

Film Review: ‘The Gambler’ is a Sure Bet for the Holiday Weekend

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 25, 2014 - 8:56am

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CHICAGO – Gritty, funky and quote-worthy, this re-imagining of “The Gambler” – from a 1970s source film – is one of Mark Wahlberg’s best performances. His addicted-to-gaming soul has roots in other frustrations, and the actor is willing to communicate the whole range of emotions.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Director Rupert Wyatt, working from an adaptation from writer William Monahan, creates a parallel symbolic universe to the American dream, and the tragedy that occurs when waking up the next morning. Wahlberg’s character of “The Gambler” is complex and deep – his secret identity is as a adjunct professor of literature. This personality, which drove him to write his first book, is also responsible for his gambling addict side, and feeds his ability to walk away from both victory and losses without an indication of reactive feeling. The film is a broad, rich bite of tension, great acting and a John Goodman who in effect steals the picture. This is a perfect adult story alternative to the kiddies begging for “Annie.”

Jim (Wahlberg) is up to his eyeballs in debt, from several monetary sources that expect him to payoff during his intense bouts of gambling. Jim has no strategy, he simply bets the limit, rakes in the gold, and puts it right back on the table. This has nearly destroyed his mother Roberta (Jessica Lange), who can’t help but keep helping him.

His other life is as a writer and literature professor. He got middling reviews for his first book, but finds a new purpose in that literature when he discovers that one of his students, Amy (Brie Larson), is a prodigy. His interest in her re-adjusts a bit of his gaming life, but he’s still in for large sums to Neville (Michael Kenneth Williams) and the enigmatic gangster/philosopher Frank (Goodman).

“The Gambler” opens everywhere on December 25th. Featuring Mark Wahlberg, Jessica Lange, Brie Larson, John Goodman, Michael Kenneth Williams and George Kennedy. Screenplay adapted by William Monahan. Directed by Rupert Wyatt. Rated “R”



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Jim (Mark Wahlberg) and Amy (Brie Larson) Place Their Bets in ‘The Gambler’
Photo credit: Paramount Pictures



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