



Ai seems innocent but she can offer a terrifying deal.

Hell Girl: Volume One

HELL'S BELLE Would you like to see what Hell is like? The mysterious Enma Ai can show you...

Studio Revelation Films **Certificate** 15 **Price** £16 **Release** 18 February

Would you – no, wait – could you curse someone to the depths of Hell? No? What if they were torturing you, had stolen your true love or had been stalking you for longer than you can remember? What if cursing them was your only way out? Would you do it then? The Hell Correspondence is a mysterious website that promises vengeance. It appears only at midnight and is very real.

The website is the means by which the mysterious Hell Girl, Enma Ai, answers the pleas of the desperate. With her three assistants – elderly Wanyuudou, kimono-clad Hone-Onna and bishounen Ichimoku Ren – Ai offers salvation and damnation in one neat little package. But to those she offers a straw doll, their own soul will be forfeited and they too will be ferried to Hell after their mortal demise.



Each standalone episode – of which there are five on the first Hell Girl DVD – focuses on one of Ai's numerous clients and the history of their grudge. In most other circumstances the 'character of the week' format could be construed as formulaic and boring, but here it takes on a life of its own, making each episode fresh in its focus as we explore the psyches of those poor souls who have no other recourse but to summon Ai.

The artwork – particularly the DVD cover – is eerily beautiful and the scenery awe-inspiring, but that's not the only thing that makes this an outstanding series.

The Japanese dub is creepy and, oddly enough, the English dub is outstanding. An enchanting series, Hell Girl is very different but it's also a joy to watch – perfect for those who like their anime a little darker than normal.

RATING

Also look at...

The blood feud intensifies and Sunako (or is that Sadako?) learns to be a lady



The Wallflower: Volume One

Studio ADV Films

Certificate 12

Price £20

Release date 18 February

RATING

Based on a popular manga series, The Wallflower is not your average romantic comedy. Directed by Shinichi Watanabe (aka Excel Saga's Nabeshin) it tells the story of four beautiful boys who have it good. They live in a mansion with their rich landlady, Auntie, and enjoy the high life until she sets them a task to turn her niece, Sunako, into a lady – or face having their rent tripled.

Sunako could easily be mistaken for Sadako Yamamura of Ring: her hair covers her eyes, she has a thing for horror and she can't stand in the radiance of the four Creatures of the Light that she's forced to live with. This variety of styles gives The Wallflower a relaxed feel. It's a fun series that doesn't take itself seriously and is sure to be one of 2008's more interesting offerings.



Basilisk: Volume Five

Studio GONZO

Certificate 15

Price £20

Release date Out now

RATING

As this tale of Romeo and Juliet enters its penultimate volume, the story reaches heartbreaking levels. You know it's going to end badly for young lovers Gennosuke and Oboro, and this inevitability makes each episode that much sweeter. GONZO's gorgeous artwork remains as crisp as it did in Volume One and the fights are just as mesmerising and complex.

The story turns psychological, seeing how the feud affects the remaining members of the Iga and Kouga clans, now diminished to only a few members each. For Oboro and Gennosuke, love has already begun to turn sour, crystallising into intense hatred as neither knows the reasons for the feud. The end is coming and Basilisk will keep you hooked until the final credits roll.

