



WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

In the dead of night, paranormal investigators venture into abandoned buildings and cemeteries in search of eerie clues. One is a saleswoman who converses with spirits, another is a former construction worker who fights ghostly assailants, and then there's a father of two who hosts a reality show with a difference...

Story: Denise Mooney

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Attila Kaldy Paranormal Research Division, NSW

Donald Trump and Mark Bouris may have been tough on their protégés on TV's *The Apprentice*, but at least they didn't have to camp overnight in haunted buildings.



Paranormal Investigators:

The Challenge follows the fortunes of a trainee paranormal investigator who is put through a series of terrifying challenges. If she has what it takes, she will join the Paranormal Research Division, a group of New South Wales investigators established by Attila Kaldy nine years ago.

Auditions are held in a haunted house in Macarthur, NSW, where Kaldy, 37, has to choose one of four girls to star in the show. They each take turns to stay in the building, alone, overnight.

"These girls have never been exposed to this type of challenge before," Kaldy tells us. "The fear factor is obviously there, which is natural, but I think they surprised themselves."

The selection process is part of the series, so the father of two wasn't keen to give much away, except to say that conditions were "extreme". Television critics dubbed the first season, which screened last year, "One of the most fun half-hours on TV".

The Paranormal Research Division has seven members, including coordinator Kaldy, cameramen, analysts and a medium. Together, they have investigated hundreds of alleged haunted sites. On an overnight investigation at an abandoned hospital identified only as

which can indicate the presence of paranormal activity. *Paranormal Investigators: The Challenge 2* will screen on TVS, QCTV and Channel 31 later this year.

THE TEAM'S EQUIPMENT SUDDENLY WENT DEAD, LEAVING THEM IN TOTAL DARKNESS

'the facility', team members were terrified by a ghostly apparition. A 'vortex' raced in the door, spinning around the middle of the floor before disappearing. The apparition occurred after the team received a stark warning to leave, relayed through a medium. "The cameraman freaked out and took off," says Kaldy. "It's something you can't explain."

The team is called out frequently, but not all spooky situations have otherworldly origins. Many are similar to the case of a man in Camden, NSW, who kept seeing figures in his bedroom. "This man's head was up against where the [electricity] meter box was, so he was always being pounded by electromagnetic radiation," reveals Kaldy. "It was causing him to hallucinate." According to pro paranormal researchers, electromagnetic radiation can often mimic the symptoms of a genuine haunting. Electromagnetic field (EMF) meters are used to detect a disruption in the natural energy field,

Brad Scott, New Zealand Paranormal Investigation Society, Wellington

Brad Scott is so hard that even ghosts don't mess with him. "No-one would want to follow me home," he tells us. "I can handle myself, but it has taken years of practice."

Scott developed an interest in the paranormal after sharing his childhood home in Queensland with a poltergeist. "The television would turn itself on and off," he claims.

After moving to Wellington, Scott formed the New Zealand Paranormal Investigation Society in 2006. Since then, his group of intrepid ghost hunters has explored haunted sites all over NZ. One of the spookiest was Wrights Hill Fortress in Wellington, where the



team's equipment suddenly went dead as they walked through one of the tunnels, leaving them in total darkness. "When an entity is trying to form, it will draw on any power it can," says Scott. The group heard "funny, groaning noises" coming from behind locked steel doors and, just as suddenly, all of their equipment came back on and the strange sounds stopped.

A haunted pub in the North Island township of Feilding was the site of another odd occurrence. "Nothing was happening, as usual. I was saying, 'Come on!

Where are you? I've heard stories about you.' I was trying to get them to react." Within minutes, Scott was pushed over and large scratches and welts formed on his back: "My back was burning. It felt like someone had pushed me really hard. I pissed somebody off." He says being attacked by the paranormal can leave you with traces of "someone else": "You can bring things home with you that you definitely don't want."

With 15 years of experience under his belt, the 37-year-old is now more safety conscious. "I learned the hard way," he admits ruefully. The group doesn't use mediums, instead relying exclusively on documented evidence. Over the years, Scott has spent \$50,000 on



equipment, including the very latest in sound-editing software. "It's taken me years to build this up," he says. "I run my own DVD business to fund it." He is currently filming the second series of a fly-on-the-wall documentary called *NZ Paranormal TV*; the first was shown on the Triangle network last year. So far, it hasn't been too lucrative, although it has proved popular on YouTube.

Scott prides himself on being able to debunk most reports of paranormal activity, putting them down to "overactive imaginations" or structural causes, which his construction background helps him establish. But what excites him is the 10 per cent of cases he can't explain: "I've seen too much and experienced too much. There has to be another plane that we don't know about. I'll probably never find the answer, but who's to say people won't a hundred years from now?"

Christine Segært, Spookspotters, Vic

Christine Segært sells adventure flights in old military aircraft for a living. But after-hours, her activities are a little edgier. For as long as she can remember, the 41-year-old has had ▶



MOST HAUNTED: **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**

Port Arthur, Tasmania

The former penal colony has several reported sightings of ghosts. Among them are the Reverend George Eastman; the mysterious 'Lady in Blue'; and the spirit of Charles O'Hara Booth, an early commandant of the prison.

Walhalla, Vic

This old gold-rush town is said to have the highest ratio of ghosts to humans in Australia. Home to more than 4000 people during the 1860s, today there are just 20 residents...and at least five ghosts.

Quarantine Station, Manly, NSW

Hundreds of new immigrants were isolated here for months on end in truly appalling conditions. Tourists have reported seeing ghostly nurses and long-dead patients, including a young girl who is frequently spotted in the cemetery.

Monte Cristo Homestead, Junee, NSW

Monte Cristo is famous all over the world for being 'the most haunted house in Australia'. Paranormal activity here is thought to stem from the Crawley family, who built the house in 1884. There have been reports of phantom piano playing, bedside apparitions and mysterious footsteps.

Maitland Gaol, NSW

The gaol, situated 163km north of Sydney, opened in 1849 to house convicts, including women and children, and was the site of many executions. It was considered one of Australia's toughest prisons. Backpacker murderer Ivan Milat was incarcerated here before the gaol's closure in 1998.

Kapunda, SA

Allegedly the most haunted town in Australia, Kapunda is a former mining centre located two hours outside of Adelaide. The ghost of a girl sent to the local Catholic reformatory after falling pregnant has been spotted in the cemetery at night, looking for her dead baby.

Picton Tunnel, NSW

The ghost of Emily Bollard, a woman killed by a train in 1916, is said to lurk in the abandoned railway tunnel. Witnesses have reported seeing odd lights and shadows, and feeling gusts of wind similar to those caused by approaching locomotives.

Aradale Asylum, VIC

Situated high on a hill in the Victorian town of Ararat, Aradale housed the criminally insane between 1859 and 1887. There are stories of dark figures roaming the hospital, and unusual noises such as footsteps, crying and moaning.


Studley Park House, NSW

This grand Victorian mansion is reportedly haunted by several ghosts, including an older male who can be seen looking out from the windows of the house.

St James Theatre, Wellington, NZ

There have been numerous sightings of spirits here, including that of Yuri, a Russian performer who was reportedly pushed to his death from one of the stages. There is also a 'wailing woman', the ghost of an actress who killed herself after her performance was poorly received.





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▶ the ability to see and talk to the dead. Her abilities became apparent when she was a child: “I asked my parents, why are all these men in the house?” Her shocked folks took her to a child psychologist, but later contacted a priest when they too began having bizarre experiences. “My mother was ironing clothes and the iron flew off the ironing board and almost hit her,” asserts Segaert. “She ran in to the neighbours’ house and when she got back, all the doors had been locked.”

One of Segaert’s all-time favourite haunts is Walhalla, a former gold-rush town in Victoria. In the late 19th century, it had a population of more than 4000. Today, it’s a ghost town in every sense. “It’s totally amazing,” enthuses Segaert. Windsor House Bed and Breakfast has a permanent guest, a maid called Emily who presumably worked at the house in its heyday. “She’s very nice; there’s nothing wrong with her. She just has this thing about doing her work, and she would lock all the doors. She locked my son in his room once.”

Segaert set up Spookspotters shortly after moving to Melbourne 10 years ago. She works with another medium, as well as researchers and technicians, but investigations don’t focus on her psychic readings. “It provides a story,” she explains. “It’s all about evidence gained through our equipment. We never look at one piece of evidence on its own.” The team relies on video cameras with infra-red sensors, voice

recorders, temperature gauges and EMF meters to record paranormal activity.

Forays into the supernatural can be fairly laborious and time-consuming, and the group operates on a voluntary basis. “You can have eight hours of footage on four voice recorders, and there will be six cameras running for all that time,” says Segaert. “Someone has to sit through all of that.” Most people who contact

Spookspotters want to know why their house or business is haunted: “They want to know they’re not going mad.”

According to Segaert, there are a number of reasons why ghosts hang around: “One could be fear—they won’t go to the light, or they’re attached to someone and they don’t want to leave. Some of them don’t realise they’re dead.” 