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O Thiassos

(The Journey of the Actors)

(GREEK-COLOR)

Variety 6-4-75

Cannes, June 4.

Papalios Productions presentation. Written and directed Theodor Angelopoulos. Camera (color), Georges Arvanitis. No other credits provided. Reviewed at Star Theatre, Cannes Film Festival, May 12, '75. Running time: **230 MINS.**

Cast: Eva Kotamanidou, Vangelis Kazan, Alike Georgoulis, Stratos Pachis, Maria Vassiliou, Petros Zarkadis, Kyriahos Katrivanos, Iannis Firios, Nina Papazaphiropoulou, Alekos Roubis.

The title reflects the epic character of this pic, carved out of the historical background of Greece between 1939 and 1952. Its lengthy three hours and 50 minutes is easy to take, as the central motif is a theatrical cast on tour throughout each of the provinces, the whole encased in the classical dramatic trilogy of Aeschylus about the vengeance of Orestes and Electra.

It's the film itself that determines the proper length, and this one has many reasons to keep it as it is (although one coming fest has already requested a shorter version). It's Angelopoulos's third feature pic, following the success he found internationally for the allegorical "Reconstitution" (1970) and "Days of 1936" (1972). It's also a super production for Greek standards, costing \$250,000 and only possible to film because of the lapse between old and new governments

last year.

An ambitious pic, the story has two levels that interweave in a constantly interrupting web. The first is about the travelling troupe, playing from town to town, the same "Golfo the Shepherdess," a folk drama that is simply the starting point for a narrative about the daughter (the Electra figure) in the troupe seeking vengeance on the mother for the death of the father. The son (Orestes counterpart) is a resistance-partisan fighter, who comes out of hiding to slay the mother and her lover on stage of a performance and later dies in prison.

The second level is comprised of political events in a torn Greece before and after the last war, which the actors are constantly bumping into on their journeys and, in turn, interrupt the mythical fatalism of the story.

Angelopoulos has a unique style of shooting in long takes from a perspective that takes in whole areas at a glance. The whole pic is divided into 80 takes, each one rigorously rehearsed to be finished in a day's work, if possible. Often the camera remains still over a street or plaza to capture mass scenes as they are; at other times it moves in ballet-like accompaniment to rhythms of people and crowds on a street; and occasionally it films from a tight angle to allow the action to cross back and forth before it.

The beauty of the pic is in the color of its images. Shot mostly in summer all over Greece, Angelopoulos chose his natural lighting carefully and added paint to the scenes when he felt it was necessary for tone qualities.

Some scenes are particularly memorable. The triumph of the Right in the Civil War is handled symbolically in a confrontation at a dance hall that ends in a tango. Later the group weaves through the streets singing and gradually fall into step to salute the new dictatorship. The period feel is adroitly played overall and pic will surface at leading fests this year. —Holl.