



Jesus Freaks: A True Story of Murder and Madness on the Evangelical Edge

Don Lattin

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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 prophesies and proclamations of anyone who claims to speak for God.

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