

Document Citation

Title	After the sunset
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Reader (Chicago, Ill.)</i>
Date	2004 Nov 19
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	27
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	After the sunset, Ratner, Brett, 2004

CHICAGO READER, 11/19/04, p. 27

this purpose a camera is better than a mirror. In this respect he's anything but a "hedonist," as Simon identifies him, since hedonism involves losing one's self in pleasure. The Alfie we see in both movies is never lost, no matter how despondent he becomes. He's far too compulsively bent on identifying his tricks and beliefs to fully enjoy anything they can yield.

There's no such interference with pleasure in Brett Ratner's *After the Sunset*, a deliberately mindless action comedy that invites us to lose ourselves, without any PC guilt, in its hedonistic enticements. It's in no way

significant that Pierce Brosnan is playing not James Bond but a jewel thief named Max, who's cross-referenced with Cary Grant in *To Catch a Thief*—the most lightweight of Alfred Hitchcock's Hollywood thrillers. The main setting is all that's needed to establish the proper racial and sexual ambience: Paradise Island in the Bahamas, a Caribbean tourist spot designed to stir up the same third-world-conquest fantasies as any Bond flick. It's here that Max and Lola (Salma Hayek), his Latino girlfriend and "assistant," go after they snare the second of three famous "Napoleon" diamonds.

In keeping with the un-PC

agenda of this movie, Ratner gives us a charming African-American villain (Don Cheadle as Henry Mooré, who admits he's added an accent to his surname to make him seem local) and highlights the voluptuous, dark-skinned bodies of Hayek and Naomie Harris. Harris plays Sophie, a local cop who teams up with FBI agent Stan (Woody Harrelson) to catch Max trying to steal the third Napoleon diamond; the two also form a second romantic couple meant to be a comic variation on the first (just as Lupino Lane and Lillian Roth, a pair of low-comedy servants in the 1929 *The Love Parade*, rhyme with Maurice

Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald). Apart from the theft of the diamond, the adolescent rivalry between Max and Stan is the closest thing this movie has to a plot, and Ratner treats both with the perfunctory offhandedness they deserve.

Sexist male fantasies of conquering white heroes that were minted in the 60s—often fostered by wealthy and mythologized (as well as mythologizing) laissez-faire playboys and Ian Fleming fans such as JFK and Hugh Hefner—lurk behind both *After the Sunset* and the new *Alfie*, despite their radically different milieus. But the absence of guilt in *After the Sunset* makes

for a relatively uncluttered hedonism, because the worlds to conquer are so modest, never involving much more than a beach or a cocktail lounge. If the pursuit of pleasure in *After the Sunset* is placed alongside the pursuit of self-gratification in *Alfie*, it's not hard to see that *Alfie*'s claim to a higher moral ground doesn't make it more honest, sincere, or even moral—because neither movie could function on any level without its pornographic intent. So the question is which movie fulfills that intention better and more honestly. For sensuality without complications, Paradise Island beats an ersatz Manhattan hands down. **D**