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The Books were an American-Dutch duo, formed in [New York City](#) in 1999, consisting of guitarist and vocalist [Nick Zammuto](#) and cellist Paul de Jong. Their releases typically incorporated [samples](#) of obscure sounds and speech.^{[1][2]} They released three critically acclaimed albums on the German label [Tomlab](#), and released their fourth studio album, *[The Way Out](#)*, on [Temporary Residence Limited](#) in July 2010.

Zammuto and de Jong first met in [New York City](#) in 1999 as they shared the same apartment building.^[3] De Jong invited Zammuto to dinner at his apartment, where he played him some of his collection of audio and video samples, including a [Shooby Taylor](#) record.^[4] Zammuto said of their meeting that "we both kind of knew at that moment that we listened (to music) in interesting ways and had similar approaches to music".^[5] Soon after, they began playing what they considered [pop music](#), in comparison to their own works, under the name the Books.^[5]

In 2000, the Books started work their début album *[Thought for Food](#)*.^[6] Zammuto and de Jong moved often during this time,^[6] recording in New York, [Los Angeles](#), [Boston](#), and finally in the basement of a hostel in [North Carolina](#) where Zammuto worked for a while after hiking the [Appalachian Trail](#).^{[5][7]} *Thought for Food* was released on October 22, 2002.^[8] Praised by critics for its distinctive sound,^[9] it featured extensive sampling from obscure sources coupled with mostly acoustic instrumentation.

Shortly after the release of *Thought for Food*, the band relocated to [North Adams, Massachusetts](#), near where Zammuto had graduated from [Williams College](#) in 1999, studying [chemistry](#) and [visual arts](#).^[10] Zammuto and de Jong began the recording of *[The Lemon of Pink](#)* around this time. Anne Doerner, a guest vocalist on the album, said the process was much more arduous than the recording of *Thought for Food*, with Zammuto working on the album for five straight months.^[5]

The Lemon of Pink was released to critical acclaim^[11] on October 7, 2003.^[12] It is similar in style to *Thought for Food*, but oriented more around vocals performed mostly by Anne Doerner.

In 2004, the French [Ministry of Culture](#) asked the Books to compose music for a new elevator in their building. The Books released a [Mini CD](#) of this work in 2006, under the name *[Music for a French Elevator and Other Short Format Oddities by the Books](#)*.^[13]

On April 5, 2005, the Books released their third studio album, *[Lost and Safe](#)*. Zammuto has a greater vocal presence in this album, and the album was criticized for this change of sound.^[14] Aside from this, *Lost and Safe* was well received by critics.^[15] Throughout early 2005, the Books collaborated with the electronica artist [Prefuse 73](#). The Books appear on his album *[Surrounded by Silence](#)* ("Pagina Dos"), and the E.P. *[Prefuse 73 Reads the Books E.P.](#)* collects remixes of material sourced from the Books' albums.

Before starting a three-month^[16] tour of North America in April 2006, the Books had played only one concert,^[7] in October 2003 at a festival in [Chicago, Illinois](#).^[17] Zammuto expressed apprehensiveness towards touring, but says it is necessary to make a living, given his belief that people downloading the Books' music via [file-sharing](#)^[18] has put him under financial strain.