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## East Of Sunset

Picture: C    Sound: B-    Extras: D    Main Program: C-  
 CD Sound: B    Music: C+

Though it is sold as if it were a dramatic feature film, Brian McNelis' **East Of Sunset** is really under 50 minutes and shot on simple digital DV-type video. The story is about a young casual sex and drugs kind of gal named Carley (Emily Stiles, who is actually not bad here) who is just drifting on until she meets Jim (Jimmy Wayne Farley). She likes him, but proving that like people tend to zero in on each other, he is a big heroin user pointing to the path she could easily go down.

That is a promising set-up, but the program is so distracted by covers of Tom Waits songs and repetitions of non-dialogue scenes, which fare much better than those with dialogue. Those moments are shrill and sound like junk words on bad script pages, something impossible for these actors to overcome. After about 20 minutes, you realize this is going nowhere and every cover songs sounds like good (wished for?) end credits music. When all this mercifully ends early, it is still not early enough. If the treatment of drugs is inadequate and pointless, the use of sex is a disaster. The sex scenes, what you can see of them, are badly choreographed, acted and especially shot. McNelis simply does not have the guts or the grasp to deal with human sexuality and his actors are trying to take the censored approach that they think will keep them respectable for future work. They should see Vincent Gallo's **The Brown Bunny** (2003) to see all the ways they went wrong.

The letterboxed 1.78 X 1 image is soft, with ghosting, inconsistent color and detail troubles throughout. The Dolby Digital 5.1 is better by default, with its music score being the most sonically able feature. Too bad this is awkward in this case. The combination is almost as grating as the work itself. The only extras on the DVD is are a music video of one of the many Tom Waits songs (the CD included sounds better and spares you the program if you land up liking the covers) and commentary by the director that shows he has not idea where he went wrong. It is best for the sun to set on **East Of Sunset**, the kind of problematic project the expense of film used to prevent from getting made.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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