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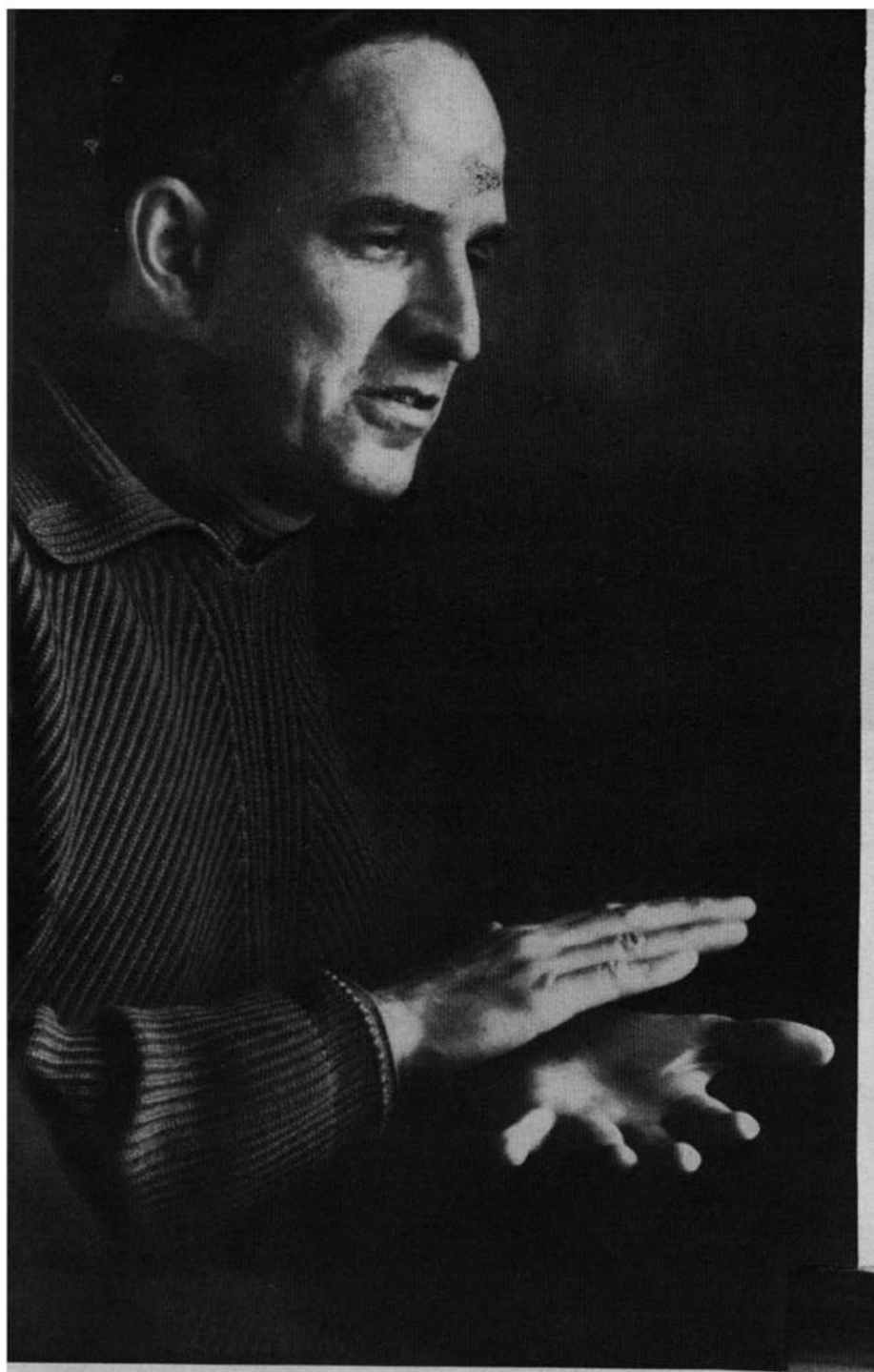
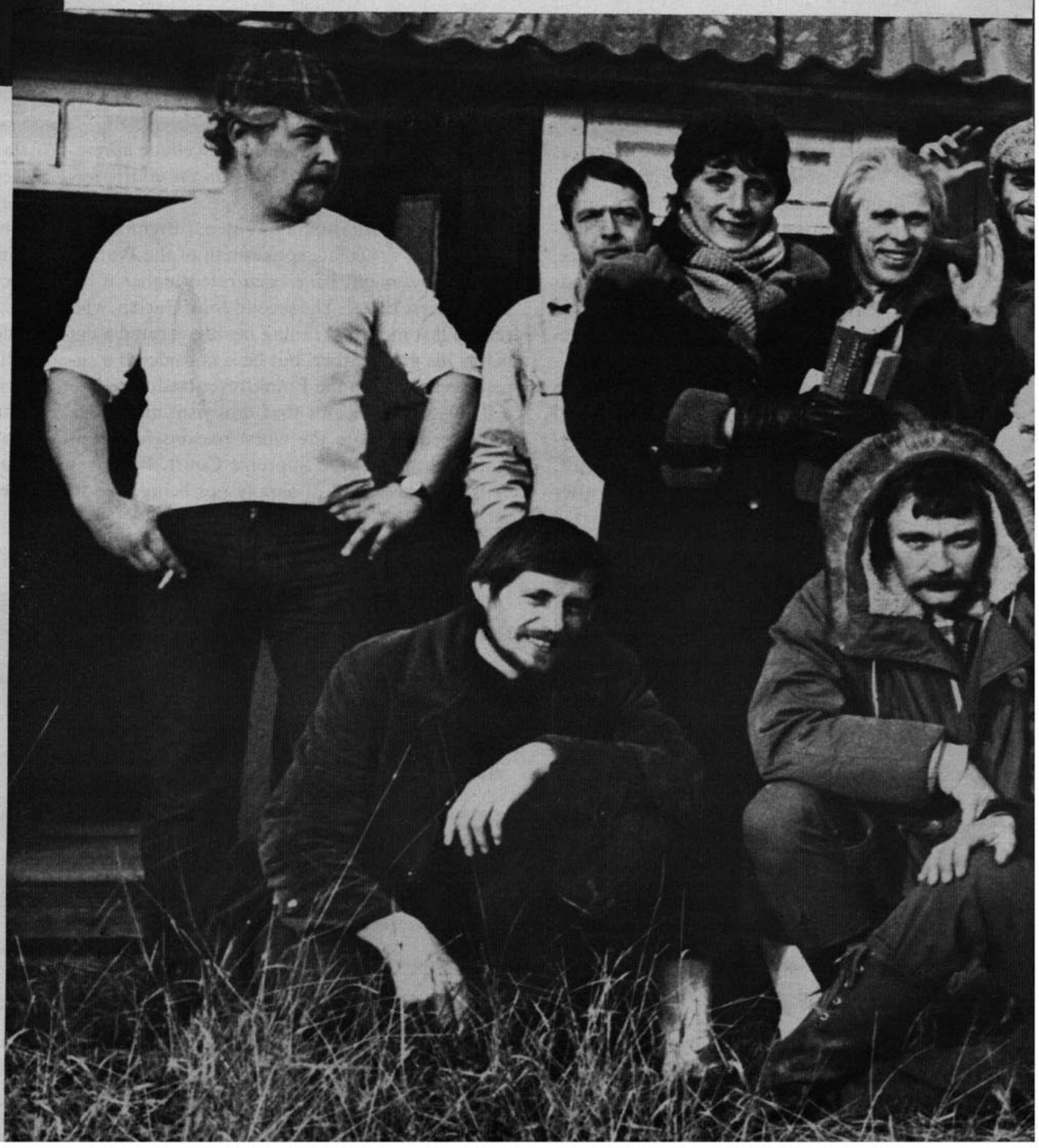
A rare and revealing view of Sweden's mysterious genius Ingmar Bergman as he makes 'The Touch,' his first film in English



'I live at the edge

"I think it is very important that we are only 18 or 20 people working together," says Ingmar Bergman (above), his expressive hands emphasizing his words. "We sit down and we talk, and the electricians have the same right to tell what they like or dislike as I have. It is not just a profession for them, they are personally interested. A crew of 50 people can't be interested in that way." At right, in the front row wearing a white parka, he poses like a proud patriarch with *The Touch* film crew—his "friends," most of whom have worked on most of his movies. At his right are stars Bibi Andersson and Elliott Gould.



by RICHARD MERYMAN

During the winter of 1970, Ingmar Bergman's personal agent, Paul Kohner, met with Martin Baum, president of ABC Pictures, a subsidiary of American Broadcasting Companies. Kohner: "How would you like to have Ingmar Bergman's first film in English?" Baum: "Great! Give me the script!" Kohner: "There is no script." Baum: "Can I read the story?" Kohner: "There is no story in writing." Baum: "Then what do we do?" Kohner: "You've got to come to London where Bergman is directing a play and let him tell you the story. And you've got to be willing to make the commitment then without anything in writing." Baum (gulping): "OK." Kohner: "That's not all. There are people you report to. Bergman says you have to bring everybody who can say yes or no to the commitment." Baum (gulping twice): "OK."

Paul Kohner's proposition involved more than a million dollars—and under most circumstances would simply have provoked a chuckle about directors' egos. But Ingmar Bergman's 32 films include the radically innovative *Persona*, *Wild Strawberries*, *The Silence*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Winter Light*, *Smiles of a Summer Night*. His movies deal with the ultimate themes of living—God, death, love, man, hate, isolation, truth, madness, sex, communication—and they have been a historic force behind today's regard for film as a serious medium for personal expression. Obsessive in his dissection of his own emotional life, Bergman has always explored on film the most private of his agonies and quandaries. But at the same time he has kept the everyday Mr. Bergman so remote that the source of all those remarkable films has remained a tantalizing mystery. Undoubtedly, to the ABC brass, one of the lures of Ingmar Bergman—beyond his success—was the chance to touch this remote and illusive genius. So, on May 2, 1970, there assembled for dinner in a private room of London's Connaught Hotel Ingmar Bergman; Leonard Goldenson, president of the entire ABC corporation; Sam Clark, vice-president for nonbroadcast activities; Larry Newton, vice-president for film distribution; Paul Kohner; Martin Baum—and Mrs. Baum.

When one first meets Bergman, the very first glance catches quite an ordinary-looking fellow, medium-sized, hair thinning on top. But then he moves and speaks—and the vitality pours forth. He is the kind of man who grabs your heavy suitcase and carries it despite your protests—and the sort

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# of a very strange country'

How he hypnotized moguls and sold his film

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whose words come to you conducted by graceful hands always in motion. Bergman is a man who, when he says no, can do it with a crudity that is almost obscene. Or he can say no, and immediately reach out and touch you—on the back of the hand, the shoulder—to reassure you that all will be well, that you must not be unhappy, dismayed. Either way, he exudes absolute, total finality.

He is a man who casts spells. When he describes a memory special to him, his voice takes on a hypnotic note. His gaze turns away from the listener. His eyes, permanently saddened by slightly drooping eyelids, seem to fill with a dreamy, mystical distance—the look of worlds and wisdoms long traveled. When he talks, though his English can be awkward, he achieves with a very uncomplicated vocabulary a special economy and precision. As one who has endlessly explored the complexities of life, he makes you feel with his tone of tolerance and sensibleness that he has found for everything the simple answers.

When Bergman told the story of his film during dinner, he addressed himself almost entirely to Mrs. Baum, giving the men only peripheral attention. Describing the moment after Bergman finished, Martin Baum said, "We were to give our answer to Mr. Kohner in a few days. But I could see from the faces that he had sold everybody in the room. And my *wife!* With her he had scored a *bull's-eye!*"

Immediately, the ABC audience began to discuss casting. They talked about the role of "the outsider," Bergman's name for the English-speaking archaeologist who was the fulcrum of the plot. This man, a seminomad, comes to a small Swedish city to excavate near an ancient church. He meets the pretty, devotedly domestic wife of a successful, attractive physician, and has a violent affair with her. In the end, exhausted by the outsider's demanding childishness, she returns to repair the wreckage of her marriage. The assembled ABC officers made up their list of the most important American film actors of the right age: Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Elliott Gould, Dustin Hoffman. Bergman agreed to see sample films of these men and make a decision.

Two days later the deal was made with Kohner. ABC Pictures would pay $1 million on delivery of the film's negative and also pay the salary of "the outsider"—ultimately $200,000. Bergman would have a script in their hands by July 15, and would start shooting on Sept. 15. ABC would have absolutely no control over Bergman or the final cut of the film. That is a freedom commanded regularly only by a super exclusive group: virtually just Federico Fellini, Mike Nichols, Akira Kurosawa —and Bergman.

All of this scheduling conformed to Bergman's minutely timetabled yearly routine. Bergman shoots a film almost every fall. Then, practically the same day film production ends, he begins directing one or more plays at the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm. In the spring he starts writing his next movie. Then without a break he goes back to theater-directing until time to begin the weeks of meticulous preparation for the fall filming. There are no gaps, everything meshes, exquisitely scheduled.

There is very little socializing. Bergman has placed the execution of his art ahead of every other consideration in his life. In nonworking hours he is husbanding and storing up strength for the next day. There are very few friends with whom he can completely relax, and he is currently unmarried —though there have been many alliances and four marriages. He has remained on very good terms with all his former wives and has eight children. Every moment he does not *have* to be

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'My characters, they don't obey me. If they had to, they would die'

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in Stockholm, he is at his stone house on the tiny island of Farö. Just off the large island of Gotland, far out in the Baltic Sea, Farö is a three-hour air, auto and ferry trip from the mainland.

It was to Farö that he retired last May to write his script of *The Touch*, his movie for ABC. As in most areas of his life, his script-writing routines are rigid. Writing *The Touch*, he rose early each morning, made his breakfast, took a walk for an hour. Exactly at half past nine he sat down in his workroom at a plain table facing a windowless wall. He labored until precisely 3:30. He used blocks of lined yellow paper, writing in a very round, very personal, very hard-to-read hand. If he made a mistake, wanted to change something, he would not cross out and scratch in the new words, but instead would recopy the entire page. Once the script is printed up, he writes all over it, makes sketches, even doodles hearts on it.

Ingmar Bergman: Before I start the writing of the final script, I write and write and write books and books of notations. They are very personal: dialogues and discussions and personal expressions and situations, memories, things that have nothing directly to do with the picture or with anybody but myself. It is very boring. I hate it. And afterward I throw everything away.

But I boil all that down in the final script. I put all those things together as in a dream—so you don't recognize anything. It's always thousands of details, and these combinations are emotionally stimulating to my creative mind. From these combinations I build a selective reality, a mirrored reality. Suddenly it's a newer reality.

My whole life I have trained my intuition. It's a sort of rail I travel the whole time. The first moment I meet you, my intuition starts to work inside—a computer that gives me information. I see how you move. I see your eyes, your face. I listen very much on the voice.

I used to have a feeling of mean and bad—a moralistic stomachache about all the time taking pictures in my mind. But you just have to accept that this has nothing to do with coldness or a twisted mind. It is just part of me and I can make something out of it. For example, the opening scene of *The Touch* is built on the death of an actor friend 15 years ago—but I did use one thing from my father's death. I saw my father 15 minutes after he died. The window was open and all the sounds of life—buses, car horns—came from the outside. His head was turned toward the window. The eyes were closed, but not completely. The illusion was that he was looking far away. I found it so extremely strange and beautiful and full of secrets.

The most important thing in the creative job is to let your intuition tell you what to do. I am writing my script and I plan for this man that he will do such and such. I know that if he does not do such and such, all these other things in the plot will fall into pieces. But my intuition tells me suddenly that this man says he will *not* do such and such. So I ask the intuition why. And the intuition says, I never tell you why. You have to find out for yourself.

Then you go on a long, long safari in the jungle to follow where the intuition has directed. But if I refuse the intuition, then I have merely arranged things. So my characters, they don't obey me. They go their own way. If they had to obey me, they would die.

On exactly July 15, the day promised, Bergman's agent placed the script of *The Touch* in the hand of Martin Baum. It was essentially a 56-page novella, not at all in the conventional dialogue form. But every scene and line was there, surrounded by the moods and tones Bergman wanted. By that time the film had been cast. For the Swedish parts, Bergman could draw upon what is virtually his private repertory company, a select elite of actors who have peo-

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'What I found in Elliott was an impatience of the soul'

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pled film after film of his, and have become literally extensions of Bergman's imagination. For Andreas, the doctor, he chose Max von Sydow, who had appeared in ten Bergman movies. Karen, the wife, would be Bibi Andersson, one of Bergman's closest friends and veteran of nine films. After seeing *Getting Straight*, Bergman picked Elliott Gould to play David, "the outsider."

Ingmar Bergman: I'll tell you exactly what I found in Elliott. It was the impatience of a soul to find out things about reality and himself, and that is one thing that always makes me touched almost to tears, that impatience of the soul.

You can say it's childish, but then you can say Mozart was childish and Picasso is childish and Stravinsky was childish. As Christ said, if you are not as children, you will never come to heaven. I think all real artists have this childishness —they never feel that "now I am completed." They are always curious and they are always on their way and they are always impatient.

You know, I love actors by nature. Of course, they can bore me extremely—the same as they can be bored by me—but I think they are lovely. You know, if we are real people of the profession, we are related to each other because we have the same difficulties. We have the same longing for contact, for tenderness, for hard work, meaningful work. Actors are very, very delicate—very sensitive—and very tough.

Elliott Gould is one of the absolutely real actors. I think it is a catastrophe for the creative powers of this man just to make pictures, because he is also a Shakespearean actor, an Ibsen actor, a Strindberg actor. A wonderful Molière actor. He has this certain atmosphere, a certain mind, a certain sort of imagination, a certain thing you feel that the body of the actor is an instrument, and that he is conscious enough and talented enough to play on it perfectly—the whole time.

Elliott Gould was sent the script. "I read it," said Gould, "more intently than I've read anything in my life. I probably memorized it in one reading. And I got a migraine headache. It was a classic Bergman thing —so cellular and diagrammed and microscopic and universal. There were certain scenes which were wonderfully erotic, really intimate scenes which frightened me in terms of bringing myself to Bergman and conceivably having intercourse while on camera. It was a very difficult thing for me to consider."

Gould turned down the role, insisting that he was "too ignorant" and could not "put myself into Bergman's hands totally." So a phone call was arranged. "In 90 seconds," said Gould, "he was just so reassuring, so interested, so enthusiastic. I knew that I trusted him. I felt that, regardless of my feelings. You never heard an eagerer man than myself, and on the other end of the phone a man more desirous of making me comfortable. He was just so sensitive, terrific."

Bergman's choice of Gould gives an insight into the director as well as into the actor. While the character of Karen was patterned after an acquaintance of Bergman's, he based David in part on what he regards as the explosive, childish, even boorish side of his own very split nature.

Max von Sydow: Ingmar has these special characters who are reincarnated from film to film. There is the very sensitive, very emotional person who cannot bear his own feelings. He is usually destroyed by the second type of character, the one who is emotionally inhibited by his intellect, who never has had any real emotional experience and longs to be almost the victim of an emotional explosion just in order to feel something. This shows, I guess, that Bergman is constantly struggling within himself between these two extremes.

Ingmar Bergman: The only thing I care to tell

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'I know my neuroses. I can talk to them'

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you about my tensions is that much of the eternal dialogue inside me is between the 50% of my mother and the 50% of my father I carry inside. Both were extreme and very strong personalities. They were married 52 years, but they did never understand a word one of them said to the other. They were as water and fire. I was always sensitive and I did not stand any pressure. That I got from my mother. But she had her enormous self-discipline from childhood. Women are always stronger in the way of bearing the pressure of a situation, of going on. My mother had no patience with us children because she educated us the whole time. She was an extremely intelligent, impatient woman, full of temper and extremely bright.

On my father's side, they have always been clergymen and farmers. From my father I think I have got some good red blood and my closeness to the landscape, to the seashore. I don't want to say anything bad about him, but I got from my father the most difficult qualities. He was a very dangerous man because he had a lot inside of him. He was a very good clergyman. I think I am that too, a little.

My education was insane, crazy, completely ridiculous. Here was God, King, Father, Family—this hierarchic construction in that order. Freedom did not exist. So it was necessary that education created not characters, but obeying machines. Brutality and cruelty were inevitable.

In Bergman's films, the characters constantly speak with his voice, articulating both Bergman recollections and philosophy. Their speeches give perhaps the best of all looks past the mystery and into the darkest corners of his mind. In *Hour of the Wolf* there is an artist, Johan—a deliberate self-portrait of Bergman. The film follows his descent into madness. In one scene Johan describes an incident at the hands of his parents, which is a true story from Bergman's own childhood.

"It was a kind of punishment," Johan tells. "They pushed me into the wardrobe and locked the door. It was silent and pitch dark. I was mad with fear and I pounded and kicked. You see, they had told me that a little man lived in there, and he could gnaw the toes off naughty children. When I stopped kicking, I heard something rustling in a corner. I struck out wildly to save myself from that little creature. I howled with terror and asked to be forgiven.

"At last the door was opened and I could step into the daylight. My father said, 'Mother tells me that you are sorry.' And I said, 'Yes, please forgive me.' 'Get ready on the sofa,' he said. I went up to the green sofa and arranged a pile of cushions. Then I fetched the cane, took down my pants, and bent over the cushions. Then father said, 'How many strokes do you deserve?' And I said, 'As many as possible.' Then he caned—hard—but not unbearably. When it was over, I turned to mother and asked: 'Can you forgive me now?' She wept—and said, 'Of course I forgive you.' She put out her hand . . . and I kissed it."

Ingmar Bergman: You know *Hour of the Wolf?* It's not a very good picture, but it's a very personal picture. What I talked about was the demons, the friends who become

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friendly, and started to destroy that man. I think it had very much to do with my own fear of them—but I will never let them do that.

I wrote *Hour of the Wolf* in a very quiet room. I never have any sun in the room where I write. I was sleeping in this room too, and after a few weeks I had to stop. The demons would come to me and wake me up and they would stand there and talk to me. It was very strange.

I live at the edge of a very strange country and I don't know what will happen. There is a real problem in my character which is no secret: I am extremely aggressive. Disciplined aggressivity can be a very good thing in my profession. It's a good horse. And of course that is very much in my films. But I have a fascination to the brutality and cruelty in life because I feel a relation to the power of cruelty. It's a very dangerous thing to carry. It's a sort of dynamite inside.

But I know my neuroses and I can say hello to them and I talk to them and I have them under control. I am extremely healthy. My doctor thinks I will be 110.

I never use drugs or alcohol. The most I drink is a glass of wine and that makes me incredibly happy. Music is always there, every day, every night, and this is absolutely necessary for me. If I had to choose between losing my eyes or ears—I would keep my ears. I can't imagine anything more terrible than to have my music taken away from me. It is my most important stimulation, it gives me impressions. When I am completely sleepless, then I have a very good friend in music. Johann Sebastian Bach gives me a lot always, but I am extremely stimulated by modern music—the Rolling Stones. The most rough, brutal, aggressive pop music I put on so the walls almost shake.

Though he was contractually obliged to spend only four weeks at work on *The Touch*, Elliott Gould went to Stockholm three weeks early so he and Bergman could get acquainted. They were to meet at 8:30 the first night and go to dinner. Gould had been warned that Bergman was such a demon for promptness that he was always five minutes early, a habit ground into him by his father. Precisely at 8:30 Gould and his girl, Jenny Bogart, descended to the lobby of the Grand Hotel.

Elliott Gould: We went downstairs and he was there. He

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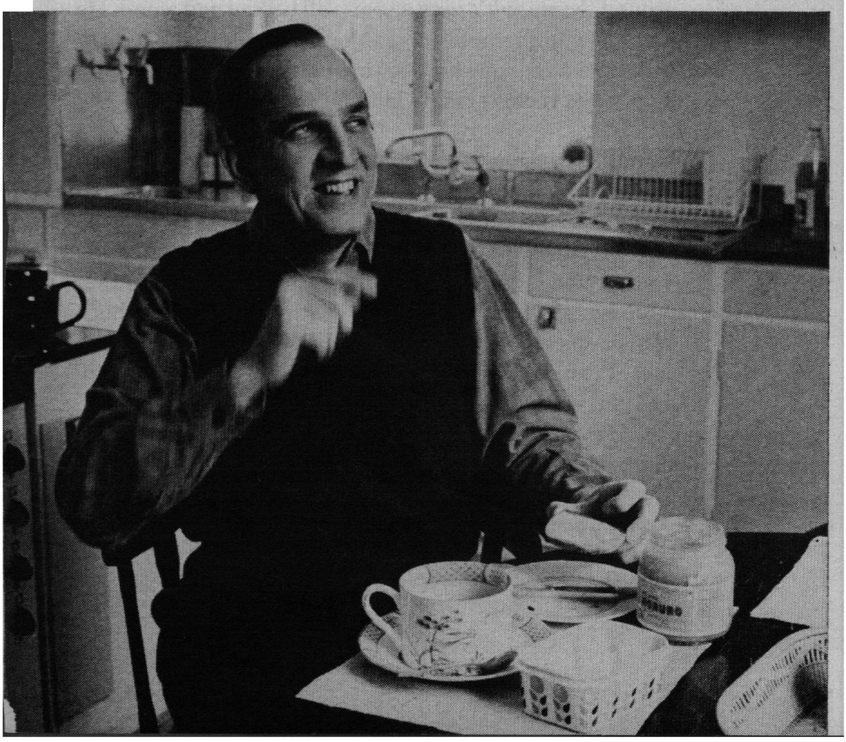
In his Stockholm apartment, a delighted Bergman talks about his fight with a newspaper theater critic who often criticized his directing. With one punch Bergman knocked him into the theater wings. Said Bergman, "A very nice feeling to hit him in the jaw."



'My greatest fear is to be locked in a tiny space'

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must have been pacing—with his little windbreaker and sweater. We just walked toward one another and immediately hugged each other. Then we looked at one another's eyes. I guess we always were brothers. I don't know why. Maybe he recognized an ignorant sensitivity and deep kind of feeling in me that he knows. Perhaps he also recognized an innocence which I still don't understand.

Gould and Jenny Bogart spent the weekend at Bergman's house on his island of Farö. Invited guests, especially foreigners, are extremely rare. Farö, the last Swedish land before the Soviet Union, is a military reservation, and complicated official permission was needed for their visit.

During the weekend Bergman showed them *The White Sheik*, one of the earliest films of his favorite moviemaker, Fellini. It was part of Bergman's very large private collection of films, including his own, which he reruns to study and learn from. They toured the island, and at one point Bergman asked what was Gould's greatest fear. "Not being what somebody I cared about expected me to be," Gould said. "Mine is to be locked in a tiny space," said Bergman.

Bibi Andersson: I think Ingmar's island mirrors his own personality. Now this island is extremely poor, so he feels as though he is flowering there because everything is gray—the stones, the crippled little trees that can hardly grow because it's constantly blowing. There are flowers but small, dry flowers. The island is so old, it's ageless. No feeling of time. Nothing has happened there for hundreds of years. The people look the same as they have for centuries. The only animals are sheep. They come and look in through his windows, and on the seashore—there's no sand, just rocks—there are the white bones of dead sheep. I think from this island he can start.

He has built there on this terribly uncomfortable island a cozy little world surrounded by a stone wall. It is very strange because when you come in through these walls, you have a feeling that you have neighbors and people around, because it's very warm—all yellow and wood. He has a swimming pool there. You have a feeling you can pick up a telephone and go to a neighbor. And then you go out and there is empty land all over.

Ingmar Bergman: My island is so good for me. The atmosphere, the people, the landscape, the sea, the rhythm of my life there—life and reality have their right proportions. I will try to explain. If I go to the Royal Dramatic Theater and I start rehearsal and I am very angry on that morning, suddenly the whole theater knows. Four hundred people say Bergman has a bad temper—oh, how terrible. I can suddenly have the feeling that I am somebody and that my mood is very important.

If I have a bad temper on the island and I go to the seashore and perhaps I scream or something, then the only thing that happens is that maybe a bird flies off and says, *Waaa, waaa.* So here is the exact position, Mr. Bergman, of your life, of your importance.

That gives a security, a sort of rest. I think it's very

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'When I have to meet new people, I always feel scared to death'

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healthy for grown-up people to learn their exact proportions on earth, very good for the creative job. Then that will be more proportional.

Elliott Gould toured Europe for a week and returned to begin the shooting of *The Touch*. He joined an almost impenetrably closed circle—Bergman's film crew, his so-called "18 friends." Almost all of them—the electrician, the clapperboy, the continuity director, costume designer, cinematographer, etc. —have been with Bergman for 15, 18, 20 years and are as reflexive and as sure as the fingers on his hand. At the same time they are expected to have a strong say in the making of the film, especially in the weeks of preparation for every contingency, and in the testing on film of every possible combination of color in costume and props. "A film," says Bergman, "is selected reality." Everything in a Bergman movie is done by conscious, explored decision; nothing left to chance; complete control.

Max von Sydow: In Ingmar's films there are always moments of subtle humiliation. In *The Passion of Anna*, for example, I as Andreas visit the other man, Ellis, in his studio and he keeps photographing me. The way he does it becomes a strange, terrible torture—again and again, keeps on forever—till there is an eerie quality in it. "Don't move. No. No. Turn your head like that. Look that way. Hold your breath"—and you are kind of hypnotized and humiliated.

What does that tell me about Ingmar? It tells me about a man who is very sensitive and very afraid of being handled by other people. A man who is very anxious to stay in command and who is very good at being in command—who worries terribly beforehand when, for example, he makes a movie; who is so terribly well prepared from every angle about every little detail just in order to avoid every risk of being caught offhand by situations—to keep control of everything.

Ingmar Bergman: I try always to do things that are familiar to me. I always feel scared to death when I have to meet new people. When I travel out of Sweden, I feel exhausted, unhappy, insecure. So the technical solution is to regulate my life just so . . . very orderly . . . ritual. That keeps my tensions in balance, keeps this heavy, difficult thing inside me from starting to roll. It's like a ship in a storm. If the cargo shifts, the ship will drown. I think if I let my routine go, in a few weeks the catastrophe would be complete. I mean some sort of self-destruction.

You know, somebody studying sleep discovered that if they prevent you from dreaming, you go crazy. It is completely the same with me. If I could not create my dreams—my films—that would make me completely crazy.

Dreams are a sort of creative process, don't you think? My films come from the same factory. They are like dreams in my mind before I write, and they are made from the same materials, from everything I have ever seen or heard or felt. I use reality the same way dreams do. Dreams seem very realistic—and so do my films —and there is a certain security in that reality. And then something happens that disturbs you, that makes you insecure.

All my films are dreams. When I was very little I was happy because I lived in dreams. I was alone and I built puppet theaters and puppets. Sometimes I used to mix up what had happened —what was reality and what had been my dreams —and that would give me trouble with my mother and father. After I saw my first motion picture —it was *Black Beauty*—I was so excited I was in bed three days with a fever.

On the set Elliott Gould fitted right in: each morning he was totally prepared and took everything very seriously. Bergman always had a box of Droste's chocolates, and it was a little bit of an honor when he offered one. It became very special to Gould that after lunch he would get two or three pieces.

They all enjoyed the clown in Gould, who was once a song-and-dance man. He had them all flipping three pennies off their hands and trying to catch them one at a time. A basketball nut, he and the crew and Max von Sydow played half-court games. Gould would sing in his deep basso voice, and sometimes Gould and Bergman would sing and dance together. "Suddenly," says Gould, "it was like we were all kids."

Bibi Andersson: I love Ingmar. I've known him for 17 years. I admire him for just being alive, because all through these problems he has with himself, he has not grown mentally old and deformed himself. He's marvelous to have to your house because he appreciates everything. And he can be so childlike. For me that is very touching.

We have this loving laugh about Ingmar because he has this silly little private life. He's been wearing the same shoes for 15 years. I think that's

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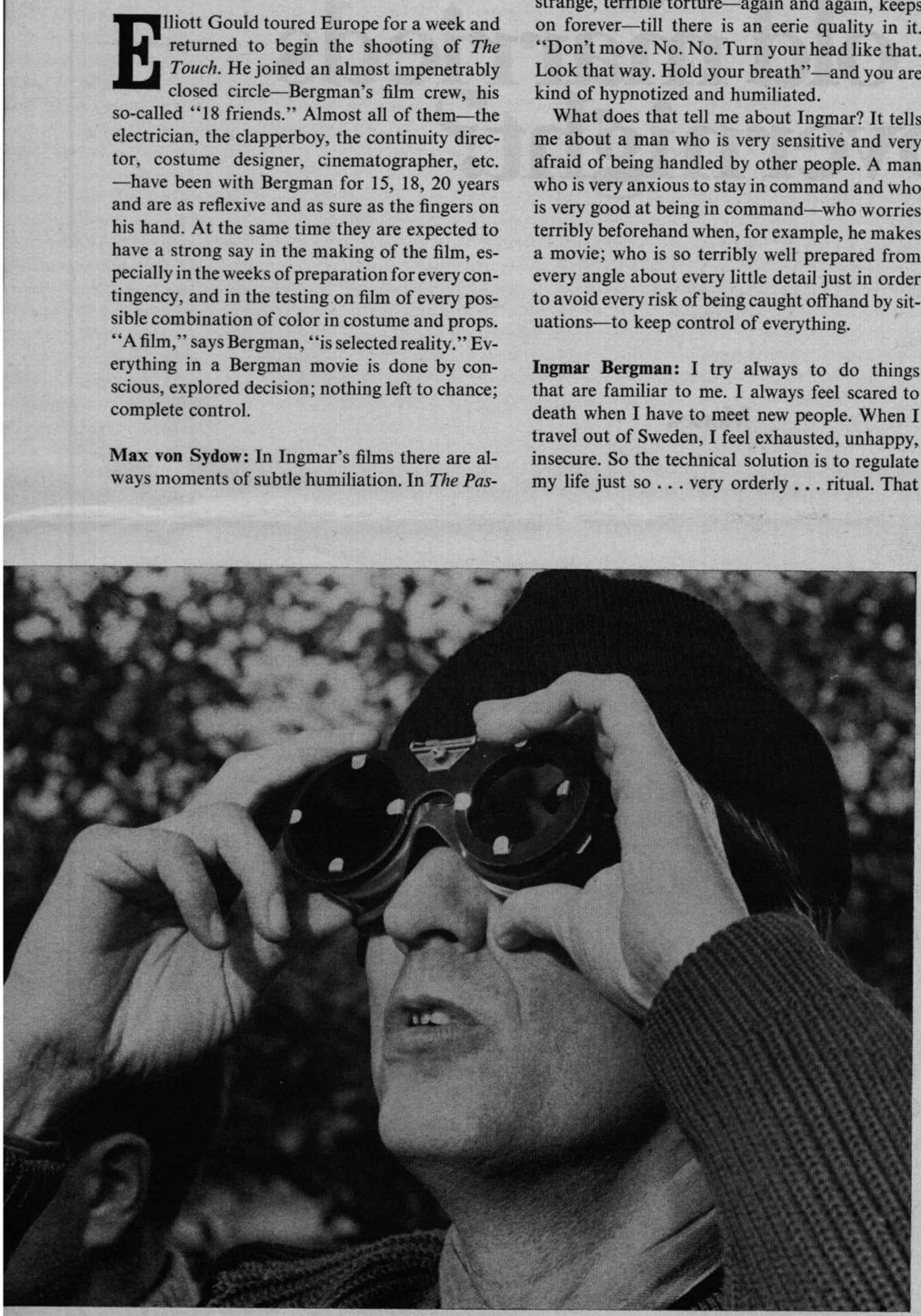

Wearing the special "good-luck goggles" he uses on every film, Bergman can look directly at the sun to decide how soon an errant cloud may dim out his sunlight.

'One thing that puts me off is the "honor" of working for Bergman'

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very funny. He brushes them so carefully and it doesn't show. Since I know him, he is wearing the same sweater, the same jacket—but they're kept so neat. It's not a gimmick, something he puts on for effect or show. It's that everything should be comfortable.

He constantly eats the same lunch. It doesn't change. It's some kind of whipped sour milk, very fat, and strawberry jam, very sweet—a strange kind of baby food he eats with corn flakes. He says his stomach cannot take any other food, but we all know there's nothing wrong with his stomach and that he just has to make this terror to everyone that he has stomach pain.

It was so funny. He kept talking to Elliott Gould about how healthy this lunch was and he should have it. Poor Elliott, he was so polite and he was eating this stuff, saying, "Oh, I love it." Then Ingmar said, "Now Elliott is going to have this every day for lunch because he loves it." And we all laughed because nobody can eat that except Ingmar.

I can joke about his sour cream and strawberry jam—at the same time he's eating that, he has a film going on in his mind like *The Seventh Seal* or *Persona*—things I admire so much, they're too far beyond me even to talk about. Maybe I can participate in them, but I could never invent them in my whole life. If he was just eating the jam, I wouldn't love him.

To Bergman, the atmosphere on the movie set is crucially important. The actors, a breed regularly haunted by self-doubts and paranoia, must feel completely secure and respected. It is somehow communicated that simply because he, Bergman, has chosen them for the roles, then there is no possibility that they will fail. Therefore, they will trust Bergman completely. All the niggling preparation, the sense that every contingency has been anticipated, surrounds the actor with a security, a good feeling each morning that everything is clean and ready. No outsiders are allowed on the set, so that the actors feel they are watched only by friends. "The actor," says Bergman, "delivers his inner self at all times. If you feel scared, or insecure, or feel there's something wrong with your nose, or with your saying this, or wrong with this gesture, you deliver nothing. But if the actor is in an atmosphere of security, he opens up like a flower." During *The Touch*, Bergman devoted himself constantly to Gould. They spent hours together, mainly Gould talking and Bergman listening.

Elliott Gould: Like Bibi said to me when I got to Sweden, Ingmar brings out the best in his actors. It was everything and far more than I had thought —plus dreams I wouldn't dare have. Bergman's universe is so magnificent that to bring my ignorance to him and let him use me while he was loving me . . . I mean, it was an experience that . . . that's sublime. Bergman is sublime.

After one scene where I had to hit Bibi, which was really hard for me, and knock her down and go crazy screaming at her, Bergman asked if sometime I would play Othello—and I thought, Jesus Christ. I said, "Olivier was fantastic as Othello." Bergman said, "Yes, he played Othello fantastically. But you could *be* Othello." I thought, that man, I'd be a snake for him. I would go there and play a box.

He never talks to you about psychology, only specifics. He is never patronizing. When there were really neurotic, complicated things to be done, he would say something. On the next take I would feel almost as if my ribs opened a little bit and something that maybe happened to me when I was 2 would fill in the cracks between the lines. When the take was over, I would get the chills. I would feel very cold and know that I really allowed myself to be touched and that he took that extra thing he felt was there beneath my being a copycat. I'm a brilliant copycat.

Once I went to him for help and I put my arms around him. And he put his arms around me. He said to me, "Don't contract your muscles. Be open even to emptiness because then whatever does come will be real." And it was just so simple and true—I could have cried.

On Monday, May 3, 1971, exactly one year from that dinner at the Connaught Hotel in London, the same cast of ABC officials assembled to see the finished film of *The Touch*. Bergman himself was absent—to spare them embarrassment if they were disappointed. They loved the film and had a big celebration lunch. That afternoon, assured that all was well, Bergman met with them and heard their enthusiasm. In his pleasure and relief, reports Martin Baum, Bergman was positively boyish.

On Friday, May 14, Bergman, Bibi Andersson and Elliott Gould were to be taped with Dick Cavett in Stockholm. Gould had flown to London a week early, expecting to go to Sweden and spend some time with Bergman before the taping.

But to Bergman, *The Touch* was now past history. And he was, by his strict routine, writing his fall film. No invitation was forthcoming. In a final interview given shortly after his return from London, Gould's feelings about Bergman had become suddenly very complicated.

Elliott Gould: When I was in London last week I telephoned Bergman. And you know I don't ever call anybody. It was at night and I woke him up. I said, "Listen, I'm here and I don't want to wait for a week to see you." And he said he couldn't see me—so I said, screw me, and I went home to New York.

It just disappointed me a little because I'm his friend, and he tells me that I'm his favorite little brother in the world, and it was a bit of a lonely time for me. But it's true, like I said from London, any time you want me, just send me a toothpick and I'll be there. What I long for is contact, and he makes movies out of contact.

One of the things that puts me off is the "honor" of acting for Bergman. So an American actor went and worked with this brilliant man! I don't think he's terribly important anymore. As far as young people and the revolution that's going on here, well, I've seen *The Touch* and I told Ingmar it is really quality, but I'm not that impressed.

Sure, he's understanding but it's not good enough just to understand. He's not nice. That's a quote from Ingmar Bergman, and it's true. He's not nice. But he's smart. Bergman is a boy. He's the most brilliant, magnificent, sensitive little boy, and he knows it and he plays it,

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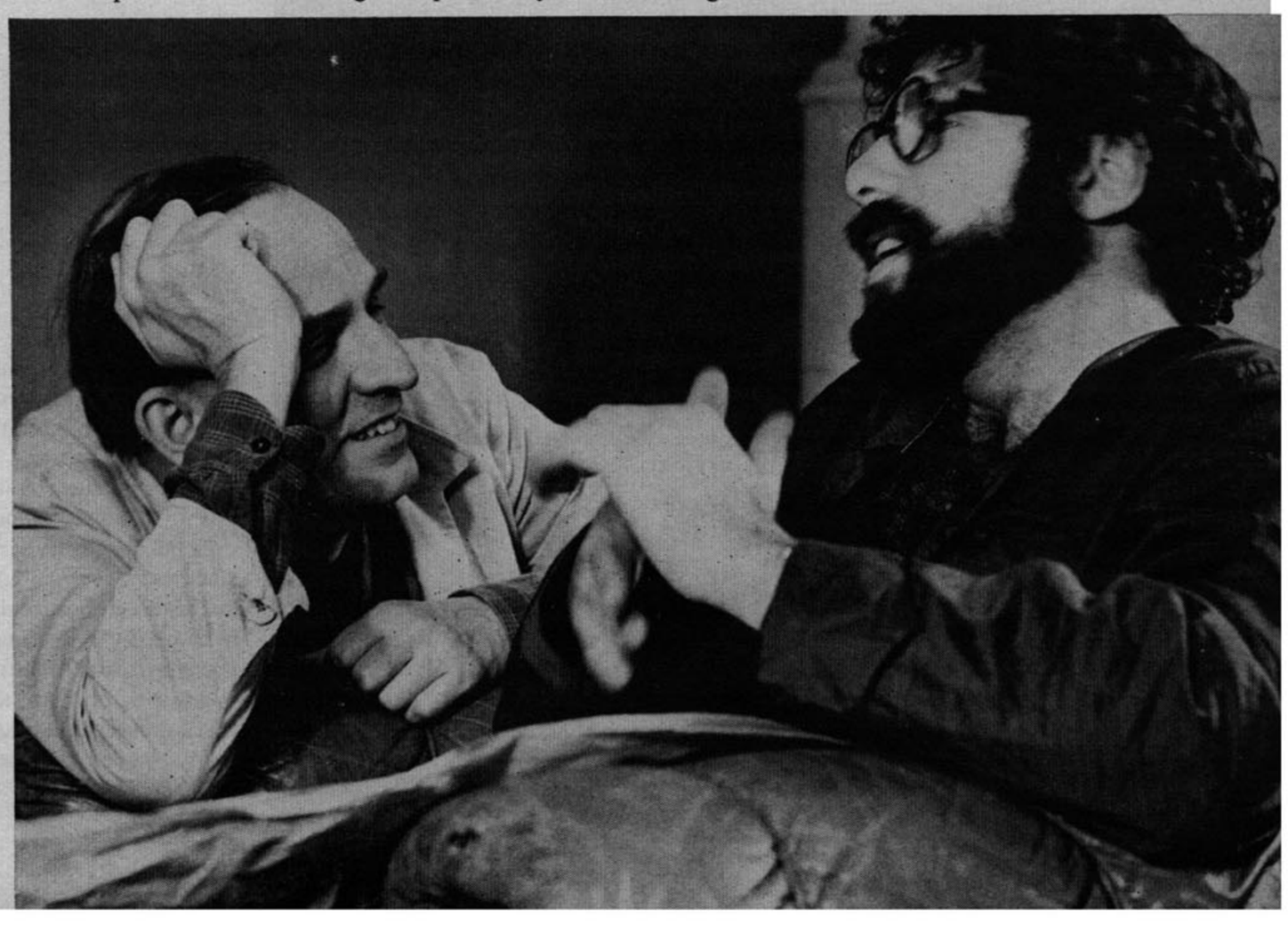
To achieve the relationship he felt was essential—and to know what the actor had inside to express on camera—Bergman spent many hours listening to Gould talk.



'We make a thing for people to use. It is very simple and very brutal'

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and God knows I'm a littler boy than he is —but not as mean as him.

I'm just disappointed by perhaps his limitations. I mean, he's been there so long, in his way biting his nails—God knows I respect anxiety —but I think he ought to get out of Sweden. I know I could show him things he never dreamed of. On the other hand, maybe this film with an American actor, in English, with American money is his passport to other things. Don Giovanni! I really would like to do that before I do Othello.

When *The Touch* opened in New York, the major reviews were very evenly distributed between enthusiastic, respectful and disappointed. In some cases Gould's performance was admired, but more frequently it was criticized as not believable. Often it was suggested that Gould was defeated by banal lines written by a Bergman whose Swedish ear was not tuned to detect English clichés. Yet almost every reviewer felt that the film—even if flawed—was still the work of a master.

The day of the opening, Elliott Gould telephoned Bergman to tell him there were lines outside the theater. During a lengthy and warm exchange, Bergman apologized to a very pleased Gould for his brusqueness during their last call.

Ingmar Bergman: The only judge of my work that is interesting to me is what a few friends think and what I think. Sometimes, yes, I am too obscure. But my function is not to explain everything, is not to say every minute to feel this way, that way. I do not imprison emotions, rape them. My job is just to start your emotions and then give them food. But I have no problems with the public. I can assure you that the producers, the people who give the money to buy the picture from me, they don't come to me only for my beautiful eyes.

My main passion—it is a need—is to make contact with people, to influence them, touch them physically and mentally. My pictures are my way of making contact. When you are making a film, you are part of a group. If you are a relatively inhibited, shy, timid person like me who has trouble establishing deeper relations, it is wonderful to live in that intimate little world. These are the only reasons for me to go on like this.

Penguins want to be together, to touch each other, to talk together and take walks together. If you have just one penguin, you can feed him and you can talk to him, but he dies because he has nobody else to be in contact with. I feel extremely like a penguin.

I am not interested in making masterpieces of art under the sign of eternity. I and my crew, my 18 friends, we are like one body and all together we make the piece of craftsmanship. We make a thing—like a car or a table or a part of the road —a thing for people to use. It's very simple and very brutal.

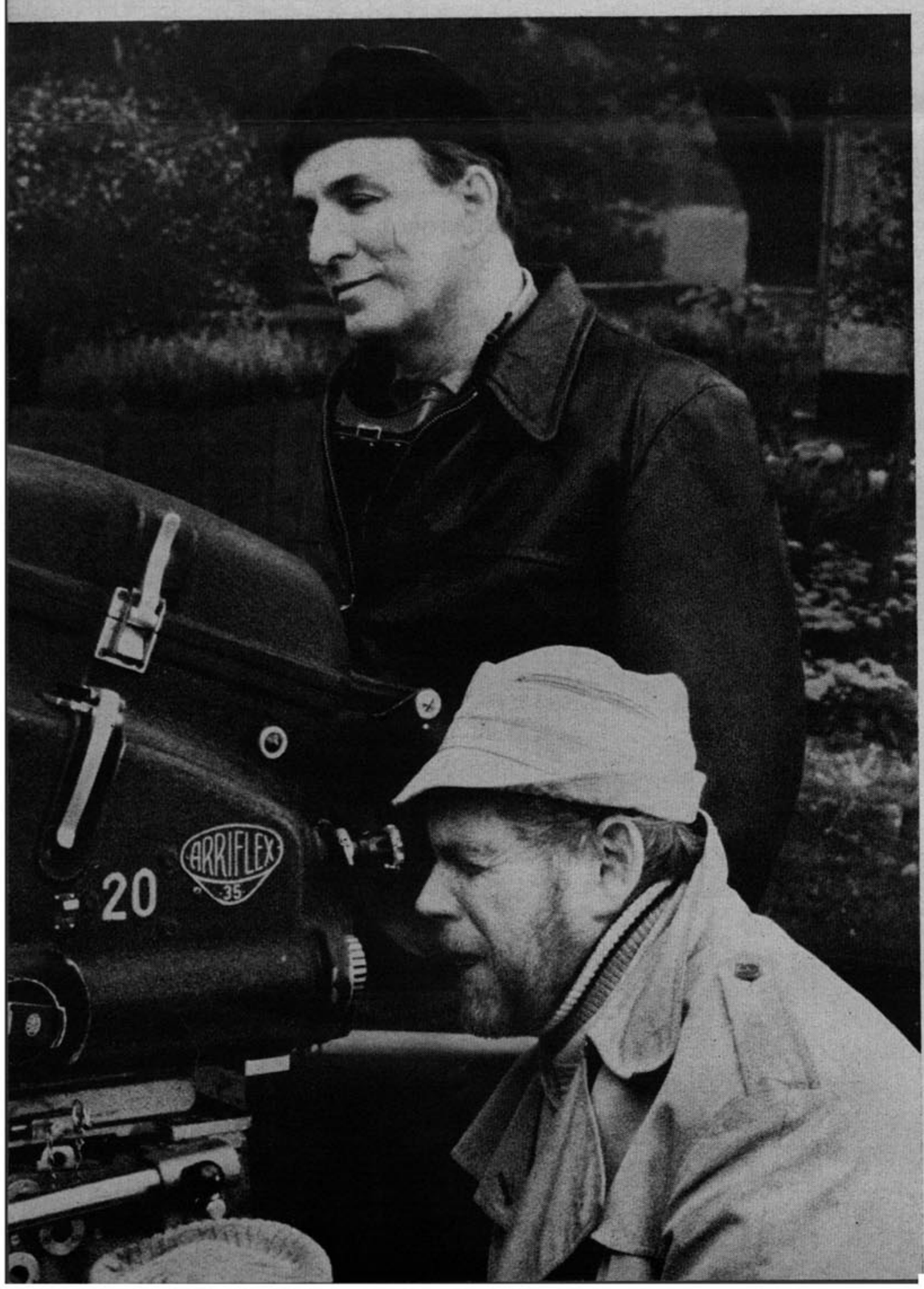
Freddy the Great, the Prussian king, his architect built a wonderful castle called Sans Souci. When the king saw it for the first time, the polite men around him said, "Look what you have achieved, Your Majesty." And the king said, "God in Heaven, have I done all this?" I have the same feeling sometimes when I read those people who analyze my films.

Perhaps I should say this about my work. I think we have this dirty, cruel, wonderful, marvelous life—and when it is completed, life is simply switched off and it will not hurt. That is my religion. That makes me secure and happy to know. When I believed in some strange God or a life after this life, I felt anxious and scared and upset.

But there is something wonderful: that for thousands and thousands of years, all our fear, all our hopes, the sighs and longings have crystallized a certain religious feeling inside, an eternal gift from all those generations. So when you hear one of the last symphonies by Mozart or Bach or a play by Strindberg, suddenly the roof opens up to something that is bigger than the limitations of the human being. That makes me very happy. That is a treasure we carry with us. To make a film is to try to open up the roof—so we can breathe.

There is a final piece of Ingmar Bergman which may make it possible for him to survive the inner intensity, the agonizing pace of his work. In a tiny, sunny corner of himself, Bergman is bemused by being Bergman. It is a niche where he does not take himself and his art so very seriously. It is the part which makes him say so often about film-making, "We play the game together."

In *Hour of the Wolf*, speaking through Johan, Bergman sums himself up: "I call myself an artist for lack of a better name. In my creative work, nothing is important except compulsion. Through no fault of mine, I've been pointed out as a freak. I've never fought to attain that position. And I shan't fight to keep it. I felt megalomania waft about my brow, but I think I'm immune. I've only to consider the utter unimportance of art in the world of men—and I come back to earth with a bump. But the compulsion remains." ■



In a reflective moment during *The Touch*, Bergman awaits the opinion of his cinematographer, Sven Nykvist, on the framing of a shot. Nykvist, who has done 12 films with Bergman since 1953, is as committed as the director to total preparation. In *The Touch* he spent days with Bibi Andersson testing on film the reds of 12 different coats against many shades of makeup.