

Gennosuke and Oboro provide moments of romance between a bloody and violent battle to the death.



Basilisk: Scrolls of Blood

FORBIDDEN LOVE A must-see series that mixes Romeo and Juliet with Ninja Scroll in feudal Japan

Studio Gonzo **Certificate** 15 **Price** £20 **Release Date** 18 June

Studio Gonzo has a long list of animated successes behind it: *Kiddy Grade*, *Samurai 7* and now *Basilisk*.

Adapted from a best-selling manga by Masaki Segawa, this adventure is set during the 16th century, at a time of immense upheaval for feudal Japan.

An uneasy truce between two warring ninja clans has lasted for centuries after being brokered by the first Hattori Hanzo. Now the two sons of the Shogun are bickering about who will become his heir and it falls to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the previous Shogun, to mediate the dispute by putting the fate of the land into the hands of ten ninja from the Kouga clan and ten from the Iga.

Of course, if it were just a matter of killing each other, the contest would be a simple one if the leaders of the clans -



Gennosuke and Oboro - were not hopelessly in love with each other. Originally betrothed during the ceasefire, the pair now fight to find a peaceful way to resolve their situation.

The animation is beautiful and the abilities of the various ninja instantly captivate. This includes ninja who can summon butterflies to one who uses strands of women's hair to bind his prey and another who uses poisoned needles. None of their abilities are unbelievably supernatural but neither are they completely realistic.

While the series isn't overtly gory, even the sight of blood is stylishly animated, and the character designs are lovely to look at.

The voice acting is excellently done and there are some nice extras, including commentary from the English director.

RATING

Also look at...

A French historical thriller spliced with gargoyles, and girls 'n' guns with a heart



Le Chevalier D'Eon: Book 1

Studio ADV Films

Certificate 15

Price £20

Release date Out now

RATING

Part historical thriller and part supernatural whodunit, *Le Chevalier D'Eon* focuses on Charles Genevieve Louis Auguste Andre Timothee Eon de Beaumont (aka D'Eon), a French spy and diplomat known for his habit of cross-dressing.

However if fact weren't bizarre enough, this anime gives his life a supernatural spin when D'Eon is possessed by the spirit of his murdered sister, Lia. The young noble finds himself wading through a world of secret organisations and battling a mysterious Poet who turns humans into zombie-like gargoyles by inscribing 'H.O.' upon their foreheads.

Sadly the animation isn't as stunning as it could be and the setting of medieval France might not appeal to everyone. But the supernatural slant, sword fighting action, intrigue and mystery more than makes up for this and *Le Chevalier D'Eon* is well worth watching.



Gunslinger Girls: The Complete Series

Studio Madhouse

Certificate 15

Price £30

Release date Out now

RATING

Gunslinger Girls might summon images of the Old West, but the anime is actually set in Italy, where a group of innocent girls are trained to become elite assassins. Each is chosen by a handler, stripped of her memories, forced to become cyborgs and then brainwashed by the mysterious Agency.

The storyline is disturbing but beautifully animated. Each of the innocent-looking girls has their own heartbreaking history that they've left behind, and their treatment from their handlers ranges from indifference to dehumanisation.

The box set contains all 13 episodes of this very dark but short series. In this case less is more and the 'girls with guns' plotline is very much turned on its head, tugging at the heartstrings by focusing on the girls themselves rather than their new roles as assassins.

