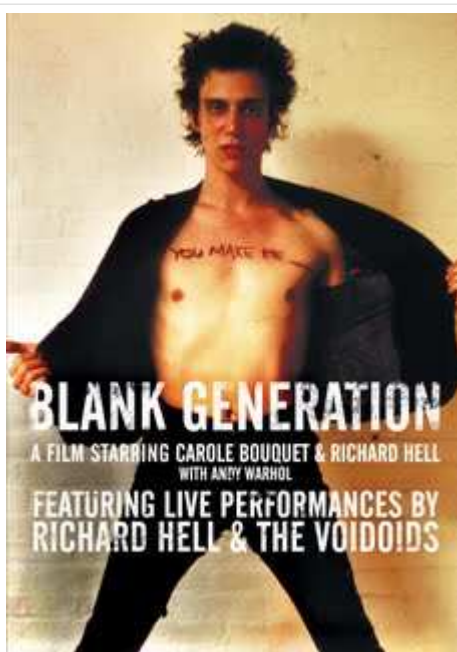




Blank Generation Turns 30

posted by **Izzy Cihak** | Saturday, February 20, 2010 | 9:52 PM

30 years ago punk met camp (although probably not intentionally) in Ulli Lommel's *Blank Generation*, the first melodrama to be able to boast Richard Hell as its leading man. Lommel had made a name for himself as part of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's troupe of "collaborators" and Hell had made a name for himself in a handful of NYC's most significant bands: Television, The Heartbreakers, and The Voidoids, who the film features. Unfortunately, the efficacy of these resumes never makes it onscreen.



Blank Generation attempts to tell the story of a man who has to choose between his "love" and pop stardom. However, the movie features a plot that barely exists outside of assumptions we can make based on Rock'N'Roll clichés that would later come to be known as *Behind the Music*. It plays a bit like a pastiche of movie-of-the-week biopics on the Sex Pistols and the Beatles. In the scheme of things, Lommel and Hell's reputations got off easy; co-star Carole Bouquet was following up her debut as one half of the female lead in Bunuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire*.

The film does, however, have one shockingly poignant moment. As Hell's "character" lies sullenly in bed, he proclaims "They were drawn there like a crowd around a car wreck and I'd never be able to make it any different, but it just suddenly got intolerable. I mean the thing is, who'd even want to feel like me? I don't." When faced with such sincerity in the midst of a feature-length soap opera, there is little else one can do but laugh uncomfortably.

In honor of the film's 30th anniversary (or maybe not), MVD Visual has re-released the cult classic, including an interview with Hell (which Hell claims is "better than the movie itself") in which he confesses everything we were thinking the first time we saw the film: "There's not a single truthful, authentic moment in that whole movie," "That is once scene that is bad almost in the sense that it's funny," and "Part of the shame is that I'm among the screenwriters." – *Izzy Cihak*

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