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For two months every year, from 1946 to his death eighteen 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 here. This book explores the huge influence of Jamaica on the creation of Fleming's iconic post-war hero. The island was for Fleming part retreat from the world, part tangible representation of his own values, and part exotic fantasy. It will examine his Jamaican friendships-his extraordinary circle included Errol Flynn, the Olivier's, international politicians and British royalty, as well as his close neighbor Noel Coward and trace his changing relationship with Ann Charteris (and hers with Jamaica) and the emergence of Blanche Blackwell as his Jamaican soulmate.

Goldeneye also compares the real Jamaica of the 1950s during the build-up 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 to the dramatic end of the British Empire.

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

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From Reader Review *Goldeneye: Where Bond Was Born*: Ian Fleming's Jamaica for online ebook

Lee Miller says

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.

Alissandra Cummins says

Enjoyed tremendously, clearly and empathetically written, provides fascinating insight into the writing process of an enigmatic author. MP has given a lot of space to pre and just post Independence Jamaica in this book, which for me (like many others I presume) never really registered as the birthplace of Bond in such an indelible way before. Really resonated with some other research I was doing on Jamaica for this period.

David Gee says

'*Sex, snobbery and sadism*' were the key ingredients in a James Bond novel, according to a review of **Dr No** in the New Statesman in 1958. Yes, he was probably right, but the reviewer seems to have missed out the outlandish thrills that Ian Fleming could deliver along with some of the most colourful villains in the history of pulp fiction: Mr Big, Rosa Klebb, Dr. No, Goldfinger and, that toothsome twosome, Ernst Stavro Blofeld and Irma Bunt!

Matthew Parker's lively new contribution to the 007 'canon' is a history of Fleming's long love-affair with pre- and post-Independence Jamaica, where he spent two months of every year from 1946 until his death in 1964 and where he wrote all the Bond books. At *Goldeneye*, the boxy little bungalow Fleming built on the north coast of the Caribbean island, he entertained the great and the good (including Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Eden and - of course - Sean Connery) together with a far from modest selection of married ladyfriends, one of whom, Viscount Rothermere's wife Ann, divorced her husband to marry Fleming. Ann had to put up with a "three-people marriage" when Fleming took another Jamaican expat as his long-term mistress. Tit for tat, Ann Fleming became Hugh Gaitskell's lover for the last years of his life.

Fascinating as this book is, it's filled with dislikeable characters. Fleming himself is a curmudgeon, sometimes genial, more often sulky. Ann is a snobbish pill-popping neurotic who dismisses her husband's novels (largely without reading them) as 'pornography'. Even Noel Coward comes across as little more than another of the old colonial bores. Fleming largely detested the idle rich and retired who made up most of his wife's social circle both on the island and in London, and yet, as the New Statesman observed, James Bond was very much a product of the supercilious 'imperialist' mindset.

Parker confirms what we have heard before, that there was a lot of Fleming in 007: the naval background, a love of fishing and snorkelling as well as lethal levels of smoking and drinking. From this account Fleming does not seem to have been a very happy man, but his books, however sniffy some of the critics, have brought pleasure to millions.

Fleming was toying with killing off 007 at the end of **From Russia With Love** when (unlike in the movie) Rosa Klebb strikes home with the poisoned blade in her toecap. Luckily for us, this was Fleming's breakthrough book and he contrived a way to 'resurrect' Bond at the beginning of **Dr No**. Today, in real time, Bond would either be long since despatched to the rest home for old spies or, more likely given his alcohol and tobacco intake, would have made the trip to the crematorium which he narrowly escaped in the movie of **Diamonds Are Forever**. Despite the up-and-down quality of both the book and the movie franchise, long may he go on living!

Jeffrey Westhoff says

After Andrew Lycett's exhaustive biography of Ian Fleming (which is 20 years old, believe it or not), you may wonder what is left to learn of James Bond's creator.

In his new book "Goldeneye," Matthew Parker proves there is quite a bit left to learn. Unlike the works of Lycett and John Pearson, which remain the two indispensable Fleming biographies, Parker's book is not a straightforward life story. He instead focuses on Fleming's love for Jamaica and the vacation home he built there, Goldeneye. Pearson and Lycett certainly acknowledge that Jamaica was a major part of Fleming's life, but Parker has more time and space to devote to the author's time in Jamaica, and he unearths aspects of the man not found by previous biographers.

Fleming first visited Jamaica during a conference in World War II while he worked for British naval intelligence. Before leaving he told his friend Ivar Bryce (who would later figure in one of the biggest dramas of Fleming's life) that he would buy a home on the island where he would vacation and write. That home would become Goldeneye, on Jamaica's north coast near Oracabessa. When Fleming secured a London journalism job after the war, he insisted upon and received two months paid vacation per year (when I was a teenager reading about Fleming, I found nothing remarkable about this. Today I wonder at his power of persuasion). Fleming would spend those two months, from January to March, at Goldeneye. Parker details Fleming's life for those two months out of the year, remarkably pinpointing Fleming's locations and activities during his time in Jamaica. In some ways, it is a biography of two months at a time, each chapter usually focusing on a single year.

Parker also delves into Jamaican history pertinent to the island's hold on Fleming. Britain lost India shortly after the Second World War, but in the late 1940s and early '50s, Jamaica seemed a sunny, friendly outpost of the British Empire, something that appealed to the nostalgic imperialist Fleming and provided the perfect spot for him to create his imperialist hero, James Bond.

Although Fleming hinted at the end of the war he wanted to write a spy novel, he did not start banging away on his typewriter until his 1952 visit to Jamaica. This coincided with his impending marriage to his longtime mistress, Ann (pregnant at the time), and Fleming often blamed premarital jitters for the creation of Bond. But Parker finds evidence that Fleming was ready to write *Casino Royale* that winter regardless of his fleeting bachelorhood.

The portrait of the resulting marriage is familiar from Lycett's biography. Ian and Ann Fleming were two people who loved each other deeply yet seemed addicted to damaging each other. In Parker's book, *Goldeneye* itself becomes an obstacle between them after Ann begins to loathe Jamaica and refuses to vacation there with her husband. This allows Fleming to begin an affair with Blanche Blackwell, a celebrated member of Jamaica's north coast society and, it is hard to dispute, a more sympathetic partner for Fleming. By this point Ann Fleming already was having a widely recognized affair with British politician Hugh Gaitskill.

Parker looks at the writing of each Bond book and the circumstances that surround their inception. He pays closest attention to the three books set in Jamaica -- *Live and Let Die*, *Doctor No* and *The Man With the Golden Gun* -- and how the island's shifting political situation is reflected in each title.

Parker's book is deeply researched but highly readable (a quality it shares with Pearson's biography). Dozens of books have been written about Fleming and Bond, but new insights are hard to come by anymore. Parker's "*Goldeneye*" is filled with them. It is a worthy supplement to Pearson's and Lycett's thicker volumes.

Steve says

Ian Fleming wrote his James Bond books during his annual two month holiday at his Jamaican retreat *Goldeneye*. Fleming had a soft spot for the island and it, or his view of it, is depicted in many of his books. This book looks at Fleming's life with a focus on his time at *Goldeneye* and the lives of his friends and the people he interacted with while there using Ian and Ann Fleming's letters as well as materials and interviews from people who knew and interacted with them during their time together both before and after their marriage. Comparing and contrasting actual events with their reflections in the Bond novels this book also looks at the history of Jamaica and Jamaican independence during the waning of the British Empire after WWII. I found this book a fascinating look at the people and events that influenced Fleming as he wrote the James Bond stories and they began to become the worldwide phenomena that James Bond became.

Frank Hughes says

Skillfully blends a history of Jamaica and the literary James Bond through the prism of *Goldeneye*, the tropical retreat where the novels were written. Author Matthew Parker begins with the story of Ian Fleming's first visit to Jamaica and a concise biography of Bond's creator from birth to the postwar era. This is followed by a history of Jamaica that sets the stage for the birth of James Bond. Having brought the island and the author together, from this point on the book skillfully weaves together the Twentieth Century political turmoil of Jamaica, the life of Ian Fleming, and the story of the Bond novels. Along the way we get glimpses of other luminaries who become part of Jamaica's story, including Winston Churchill, Errol Flynn, Noel Coward, Ursula Andress, Laurence Olivier, and Sean Connery. There is endless delight for Bond fans

here, a number of revelations that include the origin of the Vesper cocktail, the real Isle of Surprise, and the true life circumstances that inspired "Quantum of Solace" and "The Hildebrand Rarity". There are also interesting stories about the filming of "Dr. No" and "Live and Let Die" that, although I've been a Bond fan for almost fifty years, I never knew. There is also inspiration for writers here, as it is very clear that Fleming took mundane incidents from his own life and turned them into the fanciful and imaginative sequences we love in his novels. This densely researched book, sporting 40 pages of notes and acknowledgments, is a mesmerizing combination of history, biography, and fan boy trivia.

Sydney says

Love it. Confession: I've never been super into James Bond, but it didn't matter. I picked up this book out of curiosity, not even really realizing what it was about, and I was hooked immediately. It's a fascinating story, one that's about race and history and literature and one of the most memorable characters in history. I feel like 007 fans will totally geek out over this book, and non-007 fans will find so much in it that they'll find themselves craving one of the movies. Absolutely recommend.

Michele says

Goldeneye Where Bond was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica by Matthew Parker (2015, Pegasus Books) has been a long time in coming. Where much of Fleming and Bond have been explored and dissected, the little tropical island that was the backdrop for two months for eighteen years has little inspection.

Parker has done extensive research in preparation of this book. It's a full plate that he most organize, manage, and in some cases, provide a delicate balance of he said/she said without becoming low brow gossip. In the early chapters, Parker sorts out the cast of characters against the chaotic and changing political fabric of Jamaica and the world. It did feel as though there was some jumping around in these chapters, but Parker gets into a rhythm once Ian Fleming started working on his novels.

What I found fascinating and intriguing were Fleming's various nods in his books to references – people, places, events – that were important enough for him to set down for posterity. His early novels were particularly well documented by Parker, but by the last few novels, Parker spent more time discussing the plots. I think part of that fact is due to Fleming's stories be set elsewhere than Jamaica.

My one criticism, which truly arises from my personal preference, is that Parker spent a considerable amount of time detailing the political climate. It makes complete sense, given the changing attitudes towards imperialism/colonialism, racism, etc., however my interest waned during those sections. With that said, I still believe this is a worthwhile book for those who enjoy the films and do not know much about the books and Jamaica, this would be a good starting point. For the seasoned Bond aficionado, it's a must because it is about Fleming and Bond.

As to the book trimmings: there are black and white photographs throughout the book and a small section of color photographs. I appreciated the selection and felt like I got to see just about everyone that had come in and out of Fleming's life at Goldeneye. In the back of the book, Parker provided picture and quotation credits, endnotes, a selected bibliography, and a thorough index, which was impressive.

Laura says

So fascinating! Parker does a wonderful job of balancing the history of Jamaica, the history of Bond, and Fleming's own life details. Read like fiction - so much family drama, political intrigue, tragedy, addiction, beauty.

Casey says

A good book, combining a biography of Ian Fleming with an analysis of his James Bond novels and their relation to Fleming's experience in Jamaica, where they were written. In the late 1940s Fleming built a winter house on Jamaica's north coast, Goldeneye, living there as Jamaica evolved from a colonial outpost to an independent country with a vibrant tourism industry and a budding industrial economy. The book provides a detailed look at Fleming's life, his friendships, love interests, political/cultural views, and hobbies. It also analyzes each of the Bond novels, pointing out the real-life incidences in Jamaica and around the world which shaped each story. The book explores the tough questions of the wide popularity for a character and a series which, even for the times, pushed moral attitudes and political views that were fringe, and would become even more so. All in all, a good overview of the environment in which James Bond was created, the way in which the books were a release from the growing pain in Fleming's life, and the reasons for the continued popularity of the 007 character.

Paul says

Goldeneye – An ode to Fleming, Bond and Jamaica

In 1943 a young naval intelligence officer was in Kingston for a conference when he promised to himself that he would come back and live on the island of Jamaica. In 1946 Ian Fleming made good on that promise and so began a long love affair with Jamaica and the creation of one of the world's most famous literary and celluloid heroes James Bond. In the eighteen years that Fleming owned Goldeneye his home during the cold winters of a dark and dank London winters all the Bond thrillers were written here.

Matthew Parker does not idolise Goldeneye making false claims, but paints a very clear picture of it as very much a harsh bachelor pad with very little in the way of comfort, in the dying years of Imperial Jamaica when the Blacks were there to serve and not be heard. All this comes across in the book and it must be remembered that Fleming was a man of his times, the Empire had stood for the greatness of a people, and the monarchy was its representation and was a force for good.

When Fleming bought the land and designed Goldeneye there were no creature comforts no decent plumbing, no windows or cupboards. The one thing that does come across from this book is that Fleming wanted to communion with nature and be inspired by what was around him he took to Jamaica and Jamaica took to Fleming.

One of the most interesting things about this book is not just that the chapters are neatly broken up for the reader starting in 1946 and then eventually in to when each of the Bond Thrillers were written. By doing this

we are able to examine the events around Fleming's life at the time his loves and his struggles. We also get an examination of Jamaica at a turning point in its history when things were changing from colonial back post to a leading Caribbean independent nation. Parker also interviews many people who knew Fleming at the time which adds to the cache of this book.

Parker also examines our enduring love of both the books and the films and one thing that we British are good at, laughing at ourselves. Early on in the books and in Flemings' thoughts was Britain's uneasy and changing relationship with America which helped to spark some of the more fun, sparky and deeply felt segments in the novels. Something that does come across if it was not for the ability to laugh at ourselves, then both Fleming and Bond have something in common they were pretty unlikeable.

Throughout the book it is amazing once it is pointed out how many times Jamaica actually appears in Flemings novels. From the name of James Bond an author on Jamaica's bird life to how many places and people appear in one guise or other. We also see Fleming's relationships with the locals and his famous friends, such as Noel Coward, Blanche Blackwell and with the Governor General of the time Sir Hugh Foot. As well we get explanations of the politics of the time of Manley and the politics of Independence.

Matthew Parker with Goldeneye has not replaced the two excellent biographies of Fleming but made an excellent addition to the James Bond canon. We also are able to see that even though Fleming may not have been in the literary limelight and the greater his success the more destructive he became to himself and too his creation Bond.

That self destruct button that exists in all the Bond novels and films with the excessive drinking and smoking was a reflection of Fleming; he was still able to hammer out 2000 words a day until his final outing. Fleming's love of Goldeneye and of Jamaica pours from every page of the book, while still proudly English it was probably the only place he ever was really happy.

George Roper says

There are three reasons I bought and then read this book:

- 1) I love to read books that are historical in focus: Its a bonus for me when the history that is being written about has a Jamaican or Caribbean focus;
- 2) Matthew Parker's name on the cover of the book: The process of reading Parker's excellent "Sugar Barons" was absorbing, which was due in large part to the author's style and his selection of subject matter to include in a book that covered over 210 years of history in the English Caribbean colonies of Barbados, the Leewards and Jamaica. Parker writes history they way it should have always been written - with sensitivity and courage to tell the truth no matter where it takes you;
- 3) James Bond driven middle age nostalgia syndrome (haha): As a pre-adolescent the first movie for grown-ups that had a major impact on me was "Live and Let Die". The rollicking reggae spiced theme song by Paul McCartney & Wings, pulsating action, suave laid back cool of Roger Moore in the face of danger, menacing and formidable Afro-American villains, lusciously lovely ladies (the beautiful charms of Gloria Hendry and Jane Seymour were unforgettably eye-popping) and the breathtaking Jamaican scenery used in the movie made a lasting impression on this young Jamaican lad. Since that day in the mid 1970s Bond has been

something of a guilty pleasure... although in recent times Bond has, for me at least, lost a lot of the pull and appeal he once had (growing up is a hell of a thing eh?).

Parker's "Goldeneye" was an awesome read. Yes it is gossipy - as some critics have observed - but a lot of the gossip is subservient to the major story which is a depiction of the racial attitudes and mores of upper middle class England during a climatic period of that country's history: 1946 (just after World War II) up to the mid 1970s. The impact of the Cold War and Jamaica's own drive towards political independence on Flemming's story-telling are admirably covered by Parker. The overall theme in "Goldeneye" is that Flemming's James Bond books provided its English readers with an opportunity to escape from the harsh reality that the British Empire was not what it used to be, as growing numbers of colonies in Asia and Africa gained their independence in the post World War II period. Some of those in Flemming's circle actually express ugly sentiments as they come face to face with a more self-assured and confident Afro-Jamaican populace in the 1950s who sense that independence is near.

The James Bond books - all written by Flemming at Goldeneye on the north coast of Jamaica - gave their English readers a sense that Britain still had it (even though really she was losing her mojo) because Bond is always shown to be the "superspy" to top all spies no matter where they hailed from, the CIA and KGB not excluded. One interesting insight is that the Bond in the books is not identical to the Bond of the movies - at least in one particular - his political views. I will not state here what that difference is but let's say that the Bond of the books might well have voted "Leave" earlier this year, whilst the Bond of the movies more than likely would be with the "Remain" contingent!

I am very happy I bought and read this book. The fans of the Bond books and movies will not be disappointed if they were to read it too.

Jared Millet says

Sometimes it's the little decisions that make history. Such as when some obscure British guy decides he wants to buy a house in Jamaica where he can get drunk, snorkel his own private reef, and maybe write a book.

Parker's *Goldeneye* sits in the Venn-diagram intersection of three stories: a biography of Ian Fleming's time in Jamaica, a history of Jamaica during its transition from British colony to independence, and a literary history of Bond, James Bond. Parker does each of them justice, and draws strong connections between all three: Fleming and his neighbor, playwright Noel Coward, being "early adopters" in the Jamaica-as-tourist-hotspot concept, Fleming's time in Jamaica having a heavy influence on his development of Bond and the stories in the novels, and the great impact that Fleming and Bond had in bringing Jamaica to a worldwide audience. All this is set against a backdrop of the fall of British Imperialism, something that Fleming and Coward both lamented and reflected in their works.

Fleming does not come across as a likeable character: he's a boozier, a chain-smoker, an aristocratic snob, a curmudgeonly recluse, and a serial adulterer. But then, so again is Bond. It's clear that Fleming injected much of himself into the Bond character, especially his way with the ladies and the knowing twinkle in Bond's eye that everything going on around him is just a little bit ridiculous. It's that sly charm and knowing self-mockery that, it appears, redeems Fleming and Bond both. That, and the fact that they've both had such a vast cultural impact on the world, far beyond any reasonable proportion.

I started reading the Bond books ages ago, but got distracted halfway through *Live and Let Die*. Not soon after beginning this book, I put the entire series back in my to-read page. Looking forward to reading them fresh with more insight into the context in which they were written.

JT says

The writing moves along and is easy reading. The book fleshes out the man who created Bond and the times and circumstances that influenced his books. The 50's was a time of great political and social change in the West Indies and this book covers its impact on Jamaica. Fleming had an eclectic group of friends and lovers and their interaction on the island is fascinating. You'll feel like a fly on the wall at times. I definitely would put this book in the 'curl up with a hot cup of tea and a couple of relaxing hours' category. Highly recommended if you are a Bond fan.

Lilisa says

I love James Bond movies - fast-moving, fantasy, glitzy, bad guys, good guy always wins = never a dull moment! Goldeneye is the house in Jamaica that Ian Fleming built and where all the James Bond books were written. The book details the life of Ian Fleming, his friendships and the influence Jamaica had on his life and on his 007 books. There's quite a bit of history thrown in as well as societal reflections of the day, particularly relating to class and race. It wasn't as absorbing a read as I would have expected. I felt the writing didn't flow as fluidly as it could have, was sometimes boring and ploddy and I had to steel myself to power on through. But all in all I got the picture of an Ian Fleming on the island of Jamaica that heavily influenced his writing of one of my favorite spy series of all time.
