

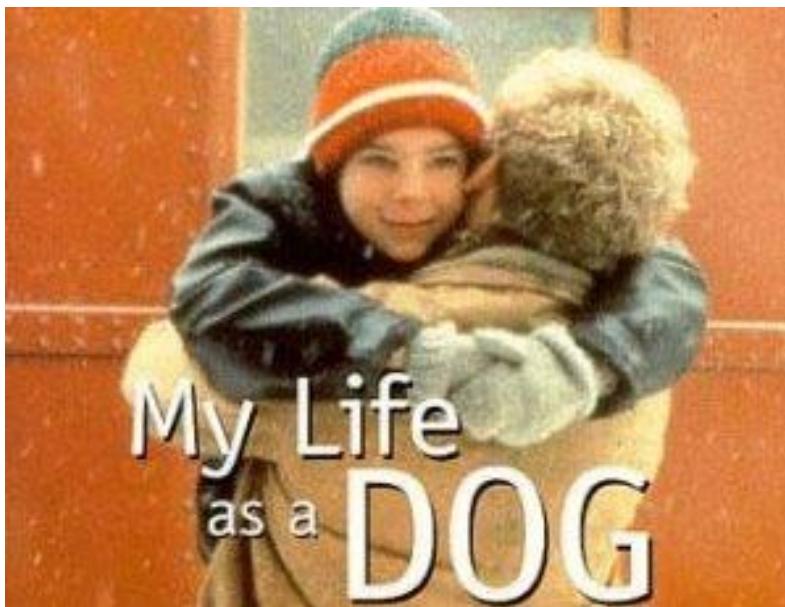
Mitt liv som hund

Sweden 1985

110 minutes Cert 12A

UK release: 1987

Director: Lasse Hallstrom
Screenplay: Lasse Hallstrom, Reidar Jonsson, Brasse Brannstrom, Per Berglund
Cinematography: Jorgen Persson
Film Editing: Christer Furubrand, Susanne Linnman
Art Direction: Lasse Westfelt
Music: Bjorn Isfalt



Cast:

Ingemar Johansson	Anton Glanzelius
Uncle	Tomas von Brömssen
Mother	Anki Liden
Saga	Melinda Kinnaman
Ulla	Kicki Rundgren
Erik	Manfred Serner
Konstnören, the sculptor	Lennart Hjulström
Berit	Ing-Marie Carlsson
Mr. Sandberg	Leif Ericsson
Mrs. Sandberg	Christina Carlwind
Harry	Ralph Carlsson

If your experience of Swedish films has been confined to Ingmar Bergman, I am confident that tonight's film will come as a delightful shock.

Unfortunately this film (like so many subtitled films) has rarely been shown on terrestrial television and had a limited initial release. However over the years it has received many positive comments.

"It is certainly one of my favourite films of all time," says the actor Rhys Ifans, who worked with Hallström on *The Shipping News*. "There is something so bittersweet, so genuine and so right about this film but I can't really put my finger on what it is. All I know is that we could do with more films like this. It is a quiet masterpiece that makes you feel good about being human."



In an interview on the Criterion DVD release, Hallström acknowledges that the film is his best work, the one he compares all his other films to, which bearing in mind subsequent films include *The Cider House Rules* and *Chocolat* shows how highly tonight's film is regarded. He earned an Oscar nomination for Best Director, although that was in 1988 which shows how long it took for the film to be recognised.

In an interview looking at his career, Hallström commented: "I can't go back and label myself as an outcast because I was a pretty well-adjusted kid, but I can certainly relate to the feeling of being

an outsider. I was shy and a bit awkward. Yeah, I can relate to that. I was sensible in a way that made me too vulnerable to rough games. I wasn't well-adjusted to the tough world of children."

This charming, bitter-sweet evocation of childhood is something of a minor gem based loosely on Reidar Jonsson's 1983 novel of the same name.

The year of the action is 1959, when the boy's countryman-namesake fought Floyd Patterson for the Heavyweight Championship of the World, and the film chronicles a year in the life of precocious 12-year-old Ingemar (Anton Glanzelius),



One of the keys to the film's success is the performance by Glanzelius, an unknown child actor with great gifts who, surprisingly enough, did not go on to an acting career. Physically, he is perfect for the role, with his inquisitive, slightly devious eyes, pug nose, and ear-to-ear grin; he's an imp you can't help but like, even when his emotions and nervous tics get the better of him. Ingemar has a penchant for getting into trouble and making his life even more difficult than it already is, and he consoles himself by reading about tragedies that have befallen others

Such an evocative tale depends intimately on individual performances and Glanzelius is more than equal to the challenge, despite his youth. The supporting actors are all excellent but they really provide just the backdrop for his stunning lead role.

While the film has varying themes and subplots throughout, careful editing and good directing has ensured that things neither become boring nor confusing. While there is a clear cut contrast between the darker moments and the more light hearted moments "My Life As A Dog" effectively manages to maintain the viewers interest at all times.

If only more films could contain characters so vividly painted, people with believable lives and the tiny idiosyncrasies which make them human. **My Life as a Dog** is frankly stunning, one of the best ever "coming-of-age" movies, which provides both amusing and at times sad entertainment. It almost makes you nostalgic for your own childhood. Almost.

Iain McGlashan

PS Hallström's first feature film was Abba: The Movie, so we cannot avoid some Swedish stereotypes tonight!

"Your first film was Abba: The Movie. Do you have happy memories of it?"

I do. Five weeks in Australia, it was wonderful. It was 1977 and coming from Sweden to Australia was fantastic. They're very nice. I made all their videos, apart from the last two, so if you ever see an Abba video on TV then it's my stuff. They look their age now. I saw a couple the other week and things have moved on. I'm still proud of them though."