Cultural Daily

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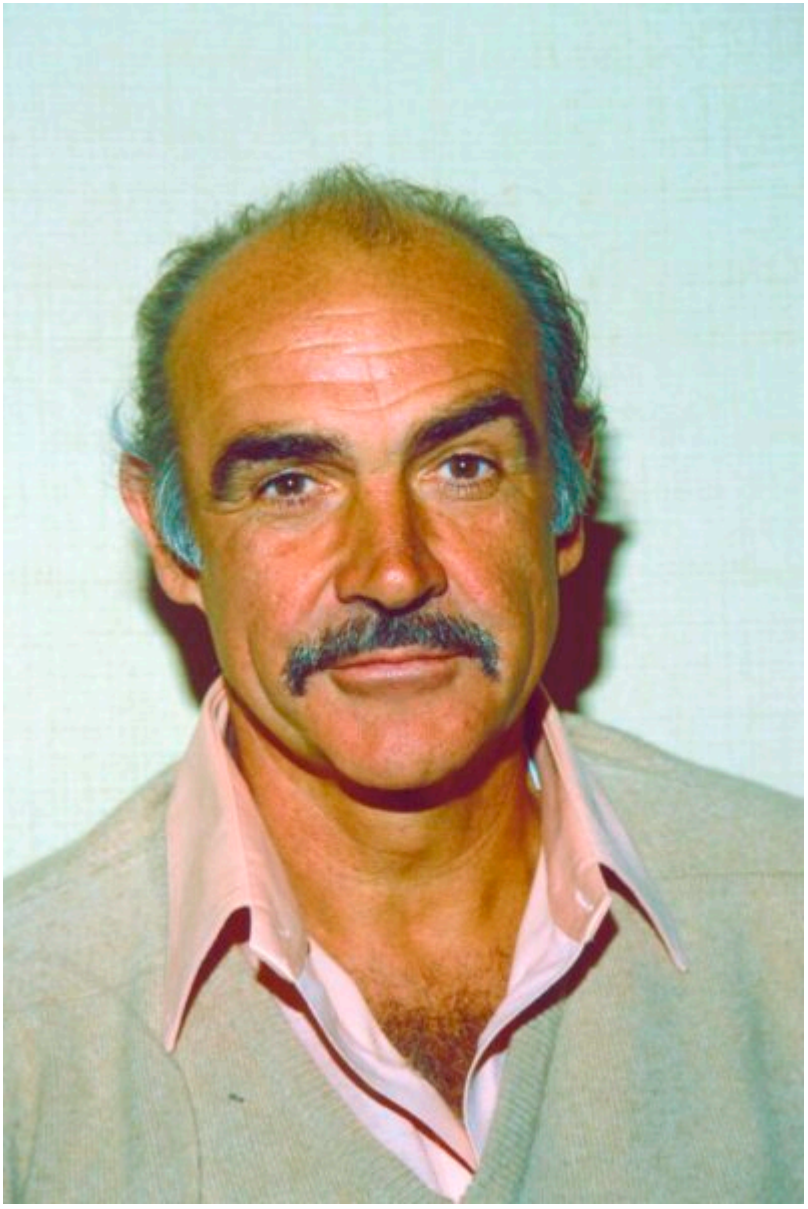
# Sean Connery and Me

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, November 11th, 2020



Sean Connery © Elisa Leonelli 1983

The first time I "met" Sean Connery was on the big screen, when I saw him play James Bond in *From Russia with Love* as a teenager in Italy. It was love at first sight. I never dreamed then that I would actually meet my movie star crush in person, but I did, after I moved to Los Angeles and started my career as a photo-journalist. I interviewed Sean Connery numerous times between 1983 and 2003 about various movies, *Never Say Never Again* (1983), *Presidio* (1988), *Indiana Jones*

*and the Last Crusade* (1989), *Hunt for Red October* (1990), *Russia House* (1991), *First Knight* (1995), *The Rock* (1996), *Playing by Heart* (1998), *Finding Forrester* (2000), at press round tables or as a film journalist in the Hollywood Foreign Press, but the most memorable interview was a one-on-one I did in 1992 for the movie *Medicine Man*, when I spent one hour alone with the Scottish actor in a hotel ballroom. Here are some excerpts.

Elisa Leonelli, Sean Connery © HFPA 1983

***The burning and destruction of the rainforest is a hotly debated ecological issue these days, also dealt with in the film by Hector Babenco,* At Play in the Fields of the Lord. *What do you think could be done to stop it?***

*Medicine Man* is set in the jungle in Brazil, where they have this slash and burn policy, and it has some ecological aspects. Hector Babenco was saying there is nothing that gets more media coverage than the rainforest with so little action in response. Sting is certainly bringing it to the attention of everybody, he's spending his energy and time raising money for it. The next step obviously will be for this to become an issue in the United Nations, and then, in this new international order they're attempting to establish, they'll do something about it.

***The United Nations also played a big role, with the United States, in the Gulf War. Do you agree that it was necessary to bomb Iraq to defeat Saddam?***

Yes, because there's no questions that the sanctions would never have worked, no matter what they were saying, so war became necessary, otherwise the next country to go in that area would have been Saudi Arabia. You saw what Saddam did, burning all those wells and polluting the place, I mean, they'll never get over the damage this maniac has done, so, if he'd gone on with any more power than he had, he would have damaged everything. The only unsatisfactory aspect of it is that he's still there; but it's difficult to blame Bush on that respect, for pulling back after arriving to the walls of Baghdad, because you have to be careful, otherwise you dilute the potency of something like the United Nations, when you're attempting to make a war without breeching sovereignty in other countries. The criteria for everything is democracy, and that's the one strength the United States have in most issues, the combination of the Congress and the Bill of Rights make for events to take a pace that dictatorships and totalitarian countries don't have.

***You were born in Scotland, you started a foundation to help Scottish children and Edinburgh is your hometown; what impression did it make on you to go back there to receive an award?***

I have founded the Scottish International Education Trust in 1988, which is really to support and encourage anyone who has any particular talent for anything in Scotland. The Freedom of Edinburgh has been going on for 500 years and the last time they gave this award was twenty-odd years ago. The field is an extraordinary mixture of admirals and scientists: Queen Victoria, Dwight Eisenhower, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Alexander Graham Bell. So I felt in very exalted company.

Sean Connery (c) HFPA 1990

My interviews were published in Italian magazines like *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Ciak*, *Gioia*, *Donna Moderna*, the last one was a career profile I wrote in 2003 for the Spanish film monthly

*Cinemanía*. In 2014 I read his 2008 autobiographical book *Being a Scot*, and wrote a Sean Connery profile for the Golden Globes website.

I watched all of this films, I especially loved *Zardoz* (1974) by John Boorman, *The Man Who Would be King* (1975) by John Huston, *Robin and Marian* (1976) by Richard Lester.

Sean Connery died at 90 on October 31, 2020, but he will live forever through his movies and in our memory.

*(Featured photo by Elisa Leonelli (c) 1983)*

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