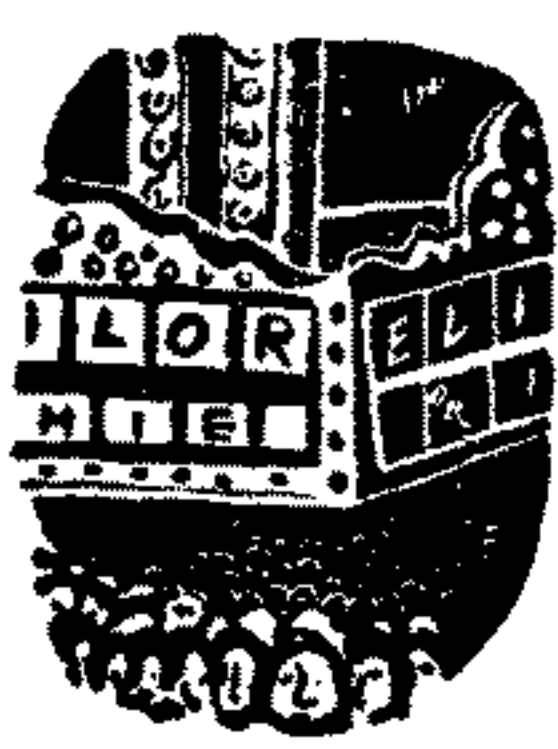


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SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

Bergman Revisited

ONE of the more gratifying aspects of the movie world is the opportunity it often affords us to catch up on the work of an artist we particularly admire. This is especially true of the foreign film makers. Let one of their works catch on, and soon every art theatre in town is running pictures made before the breakthrough. Just a few months ago, New York was a Bergman festival, with no less than seven films by the redoubtable Swede playing simultaneously—films early and late, all contributing additional insights into the variety of his special but intriguing genius.

The latest of the Ingmar Bergman revivals, "A Lesson in Love" (Janus), would seem to mark a return to the comedy style of "Smiles of a Summer Night," the film that first won him the attention of American audiences. In point of fact, its production immediately preceded "Smiles"; but it shares with that film the same technical security, the same pointed commentary on sex, and in Eva Dahlbeck and the chameleon Gunnar Bjornstrand, the same stars. If it suggests "Wild Strawberries" in its wild juggling with time, it has neither the austerity nor the formidable intellectuality of the later film. For the most part, it is a gay romp, often hilariously funny, invariably witty, and serious only when reflecting upon the effect of marital infidelity on the young.

The opening is a gem of indirection as Bjornstrand, a gynecologist, disengages himself from his mistress, then seemingly picks up an attractive matron on a train. Not until the picture leaps into flashback do we discover that she is in fact his wife. Piqued by his many infidelities, she is on her way to keep a tryst with a former lover. Past and present intermingle as husband and lover vie with each other to win her back. Not much of a story perhaps; but Bergman, once again his own script writer, has threaded it with deliciously naughty dialogue, some wonderful farce comedy, and a good many telling jabs at the battle of the sexes.

Although this is not yet the lyric Bergman of today, there is at least one sequence—a marvelous, silent scene in which an awkwardly adolescent girl attempts to choose between mother and father—that can stand with anything he has done in the full maturity of his powers. To alter a slogan that

Paramount once made popular, "If it's a Bergman picture, it's the best show in town."