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## Confronting the Crisis in Greece Through Cinema: 6th Annual Los Angeles Greek Film Festival

Posted: 05/31/2012 4:08 pm

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You'd have to be living under a pretty big rock right now to not know that Greece has been undergoing a major economic and political crisis over the past year, one that's profoundly effecting not just that country, but the European Union and the rest of the world as well.

I haven't gone a day in the last year without being asked how my family is doing, why Greece is where it is today, or what I think might happen next. I can tell at least a dozen stories off the top of my head -- like how my mother spent the entire past winter sleeping by the fireplace in the living room because she couldn't afford to run heat throughout the house; or how members of my family were tear-gassed during one of countless protests in Athens, forced to hide out from the police in the back of a

demolished restaurant until it was safe to go back home. Yet in the face of immense challenges, friends, family, neighbors and even complete strangers have stepped up to help each other out, pulling together whatever they have on hand to give to those who aren't able to support themselves.

It's within this global context that Los Angeles Greek Film Festival (LAGFF) is raising the curtain on its sixth annual showcase of cinematic works from Greek filmmakers worldwide. LAGFF has dedicated the 2012 fest to giving a voice to the numerous stories that have been inspired because of and, in most cases, despite the crisis in Greece. In fact our official theme this year is "Defeating the Crisis Through the Viewfinder."

From the feature film *Tungsten*, which follows the lives of three men in crisis-ridden Athens within the course of a single day, to the documentary *Raw Material*, which tracks a group of illegal gypsy immigrants as they gather garbage and scrap metal in an attempt to improve their lives, to the comedic film *Super Demetrios*, a Greek take on the classic tale of Superman, this year's festival provides a broad range of perspectives. Throw in almost twenty more films and special events, and you have the recipe for an entertaining and thought-provoking four days.

A highlight of this year's LAGFF is a tribute to the great filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos, who was killed in a road accident five months ago while filming *The Other Sea*. Free and open to the public, the tribute kicks off with a lecture and panel discussion at 10:00 a.m. at the Linwood Dunn Theatre, followed by a screening of Angelopoulos's *Eternity and a Day*, the 1998 winner of the Cannes Film Festival's coveted Palme d'Or.

LAGFF kicks off May 31 with the world premiere of *A Green Story*, the triumphant true tale of Van Vlahakis, a Greek immigrant who arrived in America with only \$22 in his pocket but eventually founded the multimillion dollar green company, Earth Friendly Products. June 1-3, the majority of LAGFF will take place at the Linwood Dunn Theater on the campus of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' Pickford Center for Motion Picture Study, in the heart of Hollywood, California.

Art is usually the first casualty when government decides to cut spending, and this is more than true in Greece's case, with the austerity measures that have been enacted to date. So, given those circumstances and the fact that most of the films we'll be screening at this year's festival were made with little to no budget, the breadth and scope of these works is truly remarkable. Expressions of anger, anxiety, confusion and fear merge seamlessly with tales of hope, courage and strength, and I can guarantee that every film in this year's lineup -- be it feature, short or documentary -- will leave you walking away with plenty to think about.

I'm proud to be Greek... even today... especially today. The pathos (passion) with which we live our lives every day, whether it's joyous, angry or anywhere in between, is at the heart of who we are as a people. That spirit, so well expressed by all our films this year, is one of the reasons that, despite our current circumstances, I hold great hope that Greek cinema will thrive and a new generation of filmmakers will continue to create works that will amaze, confound and inspire.

*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. Friends and fans worldwide are encouraged to follow the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival at [www.lagff.org](http://www.lagff.org), on [Facebook](#) or on [Twitter](#).*





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