



## Greece Ninos-Fenek Mikelidis

The continuing economic crisis has taken a heavy toll on Greek film. Notwithstanding the passing of the a Greek law on cinema, the Greek Film Centre, under its new seven-member Board of Directors (headed by filmmaker Grigoris Karantinakis) has, for the past two years, not been funded by the Ministry of Culture. The result has been fewer films. And those directors or producers who had been officially granted – at least on paper – some subsidies still had to shoot their films on a privately-funded shoestring. In contrast to this, ERT, the state television network, recently renewed its script committee, which was in hibernation for two years. They will distribute the 1.5 per cent revenue on film production and are now pressing ahead with choosing scripts for funding with the €9million budget that has accumulated during the period they were dormant. ERT has also decided to use a large percentage of its budget solely to produce scripts by new writers.

Profits, compared with previous years, were at their lowest level, with Nicos Koutelidakis's most commercial film **The Christmas Tango** attracting less than 150,000 admissions, which is better than a more artistic film like Yorgos



Nicos Koutelidakis's **The Christmas Tango**

Lanthimos's **Alps**, which attracted an audience of just 3,000. Compare that to his previous film, *Dogtooth*, which racked up 30,000. Feature film production was down to twenty for the year, with some still awaiting domestic distribution.



Yorgos Lanthimos's **Alps**

One of the most interesting films of the year was **Children's Town** (*I polis ton pedion*), a low-budget production by newcomer Yiorgos Gigapeppas. It won the FIPRESCI and Greek Critics' Association prizes at the Thessaloniki film festival. The film shows how pregnancy, combined with the recent economic crisis, affects the lives of four couples, among them a woman who chooses abortion whilst another, a poor immigrant, manages to give birth at home, assisted by a Greek neighbour. Gigapeppas adopts a low-key, realistic style for these parallel stories, whilst drawing out engaging performances from his actors.

In his nourish thriller **Unjust World** (*Adikos kosmos*), which picked up the Best Director prize at San Sebastián, Philippos Tsitos presents a 'slice of Greek life' through the work of a police investigator who desperately tries to be just in an unjust world. The

investigator's decisions over whether to confirm the accusations against small-time crooks, criminals and other members of the underworld, or let them free, depend on his amateur psychology during interrogation. Tsitos also uses a low-key approach, reminiscent of Mike Leigh's films, to present a detailed and clear picture of the various situations the characters become embroiled in, always placing their actions in the context of their social background.

Yiorgos Lanthimos's *Alps* screened at Venice and is an uneven, in parts unconvincing, black comedy about a group of people who have created a strange, illegal group – the 'Alps' – who decide to imitate dead people in order for their loved ones to deal with their grief.

Menelaos Karamangiolis's **J.A.C.E.** is an ambitious, visually striking, but overlong film about a young illegal immigrant growing up in Greece, and his passage from the benevolent guardianship of a gentle Jewish shop-owner to a criminal ring that trades in human trafficking. The episodic, 153-minute film, covers a range of issues, from abduction, child trafficking, prostitution, incest, the selling of vital organs, police corruption and vengeance, with a style that shifts throughout.



Zacharias Mavroidis's **The Guide**

The multi-faceted, often crazy image of contemporary Athens and its architecture is satirised in Zacharias Mavroidis's comedy **The Guide** (*O Xenagos*). Its protagonist is a young country boy guiding visiting foreign architects



Yiorgos Yeorgopoulos' **Tungsten**

around the city. Another portrait of Athens can be found in Yiorgos Yeorgopoulos's **Tungsten**, which features a bus ticket-collector, a couple on the verge of separation and two teenagers roaming the streets of Athens with a gun. This exciting black-and-white feature debut tackles the role violence plays in city life and how it shapes our lives.

A schematic script, unconvincing performances and somewhat stilted direction undermine Constantine Giannaris's **Man at Sea**, which deals with the problems of immigration through the tragedy that follows a mutiny by sailors on board a tanker. It is sparked by the captain's decision to save the illegal immigrants on board a sinking ship.

*Peppermint* director Costas Kapakas's **Magic Hour** is an uneven, occasionally amusing road movie about two men who roam Greece with a casket that contains anything but a dead person. In **Paradise** (*Paradisos*), Panayiotis Fafoutis employs an Altman-esque approach to narrative structure to tell the story of four couples during the



Layia Yourgou's **Red Sky**

Patras carnival. Sadly, the film is littered with too many clichés to be anything more than interesting. In the uneven **Red Sky** (*Kokkinos ouranos*), Layia Yourgou focuses on a love triangle between two men and a German woman on a distant, barren strip in Crete. And Antonioni's *L'avventura* comes to mind in newcomer Aris Balafoukas's **Breathlessness** (*Apnea*), which concerns a young swimmer reminiscing about a lost love.

Loukia Rikaki's **Drawings: Sotiria** (*Shedio Sotiria*) is a moving documentary based on an exhibition of paintings by students of the national Fine Arts School. They are inspired by life at the first – but now closed – public sanatorium, Sotiria. Special mention should also be made of the short film **The New-Born** (*To pistoma*), directed by newcomer Yiorgos Fourtounis, which picked up the Best Film prize at Drama Short Film Festival. Shot in black and white, with its unforgettable images drawing comparison with the work of Béla Tarr's, it tells the story of a bandit who returns to his village to find his wife with a new-born baby. He kills her lover and forces her to bury her child alive.

However grim the economic situation, both established and new Greek directors are pressing ahead with plans for new films, whilst others have already finished theirs. Among directors with films in post-production are: Nicos Panayiotopoulos with **Blood Bonds** (*Desma ematos*); Dimitris Athanitis with **Three Days of Happiness** (*Tris meres eftychias*); Elizabeth Chronopoulou with **Hannibal at the Gates** (*Annivas pro ton pylon*); Yiannis Fangras with **Forget-Me-Not**; Bambis Makridis with **L** and Vassilis Mazomenos with **Exile**. Meanwhile Theo Angelopoulos has begun shooting his new opus, **The Other Sea** (*I alli thalassa*), as has Yiannis Smaragdus with **God Loves Caviar** (*O theos agapa to haviari*).



Philippos Tsitos' **Unjust World**

### The year's best films

**The City of Children** (Yiorgos Gigapeppas)

**Unjust World** (Philippos Tsitos)

**The New-Born** (Yiorgos Fourtounis)

### Directory

All Tel/Fax numbers begin (+30)

**Association of Independent Producers of Audiovisual Works (SAPOE)**, 30 Aegialias, 151 25 Maroussi. Tel: (210) 683 3212. Fax: (210) 683 3606. sapoe-gr@otenet.gr.

**Greek Film Centre**, President: George Papalios, 7, Dionysiou Aeropagitou, 117 42 Athens. Tel: (210) 367 8500. Fax: (210) 364 8269. info@gfc.gr. www.gfc.gr.

**Greek Film, Theatre & Television Directors Guild**, 11 Tossitsa, 106 83 Athens. Tel: (210) 822 8936. Fax: (210) 821 1390. ees@ath.forthnet.gr.

**Hellenic Ministry of Culture**, 20 Bouboulinas, 106 82 Athens. Tel: (210) 820 1100. w3admin@culture.gr. http://culture.gr.

**Hellenic Film Academy**, 12 Athinas Street, 182 33, Athens. press@fogfilms.org.

**Union of Greek Film Directors and Producers**, 33 Methonis, 106 83 Athens. Tel: (210) 825 3065. Fax: (210) 825 3065.

**Union of Greek Film, TV & Audiovisual Sector Technicians (ETEKT-OT)**, 25 Valtetsiou, 106 80 Athens. Tel: (210) 360 2379/361 5675. Fax: (210) 361 6442. etekt-ot@ath.forthnet.gr.

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