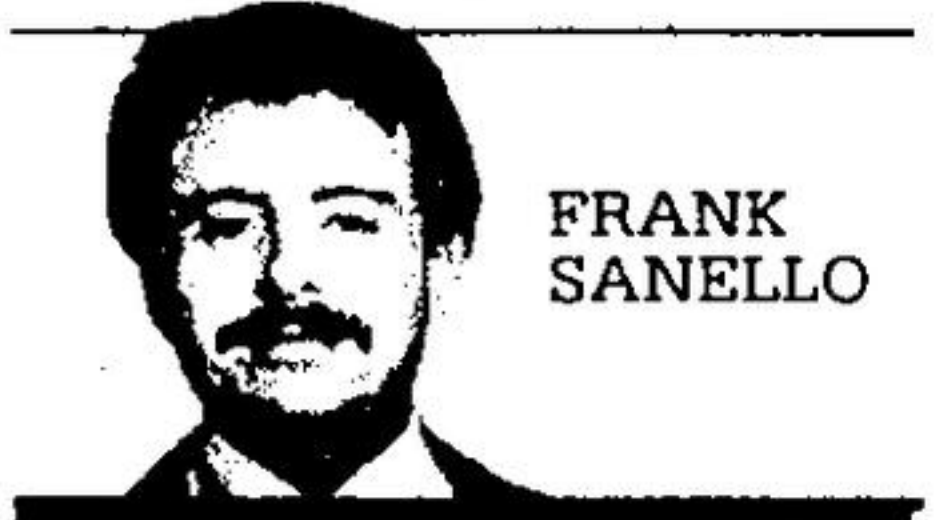


Dalton raised eyebrows in first Bond film

STAR SPEAK



FRANK SANELLO

Eyebrows raised when Timothy Dalton, a noted Shakespearean actor, agreed to take over the role of James Bond from Roger Moore in the 1987 film "The Living Daylights." But the movie cleaned up at the box office, and many critics said Dalton was the best Bond ever.

Dalton, 44, returns as the British secret agent in "Licence to Kill," a hard-edged thriller that pits Bond against a Latin American drug lord.

The English actor's previous training and credits were an unlikely steppingstone for the blatantly commercial Bond films.

Born in Colwyn Bay, North Wales, Dalton moved to Manchester, England, when he was 3. The acting bug bit when he was 16 and a touring production of "Macbeth" stopped in his hometown. He spent two years at the prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and made his first professional stage appearance in "Richard II."



Timothy Dalton

While appearing with the Birmingham Rep, he was spotted by the producers of "The Lion in Winter," who cast him as the King of France opposite Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn.

On TV, Dalton has appeared in the miniseries "Mistral's Daughter," "Sins" and "Centennial."

Dalton, a bachelor, lives — unlike the sybaritic James Bond — in a middle-class neighborhood in London, and drives a Toyota.

Q. When Sean Connery first dropped out of the Bond films in the late '60s, you were offered the role. Why did you turn it down then?

A. I thought it would be professional suicide because I felt Connery was brilliant in the role. I was too young, and Connery at the time was indelibly identified with the role. Since then, there have been two other Bonds. I'm the fourth. The public is used to the idea of people taking over the role.

A. I think it's good and it's right. If you're going to do a James Bond film, he exists in a world of danger and violence. That should be a given. It's just for the past 10 years, the films have been more lighthearted and comedic — to fit Roger's style. But if you go back to Ian Fleming's novels and the early films, people were always being eaten by sharks, shot, set on fire, tortured or killed in horrendous ways.

Q. James Bond had only one love interest in "The Living Daylights." The press said that was because of the AIDS epidemic. Why does Bond romance two women in the current film?

A. Bond is generally monogamous. There have been occasions when he has been to bed with another woman, it's true; but generally, he has his leading lady and that's his relationship.

Q. When you accepted the role of James Bond, were you afraid you

might be typecast as Sean Connery was for so many roles?

A. I've got 20 years of doing other movies and plays. Bond was Connery's first big film. Bond isn't my only identity as an actor.

Q. Has your fame as James Bond given you the clout to make other films that aren't commercial?

A. Yes. I got "Hawks" off the ground. It's a dark comedy about two men dying of cancer. It's a worthwhile film, but it hasn't been able to find a distributor in the United States because of the subject matter.

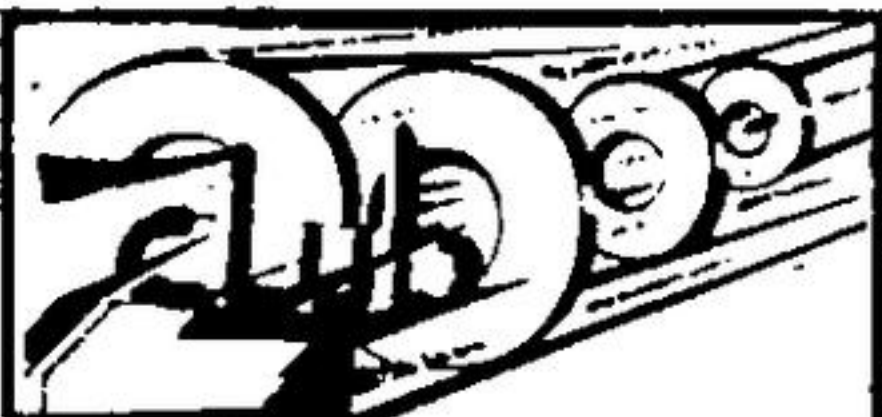
'James Bond shouldn't be a role model. Look at him. He's a killer.'

— Timothy Dalton

Q. In the late '60s and early '70s, you starred in a number of major films, then dropped out to go back to the theater. Why?

A. I think I was influenced by my peers who had had three to four years of immediate film stardom ... and then disappeared. I loved film acting, but I knew I was a beginner. I thought, "How can I be playing leading parts with Katharine Hepburn, Peter O'Toole and Glenda Jackson when I'm in my early 20s?" I felt, in a way, I didn't deserve it. So I turned down every movie and spent three years in the theater. I think it made me a better actor. I learned a lot.

Q. "Licence to Kill" is much more violent than previous Bond films, especially the Roger Moore films. How do you feel about that?



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