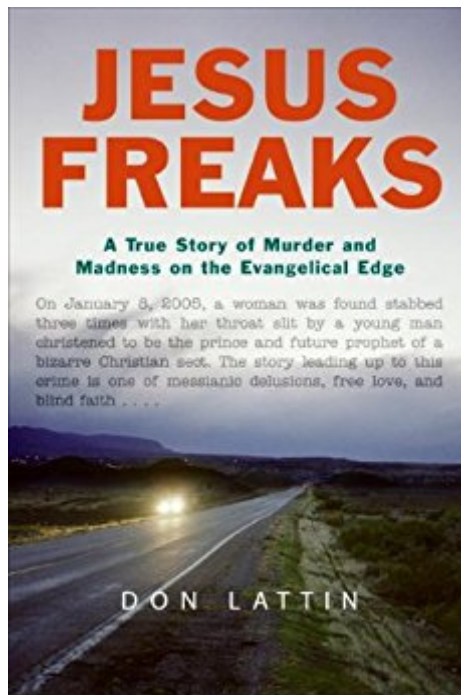


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Jesus Freaks: A True Story Of Murder And Madness On The Evangelical Edge



Synopsis

In the tradition of Jon Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Don Lattin's *Jesus Freaks* is the story of a shocking pilgrimage of revenge that left two people dead and shed new light on The Family International, one of the most controversial religious movements to emerge from the spiritual turmoil of the sixties and seventies. Some say The Family International "previously known as the Children of God" began with the best intentions. But their sexual and spiritual excesses soon forced them to go underground and follow a dark and dangerous path. Their charismatic leader, David "Moses" Berg, preached a radical critique of the piety and hypocrisy of mainstream Christianity. But Berg's message quickly devolved into its own web of lies. He lusted for power and unlimited access to female members of his flock "including young girls and teenagers" and became a drunken tyrant, setting up re-indoctrination camps around the world for rebellious teenagers under his control. Thousands of children raised in The Family would defect and try to live normal lives, but the prophet's heir apparent, Ricky "Davidito" Rodriguez, was unable to either bear the excesses of the cult or fit into normal society. Sexually and emotionally abused as a child, Ricky left the fold and began a crusade to destroy the only family he ever knew, including a plot to kill his own mother. Veteran journalist Don Lattin has written a powerful, engrossing book about this uniquely American tragedy. *Jesus Freaks* is a cautionary tale for those who fail to question the prophecies and proclamations of anyone who claims to speak for God.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Don Lattin's JESUS FREAKS is the well written, well researched, and well documented account of a fringe Christian cult called The Children of God. The church, which began in the 60s and was designed to appeal to street hippies and to lost souls who were searching for meaning in their lives, was of the apocalyptic persuasion. The world would end in a specified period of time - 7 years, 38.5 months, whatever seemed right at the time - and the members of The Children of God, founded and led by one David Berg, would attain their rightful place in heaven. The rest of you? Not so fast there, Marty. It appears that The Children of God, like many other cults, was begun with good intentions, but eventually Berg established himself first as the group's connection to God and then as God himself. And, as God, anything that Berg decreed was not only okay, it was positively sanctified. And what Berg, the alcoholic son of itinerant fundamentalist preachers, mainly decreed was sex - often mandated - between adults, their marital status notwithstanding; between adults and children; and between children. Incest? No problem. That was encouraged as well. Berg also had young women in his congregation engage in what Berg called "flirty fishing" which was basically prostitution designed to deliver money and converts to The Children of God. As Lattin writes, "Berg was to become God's pimp." JESUS FREAKS, Lattin's history/expose of the cult, revolves around the story of Ricky Rodriguez, a child born into the cult who, though not biologically related to David Berg was raised by Berg and Ricky's mother as his own son and who was designated the boy king who would assume leadership when Berg passed on to that great orgy in the sky.

Jesus Freaks / 978-0-06-111804-3 Sometimes you're walking through the "True Crime" section of the bookstore, and a book leaps out at you, and you realize that it's the true account of that one Law & Order episode you caught that one time that totally wasn't based on a true story or anything, except of course they all are. And because you thought the episode (Season 15, Episode 19, "Sects") was interesting (in a horrifying kind of way), you take the book home and you read it, and you find a gripping tale of horror and sadness. That's what this book is. I knew I would like "Jesus Freaks" right off the bat, when I saw that the author had thoughtfully included a 'cheat sheet' of important personas as the first page. Having just spent this winter reading through the labyrinthine

family trees of the Warren Jeffs' FLDS cult, I appreciated immediately that the author of "Jesus Freaks" recognized how difficult it can be to keep straight all the names when plumbing decades of cult behavior. What I hadn't expected, however, was that the writing and characterization here would be so clear and memorable, that I would rarely have to refer to my cheat sheet. Although this book deals with some truly horrible human behavior, Lattin does a wonderful job of keeping the material accessible. He has a very careful way of zooming into the terrible history of this cult, but then zooming back out to cover some other, less distasteful history in order to let the reader get their bearings back.

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