

Seven Samurai rip offs-

13th Warrior

The Magnificent Seven

Ronin

Dirty Dozen

Saving Private Ryan

The Wild Bunch

Conan the Barbarian (1982)

Battle Beyond the Stars

Last Man Standing /Yojimbo

The Bodyguard, Kevin Costner watches a screening of Kurosawa's film and later does some samurai-ish turns with a sword (*Yojimbo*, loosely translated, is Japanese for "bodyguard").

THE FILMS of Akira Kurosawa have always been a point at which Eastern and Western currents crossed. His *Throne of Blood* (1957) retold *Macbeth*, and *Ran* (1985) resembled *King Lear*. And Kurosawa hasn't borrowed only from high art. His thriller *High and Low* (1963) was an adaptation of 87th-precinct creator Ed McBain's novel *King's Ransom*.

Western filmmakers have returned the compliment, if it can be considered such. Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai* (1954) was turned into the 1960 Western hit *The Magnificent Seven*, and *Rashomon* (1950) was clumsily translated into Martin Ritt's *The Outrage* (1964).

Although Kurosawa's borrowings from Shakespeare and McBain were acknowledged, *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Outrage* were made without the master's approval or even his knowledge. Kurosawa apparently reached his limit with *A Fistful of Dollars* and sued in an Italian court. Leone, incredibly, denied the connection between his film and *Yojimbo*, even though numerous critics have pointed out the similarities not only in plot but in shot selection and camera angles.

After the suit dragged on for years, Kurosawa finally received a portion of the profits from *A Fistful of Dollars* and the copyrights to *Yojimbo*, while United Artists, Leone's distributor, retained copyrights to *A Fistful of Dollars*.

Since the plots of the two films are nearly identical, the court's ruling resulted in more ambiguity than justice. In the case of *Last Man Standing*, there will probably be no question that New Line Cinema, the film's distributor, has the right to revise *Yojimbo*. In fact, director Hill, who calls the film "an adaptation, not a remake," is proud of the fact that *Last Man Standing* will be the first version of a Kurosawa film sanctioned by the Japanese filmmaker.

That pedigree, however, didn't stop United Artists from trying to muscle in on the action. "When the project was announced," says a New Line spokesman, "a story in the press said, 'It is widely known that *Yojimbo* was remade in 1964 as *A Fistful of Dollars*.' Somebody must have read that, because we got a letter from UA that said, in effect, 'You are now on legal notice that you have no right to use the plot of *A Fistful of Dollars*.' It was bizarre. Their attitude was like *Yojimbo* had never been made, let alone made first. We decided to ignore the letter and make our movie."

. The critic Michael Jeck suggests that this was the first film in which a team is assembled to carry out a mission--an idea which gave birth to its direct Hollywood remake, "The Magnificent Seven," as well as "The Guns of Navarone." "The Dirty Dozen," and countless later war, heist and caper movies. Since Kurosawa's samurai adventure "Yojimbo" (1960) was remade as "A Fistful of Dollars" and essentially

created the spaghetti Western, and since this movie and Kurosawa's "The Hidden Fortress" inspired George Lucas' "Star Wars" series, it could be argued that this greatest of filmmakers gave employment to action heroes for the next 50 years, just as a fallout from his primary purpose.

In *To the Distant Observer*, his study of Japanese films, Noel Burch observes: "masochistic perseverance in the fulfillment of complex social obligations is a basic cultural trait of Japan."

"The Seven Samurai" represents a great divide in his work; most of his earlier films, Jeck observes, subscribe to the Japanese virtues of teamwork, fitting in, going along, conforming. All his later films are about misfits, nonconformists and rebels. The turning point can be seen in his greatest film, "Ikiru" (1952), in which a bureaucrat spends his days in the rote performance of meaningless duties, but decides when he is dying to break loose and achieve at least one meaningful thing.

Shimura's Kambei is the veteran warrior, who in an early scene shaves his head to disguise himself as a priest, in order to enter a house where a hostage is being held. (Did *this* scene create the long action movie tradition of opening sequences in which the hero wades into a dangerous situation unrelated to the later plot?)

Repeated viewings of "The Seven Samurai" reveal visual patterns. Consider the irony, for example, in two sequences that bookend the first battle with the bandits. In the first, the villagers have heard the bandits are coming, and rush around in panic. Kambei orders his samurai to calm and contain them, and the ronin run from one group to the next (the villagers always run in groups, not individually) to herd them into cover. Later, after the bandits have been repulsed, a wounded bandit falls in the village square, and now the villagers rush forward with delayed bravery, to kill him. This time the samurai hurry about pushing them back. Mirrored scenes like that can be found throughout the movie

The most important samurai movie is Akira Kurosawa's 1954 feature, *Seven Samurai*, which not only impacted the way the genre was viewed, but elevated its status.

- Later remade into the Western Magnificent Seven, The (1960) by John Sturges.

Heihachi is the first of the Seven Samurai to die in the film. Minoru Chiaki, who played Heihachi, was the last of the title character actors to die in real life (in 1999).

Originally released in theaters in an abridged 141-minute version in USA and Europe. Original Japanese version (now available on restored video release) is 203 minutes long

Dashiell Hammett's legendary novel, claims that *Yojimbo* "practically is *Red Harvest*--it's a samurai version of an American gangster novel. Many people have said this." To redo *Yojimbo*

By the time Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Thin Man* and *The Glass Key* had become film successes, Hammett himself was in trouble with the House Un-American Activities Committee,

'Shichinin No Samurai' is one of the greatest movies ever made. It is called the first modern action movie, the first movie where a team is on a mission, an inspiration for the spaghetti western. Probably it is Akira Kurosawa's best movie. Akira Kurosawa was one of the best filmmakers that ever lived so that makes 'Shichinin No Samurai' one of the best movies ever made.

Director name : Akira Kurosawa

Country : Japan

Akira Kurosawa was a master filmmaker best known for his samurai epics. He is credited with introducing the world to Japanese cinema. He was born on Mar 23, 1910. He had studied painting and began his career as an illustrator. He then answered an ad for an assistant director and landed the job. During this time he also edited and contributed as a screenwriter.

He made his directorial debut in 1943 with *Judo Saga*, a martial arts film that explored the relationship between a teacher and a pupil. The teacher-pupil theme would be resurrected quite a few times during the course of his career. Another earlier venture of note was *Drunken Angel* (1948), a gangster melodrama that marked the first in a long collaboration with actor Toshiro Mifune. Kurosawa's early films are a compilation of varied themes coupled with a visual flair. He enjoyed success even before his films were appreciated outside Japan.

Rashomon (1950), proved to be a milestone for Kurosawa, gaining him international recognition and acclaim. The deeply absorbing drama focused on a rape and murder, related from four points of view. It was a fascinating exploration of the subjective nature of truth. Kurosawa's strong visual sense won many admirers. Following *Rashomon*, Kurosawa proved his versatility with widely differing storylines, often inspired by Western literature.

Haikuchi (1950) was based on Dostoyevski's *The Idiot*. *Ikiru* (1952) examined the post-war depression in Japan. *The Seven Samurai* (1954) was one of his finest efforts and next to *Rashomon*, the film he is most remembered for. The film was innovative in its use of long lenses and multiple cameras to capture the chaos of the battle scenes. The story of a group of Samurai was inspired by Hollywood westerns. Ironically, Kurosawa's epic inspired the Hollywood classic western, *The Magnificent Seven*. *Throne of Blood* (1957) was a combination of Noh theatre and *Macbeth*.

Besides literature, Kurosawa even found inspiration in the novels of Ed McBain, which inspired *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960). Another samurai classic *Yojimbo* (1961) was key in the development of the Italian 'spaghetti westerns'. It inspired the Clint Eastwood classic *A Fistful of Dollars*, which was the first Italian entry in the genre to gain international attention. *Red Beard* (1965) would be Kurosawa's last film with Mifune.

Kurosawa would then try to make a film in America, but several efforts went unrealized. Returning to Japan he made *Dodes Ka-Den* in 1970. The exploration of the lives of people in a shantytown was a failure, which led Kurosawa to attempt suicide. Fortunately, he survived. He made a triumphant return in 1975, with the release of *Denzu Uzala*, an epic adventure about a trapper. The film would win the Best Foreign Film Oscar.

Kurosawa continued to impress with his return to samurai fare in 1985's *Kagemusha*. It was a critical and commercial hit. *Ran* (1985) was an adaptation of *King Lear* set in 16th century Japan. Another epic, at a budget of \$11 million it was the most expensive Japanese film ever produced. It was hailed as a masterpiece and won 4 Oscar nominations including a best Director nod for Kurosawa.

Kurosawa's last few films were smaller efforts and he often had to rely on foreign financing to get them made. He released *Dreams* in 1990, which had Martin Scorsese as part of the cast. The film was an experimental portrayal of his fears for the future of mankind. In 1991, his *Rhapsody in August* featured Richard Gere. His last film was *Madadayo* in 1993.

Kurosawa passed away in 1998. His contribution to cinema is immense. His meticulous approach to filmmaking right from planning to rehearsals to actual production made for some unforgettable films. His work greatly influenced the course of Japanese cinema and even American westerns owe him a debt of gratitude. He was awarded an honorary Oscar for his lifetime achievement.