


BY MARK EVANS

When it comes to Bond films, you really have to compare them to each other, since any other scale is basically worthless. That's because they are all, to one degree or another, exactly the same. James Bond films follow

the simple — and lyrical — formula. "bed some asses, kick some asses." For a character with nineteen "official" films under his belt, there hasn't been any real character growth since *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*.

And hey, there's no problem

with that. People don't go to a Bond film for spiritual growth, they go to see terrible one-liners and choreographed action sequences. With that in mind, it's almost unfortunate to dub *The World Is Not Enough* (*TWINE*) the 'whatever' of recent Bond films.

For starters, the plot. It basically revolves around a plan to monopolize oil supplies in the western world for the next century. Whatever. This is a pretty lame plot, and its implementation is all over the map. There is a point in the film where somebody gets captured, and they are put in a cage to watch a clock. Thrilling. Not to say that they weren't cheesy, but I think I preferred the old extravagant death traps.

Now for the villains. There

are villains in this Bond film? It's like a parade of wusses. The main villain, Renard (Robert Carlyle), has a bullet lodged in his head that's slowly killing him. At the same time, it makes him immune to pain, since it has cut off his sense of touch.

Whatever. This is a novel concept and it goes absolutely nowhere. Renard is in not nearly enough scenes, and when he is he acts like every other Bond villain. Show me a Bond film where they don't shoot the henchmen.

The rest of the cast is not bad. It's nice to see so many of the supporting cast from *Goldeneye* and *Tomorrow Never Dies* and they add to the film immensely. John Cleese playing 'R', who will be taking over from 'Q' (Desmond Llewelyn) when he retires, is an extremely welcomed addition.

There is something off with Pierce Brosnan's portrayal of Bond in this one. His colder-hearted Bond is fine, but he seems like he's sleepwalking through the role as if he was bored. Brosnan did better in *Tomorrow Never Dies* when he looked like he was having fun.

As usual, the action sequences make the film. But even these have such a mechanical feel to them at times that it isn't funny. The entire opening sequence is fantastic, although the boat sequence borders on ludicrous by the end. One set piece towards the last part of the film involving a couple of helicopters is hurt by

the fact that you can tell where all the FX shots are being done.

The worst offender here is the ending, which is excessively close to yawn-worthy. The other two Brosnan films were good, and they had at least passable endings. Watching Bond and 006 go at it on top of the radar array is fun, watching Bond and Wai-Lyn tear up a submarine is also fun. This one is just... well... whatever.

Opening theme by Garbage? It sounds too much like Sheryl Crow's from the last film, but that's Garbage for you. Opening titles with the oil women? It's nothing compared to previous Bond intros. Denise Richards as a nuclear scientist? Thinking Richards could actually act her way out of a wet paper bag? Ha!

It's a shame too, because Brosnan is my all-time favorite Bond, and expectations were really high for some classic Bondian action. Even worse, a couple of clever touches that break "Bond formula" hint at so much untapped potential. There is just no escaping the general malaise that seems to be strewn throughout this one though. It waddles along like a lame duck.

Bottom line: Hey, it's Bond right? Most people know whether or not they're going to see this one anyway and if they have lower expectations they might enjoy it more. For me, after the other two excellent Brosnan Bond's, it was a bit of a let-down. *TWINE* rates two and a half stars out of four. It's a Bond, just not a great one.

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Films with a Stalinist... er, Marxist Edge

BY GREG MCFARLANE

Whenever asked to give a definition of politics, I usually reply with a cynical answer: the misapplication of philosophy. Accordingly, whenever I'm asked to define 'marxist', I usually say, "someone who misapplies the philosophy of Karl Marx".

There are lots of marxists out there. Lenin was a marxist. Mao was a marxist. Even Stalin was a marxist.

Marx, I'm willing to bet, wouldn't consider himself a Stalinist. This, it turns out is an interesting statement, especially as it applies to the Dal Arts Centre's screening of Dziga Vertov's

Enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is Vertov's 1931 ode to the achievements of industrial development in the Soviet Union. Taking the shape of an historical documentary, Vertov's timeline presumably starts at the onset of the communist revolution. With subtlety of an Adam Sandler film, Vertov outlines one of communism's chief claims: church bad, proletariat good. This is done with ominous music accompanying every picture of a cross, and happy music (probably from an accordion) and happy faces leading proletariat marches down the street.

Soon, the churches are

destroyed, and the workers can turn their efforts to the plants, factories and farms that drove the Soviet economy and making statues of Lenin's clean-shaven head.

But the Soviet Union, from my vantage point, sounds like it was quite the annoying place to live. Vertov fills *Enthusiasm* with every bothersome horn sound he can find. These sounds, we are to presume, energized the workers' spirits as they toiled in the smoky factories and on the vast farmlands. Every so often, those lucky proles would get the opportunity to eat dinner, as an equally grating but probably welcoming dinner bell would chime. All in all, if Vertov was trying to promote Soviet-style communism, he wasn't doing the best job.

All of this taken into account, the worst part about this film is that it totally disregards the impact of Stalin in Soviet politics. Where's the purging? The maiming, the mass death? Nowhere. I understand the position Vertov was in. Nobody spoke against Stalin. That being said, why are we showing films trumpeting accomplishments made under his control, even if under the guise of artistic genius? Legitimizing this film is the equivalent of legitimizing Stalin, and thus de-legitimizing the philosophy of Marx. Therefore, the only enthusiasm displayed should be when the film is relegated to the trash heap of history.

The Dalhousie Arts Centre's *Four Films With a Marxist Edge* series continues Wednesday, December 8, with the Italian film *Umberto D*, and December 15, with the German film-adaptation of Brecht's *The Three Penny Opera*.

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