

what are we watching on dvd?



MADLAX VOL 1

4 Episodes, 100 minutes, Rates TV 14 V (ADV Films)

"Noir" will always be known as an awesome series. A well-written storyline and awesome music and cool animated action scenes.

It was definitely no surprise that fans were in high-anticipation mode when Bee Train announced a new anime series called "Madlax".

Bringing back the Twin Bee team behind "Noir", director Mashimo Koichi, composer Kajiura Yuki ("Noir" and "Aquarian Age" and character designers Shiba Minako and Miyachi Satoko, "Madlax" is definitely a highly anticipated anime for fans who enjoyed Twin Bee's "Noir" and ".Hack" series.

So, what is "Madlax"?

Madlax is an assassin. She is the ultimate in the art of combat. She's beautiful, skilled, elusive and dangerous.

In episode 1, the anime introduces us to Madlax as she is dispatched to the country of Gazth-Sonika which is currently embroiled in civil war.

Her mission is to recover data.

In this episode, we get to see a soft side of Madlax as she tries to help a rebel soldier but at the same time, we get to see her deadly side as she changes her outfit in a sexy

nightgown gunning down an army.

As an agent-for-hire, she is contacted with a mysterious liaison known only as "SSS".

If there is anything that we do know, Madlax has these images in her head but no recollection of her past.

In episode 2, we are introduced to Margaret Burton. An orphaned schoolgirl who is haunted by bizarre dreams, something that may be part of a horrifying past.

Whatever happened to her, made her live life as if she's out of it. All that she really thinks about are images and she has no recollection of why.

In episodes 3 and 4, we get to see more of Madlax on missions but the first two episodes are introductory episodes to both main characters.

I look forward to seeing how the characters progress further on in the storyline and how their lives are intertwined.

I can't say enough of how "Madlax" is so similar to "Noir". In both series, we have a mercenary and also a teenager girl with no memories of the past.

One thing that is different to "Madlax" are the supporting characters

and characters that show up from nowhere.

For example, we briefly see mysterious young girl named Laetitia who speaks in mysterious phrases.

In episode 2, we meet Elenore Baker who is the maid and caretaker of Margaret. Also, Vanessa Rene, Margaret's tutor and next door neighbor.

And a really mysterious masked individual (who we can tell is probably going to be the supreme bad guy) named "Friday Monday" who is the leader of the *Enfant*.

As for the anime series, "Madlax" has big shoes to fill, especially with the success of "Noir".

The animation is very well done and the action scenes with Madlax in assassin mode wearing a nightgown, I actually found beautiful.

Sure, it's a little far-fetched but it's kind of cool to see. I like the color usage in this anime from the darks, to the cloudy look and much more.

As for audio, the English dub is very well done and was presented in digital 5.1. The Japanese 2.0 track is definitely good as well. But the audio sounds great on 5.1 and Kajiura Yuki's music is beautiful and again, very reminiscent of "Noir".

Special features include the clean opening and closing themes, Japanese promo spots, production sketches, unused opening sequence and production insert.

I really enjoyed Twin Bee's "Noir" and ".Hack" series and in a way, I do have high expectations for "Madlax".

I can only hope that the series is different and not too similar to "Noir".

The Intel Report provided to us by ADV Films suggests that the potential exists that "Noir" and "Madlax" may have closer ties and that further observation will be necessary. Hmm...

As for me, I can't wait to see more episodes. Twin Bee has not disappointed me at all with ".Hack" and "Noir" and I have high expectations that "Madlax" won't either.

— DENNIS A. AMITH

REVIEW GRADE

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