

= Tucker : The Man and His Dream =

Tucker : The Man and His Dream is a 1988 American biographical comedy @-@ drama film directed by Francis Ford Coppola and starring Jeff Bridges . The film recounts the story of Preston Tucker and his attempt to produce and market the 1948 Tucker Sedan , which was met with scandal between the " Big Three automobile manufacturers " and accusations of stock fraud from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission . Joan Allen , Martin Landau , Elias Koteas , Frederic Forrest and Christian Slater appear in supporting roles .

In 1973 , Coppola began development of a film based on the life of Tucker , originally with Marlon Brando in the lead role . Starting in 1976 , Coppola planned Tucker to be both a musical and an experimental film with music and lyrics written by Leonard Bernstein , Betty Comden and Adolph Green . The project eventually collapsed when Coppola 's American Zoetrope experienced financial problems . Tucker was revived in 1986 when Coppola 's friend , George Lucas , joined as a producer .

The film received critical praise , but was a box office disappointment . Nonetheless , Tucker : The Man and His Dream produced a spike in prices of Tucker Sedans , as well as a renewed appreciation for Tucker and his automobiles .

= = Plot = =

Detroit engineer Preston Tucker (Jeff Bridges) has been interested in building cars since childhood . During World War II he designed an armored car for the military and made money building gun turrets for aircraft in a small shop next to his home in Ypsilanti , Michigan . Tucker is supported by his large , extended family , including wife Vera (Joan Allen) and eldest son Preston Jr (Christian Slater) .

As the war winds down , Tucker has a dream of finally building the " car of the future . " The " Tucker Torpedo " will feature revolutionary safety designs including disc brakes , seat belts , a pop out windshield , and head lights which swivel when you turn . Tucker hires young designer Alex Tremulis (Elias Koteas) to help with the design and enlists New York financier Abe Karatz (Martin Landau) , to arrange financial support . Raising the money through a stock issue , Tucker and Karatz acquire the enormous Dodge Chicago Plant to begin manufacturing . Abe hires Robert Bennington (Dean Goodman) to run the new Tucker Corporation on a day @-@ to @-@ day basis .

Launching " the car of tomorrow " in a spectacular way , the Tucker Corporation is met with enthusiasm from shareholders and the general public . However , the Tucker company board of directors , unsure of his ability to overcome the technical and financial obstacles ahead , send Tucker off on a publicity campaign , and attempt to take complete control of the company . While Tucker travels the country , Bennington and directors change the design of Tucker 's car to a more conventional design , eliminating the safety and engineering advances Tucker was advertising . At the same time , Tucker faces animosity from the Big Three and the authorities led by Michigan Senator Homer S. Ferguson (Lloyd Bridges) .

Tucker returns from his publicity tour and confronts Bennington , who curtly informs him that he no longer has any power in the company to make decisions , and the engine originally planned for the car is not viable . Tucker then receives a call from Howard Hughes (Dean Stockwell) , who sends a private plane to bring Tucker to his aircraft manufacturing site . Hughes advises Tucker to purchase Air Cooled Motors , which can supply both the steel Tucker needs , as well as a small , powerful helicopter engine that might replace Tucker 's original " 589 " power plant .

Faced with being unable to change Bennington 's design , Tucker modifies the new engine and installs it in a test Tucker in the secrecy of his backyard tool and die shop . This prototype proves successful in both durability and crash testing . However , Tucker is confronted with allegations of stock fraud . Ferguson 's investigation with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) , causes Karatz , once convicted of bank fraud , to resign , fearful that his criminal record will prejudice the hearings . Yellow journalism starts ruining Tucker 's public image even though the

ultimate courtroom battle is resolved when he parades his entire production run of 50 Tucker Torpedoes , proving that he has reached production status .

After giving a speech to the jurors on how capitalism in the United States is harmed by efforts of large corporations against small entrepreneurs like himself , Tucker is acquitted on all charges . Nevertheless , his company falls into bankruptcy and Preston Tucker dies of lung cancer seven years later , never able to realize his dream of producing a state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art automobile .

The film ends with all 50 Tucker Sedans being driven down the streets of downtown Chicago , admired by everyone as they pass .

= = Cast = =

= = Background = =

From childhood , Coppola envisioned a film about the Tucker automobile and while attending the UCLA School of Theater , Film and Television in the early 1960s , further refined a film concept based on the life of Preston Tucker . In June 1973 , during the filming of The Godfather Part II (1974) , Coppola announced his intention to start development at American Zoetrope as writer , producer and director . He had already approached Marlon Brando for the lead role . He then purchased the rights from the Tucker Estate in 1976 , and , in addition to Brando , discussed the leading role with Jack Nicholson and also considered Burt Reynolds . Taking inspiration from Citizen Kane (1941) , Kabuki theater and the work of Bertolt Brecht , Coppola initially planned to make Tucker as a " dark kind of musical . " He later said that the idea approximated the style of an experimental film , similar to Mishima : A Life in Four Chapters (1985) , which he produced .

The musical would have featured Tucker predominantly , but storylines would have interwoven Thomas Edison , Henry Ford , Harvey Samuel Firestone and Andrew Carnegie as supporting characters . Leonard Bernstein agreed to write the music , and Betty Comden and Adolph Green were hired to write the lyrics . They all spent a week at Coppola 's home in California , planning the musical which resulted in Bernstein writing one song . Coppola also approached Gene Kelly as a consultant for the dance choreography . However , financing for Tucker fell through when Coppola 's production company , American Zoetrope , filed for bankruptcy after the box office failures of One from the Heart (1982) and The Cotton Club (1984) . Coppola abandoned Tucker for the time being and went to work on Peggy Sue Got Married (1986) .

In 1986 , during the production of Captain EO (1986) , Coppola 's friend George Lucas encouraged him to revive development for Tucker , believing it to be " the best film Francis had ever been involved with . " In addition , Lucas agreed to serve as executive producer and offered the use of his filmmaking companies , Lucasfilm and Industrial Light & Magic . He also convinced Coppola to drop the musical idea in favor of doing a homage to the films of Frank Capra , especially Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939) . Coppola became interested in the American Dream aspect of the storyline , as well as post @-@ World War II capitalism and politics . At one point , Coppola approached Capra to produce the film with Lucas , however , Capra thought Tucker was a failure and Coppola dropped that plan .

Coppola originally intended to write the screenplay himself , but due to his commitment to the filming of Gardens of Stone (1987) , engaged Arnold Schulman who scripted Capra 's A Hole in the Head (1959) . Schulman eventually collaborated with David Seidler on the Tucker project . Subsequently , Coppola rewrote the Schulman and Seidler scripts , but an attempt to get a co @-@ writing credit on the film was overruled by the Writers Guild of America , as an arbitration committee determined Coppola did not contribute enough to the script to warrant an on @-@ screen writing credit . The filmmakers devised a \$ 24 million production budget , but Universal Pictures , Walt Disney Pictures , TriStar Pictures and Paramount Pictures wanted Coppola and Lucas to lower it to \$ 15 million . Distributors were also dubious about working with Lucas after the 1986 commercial and critical failures of both Labyrinth and Howard the Duck . Lucas decided to cover the \$ 24 million

budget himself , and pre @-@ production proceeded .

= = Production = =

Development and production for Tucker : The Man and His Dream included the involvement of Tucker 's children and grandchildren . Jeff Bridges was cast in the title role and , for research , studied Preston Tucker 's mannerisms and movements through home movies . Tucker 's descendants also granted Bridges the opportunity to sport the man 's black pearl ring and cuff links for his wardrobe . Preston 's son , John Tucker , said that Bridges has " got it all in the mannerisms and the look . My father was very positive , always thinking of what came next . Jeff captures that . " Martin Landau was enthusiastic about accepting the pivotal role of Abe Karatz as a means to avoid typecasting . The construct of family values played a crucial role in the Tuckers ' life and Coppola studiously selected Joan Allen for the part of Vera , Tucker 's devoted wife while Christian Slater and Elias Koteas fill in the other central roles of eldest son and Tucker 's friend and confederate , Alex Tremulis . Coppola 's family was undergoing a stressful time during the production and he dedicated the film to Gio , his eldest son , who died before filming began .

Principal photography started with first unit shooting on April 13 , 1987 in the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant in Richmond , California , doubling for the Dodge Chicago Plant . The majority of outdoor filming took place in Marin County , California as well as various locations including Oakland , Novato , and San Francisco . Forty @-@ seven of the original 52 Tucker ' 48s still exist , and many are in excellent condition . Twenty @-@ one of the cars were borrowed from members of the Tucker Automobile Club of America and were extensively used as both " set dressing " and in starring roles . Three cars were used to film the crash scene , a " before " version , with a fiberglass body , the car used to do the actual rollover was a Studebaker modified to look like a Tucker (this car is currently in a privately owned museum in Tallahassee , Florida) , and an " after crash " version which was another fiberglass body fitted to a Ford LTD chassis . The production is notable as the first film to have audio mixing work done at Lucas 's Skywalker Ranch . Production wrapped on July 17 , 1987 , and in the following month , Lucas convinced Paramount Pictures to distribute the film and cover the majority of the budget . He was helped by the fact that the studio was courting Coppola to direct The Godfather Part III (1990) . Prior to final editing , the studio insisted on amplifying the title to Tucker : The Man and His Dream .

= = Historical accuracy = =

Coppola had a certain amount of personal affinity with the short @-@ lived legacy of Preston Tucker . His father , Carmine Coppola , had been one of the original investors in Tucker stock and purchased one of the cars off the production line . Coppola included the involvement of Preston Tucker 's children , grandchildren and members of the Tucker Estate during the development of Tucker in the late 1970s , as well as during filming in 1987 . Coppola and Lucas acknowledged that they purposely intended to portray Tucker in an entirely sympathetic way . Both filmmakers each owned two Tuckers , although Lucas eventually sold one of his cars in September 2005 for \$ 385 @, @ 500 . The Tucker Automobile Club made up of a legion of Tucker owners and collectors pronounced in their trade journal , TACA , that the " basic theme of the movie is quite accurate ... " although " the film compresses time and often takes artistic license with facts in order to more effectively present the story . "

Anahid Nazarian , Coppola 's librarian , spoke of the historical inaccuracies . " Preston Tucker didn 't really have an assembly line ; there 's one in the film . He actually had five kids ; there are only four in the film . Our story takes place in one year ; the real story took place over four years . People who know the story will find a lot of what they call errors . I 'm sure I 'll be deluged with letters . " Nazarian 's research , collected over several years , consisted of books , some 350 articles , interviews with the Tucker family , hundreds of photographs , home movies and information from the Tucker Automobile Club of America who the production company considered important arbiters of the Tucker mystique . " We knew the facts , " she continued , " but to fit the spirit of the story in a film

that is exciting and has characters you love and characters you hate - that made us change a lot of things . Things like the president of the Tucker Company was a good guy really , but we needed a villain , so we made him a villain . " Alex Tremulis who served as one of the historical consultants during production , is depicted as the chief car designer of the Tucker Torpedo rather than as the stylist , and the film ignores the involvement of designer Philip Egan .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

Tucker : The Man and His Dream was released in the United States on August 12 , 1988 , earning \$ 3 @, @ 709 @, @ 562 in its opening weekend in 720 theaters . The film eventually grossed \$ 19 @. @ 65 million in US totals and was declared a box office bomb because it did not reimburse its \$ 24 million production budget , despite positive reviews . Pocket Books published a novelization written by Robert Tine to coincide with the release of the film . Paramount Home Video released Tucker : The Man and His Dream on DVD in October 2000 , which included audio commentary by Coppola , the 1948 promotional film Tucker : The Man and the Car (with optional commentary by Coppola) , as well as a making @-@ of featurette , Under the Hood : Making Tucker .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Critical reaction was mainly positive . Based on 37 reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes , 84 % of the critics enjoyed the film with an average score of 7 @. @ 2 / 10 . By comparison Metacritic calculated an average score of 74 / 100 , based on 13 reviews . Richard Schickel of Time magazine praised the film for its exaggerated kitsch style . He also believed the role of Preston Tucker to be Jeff Bridges ' best performance . Janet Maslin from The New York Times agreed , writing that Coppola , known for his dark approach on his previous films , " found the directorial range to actually make a feel @-@ good movie . " In addition , Desson Thomson , writing in The Washington Post , called the film a " satisfying commercial breakthrough for Coppola , " and praised the cinematography of Vittorio Storaro , as well as the ubiquitous approach for Dean Stockwell 's cameo appearance as Howard Hughes . Roger Ebert gave a mixed review . " Preston Tucker lacks an ounce of common sense or any notion of the real odds against him . And since the movie never really deals with that - never really comes to grips with Tucker 's character - it begins as a saga but ends in whimsy . "

Although Coppola enjoyed his working relationship with Lucas , he commented in a July 1988 The New York Times interview with Robert Lindsey that " I think it 's a good movie - it 's eccentric , a little wacky , like the Tucker car - but it 's not the movie I would have made at the height of my power . " Coppola was able to stoically accept the critical and commercial reaction to Tucker : The Man and His Dream . " Every time in my career I tried to make , dare I say it , an art film , it never did well . "

Despite helming his " labor of love , " Coppola was insistent that Tucker : The Man and His Dream would be his last Hollywood project . He reiterated a long @-@ held dream of his own , embarking on a " period of amateurism and experimentation as a Hollywood dropout . " One of the unexpected benefits of the film 's release was a renewed interest in the Tucker automobile and a boost in the collector 's value of the Tucker 48 ; a recent auction of a low @-@ mileage example topped the \$ 1 million mark .

= = Awards = =

At the 61st Academy Awards , Martin Landau was nominated for Best Supporting Actor , while production and set designers Dean Tavoularis and Armin Ganz (Art Direction) and Milena Canonero (Costume Design) were also nominated for their work . Landau did end up winning the Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture , while Tavoularis won the

BAFTA Award for Best Production Design . Casting directors Jane Jenkins and Janet Hirshenson received a nomination for Feature Film Casting- Drama by the Casting Society of America . The film was nominated for the prestigious Grand Prix of the Belgian Syndicate of Cinema Critics . Music composer Joe Jackson received a Grammy Award nomination .