



Larry Potheast as Joey, a 19 year old juvenile delinquent in *The Indian Wants the Bronx*, one of two free Laboratory Plays to be presented Monday.

# Touch—Bergman's metaphor for love

Review by Bill Wallis

Ingmar Bergman works at making the intimate universal. In *The Touch*, as in *Persona* and *The Passion of Anna*, Bergman studies the pain and joy of an extraordinarily intense love affair in which personalities merge into bonds which may only be broken with violent psychic and physical agony. The touch is Bergman's metaphor for human love—commitment and concern.

In addition to society's condemnation of the affair, a third figure (usually a husband, or the memory of one) brings additional pressure to bear upon the two individuals seeking meaning in a seemingly void, "bourgeois" existence. This pressure emphasizes again to the couple the enormous expense and investment of touching another human being's life with need and sincerity.

**THE STORY IS** not simple, even if the plot may seem to be. Bergman's psychological insight is the key to the greatness of his art, and with this tool he excels in the art of characterization. His characters become stories in themselves.

Michael (Elliot Gould), an archeologist and a Jew whose family was victimized in Nazi concentration camps, meets Karen (Bibi Andersson), the wife of a psychiatrist (Max Von Sydow). After a series of visits they embark upon an off-and-on affair of two years.

Michael is shown to be a tortured, lonely man who reacts to Karen's innocent concern with her family responsibilities with a nonplussed violence. Karen is slow to agree to be Michael's mistress (she says "no!" instinctively the first time he touches her hand), but once she agrees she is totally committed. She endures his childish rages and jealous fits, and always comes to him when he calls.

**MICHAEL LEAVES** Karen. She follows him to London, leaving her husband and children. In London she meets Michael's sister with whom he lives and (the sister hints) serves as husband.

Karen returns to her family. Some months later Michael returns and demands a renewal of the relationship. She denies him. He leaves, disbelieving that her denial will hold firm. Karen is left on her knees alone by a stream. The circle is complete: Michael has come and gone bringing great happiness and pain.

Karen's point-of-view dominates the film. Her crises are shown in detail. Michael's character seems sketchy and incompletely motivated when set beside Karen's.

This, augmented by Gould's less-than-excellent performance as an actor does not lend Michael's character enough depth or believability. Von Sydow and Andersson are their usual superb, as are the smaller characterizations.

**BERGMAN IS DIFFICULT** to discuss because he is both intense and ambiguous, intimate and diffuse. In short, enormously lyric. He is a lyric poet of the cinema, as compared to David Lean, who creates epic drama for the screen.

His statements of existence are cyclical patterns of encounter and loneliness, belief and realization.

Why does an individual involve and commit him or herself? One is needed and needs, gives deeply and receives the same. In this poetic story both Karen and Bibi Andersson give more than they receive from their opposites. But Bergman's message does not stand on a single performance such as Gould's.

**THE SHOW IS** so much better than the average American movie that to say that it is not Bergman's best does not do it justice. It is excellent. Fellini, Kazan and Bergman make great films today. Bergman speaks loudest to me.

Highly recommended.

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