



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Unforgiven

Unforgiven

Directed by: Clint Eastwood
©/Author: Warner Bros, Inc.
Production Company: Malpas Company
Presented by/Distributed by: Warner Bros.
Executive Producer: David Valdes
Produced by: Clint Eastwood
Associate Producer: Julian Ludwig
Production Associates: Matt Palmer, John Lind
Production Auditor: Michael Maurer
Production Accountants: Lynn Elston, Jeffrey Kloss
Production Co-ordinator: Penny Gibbs
Sonora Unit Production Co-ordinator: Carol Trost
Production Manager: Bob Gray
Sonora Unit Production Manager: David Valdes
Unit Manager: Lynne Bepflug
Location Manager: Rino Pace
1st Assistant Director: Scott Maitland
2nd Assistant Director: Bill Bannerman
Script Supervisor: Lloyd Nelson
Casting by: Phyllis Huffman
Screenplay: David Webb Peoples
Director of Photography: Jack N. Green
A Camera Operator: Stephen St. John
B Camera Operator: Roger Vernon
Key Grip: Charles Saldana
Still Photographer: Bob Akester
Co-ordinator Special Effects: John Frazier
Edited by: Joel Cox
Production Designed by: Henry Bumstead
Art Directors: Rick Roberts, Adrian Gorton
Set Designer: James J. Murakami
Set Decorator: Janice Blackie-Goodine
Property Master: Edward Aiona
Construction Co-ordinator: Jan Kobylka
Wardrobe Department Head: Glenn Wright
Men's Wardrobe Supervisor: Carla Hetland
Women's Wardrobe Supervisor: Joanne Hansen
Head Make-up Artist: Mike Hancock
Assistant Make-up Artist: Stan Edmonds
Head Hairstylist: Iloe Flewelling
Titles and Opticals by: Pacific Title
Colour Timer: Phil Downey
Negative Cutter: Donah Bassett
Music Score by: Lennie Niehaus
Music Editor: Donald Harris
Scoring Mixer: Bobby Fernandez
Sound Mixer: Rob Young
Boom Operator: Kelly Zombor
Re-recording Mixers: Les Fresholtz, Vern Poore, Dick Alexander
Supervising Sound Editors: Alan Robert Murray, Walter Newman
Supervising Dialogue Editor: Karen Spangenberg
Dedicated to: Sergio, Don
Head Wrangler: John Scott
Unit Publicist: Marco Barla
Cast:
Clint Eastwood (*Bill Munny*)
Gene Hackman (*Little Bill Daggett*)
Morgan Freeman (*Ned Logan*)
Richard Harris (*English Bob*)
Jaimz Woolvett (*The 'Schofield Kid'*)
Saul Rubinek (*W.W. Beauchamp*)
Frances Fisher (*Strawberry Alice*)
Anna Thomson (*Delilah Fitzgerald*)

A contemporary review

When *High Plains Drifter* was released in 1972, Malpas issued a press still which showed Clint Eastwood standing next to two gravestones: the inscriptions on them read 'Donald Siegel' and 'Sergio Leone'. Similarly, *Unforgiven* ends with the words 'Dedicated to Sergio and Don', both of whom have died since Eastwood's last Western, *Pale Rider* (1985). At first sight, *Unforgiven* seems a very fitting *arrivederci* to Eastwood-the-director's two great mentors: like the Man with No Name, Bill Munny becomes a singleminded bounty hunter, his rival for the reward being a frock-coated 'specialist' with a leather bag full of weaponry (like Colonel Mortimer in *For a Few Dollars More*); but he also proves susceptible to the influence of women, and like the hero of *The Beguiled* recovers from his wounds with help from a sisterhood of unmarried women.

These similarities and the dedication aside, however, *Unforgiven* owes much more to Eastwood's own Westerns as a director since the early '70s. William Munny (William Bonney meets the cash nexus?) is a hog farmer who travels the vengeance trail from Kansas to Wyoming, picking up a family of 'misfits' in the process – a black farmer married to a Native American, a short-sighted kid with growing pains, a victimised young prostitute called Delilah – and learns to confront his own past along the way. That's the first half of *Unforgiven*, and it closely resembles *The Outlaw Josey Wales*; then, when Munny reaches his destination, he is transformed by circumstances into a superhuman avenger who steps out of a thunderstorm to shoot down five people before riding off into the wilderness. That's the last reel, school of *High Plains Drifter*.

The twist – an important one – is that *Unforgiven* reverses the progression of the earlier films by having its central character gradually revert to type as a gunfighter, instead of settling down in a little house on the prairie. It's as if Eastwood is going back over his career as a Western hero to take stock of how far he has travelled, eventually arriving at the heart of darkness. At the beginning of the film, Munny is always talking with regret and even contrition about 'the things I done in the old days', or 'the sins of my youth'. There are running gags about Munny falling off his horse ('I ain't really been in the saddle for a while'), and about the fact that he now needs a scattergun to stand a chance of hitting anything. It is made clear that Munny has become a sensitive single parent to his two children, dislikes cruelty to horses as well as to women, and has generally turned New Age.

At this stage in the story, Eastwood seems almost like a minor character, a team player, in his own film: Gene Hackman, Richard Harris and Morgan Freeman are given the lion's share of both screen time and charisma. But as he strides into the Big Whiskey whorehouse in his long coat, his hat pulled down over his eyes, with the famous Eastwood scowl on his face – the first in the film – and spits out the words, 'Who's the fella owns this shithole?', we are left in no doubt that all his good intentions have gone out the window. It's a great cinematic moment, and visually this reversal is photographed (by Jack N. Green, protégé of Bruce Surtees) as a series of stark – sometimes too stark – contrasts: the farm and the journey in crisp, bright sunlight, the town in rain and murk and darkness, a bronze darkness which has almost become Eastwood's pictorial trademark since *Tightrope* (1984).

Unusually, *Unforgiven* is also punctuated with direct visual and verbal references to past Hollywood Westerns. Big Whiskey, with its snow-capped mountains in the background and its main street a sea of mud, is just like the town in *Shane*. There are Rooster Cogburn-style gags, Munny's two children are called Will and Penny, and the final section of the film mirrors Wellman's *The Ox-Bow Incident* (one of Eastwood's favourite films). Yet although the script is by David Webb Peoples (of *Blade Runner* fame), *Unforgiven* goes against the grain of recent Westerns (*Silverado*, *Young Guns*) by eschewing irony and hipness and fashionable post-modernism. The references seem to be there to anchor Eastwood's odyssey within a hallowed tradition, rather than to show off about the hollowness of that tradition.

David Mucci (*Quick Mike*)
 Rob Campbell (*Davey Bunting*)
 Anthony James (*Skinny Dubois*)
 Tara Dawn Frederick (*Little Sue*)
 Beverley Elliott (*Silky*)
 Liisa Repo-Martell (*Faith*)
 Josie Smith (*Crow Creek Kate*)
 Shane Meier (*Will Munny*)
 Aline Levasseur (*Penny Munny*)
 Cherrilene Cardinal (*Sally Two Trees*)
 Robert Koons (*Crocker*)
 Ron White (*Clyde Ledbetter*)
 Mina E. Mina (*Muddy Chandler*)
 Henry Kope (*German Joe Schultz*)
 Jeremy Ratchford (*Deputy Andy Russell*)
 John Pyper-Ferguson (*Charley Hecker*)
 Jefferson Mappin (*Fatty Rossiter*)
 Walter Marsh (*barber*)
 Garner Butler (*Eggs Anderson*)
 Larry Reese (*Tom Luckinbill*)
 Blair Haynes (*Paddy McGee*)
 Frank C. Turner (*Fuzzy*)
 Sam Karas (*Thirsty Thurston*)
 Lochlyn Munro (*Texas Slim*)
 Ben Cardinal (*Johnny Foley*)
 Philip Hayes (*Lippy MacGregor*)
 Michael Charois (*Wiggins*)
 Bill Davidson (*Buck Barthol*)
 Paul McLean (*train person 1*)
 James Herman (*train person 2*)
 Michael Maurer (*train person 3*)
 Larry Joshua (*Bucky*)
 George Orrison (*The Shadow*)
 Gregory Goossen (*fighter*)
 USA 1992©
 130 mins
 Digital 4K

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In the end, there's more of 'Don' than 'Sergio' in *Unforgiven*, a Western that tries hard to show that its heroic (rather than anti-heroic) protagonist is, as he puts it, 'just a fella now; I ain't no different than anyone else no more'. It resembles *The Shootist*, where the story of the lead actor's career and the film story became inseparable, and where an actor who had become 'out of time' managed to find a way of making contact with a contemporary audience by putting his own career into a fresh context. In interview, Eastwood has responded with no more than monosyllabic incomprehension to the suggestion that he is now in the unusual position of carrying an entire cinematic genre on his shoulders. *Unforgiven* comes across as a much more interesting reply, and his best Western – the most distinguished film he has appeared in and directed – since *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

Christopher Fraying, *Sight and Sound*, October 1992

Clint Eastwood talks to Peter Keogh about the Western

Were you worried about making a film in a genre that's been declared dead?

The Western has been pronounced dead so many times for so many years; I imagine it will be pronounced dead another twenty times before the century is over. I remember when I did *A Fistful of Dollars* before the picture was completed there were pronouncements that the Western was dead. Then a little article in *Variety* said the Western is dead, but there's this little film from Italy called *Per un pugno di dollari* that's doing well. Well, I didn't think too much about it because that wasn't the title of the film I made. Later there was another thing about *Per un pugno di dollari* with Clint Eastwood, and I thought, 'Wait a second! What am I doing in this?' So then I realised that they'd changed the title. The film progressed through Europe and did well. That was another case of the Western being declared dead.

The film ends with a dedication to Don and Sergio. How do the Spaghetti Westerns hold up to the other films you've done?

Those were fun pictures, but they were stylised and operatic and the story didn't mean too much. It was mostly satire, with a character who comes along and events happen – the character really hasn't much feeling as to where he's been or where he's going. At least not to the same degree as a Josey Wales-type character, who's a victim and a warrior trying to escape conflict, but conflict keeps trailing him. Or like this character, William Munny, whose conscience is killing him.

The first Western I did in the US after the European Westerns was *Hang 'em High*. I'd been offered at that time a much larger Western, *Mackenna's Gold*. But I wanted to do *Hang 'em High* because it discussed the pros and cons of capital punishment. I was looking to explore new things I didn't want to get mired down in the Man with No Name character.

Unforgiven, like Pale Rider, High Plains Drifter and The Outlaw Josey Wales, features a hero who is a mythic, Biblical figure of retribution. What's the reason for this fascination?

I've always been interested in mythical characters – though the Jehovah-like avenger of *Pale Rider* is quite different from Munny. Munny has a lot of demons: when he gets ill, he visits hell in hallucinations that realise a lot of feelings – including the memory of his wife who straightened out his life for a period of time. He's constantly trying to talk himself into thinking he's worthy. He and Little Bill are very much alike, but Little Bill has the advantage of acting in the name of the law.

Do you think Unforgiven will finally get you the respect you deserve?

'Deserve has got nothing to do with it'. Ha-ha. There's always a line in a film that's applicable. It's like the line in *White Hunter, Black Heart*, where he says they'll name a special Academy Award after me and all the wrong guys will win it.

Interview by Peter Keogh, *Sight and Sound*, October 1992