

# OF GODS AND KINGS

## THE SKYROS HORSE

A FILM BY HORSEFLY FILMS



HORSEFLY FILMS PRESENTS "OF GODS AND KINGS: THE SKYROS HORSE"  
PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY JEN MILLER & SOPHIE DIA PEGRUM  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY & EDITED BY SOPHIE DIA PEGRUM WRITTEN BY JEN MILLER  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER SCOTT BENJAMIN SCORE COMPOSED BY JUSTIN BURNETT

## SYNOPSIS

### ***OF GODS AND KINGS: The Skyros Horse***

A Documentary Film by Horsefly Films

OF GODS AND KINGS is the first in an ongoing series of informative half hour films documenting and celebrating rare equine breeds and the unique, and often vanishing, cultures around them. This film is part of Horsefly Films' lovingly-crafted film atlas of the horse and humanity.

This remarkable series of films explores the singular relationships between man and horse through history, interviews and breathtaking footage of the horses themselves. Many of these rare equine breeds are facing extinction. As well as telling the stories and distinctive histories of these horses, we as filmmakers also hope to draw attention to horses whose futures may be threatened.

The history of man IS the history of the horse. From the sword to the plowshare, through our most arduous and treacherous endeavors, humanity owes an incalculable debt to the noble horse. Not only has mankind built civilizations on the backs of horses, the equine has historically conferred prestige, epitomized freedom, and represented strength, swiftness and beauty, as well as playing into regional identity and economics.

In Greece, arguably the birthplace of modern civilization, a remarkable and ancient horse, genetically unlike any other, is facing extinction.

Showing no close relationship with any other breed, the diminutive Skyrian Horse, with their loving disposition and elegant movement, has been critically endangered for decades.

In recent history the Skyrian Horse lived wild on the mountain for half the year and worked alongside humans for the other. Mechanization has deprived the horse of their agricultural use and their natural habitat on the wild mountain vouno is also threatened by overgrazing and the looming hazard of plans for the largest wind farm in Europe.

Through informative interviews, archival photographs, sweeping photography of Greece, it's artifacts and these beautiful horses, the half hour film weaves an intimate portrait of these horses and the people who are trying to save them.

Bringing legend to life, the film also explores the distinctive historic tales of the Skyrian horse alongside scientific research, while sparking our imagination and hopefully igniting passion for these noble little horses.

The debt to history remains, these horses are an integral part of who we are, and who we become. Their fate lies in our hands.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Horsefly Films is a film production company in California whose mission and passion is to create beautiful cinematic films of horses and related horse culture. Jen Miller and Sophie Dia Pegrum, the two filmmakers behind Horsefly Films, won top honors in the renowned Scriptapalooza screenwriting competition on a joint project and have worked together since to bring their vision to the screen as a team, carving out a distinctive niche by making films about famous horses, rare horses and humanity's history and changing relationship with this special animal. Working for both private entities as well as making documentary films, Horsefly Films has received significant credit for making cinematic and compelling films in a popular niche genre, where often only well-meaning but insipid films existed.

*"What public television's guru of history documentaries Ken Burns did for the Civil War and baseball, Jen Miller and Sophie Dia Pegrum have done in their intelligent, coherent, photogenic, and beautifully-produced documentary on the history of the Polish Arabian and its survival amid the ravages of war and turmoil. I urge anyone with an interest in the breed, or the effect of geo-political systems on national identity and history, to check it out."*  
~ LA Pomeroy - International Alliance of Equestrian Journalists - on "Path to Glory"

*"It is debatable whether Sophie and Jen are horsewomen or filmmakers first. They have so effortlessly bound the art of the latter with the beauty of the former that there are no clear lines of distinction. Their films capture the magic of the horse like no other..."*  
~Samantha Mattocks -The Arabian Magazine

Horsefly Films is knowledgeable about people and their relationships with horses, how to film horses, and why this unique relationship is enduring and interesting. They have forged relationships with scientists - folks who are interested in the genealogy of the equine and are glad for this documentation, as well as social historians, who believe that societies can be described and determined by their historical relationships (or lack thereof) with the horse. They believe that the film is story-worthy, but also has sociological value. These cultures and horses will likely be gone all too soon, and so their films are a contribution to recordmaking in what they hope is a valuable and longstanding way. Despite modern technology making horses obsolete for many, the debt to history remains. They are an integral part of who we are, of who we become. By telling the stories of this rare and distinctive relationship, we can make that bond indelible.

Cutting her teeth on "Forrest Gump", Jen Miller's subsequent inauguration in the film business was producing a feature film for MGM, on which she also served as Music Supervisor and Creative Director for the publicity campaign, overseeing key art one-sheet and trailer production. She was nominated for a Key Art Award as Copywriter and Creative Director for her efforts. Over the next five years, Jen directed and produced music videos for MTV through her own production company. As a music supervisor she put together the soundtracks for several feature films for Miramax and MGM films and also free-lanced as a music supervisor, producing music for films, commercials, trailers and TV series. As a screenwriter, her screenplays won honors in the Sundance writing program and have been optioned and produced by companies such as Columbia Tristar and Stormworks entertainment. Her first novel "Billy Bones" was a semifinalist in the 2011 Amazon Next Great Novel contest.

Sophie Pegrum is a director and filmmaker who has made films in the Antarctic, at the North Pole and in the Himalayas. Co-owner of production company, Horsefly Films based in Los Angeles, Sophie is also an accomplished painter. Horsefly Films produced the award-winning documentary "Path to Glory" and have embarked on a series about rare equine breeds and the lesser-known horse cultures of the world. They also produce promotional films, training videos and commercials. Sophie wrote and directed her debut feature film "Dogstar" in 1997 and she directed and shot the documentary "77 Below" about Earth-artist Lita Albuquerque and her Antarctic Stellar Axis installation in collaboration with the National Science Foundation. Sophie traveled to the North Pole as the filmmaker and photographer in residence on Russian Icebreaker, Yamal, further documenting the artists work. Recently, she has been shooting a film in Jumla, Nepal entitled "Daughters of the Curved Moon".

## REVIEWS

### **Of Gods and Kings: The Skyros Horse**

One need not be versed in horsemanship to know the legend of Bucephalus, the wild stallion tamed by Alexander the Great as a boy, who saw its ferocity for what it truly was – fear of its own shadow. By turning its head to face the sun, Alexander tamed him. Their story belongs to the ages yet how many know Bucephalus belonged to a breed so intrinsic to the Greek island of Skyros that its DNA remains unique today among that of all other horse breeds? Or that only 90 Skyros Horses remain between that legacy and oblivion? Horsefly Films understands the implication of allowing the Skyros Horse to disappear, which is why OF GODS AND KINGS is the first in its Rare Equine Breed Series of half hour documentaries presenting thoroughly researched, historically accurate, visually compelling and eminently quotable films arguing in defense of saving the world's endangered breeds. One cannot learn the story of the Skyros Horse without agreeing with Horsefly's producers that history, and we as its curators, owe a debt to the horses of Hercules: "These horses, which should be celebrated as a Greek National Treasure, are an integral part of who we are and who we become. The debt to history remains." It's time we turn our faces, if not to the sun, than certainly to this film. **L.A. Pomeroy, Equinista**

Legend comes to life in the inspiring and informative story of the Skyrian horse, putting man's relationship with all equines into powerful and poignant perspective. I too felt part of the Skyrian horse while watching this beautiful and important film.

*Inspiring and uplifting - one is left feeling bonded to the Skyrian horse - its history, its influence and its monumentally important impact - intimately and profoundly. The story of this incredible horse reminds us once again of the debt we as humans owe the horse - our success as a species is unequivocally a direct result of our inseparable association with equines. The increased awareness, worldwide recognition and responsible expansion of this mighty little horse is essential to continued success of all equine endeavours.*

**Scott Benjamin, International Equine Consultant & Judge**

*Today, an alarming number of equine breeds face extinction. Many of these, such as the Skyros Horse, have made incalculable contributions to humanity. I applaud Horsefly Films for its efforts to increase public awareness of the plight of these noble creatures. As with past Horsefly projects, this is beautifully produced film that both educates and entertains.*

**Bill Cooke, Director International Museum of the Horse**

This is a wonderful film which I truly enjoyed. I have studied the Skyros Pony for many years but have never seen them except in still pictures. They are even more impressive than I imagined and the film showed the uniqueness of the horses. The film was technically well done, the photography striking. I especially liked the way the film linked the ancient to the modern both in images and stories, making excellent use of science in addressing some of the problems facing the horses of Skyros. The issues related to conservation of rare breeds of domestic animals were right on point both in the comments of the people on the screen and by the narrator. Not only did the film explain why many breeds become rare and threatened but it also covered ways that the threats can be mitigated. In all ways this film is excellent. I look forward to seeing future films in the planned series.

**Dr. E. Gus Cothran, Ph.D. CVM, VIBS - Texas A&M University**

## PREVIOUS WORK

**PATH TO GLORY**—Feature Documentary 2011  
Winner Best Documentary—Equus Film Festival Chicago

The Polish Arabian horse and the moving image are a match made in heaven - their beauty, their movement, grace and bravery - no other horse is so tailor-made for the alchemy that is filmmaking. The Polish story epitomizes man's story with the horse over generations - the Poles worked through the horrors of World Wars and political oppression to produce the finest Arabian Horses in the world, and with "Path to Glory" we strove to capture that stretch back through history - as well as covering the worldwide influence that the Arabian horse has had. Using historical facts, personal testimonies, archival footage and modern-day images to tell this epic saga, "Path to Glory" re-told a history from a dramatic new angle. The film "Path to Glory" is relevant to this current proposal for the following reasons - it was also borne out of the filmmakers unique perspective and knowledge that we can more interestingly illustrate the history of man through the lens of the horse - a creature that is surely one of the most cinematically impressive. "Path to Glory" became a cult hit with Arabian Horse enthusiasts, and though it tells a similar story of man's enduring relationship with the equine, we believe that OF GODS AND KINGS has a broader appeal as it could also be enjoyed as a unique saga of a historic and legendary region of the world - which also happens to be a horse culture.

For more information on the film *PATH TO GLORY*, please visit [pathtogloryfilm.com](http://pathtogloryfilm.com)



RARE: 1) *Of unusual, uncommon & distinctive quality, merit or appeal;*  
2) *superlative or extreme of its kind;* 3) *seldom occurring or found*

The *Horsefly Films Rare Equine Trust*, is dedicated to the preservation of endangered rare equines around the world, specifically through the creation of a cinematic library. There are over 600 rare equine breeds worldwide so the work is ongoing as we try and shed light on the most unique among these.

This film library takes form with the new documentary film, "**Of Gods & Kings: The Skyros Horse**", featuring the critically-endangered Skyrian Horse of remote Skyros Island in Greece.

The RARE series of films captures the beauty, history and the fragile position of rare breeds and the work of those trying to preserve them, establishing a necessary and compelling film folio for equine enthusiasts, social historians and general audiences while archiving these breeds and related cultures for posterity.

The filmmakers fervently believe the horse is a reminder of man's loftier connection to nature and many of these breeds will disappear without intervention - a great loss to humanity. Despite modern technology making horses obsolete for many, the debt to history remains. They are an integral part of who we are, of who we became, and it is our duty to preserve that bond.

The Horsefly Films Rare Equine Trust hopes to partner with other societies, museums and organizations around the world working to educate the public and shape a viable future for rare equine breeds everywhere.

## A LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKERS

As passionate filmmakers, storytellers and great lifelong admirers of the horse, creating this film has been a unique labor of love. For us, the connection between the human and the horse has always been inherently interesting—an almost mythical bond in which horses allow us a relationship, carrying us forth, imbuing us with their power as if we had wings. That union is larger than life and inspires us in our work, to always strive to capture that magic on film. The horse and the moving image are a match made in heaven—their beauty, power, movement, grace and bravery—no other creature is so tailor-made for the alchemy that is filmmaking.

After our work creating our first documentary feature *Path to Glory: The Rise & Rise of the Polish Arabian Horse*, we knew there was much in the equine world that was untapped. We were inspired to create an ongoing series of documentary films that explores truly rare equine breeds and their related cultures around the world. Our fervent underlying belief that the history of man is the history of the horse, coupled with our deep passion for creating cinematically beautiful and emotional stories drove us to create *Of Gods And Kings*, the first of our Horsefly Films Rare Equine Trust Film Library.

The horse is a reminder of man's connection to loftier nature. Our passion for this story, these people and these noble little Skyrian horses multiplied as our film grew and we connected to those involved in saving this breed. Our most fervent hope as filmmakers and horsewomen is to share this utterly unique, unknown and endangered horse with the world. To have audiences respond with a desire to get involved in rare equine preservation is the greatest achievement this film could have. We have formed our Horsefly Films Rare Equine Trust to oversee dissemination of a portion of the film's proceeds to rare equine breeds around the world and to work with museums and other organizations in that endeavor.

We are without doubt, unabashedly enthralled with the horse and we wanted to give something back to them for all they have given the world. *Of Gods And Kings* was born out of our intense desire to tell this unique story to people everywhere.

We hope you enjoy the film.

Jen Miller & Sophie Dia Pegrum  
Horsefly Films

PRODUCTION STILLS



Hermes, on the beach in Skyros, 2012



A Skyrian Herd, Katsarelias/Simpson Stud, Skyros, 2012

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A Skyrian Herd, Katsarelias/Simpson Stud, Skyros, 2012



Julieta, with a Skyrian Horse, Skyros 2012