

Bergman acts in newest Bergman

By Elizabeth Wright

In this movie decade of glitter, glamour, high-budget sen-

sationalism and overexposed 'superstars,' Ingmar Bergman's latest film, *Autumn Sonata*, comes to us as a literate study of human lives as they are.

Bergman, who admits that theatre is his first love, utilizes film, his second love, to magnify all that good drama offers: intense characterization, meaningful dialogue, and a forceful story — or as is the case in *Autumn Sonata*, a dramatic encounter.

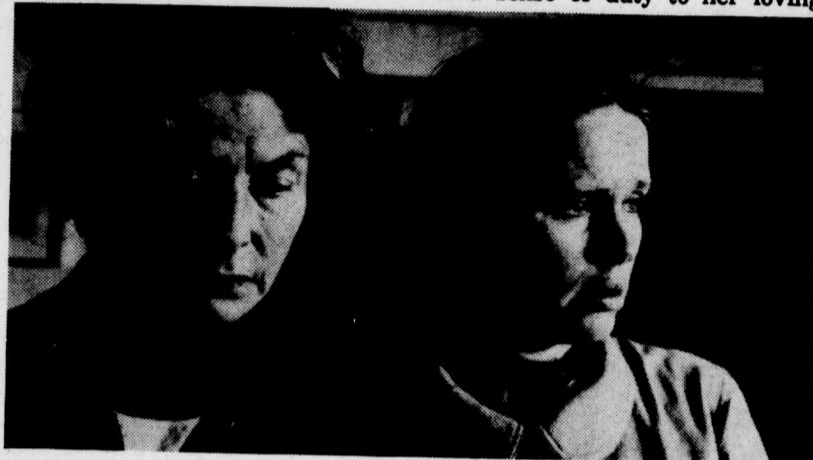
Bergman does not clutter the screen with images. He is too sophisticated and too passionate for diversion. It is his intention to find the truth — the essential realism that underlines the human

experience — as excruciating and painful as that may be.

The film centres on two women, a mother and daughter. Charlotte, brilliantly played by Ingrid Bergman, is the mother — a successful concert pianist. Her daughter Eva, played by the sublime Liv Ullman, is a quiet person who has found refuge as the wife of a country minister.

The film begins with Eva writing to her mother, entreating her to come and visit the parsonage. They have not seen each other for seven years.

This is really Eva's story: haunting and as graceful as her spiritual character. Her mother Charlotte, who comes to stay, is beautiful, proud and professional. The contrast between the two women is obvious from the start. Yet, *Autumn Sonata* claims there are reasons for our unique personas. Through the use of subtle flashbacks we are made aware of Eva's childhood, of the neglect and isolation inflicted by Charlotte, Eva's unloving mother. Eva's character is scarred and torn. She feels incapable of love and lives out of a sense of duty to her loving



Bergman and Ullman in gloomy interior of "Autumn Sonata"

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husband and invalid sister Helena, whom Eva has rescued from the home Charlotte placed her in. Charlotte, we sense, clings to life out of an egocentric drive. From her position Eva finds the strength to attack Charlotte's brittle facade. This explosive yet tender scene which lasts the duration of a night is truly Bergman's work. The dialogue, intense and struggling, are words from the heart — faltering attempts by two women seeking to define themselves, their lives, and their relationship with each other.

More specifically, Bergman is spotlighting the important, yet what he regards as enigmatic, relation of mother and daughter. At one point, early in the film, Eva cries to her mother, "Why can't people leave each other alone?" But this is exactly the point — people can't leave each other alone. And as *Autumn Sonata* demonstrates this is no more evident than in the umbilical tie between mother and daughter.

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