

## Heartbreak Hotel

von Rebecca Tan

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### **Heartbreak Hotel (Schwedisch für Folrtgeschrittene), Schweden 2006**

Regie: Colin Nutley

von Rebecca Tan

Hamburg, 11.06.2007

Sharon Waxman wrote (NYTimes, April 26, 2007) that Hollywood is no longer making movies for women 40 years and older. Forget Hollywood! From Sweden comes a wonderful film which should delight women of all ages. Elizabeth (Helena Bergström) is a divorced gynaecologist; Gudrun (Maria Lundqvist) a traffic warden. After three chance encounters, they become friends. Encounter one: Gudrun writes Elizabeth a parking ticket, which results in a huge argument. Encounter two: Gudrun goes to a gynaecologist at her daughter's urging. The doctor is none other than Elizabeth. Encounter three: After her divorce Elizabeth decides to have fun in a disco (in the Heartbreak Hotel of course). She spies Gudrun sitting morosely on a bar stool where she is having no fun at all, but again she is there at her daughter's urging. Both are single, over 40, and "tenil" (senile teenagers, according to Elizabeth's son). Their friendship grows, at first unevenly with Elizabeth the driving power. Soon Gudrun catches up and arranges blind dates for them with motorcyclists; here Gudrun is the strong one and Elizabeth falls apart with a vengeance (my favourite scene).

I enjoyed this film immensely; I recognized myself and my friends. It's hard to imagine that a man could be behind it, but director Colin Nutley is a man, albeit smart enough to encourage input from Berström (his wife and actress in 11 of his films), as well as from Lundqvist, one of Sweden's top actresses. There are many scenes which could stand alone as skits, and they are deftly put together to flow smoothly (edit: Perry Schaffer). The music is boppy with three songs from Sweden's top singer, Jill Johnson, who plays a small role; there are no dull moments. My only reservation is that Elizabeth and Gudrun were out to have fun, but why did they want to date, after disappointing experiences with their husbands? Maybe men, even weak ones, are necessary after all. This humorous film was a big hit at the 2006 Filmfest Hamburg, where it won an audience prize over six other European films.