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## After the rehearsals: Bergman's 1982 career summation

### **FANNY AND ALEXANDER**

Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman

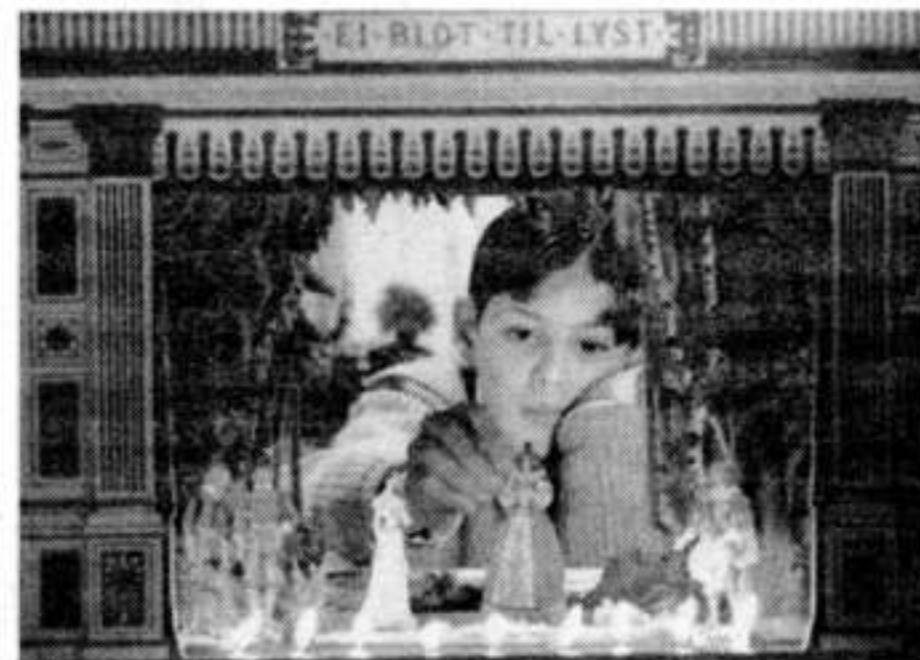
Janus

May 21 through 27, Film Forum

**O**f the Art Film—era über-auteurs, Fellini, Antonioni, Godard, Truffaut, Kurosawa, and Buñuel remain potent currency in one form or another (new work, old scripts, reissues, docs, tributes, etc.), but Ingmar Bergman seems to have faded dramatically from view. Clearly now, the respect he received was always on the verge of dissolving into contempt; going back as far as the 1968 short *De Döva*, things “Bergman-esque”—overt psychological symbolism, brooding seriousness, spiritual crisis, Scandi-angst—have been grist for farce. The grim Swede may have seemed to be an indomitable voice, but in today's cultural market, he's a nowhere man.

Still, fashion will not win in the end, and Bergman, a classical giant with modernist ordnance, will re-emerge as essential for all ages. Film Forum's upcoming retro will prove the point, but so would *Fanny and Alexander*, Bergman's 1982 career summation and the kind of rich, timeless, cautionless magnum opus we can only receive, like benedictions, from artists who've paid their generation's dues of sweat, risk, tears, and honesty. *F&A* views the oceanic heavings of a close-knit theater family circa 1907 from the perspective of the eponymous lad, from warm holiday memories through a medieval stepchildhood and beyond.

Exploring his own psycho-aesthetic roots and how they sprouted in his earlier films (the iconography, from household spaces made menacing to ghosts and suggestions of God himself, virtually catalogs the '50s-'60s filmography), Bergman locates a generosity and élan that make *F&A* feel like his youngest film. Pity that the five-hour-plus Swedish



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### **Theater family: Alexander (Bertil Guve)**

TV version isn't being given a screen—reportedly, Bergman himself prefers the three-hour theatrical version, but for me, the more of this royal banquet the better. (The curious can seek out the 309-minute British DVD edition.) For the enviable Bergman initiate, this is the spring's main event. **MICHAEL ATKINSON**

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