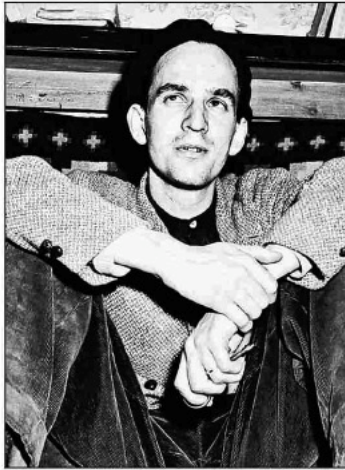


## NONFICTION REVIEW



Taschen Books 1948

**Ingmar Bergman** bonded with actors on stage, TV and film.

## An epic guide for devotees of Bergman

By **Mick LaSalle**  
CHRONICLE MOVIE CRITIC

You can read it, or you can do curls with it. Just don't pick up "The Ingmar Bergman Archives" without tightening your stomach muscles; otherwise, you could throw your back out. Also, if you like to read in bed, think twice about getting under the covers with this one. I tried it, and it felt like wrestling with a piano.

This is a big book. It's a big book in every way, first of all physically. It weighs 15 pounds. The pages are 12 inches high and 16 inches wide. There are 592 pages, with four columns of print on each page. The paper is high quality, heavy and glossy, ideal for photographs, and there are hundreds of them — production stills, portraits and reproductions from Bergman's notebooks.

The price tag is big, too. It lists for \$200, though if you shop

around, you can get it for about \$125. The book comes with a DVD that includes 18 minutes of Bergman's home movies, a behind-the-scenes look at "Autumn Sonata" (1978), a documentary and a video diary of Bergman's

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► **The Ingmar Bergman Archives** (Taschen; 2008; \$200): Edited by Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius. Contributing editors: Birgitta Steene, Peter Cowie, Bengt Forslund and Ulla Aberg.

► **Q&A** with Bergman scholar Peter Cowie. **E6**

last film, "Saraband" (2003). Finally, to give readers a brush with greatness, each book includes a strip of film — a dozen frames from "Fanny and Alexander," cut from a 35mm print played on Bergman's own projector.

Most of all, the book's success is tremendous. "The Ingmar Bergman Archives" presents no less than the totality of Bergman's life work. As such, it's not a book to be read just once, but rather it's a companion for a lifetime's worth of viewing. It covers not only his films but also his lifelong stage career and his numerous productions for television. This is appropriate, as many of Bergman's actors came from the stage and established their bond of trust with him through their work together in the theater and television.

The film portion, however, dominates the book. Each movie gets its own chapter, and these chapters consist mainly of primary sources, embellished with contemporary commentary. Virtually anything significant that Bergman ever said about a film will be found in these pages. Entire interviews are reprinted, including those with Bergman's actors.

These original sources are interspersed with the observations of four contributing editors, who all come with major credentials:

Ulla Aberg, dramaturge at the Royal Dramatic Theater in Sweden since 1966, who worked with Bergman; Peter Cowie, the founder of the International Film Guide and the author of "Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography"; Birgitta Steene, a Swedish-born



Taschen Books images

**Bibi Andersson** (left) and Liv Ullmann in Ingmar Bergman's movie "Persona" (1966); the big new book, above.

American professor and the author of "Ingmar Bergman: A Reference Guide"; and Bengt Forslund, a film historian and an Academy Award-nominated producer and screenwriter.

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the scope of Bergman's life achievement is to realize that it took four talented and accomplished people of various backgrounds just to wrap their minds around it. Of course, the book is big. Its subject is enormous. This is the epic treatment Bergman's talent deserves.

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# Huge book took a prodigious amount of work



**Peter Cowie**, founder of the International Film Guide, knew Ingmar Bergman and has written about him.

By Mick LaSalle

CHRONICLE MOVIE CRITIC

Peter Cowie, the founder of the International Film Guide, has written more than 30 books, including the essential "Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography," but he's probably most widely known in this country for his witty, personable commentaries for the Criterion Collection DVD series. Cowie knew Bergman and, over several decades, has interviewed most of Bergman's principal actors. Cowie answered questions for The Chronicle about "The Ingmar Bergman Archives" and how this remarkable book came about.

**Q: How did you get involved in the creation of the book?**

**A:** *Taschen* already had published a number of director monographs and approached me about working on one. Paul Duncan, the film books editor, agreed with me that if they were to do Bergman, he had to be done in spectacular fashion. Max Ström, the Swedish publisher, had also wanted to do a major book on Bergman, but this only became a realistic venture when

they bonded with *Taschen* for the gigantic tome you have before you.

*Taschen* wanted to cover Bergman's achievements in theater as well as film, so I was brought in as the film scholar. Bengt Forslund (the Swedish filmmaker and scholar) became my opposite number in Stockholm. One of the daunting tasks was to write the captions for all the film images, working to a specific word count so as to fit the page layouts. I did hundreds of them.

**Q: What was the research process like?**

**A:** The research period was the most taxing. We tracked down virtually every interview Bergman had given in any major language, had them translated, and then

Paul Duncan made a selection of the best extracts to run — in tune with extracts from Bergman's own memoirs.

**Q: What was the selection process for what material got in and what didn't?**

**A:** The thrust of the book is Bergman telling his own story — his career in film and theater, and, to a lesser extent, his life from A to Z, or rather from 1918 to 2007. Any material that was not germane to that narrative had to be omitted. Bengt Wanselius (the co-editor) also did a prodigious job in researching more than 1,000 photos of Bergman — some familiar, but many unpublished until now, that help give us a rounded image of the man and his methods of working — for example, script pages are reproduced with Bergman's comments.

**Q: Didn't Bergman once say he wanted to be forgotten after his death?**

**A:** Bergman once said that he had no interest in fame after death and that he would like to be like one of those anonymous builders of Chartres Cathedral. In fact, he was no more or less vain than anyone. Bad reviews upset him a lot, and he did read or glance at most things written about him. By giving all his papers to the Swedish Film Institute, he guaranteed that a foundation would enshrine his work into the future — and of course those archives were invaluable in creating the *Taschen* book.

**Q: You knew Bergman. Knowing all you knew about the man and his work, was there anything about him in the flesh, or about just being in his company, that surprised you?**

**A:** Bergman possessed, like all great artists, considerable charisma, with a roguish and sometimes raucous sense of humor. But he could also be petty-minded, could stand in the way of new talent every bit as much as he could encourage it from time to time. He was an ascetic above all things. His days were rigorously ordered. He seldom drank and had not smoked for decades, and he spent nothing on clothes, haircuts or similar accoutrements of showbiz. Like a cat, he summed people up with a hooded eye as soon as he met them.

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