

# T WESTERN TIMES

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## A stab in the dark

### □ Book Review by Kieran Knox

**Be Careful Where You Go and Very Careful Who You Cross, for Sometimes the Sun Shines on even the Darkest Souls**

**The Silver Dagger by local author Jame McLean is an exquisitely evil piece of work.**

It is the tale of a serial killer who begins his vicious occupation as a young boy in Tara and spreads his wrath through Charleville, Roma, the Gold Coast and eventually to the State's capital, Brisbane.

"He's a bad bastard," said Jame who was in town last weekend to sell his books at the Charleville Show.

"I found it very easy to get into his head," he said calmly while sipping an iced chocolate as we sat and chatted outside a local coffee shop.

The head Jame had gotten into is that of the novel's protagonist Robert Carrana, a young man who sets out to claim vengeance upon all those whom he feels were responsible for his unhappy childhood.

Robert is not a nice man. Indeed, he could well be, as the novel's jacket proclaims, "the worst

man alive."

But he's an intriguing man. He is a man whose head one needs, almost yearns, to get inside.

It is such a compelling read - dare I say 'un-put-downable' - because while Jame got into that head, he produced a style of writing that pulls the reader into that same head as well.

"I like crime novels," said Jame, "but they're always written from the good guy's perspective - the hero. I wanted to come from the bad guy's point of view."

Jame has achieved his aim in this novel, for it is this facet, the perspective of the baddie that is this novel's most compelling component.

You never get to like this character - there is no way you could ever like this character.

But as you are trawled through the mind of Robert Carrana, you are taken through those murky waters that create fear in us all - that 'what is down there' feeling like surfing in the water off an un-netted beach.

This is Jame's third self-published novel and it is being distributed nationally by Pan Macmillan.



*Jame McLean: I found it very easy to get into his head.*

Jame, a fourth generation farmer who runs "Lantana" station about 200km south west of Charleville, refers to his work as "outback fiction".

"But it's not the normal Australian shearers and billabongs stuff," he said. "It's more real to life - it's the real outback. That's what I know about and it's my passion."

"I use things I've actually

known or seen. If people believe the environment, they'll believe the events."

"I write fast-paced stories - bad or sad," he said.

The Silver Dagger is certainly fast-paced - and Robert Carrana is very, very bad.

The ending, without giving anything away, is classic horror.

This is a novel well worth reading.