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TRACKING SHOTS



Photofest/Film Forum

The beauty: Cardinale and Delon

THE LEOPARD

Directed by Luchino Visconti

August 13 through 26, Film Forum

There are some movies that invent a genre to which their successors can only aspire. Jean Renoir's ensemble social satire *The Rules of the Game* is one. *The Leopard*, Luchino Visconti's sumptuous historical drama—and the most mutilated movie of 1963—is another.

More pageant than action film, less reconstruction than reverie, its artistry only comprehensible in the uncut Italian version showing for two weeks at Film Forum (it's also available on a Criterion DVD), *The Leopard* tracks a Sicilian prince (Burt Lancaster dubbed in Italian in a near career performance) amid the upheavals of the mid-19th-century risorgimento. The movie is an extraordinary combination of romantic sweep and obsessive detail. The winds change and the light shifts over an eternal landscape.

Confounding the truism that a great film can't be made from serious literature, *The Leopard* is a faithful adaptation of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's novel. Visconti does supply a few battle scenes, but what's perhaps most remarkable about the movie is that even while remaining outside Lancaster's prince, the whole spectacle seems to unfold in his mind. The Marxist aristo Visconti, who openly identified with the prince, never had better stars—Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon provide the beauty, Lancaster supplies the authority—or more appropriate material. The narrative turns on the class struggle between fading nobility and ascendant bourgeoisie; the characters embody the historical specificity of their age.

The Leopard is the greatest film of its kind made since World War II—its only rivals are Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* and Visconti's own *Senso*.

J. HOBERMAN

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