



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 20, 2011

The Lincoln Lawyer: A Decent Crime Thriller

A defense lawyer who engages in questionable practices, Mick Haller (Matthew McConaughey) alleges to have opted for defending suspects in criminal cases rather than prosecuting them because he views prosecutors to have forgotten the meaning of the “justice system.”

Ironically, Haller seems to have forgotten the meaning of the phrase as well. But that is all to change when Haller is hired to work on a case for a high-profile client in Beverly Hills.

Haller’s newest client, Louis Roulet (Ryan Phillippe), asserts that he is not guilty of the crime for which he is being charged: sexual and physical assault against a prostitute. Haller, recognizing that he stands to profit greatly from the client, accepts the case and believes he may have found one of the few innocent clients he has had to defend.

It is not long, however, before Haller begins to make connections between the current case and one from his past, one that in fact haunts him.

Before he knows it, Haller finds himself in an extremely tangled web and confronted with a clever, but evil, young man with the money and power to succeed in his deceit.

What unfolds is an exciting and captivating plot, with some unexpected twists. And the resolution is one that is worth paying the \$10 to see.

The Lincoln Lawyer is fascinating in that it highlights the inner-workings of the criminal justice system. At times, both prosecutors and defense attorneys must resort to shadiness in order to progress in the all-too bureaucratic world of the system, and the film evaluates those moments. It asks how far one may go to ensure that “justice” is served, even when that term is often subjective.

Additionally, Matthew McConaughey’s performance is commanding as moviegoers watch a man lapse from confident and mildly corrupt to one who reassesses his life’s choices and priorities. Is the transition a complete one? Not exactly, but a definite improvement.

Likewise, Ryan Phillippe is a convincing villain, one who at times can make your stomach turn merely by his presence on screen. His ability to swing from unfortunate victim of circumstance to a ruthless and cunning antagonist is certainly engaging, to both the audience and to Roulet’s lawyer, Mick, who often finds himself in the compromising position of deciphering between Roulet’s two personalities. Besides adding another dimension to Roulet’s character, the smooth transition between the two roles certainly is evidential of Phillippe’s acting skills.

Additionally, performances from supporting actors and actresses like Marisa Tomei, William Macy, Josh





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Lucas, and Michael Pena are all worthy of recognition.

Though the film boasts an enthralling plot and engaging performances, there are some flaws worth mentioning.

First, the characterization of Mick Haller as a criminal defense attorney at the start of the film is a bit trite, as he embodies the stereotypical corrupt defense attorney who cares more about profit than assisting a guilty man to freedom.

Second, the inclusion of Marisa Tomei's character, Maggie McPherson — a former love interest of Mick's with whom he shares a child — seems unnecessary. The storyline seems to go nowhere except to provide a platform for a useless, albeit mild, sex scene.

At times, the characters and scenes in the film appear to be taken out of context, likely because the film is adapted from the best-selling novel, *The Lincoln Lawyer*, written by Michael Connelly. Perhaps the characters and subplots are given more attention in the novel and are lost in the movie translation.

Overall, *The Lincoln Lawyer* provides McConaughey the opportunity to prove that he is more than just a Hollywood pretty boy, and the film is exciting and entertaining enough to justify at least a matinee movie price.



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