

## Robert Quine

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Robert Quine, who has died aged 61, was acknowledged to be one of the most original and formidably talented guitarists in rock music; a founder member of American punk band The Voidoids, he later worked with Lou Reed, Tom Waits, Lloyd Cole and Brian Eno.

At first glance, Bob Quine appeared an unlikely punk. A nephew of the philosopher W V Quine, he was a tax lawyer until his mid-thirties, by which time he was already nearly bald. Even at the height of his success, he took to the stage in a well-ironed shirt and black sports jacket, his only concession to attitude being the wearing of sunglasses.

Equally out of keeping with punk's ethos was his command of his instrument, from which he produced an intense, aggressive, dissonant sound. Lou Reed acclaimed him as "a magnificent guitar player . . . an innovative tyro of the vintage beast".

His skills are best preserved on *Blank Generation*, the album he recorded with Richard Hell in 1977. Having renounced the law, he was then working in a Greenwich Village bookshop with Hell and Tom Verlaine, both members of the proto-punk group Television.

Hell, having fallen out with Verlaine and later with Johnny Thunders of The Heartbreakers, which he had gone on to join, put together a new band with Quine, Ivan Julian and Marc Bell (later of The Ramones) - The Voidoids. Quine coaxed suitably angry sounds from his Stratocaster to frame Hell's nihilistic yet purposeful lyrics, and the LP - especially its title track - became an underground success.

The band toured England in 1977, opening for The Clash (and being greeted with a fusillade of spittle), and again the following year before imploding, following quarrels between the members and problems with their record label. Their most important legacy was their wasted, trampish look (with the exception of Quine), which Malcolm McLaren had already shamelessly borrowed for the Sex Pistols.

Robert Quine was born at Akron, Ohio, on December 30 1942. As a boy, he was excited by the onset of rock 'n' roll and taught himself the guitar in imitation of his idol, Ritchie Valens. Later he became influenced by blues and jazz - especially Miles Davis - and during a year in Britain in the early Sixties was inspired by Hank Marvin.

In 1965, he went to St Louis to study law, and after passing the Missouri bar exams moved to San Francisco to qualify there. He quickly tired of his work, however, preferring to hang out with a then unknown band, The Velvet Underground, many of whose early concerts he recorded. In the early Seventies he went to New York, where he spent three years writing books on tax law, but the excitement of this soon palled and he dedicated himself to music.

Having left the Voidoids, he became a session musician. He played on Reed's solo album *The Blue Mask* (1982), which was a highlight of his work, but both men had sizeable egos and though he appeared on several other LPs of Reed's, they were barely on speaking terms. Quine, a considerable scholar of music, regarded it as something of a priesthood and could not abide others questioning his interpretation of its laws.

He subsequently played with Tom Waits (and Keith Richards) on *Rain Dogs* (1985), with Scritti Politti on *Cupid & Psyche* (1985) and with Marianne Faithfull for *Strange Weather* (1987). He also collaborated with Lloyd Cole on many of his solo albums, with They Might Be Giants, and with Matthew Sweet, notably on *Girlfriend* (1991). His work with Brian Eno on *Nerve Net* (1992) aroused his interest in ambient music. Quine's Velvet Underground recordings were released as *The Bootleg Series* last year.

He was found dead in Manhattan, and had probably died on May 31. He had been suffering from depression since the death of his wife, Alice, last year.

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