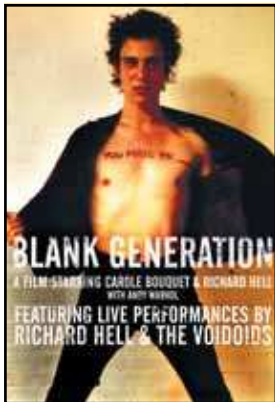


# moviecore

By Jim Kaz

**W**hen it comes to the packaging of punk rock, the Sex Pistols are still the reigning marketing kings. Image-wise, the band had it all—the perfectly spiked coifs, the rattiest leather jackets, the requisite safety pins, and loads of snot to enhance the bad attitudes. But in actuality, the New York scene came first with the true kings of punk, The Ramones, along with early icons such as Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers, Jayne County, The Dictators, Blondie, Television, Talking Heads, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids. And as for the de facto punk look the Pistols wore like a badge of honor, it was Hell who did it first, all of it: the spiky hair, the tattered threads, and yes, even those nasty little safety pins. The misfit artist, singer and bass player's unique look was quickly co-opted by Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren who had spotted him upon visiting the Big Apple during the mid-'70s. Ever the cunning businessman, McLaren took what he had observed back to his young protégés and duly exploited it, leaving Hell with a rather humdrum career by contrast. Pity, that. But hey, this month, we're going to look at the long-awaited DVD reissue of his most famous celluloid jaunt, *Blank Generation* (MVD), plus a few other interesting things. So, I guess things could be worse.

The title *Blank Generation* applies to two punk-related films: Amos Poe's documentary on the burgeoning NYC punk scene from 1976, and the less-interesting rock-drama of sorts starring Hell and actress Carole Bouquet that we're talking about here (1980). Hell plays up-and-coming punk star Billy, who soon meets Nada, a beautiful French



journalist played by ex-Bond girl Bouquet. The two hook up and begin a tumultuous relationship, forcing her to decide whether to stay or not. So, where's the punk you ask? For starters, there are some juicy live bits from Hell's band performing "Liars Beware," "Blank Generation" and "Love Comes in Spurts." What's most interesting about the film is the time and place it captured. It was the end of the original NYC punk era. And balanced against the gritty cityscapes of Manhattan before the makeover, the film has a very seamy feel.

If you're not into silly punk melodramas or stiff acting, skip to the bonus feature *The Horror of It All*, which includes a candid interview with Hell about the making of the film. For those who want to learn more about

the original New York punk movement, *Blank Generation* is like a time capsule, giving an inside view of a once-thriving scene in decline.

I'm always excited to find out about new indie DVD labels and recently stumbled upon one that doing some great things. Scorpion Releasing is headed up by vets of the cult-film arena, who are experts at exhuming

elusive obscurities that you're not likely to see on iTunes or at Best Buy anytime soon. One of the label's latest releases is *Doctor Death: Keeper of Souls*. This little shocker from 1973 is far tamer than the title suggests. In fact, it seems more like a self-deprecating, black comedy than a gruesome exploitation film. The film looks and feels more like a late-'60s TV movie or an episode of Rod Serling's *Night*



*Gallery*, than anything like the saucy British gothic films or early exploitation pieces that were creeping out at the time.

Fred is a grieving widower who's obsessed over his wife's final vow to come back to him. After exploring various supernatural avenues, he meets the inimitable Doctor Death—played to comic perfection by character actor John Considine. Considine imbues the role with a schmaltzy sheen that is both funny and creepy—he's a cocky combination of greasy lounge lizard and pervy game show host. In a weird way, it works, especially in campy delivery of his ultra-wordy lines. His appearance is also quite alarming—he sports a baby afro with a widow's peak. It turns out that the good doctor has been alive for a thousand years and is an expert at reincarnation, which in the case entails murdering innocents so he can force the souls of others into their bodies. The ending is fairly predictable and one is left with the nagging question of what exactly *Doctor Death* is: a comedy, melodrama, horror or thriller? Maybe it's a combination of all of the above. Oh yeah, the film also features a cameo by ageing Three Stooges ringleader Moe Howard.



Another cultish DVD worth seeing is the remastered version of the infamous Ed Wood classic, *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (Legend). Whenever critics get together to vote for the greatest films of all time, it's a safe bet you're going to see things like *Citizen*

*Kane*, *Wizard of Oz* and *The Godfather*. But what of the worst films? With this DVD, you're basically looking at it. *Plan 9* tends to be the one to win that dubious honor. But is it really that bad? Yes and no. First off, the film boasts horror icon Bela Lugosi as its star, but in actuality, Lugosi had died prior to finishing shooting. Legend has it that the overzealous, child-like Wood repeatedly used the few minutes of footage he actually had of Lugosi, and then replaced him with

his wife's chiropractor—who neither looked nor sounded anything like Lugosi—to finish out the dead actor's scenes!

This kind of chicanery is indicative of the shoddy craftsmanship Wood has become infamous for. The dialog is also horrifyingly bad and features immortal lines like: "Your stupid, stupid minds!" But beyond all the technical cluster-fucks and the dialog and continuity glitches, it's a wildly entertaining film, with loads of quirky aliens, corny zombies, and unintentionally funny bits—especially the extraordinary introduction by flamboyant, real-life psychic and announcer, The Amazing Criswell, who imparts: "Greetings, my friend. We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives."

As for TV stuff, there've been quite a few things as of late on DVD that you might wanna know about. *Nurse Jackie* (Showtime) premiered last year to a mixed response. The story of a philandering, pill-snorting nurse with a crisis of ethics did well with many critics, but provoked the ire of both the nurse's associations and conservative Christian groups. Edie Falco from *The Sopranos* has reinvented herself as the hard-ass with a boy haircut, and she's amazingly plausible. There's an especially great scene where she flushes a violent thug's severed ear down the toilet—that endeared her to me right away.

I understand why British television is not everyone's cup of tea. There are the accents, the customs and the quirky humor,



the creators have finished doing traditional seasons for the time being, they've issued a series of specials, which have now been compiled in a set aptly titled, *Doctor Who - The Complete Specials*. One of them tells the story of a virus that makes humans gush gallons of water like a civ. It's quite a hoot, a freakish one at that. Also check out the BBC's racy new take on *Robin Hood*. *Season 3* sees the hooded one back with a vengeance to wreak havoc upon those who killed his fair maiden.

Who would've thought a quirky cartoon launched on an untested network would still be here some 20 seasons later? *The Simpsons: The Complete 20th Season* has recently hit DVD and Blu-ray (FOX) and it's a doozie. One of the best bits—*Sex, Pies and Idiot Scrapes*—sees Marge starting work at a bakery that specializes in suggestive sweets. Meanwhile, Homer becomes



a bounty hunter with Flanders as his sidekick. Fun stuff. The only thing is the lack of extras, which may not bode well with some of the diehards I know.

Along similar lines, check out the animated series of Mel Brooks' *Spaceballs: The Totally Warped Animated Adventures* (MGM), which is an irreverent Sci-Fi send-up guaranteed to generate cheap laughs and leave you a tad confused.

While I hate to end things on a heavier note, I wanted to give a few nods to some documentaries and related things that have come my way in recent days. I just love geeking out on archival footage set to cryptic descriptions of what happened back in

traditionally pulled things off over the past few decades has been by rotating the various doctors throughout the years, usually swapping one cantankerous old goat for another. But the BBC has been fishing for a younger audience in this latest round, with dazzling special effects, clever storylines, plus a younger and funnier, time traveling "doctor" in actor David Tennant. While



the day. But just because a certain view or alternative view is offered, that doesn't mean I automatically buy into it. Hell, everyone's got an agenda.

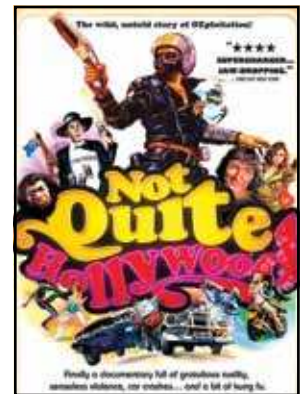
With the recent death of author/historian/activist Howard Zinn, it's ironic that the DVD *The People Speak* would hit the shelves just 10 days later (it was actually announced to us press folks weeks before). Zinn wrote a book years ago—*The People's History of the United States*—that offered a different view of US events throughout the ages. The DVD is narrated by Zinn and features historical readings by various celebrities, plus music from the likes of Eddie Vedder and The Black Crowes. For followers of Zinn it may be interesting; I'd personally stick with the books over seeing the likes of Matt Damon getting all blustery over *The Declaration of Independence*. At least

Ben Affleck stayed the hell out. Cheers to that.

JFK will always titillate conspiracy theorists and history buffs. Two recent docs delve into different sides of the mess (A&E).

*The Kennedy Assassination: 24 Hours*

*Later* explores Lyndon Johnson's anxiousness and—some say—insecurity about becoming prez after JFK was shot. Some wonder if he may have even known about it in advance. *JFK: Three Shots That Changed America* tackles things from the front end, adding a further layer of skullfuckery to the whole sordid situation.



*Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!* (Magnet) explores Aussie exploitation films of yore through a series of vignettes and interviews—including Quentin Tarantino. These Aussies can be downright diabolical, which is why films like *Razorback* and and the daddy of all Aussie biker flicks, *Stone*, are some of my favorite cult films yet.

For questions or suggestions, drop me a line at [Retrohead77@yahoo.com](mailto:Retrohead77@yahoo.com). See you next time, JK. ↖



mainstream American sitcoms. The latest version of the decades-running Sci-Fi hit *Doctor Who* should have a more universal appeal. The way they've

