The Celebrity of Cults
THE CELEBRITY OF CULTS

synopsis

We are unaware, but there are sinister forces living amongst us, hunting us down. Their goal – to control our minds and destroy our lives.

Cults recruit constantly, attending church meetings, community gatherings, workplaces -- even college campuses. In the spaces where we feel most safe, they move among us anonymously, stealthily, stalking us like prey.

For the first time, CELEBRITY OF CULTS delves deep and exposes the highest profile cults operating amongst us. taking the wraps off organizations that operate in secret. At the core of each episode, a single cult. At the core of each cult there is always a Jim Jones, a David Koresh or a Charles Manson – a charismatic leader that drives it. Ruthless and psychopathic in their methods, cults use intimidation and fear to force their followers into complete submission.
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structure

Each episode focuses on one cult, beginning with a quick look back at how it formed. CELEBRITY OF CULTS then traces the rise of the group to prominence. The first step --to recruit as many members as possible. First person interviews with former members and dramatic recreations show the deceptive techniques used by cult recruiters to draw members in. Experts and those in law enforcement who work with cults explain how cults and their leaders create the trust and obedience required to gain control. In chilling first-person interviews, former members describe day to day life in the cult --their dark journey into servitude and despair as the cult indoctrinates them, leading them further down the rabbit hole, keeping them captive with no end in sight...
We also look at how cults make money and how they ensure that large sums of money keep coming. Many cults like The Church of Scientology are a major draw for Hollywood stars who find themselves in the grips of uncertainty despite their fame and wealth. These stars offer cults healthy injections of cash in addition to their celebrity endorsement.
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structure (con’t)

Through first person interviews with survivors and dramatic recreations, CELEBRITY OF CULTS reveals the never-before seen mind control and pressure tactics used by cults to force members to turn over large amounts of cash—even donate their life savings. Survivors tell us of the terrible consequences of not contributing—from terrifying threats of expulsion to brutal beatings. Financial experts and those who have conducted business with cults—often innocently—explain how cults make and manage their money—sometimes amassing large fortunes. This money that is used to dominate and to push the cult to celebrity status.

CELEBRITY OF CULTS also explores the relationship cults have with the media and how they use the internet. In first person interviews, former cult members dissect the media strategies and campaigns they were forced to create in order to “normalize” a cult and its leader to the world. They also discuss how attractive and professional websites are used to deliver the group’s message to draw new, unsuspecting members in.

Each episode ends with the harrowing first person accounts told to us by former members who were able to escape the bondage of these groups. Some recount terrifying stories to CELEBRITY OF CULTS of dangerous escapes— and kidnappings—most conducted under the cover of night. These are illustrated with frightening dramatic recreations. These former members reveal their terrible fear of retribution and tell us how they are working to rebuild their lives on the outside. Experts tell us of the problems defectors create for cults and how the groups use violence and intimidation to try to bring these escapees back to the fold or to ensure they don’t divulge any cult secrets.

Former cult members who have managed to escape the grips of these sinister organizations tell CELEBRITY OF CULTS that the horror never ends. Even though they survived, the terrible damage done by cult life—even one lived decades ago—is a permanent scar that marks a survivor forever.
The Unification Church or “Moonies”

Known for their mass weddings and communal living, the Unification Church was founded by Sun Myung Moon in Korea in the 1940s. The group operated in the United Church as early as the 1970s where they were accused of separating vulnerable students from their families by using mind control techniques. The group’s landholdings in Korea alone were estimated to be worth 1 billion dollars in the 1990s. In 1993, a book by a former member alleged that Moon conducted sex rituals with female disciples. Despite their infamy, celebrities like Gerald Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Coretta Scott King, and George Bush have all been involved with the church.
The Manson Family

Founded by Charles Manson, the group came to prominence after the Sharon Tate murders in 1969. These were the most prominent murders committed by the group, but they are known to have committed at least five others. Charles Mason started the cult as a commune in 1967, when his bizarre views on Christ and Satan earned him a loyal following amongst young people taking part in the summer of love.

Dennis Wilson of the Beach Boys became involved with the group in 1967 and spent at least $100,000 supporting the group when some its members moved into his house. Several female cult members remained loyal to Manson until his death in 2017.
The group was founded in New York in 1966 by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who is still worshipped by followers today. George Harrison of the Beatles was a member and provided financial support to the group – even donating of a 23-acre property near London. The Hare Krishnas courted controversy when allegations of emotional, sexual, and ritual abuse were made by former members. A number of lawsuits have been filed against the group by former members for brainwashing and child abuse. The New Vrindaban offshoot group (the largest Hare Krishna community in the US) became infamous for a wide range of multi-million-dollar racketing schemes, mail fraud, and the illegal sales of copyrighted material in 1966. The leader was also charged with the murder of two followers but found not
The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan is three distinct movements in the United States that have advocated extremist reactionary positions such as white supremacy, white nationalism, anti-immigration, anti-Catholicism and antisemitism. The most recent incarnation of the KKK began after World War II and modeled their organization after the many fraternal orders that existed at the time. Members had to pay dues and purchase all regalia and materials from the Klan leadership. During the 1950s and 60s they used the members money to forge alliances with Southern police departments, as in Birmingham, Alabama; or with governor's offices, as with George Wallace of Alabama. They focused their activities on suppression of the civil rights movement, often using violence and murder to silence activists. Several members of KKK groups were convicted of murder in the deaths of civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964 and children in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963.
The Aryan Nation

The Aryan Nation was founded in Idaho in the 1970s as an arm of the Church of Jesus Christ-Christian which advocates an interpretation of Christianity which holds that only Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Nordic, Aryan people and their kindred blood are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and hence the descendants of the ancient Israelites. After the death of their leader Richard Girnt Butler, the Aryan Nation split into 3 main factions. While their overall numbers have diminished, they are still considered a “terrorist threat” by the FBI and a “racist cult” by the Southern Poverty Law Centre.
Raelism

Raelism is a UFO religion founded by Claude Vorilhon, known as Rael, in 1974. Members believe that extraterrestrials genetically engineered humanity. Rael requested 20 million dollars from his followers to build an embassy to receive extraterrestrials and was able to raise a staggering 7 million. In 1991, a French journalist attended a Raelian seminar and taped couples having sexual intercourse in tents. The resulting news stories described these practices as perverted and claimed they were a result of brainwashing. Former members have accused Rael of plagiarism – most of Rael’s “Sensual Meditation” book is said to have been derived from the Silva “Mind Control” Method. A former member alleged that Rael was holding his wife and children prisoners, treating them like criminals and forcing them to take part in orgies. He also alleged that children had been sacrificed at the group’s Sensual Meditation Camp. In 1992, he attempted to shoot Rael. In 1977 Rael founded Clonaid, an American-based human cloning organization that received a great deal of public and press attention.
The group, now known as Family International was founded in California by David Berg in 1968. Evangelical in its teachings, the group espoused “salvation, apocalypticism, spiritual revolution and happiness”. They developed a method called “Flirty Fishing” that used sex to show God’s love and mercy to win converts. Communes were set up in various cities, and there were 130 active communities around the world by 1972. Leaders were known to have engaged in abusive sexual practices involving minors and were also known to beat members and separate minors from their families. Former members also claimed that the group used mind control techniques as well as neglect to force them into submission. Despite condemnation of the group’s activities, Jeremy Spencer of Fleetwood Mac, Christopher Owens, Rose McGowan and Joaquin
The Nation of Islam

The group was founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad and has its roots in Detroit. It was estimated to have 20,000 to 50,000 members in 2007. The NOI, is known to be black supremacist, anti-Semitic and anti-LGBT. The sect is also one of the wealthiest and best-known organizations in black America. The current leader Louis Farrakhan has an estimated net worth of $3 million dollars. Malcolm X was a senior leader before he left to become a Sunni Muslim. Muhammad Ali and Snoop Dogg have been members. When Michael Jackson was associated with the group, associates said they were brainwashing him and asserting control over his business affairs, friends, and employees.
The People’s Temple

Best known for the “Kool-Aid” mass murder of 918 members, the group was founded by charismatic leader Jim Jones in 1955. Jones established a socialist hierarchy and demanded that members donate their material possessions to the Temple telling them the Temple would meet all their needs in exchange. Jones surrounded himself with mostly white, privileged members in their 20s and 30s who had skills in law, accounting, nursing, teaching, music, and administration. They carried out Temple duties and chores while handing over substantial salaries from their jobs. At its peak the cult had 300 residents and 2000 members. Claims of abuse led a congressman to visit the commune to investigate. When several members tried to leave with him, they were gunned down by Temple security guards. The congressman and three journalists were killed in the altercation.
The sect was founded by Benjamin Roden in 1955. In the mid-1980s, David Koresh left the group with a number of followers, eventually returning and becoming the leader. Koresh claimed to be a prophet, chosen by God to carry out his will.

Members alleged that Koresh practiced polygamy with underage brides, physically abused children and stockpiled illegal weapons. In his time with the sect, Koresh amassed assets worth more than $1 million. It was reported he controlled members’ credit cards and took their paychecks and property. 100 percent of members’ earnings also went to Koresh.

The sect is best known for the 1993 siege of their Center near Waco, Texas. The standoff with authorities lasted 51 days and resulted in the deaths of 82 members – including Koresh-- and four federal agents.
Heaven’s Gate

A UFO religious millenarian cult based in San Diego, the group was founded in 1974 by Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles. The group is known for the 1997 mass suicide of 39 members. When their bodies were discovered, members were all wearing patches that read “Heaven’s Gate Away Team.” These members committed suicide believing it would allow their souls to ascend to an extraterrestrial spacecraft following the Hale-Bopp Comet.

The group focused intently on science fictions shows, and one of the members who committed suicide was the brother of Nichelle Nichols who played Lieutenant Uhura in the original Star Trek series. Upon joining, members were forced to cut off contact with friends and family, turn over all their money and ritualistically purge themselves of impure worldly influences. The latter was accomplished by living on the Master Cleanse – lemonade, cayenne pepper and maple syrup – for months at a time. Indoctrination techniques were used to force members to conform. To further strip them of their individuality, members were required to make everything look the same as well and doing things such as shaving in a specific way. Members were not allowed to have sex, and several men were convinced to undergo castration to curb their sexual urges. The group attracted young, left leaning individuals and supported itself by working in web design. They are believed to be the first cult to use the internet to spread their message and recruit new members. Two former members still maintain the group’s website today.
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