

On Her Majesty's Secret Service (A Look Back)

On Her Majesty's Secret Service, released in 1969, was the sixth installment in the popular James Bond series and the first not to feature Sean Connery. Although largely dismissed by critics at the time of its release, the movie subsequently grew in reputation.



The movie opens with Bond (George Lazenby) in Portugal, where he is searching for Blofeld (Telly Savalas), head of the criminal organization SPECTRE. While there, Bond saves a young woman named Tracy (Diana Rigg) from committing suicide. That evening at a casino, she loses at baccarat, but Bond covers her losses. She repays his gallantry by spending the night with him before vanishing the next morning. Bond is then kidnapped by crime kingpin Draco (Gabriele Ferzetti), who explains that he is a widower and that Tracy is his daughter. Draco is concerned about Tracy's reckless behaviour, and he offers Bond a large sum of money if he will marry her. Bond pretends to consider the offer and, in return, asks Draco to use his considerable intelligence resources to help him find Blofeld. The trail leads to Piz Gloria, an allergy-research institute owned by Blofeld in the Swiss Alps.



Upon his arrival, Bond—posing as an expert from the College of Arms in London—discovers that a number of young women are patients at the institute. However, it soon becomes clear that the women are Blofeld’s “angels of death.” They have been brainwashed to spread a virus that will obliterate animal and plant life unless his demands are met.



After Bond’s true identity is uncovered, he escapes on skis, and at the bottom of the hill, he is shocked to find Tracy, who has followed him to Switzerland. He proposes to her. The next day the two attempt to escape down the mountainside, but Blofeld initiates an avalanche. Although Bond escapes, Tracy is captured. Bond enlists the aid of Draco and his men to launch a helicopter attack on Piz Gloria. A brutal battle ensues, and Bond saves Tracy before the institute is destroyed. He then pursues Blofeld in a high-speed toboggan chase that results in the criminal’s apparent death.



Back in London, Bond marries Tracy. However, as the newlyweds embark on their honeymoon, their car is sprayed with bullets by Blofeld and his henchwoman, Irma Bunt (Ilse Steppat). Tracy is killed, and as Bond cradles his dead wife, he repeats their favourite saying, “We have all the time in the world.”

After **You Only Live Twice (1967)**, Connery had announced that he would no longer play Bond, and filmmakers were forced to find a replacement. (The parody *Casino Royale* [1967] featured David Niven as 007, but the film is not considered part of the Bond franchise.) They ultimately chose Lazenby, an Australian model who had no prior acting experience. Although often compared unfavourably with Connery, Lazenby was noted for bringing a vulnerability to the normally unflappable Bond.

On Her Majesty's Secret Service boasts one of the series' best scripts—which stays close to Ian Fleming's 1963 novel—a fine musical score, and inspired direction by the franchise's former editor, Peter R. Hunt. Rigg was well cast as the Bond girl, and the movie features memorable action and stunt sequences, including the toboggan chase, which cameraman Willy Bogner filmed while skiing backwards. Although a box-office hit, the film grossed well below those starring Connery. Lazenby stunned producers by announcing that this would be his only Bond film. Connery was subsequently lured back for **Diamonds Are Forever (1971)**.

Director: Peter R. Hunt

Producers: Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman

Writer: Richard Maibaum

Music: John Barry

Running time: 142 minutes

Cast:

George Lazenby (James Bond)

Diana Rigg (Tracy)

Telly Savalas (Blofeld)

Gabriele Ferzetti (Draco)

Ilse Steppat (Irma Bunt)