

Document Citation

Title	Alexander the Great
Author(s)	Tony Mitchell
Source	<i>Hong Kong Film Festival</i>
Date	1981
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	131
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	O megalexandros (Alexander the Great), Angelopoulos, Theodoros, 1980

Alexander The Great

(O Megalexandros)

Greece/W. Germany/ 1980

Showing from 1st Nov 1980

Director:
Theodoros Angelopoulos

Screenplay:
Theodoros Angelopoulos

Photography (colour):
Giorgios Arvanitis

Art Director:
Miké Karapiperis

Costumes:
Ghiorgos Ziakas

Music:
Christodulos Halaris

Production Manager:
Stephanos Vlakos

Cast:
Alexander
Omero Antonutti
The Stepdaughter
Eva Kotamanidou
The Schoolteacher
Grigoris Evanghelatos

The Guide
Michalis Yannatos

Italian Anarchists
Laura de Marchi
Francesco Carnelutti
Brizio Montinaro
Norman Mozzato
Claude Betan

Woman of the Village
Tula Stathopoulou

Man of the Village
Thanos Grammenos

Mr Zelepis
Christoforos Nezer

Alexander as a boy
Ilia Zafiropulos

Co-produced by
Angelopoulos Produc-
tions (Athens)/ZDF
(Munich)/RAI (Rome).
Producer for RAI:
Lorenzo Ostuni. Execu-
tive Producer: Phoebe
Stavropoulou.

Approx. 195 minutes.

Greek and Italian
dialogue/English
titles.

Source: Angelopoulos
Productions, 23-25
Daphnomili Street,
Athens 706, Greece.

The Film

On the first New Year's Eve of the 20th century, the Greek bandit Alexander seizes a party of English aristocrats and holds them hostage in a remote mountain village. The village is run as a commune, under the guidance of a group of Italian anarchists. Alexander is a mysterious figure: his birth is unknown, and so he adopts a village woman as his mother, and her daughter becomes his sister; later he marries his adopted mother, so that his step-sister becomes his step-daughter. On the wedding day, assassins hired by the ousted land-owners try to kill Alexander, but murder his bride instead. Gradually, Alexander comes to represent more than just a bandit...

From an Interview with Angelopoulos

The first thing to be said is that it's the most simple film I've made so far. Its progress is linear, and it hasn't developed its stylistic form in the course of editing like the other films. There are no chronological jumps — the film begins on New Year's Eve in 1900 and proceeds from there, except for the final sequence when the little Alexander becomes Megalexandros and goes towards the city. Which is a modern city — present-day Athens, in fact — in contrast to the rural, turn-of-the-century world of the rest of the film. When the little Alexander enters the city, he brings all the experience of the century with him. He has gained a total experience of life, sex and death, and over it there is a great question mark. How long will the night last, and when will a new day break?

It's a more surrealistic film than *The Travelling Players*. It doesn't describe real events, but their sense and meaning, and concentrates on political and sexual consequences. It's a more 'poetic' film, whereas *Travelling Players* was more concrete.

Greek people have grown up caressing dead stones. I've tried to bring mythology down from the heights and directly to the people, in both *Travelling Players* and *O Megalexandros*. The title should not be Alexander the Great but Megalexandros, who exists in popular, anonymous legends and fables and has nothing to do with the historical Alexander — he evokes a totally different personage. For this

reason, we have had difficulty in finding a translation for the title. The legend of Megalexandros originated in 1453 under Turkish domination, and it has come down through oral tradition over the centuries. It embodies one of the deepest of Greek sentiments, that of waiting for a liberator, even a Messiah — he's a kind of Christ figure, and in the film is also identified with St. George.

The film is based on two sources. One is *The Book of Megalexandros*, which is an account of the legend, and provides the general climate of the film rather than the storyline. The second, more concrete source is an actual event of 1870, when a group of aristocratic English tourists were kidnapped by Greek bandits at Marathon. The bandits held them to ransom and demanded an amnesty from the government in exchange for the hostages. The government botched the whole business, and the exchange never came about; so the tourists were killed, and a scandal erupted. The British fleet blockaded the port.
— from an interview by Tony Mitchell, published in *Sight & Sound* (Winter 1980/81)

Theodoros ANGELOPOULOS

For details of Angelopoulos' career and his filmography, please see the note on his earlier film *Days of '36*.