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The Banker (2020 film)

The Banker is a 2020 American period drama film directed, co-written and produced by George Nolfi. The film stars Anthony Mackie, Nicholas Hoult, Nia Long, Jessie T. Usher and Samuel L. Jackson. The story follows Joe Morris (Jackson) and Bernard Garrett (Mackie), two of the first African-American bankers in the United States.

Plot

In 1954, Bernard Garrett wants to get into real estate but encounters racism that prevents him from being a successful real estate investor. After a chance encounter with wealthy club owner Joe Morris, he convinces Joe to be his co-investor. Together they convince Matt Steiner, a white man, to pose as the front of the company in meetings to facilitate the sales. Eventually, they become extremely successful in Los Angeles real estate, with the two teaching Matt the basics of real estate investing. The three secure a number of properties in L.A. and effectively integrate a number of previously segregated neighborhoods by selling and renting to black families. After this success, he sets his sights on the local bank in his Texas hometown to give loans to the black residents. Racist bank practices had excluded black people from receiving loans for small businesses and homeownership. Joe protests the idea at first but eventually relents and the three move to Texas.

Matt buys the bank, fronting for Bernard and Joe, but the local townspeople are extremely suspicious of this move. A bank executive tracks the records of the loans and discovers that they're giving loans to black people, follows Matt and discovers that his partners are black, then threatens them with exposure which would cause "a run on the bank." Matt persuades Joe and Bernard to purchase a second bank and put him in charge of it despite his inexperience. The racist bank executive calls in a federal investigator who checks the records of Matt's bank and discovers numerous infractions attributable to Matt's carelessness. Matt, Bernard and Joe get arrested for violating federal banking laws.

Facing a 50-year prison term, Matt takes a plea deal, falsely testifying that he was duped by Bernard and Joe. The next day, Bernard testifies passionately about black people being given the same opportunity for upward mobility as whites. He and Joe are

The Banker



Theatrical release poster

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Directed by | <u>George Nolfi</u> |
| Screenplay by | Niceole Levy George Nolfi David Lewis Smith Stan Younger |
| Story by | David Lewis Smith Stan Younger <u>Brad Caleb Kane</u> |
| Produced by | Joel Viertel Brad Feinstein George Nolfi <u>Nnamdi Asomugha</u> Jonathan Baker David Lewis Smith |

convicted and serve time in prison; upon release, they go with Bernard's wife Eunice to live in the Bahamas in two homes which Matt had purchased for them with money Bernard had entrusted to him for that purpose the night before Bernard's testimony.

Cast

- [Anthony Mackie](#) as [Bernard Garrett](#)
- [Nicholas Hoult](#) as [Matt Steiner](#)
- [Samuel L. Jackson](#) as [Joe Morris](#)
- [Nia Long](#) as [Eunice Garrett](#)
- [Scott Daniel Johnson](#) as [Robert Florance, Jr.](#)
- [Taylor Black](#) as [Susie](#)
- [Michael Harney](#) as [Melvin Belli](#)
- [Colm Meaney](#) as [Patrick Barker](#)
- [Paul Ben-Victor](#) as [Donald Silverthorne](#)
- [Jessie T. Usher](#) as [Tony Jackson](#)
- [Gregory Alan Williams](#) as [Britton Garrett](#)
- [Rhoda Griffis](#) as [Mrs. Barker](#)
- [Travis West](#) as [Mrs. Cooper's Son](#)
- [David Alexander](#) as [Mr. Miller](#)
- [Jaylon Gordon](#) as [Bernard Garrett Jr.](#)

Production

It was announced in October 2018 that [George Nolfi](#) would direct the film, which he co-wrote with [Niceole Levy](#). [Samuel L. Jackson](#), [Anthony Mackie](#), [Nicholas Hoult](#), [Nia Long](#) and [Taylor Black](#) were set to star, with filming beginning in [Atlanta](#).^{[3][4]} The film was partially shot in [Douglasville, Georgia](#) and [Newnan, Georgia](#).^[5] Additional casting was announced in November.^[6] The film's early apartment scenes were filmed at La Madre Arms apartments in Atlanta.

Release

In July 2019, [Apple TV+](#) acquired distribution rights to the film.^[7] It was set to have its world premiere at [AFI Fest](#) on November 21, 2019,^[8] followed by a [limited theatrical release](#) on December 6, 2019, and digital streaming in January 2020.^[9] However, after claims of sexual assault were made against one of the producers of the film, [Bernard Garrett's son Bernie Jr.](#), by his half-sisters, the premiere was cancelled and the film was pulled from the schedule.^[10]

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | Anthony Mackie |
| Starring | Anthony Mackie <div>Nicholas Hoult</div> <div>Nia Long</div> <div>Jessie T. Usher</div> <div>Samuel L. Jackson</div> |
| Cinematography | Charlotte Bruus Christensen |
| Edited by | Joel Viertel |
| Music by | H. Scott Salinas |
| Production companies | <div>Romulus Entertainment</div> <div>Mad Hatter</div> <div>Iam21 Entertainment</div> <div>Hyphenate Films</div> |
| Distributed by | Apple TV+ |
| Release date | March 6, 2020 |
| Running time | 120 minutes ^[1] |
| Country | United States |
| Language | English |
| Budget | \$11 million ^[2] |

The film was eventually released in a limited theatrical release on March 6, 2020, followed by digital streaming on March 20, 2020.

Reception

Critical reception

On Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 79% with an average score of 6.8/10, based on 77 reviews. The site's critical consensus reads: "*The Banker*'s timid approach to dramatizing its fact-based story is often outweighed by the trio of strong performances at its core."^[11] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 59 out of 100, based on 19 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[12]

Accolades

| Award | Year of ceremony | Category | Recipient(s) | Result | Ref. |
|---|------------------|---|---|-----------|-----------------|
| <u>Camerimage</u> | 2020 | Main Competition | <i>The Banker</i> | Nominated | ^[13] |
| <u>Georgia Film Critics Association</u> | 2021 | Oglethorpe Award for Excellence in Georgia Cinema | George Nolfi, Niceole Levy, David Lewis Smith, and Stan Younger | Nominated | ^[14] |
| <u>NAACP Image Awards</u> | 2021 | <u>Outstanding Independent Motion Picture</u> | <i>The Banker</i> | Won | ^[15] |
| | | <u>Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture</u> | <u>Anthony Mackie</u> | Nominated | |
| | | <u>Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture</u> | <u>Nia Long</u> | Nominated | |
| | | <u>Outstanding Ensemble Cast in a Motion Picture</u> | <i>The Banker</i> | Nominated | |
| <u>35th Golden Rooster Awards</u> | 2022 | <u>Best Foreign Language Film</u> | <i>The Banker</i> | Nominated | ^[16] |

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External links

- *The Banker* (<https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/the-banker/umc.cmc.2f8qhsa039voq5x0iwn1eixj1>) – official site
 - *The Banker* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6285944/>) at *IMDb*
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