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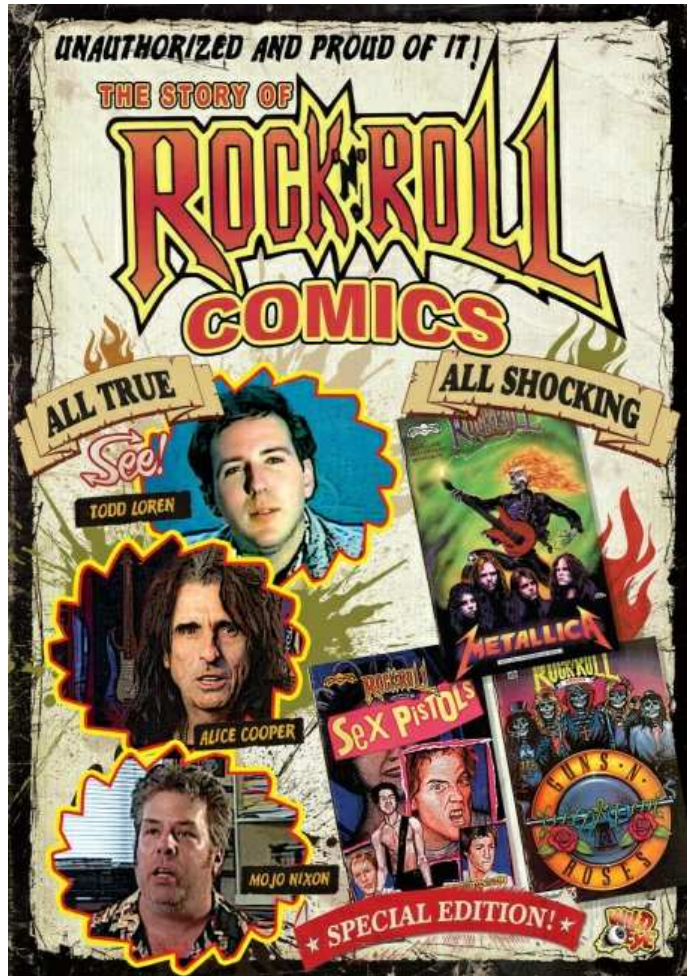
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- EDM
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- INDIE
- METAL
- MUSIC
- PERFORMING ARTS
- PHOTO
- PUNK
- RVA MAG EVENTS
- FASHION

## MOVIE REVIEW: Unauthorized And Proud Of It

Posted by: Necci – May 21, 2012



Unauthorized And Proud Of It: The Story Of Rock N' Roll Comics (2012)  
(dir. Ilko Davidov)

Music and comic book fans who were around in the early 90s may remember Rock N' Roll Comics, a small-press comic book title that printed unauthorized sequential-art biographies of then-popular rock stars, and took a lot of legal heat for doing so. However, despite the fact that the story was big news at the time, at least in the music and art world, it is mostly forgotten now, to the point where I wouldn't be surprised if our younger readers don't remember it at all. This documentary exists to remind everyone who comes across it about Rock N' Roll Comics, and why they mattered. And make no mistake, they did matter, as publisher Revolutionary Comics, and specifically its owner and the creator of Rock N' Roll Comics, Todd Loren, fought and won quite a few legal battles that set precedents in favor of freedom of speech and the press that still stand today.

But that's not all there is to the story—far from it, in fact. *Unauthorized And Proud Of It* relates the history of Rock N' Roll Comics in a gripping fashion that keeps the viewer's attention throughout, beginning with the most shocking element of the entire story—Loren's still-unsolved murder, which occurred in Summer 1992, at the height of Revolutionary Comics' fame and fortune, when Loren was only 32. From there, the film doubles back to the beginning, and weaves a complex and fascinating tale that explains Todd Loren's rise from teenaged entrepreneur to comic book

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publisher and pseudo-mogul.

I say "pseudo" because one of the main things you'll learn from this film is that, regardless of the public face Loren portrayed as the owner of Revolutionary Comics, the truth is that the tiny publishing enterprise was always run in a somewhat ad hoc fashion. Loren's visionary plans for the company often stretched past his meager budget, and this led not just to the aforementioned First Amendment-related legal battles but quite a few other legal and personal issues, which were often money-related. A born hustler, Loren would use any means at his disposal to help advance the fortunes of himself and his company, and even nearly two decades after his murder, it's clear that there are a lot of less-than-positive feelings about him remaining in the comic book and music worlds. And yet, the many interviews that are used for this film demonstrate that a lot of people also respect Loren's work a great deal—sometimes even the same ones who feel lingering bitterness over their battles with him. Make no mistake, the main motivation for his battles to create unauthorized comic biographies of rock stars was most likely financial rather than charitable or patriotic. After all, if you don't have to authorize a biography, you don't have to pay musicians for the rights to use their name and likeness either. Nonetheless, if you believe in the freedoms protected by the First Amendment, it's hard to argue against Loren's use of the First Amendment to guarantee his right to free—and profitable—use of the press in production of his comic books.



Sadly, there is a gaping hole at the heart of this documentary, and that's the absence of any significant commentary by Loren himself. Outtakes from commercials that Loren shot while he was alive punctuate many of the transitions between scenes of the documentary, but none of them have any real substance—most of them show Loren screwing up lines or bantering with coworkers. Perhaps no interview footage survives from the period during which Loren was publishing Revolutionary Comics, or perhaps the filmmakers felt it'd be more respectful to allow his story to be told by friends and coworkers who are still alive today. However, I can't help but feel that even a few minutes of archival commentary from Loren himself would have done a great deal to help illuminate a person who comes across through the recollections of others as immensely complicated and enigmatic.

Overall, though, the fact remains that this is a really interesting documentary. A 78-minute movie seems like the perfect format in which to tell this visually-oriented story of a comic book publisher who broke a lot of unwritten rules and pissed off a lot of people in his quest to do something no one had yet done. There are many interesting anecdotes within the film, not all of them even related to Loren himself (there's a memorable interview with Cynthia Plaster Caster about her pornographic groupie exploits), and the entire story is worth hearing in detail. Even those like me who were around during the time this all went on, and remember reading the comics and hearing about the legal cases, will learn a lot from this film. For those with no memory of the era, this story should be that much more fascinating.

*Unauthorized and Proud of It: The Story of Rock N' Roll Comics* is available on DVD from [MVD Visual](#) and can be purchased [HERE](#).

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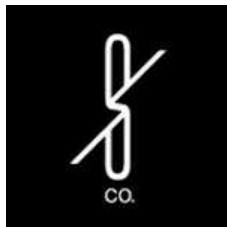
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