



GARY OLDMAN

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

With a remarkable cast (Benedict Cumberbatch, Kathy Burke, Tom Hardy and Stephen Graham are in there too), this adaptation of John Le Carré's Cold War espionage mystery is inevitably classy and (given the running time) complex in its plotting. As the taciturn George Smiley, brought out of retirement to investigate a mole within MI6, Oldman bravely – and very successfully – follows in Alec Guinness's footsteps.

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Two big questions hover over the film *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. How good a slow-burn spy thriller is it, and how well does it adapt one of the trickier narratives in contemporary fiction? Retired agent George Smiley (Gary Oldman) is brought back to uncover painstakingly the identity of a mole – a double agent, working for the Soviets – who is one of the four men who currently lead the 'Circus', author John le Carré's nickname for MI6. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is set in the early years of the 1970s. It was, historically, another low dishonest decade, as Auden called the 1930s, and for most cinemagoers in 2011 it will be ancient history: interesting, but not quite as interesting as the 1950s or 60s – currently being boomed on television by *Mad Men* and *The Hour*. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*'s director Tomas Alfredson, one calculates, was a six-year-old in Stockholm in 1971 not particularly concerned, one presumes, about the Cold War, from which Sweden had wisely kept itself neutral.

Dense historical framework is vital to le Carré's design and the moral climate of his trilogy – of which *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is the first part – charting Smiley's battle of wits with the Soviet intelligence officer codenamed Karla. With 127 minutes of screen time at its disposal, the film can only lightly sketch in that framework (which it does brilliantly), whereas the 1979 BBC television adaptation had 290 minutes to air le Carré's nuances. Smiley, the novel is at pains to stress, belongs to that heroic generation of war-winning gentleman spies. He is 'loyal to his own time' – but his time is passing. Alfredson conveys this sense of *fin de ligne* by means of a pervasively crepuscular tone – this is a film without luminosity. Darkness is falling for Smiley's generation. His unmasking of Karla's mole – the cancer destroying the agency – will be a partial vindication of the cause he has served: his 'legacy', a monument. It could even, who knows, be a cure for what has gone so badly wrong.

If war is fog, espionage brews the mother of fogs. Nebulosity works in le Carré's novels, but it poses problems for film. Alfredson – on the evidence of *Let the Right One In*, whose unexpected success surely brought him this plum assignment – is extraordinarily strong on mood. Scripted by Bridget O'Connor and Peter Straughan, this adaptation sharpens up le Carré drastically, creating (as the novelist never does) a clear-cut beginning, middle and end, but contriving to retain the murky essence of the source text. There is homage, even in the necessary infidelities of the adaptation. The end of the film may be, for some tastes, rather too clear-cut (Alfredson does not have the luxury of two sequels). The beginning – a shootout in Budapest as the attempt to 'turn' a Hungarian general goes wrong – involves some radical rearrangement of le Carré's text. Purists may object that le Carré does the

episode off stage by report and gossip, not as in-your-face action. But the creation of tension, nervousness and – finally – debacle is masterfully done. One forgives Alfredson his liberties.

In later stretches of narrative, Alfredson skilfully thins down le Carré. Smiley's incorrigibly faithless wife Ann, a major presence in the novel, is almost wholly absent. Only a shapely rump, writhing in adulterous embrace, remains. George (ever the spy) is watching that rump. He too writhes. Spies? Voyeurs? What's the difference? Both are engaged in a dirty-minded business. The scene in Delhi with Karla, lengthy and pivotal in the novel, is similarly reduced to a few glimpsed moments. Karla is there – but as a shadow. Many other things are done as adeptly. The film's periodisation is pitch-perfect. Dimplex, Gannex and Ajax (if you don't know what they are, you weren't there) feature nostalgically among the many tactfully placed props. The feel of the film (for those who were there) is eerily accurate.

Scandinavian is the favoured flavour for popular narrative at the moment. The Swedish director brings a tartness to the narrative which, like the drop of angostura in Smiley's pink gin, sours the whole. Put another way, there's a palpable whiff of *Wallander* in Gary Oldman's thoughtful interpretation of Smiley – the same clever use of meditative, inscrutable silence. Particularly effective – and original to the film, I think – are the scenes of Smiley swimming in Hampstead, horn-rims firmly on, hair Brylcreemed back, brain, underneath, working remorselessly. In Alfredson's film, le Carré's primal influence is necessarily felt – but not dictatorially. Liberties are taken. Rather more conflicting is the makers' (and doubtless some of the audience's) concurrent awareness of earlier adaptations. How to capitalise on, yet differentiate the film from, the overwhelmingly successful 1979 TV version? How to use the widely listened to 1988 and 2009 radio versions? Use, that is, and at the same time create a necessary dividing space. Some of the film's cast (notably Oldman) hew very different interpretations from preceding adaptations; others stay close.

Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is a hugely successful treatment of formidably resistant materials. He achieves his success by interpreting le Carré, and taking his interpretation in some illuminatingly new directions (of which, one is told, the author, who made a papal visit or two to the set, approved). The cast is immensely strong and, one senses, Alfredson has allowed what is the cream of the current British acting troupe a corresponding freedom to interpret their roles. Oldman, in particular, makes full use of that freedom. In short this is as much an enrichment as an adaptation of the book Alfredson was given to remake. One can only hope that the film will do as well as it deserves to and that the director will be assigned the remaining parts of the trilogy.

John Sutherland, *Sight & Sound*, October 2011

TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY

Directed by: Tomas Alfredson
©: Karla Films Ltd, Paradis Films S.A.R.L., Kinowelt Filmproduktion GmbH
Production Companies: Karla Films, Paradis Films, Kinowelt Filmproduktion, Working Title
With the participation of: Canal+, CinéCinéma
Presented by: StudioCanal
Production Services in Hungary Provided by: Raleigh Film Budapest Kft
Production Services in Istanbul Provided by: AZ Celtic Films
Executive Producers: Debra Hayward, Liza Chasin, Olivier Courson, Ron Halpern, John le Carré, Peter Morgan, Douglas Urbanski
Produced by: Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robyn Slovo
Co-producer: Alexandra Ferguson
Budapest Unit Line Producer: Artist Robinson
Istanbul Unit Line Producer: Alex Sutherland
Unit Production Manager: Tim Wellspring
Working Title Production Supervisor: Kate Fasulo
Working Title Production Co-ordinator: Jack Sidey
Production Co-ordinator: Hannah Collett
Production Accountant: Jon Duncan
Unit Manager: Joshua Benedetti
Location Manager: Steve Mortimore
Additional Locations Manager: Charlotte Wright
Location Scout: Damon Crane
Post-production Supervisors: Tania Blunden, Deborah Harding
2nd Unit Director: Mikael Marcimain
1st Assistant Director: Alexander Oakley
2nd Assistant Director: Mark Hopkins
Script Supervisor: Libbie Barr
Casting by: Jina Jay
Screenplay by: Bridget O'Connor, Peter Straughan
Based on the novel by: John le Carré
Director of Photography: Hoyte van Hoytema
2nd Unit Director of Photography: Jallo Faber
B Camera Operator: Peter Taylor
A Camera Grip: Colin Strachan
Additional Key Grip: Andy Hopkins
Gaffer: Alan Martin
Unit and Special Stills Photographer: Jack English
Visual Effects by: Framestore
Additional Visual Effects: The Chimney Pot
Special Effects Supervisor: Mark Holt
Editor: Dino Jonsäter
Consultant Editor/Additional Editing by: Jill Bilcock
Production Designer: Maria Djurkovic
Supervising Art Directors: Mark Raggett, Tom Brown
Art Director: Pilar Foy
Set Decorator: Tatiana MacDonald
Storyboard Artist: Magnus Jonasson
Property Master: Chris Cull
Construction Manager: John O'Connor
Costume Designer: Jacqueline Durran
Costume Supervisor: Dan Grace
Hair and Make-up Designer: Felicity Bowring
Key Hair and Make-up Artist: Donald McInnes
Additional Hair and Make-up Artist: Wakana Yoshihara
Main Titles: Björn Kusoffsky, Stockholm Design Lab
End Roller: Paul Kühlnhorn, Fellow Designers

Music by: Alberto Iglesias
Score Conducted by: Alberto Iglesias
Music Supervisor: Nick Angel
Production Sound Mixer: John Casali
Boom Operator: Chris Murphy
Supervising Sound Editors: Stephen Griffiths, Andy Shelley
Re-recording Mixers: Howard Bargroff, Doug Cooper
Stunt Co-ordinator: Andy Bennett
Unit Publicist: Rachel Kennedy

Cast

Gary Oldman (*George Smiley*)
Kathy Burke (*Connie Sachs*)
Benedict Cumberbatch (*Peter Guillam*)
David Dencik (*Toby Esterhase*)
Colin Firth (*Bill Haydon*)
Stephen Graham (*Jerry Westerby*)
Tom Hardy (*Ricki Tarr*)
Ciarán Hinds (*Roy Bland*)
John Hurt (*Control*)
Toby Jones (*Percy Alleline*)
Simon McBurney (*Oliver Lacon*)
Mark Strong (*Jim Prideaux*)
Svetlana Khodchenkova (*Irina*)
Konstantin Khabensky (*Polyakov*)
Roger Lloyd Pack (*Mendel*)
Christian McKay (*Mackelvore*)
Zoltán Mucsi (*Magyar*)
Péter Kálloy Molnár (*Hungarian waiter*)
Ilona Kassai (*woman in window*)
Imre Csujá (*KGB agent*)
Arthur Nightingale (*Bryant*)
Amanda Fairbank Hynes (*Belinda*)
Peter McNeil O'Connor (*Fawn*)
Matyelok Gibbs (*Mrs Pope Graham*)
Philip Hill-Pearson (*Norman*)
Jamie Thomas King (*Kaspar*)
Stuart Graham (*minister*)
Sarah-Jane Robinson (*Mary Alleline*)
Katrina Vasilieva (*Ann Smiley*)
Linda Marlowe (*Mrs McCraig*)
William Haddock (*Bill Roach*)
Erskine Wylie (*Spikeley*)
Philip Martin Brown (*Tufty Thesinger*)
Tomasz Kowalski (*Boris*)
Alexandra Salafranca (*Turkish mistress*)
Denis Khoroshko (*Ivan*)
Oleg Dzhabrailov (*Sergei*)
Gillian Steventon (*listening woman*)
Nick Hopper (*janitor Alwyn*)
Laura Carmichael (*Sal*)
Rupert Procter (*Guillam's boyfriend*)
John le Carré (*Christmas party guest*)
Michael Sarne (*voice of Karla*)
Jean Claude Jay (*French man at residency*)
Tom Stuart (*Ben*)

UK/France/Germany 2011©
127 mins

GARY OLDMAN

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

Sat 5 Nov 20:20; Thu 24 Nov 17:55

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead

Sun 6 Nov 18:20

Mank

Tue 8 Nov 20:15; Sat 26 Nov 17:20; Tue 29 Nov 20:20

The Firm – Director's Cut

Thu 10 Nov 18:15

Darkest Hour

Sat 12 Nov 12:20; Sat 19 Nov 20:30; Mon 21 Nov 14:30

Prick Up Your Ears

Sun 13 Nov 18:20; Fri 25 Nov 20:40

The Contender

Mon 14 Nov 18:00

JFK – Director's Cut

Sat 19 Nov 16:30

True Romance

Tue 22 Nov 20:30; Tue 29 Nov 18:00

Bram Stoker's Dracula

Wed 23 Nov 18:00

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