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The 'Tide' is high

BY HEATHER SALERNO | THE JOURNAL NEWS • MARCH 21, 2008

Andrew Gross may be the biggest suspense writer you've never heard of. But he's hoping that will change soon. That's because Gross's sophomore novel, "The Dark Tide" - which hit stores this week - could help him emerge from the shadow of a well-known mentor.

He got his start co-writing a string of blockbusters with mystery master James Patterson, and though the prized [collaboration](#) certainly helped, Gross says it's not easy launching a solo career.

"It is a bit of a double-edged sword," says Gross, 55, taking a break from his usual morning writing schedule to chat in the cozy den of his Purchase [home](#).

"My life could never have taken a better turn than to have Jim Patterson call me up. But with that said, when you want to branch out on your own, everyone sees you as a Patterson clone."

So Gross is working hard to avoid the copycat label.

He's left behind Patterson's trademark super-short chapters, staccato sentences and serial killers. That's not to say he didn't learn from his former boss: Quick-paced plots, likable protagonists and adrenaline-pumping action permeate Gross' stories, too.

"The Dark Tide" revolves around a Greenwich, Conn., mother of two whose life is upended when her husband, a successful hedge-fund manager, is killed in a bombing at Grand Central Terminal. Months later, she discovers that her spouse wasn't what he seemed: Hundreds of millions of dollars are missing from his firm, and some shady business dealings may have resulted in murder.

Readers of Gross' first book, "The Blue Zone," now out in paperback, may notice a recurring motif.

That novel centered on a young medical researcher who's shocked when her beloved father is accused of laundering money for a Colombian drug cartel, and her [family](#) is placed in the Witness Protection Program.

"All of my books seem to have this theme of these big, respected people who had a secret life that was undone," he says.

Now, Gross hasn't personally spent time outwitting the FBI or running from criminal overlords, but he does know something about life's ups and downs.

He spent nearly 20 years as an executive in the apparel industry, starting out in his family's business, the Leslie Fay Co., a women's [clothing](#) company founded by his grandfather.

He moved on to become president of the HEAD sportswear company, and later, Le Coq Sportif, a French sports fashion line.

By the mid-1990s, Gross was burned out. He'd always dreamed of writing a book, and he convinced his wife, Lynn, a yoga instructor, to give him one year to do that.

The year turned into two. The couple even moved their three children, now in their 20s, from private to public school so Gross could achieve his goal.

His completed novel, a conspiracy-based thriller about U.S. militias, generated interest from publishers.

Then nothing happened. Just as Gross was sitting around, thinking, "What the hell am I going to do now?" the phone rang.

James Patterson had gotten hold of a copy of the unpublished manuscript, and he thought Gross showed promise.

"I read it and said, 'OK, this guy can write scenes well,'" says Patterson.



Carucha L. Meuse /The Journal News Carucha L. Meuse
Author Andrew Gross discusses his new novel at his home in Purchase.

SEE AUTHOR ANDREW GROSS

Purchase author Andrew Gross will be at the Rye Library on April 15 to sign copies of his latest thriller, "The Dark Tide." The event kicks off at 7:30 p.m. The library is at 1061 Boston Post Road.

Gross will also be one of the featured speakers at the Westchester Library System's annual Book & Author Luncheon on April 17. The event - from noon to 2 p.m. at Trump National Golf Club in Briarcliff Manor - will be followed by a book-signing.

Besides Gross, the other authors scheduled to attend are:

- Susan Choi. The novelist's latest, "A Person of Interest," is about a Chinese immigrant math professor, which combines elements of the Unabomber and Wen Ho Lee cases.

- Dee Dee Myers. The former White House press secretary looks at women in power in "Why Women Should Rule the World."

- Josh Swiller. The deaf writer discusses his time spent in a remote village in Zambia for the Peace Corps in "The Unheard: A Memoir of Deafness and Africa."

Ticket prices are \$100 for general admission and \$150 for a Library Friend, which includes

The two met at the City Limits Diner in White Plains. (Patterson, who lives in Palm Beach, Fla., has a summer home in Briarcliff Manor.)

It turned out that Patterson was looking for someone to help develop his many book ideas, since he didn't have time to tackle them all himself.

Patterson mapped out the story of four female crime-solvers, which eventually became the popular Women's Murder Club series.

Gross was intrigued.

"I went home and noodled some chapters out, and I think I sent it to him the next day," he says. "Literally a couple of days later, we had this working agreement."

Within seven years, Gross had co-written five Patterson titles, including "2nd Chance," "3rd Degree" and "Judge & Jury." All five went to No. 1 on the best-seller lists.

And Gross had graduated from a crash course in how to write a hit.

All of the novels started with one of Patterson's outlines; Gross would send him completed chapters once a month.

Patterson, says Gross, is an "idea factory. He has extraordinary instincts."

One of Patterson's strong suits, adds Gross, is creating a product that appeals to his readers.

"I try to do the same thing," he says. "I think I learned some of these lessons."

Gross finally decided to break out in 2005, while growing impatient as he waited for another story summary from Patterson.

So he jotted down one of his own, and contacted an agent. Within a week, four publishers were bidding on the idea. And that was "just as an outline, not even with a book," he says.

Patterson fully supported his friend, knowing Gross would eventually go it alone.

"He was ready and off he went," he says. "He was thrown out of the nest and flew. Actually, he jumped out of the nest and flew."

Gross landed a three-book deal with William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins. His third book will be a sequel to "The Dark Tide," which will likely come out next year.

Gross is set to pen six more after that, having signed another contract with his publisher this year.

He admits that he's a little concerned about the fact that he's being paid a lot of **money** for a lot of books, "and I have no idea what they're going to be."

Well, not exactly. He does know at least one thing.

"To me, what I like in a book when I read it is an emotional payoff," he says. "So my whole goal is not to write cop-and-robber thrillers, but thrillers with heart at the end."

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entry to a pre-luncheon reception.
For more information, call 914- 231-3226 or visit
www.westchesterlibraries.org.