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A CITY OF SADNESS

Beiqing chengshi

The hypnotic rhythms and family themes of Hou Hsiao-hsien's deeply personal work were first introduced to SFIFF audiences in 1985 with *The Boys from Fengkuei*. With each successive film, this Taiwanese director has refined and reaffirmed his stature as one of today's most exciting talents. Winner of the Golden Lion at Venice last fall, "A City of Sadness" is Hou's biggest film, and in many ways his bravest. It focuses on one family (old Lin Ah-Lu and his four sons), but rhymes their affairs with the fate of Taiwan at a crucial turning point in its modern history. The action spans the years from 1945 (the end of the Japanese colonial period) to 1949 (the Communist takeover of Mainland China and the establishment of Chiang Kai-Shek's government-in-exile in Taiwan). The opposite poles of the Lin family are the eldest son, a gangster, nightclub owner and black marketeer, and the youngest son (played by Tony Leung), who runs a small

photo studio and befriends students of the movement campaigning for Taiwanese independence and self-government. At the heart of the film is Chiang Kai-Shek's annihilation of the Independence Movement. The mere mention of these events has long been taboo in Taiwan, and Hou is courting controversy by bringing them to light. But the insistence on facing up to an outrage from the past doesn't obscure Hou's characteristic sensitivity to human drama. The film measures crimes in the gangster world against the undercover struggles of the resistance, and finds both milieus bursting with stories and incidents to break the heart."

—Tony Rayns, *Vancouver Film Festival*

**PLAYDATES: 5/3 KABX2, 5/6 ARC,
5/13 KAB**

TAIWAN, R.O.C., 1989 155 min. In Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Japanese and Shanghaiese with English and Chinese subtitles

DIRECTOR: Hou Hsiao-hsien EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: H. T. Jan, Michael Yang
SCREENPLAY: Wu Nien-jen, Chu Tien-wen CAMERA: Chen Hwai-en EDITOR:
Liu Ching-sown MUSIC: Naoki Tachikawa CAST: Tony Lueng, Hsin Shu-fer,
Chen Sown-yung, Kao Jai, Li Tien-lu PRINT SOURCE: Creative Workshop

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