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Scener ur ett äktenskap (Scenes from a marriage), Bergman, Ingmar, 1974

Sommaren med Monika (Summer with Monika), Bergman, Ingmar, 1953

Tystnaden (The silence), Bergman, Ingmar, 1963

The second coming of Bergmania: Six takes on a Swedish master's spiritual investigations

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INGMAR BERGMAN
Through July 1
Film Forum

NEXT TO GODLINESS



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THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

June 2

The first crepuscular salvo of Bergman's "God and Man" trilogy (all three are available in a DVD set from Criterion), this mysterious chamber wail from 1961 stands on its own, and might be the gnarliest joint of psychodrama in the man's portfolio. The proverbial Family has, by now, degenerated to three men—a father, a husband, a younger brother—and a single, clinically insane woman, vacationing on the edge of the world together as the sky's Godless ceiling closes in. It's a movie as primal scream lab, and as the hub of this troubling wheel of interrelationships, Harriet Andersson earned the actor's Nobel of our dreams with this one film. Grief-crippled father Gunnar Björnstrand, with a single scene in the darkened beach house, stakes a claim for the decade's most heartfelt supporting performance. This is Bergman's horror movie, equal venom doses of Poe and Kant—a nightmare of love that climaxes at an extraordinary, bloodcurdling pitch with the slow opening of a closet door. **MICHAEL ATKINSON**

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

June 3

In the same year (1973) that *The Mother and the Whore* looked at bohemian Parisians mucking their way through dissatisfying trysts in the wake of the 1960s, Ingmar Bergman's six-part Swedish TV drama, *Scenes From a Marriage*, turned the camera in another direction, onto a "ridiculously bourgeois" couple who have traded their activist pasts for posh interiors and offstage children. The ties between scientist and poetaster Johan (Erland Josephson) and divorce lawyer Marianne (Liv Ullmann, never more beautiful) unravel, as in Edvard Munch paintings, in close-ups of repressed sound and fury at last emerging. The three-hour edit familiar to American audiences is a relentless nightmare of uncoupling worth more

Birgitta Valberg, von Sydow in *Virgin Spring*

schadenfreude per minute than any reality-TV courtship. But as shown here in its five-hour entirety (Criterion's new DVD includes both versions), *Scenes* is a more compassionate experience, a novelistic account of two desperate souls learning across decades to share their inescapable loneliness. **BENJAMIN STRONG**

MONIKA

June 10

While *Monika* (1952) is generally viewed here as a minor early work, French critics have always placed it high in the Bergman canon. A bittersweet study of a doomed youthful love affair, *Monika* is without a false note. No sighs, whispers, whimpers, or existential angst. Lars Ekborg and Harriet Andersson are confused, gauche, poorly educated, and live in chaotic family environments. A compulsive gum-chewer addicted to trashy movies, she's more than a bit of a slut—and he loves her. Fed up with their lives in Stockholm, they take off for an island. It's summer and they're Adam and Eve in the Garden. But by autumn, they're broke, she's pregnant, and when they return to a dreary apartment in town, their idyll has turned into a sad chronicle of the death of love. Andersson, who had never played a major role before, charges the film with precocious sexual power. This marvelous actress, who became a principal figure in his close-knit repertory company, was never more striking than in *Monika*. Incidentally, it's the only film in which Bergman successfully portrayed working-class characters. **ELLIOTT STEIN**

THE SILENCE

June 16

Bergman's allegorical working-out of his pained relationship with his mother, *The Silence* was tremendously popular when released in 1963—a year from the shank of the

art house age, when on-screen metaphysics tacitly promised compensatory portions of nudity and dwarves, both in short supply on big screens stateside at the time. There are unforgettably dreamy sequences in this unhurried story about a young Warholian sissy-boy, his rutting bombshell mother, and his cerebral-but-tubercular aunt who get stranded in a vast deserted hotel in an unnamed Euro-nation shivering with the Cold War rumblings of tank maneuvers. Gunnel Lindblom as the mother makes the ambiguousness of her weird beauty irrelevant as she marches out a performance that's absolutely tumescent with carnality. Every possible incestuous permutation is flirtatiously projected onto this unlikely triangle, and wherever in the world they may be, the humidex sure keeps them sweaty. The movie feels more programmed with symbols than inhabited by humans, but the formally gorgeous camera work and the vibrating austerity of the soundtrack create atmospheres of loneliness and despair as powerful as anything in the master's filmography. **GUY MADDIN**

THE VIRGIN SPRING

June 18 and 19

Deep in the Swedish forest, we happen upon another of Death's sick-joke chess games, a volley of brutally pure oppositions: shadows and sun dapples, fire and water, man and the elements—the most arresting image in *The Virgin Spring* (1960) captures peasant father Max von Sydow battling to subdue a birch tree. A swinish pair of goatherds rape and murder a blond, apple-cheeked churchgoer while her dark and feral, pregnant half-sister looks on in agony and ecstasy; and then the will of the divine scorekeeper turns the tables and tightens the screws. (But what of the little boy also present at the scene of the crime, who is harrowed for the sin of witness—sickened by any nourishment that comes near his lips, like the God-scourged wraith in *The Violent Bear It Away*?) Bergman's affinities with Dreyer were never stronger than in this transcendent adaptation—or sublimation—of a medieval Swedish ballad. The director would later ponder the possibility of a void where the heavens should be in his "God and Man" trilogy, but *Spring* is a stark and stunned contemplation of a world in which God is very much alive, and yet everything is permitted. **JESSICA WINTER**

HOOR OF THE WOLF

June 23

Bergman's Gothic propensities were an embarrassment to some of his more deep-dish admirers back in the day, but films such as *The Magician* (1958, screens June 20 and 21) and *Hour of the Wolf* (1968, also newly available on MGM DVD) hold up a lot better than, say, the missing-God melodramas. Here, painter Max von Sydow (anguished, yes) and girlfriend Liv Ullmann set up a homestead in an island cabin off the coast of Sweden, only to be set upon by a crowd of aristo-ghouls (decadent, you bet) including a bloated Lugosi ringer and an old woman who "keeps threatening to take her hat off" ("She has no face!"). Push all thoughts of an allegory for the artistic process to the back of your mind, step on them hard, and you're left with a pretty solid horror film, with intermittent drafts of the truly *unheimlich* that make it clear why the film should be a David Lynch favorite; a few of the ghosts' American cousins turn up to offer obscure advice to Laura Palmer in the great, neglected *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. **B. KITE**