

Casino Jack

Directed by George Hickenlooper

Runtime: 108 min.

Kevin Spacey isn't just a ham actor. He's a honey-glazed ham actor whose ear for flamboyant annoyance can be rather tasty. He goes through a variety of snits in *Casino Jack*, playing Jack Abramoff, the showy lobbyist-turned-criminal and convict. Abramoff, whose shady connections

stretched from Washington, D.C., to Hollywood (where he produced two Dolph Lundgren flicks) was also a movie fan. This quirk gives Spacey the opportunity to portray Abramoff's nerdiness in dead-on impersonations of pop icons like Al Pacino, W.C. Fields and even John F. Kennedy.

Spacey seems to think he's making a comedy—a good actorly instinct—but director George Hickenlooper makes the offensive decision to treat Abramoff's transgressions as more grist for the Bush-grinding mill. This is a less credible film than the political documentary *Casino Jack and the United States of Money*. The scene where Abramoff freaks out at a Congressional hearing and acts out Pacino's rant in *And Justice For All* shows how little genuine seriousness goes into Hollywood's current facile political films.

Hickenlooper gave little help to Spacey's tour-de-farce, letting his panache overflow into caricature. This doesn't happen when Spacey has a good director. In *Casino Jack*, Spacey's uncontrolled bravura is less effective than Jon Lovitz, who brings three-dimensional sleaze to the role of Adam Kidan, alterego of Abramoff's Jewish family man delusions. Delusions as grandiose as Spacey's talent.

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