

THE Hollywood REPORTER

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(http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/tv-review-fleming-man-who-675272#comments)



Ecosse/Sky Atlantic/BBC Worldwide
"Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond"

The BBC America miniseries on the 007 author makes for a enjoyable ride through the backstory of the man who created -- and really wanted to be -- James Bond.

You could spend a lot of time talking about how **Ian Fleming** really wasn't **James Bond** -- that the book and screen hero who has endured all of these years and remains, affirmatively, legend rather than myth, had to be invented from the dreams of the author and that nobody could ever be as riveting as Bond.

OUR EDITOR RECOMMENDS



(http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/bbc-america-debuts-first-photos-578038)

BBC America Debuts First Photos, Trailer of 'Fleming: The

Well, yes, that is in some ways the point of BBC America's miniseries, *Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond*. But some will no doubt struggle with the juxtaposition and advocate for reading one of the book or watching one of the movies and forgetting the boring backstory.

Except that it's not really that boring. It's pretty damned interesting and writers **John Brownlow** and **Don MacPherson** go out of their way to make the connection that real-life Fleming *was* Bond, but just a less glorified, less realized version. He needed to fictionalize the world view and the man to get it right.

ANALYSIS: BBC America on the Rise With 'Orphan Black,' Standout Dramas (http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/bastard-machine/bbc-america-rise-orphan-black-593426)

Though technically (and if you stick literally to the book or movie stories) Fleming couldn't be Bond no matter how hard he tried, Fleming did try really hard and was damned good at it -- so he took to the typewriter and nothing about suave British heroes has ever been the same again.

Dominic Cooper plays Fleming with a chip on his shoulder. Fleming's older brother, Peter (**Rupert Evans**) is already a successful author and the son who does everything right, even in the eyes of their mother (**Lesley Manville**). Ian Fleming is more than the difficult son -- he's a screw-up whose Bondsian life seems like so much debauchery to an upper-crust British family and a country on the edge of war. In fact, it's not until that war

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Man Who Would Be Bond' »)

BBC America Orders 'The Game' Espionage Miniseries »

arrives that chronic under-performer Ian gets a chance to shine in England's Naval Intelligence department. It turns out that speaking multiple languages, being able to hold your Champagne and being charming actually do have value – to a spy.

Directed with aplomb by **Mat Whitecross**, who periodically decides, in the course of this four-hour feast, to stop making a movie about a man and instead make a Bond movie, Fleming is the kind of movie that winks at you constantly and you never get annoyed by the intimations.

Credit Whitecross with never letting *Fleming* feel alienated from the world of James Bond – the look is beautiful, the score hints at remembrances of things past (meaning you'll smile or nod plenty of times), and not only does he get a free pass in the first episode when he shifts into overdrive and goes fully Bond-esque cinematic in one sequence, he should be applauded for it.

(Without ruining anything, it's like Whitecross looked at the script, saw a scene where Fleming -- played superbly by Cooper -- is trying to seduce future wife Ann O'Neill (**Lara Pulver**) and just decides, "to hell with it" and makes it as over the top and operatic as any Bond director ever has; applause all around for the effort and the lack of worry that it might stand out as gaudy. It does stand out, but you're more likely to applaud the indulgence than wince at it.

What fuels *Fleming* is the riveting performances by Cooper and Pulver, who manage to take as much passion and pulp as possible and run with it. A miniseries that's more intellectual in its approach than most Bond films needed two characters to take the words and escalate the drama. Cooper and Pulver are magnetic as they do just that.

Beyond the visual winks to future Bond movies, there's the rather straightforward fact that Fleming worked with a boss (**Samuel West**) who will become the fictionalized M, and an office hellion, Lt. Monday (**Anna Chancellor**), who would be the inspiration for Moneypenny. Along with references to future movies, it's a way for *Fleming* to have some fun while unspooling this tale.

And, yes, ultimately the I-can-be-dashing Fleming is not a real match for James Bond. A person's life, no matter how much of it is the inspiration, can't match a fictional persona that gets into the zeitgeist and never flags. So, yes, we know that Bond likes his martinis shaken and not stirred and that Fleming had trouble finding happiness with women even though he never had much trouble meeting them. Sometimes, you don't know how good you've got it until you blow the whole thing into pieces and start over.

Certainly directors have done that for movies. *Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond* does that on the small screen. You can complain that the miniseries fails to be as popcorn-worthy as the movies that came from Fleming's books, but it's a wonderfully executed, creatively shot drama worth putting out there as an intriguing accessory to the long Bond lineage.

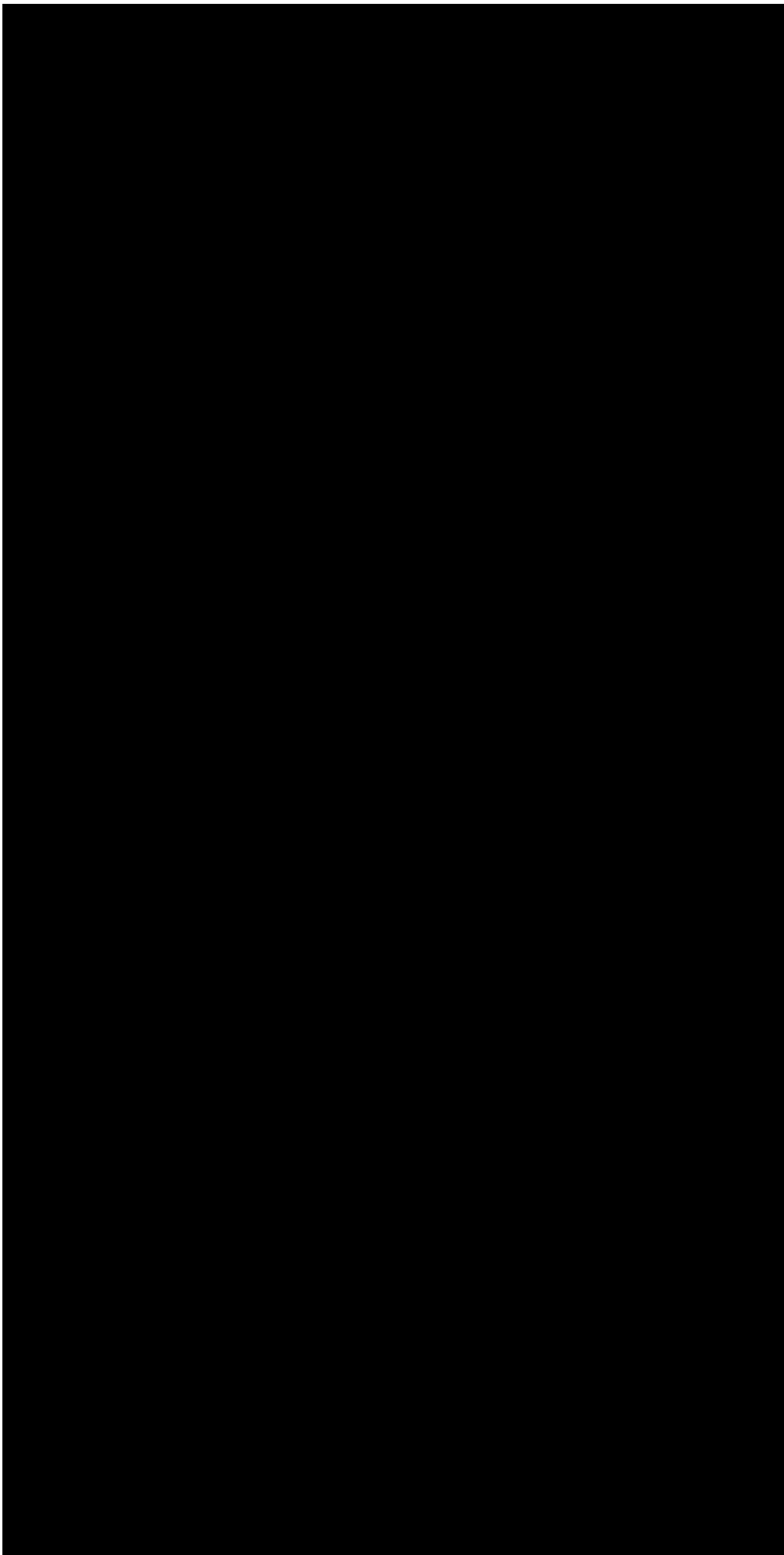
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BBC America on the Rise With 'Orphan Black,' Standout



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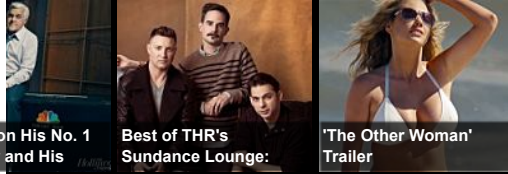
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Inside Clive Davis' Pre-Grammy Party 2014

Jay Leno on His No. 1 Talk Show and His

Best of THR's Sundance Lounge:

'The Other Woman' Trailer

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