

# TV chronicles the making of 'JFK'

By Jane Sumner

The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — Danny Schechter is one of the privileged few to see a final cut of "JFK." And the Emmy-winning former producer of ABC's "20/20" isn't talking. Except to say that Oliver Stone's three-hour suspense drama about the John F. Kennedy assassination is "very powerful, very strong."

Schechter expects the film to stun viewers and provoke debate about the crime. That's why he's at work on a special project at Globalvision, the television production company he founded four years ago with former "48 Hours" and "The MacNeil Lehrer Newshour" producer Rory O'Connor. Stone has tapped the "network refugees," as they call themselves, to create an as yet untitled TV film about his movie "JFK."

But Globalvision's film, Schechter says, is not one of those behind-the-scenes promotions such as "The Making of Lonesome Dove."

"We are involved in producing a documentary that deals not with the making of the movie but with the issues behind it," Schechter says. "We're trying to talk with the

people who are the basis of the story as well as the people involved in making the film.

"We've interviewed a lot of ordinary Americans. What did they think about this? What were their memories? It's very rare there's an event in American history that everybody remembers where they were when they heard about it. Do you know where you were when you heard Ronald Reagan had been shot? I know exactly where I was and what I was doing (on Nov. 22, 1963) and how I experienced the Oswald shooting."

Schechter was a student at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

"It was the weekend before Thanksgiving vacation, and I was sitting around in the student union watching these images on television, watching Walter Cronkite take off his glasses and almost break down," he says. "I remember it very dramatically."

Globalvision entered into the "JFK" documentary with no particular point of view, he says.

A Globalvision team was in Dallas earlier this year for Stone's re-creation of the assassination scene. And last week they returned to cover the Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy at the

Hyatt Regency Hotel.

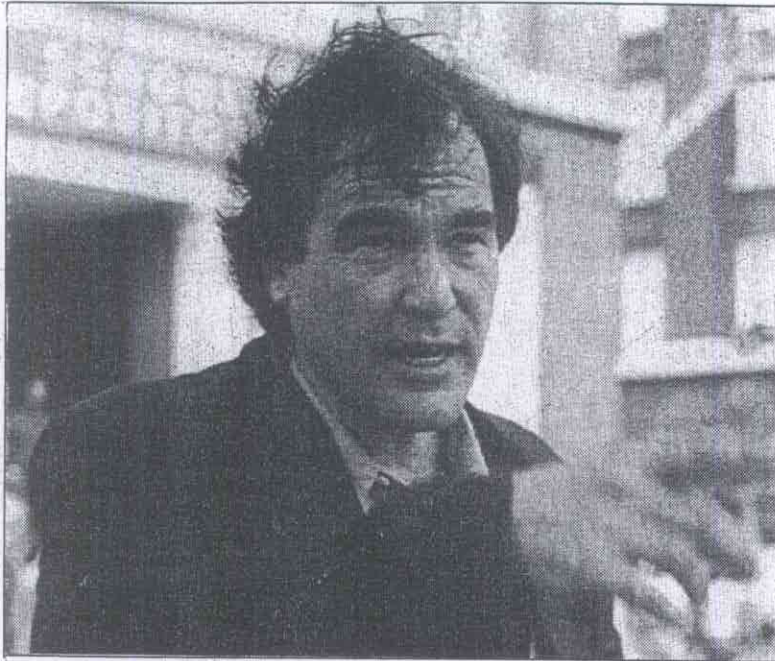
"One of the things that's interesting in Dallas is that it's kind of a magnet," Schechter says. "We met people from all over. We interviewed soldiers in Desert Storm uniforms, a labor organizer from Alabama, some tourists from California, a schoolteacher from Massachusetts and an American Indian woman from Minnesota."

And when Stone took his shoot to New Orleans, Globalvision went too.

"We interviewed people there also," Schechter says. "They said, 'Why is this happening here? Didn't this happen in Dallas?' What Oliver Stone is saying is that in fact this is a tale of three cities: Dallas, New Orleans and Washington, D.C. He says he's doing a 'whydunit,' not a 'whodunit.' And once you get into a 'whydunit,' then there's a lot of factors that need some explanation."

Globalvision has done several interviews with the director and talked on camera with members of the cast, including Gary Oldman (who plays Lee Harvey Oswald) and Kevin Costner (New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison).

The documentary will be seen on French and German television.



Associated Press

Oliver Stone on the set of his three-hour feature film "JFK," which sparked interest in a TV documentary about the assassination.

the sources of its funding. (Money for "JFK" also is coming from French television, Schechter says.)

"It's a commentary in part on what's happening in American television that not one major network has a major documentary series any more. 'CBS Reports' is

gone. 'Close-up' at ABC is gone. 'NBC White Paper' is gone. There are very few markets on which to present thoughtful non-fictional work. HBO does documentaries. Showtime does some. Fox does very few. Whereas if you go anywhere else in the world, there are a lot of documentaries being shown."