

## Document Citation

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## Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö (The Match Factory Girl) (FINNISH)

**Berlin** A Villealfa presentation of Villealfa coproduction with the Swedish Film Institute and in association with Finnkino and Esselte Video. Produced by Aki Kaurismäki. Executive producers, Klas Olofsson, Katinka Farago. Written and directed by Aki Kaurismäki. Camera (Eastmancolor), Timo Salminen; editor, Kaurismäki; music, Reijo Taipale, the Strangers, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Mauri Sumen, Badding Rockers, Nardis, Klaus Treuheit, Olavi Virta, Melrose; sound, Jouko Lumme; production design, Risto Karhula; production management, Klaus Heydemann, Jaakko Talaskivi; assistant director, Pauli Pennti. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (Forum of Young Film), Feb. 15, 1990. Running time: **70 MIN.**

Iris. . . . .Kati Outinen  
Her mother. . . . .Elina Salo  
Her stepfather. . . . .Esko Nikkari  
Man in dancehall. . . . .Vesa Vierikko

Also with: Reijo Taipale, Silu Seppälä, Outi Maenpää, Marja Packalen, Klaus Heydemann.

■ **Finnish cinema's wunderkind Aki Kaurismäki is back with "The Match Factory Girl," in which he has polished his deadpan realistic comedy style to a high gloss. His story about a tormented loser who takes a silent but gruesome revenge is sure to raise happy chuckles in specialized theaters.**

Title's assembly line worker is a mousy Iris, abused by everybody including the parasitic mother and stepfather she lives with in a slum apartment. They hog her salary and even the meat chunks from her soup. She takes solace in reading romantic pulp and in sitting around in dancehalls, unapproached and listening to more romantic slush while sipping soda.

One day a man asks Iris to dance and afterwards to his plush apartment. They bed down, but next morning Iris gets the bounce. Her parents bounce her, too, when they find out that she is pregnant. But nobody figured on the hidden strength of this timid girl, who now sets out to calmly plan and

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execute her revenge.

Using minimum dialogue and composing sparse frames nevertheless filled with telling detail, Kaurismäki accomplishes more than just a clever takeoff on Robert Bresson's quiet-violent style. He infuses every shot with real emotion although his actors' facial expressions are kept at a minimum. If his story is obviously corny, it also rings painfully true.

In the lead, Kati Outinen is everything Hans Christian Andersen must have had in mind with his own version of a day-dreaming girl selling matches on street corners. Outinen is Kaurismäki's favorite actress and he has her radiate a quiet glow even when expressing maximum sadness.

As in his earlier films ("Shadows In Paradise," "Ariel"), Kaurismäki uses romantic music sung by pop singers as a Greek chorus commenting on the value of dreams to sustain dreary lives. There is, however, never a condescending note. — *Kell.*