

EVENTS

James Patterson launches ‘Book Shots’ novel concept

BY KAREN HELLER
THE WASHINGTON POST

BRIARCLIFF MANOR, New York — In book publishing, there is James Patterson — and basically everyone else.

His author bio: “James Patterson has written more bestsellers and created more enduring fictional characters than any other novelist today.” Beloved by critics and peers? Not so much. But his popularity among readers remains incontrovertible. He is an industry unto himself.

And now the writer of popular thrillers — and children’s books and young-adult novels and romance and mysteries — has launched BookShots, a series of short, cheap, plot-propelled novels directed at an audience more prone to reading smartphones than print. (Naturally, there is an app for it.)

“In this day and age, when so many people have decided to spend so much of their lives not reading books, I think to create a new habit for them is a smart thing,” Patterson, 69, says, perched in the summer study of his Hudson Valley home, the room dominated by a sleigh bed where he reads and edits.

The trick? “I’ve taken the fat out of commercial novels,” he says. “In an awful lot of novels, there’s more in them than there should be.”

Not in these books. The sentences are simple and declarative.

And frequently double as paragraphs.

“Every single chapter is conceived to move the plot and the characterization forward,” he says, “and to turn on the movie projectors in our heads.”

Movies loom large in Patterson’s world. Television, too. BookShots’ editorial director, Washington native Bill Robinson, has a background in both fields and serves as executive producer of “Zoo,” the CBS series based on Patterson’s book of the same name. More than once, Patterson refers to himself as the literary equivalent of a showrunner.

He has a way of making grand statements calmly — in contrast to his fevered characters — but with the absolute conviction of a very successful man. He labels BookShots “a revolution” and “a huge thing.”

The paperbacks will be sold in airports, drugstores, big-box emporiums, sometimes affixed to clip strips like bags of gummy bears. The motto: “Books at the speed of life.”

“People want things faster. They want to binge,” the former ad man and onetime creative chief at J. Walter Thompson says. “These books are like reading movies.”

In the buffet of fiction, BookShots are small plates if we’re being kind, junk food if we’re not: less than 150 pages, roughly the size of an iPad mini, retail price \$4.99. Two titles per month to start.

Snaps Patterson of that last decision by publisher Little, Brown: “Honestly, I would have been more aggressive.”

In the past year, he has written 117 volumes for BookShots.

“Written,” though, is not the precise verb. Conceived, outlined, co-written and curated. Patterson delivers exhaustive notes and outlines, sometimes running 80 pages, to co-authors, his printer regularly



James Patterson

discharging collaborators’ efforts like lottery tickets. “The success rate when I write the outline is almost 100 percent. When other people do, it’s 50 to 60 percent,” he says.

He is among the first writers credited with promoting books through television spots, releasing more than one title a year, and maintaining a stable of writers that rivals this year’s field at the Kentucky Derby.

“It may be a factory,” says Robinson, “but it’s a hand-tooled factory.”

The brevity of BookShots serves another master: Patterson’s mortality.

“Jim realized his ideas were never going to all get done at the regular pace of publishing,” says Robinson.

“Publishing doesn’t innovate,” says Patterson. “It’s kind of weird, in this world where everything is changing every 10 minutes.”

Patterson’s 1976 debut novel, “The Thomas Berryman Number,” was initially rejected by 31 publishers. It remains among his most acclaimed, winner of the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America. It

sold about 10,000 copies.

By comparison, “15th Af-fair,” created with Maxine Paetro and, yes, the 15th volume in the Women’s Murder Club series, sold 20,000 copies in one week.

For a man of words — so many, many words — Patterson also boasts a staggering amount of numbers. Over 40 years, he has produced 158 titles and sold 325 million copies. Last year, according to his publisher, one in 21 hardcover adult novels sold in the United States featured Patterson’s name on the cover. Forbes estimates his annual book-related earnings at around \$89 million.

Although he scoffs at tradition, Patterson’s preppy attire (linen shirt, clear-framed specs, boat shoes) and the look of his house, an elegant pile of fieldstone, are Ralph Lauren on steroids. He grew up in working-class Newburgh, 35 miles north and a world away from Briarcliff Manor. This, by the way, is the lesser house. The 20,000-square-foot winter estate in Palm Beach was purchased for \$17.4 million in 2009 before Patterson and his wife, Sue, sank an additional \$14 million into renovating it.

But if he lives like few authors, he also champions philanthropy at a spectacular level.

He and Sue fund 400 annual teacher education scholarships at 22 colleges and universities, many of them historically black. Patterson has provided more than 650,000 books to U.S. soldiers and 250,000 to public school students in multiple cities. He has given millions to school libraries and more than a million to independent bookstores.

All the success stems from one simple root: his love of telling stories.

“I remember wandering around the woods as a child and telling story after story,” he says. On long drives, “I would write entire musicals in the car and sing songs I had written for them.” And he’s never at a loss for stories.

“I don’t like doing nonfiction,” he says. “It shuts down my strength, which is my imagination.”

Sure, but he’s done non-fiction, too.

He has been savaged by critics, who rarely bother reviewing his works, and he generally stands outside the band of well-known thriller writers. Stephen King branded him “a terrible writer.” For all Patterson’s gruff bravado — he is rarely photographed smiling and will correct people who dare question his abilities — it’s clear that all this can sting.

Guessing toward a well-reviewed new thriller that he found wanting — he devours literary and popular fiction at nearly the rate that he writes — he says, “Some of the boys got together and decided to have the author break out.” The “boys” being Michael Connelly, Harlan Coben and Lee Child.

Patterson’s fictional characters tend to be nothing like him, except in their frenzy of activity. His Michael Bennett series features a widowed detective with 10 adopted children. He and Sue, a sunny former all-American swimmer and ad designer a decade his junior, who created several BookShots covers, have been together for 19 years. Their home is a museum

of images of their only child, Jack, his recent graduation from boarding school the rare writing day off for his father.

Patterson’s best-known hero is Alex Cross, an African-American D.C. detective with a doctorate in psychology. (Patterson dropped out of the graduate English program at Vanderbilt after a year.) Patterson welcomes the challenge of creating heroes unlike himself: “The more difficult the task, the more unlikely that someone else has done it, which allows it to be fresh.”

He isn’t big on following publishing tradition, or accepted rules about writing. “I don’t care about rules per se. They either work or they don’t work. I’m going to attempt to write a best-selling book,” he says.

When he first started with fiction, “I would write at the top of every chapter, ‘Be there, be there, be there in the scene.’ Feel what the hero is feeling. If you’re being electrocuted, feel that. You can’t be distant. You can’t be watching from another room.”

He hasn’t given much thought to slowing down or taking more than a day off.

“I don’t work for a living. I play. Why would I stop playing?”

He’ll stop when he’s dead? He shrugs. “Maybe.”

Given the fat file of ideas, the army of co-authors, maybe not even then.

After a tour of the garden, the pool, the terrace, the spoils of his fiction, the author returns to his second-floor aerie. The printer has spat out another novel from a co-author, built from his blueprint, and the ferocious industry of Patterson Inc. sparks to life.

Things to Do

BANGOR — Silent auction, yard sale and Pampered Chef event, 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, June 10, Maine Veterans Home’s multipurpose room, 44 Hogan Road, rain or shine. All proceeds benefit Alzheimer’s Walk Team.

BANGOR — “Rock of Ages,” June 9 through July 2, Penobscot Theatre, 131 Main St. Performance times vary. Tickets and information about show-times may be obtained by calling 942-3333 or going to penobscottheatre.org. Tony Award-nominated Broadway musical features hits of the 1980s, including songs from Styx, Journey, Bon Jovi, Pat Benatar, Twisted Sister, Steve Perry, Poison and more.

BANGOR — Derek Volk, author of “Chasing the Rabbit: A Dad’s Life Raising a Son on the Spectrum,” 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 8, Bangor Public Library. Free. bangorpubliclibrary.org.

BANGOR — E-waste drive, 8 a.m.-noon Saturday, June 11, William S. Cohen School parking lot, 304 Garland St. \$7 per carload, \$10 per air conditioner. Benefits Camp Invention Scholarship Fund. Items accepted: televisions of all sizes, computers, monitors, printers, copiers, cell phones, microwave ovens, game consoles, CD and DVD players, fax machines, air conditioners and electronics. 385-7478 or mgladstone@bangorschools.net.

BANGOR — Bangor Historical Society Brown Bag Lunch Series, noon Tuesdays, Isaac Farrar Mansion, Union Street: June 7, “200 Years of the Bangor Fire Department,” Bangor Fire Department; July 12, “Understanding the Declaration of Independence,” Liam Riordan; Aug. 2, “Maine at Gettysburg,” Brian Swartz; Sept. 13, “Then and Now with the Bangor Police Department,” Bangor PD; Oct. 4, “Hail to the Chiefs: Presidents in Bangor,” Dick Shaw. 942-1900.

BANGOR — Food Is Medicine Forum: Addressing Food Security for a Healthier Maine, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday, June 7, Cross Insurance Center, 515 Main St. Registration required. Free. 973-6564.

BATH — North of Nashville duo Jay Basiner and Andrew Martelle reunite for performance, 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 10, Chocolate Church, 804 Washington St. Tickets \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door. chocolatechurchcharts.org.

BELFAST — Inaugural Belfast Has Pride parade and festival, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, June 11, beginning at Waterfall Arts, 256 High St., and ending at Steamboat Landing Park, 34 Commercial St. Bounce castle, dunk tank, snow cones, face painting, live music, drag performances, food, and more. belfasthaspride@gmail.com or Facebook page Belfast Has Pride.

BELFAST — Workshop on Photoshop for artists, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday through Sunday, June 10-12, Waterfall Arts. \$200. 338-2222 or waterfallarts.org.

BELFAST — Opening reception for 14th annual Festival of Art, 6-8 p.m. Thursday, June 9, University of Maine Hutchinson Center, 80 Belmont Ave. Features work of 139 Maine artists, music of Belfast Bay Fiddlers, light refreshments and wine bar. Opportunity to purchase artwork, meet artists. 223-4459 or belfast-seniorcollege.com.

BREWER — Pop-up store presentation from Maine SNAP-Ed educator, noon-1 p.m. Thursday, June 7, Brewer Public Library. Participants will receive free Hannaford gift cards and other gifts. Registration required, space limited. 989-7943.

BREWER — Auditions for roles in “The Little Mermaid” summer theater camp production, 4-7 p.m. Wednesday, June 8, Next Generation, 39 Center St. 989-7100.

BREWER — Singer-songwriter Toney Rocks, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, June 10, Next Generation Theatre, 39 Center St. 989-7100.

BREWER — Bangor Singles Club dances, 8 p.m.-midnight Fridays, Brewer Eagles Club, 22 Atlantic Ave.: Country Mist, June 10; Wild Horse, June 17; Steve and the Good Old Boys, June 24. Marilyn, 827-5751.

DEER ISLE — End-of-session self-guided tour of artists’ and faculty work, 7 p.m. Thursday, June 9, Haystack Gateway Auditorium. Followed by auction to benefit Haystack scholarship fund. Silent auction and item preview, 8 p.m.; live auction, 8:30 p.m. 348-2306, haystack@haystack-mtn.org or haystack-mtn.org.

DEXTER — Bean-hole bean and ham supper, 5-6:30 p.m. Saturday, June 11, Wayside Grange, 851 North Dexter Road (Route 23). Includes coleslaw, bread, desserts, lemonade and coffee. Live music. Takeout meals available after 6:30 p.m. (if anything is left). \$7. Chester at 924-5711.

DOVER-FOXCROFT — Brown Bag Lunch Series, 12:30-1:30 p.m. Thursday, June 9, Thompson Free Library. Guest speaker Jackie Robinson, fourth-generation farmer from Leaves and Blooms Greenhouse in Dover-Foxcroft, talking about eating seasonally and four-season farming. Bring a lunch. 564-3350 or df@thompson.lib.me.us.

NORTHEAST HARBOR — Dr. Steven Kassels, author of “Addiction on Trial: Tragedy in Downeast Maine,” hosting a discussion, 5-6:30 p.m. Thursday, June 9, Northeast Harbor Library. 244-4012.

PORTLAND — Downeast Soul Coalition concert, 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 10, St. Lawrence Arts. Tickets, stlawrencearts.org.

SOUTHWEST HARBOR — Author Kate Braestrup talking about her new memoir, “Anchor and Flares: A Memoir of Motherhood, Hope and Service,” 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 7, Southwest Harbor Public Library. 244-7065.

WESTBROOK — Westbrook Police Department Coffee with a Cop, 8:30-10 a.m.

Friday, June 10, Starlight Cafe, Westbrook Community Center, 426 Bridge St. Community members invited to meet with Westbrook police officers, discuss community issues and drink coffee. Officer Joel Loranger, jloranger@

westbrook.me.us.

WINTERPORT — Open house to view Winterport Union Meeting House’s newly completed lighting project, refreshments and silent auction, 6-9 p.m. Friday, June 10, at the meet-

ing house. 223-4091, Fitz1357@roadrunner.com or winterportmaine.gov/winterportmeetinghouse.

For a complete listing of calendar items or to submit your event, visit www.bangordailynews.com.

Tuesday prime time

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM
BROADCAST	2 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	America's Got Talent The auditions continue. (N)	Maya & Marty (N)	News					
	4 CBC Rick Mercer 22 Minutes	Just for Laughs	The National (N)						
	5 CBS Big Bang	Broke Girl NCIS (HD)	NCIS: New Orleans	Person of Interest (N)	News				
	52 CW Family Guy	Family Guy The Flash (HD)	Containment (HD)	News Seinfeld	Cougar				
	6 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	America's Got Talent The auditions continue. (N)	Maya & Marty (N)	News					
	7 ABC Wheel Jeopardy!	The Bachelorette (N) (HD)	20/20 (N) (HD)	News	Big Bang	Big Bang			
	WAGM FOX The Insider Ent. Tonight	Hotel Hell (N)	Coupled (N) (HD)	News	Big Bang	Big Bang			
	8 ABC Wheel Jeopardy!	The Bachelorette (N) (HD)	20/20 (N) (HD)	News					
	MPBN PBS PBS NewsHour (N) (HD)	The Big Band Years (My Music) Big Band hits.	Genealogy Roadshow	Orman					
	9 IND Person of Interest (N) (HD)	Movie	News-Lisa	CTV News	Daily Show				
KIDS	13 CBS Ent. Tonight	The Insider NCIS (HD)	NCIS: New Orleans	Person of Interest (N)	News				
	22 FOX Mod Fam	Mod Fam Hotel Hell (N)	Coupled (N) (HD)	FOX 22 News at 10 (N)	Walk:Dead				
	33 IND M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	Andy Griffith Andy Griffith	Happy Days Gilligan Isle	Hogan Hero Hogan Hero	C. Burnett			
	38 IND Big Bang	Big Bang	The Walking Dead	The Walking Dead	WBZ News (N) (HD)	Seinfeld			
LEARN	HIST Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	Cars	Top Gear (N)	Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	Car Hunters	
	DISC Deadliest Catch	Deadliest Catch: On Deck	Deadliest Catch (N)	Deadliest Catch (N)	(:03) Dark Woods Justice	Catch			
	TLC Little People, Big World	Little People, Big World	Little People, Big World	Little People, Big World	(:01) My Giant Life (N)	Little People			
SPORTS	A&E The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	** Walking Tall (2004, Action) The Rock. (PG-13)	The Rock. (PG-13)	The First 48			
	ANPL Killer Hornet Invasion	Killer Dragons	Killer Dragons	Deadliest Place on Earth	9-1-1	9-1-1	(:03) Rabil		
	CSNE SportsNet Early	Quick	The Baseball Show		Sports	SportsNet	Sports		
NEWS	ESPN (6:00) SportsCenter (N)	College Softball	College Softball		SportsCenter (N) (L)				
	ESPN2 MLB Baseball New York Mets at Pittsburgh Pirates. From PNC Park in Pittsburgh.	World Series of Fighting 5 From Atlantic City, N.J.	World Series of Fighting 5 From Atlantic City, N.J.	World Series of Fighting 2	WNBA Basketball: Liberty at Sparks				
	NBCSPN World Series of Fighting 5	Behind B Bruins	Pitch	Red Sox	MLB Baseball: Red Sox at Giants				
VARIETY	CNBC Shark Tank	Shark Tank	Shark Tank	Shark Tank	West Texas	Shark Tank			
	CNN Super Tuesday 5	Super Tuesday 5	Super Tuesday 5	Super Tuesday 5	Super Tuesday 5	Super Tue			
	FNC Greta Van Susteren	The O'Reilly Factor (N)	The Kelly File (N) (L)	Hannity (N)	Election HQ				
PREMIUM	AMC (6:30) *** Hitch (2005) (ESP) Will Smith. (PG-13)	Feed the Beast	Feed the Beast (N)	Feed the					
	BRV Below Deck	Below Deck	Below Deck	Below Deck	Below Deck	Charm			
	CMT Last Man Last Man	Last Man Last Man	Last Man Last Man	** Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit (1993) Whoopi Goldberg. (PG)					
SHOW	COM Futurama	Futurama	Tosh.0	(:24) Tosh.0	Daniel Tosh	Tosh.0 (N)	Not Safe	Tosh.0	
	E! E! News (N)	Botched (N)	Botched (N)	Botched (N)	Botched	E! News			
	FOOD Chopped	Chopped Junior (N)	Chopped Junior (N)	Chopped	Chopped (N)	Chopped			
STARZ	FX The Hangover Part II (R)	*** Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues (2013) Will Ferrell.	Anchorman 2						
	GAC Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	Log Cabin	
	HALL Last Man Last Man	Last Man Last Man	Last Man Last Man	The Middle	The Middle	The Middle	The Middle	Golden Girls	
STZENC	HGTV Fixer Upper	Fixer Upper	Fixer Upper	Fixer Upper	Hunters	Hunters Int'l	Fixer Upper		
	LIFE Celebrity Wife Swap	Celebrity Wife Swap	Celebrity Wife Swap	Celebrity Wife Swap	(:02) Celebrity Wife Swap	(:02) Woman			
	MTV Catfish: The TV Show	Scream	Scream	Scream	** A Haunted House (2013, Comedy) (R)				
HBO	OXY Bad Girls Club	Bad Girls Club	Bad Girls Club	Virtually in Love (N)	Bad Girls Club	Virtually			
	SPIKE Out of Time ** Four Brothers (2005, Crime Drama) Mark Wahlberg. (R)	** The Book of Eli (2010) (R)							
	SYFY (6:30) ** The Time Traveler's Wife (2009) (PG-13)	** Warm Bodies (2013) Nicholas Hoult. (PG-13)	Frequency						
MAX	TBN Supernat. Potters	Trinity	Everyday	Prince	Cornelius	Praise the Lord			
	TBS Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Big Bang	Big Bang	Big Bang	Big Bang	Separation Anxiety (N)	Conan (N)	
	TCM Murderer Lives at	** Jigsaw (1961, Suspense) Jack Warner. (NR)	** Brighton Rock (1947) (NR)						
SHOW	TRAVEL (5:45) Duets (:40) *** The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999) (ESP) Matt Damon. (R)	The Death of "Superman Lives"							
	TNT Castle	Castle	Castle	Castle	Castle	CSI: NY			
	TRU Imp. Jokers Imp. Jokers	Imp. Jokers	Imp. Jokers	Imp. Jokers	Imp. Jokers	Hack	Hack	Hack	
STARZ	TVL Andy Griffith Andy Griffith	(:12) George Lopez	George	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	King	
	USA Mod Fam	Mod Fam	Mod Fam	Mod Fam	Mod Fam	Chrisley	Impressions	Mod Fam	
	VH1 Love & Hip Hop: Atlanta	Love & Hip Hop: Atlanta	** Purple Rain (1984, Musical) Prince, Apollonia Kotero. (R)						
STARZ	WGN-A ** Tears of the Sun (2003, Action) Bruce Willis, Cole Hauser. (R)	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	
	HBO (:15) ** MI-5 (2015) Kit Harington. A former MI5 agent probes the disappearance of an operative. (R)	Game of Thrones Arya makes a plan. (ESP)	Silicon Valley REAL Sports With Bryant (ESP)	Gumbel (ESP)					
	MAX (6:10) ** The Specialist	** Selfless (2015) Ryan Reynolds. A dying man's consciousness is transferred to another body. (PG-13)	** The Visit (2015, Suspense) (ESP) Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould. (PG-13)						
STARZ	SHOW Brad Williams Iverson (2014) Allen Iverson becomes an 11-time NBA All-Star. (NR)	60 Minutes Sports (N)	Penny Dreadful Vanessa meets a new ally.	60 Minutes Sports (N)					
	STARZ (5:40) Rocky (1976) (PG)	Girlfriend Expr.	(:15) * Wild Hogs (2007, Comedy) (ESP) Tim Allen. Four friends take a motorcycle road trip. (PG-13)	Outlander An Englishman arrives with information.	Girlfriend Expr.				
	STZENC (6:10) *** Whiplash (2014) Miles Teller. (R)	**** Taxi Driver (1976) Robert De Niro. A psychotic New York cabbie unleashes his rage on pimps.							