

Spectre

Reviewed by Garry Victor Hill



Produced by Barbara Broccoli. Directed by Sam Mendes. Screenplay by John Logan, Neal Purvis, Robert Wade & Jez Butterworth. Based on characters created by Ian Fleming. Cinematography by Hoyte van Hoytena. Production Design by Dennis Gassner. Original Music by Thomas Newman. Edited by Lee Smith. Cinematic length: 148 minutes. An Eon Production. Distributed by Metro-Goldwyn Mayer/ Columbia. Cinematic release: October 2015. Check for ratings. Rating *****80%.

All illustrations are from the public domain

Cast

James Bond: Daniel Craig

Blofeld: Christopher Waltz

Doctor Madeline Swann: Léa Seydoux

Q: Ben Whishaw

C: Andrew Scott

M: Ralph Fiennes

Moneypenny: Naomie Harris

Spectre Thug: Dave Bautista

White, (Swann's father): Jesper Christensen

M16 Head: Rory Kinnear

Lucia Sciarra: Monica Bellucci

Marco Sciarra: Alexandro Cremona

Estrela: Stephanie Sigman

Doctor Vogel: Bridget Millar

Abrika: Adel Bencherif

Chairman of the International gathering: Nigel Barber

Review

At a cost of just under a quarter of a billion dollars *SPECTRE* may be the most expensive movie ever made - and when considering that its box office take now rapidly heads towards a billion, it is also one of the most popular. The reasons for both the cost and the profit are obvious in the watching.

As is usual in a Bond film, the special effects in both visuals and sound, continuity, editing, cinematography and stunt work are all top class. Unlike so many recent supposedly realistic films, in this fantasy there are no implausibilities (except Bond always surviving in dangerous situations) or holes in the plot.

That plot concerns a double threat from computers. Spectre which is controlled by the Bond movie series perennial arch-villain, Blofield (Christopher Waltz) is some type of multinational and more sinister than most. This one dreams even bigger than most as it will take over the world by selling the nations of the world their new security system. They will need that system because terrorists are blowing up sections of the world's cities and the current systems are clearly inadequate – and obsolete. So are the boots on the ground secret agents as C (Andrew Scott) head of British Intelligence, tells the new M (Ralph Fiennes) and Bond. He will soon be retrenched and replaced by a computer. Spectre of course are behind the bombings that make the new system look needed.

This is a fantasy?

The film starts with a wonderful, lavish and bizarre sequence in Mexico City during the Day of the Dead, when parades of revellers costumed as skeletons sway through the streets to mesmerising music. Despite being the largest city on earth, Mexico's City's Central Square and some surrounding streets were cleared for the filming, coated in a quarter of a million flowers (paper ones apparently) and fifteen hundred extras were used for the parade. They were made to look like ten times that number, made possible with special effects and made creditable as nearly everybody was in masks and similar costumes. This could only be the largest musical piece ever filmed; it certainly looks it. And this is just the prologue?????



The opening scenes, magnificently done.

Bond appears there, seemingly as part of the parade, but really to assassinate Spectre's operatives: they plan to blow up a stadium full of people as a part of their sales plan. Bond stops them but blows up a city block in the process and so, subsequently gets officially grounded. He then turns lone wolf, trying to stop Spectre while avoiding control of British Intelligence through computer tracing.

His search leads him through the usual Bond locales: London, Rome, the Austrian Alps, Tangier, and the Sahara Desert and then finally back to London. On the way there are the usual elements in a Bond film; femme fatales, high speed chases in cars and snowmobiles, very big explosions, sinister thugs who try to strangle him and chilling self-conscious villains who explain their motives for being evil. Being a Bond movie of course, the love interest also appears in several different incarnations.

Three ingredients in bond movies: sexuality, power in an elegant setting and a remote villain's lair





Doctor Madeline Swann in a classic femme fatale pose and costume

This time the main incarnation does not serve as the usual passive non-participant giving vital information while watching and waiting for her man. Doctor Swann (Léa Seydoux) also wants the organisation that destroyed her family destroyed and she does her very best to do that. Daddy (Jesper Christensen) a former M16 operative, taught her pistol shooting and self-defence and she uses these skills.

The last few minutes are not quite what you expect in a Bond film, but that is okay: after twenty-three earlier Bond films a surprise can only be welcome. One criticism: the film does not need so many continual shots of Daniel Craig's face.

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