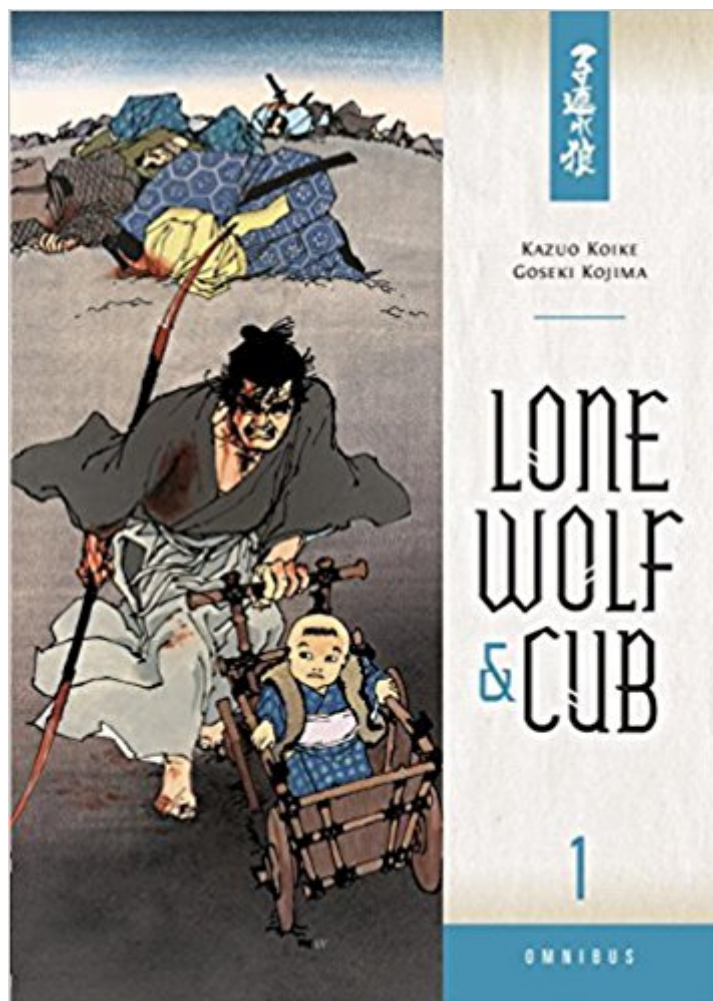


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Lone Wolf And Cub Omnibus Volume 1



Synopsis

A samurai epic of staggering proportions, the acclaimed Lone Wolf and Cub begins its second life at Dark Horse Manga with new, larger editions of over 700 pages, value priced. The brilliant storytelling of series creator Kazuo Koike and the groundbreaking cinematic visuals of Goseki Kojima create a graphic-fiction masterpiece of beauty, fury, and thematic power.

Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #24,911 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 inÂ Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Manga > Historical Fiction #46 inÂ Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Publishers > Dark Horse #108 inÂ Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Manga > Fantasy

Customer Reviews

The series is one of the best Japanese comics ever created, up there with the likes of Akira and Berserk...I think. For whatever reason, when Dark Horse decided to pick the series up and reprint it as they've done with numerous Japanese comics in the past, they decided to release it in an incredibly small size, smaller even than the usual "digest" size manga softcovers that people are used to. I started reading it quite awhile ago, but found that I couldn't fully enjoy the artwork (or read the text) due to the insanely small print. Well, Dark Horse has finally come to their senses and release the series in the usual "digest" size they use for all their other reprint manga properties. Not to mention, they also added more story (the volume contains the contents of the first two and a half original LWAC books). Why they didn't do this sooner, I can only imagine. But I look forward to reading (and in some cases re-reading) this series from the beginning.

This is one of those books that anyone who cares about manga, and comics, needs to check out. When Dark Horse first started releasing their groundbreaking 300-page, 4" x 6" volumes, one a

month, for the entire two year and four-month period it took to publish all 28 volumes, it was quite an achievement. The translation was consistently excellent, using appropriately R-rated language to capture the rough speech of the various bandits and yakuza that Ogami Itto and his young son Daigoro encountered on the way to Meifumado, the road to the Buddhist Hell. Kazuo Koike's tale of the former Kogi Kaishakunin* to the Tokugawa Shogunate, whose name is dishonored and his wife murdered, by the scheming of Retsudo Yagyu, patriarch of the Ura-Yagyu clan (*The Shogun's 'second', integral to the rite of seppuku; though it was pretty unlikely the Shogun would ever feel compelled to commit hara-kiri, any lord who wore the crest served as his proxy, and this was how the Kogi Kaishakunin stayed busy; after the lord disembowelled himself using a wazikashi or tanto blade, the Kogi Kaishakunin then finished the ritual by severing his 'masters' head with a dotanuki, leaving a small patch of skin on the throat intact, so the head will drop face first onto the chest, instead of rolling away; only the most skilled swordsman could be entrusted with such a task). The Kogi Kaishakunin is a position of great importance; as the Shogun's high executioner, he is charged with making certain that any Daimyo (feudal lords) who anger their lord pay the price; they can die honorably, committing seppuku, to be decapitated by the Kogi Kaishakunin, or dishonorably, and still end up decapitated. As one of the three high positions of power in the Shogunate, Retsudo frames Ogami Itto to claim the post for himself, and ensure the Yagyu's dominance. Lone Wolf and Cub is one of the biggest, most sprawling epics in sequential art history. Koike collaborated on this project with artist Goseki Kojima, whose brushwork and naturalistic rendering rejects the heavily stylized art of most mangaka of the 1970's for art that is closer to the ukiyo-e wood-block prints of the edo-period. His cinematic compositions and pacing fit well with Kazuo Koike's scripts; both men were devoted admirers of film-maker Akira Kurosawa. Yojimbo, Seven Samurai, and Rashomon, as well as dozens of other classic samurai films, leave their footprints throughout the pages of Lone Wolf and Cub (there is also a distinct resemblance to Toshiro Mifune, Kurosawa's favorite actor, in the features of Ogami Itto). The 'way of blood and demons', Meifumado, is the only path left open to Ogami Itto if he is to find vengeance; no longer bearing the Tokugawa crest, dishonored in the eyes of the Shogunate, Itto was expected to commit seppuku. Instead, he travels Edo-period Japan as a Ronin, offering his services as an assassin while pushing along a cart carrying Daigoro. His work takes him to every corner of Japan, and Koike has a genius for incorporating accurate historical facts and events into the various desperate situations that bring Itto into people's lives. There is no one better at creating visceral scenes in which characters are called upon by the Shogunate, by their loves and hatreds, by the Bushido code, and by their own conscience, to commit terrible acts if they are to forestall even more terrible consequences... for example: a teenaged Daimyo is unable

to raise the taxes due the shogunate, because the villages he governs lost their crops, and are now starving; his loyal retainers beg Itto to accept the task of killing the beloved young lord on his way to Edo, staging a brutal robbery that will protect the young man from a worse death by seppuku, and leave his honor intact. More often than not, the person that Itto is paid to kill is far from deserving of such an end, but the near invincible swordsman has dedicated his suio-ryu technique and heavy dotanuki to the path of vengeance, and fulfills his terrible obligations with a frightening philosophical certainty. But as he navigates the ocean coastlines and the treacherous paths through snow-covered mountains, he moves with purpose. With each new village he learns the secret methods by which the Ura-Yagyu (the 'Shadow Yagyu' branch of the larger clan that operates in secret), is consolidating power and loyalties. The moral relativism of this series puts it far ahead of its time. It is filled with shocking violence and graphic sexuality that often involves rape -- definitely not a kids' book. At some 9 000 pages, this series is huge, but well worth the investment of time and money. Although the smaller original editions were great, very affordable, I found the format too small at times to make out the smaller details, particularly in the complex battle scenes and samurai duels. These larger format, much longer omnibus editions are an excellent way to experience Lone Wolf and Cub; going from the 4" x 6" of the first books to the 5.5" x 7.35" dimensions of the omnibus editions makes a considerable difference. P.S. As big as this series is, in a way it is actually bigger; Koike and Kojima continue their tale of edo-period Japan through the character of Decapitator Asaemon, one of Ogami Itto's most dangerous foes. The ten volumes of this series, 'Samurai Executioner', were published by Dark Horse in the same format as LW&C; they are now being collected in the omnibus format as well. Then there is 'Path of the Assassin', by the same creators, that is set before LW&C. It tells the story of ninja Hattori Hanzo, and the friend he has sworn to protect, Tokugawa Ieyasu -- the man who would one day become shogun and unify Japan. Again published in the same format, it totaled 15 volumes. Taken as a whole, Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima created a tale of life under the Tokugawa Shogunate that totaled 53 books, each one around 300 pages, equalling an impressive 16 000 pages. Truly epic...

Lone Wolf and Cub is truly one of the greatest manga/comic epics of all time. It's beautifully written and illustrated, full of violence and beauty. And I absolutely love these new Omnibus editions. Much bigger size, crisp and clean print, and 700 pages long instead of 300 or so like the old editions. That means there will probably only be 10 or 12 to collect instead of 28. Much praise to Dark Horse for giving us this amazing series in the first place with the old editions, and now with these awesome new editions. I immensely enjoyed collecting and reading all 28 of the original editions, and I look

forward to collecting these new editions and reading it over again! Maybe they'll do Omnibus editions of Samurai Executioner next...

I first read Lone Wolf and Cub in its 36 issue entirety in the mini-manga format from my local library. I was so impressed by the work that I immediately began looking into owning the entire series. Unfortunately it is too price prohibitive for me to do so. So I was thrilled when Dark Horse released the series in a three issue Omnibus with a \$19.99 cover price. The story centers on Ogami Ittō, the Shogun's Executioner, during Japan's feudal period. Framed as a traitor by the agents of a rival clan he is forced to take the path of an assassin in his quest for revenge. It is a choice he also gives his son Daigoro by allowing the toddler to choose between a ball or a sword; when the child chooses the sword their fates are sealed. They are reborn as Lone Wolf and Cub, Swords for hire. The series follows the pair as they participate in countless assassinations, with Ittō employing tactics ranging from subterfuge to military stratagems from the Art of War to succeed in his duty. Often times hidden in such a way from the reader that the "reveals" of the strategy are as surprising to us as the targets of the assassination. More than just a hack and slash title, the stories focus heavily on the way of the ancient warrior, the code of the samurai, and the roles and ranks present in feudal Japan. Within this first Omnibus the attentive reader will find passages dripping with buddist concepts, samurai honor, and more than a few pages of Art of War. These sensibilities are brought home with the art work as well. Within the mix of panels depicting gruesome deaths and manga sex, will be the quiet landscapes, the mist strewn temples, and the majestic mountaintops of rural Japan. When reading (true reading the images and the words) Lone Wolf and Cub I was often reminded of the Japanese poetic form Haiku; where within a firm structure and short length the words transcend their literal purpose and resonate with a beauty and meaning far greater than they should. Panels and their words, combined and yet conflicting, elevate the page. Just as our hero Ittō rises above elevates the assassin to a code of conduct befitting a samurai, just as he is above the mundane politics that offer pay him his salary, so does this story/art arise above what could have been a very mundane comicbook and places Lone Wolf firmly into the realm of literature. The only thing keeping this from a 5 star rating is the book format. The good news is that the pages of this volume are much larger than the mini-manga format and, therefore, gives you a much better look at the gorgeous artwork. However, at over 700 pages the book is over 2" thick. Given the condition of the spine after one reading I can imagine what this will look like after several readings and wonder if separation will not be an issue. For that reason, I will be very stingy with loaning out this fantastic read.

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