

This spoiler-free review of SKYFALL was published October 18, 2012

## DANIEL CRAIG FINDS "HOME" AS JAMES BOND IN SKYFALL

*By Anders Frejdh, Editor of Scandinavia's most comprehensive website about Ian Fleming's James Bond – From Sweden with Love – <http://jamesbond007.se>*

James Bond is back at the cinemas in the 23rd film from EON Productions, *SKYFALL*. For the third time in a row, **Daniel Craig** plays Ian Fleming's immortal agent 007 with a licence to kill, this time more personal than ever. Craig feels at home and has now made the part his own. Although no one, in my eyes, will ever surpass **Sean Connery's** elegant and hard version of 007, I would say that Craig is a great actor, perhaps the greatest one in the role.

The title *SKYFALL* is original and has not come from Ian Fleming's original novels or any of the other Bond books. Without revealing too much, the title has a great significance in the film, based on a screenplay by **Neal Purvis & Robert Wade** and **John Logan**. We'll see James Bond in situations that we have not seen him before. They can be proud, the script is strong and the film is enormously lavish and well executed.

The film has no connection to the previous two with Craig. It starts with a spectacular and stunning chase sequence in Turkey with spectacular action mastered by the film's stunt coordinator, **Gary Powell**, and his talented team. One of Sweden's contributions to the film, **Ola Rapace** in the role of the mysterious Patrice, impresses in the fight with James Bond (Daniel Craig) on top of a speeding train. The clearly impressive opening sequence takes us through Istanbul's busy streets where gridlock is an understatement. Hats off to the production team behind the 2nd Unit lead by Bond veteran **Terry Bamber**.

The subsequent title sequence is both clever and memorable: **Daniel Kleinman** returning after his absence from the last film, has created some of the most accomplished titles since he began in 1995, having taken over from **Maurice Binder** (1925-1991) who put his stamp on 14 of the first 16 Bond title sequences. His work is aided immeasurably by being accompanied by **Adele's** title song: a classic theme in the **Shirley Bassey** tradition.

*SKYFALL* is the second longest James Bond film to date with a 143 minutes running time (*CASINO ROYALE*, with its 144 minutes, is the longest). Perhaps it is evidence the film makers have reacted to the somewhat criticized *QUANTUM OF SOLACE*. The delay caused by the studio's financial woes gave them more time to develop the screenplay. **Daniel Craig** has been personally involved in the choice of director **Sam Mendes** and the choice of **Javier Bardem** who plays Bond's main enemy in the film, Raoul Silva. Bardem does a brilliant performance as Bond villain, without doubt one of the best in the series: nasty, intelligent and crazy.

One of the choices they made for *SKYFALL* was to bring back "Q". This time, and for the first time, we get to see **Ben Whishaw** in the role of a younger and more

data-oriented Quartermaster. It remains to see what they make of the relationship between 007 and Q but the chemistry between the two actors is there, as well as the humor and respect for each other. I hope it grows into the relationship developed in 17 of the previous films when Q was played by the much-loved actor **Desmond Llewelyn** (1914-1999).

For the seventh time, **Judi Dench** portrays Bond's boss, "M", and as usual she makes a solid and lasting performance. The relationship between M and Bond is deepened even more in this film, and more personal than ever before.

One of the "Bond Girls", even if it feels slightly incorrect to call her that after seeing the film, is played by the shapely and obviously talented actress **Bérénice Marlohe**. She plays the enigmatic character "Severine", who I think will be one of the most memorable girls in the entire series. **Naomie Harris** does a fantastic job as Bond's colleague in the field, "Eve" - I hope and believe she will be back.

Director **Sam Mendes'** first Bond film is hopefully not his last. He is a genuine Bond fan since childhood and a very talented filmmaker, his involvement is like icing on the cake for the movie. He won the Best Director Oscar for 1999's *American Beauty* and has brought something majestic to the film.

In *SKYFALL*, there are countless of computer screens which are not directly suitable to film. This is the result of the work of talented artist **Ian Sargent** who spent 11 months on the production at Blind Ltd (including on set), and then extra work in the post-production process of the film, coping with a lot of changes at the last second.

*SKYFALL* features product placement (which is understandable in view of the production cost) but not in excess so as to become distracting. The rumour that Bond would abandon his martini for Heineken, which I personally never believed, did not happen.

The soundtrack was composed by **Thomas Newman**, his first James Bond film. He does it well but I still miss John Barry's music. **Adele's** theme song "Skyfall" is co-written and produced by **Paul Epworth**. In my eyes, there are three types of Bond theme songs: Some are impressive, cool and sexy as "Goldfinger". Some are reflective and sad as "You Only Live Twice" while others are anthemic and adventurous like "Live and Let Die". Adele's song belongs to the more reflective and sad: it is very Bondian but also very Adele. It is a beautiful ballad that is likely to be a classic.

The film's producers and **Albert R. Broccoli's** heirs, **Barbara Broccoli** and **Michael G. Wilson**, have yet again proved that their vision of reviving the James Bond phenomenon has been artistically brave and the right way go. Daniel Craig's version of **Ian Fleming's** agent is unique and more emotional than previous versions: I actually cried at one point. There is more humour in *SKYFALL* (compared to Craig's previous Bonds), but it's still a long way from **Roger Moore's** films, although I personally don't need any more humor in them.

Conclusion, a balanced Bond film for the 50th Anniversary of *DR. NO* (which didn't actually open in Sweden until April 1963), *SKYFALL* is a mix between *LICENCE TO KILL* and *CASINO ROYALE*. I think it will become a classic Bond film. The well-written script, the spectacular action scenes, a stunning ensemble with Q's return, as well as a memorable and nasty villain gives it strength. The two Swedish actors in the film, **Ola Rapace** and **Jens Hultén**, should be proud, to have a close encounter with James Bond is a rare thing. They make a solid effort, even if they do not say a word; it is likely that it was initially thought that their characters would be played by professional stuntmen. Having impressed the stunt coordinator **Gary Powell**, they were selected in tough competition. Four out of five Swedish flags is my rating on *SKYFALL*.

*From Sweden with Love* was the first in the world to publish the name of Ola Rapace's part in the film, as well as the first to reveal Jens Hultén's participation.

Besides Ola Rapace and Jens Hultén there is another Swedish person who worked on *SKYFALL*, **Per Hallberg**, Academy Award-winning Sound Editor.

The film started shooting on November 7, 2011 in London, after which the crew then went to Scotland, Shanghai and Turkey.

*SKYFALL* is released in Sweden and the UK on October 26, 2012, almost exactly four years after the previous film, *QUANTUM OF SOLACE*, opened.

The Royal premiere in London is held on October 23 at the Royal Albert Hall. The Swedish gala premiere in Stockholm will take place on October 24 and is organized by ZAP Events.

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