

# The Greek American Image in American Cinema

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How American films depict Greek Americans tells us more about American culture than about Greek Americans. Movies, in brief, usually present Greek Americans as seen by others, not as self-projected. This is a result of the circumstances that movies reflect contemporary cultural assumptions. The general rule is that screenwriters, directors, cinematographers, and actors do not have any special knowledge of Greek America. Therefore, they can only reproduce the dominant cultural stereotypes of their times. By presenting those values in vivid formats, movies reinforce or validate them. Even filmmakers with a Greek heritage often find success by satisfying rather than questioning the assumptions of mainstream audiences. Filmmakers who consciously attempt to reshape or challenge established perceptions are rare.

Just how American films actually depict Greek Americans has never been systematically addressed. To begin to meet that need, Vassili Lambropoulos (Modern Greek Program: University of Michigan) and I (Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College) have conducted a joint project to create a filmography of American fiction films that feature Greek Americans. In this venture, we have received and continue to receive invaluable feedback from a score of interested scholars and students, here and abroad. They have helped us to locate the great majority of American films that deal with Greek Americans.

We believe the filmography we have developed allows scholars to examine how mainstream Americans have perceived Greek Americans at any given historical moment and to establish any long-term patterns that may have emerged during a century of filmmaking. Our definition of Greek American is any immigrant to America or any offspring of an immigrant, however far-removed, who claims Greek identity. We have not included any fiction films that are less than feature length or any documentaries. Nor have we included films set in Greece or Cyprus unless Greek Americans are characters. We have included silent films known to us, but we have not scrutinized silent film production systematically.

Our long-term goal has been to establish the basic production credits and plot analysis of each film. We have also indicated, where appropriate, how that film reflects any thematic cycle we have uncovered. In order to make the filmography practical, we have set up a rating system based on the letter G (for Greek) to indicate the nature of each film's Greek American dimension. These rankings are not to be confused as rankings based on artistic or social merit.

A ranking of GGGGG indicates a film whose major character is Greek American and whose Greek heritage is a central element in the film's plot line. Few Hollywood films fit into this category while almost all independent films made by Greek Americans do. For an example of a Hollywood film in this category see the entry for *Beneath the*

*Twelve Mile Reef*. This film was chosen as a prime example of this category due to its focus on the Greek sponge divers of Tarpon Springs and its treatment of a romance between a Greek and a non-Greek.

A ranking of GGGG indicates a film with a major or minor character whose Greekness is integral to the film, but is not its central theme. For an example see the entry for *City Hall*. This film features Al Pacino as a Greek mayor of New York City whose Greekness only surfaces occasionally.

A ranking of GGG indicates a film with a major or minor character who is clearly identified as a Greek American, but whose ethnicity is not vigorously explored. This is a fairly large category. For an example, see the entry for *Mr. Lucky* in which Cary Grant plays a Greek American gambler. A letter from Greece alters his life.

A ranking of GG indicates a film with a minor Greek American character whose ethnic identity is barely noted. Greekness often is only indicated by the character's name. For an example, see the entry for *Milk*. In this film, Art Agnos, a real-life Greek American politician who became mayor of San Francisco has a momentary spotlight in the film's plot, but he is Greek-identified only by his name.

A ranking of G indicates a film with a very minor character that could be of any ethnic heritage and may not even have a speaking role. We have also used this designation to indicate films based on another medium in which a character who was originally Greek has been given a different ethnicity or a mainstream identity. For an unusual example of this category see *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This theater/film classic set in New Orleans contains a line of Greek spoken by a supposedly Hispanic character.

All titles with a G rating have been seen by at least one of the following: Dan Georgakas, Steve Frangos, or Vassili Lambropoulos. All titles with a (?) rating are tentative as they have not been seen or have not been seen recently by Georgakas, Frangos, or Lambropoulos. The synopsis for these (?) films is taken from third party sources, which include individuals, indexes, press releases, web sites, and other materials. Incomplete entries will be completed as we are able to gather accurate data. The entry for each film is written by Georgakas with a second look by Lambropoulos, Frangos, and Elaine Thomopoulos. Basic research is primarily the work of Georgakas and Frangos. Anna Moniodis and Maria Kassaras did considerable initial research locating and gathering data on some 50 of the films. Many other individuals, including colleagues in Greece and Australia, have assisted in indentifying specific films.

This is an ongoing project which will be updated annually for new films, additions of missed films, and corrections. We welcome comments, additions, and corrections. We can be reached at:

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## Greek American Images in American Cinema

### *Achilles Heel*—GGGG

(aka Achilles Love)

2000 Color 90 Minutes

**Producer:** Ardusry Home Entertainment LLC; Castle Hill Productions Inc.; IFM Film Associates; Pittsburgh Pictures

**Director:** Meredith Cole

**Script:** Heidi Haaland, John C. Mouganis

**Cast:** Mather Zickel, Claudia Besso, Alex Coleman, Eli Ganias, Andre Koslowski, John Mouganis

**Synopsis:** Two boyhood friends meet and fall in love with the same woman. The film has various stereotypical scenes of Greek American life and ends with a sequence featuring Greek dancing. Original music is by Emmanuael Kiriakou.

### *Afti Einai I Zoi (That's Life)*—GGGGG (?)

1931 & 1935 B&W 60 minute & 115 minute versions

**Producer:** Hellenic Cinema Corporation

**Director:** Tetos (Theodotos) Demetriades

**Script:** Orfeos Karavias

**Cast:** Aris Lucas, Maria Katchonis, Rita Karmi, Lola Papadoulpulos, Lambis Vassilakis,, Yerassimos Kouroutakis.

**Synopsis:** No copies of this film are known to exist. What follows is mainly from an account of the film by Aris Lucas as told to Paul Denis. This film seems to be the second sound film in the Greek language made in America. It was shot in New York City at the Universal studios. Its audience was made up of Greeks in major American cities and Greeks in Cyprus, Alexandria, and Constantinople. Aris Lucas was a Cypriot immigrant whose potential Hollywood career as a Rudolph Valentino-type was cut short by the advent of talking pictures due to this thick accent. Maria Katchonis was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, but does not seem have had a subsequent career in film. The scriptwriter also served as the main cinematographer. The writer and director had collaborated on *I Grothia Tou Skatai* (The Fist of the Invalid, 1930) which was also shot in New York City. In *Afti Einai I Zoi*, Lucas plays a medical student in Athens who is living with Rita (Maria Katchonis), a sultry woman who plays piano in a café. When Rita is assaulted by a male, she kills him, but despite the circumstances is sent to jail. Lucas is brought to America by a man who pays for his passage and education on the condition that Lucas marries the man's daughter. Years later, when Lucas returns to Athens to give a lecture and is given a dead body to use as a specimen, the corpse is Rita. One version of the film has English subtitles. The film was screened in Athens in 1931, making it the second film ever in the Greek language. Possibly the version released in 1931 did not have subtitles. Whether the version released in 1935 is the longer of the two

is unknown. For additional information on Demetriades see the entry for *I Grothia tou Sakati*. Exactly who the director of the film is remains unclear as in Athens and elsewhere, the director was introduced as Vincent (no last name), which may be a pseudonym for Demetriades who was also recording music at that time that host governments in Turkey, Greece, and neighboring states considered offense and even treasonous.

### ***America, America—GGGGG***

1963 B&W 177 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Bros.

**Director:** Elia Kazan

**Script:** Elia Kazan who later wrote a novel of the same title based on his script

**Cast:** Stathis Giallelis, Frank Wolff, Elena Karam, Lou Antonio Abdul

**Synopsis:** This film draws on the real life of Avraam Elia Kazanjoglou (aka A.E. Joe Kazan) director Kazan's uncle, who grew up in a small Anatolian village as a member of the Greek minority in Turkey at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to mounting Turkish oppression, Stavros Topouzoglou (Stathis Giallelis) is entrusted by his father with the family treasures and sent to Constantinople to arrange for the family's escape to the metropolis. Stavros' private dream, however, is to go to America. The film chronicles the foolishness, naiveté, exploitations, sufferings, and moral compromises that mark Stavros' journey. His final escape to America includes assuming the identity of an Armenian and becoming a gigolo to an older married Armenian woman. All but the last scene take place in Asia Minor, where numerous scenes were shot, but the idea of America hovers in the film's imagination as a nearly impossible dream. In the final scene, Stavros is shown in a typical Greek American occupation of the time—shoeshine boy. We also see his family waiting for him to send for them, and we understand his determination to do so. Kazan has stated this may not be his "best" film, but it is one of his "favorites." The film is uncompromising in its views of the harshness and brutality of Anatolian life, particularly the persecution/discrimination against Greeks and Armenians by Ottoman authorities, at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No other American film has so powerfully chronicled the obstacles facing the millions who undertook emigration to America in his time period. Manos Hadjidakis's musical theme "The Northern Star" is repeated throughout the film to evoke the desire for America. All but the final scenes take place in Asia Minor, but the idea of America hovers in the film's imagination as a nearly impossible dream. The film ends with a voice-over by Kazan, "I am a Greek by blood, a Turk by birth, and an American because my uncle undertook this journey."

### ***Andy—GGGGG (?)***

1965 B&W 80 minutes

**Producer:** Universal Pictures, Deran Productions

**Director:** Richard C. Sarafian

**Script:** Richard C. Sarafian

**Cast:** Norman Alden, Tamara Dayakarhanova, Zvee Scooter

**Synopsis:** This feature, shot on location in NYC, stars well-known character Norman Alden as a mentally retarded, forty-year-old man named Andy Chadakis. Andy frightens

most adults but gets along with children. Nonetheless, he is repeatedly teased, beaten, and then robbed. Theo Chadakis (Zvee Scooter), Andy's father, believes his son is ruining his life and plans to have him institutionalized. Tessa Chadakis (Tamara Dayakarhanova), Andy's mother, usually defends her son but has little faith in his abilities, knows he is not able to live independently, and fears for his safety. Theo and Tessa are both Greek immigrants, but the focus on the story is not on ethnicity but on the horrible situations that confront the mentally retarded and their families. Ethnicity in this instance is just a complicating factor. The director succeeds in establishing that the parents' views are understandable, whether one is supportive of them or not. A project done at the Library of Congress listed *Andy* as one of the Fifty Notable Films Forgotten Within Fifty Years.

### ***The Arrangement—GGGG***

1969 Color 125 minutes

**Producer:** Athena Productions

**Director:** Elia Kazan

**Script:** Elia Kazan from his own novel

**Cast:** Kirk Douglas, Faye Dunaway, Deborah Kerr, Richard Boone

**Synopsis:** Eddie Anderson (Kirk Douglas) is an advertising executive who has everything that constitutes the American dream: money, family, and professional success. But this "arrangement," this American dream apparently come true for the son of a Greek immigrant, has soured. Eddie feels he has betrayed his better instincts. Much of the film deals with his emotional breakdown which involves attempted suicide, an attempt to rekindle a lost romance with Gwen (Faye Dunaway), and a final effort to reconcile with Florence (Deborah Kerr), his wife. The story references scenes from *America, America* that depict the arrival of Kazan's uncle in America. That man, now named Sam Anderson (Richard Boone), is Eddie's father. Sam is rendered as an ethnic monster: self-centered, extremely patriarchic, paranoid, authoritarian, crassly materialistic and generally unpleasant. Except for a drink of ouzo and his identification as a rug merchant with ties to Asia Minor, there is nothing specifically Greek in his character. Eddie's brother and daughter display no ethnic identity and the ethnic identity of Eddie and his mother is nearly non-existent. Earlier in the film Eddie expresses great love for his father, but later, he releases previously suppressed, highly negative emotions in scenes that are theatrical in the worst sense of that term. Kazan has written that miscasting forced on him by financial backers marred the film. He argued that if Marlon Brando had played Eddie, the film would have been far more effective and commercially successful. This criticism of a lead actor by a director noted for his ability to elicit great performances from actors is puzzling. Also puzzling is that in one scene Sam is identified as a "Catholic" while at Greek Orthodox priest conducts his funeral service. Generally speaking, one senses the best part of the main character is when he thinks of himself as Evangelos rather than Eddie.

### ***Astoria—GGGGG***

2000 Color 103 minutes

**Producer:** Marevan Pictures, Astoria Partners Inc.

**Director:** Nick Eferiades

**Script:** Nick Efteriades

**Cast:** Richard Stear, Ed Setrakian, Paige Turco

**Synopsis:** As the title indicates, this film is set in Astoria, a Greek enclave in the New York City's borough of Queens. Twenty-eight year old Alex ( Richard Stear) desires to escape what he considered his dull neighborhood. Demo (Ed Setrakian) his father, however, wants to expand the family's business, a small corner eatery, and expects Alex to eventually assume ownership. Alex also has to contend with some local loan sharks trying to collect on his father's gambling debts. As Alex struggles to find a cultural identity that is neither mainstream Greek nor mainstream American, he becomes enchanted with Elena (Paige Turco), a beautiful Byzantine scholar visiting from Greece.. Echoing to some degree a theme in *A Dream of Kings*, Alex ultimately resolves his dilemma with the slightly absurd notion of flying to Egypt and to find the lost tomb of Alexander the Great, the man whose name he bears. Writer/director Efteriades has written, "Just as Alex dreams of the glorious past of the heritage he says, ' to find it, to see that it's real, to connect to something . . .,' I hope we can all find some of that inside ourselves." A decided plus of this film is its on-site locations in Astoria and its faithful recreation of language, dress, conflicts, and customs, whether positive or negative. Musical score is by Nikos Papazoglou, a Thessaloniki-based singer, composer, and arranger. More than a dozen Greek actors play various roles and Rev. Ierotheos Markopoulos plays a priest.

### ***Babe—GGG (?)***

1975 Color 97 minutes

**Producer:** A made for-TV film available from Warner Brothers Archives

**Director:** Buzz Kulik

**Script:** Joanna Le from Didrickson's autobiography *The Life I've Led*

**Cast:** Susan Clark, Alex Karras

**Synopsis:** This is a celebratory portrait of "Babe" Didrickson Zaharias (Mildred Ella Didrickson), who was born to Norwegian immigrants. From an early age Didrickson showed tremendous athletic abilities. At the 1932 Olympic games, she won 2 gold medals and one silver in field and track. She then turned her attention to professional golf and became an international star. In 1938, she married Theodore Vetoyannis, a professional wrestler who had adopted the name George Zaharias. The three-hundred pound Zaharias' most famous match had been a losing effort against Jim "the Golden Greek" Londos in 1932 before a crowd of 14,500. Zaharias, a good business man, became "Babe's" manager and developed a number of successful businesses. Zaharias was constantly at Didrickson's side during her fatal bout with cancer. The film *Babe* fairly accurately summarizes the public aspect of Babe's life, both before and after her marriage. Susan Clark's insightful portrayal of Babe won her an Emmy. Alex Karras, who played Zaharias, happened to have had a brief career as a wrestler himself following a career with the Detroit Lions football time. With life oddly mirroring film, he subsequently married co-star Susan Clark.

### ***Battle: Los Angeles—GG***

2011 Color 116 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures

**Director:** Jonathan Liebesman

**Script:** Christopher Bertolini

**Cast:** Gino Anthony Pesi

**Synopsis:** This is a film totally dependent on special effects as aliens from outer space attack earth. Cpl. Nick Stavros (Gino Anthony Pesi) is part of a mixed-ethnic squad of American soldiers called on to save the day. Stavros happens to have blue eyes and the only indication of his Greek heritage is his name. The film's heroes are like those in WWII combat films where ethnic characters were used to indicate the multicultural dimension of American society.

### ***Before and After—GGG***

1996 Color 107 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures, Hollywood Pictures

**Director:** Barbet Shroeder

**Script:** Ted Tally from a novel by Rosellen Brown

**Cast:** Meryl Streep, Liam Neeson, Edward Furlong, Alfred Molina

**Synopsis:** Jacob Ryan (Edward Furlong), the teen-age son of Carolyn and Ben Ryan (Meryl Streep, Liam Neeson), an affluent Massachusetts couple, is charged with committing murder. The movie mainly revolves around the failure of the Ryans as parents and the resolution of the murder charges. The Ryans hire Panos Demeris (Alfred Molina), an expensive Boston attorney, to defend Jacob. This film reflects a trend that gradually developed from the 1960s onward in which Greek American characters often are presented as highly competent and well-educated professionals.

### ***Beneath the Twelve-Mile Reef—GGGGG***

1953 Color 102 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Robert Webb

**Script:** A.I. Bezzerides

**Cast:** Robert Wager, Terry Moore, Gilbert Roland, Richard Boone

**Synopsis:** Tony Petrakis (Robert Wagner) is a cocky Greek youth living in Tarpon Springs in a stereotypical traditional family. He undergoes a manly rite of passage as he works alongside his father, Mike Petrakis (Gilbert Roland), a sponge diver/ship's captain. Having a hard time finding sponges in the area traditionally harvested by Greeks, Mike decides to make an early morning run into Key West waters that are considered the territory of non-Greek fishermen led by Thomas Rhys (Richard Boone). When the locals discover the presence of Greeks, there is violence and a dramatic face-to-face between the Petrakis and Rhys families. The story takes another turn when Tony becomes romantically interested in Rhy's beautiful and rebellious daughter Gwyneth (Terry Moore). Terry's boyfriend (Peter Graves) takes offense. The ensuing fight is partly about sponges, partly about jealousy, and partly about whether Greeks can be considered as equals by native-born Americans. Much of the film is shot on location and explores the skills and dangers involved in sponge diving. Mike is killed diving in dangerous waters.

After more violence, Tony and Terry elope. Her father pursues them with a vengeance, but the film ends with the feuding communities coming to terms with one another, mainly due to the attitudes embodied in the younger generation. The Greek characters are portrayed as courageous. The script is by A.I. Bezzerides from his own short story. Bezzerides, son of an Armenian mother and a Greek father, was born in Asia Minor. Rock Hudson, then at the onset of his career, provides a brief narrative introduction in the opening sequence. This early Cinemascope production is noted for its innovative underwater photography (cinematographer Edward Cronjagger got an Oscar nomination for his work). This is one of two films about Greeks made by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1953. Perhaps not coincidentally, the studio was then headed at this time by Spyros Skouras.

### ***Bullethead---GGG***

1998

Full details pending on film featuring Greek gangsters.

### ***Callas Forever-GGGG***

2002 Color 108 minutes

**Producer:** Medusa Films, Galafin

**Director:** Franco Zeffirelli.

**Script:** Franco Zeffirelli, Martin Sherman

**Cast:** Fanny Ardant, Jerry Irons

**Synopsis:** This fictional tale is set in 1977, the year of the death of Maria Callas. The plot revolves around the desire of director Larry Kelly (Jeremy Irons) to make a film of Bizet's *Carmen* with Maria Callas (Fanny Ardant) as the lead. But the diva is at the end of her life and her fabulous voice is gone. Kelly proposes that Callas star in the film and just lip-synch to a sound track of the opera created from recordings of a performance that she made while at the zenith of her talents. The temperamental Callas is conflicted. She is embarrassed and despondent that her voice is now a broken instrument, but she still craves the spotlight and is confident of her acting abilities. Nonetheless, she is tormented by the sense that the film would be somehow fraudulent, a grand deception at the expense of her devoted fans. Her mood takes various turns and succeeds in establishing Callas' great sense of integrity. Kelly is obviously a stand-in for Zeffirelli who was a close friend of Callas and had directed Callas on stage. He had always wanted to make a film with her and this effort is a kind of wish fulfillment by the only available means. He was able to present, at least, her voice on film and imagine how such might have performed the opera Fanny Ardant, looking a bit like Irene Papas and using a Greekish accent, is excellent at conveying Callas' complex and temperamental personality. The lavish opera scenes that take up much of the film's time work quite well even though the rest of the film often seems indifferently scripted and photographed. Zeffirelli seems to be insisting that only the music counts. This film connects the Greek emotionalism and individualism found in numerous films with an homage to the unique artistic spirit of the Greek American soprano often referred to the popular press as "the voice of the century."



### ***The Cannonball Run—GG***

1981 Color 93 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Hal Needham

**Script:** Brock Yates

**Cast:** Burt Reynolds, Sammy Davis Jr., Farrah Fawcett, Dean Martin, Dom De Luise, Jamie Farr, Jimmy “the Greek” Snyder

**Synopsis:** This “good old boys” whacky comedy features eccentric participants who will do whatever needed to win a wild, illegal, and popular cross-country car race. The celebrities indulge in numerous showbiz in-jokes. The Greek American aspect involves a very small role by the celebrated Las Vegas odds maker of partly Greek heritage known as Jimmy “the Greek.” In the film he is simply identified as “the Greek.” His behavior is like that of all the others in the car race. His Greekness resides only in his nickname.

### ***The Catalina Caper—GG***

1967 Color 84 minutes

**Producer:** Executive Pictures, Crown International

**Director:** Lee Shoken

**Script:** Clyde Ware

**Cast:** Tommy Kirk, Peter Duryea, Ulla Stromsted, Lee Dean, Little Richard

**Synopsis:** This is a latecomer to the beach/musical comedy genre of the 1950s that was mainly aimed at teenage audiences. Most of the film is about attractive young men and women in swimsuits enjoying the music of Little Richard. In a subplot the parents of one of the teenagers try to sell a supposedly ancient scroll stolen from a museum to a shadowy Greek art collector with a thick accent identified only by his last name, Lakopoulos (Lee Deane).. The Greek is depicted as cunning, crafty, and deceitful, but a person with expert knowledge of ancient antiquities. The deal never happens.

### ***Charlie Wilson’s War—GGGG***

2007 Color 97 minutes

**Producer:** Universal Pictures

**Director:** Mike Nicholas

**Script:** Aaron Sorkin adaptation from book of same title by George Crile

**Cast:** Tom Hanks, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Julie Roberts

**Synopsis:** Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson (Tom Hanks) conspires with CIA maverick Gust Avrakotos (Philip Seymour Hoffman) to aid Afghanistan *mujhadeen* rebels in their fight against the Soviet army. The character is not George Tenet, who later headed the CIA, but suggests a Greek presence in intelligence and foreign intrigue not previously seen in American film. There is little Greek American in Avrakotos other than he that he expresses pride in his heritage. He is depicted as a kind of tough street guy whose father was a soda pop maker. Avrakotos makes a point of emphasizing the “t” at the end of his name, which is a spelling often found early in Greek immigration but is rather rare after World War II. The conservative Congressman is hard drinking and sexually promiscuous, but he has a liberal social agenda. He works on the Afghan

situation with the wealthy Joanne Herring (Julie Roberts), an extreme right-winger with born-again politics with whom he has a sexual relationship. An interesting ethnic point in the film is that people are constantly getting Gust's name wrong. Wilson wants to get it right and eventually does, but the right-wingers are indifferent to their error. The script slyly parallels this usage to the way some right-wingers in the film confuse Afghanistan with Pakistan. Early in the film, Avrakotos opines that a recent purge of some CIA operators who were foreign-born or the children of immigrants was a kind of xenophobia. He indicates he served the CIA in Greece to limit Soviet influence there and that his understanding of the language and culture were extremely important. He concludes by expressing passionate identification with the US and its ideals. Avrakotos is very intelligent, competent, and resourceful, but unusually blunt and given to occasional emotional outbursts. At the end of the film Avrakotos expresses his concern that the US has won the war in Afghanistan but religious crazies are now taking over which will mean America is also a loser.. He relates a folk tale to Wilson about unintended or unknown consequences of a dramatic act. Wilson who was able to raise 500 billion from Congress for the war effort finds he is unable to raise even a million for the building of schools and facilities needed to reconstruct Afghanistan. Hoffman was nominated for an Oscar for his role of Avrakotos.

### ***City Hall—GGGG***

1986 Color 111 minutes

**Producer:** Pressman Film Corp., Lipper Productions, Castle Rock Entertainment

**Director:** Harold Becker

**Script:** Ken Lipper, Paul Schrader, Nicholas Pileggi, Bo Goodman

**Cast:** Al Pacino, John Cusack, Bridget Fonda, Martin Landau, Danny Aiello

**Synopsis:** John Pappas (Al Pacino) is an idealistic mayor of New York with presidential ambitions. Although Pappas' Greek ancestry is noted from time to time, only one sequence has a decidedly Greek dimension. When a black boy is accidentally killed in the cross fire between a drug dealer and a white narcotics detective in a predominately black neighborhood, a riot is in the offing. Pappas eases tensions with a funeral speech at the boy's church that explicitly refers to an address by Pericles to the Athenians and the mayor's Greek heritage. During the course of the film, a mayoral aide (John Cusack) uncovers seedy elements in the mayor's political rise to power. The film, however, mainly focuses on a Brooklyn council member (Danny Aiello) with considerable reference to Italian American culture.

### ***Collision Course—GG***

1989 Color 100 minutes

**Producer:** De Laurentis Group, Interscope Communications

**Director:** Lewis Teague

**Script:** Frank Darius, Robert Resnikoff

**Cast:** Jay Leno, Pat Morita

**Synopsis:** Tony Costas (Jay Leno), a brash, obnoxious, sexist, and racist Detroit cop who has long stopped following the rules is assigned to work on an international case with Inspector Fujitsuka Natsua (Pat Morita), a by-the-book Japanese police investigator. The two men, of course, are suspicious of and hostile to one another. Unlike most "odd

couple” films, although they do become more cordial and respectful of one another in the course of their work, they do not become “buddies.” Costas is depicted as fully assimilated into American culture with few ties to his Greek heritage. Costas is not at all in touch with the Greek tradition of hospitality toward strangers and rather than feeling himself to be a kind of American outsider or newcomer with insights into other cultures, he behaves like an uncultured xenophobic.

### ***Crazy on the Outside—G***

2010

Full details on film comedy about an ex-convict.

### ***Crime Killer—GGG (?)***

1985 Color 90 min.

**Producer:** GPA Films

**Director:** George Pan Andreas

**Script:** George Pan Andreas

**Cast:** George Pan Andreas, Helen Vlachos, Athan Karras

**Synopsis:** This film is an action-filled drama with lots of chases and physical violence (about every ten minutes). Some comedy, but not necessarily intentional. Among the many throwaway scenes is one of a tennis match in which the women are topless. Zeus (George Pan Andreas) is a tough cop who is forced into early retirement. He fumes as criminals seem to take over Los Angeles. The cops ask him to serve as a de facto CIA agent in the investigation of the murder of the President ex-wife. Zeus, the crime killer, obliges. Athan Karras plays a character named Karras who is an associate of Zeus. Helen Vlachos plays a belly dancer. The film was first released in Greece as *Zeus-Crime Killer*. Aside from the classical references and occasional expressions of ethnic pride, the film says little about Greek America. Many viewers of the film complain about Pan Andreas’ thick Greek accent that they said made it hard to understand what he was saying half of the time. Co-workers have expressed both warm regard and contempt for Pan Andreas’ professional behavior. A sequel of the film was later made but to date has only been released in Germany. General consensus on this film is that it is a worthy contender for Worst Cops & Robbers Ever.

### ***Crime School—GGG***

1938 B&W 86 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Brothers

**Director:** Lewis Sieler

**Script:** Crane Wilbur, Vincent Sherman

**Cast:** Humphrey Bogart, Gale Page, Bernard Punsely, Paul Porcasi, Leo Gorcey

**Synopsis:** Typical vehicle in the Dead End Kids cycle. The head of a reform school (Humphrey Bogart) wins the trust of his charges by his fairness. When he falls in love with the student gang leader’s sister (Gale Page), disgruntled employees try to create a political scandal and have him removed from office in order to reestablish the harsh

policies of the past. One of the reform school gang members is George “Fats” Papadopoulos (Bernard Punsely). His appropriate nickname seems related to his mother’s Greek cooking. Nick Papadopoulos (Paul Porcasi), his father, is one of the few parents who show interest in the schooling of their delinquent children. In this regard, *Crime School* is an early example of the strong family relationships usually associated with Greeks in American films.

### ***The Dangerous Moment—GGG (?)***

1921 B&W 75 minutes

**Producer:** Universal

**Director:** Marcel De Sano

**Script:** William Clifton

**Cast:** Carmel Myers, Lule Warrenton, George Rigas

**Synopsis:** Sylvia Palprini (Carmel Meyers) is a waitress at Greenwich Village nightclub frequented by artists. Sylvia has a crush on one of the artists but is ardently pursued by Movros Tarkides (George Rigas) whom she rebuffs. When Rigas is killed, Movros’ mother (Lule Warrenton) is sure Sylvia is the killer. Sylvia hides in the artist’s apartment until she is absolved of the murder. The artist falls in love with her offering a classic happy ending to the melodrama. Greek ethnicity is not a major plot element

### ***Daredevil—GGG***

2003 Color 114 Minutes

**Producer:** Marvel Enterprises, New Regency Pictures, Horseshoe Bay Productions, Twentieth Century- Fox, Epsilon Motion Pictures, Regency Entertainment

**Director:** Mark Steven Johnson

**Script:** Mark Steven Johnson

**Cast:** Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner, Michael Clark Duncan, Colin Farrell, Lennie Loftin, Erick Avari, Stefanos Miltakis

**Synopsis:** This film is based on a character developed in Marvel Comics in 1964. A hazardous waste accident leaves young Matt Murdock blind but with a kind of “radar” sense. He grows up to be a lawyer (Ben Affleck) who defends the innocent by day and is a masked stalker of the evil at night. Among the villains is Kingpin (Michael Clark Duncan), a ruthless leader in the New York City underworld. Among Kingpin’s criminal associates is the powerful Ambassador Nikolas Natchios (Erick Avari). Natchios eventually defects from the alliance and is subsequently killed. Elektra Natchios (Jennifer Garner), his tough daughter, believes the Daredevil is responsible for her father’s demise. This is not true, but it makes it difficult for the by-day lawyer Murdock to pursue a desired romantic relationship with her. Elektra Natchios is roughly patterned on the historical Elektra myth, but given this is a Hollywood action flick, there is a happy ending. One of the minor characters is Detective Manolis (Lennie Loftin).

### ***Dark Odyssey—GGGGG***

1957 B&W 85 minutes

**Producer:** William Kyriakis, Radley Metzger

**Director:** William Kyriakis, Radley Metzger

**Cast:** Athan Karras, Jeanne Jerrems, Rosemary Tom, Edward Brazier, Ariadne Zapnoukayas, Nicholas Zapnoukayas

**Synopsis;** Yannis Martakis (Athan Karras), a young Greek sailor, arrives in the port of New York to kill the man who “ruined” his sister in Greece and drove her to suicide. Yannis is befriended by Niki Vassos (Jeanne Jerrems), a second-generation Greek American, with whom he falls in love. When she learns why he has come to New York, she tries to talk him out of seeking revenge. Very authentic scenes of Greek American life are set in Washington Heights at a time when it housed many Greeks. Much of the film involves excellent street and waterfront footage of New York City. An interesting subplot deals with Helen Vassos (Rosemary Tom), Niki’s younger sister, who is secretly dating Jack Fields (Edward Brazier), an American whom her family rejects solely because he is not Greek. Karras, an accomplished professional dancer, performs a brilliant saber dance during the film. One-site sequences were filmed in one of the Greek cabarets that used to line 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and in a Greek Orthodox church. Ariadne and Nicholas Zapnoukayas are excellent as kindly, insightful, but traditionally-minded immigrants who ultimately adopt liberal attitudes toward the behavior of both of their daughters.

### ***The Devil’s Skipper—GGG (?)***

1928 B&W 60 minutes

**Producer:** Thomas Ince-Tiffany-Stahl Productions

**Director:** James G. Adolphi

**Script:** Harry Braxton (Titles), Robert Dillon story adaption from Jack London’s story “Demetrios Contos” from his *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1905)

**Cast:** Belle Bennett, Montagu Love, G. Raymond Nick

**Synopsis:** A wronged woman played by Belle Bennett becomes skipper of the most brutal slave ship in the Seven Seas. Although her crew is mutinous, she has a loyal first mate (Montagu Love), who adores her. A complex melodramatic plot involving the selling of slaves has the Devil Skipper providing a woman she knows to be the daughter of the man who abused her for the pleasure of her mutinous crew. When she discovers the woman is actually her own daughter, she acts to retrieve her and she is stabbed to death by a crewman known as Nick the Greek (G. Raymond Nick). Nick then has to face the wrath of the loyal first mate. Whether or not Nick should be seen as a Greek American is problematic, but he certainly represents the many Greek immigrants who served under brutal conditions in the merchant marine.

### ***The Deep End of the Ocean-GGG***

1998 Color 105 minutes

**Producers:** Sony Entertainment

**Director:** Ulu Grostard

**Script:** Stephen Shiff

**Cast:** Michelle Pfeiffer, Treat Williams, John Kapelos, Ryan Merriman

**Synopsis:** Nine years after Beth (Michelle Pfeiffer) and Paul (Treat Williams) have their son abducted, a twelve-year-old man named Sam Karras (Ryan Merriman) appears at

their front door asking to mow their lawn. They establish that the boy is indeed their son, Eventually, they learn that he has been raised by George Karras (John Kapelos) who was unaware the boy had been kidnapped when he was only three years old. The mild-mannered Karras has been an ideal father and is the moral center of the film. Most of the story deals with the psychological distress of Beth and Paul and with Sam's struggle to determine his "real father" and family. Karras behaves in an exemplary manner and always places the long-term benefits of his adopted son over his own emotional distress. Although only minor reference is made to Greek culture, the boy expresses great fondness for his Greek foster grandparents. The one striking evocation of Greek culture occurs when Paul, who is Italian, tries to teach his son an Italian folk dance and the boy responds by dancing a spirited *hasapiko*. This is one of the few Hollywood films in which an adult middle-class Greek male is rendered as a highly sophisticated and well-educated man.

### ***Destination Tokyo—GGGG***

1943 B&W 135 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Bros.

**Director:** Jerry Wald

**Script:** Delmar Davis, Albert Maltz

**Cast:** Cary Grant, John Garfield, Dane Clark

**Synopsis:** This is a War World II saga that deals with what purports to be the first submarine raid on Tokyo. Like many films of this genre, a subtext deals with defining America as a successful ethnic melting pot. The sub's crew is suspicious of the loyalties of the Greek American known as "Tin Can" (Dane Clark) when he does not attend the funeral of a fallen sailor. In a confrontation that threatens to be ugly, Clark confides he has been brooding not only about his dead shipmate but the fate of his family in Greece. He eulogizes "the birth of democracy" in classical Athens and totally wins the comradeship of his shipmates. Later, he will be given the honor of pushing the button that launches the first torpedo in Tokyo Bay. This "mainstreaming" of ethnic Americans was the result of a conscious policy of the Hollywood studios and is a hallmark of combat films of the 1940s and 1950s.

### ***Do You Wanna Dance?—GGGGG***

1997 Color 104 minutes

**Producer:** Ellinas Productions

**Director:** Michael A. Nickles

**Script:** Robert Krantz

**Cast:** Robert Krantz, Robert Constanzo, Patricia Skeriotis, William Zane, Laura Whyte

**Synopsis:** This independent film breaks with formulaic stereotypes to give a good sense of Hellenic culture in contemporary Chicago. Events in the film are loosely based on the real-life experience of Robert Krantz (Haralambos Karountzos) who plays the lead role of Billy Duncan. Sentenced to community service for stealing a car, Duncan is put into the custody of Orthodox priest Fr. Chris (Robert Constanzo) of St. Basil's Church even though Duncan has no Greek heritage. Fr. Chris (based on Reverend Father Chris Kerhulas of Chicago) needs a dance instructor for his senior parishioners and Billy has

the professional qualifications for the job. Among many surprises in the film is that Fr. Chris is depicted as a very vibrant and thoroughly modern man. Not coincidentally he is a passionate sports fan. Affable as he may be, Fr. Chris has a deep understanding of his parishioners and is highly respectful of their mix of Greek and American culture. Another clever element in the film is that the elderly Greeks seeking dance instruction are not interested in Greek folk dancing but a wide variety of American and Latin American dances. Although not particularly interested in Greeks at the onset, Billy slowly warms to the Greek environment around him and becomes romantically attracted to Alexia (Patricia Skeriotis). Although Alexia is a beautiful and modern woman, her parents are interested in arranging a marriage with Mr. Halikas (William Zane). Although Alexia is not particularly attracted to the prospective groom, she does not wish to offend her parents. She also shares their belief that a common cultural heritage culture is the best basis for a good marriage. Considerable humor, good dance sequences, and some sober thoughts on ethnicity and feminism shape a credible final outcome. An unexplained moment of the film is the brief shot of an African American altar boy at the door of St. Basil's. He is, in fact, played by the son of a black parishioner of the Greek Orthodox parish headed by real-life Father Chris Kerhulas. The boy's father plays a bus driver in an early scene.

### ***Double Indemnity—GG***

1944 B&W 110 minute

**Producer:** Paramount Pictures

**Director:** Billy Wilder

**Script:** Billy Wilder, Raymond Chandler based on a novel by James M. Cain

**Cast:** Edward G. Robinson, Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck, Fortunio Bonanova

**Synopsis:** In this *film noir* classic, there is a brief early episode unrelated to the main themes of murder and betrayal. This episode serves to demonstrate the investigative skills of the kind-hearted but relentless insurance claims adjuster Barton Keyes (Edward G. Robinson). Keyes confronts truck owner Sam Garlopi (Fortunio Bonanova), about a false claim. The name Garlopi is repeated several times in the interrogation without specifically identifying the man as a Greek or as an immigrant although both are clearly implied. Garlopi is poorly educated, contrite about his attempted fraud, and terrified of being punished. Keyes dismisses him with a warning to mend his ways.

### ***Down to the Sea (aka Down Under the Sea—GGGGG (?))***

1936 B&W 53 and 60 minutes versions

**Producer:** Republic Pictures

**Director:** Lewis Collins

**Script:** Robert Lee Johnson, Wellyn Totman

**Cast:** Paul Porcasi, Vince Bonnet, Nigel De Brulier, Russell Harder, Fritz Lieber, Ben Lyons, Irving Pichel, Ann Rutherford

**Synopsis:** Two Greek sponge fishermen battle over the affections of a young Greek girl whose father controls much of Florida's sponge industry. The reputation of Greek Americans as skillful mariners and successful businessmen

is strongly on display. Also evident is identification of Greek American men as having highly emotional and aggressive personalities. This is one of several films which deal with Greeks in the sponge industry.

### ***A Dream of Kings—GGGGG***

1969 Color 175 minutes

**Producer:** National General

**Director:** Daniel Mann

**Script:** Ivan Hunter from a novel by Harry Mark Petrakis with Petrakis aiding in shaping the script

**Cast:** Anthony Quinn, Irene Papas, Inger Stevens

**Synopsis:** A great plus of this film is its realistic presentation of Greek Chicago in the 1950s. Leonidas Matsoukas (Anthony Quinn), a Greek immigrant who fought bravely in World War II, resides in the Windy City with his long-suffering wife Calliope (Irene Papas). Matsoukas is a semi-professional gambler operating out of the Falconis gambling parlor. He also offers psychological advice and tips on wrestling to Greek clients at a seedy office he calls the Pendar Counseling Service. One of the most sensitive sequences in the film occurs when Matsoukas speaks with a boy whose mother has discovered him masturbating. Matsoukas is less convincing in his Zorba-like attempt to seduce Anna (Inger Stevens), a neighborhood baker. Stevens hasn't even a wisp of Greekness in her performance and her miscasting deprives Matsoukas' dubious hyperbolic language of viability. When Matsoukas learns his son Stavros may be fatally ill, he is convinced the boy will be cured if he can recuperate in Greece. Although heretofore a totally honest gambler, Matsoukas cheats in order to obtain the money needed for the trip. He is caught, dishonored, and physically beaten. The trip becomes possible only when Calliope steals the needed funds from her elderly mother's savings. Calliope, forcefully played by Papas, is a stereotypical long-suffering Greek wife who is characterized by her self-sacrifice, her willingness to do whatever needs doing to save her son's life, and her acceptance of her husband's various strengths and weaknesses. Matsoukas is presented as noble but primitive. He is a wily and cunning philander but also a devoted, kindly father who tries to live by the code of honor he espouses. Harry Mark Petrakis has written about the making of the film that , "One time at a dinner party in Rome, I got caught up telling stories and moving my arms. Anthony Quinn who's a marvelous storyteller and who lectures with his arms snapped at me, 'You know, you try to act like a Greek.' I was amazed. I was the real Greek while he was the actor! I think the role of Zorba become more real to him than reality .... I did two drafts of my *A Dream of Kings* screenplay, but when we went to see Quinn, he wanted changes that I thought were impossible. Scene after scene was butchered, the language was cut down to a few grunts. I told him that Matsoukas was a great spinner of words, but Quinn didn't understand....I wouldn't agree to the changes and they simply moved me off the picture. The original director also quit."

### ***Drugstore Cowboy—G***

1989



Full description forthcoming a film that includes mural by Greek Americans.

### ***Elektra—GG (?)***

2005 Color 97 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth-Century Fox, Regency Pictures, Marvel Enterprises

**Director:** Rob Bowman

**Script:** Team headed by Mark Steve Johnson

**Cast:** Jennifer Gardner, Jana Mitsoula, Kurt Max Rome

**Synopsis:** This is a spinoff from *Daredevil*, featuring the Marvel comic book character Elektra Natchios (Jennifer Gardner). Plot involves cosmic battle of supernatural dimensions between Good and Evil in which Elektra is ultimately on the side of Goodness. Elektra is shown to have had a dominating father, Nikolas Natchios (Kurt Max Rome) and her mother (Jana Misoula) is the cause of the film's mayhem. Not an ethnic film so much as in the comic book/war game genre. No connection between this sexy warrior and the Electra of Greek tragedy.

### ***Eleni—GGGGG***

1985 Color 117 minutes

**Producer:** CBS Entertainment, Eleni Productions

**Director:** Peter Yates

**Script:** Steve Tesich from the novel by Nicholas Gage

**Cast:** Kate Nelligan John Malkovich

**Synopsis:** Nick (John Malkovich), a newspaper reporter is given the opportunity to work at the *New York Times* news bureau in Greece, where he searches for details concerning the execution during the Greek civil war of Eleni (Kate Nelligan), his mother. Much of the film consists of flashbacks, but other sequences deal with Nick's plan to kill the Communist who ordered his mother's death. A major emotional factor in the film is how Eleni saved her son's life and how his sisters responded to the brief period of Communist rule in their village. The film is closely based on real events in the life of Nick Gage and his family. Gage was a producer on the film. The one major fictional aspect of the story is Gage's confrontation with the Communist responsible for his mother's death.. *Eleni* is one of the few films in which relatively recent Greek politics are shown as having a profound effect on a Greek American, who has become wholly successful in the new world. In real life, Gage earned considerable fame as a crime reporter for the *New York Times* and as a financial writer for the *Wall Street Journal*.

### ***Everything for a Reason—GGGG***

2000 Color 89 minutes

**Producer:** Charley Palapanides

**Director:** Vlas Palapanides

**Script:** Vlas Palapanides

**Cast:** Dominic Comperatore, Erin Neill

**Synopsis:** All the action in this romantic comedy takes place on the New Jersey shore in summer where people in their early twenties are more driven by very active libidos than

the desire to find love. Manny Papadopoulos (Dominic Comperatore), an aspiring screen writer rescues Eve Stephanopoulos (Erin Neill), a virgin in her twenties, from an awkward social situation. Neither knows the other is Greek American when they meet and each has funny things to say about dating Greek Americans. Largely wanting to just be part of the local sexual scene while pursuing his artistic ambitions, Manny agrees to a no-sex relationship. Eve falls in love with him as she thinks his agreement stems from his respect of her feelings about sexuality. The Greek American theme in the film is muted but constant. There are inevitable sexual misunderstandings and various comic situations. Both Manny's brother and Eve's sister are quite sexually active. The brief scenes with Manny's mother are right on target; she has totally adapted to American life yet remains culturally Greek. She lights an icon in the hope Manny will eventually meet just the right girl. At the film's end, in an unexpected fashion, her wishes materialize. Although Hollywood expresses interest in his writing, Manny realizes he is more in love with Eve than he is with cinematic fame. The musical score, which has a Hellenic quality, was written by Spiros Exaras.

### ***Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask***—GG

1972 Color 88 minutes

**Producer:** United Artists

**Director:** Woody Allen

**Script:** Woody Allen based on Dr. David Reuben's book of the same title

**Cast:** Gene Wilder, Titos Vandis, Daisy

**Synopsis:** Woody Allen offers seven satirical vignettes very loosely based on a popular sexual manual of the time. In the second sequence, Stavros Milos (Titos Vandis), a Greek (?) shepherd from Armenia, appears at the New York office of Dr. David Ross (Gene Wilder). With a straight face, he explains he has fallen in love with Daisy, his sheep, but she is no longer sexually interested in him. A flabbergasted Dr. Ross explains he is a general practitioner, not a psychiatrist. Milos says his brother, a rug dealer, has assured him that if anyone can help him, Dr. Ross can. Milos now drops out of the story and we see Dr. Ross falling in love with Daisy in a series of sketches meant to "send-up" American mating habits and how people talk about sex. In due course, Ross is divorced, disbarred, and generally ruined. Daisy then disappears and Ross finds a note that Milos has taken her back to Armenia. The ethnic status of Milos is never clarified, but his name is Greek and the venerable Titos Vandis has a genuine Greek accent and was Hollywood's frequent choice to play Greek roles. The ethnic identity may be purposely ill-defined, but mis-identifying Greeks as Turks or Arabs occurs in a number of other films or film credits. Allen would seem the kind of writer to know the difference. Generally, speaking, however, this film is not considered one of his better scripts.

### ***The Exorcist***—GGG

1972 color 122 minutes

**Production:** Warner Brothers

**Director:** William Friedkin

**Script:** William Peter Blatty from his novel of the same name

**Cast:** Jason Miller, Vasiliki Maliaros, Titos Vandis

**Script:** In this famous horror film, one of the priests who is to exorcise demons is Father Damien Karras (Jason Miller). Father Karras is a Jesuit priest and a psychiatrist. At first he doubts in the validity of exorcism, and he has to tend his dying mother (Vasiliki Maliaros). He eventually agrees to the exorcism and hears the voice of his deceased mother speaking to him from inside the child he is trying to exorcise. Titos Vandis plays a minor role as Father Karras' uncle. Although some Greek is spoken, ethnicity is not a concern of this film. Perhaps using a Greek priest served to enhance the Orientalist themes in the film. This is the most notable representation of a Greek Catholic in American cinema. Athenian-born Vasiliki Maliaros is said to have been found by William Friedkin working at a Greek restaurant in New York. She had no previous acting experience and this is her only known film role. In one scene, we see her listening to a Greek radio program offering *laiki* (people's) songs rendered by Rita Sakellariou, one of Greece's most popular singers. A director's cut of the film was released in 2000, and there have been a number of spin-off films: *The Exorcist: The Beginning*, *Dominion: A Prequel to the Exorcist*, *Exorcist II*, and *Exorcist III*. The last of these makes reference to the death of Father Karras.

### ***Fifteen Minutes—GG***

2001 Color 120 minutes

**Producer:** Industry Entertainment; Katira Productions; New Line Cinema; New Redemption; Tribeca Productions

**Director:** Phil Joanou

**Script:** Wesley Stick, Robert Berger

**Cast:** Robert De Niro, Edward Burns, Melina Kanakaredes, Kelsey Grammar, George Poulos

**Synopsis:** Eddie Fleming (Robert De Niro), New York's most famous police detective teams with arson investigator Jordy Warsaw (Edward Burns) to stop a pair of murderers who videotape their crimes in hopes of making big money in mass media. The plot is far-fetched and the acting is generally mediocre. Eddie is in love with tv reporter Nicolette Karas (Melina Kanakaredes). At one point, we get a very brief glimpse of Eddie practicing Greek words he will use when proposing marriage to Nicolette. De Niro's pronunciation isn't bad even though all he is doing is saying is *se agapo* (I love you) and a few other simple words. Otherwise Nicolette's ethnicity is never mentioned. Karas is portrayed as a very caring yet very sophisticated, modern woman. Her integrity is juxtaposed to her amoral TV rival (Kelsey Grammar). Karakaredes had her own cameraman on set, Spero Stamboulis. The final credits identify George Poulos as playing a Greek waiter but in the film, he has no line, and there is no way to identify him as Greek. There is also a scene in which flowers are delivered from what may be a Greek floral shop to someone with a Greek name.

### ***Final Analysis—GGG***

1992 Color 124 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Bros.

**Director:** Phil Joanou

**Script:** Robert Berger, Wesley Strick

**Cast:** Richard Gere, Kim Basinger, Uma Thurman, Eric Roberts

**Synopsis:** In an effort to help Diane Baylor (Uma Thurman), a sexually neurotic patient, psychiatrist Isaac Barr (Richard Gere) consults with her older sister Heather Evans (Kim Basinger). Barr believes there may be sexual molestation in Diane's past. Be that as it may, he finds himself in an affair with Heather who is in a terrible marriage with Jimmy Evans (Eric Roberts), a tyrannical Greek mobster. Heather eventually is involved in the killing of Jimmy, but she is found innocent at her trial. At that point, what is apparent and what is real about the two sisters comes into question. The apparently victimized Heather turns out to be a classic Hollywood femme fatale. The stunning set design for the film is by Greek American Dean Tavoularis, most famed as set designer of the *Godfather* cycle and other films directed by Francis Ford Copolla. This an example of a wave of films from the 1990s onward in which Greek males, usually criminals, are portrayed as tyrannical. Unlike earlier portraits of Greek criminals who were gamblers and often quite congenial, many post-1990s films show the Greek American gangster as violent and even sadistic

### ***Five Aces—GG***

1999 Color 95 minutes

**Producer:** Phoenician Entertainment; Sheen/Michaels Entertainment; Split Cards Films; Triquetra Films

**Director:** David Michael O'Neill

**Script:** David Sherrill, David Michael O'Neill

**Cast:** Charlie Sheen, Patrician Skeriotis

**Synopsis:** After an opening musical theme with Greek elements and before the major credits appear, the viewer sees a Greek extended family celebrating the proposed marriage of Chris Martin (Charlie Sheen) to Sofia Panagoulis (Patricia Skeriotis). A reasonable amount of Greek is well spoken and the ethnic interactions between the family members are credible. The father of Sofia notes that Charlie is "not Greek," but that is not an issue with a family that seems comfortable with American norms. Once the film begins, however, the Greeks totally disappear as Charlie leaves New York to go to California to have a last hurrah with the "guys" he grew up with. Each of his "buddies" tries to dissuade him from his commitment to marriage. Considerable sex, booze, macho posturing, and generally infantile behavior ensue. In the last sequences, when Charlie is reunited with Sofia, he is resolved to being faithful in marriage and to return Sofia's unqualified love. We learn nothing of Sofia other than the implication in the pre-credit sequence that she is a second generation Greek American whose immigrant parents have prospered in America. A Greek cast member of this film has informed me that the director wanted there to be glass smashing in the marriage party sequence, but the Greek actors said it was not appropriate, an example of how a culturally knowledgeable member of the filmmaking team can enhance the cultural authenticity of a particular work.

### ***Fletch Lives--GG***

1989 Color 95 minutes

**Producer:** Universal Pictures, Vincent Pictures

**Director:** Michael Ritchie

**Script:** Leon Capetanos based on a character created by Gregory McDonald

**Cast:** Chevy Chase, Titos Vandis

**Synopsis:** This is a sequel to *Fletch*, a light comedy featuring Irwin M. Fletcher (Chevy Chase), a newspaper reporter who becomes involved in solving crimes. The sequel is a star vehicle allowing Chevy Chase to disguise himself in six different ways as he becomes involved in crime solving. He plays one sequence in drag. His character is named Peggy Lee Zorba and is working at a seafood restaurant chain run by the Kakakis brothers. One of the chain's business activities is money laundering underworld funds. Titos Vandis, plays Uncle Kakakis, who makes a pass at Peggy Lee Zorba at one point. This comedy reaffirms Hollywood's frequent depiction of Greek Americans eating places as working class venues that may have a shady side.

### ***Flying Down to Rio—G***

1933 B&W 89 minutes

**Producer:** RKO

**Director:** Thornton Freeland

**Script:** Cyril Hume, Erwin Gelsey, H.W.Hannermann based on a play by Anne Caldwell

**Cast:** Gene Raymond, Dolores Del Rio, Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire.

**Synopsis:** At the climax of this musical comedy, there is a brief appearance of three Greeks from an international gambling syndicate based in the French Riviera. They seek to take over a local luxury hotel through financial intrigues. The relevance of their appearance in this landmark musical (the first time Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance on screen) is that it is an example early in the sound era of the association of Greek culture and organized gambling. There was indeed such a group as depicted in the film, and it was often written about in the American press. Also during this period, the most famous gambler in America was Nick "the Greek" Dandolas, who would be an attraction in the Las Vegas casinos as late as the 1950s but eventually died in poverty. The head of the French Riviera syndicate was Nicky "the Greek Spider" Zographos. The casual American viewer could easily mesh or interchange the two identities. The Astaire/Rogers dance was choreographed by Greek American Hermes Pan who would choreograph all the subsequent Astaire/Rogers films. Pan liked to comment that *choreography* was a Greek word.

### ***Frankie and Johnny—GGG***

1991 Color 118 minutes

**Producer:** Paramount

**Director:** Gary Marshall

**Script:** Terrance McNally

**Cast:** Al Pacino, Michele Pfeiffer, Hector Elizondo, Ele Keats

**Synopsis:** Johnny (Al Pacino), a middle-aged ex-con, gets a job in a restaurant owned by a Greek family. While at work he meets Frankie (Michelle Pfeiffer) and begins a complex romantic relationship that comprises the film's main narrative. The restaurant is a standard Greek American eatery run by a gruff but good-hearted Nick (Hector Elizondo) and his wife Artemis (Ele Keats).

### ***The Glory Brigade-GGGGG***

1953 B&W 82 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Robert Webb

**Script:** Franklin Coen

**Cast:** Victor Mature, Alexander Scourby, Lee Marvin, Nick Dennis, Nico Minardos, Costas Morfis, John Verros, Father Patrianakos

**Synopsis:** Greece has contributed a brigade to the United Nations forces in Korea. Although American troops and officers do not want to be dependent on any "foreign" unit, Lt. Sam Pryor, a Greek American officer (Victor Mature), known for his courage and beloved by his men, volunteers his troops for a coordination operation. As his men advance to the front, he regales them with stories about the bravery of "his people." When the two units unit, there is considerable congenial kidding between the Greek American and Greek Lt. Nikolas (Alexander Scourby), who commands the Greeks. As the battle proceeds, the Americans become suspicious of their allies. The Greeks seem to be congenial liars and untrustworthy. After a detachment of his men is slaughtered by the Koreans, Sam is sure Greek cowardliness is to blame and bitterly denounces the Greeks. In due course, the Americans discover the Greeks actually have behaved with great bravery and self-sacrifice. The two commanding officers continue to squabble over tactics. Both are partly correct, and a battlefield victory only ensues when they mesh their views. The film ends with the cigarette-smoking Greek American affectionately placing his arm over the shoulders of the pipe-smoking Greek as both leave the battlefield in a helicopter. A significant element in the film is that an American corporal (Lee Marvin) is critical in arranging the first, tentative reconciliation. Nick Dennis, Nico Minardos, Costas Morfis, and John Verros play Greek soldiers. Real-life Father Patriankos conducts a religious service during the film and there is a brief episode of Greek dancing. This is one of two films about Greeks made by Twentieth-Century Fox in 1953. Perhaps not coincidentally the studio was then headed by Spyros Skouras.

### ***Go Naked Into the World—GGGG***

1961 Color 103 minutes

**Producer:** MGM

**Director:** Ronald MacDougall and Charles Walters.

**Script:** Ronald MacDougall from a book by Tom T. Chamales

**Cast:** Gina Lollobrigida, Anthony Franciosa, Ernest Borgnine

**Synopsis:** Nick Stratton (Anthony Franciosa) just returned from military service and proud of his numerous sexual adventures inexplicably falls in love with gorgeous Guilletta Cameron (Gina Lollobrigida) after a night of sex. Nick is the son of Pete

Stratton (Ernest Borgnine), a Greek immigrant who has become a millionaire in San Francisco via his construction projects. Pete is a rough-talking individual of relatively low culture but devoted to his notion of Hellenic traditions. He plans for Nick to marry the daughter of a Greek associate and has some prestige in the community due to his wealth. When Nick brings Guilletta to his father's wedding anniversary party, Pete informs his son in vulgar terms that his date is a high-priced call girl and that he and many of the guests at hand have been her clients. In this case, of course, Guilletta really is in love with Nick and wishes to amend her ways, but the ensuing scenario is bent on achieving a tragedy ending. Guilletta nobly tries to free Nick of his passion and social embarrassment through various scandalous actions and then caps the tale by jumping off a cliff wearing a bridal gown. The film's attempt to find a generational gap or a different cultural agenda between father and son is swamped by melodramatic claptrap not unlike those of the Greek studio system. Novelist Tom T. Chamales had something far more serious in mind. In a rare display of social outrage, a *New York Times* reviewer of the film expressed anger at how Greek Americans are portrayed in the film.

### ***Godzilla—GGG***

1998

Full details on horror film remake starring Matthew Broderick as a Greek American scientist.

### ***Goodbye, Miss Fourth of July—GGGGG (?)***

1988

Data pending on this made for television movie.

### ***The Great Gatsby—GG (?)***

Three versions of this novel with a minor Greek character have been made (1949, 1974, 2001).

Data still pending.

### ***The Greek Ambassador of Good Will—GGG***

1933-1937

George Givot created a recurring Greek American character named The Greek Ambassador of Good Will. The character began as a vaudeville character and then moved to radio where The Greek Ambassador introduced himself as "Me Greek" and was best known for his pompous language. He often ended a supposedly wise comment with, "How'd you like that?" He played a variety of ethnic characters in over thirty feature films and later on various television shows, but his major impact as the Greek Ambassador was on radio. He is featured with Parkyakarkus in the two reel *Roast Beef and Movies* (1933) and appears as a Greek character in *Hollywood Party* (1934) and *The Hit Parade* (1937). Also see Parkyakarkus entry.

### ***The Greek American-GGGG(?)***

2007 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** BBK Productions

**Director:** Alysia Maltepes

**Script:** Alysia Maltepes

**Cast:** Kenneth McGregor, Alex Vasiliades, Andrea Langi

**Synopsis:** This is a low budget (\$150,000) first feature film by writer/director Maltepes. The chief character is Michael Karras. The young Michael (Alex Vasiliades) is a highly successful boxer billed as “The Greek Palikari,” but he has been unsuccessful in his love life. Thirty years later, Michael (Kenneth McGregor) is a boxing promoter who unexpectedly meets a young woman who reminds him of his lost love. Maltepes is very Greek-identified and there are Greek cultural themes in the film. Mostly, however, it is a Hellenized rendition of the boxing genre. The film is set in Philadelphia and should not be confused with a later Greek-language film of the same title.

### ***The Greek Tycoon—GG***

1978 Color 107 minutes

**Producer:** ABKCO Films Inc.; Universal Pictures

**Director:** J. Lee Thompson

**Script:** Morton Fine, Nico Mastorakis, Win Wells (story)

**Cast:** Anthony Quinn, Jacqueline Basset, Eddie Albert, Raf Vallone, James Franciscus

**Synopsis:** The widow of an American president marries a Greek who is an international shipping magnate. The Greek also has a relationship with an opera star of Greek American heritage. Obviously drawn from the Onassis-Kennedy-Maria Callas story but mainly just celebrity exploitation without much reference to Greek American life.

### ***The Guns of Navarone—GGG***

1961 Color 158 minutes

**Producer:** Carl Foreman

**Director:** J. Lee Thompson

**Script:** Carl Foreman’s adaptation of the Alistair MacLean novel of the same title.

**Cast:** Gregory Peck, David Niven, Stanley Baker, Anthony Quinn, James Darren, Gia Scala, Anthony Quayle, Irene Papas

**Synopsis:** This big budget war drama features well-known British and American actors as a commando team that has the unenviable assignment of demolishing a seemingly impregnable Nazi fortress built on an island mountain top that allows its massive artillery to control the crucial nearby waterway. The international unit includes a Greek officer, Andrea Stavros (Anthony Quinn). The commandos are assisted by Greek guerillas led by Maria Pampadimos (Irene Papas) and Anna (Gia Scala). Another member of the international unit is Greek American Pfc Spyros Papadimos (James Darren), Maria’s brother. He had emigrated to America and Maria furiously berates him for not writing “even one letter.” This kind of complaint is common in Greek American literature and in Greek feature and documentary films, but seldom heard in American cinema. Little else



pertains to Greek America. One of the film's shooting locations was the island of Rhodes.

***The Heart is a Lonely Hunter—GGG(?)***

1968 Full data still pending.

***Heat—GGG***

1995 Color 170 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Brothers, Regency Entertainment

**Director:** Michael Mann

**Script:** Michael Mann

**Cast:** Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, Val Kilmer, Ashley Judd

**Synopsis:** This is a cops and robbers yarn based on a 1960s real life pursuit of a criminal named McCauley by Chicago police officer Chuck Adamson. Mann had done a TV show based on that scenario and with *Heat* brought the story to the big screen with a Los Angeles setting. Lt. Vincent Hanna (Al Pacino) is in pursuit of Neil McCauley (Robert De Niro), head of a gang of thieves. Chris Shiherlis (Val Kilmer) is a top member of the McCauley mob. Most of the story deals with the complex relationship that develops between Hanna and McCauley. Along the way, there is an armed car robbery and a circumstance where McCauley finds Chris' wife, Charlene (Ashley Judd), in bed with another man. Charlene ends up in custody of the police but in a change of heart manages to warn a disguised Chris of a dragnet devised to trap him. Not much Greek ethnicity is involved in this gangster saga told with Method Acting panache.

***Husbands—GGG***

1970 Color 138 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures

**Director:** John Cassavetes

**Script:** John Cassavetes

**Cast:** Ben Gazzara, Peter Falk, John Cassavetes

**Synopsis:** John Cassavetes plays Gus Demetri, a Greek American dentist living in suburbia. This is in keeping with the gradual post-World War II representation of Greek Americans as successful professionals, but there is only minimal reference to his ethnicity or Greek culture. The film is about middle class malaise. The director's cut was 235 minutes but the original Columbia Pictures released version was 150 minutes. Following reviews that judged the film to be overly long and rambling, Columbia cut the film to 138 minutes. A DVD of the original 150 minute version exists, but the original 85 minutes that Cassavetes had thought usable have been lost. This is the only Greek American role Cassavetes scripted, but Cassavetes also played a Greek American in *The Tempest*.

***I Grothia tou Sakati (The Fist of the Invalid)—GGGG (?)***

1930 B&W Running time unknown

**Producer:** Orthophonic Pictures Corp.

**Director:** Tetos (Theodotos ) Demetriades

**Script:** Dimitri Karavias

**Cast:** Nikos Delarmis, Nikos Dendramis, Tetos Demetriades, Lena Fouli

**Synopsis:** Greek sources state it addressed social exclusion and marginalization. The film is the first sound film in Greek made anywhere in the world. The film was shot in synchronized sound in New York by technicians likely linked to Universal Studios. The film was released in Athens but did poorly at the box office. A year later the same director/writer combo created *Afti Inai I Zoi* with production credited to Hellenic Cinema Corporation. Orthophonic, the producer of this film, was also the name Demetriades used for the company he owned that sold records. During this time period, Demetriades recorded Greek music throughout the eastern Mediterranean for the RCA-Victor label. The discs took on topics forbidden by one or another government due to elements such as multilingual recordings and explicit references to drugs. After his second film, Demetriades put his energies into his musical interests. His brother, however, would write scripts for Greek films during the Greek studio era of 1945-1970. This film precedes by two years the first sound film made in Greece, *The Sheppard's Lover* (1932). is the first known film produced in the Greek language.

### ***I Shot Andy Warhol –GGG***

1996 Color 103 minutes

**Producer:** Samuel Goldwyn, Orion Pictures

**Director:** Mary Harron

**Script:** Mary Harron and Daniel Minahan

**Cast:** Lili Taylor

**Synopsis:** This is a fact-based feature on the life of Greek American Valerie Solanas (Lili Taylor). Having been sexually abused by her father, Solanas drifted into the New York cultural scene of the 1960s. She considered herself a radical feminist and created SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) of which she was the only member and she issued a SCUM Manifesto. She befriended Candy Darling, one of the transvestites in Andy Warhol's circle. Salinas wanted Warhol to produce her play "Up Your Ass" and through Warhol met Maurice Girodias, the famous French publisher of sexually oriented literature. Girodias signed her to write a pornographic novel, but Salinas became suspicious he was just mocking her. Although she appeared in two small roles in Warhol films, mainly playing herself, she became suspicious that Warhol and Girodias were exploiting her. Having reached an emotional breaking point, she decided she would shoot Girodias. When she arrived at the Warhol studio, however, he wasn't there and Warhol became her victim.. He and another man were severely wounded. Solanas would be imprisoned for the shooting and later returned to New York to a life that included drug use and prostitution. She died in poverty in 1988. The film of these events mainly deals with the period leading up to the shooting. Its focus is on the more sensationalist aspects of the counter-culture of the 1960s and has little to say about ethnicity.

### ***The Imposters—GG***

1998 Color 101 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Stanley Tucci

**Script:** Stanley Tucci

**Cast:** Oliver Platt, Stanley Tucci, Tony Shalhoub

**Synopsis:** Two out-of-work actors accidentally stowaway on a ship to hide from a drunken, belligerent lead actor who has sworn to kill them. Their nemesis, of course, is a passenger on the same ship. The comedic action flows in many directions. Maurice (Oliver Platt) one of the stowaways briefly alludes to his background as “half-Greek.”

### ***Incendiary Blonde—GGG***

1945 Color 113 minutes

**Producer:** Paramount

**Director:** George Marshall

**Script:** Claude Binyon, Francis Butler

**Cast:** Betty Hutton, Eduardo Cianelli

**Synopsis:** This is a highly sanitized biopic of the rowdy and blunt-speaking entertainer Texas Guinan (Betty Hutton). The film is structured as a star vehicle for Betty Hutton in a manner that allows her to display her trademark working-class personality and singing abilities. After working in wild west shows and then chorus lines and related entertainments, Texas operated a series of New York City speakeasies during the Prohibition era and became a celebrity referred to as Queen of the Nightclubs. Among the minor characters that appear is Nick “the Greek” (Eduardo Cianelli), who owns the Green Mile Jazz Club. After Nick has been forced to sell his club to mobsters, Texas gets it signed back to him by making the return of ownership to Nick a condition for her performing at the club.

### ***Internal Affairs—GGG***

1990 Color 118 minutes

**Producer:** Paramount

**Director:** Mike Figgis

**Script:** Henry Bean

**Cast:** Richard Gere, Andy Garcia, Laurie Metcals, John Kapelos, Katherine Bokowitz

**Synopsis:** This is a crime story in which Dennis Peck (Richard Gere), a much decorated cop is revealed to be a ruthless criminal. A minor subplot has Steve Arrocas (John Kapelos), a Greek, hiring Gere to kill his parents so he can take over their rug business. Katherine Bukowitz plays Tova Arrocas, Steve’s wife. Theme echoes hostile father-son relations in other films featuring Greeks. The rug trade theme also reflects various films in which Greeks merchandise goods from the Near East.

### ***It Could Be Worse—GGGGG***

2000 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** Nicholas Paleologos, Fred Zollo, May Chicuchios

**Director:** Zack Stratis

**Script:** Zach Stratis, Vilma Gregopoulou, who also was cinematographer

**Cast:** The Stratis family: Evastathios, Evomorpha, Costas, Olympia, Theodora, and Zach

**Synopsis:** In this comedy, a young man making a musical documentary about his squabbling family decides to stage an announcement that he is gay. The family in the film is the Stratis family members playing themselves. They are wacky but lovable and in the end, they live up to the subtitle: a modern Greek love story. A *New York Times* critic called this virtual home movie, “totally original.” A *Variety* critic thought the musical numbers were “explosive.” This is the only film in which a Greek American family takes on various issues related to gayness and in many ways is far more entertaining and authentic than the famed *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

### ***It's a Big Country-GGG***

1951 B&W 89 minutes

Producer: MGM

Director: 8 directors

Script: Claudis Cranston, Allen Rivkin

Cast: Gene Kelly

**Synopsis:** This an anthology film of 8 episodes celebrating Americans racial and religious diversity and the personalities typical of the nation. Episode 5 features Gene Kelly as Private Icarus Xenophon writing a letter from Korea. The inclusion of a Greek American as the embodiment and representative of American immigration culture is indicative of the uptick in the regard for Greek Americans in the World War II and post-Greek Civil War era.

### ***Juke Girl—GG (?)***

1942

Full details pending on a film with a minor Greek character

### ***King of America—GGGGG***

1982 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** Center for Television in the Humanities

**Director:** Dezso Magyar

Script: Leon Capetanos

Cast: Larry Atlas, Michael Weldon, Olympia Dukakis, Andreas Katsulas

**Synopsis:** The time setting is 1915. Andreas (Michael Welden) jumps ship and begins a journey across America typical of Greek immigrants of that time. He works in a shoe shine parlor, a trade then dominated by Greeks. He moves on to work in a railroad work gang at a time when Greeks made up 20% of railroad gangs in the West. He later works in a copper mine where he is assigned to doing dangerous dynamiting, a task then allocated to Japanese and Greek workers. His journey across America brings him into repeated strife with Harry Mekakis (Larry Atlas), who, in the West, serves as a labor agent. Wherever he is employed, Andreas is always a militant rather than a docile worker. He becomes involved in violent confrontations, but all flow naturally from the story line rather than being used gratuitously for shock effect. He is especially hostile to fellow Greeks, often labor agents, who exploit their own immigrant brethren. The

accuracy of these fictional situations is due to historical input into the film by Greek American scholars such as Helen Papanikolas, the towering authority of that period of Greek American history in the Intermountain West. At the end of the film, when Andreas tries to apologize to his friend Manos (Andreas Katsulas) for all the trouble he has caused, his apology is refused. Manos states it is only honorable to fight for justice at the workplace, an affirmation of the Greek sense of *philotimo* and American principles of social justice. Dance scenes featuring the music of Elizabeth Swados add another authentic dimension to one of the few films to deal candidly with the harsh treatment of Greek workers early in the twentieth century. The production history of *King of America* stems from a grant of \$1.2 million made to producer David Horwatt by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1978. Horwatt was mandated to create two films for public television's American Playhouse that had Greek immigrants as their focus. *King of America* was the first, followed shortly by *My Palikiri*.

### ***Kiss Me Deadly—GGG***

1955 B&W 105 minutes

Producer: United Artists

Director: Robert Aldrich

**Script:** A.I. Bezzerides from a Mickey Spillane novel

**Cast:** Ralph Meeker, Corlis Leachman, Nick Dennis

**Synopsis:** About all that is owed in this story to the Spillane novel is its title. The main character Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker) is a rough-and-tough private detective. The film has a rapid pulp literature tempo that evolves from an opening that features a half-naked blonde woman (Corlis Leachman) running on a deserted highway through numerous murders to the uncovering of a nuclear conspiracy. Mike Hammer's only friend in the film is Nick (Nick Dennis), a car mechanic who is a decidedly boisterous Greek. Nick always greets Hammer by shouting, "Va-va-voom, Pretty Pow!" The greeting is somewhat ironic in that Nick dismantles bombs in Spillane's cars on at least two occasions. When he is murdered by having the carlift he is working under smashed on to his body, an enraged Hammer responds with actions that lead to the film's final resolution. The buddy-buddy relationship of Nick and Mike is depicted as a typical American phenomenon although both men are cultural "outsiders" in numerous ways. Scriptwriter A.I. Bezzerides is the offspring of a Greek father and an Armenian mother. Many of his other scripts also contain Greek characters. The French New Wave directors hailed the film's visual style and content as landmarks in American filmmaking

### ***Land Raiders—G***

1969 Color 101 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures

**Director:** Nathan Juran

**Script:** Ken Pettus

**Cast:** Telly Savalas, George Maharias, George Coulouris

**Synopsis:** The only Greek dimension is that the starring role of Vince "Cardena" is played by Telly Savalas and the costarring role of his brother, Paul Cardenas, is played

by George Maharis, while their father, the elder Cardenas is played by George Coulouris. Generally this is a second-rate Western berating the treatment of American Indians made at a time when various films used treatment of American Indians as an analogy to Vietnam. There is explicit reference in an otherwise banal film to an infamous real-life massacre of Indians. The ethnic dimension of the film deals with the Mexican heritage of each of the leading characters. Noted here only to inform readers that in spite of the leading male characters, there is no Greek content whatsoever.

### ***The Last Tycoon—GG***

1969 Full details pending.

### ***Mad Bull—GGGG***

British title: *The Aggressor*

1997 Color 100 minutes

**Producer:** Filmway Pictures & Len Steckler Productions

**Director:** Walter Doniger & Len Steckler

**Script:** Stanley Mann (novel and story), Wayne Wellons (novel) & Vernon Zimmerman

**Cast:** Alex Karras, Titos Vandis, Billy Varga, K.C. Martel, Elisha Cook Jr., Chris De Rose,

**Synopsis:** An embittered professional wrestler, Iago “Mad Bull” Karkus (Alex Karras) convinced that his life has no meaning outside the ring, meets a beautiful woman. There is considerable interaction with his family members and various “colorful” wrestlers. Mainly this is a “star vehicle” for ex-football star and ex-wrestler Alex Karras. The veteran actor Titos Vandis was one of several Greek actors in this production which was distributed by CBS television and had a German version. The depiction of Greeks as wrestlers is a common cinematic practice, probably due to the fame of Jim Londos, the renowned champion when wrestling was still a legitimate sport. Greek wrestlers, for example, figure prominently in Jules Dassin’s *Night and the City*, made in England after Dassin was blacklisted in Hollywood.

### ***The Man from the Diner’s Club—GGG***

1963 B&W 96 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia, Ampersand; Dena Productions

**Director:** Frank Tashlin

**Script:** William Peter Blatty

**Cast:** Danny Kaye, Telly Savalas, Cara Williams

**Synopsis:** Ernest Kink (Danny Kaye), a Diner’s Club clerk participating in an outreach effort by the credit card company, inadvertently provides a credit card to gangster Ronald “Foots” Pularδος (Telly Savalas). When Kink tries to retrieve the card at Pularδος’ health club, Pularδος learns that they share the odd physical characteristic of having different sized left and right feet. Pularδος is under tax evasion charges and thinks he might kill Kink and burn down the health club in the hope that the police will think he is the burnt corpse due to his famous odd-shaped foot bones. Meanwhile, Pularδος can leave the country under the assumed identity of Kink. Despite the murder plot, the film is primarily a comedy vehicle for the multi-talented Danny Kaye and is full of slapstick humor and

dialog. For example, the girlfriend of “Foots” is named “Sugar Pye” (Cora Williams). The Greek ancestry of Pularδος is not much of a factor in the story.

### ***Men of Respect—G***

1990 Color 113 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures

**Director:** William C. Reilly

**Script:** William C. Reilly

**Cast:** John Turturro, Rod Steiger, Stanley Tucci, Peter Boyle, Dennis Farino, Katherine Borowitz, Ron Maccone

**Synopsis:** A pretentious mob film written as a loose adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Uses the fictional D’Amico family as the focus on the plot in which typical mafia intrigues are clothed in Shakespearean metaphors. One of the minor characters is Alli “The Greek” Bernacci (Ron Maccone). Failed plots cause the Greek to retire. The remaining Greek associates of the family are murdered, ending the Greek presence in the immediate mob scene.

### ***Men Women Lovers—G (?)***

1926

Full details pending on this film from the silent era.

### ***Milk—GG***

2008 Color 128 minutes

**Producer:** Focus Features

**Director:** Gus Van Zant

**Script:** Dustin Lance Black

**Cast:** Sean Penn, Jeff Koons

**Synopsis:** This biopic explores the life of Harvey Milk, the first openly homosexual politician to be elected to office in San Francisco. Milk was subsequently murdered by a homophobic fellow politician. Early in his career, Milk (Sean Penn) debates with Art Agnos (Jeff Koons). After the debate, in which Agnos expresses no animus whatever to Milk’s sexual orientation, Agnos tells Milk that he will never win until he begins to tell people what he is for as well as what he is against. Milk will take this advice to heart and make it central to his future (successful) political campaigns. The film never notes that Agnos is Greek. Audiences would only know so because of his name. The real-life Agnos eventually served as mayor of San Francisco (1988-1992).

### ***Mister Lucky—GGG***

(Remade as *Gambling House* in 1950)

1943 B&W 98 minutes

**Producer:** RKO

**Director:** H.C. Porter

**Script:** Milton Holmes and Adrian Scott

**Cast:** Cary Grant, Laraine Day, Charles Bickford

**Synopsis:** Cary Grant plays Joe “the Greek” Adams (Joe Bacopolous). His Greekness is noted from time to time, but Grant makes no attempt to Hellenize his usual persona. He remains Cary Grant with a Greek name. Bacopolous is a gambler who assumes the identity of a dead gangster in order to avoid the draft. He then schemes to use a war charity as a cover for his gambling operations, but he falls in love with wealthy socialite Dorothy Bryant (Laraine Day). He is also greatly influenced by a letter from his mother which he takes to a Greek Orthodox priest for translation. She writes to him of the horrible actions of the Nazis in Greece. Driven by love for Bryant and his mother’s letter, Joe gives up his plan to defraud the war charity and signs up for the Merchant Marines. That particular service then manned ships in the dangerous trans-Atlantic run to Russia which were frequently the targets of very efficient Nazi submarines. Thus, Bacopolous ends the film as a Hollywood good guy and a loyal American volunteering for dangerous naval duty.

### ***My Big Fat Greek Wedding-GGGGG***

2002 Color 95 minutes

**Producer:** Good Circle Films, Home Box Office

**Director:** Joel Zwick

**Script:** Nia Vardalos

**Cast:** Nia Vardalos, Michael Constantine, Lainie Kazan, John Corbett, Louis Mandler, Bess Meisler, Andrea Martin, Stavroula Logothetis

**Synopsis:** This film is a lexicon of ethnic stereotyping. These include the culturally chauvinistic father, the earth mother wife, the cheekish brother, the lovable but daffy aunt, the demented grandmother, the conformist sister, and a frumpy thirty-something unmarried heroine. Gus Portokalos (Michael Constantine) is distressed that his daughter Toula (Nia Vardalos) is not married and contrasts her with her younger sister Athena (Stavroula Logothetis), who has married and already has produced a grandchild. Toula works at Dancing Zorba’s, the family restaurant but aspires for a more sophisticated life style. She gives herself a cosmetic make-over, loses weight, and takes college classes. The self-created Cinderella falls in love with Prince Charming, a handsome Ian Miller (John Corbett), an American schoolteacher who comes from a proto-typical White Anglo Saxon Protestant family. Although the theme of outmarriage is presented as a very serious challenge to Gus’ ethnocentrism, the tone of the film is typical situation comedy in which problems are just set-ups for gags and reassuring images. Maria Portokalos (Lainie Kazan) manipulates her husband into thinking he is making all the decisions. He may think he is captain of the ship, but Maria is definitely the pilot, ably advised by witty Aunt Voula (Andrea Martin). When Ian tries to impress Toula’s family by greeting them in Greek, her brother (Louis Mandler) teaches Ian to say, “I have three testicles.” Miller’s parents get the usual helping of food jokes and a lesson in the power of Greek ouzo. Gus insists nearly every word in the English language derives from Greek and has the peculiar notion that Windex has medicinal curing powers. The bridesmaid’s gowns are awful, the bride gets a lip zit on her wedding day, and demented grandma (Bess Meisler) rants about the Turks. Perhaps the film’s very predictability and non-threatening banality helped make it a sleeper hit in the United States and abroad. Also of note is that this is the first American comedy with a Greek woman at its center, acting on her own behalf rather than at the behests of ethnic culture. The Greek American press and Greek American



organizations generally lauded the film even though it does not accurately reflect the Greek American community at the time of its release. By the twenty-first century, Greek Americans had become among the wealthiest and best-educated groups in America with an outmarriage rate to non-Greeks of at least 80%. In that sense rather than poking fun at the existing community, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is a reprise of ethnic stereotyping rooted in radio and television situation comedies, particularly those of the 1950s and 1960s. See *It Could Be Worse*, *Dark Odyssey*, and *Everything for a Reason* for characters more representative of their time of release.

### ***My Life in Ruins—GGG***

2009 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** Playton Productions

**Director:** Donald Petrie

**Script:** Mike Reiss

**Cast:** Nia Vardalos, Richard Dreyfus, Alexis Georgoulis, Rita Wilson

**Synopsis:** Georgia (Nia Vardalos) is a Greek American history professor stranded in Greece. Having no job offers or personal relationships back home, she resigns to staying on in Greece as a tour bus guide. Most of the film deals in comedic fashion with how she deals with obnoxious tourists who at first seem horrendous but of course turn out to be terrific people by movie's end. Leader of that pack is the wisecracking Irv (Richard Dreyfus). Almost every relationship that Georgia and her clients have with Greeks is negative. Moreover, although the Greek portraits are meant as burlesque comedy, they are mean-spirited. The most extreme is a lewd desk clerk at a hotel. The exception to these negative portraits is bus driver "Poupi" Karkas (Alexis Georgoulis). Irv leads the tourist into a lot of yuks over that name, but later Irv understands that "Poupi," despite his name, has the soul of a poet. Acting like a wise parent, he helps Georgia realize that "Poupi" is the man of her dreams. The film laboriously tries to root its legitimacy by reproducing clips from *Never on Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek*, and at one point Georgia sings a tepid version of the theme song from *Never on Sunday* to a haphazard bouzouki effort by "Poupi." Although Georgia is clearly identified as exploring her Greek identity, the relationship between that need and her life in America is never explored. She could, in fact, be a non-Greek phil-Hellene and the plot wouldn't be affected. Producer Rita Wilson plays a cameo role as Irv's deceased wife who appears to him a dream sequence. The scatological name play on long and "funny-sounding" is quite low level and unimaginative.

### ***My Lucky Star—GG (?)***

1938 B&W 84 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Roy Del Ruth

**Script:** Harry Tugent, Jack Yellen

**Cast:** Sonje Henie

**Synopsis:** This is one of several personality vehicles that starred Sonje Henie, a Norwegian Olympic champion skater. A minor scene takes place in a college sweetshop where Henie's companion urges her to order ice cream with pistachio from a Greek

vender, who praises his pistachios as products from his homeland. When Henie declines to buy his ice cream, he shouts angrily, “It’s people like you what’s wrong this country!” Film scholar Diane Negra opines in *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* that this is meant as a comic and hysterical contrast between an immigrant linked to his home culture (and presumably not happy with the new world) with an immigrant who is comfortable selling American-made clothing. If we remember that this is the era of the Great Depression, it is just as reasonable to consider the Greek as feeling sufficiently assimilated to feel free to speak about his new nation’s economic ills. If so, this would be a rare case of a Southern European immigrant upbraiding a Northern European immigrant about the realities of life in America.

### ***My Palikiri—GGGGG***

1982 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** Center for Television in the Humanities

**Director:** Charles S. Dubin.

**Cast:** Telly Savalas, Michael Constantine, Yula Gavalas. Keith Gordon.

**Synopsis:** The time frame is 1953. Peter Panakos (Telly Savalas), a now-wealthy middle-aged Greek immigrant returns to the village in the Peloponnesus he left thirty-five years earlier when he was seventeen. He is accompanied by his American-born son Chris (Keith Gordon). Peter Panakos finds he now has little in common with the relatives he left behind and that the place he had remembered as a paradise seems dismal and backward. On the other hand, Chris, who made the journey reluctantly, falls in love with his ancestral homeland. The film is one of the few to show how turn-of-the-century immigrants who returned to Greece in the 1950s found themselves feeling more Americanized than they had ever realized. More standard is the theme of an American-born Greek rediscovering his roots with a pilgrimage to the ancestral village. His enthusiasm has a tourist-like quality. This was the first time Savalas played a Greek on film, and he made changes in the script to give it more ethnic authenticity. He was delighted to be able to visit his father’s own village during the shooting on location in Greece. Original music was composed by John Cacavas. The production history of *My Palikiri* stems from a grant of \$1.2 million made to producer David Horwatt by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1978. Horwatt was mandated to create two films for public television’s American Playhouse that had Greek immigrants as their focus. *My Palikiri* aired after *King of America*, which was set in an earlier time period.

### ***The Naked City-GGG***

1948 B&W 96 minutes

**Producer:** Universal

**Director:** Jules Dassin

**Script:** Albert Maltz

**Cast:** Barry Fitzgerald, Don Taylor, Howard Duff, Ted de Corsia, Dorothy Hart

**Synopsis:** This classic police drama was among the first ever shot in the streets of New York. The killer chased by the police turns out to be Peter Backalis, a former wrestler. The only Greek aspect of his character is his name.

### ***Napatia, The Greek Singer—GGG (?)***

1912 B&W

**Producer:** The Essanay Film Manufacturing Company

**Director:** Theodore Walton

**Script:** Unknown

**Cast:** Delores Cassinellis, Francis X. Bushman, Billy Arnold

**Synopsis:** Napatia (Delores Cassinellis) is a beautiful Greek American woman presented as exotic and enticing.. The plot is a love story about a fireman (Francis X. Bushman) who “rescues” Napatia from her cruel foster father. Little of Greek American identity is involved as Napatia is an orphan without a Greek family or Greek culture ties.

### ***Never So Few-G***

1959 Color 125 minutes

**Producer:** Edmund Grainger, Canterbury Productions, MGM

**Director:** John Sturges

**Script:** Millard Kaufman from a novel by Thomas T. Chamales

**Cast:** Frank Sinatra, Peter Lawford, Seven McQueen, Charles Bronson, Paul Henreid, Gina Lollabrigida

**Synopsis:** This is a World War II film based on an actual OSS operation in Burma. Col. Tom Reynolds (Frank Sinatra) is the rugged and individualistic leader of a special British & American commando team (featuring some of Hollywood’s better known heroes). They successfully attack a Japanese fortification. Unconvincing subplot involves a romantic relationship between Reynolds and Carla Vesan (Gina Lollabrigida), the Austrian-born mistress of Nikko Regas ( Paul Henreid), a mysterious Greek magnate. The ethnicity of Regas is never explored. Novelist Chamales identifies his hero as Constantine Theothoros Reynolds, but ethnic references related to Reynolds are not included in the film.

### ***Nicky’s World—GGGGG (?)***

1974

Full details pending on this made-for-television drama that stars Olympia Dukakis.

### ***Oh God!—GGG***

1977 Color 98 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Brothers

**Director:** Carl Reiner

**Script:** Avery Corman from a novel by Larry Gilbert

**Cast:** George Burns, John Denver, Titos Vandis

**Synopsis:** God (George Burns) appears to Jerry Landers (John Denver), a supermarket manager, to inform him that he has been selected to be God’s Messenger to the world. The comedy takes many turns. Titos Vandis briefly appears as Bishop Markos, reinforcing the link between Greek Americans and the Greek Orthodox Church.

### ***Only the Lonely—GGG***

1991 Color 104 minutes

**Producer:** Hughes Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox

**Director:** Chris Columbus

**Script:** Chris Columbus

**Cast:** John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Anthony Quinn

**Synopsis:** This is a comedy vehicle written for John Candy who plays Danny Muldoon, an affable but lonely Irish Chicago cop. Rose Muldoon (Maureen O'Hara) is his salty very Irish-identified mother who continually voices ethnic slurs. Danny falls in love with Theresa Luna (Ally Sheedy) who works in her father's funeral parlor. Rose is angry because Theresa is a mix of Sicilian and Polish ancestry. The Greek dimension comes from Nick Acropolis (Anthony Quinn), Rose's next-door-neighbor. The aging Acropolis, yet another Zorba, is attracted to Rose and feels that once she gets in touch with her real sexual needs and emotions, she will be an ideal romantic partner. Rose informs him that she doesn't date Greeks and that Greeks don't bathe. Derogatory remarks about various groups, including the Irish, abound from her lips. Danny and Rose go through the usual ups and downs of romantic comedy amid various comedy set-ups involving a number of ethnic groups. Acropolis remains steadfast in his pursuit of Rose. The film has a chaotic comedy finale, and as in all feel-good films, there is a happy ending. Danny marries Theresa, and Rose, beginning to shed some of her racist views, literally flies off with Nick.

### ***A Perfect Couple-GGGG***

1979 Color 110 minutes

**Producer:** Lion's Gate Films

**Director:** Robert Altman

**Script:** Robert Altman, Allan F. Nicholls

**Cast:** Paul Dooley, Marta Heflin, Titos Vandis, Belita Moreno, Dimitra Arliss, Ted Neeley

**Synopsis:** Alex Theodopoulos (Paul Dooley) meets Marta Heflin (Sheila Shea), through a computer dating service. Alex is from a very traditional and very wealthy Greek family and Marta sings for a boisterous rock group that lives in a communal loft. A series of incidents meant to be humorous puts them through a series of emotional coming-togethers and equally emotional breakups. Alex is constantly driving the action while Marta is reactive. What emerges as the main theme is that Alex is dominated by an extremely patriarchal father (Titos Vandis) and Marta by Teddy (Ted Neeley) the authoritarian leader of her group. Complicating the Alex side of the equation is a sister Eleousa (Belita Moreno) who has an extreme heart condition and a dominating and sexually repressed older sister Athena (Dimitra Arliss) who acts as a surrogate wife to her father. All the younger Theodopoulos family members feel the need to break with the past and the older Alex eventually understands that also is his road to happiness. Marta's orbit, in turn, is filled with various Flower Power types. These culturally rebellious outsiders are mainly rendered as stereotypes just as the Greek family is a strained cliché from beginning to end. Both Marta and Alex managed to break with their "families" and become "the perfect couple." Eleven musical numbers largely ruin the pace of the film rather than enrich its themes. Dooley and Heflin do remarkably well considering the poor

script. The distinctive Altman directorial touch is evident throughout the film, but lacks the effectiveness of his more famous films.

### ***Panic in the Streets—GGG***

1950 B&W 96 m

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Elia Kazan

**Script:** Richard Murphy with original story by Edward and Edna Anhalt

**Cast:** Richard Widmark Jack Palance, Paul Douglas, Barbara Bel Geddes, Zero Mostel, Alexis Minotis

**Synopsis:** Kazan has described this film as a long chase. A public health official (Richard Widmark) seeks a carrier of bubonic plague to prevent an epidemic. Yianni Mefaris (Alexis Minotis), appears briefly in two scenes as the Greek owner of a restaurant. He speaks a few lines of Greek to an unidentified customer. The film was entirely shot on location in New Orleans.

### ***Parkyakarkus—GGG***

1936-1945

Paryakarkus, sometimes referred to as Gus Paryakarkus or just “Parky, was a recurring Greek American character in ten feature films and at least five shorts of the kind that accompanied feature films in movie houses of the 1930s and 1940s. His real name was Harry Parke, but Parke became so identified with the comic character he first created as a vaudeville act that he tried to get make it his legal name. Paryakarkus (park your carcass: sit down) was famous for fracturing the English language and first gained national fame in thirty-nine appearances on Al Jolson’s radio show, “The Lifebuoy Program.” He later repeated his success on the Eddie Cantor radio shows. In his films, many of them featuring vaudeville acts, Parkyakarkus performed with many of Hollywood’s top personalities, including Bing Crosby, Ethel Merman, Ann Southern, Eve Arden, Eddie Bracken, Veronica Lake, Eddie Cantor, Eddie Bracken, and Milton Berle. Although Parkyakarkus was never the American norm, he was never a suspect Outsider. In *A Yank in Libya* (1942), for example, he masquerades as an Arab and utters Paryakarkusisms in the bazaar. When he encounters an American who is lost, they “chum up” as it were and Parkyakarkus offers tips on how to deal with Arabs. The American clearly regards Parkyakarkus as “one of us.” The feature films in which Parkyakarkus appears are *Strike Me Pink* (1936), *New Faces of 1937* (1937), *The Life of the Party* (1937;), *She’s Got Everything* (1937); *Night Spot* (1938), *A Yank in Libya* (1942), *The Yanks Are Coming* (1942), *Sweethearts of the U.S.A* (1944), *Earl Carroll Vanities* (1945); and *Out of this World* (1945). Shorts which he wrote and/or appeared in include *Roast Beef and the Movies* (1934), *See Your Doctor* (1939), *Movie Pests* (1944), and *Badminton* (1945). Parkyakarkus also appeared in the documentary *Screen Snapshots Series 18, #6* (1939). Also see entry for George Givot: The Greek Ambassador of Good Will.

### ***The Postman Always Rings Twice—G***

1946 B&W 110 minutes

See comments below

### ***The Postman Always Rings Twice—GGGG***

1981 Color 123 minutes

**Producer:** Bob Rafelson, Charles Mulvehill

**Script:** David Mamet from a novel by James Cain

**Cast:** Jack Nicholson, Jessica Lange, John Colicos

**Synopsis:** During the Great Depression, Frank Chambers (Jack Nicholson), a seedy drifter, goes to work in a roadside diner owned by Nick Papadakis (John Colicos). Chambers soon enters into a lusty sexual relationship with Cora Papadakis (Jessica Lange), the alcoholic Nick's much younger and sultry wife. Most of the film deals with their affair, their eventual murder of Nick, and the consequences of their crime. This is a remake of the 1946 original. Although both versions are based on the novel by James Cain, the 1946 version transformed Cain's Greek character into a Brit. Most likely, the 1981 version written by noted playwright David Mamet wanted to be more faithful to the original as he also omitted other changes the 1946 film had made to Cain's novel. It is possible, however, that in 1946 Warner Bros. did not think a Greek diner owner was acceptable to American audiences as the husband of a woman played by the glamorous Lana Turner.

### ***The Redemption of Greek Joe—GGGG (?)***

1912 B & W Running time unknown

**Producer:** Selig Polyscope Company

**Director:** Not available.

**Script:** Not available.

**Cast:** William V. Wong

**Synopsis:** This film has not been seen by any contemporary scholar. Little is known about it other than the title. Even though a number of Greek actors were stars in the silent era, the title role here is played by William V. Wong. The title suggests that "Greek Joe," probably an immigrant, has to be redeemed from alcoholism, poverty, or some other negative condition.

### ***The Sands of Iwo Jima—GGGG***

1949 B&W 110 minutes

**Producer:** Republic Pictures:

**Director:** Allan Dwan

**Script:** Harry Brown, James Edward Grant

**Cast:** John Wayne, Peter Coe, Forrest Tucker

**Synopsis:** This war film is a star vehicle for John Wayne who received an Oscar nomination for Best Actor for his portrayal of Sergeant John Stryker. The challenge facing the prototypical tough sergeant is to mold young men into a cohesive unit of fighting marines and then lead them into the battle on the island of Iwo Jima. As in many war dramas of this time period, a subtext involves combating the lingering hostilities felt by some native-born Americans toward immigrants and their children. In this case, a heroic Greek American, Private George Hellenopolis (Peter Coe), dies due to the cowardly

behavior of a xenophobic nativist, Private Al Thomas (Forrest Tucker). Sergeant Stryker shouts his respect for the Greek directly into the camera, affirming that Hellenpolis was a true American. This mainstreaming of Greek Americans was part of a general effort by the Hollywood studios to unify the American nation in the effort to win World War II. The name Hellenpolis is quite odd, but it is clearly positive just as some Greek names in other films are chosen for humorous effect.

### ***A Sea Apart—GGGGG***

2003 Color (90 minutes)

Producer: Terra Entertainment

Director: Ersi Danou

Script: Ersi Danou

Cast: Tamilia Kuliela, Aris Sakallariou

**Synopsis.** Eleni (Tamilia Kuliela) left her homeland island to wed a Greek American who operates a restaurant in Los Angeles. Their marriage is working on the surface, but troubled in many ways. When Aris (Aris Sakallariou), Eleni's boyhood love, shows up to proclaim he still loves her, Eleni is torn on how to proceed. Although the film is made in the twenty-first century, Eleni's intense yearning for the lost island and its memories is reminiscent of the "divided soul" in an early period of Greek American culture. An added nuance to the tale is that Eleni reflects on how her decisions and options would have differed had she been born a Greek male.

### ***Shelter—GGGG***

1997 Color 92 minutes

**Producer:** Dream Log Media Productions

**Director:** Scott Paulin

**Script:** Max Storm

**Cast:** Peter Onorato, Brenda Bakke, Charles Durning, Kurkwood Smith, Stephanos Miltsakis, Costas Mandylor

**Synopsis:** This is a gangster story in which the organized crime family is Greek. Dimitri Constantinos (Peter Onorato) is leader of a gang that law officials dub the Greek mafia. His specialty is the interstate sale of weapons. The head of the federal unit (Charles Durning) that is after him is corrupt and affiliated with a local arms dealer (Kirkwood Smith) who wants to dethrone Constantinos. Their scheme to kill Constantinos is thwarted by Martin Roberts (John Allen Nelson), an honest federal agent deemed the best in the business. Martin is wounded when he disrupts the intended assassination and slays a number of the would-be assassins. Constantinos gives him "shelter" as Martin's former boss puts out a contract on Martin's life. For the first part of the film, Constantinos is shown to be a brave and shrew mob leader who is quite good at bargaining. He has a sense of honor, is highly protective of the safety of his men, and is proud of being Greek, even though his expression of ethnicity are usually quite crude. The mob's inner circle is made of other Greeks (Costas Mandylor, George Russo, Stefanos Miltsakis), some of whom are Constantinos' blood relatives. As the film evolves, we discover Constantinos is brutal to the point of sadism. He treats his wife Elena (Brenda Bakke) as property and occasionally beats her and dares her to kill him. Martin, of course, falls in love with

Elena and plots to run away from her to escape to Mexico where he can escape the wrath of Constantinos and the feds. The plot has many highly implausible elements, even for a thriller. In due course, all the bad guys get killed and Martin and Elena are free to pursue their love. Lines of Greek dialog, often obscenities, are sprinkled throughout the film and there are references to Greek coffee and Greek courage. In one sequence, Paulos (George Russo) offers a few half-hearted Greek dance steps while his mobster comrades are beating a man to death. All the Greek mobsters, even the ones who like baseball, appear to be foreign born. Although their ethnicity is constantly referenced, they so stereotypical of the ethnic gangster that they could just have easily have been Italians, Latinos, Albanians, or some other ethnic group as Greek.

### ***Side Street—GGG***

1950 B&W 83 minutes

**Production:** MGM

**Direction:** Anthony Mann

**Script:** Sidney Boehm

**Cast:** Farley Granger, Paul Kelly, Sid Tomack, Angi O. Poulos, George David

**Synopsis:** A young postal worker (Farley Granger) steals money from a gang of con men. He thinks it is only going to be \$200, but it is actually \$30,000. In the complexities that follow a woman is killed which leads to a scene involving Greek Americans. When the woman's body is examined, Captain Walter Anderson (Paul Kelly) is informed that the night she was killed she ate lamb kabob, eggplant, and baklava. The Captain is repulsed, makes disdainful remarks about such edibles and labels them "garbage" that only Greeks and Syrians eat. A follow up scene, occurs at Les Artistes Restaurant, an eatery of middlebrow status, where the well dressed manager (Angie O. Poulos) speaks in excellent Greek to a formally uniformed waiter (Sid Tomack) who responds in more agitated, demonic Greek. The waiter remembers the couple well due to the circumstances that the man left no tip. He agrees to go to the police station and identify the man last seen with the murdered woman. The script credits for the film identify the owner as a Syrian with a Turkish name while the waiter is listed as Louie. A third character is named Ahmed. Various reference sources refer to all the men as Turks and state the language they speak is Turkish.

### ***Sixteen Fathoms Deep—GGGGG (?)***

1934 B&W 58 minutes

**Producer:** Monogram

**Director:** Armand Schaefer

**Script:** Norman Houston

**Cast:** Lon Chaney, Jr. George Rigas

**Synopsis:** Lon Chaney, Jr. plays a heroic Greek sponge diver in Tarpon Springs. He wants to buy his own boat and marry his girlfriend. Others conspire against him. George Rigas, a graduate from the silent screen, plays Theo Savanis, a money lender. Numerous sailors are identified as Greek Americans. This is one of the earliest depictions of the travails and rivalries associated with sponge diving in Florida, an occupation the



American government labeled one of the most dangerous in America. See remake of 1948.

### ***Sixteen Fathoms Deep—GGGGG***

1948 B&W 83 minutes

**Production:** Monogram

**Director:** Irving Allen

**Script:** Max Trell

**Cast:** Lloyd Bridges, Lon Chaney Jr., Arthur Lake

**Synopsis:** A remake of the earlier *Sixteen Fathoms Deep* (1934). Much of the story is a voice over by Ray Douglas (Lloyd Bridges) a non-Greek diver looking for work in Tarpon Springs. He is well treated by the Greeks and his comments about the Greek community are very positive. The on-site filming with what seem actual boats and standard diving gear enhances the film's authenticity. The docks are not unlike those still visible in Tarpon Springs, but the sponge market is now only a single shed used as a tourist attraction. The major story involves Mr. Dimitri (Lon Chaney Jr.) who tries to control the sponge trade and plots against the divers and their crew. This is a reversal of his role in the original film where he was the hero. His plots and sabotage efforts are ultimately foiled but not before he causes the death of one of the young divers. Much of the film involves the mechanics of sponge diving and scenes of underwater sponge gathering. There is buttressed to some degree by an early scene of Greeks diving for a cross during Epiphany services and minor romantic plots. Even though Mr. Dimitri and his cohorts are the villains, the Greek community is treated with great respect throughout the films. Arthur Lake, known for his Dagwood Bumstead roles, plays a foolish but well-meaning tourist who mainly deters from the film's dramatic action without adding any real humor. Most of the Greek roles are played by non-Greeks. There is minimal use of the Greek language.

### ***Smart Money—GG***

1931 B&W 90 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Brothers

**Director:** Alfred E. Green

**Script:** Kube Glasmon, John Bright, Lucien Hubbard, Joseph Jackson

**Cast:** Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, Alexander Amenoppolus, Maurice Black

**Synopsis:** Nick "The Barber" Venizelos (Edward G. Robinson) is a Greek barber in a small town. More importantly, he is an ace poker player with a passion for gambling. His local poker chums stake him \$10,000 to go to Chicago to play in the big time. Once this early and relatively short sequence ends, the story is a standard gambling genre film with James Cagney playing an antagonist to Venizelos. Nick's Greek ethnicity is never a factor and Robinson doesn't give Nick any ethnic dimension. The choice of Venizelos as a surname is interesting. Maurice Black plays a Greek barber and Alexander Amenoppopolus plays Paul Porcasi, a minor non-Greek character. Dialog between the Greek characters played by Black and Robinson is not in Greek but pidgin English.

### ***Stiletto-GGG (?)***

2008 Color 99 minutes

**Producer:** Nick Vallelonga, Warren Osterfard

**Director:** Nick Vallelonga,

**Script:** Paul Sloan

**Cast:** Tom Berenger, Stana Katic, William Forsythe, William Biehn, Kelly Hu, Tom Sizemore, Tony Lip

**Synopsis:** In this direct-to-video action film, the main character is Virgil Vadalos (Tom Berenger), a wealthy leader of a mafia-style gang. In the first scene, he meets in a bathhouse with a leader from MS-13, an infamous Salvadorian crime family located in Los Angeles. A woman bursts into the room with a stiletto, kills the MS-13 leader and severely wounds Virgil. The Greek gangster survives and orders his men and Detective Hanover (Kelly Hu), a corrupt police officer, to track down the woman. Virgil has identified her as a former Russian girlfriend named Raina (Stana Katic). He is puzzled by Raina's attack. The plot thickens when Virgil's top guns, Lee (Michael Biehn) and Alex (William Forsythe) suspect each other of stealing some \$2 million in missing cash. Raina, in the interim, creates havoc in the crime world by murdering men from several different gangs. Ultimately, we learn she is seeking out men who have wronged her in the past and she still aims to settle with Virgil. This is basically an action film with a female-revenge theme that could have used any ethnicity as the gangster and seems to have chosen Greeks to provide relief from the usual Italian mafia types. The plot is filled with characters with names such as Large Hills (Tom Sizemore). Gus, a Greek hood, is played by Tony Lip (given name: Frank Anthony Vallelonga) who was *matre d'* at the Copacabana nightclub for twelve years at a time the nightclub was a hangout for Italian hoodlums. Tony Lip subsequently played Italian gangsters in films such as *Donnie Brasco* and *Goodfellas*, and he had a featured role as a crime boss in the television hit *The Sopranos*.

### ***A Streetcar Named Desire—G***

1951 B&W 122 minutes

**Producer:** Charles Freedman

**Director:** Elia Kazan

**Script:** Tennessee Williams from his play of the same name.

**Cast:** Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, Kim Hunter, Nick Dennis

**Synopsis:** One of the men who plays poker with Stanley Kowalski (Marlon Brando), the male lead is identified as Pablo Hernandez (Nick Dennis). But early in the film when Pablo passes Blanche du Bois (Vivien Leigh) and her sister Stella (Kim Hunter) in the courtyard of the Kowalski home, Dennis speaks in Greek, calling the two women, cute birds. Dennis probably used Greek to amuse Kazan but the Greek lines remain in the final cut, perhaps an ethnic in-joke meant to suggest similarities in ethnic cultures that chronically like to stress their uniqueness. Kazan might also have been testing to see if critics would take notice. Most have not.

### ***Summer Lovers—GG***

1982 Color 98 minutes

**Producer:** Mike Moder

**Director:** Randall Kleiser

**Script:** Randall Kleiser

**Cast:** Peter Gallagher, Darryl Hannah, Valerie Quennessen

**Synopsis:** Greek American Michael Pappas (Peter Gallagher) takes his girlfriend Cathy Featherstone (Darryl Hannah) for a summer vacation on the island of Santorini. They meet Lina (Valerie Quennessen), a French archeologist, with whom they form a three-way sexual relationship. Once Michael is established as being Greek American in the opening sequences, there is no further reference to or indication of his ethnic heritage. Original music by Basil Poledouris. Film was shot on location in Santorini and various Greeks, some of them islanders, play supporting roles.

### ***Sunday—G***

1997 Color 90 minutes

**Producer:** Amy Hobby, Andrew Fieberg

**Director:** Jonathan Nossiter

**Script:** Jonathan Nossiter, James Lasdon

**Cast:** David Suchet

**Synopsis:** This is the first feature by phil-Hellene Jonathan Nossiter. None of the main characters are Greek but the entire film is set on a single Sunday in the Greek section of Astoria. A Greek diner figures in the action and the film captures some of the flavor of this unique community. Oliver (David Suchet) is a newly homeless middle-age man. He has lost his wife and his comfortable job with a computer concern. He becomes involved with an actress who mistakes him for a famous director. She in turn has had a breakup with her long-time partner. The story ends comparatively happily for all concerned.

### ***Swing Your Lady--GGG***

1938 B&W 77 minutes

**Producer:** Warner Brothers

**Director:** Ray Enright

**Script:** Joseph Schrank, Maurice Leo

**Cast:** Humphrey Bogart, Nat Pendelton, Louise Fazenda, Ronald Reagan

**Synopsis:** Joe Skopapoulos (Nat Pendelton), the Wrestling Hercules, is looking for bouts in the Ozarks. The car in which he and his manager, Ed Hatch (Humphrey Bogart) are riding gets stuck in the mud. They are pulled free by Sadie Horn (Louise Fazenda), the local Amazon who is the town's blacksmith. Hatch is inspired to publicize Hercules' presence in the Ozarks by staging a match between Hercules and Sadie. The comedic plot takes a romantic turn when Hercules falls in love with Sadie and finds himself in conflict with another local strong man. Adapted from a Broadway production, the film also has quite unmemorable "country" tunes that include "Mountain Swingeroo," "Hillbilly from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue," and "Dig Me a Grave in Missouri." Even though the humor is genial rather than vicious, the people of the Ozarks are treated as stereotypically as the Greek wrestler. *Swing Your Lady* ends happily for Joe. In a brief epilogue, we see he has married Sadie, become the town's new blacksmith, and has fathered a happy family. By equating immigrants and mountain hicks, the Greek immigrant is made the

equal of a quintessential native-born American population. On the other hand, he is a slow-witted muscle man who becomes part of a regional society that is routinely mocked in American film. Humphrey Bogart expressed great regret at being in this film. Ronald Reagan appears very briefly as a sportscaster.

### ***The Tempest—GGGG***

1982 Color 140 minutes

**Producer:** Columbia Pictures

**Director:** Paul Mazursky

**Script:** Paul Mazursky, Leon Capetanos

**Cast:** John Cassavetes, Gena Rowland, Susan Sarandon, Raul Julia, Molly Ringwald

**Synopsis:** Philip Dimitrius (John Cassavetes), a successful New York architect having a mid-life identity crisis, decides to retreat to a barren Greek island with his daughter Miranda (Molly Ringwald in her screen debut). Dimitrius hopes that by immersing himself in elemental Greece, he will find psychological peace. Before leaving for Greece, Dimitrius has a strained meeting with his estranged father in a scene shot in the Greek section of Astoria. Their father-son interchange is punctuated by the sexist comments of a Greek waiter and the parting shot of the sequence shows them entering an Off Track Betting gambling center. While in Athens waiting for the boat that will take him to his deserted island, Dimitrius becomes romantically involved with Aretha (Susan Sarandon). The sexually liberated Arthea agrees to accompany Dimitrius and his daughter to his getaway. The island's only other inhabitant is Kalibanos (Raul Julia), a crazed hermit-like character. Kalibanos is meant to be a humorous and even charming free spirit, but he is just another somewhat insulting and not very smart ethnic caricature. The island experience turns out to be a disaster until a storm fosters a shipwreck that happily reunites all the people in Dimitrius' life, including his unfaithful wife Antonia (Gena Rowland). Cassavetes does surprisingly little to project Greek ethnicity, much less the differences between a diaspora and homeland Greek. Co-scripter Leon Capetanos has a number of writing credits for films with Greek American characters. The obvious debt and references to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are strained and poorly executed.

### ***Thieves Highway—G***

1949 B&W 94 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Jules Dassin

**Script:** A.I. Bezzerides from his own novel

**Cast:** Richard Conte, Lee J. Cobb, Morris Carnovsky, Tamara Shayne

**Synopsis:** In the original novel, the Greek identity of Nick "Nico" Garcos (played in the film by Richard Conte) is a central part of the story. Garcos forcibly takes money from his hateful Greek mother to buy a truck with which he hopes to haul freshly picked apples to the wholesale food market in San Francisco where he can sell them at a premium. Garcos also seeks revenge on the gangsterish wholesaler Mike Figlia (played in the film by Lee J. Cobb), who is responsible for the death of his father. The novel emphasizes the ethnic nature of various farmers and truckers and has a strong sense that workers need to take bold action on their own behalf. The trucker ambiance of the film

reflects the direct life experience of Bezzerides who wanted to show the public the true costs of bringing fresh fruit to market. In the film, Garcos is a returned war-veteran who dearly loves his mother Parthena (Tamara Shayne) and greatly respects his father Yanko (Morris Carnovsky), who has lost the use of his legs due to the actions of Mike Figlia. There is the sound of Greek music in the first scene as Garcos gets out of a cab in front of his house, but none of the characters are identified as Greek. Parthena is a conceivable Greek name, but Yanko is not. Nico is not a distinctly Greek name and Garcos could be an Americanization of a Spanish, Italian, Balkan, or Eastern European name. The reasons for the de-emphasis on specific ethnicity might have been due to the intervention from studio boss Darryl Zanuck. Jules Dassin has complained that Zanuck rewrote some of the script, thereby greatly changing the nature of the female characters. Zanuck also had some new scenes shot after Dassin had completed his work using the original script and left for London. The strong pro-labor basis of the film desired by Dassin and Bezzerides remains in place, but scenes Zanuck added featured police challenging the independent assertion of workers' power and gently reasserting the authority of a paternalistic New Deal justice for all. Bezzerides also uses the name Nick Garcos to identify a rebel Greek farmer in *Juke Box*, but the setting for that film is Florida rather than California. Conceivably, it would be the same character who has migrated to a new state.

### ***The Thin Man—G***

A series of six films beginning in 1934 features the debonair detective Nick Charles played by William Powell. This very sophisticated detective and raconteur is identified in the novel by Dashiell Hammett as a Greek. Hammett, however, never explored Nick's Greekness and neither did the films.

### ***The Thin Red Line—GGGG***

1998 Color 170 minutes

**Producer:** Fox 2000 Pictures, Geisler-Roberdeau, Phoenix Pictures

**Director:** Terrence Malick

**Script:** Terrence Malick from the novel by James Jones

**Cast:** Sean Penn, George Clooney, John Cusack, Woody Harrelson, Elias Koteas, Nick Nolte

**Synopsis:** During the battle of Guadalcanal during World War II, a band of young soldiers arrives as relief column for a battle-weary marine unit. The men of the army unit participate in grueling combat that unites them into a traditional "band of brothers." Through brief use of Greek and other ethnic markers, James "Bugger" Staros (Elias Koteas) is identified as a Greek American who was a lawyer in civil society. His legal background is central to a key subplot, his refusal to obey a commanding officer to lead his men into a suicidal position. Staros is unlike the Greek Americans of *Destination Tokyo* (1943) and *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) and more like the Greek American of *The Glory Brigade* (1953). In short, over the years, Greek Americans have moved from a status where their ethnic identity is an issue to positions of leadership. In all four instances, the Greek Americans are portrayed as brave and independently minded. Staros is given some lines of Greek to nail down his ethnicity.

***Tiger by the Tail-GGG (?)***

1968 Full details pending.

***Two Heads On a Pillow—GGGG (?)***

1934 Full details pending.

***Tribute to a Bad Man-GGGG***

1956 Color 95 minutes

**Producer:** MGM

**Director:** Robert Wise

**Script:** Michael Blankfort

**Cast:** James Cagney, Don Dubbins, Stephen McNally, Irene Pappas

**Synopsis:** This Western stars James Cagney as Jeremy Rodock, a hard-bitten land baron in the gorgeous Colorado Rockies of the 1870s. Rodock plays by his own rules, sense of justice, and code of honor. Trouble arises when his rough treatment of rustlers drives his sweetheart, Jocasta Constantine (Irene Pappas), into the arms of cowhand Steven Miller (Don Dubbins). The beautiful and alluring Jocasta is portrayed as proud of her Greek heritage, somewhat headstrong, completely self-sufficient, and highly opinionated. At one point in the film, Jocasta sings to Rodock in Greek. Rodock ultimately restrains his worst instincts. This was Irene Pappas' debut in a Hollywood-financed film.

***Tucker: The Man and His Dream-GG***

1988 Full details pending

***Twelve Hours to Kill—GGG (?)***

1960 B&W 83 minutes

**Producer:** Twentieth Century-Fox

**Director:** Edward Cahn

**Script:** Richard Stern, Jerry Stohl

**Cast:** Nico Miardos, Barbara Eden, Grant Richards, Art Baker

**Synopsis:** Martin Filone (Nico Minardos), a newly-arrived Greek immigrant witnesses a murder. The police take him to a "safe" house in suburbia, but in fact, they are corrupt and plan to murder the naïve Filone to cover up their complicity in the crime. Barbara Eden plays a femme fatale. The major police officers are played by Art Baker, and Grant Richards. The story is based on a true-life account that had appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Although a rather mediocre police drama, the film illustrates immigrants being duped and manipulated by corrupt government officials.

***The Wind and the Lion—GGG***

1975 Color 119 minutes

**Producer:** Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM), Columbia Pictures

**Director:** John Milius

**Script:** John Milius

**Cast:** Sean Connery, Candice Bergen, Brian Keith, Simon Harrison, Polly Gottesman

**Synopsis:** This film, which takes place in Morocco, is loosely based on the real life kidnapping of Ion Perdicaris and his son in 1904 by Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli. In the film, Eden Perdicaris (Candice Bergen) is kidnapped with her two children, William (Simon Harrison) and Jennifer (Polly Gottesman) by Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli (Sean Connery). Raisuli intends to use the hostages to win control of more territory in Morocco from the ruling sultan. President Theodore Roosevelt (Brian Keith) decides to send an armed force to free the Americans. Unlike actual events, in the film, after harrowing attempts at escape, the American military takes action and Eden and her children are released. In real life, Ion Perdicaris and Cromwell, his wife's son by another marriage, were released through payment of ransom. The Greekness of the Perdicaris family is never an issue in the film, but is quite fascinating. Perdicaris was the son of Gregory Perdicaris, one of the famed "Forty Orphans" brought to America at the time of the Greek revolution. He subsequently married into a wealthy South Carolinian family and later made a fortune through his involvement with the Trenton Gas Company. Ion Perdicaris led a privileged life, but he left the US at the time of the Civil War out of fear the Confederacy would seize his land. He eventually renounced his American citizenship to become a citizen of Greece. Taking up a luxurious residence in Tangier, he and his wife (real name Ellen) had a splendid home filled with exotic animals and art works. They wrote books about Morocco and emerged as the informal leaders of its international community. Raisuli mistakenly thought Perdicaris was an American citizen. Theodore Roosevelt, in turn, also had originally believed the same thing. None of these complexities are found in the film which is mainly an adventure yarn with a decided respect for strong leaders and no interest in Hellenic culture or the history of the famed "Forty Orphans."