



Bestsellers Inc

Private India – A Collaboration between
James Patterson & Ashwin Sanghi

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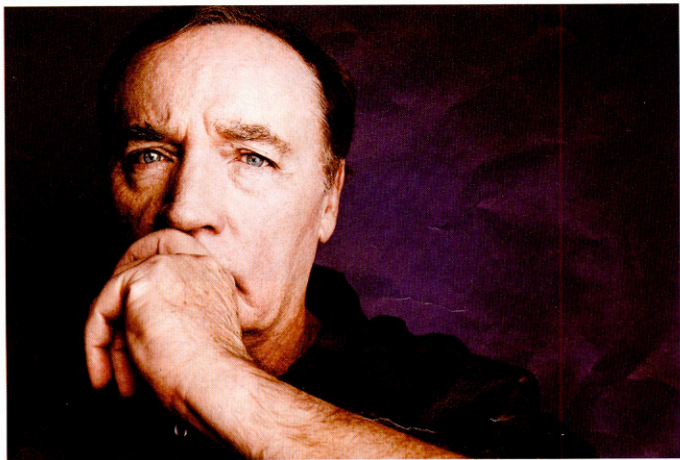
James Patterson has written close to 100 novels (and still counting) since 1976, and has sold approximately 260 million copies worldwide. He holds *The New York Times* and *Guinness World Record* for the largest number of best-selling hardcover fiction titles by a single author—at last count it was a total of 76. He is also the first author to achieve 10 million eBook sales. His books account for 1 in every 17 hardcovers sold in America, and he is the world's top-selling author since 2001, eclipsing J.K. Rowling and Stephenie Meyer. With eight of his books already translated into films or TV series, he is still shopping around Hollywood for a miscellany of projects. He has also won numerous awards including the *Edgar*, the *BCA Mystery Guild's Thriller of the Year*, the *International Thriller of the Year* award and the *Reader's Digest Reader's Choice Award*. The numbers

and accolade all add up to big business and make him one of the busiest and most successful writers around. And even though Stephen King berated Patterson's thrillers as 'dopey' and called him a 'terrible writer', in recent times Patterson's novels have out sold those by King, John Grisham and Dan Brown put together. He publishes a prodigious number of books each year, tallying anywhere from three to thirteen. He isn't restricted by genre and covers the gamut from thrillers and nonfiction to children and young adult fiction. And he is best known for the unputdownable quality of his plot-heavy novels, and his colloquial yet captivating storytelling style.

Patterson is no longer the sort of author who toils away on one manuscript at a time; instead, he's in charge of his mini-writing-empire where his stories and ideas are further fleshed out

by a team of co-writers—a sort of publishing house in itself. This American thriller writer is at the heart of the book buying consumerist culture and has his market hooked—he understands the need for racy formulaic narratives with the necessary red herrings and twists, but also recognizes the need for fun, entertaining and original storytelling. His cabal of writers works closely with him and has created some of the most memorable pulp fiction series. From the consummately popular *Alex Cross* novels to the *Women's Murder Club*, Patterson's thrillers have left his readers at the edge of their seats, constantly hungry and needy for more. And the past few decades have seen the 67-year-old author diversify beyond thrillers and into the young adult and children's categories as well.

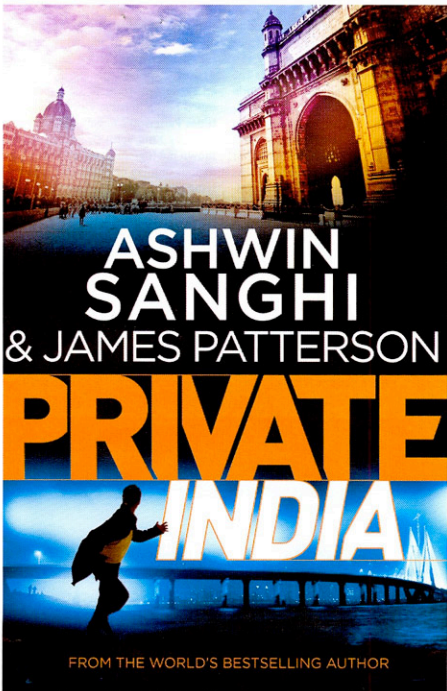
But what piqued *Platform's* curiosity was his latest collaboration



with another thriller writer closer to home—Ashwin Sanghi. It all began when Patterson was looking to further develop his *Private* series. This is one of the most popular thriller series worldwide and is based around the exclusive detective agency called 'Private', led by the heroic Jack Morgan who has offices across the globe. Titles within the series include *Private*, *Private Number 1 Suspect*, *Private Games*, *Private L.A.*, *Private London*, *Private Berlin* and *Private Oz*. With this series, the Patterson-brand gets to infiltrate markets across the world and it wasn't long before India Inc. made its way into their plan. According to Patterson it was the obvious choice, 'Yes indeed, India with its vibrant and chaotic cities, and rich history and heritage; there could be no better place to set *Private's* next adventure.'

When they struck upon the idea of *Private India* (the latest novel in the collection) he had to find a co-writer who could bring the right Indian nuances into the tale. Soon a series of recommendations came his way and as Patterson recalls, "Ashwin Sanghi's name was suggested and with his broad historical knowledge and love for a fast-paced plot, there could be no better writing partner."

Sanghi is of course, part of a rare breed of Indian writers—with the soaring success of his self-published debut *The Rozabal Line*, he was lapped up by publishers and *Westland* went on to publish *Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*. With three bestselling thrillers and a film deal with *UTV-Disney*, the *Crossword* award winning Sanghi has made his mark felt this side of town. He sees the collaboration as a natural fit, 'Given the fact that all my previous titles have been thrillers with short chapters, a compelling pace, and unexpected hooks every few pages—traits that are amply evident in Patterson's writing, the fit seemed a natural one. But all my thrillers so far come with a historical, theological or mythological backdrop. So while this collaboration is an extension of what I



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have already been doing—writing thrillers—the modern and contemporary backdrop was new. This book is a perfect blend of my style with that of his.’

For Sanghi, the process was new but he eased into it in no time, ‘James provided a guideline as well as an existing set of characters that needed to be developed in the story. Using this, I developed the plot outline. We discussed it in detail and froze on it after amendments. I then proceeded to write the first draft. The final draft was written by him. All of this happened with periodic interactions over email. Once both James and I were done with the story, the editors at *Random House* took over.’

But for Patterson, who is no novice to collaboration, it was all in a day’s work, ‘I currently have about 25 manuscripts and screenplays in my office that are works in progress. I have been writing collaboratively for some time. The way the co-writing works is that I will write the original outline and then the co-writers write the first draft and then I write all the subsequent drafts. I write every day. I start at 5:30 in the morning and don’t stop until lunch.’

But how does the Patterson writing-factory function, how does it churn out so many stories and plots year after year? Apparently, there is no vast business plan and strategy, or a team brainstorming on future bestsellers. According to the veteran writer there is just a folder of ideas, ‘I look through the ideas in my folder, I pick a few I’d want to write about and then cull them down until I know what the story is going to be. What inspires me is when they occur to me and I go, wow, now that’s a neat idea for a story. I don’t know how to describe the process, but I have to see the whole story in my head. Crime details and the rest fall into place later after I’ve figured out all the main twists and turns.’

The beauty of Patterson’s work is that his readers keep coming back for more and more and more. And that quality of addictiveness is integral to successful pulp fiction, and few maintain

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the sort of consistency his work does. According to him it’s an easy procedure, ‘Some of the rules I follow when writing my novels include: A) Writing stories the way people tell them. B) Make reading the book an “experience”. C) I keep my chapters short. D) I always outline the book before starting to write it. E) I am always open to change during the writing process. F) I write with confidence and G) I know who I am writing for and what they want.’

But according to Sanghi, the rules are slightly different, ‘There are a few simple rules that constitute the Patterson formula: amplify character traits—make them larger than life; eliminate fluff; build twists and suspense ever so often; never compromise on pace; build conflict until the very end. There are some chapters in this book that are just about a paragraph long. It stems from the Patterson style of saying absolutely nothing that does not advance the plot.’

Private India, of course, follows all the Patterson-ian principles, and the plot contains the right elements of Indian exotica and is, of course a nail-biting thriller from start to end. It is based in Mumbai where seemingly unconnected people are strangled to death in a ritualistic sort of way. In walks Santosh Wagh, head of the agency’s India bureau to stop the killer from striking again. And with the clock ticking he finds himself battling the city’s most powerful ganglord and a not so pious godman. He also discovers an even greater danger that might lead to the destruction of the *Private* enterprise alongside the lives of thousands of Mumbai citizens. With Sanghi’s intense research abilities and Patterson’s unputdownability, we’re anticipating another bestseller.

Releasing this month, *Private India* is unique, since this is the first time an international and national bestseller are coming together in a collaboration of this scale. So here’s looking forward to more growth and development in the world of pulp fiction and thriller writing in India. p