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Dance: 'Breaking' Indoors

By JACK ANDERSON

GOOD dance can come from anywhere, even from the streets themselves. As proof, there was Saturday night's "Graffiti Rock" concert at the Kitchen, a program devoted to breaking, a dance form that has flourished in recent years quite literally on the sidewalks of New York.

Both on the streets and inside theaters, breaking involves two teams, known as crews, who try to outdance each other. A member of one crew gets up and dances, after which someone from the rival crew attempts one-upmanship. And as the event proceeds, choreographic invention is combined with athletic prowess and a cheeky sense of competition.

The program pitted the Rock Steady Crew against the Swift Kids Crew, each crew consisting of five young men who had adopted what seasoned troupers might call "stage names" — such names, for instance, as Crazy Legs, Take One, Frosty Freeze and Ken Ski. Typically, a dancer might begin by standing tall and letting his feet dart back and forth. Suddenly, without preparation, he would fall to the floor, sometimes deftly, sometimes with a thud. Then he would try to

hoist himself up again or whirl and swivel about.

There were many variations on flip-flops, shoulder stands and headstands and several dancers could even spin while standing on their heads. If breakers actually do such stuff on pavement, then breaking must require extraordinary stamina. Equally remarkable was the way breaking's structured competitiveness served to channel aggression.

D.J. Spy was disk jockey and Fab 5 Freddy provided "rapping" commentary above the records. There were also slide projections of subway graffiti and murals by graffiti artists. Most New Yorkers know lots about graffiti, but many probably don't know much about breaking. Therefore, even though this was not a scholarly presentation, it was a pity that the program notes said nothing about breaking's origins and very little about the dancers themselves.

However, the fact that breaking has moved from the streets into such a center as the Kitchen suggests that it has caught the eye of theatrical choreographers, and just as the waltzes and mazurkas of years past and the disco fads of only yesterday have found their way into ballet and modern dance works, so, perhaps, will breaking, too. In any case, breaking was fun to look at for its own sake.

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