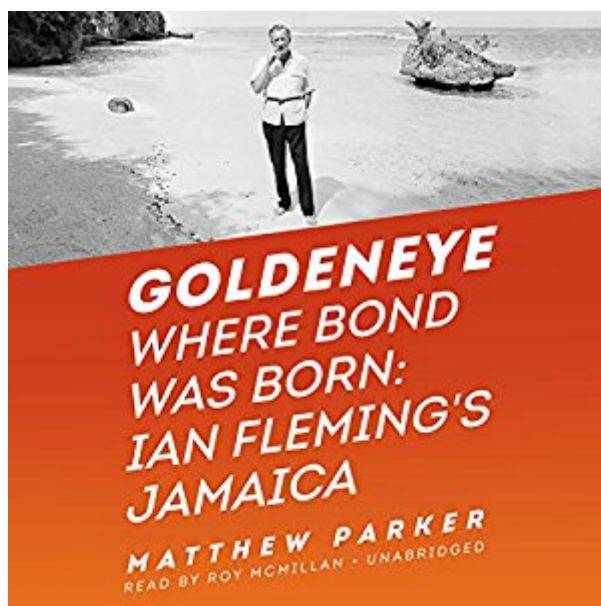


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Goldeneye: Where Bond Was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica



Synopsis

Amid the lush beauty of Jamaica's northern coast lies the true story of Ian Fleming's iconic creation: James Bond. For two months every year, from 1946 to his death 18 years later, Ian Fleming lived at Goldeneye, the house he built on a point of high land overlooking a small white-sand beach on Jamaica's stunning north coast. All the James Bond novels and stories were written there. This audiobook explores the huge influence of Jamaica on the creation of Fleming's iconic postwar hero. The island was for Fleming part retreat from the world, part tangible representation of his values, and part exotic fantasy. Goldeneye also examines Fleming's Jamaican friendships - his extraordinary circle included Errol Flynn, the Oliviers, international politicians, and British royalty as well as his close neighbor, Noël Coward - and traces his changing relationship with Ann Charteris (and hers with Jamaica) and the emergence of Blanche Blackwell as his Jamaican soul mate. Goldeneye also compares the real Jamaica of the 1950s during the buildup to independence with the island's portrayal in the Bond books, to shine a light on the attitude of the likes of Fleming and Coward regarding the dramatic end of the British Empire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

History as it should be: deeply researched, profoundly insightful, completely accessible, and vastly entertaining. The author uses a partial biography of Ian Fleming during his time in Jamaica as a tool for exploring the decline of the British Empire in the Caribbean. It succeeds on numerous levels: social history, literary history, literary criticism, film history, political history, and biography, but pure delight comes from the author's talent for sounds, smells, people, and places:

conch chowder and fried octopus tentacles with tartar sauce, sugar and slaves, rum and Coca-Cola, grand houses and old families, alligator shooting and polo, Errol Flynn and Noel Coward, sharks and barracuda, Princess Margaret and Lord Beaverbrook, Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon, Anthony Eden and Winston Churchill. Highly recommended.

Goldeneye Where Bond Was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica By Matthew Parker
Penguin Books 2015, 387 pages
Genre: Biography
Collier County Public Library:

Yes! "My contribution to the art of thriller-writing has been to attempt the total stimulation of the reader all the way through, even to his taste buds."

Ian Fleming
The James Bond movie franchise is 53 years old yet it is the third highest grossing movie franchise in the world, right behind those whippersnappers Harry Potter and Marvel Cinematic Universe. Bond's creator, Ian Fleming, wrote 14 Bond books plus a collection of short stories and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, a children's story about a flying car, a bedtime story he made up for his son Caspar. He finally wrote it down while recovering from his first heart attack in 1962. The hugely popular book was published in 1964. Dick van Dyke starred in the 1968 movie version. Fleming was already deceased, so he couldn't protest an American actor getting the role. As popular as the Bond movies have been for five decades now, it would be interesting to know how many movie fans have read even one of the books. The most recent statistics I could find show that Ian Fleming surpassed Agatha Christie as the most financially successful British crime writer, with his books earning more than 100 million pounds (about 252 million dollars) while Agatha lagged behind at 100 million pounds even. In contrast, the #1 American thriller writer John Grisham has earned more than 600 million dollars from his books and six other Americans have outearned both Fleming and Ms. Christie. Yet, Bond films have earned over 7 billion dollars plus whatever the just-released SPECTRE rakes in. If they adjusted for inflation, I would imagine that the massively successful Bond films of the 1960s would place the franchise in at least the number two slot. Even though Fleming died August 12, 1964, of a massive heart attack, he remains as intriguing a character as his fictional spy hero 007. Several writers have published biographies of Ian including his long-time good friend Kingsley Amis whose book was sanctioned by the Fleming family. Matthew Parker approaches Fleming's story as history rather than an homage to a friend or British crime writer icon. He provides context to each of Fleming's winter visits to Jamaica from 1946 to 1963 including his first trip to Jamaica in 1943. Parker's intention is to show not only the effect that Jamaica had on Fleming and his books, but also to clarify the authentic

imperial and post-imperial Jamaica that is the backdrop for several of the novels. Parker himself was born in Central America and lived in the West Indies through most of his childhood, so he is familiar with the region and its history. He also uses multiple sources to support his writing. Fleming was the second of four sons of Valentine and Eve Fleming. Like Bond, his father was British and his mother from an aristocratic Scottish family. Valentine's father Richard had made a fortune investing in American railroads and his son was educated at Eton and Oxford and took his place in society as a country gentleman and member of Parliament. At school he became lifelong friends with Winston Churchill, served with him in the military until he was killed in May 1917, when Ian was 9 years old. Churchill wrote Valentine's obituary and stayed in contact with the Fleming family throughout his lifetime. Ian's own education was at Eton and Sandhurst, and although he attended two colleges, he did not graduate. Eventually he found work writing for a newspaper and then with a publishing house. Parker goes into some detail about Ian's relationship with his mother which was in sharp contrast to the closeness he had with his father who called him "Johnny." His youngest brother Michael was killed in World War II. When Ian first experienced Jamaica in 1943, he was a man born for the best of things who had lost his one loving parent and his youngest brother, failed to graduate college and was reduced to writing for a living before the war. He had rather a fatalistic outlook on life. After joining the military in WW II, Ian's intelligence and communication skills were well utilized in the British Naval Intelligence Division. Ian had his first experience with Jamaica when as assistant to the director of Naval Intelligence, he was sent to Kingston for an Anglo-American conference on tactics to deal with the destructive German U-boats. They were inflicting massive damage on shipments of vital war goods. Ian brought along his lifelong friend Ivar Bryce, who met him in New York where the two friends took Silver Meteor to Miami. Sound familiar? Yes, it is the same journey that Bond took with Solitaire in "Live and Let Die." From Miami they flew to Kingston. Bryce was eager to show Fleming his latest wife's new purchase a former plantation great house set 1500 feet above the city. They stayed there during the duration of the conference. Ian was smitten at first whiff of the Jamaican air. The tranquility and live-for-today simplicity combined with the incredible natural beauty of the island and friendliness of the residents infused Ian's psyche with a contentment he had never experienced before. Jamaica would prove to be the one true love of Ian's life. When he returned to Jamaica after the war's end, he eventually built a winter home which he named Goldeneye after a war-time memorandum he wrote about the planning and oversight of two intelligence units. The house was extremely rustic to put it

nicely. He was there to relax during the day and party hard in the evening. He didn't have hot water installed nor worry about draperies and furnishings. Every morning he swam and sometimes snorkeled before breakfast. After his two months of winter respite, it was back to London to his world of writing, especially travel writing, and working at a publishing house, travel, continued hard partying and ceaseless womanizing. In 1952, Fleming wrote his first Bond book, "Casino Royale." It was published the next year and thereafter, Fleming spent each winter at Goldeneye starting the day with a swim, shower, breakfast and sitting at his bedroom typewriter pounding out Bond's escapades until early afternoon. He wrote for a post-war Britain which was still suffering shortages and still living with the ruins of the war. He took them to distant places, warm sunny opulent places, because travel was too expensive for average people at that time. Bond's clothing and grooming are as sumptuous as the description of the meals he eats because Fleming was giving his reader what they yearned for but could not hope to attain. Bond was implacable and always came out on top because Britain was still bruised and limping from that long war and because the Empire was almost gone. America was pictured as a place of greed and crime, primarily because Fleming resented the role it had played in the war. He knew it would have been lost without America's entry and that America was going to dominate world affairs. He just didn't like it. Most often the anti-Americanism is apparent in his novels. One exception is Felix Leiter, an American operative that Bond works with. Fleming used the surname of a good American woman friend of his, Oatsie Leiter. He also named some of his villains after people he disliked. Oatsie also introduced him to a man who would have a huge impact on Fleming's future fortune - John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Ian was visiting Oatsie in D.C. and they were driving in her Cadillac when they came upon a young couple walking. Oatsie knew them very well - JFK and Jacqueline. It was 1960 and the senator was running for president of the United States. Oatsie was to attend a dinner party at their home that evening. She asked if she could bring a guest. JFK politely asked who would that be and he was introduced to Ian Fleming. His response, "James Bond? But of course, by all means, do please come." JFK had been reading the Bond books since Jackie gave him a copy of "Casino Royale" in 1955 when he was bedridden. She also gave CIA Director Allen Dulles a copy of "From Russia With Love" in 1957. Thereafter, it is said that JFK and Dulles traded their Bond books. It was in a March 1961 Life magazine article by Hugh Sidey that America learned that "From Russia With Love" was in JFK's 10 Top Ten Books. The very day after the

issue. Fleming's release, Bond book sales skyrocketed in America. It is a clue to Fleming's character that when he retold the story of meeting JFK, he would Kennedy as saying, "THE Ian Fleming?" Fleming's personal life reflected his indulgent behavior. His womanizing started at a young age as did his drinking and his use of barbiturates and other drugs. He had first episode of gonorrhea at age 19, was plagued with kidney stones, and had his first heart attack in 1962, then the final fatal heart attack in August 1964 at age 56. He had been warned at age 40 by a doctor to cut down on the drinking and drug use. He decided he would rather "live too much" than live too long. He married for the first and only time in his mid 40s, to a woman he had been having an affair with since 1936. She was married when they met and after her husband died in WW II, Ian refused to marry her so she married a wealthy nobleman. Finally, in 1951, five months pregnant with Ian's child, Ann Charteris was given a divorce and the very day it was finalized, Ian and Ann were married. Their child, Caspar, was turned over to his nanny, where he and the nanny lived in a cottage near Ann and Ian's home. Caspar would be brought in for a quick minute before dinner, where the parents and their guests, drinks in hand, would coo over the child for a few seconds. No one in the Ian Fleming family had a happy ending. *Goldeneye Where Bond Was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica* is a great read. Fleming is even more captivating than his fictional spy hero. He is not admirable except for his work ethic, in my opinion. Like Bond, he was often brutal, cold and merciless with people. This book was a massive undertaking by Parker, to put this British icon Ian Fleming and his fictional British icon James Bond in historical context. I think he did an admirable job in showing how Fleming's own snobbery and xenophobia (in a 1956 letter to Ann, "All foreigners are pestilential") are reflected in Bond. Also his relationship with Jamaica, which was mostly loving yet paternalistic. He had the same cook for all the years he spent at Goldeneye, who called him "Commander," and most of the other help came back year after year. Parker makes a strong argument for where Fleming got Jamaica wrong. The book is stuffed with anecdotes about the rich and famous of the 1940s and 1950s who made Jamaica their hideaway. Fleming and Errol Flynn, who also loved the island, were oil and water. If they were in the same room, they made sure to be on opposite peripheries. Noel Coward was a good friend and a Jamaican neighbor to Fleming. He also knew Fleming's women quite well and Parker quotes Coward many times in regards to those relationships. Parker begins with the 2012 incident where Daniel Craig (newest Bond) and Queen Elizabeth are chatting, then appear to parachute to the opening of the 2012 Olympics. Bond

and Elizabeth both officially began their reigns in 1953. Both are British icons. After a brief survey of Fleming's early life, Parker details each Bond book and that year of Fleming's life. He argues that Fleming's own feelings about Jamaica are reflected in the stories, including the latter novels where he portrays Jamaica as a dark place plagued by crime and greed. Events in Fleming's life are also reflected in the novels. All of his assertions are bolstered with entries from the diaries, letters, interviews, biographies of Fleming himself and people who knew him. I gave it a rating of 4.0/5.0. It is well written, easy to read with some interesting information about the history of Jamaica, and many photographs. You do not have to be a Bond fan, either movies or books, to enjoy this book. But if you read this, you will get insight into why he had Bond's wife killed on their wedding day. This review was published in the 12/25/2015 issue of Coastal Breeze News.
<http://www.coastalbreezenews.com/category/entertainment/book-remarks/>

Almost too much information about Fleming's setting up a home and getaway in Jamaica, the times, the participants and a world long gone, but super-influential on the original Bond books. This is probably the most colorful portrait of Ian Fleming ever. Well done!

Fantastic read! Essential for serious Bond enthusiasts or collectors. Gives an in-depth historical overview of Fleming's life and times during the crumbling British empire, his friends and family during the period, and Jamaica's resurgence as an independent nation. Brings enormous new insight into the context in which the novels were written and the references and commentary they include. Quite a revelation!

Not only does this interesting book tell you everything you ever wanted to know about Ian Fleming and his creation of James Bond, but there is a lot of Jamaica/UK history to absorb. The island's progression from colonization to independence is well explained. And what a time was had on the North Coast "during the day." If you have been enchanted by Jamaica--the climate, the diversity, the history, the flora/fauna, the people--this book should be on your reading list.

Ian Fleming A selfish drunk Who created my only hero. My first movie that allowed me to escape And taught me what it takes to be a man in an increasingly politically correct world

Terrific history of the writing of the James Bond series, Ian Fleming and Jamaica. Highly

recommended.

This has been a delightful journey so far, now about halfway through the book. Fleming seems to have written Bond almost as an autobiography/novel if there could be such a category. Some of Bond's adventures mirror some of Fleming's. Jamaica seems to be a launching point literally and figuratively for many of Bond's adventures whether those adventures reference Jamaica or not. Goldeneye, the book's title turns out to be more than just a movie title and fictional device but I won't spoil that for you! It's an easy read, something to peruse at a chapter a day or week. You will be able to break away from it but to enjoy the next time you pick it up whether you retain all of what you read the last time or not, in short, my kind of book.

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