

## The Hunting Party

A movie of incongruent parts, *The Hunting Party* can't decide if it wants to be a funky lark about cool gonzo journalism or a searching examination of a contemporary horror story.

The 1995 Bosnia war and its vicious civil strife serve as the backdrop for a discredited TV reporter Simon (Richard Gere) and his once invaluable cameraman and compatriot Duck (Terence Hudson). During that war, the reporter commits a gross network faux pas, then disappears from sight, only to surface again in Belgrade--after a five-year hiatus—to go after the Big Scoop.

The scoop consists of locating and interviewing the vile—and secretive--overlord Dragoslav Bogdanovic (obviously based on the real war criminal General Ratko Mladić). The two old colleagues agree to team again, along with a nerdy network correspondent-in-training Benjamin (Jesse Eisenberg). The intrepid three amazingly bump into a few leads and somehow get close to the evil one within a couple days.

Such blind, unlikely fortune and the defensive banter between the principals are supposed to be the comedic element of this screenplay by Richard Shepard (*The Matador*), who also directed. The trouble is that this humorous element is laid against real, palpable wartime agonies (in flashback and present time) which, combined, can produce a winch-inducing effect. Gere is, as usual, quite charismatic (though not fully believable as a journalist), Hudson offers a calm and ironic presence, and Eisenberg is cute, but all three—while fitfully entertaining--can't make the picture finally work.

What was probably meant as a black comedy on the page (it was originally entitled "Spring Break in Bosnia") comes out as more a clash of disparate tones.

*(Rated "R" for wartime violence and language; 96 minutes)*

(October 2007)