



**BIG SCREEN CLASSICS**

# **Wild Strawberries** **(Smultronstället)**

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away the film's ending.

An elderly scientist (Sjöström, superb) drives with his daughter-in-law from Stockholm to Lund to receive an honorary award; disturbed by a dream he had before setting out, he looks back over his life, revisiting key moments in an attempt to understand himself – and his family – better. One of Bergman's greatest films, this prototype road movie travels through both space and time.

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One of Ingmar Bergman's warmest films, this boasts a magnificent performance by Victor Sjöström, the actor who was himself an acclaimed Swedish filmmaker in his own right. He plays an ageing, grouchy academic driving to Lund to accept an award; the trip also traverses memories, reveries and illuminating encounters with family members and strangers alike. Famous for its early dream sequence, the film is nevertheless most impressive for its rich, vivid characterisations from a superb cast of Bergman regulars.

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The main character in Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), Professor Isak Borg (Victor Sjöström), an eminent bacteriologist, spends the majority of the film travelling back through his memories and worries. Though in actuality he is travelling by car to Lund to receive an honorary degree, in Bergman's terms the terrain we inhabit is not simply a physical realm but a psychic one too; journeys are both inner and outer experiences. It is not an inanimate collection of roads, hills and houses but a skin that holds time within its scars. Borg is accompanied by his daughter-in-law Marianne (Ingrid Thulin), who has joined him even though she is planning to leave Borg's son, Evald (Gunnar Björnstrand), following a disagreement about the fate of their unborn child. Along the journey, the pair meet various characters, including a trio of youngsters, one of whom, Sara (Bibi Andersson), resembles Borg's lost love. The interactions between these characters and other passengers cause the melancholic doctor to drift off into dreams, reveries and memories.

Looking back is an addictive action whose potency increases as memories accumulate. But Borg has lived a life of avoidance, fearful of the pain in his past. His lost love seems to hold the greatest power in his earlier memories, suggesting this is the source of the pain that haunts him. The unhappiness of his eventual marriage rears its head too, strangely linking potential academic failure with his failure to be a loving husband. Even the recapitulation of the unhappiness between his son and Marianne has been avoided until this trip. It appears he has been resigned to accepting the loneliness of the passing years rather than trying to confront his ghosts. As one character asks him, 'Have you looked in the mirror, Isak?'

The film's final shot links his dream-world of good and bad memories but finds solace rather than torment. Time has been a key worry throughout the film; the handless clock in both his first dream and in his elderly mother's

room implies a waste or loss. Is Borg really worried that his life has been meaningless? Bergman could have ended with a continuation of this pessimistic streak – he did as much the same year in *The Seventh Seal* – but he knows that contentment before death is a more powerful and complex conclusion. The doctor's true love guides his older self gently through a field to a lake to see something. Bergman shows us the man witnessing his past as a gift; the gift of a memory. Light is shining on his face, flickering in his almost tearful eyes. It's an image that embodies totally a moment of happiness.

But what does Borg really see in that final shot? The sight we are presented with is an idyll, his parents enjoying the passing of their own time alone while their large family enjoy themselves on a boat tethered nearer to the house. The father is fishing, the mother watching on. Both are waving back fondly but the sight is not a simple one. Borg's expression shows us he is witnessing something profound, beyond words. For his parents are content, even in just that brief moment away from the confrontations that have characterised the memories in the earlier half of the film. Borg reminisces about such childhood memories, so he says, to calm him before sleep; a soothing proof that his life was not actually hopeless at all.

The screen fades from his memory-scape to the contented man in bed, having faced his demons on the road and now ready for sleep. It's Bergman's most emotional ending; seeing a youthful vision of home through the older eyes of experience. One feeds into the other, a bright and brilliant light shining through the dusty murk of a pessimist's prism. The hollowness and meaninglessness he had perceived in his life was only an illusion caused by the timidity of not looking directly back. Fear over who we once were will always crop up from time to time. Bergman ends on the reaction to this realisation, arguably the whole drive of the film captured in one moment. There is no naivety in regarding such warm memories from the days when wild strawberries grew freely in the garden, just an awareness that the best of days and the worst of days sat side by side and always will: 'Today, tomorrow, forever.'

**Adam Scovell, *Sight & Sound*, February 2018**

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#### **WILD STRAWBERRIES (SMULTRONSTÄLLET)**

*Director:* Ingmar Bergman

*Production Company:* Svensk Filmindustri

*Producer:* Carl Anders Dymling \*

*Production Manager:* Allan Ekelund \*

*Unit Manager:* Sven Sjönell

*Assistant Director:* Gösta Ekman

*Script Supervisor:* Katherina Faragó

*Screenplay:* Ingmar Bergman

*Director of Photography:* Gunnar Fischer

*Assistant Cameraman:* Björn Thermenius \*

*Editor:* Oscar Rosander

*Art Director:* Gittan Gustafsson

*Property Master:* Karl-Arne Bergman

*Costumes:* Millie Ström

*Wigs:* Nils Nittel, Firma Carl M. Lundh

*Music:* Erik Nordgren

*Musical Direction:* E. Eckert-Lundin \*

*Sound:* Aaby Wedin

*Assistant Sound:* Lennart Wallin \*

#### **Cast**

Victor Sjöström (*Professor Isak Borg*)

Bibi Andersson (*Sara, hitchhiker/Sara, Isak's cousin*)

Ingrid Thulin (*Marianne Borg, Evald's wife*)

Gunnar Björnstrand (*Dr Evald Borg*)

Jullan Kindahl (*Miss Agda, Isak's housekeeper*)

Folke Sundquist (*Anders, hitchhiking theology student*)

Björn Bjelvenstam (*Viktor, hitchhiking medical student*)

Naima Wifstrand (*Borg's mother*)

Gunnel Broström (*Berit Alman*)

Gertrud Fridh (*Karin, Isak's wife*)

Sif Ruud (*Aunt Olga*)

Gunnar Sjöberg (*Sten Alman, an engineer*)

Max von Sydow

(*Henrik Åkerman, petrol station owner*)

Åke Fridell (*Karin's lover*)

Yngve Nordwall (*Uncle Aron*)

Per Sjöstrand (*Sigfrid, Isak's elder brother*)

Gio Petré (*Sigbritt, Isak's married sister*)

Gunnel Lindblom (*Charlotta, Isak's elder sister*)

Maud Hansson (*Angelica, Isak's younger sister*)

Ann-Mari Wiman (*Eva Åkerman, Henrik's wife*)

Eva Norée (*Anna, Isak's sister*)

Lena Bergman, Monica Ehrling

(*Kristina/Brigitta, Isak's twin sisters*)

Per Skogsberg (*Hagbart, the eldest Borg brother*) \*

Göran Lundquist (*Benjamin, Isak's younger brother*) \*

Profesor Helge Wulff

(*public orator in Lund Cathedral*) \*

Else Fisher (*Isak's mother as a young woman*) \*

Sweden 1957

92 mins

\* Uncredited

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## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

### **Lift to the Scaffold (Ascenseur pour l'échafaud)**

Thu 1 Sep 18:30; Thu 15 Sep 20:55; Sun 18 Sep 15:50; Wed 21 Sep 21:00; Tue 27 Sep 21:00

### **Do the Right Thing**

Fri 2 Sep 20:40; Sat 24 Sep 20:40; Wed 28 Sep 18:00 + intro by freelance writer and producer Kaleem Aftab

### **Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)**

Sat 3 Sep 16:00; Fri 9 Sep 14:30; Tue 13 Sep 18:10; Sat 17 Sep 12:30

### **Psycho**

Sat 3 Sep 20:45; Sun 11 Sep 15:40; Thu 15 Sep 14:30; Tue 4 Oct 18:30

### **The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser (Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle)**

Sun 4 Sep 13:20; Fri 9 Sep 20:45; Tue 13 Sep 20:30

### **In a Lonely Place**

Sun 4 Sep 16:00; Wed 14 Sep 18:15 + intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large; Fri 23 Sep 18:00; Wed 28 Sep 20:50

### **The Bride Wore Black (La Mariée était en noir)**

Mon 5 Sep 20:50; Fri 30 Sep 18:10; Mon 3 Oct 17:50

### **Accident**

Tue 6 Sep 20:40; Sun 11 Sep 13:10; Tue 20 Sep 17:50

### **Ratcatcher**

Wed 7 Sep 18:15 + intro by Catharine Des Forges, Director of the Independent Cinema Office; Sat 17 Sep 18:00; Thu 29 Sep 21:00

### **The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (Les Parapluies de Cherbourg)**

Thu 8 Sep 20:45; Mon 12 Sep 14:30; Mon 19 Sep 20:45; Sun 25 Sep 15:30

### **Letter from an Unknown Woman**

Sat 10 Sep 12:30; Wed 14 Sep 14:30; Wed 21 Sep 18:00 + intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large

### **The Motorcycle Diaries (Diarios de motocicleta)**

Sat 10 Sep 18:00; Sat 17 Sep 14:45

### **Cleo from 5 to 7 (Cléo de 5 à 7)**

Tue 13 Sep 14:30; Fri 16 Sep 18:00; Tue 20 Sep 20:50; Sat 1 Oct 12:30

### **Fargo**

Thu 22 Sep 20:55; Sat 1 Oct 18:00

### **Last Year in Marienbad (L'Année dernière à Marienbad)**

Mon 26 Sep 20:50; Sun 2 Oct 12:45; Tue 4 Oct 20:40

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