

Bond Movies: A Retrospective

Ho Lin

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Comprehensive in its coverage of James Bond, the movie character, this retrospective stands to impress neophytes and die hard fans alike.

While this year's *No Time to Die* marked the end of Daniel Craig's run as British agent 007 and closed another chapter of the James Bond franchise, history suggests that another successful reboot is on its way. James Bond fan Ho Lin chronicles that history in *Bond Movies*, giving his own thoughts on each entry in the franchise and tying them all together. It's a detailed retrospective of the movies, from 1962's *Dr. No* through to Bond's latest adventure.

As Lin notes, both James Bond the character and the template for his adventures have been reinvented many times since their Cold War origins. From Sean Connery's iconic original to David Niven's heightened take in the madcap first *Casino Royale* to Craig's imposing presence in the grittier recent version, the ingredients keep things fresh, even as the general formula remains in place. "Bond movies also epitomize franchise filmmaking, for good and ill, but mostly for good," Lin writes. "They offer simple pleasures well told."

The book tracks those tellings with a full chapter devoted to each film, each of which combines Lin's film critical analysis of the movie's strengths and weaknesses with details about how each fits into the behind-the-scenes story of the James Bond franchise. Each chapter also includes sidebars with trivia and memorable moments from its film.

The book assumes at least some familiarity with each of the films being discussed, including their plot points and characters, but does a fine job of providing enough context for casual fans who are looking to learn a little more about the movies, as well as for die hard fans who want to compare their perspectives with another person's.

Each chapter ends with a recap encompassing key characters, the villain's plot, the gadgets, memorable bits of dialogue, highlights and low points, and continuity errors. Standalone dossier chapters discuss the careers of important individuals in the Bond universe, both before and after their involvement. These apply not only to the handful of actors who played 007 through the years, but to key producers and directors, with a filmography listed for each of these contributors.

With so many Bond films, there's a lot of material to cover, but *Bond Movies* is a thorough chronicle. By discussing each film in order and showing how the franchise changed both behind the camera and on film, it functions as a comprehensive biography of James Bond the movie character—a man who has outlasted his original appeal by changing with the times, and who will no doubt do so again, as a new actor takes on the role.

JEFF FLEISCHER (December 13, 2021)

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