

# Indie Horror Films

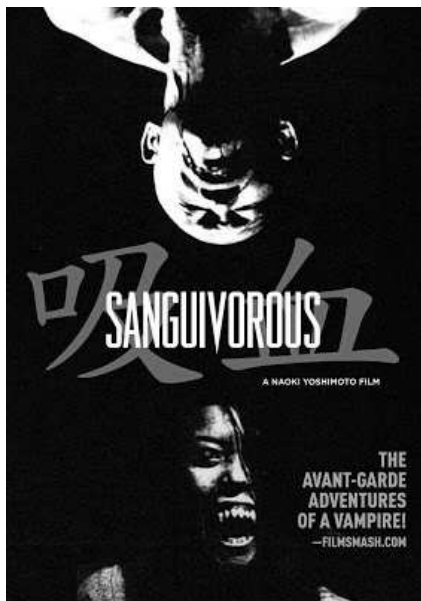
All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to [rbf55@msn.com](mailto:rbf55@msn.com).

Friday, November 15, 2013

## DVD Review: Sanguivorous (Kyuketsu)

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### Sanguivorous (aka Kyuketsu)

Directed, edited and music by Naoki Yoshimoto

Tidepoint Pictures

Rain Trail Pictures

Stavros Films

56 minutes, 2009 / 2013

[www.MVDvisual.com](http://www.MVDvisual.com)

Literally translated, the title of the film is to *feed off the blood of the living*, usually referring to parasites and certain bats; here, it is merely shortened to "sucking blood." That works, too.

It is not surprising to me they shortened the definition, because the film runs just over 56 minutes. It's on that borderline that makes it more of a featurette, which works well on the festival circuit rather than a cineplex. But this will probably never play as a first liner except at conventions, fests and possibly art theaters.

*Sangafanga*, as I've been calling it, is a Japanese vampire film that is over-burdened with an art aesthetic that is both beautiful and cumbersome. Much like films such as *Where the Dead Go to Die* (2012, reviewed [HERE](#)) or *Profane* (2012; reviewed [HERE](#)), the director, Naoki Yoshimoto, has a more ambitious vision that he wants to put to digital celluloid, as it were.

Mixing black & white, color, muted color, and digital film effects, Yoshimoto brings us into a world that is usually dark, both in tone and vision (or, if you will, figuratively and literally), as we are introduced to the only four characters. First there is a young woman played by Ayumi Kakizawa, who is haunted by weird visions, strange feelings, and general anxiety. Her thin-cut side-burned (hipster?) boyfriend, embodied by Mutsuko Yoshinaga, reads a text that borrows from the Bram Stoker idea that a ship with a coffin containing a many-hundred year-old vampire came



Ayumi Kakizawa

## Blog Archive

- 2014 (5)
- ▼ 2013 (36)
  - December (3)
  - ▼ November (2)
    - DVD Review: Sanguivorous (Kyuketsu)
    - DVD Review: Murder University
  - October (6)
  - September (3)
  - August (3)
  - July (1)
  - June (5)
  - May (3)
  - April (3)
  - February (4)
  - January (3)
- 2012 (27)

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ashore onto Japan centuries before, and the heirs of its contents still have the vampire blood floating around waiting until it is aroused (the film's term, i.e., lose your virginity and...). Joining in is an older couple (her parents?), played by Masaya Adachi, who has the prerequisite Asian long, white fingernails, and the striking, muscular and bald Ko Murobushi, who looks like he was imagined from a manga comic (Ko is a leading avant-garde *butoh* dancer in his "day" job).

The story is kind of murky for a number of reasons. First, there is barely any dialog, other than exposition, so most of the storytelling relies on visuals and sounds. The main reason, however, is its artistic bent. Mostly filmed in black and white, it is often digitally treated to look like the *Nosferatu* period (1922), or scratchy, or with just a hint of color. Occasionally there may be one object in vibrant color, such as a red kimono, and more rare, a shot entirely in vivid color, such as a field of yellow flowers.



*Ko Murobushi*

Even with the blending of visuals, arty editing, unusual angles, extraneous close-ups of objects, and all the other modern methods to make it look older, there is definitely a beauty to the film. The way characters move, and how they are presented speak as much as the sparse dialog. Sure, you really do need some patience in this post-MTV/*Transformers* world, because this mostly moves at a snail's pace, while still managing to fill the senses with unusual imagery.

While there is some blood, and some wicked looking teeth, I would hardly call this a gory film by any stretch of

the imagination. Most of the shock value comes from the use of sound, be it a sudden loud noise, a piece of dissonant music, or just silence. Yoshimoto, who plays the piano on some of this, ties it all together to make it work, even if it is unconventional.

Speaking of Yoshimoto, there is a 10-minute or so making of short where the relatively young director talks about how the film came to be, mixed with some short interviews with Kakizawa and Murobushi. His solid grasp of English makes it coherent and helps to explain a bit of what is going on in the film.

The other extra is an additional short film called *Nowhere*, which is also around 10 minutes. It definitely has a similar auteur feel to *Sangafanga*, in which a man stumbles into a deserted factory and screams a few times, before walking out and meeting someone on the road. Again, there is no dialog other than the repeated yelling, and we are presented with a switching of color and B&W. I believe it is about a post-apocalyptic world, but I am not sure. It did win a prize for digital short at a festival, and that is hardly surprising.

To recap: the film is esoteric (perhaps not as much as, say, *Dog Star Man* (1962, by the way overrated Stan Brakhage) and intentionally obscure, but it is also a beautiful piece of art with horror as it heart. I'm leavin' it all up to yo-oo-oo, as the song says.

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 1:06 PM

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