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Fimpen

(UK = "Stubby")

Sweden : 1974 : dir. Bo Widerberg

: 90 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Johan Bergman](#)

Inger Bergman; Monica Zetterlund; Ernst Hugo Jaregaard; Magnus Harenstram;
Carl Billquist; Stig Ossian Ericson

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ≠ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Sweden's secret weapon – not Abba but Stubby...
Source: 18th London Film Festival programme

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Six-year old is spotted kicking a ball around by the left winger of the national team, and is so good that he successfully replaces his discoverer for cup matches. Because he can't read the sport reports about himself and can't write autographs for the fans he opts finally for school instead. Critical and satirical fairy tale is not expressly didactic and thereby all the more effective. Little Bergman can indeed play football so well that without forced trick-work he's able to hold his own with Edström, Larsson, Magnusson and the other crack players. *** "

18th London Film Festival (1974) programme review:

" **"STUBBY"** is a delightful rarity, a film presumably intended for children which can be enjoyed equally by their parents¹. Stubby himself is a six-year-old boy with an

astonishing talent for soccer. After out-dribbling the national football hero, he is given the position of anchorman on the Swedish National soccer team and soon becomes their star, even leading them to victory against the USSR at Dynamo Stadium. But Stubby feels discontented as his playing interferes with his schooling and he cannot even read about his triumphs in the newspaper.

Widerberg's view of soccer is as romantic as his views of lovers in **"ELVIRA MADIGAN"** but equally captivating. As Penelope Houston noted in "Sight & Sound" - **"STUBBY"** sounds dire: a fantasy about a six-year-old, not very advanced when it comes to reading and writing and tying his bootlaces, who is a natural soccer genius and becomes the prop of Sweden's team. But Widerberg, in his most relaxed and gentle mood, keeps the ideas going beautifully, feeding in a string of amiable notions (like the child's bedtime book which sends the whole team to sleep) before finally retiring the harassed, exhausted prodigy to his lessons. Footballing children may find the soccer scenes not absolutely persuasive; but Stubby himself invites maximum identification." "

Film Review 1974-75 note:

"Some well-known [Swedish] directors have produced characteristic work... Vilgot Sjöman may at last be living down his scandal success of the **"CURIOUS"** films with **"A HANDFUL OF LOVE"**... It sounds like the sort of film that Bo Widerberg might have made, but he too may have moved on with **"STUBBY"**, a comedy about a six-year old boy who gets into the Swedish national football team.. "

¹ the fact it wasn't made in English has a good deal to do with that..

NFT Bulletin -December '82 - review:

“ **"STUBBY"** is a delightful rarity, a children's film which can be enjoyed equally by their parents. Stubby is a 6-year old with an astonishing talent for soccer. After out-dribbling the national football hero, he is given the position of anchorman on the Swedish national soccer team and soon becomes their star, even leading them to victory against the USSR at Dynamo Stadium. Cert U. Suitable 9 years and up.”



Source: NFT Bulletin

No further information currently available. The US has released more than enough titles (thank you very much) in which a kid somehow rescues the bacon of a major league football team or baseball team – **"ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD"** (51 & 94), **"THE KID FROM LEFT FIELD"** (53 & 79), **"TIGER TOWN"** (83), **"LITTLE BIG LEAGUE"** (94), and notably **"ROOKIE OF THE YEAR"** (93) – but Europe has been slow to retaliate with soccer or cricket-based tales. It's notable, while we're on the subject, how soccer-based films have always proved less bankable in Europe than baseball/football titles in the States. No shortage of fanatical devotion to the sport, but it doesn't seem to translate well to the cinema.

And, although soccer has been meat and two veg to British boys (most of them, at any rate) for generations, children's films and television have also been slow to capitalise on that appetite (while it was always a staple, for example, of British boys' comics). Everybody can recall the school football match in **"KES"**, but who can recall a school football film?

However, to the Catholicism of football I am an Islamic fundamentalist, so who's complaining? It would be interesting, though, to hear the NFT rationalise *why* they felt a film like this would not be "suitable" for 8-year olds, or indeed 6-year olds, since that's the age of its protagonist. "Suitable 9 years and up"? Nonsense.

But what's this? *More* Bergmans? I've no idea whether Johan and Inger here are also related, but the maestro appeared both in person and played as a child in **"SÖNDAGS BARN"** ('92), directed by his son Daniel, while his own chief contributions to the archive are **"TYSTNADEN"** and **"FANNY OCH ALEXANDRA"**.

See subject index under **PRODIGIES / GIFTED CHILDREN, SCANDINAVIA** and **SOCCER**.