

Crime film 'The Lookout' twists, tramples logic

By Kam Williams

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Chris Pratt (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) was once on top of the world. The son of a tycoon in his hometown of Kansas City, this boy-most-likely was a star on his high school hockey team, drove a cool convertible, and was adored by his devoted girlfriend, Kelly (Laura Vandervoort).

Unfortunately, Chris also suffered from that uniquely teen delusion of invincibility,

which led him to tempt fate one night by speeding down a country road with his headlights turned off.

That impulsive decision to show off behind the wheel changed his life in an instant when his car plowed into a stalled farm combine.

Two of his close friends died in the crash. Kelly survived, but lost a leg and never spoke to him again. And Chris suffered a severe head trauma, which left him with crippling brain damage.

It is now four years since the accident, and he is still in rehabilitation trying to relearn the ability to master simple motor tasks everybody takes for granted. Because he suffers from short-term memory loss, he must write copious notes to himself as reminders of what needs to be done.

With his career prospects severely limited by this mental incapacity, Chris considers himself lucky to be employed as a night janitor at the Noel State Bank & Trust. He shares a modest apartment on the seedy side of the

city with Lewis (Jeff Daniels) a blind optimist with a pipe dream of opening a diner named, "Lew's Your Lunch."

This tragic tableau sets the table for "The Lookout," a crime caper ostensibly-inspired by "Memento" (2000), another whodunit revolving around a hero afflicted with amnesia.

The movie was written and directed by Oscar-nominee Scott Frank (for the script of "Out of Sight"), who might have borrowed heavily from "Memento" but successfully overhauled it into a psychological thriller ca-

pable of standing on its own.

The plot thickens the day Chris is befriended by Gary Spargo (Matthew Goode), a shady character claiming to be an acquaintance of his sister, Alison (Janaya Stephens).

The truth is that the stranger is a member of a ruthless gang out to enlist his assistance to rob the bank where he works. Because of his brain disorder, Chris is gullible and easy pickings for a crafty crook like Gary.

Just as in "Memento," the protagonist proves to be quite confused about his new pal's

motivations, especially since the guy's got girls, including the irresistible and lovely Luvlee (Isla Fisher).

Fortunately, despite his deficiencies, Chris never lost his moral core, a trait which usually enables any underdog to trump pure evil, at least at the movies.

Not nearly as much of a mind-bender as "Memento," yet "The Lookout" is, nonetheless, a praiseworthy homage to that inscrutable brain teaser.

Excellent movie (4 stars). Rated R for sex, expletives and violent content.

Singers recording top hits in Spanish

MIAMI (AP) - Wyclef Jean has sold millions of records as a solo artist and as a founding member of the hip-hop group The Fugees. Still, few in the mainly Latin-crowd seemed to recognize the Grammy-winner when he leaped onto the stage at a recent sold-out concert.

That is, until Colombian superstar Shakira shimmied onto the floor, and the two traded Spanish and English rhymes from her smash hit "Hips Don't Lie." At that point, the crowd roared for both.

A few years ago, the big Latin crossover involved Spanish-speaking performers making it big by singing in English — including sensations like Ricky Martin, Shakira and Marc Anthony. Nowadays, stars like Jean, Beyonce and Jennifer Lopez are kicking it the other way — singing and rapping in Spanish for the hemisphere's Hispanic market.

It's not hard to see why.

Salsa, boleros, cumbia, alt-rock, reggaeton — Latin music offers a little something for everyone. Then there's the state of the declining music industry. As more fans illegally download music and selectively purchase singles instead of entire albums, record labels are desperate for new listeners. The estimated 32 million Spanish speakers in the United States, not to mention another roughly 400 million Spanish-speakers in Spain and Latin America, are markets screaming to be tapped.

"It's hard to ignore when 11 million people watch the Latin Grammys," said Jose Cancela, author of the book, "The Power of Business en Espanol," and a 25-year veteran of Spanish-language radio and television.

"What more and more artists are seeing is that the growth of Spanish-language media, especially in the top 25 markets in the country, is having real impact on airplay and on viewership," he added.

This week, Beyonce is reissuing her multi-platinum, Grammy-winning album "B'Day" with seven tracks in Spanish, including a duet with Shakira. The idea for the Spanish side of the album was born with a duet her group, Destiny's Child, recorded with Spanish pop singer Alejandro Sanz four years ago.

"A lot of my Latin fans said 'Oh, you should do more songs in Spanish,'" Beyonce said during a recent press conference in her hometown of Houston.

Roker

(Continued from Page 11) Deborah Roberts, does most of the cooking at home and tries to make simple, low-fat meals. When the family goes out to eat, they wave off the breadbasket.

Roker's own serious weight problems began when he entered college in upstate New York, where the idea of seconds or thirds at the din-

ner table was revelatory.

He underwent gastric bypass surgery in 2002 when his weight reached 330 pounds.

He dropped to 200 pounds, but is around 230 now. "I'll never go back to 330 pounds, but just like anybody else, I've got to watch what I eat, and I have to exercise," he said.

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