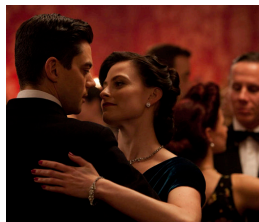


Collections • James Bond

Mini-series explores life, loves of James Bond author



Dominic Cooper as Ian Fleming and Lara Pulver as his wife. In the miniseries' first episode, the wealthy Fleming, having failed as a journalist and a stockbroker, joins British Naval Intelligence before WWII.



GALLERY: Dominic Cooper stars as Ian Fleming and Lara Pulver as his...

By Tirdad Derakhshani, Inquirer Staff Writer

POSTED: January 29, 2014

"This [James] Bond fellow, I don't like him one bit, he's a sadistic brute."

So opines Ian Fleming's beautiful wife, Ann (Lara Pulver), in the opening scene of *Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond*, an enjoyable if inflated and overwrought four-part mini-series about the life, the loves - and even more of the loves - of the best-selling author who spawned the world's most famous superspy, 007.

BBC America's sexy, visually scrumptious bio runs in four weekly, one-hour installments beginning Wednesday at 10 p.m. (www.bbcamerica.com/fleming).

It's 1952, and we're with the Flemings at their idyllic, to-die-for Goldeneye estate in Jamaica.

Fleming is played with just the right irreverence by the rather beautiful Dominic Cooper (*The Devil's Double*, the *Captain America* franchise), whose face bears a certain rakish, Bondian look of perma-lust.

Ann is flitting about Fleming as he pounds out one of the most famous lines from his debut novel, *Casino Royale*: "The bitch is dead now."

He considers for a second Ann's critique of Bond as a "sadistic brute," and tells her with impish joy, "I thought that was your type."

When Ann dismisses the novel as "pornographic, pure, and simple," Fleming responds, "I'm glad you liked it. I thought of dedicating it to you."

The Flemings' sadomasochistic love affair - as much about verbal jousting and rough sex as it is about sentiment - is very much at the heart (if not soul) of this sometimes soulless story. It focuses on Fleming's experiences during World War II when he served with British Naval Intelligence as assistant to the renowned spymaster Adm. John Godfrey.

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After its prologue in Jamaica, the first episode flashes back to the summer of 1930. At 31, Fleming already has had an abortive career as a journalist and is hard at work ruining his second, as a stockbroker.

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Born into a fabulously wealthy upper-class family, Fleming is happy to spend their money collecting first-edition books and 18th-century pornographic prints. He lives the life of a dissolute bon vivant, drinking at jazz clubs and picking up beautiful women - until his mother and older brother, the acclaimed adventurer and best-selling travel writer Peter Fleming, stage an intervention. Why can't he be like his older brother, asks his overbearing, disapproving mother Eve (Lesley Manville)?

When Ian tells his mother he has little to offer the world but an overactive imagination, she manages to find him the ideal job. She appeals to her pal, Winston Churchill, who suggests Ian would do well in Intelligence.

The first episode of *Fleming* moves at a nice narrative speed as it follows Fleming in his new job. His boss, Adm. Godfrey, played by the wonderful Samuel West (*Mr. Selfridge*), seems to be a man of infinite patience. He lets Fleming stage one fantastical mission after another throughout Europe.

Fleming proves to be a brilliant ideas man. We watch as he realizes his great accomplishment during the war, founding two special forces units, 30 Assault Unit and T-Force.

Fleming's play is backed by Godfrey's secretary, the lovely if shy Lt. Monday (Anna Chancellor). She's Miss Moneypenny all the way - in awe of Fleming and quite smitten by him.

Fleming: The Man Who Would Be Bond loses its way in its repetitive two middle episodes, but manages to deliver an exciting finale.

Yet, it fails as a serious biography: The filmmakers try so hard to make Fleming a Bondian hero - and his wife a Bond femme fatale - that they reduce flesh-and-blood people to caricatures.

Guess that's supposed to make for must-see TV.

TELEVISION

Fleming:

The Man

Who Would

Be Bond

Wednesday

at 10 p.m.

on BBC America.

tirdad@phillynews.com

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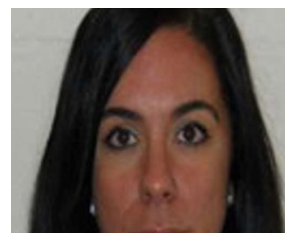
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