The Blu-ray's extras (carried over from the film's previous DVD incarnation) consider the legacy of this master director, whose work was often considered to be scandalous upon its release, but which can appear quaint today. Of special note is a video conversation between film critics (and longtime marriage partners) Molly Haskell and Andrew Sarris, in which they discuss topics ranging from Fox's penchant for full-bodied sets and interior design, to a feminist reading of Martha as the wiser member of the couple who knowingly allows Henry to behave in childish form, and Sarris's recollection of the film being undervalued upon its initial release in the United States, partly due to how its modest chronicling of a wealthy antihero's life fell out of sync with popular wartime concerns. Their discussion of a filmmaker more intent, in this case, on challenging social politics than on exploring geopolitics finds summation in Haskell's remarking: "I think that Lubitsch refused to give himself importance that way."

The disc's other Lubitsch-focused special features include a contextualizing booklet essay by scholar William Paul and a short video containing reminiscences from the director's daughter, Nicola Lubitsch, with clues into how her father's passion for music helped guide the rigorously careful structuring of his films. This talent for structuring is discussed further in two archival recordings with *Heaven Can Wait*'s screenwriter, Samson Raphaelson, who collaborated with Lubitsch on nine films, including some of his early American masterworks, such as *One Hour with You* (1932) and *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), that helped define for Paramount's advertisers the notion of "the Lubitsch touch." Raphaelson proves to be particularly insightful in the audio-only recording of a talk held between him and critic Richard Corliss at The Museum of Modern Art in 1977, in which he speaks about how he and Lubitsch, with great mutual respect, would constantly reject each other's bad ideas while working side by side to find the most creative and surprising ways to move their stories forward.

Heaven Can Wait is filled with such surprises—for instance, a late announcement of the presence of "Mr. Van Cleve," followed by a shot of Henry's adult son hard at work while awaiting the aged patriarch's arrival home from a festive night. Lubitsch could directly address the sufferings of war and other grand-scale calamities, as can be seen in the anti-Nazi satire *To Be or Not to Be* as well as amazing lesser-known films like the post-WWI-set drama *Broken Lullaby* (1932); yet, his work on this occasion seems to have been consciously pointed in a different direction. Henry, Martha, and those around them do not have to choose to grow up, since aging will come to them anyway; and there is no need for them to choose to take life and death seriously, since the moments worth taking seriously—both for bad and for good—will announce themselves soon enough.—**Aaron Cutler**

Scenes from a Marriage

Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman; cinematography by Sven Nykvist; edited by Siv Lundgren; sound by Owe Svensson; wardrobe by Inger Pehrsson; starring Liv Ullmann, Erland Josephson, Bibi Andersson, Jan Malmsjö, and Gunnel Lindblom. Blu-ray and DVD, color, Swedish dialogue with English subtitles, TV version 297 min., 1973; U.S. theatrical version 169 min., 1974. A Criterion Collection release, www.criterion.com.

In *Images: My Life in Film*, Ingmar Bergman reflected, "Today I feel that in *Persona*—and later in *Cries and Whispers*—I had gone as far as I could go...working in freedom, I touched wordless secrets that only the cinema can discover." In between those two widely celebrated landmarks (released in 1966 and 1972, respectively) Bergman wrote and directed five additional exceptional films, including the still-underappreciated masterpieces *Shame* (1968) and *The Passion of Anna* (1969)—a remarkable streak even in the context of one of the most extraordinary careers in the history of cinema.

Yet Bergman would arguably go further still, with the made-for-television *Scenes from a Marriage*, which followed on the heels of *Cries and Whispers*, and is now available in a Blu-ray edition from the Criterion Collection (an upgrade of their 2004 DVD). The microbudgeted *Scenes* again afforded Bergman the independence to produce exactly the movie he envisioned, and working with a small handful of actors and a skeleton crew (including, of course, cinematographer Sven Nykvist, who had won the Academy Award for his work on *Cries*), Bergman would recall *Scenes* as "a sheer joy to make." It was also a film that clearly resonated with the director. In *From the Life of the Marionettes* (1980) he reintroduced two peripheral characters from *Scenes*, bringing them to the center of the action. *Marionettes* is ultimately a minor film in Bergman's oeuvre, but it is innovative, intense, and riveting, and is an effort the often self-critical director reports feeling "rather proud of." And in 2003, for his final film, *Saraband*, Bergman intimates Liv Ullmann and Erland Josephson would reprise their roles as Marianne and Johan from *Scenes* in a brilliant, moving exploration of what had become of that movie's titular couple, whose relationship had been dissected by the camera's unflinching eye some thirty years previously.

Scenes from a Marriage, which Bergman wrote in one dedicated three-month stretch during the spring of 1972, was shot in 16mm and originally appeared on television in six weekly installments from April 11 to May 16 in 1973. Pushing five hours in total, Bergman subsequently cut its 297 minutes down to a still prodigious but manageable-in-one-sitting 169 for a theatrical release (transferred to 35mm) that premiered in late 1974. In both versions, the picture was a sensation. The unraveling of a by-every-appearance "perfect" marriage between a comfortable, attractive, professional couple with no real problems to speak of touched a nerve on two continents. In Scandinavia, legend holds that the streets were deserted on the evenings the episodes aired (everybody was home, watching), and that the divorce rate soared not long after. American audiences—and many American marriages—were similarly upended by the phenomenon. Tom Wolfe devoted several smart pages to the film and its influence in his long, legendary essay "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," opening that discussion with the

Marianne (Liv Ullmann) and Johan (Erland Josephson) in a happier moment from Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*. (photo courtesy of Photofest)

following observation: "*Scenes From a Marriage* is one of those rare works of art, like *The Sun Also Rises*, that not only succeed in capturing a certain mental atmosphere in fictional form...but also turn around and help radiate it throughout real life."

The Criterion edition includes both versions, but the long-form incarnation is the one to watch—and despite the undeniable merits of the feature film, it is not a close call. The TV version is richer and more nuanced, and includes scenes that could be plausibly redacted as less than essential but which in fact provide crucial links across seemingly disparate moments. An unexpected pregnancy and its resolution at the end of scene one contextualizes the growing and unstated ennui of scene two; the late reprise of Johan's colleague Eva for a second exchange between the two fully develops tensions only hinted at in their first encounter; Marianne's visit to her widowed mother, with great economy, walks the audience through yet another envisioning of a marriage (and its compromises) that might have been, and reinforces our (and Marianne's) understanding of her childhood.

The television version also makes more sense rhythmically. This may be a film about a marriage, but it takes place over a ten-year period, and is at least, if not ultimately even more, about the development of Marianne. Over the course of *Scenes*, she slowly emerges from the tentative reflection of someone who, when not interrupted, defined herself as a wife and a mother (as she does in an interview during the first episode), to the more confident, self-aware woman of episode 6—a transformation that develops more naturally when the story is seen in discrete parts with some space between them. In addition, the tighter editing of the theatrical version necessarily loses what Phillip Lopate, in an essay accompanying the Criterion discs, identifies as one of the great strengths of the long-form version: "Scenes that go past the 'normal' climax into a confusing, unpredictable zone of appeasement and retrenchment," with the camera in relentless pursuit of characters "as they straggled through interiors looking for some safe nook, as though for a boxing corner between rounds." Another advantage of the episodic structure is that Bergman provided voice-over introductions for each installment; nominally, these are designed to refresh memories or bring viewers up to date, but his choice and summary of key developments offer interpretations of events that viewers might have shaded differently, inviting still further discussion.

Scenes from a Marriage has its origins in the dissolution of Bergman's second marriage in 1949, which involved a blindsiding announcement followed by the flight of a runaway couple to Paris. (Or, as the director tersely summarized in his autobiography *The Magic Lantern*, "anyone interested can follow the third part of *Scenes from a Marriage*.") In the documentary *Bergman Island*, he further explained how everything in the film, before and after, flowed from those discreditable events in his own life, as presented in episode 3, which was written first. That episode ("Paula") is also steeped in that ultimate Bergman fear—humiliation—which is visited, unbearably, twice here on the innocent Marianne: first, when doe-eyed and peering through childlike glasses, taking absent-minded bites of an open-faced sandwich, she has to process Johan's shocking announcement of his imminent, irrevocable departure; second, the morning after, when she reaches out to some friends with the terrible revelation only to learn that Johan's affair was common knowledge in their circle.

This incomprehensible betrayal radiates backward to episodes 1 and 2—on a second viewing it becomes quite clear, in every glance and pause, that it was "all there" from the very start: the fragile facade of their happiness and everything that was looming behind it. And the stakes that seemed relatively low in the second installment (tensions over a small family obligation, a scientific experiment centered on an elusive spot of light in the darkness, a modest and even clichéd marital rehearsal of divergent sexual appetites) fill with new meanings in light of that which will follow.

If "Paula" is the fulcrum of *Scenes from a Marriage*, episode 4 is its centerpiece. Taking place a few years after Johan's abrupt departure, the couple meet again, somewhat furtively, for dinner, and from this installment the story of Marianne's awakening emerges as the principal theme of the second half of the narrative. At the heart of this episode is her spellbinding, six-minute monologue, as Marianne reads from her diary (set to still photographs of Ullmann as a girl and young woman), where she has put down in longhand thoughts about how her upbringing was designed to suppress her spirit and any sense of independent identity, properly situating her as a passive subordinate (even her career, we learn—though it was hinted at in episode 1—was imposed from above by her father). "I've always done what I was told," she reads; "I later realized that if I kept my thoughts to myself and was ingratiating and predictable, my behavior yielded rewards." As for her relations with men, Marianne describes "always putting on an act in a desperate attempt to please," and, with the "constant erosion" of her personality, never considering "what I want, but only what he wants me to want." (And what Johan does here, passively, is even less forgivable than the emotional and (in one horrifying passage) physical abuse that he visits upon her in episodes 3 and 5.)

The overpowering fifth installment, like the third, is a stomach-knotting one-location two-hander that is almost more endured than witnessed. It is a number of months later and Marianne has grown further still (Johan's prospects, in contrast, have narrowed), and the time has come, finally, to sign the formal divorce papers. They talk, they argue, they joke, they have sex (at her initiation—and here it becomes suddenly obvious that sexual passion, anxiety, anger, and resentment have never been far from the surface of any of this movie's marriages). And then they fight—viciously, and shockingly, but possibly necessarily, as if it was the only way to finalize what they both know must be done. Surely it was scenes like these that Molly Haskell had in mind in her review for *The Village Voice*: "There are almost no words for the subtlety and the intensity and the range of Ullmann's and Josephson's performances."

The final installment of *Scenes from a Marriage* takes place ten years after we have first met Marianne and Johan. They are older and wiser—and so are we. Which is not to say our protagonists have been liberated from all their struggles and enduring human concerns. Indeed, after much contentment Marianne wakes up from an unsettling nightmare, one that expresses her deep-seated fear about whether she has the capacity to love and to be loved—a fear which only at that moment comes clearly into focus. Yet, upon reflection, it is an anxiety she had been harboring since (at least) episode 2, when she met with a client, a cold, long-married woman ten years her senior who had never loved her husband. (The camera lingers on the older woman's hands, another Bergman motif, and we are primed to make a connection to that here.) But the title of this episode, "In the Middle of the Night in a Dark House Somewhere in the World," is meant to be read with a warm smile, as Bergman, in a generous, even buoyant mood, leaves us with perhaps the most life-affirming conclusion he ever put on film.

In addition to the Lopate essay, the Criterion edition comes with an analysis by Bergman scholar Peter Cowie, who compares the two editions of the movie, an informative archival interview with Bergman from 1986, and heartwarming interviews with Ullman and Josephson conducted by Criterion for their 2004 DVD release. You may not need the Blu-ray—Bergman and Nykvist went with a grainy, unadorned look, featured compositions that were usually designed not to interfere with the power of the performances, and pushed the director's penchant for tight close-ups to the limit. But this forty-five year old film about women and men hasn't aged a day, and it should have a place on the shelf of any film lover.—**Jonathan Kirshner**

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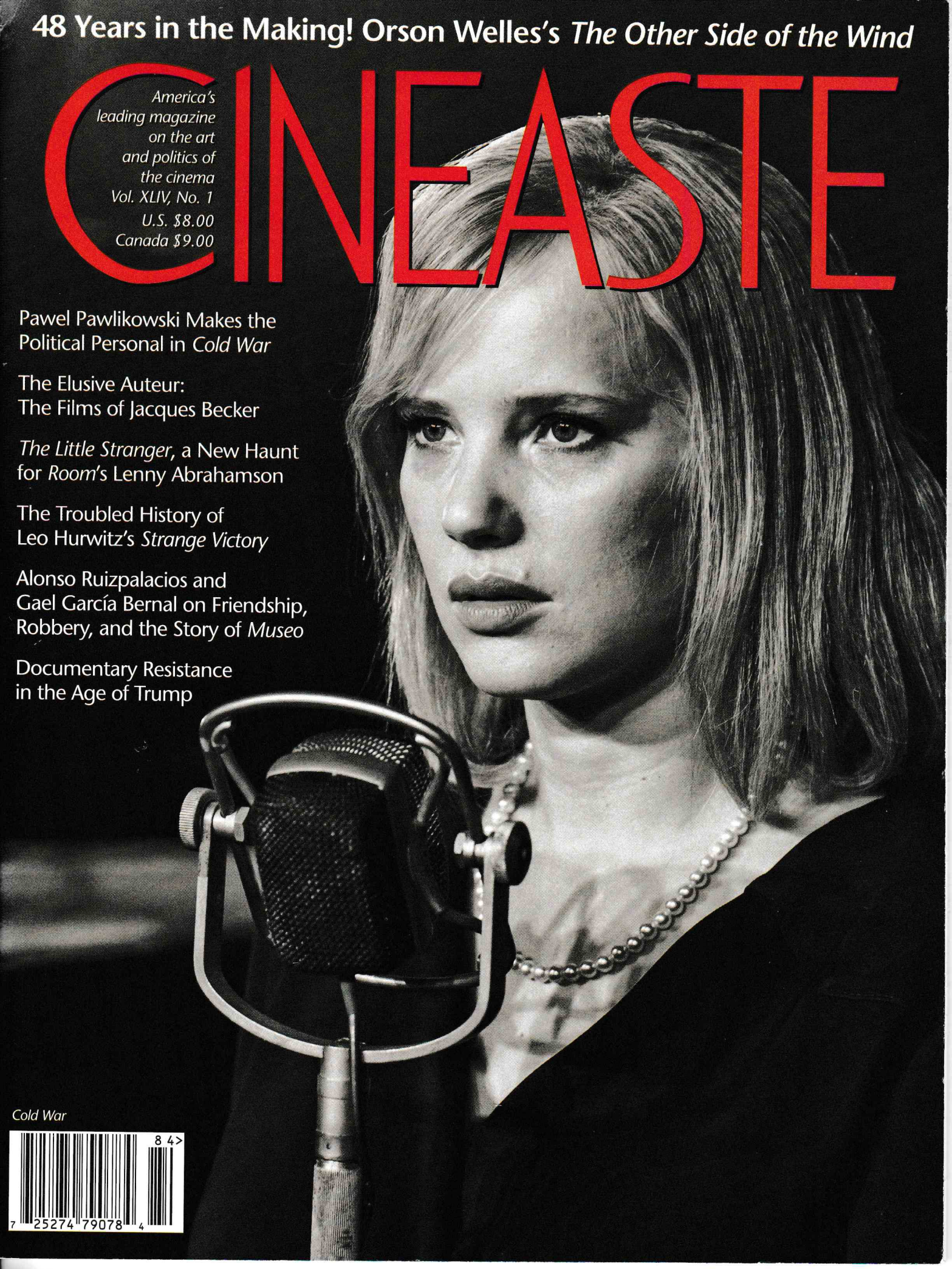

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