

by Brian Pendreigh

THE cold-eyed killer is sitting next to James Bond in the passenger seat of 007's Aston Martin, with a pistol pointing at the British agent's head.

But, in an iconic scene, Bond's finger flicks open the top of the gear stick and presses a red button. The roof flies open and his foe is hurtled into oblivion, along with the now legendary ejector seat.

Film director Guy Hamilton, who created that legendary scene in *Goldfinger*, is the man widely credited with perfecting the classic Bond formula of guns, girls and gadgets, exotic locations and darkly humorous one-liners. After the 1964 film, with its famous Aston Martin DB5, he went on to direct three subsequent Bond movies.

But before he became a film-maker, Hamilton had another career, working with real-life secret agents, ferrying them in a fast motor boat on top secret and extremely dangerous trips from his base in Aberdeen to Nazi-occupied Europe.

A wartime grounding in espionage might seem the perfect preparation for a James Bond movie, but nothing could be further from the truth, according to Hamilton.

'My wartime experiences have got nothing to do with Bond,' he says. 'James Bond is fantasy land.'

So much for the girls and exotic locations. But what of the gadgets? Hamilton says that in his war the equipment was far more basic and prone to failing at the most inconvenient time.

Hamilton, 86, now lives in Majorca but later this month he will return to Aberdeen for the first time since VE Day to give a talk on his life.

As a young lieutenant on the Royal Navy's Motor Torpedo Boat 718, he was one of the men responsible for getting special operatives across the North Sea and English Channel and depositing them behind enemy lines. He personally accompanied the rowing boat that took the men from open water to the shore.

On one occasion, problems with a radio meant Hamilton and his returning crew simply could not find the mother ship and were left behind in France.

While he makes it sound like a minor inconvenience, as a Naval officer involved in covert operations, stranded in Nazi territory he was living James Bond for real.

HAMILTON quickly adds, matter-of-factly, that the boat came back for him a month later. Details of his time on the run from the Gestapo have to be teased out of him.

He says: 'They knew we were there and they were running around trying to find us. There was a tremendous French Resistance in Brittany and I am still in contact with some of these people. I wouldn't be here today if they hadn't looked after us.'

Hamilton and his men were moved from place to place. On one occasion, the Gestapo learned exactly where they were hiding. While the Germans got a local police officer to show them the way, another gendarme took a short cut to warn the British crew. 'By the time they got there we were in the woods,' he says.

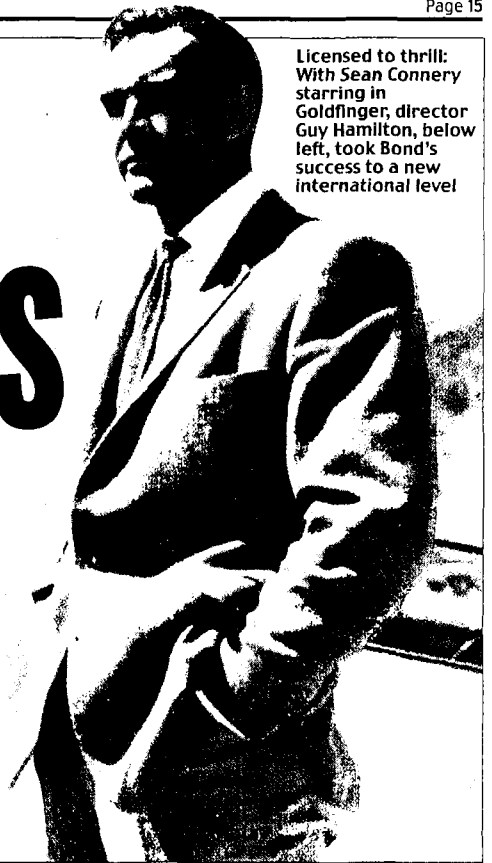
Hamilton joined the Navy in 1940 at the age of 18. 'I was lucky to eventually join the 15th MTB flotilla and our speciality was dropping and picking up agents in foreign climes,' he says.

He sailed out of Dartmouth to France and from Aberdeen to

GUNS, GIRLS AND GADGETS

No, not the 'fantasy land' of fiction's 007 but the real secret wartime life of the film-maker who perfected the classic Bond formula

Licensed to thrill: With Sean Connery starring in *Goldfinger*, director Guy Hamilton, below left, took Bond's success to a new international level



Norway, ferrying operatives and picking up escaped POWs and shot-down pilots.

On several occasions they found themselves in the same waters as enemy ships. They used signals to fool them into thinking they were on the same side. But they also came under fire.

Hamilton describes it in his usual understated fashion. 'Let's not get dramatic,' he says. 'Everybody came under fire ... we don't want to get too heavy about this.'

Returning from a mission, they heard news of VE Day on the radio. 'We arrived in Aberdeen and everybody was drunk. There was nobody in the harbour to catch the rope,' he remembers.

He describes going into town, where the famous music-hall entertainer Will Fyffe was singing, of all things, *I Belong to Glasgow*, from the balcony of one of the main hotels.

The director sees few similarities between his wartime experiences and the exploits of Bond. He says the secret agents he worked with owed more to the character of Harry Palmer, as first played by a bespectacled Michael Caine in *The Ipcress File* in 1965.

The real agents were brave, but fallible, like Palmer, says Hamilton, who directed the second Harry Palmer film, *Funeral in Berlin*, in 1966.

They were strip-searched before voyages because they had a tendency to take odd souvenirs with them - such as a cinema stub - which would have been difficult to explain away to Gestapo officers.

'The French were even more awkward,' he reveals. 'French socks are absolutely awful and they would go to Woolworths and buy a wonderful pair of

socks. These are the sort of things that would give them away.'

After the war, Hamilton became assistant director on *The Third Man* (1949), wrote and directed *The Colditz Story* (1955) and had the chance to direct the first Bond movie *Dr No* (1962). But family commitments precluded a long location shoot in Jamaica.

When it came to *Goldfinger*, the third Bond movie, Hamilton struggled to persuade Connery - now a keen golfer - that a golf match between Bond and *Goldfinger* could be exciting.

'Sean had never swung a golf club in his life and thought it was upper-class and not particularly interesting,' he said.

The first two Bond films had been big hits but *Goldfinger* took Bond's success to a new international level and was one of the highest-grossing films in America in 1965.

ONE of the elements of the classic Bond formula, developed and reinforced by Hamilton in *Goldfinger*, was Bond girls who were just as tough and independent as 007 himself.

Honey Ryder (Ursula Andress) provided a template in *Dr No*, but Hamilton took it further. Pussy Galore (Honor Blackman) was a worthy adversary. And, when it comes to killing *Goldfinger*, Bond has a rival in Tilly Masterson (Tania Mallet), whose sister was smothered in gold by *Goldfinger*.

Two of Roger Moore's Bond films - *Live and Let Die* (1973) and *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) were also directed by Hamilton.

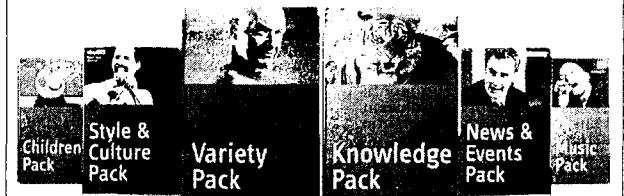
While Bond may owe little directly to Hamilton's wartime experiences, perhaps the Bond girls and the Bond banter owe something to Aberdeen.

Hamilton says: 'I remember in Aberdeen the fish girls used to take the rope and pull us in. They were stronger, bigger and tougher than all of my crew put together. We used to tease them and they teased us. They were special ladies.'

Special, yes, but Ursula Andress, no.

● *Guy Hamilton discusses his career at Aberdeen University's King's College on April 28. Tickets are free but limited. Radio Scotland will broadcast the event in May.*

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