



Billy and The Joels - The American rock star and his German family story: Foreword by Billy Joel

Steffen Radlmaier, Billy Joel

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In the 1920s, Karl Amson Joel and his wife Meta founded a mail-order linen goods company in Nuremberg, Germany. The business flourished, and it could have turned out to be a picture-book success story, were it not for the coming to power of Adolf Hitler. To escape the Nazis, the Jewish couple and their son Helmut fled first to Berlin and then on to Switzerland. The linen goods company was snapped up by department-store 'king' Josef Neckermann at basement price. A further hazardous journey then took the Joels to Cuba and, finally, to New York. Helmut married a young girl from Brooklyn and, in 1949, she gave birth to their son William Martin, known as 'Billy'. When the marriage fell apart, Helmut returned alone to Germany, remarried and had a second son, Alexander, now an internationally sought-after conductor. Billy Joel is one of the most successful solo artists in the world of international pop music, having sold over 100 million albums. His daughter Alexa Ray has also carved out a career for herself in music.

In order to write this extensive biography, Steffen Radlmaier not only researched archives and analyzed specialist literature and interviews, over a period of many years he also conducted personal interviews with numerous family members, acquaintances and contemporary witnesses. He visited Billy Joel and his daughter in New York in the autumn of 2008.



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