

CINEMA

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The reputation of Greek cinema centres on the work of Theo Angelopoulos. Cinema was a very popular cultural activity in the 1950s and 1960s and, although its popularity later declined, it is now in a phase of recovery, mainly due to the building of new venues and the restoration of older ones. Most of them are in Athens and Thessaloniki.

EDUCATION & CULTURE

EDUCATION

Private cinema and television schools operate like Greek universities. Acting training is received in drama schools. Almost all of these schools are located in Athens.

CINEMA CLUBS

Cinema clubs are a phenomenon in Greece. There are 61 throughout the country, with the most intense concentration in the Ionian Islands; there is a similar trend with regard to town bands (see Section on Music, data from 1987).

VENUES AND ADMISSIONS

According to the data for 1998, the number of cinema units is 319 (3 per 100,000 inhabitants). Their distribution is the following: 84 one-screen venues, 5 two-screen venues and 8 multiplexes (more than eight-screen venues), which is the latest vogue. Multiplexes have been built in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, one is being built in Larissa, and more are planned. Research shows that Athenians are the most enthusiastic cinemagoers. Individual cinemas (like the old outdoor variety) are in decline. The average number of screens per venue is 1.1 and the total admissions stand at 12,4 million. Box-office receipts were 61 million ECU (5,8 ECU per inhabitant).

HISTORY

The first full-length Greek feature film ("Golfo", a bucolic melodrama) was produced in 1914. The country's major studio (Finos Film) was established in 1943. The Greek film industry produced films that attracted growing audiences de-

spite strict censorship, casualties suffered in the hostilities (the civil war lasted from 1944 till 1949) and the acute poverty of the post-war years. By the late 1950s the film industry was at its most dynamic, experiencing explosive (and profitable) growth. The first two films which attracted significant international attention were "Stella" (1955), directed by Michael Cacoyannis, and "The Orge of Athens" (1956), directed by Nikos Koundouros.

FILM PRODUCTION

Between 1955 and 1969 Greece was making the highest number of films per capita in the world. For several years it produced around a hundred feature films a year: peaking at 117 films in 1966. The number of Greek feature films has declined significantly since 1970. It has dropped from 90 films in 1971 to 10 in 1990 and 1992. The trend is the opposite for short films. In 1990 130 films were produced, compared to 1971 and 1972 (31 films). This is a clear indication of the difficulty of making feature films, unless co-financing is obtained (e.g. by the EU).

FOREIGN FILMS PRODUCED IN GREECE

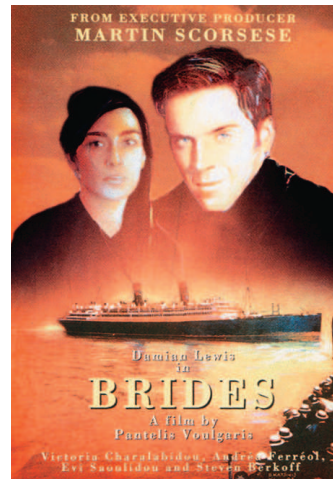
Greece has been an ideal location for the production of many foreign films: These include "The Boy on a Dolphin" (filmed on Hydra) and "Ill Met by Moonlight" (filmed on Crete) in 1957, "The Guns of Navarone" in 1961 (the top-grossing film of the year, filmed on Rhodes). Other examples are "It Happened in Athens" (referring to the 1896 Olympics) in 1962, "For

Your Eyes Only” (a James Bond film with parts filmed in Meteora) in 1981, “The Big Blue” (parts filmed on Amorgos) in 1988, “Shirley Valentine” (from Willy Russell’s play, filmed in Mykonos) in 1989, and “Signs and Wonders” (filmed in Athens and directed by Jonathan Nossiter) in 2000. The Italian film “Mediterraneo”, which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language film in 1991, was filmed on Kastellorizo in the Dodecanese. The film that received extensive coverage in the international media in 2001 was “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin” (from Louis de Bernier’s novel and filmed on Cephalonia). The most recent blockbuster with parts filmed in Greece (Santorini) is “Lara Croft and the Cradle of Life: Tomb Raider 2”.

DIRECTORS

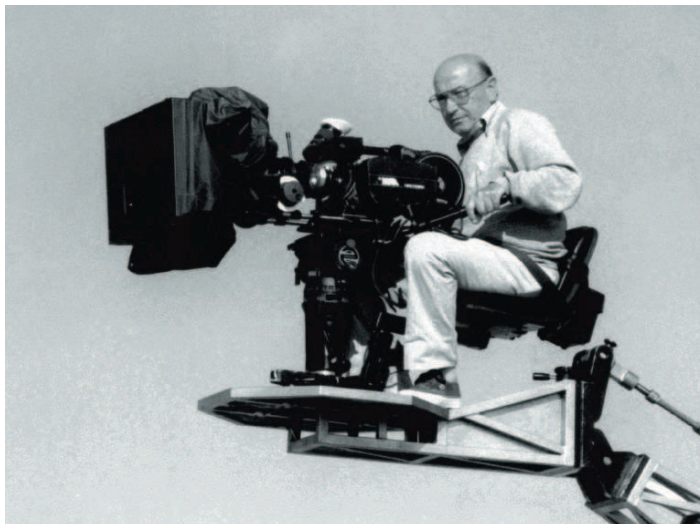
The most famous director is Theo Angelopoulos. According to leading film critic David Thomson, he is one of the four greatest living film practitioners. His latest film, “Eternity and a Day”, won the Palm d’Or at the Cannes Festival in 1998. His film “The Travelling Players” (1975) is considered to be the best Greek film ever made and one of the few masterpieces of world cinema in the last twenty-five years. His films are popular among Greek audiences, and he has also won many awards in the three most important international film festivals (1971 and 1973 at Berlin, 1975, 1984 and 1995 at Cannes, and 1980 and 1988 at Venice).

Angelopoulos has continued a tradition of important directors of the recent past (some of them continue to work, albeit sporadical-



ly): They include Michalis Cacoyannis (two Oscars for “Zorba the Greek” in 1964), Alexis Damianos (Best Direction Award at the Hyères Festival for “To the Ship” in 1967), Nikos Koundouros (Best Direction Award at the Berlin Festival for “Young Aphrodites” in 1963), and Robiros Manthoulis (“Face to Face”, 1966), who made a comeback in 2002 with the film “Lily’s Story”.

Angelopoulos belongs to the school of “New Greek Cinema”, which emerged during the military dictatorship (1967-1974). His film “Reconstruction” (1970) and Damianos’ film “Evdokia” (1971) are typical examples. New Greek Cinema differs from the mainstream in three major respects: a) thematically, it focused on Greek social issues and the shaping of Greek society; b) aesthetically, it favoured forms influenced by militant and experimental cinemas; c) most productions were made possible by the dedicated, often voluntary, contributions of film-makers to



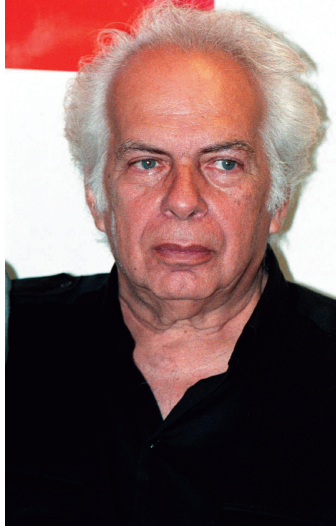
each other's films. Audience response to the new approach was initially favourable, but the term "New Greek Cinema" faded somewhat in the mid-1980s.

Still active directors who belong to the New Greek Cinema include the following: Kostas Ferris (Silver Bear Award at the Berlin Festival for "Rembetiko" in 1984), Frieda Liappa (Award SIGA at the San Sebastian Festival for "A Quiet Death" in 1986), Tonia Marketaki (First Award at the Festival of Mediterranean Civilisation for "The Price of Love" at Bastia, Corsica, in 1984). Others include Nikos Panayotopoulos (two awards in two different festivals for "The Idlers of the Fertile Valley" in 1978), Nikos Papatakis, Nikos Perakis (also made films in Germany), and Pandelis Voulgaris (two awards at the Valencia Festival for "Stone Years" in 1986).

In recent years a new generation of

promising directors has appeared: Here one should mention Sotiris Goritsas (three awards at two different festivals for the 1993 film "From the Snow"), Pericles Hour-soglou (Golden Dolphin at the Festróia - Tróia International Film Festival for "The Man in Grey" in 1998), Antonis Kokkinos (Crystal Globe at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival for "End of an Era" in 1995) and Constantine Giannaris (three international awards for the 1998 film "From the Edge of the City") are also noteworthy.

Many important directors of Greek origin have been working abroad (mainly in the USA). They include John Cassavetes (Golden Lion for "Gloria" at the Venice Festival in 1980, and also a very talented actor), George Pan Cosmatos ("Tombstone", a box-office hit in 1993) and Costa Gavras (Adapted Screenplay Oscar for "Missing" in 1982). In this group we also find Elia Kazan (Best



Director Oscars for “A Gentleman’s Agreement” in 1947 and for “On the Waterfront” in 1954), George Miller (“Mad Max” 1, 2 and 3), Alexander Payne (“Citizen Ruth”, 1996) and Agnes Varda (Golden Lion for “Vagabonde” at the Venice Festival in 1985). Jules Dassin, Melina Mercouri’s husband, was born in the US, but is a naturalised Greek and won two awards at the Cannes Festival (for “Rififi” in 1955 and for “He Who Must Die” in 1957). A surprising hit of 2002 in USA was the film “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” (written by Nia Vardalos, who also starred, and produced by Tom Hanks and his wife Rita Wilson, who is also of Greek origin). A recent phenomenon is the strong presence, also related to the size of the Greek community, of Greek directors working in Australia: Ana Kokkinos, Nadia Tass (“Amy”, 1998), John Tatoulis (“Zone 39”, 1997) and Aleksis Vellis (“Wog Boy”, 2000).



ACTORS

There are many Greek actors (or of Greek origin) who have appeared in foreign films: These include Jennifer Aniston (Golden Globes, Golden Satellite, Emmy, American Comedy and Screen Actors Guild Awards for the TV series “Friends”) and George Chakiris (Best Supporting Actor Oscar for “West Side Story” in 1961). Others include Olympia Dukakis (Best Supporting Actress Oscar for “Moonstruck” in 1987), Spiros Focas (acted in many Italian films in the 1960s), Elias Koteas (acted in most of Atom Egoyan’s films), Alexis Minotis (“Notorius”, directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1946), Irene Papas (active since 1954), Katina Paxinou (wife of Minotis, Supporting Actress Oscar for “For Whom the Bell Tolls” in 1943), Telly and George Savalas (TV series “Kojak”), Titos Vandis (active from 1960 till 1989, mainly in the USA), Andreas Voutsinas (“Big Blue”, 1988) and



Yorgo Voyagis (active from 1964 till 1992). An actor who found international fame through the 2001 film "15 Seconds" ("forcing" Robert De Niro to speak Greek) was Melina Kanakaredes. The most recent successes by an actor were the two awards (the Australian Film Institute and Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards) for best actress that Maria Theodorakis received for the film "Walking on Water" (Australia, 2002).

The most charismatic personality was Melina Mercouri - actress, singer and politician. She acted in many of Dassin's films, and won the Best Actress Award for "Never on Sunday" at the Cannes Festival in 1960. She was also the Minister of Culture in all the PASOK governments till her death (from 1981 till 1989, and from 1993 till 1994).

POPULAR TYPES OF FILM

The most popular film genres are comedy and melodrama. Popular Greek comedy developed after

World War II, reaching its peak in 1955. It was influenced by numerous sources, such as theatre (revues, variety, farce, travelling troupes), cinema (Italian comedy), ancient Greek comedy (Aristophanes), circus, country fairs and shows, shadow puppet theatre, etc. The main format is stereotypes from the lower middle classes. An example belonging to this period is the film "The Counterfeit Coin" (1955, director Yiorgos Tzavellas).

After the early 1960s Greek comedies lost their farcical elements, and became musicals influenced by Hollywood musicals. These were sometimes more popular than the earlier farces. In the mid-1970s Greek comedy virtually disappeared, along with commercial Greek cinema in general. This was due to the increasing popularity of television. However, these films are among the most popular programmes on TV. Comedies continue to be produced, such as the films directed by Nikos Perakis.

Melodrama forms the core of mainstream Greek cinema. The key theme is human relationships. Greek melodrama can be divided into three categories: "art", "high" and "melo". "Art" and "high" melodramas were less common but had more critical prestige. "High" melodrama was influenced by Hollywood, "art" melodrama by Italian neo-realism ("The Magic City", 1954, directed by Nikos Koundouros), while the "melo" was built on aspects of Middle Eastern and Asian cinema.

A genre that has not been very popular but has an important his-



tory is documentary. The first film ever made in Greece was a newsreel of the interim Olympics of 1906. The documentary developed in the late 1950s and 1960s. The 1967 coup put an end to it. After the fall of the dictatorship in 1974 feature-length political documentaries were produced for the first time. By the 1980s, the production of documentary films had declined. The most important director who specialised in documentaries is Vassilis Maros, who has won awards in various festivals. An unexpected recent artistic and commercial success was the film “Mourning Rock” (2000).

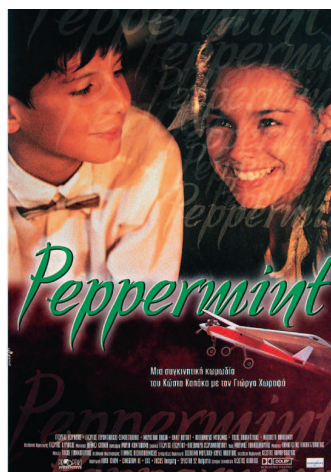
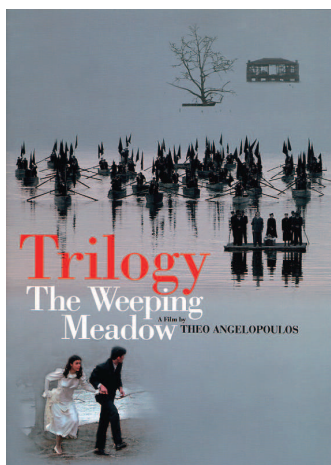
In the heyday of commercial cinema, Greek films accounted for 16 percent of the total and a 25 percent share of the national box office; Hollywood provided 45 percent of the films and took about the same market share.

Greek films are not very popular nowadays: between September 2001 and May 2002, amongst the

40 most popular films shown in Greece there were only two Greek films: “One Day in August” (directed by Yannaris, Golden Berlin Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002) and “Silicon Tears”. The latter was in 5th position and was directed by Thanasis Papathanasiou and Michalis Rappas, who also directed the film that sold the most tickets in the history of Greek cinema, the 1999 comedy “Safe Sex” (around 1 million admissions).

INSTITUTIONS

The Greek Film Centre (GFC) was set up in 1970 as a profit-making subsidiary of the Greek Industrial and Development Bank. In 1982 the Ministry of Culture offered to provide substantial aid to promote the quality of Greek films. In 1983, the GFC began to finance scriptwriting. In 1986 a special department called “Hellas Film” was created to promote Greek films abroad. By 1988 the GFC was the only Greek film production company in exist-



tence. Almost all “New” Greek filmmakers had received funds from its co-production programme, and it remains today the main Greek producer of new films (some of them international co-productions). Funds are raised through a percentage of cinema receipts, under the administration of the Ministry of Culture. Another means of state involvement has been the annual State Cinema Awards.

HELLENIC FILM COMMISSION OFFICE

In the decade 1955-1965 Greece attracted the interest of various international producers who decided to exploit the country’s light, its landscape but very often also its myths. These films were major international box-office hits. To name but a few, who can forget “Boy on a Dolphin” (1957) starring Sophia Loren and Alan Ladd, “The Guns of Navarone” (1961) with an all-star cast that included Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn and

Irene Papas, and “Zorba the Greek” (1964) with Anthony Quinn and Alan Bates in the lead roles? To date, films of all genres have been shot in Greece from time to time, as well as television programmes and commercials, which, however, were filmed mostly on the Greek islands. The visual wealth of the Greek hinterland, slightly familiar from the films of Theo Angelopoulos, is, in essence, virgin territory. The need for new images in the film industry has led to a boom in optical effects and the quest for visually pristine locations. Just think, how many more romantic comedies can still be filmed in Paris? At a time when the film industry has exhausted, visually, many regions of the planet, Greece offers a wide variety of natural locations that are rich in unique historical monuments and traditional architecture.

But apart from its natural beauty the country also offers a modern infrastructure for handling international film productions, production



companies with a record of participations in international productions, experienced crews and service companies that can provide you with the necessary equipment.

In Greece you will not find large studios. Those you can find in other countries. What we do have here are excellent locations, unique monuments, history and myths that you will not find in other countries, all under the best light of the sun.

In 2007, within the framework of the Greek Film Centre's operations, the Hellenic Film Commission Office was established for the purpose of providing every possible service so that you can shoot your film in Greece.

THE GREEK FILM CENTRE AND ITS ACTIVITIES

The Greek Film Centre (GFC) is the principal lever for the implementation of state film policy. It oper-

ates in the public interest in accordance with the rules of the private economy and under state supervision. Its basic goals are the protection and development of the art of film in Greece and the exhibition, dissemination and promotion of Greek film production domestically and internationally.

Seven funding programmes have been developed in order to fulfil the GFC's basic goal, which is the support of Greek film production. Through these programmes funding is provided for large-scale as well as independent productions, short films, documentaries, animation films, films by new directors and scriptwriting projects.

At the same time, in recent years there has been a major attempt to foster partnerships, sponsorships and new programmes that will strengthen the relations and presence of the GFC in Greece and internationally. All the above have turned the focus of GFC policy in a specific direction.

EDUCATION & CULTURE

a. On a national level

It continues its collaboration with all the institutional agencies in reviewing the legislative framework that concerns cinema. Through specific funding programmes it aims at developing and supporting Greek scriptwriting.

It plans a new, modern and dynamic promotional and communications policy which, for the time being, is being implemented in two ways: with the publication of "Roll Camera", the GFC's new bi-monthly magazine, as well as by updating its website.

Finally it is creating educational programmes aimed at children either as viewers or creators, with the goal of familiarizing them with the seventh art.

b. On an international level

It organizes retrospectives and events on Greek cinema in collaboration with international film centres that assure Greek films of international recognition and introduces them into the international marketplace.

It presents Greek film activity, including its theoretical work, in the European and international

arena with the help of a variety of partnerships and exchanges with international agencies.

It is collaborating with the Hellenic Ministries of Tourism and Culture for the purpose of creating a Film Commission Office that will operate along the lines of European models as an "umbrella" for Greek and foreign businessmen who would like to become active in our country in the area of film production.

USEFUL LINKS

[Greek Film Center
www.gfc.gr](http://www.gfc.gr)

[International Thessaloniki Film Festival
www.filmfestival.gr](http://www.filmfestival.gr)

USEFUL ADDRESSES

[Greek National Committee of UNESCO
Academias 3
Athens 106 71](#)

[Ministry of Culture
Bouboulinas 20
Athens 106 82](#)

[Ministry of Culture
Directorate of Relations between Greece and
the European Union
Place Karytsi 10
Athens 101 86](#)

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Directorate of International Cultural Affairs
Academias 1
Athens 106 71](#)