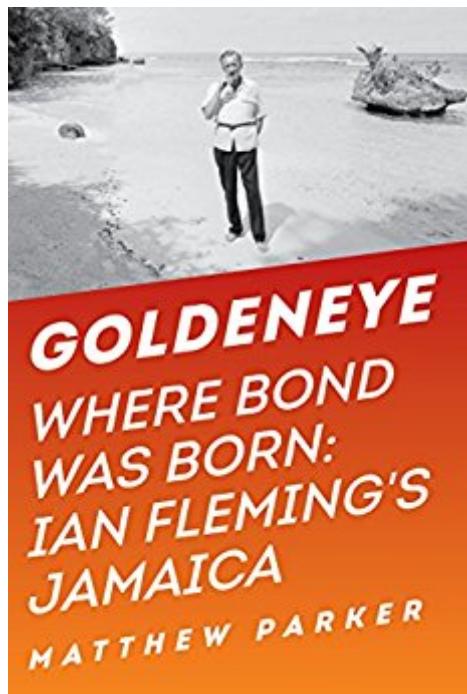


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Goldeneye: Where Bond Was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica



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 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 Oliviers, 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.

Book Information

File Size: 11907 KB

Print Length: 264 pages

Publisher: Pegasus Books; 1 edition (March 15, 2015)

Publication Date: February 16, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00LADUN4Y

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #312,075 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #18

in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Jamaica #70 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies #666 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Authors

Customer Reviews

Well. This is exactly how things are supposed to work. I got this book from the library and love it so

much I don't want to return it. So I'll be purchasing a copy. This is at least the fourth biography of Fleming I have read, and it is by far the best. Amis was too good a friend. Pearson, who was authorized, suffered from having to protect the man's reputation. Lycett had too much useless information and made excuses for the man. Parker, at last, examines Fleming and Bond in the context of an addict and of an oarless, unhappy man temporarily in his happy place. The excellence of the book is amazing to me, partly because the focus is so narrow: Fleming was only in Jamaica for 2 months of the year, and only after he was in his forties. Parker makes a convincing case that all you really need to know about Fleming is revealed at and around Goldeneye. As an armchair psychologist, Parker is honest to the point of cutting. He finds not only something nasty, but something redeeming to say about everyone: Blanche Blackwell gave Fleming adoration, but Fleming didn't altogether want that, even as he needed it. Ann gave him cachet, but Ian was new money and knew it. Ann's criticism and need for money spurred Ian to produce the moneymakers even as he ached for critical recognition, and he had the observation, if not the real sensitivity, to produce gut-wrenching stories when he was brave enough. How lucky Parker was to have Blackwell, Fleming's mistress, not only alive at over 100 but willing to talk to him. Parker includes a political history of Jamaica and of the decline of British power worldwide that makes both Bond and Fleming make more sense.

If you're looking for slight, fan-centric anecdotes of martinis, exotic casinos, prestige cars and globe-trotting escapades - you would be wise to look elsewhere. This is the comprehensive, insightful history that serious readers of Fleming have been owed for some time. And for all of its 300 pages of detailed history, 'Goldeneye' is an addicting combination of superbly researched threads that provide surprising insight into the creation of Fleming's celebrated and iconic protagonist. Parker's book is, by turns, a history of Fleming's Jamaican retreat (where the Bond books were written), an historical account of the island country itself, a select biography of events in Fleming's life (including his infamous penchant for carrying on affairs with married women) and a close-reading of the Bond novels, enlightened by all of the above narratives. It's an 'experiential' read. By the end of it, you feel as if you have lived with Fleming through those humid, evocative Caribbean nights, the torrid and thrilling affairs, engaged with the colourful, intriguing characters drifting through Fleming's Jamaica and immersed in the curious combination of imperial privilege coupled with a liberal and consuming culture of open sexuality - all of these influences made Fleming into an author with both popular and anachronistic instincts. The Bond novels' strangely thrilling combination of sadism, snobbishness, eroticism

and patriotism makes perfect sense given the unorthodox lifestyle he forged for himself amongst the aristocracy of Jamaica. As a biographical account of the writing of each Bond book, "Goldeneye" is a sheer delight.

One of Ian Fleming's teachers wrote to his mother that "He ought to make an excellent soldier, provided always that the Ladies don't ruin him." • Fleming, who was a storied womanizer (and a good soldier) in real life, established a fictional alter-ego who was always successful with "the Ladies" • and an expert at Cold War-style spy-craft. In this highly readable book, Matthew Parker, who came upon Goldeneye, the Fleming retreat in Jamaica, while working on THE SUGAR BARONS, paints a colorful portrait of the paradise where James Bond first drew breath, and where Fleming flirted with creation and self-destruction. Famously, Fleming, visiting Jamaica on an espionage assignment for the British Navy during World War II, vowed to return and did so, building a villa he called Goldeneye on a high hill overlooking the ocean. "Each year, Jamaica had soaked into him, with its creative spirit and cocktail of luxury, melancholy, imperialism, sensuality, danger and violence." • By 1953, he had tapped out his first novel at Goldeneye: CASINO ROYALE introduced Bond --- uncomplicated, unflappable, undaunted by danger. Bond would become an English icon and the book's international favorite, while Fleming would go on smoking 3+ packs of cigarettes a day, drinking to dangerous excess, and writing a new Bond thriller every year. Together with Noël Coward, who also moved to Jamaica, Fleming, though always something of a loner, would help make Jamaica the happening place for the beautiful people: Kathryn Hepburn, Errol Flynn, Michael Redgrave, Lucien Freud, the Oliviers, and Fleming's wife-to-be, Ann Charteris. But this is a story about the place as well as the man.

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