



This Week: *Neon City*

By now you've probably learned what to expect from this column. Looking back over my last two reviews, I realized that all three of them were post apocalyptic, and two of them were car warrior epics. That bothered me. What if, by reviewing only those movies, people receive a false impression about the genre? What if they assume all my reviews are about end of the world battles? What if my reviews set up a wave of pessimism, apathy and future shock that swamps the campus, causing suicides and drop-outs and low marks and student protests and death and destruction and really awful things?

But on the other hand, why stop when you're on a roll?

Right! This week, we skip ahead to 2015 *Ano Domino* with *Neon City*. This bizarre car warrior flick was released under the Vidmark label circa 1990, when the ozone scare hit in a big way. It stars Micheal Ironside (you know, the bad guy from *Highlander II*) Vanity and the late Lyle Alzado. The setting: pollution and laser experiments have destroyed the ozone layer and caused the world to fall into perpetual winter.

Ironside plays Harry Stark, a bounty hunter who works the Outland. In a neat fight scene at the beginning, he captures a woman (Vanity) who turns out to be a Red Star (one of the most dangerous, vile and wanted criminals of the time). He tries to turn her in for credits at a scuzzy little settlement called Jerhico, but they haven't got the credits or facilities to hold her. So Stark is forced to hop on the overland transport to Neon City.

Boy, is he in trouble. The satellite reports show heavy Skins activity along the route, not to mention Zander clouds and at least one Bright (later, I'll explain later.) the upshot of all this is the last transport leaving for quite some time. Thus a motley crew of assorted dreamers end up on board: Richard Saunders as a lame comedian who sells suicide drugs; some old oriental dude who keeps spouting wisdom and scientific terms; Lyle Alzado as the bus driver, a.k.a. Killer Tomato; a crazy doctor addicted to eyedrops, and rich little lady who has no idea how to use a gun.

If you think all this sounds a lot like the plot for *Stagecoach*, you're right. As the bus makes its merry way across the

endless wastelands, they get attacked by Skins (outlaws who dress in, you guessed it, skins); encounter Zander's Clouds, which are areas of dense pollution with almost no oxygen; discover raided settlements where people are either dead or wish they were; and finally live through a Bright (an area where suspended pollution particles and ozone hole combine to refract light into a deadly laser like rainbow).

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either. This is a serious movie. The action scenes are well coordinated and all the loose ends get tied up in or near the end. The result is a gripping action drama or a complete farce, depending on your point of view.

Stuff to Watch For: The sheriff of Jerhico "convincing" Stark to take the prisoner; the requisite car chase scene where luggage kills; Richard Saunders dying (by that point, you're cheering the little geek to the afterlife); the real identity of the old dude and his unlikely weapon; and various other touches that keep everything looking authentic.

Judgment: Who needs *Stagecoach*? *Neon City* is a lot more fun. Even better, *Neon City* is very realistic, with numerous touches of humour to keep you from getting depressed. Try it. You just might like it. ■