

Insider SPOTLIGHT

Giants of the genre in an explosive mix

JAMES PATTERSON WAS UP FOR THE CHALLENGE OF FINISHING A LATE MICHAEL CRICHTON BOOK

Kerry Parnell

What do you get if you combine thriller kings Michael Crichton and James Patterson?

Answer: an explosive blockbuster.

It's fitting then, that the title of the biggest release of the year, is *Eruption*, following the story of an enormous volcanic eruption that threatens the existence of the world.

The late Michael Crichton – who penned *Jurassic Park* – had been working on his passion project, set in Hawaii, for decades, before he died in 2008, aged 66. When his bereaved wife Sherri Crichton found his manuscript, she initially set it to one side, then presented it to Patterson, to finish it.

Sherri and James tell *The Saturday Telegraph* how their collaboration came about.

"After Michael passed away, it took me a while to get into his real work. But when I did, I came across this manuscript. This was incredibly special, because it was a partial-manuscript that Michael had talked about for years – he was always talking about volcanoes," Sherri says, over Zoom from LA, adding the couple even honeymooned in

Pompeii, where he "was teaching me about volcanoes".

"When I came upon this book, it was so emotional, because I really could feel Michael's voice present," she said.

Sherri then undertook an exhaustive search to piece together all his research. "It took years until I felt comfortable I had all the pieces. It was a lot of research – there was research about research," she says.

"So, then I was like, you know, who do you get to finish this, because it's so special and so meaningful? I thought, how amazing would it be if Jim would be open to it and for these two storytelling giants to come together on the page," she says, adding she didn't know if James was, "even a Michael Crichton fan, would he take on something like this?"

Fortunately, all of those answers were yes, she says.

They don't get any bigger than James Patterson – the 77-year-old has sold more than 425 million books and created everything from *Alex Cross* to the *Women's Murder Club*. But he had no hesitation taking on this project, he says, from his Florida base.

"I said, 'Let me read it', then I said, 'I'm in'," he says.

"I'm a huge Michael Crichton fan. I've read all his novels and nonfiction."

He says he was gripped by the story

and had to know how it turned out.

"I loved what he had written," he says.

"My joke with Sherri was, 'I've got to write it, because I gotta find out how the hell it ends, man!'"

The pair connected well together.

"Sherri lost Michael and I lost the first love of my life when I was 35, to a brain tumour," he says, talking of his girlfriend Jane Blanchard, who he was in a relationship with before he met his wife, Susan.

James, who regularly collaborates with other writers, as well as big names, such as Bill Clinton and Dolly Parton, says the working process was enjoyable.

"Her feedback was better than most," he says.

"She kept reminding me to keep the dual storyline working and also to be respectful of Hawaii."

So, did he take on Michael's voice, or use his own? "Oh no, we wanted it to be seamless," he says, "we wanted it to feel like a Crichton," adding the challenge is to spot the point "where Michael stopped writing" and he begins.

Set in Hawaii, the story follows action-man scientist John "Mac" MacGregor, as he battles an imminent volcanic eruption combined with a secret military

operation. The fast-paced, high-action page-turner is already destined for the big screen, unsurprisingly, considering Crichton's other Hawaii-based franchise, *Jurassic Park*, has grossed more than \$4.9bn.

The response from Hollywood was "overwhelmingly positive," says Sherri. "We think we have found someone really fabulous to elevate this genre."

"With this movie, you'll feel the heat, you'll smell the sulphur, you'll really feel the danger in a realistic way," says James.

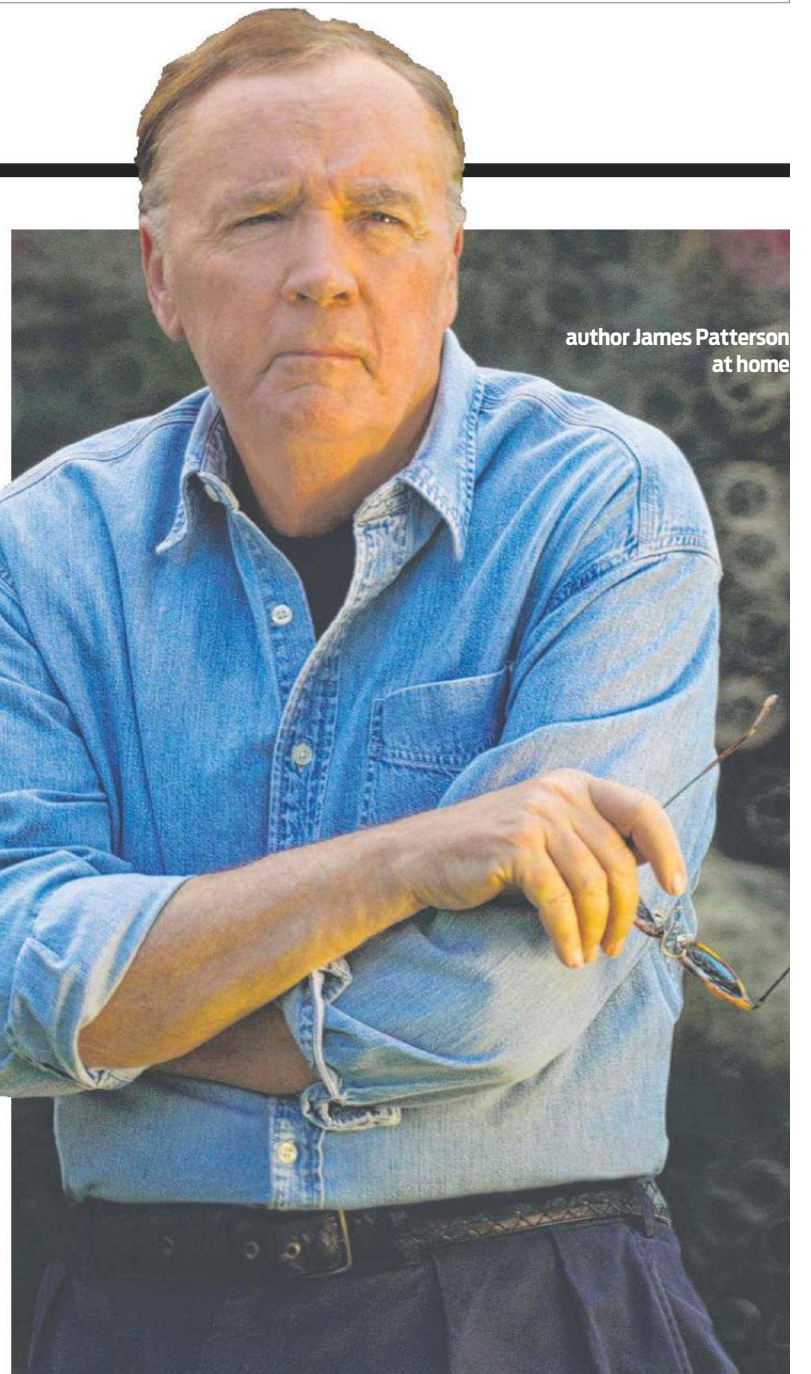
The big question is, what Michael would have thought of the finished product?

"I think he would be really proud of it," Sherri says, adding she showed it

to her and Michael's son, John Michael Jr, and Michael's daughter Taylor, from a previous marriage.

"The two critics that I want the most input from, think it's great," Sherri says. "It's a great combination of Crichton and Patterson and what Jim did so well, is keep that science in, so you walk away smarter."

"Just reading his research I'm smarter," says James. "I tested my IQ and it's two points higher than when I started." ***Eruption*, by Michael Crichton and James Patterson, \$34.99, is out now**



author James Patterson at home

Use Men's Health Month to change your life for good

Justin Williams

Everyone in life is dealt a card, and the fact is we're all responsible for how we manage that particular reality or circumstance.

For some of us it can be an extreme life event or situation. For others, it may be less noticeable, but still valid. Either way, every single one of us is faced with challenges.

This month is Men's Health Month – and equipping ourselves with the knowledge, awareness, and tools to handle our lot in life is vital for ongoing stability and growth. In fact, it's never been more important than it is right now.

Having endured a traumatic card as a young child, that definitely derailed that journey.

Not being aware enough or suitably equipped to manage

that life experience, meant that I progressively displayed energies, attitudes, and behaviours that had monumental consequences on myself and my loved ones.

I have learnt that life requires constant management – we are never done. We will have moments of ecstasy, periods of stability, and passages of challenge.

It's how we manage those various emotions that determine our progress.

Vulnerability is my super strength. I believe that getting comfortable being uncomfortable is the most powerful form of personal growth.

Understanding that everyone is in similar situations from a mindset perspective, allows you to be free of misconceptions and strong enough to manage any situation presented.

Self-reflection is a most powerful tool. Awareness, accountability, and understanding will follow.

Self care means you're at your peak, therefore can manage any situation or challenge faced, to the best of your ability.

This can look different for everyone. I started by surrounding myself with like-minded people and removing the toxic influences in my life. A small, safe, and secure circle can be life changing.

Strong in body, strength in mind. The approach is simple but most effective. This is why I'm a trainer, and this is why I've launched the Move Mentor Academy App.

It provides individualised programs for strength training and nutrition but also, and more importantly, promotes positive high performance habits through mind training.



Justin Williams.

There is also a strong emphasis on adolescent mentoring and guidance as I wish I'd learnt these skills and tools as a young male.

We are all a work in progress and the continued attempt to improve is vital.

June is Men's Health Month, so it's a timely reminder to talk to each other. To listen to each other. To reach out – which can be harder for men than it is for women. I know what changing my mental frame of mind and surrounding myself with positivity has done for me. Do yourself a favour and allow yourself the time and space to reflect, be vulnerable and take steps to embrace change.

I promise you, it didn't just change my life, it saved it. **Justin Williams is the owner, trainer and mental health advocate at The Move Mentor Academy**