

Rushes

THE HOUSE THAT 'DAVE' BUILT

ON THE SET

It was a covert operation that would have done Nixon proud. Production designer J. Michael Riva didn't exactly break into the White House to take top-secret pictures, but he did leave the president's home with a full roll of film and a smile on his face. Riva

requested but was denied access to photograph the manse so that he

could duplicate the interiors for *Dave*, a Capraesque fable starring Kevin Kline as a presidential look-alike. Taking up the challenge, he surreptitiously filmed a White House tour with an 8mm camera. "I wasn't nervous," recalls Riva. "The people I was with were nervous. But I've been arrested before, so I didn't worry about it."

Using the precious footage, Riva and his design team reproduced the Oval Office and the dining room. While the two sets are near replicas of their counterparts, the outer offices and hallways in *Dave* are more impressive than the originals. "We exaggerated everything," Riva explains. "Seeing the real White House was a bit of an anticlimax. You didn't feel like it was substan-

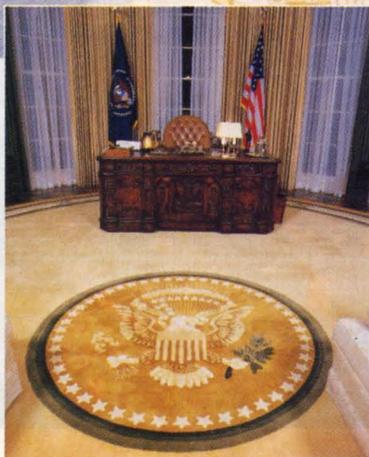
tial enough. It should be *overwhelming*."

When it came to re-creating the view from the Oval Office, Riva received permission to shoot from the White House lawn. "We got this big scissor lift and went up to photograph it," he says. "But the Secret Service made us take everything down two or three times because it was the perfect sniper position to shoot the president through the living room window. We had five policemen, two bomb-sniffing dogs, and the Secret Service stepping all over everybody's jurisdiction! After four days, we did what should have taken fifteen minutes to do." Sigh. "I've had my fill of Washington."

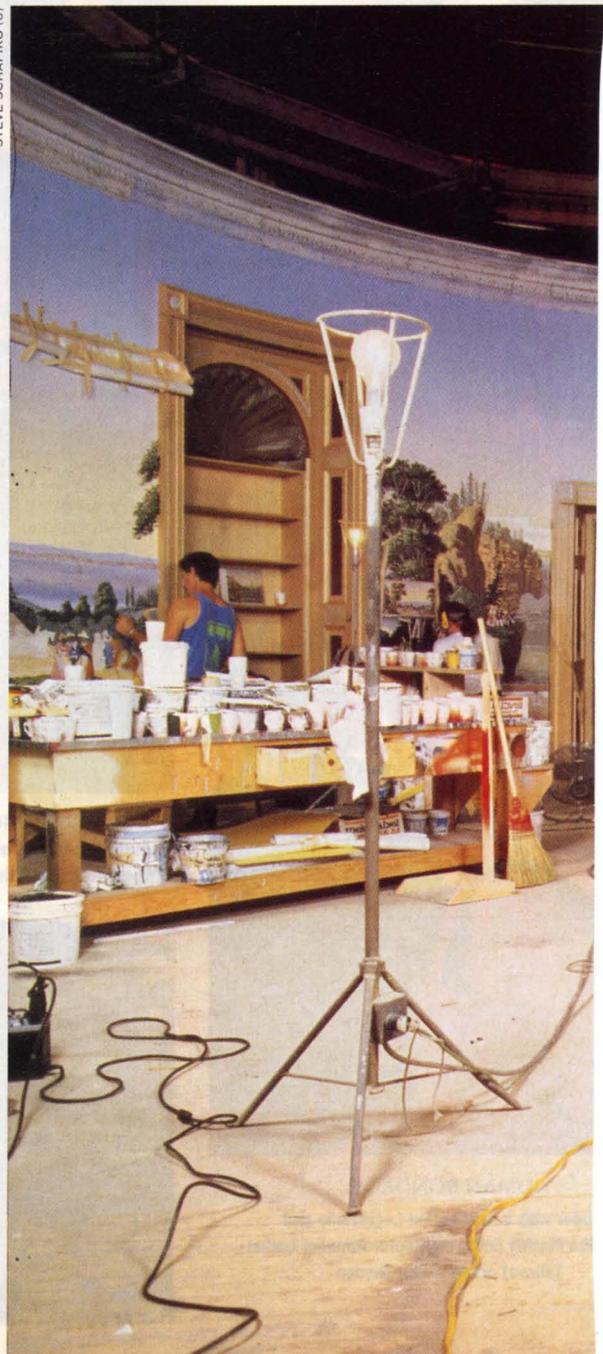
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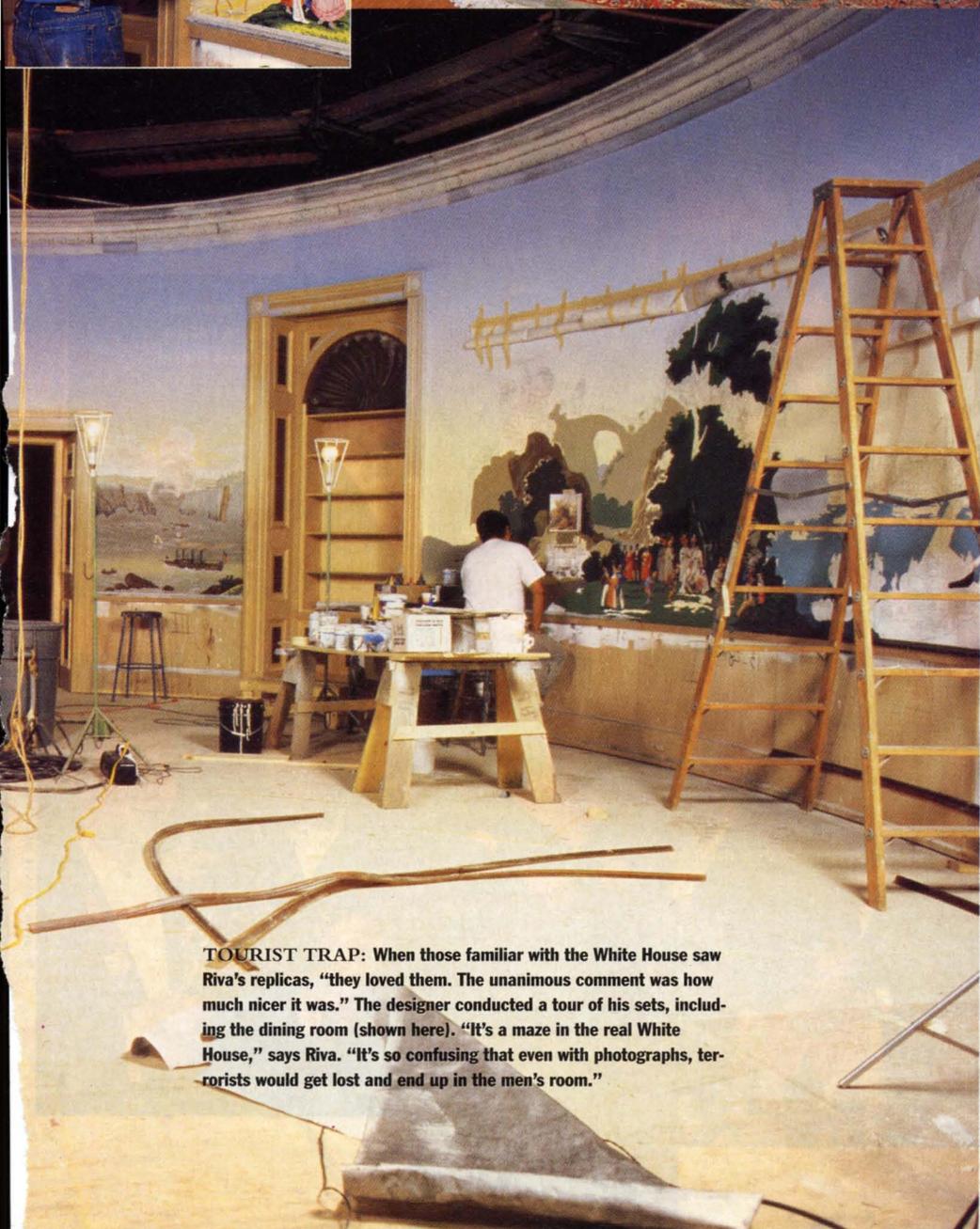
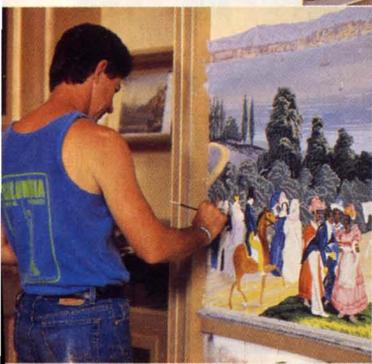
SUITE DREAMS: The *faux* entryway to the presidential sleeping quarters (above). "We weren't allowed up there *at all*," says Riva. In the end, they studied videos of a White House tour narrated by Jackie Kennedy.



WHAT CAMELOT BEGOT: "I wanted to mirror the Kennedy administration as much as possible, because he was my favorite recent president," says Riva of his \$90,000 Oval Office (left). "The carpets came from the company that supplies the White House. We used part Kennedy and part Reagan carpets. The telephones are real. We found them in a warehouse; they had been purchased from the White House for *Seven Days in May* [1964]. I don't know *how* they did that." The real president, hard at work (above).



DÉJÀ VIEW: Riva's sets, including the muraled dining room (below), took six weeks to construct. "We left them standing," says Riva. "Warner Bros. kicked in \$25,000 or \$30,000, and now they own them. They immediately rented them to *In the Line of Fire* and *Hot Shots! Part Deux*. And they probably made twice as much money as they put into it."



TOURIST TRAP: When those familiar with the White House saw Riva's replicas, "they loved them. The unanimous comment was how much nicer it was." The designer conducted a tour of his sets, including the dining room (shown here). "It's a maze in the real White House," says Riva. "It's so confusing that even with photographs, terrorists would get lost and end up in the men's room."