

ABBIE HOFFMAN

JEWISH ROAD WARRIOR

We all think we know Abbie Hoffman.

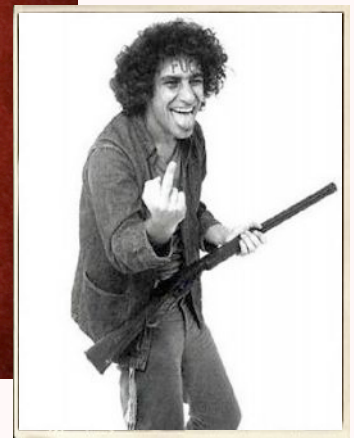


Hippie. Yippie. Dissident. Activist.
Counterculture rabble-rouser.
Icon of the 1960s.

But this is NOT a film about the 1960s... this is the
UNTOLD STORY of Abbie Hoffman's life on the run –
a fugitive from the FBI, many times an exile in plain
sight, romping through America and the world.

Perhaps historian Howard Zinn captures it best:

“There was no one quite like him, no one who so combined brilliant, zany wit with serious political purpose. There also was no one who so brought together – as with a clash of cymbals – the cultural revolution of the sixties with the tumultuous protests for racial justice and against the war in Vietnam, and very few who carried over the energy and commitment of those years into the seventies and eighties, without a pause and without any twinge of uncertainty.”



Catch me if you can

I. INTRO & EXPOSITION (the sixties)

Giving the back-story, the context... fast-paced, driving music, sound bites when needed...

Abbie becoming Abbie:



The ubiquitous button-up American flag shirt...

The rebellious 1968 Democratic National

Convention, when the better angels of our nature

were so sorely missing... The subsequent and

brawling Chicago Eight Trial... Abbie levitating the

Pentagon with Allen Ginsburg and 20,000 hippies...

Abbie Hoffman is remembered best as the “clown prince of American radicalism,” a man with a brilliant penchant for political theater that brought the growing antiwar movement to mainstream America through their televisions and mass media.

II. RISING ACTION TO CLIMAX (the “guts” of this film)

In 1974, facing twenty years in Attica for a coke-bust setup by the FBI (who had already amassed more than 13,000 pages on Hoffman through their illegal COINTELPRO Program), Abbie goes underground and embarks on a seven-year thrilling, hilarious, harrowing, but ultimately triumphant romp across the US, Latin America, and Europe – all the while evading federal authorities who were often just a few steps behind. It was Abbie’s own magical mystery tour.



With unprecedented and exclusive access to the personal files, photos, and footage belonging to Abbie Hoffman’s estate and Johanna Lawrenson (his longtime partner), the vast majority of which has never been publicly released, this documentary feature film will tell the definitive story of Abbie Hoffman's life and legacy – the good, the bad, the ugly... and the uproarious.

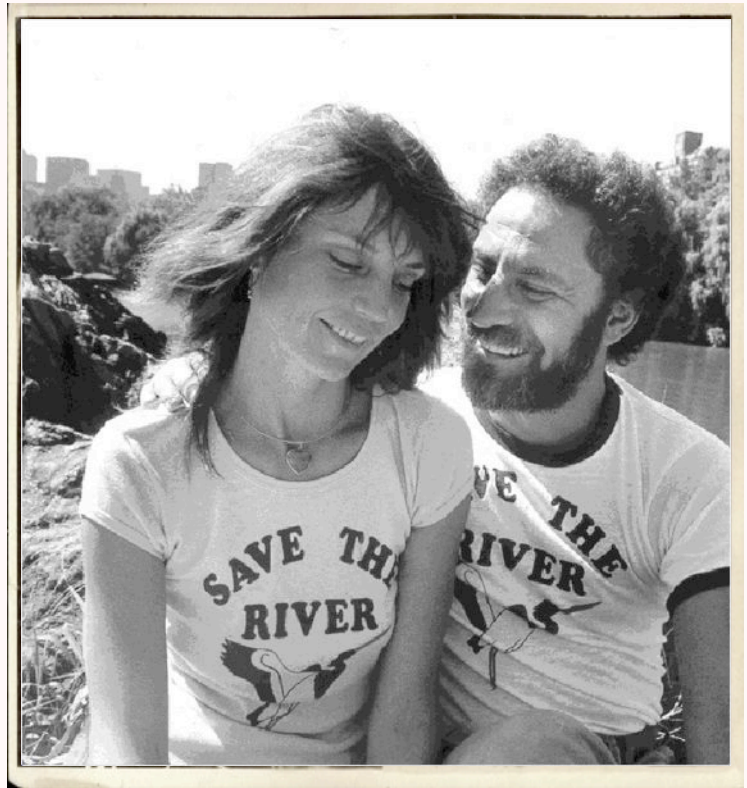
What follows is a collection of bites, “snapshots” that create the essence of the film... moments that drive the narrative through the 1970s and 80s.

- ★ **February of 1974:** Abbie drops out of sight after much preparation, leaving his wife Anita to care for their 3 year old son “america” Hoffman. For days, Abbie tells america a story about a bunny rabbit hiding in the woods from the bad hunters.
- ★ **Posing as a Canadian TV host,** Abbie visits a plastic surgeon and goes under the knife to alter his appearance.
- ★ **Abbie’s father dies** one month after he goes underground; the FBI shows up en masse at the funeral hoping to catch him.
- ★ **The Weather Underground** tells Abbie that, “going alone is very tough. None of our people make it alone.” Luckily for Abbie, he meets Johanna Lawrenson in Mexico; she becomes his “running mate.” In the articles he publishes while on the run, Abbie calls her “Angel” and himself “The Fugitive.” They are together until Abbie’s death.
- ★ **Abbie publishes “To America With Love,”** his underground correspondence with his son america.
- ★ **Abbie and Johanna flee Mexico** after a Playboy interview shares details they believe will blow their cover.
- ★ **Abbie obliges a request from Francis Ford Coppola** who asks him to smuggle a print of *The Godfather* into Cuba for Fidel. Huey Newton is already in Havana and asks Abbie to also bring a toilet seat - citing the lack thereof as the only great inconvenience of living on the island nation. So Abbie travels to Cuba with *The Godfather* under one arm and a toilet seat under the other...
- ★ **Abbie and Johanna attend Jimmy Carter’s inauguration.** They stand a mere 15 feet away from the new president as Jimmy and Rosalynn walk home.
- ★ **Amazingly, Abbie takes the tour of FBI Headquarters** while in D.C. and visits the newly completed J. Edgar Hoover Building. He then writes and publishes his personal review of the tour, which opens with the line:

“A chill sneaked up my spine as I crossed the moat and wandered up and down, looking for the right door.”
- ★ **Abbie and Johanna employ intricate evasion techniques** to ensure their invisibility, their delicate freedom – take one car, jump into another, now a bus, maybe a train or a cab, back alleys, costumes, change the way you move...

“To forget what your body is doing, is to forget you are a hunted animal.”
- ★ **“A simple ‘what’s your name?’ can produce insane giggles.”** In Las Vegas, after years of using many identities, Abbie has the first of several what he calls “crack-ups” or mental breakdowns. A second crack-up in NYC lands him in jail, but he doesn’t blow his cover identity.
- ★ **As reported by PEOPLE Magazine:** Abbie makes two brief, anxiety-riddled visits to see his mother Florence in his hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts. PEOPLE magazine quotes her as saying: “He was shaking from worry that he’d be caught.”

- ★ **Abbie and Johanna escape to the Thousand Islands** in upstate NY, a remote base on the St. Lawrence River that they utilize for the next several years. Undercover, Abbie's three children visit him here often.
- ★ **Food Critic, Playboy Magazine:** Abbie uses a three-sentence letter he writes in a motel room in Amarillo, Texas introducing himself and Johanna as Mr. and Mrs. Mark Samuels, food critic and photographer for Playboy Magazine. They travel through Paris, the French Riviera, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland as the magazine's powerful cuisine scribes, eating 65 meals at 54 of the best restaurants in the world. His resulting article explains the scam, but also lovingly tells of the meals and the chefs and includes a top ten list of the best spots.
- ★ **Becoming Barry Freed:** While living on the St. Lawrence River, Abbie and Johanna learn of a proposed plan by the Army Corps of Engineers that will threaten the local ecology and the livelihood of people living on the river. Now operating publicly as "Barry Freed," Abbie successfully leads the "Save the River!" campaign, which blocks the project. He even appears in a photograph (in a beard and dark sunglasses) alongside U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who proclaimed they all owed a debt of gratitude to Barry Freed.
- ★ **In 1980, Abbie visits ABC studios** for a 25 minute interview with Barbara Walters, talking about his time on the run and promoting his newly published autobiography, "Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture," after which he turns himself in to federal authorities. Abbie spends one year in prison in upstate NY.
- ★ **Abbie's work as an activist** and community organizer continues as he galvanizes support to block the construction of nuclear power plants, U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, while lecturing at some 50 universities a year.
- ★ **In 1987, he joins former president Jimmy Carter's daughter, Amy Carter,** in a civil disobedience action against CIA recruitment on the campus of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. President Carter and Hoffman graciously correspond about Abbie's political relationship with Amy.
- ★ **In the subsequent trial** (AT THE FILM'S CRESCENDO), Abbie defends himself, giving perhaps the greatest and most rousing speech of his life (shades of Atticus Finch) – a powerful summation of his political and humanistic beliefs. The jury acquits Hoffman and all the other defendants.



III. DÉNOUEMENT (Abbie's final demise)

After resurfacing, Abbie was diagnosed with manic depression and began taking treatment medications. In 1989, he was found dead, a result of suicide in his Pennsylvania apartment – the coroner finding residue of a large dose of Phenobarbital tablets in his system.

A week later a memorial was held at his childhood synagogue in Worcester, Massachusetts, where Rabbi Norman Mendell said Abbie's long history of protest was:



*“in the Jewish prophetic tradition,
which is to comfort the afflicted
and afflict the comfortable.”*

Creative Execution

For a film about Abbie Hoffman there is no better point of style reference than Abbie himself:

**fast-paced • energetic • irreverent • entertaining
incisive • deadly funny • dead serious**

Throughout Abbie's remarkable and turbulent life, he befriended many notable celebrities and political personalities – from John Lennon and Yoko Ono to Daniel Ellsberg and Bobby Seale, from Jane Fonda and Bill Walton to Susan Sarandon and Jimmy Carter. He also made enemies and there were lots of critics. Together, they will add color, perspective, and personal insight. Combined with a wealth of exclusive and never-before-seen media, ***ABBIE HOFFMAN: Jewish Road Warrior*** will paint an honest and fiercely personal portrait of an American icon.

