



The Mad Ones: Crazy Joe Gallo and the Revolution at the Edge of the Underworld

By Tom Folsom

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The Mad Ones chronicles the rise and fall of the Gallo brothers, a trio of reckless young gangsters whose revolution against New York City's Mafia was inspired by Crazy Joe Gallo's forays into Greenwich Village counterculture.

Crazy Joe, Kid Blast, and Larry Gallo are steeped in legend, from Bob Dylan's eleven-minute ballad "Joey" to fictionalizations central to *The Godfather* trilogy and Jimmy Breslin's *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*. Called the toughest gang in the city by the NYPD, the Gallos hailed from the rough Red Hook neighborhood on the Brooklyn waterfront. As low-level Mafiosi, they were expected to serve their don quietly, but the brothers stood apart from typical gangsters with their hip style, fierce ambition, and Crazy Joe's manic idealism.

Here, for the first time, is the complete story of the Gallos' war against the powerful Cosa Nostra, an epic crime saga that culminates in Crazy Joe's murder on the streets of Little Italy, where he was gunned down mid-bite into a forkful of spaghetti in 1972. *The Mad Ones* is a wildly satisfying entertainment and a significant work of cultural history.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #768061 in Books
- Published on: 2010-05-11
- Released on: 2010-05-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .75" w x 6.00" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Mobsters are infinitely entertaining, but in TV producer Folsom's (co-author, Mr. Untouchable) chronicle of the infamous Gallo brothers who ruled Red Hook, Brooklyn in the 1950s and 60s, there's not only gang war, mayhem and murder, but the media sensation that was leader Crazy Joe Gallo. Immortalized in Jimmy Breslin's *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*, the Gallo brothers really did keep a lion in the basement to encourage payments, and broke with the rules of the Mafia by including outsiders like Mondo the Dwarf and an Egyptian nicknamed Ali Baba. In crisp prose that can veer into the tabloid, Folsom expertly captures the color of Crazy Joey and his times. Joey, who did time in psych wards and prisons (he read up to eight books a day in Attica), mugged for the cameras while being questioned by Attorney General Robert Kennedy at the McClellan Hearings in 1959, appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, held court at Elaine's with Ben Gazzarra and Bruce Jay Friedman and became best friends with actor Jerry Orbach. At the time he was gunned down (at Umberto's Clam House in Little Italy) at 43 years old, Joey had a book deal from Viking: "There's something suicidal about publishers," he said later, "paying a lot of greens for the big nothing." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Bob Dylan immortalized Joey Gallo in a lengthy ballad romanticizing him and his cohort, and breathless contemporary tabloids enthusiastically agreed. Not exactly out to counter Gallo's lovable thug persona, Folsom chronicles Gallo in highly readable, almost lyrical fashion. Joey frequented cultural hot spots like the Village, rubbing elbows with boulevardiers, pop stars, and poets. He wrote poetry and sought the media limelight with unheard-of fervor for a working mobster. That didn't sit well with other gangsters in general and senior members of the Profaci (later Colombo) Mob family in particular. His self-promotion worked, however, and his icon status was assured when, like Dutch Schultz before him, he was gunned down in mid-bite at his favorite restaurant. During his raucous career, he warred with godfather Joseph Profaci and may have had a hand in the assassination of Profaci's successor, Joe Colombo. More celebration than condemnation, Folsom's invigorating read recalls an odd chapter in American Mob history, but then the late 1960s–early 1970s constitute an odd chapter in American social history generally. A fitting tribute. --Mike Tribby

Review

"In vivid style-part Puzo, part Kerouac-Tom Folsom takes the reader back to a time when the underworld and the counterculture seemed to be on parallel tracks. Brutal and elegiac, the story of Crazy Joe and the Gallo brothers is one for the ages. *The Mad Ones* belongs on a shelf alongside the best of Breslin and Pileggi."

Users Review

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