

**NEW YORK'S MOST NOTORIOUS SERIAL KILLER**

**"That's their job...  
to get into a  
stranger's car."**

**- Joel Rifkin**

# JOEL

**STARRING ARNOLD ODO AS JOEL RIFKIN  
PRODUCED BY APRIL FLOYD  
WRITTEN, DIRECTED, AND EDITED BY JOHN R. HAND**

Copyright © MMXVII John R. Hand

Email: [johnrhand@gmail.com](mailto:johnrhand@gmail.com)

Website: [joelthemovie.com](http://joelthemovie.com)

# JOEL

USA | 2017 | 84 min. | Color | 1.78:1 | Stereo | Dir. John R. Hand

## Synopsis

"Joel" is a true crime film based on the story of New York's most notorious serial killer Joel Rifkin, who murdered at least seventeen prostitutes in the late eighties and early nineties.

The product of over three years worth of intensive research, "Joel" is one of the most accurate and in-depth cinematic renderings of the life and crimes of a serial killer ever made.



## **Director Statement**

It took me years of searching to discover Joel Rifkin's story. It took a few more years of false starts, rewrites and total rethinks before I could reduce Rifkin's story to the essential elements and finally create the completed film.. The story of Joel Rifkin is often neglected - there's no extravagant details of ritualized crime scenes, no sordid tales of a warped childhood. Rifkin had a normal upbringing until various obsessions and emotional forces led him to the murder a string of sex workers in the New York area.

There were many elements of Rifkin's life story I could relate to, such as his early abuse at the hands of his school classmates, his early adult floundering at finding a job, and his inability to live up to his father's expectations. His surface normality forces us to confront his humanity and makes his crimes even more horrifying.

Most films made from the stories of real-life killers take only the basic details of the actual events and then invent their own fictional stories and characters. The filmmakers frequently invent a specific character, usually a law enforcement figure, who can guide us like children through the world of our killer as a kind of rational window into the world of madness. With *Joel*, I wanted to strip that away and tell the story directly from the viewpoint of Joel Rifkin with as much authentic detail as possible. I wanted to use his own words taken directly from interviews to weave a fractured portrait of the man, his crimes, and his victims.

## **Finding "Joel"**

I think the great films about serial killer revolve around a great performance from the lead serial killer, and I couldn't have asked for anyone else to portray Rifkin than Arnold Odo. Arnold was literally delivered to me by the movie gods. His performance has a sense of subtlety and a depth that really captivated and inspired me. He's able to take us on this journey through the development of this psychopath and the perfect storm of emotions which lead to him to become homicidal. He also closely resembles Rifkin physically as well.



## **On Creating The Soundtrack**

I've had some experience creating the electronic scores for my previous films and I knew synthesizers were the perfect musical palette for *Joel's* soundtrack to realize the pulsing sonic undercurrents of Joel's obsessions. Filmmakers used to be really prejudiced again electronic music but I think that stigma is slowly fading away as kids grow up loving the John Carpenter film music and wanting to use those types of pure analog synth sounds in their own work. The stigma of electronic music being cold, unemotional and inappropriate for anything other than sci-fi is slowly dying out.

## **The One-Man Crew**

We shot the film primarily with a one-man crew, portable battery-powered lights and the smallest cameras we could find in order to document the seedy environs where Rifkin perpetrated his crimes - the flea pit hotel rooms, back alleys and claustrophobic car interiors. Shooting in these spaces required a very mobile, lightweight approach to the entire production. You could definitely make a multi-million dollar Joel Rifkin film but I don't think it would have the same texture we were able to imbue with our lo-fi approach.



## About the Filmmaker

Director John R. Hand formed JRH Films with the goal producing work with a unique style which incorporate elements of both conventional narrative, experimental cinema and documentary form into bold new works.

His debut feature-length film which he photographed in Super-8, *Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare*, garnered a peculiar degree of underground acclaim and divisive reviews. Joe Leydon wrote in *Variety* that the film "...plumbs the lower depths of awfulness to a degree unmatched by pictures merely inept and/or pretentious" and could "become a cult item by dint of its befuddling crudeness."

Hand's follow-up film was the enigmatic post-apocalyptic fairy tale *Scars of Youth*, the transgressive sci-fi piece *The Synthetic man*, and the euro horror-inspired *Forest of the Vampire*.

Contact Info:

John R. Hand - JRH Films

[johnrhand@gmail.com](mailto:johnrhand@gmail.com)

[www.jrhfilms.com](http://www.jrhfilms.com)

[www.joelthemovie.com](http://www.joelthemovie.com)

JRH Film presents a John R. Hand Film

# JOEL

## CAST

ARNOLD ODO	...	Joel
FERNANDO CANO	...	Detective Morretti
GEOFF ARAM	...	Joel's Father
JUSTINE DAVIS	...	Frenzy Scene - Barbara
KARL BORST	...	Frenzy Scene - Harold
AMANDA LEEDS	...	Vice Cop
BRI BYNON MCGREGOR	...	Victim #1 - Star
ELLA STRYKER	...	Victim #2 - Jamie
JEANNIE RAMIREZ	...	Victim #4 - Macy
ALYSSA KLEIN	...	Victim #5 - Bibi
JULIA GOLDEN	...	Victim #6 - Lola
CAITLYN MOORE	...	Victim #10 - Amber
GRACE HEDLEY	...	Victim #11 - Maya
BILLIONNA REYES	...	Victim #13 - Kerri
DIANE RICHARDS	...	Victim #14 - Bunny
LAUREL THOMAS	...	Victim #17 - Candy
CARRIE HARDEN	...	Randi
WYATT KEITH	...	Prison Guard #1
MIKE BARNES	...	Prison Guard #2

CREW

JOHN R. HAND

writer, director, cinematographer, editor

APRIL FLOYD

producer

THE GREYS

music

Copyright 2017 John R. Hand. All Rights Reserved.