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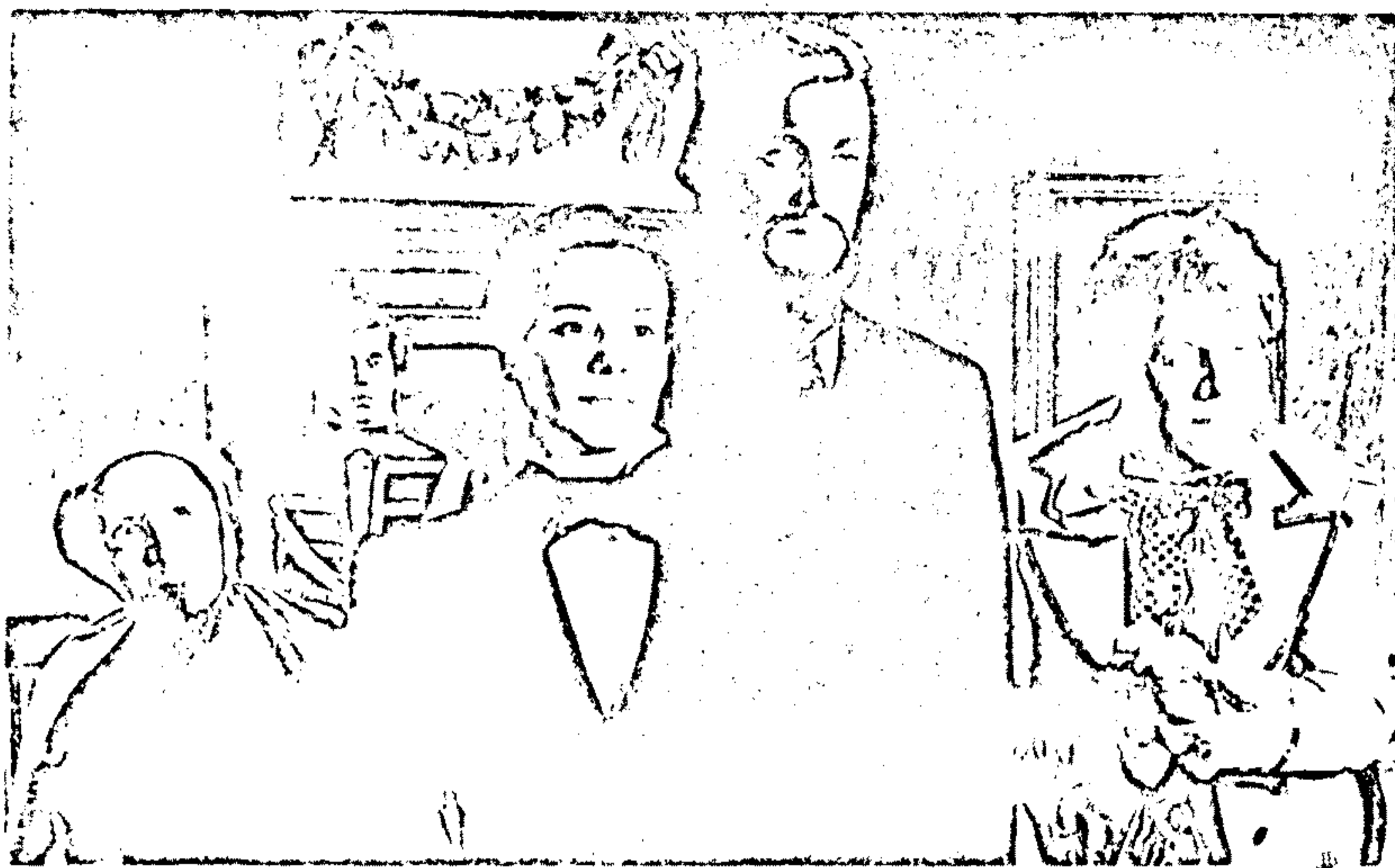
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WIFSTRAND, DUBERG, THULIN,  
VON SYDOW and FRIDELL

## THE MAGICIAN

SWEDISH (1958). *Original Title: "ANSIKTET" (The Face).* AN INGMAR BERGMAN FILM for SVENSK FILMINDUSTRI. Released in the U.S. by JANUS FILMS. Producer: CARL-HENRY CAGARP. Directed and Written by INGMAR BERGMAN. Photography: GUNNAR FISCHER. Art Direction: P.A. LUNDGREN. Costumes: MANNE LINDHOLM and GRETA JOHANSSON. Editor: OSCAR ROSANDER. Music: ERIK NORDGREN. Swedish Dialogue; English Subtitles. 102 Mins.

Vogler .....	MAX VON SYDOW
Manda (Aman) .....	INGRID THULIN
Dr. Vergerus .....	GUNNAR BJORNSTRAND
Grandmother .....	NAIMA WIFSTRAND
Spögel .....	BENGT EKEROT
Sara .....	BIBI ANDERSSON
Mrs. Eggerman .....	GERTRUD FRIDH
Simson .....	LARS EKBORG
Starbeck .....	TOIVO PAWLO
Eggerman .....	ERLAND JOSEFSON
Tubal .....	ÅKE FRIDELL
Sofia .....	SIF RUUD
Antonsson .....	OSCAR LJUNG
Mrs. Starbeck .....	ULLA SJÖLLOM
Rustan .....	AXEL DUBERG
Sanna .....	BIRGITTA PETTERSSON

## Synopsis

In mid-19th century Sweden, a magician and his troupe are traveling by coach to Stockholm. The magician is a man who calls himself Dr. Vogler; a charlatan and a mesmerist, he feigns muteness, disguises himself with a wig, a beard and false eyebrows, and claims supernatural powers. The others in the troupe consist of his wife Manda who masquerades as a young man and serves as his assistant; his grandmother, an old crone who sells love potions and foretells the future; his manager, Tubal, who is the spokesman for the group; and the coachman, a lad named Simson. After picking up a half-dead, liquor-sodden actor, the little band is stopped by police at a tollgate and brought for questioning to the home of a wealthy merchant. The merchant, the local police constable and a medical officer express doubts as to Vogler's

powers and demand a private performance for the next morning. For almost everyone it is a long and sleepless night that follows. The young coachman is seduced by a servant girl; the manager is converted to the path of "righteousness" by a lusty housekeeper; the alcoholic actor dies in Vogler's arms; the merchant's wife, seeking "spiritual" comfort, offers herself to the magician; and the doctor makes advances to Vogler's wife. The next morning during the performance the committee amuses itself at Vogler's expense until he hypnotizes the constable's wife and she ridicules both herself and her husband. Near the end of the performance Vogler is attacked and seemingly killed by one of his victims, the merchant's coach-

man. Immediately, the doctor orders an autopsy. At its conclusion, Vogler suddenly reappears—without his mask—and puts the skeptical doctor through a diabolical ordeal of supernatural tricks and apparitions, driving him to near hysteria. When Vogler's wife interrupts her husband's revenge, Vogler admits he merely feigned death and that it was the dead actor upon whom the doctor had performed the autopsy. Once more the skeptic, the doctor denounces Vogler as a complete fraud and forces him to grovel for a fee. But the final triumph belongs to Vogler: as he leaves the merchant's house word arrives that he has been summoned by the King of Sweden for a Command Performance!

## Critique

SATURDAY REVIEW. "A remarkable movie indeed, from the most remarkable director extant... A faintly dizzying mixture of the macabre, the comic, the mystical, and the supernatural. If not quite so enigmatic as Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, it nevertheless has puzzling overtones, moments that are poetic in intent, other moments that are the sheerest farce. Like other of his films, it is darkly, moodily, beautifully photographed; it compels and fascinates; and it is also strangely, unexpectedly charming, for such Gothic material as he has chosen... Bergman provides no easy answers for the puzzles he has concocted, although the 'mysteries' themselves are easily explainable. In fact, they are at times made transparent, and become part of the ghoulish fun. Bergman may be saying that the face of the charlatan appeals to something primitive in man's nature; Vogler may represent the diseased Christ figure, the artist, the illusionist; the overtones for these speculations are all there. Oddly enough, our sympathy is constantly directed toward Vogler himself, and here perhaps is the clue. Vogler, in

spite of the fact that he is a trickster, becomes aware that he may have, momentarily, the very powers he pretends to have. Inventing the unexplainable for his audience, he glimpses the irrational, and is haunted by it. Vogler's, then, is the spirit of modern man, Bergman seems to say, inventing miracles, and facing an abyss. Whatever message for us there is in the story, Bergman makes sure that it ends properly, as a good story should. Vogler is granted his moment of triumph and recognition, and Bergman closes on a fanfare of trumpets, on a farcical note that seems to say that a motion picture director is, after all, merely an illusionist himself, a charlatan with a clever bag of tricks. But Bergman is an artist, and whatever he does is done with artistry, and with a feel for truth. It may be a sideshow he has given us this time, but what an absorbing one he has prepared for all who enter his magic tent." *Hollis Alpert (8/29/59).*

THE N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE. "The undeniable brilliance of Ingmar Bergman illuminates a large part of his newest picture, but a dragged-in ending of no great relevance weakens the impact of all that preceded it. Mr. Bergman, unhappily, decided that he must have a happy ending. In so doing, he bails out a group of charlatans whose previous actions hardly clamor for vindication. The virtues of the picture, nevertheless, are impressive. The magician and his traveling troupe of like-minded humbugs are presented with unsparing realism. The same candor is directed toward the officials of a Swedish town who decide to expose the fakers—and lay bare their own fraudulence as they do so. The manufactured magic of the little troupe is a minor feat when compared with the skill that Mr. Bergman uses to probe into the depths of his characters. His black-and-white camera and well-planned lighting underscore the personalities and conflicts of the characters. Each one comes to life and, for a while at least, commands your complete interest... But the last scene, brought on like the United States cavalry riding to the rescue of the besieged wagon train, cuts a fine picture down to ordinary size. Reducing it to fractions, *The Magician* is eight-tenths of an outstanding film." *Gene Gleason (8/28/59).*

VARIETY. "Among the better recent European films... Rates along with Bergman's outstanding recent releases, but it doesn't quite reach the heights and concentration he attained in *Wild Strawberries*... In a world filled with mysticism, Bergman manifests his artistic screen skill to excite, frighten, fascinate, entertain and seduce his audience... The feature dwells on the question of whether there are supernatural powers or not. Bergman comes to no conclusion, but shows that man is susceptible to the tricks of the magician. Fascinated by happenings for which there is no immediate explanation, man is seduced and made to believe... By setting his film more than 100 years in the past, Bergman avoids the problems of modern day realism. With death and fright always lurking in the background, he has created a mystical thriller. When he has built up an overpowering tension he lets his audience relax in moments of burlesque. However, time and time again he gets

away from the main theme and thereby slows up the motion... The magician is strikingly portrayed by Max von Sydow... A lasting impression is made by experienced actress Naima Wifstrand. Throughout, however, it can be said that Bergman displays his ability to get the most out of his actors as many of them give inspired performances. The photography by Gunnar Fischer, who has filmed a number of Bergman's movies, rates with the best anywhere." *'Shor' (Stockholm-1/14/59).*

THE N.Y. TIMES. "Highly esoteric and technically exquisite... More than in either of his pictures exhibited hereabouts recently (*The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*), Mr. Bergman is offering in this a mystical contemplation that could well have wide popular appeal. For he is dealing with magic, spiritual manifestations, spells and 'animal magnetism,' which are more exciting when they're not fully understood. And it's a safe bet that very few viewers are going to understand everything that Mr. Bergman here levitates and puts forth in his bewitchingly imagistic style... Mysteries rise from the shadows and glooms of this eerie and Rabelaisian study of the susceptibility of the human mind to the powerful sway of illusion and of the ephemeral nature of Truth. But never mind about those details that may be vaporous and vague. The important thing is that this picture is full of extraordinary thrills that flow and collide on several levels of emotion and intellect. And it swarms with sufficient melodrama of the blood-chilling, flesh-creeping sort to tingle the hide of the least brainy addict of out-right monster films... You'll look far to find a creepier scene than the one in which the skeptical surgeon



BJORNSTRAND

is hounded by the 'body' on which he has just performed an autopsy! The practical uses of suggestion are beautifully indicated here. As in all his pictures, Mr. Bergman (who does everything) has achieved remarkable magic with his camera and with his cast [which] is superior in absolutely every role... Max von Sydow as the magician is a haunting figure who floats between the realms of