

Not to be confused with the film/video "Interview With *An* Assassin," which supposedly was the documented "confession" of incarcerated prisoner James E. Files, "...THE Assassin" opened Friday, November 22 (coincidence or conspiracy?). The first showing locally was to be just after noon, and I was first in line. But there was a problem. While customers attending the other films at the theater were allowed to go in, those of us in the "Assassin" line were kept waiting, outside. We were told that the machine would not print our tickets. We offered to pay anyway, if they would just let us in. No deal. Then some people behind me began to suspect that there was a sinister reason for it all. Perhaps they were trying to photograph us? We demanded to pay and enter - they could come in later and give us their precious tickets - but still, no go. Finally, the manager arrived with a huge roll of those old red carnival "Admit One" tickets, and as we each paid our bargain matinee fare, we were waved in. All six of us. This seemed to assure that it would be 12:30 when the first frames flickered in front of us. A lengthy preamble, to set the mood for intrigue... (here AND there!).

As the film unwinds, figuratively and literally, we become drawn into the world of the mysterious Walter Ohlinger, right along with Ron Kobeleski, the young unemployed cameraman he recruits to document his confession on video tape. This sets the mood with a cinema verite, documentary look, as we watch the story unfold through Kobeleski's viewfinder, right along with him. When the pair go to Dallas, and we see Walter stand behind the picket fence, demonstrating where and how he shot JFK, it's almost too cold, gritty and disturbing to give comfort to our curiosity. Even his long-hidden Mannlicher Carcano bullet (proof and/or life insurance?) was both as inanimate and terrifying as his speaking voice. As he stood on the Grassy Knoll and told his story, I paid strict attention, scanning his eyes

## Film Review: Interview With The Assassin



by  
Ken Jacobs

and measuring his words for any signs of a lie, any inconsistency with the "truth" as we know it. Zip. Nada. He *was* there. Suddenly, I got shivers, and thought I could hear the other five in the theatre shifting in their seats, zipping up their parkas, too. Paranoia was setting in. Were we watching a drama or a documentary? Maybe we really don't want to know, after all? This fellow is way too spooky. And certainly sharp enough not to get caught by a night watchman at the Watergate...

I can't give away the ending. Sorry. You already know who the murder victim was, and when and where it happened. And probably another kazillion facts or fantasies surrounding the assassination. You just never knew *who*, or *why*.

Let's cut to the chase: should you see this film? Of course! **If not you, then who?** There isn't one among us who *doesn't* want to know who pulled the

trigger, **and** who pulled the strings. It's in our blood, after all. Perhaps we have each even imagined just **how** we might learn the truth, some day. One pundit even proposed holding a candle to the feet of E. Howard Hunt, Gerry Ford, and Poppy Bush in order to get the real story! In the case of this film's writer/director, Neil Burger, his inspiration came from a real-life chance encounter at a bar with an older stranger who suddenly admitted that he knew who killed Kennedy. When that man never returned from the restroom, the eerie experience for Mr. Burger germinated into a plan for a film, which begins in a somewhat similar fashion. (Please see Debra Conway's interview with the director, elsewhere in this issue.)

I wish I could urge you to rush out and see this film, but it was gone from the theatres by the next week. The local press did not give it much notice, and publicity was scarce. This may prove to be the film's fate around the country, so in that case, perhaps we can urge the filmmakers to keep in touch with Debra and JFK Lancer, and some day offer videos or DVD's to us directly. How about a special showing in November, at the conference?

Should you buy it, when (and if) it comes out?

What would you *rather* have on your shelf, *Polyanna*, or *Case Closed - The Movie*? No, this movie was made for us, more than any other movie since *JFK*, *The Parallax View* or *Executive Action*, before it. It will take hold of your imagination, and shake it like a pit bull before it lets you go....

Outside the theater, the Red Ticket Six stood, wincing in the sunlight, shaken *and* stirred, almost as if we'd just ridden a rollercoaster. Although everything seemed normal on the surface, we each cautiously, silently edged our way back into the real world, as we thought we knew it. No one was smiling. Try telling any of us it was "just a movie."

The End ?

P.S. There *is* a nice website where you can learn more, see pictures and even catch a few short clips of the film, at:

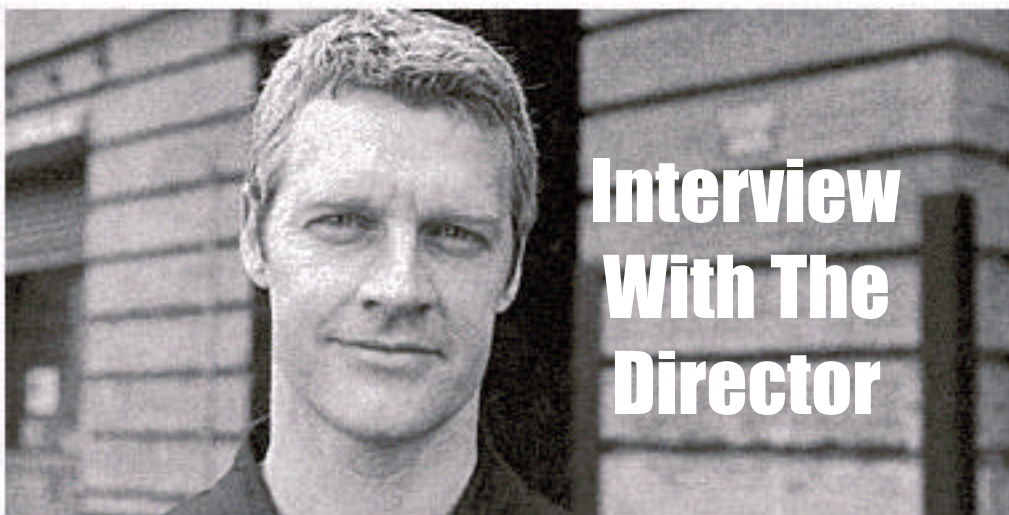
<http://www.interviewwiththeassassin.com/>



*Character actor Raymond Barry*, who has appeared in more than forty feature films, and who is a veteran of the New York stage.

To prepare for the role of brooding, laconic Walter Ohlinger, who may or may not be telling the truth about his involvement in the Kennedy assassination,

Barry dusted off two accents from previous roles, the Louisiana drawl he used in "Dead Man Walking", and the Mississippi twang he perfected for his role in "The Chamber" opposite Gene Hackman, and tried to suppress his rough New York accent. The result was something chilling and non-descript, a deadpan tone that could have come from anywhere.



## The KAC Interview

By Debra Conway

**Q** : Why did you choose something like the Kennedy assassination for your debut film?

**A:** It's one of the most confounding mysteries in American History, so it's endlessly fascinating and incredibly important to our nation's cultural history - it's a milestone, a turning point for our country.

**Q: Let me ask you something right up front: did Lee Oswald act alone?**

**A:** I have no idea! I don't know. That's the funny, or infuriating thing about the whole assassination. It's that you follow these trails of evidence down the line, and just when you feel like you have something conclusive, it just evaporates. It's fascinating, and it pulls you in, but it's also enough to drive you crazy. And each time you are sure that there is a conspiracy, or something, suddenly it folds back on itself, and you think: well, maybe he *did* do it completely alone, and then there's something that comes up, and you say: there's *no way* he did it alone! And then it just goes 'round and 'round. And unfortunately, you never get that definitive bit of evidence that is going to clear up all the other mysteries.

**Q: It sounds like you looked into the assassination more than just for this movie - you really sound like you know a little about the case...?**

**A:** As I said, I, like a lot of people, found it so intriguing, and maybe I looked into it a little more, but I also

**How do you navigate through that world -- a world of conspiracy theories, which do exist for a reason -- because there has been a vacuum of truth.**

did a lot of research for the movie, and other kinds of research as well, about people who were snipers, in the war, serial killers, that were delusional, that were paranoid schizophrenics, all sorts of different things to weave together to make this character credible.

**Q: I have to say that the assassin character who is portrayed in this movie is almost a cookie-cutter type of personality of someone who really *would* have been a shooter in the assassination.**

**A:** Right, well I did a lot of work, as I said, to try to weave that character, and I did all sorts of research beyond the Kennedy assassination, into the mind of somebody that would either have been involved in it or would be delusional enough to want to be involved in that, or - perhaps have some kind of agenda of his own, and is leading us down some kind of path, so either way, it's an intriguing and disturbing character.

**Q: We have so many movies about the "innocence of the sixties," the James Bond kind of stories that sort of gloss-over the kinds of things people my age can remember, from things like the Watergate affair with people like G. Gordon Liddy, and E.**

**Howard Hunt, and you realize the CIA was supplying things like disguises for them, and they did things like domestic espionage. We've almost forgotten these kinds of people did exist. You've re-introduced us to this kind of character - we don't see much about that kind of thing anymore ...**

A: Well, maybe not in the movies, but I don't think this kind of character has gone away! There's certainly guys like this out there. That's one of the things that was fascinating to me: if there was a conspiracy, there probably would have been a lot of people killed. But if they were still living, you wonder: where are they now? What's their life like? What's it like to be them? Where do they live? Do they have wives and children, or not? What's it like for them?

**Q: We were talking about the personality of a cold-blooded type of character - we know these kind of people are out there, doing these kinds of jobs, whether it's domestic or international, or for terrorists, or whatever - isn't killing JFK almost like a terrorist act? We think the story is going to be about the cameraman, and he may solve the assassination, but we get fooled at the end - do you want to talk about the end of the movie?**

A: Well, obviously I couldn't solve the Kennedy assassination, and I didn't set out to do that. The movie doesn't offer any particular theory. It's not trying to say that it happened this way, or not. It's about these two characters who feel they are nobodies, and what they do to try to empower themselves, operating in this very complicated world. In a world where the truth

seems to be subjective. How do you navigate through that world - a world of conspiracy theories, which do exist for a reason - because there has been a vacuum of truth. Conspiracy theories have filled that void to try to explain an event that seems to be random, but - perhaps, *isn't* so random...

So, in the same way that these huge events happened, and for all of us - it was out of our control, seemingly irrational and beyond our understanding - so it was for these two guys, who feel like they are nobodies, who are also operating in this complex world where the events are much bigger than them, who are trying to empower themselves, trying to find some kind of meaning in that. That's how their characters tie into the assassination, and the idea of conspiracy theories. So, at the end, it remains a mystery! Because, as I said, I don't have the answer. The important question is: how do you behave in the world? How do you navigate through the world where the truth has become subjective? What do you believe? What's true?

**Q: Right! You've made some very good points. I've done some study of the assassination, helping a person writing a book about Oswald, and there was the saying that he had the "fingerprints of intelligence all over him." The idea being that he was a made a patsy, as he claimed to be. Your film shows how easy it is to "patsy" someone. That, to me, was the film's most powerful statement. Who do you trust? What you think you are doing is not what you are actually doing, at all!**

**Neil Burger** was recently named one of *FILMMAKER* Magazine's 25 New Faces of Indie Film for his writing and directing debut, "Interview With The Assassin." Neil is also an award-winning director of commercials, music videos, and documentaries. After graduating from Yale University with a degree in fine arts, Neil began his film career by creating and directing the acclaimed "Books: Feed Your Head" campaign for MTV. These "one-minute movies" promoted language and literature and featured actors such as Timothy Hutton and Aidan Quinn.

Presently, Neil has written and is attached to direct the screenplay "The Illusionist" based on Pulitzer Prize winner Steven Millhauser's story "Eisenheim the Illusionist". Brian Koppelman and David Levien ("Rounders," "Knockaround Guys") who produced "Interview with the Assassin" will also produce "The Illusionist."

A: That's right - and I think if somebody like, if Oswald didn't do it, or if he was somehow involved in it, it seems like from the things that I read about him in his diaries, if they are authentic, he was the kind of person who was trying to be important in the world, you know, make his life worth something, and that's the perfect kind of person who gets pulled into one of these things, and that's what happens to the cameraman in the movie. He's trying to somehow be special, to be important in the world, and he gets sucked along, and hitches his wagon to the wrong kind of person...

**Q: I think it was a brave effort. Not only the topic, but also doing it documentary-style. It's a very risky thing to do. I'm sure you were told that?**

A: Obviously, some people don't like the documentary

style - there's a blanket rejection of it, but I felt it was an important way to explore the topic. Because the movie is all about issues of truth. What do you believe? How do you know what's true? And the documentary form seems to be about truth. But like any other kind of filmmaking, it *is* subjective, because you always have the point of view of the filmmaker, there's editing, etc., and it was an interesting way to explore the question, technically, and thematically.

**Q: So are you a paranoid person?**

A: I'm not! I'm not! I'm actually a very optimistic person. I'm one who wants to believe the party line, unless I'm shown otherwise, and it's obviously not always very easy to be that way...



**Raymond Barry as Walter Ohlinger, the assassin in *Interview With The Assassin*.**

