

Uncover the mystery of A Most Wanted Man



By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Humanity and issues of identity clash head on in the not-to-be-missed thriller *A Most Wanted Man*, with German and US security agencies trying to establish the identity of a half-Chechen, half-Russian, brutally tortured immigrant who turns up in Hamburg's Islamic community.

This contemporary, cerebral tale of intrigue, love, rivalry, and politics that prickles with tension right through to its last heart-stopping scene, marks the third film to be directed by Dutch filmmaker Anton Corbijn (*Control*, *The American*), and is based on the best-selling 2008 novel of the same name by John le Carré.



Over a decade has passed since the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001 and the German city of Hamburg, where the bombers lived and plotted, remains on high alert.

Corbijn, who knew Hamburg well and had directed his very first music video (for Palais Schaumburg) in the city back in 1983, was intrigued by the subject matter. "We are dealing with a world that has changed so much since 2001. We judge people very quickly; everything has to be black or white. I feel this is something that is affecting all of our lives," he says.

An escaped militant jihadist

Grigoriy Dobrygin, a Russian film and theatre actor and director, is superb as the 26-year-old Chechen classified by Interpol as an escaped militant jihadist who wants to claim an inheritance from his father that is being held for him by the Brue Freres bank, with Philip Seymour Hoffman equally brilliant as the dishevelled, whisky-drinking, chain-smoking Gunter Bachmann, the head of a secretive anti-terror unit that works under the radar for Germany's intelligence services to cultivate sources within Hamburg's Islamic community.



"This movie is about a lot of things including, obviously, how countries deal with terrorism," says Hoffman. "But it's also about a man who keeps doing the same thing and getting the same result. You get the feeling he can't stop. He really feels like he's trying to do the right thing and I think, actually, he is. But the world isn't going along with his way of taking care of the bad guys of the planet.

"I was just so taken with his tunnel vision. He just thought: 'It's going to work this time and they're going to see that I know; that I actually know.' That's a hard way to live, to be someone who thinks: 'If they could just see what I see, they'll get it.' But they never let him get there and he keeps going there. He suffers."



First-rate performances

There are also first-rate performances by Willem Dafoe as English banker Thomas Brue, and Rachel McAdams as an idealistic young lawyer Annabel Richter from a human rights organisation called Sanctuary North, who is moved by Karpov's story of torture at the hands of the Russian security services and agrees to help him.

McAdams says she was drawn to the theme of loneliness in the film. "They are all people who are seeking out love, different kinds of love in different kinds of ways, whether it's love of God or spirituality or physical love of another human being or misplaced or unrequited love," she says. "Anton is focused on how they reach out to each other and the ways in which they choose to be alone."

The novel was adapted by Australian writer Andrew Bovell, best-known for the complex, sophisticated drama *Lantana*, who was asked to write the script.

"One of the interesting things about *A Most Wanted Man* is that it doesn't really have an antagonist," Cornwell continues. "It has lots of people who all believe they are doing the right thing but their reasons are all different. They come into conflict around one central objective, which is the most wanted man who they all see from a different perspective and want for different reasons."

Le Carré himself visited the set several times, lending his backing and encouragement to the process. As a seasoned observer of the journey from page to screen, Le Carré believes his novels need to evolve to make that transformation successfully. For that to happen, he is happy to take a step back.

"The novel is his, but the movie will be Anton's and that's a transition he really supports and enjoys," says Stephen Cornwell.

"What's interesting about the adaptation is that it is quite distinct from the novel. There is a whole aspect to the novel that isn't in the movie. It finds its own language and its own way of telling the story. But at the same time it is incredibly true to the intent of the story. It's exactly what a really good adaptation should be. It takes a novel, respects its intent but it becomes something of its own."

If you are looking for an intelligent thriller that will keep you glued to your seat until the last frame, make sure to uncover the mystery of *A Most Wanted Man*.

Read more about *A Most Wanted Man* and other new films opening this week at www.writingstudio.co.za.

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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