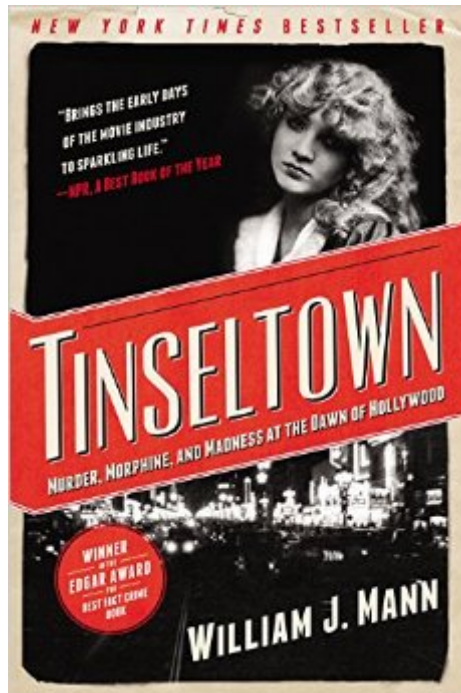


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# Tinseltown: Murder, Morphine, And Madness At The Dawn Of Hollywood



## Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller Edgar Award winner for Best Fact Crime *The 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 America's new favorite pastime, and one of the nation's largest industries. Never before had a medium possessed such power to influence. Yet Hollywood's glittering ascendancy was threatened by a string of headline-grabbing tragedies—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 him—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 prime—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 powers—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 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." The preceding blurb for this book is fairly accurate except for "untold Hollywood story". The murder of silent film director William Desmond Taylor (né William Deane Tanner) has been told before, but I doubt if many people have heard it unless they are into true crime and early Hollywood. Sidney Kirkpatrick's book *A Cast of Characters* in many ways presents the same story, but this book is in my opinion is better. Better how, you might ask? This book, while based on fact, takes a true story and blends it with a story of early Hollywood and other sensationalistic sad stories and comes off as factual with overtones of a really compelling work of fiction. The victim in short order, does a disappearing act on wife and child and assumes a new identity in sunny LA where nothing is dark or distasteful except its residents. He becomes a prominent director in the burgeoning film industry, gains a certain level of respectability and prominence until he turns up with a bullet hole in his cold corpse in his LA home. The cast of characters include a virginal movie heroine on the ascendency of what seemed to be a promising career, a drug addled screen comedienne of note, a stage mother, a shady butler, and many more disreputable types hiding in shadows or behind big desks at the studios. The author William Mann is an excellent writer and researcher. I can personally attest to this because I've read his other books and that's precisely why I grabbed *Tinseltown* up when offered by Vine.

Such authors as Sidney D. Kirkpatrick (via the research of King Vidor), Robert Giroux, Charles Higham, and other writers through crime compendia and, at least, one graphic novel have all professed to "solving" this unsolved murder. One of the few settled truths of this celebrated case is that it is as cold a case as one could ever imagine. Contrary to "investigative" journalism braggadocio, no yellowing document implicating any one as the killer has been discovered in a dusty file cabinet situated in a forgotten, walled-off room. Moreover, no person will be found who had any connection to the case, because they're all cold in their graves. You could, of course, visit a few, such as William Deane-Tanner, aka William Desmond Taylor, at Hollywood Forever Cemetery, a wonderful place, but they are in no condition to speak with you. Nearly everything connected to this case has to be labelled with modifiers, such as "supposedly," "allegedly," and "reportedly," but seldom "actually." The police investigation was desultory and bordering on incompetent. Studio

personnel were allowed to walk freely through Mr. Taylor's bungalow, a crime scene, and supposedly tampered with anything that could prove embarrassing to the company. But, again, one can't really distinguish between fact and myth (in its colloquial usage) in this case. One "fact" tossed facilely about is that Mr. Taylor was a homosexual, who employed his cook/butler/houseboy, Peavey, to scout Westlake (now MacArthur) Park for young boys for his sexual pleasures. There is absolutely no proof Mr. Taylor was a homosexual anymore than Mabel Normand was a cocaine "addict.

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