



# The Emperor and the Wolf: The Lives and Films of Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune

By Stuart Galbraith IV

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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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**The Emperor and the Wolf: The Lives and Films of Akira Kurosawa and Toshiro Mifune** By Stuart Galbraith IV **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Library Journal

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

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From [Booklist](#)

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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Review

"A terrific book, and long overdue: a well-researched study of how a great director and a great actor fired each other up; an informative history of how high profile Japanese films were received at home and abroad; [and] a surprising genealogy of the modern action hero." --Christopher Frayling, author of *Sergio Leone*

"A monumental job of research [and] a rare feast for lovers of Japanese cinema . . . infused throughout with an affection for its subjects that is contagious. Best of all, it does what all good film books should do: it returns us, with an enriched appreciation, to the movies themselves." --Peter Biskind, *The New York Times*

## *Book Review*

"[A] splendid dual biography . . . . Where [Galbraith] really scores is in illuminating the two men's lives, and the lives of many of their close associates, as well as their work." --*The Economist*

"Galbraith is an obvious enthusiast, and his love and encyclopedic knowledge of Japanese cinema radiate off every page. He is also a sensitive critic of Kurosawa's work who does not make the common mistake of viewing the master's films through a Western prism." --Nicholas Riccard, *Variety*

"Not many film books deserve to have the adjective 'extraordinary' applied to them, but Stuart Galbraith's *The Emperor and the Wolf* is nothing less than that. In fact, it's more . . . . this 823-page achievement wants to be all things to all admirers of its twin subjects, and, incredibly, it succeeds. Reference work, scrupulously thorough filmography, exhaustive biography-all are here . . . . A graceful, economical writer, [Galbraith] is also a first-rate critic and film historian. [*The Emperor and the Wolf*] is a wonder of clarity and organization, and an enormous pleasure to read . . . . [a] magnificent book." --Bill Kelley, *The Sarasota Herald Tribune*

"An important reference work on both men . . . . thanks to Galbraith and his inexhaustible research, the stature of both these artists has been reaffirmed."

--Bob Leddy, *The Providence Journal*

"An informative, intelligent and carefully considered study of one of the greatest actor-director teams in the history of cinema." --Martin Scorsese

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