

Editor's notebook

Brian H. Shaw



The risks of playing it safe

There are people who look at risk as dangerous and something to avoid, and there are those who regard risk as the necessary rite of passage for almost any worthwhile endeavor, –a trial by fire that makes you stronger. In a separate category are those whose arrogance or delusions make it impossible for them to assess risk with any accuracy. They're really just flying blind until they crash and burn.

Pioneering psychotherapist Alfred Adler taught that the most dangerous risks could stem from taking too many precautions. He influenced several generations of risk-takers in the sciences and the arts who sensed the world was ready for some alternative thinking. As he refined his early work with Freud, he formed a foundation for the later breakthroughs of Rollo May, Viktor Frankl, and Abraham Maslow. In truth, most of the motivational gurus of the last 30 years found the axis for their ideas with these earlier pioneers. Each learned life-changing lessons about the constraints of risk-averse thinking.

From this same vantage point, I remember a good friend and physician who specialized in infectious disease. She vehemently refused to worry about her children when they didn't dress warm, got colds, wouldn't wash their hands, and so on. She truly believed their immune systems needed to bulk-up and be ready for the new strains of infection they'd face in the '90s and beyond. Today, her children are fine but we lost our friend to cancer a decade ago, while her sons and daughter were in high school. In reality, it

seems some of us have the DNA to handle more risks than others. What's more, Israeli researchers have identified a "risk gene" that may alter the reabsorption of the neurotransmitter dopamine, allowing some of us a better, more nimble response to stress.

These differences in "degree of danger" –whether truly perceived or blissfully ignored– are more trenchant when we look at those who make our art and culture, for most artists thrive when their method of expression is on the absolute cutting edge. They resonate with an exhilarated sense of *now* as they endlessly reinvent their life's work. Their thinking is nuanced and believes in some great unified field of possibility. They may even be able to adopt artistic muses at will.

Creative risk-takers

We are graced in this issue with a group of designers, actors, artists and cultural icons who understand the power of risk within the arena of their profession. They manage to stand for quality and push the envelope. They excel, despite the occasional misstep or misdeed.

We only have to look at the recent career of actor Daniel Craig to see the truths about risk-taking in high relief. When the Bond franchise producers tapped him to portray James Bond in *Casino Royale*, he endured a year of harping and derisive comments –even posters proclaiming "NO BLONDE BOND." But a lot of thought went into selecting Craig: He is closer to Bond's real age and has a combination of acting





chops and karate chops that really hasn't been in evidence since Sean Connery prowled across Dr. No's island. And, perhaps more importantly, Craig's relative youthfulness would allow the producers to show Bond's early years, start a new franchise with a new actor

who could believably help retell one of the world's most popular fictional stories. But the producers were also taking a significant risk: Craig was not an obvious Bond, or a "first choice" in the minds of the faithful. Calls for the dark, razor sharp talents of Clive Owen and others were loud and frequent. Seemingly, Craig couldn't come close to such expectations. But the risky side of what Craig and producer Barbara Broccoli were up to did pay off handsomely with *Casino Royale*, breaking all previous Bond-film attendance records. If the recent *Quantum of Solace* can't quite live up to it, it was still a box office hit.

Craig's willingness to risk injury and endure repeated takes in perilous scenes gives an air of authenticity and immediacy to his Bond. The films crank up the thrill factor several notches.

Frequently, action films use a "blue screen" so the



Daniel Craig is JAMES BOND

hero can appear to be in a dangerous setting, yet actually stay on a safe sound stage. But Craig's Bond productions make real stunts happen in real locations throughout the world. While stunt men did double for Craig in several dangerous setups in *Royale*, as he explained to *eTalk*

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reporter and indie filmmaker David Giammarco, he still handled more than half the stunt work himself: "I got a personal trainer for *Casino Royale*, which was an absolute godsend. I knew I had to be in the best shape I could be, otherwise I would never survive. Because at the end of the day, there isn't any painting-it-in [with blue screen]... What you're seeing is the real thing. And I've got the bruises to prove it."

The crucial point behind Craig's comments (see our ICON feature: *The Defiant Starpower of Daniel Craig* for even more risk-taking) is that, fictional though he may be, Bond's world exists a little beyond what is predictable and planned. No CGI avatar is going to dominate the action so Craig can watch safely from his canvas chair. Like Connery, he understands Bond's wounds are real.

–Brian Shaw