

Green Zone

Study Notes



Directed by: Paul Greengrass

Certificate: 15

Running time: 115 mins

Release date: 12 March 2010

Synopsis

A blend of fact and fiction, action and intrigue, *Green Zone* reunites director Paul Greengrass with Matt Damon after their critically and commercially successful teaming in *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum*. Captain Roy Miller (Damon) is a soldier in Iraq, 2003. He leads his team in the search for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). But when the sites that are supposed to contain WMDs are found empty, Miller begins to question the US government and the erroneous information it has given him. Facing opposition from both government officials and soldiers on the ground, Miller races to find the truth.

Before Viewing: Marketing – The Same But Different

The promotional material and reviews for *Green Zone* drew heavily on the popularity of the Bourne films, two of which were directed by Greengrass and all of which starred Matt Damon. Indeed, the film was referred to as ‘Bourne in Baghdad’ and ‘Bourne goes Epic’ in various articles. For better or worse, Bourne cast an expectant shadow over this film.

- Search online for posters for *The Bourne Ultimatum* and *Green Zone*. How are the images used similar or different to each other? Discuss denotations and connotations, anchorage and camera angles.
- At first glance, could they be images from the same film?
- How does the *Green Zone* poster attract both Bourne fans and new audiences?
- What type of person would *Green Zone* appeal to based on the poster? Consider age, gender and political ideology. Is such a consumer similar to a Bourne fan?

After Viewing: Exploring Fact Through Action & Adventure

The book that inspired *Green Zone* (Imperial Life in The Emerald City: Inside Iraq’s Green Zone by Rajiv Chandrasekaran) is an in-depth, journalistic report of the handling of the Iraq invasion that doesn’t necessarily lend itself to an action-adventure film adaptation. Consequently, the film balances being too action-packed for serious-minded viewers, and too ‘talky’ for genre fans.

- To what extent do you feel *Green Zone* balances addressing the issues surrounding Iraq and WMDs with the expectations of adventure narrative and action spectacle?
- What benefits are there for audiences and producers in taking a serious, topical issue and placing it in an action-adventure context?

Paul Greengrass

British director Greengrass began his career documenting and writing about warfare before directing 2002's *Bloody Sunday*. The realistic and intensive verisimilitude of that film got him the job directing *The Bourne Supremacy*. Greengrass quickly became known for his immersive handheld camera and frenetic editing style. He is also known for bringing difficult subjects to a mainstream audience.

- There are some directors and actors who will make a huge Hollywood blockbuster in order to earn the freedom and money to make smaller, more challenging films. To what extent does Greengrass follow this filmmaking pattern? Do you think there is more to it than this?
- Look at the filmographies of John Cusack, Matt Damon, George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh. Do they follow this trend? Do you know of any others?
- Between the two Bourne movies, Greengrass directed *United 93*, the story of the plane hijacked and then grounded on 9/11. It was filmed in a documentary style and featured no named actors. When and how is Greengrass' name used to advocate *United 93*, *Green Zone* and the Bourne films? If you have seen *United 93*, how would you categorise it generically and in what ways was it similar or different to *Green Zone*?

Suggested Activity

- Pick a major topical debate or event, or a story from this week's newspapers. Make a trailer, short film or action sequence based on this story, working in the style of Paul Greengrass. What details of the story might you omit? If the story is complex, how might you condense or simplify it for a mainstream audience? How might you create character?
- Many say that watching a Greengrass film in the cinema gives you the sensation of feeling seasick. Film a sequence that parodies or addresses this opinion.

Written by: Gareth C Evans