



Carte Blanche

Jeffery Deaver

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James Bond is back. And in *Carte Blanche*, he is just out of Afghanistan, seconded to a new security agency -- one that is a distinctly separate entity from MI5 or 6. A decryption reveals that Britain is harbouring a vicious clandestine figure, and a great many people are to die -- within a week. 007 is in action in his own country for once, his hands tied by an irritating bureaucratic colleague, and up against a sinister opponent who luxuriates in the sights and sounds of death and putrefaction. And if the latter sounds like the kind of villain Lincoln Rhyme might be taking on, that's because 007's new chronicler is the American writer Jeffrey Deaver, creator of the quadriplegic criminologist Rhyme.

There is now a long and impressive tradition of continuing the literary adventures of Ian Fleming's superspy after his elegant creator's death, and it has to be said that the results have been only fitfully successful. The first post-Fleming Bond novel, Robert Markham's *Colonel Sun*, was a lovingly crafted tribute by a pseudonymous Kingsley Amis, and did considerable justice to the original concept. The entries by the American writer Raymond Benson were generally received with less enthusiasm (proving that Benson's considerable knowledge of Bondiana did not constitute sufficient credentials for the task), and while the veteran thriller writer John Gardner's entries began strongly, he appeared to lose interest in the project; the last two books in his 007 sequence were workaday, to say the least. Sebastian Falk's recent entry, *Devil May Care*, placed Bond back in the Fleming era, and was a diverting outing.

Like Gardner, Jeffrey Deaver is, of course, a considerable thriller writer with a body of work that has acquired a strong following (principally for his novels featuring Lincoln Rhyme). And like any writer approaching the task of continuing the adventures of Britain's most famous spy, Deaver was faced with a variety of dilemmas. Should he bring Bond into the modern age, as John Gardner (and the continuing film franchise) had done? Or should he create a period adventure in the fashion of the last non-Fleming Bond adventure by Sebastian Falks? To some degree, Deaver has opted to have the best of both worlds. This is a 21st-century Bond, post-9/11 and post-7/7 (both namechecked in this book), and Bond has given up smoking (something else that John Gardner wished upon the hero in his series). Many of the comforting facets of the Bond books are in place, including the sybaritic lifestyle and the absurdly-named women he encounters (how long did it take Deaver to come up with the name Ophelia Maidenstone?). The eternal Miss Moneybags is on board, as is the de rigueur grotesque villain. The modern reader consuming the book (and it demands to be consumed -- at a brisk pace) will be wondering what version of the spy chief M we will encounter: a middle-aged woman with echoes of Judi Dench? No, M in *Carte Blanche* is an admiral (clearly, in fact, Fleming's Sir Miles Messervy), and all the other aspects readers have come to expect in Fleming's adroitly written thrillers are satisfyingly in place. In fact, the opening suspense sequence (involving multiple deaths and the destruction of a train) is something that would have done Fleming proud. But as Deaver would no doubt be the first to admit, there was only one Ian Fleming, and any new Bond adventure is essentially an act of ventriloquism. But if such initiatives are to be undertaken, it is to the Fleming Estate's credit that the talented Mr Deaver was chosen for the job. Fleming aficionados may have caveats, but there is no denying that Deaver's customary storytelling expertise is handsomely on display here, and Deaver can offer a frequently persuasive Fleming simulacra. --Barry Forshaw

Carte Blanche Details

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From Reader Review Carte Blanche for online ebook

Gerald says

In reviewing *Carte Blanche*, I'm going to be referencing all sorts of things Bond-related, from the films to Fleming's Bond to some of the other literary versions. I think it's important to note, right from the start, that I'm a Bond fan (probably safe to assume, given my speedy reading of this). But what sort of Bond fan?

My favourite book is Fleming's *OHMSS* (along with *Thunderball*, *From Russia with Love* and *Dr No*); My favourite films are *Thunderball*, *From Russia With Love*, *Casino Royale*; My favourite Bond actor... I always say Timothy Dalton, but it's probably equal with Daniel Craig. I've never read any Jeffrey Deaver before this, but every other Bond novel except for the last two Raymond Benson books, which I couldn't bring myself to read – so horribly misjudged did I find the first few. So that's me. That's the context.

To get back to *Carte Blanche*, I enjoyed it enough. It was a good read. I expected Deaver to be a slightly more highbrow writer. Highbrow? Bond? Well, yes. Highbrow perhaps is the wrong word, but for all that Fleming's stories were (and they were a product of their times), there was something very classy about his prose. His attention to detail and use of language did put them a cut above similar (and more forgettable) stories of the day. In the same way that John Le Carre writes such beautiful prose that it's lovely to read, no matter what the subject. Fleming could do that. Kingsley Amis could do that too, and his Bond novel (as Robert Markham), *'Colonel Sun'* remains my favourite of all the non-Fleming Bonds. Faulks is a clever writer and he tried to do it.. but not hard enough. And the fact that he wasn't particularly a Bond fan showed. John Gardner's plotting and characterisation went a bit potty at times, but his prose was mostly elegant. He is also a specialist genre-writer (*The Secret Generations* trilogy, being, I think, his best work and one that shows how well he understands the *Spy Game*).

The next thing I was looking for in Deaver was how English the story was? Because there is no mistake that his English-ness is one of the things that has endured in Bond. I don't want to waste too much time on Raymond Benson, but this was where he came most terribly unstuck (Bond referring to people as 'Cowboys' and many more Americanisms, the Englishness being almost a parody). This is where Deaver impressed me. Careful, intelligent research – showing skills as a natural writer (which Benson wasn't) and only occasionally succumbing to gingo-istic stereotype (Rugby, in particular left out rather self-consciously). In fact, this Bond feels very naturally English and very at home in London.

I should probably reflect on the plot [slight spoiler alert], which is very topical (read: will date easily), globe-trotting and almost features the complete destruction of the villain's lair. Just like... the films. And this is where both Faulks and Deaver have disappointed me. Given the opportunity to create a new literary Bond, they both appear to have followed the formula of the films. This one has girls 1, 2, 3 (girl next door, victim, leading lady), evil henchman, villain's lair... in fact more than that... this one is *Licence to Kill*.

Yes - my favourite Bond film between 1969 and 2005 - *Hydte* is Robert Davi's *Franz Sanchez*, Dunne is Benicio Del Toro's *Dario*, Jessica is Lupe Lamora (okay, he doesn't sleep with Jessica), *Isthmus* becomes Cape Town, Cocaine becomes... recycling(?!). Bond goes undercover, gets accepted as one of their own, someone who might become useful, eventually is revealed, henchman suspected all along... I almost expected the same dialogue ("You disappoint me Mr Bond"). Only 1989's *LTK* managed to be very Fleming-esque, even as a film set in the 80s (the decade style forgot) and yet *Carte Blanche* fails.

In fact most of the books that have tried to be like the films, even though they're written by a carefully

selected writer - don't do it half as well as the films do (which are often written by committee in the end, with three writers having main responsibility).

So why do so many author's fail in trying to write a literary Bond? Fleming, of course, never had to stick to a formula and didn't. Although 'The Spy who Loved Me' is one of the most dreadfully misogynistic books ever written, I love the structure (like the film 'Under Siege', Bond is an incidental character who appears about halfway in and makes life difficult for a bunch of hoodlum's whilst coincidentally staying in an American motel one night). He killed Bond off twice, had him married twice.. none of that can happen for someone writing a one-off novel. They have to stick to the formula.

But they also try and write too much, in my opinion. Fleming's Bond never talked about sport, or about films, or about books, or about music (Deaver's does all of these). Perhaps that's because Fleming himself wasn't very interested in them, but it does help for Bond to be the 'blunt instrument' he was described as being. Film's can't show us inside Bond's mind. Books can and so Faulks and Deaver have chosen to. But that's a mistake. Fleming didn't try most of the time. His Bond was not romantic (as Connery could be). Not particularly desperate to get women in to bed (as Moore seemed to be). He just had a kind of raw animal magnetism. Is it politically correct to write a character like that in the modern age? Is the old Bond redundant in the modern age? Is there even a need for new Bond novels?

I've frequently thought about all these questions and decided the answer to them all is no. If Bond can't be how he was then why continue him? And when he isn't, it loses something. But then there was Licence to Kill. And then there was Casino Royale. Both great films, Fleming-esque and yet entirely a product of their times and ages. If the films can manage to do this, then surely literature should?

A few quick responses to things you've already read about:

1. Deaver is a car nut and a fan of Top Gear. [Sighs] Yes we get that.
2. Bond drinks Bourbon instead of Vodka Martini. Not strictly true as he does have one Vodka Martini, and when in America [in Fleming's Diamonds are Forever] he quite got into Bourbon. I don't really have a problem with this. This is where Deaver can, in my opinion, put his likes and expertise on to Bond.
3. Yes there are gadgets [acceptable], and a version of Q [A British Asian Cricket-fan whom I quite liked].
4. Its another re-boot. Bond's been re-tooled so many times now. I'm not a big fan of re-boots. I know you have to suspend disbelief quite a lot to picture someone who cut their teeth in WW2 and grew up through the Cold War still fighting in Afghanistan today, but readers (and watchers) are used to suspending disbelief. The question is, is it more authentic to do that, or to have a Bond entirely bereft of those experiences.
5. Current day setting: See above. If you can make it authentic then surely that's better, but for me, Faulks' was so wrong I'd rather have a modern re-boot that gets it right. And they did that in Casino Royale.

Having said all that, I'd like to remind you of my earlier statements. I quite liked Carte Blanche. It was good fun. There's a lot worse thrillers out there [a lot]. And a lot better too. In terms of Bond books it wasn't a patch on Fleming (obviously), or Robert Markham. It was better than Faulks, Benson and some of Gardner's later ones. When I'm reading a Bond novel its interesting to me which of the existing Bond actors I find myself picturing. Is that a guide to which Bond the author had in his head?

I never picture Roger Moore ever (although For Your Eyes Only is quite good, and quite Fleming-esque). Occasionally flashes of Lazenby's physicality might strike me in a fight scene. I picture Dalton more in the better Gardner Books (Icebreaker, for example).. perhaps because I'm so used to seeing him in 80s garb. Devil May Care was definitely Connery (but a late-era toupee-wearing Connery, like Never Say Never Again). Carte Blanche was mostly Daniel Craig, with Connery appearing in all the cheesy moments.

That would draw the conclusion that he's trying to do for the books what Casino Royale did for the films... but not quite succeeding. And that is probably how I'd sum it up.

Randy says

I read all the Ian Fleming Bond novels when I was fourteen-fifteen. I had to hide them from my mother as she didn't approve. I've followed all the "new " novels since Fleming's death: Kingsly Amis(as by Robert Markham, those of John Gardner, Raymond Benson, Charlie Higson(the young Bond series), and the one by Sebastian Faulks. Even the two by Christopher Woods based on the scripts for The Spy Who Loved Me and Moonraker, both sufficiently different that a few name changes, and title, and you'd have new Bond novels.

Jeffery Deaver won the Ian Fleming Dagger Award for his novel GARDEN OF BEASTS. In his acceptance speech, he spoke glowingly about his feelings for Fleming's writings. It led to his being asked if he would like to write a Bond novel.

This is a James Bond updated to today's world. Mid-thirties, Bond is a member of a secret branch of British intelligence called the Overseas Development Group. Run by M, Bond is a 007 charged with protecting the realm by any means necessary. All the characters are here; Moneypenny, Mary Goodnight, Bill Tanner, his housekeeper May is mentioned, Q Branch, even Felix Leiter puts in an appearance.

In this modern world, Bond has the latest mobile phone and enough apps to render such things as shotgun mikes, bugs, and even following someone too close superfluous.

Bond has the Fleming woman also: Felicity Willing by name(make your own jokes). A villain named Severan Hydt. Known as the Rag-and-Bone man, he owns Greenway International, the world's largest disposal and recycling company.

Headquarters receives an electronic whisper that's chilling:

Casualties estimated in the thousands, British interests adversely affected.

Bond is sent in to find out what and stop it. However he feels necessary.

As I read this one, I realized something. The Bond I pictured in my mind was Timothy Dalton. While Connery is probably my favorite, I had read all the Fleming novels before I ever saw one of the films. I had my ideas built up of how he looked and Dalton comes the closest of all the actors that have filled the role.

A very good book.

Eric says

Whenever I read Ian Fleming Bond stories, I picture Daniel Craig as 007. I know I should be picturing Connery or Moore, or even Brosnan, and not the "Blonde Bond", but I can't help it -- Casino Royale was the first Bond film that engaged me. Previously, I had only seen a few minutes of a Brosnan Bond flick with an

ice castle that only left me thinking how stupid the whole franchise must be. So after reading *Quantum of Solace: The Complete James Bond Short Stories and Doctor No*, I'm excited to see a modern day literary take on 007, where the image of the rebooted Bond Daniel Craig belongs.

It seems that it took a while for Jeffery Deaver -- this is his first Bond novel -- to get comfortable writing 007. The first few chapters are a bit stilted and tentative, but once Deaver settles in, the book begins to flow into a great globe-trotting thriller that keeps to the spirit of the original Ian Fleming character, and features guest spots by M, Q, Miss Money Penny and Felix Leiter.

I don't really understand the low ratings for this book. I would highly recommend it to fans of espionage, thriller and Bond stories, and look forward for further Bond tales from this author.

Tony says

CARTE BLANCHE. (2011). Jeffery Deaver. ***.

The James Bond Trust – or some such organization – has been granting permission over the years to current authors to write new adventures for Ian Fleming's series hero. This time, we got Deaver. This is a thriller in the Deaver style that uses many of the characters that appeared in the Bond series, along with Fleming's fascination with clever gadgets to aid him in his search for the evil men of the world. In this iteration, it seems as if Bond has a super iPhone that he carries around with him that contains all the known apps in the world – plus a few that seemed to be invented on the spot. I'd like one of those phones! This is a good thriller that involves a planned terrorist plot. Bond doesn't have much information to go on at the beginning, but spends the required amount of time trying to find out more about the planned site and the proposed reactionaries. We get to meet some of the organizers of the plot early on in the book, but we don't learn much since they only contact each other in code. Bond, of course, has an app that will break the code and let him in on the plot, but he only gets a small bit of code at a time. Frustrating! If you like Deaver, you will like this book.

Michael says

When I think of a reboot of James Bond, I think about *Golden Eye*, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and all the newer Bond movies. *Carte Blanche* is the first novel in the Bond series to get a reboot; a veteran of the war in Afghanistan and former smoker. These are the only real big differences I can see in this novel. Everything you would expect in a Bond novel/movie is still here; the cars (a Bentley Continental GT and even a Subaru Impreza WRX) the girls (so many of them), the gadgets (including a custom iPhone called a qiPhone) and of course the over-the-top action. Even some of the common friends of Bond make an appearance in this book, including; M, Money Penny and Felix Leiter.

As for the story, this reminds me a lot of *Tomorrow Never Dies* but instead of an insane Reporter causing all the attacks it is an Eco Terrorist group. There is a lot of action, flirting and double crossing, I've never read another Bond novel but this was everything I wanted. I know many people are concerned about this reboot but I must admit, it still lives up to the Bond name. I will go back and read some of the older 007 novels but for now this lives up to the Bond name, if I compare it to the movies.

Daniel says

Jeffery Deaver accomplished something beyond the capacities that I expect from contemporary writers: he wrote a twenty-first century Bond novel that reads exactly as a Bond novel set in the twenty-first century should. Since Fleming passed away and the Bond name and series continued without him, a handful of authors have added to the Bond canon with varying measures of success, yet without capturing the vitality--the soul, you could say--that makes Fleming's books so good. Somehow, Deaver has captured this essence and combined its potency with a story that stands up as an excellent international thriller in its own right, Bond or no Bond.

This is, undoubtedly, a Bond book, and anyone who has read Fleming's work will immediately recognize the tone of the story. Bond is clinical in his approach to his job and absolutely certain about his cause. He lives in the present and for the moment, and seizes opportunity when and where it appears--be it a chance to infiltrate a potential enemy stronghold, despite a lack of fall-back options; or a high-speed drive in a high-performance car on winding, back-country roads. He is also sharp of mind, using his tools, craft, and raw intelligence to outdo obstacle and enemies, and to crack the greater puzzle behind the story. In combat, Bond is fearless, savvy, and brutal when need be. "Carte Blanche" reads like a Bond novel, and Deaver writes Bond so that he acts and speaks as Fleming intended.

The one note that Deaver edits from Fleming's oeuvre is the morbid side of Bond that grows more pronounced with each book in the earlier series, until it culminates in a personal crisis that causes Bond to consider drastic actions for relief. As Deaver envisions him, Bond is in his mid-thirties and is resolute in his cause to "protect the Realm, at all costs." In context, this falls perfectly in step with the romantic connotations that phrases like "on her Majesty's secret service" evoke, and connects Bond with the literary tradition of British spycraft. More importantly, however, Deaver offers a Bond who is heroic in a classical sense, free to exercise his talents and pursue his mission without any taint of modern cynicism or censure.

Another noteworthy accomplishment of Deaver's is his use of modern and traditional spycraft. In "Carte Blanche," Bond relies greatly on his mobile phone and its various apps to trail suspects, eavesdrop on conversation, snap photos, and video important events. Deaver shows himself impressively adept at incorporating modern digital gadgets and tools with just enough detail to work these devices into the fabric of the story. At the same time, he writes Bond into positions where old fashioned spycraft--such as cutouts, and an ingenious means of getting past a secure doorway--serve as the best strategy. Deaver combines these old and new tricks into a seamless blend that, again, connects Bond with the espionage tradition, while also serving readers an updated take on a spy whose exploits fascinate and entertain.

"Carte Blanche" had the same effect on me as the twenty-first century "Casino Royale:" once again, I was able to experience the same adventure and intrigue, the same thrills, that I once did when I first read about British Secret Agent James Bond, 007. In fact, "Carte Blanche" is so good, I actually took my time reading it, so as to make the concoction last just a little longer. James Bond is a unique figure in literature, and a spy tale such as "Carte Blanche" does not come along often enough.

Bryan says

We are gathered here together to witness the joyous union between the James Bond literary franchise, and the successfully established thriller novelist Jeffery Deaver.

And like any good wedding, we've ensured that we've observed the traditions.

Something Old:

James Bond is back - with all the high adventure, bizarre villains, and beautiful women (with whimsical names). Bond drinks the finest wines, consumes fabulous meals, and drives fast and exotic cars. And Deaver's gone way back to the beginning, so Bond is young and exuberant. Seems like old times, with the novel free from any baggage that might otherwise be remaining by keeping continuity with the John Gardner or Raymond Benson storylines. In fact, Bond seems a bit fresh in his personal struggles, so this novel could arguably use Ian Fleming's first couple of Bond novels its starting point.

Something New:

For all that Deaver's gone back to the beginning, it's also a reboot of the series. Other authors' works appended to the series, but Deaver's version is actually a reimagining of the character for contemporary times. This is not your father's version of James Bond - he's rather politically correct, a non-smoker, and comes across a bit less self-assured. He doesn't always charm the girls, and he employs a largely defensive form of fighting. Moreover his high-tech gear is up-to-date: his cellphone alone has many of the apps he needs for his job in one handy package.

Something Borrowed:

Bond novels (by Fleming) always seemed to focus on adventure, in which there also happened to be some espionage activity. In this new start, Deaver actually seems to focus more on espionage - I've never seen Bond so careful. To me, Fleming's novels depicted that Bond's espionage skill was ART (ie: he was good at it partly due to his confidence and ability to bluff), but Deaver's novel seems to showcase that Bond's espionage skill is CRAFT. He literally never goes into any situation without a backup plan, as readers will discover in this novel.

Something Blue:

Bet you thought I couldn't deliver, but from p. 331: "A blue crane, the South African national bird, stood regally in a pond nearby, perfectly balanced on one leg." Thank you Mr. Deaver for not forgetting, and now the wedding is perfect.

Some general thoughts about this book - I've never read any works by Deaver before, but I certainly hope he writes more James Bond, as I definitely want to read more. Will I check out his other works? Perhaps. Deaver writes an economical style of prose, succinct and parsimonious. Deaver's writing is very basic, so much so that younger readers who've never tried anything beyond YA novels could devour this without breaking a sweat. And truthfully, the simplistic exposition and the basic vocabulary helps speed the book along. This book held my attention raptly and I was sorry when it was done - always leave them wanting more, right Deaver?

And not to be prudish, but an extra half-point to Deaver for writing a grim thriller with no strongly profane

language. A couple milder expletives, but easily overlooked: I appreciated his restraint.

I'll definitely be cheering Deaver for more Bond. Best reboot of any long-running franchise that I've read so far!

5 stars!

Rick Riordan says

This is the newest reincarnation of James Bond, and I was interested in seeing how Deaver would reinvent 007 as a 21st Century British operative. I'll admit I'm not an avid James Bond fan, though I liked Sean Connery in Dr. No, and I've read Ian Fleming's Casino Royale. I was impressed with Deaver's interpretation. He stayed true to the spirit of Bond, but added his own impeccable plotting, which frankly made a lot more sense than many of the Bond movies. All in all, Deaver successfully transplanted Bond into 2011. The narrative twists are many and suitably surprising. The villains are well drawn, equally creepy, compelling and competent. Bond comes across as very human, admirable and somewhat tragic. While there is no shortage of romance with the usual 'Bond girls' with ridiculous names – Felicity Willing, Philly Maidenstone – there is nothing 'throw away' or glibly macho about Bond's emotional life. This is a three-dimensional James Bond whom I would love to follow in further adventures.

Mike (the Paladin) says

This was a close one. I was very close to going 2 stars on it..but it finally seemed to pull itself together and finish strong. I will say that it's the best post Fleming 007 book I've tried.

I read Ian Fleming's Bond books years ago (the late '60s and early '70s) and since he passed (and the post Fleming's death books) there have been a "series of writers" adding to the "series of book". I've yet to be really drawn into one of those. I started another recently and laid it aside so often I had to return it to the library. Note: I have not given it a bad rating, I plan to give it another shot.

Here we get the first I've actually gotten into. Bond getting involved in nefarious doings about feeding the starving. (Yeah I know that's a "what the..." statement but you need to read the book to get the details). Bond has moved forward and has access to the NET and so on. The book works as a fair thriller and the plot ties up well with a climatic ending.

Still, I guess the problem is it's not really Bond. Others who read the book may not "feel" that way but I did. I found my interest wandering and spent a good deal of the book somewhat bored with it. I was well into the book before I finally got interested in it...and then I was still ready for it to end.

So, maybe Bond is a character of his time and that magic just won't be recaptured. I live in hope that I'll find a volume that i can get involved in, maybe even a little excited about. That still hasn't happened but i will say that I've liked Mr. Deaver's book better than any of the other (as noted) post Fleming works.

Jerome says

Well paced.

But, while Deaver is intent on reiterating Bond's tastes in fast cars, sharp attire, and quality booze, he misses what originally made 007 such an iconic figure. Ian Fleming's James Bond, arising from the conformism of the 1950s, carried the appeal of being an outsider within the system, someone who exercised the freedom of his "licensed-to-kill" status to create his own rules, bucking convention. Fleming's Bond worked on very long tether from HQ as he pursued his quarry, as in his search for his nemeses from SPECTRE. He could be cold and arrogant, definitely not a team player. While a reader certainly roots for him, there are occasions that same reader might not be sure whether he likes him. Critics even came to characterize him as an "anti-hero." (In contrast to Deaver, the cinematic reboot casting Daniel Craig as 007 actually captures these character traits quite well.)

Deaver, on the other hand, wants to have a likeable James Bond, who loves his parents, cares about world hunger, only wounds his attackers if he doesn't absolutely have to kill them, and is always "phoning home." His relationships with all his colleagues at HQ are warm and chummy. His apartment decorations reflect sentimentality. Even in pursuit of a bad guy, Bond takes time to "smell the flowers," noticing the beauty of his surroundings. At one point, Deaver has Bond asked himself, "What would M do in this situation?"—something Fleming's Bond would never be caught doing. This is a sanitized Boy's Life version of James Bond (an appropriate metaphor in more ways than one, since the book feels like it was written at a sixth-grade level).

this new Bond is so pleasant, so likable that he berates himself for being annoyed by irritating minor characters.

Also, the whole point of Bond is that he is supposed to be an unpleasant, intensely snobbish bore who manipulates and exploits any weakness in people for his selfish ends. Especially other people who lack his all-consuming passion for life at the edge and all its finest rewards and pleasures. But Flemming cleverly tempered this personality with the background of a tragic childhood and the product of an English boarding school upbringing resulting in a longing to look up to authority father figures such as 'M'.

Ian Flemming brilliantly held up the closeted and bigotted attitudes held by society and demonstrated its hypocrisy when Bond thunders and crashes into any situation requiring his ruthless efficiency.

But do we get the modern equivalent with the Carte Blanche Bond? Will you be shaken, and stirred? Will Carte Blanche's licence to kill have you in Bond's gun sights? No, no, and NO! What we get is Bond the bleeding heart liberal who wakes with night sweats and troubled conscience for sleeping with a woman when he may be falling for a work colleague. WE get the errant Knight Sir Galahad who puts the beautiful and vulnerable date in a taxi and waves goodbye lest he be tempted to take advantage....OMG. WHY oh Why is Bond so wet?

The villain is a childish cardboard cut-out, and there's LOTS of detail on the food people order.

Michael says

Jeffery Deaver doing James Bond is like having Robert Downey, Jr. play... Sherlock Holmes. Well done, but with serious disconnects on multiple levels. One needs to just enjoy the story as a story, and suspend

complaints about deviations from Fleming's ideal. Though I am enjoying the story, I think Deaver needs to get back to Lincoln Rhyme.

J.F. Penn says

Full video review here <http://mysterythriller.tv/carte-blanc...>

I had to read this book as I am a huge Bond fan and also enjoy Jeffrey Deaver's Lincoln Rhyme series. For an American thriller author to write in the biggest British spy novel franchise, it's quite the combination. Anyway, the book opens with a message that has been intercepted by British intelligence about an incident by the mysterious 'noah' that will have thousands of casualties and impact british interests. James Bond is assigned to find out what it is and stop it. This adventure leads him to rubbish disposal multi-millionaire Severan Hydt who has a ruthless Irish henchman, and Bond ends up travelling in Britain, to Dubai and then on to South Africa where the book escalates to the final twist.

So what did I like about the book?

I like Q - this reincarnation is an Indian IT guru who can make interesting gadgets from what is locally to hand. It was good to see Felix Leiter born again, a new American who meets up with Bond in Dubai. There's the obligatory flirting with the ladies, who are portrayed as stronger than previous Bond girls. I particularly loved the villain, Severan Hydt who is sexually aroused by decay and death. He is thrilled to be near dead bodies and even loves the decay of buildings and cities. He doesn't allow his lover to wear makeup so he can see her aging process. Creepy. His business of rubbish disposal is a curious, but effective bad-guy business. England now is critically short of rubbish space and it is a hugely important topic here and these mega-rubbish tips are brilliant places to keep bodies. The descriptions are also excellent - it's amazing what people throw away and there are some good bits about technology invented to scan hard drives before destroying or extract precious metal which can be on-sold. One can see how lucrative the business could be. This is a really original villain's business. Brilliant!

However, I didn't think the story was big enough for Bond - in terms of the scale of evil or the threat and also the ending wasn't consequential enough for me, although no spoilers! In my mind, Bond has to save the world - he is almost like Flash Gordon, saviour of the Universe! But in this book, I don't see him saving anything big enough to warrant his attention - a lesser agent could have dealt with it. Bond himself is possibly too introspective for me as well - the Bond in my mind is all action, less thinking about how lonely he is really and how we can't get close to people. He shoots people, has sex, has a few drinks, adjusts his tie and gets on with it - for England. I don't need him to be a sensitive, new age man. Leave that to other heroes. I also got annoyed about the product placement - there was so much of it - perhaps that was for the film tie-in. BUT, all that said, I enjoyed the ride. Deaver knows how to write a thriller and keeps it interesting enough - and the new take on Bond may be justified after so many outings. Worth a read on the Kindle!

Mark says

Being a fan of Deavers writing I kind of got what I expected from his 007 book. A lot of twists in the tale and overall a decent book about a James Bond planted in our time. Well researched by the writer with all the obvious things that makes the "movie" James Bond such fun to watch.

Having read all Ian Fleming novels I am somewhat dissatisfied by the fact that Deaver wrote a sequel to the movie-007 and not to the literary creation as envisioned by Ian Fleming. (The only continuation novel that is similar to Fleming is the Kingsley Amis "Colonel Sun"). Like Gardner, Benson, Faulks and now Deaver they all write about recognisable moviehero. I had hoped on the strength of Deaver's own work he would have chosen for a more Flemingsque story.

It is a slick tale, but by NO means the best Deaver has to offer.

Chuck says

Jeffery Deaver is one of my favorite authors. So, Deaver writing a James Bond yarn, why not? This is a contemporary Bond, i.e. post 9/11. He receives a bulletin from headquarters warning of an attack threat scheduled for later in the week jeopardizing British interests and estimates thousands of casualties. Of course this sends Bond to the airport and we are in for a complicated journey that is fraught with danger. It's not the Bond we remember but it is Bond.

Christopher Gordon says

I really wanted to love this book, to slap 5 stars up and tell the world to go and enjoy this while the 3rd Daniel Craig movie takes yet another long year to film. Especially when you consider that Jeffrey Deaver is a world class thriller writer and the Daniel Craig Bond movies have demonstrated it is possible to achieve the seemingly impossible task of modernising Bond and still maintain his essential anti-hero arrogance, unpleasantness, and cruelty all wrapped up in a redemptive package of bravery in the face of insurmountable odds... then big things are expected of Carte Blanche.

Alas, as much as I enjoyed the book there are several fatal flaws:

1. Strangely the book seems overly long. Never a good sign that over the 2 days it took to read the hundred thousand or so words, I put down the book at least a dozen times. Judge that against the page turning tension of the longer Suzanne Collins Hunger Games when I read that from cover to cover in one session. But I did manage to pick it up again.
2. The old writer's trick of limiting the Third person intimate Point-of-View of the protagonist so you are tricked into believing you are enjoying the ride inside Bond's shoes but no; it turns out you are not actually privy to his inner thoughts as the apparent dangerous situation, or life threatening peril that Bond finds himself in, turns out to be nothing of the sort: Bond had it under control all along with hurried post-mortem explanations of previously hidden vital information of Bond's actions. The first time this writer device was used I felt annoyed. The fifth time I was spitting blood. It's such a cheap literary device to con the reader with fake excitement. So for that I deducted one star.
3. Finally, the Bond character himself: Ian Fleming created a character of subtle satirical dry wit that seems unrecognisable in Carte Blanche. I might as well be reading a Lee Child Jack Reacher novel because this new Bond is so pleasant, so likable that he berates himself for being annoyed by irritating minor characters.

The whole point of Bond is that he is supposed to be an unpleasant, intensely snobbish bore who manipulates and exploits any weakness in people for his selfish ends. Especially other people who lack his all consuming passion for life at the edge and all its finest rewards and pleasures. But Flemming cleverly tempered this personality with the background of a tragic childhood and the product of an English boarding school upbringing resulting in a longing to look up to authority father figures such as 'M'.

Ian Flemming brilliantly held up the closeted and bigotted attitudes held by society and demonstrated its hypocrisy when Bond thunders and crashes into any situation requiring his ruthless efficiency.

But do we get the modern equivalent with the Carte Blanche Bond? Will you be shaken, and stirred? Will Carte Blanche's licence to kill have you in Bond's gun sights? No, no, and NO! What we get is Bond the bleeding heart liberal who wakes with night sweats and troubled conscience for sleeping with a woman when he may be falling for a work colleague. WE get the errant Knight Sir Galahad who puts the beautiful and vulnerable date in a taxi and waves goodbye lest he be tempted to take advantage....OMG. WHY oh Why is Bond so wet?

When you consider that Daniel Craig's Bond is just as nasty and selfish and unlikeable as the Ian Flemming original; yet brilliantly portrayed as a complicated and flawed and vulnerable adrenalin junkie; why do we get such a feeble and bland Bond in this book?

So for that I took off another star.

This would have made a fine novel in the mould of Lee Child's Jack Reacher if the author had not adopted the baggage of James Bond 007 and decided to call his character something different like JAMES BLAND.
