

## Document Citation

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## Englar alheimsins

### Angels of the Universe

**Fridrik Thor  
Fridriksson**

ICELAND/NORWAY/GERMANY/  
SWEDEN/DENMARK, 2000

95 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Icelandic Film  
Corporation/Filmhuset/Peter Rommel  
Film Production/ZDF/ARTE/ORB/  
SVT/Zentropa Productions**

Producer: **Fridrik Thór Fridriksson**

Screenplay: **Einar Már Gudmundsson**

Cinematographer: **Harold Paulgaard**

Editor: **Sigvaldi J. Kárasen, Skule Eriksen**

Principal Cast: **Ingvar E. Sigurdsson,  
Baltasar Kormákur, Björn Jörundur  
Fridbjörnsson, Hilmir Snaer Gudnason**

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In the tradition of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* comes *Angels of the Universe*, the latest film by acclaimed Icelandic director Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. Based on scriptwriter Einar Már Gudmundsson's book about his schizophrenic brother, it is a brilliant and ultimately damning portrayal of an all-too-often ambivalent psychiatric world. With a skilled hand, Fridriksson blurs the line between sanity and madness, and casts doubt on how we come to decide which is which.

When we first meet Paul he seems to be living a normal, well-adjusted life with his parents in Reykjavik. He is interested in art and music, and has just begun a relationship with the girl of his dreams. But things are not always what they seem – there are hints that something might be terribly wrong in Paul's world. When his behaviour becomes increasingly erratic, it seems his parents have no choice but to commit him.

Now in the care of the local psychiatric hospital, Paul sets about befriending some of his fellow "patients." There's Óli Beatle – he wrote all the Beatles' songs and sent them to the Fab Four via telepathy. There's Viktor, a literate, articulate gentleman from the best of families – so what if he thinks he's Hitler once in a while? And of course, there is Paul's roommate, Peter, who, after years of drug abuse, now spends his days trying to convince others of his imagined trips to China and "expert" knowledge of the work of Friedrich Schiller.

By portraying the day-to-day actuality of living with schizophrenia, Fridriksson avoids defining his characters simply by their "sickness," for beneath this outward appearance is buried incredible compassion and sensitivity. Dealing with the harsh reality of psychosis is not always easy, but with grace and a light-hearted touch, the characters of *Angels of the Universe* triumph over an illness which at first seems beyond their control.

■ **Steve Gravestock**

**Fridrik Thor Fridriksson** was born in Iceland in 1954. Self-taught in the art of filmmaking, he became the founder, editor and film critic of Iceland's first film magazine. He began directing documentaries in 1981. Selected feature filmography: *White Whales* (87), *Children of Nature* (92), *Movie Days* (94), *Cold Fever* (94), *Devil's Island* (96) and *Angels of the Universe* (00).

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