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## In Brief

**SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT** (*Films de France*). Since becoming internationally known as the author of Alf Sjöberg's *Frenzy*, Ingmar Bergman has made (usually as writer and director) a number of films dealing with the passions of youth. The pervading mood of these films—innocence is often despoiled by the innate evil in others—has recently been replaced by the brutish melodramatics and determined eroticism of a film like *Sawdust and Tinsel*. Now, in *Sommarnattens Leende* (*Smiles of a Summer Night*) he has attempted an intimate study in period *amours*, which, in subject matter, occasionally recalls *La Ronde* or *Occupe-Toi D'Amèlie* played straight. The main action takes place during a country house party attended by numerous husbands, wives and mistresses. The complex sexual manoeuvrings which occupy most of the long summer night end in a mutually acceptable pairing off of the principal characters, with the child-wife of the fickle lawyer eloping with her husband's son of a former marriage! Rejecting a bitter-sweet romanticism, Bergman views his lovers with a cold, almost Strindbergian detachment; for him, love's roundabout is painful, bitter and not to be trusted. When humour and irony intrude, they are usually transformed into a macabre comment on the penalties of desire—the lawyer is forced to leave his mistress's apartment in a nightshirt, and is later challenged by his rival, a fiery count, to a game of Russian roulette with a revolver containing one blank cartridge. As an additional turn of the screw, Bergman deploys his tormented characters against backgrounds of extreme beauty. Gunnar Fischer's luminous images of country house, rivers and gardens, coupled with some elegant decor and costuming, evoke a rich period atmosphere. The handling of the players is also stylish and assured, Eva Dahlbeck, in particular, creating a vivid portrait as the cigar-smoking mistress of both count and lawyer. In a

personal statement recently quoted in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Bergman said that his purpose in film-making is "to express, in an entirely subjective manner, the ideas that are part of my conscience". On the evidence of his past work, he is clearly a director of considerable technical fluency and invention. Eut, despite the fleeting glimpses of pity and affection in this latest film, the prevailing mood remains defiantly cynical and jaundiced.—JOHN GILLET.