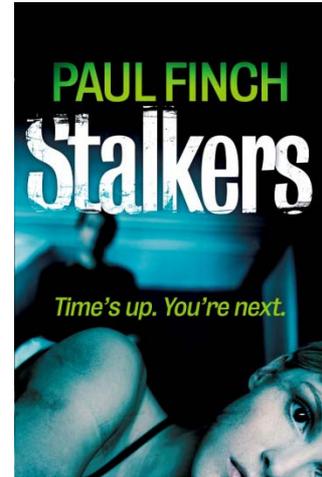


Paul Finch on why he wrote *Stalkers*...

A couple of years after I finished working on *The Bill*, I began laying out my thoughts for a new police novel. I'd been penning different things during the intervening years – novellas, audio dramas and so on – but I increasingly knew that I wanted to write an epic cop story. I had my own experiences of the job to draw upon, plus those of many friends and colleagues who I'm still in regular contact with. But it wasn't just that. This wasn't a kind of catharsis or something I needed to get off my chest. It was just that I had a lot of combined knowledge which I felt was going to waste.



In addition, in terms of TV shows, it's often frustrated me how cosy our British crime and police dramas tend to be. Though we occasionally break the mould, on the whole we seem to prefer gentle whodunits in this country. You rarely get material packing anything like the energy and attitude of US cop shows like *The Shield* or *The Wire*. I knew that if I was going to write a British cop novel, it had to have a little bit of that in it: not just action and suspense, but vicious politics, tough relationships, that hard edge of urban authenticity – and pace, lots and lots of pace.

With all this in mind, I began devising characters (some of whom will only appear in the second novel), but it was amazing how quickly they seemed to draw themselves, and yet that was nothing compared to the actual writing. When the central premise suddenly hit me – I'd known all along that I needed a real high-concept notion to kick this series off with – I literally fell into it, and had probably written the entire first draft of the book within two months. There have been several drafts since then of course, not to mention lots of revisions and tweaks and so forth, but the truth is that it's been a joy. I suppose any writer will tell you that when you're working on a project you're in love with, when you get emotionally attached to the characters and feel that hugely positive impulse about the whole thing – it can hardly be described as work, even though I probably put in much longer hours on this one than I normally would.

My schedule for *Stalkers* was roughly eight in the morning until around four in the afternoon, and then nine in the evening until around midnight. Looking back on it, that seems like a pretty full working-day, but the urge to get it in the can was overwhelming.