Letter written by Elio Petri to the film critic Alessandro Alexander. Coll. MNC

A RESTORATION FOR CANNES CLASSICS 2011

BY

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 Courtesy by TITANUS
**THE FILM**

The Assassin, Elio Petri’s first feature film, highlights right from the start some of the characteristics which would prove to be peculiarities of his Roman film director’s intense and varied work. All the characters are viewed from the point of view of a disenchanted analysis of people who find themselves in the abominating environment of modern life and the relationship between the individual and hierarchies of power.

Alfredo Martelli is a young antiquities dealer who doesn’t have too many qualms when it comes to getting ahead in life. He sells for a fortune objects that he himself acquired for a few pennies, he deals in fake paintings, he nips his competitors by spreading false rumors about them, he befriends with his wife’s lover. One morning he is stopped by the flying squad and is taken to the police station. While he is waiting to talk to police chief Palumbo, he thinks that his slightly unorthodox behavior is the reason for his arrest. However Palumbo reveals that Adalgisa, who by now has become Alfredo’s ex-lover, has been found murdered. Everyone is convinced that Martelli is the murderer, except for his former cleaner Rosetta, who soon goes so far as to confess to the murder herself. While questioning other witnesses, the police manage to shed some light on the crime and Alfredo is cleared. But the long hours spent in the police station have not changed this man’s existence, and he goes back to his old ways.

Alfredo Martelli’s story is that of a mediocre man who finds himself trapped by a powerful, probing police force whose methods he doesn’t understand, because power—by its very nature—tends to hide and disguise its methods, when it doesn’t try to distort them altogether. Thanks to his significant importance as a political and social analysis, The Assassin had several problems with censorship, especially because it showed the Italian police using unorthodox methods.

«I had just made Giove d’Amore (Days of Love) with Giuseppe De Santis and there was his assistant and screenwriter Elio Petri. We hit it off from the start. One day Elio brought me this script, which I found very clever and unusual and I said that we would certainly make it. The Assassin was a delightful film. I found a poster of it in Martin Scorsese’s home in Hollywood, the rooms are full of Italian film posters, and this moved me and filled me with pride.»

Jean Gili: «We already find, in The Assassin, a policeman who uses “illegal” methods».

Elio Petri: «It is, I believe, in Italy and everywhere, the methods of the police: That’s to say creating a charge by abstractly. From the moment that you are face to face with the authorities, you are guilty.»

«In order to regain its original splendor, a digital grading was carried out using a contemporary positive print as a reference, preserved by the production company Titanus in Bologna’s Cinecittà film archive.

The original sound was digitally restored starting from the 35 mm optical negatives, used to print a positive soundtrack. Once this element was created, it was possible to digitally clean it and reduce background noise caused by wear and tear. The restoration produced an archive duplicate and a new negative soundtrack. Moreover, a complete back-up of all files created by the digital restoration was done on various different kinds of digital media. The work was carried out by the L’Immagine Ritrovata laboratory in 2011.»

**ELIO PETRI**

Elio Petri (Rome, 29 January 1929 - 10 November 1982)

Born into a family of craftsmen, Petri began working as a film critic on “L’Unità”, before debuting in the world of film as a screenwriter and director’s assistant on Giuseppe De Santis’s Rome 11.00. After having directed a few short films, he debuted in 1961 with The Assassin, followed by I giorni contati (1962). After a few films where he attempted to complete a personal analysis of Italian society, passed between tradition and modernity, he pursued the path of political film in an increasingly local fashion: his path would lead him to films of hard-hitting social denunciation, such as Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion (1970, which won an Oscar for best foreign film and the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival) and The Working Class Goes to Heaven (1971, Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival, alongside Francesco Rosi’s The Matteo Affair). His other merciless portraits of Italian society were completed by Property is no longer a theft (1973), a bitter reflection on the role of money and Todo Modo, which reflected the decline of the Christian Democratic party, a film which was removed from cinemas only a month after its release. His film career ended with Le mura sparse (1978) - a version of Jean-Paul Sartre’s Les Mauvais Sœurs, produced for Rai television - and Good News (1979), produced by the film director with Giorgio Gaslini.

In 2007, Paolo Peporeeta Petri, Elio Petri’s wife, donated the director’s entire archive - consisting of documents, screenings, photographs, notes and letters - to the National Cinema Museum of Turin. This Fund is also the source of all the photographs and letters published in these pages.

**L’ASSASSINO**

Director: Elio Petri
Story: Elio Petri, Tonino Guerra
Screenplay: Elio Petri, Tonino Guerra, Pasquale Ferraro
Cameraman: Massimo Franciosa
Assistant directors: Giorgio Torelli, Adolfo Cagnacci
Director of photography: Carlo Di Palma
Cameraman: Danis Di Palma
Editor: Ruggiero Mastroianni
Music: Piero Piccioni, directed by the composer
Music published by: Titano, The cost: Marcello Mastroianni (Alfredo Martelli), Micheline Presle (Adalgisa De Martelli), Cesare Danova (Nicoletta Nogara), Sabina Rambone (police chief Palumbo), Marco Mancini (police chief Margiotta), Franco Rossell (Dr. Franceschi), Giannino Gagliardi (Rosetta, housemaid), Paolo Panelli (Paolo, prisoner), Toni Lisi (Cosi, prisoner)

**FILMOGRAPHY**

1954 Noce in campagna (short film)
1957 I sette contadini (short film)
1961 L’Assassinio (The Assassin)
1962 I giorni contati
1963 Il museo di Vignafrà (The Treasure from Vignafrà)
1964 Peccato nel pomeriggio (episode from the film Alta infedeltà, or High Infidelity)
1965 La decima vittima (The 10th Victim)
1967 A ciascuno il suo (We Will Kill the Old Way)
1968 Un tranquillo posto di campagna (A Quiet Place in the Country)
1970 Le mani sporche (film made for TV)
1979 Buone notizie ovvero la personalità della vittima (Good News)