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# Going Piece by Piece: A Review of LEGO One Piece

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Eiichiro Oda's "One Piece" rightfully has its place in the Big Three of anime, boasting 1,200 episodes and a fiercely devoted fanbase. Since the anime's debut in 1999, generations of fans have followed the Straw Hat Pirates as they chase their dreams across the Grand Line. However, the sheer length of the series has become a barrier for newcomers, intimidated by close to 500 hours of content.

To make the story more accessible to new audiences, Netflix released a live-action adaptation in 2023 with its third season planned to come out early 2027, recreating the fondly remembered Alabasta arc. Opting out of a traditional movie recap splicing scenes from the series, Netflix decided to release an animated special — "LEGO One Piece."

The two-part special consists of 30-minute episodes that each recap a season. The first part covers the story of the original five pirates — Luffy, Zoro, Nami, Usopp and Sanji — along with their conflicts with Buggy and the Arlong Pirates. The next part follows them as they enter the Grand Line and venture into the first three islands. Here they fight with Baroque Works, add Chopper to the crew and vow to help Princess Vivi take back her kingdom of Alabasta from Crocodile.

The LEGO adaptation cleverly uses Usopp from the live-action series, who recounts the Straw Hats' earlier adventures to Chopper, who joined the crew later in the story. This is especially funny given Usopp's penchant for embellishing the truth, or, more aptly, lying. He tells Chopper that he had just liberated his town from the Black Cat Pirates when Luffy and his crew arrived — a blatant lie for anyone who has watched the show. In reality, he needed help from the Straw Hats to save Kaya. For viewers whose only "One Piece" experience comes from the LEGO adaptation, this bit might fly over their heads, as they lack the context needed to appreciate Usopp's dishonesty.

One of my major critiques of this adaptation is that in condensing over 130 episodes into a single hour, it inevitably loses many of the traits that make its characters special. Nami breaks down and declares that she needs help saving her village just four minutes into the Baratie arc, rushing through a pivotal moment in her character development. Sanji also loses much of his womanizing personality, a defining and humorous aspect of the show.

Another major critique is the removal of backstories for the characters that make "One Piece" so memorable. We never see the childhood friendship between Zoro and Kuina, whose death motivates his dream of becoming the world's greatest swordsman. Usopp's history as the boy who cried wolf is similarly glossed over, as is Sanji's history with the chef Zeff. These stories give the characters the emotional depth that makes them so endearing to us.

Some online fans also regard the series as a blatant commercialization of their favorite show. Many have pointed to the new "LEGO One Piece" sets, particularly the Jolly Roger, being advertised by this adaptation.

For longtime fans, however, "LEGO One Piece" offers a humorous yet nostalgic viewing experience. It recreates the major action sequences surprisingly well, masterfully using the LEGO format to make familiar moments even funnier. Mihawk's fight with Zoro is almost as entertaining as the original. The Arlong Park sequence was my personal favorite, largely thanks to the trap music playing in the background, complete with hilariously bad lyrics.

Undeniably, "LEGO One Piece" should not be regarded as a replacement for either the anime or the live-action adaptation. Newcomers may miss the nuances of the characters and the intricacies of the plot when experiencing the story in such an abridged format. The adaptation is simply too condensed to capture what makes the original so beloved.

Seasoned fans, however, should take the time to give it a watch. As "One Piece" progresses through its final saga, its increasingly serious narrative makes a return to the lower-stakes days all the more welcome. "LEGO One Piece" reminds us of a time when the Straw Hats were simply a bunch of goofy pirates chasing their dreams and inspiring us to do the same.

3.5/5




**The poster for the new Netflix LEGO One Piece Special featuring the tagline "Built Differently."**

PHOTO COURTESY OF @INAKIGO ON INSTAGRAM




**A snapshot from the trailer for Netflix's LEGO One Piece Special. The series does two thirty minute recaps of the anime's early arcs.**

PHOTO BY COURTESY OF GEEK & SUNDRY ON FACEBOOK

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