

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Claudia Cardinale Today

Elisa Leonelli · Sunday, February 3rd, 2019

As teenage girls growing up in Italy in the mid 1960s, [Claudia Cardinale](#) was a movie star we looked up to, as was Catherine Deneuve.

Born in Tunisia of a Sicilian father and a French mother (on April 15, 1938, under the sign of Aries), Claudia grew up speaking French. She started acting in Italian movies with help from producer Franco Cristaldi, her companion from 1958 to 1974. She acted with Marcello Mastroianni in movies like *Il bell'Antonio* (1960) by Mauro Bolognini and *Otto e mezzo* (8 1/2 1963) by Federico Fellini. [Watch clip](#).



*La viaccia* by Mario Bolognini 1961 © Huguette Ronald-Centro Cinema Città di Cesena

She was directed by Valerio Zurlini in *La ragazza con la valigia* (*Girl with a Suitcase* 1961), by Mauro Bolognini again in *La viaccia* (*The Lovemakers* 1961) with Jean-Paul Belmondo, by Luchino Visconti in *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard* 1963) with Burt Lancaster and Alain Delon, by Luigi Comencini in *La ragazza di Bube* (*Bebo's Girl* 1963), by Sergio Leone in *C'era una volta il West* (*Once Upon a Time in the West* 1968). She became internationally famous, like Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren.

It was not until 2005 that I met Claudia in person, at a luncheon held at the [Italian Cultural Institute](#).

Last week I met her again, as a journalist in the Hollywood Foreign Press, during the “Filming Italy” event, where she was guest of honor, along with Gina Lollobrigida, who was honored last year. [See my article](#).

In the morning of the evening's awards ceremonies, on January 30th, at the Italian Cultural Institute, they screened *The Pink Panther* (1963) by Blake Edwards, where Claudia Cardinale costarred with Peter Sellers and David Niven.

The actress has 2 grown children, a son, Patrick, born in 1958, and a daughter, Claudia, born in 1979, whose father is director Pasquale Squitieri, Cardinale's companion from 1975 to 2002, and 2 grandchildren, Lucilla, born in 1979, and Milo, born in 2012.

In person Claudia seems happy, making jokes, laughing often, and she's accompanied by her daughter, who elaborates on her mother's short answers in English. She continues to work, this

year playing a grandmother in a TV series, *Bulle*, shot in Switzerland, to be broadcast in 2020.



Il Gattopardo by Luchino Visconti © 1963

Here are some quotes from Claudia Cardinale:

“I’m Italian, but I was born in Arabic Tunisia, where they call me their princess. So my first language is French, and when I arrived in Italy, I didn’t speak a word of Italian, so I was dubbed; also, because I had this deep voice like a man, they gave me another voice. My family lived in Tunisia for generations, during the First World war lots of people emigrated there, from Russia, from Malta, from Italy. And now there is a democracy. The problem is that there’s a war between religions, the Muslims, the Christians, the Jews, which is ridiculous, I don’t understand that.”

“When they started calling me CC for Claudia Cardinale, like BB for Brigitte Bardot, the brunette against the blonde, it was incredible, because for me Brigitte was the most beautiful woman in the world, she was fantastic, and we had a marvelous relationship. The paparazzi thought we were going to kill each other, but we didn’t.”

“I’ve been very lucky, because I arrived in Italy in the magic moment of cinema with big directors, like Visconti, Fellini, Bolognini. It was a fantastic moment, because, with Visconti on *The Leopard*, it was like doing theater, everything was very precise. With Federico on *8 1/2*, there was no script, it was all improvisation. So it was just the opposite, and in one I was a blond, in the other a brunette.”

“I’ve worked with lots of beautiful men, but someone who was a very good friend of mine, was Rock Hudson. At that time, if you were homosexual, you couldn’t work; he was always in my house in Los Angeles, and we were going out, as if we were together, because, otherwise, it was poison for him, it didn’t work, and for me it was fantastic.”

“I never got married. I had only one important man in my life, the father of my daughter, Neapolitan director Pasquale Squitieri. He was educated, intelligent and also a little crazy, but I like crazy. Marlon Brando once knocked at my door in Los Angeles and wanted to make love to me, but I said no. Marcello Mastroianni was in love with me, he sent me flower, notes, letters; and he was a beautiful man, classy, elegant, but I never gave in.”

“To be a mother is fantastic, but I gave a lot of freedom to Patrick and to Claudia, from when they were very young; and that’s very important. My daughter was living by herself, when she was fourteen years old, and my son too. He lived in New York for twenty years and now he’s in Rome. We have a fantastic relationship. I’ve been living in Paris for 35 years, since my daughter was very young, because I wanted her to learn French and English. Then she moved to London to study, but I stayed there, and now my daughter and her son live in Paris near me.”



La ragazza con la valigia © 1961

“I’m a Goodwill Ambassador for UNESCO and I’m always fighting for women’s rights, equality is very important. In many countries, unfortunately, the man is king. When I was young, I was getting into fist fights with boys all the time, because I always wanted to prove that, as a woman, I was stronger. Also I was playing lots of sports, basketball,

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volleyball, athletics. I was like a boy, because my real name is Claude, which is used for both men and women.”

“I was never interested in movies, because I had a sister, Blanche, who was more beautiful than me and she wanted to be an actress. I wanted to become an explorer, visit exotic places; and I succeeded, I made movies everywhere, the Amazon, Brazil, Australia. I love to travel, for me it’s very important to know people from everywhere, because they give to you and you give to them.”

*Top photo: 8 1/2 by Federico Fellini (1963) photo © Paul Ronald-Collezione Maraldi*

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