

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

Los Angeles Times

A BIRTHDAY PARTY AT N.Y.'S KITCHEN

By KRISTINE McKENNA

NEW YORK—The Kitchen, a spacious loft in Soho, Manhattan's chic avant-garde ghetto, has offered a home away from home to unorthodox dancers, musicians and artists for 10 years. This week, this most successful of counterculture corporations celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a two-night bash at Bond's, the huge pleasure palace that was recently the scene of a controversial visit from the Clash.

Founded by Woody and Steina Vaulka, the Kitchen nurtured minimal classicists Phil Glass and Steve Reich back in their early days, introduced the art world to punk and has been an active pioneer in the development of video. Essentially, it's been a catch-all for all manner of experimentation, and many ideas hammered out at the Kitchen have filtered down and altered the culture at large.

Since much of the work done at the Kitchen is of a non-commercial nature, it has relied on federal funding to survive. So, when President Reagan's threatened cutback in arts funding came howling at the Kitchen door, the New York art world rallied to her defense. A fund-raiser as well as a birthday party, the two-night event was an impressive testament to the esprit de corps of New York's art community. Both shows were sold out, some extremely "difficult" music was courteously received and a good time was had by all.

A partial recap of the lineup gives a good indication of the Kitchen's breadth of vision: rap group Fab Five Freddy & Friends, art-rockers DNA, Bush Tetras and the Feelies, Glass, Reich, Lydia Lunch's new group 1313, video by Nam June Paik, Devo and Brian Eno, and performances by Dan Aykroyd and Laurie Anderson.

Predictably, the biggest crowd-pleaser of the first evening was Phil Glass, who performed some of his trademark lyrical minimalism. The crowd had thinned out considerably by 2:30 a.m., when guitarist Glen Branca, one of New York's hottest young composers, combining classical structure with the violence and volume of rock, came on with his guitar army to perform a frighteningly powerful piece called "The Ascension." Branca, along with musical terrorists DNA, left the largest aural dents on Sunday evening.

The following night the crowd, which included Mick Jagger, had doubled in size and the performances stretched until 5:30 in the morning. Surprise guest Todd Rundgren performed three solo songs on electric guitar, while the surprise hit of the evening was jack-of-all-arts Meredith Monk, whose company performed a stunning dance with vocal accompaniment that cast a spell-bound hush on the hall. Percussionist David Van Tiegham showed himself to be an agile and innovative dancer with a solo offering, and performance artist Laurie Anderson went down a storm doing sections of her epic opera "United States." Anderson is the current darling of the avant-garde and deservedly so. She is an utterly enchanting artist.

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HALEAKALA, INC.
59 WOOSTER
NEW YORK,
NEW YORK
10012
(212) 925-3615

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