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Frame by frame: Life's a movie for *After Midnight* pair Amanda (Francesca Inaudi) and Martino (Giorgio Pasotti).

'After Midnight'

Another day in paradiso

Italian import *After Midnight* arrives touted as the new *Cinema Paradiso*, but even those for whom the phrase "the new *Cinema Paradiso*" inspires immediate evacuation procedures should give writer-director (and film critic) Davide Ferrario's new film a chance. Yes, *After Midnight* does have its fair share of whimsy, exacerbated by droll, très *Amélie* narration. But dammit — I liked it in spite of my cynical, snarling self. Shy Martino (Giorgio Pasotti) spends nights prowling Turin's enchanting Museum of Cinema; his job as a watchman consists mostly of screening silent films for an audience of one. He's particularly fond of Buster Keaton, and when he literally collides with the free-spirited Amanda (Francesca Inaudi, who resembles a punky Penélope Cruz), he clumsily tries to woo her using tactics cribbed from the Great Stone Face's playbook. Amanda's unofficial boyfriend, a car thief and unrepentant ladies' man known simply as the Angel (Fabio Troiano), is less than thrilled by Martino's entrance into Amanda's life, but the trio manage to do all right, for a while anyway — à la the overtly referenced *Jules et Jim*. A wry sense of humor saves *After Midnight* from being too saccharine and clichéd, although the dreaded phrase "a love letter to cinema" could conceivably apply here. Moreover, *After Midnight* is a charming mélange of romance, mathematics (weirdly enough), and vintage-film swooning, in the best way possible. *Castro, Smith Rafael.* (Cheryl Eddy)