

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Stefania Sandrelli 1983

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021

In 1983 I decided to spend 3 months in Europe, testing the concept that I could work as a photo-journalist while based in Italy, as I had been doing in Los Angeles since 1975. I travelled to the Cannes Film Festival, where I photographed actors like [Gian Maria Volonté](#), and hang out with my friend Douglas Kirkland, I took the train to Berlin to see David Bowie in concert, I drove to Arles, where I did a reportage for *L'Espresso* on the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, and exhibited a selection of my projected photographs in the square, as suggested by Franco Fontana, my photographer friend from our hometown of Modena. You may read my article in Italian and see photos [at this link](#), from the [Elisa Leonelli, Photojournalist Collection](#) at Claremont Colleges Digital Library.



Gian Maria Volonté, Cannes © Elisa Leonelli 1983

I went to Rome a few times because that is where Italian movie stars live and make

movies. I love that city having lived there in 1970 and 1971. My journalist friend Giovanna Grassi helped me get connected. My most rewarding photos layouts were with [Stefania Sandrelli](#), an actress of my generation, whom I had been following since the 1960s while still living in Italy. She graciously agreed to be photographed and interviewed in her home, and on the set of *La Chiave*, directed by Tinto Brass.



Stefania Sandrelli, Roma © Elisa Leonelli 1983

The featured photo with the black cat was immediately published as a full page in the Italian magazine *Amica*.



Ugo Tognazzi, Roma © Elisa Leonelli 1983

I took a few portraits of [Ugo Tognazzi](#) in his dressing room, while he was shooting *Il petomane*. His sons Ricky and Gianmarco were also there. In 1979, after joining the Hollywood Foreign Press, I had interviewed Tognazzi about *La Cage aux Folles*. In 2015 I wrote [an article in Italian](#) about this experience for the Golden Globes website.



Elisa Leonelli, Ugo Tognazzi © HFPA 1979

Here's some excerpts from my interview with Sandrelli. I had to ask about her relationship with [Gino Paoli](#), because, as a teenager in the mid 1960s, I was always listening to his love songs with my boyfriend. Our favorite was "Il cielo in una stanza," which he wrote, [as sang by Mina](#). She said, "We met on June 5, 1961, at La Bussola in Viareggio, where I was celebrating my 15th birthday. I was immediately taken with him, I thought he was to die for, so I would often go back to that nightclub with low-cut dresses, hoping he would invite me to dance, which he did. I fell madly in love with him, and he with me, that is how our daughter Amanda was born, and she is beautiful."



Stefania Sandrelli. La chiave (c) Elisa Leonelli 1983

I also did home photo layouts and interviews with Michele Placido, while he was shooting the TV miniseries *La piovra*, where my friend Luigi Perelli would later serve as director, and with Giuliana De Sio. I drove to Pomposa to interview and photograph Terence Hill on the set of *Don Camillo*. I will share some of those photos in an upcoming article.

At the end of this extended stay, which did prove that I could earn a living as a photo-journalist while living in Modena, if I wanted to, I came back to Los Angeles, my adopted city since 1973.

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