

Movie Review

"Ran"
A film by
Akira Kurosawa
Starring
Tatsuya Nakadai,
Akira Terao and Peter
******* (five out of five)**

For the past 40 years, Akira Kurosawa has been the leading figure in Japanese films. Kurosawa's films are able to transcend cultural barriers and are easily some of the best films of any culture.

Kurosawa began working in the film industry as an assistant director in 1941 and soon after began directing, writing and editing his own films. In 1951, his film "Rashomon" was the first Japanese film to gain wide ac-

ceptance in the Western world. In 1952, Kurosawa's "Seven Samurai" became internationally successful. "Seven Samurai" was later Americanized and remade as the classic western "The Magnificent Seven." Kurosawa's "Yojimbo" (1961) provided the inspiration for Sergio Leone's "A Fistful of Dollars." William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" provided the story for Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood" (1957).

For "Ran," Kurosawa draws on Shakespeare's "King Lear." Last year, "Ran" was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. It was the first time a Japanese film and only the second time a foreign film was nominated in the Best Picture category (Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny and Alexander"

was the first in 1984).

In "Ran," the Great Lord Hidetora decides he is too old to continue ruling all his lands. He divides his lands among his three sons, Taro, Jiro and Saburo, and wants them to work together to protect the lands from outside invaders. Saburo tries to tell Hidetora that he is being foolish and that his brothers are too greedy to be given so much power. Hidetora feels Saburo is being disrespectful and banishes him.

While Saburo takes refuge with neighboring ruler Fujimaka, his brothers plot against their father. Taro, the oldest son, cannot be absolute ruler as long as his father is still alive. Taro's wife Kaede, who was given to him after her parents were killed by Hidetora, is also

hungry for power and pushes Taro to take action. Jiro will support Taro's plans to do away with their father but Jiro is also plotting against his brother so that he can become absolute ruler.

The cinematography in "Ran" is fantastic. The beauty of the Japanese mountains and the colors of the soldiers' uniforms are captured with artistic finesse. The battle scenes are both majestic and realistic.

The overall effect of "Ran" is stunning. You leave the theater in a daze and it takes several hours before you're able to assimilate what you've just seen. The film is so packed with beauty and action that you hardly even notice that it is almost three hours long.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

Album Reviews



"Landing on Water"
Neil Young
Geffen Records
***** (three out of five)**

For the past six years I have been wondering when Neil Young was going to make a real album again.

In 1979, Young released "Rust Never Sleeps," a tour de force album that marked the high point of a marvelous career. Like most of Young's music, "Rust Never Sleeps" was a wonderful synthesis of rock, country and folk music styles. Young's next albums were failed attempts at particular music styles: "Hawks and Doves" (1980) — country rock; "Reactor" (1981) — hard rock; "Trans" (1982) — electronic music; "Everybody's Rockin'" (1983) — rockabilly; "Old Ways" (1985) — country.

In "Landing on Water," Young experiments with another music style — synth-pop. The lyrics on the album are up to Young's usually brilliant standards, but most of the songs could be improved if they were stripped of synthesizers and electric drums.

"Touch the Night" is a beautiful love song with a guitar solo reminiscent of Young's earlier "Like a Hurricane." Unfortunately, the solo is buried on the chorus.

Young, one of the best writers of protest music to come out of the '60s, criticizes the way '60s idealism has floundered in "Hippie Dream." "Pressure" attacks yuppie idealism of the '80s.

Most of the other songs on the album don't deserve mention, but one song, "Drifter," seems to explain what Young has been thinking for the past six years.

According to "Drifter," Young feels his public doesn't understand his need to experiment with various music styles. When Young sings: "Don't try to tell me what I gotta do to fit in," he shows a resentment for the critics who keep telling him to make music like he used to.

Young also accuses his public of being fair-weather fans who are not willing to trust him.

The lines "How do I know that your love is true?" and "How can I count on you to count on me?" criticize those fans.

I have more respect for Young now that I have heard "Drifter" and some of the other songs on "Landing on Water." But I don't feel obligated to like the whole album.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer



"Stand By Me"
Original Motion Picture
Soundtrack
Various Artists
Atlantic Records
******* (five out of five)**

One of the best ways to set the mood for a movie that takes place during 1960 is to use songs from that time. The soundtrack for "Stand By Me" uses 10 gems from that period.

The title track, Ben E. King's classic "Stand By Me," is simply

one of the best love songs ever written. Buddy Holly's "Everyday" is another great love song. "Everyday," originally released as the flip side of "Peggy Sue," is the only song on the album that didn't make the Top 40.

The Del Vikings, one of the first racially integrated rock 'n' roll bands of the '50s, shine with "Come Go With Me" and "Whispering Bells."

The best doo-wop song of the '50s had to be the Silhouettes' "Get a Job." How can you beat these lyrics?:

Sha da da da, sha da da da
 da, ba-dum

Yip yip yip yip yip yip yip
 Mm mm mm mm mm mm

Get a Job

Shirley and Lee's "Let the Good Times Roll," the Chordettes' "Lollipop" and the Bobbettes' "Mr. Lee" are some of the best music to come out of the girl groups of the '50s. The Coasters' "Yakety Yak" and Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls of Fire" show how much fun the guys were having too.

The soundtrack to "Stand By Me" is the best sampler of '50s music since the "American Graffiti" soundtrack. The only problem is that the album is not long enough and leaves you hungry for more of this wonderful music.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer