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The darkest, dirtiest celeb family secrets unearthed by *Who Do You Think You Are?*



Strictly Ballroom star Paul Mercurio unearthed some dark secrets regarding his family's connections in 'Who Do You Think You Are?' (Ronin films)

Retracing the celebrities who uncovered some serious skeletons in their family's closets.

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Who Do You Think You Are? has unearthed many well-kept family secrets of celebrities over its history. Often this has come in the form of pleasant or welcome surprises.

For some of the stars though, their historical journeys have taken them to much darker places as they learn of brutal histories and shocking secrets hiding amid their ancestry.

Richard Roxburgh's connections to the brutal slave industry



Travelling back to Trinidad and Tobago, where Richard was surprised to learn that his Scottish family had some significant influence and power in the region. His Great Great Grandfather Thomas Roxburgh, was heavily embroiled in the grim and brutal slave industry in the Caribbean. Owning up to 109 slaves at one point on his sugar plantation, he actually actively fought against the abolition of slavery

When Paul Mercurio uncovered family ties to the mafia



TV Chef and star of *Strictly Ballroom*, Paul Mercurio followed his family history back to his father's place of birth in the United States. He finds that his grandfather Vince Mercurio had a very dark and murky history, with questionable political connections who was in fact named in the national archives of the FBI as a member of the Milwaukee division of La Cosa Nostra aka the Sicilian Mafia in the 1950s.

Tina Arena's dark family history of poverty and child slave labour

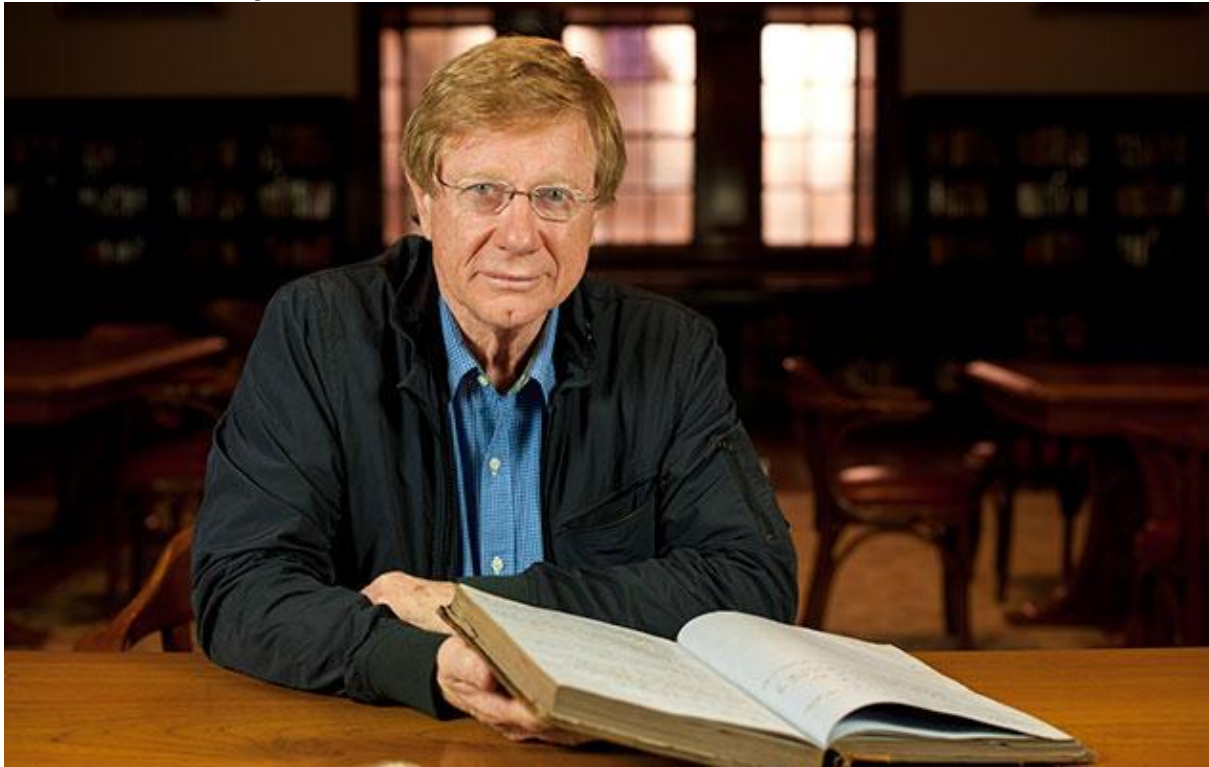


When Tina Arena set out on her journey, she didn't know anything about her maternal grandmother Filippa Giulivo, but she soon discovered there was a lot of sadness in her past. Talking to her mother for the first time about Filippa's origins and discovers that she was an orphan whose parents died when she was young.

Returning to Italy, Tina learns that her *great*-grandmother Carmela, had more children than Tina had first realised. It turned out that Carmela had taken in six "foundlings" (babies abandoned by parents too poor to support them) with her own children, meaning she raised 11 children children all up in spite of incredible hardship and poverty.

Investigating her grandfather Francesco, who she'd remembered as rather strict and grumpy, she soon learned that the source of his temperament could have been the hardship he endured as a child when he was forced to work in virtual slave labour in dangerous sulphur mines in Sicily from the age of just six-years-old.

That time Kerry O'Brien uncovered his criminal connections



He's known as one of Australia's toughest journos and has reported on his fair share of crooks, but when Kerry O'Brien tracked down his own family history in season four, he uncovered that it was crime that brought his own family to Australia in the first place.

His Irish great-great-grandparents were sent to Australia as convicts to the penal colony - and it seems they endured incredible hardship and poverty as a result, even after they were released as free settlers. Their crime? Stealing livestock.

Rebecca Gibney discover her family's role in a dark and violent chapter of New Zealand's history



Heading back to New Zealand, Rebecca Gibney learns of her ancestor's involvement in one of the most brutal atrocities ever to occur in the country.

Her Great Great Grandfather, James Way Jnr, who had a tragic upbringing of his own, having lost his mother and two siblings in quick succession, was involved in the military invasion of the peaceful Maori settlement of Parihaka in Taranaki. The Maori people bravely defied the invaders with non-violent resistance.

Hoping to help heal this past shame, Rebecca apologises for her ancestor's role and in a highly moving reconciliation ceremony she offers up a tearful rendition of Amazing Grace as a way of thanking the community for the warmth and friendship they have offered her after they offered her an official Maori welcome.

Jacki Weaver's shameful family secrets



The legendary Aussie star of stage and screen was slammed in the 1970s for having a child out of wedlock but she soon learns that in fact her father's mother Grace was born out of wedlock too.

Both Grace and her mother Adeline were stigmatized by the society of the day, both suffering from a mysterious affliction, they were classed as "imbeciles" - which could have meant anything back then.

Jacki's father it turns out, had some hidden dark history of his own too, as she discovers the truth behind his role as a bomb aimer in the Bombing of Dresden, one of the most controversial events of World War II.

Mischief murder and mayhem in Lisa McCune's family history



When Lisa McCune went digging to find out more about her mysterious great-grandfather, she learned that he had been the perpetrator of a sensational goldrush murder at a mine in Western Australia. The newspapers described it as "one of the most fiendish murders ever committed in the State."

Melissa George's shocking skeletons in the family closet



Aussie actress Melissa George learned on her journey of a descendant, several generations back on her father's side, who worked at Rottnest Island in the 19th century as the warden at a brutal prison for Aboriginal men and boys. He was also implicated in one of Australia's first recorded Aboriginal deaths in custody.

Things were pretty grim on her mother's side too as she learns that as orphaned children, both her great-grandparents were shipped out to Australia as unaccompanied minors in the hope of a better life.