

# Arts & Entertainment

## Epic film 'Ran' too beautiful to miss

By Charles Lieurance  
Senior Reporter

Akira Kurosawa directs films the way military leaders direct theaters of war.

Kurosawa's latest film, the much-acclaimed "Ran," is simply astounding, a breathless canvas of the personal vision of "the Emperor," as he is called in the international film community. The film is Kurosawa through and through, from the highly stylized hallucinogenic battle scenes that have become his trademark in films like "The Seven Samurai" and "Kagemusha: The Shadow Warriors" to the poignant commentary on the human capacity for bloodshed and cruelty.

### Movie Review

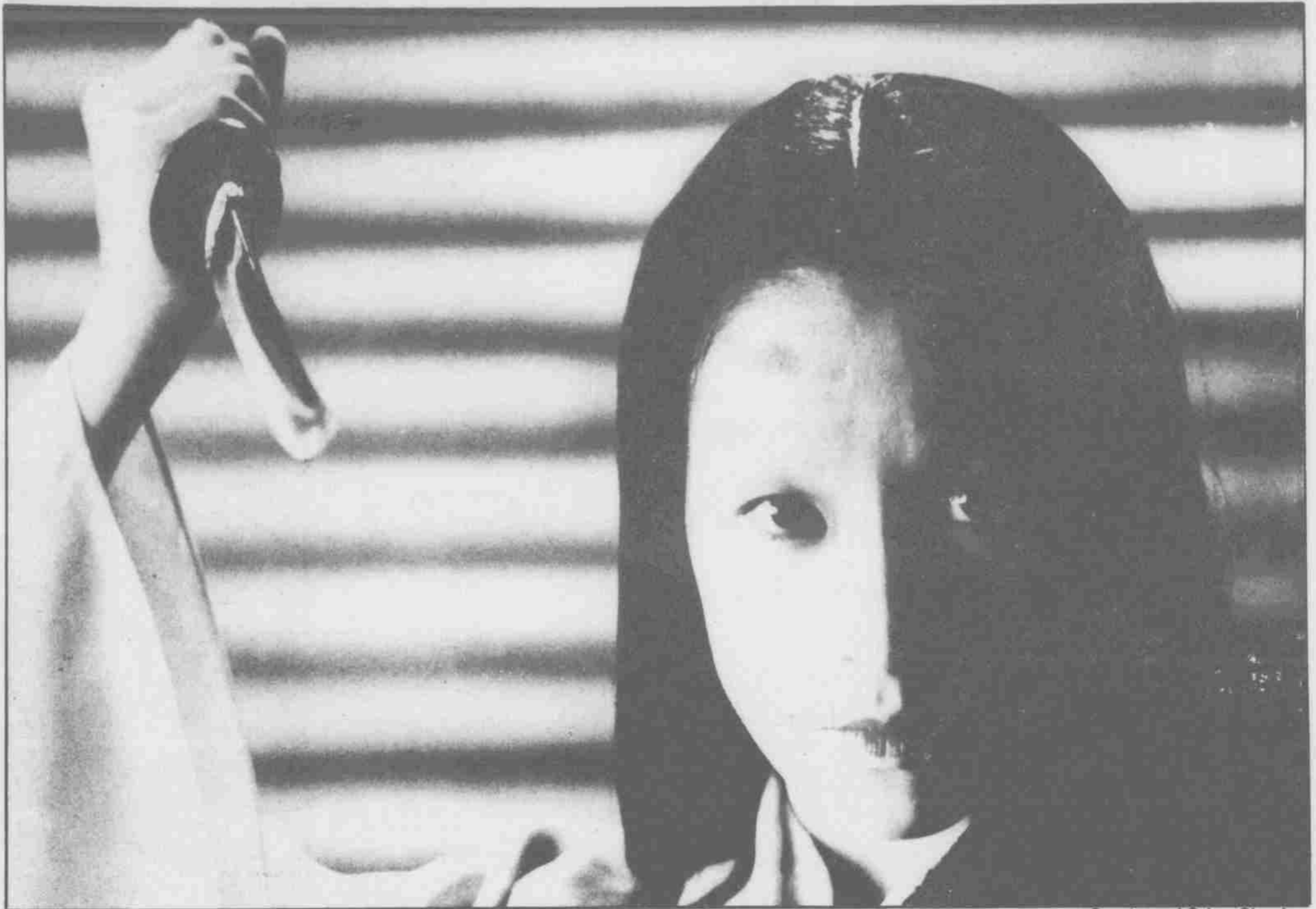
But "Ran" is also a pinnacle, a retelling of Shakespeare's "King Lear" painted in such bold, long strokes that it nearly sums up the Kurosawa "message."

"Lear's" themes of betrayal, filial love, filial hatred, nature, madness, war and spiritual darkness all are captured with devastating clarity. But Kurosawa takes the whole business to the *nth* degree.

It might sound absurd to say he has modernized "Lear" in a film set in Japan during the 1500s, the twilight of an age of feudal lords and infernal infighting. But Kurosawa's "Ran" has a living, breathing commitment to this age.

Kurosawa's interest in history is as metaphor. Something of the modern nuclear crisis is here, although pinning it down is hard. Perhaps it is the changing landscapes. Kurosawa's sudden landscape changes are painful. He switches from very Oriental rolling, watercolor-wash bucolic to bleak, burned-out fortresses or monsoon-thrashed thickets. The pain in the land and the pain in the sky that Kurosawa manages to capture on celluloid is one of the strongest anti-war statements I've seen in a long while.

The acting in "Ran" is incredibly palatable for a Japanese film shown in



Harada as Lady Kaede in 'Ran'

Courtesy of Orion Classics

Western theaters. Japanese acting usually translates into long somber expressions (I hesitate to call this the "inscrutable" look) and unbearable histrionics to Western audiences more used to the Western theatrical tradition. There is usually no middle of the road.

Not so in "Ran." The acting is universally impeccable. Mieko Harada as the monstrous villain Lady Kaede, is a stand-out. Her combination of seductive power and sheer demonic madness is a masterwork of expression and versatility.

To those unfamiliar with Shakespeare's "Lear" or its precedents, "Ran's" plot is really quite simple as far as surface details go. The old feudal lord Hidetora believes he has become too old to handle his land holdings. He calls his three sons together (in "Lear" it is his daughters) and divides up the kingdom, giving the eldest full reign, the second a smaller but ample portion. To his youngest son, Saburo, he gives exile because of the son's blunt honesty in the face of his brothers' hollow flattery.

Slowly the elderly lord is phased out

of the picture. He is denied an escort, a home, a seat of power, everything, by his two eldest sons. Finally, he is forced to wander, mad and haunted through the stormy fields. He is an exile like Oedipus, Ireland's Sweeney and Shakespeare's Lear.

In some ways the lord deserves his fate, his dose of evil and cruelty. He has won his large landholdings through impassioned bloodletting, cold brutality and an imperviousness to emotion.

The true star of "Ran," though, is Kurosawa's vision, his serpentine tide of soldiers, his bubbling red paint/

blood splashed across the land with artist's care, the banners and strategies that come off with majesty and horror.

"Ran" lasts 2 hours and 41 minutes, but the film is so fascinating, intelligent and emotive that it seems much shorter. All in all, the film is too beautiful and too important to miss, a moral epic of the highest order.

"Ran" plays at the Sheldon Film Theater Thursday through Sunday. Showings are at 7 and 9:45 p.m. with 3 p.m. matinees on Saturday and Sunday. Admission is \$3.75.

## Heroes ruin images with public appearances

Last week, as you've probably heard, Clint Eastwood was elected mayor of Carmel-By-The-Sea, Calif., population 4,800.

I don't know how much more of this kind of thing I can take.

Last week I shelled out hard-earned cash for the latest Rolling Stones



Bill Allen

album, only to find that I would have been better off sitting at home and listening to their old ones. Why didn't the Stones quit when they were legends?

Then I read reports that Bob Dylan is touring with Tom Petty and the audiences aren't that enthused. They actually like Petty's part of the concert. Then, every time America bombs some foreign country I am constantly

reminded that the "Death Valley Days" host I grew to love is now a senile old man who wears suits and eats off of china worth \$50,000.

So now, just as I'm borne back ceaselessly into the past — a past that's being plastered across the present like cheap wallpaper over beautifully stained redwood walls — I find that Clint Eastwood really didn't ride off into the sunset after "The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly."

Instead, I find he lives in some fancy house in California, probably eating quiche and having some maid bring him his slippers so he can get up and greet the city council members when they stop by for mint juleps and pastries.

That's not the way I saw it ending for Clint Eastwood.

Sure, somewhere in the back of my mind I realized he is just a movie star and that he really isn't that absolutely ice-cold cool. But I tried to never let that surface, just like you sometimes hide bad memories so you won't have to constantly deal with them over and

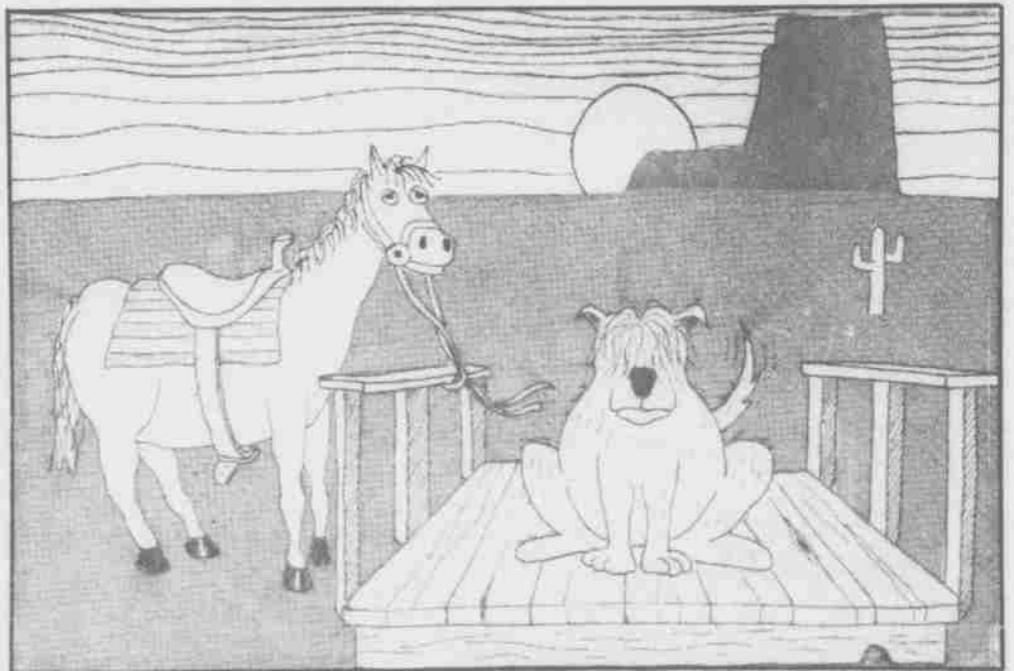
over.

And sure, I knew that Clint moved from those grainy, dirty spaghetti Westerns to an even dirtier Harry. But I could live with that. Dirty Harry was just a modern-day cowboy, a drifter and a man fighting for justice.

My second favorite Eastwood movie was "Every Which Way But Loose," where he and his orangutan, Clyde, searched all over the western United States in search of a woman who didn't care.

It was an absolutely horrible movie filled with old pick-ups, bikers and country music, but it sticks to my ribs like the beans and bacon I imagined Clint would eat at every meal for the rest of his life. I watched it this weekend on my VCR and loved it again. My parents laughed at the funny parts; my girlfriend's only comment was, "I don't like country music."

I saw it as another angle in the career of a hero who would someday simply move to a back porch in the desert and sit in the sun with an ugly, happy dog and a horse tied nearby.



Ron Jelinek/Daily Nebraskan

### Where's Clint?

Then he goes and gets himself elected as mayor of some fancy California town. I hope he at least makes a movie about being mayor where he shoots up city hall, rescues something or someone and drives off into the

sunset in an old pick-up with a Waylon Jennings song drifting over the credits. He owes us that much out of this atrocity.

Heroes shouldn't be allowed to exist off the screen, at least not in public.

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