

= JFK (film) =

JFK is a 1991 American historical legal @-@ conspiracy thriller film directed by Oliver Stone . It examines the events leading to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and alleged cover @-@ up through the eyes of former New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) .

Garrison filed charges against New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones) for his alleged participation in a conspiracy to assassinate the President , for which Lee Harvey Oswald (Gary Oldman) was found responsible by a government investigation : the Warren Commission .

The film was adapted by Stone and Zachary Sklar from the books On the Trail of the Assassins by Jim Garrison and Crossfire : The Plot That Killed Kennedy by Jim Marrs . Stone described this account as a " counter @-@ myth " to the Warren Commission 's " fictional myth . "

The film became embroiled in controversy . Upon JFK 's theatrical release , many major American newspapers ran editorials accusing Stone of taking liberties with historical facts , including the film 's implication that President Lyndon B. Johnson was part of a coup d'état to kill Kennedy . After a slow start at the box office , the film gradually picked up momentum , earning over \$ 205 million in worldwide gross . JFK was nominated for eight Academy Awards (including Best Picture) and won two for Best Cinematography and Best Film Editing . It was the most successful of three films Stone made about the American Presidency , followed later by Nixon with Anthony Hopkins in the title role and W. with Josh Brolin as George W. Bush .

= = Plot = =

The film opens with newsreel footage , including the farewell address in 1961 of outgoing President Dwight D. Eisenhower , warning about the build @-@ up of the " military @-@ industrial complex " . This is followed by a summary of John F. Kennedy 's years as president , emphasizing the events that , in Stone 's thesis , would lead to his assassination . This builds to a reconstruction of the assassination on November 22 , 1963 . New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison subsequently learns about potential links to the assassination in New Orleans . Garrison and his team investigate several possible conspirators , including private pilot David Ferrie (Joe Pesci) , but are forced to let them go after their investigation is publicly rebuked by the federal government . Kennedy 's suspected assassin Lee Harvey Oswald is killed by Jack Ruby , and Garrison closes the investigation .

The investigation is reopened in 1966 after Garrison reads the Warren Report and notices what he believes to be multiple inaccuracies . Garrison and his staff interrogate several witnesses to the Kennedy assassination , and others involved with Oswald , Ruby , and Ferrie . One such witness is Willie O 'Keefe (Kevin Bacon) , a male prostitute serving five years in prison for soliciting , who reveals he witnessed Ferrie discussing a coup d'état . As well as briefly meeting Oswald , O 'Keefe was romantically involved with a man called " Clay Bertrand " . Jean Hill (Ellen McElduff) , a teacher who says she witnessed shots fired from the grassy knoll , tells the investigators that Secret Service threatened her into saying three shots came from the book depository , revealing changes that were made to her testimony by the Warren Commission . Garrison 's staff also test the single bullet theory by aiming an empty rifle from the window through which Oswald was alleged to have shot Kennedy . They conclude that Oswald was too poor a marksman to make the shots , indicating someone else , or multiple marksmen , were involved .

Garrison meets a high @-@ level figure in Washington D.C. who identifies himself as " X " (Donald Sutherland) . He suggests a conspiracy at the highest levels of government , implicating members of the CIA , the Mafia , the military @-@ industrial complex , Secret Service , FBI , and Kennedy 's vice @-@ president & then president Lyndon Baines Johnson as either co @-@ conspirators or as having motives to cover up the truth of the assassination . X explains that the President was killed because he wanted to pull the United States out of the Vietnam War and dismantle the CIA . X encourages Garrison to keep digging and prosecute New Orleans based international businessman Clay Shaw for his alleged involvement . Upon interrogating Shaw , the businessman denies any knowledge of meeting Ferrie , O 'Keefe or Oswald , but he is soon charged with conspiring to

murder the President .

Some of Garrison 's staff begin to doubt his motives and disagree with his methods , so leave the investigation . Garrison 's marriage is strained when his wife Liz (Sissy Spacek) complains that he is spending more time on the case than with his own family . After a sinister phone call is made to their daughter , Liz accuses Garrison of being selfish and attacking Shaw only because of his homosexuality . In addition , the media launches attacks on television and in newspapers attacking Garrison 's character and criticizing the way his office is spending taxpayers ' money . Some key witnesses become scared and refuse to testify while others , such as Ferrie , are killed in suspicious circumstances . Before his death , Ferrie tells Garrison that he believes people are after him , and reveals there was a conspiracy around Kennedy 's death .

The trial of Clay Shaw takes place in 1969 . Garrison presents the court with further evidence of multiple killers and dismissing the single bullet theory , and proposes a Dealey Plaza shots scenario involving three assassins who fired six total shots and framing Oswald for the murders of Kennedy and officer J. D. Tippit but the jury acquits Shaw after less than one hour of deliberation . The film reflects that members of that jury stated publicly that they believed there was a conspiracy behind the assassination , but not enough evidence to link Shaw to that conspiracy . Shaw died of lung cancer in 1974 , but in 1979 Richard Helms testified that Clay Shaw had been a part @-@ time contact of the Domestic Contacts Division of the CIA . The end credits claim that records related to the assassination will be released to the public in 2029 .

= = Cast = =

Kevin Costner as Jim Garrison . For the role , Stone sent copies of the script to Costner , Mel Gibson , and Harrison Ford . Initially , Costner turned Stone down . However , the actor 's agent , Michael Ovitz , was a big fan of the project and helped Stone convince the actor to take the role . Before accepting the role , Costner conducted extensive research on Garrison , including meeting the man and his enemies . Two months after finally signing on to play Garrison in January 1991 , his film Dances with Wolves won seven Academy Awards and so his presence greatly enhanced JFK 's bankability in the studio 's eyes .

Kevin Bacon as Willie O 'Keefe , a composite character who testifies that Bertrand and Shaw are the same person and that he knew Ferrie , and had met Oswald .

Tommy Lee Jones as Clay Shaw / Clay Bertrand . A flamboyantly gay , chain @-@ smoking , New Orleans businessman whom Garrison investigates to find a link between him and President Kennedy 's assassination . Jones was originally considered for another role that was ultimately cut from the film and it was Stone who decided to cast him as Shaw . In preparation for the film , Jones interviewed Garrison on three different occasions and talked to others who had worked with Shaw and knew him .

Joe Pesci as David Ferrie . Stone originally wanted James Woods to play Ferrie , but Woods wanted to play Garrison . Stone also approached Willem Dafoe and John Malkovich , who both turned down the role .

Laurie Metcalf as New Orleans Assistant District Attorney Susie Cox

Gary Oldman as Lee Harvey Oswald , a former U.S. Marine who defected to the Soviet Union and later returned . He was arrested on suspicion of killing Dallas police officer J.D. Tippit . According to Oldman , very little was written about Oswald in the script . Stone gave him several plane tickets , a list of contacts and told him to do his own research . Oldman met with Oswald 's wife , Marina , and her two daughters to prepare for the role .

Michael Rooker as New Orleans Assistant District Attorney Bill Broussard

Jay O. Sanders as Lou Ivon

Sissy Spacek as Liz Garrison , Jim Garrison 's wife .

Beata Po?niak as Marina Oswald Porter . Oswald 's wife . Po?niak studied 26 volumes of the Warren Report and spent time living with Marina Oswald . Since the script contained few lines for the Oswalds , Po?niak interviewed acquaintances of the Oswalds in order to improvise her scenes with Gary Oldman .

Jack Lemmon as Jack Martin , an American private investigator living in New Orleans . He worked with Guy Banister at Banister 's private investigation office . He was the one who implicated Ferrie to Garrison about Kennedy 's assassination .

Walter Matthau as Russell B. Long , an American politician who served in the U.S. Senate as a Democrat from Louisiana from 1948 until 1987 . He inspires Garrison in 1966 to re @-@ open the investigation of President Kennedy 's assassination .

Donald Sutherland as X , a shadowy colonel in the U.S. Air Force , author , banker , and critic of U.S. foreign policy , especially the Central Intelligence Agency 's activities . He advises Garrison about the U.S. government 's involvement in President Kennedy 's assassination . The character is loosely based on L. Fletcher Prouty .

Edward Asner as Guy Banister , a career member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a private investigator . He was an avid anti @-@ communist , member of the Minutemen , the John Birch Society , Louisiana Committee on Un @-@ American Activities , and publisher of the Louisiana Intelligence Digest .

Brian Doyle @-@ Murray as Jack Ruby , an American nightclub operator from Dallas , Texas . He was convicted on March 14 , 1964 for Oswald 's murder on November 24 , 1963 , two days after Oswald was arrested for Kennedy 's assassination .

John Candy as Dean Andrews Jr . , an eccentric New Orleans lawyer who was allegedly contacted by Shaw to represent Oswald in the assassination case .

Sally Kirkland as Rose Cheramie , a Dallas prostitute who was allegedly beaten up by Jack Ruby 's bodyguards . She 's taken to a clinic where she pleads to the doctors that the Mafia is planning on killing President Kennedy .

Wayne Knight as Numa Bertel

Vincent D 'Onofrio as Bill Newman , an eyewitness

Many actors were willing to waive their normal fees because of the nature of the project and to lend their support . Martin Sheen provided the opening narration . The real Jim Garrison , a severe critic of the Warren Commission , played Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren himself , during the scene in which he questions Jack Ruby in a Dallas jail . Alleged assassination witness Beverly Oliver , who claims to be the " Babushka Lady " seen in the Zapruder film , also appeared in a cameo role inside Ruby 's club . Sean Stone , Oliver Stone 's son , plays a secondary role as Garrison 's oldest son Jasper . Perry R. Russo , one of the sources for the fictional character " Willie O 'Keefe , " appeared in a cameo role as " angry bar patron . "

Dutch investigative journalist Willem Oltmans , who worked as a reporter for Dutch TV broadcaster NOS in the 1960s , had established ties to Kennedy 's closest circle of advisers . After Kennedy 's assassination , Oltmans interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald 's mother , Marguerite . Further investigation led him to Oswald 's alleged CIA babysitter George de Mohrenschildt . According to Oltmans , de Mohrenschildt , who had ties to the CIA , was the assassination 's architect . In 1977 , de Mohrenschildt agreed to disclose information to Oltmans , but disappeared from their meeting place and was found dead in Florida a few weeks later . Intent on irony , Oltmans played de Mohrenschildt in the film .

= = Production = =

Zachary Sklar , a journalist and a professor of journalism at the Columbia School of Journalism , met Garrison in 1987 and helped him rewrite a manuscript that he was working on about Kennedy 's assassination . He changed it from a scholarly book in the third person to " a detective story ? a whydunit " in the first person . Sklar edited the book and it was published in 1988 . While attending the Latin American Film Festival in Havana , Cuba , Stone met Sheridan Square Press publisher Ellen Ray on an elevator . She had published Jim Garrison 's book On the Trail of the Assassins . Ray had gone to New Orleans and worked with Garrison in 1967 . She gave Stone a copy of Garrison 's book and told him to read it . He did and quickly bought the film rights with \$ 250 @,@ 000 of his own money to prevent talk going around the studios about projects he might be developing .

Kennedy 's assassination had always had a profound effect on Stone : " The Kennedy murder was one of the signal events of the postwar generation , my generation . " Stone met Garrison and grilled him with a variety of questions for three hours . Garrison stood up to Stone 's questioning and then got up and left . His pride and dignity impressed the director . Stone 's impressions from their meeting were that Garrison " made many mistakes . He trusted a lot of weirdos and followed a lot of fake leads . But he went out on a limb , way out . And he kept going , even when he knew he was facing long odds . "

Stone was not interested in making a film about Garrison 's life , but rather the story behind the conspiracy to kill Kennedy . He also bought the film rights to Jim Marrs ' book Crossfire : The Plot That Killed Kennedy . One of the filmmaker 's primary goals with JFK was to provide a rebuttal to the Warren Commission 's report that he believed was " a great myth . And in order to fight a myth , maybe you have to create another one , a counter @-@ myth . " Even though Marrs ' book collected many theories , Stone was hungry for more and hired Jane Rusconi , a recent Yale University graduate , to lead a team of researchers and assemble as much information about the assassination as possible while the director completed post @-@ production on Born on the Fourth of July . Stone read two dozen books on the assassination while Rusconi read between 100 and 200 books on the subject .

By December 1989 , Stone began approaching studios to back his film . While in pre @-@ production on The Doors , he met with three executives at Warner Bros. who wanted him to make a film about Howard Hughes . However , Warren Beatty owned the rights and so Stone pitched JFK . Studio president and Chief Operating Officer Terry Semel liked the idea . He had a reputation for making political and controversial films , including All the President 's Men , The Parallax View and The Killing Fields . Stone made a handshake deal with Warner Bros. whereby the studio would get all the rights to the film and put up \$ 20 million for the budget . The director did this so that the screenplay wouldn 't be widely read and bid on , and he also knew that the material was potentially dangerous and wanted only one studio to finance it . Finally , Stone liked Semel 's track record of producing political films .

= = = Screenplay = = =

When Stone set out to write the screenplay , he asked Sklar (who also edited Marrs ' book) to co @-@ write it with him and distill the Garrison and Marrs ' books and Rusconi 's research into a script that would resemble what he called " a great detective movie . " Stone told Sklar his vision of the film :

I see the models as Z and Rashomon , I see the event in Dealey Plaza taking place in the first reel , and again in the eighth reel , and again later , and each time we 're going to see it differently and with more illumination .

Although he did employ ideas from Rashomon , his principal model for JFK was Z :

Somehow I had the impression that in Z you had the showing of the crime and then the re @-@ showing of the crime throughout the picture until it was seen another way . That was the idea of JFK ? that was the essence of it : basically , that 's why I called it JFK . Not J dot F dot K dot . JFK . It was a code , like Z was a code , for he lives , American @-@ style . As it was written it became more fascinating : it evolved into four DNA threads .

Stone broke the film 's structure down into four stories : Garrison investigating the New Orleans connection to the assassination ; the research that revealed what Stone calls , " Oswald legend : who he was and how to try to inculcate that " ; the recreation of the assassination at Dealey Plaza ; and the information that the character of " X " imparts on Garrison , which Stone saw as the " means by which we were able to move between New Orleans , local , into the wider story of Dealey Plaza . " Sklar worked on the Garrison side of the story while Stone added the Oswald story , the events at Dealey Plaza and the " Mr. X " character . Sklar spent a year researching and writing a 550 triple @-@ spaced page screenplay and then Stone rewrote it and condensed it closer to normal screenplay length . Stone and Sklar used composite characters , most notably the " Mr. X " character played by Donald Sutherland . This was a technique that would be criticized in the press .

He was a mix of Richard Case Nagell and retired Air Force colonel Fletcher Prouty , another adviser for the film and who was a military liaison between the CIA and the Pentagon . Meeting Prouty was , for Stone , " one of the most extraordinary afternoons I 've ever spent . Pretty much like in the movie , he just started to talk . " According to Stone ,

I feel this was in the spirit of the truth because Garrison also met a deep throat type named Richard Case Nagell , who claimed to be a CIA agent and made Jim aware of a much larger scenario than the microcosm of New Orleans .

The screenplay 's early drafts suggested a four and a half @-@ hour film with a potential budget of \$ 40 million ? double what Stone had agreed to with Warner Bros. The director knew film mogul Arnon Milchan and met with him to help finance the film . Milchan was eager to work on the project and launch his new company , Regency Enterprises , with a high profile film like JFK . Milchan made a deal with Warner Bros. to put up the money for the film . Stone managed to pare down his initial revision , a 190 @-@ page draft , to a 156 @-@ page shooting script .

There were many advisers for the film , including Gerald Hemming , a former Marine who claimed involvement in various CIA activities , and Robert Groden , a self @-@ proclaimed photographic expert and longtime JFK assassination researcher and author .

= = = Principal photography = = =

The story revolves around Costner 's Jim Garrison , with a large cast of well @-@ known actors in supporting roles . Stone was inspired by the casting model of the documentary epic The Longest Day , which he had admired as a child : " It was realistic , but it had a lot of stars ... the supporting cast provides a map of the American psyche : familiar , comfortable faces that walk you through a winding path in the dark woods . "

Cinematographer Robert Richardson was a week and a half into shooting City of Hope for John Sayles when he got word that Stone was thinking about making JFK . By the time principal photography wrapped on City of Hope , Richardson was ready to make Stone 's film . To prepare , Richardson read up on various JFK assassination books starting with On the Trail of the Assassins and Crossfire : The Plot That Killed Kennedy .

The original idea was to film the opening sequence in 1 @.@ 33 : 1 aspect ratio in order to simulate the TV screens that were available at the time of the assassination , then transition to 1 @.@ 85 : 1 when Garrison began his investigation , and finally switch to 2 @.@ 35 : 1 for scenes occurring in 1968 and later . However , because of time constraints and logistics , Richardson was forced to abandon this approach .

Stone wanted to recreate the Kennedy assassination in Dealey Plaza . His producers had to pay the Dallas City Council a substantial amount of money to hire police to reroute traffic and close streets for three weeks . He only had ten days to shoot all of the footage he needed and so he used seven cameras (two 35 mm and five 16 mm) and 14 film stocks . Getting permission to shoot in the Texas School Book Depository was more difficult . They had to pay \$ 50 @,@ 000 to put someone in the window from which Oswald was supposed to have shot Kennedy . They were allowed to film in that location only between certain hours with only five people on the floor at one time : the camera crew , an actor and Stone . Co @-@ producer Clayton Townsend has said that the hardest part was getting the permission to restore the building to the way it looked back in 1963 . It took five months of negotiation .

The production spent \$ 4 million to restore Dealey Plaza to 1963 conditions . Stone utilized a variety of film stocks . Richardson said , " It depends whether you want to shoot in 35 or 16 or Super 8 . In many cases the lighting has to be different . " For certain shots in the film , Stone employed multiple camera crews shooting at once , using five cameras at the same time in different formats . Richardson said of Stone 's style of direction , " Oliver disdains convention , he tries to force you into things that are not classic . There 's this constant need to stretch . " This forced the cinematographer to use lighting in diverse positions and rely very little on classic lighting modes . The shoot lasted 79 days with filming finished five months before the release date .

=== Editing ===

JFK marked a fundamental change in the way that Stone constructed his films : a subjective lateral presentation of the plot , with the editing 's rhythm carrying the story . Stone brought in Hank Corwin , an editor of commercials , to help edit the film . Stone chose him because his " chaotic mind " was " totally alien to the film form . " Stone remembers that Corwin irritated the more traditional editors working on the film because his " concepts are very commercial sixty @-@ seconds @-@ get @-@ your @-@ attention @-@ fragment @-@ your @-@ mind @-@ make @-@ you @-@ rethink @-@ it . But he had not developed the long form yet . And so a lot of his cuts were very chaotic . " Stone employed extensive use of flashbacks within flashbacks for a specific effect . He said in an interview

‘ I wanted to do the film on two or three levels ? sound and picture would take us back , and we 'd go from one flashback to another , and then that flashback would go inside another flashback ... I wanted multiple layers because reading the Warren Commission Report is like drowning .

Partially due to a setback that occurred during editing , that saw all the time codes disappear , JFK would be the last film that Stone edited on film stock before he switched to digital editing .

Years after its release , Stone said of the film that it " was the beginning of a new era for me in terms of film making because it 's not just about a conspiracy to kill John Kennedy . It 's also about the way we look at our recent history ... It shifts from black and white to color , and then back again , and views people from offbeat angles . "

=== Music ===

Because of his enormous commitment to Steven Spielberg 's Hook , which opened the same month as JFK , composer John Williams did not have time to compose a conventional score for the entire film . Instead he composed and conducted six musical sequences in full for JFK before he saw the film in its entirety . Soon after recording this music , he traveled to New Orleans where Stone was still shooting the film and saw approximately an hour 's worth of edited footage and dailies . Williams remembers , " I thought his handling of Lee Harvey Oswald was particularly strong , and I understood some of the atmosphere of the film ? the sordid elements , the underside of New Orleans . " Stone and his team then actually cut the film to fit Williams ' music after the composer had scored and recorded musical cues in addition to the six he had done prior to seeing the film . For the motorcade sequence , Williams described the score he composed as " strongly kinetic music , music of interlocking rhythmic disciplines . " The composer remembered the moment he learned of Kennedy 's assassination and it stuck with him for years . This was a significant factor in his deciding to work on the film . Williams said , " This is a very resonant subject for people of my generation , and that 's why I welcomed the opportunity to participate in this film . "

=== Reception ===

=== Critical reaction ===

Based on 55 reviews collected from notable publications by popular review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes , the film holds an 84 % " fresh " approval rating , with the consensus , " As history , Oliver Stone 's JFK is dubious , but as filmmaking it 's electric , cramming a ton of information and excitement into its three @-@ hour runtime and making great use of its outstanding cast . " However , the film 's production and release was subject to intense scrutiny and criticism . A few weeks after shooting had begun , on May 14 , 1991 , Jon Margolis wrote in the Chicago Tribune that JFK was " an insult to the intelligence . " Five days later , the Washington Post ran a scathing article by national security correspondent George Lardner titled , " On the Set : Dallas in Wonderland " that used the first draft of the JFK screenplay to blast it for " the absurdities and palpable untruths in Garrison 's book and Stone 's rendition of it . " The article pointed out that Garrison lost his case

against Clay Shaw and that he inflated his case by trying to use Shaw 's homosexual relationships to prove guilt by association . Stone responded to Lardner 's article by hiring a public relations firm that specialized in political issues . Other critical articles soon followed . Anthony Lewis in the New York Times stated that the film " tells us that our government cannot be trusted to give an honest account of a Presidential assassination . " Washington Post columnist George Will called Stone " a man of technical skill , scant education and negligible conscience . "

TIME magazine ran its own critique of the film @-@ in @-@ progress on June 10 , 1991 and alleged that Stone was trying to suppress a rival JFK assassination film based on Don DeLillo 's 1988 novel *Libra* . Stone rebutted these claims in a letter to the magazine . Richard Corliss , TIME 's film critic , wrote later on (Dec. 23 , 1991) : So , you want to know , who killed the President and connived in the cover @-@ up ? Everybody ! High officials in the CIA , the FBI , the Dallas constabulary , all three armed services , Big Business and the White House . Everybody done it ? everybody but Lee Harvey Oswald . Yet on the movie itself : Whatever one 's suspicions about its use or abuse of the evidence , JFK is a knockout . Part history book , part comic book , the movie rushes toward judgment for three breathless hours , lassoing facts and factoids by the thousands , then bundling them together into an incendiary device that would frag any viewer 's complacency . Stone 's picture is , in both meanings of the word , sensational : it 's tip @-@ top tabloid journalism . In its bravura and breadth , JFK is seditiously enthralling ; in its craft , wondrously complex .

The filmmaker ended up splitting his time between making his film , responding to criticism , and conducting a publicity campaign of his own that saw him " omnipresent , from CBS Evening News , to Oprah . " However , the Lardner Post piece stung the most because Lardner had stolen a copy of the script . Stone recalls , " He had the first draft , and I went through probably six or seven drafts . "

Upon theatrical release , it polarized critics . The New York Times ran an article by Bernard Weinraub entitled , " Hollywood Wonders If Warner Brothers let JFK Go Too Far . " The article called for intervention by the studio , asking " At what point does a studio exercise its leverage and blunt the highly charged message of a film maker like Oliver Stone ? " The newspaper also ran a review of the film by Vincent Canby who wrote , " Mr. Stone 's hyperbolic style of film making is familiar : lots of short , often hysterical scenes tumbling one after another , backed by a soundtrack that is layered , strudel @-@ like , with noises , dialogue , music , more noises , more dialogue . " Pat Dowell , veteran film critic for *The Washingtonian* , had her 34 @-@ word capsule review for the January issue rejected by her editor John Limpert on the grounds that he didn 't want a positive review for a film he felt was " preposterous " associated with the magazine . Dowell resigned in protest .

The Miami Herald said about the controversy in its review , " the focus on the trivialities of personality conveniently prevents us from having to confront the tough questions [Stone 's] film raises . " However , Roger Ebert praised the film in his review for the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* , saying ,

The achievement of the film is not that it answers the mystery of the Kennedy assassination , because it does not , or even that it vindicates Garrison , who is seen here as a man often whistling in the dark . Its achievement is that it tries to marshal the anger which ever since 1963 has been gnawing away on some dark shelf of the national psyche .

Rita Kempley in the *Washington Post* wrote ,

Quoting everyone from Shakespeare to Hitler to bolster their arguments , Stone and Sklar present a gripping alternative to the Warren Commission 's conclusion . A marvelously paranoid thriller featuring a closetful of spies , moles , pro @-@ commies and Cuban freedom @-@ fighters , the whole thing might have been thought up by Robert Ludlum .

On Christmas Day , the Los Angeles Times ran a critical article entitled " Suppression of the Facts Grants Stone a Broad Brush . " New York Newsday followed suit the next day with two articles ? " The Blurred Vision of JFK " and " The Many Theories of a Jolly Green Giant . " A few days later , the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* followed suit with " Stone 's Film Trashes Facts , Dishonors J.F.K. " Jack Valenti , then president and chief executive of the Motion Picture Association of America , denounced Stone 's film in a seven @-@ page statement . He wrote , " In much the same way , young German boys and girls in 1941 were mesmerized by Leni Riefenstahl 's *Triumph of the Will* ,

in which Adolf Hitler was depicted as a newborn God . Both JFK and Triumph of the Will are equally a propaganda masterpiece and equally a hoax . Mr. Stone and Leni Riefenstahl have another genetic linkage : neither of them carried a disclaimer on their film that its contents were mostly pure fiction . " Stone recalls in an interview , " I can 't even remember all the threats , there were so many of them . "

TIME magazine ranked it the fourth best film of 1991 , while including it in Top 10 Historically Misleading Films . Roger Ebert of Chicago Sun @-@ Times went on to name Stone 's film as the best film of the year and one of the top ten films of the decade , as well as one of The Great Movies . The Sydney Morning Herald named JFK as the best film of 1991 . Entertainment Weekly ranked it the 5th Most Controversial Movie Ever .

Ebert 's colleague Richard Roeper was less complimentary : " One can admire Stone 's filmmaking skills and the performances here while denouncing the utter crapola presented as ' evidence ' of a conspiracy to murder . " Roeper applauded the film 's " dazzling array of filmmaking techniques and a stellar roster of actors " but criticized Stone 's narrative : " As a work of fantastical fiction , JFK is an interesting if overblown vision of a parallel universe . As a dramatic interpretation of events , it 's journalistically bankrupt nonsense . "

Harry Connick Sr. , the New Orleans district attorney who defeated Garrison in 1973 , criticized Stone 's view of the assassination : " Stone was either unaware of the details and particulars of the Clay Shaw investigation and trial or , if he was aware , that didn 't get in his way of what he perceived to be the way the case should have been . " In his book Reclaiming History : The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy , a history of the assassination published 16 years after the film 's release , Vincent Bugliosi devoted an entire chapter to Garrison 's prosecution of Shaw and Stone 's subsequent film . Bugliosi lists thirty @-@ two separate " lies and fabrications " in Stone 's film and describes the film as " one continuous lie in which Stone couldn 't find any level of deception and invention beyond which he was unwilling to go . " David Wrone stated that " 80 percent of the film is in factual error " and rejected the premise of a conspiracy involving the CIA and the so @-@ called military @-@ industrial complex as " irrational . " Warren Commission investigator David Belin called the film " a big lie that would make Adolf Hitler proud " .

= = = Box office = = =

JFK was released in theaters on December 20 , 1991 . Box office started slow but picked up momentum and by the first week in January 1992 , it had grossed over \$ 50 million worldwide . Stone started to get support for his film . Warner Brothers executives pointed out that because of the film 's long running time , it had fewer screenings . The studio undertook a \$ 15 million marketing campaign promoting Stone 's film .

On its first week of release , JFK tied with Beauty and the Beast for fifth place in the U.S. box office and its critics began to say it was a flop . However , JFK eventually earned over \$ 200 million worldwide , and \$ 70 million in the United States during its initial run . Garrison 's estate subsequently sued Warner Bros. for a share of the film 's profits , alleging a book @-@ keeping practice known as " Hollywood accounting . " The lawsuit contends that JFK made in excess of \$ 150 million worldwide but the studio claimed that the film did not earn any money under its " net profits " accounting formula . The suit also claims that Garrison 's estate didn 't receive any of the net profits income . He should have been paid more than \$ 1 million .

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

JFK was nominated for eight Academy Awards including Best Picture , Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Tommy Lee Jones) , Best Director (Oliver Stone) , Best Original Score (John Williams) , Best Sound (Michael Minkler , Gregg Landaker and Tod A. Maitland) , Best Cinematography (Robert Richardson) , Best Film Editing , and Best Adapted Screenplay (Stone and Zachary Sklar) . It won two awards , for Best Cinematography and Best Film Editing .

Stone was nominated for an award for Outstanding Directing by the Directors Guild of America but

didn't win . He also won a Golden Globe for Best Director and in his acceptance speech , he said , " A terrible lie was told to us 28 years ago . I hope that this film can be the first step in righting that wrong . "

Entertainment Weekly ranked JFK as one of the 25 " Powerful Political Thrillers " .

= = = Cultural impact = = =

In 1992 , the television show Seinfeld pastiched the " Magic Bullet Theory " featured in JFK in an episode (" The Boyfriend ") wherein Kramer and Newman believe that they had been spat at by New York Met Keith Hernandez , who later reveals that there had been a second spitter , Roger McDowell . Wayne Knight , who plays Newman , is also in JFK as a member of Garrison 's team . He would be one of the two men to model the shooting in court to prove the implausibility of the " magic bullet , " not unlike how Jerry disproves Newman and Kramer 's theory of the " magic loogie . " In each case , Knight played the second victim in the sequence , John Connally and Newman , respectively .

= = Legislative impact = =

The final report of the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) partially credited concern over the conclusions in JFK with the passage of the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 , also known as the JFK Act .

The ARRB stated that the film " popularized a version of President Kennedy 's assassination that featured U.S. government agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) , the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) , and the military as conspirators . " While describing the film as " largely fictional " , the ARRB acknowledged Stone 's point that official records were to be sealed from the public until 2029 , and his suggestion that " Americans could not trust official public conclusions when those conclusions had been made in secret . " By ARRB law , all existing assassination @-@ related documents will be made public by 2017 .

= = Home video = =

JFK has been released on VHS , LaserDisc , and several times on DVD . The film 's only version ever released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray in the United States is the 206 @-@ minute " Director 's Cut " . The theatrical cut has been released on DVD in only a few foreign territories , including the UK . In 2001 , the " Director 's Cut " was released as part of the Oliver Stone Collection box set with the film on one disc and supplemental material on the second . Stone contributed several extras to this edition , including an audio commentary , two multimedia essays , and 54 minutes ' worth of deleted / extended scenes with optional commentary by Stone . In 2003 , a two @-@ DVD " Special Edition " was released with all of the extras on the 2001 edition in addition to a 90 @-@ minute documentary entitled , Beyond JFK : The Question of Conspiracy .

The film was released on Blu @-@ ray on November 11 , 2008 . The disc features many of the extras included on the previous DVD releases , including the Beyond JFK : The Question of Conspiracy documentary .