

Keep Your Eye on Jennifer Lawrence in ‘Red Sparrow’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 2, 2018 - 6:17pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It is movie star time for JLaw (Jennifer Lawrence) in ‘Red Sparrow,’ because her performance transcends the muddy plot, and her charisma – even with the lowest of low key characters – creates an interest in her thought process, even as she muddles through the story.

The old fashion Cold War style movie presupposes that Russia has a secret training ground for nookie, which puts reality about 40 years behind. Speaking of behinds, we see JLaw in all her birthday suit glory from that angle and the front... which she promoted so vividly in the last few weeks I thought it was part of a promotional giveaway. She possesses the film, and she makes the most of all of it, despite Justin Haythe’s adapted screenplay (from a novel by Jason Matthews) going in more directions than a busted GPS. There are so many random twists that it could be subtitled, “The Spy Who Confused Me.”

Dominka (Jennifer Lawrence) is a Russian dancer for the Bolshoi Ballet. She lives with and supports her mother, and is given all provisions through the ballet company. When she suffers a horrific and career ending injury, her lifestyle is threatened. Enter her Uncle Vanya (HA! Matthias Schoenaerts), who sees something in her that could be used in his profession as a Russian spy.



Lady in Red: Dominika (Jennifer Lawrence) Sets the Trap in ‘Red Sparrow’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

Dominika is recruited as a Red Sparrow, and the school – run by the mysterious Matron (Charlotte Rampling) – is a spy training ground for the best looking Russians in the country. They teach them to use their natural sexual allure to get information from randy “undercover” operatives. The former ballerina’s first assignment is to find a mole that American spy Nate (Joel Edgerton) is harboring.

The Nookie School is the best part of the film, anchored by Charlotte Rampling’s icy performance as the Matron. The film is actually saying something with this absurd training ground, and what the recruits are learning has everything to do with exploiting vulnerabilities, as a catalyst to reveal secrets... it’s heady stuff. Once JLaw is on the actual mission, the film devolves into a mishmash of Spy Vs. Spy, which had me pining again for Nookie School.

Picking Ms. Lawrence to represent the Russian “weapon” as an alluring decoy was pretty darn smart, and she takes this quieter character and puts a spin on it that would qualify that allure as otherworldly. At some point, she is the only reason to keep up with the story, as Joel Edgerton adds nothing as the tough-but-benign American spy, and her love interest. I found myself actually rooting against the pairing.



In Training: Dominika and The Matron (Charlotte Rampling) in 'Red Sparrow'

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

And Jeebus Christo, even though this is 2018 and presumably the film is set in the present (there were so many references to “the President,” that I thought Putin would appear at the Bolshoi as a ballerina catcher), it felt like a Cold War meandering that has no place in the brave new world of hacking voting machines and making up fake news. Our Dear Leader wouldn’t even recognize the Russia that he now loves.

Eh, enough of that. JLaw is the reason to see this potboiler and she stirs up the waters with natural heat. In true movie star spirit, the essence of what she creates becomes part of the performer she is evolving to... not bad for someone who just turned 28 years old.

“Red Sparrow” opens everywhere on March 2nd. Featuring Jennifer Lawrence, Joel Edgerton, Charlotte Rampling, Mary-Louise Parker and Jeremy Irons. Screenplay adapted by Justin Haythe. Directed by Frances Lawrence. Rated “R”



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