

Aluminum Music Cooking At The Kitchen

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Tonight and tomorrow night, The Kitchen presents Aluminum Music, a 30-year-anniversary party for the legendary Aluminum Nights concert—and part of the performance hub's own 40th anniversary season—featuring Z'EV, The Bush Tetras, George Lewis and Love of Life Orchestra. We spoke with Nick Hallett, the event's curator, about whether or not lightning—or at least a backstage visit from Mick Jagger—can strike twice.

New York Press: The Kitchen has done so many interesting, important and weird events, how did the idea to pay homage to Aluminum Nights come about?

Nick Hallett: I've been involved with The Kitchen for several years and it's their 40th anniversary and I wanted to curate something that was along the lines of its legacy because I think its so important to the history of music, art, video and New York City in general. Sitting in the Kitchen's office are two posters for the original Aluminum Nights concerts, and they're not hung up, they're kind of leaning against a wall. They've been there as long as I've been curating and performing there. When I sat down with the director there to talk about what we should do to celebrate The Kitchen's legacy, I turned to the posters.

And you managed to get a number of the original participants, most of whom are still creating art.

It's not as though I reached down into the vault of forgottenness. The artists performing are artists I am interfacing with through my own practice as a musician and curator. It was looking around and seeing who is playing now and at the top of their game. It's a very simple show and there's no way we could completely emulate the original—it's just a context in which to present these amazing musicians.

Is this sort of concert something The Kitchen might pull off today?

The Kitchen has lived through many moments in art. If you look at what it's producing right now, it's nothing at all like what it was doing in 1981. It's a relevant performance venue because it's tapped into the zeitgeist. In New York City, there will always be emerging artists and something that emulates or signifies a Downtown aesthetic or sense of art making, but this is different.

The original lineup was amazing; Brian Eno did a video installation! Is there anyone from the original lineup you wanted but couldn't get?

I acted locally in terms of how I curated. I was thinking, who in my world is amazing.

Have you thought about doing something that people in another 20 years will want to recreate?

I'm hoping. I love the idea of taking an event like Aluminum Nights and thinking about it as a convergence for the important culture of the time. I'm hoping that today's artists are creating events in the present that 20 years from now will be reflected upon in a similar way.

Is there one act you're most excited about?

Each act is completely different and that's another thing that's really fun about re-curating this. Obviously I have a lot to choose from and I'm only choosing a little bit, but what was so exciting about the Downtown scene of the late 1970s and early '80s... the word often used is disparate, and I hate that word, but there were all sorts of different agendas being addressed but it all seemed to come together. That's what's exciting about being able to put together a concert like this. Outside of The Kitchen, it would be hard to imagine these acts being paired with each other.

