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La Mani Sulla Città
(Hands on the City)
(ITALIAN)

Hard-hitting, finely made pic against corruption, graft and real estate speculation in an Italian city. Topical aspects should help this to good grosses in Italy and Rod Steiger name will help it in more limited specialized bookings elsewhere.

Venice, Sept. 5.

Warners release of Galatea production. Stars Rod Steiger; features Salvo Randone, Guido Alberti, Marcello Cannavale, Alberto Conocchia, Ferenzio Cordova, Angelo D'Alessandro, Dante di Pinto, Carlo Fermariello, Gaetano Grimaldi Fillioli, Vincenzo Metafora. Directed by Francesco Rosi. Screenplay, Rosi, Canevari. Camera, Gianni di Venanzo; music, Piero Piccioni; editor, Mario Serandrel. At Venice Film Festival. Running time, 105 MINS.

Edoardo Nottola Rod Steiger
Maglione Guido Alberti
Balsamo Salvo Randone
DeVita Marallo Cannavale

Rod Steiger, as city councilman Nottola, is out for a 5,000% profit on a remote suburban area which he's just bought. Pic shows how he and his party colleagues maneuver the deal by secret alliances and other crooked methods, against the opposition of leftwing elements in the city council. Pic subtly, but clearly, shows the ease with which such tactics come off, and ends with city and government sanction—in a formal inauguration scene—of future housing projects. Film contains a very direct criticism of Italian government laissez-faire in recent real-life scandals of a similar nature, and beyond that, there's more than a hint that left wing, but especially Communist, leaders offer the only hope of saving the people and city (or nation) from such shenanigans. Tip-off is in the development of the character of the commie rep in the city government, the only one who comes out lily-white and uncorruptible, the true hero of the film.

Rosi's screenplay is as linear as is his direction in relentlessly pursuing his objectives. He deliberately concentrates on his men in their political lives and functions only, thus skipping their private existences entirely. Also, his characters have little human depth, but are almost purely symbolic pawns repping various political tendencies, in the hands of the director.

Steiger gives a powerful performance as the real estate czar, but again, neither he nor others dominate picture. Salvo Randone is good as usual as the wavering politician who helps in the deal, and Guido Alberti gives a neat picture of another top local politico. Others called in by Rosi all measure up.

Had Rosi given this film more of a universal slant against corruption everywhere, rather than the more limited localized attack with topical and politically slanted overtones, he would have made a great film. As it is, it's merely a very good one, worthy of one of today's best filmmakers.

Technical credits are all excellent, with a special bow to Gianni di Venanzo's location lensing (in Naples), though Piero Piccioni's music is at time too important and pompous. Hawk.

Sept. 11 '63