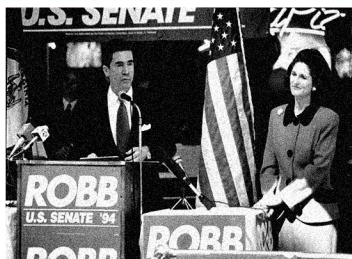


Rolling Stone

POLITICAL FIRECRACKER: “a PERFECT CANDIDATE”

➤ TALK ABOUT TIMELY. AS THE MUD BEGINS TO BE SLUNG IN earnest in the '96 presidential race, you won't find a wittier or grittier guide to the electoral process than this documentary, a wicked dazzler from R.J. Cutler (*The War Room*) and David Van Taylor (*Dream Deceivers*). *A Perfect Candidate* declares open season on campaign season by focusing on the 1994 Virginia Senate race. Republican Oliver North is



eager to join the Congress that nailed him for lying about Iran-contra, and Democratic incumbent Chuck Robb, the husband of one of LBJ's daughters, is eager to dodge the press that nailed him for a fling with a center-fold and attending a cocaine party. "It's like choosing between diseases," says a voter.



Surprising satirical mileage is mined from a subject that offers little news (both scandals are old) and less suspense (Robb won). The film is keenly observant behind the scenes, where ideology vies with cynicism. Don Baker, a liberal *Washington Post* reporter, warms to North, while Mark Goodin, North's strategist, laments the degeneration of campaigning into tabloid showbiz. *Candidate* is a keeper that pulls you up short with insights as barbed as a political cartoon and as sober as truth.

TOP: CHUCK ROBB HITS THE STUMP. ABOVE: OLLIE NORTH GIVES VOTERS THE HIGH SIGN.