

## James Bond Returns in Stunning, Spectacular ‘Skyfall’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 30, 2012 - 9:53am

- [Albert Finney](#) [2]
- [Ben Whishaw](#) [3]
- [Berenice Marlohe](#) [4]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [5]
- [Daniel Craig](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [James Bond](#) [8]
- [Javier Bardem](#) [9]
- [Judi Dench](#) [10]
- [Movie Review](#) [11]
- [Naomie Harris](#) [12]
- [Ralph Fiennes](#) [13]
- [Sam Mendes](#) [14]
- [Skyfall](#) [15]



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Skyfall” is a gorgeous, action-packed, superbly structured piece of modern filmmaking. It is not only one of the best James Bond movies in the five-decade history of the beloved character but it’s one of the best action movies of the last decade. Sam Mendes’ film is smart, sexy, dangerous, and, most stunningly of all, beautiful. With Oscar-caliber work from cinematographer Roger Deakins, James Bond finally has a film that looks as perfect as his suave style has deserved for half a century. And the new, modern look for Bond is used to tell the deepest story in his film history. “Skyfall” is an absolute success.

As has become trademark for the Bond franchise, “Skyfall” opens with a bang – a breakneck action sequence that is essentially one long chase scene on foot, by car, on a motorcycle, and even the roof of a train. Bond (Daniel Craig) is chasing someone with a list that MI6 needs desperately. M (Judi Dench) is on a headset speaking to both Bond and another agent named Eve (Naomie Harris), stressing the urgency of not letting the list get away. From the very beginning, the heightened dramatic stakes are clear as Bond passes an agent bleeding to death. Stop the hemorrhaging or get the bad guy? Let a good guy die to stop a bad one? These are the questions that will circle the entire arc of “Skyfall,” easily the darkest Bond movie ever made. There are echoes of “The Dark Knight” in the way the film explores the history of its iconic character and a villain looking to cause chaos.



Skyfall

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*



The explosive opening of “Skyfall” ends with 007 being shot and presumed dead after another tough decision by M. As the leader of MI6 is trying to get over the failure of the mission both politically and personally, a superior named Gareth Mallory (Ralph Fiennes) threatens her with forced retirement. She vows to clear up the current nightmare – it turns out the list was that of undercover British spies around the world that could now have their covers blown – before heading into the sunset. Bond resurfaces and decides to forgive M long enough to get the job done.

Said job involves help from a new Q (a perfect Ben Whishaw), a stunning new beauty named Severine (Berenice Marlohe), and, of course, a new Bond bad guy. The villain this time is named Silva (Javier Bardem) and he doesn’t appear for so long into the film that I’m hesitant to even offer too much character detail. We know from the beginning that the person tormenting MI6 with a personal grudge against M is someone with a history with the spy business, adding a layer of depth to the bad guy here that’s so often missing from Bond movies. Silva is what James Bond could have become with just a few failed missions and a stronger tendency to vengeance. Much like Batman and The Joker used fear to different ends, Bond and Silva are two sides of the same coin.



Skyfall

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures*

Mendes, the director of dramas like “American Beauty” and “The Road to Perdition,” seemed like an unusual choice when he was first announced for “Skyfall.” We’ve seen a lot of directors who were adept at drama stumble when it comes to action. The opposite is the case with “Skyfall” as Mendes proves to be stunningly efficient and accomplished when it comes to action. “Skyfall” is one of those increasingly rare action films in which chaos is not the overriding artistic principle. Every kick, punch, and shot resonates. When a car hits a stationary object, the director doesn’t feel the need to shake the camera to thrill the audience. You should be warned that “Skyfall” is actually pretty slight on action when one thinks back on it although the film is so brilliantly paced that one doesn’t notice the lack of major set-pieces while it’s playing.

It helps that “Skyfall” is one of the best-looking films of the year. The man who shot “Fargo,” “The Shawshank Redemption,” “True Grit,” “No Country For Old Men,” and so many other master classes in light and shadow has done it again, delivering one of the most visually striking action films in such a long time and a strong competitor for the Oscar again this year (he’s been nominated nine times but never won.) “Skyfall” gives Deakins so many wonderful locations to work with from Turkey to Shanghai to Macau to Scotland and he brings such artistry and stunning personality to all of them that it’s hard to pick a favorite. From the way he lights Bond with the electronic signs in Shanghai to the fog on the moors of Scotland, “Skyfall” is a breathtaking visual accomplishment.





Skyfall

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

It's also arguably the most accomplished Bond film in terms of performance as well. Craig drives the film, of course, and he has an added gravity this time as the stakes are higher than ever and the screenplay delves into the personal history of 007. The great actor once again adds grit and sweat to a character who was seen as pure style for so many years. He won't get the credit he deserves because he's supported more adeptly than Bond ever has been before. Dench is essentially a co-lead here as the story circles so much around M. Of course, one of our greatest actresses completely delivers, playing M with a wonderful sense of dignity instead of the overly dramatic choices other actresses might have made. And Bardem makes an impact from his very first scene. He's spectacular. Everyone in the extended supporting cast – Harris, Whishaw, Marlohe, Fiennes – simply works.

When this many elements come together successfully – the ensemble, the storytelling, the cinematography – credit must go back to the director. Much like Christopher Nolan did with the legend of Batman, Sam Mendes has taken an iconic, beloved character and found new levels of depth and meaning in his history and future. “Skyfall” beautifully encapsulates what James Bond is all about, offering depth to his past and getting fans excited about where this character still has to go. With fifty years of Bond in the books, perhaps the greatest achievement of “Skyfall” is how thoroughly it convinces you that his best days may still be ahead.

*“Skyfall” stars Daniel Craig, Judi Dench, Javier Bardem, Ralph Fiennes, Naomie Harris, Berenice Marlohe, Ben Whishaw, and Albert Finney. It was written by Neal Purvis & Robert Wade and John Logan and directed by Sam Mendes. It will be released on November 9, 2012.*



[16]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [17]  
Content Director  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [16]

**Source URL (retrieved on Mar 28 2024 - 5:17pm):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/20455/james-bond-returns-in-stunning-spectacular-skyfall>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/albert-finney>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ben-whishaw>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/berenice-marlohe>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/daniel-craig>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/james-bond>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/javier-bardem>



- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/judi-dench>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/naomie-harris>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ralph-fiennes>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sam-mendes>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/skyfall>
- [16] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>