



The Zodiac Killer: The Mystery of America's Most Infamous Serial Killer

Zed Simpson

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*Includes pictures *Includes contemporary accounts of the Zodiac Killer's crime spree and his messages to police *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents "I LIKE KILLING PEOPLE BECAUSE IT IS SO MUCH FUN IT IS MORE FUN THAN KILLING WILD GAME IN THE FORREST BECAUSE MAN IS THE MOST DANGEROUE ANAMAL OF ALL" – A section of the Zodiac Killer's cipher During the mid-1960s, the people of America became accustomed to opening their newspapers to two types of headlines. The first would be positive and often have something to do with the space program, perhaps which mission was in the works or which one had just been completed. Then there would be an article of a more negative nature, often concerning the United States' increasing involvement in the Vietnam War. Toward the end of 1968, however, a new and more sinister headline began to pop up. At first it was just in California and seemed to be simply a random crime, with a couple being murdered a few days before Christmas. It was a tragic tale, but in California, it was often dismissed as a byproduct of the youth culture of sex, drugs and rock and roll that often led young people to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Then, some months later, another couple was shot, and this time the man survived. The story he told was not of someone targeting either him or his friend, but of a type of madman shooting them again and again. The idea that there was an unhinged serial killer on the loose was confirmed when he began writing letters to the police and the newspapers, not only claiming responsibility for these killings but for others that either had been or would be committed. After he stabbed a third couple and then shot a cab driver in cold blood, he began to send more and more letters. These, like the earlier ones, were signed with a symbol understood only by the killer, a man who called himself "Zodiac." In addition to sending cryptic letters that authorities had to decipher, the Zodiac Killer used them to both taunt people and threaten more violence, warning that a failure to publish what he would wrote would lead him to "cruse [sic] around all weekend killing lone people in the night then move on to kill again, until I end up with a dozen people over the weekend." In many respects, the pattern of crime and writing letters was not novel at all. Around the same time the Zodiac Killer was murdering people on the West Coast, the Son of Sam terrorized New York City in much the same way by killing at random and writing letters to the police. Serial killers often use a set pattern and/or rituals as part of their modus operandi, so in that regard the actions of the Zodiac Killer didn't exactly distinguish him from other serial killers. The main difference, of course, is that most serial killers are caught, including the Son of Sam (David Berkowitz), while the Zodiac Killer's identity remains an unsolved mystery. By both remaining unidentified and leaving seemingly tantalizing clues in his writing, the Zodiac Killer ensured his notorious legacy in American history, much the same way the attempt to identify Jack the Ripper continues to fascinate people across the world today. If this case had been part of a well-written police show or movie, there would be music, shooting, and perhaps a romance between a cranky cop and a sexy detective. The case would be wrapped up in an hour or two, the killer would either be killed in an exciting firefight or put away for life, and the people of San Francisco would once more rest easy at night. But this was no movie, the script lacks an ending, and though the killer would be an old man by now, as far as anyone knows, he could still be alive and potentially dangerous. The Zodiac Killer: The Mystery of America's Most Infamous Serial Killer looks at the life of the serial killer and the crimes he committed.

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