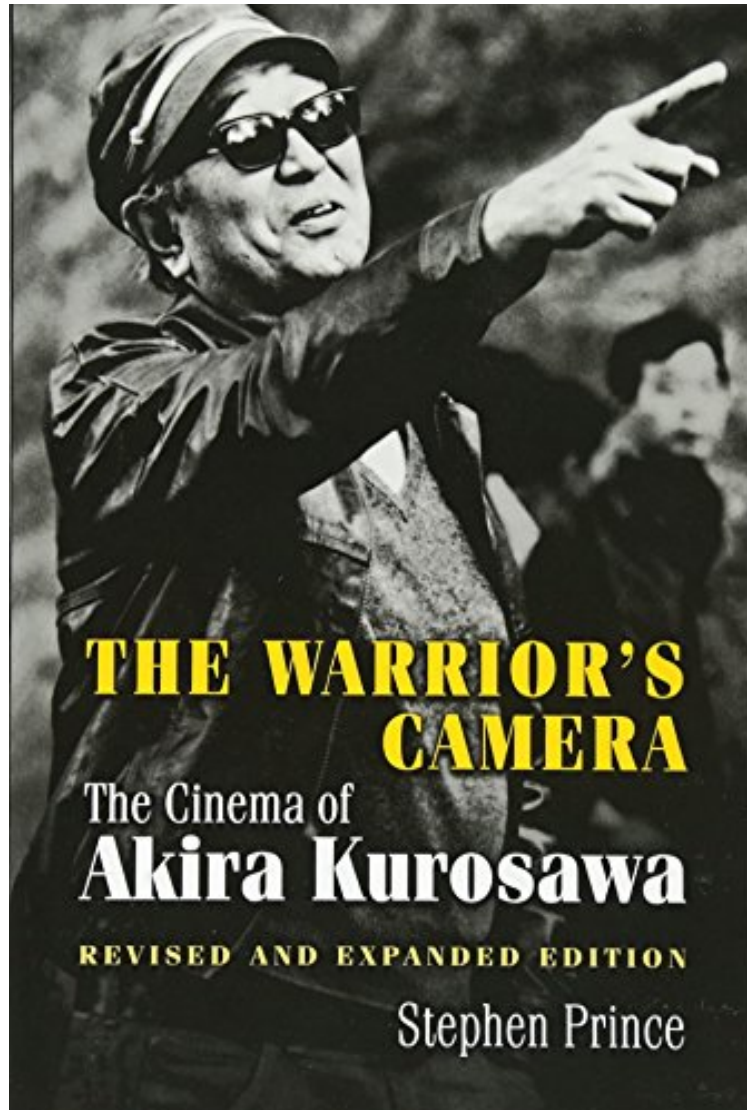


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The Warrior's Camera

Stephen Prince

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Stephen Prince : The Warrior's Camera before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Warrior's Camera:

38 of 41 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study of a master filmmakerBy Zack Davisson"The Warrior's Camera" is not a casual book for fans of "Yojimbo" and "The Seven Samurai." It is a dense, scholarly tome designed for film majors to study. The book takes for granted that you are familiar with the films of Eisenstein, the books of Dostoyevsky and the plays of Bertold Brecht, as well as the personal philosophies of each of these Kurosawa influences.This is also not a biography, and none of Kurosawa's personal life is put on display. Films are dissected shot

by shot in tight detail. However, if you are prepared, "The Warrior's Camera" lends tremendous insight into a fascinating director. Each chapter focuses on philosophical themes central to Kurosawa's work, and dives into the films that most represent these personal philosophies. The strength of the individual, and the ability for personal choice, is outlined by "Drunken Angels," "No Regrets for Our Youth" and "Stray Dog." Strength of will is shown in "Ikiru" and "Red Beard." As this is a scholarly work, each chapter presents an argument and then presents evidence to support the argument. I have come away from this book with a much deeper understanding of Kurosawa and what he was trying to accomplish with his films. Highly recommended, but be prepared to work for your knowledge.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One Stop Shopping
By Jason Jones
The problem with getting good books on cinema is that they are expensive and they tend to focus too heavily on the best or worst parts of a director's work and are usually focused on content instead of context. This is hard to swallow, because you've ponied up a bunch of cash for a book and wouldn't have done so if you didn't already know said director's work. Insights into the film are nice, but belong in a friendly conversation, not a pricey book. This balances rather well the biography and the cinema of the late master and I saw several of the films through a different lens (no pun intended).

23 of 29 people found the following review helpful. Initially promising but ultimately disappointing
By Michael
Contrary to the last reviewer, this is not, in some exclusive sense, a book "designed for film majors to study," and if one is interested, you'll do fine without any previous study of Dostoevsky, Eisenstein, or Bertolt Brecht. Some previous knowledge helps for sure - but don't let such elevated requirements discourage you from exploring Prince's work of Kurosawa scholarship. I am not a "film major"; I have read few works of Dostoevsky; I have seen only 2 Eisenstein films and read only fragments of his writings. I know more about Brecht than the other two figures, but with this said, I still gained much insight and understanding from Prince's arguments and observations. If you're still worried about it, don't hesitate to put to use one of the greatest research inventions ever: the internet.

Now on to my review: This book begins with much promise but ultimately ends in disappointment. Prince begins by stressing the importance of historically-based analysis. He suggests that one understand Kurosawa's films as "address[ing] the Japan shattered by World War II and [as helping] reshape society." (8) This is a most interesting, preliminary claim that initially promises certain fascinating paths of reading. Also, Prince begins by criticizing 'auteurism' and naive assumptions of 'authorship'. He notes that the formation of 'film studies' as an academic field imposed a "major code" that reduced all Kurosawa films to "the ideal of humanism". Now this is also promising - finally, a comprehensive work on Kurosawa, other than that of Donald Richie, that gets beyond 'auteurism'. Unfortunately, Prince's book does not live up to these introductory assertions. First, Prince continually makes use of terms like "Zen Buddhism", "heroic ideal", "warrior ideal", instead of terms like "humanist universalism" as if they were more accurate interpretive concepts for understanding Kurosawa's films (see pp. 10, 11, 28, 30, 115). However, he never 'historicizes' these very concepts but treats them as somewhat static and a-historical. I don't think that one would find it completely convincing or that interesting if some critic put to use concepts like "Christian providence" or "protestant individualism" for the purposes of deciphering the work of Orson Welles without demonstrating first the historic intricacies of such empty concepts and second their specific, contextual relevance to a given Welles' film-text. Thus, it must be asked: why make use of analogous empty signifiers of Japanese history and culture so carelessly in relation to Kurosawa's films? Ultimately, Prince's interpretive framework remains less than convincing, for his initial imperative to read "against the grain of history" is violated repeatedly throughout the book. Also, it is disappointing that right after Prince criticizes the usual appeal to authorship or auteurism he categorically states, "Kurosawa's films form a series of inquiries on the place and the possibilities of the autonomous self within a culture whose social relations stress group ties and obligations." (27) From this Prince establishes his own master code for interpreting the totality of Kurosawa's work based upon the supposed 'intentions' of Kurosawa-as-author. It is a code that reads Kurosawa's films as being primarily about the negotiation of the ego in the modern world. Prince continues, throughout the work, to make sense of the rich diversity of films in terms of this restricted framework. He writes, "Kurosawa's world is an arena where his characters must be tested, where they must be victorious in their goals or must be broken and defeated." (116) Later, he reduces the entire complexity of Kurosawa films into a 'meta-narrative' that is "...the passage from willed optimism of the early films to the ethic of resignation and despair that pervades the late works..." (154) The meaning that Prince detects in these films is not wrong per se but way too limited and reductive. There is a vast complexity of meaning and significance in Kurosawa's diverse catalogue of films, and some of it is in direct contradiction to Prince's 'auteurist' thesis. I cannot say that I was satisfied with Prince's analysis for these reasons. However, if one is sympathetic to auteur forms of criticism, then this book may be for you. Just remember what Foucault says in 'What is an Author?': "the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts." Personally, I think the "contradictions" that one might locate in a series of texts serve as the sites of most interest in any interpretive investigation; thus, they should not be effaced by way of some reductive narrative of authorship.

I give this book 3 instead of say 2 stars because it is quite an extensive project providing a vast amount of helpful information, and the analyses of certain films is thorough and somewhat technical. It just had so much potential to be better. Read this alongside Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto's book.

The Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa, who died at the age of 88, has been internationally acclaimed as a giant of

world cinema. *Rashomon*, which won both the Venice Film Festival's grand prize and an Academy Award for best foreign-language film, helped ignite Western interest in the Japanese cinema. *Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo* remain enormously popular both in Japan and abroad. In this newly revised and expanded edition of his study of Kurosawa's films, Stephen Prince provides two new chapters that examine Kurosawa's remaining films, placing him in the context of cinema history. Prince also discusses how Kurosawa furnished a template for some well-known Hollywood directors, including Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas. Providing a new and comprehensive look at this master filmmaker, *The Warrior's Camera* probes the complex visual structure of Kurosawa's work. The book shows how Kurosawa attempted to symbolize on film a course of national development for post-war Japan, and it traces the ways that he tied his social visions to a dynamic system of visual and narrative forms. The author analyzes Kurosawa's entire career and places the films in context by drawing on the director's autobiography--a fascinating work that presents Kurosawa as a Kurosawa character and the story of his life as the kind of spiritual odyssey witnessed so often in his films. After examining the development of Kurosawa's visual style in his early work, *The Warrior's Camera* explains how he used this style in subsequent films to forge a politically committed model of filmmaking. It then demonstrates how the collapse of Kurosawa's efforts to participate as a filmmaker in the tasks of social reconstruction led to the very different cinematic style evident in his most recent films, works of pessimism that view the world as resistant to change.

One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 1991 "The Warrior's Camera is not only a thoughtful, stimulating and rigorous study but also a major addition to both Kurosawa and Japanese film scholarship. Its examination of the intersection of self, culture, and history is meticulously done; its extended close analysis of individual films, especially *Ikiru*, *Yojimbo*, *High and Low*, and *Red Beard*, is superbly confident."--*Film Quarterly*"The subtle nuances that enrich Akira Kurosawa's intense cinematographic imagery distinguish Stephen Prince's insightful study, *The Warrior's Camera*."--*American Cinematographer*"[Prince's] close analysis of the films generates many superb insights. This work is accessible, nicely illustrated and an essential text about a great subject."--*Choice*From the Back CoverThe Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa, who died at the age of eighty-eight, has been internationally acclaimed as a giant of world cinema. *Rashomon*, which won both the Venice Film Festival's grand prize and an Academy Award for best foreign-language film, helped ignite Western interest in the Japanese cinema. *Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo* remain enormously popular both in Japan and abroad. In this newly revised and expanded edition of his study of Kurosawa's films, Stephen Prince provides two new chapters in which he examines Kurosawa's remaining work, placing him in the context of cinema history. Prince also discusses how Kurosawa furnished a template for some well-known Hollywood directors, including Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas. *The Warrior's Camera* examines the four creative stages of Kurosawa's work. After exploring the development of Kurosawa's visual style in his early films, the book shows how he used this style in subsequent films to forge a politically committed model of filmmaking. It then demonstrates how the collapse of Kurosawa's efforts to participate as a filmmaker in the tasks of social reconstruction produced a revision of his style in the pessimistic films of 1970-1985. Finally, it examines the psychobiographical mode of Kurosawa's last films, produced when the director was in his eighties and preoccupied by issues of aging and his artistic legacy. About the Author Stephen Prince is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Virginia Tech. His recent books include *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies*.