

The Real Action Hero

In the Line of Fire

Starring Clint Eastwood
Written by Jeff McGuire
Directed by Wolfgang Petersen
Columbia Pictures

By Peter Travers

THERE IS MUCH to be said for Clint Eastwood's brand of no-bull heroics. Just watch big, bad Arnold Schwarzenegger huff and puff and not blow the box office down as he tries to turn an \$80 million white elephant called *Last Action Hero* (rated PG-13) into a *Terminator* for tykes. It's a pleasure to report that Eastwood is on firm, R-rated action ground with *In the Line of Fire*. Bur don't set your hopes too high. We're a long way from the profundities that covered the big guy in Oscar glory for *Unforgiven*. *Fire* is formula stuff that pits Eastwood as Secret Service agent Frank Horrigan against John Malkovich as assassin Mitch Leary.

The target is the president, who is particularly vulnerable because he's campaigning for re-election. In a series of menacing phone calls, Leary tells Horrigan he's going to shoot the prez right in front of the agent's eyes. "That's not gonna happen," says Horrigan in one of those "make my day" Eastwoodisms (mercifully, this one is downplayed). Horrigan is haunted by his failure to take a bullet for President Kennedy 30 years ago. (Since *Fire* is the first film made with Secret Service cooperation, there's a lot of indigestible government propaganda to swallow in Jeff McGuire's bloated script.)

The references to JFK sometimes threaten to overwhelm the lightweight material. A flashback shows Horrigan in



Illustration by EDMUND GUY

