

Scandinavian season

Faithless

The movie is about a messy affair from "Bergman's" past, and it is about the creative process.

Notes compiled by Val Noble

A Lifelong Liaison

In the golden era of European cinema, the names Ingmar Bergman and Liv Ullmann went hand in hand. He was the most revered film-maker of his generation. She was his muse, his star, his love. But though they separated, they would, she told Simon Hattenstone (*The Guardian*, Saturday 3 February 2001), never be really apart. And now their roles are reversed. She is the feted director, and he is the subject of her latest film.



Review by Roger Ebert -

The island is Faro, where Ingmar Bergman lives, and the house is Bergman's house, and the beach is where he walks, and the office is where he works, and we can see a shadowy 16mm film projector in the background, and remember hearing that the Swedish Film Institute sends him weekly shipments of films to watch. And the old man in the film is named "Bergman," although we don't learn that essential piece of the jigsaw until the final credits.

Or perhaps the house and its office are a set. And perhaps "Bergman" is partly Ingmar Bergman and partly the director's fictional creation. And surely, we think, he has a DVD player by now. "Faithless," a film made from his screenplay and directed by Liv Ullmann, is intriguing in the way it dances in and out of the shadow of Bergman's autobiography. We learn in his book *The Magic Lantern*, for example, that in 1949 he was involved in an affair something like the one in this film - but we sense immediately that "Faithless" is not a memoir of that affair, but a meditation on the guilt it inspired.

Eden Court Cinema

Tuesday 19 August 2014 at 7.15pm

2000, Sweden/Norway/Finland, Colour

Running time: 147 mins.

Genre: Drama

Language: Swedish + subtitles

Cast: Lena Endre, Erland Josephson, Krister Henriksson, Thomas Hanzon, Michelle Gylemo, Juni Dahr

Director: Liv Ullman

Screenplay: Ingmar Bergman



Liv Ullmann

Bergman, the son of a Lutheran bishop, has in his 80s forsaken the consolations of religion but not the psychic payments that it exacts. His film feels like an examination of conscience, and he's hard on himself. It's with a start we realize that Ullmann is also one of his former lovers, that they have a child together, and that in her vision he has clearly been forgiven his trespasses.

The movie is about a messy affair from "Bergman's" past, and it is about the creative process. As it begins, the old man (Erland Josephson) has writing paper on the desk before him and is talking with an actress (Lena Endre). It becomes clear that this actress is not physically present. The dialogue suggests the director has enlisted this woman, or her memory, to help him think through a story he is writing. But she is also the woman the story is about. And she sometimes seems to be reading her story from his notes - as if he created her, and she exists only in his words.

The woman is named Marianne. She is married to Markus (Thomas Hanzon), a symphony conductor, often away on tours. They have a daughter of 8 or 9, Isabelle (Michelle Gylemo). David (Krister Henriksson) is Markus' best friend. One night while Markus is away, David asks Marianne if he may sleep with her. She laughs him off, but then agrees they can share the same bed as brother and sister. Soon they have hurtled into a passionate affair, unforeseen and heedless.

It is clear that David is "Bergman" at an earlier age. He is a film director with vague projects in mind, he has long been attracted to Marianne, and he is, let us say, a louse. What becomes clear during the course of the film is that Markus is no saint, either, and that he uses his daughter as a hostage in the unpleasantness that results.

Ullmann has a sure sense for the ways people behave in emotional extremity. "Faithless" is not made of soap opera sincerity, but from the messiness of people who might later wish they had behaved differently. When Markus surprises the naked David in bed with Marianne, he projects not jealous anger, but a kind of smarmy gotcha! triumph (for their part, they giggle nervously).

It is David who feels sexual jealousy; when Marianne returns from Markus with the news she has regained custody of her child, David thinks "something doesn't sound right," and cross-examines her until he forces out a description of how Markus raped her as the cost of custody. (This rape, described but not seen, has the same kind of reality in the mind's eye as the monologue about the boys on the beach in "Persona.") At one point in the film, "Bergman" reaches out and tenderly touches the cheek of David, and Ullmann has said this is the old man forgiving the young man, even though the old man can never forgive himself.

Ingmar Bergman has had his name on films for nearly 60 years. Some are among the best ever made. In old age he has grown more inward and personal, writing versions of his autobiography, usually to be directed by close friends. The films shot on Faro are in a category by themselves: chamber films, spare, chilly, with grateful interiors warmed by fires or candles. In "Faithless," scenes in Stockholm and Paris show cozy interiors. And then all is reduced to the spare, stark office where "Bergman" sits and remembers, summons his muses, and writes.

Our next screening...



Jar City

Continuing our

Scandinavian season

on Tuesday 2 September 2014 at 7.15pm

Icelandic director Baltasar Kormakur (*101 Reykjavik*) is on home turf with this accomplished crime drama. Based on a novel by Arnaldur Indridason, it's a multilayered story whose central theme is the murder of a reclusive old man. Ingvar E Sigurdsson stars as the grumpy detective who discovers a link to a series of crimes from years earlier. Kormakur's economical direction and the strikingly bleak Icelandic vistas make for an extraordinary film.

Inverness Film Fans (InFiFa) meet fortnightly at Eden Court Cinema for screenings and post-film discussions. For more information and to join us, free, go to:

www.invernessfilmfans.org



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