

# Matt Damon is Fighting Mad in Tense ‘Jason Bourne’

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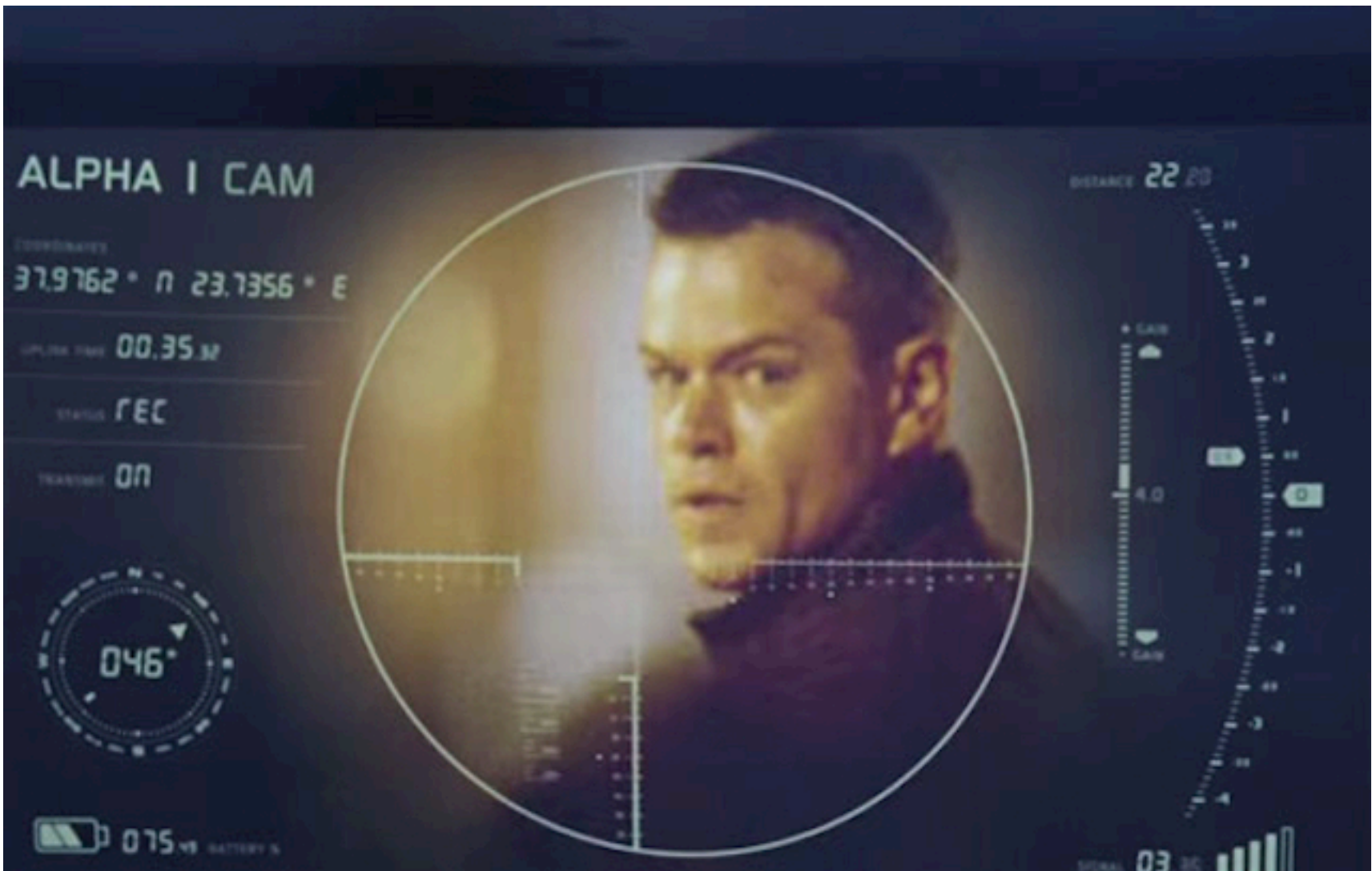
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CHICAGO – To come back to a character that everyone thought he had left behind, Matt Damon needed the right creative team. He got it again in co-writer (with Christopher Rouse) and director Paul Greengrass, and together they fashioned a paranoid spy tale in the rat-a-tat “Jason Bourne.”

The strength of the story is in its modern context. The underground Bourne re-emerges in riot torn Greece (during its economic crisis), the CIA is in cahoots with a social media billionaire, plus the hackers and the rogue agents are more heroic than our institutions of “law and order.” The multi-layering of a desperate world blends with Matt Damon’s desperate character, a bitter killing machine trying to remember anything about a past that was taken away from him.

Ex-special agent Jason Bourne is in the “freezer,” as they say at the CIA, and he spends his days bare knuckle brawling on the Greek/Albanian border. Meanwhile, at Langley headquarters, the Director of Technology Heather Lee (Alicia Vikander) detects a hacker (Julia Stiles) in Iceland, who has stolen crucial files having to do with the top secret programs that turned Bourne into an agency assassin.



Matt Damon is Targeted as the Title Character in ‘Jason Bourne’  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

The hacker needs to get the info to Bourne, and meets him in Athens, Greece, in the midst of a riot during the economic crisis. The CIA, embodied by director Dewey (Tommy Lee Jones) has sent an “asset” (Vincent Cassel) to kill Bourne, and the pot is sweetened for the killer because Bourne once set him up for capture. When this spy comes in from the cold, the heat is on.

Adding the geopolitics was the spice in this multi-national stew, which ends up in Las Vegas (naturally). The riots in Greece were intense, the people there were serious about the situation, and Bourne uses the chaos to his advantage. In fact, the film is all about the chaos of our times, including a social media billionaire (Riz Ahmed) who owes the CIA spooks a big favor. That never ends well.

Admittedly, I haven’t seen the previous films, or the recent reboot. But the story was that Matt Damon would not do another Bourne picture unless director Paul Greenglass was involved. And as the writer/director did in his previous films “Captain Phillips” and “United 93,” there was a distinct whiff of a superpower foul odor in the circumstances of wanting Bourne eliminated.

The flavor of the cast members pursuing Bourne – portrayed by veteran Tommy Lee Jones, new sensation Alicia Vikander and relentless Vincent Cassel – used the force of their interpretations to create an essential atmosphere of dread. Vikander was most interesting, very cool and very connected to the situation with the CIA and the social media billionaire. She provided a unique dynamic to an often throwaway role.



Director Dewey (Tommy Lee Jones) and Heather Lee (Alicia Vikander) in ‘Jason Bourne’”

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Matt Damon does his best to resurrect his best known franchise character, and wants a human outcome for Bourne’s killing psyche. The film gets a bit too much into the action/chase department, and the bare knuckle boxing at the border is strange – those instances could have been cut down or excised. The best part of the film was establishing that Bourne just wants some truth, but the agency cannot give back what it has taken away.

On the paranoia scale, it seems like the Damon/Greenglass team was aiming for the 1970s thriller “The Parallax View” and ended up with the soapier “Enemy of the State.” Either way, this ice cold spy was properly thawed out.

*“Jason Bourne” opens nationwide on July 29th. Featuring Matt Damon, Tommy Lee Jones, Alicia Vikander, Vincent Cassel, Julia Stiles and Bill Camp. Written by Paul Greenglass and Christopher Rouse. Directed by Paul Greenglass. Rated “R”*



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