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Burnt bottle, raped moon

The group concert which opened the season at the Kitchen on October 9 was not one of the better concerts I have seen there. But like most concerts at the Kitchen, there were enough fresh ideas to make it a novel and interesting evening nonetheless.

Laurie Spiegel's electronic music was played while the audience was coming in, so I found it difficult to pay very close attention to it until her last piece. "Sediment" is a quiet attractive piece, made up mostly of sustained tones which gradually fade in and out, overlapping each other in interesting ways. Many of the sounds are quite simple, but some of them have unusual colors and vibrato effects. It is a stereo tape, but instead of the two tracks being placed left and right, they came from front and rear. I like this procedure as it fills the room, creates greater separation between the two channels, and generally enhances the piece. But when the piece ended after perhaps five or 10 minutes, I had just begun to familiarize myself with the sounds enough to hear the piece on another level, and I was sorry that it stopped. Of course, a lot of other people might have been turned off if the music had gone on for half an hour. But I had the feeling that the piece itself would like to have had more time.

Jim Burton's "Rhetoric I" uses two guitar chords, repeated continuously. The one on the front speaker has a slightly different tempo than the one on the rear speaker, so gradually they move in and out of phase with one another. Nothing changes for a long time until two voices suddenly emerge. The voice on the front speaker is worried that the audience will get bored listening to the music, while the voice on the rear speaker tries to reassure him that it is all right. While the music drones on, the self-conscious discussion leads through

some amusing observations and sometimes forces the listener to examine his own feelings about repetition and time.

Judith Sherman's "Moon-landing" is a tape collage which utilizes several tracks of her own singing along with some spoken poetry, fragments of distant rock music, and other sounds. The many elements are mixed together in a very professional way, and the singing is particularly effective. But I had trouble appreciating the poetry, which concerns a phallic space ship raping the virgin moon.

Michael Levenson's "Coke on the Rocks" begins as a militant snare drum solo. Then he pours lighter fluid over a large, economy size Coke bottle and sets it on fire. As the bottle burns, he returns to his snare drum and plays jazz riffs with brushes. His excellent drumming sustains the short piece well, and the simple stark image of the burning Coke bottle, in context with the drumming, makes an arresting statement.

Levenson's other theatre piece, "Professor Throwback Presents," conveys much less through much more. Wearing a gorilla mask, he burns classical sheet music, does a bad magic act, induces a member of the audience to suck her thumb, draws meaningless symbols, etc., etc. It is more or less impossible to relate the many events, and the piece as a whole is pretty confused.

Garret List's "Resonance Music" (second version) was played by two double basses, French horn, and clarinet. The musicians play largely sustained tones and textures while the composer manipulates audio controls, amplifying different instruments at different times and creating feedback squeals. Though some sounds are interesting, they don't seem to fit together very well. But perhaps I missed the point.

Tom Johnson