

The Gentlemen (2019 film)

The Gentlemen is a 2019 action comedy film written, directed and produced by Guy Ritchie, who developed the story along with Ivan Atkinson and Marn Davies. The film stars Matthew McConaughey, Charlie Hunnam, Henry Golding, Michelle Dockery, Jeremy Strong, Eddie Marsan, Colin Farrell, and Hugh Grant. It follows an American cannabis wholesaler in England who is looking to sell his business, setting off a chain of blackmail and schemes to undermine him.

The Gentlemen premiered at the Curzon Mayfair Cinema on December 3, 2019,^[5] and was released theatrically in the United Kingdom on January 1, 2020, by Entertainment Film Distributors, and in the United States on January 24, 2020, by STXfilms. It received generally positive reviews from critics and was also a commercial success, grossing \$115 million worldwide against its \$22 million budget. A spin-off television series was released by Netflix in 2024 with Theo James starring in the lead role.^{[6][7]}

Plot

Big Dave, editor of the *Daily Print* tabloid, is snubbed by cannabis baron Mickey Pearson at a party and hires private detective Fletcher to investigate Pearson's links to Lord Pressfield. Pressfield, a duke, has a heroin-addicted daughter named Laura. Fletcher offers to sell his findings (typed up as a screenplay entitled *Bush*) to Pearson's right-hand man, Raymond, for £20 million.

Born into poverty in the U.S., Pearson won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, where he began selling marijuana before dropping out and building his criminal empire. He now plans to sell his business to American billionaire Matthew Berger for £400m and retire peacefully with his wife, Rosalind. Pearson shows Berger one of the labs where he grows cannabis under the estates of aristocratic landlords who need cash for the upkeep of their stately homes. Pearson is later approached by Dry Eye, an underboss for Chinese gangster Lord George. Dry Eye offers to buy out Pearson's business, but he refuses. Pearson's lab is raided by amateur MMA fighters and aspiring YouTubers "The Toddlers" who overpower the guards, steal

The Gentlemen



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Guy Ritchie</u>
Screenplay by	Guy Ritchie
Story by	Guy Ritchie Ivan Atkinson Marn Davies
Produced by	Guy Ritchie Ivan Atkinson <u>Bill Block</u>
Starring	<u>Matthew McConaughey</u> <u>Charlie Hunnam</u> <u>Henry Golding</u> <u>Michelle Dockery</u> <u>Jeremy Strong</u> <u>Eddie Marsan</u> <u>Colin Farrell</u> <u>Hugh Grant</u>
Cinematography	<u>Alan Stewart</u>
Edited by	James Herbert

marijuana and upload a rap video of their caper online. The fighters' horrified trainer, "Coach", orders them to delete the video.

Following the raid, Pearson begins transferring his cannabis plants out of the estates as a precaution. At the request of Pressfield, he also agrees to bring Laura home. Raymond retrieves her from a council estate where she lives with other addicts. In a brawl with her flatmates, one of Raymond's men accidentally kills Aslan, a young Russian. Laura is returned to her parents and then dies of an overdose.

Coach visits Raymond, apologises for his students' actions, and offers his services as penance. Coach has captured Phuc, a henchman of Dry Eye's who had informed The Toddlers about the lab location. While attempting to escape, Phuc gets fatally run over by a train. Pearson threatens Lord George for going after his lab and destroys one of his heroin labs in retaliation. George chastises Dry Eye for his insubordination in attacking Pearson and offering to buy him out; George is then executed by one of his own men.

Dry Eye is actually in league with Berger, who had wanted Pearson's business disrupted to reduce the price. Dry Eye has taken Lord George's place and still hopes to take Pearson's empire for himself. Dry Eye tries to kidnap Rosalind, who kills his men before running out of bullets. Raymond kills an assassin sent to kill Pearson; the two rush to Rosalind and Pearson kills Dry Eye as he is about to rape her. Fletcher ends his story and Raymond orders him to leave his house.

Fletcher has merely confirmed Pearson's suspicions about the link between Dry Eye and Berger. Raymond orders The Toddlers to capture Big Dave. They drug him and film him having sex with a pig, threatening to post it online unless he drops his investigation and publishes nothing. Pearson and Berger meet up again in a frozen fish plant, actually a cover for Pearson's European distribution operation. Berger drops his offer to £130 million, on account of the recent disruptions, but Pearson reveals his knowledge of Berger's plan, shows him Dry Eye's frozen body and tells him he is keeping his business. Pearson forces Berger inside a refrigerator, where he will freeze to death unless he transfers £270 million compensation for the blood he now has on his hands and the cost of restoring order. Pearson admits he is not "emotional about the money" but because Rosalind was assaulted, he demands "a pound of flesh" from Berger's own body, anywhere Berger chooses, as compensation for this indiscretion.

Fletcher approaches Raymond again for his payment, but Raymond reveals he was tailing Fletcher all along. The Toddlers have stolen his stashes of evidence after Raymond placed a tracker on him during their last encounter. Fletcher reveals he has also sold info to Aslan's father, a Russian oligarch and former KGB agent. The assassin whom Raymond killed earlier was one of the Russians. Coach kills two Russian hitmen sent to kill Raymond, while Fletcher escapes in the chaos. Pearson is kidnapped by two other Russians, but they are ambushed by The Toddlers who want to "solve Coach's problem". They riddle the car with bullets,

	<u>Paul Machliss</u>
Music by	<u>Christopher Benstead</u>
Production companies	<u>Miramax</u> Toff Guy Films
Distributed by	<u>Entertainment Film Distributors</u> (United Kingdom) <u>STXfilms</u> (United States)
Release dates	December 3, 2019 (<u>Curzon Mayfair Cinema</u>) January 1, 2020 (United Kingdom) January 24, 2020 (United States)
Running time	113 minutes ^[1]
Countries	United Kingdom United States
Language	English
Budget	\$22 million ^[2]
Box office	\$115.2 million ^{[3][4]}

killing the Russians and allowing Pearson to escape. Later, Fletcher decides to pitch the story as a film to Miramax. After his meeting, he gets into a cab only to realize that Raymond is the driver. Upon learning of Fletcher's capture, the Pearsons return to their cannabis empire and celebrate together.

Cast

- Matthew McConaughey as Michael "Mickey" Pearson
 - Tom Lambert as Young Mickey
- Charlie Hunnam as Raymond Smith
- Henry Golding as "Dry Eye"
- Michelle Dockery as Rosalind Pearson
- Jeremy Strong as Matthew Berger
- Colin Farrell as Coach
- Hugh Grant as Fletcher
- Eddie Marsan as Dave "Big Dave"
- Tom Wu as George "Lord George"
- Bugzy Malone as Ernie
- Chidi Ajufo as "Bunny"
- Jason Wong as Phuc
- Brittany Ashworth as Ruby
- Samuel West as Lord Pressfield
- Geraldine Somerville as Lady Pressfield
- Eliot Sumner as Laura Pressfield
- George Asprey as "Lord Snowball"
- Lyne Renée as Jackie
- Chris Evangelou as "Primetime"
- Franz Drameh as Benny
- John Dagleish as "Hammy"
- Tom Rhys Harries as Power Noel
- Danny Griffin as Aslan
- Max Bennett as Brown
- Ashley McGuire as Maureen
- Eugenia Kuzmina as Misha
- Lily Frazer as Lisa the Mechanic
- Jordan Long as Barman
- Gershwyn Eustache Jnr as Roger

Production

Development and casting

It was announced in May 2018 that Guy Ritchie would write and direct *The Gentlemen*, a film that would be in the same spirit as his earlier *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch*. The project was unveiled at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival by CAA Media Finance and Rocket Science where Miramax acquired the distribution rights.^{[8][9]} Filming was expected to begin in October.^[10] In October, Matthew

McConaughey, Kate Beckinsale, Henry Golding and Hugh Grant were cast,^{[11][12]} with Jeremy Strong, Jason Wong and Colin Farrell joining in November. Later, Michelle Dockery signed on, replacing Beckinsale in her role.^{[13][14][15]} In December 2018, Lyne Renée was added as well.^[16]

Filming

Principal photography began in November 2018.^[17] Filming locations included West London Film Studios, Longcross Studios, The Princess Victoria pub in Shepherd's Bush and Brompton Cemetery.^[18]

Release

In February 2019, STX Entertainment acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film from Miramax for \$7 million.^[19] The film had its world premiere as a VIP special screening at Curzon Mayfair on December 3, 2019.^[20] It was theatrically released in the UK on January 1, 2020, and in the US on January 24, 2020.^[21] The studio spent around \$25 million on promoting the film.^[22]

Home media

The Gentlemen was released on home media and video on demand on March 24, 2020.^[23] It was previously set for a home media release on April 7, but was moved up due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^[24] It was released on DVD, Blu-ray, and Ultra HD Blu-ray on April 21, 2020, by Universal Studios Home Entertainment.^[25]

Reception

Box office

The Gentlemen grossed \$15.9 million in the United Kingdom, \$36.5 million in the United States and Canada, and \$62.8 million in other countries, for a worldwide total of \$115.2 million.^{[3][4]}

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *The Turning*, and was projected to gross around \$10 million from 2,100 theaters in its opening weekend.^[26] The film made \$3.1 million on its first day, including \$725,000 from Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$10.6 million, finishing fourth at the box office.^[22] It then made \$6 million in its second weekend, finishing fifth.^[27] In its third and fourth weekends the film made a respective \$4.2 million and \$2.7 million.^{[28][29]}

Critical response

On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 75% based on 274 reviews, with an average rating of 6.5/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "It may not win writer-director Guy Ritchie many new converts, but for those already attuned to the filmmaker's brash wavelength, *The Gentlemen* stands tall."^[30] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 51 out of 100, based on 44 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[31] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while PostTrak reported an average 3.5 out of 5 stars, with 48% of people saying they would definitely recommend it.^[22]

Writing for *Entertainment Weekly*, Leah Greenblatt rated the film a "B−" and found it to come up short when compared to Ritchie's previous crime films, stating, "*The Gentlemen* is nothing if not a callback to the *Locks* of yesteryear, star-stacked and defibrillated with enough juice to jolt a gorilla out of cardiac arrest."^[32]

The movie was also criticized for racism. Writing for *The Guardian*, Simran Hans writes "By Ritchie's logic, white weed kingpins are entrepreneurs with the moral high ground; Asian heroin-pushers are 'the killers of worlds.'"^[33] Gary M. Kramer, writing for *Salon*, said "Ritchie thinks casual racism is funny, and the film's Asian characters are all called the derogatory c-word: 'Chinamen.' Most everyone else on screen is called the other, equally taboo c-word, which is meant to be cheeky, but it is not. It is offensive; cringe-inducing rather than amusing, and one wonders when the juvenile Ritchie is going to grow the f**k up and quit being so conceited about his smartassery."^[34]

Accolades

Award	Year	Category	Recipient	Result	Ref.
<u>Saturn Awards</u>	<u>October 26, 2021</u>	<u>Best Action or Adventure Film</u>	<i>The Gentlemen</i>	Nominated	^[35]

Lawsuit

Three years after the film's release, Ritchie was sued by the actor Mickey De Hara (who had played Turbo in Ritchie's prior film *RocknRolla*) for copying the "cast of characters, their characterization and 'unique aspects of the plot'" from a screenplay De Hara had offered Ritchie as a sequel to *RocknRolla*. De Hara claimed that when he had tried to address the issue out of court, Ritchie responded, "Mickey, I and my people have tried to contact you for some years now. There was no response. I am happy for us to sit down and have a chat." De Hara claimed that the most blatant instance of copying was a scene involving the character Coach and "The Toddlers" gang he leads, which was an almost exact match to a scene from De Hara's screenplay with a character Coach leading a group of thugs nicknamed "The Baby Squad."^[36] Ritchie filed his defense to the London High Court denying the allegations in August 2023. Ritchie confirmed that discussions took place regarding a potential *RocknRolla* sequel or trilogy and that he used some aspects of the screenplay for *The Gentlemen*; however, he claimed the contributions of De Hara were well below both the Writers Guild of America and Writers Guild of Great Britain thresholds to receive credit.^[37]

Netflix series

In October 2020, Miramax Television started development on a spin-off television series of the film, with Ritchie overseeing the project.^[38] In November 2022, the series was officially greenlit by Netflix.^[6] The pilot was written by Guy Ritchie and Matthew Read. Ritchie was set to direct the first two episodes and serve as executive producer alongside Ivan Atkinson, Marn Davies, and Bill Block.^{[38][39]} *The Gentleman* stars Theo James, alongside Vinnie Jones, Kaya Scodelario, Giancarlo Esposito, Daniel Ings, Joely Richardson, Peter Serafinowicz,^{[6][7]} Alexis Rodney,^[40] Chanel Cresswell^[41] and Max Beesley.^[42]

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External links

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