



Hawke

Ted Bell

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A James Bond for the 21st century, Alex Hawke is suave, sexy, smart, wealthy, and deadly. And he's got the bloodlines to prove it--the direct descendant of a famous English pirate, the British secret agent is back in the Caribbean where his ancestor once amassed a legendary fortune and where, decades ago, his own parents were brutally tortured and murdered for a secret Alex, to this day, doesn't know he has in his possession. What brings Alex back to the scene of a crime he only vaguely remembers witnessing as a child is a mission to find and recover a stealth submarine that's gone missing less than a hundred miles from the American mainland, complete with 40 nuclear warheads and a rogue terrorist's finger on the countdown button. It's a hoary premise, but Bell makes it work with skillful plotting, quick characterizations, and a lively hero who deserves a sequel, not to mention the big screen treatment. --*Jane Adams*

Hawke Details

Date : Published (first published June 3rd 2003)

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Author : Ted Bell

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From Reader Review Hawke for online ebook

Jeanne says

Started reading the Alexander Hawke series with books 6 & 7, "Warlord" and "Phantom". Decided to go back to the beginning and since "Hawke" was only available in abridged version on audio CD, actually read this one. What a great story, with a central plot, but many "sub-stories" building up to the ending. Love, revenge, fortune seeking, power, friendship and hidden treasure--this book has it all! I usually like a "big" ending to my stories, but this book had so much of everything I enjoy along the way that I really didn't need the "ta-da" at the end! 8 out of 10 for me.

Kurt Young says

This is the first novel in a series about Alex Hawke, a billionaire Brit, descended from pirates, who also happens to be a former fighter pilot, SAS operative and known ladies man. Apparently it was a best seller. It must have been the only book published the year it was a best seller.

I've seen blurbs that liken it to James Bond. It more closely resembles what Maxwell Smart might believe his life to be like. I originally read the second book in the series: "Assassin." "Assassin," was a passable thriller, and it's clear that Ted Bell not only advanced as a writer, but also received much better editing help. One of the fun parts of book 2, was the casual references to past Hawke exploits. I picked up "Hawke," eager to read of them.

Unfortunately you don't get to. Bell, simply tells you, that in the past his hero stopped a diamond smuggling ring that ran all the way to Slobodan Milocivic. Also, he escaped an Iraqi prisoner hospital carrying an American pilot. No stories; just oh, by the way mentions.

The plot itself full of holes, helped along by sudden appearances of crucial acquaintances from Hawke's extraordinary past.

A bonus: Stupid factual errors that no editor has bothered to correct even though I read the 5th paperback printing. Example: In the climactic battle Navy F/A 18's are firing AIM-9 Sidewinder missles at the bad guys' lair. The AIM-9 is an air-to-air missile that's been around for 50 years.

ElaineY says

REVIEW OF ABRIDGED AUDIOBOOK; DECEMBER 8, 2015

Narrator: John Shea

I've never been a fan of the James Bond movies and have never read Clive Cussler but I was looking for another action-thriller series with a likeable, *attractive* hero and decided to give Ted Bell a try, even though the MC is a Brit (I don't like listening to a Brit accent book).

What a blast this book was. The only unfortunate thing about this audiobook is that it's abridged. There

doesn't seem to be an unabridged version so I bought the e-book to check what I was missing. What was omitted was interesting enough that several times I paused the audio and read the ebook. But John Shea's narrating skills are superb and in the end, I put my Kindle away and just enjoyed Shea exclusively.

I did not have any of the complaints that the 1-star reviewers had about Hawke's character or about the plot. On the contrary, Lord Hawke is exactly what I was looking for and I found the plot different from my usual, current thriller fare. The Prologue takes us back to when Hawke was seven years old and witnesses the brutal murders of his parents on board their yacht, the Seahawke, on its maiden voyage in the Bahamas.

The young Hawke is so traumatized by this that he blocks it out but suffers recurring nightmares well into his adulthood. When the main story begins, Hawke is in his late thirties, has taken over the reins of the family business and enlarged its coffers. Somewhere, somehow (and I don't care) in-between running the giant conglomerate with worldwide diversified interests, Hawke runs covert missions for the UK and the US.

Book 1 takes Hawke back to the Bahamas on board the Blackhawke, whose stewards were recruited from the SAS, SBS (the UK equivalent of the US Navy SEALs) with my favorite being Stoke, who is American and ex-NYPD. Before that, Stokes was a member of SEAL Team Six. Yeah, I love the whole over-the-top thing. Absolutely love it:)

Hawke's assignment is to find out who has the Borzoi, a boomerang-shaped Russian-made stealth submarine carrying 40 warheads, and get it back. This leads him back to the Caribbean, and gives him his chance at vengeance for that childhood terror.

I've already started Book 2, Assassin, and enjoying the tidbits about Hawke.

The Narration: John Shea played a major part in my enjoyment of this book. He is so talented with accents and switches from one to another with ease, from Stoke's African-American to Madame Secretary of State back to Hawke's Queen's English. Oh, and I mustn't forget the Cubans. Shea does them all marvelously.

Don't go into the series expecting a 100% serious espionage thriller, in which case the 1-star reviews should be heeded. At the same time, the violence was more graphic than I was expecting so this isn't a mild thriller either. Thankfully, the crucifixion and gutting of Hawke's father took place off-page.

I haven't had this much fun with a thriller ever:)

Luca H. says

The first book in the Alex Hawke series, Hawke is an action-packed thriller taking millionaire Hawke on a world-saving adventure against psycho Cuban revolutionaries armed with a stealth Russian submarine. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a quick thrilling book for a weekend or two.

Kyle says

Hawke is very much like a big budget summer blockbuster movie; it's a fast, fun over-the-top ride but lacks any real characters or substance. The character of Alex Hawke seems like a laundry list of young boy's

hero's: he's a Naval commander. A fighter pilot. A successful business man. A highly trained military operative. He's a spy for the British government. He's a spy for the American government. He's filthy rich. He has the title of "Lord." Oh, and his descendants were pirates. Hawke is more caricature than character. I also found that all of the characters were written a lot older than they were supposed to be. Right from the beginning, the way Hawke (and the other main characters) acted and spoke, I got the feeling that they were all in their 50's, but mid-way through the book there's reference to Hawke being in his 30's, which just didn't ring true to me. Thankfully (this being a book) I could just ignore that fact and keep on imagining all of the characters in their 50's.

Despite my issues with the characters, I still enjoyed the book for what it was. A fun, fast-paced thriller that's easy to read; i.e. the ideal summer beach book. It's entertaining and doesn't require a lot of effort.

Alex Gherzo says

Ted Bell's Hawke wants to be a big, fun adventure in the Bondian tradition but it ends up being a thoroughly mediocre slog, nowhere near as fun or epic as it seems to think it is. Alexander Hawke is a wealthy English lord who regularly goes on grandiose spy adventures for the British and American governments. His latest mission is to discover who is in possession of a Russian super-sub capable of, apparently, single-handedly decimating the entire U.S. Navy. A coup d'état in Cuba, an down-and-out American naval officer, a decades-old treasure map and a tragedy from Hawke's past all figure in to the story.

Spoilers...

There are lots of problems with Hawke, but I think first and foremost is the plotting. Hawke feels a lot slower than it should, and a big part of why is that Bell doesn't seem to understand pacing very well. There are scenes that should be done in one chapter that are spread out over several because Bell feels the need to split them up with other goings on. I understand the impetus to spend a certain amount of time with everyone, but Bell does it in such a way that it breaks the momentum and makes certain scenes drag. Castro's kidnapping, for example, goes on forever. Additionally, Alex Hawke does very little to move the plot forward. For the entire middle section of the book he's mostly relaxing with Vicky. There's no spying or anything going on, just tanning, swimming and talking about feelings (although I did enjoy the sex on the beach). It's his friends and employees who are doing all the investigating. It makes it hard to see Hawke as the swashbuckling hero he's intended to be when he allows so many swashes to go unbuckled.

Then there's the scope of the story, which feels small when it should be epic. Cuba has been taken over by its military leaders! A sci-fi submarine is waiting to destroy any U.S. fleet that comes near it! A biological agent has been hidden in Guantanamo by a turncoat officer! This should be huge! But it's not. The coup d'état takes minutes to implement and the effects are never really felt. The submarine unleashes its awesome might but once, and it destroys... a fishing boat. The attack on Gitmo, while a bit more successful, is marred by the

idiotic -- and flat-out annoying -- characterization of Gomer. The sense of danger never quite feels real, and as a result the adventure is much less fun.

Also infuriating is the writing style. Ted Bell just isn't that great a prose writer. He repeats words very often in close proximity to each other (a bugaboo of mine). He isn't very adept at describing anything exciting, which makes the action scenes dull. But worst of all is his dialogue. He wants Hawke to be witty like James Bond, but he doesn't know how to write wit so everything Hawke says ends up being either corny or just flat. The same holds true for the other characters, but Hawke gets most of what Bell seems to think are the best lines, so he comes out the most scathed.

Now, I didn't hate the book. I liked the air of fun it created, even if it couldn't really deliver on it. The idea of Hawke as a hero in the mold of James Bond or Indiana Jones is very appealing. Throughout the book, Bell has different characters reflect on past Alex Hawke adventures and that works really well in creating this adventure-serial world. I also really liked some of the supporting characters, particularly Vicky and Stokely, with Conch following close behind them. I preferred them greatly to the rather dull Congreve and Ross (Bell seems to do better with American characters than Brits; seeing as he's American himself, that isn't overly surprising in hindsight, though it's a bit problematic since he decided to make the hero of his books an Englishman). I also really liked Rodrigo, a villain very much in the Ian Fleming tradition. Unfortunately, not only is he just a henchman (serving much less-interesting masters) but he is barely present. Luckily the ending seems to suggest he'll show up again down the road.

And I think I will investigate that road further. I was far less than impressed with this book, but I've read that the writing gets much better as the series goes on, so I'm willing to give it another chance. There is a lot of potential in the setup, but Bell really needs to up his game from here on out.

Nick says

Where to begin. I foolishly picked up the whole book after reading the kindle sample. It was 50% tripe, 25% fun, 20% interesting and 5% wrong.

To begin, Alex Hawke (Lord Alex, my apologies) is a British Aristocrat who is also able to fly f-14 Tomcats off Royal Navy ships, was a member of the navy version of the SAS, is an accomplished pilot and is also a multi millionaire with a ship (Blackhawke of course) which holds a flying boat that looks like a Spitfire (Kittyhawke naturally) and a speed boat that can outrun almost everything (Nighthawke). He also has a parrot named Sniper that warns him of anything bad happening and a treasure map from his ancient ancestor, the notorious pirate Blackhawke.

The action when it happened was not terrible, what was bad though was the characters. The token black man, Stokely, actually talked as such. "You done gone goofed now boy". This was one of many. The love interest was a doctor and had long luscious locks, hell, even the DOCTOR on Blackhawke (the boat not the pirate), a minor role, was the identical twin of the reigning Miss Denmark.

It was silly, it was wrong (a Glock pistol does not have a safety latch to toy with, and Sidewinder missiles cannot attack ground targets as they are air-to-air missiles), it was overly oriented toward action which dragged in the middle of the book, it was cheesy as all hell and yet, somehow, stupidly, it worked.

Although if I read a book where someone says "suh" instead of sir one more time...

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

Today's book is given to you by the letter "C." Cheesy, campy, cartoony and cliche-ridden. We meet Lord Alexander Hawke, the "hero" of this novel in the prologue when he's seven-years-old. Pirates board his family yacht in search of a treasure map. Apparently a descendent of the original owner of the treasure *centuries* ago just happens to catch wind that the descendent of the privateer that supposedly stole it is sailing on his yacht, and Alex's father, who doesn't *know* this nevertheless thinks to put the treasure map into his son's pocket before hiding him when he suspects there are intruders aboard. Quel coincidence! Alex watches while pirates festooned with a spider tattoo that spouts a sprinkling of cartoon villain Spanish murders his parents. The orphan is then raised by his grandfather and grows up "a expert in the art of blowing things up and killing people silently with a knife or one's bare hands."

When we next see Alex all grown up, he takes on three punks, breaking a clavicle of one who blocks his way and taking on him and his friends with relish. Oh, and the villain? He's lost all color in his iris because he was held in the darkness too long. See what I mean about cartoony and campy? Also, too many exclamation points. And much, much too much testosterone.

Kara Jorges says

Ted Bell brings us a new adventure series with a hero who can stand on his own, but gives a nod to several adventure heroes who have come before him. Like Doc Savage, Alex Hawke is richer than God, has a number of really cool toys, and a whole team of loyal sidekicks. Like James Bond, he is British and a spy. Like Dirk Pitt, he can pilot anything in the air or on the water, and enjoys an intimate relationship with a powerful politico, except Hawke's ladyfriend is the Secretary of State, not a mere congresswoman. Unlike the heroes of old, however, Hawke, even though he doesn't think it of himself, has some emotional depth.

Alex Hawke saw his parents murdered by pirates aboard their yacht moored in the Exumas when he was seven years old. He blocked out conscious memories of that night, but still dreams constantly of pirates. That's no surprise, as he is a direct descendant of the infamous Blackhawke, who was hanged for piracy back in the day. Alex himself is quite colorful, having been a highly decorated officer in the British military and now doing some spy work for both England and the United States.

Alex and his band of merry men are sent to the Caribbean to search for a missing Soviet Borzoi-class submarine, believed to have been purchased by Cuban terrorists. The submarine had been built with stolen stealth technology, and can carry 40 serious warheads, so the United States wants it found. Alex's search for the sub also coincides neatly with his own personal hunt for pirate treasure buried somewhere nearby, which is also tied into the murder of his parents 30 years earlier. While Alex strong-arms some Russian arms dealers into giving him information, Castro is removed from power by a group of terrorists calling themselves Telerana, which means the Spider's Web. They manage to kidnap Alex's lady love, Vicky Sweet, so he and his team must storm their compound and rescue her before the US Navy levels the place.

This is the first Alex Hawke adventure, so while the story wasn't slow, I think future novels will be a bit more action-packed. In this one, we had to lay down the back story and introduce everyone. One little quirk of Bell's that I am quite taken with is the way he drastically changes point of view from character to

character. Since the characters range from well-educated Brits to streetwise black American cops, the verbiage can be quite different from character to character, and it's quite well done. Anyone who doesn't fall in love with Stoke by the end of this book should just quit reading altogether.

Adventure novels are my favorite, and I am thrilled I managed to get in on the ground floor with Alex Hawke. This is going to be a great series.

Eric says

Having read the most recent two books in the Hawke series, and having enjoyed them so much, I decided to go back to the very beginning and to read all of the Ted Bell books. I find that the consistency of writing and form found in the last two books are equal to the first. This story sets the stage for the characters of Hawke and Congreve and Stokley. The story features ancient pirate lore, Columbian drugs, Fidel Castro and a coup de tate. Also involved are chemical bombs and U.S. Navel aircraft carriers. Throw into the mix a state of the art Soviet-era Boomerang submarine, and you have all the elements for a page-turning adventure. I would highly recommend!

Robert Williams says

Sorry, really wanted to like it but life is just too short for such bad writing.

Tim says

This novel entails the beginnings of Hawke's character since he was seven years old. Thus begins the exciting journey of a thoroughly enjoyable persona, especially when teamed with Stokely Jones. While some of the action is a bit improbable, the good guys come out on top and that's always best! 8 of 10 stars

Santhosh says

Will never win critical acclaim. A read when you're totally bored. Should appeal to those who like Tom Clancy, Stephen Coontz, or Robert Ludlum. A little sophisticated weaponry and a little political intrigue, with a whiff of British aristocracy thrown in. Something like the Scarlet Pimpernel, but not quite. His parrot, Sniper, perched on his shoulder completes the picture.

Jane Mackay says

One of the worst-written books I've ever read. Hammers the reader over the head with ham-fisted character psychology and blunt-force action that is escalated over and over again, on cue, per the injunction in every "how to write a novel readers can't put down" article. Not to mention generous helpings of cliched

characters, dialogue, relationships and plot elements.

Mr Bell would do well to read and study every Ian Fleming-written James Bond book for lessons in subtlety, depth, nerve-scraping suspense (cf. the centipede scene near the start of DR NO) and beautiful (UNclickable) scene description. Without the need for a cast of thousands, an equal number of dead bodies and the destruction of vast swaths of natural and human habitat.

A small example, also from DR NO: "The shadows crept from behind the house and marched across the lawn and enveloped him. The Undertaker's Wind that blows at night from the centre of the island, clattered softly in the tops of the palm trees. The frogs began to tinkle among the shrubs. The fireflies, the 'blink-a-blanks', as Quarrel called them, came out and began flashing their sexual Morse. For a moment the melancholy of the tropical dusk caught at Bond's heart."

Alain Dewitt says

I read this book on the recommendation of an old college roommate. My friend Rick really likes Ted Bell. Rick and I both like Clive Cussler and the Dirk Pitt series so I thought I would give 'Hawke' a try.

I don't think I will be reading any more Hawke books. Frankly, the writing is almost amateurish. Bell is clearly trying to create a Pitt-like character. Hawke and Pitt have similar, nay, almost identical backgrounds(ex-military men, pilots, dashing good looks, scions of prominent families, loyal sidekicks, beautiful women dropping at their feet). Hawke is almost a caricature of an English nobleman (Lord Hawke) with his faithful butler, Pelham, and his antiquated mode of speaking (old thing, jolly good, I say, etc.) It's as if Bell is trying to one-up Cussler with Hawke.

Bell's plotting is adequate but he fails to capture the historical mystery aspect that Cussler does so well. With Cussler's books you have an ancient or old maritime wreck that figures prominently and dovetails neatly with the contemporary threat. In 'Hawke', Bell slaps together a contemporary threat and then forces a connection with an old mystery. In this case, the villain is the descendant of a 17th century Spanish pirate whose treasure was stolen by a 17th century English pirate. I'll give you three guesses as to who the great-great-great-great-grandson of that English pirate is. And the first two guesses don't count.

All of this could be somewhat forgiven, and perhaps have earned the book an extra star or two had it not been for the unbelievability of the main character and the rife factual errors. In the case of Hawke, he grows up and attends the British version of our Naval Academy (Dartmouth) and then becomes a naval aviator. First he flies Harrier jump jets and then graduates to fighters (an error since Harriers are fighters and attack aircraft). Bell relates how during the first Gulf War Hawke flew Tomcats. Tomcats are F-14s. F-14s are carrier-based interceptor/fighters. Only two nations have ever operated the F-14: the United States and the Shah's Iran.

Still let's put that error aside for the moment (although it's but one example of what I mean). Let's also put aside the rarity of a pilot transitioning from one aircraft to another (it happens but not that often) and we have the fact that, per Bell, after mastering two high performance aircraft, Hawke did a tour with SBS (Special Boat Squadron, the British equivalent of the US Navy SEALs).

We now catch up to Hawke and he is a billionaire business mogul who freelances by doing wet-work and commando-style anti-terrorism and espionage missions for the US and UK. He's 37 years old.

The timeline is simply impossible. Not unlikely. Not improbable. Impossible. No mention is made of how he acquired his vast fortune in approximately five years. It can't be family money. His family is supposed to be well-off, but he is the son and grandson of war heroes who both became intelligence officers after their military careers were over.

Oh, and his ex- (whose age is unspecified but she's another ravishing beauty) is the new US Secretary of State.

Again, I might have even (emphasis on 'might') overlooked this impossible protagonist had it not been for the numerous factual errors. This book was published in 2003 and these kinds of errors are simply unforgivable in this day and age of instant access to Google and Wikipedia. And how all these errors got past editors and fact checkers is the real question.

I've already mentioned the Tomcat. Here are a couple of others:

- Hawke meets with two Russian arms dealers, looking to buy a nuclear missile submarine. He tells them he wants to buy a boomer (missile sub), an Akula. Akulas are fast-attack submarines. This is like saying, I want to buy a big rig, a Mustang. Bell then doubles down on the error by referring to an Akula Typhoon. This is like saying you want a Mack Testarossa. It's incomprehensible.
- a character makes an analogy by referring to Axl Rose's Fender Stratocaster. First, Axl doesn't play guitar in Guns 'n Roses; Slash does. And not content to make just the one error, he again doubles down because Slash plays Gibson Les Pauls not Fender Strats.
- in the finale Bell has American F/A-18 attack aircraft attacking ground targets with Aim (not AIM) - 9 Sidewinder missiles. Aim means nothing. AIM stands for Advanced Intermediate Range Missile. It **is** a Sidewinder but it is a heat-seeking air-to-air missile and cannot be used to attack ground targets. For that you would use an AGM (Air-to-Ground Missile) - 65 Maverick.

This has been a long review but I think I have amply demonstrated that this is not a franchise or author worth your time. Reader beware!
