

Supremely Silly ‘Mortdecai’ is a Pleasant Surprise

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 23, 2015 - 10:53pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – I have to say while watching Johnny Depp in “Mortdecai,” I found myself amused. I rarely elicited anything more than a slight chuckle, but its indomitable spirit of silliness made it a not entirely unpleasant evening out. This feather-weight trifle of a caper is only slightly more than the funny mustache movie its posters and trailer make it out to be.

Depp as Mortdecai comes across as sort of a randier Austin Powers, with more of a roguish rascal aura about him. Based on a character from a series of novels in the 1970’s by the late Kyril Bonfiglioli, Mortdecai is another in a long line of upper class British bumbler. He has all the upper class affectations of the aristocracy with none of the brains. While the film delves deeply into bathroom, breasts and boner humor, the spirit of the character wouldn’t be entirely out of place in a P.G. Wodehouse novel.



Johnny Depp is the Title Character in ‘Mortdecai’

Photo credit: Lionsgate

Mortdecai is an art dealer with connections to some of the more charismatic and cartoonish members of the underworld. He’s in the hole to His Majesty’s government for back taxes, so he agrees to help an old acquaintance in the British Secret Service (Ewan McGregor) track down a stolen painting and keep it out of the hands of international terrorists, Russian oligarchs, and other assorted power hungry fops. Gwyneth Paltrow adopts a British accent seemingly picked up from Madonna to play Mortdecai’s wife, while Paul Bettany acts as Mortdecai’s muscle and gruff manservant, Jock Strapp (insert your tee-hee’s and ho-ho’s here).

Depp plays up his English affectations with a British accent that makes Austin Powers look positively sedate by comparison. It's never believable in the slightest, but Depp's Mortdecai is delightfully silly, if you are amused by that sort of thing. His devotion to his newly grown moustache – and the nearly universal disapproval from everyone else including his wife – becomes a running gag and a major plot point.

Mortdecai is also almost completely superfluous to the plot. He throws around words like "chap" and "old bean," refers to America as the "colonies" and rides around in a Rolls Royce, but as is usual in comic British capers of this sort he doesn't do much of the detective work. He's bumbling around in the forefront while his wife conducts her own parallel investigation, and his manservant does all the really heavy lifting, to lead him to the right conclusion.



Gwyneth Paltrow and Ewan McGregor in 'Mortdecai'

Photo credit: Lionsgate

The plot is a deliberately complicated globe-trotting affair that takes him from London to Moscow, and then to America, while adding in even more silliness – including a Russian collector who always appears to be having a ball or two, and American art collector (Jeff Goldblum) and his nymphomaniac daughter (Olivia Munn). It also ostensibly features an appropriately mustachioed international terrorist trying to use the painting to finance a network of terror across Europe – the film is filled with some of the least threatening villains in recent memory.

Director David Koepp shows a sure hand while operating within the conventions, and the music score by Mark Ronson strikes just the right tone. It's worth noting that most of the jokes involved are just not funny. At their best the jokes are more clever than laugh out loud knee slappers, with the situations providing most of the humor for these silly characters to interact in, but it's not really a punchline kind of movie anyway. It's that spirit of silliness carries the day, in a way I certainly didn't expect.

"Mortdecai" opens everywhere on January 23rd. Featuring Johnny Depp, Gwyneth Paltrow, Paul Bettany, Ewan McGregor, Olivia Munn and Jeff Goldblum. Screenplay adapted by Eric Aronson. Directed by David Koepp. Rated "R"



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