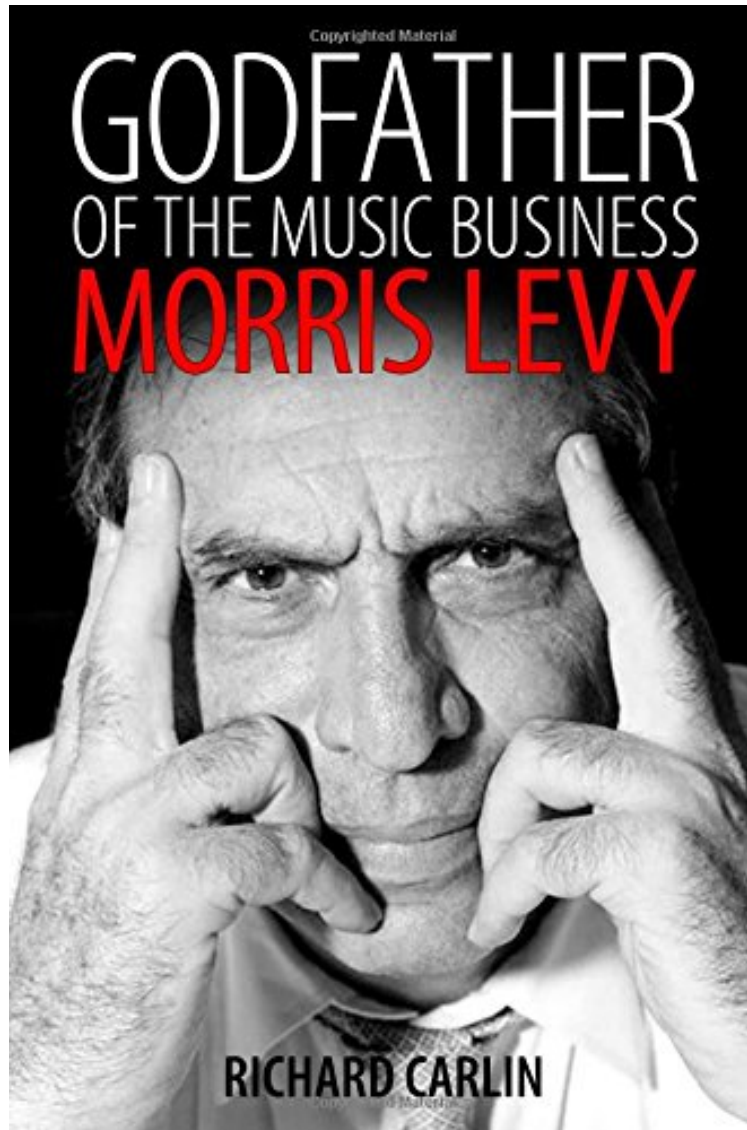


[Read now] Godfather of the Music Business: Morris Levy (American Made Music Series)

## Godfather of the Music Business: Morris Levy (American Made Music Series)

*Richard Carlin*

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**Richard Carlin : Godfather of the Music Business: Morris Levy (American Made Music Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Godfather of the Music Business: Morris Levy (American Made Music Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting look at the mob and musicBy Mary HiI had been a singer or songwriter back in the 50s to 80s, I sure wouldn't have wanted my contract controlled by Morris Levy. This

is a great look at how the mob, through Levy, got their hooks into unsuspecting creatives. Especially true for those with no money management skills and substance abuse problems. It's a wonder they got any money at all. I originally heard of Levy in Tommy James memoir (Me, the Mob and the Music). James has a grudging affection for Levy, who screwed him out of millions. He does seem to have a sort of honest, Mafia-type charm. Carlin, the author of *Godfather of the Music Business*, tells the history of Levy's record operations in an interesting way, lots of facts. I wish he had gone into Levy's personal life more. He was married several times and had a number of children. Still, the book's a good read, even for people like me who know little about the record industry. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great read! By J. Rosner Fascinating stuff despite some errors in terminology. Couldn't put it down - interesting as both a biography and general history of the music business. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Miss On Moishe Fact filled, well written bio reveals nothing new. By BDavidMc Nothing new bared here many recycled items culled from existing works by Tommy James/Martin Fitzpatrick, John A. Jackson, Larry McShane et al. The stories are entertaining as Moishe was a true character no embellishments necessary. Joel Selvin's "Here Comes The Night" uncovers more arcane Levy-abillia, touching on Bert Bern's dealings w/him, than Carlin manages. Nonetheless, the book does succeed in holding the reader eager to uncover more, his interactions w/Vinnie "The Chin" Gigante and the rest of the central casting types from the Genovese family, for example, disappointingly, what is revealed is neither revelatory nor new. The Alan Freed/Morris Levy partnership is described in depth depicting just how entrenched Levy was when the segue from rhythm and blues/race records into rock 'n' roll was imminent. Moreover, his accuracy in smelling a score having an Alan Freed positioned both as co-producer of Freed's Rock 'N' Roll shows and Freed's nightly radio show on 1010 WINS breaking new records by Roulette recording artists. For the uninitiated, the book delivers somewhat as advertised but for the more fact finding, discerning few alas, it comes up a tad short. 2 1/2 stars (rating system doesn't register fractions).

This biography tells the story of one of the most notorious figures in the history of popular music, Morris Levy (1927-1990). At age nineteen, he cofounded the nightclub Birdland in Hell's Kitchen, which became the home for a new musical style, bebop. Levy operated one of the first integrated clubs on Broadway and helped build the careers of Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell and most notably aided the reemergence of Count Basie. In 1957, he founded a record label, Roulette Records. Roulette featured many of the significant jazz artists who played Birdland but also scored top pop hits with acts like Buddy Knox, Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers, Joey Dee and the Starlites, and, in the mid-1960s, Tommy James. Stories abound of Levy threatening artists, songwriters, and producers, sometimes just for the sport, other times so he could continue to build his empire. Along the way, Levy attracted investors with ties to the Mafia, including Dominic Cialfano (a.k.a. Swats Mulligan), Tommy Eboli, and the most notorious of them all, Vincent Gigante. Gigante allegedly owned large pieces of Levys recording and retail businesses. Starting in the late 1950s, the FBI and IRS investigated Levy but could not make anything stick until the early 1980s, when Levy foolishly got involved in a deal to sell remaindered records to a small-time reseller, John LaMonte. With partners in the mob, Levy tried to force LaMonte to pay for four million remaindered records. When the FBI secretly wiretapped LaMonte in an unrelated investigation and agents learned about the deal, investigators successfully prosecuted Levy in the extortion scheme. Convicted in 1988, Levy did not live to serve prison time. Stricken with cancer, he died just as his last appeals were exhausted. However, even if he had lived, Levys brand of storied high life was effectively bust. Corporate ownership of record labels doomed most independents in the business, ending the days when a savvy if ruthless hustler could blaze a path to the top.

Richard Carlin has written an eye-opening, behind-the-scenes study of jazz and popular music through the fascinating (and checkered) career of Morris Levy. Digging deep into a variety of sources, Carlin has added fascinating, often highly personal, details to the history of popular music during the latter half of the twentieth century. This is a messy and revealing story, with an assortment of criminal types and sprinkled with many interesting photos. Ronald D. Cohen, editor of *Alan Lomax, Assistant in Charge: The Library of Congress Letters, 1935-1945* (University Press of Mississippi) The FBI always figured Morris Levy was the front man for the syndicate in the record business. This beloved, feared music man finally gets the epic biography he deserves in Richard Carlin's fascinating *Godfather of the Music Business*. Joel Selvin, author of *Here Comes the Night: The Dark Soul of Bert Berns and the Dirty Business of Rhythm and Blues* About the Author Richard Carlin, Glen Ridge, New Jersey, is the author of several books on popular music, including *Worlds of Sound: The Story of Smithsonian Folkways* and *Country Music: The People, Places, and Moments That Shaped the Country Style*. He also coedited *Aint Nothing But the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment* and edited the eight-volume series *Americas Popular Music*.