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## FILMS

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# Newspaper

*Journalism's answer to Airport and Hospital.*



Neither politics nor character, but a tedious authenticity in the news room of the Washington Post.

**All The President's Men.** Screenplay by William Goldman. Produced by Walter Coblenz. Directed by Allen J. Pakula. Distributed by Warner Brothers.

BY NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

Robert Redford said *All The President's Men* wasn't about Nixon, but about newspaper reporting, and he's right. As such, it's a genre occupation picture a la *Airport* and *Hospital*, but one which emphasizes the veracity of minute details instead of sex and sensation. Now you know what reporters, instead of doctors and pilots, do, and if that interests you, you ought to enjoy the picture.

You'll see the endless telephone calling, the checking of city directories, the fumbling questions, the numb

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wonderment about what to try and find out next, which occupy so much of a reporter's time. For people who are curious about such things, or are smitten with the fashionable notion that journalists are the saviors of the Republic, or are Watergate hobbyists, the movie should be entertaining enough so that they'll not miss a certain absence of plot and character.

### Hard-Working Automata

The cinematic Woodward and Bernstein have been so stripped of the identifying marks of human individuality that they could be *any* two hard-working reporters of either sex. Two women could have read their roles, for even the telltale perspective of gender has been removed from their parts.

Much the same is true of the editors at *The Washington Post*. The characters bear no resemblance to the real persons, nor to anybody else. Here and there you get a line that smacks slightly of *The Front Page*, but mostly they're depicted as hard-working, virtuous, Ivy-

Leaguish automata, prudent, concerned integers who do their work with the care of bank tellers. Jason Robards, who plays Ben Bradlee, does a semi-imitation of Bradlee's physical mannerisms, but the script he's been given to read delineates a nonperson. The real people are far more interesting than their dramatic representations. The real Bradlee doesn't go about uttering portentous, cosmographical stuffinesses.

Deep Throat, played by Hal Holbrook, comes off like the Mayan god on the Chubby Checkers program and is therefore the most entertaining chap on the set. Again, none of this flatness will bother you if you're an old-time Nixon hater, a Watergate wallower, or a news groupie.

### White House Caesar

When Shakespeare wrote *Julius Caesar*, the story of the downfall of another authoritarian politician, it can't have occurred to him that he had an obligation to be historically accurate.