

23 APR 1973

Approved For Release 2005/01/13 : CIA-RDP88-01365R000300210003-1

P-Shales, Tom  
Scorpio

# A Patina of Mediocrity

By Tom Shales

"Scorpio," a new spy chase now at Keith's and the Republic, apparently deplores the ruthless violence it so obligingly depicts. Well, it isn't the first time.

One hopes it may be the last time, however, for the worn-out theme of amorality in spy biz. "There is no good and no bad," mourns Burt Lancaster with his next-to-last breaths. That's the Author's Message, as Woody Allen might say, and it's been said countless times before—sometimes better, sometimes worse.

One or two chases are nicely done and there's an attractive explosion in Vienna, but director Michael Winner's patina of mediocrity assures that the film can be at best diverting.

Of at least local interest are scenes shot in Washington—about one-third of the film. Locations include Dulles and National Air-

## Film

ports, the Greyhound Bus Terminal men's room, the Library of Congress, the Watergate Hotel (where character actor Robert Emhardt is wasted as a prop) and a second-floor gymnasium over an auto repair shop in Northeast.

Georgetown suffers from overexposed photography, but you still can recognize the corner of O Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Urban sentimentalists can also look again at a copy of the late Washington Daily News and a room in the half-departed Willard Hotel.

Unfortunately, most of what goes on at all these places, and in Vienna, is just dull, relying heavily on a fascination with the mechanics of espionage that has surely faded in recent years. It's domestic spying,

after all, that's occupying to-days headlines.

The screenplay, by David W. Rintels and Gerald Wilson, tries to be obliquely chic and fails. People speak in portentous pop-poetry, not only as they chase one another in ever-convenient taxicabs (even in Washington) but also during the film's few attempts at intimacy.

Lancaster strides through the picture with the imperial disdain of someone who thinks he's too grand for the role. He looks mainly too old. Alain Delon is the hired assassin who follows him everywhere, and he doesn't seem to care, either.

It's the kind of movie where people repeatedly shove guns into each other's necks and nobody can enter a room without incident. In Vienna, one of Lancaster's contacts is a kindly old cellist with little round glasses who you know, from his very very first appearance, will end up smeared. So he does.