

Rashomon: Akira Kurosawa's Masterpiece in Print



Rashomon: Akira Kurosawa, Director (Rutgers Films in Print series Book 6) by Donald Richie

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

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Akira Kurosawa's 1950 masterpiece, *Rashomon*, is a gripping tale of murder and the conflicting perspectives of its witnesses. Set in medieval Japan, the film follows the investigation of a crime through the testimony of four different people: a bandit, a samurai, his wife, and a woodcutter. Through their conflicting accounts, the film explores the nature of truth and the subjectivity of human perception.

Rashomon was a critical and commercial success in Japan and around the world, winning the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and an Honorary Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The film is considered one of Kurosawa's greatest works and is widely regarded as one of the most important films in the history of cinema.

The Plot

Rashomon opens with a group of travelers taking shelter from a rainstorm under the gate of Rashomon, a ruined city gate in Kyoto. As they wait out the storm, they tell each other the story of a murder that occurred in the forest.

The first person to tell the story is the bandit, Tajomaru. Tajomaru claims that he attacked a samurai and his wife in the forest and stole the wife's clothes. However, the samurai, Takehiro, tells a different story. He claims that Tajomaru raped and murdered his wife, and then killed him.

The samurai's wife, Masako, tells yet another story. She claims that Tajomaru attacked her and her husband, but that she was able to escape. She then claims that she met a woodcutter in the forest, who helped her to find her way back to the village.

The woodcutter, Kyoshiro, tells a different story still. He claims that he found the samurai's wife wandering in the forest, and that she told him that her husband had been killed by a bandit. Kyoshiro then claims that he found the samurai's body, and that he buried him.

The Rashomon Effect

The conflicting accounts of the witnesses in Rashomon raise questions about the nature of truth. Is there a single, objective truth about what happened in the forest? Or is truth subjective, depending on the perspective of the individual?

This question has come to be known as the "Rashomon effect." The Rashomon effect refers to the phenomenon of multiple, conflicting accounts

of the same event. These accounts may differ in their details, their interpretations, or even their basic facts.

The Rashomon effect highlights the difficulty of finding a single, objective truth about an event. It also raises questions about the reliability of human testimony and the role of perspective in shaping our understanding of the world.

Kurosawa's Style

Rashomon is a visually stunning film, with a unique style that is both traditional and modern. Kurosawa uses a variety of techniques to create a sense of atmosphere and tension, including chiaroscuro lighting, dynamic camera angles, and rapid editing.

Kurosawa's use of chiaroscuro lighting creates a sense of mystery and ambiguity. The film is often shot in low light, with deep shadows and sharp highlights. This creates a sense of unease and makes it difficult to see the faces of the characters clearly.

Kurosawa also uses dynamic camera angles to create a sense of tension and excitement. The camera often moves around the characters, giving the viewer a sense of being in the midst of the action. This creates a sense of immediacy and involvement that helps to draw the viewer into the story.

Finally, Kurosawa's use of rapid editing creates a sense of rhythm and energy. The film is full of short, sharp cuts that

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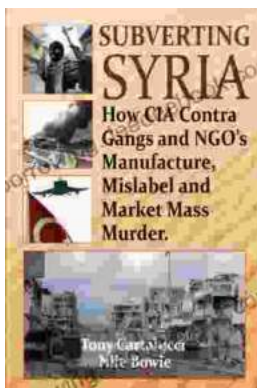


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