

## film review

# Bonding Agent

By Josef Woodard, November 27, 2006

**Casino Royale. Daniel Craig, Eva Green, Mads Mikkelsen, and Judi Dench star in a film written by Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, and Paul Haggis, based on the novel by Ian Fleming, and directed by Martin Campbell.**

Reviewed by **Josef Woodard**

Does a tougher world demand a tougher Bond? Well, we've got one in Daniel Craig, the latest actor to don the costumes and the persona of Ian Fleming's protagonist and a grittier model with less fun and games than most of his predecessors. He's lean, he's mean, and has a face like a grimmer version of Steve McQueen. He looks good in a suit but is also subjected to the mortal abrasions of his job, with more bloodied and battered flesh than the Bonds of old.

In the new film, which revisits and updates the Sean Connery-era version from 1967, the familiar elements are in place, plus some new bells and whistles and a newly hardened attitude. As usual, the location scouting is extravagant. Casino Royale includes a dizzyingly kinetic on-foot chase scene through a construction site in Madagascar as well as choreographed waves of sex and violence in Nassau, Bahamas. But there's also a cerebral set in the middle of the story, with an über-high-stakes poker game at the lavish Casino Royale that simmers with psychological tension.

On occasion, the new Bond spoofs the Bond brand, as when he's asked about his martini: "Shaken or stirred?" "I don't give a damn," he replies. The new Bond doesn't particularly give a damn about much, except getting his man, dispensing unrelenting, cold (and not simply cool) thug's justice on a world of bad guys. Oh, and love sneaks briefly into the mix, too, courtesy of the smart and lovely Accountant-to-the-Crown character, played with controlled flair by Eva Green.

With this gripping existential joy ride of a Bond film, we're yet again reminded that, more than any other serial phenom in film, the Bond franchise just keeps on ticking. It ticks like a bomb, a Swiss clock, or a libido with a lust for blood.