

People & Places

Obit

Spirited, affectionate

Swedish actress Bibi Andersson dies at 83

By Owen Gleiberman

Seen from the vantage of 2019, the extraordinary actresses who came to prominence in the films of Ingmar Bergman – Harriet Andersson, Liv Ullmann, Ingrid Thulin, and the sunny and anguished, incandescent and heartbreaking Bibi Andersson, who died Sunday – enjoyed a relationship with their director that was rooted in a 20th-century male-gaze ethos. Bergman was famously obsessed with these women: with their faces, their personae, the dramatic possibilities they opened up to him. He carried on off-screen romantic relationships with most of them (including Bibi Andersson), and in his movies he placed them on a grand pedestal of extravagant expression. The pedestal was framed not with a medium or long shot but with a starkly penetrating close-up. You could say that Bergman used the camera to probe their very being.



Anderson

Yet it may be the essence of the partnership between Bergman, the mythical art-house giant, and the actresses he turned into psychodramatic muses that the actresses were the polar opposite of passive. They revealed things that no actress in a movie had ever revealed before: depths of joy and thought and agony and experience. In staying true to their inner selves, they showed the world a new kind of woman. And no actress brought that sense of revelation to bear with more vibrant virtuosity than Bibi Andersson.

Challenging

She came to the movies with a traditional look (corn-silk hair, flashing eyes, a wholesome sexy overbite), but she became a Bergman surrogate-goddess who forged her own complex identity: spirited and affectionate, with the ability to heal (that serene smile Victor Sjöström's Isak Borg has at the end of "Wild Strawberries" wouldn't have been possible had he not been touched along the way by the spirit of Bibi Andersson), but also knowing, questioning, a shade petulant, holding her most challenging thoughts close to the vest, so that it was only those in the audience who could fully see them.

Born in 1935, Andersson was discovered at 16 in a soap commercial and started off as a 1950s ingenue, playing the kind of Scandinavian-Doris-Day-with-gravitas who invited you to bask in her beauty, like the homespun dream girl she embodied, at 20, for a single blissed-out scene in "Smiles of a Summer Night". Yet it didn't take long for Andersson to develop a moody sensuality that turned the tables on the audience. In "Wild Strawberries", she played not one but two roles, an idealized heroine and – two years before "Breathless" – a short-haired, short-fused free spirit of defiance who seemed purged of romance. In "The Seventh Seal", she was a vision of the everyday faith the hero has lost. And in "Persona", the obliquely disturbing and self-destructing art-cinema head trip that remains one of the key movies of the 1960s, Andersson did what only the greatest actresses can do: She tore off the mask and let you touch what was beneath it.

She was, by that point, a leading Bergman player (unlike Liv Ullmann, who was the new persona on the block), and her role in "Persona" starts off as archetypically Bibi: She's Alma the private hospital nurse, dutiful and nurturing, assigned to take care of Ullmann's emotionally fractured actress, who has withdrawn from the stage, and from the world, by refusing to speak.

Enact

For a while, the two enact a dance of temperaments: Ullmann the debauched earth mother, and Andersson the right-brain good girl, doing all she can to behave responsibly. But then, in their budding intimacy, they begin to reveal sides of themselves that are the opposite of what we expected. Andersson delivers a sullen, hot-and-bothered reminiscence of group sex on a beach that Pauline Kael heralded as "one of the rare truly erotic sequences in movie history," and what Kael meant, I think, is that it's one of the only erotic moments that we can actually believe happened. As "Persona" goes on, Ullmann and Andersson fuse into each other's spirits, at times nearly trading places, and that bespeaks the yin-and-yang quality of Andersson's acting. She was a "girl next door" who, at key moments, could reveal the haunted depths of a Vivien Leigh crossed with Sylvia Plath. And she never shone more brightly than when her candle burned darkly.

One of my three or four favorite scenes in any film by Bergman is the opening section of "Scenes from a Marriage". It's a dinner party for four, so comfortable and bourgeois, with the hosts, played by Ullmann and Erland Josephson, so smug in their contentment that you can't wait to see what they're hiding. But you don't have to wait long, because the other couple, played by Andersson and Jan Malmsjö, are on hand to show us, as a kind of foreshadowing, what marriage is really about: the holding in of secrets, and the repression of rage, which comes boiling over as they trade insults that turn deadly. It's a sequence that in 15 minutes achieves the claw-ripping power of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", and the key to it all is Andersson's cathartic portrayal of primal feminine rage.

Andersson, like Bergman, found a presence beyond Sweden, appearing in the late '70s in such second-tier Hollywood movies as "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden" and "The Concorde...Airport '79", as well as Robert Altman's misbegotten "Quintet". But unlike her fellow Bergman stock-company alum Max von Sydow, she never connected as an "international" star. She didn't pop in those films; she was too much the sober punitive Euro-head. Yet in the '80s, she regained her sly humor in a movie like "Babette's Feast", and she continued to act on stage and on Swedish television.

The spirit of inclusion that is now gripping the entertainment industry is all about opportunity in the real world. It's about women seizing the chance, as never before, to become directors, cinematographers, executives, power players. But it is also, of course, about heightening the opportunity to tell women's stories, to place them front and center in the culture, as the stories of men have always been. We've certainly got a long way to go, yet the movies of the 20th century are part of the wind at the back of that revolution. And Bergman's films, especially, will go down as groundbreaking expressions of a new kind of feminine mystique. In a movie like "Wild Strawberries" or "Persona", Bibi Andersson projected the spark of her inner fire and dismay, etching it onto the consciousness of everyone who watched her. She revealed what it was now possible for a woman to feel. Were the emotions new? In a way. But as much as that, showing them was new. And that was the change. Andersson was the actress as alchemist. (RTRS)



H.E.R. performs at the Coachella Music & Arts Festival at the Empire Polo Club on April 14 in Indio, Calif. (AP)

Music

Grande brings 4/5ths of 'N Sync

Eilish triumphs at Coachella

By Chris Willman

As rumored, Arianna Grande brought out most of the members of 'N Sync during her Coachella-closing performance Sunday night ... and the reaction to the collaboration between the reigning pop superstar and the nearly reunited boy-band kings was mixed, ranging from an exultant "OMG!" to something more like "Oh, meh, god."

Lance Bass, Joey Fatone, Chris Kirkpatrick and JC Chasez first came out as Grande sang "Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored", which samples the group's vintage "Makes Me Ill", and then they stuck around for a joint version of the oldie "Tearin' Up My Heart".

The absence of Justin Timberlake was an insurmountable obstacle for some watching at home via the live stream or in the California crowd. Others thought that recreating some of their signature late '90s/early 2000s dance moves with Grande gamely joining in was justification enough to spotlight these four in the desert, even without participation from the man in the woods.

At least a small amount of ire was directed at Timberlake for (presumably) saying no and spoiling the potential fun. "JT is no longer touring and couldn't join N'sync and Ariana for 3 mins at Coachella?" tweeted Erica Beth (@RibaDiva). Wrote Amber (@

Yachtzee27), "I read that JT wouldn't be at Coachella because he's on tour, but he just finished the tour. So why not just say it's because he thinks he's better than 'N Sync these days?'"

Rock isn't dead at Coachella, a vast amount of evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. It was alive and well in a performance by Billie Eilish that pushed every rock 'n' roll button except the one that demands there be an electric guitar on stage.

Close

The 17-going-on-35-year-old star literally bounded through close to half the songs, her white high-top sneakers catching enough air to nearly batter her rear end... then, kicking it down just as many notches when it came time to take to a stool and go all confessional, in another fine rock tradition. It turns out one of the best ways that she is old before her time is that, in spirit if not exactly sound, she comes off as the reincarnation of an old-school punk-rock kid.

Eilish's non-headlining but really effectively headlining performance was the most anticipated performance of the three-day weekend at the Southern California desert's conjoined polo clubs. Eilish was booked onto what everybody knows as the second stage – the Outdoor Theatre – and the crush to get into the available space was serious nowhere more than the fenced-off

guest/artists area, where even model-actresses used to maintaining their personal space got perhaps their glimpse of what it's like to be in the thick of it at a Palladium show. It might've seemed like an error on Coachella's part not to book Eilish onto the main stage, but in the end it felt right, like a nascent star's last club show before acceding to big-league status, even if the "club" here probably allowed for six-figure attendance.

Your initial inclination might also have been to say, "Poor Tame Impala", since that one-man band, Saturday's ostensible headliner, was always destined to go as less of an attention-getter for the day – even before a half-hour-late start time for Eilish's show meant she overlapped their time on the main stage by at least that long. But in the end, maybe Kevin Parker doesn't need our sympathy. He and his pickup crew did just fine for themselves, and Tame Impala's show ended up being a very chill-out way to end the day (at least for those who didn't end it by then heading over to Kid Cudi's higher-energy, overpacked midnight performance in the Sahara tent).

Tame Impala is tamer these days – and that's not a knock. They may be known to a lot of the vast crowd as that band that has that one harder-edged hit that they're never quite if it was by the Black Keys are not. (RTRS)



Hong Kong actress Kara Wai poses after winning the Best Supporting Actress of her movie "Tracey" at the Hong Kong Film Awards in Hong Kong on April 14. (AP)



Hart



Oswalt

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Bruce Springsteen took the stage for the first time in 2019 with photographer Danny Clinch and his Tangiers Blues Band, at New York's Tribeca Grill at a benefit supporting the Kristen Ann Carr Fund.

Springsteen and company rocked the house that included a set similar to the one performed at the opening of the New Jersey venue Asbury Lanes last year: Johnny Rivers' "Rockin' Pneumonia and Boogie Woogie Flu" and the old boogie-woogie standard, "Down the Road Apiece", popularized by Chuck Berry and the Rolling Stones.

The event – "A Night to Remember" – raises money and awareness in the charity's fight against sarcoma, a form of cancer. Carr, the daughter of rock journalist and Sirius XM E Street Radio host Dave Marsh and Springsteen co-manager Barbara Carr, died of the disease in 1993 at the age of 21.

Clinch was the main honoree of the evening at the gala, held at the Tribeca Grill Loft in New York City. Also in attendance was E Street Band member Roy Bittan. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Universal Pictures is celebrating National Pet Day by dropping a new trailer for "The Secret Life of Pets 2", highlighting the "emotional" side of our furry friends.

The footage shows the terrier Max, voiced by Patton Oswalt, being taken to the vet by his owner (Ellie Kemper) due to the stress of protecting her toddler son Liam.

Kevin Hart's rabbit Snowball later tells Max, "The baby is leaving the nest," as Liam heads off to preschool for the

first time. Harrison Ford, making his animated-film debut as the Welsh Sheepdog Rooster, pushes Max to deal with his fears. "The first step of not being afraid is acting like you're not afraid," Rooster declares.

The voice cast includes returnees

Chloe the tabby cat (Lake Bell) and Gidget the Pomeranian (Jenny Slate), as well as newcomer Daisy the Shih Tzu (Tiffany Haddish). Oswalt replaces original star Louis C.K. as Max. Chris Renaud returns as the director, along with screenwriter Brian Lynch.



Actor Robert Downey Jr. (center), poses with actor Jeremy Renner, and actress Brie Larson during an Asia Press Conference to promote their latest film "Avengers Endgame" in Seoul, South Korea on April 15. The movie will open on April 24 in South Korea. (AP)

The trailer arrives a day after the announcement of an upcoming "Secret Life of Pets" ride at Universal Studios Hollywood, called "The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash!", adjacent to the "Despicable Me Minion Mayhem" attraction. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Global streaming giant Netflix has added 10 Indian original films to its slate. The are in a variety of genres and hail from a galaxy of A-list talent.

After the success of 2018's "Stories", Karan Johar, Zoya Akhtar, Dibakar Banerjee and Anurag Kashyap, reunite for the self-explanatory "Ghost Stories", being produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP and Ashi Dua.

Banerjee also produces and directs "Freedom", the story of desires in an Indian family interwoven with the personal, ideological and sexual history of the country.

"Guilty", directed by Ruchi Narain explores the versions of truth that unfold when a small-town girl accuses the college jock of rape. Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital content arm of Johar's Dharma Productions, produces.

Bombay Fables and Cineras Entertainment's "Serious Men", based on Manu Joseph's bestselling novel, follows a wily slum dweller who cons the country into believing his dim-witted 10-year-old son is a genius. Sudhir Mishra ("Hostages") directs. (RTRS)