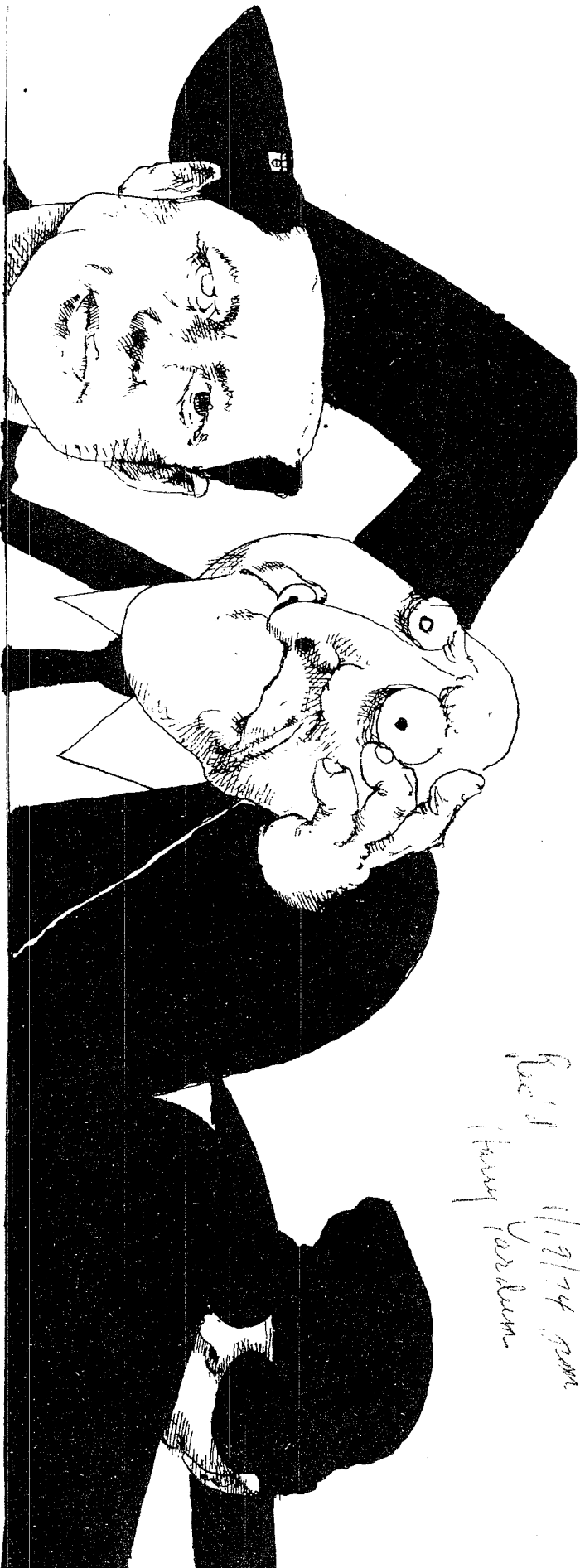


FILM

# The President's Brain Is Missing

*Book 1/19/74 from  
Henry Fordson*



**A Review of Executive Action & Commentary  
On the Curious State of the President's Brain**

by Buzz Kilman  
Contributing Editor

Ten years after John Kennedy got his head blown apart in Dallas, we are celebrating the anniversary. On tee vee we can see the Kennedy home movies (Jack Parr got a first showing exclusive), the painful interviews with the still bereaved (Tell me, Senator, if your brother were alive what would he be doing today?), and the final shots of the casket being laid to rest and the eternal flame still burning, presumably by special dispensation from Richard Nixon.

And at the movies we can also see *Executive Action*, the film starring Robert Ryan (now dead with cancer), Burt Lancaster and actual videotape of Kennedy as he journeyed to Dallas for the event of the decade. History becomes, finally, entertainment and, likewise, entertainment becomes history most recently featuring the Watergate hearings starring Senator Sam whose album has just been released for the Christmas season.

*Executive Action* is based on the premise that the assassination of President Kennedy was directed by a group of right wing businessmen and C.I.A. affiliates. It will make a lot of money. It is not a very good movie. It may or may not be a reasonable facsimile. It too becomes history. Read all about it in your local entertainment section.

The fact is when Kennedy got shot I was fascinated more by the event than by the tragedy. True, I may have been in the minority because as I strolled off the University of Miami's campus it looked like the final stretch of an encounter group gone berserk. I went to a friends house and found him near catatonic in his room. When I told him I thought Kennedy was full of shit, he asked me to leave. The next day I walked into my grandmother's house just in time to see Lee Harvey Oswald get it on coast to coast tee vee, live. Give me a break.

During this time I was also editing the *Campus Conservative* and working for

Barry Goldwater who, as the Young Americans For Freedom saw it, was in bad trouble. "Kennedy was like a lightning rod," I was told in tones of ultimate frustration, "without him, Goldwater has nothing to strike."

Despite these sentiments of mismanaged mourning, the now defunct *Campus Conservative* printed a front page eulogy along the good sportsmanship vein. Everyone connected with the issue was immediately called on the carpet and reamed for putting out such liberal slop on campus. The Republican money is not known for its bipartisanship.

Ten years later, having survived Lyndon Johnson and watching Richard Nixon go down with the ship, John Kennedy somehow seems more real than he did on Nov. 22, 1963. He is like a vision from some golden era, his face bright and generous, his wife beautiful, his style charming and humorous. In contrast, Nixon looks like some haggard body snatcher, which brings up the subject at hand.



robert ryan & burt lancaster set up lee harvey oswald

## THE PRESIDENTS BRAIN IS MISSING

These excerpts are taken from the Sunday edition of the New York Times August 27, 1972:

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26—The preserved brain of President Kennedy, plus microscopic slides of tissues removed from his bullet wounds have been withheld apparently by the Kennedy family, from the assassination evidence in the National Archives, a medical expert said today.

The expert, Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, was the first critic of the Warren Commission's report on the assassination to be allowed to see the items from the autopsy on the President.

Interviews with government officials and President Kennedy's personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, disclosed that the slides and probably the brain, which was removed from the body in the autopsy in 1963 and was preserved in

a container of formalin, were delivered in a locked chest to a representative of Senator Robert Kennedy in 1965.

When the autopsy materials were placed in the National Archives in 1966 by Burke Marshall, a representative of the Kennedy family, the slides of the brain and possibly some other items were not included.

Mr. Marshall, who is a law professor at Yale University said in an interview last night that he never had possession of the chest of items and that he had no knowledge of the brain or any other objects not now in the archives.

Mr. Marshall said that the other items had apparently not been requested by the Justice Department because "they had no bearings on who killed the President. He deplored Dr. Wecht's "chasing after parts of the President's body because he hasn't found any evidence that anything else was wrong.

Examination of the brain is necessary, Dr. Wecht said, because photographs of the top of the removed brain, which were shown to him, disclosed a sizeable foreign object that could have been a flattened bullet fragment or a brain tumor.

The official report of the autopsy by three military physicians on Nov. 22, 1963, the day of the assassination in Dallas, did not mention the object. A subsequent panel of four physicians appointed by Ramsey Clark when he was Attorney General—they also were not shown the actual brain—reported the presence of the object in the photographs.

Dr. Wecht, who is both a pathologist and a lawyer, said he felt certain that the brain was "around somewhere" and that he intended to ask Mr. Marshall to let a panel of experts inspect it. "Who would have taken the responsibility to destroy the brain," he asked.

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phone call and the rest is ...

Not impossible and, perhaps, not improbable but definitely not convincing which means that whatever factual evidence may be introduced from this point on can be summarily dismissed as the paranoid ravings of Hollywood's left or just ignored. It's so easy to ignore a bad movie.

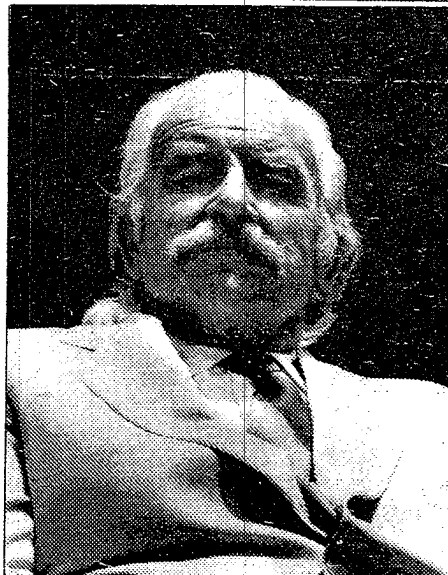
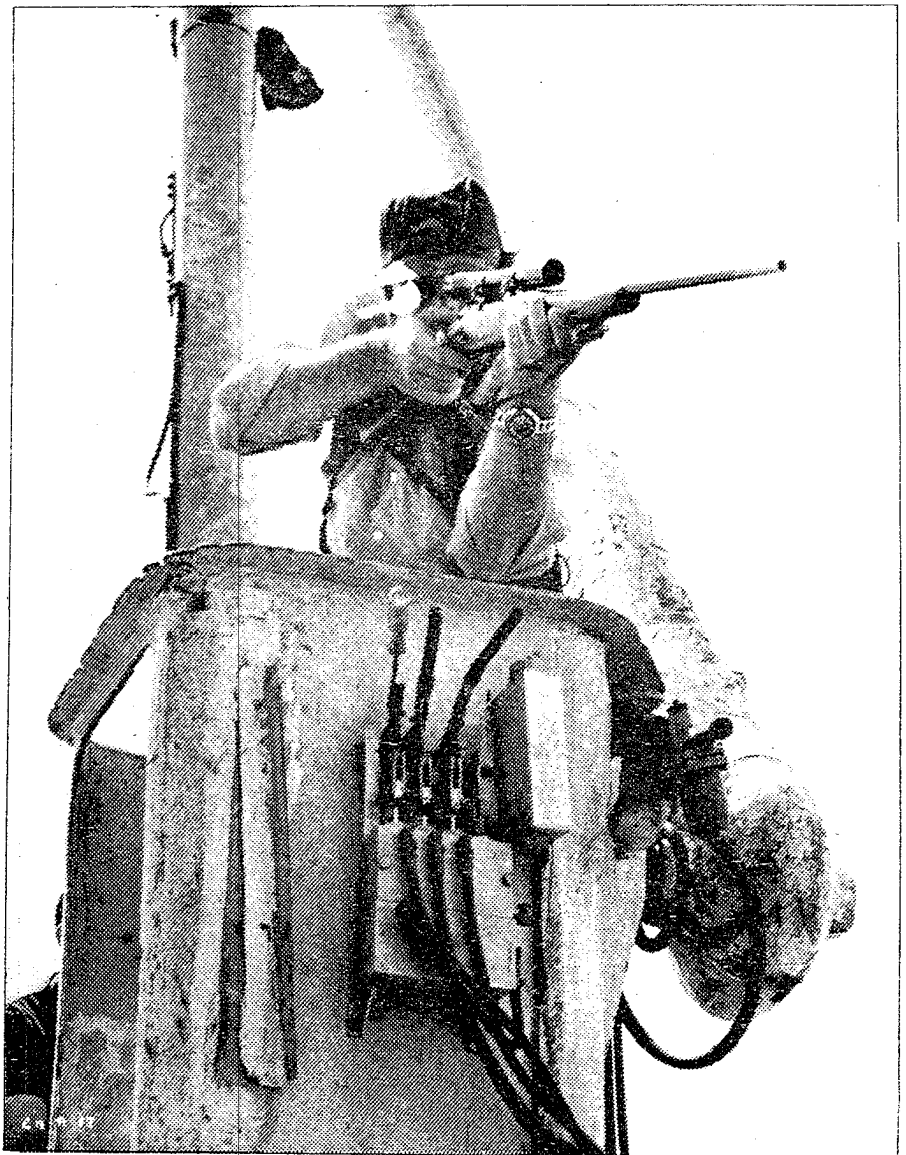
But despite this initial false start there is an innate fascination that keeps us occupied if not convinced. The

videotapes of Kennedy only hours away from his death, bring to the film a reality separate from any theoretical misgivings and with that reality their builds an outrage that such a event can even be explored hypothetically. Add to this a new and sensitive awareness of the power structures basic lack of integrity and you have a film that may not be of conclusive persuasion but certainly challenges ones own intellectual contentment and reality.

#### CAUGHT NECKING

Several years ago an excerpt from William Manchester's controversial Kennedy book was presented in Paul Krassners *The Realist*. It contained what must certainly be a classic portrait of the politicians debauched lust for power. Lyndon Johnson, just named President of The United States and finding himself briefly alone with the corpse of the dead Kennedy in the President's plane, is caught by Jackie as he is slipping his aging Texan cock into the still open wound of the dead President's neck. A completely revolting story, certainly. And a lie, as Krassner later revealed. But there was that vision conjured and one saw, without too much strain, that stranger things have happened. If nothing else, it demonstrated that the unthinkable is just another possibility sneaking up on you.

# FILM



## MILHOUS: The Gruesome Career of A Used Farce Salesman

by Larry Mans  
Editor

What could be more gruesome than a detailed depiction of the assassination of Jack Kennedy? Watching 1½ hours of Richard Nixon bellyache his way through MILHOUS: A WHITE HOUSE COMEDY.

Film critic Buzz Kilman and I barrelled out to the Dadeland Twin to watch Executive Action, the review of which is in this issue under the title THE PRESIDENT'S BRAIN IS MISSING ... After viewing this films' interpretation of the assassination, Buzz and I were headed back toward Coconut Grove when we discovered MILHOUS was making a one night stand at the University of Miami.

Milhouse is a selection of carefully edited news film footage of Nixon's political career from beginning to present with interviews of people who knew him well or clashed with him on his long journey to Watergate. Everything is there, from his campaigns against Alger Hiss and other alleged communists to his slush fund speech as Eisenhowers VP nominee to his "You won't have Richard Nixon to kick around anymore" speech after he lost the 1962 Governor campaign in California.

At first the film is hilarious to watch because Nixon simply makes a fool of himself constantly. Nothing he says has changed in the last twenty years. After the humor and fascination wear off, the horror sets in. The horror that somehow this man is President of the United States. The horror that it is a reality. And that if this is reality, then nothing is real or understandable or controllable, that to be involved is a joke, that everything is really a mirage and reality is irrelevant.



## FILM: Man Against Machine, The Mafia Takes it in the Neck

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WESTWORLD is a science fiction story of man against machine, an old plot given temporary life by Michael Crichton who wrote and directed.

Richard Benjamin is himself as the lawyer who survives to fight the robots that have gone berserk in a vacation resort built on modern computerized technology. The machines fall prey to a "disease" which finally results in the robots gaining temporary autonomy and murdering everyone in the resort.

The special effects are well done and the acting credible, allowing for an enjoyable evening. But the real science fiction fan is let down in WESTWORLD

When Crichton wrote the *Andromeda Strain*, he produced a fast paced mystery which headed for a climactic conclusion and suddenly ended in a whimper. It didn't go anywhere. Here he writes and directs a story which takes forever (2-3 of the film) to develop even though we know from the first five minutes what is going to happen. There are no surprises. Everyone you figure will die does so; everything you figure will go wrong does so.

This is true down to the direction, which is solid for its steady development but weak in its predictability. Obvious script phrases are used which upon hearing the viewer immediately can surmise what will happen one hour later and is then led down the garden path.

Once during a chase scene we are led to believe that Benjamin has killed the gunfighter robot (Yul Brynner) that is trying to kill him. But the robot makes a second comeback and Benjamin sets him afire with a torch. Unfortunately, Benjamin flees and is later pictures trying to escape as the camera holds on

him as he stares at a dying robot. Up a staircase he climbs without looking up it, and the camera is obviously avoiding where he is headed. Obviously because the killed robot appears again just as you would expect when the camera acted as it had.

Is all of this fair criticism? Yes. A thirty minute plot is dragged out for two hours. Everything is predictable, there are no surprises. The same of course can be said of many films, EXECUTIVE ACTION for example. The difference is that despite the advance knowledge that the President will die and Oswald will be caught and killed, the plot is developed in detail, weaving in facts and theories and creating a situation fresh for the viewer. *Westworld* is stale after five minutes because anyone who sees the first five minutes could write and direct the next two hours and produce the same product Crichton comes up with.

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Too late for my last reviews was *Charlie Virrick*, a violence picture in which Walter Matthau is a very likable crook. In fact, it was the most enjoyable cops and robbers picture I saw.

Charlie outwits the police and the mafia in this one, in a way that has us rooting for his success right to his climactic escape. Nothing but compliments here for Matthau, whose character development is sensational. The picture itself is beautifully paced and unlike the others reviewed here thus far, usually unpredictable.

Matthau and his wife and some cohorts are tired of crop dusting for a living and decide to knock off a local bank. During the robbery, everyone is killed except Matthau and a young accomplice.

They have unwittingly taken \$750,000 from the vaults of a Mafia clearing house and upon the discovery, Matthau instantly understands the big trouble he is in. The Mafia does not give up till they get their money back and dispense with those who have embarrassed them. Nevertheless, Matthau gets away, frames the bad guys, and escapes with the police and the Mafia believing he is dead. How does he do it? With the help of a Sopwith Camel and X-rays of his teeth. Oh yeah? Yeah.

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Finally, a cops and robbers film titled *COPS AND ROBBERS*. Try two New York cops stealing 10 million dollars in securities and trying to sell them to the Mafia. The Mafia takes the burn in this

one too, as the cops don't get away with the securities even though the police and the Mafia think they have. That is enough however, as our heroes dupe the Mafia and get the cash anyway.

This picture is well directed and well acted and the plot is as unpredictable as intriguing.

What makes it even more fascinating is picking up the morning *Herald* and reading that two Miami cops have knocked off the International House of Pancakes and six others have raped a prostitute they have been protecting in exchange for some sensual oral pleasure once a week.

All this goes to show that Miami cops are not in the same league with their New York counterparts