

film

The latest film in the Bergman cult

schedule

West 11th Drive-In, West 11th and Seneca, 342-4142. "Five Fingers of Death," and "A Man in the Wilderness." Theatre opens at 6:45 p.m., starts at 7:15 p.m. Tickets \$1.75 a person.

North End Drive-In, 99N, 1 1/2 miles north of Overhead, 689-0445. "Sounder" and "Walk About." Theatre opens at 6:45 p.m. and show starts at 7:15 p.m. Tickets \$1.75 per person.

Motor Vu Drive-In, 41st and McKenzie Highway, 747-5415. "Jeremiah Johnson" and "Skin Game." Theatre opens at 6:45 p.m. and show starts at 7:15 p.m. Tickets \$1.75 per person.

Eugene Drive-In, Glenwood, off Franklin Blvd., 726-7512. "High Plains Drifter" and "Chato Land." Theatre opens at 6:45 p.m. and show starts at 7:15 p.m. Tickets \$1.75 per person.

Valley River Twin Cinema I and II, across from Valley River Center, 686-8633. Cinema I: "High Plains Drifter" 6:45 p.m. and 10:15 p.m., and "Chato Land" 8:35 p.m.; Cinema II: "The Cheerleaders," 6:45 p.m. and 9:45 p.m., and "The Female Animal," 8:10 p.m. Tickets for both, \$2.

Cascade Drive-In, Springfield, "Silent Night, Bloody Night," and "I, Monster." theatre opens at 7:15, show starts at dusk.

Mayflower Theatre, 11th and Alder, 345-1022. "Cries and Whispers." Shows at 7:30 and 9:15 p.m. Tickets \$2.

Fine Arts, 630 Main, Springfield, 747-2201. "The Nelson Affair," 9:45 p.m., and "Mary, Queen of Scots," 7:30 p.m. Tickets, \$1.75.

"Have you seen Bergman's new film down at the Mayflower on 11th? No? Man, you've got to see it! It's called "Cries and Whispers." What's it about? Come on—you don't ask that kind of a question about a Bergman film. Just go see it. All I can tell you is that it's beautiful..."

The above is a typical capsule review of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's latest film, "Cries and Whispers," such as might be heard in low-rent houses and apartments all over Eugene lately. It's simplistic and vague, true; but it actually contains a lot of valid information about the film and the sort of niche that it fills for cinema freaks.

Bergman, like a number of film directors in the history of the medium, has become the object of a kind of cult, just as someone like Bob Dylan occupies a similar position in the realm of popular music. The myth that has grown up around Bergman is both the cause and result of his cult image. For an inveterate Bergman freak (such as the hypothetical one quoted above) that myth is an important element in the perception of any of the director's films. Each new work seems to treat his usual themes in a different manner and with different relative emphasis. Even someone with a casual interest and knowledge of Bergman will have the feeling that he or she is seeing something both new and yet recognizable and familiar. This is all part of the appeal of "Cries and Whispers."

The feeling of familiarity is certainly justified. In his new film, Bergman treats again the themes of time, pain, death and the complex tensions of human relationships. In "Cries and Whispers," the "plot," that really acts only as a medium for the treatment of these themes centers around the death of a woman from cancer of the womb, an event that has brought her together with her two sisters and a serving woman in the large country house they grew up in, in and around which most of the film was shot. In time, the film is set in the 19th century, a period which seems to be haunted itself by the shadows of both the past and the future.

It is this haunting that is the subject of the film in one way. Agnes, the dying woman (played by Harriet Andersson), is haunted by the image of her mother and a desire for sororal affection which her sisters have never really responded to. Her sister Karin (played by Ingrid Thulin) has been hardened by an unhappy marriage to a rather creepy old diplomat, and is haunted by her awareness of the sham character of the relationship and the need to keep up appearances, even that of her own hardened mask, which sometimes cracks to reveal an almost psychotic desperation. The other sister, Maria (played by Liv Ullmann) is a seductive, almost childish woman haunted by her concealed coldness, which always soaks through to reveal the shallowness of the affection she shows outwardly to her milk-sop husband, her lover, even her sisters. Anna, the serving woman (Kari Sylwan), is a salt-of-the-earth character haunted by her almost religious devotion to Agnes and the memory of her small daughter, some years dead. These characters spend a few weeks of their lives together, during which time they are presented with the opportunity to come to terms with themselves and their pasts. At the

end of the film, it becomes clear that they have, on the whole, failed somehow to take advantage of that opportunity.

Yet it is difficult to speak accurately about the personages that move about in Bergman's films as characters in the classic sense. Two of the actresses, for instance, are quite familiar from earlier films by the same director, and that fact somehow gives them a certain integrity as actresses outside of the characters they are meant to portray. Furthermore, these faces are so often seen isolated, in stark, portrait-like shots that make the viewer aware that he or she is looking at a mask of sorts. One becomes aware of Bergman himself in this way.

It is not Bergman the human being, though, but Bergman as an artistic consciousness. He seeks, through the film, to objectify that artistic consciousness in the same way the Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian writer, seeks to in his parable, "Borges and I," published in the collection "Labyrinths." That parable establishes life, and the process of making art in particular, as a series of experiences passing away from a person into the impersonal domains of the past, the world, and death. What a person casts off, then, becomes his public, historical personality, something that exists, either vaguely or vividly, only in the consciousnesses and memories of others. It is this dichotomy that one becomes aware of in "Cries and Whispers." And it is Bergman that we feel behind every mask.

There are what might be called weak spots in the film. One is the minister's speech over Agnes' body, addressed so directly to the audience that the viewer is apt to feel very self-conscious all of a sudden. Another is the final meeting between Karin and Maria as they prepare to resume their separate lives. There has been some evidence that they have in some way broken through to each other. But, as indicated earlier, Maria suddenly turns on her sister, and the contact is negated in an instant. There is no smoothness in these transitions, but again this seems intentional. Bergman is, in a way, administering slight shocks to the audience (other scenes in the film, particularly those dealing with pain, reinforce this suggestion). Again, we become aware of Bergman behind this facade of light.

Finally, and most importantly, there is the sheer beauty of the film. It is shot in glowing colors, with a predominance of black, white, and deep red. But color is not the only element so consciously manipulated. Virtually all the shots—many of which seem almost stills—are composed very carefully. As one reviewer commented, almost any frame in the film could be blown up and hung on the wall. Not only that, but there is extensive use of piano and cello pieces (by Bach?) which at one point even serve as substitute for dialogue.

The beauty, however, is not handed over without irony. For some part of the most visually attractive scenes in the film are ones in which pain is graphically depicted. If "Cries and Whispers" has any messages, perhaps this observation leads to one: Beauty is everywhere, even in the pain life inflicts on us and the pain we inflict on ourselves. That "Cries and Whispers" allows us to come close to accepting this is a mark of its achievement.

Stephen Bangs

art

Festival features Indian culture

It was a week-end of arts and crafts at the fourteenth annual Indian Festival of Arts June 14-16 in La Grande.

Dancing, rituals, singing and drumming were all part of the arts. Among the dancers were Benjamin Pease, Jr., Festival of Arts President, and his son Benjie. They did a traditional Crow Indian dance at the festival's opening ceremonies.

The crafts exhibits included that of Dibbon Cook, a Modoc Indian from the Klamath reservation. Cook is a retired cobbler who carves eagles and other symbols of Indian mythology from antlers. He gave the Indian Festival of Arts a three-foot wooden arrowhead with the organization's name carved on it.

