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Mitten Ins Herz
(Straight to the Heart)
(WEST GERMAN-COLOR)

V. G. F. 108 #14/83
Venice, Aug. 31.

Al Olga Film Production, Munich, in coproduction with Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), Cologne; producer, Denyse Noever. World rights, Munic Film, Munich. Features entire cast. Directed by Doris Doerrie. Screenplay, Jelena Kristl; camera (color), Michael Goebel; sets, Klaus Emberger; editing, Thomas Wigand; costumes, Barbara Grupp; production manager, Harald Kuegler. Reviewed at Venice Film Fest (Opera Prima Competition), August 31, '83. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Beate Jensen (Anna), Sepp Bierbichler (Armin), Gabriele Litty (Marlies), Nuran Filiz, Jens Mueller-Rastede (messenger), Joachim Hoepner (supermarket manager).

Doris Doerrie's career before her first feature, "Straight to the Heart," has been in documentaries and tv-productions since 1977. This explains, to some extent, the polish achieved in her debut pic — little doubt about it, she's easily one of the most talented German femme filmers on the scene today. A sharply sketched narrative tale of one-upmanship between two eccentric, quite narcissistic individuals intent only on satisfying their own selves without getting involved in any necessary social obligations "Straight to the Heart" scores as a comedy of manners turned inside out.

Anna Blume is a young independent lady working as a cashier in a supermarket. She spends her free time in her drab apartment writing letters to herself, and she doesn't particularly like being told what to do. So when the supermarket manager finds her helping out the mother of a foreign-worker family by not ringing up the cash charges properly, she just up and decides to leave the job on the spot. Then she dyes her hair an eye-catching blue to achieve a desired nonchalant "I Don't Care" presence on the streets.

Anna's independent nature, however, attracts the attention of a dentist during her search for a new apartment (she doesn't have any of the amenities of life in the old one, not even a refrigerator). He decides to invite her to live with him in his comfortable villa as a salaried "lady-of-the-house" with no strings attached. One might think that she's to be the rich man's geisha on the side, but in fact the dentist is lonely and only desires company of sorts since his recent divorce. The girl agrees to the odd relationship, then becomes quickly bored with nothing to do — save spend her \$1,000 per month on whatever takes her fancy.

Not even an open warm-hearted invitation to a roll in the hay works at the outset: this only comes about after she gets desperately drunk and then soaked to the skin on a rainy night.

The girl finally hits upon the idea of feigning pregnancy to win her host's affection, for what it's worth. He's delighted — and now Anna is in deeper water than expected. So she leaves on a long-term trip to have the supposed child in a Frankfurt clinic — that is, she up and steals a new-born baby from the arms of a Turkish woman, and successfully makes off with it. Our dentist doesn't really know the difference, nor does he care even after reading the truth of the crime by accident in a discarded newspaper. In desperation once again, Anna impulsively kills the only man in her life she has ever really cared for. The last scene has her on-the-run to nowhere with the baby in her arms.

An eerie tale of a cold, self-centered relationship, "Straight to the Heart" benefits from a tight script, peppered with comical twists and amusing dialogue. Lensing and

thesping are more pluses, particularly newcomer Beate Jensen and vet Sepp Bierbichler in the lead roles. All the same, it's difficult to sympathize with a kookie, kinky heroine who bluntly steals another woman's newly-born baby just to score a couple game-points back at the ranch — a narrative line between irony and decency has to be drawn somewhere. —Holl.