

The Story of Rock & Roll Comics



I have been a comic book fan since my childhood, thanks to my parents, teachers, and my father's coworkers, who supplied me with them. Good times those were, I must say. However, as I went to college, I drifted apart from most of them, and mostly only read Asterix, which my late father also enjoyed. For some years now, I have returned to reading other titles, including the famous or infamous Rock & Roll comics. I never quite cared about their history; I just read them. However, what a surprise it was when I watched "The Story of Rock & Roll Comics," an intriguing and incredibly informative documentary, directed by [Iiko Davidov](#), about the history of this publication, as well as that of the late Todd Loren, its creator.

One of the things that I didn't know about Rock & Roll comics, and that I learned through this film, is that [Todd Loren](#) was brutally assassinated. And that is, precisely, the way the movie opens, with scenes of the media reporting the crime, which occurred in his apartment in San Diego, California, on June 18, 1992. He was the president of [Revolutionary Comics](#), which published Rock & Roll comics. We then meet Herb Shapiro, Todd's father, and he tells us about his son's younger years, how he began collecting and selling comic books, and how at 18 years old he had enough money to buy a house. These scenes are mixed with video interviews with Todd, in which he also talks about his passion for comics. Some other people who knew him are also interviewed, and they mention that Todd's inspiration for Rock & Roll comics was "Hey, Boss – a parody of Bruce Springsteen."

Some of the personnel that worked as either artists or writers interviewed for the film were [Spike Steffenhagen](#), [Jay Allen Sanford](#), Scott Jackson, Robert Conte, among others. There are also interviews with [Alice Cooper](#), who respected the magazine, as well as Andy Verne (attorney for the magazine). They talked about the fights that Todd had with several musicians who felt that the comics were lying about them, and how Todd's character and attitude made him many enemies. Perhaps the most significant legal battle that Todd had was that with [New Kids on the Block](#), which went all the way to court, with the judge deciding in favor of Todd, based on his [First Amendments](#) rights. This verdict opened the door for future publishers.

Not in vain, the magazine's motto was "unauthorized and proud of it!" And Todd really pushed the envelope and used this privilege on that one.



Todd Loren (1960-1992), whose real name was [Stuart Shapiro](#), died very young, at the height of his success, and part of the final moments of the movie speculate about the possible reasons for the murders – it could have been because he was [gay](#), because was at times arrogant and abusive, or because of a car sale deal gone wrong. Perhaps musician [Mojo Dixon](#) was correct when he said, "Rock & Roll is really about two things: 'I don't give a fuck' or 'Fuck you' – that's the spirit that Todd had." At any rate, Rock & Roll comics are part of history, some of us enjoy them, and that's all that matters. And you can bet your 'fundillo' that with time they will be worth some serious money. The DVD includes alternate and extended interviews, TV clips, news stories, and much more. (USA, 2005, color, 84 min plus additional materials) Reviewed on July 22, 2012. Wild Eye / MVD Visual.