

LICENSE[®]

THE LICENSING INDUSTRY'S THOUGHT LEADER
LICENSEMAG.COM

GLOBAL

DRAGON BALL Z



Toei/Dragon Ball Z 30th

CASE STUDY

LICENSE[®]

THE LICENSEE'S THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
LICENSEGLOBAL.COM

30

YEARS OF

DRAGON BALL Z

Toei Animation is celebrating the milestone 30th anniversary of "Dragon Ball Z" and its immeasurable impact on catapulting anime across the globe.





DRAGON BALL Z

TURNS 30

A TRUE TRIUMPH FOR

TOEI ANIMATION

Toei Animation is celebrating the milestone 30th anniversary of “Dragon Ball Z” and its immeasurable impact on catapulting anime across the globe.

by BIBI WARDAK

Toei Animation has achieved the unfathomable—bringing a once-niche, obscure Japanese animation phenomenon known as “anime” stateside, solidifying the genre as a bonafide mainstay of American pop culture today.

Forever changing the landscape of animation consumption in the West is a monumental achievement that didn’t happen overnight. In fact, it took decades. And one major contributing factor to this shift was the undeniable popularity of Toei’s iconic “Dragon Ball” franchises, most notably, “Dragon Ball Z.”

2019 marks the landmark 30th anniversary of “Dragon Ball Z,” which Toei plans to celebrate via a host of major events, licensing deals, promotions, product launches and activations fit for a property of this magnitude.

The “Dragon Ball” franchise collectively has more than 800 episodes. Titles include “Dragon Ball”

(153 episodes), “Dragon Ball Z” (291 episodes) and “Dragon Ball GT” (64 episodes), among others.

Turner’s Adult Swim currently airs “Dragon Ball Super,” which launched in 2017 and is aimed at a younger audience, as well as “Dragon Ball Z Kai,” a remastered, re-cut version of “Dragon Ball Z.”

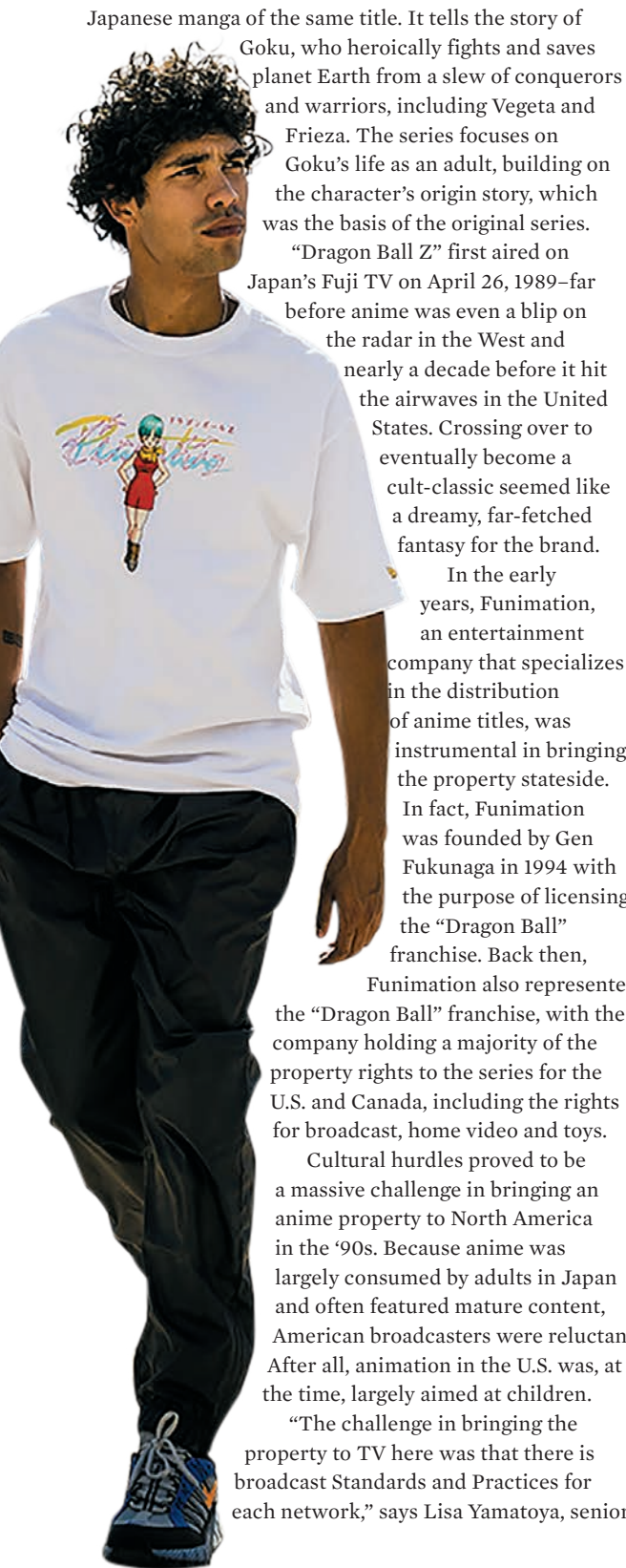
“Dragon Ball Z” is the sequel to the original “Dragon Ball” anime series, inspired by the



MASAYUKI ENDO
president and chief executive officer, Toei Animation



LISA YAMATOYA
senior manager, marketing and licensing, Toei Animation



Japanese manga of the same title. It tells the story of Goku, who heroically fights and saves planet Earth from a slew of conquerors and warriors, including Vegeta and Frieza. The series focuses on Goku's life as an adult, building on the character's origin story, which was the basis of the original series.

"Dragon Ball Z" first aired on Japan's Fuji TV on April 26, 1989—far before anime was even a blip on the radar in the West and nearly a decade before it hit the airwaves in the United States. Crossing over to eventually become a cult-classic seemed like a dreamy, far-fetched fantasy for the brand.

In the early years, Funimation, an entertainment company that specializes in the distribution of anime titles, was instrumental in bringing the property stateside.

In fact, Funimation was founded by Gen Fukunaga in 1994 with the purpose of licensing the "Dragon Ball" franchise. Back then,

Funimation also represented the "Dragon Ball" franchise, with the company holding a majority of the property rights to the series for the U.S. and Canada, including the rights for broadcast, home video and toys.

Cultural hurdles proved to be a massive challenge in bringing an anime property to North America in the '90s. Because anime was largely consumed by adults in Japan and often featured mature content, American broadcasters were reluctant. After all, animation in the U.S. was, at the time, largely aimed at children.

"The challenge in bringing the property to TV here was that there is broadcast Standards and Practices for each network," says Lisa Yamatoya, senior

Bandai Namco Entertainment: A Game-Changer for Toei Animation

As a decades-long partner of Toei Animation, Bandai Namco Group has helped to create a plethora of "Dragon Ball Z" products including video games, toys, apparel, figurines, vending machines and playing cards.

"Toei is an excellent partner," says Eric Hartness, vice president, marketing, Bandai Namco Entertainment America. "With 'Dragon Ball,' we have almost daily exchanges with Toei and discuss ideas on how to expand the 'Dragon Ball' fan base."

According to Hartness, working hand-in-hand with Toei each step of the way is essential to the partnership's success.

The most notable game release born out of the partnership, according to Hartness, is the "Dragon Ball Xenoverse" game series—a fighting role-playing video game that features battles between Goku and his enemies, Vegeta, Frieza and Cell. The game allows players to immerse themselves in an original "Dragon Ball" story.

"Dragon Ball Z"-themed video games are fan-driven and inspire significant feedback from zealous supporters of the franchise.

For Bandai Namco Entertainment, stimulating the "Dragon Ball Z" super-fan's imagination is a key to success.

"Since 'Dragon Ball' is such a popular IP that inspires people's imagination, fans use their own imagination to determine such things as which characters are stronger if they battle each other," continues Hartness. "The game experiences can enable fans to play out their imaginations, which helps increase the popularity of 'Dragon Ball' games."

Though Bandai Namco Entertainment is not prepared to officially announce future releases in partnership with Toei, according to Hartness, there could be more video games on the horizon in celebration of "Dragon Ball Z's" 30th anniversary.

And the storied partnership is showing no signs of slowing down in 2019 and beyond.

"We plan to continue creating games that our mutual fans crave," says Hartness. "I can't mention details at this point, but please stay tuned for future announcements." ©



manager, marketing and licensing, Toei Animation. “The series itself had some mature content, so we learned to accept that we would have to invest in different versions, such as a hard edit and a soft edit. We edited the actual animation, and we re-recorded it in other languages to make it suitable for different networks.

“In America, everybody thinks animation is for kids, but in Japan, people of all ages read manga, and the after-midnight animation shows have mature content,” adds Yamatoya. “I think to have the Japan team understand what needs to be done to sell in the U.S. is a huge challenge, even to this day.”

“Japanese animation was quite niche, and it was quite difficult to get it on broadcast TV,” says Masayuki Endo, president and chief executive officer, Toei Animation. “Luckily, around the 1990s, there was a boom for Japanese animation worldwide, including North America. Many distributors, licensees and broadcasters approached us to acquire rights for Japanese animation.”

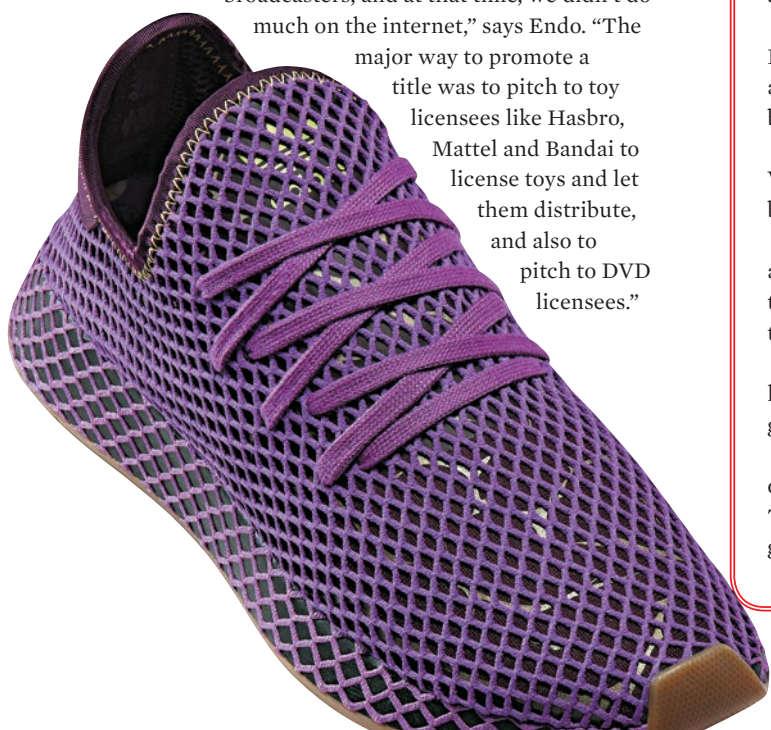
According to Endo, once anime’s popularity began to take root in North America, advances in technology proved to be the next hurdle. Namely, the illegal downloading and sharing of content.

“The home video market started to change, retailers closed and fans began to watch via illegal download and counterfeit DVDs after 2005,” says Endo. “Worldwide, anime was popular, but nobody wanted to pay money for it.”

This unsettling trend was unexpected news for Toei, which, in the mid-2000s, would regularly pitch to broadcasters to advance the “Dragon Ball” franchise.

“From 2004 to 2006, our main business was to pitch to broadcasters, and at that time, we didn’t do much on the internet,” says Endo. “The

major way to promote a title was to pitch to toy licensees like Hasbro, Mattel and Bandai to license toys and let them distribute, and also to pitch to DVD licensees.”



Bioworld: Delivering Lifestyle Collections for Toei Animation

In 2014, as the fandom and popularity of anime continued to rise across the globe, Bioworld decided to make an investment in anime—and it had its sights set on one franchise.

“Dragon Ball Z’ is the anime of all animes and is the one title that reaches across all anime fans,” says Beth Taylor, director, licensing, Bioworld. “It’s a classic but stays relevant and connected to the fan by releasing new content consistently. Therefore, Bioworld made an offer, and we are forever grateful that Toei Animation granted us the rights.”

According to Taylor, partnering with Toei Animation offers an array of benefits including speed to market, maximizing trends, consistent content releases and investing in the brand’s marketing.

Bioworld’s brand expertise and fan-focused design approach have been vital to the partnership’s growing success.

“Bioworld designs ‘Dragon Ball Z’ merchandise 365-days-a-year, as we need to deliver newness for the fan and provide differentiation at each channel of distribution,” says Taylor. “As new trends emerge, new assets are released, and new content is available.”

Bioworld has launched a range of “Dragon Ball Z” lifestyle collections that include apparel, sleepwear, underwear, headwear, bags, wallets, socks and desk collectibles.

The most coveted items among fans include the Vegeta track suit, Shenron athletic jacket, Vegeta backpack and the “Dragon Ball Z” windbreaker.

In celebration of “Dragon Ball Z’s” 30th anniversary, Bioworld will create capsule collections throughout 2019 that will feature design direction that honors the history of the franchise.

And Bioworld plans to work hand-in-hand with Toei to keep the momentum going throughout the year.

“Bioworld is honored to be working on the ‘Dragon Ball Z’ franchise,” says Taylor. “We are proud to assist Toei in growing the brand to the next level.” ©



Years later, according to Endo, Toei began to use growing digital platforms—strictly via legal contractual partnerships—to promote their properties, and, ultimately, grow the “Dragon Ball Z” franchise worldwide.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, Toei Animation boasts an incredible roster of licensed partnerships on behalf of “Dragon Ball Z.” Because “Dragon Ball Z” is 30 years old, the brand has a robust adult fan base whose adoration for the series is rooted deeply in childhood nostalgia. That fan base has also introduced the series to their children, effectively widening the target audience.

“Every Japanese title wants to sustain longevity, but it’s very difficult,” says Endo. “So far, ‘Dragon Ball’ is the exception, and as a result, it’s one of the most successful titles that has lasted 30 years. In the United States, everybody knows ‘Dragon Ball Z.’”

The brand gained traction in Europe, where it is supported by an expansive licensing program.

“The licensing program for ‘Dragon Ball Z’ includes a toys and games range, video games, apparel and gifts and accessories,” says Isabelle

Favre, head, marketing and new business, Toei Animation Europe. “Fans appreciate collectors’ edition figures or added-value items. Apparel is also very important. Several apparel companies, including our direct-to-retail partnerships, work on several ‘Dragon Ball Z’ projects today.”

“Collaboration projects on the international scale include the ‘Dragon Ball Z’ x Adidas line,” says Yamatoya. “The ‘Dragon Ball Z’ x Primitive line, which first launched in the U.S., was so popular



Crunchyroll: Streaming Toei Animation

Crunchyroll, a leading anime streaming platform with more than 45 million registered users, began its relationship with Toei Animation in 2008 after acquiring some of Toei’s catalog content including “Digimon Adventure 02,” “Fist of the North Star” and “Slam Dunk.”

“As a leader in production and IP management, Toei Animation is the gold standard in anime for compelling storytelling and global exploitation,” says Sae Whan Song, vice president, business development, Crunchyroll. “We’ve been lucky to collaborate with Toei Animation to stream and help promote their franchises including ‘Dragon Ball Super,’ ‘One Piece’ and more.”

With more than two million monthly subscribers, Crunchyroll works intimately with Toei to bring the titles to fans worldwide.

“‘Dragon Ball Super’ is arguably one of the most famous anime franchises,” says Song. “We acquired the newest series in 2016, and we’re excited to be a part of the ‘Dragon Ball’ resurgence.”

The popularity of “Dragon Ball Super” has even caused site difficulties for Crunchyroll, which experienced overwhelming site traffic from fans all across the globe.

Another top-performing title from Toei is “One Piece.” Crunchyroll acquired the series in 2013 for simulcast. Crunchyroll also streams “Rowdy Sumo Wrestler Matsutarō,” a Toei title that represents Crunchyroll’s first deal with Toei Animation Europe. ©





that retailers in Japan, Europe and other territories began to sell it as well.”

Toei’s partners include Bioworld (apparel), Adidas (footwear), Crunchyroll (streaming), Funimation (home video and cinematic events), Fathom Events (cinematic events),

Funko (Pop! figurines), Bandai Namco (video games) and Bandai (toys), among an extensive list of others.

Licensed “Dragon Ball” merchandise is available via an array of retailers including Walmart, Target, Walgreens, Barnes & Noble, Hot Topic, FYE, Forever 21 and Urban Outfitters, to name a few.

Each year, the demand for “Dragon Ball Z” products increases as retail evolves and more major retailers begin to embrace the idea of carrying anime products.

“In North America, apparel is doing great right now, and Bioworld has broken into mass market, which will help break other partners into the channel,” says Yamatoya. “Target is planning an anime section that will feature a lot of ‘Dragon Ball’ products in June. That’s a huge change we are seeing because anime is

Fathom Events: Transporting Toei Animation into Theaters

Fathom Events, an event cinema company, has partnered with Toei Animation for years via distributors and content partners, making anime a content pillar within event cinema.

In early 2018, Fathom and Toei entered into their first direct partnership for an official series of events for the *Digimon Adventure tri* film series.

“Toei Animation is a fantastic and major anime partner for Fathom Events,” says Brian Deulley, senior director, programming, Fathom Events. “Lisa Yamatoya and her team are critical in helping to grow the anime event cinema landscape through their recognizable brands, knowledge about the space and ability to reach target audiences.”

Because fans love to relive classic titles via an in theater experience, events centered on the “Dragon Ball Z” franchise have been one of the most successful events Fathom and Toei have developed together.

“Some of the most memorable and successful events developed with Toei have been around the ‘Dragon Ball Z’ franchise,” says Deulley. “Bringing classic titles back that have never been seen on the big screen is something fans clamor for, and we are excited to work with Toei to give them that opportunity.”

“Dragon Ball Z” cinematic throwback events have performed particularly well in part because of the franchise’s immense cult following and the need for fellow fans to connect as a community.

“We couldn’t be more excited to be working with Toei and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of ‘Dragon Ball Z’ this year,” says Deulley. “There are lots of discussions happening at the moment, so fans should stay tuned to Fathom Events and Toei’s websites and social channels throughout the year.” ©



being accepted. Mass market is seeing that ‘Dragon Ball’ and other anime is working out for specialty, like Hot Topic, and so they are trying to educate the buyers internally. A lot of people are responding.”

The popular “Dragon Ball Z” x Adidas collection consisted of seven shoes inspired by the series’ characters.

In 2018, “Dragon Ball Z” was one of the top performing men’s apparel licenses at Walmart. The “Dragon Ball FighterZ” video game, released in January 2018, quickly became one of the highest-selling video games of all

time, with two million copies sold in its first week, according to Toei. The “Dragon Ball Legends” mobile fighting game surpassed more than two million registrations before its June 2018 launch.

Following the unwavering success of the brand’s licensing program in 2018, Toei has a detailed roster of events and deals lined up in 2019 to



Funimation: A Pivotal Player in Toei Animation’s Story

2019 marks the 25th anniversary of Funimation’s partnership with Toei Animation and the introduction of “Dragon Ball” to North America. Funimation’s storied history with Toei is far more significant and nuanced than your average licensing partnership.

In 1994, Gen Fukunaga founded Funimation with the purpose of licensing the “Dragon Ball” franchise in North America. Funimation was instrumental in bringing the “Dragon Ball” franchise to the region, a territory where anime was extremely niche.

In the early years, Funimation’s license for the “Dragon Ball” franchise encompassed the majority of rights for the property, and covered specific regions including North America. Today, Funimation serves as Toei’s agent for broadcast distribution and merchandise licensing.

“Toei has and continues to be a wonderful partner,” says Fukunaga, chief executive officer and president, Funimation. “Over the last nearly 25 years, they have provided support on numerous products as well as countless fan-engagement programs. Toei’s ability to balance all the brand’s committee members in Japan with licensee needs around the world is a testament to their expertise as a licensor.”

Naturally, the 30th anniversary of “Dragon Ball Z” is also a massive victory for Funimation.

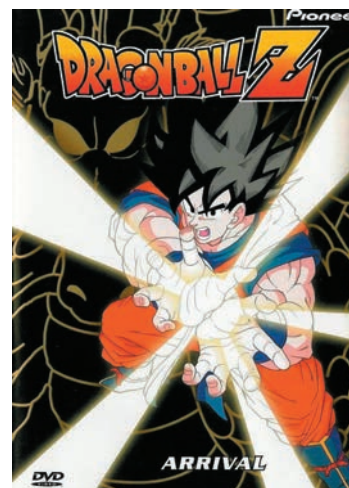
“The January theatrical opening of *Dragon Ball Super: Broly* is the jumping-off point for our yearlong ‘Dragon Ball Z’ 30th anniversary campaign,” says Fukunaga. “‘Dragon Ball Z’ has made a visible and lasting mark on North American pop culture. We will be

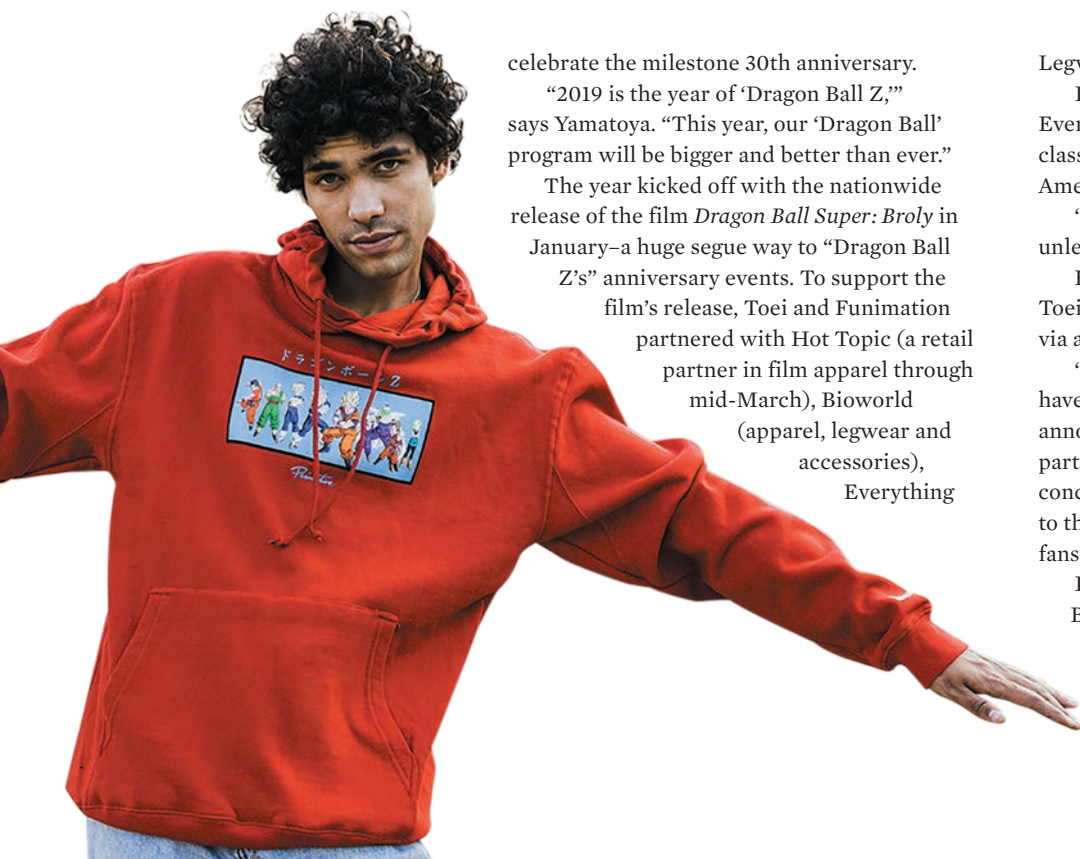
celebrating the history of ‘Dragon Ball Z’ throughout this year while also exploring its impact in a variety of areas such as gaming, sports and music. There will, of course, also be unique product offerings for both fans and collectors alike. Stay tuned!”

Funimation has licensed two of Toei’s franchise properties—“Dragon Ball” and “One Piece.” Its home video program for the properties are crucial to generating and maintaining brand awareness.

“Home video has been a major contributor to the longevity of the ‘Dragon Ball’ franchise—from VHS in the ‘90s to its remarketing on DVD and then its remastering and remarketing on Blu-ray,” says Fukunaga. “The current series, ‘Dragon Ball Super,’ is in the middle of its home video release as the English dub production is still ongoing.”

As 2019 continues to roll out, Funimation plans to continue to nurture its close partnership with Toei and further propel “Dragon Ball Z” into the pop culture stratosphere. ©





celebrate the milestone 30th anniversary.

“2019 is the year of ‘Dragon Ball Z,’” says Yamatoya. “This year, our ‘Dragon Ball’ program will be bigger and better than ever.”

The year kicked off with the nationwide release of the film *Dragon Ball Super: Broly* in January—a huge segue way to “Dragon Ball Z’s” anniversary events. To support the film’s release, Toei and Funimation partnered with Hot Topic (a retail partner in film apparel through mid-March), Bioworld (apparel, legwear and accessories), Everything

Legwear (socks) and Great Eastern (apparel).

In 2018, as part of its partnership with Fathom Events, Toei released three of the most-viewed classic “Dragon Ball Z” titles in movie theaters across America in an effort to promote the new film.

“We never dreamed of showing in a movie theater unless it was a new release,” says Yamatoya.

Between March and April, Turner’s Adult Swim and Toei will help celebrate the “Dragon Ball Z” anniversary via an announcement and a promotional giveaway for fans.

“In February, along with Funimation, we’re going to have a 30th anniversary collectible home video release announcement,” says Yamatoya. “This summer, we will partner with Overlook to host a ‘Dragon Ball Z’ symphony concert in the U.S. and Canada. The audience can listen to the symphony while clips from the show play, allowing fans to see the story on-screen with live music.”

In July, Toei and Bandai plan to bring “Dragon Ball” back to Comic-Con in a big way following the success of its appearance last year, which included the “Dragon Ball” takeover of the convention’s adjacent Marriott hotel.



“This was the first time there was such a big push for anime at San Diego Comic-Con,” says Yamatoya. “At first, we were very skeptical about how people were going to respond because we felt it is a Hollywood-focused

kind of event. But San Diego Comic-Con told us they wanted us back. We thought anime was too niche to do so well, but we are planning on a bigger presence.”

Toei will also bring the “Dragon Ball” franchise to Anime Expo, Crunchy Roll Expo and New York Comic Con this year. And in November, Toei will once again participate in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, as it did last year with its massive Goku balloon.

This year, Toei Animation will also celebrate the 20th anniversary of its “One Piece” series and the 20th anniversary of its “Digimon” series, which launched in 1999.

As the year continues to roll out, many more licensed deals surrounding “Dragon Ball Z’s” milestone 30th anniversary will be announced.

It’s safe to say the beloved series will continue to flourish uncontrollably—a true triumph for Toei Animation.

Perhaps the reason “Dragon Ball Z” resonates so well with fans, young and old, is because of the positive, inspiring theme behind its story. When faced with incredible adversity, Goku trains tirelessly and tackles huge challenges to transform himself into an immense superpower that defends Earth with undying heroism and altruism. And we can all appreciate and draw inspiration from such a noble endeavor. ©



"Dragon Ball Z" Through the Years



September 13 The first episode airs on U.S. television in first-run syndication.

1989

April 26 "Dragon Ball Z's" first episode airs in Japan.



1996

1997

August 5 Funimation releases the first "Dragon Ball Z" home release.



1998

August 31 Reruns of the television series begin on Cartoon Network's Toonami block.



1999

September 13 The renewed dub of "Dragon Ball Z" airs on Toonami.

Additional "Dragon Ball Z" merchandise licenses begin in North America. MGA Entertainment releases 20-plus toys (table-top games and walkie talkies) and Irwin Toy releases 72-plus action figures.

2000

June A "Dragon Ball Z" toy promotion begins at Burger King, selling 20 million figurines.

Atari releases the first two "Dragon Ball Z" video games in North America: "Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku" and "Dragon Ball Z: Budokai."

2002

December Jakks Pacific licenses "Dragon Ball Z" toys, including 5-inch figures.

January 26 "Dragon Ball FighterZ" is released for PS4, Xbox One and PC.

October "Dragon Ball Z Kai" reruns begin to air on Turner's Adult Swim.

Primitive Skate releases "Dragon Ball Z" skateboard decks and apparel online and in Zumiez retail shops.

Adidas Originals announce collaborative project with Toei Animation and "Dragon Ball Z" for seven sneaker silhouettes inspired by the series' most iconic characters.



2018



September 15 and 17 *Dragon Ball Z: Broly - The Legendary Super Saiyan* (1993)

is released in theaters in the U.S. and Canada.

November 3 and 5 The theatrical double feature release of *Dragon Ball Z: Bardock - The Father of Goku* (1990) and *Dragon Ball Z: Fusion Reborn* (1995) in the U.S. and Canada.

November 22 Goku debuts at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City and is broadcasted on national television.

2017

January 7 "Dragon Ball Z Kai: The Final Chapters" premieres on Cartoon Network/Toonami. The series first premiered in Japan on April 6, 2014.



"Dragon Ball Xenoverse 2" is released on PS4, Xbox One and PC.

2015

"Dragon Ball Z: Dokkan Battle" is released on Android and iOS. "Dragon Ball Z: Extreme Butoden" is released for Nintendo 3DS.

"Dragon Ball Xenoverse" is released on PS4, PS3, Xbox 360, Xbox One and PC.

August 4 *Dragon Ball Z: Resurrection 'F'* is released in theaters in the U.S. and Canada, earning it the spot as the No. 9 best-performing anime film of all time.



2014

August 5 *Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Gods* is released theatrically, marking the first "Dragon Ball Z" film release in the U.S. and Canada.



"Dragon Ball Z: Battle of Z" is released in Japan, Europe and North America for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and PlayStation Vita.

2010

Toei Animation secures deals with Central and South American companies, spreading the brand to even more Western territories.

May 24, "Dragon Ball Z Kai" first airs on Nickelodeon/Nicktoons. The series first premiered in Japan on Fuji TV on April 5, 2009.

2009

Bandai Namco Games (then Namco Bandai Games) secures North American/European distribution rights for the "Dragon Ball Z" video games, releasing "Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyan."



2007

"Dragon Ball Z" digitally remastered season sets are released on DVD.

ICV2 names "Dragon Ball Z" the No. 1 U.S. anime property.

