

BUSH TALES

This cattleman and writer could be heading for the bestseller list

On his sprawling cattle property, Jame McLean looks right at home in his boots and cowboy hat. But 33-year-old Jame is a farmer with a difference. His talents stretch beyond toiling on the land at his 40,000-hectare spread in Queensland's outback. Jame is a real-life 'paperback hero', a storyteller who's set to become a bestselling novelist.

Not bad for a youngster who was educated by School of the Air and whose closest neighbour was 80km away.

'I'm forever coming up with new story ideas, plots and characters'

'The bush can look dry and desolate, but it has a special beauty, it's invigorating and awe inspiring. These qualities fuel my imagination,' he says.

'I'm probably the only man on the land who gets around the property carrying a little black book and pen,' Jame laughs. 'I'm forever coming up with story ideas, plots and characters, so I need to jot them down before I forget.'

The outback is the perfect setting for Jame's new novel, *The Silver Dagger* (Longueville Books, \$29.95), a gripping crime thriller in which the serial killer is the narrator.

Helping Jame achieve his dream is his 26-year-old wife, Dianne, who is seven months pregnant with their first child.

A former contract musterer, Dianne says: 'Jame is up all night handwriting his next novel, so not long after he gets to bed, usually at about 3am, I get up and type it out for him. He doesn't edit as he goes, he just writes and writes.'

Dianne says. She rates *The Silver Dagger* his best work yet.

'I read it all in one night and loved it. Because it's written from the villain's perspective, it's quite confronting. Jame was concerned, even jokingly asking if I was now too afraid to sleep in the same bed,' Dianne says.

'But it didn't faze me one bit,' she adds. 'The character might be a psychopathic killer, but Jame himself couldn't be nicer and more romantic.'

Jame hopes that one day he could be a full-time author, but doubts he'd ever leave the land.

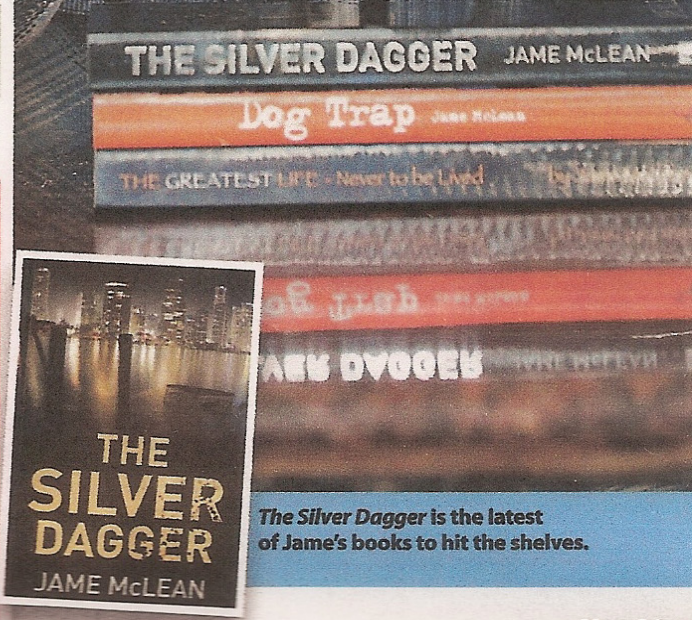
'We might downsize and move closer to south-east Queensland, but as the old saying goes: "Once the red dust gets into your lungs, you never want to leave."' **NI**

• For more information, visit www.jamemclean.com.

By Warren Gibbs
Pictures: Paul Broben



Wife Dianne is Jame's biggest fan.



The Silver Dagger is the latest of Jame's books to hit the shelves.