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 February 23, 1992

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COMMENTARY

Rousing Stone gathers no praise

By Lucas J. Gutman

How dare he. Oliver Stone's anti-American rabble rousing borders on the edge of treason. What's with his conspiratorial thinking mind? His theory is full of more holes than swiss cheese.

Can't he just let a sleeping dog lie? John F. Kennedy is dead for God's sake. And besides which, the Warren Commission report is sound. Not!

The following seems to be the pervasive attitude with which the media are treating the new Oliver Stone movie/phenomena. Despite the fact that recent polls have indicated that as few as 15 percent of the American public believes the Warren Commission report, the press has, for the most part, chosen to attack, rather than critique or analyze the film.

Instead of embracing the audacity and courage of Stone in releasing a film that questions the integrity of much of the U.S. government, the press has for the most part passed him off as a renegade stuck in the 1960s.

The headlines scream about the sick and twisted image of history that *JFK* presents. To be precise: The Dec. 23 issue of *Newsweek* had a cover that read, "The twisted truth of *JFK*: Why Oliver Stone's movie can't be trusted." In the *Wall Street Journal*, Arthur Schlesinger described the movie as a "reckless, paranoid, really despicable fantasy."

The main thing journalists seem to complain about is Stone's implicit allegation that Kennedy's killing was an operation that involved Lyndon Johnson, the CIA, the military-industrial complex and anti-Castro Cubans among others.

Granted, it's all a bit much to take. Not many people are buying into this all-encompassing conspiracy theory. What is making the audiences sit up and take notice, however, is the logic that is lacking in the Warren Commission report. How could Oswald shoot as fast and accurately as he is alleged to? How could more than a dozen medical professionals who saw the exit wound in the back of Kennedy's neck be mistaken? And how, exactly, does a single bullet move back and forth more times than a heat-seeking missile and end up unscathed?

For every hole in logic in Stone's film, there is a hole in the Warren Commission report. Yes, this is a pseudo documentary. It is a brilliantly filmed one at that. Real footage is often impossible to discern from manufactured material. But the point of filmmaking, even in documentaries, is not to present an unbiased view of a situation. It's an opportunity for the filmmaker to present a point of view. That's what Stone is doing. And he's being attacked for it like no other person in recent memory.

Besides playing fast and loose with facts and conjecture, Stone is accused of making a film that future generations will see as historical fact. If this

turns out to be the case (I hope it doesn't), then it's the fault of an education system that allows its children to learn history from a single film rather than a careful distillation of the facts as presented from several viewpoints.

Despite the rabid beating by the press that *JFK* is taking, the public seems to be affected by the film in the way Stone intended. The traditional government line is being questioned. Every new generation seems to be given more and more reasons not to trust their government. From Watergate to the Iran-Contra Affair, to the support of dictatorships in countries where we have vested economic interests, we have come to find that the U.S. government is no less corruptible than anyone. Is it wrong to think that perhaps we've been lied to before?

Just as important as it is to question the authority of Stone's facts, we must question the facts that have been presented to us and demand that the information we have not been made privy to be released for public consumption. There's nothing un-American about that. It's the spirit that keeps making this country better.

Lucas J. Gutman is a student at the University.



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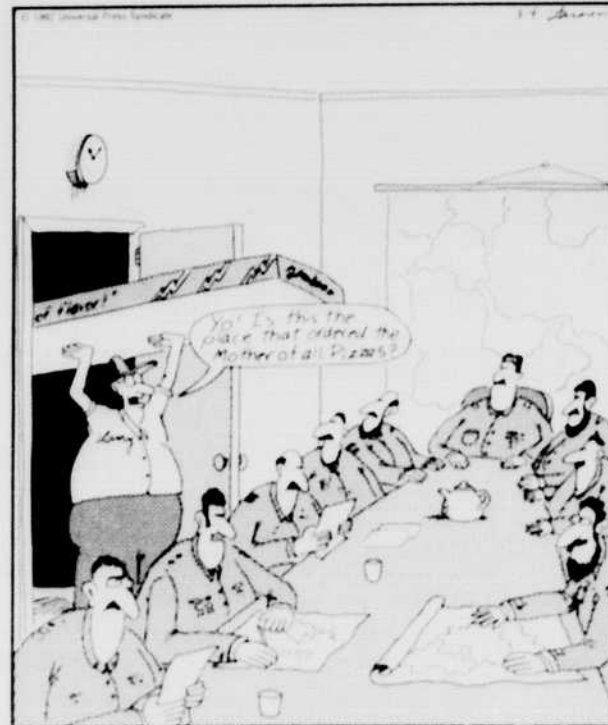
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THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



In Saddam Hussein's war room

COMMENTARY POLICY

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Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.

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