NEON: An Electric Memoir
Six years in the making! More than a striking record of the town and of northern America, this is a great success of a picture for Packard in 1920 - right up to the wonderful sagacity of Las Vegas.

The man who lived up Broadway (as a part of the old New York world) that famous Camel cigarette sign, and smoke rings being blown are captured up there on the screen. Old "cold" signs no longer light up anywhere; followed by dragons on Chinese restaurants, Art Deco movie-house marquees, and cowboys on bucking broncos. And on to the world of neon artists who maintain the tradition of the illuminated redly and find it appealing.

There’s a glimpse of a "bender" he who bends the neon tubing! shaping a sign and placing the life-size paper pattern, and a dissertation on how to get the clear bright colours - "If you know your gasses, you can make 150 different colours for a sign." All this wonderful stuff before your eyes should be enough, but the filmmakers have seen fit to add a commentary by a fictional character - "Gloria Raposo's story, as told to John Frizzell." With triple-eye lashes, and drink cupped in thin, grasping hands, Gloria (Jackie Burroughs) parks above the deli, hair illuminated redly by the flashing neon sign outside her window. She rambles and reminisces about her travels across the States, meetings with neon artists, the signs she knew and loved - reflecting on endless lists of place names and artists. Unfortunately, at the same time, riveting images on the screen, plus background music, leaving an audience knowing not how to turn it off.

It’s a great pity that a spendid piece of narrative writing doesn’t work. The image, and colour on screen are so vital and pulsing that only a word or two of information is needed along the blindingly bright way. The ending is a fabulous cascade of effervescence visualised by the various hotels and casinos of Las Vegas. As the come-on signs fuzz and shimmer, a truly 20th century art grabs a hold of yer!