

have initiated their own game of *Chevalier*. Solidifying the film's allegorical dimension, this concluding scene foregrounds the question of class within a narrative dominated by conspicuous affluence. Here, too, *Chevalier's* suggestion is damning: the working classes reproduce the behaviours of the privileged, even when such attitudes are toxic and undoubtedly against their own interests. Perhaps fishing for octopus would have been a better idea. ♦

### Coming soon to Acropolis:

- *Trigonometry* (Dir. Athina Rachel Tsangari, 2020)—May 16 at Vidiots
- Short Films by Athina Rachel Tsangari (1993-2013)—May 17 at Vidiots
- *Two Seasons, Two Strangers* (Dir. Sho Miyake, 2025)—Los Angeles premiere, May 28 at 2220 Arts + Archives

# Acropolis Cinema presents:



May 6, 2026 – Los Feliz 3

# ABOUT THE FILM

Six men set out on the Aegean Sea aboard a yacht, and before long, male bonding and one-upmanship give way to a loosely defined yet hotly contested competition to determine which of them is “the best in general.” As the games and trials grow more elaborate and absurd—everything is up for judgment, from sleeping positions to cholesterol levels to furniture-assembly skills—insecurities emerge and power relations shift. As in her breakthrough *Attenberg*, Athina Rachel Tsangari balances anthropological precision with a wry and wholly original sense of humor. Impeccably staged, crisply photographed, and buoyed by eclectic soundtrack choices (Petula Clark, Mark Lanegan), this maritime psychodrama becomes both funnier and richer in its implications as it progresses. What begins as a lampoon of bourgeois machismo and male anxiety develops into an incisive allegory for the state of contemporary Greece, and leaves a final impression as an empathetic, razor-sharp study of human nature itself. *Co-presented by MUBI.*

TRT: 105 min

In person: Athina Rachel Tsangari

## Mean Men at Sea by Erika Balsom

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Petty, narcissistic, vain, manipulative: certain adjectives tend to be attached to women much more frequently than to men, a sure symptom of a misogyny as pervasive as it is under-acknowledged. And yet all might apply to the men of Athina Rachel Tsangari's brilliant *Chevalier*, a film about six friends on an octopus-fishing trip aboard a luxury yacht in the Aegean who compete to determine which among them is “the best in general”. Whether out of boredom, malice or some combination of the two, they gamify their holiday so as to both formalise and justify the selfish competitiveness that infuses their interactions, while the servants look on and discuss the proceedings. With a deadpan tenor and steely palette, Tsangari pivots away from the well-trodden territory of mean girls to cast her gaze instead on these mean boys.

The result? Like Claire Denis's otherwise very different *Beau travail* (1999), in its interrogation of masculinity and homosocial relationships, *Chevalier* emerges as that fascinating and seemingly paradoxical thing: a feminist film in which women are virtually absent from the screen.

Like the girl gangs of countless films, each man in *Chevalier* occupies a delineated position in the social landscape. The Doctor delights in his patriarchal authority, lording it over his son-in-law Yannis and younger colleague Christos, both of whom have

romantic entanglements with his daughter Anna. Long-haired Joseph is generally insouciant, seeming to care little about any aspect of the game other than the size of his erection, while his business partner Yorgos is the classical unmarked protagonist, the Carrie of the group in *Sex and the City* terms. The corpulent, somewhat infantile Dimitris, a lip-synching rock collector who lives with his mother, fulfils the requisite role of pitied outcast.

Though occasionally the men participate in ‘mini-challenges’, to use the language of reality television, a key premise of *Chevalier* is that there is no outside to the game. Absolutely every interaction and habit can be subject to scrutiny. The men examine their sagging stomachs, unflinchingly monitor each other's behaviour and purposefully undermine the self-confidence of their supposed friends. Judgements are never delivered directly but implied through passive-aggressive remarks and privately recorded in tiny notebooks.

Despite *Chevalier*'s clear concern with gender, its skewering of masculinity is perhaps less important than its broader social satire. Beyond its interest in dick measuring as both metaphor and literal activity, the film uses the limited setting of the yacht to stage a dark, absurdist send-up of the pathologies of 21st-century selfhood.

Though frequently hilarious, *Chevalier*'s vision of a quantified life of incessant surveillance and punishing self-improvement leaves little to laugh about. Like last year's *The Lobster* (with which it shares a co-writer, Efthymis Filippou), *Chevalier* proposes a scathing indictment of contemporary life through a highly contrived, claustrophobic situation. As Hitchcock recognised in *Lifeboat* (1944), the ship is a space apart, one with close historical ties to the development of capitalism, and possessing a special allegorical power to expose how life is governed at large. Whereas *The Lobster* pointed to the deep ambivalence of the monogamous couple as a basic societal unit, *Chevalier* targets neoliberalism's demand for omnicompetence, its obsession with metrics and its spurious injunction that we must not just tolerate capital's complete subsumption of life but find it enjoyable and fun, like a game.

Yorgos is awarded the prize of a signet ring following a rehearsed speech in which he declares that he feels he has already won. When one's personality is but a product on the market of individualism, such a self-validating proclamation is perhaps the most winning gesture of all. But much earlier, Joseph had both predicted and deflated this ending, telling Yorgos, “You'll win, but you won't actually win anything. Even if you win, it doesn't mean you're the best in general.”

Indeed, to name the winner is no kind of spoiler, a fact that Tsangari underlines in a masterful final sequence. Faces remain out of frame when the ring is awarded, and little attention is given to revealing the identity of the *Chevalier* in the darkness of the pier. Blink and miss it.

This strategic lack of emphasis makes way for the film's true culmination: the servants