

# Anita: The Story of a Bad Film

The cultural life of Torgny Wickman's 1973 sex film

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## Abstract

*Anita* (Torgny Wickman 1973) is a typical example of a film produced as part of a wave of Swedish softcore sex films created with an eye on the substantial overseas profits to be made in market curious to witness onscreen Swedish Sin. Following an extremely brief and limited release in Sweden the film disappeared from popular cultural perception until resurfacing in the late 1990s as an object of nostalgic cult curiosity. Taking cues from New Cinema History disciplinary methods, cult theory and touching on theories of the dispositif, this thesis maps the manner in which *Anita* is popularly and academically regarded as a text throughout differently delineated eras of its lifespan. By drawing on its appearance in film listings, popular press, national press and fanzines, and through its various releases and restoration this work builds to an understanding of how uses of this text move from populist via nostalgia through cult to historical canon, and the way in which these uses offer new perspectives on Swedish film history.

### **Keywords**

Anita, Torgny Wickman, Swedish Sin, Cult Film, Sex Film

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*Sorry for all the rude books all around the house, Ulf.*

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# Introduction

For a brief period between 1965 and 1973 there flourished a golden age of softcore Swedish sex films, brought into fruition through a complicated relationship between burgeoning Swedish modernity and the liberal attitude to sex, and expressions of sexuality that it brought with it - and the money to be made through exploiting this relationship. Internationally there existed a widespread fascination with ‘Swedish sin’, with the Scandinavian nation seen as a land of unbridled sexuality. Capitalising on this shift towards the sinful, director Torgny Wickman released a number of softcore sex films: His 1973 release *Anita, Swedish Nymphet* (*Anita: ur en tonårsflickas dagbok*)<sup>1</sup> is the subject of this historiographical study, in which I intend to focus on the changing cultural meaning of a single text from a specific genre and period as it is appropriated and reappropriated by different audiences across its cultural lifespan.

Since the turn of the millennium the concept of the relationship between Swedish sin and Swedish cinema has, after many years in the historical doldrums, become a subject for academic discourse as the concept itself fades into a historical phenomenon. Studies to date have focused primarily on the contemporary institutional and societal context in the 1950s-60s that provided a background for this phenomenon, and how this social-cultural nexus created the conditions of possibility for a wave of boundary-pushing filmic depictions of increasingly explicit content. An oft-quoted example of this overseas fascination with, and market for Nordic naughtiness is that of showman promoter Kroger Babb, who adapted Ingmar Bergman’s *Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika* 1953) for the US audience to capitalise on the crossover between the grindhouse circuit and Swedish arthouse cinema, with its liberal attitude to nudity. Taking Bergman’s film he cut thirty three minutes - keeping the all important nude bathing scene - dubbed the film into “American” English, and renamed the film. The result: *Monika: The Story of a Bad Girl*.<sup>2</sup>

Much focus has been placed on these films as contemporary historical objects belonging to a specific era and genre with little to no effort to re-contextualise how readings may differ according to how different audiences, temporally removed from the original exhibition context, experience the text in differing dispositifs. Indeed, official histories of Swedish film are particularly dismissive of films from this era, and have lacked serious consideration of the role they play in Swedish film history. Little attention has been paid to the continuing legacy of these texts and how they may be read from a modern perspective as their textual readings may be seen to shift.

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<sup>1</sup> For brevity a shortened version of the film’s title will be used throughout, henceforth *Anita*. When referring to non-Swedish exhibition the local title will be used. Note that in the film’s opening credits only the title *Anita* is given.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Schaefer, “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*”: a History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959. (Durham: N.C, Duke University Press, 1999), 335.

My study intends to provide a case study of how a single text - *Anita* - is received and transformed in Sweden through changing points of contact with a changing audience and spectatorship. In this way I intend to describe a historiographical overview of the manner in which a text is approached and utilised by different audiences experiencing the text in different contexts and socio-temporal eras. In this manner it may be demonstrated that the 'lesser' films of this era play a continuing role in our understanding of Swedish cinema history. This study is significant in taking an approach using a single text across a longer historical period to provide contextual and historical analysis using the text itself as the centre around which an analysis can be performed, distinct from an approach providing a textual analysis to study the period in which the text was created. In taking this approach it will be shown that varying patterns of usage result in different textual meanings and uses for distinct groups of users. A more traditional analysis of the production and initial exhibition will inform us of creation and consumption of *Anita* and allow a picture to be formed of the myths and reputation that come to surround the film and in turn come to inform future interpretations and usage. Processes of creating 'cult' meanings will be explored, and it will be shown how a Swedish audience using cult consumption strategies seek to elevate *Anita* into a canon of Swedish cult films. This will be seen to work as a reaction to, and in opposition to efforts, intentional or otherwise, to exclude *Anita* from another canon - that of Swedish film heritage. To sum up the research question: What can be learned about Swedish film history by following the cultural usage and reappropriations of *Anita*?

# 1.Theory and Method

In this section I outline three theoretical approaches that form the base for my historiographical study. I will firstly discuss previous research into the Swedish sex film, and the consequent research gap that this paper hopes to address. I will then outline how the approaches and techniques of the New Cinema History school of cinema studies will form a methodological basis for my research. I then engage with the concept of the *dispositif* and its relevance in understanding how a single text may - and should - be understood in different ways dependent on the exhibition context. Finally I will discuss aspects of Cult Theory and their use to my case study, as well as how cult studies itself may provide evidence of historical cultural approaches.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 Previous research

In their introduction to *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution: Critical Essays*, Björklund and Larsson note that:

This part of Swedish film history can be said to be well known. However, the knowledge of this period is full of vague misunderstandings and misconceptions. In addition there is very little scholarly research on this phenomenon. Instead, previous historiography has been of a more popular character or written by fans.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to this 2016 volume, very little academic research or discussion has indeed been made of the subject of the sex film era, less so on the wider work of Wickman - a notable exception being Qvist & Soila's 2005 chapter on Wickman's *Swedish and Underage (Eva-den utstötta, 1967)*.<sup>5</sup> The fan based texts they note vary in quality with Daniel Ekeröth's *Swedish Sensationsfilms: A Clandestine History of Sex, Thrillers, and Kicker Cinema* being concerned more with attempting to create a new genre and coin neologism rather than offering any real insight into the films it lists, aside from pithy comments and oft-repeated myths. Ekeröth, writing under the name Daniel Dellamorte offers a similarly breathless tome in his native Swedish in *Svensk sensationsfilm: en o censurerad guide till den fördolda*

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<sup>3</sup> All translations from Swedish are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> Elisabet Björklund and Mariah Larsson. *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution : Critical Essays*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2016), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Per Olov Qvist, and Tytti Soila. "Eva - den utstötta/Swedish and Underage." in *The Cinema of Scandinavia*, edited by Tytti Soila, (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 150-158.



*svenska filmhistorien*. On the opposite side of the fan based spectrum is work such as Jack Stevenson's *Scandinavian Blue: The Erotic Cinema of Sweden and Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s* which offers a less wide-eyed history of the period, with a particular focus on Danish productions and stars.<sup>6</sup> These publications offer varied scholarly critique of the period, but their worth is far greater in establishing cultural relations to the featured films at the time of their publications and cataloguing information: Ekeroth/Dellamorte's tone of enthusiastic fan of a genre, keen to share his expert knowledge acts in one way to give more insight to how he relates to the film than the actual textual content of the film itself.

Mariah Larsson opines in her book *The Swedish Porn Scene* that a schism exists between the popular memory of the 'golden age of sex films'<sup>7</sup> and the scholarly regard in which it is held, with the period "almost expelled" from the history of Swedish national cinema.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it seems that Larsson seems set on righting this perceived scholarly injustice, and has created a body of work that tackles concerns with pornography and Swedish society and the academically under researched 1970s era of erotic spectacle, operating on the border between softcore and hardcore pornography. Valuably, she delineates this difference between hard and softcore, the "more or less" pornographic films that Furhammar struggles to accept, as better characterised as "sex films" rather than pornographic.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the 1970s phenomenon of the sex film is not unique to Sweden, however the attachment of Swedish national identity to sex and sexuality became a powerful and long lasting association for foreign audiences.<sup>10</sup> While not uniquely Swedish, the topic of sex and promise of - to borrow Furhammar's phrase - more or less graphic scenes is a commercially viable strategy for European cinema, be it the art cinema of Bergman or the sex film of Wickman.<sup>11</sup> This area between soft and hardcore, prior to the arrival of legalised hardcore on theatrical screens in Sweden, offers a more 'respectable' titillation than the hardcore stag film or pornographic loops in circulation that show full penetrative sex. The sex film is defined by Arnberg and Larsson in their work on the Swedish "in-between" space between the pornographic and the non-pornographic as being a range of diverse films, loosely grouped together with the defining feature that they contain nudity and sexual situations.<sup>12</sup> This definition is as close to a generic definition as possible - nudity and sex being the common themes of the sex film, which in Wickman's oeuvre span genres from horror with *Fear Has 1000 Eyes* (*Skräcken har 1000 ögon*, 1970), through farce in *The Lustful Vicar* (*Kyrkoherden* 1970) to the social

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Dellamorte, *Svensk sensationsfilm : en oöversatt guide till den fördolda svenska filmhistorien*, 1951-1993. (Malmö: Tamara press, 2003), Ekeroth, Daniel. *Swedish Sensationsfilms : a Clandestine History of Sex, Thrillers, and Kicker Cinema*. (New York: Bazillion Points, 2011), Jack Stevenson. *Scandinavian Blue: the Erotic Cinema of Sweden and Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s*. (Jefferson: Mcfarland, 2010)

<sup>7</sup> Broadly put, this is an era between 1965 and 1975, with a peak between 1969 and 1970.

<sup>8</sup> Mariah Larsson. *The Swedish Porn Scene : Exhibition Contexts, 8mm Pornography and the Sex Film*. (Bristol: Intellect, 2017), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Mariah Larsson, *Drawing the Line: Generic Boundaries of the Pornographic Film in Early 1970s Sweden* Codex and Code Linköping Electronic Conference Proceedings, January 1, 2010, 388.

<sup>10</sup> For examples see Jon Abbott: *Strange New Worlds: Sex Films of the 1970s* (SI: Createspace, 2015) David McGillivray. *Doing Rude Things: the History of the British Sex Film, 1957-1981*. (London: Sun Tavern Fields, 1992) and Simon Sheridan *Keeping the British End Up: Four Decades of Saucy Cinema* (London: Titan, 2011),

<sup>11</sup> Mariah Larsson, Practice Makes Perfect? The Production of the Swedish Sex Film in the 1970s (2010) *Film International*, 8, no. 6, 44.

<sup>12</sup> Klara Arnberg and Mariah Larsson. "Benefits of the in-between: Swedish Men's Magazines and Sex Films 1965-1975." *Sexuality & Culture* 18, no. 2 (June 2014), 321.

problem drama of *Anita*. It is emphasised that these films are not pornographic: They were screened in programmes in mainstream theatres, not the private sex cinemas and societies where hardcore could be seen. Larsson's work covers perceptions of Sweden and Swedishness tied to Swedish Sin and erotica, including the modern "Swedification" of pornography, but much of her analysis of the 1960s and 1970s Swedish sex film is essentially tied to historical reception rather than contemporary perspectives. Her work covers to an extent the shifting definition of 'pornographic' within cinema and Swedish society, and as such provides valuable perspective when considering contemporary positions how sex films from this period are understood, marketed and discussed, however her work remains predominantly of a historical nature.

Wickman's films have attracted a modicum of academic interest, predominantly within Sweden, in particular Elisabet Björklund's work focusing on Swedish Sex education and the role of Wickman's *The Language of Love* (*Ur kärlekens språk*, Torgny Wickman, 1969) as a work that exists in a contact zone between educational and exploitative. Björklund has also tackled the positioning of Wickman's other *Language of Love* films against liberalised views of the limits of screening sexual acts as well as the pervasive mythology surrounding *The Language of Love* and *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese 1976).<sup>13</sup> Her work should be also seen as part of the scholarly research that has been lacking into this area, and focuses primarily on Wickman's sexual education films and their historical context. I shall discuss the Swedish academic approach to the sex film further, and give a chronological overview of the shifting scholarly attitude to this area in Chapter 5.

As noted, prior to *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution* scholarly discussion of this subject has been notably sparse and remains frequently rooted in textual analysis and the retrospective historical appraisal. The initial focus for this thesis was to be an analysis of a range of Torgny Wickman's sex films. Wickman holds an interesting role in Swedish film history: as a prolific filmmaker, writer and producer with a 50 year career, his roster boasts several hundred films credited to him, spanning industrial shorts for bathrooms, road safety films and straight laced feature length melodramas. His swan song period of feature films for Swedish Film Production AB saw him - briefly - becoming one of Sweden's most profitable and successful directors<sup>14</sup> However enough attention has at the time of writing been paid to the historical sex film era that to create yet another textual analysis of a series of sex films would not be a relevant contribution to academic understanding of this era of Swedish film history. I consider this the research gap that this thesis intends to address: instead of a focus on the text trapped within a single historical moment, the shifting socio-cultural relations to the sex film can be analysed through keeping close to this single text and coming to understand how different audiences and users define and evaluate this text at specific historical moments throughout its cultural life. In this manner, approaching the case study from the outside through cultural touch-points and various users, it will be demonstrated how the perception of film and film heritage evolves across

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<sup>13</sup> Björklund, Elisabet, 'The Limits of Sexual Depictions in the Late 1960s' in *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution: Critical Essays*, eds. Elisabet Björklund and Mariah Larsson (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2016) 126-138.

<sup>14</sup> "Torgny Wickman", *Svensk Filmdatabas*, Accessed 7/3/2023, <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=person&itemid=62741#biography>.

a cultural lifetime: through this new knowledge can be found about both *Anita* and the type of film that it represents.

## 1.2 New Cinema History

In this section I discuss briefly the historical and cultural background to the New Cinema History, provide an overview of disciplinary techniques and approaches, and outline which methods will be appropriate to this study.

The 1978 FIAF Annual Congress in Brighton is referred to as achieving an “almost mythical status” in the field of New Cinema History, representing a tempting foundational myth that allows the disciples of the *new* cinema history to define themselves as distinct from the *old* methods.<sup>15</sup> This discourse sees the field of cinema studies changed overnight by the congress, as though a light were turned on, offering an alternative to the historical study of textual analyses to the focus on film-going culture through renewed archival practices. The totemic renaissance-like relevance of the conference itself should perhaps be toned down when one considers it as a development of theories advanced in the 1970s rather than a generational shift between two eras of historical study. (Gauthier 2012). Nevertheless, what is undeniable is the importance of this event in bringing together the academic and the archivist, and for making the archive and the material within available to the scholar of film and for establishing a symbolic disciplinary precedent for study of film using archival material. While it may be tempting to view New Cinema History as a binary discipline, a fundamental alternative to ‘traditional’ cinema history and theory, it is much more useful to consider it as one of many tools available and can effectively be used in conjunction with other more traditional approaches.<sup>16</sup>

The term ‘New Film History’ itself is coined in the early 1980s, and around the same time the phrase ‘traditional film history’ enters use.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Elsaesser - while not minting the phrase but arguably popularising it - defines this in his 1986 essay-cum-state of the nation piece *The New Film History* as “a polemical dissatisfaction with the surveys and overviews, the tales of pioneers and adventurers that for too long passed as film histories”.<sup>18</sup> In the essay, in which he discusses the publications of four scholars working with non-traditional techniques, he accurately predicts the changing ways in which film will be distributed and exhibited and that cinematic exhibition may become the exception rather than the rule as film becomes a multi-media object. The polemical nature of his essay itself becomes clear as he essentially outlines a manifesto for the New Film History, which turns its back on the textual analysis and interpretive study offered by auteurism and questions instead the beliefs and ideals shaped and communicated by film.<sup>19</sup> The piece proposes a movement away from

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<sup>15</sup> Giovanna Fossati. *From Grain to Pixel : the Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Third revised edition. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 148.

<sup>16</sup> The irony of referring to a nearly 50 year old historiographical discipline as ‘New’ is not entirely lost.

<sup>17</sup> Philipp Gauthier, *The Brighton Congress and Traditional Film History as Founding Myths of the New Film History* (March 2012 Conference paper, 2012 Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Conference, Boston, USA)

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Elsaesser "The New Film History." *Sight and Sound*, 55 No. 4. (Autumn 1986), 246 - 251.

<sup>19</sup> Elsaesser, “The New Film History”, 247.

the film *itself* and towards that which surrounds it, and is disregarded by ‘traditional film studies’, finding evidence in court records, demographic data, transport policy and all other kinds of data not directly connected with film production. Using a phrase which Daniel Biltereyst later echoes he proposes that cinema history can be approached from the top - using the personal archive of Hollywood production executives or company records - and from below through study of, for example, the drive-in economy, real estate values and local industrial patterns.<sup>20</sup> This is, of course, to presume that the film may lie at the centre of this model. The text is surrounded by context - it is up to the New Film Historian to consider how context may be seen to form our relationship to the text.

It should be noted here that while the terms ‘cinema’ and ‘film’ are clearly not easily interchangeable the nomenclature of this discipline evolves from the ‘New Film History’ of Elsaesser’s 1986 work into the ‘New Cinema History’ that Richard Maltby lays claim to in 2011.<sup>21</sup> Maltby outlines what is ‘new’ about New Cinema History through distinguishing new *cinema* history from *film* history - describing film history as a history of production, producers, authorship and films. Concerned with the economic, aesthetic and social systems that shape film, film history is described as a post-structuralist perspective that concerns itself with the signifying language of film. The unwillingness of the film theorist to collaborate with the historian leads to a consensus where films are “treated as involuntary testimony, bearing unconscious material witness to the zeitgeist of the period of their production”.<sup>22</sup>

Referring to this, Maltby notes that historians are encouraged to examine the ‘unconscious’ of the filmic text to “reveal the biases, tastes or secret fears of the cultural moment in which it was produced”<sup>23</sup>. This presumes that the filmic object is a static one, culturally, only capable of revealing the culture that produces the film, disregarding the culture that *consumes* the film. Following this line of approach *Anita* could only be considered as the product of the Swedish films trend for producing sex films in a golden era of sex film. It is precisely this analysis that I seek to avoid, seeking instead to consider what happens when a film produced in a certain context is consumed and observed in other, different contexts. The New Cinema History approach disregards the orthodox and literal approach that film studies is *solely* the study of films and seeks to place cinema in a social, economic and cultural context. It cautions against the adequacy of a total history of cinema based entirely on the study of filmic texts. Maltby identifies an issue which potentially affects this essay - chasing the unknowable and unidentifiable participants in undocumented events: the ticket paying audience and their motivations. It is in any way possible to describe the audience at the first screenings of *Anita* or can we in any way understand the experience? The answer to this, in the absence of first hand perspective must be no and indeed, as Anette Kuhn repeatedly demonstrates, the cinema memory is

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<sup>20</sup> Elsaesser, “The New Film History”, 248.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Maltby, “New Cinema Histories” in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers. (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Maltby, “New Cinema Histories” 5.

<sup>23</sup> Marc Ferro quoted in Maltby, 6.

fragmented, unreliable and concerns more the ephemeral circumstance of the cinema visit than the cinematic content itself.<sup>24</sup> Maltby, in reference to the study of the text in isolation states:

This perspective makes clear how arbitrary it is to select the film text as a representation of the cinematic event of which it is a constituent part and how important it is to qualify the analysis of any film's individual meaning within the limits of what we can recover about the time and places where it circulated.<sup>25</sup>

In place of first hand audience response this study instead seeks to analyse the times and places where *Anita* is circulated and to consider what potential pleasures may be found for audiences at these times and places. Fundamentally, and as discussed earlier in regard to the dispositive the experience of the anonymous viewer of *Anita* in 1973 cannot be understood to be replicated once experienced on VHS in 1999. Nor can we presume that the audience of 1973 approaches the film with the same set of expectations and assumptions as the one in the early 21st Century.

As noted, Biltereyst elegantly describes some of the methods used by the New Cinema History school as approaching “from below” - oral reports from audience members, here replaced by semi-structured testimonial interview with parties involved in production, distribution and exhibition, “from above” - statistics and industrial data produced by production and distribution companies, and “From the side” - social actors from outside the world of cinema, such as newspapers, fanzines and fan based economies. These factors are used to place *Anita* within socio-cultural and economic contexts.<sup>26</sup> This approach places a single text at the centre of my enquiry rather than a single site, which has been the case with many of the New Cinema History research papers offered as case studies.<sup>27</sup> The use of these sources analyses sites of exhibition and distribution and reveals the discourse around the text and the context in which it is presented, viewed and received. The lifespan of *Anita* starts with traditional theatrical presentation and follows the move from a cinema based experience to a *screen* based experience as appears on domestic video, DVD, theatrical reissue, digitised archive file and streaming. The 50 year history of the film encompasses generational shifts in how film is consumed and distributed as an object, the same shifts predicted by Elsaesser, and as such perhaps the phrase ‘New Cinema History’ becomes less relevant: it may be more appropriate to consider this a work of ‘New Screen History’ as I consider a single text in multiple sites of exhibition and consumption, inside and outside of the cinema auditorium, in domestic and public settings to differing audiences and cultural eras.

I propose therefore a combination of the New Cinema History approach of analysing *Anita* from the outside together with a ‘traditional’ approach of considering the original production context, status and critical reception. This study will not be able to find the audience but it intends to define the situations where *Anita* can be found, how this situation informs the new dispositive and in turn creates

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<sup>24</sup> e.g. Annette Kuhn. *An Everyday Magic : Cinema and Cultural Memory*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002)

<sup>25</sup> Maltby, “New Cinema Histories” 33.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Biltereyst, “Audience as Palimpsest”, in *Researching Historical Screen Audiences*, eds. Kate Egan, Martin Ian Smith and Jamie Terrill. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. Maltby, Biltereyst & Meers 2011, Biltereyst, Maltby & Meers 2019, Egan, Smith & Terrill 2022

new meaning for a new audience. In place of direct testimony the techniques of the New Cinema History work as a framework for revealing the changing dispositifs from below, from the top and from the sides.

### 1.3 Defining the dispositif

Giovanna Fossati's work on the balance between academia and film archival practice makes great claim of the nature of film as an inherently transitional medium. Fossati maintains that a single canonical definition of 'cinema' has, throughout the over 100 year history of the medium, proved to be elusive. The FIAF Brighton Congress of 1978 is seen as a key event in the way film is formulated as a cultural object, giving rise to the New Cinema History movement, and providing a watershed moment in the manner in which archival film is regarded as an historicised object.<sup>28</sup> The archival film object is not - and cannot - be regarded as the same object that was shown to an audience for the first time, and should instead be considered as an historicised material object (the material damage to the print, the fading of dyes) and as a historicised conceptual object. The "archival life of film" should be considered as part of this transitional nature particularly, for Fossati, in the era of digitalisation. If cinema itself is in a continual process of transformation as a medium, then it should also be demonstrable that a cinematic text itself leads a transformative life from the moment it is released.

In *From Grain to Pixel* Fossati outlines frameworks for academic study of archival film and archival exhibition and within these are concepts that can be seen to apply equally to studying the aesthetically and conceptually transitional readings of an historicised text outside of purely archival practice, such as *Anita*. Her framework of 'film as dispositif' tackles the possibility of film from a wider perspective than an abstract object of conceptual analysis. Dispositif as a term can be used and misused depending in the authors intent, so it would be wise to first consider Fossati's interpretation of this before moving on to a wider working definition for this thesis. Fossati states that a film's identity is created within a dispositif which she defines plainly as being "where the film meets the user": a temptingly simple definition, which in turn allows for a model where films exist as dynamic objects with material and conceptual components working together.<sup>29</sup> Another framework offered by Fossati of the 'film as original' would see the original dispositif recreated for any screening of a film to maintain the fundamental aesthetic nature of that film as experience as close to possible to the initial conditions of exhibition. Within the 'film as dispositif' framework the showing of a film in circumstances different to the historical one becomes an important alternative. If we are to apply this idea to *Anita* we will need to consider wider aspects of the exhibition dispositif: The initial historical exhibition should be identified, as should subsequent viewing environs and experiences. These dispositifs should not just consider the site of exhibition but the context of exhibition, they should

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<sup>28</sup> Fossati, 148-149.

<sup>29</sup> Fossati, 171.

touch on social constructions and how the text can be positioned within shifting societal attitudes to sex and sexual politics, for example. This simplified definition of *dispositif* as being where the film meets the user offers a key starting point for this thesis: The site where the film and user meet is in constant transition, and by considering these changing sites we may trace changing meanings and identities as the film itself transits to a new reading. The film itself is approached from a wider perspective than a simple textual analysis. A film such as *Anita* may be, using this approach, defined and redefined by the contact with different viewers or user groups in different cultural situations.

Fossati's idea of the relation between *dispositif*, audience and meaning builds on Frank Kessler's dialogue with the concept of the Cinema of Attractions. Working from Tom Gunning's definition of the Cinema of Attractions representing a historical period of pre-narrative cinema (i.e. prior to 1906) Kessler notes that a period does not exist in itself in history, only in historical explanation: an historical period or object is contextualised as such only by later perspective and not as an *a priori* fact.<sup>30</sup> Kessler maintains that the Cinema of Attractions should be re-read not as a specific historical period, but a specific *dispositif*: a condition of exhibition and an experience that provided a certain spectacle for the spectator.

A brief aside on Kessler's use of *dispositif*: Kessler defines the *dispositif* as distinct from the commonly used English translation of 'apparatus'. For Kessler, the apparatus stems from Baudry's "*appareil du bas*" - interpreted as meaning the equipment and industrial process required to produce and watch film whereas Kessler's *dispositif* refers solely to the circumstances of viewing film.<sup>31</sup> I find this distinction compelling, and will follow his use of *dispositif* in this text - tallying as it does with Fossati's conception. Kessler contends that Baudry's use of the *dispositif* as a form of address guaranteeing a viewing position is flawed, and that a single viewing position should not be considered a transhistorical norm. This argument is, of course, of interest to the study of a single text across a 50 year period which forms this theses. If, as Kessler argues, the positioning of the spectator should be historicised, then we need to consider the conditions of viewing for spectators for the same text at different historical periods and to define the makeup of these historical period. The suggestion he makes is the fundament of this thesis: "a historical analysis based in the concept of *dispositif* re-interpreted in a pragmatic perspective could actually take into account different uses of one and the same text within different exhibition contexts".<sup>32</sup> This re-interpretation provides the ground for the different 'eras' of *Anita*'s life as a film that I shall later outline, each indicating how distinct *dispositifs* may allow new users to use, reuse and appropriate the text in different ways resulting in an evolving cultural footprint.

Kate Egan's work on the British Video Nasty phenomenon is an example of work that brushes against Kessler's suggested analysis.<sup>33</sup> Egan suggests that the Video Nasty genre - if it can be described as such - is one that is defined by a number of films grouped by historical coincidence rather

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<sup>30</sup> Frank Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions as *Dispositif*" in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 58.

<sup>31</sup> Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions", 60.

<sup>32</sup> Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions", 61.

<sup>33</sup> Kate Egan, *Trash or Treasure: Censorship and the changing meanings of the video nasties*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)

than overreaching thematic or aesthetic similarities. The term itself holds a meaning for the press seeking to demonise a set of films, one for the fans and collectors who fetishise specific cuts of film, and yet another for the redistribution of films in contemporary releases and formats. She takes a historiographical approach to trace how the texts in question are negotiated through different social eras and users, which she classifies as a ‘user orientated approach’ - that is to say the specific desires and uses of each audience (and by extension dispositif) affect the interpretation and meaning of the texts. Referring to Rick Altman’s work on genre it is noted that the location of genre “may depend at different times on different criteria” - echoing Kessler’s idea that meaning is fluid and contextual and defined by different users.<sup>34</sup> I will return briefly to Kate Egan and further work on Cult theory presently.

In applying this method to the Swedish sex film era - a group of films that can also be seen to have been grouped by historical proximity whilst still containing similar aesthetics - it may be possible to consider the relation between the audience, *Anita* and the historical era that spawned it. It is noted that this type of study exploring the changing meaning of a film has been performed by, for example, Mike Budd analysing *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* among many others.<sup>35</sup> A notable tendency of these studies however is the focus on more visible texts - *Caligari*, *King Kong*, *Casablanca*.<sup>36</sup> *Anita* falls quite happily into the corpus of “lesser filmmakers” which will come to be castigated by the SFI’s Harry Schein and becomes a more challenging object for study without the wealth of historical material or context a *King Kong* may have generated. Little to no academic literature discusses *Anita* outside of its historical context - leaving a lack of theoretical or historical discussion with which to engage and problematise. This necessitates, therefore, an approach to researching primary materials using the New Cinema History school of historical audience research. It should be noted that this study is essentially historiographical and not an audience research project it seeks to apply some of the methods used by historical audience research.

Fossati notes that any attempt to recreate an authentic dispositif that exactly mimics the original premiere screening of any film is fundamentally bound to failure due to the impossibility of recreating the original audience - to which it should be added that it is equally impossible to recreate a specific set of socio-cultural conditions and expectations.<sup>37</sup> The individual audience for *Anita* are therefore essentially absent from this study for that reason and for the reason a reception study based approach to the film - while an interesting project - is outside of the historiographical study I am performing here. Biltereyst proposes the use of “Press coverage, promotion, box office results and marketing strategies, and where we have the film, we can start scraping away at layers of real and potential cinematic experiences.”<sup>38</sup> We cannot simulate the audience reaction at any stage, but we can ‘scrape away the layers’ of discourse around *Anita* to understand a how different viewers create meaning and context in the manner that Biltereyst suggests from the sources that surround them. These

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<sup>34</sup> Egan, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Mike Budd: ‘The moments of *Caligari*’, in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari: Texts, Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> See note in Egan, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Fossati, 172.

<sup>38</sup> Biltereyst, “Audience as Palimpsest”, 27.



viewers and their reactions act as historical and cultural testimony. The ideas of the dispositif that I outline above allows us to consider the unique cultural and aesthetic moment of the cinematic experiences in which these viewers encounter the film.

## 1.4 Cult theory

Cult theory, among its many guises, tackles how audience and texts become intertwined in creating and rearticulating meaning through their relationships to texts, how this relationship is communicated, and analyses the varying pleasures a ‘cult’ text may offer to the audience. I intend to outline aspects of cult theory that will be relevant in consideration of how *Anita* as a text alters in relation to different audiences in different situations and how the manner in which these audiences use the text form part of the differing dispositifs. This will be relevant in understanding why, when and how *Anita* is recirculated to place the surrounding discourse into context. What is of particular interest is the evolution of cult theory and how it develops from the early approaches to (what was referred to as) ‘paracinema’ in the 1980s through Henry Jenkins work with fan culture and “textual poachers” which in turn inspires new approaches to cult cinema post millennium.<sup>39</sup> The manner in which cult texts are consumed and distributed over this period shifts from midnight movie circuit into domestic VHS and fanzine culture into DVD reissue followed by internet based distribution and community formation and finally up to date through digitisation, 4k Blu Ray restorations and specialist streaming services. The changes in cult theory and particularly the socio-cultural background behind each phase of the theory work to inform just where a text like *Anita* may be positioned within the discourses forming the different historiographical phases that I shall outline presently.

“Cult film” in itself is a slippery term, denying easy definition and classification. In the introduction to *Defining Cult Movies* it is proposed that an essential definition should be avoided, as “cult movie” is an essentially eclectic category.<sup>40</sup> It would therefore be folly to attempt to create a definitive list of just what a cult movie is, as Jeffrey Sconce’s 1995 list of disparate sub-genres of ‘paracinema’ indicates.<sup>41</sup> Helpfully, his description of the spectrum as ranging from “juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft core pornography” could quite happily indicate where the appeal of *Anita* may be found for some audiences, arguably covering both extremes of this range.<sup>42</sup> This list is more helpful in considering pre-conceptions of cult and how it is understood as a term - a genre or sub-genre may more readily come under the umbrella of cult. More importantly, it allows us to

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<sup>39</sup> Henry Jenkins. *Textual poachers: television fans & participatory culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992)

<sup>40</sup> Mark Jancovich, Antonio Lázaro Reboll, Julian Stringer and Andy Willis, eds. *Defining Cult Movies: the Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Sconce. “Trashing the academy: taste, excess and an emerging politics of cinematic style” *Screen*. 36 No. 4, (Winter 1995), 372.

<sup>42</sup> His categories range from “Badfilm, splatterpunk, mondo films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach-party musicals, and just about every other historical manifestation of exploitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft-core pornography”

understand the social and political positioning of cult film viewers as the antithesis to the mainstream cultural tastemakers.

Cult is perhaps better understood as a subcultural ideology in films, filmmakers and most particularly audiences that places itself in opposition to the mainstream - although it should be noted "mainstream" is as equally difficult to define as 'cult'. While self-consciously 'cult' films are produced as such, this is of little interest when considering how an audience comes to understand a film as cult or indeed how it is presented and packaged to them as cult. Cult should be therefore better expressed as a method of consumption rather than a method of production or generic style, an expression of oppositional taste. In Sconce's words "an overall aesthetic of calculated disaffection, marking a deviant taste public disengaged from the cultural hierarchies of their overarching taste culture".<sup>43</sup> The opposition he defines wishes to distance itself from the cultural elite and elitist taste. Sconce claims echoes of the camp re-readings of Douglas Sirk melodramas in the development of cult/paracinema culture, however he notes a key difference in that camp is an aesthetic of ironic colonisation, whereas cult is one of vocal confrontation. This may be true for Sconce writing in 1995, but it seems impossible to separate the two approaches now when considering an oppositional taste: one certainly does not exclude the other. The aesthetic of calculated disaffection and the nature of deviant taste clearly changes over time, but work of this era gives a socio-cultural background to definitions of cult and alternative taste around the time *Anita* resurfaces for public viewing both in the mid 1980s and the late 1990s.

A similar quality of alternative reading practices can be seen in the interpretative strategies of gay audiences of Judy Garland's *A Star Is Born* which in turn leads to a useful concept in an analysis of *Anita*. In considering three readings for a single film - preferred, dominant-culture and alternative - Janet Staiger indicates how audience interpretation and reading becomes a community action with cultural forms being used as self-definition, forming interpretative communities related to that self definition.<sup>44</sup> Is it possible to see all audiences as a community? I would suggest not, and the difference between an audience viewing a film as entertainment and one viewing it as a totemic form of self expression should be considered the divide where audience becomes community. Staiger's work on *A Star Is Born* tallies with the aforementioned user orientated approach of Kate Egan - meaning and interpretation is created in contact with an audience in response to their expectations and preconceptions and alters in different contexts and with different user groups: *A Star Is Born* remains the same filmic text but its meaning, relevance and interpretation is affected by the audience and how they appropriate the film. This is as relevant for the gay audience as the cult audience, and it seems difficult to justify these as two separate aesthetics, as Sconce claimed. The cult audience is an interpretative community, their oppositional stance is equally as oppositional as the gay reading and appropriation of mainstream melodrama.

Users not only interpret meaning but also assign genre - any definition of genre is entirely reliant on the users and their approaches. Using the argument of Rick Altman that genre is a discursive

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<sup>43</sup> Sconce, 376.

<sup>44</sup> Janet Staiger. "The Logic of Alternative Readings: A Star Is Born in *Interpreting Films : Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 154-177

construct whose function and meaning is decided by the user then it follows that, by considering *Anita*, it can be understood how this text is classified and defined as within specific genre at different moments by defining who the user is and in which manner they appropriate the text: free from the “tyranny of textual analysis”.<sup>45</sup> While I have argued against use of ‘cult’ as a genre for this paper, it remains still a generic definition applied by the user with an accompanying set of expectations - one user’s cult is another person’s mainstream. This approach is useful when trying to define what a ‘1970s Swedish sex film’ may suggest as a meta-generic title, in this manner mirroring the British Video Nasty phenomenon in representing a number of thematically dissimilar films.

While ‘cult’ is, as has been shown, an impossibly broad term to quantify, a useful tool is provided by the online journal *Bright Lights Film*: In place of a definition of cult itself, it offers a checklist of the qualities an audience may respond to when establishing a film as a cult text:<sup>46</sup>

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. Marginality    | Content falls outside general cultural norms           |
| 2. Suppression    | Subject to censor, ridicule, lawsuit, or exclusion     |
| 3. Economics      | Box office flop upon release but eventually profitable |
| 4. Transgression  | Content breaks social, moral, or legal rules           |
| 5. Cult following | Generates devoted minority audience                    |
| 6. Community      | Audience is or becomes self-identified group           |
| 7. Quotation      | Lines of dialog become common language                 |
| 8. Iconography    | Establishes or revives cult icons                      |

This checklist, while far from exhaustive, helps us to understand cult not as a genre in itself but as a set of distinct pleasures that have different relevances to different audiences - it is once these pleasures are located by the audience that they lay claim to a text as ‘cult’ and create an interpretative community. This may not necessarily be an act by an audience - cheap DVD reissues of VHS transfers collected together as ‘cult classics’ that tick many of the items on the list are decried as offering bad movies desperate for a little cachet under the flag of cult.<sup>47</sup> This checklist should not be considered as a classificatory tool, but will provide a helpful reference for discussion of how *Anita* is remembered, reappropriated and remarked.

There exists also a theoretical Venn diagram of the contested spaces between academic, cinephile and fan in cult studies, resulting in such terms as ‘fancademia’. The pattern established by Henry Jennings’s influential approach in *Textual Poachers* sets to some extent a precedent of academics allowing their cold scholarly perspective to be tempered by the breathless wonder of the cult fan. Various neologisms are coined to describe this, from the “aca-fan” (Jenkins 1992) through the fan-scholar/scholar-fan (Hills 2002) into “Fancademia” (Carter 2018). This can spill over into public

<sup>45</sup> Rick Altman. *Film/Genre*. (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 213.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Bentley Baker, “*What Is Cult Cinema?: A Checklist*”, *Bright Lights film*, accessed 16/2/23, <https://brightlightsfilm.com/what-is-cult-cinema-a-checklist/#.Y-4BLi8w1pQ>

<sup>47</sup> Cynthia Lucia and Richard Portón, “Editorial: Cult Film - undoing the Time Warp”, *Cineaste*, 34, No.1 (Winter, 2008), 6.

debate - a good example being Ian Hunter's defiantly oppositional *Beaver Las Vegas: A Fan-Boys Defence of Showgirls*.<sup>48</sup> The discussion that follows this essay's publication gives insight into differing fan and academic practices and is key to considering how a sex film such as *Anita* holds different attractions for different audiences at different times - following this discussion provides an interesting and relevant historical context.

Hunter's piece was initially published in *Unruly Pleasures: the Cult Film and Its Critics*, which comes under scrutiny for the notably 'laddish' undertone and content when reviewed by Linda Ruth Williams in *Sight and Sound*. Williams views the volume - "an academic version of the Sunday Sport" as intrinsically transgressive, dryly noting that the nipple count and references to Lacan run equal.<sup>49</sup> Approaching this volume 23 years hence it is notable how closely it treads the line between academic integrity and breathless fan-boy publication (to re-use Hunter's self-identification) of the type broadly dismissed earlier by Björklund and Larsson.<sup>50</sup> It is well illustrated with a large number of plates from films, many of which appear to have been chosen to add to the suspected nipple-count rather than for specific insight. The editors open the book with a call to arms, noting the 'orgasmic' pleasures to be derived in Cult film.<sup>51</sup> Hunter's piece follows the tone of the introduction, starting almost from the first word with the single entendre 'beaver' joke in the title, adopting an at times self aggrandising tone and veering into overtly passive-aggressive statements such as decrying psychoanalysis as "science for people who don't know anything about science".<sup>52</sup> The essay is more notable for what it reveals about the author's position than about *Showgirls*: Hunter's ironised oppositional taste, and his claim that no-one shares his view is laid out as a calling card for his credentials as an academic bad boy.

Using this term - academic bad boy - this ironic elevation of politically incorrect texts is called out in Jacinda Read's 2003 response to Hunter's essay.<sup>53</sup> The naive disregard for sexism and misogyny displayed by cult 'fancademics' is questioned, and Read places into focus the strategy of the transformation of subcultural capital into "legitimate" academic cultural capital.<sup>54</sup> She connects Hunter's approach and writing style with the British 'New Lad' masculine culture of the late 1990s and questions if his passive aggressive defence of *Showgirls* is just another ironic reappropriation and celebration of politically incorrect texts: his should be regarded in context as part of an ongoing debate of the masculine nature of cult consumption vs the passive, feminine nature of cinema-going.

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<sup>48</sup> IQ Hunter, "'Beaver Las Vegas!' A Fan-Boy's Defence of *Showgirls*", in *Unruly Pleasures: the Cult Film and Its Critics*, eds. Xavier Mendik, and Graeme Harper. (Guildford: FAB, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> Linda Ruth Williams (2000) review "Unruly Pleasures: The Cult Film and its Critics." *Sight and Sound*, Vol.10 (11), 38. The *Sunday Sport* is a UK based tabloid newspaper, notorious in the 1990s for pages full of topless models, stories of dubious veracity and a proudly displayed numerical nipple-count on the front cover.

<sup>50</sup> Björklund and Larsson. *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Xavier Mendik and Graeme Harper, "Introduction" in *Unruly Pleasures: the Cult Film and Its Critics* eds. Xavier Mendik, and Graeme Harper. (Guildford: FAB, 2000), 4.

<sup>52</sup> IQ Hunter, *Cult Film As A Guide To Life: Fandom, Adaptation and Identity* (New York, Bloomsbury, 2016), 32.

<sup>53</sup> Jacinda Read, "The Cult of Masculinity", in *Defining Cult Movies: the Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*, eds. Mark Jancovich, Antonio Lázaro Reboll, Julian Stringer and Andy Willis. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 54-70.

<sup>54</sup> Read, "The Cult of Masculinity", 54.

Hunter provides a baleful 2016 post-script to Read's response where he gamely re-prints his original essay before offering a hands-up admission of guilt in an afterword entitled 'My Bad'. He concedes that the lasting academic value of his essay was created in Read's critique rather than in his polemical calling card essay, which has been recast instead as a symptomatic case study.<sup>55</sup> With his tale between his legs he reflects that, in 2016, Cult is the domain of wider communities of users, more diverse culturally and socially. No more does it carry the stereotypical masculine connotation of "white men in black t-shirts obsessing about horror and sex films".<sup>56</sup> This stands as an example of the tensions within cult fandom and academia, and while this clichéd image of the cult consumer is pervasive it is prudent to consider the power relations that lead to the formation of this cliché and the influence they have on the definition of cult at the use of the text at each different point of contact with the film. This forms in turn as much a part of the dispositif as the auditorium and the physical media.

While this essay concerns itself primarily with the Swedish reception and exhibition of *Anita*, I choose to bring this discussion about British cultural reference points to the fore to enlighten a number of issues. Firstly, and without wishing to make an Ian Hunter style attempt to place the author at the centre of the text, it serves as a reminder of my cultural background: that as a British male who was socially and culturally active at the time that Hunter wrote his piece I should be wary of the cultural perspective I may bring to a Swedish sex film and to question my motives and approach in pursuing this study.<sup>57</sup> The recirculation and reissue of *Anita* occurs roughly at the same time that Hunter wrote his original text, and as such Hunter's writing and the ensuing discussions provide a historical context for the same sort of late 1990s ironic reappropriation that *Anita* may appeal to.<sup>58</sup> The masculine nature of cult, particularly at this late '90s period, may go some way to enlightening just why sex films are offered cult status at the expense of, for sake of example, contemporary children's films. The power relations in the audience who chose to anoint a film with cult status, or indeed any other cultural status must be analysed to understand why this status is assigned: Who is doing this? On what terms are they laying claim to cult status? What is the socio-political background? This returns to Staiger's idea of the interpretative community finding expression in reappropriated readings of films, the question is to discover how this community is organised and what their motives are. Cult studies provides therefore strategies for considering how audiences reappropriate texts for their own purposes. Whether *Anita* should be a cult text or not, these strategies remain relevant and will provide a fundament for considering who repurposes the film and in what manner.

These three theoretical bases inform the method of this thesis - that of different conditions of exhibition and socio-cultural context working to create different dispositifs, aspects of cult theory allowing examination of these of a dispositif created by certain user groups, and the New Cinema History approaches allow these dispositifs and groups to be approached through study of the social and cultural records and references surrounding them. Following on from Kessler's notion that a

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<sup>55</sup> IQ Hunter (2016) "Beaver Las Vegas! A Fanboys Defence of *Showgirls*" in Hunter, *Cult Film As A Guide To Life: Fandom, Adaptation and Identity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 23-40.

<sup>56</sup> Hunter, *Cult Film as a Guide to Life*, xiii.

<sup>57</sup> I note, with a certain air of resignation, that I am wearing jeans and a black t-shirt as I write this.

<sup>58</sup> While published in *Unruly Pleasures* in 2000, *Beaver Las Vegas* was initially written and presented in 1997 at a Birmingham University conference on American Studies. See Hunter, *Cult Film*, 36.

historical period can only be defined after the event, and may be seen to provide a specific dispositif, I will presently define 4 historical periods that will allow these theoretical approaches to interrogate *Anita* inspired by the methods I have outlined.<sup>59</sup>

## 1.5 Methodology and delimitation

It is perhaps an understatement to claim that Sweden has negotiated a love/hate relationship with the international conception of Sweden as the sinful nation of unbridled free love, having spent many years attempting to untangle itself from the historical Sweden/Sin nexus.<sup>60</sup> As a Swedish/French co-production *Anita* is fundamentally also entangled in the relation Sweden has between this international myth, the perpetuation of it and eventual attempts to distance the nation from association with Swedish Sin.

*Anita* has been canonically regarded as a film produced solely for the international market, and remains categorised as ‘typical export production’ in the official record in *Svensk Filmografi*.<sup>61</sup> There is demonstrably more than an element of truth in this categorisation, yet this record acts to disenfranchise *Anita* from the context of Swedish film production and Swedish film heritage. The phrase ‘typical’ export production seems to move to strip *Anita* of any aspect of ‘Swedishness’ - this is a product for the foreign market - without any deeper consideration of why this market exists, and why a production for export should hold less cultural value than one for domestic consumption. There seems to have existed, as discussed by Larsson, an almost willing ignorance of how this film and films of the associated sex film meta-genre were exhibited and consumed within Sweden and what cultural relevance it potentially holds. By limiting my scope to *Anita*’s shifting cultural position within Sweden it is hoped that it may be understood how this text comes to be branded and understood in a certain way domestically, and how this categorisation and accompanying presumptions tie into the way the perception of the film is developed and re-interpreted. The ‘Swedishness’ of the film becomes increasingly relevant as the film wallows in post-release obscurity in Sweden. This forms a further part of a cultural nostalgia and plausibly forms part of the meaning to each interpretative user group as the film is revived in various forms.

*Anita* appears at the tail end of the boom in sex films, and towards the end of Wickman’s career. There are number of interesting factors in *Anita* which contribute to it appealing to different groups at different stages of its life. Firstly, and most obviously, is the categorisation of *Anita* as a sex film, and the changing connotations that label may be seen to hold between 1973 and 2023. This categorisation shifts the text from an object of salacious sexual curiosity, into a shameful blot on a national memory and eventually as object of nostalgia and historical record at various stages of the film’s life. The two lead actors - Christina Lindberg and Stellan Skarsgård - both hold varying status as

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<sup>59</sup> Kessler, “The Cinema of Attractions” 58.

<sup>60</sup> See Niklas Glover & Marklund, C. (2009) Arabian Nights in the Midnight Sun: Exploring the Temporal Structure of Sexual Geographies. *Historisk Tidskrift (S)*, (3), 487-510.

<sup>61</sup> Lars Åhlander. *Svensk filmografi 7, 1970-1979*. (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1989) 219.

celebrities across the 50 year life span. It would be wise to consider the film a vehicle for Christina Lindberg in 1973, being as she was at the height of her pin-up fame, but her fame ebbs and flows nationally and internationally since the film's release, similarly 'a Christina Lindberg film' denotes different things at different times in her career. The young Stellan Skarsgård was most popularly known, in Sweden, as the young star of television series *Bombi Bitt & jag* in 1973 - a world away from the globally visible star he would become by the late 1990s, with his increasing fame renewing interest in an obscure film. The novelty of a leading actor appearing in a (to all extents and purposes) forgotten film is raised regularly in interviews with Skarsgård, to his occasional irritation.

### 1.5.1 Defining the four phases of *Anita's* cultural life.

The focus of this thesis is to analyse potential shifts in the cultural understanding of *Anita* as a text as it comes into contact with different audiences in different dispositifs throughout the near 50 year history of the film. As has been established, the audience watching *Anita* in, for example, 1999 is meeting the film with a different set of expectations in an entirely different cultural situation to a first run audience in 1973, and with different conditions of exhibition. To allow for clarity I have identified four distinct phases in the 'life' of *Anita* following its theatrical premiere. These are defined in relation to theoretical and thematic considerations and represent a period where the manner in which the film and audience meet shifts into a new situation:

#### 1) *The initial release, distribution and reception*

This period covers the period when *Anita* was produced and screened in Swedish cinemas on its first run, approximately 1973-1974. This starts with putting the production of *Anita* into a historical and cultural context - what were the conditions of possibility that lead to the film being produced, what does it show about how films of this type in this era were produced? Who was *Anita* for? However they may be considered now, Wickman's films - *Anita* included - were certainly intended to be popular and, by default, profitable. It is therefore necessary to see when and where *Anita* could be seen in its initial release. It is noted in *Svensk filmografi* that it was initially not released in Stockholm - with the same dismissive tone with which it dismissed the export status - with comments that this decision was made by the producer "to avoid the whining Stockholm critics".<sup>62</sup> It will be therefore necessary to focus on how *Anita* could be seen by a Swedish audience, where, how it performed and what can be inferred from this.

#### 2) *The 'wilderness' years*

Following the initial release in 1973-74 *Anita* was no longer in theatrical circulation in Sweden - where, if anywhere, is the film visible during this period? How is it discussed or referenced?

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<sup>62</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 219.

During this period it will need to be established what cultural relevance *Anita* may hold, and perhaps what may be understood from a lack of cultural visibility. What happens during this period to the reputation of Wickman and the film itself - how is it contextualised if indeed at all? This period covers from 1975 to the mid 1990s, a longer period where the film will be seen to be, essentially, entirely forgotten.

### 3) *The cult years*

The revival of the film by enthusiasts, and what effect ‘subcultural currency’ has on the films reappearance. During this period *Anita* is screened once again to the public, and released for domestic consumption. The cultural and economic forces driving this revival are of interest - is there a wider demand for this? What is the context in which the film is now screened and marketed once released, and how does this once again alter the meaning of the text for the audience? Who is the audience at this time and how do they differ from the original audience? This section will cover the growth of Swedish cult subcultures in the mid 1990s through reissue and re-exhibition under a generic reclassification assigning certain texts the metagenre of Swedish cult cinema

### 4) *The ‘academic’ years*

The arrival of Torgny Wickman’s work and the sex film into academic discourse. To what extent does the ‘revival’ or the redistribution of *Anita* and similar works lead to recontextualisation and renewed understanding of their cultural and historical capital? How can *Anita* be approached as a text 50 years after its release and how may it now be read?

At all four of these stages it may be seen that appropriation and re-appropriation of *Anita* results in a shifting cultural categorisation, and that each stage relies upon the previously accrued meanings in the creation of further iterations.

## 1.5.2 Materials

*Anita* has been chosen as the focus for this thesis as it represents a typical example of the output of the sex film era, which has itself been the focus of evaluation and re-evaluation: that is to say the film uses an exploitation model to provide risqué, though not hardcore, content, and was produced in a specific temporal period. It has been subject to rumour and gossip, and one of the stars of the films becomes a successful and well known actor both globally and domestically, while the other comes to enjoy status as a cult icon. The digital restoration of *Anita* by the Swedish Film Institute in 2021 provides a clear timeline from release to the cultural position it will be seen to occupy today, allowing for shifts in usage and cultural meaning to be charted. By focusing on a single case study these processes of cultural evaluation and re-evaluation become illuminated, as do the groups performing these processes and their motivations. The focus has been limited to Sweden to provide clearer focus of the cultural meanings and relevance to Swedish film heritage, free of complicating factors such as the xenostereotype of Sweden as the sexy nation. To consider the French, British and



American contexts would distract from the central focus of this thesis, although although critical accusations of being produced solely for export form a vital part of Swedish perceptions of the film, the opinions of the foreign markets are less relevant to this study.

The popular press provides insight into the cultural reception and perception of *Anita*. By looking around the subject - that is to say not searching solely for mentions of the film itself - the text and context can be reached from the sides, above and below, to use Biltereyst's methodological analogy. This New Cinema History approach inspires a method of approaching the text to see where and when it was visible outside of the cinema auditorium. New Cinema History approaches should not for this work be regarded as a methodological orthodoxy, but perhaps more as a perspective or style.<sup>63</sup> It defines not a singular set approach or method, and different methodologies can be found gathered under the umbrella of New Cinema History. It should be noted that this has required time consuming research and browsing through a very broad range of Swedish press sources - evening newspapers and daily newspapers together with regional and national publications have formed the core of the research. Together with these, volumes of more specialised publications have been researched: lifestyle magazines, softcore pornographic magazines specialist and popular cinema magazines, fanzines and fan publications. For all of these sources an approach was taken - where non-digitised material was the sole source - of reading through issues published at specific times of interest where *Anita* or Wickman were likely to have been mentioned. This has resulted in a great range of materials consulted, not all of which have generated worthwhile results, and many of which do not form part of my bibliography, but I present a selection of these here.

To this end I have made considerable use of the Swedish Newspaper Archive for primary source material. The regional and national newspapers have been first and foremost a source for film listings in an effort to identify all the dates of *Anita*'s initial release period, to quantify the duration of exhibition and the cinemas where it was exhibited but also provide material on Wickman, Lindberg and the production of *Anita*. Primarily I have made use of the digitised archive, allowing for individual references to be searched. The core of this was made up by the national evening tabloids *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* and the national broadsheets *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, the Malmö based *Arbetet* and the Gothenburg *Göteborgsposten* provide local listings for the two major sites of the initial release, and local papers *Barometern* (Kalmar) and *Borås Tidning* (Borås) provide further listings. Working on the presumption that a film production would be an event of note in small town Katrineholm - the location of the majority of the filming and of Wickman's residence - the microfiche records of *Katrineholms-Kuriren* were also accessed. Limitations of time and scope have meant that the specific focus on Katrineholm has been the sole focus of study of original microfiche, with other digitised sources prioritised.

The newspapers around the period of the release also allow for an understanding of the perception of Torgny Wickman and his film career - through reading features on and interviews with Wickman a cultural 'tone' can be insinuated: what questions is Wickman asked, how is he presented as

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<sup>63</sup> Biltereyst, Maltby & Meers, "Introduction: The scope of new cinema history", in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, eds. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers. (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2019), 6.

a cultural figure or artist? Any eventual promotional material in the press provides indications of where the film is positioned within the contemporary release schedule. How is *Anita* promoted at this time and to whom? The newspaper archive provides contemporary perspective around the theatrical release, and continues to illustrate Swedish cultural attitudes towards *Anita* and the sex film era throughout the latter part of the 20th century and early 2000s. The national and local press provide a popular critical and cultural perspective which, while enlightening, may neglect other viewpoints equally relevant to a historical contextualisation of *Anita*, which therefore required research into more specialist publications. To this extent the more ‘serious’ cineaste focused publications such as *Chaplin* and *Filmrutan* become part of the source material. For both these publications the bound volumes held in both the Royal Library and in the collections of the Swedish Film Institute were consulted, with particular focus on the issues surrounding key dates - such as the original release or the VHS re-release as a ‘cult classic’. Other items in the SFI collection accessed included the SFI’s own *Film in Sweden* review of the state of Swedish cinema, the short lived sex film periodical *Cinema X*, the fanzine *Magasin Defekt* and the entire run of *Total Film* magazine. The soft core publications like *Lektyr* represent what can be seen as the opposing end of a cultural spectrum.

One theoretical avenue of research that gave very little result was to consult the late 1990s equivalents of the 1970s softcore lifestyle magazines. Star of *Anita* Christina Lindberg owes her celebrity and her screen career to her literal exposure as a pin-up girl in softcore magazines such as *Fib Aktuell* and the aforementioned *Lektyr*. Men’s lifestyle magazines *Slitz* and *Café* transitioned into something resembling the wave of British ‘Lads Mags’ in the late 1990s, combining lifestyle reportage for men with scantily clad (female) celebrities on the cover and in selected photo features, a model not too far removed from the 70s Swedish softcore publications. The British magazines played on a nostalgic sense of ironic political incorrectness - the same ironic distance that IQ Hunter dabbled with - with regular reference to 1960s and 1970s British era of popular sex film. It seemed, therefore, a reasonably logical step to use these magazines to see if a similar ironic nostalgia for the era of Swedish sin existed. A simple, and rather abrupt, conclusion to this line of enquiry is to note that these magazines offered up their scantily clad models entirely without irony or nostalgia and while some mention of the re-release of *Anita* was made they are more perfunctory than containing any substantial editorial contribution. These mentions do however go some way to showing *where* the redistribution of *Anita* was visible.

A study of the reception of *Anita* by different audiences would be, of course, an interesting project but lies outside the scope of this thesis: the audience must remain tantalisingly absent. In place of audience response and recollection I secured interviews with two key figures in the history of *Anita*: lead actor Christina Lindberg and current rights-holder and distributor Rickard Gramfors of *Klubb Super 8*. These interviews were performed in September 2022 and were of semi structured form, intended to provide expert testimony and insight. Through these interviews I also gained access to Christina Lindberg’s personal scrapbook of press cuttings and Torgny Wickman’s production files for *Anita*, containing full details of the budget, salaries and casting. These latter materials are not the prime focus for the majority study, but provide instead valuable production information that will

support an analysis of whether the Swedish domestic release was - in the words of *Svensk Filmografi* - an 'secondary consideration'.<sup>64</sup> Archive material from the SFI archive - Shooting script, promotional materials and press cuttings - complement these items from private collections.<sup>65</sup>

It should be noted that scholarly research into *Anita* and the sex film phenomenon will be used in my analysis as both primary sources, used to indicate cultural engagement with the subjects and to chart historical attitudes, and as secondary sources, where the theories and conclusions proposed are engaged with and problematised. Where used as a primary source the tone and intention of the research acts as evidence of reception and usage: The scholar should be understood to have their own usage for this text, which should be interrogated and contextualised.

I am intentionally avoiding an auteurist reading of Wickman's work. Primarily, as there is a focus on a single text this is less relevant. However, Wickman's prior career, plus his shift into sexual content is relevant, particularly as he is seen to be branded culturally as a 'sex master'. My focus is on the history surrounding the text itself, using a macro historical approach towards the same text in different time periods to give micro-histories of changing cultural attitudes. By following the single thread of a text as it passes through history it informs us how this individual text shifts in relation to wider contexts, rather than simply a wider historical perspective of Swedish cinema itself. As Larsson and Björklund noted this period of history can indeed be said to be well known, but little is known about the details of how this period of history comes to be formed - or how it becomes understood, misunderstood or misrepresented.

## 2. *Anita* - Production, Release and Reception

I begin this chapter by providing a synopsis of *Anita*. I will analyse the conditions of production to provide an understanding of how *Anita* comes to be made, through considering the success of sex films prior to *Anita* and the working relationship between Torgny Wickman and Swedish Filmproduction. The producer of *Anita* overtly positions it as a sex film during production and this vicariously defined meta-genre will be seen to contribute to other interpretations and appropriations in later chapters. A further analysis of the production of the film will consider how matters of sexual content are negotiated to allow the film to exist in the "in-between" space defined by

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<sup>64</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 219.

<sup>65</sup> Items from the private collections referred to in this text can be found in the appendix.

Arnberg and Larsson, in response to the prevailing conditions of the marketplace.<sup>66</sup> Production materials together with reports in the popular and local press are used to show how the film is shaped by economic concerns and how it is perceived in popular Swedish culture. Through use of local newspaper listings, inspired by New Cinema History techniques, the domestic theatrical release of *Anita* will be analysed to give perspective on its position in relation to contemporary releases, and to understand in which theatres it may be seen and who a potential audience may be. These negotiated spaces, cultural footprint and exhibition contexts will be shown to form specific dispositifs for this period.

## 2.1 Synopsis

*Anita* opens with a title card: “Anita: The true report of a 17 year old girl’s nymphomaniac behaviour”. Anita (Christina Lindberg) is a young girl growing up in small town who indulges her uncontrollable sexual activity with the men of the town in a self-contemptuous attempt to find the love and validation she lacks from her parents, a strict military officer and his wife. Ostracised by the small-town community and her peers she runs away to Stockholm. Her impulses lead her to seek quick, easy and ungratifying sexual encounters with strangers, first with a young man she picks up on Stockholm’s notorious Sergels torg, then with an incredulous - but still willing - older man she approaches in the library of the nearby Kulturhuset. Following this brief, loveless encounter on a building site overlooking the reconstruction of Stockholm’s Klara district young psychology student Erik (Stellan Skarsgård) literally stumbles over Anita while chasing a thief.<sup>67</sup> He takes her back to his house, shared with a collective of male and female music students and where he gently rejects her insistent advances. Speaking with his Professor, he takes the opportunity to make her the object of study: “what we have here is something as rare as a genuine nymphomaniac”.

Anita’s urges lead to her seducing the boyfriends of the other occupants of the house, whereupon she is attacked by one of the jealous girlfriends, injuring her and giving her a black eye. Tenderly caring for her and reminiscing about how they first met, Erik diagnoses a cure for her nymphomania: Anita needs to learn to love herself, and experiencing an orgasm is the vital first step in this process. An unsuccessful attempt at self-pleasuring with a vibrator ends with tears, and the sex toy being crushed in anger and self-loathing. This dive into the darkness of her conditions drives her from the house and back to the slums and squats of the condemned Klara district where she offers her body willingly to a group of immigrant drug dealers.

A police raid of the squat the following morning sees Anita taken into custody, where she is placed in the care of the social services. She immediately seduces her female social worker, and stays the night with her. Affectionately sharing a shower the following morning - a break from Anita’s usual feelings of shame and self loathing - her custodian wonders why she uses the name ‘Anita’ when

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<sup>66</sup> Arnberg & Larsson, “*Benefits of the in-between*”, 321.

<sup>67</sup> Thrillingly, for fans of temporal film tourism and geographical literalism, these scenes take place on the same stretch of Stockholm’s Regeringsgatan and offer an interesting view of this area under transformation in the 1970s.

official records show her birthname as Anna. Erik searches Stockholm for Anita, eventually finding her performing as a nude dancer in a sex club - they gleefully embrace backstage, Anita exclaims that she thinks that they can be together now. Erik concurs, stating that his Professor also agrees, and proclaims his love for Anita. They return to Erik's house, where they make love, leading to Anita finally experiencing orgasm.

The couple drive to Anita's hometown in the middle of the night to share the news of their love for each other with Anita's parents. On arriving they find that the locks to their apartment have been changed and the sounds of a party in full swing can be heard - Anita and Erik look through the letterbox, before declaring that her parents have locked themselves in, but unlocked Anita. They drive to a nearby church to admire the architecture, reflect on the fate of Mary Magdalene and leave the church together to the sounds of the Wedding March.

## 2.2 Conditions of production

Before further consideration of *Anita* it is worth establishing just who Torgny Wickman was as a filmmaker at the time the film went into production, and the conditions that lead to just Torgny Wickman making *this* film for *this* audience at *this* time. Torgny Wickman's career up until the release of *Anita* was diverse, and spanned a near forty year period. Son of baptist priest turned film laboratory owner Albert Wickman, in 1935 Wickman, together with his uncle Dr. Oskar Lindskog founded Torgny AB Ellwe-Film, later to become Svensk Journalfilm AB.<sup>68</sup> Until 1966 he produced, directed and wrote numerous newsreels, documentaries, nature and advertising films for Svensk Journalfilm - the exact number is almost impossible to correlate: Wickman himself claims to have made over one thousand films during his career<sup>69</sup>, the Swedish Film Database offers a rather more modest figure.<sup>70</sup> In the 1950s Wickman also directed a number of feature length dramatic films - his 1954 film *A Girl Without a Name* (*Flicka utan namn*) was marketed in press releases as his directorial debut, disregarding his earlier career for the sake of publicity.<sup>71</sup> A number of his newsreel films were referred to as *socialreportage* - social reports. A late example of these, *Det glömda rummet* (Torgny Wickman 1960), was a commission by the Swedish porcelain manufacturer Gustavsbergs Fabriker to promote their range of baths and toilets. It opens with a title card overtly declaring the film a 'Social Report by Torgny Wickman'. Wickman tackles the brief in a poetic, educational manner, yet his script cannot resist offering up the opportunity to 'enjoy the old-fashioned Carl Larsson style' as a towel-clad female model scrubs the back of another, naked girl in a bath tub. Indeed throughout this short film

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<sup>68</sup> Torgny Wickman, *Svensk filmdatabas*, accessed 7/3/2023, <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=person&itemid=62741#biography>

<sup>69</sup> Lars-Olof Löthwall, "Torgny Wickman: It's hell that everything that is profitable in artistic line is contemptible." *Film in Schweden : Film in Sweden = Cinéma en Suède*. (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1971), 23.

<sup>70</sup> Torgny Wickman: Audio Interview: Torgny Wickman Berättar Filmhistoria, 1995 with Per Lönndahl (Nordiska Film & TV Reunion - Kungliga Biblioteket)

<sup>71</sup> Lars Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi. 5, 1950-1959*. (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1984), 380.

Wickman offers the viewer more glimpses of the naked female form than the sinks and bidets where Gustavsbergs hopes our focus will lie. This mixture of competent, workmanlike direction, high minded aspirations and the appreciation of the naked (female) body would stand Wickman in good stead for the rest of his career.

This combination of skill and salaciousness may well be the qualities that brought Wickman into the orbit of Inge Ivarson. Ivarson was an experienced film studio owner and producer with a twenty year career. His company Kungsfilm worked with director - and godfather of Swedish Sin - Arne Mattsson,<sup>72</sup> a partnership that continued into the 1960s at Bison Film AB.<sup>73</sup> Ivarson formed production company Swedish Filmproduction Investment AB in 1968<sup>74</sup>, as part of the “Klondyke spirit” that saw production companies spring up to capitalise on the global interest in - and more importantly global market for - cinematic portrayals of Swedish sex and sexuality.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the English language name of the production company serves as good indication of the international scope of the production company. Their first production, *One Swedish Summer (...Som havets nakna vind*, Gunnar Höglund 1968) became the fourth most popular Swedish film at the Swedish box office in the year following its release, with receipts of 2,374,484 SEK.<sup>76</sup> Swedish sex was thus clearly a marketable commodity and one which Swedish Filmproduction intended to capitalise on, with *One Swedish Summer* exported to over 40 countries.<sup>77</sup> For their next project, Ivarson took inspiration from a German distributor’s comments on a school room sex education sequence from a film he had produced for Europa Film 15 years prior: “If you could make something like that 15 years ago, what could you do now?” Earlier discussions between Torgny Wickman and Ivarson had left Wickman enthusiastic about the possibilities of collaboration, and when Ivarson contacted Wickman with the idea for what would become *The Language of Love* Wickman responded extremely positively: Ivarson recalls that “He (Wickman) was himself very open minded in sexual matters, so he thought this a very pleasing idea.”<sup>78</sup>

A collaboration between Wickman and Swedish Filmproduction was thus formed, one that would prove to be particularly fruitful. The first of the films released under this partnership in September 1969, *Swedish and Underage (Eva den utstötta)* was, ostensibly, a social problem drama of a young girl whose sexual proclivities see her ostracised by her local community, eventually exposing the establishment figures who have exploited her. The film starred Solveig Andersson and is notable for the extensive exploitation of her naked body and sexual situations to support its dramatic premise.

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<sup>72</sup> Mattsson’s 1951 film *One Summer of Happiness/Hon Dansade en Sommar* is the fountainhead for the popular connection between Swedish bodies and sinful sexuality onscreen. See Anders Marklund “It Started With a Kiss: Sexuality and Swedish Film in 1951” in *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution: Critical Essays*, eds. Elisabet Björklund and Maria Larsson. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2016), 22-34.

<sup>73</sup> Elisabet Björklund. *The Most Delicate Subject: a History of Sex Education Films in Sweden*. (Lund: Centre for Language and Literature, Division of Comparative Literature, Lund University, 2012), 168-169.

<sup>74</sup> Swedish Filmproduction Investment AB will be henceforth be referred to as Swedish Filmproduction for brevity.

<sup>75</sup> Larsson, “Practice Makes Perfect?”, 45.

<sup>76</sup> Bertil Wredlund, & Torsten Jungstedt. *Filmårsboken: 1969* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1970), 8.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Som havets nakna vind’, *Svensk filmdatabas*, accessed 10/3/2023, <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=film&itemid=4800#comments>

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Inge Ivarson taken from *Inge och Maj-Briht om Kärlekens Språk* (Andreas Frisk, Tomas Seidevall, Rickard Gramfors) - special feature on the DVD release *Ur Kärlekens Språk* (Klubb Super 8)

The film drew a respectable box office, become the 11th most popular Swedish-produced film between release and March 1970.<sup>79</sup> When *The Language of Love* released a month later in October 1969 it rapidly became the most successful Swedish made film to date in the domestic market, with box office sales generating 5,618,800<sup>80</sup> in the first three months of release alone and nearly 7,000,000 in its first two years.<sup>81</sup>

A profitable pattern was established, with Swedish Filmproduction bankrolling Wickman's newfound career as director of sex films. *The Language of Love* was followed in short order by sequels *More From the Language of Love* (*Mera ur kärlekens språk*, 1970), *The XYZ of Love* (*Kärlekens XYZ*, 1971) and *The Best of the Language of Love Film* (*Det bästa ur kärlekens språk-filmerna*, 1971), all of which remained financially solvent in Sweden alone, albeit never reaching the heights of the original film. This period also saw the release of several features by the director/producer team: *The Lustful Vicar* - a broad sex-comedy farce featuring a priest 'cursed' with a permanent erection of which a parade of topless maidens variously exploit/attempt to cure, *Fear Has 1000 Eyes*, an erotic horror film in which *Swedish and Underage's* Solveig Andersson returns to seduce a priest and his wife with the intertwined pleasures of the body and the occult, and finally the Sven Nykvist photographed historical drama *Lockfågeln* (1971). With the exception of *Lockfågeln* all of the Wickman/Swedish Filmproduction films have sex as an overt theme, while not depicting graphic, hardcore sex scenes.<sup>82</sup> The result of this intensive period of activity is that, by the end of 1972, Torgny Wickman had become the 5th most successful director in Sweden, in terms of box office sales.<sup>83</sup>

Interviewed in the Swedish Film Institute's *Film in Sweden* with the headline "It's hell that everything that is profitable in artistic line is contemptible" (sic) Wickman is characterised as a gaining cultural attention for his short films and his "normal" films. He is painted as a "poseur, whose flow of boasting has a marked streak of a sympathetic, biting irony directed at himself". In answer to the statement that "every now and then Swedish critics murder artist Torgny Wickman in a big way" he responds: "I freely admit that my films are made also so that we shall get some financial pleasure out of them. It's pointless to make a film that is viewed without the intention of making money?"<sup>84</sup>

## 2.3 Production

As previously noted, Björklund and Larsson characterise this era of Swedish cinema as popularly known, but little understood.<sup>85</sup> To understand *Anita* from a macro level it will be beneficial to look closely at the production of this specific sex film to understand what it can reveal about

<sup>79</sup> Box office takings 985,821 SEK, Wredlund & Jungstedt *Filmårsboken: 1969*, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Wredlund & Jungstedt *Filmårsboken: 1969*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Wredlund & Jungstedt *Filmårsboken: 1970* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1970), 8.

<sup>82</sup> The *Language of Love* films justify their depiction of hardcore imagery through a documentary mode of filmmaking: sex educational frameworks are not presented for titillation alone, and as such should arguably not be considered as hardcore films.

<sup>83</sup> Åke Bergholm, 'Inga kritiker ska lära mig att göra film', *Aftonbladet* 19/1/1975

<sup>84</sup> Löthwall, *Torgny Wickman: It's hell that everything that is profitable in artistic line is contemptible*, 25.

<sup>85</sup> Björklund & Larsson, 3.

production and marketing practises in 1973: The process of production and distribution is, in conjunction with what first hand testimony can be gleaned from the popular press, a valuable historical context.

*Anita* - at this point with the working title *Nymfoman/Nymphomaniac* - was proposed with an initial budget of 351,822 SEK<sup>86</sup> Preproduction on *Anita* began in early 1973 under producer Ove Wallius, with financing put in place by Swedish Filmproduction working in conjunction with the French pornographic studio Alpha France, with Alpha France claiming exclusive distribution rights for their French chain of adult cinemas. Wickman's first draft of the script outlines that his original concept for the film was a hardcore pornographic film: numerous sections of the draft include graphic and detailed descriptions of erect penises, masturbation, penetration and oral sex, in total thirteen scenes. These sections have been struck from the draft following his original submission, covered in paper with notes that they are not to be shot.<sup>87</sup> A memo from producer Ove Wallius to Wickman expresses his frustrated dismay with this first draft, and clearly leads to these scenes being excised:

My initial reaction when I read the manuscript was one of violent disappointment. To be quite harsh, the manuscript personally gave me the impression of being written by a couple of older gentlemen who have concocted as many horrors and perversions as possible. A film of this type is primarily for sale overseas. It is incomprehensible to me that our director and producers have not understood that explicit sex is virtually impossible in most parts of the world.<sup>88</sup>

Principal photography took place between 7th March and 27th April 1973.<sup>89</sup> Wickman based his production in Wegersbergs Gård, his rented 17th century estate in Katrineholm a small municipality two hours south-west of Stockholm, into which he had recently moved. Wickman's reputation as an effective and workmanlike filmmaker clearly extended to economic concerns as well: Wegersbergs Gård acted not only as production base but provided accommodation for the cast and small crew during the shoot, which mainly took place in Katrineholm itself, with several days of complementary shooting in Stockholm. The production team was minimal, with multi-tasking the order of the day to make effective use of the budget. Wickman himself was responsible for the script and direction, and contributed to the soundtrack with the lyrics for the opening theme song '*An Onest Girl*' (sic)<sup>90</sup> - he had intended to also edit the film himself for the sake of economy, but was overruled by Ove Wallius.<sup>91</sup> Hans Dittmer was the director of photography with a single camera assistant, and Nils Skeppstedt was responsible for sound. Wickman's wife Klinga is credited with wardrobe, make-up, script assistant and co-propmaster.<sup>92</sup> Dittmer, Lundberg and the Wickmans all appear in the film in

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<sup>86</sup> Kalkyl *Nymfoman* nr 3, 22/1/1973 - Private Collection

<sup>87</sup> 1st draft script '*Nymfoman*', 1973 - Private Collection

<sup>88</sup> Memo to Torgny Wickman regarding film project '*Nymfoman*', 23/1/1973

<sup>89</sup> Memo included in Pressklippings, Swedish Film Institute archive

<sup>90</sup> With English as his second language, Wickman's original lyrics and the original title recorded with the STIM royalties collection authority contain this spelling mistake in the title song: Wickman, 3/6/1973 - Private Collection

<sup>91</sup> Memo to Torgny Wickman from Ove Wallius, 2/3/1973, Private Collection

<sup>92</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 218.



minor roles, serving to keep the expenditure on talent and extras to a minimum.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Wickman notes early in production in a memo to Swedish Filmproduction that his total fee of 49,000 SEK will include wardrobe and assistance - that is to say Klinga Wickman - emphasising his economic savviness<sup>94</sup>

Christina Lindberg recalls that during the shoot they all lived extremely closely together in Wegersbergs Gård, cast and crew, with Klinga preparing food for them all. They would all eat around the same, large table presided over by an authoritarian Torgny Wickman, dressed in his 'Jesus like' kaftan.<sup>95</sup> An interview for Swedish tabloid *Expressen* published towards the end of production shows Wickman strolling arm in arm through the estate with stars Christina Lindberg and Stellan Skarsgård, Klinga at his side, an idyllic image of the film making family. In the interview Wickman boasts of how the French co-producers also approved of his methods, heralding the birth of "Katrinehollywood" at the Wegerbergs Gård: "The Alpha France guys that were just here were hugely impressed by how the costs can be kept down by working like this." The article notes also that editor Lasse Lundberg also moonlights as the director's assistant and, when needed, takes Wickman's two dogs for walks. Wickman's weariness to his perception within Stockholm cultural circles is evident: "after the *Language of Love* films the Stockholm press usually call me 'the sex-master' or something like that. That's why I prefer talking to the (local newspaper) *Katrineholms Kuriren*".<sup>96</sup> This title was clearly a bugbear for Wickman - correspondance between him and journalist Hans Fridlund, responsible for the piece (who seems to have allowed Wickman pre-approval), show that they were keen to keep the 'sex master' tag out of this article - a promise that Wickman replies he is happy to have seen fulfilled. "Perhaps Expressen are on the way to rehabilitate themselves."<sup>97</sup>

The shooting of *Anita* was clearly quite the event in Katrineholm. Wickman had, towards the end of February 1973, placed an advert in the classified section of the *Katrineholms Kuriren* seeking extras for his forthcoming shoot in the town, inviting written responses with accompanying photographs to be sent to him at Wegersbergs Gård.<sup>98</sup> The arrival of the production in Katrineholm was noted with a splash on the front page of the *Katrineholms Kuriren*. "'Pinup' girl to make film in Katrineholm" - leading with a picture of Christina Lindberg and Wickman together.<sup>99</sup> Introducing Lindberg with her popular title "Swedens biggest pinup girl"<sup>100</sup> and offers a brief synopsis of the film - referred to as *Anita* only - before ending on a brief note that Stellan Skarsgård will co-star. A set-visit

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<sup>93</sup> Hans Dittmer appears as the organist in the finale, Lundberg is the object of Anita's predatory affection at Katrineholm train station and Torgny and Klinga Wickman are the couple interacting with the artiste in the sex club scene.

<sup>94</sup> Memo accompanying New Weekly Budget, undated, Private Collection

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Christina Lindberg 6/9/2022

<sup>96</sup> Hans Fridlund, 'Katrinehollywood' *Expressen* 16/4/1973

<sup>97</sup> Torgny Wickman letter to Hans Fridlund, 12/4/1973 - Private collection

<sup>98</sup> Classified adverts, *Katrineholms Kuriren* 23/2/1973 12 - the extras requested are "20 youths between 16-20 for a discotheque scene. 3 greasers, ideally with own cars. 5 men, dark skinned, of Southern European type. 5-10 men of military officer type, 3 party couples around 25 years old"

<sup>99</sup> "'Utvikt' brud ska göra film i Katrineholm' *Katrineholms Kuriren* 7/3/1973, 1.

<sup>100</sup> This is a translation of the Swedish word 'utvik' which refers specifically to the act of appearing in or exposing oneself in a magazine, usually naked. It carries specific connotations in Swedish and can be used as an adjective in way that this feature does: 'sveriges mesta utviktungsbrud' - that is difficult to translate into English. I have used 'pinup' as an anglicised version of 'utvik' here in and in other references.

to the first day of shooting by the *Kuriren* in the following day's issue expresses surprise at the slimmed down method of film making they encounter at the local billiard hall location and perhaps sees the scales falling from the eyes of the reporter expecting a slightly more grand spectacle: "The minimal insight we have into the world of filmmaking gives the impression that there is usually at least a whole battery of people tripping over each other...here are a total of four though: two photographers, one assistant director and Torgny himself." The whole scene reminds the reporter of a "bicycle repair shop" more than their pre-conceived impression of a film set. Wickman's industrious nature and demeanour is remarked upon: not only is he responsible for the script and direction but he also acts as clapperboard, tripping over cables and lighting stands as he does so, and putting together a scene from the "chaos" of equipment and extras: "With the narrowest trouser legs in town since the swing era, he rushes around among the tables so that the sweat drips down him, all the while emphasising that he is not the type to allow himself to be stressed".<sup>101</sup> The production of *Anita* was clearly focused on delivering a film at the lowest possible cost. While Wickman was clearly capable of cutting many corners to shave production costs, tensions can be felt between him and Ove Wallius in a series of memos during production, culminating in a terse ultimatum from the producer ahead of principal photography on the 2nd March, addressed to 'Brother Wickman': "You have a personal interest in making this film as cheap as possible while still being as good as possible. Otherwise, there will be no more productions of this kind."<sup>102</sup>

Although the hardcore pornographic content that Wickman originally envisioned was excised after the first draft, Wallius was clearly unhappy with the much more serious direction in which Wickman had steered *Anita*: A memo from Wallius to Wickman dated 10th May 1973 is revealing in many ways - and allows an understanding of the manner in which Wallius negotiates the in-between space between hardcore and the sex film, and who the film was being made for, something he had previously flagged at first draft stage. "Our film should be as visually-appealing as possible without unnecessary hard-core content."<sup>103</sup> Wallius outlines the necessity for the film to be as 'marketable' as possible to their various customers around the world. He notes that that which is permissible on screen in Sweden may not be acceptable in neighbouring countries Norway or Finland, and that which may be permissible in Finland is impossible in Thailand or Hong Kong.<sup>104</sup> He reiterates that the film was initially offered to customers in three versions, now revised to two - with the customer responsible for cutting any scenes that would not pass: this seems to explain the removal of the hardcore scenes from the first draft, written to accommodate this strategy, to facilitate exports. This proposal was received by the foreign customers as "an exceptional idea, and the interest in *Anita* is also very high." Wallius expresses disappointment following the first screening of *Anita* for the producer:

Since it is a sex film we are selling - the film is about a nymphomaniac's life and development - we cannot make a purely psychological film. All potential buyers must be disappointed and feel cheated. It

<sup>101</sup> Agneta, "Festligt när Wickman gör film", *Katrineholms Kuriren* 8/3/1973

<sup>102</sup> Memo from Ove Wallius to Torgny Wickman, 2/3/1973 - Private Collection

<sup>103</sup> Memo from Ove Wallius to Torgny Wickman, 10/5/1973, Private Collection

<sup>104</sup> *Anita* was not passed for viewing by the Norwegian censors and was banned in Norway for 'violating decency' see *Filmrutan* 18 No 3, 1975, p123.

is therefore an absolute condition that the film is supplemented with scenes that can be inserted or removed according to the customers' respective wishes. I repeat once again that it is not our intention to make any hard-core scenes, but we must show scenes that currently leave too much to the viewer's imagination.<sup>105</sup>

The producer clearly outlines that he sees a distinct difference between a sex film and hardcore, and that the film's modus operandi is to sell sex to an international audience, regardless of Wickman's artistic intentions. Without using the word pornographic Wallius distinguishes the sex film from films with hardcore content. The star of *Anita* Christina Lindberg herself comments emphatically that she was unwilling to perform in anything that she regarded as pornographic - referring to her body of filmic work as "nakenfilmer" or naked films - and was prepared only to perform "Hollywood sex - that is to say faked sex - nothing more than that".<sup>106</sup>

## 2.4 Pre-release

Pre-release promotion for *Anita* seems to be relatively sparse. There appears to be a brief promotional push during production: A photograph from the *Katrineholms Kuriren* set visit was repurposed in lifestyle magazine *Hänt i veckan* - portrayed as a "New love couple", Lindberg and Skarsgård are offered up as the 'beautiful couple' starring in *Anita*, Torgny Wickman's new film shooting in Wegersberg.<sup>107</sup> The following day *Aftonbladet* offers a picture of a topless Lindberg - "our most pinned-up Christina Lindberg"<sup>108</sup> - reported to be playing a role as Anita in the film of the same name by "known expert on filmic sexual intercourse Torgny Wickman", with Stellan Skarsgård "enjoying Christina's well know comforts".<sup>109</sup> The popular reputation of Wickman - arguably justifiably earned - is reflected in this copy, and it may well be precisely this 'sex master' comment he will later refer to in his correspondence with *Expressen* journalist Fridlund. Reading between the lines there is a clear expectation of a sex film of some sort, the salacious focus on Lindberg and the overt reference to sexual intercourse should serve as some indication of what is expected of this film. While slightly different in tone, both of these small mentions insinuate certain pleasures to be found in the forthcoming *Anita*. The actual plot or theme of the film is not mentioned, yet Lindberg and Skarsgård - who were not a couple - are associated in these few lines of innuendo with love, nudity, physical comforts and onscreen sex.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Memo from Ove Wallius to Torgny Wickman, 10/5/1973, Private Collection

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Christina Lindberg 12/9/2022

<sup>107</sup> *Hänt i veckan* Nr.12, 22/3/1973, 6.

<sup>108</sup> 'Vår mest utvikta Christina Lindberg' in the original Swedish.

<sup>109</sup> 'Christina filmer igen', *Aftonbladet* 23/3/1973, 30.

<sup>110</sup> Skarsgård reflected on the shoot in an 2015 television interview: "I was fascinated by her. I thought she was very beautiful. She was also mysterious because she was shy. I felt like I saw a greatness in her that no one else saw. I fell deeply in love with her when we filmed together - she was wonderful." *K Special: Christina Lindberg "The original eyepatch wearing buttkicking babe"*, SVT 2, 2/10/2015

Aside from this, the previously mentioned *Katrinehollywood* full page feature in *Expressen* towards the end of the shoot, showing the happy film ‘family’ strolling arm in arm through Wickman’s estate may well be the largest and most visible item of promotion for the film - albeit 9 months prior to the film’s release.<sup>111</sup> Nearer the release date, and around the time the film was submitted for censorship, the distributor Pallas Film AB take out a plain half page, back cover advert in *Filmrutan*, an industry publication containing both critical essays and trade information, published by Swedens United Film studios (SFF).<sup>112</sup> In the list of five upcoming Swedish films from Pallas Film *Anita* is presented with the simplistic description ‘On youth and sex’: the eventual subtitle of the film is absent from this industry advert.

*Anita* was submitted by Pallas Film for censorship approval at state censor Statens Biografbyrå on the 7th December with a request for a yellow rating (not suitable for under 15s) and was passed on the 11th December 1973 uncut with no comments or cuts.<sup>113</sup> The film was submitted with the simple title *Anita*. The production is attributed solely to Swedish Film Production International AB with no mention of the French co-producer. Two technical remarks have been added to the censors card - ‘widescreen’ and ‘colour film’.<sup>114</sup>

## 2.5 Release and reception

It has been recorded in *Svensk filmografi* that the Swedish release of *Anita* was an “afterthought”, with focus solely on the export market.<sup>115</sup> While the accusation that the film was intentionally not distributed in Stockholm may bear up to scrutiny - it does appear not to have been exhibited in Stockholm on initial release - the comment that this was to avoid the “whining Stockholm critics” is somewhat harder to substantiate. It is however worth deeper study as to just how and where else *Anita* was screened in Sweden at the time of release - should the Swedish release be considered an afterthought? Through use of cinema listings the release of *Anita* can be traced and considered alongside contemporary releases to perhaps give a more accurate picture of the release.

The release of *Anita* in Sweden was a modest affair for a director as successful as Torgny Wickman. A total of 7 theatrical prints were ordered for censorship and distribution, minimising the potential for screenings<sup>116</sup>. This should be considered in contrast to Wickman’s preceding sex films with Swedish Filmproduction: 15 prints struck for *Eva - Swedish and Underage*, 41 prints for the

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<sup>111</sup> Hans Fridlund, ‘Katrinehollywood’ *Expressen* 16/4/1973

<sup>112</sup> *Filmrutan* 16, no.3, (1973), 132.

<sup>113</sup> Covering letter for censorship submission, *Anita*, Pallas Film AB - 7/12/1973, Records from the National Board of Film Censors (Statens biografbyrå)

<sup>114</sup> *Anita*, censorship card 112828, Records from the National Board of Film Censors (Statens biografbyrå). It should be noted that the version of this record currently available in the online archive of censorship records has the word ‘pornography’ added to the remarks. It is unclear at what stage this was added, but is absent from the original censorship card. <https://www.statensmedierad.se/aldersgranser-for-film/sok-i-filmregistret> accessed 9/6/23

<sup>115</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 219.

<sup>116</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 218.

wildly successful *The Language of Love*<sup>117</sup>, 40 for *The Lustful Vicar*, 30 for *More of the Language of Love*, 20 for *Kärlekens XYZ* and 12 for *Fear Has 1000 Eyes*.<sup>118</sup>

On the 24th December the entertainment pages of the Malmö local newspaper *Arbetet* carry the first listing for *Anita - Ur en tonårsflickas dagbok* (*Anita - From a Teenage Girl's Diary*), the first time this subtitle is used. The film opens the following day at the Plaza cinema.<sup>119</sup> A generous 4 column advert features a hand drawn version of the film's poster, with Stellan Skarsgård lifting Christina Lindberg's sweater to expose her breasts. Lindberg, in line with her status as Sweden's most popular pin-up and veteran of 12 films, is the top draw and receives top billing over newcomer Skarsgård. The 'children forbidden' rating is discretely hidden in the listing for showtimes, and the ticket price of 6 SEK is advertised. In the technical credits Torgny Wickman's name is emphasised in capital letters, an indication of his domestic celebrity status as expert on filmic sex. Only one other film is advertised with the same sized advert, *Tom Sawyer* (Don Taylor, 1973), is aimed overtly at children in clear contrast to the explicitly adult undertones of the *Anita* advert. The *Anita* advertisement is notably twice the size of other major American studio releases premiering in Malmö on the same day: the Clint Eastwood starring Dirty Harry sequel *Magnum Force* (Ted Post, 1973) and *The Three Musketeers* (Richard Lester, 1973).

The first public screening of *Anita* was held at the Plaza cinema in Malmö on the 25th December 1973.<sup>120</sup> The Plaza was a generously sized, modern cinema with 563 seats in an urban area of Malmö and ran two screenings daily, at 19.00 and 21.00.<sup>121</sup> The Plaza, by 1973, had found its niche showing hardcore pornographic features: The film replaced the American hardcore pornographic feature *Oral Generation* (Richard Franklin, 1971)<sup>122</sup> which screened at Plaza the previous three weeks.<sup>123</sup> The premiere appears to have received little fanfare apart from the generously sized advertisement in the *Arbetet* listings, and no gala opening or official premiere has been recorded. *Anita* screened exclusively at the Plaza until the 13th January 1974, when it was replaced by another hardcore film *The Newcomers* (Louis Su, 1972).<sup>124</sup>

*Anita* then screened for one week from the 14th January at the 343 seat Saga theatre in Borås, again a centrally located cinema, this time catering to less adult tastes, with two screenings daily.<sup>125</sup> The other films available to the Borås cinemagoer that week at Borås' six cinemas were the Bond film *Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton, 1973), Hitchcock's *The Birds*, Western romance *The Man Who*

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<sup>117</sup> Donner, Jörn. *Svensk filmografi 6, 1960-1969*. (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1977) 473, 477

<sup>118</sup> Åhländer, *Svensk filmografi 7*. 78, 95, 121, 217.

<sup>119</sup> *Arbetet*, Cinema Listings, 24/12/1973, 23.

<sup>120</sup> *Arbetet*, Cinema Listings, 24/12/1973, 23.

<sup>121</sup> Uffe Stauslund. *Bio i Malmö: Malmö biografer genom tiderna*. (Malmö: Corona, 2001), 63.

<sup>122</sup> The synopsis for this film seems to indicate that it follows the trend of films with hardcore material framed within a 'scientific' or educational context, much like Wickman's *The Language Of Love*: "This frank and explicit scientific documentary centers on the current generation of sexually liberated young women of the early 1970's and their bold willingness to celebrate their new found carnal freedom in the most eager and unabashed manner imaginable:" [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3444650/plotsummary/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3444650/plotsummary/?ref_=tt_ov_pl). Accessed 17/3/23

<sup>123</sup> *Arbetet*, Cinema Listings, 17/12/73, 27.

<sup>124</sup> *Arbetet*, Cinema Listings, 14/1/74, 21.

<sup>125</sup> Contemporary records of numbers of seats have proved elusive, but the auditorium is still in use in 2023, and the website notes that it retains the original fittings, giving the number of seats as 343: <https://www.sagateatern.se/hyra-sagateatern/> accessed 17/3/23

*Loved Cat Dancing* (Richard C Sarafian, 1973) and children's film *Emil and the Piglet* (Emil och griseknoen, Olle Hellblom, 1973).<sup>126</sup> At the Olympia cinema two films were screening: an 18.30 showing of *Underground* (Arthur Nadel, 1970) and at 20.30 'for the second successful week' the hardcore pornographic horror *Fuck Dreams/Dark Dreams* (Arthur Guermentes, 1971).<sup>127</sup>

Katrineholm, as the location for most of *Anita*, was clearly interested in seeing the result of Wickman's labours, as well as the opportunity to see the town and local extras in the cinema. The Cosmos cinema at Folkets Hus announced the arrival of the film on the 19th January with the same hand drawn advert as used previously, with the text 'SHOT IN KATRINEHOLM' splashed across the centre. High demand was clearly anticipated: the regular 19.30 screenings on Saturdays and Sundays were supplemented with an extra screening at 17.00 on the Sunday afternoon. Screening at the Grand and Palladium screens respectively on the same evening at 19.30 were *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* (Sergio Leone, 1968) and "The film that shocked the USA" the 'quality' hardcore film for adults *Deep Throat* (Gerald Damiano, 1972) - showing with a Laurel and Hardy supporting feature.<sup>128</sup> This is an intriguing choice - seemingly programmed in direct competition to the Wickman film, and represents an unusually racy weekend of entertainment in Katrineholm. There is no documentation that proves that this *was* indeed programmed in this way, but the Palladium cinema had not shown adult or hardcore films in the weeks preceding so the suspicion remains that the Palladium are attempting to do one of two things with this programming choice: To piggy back on the local interest shown in a film shot in Katrineholm by a known director of films with sexual content, or to perhaps provide a more satisfying, hardcore experience for those seeking such pleasures in *Anita*. This is speculation, but the coincidence is remarkable, considering that *Deep Throat* was not part of the regular circuit in Sweden at this time, having premiered in Sweden a year earlier in January 1973.<sup>129</sup> Speculation aside, what is undeniable is that small town Katrineholm displayed a remarkable enthusiasm for *Anita*. As the film closed after a two week run - showing daily rather than weekends only - the *Katrineholm Kuriren* reported that almost 3000 people had watched *Anita* at Cosmos - the second most successful film in Cosmos's history after Disney's *The Jungle Book* (Wolfgang Reitherman, 1967).<sup>130</sup> Impressive statistics for an adults only film showing in a town with approximately 23,000 inhabitants of all ages.<sup>131</sup>

*Anita*'s next opening in a major town was on the 28th January 1973 at Gothenburg's 713 seat Draken cinema, which boasted Gothenburg's largest cinema screen.<sup>132</sup> This premiere was teased as the only Swedish release in the forthcoming attractions in the preceding Saturday's issue of *Göteborgs Posten* under the rubric 'Monday's Major Films', alongside prison escape drama *Papillon* (Frank

<sup>126</sup> *Borås Tidning*, Cinema Listings, 14/1/74, 14.

<sup>127</sup> Original English title 'Dark Dreams' appears to have been changed to another English language title for the Swedish market to avoid any confusion as to the content.

<sup>128</sup> *Katrineholms Kuriren* Cinema Listings, 19/1/1974, 13.

<sup>129</sup> 'Långt ner i halsen' Svensk Filmdatabas, Accessed 8/5/2023, <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=film&itemid=13009>.

<sup>130</sup> '3000 har sett 'Anita'', *Katrineholms Kuriren* 26/1/1974, 3.

<sup>131</sup> "Katrineholm", Wikipedia, accessed 17/3/2023, <https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katrineholm#Befolkningsutveckling>.

<sup>132</sup> Göran Bjelkendal. *Göteborgs alla biografier : en resa i 100 år*. (Göteborg: Landsarkivet i Göteborg, 2009), 300-301.

Schaeffer, 1972) French transcendental art film *Four Nights of a Dreamer* (Robert Bresson, 1971), Spanish WW2 action film *Hell Commandos* (José Luis Merino, 1968) and finally, a brief mention of “The Danish *Så här gör vi också*: pornography”.<sup>133</sup> The hand drawn image is again used in a prominent two column advert in the cinema listings the day prior to the opening, and an even larger advert on the day of opening, the most prominent on the page together with *Hell Commandos* and *Live and Let Die*.<sup>134</sup> After a week at Draken *Anita* moves to the slightly smaller, but still substantial 684 seat Flamman cinema for a one week run between the 4th and 10th February.<sup>135</sup>

A final run of screenings were held in Kalmar at the Saga cinema, with the premiere on 25th March following a weekend festival of James Bond films. Once again, the two column hand drawn advert featured prominently, the same size as the advert for *Papillon* immediately above.<sup>136</sup> *Anita* ran into a second week, before being replaced with American mafia drama *The Don is Dead* (Richard Fleischer 1973). This fortnight of screening is, to all extents and purposes, the final major screening of *Anita* during its initial run. The film did not run in any of the major towns in Sweden after this point, although there is evidence that prints were circulated for a short while in smaller cinemas in smaller towns - there exists, for example, a single listing for two screenings of *Anita* at 8pm on the 26 & 27th October 1974 at the Bio/Konserthall in Kinna.<sup>137</sup> After this, no evidence of other theatrical screenings in Sweden can be found. This, then, marks the end of *Anita*'s first stage - as a theatrical presentation screened on film in mainstream cinemas to a Swedish public.

Critical reception to *Anita* was at best muted, if not downright hostile. The broadsheet Stockholm newspapers, likely as a result of the lack of screenings in the capital, paid it no attention. The evening tabloid *Expressen*, which Wickman earlier hoped was rehabilitating itself in his eyes, clearly had a relapse. Under the headline ‘*Swedish Sex*’ Lars Löfstrand’s review is nothing if not scathing: “Swedish so-called sex film” it starts after awarding a zero star rating. “Not even the most positively disposed towards cinema can approve of this story [...] It is made by Torgny Wickman and produced by Inge Ivarson. These gentlemen have been in the industry so long that they should know that they can use film stock for something completely different: Making films, for example. Stay home and watch TV instead”.<sup>138</sup> *Göteborgs Posten* are equally unconvinced by the film’s merits: The headline “Just Bad” sets the tone for Monika Tunbäck-Hanson’s review.

Torgny Wickman continues to wander the easily trodden path of pornographic lasciviousness.... The social value of making a film about this pathological sexual drive is easily questioned when one sees the result. The set up is more accurately an excuse for nudity and the old in-out (to paraphrase *Clockwork Orange*). It should be said that those that go to *Anita* to see a porn film will be leaving disappointed. *Anita* is a shamefully bad story<sup>139</sup>

<sup>133</sup> *Göteborgsposten* Cinema Listings 27/1/1974, 7.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Storfilm på måndag’, *Göteborgsposten* 26/1/74, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Bjelkental, 240.

<sup>136</sup> Cinema listings, *Barometern* 23/3/1974, 25/3/1974

<sup>137</sup> *Borås Tidning* 23/10/1974, 16.

<sup>138</sup> Lars Löfstrand, “Svenskt sex”, *Expressen* 29/1/1974

<sup>139</sup> Monika Tunbäck-Hanson, “Bara dåligt” *Göteborgs Posten* 29/1/1974, 13.

Cinephile magazine *Chaplin* appears unworried by *Anita*'s release and carries no reviews, nor does *Filmrutan*. These two newspaper reviews are the sole popular reviews of *Anita* and serve to give a good indication of the critical consensus regarding Wickman and his niche of films, and come towards the middle of the film's theatrical run, appearing on the same day as the 29th January opening in Gothenburg. Clearly, the 'sex-master' branding had been impossible for Wickman to escape.

The public were also unworried about the reviews - appearing as they did one month into the film's release and in only two papers. It is difficult to describe *Anita* as anything other than successful at the box office, particularly in light of its limited release. Over the duration of its main run, between December 1973 to March 1974 *Anita* sold 42,658 tickets, generating 383,006 SEK in reported box office receipts, making it the 6th most successful Swedish produced film of the 15 month period Jan 1973 - March 1974 on which *Filmårsboken* based its yearly statistics.<sup>140</sup> With the knowledge that *Anita* was only screened at the Plaza, Malmö for the final weeks of 1973 it is possible to roughly gauge the film's popularity. *Filmårsboken* offers statistics for *Anita*'s performance in 1973 alone of 1800 tickets sold. During this period it was screened twice daily at the Plaza - a 563 seat cinema - giving a potential 1126 seats available each day. The local newspaper listings reveal that the screen was closed on New Year's Eve, and so the six days of the 1973 run (25th - 30th Dec) give a total potential of 6756 seats - of which 1800 were sold.<sup>141</sup> This means that, on average, *Anita* ran at 30% capacity. Not a blockbuster, but still reasonably solid figures: solid enough that *Anita*, ostensibly an export product, earned back its production budget within the first four months of a rather limited domestic release.

## 2.6 End of the first phase

Many factors, then, contribute to the specific dispositifs in which *Anita* could be experienced in 1973/4. Primarily, the film could only be viewed theatrically, in public theatres in the presence of an audience. The film ran at, predominantly, mainstream cinemas and was released as a piece of adult entertainment at a time when hardcore content could also be seen in town centre cinemas not specialising in adult films: the legalisation of pornography in Sweden in early 1971 saw hardcore material being passed by the censors for exhibition within purely entertainment contexts, rather than needing to resort to the quasi-educational framework of the *Language of Love* films with which Wickman found his greatest success.<sup>142</sup> The programme at the Plaza theatre, where *Anita* opened indicates this liminal space that *Anita* negotiates, with hardcore pornographic films bookending its run. It is released on Christmas Day (a key date in the Swedish release calendar) competing against major Hollywood studio releases, and advertised with a substantial advertisement in the film listings.

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<sup>140</sup> Bertil Wredlund & Torsten Jungstedt. *Filmårsboken: 1973* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1974) 7.

<sup>141</sup> Cinema listings *Arbetet* 31/12/1973

<sup>142</sup> Maria Larsson, Klara Arnberg, Tommy Gustafsson, and Elisabet Björklund. *Såra tukt och sedlighet: hundra år av pornografi i Sverige*. (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2021), 117.



As has been seen throughout the production, efficiency and economy were key - the budget was used as effectively as possible, and the accusation that the film is an 'export production' do hold some weight, both through the transnational nature of the French/Swedish funding and the willingness of the producer to negotiate carefully which content could be exported. The Swedish release should be seen as anything but an afterthought - the film was screened in reasonably sized cinemas, moving from town to town across a roughly four month period, and generated sizeable income bordering on clear profit, a position far from guaranteed for Swedish domestic productions. Production memos have also shown that it was created as a sex film, and sought to provide the content that the 1973 consumer of sex films would expect - non hardcore content that still didn't leave too much to the imagination. The script refers to *Anita* as being a "social reportage" in keeping with Wickman's earlier 'social reports' and utilises this approach in the framing of the content through the opening title card as "a true report of a 17 year old girls nymphomaniac behaviour".<sup>143</sup> This veil of respectability, follows a classic pattern of exploitation cinema, the "square up" in which an introductory statement is made about the social problem the film seeks to combat.<sup>144</sup> This tactic is beneficial to both the producer - who circumvents social morals about content - and the audience, who are provided with a respectable cover for their cinema-going. This device is seemingly paradoxically both derided by the critics for being an excuse for providing nudity, and understood by the audience as an excuse for providing nudity.

It is worth reflecting on the choice of screen for the premiere. The Plaza - of all the cinemas where *Anita* was screened - is the one that is most clearly identified as focusing on adult content with hardcore presentations bookending the opening of *Anita*.<sup>145</sup> The Plaza was situated on the Southern fringe of what could be loosely seen as a red-light area in Malmö, in close proximity to sex clubs, shops and non-stop pornographic cinemas - while still maintaining a respectable distance. It is better characterised as regular cinema that showed programmed sex and pornographic films, rather than the perfunctory pornographic loops of the day-round Spegeln located a few hundred meters away on the same street.<sup>146</sup> This choice of cinema for the first run seems calculated as also occupying in-between space between the pornographic and the non-pornographic, rather like that which *Anita* precariously negotiates, having been conceived as hardcore, and tamed by producer Wallius to enhance sales and allows us to form an idea of which audience they were hoping to attract.

As the audience would have their own set of expectations, so do the critics. Derided on release as both so-called sex film and disappointingly non-pornographic,<sup>147</sup> these criticisms imply precisely what the critic was *expecting* to find in the text and what they understood of the genre. It should be considered then that it may well be all of these things at once - the audience may have just as likely been looking to enjoy something non-pornographic, yet titillatingly close enough to it. Wickman's name, to his dismay, carries popular connotations of being a 'sex-master', and his name features also

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<sup>143</sup> Shooting Script (*Anita ett socialreportage av Torgny Wickman*) 1973, Archive of the Swedish Film Institute. It is also worth noting that the scenes in the Chat Noir sex club towards the end of the film are also referred to as 'reportage' in the script, although their pedagogic qualities are debatable.

<sup>144</sup> Schaefer, 69-73.

<sup>145</sup> As of 2023 the site of the Plaza on Södra Förstadsgatan 81 is home to the Taboo sex shop, which has been in situ since at least 2001 and perhaps also points to the psychogeography of the area. Stausland, 63.

<sup>146</sup> Larsson, "The Swedish Porn Scene", 96-99.

<sup>147</sup> Löfstrand, *Expressen* 29/1/1974, Tunbäck-Hanson, *Göteborgs Posten* 29/1/1974

on the advertising. The film's appeal is constructed around Christina Lindberg's persona as a nude pinup model, and it is Lindberg (and her partially exposed breasts) that feature in the poster as a prime attraction. The audience can therefore be assumed to be aware that this was a sex film, advertised as it was as 'not suitable for children', the tag line "From a Teenage Girls Diary" providing the insinuation of sexual or transgressive content. By 1973 the audience would also likely be aware of precisely what a 'Torgny Wickman' film would offer, and would more likely have understood that it was not hardcore, and would fall on the 'respectable' side of the sex film spectrum. This is a cultural landscape in which viewing a sex film in a regular cinema as part of a Christmas holiday tradition of cinema-going was considering normal rather than transgressive or perverse.

To return to Kessler's interrogation of the cinema of attractions as *dispositif*, it would be worth considering that the same film holds similar yet different attractions for the resident of Malmö and that of Katrineholm. Kessler posited a use of a pragmatic perspective of the *dispositif* in which different uses of the same text within different exhibition contexts or institutional framings would enable an historical analysis of the text.<sup>148</sup> The viewing experience in Malmö for exactly the same film should however be considered different to that experienced in the sell-out run at Katrineholm. The pleasure of seeing the results of a (relatively) major production in their hometown on screen, and spotting the local locations should most likely be considered seen as strong an attraction as the content of the film itself, if not stronger - and at the very least represent a unique attraction in this one location. Aside from the substantial box office reports from the Cosmos cinema no critical audience response is recorded, but the box office returns themselves recorded here provide a clear picture of a remarkable localised success. This should stand as a clear example of how the same text holds different meanings depending on what use the audience has of the text which in turn forms part of the context - or *dispositif* - in which they encounter the film.

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<sup>148</sup> Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions", 41.

# 3. The Wilderness Years

This chapter will consider the period following the theatrical release of *Anita* in Sweden up until the beginning 'cult' revival of the 1990s. In doing so, it will consider how approaches to the film, Wickman and the boom of sex films changed in the years since release, how the film came to be regarded culturally and what space it came to occupy in the history of Swedish film. This period can be divided into two eras: The first is a critical and cultural reckoning of the sex film, Torgny Wickman and of *Anita* itself, carried out retrospectively once the echos of the sex barrier being broken had faded away. This results in a cultural 'othering' of *Anita* and the sex film era, which is seen to be placed in lower regard than other, now canonical elements of the Swedish film heritage by cultural critics and tastemakers. The second era results from the effective removal of *Anita* from the pantheon of Swedish cinema - once placed culturally and popularly as a 'bad' pornographic film it becomes associated with alternative patterns of fandom and celebration. This fandom, inspired by the nascent cult cinema subculture emerging from the American midnight movie screening culture, bases itself on an oppositional view of 'bad' culture. *Anita* is given a totemic value allying it to the American pattern, and a claim is made - inspired by contemporary marketing technique - that it is the "Swedish erotic cult classic of the year!".

I start with Wickman's public perception immediately following *Anita*'s and the concurrent formation of the official institutional history of Wickman's work, in particular the manner in which cultural and critical institutions distance themselves from films like *Anita* and the sex film in general. I then consider a brief moment in the mid 1980s when *Anita* is interpreted in new ways by a new public approaching the film as an object from a specific time period, and a branding of the film as 'cult'. It will consider how the development of cult strategies of fandom and participatory culture in conjunction with the film becoming 'forgotten' contribute to a possible shift in meaning for *Anita*. As seen, *Anita*'s Swedish release was small but economically successful. As a cultural artefact, *Anita* seems to have left little to no footprint following its release - which should perhaps be understandable considering the short time in which it was available to watch, for a limited public in a limited number of locations. At the end of the run it disappears from Swedish screens and is not shown again, nor is it mentioned in the press in any substantial way for the remainder of the 1970s.

Through doing this it will be demonstrated that little cultural memory or recognition of *Anita* existed in the years almost immediately following its release, and that this effective erasure from the cultural canon feeds into oppositional strategies of reappropriation.

## 3.1 Wickman post-*Anita*

Following the release of *Anita* Torgny Wickman's domestic cultural reputation appears to have started a precipitous downfall - or at the very least his reputational decline gathered further momentum. Wickman's working relationship with Swedish Filmproduction Investment AB produced

one more film: again with a French co-producer (this time FFCM Production) *The Intruders* (*Inkräktarna*) was shot at Wegersbergs Gård in the summer of 1974, immediately after the production of *Anita* and also starring Stellan Skarsgård.<sup>149</sup> Somewhat more graphic than *Anita*, this was not offered for censorship or distribution in Sweden and was distributed solely overseas in two versions: one with softcore sex scenes, and another with hardcore pornographic close up inserts spliced in by the American distributor.<sup>150</sup> Inge Ivarson had already understood that profits lay in the newly opened up hardcore market rather than the softer sex film: the didactic sex film with a socio-cultural ‘message’ that typified the core of Swedish Film Production’s release gave dwindling returns, resulting in Ivarson moving his distribution company Filminvest AB into film production in 1974. This production company focused on ‘quality’ hardcore pornography, intending to capitalise on the market opened up by the success of *Deep Throat*.<sup>151</sup> Filminvest partnered with Wickman for his final feature length film - 1977 hardcore pornographic film, *Practice Makes Perfect* (*Ta mig i dalen*), once again, shot in Wegersbergs Gård. This film represents the end of Wickman’s career as a director of sex-based features and indeed as a director of any feature length film: the remainder of his career sees him work on self-produced short films, personal projects closer in style to his earlier newsreel shorts.

### 3.2 The cultural othering of the sex film

To consider the shifting cultural perception of *Anita* it is necessary to briefly return to the original conditions of production in order to allow us to chart the change in the position the sex film held in Swedish film culture. In the mid 1960s the delights of boundary-pushing representations of sex and nudity in Swedish cinema were fascinating a world hungry for further images of Nordic naughtiness to sate the thirst for Swedish Sin onscreen. The Swedish Film Institute (SFI), established under the auspices of entrepreneur, critic and socialite Harry Schein in 1963 embraced the attention being lavished upon Swedish cinema. In 1965 Schein, writing in *Film in Sweden*, the SFI’s outward facing publication intended to promote Swedish cinema, placed great emphasis on the Swedish ability to portray sex in an uncomplicated way:<sup>152</sup> “The attitude of Swedish society towards sex is more liberal and more relaxed. This is reflected in Swedish films - not only through what is allowed or prohibited by the film censors, but by what is accepted by the press, the churches, the audiences and the opinion makers - what our establishment considers to be good taste”.<sup>153</sup> Cinematic nudity is for Schein - at least at this stage in the 1960s - emblematic of a Swedish idea of ‘good taste’. That which may seem irrational, salacious or even unnecessary to the outsider is for a Swede perfectly acceptable and rational. For Schein this reveals “less about Swedish films than they do the moral

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<sup>149</sup> *Inkräktarna*, Swedish Film Database, accessed 22/3/2023: <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=film&itemid=4939>

<sup>150</sup> Åhlander *Svensk filmografi* 7, 250.

<sup>151</sup> Larsson, “Practice Makes Perfect”, 45-46.

<sup>152</sup> Schein characterises the goal of *Film in Sweden* as “to present the creative personality of Swedish films” - *Film in Sweden 1, 1965* (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet 1965), 1.

<sup>153</sup> Harry Schein, “The Swedish Knack”, *Film in Sweden 1* (Stockholm, Svenska filminstitutet 1966), 4.

(pre)conceptions of our foreign friends”:<sup>154</sup> these moral preconceptions formed, however, the basis of a large and profitable overseas market for the Swedish attitude to sex which the SFI seemed happy to market in this way.

1971's redesigned first edition of *Film in Sweden* continues this endorsement of Swedish sexiness. The front page carries the bold statement “This is *Film in Sweden* in new clothes; we hope, indeed, they are not the Emperor's new clothes. Although many in the world still believe that we in Sweden hop delightedly out of our underwear as soon as a movie camera starts to grind. It isn't that simple, even though nudity still plays a very prominent part in some Swedish films”.<sup>155</sup> The same issue carries the substantial interview celebrating Wickman in which he is referred to as boastful - noting that as a film maker he is not afraid of shying away from making film with an eye on profits over aesthetics.<sup>156</sup> This celebration of the profit making sex film was short lived. 1973's *Swedish Films*, which replaced *Film in Sweden* as the SFI's promotional publication, opens with an essay by Torsten Manns addressing ‘The Sex Trauma in Swedish Films’.<sup>157</sup> Manns ends his essay, dealing with romantic depictions of sex in Swedish cinema, by lamenting the rise of the “herostratically famous Swedish information movies” *The Language of Love*, in comparison with Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious Yellow* (*Jag är nyfiken - gul*, 1967). In one moment Manns praises Sjöman for actively challenging censorship - “the ancient rusty weapon of the bourgeoisie” - while in the next describing the censors as:

giving up the battle with the insistent filmmakers desire to display certain sex organs and intercourse on screen...Many producers have taken the liberal attitude towards sex as an excuse to make racy sex depiction without any form of artisticness (sic).... They have a single goal - to make money.<sup>158</sup>

In the same SFI publication designed to showcase Swedish national cinema, and where Wickman was celebrated and endorsed with a generous interview two years earlier, his style of filmmaking is now openly criticised by the SFI.

By the late 1970s critical attitudes towards the sex film, pornography and Wickman had hardened further. Harry Schein seems to have lost his appetite for the Swedish ‘knack’ for nudity. His essay ‘*It Happened in the 1960s*’ acts as the introduction to *Svensk filmografi 6*, the official record of Swedish releases between 1960 to 1969 - the era in which the ‘sex barrier’ was broken down - and laments the commercial exploitation of sex for which *Film in Sweden* once celebrated Torgny Wickman. Writing with hindsight in 1977, Schein reflects that:

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<sup>154</sup> Schein, *The Swedish Knack*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Lars-Olof Löthwall, editorial, *Film in Schweden : Film in Sweden = Cinéma en Suède*. (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1971) 1/71, 1-2.

<sup>156</sup> Löthwall, *Torgny Wickman: It's hell that everything that is profitable in artistic line is contemptible*, 23.

<sup>157</sup> Torsten Manns, “The Sex Trauma in Swedish Films” in Gun Hyltén-Cavallius, Jörn Donner, and Lars-Olof Löthwall eds. *Swedish Films. 1973*. (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1973), 19-24.

<sup>158</sup> Manns, *The Sex Trauma in Swedish Films*, 24.

As soon as a respected filmmaker conquered a new territory it was occupied by a somewhat less respected filmmaker. "Why can't I show what Bergman can show?" became the constant question that could never be answered. All that resulted were films that showed only intercourse, in close up, in different positions... The first of these films was presented, following a 30 year old German tradition, as an educational film, as education can just as much as art give value to pornography<sup>159</sup>

Notably, in this paragraph Schein connects Wickman's *The Language of Love* - which is singled out for specific attention through insinuation rather than by name - as an example of the work of a "less respected" filmmaker. It is difficult not to read this as being written with Wickman as the filmmaker in Schein's mind - Wickman's work is at the very least being held up as emblematic of certain type of filmmaker. Notable also is the distinction between the respected filmmaker and the pornographer, indeed he seems to be classifying *The Language Of Love* as pornographic, using pedagogy as a tactic to sneak hardcore content under the cultural radar. Schein also appears to answer his unanswerable question "Why can't I show what Bergman can show" himself: Earlier in his essay he draws clear distinctions between the artistic and the commercial, between the serious filmmaker and the less respected: "At the forefront of liberation were serious filmmakers, Ingmar Bergman and Vilgot Sjöman, not because of any particular moral courage but simply because "artistic" films were to be treated more liberally under current legislation than commercial speculation."<sup>160</sup> Schein carefully separates the serious filmmaker from those with purely economic concerns, again, the artist and the pornographer. The fact that Schein creates these cultural distinctions between the serious and the commercial, the artistic and the pornographic carries particular weight because of Schein's position as tastemaker and of and totemic figure within the SFI and its remit to support 'quality' film.<sup>161</sup> Elsewhere in the same volume of *Svensk filmografi* accompanying the entry on *The Language of Love* is an essay by film critic Kerstin Vinterhed: *Through the sex barrier - and then what?: Eroticism in Sixties Swedish film*.<sup>162</sup> In analysing the breaking of onscreen taboos in the 1960s Vinterhed notably refrains from using Wickman's name once - not even when referring directly to the *Language of Love* films. This series of films is named only in passing as a counterpoint to the eroticism expressed onscreen by Ingmar Bergman, Vilgot Sjöman and Bo Widerberg: *serious* filmmakers, who are named in the essay. These are the filmmakers attributed in this official history of the decade with breaking the sex barrier, recorded here at the expense of the less respected filmmakers' vulgar, commercial efforts. Here we can see Wickman being made almost explicitly absent in a critical essay attached to the official record of his most successful film, written at a time when attitudes towards the sex film era had shifted, critically, into the negative and dismissive.

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<sup>159</sup> Harry Schein. "Det Händ på 60-talet", in Jorn Dönnar *Svensk filmografi 6 1960-1969*, (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1977), 29.

<sup>160</sup> Schein, *Det hände på 60-talet*, 29.

<sup>161</sup> This is noted by Schein himself as he opens his essay: "I would like to add a reminder: a recommendation that the reader not only thinks about what has been written but also about who has written it", *Det Händ på 60-talet*, 9.

<sup>162</sup> Kerstin Vinterhed: 'Genom sexvallen - och sedan? Erotiken i svensk sextiotalsfilm' in Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi 6 1960-1969*, 479-482.

### 3.3 Svensk filmografi

It is also necessary here to leap forward to the latter part of this ‘wilderness era’ to comments in the 1989 edition of *Svensk filmografi* covering the 1970s, which position Wickman as speculative and associate him with pornography: The comments in the same volume for his 1970 historical drama *Lockfågeln* note that “after this less than successful visit to more ‘serious’ filmmaking Torgny Wickman quickly returned to his niche: Pornography”.<sup>163</sup> His next film was *Anita*, here overtly classified as pornography. An interesting insinuation of Wickman as speculative filmmaker arises from the entry for *Anita* itself:

*Anita* was a typical export venture. The launch in Sweden was a side issue. The film has never been shown in Stockholm. In this way, the producer could avoid what he considered to be the whiny Stockholm critics. *Anita* is also typical in its attempt to make pornography more respectable by incorporating a "sexual problem" as a theme, in this case, nymphomania. *Anita* is a co-production with the French company Alpha France. However, no French premiere can be confirmed.<sup>164</sup>

Considering that this is the record of *Anita* in the respected and accepted chronology of Swedish cinema it is worth analysing the language and tone of these comments. *Anita* is dismissed as an export venture, with a Swedish launch a mere afterthought. While there is an element of truth in this matter, it appears to dismiss the film as somehow fundamentally un-Swedish due to its commercial rather than artistic intentions, a comment that Leif Furhammar later echoes in his history of Swedish Film.<sup>165</sup> The Swedish release, as has been seen in the previous chapter, should be more accurately considered a domestic success, being as it was the sixth most popular Swedish produced release during its short onscreen life - which it did even as a limited release that skipped the largest market of Stockholm.<sup>166</sup> This also disregards any success the film experience overseas. Noting that the film is co-produced with a French company also acts to disenfranchise the production from a ‘genuine’ Swedish context - again as a speculative product intended for a foreign market rather than the respected filmmakers. The rather sniffy note that ‘No French premiere can be confirmed’ appears to be written with a rather suspicious tone, and can easily be interpreted as insinuating that no such event occurred at all, regardless of French backing. This is both unfortunate and easy to disprove - the notes for this entry held in the archive of the Swedish Film Institute signed ‘SGW’ are written as “Information about the French premiere cannot be confirmed. This information should however most likely be found in the Film Institute library”. However, the same folder of cuttings for *Anita* also contain the listing taken from *Le Film Francais* dated 29/3/1974, announcing the premiere of *Les Impures/Anita* at eleven cinema screens in Paris on the 27/3/1974 - substantially more than the Swedish premiere.<sup>167</sup> This lack

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<sup>163</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 140.

<sup>164</sup> Åhlander, *Svensk filmografi* 7, 219.

<sup>165</sup> Leif Furhammar, *Filmen i Sverige: en historia i tio kapitel och en fortsättning* (Stockholm: Dialogos i samarbete med Svenska filminstitutet, 1991, revised edition 2003), 328-329.

<sup>166</sup> Wredlund & Jungstedt. *Filmårsboken: 1973* (Stockholm: Proprius, 1974), 7.

<sup>167</sup> Press cuttings, *Anita*, Archive of the Swedish Film Institute

of diligence results in a listing in the official filmography that appears to cast aspersions on the integrity of the distributors.<sup>168</sup>

*Svensk filmografi*'s cool indifference to *Anita*'s export concerns should be contrasted with the export success of 'respected' filmmaker Vilgot Sjöman's *I am Curious - Yellow*:

After just over a year, it became the biggest foreign box office success in the American market ... In the following years, the gross revenues in the US rose to around 50 million Swedish kronor ... Alongside Ingmar Bergman's "The Silence" (1963/12), no Swedish film has probably gained greater international attention.<sup>169</sup>

It would be difficult to argue that Sjöman's polemical study of Swedish political apathy was actually produced with the foreign market in mind - but it could equally be argued that the wild success of the film in the US had more to do with the artsploitation scenes of nudity and sex in a 'serious' film rather than any American interest in Swedish politics. In many ways, this film performs the same trick that *Anita* is criticised for, of offering pornographic (or at least sexually explicit) content behind a respectable veneer of political engagement - albeit perhaps less cynically.

These comments firmly generically classify *Anita* as pornographic - and offer little consideration to the shifting status of just what may be described as 'pornography'. As will be commented on later, by contemporary 1989 standards the sexual content of *Anita* would likely not see it classified in this way. The proximity to pornography, though, will shortly be seen to give it a certain cachet for another audience.

### 3.4 The popular press

Barely a year after the release of *Anita* Wickman appears in a full page interview in *Aftonbladet*, the headline giving a good indication of the pervading opinions of him held by the Swedish cultural and critical elite: "Torgny Wickman, Sweden's most criticised film director".<sup>170</sup> The interview, while broadly sympathetic to Wickman's complaints, opens with a unintentionally damning line. "Do you remember Torgny Wickman?" - coming as this piece does so close to the highs of his box office successes this should be taken as evidence of Wickman's dwindling popular reputation. He is referred to as having become a "national celebrity" following the success of *The Language of Love*, *Swedish and Underage* and *The Lustful Vicar* - which are noted as having attracted over 12 million SEK at the box office. Wickman protests that he has been accused of being "speculative, and for making cheap porn films" - which it may be argued is not an entirely unfair characterisation, particularly in the economic aspect. He almost immediately endorses the accusation of cheapness and

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<sup>168</sup> It should also be noted that the record for *Anita* on the SFI's Swedish Film Database also quoted this passage regarding a lack of French premiere up until March 2023 when it was corrected following this listing from Le Film Francais being brought to their attention: <https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/sv/item/?type=film&itemid=4922> accessed 11/5/23

<sup>169</sup> Donner, *Svensk filmografi*. 6, 346.

<sup>170</sup> Åke Bergholm, 'Inga kritiker ska lära mig att göra film', *Aftonbladet* 19/1/1975, 9.



returns to the desire for profitability that lies at the heart of his work - and that he referred to in the much more positive 1971 *Film in Sweden* interview:<sup>171</sup>

Quality? Culture? Serious? What's that? Are all films that get support from the Swedish Film Institute cultural just because they attract four or five cinemagoers and have terrible economic returns? I learned early on to survive on my craft. I work just as seriously as all the other filmmakers in this country. That I broke a lot of taboos with "The Language of Love" is nothing to accuse me of. That film has done more social good than all the 'socially conscious' films that have received funding from the Film Institute put together.<sup>172</sup>

A clear schism between the establishment and Wickman can be seen here, one that appears again in a later interview in which Wickman appears as the literal cover figure for an *Expressen* front page report into age discrimination.<sup>173</sup> The front page of *Expressen* trails Wickman as "successful film director, who makes films for less than a million SEK, stopped after turning 65", and the opening to the piece characterises him as having "shot many films, including pornography". In the article, a bitter Wickman rails against the Swedish Film Institute for ignoring his newly written scripts when submitted for production support, an accusation denied by then head of the SFI Jörn Donner.<sup>174</sup>

Wickman, then, at the end of the 70s has rapidly become a forgotten figure of Swedish film, bitter at the critics and cultural gatekeepers that he feels prevent his brand of cinema from being made. Whatever the reasons for his career tailing off, his successful films belong to a brief and specific period that is no longer celebrated in cultural channels, and has now been painted as an anomaly in the history of Swedish cinema, a commercial blip created to satiate foreign tastes. The liberated Swedish attitude to sex celebrated by Schein in 'The Swedish Knack' shifts to an apologetic, embarrassed tone for the 'lesser' films that this sexual liberation resulted in.

### **3.5 A hint of revival - *Anita* in *Aftonbladet* 1986.**

*Anita* and Wickman are not mentioned together in the popular daily national newspapers for the early part of the 1980s, indeed Wickman alone receives scarce mention - his name appears in a one star listing for a recirculated *The Lustful Vicar* in 1981.<sup>175</sup> *Anita* does not appear in any television listings or cinema listings at all. The cultural footprint of *Anita* appears to be so minimal as to essentially be absent, save for a brief mention in a 1985 *Expressen* column on the columnist's life in London. The author notes that he is always drawn to seedy areas, where he finds *Anita* advertised at

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<sup>171</sup> Löthwall, *Torgny Wickman: It's hell that everything that is profitable in artistic line is contemptible*, 25.

<sup>172</sup> Åke Bergholm, 'Inga kritiker ska lära mig att göra film', *Aftonbladet* 19/1/1975, 9.

<sup>173</sup> Sigvard Blomén, 'Yrkesförbud i Sverige om man är gammal', *Expressen* 27/1/1979, 26.

<sup>174</sup> The SFI was founded with the remit, amongst others, of supporting 'quality' films through financial support. A panel of expert judges would consider the 'quality' of a proposed film project before offering support.

<sup>175</sup> BIO, *Expressen*, 26/6/1981

Sven Books on Soho's Brewer Street, "according to the poster it's about a teenage nymphomaniac who can never be satisfied".<sup>176</sup> This changes with *Aftonbladet's Äntligen Fredag* entertainment supplement in May 1986.<sup>177</sup> This is the first issue of the new pullout, previously titled *Aftonbladet Ung* (*Young Aftonbladet*), a splash on the front page notes a change in audience, and that "Young has grown up!", addressing a wider age range than before. The cover lists exactly what can be expected in the new look *Äntligen Fredag*: "Sleazy Rockers, Satire, Punks, Cheese Puffs, Films, Tours, Music, Theatre, Avant Garde, Video, Dance" - A wide range of cultural touch-points that indicates a range of tastes outside of the mainstream, the avant garde alongside irreverent snack foods.<sup>178</sup> The cover's main feature is a mocked up strip of film featuring a lead article on horror author Stephen King, accompanied by a headline for another feature:

Here is the sex film of the year! This year's erotic cult film is not *9 1/2 Weeks*. No, it is *Anita*, a porno film from 1973 with Stellan Skarsgård and Christina Lindberg. Tomorrow TV will show a sequence from *Anita*. Today you can read about it in *Aftonbladet*!

This brief introduction clearly sets up an oppositional position: *Anita* is placed in contrast to the globally successful mainstream erotic drama *9 1/2 Weeks* (Adrian Lyne 1986), marketed at the time in Sweden with the tag line 'The erotic cult film of the year'<sup>179</sup> - hence the reference - but this sees the phrase 'cult film' invoked in relation to *Anita* for the first time, prominently in a national newspaper. The feature itself spreads across pages 4 and 5 of the supplement, with the headline spanning both pages. "WHY I LOVE BAD SEX FILMS - Stellan Skarsgård in forgotten sex film on TV tomorrow".<sup>180</sup>

Written by 38 year old cultural journalist Anders Sjögren, the article begins by tying the piece to a new TV variety show, the *Vaduvill Show*, premiering the following day. Part of the *Vaduvill Show* is a chronicle of 'Kalkonfilmer' - Turkey Films - presented by comedian Steffan Ling with a script by Sjögren, who explains that "Turkey films are wonderfully bad films, from America's turkey: birds that can't fly": one of the films to be presented in this chronicle is *Anita*.<sup>181</sup> Sjögren admits to being

<sup>176</sup> Mats Olsson, 'Jag har minsann att göra i London', *Expressen* 5/3/1985

<sup>177</sup> *Äntligen Fredag! Aftonbladet* 9/5/1986, 1.

<sup>178</sup> This does rather bring to mind Jeffrey Sconce's 1995 list of Paracinematic sub-genres.

<sup>179</sup> Press material, *9 1/2 Weeks*, Archive of the Swedish Film Institute

<sup>180</sup> Anders Sjögren, 'Varför jag älskar dåliga sexfilmer' - *Äntligen Fredag, Aftonbladet* 9/5/1986, 4-5.

<sup>181</sup> A brief note on this: the etymology behind 'Turkey' being used to describe an unsuccessful production is somewhat disputed. Film historian Doug McClelland offers three possible apocryphal alternatives - a long-forgotten Broadway play opening and closing on the same Thanksgiving Day, or perhaps the story of a stage producer determined to attract audiences to his poorly reviewed play offering free performances on Thanksgiving. The third, more obvious reason is that the bird's ugliness and inevitable premature demise on Thanksgiving may have seen it become synonymous with ill-fated ventures. More importantly, the term becomes popularly attached to cinema thanks to Harry and Michael Medved's popular 1980 book *The Golden Turkey Awards*, a product of the late 70s revival of bad films. The celebration of 'bad' film became late 1970s with the midnight movie circuit, and continued in the early 80s when distributors cashed in on the VHS boom by releasing many old, out of circulation films into a new market. The detailed history of this phenomenon is outside of the scope of this thesis but is mentioned here as background to the counter-cultural oppositional position Sjögren is taking in his article. See for example McClelland, Doug, *Hollywood Talks Turkey: the Screen's Greatest Flops*. (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989), Medved, Harry, and Michael Medved. *The Golden Turkey Awards: Nominees and Winners, the Worst Achievements in Hollywood History*. (New York: Putnam, 1980)

directly influenced by the America trend, and coined the Swedish phrase ‘kalkonfilm’ himself, confessing that he “stole it from America”.<sup>182</sup> Sjögren had, in 1985, written a pioneering essay on bad taste in Swedish cineaste magazine *Chaplin*.<sup>183</sup> His piece praised the treasure chest that Swedish cinema offered “For those of us who love bad taste, crude speculations, vulgar exaggerations, misguided social criticism, empty grandiose words, artistic crash landings, superficial explorations of trends, and domestic plagiarism of continental currents.”, referring to a ‘turkeyfying’ process applied to forgotten film.<sup>184</sup> Sjögrens Aftonbladet article represent the first time the first time ‘kalkonfilm’ is used in the popular press in Sweden, and the first time it is used to describe *Anita*, in doing so attaching the bad taste epithet to Wickman’s film.

Sjögren complains in Aftonbladet that he wishes to escape the polished surface of cinema, which no longer provides the sort of social realist education that the underbelly of Swedish film once offered. He longs back to the cinema of ten years previously, where “erotic youth films” were still shown theatrically, and notes that he present here a forgotten “pearl” that both sums up and marks the end of an era in Swedish film. He notes, ironically, how the film lays claim to scientific precision with the square up at the start of *Anita* “A true report of a 17 year old girls nymphomaniac behaviour”, immediately connecting this technique with the “recipe for success” used by American exploitation films. This is an interesting observation, and marks a point where *Anita* is repositioned culturally. Sjögren refers to the original Swedish context, but notes that it tallies more exactly with the American exploitation cinema techniques - particularly interesting as this brings *Anita* into the modes of ironic post-modern spectatorship with which paracinema was being consumed in the mid 1980s. He outlines generic qualities of American exploitation cinema: a trustworthy veteran to take care of direction, casting the male lead with a relatively cheap former child star (with just enough star power to provide a box office draw) and a physically attractive Playboy model, and allow these to perform in an environment and story that feels relevant and meaningful for the young cinemagoer. He continues to explain how the casting and story of *Anita* follows this pattern, with Skarsgård known from family TV show *Bombi Bitt och jag*, Lindberg from Playboy’s “Provincial cousins” *Fib/Aktuellt* and *Lektyr* in a drama concerning the hot social topic of the early 1970s, the sexual liberation of young girls. In contrast to earlier critical efforts complaining that the film is created for foreign markets it is here described as ‘äktsvensk’ - genuinely Swedish. Indeed, it is notable that the article makes no mention of foreign perceptions of ‘Swedish Sin’, films being made for export or of overseas interest (aside from a mention of the French title) There is a clear desire to discover an object that matches the pattern of American cult spectatorship and can inform a Swedish cult approach.

What can be seen in effect here is genre being reassigned according to another pre-established generic pattern. Sjögren see the similarities between the Swedish sex film mode of film making and the (at that time fashionable in cult film circles) American exploitation film<sup>185</sup>. The qualities that that

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<sup>182</sup> Anders Sjögren, Email correspondance 29-30/3/2023

<sup>183</sup> Anders Sjögren, ‘Endast för finsmakare’, *Chaplin* 196, February 1985, 12-15.

<sup>184</sup> Sjögren, *Endast för finsmakare*, 12.

<sup>185</sup> It should be considered that ‘exploitation’ operates in the same way as ‘cult’ as a slippery generic term. For further discussion of this see Schaefer, 3-7.

caused *Anita* to be critically dismissed are reclaimed as objects of oppositional taste - celebrated for grainy picture, occasionally out of sync sound, inaudible outdoor scenes and “badly lit pimply bottoms” - indeed Sjögren freely admits to having taken an intentionally oppositional stance: “I tried to be anti-establishment and slightly subversive. Informative, entertaining and a kick up the arse of good taste.”<sup>186</sup> While references to pornography are made in the text these are freely used together with ‘sex film’. The film is not referred to as pornographic per se - indicating how this in-between meaning has shifted since the early 1970s, now negotiated into a less challenging tag. This approach contrasts with the dismissal of *Anita* as pornographic in *Svensk filmografi* - here pornographic and ‘sex film’ are interchangeable and used to indicate (s)exploitation cinema rather than genuinely pornographic pleasure.

*Anita* is in this way reinterpreted and reappropriated for another mode of consumption. If it is considered that the dispositif is that which makes up the viewing experience then the shift in the viewing experience here contributes to the reallocation of genre. The original release was experienced in mainstream theatrical cinemas, in the company of a physical audience at a time when the softer pleasures of the sex film were being usurped by more hardcore. The dispositif described here by Sjögren differs greatly - the attraction of *Anita* is now not the content, but what it represents: a forgotten film, described as being found on a tucked away shelf in a remote video store enjoyed by a small group of friends. This ‘hidden treasure’ viewing experience is essential to positioning the film as a cult object, a secret shared by a small coterie of true believers. The space in which *Anita* is experienced has altered radically from mainstream cinema to domestic television. This acts quite readily as an illustration of Kate Egan’s “user oriented approach” interpretation of Rick Altman’s theory of genre, that genre depends on different criteria at different times and is assigned by user as they come into contact with a text.<sup>187</sup> Here the passage of time and the forgotten nature of *Anita*, together with its thematic similarity to the exploitation film align it, for this audience of three friends in Umeå, with the objects of oppositional taste enjoyed by the American audience of cult cinema. *Anita* shifts from a mainstream domestic cinema release, into the realm of ‘bad taste’ consumption in the eyes of these users. The dismissal of *Anita* and Wickman by one cultural coterie acts to enhance its appeal to another. *Anita* was not conceived, marketed or produced to be a ‘bad’ film or a ‘turkey’, but in contact with a certain subcultural group its cultural status allows it to be celebrated and reappropriated for the exact same reason it was condemned as being “just bad”.<sup>188</sup>

To summarise this era, it is worth turning to Andrew Higson’s 1989 work on national cinema, coming as it does at the tail end of this period and acting as barometer of ideas of national cinema at that time. In defining the arguments that surround the precise definition of just what constitutes a national cinema, he identifies a criticism-led approach, which restricts national cinema to a quality art cinema (the word ‘quality’ being particularly important in the Swedish context, with the SFI’s formal endorsement of quality cinema) - “a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural heritage of a

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<sup>186</sup> Anders Sjögren, email correspondence 29-30/3/2023

<sup>187</sup> Egan, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Tunbäck-Hanson, *Göteborgsposten* 29/1/1974 13.

nation state ... rather than one that appeals to the desires and fantasies of the popular audiences.”<sup>189</sup> The efforts of the Swedish critics and cultural figures appeal to this tendency that Higson identifies, elevating one form of culture at the expense of another, seeking to exclude it and retain the high-culture as the true Swedish film heritage: “As soon as a respected filmmaker conquered a new territory it was occupied by a somewhat less respected filmmaker” - the binary positions of respected and less respected are set out, and only one is clearly, at this time, felt to represent Swedish film heritage.<sup>190</sup>

Higson however also points the way forward to a national cinema based on factors beyond production, that we should look at the range of “socially specific audiences for different types of film, and how these audiences *use* these films in particular exhibition contexts”.<sup>191</sup> Much greater emphasis should then be placed on the point of consumption and on the use of films, which he defines as “sounds, images, narratives, fantasies”.<sup>192</sup> This latter point is illustrated in Sjögren’s use of the film - ‘fantasies’ should be seen as synonymous with interpretations, ideas that build up around the film with the film at the centre. How a (Swedish) audience such as Sjögren - and he is indeed an audience of one - consumes, uses the (Swedish) film, finds his own pleasures in it and expresses them should, for Higson, equally be seen as part of a national cinema and as such Swedish national film heritage. With this in mind, *Anita* moves to the next phase where the point of consumption and usage contribute to a further era in its cultural life and shifting position in Swedish film history.

## 4. The Cult years: Revival, Reappropriation and Cult status

“Cult” has thus far been seen to be a wide-ranging term, encompassing the small town obscurist seeking out forgotten rarities on VHS while at the same time as being activated by distributors of major releases seeking to capitalise on wider notions of cult fandom - “The erotic cult film of the year”. Cult, while also referring to a wider meta-genre of cinema, is also seen to be a subcultural ideology. Mark Jancovich notes that this subcultural ideology is essential to fan cultures - and by default cult fandom - to provide the sense of distinction that separates them from popular audiences. “To be a fan is to be interesting and different, not simply a ‘normal’ cultural consumer”. He continues to outline how the cult movie scene depends on a self defined distance from ‘the media’ and academia, but that these institutions also provide the “spaces and systems of communication through which a sense of community is produced and maintained”.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema”, *Screen*, 30, no. 4 (Autumn 1989), 37.

<sup>190</sup> Schein, *Det hände på 60-talet*, 29.

<sup>191</sup> Higson, “National Cinema”, 45. Author’s italics

<sup>192</sup> Higson, “National Cinema”, 45.

<sup>193</sup> Mark Jancovich. “Cult Fictions: Cult movies, Subcultural Capital and the Production of Cultural Distinctions”, *Cultural Studies* 16, No.2 (2002), 308.

For Jeffrey Sconce, writing in 1995, this distance was fundamental to the self-definition of cult (or paracinema, in his terms) as in opposition to the mainstream:

The caustic rhetoric of paracinema suggests a pitched battle between a guerrilla band of cult film viewers and an elite cadre of would-be cinematic tastemakers. Certainly, the paracinematic audience likes to see itself as a disruptive force in the cultural and intellectual marketplace.<sup>194</sup>

This chapter will illustrate how just such a ‘guerilla band’ of Swedish enthusiasts contribute to a revived cultural awareness of *Anita* and the sex film. I will consider how the cultural understanding of *Anita* shifts throughout the 1990s as it becomes the object of wider cult reappraisal and reappropriation and is eventually made available for exhibition once again. The changing celebrity status of stars Stellan Skarsgård and Christina Lindberg will show how their divergent careers add to the appeal and commodification of the film. I will then discuss the emergence of a subcultural ‘cult’ audience through the content of specialist magazine/fanzine *Magasin Defekt* and how it communicates the pleasures this audience derive from their taste. It will be shown that *Anita* is positioned and subsequently marketed as a cult commodity both this specialist and popular press. I will consider how the film is redistributed and repositioned as a cultural artefact through reappropriation both by and for a new audience through *Klubb Super 8*’s creation of a fan community and acquisition of the rights to *Anita*. Fan driven enterprise will be shown to have created a new dispositif once the cultural usage of *Anita* changes, and how this once again establishes a foundation for the next chapter of *Anita*’s cultural life.

## 4.1 Return to obscurity

There was no responding echo to Anders Sjögren’s lone voice calling for *Anita* to be revived as a genuine, Swedish erotic cult classic. The actual release information for the VHS video that he and his friends found in the Umeå rental store has proved elusive - his article is the only concrete evidence, to date, that *Anita* was released on VHS in Sweden.<sup>195</sup> It is worth reiterating that shortly after Sjögren’s piece, in 1989, the withering entry on *Anita* is written and published in *Svensk filmografi* 7, cementing the official cultural record of Wickman’s film. A single further mention of *Anita* is made in the daily press in the 1980s - indicating that a vague cultural footprint exists, albeit rather less affectionate in tone than Sjögren’s claim to cult status. Cultural commentator Lars Lindström, in a *Expressen* column titled ‘Now we want to see *Anita* too!’ notes that while waiting to watch *The Singing Detective* on SVT1 he accidentally watched a broadcast of Torgny Wickman’s 1971 *Lockfågeln*.<sup>196</sup> “Of course, you can rent all sorts of useless films on video, but it was a long time since I watched a film as tragically bad as *Lockfågeln*”. In his evisceration of the film, he notes that he

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<sup>194</sup> Sconce, “Trashing the Academy” 372.

<sup>195</sup> Enquiries with Swedish VHS collectors have lead only to the suggestion that it was released on either the Mac Video or Walthers labels, but is exceptionally rare.

<sup>196</sup> Lars Lindström, *Nu vill vi se “Anita” också!*, *Expressen*, 19/5/1989

reacted with little surprise when realising it was directed by Wickman, “the man behind a classic like ‘*Anita*’”. He thanks SVT1 for screening this “miserable product from 1971” with the realisation that is a “kalkonfilm” that should be seen as a classic within the genre - “unintentional comedy is often the best” - this points to a wider cultural understanding and acceptance of the phrase ‘kalkonfilmer’ used here in a column in an evening newspaper. Lindström concludes with a demand that SVT immediately show *Anita*, *The Language of Love* and *The Lustful Vicar* “and hopefully more of Torgny Wickman’s films”.<sup>197</sup>

## 4.2 The star attraction of Stellan Skarsgård.

By the 1990s the star status of the two leads in *Anita* had shifted entirely. In 1973 Christina Lindberg was at the height of her celebrity in Sweden, though *Anita* would be the last sex film that she would make. Following the legalisation of pornography the softcore sex film lost its audience, and the softer topless pinup photoshoots that Lindberg was renowned for were surpassed by the more explicit hardcore shoots in the now legally sold pornographic magazines. The distribution of magazines such as *Lektyr* and *Fib aktuellt* dropped rapidly in the late 1970s in response to several factors: the arrival of even more explicit magazines, the growth of VHS pornography in the home environment and the cultural backlash to pornography led by actors such as the Grupp 8 feminist activist group.<sup>198</sup> Lindberg herself refers to her status as being “burned” by association with the sex films that were being critically eviscerated by the arbiters of Swedish ‘quality’ cinema. She recalls being told by a television producer that “‘Christina, if you go through drama school, then you can come back, then you have ‘purified’ yourself - then you can get roles from me’.”<sup>199</sup> Her eventual acting studies came, however, to very little. Lindberg had entered into a relationship with photographer, aviation expert and novelist Bo Sehlberg in 1974, a controlling character who restricted her career and steered her away from modelling and acting work. Lindberg retreated from the public eye, appearing only briefly in small roles in a handful of films in the early 1980s before her screen career ended. She trained instead as a journalist and began to write for aviation magazine *Flygrevyn*, which Sehlberg had taken over as publisher in 1984.<sup>200</sup> By the mid 1990s Lindberg had devoted herself wholly to this career as aviation journalist.

Skarsgård’s career took an entirely different path. Prior to *Anita* he had already experienced “instant, rock star fame... screaming girls, the whole thing” in Sweden as star of *Bombi Bitt & jag*.<sup>201</sup> He remained focused on acting, primarily as part of the company at Stockholm’s Royal Dramatic Theatre before taking on more roles in Swedish television and film. In 1982 he won both the Swedish Guldbagge award and the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for his role as Sven in *The Simple*

<sup>197</sup> Lindström, in email correspondence in 2023, revealed that he never eventually got round to watching *Anita*.

<sup>198</sup> Arnberg & Larsson, “Benefits of the in-between”, 317-328.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with Christina Lindberg

<sup>200</sup> Erik Helmersson, *Christina Lindberg har fått revansch*, Svenska Dagbladet 3/2/2010

<sup>201</sup> Robbie Collin, *Bergman? He could destroy people* - Interview with Stellan Skarsgård, The Daily Telegraph 30/8/2014

*Minded Murderer* (*Den enfaldige mördaren*, Hans Alfredson, 1982).<sup>202</sup> His domestic reputation and fame as actor grew, and he made tentative steps into Hollywood in 1990, cast as a Russian submarine captain in *The Hunt For Red October* (John McTiernan, 1990). In the mid 1990s his star was about to rise even further, with breakthrough international roles in *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996), *Good Will Hunting* (Gus van Sant, 1997) and *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997) just around the corner.

This results in two entirely different star statuses in the mid 1990s. Christina Lindberg's presence becomes one of nostalgia, her persona entirely associated with her period as topless star of sex films and pinup photoshoots linking her essentially to the 1970s. Skarsgård is at this time extremely famous and well regarded domestically, and on the cusp of global recognition - his career has advanced substantially since his early role for Wickman. Popular references to *Anita* reflect this shift in star status. It has already been seen that pre-release press coverage focused on the presence of 'Sweden's most pinned up' starlet Lindberg over her co-star. The print adverts for *Anita* in film listings emphasised also Lindberg over Skarsgård. This emphasis can be seen to alter in Anders Sjögren's 1986 double page feature in *Aftonbladet*. Here Skarsgård is the attraction, his photograph dominating the spread, and the sub headline teasing "Stellan Skarsgård in forgotten film on TV tomorrow".<sup>203</sup> Throughout the text, and in the pull quotes Skarsgård is always named first. This connection between Skarsgård and *Anita* can be seen to develop in other mentions in the popular press: henceforth until Christina Lindberg's celebrity is revived in the early 2000s whenever *Anita* is mentioned in the popular press, reference is almost always made to Skarsgård ahead of Lindberg - if Lindberg is mentioned at all.

### 4.3 Misremembering *Anita*

A feature discussing the veracity of onscreen sex titled '*Are they doing it for real?*' appears in the Gothenburg and Malmö regional newspaper *iDag* in 1990, in which *Anita* is overtly described as a hardcore pornographic film that had been cut down for Swedish audiences, a film that the author has "stumbled across". "Those that are used to watching films can see here several very abrupt edits, that indicate that 'hardcore' scenes have been removed for the Swedish version". It continues to state that, in the 1970s, Skarsgård played "many roles in erotic films of dubious character - many of these have never even been shown in Sweden".<sup>204</sup> Skarsgård appears, in fact, in three films that fall into this category. Wickman's *Anita & The Intruders* and Mikael Ekman's 1972 *Strandhugg i somras* (which features a naked Skarsgård on the poster). Of these only *The Intruders* was not initially shown in Sweden. Here can be seen a mythology attaching itself to *Anita* in a form of cultural rumours passed along a chain indicating a misunderstanding on the part of the author that the film is substantially more pornographic than which was actually released. The hardcore scenes were only added by the American distributor - something that was commented on as being equally obvious on release in the

<sup>202</sup> *The Simple Minded Murderer*, imdb.com, accessed 12/4/2023, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083888/awards/?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083888/awards/?ref_=tt_awd)

<sup>203</sup> Anders Sjögren, 'Varför jag älskar dåliga sexfilmer' - *Äntligen Fredag, Aftonbladet* 9/5/1986, 4.

<sup>204</sup> Gunnar Rehlin, 'Gör dom det på riktigt?' *iDag*, 23/2/1990.



US: “Two dozen hardcore sex acts - straight, gay, missionary, oral, you name it - are spliced into a ludicrous ‘study’ of a Swedish nymphomaniac.”<sup>205</sup> That hardcore scenes were added to the film is therefore actual fact - but equally true is that nothing was cut for the Swedish release. Wallius’s stern memo to Wickman shows that no hardcore content was filmed, nor was to be filmed. Sjögren’s “Forgotten sex film” now evolves four years later into a role for Skarsgård in a “hardcore” film.

*iDag* once again invokes *Anita* as an early part of Skarsgård’s professional life in 1992. A brief retrospective of his roles under the title ‘Stellan: From cheeky boy to Swedish Bond’ features a subsection on his ‘notorious soft porn career’.<sup>206</sup> “All of these films are available on video apart from one: *Anita - a teenage girls diary* (sic), the sort of film that is rarely made nowadays. It was part of the wave of soft porn that swept over the country in the 1970s. It’s also a role that Skarsgård would rather not talk about these days”.<sup>207</sup> The reference to scarcity adds to the mythology surrounding the film. *Anita* had not been screened in Sweden since 1974, save the brief clips on the 1986 *Vaduvill show*. The writer of the piece seems to be working on second hand knowledge of the film, referring to the Skarsgård as “a psychiatrist who takes care of the sexually frustrated Anita” and “long and sweaty sequences where the psychiatrist - using practical exercises - tries to relieve Anita’s inhibitions”. This description seems to outline more what is *expected* of a film like *Anita* rather than the actual content - it is difficult to identify any ‘long and sweaty sequences’ in the film itself, all the depictions of sex in *Anita* are rather brief: indeed, the author having previously noted that film is not available on video indicates that this description is based on expectation and the content is presumed rather than cribbed from the published synopsis in *Svensk Filmografi*. The film is again presented as a mythical salacious object - unknowable through its unavailability, and one in where imagination is left to fill in the gaps.

## 4.5 From Kisses to Pornography

The 1994 television documentary *Från pussar till porr (From Kisses to Pornography)* is remarkable as it represents an approach to Swedish film history that seeks to contextualise and, to an extent, rehabilitate the sex film, *Anita* and Wickman into something other than an embarrassing, misremembered cipher. An alternative to the traditional view of the sex film is presented and approached with a serious, critical approach to the era that has thus far been lacking - a notable shift in tone. Instead of the mocking retrospective of 1986’s *Vaduvill Show*, TV4’s 3 part *Från pussar till porr*, written and presented by film critic Nils Petter Sundgren, offers a sober cultural analysis of the phenomenon of Swedish Sin.<sup>208</sup>

In the third episode, titled ‘*Nymphomaniacs and Puritans*’ Sundgren places his focus on the 1970s, and considers the recurring theme of nymphomania and women with insatiable libidos. The

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<sup>205</sup> “Buying and Booking Guide: ANITA, Swedish Nymphet”, *The Independent Film Journal (Archive: 1937-1979)*, 76 (August 20 1975), 6.

<sup>206</sup> The ‘cheeky’ in the title refers to his debut role in *Bombi Bitt & jag* rather than serving as a tongue in cheek reference to his soft porn career.

<sup>207</sup> Lasse Råde, ‘Från buspojke till svensk Bond’, *iDag* 21/8/1992.

<sup>208</sup> *Fran Pussar Till Porr*, TV4 18/4/1994 (Nils Petter Sundgren)

documentary passes no judgment on the quality or content of the films and offers no comment, apart from discussions with a sexologist about the changing nature of pornography. It is presented by Sundgren, topping and tailing the programme by addressing the camera in the form of a lecture. *Från pussar till porr* makes use of lengthy clips from the featured films, and shows full frontal (female) nudity. Interestingly, *Anita* is presented primarily in reference to Christina Lindberg and the full scene where *Anita* strips at her parent's social gathering is shown, before Lindberg is interviewed. This scene is presented without comment or context, and is shown primarily to illustrate the content of the film - no mocking comments are made, and Lindberg's interview is the first time Skarsgård's name is mentioned. Two other clips are shown - the seduction scene with two old ladies eavesdropping in the stairwell outside, and the climactic declaration of love that cures Anita of her nymphomania. Wickman is interviewed about his attitude towards sex and is shown in onset footage from the set of *The Lustful Vicar*. Wickman and his films are presented respectfully, and within the context of a historical analysis of Swedish Sin. Sundgren makes the distinction between the "kinder" Swedish sex films being replaced by more or less straightforward hardcore porn, commenting that "when watching these films that were so violently and aggressively debated 25-30 years ago it seems ridiculous because today one sees something that is obviously rather innocent and somewhat comical". *Anita* is portrayed in just this way as a more innocent sex film rather than the pornography with which it has become associated. Sundgren muses at the series' conclusion that he these films may now "sink back into the archives, although someone will certainly wake them again".

## 4.6 *Magasin Defekt* and the state of Swedish cult in the mid 1990s

*Magasin Defekt* was a Lund based film periodical, founded by graphic novel writer and journalist Pidde Andersson together with Magnus Paulsson. Andersson had, since 1993, written a column called 'Cult Film' published every third Thursday in the culture and entertainment pages of *Nordvästra Skånes Tidningars* local newspapers.<sup>209</sup> Defining his version of cult he suggests that to be cult requires nothing more than a cult following, and that the cult object is one that is consumed over and over again. A definition that would it to be taken at face value would also encompass films such as *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise 1965). His editor convinced him that this definition may be lost on his readers, who would immediately associate 'cult film' with "low budget horror, sex and violence" - which proved to be the case.<sup>210</sup>

The opening editorial of *Magasin Defekt* - "The new abnormal film magazine" - in 1995 uses an established space and system of communication - published articles distributed in commercially available publications - to publish their own caustic rhetoric of a battle between tastemakers and the cult enthusiast. The opening editorial pins its colours to the flag.

<sup>209</sup> Pidde Andersson, *Sex & våld : kultfilm i NST 1995-1999*. (Malmö, P. Andersson, 2008), 11.

<sup>210</sup> Andersson, 13.

In 1995, there are only a few ‘serious,’ ‘high culture’ journals in Sweden. *Chaplin*, *Filmhäftet*, and *Filmkonst* among them. There is nothing wrong with this type of journals ... However, my colleagues and I don't want to read only about ‘art’ when we buy a Swedish film magazine. Especially since we are heavily into the direct opposite of the movies covered in, for example, *Chaplin*. Cult films, B-movies, garbage movies. Good, fun trash. Subgenres like exploitation, sexploitation, and blaxploitation. And horror, primarily European horror. And over-the-top action movies from Asia...And so on... In short - psychotronic movies, as they are so wonderfully called.<sup>211</sup>

The polemical editorial sets itself in overt opposition to the establishment with their high culture publications, and goes on to note the existence of a fan driven subculture in reference to fanzines covering “bizarre” film, while emphasising that *Magasin Defekt* should be seen as a “prozine” instead of a fanzine. Interestingly, the editorial takes a stance staking out a Swedish space for cult fandom. Listing fanzines with English titles (including Swedish fanzines)<sup>212</sup> it is noted that *Magasin Defekt* is to be a Swedish space - “this is a Swedish magazine, in Swedish, published in Sweden. A Swedish name is a must”. With this in mind, as a Swedish-focused periodical written by Swedish proponents and consumers of oppositional taste *Magasin Defekt* clearly stands as a record of Swedish cult taste in the mid 1990s. *Magasin Defekt* also represents a step towards the commercial commodification of cult material - the fan activity shifts from consumption of the cult object into fan based enterprise aimed at redistribution and, potentially, profit. The first issue contains a mail order section run by the magazine itself, offering fanzines, book and model kits all tied into paracinema/psychotronic film/cult or whichever label most readily attaches itself.

This first issue ends with a piece by Jan Lumholdt explaining how the ‘cult’ of *Magasin Defekt* differs from the ‘kalkonfilm’ of mid 1980s Anders Sjögren. Staking out what he sees as ‘defective’ (defekt) films as films that are less than perfect - comparing them to the beauty found in the Leaning Tower of Pisa. “Defective film? Is it the same as turkey film? The term is misleading. Turkey films are ridiculous films where people laugh at cardboard sets, crooked wigs, and unreasonable arguments. Certainly, many of our topics provide laughter, but with those involved, not at them. Turkey, no”.<sup>213</sup> This distinction from the mocking tone of the ‘kalkonfilm’ is key to how the trash aesthetes of *Magasin Defekt* differentiate their reappropriation of texts into their canon of ‘defective’ cult film. In this opening issue the contributors set up their tastes both in opposition to a loosely defined cultural elite and also against other factions of oppositional taste. Seemingly paradoxically, emphasis is placed on the cultural capital of the cult text, allying *Magasin Defekt* more closely with the tastemakers they claim to oppose in an effort to stratify levels of appreciation for ‘bad taste’. As Jancovich pointed out, while claiming to act in opposition, the appropriation strategies displayed in

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<sup>211</sup> Pidde Andersson, ‘Varför Magasin Defekt?’ *Magasin Defekt*, 1, 1995, 4.

<sup>212</sup> The titles given are *Black, Broken Minds*, *Bad Taste* and the possibly more speculative *Psycho Babes from Space*, *Violent Massacre Movies* and *Killer Flicks with Spices*.

<sup>213</sup> Jan Lumholdt, ‘Vi har lyft’, *Magasin Defekt* 1, 1995, 47.

*Magasin Defekt* work within the same spaces of communication as academia and ‘highbrow’ film journals.

The second issue - published in 1996, a year after the first issue - makes abundantly clear that the Swedish sex film forms part of the mid 90s cult fandom. The cover features a semi-nude Christina Lindberg and teases the contents: “Swedish Sin: Schwedenfilm special!”.<sup>214</sup> The term ‘*Schwedenfilm*’ was coined in Germany in the mid 1960s to describe any film with erotic content, regardless of country of origin, a reflection of the international Swedish Sin stereotype of Sweden as the national of unbridled sex - here repurposed to make full use of nostalgic connotations. The magazine carries a substantial interview with Lindberg, which claims that “*Anita* is one of our favourites among Schwedenfilm” - for the author, Lindberg is the star attraction, with Skarsgård mentioned in passing. The opening editorial seeks to enhance the author’s (sub)cultural capital by laying claim to expert knowledge of the films of the period:

Those of us who write this magazine have, pretty much, seen all of the Schwedenfilms that are named in the article....Some of our readers are likely wondering how to go about watching these films: Good question. If one is lucky one might eventually some of the purely pornographic films from the 1970s on video...the kinder sex films are much more difficult to see. Actually, it’s not possible at all if you don’t happen to know the right people. Of course, *we* at least know the right people.<sup>215</sup>

This boastful passage points to the relative scarcity of the sex film - as seen, these are more the object of rumour and conjecture than exhibition - and also acts to position the authors as expert cultural gatekeepers of knowledge, expressing a form of ownership over the contents of the unseen film. This literal act of reappropriation takes the sex film text out of one context and positions it within one of the author/gatekeeper’s choice. The proximity of the “kinder” sex film to hardcore pornography is emphasised and commented upon, a strategy which serves to enhance the illicit thrill found in the “outlaw” status of cult film.<sup>216</sup>

The shifting of tone towards previously dismissed films is made earnestly. Texts are now not simply represented as objects of fun or derision but as objects worthy of deeper consideration, even if this consideration results in very little. Jan Lumholdt’s closing editorial considers the impact of the sex film on Swedish cultural history

...this newspaper has a different perspective on this matter, we want, not without a certain pride in our cultural (?) heritage, to present an honest and serious picture of this phenomenon that everyone has heard of but few have scratched the surface of. Because if one delves into these films, one quickly

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<sup>214</sup> *Magasin Defekt* 2, 1996.

<sup>215</sup> Pidde Andersson, ‘Jag - en ledare’, *Magasin Defekt* 2, 1996, 4.

<sup>216</sup> Joanne Hollows, “The Masculinity of Cult” in *Defining Cult Movies: the Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*, eds. Mark Jancovich, Antonio Lázaro Reboll, Julian Stringer and Andy Willis. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 43.

realizes that beneath the surface there is... very, very little. But on the way to this conclusion, one has a lot, a lot of fun.<sup>217</sup>

*Anita* comes to form part of a canon of Swedish cult cinema in the mid 1990s. The phenomenon of Swedish Sin was now viewed, reflexively, with curious nostalgia rather than the overt embarrassment expressed by Harry Schein, and though the subject matter was “fun” it was still taken relatively seriously.

The scarcity of the cult texts that *Magasin Defekt* celebrates is made apparent in a readers letter in the issue following the Schwedenfilm special. Pontus Brandstedt of Åseda complains that “An interesting question (...) is the problem of getting hold of these cult films. Imagine if *Anita* and *Thriller* were released in tasteful packages, maybe with small postcards from the film - or posters - and interviews with actors or filmmakers”<sup>218</sup> Accessibility and visibility are clearly still an issue for this community. While comment on the films in fanzines such as *Magasin Defekt* ensures they exist as cultural commodities within the cult community, they remain still somewhat intangible.

## 4.7 *Klubb Super 8, Anita's reissue and Stockholm debut*

Henry Jenkins' work in *Textual Poachers* concerns how fan cultures take inspiration and ‘poach’ the texts at the centre of their fandom as part of a creative process of interaction and interpretation with the texts. Oliver Carter summarises Jenkins's levels of fan activity in a convenient list, identifying elements which serve to delineate the interpretative communities formed around texts. Within this list he identifies that fandom involves a particular set of critical and interpretative activities, provides a base for consumer activism and that organised fandom has in its possession particular forms of cultural production and practices while functioning as an alternative social community.<sup>219</sup> The individualist strategy of fandom and interpretation that Sjögren uses in 1986 - “Why I love bad sex films” - happily allies with much of Carter's list: a postmodern ironic mode of reception tied to an oppositional critical practice. Where this falls short is in the idea of a community and cultural production - the cultural practices and social communities of cult fandom did not attach themselves to *Anita* in the mid 1980s. Cult fandom has, though, organised itself by the mid 90s into a wider interpretative community based practice through fanzines, *Magasin Defekt* and film clubs and festivals, such as the Malmö based Cinemacabre club (run by the authors of *Magasin Defekt*) and the Fantastic Film Festival (featuring guest of honour and jury member Torgny Wickman in 1997).

In Stockholm in 1997 the cult film fetishist could find themselves at one of Tomas Seidevall's *Klubb Super 8* nights at the K Bar on the hipster-rich Skånegatan.<sup>220</sup> Never a pure film club, these evenings were DJ club nights with a Super 8 projector screening old horror reels as a form of visual

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<sup>217</sup> Jan Lumholdt, ‘... Vid korvens ände’, *Magasin Defekt*, 2, 1996, 50.

<sup>218</sup> Readers letter, Brev, *Magasin Defekt* 3, 1997, 28.

<sup>219</sup> Oliver Carter, *Making European Cult Cinema: Fan Enterprise in an Alternative Economy*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 28.

<sup>220</sup> Entertainment listings, *Aftonbladet* 17/11/1997.

atmosphere - a kitsch moving wallpaper.<sup>221</sup> A family connection put Seidevall in contact with the like-minded Rickard Gramfors. Gramfors had worked at the Swedish Film Institute's Cinemateket as programme editor in the 1980s, channeling his personal interest in cult and psychotronic films into a series of Friday evening screenings under the theme 'Fredagssnask'.<sup>222</sup> Gramfors's access to and knowledge of the SFI archive meant that together with Seidevall *Klubb Super 8* could transition into monthly Friday evening screenings at the Filmhuset bar of curated 'cult' films, followed by an evening of DJs, live music and projections until the wee hours.<sup>223</sup>

*Klubb Super 8* existed initially as a members film club, and also organised more 'normal' screenings for the club members at Stockholm's Sture cinema. In October 1998, with Stockholm hosting the European City of Culture, *Klubb Super 8* curated four evenings of films at the Skandia cinema on central Drottninggatan. One evening - "3D Mania Sex horror a go-go" - focused on 3D films "filled with 3D monsters and naked bodies that leap out of the screen"<sup>224</sup>, climaxing with Torgny Wickman's short for Inge Ivarson's Europa Film AB *Sex Dream in 3D (Drömsex i 3D, 1972)*.<sup>225</sup> The actual nature of the evening's programming came as some surprise to the head of the City of Culture event, who was in attendance, but even more so to Ivarson - who by this point was long retired from the film industry, enjoying life as an estate agent on the Costa Del Sol. Gramfors himself recalls the response from Ivarson, clearly surprised that his films from the 1970s were now being screened again:

Ivarson got wind of this, and he called me up and said 'What the FUCK? This is MY film, you have no right to distribute it' - So, I said can we meet up? And we met him at his office and we said we think there might be a market to release your films on VHS [...] we will pay for all the costs of making them, but you'll get a percentage. And he said 'Well, knock yourself out. This is stupid. No-one cares for these films' - he made them for cinema, there were no tv-stations screening them and obviously there was no VHS.<sup>226</sup>

Ivarson signed the rights to distribute 25 of his films (from his Swedish Filmproduction and Filminvest companies) to the newly formed *Klubb Super 8 Video* in 1999. The initial films that were of most interest to Gramfors were *Anita* and *The Language of Love* - and these two formed part of a *Klubb Super 8* launch party double bill for their video label, again at the Skandia cinema on the 9th September 1999, which saw *Anita* was screened theatrically in Stockholm for the first time.<sup>227</sup> Indeed, this is the first time *Anita* had been screened in a Swedish cinema since 1974, and was welcomed with a warm round of applause from the Stockholm audience, according to reports from the screening.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Karoline Eriksson, 'Filmerna du inte trodde att du ville se', *Svenska Dagbladet* 27/9/2002.

<sup>222</sup> Roughly translated as 'Friday Junk Food', this is a play on the Swedish tradition of 'Lördagsgodis' or 'Saturday Candy', where children are allowed sugary treats on Saturday as their end of week treat: essentially advertising an opposition, deviant position in contrast to the usual high brow fare of the Cinemateket.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors 8/9/2022.

<sup>224</sup> Stockholm '98 festival listings, *DN* 2/10/1998.

<sup>225</sup> Ostensibly produced by the 'working group for 3 Dimensional pornography', this short was distributed as a supporting film to Wickman's *Brev till Inge & Sten*.

<sup>226</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors 8/9/2022.

<sup>227</sup> Cinema Listings *DN* 9/9/1999.

<sup>228</sup> Linda Hedih, "Shakin' all over: Stockholm does itself in 1999" in *Fleshpot: Cinemas Sexual Myth Makers and Taboo Breakers*, ed. Jack Stevenson. (Manchester: Critical Vision, 2000), 217.

As rights holders, *Klubb Super 8 Video* were now in a position to issue their own VHS versions of Ivarson's films, which followed shortly after *Anita* had been screened in Stockholm, in December 1999. Gramfors was also at this time, the editor of *Total Film*, a popular magazine aimed at a mass market audience, positioned somewhere between fanzine and cineaste tastes, and which shifted into more niche cult territory over its short lifespan of 8 issues.<sup>229</sup> Gramfors outlines his views regarding Swedish genre film in an editorial, a position which can be seen in the pages of *Total Film* and reflected in the philosophy and activities of *Klubb Super 8*:

Several Swedish filmmakers and producers who attempted to make genre films in the 60s and 70s were so destroyed by influential critics that they had to shut down their operations [...] Finding producers or seeking funding for genre films has so far been virtually impossible because the "Ingmar Bergman" generation has held most of the positions of power.<sup>230</sup>

This oppositional tone sets the genre film - and by default the sex film - in confrontation with the cultural hegemony. It also provides a clear echo of the rage that Wickman directs towards the financiers and cultural gatekeepers at the Swedish Film Institute in his 1979 *Expressen* interview, and sets out a high/low culture dichotomy within Swedish cinema for renewed evaluation.

The November issue of *Total Film* was devoted to sex and cinema (punningly it was issue 6, the word for six and sex being the same in Swedish), with the cover tag line "All you wanted to know about sex film but were afraid to ask". The edition carries an article by *Magasin Defekt's* Pidde Andersson on the Swedish Sin phenomenon, distinguishing between the softer and harder eras, and written throughout with reference to nostalgia.<sup>231</sup> This overview carries reference to *Anita* - framed primarily around Lindberg, rather than Skarsgård, and reflects towards its conclusion on the contemporary state of Swedish pornography compared to the more narrative based hardcore of the 1970s. Conveniently, the article concludes with a list of 20 films available on VHS, of which 11 are available, or due for imminent release on VHS by *Klubb Super 8 Video*, including *Anita*. Equally conveniently on the page following the feature and offering - in capital letters - "SWEDISH CULT CLASSICS! IN DEMAND! LONG AWAITED" is a full-page colourful advert for *Klubb Super 8 Video's* first 8 VHS releases, *Anita* included.<sup>232</sup>

The press coverage of *Klubb Super 8 Video's* first re-releases provides an indication of how the non-cult enthusiast may interpret these films. Under the headline 'The porno films the stars would rather forget. Now you can see them on video!' the coming attractions from the distributor, including *Anita*, are listed across a two page spread in newspaper *GT*. The piece makes clear the nostalgia value of these releases, referring to them as "sex films from the happy Seventies", going on to emphasise

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<sup>229</sup> All references here are to the Swedish territory version of *Total Film*, published by the Atlantic publishing company under license from the UK magazine published by Future Publishing. The UK version remains in publication at the time of writing.

<sup>230</sup> Rickard Gramfors, 'Vad fan är hög standard?', *Total Film* 1, February 2000, 4.

<sup>231</sup> Pidde Andersson, 'De dansade några somrar' *Total Film*, 6, November 1999, 46-49.

<sup>232</sup> The 8 films are 6 Wickman films (*Anita*, *Language of Love*, *More From the Language of Love*, *The XYZ of Love*, *Fear has 1000 Eyes*, *Practice Makes Perfect*), and Mac Ahlbergs *Flossie* (1974) and *Molly - Familjeflickan*. (1977)- the latter two contain hardcore scenes.

their innocence and contextualising them as historical object - in which artists and actors could appear in adult entertainment without risk of criticism or castigation - presented here as curious ‘pornography’ for safe nostalgic fascination, and skeletons in the cupboard of celebrities like Stellan Skarsgård.<sup>233</sup>

## 4.8 The cult usage of Anita in 1999

With *Anita* now marketed as a cult object towards fans of cult it is worth revisiting the ‘checklist’ of cult qualities this audience may respond to, to consider where these qualities may be found in *Anita*. Once again, this is not to be considered exhaustive or definitive, yet clearly indicates which strategies have been used to bring *Anita* into a canon of Swedish cult.

1. Marginality	Content falls outside general cultural norms
2. Suppression	Subject to censor, ridicule, lawsuit, or exclusion
3. Economics	Box office flop upon release but eventually profitable
4. Transgression	Content breaks social, moral, or legal rules
5. Cult following	Generates devoted minority audience
6. Community	Audience is or becomes self-identified group
7. Quotation	Lines of dialog become common language
8. Iconography	Establishes or revives cult icons

Evidence of marginal and suppressed status can be found in the many cynical references to how Skarsgård is referred to as “curing” Anita’s nymphomania within sarcastic quotation marks - from the *Vaduvill* show to the press releases *Klubb Super 8 Video* distribute, knowingly perpetuating this tone. The sex film, and in particular the didactic sex film with a message that Wickman specialised in is a cultural form that has fallen from grace, and is allied more closely with pornography and the negative cultural connotations that the term has acquired since the mid 1970s. The didactic nature of the film is also subject to ridicule, with the recurring accusation that Wickman is merely using the topic as camouflage to “show what Ingmar Bergman can”. Cultural gatekeeping by actors such as *Svensk filmografi* has served to marginalise and exclude *Anita* from official histories or wider discussion of Swedish cinema, reducing it to a footnote: “Who remembers Torgny Wickman?”. This critical exclusion works in conjunction with the idea of an economic ‘lost gem’. *Anita*, was as has been seen profitable and successful - indeed, the production itself had a remarkable focus on economic corner cutting - yet this success does not form part of the cultural imaginary.

*Anita* in itself has not developed its own audience devoted to this text alone - but is instead allied with a wider cult sensibility and embraced into this meta-genre. Clearly aligned with cult expectations, it is viewed as part of a collective experience of cult consumption, with recontextualised knowledge of what the viewing experience entails. The ‘forgotten’ past of Swedish sin is now viewed with curiosity and nostalgia, soft and hardcore porn is not watched for titillation but entertainment.

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<sup>233</sup> Robert Lagerström, ‘Porrfilmerna kändisarna helst vill glömma’, *GT*, 8/11/1999, 30-31.



The commonly raised association with pornography appeals to those seeking transgressive material. The rumours of expunged hardcore scenes appeal to this breaking of social and moral rules, however the phrase ‘sex film’ persists from the 1970s, and still at this point maintains an ambiguous aspect. Previously the phrase has been used variously to describe a range of films, but excluded (that which was considered at the time) hard core pornography. It should also be noted that this reissue comes at a time where discussion of pornographic and the accessibility of pornography were high on the Swedish cultural agenda: the cable TV channels TV1000 and Canal+ were attracting criticism for broadcasting contemporary hardcore pornography after midnight to Swedish audiences through their channels: this debate climaxed in the screening of the anti-porn documentary *Shocking Truth* (Alexa Wolf 2000) to the Swedish Parliament in 2000.<sup>234</sup> This renewed popular debate perhaps serves to allow the softcore “innocent’ nostalgic cult film to occupy a cultural position distinct from the contemporary porn shown on the cable channels. *Klubb Super 8*’s VHS reissue uses original marketing materials and posters, placing them within a 1970s context, as indeed does the name of the organisation in invoking a once popular film format. The advert for *Klubb Super 8*’s reissues in *Total Film* should be contrasted with a full page advert for Max Film’s release of the feminist erotic hardcore *Constance* (Knud Vesterskov, 1998) later in the same issue.<sup>235</sup> The *Klubb Super 8* offering serves up nostalgia, through its choice of retro typeface and presentation of original artwork, positioning them objects of the past, the Max Film advert sets the artwork on a background of satin sheets, with bold text asking ‘DO YOU DARE?’ before the copy offers a film that “is a movie to enjoy with someone you enjoy. Someone you’ve just met. Someone you’ve loved for many years. Or just with yourself, when your desire tickles your senses”. The Swedish sex film is in this way placed in contrast to 1990s pornography, for example seen in Nils Petter Sundgren’s comment on the ‘innocence’ of the sex film in *Från pussar till porr*, and in Total Film’s juxtaposition of articles on contemporary Swedish pornographic productions with features on the 1970s sex film and the distinction between the advertising material for reissued Swedish sex films and contemporary 1990s erotica. In this era the sex film, and by design *Anita* exists as object of oppositional taste works both in opposition to both accepted hegemonic histories of Swedish film heritage and in contrast to contemporary pornography.

Over this period *Anita* has shifted from an unseen subject of rumour into an object that now inhabits a new cultural position as object of Swedish cult fan appreciation. It transfers from being an object of scarcity - which appeals to cult sensibility - to an object that can be physically owned. Indeed, owning this object, the physical VHS reissue acts as a marker of cult status. *Anita* is not by any means a lost classic being rediscovered, but its former obscurity, status as ‘forbidden’ object marked as “the films they want to forget” paradoxically renders it exclusive at the same time as deleting the obscurity. Knowledge of and now possession of *Anita* allows the Swedish cult fan to potentially occupy the same space that the cultural gatekeepers: “of course we know the right people”

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<sup>234</sup> Mariah Larsson, “The Death of Porn” in *A Companion to Nordic Cinema*, eds. Metter Hjort and Ursula Lindqvist. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 570.

<sup>235</sup> *Total Film*, No. 6, November 1999

once occupied. The owner of the VHS cassette of an obscure Swedish sex film also now clearly knows the right people and entitles the owner to a privileged sense of ownership

The enterprising activities of *Magasin Defekt* and *Klubb Super 8* brings to cultural effect the disruptive force that Sconce identified in the “paracinematic audience”.<sup>236</sup> These efforts should be seen as the metaphorical pitched battle between the cult film viewer and the cinematic tastemaker, expressed overtly so in *Defekt*’s open opposition to the highbrow, and Gramfors’s distaste for the “Ingmar Bergman” cultural gatekeepers. *Anita* is assigned status as cult object not through any formation of a cult following of its own, but through its proximity to widely understood understanding of what a ‘cult’ film may be. An editorial in the spring 2002 edition of *Filmrutan* perhaps sums up the - almost violent - opposition felt by the cultural hegemony towards the sex film. Under the headline ‘Let the films rest in peace.’ Roger Téreus argues:

From time to time over the past few years, press releases have dropped into our email inbox from something called *Klubb Super 8*, which releases videos of films that hardly anyone wanted to see when they were released in theaters. And they often use statements like "The cultural work continues," but worse yet, they ask questions that would make even the most seasoned cinephile flinch. Some examples: "*Who needs Ingmar Bergman when you can have Torgny Anderberg* (sic)? *Who needs Bo Widerberg when you can have Mac Ahlberg?*" Is it necessary to answer? Wouldn't it be easiest to just swap the names? I believe that *Filmrutan*'s readers belong to the category that needs both Bergman and Widerberg, but can do without the other two. These are "*films made to entertain, scare, educate, excite, and earn as much money as possible*," they add honestly, but without any shame or embarrassment on their faces.<sup>237</sup>

This is perhaps the clearest evidence of the voice of the defending side in Sconce’s pitched battle between the cult film fan and the gatekeepers of good taste, and the effect of the disruptive force on the intellectual marketplace where it would very shortly make its presence felt.

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<sup>236</sup> Sconce, “Trashing the Academy”, 372.

<sup>237</sup> Roger Téreus, ‘Låt filmerna vila i fred’, *Filmrutan*, 45, No.1 (2002), 1. Bengt Anderberg was the surname of the author of the novel that Wickman adapted for *The Lustful Vicar*, and is perhaps the source of the confused nomenclature here.

## 5. The Academic Years

In this chapter I will consider the shifting dispositif as *Anita* passes through a period where it is first available for domestic consumption on VHS cassette, then on DVD, special theatrical screenings and ends with the restoration and digitisation by the Swedish Film Institute. *Anita* starts this period as the object of nostalgic cult consumption and fandom, and moves into being subjected to academic interest through a renewed focus on the historical era which produced it. The reissue occurs against a background where historiographical studies of Swedish film history are shown to dismiss or, indeed, refuse to provide any serious analysis of the production and relevance of the sex film.

This section will take a broadly chronological structure, establishing first how Swedish film history had been written, predominantly in English language, up to turn of the millennium, at the same time *Anita* is being redistributed, elaborating on earlier mentions in *Svensk Filmografi* and Harry Schein's retrospective dismissals of the "less respected filmmakers".<sup>238</sup> This is then placed into context through an appraisal of the rise of cultural studies approaches towards Cult Studies and Fan Studies, and how the development of these disciplines allows for new critical and academic approaches, coincidental with the recirculation of films seen to have been overlooked in historiographical work on Swedish film heritage. Following from this there will be a brief discussion of how the new rights holders of *Anita* begin to screen this and other related films in newer contexts, as part of retrospectives on long held ideas of Swedish Sin, together with Christina Lindberg whose cult status grows throughout this period. This is followed to an overview of a new wave of Swedish scholars who adopt a transdisciplinary approach encompassing cultural studies, pornography studies and cinema studies to engage with and reassess the film and the topic of the sex film itself as a historical phenomenon, and to revisit the position of this contested meta-genre in Swedish film history.

At this point in the chronology *Anita* is shown in new contexts as part of film festivals and retrospectives, and it will be seen that with increased visibility a once forgotten - or at the very least misremembered - film becomes remembered, reassessed and possibly plagiarised: the remarkable similarity between *Anita* and Lars von Trier's 2013 *Nymphomaniac* is noted. While the focus of this thesis has thus far been on the Swedish cultural history of *Anita* it is worthwhile at this point reflecting on how the renewed visibility of the film related to *Nymphomaniac* in conjunction with new academic perspectives on the sex film era leads in turn to a new international perspective on *Anita*. Two scholarly articles by non-Swedish authors referencing *Anita* are offered both as primary sources - evidence of *Anita's* reassessed position as a cultural reference point and a shift in international notions of Swedish Sin - and as secondary sources, in which the content of the articles is analysed and contextualised. Finally, at the end of this chronology, the Swedish Film Institute restore and digitise *Anita* in 2021.

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<sup>238</sup> Schein, *Det Hände på 60-talet*, 29.

## 5.1 Swedish film history at the Millennium

It has been seen earlier that *Anita* and the period of the sex film have been dismissed in earlier filmographies and form a contested popular cultural memory of the era. Fans of oppositional taste have to some extent based their appreciation and appropriation of *Anita* on this outcast the status that this hegemonic dismissal has lent it and other texts. By returning to Leif Furhammar's comments on Swedish film production in the 1970s consideration can be given to the tone and approach of histories of Swedish cinema in circulation at the time immediately following *Anita's* reissue and recirculation in 1999, and how this will be seen to be in contrast to academic approaches which follow.

The preface to the Swedish Cinema section of the English language *Guide to the Cinema of Sweden and Finland*, published in 2000, gives a rather telling overview of the state of Swedish film history at the turn of the millennium:

Swedish Cinema is both well known and unknown to a foreign audience and scholars from other countries. Most people interested in film and film history are probably acquainted with names such as Ingmar Bergman, Victor Sjöström, Alf Sjöberg and perhaps a few others. Most of what has been written in English concerns these internationally established directors and their works.<sup>239</sup>

As author Per Olov Qvist rightly points out, for the English speaking scholar of cinema there existed at this point in time rather few serious publications on the history of the Swedish Cinema. The linguistic barrier to the study of Swedish cinema in English is noted by Qvist, with the existence of subtitled prints identified as the greatest obstacle to overcome for the non-Swedish speaker.<sup>240</sup> He also identifies a problem common to many histories of Swedish cinema to date, which take particularly narrow perspective, allocating status of "high art" to certain names and films at the expense of the rest of the industry: "The primary aim of film historians should not be to hand out gold stars to the best pupils in the classroom."<sup>241</sup>

Leif Furhammar's Swedish-language *Filmen i Sverige* stands as an example of this. A widely regarded publication, commissioned to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Swedish Film Institute, Furhammar's introductory chapter makes the argument that a broad representative overview of the Swedish film history has to date been lacking, a lack that has a negative effect on academic study of Swedish cinema, and one which Furhammar clearly intends to redress with his book. However, Furhammar concludes his introduction by pinning a metaphorical gold star to the chest of Ingmar Bergman: "Ingmar Bergman's significance as a filmmaker is far greater than the volume of text devoted to him in this book suggests. [...] Fortunately, there is a lot written about Ingmar Bergman

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<sup>239</sup> Per Olov Qvist, "Swedish Cinema" in *Guide to the Cinema of Sweden and Finland*, Per Olov Qvist, and Peter von Bagh. (Westport: Greenwood, 2000), 3.

<sup>240</sup> For context, it is worth recalling that Qvist writes at the same time as the DVD is starting to make roads into the domestic market, with its ability to carry subtitle tracks in several languages.

<sup>241</sup> Qvist, "Swedish Cinema" 3.

elsewhere: in the Swedish Film Institute's library, there are about five metres of shelves dedicated to him.”<sup>242</sup> In contrast to the five metre’s-worth of Bergman based text in the SFI library, Furhammar devotes three paragraphs of his 380 page tome to the phenomenon of the sex film.<sup>243</sup> Furhammar’s stated desire in his introduction to provide a “broad representative overview” does not apply to the “more or less advanced pornography ... produced almost exclusively for the foreign market” even though, as he states, this represents approximately twenty percent of *all* Swedish film production in the 1970s. With a few brief strokes an entire aspect of Swedish film history is dismissed as “odd categories” that Furhammar overtly dismisses, “The production that remained after excluding these odd categories was therefore far less than any corresponding period during the sound film era” - an interesting statement that perhaps may well be mirrored in other periods, were twenty percent of all productions ignored.<sup>244</sup> Furhammar’s tone echoes and reinforces the dismissive comments on *Anita* in *Svensk Filmografi*.<sup>245</sup>

Film writer and historian Peter Cowie’s 1985 *Swedish Cinema* unites both Furhammar and Qvist in their ambivalence - “one of a few general studies in English, unfortunately rather shallow”.<sup>246</sup> Cowie’s 1992 English language history *Scandinavian Cinema* spends much of its time discussing Sweden in an appraisal of the Golden Age of Swedish cinema, before canonising Ingmar Bergman and framing post 1950s Swedish cinema against his achievements.<sup>247</sup> Going one step further than Furhammar, Cowie devotes none of his text to the relevance of the sex film or pornography to the history of Swedish film. A brief nod to the (not so) erotic content of *I am Curious Yellow* is as close an acknowledgement as Cowie offers. Again, the history of Swedish film is constructed in relation to the totemic genius of Bergman.

Swedish cinema is once again collectivised with its Nordic neighbours in 1998’s *Nordic National Cinemas*, an English language series offering an exploration of each of the Nordic nations’ production, audience and socio-political contexts, with Tytti Soila contributing the section on the Swedish national cinema.<sup>248</sup> Her chapter is more substantial than Cowie’s work and places particular emphasis on the role of the Swedish Film Institute, but once again toes the same line as Cowie and Furhammar in seeing the success of the sex film as a brief footnote to history. In the section titled “*To the bottom?*” Soila appears to share Furhammar’s view of the 1970s as a cultural low point for Swedish cinema in which she spends few sentences noting the boom of “pornographic movies” following the abolition of censorship laws, and repeats Furhammar’s statistic that pornographic productions made up 20 per cent of Swedish film production in the 1970s, omitting the ‘more or less

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<sup>242</sup> Furhammar, 8.

<sup>243</sup> Furhammar, 328-329.

<sup>244</sup> Furhammar, 329.

<sup>245</sup> At the time of writing in 2023 the library of the Swedish Film Institute held 7 copies of *Filmen i Sverige*, two of which are reserved as course literature for the Stockholm University department of Cinema Studies. Not quite five metres of shelf space, but an indication of the importance of the text to the study of Swedish cinema.

<sup>246</sup> Qvist & von Bagh, *Guide to the Cinema of Sweden and Finland*, 200.

<sup>247</sup> Peter Cowie, and Françoise Buquet. *Scandinavian Cinema: a Survey of the Films and Film-Makers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden*. (London: Tantivy press on behalf of “Scandinavian Films” - Nordic Cinema/Cinéma Nordique, 1992), 136-157.

<sup>248</sup> Tytti Soila, “Sweden” in *Nordic National Cinemas*, Gunnar Iverson, Astrid Soderbergh Widding, and Tytti Soila. (London: Routledge, 1998), 142-232.

advanced' waiver. However, of the seven references to 'eroticism' in the book's subject index, not one refers to a named sex or pornographic film (Indeed, no Swedish sex film is named anywhere in her text). Soila does note however the importance of the popular sex film for the "embarrassing fact" that the popularity of pornography and foreign films were ironically responsible for the funding of 'quality films', the SFI being funded entirely by a tax on ticket sales.<sup>249</sup>

The tone and narrow perspective of the Swedish texts was echoed in the sparse English language scholarly texts, that Qvist rightly notes also lionise certain genres and talents over others. Qvist's English language overview of Swedish cinema's key films and figures in *Guide to the Cinema of Sweden and Finland* clearly makes some effort to provide a more objective overview of the history, while still reluctant to stray from the established consensus. His opening introduction provides another summary of the timeline of and key events in Swedish cinema, noting in a paragraph that the dropping of the barricades of censorship led to a rise in the "Schwedenfilm": "These soft-core films became virtually a cliché but generally did good business in the export market. A few so-called educational films about the 'language of love' as the titles usually read did very well in both domestic and foreign markets".<sup>250</sup> (This comment is made without reference to Wickman's *The Language of Love* itself). Qvist notes that the films gradually developed into hard-core, and notes that the "sex film" had all but disappeared by the 1980s. Qvist distinguishes between the soft and hard core, and refrains from using 'pornographic', instead reverting to the much milder sex film. While the cultural relevance or details of this era are not enhanced upon, there is a more nuanced tone towards the content of the sex film that differs from previous dismissal of such films as pornography.

While far from exhaustive, this brief overview is intended to act as a rough barometer of the various schools of Swedish film history as the 20th century ended, concurrently with *Klubb Super 8* reviving and reissuing *Anita* and other sex films. Bolstered by accounts such as *Svensk Filmografi* and the musings of Harry Schein a consensus had been reached as to the accepted history of the Swedish cinema, with little deviation from this into genres or directors outside of the generally accepted canon. The sex film, excluded as it was, had become little understood either as cultural or historical phenomenon, existed as the subject of hearsay and rumour and was, prior to fan based enterprise, to all extents and purposes unseeable.

## 5.2 The rise of academic trash

Mariah Larsson, whose research interests lie at the convergence of pornography and cinema studies, contests that the hegemonic Swedish view of pornography was one of resistance throughout the 1980s and 90s, tailing off in the early 2000s.<sup>251</sup> The arrival of queer theory into the Swedish academic discourse in the 1990s (Larsson cites Don Kulick and Tiina Rosenberg as key influences) allows for an alternative view on pornography and sexual content to gain credence within academia.

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<sup>249</sup> Soila, "Sweden", 222.

<sup>250</sup> Qvist, "Swedish Cinema", 16.

<sup>251</sup> Larsson, "The Death of Porn", 572.

The status of *Anita* and the wider sex film as ‘pornographic’ is still a contested and unclear label. This label has up until this point served to categorise it as an object of little cultural worth, sidelined by the hegemonic negative connotations of the category. The gradual legitimising of pornography studies should therefore be seen as one of the factors that will gradually bring the sex film within the scope of scholarly study.

As seen, the 1990s saw a rise in the study of hitherto culturally derided objects. It is tempting to see Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers* as the root of a shift towards studies of fan culture the subjects of their fandom - indeed, the influence of his book is difficult to overstate, cited as it is in many of the ensuing publications where the author cites Jenkins’s work as a direct influence.<sup>252</sup> Sconce’s *Trashing the Academy* not only provides his broad catch all definition of paracinema/trash cinema, but discusses how the low cultural object had, by 1995, started to make in-roads into the academy inspired by the growth in cultural studies: “many students now pursuing an advanced degree in film began as fans of exploitation genres such as horror and science fiction. Some students retain their interest in trash culture as a secret, guilty pleasure. Others, however, increasingly seek to focus their work on these previously marginalised and debased forms of cinema.”<sup>253</sup> Sconce describes the struggle for the trash fan to transfer to legitimate scholar, with students trapped between the fan-based activities (the fanzines, the film societies, the swapping of pirated VHS copies) and institutional discourses. This nascent arrival of paracinema into the academy - trashing the academy - results in texts where the author orientates their research around their tastes, inserting themselves and the objects of their fandom into their work. This is the trap that IQ Hunter has been shown to fall into in his 1997 *Beaver Las Vegas*, overtly writing his academic calling card essay centred around his tastes and identity. It is one that Schaefer avoids with his groundbreaking 1999 survey of the history of the American exploitation film. Schaefer notes the status of the relationship between the academy and what is now termed ‘cult’ in his introduction, which clearly echoes the relation of Swedish historians to the sex(ploitation) film.

Histories of the motion picture passed them (American exploitation films) by. Their current position as part of the ‘bad film’ cult accords them the status of curiosity at best, continued dismissal at worst. These factors contribute to the relative lack of prior research on exploitation films, academic or otherwise [...] how does one investigate a phenomenon that is little more than a shadow?<sup>254</sup>

This is precisely the predicament in which the Swedish sex film had found itself by 1999. Dismissed as an historical anomaly it had become instead the subject of cult fandom. The films themselves had been reduced to shadowy hearsay, objects of rumour rather than discussion or research. It is perhaps serendipity that the growth in academic interest in cult film and cult subcultures coincides with the subculture formed around Swedish cult taking control of the rights of and redistributing the subjects of their fandom.

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<sup>252</sup> eg. Jancovich, *Cult Fictions*, 307.

<sup>253</sup> Sconce, *Trashing the Academy*, 377.

<sup>254</sup> Schaefer, 9.

## 5.3 Lindberg's revival as cult celebrity

Christina Lindberg had enjoyed a status as a minor figure of cult fandom for some time, both in Sweden for her pinup career and 'nakenfilmer', as evidenced in *Magasin Defekt*, and for many non-Swedish cult fans who focused on her role as Madelaine/Frigga in Bo Arne Vibenius's *Thriller* (1974).<sup>255</sup> Vibenius's rape revenge exploitation film gained further cult currency and wider exposure when the character of Frigga (or at least the distinctive eye patch that she wears) was cited by Quentin Tarantino as the inspiration for Daryl Hannah's one-eyed assassin Elle Driver in his *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003) and *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (2004). Hannah recalls that the source for this character detail was a "Swedish porn film for my patch. I think he (Tarantino) gave me that on videotape."<sup>256</sup> (*Thriller* was released in two versions, one with intercut hardcore scenes and one without). Tarantino's bricolage reappropriation of his many cult and exploitation influences for these films results in an oft-recited connection between Lindberg and Tarantino, with her character referred to in the Swedish press as, for example, "inspired Tarantino to make Uma Thurman's character in *Kill Bill* one eyed"<sup>257</sup> or "inspired Quentin Tarantino to make the critically praised *Kill Bill*".<sup>258</sup>

This growth in the cult capital of Lindberg coincides with a change in her personal circumstances. Her partner Bo Sehlberg, who restricted her film career, passed away in 2004, roughly the same time that *Klubb Super 8*'s Rickard Gramfors and Tomas Seideval are put in contact with Lindberg through mutual acquaintances, seeking to record an interview for their planned DVD release of *Anita*, which in turn lead to a working friendship between Gramfors and Lindberg. One of the earliest results following this collaboration was an April 2006 event held at the American Cinematheque at the Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles. Gramfors, in his "day job" within the film industry had come into contact with programmer Chris Dee at the Cinematheque, and together created the 'I Am Curious Sweden' event, a short program of films promoted under the banner of Swedish Sin.<sup>259</sup> A triple bill of films starring Lindberg were programmed - *Exposed* (*Exponerade*, Gustav Wiklund 1971), *Thriller* and *Anita* - and Lindberg, now free from her restrictive relationship, was invited to attend together with Inge Ivarson. The event was promoted in Los Angeles by the Swedish Embassy and the Swedish Institute, although funding for the event was scarce. Gramfors recalls that, with Tarantino having been so open about the influence of *Thriller* on *Kill Bill* it was worth contacting Tarantino's personal assistant explaining the situation "And the next day, lo and behold, I got an email back saying 'Quentin is so excited - where do you want us to send the cheque?'"<sup>260</sup> Tarantino himself was unable to attend, being occupied with the QT Fest film festival in Austin, Texas - but did request that the prints be forwarded to him for a private screening. The screening itself - which was the first

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<sup>255</sup> The character is named Madelaine in the original Swedish, renamed Frigga in the English dub, also known as *They Call Her One Eye*.

<sup>256</sup> Jeff Otto. 'Daryl Hannah Talks Kill Bill', *IGN.com*, 9 October 2003, accessed 2/5/2023 <https://www.ign.com/articles/2003/10/08/daryl-hannah-talks-kill-bill>,

<sup>257</sup> Karoline Eriksson, 'Svensk film utan kläder i LA', *Svenska Dagbladet* 19/4/2006, 13.

<sup>258</sup> Susanne Nylén, 'Leve den svenska synden', *Aftonbladet* 6/10/2007, 10.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors

<sup>260</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors



time that Lindberg had actually watched *Anita* - was a mild success, attracting a mixed audience of male and female cult fans.<sup>261</sup> This short programme represents a new screening context for *Anita*. While *Thriller* is the star attraction in this programme, ostensibly screened within a cult context, the association of the Swedish Embassy and the Swedish Institute lends an element of cultural legitimacy to the texts. They are contextualised in this screening, at a respected cinemathèque, simultaneously as cult objects of oppositional taste *and* as films representing a specific era of Swedish film history.<sup>262</sup> The following year *Klubb Super 8* arranged a short season of Swedish sex films from their repertoire at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, presenting amongst other films a double bill of *Anita* and *Exposed* with Lindberg again in attendance for a question and answer session. The notes accompanying the short season (clearly supplied by *Klubb Super 8*) promise that “These films had such an impact that many of us still associate Sweden with skinny dipping, promiscuity and voluptuous blondes, and this weekend of films won't do much to change that perception.”:<sup>263</sup> the tone of the exploitation showman of the grindhouse now entering the arthouse.

*Klubb Super 8* released *Anita* on DVD later that year, the rights having now being purchased outright from Ivarson. The disc featured extras such as the original trailer for *Anita* and a short film featuring interviews with Christina Lindberg and Klinga Wickman titled “Sex, Stellan and Psychotherapy”, and goes on to become *Klubb Super 8*'s biggest selling single DVD release by some margin.<sup>264</sup> The Swedish release did not feature a subtitle track in English, however international partners Impulse Pictures - who had earlier released *Thriller* in the United States - also issued *Anita* on DVD, now with an English language subtitle track.<sup>265</sup>

The sum of these reissues and screenings is that *Anita* now is screened in ‘respectable’ cinemathèques in a vastly different dispositif to the original release. A further example of this is the later programming of *Anita* by historian Jorg Schöning as part of the retrospective of love and sex in Scandinavian films at the 2010 Nordic Film Days festival in Lübeck. *Anita* is screened in the company of *Summer with Monika*, *I am Curious Yellow* and others, describing the liberating effect Scandinavian films have had on private aspects of 20th century life, placing them in the context of the sexual revolution as an interdependent part of societal change.<sup>266</sup> The programme notes the various meanings to be found in Wickman's film: “On the one hand a coherent contemporary document, on the other a transparent colportage.” - albeit a transparent colportage screened now as a retrospective of Swedish film history, under the theme ‘Homage to Christina Lindberg’, with Lindberg attending the festival.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Albeit a not particularly memorable event: “I remember that I went into the cinema, I was there and then I came out....I have no memories of the film or anything!” - Interview with Christina Lindberg, with apologies to Anette Kuhn.

<sup>262</sup> It should be noted that this is the first time that the original Swedish cut of *Anita* is shown in the USA, rather than the hardcore *Anita: Swedish Nymphet* version distributed in the US by Cambist Films - see Chapter 4.3

<sup>263</sup> “Swedish Erotica”, ICA, accessed 3/5/23, <https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/season/swedish-erotica/>

<sup>264</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors. It is only outsold by a boxset of the ‘Fridolf’ so-called pilsnerfilm comedies.

<sup>265</sup> Gunnar Rhelin, ‘Softcore porn: How Swede it is’, *Variety*, Apr 23-Apr 29, 2007, 6.

<sup>266</sup> New Faces at Nordic Film Days Lübeck, accessed 14/5/23, <https://www.nordische-filmtage.de/archiv/2010/en/meldungen/20100809.html>

<sup>267</sup> Lübeck Nordic Film Days programme, Retrospective, accessed 2/3/23 [https://www.nordische-filmtage.de/filmdb/files/2010/nfl\\_2010\\_lowres\\_112.pdf](https://www.nordische-filmtage.de/filmdb/files/2010/nfl_2010_lowres_112.pdf)

Quite coincidentally, Stellan Skarsgård attended the festival as guest of honour. Lindberg, Skarsgård and Bergman, together at last.

## 5.4 The sex film enters the Swedish academy

The 2005 *The Cinema of Scandinavia*, edited by Tytti Soila, indicates a softening of academic attitudes towards the sex film. This volume once again proffers an English language overview of the Nordic nations, with each chapter provided by a different contributor. Rather than a temporal historical perspective, with one socio-political event leading to the next *The Cinema of Scandinavia* takes the approach of selecting “seminal, but off” films from outside the canonised selection generally offered by cultural institutions as “typical for Scandinavia”. Soila writes in her introduction that this approach is intended to include films that are not seen as “artistic” or “culturally valuable” and includes analysis of two Scandinavian pornographic films, acknowledging that this genre is more commonly familiar through hearsay to a foreign audience.<sup>268</sup> This is a clearly different approach from the cherry picked histories that offer the great and good of a national cinema at the expense of the less culturally respected. Bergman is represented in the volume not through an essay on one of his much discussed feature length films, but through a lesser known commercial for Bris soap: Maaret Koskinen’s essay observes how these commercials have been regarded as a peripheral part of Bergman’s career, unfortunate mistakes - if they are mentioned at all - in an echo of the language used to describe the sex film era.<sup>269</sup>

Soila and Per Olov Qvist - both of whom have contributed earlier complete histories of Swedish Cinema - offer an analysis of Wickman’s *Swedish and Underage*. The essay opens by noting that canonical histories of Swedish Cinema around this era have lent the period a mythical status, although fail to address that the reforms and changes had little effect on the monopolised vertically integrated structure of Swedish film production. *Swedish and Underage* is placed into a historical context first, as an example of film produced by a smaller production company exploiting a niche market to appeal to independent distributors and cinema owners. Rather than dismissal for their speculative nature, Inge Ivarson’s Swedish Filmproduction Investments is contextualised as the “true heir” to a Swedish film production tradition of small companies producing comedies, industrial films and newsreels.<sup>270</sup> Interestingly the essay seeks not to assign genre or title to the film - in keeping with the volume’s approach to presenting previously less regarded objects from the fringes of Scandinavian film history. While the introduction to *Scandinavian Cinema* notes that the tome will tackle pornographic films, the ambiguity surrounding the pornographic status is negotiated in the essay by using Wickman’s own words to describe the film as about sex rather than pornography, with the authors noting that the foreign title and marketing used references to pornographic attractions: this

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<sup>268</sup> Tytti Soila, “Introduction” in *The Cinema of Scandinavia*, ed. Tytti Soila. (London: Wallflower, 2005), 4.

<sup>269</sup> Maaret Koskinen, “Tvålen Bris (Bris the soap)” in *The Cinema of Scandinavia*, ed. Tytti Soila. (London: Wallflower, 2005), 103.

<sup>270</sup> Qvist and Soila, “Eva - Den Utstötta (*Swedish and Underage*)”, 151-152.

should be seen as a clear departure from earlier categorisations of Wickman's brand of didactic sex film as more or less advanced pornography. The essay's textual analysis questions the double moral nature of the film, while keeping the film within context: the authors note a shift in tone between the moral core of the film found in the portrayals of hypocrisy by authority figures, set to restrained and downbeat music, and the up-tempo melodies and voyeuristic photography that exploit the exposed bodies of the female characters.

It is tempting to surmise that this approach is inspired by renewed access to the film itself, following the 2000 issue of *Swedish and Underage* on VHS by *Klubb Super 8* (as part of their Swedish Cult Classics series): it is difficult to write objectively on a period of history that exists solely as rumour and hearsay or on a rumoured VHS cassette in a rental shop in Umeå. It would also be optimistic to state that the re-release of the Swedish Filmproduction Investment films on VHS for a new audience was solely responsible for an cultural reappraisal: it should rather be considered the confluence of several factors. As noted by Larsson, the study of material labeled as 'pornographic' had been gaining academic acceptability, as were studies of low cultural phenomena, epitomised by Sconce and Schaefer. *The Cinema of Scandinavia* indicates a willingness to reconsider the hegemonic history of Swedish Cinema, and a move to reappraising the role of the "off" films that had been thus far intentionally overlooked.

From having been almost entirely dismissed there now starts a slow trickle of academic articles and essays seeking to contextualise the sex film within a wider cultural history. Larsson's work spearheads this re-evaluation of Swedish sex film, her 2009 paper *Drawing the Line* discusses the problematic generic classification Furhammar's of "more or less pornographic films" from the 1970s, using *Anita* as one of her case studies. Noting that the generic label of pornography is a discursive one, and that by modern day standards very few of the "more or less" pornographic films would be considered as pornography, Larsson concludes that the contention that pornographic productions make up a fifth of Swedish production in the 1970s should be revised in favour of new more nuanced view of Swedish film history.<sup>271</sup> Larsson continues her work in the 2010 essay *Practice Makes Perfect*.<sup>272</sup> In this essay she addresses first how the era of the sex film is well documented by cult enthusiasts, but remains absent from scholarly historiographies - noting Tytti Soila's chapter as one of the few exceptions. The essay seeks to extricate the films of the era made from the blanket generic title of pornographic which has traditionally been attached to them, considering the nuances and varying levels of explicitness of films from the era. In particular, she notes how Torgny Wickman's approach to his subject in *Anita* echoes techniques in American exploitation cinema, citing Schaefer, providing a justification for its explicitness. Larsson uses this to consider the appeal to the audience for *Anita* - a group previously absent from historical dismissal of the sex film genre - concluding that a film like *Anita* caters "not only to prurient interest but also to social conscience and educational interest, it may have been possible to stand in line for a ticket to one of his films without being embarrassed."<sup>273</sup> In

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<sup>271</sup> Larsson, *Drawing the Line*, 387–98.

<sup>272</sup> Larsson, *Practice Makes Perfect*, 40–49.

<sup>273</sup> Furhammar, 46–47.

doing so, the commercial success of the sex film is not waved away as an historical aberration but accepted as a cultural phenomenon worthy of deeper study.

Elisabet Björklund's essay *This is a dirty movie: Taxi Driver and Swedish Sin*: offers an interesting case of how a historical conception of Sweden and sexuality from the 1970s is evoked in the 2000s to capitalise on modern perspectives of the Swedish Sin mythology.<sup>274</sup> This offers an interesting perspective, as it contextualises perception of Swedish Sin in the USA through *Taxi Driver*'s representation of a fake sexual education film for the 'date' Travis Bickle treats Betsy to at a 42nd street cinema. Combining footage from the American sexploitation film *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (John Lamb 1970) together with a newly recorded Swedish narration and the made-up title *Swedish Marriage Manual* on the theatre's marquee. The inference is clear - Sweden is the land of more or less advanced pornography, hidden behind a liberal educational framework - this represents a clear construction of what "Swedish" cinema represents. (Björklund also notes, tantalisingly, that in an earlier scene Bickle drives his taxi past another cinema, advertising *Anita: Swedish Nymphet*).<sup>275</sup> This sequence from the late 1990s onwards is regularly misidentified as featuring Wickman's *The Language of Love* - Rickard Gramfors admits to having reiterated this myth many times over the years, repeating the traditions of sexploitation cinema showmen such as Kroger Babb.<sup>276</sup> Björklund's book, *The Most Delicate Subject*, derived from her Ph.D. thesis, focuses on the history of sex education films in Sweden and draws on Larsson's work when presenting the debate surrounding Wickman's *The Language of Love*'s contested status between educational and pornographic.<sup>277</sup> Notably, Björklund approaches the sex film era and the *Language of Love* series as representative of an historical moment in the late 1960s and 1970s. This strategy of placing the film within the original historical context builds on Larsson's work and provides a platform for a thorough and deep analysis of Wickman's educational films. Again, this presents a marked contrast to Per Olof Qvist's earlier dismissal of these films in the *Guide to the Cinema of Sweden and Finland*.<sup>278</sup>

Björklund and Larsson write further on this revision in the introduction to their 2016 volume *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution*. Noting that the period in which Swedish cinema is connected with sex is well known it is, however, little understood and what knowledge there is is based upon "vague understandings and misconceptions"<sup>279</sup>. The nature of the period as subject of celebratory focus by fans of oppositional taste tends to obstruct serious historical treatment, with myth and rumour continually repeated as fact. If we follow Larsson's earlier argument in *Drawing the Line* then the conclusion can be drawn that Furhammar's claim of one fifth of production being more or less pornographic should perhaps also be considered one of these misconceptions.

The work of Björklund and Larsson is, while clearly influenced by cultural studies approaches, distant from the documentary work of cult enthusiasts, or the fancademic tendencies of

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<sup>274</sup> Elisabet Björklund, "This is a dirty movie" – Taxi Driver and 'Swedish sin'" *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 1 No. 2 (2011), 163-176.

<sup>275</sup> Furhammar, 168.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Rickard Gramfors

<sup>277</sup> Björklund. *The Most Delicate Subject*, 153-200.

<sup>278</sup> Qvist, "Swedish Cinema", 16.

<sup>279</sup> Björklund & Larsson, 3.

Cult Studies scholars such as IQ Hunter. Björklund and Larsson take care to note that their volume should be seen as separate from the historiographies written by fans in their introduction, and state that “for a long time, the national historiography has treated the films produced during Sweden’s ‘sex film wave’ with contempt [...] ‘official’ discourse on film distanced itself from these films”.<sup>280</sup> The tone throughout their work, and throughout *Swedish Cinema and the Sexual Revolution: Critical Essays* is not the defiantly oppositional tone of the textual poacher, nor is it an oppositional stance to the ‘official’ discourse but rather a reckoning and analysis of a previously understudied aspect of Swedish cinema which in turn follows the achievement of cult enthusiasts in making this aspect visible again. Hunter writes in 1997, in defence of his status as academic cult, that he adopts a “Kind of postmodern irony [...] the last refuge of white middle-class male intellectuals” and endorses the notion that paracinema has provided an opportunity for (predominantly) straight white male academics to indulge in a “perverse liking for an ‘obviously’ bad film as a strategy for carving out some interpretative space and ensuring distance from an earlier generation of academics”.<sup>281</sup> It is worth noting the distance the new wave of Swedish scholars take from this notion - there is no indication of any ‘liking’ or fandom in the works of Björklund and Larsson, let alone judgements on the quality of the films they study, ‘bad’ or otherwise. While possibly not statistically significant, is it interesting to note that the generation of Swedish academics addressing pornography and the sex film post-millennium are predominantly female (Larsson, Björklund, Arnberg), contrasted with the cult fans of *Magasin Defekt* and the “straight white male” academics of the 1990s (Sconce, Schaefer, Hunter)

## 5.5 *Nymphomaniac* and *Anita*

While the focus of this thesis has been on the Swedish cultural history of *Anita* it is worthwhile as this point reflecting on how the renewed visibility of the film in conjunction with new academic perspectives on the sex film era leads in turn a new international perspective on *Anita*. Two scholarly articles by non-Swedish authors referencing *Anita* are offered again both as primary sources - evidence of *Anita*’s reassessed position as a cultural reference point and a shift in notions of Swedish Sin - and as secondary sources, in which the content of the articles is briefly analysed and contextualised.

Skarsgård’s association with *Anita* continued to be a constant point of reference as his international career followed its stellar trajectory, with interviewers regularly reminding him of his role in a ‘soft porn’ film.<sup>282</sup> The association seems not to have been lost on Lars von Trier, who cast Skarsgård in the both volumes of his 2013 *Nymphomaniac*. In his role Skarsgård plays a man, Seligman, who takes in an injured dark haired girl he has come across on the street. At his home, the girl confides to him about her life as a nymphomaniac and the effect her predilections have had on her

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<sup>280</sup> Björklund & Larsson, 5.

<sup>281</sup> Hunter, “Beaver Las Vegas”, 197.

<sup>282</sup> e.g. James Mottram, Interview with Stellan Skarsgård - *Total Film* 4, (August 1999), 22-23; Collin, Robbie, ‘Bergman? He could destroy people.’ *The Daily Telegraph* (UK) 30 August 2014

life, told in flashback until we come to understand the circumstances that lead to her injuries. The similarities between *Nymphomaniac* and *Anita* are perhaps too strong to be mere coincidence - a coincidence that von Trier denies, although Christina Lindberg wryly comments that Tarantino was perhaps more generous with crediting his influences.<sup>283</sup> The similarities are also noted in a pair of articles that consider *Nymphomaniac* and seek to draw parallels between it and *Anita*. Both essays are written by non-Swedish authors, and the approach adopted utilises the same scholarly distancing that Björklund and Larsson have exhibited. Archivist Darragh O'Donoghue's 2014 essay on *Nymphomaniac* opens with illustrations of the American poster for *Anita: Swedish Nymphet*, a still from *Anita* (the image of Skarsgård caressing Lindberg's breast that forms the basis for the Swedish advertising in 1973) and the cover for the US release of the DVD as part of 'The Swedish Erotica Collection'. These three images are offered as the "cinematic genealogy of *Nymphomaniac*"<sup>284</sup> The article is predominantly focused on analysing *Nymphomaniac*, but opens with a comparison with *Anita*, and how various narrative touchpoints are remarkably similar, querying overtly what von Trier's purpose is in "modelling *Nymph()*maniac [...] on a niche artefact of Scandi-softcore?": O'Donoghue is clearly convinced that *Anita* forms the inspiration for von Trier.<sup>285</sup> At the same time as generically categorising the film as Scandinavian softcore pornography O'Donoghue engages with the content of *Anita*, rather than the simple dismissal seen to previously attach itself to this meta-genre. The photography is praised for proving a realist, documentary style that emphasises the sordid nature of Anita's unsensational, desperate sex, and summarises *Anita* a satire on class, gender, High Culture and the military. Mariah Larsson had previously expressed dismay that the cult celebration of such Scandi-softcore was founded in a nostalgic and naive notion of the pornography of the era being a more innocent affair, a simple matter of nudity and sexual innuendo.<sup>286</sup> O'Donoghue avoids this simplistic nostalgia, finding instead something deeper and more meaningful in *Anita* than the 'pimply bottoms' of ironic cult fandom.

US based Professor of Cinema Studies Linda Badley positions *Nymphomaniac* as a response to, and a continuation of, traditions of Scandinavian erotic cinema, including the didactic Swedish education/sexploitation film.<sup>287</sup> Badley analyses the manner in which psychoanalytic themes are engaged in *Anita* and *Nymphomaniac*, using the "uncanny resemblance" as a starting point.<sup>288</sup> *Anita* is described as a fictional case study/romance/softcore hybrid, prioritising the 'reportage' concept which Wickman uses to frame his drama. The use of a Freudian psychoanalytical framework in *Anita*, with Skarsgård's Erik attempting to cure Anita of her nymphomania caused by a dysfunctional relationship with her parents is read by Badley as "earnest". This is placed in dialogue with Seligman's muddled analogies and allusions to the eponymous *Nymphomaniac* which offer no solution or cure and result in his eventual betrayal of his confidante - unlike the happy ending of *Anita* which climaxes with Anita

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<sup>283</sup> Interview with Christina Lindberg

<sup>284</sup> Darragh O'Donoghue, "A Girl Named Joe: Nymphets, Nymph()maniac, and Lars von Trier", *Cineaste*, Summer 2014, 10.

<sup>285</sup> O'Donoghue "A Girl Named Joe", 11.

<sup>286</sup> Larsson, "Practice makes Perfect", 41.

<sup>287</sup> Linda Badley, "Nymph()maniac as retro Scandinavian blue", *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 5, No.2, (2015), 191–204.

<sup>288</sup> Badley, "Nymph()maniac", 198.

released from her sexual shackles through finding love with Erik.<sup>289</sup> Badley's analysis of *Anita* does not at anytime question the motivation of Wickman or seek to belittle its psychoanalytical content, and she generously concludes her comparison with *Nymphomaniac* by reflecting on how both films confound the expectations shaped by genre. The essay ends with the conclusion that the sex film, "brought sexuality and socio-political issues together in cinematic discourse, breaking ground as they roused censors and brewed scandals."<sup>290</sup> in this conclusion *Anita* is placed firmly in a specific socio-historical context rather than simple assignation of meta-genre.

### 5.5.1 Digital Restoration by the SFI

By 2019 *Filmrutan's* attitude towards the softcore sex film which had previously popped, unwelcome, into their inbox had thawed. Without a hint of shame or embarrassment Louise Lagerström provides a thirteen page retrospective of Lindberg's career and comeback.<sup>291</sup> Lindberg's contribution as an actor to *Anita* is given warm praise, and her interaction with Skarsgård "show that there is a personality above her belly-button, and a face that the camera loved". The realist style of the film is noted - "a Stockholm in transition, a veritable building site provides the naturalistic foundation".<sup>292</sup> *Klubb Super 8*, in the form of Gramfors, are now the providers of expert commentary in *Filmrutan*: "How many B-films from 1973 have survived the passage of time and can be shown to an enthusiastic public around the world today, who both appreciate the film and analyse it?"<sup>293</sup>

The stated purpose of the Archival Film Collection of the Swedish Film Institute is "to acquire, catalogue, preserve, restore and give access to the Swedish film heritage."<sup>294</sup> As part of this remit to give access to Swedish film heritage the SFI began, in 2013, a programme of digitisation of the 9,300 Swedish films held in their collection.<sup>295</sup> The digitisation policy of 2019 states that the aim of the process is that "all of them have to be digitized in order to be made accessible to the general public"<sup>296</sup> The nature of digitisation and restoration, a slow, expensive process, means that by May 2022 the project had successfully digitised films at a rate of approximately 100 films per year, around

<sup>289</sup> Badley, "Nymph()maniac" 199.

<sup>290</sup> Badley, "Nymph()maniac" 201.

<sup>291</sup> Louise Lagerström, "Christina Lindberg - ikonisk vigilant i lång och avspänd come back", *Filmrutan*, 62, No.2 (2019), 10-23.

<sup>292</sup> Lagerström, "Christina Lindberg" 16-17.

<sup>293</sup> Quoted in Lagerström, "Christina Lindberg" 22.

<sup>294</sup> The full definition of 'Swedish film heritage' is given as "all films that either have received production subsidy or box office-related support (PRS) from the Swedish Film Institute, and/or have been theatrically released in Sweden, and/or have been submitted to the Swedish censorship board with the intention of being theatrically released" - Policy of the Archival Film Collections of the Swedish Film Institute, January 2020, accessed 4/5/2023

[https://www.filminstitutet.se/globalassets/\\_dokument/policy-of-the-archival-film-collections-of-the-swedish-film-institute-2020.pdf](https://www.filminstitutet.se/globalassets/_dokument/policy-of-the-archival-film-collections-of-the-swedish-film-institute-2020.pdf)

<sup>295</sup> Jon Wengström, 'The Coexistence of Analogue and Digital Strategies in the Archival Film Collections of the Swedish Film Institute' *Journal of Film Preservation*; Issue 96, (Apr 2017), 66.

<sup>296</sup> Policy of the Film heritage digitization Selection committee, March 12 2018 (revised April 29 2019) accessed 4/5/2023, <https://www.filminstitutet.se/globalassets/2.-fa-kunskap-om-film/ta-del-av-filmsamlingarna/diverse-bilder/policy-of-the-film-heritage-digitization-selection-committee-2019.pdf>

65 of which being restorations, but representing only 6% of the films scheduled for digitisation.<sup>297</sup> The SFI are obliged to operate a selection process to decide precisely which of the un-digitised films they should allocate their budget and resources to. This policy, outlined in the SFI's *Policy of the Film Heritage Digitization Selection Committee* contains this reference to the criteria for individual titles:

Films are produced and received in a contemporary context, and films are thus embraced or rejected depending on current cultural and political context. As values, the relevance of a film is not static but evolves over time. Some films retain their relevance, but digitization also brings the opportunity to re-evaluate film history, and to highlight films and creators which were previously considered irrelevant.<sup>298</sup>

As well as the selection committee's annual selection of films for preservation, aiming to cover a broad selection, the SFI accepts requests from external rights holders, which may influence the selection should the rights holder provide a satisfactory plan for the dissemination of the digitised material - including physical home entertainment releases, VOD services and exhibitions.<sup>299</sup> In response to a request by *Klubb Super 8 Video*, *Anita* was subject to a digital restoration in 2021 by the SFI.<sup>300</sup> This version has now been theatrically exhibited both in Stockholm and at the upmarket British Everyman chain of cinemas. At the time of writing a Blu Ray release of the restored version was planned, but had not yet been released.

A restoration of a previously disregarded film by a state cultural actor SFI should be seen as different to, for example, a company such as Vinegar Syndrome performing restorations of underground and genre film both for preservation and commercial purpose.<sup>301</sup> As per the SFI's policy, their mission is to preserve the Swedish film heritage - and it thus follows that as an object chosen for preservation this in turn legitimises *Anita* as an accepted part of heritage and history. As the SFI state, the prevailing cultural and political context is key to whether films are embraced or rejected within any given socio-political environment. The change of that cultural and political context throughout this era - roughly 1999 to the digitisation in 2021 - sees perhaps the biggest shift in *Anita's* dispositif. As the 20th century ended the hegemonic consensus on precisely *what* formed part of Swedish film heritage was coming into question. Against this background fan based endeavours were redistributing texts that had been disregarded academically, culturally and historiographically. Cult enthusiasm, and the embracing of a subcultural identity of cult consumption drives the cult aficionado to redistribute and offer the opportunity for recontextualisation of the object of their subcultural appreciation. Instead of letting the films rest in peace the recirculation offers them in a new context to a different audience - be they ironic fans of bad cinema or academics seeking to reappraise Swedish cinema.

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<sup>297</sup> Jon Wengström, *The Future of Theatrical Screening and Archival Programming*, conference paper delivered at MASN Film and Media Archive Studies conference, Filmhuset, Stockholm, 12 May 2022

<sup>298</sup> *Policy of the Film heritage digitization Selection committee*, 6.

<sup>299</sup> *Policy of the Film heritage digitization Selection committee*, 10-11.

<sup>300</sup> Digital restoration is classified as the fourth highest grade of five by the SFI, short of Full Digital Restoration, and is the most frequent level of digitisation carried out by the SFI, involving removal of defects, sync sound correction and remastering, see *Policy of the Film heritage digitization Selection committee*, 13.

<sup>301</sup> Vinegar Syndrome, "About", accessed 21/5/2023, <https://vinegarsyndrome.com/pages/about>



It is precisely the resistance to this recontextualisation that provides the oppositional impetus: “The cultural work continues”. Without this recirculation there is no object available for re-evaluation once the academic winds begin to shift in their favour. It may be tempting to draw parallels with the re-evaluation of the silent film that occurred in New York in 1935 when the Museum of Modern art, to no small criticism, announced they were intending to collect and exhibit film.<sup>302</sup> The disbelieving critical tone that matched this announcement, with the prospect of Ph.D. dissertations on popular westerns or Marlene Dietrich’s legs dismissed in the press.<sup>303</sup> Yet at the turn of the millennium the prospect of a Ph.D. dissertation on Swedish sexual health education with Torgny Wickman at the centre would have seemed equally fantastic.

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<sup>302</sup> Haidee Wasson, “Studying Movies at the Museum: The museum of modern art and cinema’s changing object” in *Inventing Film Studies*, eds. Lee Grieveson, and Haidee Wasson.(Durham, Duke University Press, 2008), 121.

<sup>303</sup> Wasson, “Studying Movies at the Museum”, 121-122.

## 6. Conclusion

First, a brief reflection on the process: this thesis has focused on *Anita* from a Swedish socio-cultural perspective and as such has been reliant on the materials available within Swedish contexts and from Swedish sources. While the concept of Swedish Sin was imposed externally there has always been a complex interplay between it and Swedish notions of self identity. I have attempted to analyse how a product designed to capitalise on just this xenostereotype changes conceptually within the nation that was subject to this sexual scrutiny. While touching on notions of national cinema in my conclusion to chapter 3, I have otherwise avoided discussion of the relevance of the sex film to ideas of national cinema, and have focused primarily on ideas of heritage. These are, of course, interlinked and this nexus may be worthy of further study, although. The limited availability of materials have to an extent limited my focus, as *Anita* is never seen to acquire the dedicated cult audience of a *Thriller* or becomes subject to the social reappraisal of *The Language of Love* and as such is not party to the wider scrutiny that these two texts receive post-millennium. As I have noted, the film is popularly ‘invisible’ for a long period, and the absence of material in this period both works through its very absence to support my thesis while hindering attempts to illuminate the period: however the absence of primary materials from the ‘Wilderness era’ is perhaps paradoxically a primary source of evidence itself. While avoiding, to a great extent, the overseas exhibition, marketing and reception of *Anita* I feel there is still relevant work using similar methods to follow the shifting cultural perceptions of such a text. The cultural relevance of *Anita* overseas and how it ties in to the relevant domestic cultural heritage may in itself be of interest. The same approach, using a single text to trace cultural history, is of course, not-specific to Sweden, the sex film nor other maligned genres.

In conclusion, it is worth returning to Richard Maltby’s claims that the film historian, through textual analysis, is encouraged to “reveal the biases, tastes of secret fears of the cultural moment in which it was produced”.<sup>304</sup> What I have attempted here is the use of the text as a centre, around which the biases and, to some extent, the secret fears of the differing cultural moments that surround it are revealed in the years after its production, and in turn to trace *Anita*’s historiographical evolution as a cultural object. As *Anita* has passed through 50 years of Swedish film history it has left a trail of socio-cultural breadcrumbs, scattered across academia, the popular press, television and film. *Anita* stands as historical film artefact, an “involuntary testimony, bearing unconscious material witness” to the zeitgeist of the period of its production, in the words of Maltby.<sup>305</sup> This much is of course true, and by focussing on the production of the film it has been possible to gain a social and cultural context for its production. But by placing the film at the centre of the periods following its production - its cultural life - it has been seen to act equally as material witness to all subsequent periods in which it is encountered.

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<sup>304</sup> Marc Ferro quoted in Maltby, “New Cinema Histories” 6.

<sup>305</sup> Maltby, “New Cinema Histories”, 5.

The social and cultural context in which *Anita* was produced form part of the dispositif for each subsequent social-cultural era which in turn reveal the relation between these eras and the original context, as the text is reused and redefined. I have identified three further phases following the initial production and release phase. These four phases in total illustrate how following a single text through encounters with different cultural contexts and audiences allows for an understanding and interpretation of these historical contexts through their interactions with the text.

The first phase sees a film created for and released into a culture where softcore sex films are consumed as mainstream entertainment for a broad audience. The reporting of the production in national and local newspapers with their references to Christina Lindberg illuminate a culture in which topless models and sex films are covered in the entertainment sections. The box office success of *Anita*, the 6th most popular domestic production in the year of its release, points to the wider popularity of this sort of entertainment, and a cultural acceptance of this sort of sex film. As a film it is clearly understood to offer the didactic mix of social relevance and nudity that Wickman had carved out as his niche, something held in disregard by the critics who encounter it. Approaching the film, using Daniel Biltereyst's term "from above", through production material I have shown where this non-hardcore market was to be found and exploited and how the sexual content of the film was negotiated to capitalise on the market for in-between depictions of nudity and sex.<sup>306</sup> It is notable that *Anita* leaves no cultural footprint following its release: after release, and until the next phase identified, it disappears almost entirely from cultural view. This was seen to be a rapid cultural process, described in the next phase.

The second phase reflects cultural shifts in Sweden, as the social acceptance of pornography and sexual entertainment swings following the rise of anti-pornography discourses. In turn, the content of much of the sex film era is tarred with the same brush, and the sex film becomes less visible as a cultural as the trend for these productions ends, coinciding with the rise in domestic consumption of video. The grinding to a rapid halt of Wickman's career is brought about by this change in circumstance. As a workmanlike director with a somewhat perfunctory style of filmmaking his worth was to be found in making profitable films - as he had earlier boasted. Once the market for this shrank, so did demand for his work. The rapidity with which Wickman and *Anita*'s reputation decline - "Do you remember Torgny Wickman?" - attests to a changing cultural environment with little regard for the low, popular culture of the recent past. This era stands in contrast to the digitised film that we can see in 2023 or the celluloid film on the exhibition circuit in 1973. The film exists essentially only as a record or a memory - viewable only on a seldom seen VHS cassette. If we follow the idea that genre is created in a site where the film meets the user then this era indicates what happens when a film CANNOT meet the user. It becomes subject to rumour and speculation and exists on reputation alone as different users interpret in the text in its absence - *Anita* is assigned generic labels such as 'pornographic' based on second hand reports of the text rather than its actual content. By approaching the film from "the side" through Anders Sjögren's article on *Why I Love Bad Sex Films* we can understand how a single user assigns genre based on the dispositif in which he encounters the film,

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<sup>306</sup> Biltereyst, "Audience as Palimpsest", 27.

which is in turn informed by retrospective knowledge of the era that spawned it, and through use of alternative, oppositional strategies.

The third era showed how *Anita's* proximity to widely understood definitions of cult saw it appropriated as part of a canon of Swedish cult cinema through the work of enthusiasts and self-proclaimed experts. The acts of rejection and cultural othering that preceded this period lend it a certain cachet for a group of fans who find their interest in the objects of this cultural othering, rather than the content of the objects themselves: for them, "beneath the surface there is... very, very little" in the objects of their interest - no claim is being made for these being lost masterpieces, but forgotten objects of fun.<sup>307</sup> It is precisely because *Anita* and other films have been placed on the cultural periphery that this group is attracted to them, placing them in direct and often intentionally confrontational opposition to the accepted pantheon of Swedish cinematic achievements.

The fourth and final period sees *Anita* and similar texts made newly visible again, allowing for new academic approaches towards these films questioning their exclusion from Swedish film history. These approaches are not made in opposition to historical consensus but seek instead to revisit, revise and enhance it from a position of scholarly curiosity, in response to a gap in knowledge of Swedish cinema. It sees a major shift in the cultural value of *Anita*, as it is reassessed, and enters into the canon of Swedish film heritage as it is restored and digitised by the Swedish Film Institute, its cultural position re-evaluated fifty years after release.

While it is true to state that, historically, *Anita* is a film from the era of Swedish sex films, it has been seen that this meta-generic classification is in itself inadequate. The connotations of this association to the era of its production have aligned with the needs of users across a 50 year span. The film is exactly what its audience finds it to be at any given time, or expects to find. It may simultaneously be pornography, nostalgia, historical artefact and psychodrama, and may yet become other things. *Anita* has thus far been seen to occupy the position of sex film, pornographic film, turkey film, Swedish cult classic and will potentially occupy many other positions, dependent on who finds the film, when and where. The film exists as a historical object for the historian seeking one, a cult object seeking to 'uncover' forgotten films, an example of a embarrassing period for the cultural elite looking to gate-keep high culture or a mildly titillating piece of erotic entertainment for those looking for softer pleasures than hardcore pornography. If meaning and genre is created where the film meets the user then it must be considered that the user may be informed of all previous meanings as well, which form part of the unique dispositif when that user encounters the film. Without the cultural rejection there is little for the cult film fan to reclaim, without the cult film fan redistributing the film there is little for the academic to study, and so forth across these and all coming interpretations and reappropriations.

Through this study it has been seen that canonisation of a cinema text is, like the assignation of genre, a tool of the users of the text in question, who form it around their expectations, tastes and prejudices. *Anita* has been seen to be denied canonic status as Swedish film history by cultural gatekeepers at the SFI, but the same film is bestowed this status by the same institution some 40 years

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<sup>307</sup> Lumholdt, '... Vid korvens ände', *Magasin Defekt*, 2, 1996, 50.

later. The text, of course, remains the same but through this case study the cultural shifts that allow for re-evaluation have been illuminated

And so we should perhaps consider ourselves to currently occupy perhaps a fifth period in Anita's cultural life: What happens once all these previous periods can inform this one? As noted, Gianna Fossati points out that the original *dispositif* is, inevitably, entirely impossible to recreate.<sup>308</sup> However, it is possible to create a *new* *dispositif*, and to that end a screening was held for 1st year Cinema Studies Masters Students to observe what happens when this film is screened in this specific *dispositif* - the newly restored version of *Anita* in an academic environment with attendant discussion of the film. This was held as a casual event, more to observe reaction and gauge how a young audience in 2022 may view, interpret and indeed even be bored to near tears by this film. The reactions were mixed - very few were aware of the film prior to the screening, a number noted that they detected thematic and textual similarities to Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac*. Comments included 'It was not a sexy film', 'Very unsexy' and 'Is this a sex film?' One student who was well read on pornography studies found it exploitative but not pornographic. What was interesting from the perspective of this study was to witness how meaning and genre were created in the encounter with the film itself. Freed from historical preconceptions of Swedish Sin, or nostalgia for the period, the general tone of the comments was of a dark drama, which verged on exploiting female sexuality for narrative purposes.

This screening provides the conclusion for this thesis: *Anita* is precisely what the audience at any one time interprets it as according to the preconceptions, understandings and requirements that they have. Meaning and genre are not and cannot be fixed in a text - there is nothing innate in a text without an audience or user to interpret it. The content of the film itself tells us very little about the era in which it is encountered, but it is the reactions to this content and the interpretations of the audience that allow us to understand where and how they position the film. In returning to Kessler's interpretation of the cinema of attractions as *dispositif* it is worth reiterating how he notes that at varying points in history a medium can provide specific configurations of technology, text and spectatorship.<sup>309</sup> It is through the analysis of how these configurations are formed, in many ways, across the four phases of *Anita*'s cultural life that I have illuminated its changing position within Swedish film heritage. The analysis of two different potential uses for an audience for the same film at the same time of release - that of the Malmö audience attracted to erotic spectacle and that of the Katrineholm audience attracted to a local spectacle - demonstrated the difficulty of assigning a single *dispositif* to an era, if not the impossibility. At all stages and phases presented here, the different sites of exhibition, the cultural discourse surrounding the film and the expectation of the user has been seen to form its meaning. *Anita* is, like all films, a malleable object without immanent meaning. The meaning and cultural relevance of this film is, like all films, created in contact with an audience and part of a tapestry of prior knowledge, exhibition context, socio-cultural prejudices and ideas of genre. All these factors contribute to shaping meaning at the very point of contact with the film. As a malleable object, *Anita* in itself tells us nothing about the eras in which it is encountered, but the way

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<sup>308</sup> Fossati, 172.

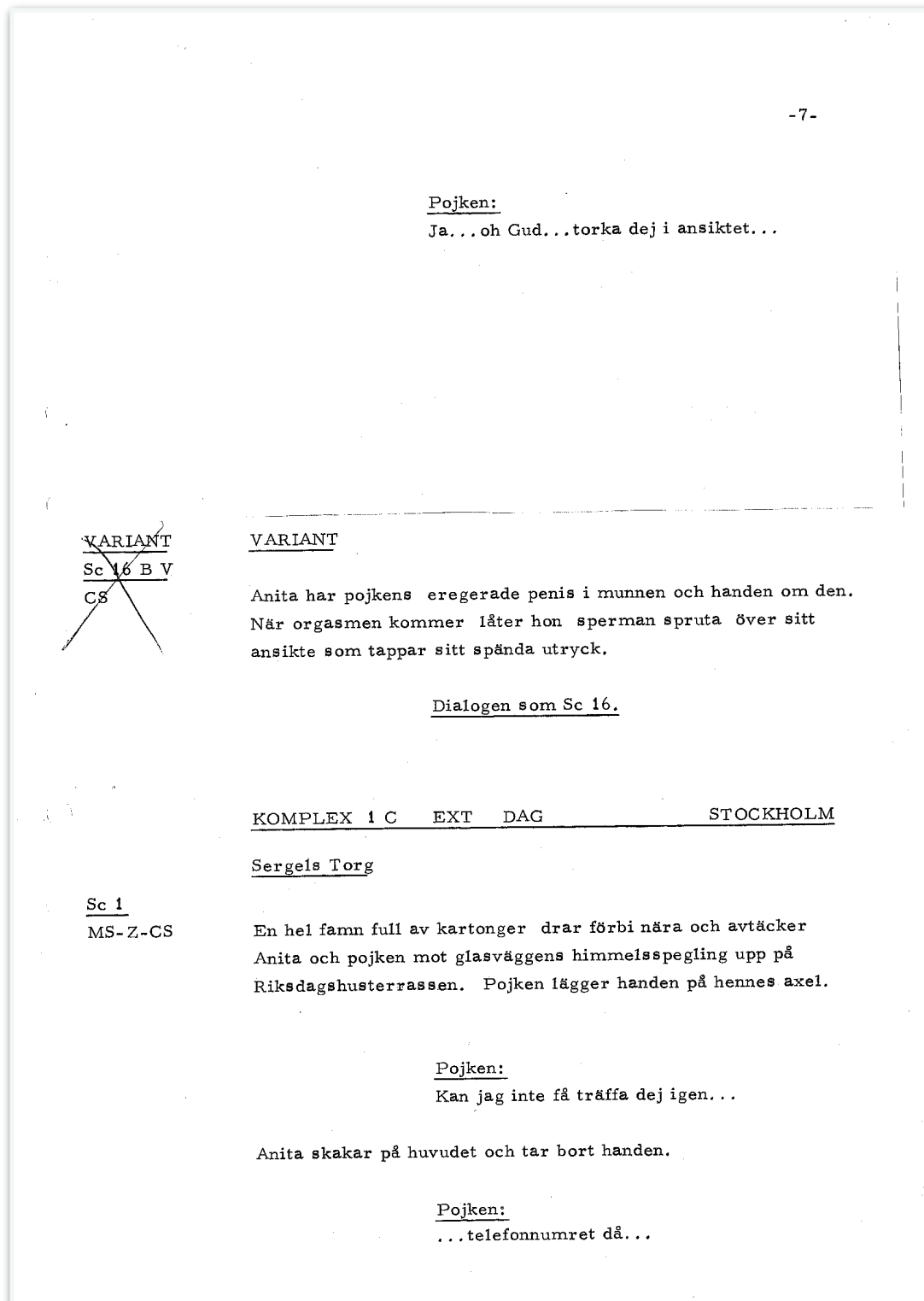
<sup>309</sup> Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions", 61.

the film is used, reused and reused again across socio-temporal eras informs our understanding of those eras. Is *Anita* a 'bad film'? That, as has been seen, is entirely in the hands of the user.

# Appendix

## Items from Private Collection

Excerpt from first draft script 'Nymfoman' - Torgny Wickman, undated - showing graphic content and subsequent redaction with taped in paper blanks (1st image shows this paper blank folded upwards to reveal the excised content, the second with edits in situ:



Pojken:

Ja...oh Gud...torka dej i ansiktet...

Mansröst: ( Utanför bilden )

Öppna för helvetet...

Pojken:

Jag måste öppna nu...

~~VARIANT  
Sc 16 B V  
CS~~

KOMPLEX 1 C   EXT   DAG                      STOCKHOLM

Sergels Torg

Sc 1

MS-Z-CS

En hel famn full av kartonger drar förbi nära och avtäcker  
Anita och pojken mot glasväggens himmelsspegling upp på  
Riksdagshusterrassen. Pojken lägger handen på hennes axel.

Pojken:

Kan jag inte få träffa dej igen...

Anita skakar på huvudet och tar bort handen.

Pojken:

...telefonnumret då...



## PRODUKTIONSKOSTNADER

för filmen: .....

## 1. Manuskript

1. Filmanstt	14.000	
2. Synopsis		
3. Scenario		
4. Utskrivning av manus	2.000	
5. Översättningar	1.500	17.500 ✓

## 2. Renipersonal

1. Producent		
2. Produktionsledare		
3. Inspelningsledare (kameror) p. 800	6.400 + 2.400 = 8.800	
4. Regissör	35.000	
5. Regiassistent		40.000
6. Scriptgirl		44.800
7. Koreograf		84.400 ✓

## 3. Skådespelare och statister

1. Huvudroller (Burlin + S. Sennar) } 32.000		
2. Smroller + scenarior } 2.000		
3. Statister	49.400	✓

## 4. Teknisk personal

1. Arkitekt		
2. Fotografer	17.600	
3. Stillbildsfotografer		
4. Ljud	8.800	

forts. nästa sida

- 2 -

5. Forts.		
6. Filmklippare	16.600	
7. Smink		
8. Garderobier		
9. Inspicient 1600 x 80	4.000	
10. Rekvisitör		
11. Klädexpert	5.000	48.200 ✓

## 5. Hantverkare och scenarbetare

1. Scenarbetare, snickare, målare, elektriker, tapetserare, stömskor, skräddare etc.	12.000	12.000 ✓
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## 6. Åteldkostnader och exteriorskostnader

1. Åteldhyra 15 a 200	4.500	
2. Hyra för annan inspelningsplats	8.250	
3. Kamerautrustning 750 x 80 = 6000	4.800	
4. Ljudutrustning, Inspelnings 800 x 80 = 6400		
5. Ljudrum för dubning etc.	800	
6. Övrig teknisk inspelningsutrustning	4.000	
7. Elektrisk utrustning 500 x 80	1.000	
8. Elektrisk energi		
9. Förbrukningsmaterial: glödlampor, byggnadsmaterial, målningsmaterial	500	
10. Klipprum (Burlin) 600 x 80 = 4800	4.800	
11. Kårum	1.000	
12. Telefonavgifter		
13. Uppdragslicenser		
14. Övrig åteld- och exteriorskostnader	1.800	31.450 ✓

- 3 -

## 7. Möbler och rekvisita m.m.

1. Hyra av möbler och annan rekvisita		
2. Köpta möbler och annan rekvisita (nye)	16.000	
3. Kläder (hyrda, köpta och material för tillverkning)	5000	
4. Puder, smink, peruker o.dyl.	1000	16000 ✓

## 8. Resor och transporter

1. Kostnader för egna bilar (per timme eller kilometer) 550/mil	8.250	
2. Övriga transporter och frakter	800	
3. Resor (Burlin)	6.000	
4. Traktamenten och matersättning	800 + 16.800	31.850 ✓

## 9. Råfilm och laboratoriecostnader

1. Råfilm 50 x 319 - 19.950 + 9.508	9.508	
2. Framkallning: bild- (och ljuden) 6000 m x 94	6.700	
3. Arbetskopia 3000 bild x 94	2.850	
4. Övriga laboratoriearbeten inkl optisk print 10000 m x 12,50	34.000	
5. Negativklippning	8.500	
6. Magnetmaterial (tape) 600 x 20 x 1200	2.400	
7. Mixing 160 x 170 x 2720	5.120	
8. Optiskt avdrag 2.200 x 1,40	4.040	
9. Förtexter	300	74.622 ✓

## 10. Musikcostnader

1. Kompositör		
2. Arrangemang, partitur		
3. Noter		
4. Kapellmästare	7.000	
5. Orkester		
6. Musiklicens		
7. Lokalkostnad		7.000 ✓

- 4 -

## 11. Trailer och stillbilder

1. Trailer		
2. Stillbilder t.o.m. provset	5000	5.000 ✓

## 12. Kopior

1. Spelfilm och fyllnad A-kopier 20 914		
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## 13. Diverse inspelningskostnader

1. Försäkringar av skådespelare, negativ, möbler etc.	5000	
2. Provfilmning		
3. Avgifter till producentorganisat	5.000	
4. Övrigt opreciserade utgifter	5.000	15.000 ✓

Stockholm den 22/1-73  
V. Malmgren

346.622  
+ 24000  
+ 800  
= 371.422  
351.822

swedish filmproduction

Blad

P.M. till Torgny Wickman betr.  
filmprojektet NYMFOMANEN.

Min första reaktion när jag läste manuskriptet (utan att ha läst någonting förut) var en våldsam besvikelse.

För att vara riktigt elak gör manuset på mig personligen ett intryck av att vara författat av ett par äldre herrar, som "zeggat" ihop så mycket läskigheter och perversiteter som möjligt.

Det finns inte en gnutta humor eller en ironisk distans till ärendet.

Jämförelserna med DEN FÖRSTA STENEN håller inte i sammanhanget. Det var en snygg historia, som vi inte behövde skämmas för i något sammanhang. Föreliggande manus på NYMFOMANEN är alltigenom snaskig och otäck.

En film av denna typ skall huvudsakligen säljas i utlandet. Det är för mig obegripligt att inte våra regissörer och producenter fått klart för sig att hård sex är omöjlig i praktiskt taget hela världen. I Sverige och Danmark, där hård sex är möjligt att visa, är marknaden så mattad att några förskott inte kan påräknas.

För att belysa mina uttalanden med exempel, är t.e.x. ovannämnda DEN FÖRSTA STENEN visad i en rad länder i Fjärran Östern, men mycket hårt beskuren. I många länder är det fortfarande omöjligt att ens visa ett naket bröst.

Den milda versionen, som vi definitivt måste ha på en film av detta slag, får således inte ens vara "naken". Flickorna skall ha låtta underkläder och sexscener får endast antyd.

I den något hårdare versionen får bröst och "agerande" visas på så sätt att "agerandet" måste vara "skynt" på något sätt (bordskanter, vaser eller vad den uppfinningsrike regissören kan hitta på).

I den hårdare versionen, som kan användas endast i Sverige och Danmark samt möjligen insmugglad i Japan resp. Amerika, kan vad som helst visas.

Detaljanmärkningar på manuset.

Betr. manuset som sådant, är det verkligen nödvändigt att historien skall berättas i återblickar? Vore det inte ~~enklare~~ bättre att psykiatrikern helt utgår och att hon istället berättar för sin man hur hennes ungdom gestaltade sig?

Början av manuset är acceptabel, men observera ovannämnda uttalanden om lättare versioner. Jag skulle också vilja ha fler scener som belyser Anitas utstötthet.

Komplex 5: Stryk ner det hårda "snacket" och använd mindre vulgära uttryck även om det är möjligt att ungdomen använder sådana idag.

Betr. Anitas agerande, måste hon väl ~~ibland~~ någon gång ha ett normalt sexuellt beteende. Det behöver väl för herrans namn inte vara

Stenen  
kan mycket  
vara då.

Det  
endast  
antyd  
underkläder

Ja!  
Bättre om

nu man men i fängelsen m. EE

ok

ok

"felatio" varenda gång.

Komplex 10: Anitas föräldrar skall naturligtvis skildras på så sätt att de betraktar sin datters beteende anmärkningsvärt kallt. Å andra sidan är hon trots allt deras dotter, och ingen normal förälder gör sådana kommentarer som mamman på sid. 37. Det vore mycket bättre om föräldrarna skildras som strikta och kalla människor, där kärlekslösheten mot dottern liksom den påtagliga stoltheten över sonen kommer fram på annat sätt. Det måste finnas en kontrast mellan deras och dotterns beteende, annars blir det ingen som helst chock i slutet av filmen, när vi ser vad föräldrarna verkligen går för.

Här finns det möjligheter att göra erotiskt intressanta scener med mamman i vackra genomskinliga negligéer sittande sin budoar, diskuterande med sin man i sängkammaren etc.

Jag skulle rekommendera att alla scener av porr-karaktär utgår i det här skedet av historien beträffande mamman och pappan.

Scenen med läraren är bra och där skall tydligt framgå Anitas rädsla för att bli avslöjad som dålig lärläsare samtidigt som hon är livrädd för att hennes perversa lust till läraren skall ta överhanden. (Har vi verkligen en sådan skådespelerska?).

Komplex 15: är omöjlig i sin nuvarande utformning. Scenen med faderns avklädnad av Anitas brist på kunskaper är hygglig, men det får på inga villkor bli någon pervers scen mellan Anita och hennes bror. (Jag undrar om herr författaren vet vad han sysslar med, som kan antyda något så ohållbart?) Istället kan Anita göra några antydningar och ev. dra ner eller upp kläderna med några fräcka påståenden.

När Erik Emanuel kommer in i bilden bör han enligt min uppfattning "byggas ut" åtskilligt. Som jag ser det är han den enda riktiga människan i hela historien och vi måste få intresse för honom. Varför inte ersätta de scener, som måste utgå, med att berätta lite om hans liv istället? Korta kärlekshistorier med olika flickor, som han av något skäl är ganska likgiltig för. Kort montage av hans skolgång, ev. hans föräldrahem, så att vi får också hans bakgrund med värme och mänsklighet som kontrast mot Anitas kärlekslösa barndom.

Komplexet på tidningen, som inte är så dumt, skall kunna byggas ut ytterligare. Det borde inte vara alldeles omöjligt att få någonting som är roligare i dessa scener. Erik Emanuels svartsjuka måste också komma fram mycket bättre.

Scenen i rivningshuset är i sin nuvarande utformning helt omöjlig, men bör lätt kunna göras om så att den blir användbar. Samtliga handlingar i rummet skall endast antydvas.

Jag kan heller inte inse att poliserna skall behöva uppträda så brutalt. Jag kanske är felunderrättad, men jag betvivlar att svenska poliskillar normalt uppträder på sådant sätt.

Scenen med socialassistenten är kanske inte så dålig, som jag tyckte vid första genomläsningen. Det är dock av stor vikt att scenen görs med så mycket finess som det över huvud taget är möjligt.

Scenen mellan modern och fadern är nödvändig för handlingen, och där tycker jag att vi för första gången skall konfronteras med moderns innersta önsningar utan att det ännu på något sätt visas i bild.

Scenerna på porrklubben är också bra genom att vi ser porrklubben från baksidan. Det enda vi enligt min uppfattning skall ha med är den eleganta miljön, de upphetsade gästerna och en skymt av scenen från sidan, där vi ser att någonting pågår.

Scenerna med Anita (Anna) och Erik Emanuel måste också göras synnerligen varmt och innerligt utan några porrinslag. *Alla kvinnor och deras!*

Avslutningen av filmen kan också utformas någorlunda enligt manuset. Anitas (Annas) och Erik Emanuels inblick ~~in~~ föräldrarnas verkliga förhållanden kan gärna antyd lite längre, så att vi ett ögonblick som åskådare deltar i deras party i synnerligen elegant miljö.

Själva avslutningen av filmen bör göras på ett trevligt och avspänt sätt med lyckliga människor, som vi ser tycker om varandra och hela tiden talar om att de skall gifta sig inom den närmaste framtiden.

Om vi inte hinner få vårbilder från Sverige kanske vi kan ta några bilder under en vecka på Mallorca för att få så hög produktionskvalitet som det över huvud taget är möjligt.

Stockholm den 23 januari 1973

Ove Wallius

*Bra med åskådare!*

P M till NYA VECKOKALKYLEN \* Nymfoman

1. Någon har flyttats från Ljud till Teknik
2. Aktörer har ökats med 20.000. för nytillkomna småroller för skådespelare ( åt Eva - hållet )
3. Min ass ( Kläder organisation skript ) debiteras inte. Mitt totala arvode ner från 64.000. - till 49.000. - emedan bl a klippning tillkommer nu mera.
4. Klippning har debiterats organisation vilket trots ökningen med 12.000. - här totalt minskar till 99.400. -
5. Bilarna har ökats med 5.000. - baserat på 5. - / mil för att Inge skall kunna kompenseras för utlägg.

Memo from Ove Wallius to Torgny Wickman, 2/3/1973. The reason for this headed paper reading 'Swedish filmproduction international ab' rather than 'Swedish filmproduction investment ab' is unclear, but all company details and the logo remain the same.

BIRGER JARLSGATAN 31  
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SWEDEN  
TEL. 14 14 80  
CABLE: FILMTEVE

**swedish filmproduction international ab**



SFP  
OW/IM

Regissör Torgny Wickman

Wegersberg

641 00 Katrineholm

Stockholm den 2 mars 1973

Broder Torgny.

Du är intelligent och impulsiv och jag sätter personligen stort värde på sådana människor.

Tyvärr tänker Du emellertid inte igenom problemen från alla sidor, vilket ibland leder till märkliga synpunkter.

Som företagsledare måste Du alltid ha Firmans bästa för Dina ögon, liksom att de redan engagerade sysselsätts på ett riktigt sätt.

Tyvärr har vi tidigare på ett alltför lättsinnigt sätt låtit oss påverkas att acceptera saker som sunt förnuft och den minsta eftertanke borde ha fått oss att avstå från. Ex.vis (jag är ledsen att jag är så tjatig) RESELE-projektet, som i alla fall har kostat Firman nära 1 milj. i baken.

Du får ursäktas att jag inte har något som helst hjärta eller intresse av Din vän Westrup, som rimligen måste vara en kvalificerad O:a i filmsammanhang. Han må sedan vara aldrig så duktig som civilekonom. Att vi skulle välja honom och låta en gammal trotjänare som Stig "svälta" är uteslutet. Jag tycker dessutom, utan att skryta eller överdriva, att jag har gjort så mycket för Företaget att det är självklart att mina önsknings betr. Ulf skall respekteras.

Han skall därför utbildas på alla fronter och det är definitivt inte meningen att han skall sitta still under Katrineholms-tiden. Och eftersom killen dessutom har huvudet på skaft, tror jag att han kommer att bli en bättre medarbetare för Dig än herr Westrup någonsin kommer att bli.

Betr. inspelningstiden måste Du själv medge att 12 veckor för en film av denna typ är otänkbar. Då skulle det ju inte bli någon lågbudgetfilm. 8 veckor med kvällsövertid måste vara mer än nog. F.ö. ser vi själva ganska snart om personalen måste utökas för att vi skall hinna med programmet.

Betr. Kristina Lindberg håller jag med Dig. Vi har heller inte av-

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gjort saken utan kommer i samråd med Dig att diskutera andra alternativ. Du behöver alltså inte alls känna Dig överröstad, snarare tvärtom.

Betr. Ditt avtal för helinackordering skulle man egentligen rama in den och sätta den på väggen. Tanken bakom är emellertid så älskvärd och vänlig att det t.o.m. rör mitt starka hjärta. (STENHJÄRTA)

Vi är helt överens om att Du inte skall förlora på inkvarteringen. Däremot vore jag synnerligen tacksam om Du stryker snapsarna från programmet utom i rena undantagsfallet för att hålla folket i humör efter en besvärlig dagstagnning.

Betr. bilarna var vi tidigare överens om att vi skulle göra ett avtal med Inge som enligt uppgift äger båda två.

Avtalet med Klinga är i princip O.K. Emellertid måste vi vara överens om att både klädes- och möbelinköpen görs och förhandlas om i samråd. Kanske behöver vi mycket mindre, kanske något mer. Alldeles självklart skall vi inte vara snåla i sammanhanget.

Båda avtalen bifogas omskrivna.

Betr. Ditt eget avtalsförslag återkommer jag till mitt inledningsstycke i detta brev.

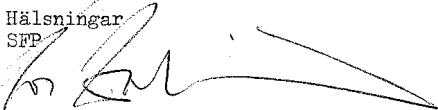
Vad händer om filmen blir mycket dyrare? Vem fick nöjet att stå för RESELE-kostnaderna?

Du har i allra högsta grad ett personligt intresse av att göra denna film så billig och samtidigt så bra som möjligt. Annars blir det inga fler produktioner av detta slag.

Vi måste emellertid rimligen få en chans att ta igen lite av de förlorade pengarna på RESELE och KÄRLEKENS SPRÅK II och III (för att inte tala om KYRKOHERDEN, som blev alldeles på tok för dyr).

Jag återkommer därför med förslag hur Din procentuella delaktighet skall räknas. Vi är för dagen helt överens om att Dina 2.500:--/vecka betalas enligt överenskommelse. Den ändringen skall dock vidtagas att Du får 5.000:-- den 30 mars (för Din kvartalshyra) samt därefter 2.000:--/vecka i stället för tidigare överenskomna 2.500:-- intill dess full betalning skett med sammanlagt 50.000:-- (49.000:-- + 1.000:--).

Hälsningar  
SFP



Ove Wallius

Correspondance between Torgny Wickman and *Expressen's* Hans Fridlund, 12/4/1973

EXPRESSEN				
snnummer	Avdelning	Artikelnamn	Sid	Författare
Börja här				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6		Bäste.		
7				
8		Härmed, sent omside p g a andra sysselsättningar,		
9		kopian på den tilltänkta artikeln - som förhoppningsvis		
10		ska befinnas vara utan epitet modell "sex-mästaren" i		
11		våra redaktionella behandlingar av ämnet....		
12		Bra vore om Du så fort som möjligt, gärna		
13		under torsdag förmiddag kan ringa och säga OK - vi vill		
14		gärna ha in den så fort som möjligt, eftersom det redan		
15		dröjt en vecka.		
16				
17		x 22 48 00		
18		basta hälsningar		
19		Torgny Wickman		
20				
21				
22				

T. WICKMAN  
WEGERSBERG

Hans Fridlund  
Tidningen EXPRESSEN  
105 16 STOCKHOLM

Käre skrivare,

du höll ditt löfte. Artikeln är OK med de ytterligare små ändringar som jag gjort, i sanningens intresse. T ex har jag inte inrett badrummen 91 flyglarna, de fanns när jag kom hit och Inkräktarna kommer efter en thriller som börjar i maj och vars namn jag inte nämnt. O s v.

Tack också för vänligheten att hålla ditt löfte om kopia till mig. Expressen håller på att rehabilitera sig, kanske. Sänder manus express nu en timma efter erhållandet.

Vänliga hälsningar  
Torgny Wickman

Wegersberg den 12 april 1973.



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**swedish filmproduction investment ab**

**sfp**

SFP  
OW/TM

Regissör Torgny Wickman  
Wegersberg

641 00 Katrineholm

Stockholm den 10 maj 1973

Betr. filmprojektet ANITA

Jag bekräftar våra telefondiskussioner betr. ANITA-projektet. Vi är helt eniga om att undertecknad är den som ivrigast hävdar linjen att våra filmer skall vara så snygga som möjligt utan onödig s.k. hard-core. Emellertid står och faller framtida filmproduktioner med att dagens filmer är säljbara.

Vad menas då med säljbara? Naturligtvis är åsikterna synnerligen delade i olika länder, beroende på respektive lands censur. Vad som idag är tillåtet i Sverige finns det ingen som helst möjlighet att visa i broderländerna Norge eller Finland. Vad som kan visas i Finland är omöjligt i Thailand och Hong Kong för att ta ett exempel.

Jag har därför i alla våra säljbrev till utlandet betr. filmen ANITA utlovat från början tre versioner. Detta har vi sedermera modifierat till två versioner och motiverat detta med att kunderna ifråga själva kan "klippa bort" och förkorta scener som omöjligt kan visas i hans land.

Alla våra kunder runt om i världen har tyckt detta vara en utomordentlig ide och intresset för ANITA är också mycket stort.

När jag såg filmen i måndags var min reaktion efter första halvan synnerligen blandad. Mitt intryck förbättrades avsevärt efter andra halvan, men kvar stod ändå känslan av att filmen sitter mellan 2 stolar. Eftersom det är en sexfilm vi säljer - filmen handlar om en nymfomans liv och utveckling - kan vi inte göra en enbart psykologisk film. Alla ev. köpare måste bli besvikna och känna sig lurade. Det är därför absolut ett villkor att filmen kompletteras med scener, som kan sättas in eller tagas bort allt efter kundernas respektive önsknings. Inspelningen av dessa tillägsscener måste vara klar i god tid före maj månads utgång och jag bekräftar att Christina Lindberg är kontrakterad för ev. kompletteringsdagar under perioden 23 - 30 maj.

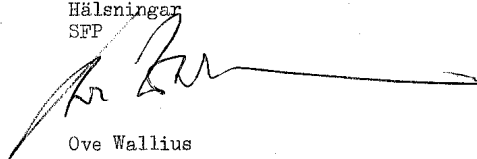
Jag bifogar en lista på scener, som vi önskar inspelade och vi förlitar oss naturligtvis på inspelningsgruppens skicklighet att få dem så bra som möjligt.

Jag repeterar än en gång att det på intet vis är avsikten att göra

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några hard-core scener, däremot måste vissa scener, som nu lämnar  
för mycket åt åskådarens inbillning, förlängas.

Hälsningar  
SEP



Ove Wallius

cc. Hans Dittmer  
Lars Lundberg  
Gustaf Mandahl  
Nils Skeppstedt  
Ulf Wallius

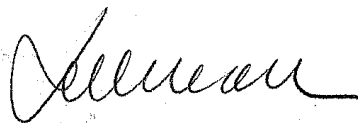
AN ONEST GIRL.

Ladies and gentlemen  
lis<sup>t</sup>sen to me  
now  
a girl like me  
a girl like me  
will never be happy again  
so I tell you

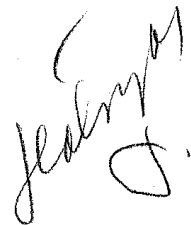
An onest girl like me  
an onest girl  
likes to be  
cared  
as a womman  
loved  
as a womman  
too  
I tell you

Ladies and gentlemen  
look at me serious  
a girl like me  
a girl like me  
will never be happy again  
and she knows that  
I show me now  
for you  
I show me as I am for you  
an real onest girl  
is thru.....

Sista versen bisseras.



T Wickman Wegersberg den 3 juni 1973.



# Filmography

*9 1/2 Weeks* (Adrian Lyne 1986)  
*A Girl Without a Name* (*Flicka utan namn*, Torgny Wickman 1954)  
*A Star Is Born* (George Cukor 1954)  
*Amistad* (Stephen Spielberg 1997)  
*Anita, Swedish Nymphet* (*Anita: ur en tonårsflickas dagbok*, Torgny Wickman 1973)  
*Hell Commandos* (*Comando al inferno*, José Luis Merino 1968)  
*Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996)  
*Constance* (Knud Vesterskov 1998)  
*Dark Dreams* (Arthur Guermentes 1971).  
*Deep Throat* (Gerald Damiano, 1972)  
*Det glömda rummet* (Torgny Wickman, 1960)  
*Emil and the Piglet* (*Emil och griseknoen*, Olle Hellblom, 1973)  
*Exposed* (*Exponerad*, Gustav Wiklund, 1971)  
*Fear Has 1000 Eyes* (*Skräcken har 1000 ögon*, Torgny Wickman, 1970)  
*Flossie* (Mac Ahlberg 1974)  
*Four Nights of a Dreamer* (*Quatre nuits d'un rêveur*, Robert Bresson, 1971)  
*Good Will Hunting* (Gus van Sant, 1997)  
*I Am Curious Yellow* (*Jag är nyfiken - gul*, Vilgot Sjöman 1967)  
*Kill Bill: Volume One* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003)  
*Kill Bill: Volume Two* (Quentin Tarantino, 2004)  
*Live and Let Die* (Guy Hamilton 1973)  
*Lockfågeln* (Torgny Wickman 1971)  
*Magnum Force* (Ted Post 1973)  
*Mollie, Familjeflickan.* (Mac Ahlberg 1977)  
*More From the Language of Love* (*Mera ur kärlekens språk*, Torgny Wickman, 1970)  
*Nymphomaniac Vol.1* (Lars von Trier, 2013)  
*Nymphomaniac Vol.2* (Lars von Trier, 2013)  
*One Swedish Summer* (...*Som havets nakna vind*, Gunnar Höglund, 1968)  
*Oral Generation* (Richard Franklin 1971)

*Summer with Monika* (*Sommaren med Monika* Ingmar Bergman, 1953)  
*Swedish and Underage* (*Eva - den utstötta*, Torgny Wickman, 1967)  
*Papillon* (Frank Schaeffer, 1972)  
*Practice Makes Perfect* (*Ta mig I dalen*, Torgny Wickman, 1977)  
*Shocking Truth* (Alexa Wolf, 2000)  
*Showgirls* (Paul Verhoeven, 1995)  
*Sex Dream in 3D* (*Drömsex i 3D*, Torgny Wickman, 1972)  
*Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (John Lamb 1970)  
*Strandhugg i somras* (Mikael Ekman 1972)  
*Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)  
*The Best of the Language of Love Films* (*Det bästa ur kärlekens språk-filmerna*, Torgny Wickman, 1971)  
*The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock 1963)  
*The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* (Sergio Leone 1968)  
*The Hunt For Red October* (John McTiernan, 1990)  
*The Intruders* (*Inkräktarna*, Torgny Wickman, 1974)  
*The Jungle Book* (Wolfgang Reitherman, 1967)  
*The Language of Love* (*Ur kärlekens språk*, Torgny Wickman, 1969)  
*The Lustful Vicar* (*Kyrkoherden*, Torgny Wickman, 1970)  
*The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing* (Richard C Sarafian, 1973)  
*The Newcomers* (Louis Su, 1972)  
*The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise 1965)  
*The Three Musketeers* (Richard Lester, 1973)  
*The XYZ of Love* (*Kärlekens XYZ*, Torgny Wickman, 1971)  
*The Simple Minded Murderer* (*Den enfaldige mördaren*, Hans Alfredson, 1982)  
*Thriller* (*Thriller: en grym film*, Bo Arne Vibenius 1974)  
*Tom Sawyer* (Don Taylor, 1973)  
*Underground* (Arthur Nadel 1970)

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