



WALT DISNEY Television

Dear Harold,
This will probably be one of the last things you receive from me at Disney as my contract expires next week. At the present, I am unemployed, but I hope that situation will change shortly. In any case, there's an article on the play LIBRA (from the book). Sorry to hear that Michael Jackson has been non-responsive. It's unfortunate that the publishers didn't set some thing up to promote the book with a P.R. firm. They - certainly beat the drum for some of their other assassination books. Anyway, I will stay in touch and keep you informed on my situation. Best wishes.

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SHOW

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS, REVIEWS AND PERSONALITIES

STAGE REVIEW/DAVID PATRICK STEARNS

'Libra' weighs in with Lee Oswald's story

CHICAGO — Any dramatization of Lee Harvey Oswald's life almost has to be great — or at least purposeful — to justify the anguish and sense of loss it inevitably brings up. Anything less smells of exploitation, and there are whiffs of that in *Libra*, an adaptation of Don DeLillo's best seller by actor John Malkovich that plays through June 26 at the Steppenwolf Theater (★★ out of four).

In returning to the theater company that helped launch him, Malkovich proves his directing talent is undiminished. *Libra* confidently holds the stage with an adaptation structured around periodic interrogation scenes — Oswald had many — with events between them often presented out of their chronological order, allowing the key characters in the Kennedy assassination to make periodic appearances. Thus, the audience gets to know them well while getting the sense that the assassination resulted from a conspiracy that was waiting for the right patsy — Oswald.

Besides using lots of DeLillo's crackling dialogue, Malkovich preserves his theory that, unlike Oliver Stone's in *JFK*, the conspiracy was a bumbling affair out to stir up anti-Castro sentiment and only wound the



By Michael Brosilow
'LIBRA': Laurie Metcalf as Lee Harvey's mother and Alexis Arquette as Oswald

president. But the adaptation also lingers over some of the tawdrier, less-relevant episodes, which makes the narrative distracted, unfocused and sometimes irrelevant.

Such moments are also acted in a hambone style that threatens to turn it into a burlesque. The big offenders are Rick Snyder (Jack Ruby) and *Roseanne's* Laurie Metcalf in male drag as David Ferrie (the role played by Joe Pesci in *JFK*), though she has effective moments in a dual role as Oswald's manic mother.

The worst part is that Oswald (Alexis Arquette) remains coy and opaque. What lies behind his shifting politics? What was he in it for? Why did he beat his wife? With so little insight in such key areas, the use of authentic video footage of the assassination seems like superficial effects laboring to give the play a sorely needed backbone.

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