

The Anderson Tapes

by Emily Soares | April 27, 2009



After taking a break from life as James Bond and temporarily handing it over to George Lazenby for *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), Sean Connery found his career in decline. So he was more than happy to receive an unusual heist/tech-thriller script from friend Sidney Lumet, with whom he'd done *The Hill* (1965). Though his lead role as John Anderson would put him on the other side of the law from James Bond, **The Anderson Tapes** (1971) proved a good choice for Connery, and it would put him, at least temporarily, back on the American list of top ten stars.

Based on the book by Lawrence Sanders, **The Anderson Tapes** was the first film to tackle the subject of modern surveillance, a theme that would be more thoroughly explored a few years later in Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974). Connery plays an unrepentant thief just released from prison, who has barely changed out of his stripes before he has another caper planned-this time to steal everything in the posh apartment building of his long-time girlfriend (Dyan Cannon). The switch here is that every move he makes is caught on film and every word is recorded by a cabal of law enforcement voyeurs.

The Anderson Tapes was shot on location in New York on a tight budget and completed in six hurried weeks. Perceptions of its success vary from "moderate" to "resounding", but the movie and Connery's performance were generally well received.

In *Sean Connery: A Biography*, author Bob McCabe observes, "Sean's character managers to steal the money, just as Sean stole the picture....Yet he had a degree of competition from Martin Balsam as a homosexual antique dealer and from Dyan Cannon as Sean's girlfriend. There were also enough television screens, tape recorders and video controls to make Q salivate (Sean was later to say it was an extraordinarily prophetic picture, since it came out just before Watergate)." The film was released on June 17, 1971-one year, to the day, before the arrests that broke the scandal open.

The Anderson Tapes is rife with interesting appearances, including Christopher Walken as "The Kid" in his first big role. Stand-up comic Alan King makes a completely believable Mafia don, Garrett Morris appears in a suitably comic role as the cop who leads the storming of the building, and Margaret Hamilton (Elmira Gulch/the wicked witches in *The Wizard of Oz* 1939) makes her last big-screen appearance. Her last official theatrical film was *Journey Back to Oz* (1974) in which she only provided voice-over talent.

Columbia wasn't happy with the ending of *The Anderson Tapes*, which had Connery escape from the building and head over the state line in a van pursued by police helicopters. Knowing that the film would be released to television, the distributors insisted that the thieves be either captured or killed to fulfill the stricter moral codes of the small screen.

Arthur Sarkissian, producer of the *Rush Hour* film series, reportedly has plans to remake **The Anderson Tapes** and relocate the story to Miami. The latest target date is 2010.

Producer: Robert M. Weitman

Director: Sidney Lumet

Screenplay: Frank R. Pierson; Lawrence Sanders (novel "The Anderson Tapes")

Cinematography: Arthur J. Ornitz

Art Direction: Philip Rosenberg

Music: Quincy Jones

Film Editing: Joanne Burke

Cast: Sean Connery (Anderson), Dyan Cannon (Ingrid), Martin Balsam (Haskins), Ralph Meeker (Delaney), Alan King (Angelo), Christopher Walken (The Kid), Val Avery (Parelli), Dick Williams (Spencer), Garrett Morris (Everson), Stan Gottlieb (Pop), Paul Benjamin (Jimmy), Anthony Holland (Psychologist), Richard B. Schull (Werner), Conrad Bain (Dr. Rubicoff), Margaret Hamilton (Miss Kaler), Judith Lowry (Mrs. Hathaway).

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