

## **‘No Time to Die’ instills an oddball energy into the James Bond series**

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 15 October 2021 05:08

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Rating: ««

out of «««««

Running Time: 163 minutes

**This feature from United Artists Releasing opens at movie theaters on Oct. 8.**

Nearly 70 years ago, author Ian Fleming created the iconic British secret agent, James Bond. In the years that followed, the character adapted with the times and spawned a film series containing 25 official titles. The latest feature is “No Time to Die,” and it marks the final onscreen appearance of Daniel Craig as the famed spy. As one might expect, the action on display is extremely impressive to watch.

But the story’s attempts to wrap up threads introduced in previous films is clunky. And for this reviewer, there’s a distinct lack of adventure or thrills present that one would expect from the series.

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This story sees James Bond (Craig) off-duty and living off the grid with Dr. Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux). When armed figures unexpectedly make an attempt on Bond's life and he learns that Swann has been hiding a secret from him, the protagonist ushers her away. Some time later, the lead is approached by CIA agents Felix Leiter (Jeffrey Wright) and Logan Ash (Billy Magnussen). They need his assistance with a new threat involving a microscopic nanobot-based DNA weapon that could potentially wipe out anyone whom the user targets.

While Bond follows the trail, he meets new "00" and CIA agents Nomi (Lashana Lynch) and Paloma (Ana de Armas). The hero also comes into contact with an old enemy Ernst Blofeld (Christoph Waltz) and a new foe named Lyutsifer Safin (Rami Malek).

The movie starts off quite well, with a memorable opening involving a masked assassin, followed by Bond being attacked by various thugs and racing through a picturesque European village. Since the beginning of the franchise, the stunt work has been fantastic and as expected, this picture keeps the tradition going. There's also some entertaining conflict in a Cuba-set sequence that features Bond and new agents Paloma and Nomi getting involved in an elaborate fracas. In particular, supporting cast member Ana de Armas stands out and adds humor as a new and untested spy.

That's why it is disappointing that the movie becomes ponderous and convoluted during its second half as the action ceases and motivations for the various foes are revealed. While it's impressive that all the cast is committed to depicting the drama with utter seriousness, their tone is in contrast with the sillier nanobot-based plot elements. And ultimately, for much of the two-hour-and-forty-three-minute running time, the movie is content to somberly explain who was responsible for which specific acts and add some last-minute emotional reckoning for the lead. Sadly, these revelations aren't exciting to witness.

The pacing crawls during the second half and the story loses its vitality.

Malek does make for an interesting enough foe with Lyutsifer Safin, but the picture also suffers from having too many baddies. This includes a henchman (Dali Benssalah) with a unique physical attribute, a nasty rogue agent and the reappearance of Blofeld. They're all vying for screen time and Safin doesn't have the opportunity to make a notable impression. In fact, if memory serves, the main villain doesn't even cross paths or have direct contact with Bond until the final act of the movie.

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He may very well be a criminal mastermind with a nifty poison garden, but it would have been much more dynamic to see Bond and this figure trade barbs and blows throughout the picture.

So, despite some great action early on and the explosive nature of the finale, “No Time to Die” takes itself too seriously and ends in a tired manner. Personally, I’m a big enthusiast of James Bond and adored the first few Craig movies. But as time has passed and the tone has become more and more downcast, the zip and fun associated with the famed character has been drained.

Even more surprisingly, this title unexpectedly implies that the most recent movies may not be connected to the earlier Bond film timeline. At least that gives fans some hope that follow-ups will either revitalize the franchise or that some very, very creative writing may right the wrongs committed by this oddball entry.

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