



## Akira Kurosawa

Director, Screenwriter

Birth	Mar 24, 1910 (Tokyo, Japan)
Death	Sep 6, 1998 (Tokyo, Japan)
Genres	Drama,

The most well-known of all Japanese directors, the great irony about Akira Kurosawa's career is that he's been far more popular outside of Japan than in Japan. The son of an army officer, Kurosawa studied art before gravitating to film as a means of supporting himself. He served seven years as an assistant to director Kajiro Yamamoto before he began his own directorial career with *Sanshiro Sugata* (1943), a film about the 19th century struggle for supremacy between adherents of judo and jujitsu that so impressed the military government, he was prevailed upon to make a sequel (*Sanshiro Sugata Part Two*).

Following the end of World War II, Kurosawa's career gathered speed with a series of films that cut across all genres, from crime thrillers to period dramas. Among the latter, his *Rashomon* (1951) became the first postwar Japanese film to find wide favor with Western audiences, and simultaneously introduced leading man Toshiro Mifune to Western viewers. It was Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954), however, that made the largest impact of any of his movies outside of Japan. Although heavily cut for its original release, this three-hour-plus medieval action drama, shot with painstaking attention to both dramatic and period detail, became one of the most popular Japanese films of all time in the West, and every subsequent Kurosawa film has been released in the U.S. in some form, even if many — most notably *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) — were cut down in length.

At the same time, American and European filmmakers began taking a serious look at Kurosawa's movies as a source of plot material for their own work. In 1964, *Rashomon* was remade in a Western setting as *The Outrage*, while *Yojimbo* was remade by Sergio Leone as *A Fistful of Dollars*. *The Seven Samurai* (1954) fared best of all, serving as the basis for John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven* (which had been the original title of Kurosawa's movie) in 1960; the remake actually did better business in Japan than the original. In 1985, an unfilmed screenplay of Kurosawa's also served as the basis for *Runaway Train*, a popular action thriller.

Kurosawa's movies subsequent to his period thriller *Sanjuro* (1962) abandoned the action format in favor of more esoteric and serious drama, including his epic-length medical melodrama *Red Beard* (1965). In later years, despite ill health and problems getting financing for his more ambitious films, Kurosawa remained the most prominent of

Japanese filmmakers until his death in 1998. With his Westernized style, Kurosawa always found a wider audience and more financing opportunities in Europe and America than he did in his own country. A sensitive romantic at heart, with a sentimental streak that occasionally rose forcefully to the surface of his movies, his work probably resembles that of John Ford more closely than it does any of his fellow Japanese directors. — **Bruce Eder**

### **Director - filmography**

[\(1990s\)](#) [\(1980s\)](#) [\(1970s\)](#) [\(1960s\)](#) [\(1950s\)](#) [\(1940s\)](#)

1. [Madadayo](#) (1993)  
... aka Not Yet
2. [Hachi-gatsu no kyôshikyoku](#) (1991)  
... aka Rhapsody in August (USA)
3. [Yume](#) (1990)  
... aka Such Dreams I Have Dreamed (Japan: English title)
4. [Ran](#) (1985)  
... aka Ran (USA)
5. [Kagemusha](#) (1980)  
... aka Shadow Warrior
6. [Dodesukaden](#) (1970)  
... aka Clickety-Clack
7. [Akahige](#) (1965)  
... aka Red Beard (International: English title: literal title)
8. [Tengoku to jigoku](#) (1963)  
... aka High and Low (USA)
9. [Tsubaki Sanjûrô](#) (1962)  
... aka Sanjuro (USA)
10. [Yojimbo](#) (1961)  
... aka The Bodyguard (International: English title: literal title)
11. [Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru](#) (1960)  
... aka The Worse You Are, the Better You Sleep
12. [Kakushi toride no san akunin](#) (1958)  
... aka The Hidden Fortress (USA)
13. [Donzoko](#) (1957)  
... aka The Lower Depths (USA)
14. [Kumonosu jô](#) (1957)  
... aka Throne of Blood (USA: original subtitled version)
15. [Ikimono no kiroku](#) (1955)  
... aka I Live In Fear: Record of a Living Being (International: English title)
16. [Shichinin no samurai](#) (1954)  
... aka Seven Samurai (UK)

17. [Ikiru](#) (1952)  
... aka Doomed
18. [Hakuchi](#) (1951)  
... aka The Idiot (USA)
19. [Rashômon](#) (1950)  
... aka In the Woods
20. [Shubun](#) (1950)  
... aka Scandal
  
21. [Nora inu](#) (1949)  
... aka Stray Dog (USA)
  
22. [Shizukanaru ketto](#) (1949)  
... aka A Silent Duel
23. [Yoidore tenshi](#) (1948)  
... aka Drunken Angel
24. [Subarashiki nichiyobi](#) (1947)  
... aka One Wonderful Sunday
25. [Waga seishun ni kuinashi](#) (1946)  
... aka No Regrets for Our Youth
26. [Asu o tsukuru hitobito](#) (1946)  
... aka Those Who Make Tomorrow
27. [Tora no o wo fumu otokotachi](#) (1945)  
... aka The Men Who Tread On the Tiger's Tail (USA)
28. [Zoku Sugata Sanshiro](#) (1945)  
... aka Judo Saga II
29. [Ichiban utsukushiku](#) (1944)  
... aka Most Beautifully
30. [Sugata Sanshiro](#) (1943)  
... aka Judo Saga
31. [Uma](#) (1941) (some scenes) (uncredited)  
... aka Horse

