

= Casino Royale (Climax !) =

Casino Royale is a 1954 television adaptation of the novel of the same name by Ian Fleming . An episode of the dramatic anthology series Climax ! , the show is the first screen adaptation of a James Bond novel and stars Barry Nelson and Peter Lorre . Though this marks the first onscreen appearance of the character of James Bond , Nelson 's character is played as an American agent with " Combined Intelligence " and is referred to as " Jimmy " by several characters .

Most of the largely forgotten show was located in the 1980s by film historian Jim Schoenberger , with the ending (including credits) found afterward . The rights to the program were acquired by MGM at the same time as the rights for the 1967 film version of Casino Royale , clearing the legal pathway and enabling it to make the 2006 film of the same name .

= = Plot = =

Act I " Combined Intelligence " agent James Bond comes under fire from an assassin : he manages to dodge the bullets and enters Casino Royale . There he meets his British contact , Clarence Leiter , who remembers " Card Sense Jimmy Bond " from when he played the Maharajah of Deauville . While Bond explains the rules of baccarat , Leiter explains Bond 's mission : to defeat Le Chiffre at baccarat and force his Soviet spymasters to " retire " him . Bond then encounters a former lover , Valerie Mathis who is Le Chiffre 's current girlfriend ; he also meets Le Chiffre himself .

Act II Bond beats Le Chiffre at baccarat but , when he returns to his hotel room , is confronted by Le Chiffre and his bodyguards , along with Mathis , who Le Chiffre has discovered is an agent of the Deuxième , France 's external military intelligence agency at the time .

Act III Le Chiffre tortures Bond in order to find out where Bond has hidden the cheque for his winnings , but Bond does not reveal where it is . After a fight between Bond and Le Chiffre 's guards , Bond shoots and wounds Le Chiffre , saving Valerie in the process . Exhausted , Bond sits in a chair opposite Le Chiffre to talk . Mathis gets in between them and Le Chiffre grabs her from behind , threatening her with a concealed razor blade . As Le Chiffre moves towards the door with Mathis as a shield , she struggles , breaking free slightly and Bond is able to shoot Le Chiffre .

= = Cast = =

Barry Nelson ? James Bond
Peter Lorre ? Le Chiffre
Linda Christian ? Valerie Mathis
Michael Pate ? Clarence Leiter
Eugene Borden ? Chef De Partie
Jean Del Val ? Croupier
Gene Roth ? Basil
Kurt Katch ? Zoltan
Unknown actor ? Zuroff
William Lundigan ? Host / Himself

= = Production = =

In 1954 CBS paid Ian Fleming \$ 1 @, @ 000 (\$ 8 @, @ 812 in 2016 dollars) to adapt his first novel , Casino Royale , into a one @-@ hour television adventure as part of their dramatic anthology series Climax ! , which ran between October 1954 and June 1958 . It was adapted for the screen by Anthony Ellis and Charles Bennett ; Bennett was best known for his collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock , including The 39 Steps and Sabotage . Due to the restriction of a one @-@ hour play , the adapted version lost many of the details found in the book , although it retained its violence , particularly in Act III .

The hour @-@ long Casino Royale episode aired on 21 October 1954 as a live production and

starred Barry Nelson as secret agent James Bond , with Peter Lorre in the role of Le Chiffre and was hosted by William Lundigan . The Bond character from Casino Royale was re @-@ cast as an American agent , described as working for " Combined Intelligence " , supported by the British agent , Clarence Leiter ; " thus was the Anglo @-@ American relationship depicted in the book reversed for American consumption " .

Clarence Leiter was an agent for Station S , while being a combination of Felix Leiter and René Mathis . The name " Mathis " , and his association with the Deuxième Bureau , was given to the leading lady , who is named Valérie Mathis , instead of Vesper Lynd . Reports that towards the end of the broadcast " the coast @-@ to @-@ coast audience saw Peter Lorre , the actor playing Le Chiffre , get up off the floor after his ' death ' and begin to walk to his dressing room " , do not appear to be accurate .

= = Legacy = =

The production went mostly unnoticed upon release . However , four years after the production of Casino Royale , CBS invited Fleming to write 32 episodes over a two @-@ year period for a television show based on the James Bond character . Fleming agreed and began to write outlines for this series . When nothing ever came of this , however , Fleming grouped and adapted three of the outlines into short stories and released the 1960 anthology For Your Eyes Only along with an additional two new short stories .

This was the first screen adaptation of a James Bond novel and was made before the formation of Eon Productions . When MGM eventually obtained the rights to the 1967 film version of Casino Royale , it also received the rights to this television episode .

The Casino Royale episode was lost for decades after its 1954 broadcast until a kinescope of it was located by film historian Jim Schoenberger in 1981 . It also aired on TBS as part of a Bond film marathon . However , the VHS release and TBS presentation did not include the full finale of the adaptation , which was at that point still lost . Eventually , the missing footage (minus the last few seconds of the credits) was found and included on a Spy Guise & Cara Entertainment VHS release . MGM subsequently included the truncated version on its DVD of the 1967 Casino Royale .

David Cornelius of Efilmcritic.com remarked that " the first act freely gives in to spy pulp cliché " and noted that he believed Nelson was miscast and " trips over his lines and lacks the elegance needed for the role . " He described Lorre as " the real main attraction here , the veteran villain working at full weasel mode ; a grotesque weasel whose very presence makes you uncomfortable . " Peter Debruge of Variety also praised Lorre , considering him the source of " whatever charm this slipshod antecedent to the Bond oeuvre has to offer " , and complaining that " the whole thing seems to have been done on the cheap " . Debruge still noted that while the special had very few elements in common with the Eon series , Nelson 's portrayal of " Bond suggests a realistically human vulnerability that wouldn 't resurface until Eon finally remade Casino Royale more than half a century later . "