

Film Review: SPECTRE, directed by Sam Mendes for chrissakes.

I finally watched 'Spectre'. From the cliched and pointless opening 'Touch of Evil' tracking shot to the final but by no means only pointless explosion it is an absolute epic of lumpen, witless film-making.

The script has so many holes in it you could use it to catch fish with the non-sequiturs coming even more frequently than the suspenseless chases through mysteriously deserted European capitals.

Intriguingly, the only person I recall SPECTRE actually killing was one of their own members who did indeed seem like a bit of a dick.

In contrast, Bond and his *Famous Five*-like band of amateur MI6 sleuths merrily massacre dozens of waiters, computer geeks and chauffeurs (though mercifully their massive explosions in densely-populated areas seem to cause no casualties at all).

As well as being more humane than MI6, SPECTRE also exhibits considerably more cultural sophistication. Even their prime assassin - Bluto from the *Popeye* cartoons - is able to reference the fate of Gloucester in *King Lear* when he squeezes out the eyes of a usurping rival during a job interview.

By contrast, Bond is unable to muster anything more complex than the weakest of sarcasm. When Bluto is finally sent to join Oddjob and Jaws in baddie heaven by means of rope coiled around beer barrels on a speeding train (a clear breach of health and safety regulations), it was crying out for Bond to quip: "Well, he was a barrel of fun!" or "Seems Guinness is not always good for you!"

Instead, JB and his still-traumatised-by-death-of-parent squeeze become sexually aroused by Bluto's beer-induced decapitation and retire to their cabin for heavy hanky-panky.

As absent as quippery is Felix Leiter who merits a single mention when our hero acknowledges he is way out of his depth and offers to give Uncle Sam's top-secretest phone number to someone he has just met and who is closely linked to SPECTRE. In all likelihood, Felix has changed his number by now anyway, in an attempt to distance himself from his erstwhile charity case.

This leads me to conclude that SPECTRE are in fact the good guys. By the end I was praying for them to achieve global domination. Inevitably my prayer went unanswered as Blofeld inexplicably forgot that Bond has on countless occasions in the past used his exploding watch to elude his clutches when the script runs into a dead end.

SPECTRE also exhibits higher standards of business ethics than MI6. Various brands of cars exist in their car pool, evidence of well-run competitive tenders. Their only piece of product placement is an own-brand ring of Muji-like simplicity. Bond on the other hand will sell his gym-toned butt to anyone with a chequebook, hence his painfully obvious wardrobe, second-rate taste in liquor and the specially-designed Ray-Ban sunglasses which somehow contrive to make him look cross-eyed.

Ironically, the classiest piece of attire he dons is a brown knitted countryman tie of the type available from any Oxfam shop for about 50 pence.

I have yet to devise a non-miraculous explanation for Bond's ability to suddenly appear in a requisitioned

aeroplane despite being on top of a mountain - a location notoriously bereft of runways.

The lack of security guards at MI6 is another cause for concern which leads me to suspect government cuts are going too far (one of the key 'messages'). Not only is it possible to merely wander onto the site of the old HQ despite the fact it is rigged with high explosives, but similar laxity prevails at the new HQ where 'M' (Ralph Fiennes with his soul leaking out as you watch) can casually breeze in, packing considerable heat, even though he has just lost his job for the entirely sensible reason that he tends to let his agents run amok in foreign capitals.

Thankfully the governments of Mexico, South Africa, Italy etc are satisfied with a newspaper headline rather than getting too worked up about Bond's ever-lengthening chain of global chaos reaching their countries.

Favourite moments included the opening credits (is any animal less sexy than an octopus?) and Bond casually abandoning Monica Bellucci to what she repeatedly assures him is certain death only seconds after humping her. Oh, James! He might at least have called to see if she was still alive. I certainly would.

Even more caddish was the way he hands a cocktail glass to a lady BY THE RIM, an act of unhygienic boorishness unthinkable from Roger Moore.

Incidentally, the lady in question was the daughter of a man who decided to put a bullet in his own head after just five minutes of conversation with Bond: a course of action with which one can only have the warmest sympathy.

The only consolation was that Daniel Craig appeared to enjoy the whole experience even less than I did, his combination of geriatrically lined face and bandy-legged power walk giving him the appearance of a not particularly bright blonde chimpanzee throughout.

Verdict: FIVE STARS like everyone else!