



Below is Kino Ken's review of the subtitled documentary *Ennio* from Italy.

14 of a possible 20 points = \*\*\*1/2 = a very good film

Italy / United States / United Kingdom 2021 color and black-and-white

156 minutes subtitled live action feature documentary

Piano b Produzioni / Potemkino / Gaga / Terras

Producers: Gianni Russo, Gabrielle Costa, Tom Yoda, Peter De Maego,  
San Fu Maltha, Tom Hameeuw, and Gisella Marengo

Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement

**Points:**

**2 Direction: Giuseppe Tornatore**

**0 Editing: Massimo Quaglia and Annalisa Schillaci**

**1 Cinematography: Giancarlo Leggeri and Fabio Zamarion**

**1 Lighting**

**Special Visual Effects: Jessica Antonini and Micaela Tempesta**

**2 Written by: Giuseppe Tornatore\***

**2 Music: Ennio Morricone\***

**2 Appearances: Ennio Morricone, Gino Paoli, Quincy Jones, Miranda Martino,  
Alessandro De Rosa, Gianni Morandi, Nicola Piovani,  
Pat Metheny, Giulano Montaldo, Bruce Springsteen,  
Bernardo Bertolucci, Silvano Agosti, Roland Joffé,**

Dario Argento, Clint Eastwood, Lina Wertmuller,  
Caterina Caselli, Walter Branchi, Alessandro Alessandroni,  
Bruno Battisti D'Amario, Edoardo Vianello, Sergio Miceli,  
Goffredo Petrassi, Daniele Furlati, Boris Porena,  
Enrico Pieranunzi, Igor Stravinsky, Carlo Savina,  
Ettore Zappigno, Eva Fischer, John Cage, Giuseppe Tornatore,  
Gianni Meccia, Franco Migliacci, Edda Dell'Orso,  
Bruno Zambrini, Tonino Poce, Paul Anka, Chet Baker,  
Luciano Salce, Sergio Leone, Carlo Verdone, Roberto Faenza,  
Sergio Bassetti, Marco Bellocchio, Raffaella Leone, John Huston,  
Dino De Laurentiis, Gillo Pontecorvo, Pier Paolo Pasolini,  
Enzo Ocone, Barry Levinson, Quentin Tarantino, Sergio Sollima,  
Mina, Marina Cicogna, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, Dino Asciolla,  
Antonello Neri, Franco Piersanti, Elio Petri, Paul Simonon,  
Alberto Lattuada, Liliani Cavani, Dulce Pontes, Hans Zimmer,  
Stanley Kubrick, Enzo Castellari, Furio Colombo, Joan Baez,  
John Williams, Antonio Pappano, Wong Kar-Wai,  
Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani, Marco Tullio Giordana,  
Valerio Zurlini, Terrence Malick, Mychael Danna, Andrea Leone,  
Claudio Mancini, Robert De Niro, David Puttnam,  
Herbie Hancock, Gilda Buttà, Oliver Stone, Maria Travia,  
Fabio Venturi, Marco Biscarini, Phil Joanou, Mike Patton,  
Zucchero, James Hetfield, 2 Cellos, Patti Austin, Chris Botti,  
Tituss Burgess, Walter Chiari, Coolio, Leonardo Di Caprio,  
Down Low, Emma Marrone, Mireille Mathieu, Metallica,  
Bette Midler, Muse, Eddie Redmayne, Tim Roth,  
Beatrice Schönberg, Ridley Scott, Will Smith, Steven Spielberg,  
Patrick Swayze, Totò, Jean-Louis Trintignant, and  
Jonathan Tunick

- 1 Sound: Gilberto Martinelli  
Sound Editing: Fabio Venturi  
Dialogue Editing: Francesco Vallochia  
Sound Mixing: Peter Beer, Antongiorgio Sabia  
2<sup>nd</sup> Unit Sound Mixing: Bruno Glisbergh
- 2 Research: Beatrice Kildani, Antonio La Torre Giordano,

Giorgio Federico Mosco, Lorenzo Quagliozzi, Luca Rea

## 1 Creativity

14 total points

Film music lovers rejoice! Giuseppe Tornatore, director of *Cinema Paradiso*, has created an insightful, intensely informative, and musically fascinating documentary combining a wealth of biographical information with just enough musical analysis to not only showcase avant-garde classical compositions of Ennio Morricone, but his memorable screen scores as well. This exploration into the maestro's work sonically demonstrates exactly how and why his music fits so ideally with screen images.

An array of contemporary music icons, including Quincy Jones, Pat Metheny, Mychael Danna, and Hans Zimmer, provide testimonials to Morricone's worldwide influence. Film directors from Italy and the United States corroborate those kudos. They include Steven Spielberg, the Taviani Brothers, Barry Levinson, Roland Joffé, Quentin Tarantino, Tornatore himself, Oliver Stone, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Sergio Leone, who repeatedly partnered with his former schoolmate.

Having for father a professional trumpeter, Ennio was channeled by parental advice and paternal scheduling into gigs with local bands at a young age. Papa Morricone overruled an early inclination to enter the medical profession. Instead, the lad found himself pursuing the study of music in preparation for a career as virtuoso instrumentalist.

That course, however, held less charm than did composing, which occupied the bulk of non-performance recreational time. Eventually coming under the tutelage of classical composer Goffredo Petrassi, he heard for the first time such radical orchestral works as Igor Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* with its abundance of time signature changes and blaring dissonances. These represented an uncompromising commitment to abstract organizational principles making no concessions to popular taste. Such experimentation fascinated Ennio, who later became an integral part of a bruitist quartet fond of incorporating street sounds and extended silences à la John Cage into its repertoire.

Perhaps due to constraints imposed by a thinly padded wallet, the music conservatory graduate found work more frequently in radio studios than

concert halls, where forays into the classical field met more with incomprehension than applause.

Work at RCA Victor Studios in Italy during the second half of the 1950s allowed for greater freedom in arranging material, since the measurement of song success depended on popular acclaim rather than alignment with symphonic standards. Creating for both radio and television programming, Ennio heard and met a broad assortment of pop singers, for whom he crafted songs with unique rhythms and sound effects. These were tailored to specific vocal timbres and ranges.

Though still relatively unknown due to employment of pseudonyms on credits, the native Roman familiarized himself with a clientele of professional singers eager to perform his novelties.

In 1956 he married Maria Trava, with whom he had four children. They included future composer Andrea. Maria became the arbiter of his pieces, a sort of Italian variant on Alma Reville Hitchcock. If she approved them he knew worldwide listeners also would.

Morricone drifted into film work around the end of the 1950s, specializing in scores for comedies and westerns. These failed to attract much attention.

That situation changed in 1964 when Sergio Leone hired him to write soundtrack music for *A Fistful of Dollars*.

Thanks to an orchestra strike, Morricone was compelled to settle for a small, unconventional ensemble of musicians. The results were astounding.

That same year, he and three like-minded free spirits created Il Gruppo, an improvisational quartet serving as a laboratory for post-bop fusion experiments incorporating a considerable amount of musique concrete, which its leader had encountered earlier while visiting the experimental studio at Darmstadt, Germany.

Extreme commercial success of a trio of Leone westerns with Morricone music and massive record sales of their soundtracks led Hollywood to offer the Italian commissions. These included scores for *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *The Mission* (1986), *The Untouchables* (1987), *Hamlet* (1990), and *Bugsy* (1991).

Denied an Oscar™ he believed was due him for *The Mission*, Morricone apparently felt cheated by the Hollywood industry. However, many years later

he received first an honorary Oscar™ for lifetime achievement in 2007 and then an actual competitive one for *The Hateful Eight* in 2016.

A lifetime chess aficionado, Ennio once simultaneously played a game with director Terrence Malick while conducting a recording session for *Days of Heaven's* soundtrack simultaneously.

Noted principally for outré, off-kilter motifs, Morricone proved also capable of producing extraordinarily memorable, gorgeous melodies. Such as the themes for *The Mission* ("Gabriel's Oboe"), *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and the 1988 release *Cinema Paradiso*.

Yet there's a disturbing side to his character, one glossed over in Tornatore's production. Why was he so drawn to motion pictures featuring huge doses of extreme violence? Did he think the attractiveness of his music would offset ugliness of corresponding visuals? Did he relish radical counterpointing of sound and image working in polar opposition to one another?

Warning: there are many scenes of graphic violence and uncensored lovemaking contained within this film.

Music, research, and scripting are highly accomplished in *Ennio*.

Editing is beset by the problem cited above with images chosen for musical accompaniment frequently being shockingly sadistic or erotic.

Sound mixing is sometimes subpar.

Illuminating interviews, some containing witty anecdotes, are a decided asset.

Lighting is acceptable, though hardly superior in quality.

With reservations indicated above, *Ennio* makes for rewarding, very adult viewing. It excels in portraying sympathetically a complex musical personality whose achievements and impact will continue to be honored in future decades.