

NO TIME FOR REGRETS

The only misgiving Daniel Craig has about handing back James Bond's gun, is giving Hugh Jackman more ammunition. He credits the Aussie actor as helping shape the spy we all love, when he first took on the role of 007, by showing him how to cope with his new-found level of fame.

Speaking to Insider in London, where he lives with wife Rachel Weisz, Craig, 53, says: "I owe him big style."

"Hugh is an extraordinary man and had a big influence on me. He is a gentleman and he loves his job dearly. And through him I learned to love my job more."

So, has Hugh ever let him forget that?

"No. And he's not going to let me live that down, now, is he?" Craig says, with a laugh.

He says the X-Men actor won't stop pestering him to be the next James Bond.

"Oh, he won't get off the phone. It's sort of disgusting," Craig says, as we chat with the Bond star and his producer Barbara Broccoli.

Would Barbara consider another Aussie Bond – the next George Lazenby? She's giving nothing away.

"Daniel has been such a spectacular Bond. I really can't even begin to think about anyone else ever doing this, so I'm going to stay in denial as long as possible," she says, diplomatically.

As to who it will be and what they look like, she's not saying. But one thing is for certain – there will be no furor over Bond being blond, like there was when Craig was cast 16 years ago.

It seems absurd now that it caused such a fuss.

"It was pretty absurd to me at the time," Craig says. "I think people were just looking for any excuse to have a go. I understood it. People were very passionate, and had very strong opinions about it."

That's an understatement – there was an onslaught of criticism at the time and the actor says he stayed up all night reading negative comments about himself, which must have been difficult to not let affect him.

"I felt like there was nothing I could do," he says.

He's had the best job in movies and Daniel Craig says it was one of our own who helped him see it for what it was, writes **Kerry Parnell**

"People's opinions are their own and they're entitled to them. I just got on with my job; I knew we had a good film. I knew we had something special, I just had to keep my head down."

Everyone has an opinion about Bond, says Broccoli, because they all feel they own it.

"It's a testament to everyone who's been making these films for all these years, starting with my father (original producer Cubby) back in 1962. It wasn't just a film series, they created a new genre. So, the fact that they take it all very personally is wonderful."

"When the criticism of Daniel occurred, of course, I was beside myself. I knew how amazing he was and it was brutal, shocking and despicable. But anyway, he's



Daniel Craig and Ana de Armas in *No Time to Die*, which has been collecting brilliant reviews overseas.

been the most spectacular Bond."

Talk about proving the critics wrong – not only did Craig go on to be a critical and commercial success – *Skyfall* alone grossed an incredible \$1.5 billion worldwide, his last outing *No Time to Die* promises to single-handedly save the movie industry in the pandemic-addled world.

No big deal.

Even its premiere in London in September hit the headlines all over the world as the royal family frocked up for the occasion. Prince William, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, turned up for the event of the year and punters packed the cinemas again, for the first time since the pandemic began.

The movie recently passed

\$800 million at the box office and hasn't stopped yet, as it has just launched in China and opens this week in Australia after a pandemic delay.

If anyone was going to accept the mission to get punters back into the cinema, it was Bond. The movie was the first blockbuster delayed by lockdown – initially scheduled for early 2020, it finally opened in the UK on September 30. It was important it screened in cinemas, Craig says. "We love cinema. We know this Bond movie is to be seen in the cinema and whatever we can do, if we can bolster the movie industry, that's just such a bonus."

I make movies for a set of audiences, not for little phones."

It was worth the wait, according to reviews.

The UK's *Times* called it "better than good. It's magnificent."

With Craig starring alongside Ralph Fiennes as M and Ben Whishaw as Q, Rami Malek as Safin and Christoph Waltz as Blofeld, as well as Ana de Armas as Paloma, Lashana Lynch as Nomi and Lea Seydoux as Madeleine, the movie is back to the best of Bond, with funny one-liners courtesy of screenwriter Fleabag's Phoebe Waller-Bridge and spectacular action sequences thanks to *True Detective* director Cary Joji Fukunaga.

It's been a long goodbye – Craig gave an emotional speech on the last day of filming, saying "I've loved every single second of these movies", calling them, "the greatest honours of my life".

Did he get to keep any gadgets? "It's so funny,

everyone thinks I steal from the set. I must steal something," he says, laughing.

Adds Broccoli: "We check his pockets at the end of every day."

"I'm not a memento kind of person," Craig says. "I don't need those things, I have it up here," he says, pointing to his head. "I keep suits. I give those to charity, but I can't take a car, much as I'd want to."

Surely, they must have given him something ... finally, he admits to one bonus.

Pulling up the leg of his jeans he shows us his handmade shoes. "I have the occasional pair of shoes that I love because they're beautiful shoes that are made for me."

Which is proof that whoever comes next, be it Tom Hardy, Idris Elba or a surprise, they really won't be able to step into Daniel's shoes – but will have to make their own.

NO TIME TO DIE OPENS ON THURSDAY



Great mates Craig and Jackman in 2009.



Daniel Craig hands in his gun after 16 years in the long-awaited *No Time to Die*. Picture: Greg Williams