**FILM****Health film  
festival**

Inspirational medical  
stories from around  
the world come  
together on Kos

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The closing film

STEPHEN Walker's film *Young@heart* first came out in 2008. He's now entered it into the health film festival and it's been picked as the closing film.

In the film, a chorus of senior citizens from Massachusetts takes to the stage, but they don't sing church hymns - they're more rock'n'roll than that. Think along the lines of Jimi Hendrix, Coldplay, Sonic Youth and other unexpected musicians. These are the subjects of Walker's film.

The film charts the group's journey, physically, across various theatres in the US, and spiritually, as the members come to terms with the deaths of two fellow choir singers. Walker (photo) hopes the strong subject-matter will be perfect for the festival.



"These are amazing personal stories about human beings who are right on the precipice," he says. "There's something about them which I find extraordinary. I'm too much of a coward to be like these people. When I see them, facing their mortality and death - but continuing to do what they do so well - it's incredible."

Walker stumbled across the choir completely by chance. "Just seeing people of that age group, who were able to take on board music not of their generation and sing it whilst changing the meanings, was amazing," he reminisces.

"If you see a 93-year-old woman singing 'Should I stay or should I go' by the Clash, she's not singing about relationships, she's literally singing about whether she should live or die."

# Health films on Kos

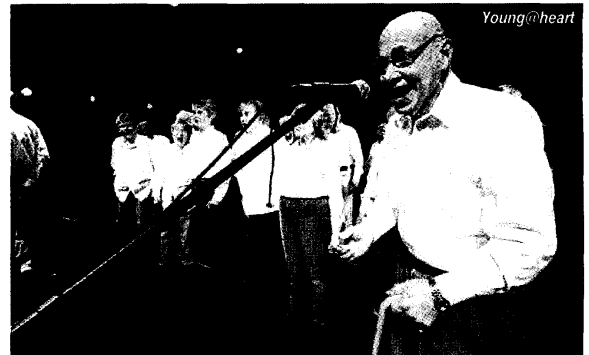
*A recently founded festival on the island of Hippocrates brings together medical stories from around the world, courtesy of a Greek film director*

By Theopi Skarlatos

IT MAY not lure Hollywood starlets or grace its guests with a red-carpet welcome, but that's not why people come to the health film festival on the island of Kos. Creativity here is inspired by meaningful stories of the soul, of human willpower and the generosity of people. It goes beyond wealth and all things material. People come here to get to the core of what life is really about.

Kos International Health Film Festival is Lucia Rikaki's baby. The filmmaker wanted to create the first meeting place for members of the health community and the film industry on the island famous for giving birth to the father of medicine Hippocrates.

"The aim is to highlight good practices in medicine, not the scandals and negative stories we are always reading about in the news", says Rikaki. "This is a platform for dialogue, where we can bring about changes to our lifestyle. New



Young@heart

films emerge from the meetings here. There are so many stories which need to be told."

She tells me we're all skating on thin ice; that even though the poets warned us about the fake chariot of consumerism, we kept on seeking wealth. Wasting time on earth and chasing money is, she points out, absolutely pointless.

"We created this festival at a time of crisis," she adds, "to suggest a way of life that could save us; to draw attention to those values with which a person can obtain equilibrium of body and soul and, therefore, good health."

The festival was founded a year ago and will be an annual event on the island.

The entries are not scientific films; it's not as straightforward as that. The work being shown in Kos falls under a big umbrella, which covers themes such as human pain, illness and ethics. This year you can be introduced to an 11-year-old who's been fighting anorexia since she was 7; hear the story of a family who travelled on horseback to Mongolia to help

their autistic son and learn how it's possible to purchase sperm and eggs online and then impregnate a surrogate in India who will eventually give birth to your built-to-spec baby.

Last year's winner of the Audience Award was *The English Surgeon*, a film which documents the dilemmas of one of London's foremost brain surgeons, as he takes on his latest mission in Ukraine.

What is it like to have life-or-death surgical powers, yet to struggle against your own humanity, the film asks. What is it like to try and save a life, and fail?

Attending the screenings is brain surgeon Henry Marsh, who is also the subject of a film shown on Kos. Summarising his experience, he says: "When push comes to shove, we can afford to lose an arm or a leg, but I am operating on people's thoughts and feelings, and if something goes wrong I can destroy that person's character... forever."

The festival will run on September 1-6 at the Orfeas open-air cinema on Kos. Admission to all screenings is free.

Horseboy



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