



Conversations with Clint: Paul Nelson's Lost Interviews with Clint Eastwood, 1979-1983

By Kevin Avery

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Clint Eastwood has forged a remarkable career as a movie star, director, producer and composer. These newly discovered conversations with legendary journalist Paul Nelson return us to a point when, still acting in other people's films, Eastwood was honing his directorial craft on a series of inexpensive films that he brought in under budget and ahead of schedule. Operating largely beneath the critical radar, he made his movies swiftly and inexpensively. Few of his critics then could have predicted that Eastwood the actor and director would ever be taken as seriously as he is today. But Paul Nelson did.

The interviews were conducted from 1979 through 1983. Eastwood talks openly and without illusions about his early career as an actor, old Hollywood, and his formative years as a director, his influence and what he learned along the way as an actor—lessons that helped him become the director he is today. *Conversations with Clint* provides a fresh and vivid perspective on the life and work of this most American of movie icons.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Kevin Avery has performed a great service to film lovers by bringing to light Paul Nelson's remarkable interviews with Clint Eastwood. Nelson was an appreciator of Eastwood in the seventies, before he had won wide critical recognition. In these fascinating and wide-ranging conversations, the actor-director discusses with complete candor both the art of his films and the realities of filmmaking in Hollywood."— Andrew Sarris, Author of "Notes on the Auteur Theory" (1962)

"Paul Nelson was the first serious film aficionado who, way back in the early '70s, turned me on to the importance of Clint Eastwood as an actor, filmmaker and American icon. He showed me the S&W Magnum .44 he kept under a pile of sweaters in his closet. 'Same as Dirty Harry,' he said, explaining that if he was going to write about men with guns he had to know how it felt in his hand. We were both devoted to F. Scott Fitzgerald and hoping that Clint Eastwood would play Gatsby in the upcoming film, which, of course, he didn't."

"The repartee between these two straight shooters is more revealing of the inner workings of Hollywood and the creative process of Clint Eastwood than anything I've ever read before."

—Elliott Murphy, singer-songwriter

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"At a time when most critics didn't take Clint Eastwood seriously, he had no admirer more prescient or loving than the late Paul Nelson. And Nelson—still insufficiently appreciated for his stubborn indifference to fashionability, but a smoke-wreathed legend to his 1970s colleagues—will never have a posthumous rescuer more devoted and scrupulous than Kevin Avery. Unguarded, searching, and occasionally very funny, the uniquely intimate interviews collected in *Conversations With Clint* morph as we read into the ideal script for a lost Eastwood movie on the nature of friendship. I'm sure Paul would be pleased that the alternate title that kept springing to mind was that of a John Ford Western: *Two Rode Together*."

—Tom Carson, critic for *GQ* and author of *Daisy Buchanan's Daughter*

"This is what happens when an artist interviews an artist: Nelson's acute critical engagement with Eastwood's films yields more insight from the moviemaker than any reader could have hoped for. Can a collection of interviews be called poignantly brilliant? This one is."

—Ken Tucker, *Entertainment Weekly*

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"I found that *Conversations with Clint* is invaluable reading, not just because it's a uniquely in-depth series of interviews with someone who always had a sense of himself as an enduring figure. It also takes us inside the head of Paul Nelson—the interviewer himself—whose states of mind complete the story. The best interviews have always been two-sided—a conversation—and *Conversations* is just that: a compelling look at an extended eyeball-to-eyeball encounter, complete with blinks and flinches."

—Elvis Mitchell, host of KCRW's *The Treatment*

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<http://www.tcm.com/this-month/movie-news.html?id=413290&name=Conversations-with-Clint-Paul-Nelson-s-Lost-Interviews-with-Clint-Eastwood>

"An amazing find! Hip journalist Paul Nelson's lengthy, detailed, casual yet riveting, long-believed lost conversations with the iconic director-producer-star Clint Eastwood, who has had one of the most extraordinary careers in the history of the American screen. A must for any true film lover."

—Peter Bogdanovich, director, writer, actor, critic

"Paul Nelson's resurrected 'lost' interviews represent deep-dish Clint. Nelson recognized the magnitude of the actor-director's talents earlier than most—Eastwood had only made it up to *Sudden Impact* in 1983 by the time of the final interview—and they clearly had an easy rapport. The result sees the star opening up on his early struggles, how he learned from observing on *Rawhide*, his close collaborations with Sergio Leone and Don Siegel, money, politics, celebrity, and why he prefers early Bergman and Kurosawa to their later films. Clint has given many interviews, but this is one of his best, definitely of great interest to anyone who takes his work seriously."

—Todd McCarthy, critic for *The Hollywood Reporter*

About the Author

Kevin Avery's writing has appeared in publications as diverse as *Mississippi Review*, *Penthouse*, *Weber Studies*, and *Salt Lake* magazine. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife and stepdaughter. His first book, *Everything Is an Afterthought: The Life and Writings of Paul Nelson*, is published by Fantagraphics Books.

Jonathan Lethem is one of the most acclaimed American novelists of his generation. His books include *Motherless Brooklyn*, *The Fortress of Solitude*, and *Chronic City*. His essays about James Brown and Bob Dylan have appeared in *Rolling Stone*. He lives in Claremont, California.

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