

A big tribute to a heavyweight

£120 is a small price to pay for a life of Ingmar Bergman



In 1936, director Mervyn LeRoy, anxious to make a film of Harvey Allen's mammoth *Anthony Adverse*, cabled Jack Warner, head of Warner Brothers, asking if he'd read the novel. 'Read it? I can't lift it,' Warner replied. I felt the same way when *The Ingmar Bergman Archives* (Taschen, £120), edited by Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius, arrived by messenger. It is rectangular (12in by 17in), 600 pages and weighs a little over 14lb. It needs to be read on a table but is no coffee-table book. It is a sumptuous volume of unsurpassable excellence, the greatest-ever study of a movie director. Bergman was collaborating with its editors when he died last year at 89.

With more than 1,000 illustrations, it covers his life from the entries on his birth in his parents' diaries to the final days on his Baltic island, Faro. Tucked inside are a DVD of 'making of' documentaries and a cellophane pocket containing a 12-frame strip of film from the 35mm print of *Fanny and Alexander* that Bergman used in his private cinema.

The book covers every film, radio and theatre play and stage production he was ever involved in and every page has a revelation ranging from his love of the movies of Michael Curtiz, director of *Casablanca*, to his devotion to convincing Swedes that Strindberg was their equivalent of Shakespeare.

The book is monumental, but no gravestone, nor simple eulogy. It is frank, as Bergman was, about his egotism, his tantrums, his unruly private life and his adolescent admiration for Hitler, much regretted in later life, that began during a 1934 visit to Germany.

The price is a problem, but you can get it for £84 from Amazon.

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