

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

GRANT

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The film, which centers on Bond's discovery of a sinister organization called Spectre and his personal connection to its maniacal leader, has all of the classic ingredients of the best Bond films.

Majestic and moody theme song, "Writing's on the Wall" by Grammy-winning singer Sam Smith: check.

Terrific and suspenseful action sequences: check.

Bond women and sexual tension: check.

Gadgets, high-tech toys and cool cars: check.

Sly humor and explosions: check

Though in truth most everything that happens in "Spectre" has been seen before in previous Bond films, the thing that makes everything tick is Craig's performance as Bond.

Throughout "Spectre," several characters refer to the 00 Spy program and Bond himself as being old hat and obsolete, but this film and Craig's

performance prove there's a lot of life left in the James Bond character.

Having seen many of the films in the Bond series, I must admit that I had not seen any of Craig's previous performances as Bond, and I think I've been missing something special.

After years of either campy Bond or Bond villain performances, I sort of checked out of the Bond franchise in the early 1990s.

Having not seen the Bond character in so many years, it was a delight to step back into the world of Bond and thrilling to see Craig's lean, athletic and suave take on such an iconic role.

With the campy turned down and a tight, well-paced and well-shot film such as "Spectre," it was a welcome relief to watch this latest Bond installment.

Much like the recent reboot of Sherlock Holmes with the BBC TV series "Sherlock," Craig's take on Bond in "Spectre" brings a fresh breath of air to something that's

so well-known and well-loved.

Like "Sherlock," "Spectre" has a modern feel while at the same time not losing the ingredients that make the Bond character so appealing.

Several of the young British actors appearing in "Spectre" may also be familiar to movie goers who are fans of other recent BBC productions.

Andrew Scott, who plays "C" in "Spectre," also plays Holmes' arch-nemesis Moriarty in a few episodes of the BBC's "Sherlock."

While the Bond character does come across as a sort of British superhero at times (how does he manage to survive some of this stuff?), "Spectre" sticks to the tried-and-true Bond formula: It all somehow works.

Much like a good romantic comedy, a familiar plot line handled well with actors who are well-suited to their roles can transcend its limitations.

And I must say the action sequences, especially a thrilling helicopter sequence early in the film,

are magnificently filmed and also help to make this film fun to watch.

While I'm no expert on Bond films, from the sampling I've seen of the franchise, Craig is the best Bond I've seen since Sean Connery.

Supposedly Craig has said this is his last performance as Bond. If true, that's too bad as he fits the role like a glove.

I can't imagine Bond fans being disappointed in "Spectre," and if you're like me and just a casual viewer of the Bond films, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised and at least well entertained for a couple of hours.

And never fear, Bond fans, even if Craig does not don the role for a fifth time, the tail of the credits of "Spectre" reads "James Bond will be back."

For me personally Bond is also back, and "Spectre" is a great reintroduction.

This column is the commentary of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of The News-Sentinel.

EXPLOSIONS

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were instructed to approach the blaze from a defensive tactic. In other words, they were not to go into the building. Firefighters reported

hearing small explosions going off inside.

Smoke rolled out of the building, and flames were visible coming from the rear of the building.

For more on this story, check news-sentinel.com later today.



By Cindy Larson of The News-Sentinel
Flames burst through the rear of Lazer X, 244 Fernhill Ave., this morning after responding Fort Wayne Fire Department firefighters reported hearing explosions inside.

GROUP

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Kalamazoo Promise scholarship, students who graduate from Kalamazoo Public Schools after going all the way from kindergarten in the district get 100 percent of their tuition and fees covered by the Kalamazoo Promise. They can attend any public university or college in the state, as well as many private institutions. Attending all four years of high school entitles students to a 65 percent scholarship.

That scholarship promise is part of what brought a contingent of more than 40 civic leaders from Fort Wayne and Allen County to visit the city last week. Their trip to Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, Mich., was the seventh "Inter-City Visit" since 2005 by leaders in business, government, education and non-profits, all searching for good ideas that have helped other cities succeed.

"We don't care if your family makes \$2 million or \$22," Von Washington, executive director of community relations for Kalamazoo Promise, told the Fort Wayne group.

Kalamazoo Promise was endowed 10 years ago by a donor or donors who have remained anonymous.

The fund behind the promise, reputedly large enough to keep the scholarships coming forever, has been estimated at \$200 million to \$250 million.

A WIDE-OPEN DOOR TO OPPORTUNITY

Unlike many scholarships, its rules seem designed to qualify as many recipients as possible. Graduates have up to 10 years to take advantage of the scholarships. The scholarships are not restricted to star students, and falling short of star performance in college doesn't cancel a student's scholarship, either. Students need only maintain a 2.0 grade-point average in college to remain eligible,



Courtesy photo by William Dolak via Discover Kalamazoo
More than 40 civic leaders traveled from Fort Wayne to Kalamazoo, Mich., last week to learn more about the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship program and that city's economic-development efforts.



By Bob Caylor of The News-Sentinel
Von Washington, executive director of community relations for Kalamazoo Promise, explains the scholarship program to more than 40 visitors from Fort Wayne last week. All students who attend at least all four years of high school at Kalamazoo Public Schools are entitled to scholarship funds.

Washington told the Fort Wayne group, whose trip last week was organized and led by Greater Fort Wayne Inc. He said stricter requirements for scholarships tend to reward people who already have strong opportunities.

"If we have a 3.0 grade-point average requirement coming out of high school, we're probably capturing those who are on their way anyway," Washington said.

Since its inception, the Promise has paid more than \$60 million to universities and colleges to educate more than 4,000 eligible KPS students.

An analysis released in June by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, based in Kalamazoo,

estimated that within six years after graduation, 48 percent of students eligible for the Promise finished bachelor's or associate degrees or certificates, compared with 36 percent without the aid of the Promise scholarships.

No other school district can count on a philanthropic windfall as transforming as the Kalamazoo Promise, but any community can aspire to do a better job of making its own luck.

At making its own luck, the Kalamazoo region often excels. The abandoned GM plant provides a great example. At 2.2 million square feet, it is more than two-thirds as big as the GM Fort Wayne Assembly Plant. But instead of a deteriorating



Courtesy of Greater Fort Wayne Inc.
Marc Levy of Questa Education Foundation, left; Kirk Moriarty of Greater Fort Wayne Inc.; and D. Faye Williams-Robbins of Fort Wayne Community Schools listen Oct. 29 to presentations on Kalamazoo, Mich.'s economic-development strategies.

husk, the former Fisher Body stamping plant is now home to more than a dozen companies, employing hundreds.

NEW LIFE FOR AN ABANDONED PLANT

Transforming a symbol of industrial employment into the Midlink Business Park was largely the work of Southwest Michigan First, a highly entrepreneurial economic-development nonprofit.

"When General Motors closed the plant in 1999, we had a potential white elephant on our hands. Instead, we viewed it as prime real estate midway between Detroit and Chicago, and we moved quickly to capitalize on the opportunity," Southwest Michigan First

CEO Ron Kitchens said in a news release.

Southwest Michigan First worked with Los Angeles-based Hackman Capital Partners and public and private partners to transform the former GM plant into a business park. The new owners invested about \$30 million, freshening its appearance with new lighting, paint and landscaping, and dividing it into two buildings with a truck bay between them.

Now its tenants include an aluminum-fabrication plant, warehousing and distribution facilities, a sports-training site and even an extended-stay hotel.

Southwest Michigan First was founded 16 years ago to pursue economic develop-

ment as a private nonprofit. Since 1999, Southwest Michigan First says, its work has brought 35,500 direct and indirect jobs, \$1.6 billion in salaries and wages to the region and served more than 350 companies.

More than his statistics, it's Kitchens' fervor that impresses an audience.

"We live by the belief that the greatest force for change is a job," he told the Fort Wayne group. "A job not only takes care of the present, it takes care of the past" by changing a person's self-image and expectations.

BUILDING ENTERPRISE INTO A NONPROFIT

Now the roughly 30 employees of Southwest Michigan First have diversified into a new tier of services that bring in roughly half of its \$7.2 million budget, Kitchens said. These for-profit services range from brand development to recruiting links in companies' supply chains to finance and



workforce development.

But Kitchens doesn't downplay the challenges that face the seven counties Southwest Michigan First serves. If they don't lure more millennial-generation talent, their labor forces will run critically short in a decade. Despite a relatively low unemployment rate, the median household income in the Kalamazoo metro area, \$43,936, runs significantly behind the \$46,005 figure in the Fort Wayne metro area.

But Kitchens also projects the kind of relentless optimism that sees every deal as an opportunity for both sides to win. It moves him to quote the late Zig Ziglar, a salesman and motivational speaker, without irony: "You can get anything you want in this world if you help enough other people get what they want," he said.

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