



# Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw

By Mark Bowden



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A tour de force of investigative journalism—*Killing Pablo* is the story of the violent rise and fall of Pablo Escobar, the head of the Colombian Medellin cocaine cartel. Escobar's criminal empire held a nation of thirty million hostage in a reign of terror that would only end with his death. In an intense, up-close account, award-winning journalist Mark Bowden exposes details never before revealed about the U.S.-led covert sixteen-month manhunt. With unprecedented access to important players—including Colombian president Cesar Gaviria and the incorruptible head of the special police unit that pursued Escobar, Colonel Hugo Martinez—as well as top-secret documents and transcripts of Escobar's intercepted phone conversations, Bowden has produced a gripping narrative that is a stark portrayal of rough justice in the real world.



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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Readers of *Black Hawk Down* know Mark Bowden can tell an exciting story about as well as any writer at work today. *Killing Pablo* is further proof. It describes the rise and fall of Pablo Escobar, a notorious Colombian drug lord who became one of the narcotic trade's first billionaires. Pablo--Bowden refers to him by his first name throughout the book--started out as a petty thief and wound up running a massive smuggling empire. At his height in the 1980s, he owned fleets of boats and planes, plus 19 separate residences in Medellin, each with its own helipad. Violence marked everything he did: "He wasn't an entrepreneur, and he wasn't even an especially talented businessman. He was just ruthless." He bought off police, politicians, and judges throughout his country, and killed many others who wouldn't cooperate. The Colombian government tried to capture him, but without much luck; he evaded them time after time. "Now and then the police achieved enough surprise to catch him, literally, with his pants down. In [1988], about one thousand national police raided one of his mansions," writes Bowden. "Pablo fled in his underwear, avoiding the police cordon on foot." He got away, again, but his days were numbered. He was making powerful enemies in both Colombia and the United States. The final straw probably came when Pablo's men murdered a popular politician and, three months later, planted a bomb on a plane, killing 110 people, including two Americans.

The bulk of *Killing Pablo* describes what happened when the U.S. government put its resources behind the hunt for Pablo. Bowden describes the search in gripping detail, from the massive electronic-surveillance effort to bureaucratic infighting between rival U.S. agencies. This is an outstanding work of reportorial journalism, too: in the epilogue, Bowden drops tantalizing hints that it was an American--not a Colombian--who delivered the killing shot to Pablo in 1993. Readers looking for a real-life thriller--or any kind of thriller, for that matter--won't do much better than *Killing Pablo*.

#### From Publishers Weekly

The author of the bestseller *Black Hawk Down*, which depicted the U.S. military's involvement in Somalia, Bowden hits another home run with his chronicle of the manhunt for Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar. He traces the prevalence of violence in Colombian history as background, then launches into the tale of the dramatic rise and fall of "Don Pablo," as he was known. Packed with detail, the book shows how Escobar, a pudgy, uneducated man who smoked marijuana daily, ruthlessly built the infamous Medellin cartel, a drug machine that eventually controlled much of Colombian life. As Bowden shows, the impotence of the Colombian government left a void readily filled by Escobar's mafia. While not ignoring the larger picture e.g., the terrible drug-related murders that wracked the South American country in the late 1980s and early 1990s Bowden never loses sight of the human story behind the search for Escobar, who was finally assassinated in 1993, and the terrible toll the hunt took on many of its main players.. There's a smoking gun here: Bowden charges that U.S. special forces were likely involved in helping some of Colombia's other drug lords assassinate perhaps more than a hundred people linked to Escobar. There's no doubt, according to Bowden, that the U.S. government was involved in the search for Escobar after a 1989 airplane bombing that killed 100 and made him, in Bowden's words, "Public Enemy Number One in the world." This revelation highlights one of Bowden's many journalistic accomplishments here: he shows how the search for Escobar became an end in itself. (May 8)Forecast: Bowden will go on a monster tour (about two dozen cities) to promote this BOMC selection, which also has its own Web site ([www.killingpablo.com](http://www.killingpablo.com)). Expect healthy sales.

From Library Journal

Bowden, a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, presents a gripping saga of the search for and death of Pablo Escobar, the notorious Colombian drug czar. Bowden, whose *Black Hawk Down* was a National Book Award finalist, chronicles the horrendous crimes and terrorist acts perpetrated by Escobar and his cartel. Escobar's acts were so frightening he kidnapped, tortured, and killed all those (and their loved ones) who stood in his way that he held the entire country in fear. For many years, he eluded capture with his *plata o plomo* (silver or lead, bribes or bullets) approach. Finally, with the help of covert U.S. Army operatives and the CIA, the Colombian task force on the trail of Escobar was able to locate him. Along the way, as Bowden shows, a shadowy vigilante group was targeting Escobar's associates and family members. Recommended, especially in light of current cinematic interest in subject. Karen Saudlin Silverman, Ctr. for Applied Research, Philadelphia

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## **Users Review**

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#### **Rita Hackett:**

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**Erica Northern:**

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