



[Skeletons](#)

Reviewed by [Dave Porter](#) August 2010

Skeletons is a darkly comic debut from young talent Nick Whitfield with lineage straight from the European school of film making.

Shot with a meticulous eye for detail, the film has a rural setting which recalls Jean De Florette

in its rustic charms. Avowedly set in the present, the feel is distinctly of a bygone era – the two central characters carry leather briefcases, use antiquated equipment and travel in train carriages dusted with nostalgia.

Davis and Bennett visit people's homes to metaphorically clean out their closets of skeletons: hidden and often dirty secrets which they are too weak to disclose themselves. The duo is played with Pinter-esque menace by Andrew Buckley and Ed Gaughan, social misfits who work for the mysterious Colonel.

But Bennett has a dark secret himself. He has been using his tools of the trade to illicitly drop into people's lives – or Glow Chasing – to fill some deep psychological need. Explicitly forbidden by Veridical, the company they work for, it is on their latest job that Davis and Bennett's professional relationship and ethics slowly begin to unravel.

Called in to trace a missing husband, they face their most difficult assignment to date. Davis finds himself drawn to the emotionally bereft client, Jane, played with wild eccentricity by Paprika Steen, while Bennett is forced to face his dirty habit of Glow Chasing by the mute Rebecca (played by Tuppence Middleton, whose beauty looks as if it was modelled from stone).

There are some laugh-out-loud scenes, such as when the duo are forced to stay overnight at Paprika's decidedly odd home and are served up a rice dish with a pasta topping, and Rebecca steals all Davis' potatoes. "Are you married?" Paprika asks Davis. "Not to each other, I mean". Getting nowhere trying to locate the missing husband, they are forced to call in the Colonel (Jason Isaacs, best known as Lucius Malfoy in Harry Potter). Then, sure they have cracked the conundrum, they carry out 'the procedure' only for Bennett to get blasted by psychic detritus. Knocked unconscious, he awakes to find himself conversing in Belgium, an unfortunate side effect of the procedure explains the Colonel.

If this all sounds a mite twee and pretentious, the film has a serious – and humorous – message about memory, loss and secrets. While the film is unmistakeably British – English indeed – in its charming eccentricity, there are traces of great European films such as *Delicatessen* in its values.

Without giving anything away, Davis and Bennett manage to trace the missing husband, with depressing yet ultimately uplifting consequences for everyone, and the film ends on an unexpected twist.

Skeletons is a gem of English independent cinema and Nick Whitfield someone to watch.

Skeletons is on at the [Cornerhouse](#) from 17-19 August and well worth catching whilst it's here.