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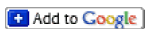
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Sanguivorous

[MVD Entertainment Group](#) // Unrated // November 19, 2013

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Review by [Tyler Foster](#) | posted December 19, 2013 | [E-mail the Author](#)

Billed in the DVD press release as "the first Japanese avant-garde, silent vampire movie ever made" (not sure if this is a quote from someone, or the work of the publicity department), *Sanguivorous* sounds like a cool little vampire gem that may have taken its time making its way from one side of the globe to the other. Now that I've gotten my hands on a copy, sadly, it's clear that most of these claims are smoke and mirrors designed to turn an art project into something worth selling to curious folks on DVD.

First of all, *Sanguivorous* is only 56 minutes long. The story, involving (if I understand it correctly) a young girl (Ayumi Kakizawa) whose latent vampirism is suddenly awakened thanks to a 2,000 year old curse, is not something with a traditional thrust. It's true that many silent films were short, but it turns out "silent film" is basically just a gimmick that the filmmakers aren't really interested in following through on. Much like *The Artist*, there's no actual attention to the style of silent filmmaking in *Sanguivorous*, which feels very contemporary. Even more to the point, the film isn't actually silent at all, because within the first 10 minutes, there's an extended dialogue sequence setting up the minimal story.

With "silent" crossed off, that leaves "avant-garde." I suppose if using filters in the editing program to give sequences a surreal, ghostly appearance and turn people's faces pale is considered avant-garde these days, *Sanguivorous* makes the cut. Admittedly, some of the film does achieve a certain other-worldly creepiness (a shot of blackened liquid moving in strands down the frame in a way that almost looks like hair really stands out), and even more impressively, does so through silence and suggestion rather than sting sounds and jump scares (lots of people moving slowly in and out of the shadows), but these moments tend to just peter out rather than develop into something more interesting.

IMDb trivia suggests that *Sanguivorous*, despite a new score by director Naoki Yoshimoto for this DVD edition, was never really meant to be viewed as a film. It was a piece that would play on screens with live musical accompaniment, more of a multimedia element of a performance than a feature film. Viewed in that light, the film's many shortcomings make sense, but as a home video release, *Sanguivorous* is more of a curiosity than a full-fledged feature film.

The DVD

The blown-out whites on the simple but straightforward artwork for *Sanguivorous* makes the imagery a little ugly, but I suppose that's in keeping with the film's aesthetic. However, it is quite strange that there are no pictures of the film on the back cover, rather, just a subdued backdrop picture and text. The disc comes in a cheap DVD case, and there is no insert.

The Video and Audio

Presented in 1.78:1 anamorphic widescreen, *Sanguivorous* is not exactly pretty. The picture was shot on low-quality HD video cameras back in 2008, with some footage exhibiting the usual trademarks (blown-out whites with garish edge haloes and heavy aliasing, poor color, and limited detail). Other footage, which is softer and less garish, is covered in filters to give it a surreal look, making judgment basically impossible. I'll grade right down the middle -- loses 2.5 stars for its general ugliness, plus 2.5 stars because it almost certainly can't look any better. Dolby Digital 2.0 audio is basically the same story. Although the picture is billed as a silent film, there are definitely passages of dialogue here, and that dialogue is at the mercy of the conditions in which it was recorded. Early material of a man reading from a book is muffled and riddled with echo. Music sounds fine, but lacks the separation that would come with higher-resolution source audio or a 5.1 mix. English subtitles -- surprisingly, not burned-in -- are provided.

The Extras

Two brief extras are included. A "making-of" (9:05) looks back at the production from a recent standpoint, filling the viewer in on a little of the piece's history. The other extra is a short film called "Nowhere" (10:49), which is very much in keeping with the feature's style and tone -- ethereal, low-res.

Conclusion

Sanguivorous might be of interest to some people, but curious viewers should know that's what this is -- more of a special interest piece of filmmaking than an actual narrative feature. Since the film doesn't necessarily lend itself to repeat viewings, and the extras are short, they should **rent it** in order to check it out.

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