

2012 Los Angeles Greek Film Festival Soars to New Heights; And the Orpheus Goes To...

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The 2012 Orpheus Awards as photographed by Maria Martin.

Grecophiles from near and far received a much-needed emotional lift during the four-day 2012 Los Angeles Greek Film Festival, culminating with the presentation of the Orpheus Awards June 3rd at the elegant Hancock Park residence of Greek Consul General Elisabeth Fotiadou

A stroll through the Orpheus Awards party with Nicholas Snow.

“This year’s festival was one of the most successful we’ve had,” stated Greek Consul General Elisabeth Fotiadou about the recently-concluded 6th annual Los Angeles Greek Film Festival. “I am glad to see more and more people interested in Greek cinema. The Festival’s team did amazing work. The films they screened were very powerful; commented on the Greek society of the past and present; and depicted parts

of Greece’s reality in a very sensitive and mature way, sometimes with a bitter sense of humor.”



Greek Consul General Elisabeth Fotiadou. Photo by Maria Martin.

“There is no more timely a reflection of Greece’s struggles than the one offered by its burgeoning cinema,” stated Co-Founder/Artistic Director Ersi Danou earlier this year when announcing the 2012 LAGFF theme: *Defeating the Crisis Through the Viewfinder*. About the films submitted for the festival, Danou added, “A new generation of filmmakers has begun to question the current state of things, as well as to express an urge to evolve as artists and human beings. These filmmakers make films out of nothing, powered by their passion to make their stories – however small – known.”

And some of these filmmakers went on to win an Orpheus Award. Named for the legendary Greek poet and “father of songs”, the Orpheus is awarded annually to honor the best in Greek and Greek-inspired cinema. Selecting the winners this year were jury members Robert Arentz, founder of the Los Angeles International Short Film Festival; Klara Beverly, owner of the theatrical distribution company ATLANTIS Entertainment CZ; Andrew P. Crane, Special Project Programmer and Membership Manager for the American Cinematheque in Los Angeles; and Marc Halperin, who has managed the release of numerous landmark films.



THE PALACE Director Anthony Maras. Photo by Maria Martin.

The Orpheus for Best Short Film was awarded to *THE PALACE*, in which writer/director Anthony Maras explores 1974 Cyprus where a conscript soldier comes face to face with a family in hiding and must confront the brutal reality of war and his role in it.



foto Emanuela Scarpa

Production still from APARTMENT IN ATHENS.

The Orpheus for Best Feature was awarded to APARTMENT IN ATHENS (Appartamento ad Atene), directed by Ruggero Diapola. Set against a backdrop of the German occupation of Greece in 1943, this drama introduces us to an Athenian family that undergoes a profound change when their apartment is commandeered by an exacting German officer with an inscrutable attitude.



Production still from WASTED YOUTH.

An unplanned Special Jury Orpheus Award was presented to WASTED YOUTH co-directors Argyris Papadimitropoulos and Jan Vogel. The film takes place in Athens on a blazing hot day on which a teenage skateboarder sets out for an aimless day with his friends; a middle-aged policeman struggles to make ends meet; and a simple twist of fate disrupts the course of their actions.



SAYOME Director Nikos Dayandas. Photo by Maria Martin.

So powerful is SAYOME, the feature-length documentary from Director Nikos Dayandas, it was awarded the Orpheus for Best Documentary and for Audience Choice. After 35 years of living in Crete, happily married to a Greek sailor and raising her two sons, Sayome hears news of her mother's death and return to her native Japan to reunite with her estranged family.

A personal highlight of this year's festival for Ersi Danou, and a surprise of awards night, was the Honorary Orpheus presented to Greek Consul General Elisabeth Fotiadou. "This was the least we could do to express our immense gratitude for all the support she has offered LAGFF throughout the last three years, and for hosting, along with her husband Dr. Vasilios Berdoukas, the Orpheus Awards at her elegant residence," stated Danou. "We are forever indebted to her."



Greek Consul General Elisabeth Fotiadou accepts her Honorary Orpheus Award, with her husband Dr. Vasilios Berdoukas, as programmer Kacie Velie looks on. Photo by Maria Martin.

Other than filmmakers who traveled from as far as Greece, among those traveling the farthest from within the United States to attend the festival was the Dimitriou family from North Carolina, including Labro, his wife Yiota, and their teenage son and daughter. "I decided to get the Gold Passes and attend with my family because I was just so frustrated with all the negative news coming from Greece lately," expressed Mrs. Dimitriou in a post-festival thank you note. "I wanted to show my kids something from the contemporary Greek culture to make them proud again of their heritage."



The Dimitriou Family. Photo by Conrad Allan.

“You sure did indeed exceed our expectations,” Mrs. Dimitriou continued. “I say this on behalf of my entire family. We all enjoyed both the high caliber movies your festival featured as well as the events. Meeting some of the artists and other people attending was another a high point. Please do convey our gratitude to Mrs. Fotiadou for her warm hospitality... and please do let us know the date for next year so we can plan ahead. See you next year!”

According to LAGFF Executive Director, “We met our ambitious Gold Pass goal with a tenfold increase in sales. The 2012 LAGFF Gold Pass included tickets and advance entrance to all films, panels and programs; the opening gala red carpet premiere with after party; closing night champagne reception; a deluxe program book; free parking at the Linwood Dunn Theater; access to the VIP hospitality suite and, of course, the must-have ticket to the exclusive Orpheus Awards dinner.



LAGFF Executive Director Craig Prater. Photo by Maria Martin.

LAGFF 2012 took place Linwood Dunn Theater on the campus of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' Pickford Center for Motion Picture Study, and at the historic Egyptian Theatre, both in the heart of Hollywood, California. Produced by the nonprofit Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Cultural Center (EMBCC) with the support of sponsors worldwide, the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival promotes awareness of Greek culture through the art of cinema.

Official 2012 LAGFF Trailer. Animation by Panagiotis Rappas. Music by Marios Strofalis.

In the months leading up to the festival, LAGFF Co-Founder Angeliki Giannakopoulos said, "Filmmakers around the world dream of coming to Hollywood one day, and for many filmmakers of Greek heritage, this dream has come true. We are here to facilitate this journey for upcoming filmmakers, and to celebrate and honor Greek culture."



LAGFF Co-Founder Angeliki Giannakopoulos (right) with Marianne Metropoulos. Mrs. Metropoulos and her husband Dean (along with one of their businesses, Pabst Brewing Company) are major supporters of the festival. Photo by Maria Martin.

LAGFF's 2012 leadership team insisted on identifying the Greek crisis as an opportunity for change. "To us, 'change' means looking forward to a better future; it also means looking back in order to honor the great foundations and principles of an ancient culture. Only then can we truly expect a new homecoming," concluded Danou.

And a new homecoming it was, many dreams realized.

Friends and fans worldwide are encouraged to follow the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival at <http://www.lagff.org/>, www.Facebook.com/lagff, and at www.youtube.com/LAGreekFilmFestival.

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Gold Patron *Pabst Brewing Company / The Metropoulos Family*

We are very proud to welcome the Pabst Brewing Company and the Metropoulos Family as Gold Patron of Los Angeles Greek Film Festival 2012. Pabst Brewing Company is an award-winning American company that was founded in 1844. It brews over two dozen brands of beer, including the much-loved Pabst Blue Ribbon (PBR). The Company supports several community events and worthy organizations. This year, it is presenting LAGFF's Industry Panel: Representation in Hollywood, and the Closing Night Film SAYOME. The screening will be preceded by Pabst beer and hors d' oeuvres reception.

LAGFF Welcomes *Ben & Jerry's* as a Silver Patron. *G. P. Kolovos & Associates* returns this year as Silver Patron. Bronze Patrons include *Hollywood Foreign Press Association* and *West Coast Investors*. Media Sponsors include *ERT* and *NotesFromHollywood.com*. Supporters includes *HBO*, *Astro Burger*, *Greek Film Centre*, and *Delphi Greek Restaurant*. LAGFF receives support from *European Language Movies in America (ELMA)*.
