

The Package Offers Tightly-Wound Suspense

review by Glenn St-Germain

In the past year, intrigue-thriller films with a military flavour have been making a few appearances with such films as *No Way Out* and *The Presidio*. *The Package* is another such film, reuniting Gene Hackman and Joanna Cassidy (who previously co-starred in *Under Fire*).

Hackman plays Sgt. Johnny Gallagher, a career soldier serving with the U.S. security forces in West Berlin during a summit conference. After terrorists blow up a general's car (with the general in it), Gallagher is reassigned to a more menial assignment — escorting a "package" to the States. The package in this case is a courtmartialled soldier being sent back Stateside to serve his sentence.

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However, once back in the U.S.A., the package gets away. Gallagher solicits the help of his officer ex-wife, Lt. Col. Eileen Gallagher (Cassidy), to help find the escaped soldier. Together, they are drawn into a web of intrigue involving a plot to assassinate the U.S. President and the Soviet Secretary General. All this happens while they are visiting Chicago to sign a new accord to formally end the Cold War. The plot is perpetrated by some top brass who are against the accord.

What follows is very tightly wound suspense. The people behind the plot want the Gallaghers out of the way because they know too much. Johnny and Eileen, meanwhile, try to put the pieces of the puzzle together-pieces that don't fit very well at the



Gene Hackman fingers a stiff in *The Package*.

beginning.

Although this might sound predictable, it really isn't. The plot has enough twists in it to keep one guessing without completely losing the audience. It isn't until close to the end that all the pieces finally come together. In the meantime, the tension and pace keep this movie on an "edge of the" level for most of the time.

Besides the strong performances of Hackman and Cassidy, much credit must go to director Andrew Davis, who directed other high-energy films such as *Above the Law* and *Code of Silence*. Tommy Lee Jones is also worth noting as the "package" Sgt. Gallagher loses on the way to Washington, and who himself is an integral part of the assassination plot.

The most intriguing aspect of *The Package* is that it is a plausible film. The plans to sabotage the treaty are not unbelievable. Consider the assassination of JFK — we may never know what really happened.

All in all, this is a really fun movie. Some spy intrigue thrillers are ridiculously easy to second-guess, spoiling the fun. This one isn't, making it worth a look.

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