

The POLITICAL PROCESS

Directors have long been fascinated with the power of the presidency and the workings of Washington. In satires, dramas, thrillers—and even a horror film—they have told America’s story.



INSIDE THE BELTWAY: (right) Otto Preminger (center) shot *Advise & Consent* (1962) on real locations in Washington, D.C., including the Capitol and the Washington Monument. The film, about the cutthroat wheeling and dealing behind a presidential appointment, was one of several pictures Preminger made challenging the production code and Hollywood blacklist. (above) Director Timur Bekmambetov (left), well known in Russia for his vampire films, teamed with Tim Burton to produce *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012). Aside from his other problems, Lincoln (Benjamin Walker) is chasing vampires who are planning to take over the country.





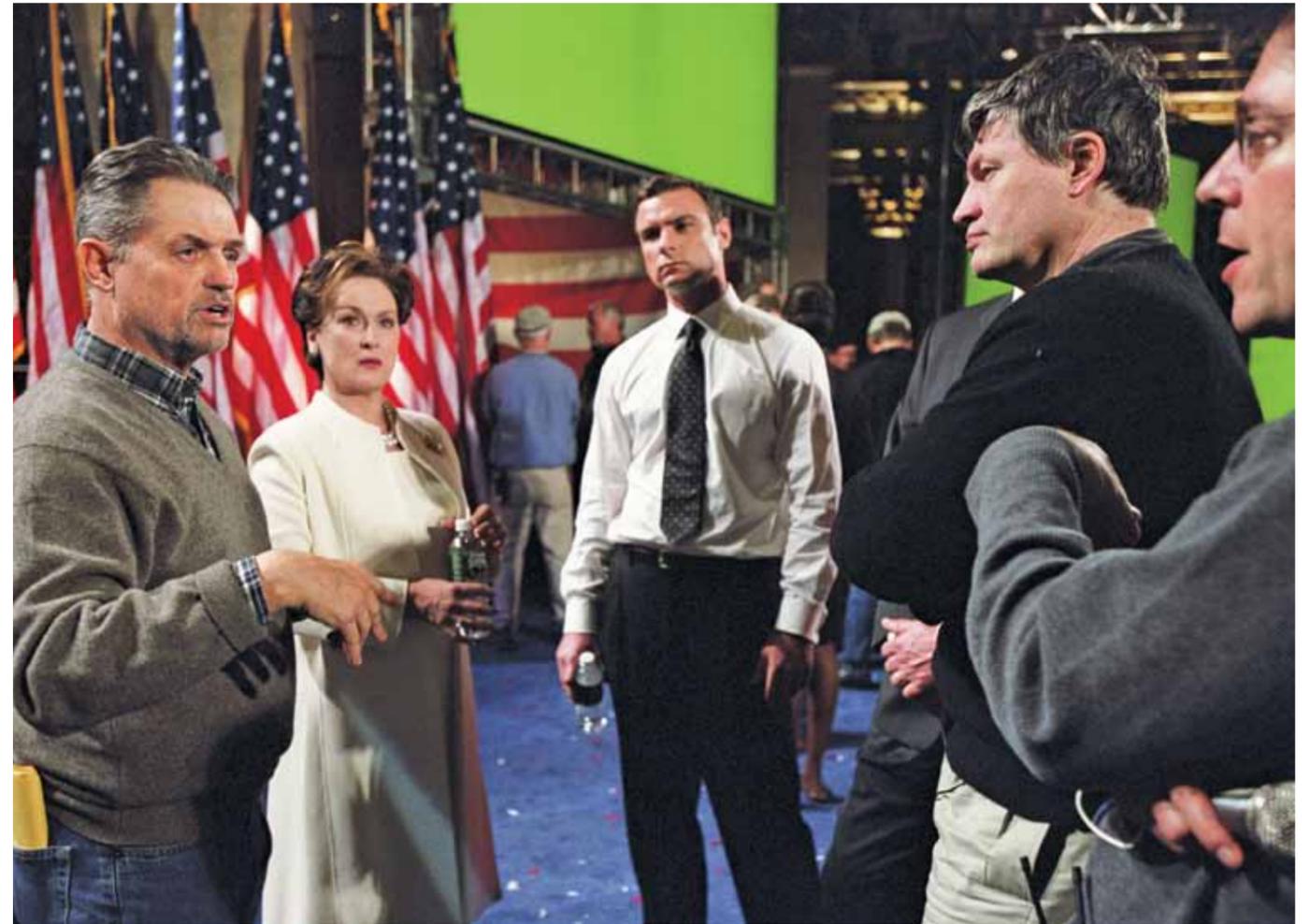
CHAMBER MUSIC: Frank Capra and his crew went to Washington, D.C., to film background material and study the layout of the Senate for his populist fable, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939). The interior of the Senate was recreated full-scale, in precise detail, on the Columbia lot, along with committee rooms, cloakrooms, hotel suites and other Washington monuments.



CAMELOT: Jon Cassar directs Greg Kinnear as John F. Kennedy in the miniseries *The Kennedys* (2011). "What was attractive to me was that we were humanizing [the family]. The oddest things to shoot were the assassinations, especially Bobby. We recreated it in such detail, it was a bit strange to stand there."



HIGHER OFFICE: Chris Rock, with producer Ali LeRoi, directed and starred as a Washington, D.C., alderman who becomes a candidate for president in *Head of State* (2003). As a first time director, he said he was more relaxed in front of the camera. "I actually found myself being less critical of my performance."



WILD CARD: Jonathan Demme sets up a scene from the climax of *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004). Demme updated John Frankenheimer's classic political conspiracy film about soldiers coming home from war, brainwashed to kill. Liev Schreiber (center) plays a vice presidential candidate brainwashed by his mother (Meryl Streep).



HOME ALONE: The Oval Office set for Rob Reiner's *The American President* (1995), starring Michael Douglas as chief executive, was originally built for *Dave* and later used for *The West Wing*. To prepare for the film, Reiner spent two days trailing President Clinton as he went through his daily routine.



CAMPAIGN TRAIL: Mike Nichols sets up a shot with John Travolta as a Clintonesque governor seeking his party's presidential nomination and Adrian Lester as an idealistic staff member in *Primary Colors* (1998). "I think of it as a story about the American process and the fact of scandal leading the headlines."

PHOTOS: (ABOVE) DGA ARCHIVES; (BOTTOM, LEFT) COURTESY ZAK CASSAR; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) DREAMWORKS/COURTESY EVERETT

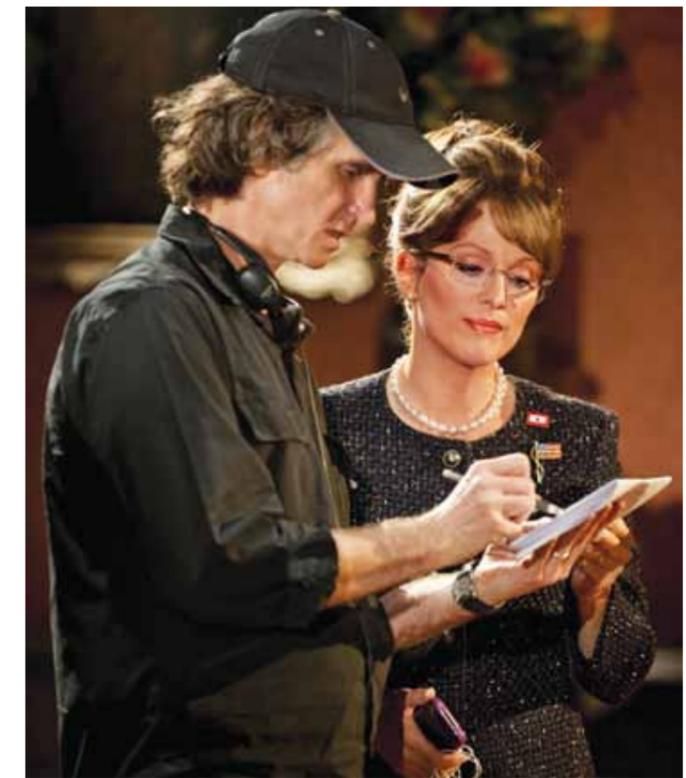
PHOTOS: (ABOVE) BFI; (BOTTOM, LEFT) KOBAL COLLECTION/FRANCOIS DUJHAMEL; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) SONY



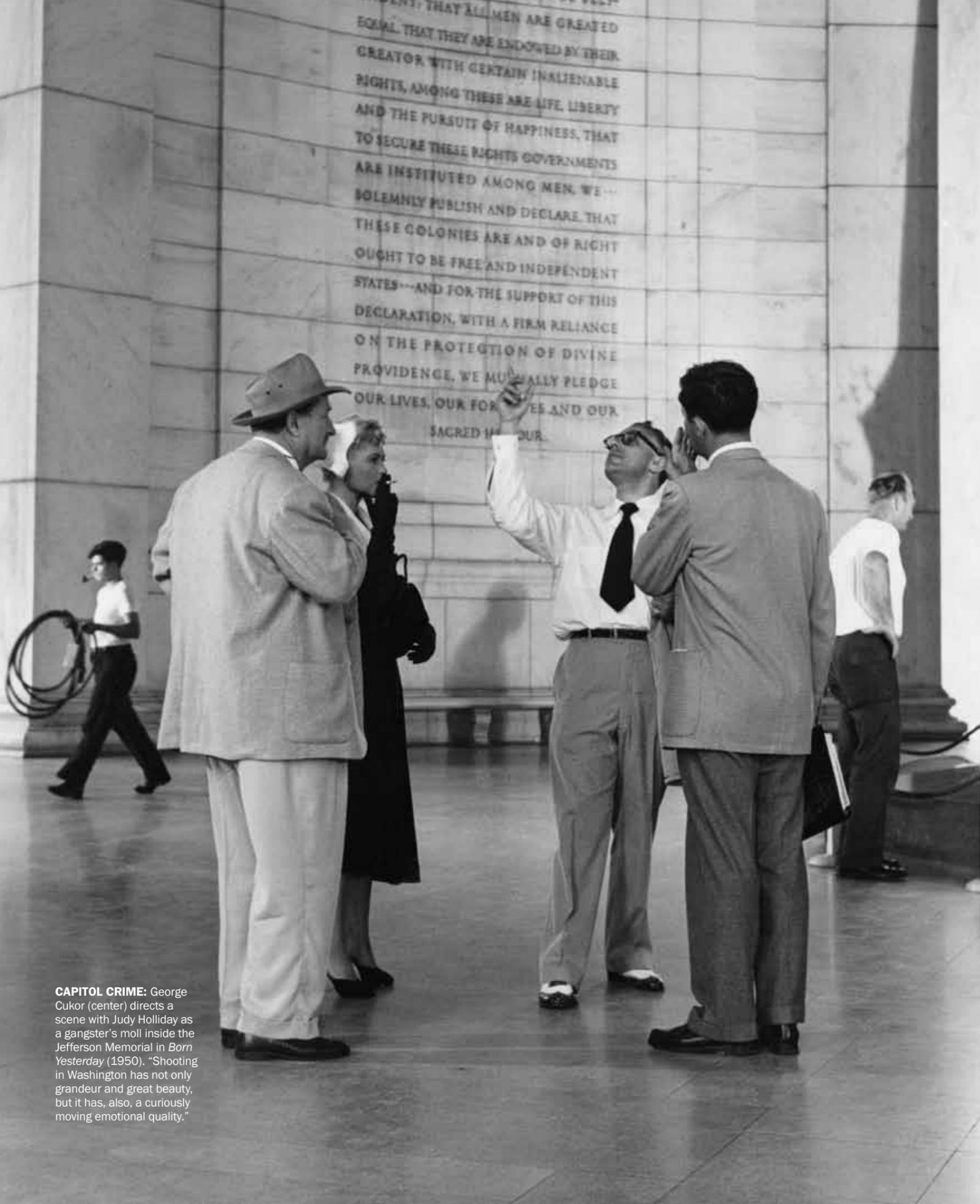
TRUE CONFESSIONS: Ron Howard agreed to direct *Frost/Nixon* (2008) only if the actors from Peter Morgan's Tony Award-winning stage play, Michael Sheen (left) and Frank Langella, were allowed to repeat their roles. Even off-camera, the actors remained in character and the cast and crew referred to Langella as "Mr. President."



HAPPIER DAYS: Oliver Stone directs Anthony Hopkins and Joan Allen as the president and his wife Pat in *Nixon* (1995). Stone regarded Nixon as a "lonely, isolated [and] kind of mad" figure. He said he cast Hopkins because he was struck by the actor's isolation. "The loneliness. I felt that was the quality that always marked Nixon."



YOU BETCHA: Jay Roach saw *Game Change* (2012), an account of Sarah Palin's run for vice president in 2008, starring Julianne Moore, as a Pygmalion story. "We tried to get as close as we could to what really happened, then trusted our instincts that it was one of the better political stories ever from real life."



CAPITOL CRIME: George Cukor (center) directs a scene with Judy Holliday as a gangster's moll inside the Jefferson Memorial in *Born Yesterday* (1950). "Shooting in Washington has not only grandeur and great beauty, but it has, also, a curiously moving emotional quality."



DIRTY LAUNDRY: George Clooney, taking a break on the set with producers Brian Oliver and Grant Heslov, directed and acted in *The Ides of March* (2011). He plays a morally compromised governor campaigning for the presidential nomination, but the focus is on the corrupting of his junior campaign manager (Ryan Gosling).



AMERICAN HERO: Robin Williams plays the host of a news satire program who runs for president and, due to a computer malfunction, gets elected in Barry Levinson's *Man of the Year* (2006). The film wasn't meant to be like Levinson's *Wag the Dog*. "It was never as dark and cynical a movie. This functioned with comedy and drama and suspense."

PHOTOS: (ABOVE) SONY; (BOTTOM) UNIVERSAL PICTURES/KOBAL COLLECTION; (OPPOSITE) AMPAS