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HEADLINE: Assassination movie takes Dallas 'back in time'

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Filming began Monday on a movie about President John F. Kennedy's assassination before hundreds of onlookers, many of whom say a fresh look might clear the city's name once and for all.

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"This certainly takes you back in time. It hurt the city a lot, but it could have happened anywhere," said Sandy McConnell, 42, a telephone clerk watching a re-creation of the fatal motorcade that carried Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

The movie, starring Kevin Costner and directed by Oliver Stone, centers on conspiracy theories.

City and county leaders allowed use of the original sites of the assassination after debate over whether the movie might rake up a bad past. Many residents say they welcome the scrutiny.

"I would like to know what really happened. When I first moved here, one of the first things I did was come down here to see the site," says Lex Pennington, 34, an insurance man who moved here in 1985.

Kennedy was killed and then-Texas governor John Connolly wounded as they traveled in a motorcade in an event that rocked the world and left Dallas with a black eye for years.

One reason: never-proved theories that the activities of right-wing extremists in the city created an atmosphere of hatred that helped motivate Lee Harvey Oswald.

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In a government probe, the Warren Commission found Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy. Oswald himself was killed two days later by Dallas bar owner Jack Ruby.

The film, JFK, stars Oscar-winner Costner as crusading New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, who tried to prove the murder was a conspiracy and wrote two books on the subject.

Stone, the sometimes-controversial director of The Doors, Born on the 4th of July and Platoon, is keeping quiet on the conclusions his movie will draw about the assassination.

But he told The Dallas Morning News in an interview that he has personal doubts about the official version of events and that the film "tries to deal with" why Kennedy was killed.

Stone said he didn't consult with the Kennedy family about the film but met with Connolly, who he said "sort of laughed at the whole thing and sort of suggested that it makes a hell of a good story."

On Monday, downtown streets were filled with female extras in 1963 beehive hairdos. Spectators tried guessing which of the women in pillbox hats was Press Alt-H for Help or Alt-Q to Quit.

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portraying Jackie Kennedy or Lady Bird Johnson. Some crew members sported red T-shirts with the words "Who Killed JFK?"

Local actors were cast in the roles of the chief players, including Oswald and Kennedy.

County commissioners first voted against but then approved the use in the movie of the sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository from which the shots that killed Kennedy were fired.

The area is now part of a museum, The 6th Floor, which opened in 1989 after years of controversy over its appropriateness. The museum board split 5-4 on allowing Stone to use the window.

The museum's V'Ann Giuffre says the close vote reveals the division between old and new residents over the assassination's effect on the city.

"We encounter people who still have a hard time with it because they ran into people in other places who absolutely hated them because they were were from Dallas where Kennedy was killed," she says.

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"We've found people sitting on the steps outside while their relatives tour the museum because they just can't bring themselves to come in."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO; b/w, Lennox, Mclendon, AP; PHOTO; b/w, Paul K. Buck, UPI

CUTLINE: STONE: Directing ' JFK, ' a film that delves into theories about the

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