'Looper' is smart, gritty and awesome

Posted on Oct 03, Posted by Patrick Hall Category At the Movies - Patrick Hall

By PATRICK HALL
The Wilson Post

In 2044, an unnamed city in Kansas is ruled by the mob, filled with poor people in tent cities and zipping through this wasteland in fancy sports cars are brash, young assassins called "Loopers," who work for the mob killing people sent to them from the future in the year 2074.

The film "Looper" focuses on the assassin Joe (**Joseph Gordon-Levitt**), who is billed as one of, if not the best at his job. In Joe's world of 2044, time travel doesn't exist, but 30 years in the future it does, so mobsters pay Joe and his fellow Loopers to kill those who cross them and the Loopers live a seemingly wealthy life.

That is until someone starts "closing the loops" by sending the assassins their older-selves to kill, meaning Loopers have a 30-year shelf life. When the mob sends Joe's older self (played by **Bruce Willis**
) for execution, older Joe is ready and waiting. He outsmarts the younger Joe and goes on the run.

While older Joe has a sinister motive for avoiding his death, other than self-preservation, his mission spins an interesting web of how he and younger Joe are able to completely change the future. Older Joe wants to preserve his life with his wife in the future while younger Joe wants to preserve his next 30-years of life.

As he hunts down older Joe, the younger is also hunted by mob boss Abe (**Jeff Daniels**) and his goons for failing to kill his mark.

The setting and world of "Looper" is one of the best I've seen in a long time from movies that focus on the not-so-distant future. There are Ford F-150 pick-up trucks, but with odd hoses running out of the gas tank. People ride futuristic hover-motorcycles, but the mob's hired guns carry revolvers and belts of bullets like the old West.

The world depicted in "Looper" is a fantastic mix of futuristic advances and rusty symbols of the past (which is our present). Futuristic movies too often show a shining, pristine world of wonder, or a complete chaotic dystopian hell. "Looper" finds the perfect middle ground.

Nothing in "Looper" is clean, right down to its protagonists. Young Joe is a cold-blooded killer and old Joe's scheme, while to preserve his happy marriage, involves even more cold-blooded murder.

When young Joe meets single-mother Sara (**Emily Blunt**) and her son Cid (**Pierce Gagnon**) both carry demons with them and frightful secrets.

In a future that really, looks fairly crummy for the majority of people, young Joe is faced with saving himself, saving an innocent life, or saving the future writ large. We're told things are even worse-off for most people in 2074 and there's an ultimate bad guy ruling the mob.

The plot of young Joe chasing old Joe as the mob's hired guns chase both of them never lets up and is always filled with action and tense scenes of exposition and a whole litany of moral ambiguity.

Gordon-Levitt is outstanding and his ability to mimic Willis' own facial tics and mannerisms, along with some prosthetic help, make him about as close as Writer/Director **Rian Johnson** could get to casting a younger Bruce Willis without time travel.

Blunt and especially Gagnon are incredible and the chemistry Blunt and Gordon-Levitt are able to build with their characters is exceptional. Gagnon shows great skill as a child actor and his scenes with Gordon-Levitt really stand out. Willis is soft-spoken but plays the part of a jaded former assassin as well as any man could.

Discussing the plot would do too much to reveal its twists and surprises, but Johnson really hits a homerun in terms of his script. ‘Looper’ does well to avoid the tedious explanations of time travel and merely uses it as a device to look at how one might reconcile with their past or future.

Loopers are admittedly, “not the most forward-thinking people” as Joe puts it, but young Joe stands at a powerful crossroads as his attitude changes over the course of the film.

The film’s primary focus seems to be that everyone’s actions have consequences and sometimes what seem like the most inconsequential events can actually be monumental moments in history.

"Looper" is rated ‘R’ with a runtime of 118 minutes. For show times, visit www.roxy10.com .

Staff Writer Patrick Hall may be contacted at This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it .

Tags: Untagged