

# Films suffer from violence, lack of morality

By **Geri Pare**  
Catholic News Service

**NEW YORK** — The scourge of drugs in the inner city is the subject of the violent action film, "New Jack City" (Warner Bros.).

Nino Brown (Wesley Snipes) and his sidekick Gee Money (Allen Payne) head the vicious gang, Cash Money Brothers, taking control of a fortress-like apartment complex where they process and sell crack cocaine to the locals at huge profit.

Detective Stone (Mario Van Peebles) convinces the top brass that Appleton and Peretti (Ice-T and Judd Nelson), two street-wise cops, have the best shot at getting the goods on Brown and company.

Using a reformed crack addict (Chris Rock) as a plant in the gang, the cops' scheme backfires, leaving many officers dead but no arrests.

The gang massacres the Mafia competition and anyone else who dares to oppose its activities. The gang members own the neighborhood, but Appleton is doggedly closing in on them.

Trusting no one, Brown becomes increasingly paranoid, summarily executing Gee Money after callously using his woman. Further bloody shootouts ensue until Brown is brought to trial. He pleads bargains in court for a slap-on-the-wrist sentence and gets instead a dose of instant justice, vigilante style, from an enraged onlooker.

Co-star and director Van Peebles, in his feature film directorial debut, makes an anti-drug statement by exploiting the seamiest aspects of drug addiction in the ghetto.

Characterizations are shallow in the extreme — the gang members are entirely evil and the two cops are conveniently tragic figures. One's mother was murdered by Brown and the other was victimized by drugs in his youth.

Violence is the name of the game here, in excessive, in-your-face doses. In a sick nod to sexual equality, women here are just as eager to blow off heads. When not killing, they are anonymous, disposable toys.

Given the restrictions of stick-figure roles, the actors are adequate though Nelson's role as the good guy is a throwaway.

The film is pretentiously presented as if it were a meaningful message movie. However, it only wallows in bloodbaths, glamorizing the money to be made off drugs and showing little human dimension in the agony of drug epidemic. Fast guns,



Warner Brothers, Inc.  
**Russell Wong (from left) as Detective Kim Park, Mario Van Peebles as Detective Stone, Judd Nelson as Detective Nick Peretti and Ice-T as "Scotty" Appleton are out to expose a ruthless mobster in the gangster epic "New Jack**

fast money and fast women fill the screen. The only "humor" comes as gang members laugh at a youth who stutters.

Hopefully "New Jack City" will be underpopulated and go bankrupt. It already is morally.

Due to excessive violence, sexual exploitation, some nudity and incessant rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

## 'True Colors'

A love triangle and driving ambition force two friends from law school to show their "True Colors" (Paramount).

Thrown together as roommates, opportunistic Peter (John Cusack) and idealistic Tim (James Spader), forge a close friendship despite their opposing personalities and value systems.

Their relationship is sorely tested when James' longtime love, Diana (Imogen

Stubbs), rejects him as not being ambitious enough. Her father is the powerful Senator Stiles (Richard Widmark), a fact not lost on politically ambitious Peter, who soon woos and weds her.

Working as the senator's aide, Peter uses his shady connections to start a campaign fund for his own shot at Congress. After manipulating a professional favor out of Tim — now a crusading Justice Department attorney — Peter allows the favor to backfire on Tim, who is then suspended.

When the betrayal is revealed, Tim must deal with an uncharacteristic desire for revenge. Nailing Peter and his criminal associates would mean ruining his friend's career and destroying a deeply felt relationship.

As co-produced and directed by Herbert Ross, "True Colors" is an engrossing, if overbaked, little drama.

As the story chugs along, occasionally losing steam, one wonders where dirt-poor Peter got the money for college and law school and a snappy red convertible to boot. But there's no question where he's coming from morally, and in the end Peter the survivor is better than ever at rationalizing, which is probably more thought-provoking for the audience than a sudden conversion.

Due to restrained premarital encounters, intermittent rough language and minimal violence, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.



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