

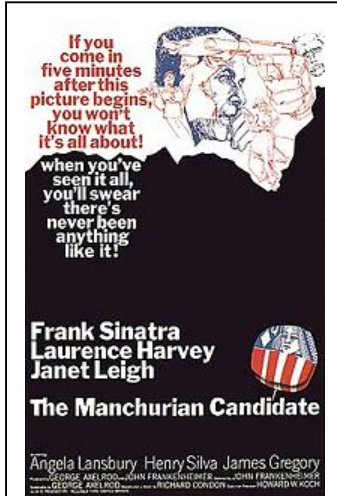


Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Movies With A Motive

The Manchurian Candidate

"His brain has not only been washed, as they say... It has been dry cleaned." - Dr. Yen Lo



Director:

John Frankenheimer

Producers:

John Frankenheimer
George Axelrod

Writers:

George Axelrod
Richard Condon (novel)

Starring:

Frank Sinatra
Laurence Harvey
Janet Leigh
Angela Lansbury

Music:

David Amram

Cinematography:

Lionel Lindon

Editor:

Ferris Webster

Distributor:

United Artists

Release date:

24 October 1962

Running time:

126 minutes

Budget

US\$1 million

Box Office gross

\$4,180,630 (US)

The term 'brainwashing' entered the English language with the Korean War, a translation of the Chinese word *hsi-nao*, which means "cleansing of the mind." During the Cold War it became a fascination and a fear for many, despite the lack of proof that mind control was possible. Richard Condon's 1959 novel **The Manchurian Candidate** exploited this panic, and John Frankenheimer's 1962 film cemented the term in the popular vernacular.

Released at the height of the Cuban missile crisis and in the wake of the McCarthy-era Communist 'witch hunts', the original film is a darkly cynical satire that juxtaposes eccentric humor with deep paranoia.

The film itself cannot be trusted to always tell the whole truth; the audience is kept off balance by unusual camera angles, unexplained events and strange dialogue that may or not be secret code. Red herrings and surreal nightmares add to the confusion, and in the brainwashed Raymond Shaw the film presents an "impossible to like" anti-hero whose thoughts and actions are mostly inscrutable. Having this unconscious assassin as the lead character creates a vacuum at the film's heart that sucks in many different strands of mystery and intrigue.

One of cinema's classic psychological thrillers, the implausibility of the plot actually adds to the viewer's enjoyment. Our mind might be momentarily troubled by what we see, but as long as our pulse is racing, our conscience remains clear.

Did you know?

- The film was prohibited in many Communist states until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1993.
- Screenwriter George Axelrod also wrote the scripts for *The Seven Year Itch* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.
- Angela Lansbury was 36 years old at the time of filming - only 3 years older than Laurence Harvey, who plays her son.
- Frank Sinatra broke his hand on a table during the film's karate fight. He never had the injury properly treated and it healed incorrectly, causing him permanent discomfort.
- Myth: The original film was taken out of circulation after JFK's assassination in 1963. Actually, the film was shown on

TV twice in 1965, though it did disappear from view in the 1970's when Frank Sinatra owned the rights, until being re-released in 1988.



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The Manchurian Candidate

"The assassin always dies, baby. It's necessary for the national healing." - Eleanor Shaw



Director:

Jonathan Demme

Producer:

Scott Rudin

Writers:

Daniel Pyne

Dean Georganis

Starring:

Denzel Washington

Meryl Streep

Liev Schreiber

Jon Voight

Music:

Rachel Portman

Cinematography:

Tak Fujimoto

Editor:

Carol Littleton

Craig McKay

Distributor:

Paramount Pictures

Release date:

30 July 2004

Running time:

130 minutes

Budget

US\$80 million

Box Office gross

\$65,955,630 (US)

\$30,150,334 (foreign)

Jonathan Demme's 2004 remake of **The Manchurian Candidate** eschews much of the humor and surrealism that lightened the 1962 film in order to emphasize its somber vision of the corruption of American politics.

The events here take place in the wake of the first Gulf War, with an evil corporation replacing the original's Communist villains. However, a more important context is the film's release on the eve of the 2004 Presidential election, and in the wake of the controversial 2000 election and the Enron scandal.

Upon release, both sides of the political spectrum attacked the film for supposedly endorsing the viewpoints of the other, perhaps confused by the film's savvy scrambling of stereotypes and conventional allegiances.

Exploiting the notion that America's worst threat may lie within, the film's biggest change from the original is to put Raymond and Eleanor Shaw's warped mother-son relationship even more overtly at the heart of the political firmament.

The new film's overarching message suggests that in post 9/11 America fear and constant surveillance are now built into the very fabric of the American state, and there is little solace left in serving mother, God and country.

Did you know?

- Many critics thought that Meryl Streep based her portrayal on Hillary Clinton. But she claimed that it was based on "Peggy Noonan, Karen Hughes... it's hard to get more hyperbolic than that."
- If the letters in Noyle's last name are rearranged, they spell Yen Lo, the name of the Chinese character in the same role in the 1962 film.
- To promote the film, Paramount set up a website that appeared to belong to the (fictional) Manchurian Global Corporation depicted in the movie. The corporation website gave no explicit indication of its connection to the film.
- On the wall of Senator Jordan's office is a poster for the Vietnam POW / MIA "You are not forgotten" campaign. Sen. John McCain was famously the victim of a smear campaign

by this group during the 2000 election that claimed he had been 'brainwashed' while a POW in Vietnam.



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GlenVIEWINGS: Movies With A Motive
The Manchurian Candidate

*"There's a part that they can't get to. And it's deep inside of us. And that's where the truth is."
Captain Ben Marco (2004)*

Things to think about:

- Do the surreal elements of the film contribute or detract from the plausibility of the plot? How do they affect your enjoyment of the film?
- Is the film optimistic or pessimistic about the state of American politics?
- What do you make of the relationship between Raymond Shaw and his mother?
- How responsible is Captain Marco for what happens to Raymond Shaw?
- What is your take on the strange dialogue exchange between Rosie (Janet Leigh/Kimberly Elise) and Captain Marco (Frank Sinatra/Denzel Washington) in their first scene together?
- What lessons does the film have to offer us about today's politics?

Topics for discussion:

- Brainwashing
- Paranoia
- Power of Ideology
- Corruption
- Dreams and nightmares
- Incest



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GlenVIEWINGS: Movies With A Motive *The Manchurian Candidate*

"Why don't you pass the time with a game of solitaire?" - Mrs. Iselin

Library Resources

1) *The Manchurian Candidate*, Richard Condon. The 1959 novel. Includes a new introduction by Pulitzer Prize winning author Louis Menand.

Copy	Material	Location
PBR FICTION CONDON,R.	1 Book	Paperback Fiction

2) *Movie Classics*, Marc Perlman. Features an analysis of the original film's context in cinema history.

Copy	Material	Location
j791.4375 PER	1 Book	Youth Nonfiction

3) *Hiding in Plain Sight: Essays in Criticism and Autobiography*. Edited by Wendy Lesser. Contains a sociopolitical analysis of the film by Greil Marcus.

Copy	Material	Location
700.1 HID	1 Book	Nonfiction

4) *The Manchurian Candidate (2004)* [videorecording (DVD)].
Just in case you want to see it again!

Copy	Material	Location
DVD MAN	1 DVD, Fiction	AudioVisual

5) *The Manchurian Candidate (1962)* [videorecording (DVD)].
Just in case you want to see it again!

Copy	Material	Location
DVD MAN	1 DVD, Fiction	AudioVisual



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GlenVIEWINGS: Movies With A Motive ***The Manchurian Candidate***

"Raymond Shaw is the kindest, bravest, warmest, most wonderful human being I've ever known in my life." - Captain Ben Marco (1962)

Online Resources

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/features/?id=1416&p=.htm>

Contains some interesting comparisons of the two film versions.

<http://www.snopes.com/movies/films/manchurian.asp>

A thorough debunking of the myth that the original film was pulled from distribution due to the assassination of JFK.

<http://www.boxofficeprophets.com/column/index.cfm?columnID=8477>

An attempt to judge which is best: the book, the 1962 film, or the remake?

<http://www.filmsite.org/manc.html>

A detailed review and synopsis of the 1962 film.

<http://www.manchuriantcandidate.com>

The official website for the 2004 remake

<http://www.davidamram.com/manchurian.html>

Detailed notes on composer David Amram's progressive score for the 1962 film

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/09/15/030915crat_atlarge?currentPage=all

Louis Menand's critical reappraisal of Richard Condon's original novel – includes good background whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald might possibly have seen the film before assassinating JFK.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9405E5DE103AF933A15754C0A9629C8B63>

A remarkable 'imagining' of "An Arabian Candidate" written the week before the 2004 film's release by Paul Klugman that indicates the political climate into which Demme's film was released.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/oct/30/featuresreviews.guardianreview16>

Film critic J. Hoberman dissects the 2004 political arguments over the film