

TELEVISION REVIEW

Fatal Deception: Mrs. Lee Harvey Oswald

(Mon. (15), 9-11 p.m., NBC)

Filmed in Dallas and Russia by David L. Wolper Prods. in association with Bernard Sofronski and Warner Bros. TV Distribution. Executive producers, Bernard Sofronski, David L. Wolper; producers, Paul Pompian, Steve Bello; director, Robert Dornhelm; writer, Bello; camera, Yuri Neyman; editor, Gerry Hambling; production designer, Brian Eatwell; music, Harold Kloser.

Cast: Helena Bonham Carter, Frank Whaley, Robert Picardo, Bill Bolender, Brandon Smith, Lisa Renee Wilson, Deborah Dawn Slaboda, Ingeborga Dapkunaite, Vladimir Ilyn, Quenby Bakke, Norman Bennett, Rodger Boyce, Cliff Stephens, Alan Ackles, Randall Bonifay, Darryl Cox, Michael Crabtree, John Fertitta, Richard Folmer, Seth Kaplan, Brad Leland, Jim Marrs, Julie Mayfield, Shannon McGrann, Sean McGraw, Marco Parella, Steve M. Powell, Bob Reed, Barry Watson, Norma Young.

Give Hollywood credit for finding new ways of resurrecting the most-watched assassination in world history right about this time of year. And this year's entry from NBC, "Fatal Deception: Mrs. Lee Harvey Oswald," is indeed original — just what kind of woman would marry crazy Lee? — but reveals nothing new while trying to stir the pot of controversy.

Telepic's highlight is the touch of class brought by Helena Bonham Carter ("Howards End," "A Room With a View") as Marina Oswald, a 22-year-old mother of two and wife of one of the most despised and controversial men in America. She plays the Russian immigrant who speaks broken

English as if she just stepped off the boat, even adding a surprisingly sultry personality that emerges from time to time.

But she cannot save what becomes frankly a boring script with little suspense — certainly Mrs. Oswald's not going to blow open the whole JFK case with new revelations — and the one question burning is answered right off the bat: No, she knows nothing more than anyone else.

Enter David Lifton (played by Robert Picardo), a non-believer of the Warren Commission and a journalist who meets up with Mrs. Oswald 15 years after the assassination, when Congress begins to rethink the way the whole matter was handled. Here, Mrs. Oswald begins to rethink her testimony, too, after being primed by journalist Lifton.

But little is found in the contemplation of events. Along the way there are flashbacks galore and, of course, the required recreation of Jack Ruby assassinating Lee Harvey Oswald.

Frank Whaley cuts a different figure as Oswald, more tough than nutty, and director Robert Dornhelm uses Bonham Carter well, along with production values that look like money well spent.

But this is a slow-mover for a topic that has been covered over and over again, with the same conclusion: There is a shadow of a doubt about who was actually involved in Kennedy's death, but never can any real light be shed on that dark element.

Guess that's why the media can't keep their hands off it.

—Drew Voros

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