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VARIETY

## AITANIC

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A CDI release of a Clemi Cinematografica production, in association with Quality Sound. Produced by Giovanni Di Clemente.

Directed by Nino D'Angelo. Screenplay, D'Angelo, Lorenzo De Luca. Camera (Cinecitta color), Sergio D'Offizi; editor, Giorgio Franchini; music, D'Angelo; art director, Raffaele Di Florio; costume designer, Adriana Scotti; sound (Dolby SR), Massimo Pisa, Davide Gaudenzi; choreography, Enzo Paolo Turchi; assistant directors, Romano Scanarianto, Antonio Galiano. Reviewed at Buena Vista screening room, Rome, Oct. 20, 2000. Running time: 92 MIN.

With: Nino D'Angelo, Sabina Began, Giacomo Rizzo, Mauro Di Francesco, Maria Del Monte, Aurelio Fierro, Pietra Montecorvino, Enzo Gragnaniello, Angelo Di Gennaro, Andrea Refuto, Mario Scarpetta.

By DAVID ROONEY

**N**ino D'Angelo, a singing star of kitsch '80s teen melodramas who has since been rehabilitated into a national cult figure, takes an agreeably anomalous turn behind the camera with "Aitanic." As much an affectionate resurrection of the cheesy vehicles on which D'Angelo rode to fame as it is a parody of the mother of all sinking-ship pics, this exuberantly unrefined Neapolitan musical likely will confine its commercial clout to southern Italy. It could, however, make a toothsome treat for fest programmers with a taste for oddball entries.

Conceived as an irreverent Neapolitan response to "Titanic" — to be whipped through production and into theaters in the immediate wake of the

James Cameron behemoth — "Aitanic" went through several production and scripting hiccups before cameras finally rolled in early summer 2000. Its tardiness is of little concern, however, given that the engaging silliness works well enough on its own terms, without relying entirely on sendup elements for laughs.

D'Angelo plays Leonardo Di Capri, a down-on-his-luck cemetery flower-seller who loses his job and is about to lose custody of his son. Seeing suicide as his only option, he heads back to the isle of Capri to deliver the boy to his mother. With the regular boat service out, due to striking dock workers, a crooked family headed by Aitano (Giacomo Rizzo) — who gives the boat its name — has commandeered a stolen ferry, loading up poor locals and rich tourists to make the crossing from Naples.

On board the rusty barge, Leonardo meets pretty woman Giulia Roberti (Sabina Began), an unhappy hooker who's been dragged along by a southerner-hating Milanese shyster, Riccardo (Mauro Di Francesco). Love blossoms between them just as the boat strikes one of Capri's rocky Faraglioni outcrops and starts going down.

The "Titanic" parody is funny without being especially clever. But it mixes well with the endless digs at Neapolitan wiles, North-South and rich-poor animosity and, in particular, with the spirited song score and amusingly clunky choreography to give this technically rudimentary operation its goofy charm.

Written by D'Angelo and lustily performed by a large, appealing cast of little-known or unknown faces, the witty songs range from soaring schmaltz (replete with a "My Heart Must Go On" riff) to an angry strikers' anthem to Mediterranean rap.

Especially notable in the cast is Maria Del Monte as Aitano's impassioned wife, Filumena. In a gag that feels stretched, D'Angelo also appears as Neon, a grotesque pop star with dyed blond hair and a tanning-lamp complexion. Brief, self-parodying references to D'Angelo's vintage hits are more successful.