

<http://www.scannerzine.com/tvpartyb2009.htm>

**Blank Generation** {MVD} I think this is the first DVD release of this 1980 film starring RICHARD HELL. It's a film that has attained some kind of cult status but, until now, I'd never seen it. While the film does have its positives, generally it's a big disappointment; its appeal limited to HELL fans and obsessive Lower East Side NYC-ophiles.

The story pivots around Billy (Hell) who, with his band, is one of the main players on the NYC/ East Village scene. He enters into a bizarre, disparate relationship with Nada (Carole Bouquet), a French journalist on an assignment in NYC. A complication arrives in the shape of another European journalist (played by director Ulli Lommel) who vies for the love of Nada as he tries to track down Andy Warhol and ultimately Nada has to choose between the two.

To say the film is disjointed and slightly eccentric is an understatement. No one appears natural in their role, except for Hell when he's on stage at CBGBs with VOIDOIDS. Hell seems a bit awkward and unsure of himself when it comes to acting while Bouquet's character appears to be out of place, relentlessly neurotic and intensely selfish. There are also a lot of scenes that seem out of sync, like a detached S&M scene where Nada's film camera becomes some metaphorical tool of domination.

For all its negatives though, it does have a couple of redeeming features. First, of course, is some scintillating performances from RICHARD HELL AND THE VOIDOIDS (complete with Marky 'Ramone' Bell on drums). There are only four songs featured ('Love Comes In Spurts', 'Liars Beware', 'New Pleasure' and 'Blank Generation' which is played about four or five times in various guises throughout) but the performances are hugely watchable - not sure whose idea it was to have attendees of CBGBs throw confetti though!! It would have been good to have seen 'Betrayal Takes Two' included, as the lyrics would have fitted the film's theme perfectly.

The other highlight is how director, Lommel (who went onto be a z-grade schlock horror director), films NYC's Lower East Side. Remember, this was 1978, before the gentrification that exists there today. In this film, it appears almost war-torn; a ruptured, decaying underbelly of the run-down big city yet shimmering in a beauty that is long gone.

As an extra feature, a new interview with RICHARD HELL gives the film a whole different sheen. Hell is quite scathing about the film in general declaring it to be a "misbegotten false film" while for his role he "went zombie", but holds some compensation when compared with Bob Dylan! He analyses various scenes with a cutting facility, while stating Bouquet was a "very privileged ice queen." He also throws in a hilarious comment about her fashion sense - but you'll have to get the DVD to hear that one. He also states that, for one of the VOIDOIDS shoots at CBGB's, one John Lydon was present.

Definitely not a film I'll be coming back to too frequently, but it does serve very well as a reminder of what the streets of New York's East Side looked like in the Jan-Feb 1978 - it's especially relevant now that CBGBs is but a memory of those who got there. (11.09.10)