

The REEL TRUTH

By Chris Vessey

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James Clavell's TAI-PAN

"There can be only one."

Starring:
Bryan Brown - Tai-pan
John Stanton - Brock
Joan Chen - May-May

Based on a novel by James Clavell

"Tai-Pan" takes place in China, during the era of the Opium Wars. Before this, China had been a closed country to the "westerners". She had neither seen nor heard of Englishmen; when the Chinese met them they thought them to be barbarians. Perhaps they were, for it was the hunger of the western civilization for the riches of the Orient — tea, silk, and spices — that brought China to an Opium stupor (it should be noted that not only the English were at work in these areas; others were active as well,

including the French). Imperialism moved the British and other westerners to establish colonial ports in this new world. The Chinese leaders were not in favor of this — the westerners were turning their people into hopeless addicts. It was for this reason that the Opium Wars commenced.

Tai-Pan is not about the wars themselves but about the ruthless trading that went on in China, and the competition between the British for colonial of the British colony was called the Tai-Pan by the Chinese. He had control over trade in the area — a monopoly, so to speak, on all aspects of the trade including opium. But it was the Tai-Pan who had to build the community; the need for wealth to

set one up sparked fierce rivalry between British companies. Murder and treachery might well be the only way to become Tai-Pan, for there can be only one.

In the film a competition takes place between the residing Tai-Pan and Brock. Each must try to defeat the other while winning the support of the people. Through all of this there is adventure, romance, and tragedy. I tend to compare it to Shogun, for it bears many of the same qualities. Rivalry, lust, power, comedy, and young romance are all a part of Tai-Pan. Because it is not a sci-fi, cinematography isn't quite as important; it is extremely good nevertheless. Background music is typical for this type of drama. I feel that Bryan Brown (Tai-Pan) has played his part to the fullest, even to the use of a rich and authentic accent. John Stanton's character, Brock, is played as it should be — a hateful man who relies on his henchmen to do his dirty work. Joan Chen (May-May) plays a beautiful slave girl, Tai-Pan's lover. Her insatiable lust defies any other description but nymphomaniac. Overall, the characters are well-played and reasonably plausible.

I confess, I have not read Clavell's novel, so I am not qualified to draw a comparison. Everyone who watches a movie is a critic (to some extent). If you have read the book, give the movie a break. Rarely is a movie as good (or better) than the book it is based on. Time dictates much of this. Also, most of what you read you envisage in your own unique way. The movie version is almost certain to be different from your visual interpretation. Make allowances, and merit the movie on its own grounds, not those of a book. I rate this according to how interesting I found it to be, not how interesting it is in comparison to the novel. I found it to be intriguing, informative, and not at all boring. It is a long movie at approximately 125 minutes. It will keep you busy for all of them. "Tai-Pan" is really good. Don't listen to some high-brow reviews which compare it to the novel. Go and enjoy yourself. You may not see one like this for quite a while.

Rating: ****+

You can see Tai-Pan at the Prince Edward Cinemas, theatre 2.

CIMN'S CROSS CAMPUS COUNTDOWN



- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. BOSTON | AMANDA |
| 2. KIM MITCHELL | ALANA LOVES ME |
| 3. BILLY IDOL | TO BE A LOVER |
| 4. HUMAN LEAGUE | HUMAN |
| 5. THE CURE | CLOSE TO ME |
| 6. THE SMITHS | THERE'S A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT |
| 7. THE POLICE | DON'T STAND SO CLOSE TO ME (86 VERSION) |
| 8. MADONNA | TRUE BLUE |
| 9. STEVE WINWOOD | BACK IN THE HIGH LIFE AGAIN |
| 10. THE SPOONS | BRIDGES OVER BORDERS |
| 11. HOWARD JONES | YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU...DON'T YOU? |
| 12. GLASS TIGER | LOOKING AT A PICTURE |
| 13. COREY HART | I AM BY YOUR SIDE |
| 14. PARACHUTE CLUB | TEARING THE VEIL |
| 15. PAUL SIMON | YOU CAN CALL ME AL |
| 16. XTC | SUMMER CAULDRON/GRASS |
| 17. BUNDOCK | AMERICAN SINGER |
| 18. TOM COCHRANE | THE UNTOUCHABLE ONE |
| 19. PET SHOP BOYS | TWO DIVIDED BY ZERO |
| 20. BON JOVI | YOU GIVE LOVE A BAD NAME |
| 21. TIMEX SOCIAL CLUB | RUMOURS |
| 22. SAM MOORE & LOU REED | SOUL MAN |
| 23. ZAPPACOSTA | WHEN I FALL IN LOVE AGAIN |
| 24. CYNDI LAUPER | TRUE COLOURS |
| 25. AC/DC | WHO MADE WHO |

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