



ELFEN LIED BOX SET

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★

2007 • 325 minutes • 15 • £49.99 • Out now
Director: Mamoru Kanbe **Writer:** Lynn Okamoto
Starring: Sanae Kobayashi, Chihiro Suzuki, Yuki Matsuoka

Horned, mutant girl escapes from lab and develops a child-like split-personality. She lives with a boy who has no idea she's a brutal killer that murdered his family.

BACK IN THE '80s, anime got a lot of bad press from the tabloids who proclaimed the genre to be little more than an orgy of sex and graphic violence. *Elfen Lied* certainly stands as an example of just how violent an anime series can get, with some bloody death scenes and hints

DID YOU KNOW?
Elfen Lied is filled with references to literature, art and religion, no more so than in the opening theme, 'Lilum'. This haunting song is notable for Biblical lyrics sung in Latin, and is set to visuals that see characters from the series inserted into paintings by Gustav Klimt.

of abuse, rape and torture in the protagonist Lucy's past. And it's possibly more affecting because these things aren't directly shown, though there is plenty of bloody spectacle right from the start.

Lucy is a psychologically scarred mutant, a Diclonius

who uses invisible hands (or vectors) to move, maim and murder. After years of abuse in a secret lab, she escapes – naked but for a metal helmet covering her face – only to be shot as she leaps into the sea. When Lucy washes up on a beach the following day, her memory has disappeared. The

human-hating murderess is no more, leaving a child who isn't capable of speech or bladder control in her place.

The 13 episode series follow Kohta and Yuka as they try to teach the foundling Lucy, who they name, Nyu, and Lucy's erstwhile captors as they attempt to bring her down, sending a misogynistic assassin and other Diclonii after her. In between the violence is a touching story of redemption, and the series makes a passable job of examining the nature versus nurture argument, while showing exactly how low humans can stoop to get what they want. Kohta and Yuka's love story is also integral to the plot, though it is very much in the background.

Elfen Lied is notable for its background animation. This is incredibly vibrant and detailed, right down to the falling sakura blossoms. As with other ADV productions, the English dub shines, although it is ultimately surpassed by the Japanese audio. If you're looking for a happy ending then this isn't the right series, but if you want something deeper, something that will both inspire and chill you to the core, *Elfen Lied* is an exemplary example of anime at its best.

Extras: Sadly, the same cannot be said for the bland extras, which are identical to the single volume releases. They include the opening and closing themes (which are repeated on each disc), plus some production and character art. **Lesley Smith**

MANGA! MANGA! MANGA!

Like *Elfen Lied*? Lesley Smith presents a round-up of the latest bloody batch of manga books that are just as graphic in their violence...



Battle Royale
 Based on Koshun Takami's cult SF novel and the controversial film. A class of Japanese teenagers are shipped to a remote island to take part in *The Program*, an ultraviolent and twisted reality

TV show. Fitted with explosive collars, they must kill each other one by one. Only the last remaining survivor will make it off the island alive. As well as weapons, the class use their brains, wits and sexuality in the ensuing bloodbath, with deadly results.



Death Note
 Likely to be this year's biggest manga is Viz Media's release of *Death Note*. Light Yagami finds the Death Note, a book carried by shinigami (death gods) that is capable of killing anyone whose name is written within its pages.

The slightly psychotic Light then decides it is his destiny to rid the world of criminals, create his own paradise and become God. Light becomes a serial murderer known as Kira. But with the dogged Detective L on his tail, will he succeed in creating his crime-free wonderland?

Death Note's dark tone and Light's delusions of grandeur make this a compelling thriller with a fantastical twist.

Boogiepop Doesn't Laugh

A psychological thriller with strong supernatural elements, *Boogiepop Doesn't Laugh* is the first of two volumes chronicling the weirdly dressed shinigami crime-fighter known only as Boogiepop. Dealing with evolution, aliens and a mysterious organisation, the plot is predominately driven by its characters, whose memories and pasts play a key role in the overall storyline. A complex



story, at the heart of it all is the mysterious Manticore, a being able to take on the forms of others on its hunt for Echoes, a curious creature who can only repeat the words of those around him...