

ELVIS & NIXON – Film at CONCA VERDE on 06.03.17

Talk by **Victoria Rondi** - From WIKIPEDIA and IMDB

THE FILM

Elvis & Nixon is a 2016 American comedy-drama film directed by Liza Johnson that is based on the true landmark meeting on 21 December 1970 between Elvis Presley and Richard Nixon at the White House. The film stars Kevin Spacey as President Richard Nixon and Michael Shannon as singer Elvis Presley.

Kevin Spacey, whom most of you must have heard of, has had a long-standing acting career in Hollywood. One of his most famous roles was in 2006 as Lex Luthor in the super hero film "*Batman Returns*". He is also a film director, producer and screenwriter.

Michael Shannon is also a well-known actor and some of his famous film appearances were in "*Pearl Harbour*" in 2001 and "*Batman vs Superman: Dawn of Justice*" also released in 2016.

Also starring are Alex Pettyfer, Johnny Knoxville, Colin Hanks, and Evan Peters.

Elvis & Nixon was presented at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival in March 2016 and was released in the US on 22 April 2016; an important date, as it marked exactly 22 years to the day of Nixon's death. In the UK, **Elvis & Nixon** was released on 29 April 2016.

THE PLOT

Elvis, totally dissatisfied and disgruntled with the socio-political climate in the US, shows up to the White House and requests an urgent meeting with President Richard Nixon on the morning of 21 December 1970. Elvis wants Nixon to swear him in as an undercover agent in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to act as a spy and be able to uncover issues which he felt were destroying the fabric of the American society.

I apologise for last time when I gave away the WHOLE plot and even told you how it finished! It was a misunderstanding between Peter and myself: I assure you it won't happen again! Sorry!

THE REVIEWS

On **Rotten Tomatoes** the film has a rating of 76% based on 130 reviews and an average rating of 6.5/10. The site agrees that the film is very engaging thanks to the talented starring of Kevin Spacey and Michael Shannon.

Radio Times gave the film an average review but praised the acting, saying: the combination of Shannon and Spacey render an entirely pleasant 86 minutes in the cinema – entertaining, humorous and well-made, albeit somewhat forgettable.

A critic from **The Guardian** called the film “a breezy comedy nimbly directed” and wrote: "Given that the film is about two of the most recognizable figures of the 20th century, clearly casting is key to its success. Luckily, director Liza Johnson hit the jackpot by getting Michael Shannon on board as the King and Kevin Spacey to play the corrupt president."

INTERESTING FACTS

Richard Milhous Nixon (9 January 1913 – 22 April 1994 – died age 81) served as the 37th President of the United States from 1969 until 1974, when he became the only US president to resign from office.

On mention of the name "Nixon", the phrase "Watergate scandal" immediately springs to mind. The word "spying" also comes to mind: the Watergate scandal cost Nixon much of his political support and in the face of almost certain impeachment and removal from office, led him to resign from his second term of office on 9 August 1974.

However, Nixon is responsible for many more positive deeds that were important cornerstones in American history. It was for these reasons that he was re-elected in one of the largest electoral landslides in US history in 1972. He was first elected in 1969 and served his 4 years. His second term lasted 2 years.

Nixon ended American involvement in the war in Vietnam in 1973 and was able to bring about the return of American POWs. He also ended compulsory military draft. His visit to the People's Republic of China in 1972 opened diplomatic relations between the US and China, and he initiated détente and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union the same year. He also presided over the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Elvis Aaron Presley, "King of Rock and Roll", or simply "the King" was born on 8 January 1935 (like Peter Anderson! In 1956) and was regarded as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 20th century.

Elvis began playing the guitar purely by chance after a gift he received when he was 10. His family later moved to Memphis, Tennessee and it is here that Elvis became influenced by the style of the American South and the many renowned musicians who grew up in and around Memphis. Much of his music was influenced by African-American spiritual music.

Elvis enjoyed fame throughout the late 50's, 60's and 70's. His good looks and unique style of dancing propelled him to stardom and the limelight as he danced around on stage shaking his hips. Many adults were shocked by his music and dancing but teenagers, however, absolutely loved and adored him.

In addition to making records and performing concerts, Elvis began to star in movies. His first movie was Love Me Tender in 1956. He also sang the title song from this movie which went

number one. Over the next 15 years, he starred in over 30 movies including *Jailhouse Rock*, *Blue Hawaii* and *Viva Las Vegas*.

On 21 December, Elvis engineered a meeting with President Richard Nixon at the White House, where he expressed his patriotism and his contempt for the hippies, the growing drug culture, and the counterculture in general. He asked Nixon for a Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs badge, a symbolic official sanction of his patriotic efforts.

Elvis Presley died of heart failure on 16 August 1977 at the age of 42. His health had deteriorated over the previous years, largely due to increased weight and, ironically, drug use. He was buried at Graceland near the graves of his mother and father.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE LATE 60's and 70's and SPYING

The 1970s were a tumultuous time. In some ways, the decade was a continuation of the 1960s. Women, African Americans, Native Americans, gays and lesbians and other marginalized people continued their fight for equality, and many Americans joined the protest against the ongoing war in Vietnam. Added to this were the rising tensions regarding welfare and social status. We can confidently say that "spying" was de rigeur.

Watergate was not just an event, or even a series of events, but rather, a mentality that permeated Nixon's presidency from the beginning. As his term in office wore on, President Nixon grew increasingly paranoid and defensive. Within a month after he was sworn in in 1969, Nixon instructed his aides to set up a secret office, paid for by private (and therefore illegal) funds, to "get the goods" in other words, "to spy", on his perceived enemies.

Think of it: an American president considering political opponents and other domestic critics -- and not people armed with nuclear weapons -- his "enemies." And then using the instruments of government, such as the Internal Revenue Service, against them. Nothing like this is known to have happened at any other time in U.S. history.

Watergate was a constitutional crisis. The raids on civilians' offices was a clear violation of the 4th Amendment's prohibition against unwarranted searches and seizures. And Nixon was engaged in a systematic attempt to defy the courts and Congress -- denying them information and seeking to make the executive branch unaccountable to the other branches of government.

It is in this light that perhaps every citizen, embodied in the form of Elvis Presley, wanted to spy on one other and know what the other was thinking in order to try and understand where everyone stood.

THE SPONSORS

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THE FILM SHOW

Elvis & Nixon is the **8th film** in English this year. The next film will also be in English: **LION** – an Australian production. This will be followed by another film in English **LA LA LAND** the film that almost won the Oscar but was pipped at the post by **MOONLIGHT**. There are 12 more films till the summer break in June – 10 in English, 1 in German and 1 in Spanish.

Enjoy the film!