

007 IN VIENNA: In the Footsteps of Timothy Dalton's "The Living Daylights"

The film *A View to a Kill* was the 14th in the long running and lucrative James Bond series, based on the spy novels of Ian Fleming. However, by all accounts the film relied more on its gadgetry and special effects than the panache and daring-do of its ageing star Roger Moore. Wisely Moore sipped his last Vodka Martini and retired to a life devoted to charity work and a well-earned knighthood.



Amongst those considered for his replacement were established 'action men' Mel Gibson, Tom Selleck and Don Johnson. Somewhat surprisingly it was the relatively unknown Timothy Dalton who clinched the part. Born in March 1946 in Colwyn Bay, North Wales he had played a variety of roles in films as diverse as

The Lion in Winter, *Flash Gordon* and *The Doctor and the Devils*. Not being a typecast actor allowed Dalton to play Bond his own way – dark and introspectively.

His first outing was based on Fleming's short story *The Living Daylights* that had appeared in *The Sunday Times* on 4th February 1962. Directed by John Glen the film premiered at the Odeon in London's Leicester Square on 27th June 1987, attended by Prince Charles and his then wife Diana. The Austrian premiere (titled *Der Hauch des Todes*, or *Breath of Death*) followed on August 13th at Vienna's Gartenbau Kino. This was of special interest to Bond's Austrian audience because much of the first half of the film uses Vienna as a backdrop, both officially and unofficially.



The plot of *The Living Daylights* dictates that Bond is sent to Bratislava in the former Czechoslovakia to protect a valuable defecting Russian agent and to eliminate a KGB sniper he knows will be waiting there to thwart the escape. The Russian, General Georgi Koskov, is hiding in a concert hall, in reality Vienna's Volksoper ('People's Opera') on Währingerstrasse, in the

city's 9th District of Alsergrund. Bond takes up position above a bookshop across the road, actually a wonderfully old-fashioned sweet shop called 'Zum Süßen Eck' ('the sweet corner') at Währingerstrasse 65; the shop's window to this day carries photographs of a saturnine-looking Dalton in *de rigueur* tuxedo and bow tie, taken during filming.

Not surprisingly for a 007 movie, the KGB sniper Bond lines up through the sight of his high-powered rifle turns out to be the beautiful Kara (played by Maryam d'Abo) – and of course he deliberately misses his



target! Koskov is duly grabbed and dispatched speedily to the safety of the West in a cylinder sent along a pressurised gas pipeline. This particular scene begins at Vienna's Steinsporenbrücke, a bridge over the New Danube (still dressed up to mimic the Eastern Bloc), and ends at an old gasworks in Vienna's 3rd District of Landstrasse, now really intended to be Vienna.

Meanwhile, Bond and Kara are involved romantically and remain in Bratislava for several scenes shot along Vienna's number 42 tram route, the streets suitably disguised with Skoda cars and Czechoslovakian shop signs (these include the former Währing tram depot, now a supermarket, and Kara's apartment on Antonigasse). The

pair eventually escape in Bond's Aston Martin and cross the border into snowbound Austria using Kara's cello as a sledge! After some fairly schmaltzy scenes visiting Vienna's Schönbrunn palace by horse-drawn carriage



(*Fiaker*) and riding in gondola 10 of the famous Ferris wheel (*Riesenrad*) in the Volksprater, the film shifts location to Oxfordshire (Stonor Park to be exact), Tangiers in Morocco,



and finally to Afghanistan.

Curiously, few of the Bond biographies, nor indeed many of the city's guidebooks for that matter, make any mention of Vienna as a film location, and indeed few visitors are aware that 007 was ever here. As if to reinforce the point, during the writing of this article a season of Bond films was screened at the aforementioned Gartenbau Kino in Vienna, and again the accompanying promotional material failed to make any reference to the fact that the city had provided much of the backdrop for *The Living Daylights*.



James Bond returned to the screen in 1988/89 in *Licence to Kill* (*Lizenz zum Töten*) but by then Dalton was already beginning to feel typecast and wisely moved on to theatre and television work, as well as the occasional motion picture.

In this writer's mind Timothy Dalton remains the only Bond to have got close to portraying the secret agent that author Fleming had in mind – with all his vulnerabilities and contradictions; he just had the misfortune of coming along at a time when Bond was somewhat out of fashion. Six years later and the baton would be taken up with greater commercial success by the less sombre Pierce Brosnan (for the film *Goldeneye*), who notably had been considered as a replacement for Roger Moore, but was at the time contracted to his television series *Remington Steele*.

Extracted from the book *Only in Vienna – A Guide to Hidden Corners, Little-Known Places and Unusual Objects* by Duncan J. D. Smith (Christian Brandstätter Verlag, 2008)

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