Although you may get your moncy's worth from the De Laurentis
Entertainment Group's lavish cpic,
"Tal-Pan" (R), it is doubtful that the
producer will ever recoup what must
have been an enormous investment.
"Tal-Pan' is spectacular but disappointing as it fails to achieve its
lotty goal of adapting James Clavell's novel for the screen. The novcl's scope and richness provide a stoty far too complex for a two-hour
lim. The great success of Clavell's
"Shogan" — his vast narrative of
leth-century Japan — was, in part, 16th-century Japan — was, in part, due to the considerable length of the TV miniseries.
Of course there is always a subjective issue when favorite or famous

books are adapted for the screen. We bemoan the fact that Hollywood can't film the images the novel stimulated in our heads.

But a film is a tilm and a novel is a novel and never the twain shall meet—at least not as exact translations of one another. A novel is "adapted" for the screen, not "translated," and adaptation involves many changes. Filmmakers face the difficult process of physically visualizing and recording on celluloid complex ideas and scenery that are easily described in writing.

CLAVELL'S "Tai-Pan" paints huge portraits of the Orient, the Opi-um Wars and the British gunboat di-



Joan Chen is May-May, Chinese concubine of Dick Struan, an early British leader in China trade, played by Bryan Brown, in "Tal-Pan."



plomacy, which led to the establishment of Hong Kong as a British Crown Colony in the 1840. The British flag followed its traders, and they are the centerpiece of novel and film.

Dirk Struan (Bryan Brown) takes the lead in establishing British trade with his arch-rival, Tyler Brock (John Stanton), close behind. Their personal and professional rivalries are at the core of "Tai-Pan."

Brock's prevented, sadistic son, Gorth (Bill Leadbitter), eventually wins the friendship of Straun's kind-ty, religious son, Cultum (Tim Guinec), who has come out to Hong Kong after the death of his mother and sisters from the plague in Glas-gow.

and sisters from the plague in Glas-gow.
Gorth falls in love with Brock's daughter. Tess '(Kyrn Sedgwick), which, quite obviously, complicates matters. What seemed quite reasonable in the book appears contrived on Illm. To further confuse the scene, Dirk Struan has a son, Gordon (Russell Wong), by a former Chinese mistress. As well, he has a current Chinese mistress, May-May (Joan Chen).

Chinese mistress, May-May (Joan Then).
Then there's Dirk's friend, Aristotie Quance (Norman Rodway), who lives on a floating Chinese house of prostitution, except when this wife (Barbara Keogh) catches up with him. The hage cast also includes the entire European commandy in Hong Chinese who regularly enter and leave the narrative.

IT TAKES the first 20 or so minutes to get into the flow of this complex story but once you do, things flow fairly well and the richness of the story is worth the effort. What diminishes "Tai-Pan" more than plot complications are the ways in which the film trivializes and romanticizes

a complicated story of human greed and passion.

The complex relationships among those who love and hate Dirk Struan are represented by banal dialogue—and the properties of the properties of the properties of the structure of the properties of th

ness.
The key scene (and fight) in which
Struan successfully transports 1.2
million British pounds in silver down
a pirate-infested river has none of
the tension and all of the contrived
nonsense of Hollywood fantasy, it
just looks easy. There is no real conflict with that boatload of easily
disselled olirates.

flict with that boatload of easily dispelled pirates.

The Hollywood fantasy of "Tal-Pan" is misplaced in this listorie romance and leads to an ending at cross-purposes. The film's style demands a conventional, happy Hollywood conclusion. Such is not the case in Clavel's book. Forcing these two opposites together in the film leads to an inance conclusion with all appeal of a TV sit-com rerun.

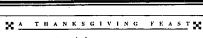
peal of a TV sil-com rerun.

BUT ALL IS not lost. The film is very attractive and quite pleasant to view. The speciacular, scene vistas and the excellent photography (Jack Cardiff) are worth the trip to your local theater. The expensive location production in China pays off visually as do the spectacular special effects. Those who like flamboyant swash-bucklers and don't mind a fair amount of graphic violence and nudity will probably enjoy "Tal-Pan."



Lin Tse-Hau (seated) is the Imperial who bans oplum trade in "Tal-Pan," vell's international best-selling novel.







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clarification

Tickets for the concert by Orot Haschuna at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield are priced at \$4 for general admission, \$2 for students and seniors.

Orot Haschuna (Lights of the The concert is sponsored by the Neighborhood) is a 13-member sing-

ing troupe of Israeli young people. The members represent six of Israel's Project Renewal nelghborhoods. Project Renewal is a multiyear plan to improve the lives of Israel's immigrant population through a special partnership with world Jewry.

Two of the performers are from Ramia, Detroit's sister city in Israel.

Through Project Renewal, Ram-la's library, senior citizens center and dental clinic all have been mod-ernized and maintained.

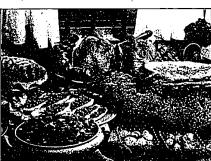
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