

CHUJI TABI NIKKI / A DIARY OF CHUJI'S TRAVELS , Daisuke Ito (Japan, 1927)
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HEBI NO MICHI / SERPENT'S PATH , Kiyoshi Kurosawa (Japan, 1997)
BARETTO BAREE / BULLET BALLET , Shinya Tsukamoto (Japan, 1998)
KINYŪ FUSHOKU RETTÔ: JUBAKU / JUBAKU: SPELLBOUND , Masato Harada (Japan, 1999)

CHUJI TABI NIKKI / A DIARY OF CHUJI'S TRAVELS

Director: Daisuke Ito • **Screenplay:** Daisuke Ito • **Photography:** Hiromitsu Karasawa, Rokuzo Watarai • **Cast:** Denjirô Ôkôchi, Nobuko Akitsuki, Eiji Murakami, Hideo Nakamura
Running time: 95 m. • Japan • 1927
Silent film with live musical accompaniment

Kunisada Chuji is a legendary Japanese folk hero who is an example of the *bakuto*, or the gambler that would later become the modern *yakuza*. Daisuke Ito, a popular director who began in silent films, devoted a trilogy of films to him of which only the two episodes included in this feature have survived.

OATSURAE JIROKICHI GOSHI / JIROKICHI THE RAT

Director: Daisuke Ito • **Screenplay:** Daisuke Ito • **Photography:** Hiromitsu Karasawa • **Cast:** Denjirô Ôkôchi, Naoe Fushimi, Nobuko Fushimi, Reisaburo Yamamoto
Running time: 79 m. • Japan • 1931
Silent film with live musical accompaniment

Another foray by Daisuke Ito into popular Japanese traditions; on this occasion through the figure of Nezumi-kozo Jirokichi, a Robin Hood-style outlaw, who takes from the rich to give to the poor. An adventure film that also provides priceless testimony of the prehistory of the Yakuza genre.

KEISATSUKAN / A POLICE OFFICER

Director: Tomu Uchida • **Screenplay:** Toshihiko Takeda, Eizo Yamauchi • **Photography:** Sôichi Aisaka • **Cast:** Eiji Nakano, Isamu Kosugi, Taisuke Matsumoto, Shizuko Mori, Tamako Katsura
Running time: 121 m. • Japan • 1933
Silent film with live musical accompaniment

One of the most emblematic crime films from the silent period shows that Japanese filmmakers had learnt the lessons of American cinema really well. The ups and downs of a police officer in his fight against crime give rise to a skilful mixture of action cinema and melodrama.

HIJOSEN NO ONNA / DRAGNET GIRL

Director: Yasujiro Ozu • **Screenplay:** Tadao Ikeda • **Photography:** Hideo Shigehara • **Cast:** Kinuyo Tanaka, Joji Oka, Sumiko Mizukubo, Hideo Mitsui
Running time: 119 m. • Japan • 1933
Silent film with live musical accompaniment

Famous for his family dramas and his rigorous formal style, Yasujiro Ozu also succumbed to the seductiveness of the West. In this melodrama about a *yotamono* (member of a gang of crooks) torn between two women, Ozu reproduces the typical settings and characters from American gangster films: thugs, boxers, femmes fatales...

NORA INU / STRAY DOG

Director: Akira Kurosawa · **Screenplay:** Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa · **Photography:** Asakazu Nakai · **Cast:** Toshirô Mifune, Takashi Shimura, Keiko Awaji, Eiko Miyoshi
Running time: 122 m. · Japan · 1949

Inspired by Neo-realism and American film noir, with *Stray Dog* Akira Kurosawa made the first great post-war Japanese film "noir". The unforgettable Toshirô Mifune and Takashi Shimura play two police officers in pursuit of a murderer. The film is not just a thrilling detective story but also provides a valuable documentary account of Japanese society at that time.

KYATSU O NIGASU NA / I SAW THE KILLER

Director: Hideo Suzuki · **Screenplay:** Takeo Murata, Hideo Suzuki · **Photography:** Mitsuo Miura · **Cast:** Ko Kimura, Keiko Tsushima, Takashi Shimura, Sonosuke Sawamura
Running time: 94 m. · Japan · 1956

A radio repairman becomes an unwitting witness to a murder. After also being recognised by the criminal, he becomes a victim of a tense game of cat and mouse. A *thriller* clearly inspired by Hitchcock shot by Hideo Suzuki, a filmmaker who deserves to be better known.

HARIKOMI / STAKE OUT

Director: Yoshitaro Nomura · **Screenplay:** Shinobu Hashimoto · **Photography:** Seiji Inoue · **Cast:** Minoru Ohki, Takahiro Tamura, Seiji Miyaguchi, Hideko Takamine
Running time: 116 m. · Japan · 1958

Although he is little known in the West, Yoshitaro Nomura is one of the great Japanese crime-film specialists. Based on a novel by the ex-crime reporter, Seicho Matsumoto, the film describes a surveillance operation on a suspect by two policemen in a tense thriller that skilfully transfers the models of American film noir to the reality of life in Japan.

HATESHINAKI YOKUBO / ENDLESS DESIRE

Director: Shohei Imamura · **Screenplay:** Natto Wada · **Photography:** Joji Ohara · **Cast:** Shizuko Kasagi, Tomiko Hattori, Kayo Matsuo, Hiroyuki Nagato
Running time: 101 m. · Japan · 1958

A gang of villains tries to make off with a cargo of medicine that was buried during the Second World War. Shohei Imamura pays tribute to American *noir* with a film that displayed the cynical vision of Japanese society that characterised his films. Ambition, violence and pettiness in a small group of people among which the figure of a genuine femme fatale stands out.

KARAKAZE YARÔ / AFRAID TO DIE

Director: Yasuzo Masumura · **Screenplay:** Hideo Ando, Ryuzo Kikushima · **Photography:** Hiroshi Murai · **Cast:** Yukio Mishima, Ayako Wakao, Keizo Kawasaki, Eiji Funakoshi, Takashi Shimura
Running time: 96 m. · Japan · 1960

The author Yukio Mishima, a great admirer of Yakuza films, fulfilled one of his great dreams with this film, which was to portray one of these tragic heroes on the big screen. Imitating one of his idols, Marlon Brando and his leather jacket, Mishima plays a gangster who gets out of jail and wants to make good, but cannot break away from his romantic aura.

TAIYO NO HAKABA / THE SUN'S BURIAL

Director: Nagisa Oshima · **Screenplay:** Toshirô Ishido, Nagisa Oshima · **Photography:** Takashi Kawamata · **Cast:** Masahiko Tsugawa, Kayoko Honoo, Isao Sasaki, Fumio Watanabe, Kamatari Fujiwara
Running time: 87 m. · Japan · 1960

One of the most controversial, non-conformist Japanese filmmakers, Nagisa Oshima gave gangster films a political edge. A gang of crooks who traffic in human blood is just an excuse for a bleak portrayal of the underworld of Japanese society, influenced by Pasolini's films and by modernist narrative experiments.

ANKOKUGAI NO TAIKETSU / THE LAST GUNFIGHT

Director: Kihachi Okamoto · **Screenplay:** Haruhiko Ôto, Shinichi Sekizawa · **Photography:** Kazuo Yamada · **Cast:** Toshirô Mifune, Koji Tsuruta, Yôko Tsukasa, Seizaburô Kawazu
Running time: 95 m. · Japan · 1960

Two of the great figures in Japanese cinema, Toshirô Mifune and Koji Tsuruta, play a policeman and a *yakuza* who become friends in the midst of a gang war. Kihachi Okamoto, one of the undisputed maestros of Japanese action films, directs the second of the eight films in the saga, *Ankokugai*, all set in the underworld.

HAKUCHUU NO BURAIKAN / GREED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

Director: Kinji Fukasaku · **Screenplay:** Kan Saji · **Photography:** Ichirô Hoshijima · **Cast:** Naoko Kubo, Hitomi Nakahara, Harumi Sone, Tetsuro Tamba
Running time: 82 m. · Japan · 1961

One of the first films by Kinji Fukasaku, which has often been compared to Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing*: a gang of Japanese and Americans tries to steal a large sum of money from the American army of occupation. American-style film noir that portrays the crude reality of life in Japan.

BUTA TO GUNKAN / PIGS AND BATTLESHIPS

Director: Shohei Imamura · **Screenplay:** Hisa Yamauchi · **Photography:** Shinsaku Himeda · **Cast:** Hiroyuki Nagato, Jitsuko Yoshimura, Masao Mishima, Tetsuro Tamba, Shirô Osaka
Running time: 108 m. · Japan · 1961

The mystique of the *yakuza* would never be questioned as much as it was in this film by Imamura. With his sardonic vision and dark sense of humour, the director dissects a directionless society that lives like a parasite on the American invaders to try and find the quickest way to get rich. A cruel, harsh film whose climax has no comparison in the history of the genre.

ZERO NO SHOTEN / ZERO FOCUS

Director: Yoshitaro Nomura • **Screenplay:** Shinobu Hashimoto, Yôji Yamada • **Photography:** Takashi Kawamata • **Cast:** Yoshiko Kuga, Hizuru Takachiho, Ineko Arima, Koji Nambara, Kô Nishimura
Running time: 95 m. • Japan • 1961

In another collaboration between Yoshitaro Nomura and the writer Seicho Matsumoto, a newly wed woman's husband mysteriously disappears on a business trip. She begins a long tense journey to try and find him that will lead her to uncover the shady pasts of a series of characters. A dark, tragic, bleak film that recalls the great Hollywood crime melodramas.

TENGOKU TO JIGOKU / HIGH AND LOW

Director: Akira Kurosawa • **Screenplay:** Eijirô Hisaita, Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni • **Photography:** Asakazu Nakai, Takao Saitô • **Cast:** Toshirô Mifune, Tatsuya Nakadai, Kyôko Kagawa, Tatsuya Mihashi, Isao Kimura
Running time: 142 m. • Japan • 1963

Kurosawa transfers one of the masters of the American crime novel, Ed McBain, to the big screen. The tense search for a child's kidnapper is the background to one of the best *film noir* in Japanese cinema. Sequences like the one inside a bullet train or the final hunt for the criminal in the Tokyo underworld should form part of any anthology of the genre.

JINSEI GEKIJO - HISHAKAKU / THEATER OF LIFE: HISHAKAKU

Director: Tadashi Sawashima • **Screenplay:** Goro Tanada • **Photography:** Shizuka Fujii • **Cast:** Koji Tsuruta, Yoshiko Sakuma, Ryunosuke Tsukigata, Ken Takakura
Running time: 95 m. • Japan • 1963

A key film in Japanese *yakuza* cinema, as it began the vogue for the *ninkyô eiga* or "chivalrous film", that is, stories about gangsters that were much closer to the concept of honour of the samurai. The undisputed stars of the genre, Koji Tsuruta and Ken Takakura, clash with a rival clan and put their friendship to the test. A classic of its genre.

YAJU NO SEISHUN / YOUTH OF THE BEAST

Director: Seijun Suzuki • **Screenplay:** Ichirô Ikeda, Tadaaki Yamazaki • **Photography:** Kazue Nagatsuka • **Cast:** Jo Shishido, Ichiro Kijima, Misako Watanabe, Seijun Suzuki, Akiji Kobayashi
Running time: 92 m. • Japan • 1963

Very few directors treated the crime film genre as irreverently and freely as Seijun Suzuki did. In what was one of his best films, the popular actor Jo Shishido plays a tough guy caught in the middle of a war between mafia gangs. A film packed with inspired visual touches and narrated with incredible verve.

KAWAITA HANA / PALE FLOWER

Director: Masahiro Shinoda - **Screenplay:** Masahiro Shinoda, Masaru Baba - **Photography:** Masao Kosugi - **Cast:** Ryo Ikebe, Mariko Kaga, Takashi Fujiki, Chisako Hara, Eijiro Tono
Running time: 96 m. - Japan - 1964

Masahiro Shinoda was one of the most important directors of what was known as *Nuberu Bagu* ("new wave"); the young generation of filmmakers who revitalised Japanese cinema in the 1960s. With this film he made a highly personal unusual contribution to *yakuza* cinema, in a sophisticated exercise in style that reproduces the codes of the genre to take them in startling directions.

ABASHIRI BANGAICHI / ABASHIRI PRISON

Director: Teruo Ishii - **Screenplay:** Teruo Ishii, Hajime Itô - **Photography:** Yoshikazu Yamasawa - **Cast:** Ken Takakura, Koji Nambara, Tetsuro Tamba, Toru Abe, Kanjuro Arashi
Running time: 92 m. - Japan - 1965

One of the biggest hits in Japanese cinema in the 1960s was this prison drama, the first in a saga that was to have seven sequels. A story that combines intrigue, action and melodrama that established the actor Ken Takakura as one of the big Japanese film stars of that period.

SHOWA ZANKYODEN / BRUTAL TALES OF CHIVALRY

Director: Kiyoshi Saeki - **Screenplay:** Takeshi Matsumoto, Akira Murao, Hideaki Yamamoto - **Photography:** Ichirô Hoshijima - **Cast:** Ken Takakura, Ryo Ikebe, Yoshiko Mita, Shinjiro Ebara
Running time: 90 m. - Japan - 1965

The start of a successful series of nine films that portrays the rivalry between modern gangsters, who are only interested in money and power, and the noble *yakuza*, who remained true to their code of honour (*jingi*). Ken Takakura once again shows why nobody could match him, katana in hand.

893 GURENTAI / THE 893 GANG

Director: Sadao Nakajima - **Screenplay:** Sadao Nakajima - **Photography:** Shigeru Akatsuka - **Cast:** Hiroki Matsukata, Shigeru Amachi, Kazuko Ineno, Yuriko Mishima
Running time: 89 m. - Japan - 1966

A realistic portrayal of the criminal world in Kyoto that focuses on the adventures of a gang of low-life crooks led by an ex-*yakuza*. Director Sadao Nakajima brought a breath of fresh air to the genre with his dynamic pace and his interest in shooting in authentic locations.

KORUTO WA ORE NO PASUPOTO / A COLT IS MY PASSPORT

Director: Takashi Nomura - **Screenplay:** Shuichi Nagahara, Nobuo Yamada - **Photography:** Shigeyoshi Mine - **Cast:** Jo Shishido, Jerry Fujio, Ryotaro Sugi
Running time: 84 m. - Japan - 1967

Jo Shishido, the quintessential tough guy in Japanese cinema, plays one of those roles that he specialised in: a hit-man who is betrayed by the men who hired him for a "job". A film with a solitary romantic hero with an end worthy of the very best spaghetti-westerns.

BAKUCHI-UCHI: SOCHO TOBAKU / BIG TIME GAMBLING BOSS

Director: Kosaku Yamashita - **Screenplay:** Kazuo Kasahara - **Photography:** Nagaki Yamagishi - **Cast:** Junko Fuji, Nobuo Kaneko, Shinichirô Mikami, Hiroshi Nawa, Hiroko Sakuramachi, Koji Tsuruta
Running time: 95 m. - Japan - 1968

Considered by many to be the masterpiece of *ninkyô eiga*, this thrilling *yakuza* film was highly praised by the writer, Yukio Mishima, who felt it attained the grandeur of classical tragedies. Koji Tsuruta plays his most emblematic role as a noble vassal who doesn't serve a honourable lord.

MOETSUKITA CHIZU / MAN WITHOUT A MAP

Director: Hiroshi Teshigahara - **Screenplay:** Kôbô Abe - **Photography:** Akira Uehara - **Cast:** Shintarô Katsu, Etsuko Ichihara, Osamu Okawa, Kiyoshi Atsumi, Tamao Nakamura
Running time: 115 m. - Japan - 1968

Hiroshi Teshigahara established his international reputation with *Woman in the dunes*, one of the great films of Japanese modernism. Here he joins up once again with the writer Kôbô Abe to work on a thriller. The great action film star Shintarô Katsu plays a private detective who has to find a man who has disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

MINAGOROSHI NO REIKA / I, THE EXECUTIONER

Director: Tai Kato - **Screenplay:** Tadashi Hiromi, Tai Kato, Haruhiko Mimura, Yôji Yamada - **Photography:** Keiji Maruyama - **Cast:** Makoto Satô, Chieko Baisho, Yuki Kawamura, Sanae Nakahara, Ran Fan O
Running time: 90 m. - Japan - 1968

A harsh and sometimes disturbing portrayal of a Japanese serial killer: a man hounds and murders five women driven by a savage lust for revenge. A dark vision of Japanese society filtered through sexuality and violence.

SHINJUKU MADDO / SHINJUKU MAD

Director: Koji Wakamatsu - **Screenplay:** Izuru Deguchi - **Photography:** - **Cast:** Yuko Ejima, Toshiyuki Tanigawa
Running time: 66 m. - Japan - 1970

Koji Wakamatsu was one of the most controversial, non-conformist Japanese filmmakers of the 1970s. In this foray into crime films he tells the story of a father in search of his son's killers in the underworld of Japanese society.

NORA-NEKO ROKKU: SEKKUSU HANTA / STRAY CAT ROCK: SEX HUNTER

Director: Yasuharu Hasebe - **Screenplay:** Takashi Ishii, Atsushi Yamatoya - **Photography:** Muneo Ueda - **Cast:** Meiko Kaji, Rikiya Yasuoka, Tatsuya Fuji, Jiro Okazaki, Yuki Arikawa
Running time: 85 m. - Japan - 1970

When you combine juvenile delinquency cinema with the western and a delirious pop aesthetic, the result is an extraordinary film that was impossible to classify. Meiko Kaji, the quintessential heroine of 1970's Japanese cinema, stars in an action film with unleashed passions directed by one of the most imaginative filmmakers of that period, Yasuharu Hasebe.

JUNKO INTAI KINEN EIGA: KANTÔ HIZAKURA IKKA / CHERRY BLOSSOM FIRE GANG

Director: Masahiro Makino · **Screenplay:** Kazuo Kasahara · **Photography:** Motoya Washyo · **Cast:** Junko Fuji, Ken Takakura, Koji Tsuruta, Tomisaburo Wakayama, Bunta Sugawara
Running time: 102 m. · Japan · 1972

A classic example of *ninkyô eiga* that was the last film made by Masahiro Makino, a veteran director with more than 200 films to his credit. Its cast brought together the very best of the genre: the popular actress Junko Fuji alongside the essential Ken Takakura, Koji Tsuruta & Bunta Sugawara.

JOSHUU 701-GO: SASORI / FEMALE PRISONER #701: SCORPION

Director: Shunya Ito · **Screenplay:** Fumio Konami, Hirô Matsuda · **Photography:** Hanjiro Nakazawa · **Cast:** Meiko Kaji, Rie Yokoyama, Isao Natsuyagi, Fumio Watanabe
Running time: 87 m. · Japan · 1972

An adaptation of a famous *manga*, this film on life in a women's prison was the first in a successful series. Far from being a realistic portrayal, the director Shunya Ito turned it into a violent stylised fantasy in which Meiko Kaji, with her endless silences and impassive gaze, created one of the most unforgettable icons in Japanese action cinema.

JINGI NAKI TATAKAI / BATTLES WITHOUT HONOR AND HUMANITY

Director: Kinji Fukasaku · **Screenplay:** Koichi Iiboshi, Kazuo Kasahara · **Photography:** Sadaji Yoshida · **Cast:** Bunta Sugawara, Hiroki Matsukata, Kunie Tanaka, Eiko Nakamura, Tsunehiko Watase
Running time: 99 m. · Japan · 1973

An emblematic film that changed the face of *yakuza* cinema for ever. With a hand-held camera and a violent dynamic rhythm, Kinji Fukasaku shot a gangster film with unprecedented realism, with a visual style that shattered the mythical aura around the *yakuza* and went down in history. This is how the *jitsuroku* field ("genuine chronicle") of the genre began, which was very successful in the 1970s.

JINGI NO HAKABA / GRAVEYARD OF HONOR

Director: Kinji Fukasaku · **Screenplay:** Tatsuhiko Kamoi, Hirô Matsuda, Fumio Konami · **Photography:** Hanjiro Nakazawa · **Cast:** Tetsuya Watari, Tatsuo Umemiya, Yumi Takigawa, Eiji Go, Noboru Ando
Running time: 85 m. · Japan · 1975

There are few characters in Japanese crime films as intense, desperate and horrifying as the *yakuza* played by Tetsuya Watari in this implacable film by Fukasaku: he is the perfect representation of the *nihirisuto* ("nihilist"), the *yakuza* who has lost his code of honour (*jingi*) and become a wild beast who rebels against everything around him.

INUGAMIKE NO ICHIZOKU / THE INUGAMI FAMILY

Director: Kon Ichikawa · **Screenplay:** Shinya Hidaka, Kon Ichikawa, Norio Nagata · **Photography:** Kiyoshi Hasegawa · **Cast:** Koji Ishizaka, Mieko Takamine, Teruhiko Aoi
Running time: 146 m. · Japan · 1976

In an adaptation of a popular crime novel by Seichi Yokomizo, that has been transferred to the big screen on several occasions, Kosuke Kindaichi, one of the most famous detectives in Japanese literature, investigates a series of mysterious gruesome murders that take place within the same family.

TAIYO WO NUSUNDA OTOKO / THE MAN WHO STOLE THE SUN

Director: Kazuhiko Hasegawa · **Screenplay:** Kazuhiko Hasegawa, Leonard Schrader · **Photography:** Tatsuo Suzuki · **Cast:** Kenji Sawada, Bunta Sugawara, Kimiko Ikegami, Yūnosuke Itō
Running time: 147 m. · Japan · 1979

A scientist manages to build a home-made atomic bomb and threatens to set it off if the authorities don't allow the Rolling Stones to perform in Japan and ban advertising at baseball games. A psychedelic satire shot right at the start of the counterculture of the 1970s.

YAJU SHISUBESHI / THE BEAST TO DIE

Director: Toru Murakawa · **Screenplay:** Shoichi Maruyama · **Photography:** Seizō Sengen · **Cast:** Yusaku Matsuda, Asami Kobayashi, Hideo Murota
Running time: 119 m. · Japan · 1980

Second version of a popular novel by Haruhiko Oyabu made into a film on four occasions. The film tells the story of a man who pretends to be an honest citizen by day, but at night becomes an uncompromising killer who drives the police and the mob crazy.

GOKUDO NO ONNA-TACHI / THE YAKUZA WIVES

Director: Hideo Gosha · **Screenplay:** Kōji Takada · **Photography:** Fujio Morita · **Cast:** Shima Iwashita, Rino Katase, Masanori Sera, Murasaki Fujima
Running time: 120 m. · Japan · 1986

The start of one of the most successful *yakuza* sagas of the 1980s, which was original because it told the story of the usual conflicts between gangs from a female perspective, by portraying the lives of gangsters' wives. The actress Shima Iwashita became famous for playing a tough elegant woman in a man's world.

SONO OTOKO KYOBO NI TSUKI / VIOLENT COP

Director: Takeshi Kitano · **Screenplay:** Hisashi Nozawa, Takeshi Kitano · **Photography:** Yasushi Sasakibara · **Cast:** Beat Takeshi (Takeshi Kitano), Maiko Kawakami, Makoto Ashikawa, Shirō Sano, Shigeru Hiraizumi
Running time: 103 m. · Japan · 1989

The first film directed by "Beat" Takeshi, better known in the West as Takeshi Kitano, and up to then an actor. Starting out from a conventional crime film script, Kitano refines, strips down and leaves it bare to achieve an extreme, radical film, a despairing ode to violence and death narrated with chilling austerity.

WAGA JINSEI SAIKU NO TOKI / THE MOST TERRIBLE TIME IN MY LIFE

Director: Kaizo Hayashi • **Screenplay:** Kaizo Hayashi, Daisuke Tengan • **Photography:** Yuichi Nagata • **Cast:** Masatoshi Nagase, Shirô Sano, Shinya Tsukamoto, Jo Shishido, Kiyotaka Nanbara
Running time: 92 m. • Japan - China - Taiwan • 1993

Maiku Hama is one of the most outrageous detectives that crime films have ever produced: he lives in a cinema, wears loud clothes, drives an old sports car and accepts any case that passes through his ramshackle office. He is an anti-hero created by the director Kaizo Hayashi, who pays tribute to American film noir in a delightfully ironic film shot in black and white.

GONIN

Director: Takashi Ishii • **Screenplay:** Takashi Ishii • **Photography:** Yasushi Sasakibara • **Cast:** Koichi Sato, Masahiro Motoki, Jinpachi Nezu, Kippe Shiina, Naoto Takenaka
Running time: 109 m. • Japan • 1995

In the very best tradition of classic film noir, a powerful story about five men who decide to make a fast buck by robbing the mafia. Directed by one of the most stunning talents in Japanese cinema in the 1990s, Takashi Ishii, this tough absorbing film contains a memorable performance by Takeshi Kitano in the role of an implacable thug.

ONIBI / ONIBI - THE FIRE WITHIN

Director: Rokuro Mochizuki • **Screenplay:** Toshiyuki Morioka • **Photography:** Naoaki Imaizumi • **Cast:** Yoshio Harada, Reiko Kataoka, Sho Aikawa, Ko Kitamura
Running time: 101 m. • Japan • 1997

One of the most interesting directors to revitalise the genre in the 1990s was Rokuro Mochizuki, author of some lyrical crepuscular gangster stories narrated with an unusual feeling for atmosphere. This is one of his best films, a story of love and death about a *yakuza* with an underlying unusual poetic sense.

GOKUDO KUROSHAKAI / RAINY DOG

Director: Takashi Miike • **Screenplay:** Seigo Inoue • **Cast:** Sho Aikawa, Lianmei Chen, Ming-Jun Gao, Jianquin He
Running time: 95 m. • Japan • 1997

Although director Takashi Miike has become famous for his irreverent attitude when it came to tackling film genres, on this occasion he showed that he could also make a disciplined film noir. This melancholy tale of a gunman exiled in Taiwan where it never stops raining has the serene beauty of the films of Jean-Pierre Melville or Johnnie To.

HEBI NO MICHI / SERPENT'S PATH

Director: Kiyoshi Kurosawa - **Screenplay:** Hiroshi Takahashi - **Photography:** Masaki Tamura - **Cast:** Sho Aikawa, Teruyuki Kagawa, Hua Rong Weng, Yûrei Yanagi
Running time: 85 m. - Japan - 1997

Well known internationally for his fantasy and horror films (*Pulse*, *Cure*), Kiyoshi Kurosawa has also made significant contributions to crime cinema. This bleak story about the revenge of a father whose daughter has been murdered is filmed with the cool hand and detached vision that characterises his best work. A real discovery for fans of the director.

BARETTO BAREE / BULLET BALLET

Director: Shinya Tsukamoto - **Screenplay:** Shinya Tsukamoto - **Photography:** Shinya Tsukamoto - **Cast:** Shinya Tsukamoto, Kirina Mano, Tatsuya Nakamura, Takahiro Murase
Running time: 87 m. - Japan - 1998

Years after surprising audiences all over the world with *Tetsuo*, the unclassifiable Shinya Tsukamoto shows his creative maturity with this amazing journey around an apocalyptic Tokyo at night. A strange highly personal film that shuns all the rules and conventions to become one of the most powerful portraits "in black" of Japan in recent cinema.

KINYÔ FUSHOKU RETTÔ: JUBAKU / JUBAKU: SPELLBOUND

Director: Masato Harada - **Screenplay:** Mugita Kinoshita, Satoshi Suzuki, Ryo Takasugi - **Photography:** Yoshitaka Sakamoto - **Cast:** Kôji Yakusho, Tatsuya Nakadai, Kippe Shiina, Ikuji Nakamura
Running time: 114 m. - Japan - 1999

The director Masato Harada, a great admirer of classic American films, describes the shady activities of the mafia in the Japanese business world. A quite different, realistic approach to gangster films that competed at the Berlin Film Festival in 1999.
