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AWARDS

## Sophia Loren teams with her director son for a return to movie making

**Los Angeles Times**

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Sophia Loren on the set of “The Life Ahead” with her director son, Edoardo Ponti. “It was really a no-brainer; it was my mother or no one,” Ponti says of casting Loren in the lead role. (Regine de Lazzaris aka Greta / Netflix )

By RANDEE DAWN

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Does Sophia Loren really need an introduction? The Italian actor, whose career spans 71 years (she began acting at 15 and is now 86), won a 1962 Academy Award for “Two Women,” becoming the first actor to receive the prize for a foreign-language film; married lifelong love, producer Carlo Ponti, who died in 2007; became an international sex symbol; stepped away from moviemaking to raise her children; and now stars in son Edoardo Ponti’s latest directorial spin, [“The Life Ahead,”](#) as a Holocaust survivor who cares for the children of prostitutes.

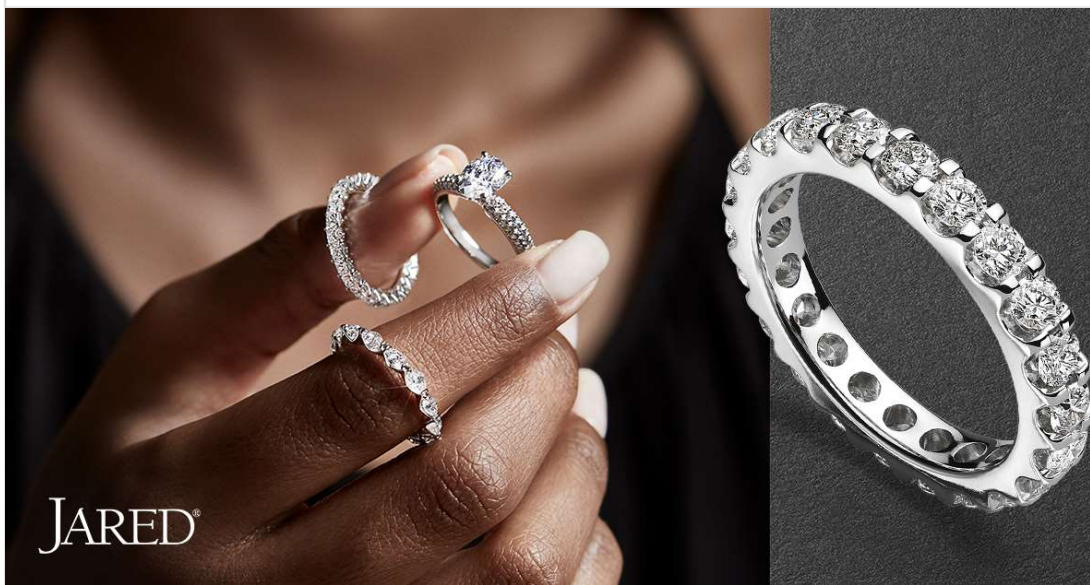
Loren and Ponti spanned the globe (she in Geneva, he in California) to speak with The Envelope about parents and children, vanity and the joys and sorrows of isolation.

### What's quarantining been like for you both?

**Sophia Loren:** It's not the kind of isolation I wanted to have. I am in my home, and I don't go out at all. I just open the window and breathe a little air, and then I close it. I read a lot. What can I do?

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**Edoardo Ponti:** My kids, we've all been together in the house since March. But we're so busy normally. The fact that we can come together at lunch and teatime and dinner — it makes us learn about each other even more. It's been very difficult, but in other ways it's been a blessing.

**Edoardo, when did you know you wanted your mother to star in “The Life Ahead”?**

**Ponti:** I read the book it was based on [“The Life Before Us,” by Romain Gary] when I was a teenager and was very drawn to the story. When I read it again four years ago, it was so clear, so inevitable, that the best actor for this role was my mother. It was really a no-brainer; it was my mother or no one.

**Loren:** In the beginning of my career, I had done so many films that were incredible. But I also did two children, of course — Carlo [Jr.] and Edoardo — and I said to myself, “What about my family?” I did stop [making movies]. Then when Edoardo came with this book, I said, “Now is the time to start” — not start all over again, but time to do what you always thought you wanted to do: See your family, be with your family, and then also do the film of your life.

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Ibrahima Gueye and Sophia Loren in the movie "The Life Ahead." (Greta De Lazzaris/Netflix

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**Did your character Madame Rosa remind you of yourself in any way?**

**Loren:** She's a little funny sometimes but also fragile. She reminded me a lot of my mother. I felt very close to my mother when I was doing the picture.

**Ponti:** I asked her to play the role in Neapolitan — it's an Italian dialect, it's a very specific language that's born in the belly. My mother's voice when she speaks Neapolitan drops a bit, and she becomes more authentic, much grittier — much like my grandmother.

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**You both appeared in the TV film “Qualcosa di biondo” (“Aurora”) in 1984, when Edoardo was just 11, so this wasn't the first time you'd worked together.**

**Loren:** Yes, he was teaching me how to do a film [then]. He pretended to know everything about filming, and he wanted to tell me what to do and how to act and what to say. It was very funny. He still thinks [he knows everything].

**Ponti:** The good news about growing up is the more you grow, the more you realize you know absolutely nothing.

**Edoardo, when did you realize that your mother was an incredibly famous, important actress?**

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**Loren:** He still doesn't know.

**Ponti:** When you're raised by [Sophia Loren](#), you're raised by two people: the person you know and by other people telling you who your mother is. I could see the way that people love my mother through their eyes. I love her for who she is to me. She always made us feel that we were her priority — she was always present. But seeing how my mother made people feel, that's what gave me pleasure to tell stories — I saw her commitment to her craft, her ability to elicit emotions and engage people.

Sophia Loren and son director Edoardo Ponti on the set of “The Life Ahead” on Netflix. (Netflix)

**Loren:** I just feel I could kiss you on your cheek.



**And the flip side of that — Sophia, you’ve been in the public eye as an international beauty for decades. How do you avoid being vain?**

**Loren:** Every woman is a little vain. I like the way I am. I like the way I manage and stay with people. I want to talk with people because I like people. I like the world I am in. That’s why now I’m a little sad because we are not free. It’s a little difficult.

**Ponti:** People have asked me about my mother’s beauty. Her beauty is in the connection that she has with people, which she was born with. She effortlessly connects with people in a deep way. There’s a bridge between her and other people. That’s her beauty, and that’s what I was trying to express in this movie, for people to see her the way I see her.

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