

Lost souls' lives intersect in serendipitous erotic thriller

Written by Kam Williams



They used to call New York the Naked City, but maybe L.A. deserves that suggestive sobriquet, judging by the goings-on in *Powder Blue*, an alternately thought-provoking and erotic thriller written and directed by Timothy Linh Bui. The film boasts one of the most star-studded casts for a flick that went straight to video, starting with Oscar-winner Forest Whitaker and Emmy-winners Lisa Kudrow and Ray Liotta, and also including Sanaa Lathan, Kris Kristofferson, Patrick Swayze and Jessica Biel. Plus, the internet has been abuzz about Biel's nude scenes, but still no theatrical release for this offbeat indie adventure.

The movie is rather reminiscent of *Crash* in the way that lots of Angelenos' lives intersect serendipitously, except that here the characters have a seedy strip club in common instead of car accidents. Jaded Rose-Johnny (Biel), aka Scarlett, dances there for a manager (Swayze) so cruel he won't let her take off Christmas Eve to be with her son (Chandler Canterbury) who's lying in the hospital in a persistent vegetative state.

Jack Doheny (Liotta), a hardened ex-con who served 25 years in prison, is one of the joint's regulars. He's looking for redemption after recently being diagnosed with terminal cancer. Also at the end of his rope is Charlie (Whitaker) a despondent former cleric who has been suicidal since his negligence led to the death of the woman (Lathan) he left the priesthood to marry. Not even the flirtations of a well-meaning waitress (Kudrow) can deter him from his mission to find someone desperate enough to shoot him for the \$50,000 he drives around with in his trunk.

Finally, there's Rose-Johnny's love interest, Qwerty Doolittle (Eddie Redmayne), an eccentric undertaker with money woes who just might be willing to fulfill Charlie's bizarre request. That's the pretzeled premise of *Powder Blue*, an intricately-plotted tale of woe which would have benefited immeasurably from a script rewrite.

Unfortunately, it's hard to take dialogue seriously when it's riddled with cliché after cliché like, "You're not from around here, are you?" and "But I'm old enough to be your father." and "Don't

Lost souls' lives intersect in serendipitous erotic thriller

Written by Kam Williams

look at me like that.” and “But we barely know each other.” and “We need to talk.” And “I never stopped loving you.” and “I don’t know what to say.”

I know what to say, “Straight to video!”

Good (2 stars)

Rated R for profanity, sexuality, nudity and drug use.

Running time: 108 minutes

Studio: Image Entertainment

DVD Extras: Audio commentary by the director and the producer, “The Making of” featurette, a photo gallery and the trailer.

To see a trailer for Powder Blue, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-AHITiUdSo>