

By
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BOND



1971 was a hell of a year for Las Vegas. The Rat Pack were still swinging hard. Hunter S. Thompson blew into town to write "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas." And James Bond was hot on the trail of stolen diamonds. In a deleted scene from "Diamonds are Forever," Sammy Davis Jr. is losing badly at craps when he notices Bond (Sean Connery) about to make his entrance to the casino floor, resplendent in a white dinner suit by Anthony Sinclair. "There isn't a wedding cake big enough for that guy," says Davis who then glances down to balefully watch his chips being swept away.

If you're interested in the classic style of James Bond, "Diamonds are Forever" is the ultimate showcase for it. From London to Amsterdam to Vegas, Bond is dressed for success. Even though Connery was over forty when he made the picture and was starting to fill out, the clothes still made a considerable man more considerable. "I make clothes in the classic English tradition," remarked Sinclair in a 1966 interview. "I won't make exaggerated, flamboyant clothes. I make only a Savile Row style. Nor will I put in any gimmicks. And I've given Connery the same cut I've given every customer all my tailoring life."

Just before he slips into the sack with the mercenary Tiffany Case (Jill St. John), Bond pays the respect his posh duds are due and hangs them neatly on a hook by the light switch. Connery looks trim but not buff, his chest hair unwaxed or trimmed. Just the way Connery flips the switch with a subtle flourish speaks volumes of Bond's calm and confidence dressed or undressed. Watching him from the massive bed, staked out in her nightie, the conniving redhead clearly knows she's about to be romped and jollied by a gentleman rogue of the old school.

In a later sequence, the adversaries are again in bed. "James, why are we staying in the bridal suite at the Whyte House," asks Case. "In order to form a more perfect union," replies Bond, brow slightly cocked. Before long, Bond is getting dressed in yet another lovely Sinclair piece of work, a black dinner suit with burgundy lapels that screams 1971. In order to evade the FBI bodyguards posted outside the door, he steps out the window, right onto the roof an elevator gliding up the side of the building. The camera watches from afar as Bond adjusts his boutonniere in ascent. Finding the penthouse is not an easy nut to crack, he repels using his enigmatic cummerbund as an improvised winch. He lands safely in the bathroom, his gorgeous brogues miraculously unscuffed. It's all so ludicrous but that's the real charm of the film – the assured self-parody that never forgets to deliver some bespoke thrills.

The wardrobe department, however, was not as flawless as Sinclair's tailoring. When Bond arrives at the desert redoubt of Willard Whyte, Connery is sporting an appalling pink tie and has both his suit jacket buttons done up despite being on the move. Mercifully, after a scuffle with two of Whyte's shapely bodyguards, the jacket is lost and the audience can admire Bond's darted linen trousers with the darts placed close to the side pockets for a clean look.

In most Bond pictures, the evil mastermind is either asexual or has a cretinous obsession with a young woman he keeps under lock and key. Charles Gray's Blofeld may camp it up a bit but he's hardly gay. The gay part is left to Mr. Kidd and Mr. Wint, the love duet of assassins with off-the-rack suits and thudding banter. Despite being encased in the drab military smocks that found their rightful nadir in Dr. Evil, Blofeld gives off enough macho energy that it's plausible he could seduce both Ms. Case, sunning herself on the "patio" of his oil derrick lair, and the minx at the start of the picture who gives up his location to Bond when the spy threatens to strangle her with her own bikini top. "So sorry to have ruined the line of your suit for nothing," says Blofeld in a droll, needling tone after his men have captured Bond and torn the shoulder of a lovely three piece navy blue suit with pinstripes. And why wouldn't he gloat? Blofeld has Bond and the girl.

"Diamonds are Forever" may not be the best Bond film but it is the film in which Bond looks his best. Watch, learn and call your tailor.

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