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Holy Hell

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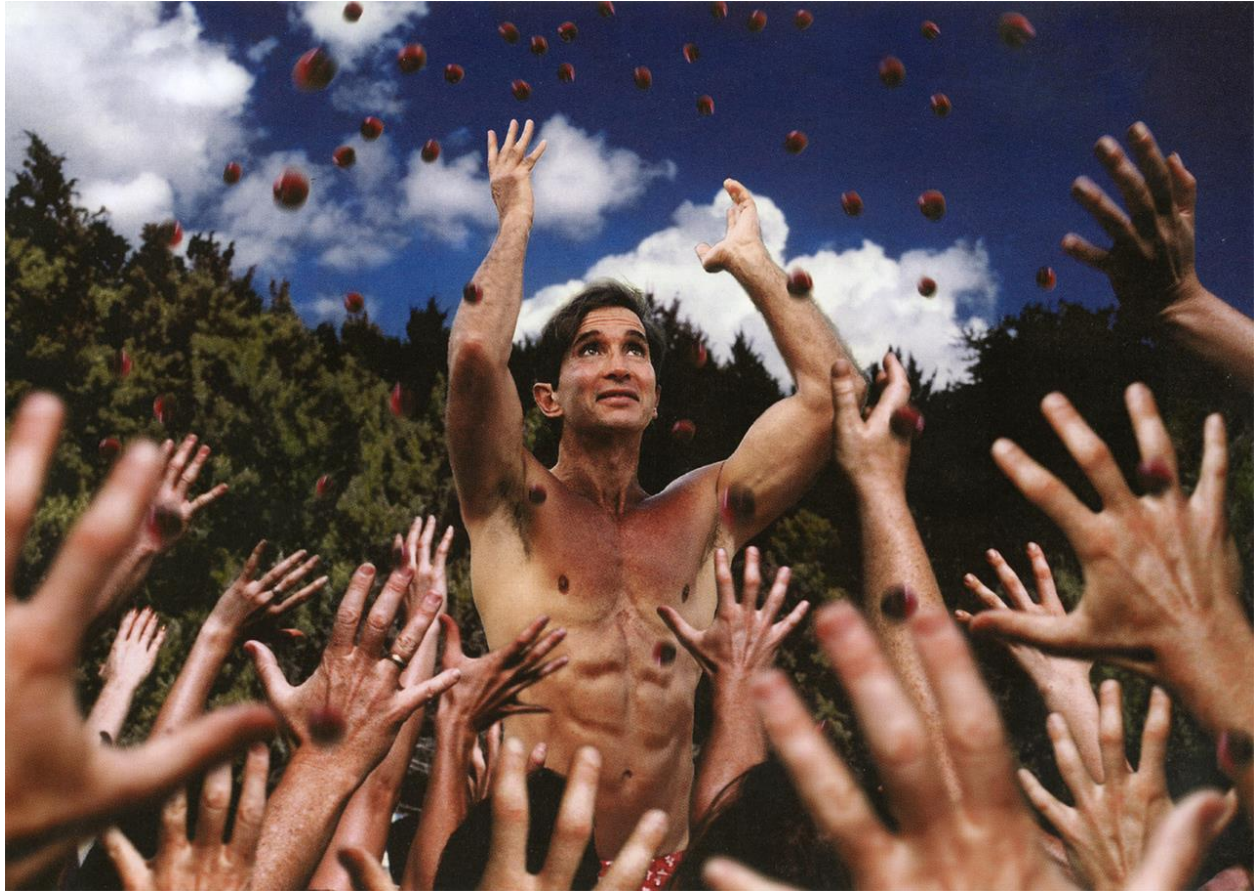
Holy Hell

Abstract

This is a film review of *Holy Hell* (2016) directed by Will Allen.

Author Notes

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Holy Hell
(2016)
Directed by Will Allen

This is the true story of a young man who joins a cult in West Hollywood right out of college. The cult leader, The Master, gives his followers the opportunity to meet God directly through a ceremony known as "The Knowing." Who wouldn't want to meet God? But, only The Master can bring you to God.

The cult became known as the Buddhafield. It served as a family for those who belonged and it gave one's life a spiritual purpose. But, as time went on, the cult became more demanding of its members and most of their time and effort became focused upon The Master. What began as an organization focused on each member became, in the end, a group of people serving the desires of The Master.

Although members of the cult were asked to transcend sex, it turns out that The Master was having sex with many of the male members of the group. But no one in the group knew what was happening to the others. If they were a sex partner for The Master, they were told to keep it a secret.

Eventually members of the group began to see The Master for what he was, a manipulative narcissist who loved the attention and adoration (and sex) he received from members of the group. And then the original group comes apart, with many of its members leaving. Not all members leave, as The Master has attracted more individuals to the group. Those who left have felt both betrayed and as though they have lost their family. Leaving was a very painful experience for them, but staying would have been even more painful.

There isn't much new about cults and how they operate in this film. What makes this film unique, however, is the fact that its director, Will Allen, was a part of the cult and its videographer. Because of Allen, we have video records of the years the members belonged to the cult, a video account that gives us an unusual record of how the cult operated. We get to see the cult in action, as opposed to merely hearing about it, and it is important to have this unique account.

For all of the insight the documentary makes available to the viewer, there is no explanation of why relatively affluent, successful people would join the cult in the first place. And, there is no explanation of why so many of them stayed a part of the cult for as long as they did – 20 years or more. The answer may be found in the fact that those members of the cult who left it all blame The Master. They do not take responsibility for their own participation in the cult.