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| Bergman, Ernst Ingmar (July 14, 1918-July 30, 2007) |
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| Perhaps *the* exemplification of the European art-film director throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s, Ingmar Bergman developed what would become an almost instantly recognizable aesthetic and catalogue of concerns—widely imitated, often satirized—in a theater and cinema career spanning seven decades. Born in Uppsala, Sweden of parents in a troubled marriage, Bergman spent his childhood largely at the home of a beloved maternal grandmother. This served in part as an escape from his relationship with his cold chaplain father. Innumerable biographical events and familial dynamics dating to his childhood would eventually be found in thinly disguised dramatic form throughout Bergman’s oeuvre, which often involves sympathetically portrayed strong and intelligent women and harshly regarded male authority figures. This is particularly the case in his final theatrical motion picture, *Fanny och Alexander* (1982) (*Fanny and Alexander*).  Bergman initially came to the cinema from the Swedish theater, where he, like Orson Welles in the US a decade earlier, managed to establish a formidable reputation by his mid-twenties. Perhaps as a result of his work for the stage, which Bergman continued throughout the rest of his life, the acting in the director’s films is always particularly impressive; not surprisingly, his films are often set in the milieu of the performing arts, with performance and creative expression as recurrent themes. |
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Bergman initially came to the cinema from the Swedish theater, where he, like Orson Welles in the US a decade earlier, managed to establish a formidable reputation by his mid-twenties. Perhaps as a result of his work for the stage, which Bergman continued throughout the rest of his life, the acting in the director’s films is always particularly impressive; not surprisingly, his films are often set in the milieu of the performing arts, with performance and creative expression as recurrent themes.  Bergman’s first motion picture credit—as screenwriter of the critical and commercial success *Hets* (1944) (*Frenzy* in the UK, *Torment* in the US)—immediately garnered fame for the twenty-six-year-old ‘angry young man’ of the theater. He managed to secure his first directorial assignment for the cinema within two years. His early work as a director often seems labored and clumsy, suggesting that had he not been working in the relatively small and uncompetitive Swedish film industry of the late 1940s, his later successes might not have materialized. When exported beyond Scandinavia, many of his early films, often concerned with youthful rebellion, were marketed as exploitation pictures. *Sommeren med Monika* (1953) (literally, ‘Summer with Monika’), for instance, was particularly successful in the United States in a cut, dubbed version promoted as ‘*Monika*, the story of a bad girl’. With *Sommarnattens leende* (*Smiles of a Summer Night* 1955), *Det sjunde inseglet* (*The Seventh Seal*), and *Smultronstället* (*Wild Strawberries* 1957) produced and released in quick succession, however, Bergman established himself as a celebrated film artist around the world.  Generally eschewing the genre traditions that many of his peer auteurs often employed—Jean-Luc Godard with ‘pop art’ gangster films, Andrei Tarkovski with intellectual science fiction—Bergman simply made dramas (or, rarely, comedies) focusing almost always on middle-class Swedes. His characters were typically found struggling with a variety of emotional and/or philosophical difficulties, attempting to find meaning and value in lives that suggest, to their increasing concern, a fundamental lack of both. Bergman’s reputation began to decline in the late 1960s due to suspicions that his work expressed misogyny, pessimism, and, simply put, an overall conservative perspective (both aesthetically and ideologically). However, the appearance of appreciative feminist, queer, and class-focused studies in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, as well as the growing popularity of a handful of films that belie reductive perspectives—the formally radical *Persona* (1966), the cinematically dazzling *Hour of the Wolf* (1968), the ultimately optimistic *Fanny and Alexander*—have ultimately restored to Bergman the status of a modernist artist of the highest rank.  Select filmography (as director unless otherwise noted)  *Hets* (*Frenzy* in the UK, *Torment* in the US) (1944) (Writer only)  *Skepp till India land* (*Land of Desire* in the UK, *Frustration* in the US) (1947)  *Fängelse* (*Prison* in the UK, *The Devil’s Wanton* in the US) (1949)  *Törst* (*Thirst*, initially *Three Strange Loves* in the US) (1949)  *Till glädje* (*To Joy*) (1950)  *Sommarlek* (*Summer Interlude*, initially *Illicit Interlude* in the US) (1950)  *Sommaren med Monika* (*Summer with Monika* in the UK, initially *Monika* in the US) (1953)  *Gycklarnas afton* (*Sawdust and Tinsel* in the UK, *The Naked Night* in the US) (1953)  *Sommarnattens leend* (*Smiles of a Summer Night*) (1955)  *Det sjunde inseglet* (*The Seventh Seal*) (1957)  *Smultronstället* (*Wild Strawberries*) (1957)  *Ansiktet* (*The Magician*) (1958)  *Jungfrukällan (The Virgin Spring)* (1960)  *Såsom i en spegel (Through a Glass Darkly*) (1961)  *Nattvardsgästerna (Winter Light)* (1963)  *Tystnaden (The Silence*) (1963)  *Persona* (1966)  *Vargtimmen (Hour of the Wolf)* (1968)  *Skammen (Shame)* (1968)  *Beröringen (The Touch)* (1971)  *Viskningar och rop (Cries and Whispers)* (1972)  *Scener ur ett äktenskap (Scenes From a Marriage)* (1973)  *Trollflöjten (The Magic Flute)* (1975)  *Ansikte mot ansikte (Face to Face)* (1976)  *Das Schlangenei (The Serpent’s Egg)* (1977)  *Herbstsonate (Autumn Sonata)* (1978)  *Aus dem Leben des Marionetten (From the Life of the Marionettes)* (1980)  *Fanny och Alexander (Fanny and Alexander)* (1982)  *Efter repetitionen (After the Rehearsal)* (1984)  *Den goda viljan (The Best Intentions)* (1991) (Writer only)  *Söndagsbarn (Sunday’s Children)* (1992) (Writer only)  *Enskilda samtal (Private Confessions)* (1996) (Writer only)  *Trolösa (Faithless)* (1999) (Writer only)  *Saraband* (2003) |
| Further reading:  (Bergman)  (Bergman, The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography)  (Björkman and al)  (Blackwell)  (Cowie)  (Gado)  (Hubner)  (Humphrey)  (Koskinen)  (Simon)  (Singer) |