

REVIEW: THE STORY OF ROCK 'N' ROLL COMICS (2005)



Rock 'n' Roll Comics was a comicbook that I used to read when I was in the 4th or 5th grade, primarily because I was heavily into heavy metal and gangster rap. I also collected comics and a comicbook that had decent art and told a story (some factual and maybe some stories elaborating on subjects that may or may not have been entirely truthful) about some of my favorite musical artists and acts. My first issue was the **Metallica** issue. I loved **Metallica** in their earlier years and their first 5 albums were awesome. The issue was pretty cool, although I pretty much knew their story already because I read so many metal magazines and heard so many interviews (this was before the internet was big and my parents even had the internet or had heard of it). It was just pretty rad to own a comicbook that had one's favorite band members as the characters in it.

The documentary being reviewed, **THE STORY OF ROCK 'N' ROLL COMICS** is about the whole history of **Rock 'N' Roll Comics**, from its inception when creator **Todd Loren** was running **Musicade**, the mail order company and store that sold all types of things related to rock, metal, and other genres of music—like pins, patches, shirts, and other collectibles. The doc contains tons of actual footage of **Todd Loren** when he was filming some pr for another project (his **Musicade** shindig) and from watching the extra footage, **Loren** kind of seemed like a major prick. He didn't smile much and seemed fairly unhappy in much of the footage.

The film is edited and pieced together with interviews of Todd, talking about his company **Musicade**, as well as interviews with Todd's father, artists and writers whom worked with Todd on issues of **Rock 'n' Roll Comics**, and others from within the comicbook industry. There is even some interviews with legendary shock rocker **Alice Cooper**, punk rocker **Mojo Nixon**, and some lesser known celebs such as **Cynthia Plaster Caster** (real name **Cynthia Albritton**) from Chicago who is an artist and "recovering groupie" who creates plaster casts of famous persons' penises and breasts. It was interesting to hear her talk about plastering **Jimmi Hendrix's** cock, but in connection with **Todd Loren** and his story, it was kind of unique (if unrelated) bit of history on the subject of rock 'n' roll. Artists in the comicbook industry interviewed were **Mary Fleener**, **Dennis Worden**, **Robert Williams**, **Denis Kitchen**, **Gary Groth**, **Scott Jackson**, and **Steve Crompton**. British music critic **Ian Shirley** also was thrown in the mix to give the film a bit of scholarly appeal.

The documentary also has a bit of true crime elements to it because Todd Loren was murdered in his apartment twenty years ago (he was found stabbed to death), has remained unsolved. His murderer also may have been **Andrew Cunanan**, the murderer of **Gianni Versace**, due to the fact that **Cunanan** was out and about killing during that time period and also because **Loren** was a homosexual, the target of **Cunanan's** murders. The documentary is very well rounded with its subject matter. There is a little bit of true crime, rock 'n' roll, comicbook geekdom, and sex within it.

I really enjoyed how the film edited bits of new stories and articles, pictures of particular issues and artwork, and insightful interviews on **Todd Loren** and his slowly growing empire spearheading free speech in the comicbook world. Myself becoming exposed to **Rock 'n' Roll Comics** at the beginning of my teen years, I was all about fighting censorship and being able to hear every "fuck", "shit", or "asshole" in all my albums, as well as the subversive subject matters that certain artists may have been exposing myself to such as murder, rape, sex, and



Rock 'N' Roll Comics founder Todd Loren

gory images of horror and very explicit sexual content. The fact that **Loren's** comicbooks also pissed off the artists for sometimes painting very unflattering pictures of them (such as the **New Kids on the Block** issue, or even the **Guns N' Roses** one) evident by the various lawsuits made the comics even more rebellious.

Director **Ilko Davidov**, director/producer/editor at BulletProof Film, Inc., and co-director of the **Chicago Movies & Music Festival** a.k.a. **CIMMfest**, makes his directorial debut (according to **IMDb**), has produced a handful of other documentaries and his work on them definitely helped his experience in making this documentary. I

found the film to be very enjoyable, moving along at a solid pace, and not once was wondering how much longer it would go on. Sometimes when a documentary loads itself up with tons of information and does so in a very drab and dull manner, things tend to get tedious and banal; this was not the case with **The Story of Rock 'n' Roll Comics**, now distributed by **Wild Eye Releasing**.



Myself a Chicago-native all my life, I was thrilled to see that local artist **Scott Jackson** was one of the artists featured (**Jackson** worked on the **Rolling Stones** issue) and also someone whom I have personally met quite a few times and is a good friend of one of my good friends. I remember when I was talking with Scott about horror films, heavy metal, and true crime one afternoon at my friend's apartment one blistering hot afternoon in **Chicago's Wicker Park** neighborhood and the topic of Scott's work on **Rock 'n' Roll Comics** came up, as well as the circumstances surrounding **Todd Loren's** death. Myself a fan of True Crime and serial killers, I instantly was extremely curious about the man that

created one of the coolest comicbooks that dealt with rock bands' bios.

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The dvd has some cool extra features on it like a few extended interviews with select artists and writers from the comicbook, as well as a lengthier story on how **Cynthia Plaster Caster** came about meeting **Jimi Hendrix** and getting him to stick his erect penis in a bunch of plaster for her unique fetish (or hobby—however one sees it). Also included on the extra features are some of the original ads and commercials that Loren made for his other company **Musicade**.

Wild Eye Releasing has released some low-budget, indie films in the past that were reviewed here at **SHU-IZMZ** that got torn apart because they were pretty crappy, but it seems that this **New York** distributor is turning over a new leaf because this documentary was incredibly awesome, its content and delivery, and I highly recommend folks checking out this documentary. **THE STORY OF ROCK 'N' ROLL COMICS** is not one to be missed!



- * S.R.P.: \$19.99
- * Running Time: 80 minutes
- * Features: Over two hours of bonus features, extended interviews, TV news clips, commercials, trailers and a Revolution Comics/ Rock N Roll Comics cover art gallery. Liner notes from Rock N Roll Comics co-creator Jay Allen Sanford, as well as from rock critic Rob O'Connor.
- * Released: April 24, 2012

* U.P.C. 760137534891
 * Catalog Number: MVD5348D

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