

Casino Royale is next Bond movie

Casino Royale, author Ian Fleming's first James Bond book, is to be the next Bond film, with Goldeneye director Martin Campbell behind the camera.

It will be the 21st James Bond film to hit the big screen, and speculation has been rife over who will play the lead. Casino Royale was turned into a spoof spy movie by John Huston in 1967, with David Niven in the lead role. Pierce Brosnan led the past four Bond films but said producers axed him after offering him the chance to return. Among the favourites to take over the coveted role are Scottish actor Dougray Scott, Oscar nominee Clive Owen and Australian star Hugh Jackman. Producers say no decision has yet been made on who will become the seventh actor, including Niven, to play Bond on film. Kill Bill director Quentin Tarantino had talked of wanting to take on the Casino Royale project, and said he had spoken to Brosnan about it.

Shooting on Casino Royale is expected to begin once Campbell has finished work on The Legend of Zorro, a sequel to The Mask of Zorro, starring Catherine Zeta Jones and Antonio Banderas. Producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson expect the film to be released in 2006.

The script will once again be developed by Neal Purvis and Robert Wade who have both worked on two previous Bond movies. Fleming's book saw the introduction of Bond pitted against a Russian spy in a game of baccarat. Simultaneously, a woman arrives on the scene to take his eye off the game. The novel is one of Fleming's most violent and sadistic stories, with 007 suffering a savage beating from his nemesis Le Chiffre. In addition to the 1967 film, it was also adapted for television in 1954 with actor Barry Nelson as an Americanised "Jimmy" Bond. MGM Vice Chairman Chris McGurk said: "Martin (Campbell) is an incredibly exciting film-maker. Goldeneye was a wonderful movie and helped reinvigorate the Bond franchise. We're thrilled to have him back to direct the

newest Bond." New Zealand-born Campbell moved to the UK in 1966 and directed TV series such as *The Professionals*, *Minder* and *Bergerac*. His film credits include *Edge of Darkness*, *Vertical Limit* and *Beyond Borders*, which starred Angelina Jolie and Clive Owen.