

Copy to H. WEITBERG

# ARTS & IDEAS

# 'Nixon': Fact or Fiction?

The filmmaker addresses his critics



By Robert Scheer  
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

**Scheer:**  
Film shows Nixon in all his terrifying, flawed glory

Wasn't this a great country before Oliver Stone started making movies? Before him we used to believe uncritically in our presidents, our wars and our assassination commissions. God and truth were always on our side in the days when Charlton Heston was Moses and John Wayne a Green Beret.

No wonder The Examiner's movie critic referred to Stone, in a Sunday Arts & Ideas piece Jan. 7, as "a man who makes his living being a ranting maniac" and "a much more dangerous fellow" than tobacco industry lobbyists and Oliver North. Filmmakers that dangerous need to be locked up. Too bad critic Barbara Shulgasser didn't have a job with Pravda in Stalin's time; she understands so clearly that it is not only the work of art but also the artist that must be destroyed.

First there was "Salvador," which implied a cynical purpose to our propping up puppet regimes in Central America. Then those Vietnam movies that reminded us of the costs of a war we were trying so hard to forget.

And now Richard Nixon, safely tucked away as an accidental embarrassment to the proud history of the presidency, has been thrust before us as a complex, tormented figure given to paranoid explanations for his own downfall.

How did Stone ever come up with such a nutty view? Felonious consultants, critic Shulgasser tells us, whip-

The critic's meat is often the artist's gristle. Oliver Stone's latest historically based film, "Nixon," has inspired heated debate — as art should. Artists have always retold history, but Stone's versions don't just rattle the critics, they spark explosive reactions.

Following an essay by Examiner film critic Barbara Shulgasser ("Oliver Stone Plays Fast and Loose With the Truth," Jan. 7), the paper received heated replies from both Stone and writer Robert Scheer, who was a consultant on "Nixon." Scheer is an Examiner columnist and contributing editor at the Los Angeles Times, and we print here his response to Shulgasser's essay and her answer to that criticism.

Stone declined to address his remarks to Shulgasser (he deemed a dialogue with a critic "demeaning"), responding instead to a critical essay by Henry Kissinger ("Stone Leaves Truth on Cutting-Room Floor") published in the Los Angeles Times on Jan. 21. (Kissinger "The film raises a final issue that goes far beyond fairness to Nixon — the responsibility of the motion-picture industry to history itself.")

We print Stone's response to Kissinger here.

— The Editor



As a consultant, perhaps I can help critic Shulgasser answer the only two clear questions of fact posed in what was an otherwise unfettered tantrum. She is offended that "Stone proposed that Nixon was in Dallas the morning of John Kennedy's assassination." He was, which she would know, if she had simply checked The Examiner library. That's what we consultants do.

And even a cursory reading of the clips would have answered the only other factual point raised by Shulgasser, where her ignorance of what is common knowledge is downright embarrassing. She wrote:

"Stone suggests that there is a connection between the break-in by Nixon's men into the Democratic National headquarters and the Bay of Pigs shenanigans. I like Stone's thinking here, but is there anything other than perversity to support this delicious notion? We really want to know."

Seven of the Watergate burglars, including the leader, Howard Hunt, were veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Hey, you could even look it up in the book "Nixon," edited by Eric Hamburg, which documents Stone's movie and contains portions of the Nixon tapes transcripts. Those transcripts reveal that in the days following the break-in, including the conversation on June 20 with the mysterious 18-minute gap, Nixon makes dozens of references to the "Cuban thing" and the "Bay of Pigs thing." On the June 23 smoking-gun tape, he refers again to "the Bay of Pigs thing," and Howard Hunt's connection with the anti-Castro efforts.

In Hunt's own book, "Give Us This Day," published in 1973, he talks about how his first recommendation during the 1960 planning of the Bay of Pigs was that Castro should be assassinated.

The "perversity" lies perhaps more in the continuity of government covert operations than in Stone's imagination. For a fuller accounting of those connections, including the myriad plots on Castro's life, which did begin during the Eisenhower/Nixon administration, one need only refer back to the hearings conducted by the late Sen. Frank Church.

The real question for this movie, however, was what was going on in Nixon's fevered imagination as his carefully constructed world collapsed. The whole point of this film is that Nixon unraveled as he came to be besieged by events and enemies beyond his control. Stone does not endorse Nixon's paranoia, but he does concede that even paranoids have enemies, and Nixon had more than his share. There is no doubt that Nixon believed that he was done in by an elusive conspiracy of enemies that included a Cuban connection.

The movie is very close to the truth in describing that weird, cynical, contradictory, even deranged hodgepodge of thoughts that were going on in the mind of a president who wielded the chief executive's power.

Like Stone, I find that reality pretty frightening, as a glimpse into the mind of at least one of the powerful, and for that reason would welcome the release of the full 4,000 hours of the Nixon tapes and not just the 60 we now have. We need to keep digging deeper into this murky past to understand better how power operated then and perhaps now. Sadly, it is worth studying all of this, because there is more than a bit of Nixon in every leader.

Anthony Hopkins portrays a beleaguered President Richard Nixon in Oliver Stone's film "Nixon."



By Barbara Shulgasser  
EXAMINER MOVIE CRITIC

What Robert Scheer fails to recognize about my "Nixon" and Oliver Stone criticisms is that I love a good conspiracy as much as the next person. Oliver Stone has spent years researching and many millions of dollars making "Nixon." Where is the new information?

Stone strings together a lot of already available smelly facts and insists that the odor constitutes proof of the existence of a mackerel. As Stone well knows, there are many things other than fish that stink.

So yes, Nixon was in Dallas the day President Kennedy was shot. As I wrote in my review of the movie, my concern was not whether Nixon was in Dallas that day, which is a matter of record, but whether *it means anything*. None of the work produced by Stone's honorable consultants indicate to me that it did.

So, if Nixon just happened to be in Dallas that day in November for his own innocent reasons, why is this even worth mentioning except for its suggestive val-

# Shulgasser.

Nice conspiracy theory, but where are the facts?

ue? Surely, if Stone has some information connecting Nixon with the Kennedy assassination, he would tell us about it.

As for wondering whether there was a connection between the Watergate break-in and the Bay of Pigs invasion, I meant a *substantial* connection. We know that some of the incompetents who blew the Bay of Pigs also blew Watergate. This just tells me that in the 1960s and '70s, when you wanted to get a dirty job done, you turned to a well-known bunch of sleazy guys who were in the business of doing dirty jobs.

If a more substantial connection existed under three administrations, I'd love to hear the facts; next time Stone gets \$4.3 million to blow on consultants and such, I hope they come up with something solid. And to clear up any misunderstanding, I agree with Scheer and Stone that Nixon was "a complex tormented figure." So what else is new?

The film is doing poorly at the box office. I wonder if Stone's complaints to The Examiner are more commercial than artistic.

CHARON LINE. Stone has hired as technical consultants such reliable sources as convicted felon John Dean. . . . If anyone is going to have an ax to grind, it'll be an ex-con. "Perhaps she doesn't recall that it was Dean who first broke the ranks of the White House cabal and gave compellingly honest congressional testimony."

Fortunately, she left me off the hook here, even though, as opposed to Dean, I got credit up front as a project consultant. Maybe she was just being kind, because I also write columns for *The Examiner*. Although I wrote about Nixon extensively and interviewed him for the *Los Angeles Times*, I was not involved in the Watergate break-in — so that eliminates me as a useful target.

As a consultant, perhaps I can help critic Shulgasser answer the only two clear questions of fact posed in what was an otherwise unfettered tantrum. She is offended that "Stone proposed that Nixon was in Dallas the morning of John Kennedy's assassination." He was, which she would know, if she had simply checked *The Examiner* library. That's what we consultants do.

And even a cursory reading of the clips would have answered the only other factual point raised by Shulgasser, where her ignorance of what is common knowledge is downright embarrassing. She wrote:

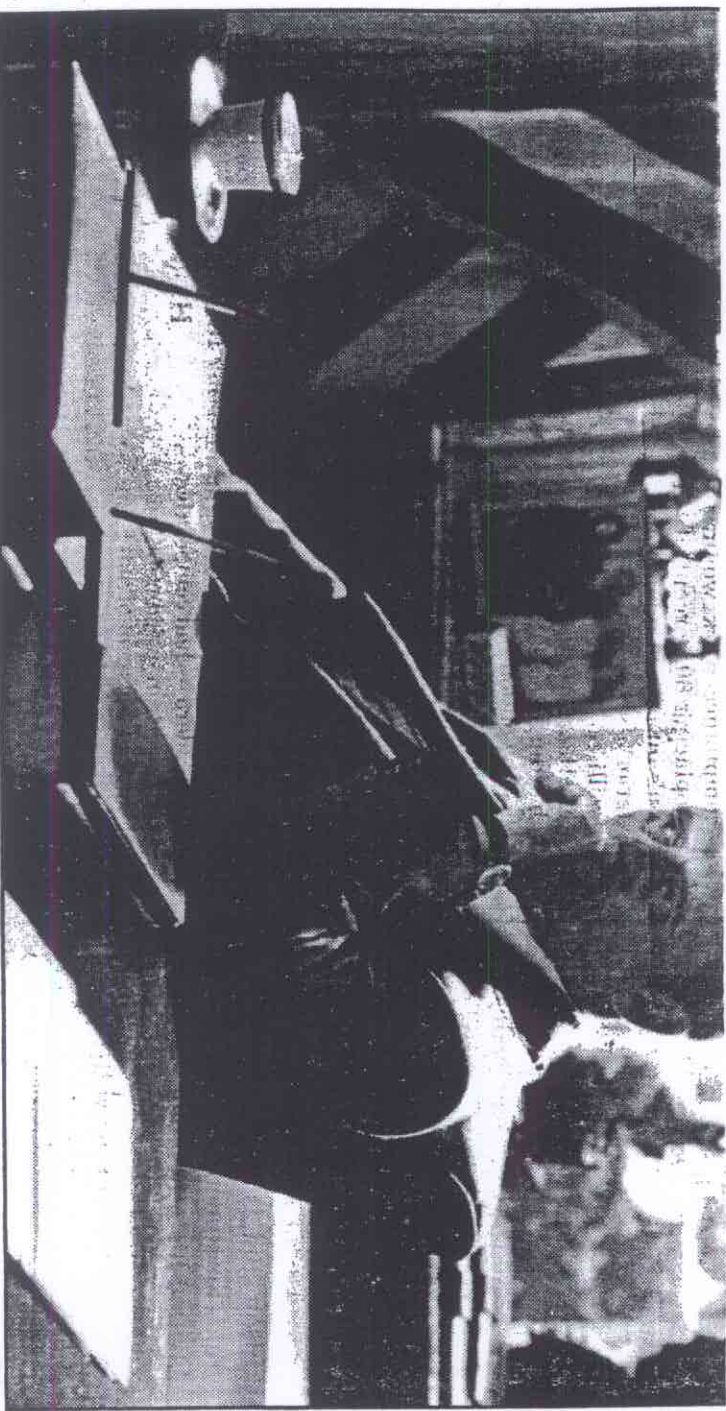
"Stone suggests that there is a connection between the break-in by Nixon's men into the Democratic National headquarters and the Bay of Pigs shenanigans. I like Stone's thinking here, but is there anything other than perversity to support this delicious notion? We really want to know."

Seven of the Watergate burglars, including the leader, Howard Hunt, were veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Hey, you could even look it up in the book "Nixon," edited by Eric Hamburg, which documents Stone's movie and contains portions of the Nixon tapes transcripts. Those transcripts reveal that in the days following the break-in, including the conversation on June 20 with the mysterious 18-minute gap, Nixon makes dozens of references to the "Cuban thing" and the "Bay of Pigs thing." On the June 23 smoking-gun tape, he refers again to "the Bay of Pigs thing," and Howard Hunt's connection with the anti-Castro efforts.

In Hunt's own book, "Give Us This Day," published in 1973, he talks about how his first recommendation during the 1960 planning of the Bay of Pigs was that Castro should be assassinated.

The "perversity" lies perhaps more in the continuity of government covert operations than in Stone's imagination. For a fuller accounting of those connections, including the myriad plots on Castro's life, which did begin during the Eisenhower/Nixon administration, one need only refer back to the hearings conducted by the late Sen. Frank Church.

The real question for this movie, however, was what was going on in Nixon's favored imagination as his cowardly, unconfidential would collude



Anthony Hopkins portrays a beleaguered President Richard Nixon in Oliver Stone's film "Nixon."



By Barbara Shulgasser  
EXAMINER MOVIE CRITIC

What Robert Scheer fails to recognize about my "Nixon" and Oliver Stone criticisms is that I love a good conspiracy as much as the next person. Oliver Stone has spent years researching and many millions of dollars making "Nixon." Where is the new information?

Stone strings together a lot of already available smelly facts and insists that the

# Shulgasser:

Nice conspiracy theory, but where are the facts?

ue? Surely, if Stone has some information connecting Nixon with the Kennedy assassination, he would tell us about it.

As for wondering whether there was a connection between the Watergate break-in and the Bay of Pigs invasion, I meant a *substantial* connection. We know that some of the incompetents who blew the Bay of Pigs also blew Watergate. This just tells me that in the 1960s and '70s, when you wanted to get a dirty job done, you turned to a well-known bunch

nical consultants such as reliable sources as convicted felon John Dean. . . . If anyone is going to have an ax to grind, it'll be an ex-con." Perhaps she doesn't recall that it was Dean who first broke the ranks of the White House cabal and gave compellingly honest congressional testimony.

Fortunately, she left me off the hook here, even though, as opposed to Dean, I got credit up front as a project consultant. Maybe she was just being kind, because I also write columns for *The Examiner*. Although I wrote about Nixon extensively and interviewed him for the *Los Angeles Times*, I was not involved in the Watergate break-in so that eliminates me as a useful target. As a consultant, perhaps I can help critic Shulgasser answer the only two clear questions of fact posed in what was an otherwise unfettered tantrum. She is offended that "Stone proposed that Nixon was in Dallas the morning of John Kennedy's assassination." He was, which she would know, if she had simply checked *The Examiner* library. That's what we consultants do.

And even a cursory reading of the clips would have answered the only other factual point raised by Shulgasser, where her ignorance of what is common knowledge is downright embarrassing. She wrote:

"Stone suggests that there is a connection between the break-in by Nixon's men into the Democratic National headquarters and the Bay of Pigs shenanigans. I like Stone's thinking here, but is there anything other than perversity to support this delicious notion? We really want to know."

Seven of the Watergate burglars, including the leader, Howard Hunt, were veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Hey, you could even look it up in the book "Nixon," edited by Eric Hamburg, which documents Stone's movie and contains portions of the Nixon tapes transcripts. Those transcripts reveal that in the days following the break-in, including the conversation on June 20 with the mysterious 18-minute gap, Nixon makes dozens of references to the "Cuban thing" and the "Bay of Pigs thing." On the June 23 smoking-gun tape, he refers again to "the Bay of Pigs thing," and Howard Hunt's connection with the anti-Castro efforts.

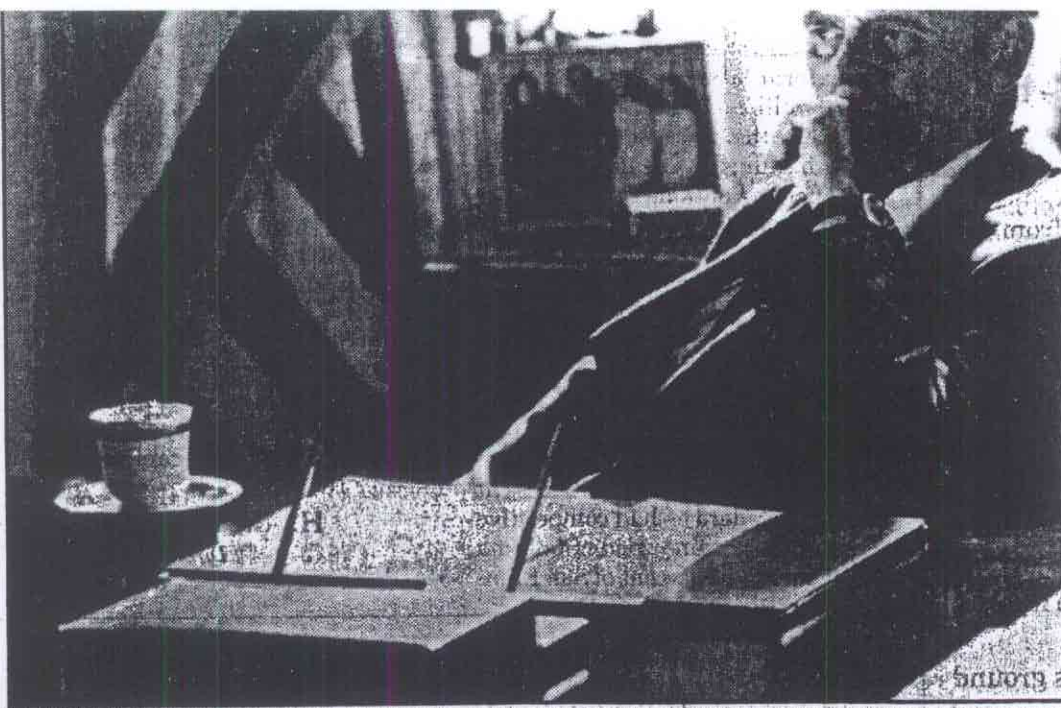
In Hunt's own book, "Give Us This Day," published in 1973, he talks about how his first recommendation during the 1960 planning of the Bay of Pigs was that Castro should be assassinated.

The "perversity" lies perhaps more in the continuity of government covert operations than in Stone's imagination. For a fuller accounting of those connections, including the myriad plots on Castro's life, which did begin during the Eisenhower/Nixon administration, one need only refer back to the hearings conducted by the late Sen. Frank Church.

The real question for this movie, however, was what was going on in Nixon's fevered imagination as his carefully constructed world collapsed. The whole point of this film is that Nixon unraveled as he came to be besieged by events and enemies beyond his control. Stone does not endorse Nixon's paranoia, but he does concede that even paranoids have enemies, and Nixon had more than his share. There is no doubt that Nixon believed that he was done in by an elusive conspiracy of enemies that included a Cuban connection.

The movie is very close to the truth in describing that weird, cynical, contradictory, even deranged hodgepodge of thoughts that were going on in the mind of a president who wielded the chief executive's power.

Like Stone, I find that reality pretty frightening, as a glimpse into the mind of at least one of the powerful, and for that reason would welcome the release of at least one of the powerful, and for that reason would welcome the release of the full 4,000 hours of the Nixon tapes and not just the 60 we now have. We need to keep digging deeper into this murky past to understand better how power operated then and perhaps now. Sadly, it is worth studying all of this, because there is more than a bit of Nixon in every leader.



Anthony Hopkins portrays a beleaguered President Stone's film "Nixon."



# Shulgasser

## Nice conspiracy where are t

By Barbara Shulgasser  
EXAMINER MOVIE CRITIC

What Robert Scheer fails to recognize about my "Nixon" and Oliver Stone criticisms is that I love a good conspiracy as much as the next person. Oliver Stone has spent years researching and many millions of dollars making "Nixon." Where is the new information?

Stone strings together a lot of already available smelly facts and insists that the odor constitutes proof of the existence of a mackerel. As Stone well knows, there are many things other than fish that stink.

So yes, Nixon was in Dallas the day President Kennedy was shot. As I wrote in my review of the movie, my concern was not whether Nixon was in Dallas that day, which is a matter of record, but whether it means anything. None of the work produced by Stone's honorable consultants indicate to me that it did.

So, if Nixon just happened to be in Dallas that day in November for his own innocent reasons, why is this even worth mentioning except for its suggestive val-

ue? Sure connect assassinat As fo connect break-in meant know th blew the This jus '70s, wh done, yo of sleazy doing di If a n ed unde to heart million hope th And ing, I a Nixon v So what The fice. I w Examir artistic

# ARTS & IDEAS

# 'Nixon': Fact or

## The filmmaker addresses



By Robert Scheer  
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

### Scheer:

### Film shows Nixon in all his terrifying, flawed glory

Wasn't this a great country before Oliver Stone started making movies? Before him we used to believe uncritically in our presidents, our wars and our assassination commissions. God and truth were always on our side in the days when Charlton Heston was Moses and John Wayne a Green Beret.

No wonder The Examiner's movie critic referred to Stone, in a Sunday Arts & Ideas piece Jan. 7, as "a man who makes his living being a ranting maniac" and "a much more dangerous fellow" than tobacco industry lobbyists and Oliver North. Filmmakers that dangerous need to be locked up. Too bad critic Barbara Shulgasser didn't have a job with Pravda in Stalin's time; she understands so clearly that it is not only the work of art but also the artist that must be destroyed.

First there was "Salvador," which implied a cynical purpose to our propping up puppet regimes in Central America. Then those Vietnam movies that reminded us of the costs of a war we were trying so hard to forget.

And now Richard Nixon, safely tucked away as an accidental embarrassment to the proud history of the presidency, has been thrust before us as a complex, tormented figure given to paranoid explanations for his own downfall.

How did Stone ever come up with such a nutty view? Felonious consul-

The critic's meat is often the artist's gristle. Oliver Stone's latest historically based film, "Nixon," has inspired heated debate — as art should. Artists always retold history, but Stone's versions don't just please the critics, they spark explosive reactions.

Following an essay by Examiner film critic Barl Shulgasser ("Oliver Stone Plays Fast and Loose with the Truth," Jan. 7), the paper received heated replies from both Stone and writer Robert Scheer, who was a consultant on "Nixon." Scheer is an Examiner columnist and contributing editor at the Los Angeles Times. Here we print here his response to Shulgasser's essay and his answer to that criticism.

Stone declined to address his remarks to Shulgasser (he deemed a dialogue with a critic "demeaning"), responding instead to a critical essay by Henry Kissinger ("Stone Leaves Truth on Cutting-Room Floor") published in the Los Angeles Times on Jan. 21. (Kissinger's "The film raises a final issue that goes far beyond Nixon — the responsibility of the motion-picture industry to history itself.")

We print Stone's response to Kissinger here.

— The

... If anyone is going to have an ax to grind, it'll be an ex-con." Perhaps she doesn't recall that it was Dean who first broke the ranks of the White House cabal and gave compellingly honest congressional testimony.

Fortunately, she left me off the hook here, even though, as opposed to Dean, I got credit up front as a project consultant. Maybe she was just being kind, because I also write columns for *The Examiner*. Although I wrote about Nixon extensively and interviewed him for the *Los Angeles Times*, I was not involved in the Watergate break-in — so that eliminates me as a useful target.

As a consultant, perhaps I can help critic Shulgasser answer the only two clear questions of fact posed in what was an otherwise unfettered tantrum. She is offended that "Stone proposed that Nixon was in Dallas the morning of John Kennedy's assassination." He was, which she would know, if she had simply checked *The Examiner* library. That's what we consultants do.

And even a cursory reading of the clips would have answered the only other factual point raised by Shulgasser, where her ignorance of what is common knowledge is downright embarrassing. She wrote:

"Stone suggests that there is a connection between the break-in by Nixon's men into the Democratic National headquarters and the Bay of Pigs shenanigans. I like Stone's thinking here, but is there anything other than perversity to support this delicious notion? We really want to know."

Seven of the Watergate burglars, including the leader, Howard Hunt, were veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Hey, you could even look it up in the book "Nixon," edited by Eric Hamburg, which documents Stone's movie and contains portions of the Nixon tapes transcripts. Those transcripts reveal that in the days following the break-in, including the conversation on June 20 with the mysterious 18-minute gap, Nixon makes dozens of references to the "Cuban thing" and the "Bay of Pigs thing." On the June 23 smoking-gun tape, he refers again to "the Bay of Pigs thing," and Howard Hunt's connection with the anti-Castro efforts.

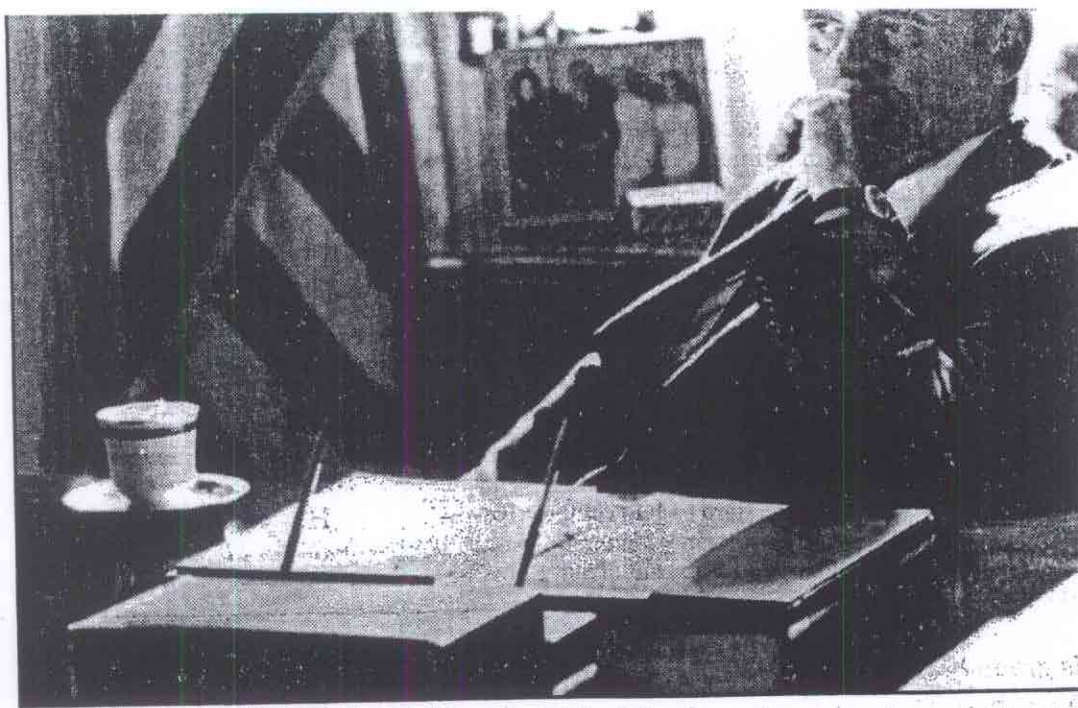
In Hunt's own book, "Give Us This Day," published in 1973, he talks about how his first recommendation during the 1960 planning of the Bay of Pigs was that Castro should be assassinated.

The "perversity" lies perhaps more in the continuity of government covert operations than in Stone's imagination. For a fuller accounting of those connections, including the myriad plots on Castro's life, which did begin during the Eisenhower/Nixon administration, one need only refer back to the hearings conducted by the late Sen. Frank Church.

The real question for this movie, however, was what was going on in Nixon's fevered imagination as his carefully constructed world collapsed. The whole point of this film is that Nixon unraveled as he came to be besieged by events and enemies beyond his control. Stone does not endorse Nixon's paranoia, but he does concede that even paranoids have enemies, and Nixon had more than his share. There is no doubt that Nixon believed that he was done in by an elusive conspiracy of enemies that included a Cuban connection.

The movie is very close to the truth in describing that weird, cynical, contradictory, even deranged hodgepodge of thoughts that were going on in the mind of a president who wielded the chief executive's power.

Like Stone, I find that reality pretty frightening, as a glimpse into the mind of at least one of the powerful, and for that reason would welcome the release of the full 4,000 hours of the Nixon tapes and not just the 60 we now have. We need to keep digging deeper into this murky past to understand better how power operated then and perhaps now. Sadly, it is worth studying all of this, because there is more than a bit of Nixon in every leader.



Anthony Hopkins portrays a beleaguered President Stone's film "Nixon."



By Barbara Shulgasser  
EXAMINER MOVIE CRITIC

# Shulgasser

## Nice conspiracy where are th

What Robert Scheer fails to recognize about my "Nixon" and Oliver Stone criticisms is that I love a good conspiracy as much as the next person. Oliver Stone has spent years researching and many millions of dollars making "Nixon." Where is the new information?

Stone strings together a lot of already available smelly facts and insists that the odor constitutes proof of the existence of a mackerel. As Stone well knows, there are many things other than fish that stink.

So yes, Nixon was in Dallas the day President Kennedy was shot. As I wrote in my review of the movie, my concern was not whether Nixon was in Dallas that day, which is a matter of record, but whether it means anything. None of the work produced by Stone's honorable consultants indicate to me that it did.

So, if Nixon just happened to be in Dallas that day in November for his own innocent reasons, why is this even worth mentioning except for its suggestive val-

ue? Surel connecti

sassinati

As for connecti

break-in

meant

know the

blew the

This just

'70s, wh

done, yo

of sleazy

doing di

If a m

ed unde

to hear t

million t

hope the

And t

ing, I ag

Nixon w

So what

The f

fice. I w

Examina

artistic.

# Movie is a dramatic portrait of a historical figure

By Oliver Stone  
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

"Nixon" is not history. It is a dramatic portrait set against a historical landscape; a film that attempts to interpret a life, to get at the tragedy of a man who shaped an era the historical truth of which remains unsettled. And this latter fact is due in part, at least, to Henry Kissinger's continuing efforts to revise and re-interpret his own role in that period.

Kissinger raises the question of how one is to know which portions of "Nixon" are imaginary and which are real. Yet a more pressing historical question is: Which portions of Kissinger's version of Nixon's White House are self-serving and which are real?

The Nixon White House, including Kissinger's role in it, was characterized not exclusively by sober debate and decision-making, as the doctor would have us believe, but also by vindictiveness, back-stabbing and paranoia.

Kissinger argues that Nixon inherited a "real and not imaginary" problem in the American public's judgment "that, as fought, the (Vietnam) war was unwinnable." According to even so sympathetic a Nixon biographer as Stephen Ambrose, this was not only the public's judgment — it was Nixon's as well. Professor Ambrose states that as early as January 1969 Nixon knew the war could not be won. If that is the case, then fully half of the names on the Vietnam Memorial are those of Americans who died despite that knowledge.

I suspect that Kissinger must have known it, too. Yet both he and President Nixon continued for years to prosecute an unwinnable war, while actively lying to the public about their hopes and aims.

I was not "a youthful radical Vietnam protester" as Kissinger states, but a wounded and decorated combat infantryman who volunteered for the war. I do not forget or forgive the deaths of friends that resulted from the Nixon-Kissinger war policy, nor do I forget that Kissinger accepted his Nobel Peace Prize in the shadow of the savage Christmas bombing of Hanoi.

Kissinger derides as simplistic the "yearning" of a young student in the film that the war be stopped, implying with characteristic hubris that for reasons of practical politics beyond her ken it could not have been. Yet, given that Nixon knew the war could not be won, the politics that forced him to continue it were "beast-like" — as we suggest in our film.

It is never the Nixons or Nobel laureates who pay the price of grand global politics: It is the simplistic "yearning" youths who believe those statesmen even when they lie. Yet at some point those youths — millions of them — saw through the Nixon-Kissinger posturings, ceased to believe their lies, and helped force an end to their forlorn war. And it is clear from his article that Kissinger still wishes to malign them.

Though I mourn those young lives that were lost I am glad, as Richard Nixon says in the film, that "History depends on who writes it." I should not wish Kissinger to have that field to himself.



Anthony Hopkins portrays a beleaguered President Richard Nixon in Oliver Stone's film "Nixon."



## Shulgasser: Nice conspiracy theory, but where are the facts?

By Barbara Shulgasser  
EXAMINER MOVIE CRITIC

What Robert Scheer fails to recognize about my "Nixon" and Oliver Stone criticisms is that I love a good conspiracy as much as the next person. Oliver Stone has spent years researching and many millions of dollars making "Nixon." Where is the new information?

Stone strings together a lot of already available smelly facts and insists that the odor constitutes proof of the existence of a mackerel. As Stone well knows, there are many things other than fish that stink.

So yes, Nixon was in Dallas the day President Kennedy was shot. As I wrote in my review of the movie, my concern was not whether Nixon was in Dallas that day, which is a matter of record, but whether it means anything. None of the work produced by Stone's honorable consultants indicate to me that it did.

So, if Nixon just happened to be in Dallas that day in November for his own innocent reasons, why is this even worth mentioning except for its suggestive val-

ue? Surely, if Stone has some information connecting Nixon with the Kennedy assassination, he would tell us about it.

As for wondering whether there was a connection between the Watergate break-in and the Bay of Pigs invasion, I meant a *substantial* connection. We know that some of the incompetents who blew the Bay of Pigs also blew Watergate. This just tells me that in the 1960s and '70s, when you wanted to get a dirty job done, you turned to a well-known bunch of sleazy guys who were in the business of doing dirty jobs.

If a more substantial connection existed under three administrations, I'd love to hear the facts; next time Stone gets \$43 million to blow on consultants and such, I hope they come up with something solid.

And to clear up any misunderstanding, I agree with Scheer and Stone that Nixon was "a complex tormented figure." So what else is new?

The film is doing poorly at the box office. I wonder if Stone's complaints to The Examiner are more commercial than artistic.

# ARTS & IDEAS

## Fact or fiction?

### Maker addresses his critics

The critic's meat is often the artist's gristle.

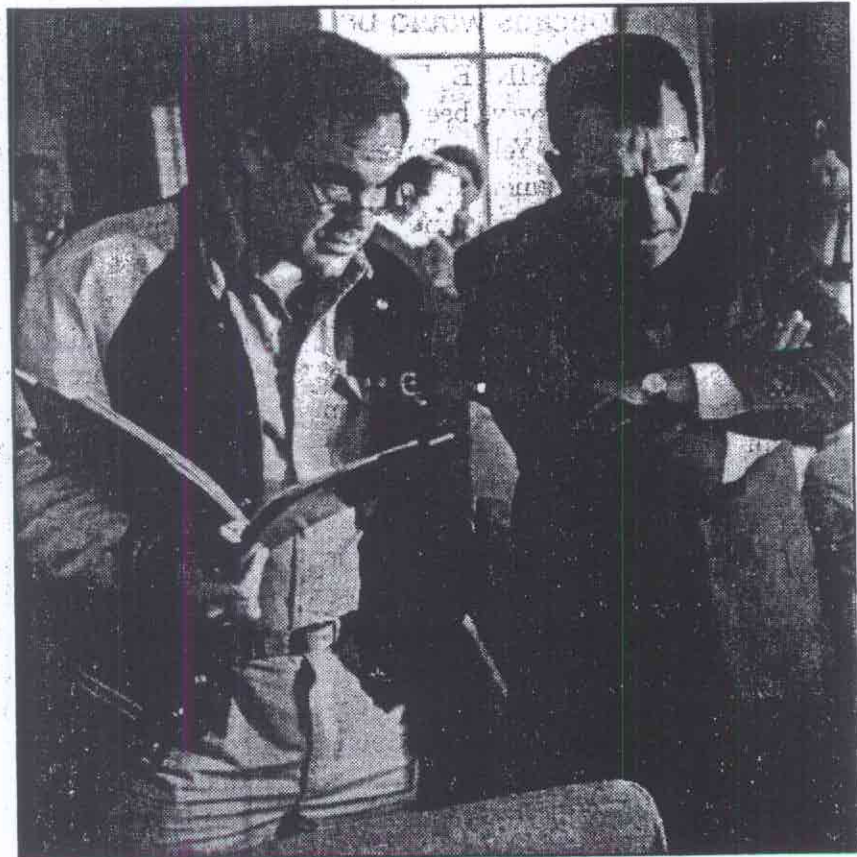
Oliver Stone's latest historically based film, "Nixon," has inspired heated debate — as art should. Artists have always retold history, but Stone's versions don't just rattle the critics, they spark explosive reactions.

Following an essay by Examiner film critic Barbara Shulgasser ("Oliver Stone Plays Fast and Loose With the Truth," Jan. 7), the paper received heated replies from both Stone and writer Robert Scheer, who was a consultant on "Nixon." Scheer is an Examiner columnist and contributing editor at the Los Angeles Times, and we print here his response to Shulgasser's essay and her answer to that criticism.

Stone declined to address his remarks to Shulgasser (he deemed a dialogue with a critic "demeaning"), responding instead to a critical essay by Henry Kissinger ("Stone Leaves Truth on Cutting-Room Floor") published in the Los Angeles Times on Jan. 21. (Kissinger: "The film raises a final issue that goes far beyond fairness to Nixon — the responsibility of the motion-picture industry to history itself.")

We print Stone's response to Kissinger here.

— The Editors



Director Oliver Stone, left, and star Anthony Hopkins consult with each other on the set of "Nixon."

Stone.