B7420 A BRIGHT SHINING LIE (USA, 5/30/1998) [TV]

Credits: director/writer, Terry George; story, Neil Sheehan.
Cast: Bill Paxton, Eric Bogosian, Donal Logue, Amy Madigan.
Summary: Biographical film set in the US and Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. The story of LTC John Paul Vann (Paxton) and his work as a military and civilian advisor in Vietnam over a ten year period (1962-72) until his death in an accidental helicopter crash. As a military advisor, Vann attempted to fight corruption in the Vietnamese army, recognizing the need to build trust among the Vietnamese peasantry. When his recommendations were ignored by the U.S. military, he exposed falsified battle reports and other deceptions to a New York Times reporter, effectively ending his military career. As the war escalated, however, Vann returned to Vietnam as a civilian advisor under Nixon's "Vietnamization" program, ending as the de facto commander of Vietnamese forces in the successful defense of the Central Highlands during the 1972 Easter Offensive. The film also examines Vann's character flaws, the chief of these being his adulterous nature and affairs with Vietnamese women which resulted in a forced marriage to a Vietnamese schoolgirl whom he had gotten pregnant.


———. “U.S. soldier is ‘Bright shining lie’ in HBO film” Seattle times (May 24, 1998), TV, p. 37.


Jicha, Tom. “War wounds: Fact-based HBO movie reflects the disaster that was Vietnam in the career of one Army officer.” Sun-sentinal [Fort Lauderdale, Fl.] (May 30, 1998), p. 3E.


King, Susan. “A soldier’s story.” Los Angeles times (May 24, 1998), TV times, p. 3.


Marshall, Alex. “The war comes home: He is remembered as a hero in a war that made no sense, a voice of reason amid the gunfire in Vietnam. However, attempts to chronicle the life of Lt. Col. John Paul Vann, a Norfolk native, have been met with controversy and outrage.” Virginia-pilot [Norfolk] (May 30, 1998), p. E1.


Molloy, Joanna (see under Rush, George)


Rollins, Peter C. “HBO’s new/old lies in the film version of Neil Sheehan’s A bright shining lie” H-Net (Michigan State Univ.) [printout 8/19/98]
“HBO’s version of Neil Sheehan’s epic: Old wine in new bottles?”


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