

Oliver Stone says studios' boards led to 'Snowden' rejection

Director Oliver Stone said Thursday at Comic-Con that every major movie studio turned down his narrative film about Edward Snowden because of censorship from their corporate leaders.

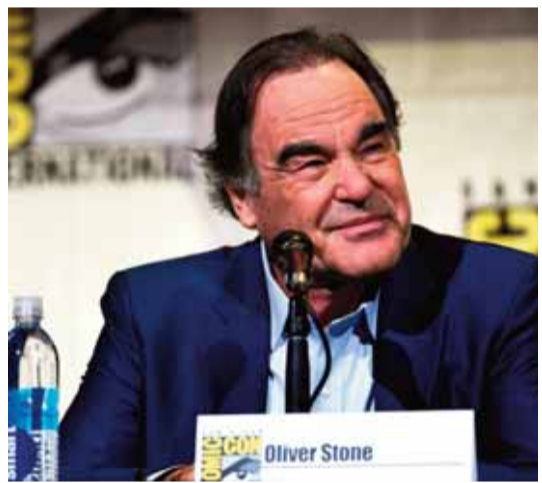
Stone, who has chronicled many American conspiracies in his films, said he does not believe an entity like the National Security Agency is putting pressure on the studios, but the corporate boards who control them.

He got financing from France and Germany for the movie, which comes out Sept. 16 and stars Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Snowden. Stone said he believes Snowden is still "a mystery" despite many interviews, articles and the Oscar-winning documentary "Citizenfour" exploring the former NSA contractor who leaked thousands of classified documents about the government's surveillance programs.

Snowden now lives in Russia, and Stone met with him a number of times in Moscow, trying to gain his trust and decide whether to take on the project. Gordon-Levitt also tried to get to know Snowden before portraying him. The actor said he was particularly surprised at Snowden's optimism about the ability of technology to positively change the future.

The conversation Thursday took a decidedly heady turn, away from the usual fanboy fun and toward big ideas about government transparency and the surveillance state. "We're promised privacy in the Constitution, and if the government was going to change those rules, they have to be open about it," Gordon-Levitt said. "We're supposed to have that conversation and decide together."

The film is set to screen for the first time Thursday at the annual fan convention. Although Stone and the cast have their own views on Snowden, the filmmaker stressed that the movie is not one-sided. "We don't want to take sides on this in the movie," Stone said. "You have to see the movie to explore the positions." Gordon-Levitt added that it's a story that does not lend itself to a headline. "It isn't even as simple as a two-hour film," he said. — AP



SAN DIEGO: Director/writer Oliver Stone attends the "Snowden" panel on day 1 of Comic-Con International on Thursday. — AP

'Fear the Walking Dead' introduces new cast member

The newest cast member of "The Walking Dead" spin-off was introduced to the zombie drama franchise in an overwhelming way.

Danay Garcia told the crowd during the "Fear the Walking Dead" panel Friday at San Diego Comic-Con International that she arrived for her first day on the Mexican set during lunch and was greeted by hordes of zombie extras chowing down. "It happened so fast," Garcia said. "I got the job on a Wednesday. I was in Mexico on Friday. I was on set on Monday."

Garcia is playing Luciana, a member of a community near Tijuana, Mexico, with a very different approach to the series' "walkers." "They don't see the dead as a bad thing,"

said "Fear the Walking Dead" executive producer Dave Erickson.

Frank Dillane's recovering addict Nick encounters Garcia's character after he ditches his fractured family earlier in the season. "She's testing him," said Garcia at the pop-culture convention. "He's the foreigner." The second half of the second season of "Fear the Walking Dead" will premiere Aug 21. — AP



SAN DIEGO: Kim Dickens, left, and Cliff Curtis attend the "Fear the Walking Dead" panel on day 2 of Comic-Con International on Friday. — AP



CLEVELAND: Confetti and balloons fall during celebrations after Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's acceptance speech on the final day of the Republican National Convention on Thursday. — AP

Fruitless search for consensus after Trump speech

A look at the 2016 Republican National Convention through a media lens: A diverse media speaking to a divided nation found something it could agree upon with Donald Trump's acceptance speech: It was long.

That was about the only consensus to be found as news organizations and their representatives sought to sum up the convention's crowning moment Thursday. "If Americans were not scared for their safety before tonight, they are now," said ABC News' Martha Raddatz.

Fox News Channel's Chris Wallace said the speech read better on paper than it was delivered. "For some reason, he shouted the speech," he said. "It was an endurance test." While MSNBC's Chris Matthews felt the speech was too much of a harangue, it hit strong points at the end. "It was pure Trump," he said.

CNN's in-house Trump supporter, Jeffrey Lord, said it reminded him of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, speaking on Fox News Channel, could find no comparison. "This was the best acceptance speech I've ever seen, including my hero, Ronald Reagan," Giuliani said. On CNN, Ana Navarro had a

slightly different take. "If you are a Republican who came to this convention hungry for an uplifting, unifying, visionary speech, you're going home starving," she said.

The media, it seems clear, is still trying to figure Donald Trump out.

WHERE'S PENCE? The speech on the penultimate night of the convention is supposed to be the shining moment for a party's vice presidential candidate. But despite a well-received address in the arena, Mike Pence was a missing man the morning after. Ted Cruz's non-endorsement speech so dominated the coverage, Pence was all but forgotten. News organizations were reflecting what people were thinking, though. The Nielsen company said the most tweeted-about moment of Wednesday night was the minute after Cruz's speech.

WORKING THE REFS: Media critic Bernard Goldberg believes reporters look for negative stories when covering Republicans, and he sought to put colleagues on notice during an appearance on Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor." He complained about the attention paid to Cruz's speech, even as he admitted it was a news story. "They will cover

the Democratic convention as a coronation," he said, "and they are covering the Republican convention as if it's an anti-abortion rally."

RATINGS: The television audience grew with the third night of coverage. The Nielsen company said 23.4 million people watched Wednesday night's session, up from the 21.9 million who watched the penultimate night of the 2012 Republican convention. Fox News Channel was the top-rated television outlet for convention coverage, followed by NBC and CNN.

BREAKING NEWS: It's been a good week for CNN's chyron writers, but the person who wrote this message seemed a little weary. "Breaking news!" the onscreen message read. "Source: Expect a few new things in Trump's speech." — AP

Judge denies witness details in murder case of rap mogul

Defense lawyers for Marion "Suge" Knight will not be given addresses and other information about confidential informants and key witnesses in the murder case against the former rap mogul, a judge ruled Friday after a closed-door meeting with a prosecutor and police detective.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Ronald Coen made the decision after prosecutors cited Knight's history of violence and allegations that he has intimidated witnesses.

However, Coen said some of the details will need to be disclosed shortly before Knight goes on trial. The 51-year-old Knight was boisterous throughout the hearing and at one point complained that he wasn't receiving proper medical treatment in jail. He told the judge he recently spent 10 days in a hospital after doctors found blood clots in his arm and neck.

"I'd hate to go through all of this and die in jail," Knight said during lengthy remarks to the judge. "I just know my time is ticking some days because of my health." "I think it's really important you listen to me because I have no one else to talk to," Knight said. Coen said he would sign any orders for medical treatment that Knight required. "I don't want you dying," he said.

Knight lashed out at his attorneys during a recess after he spoke to Coen, who had urged Knight to heed the advice of his lawyers to remain silent. Knight could be heard yelling after deputies took him out of the courtroom. "I have a right to know what is going on," Knight told his lawyers. "This has to be a real conversation. I'm not an idiot, you have to consult with me."

Knight's Attorney

Knight's attorney J. Tooson said his client's reaction was "natural in a case this high-profile." He also noted that Knight hasn't been able to see his fiancée Toi-Lin Kelly and young son. Kelly said during the recess that Knight addressed the judge directly because he isn't being treated fairly.

"He feels like has a voice and he can talk to somebody," she said. Knight has pleaded not guilty to murder and attempted murder charges filed after security camera video showed him running over two men in January 2015 outside a Compton burger stand. One of the men died.

Knight could face life in prison if convicted. A trial date has not been set. His lawyers had wanted details about people who saw the confrontation, including some who are gang members. One of the witnesses is Cle "Bone" Sloan, who survived being hit by Knight's pickup truck after he repeatedly punched the former mogul during the incident. The judge withheld Sloan's address from Knight's lawyers.

Deputy District Attorney Cynthia Barnes said she would arrange interviews of Sloan and other witnesses by Knight's lawyers. Knight's Death Row Records label fueled gangster rap's popularity in the 1990s, with a roster of artists that included Dr. Dre, Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg. He lost control of the company after it was forced into bankruptcy.

Knight pleaded no contest in 1995 and was sentenced to five years' probation for assaulting two rappers in 1992. He was sentenced to prison in 1997 for violating his probation by taking part in a fight at a Las Vegas hotel hours before Shakur was fatally wounded in a drive-by shooting as he rode in Knight's car. — AP



LOS ANGELES: Marion "Suge" Knight sits in court during a bail hearing in his murder case on July 17, 2015. — AP