

Introduction

Llewella Chapman and Claire Hines

The inspiration for this special issue of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* on ‘The Women Behind James Bond’ relates to both real world debates and emergent research about gender and the production of the longest running film franchise in British cinema history. The screen Bond is now over 60 years old and has been a cultural phenomenon since the 1960s, when the film franchise began with Sean Connery in the role of the British secret service agent. Over the decades, the franchise has been significantly influenced by, and shaped developments in, the global media industry and social and cultural changes of the period, in particular with respect to gender, but the films which famously introduced the cinematic Bond were co-produced by Eon Productions’ Albert R. ‘Cubby’ Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, using Ian Fleming’s literary creation. Iconic publicity photographs documenting this history show producer Broccoli, author Fleming, actor Connery, and producer Saltzman together at the London offices of Eon Productions before *Dr No* (1962) began filming. The well-circulated pre-production photograph (Figure 1) shows Fleming seated at a desk with pen poised in hand, and the other men stand grouped, relaxed, and smiling behind him, to visually illustrate a powerful male genesis story. As this type of imagery would suggest, in the production of Bond, men have been seen to be the dominant players, and reading the Bond novels it is further evident that the fictional character’s attitude to women originated with Fleming. Given this issue’s goal to make the history less male-centric by showcasing and analysing the contributions made by women working on the Bond films from the very start onwards, it would seem appropriate to quote upfront Bond’s now outdated opinion on gendered labour, expressed in the 1953 novel *Casino Royale*: ‘These blithering women who

thought they could do a man's work. Why the hell couldn't they stay at home and mind their pots and pans and stick to their frocks and gossip and leave men's work to the men' (Fleming [1953] 2004: 99). Although this is the product of conservative 1950s British cultural attitudes, and in the Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson production era the outlook of the Bond character in the 21st franchise instalment *Casino Royale* (2006) was adjusted to the new millennium, gender in James Bond nevertheless remains an important site of analysis.

Figure 1: Ian Fleming surrounded by (from left to right) Albert R. 'Cubby' Broccoli, Sean Connery and Harry Saltzman. (Source: *007.com* (2017), <https://www.007.com/focus-of-the-week-cubby-broccoli/>, accessed 9 May 2024.)

There has been a great deal of commentary and academic scholarship on the problematic relationship between Bond and gender roles and representation, from the gender politics of Fleming's writing, to the marketable and contradictory role of the Bond Girl, and in the lead up to 25th Bond film *No Time to Die* (2021) much publicity and media attention was given to the casting of Lashana Lynch as the first Black, and female, 007.¹ Around this time, the announcement from Eon Productions that Pheobe Waller-Bridge had been hired to contribute to the film script also generated a lot of excitable media coverage. The focus of this attention was most frequently and consistently on gender, and the impact that Waller-Bridge as a high-profile female creative may (or may not) have on Bond and any female characters in the film. This moment was also an opportunity for some of the press to at last recognise an overlooked woman from the history of the Bond film productions, since Waller-Bridge was the second woman to gain a writing credit. Previously, Johanna Harwood was the first woman screenwriter to receive credit on *Dr No* and *From Russia With Love* (1963), as Melanie Williams (2020) has researched to make an important scholarly intervention. Williams rightly advocates that telling the story of Harwood's career in the British film industry and formative contribution to the franchise 'not only provides valuable insights into

the genesis of Bond on screen, it also shows the importance of incorporating production studies into discussions of gender and James Bond films' (2020: 117). Although highly valuable, much of the existing academic work in Bond studies to date has otherwise concentrated more on the representational gender politics within the films. Even when the role that women have historically played in the film franchise is given detailed examination in the analysis of the Bond Girl, or other women of Bond, this scholarship tends to be predominantly based on the women in roles on screen (for example, Funnell 2015; Germanà 2020), as opposed to off- or behind the screen.² However, the specific academic attention that Williams (2020) has paid to Harwood's previously, and largely, unrecognised contribution to the early films, and other timely research on gender, labour and the creativity involved in costuming the world of 007 (Chapman 2022), has begun to highlight a rich history of women working in relation to the franchise that is developed by this issue.

Furthermore, beyond Bond studies, the articles here have implications for our understanding and awareness of the careers and roles played by women in the wider film industry in different periods. As such, another area of intervention made by the articles in this journal issue is that of feminist production studies within the (British) film industry more generally, and the difficulties of researching women who have historically worked within it owing to their previous erasure or marginalisation within academic scholarship. This is, in part, due to the framing of how this industry is traditionally promoted and presented in both publicity materials and the media, often affording male industry workers the dominant voice in discourses surrounding film production, with the exception of when the labour is deemed 'women's work', such as 'continuity', 'hair and make-up' or 'wardrobe'. It is also further exacerbated by the smaller percentage of archival and oral testimony available in research repositories that have been donated by women film workers. More recently, work has been done in this vital area of gathering research data and the testimony of women who have

worked or are currently working in the British film industry, including the website ‘Women and British Silent Cinema’, developed by Nathalie Morris and Claire Watson (2007-), Shelley Cobb’s and Linda Ruth Williams’s AHRC-funded project ‘Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK, 2000-2015’ (2014-2018), and Melanie Bell’s AHRC-funded project ‘Women’s Work in British Film and Television’ (2014-2017).

It is owing to the both the lack of research on the women who have worked within the James Bond film franchise, and broader attempts to reclaim the voices of women working in the British film industry, that this issue redresses this gender imbalance evident in Bond studies. The articles here offer a snapshot of women who have been employed by Eon Productions on the Bond films, and research the labour and agency of the women working behind the camera, and in on- and off- screen roles. They include, where possible, an analysis of primary source materials such as artworks, correspondence, interviews, publicity materials and press reception to understand the working practices of individual women and how they have impacted on the making and presentation of the Bond films. The first half of this journal issue, with articles written by Claire Hines, Stephanie Jones and Llewella Chapman, focuses on women working behind the screen, namely in the roles of producer (Barbara Broccoli), casting director (Debbie McWilliams), and wardrobe mistress (Eileen Sullivan). The authors work toward understanding the nature, stereotypical image and the labour behind these roles, and how these women developed their craft and career through working on the Bond films. The second half of the issue, with articles written by James Chapman, Melanie Williams and Laura Crossley, seeks to address the women working on- and off- the screen in different ways, including Nikki van der Zyl (voice artist), the Bond Girls Shirley Eaton and Margaret Nolan, and Marie Mouroum (stunt performer), all of whom have worked to establish their voice, creativity and contribution to the Bond films both during and after production. Across all of the articles, it is evidenced that there are differences between class, race and power

relations within the roles that these women inhabit. It should further be noted that there remains a plethora of avenues to reclaim ‘The Women Behind James Bond’, to ensure more, diverse, voices are acknowledged in future scholarship, for example other women working in below-the-line roles such as continuity, set design and finance, as well as women of colour employed on the Bond film franchise; work which is vital to ensure that women in the industry, historically and contemporaneously, are seen, and indeed, heard.

Notes

¹ The authors in this issue use ‘Bond Girl’ to refer to women of Bond (with the exception of M and Money Penny) in recognition of the way the phrase has been used by the media no matter what type of character or role the woman might play in the film.

² It must be said that as authors in this special issue note, women’s voices can be heard at times in publications that give the behind-the-scenes story of the James Bond film franchise, or in biographical accounts of their lives.

References

Bell, M. (2014-2017), *Women’s Work in British Film and Television*, available at:

<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/womenswork/womens-work-research-project/> (accessed 10 May 2024).

Chapman, L. (2022), *Fashioning James Bond: Costume, Gender and Identity in the World of 007*, London: Bloomsbury.

Cobb, S. and Williams, L. R. (2014-2018), *Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK, 2000-2015*, available at:

<https://callingtheshots138740090.wordpress.com/> (accessed 10 May 2024).

Fleming, I. ([1953] 2004), *Casino Royale*, London: Penguin Classics.

Funnell, L. (ed.) (2015), *For His Eyes Only: The Women of James Bond*, London and New York: Wallflower Press.

Germanà, M. (2020), *Bond Girls: Body, Fashion and Gender*, London: Bloomsbury.

Morris, N. and Watson, C. (2007-), *Women and Silent British Cinema*, available at: <https://womenandsilentbritishcinema.wordpress.com/> (accessed 10 May 2024).

Williams, M. (2020), 'Her Word Was Her Bond: Johanna Harwood, Bond first Woman Screenwriter', in S. Gerrard (ed.), *From Blofeld to Moneypenny: Gender in James Bond*, Bingley: Emerald Publishing, pp. 117-127.

Biographies:

Llewella Chapman is a visiting scholar based at the University of East Anglia. Her research interests include British cinema, gender, costume and fashion, and video games. She is the author of *Fashioning James Bond: Costume, Gender and Identity in the World of 007* (Bloomsbury, 2022) and *From Russia With Love* (BFI/Bloomsbury, 2022). Her next monograph will be *Costume and British Cinema: Labour, Agency and Creativity, 1900-1985*.

Claire Hines is Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of East Anglia. Her research interests include gender and sexuality, genre, and James Bond. Her most recent book is the co-edited collection (with Terence McSweeney and Stuart Joy) *James Bond Will Return: Critical Perspectives on the 007 Film Franchise* (Wallflower Press, 2024).