

# Actor Kevin Spacey to contest sexual assault charges in UK courts

Laura Tiernan  
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Actor Kevin Spacey was granted unconditional bail when he appeared at Westminster Magistrates Court on Friday over charges that he sexually assaulted three men. Barrister Patrick Gibbs QC told the court, “Mr Spacey strenuously denies any and all criminality in this case.”

The 62-year-old is fighting two counts of sexual assault on a man in London in March 2005; sexual assault on a man in Gloucestershire in April 2013; and one charge that he “caused a man to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent” in London in August 2008.

England’s Crown Prosecution Service authorised the charges on May 26, with Spacey issuing a defiant statement, “I will voluntarily appear in the UK as soon as can be arranged and defend myself against these charges, which I am confident will prove my innocence.”

Spacey appeared calm as he entered the court building Friday morning, surrounded by a media scrum. Inside courtroom 1, Deputy Chief Magistrate Tan Ikram heard arguments about bail, with prosecutors demanding substantial bond “commensurate with the defendant’s wealth” and the surrender of his passport.

The judge rejected their claims that Spacey was a flight risk and granted him unconditional bail. Judge Ikram addressed Spacey directly, “You cooperated with the authorities in New York and you voluntarily appeared to these proceedings. I have not been persuaded there is a real risk [you will abscond], bearing in my mind all I have heard about you.”

Spacey has been caught in the crosshairs of the #MeToo juggernaut since 2017, when untested accusations, innuendo and gossip were used to incite upper middle-class hysteria and destroy the reputations and careers of several high-profile actors, directors and

comedians.

#MeToo sought to replace the presumption of innocence with the anti-democratic principle that “women must be believed,” irrespective of evidence and the right of the accused to due process. In Spacey’s case only the gender and sexual orientation are different.

In October 2017, actor Anthony Rapp alleged that Spacey made a sexual advance toward him in 1986, when Spacey was 26 and Rapp 14. This single allegation was enough to trigger a firestorm. Within days, Netflix cut Spacey from his lead role as Frank Underwood in *House of Cards* and director Ridley Scott removed him from *All the Money in the World*, reshooting his role as Jean Paul Getty with Christopher Plummer.

Soon after, William Little alleged he had been groped by the actor in a restaurant and bar in Nantucket, Massachusetts, but the case collapsed ignominiously pre-trial. In 2019, Little refused to testify about exculpatory evidence, namely messages he had deleted from a missing mobile phone, choosing to plead the Fifth Amendment on self-incrimination and leaving his lawyers without a case.

Spacey has repeatedly challenged the #MeToo accusations against him, responding to the unprincipled attacks on his reputation with dignity and even humour. In Christmas Eve videos released on YouTube in 2018 and 2019, he issued a bravura reply to his accusers, addressing his fans as *House of Card’s* Frank Underwood, “I shocked you with my honesty, but most of all I made you think ... we’re not done no matter what anyone says.”

Acknowledging the toll taken by unproven accusations against countless individuals, his video one year later was darker: “while it’s been a privilege to

offer support, I have to say frankly it's been beyond my abilities. It's bigger than me, because heartbreakingly so many have talked about things having gotten so bad for them that they've contemplated taking their own lives."

News of the CPS charges against Spacey broke May 26 while the actor was in a Manhattan federal courtroom appearing in a civil lawsuit over Rapp's allegations. "Spacey slumped forward at the defense table's desk and hung his head in his hands for the remainder of the hearing," according to *Courthouse News Service*.

Spacey's decision to challenge his accusers in the UK takes place little more than two weeks after actor Johnny Depp won his defamation case against former wife Amber Heard. A Virginia jury found there was no evidence to support Heard's accusations of sexual assault and domestic violence against Depp made in the *Washington Post*, finding her allegations false and malicious.

*Johnny Depp v Amber Heard* played out before a huge global audience, with millions following the complex legal arguments and evidence presented by both parties. The six-week hearing exposed the tissue of lies and fabrications used to destroy Depp's career and reputation. The jury's verdict was a devastating blow to the #MeToo witch-hunt, with Depp's soaring popularity revealing a deep commitment among broad masses of working people for core democratic rights and a determined fight for the truth.

The charges brought against Spacey from 2005 and 2013 coincide with his tenure as artistic director at the Old Vic theatre in London. After Rapp's three-decades-old allegations were used to publicly flog Spacey, the Old Vic was quick to join in, stating that "we are deeply dismayed to hear the allegations levied against Kevin Spacey ... Inappropriate behaviour by anyone working at The Old Vic is completely unacceptable."

Spacey's acclaimed tenure at the Old Vic—pulling it back from bankruptcy and attracting younger audiences—suddenly counted for nothing. The theatre's trustees launched an investigation headed by law firm Lewis Silken into anonymous allegations of "inappropriate" behaviour by Spacey, and a "helpline" was established through October-November 2017 to solicit complaints. In the end, the firm's lawyers took just two weeks to issue findings, with the Old Vic

conceding, "it has not been possible to verify any of these allegations."

Spacey will appear in two films being released this year, as a detective in director Franco Nero's *L'uomo che disegno Dio (The Man Who Drew God)* and as a charismatic stranger who shows up in a small mountainside community in director Michael Zaiko Hall's *Peter Five Eight*.

Both filmmakers have defended working with Spacey, a tremendously gifted and critically acclaimed actor on stage and screen. Producer Louis Nero (no relation to Franco) told reporters last year, "Both Franco and I think Kevin is one of the best actors of a generation. We don't want to go into the private matter. He's still a great actor."

*Peter Five Eight's* producers released a defiant statement last month, saying of Spacey, "There are those who wish for him not to act, but they are outnumbered by fans worldwide who await an artist they have enjoyed for decades returning to the screen ... *Peter Five Eight* is a film for fans who care more for the art than the scandal." Zaiko Hall told *Hollywood Reporter*, "Kevin was a joy to work with, kept everyone laughing between takes and delivered what I think will be a surprising treat for his fans."

Spacey is also signed to appear in a historical drama, *1242—Gateway to the West*, his first starring role since the #MeToo accusations in 2017. The film is a British, Hungarian and Mongolian co-production directed by Peter Soos and is due to start filming in October.

Spacey will appear at Southwark Crown Court on July 14 for trial preparation and to enter a plea.



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