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ANDERSSON

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

SWEDISH (1966). * *Title Translation:* "SASOM I EN SPEGEL." AN INGMAR BERGMAN FILM for SVENSK FILMINDUSTRIE. Released in the U.S. by JANUS FILMS. Directed and Written by INGMAR BERGMAN. Photography: SVEN NYKVIST. Music from JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S "SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR;" Played by ERLING BLONDAL BENGTSSON. Art Direction: P.A. LUNDGREN. Editor: ULLA RYGHE. Sound: STIG FLODIN and STAFFAN DALIN; Sound Effects: EVALD ANDERSSON. Costumes: MAGO. Swedish dialogue, English subtitles. 91 Mins.

Karin HARRIET ANDERSSON
David GUNNAR BJORNSTRAND
Martin MAX VON SYDOW
Minus LARS PASSGARD

Synopsis

Recently released from a mental institution, a young schizophrenic named Karin is spending the summer on an isolated island in the Baltic. With her are her father, David, a self-centered author who is horrified to discover that his interest in his daughter's malady is more professional than personal; her husband, Martin, who, although a doctor, is unable to either help or comfort his wife; and her 17-year-old brother, Minus, an adolescent just awakening to sex. During most of her seizures, Karin imagines she hears voices from behind the wallpaper telling her that God will soon walk through the door and offer her salvation. After learning from her father's diary that her illness is incurable, she lapses into a fit and seduces the young Minus, an experience that leaves him shocked into a muted silence. Karin's voices then tell her

that God is about to appear. But all that comes through the door is a giant, black spider. Terrified ("I have seen the face of God"), she suffers a total mental breakdown, so violent that her father and husband are forced to restrain her until an ambulance arrives. When she has been taken back to the institution, the confused Minus turns to his father for an explanation. Realizing that each of them has failed the other by not giving completely of themselves, David tells his son that love is man's only salvation. As he leaves Minus, the boy, filled with wonder, exclaims "Father talked to me!"

Critique

SATURDAY REVIEW. "A study in insanity that is at once touching, horrifying, and inspiring...I can think of no previous Bergman work so direct, so simple, so precise in its effects, and so unequivocal in its meaning. He seems deliberately to have eschewed the symbolism, the convoluted flashbacks, and the lush imagery of his most popular films to create a new style with its own rewards — all sinew and bone, stripped down to the essentials. Its story takes no sudden tangents; its conclusion is stated with unabashed baldness. This does not mean, however, that Bergman has given us an easy entertainment. Quite the contrary. He develops his theme with an agonizing deliberateness, drawing his audience slowly into the private hell of each of his four protagonists...Bergman's film unfolds with all the uncompromising, unhurried, slow-gathering momentum of Dreyer's *Ordet*. Like *Ordet*, it works within a narrowly circumscribed group of characters while examining the same questions of God, faith, and love. But where the Dreyer film rose to its climax in the passing of a miracle, Bergman reaches his height in the most horrifying delineation of a mental breakdown ever put on the screen. Ironically, Dreyer moves from his miracle to a finale of despair, while Bergman follows madness with a ray of hope. As always, performances in the Bergman film are impeccable. As always, Bergman stages his scenes with a keen perception of the camera's capabilities...This time, however, Bergman the writer seems to have dominated Bergman the director. More of the story is told in extensive and explicit dialogue than through suggestive, elliptical camerawork. I must confess, however, I find both Bergmans equally fascinating. Bergman has always been able to handle violence, nudity, even rape in his pictures without making them appear tossed in for audience titillation. (In *Darkly*, Karin actually seduces her younger brother in one of the most tastefully handled sequences of the film.)" *Arthur Knight* (3/17/62).

THE N.Y. TIMES. "Swedish director Ingmar Bergman seems to be turning more and more into himself — or, at least, into a type of picture-making that economically packs a rather limited but powerful personal experience within a com-

* The film just won the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film of the past year.

paratively narrow frame. Such was his simple, impassioned and strongly moralistic *The Virgin Spring*. And such is *Through a Glass Darkly*... Here, in this tightly constructed and starkly realistic little film, Mr. Bergman is tensely exposing some aspects of shock and tragedy that evolve from the painful paroxysms of a young woman going mad... They burst in a horrifying display of violent madness and spiritual voiding that makes one's senses reel. The conclusion is an exchange of conversation about God between father and son that, for all its solemn sound of deep simplicity, brings the curtain down with a hollow thud. Like all — or most — of Mr. Bergman's pictures, this one may be dissected and scanned for profound implications and pregnant symbols of the loneliness and hunger of the human soul. Guidelines may be found in the frightened gropings and warped illusions of a dark, disordered mind to lead one to a harsher awareness of the tricks the mind can play upon man... This and more may be drawn from the drama, if one has the inclination and the wits (and the psychological sensitivity) to feel around for it. Mr. Bergman has laid out the materials upon a narrow and forbidding plateau and has got some magnificent performers to give light and shadow to it. Harriet Andersson is beautifully expressive of the haunting awareness, the agony of madness, that move the girl. In one scene, where she takes leave of her senses, she does a masterpiece of marbling her face. Through her, one sees the mysteries that move within the dark glass of the soul. They are barren and still mysterious, rootless and bewildering, but there they are... [*Through a Glass Darkly*] may strike one as slight and disappointing alongside the intellectual magnitude of such as his film *The Seventh Seal*. But it suggests a new mood of its author — introspective, troubled, cold. It seems to seek faith — and yet is without faith." Bosley Crowther (3/14/62).

THE NEW REPUBLIC. "The trouble with [*Through a Glass Darkly*] is that its themes are undefined and its resolution unconnected with them. The father is an egotist, more interested in his writing than his family, to whom even the daughter's illness holds horrible promise as material for his art. But the results of his egotism are not explicitly dramatized. The son does not seem an especially deprived child; his unhappiness is not much more than that of any sensitive adolescent, adored or otherwise. Although the daughter must be affected by the father's central coldness, we cannot believe it is the cause of her trouble. In daily discourse he is affectionate enough; besides, she is enfolded in the perfect love of her husband. Are we to understand that the father's egocentricity is the dynamic of the situation (as it was in *Wild Strawberries*)? Then why does the film concentrate on the daughter's anguish and hallucination and make the father's

story quite secondary? In fact, the father is going through a hell of his own, deriving from a middle-age crisis in morale, and it would be perfectly just to accuse the others of lack of sympathy on *their* part. In the last scene, where the boy is left shattered and baseless, he asks his father whether there is any reality in life. The father's answer is love — either the giving or receiving of it, but love as the one foundation of reality... But we are still left wondering how the father arrived at that belief through the progress of the film or, if it was always in him, what use it was to him if it had so little application in his life. Unlike Antonioni, who has turned his back on formal dramatic structure, Bergman gives us the feeling that he seeks a relatively formal structure and in some measure fumbles it. This new film is a Strindbergian study in mental torment and non-communication at close range, but without the unity and cumulation it leads us to expect. The result is a collection of gripping scenes, always carrying an underlying sense of breast-to-breast confrontation with Jacob's angel, but no clear contest, no decision. It is almost superfluous to note that the film is beautifully made: visually exquisite, ingeniously knit. Harriet Andersson's performance of the deranged girl is stark, beleaguered, volatile; she seems at the end virtually to exude an odor of unhealth and agony. Gunnar Bjornstrand, her father, adds to the glacial element of the son in *Wild Strawberries* a *malaise* that gives the novelist greater richness and makes the cold elements themselves more affecting. Max von Sydow shows further versatility as the patient husband. Even in the way he runs he delineates character — as unlike the Knight in *The Seventh Seal* as are the two centuries. Lars Passgard, the son, is adequate. After all, however, it is the visual and emotional tonality we remember, not the theme. For the eye and for the spirit, it is a study in varying shades of gray." Stanley Kauffmann (3/26/62).

THE N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. "*Through a Glass Darkly* is Ingmar Bergman's latest, easily vintage Bergman, the best since *The Virgin Spring*, and with that earlier film's deceptive simplicity... If Bergman uses dialogue with an acute sense of imagery, his camera, exploring the girl's tormented face or the tear in a patch of wallpaper, uses imagery as a means of projecting with equal acuteness the thought processes, the bumping of brain against brain. And his lucid photography uncovers one handsome landscape after another, impregnated with the salt smell of the sea, the feel of the grass, the sandy earth. These elements somehow invade and characterize the people, at once sharpening by contrast the hallucinations of the woman and somehow calming, balancing the torture endured by those who surround her. It has been remarked often enough that Bergman has a

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