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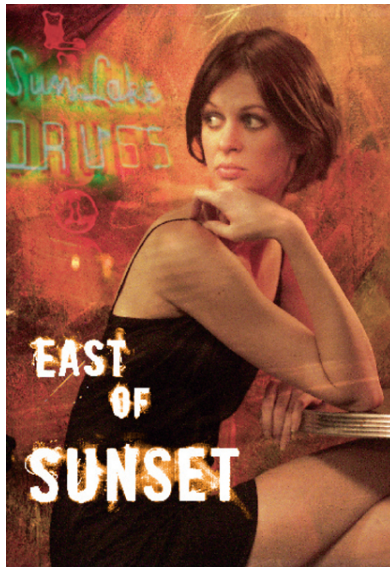

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MOVIE REVIEWS



EAST OF SUNSET (2005)

Starring Emily Stiles, Jimmy Wayne Farley, Dikla Marshall, Greg Garritano, Lucia Sullivan, Robby Morris, Jeff Gargiulo, Nino Cirabisi, Conor Jonathan, Eimer Devlin, Monte Vallier and Will Waghorn.

Screenplay by Heather Miller.

Directed by Brian McNelis.

Distributed by Blixa Films.
89 minutes. Rated NC-17.

East of Sunset

East of Sunset is the story of two alcoholic drug-users who fall in love in the slightly bedraggled Silverlake section of Los Angeles. This may sound like a dismissal of the film, but it is nothing of the sort. While I'd be hard-pressed to call East of Sunset a really good film, it does have an immediacy, a skid row vibe which makes it frequently fascinating. If the film sometimes suffers from a surplus of ideas, a scarcity of happy characters and a lack of money, it is still a charming little story.

Emily Stiles deserves the acclaim (including winning the Best Actress Award at the Method Fest 2005) that she has received for playing Carley, a numb, rather miserable barfly whose life is a series of one night stands, depressive episodes, Xanax, alcohol and weed. One night when stood up by a date at a new bar, she meets the bartender Jim (Jimmy Wayne Farley) and they begin upon an on again-off again love relationship. Carley finds it hard to let him in because she is convinced he will hurt her, so she uses every excuse she can to break up with him; everything from insisting it be just a physical relationship to becoming angered when struggling artist Jim actually gets a SoHo gallery showing in New York. Then she totally freezes him out when she finds out he has used heroin. (She's okay with Xanax and marijuana, but she has to draw the line somewhere...)

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GELLAR****DEBBIE GIBSON****MICHAEL JOSEPH
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Acting as sounding boards and alternatives to the romantic turmoil are Ella (Dikla Marshall) and Alan (George Garritano), the best friends, who are there for dual purposes; to be supportive and yet also to tempt their friends to do the wrong thing. In fact, all the relationships in this world seem to revolve around (not necessarily in this order) sex, alcohol, drugs and/or whether the leads are in a relationship or just screwing around.

The movie was obviously filmed on a shoestring budget -- the entire thing is shot on four locations; her apartment, his loft, a (supposedly) SoHo New York art gallery and the local bar (which may be a real bar but it looks strangely like an unfinished set.) However this sparse poverty (despite the fact that each of them has a huge apartment) is somehow fitting for this minimalistic, vaguely kitschy and overtly depressed world.

The last character, and one that suffuses the whole movie, is the early music of Tom Waits. The entire soundtrack is made up of songs from Waits' first eight albums. Well, not exactly Waits' music. They apparently could not get the rights to the real thing, so instead they pepper the movie with low key (mostly instrumental) cover versions by the bar house band named (the) caseworker and a bunch of tracks culled from two tribute albums released on Manifesto Records called Step Right Up (1995) and New Coat of Paint (2000). This explains the Executive Producer credit for Evan S. Cohen, the president of Manifesto and the nephew of Waits' estranged former business manager Herb Cohen, who retains the publishing rights to all of these tunes.

In the end, though, East of Sunset is a nice little addition to the skid-row-love movie genre, like films like Charles Bukowski's Barfly, or Echo Park or McArthur Park. (It's probably not a coincidence that three of those four films are named after areas of Los Angeles...) Or, a little more subtly, the film recalls Tom Waits' musical Frank's Wild Years. However, as good as East of Sunset can be, is not nearly as cutting edge as it believes it is -- in fact it's a rather standard and occasionally melodramatic romance where two misfits finally meet someone

who understands them. It's just dressed in funky clothes. (9/05)



Jay S. Jacobs

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- PETER KRAUSE (1999)
- PETER KRAUSE (2004)
- LIFEHOUSE
- TOBY LIGHTMAN
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- JOSHUA MALINA
- JOE MANTEGNA
- CHARLOTTE MARTIN
- MINT CONDITION
- ANNA NALICK
- LIAM NEESON
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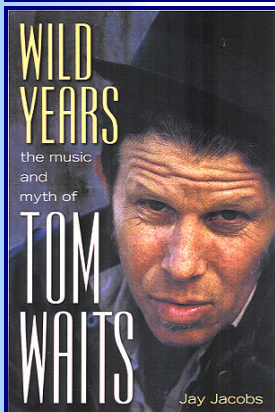
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