

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jeff Bridges and Me

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020

Among the many movie actors and directors I interviewed in my long career as a film journalist, a personal favorite is [Jeff Bridges](#), a talented actor, a humanitarian and a devoted family man.

I interviewed Jeff numerous times from 1982 to 2018, and I wrote several articles about his work for Italian magazines like *Ciak*, *Elle*, *Gioia*, *Grazia*, *Marie Claire*.



JEFF BRIDGES. Photo by Elisa Leonelli (c) 1989

My favorite interview was when I spent a couple of hours with Jeff in his Santa Monica home for a [Venice magazine cover story](#) about *American Heart*. The film was inspired by a Mary Ellen Mark photo essay, "Streets of the Lost." Here are some excerpts:



Things seem to be getting worse in terms of the increase in the homeless population in American cities. What could be done about it?

Our administration now has been changed and there's a tremendous sense of hope; I know I'm doing everything I can to support Clinton making his changes and I'm thankful he's in the White House. It's a serious situation caused by the falling apart of family structure, but we can't forget that the family has to be supported by society as well. One of the great things about human beings is how well we adapt, but that's also part of the downside, because we get used to circumstances that are not the best they should be, like seeing homeless people in the streets; so sometimes we have to be made aware that this condition is going on and doesn't have to, and we should do something to change it. I don't mean for *American Heart* to be a big morality play, because the movie is unsentimental in that way, but it might help shed some light on that segment of the population.

If you had one utopian wish, what would you like to see the United Nations do to change the world?

Hopefully, in my thinking, the United Nations could actually be a world government and function that way. Now, as soon as you say that, nobody wants to lose their sovereignty, and everybody's afraid of 'Big Brother'; one big military complex looking over the whole world is a frightening thought, but there are certain issues, like the environment and hunger, that concern the entire world. I think there really is a place for a revamping of the United Nations, so it could work more

effectively, then we could get some real ‘law and order’. If we had some sort of world government, it could handle things like feeding people, because we know all the ways to end hunger, we just haven’t done it. It could deal with dictatorships and wars, madmen who go off with nuclear arms, so it’s not just one country going after another country, but it’s the whole world concerned about what’s going on.

As a photojournalist, the documentary sensibility of Mary Ellen Mark’s photography was inspirational to me. What inspires you to shoot your Black and White panoramic photographs?

Lately, for the last fifteen years, I’ve been mainly taking pictures with a Widelux camera, and I seem to take most of my pictures while I’m making movies, and what I’ve done for the last seven film is that I make books of the photographs to give to the cast and crews as a gift, to look back at our memories, remind them of the shoot. So that’s what my photographs have mostly been about. I’m putting a show together with a gallery owner in Venice, right across from the Santa Monica Museum.

As the Film Editor of *Venice*, the Arts and Entertainment Magazine, I featured [Jeff Bridges photographs](#) in my article about *Wild Bill* (1995) directed by Walter Hill.

When Jeff Bridges was nominated as Best Actor in a drama for *Hell or High Water* (2016), I volunteered to [write his profile for the Golden Globes website](#). This week I wrote a post with quotes of [Jeff and his father Lloyd Bridges](#) about acting and their family.



Elisa Leonelli, Jeff Bridges © HFPA 1982

In 2019 we, journalists of Hollywood Foreign Press, honored Jeff Bridges with the Cecil B.DeMille Award.

Our best wishes go out to him on his birthday. [Get well soon, Dude.](#)

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