

SOAPS OVERSEAS: **Verbotene Liebe**

When WEEKLY asked readers to write in with their favorite foreign language soap opera, the hands-down winner was German *sodser Verbotene Liebe* (*Forbidden Love*).

"I stumbled across this German soap opera, *Verbotene Liebe* [on YouTube.com], actually a storyline on the show labeled 'Christian and Oliver' and I fell in love with those two characters," explains Shirley Oment, who runs the official MySpace page for actor Jo Weil, Oliver's portrayer.

"Christian was involved with a girl named Coco, and Oliver (Olli) was a bisexual man who fell in love with Christian," recaps Oment. "As time went on, Christian realized that he was in love with Olli, as well. The story took a while to unfold as Christian fought his feelings for Olli very hard. The actors, Jo Weil and Thore Schölermann, are so convincing in their portrayal [that] they have taken over YouTube. It's actually become quite the phenomenon."

No kidding, *Verbotene Liebe*, which debuted in Germany in 1995, is based on the Australian soap *Sons and Daughters* and is known for tackling all kinds of controversial issues — its first storyline was the love story of siblings Jan and Julia. (Take that, *Guiding Light*'s Jonathan and Tammy.) These days, however, the show is forming a special bond between disaffected U.S. soap viewers and the pairing of "Ollian." Clips are uploaded to YouTube daily and subtitled in English, French and Italian, and the couple is profiled on Web sites like *Gays of Daytime* (gaydaytime.blogspot.com) and WeLoveSoaps.com.

"After the disappointment that has been Luke and Noah's practically neutered relationship on *As the World Burns* lately, Olli and Christian are just brilliant," weighs in Tess, via e-mail. "They are treated like any other couple on the show, frequently take part in other plotlines, and just have one of the most well-written and well-acted relationships I've seen on TV."

Meanwhile, another fan, Sandra, notes that there's more than just the boys to rave in for, saying, "I also sigh along when young Constantin sets up a heart of burning candles in a park for his girl Judith, when former manwhore Gregor mourns the loss of his wife and child, when Sarah throws any insult she can think of into the face of the man she loves and can only extract herself from her dare when she realizes that her [drug] addiction almost cost him his life. *Verbotene Liebe* proves that good, old-fashioned soap writing isn't dead, even if you have to look overseas to find it."

If you can read German, visit the official network site at www.daserste.de/verboteneLiebe for more info. Otherwise, check out www.myspace.com/christianandolli or www.gaydaytime.blogspot.com.

