

Anyone looking for Bunnies at the Tokyo Playboy Club will be sorely disappointed. The closest this movie comes to Playmate of the Year material are three giggly hookers who dress up in costumes and don't seem to have many customers. Anyone looking for a terrific yakuza flick from out of left field, though, will find one in writer/director Yosuke Okuda's "**Tokyo Playboy Club**." Any resemblance between the cheesy brothel of the title and the nightclub atop the Palms resort in Las Vegas wouldn't merely be coincidental, it would be impossible. Action star Nao Omori ("Ichi the Killer," "The Vulture") plays an out-of-work businessman, Katsutoshi, who kills a wiseass student with a monkey wrench, because he was making too much noise and the tool was handy. The assailant decides to make a quick trip to Tokyo, where his cousin, Sekichi (Ken Mitsuishi), runs the aforementioned nightclub for the yakuza. It doesn't take long for Katsutoshi to take advantage of his cousin's generosity by beating a mob associate to a pulp in the men's room of a restaurant. The ante is raised when the two men find themselves in possession of the body of a yakuza boss who died of electro-shock while attempting to rape a young woman whose boyfriend betrayed him. When the boss' evil brother comes around demanding answers, Katsutoshi freely admits his role in making the body disappear and he doesn't care who knows it. With its extreme displays of violence and twisted sense of humor, "Tokyo Playboy Club" should remind genre buffs of the early work of Takashi Miike. That's high praise for the newcomer, Okuda.

By Gary Dretzka

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