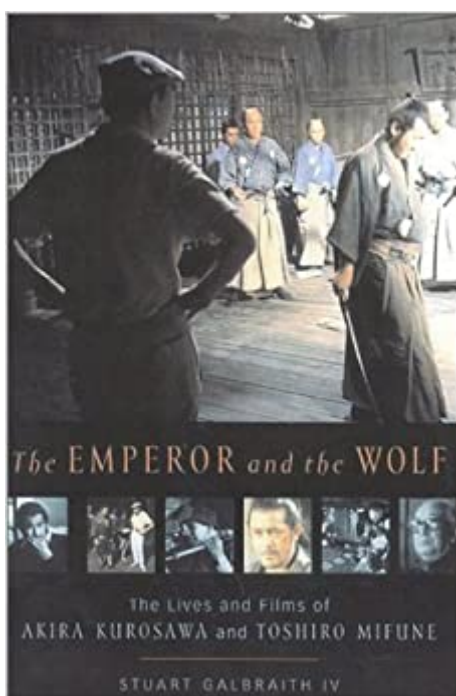


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The Emperor And The Wolf: The Lives And Films Of Akira Kurosawa And Toshiro Mifune



Synopsis

The first -- and long overdue -- English-language biography of two of the world's great cinema figures. Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune made sixteen feature films together, including *Rashomon*, *Seven Samurai*, *Throne of Blood*, *Yojimbo*, and *High and Low* -- all undisputed masterworks of world cinema. Kurosawa's films inspired blockbuster remakes and influenced directors like George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese. Meanwhile, Mifune virtually invented the roaming warrior rogue, a character adapted with great success by actors like Clint Eastwood, Sean Connery, Bruce Willis, and countless others. Their impact on the international film world is undisputable, yet at the very height of their abilities, Kurosawa and Mifune went their separate ways. After *Red Beard* in 1965 they would never work together again -- nor would they ever achieve the same level of success apart as they had together. *The Emperor and the Wolf* is an in-depth look at the life and work of these two luminaries of cinema. Full of behind-the-scenes details about their tumultuous lives and stormy relationships with the studios and each other, it is also a provocative look at postwar American and Japanese culture and the different lenses through which the two societies viewed each other.

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Customer Reviews

Akira Kurosawa dominated the landscape of post-World War II Japanese cinema with such internationally influential films as *Rashomon*, *Seven Samurai*, and *Ikiru*. Actor Toshiro Mifune

collaborated with Kurosawa on 16 films, and despite his claim that he was "always true to the Japanese spirit," critics compare his visceral acting style to that of Brando or De Niro. This is a dual biography of two Japanese film greats who brought out the best in each other, and Galbraith (*The Japanese Filmography*) expertly weaves together their stories. As Galbraith recounts, the two men gradually grew apart because of drinking problems, egos, and the collapse of the Japanese film industry. Much space is devoted to Kurosawa's unhappy experience attempting to direct segments of the American Pearl Harbor epic *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, but as Galbraith shows, Kurosawa's overwhelming desire to create led to recovery and a distinguished body of work late in life. Meanwhile, Mifune squandered his talents in a futile bid for international stardom in overblown film and television efforts. This book tells a little-known, sometimes inspiring story and provides an astute reading of major themes in the work of Kurosawa and Mifune. Recommended for public and academic libraries as a companion to Donald Richie's *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Univ. of California, 1999. rev. ed.). Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa and actor Toshiro Mifune might be thought of as John Ford and John Wayne for the world-cinema crowd. Although both had successes with other collaborators, they are best known for the 16 films they made together, the most famous being samurai-era dramas, such as *Rashomon* and *The Seven Samurai*, and the others including equally brilliant contemporary dramas. Their last work together was *Red Beard* (1965), and they each continued making films for another 30 years, until their deaths, nine months apart. Kurosawa has been the subject of numerous critical works, but no English-language biography predates this book. Furthermore, most of Mifune's 126 features remain unseen in the U.S. Thus Galbraith's dual biography fills two gaping holes in English-language filmography. Unable to meet with Mifune and interviewing Kurosawa only by fax, Galbraith did talk directly with coworkers and family members, and he uses published resources effectively. As one of world cinema's leading figures, Kurosawa is the more important subject here, but the information on Mifune is most welcome, too. Gordon Flagg

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This is a filmography, not a biography. This book focuses almost entirely on Kurosawa's and Mifune's films, giving almost no insight into what their lives were like, or what they were like as people. The first half of this 800-page book is an interminable series of synopses of their early works -- films of significance today only as harbingers of much greater things to come. (Particularly

annoying is the author's endless quoting of contemporary reviews from "Variety.") The second half still focuses primarily on the films and the minutiae of their production, but provides some substance about K&M's personal lives. However, it is not nearly enough to get a clear picture of Mifune and Kurosawa as real-life people. We, the readers, always feel like fans still observing the two legends from a distance, learning almost nothing of their personal lives. For instance, barely half a page is spent on Mifune's wedding, and essentially nothing is written about his wife, Sachiko. In addition, although this is a dual biography-the justification being that Mifune and Kurosawa did their best work together-Mr. Galbraith fails to convey what kind of relationship, whether personal or professional, the two had. Rather, the book's focus alternates from one to the other between chapters. A glaring omission in this regard is a failure to examine their famous falling out. The overly cautious author only hints that it was due to Mifune's reluctance to be tied down by the perfectionist director's lengthy shoots ("Red Beard," their last film together, took 2 years to film), that Mifune, once he gained fame, preferred quick, easy-money projects to support his luxurious lifestyle. However, almost no anecdotes are given to illustrate this or any other aspect of their relationship. In summary, the definitive English-language biographies of Mifune and Kurosawa have yet to be written.

"The Emperor and the Wolf" is a fine reference book, particularly useful in regards to filmography and timeline. The research is exhaustive. I learned quite a bit about the arc of both Kurosawa's and Mifune's careers. If you want more about Kurosawa the man, go read "Something Like an Autobiography". That's a lovely book-I've re-read it recently and felt quite close to Kurosawa as a human being...the book is quite intimate, and I am surprised at how willing Kurosawa is to criticize himself and display his less brilliant moments. I'm afraid to use the word "honest"-since Kurosawa insists we all fabricate. But, it FEELS very honest. It's just too darned bad that there is not a comparable book about Mifune!

The subtitle of this book, *The Lives and Films of Akira Kurosawa*, is completely deceitful. There is nothing biographical in this book about either one of its main protagonists. It is rather a chronicle of the Japanese film industry, not without interest in itself. However, the voluminous facts, tid-bits of information about every minor actor, director, script-writer, and film composer, as well as the synopsis of every film mentioned, makes for incredibly tedious reading. While the book has its merit as a source of information, not much credit should be given to the author other than for his ability to put together facts that are available from a number of sources. Meanwhile, reading all these capsules of data will leave you dry when it comes to the lives of Kurosawa and Mifune. The author

tells us nothing about how they lived, felt, thought, behaved, what motivated them; probably because he doesn't know himself. A simple gathering of public facts, none researched by the author himself because their sources are many and widely available, especially on the internet, do not make for a worthy book!

It was a gift for my groomsman, a man who rates Kurosawa and Mifune the greatest cinematic pairing EVER, he was pleased by the gift, a book he never thought he could get his hands on.

A little water damaged but only the first few pages, and it was marketed as lightly used, so it was what I expected.

The item was fine, but as a result of this purchase my identity was stolen and used for computer games. I have identity theft protection, so it did no damage to me. Now I have to get a new card.

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