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| |  | | --- | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Judge J. Howard Sundermann, Jr.  First Appellate  District of Ohio     |  | | --- | | **Read other reviews:**  [Kandel G. Eaton](http://docs.google.com/runawayjury_eaton.htm)  [Internet Movie Database](http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0313542/)  [All Movie Guide](http://www.allmovie.com/cg/avg.dll?p=avg&sql=1:283035)  [Readers' comments](http://docs.google.com/user_feedback.htm) |       Hackman's character is a control freak running everything and tells his clients, "Trials are too important to be left to juries." | |  | | --- | | **RUNAWAY JURY**  Judge J. Howard Sundermann  This is another John Grisham book adapted to the screen. It is a combination of courtroom drama, espionage thriller and heist film. The heist is of the jury. The film opens with what has become all too common today, an office massacre where a number of people are killed. This scene is done well as we experience the fear and helplessness of those in the office, but the audience is spared the visual violence. A widow of one of the victims sues the gun company who manufactured the weapon used by the killer. She hires Wendell Rohr, an anti-gun lawyer, played by Dustin Hoffman. The industry used in the book as the "bad guy" is the cigarette industry and I'm not sure why the industry was changed to guns in the movie. The lawyer for the defendant is almost irrelevant, as the super jury consultant, Rankin Fitch (played terrifically by Gene Hackman) is really running the defense team. The political viewpoint of the film is clearly anti-gun. The executives of the gun companies are portrayed as cartoon characters that could care less about anything but protecting their industry and are willing to win at all costs. This is why they hired Hackman, who has never lost a case.  Part of the fun of the film is watching Hackman in his control room with the computers and large screens from where he is seemingly able to see everything. You aren't sure if he is picking a jury or running Gulf War II. He has a full history on each potential juror along with his or her vulnerable points. Two important considerations, that could be credited to artistic license; are left out of the movie: (1) the cost and legality of all of this is not determined, and (2) the amount of time it takes to obtain all of the jury information is not addressed. Hackman's character is a control freak running everything and tells his clients, "Trials are too important to be left to juries."  Unknown to either side, as the trial starts, one of the jurors, played by John Cusack, and his girlfriend have their own scam. Cusack claims he can swing the jury either way and his girlfriend contacts both the plaintiff and defense to tell them that the jury can go their way for ten million dollars. In some good scenes, Cusack and the girlfriend demonstrate their control of the jury. This film, unlike most legal films, does show scenes inside the jury room, and only *Twelve Angry Men* has more jury scenes. Again a little artistic license is taken, as it never becomes clear how Cusack got on the jury (he is not even from the city of the trial) or how he can swing the jury the way he wants.  There is a great scene in the courthouse men's room when Hackman and Hoffman actually meet for the first time. It is the idealist character v. the total agnostic character. But, even Hoffman's character is not pristine pure. For a while Hoffman actually considers paying the ten million, reasoning that this would be better than losing this important case for gun control. The final explanation at the end is a little weak, and there are some holes in the plot that I pointed out, but it is good filmmaking and I recommend it.  Posted October 29, 2003 |   **Would you like to comment on this article? Please submit your comments** [**here.**](http://docs.google.com/submit-comments.htm) |  |  | | --- | | [Top of page](#gjdgxs) |  |  | | --- | | [Home](http://docs.google.com/index.html) | [Silver Screen](http://docs.google.com/silver_screen.htm) | [Small Screen](http://docs.google.com/smallscreen/small_screen.htm) | [News & Views](http://docs.google.com/newsnviews.htm) | | |