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Quote

"It's a government founded on mistrust and it breeds mistrust." -- -- Mayor Deke Copenhaver on the need to revamp Augusta's charter

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"Gang of Souls: A Generation of Beat Poets"

BY JOSH RUFFIN

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event: pick your type

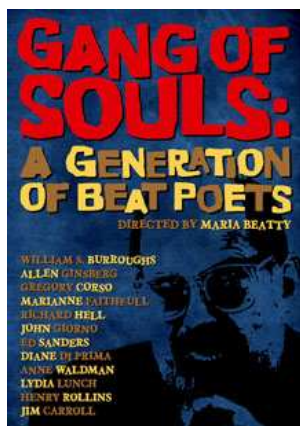
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music: pick your venue

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"Gang of Souls: A Generation of Beat Poets" Maria Beatty MVD Visual

AUGUSTA, GA - Pop quiz, hippie hotshot. Let's say, just for the sake of argument, that you want to film a documentary on the Beat Generation, its authors, its key players, and its legacy. You've got guaranteed screen time lined up for the likes of Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Anne Waldman, Marianne Faithful, and Henry Rollins. You've got a crap budget and one camera. What do you do? What...do...you...do?

If you're Maria Beatty, you just put everybody in front of the camera one by one and turn 'em loose on whatever they feel like talking about. It's really a stroke of genius on Beatty's part; rather than trying to further mystify the Beats with narrative-lace stock footage of Greenwich Village or a mini-doc on their history and impact, we are presented with the writers themselves, each one representing a certain aspect of the movement and the culture.

Everyone is here. We have the originals: William Burroughs, the godfather; Gregory Corso, the toothless sage; Ed Sanders, the gentle, awkward Edison; Anne Waldman, the explosive version of your weird, chain-smoking aunt, and Marianne Faithful, the suffering chanteuse.

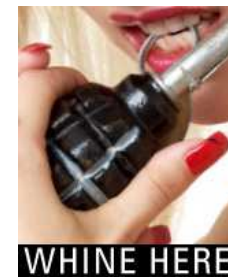
We have the new generation: Richard Hell, the reluctant punk jester; Henry Rollins, the eloquent maniac; Lydia Lunch, consumed and indignant in her nihilism, and Jim Carroll, a sensitive, shrunken David Bowie. The interviews are not chronological and with good reason; by placing these contemporary figures right alongside their progenitors, Beatty epitomizes the ethos of the all-inclusive ideal that was and is represented by this inadvertent literary phenomenon.

MVD's productions are always appropriately bare-bones, and "Gang of Souls" is no different. Being nothing more than a series of one-sided conversations, the documentary seeks to invoke rather than inform, to present its subjects in their most ungainly, neurotic, jubilant, insightful, and cantankerous forms as you, the viewer, are left to ponder.

The past, the present, and the future are all trying to talk to you. I suggest you listen.



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