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M5000 central console with
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thriller

A spy out in the cold

By MARK LAWRENCE

BRITAIN'S flair for producing real-life spy scandals should stimulate plenty of interest in 'Running Blind', a thriller series beginning on Channel 2 at 8.30 pm on Monday, January 7.

Based on Desmond Bagley's novel of the same name the series follows the exploits of retired British agent Alan Stewart (Stuart Wilson) who is forced to accept one more assignment from his former bureau chief Slade (George Sewell).

Four years earlier Stewart had resigned from the service after being forced to kill a colleague to preserve his own cover in an operation against the KGB in Sweden.

Slade threatens to reveal Stewart's whereabouts to the KGB unless he agrees to deliver a small package to Iceland — a place often visited by Stewart to fish and renew acquaintances with girlfriend Elin (Heida Steindorsdottir).

INSTANT ACTION

From the outset Stewart suspects Slade. An attempt is made on his life as soon as he arrives in Iceland and later, at the delivery rendezvous, he is accosted by Russian agents who take a bag they think contains the package.

But, having anticipated further trouble, Stewart has used Elin as an unsuspecting courier and the package remains safely in his hands.

Aware of his precarious position, unsure of who his enemies are and needing time to think, Stewart takes Elin on a camping trip in the wild highland known in Icelandic legend as "Murderer's Country".

The designation is apt. Another British agent tries (unsuccessfully) to murder Stewart and the stage is set for a nightmare race through some magnificent, rugged terrain.

Stuart Wilson turns in a compelling portrayal as the beleaguered but resourceful Stewart. His role is one of anti-hero rather than hero. All the agents in 'Running Blind' count human life as cheap. None are endearing.



Stuart Wilson as reluctant British agent Alan Stewart: cliffhangers amid Icelandic grandeur.

The programme moves fast, a pleasant change after the leisurely pace of thrillers like 'The Aphrodite Inheritance'. But the pace is well-measured and all the developments are credible. Iceland, too, is a new venue for television drama and the stark grandeur of the terrain enhances the series' visual appeal.

Sewell is suitably unlikeable as the villain and Steindorsdottir complements her good looks with a competent performance as the bewildered girlfriend caught in a web of espionage. 'Running Blind' is excellent television, combining the elements of intrigue, action and quality acting. Highly recommended.

News via satellite

LAST night Channel 9 began using satellite news coverage supplied by America's CBS network.

Until now, Melbourne TV stations have shared identical satellite news coverages from the London-based News.

Channel 9 will continue to receive the News coverage as well as the exclusive CBS reports. In an American

election year, the CBS service should give Channel 9's news — a clear ratings winner all last year — an added advantage.

The deal with CBS will run for an initial trial period of three months.

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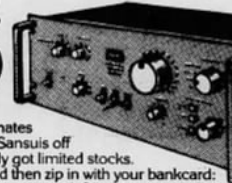
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