

Woody Allen, Ingmar Bergman find therapy in their films

TICKETS PLEASE

Woody Allen and Ingmar Bergman have never been shy about working personal problems out on celluloid. Their "Husbands and Wives" and "The Best Intentions," both opening this weekend, offer fans an even greater insight into what makes these two filmmakers tick.

"Husbands and Wives" will certainly fan the fires of Woody Allen gossip mongers. The story, about marital infidelity complicated by a middle-aged college professor's romantic interest in a 20-year-old,

hits even closer to home than the previous disaster.

More than a simple case of life imitating art, however, this is Allen's strongest, most challenging film since "Crimes and Misdemeanors." It's by far his most personal.

In the first scene, Allen and Mia Farrow, as Columbia writing professor Gabe and wife Judy, are rocked by news that their best friends Jack and Sally (Sidney Pollack and Judy Davis) plan to divorce. Soon we realize that neither of the couples is very happily married.

Allen uses a hand-held camera throughout the film, most wildly in this opening scene where both the characters and the audience are thrown off kilter. The camera pans

and zooms across the apartment, unsure where to focus on the frenzied dialogue, as if it's following the action at a sports event.

Had the film continued at this pace, it would have been virtually unwatchable, but cinematographer Carlo DiPalma calms the camera down and settles into a more subtly shaky, documentary-style look at the relationships unraveling and sometimes sewing up again.

Juliette Lewis, so remarkable as the teenager in "Cape Fear," brings a blend of sophistication and pre-teenishness to Rain, another in a series of "kamikaze women" that Gabe falls for. Judy Davis, brilliant in "Naked Lunch" and "Impromptu" and undeniably the most talented actress working in movies to-

day, punctuates every line with criticism in her role as the hyper-opinionated Sally.

Armchair psychologists will spend hours trying to figure out what went on in Allen's head during the writing and filming of "Husbands and Wives." And as much as I wanted to forget the overblown scandal while watching the film, it's impossible to separate the cinema from the writer in Allen's latest experiment, where admitted confusion regarding the mysteries of love is worn fully on his sleeve.

Ingmar Bergman officially retired from directing in 1983, but his work still resonates. He wrote the screenplay for "The Best Intentions" (playing Friday through Sunday at the Detroit Film Theatre) in the hope of more fully understanding

its subject — the courtship and early married life of his parents, both of whom were by all accounts difficult individuals.

Instead of mounting the director's chair again, Bergman dropped the script into the hands of Bille August. Those who saw his "Pelle the Conqueror" realize that August is specifically Bergman reincarnated, so the choice was logical — almost inevitable — that he should direct.

This leads to the ultimate frustration with the aptly named "Best Intentions" because, with all of its beauty and insight into the human spirit, it never takes on a life of its own. The self-absorbed, slightly pompous minister Henrik (Samuel Frøler) and his self-absorbed, slightly snobbish bride Anna (Per-

nilla August) would not survive on the screen without the Bergman name.

When the film does work, it's because Bergman paints such an often unflattering portrait of them. You grow to hate Henrik and Anna for their stubbornness and their wrong moves. Meanwhile, August does effectively convey the sequel of a minister's existence along with the few simple pleasures that keep the couple going.

Like many of Bergman's films, "The Best Intentions" is a downer, administered with an especially heavy hand. As in "Pelle," August tries so hard to mimic the well-modulated tone of Bergman's work that we're too often left with an imitation that's as pale as the faces of its long-suffering characters.

STREET SENSE

■ ANN ARBOR FILM COOPERATIVE

Angell Hall, Auditorium A, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Call 769-7797 for information. (\$2.50)

"The American Animated Film: The Violent '40s and '50s" and "Lyrical Nitrate" share a double bill Sept. 18-19. Beginning at 7:30 p.m., the first completion focuses on the post-war influence on violence in Hollywood cartoons, with Andy Panda, Mighty Mouse and Daffy Duck among the victims. The Dutch-produced "Nitrate" at 9:15 p.m. edits together footage found in an Amsterdam attic, adds music, and presents a loving tribute to early cinema.

Sense from page 9A

These are daytime talk shows. They are watched primarily by women who stay home during the day. That they might ponder to what the media thinks woman who are home in the morning want to hear is understandable. Also, beauty has become to much too great an extent the fulcrum upon which a woman's power rests.

It is understandable that women, including myself resent this. But it is also true that women, like men, get angry when they feel tricked and we don't love the people we think tricked us.

It is also true that many women complain bitterly about making love to a fat man. The truth that

supersedes all of these is that each of us must in the end take responsibility for ourselves, because it is a lie to pretend that someone else should or could take care of us. No one can give us the discipline we need.

Too often I hear women talk about feeling victimized by men. However, when men say they have been victimized by women, they are cads. That is often not true.

Barbara

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

1992). In this beautiful but overly schmaltzy romantic comedy, four women embark on a vacation in Italy only to have it change their lives. Miranda Richardson and Joan Plowright star.

"Bladerunner" (USA — 1992). The re-released director's cut of Ridley Scott's influential sci-fi film stars Harrison Ford as a futuristic policeman on the trail of runaway robots. The irritating voice-over narration is gone and the ending has been changed to the bleaker one that Scott intended.

■ MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students)

"Fourth Animation Celebration," through Sept. 25 (call for show times). A new program of cartoon shorts from around the globe, including the latest from favorites Candy Guard, Bruno Bozzetto and Paul de Nooijer. A favorite, however, remains the Bulgarian "Can-

film," about a tin can that must adapt to various political regimes. "Sliver" (USA — 1973), 7 p.m. Sept. 16 and 9 p.m. Sept. 18. The Michigan resurrects one of Woody Allen's earlier, funnier films in this sci-fi spoof about a man who wakes up from an operation only to find that it's 200 years in the future. Diane Keaton co-stars.

■ OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
739 S. Washington, Royal Oak. Call 837-2590 for information. (\$10; \$5 under 12).

"Ren and Stimpy Film Festival," 7 and 9:30 p.m. Sept. 19. Happy, happy Joy, joy! Two different programs of cartoons starring TV's surreal comic heroes will be screened in a benefit for Health Emergency Assistance of Detroit.

■ STATE THEATRE
2115 Woodward Avenue Ave., Detroit. Call 961-5450 for information. (Free)

"A Clockwork Orange" (Britain

— 1971), 9 p.m. Sept. 14. Stanley Kubrick directed this bleak look at the near future, where the clever Alex (Malcolm McDowell) leads a group of thugs on late-night spree of "ultra-violence." His capture and reconditioning leads to a surprising conclusion in this sci-fi cult hit.

■ STATE WAYNE THEATRE
35310 Michigan Ave., Wayne. All films play nightly Wednesday through Sunday. Call 326-4600 for show times. (\$2; \$1 students and senior citizens)

"The Golden Voyage of Sinbad" (Britain — 1974). Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion animated effects have never looked better than in this swashbuckling tale. Here Sinbad battles a multi-armed sword-wielding statue among his many nemesis.

"The Ballad of Cable Hogue"

(USA — 1970). Jason Robards plays a loner who makes a life for himself in the old west. Sam Peckinpah directed this lengthy but lyrical and rarely screened western.

"When My Baby Smiles at Me" (USA — 1948). Betty Grable, Dan Dailey and Jack Okey play a vaudeville team that splits when one of its members hits the big time.

— John Monaghan

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