

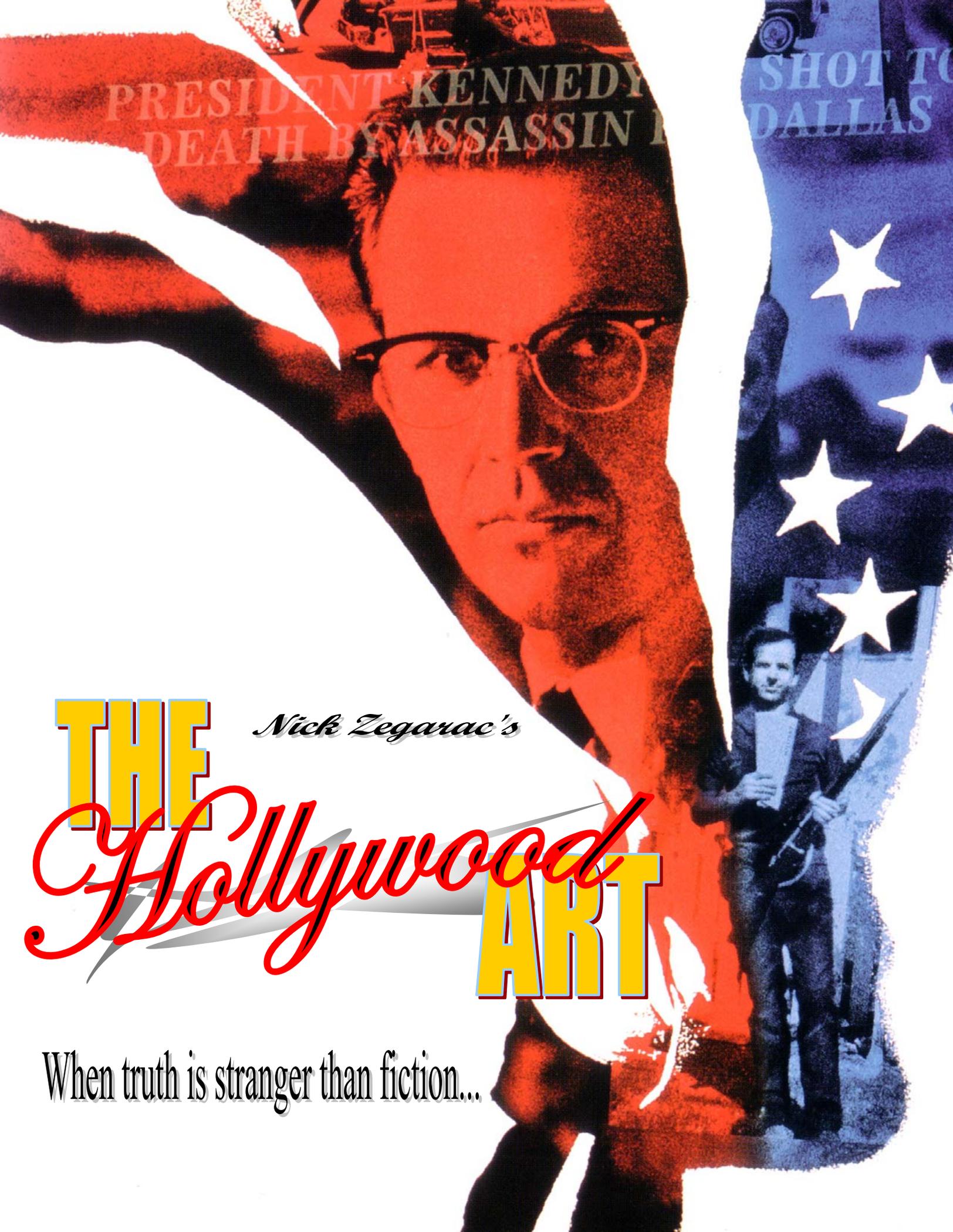
PRESIDENT KENNEDY  
DEATH BY ASSASSIN

SHOT TO  
DALLAS

*Nick Zegarac's*

THE  
*Hollywood*  
ART

When truth is stranger than fiction...



# When Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction...

Behind Oliver Stone's J.F.K. (1991)

by *Nick Zegarac*

**Disclaimer:** For those new to **The Hollywood Art**, this is not a political series. It is a repository for history and content relating to great motion pictures of the past and present and, on a more personal note, is dedicated to those iconic figures of the silver screen which have brought some special focus and meaning into its' author's life.

However, the following article involves Oliver Stone's movie **J.F.K** (1991), a film and a topic that begs further understanding of the actual events that took place before and after the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963. It is my sincere hope that history will not be quick to judge this article as a further contribution in support of mere conspiracy theories, lone gunman mythologies or even fictionalized urban legends that continues to surround that assassination.

What follows then is a retrospective of history itself – some will undoubtedly argue, as clouded through the lens of a propagandist film maker, but that this author would suggest derive far more credence, respect and investigation than history has had the time or interest to make clear to the American public to date.

It is in support of deriving clarity from the facts as presented in Oliver Stone's film and through a sincere investigation of other informational and archival materials made available elsewhere, and with the humble and utmost esteem and reverence extended to the Kennedy family, for what is undoubtedly a far more intimate - rather than national - tragedy, that this article appears.

Respectfully,

**Nick Zegarac**



# A DARK DAY IN DALLAS

## AND THE DARKNESS THAT FOLLOWED IT

***“J.F.K. – while it’s certainly skillfully put together, I would never deny that, I don’t regard as art. It’s propaganda!”***

**– David Wicker; New York Times**

Director Oliver Stone sought to poke hot needles into an open wound of the American psyche when he undertook a re-investigation of the Kennedy assassination with **J.F.K** (1991) an opus magnum of conspiracy theories contrary to the findings divulged in 26 volumes of the Warren Commission Report. Yet, perhaps even Stone was unprepared for the litany of counter-propaganda lobbied by the liberal media against both the film and his own personal credibility, which wanted to discredit the project even before a final continuity script had been approved.

While Stone diligently launched his own intense cinematic critique he was besought by a rapid fire series of disdainful interviews that, in hindsight, seem to parallel the overwhelming attempt made by the media several decades earlier to dismantle the reputation of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison – the hero in Stone’s docu-drama and the only man to ever bring formal charges against the men he believed were involved in the conspiracy to assassinate the President.

***“It is essential,”*** said Jim Garrison in an interview, ***“that the American people get off their behinds and do something about the murder of Jack Kennedy...fascism will come to America in the guise of ‘national security’.”***

In the criminal investigation Garrison eventually launched three years after the assassination against Louisiana businessman Clay Shaw, more time was spent by the liberal media analyzing Mr. Garrison – both the man and his motives – than was eventually expended on the glaring loopholes Garrison presented to the grand jury regarding lack of coverage by government agencies and the commission formed, that failed to illuminate a thorough critique of background events that led to that fateful November day in Dallas.

At one point, prior to the Garrison trial, NBC’s Walter Sheridan was leaking information on the district attorney’s whereabouts and criminal findings to the U.S. state department. Sheridan’s subsequent televised report on Garrison exhibited no subtly or media objectivity, but was instead a gross hatchet job on Garrison’s credibility as a prosecutor.

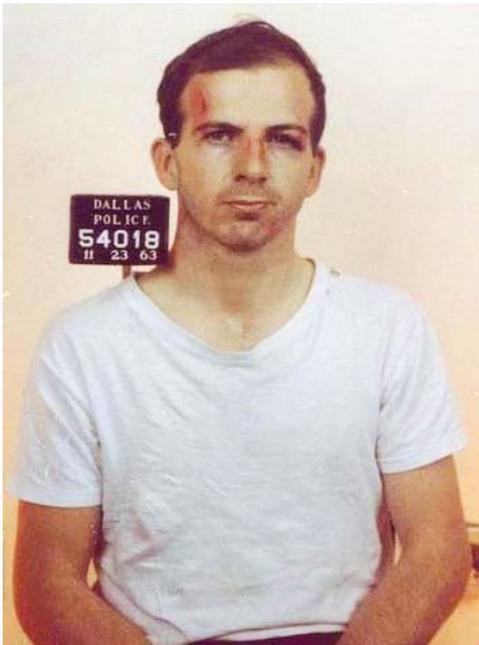




(Previous page – the optimistic start of the Dallas motorcade. Texas in general and Dallas in particular had always harbored a certain level of contained hostility toward the Kennedy Presidency, a note of distinction that made the removal of the bullet proof ‘bubble top’ from the President’s limo even more of a curiosity; especially after an FBI telex message surfaced nearly a month earlier that forewarned a “militant radical fundamentalist organization may attempt to assassinate the President on his proposed trip to Dallas.”

Above: four still frames taken from the grainy 8mm footage shot by amateur photographer, Abraham Zapruter – a bystander on the grassy knoll in front of the approaching motorcade. Top left: President Kennedy waves to the cheering crowd. Top right: The President clutches his neck after being wounded with the first of four likely shots taken in Dealey Plaza. Bottom right: Governor John Connally, in the front seat, is wounded in his wrist by a fragment of another bullet. Bottom right: the fatal head shot. This frontal view of the President’s right side being blow off proves that the fatal shot that murdered Kennedy did not come from the Texas State Book Depository, located to the rear of the motorcade.

Left: Shortly after Jim Garrison’s public investigation into the assassination was launched, NBC’s Walter Sheridan led the charge to indict Garrison’s tactics on nothing more than speculative research which in time, would prove to be erroneous and unfounded. Bottom: the presumed lone gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald as he appeared in his Dallas police mug shot. )



Sheridan publicly accused Garrison of bribing and drugging witnesses in his attempt to prove his case. In his own defense, Garrison stood firm, saying ***“In over five years of office, I have never had a single case reversed because of the use of improper methods-a record I’ll match with any other D. A. in the country.”***

Recently, more startling evidence has directly linked Walter Sheridan to Herbert Miller, a man who acted as an intermediary for the accused, Clay Shaw. Shaw’s attorneys were later implicated in an FBI memorandum sent to NBC’s New York offices that suggests a plausible assassination scenario on Garrison’s life was also, at one point, seriously considered.

***I only wish the press would allow our case to stand or fall on its merits in court. It appears that certain elements of the mass media have an active interest in preventing this case from ever coming to trial at all and find it necessary to employ against me every smear device in the book.***

– Jim Garrison

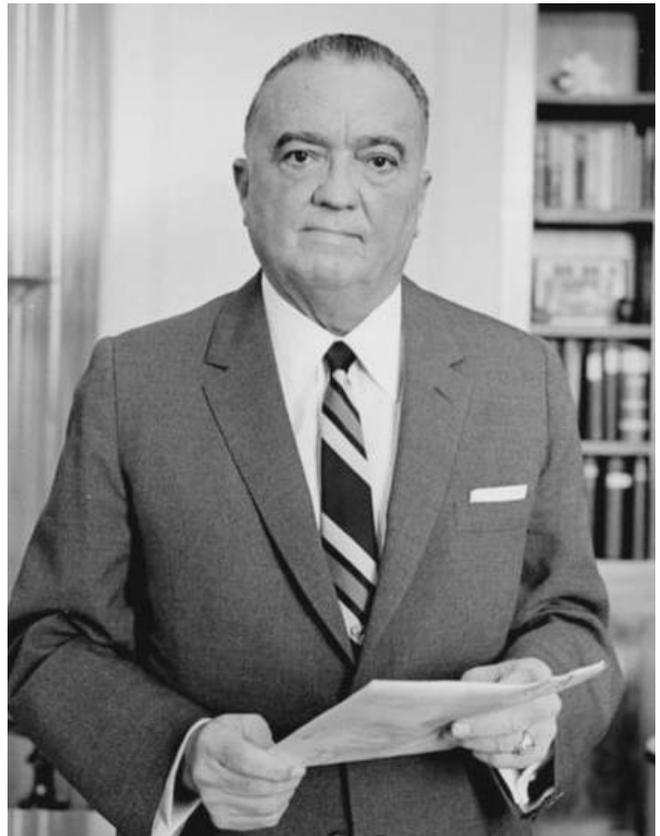
What Mr. Garrison uncovered in piecing together his investigation, mainly from eye witness accounts from credible witnesses – some of who mysteriously died just prior to trial - was a mountain of evidence against both the U.S. federal government and John Kennedy’s successor to the Oval Office; Lyndon B. Johnson. Those who wished to believe Garrison’s speculations put forth at trial found much more than probable cause – unlike the hypotheses made in the Warren Commission volumes - that President Kennedy’s named assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was NOT the lone gunman, or even and quite possibly, directly involved.

***“The thing that I am most concerned about,”*** wrote FBI director J. Edgar Hoover at the time of the assassination, ***“...is having something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin.”***

Ultimately, the Warren Commission proved to be a gross satire of the truth. Even those closely involved in its publication now concede that its 26 volumes represent a cacophony of incomplete records, falsified testimonies, ignored autopsy findings and most damning of all – CIA and FBI records of eye witness testimony to the contrary of their own findings, most of which were never followed up.

At the crux of the Commission’s deductions there emerged a fanciful theory put forth as irrefutable fact by then junior senator Arlen Specter: **The Magic Bullet Theory** - one man shooting through dense foliage from a sixth floor window with a defective Carcano rifle. With world class precision in 5.6 seconds, this lone man fired three fatal shots into the Presidential motorcade. Although panned today as purely theoretical, **The Magic Bullet Theory** was almost universally embraced by the American press and the public at the time.

(Top: Jim Garrison as he appeared at the time of his trial against the men he believed were responsible for the Presidential assassination. Garrison became a figure of fun in the media, a Southern caricature seeking higher office. Middle: FBI man - J. Edgar Hoover, who publicly ordered an investigation, then quietly did not probe the Warren Commission’s results or make inquiry into its many loopholes and omissions. Bottom: one of many gruesome autopsy photos taken at Parkland Memorial Hospital.)

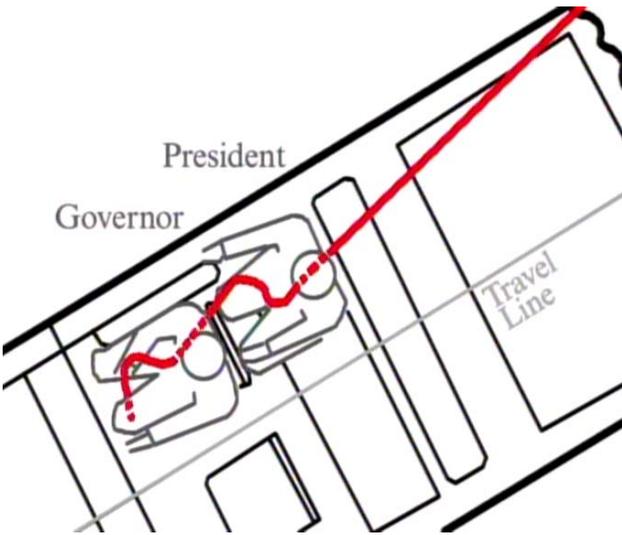




According to its grossly inaccurate premise, the theory is that one shot passed through President Kennedy's neck and head, causing all of Governor Connally's superficial wounds (chest, right wrist and left thigh) in the process. Connally never embraced this theory, but clung to the notion that Oswald had been the lone gunman, despite the fact that an 8-mm home movie taken by bystander Abraham Zapruder clearly identified the fatal headshot from a much lower trajectory ahead of the Presidential motorcade. The book depository, in fact, was to the motorcade's rear.

Ironically, Hoover's objectives to 'convince' the public otherwise were met with little to no outward consternation. The American people's thought-numbing unwillingness to believe in any conspiracy of unseen forces operating at the highest levels of their own government and under the guise of 'national security,' made concealment of the truth nearly effortless; nursing the public's fear, disgust and loathing onto the commission's findings of a lone assassin – atypical from the rest of society and perfectly in tune with its own psychological need for immediate resolution and closure.

The 'who, 'what' and 'why' of subsequent investigations put forth by Jim Garrison in his public trial of Clay Shaw, and carried over into Oliver Stone's cinematic summation have assured both the public detractors and supporters of conspiracy theories of one essential fact; that J.F.K. is indeed, the story that will not go away!



(Top: Governor Connally recovers from his wounds with his wife at his side. Middle: a diagram illustrating the trajectory of The Magic Bullet Theory. Bottom left: an unidentified Dallas forensic expert holds up the rifle Oswald is presumed to have used in the assassination. Powder residue tests conducted that same day and that later vanished from Dallas Police records initially confirmed that the gun had not been fired. Below: Lyndon Johnson takes the oath of office aboard Air Force One as it departs Love Field; flanked by Lady Bird – left – and Jacqueline Kennedy - right.)



# PATSIES

The enigma of Lee Harvey Oswald and lingering questions surrounding Jack Ruby

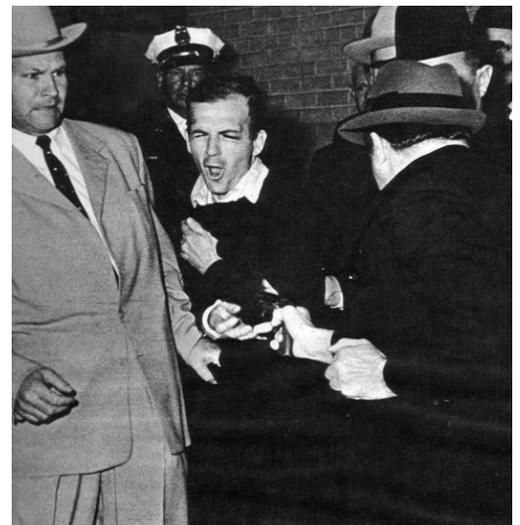
***“Anyone would have to be a fool nowadays to dismiss conspiracies.”*** – Robert MacNeil

On November 22, 1963, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy met with a most untimely end in Dealey Plaza. Almost instantly, local authorities, the FBI and the CIA sought to incriminate a lonely man working on the third floor of Dallas’ School Book Depository as their assassin; a man who in death, as in life, would prove to be so much more fascinating than the proposed ‘patsy’ put forth and supported by the Warren Commission investigation.

What is known as fact now is that Lee Harvey Oswald was part of covert U.S. military intelligence working to infiltrate a squadron of radical Cuban exiles in the spring of 1960. Oswald’s learning of the Russian language while still a foot soldier in the Civil Air Patrol overseen by David William Ferrie seems to suggest that Oswald’s prior activities for Uncle Sam included a now perceived faux defection to the Soviet Union in the early ‘60s; a timed departure that shuffled him to a radio factory in Minsk (where he met Marina), afforded him the highest level of security clearance and provided for an expense account the likes of which have never been fully clarified or disclosed. The net result of Oswald’s perceived defection may also have directly contributed to the downing of Francis Gary Powers U2 spy flight over Russia on May 1, 1960.

For years, the conventional explanation for Power’s capture was that a surface-to-air missile had been launched as a counter offensive against U.S. CIA intelligence, even though the plane was virtually unassailable by conventional weapons. This simple explanation comes with its own litany of skepticism, not the least of which is Powers’ miraculous survival from what otherwise would most certainly have been a fatal mid-air collision and crash. Yet, as a direct result of this infraction inside Russian air space by the U.S. military, the peace summit orchestrated by the Eisenhower administration failed.

(Right: perhaps, the most bizarre ‘who done it’ of them all. Top: Oswald poses with his rifle in his backyard, a photo eventually snapped up by Life Magazine for their cover story on the assassination. Middle: head shots of Dallas Mafioso Jack Ruby and David Ferrie. Bottom: before a live group of spectators, television cameras and virtual army of Dallas police detectives, Jack Ruby publicly assassinated Lee Harvey Oswald. To date, no one has ever been able to sufficiently explain either Ruby’s motives for the killing or exactly how he managed to bring a loaded weapon into the police basement garage undetected.)





Prior to his staged Russian defection, Lee Harvey Oswald had been drafted by a retired ONI operative, Guy Bannister, along with David Ferrie into a private war in support of an all-out Cuban invasion. **Operation Mongoose**, as it eventually came to be known, was privately funded by the U.S. government; a military black-ops initiative establishing a series of covert training camps throughout the United States and employing mercenaries dedicated to a planned assassination of Cuban dictator, Fidel Castro.

As part of his superficial involvement in Operation Mongoose, Oswald participated in a staged pro-Castro leaflet distribution on Canal St. in New Orleans in the summer of 1961. However, the base of his operations came from a makeshift facility at 544 Camp Street – not-so-coincidentally the same building that housed Bannister's private investigations firm formally addressed at 531 Lafayette St.

In the months leading up to the Kennedy assassination, the enigma of Lee Harvey Oswald was largely built up through a series of misinterpretations, misconceptions and complete falsehoods later published in the Warren Commission as cold hard facts. These 'facts' placed Oswald in multiple locations at the same time to help support and sustain his complicity as an overt Marxist/Leninist. In fact, sightings of Oswald were as far reaching as a Mexican brothel frequented by Cuban patriots, and, a voter registration drive in Clinton Louisiana where, not coincidentally, Clay Shaw and David Ferrie were also sited.

What is particularly disturbing about the Oswald legacy immediately following the Kennedy assassination is how quickly he was written off as a liability by those same unseen forces who he had diligently served.

Despite glaring inconsistencies in testimony, provided by witnesses who readily reported seeing gun smoke and hearing shots coming from the grassy knoll directly in front of the President's motorcade, the mythology of a lone crazed assassin had already gripped the media's fascination moments after the President's murder had taken place.

(Left: two views of a grieving nation. Top: the caisson carrying President Kennedy's body makes its way to the State Capital Building. Bottom: the famous shot of John Jr. saluting his fallen father. Mrs. Kennedy is flanked at left by daughter Caroline, brother-in-laws, Ted Kennedy and Peter Lawford and, at right, Robert Kennedy.)



Witnesses who claimed the shots came from the grassy knoll were discredited and/or intimidated by men posing as FBI agents on foot in Dealey Plaza – even though all secret service personnel accounted for in Dallas that day were nowhere except in immediate proximity to the Kennedy motorcade. Yet, within hours of the assassination, Oswald was booked for another murder; that of Dallas policeman J.D. Tippit – despite the fact that shell casing and powder residue tests conducted on Oswald clearly indicate that he had not fired a weapon on November 22.

By noon the following afternoon, after an intense twelve hour interrogation of Oswald for which no known notes survive, Dallas police had assessed Oswald's guilt for both Tippit and the President's murder. This 'official' mythology was snapped up by the media and readily published as fact before the legal precedence of due process and a public trial could determine *'beyond a reasonable doubt'* either Oswald's guilt or innocence.

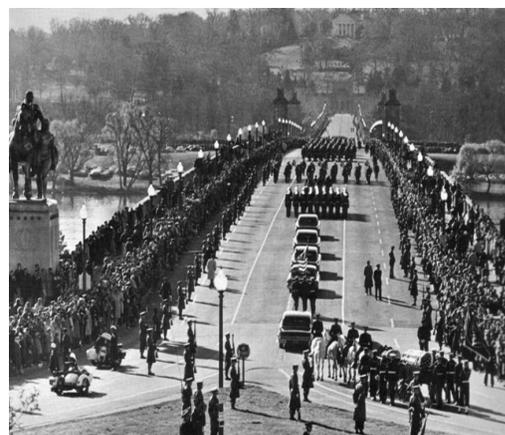
...and then, of course, there was Jack Ruby.

Born Jacob Rubenstein to Polish Orthodox Jews, Ruby was a bag man for the Dallas Mafia with various ties to both organized crime (including the Campisi crime syndicate) and the Dallas police; a man who had met Oswald socially in the preceding months, and many speculate – even years – before he fired the ill-fated shot that killed Lee Harvey Oswald on Nov. 24, 1963 as he was being led by a prison escort through the basement of the downtown Dallas police precinct.

The motives for Jack Ruby's public execution of Lee Harvey Oswald have been heavily debated; ranging in broad speculations; that he was operating under direct Mafia orders and/or government objectives that sought to silence the man set up for the Kennedy assassination. To delve more deeply into any of these speculative theories without proof is foolhardy entertainment at best. However, to his dying day, Jack Ruby did more than merely suggest that not all of the facts pertaining to his situation had been resolved.

Ruby, who first received the death sentence for Oswald's murder (it was later overturned under the premise that Ruby had not received a fair trial) - was repeatedly denied either oral or written pleas by the Warren Commission to tell his part of the story under oath until Ruby's sister, Eileen made it known to the press that both she and Ruby wished to have their statements entered as part of the public record.

**(Top: a rare photograph of the back of the Presidential limo with Jackie Kennedy's bouquet lying on the seat. Almost immediately following the assassination, Lyndon Johnson order the car rebuilt and had John Connelly's bloody suit sent to the cleaners. Middle and bottom: two views of the Presidential caisson on route to the Capital Building.)**



Reluctantly, Earl Warren and other members of the commission flew to Dallas where they met with Ruby, but emphatically refused to honor his request to be taken to Washington and placed into protective custody.

***“A whole new form of government is going to take over this country,”*** Ruby insisted, ***“...and I know I won’t live to see you another time”***; prophetic words for the man who claimed to have been injected with the cancer gene in order to silence his truth. Ruby eventually died in prison, but of a pulmonary embolism on January 3, 1967.

## **STRANGE TALES TO TELL**

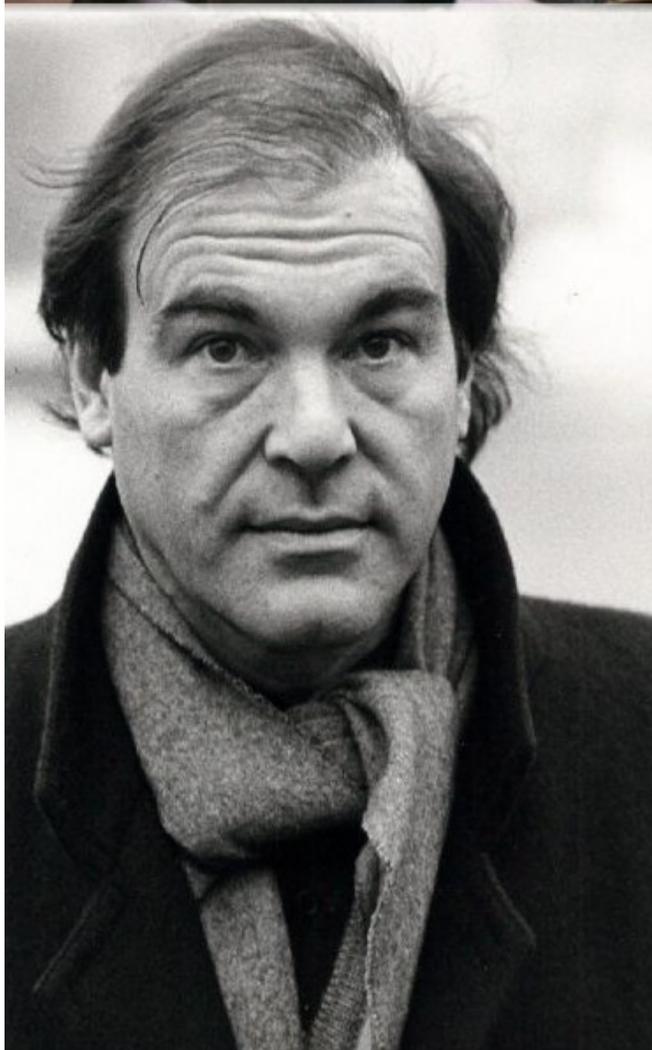
***The CIA could not face up to the American people and admit that its former employees had conspired to assassinate the President; so from the moment Kennedy’s heart stopped beating, the Agency attempted to sweep the whole conspiracy under the rug.***

- Jim Garrison.

On Nov. 22 1963, deaf mute Ed Hoffman was just one of several hundred witnesses to the murder of President John Kennedy. The event left him so completely shell shocked that for days afterward Mr. Hoffman could not bring himself to relay the story he had witnessed with his own eyes. Hoffman eventually managed to correlate what other eye witnesses like Jean Hill and S.M Harlen had already disclosed – though his story and that of the others was carefully omitted from the Warren Commission’s public findings.

In essence, Hoffman was overlooking the plaza when the shots in front of the Presidential motorcade rang out. He claims to have seen the man who fired the fatal head shot from behind the fence in Dealey Plaza. Hoffman further supports that with paralytic disbelief he observed as the man behind the fence casually disassembled his rifle, placed it into a large suitcase and then handed that suitcase to another waiting man.

(Right top: Jim Garrison as he appeared during the trial of Clay Shaw. There was nothing or no one that could impugn Garrison’s track record as a District Attorney. Right bottom: Director Oliver Stone in a still taken on the set of JFK. From the onset, controversy would dog both Stone and his film, the latter occasionally disappearing en route from Dallas to LA.)





(Down to the last detail: Stone insisted on authenticity in recreating virtually every aspect of the 1960s for his film. His attention to detail is evident in casting. Top left: Tommy Lee Jones as Clay Shaw. Left bottom: Clay Shaw. Top center: Oswald's defense attorney, Dean Andrews. Bottom center: the late John Candy as Dean Andrews. Top right: Oliver Stone checks his script for continuity changes in Dealey Plaza. Bottom right: recreating those fateful moments in Dealey Plaza for the film. Below: Ed Hoffman reenacts the moment he witnessed a man disassemble a rifle from behind the fence on the grassy knoll that was never entered into the Warren Report. Bottom: CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite makes the painful announcement that President Kennedy has died. )

This second individual physically removed the weapon from the premises before any of the Dallas police or other witnesses had a chance to climb the grassy knoll. Hoffman's testimony was completely ignored by the FBI, presumably because they were pressed for time and could not see the validity of conducting an interrogation through sign language.

However, even more unsettling than Hoffman's account, along with the other post-assassination testimonies that began to plentifully surface at random in the years that followed, are the steady stream of obvious precursors to that fateful day. One of the most startling involves William Walter, a night clerk on duty inside the FBI headquarters in New Orleans who came to D.A. Jim Garrison while he was preparing his trial against Clay Shaw.

By then, Garrison had become a target of federal spying. His offices were bugged. Walter gave Garrison a copy of a Telex message that inadvertently implicates the FBI in the conspiracy and cover up prior to the actual assassination. The Telex reads, ***"Bureau has determined that a militant revolutionary group may attempt to assassinate President Kennedy on his proposed trip to Dallas Texas."***

After the assassination, Walters was ordered to get rid of all copies of





(More startling recreations with an all-star cast. Top left: a US military photo of Lee Harvey Oswald. Bottom left: Gary Oldman as Oswald. Top middle: Jack Ruby. Bottom middle: Brian Doyle-Murray as Jack Ruby. Top right: Kevin Bacon as gay prisoner, Willie O'Keefe. Oliver Stone received a litany of criticism for melding several of Garrison's actual eye-witness testimonies about the homosexual relationships Clay Shaw had with young men in New Orleans' Latin Quarter into this one fictional film characterization. Although as a character O'Keefe is a complete fabrication, the testimony he provides to the film's Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) is an amalgam of actual testimonies given at trial. Bottom right: Ed Asner as ONI operative, Guy Bannister. Left below: Jack Lemmon as Bannister's business associate and drinking buddy, Jack Martin. Bottom: Sissy Spacek as Garrison's wife, Elizabeth. A skeptic at the start, eventually Liz realizes that her husband is definitely on to something. The real Mrs. Garrison would never come to such a conclusion.)



the Telex, as it represented an obvious 'embarrassment' and lack of follow-up on such a high-profile matter. Giving the FBI the benefit of the doubt, their ignorance about the Telex does not explain why a mysterious direct order was issued for the localized protective ground services – that should have combined as a military presence for the Kennedy motorcade in Dallas on Nov. 22 – to stand down.

Yet, no story is perhaps more bizarre or indicative of a potential cover up and conspiracy than that relayed by Rose Cheramie – a woman who turned up inside Mousa General Hospital on Nov. 20, 1963, badly beaten, while claiming to have intimate knowledge of the assassination plans before the assassination had taken place.



En route to the State Hospital in Jackson Louisiana, Cheramie told Officer Francis Fruge that she had been traveling from Florida to Dallas to complete a drug deal for Jack Ruby with two anti-Castro Cubans. Functioning as a courier, Cheramie reported that at some point in their brief association the Cubans she was traveling with decided to ditch her on a back road to Galveston; throwing her from their moving car.

As Cheramie further relayed to Fruge, the men were not merely well informed of the pending assassination but were actually going to Dallas

to partake. Fruge attempted to clear up inconsistencies in Cheramie’s story and eventually was able to collaborate all of Cheramie’s information, right down to a meeting she had been privy to between Oswald and Jack Ruby at the Silver Slipper Lounge. Following the assassination, Fruge turned over his notes on the interview to Dallas police. Fruge also offered Cheramie as a potential witness in the ongoing FBI investigation, but neither the Dallas authorities nor the FBI were interested in what Cheramie had to say. She was never called to testify. Her body was discovered on a lonely road in 1965, the apparent victim of a hit and run.

## THICKENING BLOODLINES TANGLED WEBS

*“We have been operating a ‘murder incorporated in the Caribbean.’”*

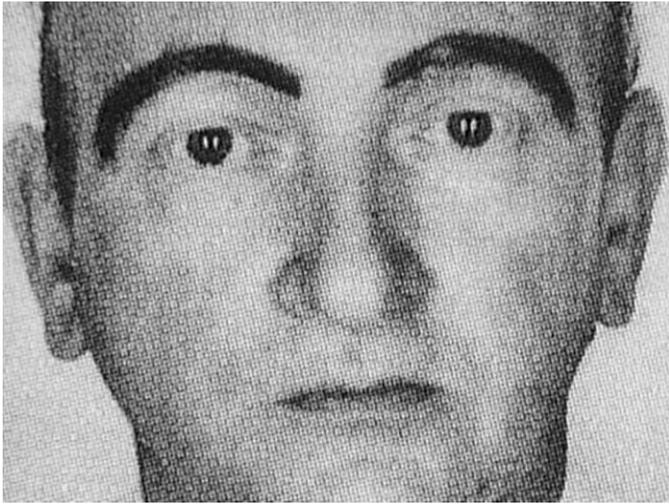
– Lyndon Johnson

During a 1969 interview with imminent media personality, Walter Cronkite, President Lyndon Johnson made several shocking revelations to the newsman, including the aforementioned quote. Johnson also hinted that some looming conspiracy theories of his day may not have been so far-fetched. These quotes were never televised in Cronkite’s subsequent interview because Johnson later recanted and politely asked Cronkite and CBS that his ‘impressions’ and ‘opinions’ not be misconstrued as ‘fact.’ His requests were honored.

However, in the spring of 1969, as D.A. Jim Garrison was beginning his trial of Clay Shaw there was no perceived shortage of co-conspirators involved with the Kennedy assassination. Garrison’s investigation had been thorough in uncovering such snippets as Jimmy Hoffa’s rather public declaration that he would have liked to firebomb Kennedy’s home, and, J. Edgar Hoover’s more subtle insecurities, fearing the vice grip of his Commander in Chief more than he frequently fretted over the government’s increasing involvement with the Mafia.

(Top: Lyndon B. Johnson’s Presidential photo. Few at the time could have even thought that he possessed any first hand knowledge of the JFK assassination. Two views of Pruitt Taylor Vince as train watch tower worker Lee Bowers, giving testimony in the film. Along with Ed Hoffman, the real Bowers always claimed that he had witnessed two men and some ‘commotion’ behind the fence on the grassy knoll at the time of the assassination. Bottom: Filmic Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) listens to eye witness Julia Ann Mercer (Jo Anderson) explain how the Warren Commission fabricated her testimony to suit their own ends.)





But what Garrison had not considered was that his eye witness testimonies, once seeming so solid and ready to come by, especially while his office had quietly searched for truths under the radar of government scrutiny, had since become difficult to obtain immediately following the published news of his investigation that had been leaked to the press through some illegal wire taps.



Eighteen potential witnesses who believed that they could identify the shooter(s) from the grassy knoll suddenly began to die or disappear. Some, like Karyn Kupcinet, were found murdered. Her killer(s) were never brought to justice. Others, like Jack Zangetti and Eddy Benavides were the 'victims' of 'accidental' gunshot wounds. Still, others like Maurice Gatlin, Lee Bowers and Jim Koethe were having their deaths explained away as accidental falls, bizarre shocks to the system and curious, though thoroughly unexplained 'blows to the neck.' Those who did not immediately perish were either bought off and/or vanished without a trace.



But perhaps the most inexplicably bizarre death to occur just days after news of Garrison's pending trial against Clay Shaw went public was that of David William Ferrie on February 22, 1967. Ferrie had been a pilot and defrocked Roman Catholic priest who suffered from a rare form of alopecia. A staunch anti-Castro militant, Ferrie supported a Cuban invasion and outwardly loathed President Kennedy for his refusal to provide air cover during the disastrous 1961 Bay of Pigs.



Bay of Pigs had been a Cold War relic of the Eisenhower administration. Outwardly, Kennedy supported it. Inwardly, he was its' reluctant participant. When he refused to provide air cover for the covert ground forces, the Cuban army – in anticipation of the coup – launched their counteroffensive; imprisoning and torturing its captors. Kennedy publicly blamed the CIA for the debacle – a move that infuriated those most closely associated with this plan of action.

(Top: a police mug shot of David Ferrie after an alleged homosexual rendezvous turned out to be a police bust. Ferrie suffered from various physical ailments including cancer. Middle: Ferrie's body is wheeled out of his New Orleans home. Ferrie died by swallowing a bottle of pills prescribed for an under-active thyroid condition that his doctor did not remember him having, nor did he recall writing the prescription for the medication that killed his patient. Middle: actor Joe Pesci as David Ferrie – the only one of the co-conspirators to actually show remorse for his actions. Bottom: Garrison (Costner) listens to Senator Russell Long (Walter Matthau) spin his theories about 'who' and 'how' the assassination was performed. In the film, it is this casual exchange that serves as the catalyst for Garrison launching his investigation.)

But Bay of Pigs also proved a defining moment in Kennedy's decision to splinter the CIA – a move he more clearly detailed with the aid of Colonel Fletcher Prouty and the drafting of National Security Action Memorandum No. 263, secretly published in Oct. of 1963. In essence, No. 263 ordered the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Viet Nam by Christmas, a direct threat to the military industrial complex who had enjoyed an engorged spending budget since the beginning of the Asian conflict.

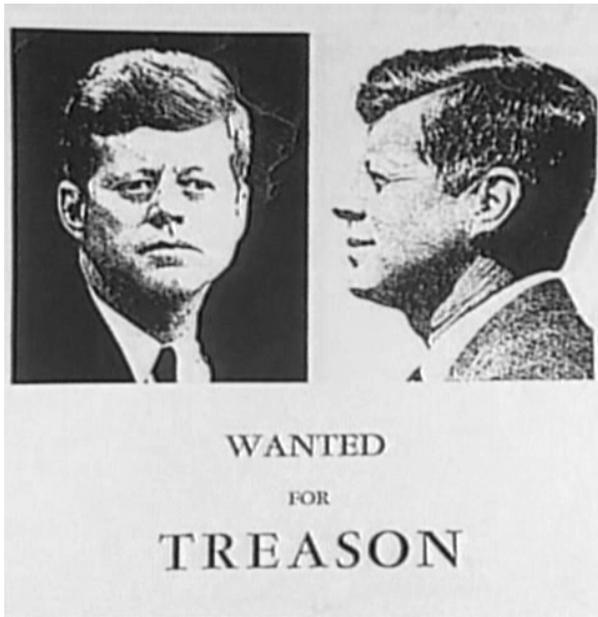
Meanwhile, CIA mob contacts Santo Trafficante and Johnny Rosselli - Dons desperate to regain control over their foundering casino empires in Cuba relinquished to the communist government with Castro's rise to power, were conscripted into the CIA's covert operations to kill Castro. On the other side of the world, mob boss Carlo Marcello – who had been deported from the U.S. to Guatemala was still in constant contact with Jack Ruby, and, it is rumored that perhaps Ruby's assassination of Oswald had come as a direct order from Marcello.

Into this mix of cloak and dagger, David Ferrie had been involved with Guy Banister's anti-Castro radicals. He knew Lee Harvey Oswald and Clay Shaw very well. Following an altercation between Banister and his associate Jack Martin, Martin made Ferrie's association with Banister and Oswald a matter of public record, even going so far as to suggest that Ferrie had hypnotized Oswald into committing the assassination himself. Curiously enough, Ferrie's library card was discovered on Oswald's person at the time of Oswald's incarceration for the President's murder.

Throughout his final days on earth, Ferrie was the only alleged participant in the presumed conspiracy to outwardly show any sort of remorse for his involvement. He very reluctantly agreed to divulge his information to the DA only after Garrison's exposure of the case made it virtually impossible for him to quietly disappear. But on February 22, 1967 Ferrie did just that; his body was discovered inside his apartment – dead of an apparent aneurysm caused by an overdose, and, leaving behind two very convoluted suicide notes.

As a result and in the final analysis, Garrison's trial was not so much hampered by inefficiencies, botched investigation tactics or recanted testimony as it was severely betrayed by a darker set of circumstances that sought to eliminate any and all plausible eye witness accounts.

(Right top: a 'Wanted' poster with Kennedy's likeness distributed by anti-Castro supporters after the disastrous Bay of Pigs fiasco. Middle: in a rare television interview in 1970, Fidel Castro denied any involvement in the Kennedy assassination, a theory that the real Garrison toyed with briefly. Bottom: the Dallas Book Depository, now a national museum.)



# COVERGENCE

– WHERE ART IMITATES LIFE

*“What kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana, being enforced on the world by American weapons of war. We must reexamine our own attitudes toward the Soviet Union. We must make the world safe for diversity. For in the final analysis, our most basic link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future...and we are all mortal.”*

Excerpt from President John F. Kennedy’s  
American University address  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1963

In 1966, Dr. Josiah Thompson attempted to negotiate a deal with Life Magazine for usage of several frames from the 8-mm home movie photographed by Abraham Zapruter for a book he was authoring about the Kennedy assassination. His request was firmly denied by Life Magazine and furthering his attempt to include a visual representation of the assassination (sketched in charcoal by an artist), Dr. Thompson was sued by Life for copyright infringement – an erroneous and obvious attempt to keep the film’s graphic account a continued public secret. Instead, a U.S. district court ruled in Thompson’s favor. Shortly thereafter the Zapruter film attained cult status with various copies and duplications readily turning up on the bootlegged market.

The Zapruter film plays a significant role in Oliver Stone’s filmic masterwork, J.F.K. In fact, it is at the crux of an elaborate trial sequence in which the film’s Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) presents a chronological breakdown of those brief but telling 343 frames of film footage. The real Jim Garrison had, in fact, subpoenaed Life for the Zapruter film at the time he went to trial against Clay Laverne Shaw.

Shaw was charged by Garrison as a co-conspirator in 1967. A prominent Louisiana businessman and founder of the Trade Mart to Latin America, whose prior military record included decorations by three nations, Shaw had admitted during his routine police interrogation to Officer Aloysius Habighorst that he

(Top: a portrait of JFK. Middle: Garrison’s assistant Lou Ivon (Jay O. Sanders) points to inconsistencies in the Warren Commission’s ‘lone gunman’ theory from the top floor of the Book Depository. Middle: a night of carousing at Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones, Joe Pesci, Kevin Bacon and an unidentified extra). Bottom: the real Clay Shaw holds up a copy of a newspaper declaring his innocence. During trial Shaw denied that he ever used the alias Clay Bertrand.)



had used the alias of Clay Bertrand; a name repeatedly involving David Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald, and one that readily appears in several volumes of the Warren Commission Report.

In fact, a man using the name Clay Bertrand employed lawyer Dean Andrews Jr. to straighten out incidents involving various gay young men convicted of selling themselves in New Orleans' Latin Quarter. Bertrand is also rumored to have contacted Andrews to arrange for Oswald's army discharge from the Marine Corps.

Though ultimately acquitted of all charges, the stain on Clay Shaw's public reputation was never entirely expunged; a blemish made even more obvious with former director of the CIA Richard Helms' 1979 testimony under oath that Clay Shaw had indeed been a CIA contact – an crucial tie-in that D.A. Garrison had uncovered during his prosecution of Shaw but that Shaw emphatically denied under oath.

Garrison eventually penned his own account of his investigation and the subsequent trial, entitled **On the Trail of the Assassins** – the book that serves as the grounding source for Oliver Stone's **J.F.K.** (1991). Those who were particularly outraged with Stone's perceived cheek in rehashing a thirty year old crime, readily dismissed the film as pure hokum wrapped inside Stone's own enigma for self-delusion reconstituted as fact. The Kennedy clan left the United States at the time of the film's premiere – presumably to avoid the hale storm of undo publicity that was sure to follow.

(Scenes from the film JFK, top: Bill Broussard (Michael Rooker) listens as Jim (Costner) and Lou discuss Guy Bannister's involvement. Middle: a pensive Lee Harvey Oswald (Gary Oldman) listens to a plot of execution being hatched in one of the film's many flashbacks. Middle: Jim assures his children that they are safe. Bottom: A disbelieving Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones) is arrested in a conspiracy to commit the murder of the President.)





(In order to expedite the film's storyline and clarify its complex narrative, director Oliver Stone consolidated testimony from various anonymous government officials into the experiences of a fictional character, General X, played by Donald Sutherland. Here, X and Jim discuss how the military complex would have suffered from extreme budgetary cuts had Kennedy's action memo been passed. The memo ordered the splintering of the CIA and withdrawal of troops from Viet Nam by Christmas of 1963. Below: at trial Jim attempts to illustrate the absurdity of The Magic Bullet Theory to his jury by first showing its implausible trajectory, then the bullet itself. )

However, not all of press garnered by the film was negative. Though Newsweek magazine published an incendiary cover story – claiming that the film and its director were 'not to be trusted', inside Newsweek's own film critic, David Ansen declared, ***"My advice is don't believe anyone who tells you this film is hogwash!"***

For the most part, what Oliver Stone presents in his dramatization is derived from an intense and lengthy private investigation of the facts; the resulting cinematic work, a compendium critique from several noted conspiracy theory books, vintage press and new interviews with Jim Garrison and other surviving members involved with the criminal investigation and its subsequent fallout.

At the heart of Stone's counter-scenario to the Warren Report is the notion that the military industrial complex – fueled by an escalated budget to invade southeast Asia, and in cahoots with the CIA - were the instigators of the





***“It’s up to you!”*** In one of the film’s most controversial moments, Costner’s Garrison challenges the film’s audience to seek out the truth about the assassination before it’s too late. The film’s piece d’ resistance is the lengthy court room summation of all that has gone before, topped off by Costner’s emotional speech where he equates the President’s assassination to Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, declaring through fought back tears, ***“Do not forget your dying king. Show this world that this is still a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Nothing you ever do will be as important.”*** While there were some critics who lamented the film’s nearly three hour running time, no one could deny that as a work of art, as well as arguably ‘fiction’ JFK packed an emotional wallop not soon to be easily forgotten.

Below: Next to Costner’s bravado performance, Tommy Lee Jones’s more subtly nuanced Clay Shaw is perhaps best deserving of the acting accolades. Jones’s villain is at once evil incarnate and a terrified, wounded little man deathly afraid that he is about to reap the wrath of his peers for his past indiscretions.)



conspiracy; a coup d’etat in which the outcome from Kennedy’s death reversed his policies for pulling out of Viet Nam; a decision that would have put an end to excessive military spending.

While some critics of the film continue to argue against that claim as bordering on absurd paranoia and flimsiness, it is important to note that although much of J.F.K. is based on indisputable facts, the film does take certain artistic liberties in its transition from fact to ‘fiction’ on the big screen; most notably with the creation of Willie O’Keefe (Kevin Bacon); a homosexual prisoner who alleges to D.A. Garrison (Kevin Costner) an ongoing sexual liaison with Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones).



O’Keefe is a fictional characterization made up of various young men with whom the real Shaw is rumored to have had bisexual relations. Director Stone has always maintained that the character O’Keefe was based on recollections from real life



(A dejected Jim Garrison (Costner) and his assistant investigator, Lou (Jay O. Sanders) sit in disbelief as the jury reads the “not guilty” verdict on Clay Shaw. Elizabeth Garrison (Sissy Spacek) seems more angry than hurt. Below: real life cloak and dagger confessions from Marita Lorenz who claims that a CIA operative admitted to her that Central Intelligence was responsible for a military styled hit. Lorenz with Cuba’s Fidel Castro.)



Shaw associate, Perry Russo (who appears as himself, briefly in the scene at Napoleon’s bar immediately following the President’s assassination) and who attended parties at Shaw’s residence where he personally witnessed the Director of the Trade Mart involved, not only with many young men from New Orleans’ Latin Quarter, but also with David Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald. Due in part to his own impassioned hatred of John Kennedy, Russo’s testimony on these matters was never considered by the FBI or CIA as anything but a very warped fallacy.

However, what rabid critics of the film J.F.K have been attacking to a large extent is Oliver Stone’s verisimilitude and artistic license – criteria employed by virtually all film makers but that in retrospect, Stone has used with incredible restraint in adapting his film. On practically every level, Stone’s masterwork has debunked what the Warren Commission once presented to the American public as indisputable facts.



The director’s hypotheses have shot so many holes in The Warren Report’s malignant simplicity that even if one discards the film’s alternate theories as far-fetched or implausible, little remains to dissuade from the fact that the film’s overall impact has helped to declassify government documentation that has supported, rather than refuted the film’s alternative theories. If it were only for the damaging discredit done to the Warren Report by the Zapruter film (which unequivocally illustrates a fatal kill shot from a low trajectory in front of the motorcade), Stone assumptions about a second assassin would already be solidly grounded.



(Above: "All this proves is that you cannot run an investigation in the light of day," Garrison tells a barrage of reporters who quickly discard him in favor of an interview with the exonerated Clay Shaw. Left: the official White House portrait of JFK.)



Time and again, eye witness testimony has placed the assassin(s) behind the fence on the grassy knoll. The witnesses that have come forth have had nothing to hide; witnesses like Marita Lorenz, a former CIA operative who claimed to have been told by FBI's Frank Sturges, a front-runner in the failed plot to assassinate Castro, that "**we** (meaning the FBI) **killed Kennedy.**" Third party testimony from former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neil has also suggested that former Kennedy aids Ken O'Donnell and Dave Powers were 'persuaded' by the FBI to fabricate their testimony in the Warren Report.

If the public is to continue to believe in the lone gunman theory, then federal ineptitude during the initial investigation can no longer be ignored: Lyndon Johnson's immediate order to rebuild the motorcade limo; his initiative to have the President's body removed before an official autopsy in Dallas was finalized, his sending of Governor Connelly's bloody suit to the cleaners; and finally, the overwhelming discrepancies between two sets of autopsies conducted (the first, inconclusive in Dallas; the second, doctored up in Washington) leave many gaping holes in what should have otherwise been a routine examination with conclusive documentation in support of the findings in the Warren Commission Report, but instead have culminated with the inexplicable disappearance of the President's brain from the National Archives.

Then, there is The Magic Bullet Theory which attempts to suggest that one miraculously bullet made all the wounds in Kennedy and Connelly before being discovered in pristine condition on a stretcher at Parkland Memorial Hospital.

A mountain of ballistic data derived from gunshots fired into human cadavers illustrates just how misguided and misleading Specter's theory is.

That, Garrison was repeatedly denied access to interrogate Frank Sturges, Earl Warren, Allan Dulles, or any of the other immediate contacts in the federal government who may have been able to shed light on these matters suggests that these men and others in the military complex had something to hide and profit by in their silence.

The more wild theories since Kennedy's time have only served to further dilute the truth – some of which Oliver Stone brings into focus with startling clarity in the film, J.F.K. If Stone had offered nothing but theory, his filmic contribution could have so easily been dismissed. But facts are indisputable. Clay Shaw perjured himself on the witness stand.

In 1979, four years after Shaw died of reported lung cancer (though no autopsy was allowed to either confirm or deny that assessment), during a congressional investigation into the matter of conspiracy, Director of Covert Operations Richard Helms opening admitted under oath that Shaw had worked for the CIA – a fact Garrison exposed at trial but one that had been readily denied by the government. Helm's denoted a 'probable conspiracy' in the Presidential assassination with recommendations to the U.S. Justice Department for further inquiry.

Yet, until Oliver Stone's J.F.K. the Justice Department was content to ignore these findings and do nothing. Since Stone's film, strides have been made to de-classify government documents pertaining to the assassination. Often these files have not been worth the paper they are printed on, with whole portions of content 'officially' blacked out, leaving gaping holes in the historical record.

The official files pertaining to the assassination are sealed in the National Archives until 2029, though it is unlikely that even then the full extent of their contents will be made accessible to the curious. The mantra for the film J.F.K. is 'complete disclosure' – a fanciful outcome, particularly given the government's ongoing outward rejection of any hypothesis that does not neatly fall between the pages of the official Warren Report. As Oliver Stone reiterates in the epitaph of J.F.K. – **'the past is prologue.'** Like D.A. Jim Garrison before him, Stone seeks the truth. It is this reviewer's fervent hope that someday he will get it.

***"I always received much more satisfaction as a defense attorney in obtaining an acquittal for a client than I ever have as a D.A. in obtaining a conviction. All my interests and sympathies tend to be on the side of the individual as opposed to the state."***

– Jim Garrison





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