



WORLD RECORDS DAY. Chandra Dangi, left, who is 21.5" tall, stands by Sultan Kösen, who is 8'3" tall, at a photocall to celebrate the 10th annual Guinness World Records Day in Westminster, London. In February 2012, Nepalese Dangi officially became the world's shortest living man. Chandra was given the title when it was discovered that he was shorter than Junrey Balawing of the Philippines, who in June 2011 was 23.5" tall. The same year, Dangi was confirmed as the shortest adult human to ever have their height verified by Guinness World Records, beating a benchmark set by Gul Mohammed (1957-1997) of New Delhi, India, who was 22.5" tall. Sultan, from Ankara, Turkey, first became the world's tallest living man in 2009, when he was 8'1". He took the title from China's Xi Shun, who in 2005 was 7'8.95". (AP Photo/PA, John Stillwell)

Hello Kitty's 40 years of cuteness and cool

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two dots for eyes, a tiny circle for a nose and no mouth — Hello Kitty was largely for little girls at the start. Her stationery became a staple gift for schoolgirls. Hello Kitty made her overseas debut in the United States in 1976 before heading to Europe and the rest of Asia. She posed piloting an airplane in 1978 for the opening of Tokyo's Narita International Airport, symbolizing her dream of going global.

The '80s: Kids Stuff No More

Hello Kitty began shaking off her purely childish image and attracting adults. Her outfits and background shifted from bold red, blue, and yellow to hues of pink and blue. A black and white Hello Kitty reflected a monotone boom led by Japanese fashion brand Comme des Garçons. Kitty's third and current designer, Yuko Yamaguchi, took the bold step of removing the black outline around the character. Hello Kitty decorated the popular items of the day, including pagers and handheld game machines.

The '90s: Like Mother, Like Daughter

Some of her original fans started having children, a potential second generation of fans. Sanrio Puroland, a theme park targeting families, opened in the Tokyo suburbs. Designer Yamaguchi created a baby Kitty in 1999 at the request of young mothers. "Kitty-lers," a new breed of grown-ups devoted to the character, became a national phenomenon. A Hello Kitty laptop went on sale, as did a portable karaoke machine amid a karaoke boom. "I'm her peer, and I've been her fan since kindergarten," said 40-year-old Yuko Ishikawa, who gave a big hug to Hello Kitty at Sanrio Puroland on a visit with her three-year-old daughter, Hina. "Happy birthday!"

The 2000s: The Cool Factor

The growing worldwide popularity of Japanese animation and comics helped Hello Kitty become cool, not just cute — or "cute-cool" as Yano puts it. A new wink gave her greater semantic presence, she said. "It can be taken straight, or ironically, or it can be taken humorously." Sanrio reached out to fans of different fashion tastes, from



MIDDLE-AGED ICON. A model dressing as Japanese character Hello Kitty gestures to show the number "40" to 40-year-old Yuko Ishikawa at Sanrio Puroland, a Tokyo theme park featuring Hello Kitty. When she came to life in 1974, she did not have a name, sitting sideways in blue overalls and a big red bow, on a coin purse for Japanese girls. On the first Saturday this month, fans around the world celebrated the 40th anniversary of the global icon of "cute-cool." That is, Hello Kitty. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

girly to street and designer brands. In 2008 Hello Kitty donned a Dior collection in *Vogue* magazine. She also co-branded with Diesel, A Bathing Ape, Undercover, Reebok, and Vans, as well as cosmetics makers Crabtree & Evelyn and MAC.

The Future: Lady Gaga, Swarovski, What's Next?

Hello Kitty is featured on about 50,000 items in some 130 countries. Lady Gaga has performed in Hello Kitty costumes, and rock band Kiss produced t-shirts last year featuring Hello Kitty in its trademark-Kiss makeup and costumes. A sitting Kitty decorated with 14,000 Swarovski stones sells for 476,280 yen (\$470) in Japan. Taiwan's EVA Air launched a Kitty-inspired Airbus A330-300 flight between Taipei and Sapporo in 2011, and Kitty-themed luxury spas have opened in Bangkok and Dubai.

Her future? There will be some ups and downs ahead, Yano says, but "I think it has a presence, a long-lasting presence."



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