



Italian composer Ennio Morricone poses with his wife Maria Travia on the red carpet of the European premiere of film 'The Hateful Eight' in London. — AFP

After Tarantino film score, Morricone readies tour

The maestro has a bad back and his memory may not be what it was but the man behind some of the most famous film music ever can still keep Quentin Tarantino waiting. In an interview with AFP, Ennio Morricone said he had initially ruled out writing the soundtrack for the US director's Western "The Hateful Eight" which premiered in London this week.

"I immediately refused," said the 87-year-old Morricone, wearing in a polo-neck jumper and dark suit. "He then came to my house to talk to me and told me about his appreciation for my work, for cinema. He convinced me to compose for him," he said.

Morricone, who won a lifetime achievement Oscar in 2007, is best known for the so-called "Spaghetti Westerns"—he himself dislikes the term—directed by his childhood friend Sergio Leone in the 1960s. But he draws a line between his latest composition and those works starring Clint Eastwood, which famously featured coyote sounds, whip cracks and gun shots.

Tarantino "has done a beautiful, interesting, original film and I treated it differently from what I did for Leone, not like a Western but like a free film. "I wanted it to have its own sounds. I didn't want the music to be the leftovers of what I did for Leone."

Classical ambition

For someone with around 500 film scores to his name, the irony is that cinema was not his first calling. "My real purpose was to write classical music. Since the conservatoire, that was my ambition. Then, of course, you have to live—and you can make money from film music," he said. "That's just how my life went."

As a child, Morricone played the trumpet with his father in 1930s Rome. After attending music school there, he went on to compose hit Italian pop songs, and then got into the Italy's film industry in its heyday in the 1960s. He has since composed music for films like "Once Upon a Time in America" (1984) as well as "The Mission" (1986), both starring Robert de Niro.

The variety of directors he has worked for reflects the differences in his work—from Oliver Stone to Pedro Almodovar, Brian de Palma to Bernardo Bertolucci. And next month, he embarks on a world tour to celebrate 60 years in the music business, with plans to play in London in February and Paris in May.

"It will almost all be film music—the scores that interest me for their compositions, for the discoveries that they yielded, not based on the film or the director. "It is an attempt to be myself, despite what I call my service to the public, to the director and to the film."

'Different sounds'

Known for introducing unusual sound effects into his music—he once wrote an entire song based on the sound of a typewriter—Morricone is still keen to experiment. "I use normal, important, historical instruments but to make different sounds, completely different."

"I think the human voice makes the strangest sounds, more than any instrument. I can become a little devil or angel for example, whatever sound suits the occasion," he said, distorting his voice into a devilish snarl.

At London's Abbey Road Studios—made famous as the preferred recording venue for The Beatles—Morricone picked up his baton this week to direct an orchestra for part of "The Hateful Eight" score, which was being recorded for a limited edition release. Suddenly animated, he conducts with vigor and rehearses again and again with the orchestra—his words in Italian translated to the other musicians by a violinist.

"It didn't go well. Let's do it again," he told them during the recording of an ominous-sounding passage, filled with double basses and oboes. "Be angrier!" he told the choir, rolling his eyes when a voice interrupts the recording. "We'll be here till midnight!" he huffed. — AFP

5 trends making the movie business lose sleep

Blockbusters like "Jurassic World" and "Furious 7" powered the movie business to record numbers in 2015. But not everything Hollywood touched turned to gold. There were plenty of "Pans" and "Victor Franksteins" to splatter red ink around. Here are five things that should keep the studios and filmmakers up at night.

Indie crisis

Arthouse cinemas are beginning to feel like ghost towns. Sundance favorites like "Dope" and "Me and Earl and the Dying Girl" scored big deals, only to die at the box office. In response, distributors kept their checkbooks closed at the Toronto Film Festival. Plus, there are fewer buyers after Relativity Media went belly up and the Weinstein Co cut the number of movies it will release in half.

Incredible shrinking stars

Norma Desmond was wrong. It's not the pictures that got smaller, it's the stars. Big names like George Clooney, Channing Tatum and Adam Sandler couldn't save "Tomorrowland," "Jupiter Ascending" and "Pixels." Diminishing drawing power threatens that most cherished of Hollywood institutions—the passion project. Hoping to nurture relationships with the likes of Sandra Bullock and Angelina Jolie, studios greenlit such risky projects as "Our Brand Is Crisis" and "By the Sea," losing millions of dollars in the process.

Netflix and Amazon fail to make a stir

Streaming services can write big checks and field buzzy TV shows like "House of Cards" and "Transparent," but they haven't had a breakout movie. Netflix says "Beasts of No Nation," a brutal drama about child soldiers, was widely viewed online, but it was barely seen in theaters. The company's deal

with Sandler also raised eyebrows after "Pixels" flopped. Amazon has been more tentative, launching its first theatrical release with Spike Lee's "Chi-Raq." Though the services have revolutionized the way content is watched at home, they haven't made many revolutionary movies-yet.

R-rated comedies running out of laughs

Amy Schumer emerged as a bona fide star with "Trainwreck," but most films hoping to ride raunch to box office gold derailed. "Vacation," "Ted 2" and "The Night Before" left audiences cold, and even well-reviewed "Spy" fell short of previous Melissa McCarthy efforts such as "The Heat" and "Identity Thief." Nothing matched the success of 2014 smash-es like "22 Jump Street" and "Neighbors," and some studio executives fret that gross-out gags aren't delivering belly laughs.

Feast or famine

The hits were big, but so were the flops. For the first time, at least five films this year will top \$1 billion globally. But even as movies like "Jurassic World" mint money, misses like "Pan" are leading to nine-figure writedowns. Fall was weighed down by adult dramas that cannibalized one another, leaving the likes of "The Walk" and "Steve Jobs" to wither. The year had two of the 10 best openings in history with "Jurassic World" and "Avengers: Age of Ultron," but also suffered four of the worst wide-release debuts ever with "Burnt," "Victor Frankenstein," "Jem and the Holograms" and "Rock the Kasbah." Not every record is worth breaking. — Reuters



In this photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox, Matt Damon as Astronaut Mark Watney finds himself stranded and alone on Mars, in "The Martian." — AP