



Volume 1: My Fair Bishounen



NABESHIN

Yamato Nadeshiko Shichihenge, as *The Wallflower* known in Japan, was directed by Shinichi Watanabe – better known as Nabeshin (yes he of *Excel Saga* fame) – and he even appears in the series as Auntie's latest beau, complete with a blond afro!

The Wallflower



AVAILABLE: TBC
 LABEL: ADV Films
 CERTIFICATE: 12
 NO. OF DISCS: 1 Disc
 RETAIL PRICE: £19.99
 RUNNING TIME: 125 mins
 SERIES LENGTH: 6

Bishounen boys living in a plush mansion are offered a unique deal by their landlady: turn her niece Sunako into a perfect young lady and live rent free. However, if they fail, their living expenses will triple. Unfortunately for them, Sunako is a Sadako-clone obsessed with torture and mannequins, so the boys have an awful lot more on their plates than they bargained for.

Doubtless destined to be one of ADV's biggest series this year, *The Wallflower* is a twist on the harem genre, featuring a chibi heroine and four beautiful boys, all under the direction of the infamous anime god, Shinichi 'Nabeshin' Watanabe. This is *My Fair Lady* gone Japanese but of course, it's never that simple.

Take Sadako – sorry, Sunako Nakahara. Her resemblance to the infamous wrathful spirit made into a household name by the *Ringu* trilogy is uncanny. There are even numerous references within the series to her doppelganger, including the creepy 'she's coming for you' walk, and floating kanji that reads 'sada'.

Sunako was once slighted by her first crush, who refused to go out with someone as ugly as her, and since then, she has become a light-shunning hikikomori (or 'shut in'). Her fringe covers her face, she doesn't wash and she spends her time watching disturbing TV programmes and making friends with a dummy called Hiroshi (who narrates the recap at the beginning of each episode). The decision to animate Sunako in super-deformed style really sets the series apart, particularly when used in tandem with the classic bishounen look.

The boys – Kyohei, Yuki, Takenaga and Ranmaru – epitomise the ideals of male beauty. Sunako even gives them the moniker of 'Creatures of the Light', and while all are motivated by the lure of free rent, Kyohei seems determined to help Sunako for other reasons, despite the fact she really doesn't want to be helped. Her aunt, the boys' landlady, is notably absent, except for predictable appearances once an episode, when she briefly returns home to check on their progress in a variety of ways – which include fireworks and a parachute!

It's impossible not to dislike *The Wallflower*. It ticks all the boxes: girls, guys, gorgeous animation and catching music. The story

itself is genuinely well thought out, and while it's obvious Sunako and Kyohei will hook up, there's no hurry for the finale, and the pacing in each episode is just right.

However, it's really the clashing art styles which set this apart from other series. Think of it a cross between the background art of *Excel Saga* and the animation of the gorgeous masculine specimens seen in *Prétear* or any one of a hundred other bishounen series. There are times at which Sunako's true potential as the Japanese ideal of perfection is revealed, with her character artwork morphing from chibi to classic, mimicking the look of her male housemates. Despite this, she's that much cuter in chibi form! A nice touch in keeping with the theme of the series is a short segment in each episode entitled 'the Road to Womanhood', in which the boys try to impart some information to help Sunako become a lady.

This is definitely a series you should add to your collection – but unfortunately it's one of the titles ADV has put on hiatus. More on a release date when we have it.

LESLEY SMITH

DVD EXTRAS

Sadly the extras in this volume really let it down. As with other recent ADV releases, the only extras are trailers, cleaning opening and closing animations and a special 'on air' version for the first 11 episodes.

Harem romance turned on its head in this Japanese take on *My Fair Lady*.

FILM ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★☆☆☆☆

