

CLASSIC DRIVER

007 things you didn't know about James Bond

Lead

Whether you've fallen asleep on Christmas Day watching Goldfinger for the tenth time, or you're an avid fan of both the films and the novels, James Bond possesses a certain charm that is irritatingly enviable. Here are (00)7 things you didn't know about our favourite secret agent...

Half what?



Here's one you won't believe: James Bond – film's most iconic character, a staple of suave, suited Britishness – is actually half Swiss. Yes, in an obituary written by Ian Fleming for 'You Only Live Twice', it's revealed that Bond's father Andrew was Scottish, but his mother, Monique Delacroix, was Swiss. Tragically, both died in a mountain-climbing accident when James was just 11, and he lived with an aunt before heading off to Eton.

Over going 'under'?



Did you know that Bond has resigned from MI6 three times? First, in 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' (though Moneypenny subversively changes it to a mere two weeks' leave), then in 'Licence to Kill', when – rather aptly – his licence to kill is subsequently revoked, prompting him to go solo as a rogue agent, and finally in 'Casino Royale', after tasting normality in Venice with his beloved Vesper Lynd. James Bond enjoying a peaceful retirement? No; considering that he's barely aged in the past 52 years, something tells us 007's not quite over going 'under' just yet.

Family values



The Bond family motto 'Orbis non sufficit', as seen on a coat of arms in the 1969 film 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service', translates from Latin as simply 'The world is not enough'. Fast-forward 30 years and Pierce Brosnan plays 007 in, sure enough, 'The World Is Not Enough'. Near the end of the film, the villainess Elektra King tells James he could have had the world. He replies with the film's title. "A foolish sentiment" says King. "Family motto", signs off Bond. He is smooth, isn't he?

A mundane name



While dreaming up a name for his new, fictional secret agent, Fleming allegedly wanted something very mundane to make the character sound ‘uninteresting’ and ‘extremely dull’. Quite why, we’re not sure, but that’s another matter. Fleming turned to a nearby ornithology book, ‘Birds of the West Indies’ written by a Dr. James Bond, and a eureka moment ensued. In ‘Die Another Day’ the book makes a cameo appearance when Pierce Brosnan is pictured twitching on a beach in Cuba. Naturally, the only birds around are of the human variety.

A step-in silhouette



The famous opening gun barrel sequence was immortalised in the first three James Bond films. But it isn’t Sean Connery who stars as the suited silhouette. Nope, Sean wasn’t available (or perhaps his toupé was still being perfected) so stuntman Bob Simmons stepped in to fill the role, turning and shooting in an impeccable manner. Cue the soundtrack.

Choose your weapon wisely



James Bond’s original gun of choice was the pocket pistol Beretta 418, but a disgruntled fan wrote to Fleming arguing that it was a lady’s weapon and ineffectual in combat. Before the Dr. No novel, another reader, this time a firearms expert named Geoffrey Boothroyd, suggested swapping it for a more powerful Walther and offered other expert advice on Bond’s arsenal. Fleming was thrilled with the information, and decided to write a new armorer into the book named Major Boothroyd (aka Q) in thanks.

The 'could-have-been' Bonds



Just six actors have played James Bond, which is startling when you consider that there have been 23 films. More impressive is the star-studded list of actors who almost played the promiscuous character. This includes, to name but a few, Michael Caine, Hugh Grant, Ralph Fiennes, Liam Neeson (he will find you, and he will kill you), and David Niven. The latter was Fleming’s number one choice, though the film’s producers opted for Connery instead. Niven later starred in the 1967 spoof of ‘Casino Royale’.

