



EVERETT COLLECTION

# BOND GIRLS

## OVER *Girl* POWER

Bond girls go beyond appealing; they're true pop-culture icons.

**BY ELIZABETH ANDERSON LOPEZ**

**T**wo of the most anticipated aspects of James Bond films are the villains and the girls — which are sometimes one and the same. From their sex appeal to their action sequences, it's the Bond girls who leave viewers with their breathing shaken and loins stirred. Here we have several Bond experts weigh in on the girls' popularity, characteristics, differences from novels to films, and how they help define both Bond and the franchise.

From the beginning, “these were very new kinds of action/adventure films featuring an antihero, a concept relatively new to cinema,” says Raymond Benson, author of *The James Bond Bedside Companion* and the fourth official Bond

novelist. And the female characters were key right from the start.

“Along with the action and spy story that capitalized on the Cold War, there was sex and violence (as [producer] ‘Cubby’ Broccoli allegedly put it, it was ‘sex and violence for the whole family’),” Benson adds. “So the glamour element certainly played a big part in establishing the ‘Bond girl’ as an icon of sexuality, beauty and, I think, most importantly — liberation.”

“There’s an attempt to characterize them as independent-minded and strong-willed,” notes James Chapman, professor of film studies at the University of Leicester in England and author of *Licence To Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*. “I wouldn’t say that attempt is always



Shirley Eaton as the ill-fated Jill Masterson in *Goldfinger*.

## Noteworthy Bond Girls

While it's impossible to include everyone's favorite Bond girl, here are a few fan favorites, including some behind-the-scenes facts and déjà vu actresses.

Definitely the first, and some say best, **Ursula Andress'** Honey Ryder emerges from the sea in a skimpy white bikini in *Dr. No* (1962), thereby launching the legend — and fantasy — of Bond girls. Andress revisits Bond as Vesper Lynd in the 1967 version of *Casino Royale*.

Sylvia Trench, played by **Eunice Gayson**, was the first Bond girl to appear twice in both *Dr. No* and *From Russia With Love* (1963).

Played by **Shirley Eaton**, Jill Masterson famously dies from being covered in gold paint in *Goldfinger* (1964). And no, despite the rumors, Eaton did not actually die from asphyxiation from the paint. As a testament to the pop-culture iconography, Eaton reprised her golden girl portrait on the cover of *LIFE* magazine.

**Martine Beswick** played two Bond girls: Zora in *From Russia With Love* and Paula Caplan in *Thunderball* (1965).

Maud Adams played **Andrea Anders** in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) and later the title character in *Octopussy* (1983). According to IMDB.com, she reappeared as the uncredited "Woman in Fisherman's Wharf" in 1985's *A View to a Kill*.

**Cassandra Harris** played Countess Lisl in *For Your Eyes Only* (1981). Harris had another Bond connection — she was the late wife of Bond actor Pierce Brosnan before he took on the spy role.

**Monica Bellucci** as Lucia Sciarra in *Spectre* (2015) marks a new generation. At 51, Bellucci has surpassed Honor Blackman at 39 as the oldest Bond girl. The title may take some getting used to; Bellucci has reportedly said, "I'm not a girl, I'm a woman; I'm a mature woman."

successful, and some of them have been rather stereotypical screaming bimbos. Poor Britt Ekland got a rotten deal as a ditzzy Mary Goodnight in *The Man with the Golden Gun* — the character in the book is a lot more intelligent — though the worst excesses of Bond bimboism must surely have been Tanya Roberts [in the role of Stacy Sutton] in *A View to a Kill!*"

## Beyond the Bimbo Reputation

Writing off the characters because of their beauty does them, and popular culture, a disservice. "Bond girls are nothing if not summarily dismissed, repeatedly, novel after novel and movie after movie..." says Michelle Disler, who has a Ph.D. in nonfiction creative writing and wrote *[Bond, James]: alphabet, anatomy, [auto]biography*. "But on closer inspection, Bond



Daniela Bianchi as Tatiana in *From Russia with Love*.

PHOTOS: EVERETT COLLECTION



Tanya Roberts as Stacy Sutton in *A View to a Kill*.

girls are capable, intelligent and more than self-sufficient, rendered dependent on Bond once conscripted into his plans to destroy the villain's vain hope for world domination. They are girls, and they are bombshells, but if sex is power, they are aware ... they have power that can be legitimized."

When looking at the "Bondology" of the franchise, to borrow Chapman's term, he also suggests taking a closer look beyond the typical typecasts. "There's a tendency to regard the Bond movies as comic-book-type entertainment and to dismiss all the characters — Bond, the girls, the villains

— as stereotypes, which they are, of course, to an extent," Chapman says. "But we should also give some thought to how popular fiction works, and what are the cultural and ideological values it represents and promotes. Bond himself, for example, stands for loyalty, patriotism and masculine heroism."

That discerning lens also helps determine characteristics of great Bond girls though, of course, choosing favorites is highly subjective. "Some might argue that a Bond girl is only as good as her screen presence, but I argue that her character must be a well-written one," Benson says. "This is what makes, say, Ursula Andress' (*Dr. No*) and Daniela Bianchi's (*From Russia with Love*) characters more rounded than, say, Claudine Auger's (*Thunderball*)." Benson lists Akiko Wakabayashi (*You Only Live Twice*), Maryam d'Abo (*The Living Daylights*) and Carey Lowell (*Licence to Kill*) as portraying among the best-written and -acted and most underrated Bond girls.

Chapman, too, touts smarts, not just sexiness, and selects Diana Rigg (Tracy Draco in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) and Honor Blackman (Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger*) as his favorites. "I think they're both a cut above some of the others in their acting abilities, and the characters are better written than most," Chapman said. "More generally, I like the characters who have a scene or two where they stand up to Bond and don't immediately fall for his charms."

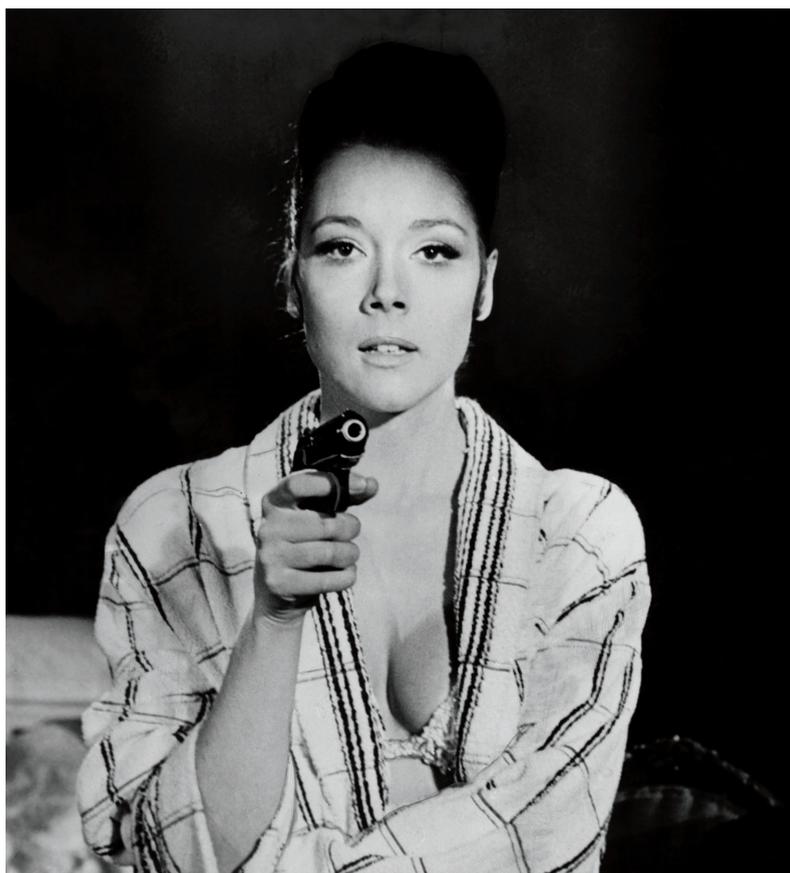
As a “scientific” alternative to the subjective preferences of individual Bond girls, there is a formulaic structure to several of the movies. “In many of the early films, there is the three-girl formula,” Benson says. “First there is a good girl in the story who may or may not become a ‘sacrificial lamb’ (she dies); then there is a bad girl, whom Bond beds for the purposes of getting closer to the enemy or whatever (she usually dies, too); and then there is the final good girl Bond ends the movie with, almost always in a boat. This three-girl formula is not always present and diminished in later years, but it established how Bond girls relate to the story being told.”

Another formula to evolve somewhat is how the Bond girls have been portrayed throughout the decades. “In the 1960s, the films reflected the generally sexist attitudes toward women that prevailed at the time,” Chapman says. “In the 1970s and 1980s, the filmmakers attempted to address this sexism by writing supposedly more ‘equal’ and ‘independent’ roles.” Chapman points to Bond girls who possess skills that Bond himself lacks, such as Anya Amasova, the KGB’s equal to Bond in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, and Holly Goodhead, a space-shuttle pilot in *Moonraker*.

Benson pinpoints changes made by the arrival of the era of Brosnan’s Bond, citing Izabella Scorupco, who portrayed Natalya Simonova in *GoldenEye*, and Michelle Yeoh, who played Wai Lin in *Tomorrow Never Dies*,



*Akiko Wakabayashi as Aki in You Only Live Twice, with Tetsuro Tamba and Sean Connery.*



*Diana Rigg as Tracy Draco in On Her Majesty's Secret Service.*

PHOTOS: EVERETT COLLECTION



Judi Dench played M to Pierce Brosnan's James Bond in *Die Another Day*.

as clearly holding their own as Bond's equals.

### **Bond Women**

The female villains and love interests are collectively known as Bond girls, but Miss Moneypenny (strictly a film character) and M have a different dynamic. "In the very early days, Lois Maxwell as Miss Moneypenny was considered a Bond girl," Benson says. "As she aged, though, audiences looked at her more as just the recurring character she became, especially since there was no sex going on between her and Bond, just flirtation. Perhaps the key to defining who and who is not a Bond girl is the sexual element that is in play with Bond himself."

M, recently played by the Oscar-winner Dame Judi Dench, could be considered the ultimate Bond woman, if you will, as a counterpoint to the Bond girls. "When M appeared as a woman in the 1995 film *GoldenEye*," Disler notes, "she lectures Bond within an inch of his life, calling him a 'dinosaur' and 'a relic of the Cold War,' a move M makes repeatedly for as long as she occupies the role: lecturing her boy as if she were his mother."

Moneypenny and M also stand out from the Bond girls as strong elements of continuity. Dench played M opposite two different actors in seven films in the franchise, while Maxwell portrayed Moneypenny in 15 films against three Bonds. That makes both Bond women worth showcasing as unique jewels in the 007 crown.



*Eva Green as Vesper Lynd in Casino Royale.*

### **The Women Behind the Spy**

One could argue that a Bond girl wouldn't exist without Bond, but we see how the girls help define him, as well. Vesper Lynd (played by Eva Green in *Casino Royale*) and Tracy Draco (Diana Rigg in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*), in particular, have crucial roles in forming Bond's identity.

Bond fell in love with Vesper and was willing to quit the service until she betrayed him. "He was very bitter and then,



*The only woman ever to "tame" Bond: Tracy Draco.*

TOP: SONY PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; BOTTOM: EVERETT COLLECTION

I suppose you could say, used women the same way he used cigarettes, alcohol, food, and the thrill of danger — as a sensory and sensual experience,” Benson says.

Bond is betrayed again by fate when his wife, Tracy, is murdered mere minutes after their wedding. Ian Fleming, writer of the original James Bond books and short stories, might have created a man based in his own image, assigning additional significance to Tracy Draco’s character. Many have reported Fleming used former lover Muriel Wright, who was killed (see below), as inspiration for Tracy’s background, further mirroring his grief for the deceased Wright with that of Bond’s grief for Tracy.

“I think what Fleming was doing here — and which the films, to their credit, followed through — was imbuing Bond

**Muriel Wright**, Ian Fleming’s longtime lover, is said to have inspired not just the Tracy Draco character in *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* but the entire concept of the Bond girls. After Wright was killed during an air raid in 1944, Fleming had to identify her body. He was devastated and reportedly idealized her for the rest of his life. Like Wright, Fleming’s Bond girls are beautiful and athletic but also tragic, often dying at a young age.

## Bond, Benson’s Bond

Raymond Benson holds a very unique perspective on all things Bond. He wrote the nonfiction book, *The James Bond Bedside Companion*, and Ian Fleming Publications Ltd. selected Benson as the fourth Bond writer from 1997 to 2003. He’s written six original James Bond novels, three novelizations (films turned into novels) and three short stories. Here is a Q&A about his experience with Bond, including creating Bond girls.

**Q:** What was your approach/inspiration when creating the Bond girls for your novels?

**A:** I suppose I went with what I knew, what was expected and what I liked. I hope my characters were more independent, liberated and smarter than what the usual perception of a Bond girl was at the time. My directive from the Ian Fleming Estate was to make my books more like the current films — more action, gadgets, a little more sex — but at the same time I attempted to keep Bond himself somewhat anachronistic for the times by keeping the various vices of Fleming’s original literary character.

**Q:** Before you started writing the Bond books and novelizations, what sort of parameters/guidelines were you given, especially related to the Bond girls?

**A:** I was discouraged by the estate from exploring Bond’s feelings about Tracy [Bond’s wife, from *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*] in depth, and I’m guessing the other continuation authors were, as well.

[In] *Zero Minus Ten*, that was one thing the Fleming Estate asked me to do — make M a woman so the books were in sync with the current films.

**Q:** Talk about your novelizations with scenes not in the films: additional Wai Lin scenes in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, for example.

**A:** If you put into prose what is actually in a screenplay, you most likely will run about 20,000 to 30,000 words too short to be a complete novel. Therefore, authors who do tie-in novels are usually given the freedom to create additional scenes (approved by the license-holder).

**Q:** Who is your favorite Bond girl from your own creation?

**A:** From my books, that’s a tough question. I like them all — but probably Hope Kendall (*High Time to Kill*) and Tylyn Mignonne (*Never Dream of Dying*) the most.

**Q:** Anything else you think fans would appreciate learning?

**A:** When I write my novels, even my own books since doing Bond, I always “cast” the parts in my head. ... This helped me in creating the character and her dialogue. However, that information is for me and me alone. Fans will just have to guess who I was thinking of for a specific character!

## What “Bond Girl Curse”?

It’s a popular belief that many actresses drop off the cinematic face of the earth after playing a Bond girl. But James Chapman, professor of film studies at the University of Leicester in England and author of *Licence To Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*, reminds us that some of the women, especially in the earlier films and smaller parts, were models rather than professional actresses and weren’t necessarily looking to build film careers. To disprove the so-called curse, here are five who thrived after their “Bonds” had been broken.

**1. Kim Basinger:** Domino Petacchi in *Never Say Never Again* (1983). Basinger won an Oscar for Best Actress in a Supporting Role in 1998 for *L.A. Confidential*.

**2. Halle Berry:** Jinx Johnson in *Die Another Day* (2002). Berry won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for *Monster’s Ball* before *Die Another Day* was released. She also earned a Golden Globe for *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* in 2000. Along with critical acclaim, Berry has achieved significant popularity in the X-Men franchise, which also features fellow Bond girl Famke Janssen.

**3. Rosamund Pike:** Miranda Frost in *Die Another Day* (2002). Pike was nominated for an Oscar, a Screen Actors Guild award and a Golden Globe for 2014’s *Gone Girl*.

**4. Diana Rigg:** Tracy in *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969). Already known for her role in TV’s *The Avengers* (1965-1968) before Bond, Rigg received a British Academy Television Award for Best Actress in *Mother Love* in 1989, a British Academy Television Special Award in 2000 for *The Avengers* (shared with fellow Bond girl Honor Blackman) and most recently two Emmy nominations for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series for *Game of Thrones*.

**5. Jane Seymour:** Solitaire in *Live and Let Die* (1973). In addition to playing *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* (1993-1998), Seymour won an Emmy in 1988 for Outstanding Supporting Actress in *Onassis: The Richest Man In the World*.



with the makeup of ‘the tragic hero,’” Chapman says. “He’s lost the woman/women he loves, which helps explain his emotional detachment from others.”

### Page vs. Screen

As with any book-to-screen adaptation, there are similarities and dissimilarities from Fleming’s books to the movies. Benson sees significant differences, which could be ironically described as the Bond girls being more fleshed out on paper than on celluloid. “These women were usually outdoorsy, athletic, independent and tough — more so as the series went on,” Benson says. “This is especially true in the Fleming novels — his characters are much more liberated



Claudine Auger in *Thunderball*.

TOP: WARNER BROTHERS/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; MIDDLE: MGM/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; BOTTOM: EVERETT COLLECTION



*The newest Moneypenny: Naomie Harris in Skyfall.*

and independent than their film counterparts.”

In contrast, Disler sees more changes in Bond himself when comparing the two media. “I’ve always maintained the Bond in the novels is less certain, more fallible than in the Bond movies,” she says. She summarizes Bond’s approach in the films as “women first, work later” and the novels as “work first, with plenty of mistakes, and women later.”

Another area with a marked difference between the novels and films is the women’s backgrounds. In Fleming’s books, “the girl” is usually a very similar physical type and always Caucasian, Chapman notes. “In the films, though, we’ve had more diverse physical types and some Bond girls from different ethnic groups,” he adds.

With dozens of women playing opposite 007, whether as

sidekick, nemesis or equal, the Bond girls have solidified the importance of their positions in both Bond’s world and our own. In short, the Bond girls have become such a hallmark of the franchise that we’d be disappointed if they weren’t part of the films, Chapman says. •

*Elizabeth Anderson Lopez is a freelance writer in Lake Forest, Calif., where she lives with her husband and menagerie of pets.*