

JERSEY BEAT

The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics - Special Edition DVD (mvdvisual.com)

When my son Steve was about ten, he started getting into comic books. There was a local comic book store called Zapp Comics (now located in Freehold), that had just opened in Sayreville. Being a comic book junkie when I was younger, back in the 60's and 70's I was drawn back into the stories of Spiderman, Superman (one of my all-time favorites that's hard to find is The Atomic Knights), etc. After about a year of going to Zapp, and getting to know the owner, he made me an offer that I couldn't refuse! He said he had a bunch of comic books that weren't selling, and were just taking up space. I went into the back room with him and he had about 20 boxes (about 100 comic books per box), with all kinds of genres (I had to go through them all and take out the X rated comics for ummm, research...

Anyway, when Steve got home from school that day and walks into his bedroom, he sees it filled to the brim with what must have looked like a gazillion comic books! He was in comic book nirvana!

So, what this all has to do with Rock 'N' Roll Comics is, in with the boxes and boxes of comics were a few issues of Rock 'N' Roll Comics. Most notably the "Unauthorized" story of The Smithereens.-Great story and drawing (in color). From then on I was hooked, and needed my monthly fix of Rock 'N' Roll Comics, much like my addiction to vinyl records!

Todd Loren's was the creator (he was savagely murdered in 1992), and editor of Rock 'N' Roll Comics when he started back in 1989 with the first issue being an unauthorized version (they all were, as Todd was a staunch supporter of the First Amendment). Guns 'N' Roses was the first comic book he published, and he and co-creator, Jay Allen Sanford took their message of Revolution Comics to the max. Drawing mostly on the rock magazines of the day like Cream and Rolling Stone, and their sometimes genius imaginations, they created stories of rock 'n' roll bands that inspired as well as challenged (MANY of the bands that comics were made of sued Todd), the readers as well as the critics alike.

Inspired by earlier attempts by other publishers who came up with basically the same idea like "Hey Boss," which was an ongoing comic book series about Bruce Springsteen (he had super powers, how cool is that), and Kiss, Todd raised the bar, or lowered it, depending if you were a fan or a band. It was definitely a love/hate relationship, and there was never any grey area. Those who supported Rock 'N' Roll Comics and those who

hated it were a mixed bag. Gene Simmons absolutely loved the stories about Kiss, while The Grateful Dead practically put a bounty out on him. Other supporters included Alice Cooper, who did a fun, and amazing interview here, and Mojo Nixon, Billy Gibbons, Motley Crew, and Frank Zappa.

When it came to punk rock Todd and Jay had a soft spot, but they also knew how to make a buck. They created mini-series of bands like the Sex Pistols, and The Runaways, to name a few. The stores revolved around what else- Sex, Drugs, & Rock 'N' Roll, and as far as punk rock, it seemed that at times, they had to tone down the stories, rather than embellish them. Bands like the sex Pistols were off the charts when it can to life imitating art. You couldn't make that stuff up!

They also got into sports biography's (Nolan Ryan, etc.), Horror, conspiracy (Robert Kennedy, etc.), and of course sex (Demi, Sexpot, & Pineapple Comics). All of which were, as always- UNAUTHORIZED! As a matter of fact, Rock 'N' Roll comics lives on. You can order (amazon.com or wherever graphic novels are sold), stuff like The Pink Floyd Experience, The Beatles Experience, and Elvis, to name a few.

There's also an interview with Todd that is funny, and a little of weird. It's kind of like a "How Not to Do an Interview," interview, which is really funny, and somewhat sad, as it was done a short time before he was brutally murdered.

A lot of us feel that eventually, rock 'n' roll will save the world (remember John and Yoko's Bed-In for Peace?-how cool was that), but "Todd Loren didn't wish to save the world. He wanted to make money and exploit the music he loved. Somewhere Albert Grossman (Dylan's manager for many years), smiles. The idea for his comic line was to do Mad magazine-type parodies while giving the readers biographical information. He wished to blend the three things he loved-music, comics, and money- into a career. - Because he didn't want to work for somebody else. And because why not?"- Rob O'Connor, from the liner notes.

As for Steve, he still has a ton of comic books, including a good chunk of what we got from Zapp. I can't find any of my Rock 'N' Roll comic books-divorces can be messy sometimes, but I know I'll eventually find a stash at a yard sale (I'm still addicted to vinyl records), or a flea market, or a estate sale, or....- Phil Rainone

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