

Feature

He married Else in 1943, betrayed her with Ellen in 1945, left her for Gun in 1951, swapped her for Kabi in 1959, then Ingrid in 1971. And that's not including his other lovers

'I HAVE COME TO REALISE I HAVE NO TALENT FOR MARRIAGE'

What Ingmar Bergman's archives reveal about cinema's brooding guru. By John-Paul Flintoff

Ingmar Bergman and the actress Liv Ullmann take a break from filming *Persona* (1966). Ullmann was one of Bergman's long-term leading ladies, and also the mother of one of his children, Linn



Five years before his death last year, Ingmar Bergman packed 44 cases full of notes, letters, private films and photos and sent them off to the new Ingmar Bergman Foundation. Soon afterwards, the film director moved permanently from Stockholm to Faro, a sparsely populated island off Sweden's Baltic coast, where he was confined to a wheelchair. His eyesight faded, and he stopped watching films in his specially built cinema. "Why did nobody tell me how difficult it was to get old?" he asked friends and his ex-wives, one of whom played piano for him till the bitter end.

26

A year after his death at the age of 89, a huge new book, *The Ingmar Bergman Archives*, sheds new light on the Swede's professional and private life. The overall impression is rather unflattering – he comes across as a man obsessed by work and a control freak.

The photographs were collated by Bengt Wanselius, Bergman's photographer for 20 years. He discovered previously unseen images from Bergman's films, and selected unpublished images from the personal archives of many photographers, including the legendary Lennart Nilsson. Rare texts by Bergman, as well as interviews never previously published outside Sweden, have now been made available, thanks





Left: Bergman in 1959 with the actresses Gunnel Lindblom, Bibi Andersson and Ingrid Thulin. Bottom left: his third wife, Gun Hagberg, and son Ingmar. Above: in the 1950s, preparing a scene

intimidating, dark and brooding genius who intoned complex insights with a Swedish accent about man's dreadful fate in a bleak universe".

True, the work did tend to accentuate rather sombre topics: death, love, art, the silence of God, the difficulty of human relationships, the agony of religious doubt, failed marriage, people's inability to communicate with one another. Paul Duncan, co-editor of the new book, admits: "When you are 15, you watch films like *Scenes from a Marriage* and you think, 'Will this never

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end?" Then he adds: "But when you're 40 and you've accumulated some life experience, you see it again and it's like the Rosetta Stone. He gets it so right."

Of course, Bergman did not limit himself to one type of film. He made at least one historical romantic comedy, an action movie, and a horror film. As the French director Jean-Luc Godard put it, Bergman's films surprised even his most enthusiastic supporters: "If you expect a comedy, it ends up being a medieval mystery tale." Altogether, Bergman directed 62 films, most of them based on his own scripts. It's less well known outside his homeland that he also directed more than 170 plays, produced

substantial radio and television work, and published novels and memoirs. "An incessant anxiety calls out to me," the Swede once confessed. "What have you done that will endure? Is there a single metre in any one of your films that will mean something for the future?"

The productivity could hardly have failed to have a bad effect on his private life. As he put it, "I've been 'family lazy'. It is quite simply that. I haven't put an ounce of effort into my families."

Ernst Ingmar Bergman was born on July 14, 1918, in the town of Uppsala, Sweden. His father, Erik, a Lutheran clergyman who later became chaplain to the Swedish royal family, believed in strict discipline, including caning and locking his children in closets. His mother, Karin, was unpredictable. "Like all other children, it seems to me I remember deciding to go out into the forest and lie there and pretend to be dead until everyone was sorry. All their lives, artists retain a strongly infantile streak."

As a child he had difficulty speaking – he stammered, occasionally, for years. "I was shut in, in every way." At the age of 17 he hit his father and left home. He was unable even to speak to his parents for decades. But after writing about his parents' troubled marriage before his birth, in *The Best Intentions* – first a novel and later a six-hour film – he changed his attitude: "After this, every form of reproach, blame, bitterness or even vague feeling that they have messed up my life is gone for ever from my mind."

One of his greatest films, 1957's *Wild Strawberries*, presents a miserable old man looking back on his life. "I had created a figure who, on the outside, looked like my father but was me, through and through," he said. "I was then 37, cut off from all human emotions." This observation seems all the more chilling →

to the book's editors receiving unrestricted access to those packing cases at Bergman's foundation, as well as various theatres and film studios. The documents reveal many implausible film projects, including proposals for Bergman to direct the crooner Harry Belafonte in a film about the poet Alexander Pushkin in 1959, and Cary Grant in a version of Albert Camus's bleak existential fable *The Fall*.

Woody Allen, a friend and avowed disciple, wrote an obituary describing Bergman as "a warm, amusing, joking character, insecure about his immense gifts, beguiled by the ladies". This was to make clear that Bergman was not, as you might expect from his films, "a formidable,

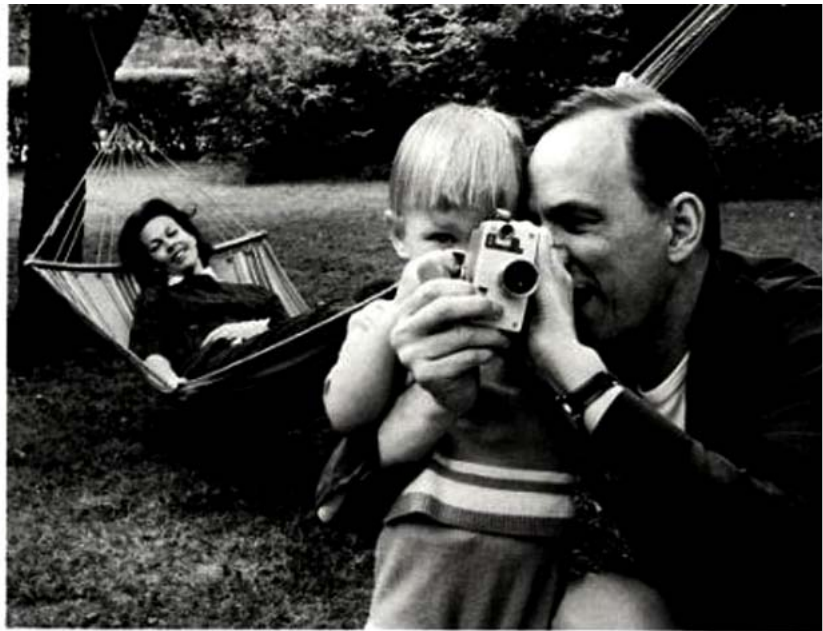
PHOTO LEFT: BOA STRONG / OUTLINE PUBLISHING; PHOTO TOP LEFT: GUY BAL / OUTLINE TELEVISION; TOP RIGHT: A. HANSSON / OUTLINE TELEVISION; BOTTOM: OUTLINE PUBLISHING

when you consider that he had, by then, married three times and fathered at least five children.

He married Else Fisher in 1943, but betrayed her with Ellen Lundstrom, whom he married in 1945. He broke with Ellen after falling in love with the journalist Gun Hagberg. He returned home and told his wife (who was delighted to see him home sooner than expected) that he was leaving her: "It still feels terrible to think that I could have been so incredibly cruel, but I was."

He married Hagberg in 1951, but betrayed her with Harriet Andersson in 1952. Harriet was replaced by Bibi Andersson (no relation) in 1955. By this time he had already told an interviewer: "I have come to realise that I have no talent for marriage, [but] I believe in it." Bibi was in turn replaced by Kabi Laretei, whom he married in 1959. Liv Ullmann took over in 1965, but eventually left him. His fifth and last wife was Ingrid von Rosen, whom he married in 1971 and stayed with until her death in 1995.

Most of these women were artists like himself: a dancer, a choreographer, a journalist, an actress, a pianist. Several left husbands and children to marry him. Altogether, he fathered eight children (although some believe it may even



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have been nine) with his wives and mistresses, including one who only found out that she was Bergman's daughter when she was 22. Most of his children now work as writers, actors and film directors. Another is an airline pilot.

His biographer, Geoffrey Macnab, says that the central paradox about Bergman is that he wrote so creatively and attentively about childhood and yet was so uninterested, for so long, in his own children's lives. Bergman attributed to his last wife, Ingrid, his belated attachment to his many children and grandchildren. "Before, I never had much time for children, emotionally or otherwise. That's something that's been added to my life, thanks to Ingrid. She took the initiative to organise family get-togethers every summer. It's so much fun."

In 1976, Bergman was arrested for tax evasion during a rehearsal of Strindberg's play *The Dance of Death*. The charge was later dismissed, but it led him to turn his back on Sweden, settling not entirely happily for several years in Munich, where he received weekly parcels of Swedish crispbread, sour cream and gingerbread.

His close friend and collaborator Erland Josephson worked with him, off and on, for an incredible 70 years. He says that Bergman could not bear to lose control, which is why the



TOP: LEONARTE/REUTERS; BOTTOM: MICHAEL PUGH/RETNA; RIGHT: LARRY BUSCH/RETNA; LEFT: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/RETNA

Top: with his fourth wife, Kabi Laretei, and their son, Daniel. Bottom: on set with his daughter Lena, whom he cast in *Wild Strawberries* (1957)



arrest hurt so much. Returning eventually to Sweden, Bergman made "behind the scenes" films that set about reclaiming control of his public image. "They belong to a genre in their own right," says Josephson. "Bergman plays Bergman. It is important to him that the image of him shows his tenderness and tolerance, but also his complete domination."

Once, during the rehearsal, Bergman pulled Josephson's beard, wobbled his chin, trod on his toes and pulled his hair. "The reason he is angry is that I have spent a weekend in Paris without telling him, instead of preparing for next week's rehearsals," Josephson realised. "The director and I quarantined our friendship for a couple of weeks."

Of Bergman's style Josephson said: "Earlier directors seldom touched actors physically. Bergman's firm grip is innovative. His pinch belongs to his stock of premeditated spontaneities, designed to liven up sluggish colleagues."

Along with his temper, Bergman's insistence on punctuality was legendary. Once, in Hollywood to discuss a film project with a famous actress, he arrived in the producer's office at nine on the dot, expecting to find the actress. After a short wait, he asked the producer to call her. When she answered the phone and told the producer she was in the shower and on her way,

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Top: Bergman feeding an inflatable swan on the set of 1964's *All These Women*, as the actor Jarl Kulle looks on. Above: joking with Ingrid Thulin between takes of *Winter Light* (1963)

Bergman said: "Give me the phone... Miss X, you can stay in the shower." The arts are all about the struggle for power, Josephson concludes.

Harriet Andersson, meanwhile, recalls his jealousy while he was making the film *Sawdust and Tinsel*. "Ingmar was terribly, pathologically jealous at times, of many people. He thought there was something going on between me and a German photographer who came over to do a feature. I was not unfaithful, even though he thought I was. I was bloody faithful."

Despite everything, Bergman used to say he was faithful too – to everyone. "I think that must be true," says Duncan in his defence, "because he always retained good friendships with his lovers and his wives, all of them, right to the end."

And with friends too. Despite their disagreements, Josephson remembers Bergman warmly: "He was aggressive and tender, penetrating, a man for whom power was important... He still is, even in death."

Indeed, Bergman directed his own funeral, down to the smallest detail. But only three of his eight children attended it ■

The Ingmar Bergman Archives, by Paul Duncan and Bengt Wastelius (Taschen, £120), is published on October 30. It is available at the BooksFirst price of £108, including p&pn. Tel: 0870 165 8585

TOP: HARRY FAHMY; BOTTOM: STEPHEN VAUGHAN; MIDDLE: LUTHERUS BULLION; LEFT: HARRY FAHMY