

Green Zone (2010)

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'Bourne series' Director Paul Greengrass and actor Matt Damon team up again this time in War film/ political thriller 'Green Zone.' Here Damon is U.S. Army officer Miller whose discovery of covert and faulty intelligence during the 2003 invasion of Baghdad questions his motives in his quest to find Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Along the way he encounters local Freddy (played with excellent and heartfelt earnestness by Khalid Abdalla), Pentagon Official and spin-doctor Clark Poundstone (played with flesh crawling smugness and superiority by Greg Kinnear), journalist Lawrie Dayne (Amy Ryan) and intelligence officer Martin Brown (Brendan Gleeson in another strong supporting role).

The film plays out like a detective thriller, as Miller must go through several obstacles, putting his life in constant danger as he comes closer to the truth. I must point out that this is no Bourne, for all of its thrills and high octane, thumping, explosive action this is set in the real World. Miller is no programmed superman, rather (and more intriguingly) he is an everyman soldier tasked with a tough mission and learning the unpalatable truth: the invasion of Iraq has been based on a lie. With the certainties crumbling around him (as well as the buildings) Miller goes on a personal journey, turning rogue to uncover the truth and expose the lies.

For all of its politics 'Green Zone' does not set out to be a polemic against the Iraq invasion. Instead it is a cleverly crafted action thriller based on an unpopular and some would say unnecessary war. It explores the notion that the increasingly contradictory and implausible nature of the reasons given for launching a war against an already ruined country was flimsy at best and downright false at worst.

All politicians and every young man or woman who wants to consider a career in the military should see this film. In these more sophisticated and enlightened times with the Internet and a more questioning audience 'Green Zone' is perfectly placed to show the 'propaganda' that was used to justify an invasion and to put lives at risk whilst at the same time destroying the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians (a fact often overlooked).

The film works well on two levels: As a superior action thriller and as education. Greengrass adeptly shows the two very different Worlds and ideologies meeting in the Middle East. His camera shows the contrast between the wealthy Westerners sunning themselves poolside, guzzling cool beer and watching events unfold on CNN while the Iraqi civilians are struggling to survive amongst the rubble and an infrastructure that is crumbling all around them.

The confusion, disorder and deceit are excellently conveyed thanks to a strong performance by Greg Kinnear as Pentagon man, Poundstone. It is made clear that there was a set agenda from the off and nothing like 'facts' were going to get in the way of an invasion no matter the status of its legality.

The violence (and being a War film, there is a lot of it) is swift and brutal. The film does suffer at times with the over reliance of the use of shaky hand held cameras to make the action seem somehow more 'authentic' and 'real.' I must say that I am starting to find this a little annoying now; audiences are perfectly able to empathise with the protagonists without feeling motion sickness as well. That minor quibble aside this is an excellent film covering a tough subject.

Many films on the second Gulf War have already been released and I am sure there are more to come, this one however should be remembered as the first to accurately and fearlessly explore the motives and intelligence that led to the invasion.

Like Sean Connery and Terence Young with the Bond films and Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro (and latterly Leonardo DiCaprio), we have in Paul Greengrass and Matt Damon a profitable and fruitful screen partnership. I can't wait

for their next collaboration.