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Blank Generation

Directed by Ulli Lommel (USA, 1980) | MVD Visual

Reviewed by Kami Posted on 12/05/2010



A (post) punk romance from schlock director Ulli Lommel, this is one of his earliest efforts, perhaps his first or second, when he was still interested in art as opposed to exploitation. That said, it doesn't make it any better or more coherent than his later efforts.

The movie is famous for two things: (1) it stars punk pioneer Richard Hell and features live footage of his band The Voidoids at what was arguably their peak – early 1978 and (2) Andy Warhol's five minute cameo. And as an actor it must be said that Richard Hell makes a fine musician, a fact that even he agrees upon.

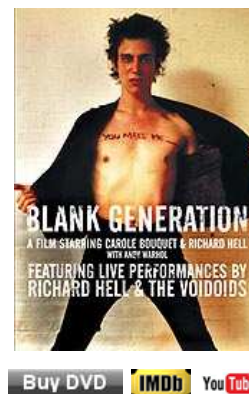
The story, such as it is, is pretty simple. French reporter Nada (the gorgeous and vacuous Carole Bouquet) is in love with musician Billy (Richard Hell). The relationship is messy though, meanwhile she has a thing for another reporter Hoffritz, (played by Lommel) and Billy finds a new girl in Lizzy (played by Lommel's future wife Susanna Love). In between we are treated to Hell's thoughts on the music biz, Lommel trying to track down Andy Warhol for an interview, a couple of great moments of the Voidoids live at CBGB's, a lot of beautiful cinematography, stilted dialogue, pointless moments, a Walter Steading cameo with his violin and groovy glasses, strange set pieces and an aching in our brains.

I think maybe Lommel was trying to draw a correlation between Warhol's famous statement about everyone having their fifteen minutes of fame and punk rock, cinema, big business and whatever else he could think of. But then again I may have just been looking for a point to the film. I'm not sure there is one. It's a love story of sorts but then it also has a narcissistic edge to it, Nada (nothing – get it?) films everything, presenting herself to Billy through film. Hell, even Lizzy comes onto the scene because she is making a guerilla style movie. Everyone is ultimately only interested in themselves, what they can gain from the music, or the relationships or the friendships. Except maybe Billy. Ah hell, I'm trying too hard.

This isn't a bad movie but it isn't a good one either. It's slow, it's poorly directed, it meanders but it grows on you (but then so does athlete's foot.) There are some great scenes of the slummier side of New York circa 78, there's live Richard Hell footage, there's a modicum of interest in what Lommel is trying to say and the look of it is great. I shouldn't like it but I do.

The bonus with this release of **Blank Generation** is the 40 + minute interview with Richard Hell where he talks about the film, the cast, the director and the mess it all was. If you think I've been harsh you haven't heard anything! Strangely though there is no mention on whether this film was based at all on Hell's relationship with French journalist/singer Lizzy Mercier whom Hell had a relationship with in the mid 70s and who he based his character Chrissa on in his novel **Go Now**. (the same book which had Hell as Billy Mud! hmmm) Hell certainly contributed to the screenplay, admitting that in the interview but maybe that's a subject for a more serious forum than this.

As a snapshot of a unique time and place, **Blank Generation** ain't bad at all but for mine, I'd much rather watch Carter Steven's **Punk Rock** – now that is a film that truly captured the sleazy, grimy feel of New York mid 70s– sleazier, dirtier and much better acting.



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Disc Details:

Running Time: 77 minutes
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1
Region: 1
No. Discs: 1

Special Features:

Interview with Richard Hell

Recommended Viewing:

Smithereens
 Sid And Nancy
 Punk Rock/Pleasure Palace
 Ladies And Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains

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