

Evaluation of What's True, What's Not in Tucker Movie

[Presented mostly in the order of the scenes in the movie.]

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Overview to the Movie

1. Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas had strong personal interests in the making of the movie:
 - a. Coppola's father was a prospective Tucker dealer. Coppola owned then and now Tucker cars #1014 and #1037. Observers have pointed out many similarities between Preston Tucker and Francis Ford Coppola.
 - b. Lucas owns Tucker cars #1009 (and #1003 at the time of the movie). He continues to own #1009. He conveyed the four Tucker replica cars in the movie to Frank Tucker.
2. Much thought was put into the creation of the movie to try to effectively capture and portray the essence of what happened with Preston Tucker's (PT's) efforts to produce his revolutionary car of the future.
3. Jeff Bridges' portrayal of Preston Tucker effectively captures his highly energetic, charismatic personality and entrepreneurial focus in attempting to produce his "Car of Tomorrow" (quite similar to Steve Jobs/Apple Computer in his pursuit to introduce the iphone).
4. Preston Tucker, as shown, was a strong family man with the strong support of his wife, Vera, and children.
5. Preston Tucker had very loyal friends/workers but also very fierce enemies (often including senior Tucker Corporation executives when they left the company).
6. Tucker cars in the movie: 1004, 1005, 1009, 1012, 1013, 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021, 1022, 1025, 1026, 1029, 1031, 1034, 1037 (as Tin Goose), 1039, 1041 and 1050. Present but not in movie: 1014, 1020 and 1051. Source: Richard Jones, on set.
7. The movie does not inform viewers that over 30 new car companies were started after World War II, including Davis, Muntz (Muntz Jet) and Playboy, but that only Kaiser-Frazer achieved a level of limited success.
8. The movie also does not inform viewers concerning the huge amount of capitalization that was necessary to form a new automobile company: Henry Kaiser said he did not realize that their first \$50M in funding for Kaiser-Frazer would scarcely have the impact of a stone skipped across a pond for what was ultimately needed to produce their cars. The Tucker Corporation never had more than \$26M.

Matters/Themes Essentially True in Movie

1. Most major themes, with the exception of the level of opposition of the Big 3, are essentially true.
2. Start of movie: The importance of family, the combat car/120 mph, PrestonTucker's (PT's) role in the 1935 Miller-Ford Indy race car, the trade of a car involving a dog, Jimmy Sukuoyoma and the goal of the "Car of Tomorrow" are all true.
3. Jeff Bridges' portrayal of Preston Tucker effectively captures his personal commitment and focus to build his "Car of Tomorrow" (Tucker's zeal to produce a car highly responsive to what buyers should want was the focus of his nomination to the Automotive Hall of Fame).
4. The January, 1946 PIC Magazine article resulted in a huge favorable response (however, unrealistic production target here and later (examples: 2/11/47- "200 cars/day by June, 1947" and 9/12/47- "1000 cars/day by 3/48") became SEC focal matters).
5. Abe Karsten was an early, very loyal promoter who had a previous criminal conviction. He was forced out by Floyd Cerf, primary underwriter.
6. Alex Tremulis did contact Preston Tucker (his original sketch, completed in six days after meeting PT, essentially became "the car").
7. Debut of Tin Goose- the movie effectively captures the major event atmosphere, large crowd, the

Matters/Themes Not True

1. The timeframe of events shown in movie are highly condensed. In contrast:
 - Early 1944. Preston Tucker began his efforts to form his new company.
 - January, 1946. Pic Magazine article.
 - December, 1946 Preston Tucker and Alex Tremulis first meet.
 - June 19, 1947. Debut of the Tin Goose.
 - March, 1948. Completion of #1001.
 - Late October, 1948. Last prototype cars created. Company essentially closed.
 - March 3, 1949. Petition for bankruptcy approved.
 - June, 1949. Preston Tucker and six other defendants were indicted.
 - October, 1949. Criminal trial began and the Federal government took back the plant from the Tucker Corporation.
 - January 11, 1950. Preston Tucker & seven defendants found NOT GUILTY.
2. The supposed level of actual Big 3 opposition, commonly asserted by Preston Tucker, did not happen. However, the level of opposition from Sen. Ferguson is accurate. Financial needs, the challenges of start-up/novel car, the need for more time and the overreach of the SEC were all major factors workings against Tucker.

challenges of getting the Tin Goose out to the stage and the focal role of family on stage.

8. The work performed at Ypsilanti Tool & Machine was critical to modifying Cord transmissions, converting the Franklin engine and the design of the new Tucker transmission, albeit this was never understood or accepted by the SEC.
9. The Vera/Preston bedroom scene discussion topic concerning his supposed 15 years of testing became a later SEC issue.
10. Preston Tucker's focus on both safety and performance (only Jaguar was a faster production car) was far ahead of the Big 3. The safety luncheon happened but with company engineers, not at the WAA.
11. Seven Tucker cars (1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1030, 1031 and 1032) were tested at the Indy 500 race track. The rollover of #1027 (in the movie, a "Studetucker replica") is very accurately captured.
12. The depiction of the Drew Pearson' radio show of June 16, 1948 is accurate. Pearson was a major, national influencer. It caused the price of Tucker Corporation stock to immediately fall (never to recover). It was a devastating blow to PT and the company.
13. SEC leaked its secret investigative report to the Detroit News (3/13/49 article) and Collier's Magazine (6/25/49 article). PT was never permitted access to it.
14. A loyal band of employees substantially completed the last 13 cars to achieve 50 cars built by late 1948. By then, the company was effectively dead, well ahead of the criminal trial that happened fall, 1949.
15. Tucker and other defendants were found not guilty without the Defense presenting any witnesses. "Did Preston Tucker intend to build his car? Yes, said the jury.

3. Sen. Ferguson was not motivated simply by being "the Senator from Detroit." Ferguson headed the Senate oversight committee of WAA. Of concern:
 1. The original \$150K down payment check from the Tucker Corporation to the WAA had gotten "lost" and over a year later the WAA had still not sought a replacement check from the company.
 2. The largest plant in the world was basically sitting idle while there was a huge national demand for plant capacity to build consumer products, including cars, after WW II.
4. The initial portrayal of Alex Tremulis. Tremulis did contact Tucker but he was not a novice designer (he had been a designer with Auburn/Cord/Duesenberg). His initial design work, completed within six days after meeting Tucker, essentially became "the Tucker car."
5. Abe: "Need millions for production." Actually, the Tucker Corporation likely needed nearly \$75M more than that actually raised/earned (\$26M) to get to full production.
6. While Preston Tucker frequently faced backlash from many of the "old guard" hired from industry to bolster the sale of stock, he still effectively controlled most of the final major decisions concerning the company and car, sometimes not resulting in the best business decisions.
7. A Preston Tucker meeting with Howard Hughes, according to Hughes, never happened. However, PT did try to secure major funding from Hughes.
8. The SEC temporarily did not shut down the Tucker plant in June, 1948 (PT made this decision- however, he had little choice given how disruptive the SEC action was).
9. Preston Tucker eluded police in chase so as not to be arrested (he did to avoid turning over company records).
10. 50 cars were not required to be built by the WAA lease of the plant to Tucker.
11. Preston Tucker did not speak in his criminal trial. However:
 1. PT, while testifying before the Grand Jury, said: "What the SEC has done is the biggest rape of Free Enterprise ever perpetrated on this country."
 2. William Kirby, PT's personal lawyer, essentially said what Jeff Bridges says in his closing argument to the jury.

The move by the Defense to rest without presenting any witnesses was brilliant. In contrast, the Prosecution had a flawed trial game plan from the start.