Zatoichi the Blind Samurai

Zatoichi is one of the most interesting characters ever brought to film. He is a reoccurring character who appears in many films that span the course of 30 years. These films detail the events in the life of Zatoichi, a blind swordsman who makes his living playing dice and giving massages. The story of Zatoichi is very interesting, as well as inspiring. It shows that nobody should be underestimated, and everyone has a story.

Zatoichi is a blind swordsman who journeys throughout Japan as a mercenary. He is featured in many feature length films, as well as a television series. These films include *The Tale of Zatoichi, The Tale of Zatoichi Continues, New Tale of Zatoichi,* and many more. There are a total of twenty six films, as well as the television series, *Zatoichi.* These films and the television series lasted from 1962 to 1989, directed by Kenji Misumi, with actor Shintaro Katsu portraying Zatoichi in all but two of the movies (www.imdb.com). A remake that is independent of the original Zatoichi series came out in 2003 as well, with Takeshi Kitano playing Zatoichi. The films of Zatoichi take place during the Tokugowa shogunate, which lasted from 1603 to 1868 (www.scaruffi.com). The films focus on the later period of the Tokugowa, taking place more specifically in the 1840’s. Many samurai films take place during the Tokugowa shogunate, and often focus on a lone warrior with no family or home (www.imagesjournal.com). This is true of Zatoichi, who wanders Japan as a hired swordsman. Although Zatoichi is blind, he possesses extraordinary senses of hearing and smell, as well as excellent swordsmanship. One reason for this amazing swordsmanship is due to the fact that Zatoichi was often looked down upon for being blind. People often took advantage of Zatoichi, or disrespected him because of his disability. Zatoichi trained himself to become a master swordsman because of this ridicule. In *The Tale of Zatoichi Continues,* Zatoichi entered a gambling den, and asked to partake in a game of dice. The other men found it amusing that a blind man would want to play dice, and thought that they could not lose to him, so they decided to let Zatoichi join the game. However, Zatoichi tricked the men, and collected their money, saying “Don’t take me for a fool just because I’m blind”. This...
disrespect for the blind is not common in Tokugowa Japan, however, as the blind people of Japan founded a guild. The blind people of feudal Japan usually stayed within their homes, often relying on the care of their family or friends. If a blind person ventured out of their home, they would usually join the Guild of the Blind, an organization that contained people of many professions, including acupuncturists, doctors, and masseurs like Zatoichi (www.jstor.org).

The films of Zatoichi are very inspiring because they show what anyone can do, regardless of a disability. Zatoichi is described by many to be one of the greatest swordsman who ever lived, but many people don't believe this until they see it. Also, it shows that one cannot judge others just by looking at them, as Zatoichi demonstrates many times. People often mistake him for someone that they can easily take advantage of, but this is not the case. These movies are also very interesting to watch because they have intense action sequences. It is fun to watch Zatoichi fight his opponents, and because he is blind, it makes it even more interesting. Zatoichi films do not contain only violence, however. Certain parts of these movies that would often be boring or uninteresting in other movies, such as conversations, are very interesting. Zatoichi also appreciates the finer things in nature that many others overlook, such as the scent of flowers.

The Zatoichi film series is one of the longest running, most consistent movie series in history. His movies show that people are not what they seem to be, and also that nobody should be underestimated. He shows that he can be deadly, while also showing a softer side of himself. Zatoichi has been compared to James Bond in terms of his popularity. It is undeniable that Zatoichi is one of the greatest fictional samurais ever to be portrayed in film, as well as one of the most popular.
Works Cited

Primary:


Secondary:

