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On Her Majesty's scientific service

Anna Fazackerley
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Over the years, secret agent and lothario James Bond has got away with some dodgy chat-up lines. But now, thanks to an Oxford University academic who has set herself up as a science consultant to Hollywood, he can no longer get away with dodgy science.

Fed up with seeing mangled science and inaccurate maths on the big screen, Lizzie Burns, a biochemist from Oxford, has launched Hollywood Math and Science Film Consulting in partnership with an award-winning Harvard University mathematician, Jonathan Farley.

Dr Burns, who is also the Medical Research Council's artist-in-residence, said: "In the last James Bond film, a guy was supposed to turn from looking North Korean to looking Western using gene therapy. That is fundamentally wrong. Why couldn't he have had a face transplant?"

The pair, who met at Oxford, hope to capitalise on the success of recent "academic" films such as *A Beautiful Mind* and *Good Will Hunting*. They have won the consultancy contract for the hit US television drama *Numb3rs*, in which an FBI agent recruits his mathematical genius brother to help solve crimes.

Dr Burns said: "It's not just the accuracy of the science in films, but also the portrayal of scientists, that's wrong. The hunchbacked mad scientist has got to go!"

Professor Farley said: "More and more Hollywood producers are seeing that the public does have an appetite for things as foreign as maths and science. If they are going to make these films, they may as well make them right."

He added: "I knew there would be movie stars such as Brad Pitt playing mathematicians one day - and I wanted to have the company ready."

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