



Share |

[Home](#)
[Latest Additions](#)
[News](#)

[Reviews:](#)
[DVD reviews](#)
[Book reviews](#)
[Music reviews](#)
[Culture reviews](#)

[Features & Interviews](#)

[Galleries:](#)
[Cult Films & TV](#)
[Books & Comics](#)
[Burlesque](#)
[Ephemera & Toys](#)

[Video](#)

[Hate Mail](#)

[The Strange Things](#)
[Boutique](#)

[FAQ](#)
[Links](#)
[Contact](#)

Follow

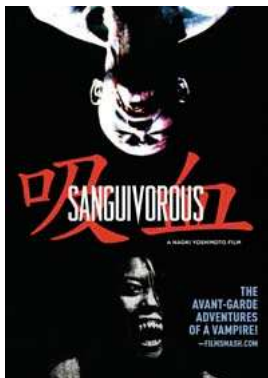
216

Like

STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING

SANGUIVOROUS

DVD. Tidepoint Pictures.



Avant-garde cinema seems to be something of a dying art these days. Despite more outlets for distribution of experimental works, I'm seeing fewer and fewer movies, either short or feature length, that really challenge the notion of conventional film making and narrative in the way that used to be fairly commonplace decades ago. Instead, we have spiritually and intellectually empty turds like **A Field in England** passed off as edgy and experimental by the easily impressed.

So **Sanguivorous** – original title **Kyuktsu** – is pretty welcome, at least if you have an idea what you are getting into. Described on the press release as *"the first Japanese avant-garde, silent vampire movie ever made"*, that description is only partly true. The film in fact opens up with dialogue scenes that set the narrative pace of the story before eschewing the spoken word – even then, it still has sound effects. But yes, by most standards, this is a 'silent' film, originally designed as part of a multi-media piece that included live accompaniment and performance. Inevitably then, the DVD is perhaps an incomplete work, given that the live elements are naturally missing. Though perhaps it would be more accurate to call it an alternative edition. Backed with a minimalist score by director Naoki Yoshimoto, it certainly doesn't feel anything less than a finished piece – though I would very much like to catch this in full multimedia mode.

The narrative is pretty simple – a young woman (Ayumi Kakizawa) is suffering from strange dreams and hallucinations. Her boyfriend reads her the story of a vampire who arrived in Japan on a ship some centuries earlier (a clear **Dracula** reference) and spawned a generation who are waiting to have their vampiric blood aroused through the loss of virginity. Our heroine, it is implied, is one of these vampires-in-waiting, and things become increasingly strange and disturbed as her dreams (or reality – it's never quite clear) are haunted by a silver-skinned, **Nosferatu**-esque vampire figure (Ko Murobushi) as she slowly evolves into her true self.

Yoshimoto mixes moments of vivid colour with decayed, black and white imagery that recalls both vintage silent cinema and the pxlvision films of Michael Almereyda (**Nadja** in particular), sometimes highly digitised, sometimes fairly straight looking, to create a strange sense of the bizarre. The film combines morbid eroticism with imagery that is very Japanese – Ko is a renowned *Butoh* dancer, leading the field in this experimental dance performance art. With no dialogue after the opening scenes (even the inter titles are suitably vague), the film's narrative quickly disintegrates and the viewer is instead immersed into a challenging world of visual aesthetic and physical performance. At times, it is like watching a performance art piece, at others it approaches an almost conventional horror aesthetic. In terms of the overwhelming atmosphere, the film brings to mind the early works of Jean Rollin, recalling his sense of the bizarre, the experimental and the melancholic morbidity that runs throughout his best works.



That it still works effectively as a film is down to the director's skill at crafting these non-narrative, multimedia video elements together into a whole that draws the viewer in. At just 56 minutes long, the film cleverly avoids over doing it – experimental cinema often falls down because it doesn't know when enough is enough – and remains compelling, intriguing and entrancing throughout. After a couple of years of ham-fisted attempts at turning horror into 'art', a film like this is a welcome return to the real thing.

Also featured on the DVD is the director's earlier short **Nowhere**, perhaps less interesting but still a worthy and experimental feature.

DAVID FLINT

[BUY IT NOW \(USA\)](#)

Share |