

# DEN OF GEEK



SUBSCRIBE



MOVIES

TV

GAMES

COMICS

BOOKS

CULTURE

VIDEO

STREAMING

MAGAZINE

SHOPPING

[Home](#) » | James Bond Villains Ranked from Worst to Best

## FEATURES

# James Bond Villains Ranked from Worst to Best

We look back on all of James Bond 007's big bads, separating the best villains from the worst.



By [David Crow](#) | August 17, 2022 |

| 52



Photo: Eon Productions / MGM / Getty

👁️ *This article contains **NO TIME TO DIE** spoilers.*

The name's Bond, James Bond. It's one of the most iconic lines in cinema, said canonically by six actors to date. And each 007 performer has surely offered an interesting and distinctive interpretation of the character, helping to build the franchise's overall allure decade after decade, and generation after generation. Yet almost as important as these movies' heroes are their villains; the scheming megalomaniacs who transformed the 60-year-old Bond franchise into a cinematic legend.

Right down to the first Bond film released by Eon Productions in 1962, *Dr. No*, a mission's target has been as nearly important as the man in the tux. After all, *Dr. No* isn't named after James. Twenty-five movies later that feels still vital, with the most popular entry of Daniel Craig's tenure, 2012's *Skyfall*, being remembered as much for Javier Bardem's demonic Silva and his proposition to Bond as it is any single act of spycraft.

So we here at *Den of Geek* have taken it upon ourselves to rank all the Bond villains, from best to worst. Admittedly, there are *a lot*. For that reason, we are primarily keeping it to the main, masterminding antagonists as opposed to henchmen and women, although in certain instances we'll note when it feels like it's a package deal and rank accordingly. So grab a martini, sit back, and make yourself comfortable as we tell you about our plan....

Villains of The Living Daylights

## **25. Georgi Koskov and Brad Whitaker (Jeroen Krabbe and Joe Don Baker)**

*The Living Daylights* (1987)

*The Living Daylights* has developed quite the cult

following amongst Bond fans in recent years due to its back-to-basics approach. After the excesses of the Roger Moore era, Timothy Dalton was the first actor to attempt a return to Ian Fleming's literary roots of Bond being a grim, professional sort of bastard.

Nonetheless, this installment will never be one of the great James Bond movies in large part because it has the most boring pair of villains on either side of the Iron Curtain. Gen. Koskov begins the movie by duping 007 into smuggling him as a defector into the West, but he is never any less bumbling or unassuming once it's revealed he is the mastermind behind James' woes for the rest of the movie. In fact, the only thing worse than this empty suit of obligatory villainy is Joe Don Baker's late entry as an American arms dealer whose obsession with war *might* be some awful attempt at satire of the Reagan era. I wrote "might," because everything about this third act baddie is so weakly forgettable that Eon Productions cast Baker again in *Goldeneye* as a more suitable comic relief sidekick, and nobody noticed.

Louis Jourdon in Octopussy

## 24. Kamal Khan (Louis Jourdan)

*Octopussy (1983)*

Another dullard sipping from the same formulaic malaise as the above two baddies, Kamal Khan is an exiled Afghan prince surrounded by henchmen who are as forgettable as his plan. While continuing the admirably pro-détente Cold War themes from the earlier (and superior) *For Your Eyes Only*, *Octopussy* offers viewers a narrative most memorable for its problematically pun-y name and as being the one where Roger Moore saves the world while dressed as a sad clown.

Admittedly, it's amusing that Jourdan's Khan wishes to *encourage* disarmament via "accidentally" detonating a nuclear weapon "accidentally" at a U.S. Air Force Base's circus. But *Octopussy* is more concerned with Bond swinging like Tarzan and making love to Maud Adams during the most sweeping of John Barry strings. Jourdan's antagonist, like everything else, is too perfunctory to matter.

## 23. Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric)

*Quantum of Solace* (2008)

Join our

## mailing list

Get the best of Den of Geek delivered right to your inbox!

Your email address →

Upon discussing how he approached the role of Dominic Greene, an international philanthropist who secretly works as a mover-and-shaker for Quantum (SPECTRE), respected French actor Mathieu Amalric said he modeled him after Tony Blair. As according to Amalric, the real villains are always smiling as they destroy the world.

While that is a pretty damning indictment of the former Labour prime minister, it certainly sounds much more nuanced and interesting than the written character Amalric ended up getting saddled with. Ultimately, Greene is neither a villainous Blair nor the menacing head of Quantum—he's middle management. He's that guy who all the other Quantum assassins might suck up to, but everyone knows he's never getting the promotion upstairs.

Consequently, Amalric just leers and sneers as a cliché French fiend that looks like he has been overdosing on Bordeaux since the crib. All wide eyes and cackles, his greatest feat is when he steals a page from *Goldfinger* and drowns a wasted Gemma Arterton in oil off-screen. Otherwise, he's so lame that Bond doesn't even bother

finishing him off: he abandons him in a desert to be terminated by his presumably more competent employers.

Gustav Graves in Die Another Day

## 22. Gustav Graves and Zao (Toby Stephens and Rick Yune)

### *Die Another Day (2002)*

The early 2000s do not seem that long ago, but it's pretty daunting to imagine that a concept this culturally misjudged would get past TikTok, Twitter, and the other PC Principals of today. If you need a reminder, this is the one where a North Korean colonel had his face changed via "gene therapy" to look like the most desirable thing in the world: a stiff, white, and Oxford educated Brit.

Yes, English stage thespian Toby Stephens had the unenviable task of playing a Bond villain who is really Korean on the inside, and fights to wipe out Seoul and most of Japan. If that wasn't bizarre enough, he also has to spend the whole third act in a lame Power Rangers outfit, so as to harness the power of his doomsday satellite. Rick Yune is only slightly less laughable as Zao, the bad guy whose gimmick is that Bond blew \$80

million worth of conflicts diamonds into the side of his permanently sparkling face. He looks cooler than he acts.

Rosamund Pike also made her feature film debut as Miranda Frost in this film, the icy double agent who betrays 007 with all the unexpected surprise of a sunset. Even so, at least this triumvirate is still more memorable than those previously mentioned on the list, and Pierce Brosnan and Toby Stephens' sword fight is one of the more enjoyable hero-villain tête-à-têtes in the series.

Charles Gray as Blofeld in *Diamonds Are Forever*

## 21. Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Charles Gray)

### *Diamonds Are Forever (1971)*

Blofeld presents an interesting challenge for this list. Technically speaking, he is one character. But since he's *almost* never been visibly played by the same actor twice (Eric Pohlmann's vocal cameos in *From Russia With Love* and *Thunderball* don't count), he is essentially a different character each time. Indeed, Bond's entire relationship with his arch-nemesis changes from film-to-film without much in the way of context or logic. Ergo, they can and should be ranked



separately.

And within those ranks, Charles Gray is easily the weakest incarnation of the character to date. Playing Blofeld as a doddering snob who seems more interested in his cats and Jill St. John's backside than starting World War III, Gray's Blofeld is a failure in most regards and is much like Sean Connery's final Eon adventure: a disappointment.

Julian Glover in *For Your Eyes Only*

## 20. Aristotle Kristatos (Julian Glover)

*For Your Eyes Only (1981)*

*For Your Eyes Only* was the result of Cubby Broccoli's savvy instinct to pull back on the silliness of the Roger Moore era in the aftermath of *Moonraker* (or: *007 in Space!*). And it paid off in dividends with the classiest of Roger Moore's Bond films, as well as one of the better efforts, period, in the canon. In this film, Moore plays Bond as an unflappable gentleman killer instead of as the driest of comedians; the themes of détente and mutual admiration between MI6 and the KGB after *The Spy Who Loved Me* are also heightened for a seriously thrilling espionage closer; and Carole Bouquet's

LATEST MOVIE  
REVIEWS

**Broker Is a  
Masterful  
Korean  
Drama That  
Challenges  
You to the  
Core**

*By Delia*

emerald eyes are as spectacular as any underwater sequence.

However, the film's actual villains are one of the few times where a great Bond movie does not have a great villain. By their very nature of spy game manipulations, the bad guys here have to be rather low-key. On that front, there is Julian Glover, who is after the lost ATAC (a communication device for English nuclear submarines). He pretends to be Bond's contact in Italy, but is really using Bond to murder a local gangster and competitor while retrieving the ATAC for the Russians.

Despite this bit of cunning, Glover would only get the chance to be more playful in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Here, he is creepy solely in the pathetic sense as he goes into paranoid hiding from Bond after his plan is exposed... and he lusts after his teenage ward.

Rami Malek as Safin in No Time to Die

## 19. Lyutsifer Safin (Rami Malek)

*No Time to Die (2021)*

Here is the other arguably great Bond movie without a great villain. Although it's not from a lack of trying. Played by Rami Malek fresh off his Oscar win, Lyustifer

*Harrington*

**Glass Onion  
Review:  
Rian  
Johnson Eats  
the Rich  
with All  
Knives Out**

*By David Crow*

**Babylon  
Review:  
Margot  
Robbie and  
Brad Pitt  
Make  
Damnation  
Look Good**

*By David Crow*

Safin is basically named *Lucifer Satan*, for godsakes. He also gets to do what no other Bond villain has ever accomplished: *he kills James Bond!* (Spoilers, I guess.)

So why is Safin ranked so low? Because *No Time to Die* is so busy delivering in other areas like action set pieces, characterization, and creating a satisfying death scene for Bond that Safin becomes somewhat of an afterthought. He has a truly great, Phantom of the Opera-inspired entrance as he hunts Léa Seydoux's Madeleine Swann as a young girl. But by the time he pops back up in her life (and in the movie's), he comes off more like a nuisance than a nightmare. That holds true when a poisoned Bond executes him while looking away—distracted by more interesting things.

Wiseman as Dr. No Villain

## 18. Dr. No (Joseph Wiseman)

### *Dr. No (1962)*

And here we have the *official* first Bond villain, Dr. No. Like the title might suggest, he is the heavy of the film and for understandable reasons. He also has some rather nifty metallic hands to replace his real ones following a lab accident. They allow him the ability to crush any object with a simple squeeze—and to slide to

his death when they fail to cling to metal poles later in the picture.

Wiseman is amusingly arrogant as the first Bond villain. He invites 007 to his underground lair on a remote island; he wines and dines him with first class accommodations and a five-star tête-à-tête meal. He even allows James to romance Ursula Andress on his own time before placing the superspy in an easily escapable cell. But he can also be just a little too basic. He's a great beta setting, but Eon Productions would perfect the formula a little later. In the meantime, will you have a drink with me, Mr. Bond, and discuss my hilariously preventable plan to radio jam rockets at Cape Canaveral?

Franz Sanchez in License to Kill

## 17. Franz Sanchez (Robert Davi)

### *License to Kill (1989)*

Franz Sanchez just might be the one villain to do more personal damage to James than any other character not named Blofeld or Silva. After all, Sanchez is the one who crippled Felix Leiter in a legitimately disturbing scene after he fed only the lower half of Felix's legs to a Great White Shark. He also killed Felix's wife on their

wedding night (another personal friend of Bond's).

Yep, this was the late 1980s, and in the wake of *Lethal Weapon* and *Miami Vice*, Timothy Dalton's 007 was *going gritty* and *going Miami*. In the film, Sanchez is just a drug dealer and nothing more. While certainly broad and cartoonish enough to remain a Bond villain (he makes a guy's head explode in a decompression chamber!), his motive is simply to move more cocaine out of his fictional Caribbean retreat. Bond gets close to this bad guy, and maybe too close, before exacting a terrible revenge. But Davi underplays Sanchez as appropriately slimy and matter-of-fact. In spite of a nasty temper—such as when he has his girlfriend's other boy toy literally lose his heart for her—he is always clear-eyed and straightforward about his business.

Fiona Volpe in Thunderball

## 16. Emilio Largo and Fiona Volpe (Adolfo Celi and Luciana Paluzzi)

*Thunderball (1965)*

Emilio Largo is one of the most iconic of James Bond villains. But much like the film he's in—the most

successful 007 adventure when inflation is accounted for—that does not make him necessarily one of the best. Indeed, much like Dominic Greene in the Daniel Craig era, Largo feels like another middle management lightweight for the SPECTRE-set—a cycloptic pencil pusher who wants to get out of the volcano lair office so he can continue ogling Claudine Auger and sweating bullets while losing *badly* in his own casino.

Celi himself gives a rather standard performance in megalomania, creating the sense that Largo's disinterest in the plot comes as much from the actor himself (he was later dubbed in post by Robert Rietty). Largo kind of looks cool with the eye-patch, but otherwise he feels like an appetizer as Sean Connery got one step closer to squaring off with the man holding the Persian kitty. Mostly, Largo is best remembered as the source of inspiration for Robert Wagner's far more enjoyable "Number 2" character in the *Austin Powers* flicks.

However, Luciana Paluzzi's evil Fiona Volpe is as fiery as her red hair, and truly one of the best Bond villains in any era. This SPECTRE seductress is also the first genuine femme fatale in the Bond franchise, and she and Connery make the screen sizzle as she prepares her death trap in the bedroom. If she wasn't then so wastefully dispatched immediately afterwards—and anchored to someone as lame as Largo—she'd single-handedly pull herself up a half-dozen positions on this

list. If we were ranking henchpeople, she'd be top five. Alas, Largo is another chauvinistic man getting in her way.

Michael Lonsdale as Hugo Drax in *Moonraker*

## 15. Hugo Drax and Jaws (Michael Lonsdale and Richard Kiel)

Ah, James Bond at the height of his epic silliness. *Moonraker* is a hate it or love-to-hate-its-ridiculousness kind of movie. James Bond goes to space. He gets shagged in space. He even teams up with Jaws to have a cheap *Star Wars* knock-off laser fight with Hugo Drax's army of school bus-colored stormtroopers.... in space!

So, why would I even consider ranking this so high? Well, a secret to many of the Roger Moore Bond movies is that even the bad ones—which this unquestionably resides among—had good villains (you'll see what I mean further down on the list). And Hugo Drax as the preening God-wannabe in *Moonraker* is quite entertaining, indeed.

Unlike Curd Jurgens in *The Spy Who Loved Me*—who *Moonraker*'s Drax is a carbon copy of, save with a fetish

for space instead of living underwater—Michael Lonsdale is visibly having a blast chewing the scenery and using starlight as his after dinner mint. He snarls, threatens, and orders various forms of murder without ever once raising his voice from a monotone drone of well-bred, upper-class superiority. He wants to be a God, because it's his birthright, goddammit!

Midway through the picture, Drax bemoans, “Mr. Bond, you persist in defying my efforts to provide an amusing death for you.” And honestly, we feel his pain, because each attempt is so thoroughly more absurd that they become a joy to behold—knife wielding assassins hiding in coffins on Venetian gondolas; giant man-eating snakes hidden beneath waterfalls; and trapped underneath a pristine control room that is rather bizarrely meant to be barbecued upon rocket lift-off.



Christoph Waltz as Blofeld and Lea Seydoux in Spectre

## 14. Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Christoph Waltz)

*Spectre (2015), No Time to Die (2021)*

By his own admission the newly rebooted Blofeld is the author of the 21st century James Bond's pain. And we believe him. That is likely a credit to Christoph Waltz who is perfectly cast as Bond's arch-nemesis. However, he could've cracked the top 10 had he been better utilized and in a better movie than *Spectre*.

That fourth entry into Craig's singular Bond oeuvre is

one of the weaker entries in the series, bizarrely squandering Blofeld's long-awaited return to the franchise in an ill-advised plot line out of *Austin Powers: Goldmember*. As it turns out, Bond and Blofeld are long lost foster brothers in *Spectre*. *Meh*.

Still, Waltz brought a level of devilish eccentricity and off-color line-readings that made the character incredibly entertaining to watch. Plus, unlike any other villain on this list, he got to come back. And *No Time to Die* is that better Bond movie the character needed. Unfortunately, for his standing on this list, Blofeld is a secondary baddie who only appears in two scenes, dying in the latter one. Yet what a meal Waltz makes of that latter sequence wherein Blofeld turns into Hannibal Lecter. The way he winds up Craig's 007 and then turns the knife is captivating, and honestly far more compelling than *NTD*'s main schemer.

Jonathan Pryce as Elliot Carver in *Tomorrow Never Dies*

## 13. Elliot Carver (Jonathan Pryce)

*Tomorrow Never Dies (1997)*

The best thing that anyone can commend *Tomorrow Never Dies* for—besides Pierce Brosnan's reliably on-point performance as Bond—is Elliot Carver. While this

villain might be after creating headlines, he is also stolen straight from the printing press as one of the wriest attempts at satire in the whole James Bond cycle. With the thinnest of pretenses, Elliot is a walking, talking parody of Rupert Murdoch and the News Corp. organization. Because if there was any single mogul or CEO out there who would be a Bond villain today, it is Rupert Murdoch, right?

One year after real life Rupert Murdoch launched Fox News in 1996, *Tomorrow Never Dies* introduces Elliot Carver on the eve of launching an international 24/7 news network around the globe. But that's not good enough for Carver, who is also quietly starting a war between the UK and China, so that his media empire can cover it for better headlines, as well as squeeze their way into having exclusive broadcasting rights in China for the entirety of the 21st century.

It's ridiculous, and Jonathan Pryce loves every frame of it. A veteran character actor who appeared ready to dine on a fine meal, he has a delicious time consuming each millimeter of exotic scenery and location shooting while leaving only scraps for his fellow performers. So over-the-top with his monologuing, grandstanding, and sheer deification of infotainment news, he should at some point have had a crossover with Ned Beatty's Arthur Jensen from *Network* to trade notes. If that had happened, even 007 would be doomed.

Le Chiffre Tortures James Bond in Casino Royale copy

## 12. Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen)

### *Casino Royale (2006)*

By playing who is arguably the “first” Bond villain since he is based on the original Ian Fleming template (*Casino Royale* was published in 1953 and is Fleming’s first novel), Mads Mikkelsen embodies this nasty piece of work, complete with as gruesome a cinematic flourish as his habit of “weeping blood.” In fact, Mikkelsen is so good as this snake in tuxedo clothing that it is somewhat of a shame that Le Chiffre is little more than a very dirty banker.

In the novel, Le Chiffre is a traitorous Frenchman who is laundering money for the Russian secret service, but here he is a banker for terrorists in the Middle East, genocidal despots in Africa, and all manners of unsavory people. He also works as a contractor for a tangential organization (later revealed to be SPECTRE), which ultimately takes him out for losing all of his clients’ money. *Twice*.

But even if Le Chiffre meets an ignominious end at the hands of his employers, it is still during a sequence that made every male viewer in the world squirm with discomfort as he combined three innocuous items: a

chair with the seat cut out; a swinging rope; and Bond's bare crown jewels marrying the two on contact. **Casino Royale** really belongs to Craig and Eva Green's Vesper Lynd, but Le Chiffre nonetheless made a permanent impression on 007, and *THAT* one scene makes him one of the all-time best.

## 11. Elektra King (Sophie Marceau)

### *The World Is Not Enough (1999)*

The marketing materials for *The World Is Not Enough* clearly indicated that Robert Carlyle's Renard was the villain of the story. Yet I don't think he even warrants a mention as a henchman. Rather he is strangely a sympathetic monster: a terrorist who has fallen head over heels in love with the kidnapped daughter of a European industrialist. Quite literally presented as reverse Stockholm Syndrome, Renard loses his bearing for Elektra King and then willingly commits suicide for her by attempting to cause a hijacked nuclear submarine to meltdown in the Bosphorus —thereby eliminating Elektra's Russian oil pipeline competitors.

A knotty plot that doesn't entirely work, *TWINE* nevertheless benefits from Elektra, who makes for a

great villainess and is the only woman to be the actual lead Bond villain in a movie. She even duped audiences as much as James early on as she appears to be just another conquest for Bond to bed. She's beautiful, well-poised, and understandably troubled by the death of her father... but in actuality she manipulated his death and plays mind games still with James, Judi Dench's M, and even the terrorists.

Marceau and Brosnan had real sparks, which caused the scene where Bond was forced to shoot her while she was unarmed—and after he lamented earlier in the film that coldblooded murders are a filthy business—to be one of Brosnan's most chilling moments, as well as a series highlight. She got the better of Bond for most of the movie, and even in death looks poised to haunt his dreams.

Christopher Walken and Grace Jones in *A View to a Kill*

## 10. Max Zorin and May Day (Christopher Walken and Grace Jones)

*A View to a Kill* (1985)

*A View to a Kill* was Roger Moore's last James Bond movie. It also is arguably his worst (I still prefer it over

***Octopussy*** and ***The Man with the Golden Gun***, personally). But there is no denying that a) Duran Duran's song is killer, and b) the villains in this one are camp classics.

At 57-years-old, Moore was more reliant on stuntmen than ever, but he also could lean for support on Christopher Walken, who looked stoned out of his mind while playing the antagonist. In the film, Max Zorin is ostensibly some test tube baby ubermensch cooked up by Nazi scientists for the KGB. But really, he's Christopher Walken giggling at the witty banter he has to exchange with Roger Moore.

If that wasn't bizarre enough, he is also partnered with Grace Jones as his henchwoman and lover. Jones was popularizing high fashion and weirdness before Lady Gaga made it truly mainstream. Together, they make for the strangest romantic pairing in Bond movie history—or maybe just in movies, period.... at least until Roger Moore gets into her bed.

These bad seeds are also brilliantly entertaining at elevating a schlock movie, whether it's by having Jones bench press her real-life boyfriend Dolph Lundgren above her head, or having Walken chuckle to himself as he slides to his demise on the top of the Golden Gate Bridge. It's gonzo and it's glorious.

Baron Smedi in Live and Let Die

## 9. Mr. Big and Baron Samedi (Yaphet Kotto and Geoffrey Holder)

### *Live and Let Die (1973)*

This is one of the few times where the henchman/supporting villain is so strong that he can elevate the entire antagonism of the film. To be sure, Yaphet Kotto is a mercurial character actor who genre fans should also know from such films as *Alien* and *The Running Man*. Hence why it's no surprise that he makes for a pretty menacing presence as Mr. Big, a corrupt Caribbean dictator with hands deep in the heroin trade.

But the real strength of the picture—that's strong enough to partially overcome the uncomfortable implications wherein every Black man 007 meets is a criminal—comes from Baron Samedi and the supernatural world he beckons us toward. Truth be told, Geoffrey Holder's henchman doesn't even have a whole lot to do in terms of interacting with Roger Moore out on his first assignment; there is another henchman named Tee Hee (Julius Harris) who gets into most of the physical altercations. But Baron Samedi is curious for the threat he personifies.



This is a character that is truly supernatural. 007 shoots Samedi dead twice in the course of the picture—and with a post-*Dirty Harry* magnum to boot—and yet Samedi keeps coming back. The closing shot of the film is of the train on which Bond and Jane Seymour's ethereal Solitaire are escaping New Orleans for a romantic getaway. Little do they know that on the roof above them, the impossible-to-kill Baron howls with delighted triumph. He is one villain that Bond never got the better of and is the sole time James entered the realm of the supernatural. It makes him one of the most popular henchmen in the series, who earns a top 10 spot simply for the tenor of that booming roar.

Christopher Lee and Roger Moore in *Live and Let Die*

## 8. Francisco Scaramanga (Christopher Lee)

*The Man with the Golden Gun (1974)*

*The Man with the Golden Gun* might be our least favorite Bond movie. And this distinction is in no small part thanks to how much it wastes one of the great character actors of cinema history, Sir Christopher Lee. But it is also a tribute to Lee's talent that despite being given one of the franchise's weakest scripts, he is still among 007's greatest foes.

As the titular marksman of the piece, Lee plays the thrice-nippled Scaramanga, a hitman so deadly that he only ever needs one golden bullet for his golden gun. The ultimate assassin for hire, he's done so much wet work that he's been able to pay for his own tropical island in the process.

A perfect foil for Roger Moore's affable cad, Lee's overbearing seriousness as the consummate gentleman brings down the weight of a tenured professor in academia (with a PhD in assassination) against Roger's typical prep school flippancy. It's a great contrast that is woefully underutilized in favor of producers Broccoli and Harry Saltzman poorly capitalizing on the recent Western love for Bruce Lee and Hong Kong films with terrible "martial arts" sequences. There's also plenty of uncomfortable comedy played at both Britt Ekland and Hervé Villechaize's dwarf henchman Nick Nack's expense. The best that can be said about these shockingly outdated detours is that the latter may have inspired *Fantasy Island*.

At the very least, the final duel between Bond and Scaramanga has all the tension of a great Western showdown, and Lee never takes a false step.

## 7. Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Donald

# Pleasence)

## *You Only Live Twice (1967)*

Here finally is the most iconic portrayal of the supervillain with a kitty cat. Anything people likely remember about ol' Ernst stems from Pleasence's jarring appearance as a scarred, cycloptic baldy in a space age jump suit with a Persian on his lap. The only thing that separates him from the Dr. Evil he inspired in Mike Myers' *Austin Powers* movies is that Dr. Evil at least has some self-awareness about his visible hilarity.

And Pleasence is undeniably great in the role. Sure, he has a few henchmen working for him, plus another ginger haired femme fatale right after *Thunderball*, but this is the Blofeld show and it is a hoot. There is some plot going on about Blofeld kidnapping American and Soviet shuttles in orbit while simultaneously framing both countries as he leads his own space race. But who cares about all that jazz? This is the one where he tells Mr. Bond his dastardly plan and then lets his guest sit comfortably by his side until the odds turn ever in 007's favor (Q-branch cigarettes, anyone?).

The only downside about this version of Blofeld is that he is so cartoonishly evil while he schemes in his hallowed out volcano lair that he passes the realm of intimidating and goes straight to nigh satire. This is not

a criticism of the performance; it's the quintessential Bond villain. However, I suspect there could be more to this character than volcanoes and hidden motives filled with carnivorous piranhas.

## 6. Raoul Silva (Javier Bardem)

### *Skyfall (2012)*

The sole villain of the Daniel Craig era (yet) to have a true indelible affect, Javier Bardem's Silva is the James Bond version of the Joker, and we're all the better for it. This platinum blonde, pansexual carnivore turned MI6 on its head, and personally wounded Mr. Bond in ways far too numerous to count: he attacked 007's place of business in London; he burned down James' childhood home; he demolished the classic Aston Martin DB5; and he even attempted to instill in Bond a sense of gay panic!

Indeed, Bardem and director Sam Mendes created one of the most enticing monologues when they shoot Silva's whole introductory speech in one-take with the fiend slowly and methodically marching toward a captured Bond while reciting his tortured metaphor about them both being rats. He then caresses and propositions a bound Bond—and in a brilliant bit of

writing, James is neither shaken or stirred since this might not be his “first time” after all.

But Silva’s greatest impact is that he brings modern chaos to London like any competent 21st century terrorist. With a few keystrokes and barrels of gasoline, he destroys the illusion of security and ultimately wins the day against Mr. Bond by succeeding to have murdered their mutual mentor, Judi Dench’s M. In fact, I can think of no other Bond villain who so thoroughly won the ideological battle; Silva’s goal was to kill off the Bond franchise’s Rock of Gibraltar, and kill her off he did.

Still, for my money, Silva’s best moment comes when he emasculates Bond by having the injured 00 fail to shoot a glass of scotch off Bérénice Marlohe’s head—Silva then simply shoots her in the head. Even for a Bond movie that was twisted. Kind of like Silva’s dental work.

James Bond and Jaws in *The Spy Who Loved Me*

## **5. Jaws and Karl Stromberg (Richard Kiel and Curd Jurgens)**

*The Spy Who Loved Me (1977)*

Once again we have an instance where the henchman is so perfect that he lifts the main villain up several dozen pegs. But in this particular case, Jaws more than elevates Stromberg's threat level—he outclasses that relatively dull and generic slice of megalomania, and represents the one time where the henchman is the evil star of the picture.

There is so much right about *The Spy Who Loved Me* that it is another tribute to Kiel's villainy that he can stand out at all. Of all the “fantasy” Bond adventures, this might be the greatest one. The ski jump pre-titles sequence Possibly the best in the series. Barbara Bach as 007's KGB counterpart Bond girl? Probably the best in the original pre-Craig/Green series. The Carly Simon song, “Nobody Does it Better?” *The best* in the whole franchise, bar none.

Cubby Broccoli got so much right in his 10th 007 adventure—and first project without Harry Saltzman by his side—that it already had overcome the dippiness of Stromberg's “destroy the world” Saturday morning scheme. Still, like the underwater Lotus Esprit that James pilots, the film goes the extra mile with Jaws, a silent, seven-foot killer with the shiniest pair of chompers ever welded together by a blow torch. Those steel molars are pure gimmicks of course, but *Spy* makes the most of them as he bites through people's necks, padlocked chains, and even an electrical lamp.

Kiel also deserves credit for instilling a great deal of physical comedy to what could have just been a generic hulking menace. Consider how many silent behemoths Bond has battled in a blur over 50 years (like David Bautista in *Spectre*). Now, recall how entertaining Kiel's reactions were to falling Egyptian debris, a close call in the hen house, and even simply trading grimaces with Roger Moore. For better or worse, there is a reason he's the only villainous actor that Eon asked to reprise his performance.

## 4. Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Telly Savalas)

### *On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969)*

Donald Pleasence is obviously the most iconic Blofeld, but Telly Savalas is indisputably the best one. Of all the actors to tackle Bond's nemesis, Savalas is the only one to fully represent that level of animosity (and to enjoy enough screen time to earn it).

Also contributing to the reason of ranking them separately, Savalas' Blofeld seems wholly independent from his Pleasence predecessor. Just as the face of Bond changed from Sean Connery to George Lazenby, so did Blofeld's relationship with the superspy. When this

version of enemies meet onscreen for the first time, they have no recognition of one another. Bond is even able to manipulate Blofeld's vanity by posing as a foppish genealogist from the London College of Arms, who has come to prove Ernst's aristocratic heritage. When the masks finally come off, there is genuine disdain and upper-class sportsman rivalry between the two alpha male egos. And unlike Pleasence, Gray, or even Waltz, Savalas is able to physically match Bond in a final chase and shootout.

Savalas' more virile interpretation of Blofeld is still just as egotistical as the others, but he doesn't cross over so readily into camp as the two iterations Connery faced. He also leaves a painful wound not matched by any other villains in the classic pre-Craig series when the film ends with Blofeld getting the bitter final word. Having his plans for world domination thwarted, he perniciously drives by the parked car of James and Teresa di Vincenzo Bond—James' new bride played by Diana Rigg—on their wedding day and shoots Tracy in the head. He leaves Bond in utter agony.

It's a heartbreaker that due to Lazenby's unpopularity was never followed up on. Our loss.

Sean Bean and Famke Janssen in Goldeneye

### **3. Alec Trevelyan and Xenia**



# Onatopp (Sean Bean and Famke Janssen)

## *Goldeneye (1995)*

The James Bond movie that brought 007 back to relevancy after the Cold War and a spotty 1980s career is also the last “traditional” Bond movie to fire on all cylinders. Daniel Craig has had some equally great films, but Pierce Brosnan’s debut entry is the final five-star Bond film where it looked like James was actually having fun—and so was everything around him.

This includes the treacherous villains headlined by Sean Bean as Alec Trevelyan (aka 006) and the best femme fatale in the series, Famke Janssen’s Xenia Onatopp (aka a Venus Flytrap). For the main villain, Eon originally envisioned 006 as a mentor to James and had in mind Anthony Hopkins for the part. We all lucked out that the series went for the far more advantageous concept of them instead being brothers, and 006 reflecting what an evil James Bond gone rogue might look like.

Bean had originally auditioned for the role of 007 but works better as a foil to Brosnan in a grudge match that is far nastier than any plastic scar molded onto a face. The opening shows the only instance of Mr. Bond working with an MI6 colleague as an equal to thrilling

effect, and then their subsequent reunion after Alec had been assumed dead for nine years is a highlight of the movie; there's genuine anger between Bond and a doppelganger who is more than his physical and intellectual equal. This is one of the few instances where Bond emanates tangible hate and melancholy.

But Famke Janssen is the one who steals the show as Xenia, a hitwoman who likes to get more than her hands dirty on the job—her preferred method of murder is strangulation by thighs. A patently absurd concept, it is just perverse enough to avoid cartoonish fantasy, and Janssen commits to the role with so much verve that she actually broke a rib during her and Brosnan's love/fight scene that involved running into the wall as hard as possible while Janssen's legs coiled tighter. Unsafe sex, indeed.

## 2. Rosa Klebb and Red Grant (Lotte Lenya and Robert Shaw)

*From Russia With Love (1963)*

This is the one doubleheader where I am not sure if either is the henchman. Both are pawns in SPECTRE's machinations, but they have such latitude that they come far closer at snuffing out Mr. Bond's legacy than

anyone else in that hapless organization.

Rosa Klebb is the film's evil architect that picks out Daniela Bianchi's naïve Tatiana to be the Cold War honey pot laid for 007. And Lotte Lenya is beautifully repellant (with heavy make up) as this grotesque woman that is part-Russian and part-SS officer. There is an undercurrent of homophobia as well since it's hinted that she too covets Tatiana, but Lenya plays it with such devious repugnance that it is as welcomed as any attempts at traditional world domination monologues. Klebb also has one of the most iconic weapons in the series as she attempts to have her kicks with 007 in order to stick him with a poisoned knife. She fails due to Tatiana's interference, but even her death curdle is a victory of performance.

Red Grant, meanwhile, is the first James Bond doppelganger, and he proves to be more ruthless and cunning than even Sean Connery's uber-Bond. After murdering everyone in his path, Grant gets the drop on James by impersonating a slain MI6 agent and legitimately tricks him to lowering his guard *while* poisoning his girlfriend. Sure, Bond overpowers the blonde piece of iron in the end, but only after the most violent and brutal fisticuffs in 007's career. Fifty years later, and the blows and final choking gasp are still cringe inducing.

Really, these two made 007 look the fool, which is

especially bad form for James since Grant gave the telltale sign that he was a no good Russian commie: he ordered red wine with fish!

Goldfinger and Oddjob

## 1. Auric Goldfinger and Oddjob (Gert Frobe and Harold Sakata)

*Goldfinger (1964)*

*“Do you expect me to talk?” / “No Mr. Bond, I expect you to die!”*

In case we need to explain why Goldfinger is the best villain any further, it should be noted that he is the sole villain of the Sean Connery cycle that was not associated with SPECTRE, and therefore was his own, independent bit of awesomeness. First, Goldfinger enjoys the most brilliant scheme of any Bond villain: he will break into Fort Knox so the Chinese can irradiate the U.S. gold supply with a nuke, and thereby increase his own gold's value.

Next, he is in truth a greater nemesis for 007 than Blofeld can ever be since he represents the polar

opposite of Bond. He's older, unfit, and socially repugnant. He is also smarter than James as he easily captures Bond and logically keeps him alive as a "guest" on a Kentucky ranch in order to trick the spying CIA. And he operates not for political cause, world domination, or any sort of ideology.

He is just a greedy bastard, who came within centimeters of castrating Mr. Bond's preferred weapon via laser. In fact, if he had done just that before turning it off, there is no way James could have gotten Pussy Galore to betray their dastardly plan.

And over in the henchman corner, Oddjob is the first true evil sidekick in the series as director Guy Hamilton helped Broccoli and Saltzman perfect their formula. As the mostly silent Korean hitman and part-time caddy for Goldfinger, Oddjob really does fulfill any request, be it painting naked women in solid gold or using the first great gimmick of the canon: a metal-rimmed hat that can shatter necks.

Yet for all their machinations, their best scene is also Bond's best tête-à-tête where Connery challenges Frobe on the golf course. There are no explosions, no gunshots, nor even a flying hat. It's just Bond matching wits at a game of skill, and winning by cheating a cheater. Everyone onscreen is enjoying himself, and you'd be a fool not to do the same.

Share:

| Comment: 52

[Christoph Waltz](#)

[Christopher Lee](#)

[Christopher Walken](#)

[Daniel Craig](#)

[James Bond](#)

[Javier Bardem](#)

[Pierce Brosnan](#)

[Rami Malek](#)

[Sean Bean](#)

[Sean Connery](#)

avid Crow

**Written by**

**David Crow** | [@DCrowsNest](#)

David Crow is the movies editor at Den of Geek. He has long been proud of his geek credentials. Raised on cinema classics that ranged from...

[READ MORE FROM DAVID CROW](#)

## JAMES BOND

**MOVIES**

**Léa Seydoux: No Time to Die Ending 'Made Me Really Sad'**

June 13, 2022 | By Don Kaye

**MOVIES**

**James Bond Movies Ranked From Worst to**