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GOTHENBURG

ANGELS OF THE UNIVERSE

(ENGLAR ALHEIMSINS)

(ICELAND-NORWAY-GERMANY-
SWEDEN-DENMARK)

An Icelandic Film Corp. (Iceland)/ Filmhuset (Norway)/Peter Rommel Prods., SDF-Arte, ORB (Germany) /SVT (Sweden)/Zentropa Prods. (Denmark) production. (International sales: Trust Film Sales, Hvidovre, Denmark.) Produced by Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. Co-producers, Egil Odegaard, Peter Rommel, Peter Aalbaeck Jensen, Anna Maria Karlsdottir, Gunnar Carlsson.

Directed by Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. Screenplay, Einar Mar Gudmundsson, from his own novel. Camera (color), Harald Paalgaard; editors, Sigvaldi Karason, Skule Eriksen; music, Hilmar Orn Hilmarsson; art director, Jon Steinar Ragnarsson; costume designer, Helga I. Stefansdottir; sound (Dolby Digital), Kjartan Kjartansson. **Reviewed at Gothenburg Film Festival**, Jan. 28, 2000. Running time: 95 MIN.

Paul Ingvar E. Sigurdsson
Oli Beatle Baltasar Kormakur
Viktor Bjorn Jorundur Fridbjornsson
Peter Hilmir Snaer Gudnason
Paul's mother Margret Helga Johanssdottir
Paul's father Theodor Juliusson

By GUNNAR REHLIN

An Icelandic version of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," Fridrik Thor Fridriksson's "Angels of the Universe" is a moving and captivating story of a man's gradual descent into madness and destruction. Fridriksson directs with an exemplary mix of reality and dreams, and, despite the tragic nature of the story, pic should do very well on the fest circuit with some arthouse exposure also indicated internationally.

Scriptwriter Einar Mar Gudmundsson has adapted his own book, the true story of his brother. Paul (Ingvar E. Sigurdsson) is a young man who lives with his parents in Reykjavik, dreams of becoming a painter and is interested in music. He's courting a girl from the upper classes and meets stiff resistance from her parents.

Paul complains about increasing pains "in the heart." He starts to behave erratically, and in the end his parents have no alternative but to commit him to the local psychiatric hospital.

There he encounters a bunch of very colorful individuals. Oli Beatle (Baltasar Kormakur) believes he

wrote all the songs by the Fab Four and sent them to the group in the form of telepathic messages. Viktor (Bjorn Jorundur Fridbjornsson) is both educated and well brought-up but sometimes thinks he's Hitler. And Peter (Hilmir Snaer Gudnason), who shares the same room as Paul, has gone crazy from too many drugs. He longs for kids but his ex-wife has a restraining order against him.

Paul makes friends — and enemies — within the hospital, where it is more a question of keeping the patients locked up than really trying to cure them. However, sometimes the patients are allowed to leave the compound, and one evening Paul, Oli Beatle and Viktor walk to the nearby town by themselves. After ordering a deluxe meal at the fanciest restaurant, they light some cigars, call for the head waiter and quietly tell him to call the police as they have no money.

It's a very funny scene, and typical of the film's overall tone, which is basically tragic but mixes in a sardonic black humor that helps to make the film accessible. As in many of his previous pics, Fridriksson also introduces supernatural elements without any warning: In one sequence where Paul is pursued by the police, he runs into a river and starts walking on water. Police have to wade in to get him, but no further mention is made of his feat.

Aided by ace d.p. Harald Paalgaard and excellent use of sound, Fridriksson has made a beautiful film with several images that stick to the ribs. And like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," it clearly states, though without using a sledgehammer, that this is no way to treat sick people.

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