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**“I’ve been lucky
enough to land one
of the best roles
in movie history”**



A very special Bond

Daniel Craig has gone from playing shoot 'em up games as a child to portraying the most famous secret agent of all time in five James Bond films. But what of life beyond his licence to kill? **Gabrielle Donnelly** finds out

James Bond has been keeping Daniel Craig fit for years. "I started off doing these films very physically and never really stopped," he says. "When I got the role in *Casino Royale*, I phoned up the producer, Barbara Broccoli, and said, "Look, I need to get in shape for this because I want to do as many of the stunts as I can. We should feel that this is a man who has done all the things Bond is supposed to have done – he's been a commander in the Navy, he's been in the Special Services, so he should look physically imposing." I hung up the phone, hit the gym and got myself into the best physical shape I could."

On the other hand, as he himself admits, he's now past 50 and the years have taken their toll. "I still do as many stunts as I can because I enjoy the physicality of it – I always have, even before Bond. But I have grown older and

don't bounce back as well as I did. I've hurt myself on every single Bond movie since I started. It's just par for the course."

He lost two teeth on his first Bond outing, *Casino Royale*, in 2006, and actually sliced off a fingertip in *Quantum of Solace* in 2008 ("A few stitches and a little bit of flesh lost," as he casually described it at the time). In *No Time to Die* – whose opening has been delayed many times as the world struggled with the pandemic, but is finally slated for later this year – he fractured his ankle in a fall during an action scene. Thanks largely, he says, to an excellent surgeon, he was back on the set within two weeks – nevertheless, it's hardly surprising that he has decided that after *No Time to Die* it's time for him to hang up his licence to kill once and for all and leave the leaping around to his younger colleagues. "It's absolutely the last," he says

firmly. "It's time for somebody else to have a go now."

Surprisingly, as a boy, he never particularly fantasised about being Bond. "It's funny because people are always saying to me, 'You must have dreamt of playing James Bond when you were a kid,' and the answer is no, I never did. I dreamt of being all sorts of other things – Superman, Spiderman, the Invisible Man, even a good old-fashioned cowboy. But Bond, not so much, which seems ironic now. I was always interested in acting, though, and the movie that inspired me most as a teenager was Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, from 1982. There was a cinema in Hoylake, where I grew up, and I walked in there one day not knowing what I was going to see. I sat down with my drink and my popcorn and there was this film with a great story and beautiful images on the screen. It was amazing. It made me want to make movies of my own."

A northern boy and proud of it, he was born in Chester and brought up on the Wirral Peninsula, the son of Carol Olivia

Craig, an art teacher, and Timothy Craig, a pub landlord, who divorced when he was little. He had a happy childhood, larking around, following Liverpool Football Club and playing shoot 'em up games with his friends on the sand dunes, rolling dramatically down the hill when he was shot. "I think," he now says of those expeditions, "that pretending to be dead then was the first acting I ever did!"

When still in his teens, he went to London to join the National Youth Theatre. After that, a stint at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama led to small parts on stage and television. Films like *Layer Cake* and *Enduring Love* made him famous; James Bond made him very famous indeed.

After 15 years in the franchise, he is delighted to have had the opportunity to play Bond for so long. "He has afforded me so many amazing things as an actor that I am extremely grateful to him and always will be. If I had any ambition as an actor, it was to work with the best people, and that is what I have been doing. Look, I've been lucky enough to

Below

Daniel Craig at school in Hoylake, on the Wirral Peninsula



"I dreamt of being all sorts of things as a kid – Superman, Spiderman, the Invisible Man, even a good old-fashioned cowboy. But Bond, not so much, which seems ironic now"



land one of the best roles in movie history, and I decided that if it turned out to be the only thing I ever did, I'd be happy. There's been no downside to playing Bond. None at all."

On the other hand, being a successful actor – whether he's playing James Bond or Hamlet – means a certain amount of public interest in his personal life. And this is an aspect of his job that Daniel, a famously private man, dislikes with an intensity bordering on ferocious.

"And it's nothing I should really even complain about," he admits, "because I have huge benefits from being who I am. But the fact is that privacy is a very important part of my life, and being a celebrity actually makes me nervous. There is a side of my life that I choose not to share or discuss. I think people's private life is private, and that's that."

He has been married for ten years to fellow actor Rachel Weisz, with whom love bloomed in 2010 when they were cast

as husband and wife in the thriller *Dream House*. They were married in New York a year later, in a ceremony attended by four guests, two of whom were Daniel's then 18-year-old daughter Ella, from an earlier marriage to actress Fiona Loudon, and Rachel's then five-year-old son Henry, who she had with her previous partner Darren Aronofsky. In September 2018, they had another child, a daughter, whose name they have so far kept secret.

They divide their life between London and New York – and yes, he admits, warily, he loves both cities and feels fortunate to spend time in each, and that, yes, he is very happy with life in general. And if you really have to ask about romance, well, "it can happen in an expensive hotel on a beautiful beach in the Bahamas, but you can also be in the ugliest place on earth, in a dingy diner in the wrong part of town, and if you're holding hands with the person you love,

Above left
Daniel with
Our Friends
in the North
cast Malcolm
McDowell,
Mark Strong
and Gina
McKee

Above right
Starring as
James Bond
in *No Time to
Die*, with Ana
de Armas as
Paloma



Above
Daniel Craig as
super-sleuth
Benoit Blanc
in *Knives Out*

it doesn't matter." Any further enquiries are met with a polite but firm: "I'm not down with answering questions like that."

Ask him about his work and he relaxes visibly – post Bond, as Pierce Brosnan has shown, the film world is the older actor's oyster. "I don't want to play characters who don't feel," he says. "I just don't think they are interesting. I'm as emotional as

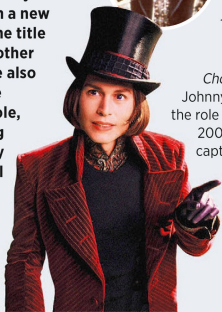
anyone and can cry at anything if I'm in the moment. Normal stuff, like kindness and so on. A good commercial can get me going if I'm in the mood."

He's also been trying his hand at comedy. Two years ago, he appeared as Southern American super-sleuth Benoit Blanc in the tongue-in-cheek murder mystery *Knives Out*; he's now in the process of making the sequel, *Knives Out 2*, and says he's thoroughly enjoying it. "I'm really happy I made the first film and really happy to be making one more. If films like this were to be my future, what a blessing that would be. It's too much fun!"

Money? He has enough, he says. "Isn't there an old adage that if you die a rich person, you've failed? I think Andrew Carnegie gave away what in today's money

New look

Bond films famously rebrand every few years with a new actor in the title role, but other films have also recast the leading role, producing some very successful remakes



WILLY WONKA

Gene Wilder played Willy Wonka in the 1971 adaptation of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Johnny Depp took on the role in Tim Burton's 2005 version. Both capture Dahl's dark humour and are loved by a young audience.



TRUE GRIT

One of John Wayne's most iconic roles as Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* (1969) was successfully remade in 2010 by the Coen brothers, with Jeff Bridges in the part made famous by Wayne.

would be about \$11 billion, which shows how rich he was because I'll bet he kept some of it, too! But I don't want to leave great sums to the next generation – I think inheritance is quite distasteful. My philosophy is get rid of it or give it away before you go."

Many actors at his stage of the profession are thinking about directing. Suggest this to Daniel, however, and he shudders. "God, no!" he says. "As an actor, I work, I go home at night, I eat, and I go to bed. If you're the director, you work, you go home at night, you try to eat, but the producer is on the phone, and then the producer in the US is on the phone, then the scriptwriter is on the phone. Maybe by three in the morning you'll get to sleep, but in two hours you have to be up again. I'll stick to acting, thanks!"

PHOTOS PAUL STUART/CAMERAPRESS, SHUTTERSTOCK, ALAMY

"Privacy is a very important part of my life, and being a celebrity actually makes me nervous"

Below
With his wife of ten years, Rachel Weisz



ROBIN HOOD

Another Bond, Sean Connery, was the anti-establishment hero in *Robin and Marian* in 1976. More recent portrayals have come from Kevin Costner in 1991, Russell Crowe in 2010 and Taron Egerton in 2018. A more comic version was given by Cary Elwes in 1993 in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*.



SHERLOCK HOLMES

Numerous silent Holmes films in the early 20th century included one with John Barrymore; then there were Basil Rathbone's films of the 30s and 40s. Perhaps the most famous recent Holmes is Robert Downey Jr in Guy Ritchie's 2009 and 2011 versions.

