

Celebrating Hellenic Cinematography in Chicago

Three ... Two.... One... aaand Action! FilmHellenes of Chicago gears up for the 2012 Greek Film Fest. In its second year, the celebration of Greek cinematography will start rolling this October at the Gene Siskel Film Center, the National Hellenic Museum, and the Pickwick Theatre in Chicago.

The inaugural Greek Film Fest took place in the fall of 2011, where 49 films were screened from over 100 submissions.

This year, the Greek Film Fest will screen about 20 to 30 selected short films, documentaries and feature-length movies. The official FilmHellenes Award will also be introduced for the first time, honoring four films in the competition. The screening selection includes award-winning films like *Fish N' Chips* by Ilias Dimitriou, and *Unfair World* by Filippos Tsitos; and documentaries such as *The Other Town* by Nefin Dinc, and *Nostos* by Nicolas Panoutsopoulos.

The overall goal of FilmHellenes is to promote, identify, and celebrate Greek filmmakers, and filmmakers of Hellenic descent worldwide, said Niko Franghias, president and co-founder. The group hosts film screenings and events throughout the year, including benefits for other organizations. In March 2012, FilmHellenes co-hosted a fundraiser for "The Smile of the Child," a

Greek non-profit organization, with a film screening of *The Flea*.

This past June, FilmHellenes also hosted a special fundraising event to honor acclaimed Greek-American filmmaker and director Alexander Payne, at the National Hellenic Museum, where about 100 people gathered to meet and greet him up close.

"It was a great event," said Franghias. "We were overwhelmed by the audience's response."

During the evening, Payne received the first FilmHellenes Honorary Award, modeled after a Cycladic Statuette with a special connection to one of Payne's films. The award statuette purposely emulated a figurine that was featured in Payne's 2004 award-winning film *Sideways*. Payne uses the statuette as a prop in the opening and closing scenes of the film to symbolize characters' plight in the movie.

This figurine, a representation of the female Cycladic Statuette found in Greece (2,800 B.C.), symbolizes fertility and rejuvenation. The directors of FilmHellenes, and model builder Panos Fiorentinos, created this special statuette with permission from the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, and decided to give Payne the first award.

For more information about FilmHellenes and the Film Fest visit: greekfilmfestchicago.org.

"A FilmHellene is someone who has passion for Greek cinema and has passion for filmmakers of Hellenic ancestry worldwide."

- Niko Franghias

