



Ilko Davidov

Ilko Davidov: The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics **The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics** (2012)

MVDvisual

Reviewer Rating:

4.5

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For some reason, almost since their respective starts, punk and metal have been intertwined with comic books. It's probably because both domains are the venue of nerds. But even with the nerds there is usually a king nerd, who, as the coolest of the nerds, gets to tell all the other nerds what to do, but is still, indisputably, a nerd. *The Story of Rock 'N' Roll Comics* follows the creation of the infamous comics line and its king-of-the-nerds founder, Todd Loren. The shocking part is that it ends in a murder mystery.

Rock N Roll Comics was a company that made a name for itself in the 1980s by publishing unauthorized biographical comics about bands. If you aren't still in your teens, you may remember that the Metallica and Kiss issues were some of the most famous issues. Wisely, director Ilko Davidov doesn't sugar coat the reality. The fact is, most Rock 'N' Roll Comics were terrible, exploitation pieces. In a way, though, that makes them that much more interesting.

At the center of the Rock 'N' Roll Comics empire, which sold enough issues to be a larger independent company in the '80s, is perplexing founder Todd Loren. Loren is portrayed as a real go-getter, and by the mere fact that he could buy a house in his early 20s, shows that it was no joke.

Likewise, though, Loren seems to be a nasty sort of character who knows just how to charm the type of people who can be easily charmed by nasty characters. Despite selling tens of thousands of issues, Loren is criticized for not paying artists, for being cheap, and for just being mean to people. He yells at the camera man. He's clearly a narcissist. He obviously doesn't think that "the rules" apply to him. But despite all this, in the documentary, the artists that worked for Loren, many of which were stiffed out of thousands of dollars, speak of him with a certain fondness, despite the fact that there are clips of him being nasty as hell to those same people. Just as interesting is how he momentarily loses this guise after talking to Gene Simmons about a book deal, briefly becoming a Kiss fanboy.

The key to Loren's success was that he knew exactly what buttons to push. Alice Cooper even appears in the documentary to discuss the *Alice Cooper* issue. So does Mojo Nixon.

But Loren's problem is that he doesn't know when he's pushed *too many* buttons. The company published a New Kids on the Block issue which resulted in a landmark trademark decision, bringing fame to Rock N Roll comics and a victory over the band, but also practically bankrupting the company.

Likewise, near the company's rougher days, Loren is mysteriously and brutally killed. Was it a creditor trying to get back at him? Was it an angered right winger? Was it something even more insidious?

The documentary basically spells out what happened to Loren even though it's still an open case. The likely answer is entirely surprising, but makes perfect sense. When you go back and re-watch the documentary, a lot of pieces of the puzzle fit together.

This documentary is as much historical research of an anomaly from the '80s as well as a fascinating character study. Loren's murder makes it that much more fascinating and creepy.

Recommended for fans of comics, for fans of mysterious murder mysteries, and for people that want to learn how to control the minds of the weak willed. Simply put, highly recommended.

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