

## Document Citation

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**ALF SJÖBERG**  
**June 9-27, 1995**

**Saturday, June 10 at 2:00**

**Thursday, June 15 at 6:00**

**BARA EN MOR (ONLY A MOTHER).** 1949. Sweden. Produced by AB Svensk Filmindustri. Directed by Alf Sjöberg. Screenplay: Alf Sjöberg, based on Ivar Lo-Johansson's "Bara en mor". Cinematography: Martin Bodin. Film Editor: Oscar Rosander. Set Design: Nils Svenwall. Music: Dag Wirén. Sound: Per Olof Pettersson. In Swedish, English subtitles. 99 min.

With Eva Dahlbeck (Rya-Rya) Ragnar Falck (Henrik), Ulf Palme (Hammar), Hugo Björne (Eniel), Åke Fridell (Inspector), Mona Geijer-Falkner (Emili), Max von Sydow (Nils), Margareta Krook (Berta), Mimi Pollack (Erika Rost), Elsa Widborg (Barnman's Wife), Olof Widgren (Father of Rya-Rya), Signe Eklöf (Mother of Rya-Rya), Ulla Smidje (Cecilia), Sif Ruud (the Teacher), Ernst Brunman (Chairperson of Schoolboard), Gun Arvidsson (Mathilda), Birger Lensander (Häger), Erna Ovesen (Hägran), Nils Hultgren (Alm), Ulf Andersson (Otto, at age 10), Jan-Olof Strandberg (Otto, at age 20), Björn Montin (Elis, at age 6), Sten Mattson (Elis, at age 18), Hans Edelskog (Stig, at age 12), Mona [Malm] Eriksson (Anna, at age 14), Rita Sandström (Anna, as an Adult), Aurore Palmgren, K. Bökman, Tryggve Jerneman, Uno Larsson, Emmy Albiin, Astrid Bodin, Gunnar Collin, Svea Holst, Valfred Andersen (Agricultural Laborers), Theodor Berthels (House-to-house Peddler), Svea Holm (Adèle), Birgit Hemmingson (Jenny), Lena Bergström (Gärda), Gösta Qvist (Håkansson), Arne Källerud (The Photographer), Anna Gräber (Lady at Photographer's), Knut Frankman (Accordionist at the Dance), Vincent Jonasson (Salesman), Björn Näslund, Lars Anjou (Two Schoolboys), Anders Andelius (Conscript Soldier), Rune Stylander (Guardsmen), Yvonne Eriksson (Little Girl)

"This is a film about loneliness - no theme is more adequate for our times: our total, individual helplessness." ---Alf Sjöberg, *Biografbladet* nr 3, 1949

"Sjöberg has in ONLY A MOTHER created a master piece on the theme of loneliness and solidarity. Rya-Rya is the first of Sjöberg's several psychological portraits of women characterized by being individuals strongly connected to their environments, yet simultaneously timeless and universal. These women are found in MISS JULIE and KARIN MÅNSDOTTER as well as, partially, in BARABBAS. For Eva Dahlbeck, Rya-Rya was her definite breakthrough as a film actress." ---Hugo Wortzelius, *Filmboken*, part 2, 1953



"(...) BARE EN MOR (ONLY A MOTHER, 1949) is Sjöberg's greatest achievement in this direction. The story of a woman's life and of a social class (the statarna, itinerant field workers whose condition was abolished only in the 30s), the film chronicles several decades of personal and collective drama with great richness of episode and character, with that ample 'breath' of nineteenth-century realist fiction which was the model for Ivar-Lo Johansson's novel. Thanks to Eva Dahlbeck's strength and transparent beauty the mother figure emerges as one of Sjöberg's recurring archetypes -- a life force that can endure physical pain as well as the shattering of her modest illusions. It is remarkable, though, that Sjöberg should have conveyed a sense of time passing, of people changing, of places abandoned and returned to, through a narrative that stresses the main character's submission to unmanageable forces to the point of enforcing a rigid continuity, an almost hypnotic chain of cause and effect between the film's episodes." --- Edgardo Cozarinsky, Cinema, A Critical Dictionary, Ed. Richard Roud, 1980.

"The Swedish welfare state did not spring into being overnight. The Social Democrats had won power in 1932, but even into the late 1940s many unjust practices survived. In ONLY A MOTHER, Sjöberg dramatizes the plight of the so-called statare -- agricultural workers who lived together in gypsy-like communities and who were exploited (or at best tolerated) by the big landowners. They were paid partly in cash, partly in kind. Rya-Rya (played by the young Eva Dahlbeck) suffers the typical life of a statare, giving birth to one child after another and eventually dying from sheer fatigue and lack of hope. But ONLY A MOTHER never becomes a sombre tract. From the vigor of the country dance at the start of the movie, Sjöberg finds the pulse of this bucolic tragedy, and makes excellent characters of the drunken husband, Henrik, and the cynical, grasping steward. Nothing can take the film away from Eva Dahlbeck, however. She dreams not only of her vanishing youth but also of escape from the toil and humiliation of her life on the farm. One can well understand why Bergman cast her in his great films of the 1950s." ---Peter Cowie, notes for film program in connection with New Sweden, 1988.

**Alf Sjöberg: Filmmaker** is presented in conjunction with the Bergman Festival.

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