

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA  
PRESSE CINEMATOGRAPHIQUE

# LA FIPRESCI

CINQUANTE ANS  
AU SERVICE  
DE LA CRITIQUE  
DE CINÉMA

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## G R E E C E

THE GREEK ASSOCIATION OF FILM CRITICS  
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## HISTORY -

An Association of Film Critics was originally formed in Greece in 1951 in which participated all Greek film critics of the time (not more than 7 or 8, which led to the Association accepting as members, friends, relatives and amateur film critics so that the number of 20 members would be achieved as demanded by Greek law regarding the forming of any kind of Association). By 1967 this Association became almost inactive and most new and basically active film critics (in newspapers and periodicals) were left out. An attempt was therefore made to form a new Association - a new statute was drawn up, signed and passed by law on 20th April 1967 to be dissolved only the next day (21<sup>st</sup> April 1967) by order of the colonels' regime which overthrew the legal government and declared illegal all newly formed associations.

After the collapse of the dictatorship (July 1974), an attempt was made by a group of younger film critics to form a single association to include all film critics but leaving out all non-critics which had in the past been members of the old Association. However, due to the refusal of the old Association's governing Committee to accept a single standard for all members this attempt led to a standstill and in October (18<sup>th</sup>) 1975, a number of younger film critics (totalling 21 members) formed the Greek Association of Film Critics (P. E. K. K.). Its members to-day total 31, of which 26 are regular members and 5 are apprentice members.

The aims of the Association are : a) to co-operate with any artistic or educational body for the promotion of the art of the cinema, b) to study all problems and subjects pertaining to film, c) to improve the level of film criticism in Greece, d) to create substantial ties between critics and the public, e) to help raise the artistic level of the Greek Cinema, f) to assist

in any attempts to inform or educate the public regarding the cinema, g) to assist any younger people who wish to exercise the function of film critic, h) to protect the professional rights of the film critic, i) to co-operate with other Greek or foreign Associations which have similar aims, and, j) to organise various manifestations relating to cinema - film shows, lectures, discussions, conferences, seminars, etc. . . - , the publishing of printed matter and, generally, the use of any kind of publicity or information for the greater achievement of its aims. For these aims, PEKK has rallied round it all important older and younger critics not only of Athens but from other towns of Greece (Thessaloniki, Volos, etc. . . ).

One of our Associations big achievements was to organise the Independent Greek Film Festival in 1977 in co-operation with all film organisations and associations : the Association of Film Directors, the Association of Film Technicians, the Association of Film Actors, the Association of Film Composers, the Association of Script Writers, etc. . . It is noteworthy that the old Association of Film Critics (which at the moment includes only 6 or 7 active film critics) not only did not co-operate in this venture but did its utmost to stop it, assisting at the same time the organisation of the government-backed official Film Festival which was boycotted by all film organisations.

Following the success of the Independent Film Festival our Association co-operated with the Film Directors and other Associations in preparing a blue-print for the better organisation of the Greek Film Festival (which was submitted to the Government) and backed all basic demands by the film organisations to improve and assist the production and distribution of Greek films, as well as the creation of new and better laws to achieve this aim (unfortunately, at the present time the government has not yet responded to these demands).

Another point on which our Association has fought a long and strenuous battle is that of the abolition of film censorship. To that end it has issued statements and written extensively in the press when films (Greek or foreign) were banned or severely cut by the Greek censors, succeeding in reversing the original decision of the censors (as in the case of the showing of films

like "I Kangeloporta" by Greek director Dimitris Makris, "Ice" by Robert Kramer, "Todo Modo" by Elio Petri, "Salò" by Pasolini, etc...). Our Association's standing regarding censorship has always been to abolish it, dividing films only in categories (suitable or unsuitable for children) in order to protect children.

Our Association has also very close links with Film Societies (at present there are about 50 Film Societies in all Greece, plus a large number of Associations of general interests) and has helped them in choosing their programmes, sending its members to lecture and conduct discussions, etc.. It has also in the past organised various festivals and Weeks of Greek and other films (2 Festivals in Cyprus, weeks of Greek film in Madrid and Barcelona, etc...) abroad and in Greece, although the state has never, up to now, assisted in any way our activities (which seem to be the monopoly of the Greek Archives, a body controlled by the government).

#### PANORAMA OF FILM CRITICISM -

Film criticism in Greece developed mainly in the daily newspapers, during the past 30 years. Up to the mid-sixties various attempts were made to publish specialised film magazines but all were unsuccessful. Therefore, the columns in the Greek newspapers were used for detailed analyses of the film showing every week (which are between 8-12 per week), turning, some times, into serious studies that in foreign countries one reads only in magazines. In the mid-sixties another attempt at publishing a magazine - "O Ellinikos Kinimatografos" - was more successful but after 6 issues the magazine was forced to cease publication due to the colonels' coup d'état. It reappeared, under another title, "Synchronos Kinimatografos", in September 1969 and has continued to be published almost without any major interruption since. This magazine publishes articles on the theory of the cinema together with studies on various directors or film subjects, plus reviews of major films and now appears four times a year. Another magazine, "Film", also published four times a year, appeared in 1974 and is specialising on theoretical problems of the cinema. These two magazines are the two most important at present published in Greece ("O Synchronos Kinimatografos" has about 2,500-3,000 readers, "Film" about 1,500-2,000). Other, minor

magazines, are : "Cinema" (4 times a year, specialising on experimental cinema), "O Procodeftikos Kinimatografos" (appearing irregularly, examining film from an extreme left-wing political attitude), and "Othoni" (also appearing irregularly, similar to "Synchronos Kinimatografos", published in Thessaloniki). All these magazines have a readership below 1.000.

The public which reads these magazines as well as the reviews which appear in the daily or weekly press (not to mention various fortnightly or monthly magazines of general interest) is a growing minority. Of course, in the case of "commercial" films or "home-made" quickies there is almost no influence by the film critic but, in the case of films with artistic merit, criticism appears to play an important role, and for the past five or ten years, film distributors take into consideration what is written by our members (especially in festivals) before deciding what quality films to buy. The critics have also helped in supporting and making a success the two art houses in Athens - "Studio" and "Alkyonis". Their influence has also had results in the younger Greek cinema, a thing which the older Greek Directors (especially those of commercial films) seem to resent, and has at times led to controversial discussions in various national papers.

Although Greek film critics have a considerable influence (and esteem) with the public and film makers, the state still refuses to regard them seriously. Our Association has never been granted yearly <sup>passes</sup> to various other bodies (the Association of Film Directors, Film Technicians, Actors, Theatre Critics, etc...); the new Minister of Culture has promised to look into the matter again, remarking that this is very irregular, because the first to be admitted to a film theatre should be the critics ! The state's attitude towards the critics can also be seen in its television policy : although one of our members is responsible for presenting films on the national channel, the Armed Forces' channel uses people who are not critics (and have no real knowledge of the cinema) to present and analyse the films that are shown - with risible results.

#### Festivals held in Greece :

Thessaloniki International Film Festival of Short Films (last week in September) : this festival is competitive for short film but also shows feature films and holds special screenings.

Thessaloniki Festival of Greek Films : This festival is held during the first week in October, and is competitive for both short and feature films.

Our Association awards two prizes yearly, to the best short film and the best feature film, among those presented in or out of competition during the Thessaloniki Festival of Greek Films.

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