

Wrowe

Overkill

By Garry Trudeau

Readers of The New York Times's sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth personal attacks on Oliver Stone this week could be forgiven for wondering if the beleaguered director of "J.F.K." has a point. Significant elements of the Establishment Media do seem hellbent on destroying his reputation.

Conspiracy or consensus? You don't have to be paranoid to re-create the key events of the last eight months — but it helps. From the top:

May 7, 1991: As Oliver Stone cruises down Hollywood Boulevard, he suddenly finds himself under fire. A troubled Chicago Tribune columnist named Jon Margolis is held responsible.

May 19: Stone, shaken by this vicious first strike, swerves to avoid a follow-up salvo from The Washington Post. The shooter, identified to readers only as "George Lardner Jr.," has known ties to organized journalism.

June 3: While Stone returns fire at The Post, he is blindsided by Time's Richard Zoglin, the first of the "Two Richards" at Time to draw a bead on him. Stone reloads and fires off a stinging rejoinder.

Oct. 15: Writing alone, a drifter by the name of Robert Sam Anson squeezes off several cheap shots at Stone. Numerous witnesses recall the attack originating from Esquire, whose offices are only seven blocks from Time's.

Nov. 15: Stung by this "coincidence," Stone careens past Lisa Grunwald, who shoots mostly blanks for her unseen masters at Life. Stone fires back wildly, blasting the media as "the Doberman pinchers of the Establishment."

Dec. 15: Tom "Wild Dog" Wicker assails Stone from the relative safety of The New York Times Arts & Leisure section. On the same day, but from a different vantage point, GQ catches Stone in a withering crossfire.

Dec. 16: Newsweek opens up with a devastating cover story, but Stone recovers when film critics hold their fire. The second of the "Two Richards" at Time, Corliss, cheers the director as he heads for daylight.

Dec. 17: Several readers of The Washington Post report that Stone is hit by a potshot from contributor Gerald R. Ford, who has well-established links to both the Warren Commission and the Oval Office. Stone answers the attack.

Dec. 19-20: Forrest Sawyer, a paid front man for ABC's "Nightline," gives Stone a free ride just before midnight. Minutes later, a professional character assassin, perched on the ultra-establishment New York Times editorial page, parts Stone's hair with a high-powered discharge.

Dec. 20-24: As a panicky Stone continues to counterattack, he unknowingly enters a deadly zone of triangulated fire.

Dec. 25-26: As a second Times shooting team sets up on the moral high ground of the editorial page, George Will, a deranged pedant from Bethesda, opens up at short range, blasting "J.F.K." as a "celluloid diatribe." It is too late. The film is released, and Stone turns a corner.

Jan. 5-6, 1992: Wicker, Janet Maslin, Leslie H. Gelb and hired hand Stefan Kanfer all get off parting shots in The Times, but the only report heard is from Daily Variety - that of a \$30.8 million gross. Laughing all the way, Stone roars off to the bank.

Garry Trudeau, creator of the comic strip *Doonesbury*, is an occasional contributor to this page.

