

Review: Gambit

The new Coen Brothers-scripted comedy caper, boasting an all-star cast including Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman, lacks spark and fails to deliver the belly laughs you expect

By [Tom Lubek](#)

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Director: Michael Hoffman

Screenwriter: Ethan Coen, Joel Coen

Starring: Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz, Alan Rickman

Length: 89 minutes

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

With such big names involved who have, let's be honest, done some bloody good stuff between them at some point or another before now, I was hoping that *Gambit* would at least provide me with a moderately entertaining way to pass a couple of hours. I had my misgivings when I saw the trailer, but I ignored them and thought, well, since when has a trailer been any good at actually showing you what a film is like anyway? Let's just say my star rating is based on how many bits I actually found funny. For a comedy film, that's really not good.

The premise is that downtrodden and frustrated art curator, Harry Deane (Colin Firth), hatches a plan to get one over on his abusive boss, Lord Shabandar (Alan Rickman), which is so ridiculous that it has to come off. He plans to sell the billionaire a forged 'lost' Monet painting for a fat profit, but in order for this to work he needs Texan rodeo queen PJ Puznowski (Cameron Diaz) to pose as the owner of the painting... which somehow found its way into her caravan after disappearing during World War Two. Almost implausible enough to be believable.

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What should be a fun and zany heist-movie, however, drags itself along at a snail's pace. Firth attempts some ludicrous physical comedy that will have you cringing for all of the wrong reasons; he even manages to get water on his trousers making it look suspiciously like he's wet himself. Wet myself with laughter, I did not. The whole physical sequences seem empty and clichéd and don't really bring anything new to the table, although, I admit a trouser-less Firth bedroom-hopping through windows, edging across balconies and raising eyebrows amongst the staff of the Savoy Hotel did raise a smirk once or twice. He even gets caught on some pretty sharp railings in a rather unfortunate place – though I suspect that my finding that funny is just my inner sadist coming out to play. I just thought it was a shame that the same sequences made Firth himself look ridiculous, rather than his character, making the comedy fall flat upon its face.

Rickman's and Diaz's performances also lack the spark needed to make the film work, though I suspect that may have something to do with the script not really giving them very much to work with. Shabandar just seems to shout a lot and Puznowski is little more than a walking stereotype. The obligatory romantic subplot is poorly done and stretches the viewer to the very edge of belief. I did enjoy Tom Courtenay as The Major, however, and Pip Torrens and Julian Rhind-Tutt make a good double-act as Savoy reception managers. But even they, and a couple of pretty funny gags, are not enough to redeem *Gambit*.

Big set pieces are not fully utilised, gags take a long time to set up and then the punch lines fail to deliver. You might smirk, smile (and probably groan) a few times, but it's hard to summon up the will for the huge belly-laughs that comedies like this should deliver. Faking it just isn't worth the effort.



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