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Potholes and plot holes abound in good-humored crime flick 'Logan Lucky'

By same director as 'Ocean's' franchise, a surprise-free appeal to red state interests

The predictable and pleasantly forgettable hillbilly-heist caper "Logan Lucky" is essentially "Ocean's Eleven" repurposed to appeal to red state audiences.

King of the remade Rat Pack franchise, director Steven Soderbergh, also helmed "Ocean's Eleven," "Ocean's Twelve," and "Ocean's Thirteen." He will release "Ocean's Eight" next June featuring a female cast.

No wonder "Logan Lucky" has been dubbed "Ocean's 7-Eleven."

Jimmy Logan (Channing Tatum) is a former high school football hero from a family known for its bad luck. He works construction on a team that is repairing sinkholes under the NASCAR track near Charlotte, N.C. Jimmy is abruptly laid off when someone notices he has a limp, a preexisting condition that creates a potential liability for the company.

Jobless, Jimmy must now negotiate with his ex-wife, Bobbie Jo (Katie Holmes), who wants to move out of state with their daughter Sadie (Farah MacKenzie)

to be near her vile new husband's car dealership. Sadie, a pageant princess competing for the Little Miss Pretty West Virginia title, is her father's heart and, with her googly, wide, ocean-blue eyes, is played by MacKenzie as a pint-sized Goldie Hawn.

First his job, now his daughter, Jimmy seems to be losing everything.

But he has a plan.

The money from NASCAR concessions travels through pneumatic tubes that run through the sinkhole sites at Charlotte Motor Speedway. With the Coca-Cola

600 race coming up, there will be millions in the pipes. All he has to do is intercept it.

Danny Ocean-style, Jimmy sets about assembling a motley crew of criminals, misfits and losers with diverse expertise to help him execute the heist.



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First onboard is his brother Clyde (Adam Driver), an Iraq War vet who lost his lower arm in combat. In Jimmy's shadow since childhood, Clyde tends bar at a dive called the Duck Tape, and his prosthetic arm becomes a gag tertiary character in the movie.

Their sister, Millie (Riley Keogh, daughter of Lisa Marie Presley and granddaughter of Elvis), is a hot-chick tomboy. As a cosmetologist, her ability to style hair is rivaled only by her ability to hot-wire cars.

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At first the Logan siblings have their doubts about the plan. The luck of the Logans must be taken into consideration. But they are persuaded by Jimmy's level of commitment and his efforts at organization. After all, he has a to-do list.

Daniel Craig (whose day job is James Bond) is obviously enjoying himself as Joe Bangs, the twanging autodidact explosives expert.

Incarcerated in a Monroe, WV, correctional facility, the terrifying-yet-earnest Bangs is a genius jail-house chemist who can create bombs by using only salt substitute, bleach pens and gummy bears.

In order for the plan to succeed, Bangs must escape and return to the prison without detection by the prison authorities.

Dwight Yoakum, minus his trademark Stetson, reveals his wispy pate as Burns, the mean-spirited, self-absorbed Monroe warden who knows something is awry but can't put it finger on it.

"Logan Lucky" relies heavily on laugh-track-worthy redneck comic stereotypes of class resentment and gullibility to explain why anyone, family included, would join Jimmy's cockamamie venture. And it demands the audience's affirmative refusal to acknowledge its plot holes.

Neither the story nor the characters deliver any surprises, except that in a movie chock full of red-state references — NASCAR, beauty pageants for tykes, John Denver's "Country Road," LeAnn Rimes, Mr. Yoakum, and Fox News — Soderbergh makes it work without flying the confederate flag.

Good-humored and agreeable, "Logan Lucky" has no highfalutin' aspirations. It's the last summer movie in the waning days before the serious cinematic submissions of the fall.

With its familiar patchwork of derivative references and cultural signifiers, the movie is both laughable and comforting — as if Tyler Perry had directed "The Dukes of Hazzard."