

# Fun, adventure in Rudyard Kipling tale

By CAROL HASKIN  
Christmas is the season of good will, Santa and movie extravaganzas, and a new crop of the latter was released at neighborhood theaters last week. Christmas releases are usually big, lavish and long-awaited. They've been getting advance publicity since late summer so that by the time they finally make it to the screen on Christmas day, expectations are running pretty high. It follows that Christmas reviews tend to get lukewarm replies for not being quite as awesome as they had promised.

"THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING," for example, is being billed as "Rudyard Kipling's epic of splendor, spectacle and high adventure." Expectations of that magnitude can prove a real handicap to a generally entertaining film such as this one.

"The Man Who Would Be King" teams Michael Caine and Sean Connery in a sort of "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid Find Lost Horizons" with "Gunga Din" overtones.

Director John Huston adapted the film from a Rudyard Kipling tale about two scapegrace British ex-soldiers who decide to make their fortunes by conquering the remote country of Kafiristan, untouched by civilization since it was last visited by a white man — Alexander the Great in 325 B.C.

Through an odd combination of events, the Kafiristanis come to regard Connery as a god — the son of Alexander — which brings him a trove of gold and jewels left behind by his "father" 2200 years earlier. But the sacrilegious pretense eventually leads to ruin for the con-

querors — Kipling's allegory for the fate of the British colonial effort.



**HUSTON SETS** the tone for the bizarre story in the opening moments of the film when the audience is led through a marketplace whose merchants are the snake charmers, scorpion launters and other showmen of Eastern mysticism.

Here the film is impressive. The semi-delirium of the irrescapable yellow Indian heat is transferred to the whirling showmen and to the staggering, sinister figure of Caine, who has come to relate his story to an astounded and somewhat frightened Kipling (Christopher Plummer).

Unfortunately, the eerie introduction degenerates into a somewhat dull midsection uncomformably akin to grade B adventure "thrillers", in which Caine and Connery brazen their way over seemingly insurmountable natural obstacles a bit too thickly to be believed.

After exploring the subject of man's brutality in a series of native slaughtering and a few polo games in which heads are substituted for the ball, Huston manages to rescue the film with a powerful (albeit expected) ending reminiscent of Poe. Connery and Caine carry the

main portion of the film with a mixture of humor, sentiment and backslaps against the wall camaraderie in the New-Man-Redford mold. As a scheming duo, they are as likeable a couple of ne'er-do-wells as one is likely to meet in Imperial India. For Caine the role is a familiar one, but Connery, out of Bon-Jaggs is surprisingly good as the dulleh Danny Draxot who grows into his risky role.

In bookend appearances, Plummer anchors Caine's incredible story to the authenticity represented by Kipling, complete with pith helmet and full moustache.

"The Man Who Would Be King" is certainly no epic, nor is it particularly splendid or spectacular. It is an absorbing and entertaining retelling of an excellent story that, offered without pretensions, is well worth an evening.

## Film earns CINE award

Will A. Lawson, a Birmingham resident and assistant manager of the Radio-Television Department at Greenfield Village, accepted a CINE Golden Eagle Award for the village during the recent Annual Award Banquet of the Council on International Non-Theatrical Events in Washington, D.C.

The award was for the film, "Greenfield Village Remembers a Country Fair," for which Lawson was producer-director-editor. Presenting the award was James G. Damon, president of CINE.

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