

MOLLY'S GAME (2017)

- Released on December 25th, 2017
- 2 Hours 20 minutes
- 30 million USD (estimated)
- Directed by Aaron Sorkin
- Written by Aaron Sorkin, Molly Bloom (book)
- STX Entertainment, Huayi Brothers Pictures, The Mark Gordon Company
- Rated R for language, drug content and some violence
- Had a special screening at the AFI Fest in Los Angeles on November 12, 2017

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

DEVELOPMENT

- Based on book *Molly's Game: The True Story of the 26-Year-Old Woman Behind the Most Exclusive, High-Stakes Underground Poker Game in the World*.
- Sorkin calls the book "fun ... but I had zero interest in adapting it. None. Not in the slightest. And then I met Molly, and everything changed."- Sorkin
- Sorkin judged (real) Molly Bloom before getting to know her. "I went to the meeting with Molly without very high expectations," he said. But he soon realized he had been mistaken. "This was a remarkably impressive woman, and there was a huge difference between the story she was telling in the book and the real story." "She's not this stereotype. There was a lot more going on. She's a creation of society. Society values women for their sexual desirability, and she changed everything about herself to try to become successful in an industry dominated by rich and powerful men."- Sorkin
- "Plus when I met her," Sorkin adds, "she'd just been sentenced to 200 hours of community service, had been handed a massive fine and was paying several millions' worth of taxes on the money the government had seized! Yet Molly just seemed very casual about it. After that first meeting, I felt like I knew her well enough to tell her, 'I've never met someone so down on their luck and who seemed so confident.'" He left that face-to-face knew that he wanted to tell her story. What the writer didn't know was that he'd also just unwittingly signed up to become a director as well.
- "So I went right to David Fincher. I gave [the script] to him first – I mean, I'd give *any* of my scripts to David first!" Fincher was completely on board to take the reins, before running into problems regarding the proposed budget and walking away from the table.
- "There was a meeting between myself, Mark Gordon and Amy Pascal in which we all had a list of directors in front of us. We went through the pros and cons of each of them, but apparently, there had been a conversation before I had arrived. After the last name was debated, they said, 'Why don't you do it?' This was right before Christmas ... they asked me to take the holiday break and think it over."

WRITING (Aaron Sorkin, Molly Bloom (book))

- "In all situations, she is trying to follow the rules laid out by men who change their mind depending on what their whims are. I think only an incredible writer is able to touch that pulse while we're all still blind to it." - Chastain
- Sorkin will freely admit that "every sound that comes out of an actor's mouth ... if it's not there in the script, I don't want to it to happen," he mentions that some of his best moments as a director happened because he was willing to let people go completely off-book
- "The way he writes, there's so much musicality, pacing, rhythm, the way he's able to set things up, it's so thoughtful and that's what good writing does. It's not cheap and disposable, there's so many layers and levels to it." - Chastain

STORY/TOPICS

- Tie ins to real life
- What makes movie appealing?
- Father/daughter story?
- Self-pressure/expectations
- Role of a woman in a man's world
- Ending quote: "Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm." - Churchill
- Lawyer story

CAST:

- Hired professional poker players and they played real pokers for inserts- "Number of folks went home with huge piles of cash. Those extras were the highest-paid people on set. I think [Michael] Cera left without his house."

JESSICA CHASTAIN (Molly Blume)

- "Write down a list of actresses who you think would be up for it," Sorkin says, "and I guarantee you I had a meeting with all of them. All fantastic, too, but the role required someone to play her from age 22 to 35, and I wanted to skew more toward the latter – so really, if we're being honest, it's Jessica Chastain or Emma Stone." When he did finally talk to Chastain over a long afternoon, the connection was immediate. "You could see Molly's sense of humor, Molly's smarts, from the moment she opened her mouth. She just sort of hit out of the park from the first second." - Sorkin
- "Immediately, it was just Aaron Sorkin. I wanted to work with him because he's a political filmmaker. He believes all of his stories about justice prevailing against the odds. I'd be happy with a couple scenes in an Aaron Sorkin film. Then I read the story." - Chastain
- Chastain said she placed photographs of the Kardashians in her trailer to further immerse herself in "this idea that to find success, to have it be given to you, you have to present this image of who you are." But in meeting and getting to know Bloom, Chastain said, "I learned she was the opposite of that stereotype.
- "I was going to this meeting to try to discover if this actress who has been directed by Ridley Scott and Katherine Bigelow and Terrence Malick and Christopher Nolan would be willing to take direction from a first-time director or would I be taking direction from her. And about three minutes into the meeting she leaned in and said, 'Listen, this meeting is stupid. You should just give me the part,'" he recounted.

- Jessica Chastain swears she's terrible at poker.
- "It was crazy because it was a very different look than me," said Chastain. "I was doing spray tans every few days, which is *so cold*. No one says that! It is so uncomfortable to get a spray tan! You're basically standing there naked and they're spraying you with very cold liquid," joked Chastain. "I was getting nails, eyebrows, and eyelashes done. And I was taping my body in these dresses. And the hair! I've never spent more time on my appearance than I did with this part [laughs]," explained the Oscar-nominated actor.

IDRIS ELBA (Charlie Jaffrey)

- Amy Pascal suggested Idris Elba for the part of Molly's lawyer – Sorkin had loved a five-episode arc the actor had done on *The Office*
- Elba said it was both a challenge and a reward. "I was thrilled to bits, first of all because it's Aaron," he said. "The added bonus was to watch Aaron and to share that moment with him." He also described working with Chastain as "a dream come true," despite an intense schedule. "We had 12 days to shoot what Aaron described as 'the spine of the film' — no pressure," Elba joked. "It was theater on speed-dial; it was fantastic."
- "He's fun. He works really hard. I know everyone's gonna know it when they see the movie, there is a speech he gives in this film that is so incredible. And Aaron Sorkin dialogue is tough because it's like Shakespeare, it's so layered, there's so much going on, there's a rhythm."- Chastain

KEVIN COSTNER (Larry Bloom)

- "I was shocked when Aaron told me that Kevin Costner was gonna play Molly's father in the film. I admire him so much....He was so generous on set. Aaron would secretly tell me that Kevin would say, "You know you can put the camera here," and Aaron said, "That's a good idea," and then he would do it, but then Aaron would let everyone know that was Kevin's idea (laughs). And then Kevin would go over to him and say, "You don't need to give me credit. It's yours." He's a team player. He was beautiful."- Chastain

MICHAEL CERA (Player X)

- "It was Toby Maguire," revealed Cera. But the actor was quick to elucidate, expanding, "but I think it's more of a composite of several people from her game. In her book, I think the most contentious relationship was with him."- Cera
- Maguire's poker prowess is already lore, but those who haven't read Bloom's book might just assume he's a really good player who happens to be famous.
- Bloom crossed paths with A-listers like Leonardo DiCaprio, Ben Affleck, Nelly, and even Alex Rodriguez, so there are many sources of inspiration for Player X

BRIAN D'ARCY JAMES (Brad)

SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- Molly Bloom, who is banned from Canada because she pleaded guilty to a federal crime in the United States, was granted a 48-hour pass to visit Canada for the movie's premiere at TIFF. Ironically, the film was shot in Canada
- The fictional law firm in this film is called Gage Whitney. The same name as the law firm Rob Lowe's character Sam Seaborn worked for in Sorkin's *The West Wing*
- Molly's lawyer is seen reading a published copy of the book *Molly's Game* to research her defense. In real life, the book wasn't published until after the trial was over

- The amount of money that the FBI took from Molly ,as well as the fine she paid, was substantially larger in the movie than in real life

DIRECTING (Aaron Sorkin)

- “I love working with great directors, and I’m not done wanting to do that,” he said. “I had such a fantastic experience on this. Every day was wonderful, and I’m very proud of how the movie came out, so I think I will do it again.”
- "My TV is permanently tuned to ESPN, so you can't help but trip over the World Series of Poker every so often," he says. "And it is the Worst. Spectator. Sport. Ever. I've tried watching a few minutes of it – even while I was writing this movie, which is when it would have been the most useful to me – and it's the exact opposite of 'You can't take your eyes off it.' You can't keep your eyes ON IT!"- Sorkin
- Since this was his directorial debut, Aaron Sorkin would often call his friend and director [David Fincher](#) for shooting tips. Both men had earlier collaborated on [The Social Network](#)(2010)

PRODUCTION (Charlotte Bruus Christensen)

- “We would get together in the morning, Idris and I, and rehearse our 10-page scene with Aaron and Charlotte [Bruus Christensen], our DP. Then the crew would come in with their coffees and their bagels and everyone would sit on the floor like we were in drama school. Idris and I would do our 10-minute scene, and at the end everyone would clap and be like, “Okay! Let’s film it!””- Chastain
- “We had six or seven days set aside for shooting just poker scenes, and we wanted to get a lot of inserts: chips being pushed forward, ice clinking into glasses, decks being cut and cards being dealt, all that. We'd hired a lot of real players for the background. And during the last few hours of shooting, I reminded them that, when we first got to set, I was going to cut a check for \$2500 to whomever had the most chips when we wrapped.”- Sorkin
- [Principal photography](#) began on November 9, 2016, in [Toronto](#)
- Production concluded on February 9, 2017

EDITING/VFX (Alan Baumgarten, Elliot Graham, Josh Schaeffer)

SOUND/MUSIC (Daniel Pemberton)

- *All The Money In The World, Steve Jobs, The Man from U.N.C.L.E., King Arthur: Legend of the Sword, The Counselor, Gold*
- “I wanted to write it a bit more like a band writing the score, rather than sort of a film composer. I approached it more from a rhythmic rock way than a melodic, traditional film composing way. That has been really good fun as well, trying to look for things in different angles.”- Pemberton
- Has a very diverse score: it’s a rock band, modern sounding soundtrack. It is mainly a band line-up, using hip-hop breaks and post-rock ideas.
- Official Trailer:
 - Two composers, Andreas Kübler (IMAScore / Really Slow Motion) and Dan Rosen (ScoreAScore), about how the music in the trailer
 - Andreas told us that the track from 0:05 – 0:36 “was made exclusively for Molly’s Game with a focus on poker sounds (card shuffling, chips) and a memorable piano riff.” The track was produced for Really Slow Motion.

- Composer Dan Rosen took care of the backend of the trailer (starting at 1:20)
- “A few months ago, through my licensing agency ScoreAScore, I was contacted by Giaronomo. They were working on the trailer and were using Jessie Reyez’s “Air” [pre-release] for the backend, but needed it to be bigger and more “trailer-y.” So I wrote some overlay (ramps, rises, booms, plus some rhythmic percussive stuff to give it a little more propulsion).

PROMOTION

- *Molly's Game* premiered on September 8, 2017, at the [Toronto International Film Festival](#)
- It was also the closing film at [AFI Fest](#) on November 16, 2017, replacing [All the Money in the World](#)

BOX OFFICE

- Total Lifetime Grosses (As of January 22nd): \$24,441,842
- Limited Opening Weekend: \$2,349,967
- Opening Weekend: \$6,856,578
- Domestic: \$24,441,842
 - + Foreign: X
 - = Worldwide: \$24,441,842
- Domestic Summary
 - (#13 rank, 271 theaters, \$8,671 average)
 - % of Total Gross: 28.1%
- > View All Weekends
 - Widest Release: 1,708 theaters
 - In Release: 5 days / 0.7 weeks

RECEPTION

- Rotten Tomatoes: 81% based on 192 reviews
- The website's critical consensus reads, "Powered by an intriguing story and a pair of outstanding performances from Jessica Chastain and Idris Elba, *Molly's Game* marks a solid debut for writer-director Aaron Sorkin."
- Audiences polled by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "A–"
- Peter Debruge of [Variety](#) praised Sorkin's script, saying, "... *Molly's Game* delivers one of the screen's great female parts — a dense, dynamic, compulsively entertaining affair, whose central role makes stunning use of Chastain's stratospheric talent."

GOLDEN GLOBES

- Jessica Chastain recently received nominations at the Golden Globes and Critics' Choice Awards for her leading role

SEQUEL/LEGACY