

DOC NYC 2010: Discovering Lillian Roxon

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Lillian Roxon was an unconventional woman. A music journalist who kept up with the bad boys and girls of the exploding 1960's rock scene in New York City. A feminist when feminism was in its infancy. The author of a seminal rock encyclopedia.

But chances are you've never heard of Lillian Roxon.

"I don't think she gets her due," says Paul Clarke, director of *Mother of Rock: Lillian Roxon*, screening in the "Metropolis" section at the DOC NYC Film Festival. "Hopefully this film will raise her profile a little."

Clarke has two things in common with Roxon: they are both former journalists who hail from Australia. But he first learned about her in an unorthodox way: by hitting on a woman.

"There was a musician in the new wave era in Sydney who used to wear a famous dress of Lillian's with a gun on the front," Clarke says. "I struck up a conversation and asked her where it came from and she told me about Lillian."

With several music videos and television documentaries under his belt, Clarke joined forces with producer Robert de Young (who was already working on a documentary about Roxon) four years ago to bring *Mother of Rock* to the big screen.

In Lillian Roxon, Clarke found a kindred spirit who was ahead of her time.

"How prescient she was," Clarke says. "She was talking in the early 60's about [Bob] Dylan's songs being the autobiography of America – its music, its confusions and the failure of its dream."

But it was more than the music, the politics and the woman herself that motivated Clarke. "I love making films with deviant energy," he said, "people doing illegal and outrageous acts that time makes meaning of."

Music and literary legends including Iggy Pop and Germaine Greer share their memories of Roxon in *Mother of Rock*, placing her squarely in the eye of this cultural hurricane. Unfortunately, Lillian Roxon's legacy was cut short. She died unexpectedly of an asthma attack in 1973, at the age of 41.

"She's sadly missed," says Clarke. "I don't think anyone can match her today."

—Faith Pennick

See [Mother of Rock: Lillian Roxon](#) on Saturday, November 6 at 1:45 pm, or Tuesday, November 9 at 3:30 pm. Robert de Young and special guests will conduct a Q&A after the show.

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