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# AU PAIR

(GERMAN-BRITISH)

An Angelika Films release of a Hermes Film GmbH (Munich) production, for Bayerischer Rundfunk and Telesyn, Wales. Produced by Angelika Weber, Thomas Hernadi. Directed by Weber. Screenplay, Hernadi, Greg Dinner. Camera (color) Marian Sloboda; editor, Alexander Rupp; music, Gerhard Daum; sound, David Heinemann. Reviewed at World Film Festival, Montreal (non-competing), Sept. 1, 1994. Running time: 92 MIN.

With: Clare Woodgate, Justin Chadwick, Elizabeth Schofield, Karl Tessler, Dale Rapley, Anna Nieland, Wilke Durant, Myriam Weber.

**I**diotic in the extreme, "Au Pair" gives its nanny heroine the full Harlequin Romance treatment, effectively bumping it out of fest and arthouse circuits. Still, it boasts the salable combo of snazzy leads, glossy lensing and a hooky premise. Look for a long life in vid rentals and dub-happy Euro webs.

Opening scenes in Wales detail the disaffection of 17-year-old Susan (Clare Woodgate) with her quiet seaside village, busy veterinarian mom and loutish b.f. (Justin Chadwick). Learning of a job in Germany, Susan goes Continental, and the rest takes place in a Munich where no one (except lowly workers) speaks German. Nominally looking after the oddly voiceless child of narcissistic TV executive Barbara (Elizabeth Schofield) and dorky architect Ivo (Dale Ripley), the Welsh lass tumbles for Barbara's "assistant," Walter, a cold-fish cad whose job appears to consist of smoking cigarettes and taking off his sunglasses just so.

Susan and the others fall in and out of "love," but they all remain ciphers, with relentless soap-opera music to pump up unearned emotions (minor-key synths drone even when characters order coffee). Chadwick makes the best impression: His adolescent rock-singer role is written as a working-class buffoon, but he provides the only discernible heart. Schofield is simply awful, with flat Sandra Bernhard mannerisms grating against a supposedly elegant role.

It's a creaky bodice-ripper in which no bodices are ever ripped, but the pic is slickly shot. And Woodgate's pretty, pudgy face is a conveniently blank screen upon which unformed adolescent minds can project vague stirrings without the intrusion of pesky reality or modern politics.

—Ken Eisner