

THE WORLD OF
GOLDENEYE



A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY
ON THE SEVENTEENTH
JAMES BOND FILM
AND ITS LEGACY

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SPECIAL PREVIEW

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GOLDENEYE AND JAMES BOND

Back in the early 1990s, novelist John Gardner continued the literary version of James Bond and Domark released a number of video games starring the British spy. However, his absence from the big screen was sorely felt by the Bond fans between 1989 and 1995. The poor box office numbers of *Licence To Kill* and legal conflicts concerning Danjaq (the holding protecting the Bond copyright) with the businessmen taking over MGM/UA complicated the production of the seventeenth James Bond film¹. Magazines named Timothy Dalton's last 007 outing as "James Bond's Final Mission"², and people assumed Ian Fleming's secret agent wouldn't be apt or get to survive this new and revolutionary decade. Luckily, the clouds cleared around 1992 and exactly on June 8, 1994, it was confirmed that James Bond would return in *GoldenEye*, starring Pierce Brosnan and set for a 1995 release. The casting of Brosnan, who missed the Bond opportunity in 1986 due to contractual obligations with *Remington Steele*, pleased many cinemagoers and the expectancy was high. But even as the machine was set in motion, a question had to be answered: Are people still interested in James Bond?

GoldenEye answered this question affirmatively and it did only demonstrate that 007 was still relevant, but the character became the goose that laid the golden eggs for United Artists, the original 007 movie studio now under MGM's holdings. "MGM/UA realized Bond was its most bankable asset so they pushed for more films as quickly as possible,"³ pointed out Jeff Kleeman, the company's vice-president during most of

the 1990s, on an interview with *The Secret Agent Lair*. He also noted that *GoldenEye*'s success was fundamental to bring the following Brosnan-Bond films *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *The World Is Not Enough* in 1997 and 1999, respectively, and later *Die Another Day* in 2002⁴.

Now, what is *GoldenEye* to the James Bond franchise, overall? Does it share elements tying it to the previous outings or is it a completely reinvented James Bond, exclusively aimed for a new generation? Is the film a classic? Let's take a look at the film, backwards...

GoldenEye was the James Bond film that saved the franchise and guaranteed its continuity in the 1990s and the 21st century, for sure. Reflecting on the film in *The Digital Bits*, Ian Fleming Foundation's founding member John Cork pointed out that "*GoldenEye* proved all the doubters wrong. Bond's continued relevance, it turned out, had little to do with Cold War politics or studio equity. It had everything to do with quality. Everyone involved in making *GoldenEye* was hungry, and it shows (...) Had *GoldenEye* failed, that would have been it for 007. The stakes with the film were incredibly high."⁵ Analysed to a bigger extent, the seventeenth Bond adventure meant an improvement over the somewhat monotonous quality of the five earlier Bond movies, directed by John Glen, who has previously been the editor and second unit director in films like *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Commanded by New Zealand-born director Martin Campbell, *GoldenEye* brought fresh air to a franchise that was becoming a bit repetitive and unglamorous.

Between 1981 and 1989, Glen did an amazing job in what it comes to tone down the slapstick humour and place Bond in down-to-earth

stories, but the acclaimed visual quality that characterized the Bond films for decades has been notoriously depreciated, feeling like made-for-TV action movies at times. The cinematography by Alan Hume and Alec Mills was often mild in comparison to the job carried away by Phil Méheux, whose visual impact was achieved through breath-taking establishing shots and detailed close-ups for many of the character reactions. The team behind *GoldenEye* brought back that visual, cinematic quality that characterized James Bond in the 1960s, which was greatly missed in the 1980s. “I wanted to get back more to the (Sean) Connery-type stories. I wanted to make it grittier, slightly more based on reality than they have been in the past”⁶, noted Campbell, quoted in *The James Bond Archives*.

However, *GoldenEye* does owe something to the John Glen films: the big development of action sequences. The aerial stunts featured in *Octopussy* and *The Living Daylights*, or the thrilling vehicle chase involving tankers through the Mexican desert in *Licence To Kill* did set a precedent for some action moments in the 1995 film, like the opening sequence where Bond catches a plane mid-air or the epic tank chase through the streets of St. Petersburg. Martin Campbell (and his second unit director, Ian Sharp) combined the exhilarating vehicle chases from the John Glen movies with the dynamic approach of the Terence Young ones. The glamour and colourful visuals of the film are also very reminiscent to Guy Hamilton, who, along with other three films, directed the most popular James Bond movie, *Goldfinger*. This effective combination turned out into a very exciting film for adrenaline lovers.

GoldenEye also tried to establish Pierce Brosnan as a spiritual heir to Sean Connery, widely recognised by many as the quintessential James

Bond. This way, Brosnan is the first actor since Connery to drive the iconic silver Aston Martin DB5 –number plate BMT 214A opposed to BMT 216A as the *Goldfinger* machine– last seen thirty years earlier in the introductory sequence of *Thunderball*. Also, just like Connery in *Dr No*, Brosnan first says his “Bond, James Bond” introduction to a woman in a casino. The replicated casino scene in *GoldenEye* even has the daughter of the late Eunice Gayson, who played Sylvia Trench in the aforementioned scene from *Dr No*, making a small cameo role as one of the guests. But despite these connections to Connery, Pierce Brosnan set a unique standard for the character which was quite different from the portrayal of the original 007: a vulnerable Bond.

Director Martin Campbell told *Cinefantastique* that “Pierce has brought his own contemporary and personal sides to the character. There’s a depth in the *GoldenEye* Bond that I always thought was missing from other entries in the series. Pierce has lifted Bond above the superficial.”⁷ In retrospect, it is evident that what Campbell said goes beyond doing publicity for his movie and he truly has a point when talking about the depth of Bond’s persona in *GoldenEye*.

Timothy Dalton had some dramatic reactions in *Licence To Kill*, particularly as he sees the maimed body of his friend Felix Leiter, severely injured by a shark attack. Still, Brosnan’s portrayal was the first that allowed audiences to get a little into James Bond’s mind as he wonders about the nature of his job and the fact that he will confront someone who was a close friend, in a scene which very akin to the first chapter of Ian Fleming’s 1959 novel *Goldfinger*, where he reflects on the man he just killed, a Mexican hitman⁸. Moments later, the villain will evaluate Bond’s attitudes: “I might as well ask you if all the vodka martinis ever silence the

screams of all the men you've killed. Or if you find forgiveness in the arms of all those willing women for all the dead ones you failed to protect," a direct allusion to Tracy Di Vicenzo, Bond's ill-fated wife in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Situations like this would be regular in the Daniel Craig's James Bond adventures beginning in 2006 with *Casino Royale*.

With his James Bond portrayal, the Irish actor has achieved to reunite the best qualities of each of his predecessors: Connery's irony and strength, some of Moore's sense of humour and the human side of Lazenby and Dalton, and yet he offered the character a uniquely human side, that doesn't prevent him to also act cool or deadly in different situations. Talking to the world press right after being appointed as the new James Bond, Pierce Brosnan emphasised he wanted to "see what is beneath the surface of this man, what drives him on, what makes him a killer"⁹. This would be a regular claim by Brosnan throughout his era, and although most of the films deviated into action movies with more entertainment than drama, none of them was without a few minutes where Bond was given an introspective approach: notably Paris Carver's death in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the betrayal of Elektra King in *The World Is Not Enough* and the MI6 abandonment he suffers after his 14 month captivity in a North Korean prison in *Die Another Day*. In the end, Brosnan showed that is great to be Bond, but at the same time that being him is not all fun and games as it was in the days of Connery or Moore.

Despite the many new things a James Bond for the '90s would have to offer in order to be attractive to new audiences, *GoldenEye* is very respectful to the original blueprint of most Bond films. It begins with the iconic gun barrel sequence (given a digital CGI makeup), opens up with

an explosive introductory action scene, then we are led to the main titles filled with beautiful women posing over the credits and iconography related to the main plot, and there are more or less of the classic 007 elements elements: beautiful Bond girls (the good girl, the bad girl and the occasional “conquest”), a villain with a plan that could put the world or England in danger, and of course the happy ending between Bond and the leading girl, generally with a hint of humour. At the same time, there are the usual scenes that the audience had grown accustomed to: Bond flirting with Moneypenny, being debriefed by M and getting his gadgets from Q.

The most significant changes in these scenes come from the interactions between Bond with Moneypenny and M, which has been now made a woman to reflect Stella Rimmington’s appointment as the head of MI5 in 1992. These roles were played by Samantha Bond (her surname is purely a coincidence) and noted British actress Judi Dench, and the dynamics between 007 and these well-known characters of the series have been modified: Moneypenny isn’t desperate for Bond and she is a bit cold at his advances, while the new M is also very strict with him but in a more feminist and bureaucratic way in contrast to Bernard Lee’s portrayal as a Royal Navy Admiral. What hasn’t changed at all and looks incredibly familiar to the previous Bond films is the famous Q scene, starting with the actor who portrays the MI6 gadget master, Desmond Llewelyn. Q is as impatient and as grouchy with 007 as he has always been, asking him to “return this equipment in pristine order” and to “grow up!” The structure of the film helps to blend in both the new elements with the classic elements in a seamless way, accomplishing the task to please Bond fans of different ages. So, in that sense, *GoldenEye* is indeed a “classic”, or at the very least, a “classic James Bond film”.

The movie also reworks some of the best moments in the series, particularly in some action scenes that bring back old memories to previous entries: the hand-to-hand combat between 007 and Trevelyan has the same intensity and brutality as that confrontation in the Orient Express between Bond and Red Grant in *From Russia With Love*, or the close quarters combat between Bond and Peter Franks inside an elevator in *Diamonds Are Forever*. Equally, the sauna confrontation between Bond and Xenia is a steamier version of Bond “practising judo” with Pussy Galore in a haystack in *Goldfinger* and the domino-like fall of cyclists in Monaco after the Aston Martin and Ferrari pass them by at an outrageous speed is similar to a scene from *For Your Eyes Only*, done with skiers in Cortina d’Ampezzo. With Trevelyan’s hideout underneath an inconspicuous looking river among the jungle, production designer Peter Lamont tributes Ken Adam’s *You Only Live Twice* set of Ernst Stavro Blofeld’s lair hidden inside an inactive volcano in Japan. So, indeed, all of the “classic” trademark Bond situations can be seen in *GoldenEye* only that readapted for this new decade.

The John Gardner novels also appeared to inspire *GoldenEye* a little, since there are moments in the film that seem (perhaps by chance) a bit reminiscent to the pages of some of Gardner’s original stories: the way Bond meets Xenia Onatopp in Monte Carlo is similar to his encounter with Percy Proud in the 1984 book *Role of Honour*, not to mention the fact that this woman is a computer expert much like Natalya Simonova was in *GoldenEye*¹⁰. At the same time, in 1982’s *For Special Services*, SPECTRE plots to infiltrate a space weapons facility on the Cheyenne Mountain by having a senior officer using his authority to perform an unscheduled test¹¹. This might have inspired Ourumov’s attack on Severnaya or

Michael France's original script where the basis for what would eventually become this scene was set right after the pre-credits sequence. The 1991 novel *The Man From Barbarossa* also shares some links with *GoldenEye*: the villain, Yevgeny Yuskovich, sees himself as the next "Iron Man" of Russia and schemes the stage of a fake trial against a war criminal – presumed to be part of the Babi Yar massacre from 1941– to distract the attention from his real plot, which is arming the Iraqis to sabotage perestroika¹². In the 1995 film, is it Ourumov who sees himself as "the next Iron Man of Russia" and the Janus Syndicate is known for having restocked the Iraqis after the Gulf War, or so Bond claims.

A key point of *GoldenEye* is the film's many action scenes, which are among the best of the series and perhaps one step ahead of the other films, even those that one has to sometimes dare to question: the escape from captivity in the Military Archives building in St. Petersburg, with Bond shooting his way out (a sequence masterfully edited by Terry Rawlings) is something that is perhaps equalled to the Piz Gloria assault in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, and yet difficult to top. Not to mention the tank chase over St. Petersburg, with Bond destroying half the city with a T55 Russian tank in pursuit of General Ourumov.

Characteristics like this place *GoldenEye* as one of the best James Bond films ever made: the combination between the directorial style of Terence Young, Guy Hamilton and John Glen which resulted on a quality rarely seen again in the franchise until perhaps *Casino Royale*, which was also directed by Martin Campbell to introduce Daniel Craig as James Bond. And even when the Craig era tried to offer a more brutal and less escapist Bond than the one we saw in *GoldenEye*, films like *Skyfall* and *SPECTRE* seemed to acknowledge some bits of the movie: the first one

with a renegade MI6 agent plotting against England, the latter with a villain linked to Bond's past that was presumed dead before revealing himself as the mastermind behind it all. The two Sam Mendes films also mention an exploding pen (a gadget that saved 007's life in *GoldenEye*) and feature an aerial stunt with a helicopter which was very much similar to the one seen at the pre-credits of *GoldenEye* as Bond escapes from Soviet troops in Arkangel by catching a Pilatus aeroplane in mid-air.

Crucial for the success of *GoldenEye* was also its marketing campaign, which urged to publicise that James Bond was back with all the traditional elements that have made the franchise successful. After the somewhat lacklustre poster campaign for *Licence To Kill*, with Timothy Dalton in an unglamorous black shirt in a *Die Hard* vibe, *GoldenEye* brought back the poster artwork glory for James Bond by taking advantage of the latest cutting-edge digital photomontage techniques.

Using photographs from a session taken by John Stoddart and stills credited to Terry O'Neill and Keith Hamshire, art directors Randi Braun and Earl Klaski created an innovative campaign which combined the striking contrast between black, red, gold and yellow for both the American and international theatrical posters, and the new Bond prominently flanked by his female companions as a collage of the best moments of the film surround them. These posters were preceded by other two "Advance" versions that emphasised that James Bond was back: a zoom-in of the secret agent's eye aiming his Walther PPK handgun for the United States and a more conventional image of Pierce Brosnan in tuxedo making a classical pose under the film's tagline: "You know the name. You know the number".

No less impressive was the film's teaser trailer: "It's a new world, with new threats and new enemies. But you can still depend on one man", it read as the new Bond walked to the camera and, breaking the fourth wall, asked to the audiences: "You were expecting someone else?" Then, the highlight of the film's action sequences flashed onscreen over a new rendition of the "James Bond Theme" performed by Starr Parodi and Jeff Fair, which was highly acclaimed by the fans all over the world: "It's great that so many of the Bond fans connected with the piece," reflected the married duo of musicians on a 2013 interview with *The GoldenEye Dossier*. "It was a tremendous honour to work on and the fans were really the ones that got the *GoldenEye* Trailer Bond Theme music on the *Best of Bond* CD by sending so many requests to MGM for the music."¹³ On an article in *Forbes*, critic Scott Mendelson observed that the teaser trailer for *GoldenEye* "reinvented the modern action movie trailer and slowly-but-surely changed how trailers for action movies were constructed" and that "it was arguably the first trailer to move so quickly that you could barely digest the images, (...) perhaps the most action-packed and relentlessly breathless action movie trailer you had ever seen."¹⁴

The trailers of *GoldenEye* have also revealed that in the film Bond will be facing "the man who knows him better: 006". This may look surprising in an era where moviegoers and fans are cautious of reading spoilers or knowing important (sometimes, hardly important) parts of the plot, although even the track listing of many Bond soundtracks have revealed the fate of some of the characters in the past. Reflecting on the film's promotion, Jeff Kleeman explained: "We felt the idea of 006 vs. 007 was a selling point. It was a way to bring people back to Bond and

introduce new audiences to Bond. It's a tiny spoiler that we felt didn't ruin the experience of watching the movie."¹⁵

Another important part of the marketing campaign included deals with well-known companies to tie-in James Bond to their products. The most notable was Omega, who initiated a long relationship as 007's wristwatch provider with *GoldenEye* and is still associated with the character. Also, for the first time, Bond sat behind the wheel of a blue BMW Z3 Roadster, which hadn't been officially launched at the time of filming. The deal was done after a visit from the producers to BMW's design centre in 1994 in Munich and the cooperation was announced in January 1995, right as the film started production. The appearance of the car was an extremely well-kept secret and only a brown shipping container stood up for the vehicle, between Bond's classic Aston Martin DB5 and Xenia's Ferrari 355. BMW provided two handmade pre-production models for the shooting of the film in Puerto Rico (doubling for Cuba) and they were heavily guarded to avoid anyone taking pictures before the official announcement, although somehow some candid shots leaked to the press¹⁶. Finally, the car was formally presented by Desmond Llewelyn on November 13, 1995, in New York, just before the film's premiere later that day¹⁷. Brands like Perrier, Kodak, IBM and Smirnoff also jumped into the "Bond-wagon", even Ferrari who accepted the condition to lose a race with the Aston Martin DB5 (something impossible to happen) just to be featured in a James Bond film¹⁸.

Taking in more than \$352 million dollars worldwide, *GoldenEye* was the most successful Bond film since 1979's *Moonraker* and brought a new fan base to the world: those were the millions of kids and teens who

were asking their parents “who that James Bond guy was”, as they discovered that four actors have played the role before Pierce Brosnan through 16 films since 1962 and that the phenomenon included books, comics and video games and lots of merchandising to collect.

In other words, *GoldenEye* did not only save James Bond, but it was also the holy water that christened and initiated many people into the Bond mania.

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