

Mysterious death inspires rock song

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By Alex Galbinski in London

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The British rock band Starsailor has released a song about Jeremiah (Jerry) Duggan, a Jewish student who mysteriously died in Germany in 2003 while attending what he thought was an anti-war conference.

Jerry's parents, Erica and Hugo Duggan, hope the song, Jeremiah, will spark new interest into their son's death, which German authorities said was a suicide.

Jerry, a 22-year-old student from London, was studying in Paris when he attended what he thought was an anti-Iraq war conference in Wiesbaden, Germany, in March 2003.

It is believed now that the meeting was in fact organised by the Schiller Institute, an extremist political group linked to Lyndon LaRouche, a US right-wing conspiracy theorist who has been accused of anti-Semitism.

On 27 March, the night of the conference, Jerry called his girlfriend Maya at 4.20am, telling her: "I am under too much pressure."

He then called his mother, saying: "Mum, I am in deep, deep trouble. I want out."

The telephone line went dead and he rang back, saying: "I'm frightened, I want to see you now."

While he was telling her where he was, the line again was cut. Around 30 minutes later Jerry was dead, having run into the road and allegedly been hit by two cars.

Tears over Moving Song

The first the family knew about the song was when Mr Duggan heard Starsailor singer-songwriter James Walsh speaking about it on a BBC Radio Five Live show on October 20, and rushed out to buy it.

"We all wept when we heard the song," said Mrs Duggan. "It's so beautiful. For me, the line 'little one do not fear' was very poignant, because when he rang me, I didn't have the chance to comfort him. I couldn't help him."

Mr Walsh in turn had found out about Jerry's story while listening to a radio interview with Mrs Duggan last year.

"The thing that touched me the most was how random it was," said Walsh. "He was a young Jewish lad who, like many people at the time, felt very strongly against the war in Iraq."

Mrs Duggan hopes the song will prompt someone with information about the circumstances surrounding her son's death to come forward.

She and her ex-husband are fighting for the investigation into his death to be reopened, after German authorities recorded a verdict of suicide. This was rejected by British coroner Dr William Dolman in 2003, who said Jerry had been 'in a state of terror' before his death.



Jeremiah (Jerry)
Duggan
Photo: EJP

"I didn't have the chance to comfort him. I couldn't help him"

Erica Duggan, Jerry's mother

"From the very outset," said Dr Dolman, "I could not accept the investigators' bald conclusion that Jeremiah Duggan intended to take his own life."

A copy of the German police's report into Jerry's death obtained by The Daily Telegraph newspaper revealed various errors which, the Duggans say, point to an inadequate investigation. They now intend to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

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Dr William Dolman, British coroner

"This song speaks volumes because it expressed how the dreams of youth are brutally crushed and the authorities turn a blind eye," she added.

'Jeremiah' is featured on Starsailor's album, On the Outside, which was released on 17 October.

For more information on the campaign, or the fundraising event, visit www.justiceforjeremiah.com/index.html