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Paramount Pictures sets Pierre Morel to direct adaptation of Frank Herbert's 1965 sci-fi classic novel "Dune".

Morel, who last directed the action hit "Taken," has signed a deal with the studio and will work toward getting the script right. Pic is one of the biggest priorities on the slate of Par Motion Picture Group prexy Adam Goodman.

Kevin Misher's Misher Films will produce with New Amsterdam's Richard Rubinstein, who also produced the highly rated six hour Frank Herbert's "Dune" miniseries and its sequel "Children of Dune" which was based on the next two novels in Herbert's original 6 novel series.

Screenplay had been developed for Peter Berg, who exited when he committed to direct Universal's "Battleship," based on the Hasbro naval combat board game. Berg had developed a "Dune" draft with Josh Zetumer, the screenwriter who separately has been scripting the fourth installment of "The Bourne Identity" for Universal. Paramount will work off the Zetumer draft, but the studio and the producers expect to announce another writer shortly.

"Dune" was first turned into a film by David Lynch, whose 1984 effort was not a financial success nor well regarded by fans of the novel. Herbert's novel—about an intergalactic struggle to control the supply of the "Spice" found only on the remote desert planet Arrakis, aka 'Dune'—remains the biggest selling science fiction novel ever and new generations of readers keep book sales still going strong. In fact Morel is a long time fan who brought his well-worn copy of the novel with him to meetings at Paramount, studio sources said.

The studio will begin doing R&D work immediately on a picture that promises to be pricey.

Rubinstein's feature credits as producer include Stephen King's "Pet Sematary" and both the original George A. Romero directed 1979 "Dawn of the Dead" as well as the Universal distributed 2004 remake directed by Zack Snyder. Pet and the Dawn remake each grossed more than 100 million worldwide. Misher, a former production chief at Universal most recently produced the Michael Mann directed "Public Enemy" starring Johnny Depp.

The deal makes "Dune" a candidate to be the next directing assignment for Morel, who is also in early stage development on a sequel to "Taken." Morel most recently wrapped the John Travolta/John Rys-Davies starrer "From Paris with Love," which hits theatres in the US next month. He is reprised by WME and Artist Talent Management.

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