

Barbara Broccoli and the Popular Image of the Bond Producer

Claire Hines

Abstract

Of all the women involved in the James Bond film franchise over the years, for the last three decades producer Barbara Broccoli has had the greatest power and influence on its development. Since taking over as co-producer (alongside half-brother Michael G. Wilson) of the Bond films in the mid-1990s, Broccoli is constantly mentioned in relationship to James Bond, yet there has been no academic attention paid to her role as Bond producer. This article will address this oversight in Bond studies and contribute to the growing area of scholarship on the producer in the British film industry by analysing the popular image of ‘the Bond producer’ using promotional materials and press coverage.

The approach adopted in this article is framed in terms of a negative stereotype of (male) film producers that is widely generalised, and pressbook evidence showing that the original Bond producers Albert R. ‘Cubby’ Broccoli and Harry Saltzman were positively caricatured in the Bond film publicity. It will consider the enduring legacy of the ‘Men Behind James Bond’ producer image to examine the role played by Broccoli in the discourses of marketing and promotion during the Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig eras. The article will demonstrate that although a high degree of public visibility might be expected to come with the role of Bond producer, the woman behind the image and the day-to-day business of film production largely remains hidden in favour of the authorised narratives shaped by the earlier promotional materials, references made to Bondian character types, or popular discourses of gender which the mainstream press reproduce. In so doing the article will reflect on debates about gender and diversity in the Bond franchise to connect to wider discourses around inclusivity in British popular culture that have come to the fore in recent years.

Keywords

Producer; Barbara Broccoli; Daniel Craig; *Casino Royale*; Eon Productions; gender; diversity; James Bond; film promotion

Biography

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Of all the women involved in the James Bond film franchise over the years, for the last three decades producer Barbara Broccoli has had the greatest power and influence on its development. In the role of Bond producer her credits currently include the four Pierce Brosnan era films *GoldenEye* (1995), *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *The World is Not Enough* (1999) and *Die Another Day* (2002), and Daniel Craig's five instalments as James Bond in the franchise, *Casino Royale* (2006), *Quantum of Solace* (2008), *Skyfall* (2012), *Spectre* (2015) and *No Time to Die* (2021). Having taken over as co-producer of the Bond films in the mid-1990s (alongside half-brother Michael G. Wilson), after years already working on the franchise, she is credited as a primary creative force and one of the entertainment industry's most successful producers. This has been recognised, a UK example being the BFI Fellowship that both she and Wilson received in acknowledgement of their contribution to cinema in 2022 (and in recognition of the franchise's record-breaking 60th anniversary). Yet like other women featured in this special issue, Broccoli has not received any special academic attention.¹ The omission might be more surprising given her comparatively high, above-the-line, status. To some extent the lack of attention to Broccoli could be considered symptomatic of the relative neglect of the producer, especially in contrast to the authorship and high value of the personal vision of the director. Although it must be said that the original Bond producers Albert R. 'Cubby' Broccoli and Harry Saltzman have not been ignored by film historians (Chapman 2014; Chapman 2022).

More generally however, there has been a growing area of scholarship on the producer in the British film industry, despite the documented challenges of studying this figure, including which sources and methods might be used for the research. As Christopher Meir points out 'It is by now somewhat well known that the role of the film producer is difficult to define, much less analyse from a historical or critical point-of-view' (2009: 467). This is arguably especially the case with an active producer like Broccoli. Some time ago,

Andrew Spicer posited that reasons why the producer was neglected might also include ‘the negative image of the producer ... relegated to a shadowy realm of business interests. Indeed, the producer is often seen as a highly suspect figure’ (2004: 33). He explained that: ‘The producer represents the unfortunate vulgarity of commercial film-making, an unwelcome reminder of film’s showground origins, its lack of cultural capital’ (ibid.). Later, Spicer reviewed how: ‘The role of the producer has been both caricatured and misunderstood, hence the absence in accounts of British cinema and Film Studies’ (2017: 139). During the interim period and afterwards, a case study approach has rightly been adopted by scholars to bring attention to some of the many ways that the role of producer can be interpreted and operates in the British film industry, challenging simplistic assumptions and instead emphasising the importance of understanding specific producers in context(s). Nevertheless, this scholarship often recognises the prominence of the producer stereotype in popular perception. In so doing Meir identifies the contrast typically made between the ‘romantically constructed’ auteur director ‘intent on personal expression’ and ‘the stereotype of the producer as a money-obsessed philistine’ (2009: 471). In response academic studies have endeavoured to shed light on the creative role of the producer, especially in reaction to the negative image in popular culture. Resultantly this article first asks: how might the popular image of the Bond producer negotiate this prominent stereotype?

Relatedly, in the editorial introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* on producers, Spicer and A. T. McKenna identify that: ‘The phallogentric pop-culture cliché of the cigar-chomping, interfering, philistine producer – part stereotype, part affectionate lampoon – still looms large’ (2012: 1). It follows that the stereotype of the film producer has characteristically been gendered male and it also is unsurprising that much of the existing work specifically on producers in British cinema is focused on male producers. However, some case studies and historical accounts of women

producers do appear; for instance, Betty Box has been identified as an important female film producer (Ashby 2000; Ayres 2020). As part of the survey *Women in British Cinema* Sue Harper (2000) devotes a chapter to discussing some notable women in the producer role in the British film industry from the 1930s to the 1980s. The primary research that has come out of Shelley Cobb and Linda Ruth Williams's major 'Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK, 2000-2015' (2014-18) project, although not exclusively on film producers, also provides valuable scholarship and reports on women working in British film production during this century. That Broccoli is a female producer in a male-dominated industry and film franchise will of course be highly relevant to aspects of this discussion, and in relationship to popular and critical debates about gender in James Bond that are also longstanding.

It is widely recognised that the Bond franchise has, to say the least, a problematic history when it comes to the roles and representations of women. On screen and in the wider media, many of the past women of Bond have been highly sexualised and eroticised as objects of desire, and although not necessarily denied agency in the films there has been a popular view that the Bond Girl represents an outmoded stereotype. With this in mind, the article will go on to consider in what ways the discourses around these women in the Bond films might extend to aspects of the media coverage of Broccoli on becoming a producer of the franchise. Broccoli began working on the Bond franchise during the Roger Moore years, an era when 007 could be particularly patronising about women in films that increasingly also used comedy in different ways. There is a moment in *Moonraker* (1979) that provides a rich illustration: the scene takes place in the high-tech Drax Industries headquarters, where Moore's Bond has been sent to investigate the disappearance of a space shuttle. He is in search of a Dr Goodhead (Lois Chiles) and his first response to her professional introduction with clipboard in hand, is that he says coolly, with a slight smile and a hint of questioning, 'a

woman'. The scene can on the one hand be read as 'mock[ing] Bond's male chauvinism': Holly Goodhead gets the opportunity to come back with a dry one-liner about Bond's powers of observation, but beyond this scene she also 'possess a narratively important skill that Bond does not', having trained to pilot a space shuttle (Chapman 2007: 165). Yet on the other hand Bond's apparent surprise to find that Dr Goodhead is 'a woman' scientist, the double-entendre of her name, and her later fulfilment of the role of love interest, plus the use of Bond Girl beauty photographs of Lois Chiles in the publicity for *Moonraker*, might well generate a different, much less forgiving, reading. Either way, this example vividly shows that negotiating attitudes toward the women of Bond both in the films and in the media is a complex matter.

It was at this time in the late seventies that Broccoli was working in the publicity office of the Bond franchise, but she later became a producer in 1995, with Michael G. Wilson, when Cubby Broccoli publicly stepped down after over 30 years and sixteen films. In this role Broccoli has since co-headed the company Eon Productions, which was set up by Cubby Broccoli and Saltzman to produce *Dr No* (1962). Eon is a UK-based production company and an affiliate of the Swiss-registered company Danjaq that together control the rights to worldwide Bond merchandising. Currently, with the Hollywood studio MGM, Danjaq co-owns the copyrights in the existing Bond franchise and controls the right to produce future Bond films. These longstanding arrangements are highly significant to the particular power of the film producer in the big budget Bond franchise. As Spicer remarks about the producer's key function: 'Above all, the producer is the mediator between commerce and creativity' (2004: 34). This seems especially true of the Bond producer; for over 60 years the Broccoli family, and Saltzman, have navigated social change and changes in culture and the British film industry, along with relationships with major American studios and studio executives, to produce twenty-five Bond films, which is no small achievement by

any standards. On the Broccolis, *Variety* describes that it is thanks to this deal that ‘they have been able to exert an unprecedented level of creative control, serving as the final arbiter on everything from scripts to the casting to the promotional materials’ (15 January 2020: 38). In the *Los Angeles Times*, the deal is expressively described as ‘one of the most unique, hands-off studio arrangements ever’ (4 October 2004). Adding that: ‘During the ensuing decades, the Broccoli family has gone through almost as many studio executives as Bond has bikini-clad girlfriends’ (ibid.). This is a typically evocative, playful and ironic press depiction of the essential role played by the Broccolis in the famously male-centric franchise that can also be found in other media coverage and journalistic accounts of the Bond producer being drawn on here to analyse the presentation of this image.

This article is concerned with aspects of the discursive representation of Broccoli in the role of Bond producer, examining how the media has characterised the Bond producer over time from the early Bond films into the twenty-first century. The primary sources include publicity materials, coverage from the British, and some American, press and trade publications like *Variety* and *Screen International*. In addition to using the press cuttings and pressbooks held at the British Film Institute (BFI) library for historical research, the other primary source materials were readily available using online databases. Most of the coverage is part of the promotional tie-ins and press attention generated by the Bond films and functions in relationship to the official production and promotional discourses of the franchise. The research is organised into four key sections, the first of which identifies the enduring significance of the original Bond producer image promoted through the films’ promotional materials circulated to the press and secondly, by extension, descriptions related to the Broccoli ‘family business’. The article then moves on to consider how the media might also call on some well-known Bondian character types to engage imaginatively with the producer role and stereotype to different ends. The final section will focus on the end of the

Daniel Craig era, and discuss references made to Broccoli in relationship to debates about gender and diversity in the Bond franchise to connect to wider discourses around inclusivity in British popular culture that have come to the fore in recent years.

The original Bond producer presented in promotional materials

By the time that Broccoli joined the Bond production team in the late 1970s, Cubby Broccoli and Saltzman had done much to establish a positive caricature of the Bond producer in the popular imagination, rather than the negative producer stereotype. This positive image and the associated narrative is apparent and persists today in popular and academic circulation: of creative, far-sighted British-based international producers who were able to see the potential of Bond at the cinema box-office, and convinced United Artists to take a risk on the films. In these accounts, United Artists is claimed to have been uncertain about how the first film would perform in the United States with the virtually unknown Scottish actor Sean Connery in the Bond role (Street 2002: 180). However, when James Chapman examines the first film *Dr No* in the wider contexts of the production and its reception, he uses extensive archival research to instead demonstrate that ‘there is good reason to doubt this narrative even though it was propagated by the Bond producers themselves’ (2022: 5). In doing so Chapman concludes that ‘This may be because Saltzman and Broccoli wanted to present an image of themselves as visionary producers and risk-takers in contrast to a film industry that was both economically cautious and culturally conservative’ (2022: 183).

That this manufactured image nevertheless became part of the promotional strategy for the early Bond films can be seen in the UK publicity campaign pressbooks. The pressbook for *Goldfinger* (1964) featured ‘The Men Behind James Bond’ and made it known that Broccoli and Saltzman had secured the screen rights to seven of Ian Fleming’s novels.² In the pressbook for *You Only Live Twice* (1967) a headline again invited exhibitors to ‘Meet

Bond's producers', Saltzman was praised as 'one of the industry's most energetic trendsetters', and Cubby Broccoli was also described as culturally significant having produced films in Britain since 1952 'when, with Irving Allen, he founded Warwick Productions, a company which made an important contribution to the industry with a series of highly successful actions films at a time when Hollywood studios had ground to a virtual standstill'.³ The pressbook heralded the seasoned film producers as 'The Bond Boys—Harry Saltzman and Albert R. Broccoli have become one of the most successful production teams in the history of the industry'.⁴ This image continued to be publicised when Saltzman left the producing partnership after *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974), but in a form that strongly emphasised the role of Cubby Broccoli as *the* visionary and hands-on producer, committed to the policy of putting the budget on the screen and making Bond films with the aim to satisfy the tastes of cinemagoers (Broccoli 1995: 7). Although this did not completely rewrite the authorised history of the franchise as previously told in the pressbooks, Cubby Broccoli was firmly positioned as the solo producer and an important figure preserving the creative continuity behind the Bond films.

There is a publicity story from around the time when Cubby Broccoli took over solo production of the films that iconically characterises the Bond producer. In the UK pressbook for *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) Broccoli is grandly introduced as a 'Modern day King Louis of France, potentate of the money-spinning James Bond empire'. However, in recognition of his Italian ancestry, the story goes that during filming on location in Egypt 'Cubby fell despondent over the local mid-eastern cuisine and the passion took him to cook his famous spaghetti for lunch for the entire 150-man crew'. The day before this took place it is said that 'he was found in the local market place near Luxor negotiating with a merchant to punch tiny holes in a large copper basin, which would serve as a colander for draining the spaghetti'. In the pressbook he is pictured on the day of the lunch looking jovial and being

helped by Moore to serve the food in front of an impromptu-looking 'Trattoria Broccoli' sign, supposedly painted by the company's art director. In addition to this photograph, and the column inches given to the story titled 'Let them Eat Pasta', also in the pressbook is the recipe for the simple spaghetti dish he prepared.⁵ In a similar vein, two years later the pressbook for *Moonraker* claimed that 'Unlike many producers, who prefer to watch from afar, Broccoli can be seen, more often than not, on the set', and 'it's not uncommon to see the great man roll up his sleeves and lend a hand with some quite menial task'.⁶ The pressbook reminded exhibitors that Cubby Broccoli had now been an important London-based producer for 25 years (although production for *Moonraker* was filmed in France and Broccoli had recently moved to California due to tax in Britain), but that his 'happiest moments' still came during the actual filming of Bond, meaning the editorial for this pressbook and the next film *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) concluded with a question and the predictable answer: 'Retirement? Not a chance'.⁷

The importance of Cubby Broccoli to the stability of the Bond franchise was such that when *GoldenEye* was released in 1995, despite having publicly stood down from the producer role and handed over production to Broccoli and Wilson, the publicity material emphasised that he was reassuringly 'still involved in running the family business' (*Screen International*, 17 November 1995: 28). The celebratory 'Midas Touch' *GoldenEye* promotional feature on Cubby Broccoli, made a particularly strong solo claim of authorial vision, worth quoting at length:

If one man can claim to have turned James Bond into a cultural icon, it is producer Albert Cubby Broccoli. Ian Fleming may have created the character, but without the medium of film, James Bond would not have reached the billions he has. Broccoli was responsible for getting... *Dr No* produced, then he nurtured the film industry's most successful franchise through three decades. It is rare for a producer to be better

known than the directors working for him, but Broccoli's name has become synonymous with Bond's. (ibid.)

The overriding impression given in the obituaries and retrospectives on Cubby Broccoli that followed his death in 1996 of his personality and career largely repeats the official narrative shaped by these publicity materials (*The Guardian*, 29 June 1996: 30; *The Times*, 29 June 1996: 8; *Variety*, 11-17 November 2002: A4). Two years after his death, Cubby Broccoli's posthumously published autobiography *When the Snow Melts* (1998) offers a first-person account of his role in the 007 productions but is obviously no less part of the heavily manufactured Bond producer legend. When Wendy Ide later reported on a BFI season dedicated to his films to mark the centenary of his birth, she opened *The Times* (2 April 2009: 12) article with an embellished retelling of the on-set spaghetti cooking anecdote, which she also presents as characteristic of Broccoli according to the authorised narrative. The two-month long 'Albert R. Broccoli Bond and Beyond' BFI season celebrated his career but especially 'the man behind Bond' image as presented in the publicity materials, and the press release announcement (2009) spoke of his 'legacy and impact of the franchise on film culture'.

The family business

The (self-)presentation of Cubby Broccoli as the original producer and creator of the Bond films provides an important context for how Broccoli is represented in a number of ways. Firstly, that she grew up with Bond is a recurrent element of biographical accounts in circulation. The introduction to her mini *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb) biographical entry reads that 'Not long after [her birth in 1960] Cubby Broccoli, and his new partner, Harry Saltzman, secured studio backing for an ambitious series of films'. It is said that she 'grew up

in the behind-the-scenes world of James Bond, travelling with her family around the world to various exotic locations'. In this version her childhood was spent 'play[ing] with the photocopy machines in the offices of Eon Productions', and there is also a popular anecdote about how on location shooting in Japan for 1967's *You Only Live Twice* she apparently 'caught a fever from the Japanese custom of sleeping on the floor'. In effect, James Bond comes to the rescue in the telling of this much-repeated story when 'Sean Connery, whose star status provided him with a comfortable bed, generously relinquished it so Barbara could properly fight her illness' (ibid.). When self-reporting her biography in interviews, Broccoli will usually be quoted saying something along the lines that: 'I thought James Bond was a real person until I was seven' (*Evening Standard*, 16 August 2012: 20). In interviews and profiles, the life story of Broccoli thereby becomes closely entwined with Bond's; a profile in *The Times* reflects, 'Here was a childhood, it seems, permeated by a man who does not exist' (10 January 2002: 2). To follow, Broccoli herself is quoted: 'He was like a mysterious relative who people talked about. You were always waiting for him to arrive at Christmas' (ibid.).

Secondly, it is recognised that Bond is a family business that has offered Broccoli (and her siblings) significant career opportunities. In promotional materials for the Bond films and Cubby Broccoli's (1998) memoir his pre-Bond life is a rags-to-riches story: from New York farmer to mail boy at Twentieth Century-Fox in Hollywood, to assistant to director, producer and screenwriter Howard Hawks, to co-producing with Allen in Britain at Warwick Films. Although some of the details might vary from source to source, the rags-to-riches narrative is used to highlight his achievement with the Bond series, starting with his partnership with Saltzman and image of 'visionary producers and risk-takers' mentioned earlier. For obvious reasons, the same narrative does not apply to Broccoli. Instead, not only is her biography invariably told in a way that highlights that James Bond has always been

part of her life and career, but without the rags-to-riches narrative it is also emphasised that she worked her way up through the franchise production hierarchy to reach the producer role. She became associate producer (with Tom Pevsner) on *The Living Daylights* (1987) and *Licence to Kill* (1989). In the production information for *Licence to Kill* it was pointedly advertised that ‘Barbara Broccoli has worked in the production and casting departments at Eon for many years. Her experience as an assistant director and her widespread casting knowledge has helped earn her the position of one of two associate producers’ on the Bond films.⁸ Prior to this she had onscreen credits as ‘Additional Assistant Director’ on *A View to a Kill* (1985) and ‘Executive assistant’ on *Octopussy* (1983). This officially endorsed narrative of Broccoli working her way up through the production ranks to earn her promotion to producer is largely taken up in the press, with only the very occasional negative reference to the spectre of nepotism. On 11 November 2002, *Time* reported uncertainly on the future of the franchise given the second-generation Broccolis’ inherited grip on Bond, quoting an anonymous ‘studio insider’ to illustrate that: ‘One industry gripe about this structure is that it breeds inertia’. The timing of this article is no doubt significant, appearing on the release of *Die Another Day*, which was to be the final film made with an actor in the Bond role chosen by Cubby Broccoli. *Time* predicted that: ‘The real test of the Broccoli-Wilson era will come when Brosnan gives up his 007 status’ (ibid.). Although in practice Brosnan did not quit as Bond but rather was replaced, six years later, after the commercial and critical success of *Casino Royale* and Craig’s Bond, the press adopted a markedly more positive interpretation of the Bond producers, saying that the ‘emphasis on family, on lineage and continuity is crucial to the Bond franchise and the weight of the Broccoli name’ (*The Times*², 10 January 2008: 2).

Thirdly, Broccoli is presented as a custodian of Bond, and the ‘Bondian’ film production team. Bondian is a term that has been used across industrial and popular

discourses to mean ‘in the spirit of James Bond’ and can describe the production ideology, formula and generic expectations that have come to define the franchise. When Janet Woollacott examines the conditions of production involved in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, she observes that new members of the production team ‘experienced a conscious effort by [Cubby] Broccoli (by this time the sole producer) and other members of his team to initiate them into the world of “Bondian filmmaking”’ (2009: 119). The initiation also meant joining the Bondian family, and Woollacott further comments that ‘it is surprising how many people have either continued to work on the Bond films or have returned to them after working on other films’ (ibid.). This same observation applies to the Bond franchise over the decades. The production information for *Moonraker* nicknamed Cubby Broccoli the ‘Godfather to the hard-working family of filmmakers who have collectively made the most successful big screen series in history possible’.⁹ In interviews Broccoli has continued to refer to ‘the extended family’ of Eon Productions both on screen and behind the scenes in relationship to her role as producer, frequently recalling the words of her father that: ‘if you have something you believe in and you get the best people around you and you create an atmosphere where they can do their best work, then all you have to do is stop people from screwing it up’ (*Variety*, 15 November 1999: 16). Adding, ‘I know that sounds very simple but it’s actually a very important thing to know’ (ibid.). It is notable that in this article and elsewhere Broccoli calls attention to the highly collaborative nature of the Bond film productions and the many creative contributions made to the franchise, especially the current Bond actor, the scriptwriters, the director, but also the influential and enduring legacy of Cubby Broccoli as producer-mentor-patriarch. Nevertheless, in a celebratory article for *Variety* titled ‘The Family Bond’, although recognition is given to others, the ultimate praise goes to the producers who are credited with building the over 50 years old franchise ‘into a creative and box office goldmine’, through the ‘studio turmoil’ and ‘regime changes’ of conglomerate era

Hollywood, thereby labelling them above all others the heroic ‘gatekeepers’ of the Bondian (15 January 2014: 73).

The Bondian

However, aspects of the negative stereotype of the producer as money obsessed, power-hungry and controlling have been used at times by the press and given a suitably Bondian interpretation. When looking back at the past, the image that the Bond producers presented in publicity materials did not go wholly unchallenged. Besides the positive profiles, promotional interviews and some outspoken comments about the British film industry, the BFI press cuttings file on Cubby Broccoli includes press stories from the mid-1970s onwards when Saltzman left Eon Productions, the litigation that occurred when Connery was involved in the development of a rival Bond film, which later became *Never Say Never Again* (1983), and various battles over the years with Bond actors about salary and earnings. Written when the original Bond producers’ relationship had publicly become strained, an article in the *Daily Express* replete with humorous villain references reflected on the experience of an expensive lunch with ‘Mr Big’ Broccoli: ‘His cufflinks are Fort Knox bricks. His bullet-grey eyes are plugged deep in his massive head...He wonders why I’m here, and says so. I assure him it’s not for the lobster soufflé (I’m disappointed he doesn’t eat piranha fish)’ (6 November 1974). Later, an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* playfully proposed that: ‘Broccoli. With his exotic name, his wealth, his impressive size and, surely, deceptively mild manner, he could make a splendid Bond villain himself’ (although the reporter goes on to say ‘except for one thing: people keep saying nice things about him’) (24 June 1979: 61).

On 21 August 2018 the official James Bond X (then Twitter) account tweeted the news that ‘Michael G. Wilson, Barbara Broccoli and Daniel Craig today announced that due

to creative differences Danny Boyle has decided to no longer direct Bond 25', leading to a great deal of media speculation about his exit and what this might mean next for the franchise. Four days later, the *Daily Mail* ran a typically sensationalist full page article headlined 'So who's the REAL BOND VILLAIN? The subheading continued '... the all-powerful producer Barbara Broccoli, her close friend Daniel Craig or the now ousted, right on director who thought he could reinvent 007?' (25 August 2018: 35) Broccoli was said to be in control of Bond and according to the article: 'To say she is formidable is an understatement. As [Michael G.] Wilson once told an interviewer: "Barbara scares the hell out of people. Everyone is frightened to death of her"'. To which it is said that she responded "Good! With a laugh' (ibid.). This idea of the Bond villain introduced by the headline obviously recalls someone who is rich and powerful being dangerously megalomaniac, although it should be noted that in the world of 007 the majority of evil villains have been male (Gerrard 2020: 171). The article mostly speaks negatively of Broccoli's hands-on creative control, which extends to her close working relationship with the Bond actor, illustrated by a large colour photograph of them sat together, leaning in toward each other, at a dinner event. 'From the outset Craig was "her" man', declares the article (*Daily Mail*, 25 August 2018: 36). As *Time* had predicted, the reinvention of the franchise with a new actor symbolised an important test for the current producers, and Broccoli's bond with Craig was widely highlighted by the media.

Yet it can be argued that the 'all-powerful producer' image in the *Daily Mail* article more readily draws parallels with another matriarchal figure of female agency in the franchise: Judi Dench's interpretation of Bond's boss at MI6. During the Brosnan and Craig eras Dench appeared in seven films from *GoldenEye* onwards in the role of the authoritative intelligence chief M to whom Bond must answer. In fact, the *Daily Mail* article opens with a description of Broccoli in the office set up of Eon Productions that, despite the villain

headline, makes her sound more M-like as a high level decisionmaker and the head of a British-based operation: ‘The headquarters of Eon Productions, from where Barbara Broccoli controls the Bond movie franchise with a rod of iron, are housed in an anonymous grey building in Central London.’ Adding, ‘It is here that the decision about who directs the next Bond will be made’ (ibid.: 35). This Broccoli-M association is further signalled in a humorous guide in *The Times* (23 August 2018: 4) on ‘how to build a Bond movie’ from around the same the time. The guide lists the ‘Boss woman’ producer as an essential component of Bond film production: ‘Bond may have his “M” but “B” (as in Barbara Broccoli) is the real-life power behind 007’ (ibid.).

It is noteworthy that the casting of a female M has been recognised as a key factor in the successful reinventions of Bond in the late 1990s and 2000s and is a decision that is mostly attributed to Broccoli. A *Telegraph* article that labels Broccoli as the producer who ‘kept James Bond relevant’ (2 November 2020) goes one step further in referring to Matthew Field and Ajay Chowdry’s book on the making of the Bond films, which draws on interviews with the casts and crews. The article uses *Some Kind of Hero* (2015) to claim that not only was the female M partly inspired by the then-director of MI5 Stella Remington but ‘partly by Broccoli herself. As co-writer [of *GoldenEye*] Bruce Feirstein observed, ““Barbara Broccoli enjoyed the odd bourbon and occasionally teased that Bond was a sexist and a dinosaur”’ (*Telegraph*, 2 November 2020). However, although M’s well-known line that Bond is a ‘sexist, misogynist dinosaur’ might superficially appear to update the gender politics of *GoldenEye*, its function is more accurately recognised to be ambivalent since ‘the film diffuses the obvious criticisms that could be made of the Bond character (that his attitude towards women is out of date in the 1990s) by voicing them itself through the agency of a female authority figure’ (Chapman 2007: 220). Both at the time and afterwards the impact of this change to on-screen representation in the franchise has enthusiastically been discussed by

media commentators and scholars, meaning any questions that may be raised about ‘such optimistic conclusions and false beliefs that gender equality has been achieved, as one might perceive through women in power like M’ (Konrad 2024: 207) must be equally applicable to Broccoli when attention is instead called to what happens behind-the-scenes on Bond film productions.

A rather less imaginative characterisation of Broccoli in the producer role by some of the press draws on the image and associations of the Bond Girl. Article and interview headlines like ‘The Woman Who Knows Bond Best’ (on the front page of the *Evening Standard*, 16 August 2012), or ‘Nobody knows him better: my lifelong affair with James Bond’ (*The Times*, 13 March 2013: 10-11), and occasional references made to Broccoli as the ‘real’ (*The Independent*, 21 September 2010: 33) or even ‘ultimate’ Bond Girl (*Evening Standard*, 16 August 2012: 20-21) demonstrate how gender might frame the relationship between a female producer and the Bond character in ways that would not apply to the franchise’s male producers. The ‘Bond Girl’ label has long been criticised for its sexism, and it has been argued that ‘any discussion which accepts the terms of reference suggested by the phrase ... is committed to constructing female gender identities and forms of sexuality in relation to the norms of masculinity supplied by the figure of Bond’ (Bennett and Woollacott 1987: 241). Traditionally, the Bond Girl is said to be revealing of how the media defines women by their looks and sexuality, although recent research on perceptions of women in the Bond franchise reports that in the eyes of the audience ‘today’s Bond Girl is strong and empowered’ (Funnell and Johnson 2020: 96). Notably, the press’s descriptions of Broccoli often favour the word ‘steely’ in recognition of her strength and determination, but usually with a qualifier related to her feminine appearance: ‘One senses that Broccoli, elegant, charming, has a core of steel’ writes the *Evening Standard* (16 August 2012: 21). In *The Times* she is described as ‘Glossy of hair and steely of purpose’ (23 August 2018: 4). Another

commentator declares: 'If you're convinced that no woman ever had a long-term relationship with Bond, think again' (Anon 2015: 34). Meanwhile, Broccoli's own standard reply to the question about the next Bond when there's already an actor in the role has been to use an incongruous (given the character is reputed to be the ultimate 'ladies' man') feminine analogy: "It's like asking on your wedding day who your next husband is going to be," she says' (*Variety*, 11-17 November 2002: A12).

Gender in James Bond during the late Craig era

The two areas where Broccoli is most often said to have had the biggest hand in modernising the Bond franchise is the casting of Craig and the representation of women in the films, as previously mentioned. Although any such claims in the press must of course be understood in relationship to the production and promotional discourses. It is crucial to be aware that when it comes to the female characters these 'production and promotional discourses of the films are at pains to position them as modern, progressive women' (Chapman 2010: 481), and what this means will also change over time. Media coverage of the role that gender has played in the Bond franchise has provided an especially important context for consideration of Broccoli's producer image at the end of the Craig era. This is a somewhat different if not entirely new context because in publicity interviews Broccoli (much more so than Wilson, or at least in print, according to my research) is routinely asked to comment on the sexism of the past and present Bond films. Interviewed for *The Times* after the 50th anniversary of the franchise and the record-breaking box-office of *Skyfall*, Broccoli was asked whether she had done anything to tackle the sexism of the Bond character. The article records her immediate reaction: 'She splutters. "Well of course I've consciously addressed it! How could I not? But, you know, like all women try to address it in their daily lives"' (*The Times*, 13 March 2013:

11). She adds: ““We don’t put up with a lot of the stuff that used to go on”” (ibid.). Further back, in the weeks running up to the release of *Quantum of Solace*, the *Sunday Telegraph* reported that Broccoli had defended the depiction of women in the early films but conceded that ‘the strong women of the 1960s were replaced [in the Moore era] by female characters who were little more than eye candy’ (21 September 2008: 3). These remarks inspired a two-page *Daily Mail* spread by the (self-identified Bond fan and feminist) author of *The Money Penny Diaries* book trilogy who picks out and positively assesses some strong female leads (Ursula Andress’s Honey Ryder, Diana Rigg’s Tracy di Vincenzo, but also in the Craig era Eva Green’s Vesper Lynd). ‘It’s a claim that’s horrified the Sisterhood. But here one female author dares to argue that, yes ... Bond girls are feminist icons!’ the *Daily Mail* headline exclaims (24 September 2008: 26-27). By way of introduction to the article, Samantha Weinberg presents ‘the woman behind Bond’ Broccoli as an unproblematic celebration of an exceptional woman: ‘Few women would disagree that she’s independent and successful, a role model for anyone who’s trying to punch their way through the proverbial glass ceiling’ (ibid.: 26).

However, the years between the release of *Spectre* and *No Time to Die* coincided with the rise of the MeToo, Times Up, and Black Lives Matter movements, and a distinct moment for UK and US popular culture. Resultantly, much of the engagement with *No Time to Die* in the long lead up to its release was concerned with how far the franchise would be impacted. In interviews Broccoli meanwhile publicly took some credit for playing an important creative role in the female characters and castings. Previously, the representation of Madeline Swann as a familiar ‘composite’ Bond girl type (Funnell 2018: 19) meant that on release *Spectre* was largely responded to as a film with predictable and conservative gender politics. Although at the age of 50, Monica Bellucci was loudly hailed as revolutionary in the publicity, the consensus after the film’s release was that the underutilisation of her character Lucia Sciarra

at best represented a missed opportunity. When *The Sunday Times* reported on this ‘Outcry over Bellucci’s 007 minutes on screen’ the article speculated that the criticisms that *Spectre* had so widely received ‘may be particularly disappointing to the Bond matriarch Barbara Broccoli’ (25 October 2015: 11). In the build up to Bond 25 (as it was then known) Broccoli spoke to *The Guardian* about the challenges that now faced the Bond franchise (‘Yes, she concedes, Bond cannot be considered a feminist property’) and reflected on the part she had played in how far the female characters had ‘transformed with the times’ (5 October 2018). This was recognised to extend to good practices on productions and Rosamund Pike is reported to have remarked of her experience filming *Die Another Day* that looking back Broccoli ““was way ahead of all this #MeToo movement” she said. “There wasn’t an ounce of feeling uncomfortable on that set”” (ibid.). Later during pre-production, the announcement that Lashana Lynch would be the first female 007 in *No Time to Die* was widely understood to be significant because: ‘As a black woman, the casting of Lynch alone challenges the legacy of white masculinity and its connection to British identity in the Bond series’ (Funnell 2019).

Much of the pre-publicity and press focused on Lynch in the role of Nomi who soon became the film’s most widely discussed female character, mainly read as a key element of the current producers’ response to the socio-cultural moment of its production. In London the *Hollywood Reporter* had interviewed both Lynch and Ana de Armas at Pinewood Studios about ‘bringing James Bond into the #MeToo age’ (6 November 2019). Speaking to *The Independent* on 9 October 2021 when the film had finally made it to movie theatres, Lynch publicly credited Broccoli with Nomi’s ‘richness making it to the screen’ (‘In Nomi there is a guarded vulnerability that belies an icy veneer’). ‘One thing Barbara does very well is listen’, Lynch is reported to say to her interviewer: ‘She’s the kind of white producer who will have a Black actor in the cast and actually have conversations about their Black experiences and

what they think the character and the script should be like' (ibid.). Although that Lynch was the new 007 in *No Time to Die* but not the next Bond was also important. Lynch spoke to this in the interview with *The Independent*. Asked 'Should the Bond mantle be passed on to a woman?' she responded that the more important question is 'when do we give a woman the lead of her own franchise?' (ibid.).

The question of who the next Bond could be is perennially raised and responded to by Broccoli over the years, and the choice of actor made by the producers has always been the subject of much speculation, controversy, and headlines. An example of this occurred after she was interviewed for an in-depth profile in *Variety* when the conversation inevitably turned to Craig leaving: whereas discussions around the representation of women in Bond have been used to support claims for Broccoli as a modernising force and even a champion of the roles for women in the franchise, the reporting on her comment on the future of the Bond role that 'he can be of any color, but he is male' (15 January 2020: 39) might easily be used to problematise aspects of her commitment to diversity. In response *The Independent* printed an opinion piece headed 'The Bond producer thinks women deserve better than a female James Bond. I couldn't disagree more', from journalist and author Clémence Michallon who imagined: 'I want a woman behind the wheel of that Aston Martin. I want a woman in a very stylish pantsuit who sleeps with men she barely knows and doesn't give them a second thought after the post-sex shower' (17 January 2020). Alternatively, once Broccoli had seemed to say she could be open to a non-binary Bond in an interview with the *Girls on Film* podcast (Smith 2021), the *Mail on Sunday* could not resist reporting that 'Now producer Barbara Broccoli intends to emasculate Bond for real. She wants whoever succeeds Craig to play a superwoke, sensitive 007' Asking 'Oh dear, is the world ready for a non-binary secret agent, driving a Prius and drinking an alcohol-free herbal infusion, stirred, not shaken?' (30 September 2022: 21). However, of course at the other end of the scale, those opposite claims

made in retrospect about her contribution since the mid-1990s as a female Bond producer, such as that ‘With a woman at the helm, the franchise that often glorified the motif of male dominance suddenly became more equal’ (*Hollywood Reporter*, 8 December 2021: 88), are not without problems either. Perhaps most directly confronting on this score is *The Guardian* article about Bond 25 where the reporter asks ‘Wouldn’t hiring a female director – or screenwriter – on the next Bond film send the strongest message?’ “Yes, absolutely,” says Broccoli. “As a female producer, of course I’d like to do that” (5 October 2018).

Conclusion

This article has contributed to the study of significant women behind Bond by calling attention to key aspects of the discursive presentation of franchise producer Barbara Broccoli in the media. The approach was in part inspired by observations about an enduring negative stereotype of (male) film producers, and pressbook evidence showing that the original Bond producers were differently caricatured in publicity materials beginning in the 1960s. This affectionate portrayal of the Bond producer is understood in this article as a positive hands-on caricature in contrast to negative producer stereotypes. This approach has also shown that, unsurprisingly, since there was a highly marketable image presented of the producer’s (rather than the films’ directors) power behind the franchise, the Broccoli name and accompanying discourses of family, lineage and continuity play an important role in the marketing and promotion of Bond during the Brosnan and Craig eras. The Bond franchise is unusual if not unique in its status in British cinema, being an international big budget co-production, the producers must maintain a relationship with a major Hollywood studio in order to continue making, marketing and promoting the films. Historically, and in the twenty-first century, the producer is integral to the Bondian production ideology and popular discourses, although

there are some variations in how the hands-on gate-keeping approach to the franchise character is interpreted by the press. Whereas Cubby Broccoli was characterised in publicity materials as larger-than-life with ‘a personality as great as the mammoth productions he personally supervises’,¹⁰ Broccoli (with Michael G. Wilson) is presented as ‘low key’ (*Telegraph*, 20 November 2020) in comparison. Although a high degree of public visibility might be expected to come with the role of Bond producer, the woman behind the image and the day-to-day business of film production largely remains hidden in favour of the authorised narratives shaped by the earlier promotional materials, references made to Bondian character types, or popular discourses of gender which the mainstream press reproduce.

This research joins other studies that seek to give greater attention to the producer in British cinema. Much of the research to date has focused on male producers, meaning there is obvious value in identifying and examining more women in the producer role. However, as a powerful woman producer at the head of the biggest franchise in the history of British cinema Broccoli can also ‘exemplify the exceptional nature of those [women] who have managed to carve out successful careers against the grain of an industry that continually marginalise them’ (Cobb and Williams 2020: 97). That Broccoli has greatly been advantaged by family connections does not go unrecognised. It is inevitable that as ‘a woman’ (to recall Bond’s highly questionable reaction to Dr Goodhead in *Moonraker*) producer of the Bond films the discourses around Broccoli can shape and be shaped by gender in different ways. This requires attention beyond onscreen representation, to consider important matters of gender representation behind the camera that especially concern this special issue. After all, both the Bond franchise and the British film industry continue practices that contribute to ongoing inequalities, even as inclusion and diversity have gained greater awareness in recent years. Given the focus on the image of the Bond producer it was beyond the scope of the present

article to provide a comprehensive account of Broccoli's labour and career in the entertainment industry, but it is worth acknowledging that outside the Bond franchise other British film and theatre projects she has produced have been discussed for focusing on female characters and championing women behind-the-scenes. Attention to these non-Bond projects, and Broccoli's role in the industry, may well warrant another study to develop the conceptualisation I have considered. However, the popular image of the Bond producer referred to here plays a crucial role in how Broccoli is represented, and at the time of writing, with no actor in the role of Bond, she remains a prominent focus of the media attention on the franchise.

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Notes

¹ She has however been interviewed along with Wilson for two books of interviews with leading producers: Helen de Winter's *What I Really Want to Do is Produce* (2006) and Tim Adler's *The Producers* (2004).

² *Goldfinger* pressbook (UK, 1964), p. 12.

³ *You Only Live Twice* pressbook (UK, 1967), p. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *The Spy Who Loved Me* pressbook (UK, 1977), p. 15.

⁶ *Moonraker* pressbook (UK, 1979), p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*; *For Your Eyes Only* pressbook (UK, 1981), p. 18.

⁸ *Licence to Kill* production information (UK, 1989), BFI press cuttings.

⁹ *Moonraker* production information (UK, 1979), p. 22, BFI press cuttings.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*