A Fistful of Dollars Encyclopedia Article

A Fistful of Dollars

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A Fistful of Dollars

The film *A Fistful of Dollars,* released in 1964, was the first of the "spaghetti Westerns" to gain a large audience in the United States. Directed by Sergio Leone, it starred Clint Eastwood, who was then best known to American audiences as a supporting actor on the television Western *Rawhide.* Eastwood's television character, the fresh-faced, slightly naive Rowdy Yates, was far removed from his first starring film role as the unshaven, cigarillo-smoking, deadly bounty hunter known only as "The Man with No Name."

The plot was blatantly lifted from Akira Kurasawa's Japanese classic *Yojimbo.* In both films, a mercenary shows up in a town that is being terrorized by two rival gangs. The stranger cleverly plays each gang off against the other, then ruthlessly wipes out those who are left. This storyline was revived yet again for the 1996 Bruce Willis vehicle *Last Man Standing.* The worldwide success of the film led to Eastwood's reprising his role in two Leone-directed sequels: *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966).

Clint Eastwood in a scene from the film *A Fistful of Dollars*.

Further Reading:

Weisser, Thomas. *Spaghetti Westerns: The Good, the Bad, and the Violent.* Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Co., 1992.