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The tampering and temptations of 'JFK'

Oliver Stone's JFK is 188 jet-speed minutes of our national nightmare — and a professional at nightmare for film reviewers judging it beyond cinematic standards. Let Stone embellish Jim Morrison in a screen bio, and who cares? But embellish a generation's watershed tragedy and here come the sharks. Cinematically, JFK is 90% marvel, faltering in domestic scenes. Historically, it displays enough insidious sleight of hand to put Siegfried & Roy out

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of work. Yet, don't far more Gallup Poll-ees than not call the Warren Commission's findings sleight-of-hand, too? This is what Stone effectively plays on: our continuing doubts over who or how many killed John Kennedy. His most vulnerable decision is making ex-New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison the hero, given the notori-

JFK
****½ (out of four)
Kevin Costner... Jim Garrison
Tommy Lee Jones... Clay Shaw
Gary Oldman... Lee Harvey Oswald
Sissy Spacek... Liz Garrison
A Warner Bros. release. Produced by A. Kiman Ho and Oliver Stone. Directed by Stone. Screenplay by Stone and Zachary Sklar. In theaters nationally. Rated R (profanity, autopsy scene).

ety of Garrison's empty assassination conspiracy case against local businessman Clay Shaw.

For his part, Kevin Costner (as Garrison) gives his most persuasive performance since *No Way Out*. And in casting chutzpah worthy of Otto Preminger, Garrison himself plays Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The film is chillingly seductive, refuting the assertion that Lee Harvey Oswald was a lone gunman — or that one so-called "magic bullet" could do so much damage to Kennedy and Texas governor John Connally. Other times, JFK feels

like a bill of goods. When someone speculates that a dead Oswald's palm print could have been planted on the fatal rifle, we see someone doing just that. Go easy, Ollie, go easy.

As if Stone ever has — or could. Judging it strictly as a movie, JFK is provocative, a technical primer and an ensemble treat with unusually well-realized star cameos. It's a provocative near-smash that, like it or not, will endure as a must-see for years.