



Dutch looks much scarier than he is. Sadly the same can't be said for Revy.

Black Lagoon

CYBERLESS CYBERPUNK Guns, girls... er, pirates!

Studio MVM **Certificate** 15 **Price** £20 **Release** Out now

You have to feel sorry for Japanese salaryman **Rokuro Okajima: all he could see in life was getting his arse kicked and the humdrum life working for a company in Tokyo. Then he finds himself held hostage by a gang of pirates for a CD he's carrying (which contains plans for nuclear weapons) and decides to try and make some extra money on their deal.**

Unfortunately, his employers aren't too keen on rescuing him, so Okajima joins forces with his captors, the Lagoon Company, and becomes known as Rock.

Despite being set in the fictional Thai city Roanapur, Black Lagoon feels like cyberpunk without the cyber. Punchy and refreshingly down to Earth, it's guns (with girls) and rather graphic violence mixed with some excellent action sequences. It's an unlikely hit and is quite different from



recent options; even for people who don't usually go for this kind of series, it's still well worth watching as it has the habit of growing on you.

As an added bonus, extras-wise there's an informative making of featurette and a music video for the opening theme Red Fraction by Mell. The usual round of trailers appear although, oddly, there's no clean opening and closing animation and this is one series that could do with them.

Thanks to impressive and gutsy animation, this first volume gets off to a cracking start. The first series only runs to 12 episodes so there's no time for dallying; instead, every moment is used to further the story. Rock, along with Benny, Dutch (who is actually American) and girl-with-guns Revy, helps to create a bizarre team, making Black Lagoon one for fans looking for a different kind of anime.

RATING

Also look at...

The Soul Reapers are back and so is the world's cutest vampire



Bleach Series One: Part Two

Studio Manga Entertainment

Certificate 15

Price £20

Release date Out now

RATING

Continuing the ever-popular tale of Ichigo's adventures is the second half of series one. The two-disc box set collects the remaining 12 episodes, providing a really hearty way to get your anime fix. Ichigo and Rukia are still combating Hollows (evil spirits who take over humans and turn them into monsters), but these creatures are starting to turn their attention on Ichigo's friends, including love interest Orihime and her friend Chizuru.

While this volume focuses on Orihime as she discovers her own abilities and those of her six fairy-like guardians, the over-arching story is the relationship between Rukia and Ichigo as he trains up. The anime is top-notch and the English dub interesting. It's still a must-see series whether you watched part one or not!



Moon Phase Vol Five

Studio Revelation Films

Certificate PG

Price £16

Release date 24 March

RATING

The penultimate volume of Moon Phase manages to not only put a twist on Hazuki's tale but also balances life-or-death battles with a large dose of comedy. Cat-eared Hazuki's slave-in-training Kohei is starting to accept his role as her protector. Training in the mountains has convinced Kohei's friends and bosses that the group are dead, but far from it. At least until an innocent child Arte appears with cute pink hair and a deadly secret.

Arte (or Artemis) is Luna/Hazuki's half sister and a shadow-user, which makes her very dangerous - don't be fooled by her butter-wouldn't-melt looks. This twist, coupled with the gorgeous animation, is what makes this comedic love story even more compelling as we gear up for what's sure to be an explosive conclusion. ●

