

## Damon dowses desert for WMDs in predictable Iraq War drama

Written by Kam Williams

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President Bush's pretext for declaring War on Iraq in 2003 was that Saddam Hussein was supposedly in possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) which posed an imminent threat to the United States. Ultimately, however, neither the military nor the CIA was able to find any evidence of biological, chemical or nuclear stockpiles. Furthermore, the official report issued by the Iraq Survey Group concluded that none probably even existed at the time of the invasion.

So, who, besides perhaps Vice President Cheney, might find a movie recounting a unit's frantic search for WMDs compelling, given that everybody already knows that it was a mere exercise in futility? That rather obvious fact didn't discourage Paul Greengrass from shooting *Green Zone*, a patently-predictable affair posing as a political potboiler presuming to take its audience on a roller coaster ride.

Since there's no mystery about how the film is going to end, the director is desperate for ways to generate any sort of tension. So, he repeatedly resorts to the same infuriating cinematic device involving the use of a handheld camera as a means of manufacturing a false sense of urgency. Unfortunately, all he really manages to achieve is to make the viewer feel dizzy.

You may recall that Greengrass is the same genius behind *United 93*, the equally-anticlimactic

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(if critically-acclaimed for its authenticity) recreation of the doomed flight of the plane hijacked on 9/11 which crashed in a Pennsylvania meadow when the passengers stormed the cabin. Because that downer had nothing to offer in the way of surprises, it wasn't exactly an edge of your seat thriller either.

*Green Zone* is based on the best seller "Imperial Life in the Emerald City" which was written by Rajiv Chandrasekaran who was stationed in Baghdad during the war as the Washington Post's bureau chief. The film stars Matt Damon as Roy Miller, an Army Warrant Officer assigned to lead a team of soldiers dowsing the desert in quest of the fabled WMDs.

Like a modern Captain Ahab, Miller gradually morphs into a madman so maniacally fixated on the mission he's even willing to go rogue after it is readily apparent that the tips he's been getting from a Pentagon Intelligence Officer (Greg Kinnear) by way of a gullible Wall Street Journal reporter (Amy Ryan) are bogus.

The only thing striking about *Green Zone* is how tame a backdrop it unfolds against. For Greengrass paints postwar Iraq as a relatively-calm environ virtually absent of improvised explosive devices, a resistance movement or suicide bombers, a stark contrast to the ubiquitous dangers lurking around every corner in *The Hurt Locker*, this year's Academy Award-winning Best Picture.

*Green Zone*, a fairy tale strictly for anyone still in denial or naïve enough to believe in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy or even Saddam's mythical Weapons of Mass Destruction. It's fun to pretend!

### **Fair (1 star)**

Rated R for violence and profanity

In English and Iraqi with subtitles.

Running time: 115 Minutes

Distributor: Universal Pictures

To see a trailer for *Green Zone*, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSX7LaFtwIU>