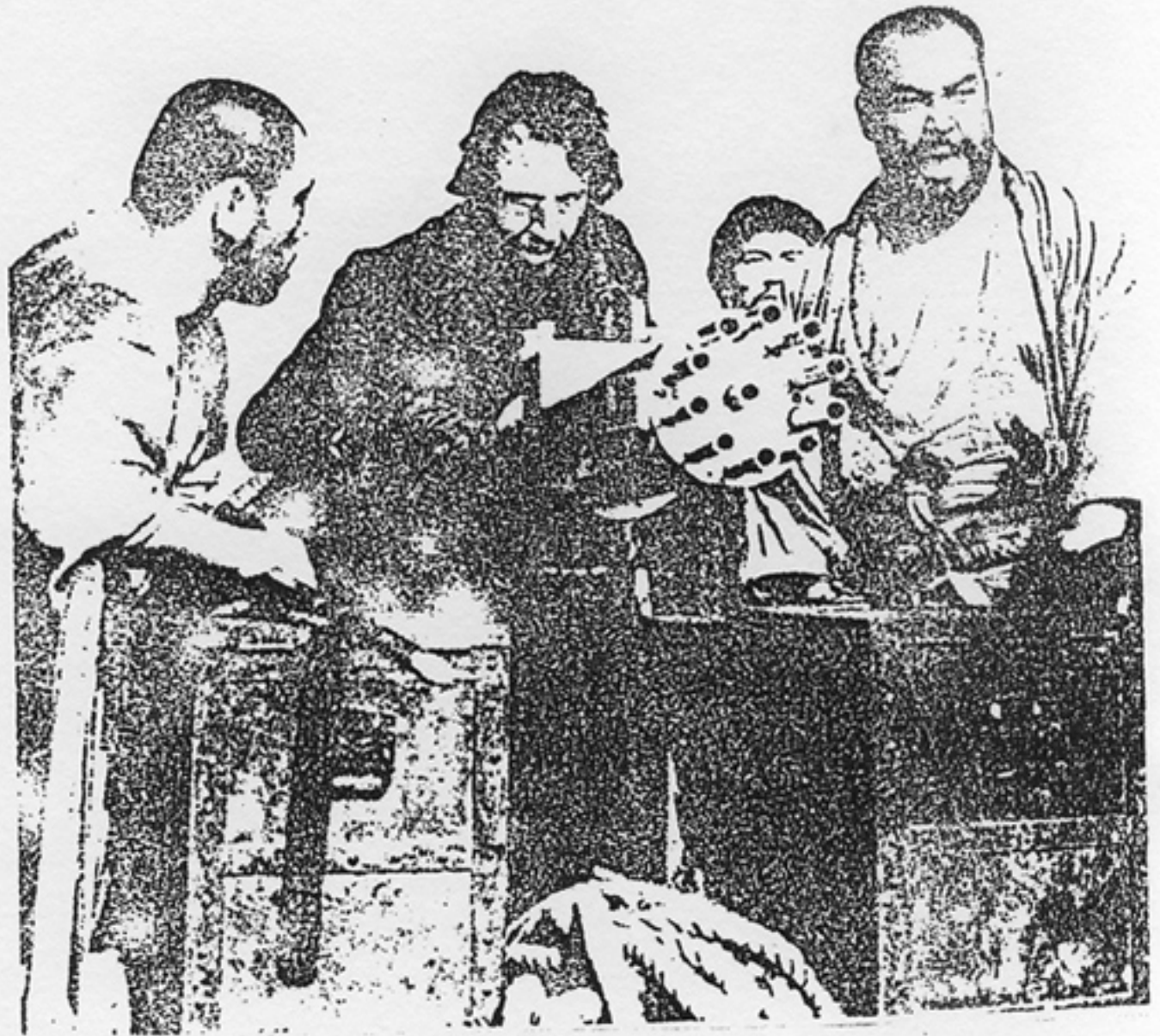
Add, emphatically, a group of 50 kidnapped girls, running around bare or clad in loose shifts. And let's not overlook a lusty brunetfe named Magda Konopka, playing "Sweet Mama" and looking even tougher than the men.

Now slam them all together, to crunching bones and spurting blood, and you have "*Blindman*." At least the last reel is served with some casual drollery, as the corpses pile up, by the director, Ferdinando Baldi. And Mr. Baldi and his color photographer scour the craggy Spanish mountains (simulating Mexico) with blistering authenticity. HOWARD THOMPSON.

# the **SILENT STRANGER**

By Tom Betts

In 1884 a dying man gives Tony Anthony a Japanese scroll to take to a man named Matori in Kosaka, Japan, who will redeem it for \$20,000. The Stranger and his horse arrive at their Far East destination, they are subject to one attack after another by thugs attempting to grab the scroll. The Stranger finds Matori by accident while escaping from a gang of men, led by Matori's cousin, who is rampaging the small town and extorting money from the people. The Stranger finds himself in the middle of a brutal samurai war. Matori and the Stranger make the exchange, and soon after the Stranger is captured by the cousin's gang, who also want the scroll. An American gang member (Lloyd Battista) tells him that the scroll really belongs to a young princess who is Matori's niece by marriage only. The extorted money is for her. The Stranger manages to steal the scroll back from Matori, tears it in half, and sells it back to each of the men. Matori gives the princess to his cousin in marriage in exchange for the other half of the scroll. Fighting breaks out during the marriage ceremony. Matori and his cousin are killed. The Stranger confiscates both halves of the scroll and gives them to the princess.



"The Silent Stranger" is an interesting, very off-beat Western. For one thing it takes place in Japan (with the exception of the opening sequence filmed in Alaska). This follows the earlier idea Anthony used in "Get Mean." I've been told this film was done as early as 1968 and not released until 1976. If this is correct it is the first pairing of the cowboy and the Samurai. The combination is quite compatible with a lot of action scenes. The photography by Mario Capriotti is excellent and one of the highlights of the film is the score done by Stelvio Cipriani. Since the film was shot during the typhoon season in Japan the weather had to be written into the script.

This is probably the least seen of any of Anthony's Westerns but I did learn that it was shown on the "Z" channel in May/June of 1976.

THE SILENT STRANGER, THE STRANGER IN JAPAN, THE HORSEMAN AND  
THE SAMURAI (English titles)

Director: Vance Lewis (Luigi Vanzi)

Story: Tony Anthony

Screenplay: Vincenzo Cerami, Giancarlo Ferrando

Photography: Mario Capriotti

Music: Stelvio Cipriani

Running time: 92 minutes

An Allen Klein-ABKCO Industries, Inc. Production

MGM - UNITED ARTISTS (1974)

Cast:

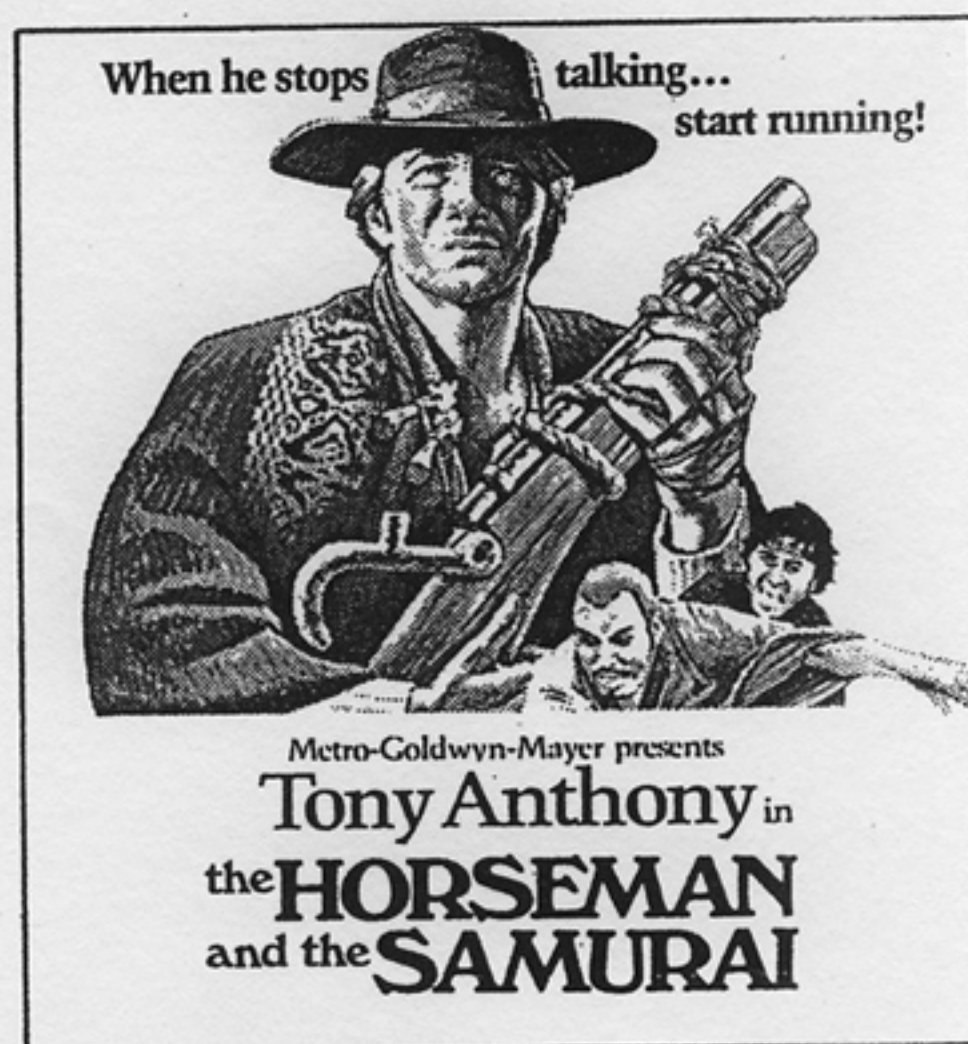
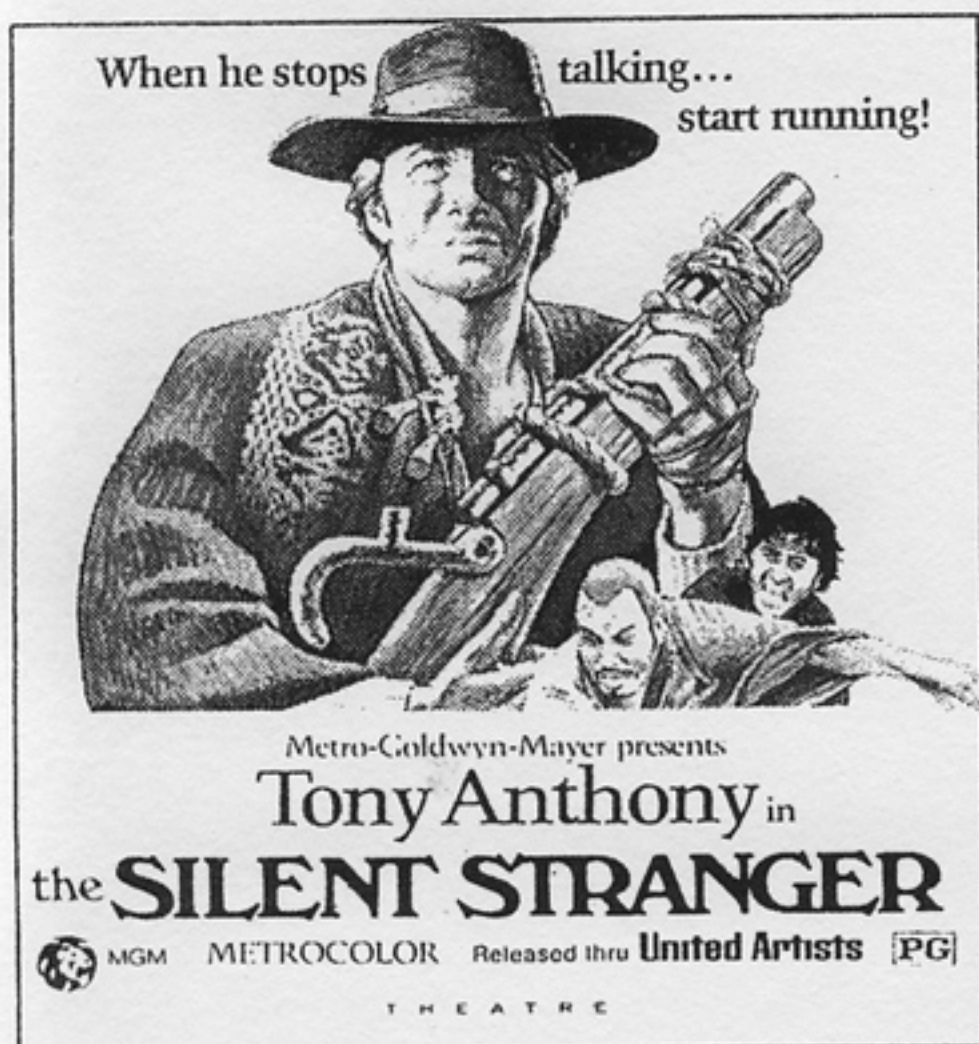
The Stranger

Tony Anthony

The American

Lloyd Battista

with; Kim Omae, Kenji Ohara, Kita Mura, Sato, Yoshio Nukano



# COMIN' AT YA!

By TOM BETTS

It was early Fall, in the year of 1981. I had been collecting Western Soundtrack recordings for about 1½ years and was really interested in the Italian composers. I had a few Morricone Lp's a couple of Ortolani's and a Nicolai. Most of the other Italian composers I had only read about and new no one who collected these obscure records. I had recently picked up a record from a dealer in England called "Savina's Western" by Carlo Savina and thought his music was pretty good but was unfamiliar with any of the titles on the album. I was looking through the Sunday edition of the Orange County Register and saw an ad for a film starting on the following Friday called COMIN' AT YA the ad mat as you can tell looked really stupid, but being a Western fanatic I looked a little further. The film starred none other then my favorite Spaghetti star...Tony Anthony! Oh no could this be another STRANGER IN TOWN! I hoped not and almost wrote off seeing it. Then I began to think, when was the last Spaghetti Western I had seen at the theater? I thought possibly DUCK YOU SUCKER. Then I remembered the great music I had started to collect and thought to myself maybe it will have an Italian composer doing the music. I also realized it was in 3-D and I hadn't seen one of those in about 15 years so I said what the heck I'll give it a shot.

I had read the review in the paper on Thursday and of course it was written down as a waste of time. If I listened to movie critics I probably would not have seen half of the great films of all time because of some other idiots opinion on what he thought was good or not, so that didn't detour me from seeing the film.

On Friday I checked the paper and decided to go during the lunch hour and see the film. Since I am in outside sales my hours are my own. I drove up to the theater and was really surprised to see more then a handful of people in line to buy tickets. Probably because it was in 3-D. I got my glasses and sat down close to the front of the theater and hoped I would not be disappointed.

When the film started the opening scenes were mostly filmed inside a blacksmiths stable and the 3-D was really good. Anthony moved about the stable as he might have in any Western although he did seem to move things around a bit like a lantern, saddle and tools. This made the 3-D more effective.

From that point on the 3-D went down hill the story line became unbelievable, Anthony was only one step up from the ridiculous Stranger character in his former films but the music became the highlight of the film. I thought and hoped then: that the music should be released on an album as it was one of and still is my favorite score. It has a little bit of everything, harmonica by Franco De Gemini, vocals by Edda Dell'Orso and great overall music by Carlo Savina.

Refer to Rob Word's letter when reading this review to get a better feel for what the film was originally released as and what most of us saw.

Pike (Gene Quintana), an outlaw and his gang, steal H. H. Hart's (Tony Anthony) wife to be as they are in the town's church about to be wed. His sweetheart is named Abeline (Victoria Abril), and she is carried away by Pike and his gang like a sack of potatoes and is taken to a secret fortress where she is placed in a dungeon with a horde of women Pike plans to sell into slavery. (Very similar to BLINDMAN in concept). The hideout is filled with rats and bats. Here is where the 3-D takes over and rubber bats on strings are seen flying toward the audience, rats crawl over the women and the camera films them as if they are feeding on the women. Hart is in pursuit of Pike and his gang and again the 3-D takes over as he rides up to a farm seeking information. We are treated to beans being poured into a bucket, water being poured into a bucket. About this time I was ready to throw-up into a bucket. Anyway, our hero Hart single-handedly rescues the women and takes his vengeance out on the gang with Anthony's usual display of dynamite to even the odds.

I've always wondered why this has never come out on video but again Rob Word's letter says it all. Maybe someday though the great film score by Savina will be released for it is truly a classic.



COMIN' AT YA

Director: Ferdinando Baldi

Story: Tony Petitto

Screenplay: Lloyd Battista, Wolf Lowenthal, Gene Quintana

Photography: Fernando Arribas

Music: Carlo Savina

Running time: 91 minutes

1981 (Italian, Spanish, U.S.A.)

Cast:

H.H. Hart

Abeline

Pike

Polk

Old Man

Tony Anthony

Victoria Abril

Gene Quintano

Ricardo Palacios

Lewis Gordon

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## RATS AND BATS IN EYE-POPPING 3-D

By LINDA GROSS

**C**omin' at Ya! (citywide) is a gimmicky, made-in-Spain spaghetti Western in a new improved 3-D process. In spite of the advances in technology, this movie places you in constant jeopardy of losing a lens if you wear contacts. It's not worth it.

"Comin' at Ya!" conveys eye-popping visual effects such as a slow-motion scene in which an arrow zips past a fleeing man into the audience. The audience also gets to be on the receiving end of rats, bats and spears.

The 3-D process used in "Comin' at Ya!" is considered a further advancement in filming techniques, making it now possible to shoot 3-D from a variety of angles with smooth transitions and using slow motion—which was previously impossible to achieve.

Viewers still have to wear glasses to get the 3-D effect, but they are of a higher optical quality and seem to work fine for people who don't have personal visual defects.

The film concerns a luckless couple (Tony Anthony and Victoria Abril) who are pursued by two outlaw brothers (Gene Quintano and Ricardo Palacios).

Anthony gets wounded and Abril is carried off by Palacios to join 100 other captured women who are going to be sold in an auction to work in bordellos.

Inside their prison tower the women are attacked by bats, who then, by the wonder of technology, fly into

the audience. In protest, Abril attacks Palacios, who then beats her. There is much beating, mauling and brutalization of women in this film.

"Comin' at Ya!" has a surreal, hallucinatory spiral quality reminiscent of Jodorowsky's "El Topo" but without its content or symbolic connotations.

Ferdinando Baldi's direction is scattered and gaudy with no attempt to create real characters or situations. The structureless screenplay by Quintano, Lloyd Battista and Wolf Lowenthal has people acting as if they were pop-up paper dolls in children's books. It has been said the original 3-D died after a brief fling because people got tired of having things flung at them. In "Comin' at Ya!" the flinging has been perfected. Producer Anthony has said: "Even if you hate the movie, look at the potential of the technology."

The special effects in the film do provide visual impact. But what good is a fancy cereal box with a stale product inside? "Comin' at Ya!" rated R for violence, in new packaging of tired old material.

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### 'COMIN' AT YA'

A Filmways Picture release of a Lupo/Anthony/Quintano production in association with the Cale Brothers. Producer Tony Anthony. Executive producers Gene Quintano, Brud Talbot. Director Ferdinando Baldi. Screenplay by Lloyd Battista, Wolf Lowenthal, Quintano from a story by Tony Petitto. Photography Fernando Arribas. Music Carlo Savina. Editor Franco Fracelli. Art direction and costume design Luciano Spadoni. Special effects Fredy Unger. 3-D technical adviser Bill Bukowski. Featuring Anthony, Quintano, Victoria Abril, Ricardo Palacios, Lewis Gordon.

Running time: 1 hour 31 minutes.

MPAA-rated: R (those under 17 must be accompanied by parent or adult guardian).

From the Los Angeles Times  
September 3, 1981

**VILLAGE VOICE, 8/19-25/81, p. 44, Carrie Rickey**

*Comin' at Ya!*, billed as the first 3-D Western, is doing shoot-'em-up box office in the Southwest for the good reason that it's an explosive, brutal catalogue of 3-D effects. Never has an audience been so literally dumped on: director Ferdinando Baldi's low-angle camera makes it seem as though corn is being shucked on your face, bullets blasted down at you; all manner of muck dribbles off the screen and onto your mug. I can't really do the movie justice, since its New York distributors were loath to let local critics see any but the first and last reels. What I did see was a lot of hilariously deployed effects, most notably breasts bursting out of bodices and into my nose, fingers groping off the screen into my eyes. Mostly it campily vacillates between *El Torpor* and *Low Plains Shiftless*, with plenty of aesthetically shredded Victorian underwear decorating the moments between rifleshoots. It looks surprisingly good, musty and rusty browns everywhere, and it uses tricks stolen from *The Great Train Robbery*, with pistols pitched at the audience. Didn't Ferdinando Baldi's mother tell him not to point his gun at strangers?



Tony Anthony is H.H. Hart and Victoria Abril is Abeline in the 3-D film 'Comin' At Ya!' now playing in county theaters.

**MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN, 8/82, p. 166, Cynthia Rose**

H. H. Hart is a failure as an outlaw, so his girlfriend Abilene convinces him to try his hand at marriage instead. As they stand at the altar, however, real outlaws Pike and Polk Thompson raid the chapel—gunning down the minister, wounding Hart and kidnapping Abby. Hart recovers and follows his stolen bride to the Thompson hideout, where he discovers scores of women who are being held captive in a large hall prior to being sold into prostitution. Hart manages to take Polk prisoner, and forces Pike to release the women in exchange for his life. The women escape in a caravan of wagons, but Hart is overpowered by Pike's men and forced to reveal where Polk is being held. Once free, Polk fights with Hart and ends up impaled on a spike. Pike has meanwhile recaptured his women, but on hearing of his brother's death condemns them to being staked out under the desert sun. Abby, however, he saves as bait for his brother's killer. In due course, Hart tracks them down to a town in Mexico, where he finds his bride lashed to a pole in the town centre. A gymnastic showdown of ambushes, fisticuffs and dynamite explosives leaves Pike dead and Hart and Abby riding off into the sunset.

As its title suggests, *Comin' at Ya!* is manufactured round every imaginable possibility for 3-D titillation. The fact that it is nominally a Western is almost irrelevant—though it does attempt the odd touch of Leone style and humour. More to the fore are the myriad objects (bottles, gun barrels, arrows, pikes and, less predictably, yo-yos, a baby's backside, showers of nuts and vegetables, apple peelings, etc.) which keep comin' at ya. But working them into a plot as hackneyed and unimaginative as this proves extremely laborious. What with wooden actors whose motivations remain impenetrable, a complete lack of suspense, and little to look at beyond bare deserts and almost bare rooms, the excitement of the 3-D effects is minimised. Only two sequences—a naively rendered bat attack and a rain of lances and flaming arrows—produce much of a *frisson*. All in all, about the only thing to commend *Comin' at Ya!* is that its 'Dimensionscope 3-D' delays the traditional 3-D viewer's headache until about an hour after the film's end.

**NEW YORK POST, 8/22/81, p. 9, Archer Winsten**

It's true, as associate producer Marshall Lupo says, an entire generation of moviegoers has grown up never having seen a 3-D movie.

*Comin' at Ya!*, at the Rivoli, Gemini 1, RKO 86th Street, Eighth Street Playhouse and 24 outlying theaters, will satisfy this lack and make the construction of another 3-D movie unnecessary for 25 more years until the next sucker generation comes along.

The in-depth movies of that distant era were, in a word, lousy.

So is this one, with the added distinction of a record-breaking paucity of dialogue. Three writers and the creator of the so-called original story could be sued for taking money under false pretenses.

The story is disarmingly simple. A girl named Abilene (Victoria Abril) is snatched by two evil villains, Pike (Gene Quintano) and Polk (Ricardo Palacios) from the altar, where they wound the bridegroom, H. H. Hart (Tony Anthony). He's left for dead, but no such luck.

She is made part of a slave market of some three dozen bedraggled females, so it's up to H. H. Hart to rescue her, though the odds are 30 to 1.

The rest is purely 3-D: shots, spears, gallops, sadistic tortures, brutal struggles, a flight of bats, explosions, pursuits, kicks, nibbling by black rats, and anything else that can come off the screen at you.

The glasses you must wear to compose the screen's double image don't fit well and are a nuisance.

An additional hazard, leading to "money back" calls from a Rivoli noon audience yesterday, was the film's jumping out of frame occasionally.

In the end, H. H. Hart gets back his wife-to-be, somewhat battered, after he has destroyed the small army of opposition. The logic of all this is dubious, the novelty of presentation a miserable reward for a \$5 entrance tax, and anyone who attends has to be part of the young sucker generation that never saw a 3-D movie.

**NEWSDAY, 8/21/81, Part II/p. 10, Joseph Gelmis**

The only claim to fame of "Comin' At Ya" is that it's the first movie—in what promises to be a significant trend—to exploit the novelty of 3-D for big bucks. The low-budget western, made in Spain, has been grossing more in out-of-town showings than many of the season's major offerings.

A number of 3-D systems are being developed and tested, as an answer to declining attendance. "Comin' At Ya" relentlessly exploits its gimmick, from the titles to the end credits. Every motion within the frame is aimed at the camera. Objects are flung, swung, dropped on us. The effect is an hour and a half of flinching. It's funnier than the sadistic mayhem that passes for plot.

Tony Anthony, who looks more like a tired and bored crooner at a catered wedding than a gunfighter, plays a one-man army who decimates a gang of murderous thugs in a sort of parody of the "Fistful of Dollars" spaghetti westerns. Even as travesty, "Comin' At Ya" is too brutal to be worth seeing for itself. Its sole fascination is technological. Its 3-D system, which requires the usual cardboard-framed glasses, is good, though at times, during scene shifts, when the image blurs, the eyes have to refocus and depth is lost.

The following article appeared in the September 6, 1981 "Calendar" section of the Los Angeles Times:

# 'COMIN' AT YA' A SURPRISE HIT

Last March, Calendar followed the progress of three fledgling producers and their unique film at the American Film Market in Los Angeles. Their Spaghetti Western "Comin' At ya," was made for \$3.5 million in 3-D, a gimmick not used for 25 years. But producers Tony Anthony, Gene Quintano and Marshall Lupo believed that with a new process that dramatically improved the 3-D effect they could sell it once again.

"Comin' At Ya" was screened more than any film at the Film Market, and yet at the end despite buyer interest it had not sold. The three told Calendar before returning East that if nothing else came up Filmways president Robert Meyers said he would take it. Meyers had once been a business partner with Arthur Herskovits, "Comin' At Ya" sales representative.

Nothing else came up and Meyers made good on his promise.

And "Comin' At Ya" has become the surprise "boffo box office" hit of the summer.

The film was universally raviled by critics; KNXT Channel 2 critic Gary Franklin gave it a 1 on his scale of 1 to 10. David Ehrenstein of the Herald Examiner called it "a pain in the eye," Calendar reviewer Linda Gross also checked praise of any kind.

Audiences ignored the bad reviews and flocked to see the film as it opened slowly city-by-city across the country. It opened at 25 theaters here last weekend and reportedly took in \$280,000, considered to be indicative of good attendance.

Among those surprised at the films acceptance are the producers. "We thought if we were lucky, we might show it in someone's basement every few years," said Quintano. "Now it's amazing. We went by a theater in New York just to look at the lines, sometimes they were a block and a half long."

With the picture virtually assured being profitable (to date it has grossed almost \$4 million after being shown in 200 theaters) Quintano said another picture is on the way.

Another one starring Anthony and himself?

"No I don't think so. This time we've got writers and everything. It will be an adventure-caper film. Four guys and a girl plot to rob a temple on the island of Panag. It'll be kind of classic "Topkapi."

And it'll be 3-D of course.

-DEBORAH CALDFIELD

The following two pages contain critics reviews from the following publications: Monthly Film Bulletin, Cynthia Rose, The New York Post, Archer Winsten, Newsday, Joseph Gelmis, Village Voice, Carrie Rickey.

# Letters

From: Rob Word, Beverly Hills, California

You must know how exciting it is for me to be receiving "Westerns...All-Italiana!" (Hey Rob's a friend of Ferrante's he's excited to get anything from WAI! tb)  
Your articles are terrific! I really enjoyed the Tony Anthony one because, while I was at Orion, we distributed "Comin' At Ya!" with Tony and Gene Quintano. We tried to adapt the film to videotape in 3-D. Because the film was so poorly shot, the 3-D adaptation was impossible. We tried several different facilities and were never able to make proper transfer that had a good enough register to both effectively show the 3-D and decrease the amount of blurriness when the effects happened.

Just before the release of the film theatrically, we deleted the first reel as it showed Tony's character as nothing but an unregenerate villain (as his previous "Stranger" movies had done). We eliminated the part where he was wantonly killing people and began it with the wedding/kidnapping, keeping Tony's character much more sympathetic. As you know, the film was a tremendous success and helped generate an interest in broadcasting 3-D movies on TV. Both Tony and Gene were very nice and naturally wanted us to succeed with the film.

Of course, this was before I discovered your magazine or I would have done a lengthy interview on tape with both Tony and Gene. I regret that I did not do this, so the events are a little sketchy.

...Thanks again for the issues and keep 'em comin', Cowboy. Also enclosed are a couple of press sheets from some spaghetti westerns that your readers might enjoy.

(Thanks very much for the letter Rob and how appropriate to give us all the info on "Comin' At Ya!" Thanks also for the press sheets, one of which adorns the cover of this issue. tb)

From: Franz Bernhard, Halbenrain, Austria

Many thanks for "Westerns...All-Italiana!", I always like to read it. I hope I can write something for your zine. Here in Austria during the last few months we saw some Italian Westerns: "Faccia a faccia", "Il Mercenario", "Adios Gringo", "Per Pocchi Dollari ancora", "Oggi a me domani a be".

It's very fine that you can continue this zine. Tim is now married which is very fine, I wish him all the best! I hope "WAI!" will exist for a very long time. Best wishes for the New year.

From: Conrad Widener, South Connellsville, Pennsylvania

It's been great receiving the latest issues of WAI. Really missed your 'zine. All issues were excellent. Particularly enjoyed the Tony Anthony issue. I loved A STRANGER IN TOWN and THE STRANGER RETURNS when I first saw them as a youngster (I was a weird kid) and I still love them. It was interesting to read what the critics had to say about A STRANGER IN TOWN. As usual they moaned about the violence, but for pity's sake these films took place in the Wild West! I'm not an expert on the Old American West, but you don't have to be an expert to know that people got shot in those days. And not all heroes rode into town strumming their guitars and yodeling. These critics are certainly entitled to their opinions, though. I like American Westerns, but feel Italian Westerns offer perhaps a more realistic view of the Old West. just had to throw in my two cents worth.

Guess that's all for now. Best of luck to Tim Ferrante in all future endeavors. And best of luck to you with WAI. I hope you will continue doing the zine for many years to come!

(Thanks for your two cents Conrad, it is always welcome. I agree with you. I was talking to Steve James, the actor, the other night and we came to the same agreement on what you just said: 1) most critics judge a film by the acting, the screenplay and the technique. Most don't care for action pictures of any kind only drama and classic films. I feel a paper should have critics to cover genre's like they have writers that cover sports and business. 2) Steve and I said the same you did as far as the Spaghetti's captured a truer feeling of the Old West as it was a rough land settled by immigrants who had little money but lots of guts. The land was ruled by the gun and the strong survived. Now you've heard my two cents. tb)

From: Michael Ferguson, Ontario, Canada

Just received Westerns...All'Italiana! #18. Great stuff. I'm very happy that you've been able to carry on Tim's fine tradition.

...As Gordon Harmer points out in his letter, I've just gotten back from vacationing in Europe. I was in Italy (Milan), Germany (Munich & Hamburg), France (Paris), Brussels and Spain (Madrid & Barcelona). It was gruelling but well worth it. Next time I'll concentrate more on Spain and Germany, and perhaps a side trip to Rome.

While in Madrid I went knocking on doors (Golden Films, Fervi Films) of some of Jesus Franco's production companies but had no luck in tracking him down. I heard later when I visited Eurocine in Paris, that he was in Milan for the festival. I did manage along the way to pick up a few of his pressbooks (22 to be exact) that made up for a lot. I brought back 100 pounds of paper from Europe!

I had better luck (while still in Madrid), at the offices of A.S. Films, where I met Spanish actor Aldo Sanbrell. I got to talk to him for awhile and I will be doing an article for

Spaghetti Cinema in the near future.

Mr. Sanbrell was very friendly and delighted by the coverage Bill (Connolly) has done on him in S.C. (I gave Aldo both issues). I thought you might want to send him some back issues of Westerns ...All'Italiana! as he would probably like to see them.

Back to WAI!. I enjoyed Earl Hudson's article on Wanted Johnny Texas. Does Earl live in California? (No Michigan tb) Either way could you ask him how he came about seeing Wanted Johnny Texas. It used to play up here in Toronto in Italian but I never got to see it. Did Earl get to see it in English? If so was it on video or television? Was the illustration the video box cover or something from your own collection? (video cover courtesy of Bill Connolly tb)

Also I didn't know James Newman was/is Dante Maggio. Did Earl recognize him from somewhere or did he read about that. (I have a copy of the video from Mike Haskins in Raleigh, North Carolina and the credits read Dante Maggio not James Newman tb) Dante Maggio was also in For A Few Dollars More, but I don't know what part he played, could either of you help in identifying him. (I'll watch For A Few Dollars More and see if I can spot him tb)

Also I enjoyed re-reading the films and filming reprint of La Strada Per Fort Alamo, I believe they ran it back in the fall of 1965. (Before Fistful's appearance in North America, and before the Christmas '65 release of For A Few Dollars More.) It's interesting to see what the press thought of the film before it became so well known around the world.

(Sounds like a great trip Mike, we'll be looking for your article on Aldo Sanbrell in Spaghetti Cinema. tb)

From: Mike Haskins, Raleigh, North Carolina

I really enjoyed WAI! #18. I recently got the 1988 Lettuce Entertainment Video release "Desperado," this is an excellent video transfer of "Keoma The Avenger." I also saw "Guns For Dollars" aka "Heads I Kill You, Tails You're Dead, They Call Me Hallelujah."

(Thanks for the word on the video titles as they can really be confusing especially if they use a title of another film. tb)

ANTON GARCIA ABRIL continued

3) MANOS TORPES (69) Sp

Quand Satana Empoigne Le Colt  
Clumsy Hands  
When Satan Grips The Colt

D: Rafael Romero Marchent  
C: Peter Lee Lawrence, Pilar Velasquez, Antonio Casas,  
Alberto De Mendoza

4) EL DESAFIO DE PANCHO VILLA (72) Sp, GB

Drei Halleluja Fur Vier Heisse Colts  
The Challenge Of Pancho Villa  
Pancho Villa

D: Gene Martin (Eugenio Martin)  
C: Telly Savalas, Clint Walker, Anne Francis, Chuck Connors,  
Jose Maria Prada, Angel Del Pozo, Luis Davila