

## A Sci-Fi Dream is Celebrated in 'Jodorowsky's Dune'

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on March 29, 2014 - 2:15pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Should Alejandro Jodorowsky have been able to direct his psychedelic adaptation of Frank Herbert's "Dune", the results would've been less of our planet compared to films like "Blade Runner" or "Star Wars". Prismatic spacecrafts and golden landscapes would have filled Jodorowsky's mad canvas, as created by stargazing designers like Jean Giraud and H.R. Giger. A famous actor/director, pleasantly plump in his later years, would have floated through the air, while another renowned artist shares his expensive cameo time with the image of a flaming giraffe. Inspired by the dynamism of science fiction book covers, "Dune" was also due to have an original soundtrack by Pink Floyd. Could such ambition actually have come true? The \$5 million that the project failed to procure has prevented us from ever knowing. Until recently, Jodorowsky's version of "Dune" remained a dream, a quixotic collision of transcendental imagination with multiplex intent. It is now shared with our world in this exhilarating documentary from Frank Pavich, framed as a tale of ambition vs. money.

"Jodorowsky's Dune" surpasses its cult audience to make new geeks out of its viewers. Pavich's film acutely assembles an endearing picture of its title visionary, an innocent filmmaker who expressed his love and freedom through the bonkers images in his features. He earned an audience especially with his films "El Topo" and "The Holy Mountain", which are still celebrated in midnight screenings to this day. The success of these strange projects thus led him to "Dune".



Alejandro Jodorowsky in 'Jodorowsky's Dune'  
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

Sparked by desire to create a mind-opening experience that mixed multiplex popcorn with visual LSD, Jodorowsky became obsessed with the idea of adapting Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel "Dune", all while not having read the book. With the intent of motivating artists but not directing them, he assembled a creative team that included Giger, Giraud, Chris Foss, and Dan O'Bannon. Together the group mapped out the entire film, shot-by-shot, and was able to package its script as a massive coffee table book for potential buyers to peruse.

That holy grail of a film book provides an excellent blueprint for this documentary's goal in vitalizing Jodorowsky's lost project. Sequences that were transferred from Jodorowsky to paper now achieve an exhilarating, and teasing, sense of life in Pavich's animations. In one humble example, the film's opening shot expands through the galaxy, passing by planets in one continuous take.

Pavich assembles quite a meeting of talking heads who are involved in the "Dune" cult; those who created it, like Foss and Giger, and the geeky prophets who are in awe of what never was, like critics Devin Faraci and Drew McWeeny, and "Only God Forgives" filmmaker Nicolas Winding Refn (the latter boasting about having "seen" it through a personal presentation by Jodorowsky). Continuing the mythology of the story and sharing their awe, their recollections make for an absorbing collect of pre-production tales.



"Jodorowsky's Dune"

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The greatest talking head of this film is of course Jodorowsky himself, an shiny man who geeks out on his own eccentricity. The non-existence of "Dune" does bum him, but he smiles throughout his storytelling about the project's potential, and leaves the film with two motivational posters: "If you fail, it's not important. We need to try", and "Have the greatest ambition possible." The only moment in which Jodorowsky's smile recedes? A brief scene in which he holds money in his hands, cursing its lack of worth in the more ambitious scheme of artistic creation.

Will Jodorowsky's interpretation of "Dune" ever achieve creation? Pavich's accessible fan documentary leaves it up for the rest of the world to decide. Pavich's documentary creates a madcap thirst for its realization, which does have Jodorowsky's blessing. If a future film should be adapted from Jodorowsky's book, one can only hope the new filmmakers follow Jodorowsky's dream of "Dune" shot-by-shot, sketch-by-sketch.

*"Jodorowsky's Dune" opens in Chicago on March 28th. Featuring Alejandro Jodorowsky, Nicolas Winding Refn, H.R. Giger, Chris Foss, and Devin Faraci. Directed by Frank Pavich. Rated "PG-13"*



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