

## Document Citation

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# 'Secret Honor'

## Dramatic light on Nixon

People's worst  
9-29-84

**SECRET HONOR:** A film based on the play "Last Tape and Testament of Richard M. Nixon." Screen version by Donald Freed and Arnold M. Stone. Made by the LA Actors Theater at the University of Michigan. Director, Ro-

bert Altman; producer, Scott Bushnell; music, George Burt; camera, Pierre Mignot. At Beverly Cineplex, La Cienega in Beverly Hills. For information call (213) 652-7760.

LOS ANGELES

**IF YOU** are too young to remember events in the Richard M. Nixon Administration don't miss seeing "Secret Honor." I can't remember a more exciting and clever film. Its subtitle is "A Political myth," a "fictional work to illuminate history," which it does superbly.

Director Robert Altman creates an atmosphere of ultra security and statesmanship in the plush surroundings of Nixon's study in the 1980s.

Philip Baker Hall as Nixon makes his entrance on a bank of four TV cameras. He prepares to make a tape by first providing himself with a drink, then fumbling with the electronic equipment, he sets the tone.

His soliloquy begins with the definition of a pardon. He applies it to himself as he relives important events in his life. He refills his glass regularly and with each sip his dialog and behavior become more obscene and melodramatic.

Donald Freed, a prize-winning historian and Arnold Stone, who spent four years as a Department of Justice attorney, pack more drama, comedy and entertainment into these 90 minutes than one would think possible.

He recalls that in 1950 he was selected by the Committee Of 100 to run for the Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas. He really liked this beautiful woman and meant her no harm. He hated the dirty tricks which he used to end her political career. But he was not responsible because the Committee Of 100 needed control of off-shore oil drilling in California and they used him to get it. He was only 37 years old then so he concludes we should give the kid a chance.

We learn his goal in life was to be like Abraham Lincoln. He portrays himself as a poor innocent young man who was led astray by bad advice or people using him. He was never responsible for the bad results as he reveals a long list of dirty tricks.

—HARRIET BLAIR