

THE GOLDEN ERA OF JAPANESE CINEMA

The 1950s are widely considered the Golden Age of Japanese cinema.

Three Japanese films from this decade made the Sight & Sound's 2002 Critics and Directors Poll for the best films of all time.

Rashomon

Seven Samurai

Tokyo Story

The period after the American Occupation led to a rise in diversity in movie distribution thanks to the increased output and popularity of the *film studios*:

Toho

Daiei

Shochiku

Nikkatsu

Toei

This period gave rise to the four great directors of Japanese cinema:

Masaki Kobayashi

Akira Kurosawa

Kenji Mizoguchi

Yasujirō Ozu.

Two types of dramas

Gendai-Geki : Contemporary Drama/Social Issues

Jidai-Geki: Costume or Period Drama (Samurai Films)

TIME LINE:

1946 - The Civil Censorship Department was created within the Civil Intelligence Section of the **Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers**. It exercised considerable influence over the operation and administration of the American Occupation of Japan after World War II. Bans 31 Separate topics from films – including imperial propaganda (i.e. Samurai Films)

1948 – US vs Paramount. The beginning the end for the studio system.

1949 November- The Civil Censorship Department becomes less heavy handed.

1950 - The decade started with Akira Kurosawa's **Rashomon** (1950), which won **the Golden Lion** at the Venice Film Festival in 1951 and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1952, and marked the entrance of Japanese cinema onto the world stage.

It was also the breakout role for legendary star **Toshiro Mifune**.

1950 - The Blue Ribbon Awards were established in 1950. The first winner for Best Film was **Until We Meet Again** by Tadashi Imai.

1951- The first Japanese film in color was Carmen Comes Home directed by Keisuke Kinoshita and released in 1951. There was also a black-and-white version of this film available.

1951- **Tokyo File 212** (1951) was the first American feature film to be shot entirely in Japan. It featured the geisha Ichimaru in a short cameo.

1953 - **Entotsu no mieru basho** by Heinosuke Gosho was in competition at the 3rd Berlin International Film Festival.

1953 - Kenji Mizoguchi wins the Silver Bear at the Venice Film Festival for **Ugetsu**.

1953 - **Gate of Hell**, a film by Teinosuke Kinugasa, was the first movie that filmed using Eastmancolor film, **Gate of Hell** was both Daiei's first color film and the first Japanese color movie to be released outside Japan, receiving an Oscar in 1954 for Best Costume Design by Sanzo Wada and an Honorary Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It also won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, the first Japanese film to achieve that honour.

1954 - Two of Japan's most influential films released. The first was the Kurosawa epic **Seven Samurai**, about a band of hired samurai who protect a helpless village from a rapacious gang of thieves. The same year, Ishirō Honda directed the anti-nuclear monster-drama **Godzilla**, which was released in America as **Godzilla, King of the**

Monsters. Though edited for its Western release, Godzilla became an international icon of Japan and spawned an entire subgenre of kaiju films.

1954, both another Kurosawa film, **Ikiru**, and Yasujirō Ozu's **Tokyo Story** were in competition at the 4th Berlin International Film Festival.

1955, Hiroshi Inagaki won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for Part I of his **Samurai trilogy** and in 1958 won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival for **Rickshaw Man**.

1956 - Kon Ichikawa directed two anti-war dramas: **The Burmese Harp** (1956), which was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards, and **Fires On The Plain** (1959), along with **Enjo** (1958), which was adapted from Yukio Mishima's novel Temple Of The Golden Pavilion.

1956 - Kenji Mizoguchi dies, ended his career with a series of masterpieces including **The Life of Oharu** (1952), **Ugetsu** (1953) and **Sansho the Bailiff** (1954).

1959 - Masaki Kobayashi made three films which would collectively become known as The Human Condition Trilogy: **No Greater Love** (1959), and **The Road To Eternity** (1959). The trilogy was completed in 1961, with **A Soldier's Prayer**. He won the Silver Bear at the Venice Film Festival for **Ugetsu**.

1960s - The number of films produced, and the cinema audience reached a peak in the

1960s - The huge level of activity of 1960s Japanese cinema also resulted in many classics. Akira Kurosawa directed the 1961 classic **Yojimbo**. Yasujirō Ozu made his final film, **An Autumn Afternoon**, in 1962. Mikio Naruse directed the wide screen melodrama **When a Woman Ascends the Stairs** in 1960; his final film was 1967's **Scattered Clouds**.

1964 - Teshigahara's **Woman in the Dunes** (1964) won the Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and was nominated for Best Director and Best Foreign Language Film Oscars.

1970s - The 1970s saw the cinema audience drop due to the spread of television.

NOTES:

Mikio Naruse made **Repast** (1950), **Late Chrysanthemums** (1954), **The Sound of the Mountain** (1954) and **Floating Clouds** (1955).

Yasujirō Ozu began directing color films beginning with **Equinox Flower** (1958), and later **Good Morning** (1959) and **Floating Weeds** (1958), which was adapted from his

earlier silent ***A Story of Floating Weeds*** (1934), and was shot by Rashomon and Sansho the Bailiff cinematographer ***Kazuo Miyagawa***.