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Interviews \ Malisa Longo



DW Forum - How was you chosen to be in the film?

Malisa Longo - I was not really chosen. I am an actress and it was my agent that introduced me. He told me the director, Bruce Lee, needed a beautiful looking girl, a mediterranean beauty, with a beautiful body for a role in his film. He saw a photo of me in a magazine and asked to see me. I was very curious because, I went to the Bruce's appointment and I wasn't really interested. The role was very little, and in one scene, I would have to stay completely nude. So that role didn't appeal to me. I had already done many films as a leading role. Besides that, Bruce in Italy was unknown, and I didn't consider this experience was important enough for my curriculum. Nobody knew that he would become a big star. Before I met him, I met the Chinese production manager twice. They wanted to be sure that I had the right glamour. The problem was the nude scene. It would be the first nude appearance in a Bruce Lee movie. But they were afraid that it might damage Bruce Lee's image. They explained to me that Bruce was a big star, the number one in the world in martial arts. Then, they told me that Bruce wanted me. The day after, I met him in Via Veneto in the Hotel Flora. (Via Veneto is the street famous for the "Dolce Vita"). When he saw me, he glanced at me in a shy way, my body was very provocant and above all, very tall! He seemed so different from the charismatic image on the screen. After the first embarrassing moment, he started to talk friendly to me and explained my role. So, I got the part.

DW Forum - Did any unusual things happen on the set with Bruce?

Malisa Longo - He was a good friend and a hard worker. The film was a low budget. He was also the producer and he looked at everything in Rome, even with the small expenses. The Rome programme was very intensive and he wanted to use old the Antic locations, but he didn't have the time and the money to ask for the shooting permission. So, most of the scenes in the film were shot without permission, He only gave a little tip to a museum guardian (The locations for the wonderful Coliseum Karate scene). Also my other scene was in "Piazza Navona". We had to shoot it like we were pretending to tourists. I have to say that the Italian organization really made the best for us to make the shooting easy.

DW Forum - What was the audiences reaction like in Italy when Way of the dragon was shown and did you attend the premiere?

Malisa Longo - I didn't go to the premiere. I was busy, I was shooting a movie in Paris. The film was very successful in Italy like everywhere else. It was the moment of success in Martial Arts Movies.

DW Forum - Did Way of the Dragon help your career?

Malisa Longo - No, The role was too small and also partly cut. After that, I starred in over 60 films with many important actors and directors (Yerence Young, Lucio Fulci etc) The list is too long, I also worked with the Boxing Champion Carlos Monzon. It was a Western Film and in that movie, I was the star.

DW Forum - I remember when I saw the movie back in 1973 how beautiful you was and how lucky Tang Lung was for you to pick him up. Did Bruce tell you that he would dissappear after he saw you topless?

Malisa Longo - No because the original scene continued a little longer. He cut it out later though. He told me that he was afraid. His image could be damaged for an erotic scene to be shown.

DW Forum - Did you know who Bruce Lee was before shooting?

Malisa Longo - No, I had never heard about him before.

DW Forum - What was Bruce's reaction like during the topless scene?

Malisa Longo - We had a nice friendship and everything happened naturally. By the way, we continued our friendship also out of the set.

DW Forum - You also worked with John Saxon in an Italian film (The name of which escapes me). Did you ever compare notes on Bruce (having both worked with him)?

Malisa Longo - No. I didn't know he had worked with Bruce, so I still think the same about him.

DW Forum - Have you seen the scene of you and Bruce? It was cut in the US.

Malisa Longo - I have never seen the original with the cut scene, I only saw the Italian version but I know what I shot and the film was very different.

DW Forum - What did you or what do you think of Bruce?

Malisa Longo - He was a very nice man. Although he was very involved with the film, the time we spent together in Rome was very nice.

DW Forum - How many times did you have to shoot the scene with you and Bruce?

Malisa Longo - He didn't repeat the scene more than two or three times. As I told you the budget was very low and he couldn't spend much money. He was the Producer, the Director and the actor. He always paid a lot of attention about the money. By the way, he was very professional. It was very funny! Meanwhile in Europe he was not that popular and he was just beginning his career, in the United States he was explosive, above all for people loving his Martial Art.

DW Forum - What was your impression of Bruce while you were filming it?

Malisa Longo - As a director he was quite good, he knew what he wanted. He always worked very hard, sometimes even through the night. I can't say the same for his acting, he wasn't a good actor but he supplied his personal charisma. He was really the best, above all in the fantastic and unique fighting scenes.

DW Forum - What else have you been up to all of these years?

Malisa Longo - I have shot more than 70 films in my career. I've done shows and theatres, I've been an actress and a singer. My last movie was the 97th. In the 98th I had my first experience as a director in a video documentary called SEX TRUE AND VIDEOTAPE (An ironic backstage in the pornworld, with interviews and backstages) Anyhow I still act, but now my main job is writing. I wrote a book COSI' COME SONO, romance about the movies world. I have written many screenplays too. At the moment I have just finished my second book WET WINGS.

DW Forum - Could you please tell us where exactly did you shoot your scenes? What was the actual location, I understand it was still in Rome?

Malisa Longo - If you are talking about The Way of the Dragon, it was shot in Rome. As I said before, it was at "Piazza Navona" and also at Bruce Lee's room in the Hotel Flora.

DW Forum - Did you see a script for the "Way of the Dragon"? Or did Bruce just tell you what to do, say and how to act?

Malisa Longo - No, He never gave me the script. He just gave me the pages of my scene.

DW Forum - If you don't mind me asking how old were you at the time of filming?

Malisa Longo - I was 21 years old.

DW Forum - What was your impression of Nora Miao (The girl with Bruce next to the fountain when you approached him), did you ever talk with her?

Malisa Longo - She was not very friendly, maybe it was because of the language difficulties.

DW Forum - Thank you Malisa for answering our questions and we wish you all the best in your future projects.