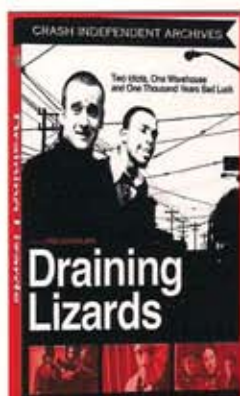


**DRAINING LIZARDS**

**Genre - British Action/Comedy**  
**All Region DVD (NTSC)**  
**Crash Cinema**  
[www.crashcinema.com](http://www.crashcinema.com)



How many times have you watched a really good British gangland thriller and wondered what it would be like to see its Hong Kong twin up there on the screen? Gangland glory cannot be exalted upon

high any more than it already is. With the Brits carving up a great big 'Chelsea Grin' on the face of their American counterparts, there seems to be no stopping independent cinema as it rolls into town.

We already know the polish of the Hong Kong gangland film genre, which for so long has threatened to give Western cinema a run for its money. So what happens when the two collide? **Draining Lizards** is a sizeable chunk of film noir comedy coughed up from the Crash Cinema Independent Archive. Intriguingly packaged as "two idiots, three ruthless gangs, one warehouse and 1000 years of bad luck", this is worth watching for the blurb alone.

Matthew Sunderland's year 2000 effort in fusion cinema is very much an experiment which could have gone horribly wrong. Oddly enough, both crime underworlds of London Cockneys and Chinese Triads meeting head on makes for an interesting take on modern London life. Oozing with the vibes of **Lock Stock And Two Smoking Barrels**, **Gangster No 1** and **Sexy Beast**; this is another British bite at the 'gangster flick' cherry. However, this time it has a very definite kung fu flavour. Following the misadventures of two would be burglars who seem to find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Joshua Rubin and Chucky Venice stumble unwittingly into a plot way over their heads when they have the misfortune to steal an ancient jade necklace which possesses a little bit more than visual charm.

It seems that the Brit pack of film directors and actors has come full circle again, as the cast of this film

demonstrate, with one of the main triad gangsters Jason Ninh Cao hand picked by Guy Ritchie for his similar role in **Snatch**. Vincent Wong and Joey Koonsombat also show their menace in this film.

The rather cheekily titled **Draining Lizards** is farcical beyond even its own belief. Matthew Sunderland's independent release explores all the gangland clichés and throws them on their heads in a fumbling, free for all. Having done the rounds on the film festival circuit this new DVD release has been unleashed on the U.S. market. If all the idiocy and slapstick dressed in its finest kung foolishness could be wrapped up in one package then this is what you would get...Enjoy!

**Reviewed By Kasha Van Sant**

**FULL METAL YAKUZA**  
**Genre - Japanese Action**  
**Region 2 DVD (Pal)**  
**Artsmagic Ltd**  
[www.artsmagic.co.uk](http://www.artsmagic.co.uk)



**Full Metal Yakuza**, was one of many 'straight-to-video' films from prolific director, Takashi Miike during the nineties. Miike is one of the shining lights of his generation, responsible for many of the edgiest and

rawest moments in world cinema. **Full Metal Yakuza** contains scenes of graphic and sexual violence but still has a low shock factor due to the comic-book nature of the movie. However, Miike holds the peculiar honour of being one of the few genre directors to have been cut by the BBFC in recent years with his ultra-graphic, **Ichi The Killer**.

This Japanese production is a low budget, high frills, adaptation of Paul Verhoeven's **Robocop**. There is an additional twist as the cyborg is a failed Yakuza down on his luck rather than a cop. Hagane (Tsuyoshi Ujiki) is a useless and cowardly Yakuza who admires the imprisoned Tosa-san. Both Yakuza are then gunned down soon after Tosa's release from prison. A mad professor (Tomorowo Taguchi) manages to salvage both the bodies and combine Hagane's brain with Tosa's heart, tattooed back

and private parts! The 'Full Metal Yakuza' must go on a bloody journey through the underworld to avenge the death of his beloved Tosa-san.

The film manages to combine gore and gadgets to create one of the most preposterous characters in the world of cinema. There is even a training scene where Hagane is taught to fight like a folk dancer! It was clearly never the intention of Miike to create an authentic martial arts movie, and much of the action is poorly choreographed with a greater emphasis on blood and guts. The special effects also lack any genuine attempt and proudly revel in their low budget feel. CGI is largely overlooked in favour of rewind and fast-forward shots, flickering screens and lots of super-crimson blood. The graphic displays of male genitalia have been digitally blurred, which only adds to the comedy!

**Full Metal Yakuza** will never pull on your emotional strings; it lacks the credibility or desire to command any sentiment. Unlike many of Miike's more recent works, this will not shock or disturb you greatly, but it will try and overwhelm you with a host of cheap frills. Released by Artsmagic this DVD comes in anamorphic widescreen with English subtitles and contains several fascinating interviews, a commentary from Miike expert, Tom Mes and much more. A bizarre film, **Full Metal Yakuza** is hard to love and hard to hate, it sits somewhere in between, but I have no idea where!

**Reviewed By Paul Richmond**

**DRACULA**  
**Genre - Horror**  
**Region 2 DVD (Pal)**  
**Anchor Bay UK**  
[www.anchorbay.co.uk](http://www.anchorbay.co.uk)

The two-part mini series, **Dracula** finally hits UK shores...This latest reworking of the Bram Stoker novel updates the setting to present day Argentina, where a wealthy young American property dealer named Jonathan Harker has settled with his girlfriend.

When Harker is approached by a mysterious Vladislav Tepes (Patrick Bergin), to help him sell his uncle's ancient Romanian castle, he jumps at the chance, hoping to earn a big chunk of commission from the sale. However, it would seem that Tepes has more sinister intentions than simply moving house. Upon arrival in Romania, Jonathan is