



MOVIES & TV

'Searching for Ingmar Bergman' an excellent look at the man and his films

G. Allen Johnson | November 27, 2018 Updated: November 28, 2018, 6:03 pm



A scene from German filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta's documentary "Searching for Ingmar Bergman."
Photo: Oscilloscope

The 100th anniversary of the birth of Ingmar Bergman has been a boon for the Swedish master filmmaker's fans, especially those in the Bay Area. The Berkeley Art Museum's Pacific Film Archive is still in the midst of a yearlong tribute that kicked off in February

with **actress and Bergman muse Liv Ullmann in person**. His assistant for 30 years, Katinka Farago, appeared in person for a Smith Rafael Film Center tribute this month in San Rafael.

And the ultimate tribute to the filmmaker who died in 2007 at age 89 came last week when the Criterion Collection released a comprehensive 39-film set of his complete filmography restored on Blu-ray, listing for nearly \$300 and weighing several pounds.

It can all seem overwhelming, but there's one tribute that should not be missed. The documentary "Searching for Ingmar Bergman," by the respected German filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta, starts Friday, Nov. 30, at the Roxie Theater in San Francisco's Mission District.

Part personal essay, by a filmmaker who knew him and was influenced by him, von Trotta ("The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum") uses film clips, behind-the-scenes footage, Bergman home movies, interviews with Bergman's collaborators (Ullmann and Farago among them) and Bergman's children as well as modern filmmakers (Olivier Assayas, Carlos Saura) influenced by him to gain insight into the man and his films.

"Bergman is one of the great phantoms who shaped the youth of our generation, who shaped the French New Wave," says legendary French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carriere. "Bergman is one of those who opened up cinema after the war."

One of those people was von Trotta, who moved to Paris in the early 1960s in her late teens to become involved with cineaste culture. Her friends exposed her to Bergman's "The Seventh Seal," and she was set on becoming a filmmaker herself. Since then, "Bergman's films have been my constant companions," von Trotta says.



Actress Liv Ullmann (left) is interviewed by German filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta in the documentary "Searching for Ingmar Bergman."

Photo: Oscilloscope

Bergman says in an interview: "Film is a channeler. Film is a distributor of dreamers and of dreams. And it brings to life people's dreams, wishes and most secret longings."

Of course, Bergman films are famous for their angst and pessimism, but, as Carriere points out, Bergman, who at first focused on religious guilt, gradually withdrew from religious themes and broadened his focus on the guilt of humanity, to which we all can relate.

"God becomes less present, and men and women are left to their own devices," Carriere says.

His children mostly loved him, but he was an absent father (he had nine children by six different women) and they don't particularly miss him.

We also get to know a lot of details that are, well, less deep. Like his favorite restaurant (Teatergrillen in Stockholm). And how he liked only the action scenes in Michael Bay's "Pearl Harbor."

Some cool things: footage of Ingrid Bergman prepping for her piano scenes in "Autumn Sonata," insight into his rehearsal methods and lots of Ullmann, who was his companion

MOVIES & TV

Why 'The Golden Girls' continues to

BY TONY BRAVO

MOVIES & TV

10 essential 'Golden Girls' episodes you

BY TONY BRAVO

film W

BY G

Related Movies

 FIND SHOWTIMES

Better Watch Out

Horror

R

 FIND SHOWTIMES

Freaky

Horror

R

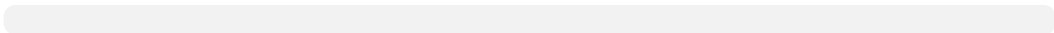
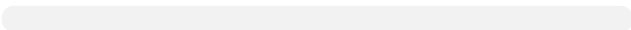
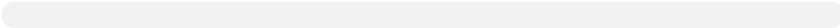
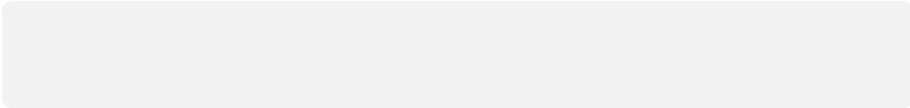
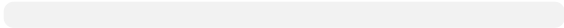
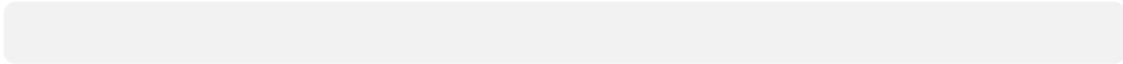
 FIND SHOW

Won't Wom

Action

You must be signed in to comment

[SIGN IN](#)



FOLLOW US



WEBSITES

SFChronicle

SFGATE

Datebook

The Press

GreenState

SERVICES

Offers

Store

e-edition

Apps

Archives

Subscriber Services

ABOUT

Company

Careers

Advertising

Customer Service

Contact Newsroom

FAQs

Privacy Notice / Notice
At Collection

Your California Privacy
Rights

Interest-Based Ads

Terms of Use

CCPA

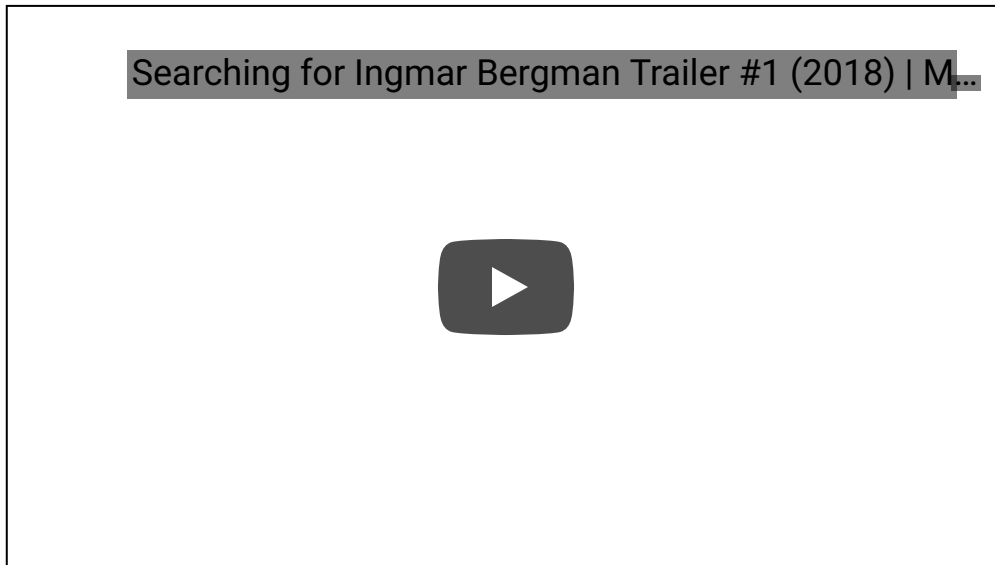
Do Not Sell My
Personal
Information

for only five years but a friend and a collaborator for four decades until his death.

Bergman fans will love this film, but the great thing about “Searching for Ingmar Bergman” is that budding cineastes who are curious about his work will find much value in it as well.



Searching for Ingmar Bergman: Documentary. Starring Liv Ullmann, Olivier Assayas, Carlos Saura. Directed by Margarethe von Trotta; co-directed by Felix Moeller, Bettina Böhler. (Not rated. 99 minutes.)



G. Allen Johnson

G. Allen Johnson is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: ajohnson@sfchronicle.com
Twitter: [@BRfilmsAllen](https://twitter.com/BRfilmsAllen)

More In Movies & TV

