



press release

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“The Contender” -- filmed on location in Virginia and starring Gary Oldman, Joan Allen and Jeff Bridges -- opens October 13

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA – The Commonwealth of Virginia played the lead in the shooting of the feature film, “The Contender,” a political thriller that gives a behind-the-scenes look at the high-stakes world of contemporary politics. The film, produced by Battleground Productions, is released by Steven Spielberg’s company, DreamWorks. It has the honor of being the first film produced by an outside company that DreamWorks has chosen to release.

“The Contender” was written and directed by Rod Lurie, a former film critic from Los Angeles who made his feature-film writing and directing debut with “Deterrence.” “The Contender” stars Gary Oldman as Speaker of the House Shelly Runyon, Joan Allen as Senator Laine Hanson and Jeff Bridges as President Jackson Evans. Also featured in the film are well-known actors Sam Elliott, Christian Slater and Mariel Hemingway.

In the film, the Vice-President of the United States has died, and the President (Jeff Bridges) has decided to appoint a woman (Joan Allen) to be vice-president, thereby ensuring his place in history as well as hers. However, his long-time adversary, Speaker of the House Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman) is the chairman of the confirmation committee and vows that she will never take office. As the film unfolds, shocking allegations are made about her, and she must finally examine how far she is willing to go to get and to keep the vice-presidency.

The film was shot in the fall of 1999 primarily in the Richmond area, although some scenes were filmed in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. Many exceptional Virginia locations figure prominently in the film, including the State Capitol, federal courts building and Arlington National Cemetery. The film company was in residence in Virginia for three months. The economic impact on the local economy was \$6,500,000. “The Contender” premiered at the Toronto Film Festival on September 17 and will open nationwide on Friday, October 13.

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