



Courtesy of MVD

Todd Loren's story is a strange tale that makes for an interesting documentary. The young entrepreneur launched a rock 'n' roll comics company in the 1980s, and almost immediately received heated critiques and lawsuits from those in the comics industry and the music business. It's actually humorous how one man and his team of artists and writers could generate so much controversy, simply by putting out graphical biographies on famous rock bands.

Loren claimed it was the company's First Amendment right to publish these "unauthorized" stories, while record companies, representing some of the biggest musicians of the day, saw it as trademark infringement. Guns N' Roses didn't look kindly on Loren's work, and the lawyers behind New Kids on the Blocks took the company to court. In a (somewhat) landmark case, Rock 'N' Roll Comics beat the music industry and was granted the approval to keep on publishing.

Not everyone disdained the company. Although the comics industry was indifferent to Loren's success, and some artists claimed their wages were unfair, the fan base kept on growing. Today, Rock 'N' Roll Comics are a frequent presence on eBay, and the value of each title only increases by the day. Even some of the rock stars portrayed in the books — Alice Cooper and Gene Simmons from Kiss, most notably — enjoyed the work of Loren's team.

The publisher, a private person who never told his coworkers or friends he was gay, appeared to be both groundbreaking and a difficult boss.

Here's how Rob O'Connor puts it in the DVD insert: "Don't let my praise for Loren negate the fact that he was, at heart, a hustler, a schlockmeister, a guy who underpaid his artists and who was often shrill in his defense of profits over people."

The story of this entrepreneur, who worked side by side with his father for years and gained the respect/disrespect from so many people, ended tragically. In 1992, Loren was brutally murdered. With Loren's death came the eventual death of Rock 'N' Roll Comics. The company couldn't uphold the energy

and the fan base.



Kiss — Courtesy of Wild Eye

Ilko Davidov's documentary, recently released on DVD from MVD and Wild Eye, is made in the same vein as the cinematic adaptation of *American Splendor*. Animation sequences are coupled with interviews and Loren's home videos. Although the production value is fairly low, the talking heads have a lot to say about this man. Loren's father remembers his son fondly, while comic insiders still hold grudges against the man. There's a full explanation of the murder, including an interview with a San Diego detective, but there are still many questions surrounding the case. No suspect has ever been arrested for Loren's death.

A few more rock 'n' roll interviews would have been nice. As it stands, only Mojo Nixon and Alice Cooper are represented. There is a neat audio recording from Gene Simmons, but other than these tidbits, this crucial aspect is largely missing from the narrative.

The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics serves as a eulogy for Loren. It offers audience members a glimpse into his professional ambitions, detailing the many feathers he ruffled. His legacy extends beyond the film and can be found among the heaps of old comics scattered throughout the world.

By John Soltes / Publisher / John@HollywoodSoapbox.com

- ***The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics***
- **[2005](#)**
- ***Directed by Ilko Davidov***
- ***Featuring Todd Loren, Alice Cooper, Jay Allen Sanford, Mojo Nixo, Spike Steffenhagen, Steven Crompton, Cynthia Plaster Caster and Robert Williams***
- ***Running time: 84 minutes***
- ***Not Rated***
- ***Rating:*** ★★★★★



[Alice Cooper](#), [American Splendor](#), [Gene Simmons](#), [Guns N' Roses](#), [Ilko Davidov](#), [Kiss](#), [New Kids on the Block](#), [The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics](#), [Todd Loren](#)

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