

# **Under the Stars**

## **Production Notes**

A Lychnari/F.A.M.E. (U.K.) Ltd. Film  
in co-production with Prooptiki S.A.  
in association with Lumiere and Wave  
with the participation of the Greek Film Centre,  
British Screen, Cinema Advisory Committee of Cyprus  
and the MEDIA Programme.

**UNDER THE STARS**

A mismatched couple illegally cross partitioned Cyprus.

Cyprus 1974. A Greek right wing military coup has overthrown the autonomous government. There has been an assassination attempt on the President of Cyprus. Meanwhile the Turkish Government is about to invade the island.

After a period of intense fighting the UN intervene and draw a Green Line through the middle of Cyprus, separating the Turkish and Greek territories. Thousands of refugees are relocated, and killed. The Green Line slices through homes, villages and the heart of the capital Nicosia.

10 year old Lukas' life is torn apart when his mother is killed during the invasion. 26 years later he lives a hermit's life in the divided city of Nicosia, haunted by memories of the past.

Enter the free-wheeling Phoebe, a smuggler who trades goods with Greeks and Turks on both sides of the border. Tempted by 600 cash, she reluctantly agrees to take Lukas back to his family village on the Turkish side of the island.

On the road this odd couple fight, argue and confront their demons. They meet a couple of Turkish footballers, a sentimental old couple, and drink with Turkish mechanics. They finally arrive at the deserted village which magically comes alive. As they dance amongst the ghosts of their long-lost relatives they both finally see a way of letting them go.

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After a period of intense battle the UN intervene and draw their "Green Line" across the middle of Cyprus, separating Turkish Cyprus from Greek Cyprus. Thousands of

refugees are moved from their homes and resettled. This “Green Line” slices through homes, villages and the heart of Nicosia.

10 year old Lukas’ life is torn apart when his mother is killed during the invasion. 26 years later he lives a hermit’s life in the divided city of Nicosia, haunted by memories of the past.

Enter the free-wheeling Phoebe: she has crossed the border a thousand times, smuggling goods from the North to the South. She trades with both Greek and Turks, doesn’t seem to have a past and works alone. Tempted by 600 cash, she reluctantly agrees to take Lukas back to his family village on the Turkish side of the island.

This odd couple sneak past the Greek Cypriot soldiers guarding the country border and drive slowly into No Man’s Land – “The dead zone”. On the other side two Turkish soldiers are waiting. They play ping-pong – if Phoebe wins, she goes through. She always wins. However, this time she has a handicap – Lukas.

Initially Lukas refuses to play – he won’t play games with Turks. Goaded into joining the frenetic game, to his satisfaction and much to the Turkish soldiers annoyance, they win!. They get back to the jeep but the one Turkish soldier taunts the other into shooting at the jeep. The bullet smashes through the window, the jeep swerves dramatically, but Phoebe gets them through.

Throughout the night they make a number of drops – a tv to an old lady, whisky to a local bar, cigarettes to the police station. Lukas gets more impatient – Phoebe is not concerned. In fact she likes winding him up.

Finally there’s just one last stop before they head to the village. Phoebe annoys Lukas even further, by picking up a couple of hitch-hiking Turkish soldiers. Lukas throws them out of the car and the couple argue furiously.

The next and last stop is an isolated farm house. To his surprise Lukas discovers that these “smugglers” are in fact a sweet old couple who make baby clothes. However, his sympathy evaporates when he realises that their “home” belongs to an old Greek man who used to live there before the invasion and now returns illegally every month to water his rose bush.

Lukas takes the side of the old Greek man, even though Phoebe reminds him that he was not the only one that suffered in the invasion

Later that night they stop and swim in a starry cove at night. Again for a moment the world round is forgotten. The moment is broken when magically Lukas seems to see his parents under the waves, happy and laughing with him. Phoebe glimpses something as well, but she runs away, refusing to admit what she saw.

On the road Phoebe drives furiously – the tyre blows and there is no spare. She spends a sleepless night in the jeep and the next morning wearily walks along the dusty landscape.

Meanwhile Lukas, disheveled from a night on the beach, bumps into our hitch-hiking Turkish friends. They push him to take part in a game of beach football. This time, he is less antagonistic and responds to their friendly enthusiasm. They drop him off at a kiosk where Phoebe is arguing with the owner. “Why did you leave me in the middle of no-where”. He realises she is still upset and instead of arguing with her tries to find someone to give them a lift.

A pick-up van with three people in the front. There isn't much space in the back either – the van is stuffed full of animal arcade rides. Riding their brightly coloured toy duck and dog Lukas and Phoebe can't escape the humour of their situation and are able to laugh at themselves and their fantastic mode of transport as they speed through the beautiful landscape.

Later that night, Phoebe Lukas and the three mechanics get drunk together. However, Lukas is reminded of his pain when he realises the mechanics were soldiers during the invasion. He goes mad, grabs a shotgun and tries to shoot one of the mechanics. They jump him – Phoebe and Lukas just manage to get away.

Once they are out of danger, Phoebe and Lukas argue terribly. He accuses her of whoring for the Turkish, she tells him that his village is dead. To prove each other wrong they finally agree to go on.

Daybreak. Lukas and Phoebe stare speechless at the ruins of their old village. Our couple wander through the half-demolished village. Sadly they realise there is nothing left for them here but dead memories.

The light is fading as Lukas and Phoebe meet up at the cemetery overlooking the sea. They are both sad and exhausted. For the first time they talk openly about stories they remember from the past. Suddenly in the sea ahead, a line of moving lights appears and heads towards the small cove at the foot of the cliff. A magical procession of people emerge from the waves, carrying lanterns, baskets and bags. The dead village has come to life in the form of a local fair.

At the fair Phoebe and Lukas dance amidst the living ghosts of their dead parents. Their memories have come to life it seems. They look at each other and kiss.

When dawn breaks, the people disappear. Phoebe runs into the surf, she wants to swim out into the sea but Lukas tells her its time to let go.

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

UNDER THE STARS tells the story of Lukas and Phoebe, a young mismatched couple who cross illegally from the Greek to the Turkish side of Cyprus. They return to their childhood village, from which they were evacuated 26 years before. Akis Sakellariou plays Lukas, a man haunted by the death of his mother during the invasion. Myrto Alikaki plays Phoebe, a freewheeling smuggler who has crossed the border a thousand times.

The director and writer is Christos Georgiou and it is produced by Sam Taylor. UNDER THE STARS is a Lychnari / F.A.M.E. (uk) Ltd production in co-production with Prooptiki SA, in association with Lumiere and Wave with the participation of the Greek Film Centre, British Screen, The Cinema Advisory Committee of Cyprus and the MEDIA Programme.

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The Director Christos Georgiou was inspired to write this story by growing up in Cyprus and coming face-to-face with the daily realities of a country in partition. After graduating from Warwick in Film and Literature, and the Northern School of Film and Television in Leeds, he won a scholarship to study at the famous Polish film academy in Lodz. Christos received much acclaim for his short films Tomasz, Grandmothers Hands and The Baptism. He was always looking for a subject to encapsulate the irony and tragedy of the Cyprus that he grew up in and was inspired to tell this through the tale of Lukas and Phoebe.

“Lukas and Phoebe represent the two extremes by which the people of the island have come to deal with the 1974 invasion. One chooses to blank out the past, the other cannot escape it. Neither is capable of looking to the future - both are incomplete. The magical procession at the end shows light coming out of the dark, it combines the world of the past and the present.” Christos Georgiou.

Georgiou wrote his story and started to look for a producer. Knowing Sam Taylor's reputation through her producing *Before the Rain* (Academy nominated for Best Foreign Film, dir. Milcho Manchevski) he approached her to come on board.

Sam Taylor became involved because of the story and the context. “In recent Europe, thousands of people have been uprooted by conflict. The story of Lukas and Phoebe represent these refugees 25 years on. Their struggle crystallizes the experiences of so many in Europe - the struggle to forget if not forgive and move on, after the fighting stops. I was also fascinated by Christos' ability to combine real experiences with magical elements. This makes the film so special - the magic enables it to transcend the politics.”

Sam and Christos took the film to British Screen who immediately came on board to fund development and then production. Simon Perry of British Screen feels that “the British were deeply involved in the partitioning of Cyprus, and it’s curious that no British films have dealt with the subject. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot community makes a significant contribution to our culture but being less vocal than other minorities it is often overlooked. This film offered an opportunity to rectify these two

things.”In Cyprus The Cinema Advisory committee also consistently supported the production from the very beginning. Prooptiki and the Greek Film Centre put the final piece of the puzzle in place.

George Lykiadopolos of Prooptiki feels that “Christos is a great up and coming talent – we are happy to support the debut feature of such a young and promising Cypriot director. We are also happy to expand our relationships with co-producers around the world”

The next step was finding the cast. Myrto Allikaki is a young star of the Greek theatre scene and won the best actress award at Thessaloniki in 1998. Akis Sakellariou a more established star in Greek Theatre Cinema and Television also won Best Actor at Thessaloniki in 1993.

UNDER THE STARS was filmed in September 2000 in numerous Cypriot locations ranging from the old city of Nicosia to the beautiful coastal resort of Pafos. The director of photography is Roman Osin who has just completed the feature film The Warrior for Film Four.

The Sales Company are representing the film in all territories around the world.

## Director's Statement

*Under the Stars* is in part a metaphor for the situation in Cyprus today.

Lukas cannot see beyond the tragedy of the events. The violence of the invasion and the continuing offence of the occupation overshadow his whole life.

Phoebe instead has rejected the events of the invasion. Dealing only with today, she tries to cut herself off from memories which only contain pain.

Neither is able to move forward into the future. Our film deals with their attempts to come to terms with the past – much as Cyprus itself must do.

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In Europe today, many refugees have been uprooted by conflict and forced to leave their homes – perhaps forever. Recent events in former Yugoslavia show this all too well. The struggle for these refugees to put back together the pieces of their shattered lives and to come to terms with the loss of their family and homes is the tragedy of the latter half of the twentieth century.

The partition of Cyprus and the effects on its inhabitants is not well known. By making a film about the effects of the partition 26 years on, we are in a way anticipating the stories of other European refugees in the future. This is why the film is so particularly important.

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This is the backdrop to our film. However, above all it is a film about individuals – Phoebe and Lukas. By following their adventures, sometimes humorous, always human, we understand their personal journey to reclaim a world that was taken from them.

## About the Filmmakers

**Christos Georgiou** (Director and Writer) was born in London U.K. in 1966 by Greek Cypriot parents. He grew up and completed his basic education in Cyprus. He received his bachelors degree from the University of Warwick in the U.K. After his graduation in 1989 he worked for a number of television and production companies in the U.K, Cyprus and Greece. In 1993 He completed his Master of Arts in Film Production, Direction at Leeds Metropolitan University in the U.K. In 1994 he was awarded a scholarship by the EEC (Tempus) to study direction at the Polish National Film School in Lodz. Two of his short film dramas, “The Baptism” and “Tomasz”, were selected by Channel Four TV for broadcast. Georgiou received the Direction award from the Company of Greek Film Directors and the Music award from the Festival Committee in Greece for his work as Director, producer and writer of “Grandmother’s Hands”. His short film, “Jal Uthna” won the “Race in the Media Award” from the Racial Equality commission in the U.K.

**Sam Taylor** (Producer) started her career at Oasis, where she was head of international sales handling such titles as Peter Greenaway’s “The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover” and “Prospero’s Books”. In 1990 she was Associate Producer on *Contact*. Sam formed Mass Productions in 1994. Her first feature as producer was Milcho Manchevski’s “Before the Rain”, which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. She also produced Benjamin Ross’ “The Young Poisoner’s Handbook” which played in Sundance and Edinburgh and received great critical acclaim. She then produced “Sweet Angel Mine”. In January 2001 Mass was acquired by F.A.M.E. AG, a German multi-media company where Sam is now head of production.

**Roman Osin** (Director of Photography) attended the National Film School in the U.K from 1991-1995. He won a cinematography award at the Texas Film Festival for his work on the short, “Sheep Thief”, which also was a runner up at the Cannes film festival. The short “Spin Drift” received the Panorama award at the Berlin Film Festival. He was also director of photography for the short film, “George and Ramona” which was selected for the London Film Festival and has just completed shooting on *The Warrior* (dir Asif Kapadia) feature film for Film Four.

**Annabel Ware** (Editor) got her start working on mainstream films as an assistant editor. One of the first films she edited was the short film, “Work Experience” which won an Oscar. She then went on to edit shorts for Channel 4 and co-edited the feature film “Madagascar Skin” with Chris Newby for The British Film Institute. She then edited the “Serpent’s Tail” directed by Kutlug Ataman.

## **About the Cast**

**Akis Sakellariou** (Lukas) was born and raised in Thessalonica Greece. He studied at the Roula Pateraki School of Theatre Arts and The Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting in Greece. Best known for his work in Greek Theatre, he has won many awards including for his most recent work in the production of “The Mystery of Irma Vep”. He has received a Best Actor award at the Thessaloniki Film Festival for his work in “Life, a Thousand and a Half Drachmas”. His work in “The Butchelor” in 1995 and “Mirupafshim” the following year, earned him Best supporting Actor awards for two consecutive years at the National Film Awards.

**Myrto Alikaki** (Phoebe) was born in Paris France. She studied theatre at the Theatro Technis Drama School in Greece. She won the Best Actress award at the Thessaloniki Film Festival in 1998 for her work in "Black Out". In the last year she has acted in “Crime and Punishment” for the Theatre Thessaloniki and for the National Theatre in Athens in the production of “Don Juan”. Ms. Alikaki is also well known in Greece for her work in television and well as theatre and film. Her television series include “Anastasia”, “Apon (Missing)”, and “The Lost Letters”.

## Crew List

Director and Writer	Christos Georgiou
Producer	Sam Taylor
Director of Photography	Roman Osin
Production Designer	Sossee Eskidjian
Editor	Annabelle Ware
Sound Design	George Triantafyllou
Composer	George Hadjineophytou
Line Producer	Panos Papahadgis
Assoc. Prod. Lumiere S.A.	Antigone Gavriatopoulou
Assoc. Prod. Prooptiki A.E.	Pantelis Mitropoulos George Lykiardopoulos
Production Manager	Panagiotis Kalakos
Story Editor	Steve Brookes
Asst. to the Producer	Sam Lavender
Advisor	Salih Eskeroglu
Unit Manager	Christos Gogakis
First Asst. Director	Elias Demetriou
Second Asst. Director	Sotiria Marini
Continuity	Aliki Panagi
Production Co-Ordinator	Elena Rolandi
Production Assistant	Isabella Georghiou
Production Designer Asst.	Dominiki Vasiageorgi
Set Builder	Nicos Kourtellides
Props Master	Panikos Tempriotis
Wardrobe	Christina Kaspari
Art Department Asst.	Christa Demetriou
Make Up	Teresa Nicolson

Sound Recordist	Panos Tsellekis
Boom Operator	Stefanos Efthymiou
Sound Mixer	Kostas Baripompiotis
Asst. Sound Designer	Aliki Panagi
Focus Puller	Claudio Bolivar
Clapper – Loader	Eleftheria Mpournousouzi
Stills Photographer	Andreas Costantinou
Steady Cam	Fotis Mitsis
Asst. Steady Cam	Elias Efstathiou
Grip	Grigoris Mavroidongonas
Gaffer	Erran Haspel
Spark	Christos Karagiogos
Electrician Genny Op	Offer Trotner
Driver	Debbie Baghdati
Caterer	Maria Aristotelous
Post Production Supervisor	Jay Coquillion
Optical Effects Designer	Matt Butcher
Grader	John Heath

## Cast List

### Starring:

Lukas Akis Sakellariou

Phoebe Murto Alikaki

### In order of appearance:

Young Lukas Stelios Onoufriou

Luka's Mother Stella Fyrogenni

Charlie Goat

Young Phoebe Nefeli Papadaki

Phoebe's Mother Christina Paulidou

Phoebe's Father Achilleas Grammatikopoulos

Lukas' Father Neoklis Neokleous

Uncle Nikos Andros Kritikos

Lukas Akis Sakelariou

Panikos Marinos Hadjivasiliou

Aleksis Sotos Stavrakis

Mrs Lenia Popi Avraam

Panikos Mother Androula Irakleous

Phoebe Myrto Alikaki

Barman Pambos Charalambous

Soldier 1 television George Mouskovias

Soldier 2 television Vasilis Michael

Soldier 1 Ping Pong Theodoros Michailidis

Soldier 2 Ping Pong Panagiotis Nedjati

Turkish Policeman Mehmet Nedjati

Woman with TV set Annig Tourian

Mehmet Christos Karaiskos

Nazim Conal Nedjati

Man – Farm House	Antonis Katsari
Woman – Farm House	Lenia Sorokou
Man with rose bush	Konstantinos Papamarkides
Petrol Station owner	Elias Demetriou
Mechanic 1	Manolis Michailides
Mechanic 2	Thanasis Drakopoulos
Mechanic 3	Petros Laghoutis
Stall Owner with Goldfish	Anthoulis Stilianou
Car Driver	Koulis Nikolaou

### Fair Musicians:

Clarinet	Simis Sioukouroglou
Laouto	George Fountos
Vocals	Eleni Kostantinou
Percussion	Giannos Kuriakides
Guitar	Aleksis Anastasiades
Mbagklama	George Kostantinou

## Contact Sheet

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