

'Comey's Rule' on Russia and Russia on 'Comey's Rule'

Former FBI director talks about the series as it premieres in Russia.

By [Ali Sar](#)

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Actors Jeff Daniels (Comey) and Brendan Gleeson (Trump) **Ben Mark Holzberg / CBS Television Studios/Showtime**

HOLLYWOOD—Former FBI director James Comey was in the news continuously for nearly four years. In 2018 he wrote a book about his experiences, “A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership” that focused, in part, on his last tumultuous months before and after the 2016 election. In late September his story was told in a new way, in the 2-part television series “The Comey Rule” by Showtime.

The series stars Jeff Daniels as James Comey, Brendan Gleeson as Donald Trump, and a cast of some of Hollywood’s best known actors in smaller roles. It even includes a cameo of President Vladimir Putin, played by actor Stass Klassen, who was born in Bishkek and studied theater and acting in Moscow. He is known to Russian television viewers for his role about Soviet

diplomats in the series “The Optimists” and to American viewers from his role in “The Americans.”

In a candid interview with Hollywood entertainment journalists, director Comey answered journalists’ questions about Donald Trump, his attitude toward Vladimir Putin, possible meddling in the current election, and watching himself on the small screen.

What was it like to see yourself portrayed?

JC: I never been to a movie set before. I went to Toronto to watch [on] the day they were filming the dinner scene [with Trump]. I told both of the actors afterwards the best compliment I could pay them is that they had utterly ruined my day. I felt ill honestly because they both captured so well the menace of Trump, which is very different than the public Trump... And Jeff Daniels, I think, fully embodied my extraordinarily distortionary discomfort.

Why do you think Russia supports Trump and interferes in American politics?

JC: I don’t know the answer to why. I was struck when I was there as the FBI director and even more struck afterward that Donald Trump wouldn’t criticize Vladimir Putin even in private, which is really striking. I don’t know the reason. I don’t know whether it’s true that there is some particular kompromat or maybe there is some more general financial interest. I know what I see, which is a President acting in striking ways to take the side of the Russian authoritarian over his own intelligence community, but I can’t explain why.

On Russian meddling with U.S. elections:

JC: I’m highly confident that the FBI, the CIA, the NSA are working hard to try and figure it out what are the Russians doing and how might we stop them. I have no doubt of that because I know the people. But by definition their response is going to be inadequate when the Commander-in-Chief doesn’t recognize that the threat even exists.

In Russia the series was quickly made available through Amediateka. So far, reviews are mixed and have largely fallen along general political lines. The reviewer at [Komsomolskaya Pravda](#) found it to be the “same old song” about Russian meddling in the 2016 elections. The [RBC reviewer](#) recommended it as “the screen version of the turning point in American politics... an attempt to make sense of it for the present and future of the U.S.” And the reviewer at [Afisha](#) found Trump to be portrayed as “an eccentric idiot, a compilation image of memes and parodies, but not a person.”

You can see the Russian trailer below.

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