



NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

DRAMA, DEVASTATION AND A LUCKY ESCAPE. THE PLOT OF NEW BOND BLOCKBUSTER *QUANTUM OF SOLACE*? NO, JUST ANOTHER DAY ON SET WITH STAR DANIEL CRAIG AND DIRECTOR MARC FORSTER

by Matt Mueller



"THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE MODERN BOND; IT'S 'SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER.' THAT WAS ALWAYS FLEMING'S IMAGE OF HIM"

007

As an action-film franchise that has always prided itself on squeezing as many exotic, far-flung locations as possible into each movie, it's not surprising to follow the latest 007 production to Bregenz, Austria – a quaint lakeside town that's also a popular destination for opera-lovers, courtesy of an annual festival and outdoor stage that rises majestically out of Lake Constance. It's here that the *Quantum of Solace* global juggernaut has taken up residence for two weeks to shoot a key sequence in which James Bond (Daniel Craig) tries to unravel the link between Vesper Lynd – the woman he loved who committed suicide near the end of *Casino Royale* – and an urbane, eco-friendly tycoon named Dominic Greene (French actor Mathieu Amalric), who hasn't come to Bregenz just to listen to opera but has gathered together a network of global power players for his own nefarious purposes.

Tonight, the Bregenz Festival's critically acclaimed 2007 production of Puccini's epic tragedy *Tosca* has been resurrected for Bond's 22nd adventure, with a stage packed with clerically-robed choral singers, and 1,200 extras decked out in eveningwear seated in the outdoor amphitheatre. Even the opera's star, Gidon Saks has answered 007's call and returned to mouth along to the *Te Deum* in his role as *Tosca*'s evil police chief Scarpia. As the tragedy plays out on Bregenz's spectacular stage – its backdrop a colossal, *Big Brother*-style eye complete with vibrant blue iris that tilts hydraulically – Craig's super-spy skirts around the fringes in 007's iconic dinner jacket (which, like all of Craig's QOS wardrobe, was designed by Tom Ford). Bond hops nimbly from the stage's lakeside moorings to solid ground and walks up the amphitheatre stairs, scanning the crowd for signs of Greene and his cohorts.

It's the sort of grand-scale production number that only top-flight blockbusters can pull off, set in a location that was immediately attractive to director Marc Forster when he was deciding whether to sign up. "Bond tries to figure out who works with whom, and what exactly is happening in this villainous organisation he's chasing," says Forster. "At the same time, you have *Tosca* in the background, which I think is a nice mirror image of Bond and of the story."

Towards the end of a lengthy night shoot, the QOS cast and crew leave the cold Austrian night behind and move inside for a gripping action sequence filmed in the opera house's airy, modern restaurant. For a few thrilling takes, Craig manoeuvres himself through the packed eatery to escape two of Greene's henchmen, knocking over waiters and firing off shots at his pursuers before effortlessly sliding across a countertop to make his escape into the kitchen. One thing that Craig has done is reinstate Bond with a brute force and primal energy.

"That's what I like about the modern Bond; it's 'shoot first and ask questions later,'" says Craig. "That was always Fleming's image of Bond. It was always 'kick the door in and see what happens.' If he's standing on top of a tall building, there's a 20-foot gap and he can't see what's down below, he jumps. And if he hurts himself, he hurts himself. The chances are he won't, and he'll move on."

Craig faced down disgruntled fans and media pundits when he was first hired to replace Pierce Brosnan as the sixth – and perhaps most unlikely – actor to play Bond. He proved all the naysayers wrong, delivering a performance that took the character back to Ian Fleming's original description of an angry, tormented man whose skills as a secret agent for Her Majesty's government are tempered by his short fuse and his refusal to play by the rulebook. *Casino Royale* had a princely reception from critics and audiences alike, impressing them with its dynamic action scenes and stunt work, Craig's compelling Bond, and the emotional love story with Eva Green's doomed treasury agent Vesper Lynd. It went on to become the most successful Bond movie of all time.

"The good news is that *Casino Royale* did so fantastically well. The bad news is, 'Oh my God, what do we do now?'" says Barbara Broccoli in the plush Piccadilly offices of EON Productions. Broccoli has been the franchise gatekeeper, alongside her stepbrother, Michael G. Wilson, ever since their father, producer Albert 'Cubby' Broccoli, passed away in 1996. Wilson agrees: "It's always the same story. If the film's not successful, you think, 'Oh God, I've screwed the thing up, we're on a downward spiral.' And if it's better, you think, 'How are we going to do this again?'"

Craig agrees with his bosses: "There's more pressure this time, but I'm just trying to apply the same rules as I did last time. Certainly we couldn't repeat what we did before. We're into a new way of thinking."

Fundamental to QOS's fresh approach is the preternaturally calm eye at its centre: Marc Forster, a director known for impassioned character studies such as *Monster's Ball*, *Finding Neverland* and *The Kite Runner* and possibly the most unlikely film-maker ever to be given the reins to a Bond movie in the franchise's 46-year history. If you didn't recognise Forster – a tall, thin man in a black turtleneck and shaved head – you'd mistake him for one of the crew as he slips quietly among them on a chilly spring night, stopping briefly to confer with his assistant director over where to place the camera for the next scene. He exudes a Zen-like tranquility on set: "Whatever happens happens, and I believe it's for the best," he explains.

Prior to QOS, Forster had never directed a full-blooded action sequence in his life, let alone wrestled a \$200m colossus into cinemas. In his favour, he is Swiss (as was Bond's mother) and he's gifted at directing actors (Halle Berry won the best actress Oscar for her performance in *Monster's Ball*), which is why Broccoli and Wilson handed him the reins. "It was very gutsy of them to hire me," he agrees. "I said to them, 'Look, if I do it, I need total creative freedom to create the movie I want to create.' So far they have stuck to that. They've really gone to bat for my vision."

At first, the German-born helmer rebuffed EON's persistent advances, thinking it was a no-win situation for him as he'd only be blamed if the film didn't live up to everyone's expectations. But, recalling an interview with Orson Welles in which the great man said his one regret was that he'd never directed a commercial film, Forster



was won over and bonded quickly with his star over a vision for *QOS* that embraced the spirit of production designer Ken Adam – who oversaw seven of the first 11 Bond films, from *Dr No* in 1962 to *Moonraker* in 1979. “Not that we set out to recreate Ken Adam’s sets, but we wanted to create environments that set that standard, that look as beautiful and take you to a place we’ve never been before,” says Forster. “As a child, watching Bond movies, I’d always wonder where we were going next – where that plane was going to take him. He’d land in an airport in the middle of nowhere and there would be a baddie’s lair. Those things were really important, and that’s what I tried to encourage as much as possible with this movie.”

With Vesper’s betrayal and death on his mind, Bond’s tormented psyche is something that Craig and Forster were also committed to exploring in *QOS*, which is the first direct sequel in the series’ illustrious history. “Everything around him is turned upside down,” says Craig, referring to his character’s siege mentality. “Everything he understood as being good turns out to be bad.” By the time Craig and Forster got on set, they were like brothers in arms. “I said to Daniel, ‘This is a great collaboration.’ We never argued about anything,” Forster says.

“Visually, Marc wanted to push the envelope in terms of creating a world that is a little retro, but postmodern in structure,” says Broccoli. Pushing the envelope meant pushing the budget – with reports pegging the cost at \$200m, making it by far the most expensive Bond film ever. “Without a doubt,” confirms Wilson. “Although, if you account for inflation, *Moonraker* was pretty expensive in its day. We more than doubled the budget from *The Spy*

Who Loved Me to *Moonraker*.” Broccoli hastens to add, “But the money’s always on the screen. That’s the thing the Bond films have always had. They’ve always delivered. There’s a lot more action in this movie than the last one, probably twice as much, and action is very expensive.”

From a 20-minute opening sequence that encompasses a frenetic car chase through a Carrara marble quarry and a sprint across the rooftops of Siena, the goal is for *QOS* to surpass the lofty action bar set by *Casino Royale*. The increased levels of stuntwork saw one stunt driver end up in hospital after his Alfa Romeo spiralled out of control. “We were all devastated because everything is designed for these things not to happen,” sighs Broccoli. “It sounds like a cliché that you’re a family, but you are – it’s impossible not to feel as close to everybody on the set as you do to your closest friends and your family. It’s a very intense experience.”

The watchword on *Quantum of Solace* was ‘realism’ – or as much realism as was humanly possible. And that makes everything a little bit riskier. “There’s always a potential for danger, because we’re creating scary situations on film,” says Craig. As was widely reported, Craig ended up in hospital when he injured his finger on a Pinewood Studios soundstage. “We do stunts that look incredibly dangerous as safely as possible. That was an accident – it’s just a small thing, but it does happen,” he adds.

Broccoli recalls a more worrying moment during the shooting of *QOS*’s explosive finale, when their irreplaceable asset vanished into the flames generated by multiple explosive charges. “We’re sitting there watching the monitor and there are 15 explosions, collapsing staircases, things going off – and we’re quietly

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Clockwise from top left On the *QOS* set in Chile; director Marc Forster; Bond (Daniel Craig) escapes a baddie on the rooftops of Siena, Italy; *from left* Forster, Mathieu Amalric (Dominic Greene), Olga Kurylenko (Camille), and Craig between takes

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FROM UKRAINE WITH LOVE

It's a long way from Olga Kurylenko's childhood on a Ukrainian housing estate to being cast as *Quantum of Solace's* central Bond girl, the vengeful Camille. The 28-year-old spent years modelling in Paris before she began acting in French films. Having gone up against 400 others for the role of Camille, Kurylenko was dining with friends on Christmas Eve when she got the call. The Champagne was cracked open, and three weeks later Kurylenko found herself shooting a boat chase in Panama opposite Daniel Craig.

Is it true you thought the director, Marc Forster, didn't like you at the first audition?

Yes. I thought there was no way I was getting the part. When I was walking out, he said, "How tall are you?" And I was thinking to myself, "Why would you care how tall I am? You're not taking me anyway!" So I left feeling really sad. I told my agent, "Forget about it," but he said, "No, they want you back for the last audition with Daniel!"

Do you think Bond girls have evolved?

Yeah, they have, especially in *Casino Royale* – suddenly there was this interesting woman, who wasn't in the film just to look pretty. They can't go back now – the girls are going to have much more personality and character in the future. I think people have had enough of the silly ones.

Was it frightening doing the stunts?

I'm not going to say, "No, I didn't feel anything; I could just jump from a 30-storey building", you know? The stunt guys told me they're scared too. They were very patient with me, because it was all new to me. They take you by the hand and walk with you, and show you that it's fine. And then you're so proud when you do it!

Amid all the action, do you and Daniel share any quieter scenes?

Initially, they're just suspicious of one another, but then they get to know each other and they open up their souls to each other.

Who's your favourite Bond?

Daniel, of course. The role has evolved with the times, and his character is more real. When he's in a fight scene, it seems really dangerous and scary. Looking at Daniel, you really believe he can break someone's neck: He's a strong, tough guy – less delicate and more raw.

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going, 'Where's Daniel? Where is he?'" Still upset by the incident, Broccoli exhales deeply. "He's in the middle of a fireball... And then he pops up, thank God!"

After everything they endured, Broccoli says that, contrary to all the 'curse of Bond' stories that cropped up during the QOS shoot, "Now we're thinking, 'Someone's watching over us.' We believe in miracles now."

As well as Austria, the 007 road show traversed Chile, Panama and Italy before ending up back at Pinewood, where it spent the final few weeks of a six-month shoot completing interior scenes – including the climactic finale in which Bond and his nemesis, Greene, face off in a Bolivian eco-hotel. The exteriors for the scene were shot at the European Space Agency's Southern Observatory in Chile's desolate Atacama Desert, 6,000 feet above sea level, to make use of its partially underground, domed residential complex; the hotel's lobby, corridors and rooms have been impressively reconstructed at Pinewood, where they are subsequently being subjected to enough explosive firepower to bring more than the house down. Experiencing that firepower first hand on the day we journey out to Pinewood is Mathieu Amalric, best known for his role in *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*.

As we stand off to the side, behind a protective barrier, Amalric runs past a glass wall as it's detonated by explosives, his arms frantically covering his face. After running the scorching gauntlet, the Frenchman looks exhilarated. "It's exciting, it's like a game – it's a big toy! I love it," he says. Amalric's Greene is a phony eco-warrior who conceals his evil intentions behind his philanthropic

organisation while secretly plotting to monopolise the water supply. He's a corporate villain who could easily crop up in contemporary headlines. "Villains today are less recognisable. They don't have a metal jaw and a white cat; it's more complicated. CEOs are fascinating. This is a man who has power but wants to show that, in fact, he's a normal person. Everybody wants to save the planet and is sad that we kick out immigrants and sell rights to pollute to other countries. That's my character: He works in ecology. He's nice, civilised, smiling – adorable!"

Later, when we meet Forster in Soho, where he's living 24/7 in an editing suite trying to get *Quantum of Solace* finished, he looks like a man in need of a very long holiday. He bemoans the film's truncated editing schedule ("On all of my other movies, I had 14 weeks; on this, I have four or five weeks"). Clearly, he's feeling the pressure of the task facing him – the need to satisfy millions of Bond fans around the world who are hoping that QOS will at least match *Casino Royale* in terms of quality. He's already informed Broccoli and Wilson that he won't be returning to put Craig through his paces again, much to their chagrin. "The only problem with Marc Forster is who's gonna follow him?" says Broccoli. "That's the real challenge, because he's been impeccable – an extremely cooperative, wonderful director with great vision. He's remarkable, and he's a lovely man – a very tough act to follow."

Matt Mueller contributes to Total Film, Premiere, Grazia, the Guardian and Wonderland