

# Greek Australian artists climb mountains

It's been a long time since the champion of the arts Apollo and his muses roamed the slopes of Mount Parnassus. These days it houses a couple of ski resorts and a casino. So, you're more likely to find Apollo and the girls zooming down a snowy track in pricey jump suits, or they're regretfully resting up in the lounge area with hangovers, a few broken limbs and a mounting gambling debt.

It's been a tough couple of years for everyone since the global financial crisis, but strangely enough not for those who perpetrated the craziness in the first place, those great gambling gods in the sky - the banks.

Despite their panic most of them have been fished out of that God-awful mess with help from what they claim to be their nemesis: government intervention with its slew of stimulus packages.

Australia has fared well during this unstable climate. Greece has not and now Ireland, both countries that rely heavily on their cultures, past and present, to bring in the essential tourist dollar.

The crisis in Greece resulted in the great summer Athens Arts Festival, at the ancient Herodotus Atticus, being canceled. Britain has also made massive cuts in arts funding.

Because whenever there's a crisis it's the artist that gets it in the neck, despite the fact statistics tell us the financial dividends won by cultural activity far outweigh the costs.

Yet those artists still soldier on.

Luckily for Greek Australian artists, the morale should be relatively high. It has been a good year all round and all of them should be congratulated for their hard work.

In the visual arts there's Nike Savvas for securing the most prestigious of art awards, the Australia Council for the Arts Fellowship, which comes with a \$120,000 grant for over a two-year period. That's \$60,000 a year, not much really when there's art materials to be paid for as well as domestic gas and electricity bills. Yes, imagine that, she's got to tick those daily grind boxes just

“ 2010 has been a plentiful year for Greek Australian artists, with awards and success stories aplenty ”

like everyone else.

Then there's the artist Michael Zavros winning the \$150,000 Doug Moran prize for his portrait of his daughter, titled Pheobe is dead/McQueen.

Sculptor, Konstantin Dimopoulos of Blue Trees fame has been doing remarkably well. This year he's been making

waves in America with his sculptures going up in Denver, Boston, Palm Springs and in Vancouver.

Christos Tsilokas' multi-award winning novel *The Slap* has been cast this year for adaptation for an upcoming ABC TV series, while his *Dead Europe* is being made into a feature film.



Paul Capsis starred in *The Threepenny Opera*.

Greek Australians were among the winners at the 2010 Melbourne Fringe Festival. One was for Best Comedy by comic writer and performer Vachel Spirason for his one man show *The Hermitude of Angus, Ecstatic*.

Of course there's productions that have been inspired by Greek culture, the one woman show *Sappho* written and performed by Jane Montgomery Griffiths, produced by The Malthouse that garnered rave reviews and great houses.

And what is possibly the hit of the year, the adaptation of the Greek legend, *Thyestes* winning Best Show for the Melbourne Fringe, which will also be, without a doubt, in the running for a slew of Green Room awards.

Acting stalwart Andreas Litras, of the highly successful one man show *Odyssey*, made an appearance late in the year in the critically acclaimed, but unfortunately short lived play about racism, *Yet to Ascertain The Nature of the Crime*. Hopefully this original and hilarious piece of political theatre will live to see another day.

In film it's Jason Raftopoulos, the winner of the Best Short Documentary *From Dope to Dalai Lama* for the IF awards.

Of course one of the highlights of the 17th Greek Film festival was *With Heart and Soul*, which starred and demonstrated the fine range of actress Victoria Haralambidou. That castration scene she did so masterfully will live on in memory.

The music scene has the remarkable and unwavering talent of singer Paul Capsis for his performance in the critically acclaimed production *The Threepenny Opera*.

And composer Bill Hogias has good reason to be happy for his collaboration in *Miss Bang: A Series of Seductions in 55 Minutes*, winning Best Cabaret for the Melbourne Fringe.

All of these awards for the arts are in their own way stimulation packages, some financial, and some inspirational, for those who have only themselves to motivate to keep going with their work.

As well being a salutary reminder for everyone that Apollo and his muses never intended our culture to end up being a giant money grubbing casino staring down on us from a mountain.

*Article from Neos Kosmos*



Henning Solberg and his co-driver Cato Menkerud from Norway compete during the Acropolis Rally in 2009.  
Photo: AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis

## Acropolis Rally returns

The Acropolis Rally, which is returning to the WRC calendar in 2011, will become a fully professional event, organised by Celeritas, a company set up by former driver Aris Vovos, but will once again be based at Loutraki.

A press conference in Athens heard that the 57th version of the race, starting on June 16 in Athens and concluding three days later at Loutraki, will have more organised promotion through Fairplay Sports Marketing.

Organisers are also in negotiations with TV stations to ensure coverage, with state broadcaster ERT the favourite at this stage.

“Our aim is not to make money. This is a risk we are taking, but it also a dream to see the Acropolis back on top of the World Rally Championship,” Vovos stated.

The Papandreou government has agreed to offer the event greater support, taking steps to offer it official

support.

Deputy Culture and Tourism Minister Yiorgos Nikitiadis said the Acropolis Rally will be placed under the ministry's auspices and underlined its role in promoting Greek tourism due to the international interest it attracts.

Speaking in a press conference, Nikitiadis stated that the culture and tourism ministry will support the endeavour in the future and stressed that the rally, which was cancelled this year, will have positive results for Greek tourism being part of the “Greece every week” tourism promotion programme.

The Acropolis Rally has been held for 51 years by the Greek motorsports organisation Automobile and Touring Club of Greece (ELPA), making it one of the longest-standing in world rallying.

However it did not take place in 2010 because of the financial crisis in Greece.