

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Brian De Palma

Elisa Leonelli · Sunday, October 6th, 2024

After reading a Los Angeles Times [review](#) of *The De Palma Decade* by Laurent Bouzereau, I was reminded of the many times I interviewed the Italian-American director as an entertainment journalist and the articles I wrote about his movies.



Brian De Palma © Elisa Leonelli 1978

I met [Brian De Palma](#) for the first time in 1978 in his New York office, when I was writing for the Cinema supplement of the Italian newsweekly *L'Europeo*.

We spoke about his latest work, *The Fury*, and I asked him about some of the movies he had directed until then.

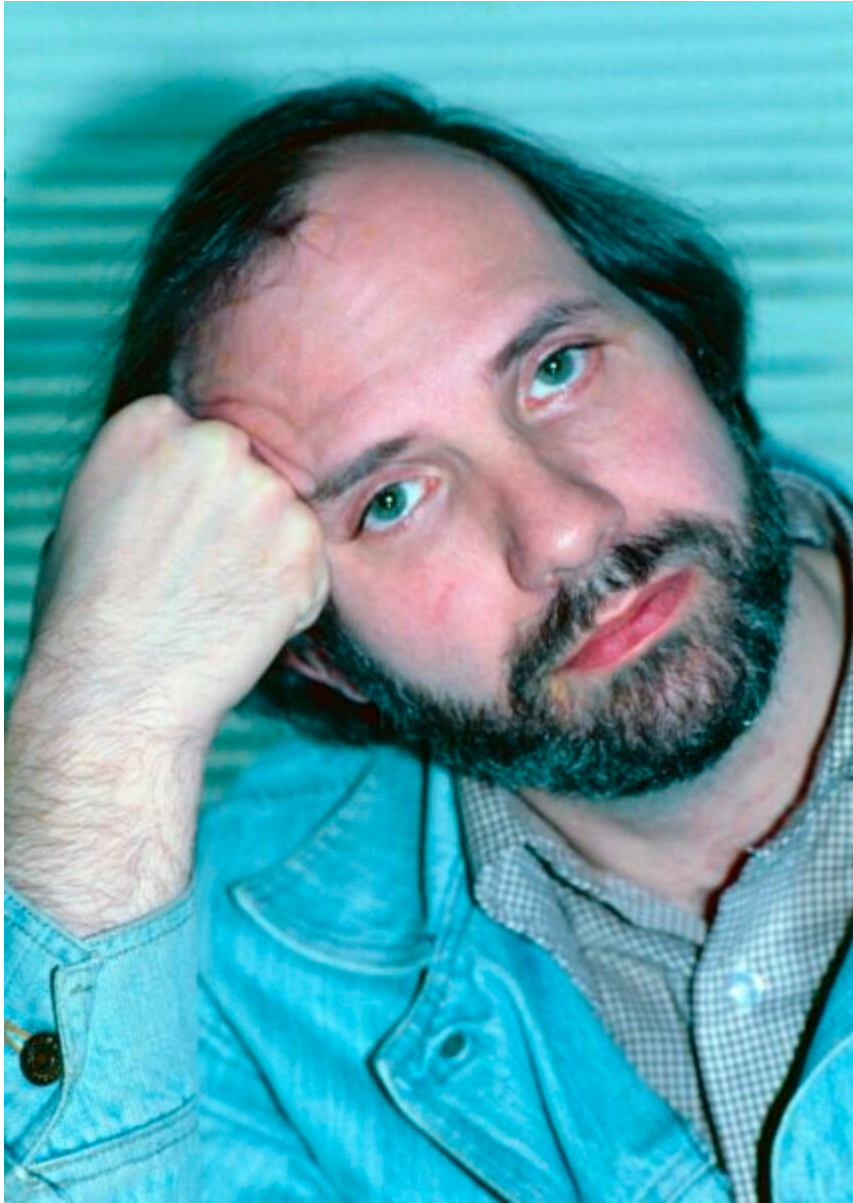
He said about *Hi Mom!* starring Robert De Niro: “We were seeing the Vietnam War essentially as a voyeuristic experience. America then became a cold nation in front of the horrible things that we were doing.”

*Sisters*: “It develops the classic theme of the good sister and bad sister, the two aspects of our

personality, one light and one dark.”

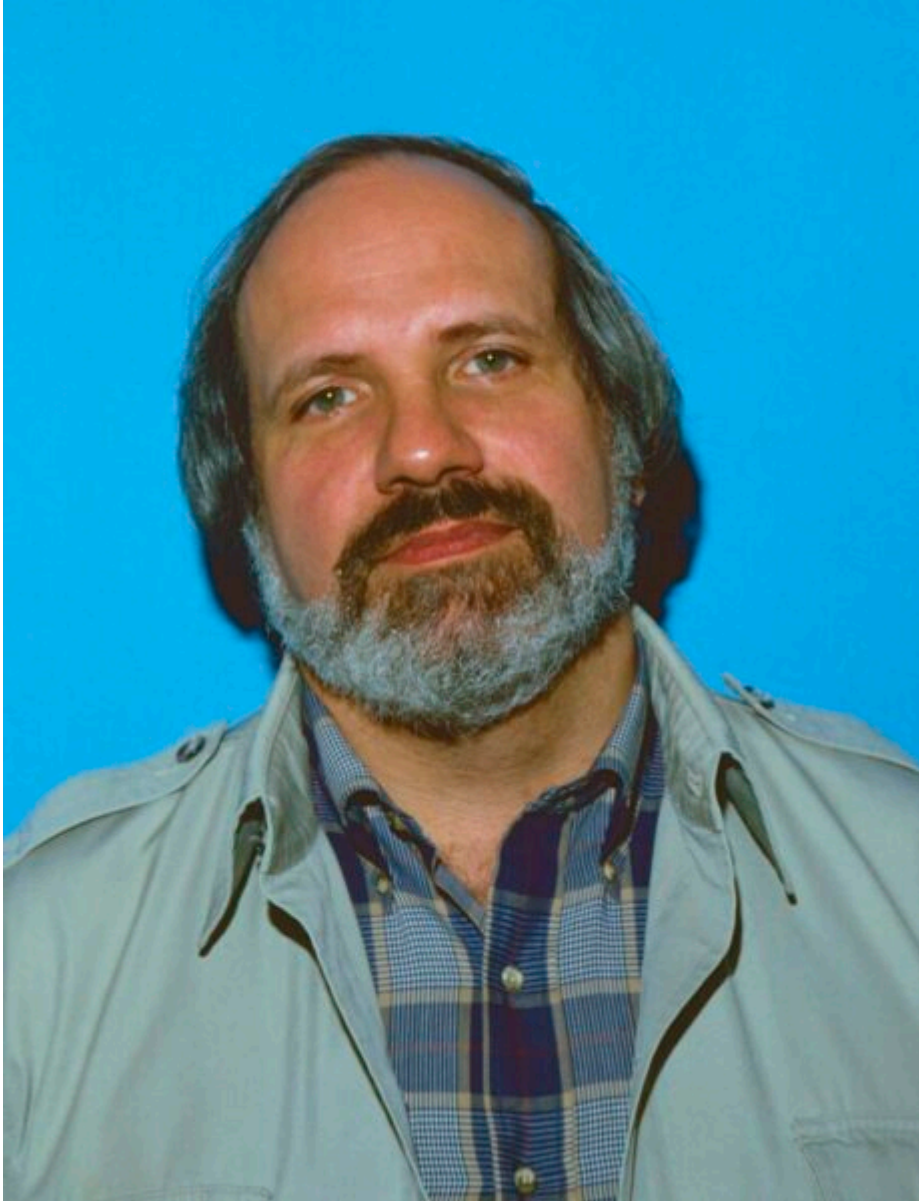
*Obsession*: “I was imitating my favorite film, *Vertigo* by Alfred Hitchcock, telling a very romantic story.”

*Carrie*: “I wanted to represent the high school experience in a different way. It’s typical of a teenager to feel cut off like the ugly duckling.”



Brian De Palma © Elisa Leonelli 1978

In 1987 the editors of *CIAK*, the Italian film monthly, proposed that I write a weekly newsletter about what was happening in Hollywood, plus film reviews and interviews with actors and directors, as their Los Angeles Correspondent. I held this position until 1994.



Brian De Palma © Elisa Leonelli 1987

The first article, my interviews about *The Untouchables* with Brian De Palma and Kevin Costner, was published in the [September 1987](#) issue as an 8-page cover story.

I asked the director about working again with Robert De Niro who played Al Capone: “We are older, but our relationship hasn’t changed. When you know somebody that long, it’s like a member of your family, a brother or something, you can talk very simply and directly.”





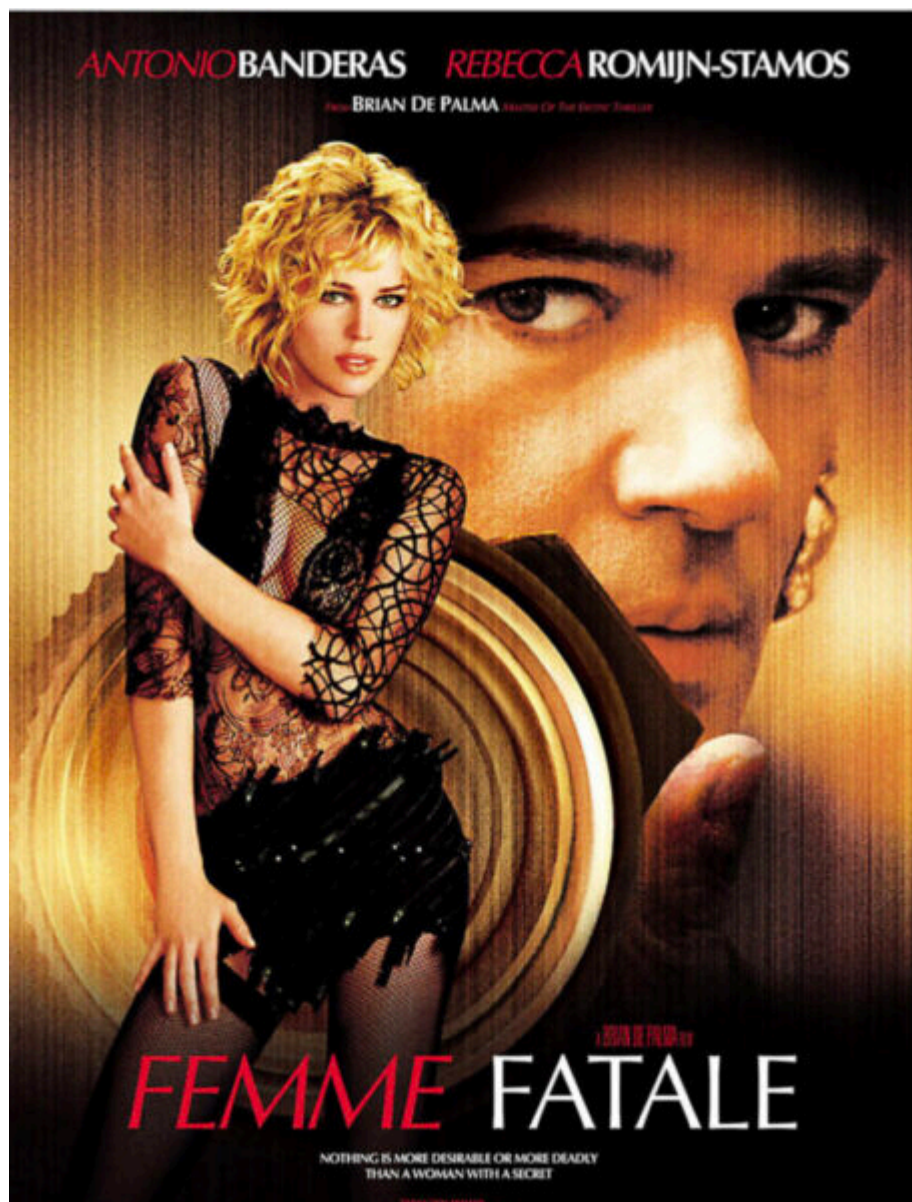
Brian De Palma, Elisa Leonelli 1989

For [CIAK September 1989](#) issue I wrote what De Palma said about *Casualties of War*.

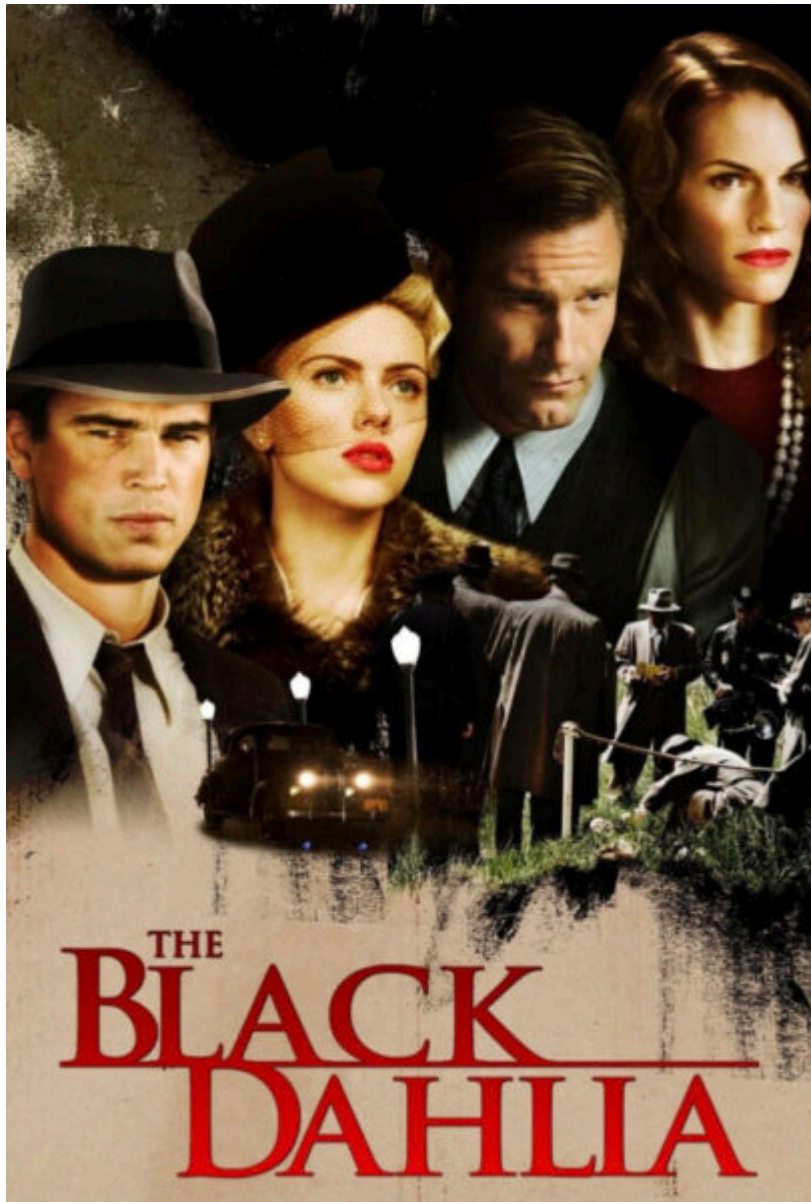
On the perspective on the Vietnam War, 20 years later: “It’s very confusing to us because we don’t quite understand why we were there, so it’s a continuing unexplained festering sore. We have all kinds of explanations, and we didn’t win the war.”

For [CIAK January 1991](#) issue I wrote what De Palma and Tom Hanks said about *Bonfire of the Vanities*.

De Palma: “The satiric and ironic tone was in the book, which deals with broad caricatures, so the movie had to be essentially a black comedy, like *Dr. Strangelove* by Stanley Kubrick, which is the best example I can think of in the history of cinema.”



I later interviewed De Palma about *Femme Fatale* (2002) and *The Black Dahlia* (2006) from the 1987 novel by James Ellroy.



I just watched on Max the documentary *De Palma* directed by Noah Baumbach and Jake Paltrow that premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2015. See [trailer](#). The director talks about every one of his movies, including *Dressed to Kill* (1980) with Angie Dickinson, *Scarface* (1983) and *Carlito's Way* (1993) with Al Pacino, *Mission Impossible* (1996) with Tom Cruise. He describes his friendship with Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Coppola: "What we did in our generation will never be duplicated."

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