

Some of the President's Men

Watergate whodunit is too short to be great

By JULIAN BELTRAME

On a mid-June night, an anonymous security guard at the Watergate hotel in Miami stumbled upon a door which had been kept unlocked by fastening tape to the lock. He called the police and the Watergate burglars were soon apprehended.

The ramifications of that June 16 night were soon to shake the confidence of a whole people in its government, tarnish the names of such previously revered agencies as the Department of Justice, the FBI and the CIA, and led to the wholesale resignations of President Richard Nixon and all his men.

When Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the two Washington Post reporters principally responsible for uncovering the clandestine operations of Nixon's Committee to Re-elect the President, finally concluded their investigations, the Post was established as the nation's leading newspaper and the two reporters, overnight celebrities and millionaires.

All the President's Men sold two and one half million copies in hard and soft cover sales. Woodward, Bernstein, and the Post executive editor Ben Bradlee were constant talk-show guests and Watergate and the Nixon administration became the number one target for non-fiction writers and satirists alike.

It was not surprising then, that Hollywood decided to cash-in on the pervasive mood of the nation. What is surprising is that they waited so long, and that they showed so much admirable restraint.

The Robert Redford-Alan J. Pakula production of the Woodward and Bernstein book is meticulously faithful to the tone and approach of the best-seller, as well as being alive in cinematic terms.

All the President's Men, which opens this Friday in Toronto, is a suspenseful, spellbinding whodunit. But unlike most whodunits, it does not use mystery to keep the audience at the edge of their seats.

The thrill of All the President's Men is that of the hunt, not the capture. Everyone knows, long before they enter the theatre that Richard Nixon is the man whodunit, and they know also that he had a motley assortment of helpers.

Director Pakula uses this limitation to embellish on the details, the methods of the two hungry reporters hot on the trail on something big and on sinisterly dark images of Washington, the centre of the haunted home, America.

The tireless attention to details pays off handsomely and the final result is that of a compelling detective fiction. That it is all fact, adds to the lure of the hunt.

Even stars like Redford, Dustin Hoffman and Jason Roberts fail to



Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford (Bernstein and Woodward) in scene from All the President's Men



Redford on his way to secret rendezvous with Deep Throat.

shine beyond the characters they are portraying. Their performances may disappoint fans who are only interested in seeing their heroes conquer all, but add to the crucial documentary feel of the picture.

But All the President's Men is a doggedly unsatisfying adaptation of Woodward and Bernstein's book. The movie, brief and fleeting at its two-hour length, ends abruptly, just when the hunt begins to get interesting.

Bob Haldeman is just briefly implicated near the film's finale, and John Mitchell is completely discredited. But what of John

Erichman and John Dean? Their names are not even mentioned in the film and Richard Nixon, remains, at the end of this film, as pure as the wind-driven snow.

The film in fact, only covers about three-fifths of the book from which it was adapted and derives its name. And while Woodward and Bernstein's book lives up to its name, the film does not. Some of the President's Men would have been a more accurate title for this film.

Or is it that All the President's Men is just as false, conniving, and deceitful as the men whose fall it documents? Perhaps there

is an All the President's Men . . . Part II already in the works.

If this is the case, and I have no doubt that a sequel is in the offing, it is only hoped that the same team that brought us Part I will collaborate for Part II. The union of both films will make All the President's Men a great American film of a great American tragedy.

Right now, we must settle for half a great film. And because we are never given any indication that the full story will not be revealed in this film, All the President's Men can only be described as a handsome, compelling and slick cheat.

Major Thoughts of Western Man

50. By Labatt's.

Dino's ITALIAN VILLA

SUNDAYS: Free Spaghetti and Pizza
for children under 12 accompanied by parents

DINING AND DANCING
FULLY LICENSED
PICK-UP AND FREE DELIVERY
ON ORDERS \$3.50 AND UP

1027 Steeles West (at Bathurst)
630-6300

There IS a difference!!!

- MCAT • LSAT • DAT
- GMAT • CPAT • VAT • GRE • OCAT • SAT
- NATIONAL MED. & DENT. BOARDS
- ECFMG • FLEX

Flexible Programs and Hours
Over 38 years of experience and success. Small classes. Voluminous home study materials. Courses that are constantly updated. Centers open days and weekends all year. Make-ups for missed lessons at our centers.

BUFFALO
716-838-5162
-688-4591

Stanley H. KAPLAN
EDUCATIONAL CENTER
TEST PREPARATION
SPECIALISTS SINCE 1938

Call Toll Free (outside N.Y. State) 800 - 221-9840
For
Affiliated Centers in Major U. S. Cities