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New 007 novel chills, thrills and kills

By Dennis Bolt
Oregon Daily Emerald

You've seen the new James Bond in *GoldenEye*, but how about the new James Bond novel?

British secret agent 007 returned to the bookstore this month in *Zero Minus Ten*, a new novel written by American author Raymond Benson.

Ian Fleming created the fictional British Spy in 1952 and wrote 14 novels before his death in 1964. Kingsley Amis was officially licensed to continue the James Bond character in 1968, but he only wrote one novel. In 1981, John Gardner revived the James Bond franchise and wrote 14 more novels before retiring his license to thrill with 1996's *Coldfall*.

Benson continues the legacy with *Zero Minus Ten*, a novel set in Hong Kong amidst the impending return of the crown colony to China. This is the 30th official James Bond novel and marks the 45th anniversary of Ian Fleming's creation of the famous spy.

Written much like one of the movie screenplays, *Zero Minus Ten* is a fast read and includes most elements that any Bond fan will recognize from either the novel series or the films.

Unlike the other novels, *Zero Minus Ten* is set during a specific week in 1997, which helps to root it in modern world. Because the James Bond phenomenon is 45 years old, it has always been hard to justify the long life of such an active hero. The modern novels therefore treat Bond as if his age were frozen in his mid forties.

The plot begins in Jamaica, at the actual house that was owned by Fleming. In this way, Benson tips his hat to the original author. As with the films, many of the

A HARD BOND TO BREAK

There have been 30 official James Bond novels written by four different authors since agent 007 was created in 1952 by Ian Fleming:



BENSON

■ IAN FLEMING:
1952-1964 (14 novels)
■ KINGSLEY AMIS:
1968 (1 novel)
■ JOHN GARDNER:
1981-1996 (14 novels)
■ RAYMOND BENSON:
1997 - (1 novel so far)



FLEMING

novels begin with an unrelated sequence that helps to set the scene for the main plot.

Hong Kong has ten days until it is returned to China, and terrorist attacks prompt the British Secret Service to send Bond to the city to investigate. While there, he becomes involved with the Chinese criminal organization Triads, as well as an old English shipping firm.

The villains include Guy Thackeray, the first-ever English bad guy and the head of EurAsia Enterprises, and General Wong, a renegade Chinese army officer. The Bond-girl is a Chinese American who has become entangled in the Triad's criminal organization.

Much like in Fleming's novel *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Bond becomes indebted to the Chinese mafia and befriends their leader. He is then forced into working for the Triad while trying to investigate Thackeray's dealings with drug smugglers.

Drugs are only a small part of a plot to destroy Hong Kong just as the Chinese take over on July 1, 1997. Bond travels between Hong

Kong and Australia in search of answers.

While the villains are not as strong as they could be, they are at least well-described. Benson also plays some games with his audience when Bond and the main villain first meet:

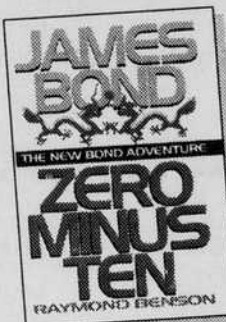
"I've always wondered why the bad guys never do that to [kill] the heroes in action movies. Instead, they have to use some elaborate method of torture or execution. The hero ultimately uses the delay to his advantage and escapes. So I should just shoot you now, right?"

Bond does ultimately get away and finds himself in the middle of the Australian outback, miles from any civilization, and the clock ticking on world domination.

Zero Minus Ten is full of nicely researched facts about Hong Kong and Chinese criminal societies. Benson also is good at continuing the legacy of Bond. His only other book is the widely acclaimed *James Bond Bedside Companion*, which is the bible for 007 fans.

As with *GoldenEye* and the upcoming Pierce Brosnan film *Tomorrow Never Dies*, James Bond makes a great resurgence into the 1990s with *Zero Minus Ten*. It is a must-read for Bond fans, but it also has deliciously detailed action that allows the reader to become involved with the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong.

REVIEW



Zero Minus Ten

Raymond Benson

★★★
(good Fleming detail, weak main villains)

Music: New Calobo release sways listener

Continued from Page 5A

Compared to their previous releases, *Stomp* is not a far departure. There is still a danceable groove and a good variety of material, from slower songs, through bluesy jams and all the way to jazz.

The only difference is that Calobo seems to be tighter as a band, more focused and able to pull off their eclectic mix of sounds with skill and finesse.

"What is Real" starts off the party with a bluegrass-influenced song that is both melancholy and uplifting.

Things slow down with "Back in Time" and "Stitched in Wool," both of which are really beautiful ballads with great guitar licks and a wonderful bass sound.

"Bright Day" starts off with an engaging piano solo and emerges into a very catchy song that reminds me of Big Head Todd.

Tunes like "Slow Train" are the kind of great danceable material that makes Calobo such a popular live band.

"Mood Swing Stomp" begins with a hypnotic melody and speeds up into a reggae song.

Calobo gets into a swing mode with the catchy tune "Down in My Old House," which also sports some great lyrics: "... Yes I've stopped drinking my liquor, baby I'm only drinking wine, cause things they do for me make me smile all the time ... I've got a boy and I've got a girl, they treat me fine in this fine old world ... " Who says the lounge era is over?

"For Avalon" is another highlight that finds Michele Van Kleef singing the blues over some dreamy guitar work and tinkling piano.

I have to admit that this is not the kind of music I usually listen to, and I am usually put off by "groove bands." But Calobo seems to defy this genre and to pull off their stuff so well that I have to love them.

What sets this band apart is the quality of the songwriting and the variety of moods, tempos, instruments and changes in the songs, which keep the listener interested.

This album is definitely worth your time. And lucky for us, Calobo will be appearing at WOW Hall Thursday, May 29 for a CD release party. So enjoy the show and help make Calobo the best-selling independent Northwest band once more. They sure deserve it.

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