

Struggle, sacrifice and big fat weddings

It's time to celebrate Greece

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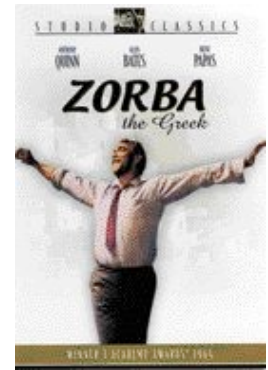
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It's been 175 years since the Greeks threw off the yoke of the Ottoman Empire, back in 1832, and tomorrow millions of their descendants will celebrate Revolution Day, commemorating the start of their people's decade-long, definitive war against the Turks in 1821.

Struggle and sacrifice are constant themes in Greek literature and cinema, and whether they occurred in ancient or modern Greece – or in countries like Canada where Greek immigrants settled – they make for compelling storytelling.

Here are a few feature films on DVD that have put Greece on the map for international audiences.

Zorba the Greek (*Greece/ U.S./Britain, 1964*) Shy British expat Alan Bates meets big-talker Anthony Quinn in this tragicomedy shot in Crete about an unlikely friendship that also changes the lives of two island women they meet. Adapted from Nikos Kazantzakis's novel with unforgettable music by Mikis Theodorakis. The Fox Studio Classics release includes an A&E Biography doc on Quinn.



Z (*France/Algeria, 1969*) Costa-Gavras's political thriller – based on the real-life assassination in 1967 of Greek politician Grigoris Lambrakis – won an Oscar for best foreign film. Iconic French actors Yves Montand and Jean-Louis Trintignant star. Montreal's Cristal Films have a fine widescreen edition in stores, though with no extras.



My Big Fat Greek Wedding (*Canada/U.S., 2002*) This comedy doesn't take place in Greece (it was shot in Toronto and Chicago), but the Old Country is never far. Like she did on stage, Nia Vardalos plays a single waitress who shakes her parents' Hellenic prejudices by romancing a non-Greek.

Troy (*U.S./Malta/Britain, 2004*) Mexico's Baja coast stands in for Turkish Anatolia in this CGI-aided imagining of the sacking of Homeric Troy. Brad Pitt stars as Achilles. Warner's two-disc, widescreen special edition has the best image, sound and extras.

My Family and Other Animals (*Britain, 2005*) Filmed in Corfu, this is a funny, fast-paced TV adaptation of Gerald Durrell's autobiographical tale about his family's pre-Second World War sojourn in Crete. Produced for Masterpiece Theatre, it stars Oscar-nominee Imelda Staunton as the widow Durrell.

Ulysses Gaze (*Greece/Germany/Britain/France/Italy, 1995*) A moving, three-hour epic in which Harvey Keitel plays a filmmaker on a quest through the war-shattered Balkans. Don't get the U.S. release, which is not widescreen; New Star, an Athens company, has a marvelous version supervised and approved by director Theodoros Angelopoulos himself (order it via the U.S. from xploitedcinema.com).

Also available by mail-order: **III Met by Moonlight** (*Britain, 1957*) A half-serious thriller starring Dirk Bogarde as a British agent sent to kidnap a German general in Nazi-occupied Crete (the Italian and French Alps and Cote d'Azur make a good substitute here). British DVD producer Carlton has the only version on the market (cheap at amazon.uk), coded for Region-2 players.

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