

COSTNER

From G-1

Thanks to a string of quality hits — "No Way Out," "The Untouchables," "Bull Durham" and "Field of Dreams" (we'll respectfully forget the execrable "Revenge") — that culminated in the Oscar-winning smash "Dances With Wolves," Costner has become Hollywood's latest greatest thing. And of course, that doesn't happen without having one's private life go suddenly, irrevocably public.

First came unflattering tabloid stories during Oscar week: "That took a lot of fun out of it," he says sadly. Next came Madonna's now-famous put-down in her film "Truth or Dare": "Someone's just looking for a quote, and I'm not giving it to them," he responds to a Madonna query with pointed displeasure. "She's handled me quite obviously."

Now come reports of dissatisfaction and chaos on the set of "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves," opening Friday, along with the celebrity stalkers in Dallas and now, New Orleans, where "JFK" is currently shooting. The wear and tear on Costner's psyche is beginning to show.

"Fame has caused me to move inside a little more," he says.

But fame is as much a double-edged sword as the one he swings about valiantly throughout "Robin Hood." Despite the havoc celebrity may wreak upon his privacy, Costner remains both proud of and grateful for his success with "Dances."

"I was desperately hoping the movie would make \$50 million. I wanted them to get their money back for doing this three-hour western." To date, the film has earned \$400 million worldwide.

And he still clearly relishes his memories of Oscar night. The film took seven trophies, with Costner personally winning two — as best director and as producer of the best picture. Ever his toughest critic, Costner reflects on his acceptance speeches: "I wish I had said more things about my parents. I wish I could talk like the other people talk."

Despite second thoughts on his speeches, Costner admits, with a wink and a grin, "I had three of 'em prepared, just in case."

He still laughs heartily when remembering the ceremony, saying his victories didn't really sink in for a couple of days. "I didn't

know whether the planets had lined up, or something" — he laughs again — "you know? Being a newcomer, sometimes that can create a lot of antagonism, and it didn't seem to, and I was real appreciative of that.

"I'm very romantic about the business that I'm in," he continues. "A lot of times when people have one hit under their belt, you see them at the Academy Awards, and they seem so glib, they seem like they've discovered America or something. And you look out there and see Walter Matthau and Gregory Peck, and you see people who have invested their entire careers. There has to be a certain amount of dignity. I want the kind of career that Spencer Tracy had."

To that end, Costner's developing another movie he may direct, "another big old movie," as he describes it. It's a period picture set in the '20s concerning an Irish family. As with "Dances," Costner says, "It's got me thinking, I don't know if I want to give it up [to another director]. I don't want someone to come through and say, 'This won't work, this is

too long.'"

In the meantime, there's far more interest and speculation surrounding Oliver Stone's secretive "JFK" project. Costner stars as Jim Garrison, the New Orleans district attorney who took the only Kennedy murder case to trial. Those associated with the film have been instructed not to discuss it until its release, but Costner says, "I don't think Lee Harvey Oswald shot him."

Many who follow the world of assassination conspiracies feel that by focusing on Garrison, the film will explore largely discredited theories. And because Costner isn't playing Garrison as the flamboyant D.A. who enjoyed his self-created media circus — he even appeared on "The Tonight Show," discussing his investigation like an actor touting a new movie — the film may not only be robbed of some of its color, but distort historic truths.

For a man obsessed with accuracy like Stone, this seems a calculated aberration that may damage the film's credibility.

"Who's your source?" Costner demands when he hears a description of his performance. When the answer is Stone himself, Costner replies good-naturedly, "Oh, OK. He must be very pleased with me, is he

"I look at what Oliver has written — I play it as written," explains. "When you talk about flamboyance, you'll just have to see it. Flamboyance has to have a believability, and Garrison has his detractors. But he's a very convenient target. He can come off like a Southern caricature but he asked some very important questions. . . ."

"In 'The Untouchables,' Ellen Ness never had a family, but because [screenwriter] David Mamet gave him a family, it colored everything I did. I didn't write 'Robin Hood,' so I don't [reinvent the script]. That's simply not how I work. I play him as written. I play 'em as they deal 'em. If you don't like the way they're written, then I don't do them, you know what I mean?"

David Kronke is the Times Herald's movie critic.

After 'Dances' success, Costner sees no way out of public eye

By David Kronke

NEW ORLEANS — While Dallas was having its fun with Kevin Costner, feverishly tailing him and voraciously eating up the incessant gossip of his whereabouts while he was in town shooting "JFK," Costner himself wasn't having any fun at all.

"I didn't like that," Costner says of the Costner Alerts, his voice becoming quiet, his face losing its easy smile. "It's all, I guess, good-natured, but you wouldn't like it. Maybe you would for a moment, but you have to trust me on this — you wouldn't like it forever."

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