



## BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

### **THE LEOPARD** (PG)

Director: Luchino Visconti

Starring: Burt Lancaster, Claudia Cardinale, Alain Delon

Italy, 1963, 3 hours 4 minutes, Italian + English subtitles

Often considered Visconti's masterpiece, Burt Lancaster stars as Don Fabrizio Corbera, the Prince of Salina. Set during the Risorgimento, Fabrizio's aristocratic life is quickly changing as a revolution erupts. He finds himself out of touch but trying to adapt to the new way of life, while his nephew, Prince Tancredi Falconeri (Delon) is a purveyor of the changing times as a part of the rebellion.

Visconti did not start with his now-iconic historical epics, but rather as a giant of Italian neo-realism. His debut *Ossessione* (1943) is often credited as the first piece of neo-realist cinema. 1954 marked a departure in his style, with *Senso*, a precursor to *The Leopard* in many ways. *Senso* was also a costume drama with an international cast, vivid colour and performances. While a far cry from neo-realism, Visconti injected the same pathos and raw emotion from the genre, also drawing from his love of opera, to inform his own specialist blend.

Lancaster was not originally Visconti's first choice, but the studio, Titanus, forced the international star on Visconti to help ensure the film would make back its enormous budget. This created a tense atmosphere between the two, with the director openly disliking Lancaster. However, they gained each other's respect over the course of the production and became friends. They even worked together again in Visconti's penultimate film, *Conversation Piece* (1974).

The decadence would have felt personal for Visconti, himself a count from noble family 'Visconti di Modrone', and is lovingly recreated in extreme detail. Famously, Visconti ordered all the drawers and cabinets to be filled with period accurate clothing and items, even though they were never planned to be on-screen props. *The Leopard* is not a cynical view of Italy's history but is a touching tribute to a class which was, and a questioning of what came after.

Notes compiled by Stuart Newnham (Ludlow Coordinator & Open Screen Committee)

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