

# All Hail to 'All the President's Men'

By VINCENT CANBY

Newspapers and newspapermen have long been favorite subjects for movie makers—a surprising number of whom are former newspapermen, yet not until "All The President's Men," the riveting screen adaptation of the Watergate book by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, has any film come remotely close to being an accurate picture of American journalism at its best.

"All The President's Men," directed by Alan J. Pakula, written by William Goldman and largely pushed into being by the continuing interest of one of its stars, Robert Redford, is a lot of things all at once: a spellbinding detective story about the work of the two Washington Post reporters who helped break the Watergate scandal, a breathless adventure that recalls the triumphs of Frank and Joe Hardy in that long-ago series of boys' books, and a vivid footnote to some contemporary American history that still boggles the mind.

The film, which opened yesterday at Loews Astor Plaza and Tower East Theaters, is an unequivocal smash-hit — the thinking man's "Jaws."

Much of the effectiveness of the movie, which could easily have become a mish-mash of names, dates and events, is in its point of view, which remains that of

## The Cast

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, directed by Alan J. Pakula; screenplay by William Goldman, based on the book by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward; produced by Walter Coblenz; music, David Shire; director of photography, Gordon Willis; editor, Robert L. Wolfe; a Wildwood production, distributed by Warner Brothers. Running time: 136 minutes. At Loews Astor Plaza, 44th Street west of Broadway, and Loews Tower East, Third Avenue near 72d Street. This film has been rated PG.

Carl Bernstein	.....	Dustin Hoffman
Bob Woodward	.....	Robert Redford
Harry Rosenfeld	.....	Jack Warden
Howard Simons	.....	Martin Balsam
Deep Throat	.....	Hal Holbrook
Ben Bradlee	.....	Jason Robards
Bookkeeper	.....	Jane Alexander
Debbie Sloan	.....	Meredith Baxter
Darcis	.....	Ned Beatty
Hugh Sloan, Jr.	.....	Stephen Collins
Sally Aiken	.....	Penny Fuller
Foreign Editor	.....	John McMartin
Donald Segretti	.....	Robert Walden
Frank Willis	.....	Himself
Bachinski	.....	David Arkin
Barker	.....	Henry Calvert
Marinez	.....	Dominic Chianese
Key Eddy	.....	Lindsay Ann Crouse
Miss Milland	.....	Valetta Curtin
McCord	.....	Richard Herd
Carolyn Abbot	.....	Allyn Ann McLerie
Angry CRP woman	.....	Neva Patterson
Al Lewis	.....	Joshua Shelley

its two, as yet unknown reporters. Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman), highly competitive and a little more experienced than his partner, and Bob Woodward (Robert Redford), very ambitious and a dog for details.

It's through their eyes—skeptical, hungry, insatiably curious—that "All The President's Men" unfolds. It begins logically on the night of June 17, 1972, when five men were arrested in an apparent break-in at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex in Washington, and continues through the spectacular series of revelations, accusa-

tions and admissions of guilt that eventually brought the Nixon Presidency to its weepy banal conclusion.

Like Bernstein and Woodward in the course of their investigation, the film maintains bifocal vision, becoming thoroughly absorbed in the seemingly unimportant minutiae out of which major conspiracies can sometimes be reconstructed, yet never for long losing sight of the overall relevance of what's going on. Although "All The President's Men" is first and foremost a fascinating newspaper film, the dimensions and implications of the Watergate story obviously give it an emotional punch that might be lacking if, say, Bernstein and Woodward had been exposing corruption in the Junior League.

Thus the necessity of the director's use of newsreel footage from time to time—the shots of President Nixon's helicopter making a night landing at the White House, which open the film; the television images of the President entering the House of Representatives, and of other familiar folk including former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, former Vice President Agnew, and, especially, Representative Gerald R. Ford in the course of his nomination of President Nixon at the 1972 Republican National Convention.

Though the film will undoubtedly have some politi-

cal impact, its strength is the virtually day-by-day record of the way Bernstein and Woodward conducted their investigations, always under the supervision of a kindly avuncular Ben Bradlee (Jason Robards), The Post's managing editor who (in this film) gives out advice, caution and, occasionally, a "well-done," acting as Dr. Gillespie to their Dr. Kildares.

Mr. Redford and Mr. Hoffman play their roles with the low-keyed, understated efficiency required since they are, in effect, the straight men to the people and the events they are pursuing. The film stays out of their private lives but is full of unexpected, brief, moving glimpses into the private lives of their subjects, including a frightened bookkeeper (Jane Alexander) for the Committee to Re-elect the President, Donald Segretti (Robert Walden), the "dirty tricks" man, and Hugh Sloan Jr. (Stephen Collins), the committee treasurer, and his wife (Meredith Baxter).

The manners and methods of big-city newspapering, beautifully detailed, contribute as much to the momentum of the film as the mystery that's being uncovered. Maybe even more, since the real excitement of "All The President's Men" is in watching two comparatively inexperienced reporters stumble onto the story of their lives and develop it triumphantly, against all odds.