

'Jason Bourne' delivers great action, but feels familiar

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: <<<< out of 4 stars

Running Time: 123 min.

It's been nine years since we last saw Matt Damon as author Robert Ludlum's uniquely skilled ex-CIA agent. Re-teaming with director Paul Greengrass (*The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*),

Jason Bourne

is the latest title in the lengthy series. Like many of the other chapters, this is a decent and well-produced action flick with a couple standout chases. The downside to this endeavor is that it all feels, for lack of a better term, overly familiar.

In the time since we last saw him, Bourne has gone off the grid, apparently making ends meet as an underground bare-knuckle boxer. His retreat doesn't last long, as a face from his past finds him. Nicky Parsons (Julia Stiles) tells him she plans on releasing secret CIA files that will expose all of the government's nefarious activities, both in the past and plans for the future. Additionally, she has discovered something previously unknown about Bourne's past. The two are soon on the run from CIA Director Dewey (Tommy Lee Jones), recent bureau recruit Lee (Alicia Vikander) and icy black ops agent Asset (Vincent Cassel).

A decade ago, director Greengrass was noted for his unique use of the shaky camera technique. It's a style in which the lens constantly moves around, zooming in and out randomly in an attempt to create a lively, almost documentary-like mood. Recent genre cinema has moved away from the approach, but the director is back to the same tricks here; he rattles the camera during hand-to-hand combat scenes, chases on wheels, and even moves it during routine conversations about pursuit strategy. Despite the constant shiftiness, the chaos is always clear and easy to follow. It's just funny that only a decade later, shooting action in this manner almost feels old-fashioned.

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It’s still fun to watch, and there are a couple of standout scenes. One is in Greece, where Bourne rides a motorcycle with agents and automobiles following through crowds of rioters and down narrow alleys and streets. The fast camera moves and rapid editing serve this bit well, making events look even more sped up and dangerous for both the characters and passersby. A climactic, crash-ridden chase in Las Vegas on the strip is also impressively captured. Yet while they’re expertly choreographed, we’ve seen the same events in previous installments; it’s all very enjoyable, but it doesn’t have quite as strong an impact this time around.

And because the entire movie is an extended chase, the characters don’t have a whole lot to say to one another. Bourne isn’t allowed as much interplay with his friends and foes as he should. Frankly, the dialogue could do with more than permanent grimaces and banter like, “We’ve lost him,” or, “Acquire the target, now!” At least there are moments in the exposition that manage to bring up some interesting themes, making pointed comments about the way modern technology can be used nefariously as tools of surveillance.

In actuality, I’m being a little kind with my rating. I think it may be because of the strong technical skills on display. As a hard-hitting action picture, *Jason Bourne* gets the job done. Yet somehow, the fact that the film’s close suggests the possibility of yet another chapter leads to concern. Even this time out, one can’t escape the nagging sensation that we’re simply getting another variation on the very same elements we’ve seen before. If Bourne returns again, his next story needs a different, more provocative angle.

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