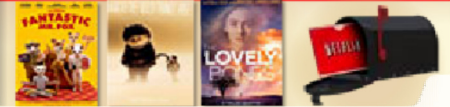


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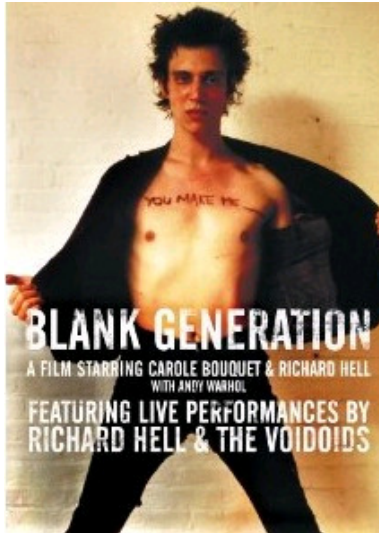
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REVIEWS: BLANK GENERATION - [DVD]



**TITLE:** Blank Generation - [DVD]  
**A Film By** Ulli Lommel, starring Carole Bouquet & Richard Hell, with Andy Warhol  
**LABEL:** MVD Visual  
**DATE:** 06-27-10

**REVIEW BY:** Bill Adams

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Now Playing: 'Blank Generation' by Richard Hell and The Voidoids

The kick about underground and independent filmmaking has always been the complete freedom of it. Working only with one's own money in hand means that creative freedom is absolute and that, in turn, means filmmakers are able to go as far out as their imagination and bankrolls will allow. The rigid Hollywood archetypes of structure, storytelling and shot direction can all fly out the window at the director's whim in an independent movie and the possible results of that freedom could amount to an all-new dialogue in the medium – that has been the case historically, anyway.

It should be said at this point that, yes, rock n' roll movies were not new by the time *Blank Generation* enjoyed its' brief and limited theatrical run in 1980. The idea of 'rock n' roll films' as a genre had already been well established, in fact, by acts like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones but *Blank Generation* looked and felt like nothing that came before it. The film is actually a rock movie based on mock reality and, in spite of the fact that it was shot in New York, the film doesn't resemble conventional North American fare at all. As one watches, the discerning eye is able to pick out that it is actually a fairly balanced hybrid of French film-making and designs (similar to that of Jen-Jacques Beineix), and the expressionist films that were coming out of New York - if which Andy Warhol (who makes a cameo here) was responsible for helping to shape. In that analysis, it suddenly makes perfect sense how Hell's role was cast and why the idea of starring in a feature film appealed to him so much; in the first New York punk movement, many of the bandmembers, including Hell, Tom Verlaine and Patti Smith, took much from the style and aesthetic of French writers like Arthur Rimbaud and applied it to their own living situations and artistic style. That same aesthetic drips from *Blank Generation*. Within the first fifteen minutes of the film alone, the hero – Billy (played by Hell) – is revealed to be a reasonably shiftless and tortured anti-hero. Not surprisingly, he has some fairly significant emotional issues (an early "love scene" with Carole Bouquet is aggressive and borders on rape), but no clear direction. His ennui dominates every scene he enters, yet Hell's innate, raw magnetism and charisma also captures those frames and steals them from everyone else – including Warhol (who plays Billy's manager, but comes off as static next to the leading man) and the positively ravishing Bouquet.

Without meaning to sound simple, those are the things viewers need to know. The plot line, such as it is, is relegated to backdrop fodder for Hell, Bouquet and Warhol both leave intermittently, but no one really cares; in that way, Hell and director Uli Lommel bring new meaning to the term scenery chewing. The possible moral of the film could be something as simple as commentary on the pointlessness of celebrity (as pointless as someone standing up in the middle of a room and making a sad noise on a violin – for example – which does happen here), but no one ever comes right out and explicitly says that. Often, the image is the thing here over any contrived sense of story, which may also be the ending point of the film. Regardless, to his credit, Hell shines in the scenes shot at CBGB alongside his Voidoids as they run through songs like "Love Comes In Sprints" – and those that see it can tell, by degrees, that a star has been born and when that star is

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