



# Experiencing Billy Joel: A Listener's Companion

*Thomas MacFarlane*

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Over the course of his career, Billy Joel has released a series of remarkable albums that together chart his journey as an artist from relative obscurity to international success. In *Experiencing Billy Joel*, musician and writer Thomas MacFarlane explores that musical journey, from Joel's apprenticeship in the Long Island music scene to his experiences in both New York and Los Angeles writing and recording his own unique brand of piano rock and pop.

After achieving a certain degree of musical success in the late 1960s, Joel embarked on a career as a singer-songwriter in the early 1970s. Although his initial albums demonstrated a precocious mastery that helped establish him in the field, his full potential as a recording artist blossomed on *The Stranger* (1977), created under the guidance of legendary producer Phil Ramone. Subsequent releases explored a variety of musical styles and helped solidify Joel's reputation as one of the most important pop composers of his era.

*Experiencing Billy Joel* explores each of Joel's albums, laying out their appeal to musicians and non-musicians alike while also exploring the various production styles that have characterized Joel's development in the studio. Along the way, MacFarlane reveals how Billy Joel's recorded works as a whole serve as the foundation for a complex and enduring musical legacy.

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