

= Tower Heist =

Tower Heist is a 2011 American heist comedy film directed by Brett Ratner and written by Ted Griffin and Jeff Nathanson , based on a story by Bill Collage , Adam Cooper and Griffin . It was released on November 2 , 2011 in the United Kingdom , with a United States release following two days later . Tower Heist follows Josh Kovaks (Ben Stiller) , Charlie Gibbs (Casey Affleck) and Enrique Dev 'reaux (Michael Peña) , employees of an exclusive apartment building who lose their pensions in the Ponzi scheme of Wall Street businessman Arthur Shaw (Alan Alda) . The group enlist the aid of criminal Slide (Eddie Murphy) , bankrupt businessman Mr. Fitzhugh (Matthew Broderick) and another employee of the apartment building , Odessa (Gabourey Sidibe) , to break into Shaw 's apartment and steal back their money while avoiding the FBI agent in charge of his case , Claire Denham (Téa Leoni) .

Tower Heist began development as early as 2005 , based on an idea by Murphy that would star himself and an all @-@ black cast of comedians as a heist group who rob Trump International Hotel and Tower . As the script developed and changed into an Ocean 's Eleven ? style caper , Murphy left the project . Ratner continued to develop the idea into what would eventually become Tower Heist , with Murphy later rejoining the production . Filming took place entirely in New York City on a budget of \$ 75 million (after tax rebates) , with several buildings provided by Donald Trump used to represent the eponymous tower . The film score was composed by Christophe Beck and released commercially on November 1 , 2011 .

The film received mixed reviews with much of the praise going to the cast , including Broderick , Leoni and Stiller . However , Murphy was repeatedly singled out by critics as the star of the film , with critics feeling that he displayed a welcome return to the comedic style of his early career . Much of the criticism received by the film was focused on the plot which was considered " formulaic , " " rushed , " " dull " and " laborious . " The film earned almost \$ 153 million during its theatrical run .

Prior to release , the film was involved in a controversy over plans by Universal Pictures to release it for home viewing on video on demand to 500 @,@ 000 Comcast customers , only three weeks after its theatrical debut . Concern over the implementation 's harming ticket sales and inspiring further films to follow suit resulted in several theater chains ' refusal to show the film at all if the plan went ahead , forcing Universal to abandon the idea .

= = Plot = =

Josh Kovaks is the building manager of The Tower , a luxury apartment complex in New York City whose employees include concierge Charlie , who is expecting a child with Josh 's sister ; Enrique , a newly hired elevator operator ; Lester , the doorman nearing retirement ; Odessa , an immigrant maid from Jamaica ; and receptionist Miss Iovenko , who is studying to become a lawyer .

One morning Josh sees Arthur Shaw , a wealthy Tower resident , being kidnapped . Josh gives chase , but is tackled by FBI agent Claire Denham , who explains that Shaw was attempting to flee the country and avoid arrest for embezzling \$ 2 billion in a Ponzi scheme . Josh confesses to the Tower staff that he gave their pensions to Shaw to invest , and they have lost everything ; Lester attempts suicide . After visiting Lester in hospital , Josh , Charlie , and Enrique confront Shaw , under house arrest in his penthouse apartment . Shaw 's insincere condolences enrage Josh and he smashes the windows of the 1963 Ferrari 250 GT Lusso displayed in Shaw 's apartment . Josh , Charlie , and Enrique are fired for the incident .

Josh meets Denham at a bar where she suggests that Shaw has concealed \$ 20 million as a reserve , and that Josh should steal it . Josh , Charlie , Enrique , and evicted Tower tenant Mr. Fitzhugh conspire to find and steal the money from Shaw 's assumed safe . They supplement their inexperience by enlisting Josh 's childhood former friend Slide , a petty criminal , and Odessa , who has locksmith experience that can help open the safe . Charlie is later rehired as the Tower 's new manager , and warns Josh to abandon the plan or he will inform the police . Subsequently , Denham informs Josh that Shaw is scheduled for to attend court on Thanksgiving during the Macy 's Thanksgiving Day Parade to avoid publicity , and that Shaw will be set free . Josh and his team

decide to break into Shaw 's apartment during the parade .

Slide attempts to betray the team by reaching the safe first , having tricked Odessa into giving him lessons . The team intercepts him at Shaw 's apartment , and during the ensuing struggle they break down a false wall , revealing Shaw 's empty safe . Slide and Fitzhugh struggle for Slide 's gun ; the gun goes off and the bullet hits the car , revealing gold underneath the Ferrari 's paint . They realize that Shaw used his money to buy gold , turn it into car parts , and assembled the car to hide the money in plain sight . Josh finds a ledger of Shaw 's illegal finances in the car 's glove box . They use a window @-@ washing platform to lower the car from the apartment into an empty apartment below before lowering it to the lobby on top of the elevator . As they reach the lobby , Denham and Shaw return , revealing the Thanksgiving court date as a ruse as part of the plan . Denham notes the missing car and Shaw 's safe and rearrests him for violating his bail by not declaring the latter .

Denham and the FBI arrest Josh and the crew (except Slide) as they walk outside the Tower . Miss Iovenko arrives , telling the FBI that she passed her bar exam three days ago and is acting as Josh 's attorney . She shows them Shaw 's ledger and tells them she will turn it over in exchange for everyone 's freedom . The FBI accepts on the condition that Josh , being the primary conspirator , must serve a minimal two @-@ year sentence , but Denham lowers it to 16 months to make sure Josh gets out for good behavior . Shaw is convicted and sentenced to prison for the rest of his life .

The team retrieves the car from its hiding place in Shaw 's rooftop pool and send various parts of the car to Tower employees to compensate for their lost pensions . As Josh is led to his cell , a satisfied smile slowly forms on his face .

= = Cast = =

Ben Stiller as Josh Kovaks

The building manager . Stiller was paid \$ 15 million for the role .

Eddie Murphy as Slide

A petty crook to whom Josh turns for help . Murphy joined the cast on October 13 , 2010 , and also became a producer on the film . He was paid \$ 7 @.@ 5 million for his work .

Casey Affleck as Charlie Gibbs

The building concierge and Josh 's brother @-@ in @-@ law . Affleck wanted to participate in the film as he was interested in playing a comedy role , saying " it sounded like a fun film to do . I wanted to do a comedy , and I thought this was an opportunity to try and be funny . " Grazer felt that Affleck would be perfect for the role because of his deadpan timing .

Alan Alda as Arthur Shaw

A Wall Street billionaire placed under house arrest for stealing \$ 2 billion . On his character , Alda said " Shaw is sometimes described as a Bernie Madoff @-@ like character . I 'm not sure . I don 't think anyone has ever operated on the scale that Madoff did . And I don 't know if what Shaw did technically qualifies as a Ponzi scheme . But in that Shaw was willing to steal money from people who really needed it ? who really couldn 't afford to lose it ? and willing to take everything they had ? yes , he 's in Bernie territory , with both feet . " Ratner initially approached Robert Redford to play the role , being a fan of his work in the heist film The Hot Rock , but Redford turned him down .

Matthew Broderick as Mr. Fitzhugh

A former Wall Street investor made bankrupt . Broderick joined the cast on October 26 , 2010 .

Téa Leoni as Claire Denham

An FBI special agent assigned to Shaw 's case . Leoni joined the cast on October 21 , 2010 . Leoni worked with FBI technical advisor Anne C. Beagan to prepare for her role . On her character and work with Beagan , Leoni said : " Agent Denham is your standard @-@ issue , ball @-@ breaking FBI agent . She 's certainly a very tough lady , and it 's not my first waltz with this type of character . However , I was able to spend some time with Anne , a great technical advisor we had on set . She 's got this steely gaze that is terrifying , but what 's underneath that is a very interesting lady . Beyond the technical aspects of the job , she provided so much more for me to use . "

Michael Peña as Enrique Dev 'reaux

The elevator operator and the newest employee of the building staff . Peña was cast on October 19

, 2010 .

Gabourey Sidibe as Odessa Montero

A Jamaican @-@ born maid threatened with deportation by Shaw 's theft . To perform her character 's Jamaican accent , Sidibe had three dialect coaches help her prepare and practiced with a friend of Jamaican heritage . Additionally , Sidibe worked with an actual safecracker to accurately portray breaking into locks . Sidibe was cast on October 19 , 2010 .

Judd Hirsch plays Mr. Simon , the building General Manager , and Stephen Henderson plays Lester , the tower 's retiring doorman . Henderson was cast after the filmmakers saw his performance in August Wilson 's Fences on Broadway . The cast is rounded out by Nina Arianda as Miss Iovenko , attorney @-@ in @-@ training , Juan Carlos Hernandez as Manuel the security guard , Harry O 'Reilly as FBI Agent Dansk , Marcia Jean Kurtz as Rose , Peter Van Wagner as attorney Marty Klein , and ?eljko Ivanek as FBI Director Mazin . Jessica Szohr plays Sasha Gibbs , Charlie 's pregnant wife , who is also Josh 's sister . Heavy D has a cameo appearance as a guard at a courthouse . Model Kate Upton cameos as the mistress of a Tower resident . Robert Downey , Sr. has a cameo as Judge Ramos .

= = Alternate Ending = =

The new ending is broken down into two scenes . In the first alternate scene , Josh was released from prison after serving 15 months out of the two years he was originally sentenced . Slide picks him up in his old car installed with a new gold grill in front of it . In the second alternate scene , Lester the doorman now owns a bar . He , Slide and the rest of the hotel staff that were compensated with gold were toasting to Josh for helping them and celebrate the night away . Josh was also embraced by Denham at the party . She tells Josh about a gold ring she received with her initials in it . When Josh asks about how she received the ring , she promises to tell him on the date they originally planned before Josh 's sentencing .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

The idea for Tower Heist began development as early as 2005 , when Murphy pitched a concept to producer Brian Grazer and Ratner concerning an all @-@ star cast of black comedians including Chris Tucker , Kevin Hart , Dave Chappelle , Tracy Morgan , and Martin Lawrence , as a group of disgruntled employees who plan to rob Donald Trump and Trump International Hotel and Tower . The film was originally titled Trump Heist under this concept . A script was developed by Adam Cooper and Bill Collage and over the course of the next five years , the script was rewritten by several writers including Russell Gewirtz , Rawson Marshall Thurber , Ted Griffin , Leslie Dixon , Noah Baumbach , and Jeff Nathanson , with the bulk of the work ? and credit ? going to Griffin and Nathanson .

Rewrites of the script gradually moved away from the ensemble of comedians and began to focus on two central characters , at which point Murphy left the project . For Ratner however , the modified script reminded him of the Ocean 's Eleven remake , a project he had developed but for which he was unavailable due to his commitment to directing Rush Hour 2 .

The project remained in development for a period of years but Ratner remained committed to the project , having enjoyed the heist films of the 1970s including The Taking of Pelham One Two Three , The Hot Rock , and The Anderson Tapes , turning down the opportunity to direct other films such as Horrible Bosses , which he instead produced . Ratner would also claim that he wanted to work with Murphy , whom Ratner partially credited as inspiring his Rush Hour films . As the script began to be finalized , Murphy was drawn back into the much @-@ changed project after being informed of Stiller 's participation , with Murphy being offered the role of Slide . Murphy rejoined as both a cast member and producer , alongside Grazer and Kim Roth . In later October 2010 , the film was finally

scheduled for release , being given a November 4 , 2011 , release date .

= = = Writing = = =

Feeling the original concept was too close to Ocean 's Eleven , Ratner attempted to recruit Rush Hour screenwriter Nathanson to perform additional work on the Tower Heist script , but at that time Nathanson was unavailable . Ratner instead hired Griffin , a writer on the Ocean 's Eleven remake . Griffin " brought the real motivation and the heart to the concept " , moving away from the premise of performing an ensemble heist on a rich Donald Trump @-@ type , and focusing instead on a group of blue @-@ collar employees who take on a corrupt , thieving Bernard Madoff @-@ like businessman who has embezzled their pensions . Ratner enjoyed the pitch and brought it to Grazer who gave his approval . After taking the script to Stiller and bringing him into the project , Ratner had Noah Baumbach perform specific rewrites for Stiller 's character . Nathanson then came aboard the project and performed the final rewrites to Griffin 's screenplay in October 2010 , adding " the obstacles , complexities and specificities of the characters . "

To help develop the script , the filmmakers and writers spoke with the resident managers of several high @-@ profile New York hotels to learn of their experiences interacting with their clientele . This research gave Griffin the idea for Shaw 's possessing a vehicle in his apartment , which Grazer and Ratner eventually decided would be a rare 1963 Ferrari 250 GT Lusso which once belonged to Steve McQueen . On his research , Nathanson said :

" It was informative , to say the least , to speak with the people who work in these buildings . I interviewed everyone from doormen to housekeepers to building managers . There 's a whole underworld to the New York building scene that exists in the basements that most people are unaware of . They make it all possible , and you just never see it . It 's fascinating . "

= = = Filming = = =

Filming began on November 2010 , taking place entirely in New York City on a budget of \$ 85 million (\$ 75 million after tax rebates) . Production designer Kristi Zea visited several upscale hotels and high @-@ rise residences to research the design elements to incorporate into the opulent surroundings of the tower and Shaw 's penthouse . Zea created an amalgamation of the elements she saw during her research to create a sophisticated lobby design for the tower . For Shaw 's penthouse , Zea took inspiration from a top @-@ floor apartment in the Trump International Hotel and Tower at Central Park West in Columbus Circle . Zea populated the apartment with an assortment of art pieces to represent Shaw 's status , based on specific artists and works that Ratner suggested . Zea decided to use modern @-@ classic reproduction designs by artists such as Pablo Picasso , Francis Bacon , Cy Twombly , and Andy Warhol . Explaining her decision , Zea said " These days , it seems wealthy people want to have wall power . They want to have art on their walls that means something and shows people , just like a car , that , ' I 'm rich , I 'm smart and I know what I 'm doing . ' "

Donald Trump allowed the production to use several of his own properties to portray the luxurious locales with the Trump International Hotel and Tower 's being used for exterior shots of the tower . Sections of the building were recreated on closed green screen sets for some of the film 's visual effects . A foot and car chase sequence was filmed on Central Park West and Columbus Avenue . Some vehicle filming occurred on sound stages in Brooklyn . The burglary itself takes place during the Macy 's Thanksgiving Day Parade , requiring the crew to film parts of the actual parade itself , and then recreate the event one week later for further filming .

For Shaw 's Ferrari , it was decided that purchasing an actual model ? of which only 350 exist and would cost at least \$ 1 million ? would be too expensive and the vehicle would be unsuitable for filming purposes . Instead , two replicas were commissioned , a process which took three months under the supervision of prop master Peter Gelfman . The replicas then received additional reinforcement for filming purposes from Steve Kirshoff and the special effects crew . After running camera tests on several authentic Ferrari colors , it was decided to paint the replicas bright red in

order to create a lasting impression instead of using the actual metallic brown muted @-@ coloring of McQueen 's vehicle .

Sidibe and Murphy performed the only improvised scene , in which they are cracking a safe together . Test screenings did not result in any scenes being cut from the film , with Ratner claiming that the theatrical version is his " director 's cut " . However , he did remove scenes which he felt " didn 't fit " , or did not match the PG @-@ 13 rating the filmmakers were targeting .

In post @-@ production , Universal decided to film a new scene for the ending that would feature a reunion between Stiller and Murphy 's characters . Murphy , however , refused to return unless he were paid a further \$ 500 @,@ 000 on top of his \$ 7 @.@ 5 million salary . The studio declined to pay the additional money and the scene was not shot .

== = Music == =

The soundtrack was composed by The Hangover 's Christophe Beck . The Tower Heist Original Motion Picture Soundtrack was released on November 1 , 2011 , by Varèse Sarabande . It consists of 22 tracks with a runtime of 40 minutes .

== Release ==

The world premiere of Tower Heist took place on October 24 , 2011 , at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York City .

== = Box office == =

Tower Heist earned \$ 78 @,@ 046 @,@ 570 (51 @.@ 0 %) in the United States and Canada , and a further \$ 74 @,@ 884 @,@ 053 (49 @.@ 0 %) elsewhere , for a worldwide box @-@ office gross of \$ 152 @,@ 930 @,@ 623 .

United States and Canada

Pre @-@ release audience tracking in the United States indicated that the film had strong awareness among males of all ages , followed by older women . Universal Pictures projected opening takings of \$ 25 ? 30 million during the opening weekend ? aiming below expectations due to a slow marketplace ? with rival studios claiming that the film would need to make at least \$ 30 million to be a success .

In the United States and Canada , Tower Heist opened in 3 @,@ 367 theaters . The film took \$ 85 @,@ 000 from midnight screenings and a total of \$ 8 @.@ 5 million opening Friday , becoming the number one grossing film for the day . Although the film had been expected to be the number one film for the weekend , it took \$ 10 @.@ 5 million on the opening Saturday , falling behind the animated film Puss in Boots (\$ 15 @.@ 3 million) . Tower Heist became the number two film for the weekend with \$ 24 million , behind Puss in Boots (\$ 34 million) , with 70 % of the audience being over the age of 25 ? the largest segment , 27 % , being over 50 ? and 56 % male . The opening audience was ethnically diverse consisting of 48 % Caucasian , 21 % African American , and 21 % Hispanic .

Markets elsewhere

Tower Heist was released on November 2 , 2011 , in the United Kingdom and opened in a total of 23 countries , including Germany , Spain , Hong Kong , and India , by November 4 , 2011 , at a total of 1 @,@ 948 theaters . The opening weekend saw the film gross \$ 9 @.@ 5 million ? an average of \$ 5 @,@ 000 per theater ? with the largest earnings coming from the United Kingdom (\$ 2 @.@ 3 million at 416 theaters) where it was the number three film for the weekend , and Spain (\$ 1 @.@ 6 million at 300 theaters) where it was the number two film .

== = Critical reception == =

Tower Heist received mixed to positive reviews from critics , garnering a 68 % approval rating from

175 critics ? an average rating of 6 @.@ 2 out of 10 ? on review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes , whose consensus reads : " Tower Heist is a true Brett Ratner joint : little brains to this caper , but it 's fun fluff , exciting to watch , and showcases a welcome return to form for Eddie Murphy . " Metacritic provides a score of 59 out of 100 from 39 critics , indicating " mixed or average reviews . " CinemaScore polls reported that the average grade moviegoers gave the film was a " B " on an A + to F scale .

Tim Robey of The Daily Telegraph called the film " a tolerably enjoyable Brett Ratner movie " , labeling it " brash , forgettable fun . " However , Robey criticized Ratner for having the mostly white characters require the aid of a black character for the heist , saying " it 's a little embarrassing that they can 't conceive of doing this without bailing a black criminal out of jail ... but cultural sensitivity has never been Ratner 's strong suit . " The Hollywood Reporter 's Todd McCarthy said that the film is " snappy , well cast and streetwise " but felt that it ignored the " contemporary economic issues at its core . " McCarthy said that Murphy 's performance was a return to form as " the rude , confrontational , wiseass Murphy audiences have nearly forgotten after all the silly kid comedies and heavy @-@ makeup outings of recent years , " and said that with his introduction " the film 's energy and amusement level kick up a few notches , " but that the enjoyment ebbs during the actual break @-@ in , in which " Murphy becomes neutered ... and the logistics of the heist become too far @-@ fetched and laborious . "

New York 's David Edelstein called it " a shameless but exuberantly well @-@ done caper comedy , " and praised the performances of Stiller , Murphy and Leoni , saying " Ben Stiller ... and Eddie Murphy ... show off two of the best fastballs in comedy , and Téa Leoni 's best scene as an FBI agent ? drunk , both sloppy and blunt ? makes you wish she had more . " Emanuel Levy called Tower Heist a " formulaic , haphazardly plotted action comedy ... whose best asset is its strong ensemble . " Levy said " What makes the picture ... work is not its plot , which is overly familiar and utterly implausible , but the socio @-@ psychological dynamics that prevail among the [characters] . " Levy singled out Stiller as " well cast " and Sidibe as having " some of the picture 's best lines , " but gave individual praise to Murphy , saying that he " dominates the second half of the picture , " rendering " a joyous performance that recalls his witty , charming , streetwise roles of the 1980s . "

Empire 's Nick de Semlyen awarded the film three out of five stars , calling it " fun if uneven stuff from Ratner , " with a " fairly dull " opening act . Semlyen said it was " a welcome return to form for Eddie Murphy , " but was critical that he is " sorely underused . " Semlyen praised Alda , saying that it is his " smarm offensive that turns out to be the primary pleasure . " The Village Voice 's Nick Pinkerton said that the film " deserves credit as a clean , well @-@ turned job , fleet and funny and inconsequential , " and appreciated the cast , praising Leoni as the " best thing going , " and Murphy 's " inspired " contributions . However , Pinkerton was critical of the script , describing it as " amateur as its crooks : the audience isn 't even fully aware of who 's in on the job when it kicks off , while other threads are left dangling . "

Roger Ebert awarded the film 2 @.@ 5 out of 4 , saying " This isn 't a great heist movie for a lot of reasons , beginning with the stupidity of its heist plan and the impossibility of these characters ever being successful at anything more complex than standing in line , " but appreciated that the comedy did not " go heavy on the excremental , the masturbatory and symphonies of four @-@ letter words " , calling it " funny in an innocent screwball kind of way . " Entertainment Weekly 's Lisa Schwarzbaum called the film " overblinded , eye @-@ catching , and essentially tacky , " and praised Murphy , saying " when Murphy is on screen , his comedic vigor ... gooses the movie 's energy level ... but whenever Murphy wanders off , the movie 's pulse rate drops . Tower Heist is in effect two movies : One belongs to Murphy , the other to the rest of the cast . " Time Out London 's Trevor Johnston said that " though it 's hard to get excited by this amiable potboiler , Tower Heist is so at home with its limitations it 's equally hard to dislike , " but criticized the finale " which might have been a bit more tense had we been able to take it remotely seriously . " Conversely , Time Out New York 's David Fear gave it 2 out of 5 stars , saying " one nail @-@ biting moment and some much @-@ missed Murphy mouthiness won 't keep you from feeling like you 're the one being ripped off . "

The New Yorker 's Anthony Lane criticized the plot , saying " toss everything you can find , starting

with roughly diced plots , into the blender : such appears to be the method behind Tower Heist . " Lane called the characters " unlikable people " but offered praise to Broderick , saying he " underplays [the character] so well . " Lane lamented that " the notion of a theft from the thieves ? from those who are lapped in lofty , screw @-@ you wealth ? is a tempting one right now , but Tower Heist passes the buck . " Variety 's Peter Debruge was also critical , saying the film " goes wonky on the way to the bank , due to its lackluster pacing and shortage of the qualities that typically earn stars Ben Stiller and Eddie Murphy their paychecks ? namely , laughs . " Debruge felt that the opening 40 minutes were " a dull blue @-@ collar drama populated entirely by stereotypes , " and while the film " picks up some much @-@ needed momentum " with the actual heist , the " resolution feels rushed . " However , Debruge echoed praise for Murphy , calling his performance " a welcome return to the comic 's irreverent , ' 80s @-@ era persona , " and lamenting his limited screen @-@ time .

= = = Video on demand boycott = = =

On October 5 , 2011 , Universal Pictures announced that Tower Heist would be made available for home viewing via parent company Comcast 's video on demand system three weeks after its theatrical debut at the rental cost of \$ 59 @. @ 99 . The move was announced as a test case , to be conducted only in Atlanta and Portland . The move met with criticism from cinema chains over concern that the test and any further future implementation would impact ticket sales . The following day , Cinemark Theatres ? the third largest cinema chain in the United States ? threatened to not show the film at all if Universal proceeded with the test . On October 11 , 2011 , several independent theater chains , including Galaxy Theatres , Regency Theatres and Emagine Theatres , and small cinema houses representing approximately 50 screens across the country , also threatened not to play Tower Heist . The following day the chains were joined by 950 @-@ screen National Amusements theater chain . In response , Universal Pictures released a statement saying that they would no longer pursue the proposed test .

= = = Accolades = = =

Tower Heist received two NAACP Image Award nominations , for Outstanding Motion Picture and Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture for Murphy .

= = = Home media = = =

Tower Heist was released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc in the United States on February 21 , 2012 . The DVD and Blu @-@ ray disc versions contain two alternate endings to the film , deleted and alternate scenes , a gag reel of mistakes made during filming , commentary on the film by Ratner , Griffin , Nathanson , and editor Mark Helfrich , and a behind the scenes film that details the development process of the film . The Blu @-@ ray edition additionally contains film storyboards , three videos about the filmmaking process led by Ratner , and musical tracks from the film .