

Victorian Cult ‘The Family’ Is Subject Of Chilling New Documentary

The film will premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival this weekend.

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Melbourne International Film Festival

A new documentary is setting the spotlight firmly on ‘The Family’, a sinister Victorian cult established in the late ‘60s. The documentary, which premieres at the [Melbourne International Film Festival](#) this week, will dive deep into the true story of the cult and its founders Anne Hamilton-Byrne and Raynor Johnson, *The Age* reports.

From their location in Lake Eildon in central Victoria on the fringes of a National Park, ‘The Family’ raised dozens children, many of whom were stolen from

their birth parents, mostly single mothers pressured into giving their children up for adoption. Once inducted into the cult, these children underwent severe emotional, physical and on occasion sexual abuse, were forced to use drugs including LSD and were starved and beaten as punishment.

All the children were dressed the same and often had their hair cut and dyed into blonde bobs. Some 28 children were forced into the cult, with 14 of them living with Johnson and Hamilton-Byrne on the Lake Eildon property.

The cult remained under the radar until 1987 when Sarah Moore, one of the children raised on the property, revealed the extent of the abuse to police. The Australian Federal Police's subsequent raid of the Lake Eildon house made headlines around the world.

Several of 'The Family's' children, now grown adults, appear in the documentary and reveal the shocking state of their childhoods to the filmmakers.

The Family's director Rosie Jones believes that the extent of the cult is yet to be fully investigated. According to Jones, the cult is still active in Melbourne, despite its founder Hamilton-Byrne being diagnosed with dementia and currently residing in a nursing home. Some 20-30 members are suspected to exist in Melbourne today, with a global diaspora that spreads to the UK and the US.

"Raynor Johnson had connections to all sorts of people," she told *The Age*. "He and Anne recruited doctors, lawyers, architects. They only recruited wealthy people, in fact, or people with status and skills they needed."

"It's extraordinary how many people you talk to who were part of it. It's much bigger than you think it is."

Head to the Melbourne International Film Festival to see The Family before its theatrical release next year. For all screening details, click [here](#).