



"Grow up, 007!" James Bond over the Decades: Formula vs. Innovation

Kerstin Jütting

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Thesis (M.A.) from the year 2005 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,3, University of Potsdam (Anglistik und Amerikanistik), 27 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: A handsome man in a tuxedo enters a casino and takes a seat opposite a beautiful woman at a card table - nobody watching this scene needs to be told who that man is: 'Bond. James Bond.' Everybody, no matter what age, knows the name and the man. It is common knowledge that Bond will win the game, move over to the bar to order a vodka martini 'shaken, not stirred' and enter into a tête-à-tête with the woman. The secret agent with the licence to kill has become a cultural icon, the mere figure '007' calls to mind a lot of images around James Bond and his adventures.

The film series about the world's most famous spy has become a phenomenon. Twenty (official Eon Production) films in forty years have broken all records, not only those of the film industry. The two producers Harry Saltzman and Albert R. 'Cubby' Broccoli have breathed life into Ian Fleming's popular character: James Bond has become more than just a literary figure. Like Robin Hood or Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes before him, Bond is considered to be real, to be or have been part of the real world. He undoubtedly changed the world of spy movies.

Before 007 hit the big screen, there had been various spy films already, but these aimed at de-mythologizing secret agents. Spies were mostly enemies. Very successful and popular were Alfred Hitchcock's several espionage films such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Notorious*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *The Secret Agent*, to name only a few. By 1963, "Ian Fleming's secret agent had transformed the entire spy genre, creating the longest-running series in film history and redefining global notions of espionage."

What makes the James Bond films so successful? What ingredients ensured their longevity? Over four decades, five even, if one considers Fleming's novels, 007 has appealed to the public, ranging from the United States over the whole of Europe all the way to Japan, and, with the latest movie only three years ago and the next already speculated about, it does not seem to be the end of 'Bond, James Bond' yet.

In the following I shall attempt to find out what ensured the success of the James Bond films. I will examine the progress of 007 from Fleming's novels to the big screen, and thus showing the development of a fixed set of ingredients, the concept behind the films. After ascertaining the James Bond formula, I shall look into the variations of the set formula: How, why and when do the films differ from the fixed concept, and how did they adjust to the times over the last decades.

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