

Casino Royale

“Voda martini.”

“Shaken or stirred?”

“Do I look like I give a damn?”

This isn't the Bond you know. There are no invisible cars. In fact, there are no gadgets at all. There will be no convenient and implausible escapes. No jumpsuit-wearing henchmen or underground lair. If you've got a problem with that, then fine! Make room at the cinema for those with better taste. You will miss the grittiest, compelling and most faithful Bond film made in decades.

Casino Royale was the first book Ian Fleming wrote starring James Bond, more than half a century ago. The plot is therefore a prequel to all other films and covers Bond's first assignment as a 00 agent. Bond must play a game of poker (baccarat in the book) against a man funding terrorists. If he wins, his opponent will lose his creditors' millions and hopefully betray them to MI6 in exchange for protection from them. If Bond loses, HM Treasury money will have financed terrorism.

If you were concerned with whether Daniel Craig is up to the task, fear not. His performance is exceptional, and worth seeing. Bond is a killer, not a comedian/stuntman, and Craig shows that. Girls should be advised that glimpses of Craig's toned body is *definitely* worth seeing. Also, you need not worry that everything you loved about Bond is gone. Miss Moneypenney and R may be absent, but the good old formula of beautiful cars (Aston Martin DB5 and DBS V12) and women (Eva Green) is alive and well. There will be set piece chases and fights and bad guys will get shot.

It's interesting to see how familiar sequences are done in this new darker style. In a memorable torture scene, instead of “sharks with frickin' laser beams attached to their heads”, the audience sees a naked Bond being hit in the testicles by a knotted rope. Brutal.

One criticism I will make of Casino Royale is that it starts Bond's career in 2006, which made it chronologically incompatible with all other films to date. I found this inconsistency quite jarring. I think that the trick is to deny that the disappointing recent films ever happened. Or one could consider the film like a new Zelda or Final Fantasy game: a reinvention rather than a straight prequel. I also hate the product placement in the film.

To conclude, this is a great film that successfully reinvents the Bond franchise, cutting out all the CGI Hollywood crap and delivering pure cold-hearted class.