

GATWICK

THE LAST CHANCE HOTEL



ABC and iview TUESDAY NOVEMBER 27 AT 9.20PM

In 2018 Australians were given a glimpse of the Gatwick Private Hotel in St Kilda on popular renovation series *The Block*. The Gatwick has been described by some as a flophouse, a hellhole even, and by others as providing an essential service for the disadvantaged.

Shot over four years, **Gatwick - The Last Chance Hotel** chronicles the final years of the hotel, a boarding house that over the years became a local, and then national icon and reveals the intimate stories and the fascinating characters you never knew about – and the women who dedicated their lives to looking after them.

Rose Banks and Yvette Kelly offered their tenants much more than a roof over their heads, and **Gatwick – The Last Chance Hotel** is as much a loving tribute to the sisters as it is a contemplation of dignity and the challenges faced by the underprivileged, including the basic need for shelter.

Clouded by various myths perpetuated in the media, this film tells the true story of Rose Banks and Yvette Kelly, twin sisters who worked at the hotel from the age of 14 until they sold the property in 2017. Halfway home to a few; home to many, in this intimate documentary, we observe a rag tag menagerie of characters who either live in; frequent; or volunteered at the Gatwick, under the watchful and caring eyes of twin sisters known locally as 'The Saints of St Kilda'.

Creator/Producer Jason Byrne; Co-Producer Julian V. Costanzo; Editor Sara Edwards.



HISTORY

Bought by Vittoria and René Carbone in 1972, the Gatwick Private Hotel was run as a boarding house where Vittoria became loved and cherished, known fondly as 'Queen Vicky'. Remembered for her compassion and motherly nature she passed away in 1998 and the family estate put the property up for sale. Wanting to continue their mother's legacy, Rose and Yvette bought the Gatwick back and continued running it like a family home for the less fortunate members of the community.



Rose Banks and Yvette Kelly had started working at the Gatwick when they were only 14 years old and have dedicated their lives to it ever since. Always at peril of being shut down due to the **inherent consequences of catering to the marginalised section of Melbourne's community** they continued to provide a home and beds to those who had nowhere else to go, up until 2017.

The feature documentary **Gatwick – The Last Chance Hotel** opens the doors to this historical building, allowing the viewer a unique look into the lives and love that made this institution what it was. We are given unrestricted access to the sisters who became mothers to hundreds, selflessly opening their hearts and home to the disadvantaged for over 40 years.

If you ask a Melburnian about the Gatwick Private Hotel, you will most likely get a variation on the **same reaction: it's a bad place that brings trouble, it's haunted, sinister, filthy, replete with murder and crime**. The boarding house has picked up a barrage of negative publicity over the years and has even been referred to as 'The Hotel of Horrors'. A number of people wanted it shut down.

But look deeper, ask around locally in St. Kilda and you come across a lot of people with a different story. Those with fond memories of the building, of the friends and family they made there, or most likely of all, someone with heartfelt praise and adoration for Queen Vicky and Aunties Rose and Ety. These strong women leave behind a legacy of compassion that we rarely see today.

Rose and Yvette see the residents of the Gatwick as their children, or, in their own words: "They're all somebody's children, and they're our children now". The place was both a fortress and a community. Once you crossed the front steps, you were in a completely different time and space: an outpost from yesteryear, a quirky village, a microcosm of poets, lovers, revellers and dreamers. Nobody is outcast. Everybody belongs.

Once offered over seven million dollars for the Gatwick, the sisters turned it down in order to continue doing what they loved. For decades the building had provided shelter, community and a home in which every single person was welcome and accepted. They housed over 80 residents and unsurprisingly, the rooms (and hallways) were always full.

The private hotel had seen its share of death and violence, but Rose and Yvette insist that nobody ever crossed a line with them or made them feel threatened in any way. They were respected and admired by the residents and many other members of the community. This documentary, filmed over four years, gives a glimpse into what made them so loved but at the same time a target for gentrification.

In the beginning Producer/Creator Jason Byrne stumbled across the story of the two identical twin sisters who owned and managed the infamous hotel in St Kilda. Friend and St Kilda social worker Ange Schistan, and Jason's wife Katie Graham suggested investigating their story of generosity and kindness.

Jason Byrne: "I introduced myself and witnessed in the space of hour more selfless acts of kindness that some people would enact in a life time. I had to tell this story. So the journey began, documenting the cavalcade of characters and the eco system of the Gatwick, with the collaboration with a number of brilliant creative talents including Sara Edwards, Luci Schroder, Jaque Fisher and others."

This documentary, filmed over four years, gives a glimpse into the final years of the Gatwick Hotel under Rose and Yvette's care to the time when they reluctantly decide to sell.

In 2018 the new owners were revealed to be the Nine Network, producers of *The Block*.

The Banks and Kelly families' legacy of compassion is engrained in this building and when all of it (except for the exterior façade) was torn down and rebuilt by *The Block* the twins mourned the loss of the building like any other family member.

Walking down Fitzroy Street with her grandchildren months after the sale and hand over, Yvette was compelled to buy a piece of the family's legacy back after one of the children pointed at the closed building and asked, "There's Nanny's house, can we pop in?"

When *The Block* apartments went under the hammer on October 28th, 2018, the sisters bought one of the five put under the hammer.

The sisters intend to retire in the apartment and spend their last years in the building that brought so much love, laughter and joy to their lives for over fifty years. "Every window has a story", said Rose.

BIOGRAPHIES

Jason Byrne - CREATOR/PRODUCER

Jason has produced the feature films *Brothers' Nest*, *Sucker*, *Rats and Cats* (with director Tony Rogers) and *Little Deaths* (winner of Best Feature Film at SPAA, 2008). He co-produced the IF Award-winning feature film *One Perfect Day* and produced the tele-feature *The Heart Break Tour*, and ABC documentaries *Beyond the Backyard* and feature-length *Shadowplay*.

Byrne has produced many internationally recognised TV commercials and award-winning short films with directors Rachel Griffiths (*Roundabout*), Clayton Jacobson (*I Love U*), Eron Sheehan (*Fish*), Edwin McGill (*Booth Story* and *Imprint*) and Josh Whiteman (*One Minute*).

He is currently in production on feature films *The Girls* and *No Prisoners*, both of which received recent development funding. These will be Jason's directing debut.

Julian V. Costanzo - CO-PRODUCER

Julian V. Costanzo has produced more than ten award-winning short films, three features and multiple web series. Notably he was the first producer to have two short films in the Tropfest Top 16, with *Off the Meter* and *Coping* screening in December 2013, and he was also the winner of Tropfest 2012 with *Lemonade Stand*.

In 2015 he produced the Screen Australia funded comedic web series *Footballer Wants a Wife* and was selected by the Screen Producers' 'One's to Watch' program as one of 20 emerging producers representing the next generation of the industry. Julian is passionate about telling compelling human stories and the story of Rose and Etty at the Gatwick he rates as one of the most compelling he has ever come across.

Sara Edwards - EDITOR

Sara Edwards began her editing career in 1994 cutting television commercials and music videos, including the Aria award-winning Madison Avenue clips. Working with various directors across a wide range of media, Sara has edited several documentaries, television dramas and shorts. She was nominated for an AFI award in 2008 for her work on *Not Quite Hollywood*.

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