



Presents

## GlenVIEWINGS: The Year's Best *Frost/Nixon*

**"What makes life mean something is purpose: a goal, a battle, a struggle! Even if you don't win it." - Richard Nixon**



**Director:**

Ron Howard

**Producers:**

Ron Howard  
Brian Grazer  
Tim Bevan  
Eric Fellner

**Writer:**

Peter Morgan

**Starring:**

Frank Langella  
Michael Sheen  
Sam Rockwell  
Kevin Bacon

**Music**

Hans Zimmer

**Cinematography**

Salvatore Totino

**Editing**

Daniel P. Hanley  
Mike Hill

**Distributors:**

Imagine Entertainment  
Working Title Films  
Universal Pictures

**Release date:**

December 5, 2008

**Running time:**

123 minutes

**Budget**

\$25,000,000

**Box Office gross**

\$27,015,079

Based around a series of televised interviews held in 1977, *Frost/Nixon* mines rich drama from the ethically dubious collusion of politics, mass media, national trauma, and personal ambition that led them to occur. The clever spin that the film puts on a recent, painful era of American history is to set up this real life event like a sports genre movie. Two mismatched adversaries are plunged into an adrenaline-fueled verbal clash where everything that matters is on the line. As a result, some historical liberties are taken in the pursuit of emotional truths and riveting entertainment.

Trading blows at the center of this intellectual boxing match are the British television presenter David Frost and former President Richard Nixon, egged on by pep talks from the teams in their respective corners. Reprising the stage roles they originated in wildly successful runs in London and on Broadway, Michael Sheen and Frank Langella ably embody the men they portray, with Langella in particular giving an imperious performance.

The film's first half sets up the schematics of the duel by focusing on the differences between the opponents. On one side is Frost, vainly eager to make his name and to ascend back to prominence, and up against him is Nixon, isolated and damaged by his abuses of power, and furious about having to watch as his reputation and legacy are tarnished.

But as the film progresses, the two men realize they share a goal that's perhaps now more important than which one of them wins or loses the debate, or whether or not the truth emerges: that they put up a good fight, and put on a good show.

**Did you know?**

- Before Ron Howard was chosen, other directors drawn to the project included Martin Scorsese, Steven Soderbergh, and George Clooney.
- *Frost/Nixon* writer Peter Morgan also wrote *The Last King of Scotland*, and *The Queen*, also Oscar-nominated.
- Nixon was not only paid \$600,000 for the interview, but also agreed to a deal that entitled him to 20% of the profits.



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**"We talked last night? What did we talk about?" - Richard Nixon**

### **Things to Explore**

- Who has more to lose from doing the interviews?
- Why does Nixon call Frost late at night? What effect does it have on each of them?
- Do you feel that film's power is diminished or enhanced because it takes liberties with historical facts?
- Why is Frost able to get answers from Nixon that the political process surrounding Watergate was not able to get?
- What political resonance does Frost/Nixon have to our own times? Why does Nixon continue to fascinate artists and historians?
- What are Nixon's motivations for agreeing to the interview? Does he have anything to gain from admitting his guilt?
- Why is Nixon interested in Frost's shoes? What do we learn about him from these exchanges?
- Does the film redeem or condemn Nixon?

### **Themes**

- Politics / Watergate
- Power struggles
- Television
- Self-destruction and self-creation
- Reputation
- Historical facts vs. myths
- Ambition
- Journalistic ethics



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**"Surely the only thing of interest to anyone about Richard Nixon would be a confession. A full no-holds barred confession." – John Birt**  
**"Well, we'll get that too." – David Frost**

### Library Resources

**1) *The Conviction of Richard Nixon: The Untold Story of the Frost/Nixon Interviews*, James Reston**

Played in the film by Sam Rockwell, Reston was a key aide to David Frost, and wrote this inside memoir of the interviews in 1977, holding it from publication until Peter Morgan's play became a Broadway sensation.

Copy	Material	Location
973.924 RES	Book	Nonfiction

**2) *Nixon at the Movies : A Book about Belief*, Mark Feeney. A 2004 look at how America's 37th President has been treated in cinema.**

Copy	Material	Location
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**3) *Nixonland : The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, Rick Perlstein.**

Perlstein argues that the current divide between 'Red' and 'Blue' states is a direct legacy of Nixon's tactics of using conflict to further his own goals.

Copy	Material	Location
973.924 PER	Book	Nonfiction

**4) *Reinventing Richard Nixon : A Cultural History of an American Obsession*, Daniel E. Frick.**

A studiously referenced investigation into the myths and truth about Richard Nixon that reveals as much about the former President's supporters and haters as it does about the man himself.

Copy	Material	Location
973.924 FRI	Book	Nonfiction

**5) *Frost/Nixon [videorecording (DVD)]***

The DVD contains footage from the real interview from 1977, a making-of feature, and a commentary on the film by director Ron Howard.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD FRO	DVD, Fiction	Audiovisual



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**"That's our tragedy, you and I, Mr. Frost. No matter how high we get, they still look down at us." - Richard Nixon**

### **Online Resources**

<http://www.frostnixon.net/>

The slick official website for the film, containing clips, photos and sound excerpts from the film, biographies and interviews with the main cast and crew.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0870111/>

The film's page at the Internet Movie Database, where it currently has a rating of 8 out of 10 from over 28,000 users.

<http://getdagoss.com/blog/2008/12/actual-frostnixon-interview-video/>

Watch the original 1977 online here.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Movies/01/05/david.frost/index.html>

A CNN interview Sir David Frost looking back on his interviews with Nixon and comparing the film to his own memories of the event. Frost notes: "There is 10 percent of fiction in the film, which no doubt improves the film. But what they got, they got ... absolutely right."

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3089868610937095287&hl=en#>

Charlie Rose interviews writer Peter Morgan and actors Frank Langella and Michael Sheen about the film.

<http://writ.news.findlaw.com/dean/20090220.html>

An interesting article that looks at the history behind the film, including an interview with Eli Chesen, author of *President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile*.

<http://creativescreenwritingmagazine.blogspot.com/2009/01/peter-morgan-frostnixon-q.html>

A *Creative Screenwriting* magazine podcast interview with *Frost/Nixon* creator Peter Morgan.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-drew/ifrostnixon-a-dishonorab\\_b\\_150948.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-drew/ifrostnixon-a-dishonorab_b_150948.html)

A review of the film that outlines many of the film's historical inaccuracies.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1127039/Nixon-v-Frost-The-true-story-really-happened-British-journalist-bullied-TV-confession-disgraced-ex-President.html>

A *Daily Mail* article that outlines the real events that took place in 1977.