



Why make

A REMAKE?

Successful movies have been remade by Hollywood studios almost since the industry began. It is widely believed that a remake is a safe option for a moviemaker. Since the original version is already known to large numbers of people, a remake is much easier to sell to the public. This is no small thing when marketing a movie can be almost as expensive as making it.

One of the most successful remakes was the spaghetti western *A Fistful of Dollars*, a remake of the Japanese movie *Yojimbo*. It has often been said that both films are all-time classics of the adventure and western genres. *Yojimbo* (1961) was directed by Akira Kurosawa and is considered to be one of the greatest movies ever made. It is often described as a comedy, though "satire" is perhaps a better word to use. The plot centers on the main character, a Samurai, played by Toshiro Mifune. He arrives in a Japanese village in the 1860s and soon gets caught in a war between two criminal gangs. Although he appears as a villain at the beginning of the movie, by the end he has become a hero by saving an innocent family from violence.

In 1964, *Yojimbo* was remade by Sergio Leone as *A Fistful of Dollars*. Unlike *Yojimbo*, the overall mood of this movie is more serious. It is set in the Old West, nineteenth-century Mexico, although it was filmed in Spain. An unknown American actor, Clint Eastwood, was chosen for the lead role. His character, like *Yojimbo*, is a loner who fights bandits, even though he seems just as cruel and violent as them, since he kills his enemies in a series of gunfights. However, Eastwood's character always spares innocent lives and shows that he too is a man of honor.

A Fistful of Dollars was a big hit in the USA. Leone's unique style of cinematography was widely acclaimed by critics. The acting, on the other hand, generally received bad reviews. Interestingly, Sergio Leone was never actually given permission to remake *Yojimbo*. Shortly after *A Fistful of Dollars* was released in Europe, Kurosawa sued the movie studio. As a result, he received 15% of the movie's profits. To this day, the connection to Kurosawa's movie is never mentioned in publicity.

2 a Read the article from a movie magazine. Answer the questions.

- 1 What are the names of the movies in the images?
- 2 What is a "remake"?

b Read the article again. Complete the chart with information about the two movies.

	<i>Yojimbo</i>	<i>A Fistful of Dollars</i>
1 Director		
2 Lead actor		
3 Release date		
4 Setting (date/place)		

3 Answer the questions about the article.

- 1 Why are remakes popular with moviemakers?
- 2 What are the similarities/differences between the two movies?
- 3 What was the reaction of critics to the remake?
- 4 Why did Kurosawa sue the makers of *A Fistful of Dollars*?