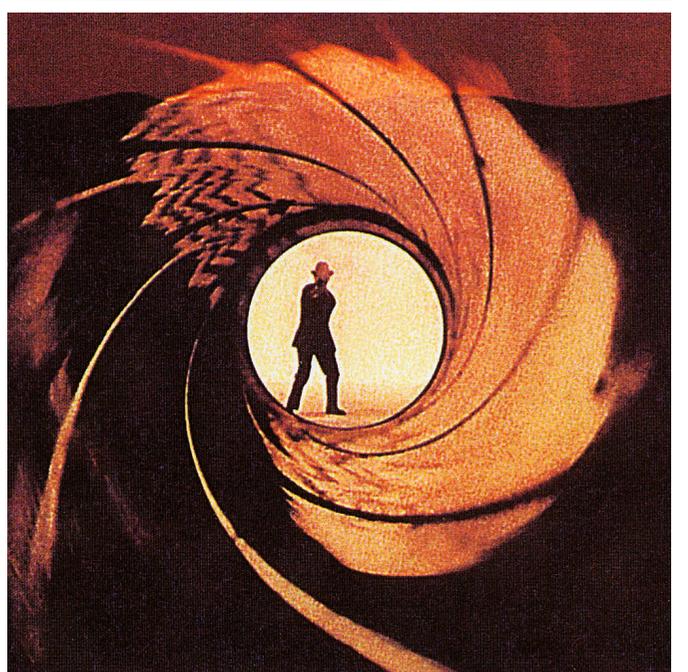


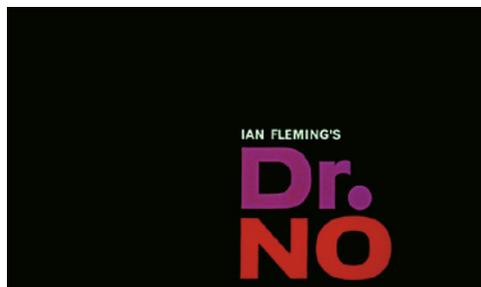
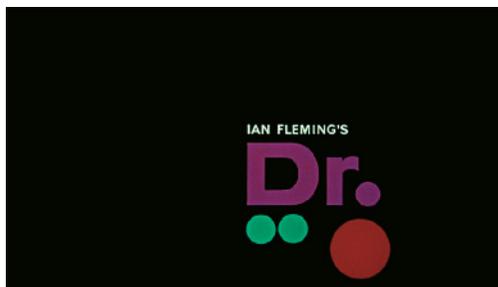
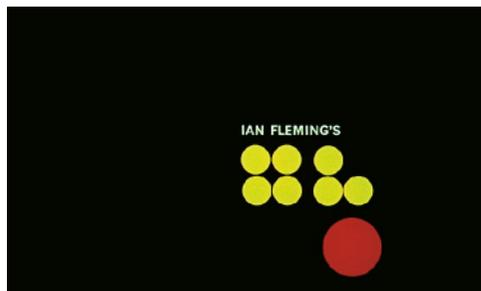
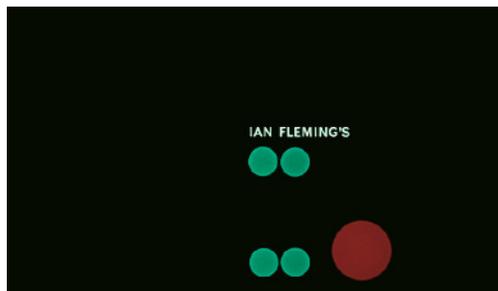
Shoot to thrill

From the iconic gun-barrel perspective in *Dr No* to the top-secret opening credits of the latest James Bond movie, *SPECTRE*, the franchise has always been defined by its experimental title sequences. **Sam Delaney** tracks the men behind the images

The charismatic designer Robert Brownjohn and his team do a preparatory study for the *Goldfinger* title sequence, 1964. **Right** Maurice Binder's opening to *Dr No*, 1962







Maurice Binder's opening titles for 1962's *Dr No* were little more than an extended gun-barrel sequence. But, set to Monty Norman's equally iconic Bond theme music, it would lay the foundations for the most distinctive titles in cinematic history.

A white dot blinks across the screen, from left to right. It settles on the far right-hand edge, then opens up to reveal the inside of a sniper's gun barrel. The barrel follows the silhouette of James Bond as he walks across the white background. Suddenly aware that he is being watched, Bond turns sharply, draws his own weapon and fires. A wash of red bleeds across the barrel and the dot falls to the bottom left of the screen, whereupon it fades away.

This was the graphically simple, conceptually ambitious idea that Maurice Binder presented to film executives Harry Saltzman and Albert R Broccoli in 1961, during the making of the first James Bond movie. 'It was something I did in a hurry because I had to get to a meeting with the producers in 20 minutes,' Binder later explained. 'I just happened to have some little white price-tag stickers and I thought I'd use them as gun shots across the screen. We'd have James Bond walk through and fire, at which point blood comes on screen. That was about a 20-minute storyboard I did, and they said, "This looks great!"'

It was the genesis of what would become one of the defining elements of the world's longest-running movie franchise. Binder's stickers would, over the course of 50 years and 23 more movies, spawn ever more elaborate imagery to accompany the opening list of cast and crew: from voodoo ceremonies to exploding volcanoes. And, of course, naked, silhouetted girls. Lots and lots of naked, silhouetted girls.

Not much is entirely sacred in the Bond universe. Over the years, the cars have changed, as have the suits and the bad guys. M became a woman for a while. In the late 1960s, 007 even got married, for about five minutes. These days, the world's most famous spy has blondish hair and is partial to the odd bottle of Heineken in between all those martinis. But the one enduring element that renders every movie unmistakably a James Bond movie are those sumptuous, spectacular, exhilarating and

unashamedly overblown openers. Every one is different, but all share the ability to place an audience immediately on Planet Bond, instantly readying our minds for a couple of hours of action, glamour and preposterous chat-up lines.

In that sense, Saltzman, Broccoli and Binder wrote the playbook for modern commercial branding, long before Nike came up with 'Just do it' or Coca-Cola declared 'Coke is it'. They established a combination of music and imagery so powerful and evocative that it could communicate a thousand messages in an instant.

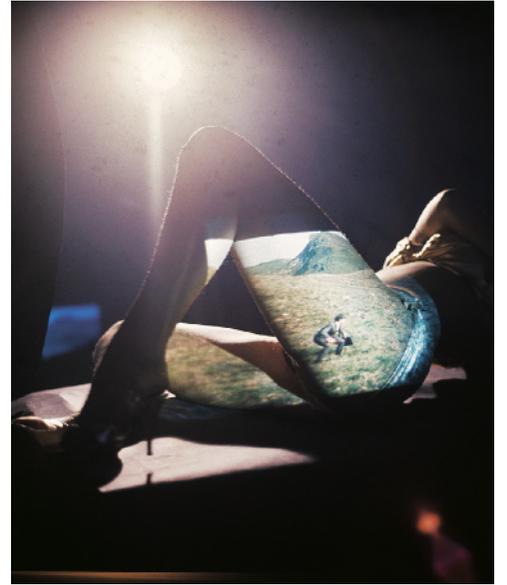
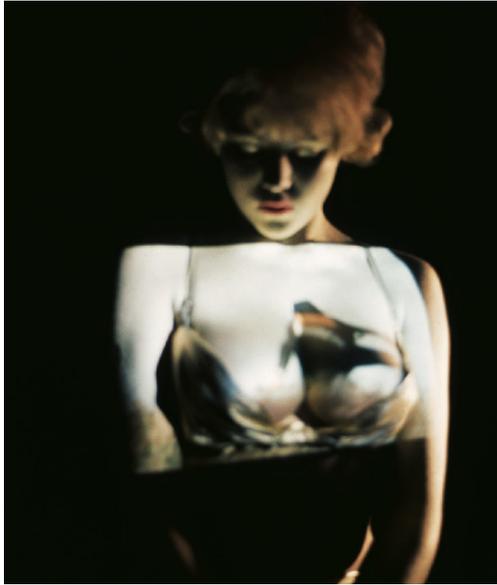


The opening sequence of *Thunderball*, says Ben Radatz, of design agency MK12, 'had that dreamlike quality and used abundant silhouettes, playing on the narrative of the movie with its underwater theme. And it was the first to use optical layering of images.'

It is unlikely that they realised they were doing so. Binder had graduated from art school then taken a job as a tea boy at Macy's department store before eventually becoming the firm's art director. While serving on an army salvage ship during the Second World War, he had made some film-industry contacts during a stop-off near Hollywood. This led to work as a stills photographer. After the war, he moved into movie advertising and making title sequences. His titles for the 1960 film *The Grass Is Greener* received an extremely positive response from the audience at its premiere, and the very next day he received a call about creating the opener for *Dr No*.

The sniper-barrel sequence aside, there is nothing particularly familiar about the very 1960s graphics that open *Dr No*, wherein coloured dots rearrange themselves around the credits in various formations. The distinctive, dreamlike sequences of shimmering female bodies would be introduced in the second film, *From Russia with Love*, created by an altogether more maverick figure.

Robert Brownjohn had established himself as one of New York's most revered graphic designers in the late 1950s, before descent into heroin addiction stalled his career. He had decided to move to London when he heard that the health service offered free treatment and prescriptions to addicts. Going cold turkey, he sailed from New York to the UK, arriving in London a bedraggled mess in 1960. But as the NHS slowly helped him conquer his drug problem, Brownjohn revived his career, becoming creative director at the ad agency J Walter Thompson before starting his own successful film company. Far from the stereotypically unassuming designer, hunched day and night over his desk, Brownjohn was a charismatic and notorious figure amid swinging London's milieu. Michael Caine, Terence Stamp and David Bailey would attend his parties. 'He installed an excitement in everyone around him,' says film director Adrian Lyne, who worked under



For Goldfinger, Robert Brownjohn took things even further than he had in From Russia with Love, spraying Margaret Nolan from head to toe in gold paint. This time it wasn't only words being projected on to her body, but explosions and gun fights too.

him at Thompson's. 'I was infatuated with this man. He was hugely talented.'

Saltzman and Broccoli invited Brownjohn to pitch ideas for *From Russia with Love's* opening credits. Brownjohn shambled into a screening theatre for his meeting with the executives carrying a bundle of slides that he mounted into a carousel. He proceeded to dim the lights, remove his shirt and perform a grotesque sort of belly dance while the credits projected on to his booze-bloated torso. 'It will be just like this,' he told the stunned producers. 'Except we'll use a pretty girl!'

Saltzman and Broccoli handed Brownjohn a budget of only £850 to make the real thing, some of which he used to hire a professional belly dancer. He experienced problems getting his projections to display clearly on her body. Eventually she walked out after being asked to lift her skirt. Brownjohn replaced her with a snake dancer called Julie Mendes and managed to sharpen the projections on to her gyrating form. He used another model who gazed into the camera as he projected '007' across her face. The sexually charged atmosphere of the Bond title sequence was born. In his article 'Sex and Typography' for the British magazine *Typographica*, he noted: 'On this type of film the only themes to work with are, it seems to me, sex or violence. I chose sex.'

Brownjohn's next sequence, for *Goldfinger*, set to Shirley Bassey's memorable theme tune, was spell-binding – and so overtly sexual that it became the first to require clearance from a film censor. It won Brownjohn the prestigious gold pencil at the British Design & Art Direction Awards in 1965.

Saltzman and Broccoli offered to set Brownjohn up in his own independent production company to make all future titles. But when he turned them down, their relationship soured and Binder was brought back in to work on 1965's *Thunderball*. He would go on to make 12 more sequences, right up to 1989's *Licence to Kill*, just two years before he

died. For some, *Thunderball* remains the quintessential Bond opener. 'Up until then, it had all been experimentation,' says Ben Radatz of the design agency MK12, who created the titles for 2008's *Quantum of Solace*. '*Thunderball* was the most confident title sequence and introduced most of the tropes that would endure.'

While it's true that certain elements persist, it would be unfair to call the title sequences formulaic. The style has constantly evolved thanks to technological advances and changing cultural fashions.

George Lazenby's one and only portrayal of



In The Spy Who Loved Me, Bond jumps from a mountain peak, freefalling for 20 seconds before releasing his Union Jack parachute. This morphs into Binder's sequence, with two beautifully manicured hands catching Bond as Carly Simon's Nobody Does It Better drifts over the scene.

Bond in 1969's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* saw the sequence reach what could now be described as 'peak Austin Powers'. Union Jack-filled martini glasses were followed by images of the spy dangling precariously from a giant clock. Binder's work on the 1970s movies chimed with the spoof-like camp of the Roger Moore era. 'Things started to verge on cheesy,' says Radatz. 'It was all Union Jacks and naked girls bouncing on trampolines.' *Live and Let Die* opened with endless coloured fire and hints of voodoo, largely filmed through the eyes of a burning skull and accompanied by the thrilling aggression of Paul McCartney's theme tune. It was nothing short of barmy. Binder's willingness to move with the times continued into the 1980s, where lasers and neon were used liberally alongside soundtracks by Duran Duran and A-Ha.

The next major reboot came with the advent of the Pierce Brosnan era in 1994. Daniel Kleinman was already renowned as one of the world's most talented commercial and pop promo directors when he came to the attention of Team Bond, shooting the promo for Gladys Knight's *Licence to Kill* theme tune in 1989. A master of digital art and special effects, Kleinman radically modernised the look of the title sequences. 'I wanted to keep the essence of the Binder and Brownjohn eras, but was able to use new techniques to deliver them,' he says. 'I am always guided by the narrative of the movie. So for my first film, *GoldenEye*, I used images reflecting the fall of Communism to give a sense of the passing of time. But I look back at the processes now, where I was layering four or five images at a time, and it seems quite primitive. Now the layers I can use are limitless, which I think helps make the title sequence even more exciting and modern.'

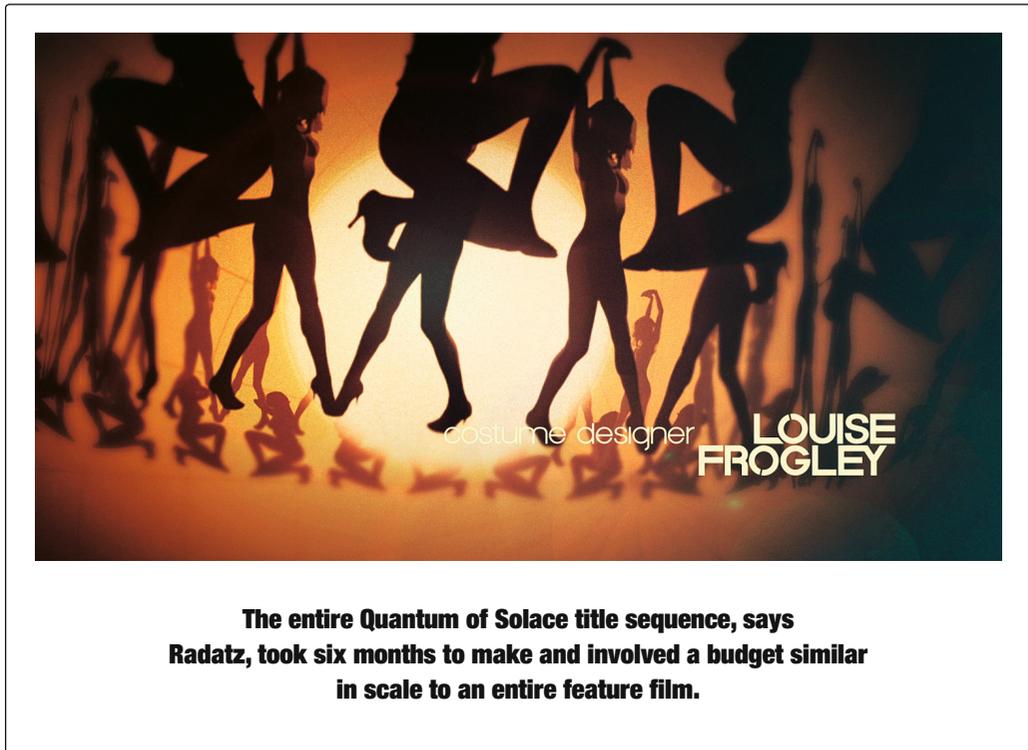
Lending the sequences a fresh feel without compromising the heritage is a difficult balancing act. 'I have had to update the gun-barrel sequence a few times now and it's not easy,' Kleinman admits. 'It

feels like being the bloke who suggests that the Queen gets plastic surgery. Or the person who came up with the idea of a new recipe for Coca-Cola.'

It is traditionally the executives at the production company, Eon, who select the director and commission the title sequence, entirely separately from the actual movie itself. But in 2008 the *Quantum of Solace* director, Marc Forster, had employed long-term collaborators MK12 to provide visual effects for the movie, and he put them forward for the opening sequence too. 'We were big fans of the series and wanted a chance to make the titles, come hell or high water,' says Radatz. 'We cold-pitched it to Eon - they didn't like the original idea, but liked enough to hire us to have another go.' He describes the Eon executives' approach to the title sequence as 'hands off'. 'They knew we had respect for the legacy of Maurice Binder and Robert Brownjohn,' he says. 'And that we just wanted to make something that lived up to the quality of the movie itself.'

GOLDENEYE © 1995 SEVENTEEN LEASING CORP AND DANJAG, LLC

Kleinman returned to the franchise for *Skyfall*, and when I spoke to him earlier this month was putting the finishing touches to the title sequence of the new Bond film, *SPECTRE*. The details of that sequence are every Bond film's most closely guarded secret; it is the part of the movie with the greatest responsibility to excite and astonish the audience. 'Basically, the point is to make a list of names seem inherently exciting,' says Kleinman. 'Traditionally, the audience have just sat through the white-knuckle ride of the opening scene, and a boring list of crew members could



The entire *Quantum of Solace* title sequence, says Radatz, took six months to make and involved a budget similar in scale to an entire feature film.

really slow down the action at that point. So I need to make something that continues the atmosphere, hints at what's coming without giving too much away and gets people in the Bond mindset by establishing all of those familiar tropes.'

You might think that to Kleinman, an art-school graduate whose working life started as a founder

member of Adam and the Ants (he still pops up on *TOTP2* once in a while), all those guns, girls and flags could seem a bit dated or cheesy. 'Maybe in another film they would,' he says. 'But this is Bond. The audience is familiar with the context and the history. You can get away with almost anything.' *SPECTRE* is released on October 26

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