

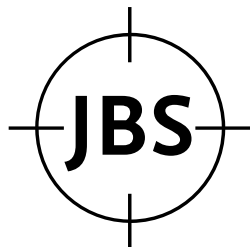
Editorial: The World is Not Enough

The Impact of James Bond on Popular Culture

JO COGHLAN, LISA J. HACKETT, AND HUW NOLAN

The impact of James Bond on the interdisciplinary field of popular culture studies is significant, universal, and ongoing. According to Ian Kinane, the “James Bond franchise has seen a near exponential growth within popular consciousness in the historical significance, political implications, and cultural influence of its central figure” (2017, 1). The literary franchise includes the original twelve novels and two short story collections written by Ian Fleming between 1953 and 1964, and since 1964 eight other authors have completed authorised Bond novels or film novelisations. Two Young Bond series have been written by Charlie Higson (2005-2008) and Steve Cole (2014-2017), including the *Young Bond Rough Guide to London* (2007), and *Danger Society: The Young Bond Dossier* (2009). *Silver Fin: The Graphic Novel* was written by Charlie Higson and illustrated by Kev Walker in 2008. Bond has appeared in film, television, radio, comics (1954-1983) and James Bond Junior was animated in 1991-1992. *The Money Penny Diaries* were written by Samantha Weinberg from 2005-2008. Bond can be found in role-playing and video games and in editions of the classic board game *Monopoly*. The Bond franchise is one of the most successful projects in film history and has been called the “most valuable cinema franchise in history” (Poliakoff 2000, 387).

The 007 online store allows fans to purchase Bond branded fashion (for men, women, and children), homewares, fragrances, sunglasses, pens, attache



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cases, headphones, cufflinks, figurines, model cars, golf accessories and prop replicas, including “Jack the Bulldog” from *Skyfall* (2012). Brands such as Tom Ford, who have been responsible for Bond’s suits since *Quantum of Solace* in 2008, largely decline to disclose their financial relationships with the Bond franchise. But as Marc O’Flaherty notes:

There is nothing meretricious about the Bond aesthetic. What’s in James’ martini may be available to the highest bidder (for *Spectre*, Belvedere vodka had the deepest pockets), but what he wears is always on-brand. The business links with fashion brands are less likely to be seven-figure advertorial because most of the labels are niche. And they have to send the right message [...] in *Skyfall* with Crockett & Jones, N Peal, Sunspel, and Barbour. For *Spectre*, Timothy Everest has dressed Ralph Fiennes as M, and created a green velvet jacket to match a Rolls-Royce for the film’s villain Mr. Hinx. Ironically the biggest official partners don’t have that heritage: Heineken, Sony and Omega. But they bring marketing budgets to buy a major presence. (2015, n.p.)

For Keith Poliakoff, Bond and his brands are “sociocultural artifacts that occupy simultaneously discrete and interacting nests of association and meaning” (331); they also generate a great profit. In 2015, the Bond franchise was estimated to be worth 13 billion pounds, comprised of 9 billion pounds in box office returns, 2 billion in DVD sales, and 2 billion in merchandise and co-marketing (Loveday 2015, n.p.). *Skyfall* is the most lucrative Bond film, returning US\$1.1 billion on its US\$200 million production costs (Katz 2019, n.p.). The merchandising of Bond ensures both his place in popular culture and the sustainment of Bond fans. According to Tyler Johnson and Lisa Funnell, “Bond fandom” is an “umbrella term that could capture any self-identified fan of the James Bond franchise, but membership, as it were, is often associated with individuals who enjoy watching the film series, and doing so across multiple eras of the six men who have played the role of Bond in Eon productions” (2022, 40). And as Henrik and Sara Linden remind us, “fans are consumers” (2017, 37).

But who is James Bond? From the first pages of Fleming’s first novel *Casino Royale* (1953), Bond’s idiosyncrasies and trademarks are quite evident. He has

cold and ruthless eyes. He drives a 1933 4 1/2-litre Bentley, one of the last with the supercharger [...] He drinks champagne and dry Martini’s, shaken, not stirred: “three measures of Gordon’s, one of vodka, half a measure of

Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it's ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon peel". He carries his Morland cigarettes [...] in a flat, gun-metal box. Underneath his dinner-jacket he sports a flat .25 Beretta automatic. And on his arms is the enticing Vesper Lynd. (Lycett 2012, 220)

In many ways the DNA of the Bond figure is self-evident. His "cold and ruthless eyes" suggest he is the "right" man to be "licensed to kill". His taste for fast cars and alcohol not only inform his character, but their brands and fastidious preparation are more than a nod to his consumption of luxuries. Gun and girl complete the package. As cultural texts, the Bond franchise directly impacts consumer culture, not only through the branding and product placement of clothes, drinks, and cars, but also corporations and locations. These characteristics frame Bond in the narrative of an archetypal hero. As Chloe Preece et al. note:

[Bond] embarks on a dangerous journey, sent there by forces he does not fully understand nor dare refuse (e.g. the character M in the case of the Bond franchise); he encounters obstacles in the form of monsters (villains with physical oddities); he must enter the domain of evil to pursue the quest; he often has a helper (the Bond girls or the character Q who furnishes him with gadgets); although he may suffer along the way, he ultimately triumphs, and the conclusion of the journey is vital to the well-being of the world; and when he has succeeded, he returns to the normal world [...] James Bond provides a type of master myth with something for everyone. Bond's escapist narrative reflects our fundamental human concerns. (2019, 335)

Each of Bond's actors in film and television, too, have contributed to the iconic place Bond holds in popular culture. Six men have played EON's filmic James Bond: Sean Connery (1962-71), George Lazenby (1969), Roger Moore (1973-1985), Timothy Dalton (1987-1989), Pierce Brosnan (1995-2002), and Daniel Craig (2006-2021). A seventh actor, David Niven, played Bond in the Columbia Pictures satirical production of *Casino Royale* in 1967. American Barry Nelson played James Bond in a 1954 television adaptation of *Casino Royale* in the US television series *Climax*. Cynthia Miller asks:

What has the twenty-first century done to poor James? He was always so forthright – for a spy – and so predictable. He was a Cold War hero: deadly

and debonair; global, yet reassuringly Anglo-Saxon. He mastered fantastic technology in order to save us from those who sought to control it for their own ends. He was hot, he was cool, and he was in control. He was, as Raymond Chandler observed, “what every man would like to be and what every woman would like to have between her sheets”. He was Bond. (2011, xiii)

Having now briefly considered the depth of the space and place of James Bond in contemporary popular culture, we turn to the contexts of this special issue. The first article, Erin Isely’s piece, “It’s Called Life, James’: Deconstructing Inclusivity in *Skyfall* and *No Time to Die*”, examines two of the Craig films and offers a sociological analysis of the issues of race, gender, and queerness by focusing on the characters Moneypenny, Nomi, Felix Leiter, and Q. Isely argues that while characters of diverse race and sexuality are included, and while Black actors have lead roles, inclusivity largely serves to reinforce Bond’s white heteronormativity rather than progressively positioning the “Other” in roles of power or equality. Isely further examines the representations of mothers and mothering in the form of Judi Dench’s M and Léa Seydoux’s Madeleine, arguing that while females are cast in lead roles, their patriarchal framing largely reduces their agency.

Drawing on a broader palette of Bond films, the next two articles maintain an interest in representations of race and ethnicity. The first paper by Xiang Gao, titled “Aliens, Enemies, and Allies: Images of Asia in the James Bond Films”, argues that the Bond films overly emphasise normative visions of Asian identities. Through the interdisciplinary lenses of history, politics, and international relations, Gao identifies that Bond films are permeated with exotic Third World locales and characters wherein colonialism still lingers at large. The second article on race and ethnicity, “Contextualising 1980s Hispanic Stereotypes: Gender and Criminality in *Licence to Kill*” by Marcella Lins, contextualises *Licence to Kill* (1989) within the social constructs of violence and gender in order to explore the representation of Hispanics in the Bond films of the 1980s. Lins positions *Licence to Kill* within a range of American films which frame Hispanic characters as lacking morals, with male Hispanics characterised as violent criminals and female Hispanics as sex symbols. Further contextualising Lin’s research are social discourses and government policies, both foreign and domestic, which, Lins argues, drives negative stereotypes of Hispanics in non-Hispanic films.

Phillip Guerty’s article, “Licensed to Play: Espionage Role-Playing Games in the Late Cold War Era”, reminds us not only of the long-term place of James Bond within the geopolitics of the Cold War, but also of the longevity of James

Bond as a cultural object that both informs and who is, in turn, informed by prevailing culture. In a detailed discussion of the James Bond espionage role-playing games from the 1980s, Guerty demonstrates how Fleming and his hero informed the production, design, and themes of the Bond role-playing games, and how the games' producers incorporated intertextual references from the film franchise.

Also demonstrating the cultural richness of James Bond is Jonnie Erickson and Kalle Jonasson's article titled "‘I am not a sporting man, Fräulein’: The Tragedy and Farce of James Bond's Heroic Prowess". Erickson and Jonasson provide a philosophically-rich discussion of Bond's sporting prowess as a rebooted formula which continues to position and reposition Bond in popular culture *vis-à-vis* a hauntological analysis of the Bond films. Andrea E. Cavanna provides remarkable psychological insight into not only the villains of the Bondiverse but provides a psychological glimpse into Bond himself in the next article, "‘I ate one of their famous secret agents for breakfast’: Psychopathy in Ian Fleming's James Bond Villains"; by drawing on Ian Fleming's original texts and using Umberto Eco's structuralist approach to the Bond novels, Cavanna reveals the traits that allow us a new glimpse into the soul of James Bond.

Rounding out this special issue comes a case study of the value in using James Bond to teach critical thinking in undergraduate university courses. In their case study, "James Bond, Gender Studies, and Popular Culture Pedagogy: A Case Study", Lisa J. Hackett, Jo Coghlan, and Huw Nolan argue that the longevity and universality of the James Bond franchise posits its pedagogical value to develop and inform critical thinking. This article argues that Bondian representations of gender stereotypes and gender politics can provide insightful ways in which gender frames can be identified, interrogated, and contested.

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