

## **Quantum of Solace: 007 Dodges Death but not Consequences**

Posted By [Robert Hubbard](#) On November 21, 2008 @ 5:33 pm In [Movies/TV](#), [Reviews](#) | [5 Comments](#)

For me, James Bond films exemplify the guilty pleasure. Since adolescence (back in the Roger Moore days), I have followed Ian Fleming's manly spy to the planet's most glamorous resorts, watched him wreck the coolest cars ever, and marveled over his technological gadgetry. These thrill rides admittedly travel in bad company.

Not only does Bond laconically kill hundreds of enemies over his long career, he shamelessly beds an average of 2.5 statuesque supermodels per film. More than any mainstream movie hero, James Bond puts the sex and violence in PG-13.

The expectations of the Bond genre are numerous. Non-negotiables include a thrilling opening chase sequence, cool spy technology, fantastic globetrotting locations, and a juicy villain. *Quantum of Solace* manages each of these conventions effectively, if not always with distinction.

Director Marc Foster, known for indie character studies such as *Monsters Ball* and *Neverland*, struggles at times in the action genre. The obligatory opening chase scene, for example, adopts the herky-jerky, hand-held camera style popularized in the *Bourne Identity* films. While this nausea-producing technique succeeds in dropping us into the action, it fails to reveal the elegance of a well-choreographed action sequence.

Autos and bodies may zip over the Spanish countryside, but without wide-angle or extended shots, how can we appreciate the stunt coordinator's craft? Likewise, the gadgetry in *Quantum of Solace* scores low on the nerd-appreciation scale. Today's facial recognition software and satellite cell-phones do not match the thrills received from yesterday's sports cars with ejector seats and wristwatches that shoot poisoned darts. This deficit may not be Foster's fault. We live in an age that is hard to impress with technology. Sean Connery's Bond never played with anything as advanced as an *iPod touch*.

If the action and technology fall slightly short, *Quantum of Solace* meets expectations in other areas. The exotic locations vividly give us the globe. In hot pursuit of the bad guys, we watch Bond trek through convincing representations of Spain, London, Haiti, Austria, Italy, Bolivia and Russia. The stop in Italy proves particularly satisfying. Here Bond crashes a conference call of tuxedo-clad corporate raiders held *during* an elaborately staged production of Puccini's *Tosca*. Very cool.

The brain behind this illegal meeting, environmentalist poser Dominic Green, proves a respectable Bond villain. As Dominic, Mathieu Amalric relies on boyish charm and feigned idealism that masks a cold and villainous heart. At one point, his betrayed and mysterious mistress, Camille (played by Olga Kurylenko), embarrasses him in a public setting. As Dominic snuggles near her, he effortlessly transitions from kissing her on the neck to tossing her off the roof.

Exciting action sequences and colorful villains do not wash away Bond's decisive role in multiple deaths. In his joyless desire to avenge the death of a former lover (Vesper from *Casino Royale*), the protagonist of *Quantum of Solace* personally sends roughly two-dozen souls to their maker (I may have lost count in the bloody blur). What strange attraction does this licensed killer hold over us? Sure, it's a violent genre, and most of them were bad guys, but shouldn't we at least be bothered that we are not more bothered?

Part of Bond's perplexing allure, at least in *Quantum of Solace*, rests with the fierce and steely performance of Daniel Craig. Building on his acclaimed work in *Casino Royale*, Craig brings a brooding might to Bond. From an acting standpoint, I particularly admire the almost serene expression Craig wears when everyone around him seems bent on ending his life.

With bullets flying and punches throwing, Craig's Bond exudes grace under pressure. Forget that his personal life is a disaster or that his career hangs in limbo; in a crisis, we want this ice-cold Brit on our side. We admire him, not for his violence, but for his unflappable confidence.

And aided by Craig's magnetism, the most recent Bond film adds a glimpse of moral anguish generally absent in the series. The days of killing and philandering without consequence, so prevalent before, now seem far removed. When a friend and fellow spy accidentally takes a bullet meant for 007, Craig's Bond tenderly and patiently holds his comrade in his arms until death arrives.

Of the two lovely actresses who step into the heralded if demeaning role of "Bond girl" in *Quantum of Solace*, only one of them, the more innocent, submits her flesh to our hero's legendary libido. The fact that she pays a ghoulish and fatal price for her association suggests a shift in the franchise's moral universe. "Everything and everyone you touch dies, Mr. Bond," taunts an adversary near the film's climax. Where bullets miss, we see this line hit. It subtly registers in Craig's flinty eyes. Bond remains Bond, but at a cost.

As expected, *Quantum of Solace* provides a pleasurable thrill ride, an escape into well-crafted kinetic sensation and fantasy. For those who pay attention, the film offers something more. It leaves space to both admire and pity its hero. For my part, I found myself rooting for him, not to kill his enemies, but to forgive himself.

*Robert Hubbard is Associate Professor of Theater and Speech at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.*

---

Article printed from The Gospel and Culture Project: <http://www.gospelandculture.org>

URL to article: <http://www.gospelandculture.org/2008/11/james-bond-quantum-solace/>