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Film Review

The Touch

(Beroringen)

(In English & Swedish;
English subtitles)

20th-Fox (certain world areas) release of ABC Pictures Corp.-Persona Film (Ingmar Bergman) production. Stars Bibi Andersson, Elliott Gould, Max von Sydow, Sheila Reid. Written and directed by Bergman; camera (Eastmancolor) Sven Nykvist; editor, Siv Kanalv-Lundgren; music, Jan Johansson. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival, June 26, 1971. Running time: 113 minutes.

Karin VergerusBibi Andersson
David KovacElliott Gould
Andreas VergerusMax von Sydow
SaraSheila Reid
Anders VergerusStaffan Hallerstrom
Agnes VergerusMaria Nolgard
Karin's mother ..Barbro Hiort af Ornas
A DoctorAke Lindstrom
A nurseMimmi Wahlander
Hospital MatronElsa Ebbesen
Family neighbors
.....Karin Nilsson, Anna von Rosen
Vergerus' secretary ..Margareta Bystrom
Museum curatorAlan Simon
Another curatorPer Sjostrand
Woman at staircaseAino Taube
Museum worker..Ann-Christin Lohbraten
BEA hostessCarol Zavis
British immigration officer
.....Dennis Gotobed
London BellboyBengt Ottekil

Berlin — Ingmar Bergman's latest film, blurbed as "his first in English" as well as "his first love story," is most probably both these things but also, happily, one of the brighter spots on the current screen scene.

Spoken in English, with occasional Swedish-dialog interludes suitably bridged by subtitles, splendidly acted and photographed, it is both a romantic film of great poignancy and strength and an example of masterful cinema honed to deceptively simple near-perfection. It is also perhaps Bergman's most readily accessible film. Thus with adroit salesmanship and a prestige buildup in keys, "The Touch" could hope to reach wider general audiences than the director's films usually do, a factor which should provide both delight and challenge to ABC Pictures, for which and with which Bergman produced, directed and wrote film.

There's a further switch: in telling what is basically a straight triangle tale (bored wife, busy husband, "interesting" and available friend) Bergman this time seems to be appealing to and aiming primarily at the emotions rather than the intellect. As a possible result, highbrow pundits and even Bergman buffs may, at a superficial glance, turn on their erstwhile hero, for bypassing them and speaking directly to auds, forgetting that other recognized "auteurs" and masters of the cinema (notably Bunuel, with "Tristana" and others) have also, in the more mature heights of their careers, de-frilled and simplified their styles.

Not unexpectedly, Bergman's cast is superb. Bibi Andersson walks away with pic, thanks to one of those immense, bigger-than-life performances, winning hearts as well as (deserved) awards. Rarely has the moving anguish of a trysting woman been so stirringly caught. Elliott Gould is a perfect choice as the somewhat neurotic foreign archeologist who despite oafish manners, selfishness and

instability fascinates and attracts her. Max von Sydow does expected wonders with the normally unplayable role of the silently strong husband. Support is solid throughout, with a notable bit by Sheila Reid as Gould's disturbing sister.

Not surprisingly, dialog is literate, adult, alternately humorous or seizing, to suit the situations and their handling. It's a rare treat to have a film so naturally combine a foreign "feel" and (intermittently) language while fully satisfying demanding English-language audience standards and requirements.

As noted, Sven Nykvist's color lensing is a top effort, and so are all other technical facets of this remarkably well-rounded production.

Hawk.