

WEEK'S FARE

TODAY

30 Orpheus will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Union Auditorium.

A *Stranger in Frog Pond* will be performed by the Pollywog Players through Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. at Thompson Theatre in Raleigh. Call 737-2405 for ticket information.

Return of the Comet is the current show at the Morehead Planetarium. Call 962-1248 for more information.

Harold Bloom will speak on "Freud: The Poetics of Frontier Concepts" at 8:15 p.m. in East Duke Building at Duke.

Grace Hartigan will speak on "Thirty-five Years of Painting" at 8 p.m. at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

FRIDAY

31 *The Brother from Another Planet* will be shown at 4:30, 7, and 9:30 p.m., and at midnight in the Union Auditorium. Call 962-2285 for ticket information.

Gates of Heaven will be shown at 8 p.m. at the North Carolina Museum of Art. Call 833-1935 for more information.

The Dining Room will be performed by PlayMakers Repertory Company through Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m., and Wednesday at 8 p.m. in Paul Green Theatre. Call 962-1121 for ticket information.

Woody Herman and his Thundering Herd will perform at 8 p.m. in Stewart Theatre at N.C. State. Call 737-3104 for ticket information.

Mike Night sponsored by the Carolina Union will begin at 8 p.m. in the Union's first floor lounge.

Laser Power is a new show at the Morehead Planetarium. Call 962-1248 for more information.

Joseph Lau will speak on recent Chinese literary movements at 2 p.m. in Toy Lounge in Dey Hall.

Jeanne Spurlock will speak on "Promotion of Mental Health: Multiple Roles of Physicians" at 4 p.m. in Berryhill Hall.

Tony Trischka and Skyline will perform at 9 p.m. at the ArtSchool. Call 929-2896 for more information.

Rod Dash will perform at Rhythm Alley. Call 929-8172 for more information.

SATURDAY

1 Klute will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Union Auditorium.

Ciampi Quartet will perform at 8:15 p.m. in East Duke Building at Duke.

Five North Carolina Folk Artists will be displayed through March 23 at the Ackland Art Museum.

American Figurative Painting Since 1950 will be displayed through April 27 at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

Awareness Art Ensemble will perform at 9:30 p.m. at the ArtSchool. Call 929-2896 for more information.

The Graphic will perform at Rhythm Alley. Call 929-8172 for more information.

SUNDAY

2 Polyester will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. and on Monday at 6 p.m. in the Union

Auditorium. Marmaduke Miles, Barbara Rowan, and Francis Whang, pianists, will perform at 8 p.m. in Hill Hall Auditorium.

Durham Symphony will perform at 8 p.m. in Durham Civic Center. Call 682-3836 for ticket information.

Viewpoints, photography by Jane Hamborsky, will be displayed through March 2 in the north gallery of the Morehead Building.

ArtSchool Jazz Ensemble will perform at 7:30 p.m. at the ArtSchool. Call 929-2896 for more information.

MONDAY

3 John Waters will speak on his career in filmmaking at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Call 962-1449 for ticket information.

Marian Smallegan and JoAnne Damon will speak on "Depression in the Elderly" at 3:30 p.m. in 104 Carrington Hall.

TUESDAY

4 Sequentia will perform at 8 p.m. in Playmakers Theatre. Call 962-2224 for ticket information.

WEDNESDAY

5 Lar Lubovitch Dance Company will perform at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Call 962-1449 for ticket information.

MOVIES

Plaza I—*Out of Africa* at 3:30 and 7:45.

Plaza II—*Weatherby* at 3, 5:15, 7:25 and 9:40 ends today. *Murphy's Romance* starts Friday 3, 5:10, 7:20 and 9:30.

Plaza III—*A Chorus Line* at 3, 5:15, 7:30 and 9:45 ends today. *Youngblood* starts Friday at 3:15, 5:20, 7:25 and 9:30.

Varsity I—*The Journey of Natty Gann* at 2:10, 4:15, 7:10 and 9:15 ends today. *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* starts Friday at 2:30, 4:30, 7:30 and 9:30.

Varsity II—*White Nights* at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30 ends today. *The Official Story* starts Friday at 2:10, 4:15, 7:10 and 9:15.

Varsity Lateshows—*Secret Honor* and *Pink Flamingoes* at 11:30 Friday and Saturday.

Carolina Blue—Twice in a Lifetime at 2:30, 4:45, 7 and 9:30.

Carolina White—My Chauffeur at 7 and 9:30 ends today. *The Eliminators* starts Friday at 3, 5, 7 and 9; weekend shows at 7 and 9 only.

American Rabbit weekend matinees at 3 and 5.

Compiled by Elizabeth Ellen, arts editor.

'Secret Honor' a portrait of Nixon and his 'what ifs'

By ALAN MASON
Staff Writer

cinema

Picture this. The scene is a grossly masculine, well-furnished, oak-walled study illuminated by desk lamp and roaring fire. It is late evening. A typically slouching, but remarkably fit-looking Richard M. Nixon enters the room, pours himself a glass of Chivas Regal on the rocks and sits at his desk. He turns on the tape recorder. He drinks. He begins to dictate.

As the alcohol takes effect, his dictation turns into a passionate confession, a heartfelt admission. He frantically paces the room, words spouting from his mouth so fast that some are unintelligible. He covers all the big subjects of his life: the presidency, 1960; Pat, the mysterious "Committee of 100," checkers, his mother, Cambodia, Watergate.

Yes, of course he would get to that last one. Robert Altman's *Secret Honor*, a film that sheds new light on the man who made a mockery of the presidency, lets this half-fictional, half-factual Nixon tell us why Watergate happened. He claims he manufactured the break-in and the cover-up to save America from four more years of Vietnam. He calls it his "secret honor."

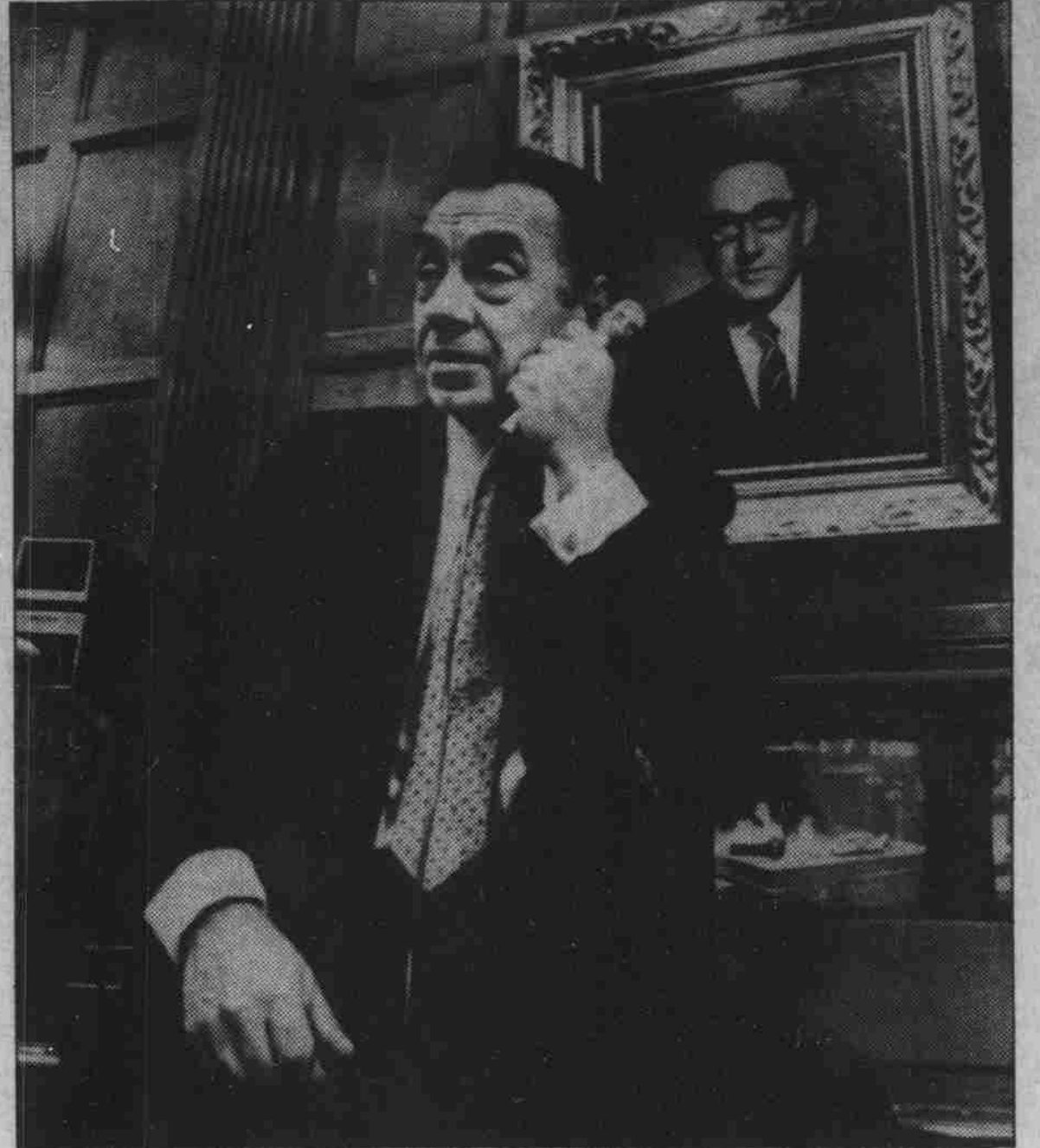
Altman subtitles his film "A Political Myth," and *Secret Honor* is just that. As the film states before the opening credits, it is not a history lesson. Originally written for the stage by Donald Freed and Arnold M. Stone (who also wrote the screenplay), it is an examination of a man who has become a symbol. And Altman, Freed and Stone use this symbol to raise some interesting questions. What drives men like Nixon into political office? What secrets do they possess that are never

revealed? Who controls them? And when they do wrong, are we, the American voting public, co-conspirators in treason?

Maybe not, but *Secret Honor* is largely a "What if" film. It does not attempt to tell the story of Watergate, nor is it an autobiography of Nixon. But it is a portrait of a man, an opinion of a man who, like many people, has made his share of mistakes. At times the film makes us pity Nixon, even have sympathy for him. We are not asked to forgive him, just to understand him.

The most credit for this tense, frantic portrayal should go to Philip Baker Hall, the virtual unknown who plays Nixon. Hall's manic, energetic performance is an amazing feat. How he found the stamina to play this character in this way would be a lesson in motivation for any actor. He does not look at all like Nixon, but it doesn't matter; he seems to be so into the character. He has Nixon's mannerisms down so well that we soon forget that acting is going on here, and it appears that we are spying on the real Nixon. When he instructs his assistant "Roberto" to erase his rantings and ravings, all of a sudden it seems like 1973 again.

Hall's Nixon is a paranoid, tense, confused man who gulps bourbon and can't sit still or remain silent. As he drinks he darts around the room, grunting and snorting and laughing his sinister laugh, garbling unfinished sentences (does he ever finish his sentences?) and absent-mindedly searching for words that seem to be on the tip of his tongue. In one powerful segment he expresses his bitter resentment of Henry Kissinger, cursing the former-Secretary's portrait on the wall: "They gave the Nobel Peace prize



Philip Baker Hall portraying Richard Nixon in 'Secret Honor'

to him and me they call the mad bomber." He saves his worst profanity for Eisenhower, Washington, and the big business power brokers (the Committee of 100) that he claims controlled him all through the presidency.

Central to the theme of *Secret Honor* is the theory that Nixon was actually a hero to the American public because he prevented the prolongation of the Vietnam War. "I chose secret honor," he says, "and public shame."

Altman's direction is his best in years. This film, with only one set and one character, allows him to display his

technical talent. The film is so tightly edited that it seems as if it were shot in one take. Altman shot the film at the University of Michigan where he was a visiting professor, and he used several student assistants, a feat that is another example of his talent as an innovator.

Altman's films are not always great because he is not afraid to take chances, but this time he is right on the mark. Altman has created a film that is an experience, and Hall has created a character that will not be forgotten. *Secret Honor* may be a political myth, but it is no lie.

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