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A CITY OF SADNESS

BEIJING CHENGSHI

SP
ASIAN AMERICAN
1 PF '96

Co-sponsored by the Chinese Performing Arts Foundation
Presented with the San Francisco International Film Festival

DIR. HOU Hsiao-Hsien

Taiwan, 1990, 35mm, 155 min

PROD H.T. JAN and Michael YANG WRITER WU Nien-jen, CHU Tien-wen

CAST Tony LEUNG, Hsin Shu-fen, CHEN Sown-yang, HAO Jai, LI Tien-ku

EDITOR LIAU Ching-sown CAMERA CHEN Hwei-en MUSIC NADKI Tachikawa

A CITY OF SADNESS is the first film in the Hou Hsiao-hsien trilogy we are presenting in this year's festival. It is a testament to a master practitioner of cinema who can deliver magic on screen while bravely presenting an accounting of Taiwan's history of political repression and exploring the character of his people. Winner of the Golden Lion at the 1990 Venice Film Festival.

—R N

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 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 of 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