

Well, Let's See...

THE GLEN BRANCA ENSEMBLE/The Kitchen/ Nov. 19

by Josh Lasco

NYC—At the time, it seemed like this show was all everyone was talking about. Many a voice could be heard saying Branca *this* or Branca *that*, and do you know who's going to be there? Well, I was there and the Kitchen was nearly empty.

Because of this fact, I wasn't able to spend my time waiting for the Ensemble by turning around in my seat, pointing at rockstars and then trading snide, gossipy stories with my own company, so I had the chance to come up with a few theories of my own as to why the attendance was so poor at such a highly praised show.

1) The ticket price was high. I blocked the actual amount out of my memory, but it was expensive (though not too expensive for, say, a "classical" performance or for, say, a diehard fan—which, if I remember, practically everyone referred to themselves as being. Besides, I paid and had no idea who Branca was). 2) I attended on Nov. 19th, what the close-knit Branca fans referred to in their secret Branca society handbook as "the unhip night" (but this isn't plausible either—I mean I was there). Or, the most probable reason for the low attendance, 3) people who pride themselves on being into artsy fartsy things usually don't know what they *really* like and don't like because they're too busy talking about it to listen to themselves.

So, how can you believe what these people say if they don't even believe it themselves? Seeing how I never knew who Branca was and therefore was shielded from the shallow talk, talk, talk aspect of it all, it's easy for me to understand why I was one of the few people in that audience.

Okay, I can't really describe the show. I just want to be upfront about that. Just think seven guitars, two basses and a drum set all played mostly at the same time, and at a volume that would dampen out a Ramones show. It sounded like the end of a Sonic Youth song, guitars wailing and drums crashing. Feedback. Only it had the driving sound of a 1000-violin orchestra and it went on all night. Symphonies No. 8 (The Mystery Part 1) and No. 10 (The Mystery



Part 2) were played and, by the intermission, I was running to the concession stand for earplugs (which, by the way, were given to me for free by a very cool member of The Kitchen staff).

I survived until the end of the night and reflected on the show. How can I explain this?, I asked myself. I read the liner notes for the CD (which were reprinted in the program) to no avail (I don't think anyone can really describe this). By the way, CDs are available from Atavistic (U.S.) and Blast First (U.K.). I've seen a whole bunch of them at Pier Platters in Hoboken, too.

Though there were some aspects to the performance that I didn't like (for some reason Glen Branca, who conducted the Ensemble, irked me. I made myself a mental bet that he brought a soda and M&M's out onto the stage every night they played in order to get a chuckle from the audience).

Regardless of whether he did or didn't, the audience/performer patronization levels were about as high as the volume that night. Quit with the acting Glen!—just play the music and get off the stage. I would say see them if it sounds like it's up your river and if you get the chance. (I understand they don't play too often, so in that case pick up a CD.) By simply doing that you can probably be a bigger Branca fan than everyone who yaps about it.