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# Something Like An Autobiography



## Synopsis

Translated by Audie E. Bock. "A first rate book and a joy to read.... It's doubtful that a complete understanding of the director's artistry can be obtained without reading this book.... Also indispensable for budding directors are the addenda, in which Kurosawa lays out his beliefs on the primacy of a good script, on scriptwriting as an essential tool for directors, on directing actors, on camera placement, and on the value of steeping oneself in literature, from great novels to detective fiction."--Variety "For the lover of Kurosawa's movies...this is nothing short of must reading...a fitting companion piece to his many dynamic and absorbing screen entertainments."--Washington Post Book World

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Japanese (translation)

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## Book World

Fabulously interesting and informative book! Magnificent store of information to share about Akira Kurosawa who shares his experiences in early life and as he matures... experiences which led to his becoming the director we all love. We learn a lot (in short easy to understand entries) about the beginning and growth curve of production of movies in Japan. Mesmerizing read. The narrative leads us through his experiences, not as a list of influences, etc., but as his experiences in life commenced and grew and where his mind traveled all the while. Very, very interesting and well written. A must read for Japanese movie enthusiasts.

What a wonderful book this was. It gives a look at the life of the Japanese director known as Kurosawa Akira. He talks about his childhood growing up with a father who still tried to follow samurai tradition, his brother, what interested him in film, filming experiences. Truly a fantastic read. After finishing it, he also changed my outlook on his films (especially Dreams). The only downside is the book only covers up to Rashomon. However I'd still highly recommend it to film students and Kurosawa fans alike. I do have one complaint, it's more with the production of the book than the book itself. I ordered the paperback version and the front cover and back cover have completely rolled up.

Something Like an Autobiography provides a very interesting look into the early life and career of one of the best filmmakers of all time, Kurosawa Akira. Though the book stops around 1950, the period covered is worth the purchase. The reader is allowed a unique glimpse into Kurosawa's philosophy, family history, and method for film making, enabling one to better appreciate his work. The anecdotes which comprise this book, albeit brief, are very interesting to read. I feel that I am better able to understand the messages in and personal history behind his films after reading this book. The translation is, overall, very good. I did not find any startling errors or awkward sentences which disturbed my reading. The actual physical product is of high quality as well. The text is clear and easily read, and the cover is strong, too. Overall, I definitely recommend this book to anyone wanting to know more about Kurosawa Akira and his work. It is an excellent quasi-autobiography.

I've always enjoyed Kurosawa as a filmmaker, but I had never realized that this book existed. To say that this autobiography moved me is an understatement. It is written with great beauty, intellect, wit and humility. Reading the first portion, I had completely forgotten about Kurosawa the director and

was enthralled by the story of this boy growing up in Tokyo. His experiences in the disaster of 1929, the death of close kin and his relationship with teachers and mentors is an incredible story that I cannot do justice with in such a short review. Even if you are not as keen on Kurosawa and film, I recommend this book. It is a page turner and I promise you that you will find yourself both laughing and crying by the end.

GAMA NO ABURA / JIDEN NO YOU NA MONO (TOAD OIL / SOMETHING LIKE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY). Mostly Childhood "Memories." Rating = \*\*\* Author: Akira Kurosawa Translator: Audie Bock 1983 ISBN: 0-394-71439-3 This is a de facto first volume of Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa's life. Apparently, it was so traumatic and embarrassing (since many folks who could/should be written about were still living at the time) for the author to compose (hence the original title "Toad Oil" [explained in his Preface]), that no further volumes were forthcoming. It is also a highly readable book--suspiciously so! It has likely been subject to multiple levels of filtration (including the "lost-in-translation" phenomenon) prior to publication. Read with the proverbial grain of salt. All autobiographies, of course, are filtered by their authors who only describe events they can remember and consider to be the most flattering as well as add embellishments to same. (The most accurate and compressive view of a subject's life and motion-picture career are usually to be found in biographies not written by their relatives!) Translators of Japanese into English also take abundant liberties and/or make extrapolated guesses (which are plain to see in many translated Japanese film titles and dialogue subtitles) to: "prettify" their English version; turn nuanced or negative statements into decisive or positive ones (the latter, by the way, is often done in movies for comic effect); and otherwise put words deemed "appropriate" into the originator's mouth (sometimes, though, direct English equivalents simply do not exist for Japanese words or phrases). The actions of the translator's book editor/publisher can add yet a third layer of filtration. Kurosawa seems to have had a remarkable (perhaps photographic?) memory and/or substantial written records and/or drew from his vivid imagination (after all, he had had a hand in creating many, many photoplays including the scenarios for all his films) judging from the level of details described from his childhood. These events are interesting from a psychological perspective, but not necessarily so for the director's film enthusiasts. Except, perhaps, for developed and retained character traits, it's hard to see much in the way of direct connections between the child described and the cinematic talent he would become. (One tidbit that emerges: it was Kurosawa's older brother who induced him--a struggling painter at the time--to start a new career in the motion picture business.) Bock in her Translator's Preface appears to think the major value in relating so many detailed childhood

memories is in helping to describe Japan's migration from a predominantly rural society to a more urban one during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Perhaps. Judging from her Translator's Preface, Bock seems to have been enraptured/enthralled with Kurosawa at the time she translated his work. This very likely impacted the objectiveness of her translation. Now and then Kurosawa's rougher language apparently manages to slip through which makes for added reading interest. While Kurosawa writes mostly about his childhood, all but one of the numerous individuals he names as assisting him in writing his book seem to be connected to him only via his cinematic activities. This casts further suspicion on the veracity of his childhood stories. This small book may lack historical accuracy and not add much (or anything) to what is now known about its author's film endeavors. But it does make for a pleasant, casual read (especially if you have a bout of insomnia). WILLIAM FLANIGAN, PhD.

A very personal and intimate look into the master director's life from his perspective.

Great Seller! Product as described.

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