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Story Of Rock N Roll Comics, The

by Ian Jane

Published on 05-05-2012 10:48 AM

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Released by: Wild Eye Releasing
Released on: April 24, 2012.
Director: Ilko Davidov

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Yeah that's true. I'll bet it's that pie-eyed guy's high def too. That last image.

42nd Street Forever - Blu-ray Edition

Todd Jordan 05-07-2012 10:05 PM

I figured that since this is technically her high def debut, she should get a good screen cap.

42nd Street Forever - Blu-ray Edition

Ian Jane 05-07-2012 06:01 PM

Rude or not, I will still go there whenever I can. Cool store there's nothing like it here in my...

42nd Street Forever - Blu-ray Edition

Todd Jordan 05-07-2012 05:54 PM

It's there Ben, There's a few new people at Kim's who actually say please and thank you and stuff...

42nd Street Forever - Blu-ray Edition

Ian Jane 05-07-2012 04:49 PM

Wait a sec -- is LAST OF THE SECRET AGENTS? on here or not? It's listed as both, Ian.

42nd Street Forever - Blu-ray Edition

bgart13 05-07-2012 04:40 PM

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Cast: Alice Cooper, Spike Steffenhagen, Mojo Nixon, Jay Allen Sanford, Steven Crompton
Year: 2005

[Purchase From Amazon](#)

The Movie:

Anyone who was anywhere near a comic book store in the eighties and early nineties will definitely remember Revolutionary Comics – those garish covers (some really nicely painted, others not so much) were often very hard to miss and with the 'UNAUTHORIZED AND PROUD OF IT!' tag line brazenly printed in the top corner of almost all of their releases, they just screamed out 'PICK ME UP AND LOOK AT ME!' While Revolutionary doesn't technically exist anymore, the story behind their very fast rise and fall is a fascinating one and filmmaker Ilko Davidov has taken it upon himself to bring that story to the masses with his excellent documentary, The Story Of Rock N Roll Comics.

The story begins by introducing us to Todd Loren, an enterprising young man who got his start in business starting a mail order company called Musicade that dealt in rock n roll memorabilia. A few years later he sold that business and moved to San Diego where he started Revolutionary Comics with his father in hopes of filling niche – music comics. Sure there had been the occasional music comic in the past like Marvel's KISS specials in the seventies but nobody was really doing rock n roll biographies in comic book form and Todd's massive collection of biographies and research material acquired from his previous business gave him the ability to do just that.

Rock N Roll Comics was born, kicking down the door with their first issue, a behind the scenes look at the origins of Guns N Roses, a band that had just recently become pretty much the hottest thing on the planet. The timing was perfect, but the comic was not received without controversy. Axl Rose famously denounced it and threatened to sue as it wasn't authorized. Rather than back down, Loren courted the controversy and even used it to his advantage. From here, notorious run in's with the legal team that represented The New Kids On The Block would follow, as would headbutting competitions with Denis Kitchen, the man behind Kitchen Sink Press who were publishing licensed Grateful Dead comic books – he was known too happy when Revolutionary put out some unauthorized Grateful Dead comics, but Jerry Garcia basically told Kitchen to leave him alone and let him do it.

Lorens would surround himself with a stable of writers and artists (who he would pay very poorly) and pump out issues as fast as anyone else in the business. Sure, maybe some liberties were taken here and there but he found a market and tapped

into it in a big way. When Tipper Gore came to prominence with the PMRC trials, Loren was there to cash in on that with some horror comics called Tipper Gore's Comix And Stories (one of which would feature a cover from Robert Williams) – but that's not all. Loren also dabbled in sports biographies, political comics and even porno comics when he started the Carnal Comics line with Demi The Demoness (the line still exists to this day though it is now handled by Opus Graphics).

In 1992, Loren was found murdered in his apartment, a crime that remains unsolved to this day. Unbeknownst to most of his friend and co-workers, Todd was gay and there are definitely ties that indicate he may have been the victim of Andrew Cunanan, the same man who killed Gianni Versace and who frequented some of the same gay nightclubs that Loren was known to appear at.

Davidov's documentary does a very respectable job of gathering up as many of the former Revolutionary Comics cohorts as possible to paint a fairly broad picture of Loren. Interviews with those who he worked with and with his father in addition to those outside the Revolutionary Comics circle who supported him such as musicians like Alice Cooper and Mojo Nixon. This not only gives us a look at what it was like working for Loren, but it also lets us know what some of those outside the stable thought of the work that was being done. Of course, not everyone was pleased – Lemmy apparently took issue with some of the details in the Motorhead issue, a few different bands threatened to sue, and Gene Simmons called up to talk about what basically amounted to some sort of profit sharing deal (the phone conversation is replayed in the feature and it's pretty amusing). As time has gone on, however, the issues have become collectible and are now not only fairly sought after in the back issue market (print runs did tend to be low on a lot of the early issues and as such first printings are tough to find) but now even sometimes pop up in the webstores of the some of the artists who were the subjects of the comics.

The true crime aspect of the documentary doesn't get as detailed and if the film has one flaw it's that it could have gone into more depth here than it does – but in Davidov's defense, as the crime is unsolved there just isn't all that much information out there. Interviews with Todd's father add a sentimental and touching side to the documentary while input from one of the San Diego cops who worked the case gives us that side of the story but twenty years after it happened, the truth behind the death of Todd Loren remains a mystery.

The movie goes along at a good pace and can be quite humorous at times. It also does a good job of mixing in a lot of the art and cover paintings from the

Rock! Shock! Pop! - Story Of Rock N Roll Comics, The various Revolutionary titles into the visual side of the presentation which makes this more than just a collection of talking head. Some archival clips of Loren are also used throughout the movie and help to give us a feel for what his personality would have been like. All in all, this is a pretty thorough and very interesting 'warts and all' documentary. Loren is not portrayed as an angel or a hero but instead as a bit of a rascally opportunist who wound up fighting in court for free speech issues and who was taken long before his time – which seems a pretty fair and accurate summation of his life and work.

Video/Audio/Extras:

Wild Eye Releasing presents The Story Of Rock N Roll Comics in a nice looking fullframe presentation. This was shot on video and probably didn't have a multi-million dollar budget behind it some there are some shots that look a little less than perfect but why nitpick? Everything is completely fine as far as the video quality goes. Colors look good, there aren't any issues with compression artifacts and overall the image is solid enough.

The English language Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo track offers up the interviews in perfectly clear condition so that they're plenty easy to understand. Sound effects and the score are mixed in well throughout the movie, but this is a fairly dialogue heavy feature so it's the interviews that matter the most. Thankfully, no problems here – the movie sounds just fine.

Wild Eye have packed this DVD with a lot of very cool supplements starting with a pair of vintage Musicade television commercials originally intended to advertise Loren's mail order business. From there, dig through a bunch of other vintage TV clips including an interesting news cast on Revolutionary's Unauthorized Sports Comics, an equally amusing piece on the Mike Tyson comic book, and an E! news story entitled Unauthorized Conspiracy Comics. A little more somber is the KFMB CBS News report on Todd Loren's murder from the day his body was discovered in his apartment in 1992.

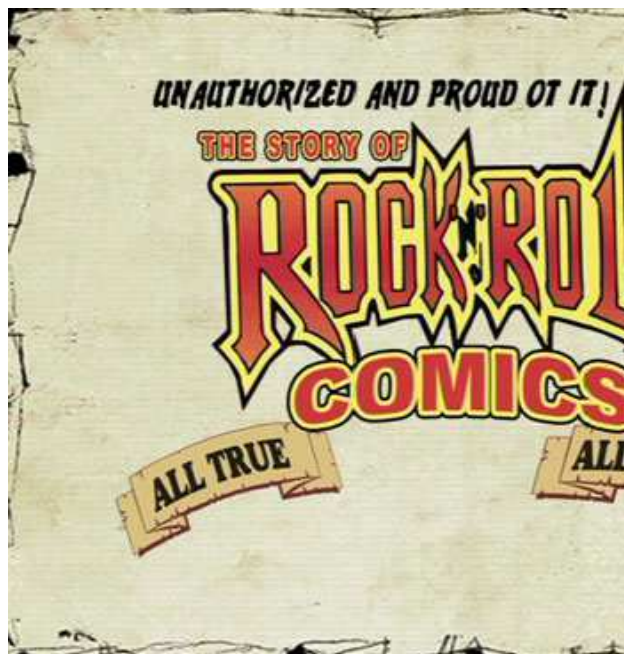
Moving right along, we also find a full uncut version of the interview that is excerpted in the feature with the infamous Ms. Cynthia Plaster Caster, a deleted scene that features more interview footage with Rock 'N' Roll Comics artist Robert Conte and a second deleted scene that features more interview footage with Revolutionary Comics artist and collector Duane Dimock.

Rounding out the extras is a great still gallery of original Rock 'N' Roll Comics covers, a trailer for the feature and trailers for a few other unrelated Wild Eye Releasing titles. Animated menus and chapter stops are also included. Tucked away inside the

Rock! Shock! Pop! - Story Of Rock N Roll Comics, The
keepcase is an eight page full color liner notes
insert that includes a piece from Rock 'N' Roll
Comics co-creator, Jay Allen Sanford and a another
piece from rock critic Rob O'Connor that are both
worth a read.

The Final Word:

You don't have to be a comic book junkie or a metal-head to appreciate this documentary (though it couldn't hurt) – as it's part personality piece, part true crime expose and part history lesson in one of the most controversial comic book publishers in recent years. Chock full of extras, the disc has got a lot of great supplemental material to compliment what is a well put together and fairly fascinating main feature. The Story Of Rock N Roll Comics is a pretty great release overall and comes highly recommended.





















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