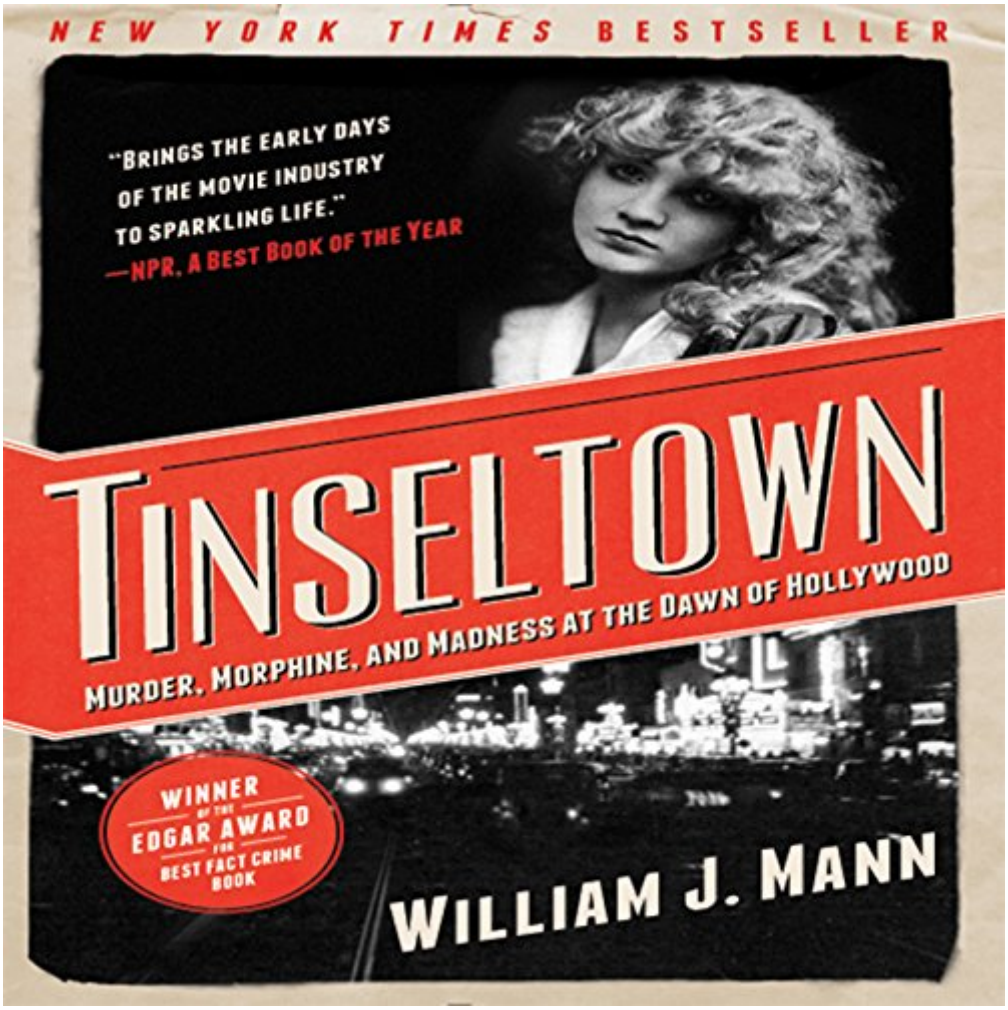
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Tinseltown: Murder, Morphine, And Madness At The Dawn Of Hollywood



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Synopsis

New York Times BestsellerEdgar Award winner for Best Fact CrimeThe Day of the Locust meets The Devil in the White City and Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil in this juicy, untold Hollywood story: an addictive true tale of ambition, scandal, intrigue, murder, and the creation of the modern film industry.By 1920, the movies had suddenly become AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s new favorite pastime, and one of the nationÃ¢â ¬â„¢s largest industries. Never before had a medium possessed such power to influence. Yet HollywoodÃ¢â ¬â„¢s glittering ascendency was threatened by a string of headline-grabbing tragediesÃ¢â ¬â •including the murder of William Desmond Taylor, the popular president of the Motion Picture Directors Association, a legendary crime that has remained unsolved until now.In a fiendishly involving narrative, bestselling Hollywood chronicler William J. Mann draws on a rich host of sources, including recently released FBI files, to unpack the story of the enigmatic Taylor and the diverse cast that surrounded himÃ¢â ¬â •including three beautiful, ambitious actresses; a grasping stage mother; a devoted valet; and a gang of two-bit thugs, any of whom might have fired the fatal bullet. And overseeing this entire landscape of intrigue was Adolph Zukor, the brilliant and ruthless founder of Paramount, locked in a struggle for control of the industry and desperate to conceal the truth about the crime. Along the way, Mann brings to life Los Angeles in the Roaring Twenties: a sparkling yet schizophrenic town filled with party girls, drug dealers, religious zealots, newly-minted legends and starlets already past their primeÃ¢â ¬â •a dangerous place where the powerful could still run afoul of the desperate.A true story recreated with the suspense of a novel, Tinseltown is the work of a storyteller at the peak of his powersÃ¢â ¬â •and the solution to a crime that has stumped detectives and historians for nearly a century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The death of William Desmond Taylor/William Deane-Tanner is among America’s most enigmatic unsolved murders. What makes his case somewhat unique is that there were deliberate efforts from people high-up in the movie industry to ensure that the case remained enigmatic and unsolved. It is virtually certain that there were a number of people who knew--or, at least, had a pretty good guess--who shot the film director, but for their own reasons, they launched a conspiracy that allowed someone to get away with murder. Evidence was concealed, misleading rumors were launched, and mouths were kept firmly shut. As all the people "in the know" are now dead, we will never learn for certain who was behind the killing, and why it was done. As very little reliable evidence about the mystery survives, all theories about the case are necessarily based on speculation."Tinseltown" is no exception to this rule, but William J. Mann offers the fullest, richest account of the Taylor killing to date, introducing several new details, a novel, intriguing "solution," and--perhaps most valuable of all--offering a fascinating look at Old Hollywood.The Taylor murder is, in fact, only a plot element in the complex, often sordid, but always exciting history of the film industry’s early days. The anti-hero of our story is Adolph "Creepy" Zukor, the ruthless film mogul who likely engineered the Taylor cover-up. Other stars of the show include Mabel Normand (one of the few sympathetic characters in this story,) the sad, tormented ingenue Mary Miles Minter, Taylor’s eccentric valet Henry Peavey (depicted much more sensitively and positively than most other accounts of the case,) and a host of grifters, blackmailers, killers, drug addicts, and desperate wanna-be stars.Mann’s scenario of how Taylor died is interesting, but, of course, he necessarily cannot present much hard evidence to back it up. His theory cannot be accepted as the "final word," but it’s certainly one of the most plausible "solutions" to date.As thorough as Mann’s book is in most respects, he does make a few odd omissions. He barely mentions the curious fact that Taylor’s brother, Dennis Deane-Tanner, also abandoned his family and disappeared. It has been proposed, as a matter of fact, that Dennis was really Taylor’s sinister former valet, "Edward Sands." Not long before the murder, Sands robbed

Taylor and vanished--yet another puzzling element to this endlessly mysterious case. (Mann states that Sands was never seen again, although other accounts claim that the ex-valet was found dead under suspicious circumstances.) I believe Mann may have made a mistake in dismissing all possibility that brother Dennis and Sands the valet somehow figured in the murder.Still, this book is wonderfully absorbing reading. Even if you have little interest in true crime, the soap-opera like saga found in these pages is almost certain to draw you in.

William J. Mann writes a detailed investigation concerning all who were near or implicated in the murder of William Desmond Taylor president of the Motion Picture Directors Association. One good point in his favor is that he does not make up dialogue. He uses reports of what was actually said. His details and telling uses much minutia - giving the background and character of the many people that surrounded TaylorAt places the story jumps, he will tell about an incident, but not fully and then go on with the narrative and the character's background and habits and then jump back to what the exact subject was in the first place. The riddles of the case are slowly unraveled and the crime, in the end "is solved" by a dying woman's confession. Other than that there is still no real evidence.We also learn something about the early film industry, especially the rivalry between Adolph Zukor and Marcus Loew. The morality of much of Hollywood during these years of the new motion picture industry is explained.This is a book that has much detail and description of many relatively unknown Hollywood personalities. Those who want to learn about the new motion picture industry in 1920 and a crime that was huge news, but forgotten in later years might enjoy reading this book.

My favorite actress used to be Bette Davis. Although I don't follow films to the same extent these days, I'm still fascinated by the idea of Hollywood and how the film industry evolved. To me, that's the best part of "Tinseltown." Considering the book's subtitle - Murder, Morphine, and Madness at the Dawn of Hollywood - I'd just as soon do away with the murder aspect and focus on how Hollywood developed the way it did. Mann does that to a certain extent, and that part of the book was highly enjoyable. But I could have done without William Desmond Taylor and the mystery of who murdered him.Fascinating aspects of the book:1. Competition between producers (Adolph Zukor) and theatre owners (Marcus Loew) to determine who would dominate.2. Actresses acting up - even (or especially?) in the 1920s. Plenty of booze, drugs, and bad behavior. Extramarital sex? Tut, Tut!3. The morality police - outraged "church ladies" trying to tone down what passed in those days for R- and X-rated movies. Imagine what they'd have to say about today's films. Since this was the era of Prohibition, however, I suppose a certain amount of outrage was inevitable.4. Anti-trust

concerns in the land of eternal sun.5. Fatty Arbuckle’s trials and tribulations.Lots of fascinating folks in this book. William Desmond Taylor himself wasn’t developed enough to be one of them.

I couldn’t walk away from it !!! A true-crime story very skilfully told in novel form. If like me you are a fan of factual stories about "Old Hollywood" and a whodunit then buy this book. Mr. Mann certainly did his homework. So much was going on in Hollywood at the time. Drugs, Drinking, Reformers,Greed,ambition, the birth of an industry and the problems created by those taking these things to extreme. Also by those who felt they were above it all. Mann used all of this to skillfully craft a portrait of the time. A most colorful backdrop for the story. Bravo! It’s not just another mediocre Hollywood word fest that in the end leaves the reader shaking their head skeptically. I was consumed and completely drawn in. I had to know all that the author came to realize. I was not disappointed. All details throughout are completely dealt with and wrapped up in the end. No stone left un-turned and no story line left hanging. An unsolved murder is Intriguing. This one hung out there for a long time. Perhaps partially solved. I now believe we know all we are ever going to know thanks to William Mann. I’m looking forward to the flicker :) ..

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