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TOSHIRO MIFUNE

IN

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S

RED BEARD

the staff:

Executive Producers: **Tomoyuki Tanaka, Ryuzo Kikushima**
Director: **Akira Kurosawa**
Original Story: **Shugoro Yamamoto**
Screenplay: **Masato Ide, Hideo Oguni, Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa**
Photography: **Choichi Naki, Takao Saito**
Art Director: **Yoshiro Muraki**; Recording: **Noboru Watari**
Lighting: **Hiromitsu Mori**; Music: **Masaru Sato**

the cast:

Kyojo Niide: **Toshiro Mifune**
Noboru Yasumoto: **Yuzo Kayama**
Osugi: **Reiko Dan**; Onaka: **Miyuki Kuwano**
Noboru's Mother: **Kinuyo Tanaka**: Noboru's Father: **Chishu Ryu**
Terumi Niki, Yoko Naito, Akemi Negishi, Kyoko Kagawa
Tsutomu Yamazaki, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Tatsuyoshi Ebara
Haruko Sugimura, Eijiro Tono, Kamatari Fujiwara, Koji Mitsui
Akira Nishimura, Yoshitaka Zushi, Ken Mitsuta, Eijiro Yanagi, Takashi Shimura

introduction:

In every motion picture he has directed, Akira Kurosawa has demonstrated deep concern for human relations: How, for example, can human beings live together peacefully and happily? In this his latest, unquestionably most monumental film he has treated this problem illustriously and from numerous angles.

Adhering to the Kurosawa formula of revealing the many facets of men's minds and hearts, "Red Beard" thus is a vehicle to explore the extremes of human emotion, the ability to withstand pain and suffering, and to magnificently state that there is goodness in every man.

Screenwriters began work on the first draft script for "Red Beard" in May, 1963. The first print of the picture was completed March 15, 1965. Thus was consumed the greatest amount of time ever in the making of a Japanese feature motion picture.

The results are a tribute to the time and effort lavished on the project by Director Kurosawa and his unfailing staff.

HONORS AWARDED RED BEARD

at Venice
- Conte Volpi Prize for best actor (2nd award for Toshiro Mifune)
- San Giorgio Prize
- City of Venice Prize
- Catholic International Prize

at Moscow
- The Prize of the Motion Picture Labor Union

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Red Beard

Look! This Applause!!

by Time Magazine:

"KUROSAWA'S ARTISTIC STRENGTH IS HIS ABILITY TO TRANSFORM THE STUFF OF LIFE INTO ELEMENTS OF EPIC."

THE PERFECT MOVIE

NEW MOVIES

Epic Vision

Even the modest projects of Japan's Akira Kurosawa are conceived and executed on a grand scale. Whether his subject is history (*Seven Samurai*), social commentary (*The Bad Sleep Well*), classic drama (*The Lower Depths*) or thriller (*High and Low*), Kurosawa invests each film with the breadth of an epic vision. Taken together, his films are like a single, vivid morality play, often heroic and sometimes cynical, celebrating the triumph of man over circumstance.

Why, and What. *Red Beard* is an oriental *Pilgrim's Progress*. In 19th century Japan, an ambitious young doctor (Yuzo Kayama) pays a formal call on the director of a public-health clinic. There he is shocked to find that he has been given a post as a mere intern. Stung by the indignity of the assignment, he rebels against the hospital rules, refuses to wear a uniform and grows careless of his patients' needs. Only the silent, looming presence of the head of the clinic, who has been nicknamed Red Beard, prevents the irate young man from quitting altogether. "This place is terrible," a fellow intern tells the young man. "The patients are all slum people; they're full of fleas—they even smell bad. Being here makes you wonder why you ever wanted to become a doctor." It is through Red Beard (Toshiro Mifune) that the young doctor learns not only why but what, in a full metaphorical sense, being a doctor of medicine really means.

An array of human wreckage straggles through the clinic in motley procession: a homicidal schizophrenic who was repeatedly raped and beaten at the age of nine; a wheelwright working even as he dies in penance for an imagined evil; a young girl, orphaned and being kept captive by syphilitic whores. Their tragedies begin gradually to touch the young doctor until, at film's end, he finally tells Red Beard that he wants to remain at the clinic. "You'll regret it," grumbles Red Beard, turning to hide his pleasure.

Lapidary Care. As for plot, Red Beard could be Dr. Gillespie, and the intern Dr. Kildare: the story is that simple. But where his hero is a physician, Kurosawa is a metaphysician. Going beneath the bathos, he explores his characters' psychology until their frailties and strengths become a sum of humanity itself. Despite his pretensions, the young doctor is as flawed—and believable—as his patients. If Red Beard himself is a heroic figure, he is nonetheless cast in a decidedly human mold: gruff and sometimes violent—as when he forcibly takes the girl from her captors—he keeps the clinic open by such inglorious expedients as coercion and extortion. Kurosawa seems to share with Red Beard the knowledge that the price of compassion is often compromise.

Stylistically, Kurosawa is without peer. Of *Red Beard* he said: "I wanted to make something so magnificent that people would just have to see it." Kurosawa's artistry is in the lapidary care that he gives to every aspect of his films. He holds scenes, without cutting, for minutes on end, forcing the eye to choose its own emphasis. His use of telephoto lenses to foreshorten perspective is so expert that it is often unnoticeable.

TIME, JANUARY 17, 1969

by the L.A. Times:

'Red Beard' Breathtaking Film Classic by Kurosawa

RED BEARD is a film of breathtaking beauty, extraordinary emotional impact and profound significance. It is still another masterpiece from Akira Kurosawa, one of the greatest directors of all time.

A movie from Kurosawa, with Toshiro Mifune as its star, is always a major event. But RED BEARD is something very special because it dares to affirm that man indeed has the capacity to transform the lives of others – and thus his own life – through love.

by the S.F. Chronicle:

Simple, Powerful Japanese Film Is Engrossing

By GENE YOUNGBLOOD
Herald-Examiner Staff Writer

"Red Beard" was before the cameras for two years. For it, Akira Kurosawa constructed an entire town of the Tokugawa period of the 1800s.

The tiles used for the roofs were real ones, actually hundreds of years old. Timbers for walls and gates as well had been aging for centuries. But despite this almost fanatical authenticity, the town's main street appears on screen for only one minute out of three hours. That's the kind of movie it is.

Kurosawa had the beds slept in for six months before shooting began. He insisted that all characters appear to age the imperceptible amount of six months—the film's time span. All this was achieved, and it is at the Toho La Brea Theater to be seen.

"Red Beard" lacks the staggering originality of a "Rashomon" or a "Throne of Blood," but its success lies elsewhere. It is that kind of masterpiece in which virtually every facet of the media is mastered to perfection and marshalled to work directly toward a common thematic goal.

Impressive Film

The film succeeds most impressively on the levels of photography and sound. Perhaps 80 per cent of "Red Beard" was shot in telephoto, the camera situated far away from its subject and equipped with extreme 750mm lenses. This is best illustrated in Mifune's fight with a band of thugs and in the parting of two young lovers on an arched bridge.

The establishing shot of the judo fight is a telephoto closeup, with Mifune emerging from the house to confront the ruffians who are ready to pounce. Telephoto shooting has flattened the frame to an eerie two-dimensionality, and as the figures charge at Mifune, each in turn thrown aside with broken limbs, the sequence takes on the helplessly violent feeling of a dream in which one runs at full speed but gets nowhere.

The sequence of the parting lovers is astoundingly beautiful and displays perhaps the most virtuosity in the film. Its extraordinary elegaic beauty is due almost entirely to telephoto lensing.

The man and the woman appear like delicate illustrations on old parchment. (Indeed the whole film seems to be coated with a burnished patina that mellows the exquisitely pristine photography.) The couple seem very near each other. Yet, as they move, she turning away and he staggering toward us, we see that they are separated. It is a brilliant visual comment on the state of their affairs, as well as an arresting artistic ploy.

Five Cameras

In almost all sequences except those requiring subtle nuances in acting, Kurosawa used a multi-camera technique, with as many as five cameras recording the action simultaneously at various angles and distances.

The soundtrack of "Red Beard" is divided into two levels: The upper (louder) level carries music, dialogue and closeup sound effects; the lower (softer) level envelops the images in an extraordinarily subtle aura of distant whispers and noises—the call of a child, the cry of a fish peddler, wind rustling in leaves—a separate symphony.

In a flashback of the lovers' first meeting, the scene is a market place in which hundreds of tiny wind-bells hang from booths. A soft wind comes up just as the couple's eyes meet and the windchimes begin shrilling, an unearthly tone we are not likely to forget.

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