

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S

RAN

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RIALTO PICTURES PRESS BOOK

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# **RAN**

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Director

**Akira Kurosawa**

Screenplay

**Akira Kurosawa**

**Hideo Oguni**

**Masato Ide**

Producers

**Serge Silberman**

**Masato Hara**

Cinematography

**Takao Saitô**

**Masaharu Ueda**

**Asakazu Nakai**

Editor

**Akira Kurosawa**

Music

**Tôru Takemitsu**

Production Designers

**Yoshirô Muraki**

**Shinobu Muraki**

Costume Design

**Emi Wada**

**Produced by Greenwich Film Production (France) –  
Herald Ace Inc. (Japan) – Nippon Herald Films (Japan)**

**Japanese release: June 1, 1985**

**Original U.S. release: September 27, 1985**

**A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE**

**France/Japan, 1985 running time: 162 min.**

**Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1 Dolby SR**

**In Japanese with English subtitles**

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## CAST

Lord Hidetora Ichimonji  
**Tatsuya Nakadai**

Taro  
**Akira Terao**

Jiro  
**Jinpachi Nezu**

Saburo  
**Daisuke Ryu**

Lady Kaede  
**Mieko Harada**

Lady Sué  
**Yoshiko Miyazaki**

Tango  
**Masayuki Yui**

Lord Ikoma  
**Kazuo Kato**

Kyoami  
**Peter**

Fujimaki  
**Hitoshi Ueki**

Ayabe  
**Jun Tazaki**

Lord Ogura  
**Norio Matsui**

Kurogane  
**Hisashi Ikawa**

Tsurumaru  
**Takeshi Nomura**

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## SYNOPSIS

Mounted sentries keep watch amid precipitous green valleys, as **LORD HIDETORA** (Tatsuya Nakadai) leads his party on a wild boar hunt on horseback, drawing his bow in close shot as the screen turns to the title RAN (literally, “chaos”).

Enclosed by banners on a hillside, Hidetora relaxes while his guests, erstwhile rival lords **FUJIMAKI** (Hitoshi Ueki) and **AYABE** (Jun Tazaki), vie for the privilege of marrying a daughter to Hidetora’s youngest son, the blue-clad **SABURO** (Daisuke Ryu). After the lord’s fool **KIYOAMI** (Peter) performs, the old man dozes off in front of everyone. The guests, including gold-clad first son **TARO** (Akira Terao) and red-clad second son **JIRO** (Jinpachi Nezu), tiptoe off, but Saburo remains behind to cut saplings to shade his father from the sun.

Suddenly Hidetora bursts through the banner barrier as he has woken up from a dream. When he collects himself, he reminisces about how he has been warring for more than 50 years – since age 17 - and more often with Fujimaki and Ayabe, to control the plain. But now he is 70 and there is peace. Now he will cede the control of his dominions and the First Castle to eldest son Taro, retaining only 30 men, an outer castle, and the insignia and title of Great Lord, with Jiro and Saburo to get the Second and Third Castle respectively.

When Taro and Jiro object, Hidetora gives a parable about arrows: one of three can easily be broken, but three together cannot. Saburo angrily breaks the bunch of three over his knee and wonders how his father can expect loyalty and fidelity after the oceans of blood he has spilled. As the brothers now bicker and Saburo notes that already there is no unity, Hidetora banishes Saburo; when loyal Lord **TANGO** (Masayuki Yui) objects, he is banished as well.

Later Fujimaki meets Saburo to tell him that the marriage is still on and that Saburo can take refuge with him; Tango decides to stay with and watch over Hidetora, albeit in disguise.

At the First Castle, Taro’s wife Lady **KAEDE** (Mieko Harada) rages that Hidetora’s concubines’ exit is blocking her way, then demands that Taro get back the Lord’s helmet and armor. When Taro’s retainers try to push past Hidetora’s guards, Kyoami taunts one into chasing him with drawn sword, only for the samurai to be felled by an arrow from Hidetora.

Lord **OGURA** (Norio Matsui) invites Hidetora to a “family gathering” to celebrate Taro’s ascension, but when he arrives he is seated below Taro and Kaede, and asked to put his concessions in writing, a “pledge,” which his adviser Lord **IKOMA** (Kazuo Kato) advises him to do. After Hidetora signs and stalks off raging “I have another son,” Kaede thanks Ikoma for his service. When she is alone with Taro, she remembers how she was born in this castle, to leave it only for marriage, whereupon Hidetora murdered her father and brothers, and in that same room, her mother took her own life.

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At the Second Castle, Jiro receives a letter from Taro, and is encouraged by advisers, led by **KUROGANE** (Hisashi Igawa), to topple Taro; already envious, Jiro agrees, but notes that Lady Kaede is the real threat: Kurogane says “A perfect match for you.” When Hidetora arrives, he hurries to meet Lady **SUÉ** (Yoshiko Miyazaki), Jiro’s wife, who, although Hidetora had burned down her castle where her parents perished, cannot hate him. Jiro arrives to say that Hidetora is welcome but his retainers must wait outside. An enraged Hidetora then finds Kurogane giving a flimsy cover story to the Lord’s retainers at the gate. Hidetora demands the gates be opened and storms out: “I will not see you again.”

Foodless in a rocky landscape, Hidetora dismisses Ikoma’s advice to go to the Third Castle, embarrassed to face Saburo. A disguised Tango arrives with food and announces that Taro has proclaimed Hidetora banished with death for all who aid him, that Ogura has taken over Third Castle, and that Saburo has taken refuge with Fujimaki; and advises him to join Saburo. But Ikoma claims it’s Fujimaki’s trap and Hidetora agrees to take over Third Castle.

At the Castle, Hidetora wakes to find himself surrounded and betrayed by Ikoma and Ogura. Taro’s army attacks, and holed up in an inner keep, Hidetora watches his concubines commit suicide together. A six-minute sequence, soundless except for music, is broken by the sound of a gunshot, as Taro is felled at the moment of triumph. “A stray shot” announces Kurogane to Jiro, carelessly flinging away a musket, “fortunes of war.” Swordless, Hidetora cannot commit *seppuku* and walks dazedly down the steps of the burning castle, as the red and gold armies part for him, and out onto the plain.

Tango and Kiyomi find Hidetora in a wind-swept field, gathering grasses. “In a mad world, only the mad are sane.” They take the now mad lord to a lonely hut, inhabited by **TSURUMARU** (Takeshi Nomura), Sué’s brother, blinded by Hidetora when a boy. He tries to be like his sister, but he cannot forget. He plays his flute in a “hospitality of the heart.”

Jiro tells Kaede that Taro was killed in battle and that his body has been burned. She asks where are his armor and helmet, which Jiro is wearing; when he points this out, she remarks “so soon” after Taro’s death. He starts to take them off as she leaves with Taro’s topknot.

Traitors Ikoma and Ogura are given gifts, ‘farewell gifts’; as Kurogane points out, those who betray one lord could betray another.

Kaede returns with the helmet as an apology and all leave her alone with Jiro. After telling Jiro that they both are pleased that Hidetora is mad, she pins Jiro in a lightning move, and with his own dagger at his throat, gets him to admit that Kurogane killed Taro. But she knows he ordered it and admits she doesn’t care about Taro, but about her future: she won’t live as a widow or a nun; this is her castle and she doesn’t want to leave. She’ll keep quiet; if she doesn’t the realm will descend to chaos. She then kisses Jiro and licks the blood from his neck.

Leaving the castle, Ikoma and Ogura are sped on their way with a gunshot to their heels.

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As Kaede reties her sash, she tells Jiro that she wants to be his wife. Reminded that he is still married to Sué, she seemingly cries hysterically, but squashes a moth mid-shriek; then makes clear she wants Sué, dead.

As Hidetora and Kiyomi wait amid the ruins of Sué's family's castle, Ikoma and Ogura wander by. Tango attacks the traitors, but before Ikoma dies, he confesses that Jiro killed Taro and that Hidetora, spared initially only because he went insane, is next. Tango rides off to summon Saburo. Jiro gives Kurogane his next mission - kill Sué - but he refuses. Kaede cautions him to salt the head for preservation because of the prevailing heat.

At the ruined castle, Kiyomi thinks of leaving Hidetora but can't. Kurogane cautiously announces himself before returning with a package—Kaede and Jiro are composing themselves -- but unwrapped it turns out to be the head of a fox statue. Kurogane pretends that Sué was actually a fox, then tells how such a fox could turn itself into a woman and bring destruction. Enraged by this warning, Kaede tells Jiro that she wants Sué's head or he'll never see her again.

Sué has taken Tsurumaru in flight, but sends her maid back to the hut for his flute. Saburo and his blue-clad forces cross a river into Ichimonji territory; on the hilly border, Fujimaki's white-clad forces observe.

Jiro is informed that Saburo is just coming back peacefully for his father, but then told of Fujimaki's move. He intends war, but initially hesitates because of Kurogane's warnings. Kaede points out that Saburo must know Hidetora's whereabouts – pretend to agree and then send out assassins to trail Saburo.

In despair even as he starts to come to his senses, Hidetora jumps off a castle wall but is not hurt. He sees Sué and runs off in guilt and terror, with Kiyomi in pursuit.

Jiro's red-clad army deploys on the plain; a messenger tells Saburo that he's got a safe conduct to find his father. Ayabe's black-clad army now appears on the horizon. Kurogane counsels caution to Jiro.

Sué goes back herself for the flute but leaves an icon of Amida Buddha with her blind brother. Found, Kiyomi tearfully confesses Hidetora disappeared on the Azusa plain. Saburo sets out with a small escort to find his father. Jiro observes, and orders out a group of assassins to kill Saburo. Kurogane objects, and when Jiro scornfully invites him to desert, plaints "Where could I go?"

On the Azusa plain, Kiyomi finds Hidetora, and Saburo and Hidetora are reconciled. Jiro's army attacks and is repeatedly repulsed. From his hill, Fujimaki applauds – but Ayabe has left a decoy and his black-clad army is attacking the First Castle.

As Saburo and Hidetora ride off, Saburo is shot, and Hidetora dies from shock. Kiyomi cries there are no gods and no Buddha. Tango says the gods weep to see us killing each other. Then Jiro's army barely gets back to First Castle before Ayabe's men, even as a messenger arrives

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with Sué's head. Kurogane confronts Kaede, who confesses that she wanted to bring down the Ichimonji to avenge her family, and that she has done what she set out to do. After killing her in a great splay of blood, Kurogane advises Jiro to prepare to die.

A procession carries Saburo and Hidetora across the plain, past castle ruins where the blind Tsurumaru teeters on the edge of the cliff, his image of Amidha Buddha fallen at his feet. A solo flute plays.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The first draft of **RAN** was written in February-March of 1976, one of several Kurosawa wrote in the wake of the success of *Dersu Uzala*. In this he worked with long-time collaborators Hideo Oguni (1904-1996, twelve scripts, beginning with *Ikiru* in 1952) and Masato Ide (b 1922, three scripts, beginning with *Red Beard* in 1965), and in the beginning it was based on the story of 16<sup>th</sup> century warlord Motonari Mori and his three extremely faithful sons – Kurosawa wondered what if they were not faithful. It was only well into the scripting process that he realized the similarity to *King Lear*. But in those times, only sons could be heirs, unlike *Lear's* daughters. Kurosawa also gave his protagonist a back history of bloody conquest, which the director found lacking in Shakespeare's original, and added the pivotal figure of Lady Kaede.

After the opening of *Kagemusha* in 1980 – which was considered to be less expensive to make, and more “bankable” than *RAN* – Kurosawa noted that now he had the actors, horses, armor, and crew to realize his dream: he just needed the money. But even at this stage of his career, he had great difficulty in finding financing. His long-time home base Toho refused to produce (although they would distribute), reasoning that the expected \$10 million budget would be prohibitive when one of their normal features cost only 1 to 2 million. (Although the following year, they'd spend over 10 million on their *Godzilla* remake.)

Although France's Gaumont would eventually pull out of the project, its head Daniel Toscan du Plantier approached veteran producer (of, among many others, five films with Luis Buñuel) Serge Silberman at the Deauville Film Festival in 1982. He decided to take it on personally, and production was slated for July 1983. (Silberman revealed that he had the same deal as with Buñuel, They had to both agree on all issues, and in fact contractually he retained “final cut.”) But Silberman had his own financing problems, and finally Japanese foreign film distributor Nippon Herald arranged a \$10.5 million loan from Sumitomo Bank, with Silberman's company Greenwich Films putting up \$1 million and handling world distribution.

While shooting actually began in June of 1984, pre-production had already been years in the making. Kurosawa had, through the years of waiting, storyboarded the entire film in his own watercolors (these have been published, with the script), and had selected famed composer Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) from the beginning. The 1400 costumes eventually occupied designer Emi Wada (b. 1937) for three full years, the quest for authenticity extending to the use of 16<sup>th</sup> century weaving and dying techniques when Kurosawa became dissatisfied with the look of

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modern chemical dyes. The eventual costume cost was itself \$1 million, with some robes taking three months themselves for dying and hand embroidery, with Kurosawa setting the distinctive color-coding of the characters.

The sets, at both Kurosawa Studios in Tokyo and on location, were planned by the husband/wife team of Yoshiro and Shinobu Muraki, regular Kurosawa collaborators since 1955. The massive set for the Third Castle was built on the slopes of Mt. Fuji and designed to be burned. The 21 ft. high outer walls (the top of the inner keep reached 51 ft.) were made of boards, then covered with styrofoam stones modeled from blown-up photos of actual castles. These were then coated with cement four times and painted – a months long process. To give a good burn, the keep was packed with lumber and drenched with 400 liters of kerosene, while wire netting was rigged to keep fiery fragments from dropping on to the outer walls, To provide non-toxic smoke for the Lord's descent, bags of dry ice were dropped into containers of hot water on cue. This set cost \$1.6 million.

The rest of the staff was composed almost entirely of Kurosawa regulars. The multi-camera filming (Kurosawa shot throughout with three cameras running simultaneously) was directed by Asakazu Nakai and Takao Saito. Production manager was Teruyo Nogami (b. 1927) again Kurosawa's "right hand woman," as she had been since *Rashomon* in 1952. And, as "director counselor," *Godzilla* director Ishiro Honda, best friends with Kurosawa since their earliest Toho days.

The cast was headed by the great Tatsuya Nakadai as Lord Hidetora, with other previous Kurosawa cast members Jinpachi Nezu as Jiro (an avant-garde theater actor who'd appeared in *Kagemusha*); Daisuke Ryu (a graduate of Tatsuya Nakadai's acting school, who played Oda Nobunaga in *Kagemusha*) as Saburo; Masayuki Yui (a businessman discovered by Kurosawa, who'd play Ieyasu Tokugawa in *Kagemusha*) as Tango; and Hisashi Igawa (already a two-time Kinema Jumbo Best Actor award winner, beginning with Kurosawa on *Dodes ka'den*). Newcomers to the Kurosawa stock company included Akira Terao (a famous rock star and actor, later the protagonist of *Dreams*) as Taro, Mieko Harada as Kaede, and Shinnosuke "Peter" Ikehata (a transvestite who's still a popular Japanese personality) as Kiyoami, the Fool.

Filming, slated for 30 weeks, began in June 1984 (the cast had already been rehearsing in full costume and make-up) and proceeded smoothly in the studio, at Mt. Fuji, at the actual Himeji Kumamoto and Nagoya Castles, and on the mountains and plains near Mount Aso, an active volcano on the southern island of Kyushu. The cast eventually included 1400 actors and extras and 250 horses, some specially imported from America. The castle burning was shot on December 15, 1984, with 400 members of the red and yellow armies and five cameras. Nakadai's makeup took three hours to apply, and he was required to lurch down the steps without looking down, a task Kurosawa himself could not master – without, obviously, chances for a retake. (Nakadai claimed to have no fear and to find the experience "rather pleasurable.") After hours of setup, the cameras rolled at 10:20 in the morning (everyone got very nervous when Nakadai took his own time to emerge) and "cut," 'print', and "douse the fire" were called at 12:50 PM, with 2800 ft of film (32 minutes) shot – the cut sequence takes 2 minutes and 5 seconds.

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Filming was marred by three deaths: Ryu Kuze, Kurosawa's longtime fight choreographer, at 76; Fumio Yanoguchi, his longtime sound man, at 67; and Kurosawa's wife of nearly 40 years, Yoko, who had starred in his second film, *The Most Beautiful*. Kurosawa scheduled an emergency two-week shutdown for her last days. She died five days later and, following the funeral, he returned to shooting.

Filming wrapped on February 24, 1985, just one month behind schedule. The battle scene had always been planned to be covered by Takemitsu's music alone, but despite the composer's pleas, Kurosawa had edited his rough cut to Mahler's "Farewell" from *Das Lied von der Erde*. (Takemitsu's score, which he had been toying with since first scripting, is used in the eventual six-minute sequence.) During final dubbing (which took place April 24 to May 8), Takemitsu quit the film in a rage at Kurosawa's demands for the mixing of the scene of Hidetora at the opening of the gate of the Second Castle. (The premiere was already set for May 31.) At one point Kurosawa contemplated doing the film with sound effects alone, but eventually things were patched up and Takemitsu improvised jazz motifs for Kurosawa on the last day of the mix.

Despite some reports, RAN was not the most expensive production in Japanese film history. The premiere was at the Tokyo Film Festival, and the film opened throughout Japan the next day. It came in second in the Kinema Jumbo's Best Ten poll to Yoshimitsu Morita's *Sorekara (And Then)*.

The U.S. premiere, in the wake of Hurricane Gloria, was at the New York Film Festival on September 27. In introducing the film Kurosawa said that he himself was an illusion - the real Kurosawa was up on the screen.

Very controversially, it was not submitted as Japan's entry for the Foreign Film Oscar, but Sidney Lumet successfully spearheaded a campaign for a Best Director nomination, among nominations for Cinematography, Art Direction, and Costumes, with Emi Wada winning for the last. Kurosawa was slated to take the name of the Best Film winner from the envelope and hand it to Billy Wilder, but had trouble with the handoff even as John Huston, the envelope opener, was down to ten seconds from his oxygen tank. Afterwards, Kurosawa described the three hour+ plus awards ceremony as "a little long."

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## AWARDS

### **Academy Awards (1986)**

- Winner, Best Costume Design
- Nominated, Best Director
- Nominated, Best Cinematography
- Nominated, Best Art Direction-Set Decoration

### **Japanese Academy Awards (1986)**

- Winner, Best Production Design
- Winner, Best Music Score
- Special award to producer Masato Hara
- Nominated, Best Cinematography
- Nominated, Best Supporting Actor (Hitoshi Ueki)

### **National Board of Review (1985)**

- Winner, Best Director
- Winner, Best Foreign Language Film

### **New York Film Critics Circle Awards (1985)**

- Winner, Best Foreign Language Film

### **National Society of Film Critics Awards (1986)**

- Winner, Best Film
- Winner, Best Cinematography

### **Golden Globes (1986)**

- Nominated, Best Foreign Film

### **BAFTA Awards (1987)**

- Winner, Best Foreign Language Film
- Winner, Best Make-up Artist
- Nominated, Best Adapted Screenplay
- Nominated, Best Cinematography
- Nominated, Best Costume Design
- Nominated, Best Production Design

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## AKIRA KUROSAWA (Director/Co-Screenwriter/Editor)

**On being asked the meaning of a film:** “If I could have said it in words, I would have--then I wouldn’t have needed to make the picture.”

Born 1910 Tokyo. Of samurai lineage, his ex-army father worked at a gymnastics school, promoting both traditional martial arts and baseball as well and building Japan’s first swimming pool. But perhaps young Kurosawa’s most dominant early influence was his older brother Heigo, who continuously pushed Akira further. (He dragged him to view the horrors of the 1923 Kanto earthquake, admonishing him to “look closely now” – a way, Akira realized, to conquer fear.) A cynical idealist, in many ways the prototype for the later Kurosawa hero—the nail, sticking up, that must be hammered down -- Heigo was a major influence in forming Akira’s taste in foreign literature and films; of a list of nearly 100 films Akira vividly remembered from this period, only three were Japanese. In 1933, Heigo committed suicide. Kurosawa wondered if he would have entered the film world as he did if his brother had not killed himself.

Akira first tried to be a painter, but realized that he did not have a distinctive vision and also couldn’t make it pay. (Hundreds of his watercolor storyboards for *Kagemusha* and *Ran* would later be published.) At loose ends, he answered an ad for what would become Toho studios, writing on the fundamental deficiencies of Japanese films (his premise: if they were fundamental, there was no way to correct them.) One of only five applicants accepted to become assistant directors, he at first wanted to quit but his father encouraged him, and then he was assigned to the director Kajiro Yamamoto – and he thought “I’ve made it at last.”

Working with his beloved teacher “Yama-san,” he soon became chief assistant, constantly writing scripts, directing second unit and location shooting, and supervising editing. In a few years, having won scenario awards, he was more than ready to direct, so eager that he demanded the studio buy the rights to the novel *Sanshiro Sugata* before it was published. The resulting film on the triumph of judo over jujitsu was immediately seen as a breakthrough – he was already using slow-motion for action. (A sequel was the only film he was ever assigned and did not initiate.)

In 1944 he made *The Most Beautiful*, a semi-documentary about young women in a lens factory that was marked by his battles with his “stubborn and uncompromising” star Yoko Yaguchi; a year later they were married (she died during the making of *Ran*). His last wartime movie, *The Men Who Tread on the Tiger’s Tail*, a semi-farcical treatment of a Kabuki classic, was banned by first the nationalist regime and then the U.S. Occupation forces.

His first film in the postwar freedom, *No Regrets for our Youth*, featured his only female protagonist and innovative editing techniques. *One Wonderful Sunday*, a Capra-esque slice of life, with touches of Peter Pan, showed the beginnings of his mature visual style.

And then began “the greatest actor-director team in film history”—David Shipman—the first of sixteen collaborations with Toshiro Mifune. Kurosawa had wandered into Mifune’s legendary “New Faces” acting tryout two years before, and had spoken up when the jury wanted to kick out

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the ex-army aerial photographer. Now he cast him as a tubercular gangster and found that he “couldn't control Mifune. When I saw this I let him play the part freely. I didn't want to smother that vitality.” *Drunken Angel* became Kurosawa's first Kinema Junpo “Best One” award winner. (A weighted poll of critics and screenwriters, it was for many years Japan's Oscar equivalent. When it is often stated that Kurosawa was better received in the West than at home, it is well to note that, except for *The Idiot*, every Kurosawa film was ranked in the KJ Top Ten.)

After *The Quiet Duel*, an admitted misfire, he made the tense detective thriller *Stray Dog* and the anti-tabloid *Scandal*, featuring a tour de force performance by Kurosawa's other favorite actor Takashi Shimura (twenty-one films for the director, from *Sanshiro Sugata* to *Kagemusha*).

Kurosawa then received a screenplay by the then-unknown Shinobu Hashimoto<sup>1</sup> about a rape and murder in 12<sup>th</sup> century Kyoto, seen from differing viewpoints; adding a prologue and epilogue, he made *Rashomon*, to the befuddlement of his assistant directors and the studio. After the disaster of his two-part adaptation of his favorite author Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* (a critical and box office flop), he staggered back home from a contract-breaking meeting to his wife's “Congratulations!” “For what?” he bellowed. *Rashomon* had won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival – he had not even known that it had been entered – and he was now world famous.

Then began what one critic has called “a relentless succession of masterpieces.”

Takashi Shimura as the bureaucrat with terminal cancer in *Ikiru*, his second Best One award winner.

*Seven Samurai*, two years in the making and the biggest budgeted film in Japanese film history (until *Godzilla* beat it later that same year); an undoubted world classic and one of the most imitated works in film history. From this film Kurosawa would use his celebrated multi-camera system, several cameras shooting simultaneously for even the most intimate scenes. (The complete auteur, he co-scripted all his films—always with collaborators to keep him honest—did all his own editing, and even made his own trailers.)

*I Live in Fear*, with Mifune playing twice his real age as a factory owner obsessed by the Bomb.

*Throne of Blood*, with Mifune as a samurai Macbeth, Izuzu Yamada's chilling Noh-inspired “Lady,” and an incredible real-arrow climax.

*The Lower Depths*, from the Maxim Gorky play, a triumph of ensemble acting, thanks to forty days of rehearsals.

The smash hit samurai adventure *The Hidden Fortress*, an admitted inspiration for *Star Wars* (two bickering farmers became R2D2 and C3PO, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> For her 2010 New Year's card, Kurosawa's long time “right hand woman” Teruyo Nogami (who began her career with Kurosawa on *Rashomon*) drew a cartoon of herself and Mr. Hashimoto, now 91. Her caption described the two of them as “the only survivors.”

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For his own independent company, Kurosawa Productions, *The Bad Sleep Well*, corporate corruption/*Hamlet* meets Enron, its 20-minute wedding reception opening proclaimed by Francis Ford Coppola as “better than Shakespeare”.

Mifune as the iconic grubby ronin in *Yojimbo*; after *Fistful of Dollars*, Sergio Leone received a letter from Kurosawa: “I have just had a chance to see your film. It is a very fine film, but it is my film.” Its sequel *Sanjuro*, with Tatsuya Nakadai suffering the first blood-gush effect in film history.

*High and Low*, a tense mystery from an 87<sup>th</sup> Precinct novel by Ed McBain, “Undoubtedly the most complex detective film of all... demands seeing far more than once.” - William K. Everson.

And then the top box office hit of 1965, the two-years in the making, three-hour *Red Beard*, 19<sup>th</sup> century doctors, the last black and white film, Kurosawa’s third and last Kinema Jumbo “Best One” ... and the last collaboration with Mifune. (No definitive answer has ever been given to Why? They remained friends.)

What next? Why, Hollywood. But ... At flamboyant producer Joseph E. Levine’s request Kurosawa wrote *Runaway Train*, based on an actual incident and planned to be his first color production, but after various delays it was shelved.

Then Darryl Zanuck and 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox hired him to film the Japanese half of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* on Pearl Harbor. But after scripting, the building of a full-scale mockup of the battleship Yamato, three weeks of shooting, Fox fired Kurosawa, ostensibly for reasons of health. In the wake of dueling press conferences, there had apparently been massive backstabbing by some of Kurosawa’s own trusted staff members.

With the Japanese industry collapsing in the wake of television—an entire studio declared bankruptcy -- Kurosawa now joined with three other legends (Masaki Kobayashi, Kon Ichikawa, and Keisuke Kinoshita) to form the Club of the Four Knights. Their first production would be *Dodes ka'den*, about poor people living in a picturesque garbage dump, Kurosawa’s first color film and perhaps the most utter change of pace from a major stylist. Shot on a budget and on a schedule a fraction of *Red Beard*’s -- partially to prove he “wasn’t crazy” —it still lost money, his first film in 15 years to do so, and the Club dissolved.

In December 1971, he attempted suicide by cutting his wrists and neck in the bath. He never explained his reasoning, but later called it “the biggest mistake of my life.”

His career seemingly over, an offer came out of the blue from the Soviet Union, and Kurosawa had just the subject, *Dersu Uzala*, the memoir of turn-of-the-century explorer Arseniev, which he had dreamed of making since before the war. After a year of filming in Siberia, amid temperatures reaching 40 below – both Centigrade and Fahrenheit – the resulting epic received a rave notice from *Newsweek* -- “An awesome portrait of man and nature...must not be missed by anyone who wants to see what film can do that not even Homer and Shakespeare could do” –

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and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. In a statement read at the ceremony, Kurosawa stated, "I will keep making films until I die".

Even now, though, Kurosawa could not obtain Japanese funding. Toho agreed to back *Kagemusha*, a samurai epic about a thief becoming a double for the great lord Takeda Shingen, then retreated when they realized its budget would be five times that for a normal feature. In despair, Kurosawa storyboarded the entire film in watercolors, then showed them to disciple George Lucas when they met. Stunned, Lucas, in the wake of *Star Wars*' mega success, talked 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox into buying the international rights up front; Toho was then shamed into funding the rest. Production almost foundered early when mercurial *Zatoichi* star Shintaro Katsu, for whom the role was written, quit/was fired on the second day of rehearsal (he wanted his own video crew to tape his performance), but Tatsuya Nakadai was immediately persuaded to step in. The result shared the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival with Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz*.

Then came *Ran*.

But first, he had to return to Hollywood in 1990 to receive an Honorary Award for his entire career, presented by Lucas and Stephen Spielberg, with a surprise direct feed from Tokyo with Mieko Harada and Chishu Ryu (star of Ozu's *Tokyo Story*) saying "Congratulations" (in English) and wishing him a happy birthday.

Now he made films at a decades-earlier pace:

*Dreams*, 1990, a series of fantastical vignettes, with Martin Scorsese as Van Gogh, the 85-year old Ryu in the closing sequence, and special effects by Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic.

*Rhapsody in August*, 1991, an old lady remembers the Bomb, with Richard Gere (a Kurosawa fan offered the part by the director at a party in Tokyo) speaking excellent Japanese as a visiting American cousin, and a reemergence of the distinctive camera style of the 50s and 60s.

And *Madadayo*, the autumnal years of beloved professor and teacher Hyakken Uchida, with two vintage tour de force sequences, the edited-in-the-old style reunion, and the wordless love scene across four seasons, with Kurosawa's favorite actress Kyoko Kagawa, back 35 years after *Red Beard*, as Uchida's wife.

He kept writing scripts and planning films until a bad fall disabled him; he died of a stroke in 1998, age 88. In a supreme act of loyalty, the Kurosawa group filmed two of the last scripts after his death, *After the Rain* and *The Sea is Watching*.

An extremely tall (6 feet) and lanky man for his generation, Kurosawa always wore a hat while shooting and, from his middle years on, wore sunglasses practically around the clock, to protect sensitive eyes. But despite some reports, he retained his eyesight to the end.

By consensus, *one* of the greatest filmmakers of all time – but why stop there?

# RAN

RIALTO PICTURES

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## TATSUYA NAKADAI (Lord Hidetora)

Born December 13, 1932 in Tokyo and stagestruck from his senior year of high school, Nakadai entered the Haiyuza Theater School in 1952, and while still a student made his film debut in *Seven Samurai* -- the perfectionist Kurosawa spent a day of shooting to get Nakadai's two-second walk-through as a possible samurai recruit just right. (Nakadai has discounted the legend that Masaki Kobayashi discovered him while a shop clerk.) He achieved stardom as the sun-glassed lowlife in 1957's *Black River* (the first of ten films for Kobayashi) and by 1959 he was carrying Japan's biggest epic ever, the three-part *The Human Condition*. Magnetically handsome, he early on decided to regularly play against pretty boy typecasting, consciously seeking out dark, twisted roles, and eventually displaying a range that could encompass the melancholy, intense middle-aged avenger of *Seppuku* (*Harakiri*); the Steve McQueen-cool detective of *High and Low*; the pistol-packing proto-yakuza punk of *Yojimbo*; and the eyeball-rolling psycho in the cult classic *Sword of Doom* — all within a four-year period. In *Sanjuro*, once again coming in second in a spectacular swordfight with Toshiro Mifune, he was the principal in the screen's first blood-gush—an effect that was, by design, a surprise to Nakadai as well as the audience. And, two days after Shintaro Katsu stalked off the set of *Kagemusha*, Nakadai agreed to play the difficult dual part in the course of a single phone call from Kurosawa's right hand woman, Teruyo Nogami.

With starring roles for masters as disparate in style and subject matter as Kurosawa, Kobayashi, Kon Ichikawa (six films, including *I Am a Cat*), Mikio Naruse (five films, including *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*), Kihachi Okamoto (thirteen films, including *Kill!*), Hideo Gosha (ten films, including *Goyokin*), Hiroshi Teshigahara, Keisuke Kinoshita, Shiro Toyoda, Satsuo Yamamoto, and Masahiro Shinoda, Nakadai's career provides a core sample right through the heart of the Golden Age of Japanese Cinema—as well as once playing the half-breed bad guy in a spaghetti Western. But in Japan he is a stage legend as well, active with the Haiyuza Theater through 1979, and then with his own troupe, over the years starring in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Miss Julie*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Don Quixote*, even *Driving Miss Daisy*.

In 1975, he founded an acting school that produced Daisuke Ryu (“Saburo” in *Ran*) and other major personalities of the Japanese stage and screen. In October 2007, the Japanese government designated him as *Bunka Korosha*, “a person of distinguished service” to Japanese culture.

Nakadai was honored by Film Forum with a month-long retrospective in June 2008, followed by a three-week run of *The Human Condition* (its first U.S. screenings in over two decades). Nakadai traveled to the U.S. for the festival, appearing in person at Film Forum for the opening night film (*Hara Kiri*) and for a special “Evening with Tatsuya Nakadai.”

He was married to actress/writer Tomoe Ryu (Kobayashi's *Inn of Evil*) from 1957 to her death in 1996.

# RAN

RIALTO PICTURES

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## MIEKO HARADA (Lady Kaede)

Born in Tokyo in 1958, Harada made her film debut at age 15 and had won her first Kinema Junpo Best Actress Award before age 20 (*Seishun no satsujin sha*, 1976). She has won three KJ awards overall, as well as shelves-full of others, sweeping every Japanese acting award for a dual mother/daughter role in *Ai o kou hito* (1998), after doing nearly the same as the mother of screwy identical twin boys in *Eno nakano bokuno mura* (1996). In Kurosawa's *Dreams*, she played the Snow Fairy. She has appeared on TV and stage, notably opposite Shintaro "Zatoichi" Katsu, and has published a novel. She is the mother of three.

## PETER (Kyoami, the Fool)

Born Shinnosuke Ikehata in Osaka in 1952 into a family of traditional dancers, Peter got his stage name (pronounced "PEE-tah" in Japanese) from his purported "Peter Pan" style of club dancing. He made his film debut in the gay-themed *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no soretsu*, 1969) and memorably came on to Shintaro Katsu himself in *Zatoichi's Fire Festival* in 1970. He has played male, female, and androgynous parts on stage, but is known mainly as a flamboyant transvestite singer/dancer/personality on TV variety, talk shows, and commercials. Married since 1987, she is the mother of three.

## YOSHIRO & SHINOBU MURAKI (Production Design)

Husband and wife production designers Yoshirô (1924-2009) and Shinobu (b. 1923) Muraki began their careers with Kurosawa as assistant art directors on *Stray Dog* (1949), but would collaborate on only two other Kurosawa films: *Dodes ka'den* (1970) and *Ran*. From *Record of a Living Being* (1955), Yoshirô was art director on most of Kurosawa's films. He passed away in October, 2009. Wrote Teruyo Nogami in her memoir *Waiting on the Weather*, "The sight of Kurosawa and Muraki face to face with the set plan spread out flat between them was like watching two grand-masters at a game of chess."

## EMI WADA (Costume Design)

Wada was born in Kyoto in 1937. She graduated from Kyoto Art College with a major in Western painting and began working as a stage and costume designer in 1957, with credits ranging from plays, musicals and modern ballet, to pantomime and television commercials.

Wada had worked on fashion shows with the Murakis, who brought her to *Ran*. This turned into a three-year project.

Wada confessed that her biggest challenge was the costume for Kyoami, the Fool, because she had to meet not only Kurosawa's usual extremely high standards, but also the director's very specific image of this costume. As Wada recalls, Kurosawa kept insisting that the costume be "more audacious, more sophisticated, but not too chic, and with the mood of Lear's Fool, too."

# RAN

RIALTO PICTURES

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## TORU TAKEMITSU (Music)

Born 1930 in Tokyo; a month later his family moved to Manchuria. Back in Japan for school, he was actually drafted into the military in 1944, at age 13, an experience he described as “extremely bitter.” Although almost completely self-taught in music, he began to compose immediately after the war, steeping himself in Western music (which had been banned under the nationalistic regime) through the U.S. Armed Forces radio network. In 1951 he was a founding member of the Jikken Kobo (Experimental Laboratory), which eschewed the Japanese artistic tradition. Already introducing tape-recording techniques, his international breakthrough came when Igor Stravinsky, on a Japanese trip in 1958, heard his “Requiem,” actually put on by mistake. Stravinsky fulsomely praised the work at an ensuing press conference and invited Takemitsu to lunch; international commissions started to follow.

In the early 60s, under the influence of John Cage and attendance at the *bunraku* puppet theater, he became interested in Japanese traditional music, which he previously had studiously avoided, using traditional instruments in his work, eventually composing path-breaking pieces that combined them with Western orchestras.

Unquestionably the biggest movie nut among composers – or almost anybody else – Takemitsu would see 300 films in an average year, including films in languages he didn’t understand when he traveled abroad. “The reason I love movies is because I experience them as music,” he said, and he would write scores for 93 films -- including sixteen for Masahiro Shinoda, twelve for Hiroshi Teshigahara (notably *Woman in the Dunes*), ten for Masaki Kobayashi (notably *Harakiri*), and others for Kon Ichikawa, Mikio Naruse, Nagisa Oshima and Kurosawa (*Dodes ka'den*, 1970) -- often being involved from the earliest script stage, and observing filming in the studio and on location. (He was present at the Mt. Fuji locations during the shooting of the castle attack for *Ran*.)

Considered Japan’s greatest composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he also wrote a detective novel and film criticism, and appeared as a celebrity chef on television. Bedridden for months in a losing battle with bladder cancer, Takemitsu lamented, just before his death from pneumonia in 1996, “in all that time I haven’t seen a single movie.”

# RAN

RIALTO PICTURES

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## RIALTO PICTURES

**Described as “the gold standard of reissue distributors”** by Los Angeles Times/NPR film critic Kenneth Turan, Rialto Pictures was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric Di Bernardo became the company’s National Sales Director.

Rialto’s past releases have included Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed’s *The Third Man*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders*, *Masculine Feminine* and *A Woman is a Woman*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Bob le Flambeur* and *Le Cercle Rouge*, for the first time in its uncut European version.

In 2002, the company released the critically acclaimed first-run film *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters, starring Sylvie Testud. Rialto celebrated a record-breaking 2004 with the previously unreleased, original 1954 Japanese version of *Godzilla* and Gillo Pontecorvo’s groundbreaking *The Battle of Algiers*, which became one of the year’s top-grossing foreign films.

In 2006, Rialto released Melville’s 1969 epic masterpiece *Army of Shadows* for the very first time in the U.S. *Army of Shadows* became the most critically acclaimed film of the year, topping many Ten Best lists, including those in *The New York Times* and *Premiere*, and was named Best Foreign Film of 2006 by the New York Film Critics’ Circle, in addition to receiving special awards from both the Los Angeles and National Society of Film Critics.

Rialto’s re-release of Alberto Lattuada’s *Mafioso*, a dark comedy starring Alberto Sordi, was the unqualified highlight of the 2006 New York Film Festival.

2007 re-releases included Melville’s *Le Doulos*, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, and Jean-Jacques Beineix’s “second wave” thriller *Diva*.

In 2008, the company had phenomenal success with Alain Resnais’s 1962 arthouse classic *Last Year at Marienbad*. Rialto also released Robert Hamer’s rediscovered masterwork of “Brit Noir,” *It Always Rains on Sunday*, and undertook their second hit reissue of Godard’s *Contempt*. Another successful re-release was Max Ophüls’ legendary film *Lola Montès* in a definitive new 35mm restoration, which was showcased to enormous acclaim at the Cannes and Telluride Film Festivals and was the spotlight retrospective of the 2008 New York Film Festival.

# RAN

## RIALTO PICTURES

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Rialto's most recent releases have been the U.S. premiere of Godard's *Made in U.S.A.*, the 40th anniversary re-release of Costa-Gavras' Academy Award-winning political thriller *Z*, starring Yves Montand and Jean-Louis Trintignant, Jean-Pierre Melville's legendary wartime drama *Léon Morin, Priest*, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, and John Boulting's Noir classic *Brighton Rock*, adapted from Graham Greene's novel of the same name and starring Richard Attenborough.

In 1999, Rialto received a special Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics, and in 2000 received a special award from the New York Film Critic's Circle, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau. The two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.

2007 marked Rialto's tenth anniversary, a milestone that was celebrated with a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Similar tributes were held at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York; the AFI Silver Theater in Washington, D.C.; and the SIFF Theater in Seattle.

In honor of the company's anniversary, The Criterion Collection issued a special gift box set, *10 Years of Rialto Pictures*, containing ten films displaying the breadth of Rialto's collection, including *Army of Shadows*, *Au Hasard Balthazar*, *Band of Outsiders*, *Billy Liar*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Mafioso*, *Murderous Maids*, *Rififi*, *The Third Man*, and *Touchez pas au Grisbi*.

In May 2009, the San Francisco International Film Festival presented Goldstein with its prestigious Mel Novikoff Award.

## RIALTO PICTURES RELEASES

2010

**RAN**  
**BREATHLESS [May] – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary restoration**

2009

**MADE IN USA (U.S. premiere)**  
**Z**  
**LEON MORIN, PRIEST**  
**BRIGHTON ROCK**  
**THE THIRD MAN (60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary)**

# **RAN**

**RIALTO PICTURES**

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- 2008**            **LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD**  
**IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY**  
**CONTEMPT**  
**LOLA MONTES**
- 2007**            **MAFIOSO**  
**LE DOULOS**  
**DIVA**
- 2006**            **ARMY OF SHADOWS (U.S. premiere)**  
**THE FALLEN IDOL**  
**FANFAN LA TULIPE**  
**TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER**
- 2005**            **MASCULINE FEMININE**  
**ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS**  
**THE TWO OF US**  
**CLASSE TOUS RISQUES**  
**MOUCHETTE**
- 2004**            **THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS**  
**GODZILLA (U.S. premiere of uncut Japanese version)**  
**HEARTS AND MINDS**
- 2003**            **LE CERCLE ROUGE (U.S. premiere of uncut version)**  
**A WOMAN IS A WOMAN**  
**TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI**  
**AU HASARD BALTHAZAR**  
**EYES WITHOUT A FACE**  
**THE MILKY WAY**
- 2002**            **PEPE LE MOKO**  
**MURDEROUS MAIDS**  
**QUAI DES ORFEVRES**  
**UMBERTO D.**  
**THE PRODUCERS**  
**THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY**

# RAN

RIALTO PICTURES

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- 2001**            **BAND OF OUTSIDERS**  
**BOB LE FLAMBEUR**  
**THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE**  
**JULIET OF THE SPIRITS**
- 2000**            **RIFIPI**  
**THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE**  
**DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID**  
**BILLY LIAR**
- 1999**            **THE THIRD MAN**  
**GRAND ILLUSION**  
**PEEPING TOM**
- 1998**            **NIGHTS OF CABIRIA**  
**GREY GARDENS**
- 1997**            **CONTEMPT**  
**THE GRADUATE**

**Pressbook written by Michael Jeck**

**Edited by Bruce Goldstein**

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<p><b>“TEN YEARS OF RIALTO PICTURES” DVD BOX SET RELEASED BY CRITERION</b></p>
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<p>In honor of the company’s anniversary, The Criterion Collection has issued a special gift box set containing ten films displaying the breadth of Rialto’s collection, including <i>Army of Shadows</i>, <i>Au Hasard Balthazar</i>, <i>Band of Outsiders</i>, <i>Billy Liar</i>, <i>Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie</i>, <i>Mafioso</i>, <i>Murderous Maids</i>, <i>Rififi</i>, <i>The Third Man</i>, and <i>Touchez pas au Grisbi</i>.</p>
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