

AWARDS CEREMONY PRESENTATION SPEECH by film-critic and screenwriting instructor John Petrakis



Thank you, Niko.

I would also like to thank my fellow jurors, film critic and Loyola University lecturer, Zbigniew Banas, and award-winning filmmaker, Mark Mamalakis.

When Niko asked if I might consider being a judge for this young but growing festival, I hesitated at first. Like many other writers and teachers who must cobble together a living from assorted jobs, I can be very stingy with my time. But I accepted for two reasons. First, in memory of Theo Angelopoulos, who passed away last year, and was not only the greatest of all Greek film directors, but one of the most honored and respected filmmakers in all the world. And second, because in this time of political and economic strife in Greece, it is important that we encourage the arts as a means to examine how our homeland found itself in such a dilemma and how it can pull itself out.

To that end, I would like to announce the winners.

In the Short Film category, the winner is **VICIOUS CIRCLE**, written, directed and produced by Salvador Georgantas, which we found to be a loving homage to silent film, the power of a punchline and the way that comedy is often the best way to face adversity.

In the Documentary category, the winner is **PLAYING WITH SHADOWS**, directed by Agnes Sklavos and Stelios Tatakis, which explored how a dying art form can be resurrected thanks to the love and dedication of a new generation.

In the Historical Documentary category, the winner is **THE OTHER TOWN**, directed by Nefin Dinç and written by Hercules Millas, which did a masterful job of examining how animosity between countries and cultures can far outlive its usefulness, and how that continued animosity can lead to emotional, political and spiritual gridlock. I should also mention that as a jury, we considered “The Other Town” to be the strongest film in the festival, regardless of category.

And finally, in the Feature Film category, the winner is **JERKS**, written, directed and produced by Stelios Kammitis, which explores the various ways we seek to escape life’s many problems, only to discover that new problems await around every corner.

In closing, I want to say that while I support the idea of awards as a way to encourage and support filmmakers, film festivals are most important as a place where myriad films can be screened and discussed, argued and enjoyed. It is like the old gambler Nick the Greek once said: “The next best thing to playing and winning, is playing and losing.” What matters is that you are in the arena, making art, fighting the good fight and letting your voice be heard. It is the only way, I believe, that we may find the next Theo Angelopoulos in our midst.

Thank you.

John Petrakis

[Two **Special Jury Awards** were also given: to the actor Giorgos Kafetzopoulos (**JERKS**) who carried the film from start to finish, and to the 98 year old Ms Stamatina Papageorgiou (narrator of the historical documentary **THE VISIT** by Stella Alisanoglou) as an outstanding representative of her courageous generation. The Audience Award of the 2012 Greek Film Fest Chicago! went to the historical documentary **KISSES TO THE CHILDREN** by Vassilis Loules].