



LOCAL SCENES

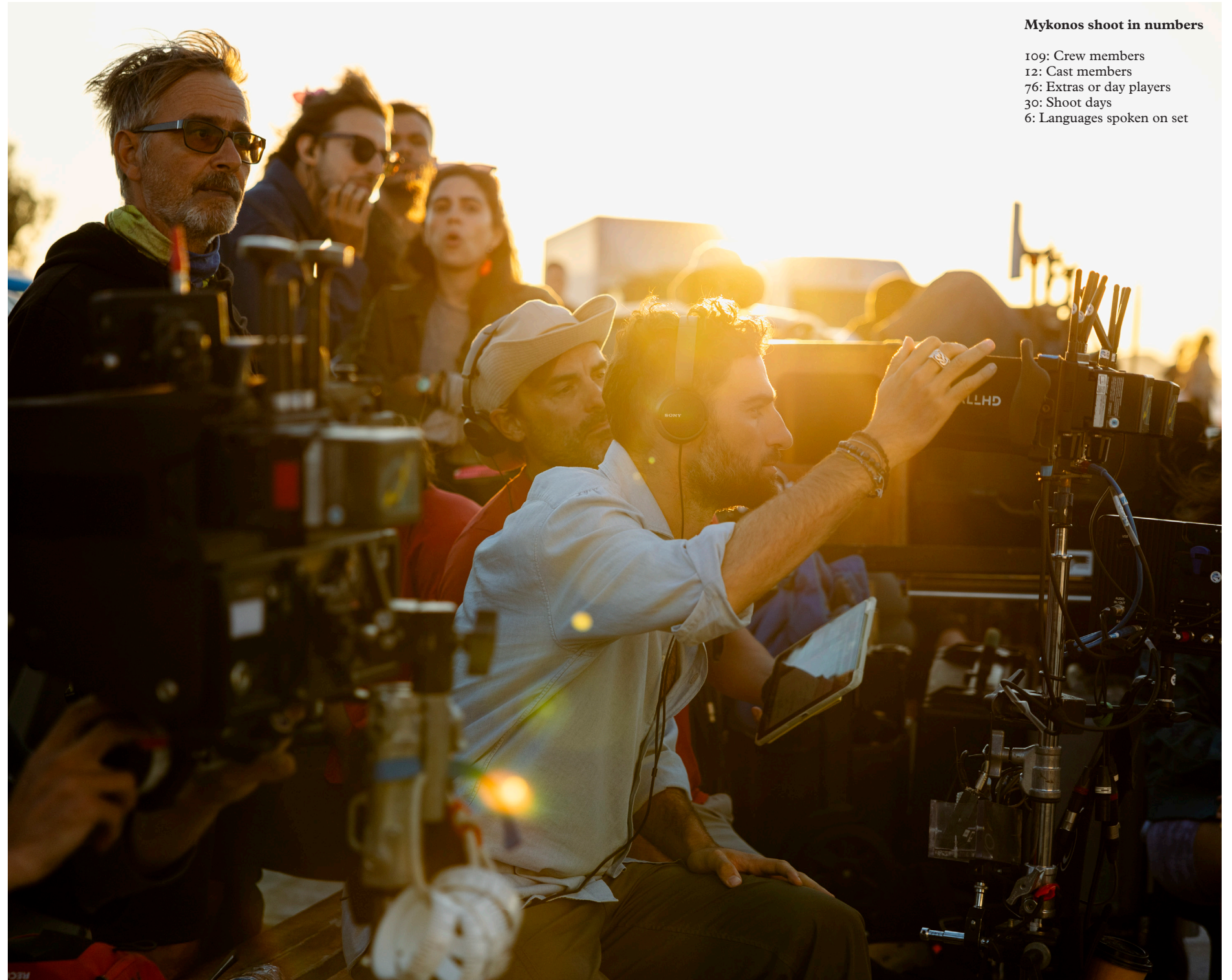
Ed Stocker REPORTING FROM *Mykonos*:

Studio Galazio is challenging traditional stereotypes about Greece through regional storytelling positioned for an international audience. Monocle heads to Mykonos for a behind-the-scenes look at the company's first full-length feature and what goes into building the country's cinematic identity.

PHOTOGRAPHER *Louiza Vradi*

It's a clear day in Mykonos and Studio Galazio is shooting its debut feature along the Greek island's port promenade. No one, however, has banked on the six cruise ships that have decided to show up, delivering hundreds of day-trippers onto terra firma. Crew members in hi-vis yellow gilets are trying to move through the crowd, redirecting those who have paused to take pictures. The film's director of photography crops the shot tighter to keep the disobedient tourists – including a Spaniard who is convinced that she has spotted Paris Hilton (she hasn't) – out of frame. "We honestly haven't had too many difficulties," says the film's writer, director and co-producer, Christopher André Marks. "Shooting live at the port was always going to be a challenge because it's so busy."

1.
First take – and not the last
2.
Christopher André Marks (wearing headphones) watching the action unfurl



Mykonos shoot in numbers

109: Crew members
12: Cast members
76: Extras or day players
30: Shoot days
6: Languages spoken on set

Sporting a half-unbuttoned shirt, Marks is rarely stationary, giving advice to his actors one minute and then shifting to watching the action on a handheld screen the next. Alongside his numerous jobs on set, he's also the founder of Studio Galazio, whose name is taken from the Greek for "light blue". This film, which everyone on the shoot is tight-lipped about, is an as-yet-untitled feature loosely billed as a heist comedy in the vein of *Ocean's Eleven*. It could see a release in late 2025.

Marks is a Greek-American raised in California who spent years working in film production in New York, including for the likes of ESPN and HBO. The 36-year-old's breakthrough moment was directing *King Otto*, a 2021 documentary about Greece's improbable triumph in the Euro 2004 football tournament under German manager Otto Rehhagel. The film was released in 75 countries and boosted the profile of Studio Galazio, whose mission to get more Greek stories on screen. "Being Greek is kind of a dominant trait; it's an inherent part of who you are," says Marks from a table at a nearby restaurant, as actors and crew break for lunch. "But I also see Greece as an opportunity."

Marks is quick to recognise that Greece is already having what some might call "a moment". The country has been steadily recovering from its 2009 economic crisis, with Athens luring investors and remote workers as a result of its relatively low

1. Filming at Mykonos's iconic windmills
2. Key movie prop
3. Lead scenic painter Apostolis Polychroniadis at the fishing village set
4. Co-producer Ginevra Tamberi
5. And... action!
5. A film shoot involves a lot of gear



cost of living and clement weather. Marks hopes to "add to the momentum" of Greek cinema, which has seen Hollywood arrive on its shores thanks to an attractive 40 per cent tax-rebate programme. There is also plenty of regional talent, from production crews to actors. Take *Poor Things* director Yorgos Lanthimos, who rose to prominence in 2009 following the success of his Greek-language film *Dogtooth*, which won the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes Film Festival. The recent popular Greek Netflix drama series *Maestro in Blue* is further proof that the talent pool is deep. Two of the show's leading figures, Klelia Andriolatou and Maria Kavoyianni, also happen to be in Studio Galazio's new production. When MONOCLE visits, Andriolatou is shooting a scene at windmills near Mykonos's port with celebrated actor Panos Koronis.

As part of its mission to showcase Greek stories, Studio Galazio combines universal themes with Greek topics, which are neatly packaged for a global audience that's increasingly comfortable with foreign content. Marks is keen to show that Greece is more than just a sunny setting for films. "The country makes for a beautiful backdrop; many foreign producers shoot here," he says, referencing features such as Richard Linklater's 2013 romantic drama, *Before Midnight*. "But what we're trying to do is showcase Greece from a storytelling perspective."

Given that the characters in Marks's *Mykonos* film are from different parts of the world, English is the predominant language as the drama unfolds. But if two Greek characters are speaking, then the scene plays out in their native tongue. Most of the crew are Greek, as are some of the producers, including basketball player Giannis Antetokounmpo, who has a production role via his company Improbable Media. But there are also Italian, French, Spanish and Turkish speakers on set. They are joined by international on-screen talent including the likes of US actor Vito Schnabel and Italy's Riccardo Scamarcio. "The ensemble aspect of the film was key for me," says Marks. "*Ocean's Eleven* was shot with Brad Pitt, Matt Damon and Bernie Mac. I really wanted to have that same kind of team, where every single actor



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"Being Greek is kind of a dominant trait; it's an inherent part of who you are"

could carry a film on their own." Still, Marks admits that the budget for the shoot is modest, though co-producer Ginevra Tamberi is quick to add that it is on a par with some other European films.

We shift locations to the interior of one of the windmills that faces the twinkling Aegean. On the day *MONOCLE* visits, it doubles as a make-up studio. Tamberi is sitting on a sofa and keen to emphasise the tightknit nature of the crew. "They have all grown so close to Chris," she says. "They see the project as a love letter to Greece – and they want to be a part of it." Tamberi has known Marks for more than a decade and the pair have always said that they would make a film together. Tamberi left a job at Amazon MGM Studios before making it happen and is sure that it was the right decision. "I believe in Chris," she says. "And I believe in storytellers. They should be given every opportunity to showcase their vision."

But Tamberi isn't the only one to have been left with a lasting impression of Marks. The film's production designer, Kostas Pappas, is in charge of scoping out and dressing sets, including a fishing village that we visit about a 30-minute drive from the windmills. Pappas is a colourful character who cut his teeth in New York and has worked on films such as *The Bourne Identity* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider – The Cradle of Life*, both of which were shot in Greece. Standing beside one of the windmills as the sun goes down, he describes being struck by Marks's humble demeanour when he first called him about the project. "For me, it was a comfortable job," he says. "What was more interesting was the way that Chris approached me. I liked his story as a Greek trying to find his roots."

While there is a lot resting on Marks pulling off the *Mykonos* heist film, it hasn't stopped him from planning future productions. He is currently laying the groundwork for two other projects: a biopic and what he calls a "prestige series", an industry phrase used to refer to complex, big-budget content. It's all part of an effort to build a recognisable brand for Greek film. "People know when they're watching French or Italian cinema," he says. "It would be great if Greece had that same kind of identity." Perhaps his *Mykonos* feature will be the first step towards making it happen. — M

Lights, camera, Athens: Projects filmed in Greece

1. **Mykonos (Title TBC), 2024**
Studio Galazio's debut follows a group of thieves as they rob rude tourists – and a love story that crosses the divide.
2. **'Maestro in Blue', 2022-present**
Netflix's first Greek series, on the island of Paxos, taps into forbidden love.



3. **'Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery', 2022**
A murder mystery set on a billionaire's private island.
4. **'Beckett', 2021**
A tourist loses his girlfriend in a car accident and is caught up in a political manhunt.
5. **'Tehran', 2020-present**
This Israeli Apple TV+ series turns parts of Athens into Iran's capital.



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1. Makeshift make-up station
2. Takes and more takes at the windmills
3. Marks is the film's writer, director and co-producer
4. Smile, you might be on camera
5. Director of photography Christos Karamanis



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