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A statue of character Monkey D Luffy, also known as Straw Hat, is displayed at the 'One Piece' anime souvenir shop in Tokyo. — AFP photos



A statue of character Shanks, also known as Red Hair is displayed at the 'One Piece' anime souvenir shop in Tokyo.

# JAPAN'S HIT 'ONE PIECE' ANIME MARKS 1,000TH EPISODE



Cards celebrating 1000 episodes of "One Piece" anime are displayed at a souvenir shop.



A woman pays at the cashier of the "One Piece" anime souvenir shop.

Two decades after "One Piece" introduced the world to a swash-buckling pirate in a straw hat, fans of the Japanese cartoon series are giddily awaiting this weekend's release of the 1,000th episode. "One Piece" first appeared in manga (comic book) form in Japan in 1997, with an anime (animated TV series) version following two years later. Since then the franchise has become a global cultural phenomenon, smashing records and winning fans around the globe. Nonetheless, it wasn't an immediate hit.

"It's a miracle," Ryuji Kochi of Toei Animation, the Japanese company behind the anime series, said of the 1,000-episode landmark. "From the beginning, it was a tough title. It was not easy to place on the TV," he told AFP, adding that growing a fanbase for the show was not easy either. Kochi said it had taken 13 long years for the anime, following the adventures of hat-wearing hero Monkey D Luffy, to reach cult status. Today, however, hundreds of millions of fans are gripped by every twist in the hunt for the eponymous One Piece, the treasure coveted by all pirates. The popularity of the manga version has also endured as the TV show has taken off. Its creator Eiichiro Oda holds the Guinness World Record for "most copies published for the same comic book series by a single author" — 490 million, to be precise.

**Netflix beckons**

The 1,000th episode of the anime series will be released in 80 countries over the weekend. In Tokyo, a giant banner of the main characters has been erected at Shibuya station, one of the Japanese capital's main transport hubs. Special screenings are planned across the US, while in France—the world's biggest manga and anime market after



In this picture, a woman walks past a poster of characters of "One Piece" anime at Shibuya Station in Tokyo, ahead of the release of the 1000th episode.

Japan—more than 100 cinemas are planning a marathon watching binge. Fans from Africa to Europe to the Middle East have posted some 20,000 selfies to a fan site in honor of the milestone.

"I've been a One Piece fan for 20 years!" tweeted one Japanese enthusiast impatient to watch the landmark episode. "I've been watching it since junior high, and I'm still enjoying it even after growing up." French fan Alexis Poriel, who runs a manga fan group on online platform Discord, said the broad scope of "One Piece" was a key reason for its popularity. "It talks about social issues, there's action, there's humor," the 26-year-old said. "One Piece" manages to really make a link with societal

questions," he added, from racism to geopolitical intrigues.

The series also spans geographical and cultural references, from ancient Egypt to medieval Japan, that help to make it feel universal. As for what's next—a live-action adaptation by Netflix is in the works, with fans speculating that it could catapult the franchise to global household name status similar to "Star Wars" or "Harry Potter". Netflix's announcement of the cast set social media alight earlier this month, with 18-year-old Mexican actor Inaki Godoy preparing to take on the role of Luffy.—AFP

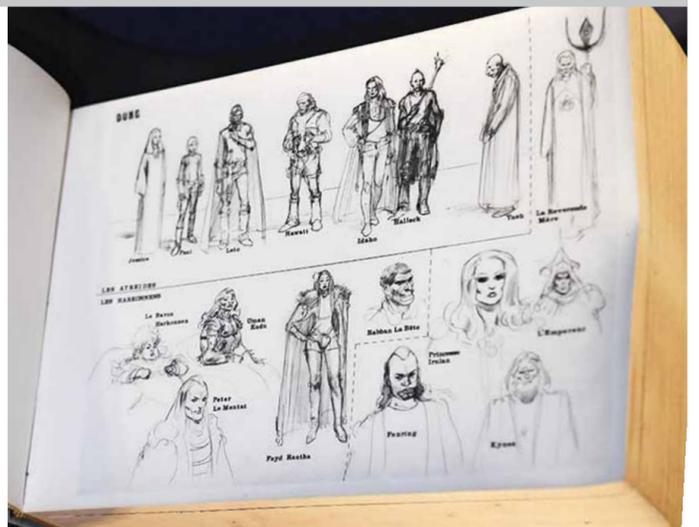
## Storyboards for doomed 'Dune' film up for auction

It has entered film folklore as one of the great missed opportunities: the doomed 1970s adaptation of "Dune" that was supposed to bring together Salvador Dali, Mick Jagger and Pink Floyd. The project famously collapsed after four years of work by cult Franco-Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowsky, but now his storyboards are going up for auction in Paris on Monday. With a new version of "Dune" starring Timothee Chalamet packing cinemas around the world in recent weeks, interest in Jodorowsky's version has been reignited and Christie's is valuing the drawings at 25,000 to 35,000 euros (\$28,000 to \$40,000).

They are collected in one large notebook, and were made by celebrated French graphic novelist Moebius (alias Jean Giraud, who died in 2012) and Swiss illustrator Giger, who went on to design "Alien" in 1979 and died in 2014. The tumultuous project was due to include surrealist Dali, Rolling Stones frontman Jagger, actor-director Orson Welles and silver screen legend Gloria Swanson in the cast, with Pink Floyd among the bands approached for the soundtrack. It collapsed for lack of funding—a story retold in the 2013 documentary "Jodorowsky's Dune". The brainchild of author Frank Herbert, "Dune" was first published in 1965 and became a six-volume

space opera of massive influence, not least on "Star Wars". Following the latter's blockbuster success, Hollywood took renewed interest in "Dune" in the early 1980s.

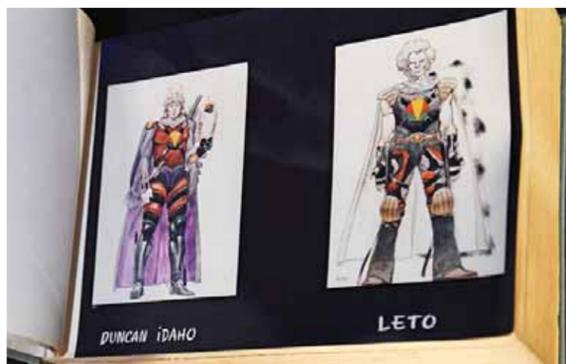
That led to David Lynch's version, released in 1984 with a cast including British musician Sting and Patrick Stewart of "Star Trek: Next Generation", which had its own troubles and became one of the decade's biggest flops. Jodorowsky's storyboards have taken on mythical overtones among sci-fi fans—said to have influenced later genre hits including "Blade Runner". "We know of several other copies: one was offered for auction several years ago, another is in Jodorowsky's possession... A third has been partially reproduced online," said Christie's. It said around 10 to 20 copies were produced, though it was hard to be certain.—AFP



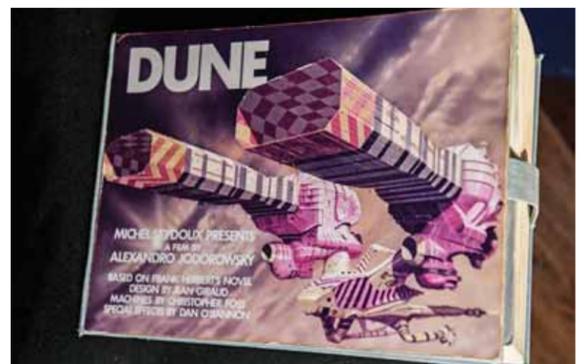
A page of one of the ten Alejandro Jodorowsky's epic 1970 Dune storyboard copies is displayed.



A page of one of the ten Alejandro Jodorowsky's epic 1970 Dune storyboard copies is displayed to the public three days before an auction at Christie's Paris gallery.



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