

"Secret Picture: 1001 Nights of Ukiyo-e" (Maruhi Gekki Ukiyo-e Senichiya) is an original feature-length animated movie produced by Leo Production, and released on October 29, 1969 (Showa year 44) by Toei Company Ltd. It is rated R18+ and designated an adult film. Also included with the film was "Ranpo Edogawa Complete Collection: The Fearsome Deformed Man" (directed by Teruo Ishii and starring Teruo Yoshida).

The taglines are, "The world's first! Ukiyo-e with voice and motion, a smiling adult manga." "Ah, I see it, it moves, it speaks! The world's first historical drama ukiyo-e motion picture, in all-color animation."

SYNOPSIS

Shunsai is an ukiyo-e artist living in a row house in downtown Edo. He is secretly asked by a kimono dealer named Kansuke Edoya to draw a spring painting of an ukiyo-e print on a folding screen. Shunsai creates a spring painting, based on the affair of his deceased next door neighbors, the couple Nikichi and Otoyō. He names the men and women in the painting "Harunobu" and "Otama." After this, Harunobu and Otama hear the climaxing gasps of Nikichi and Otoyō, which inspires them to leave folding screen and kill Nikichi and Otoyō. This incident catches the attention of a female illusionist doshin...

SUMMARY

This work is commonly said to have been piggybacking on the success of adult animation "A Thousand and One Nights" (distributed by Japan Herald Film) produced by Osamu Tezuka's Mushi Productions. On the other hand, according to producer Leo Nishimura, this work did not piggyback on Mushi Productions' "Animerama" series, and that the film had been in production long before; allegedly the initially-planned title was "Illusionary Collection: The Ukiyo-e Woman Scroll".

"As well, Mushi Productions' "A Thousand and One Nights" had not been designated as an adult movie, and as a result, this film became the world's first adult-designated theatrical anime. (Note that the adult film "Star Jewel" released in 2011 was introduced as "The World's First 18+ Anime Film Release", but this is a complete falsehood.)

The script and direction were created by Leo Production's president Leo Nishimura (Tokue Nishimura), and it took over a year to produce. After the film was completed, Toei bought it for 20 million yen, and it was shown as a double feature with Teruo Ishii's cult movie "Ranpo Edogawa Complete Collection: The Fearsome Deformed Man" on October 29, 1969 at 53 theaters nationwide. In addition, no major movie company had previously distributed 18+ adult animation, and Toei distributed the film as a "strange sexy route", alongside Toei's erotic movie series of the time.

However, a Toei union representative commented, "Why should a prestigious film label distribute a "pink video"?" ("Pink video" being slang of the time for pornography). Despite its

release, security from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department warned them to delete several obscene scenes. After that, as a result of discussions between Toei and Eirin, the six scenes were cut, including "Ukiyo-e depicting a sexual intercourse", "moaning of a woman in action", the penis removal in "ninja tightening technique", "sex pose scene" and others. This was also the first case of the Metropolitan Police Department issuing a warning or request to destroy suspected obscenity, after the movie was released to the public by five major companies. In the end, the film's release week was abandoned and had little to no performance, and the film was discontinued within 10 days.

RECEPTION

This work has been referred to as one of the worst animated films of all time, and animation critics have criticized it as, "This movie, in a single word, is just bad." The thorough criticism has had a hand in the film being shelved.

Movie critic Takuya Mori viewed this film in the theater and contributed the following criticism to movie magazine "Kinema Weekly Report":

"I don't know what Leo Productions has made. In any case, it's obvious to anyone that they were trying to capture the soul of "A Thousand and One Nights" by Mushi Productions, and to outdo it. No, this is far below it. "A Thousand and One Nights" was a disappointing blockbuster, but compared to this, it is an "immortal masterpiece." Nothing really left an impression besides the abstract sex scene with the white snake spirit. However, "1001 Nights of Ukiyoe" does not have that. There is nothing. The erotic cartoons in Manga Weekly magazine, which can be found lying in a dentist's waiting room, have better artwork, and first of all, it doesn't matter if they don't move. I spent 500 yen and an hour just for the valuable lesson that something this boring and unpleasant could be considered entertainment."

—Kinema Weekly Report No.511, Early December 1969, "Critical Review of Japanese Movies" p.62-64

Afterwards, this film's box office and critical reviews ceased evaluation, and Leo Production stopped production (but reorganized and renamed as Studio L, and is still in operation today).

Later, Tokyo TV Animation, which produced Nippon TV's weekday evening broadcast obi animation, attempted to copy Mushi Productions' "Animerama" series and Leo Productions, and released an extreme sex film in 1971 through Japan Herald Film. The theatrical pornographic anime "Yasuji's Just Do The Pornorama!!" (based on the work of Yasuji Tanioka) was released publicly, but it was a box office disaster, and Tokyo TV Animation was forced to dissolve afterwards.

Adult theatrical animation released from the late 1960s to early 1970s would completely cease production due to the box office defeat of these two works and Mushi Productions' Romanesque anime "Belladonna of Sadness" (released in 1973). Later on, the first adult-oriented OVA "Lolita

Anime" (originally created by Fumio Nakajima) was released in 1984, making it the first new adult anime on the market for more than 10 years.

CAST

Illusionist: Kaoru Taki
Fukusuke: Shin Okubo
Ume no Gensai: Ippei Tsumaki
Ukiyo-e Shunsai: Takuji Yamada
Saiji Shigefuji: Ryuta Nosaka
Harunobu: Masao Wakayama
Otama: Yukiko Miura
Yuki Edoya: Michiyo Hara
Onami: Keiko Fujiwara
Otoyo: Munaga Kimiyo
Nikichi: Hideo Machida
Edoya Kansuke: Taro Katsura
Tonbei: Rensaku Akiyama

STAFF

Screenplay / Director: Leo Nishimura
Picture supervision: Haraku Ueno
Video staff: Kumazawa Toshio, Komatsubara Hiroshi, Murata Hideo, Kanazawa Yukio
Art: Joji Katsumata
Backgrounds: Aika Akahoya
Photography: Kunishige Aramaki, Rumiko Sato
Editor: Teruo Nakajima
Music: Yoshinori Kanari and the Five Sons
Recording: Tone Studio
Distributor: Toei Co., Ltd.
Production company: Leo Productions

HOME VIDEO

The film was released as open reel-type video tape (with a running time of 70 minutes) in 1970. A shortened VHS version (approx. 60 minutes) was sold by Toei Entertainment Video for 55,000 yen (later price revision to 44,500 yen) from the late 1970s to early 1980s, during the popularization of home VCRs [5] . Since then, it has not been re-released or released on DVD. In addition, the film's status as to whether it still exists is unknown.