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LOGAN LUCKY IS WELL-ACTED, SHARPLY WRITTEN, AND SWEET

Posted by Christina Tucker | Aug 21, 2017 | New

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SCORE 94%

Overview: The Logan siblings attempt to pull off a heist during a major NASCAR race in North Carolina; *Bleecker Street*; 2017; Rated R; 119 minutes.

“Ocean’s 7-Eleven”: *Logan Lucky* is Steven Soderbergh’s first theatrical feature since *Side Effects* (2013), and is a welcome return to the format for the experienced director. With writer Rebecca Blunt (the pseudonym of a currently-unknown writer who could be anyone from Soderbergh’s wife Jules Asner to

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SCORE:

Soderbergh himself) Soderbergh has created a character-driven heist film that is both genuinely hysterical and avoids taking the easiest, most obvious routes in terms of plot, humor, and characterization.

Jimmy Logan (Channing Tatum), oldest of the Logan siblings, is fired from his mining job for a pre-existing condition, an injured knee, which he failed to disclose before starting work at the mine. On top of his unemployment, his ex Bobbie Jo Chapman (Katie Holmes) and her new husband Moody Chapman (David Denman) plan to move out of state due to Moody's business expansion, which would limit Jimmy's custody of his daughter Sadie (Farrah Mackenzie).

Clyde Logan (Adam Driver) believes Jimmy's recent bad break can be attributed to the family curse that plagues the Logans, the results of which he rattles off to Jimmy in the bar at which he works. The family's bad luck, including an illness, a roof collapse, various injuries, the loss of Clyde's arm while serving in the military, seem, when listed at once, unlucky, but can also be seen as connected to the trials of living in poverty or near-poverty.

Logan Lucky is a heist movie less concerned with making a mockery of the lifestyle of the Logans and their backwoods West Virginia roots, and more so interested in the institutions that hold them back. As such, much of the humor, irony and resulting sense of justice are a result of the incompetence of the people within these institutions that allow the Logans to pull off the impossible.

“Hillbilly Heist:” Tatum is sweet, genuine, and easy to root for as Jimmy, and the interactions he shows with his young daughter are delightful and effective. Adam Driver as the one-armed bartender Clyde Logan

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delivers perfect line delivery after perfect line delivery, doing as much with body language and expression as he does with a solid Southern accent. Riley Keough as Mellie Logan is tough, confident but also adorable, as excited to aid in the heist as she is about styling Jimmy's daughter's hair extensions for her pageant. Daniel Craig as Joe Bang is a scene-stealer as well, anchoring much of the humor, and even smaller players like Katie Holmes' Bobbie Jo Chapman and Katherine Waterston's Sylvia Harrison make their few scenes count.

These characters are effective mostly due to the care that's gone into allowing the audience into their world. Contaminated water, a corrupt prison system, insurance fraud, lack of affordable healthcare; a litany of issues that millions of Americans confront in their day-to-day lives are present in this film. These details make the setting feel not only detailed and realistic, but character motivations sympathetic and sensitively explained. The Logans and those around them—from the jobs they have to the cars they drive to the clothes they wear—are indicative of the lifestyle choices often made in working-class America, but are displayed in a way that is refreshingly neutral. Clyde's military aspirations as a means of proving himself to his family, Jimmy's high school football stardom, having a child with his high school sweetheart Bobbie Jo; these are all used in service of characterization rather than cheap punchlines, making for well-drawn characters.

Poverty and wealth exist side by side in their community; Jimmy works in the mines just under the expensive, newly renovated Charlotte Motor Speedway, for example, with the container of money stored a few dozen feet away from where he and others toil away in what are shown to be unsafe conditions. The realities of the possibilities for a better



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life are ever-present for Jimmy, frustratingly close and impossible to resist due to his situation; the issue of crime and class are constantly connected to and emotionally elevated by issues of family, values and responsibility.

“Take Me Home, Country Roads” (Possible Spoilers): There are no villains hot on the Logans’ tail, nor are the wealthy characters made out to be the villains. Moody Chapman and his family’s ostentatious McMansion tacky, and Chapman can be obnoxious, but he is not the main hindrance to the Logans. Sebastian Stan’s somewhat pretentious Dayton White is not the cause or to blame for the Logans’ problems. Even Seth MacFarlane’s Max Chilblain, one of the broader and least successful of the minor characters, and closest to a typical villain, is obnoxious but not positioned as the cause of the Logan’s poverty. In *Logan Lucky*, what Clyde sees as cosmic family curse is something more complex, a harsh reality that requires something more complex and respectfully explored than a singular villain that can be simply overcome.

If institutional faults can be said to be at play in the Logans’ predicament, it is also incompetence at an institutional level that allows them to get away with their crimes. The third act focuses on what a less deft filmmaker would have let distract the entire film, and involves the FBI’s feeble attempts to bring the thieves to justice. In what feels like a parody of heist films and crime procedurals, Hilary Swank’s no-nonsense Special Agent Sarah Grayson’s investigation into the Logans’ heist goes nowhere due to the various North Carolina institutions and individuals that are either unwilling or unable to help her. Insurance fraud at the speedway, a disagreement between race car drivers over sponsorship and merchandise, the prison’s lack of accountability, all of these interact to allow the heist

to go unpunished. Despite Grayson essentially uncovering exactly what has happened, everyone around her is more interested in helping themselves than solving a crime.

As such, there is a sense of cosmic justice in the Logans' victory; they used the same gaps in accountability and bureaucracy that can be seen as the causes of their family curse to not only deftly carry out a victimless crime but pay it forward as well. The Logans, throughout, are kind, steadfast, and support one another, and in the end their victory feels earned not only because of the irony of what allowed it, but also simply because they are characterized as good people willing to take a risk for the people they love.

Conclusion: Constantly sharp in its humor, *Logan Lucky* is hysterical, sincere, and avoids taking low-brow shots at its characters for the sake of a cheap laugh. Well-paced, well-written, and well-performed, and rooted in All-American issues, *Logan Lucky* has a sweetness and simplicity that makes the Logan family entertaining to watch and easy to root for.

Rating: A

Featured Image: Fingerprint Releasing/Bleecker Street

REVIEW

94%

94%

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Christina is formerly an art history student, currently an aspiring film critic, screenwriter, and/or starving artist. Born and raised in Michigan, she is currently based in New York City.

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