

PERFORMANCE

Peaked Paik

By Sally Baner

A COUNTERPOINT TO GOOD MORNING MR. ORWELL. A series of events by Nam June Paik. The Kitchen, 59 Wooster Street, 925-3615 (January 1-28).

The first event in *A Counterpoint to Good Morning Mr. Orwell* at the Kitchen was a public viewing on multiple receivers of the New Year's Day transmission of *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, a trans-Atlantic television satellite broadcast originating in both New York (Channel 13) and Paris (FR 3). Conceived by Nam June Paik, the show has a list of credits too long to name here, including director Emile Ardolino and writers Mitchell Kriegman and Leslie Fisher. George Plimpton hosted the New York edition of the broadcast.

The stated purpose of *Good Morning*... was to challenge the pejorative Orwellian view of technology by using it as a productive medium to unite disparate performers in disparate places into a single (though pluralistic) global village. (Although Plimpton mentioned that Orwell's other point in 1984 was the specter of

totalitarianism, that topic was never broached in the show.) Another, implicit purpose for the program was to expose avant-garde performance to a broader (TV) audience than the venues for live performance, such as the Kitchen itself, can garner. Maybe television is the performance medium of the future, even the present. But one wonders what will become of the avant-garde if it simply copies popular forms. If it's only a bad version of the real thing, why not turn the channel and watch the real thing? *Good Morning*... had its marvelous moments—Laurie Anderson and Peter Gabriel's opening number. Allen Ginsberg's song on how to meditate, lots of footage of break-dancing, Merce Cunningham's implacable movements, some of the psychedelic imagery of John Sanborn and Dean Winkler animation in *Act III*, a promo tape for music by Philip Glass. But both format and content often seemed like a weak mixture of the *Ed Sullivan Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, and MTV.

The current avant-garde in dance and performance emulates popular forms for all sorts of reasons, not only for accessibility, but also for vitality and meaning. That it strongly rejects the previous generation's serious, analytic, intellectual attitude toward art was evident in *Good Morning*..., which skipped from luminaries of the '60s to the '80s with not even a fleeting glance at the '70s. (A '60s touch was inadvertently included when satellite breakdowns forced the participants and crew to improvise constantly. I'm told that technical problems in New York also cut out a lot of the New York material.) In fact, when the Kitchen began broadcasting the football bowls on two monitors and reruns of *Good Morning*... immediately after the live transmission, the program was vastly improved.

The Kitchen installation *1984 in 1984*, which will run until January 28, shows both the New York and the Paris versions of the program; Paik will hold a question-and-answer discussion on January 16 at 6 p.m.