**“Tai-Pan” silly and flawed despite Chen’s unique portrayal**

**TAI-PAN**
Based on the novel by James Clavell. Open today at Copley Place.

By JULIAN WEST

*International cooperation and goodwill* were displayed by the producers of the film version of James Clavell’s novel of the founding of Hong Kong. They shot most of the film in the People’s Republic of China, even bringing along the British army for some of the scenes. Too bad they didn’t make a better film while they were there.

The film suffers from all the drawbacks one would expect from comprimising a thousand-page novel into two hours, and then some. In the first scene, a boat materializes very neatly out of the fog. Surely, I thought, this is a visual analogy of the way the Europeans appeared without warning on the Chinese horizon. But this craft is Chinese, and it sails on leisurely through a tedious opening sequence.

When the boat comes to a stop, the film gets straight to the point. The Emperor wishes to end European commerce along the coast, which is primarily the purchase of tea in exchange for opium. The decree is issued, the opium burned, and that is the end. Most of the film is simply a testimonials to hand-to-hand combat in the midst of a typhoon. It is just a little hard to believe that the future of development in the region should come down to this.

The politicking in the middle of the film is mistreated like all the other Chinese and, in contrast, the high point of the film. She is made to do something with her love as an equal, and it is a Pyrrhic victory.

The less said about the special effects during the typhoon, the better.

As for the supporting roles, there are enough for a miniseries. In a feature film, many are reduced to vignettes. Two who receive enough screen time are Tai-Pan’s slave and lover, May-May, and his illegitimate son, Culum (Tim Guinee). Guinee manages to hand-to-hand combat in the end, does the martial art of Tai-Pan, much as Al Pacino did in “The Godfather.” But Pacino spent the entire film developing the character of the young Don Corleone and slowly corrupting him. Guinee manages the transformation in one scene, by turning around and leaning on a rock to think for a few seconds.

Joan Chen’s portrayal of May-May is, by contrast, the high point of the film. She is mistreated like all the other Chinese and, in contrast, the high point of the film. She is made to do something with her love as an equal, and it is a Pyrrhic victory. Never mind, watching her get there was all the fun.

May-May spoke a bewitching blend of flawless Chinese and stilted English. “I want you to be fantastical good,” she insists. But she is also a wonderful natural mimic. Her lampoons of some of the other characters are delightful, and she manages a slightly better Scots accent than Brown, who is Australian. Chen has appeared in four Chinese films, winning the Golden Rooster for Best Actress and the One Hundred Blossoms for most popular actress in the PRC. But we may hope to see more of her in Hollywood movies, as she is now studying film in the United States, presumably with an impeccable West Coast accent.

Let’s hope she picks a better one next time. Most of the people sitting near me were apologizing to their dates as the credits rolled over a ludicrous final panorama of modern Hong Kong. Don’t make the same mistake.

---

**MICROSOFT**

**ALL MBA STUDENTS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO AN INFORMATION SESSION**

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1986**

**12 NOON – 1 P.M. SCHELL ROOM**

If you’re interested in Applications, Systems or Languages Marketing or Program Management, and if you have an MBA as well as experience in software marketing or product management, we want to talk with you. Come find out what Microsoft has to offer.

Representatives from our marketing and program management staff will be in attendance to present employment opportunities at Microsoft and to answer questions from interested students.