

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

SoHo Weekly News

November 23, 1978

...Kippers

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The Kipper Kids
The Kitchen
Nov. 17, 18

The Kipper Kids come on stage at The Kitchen, costumed almost identically, horrifying versions of Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee. Big beefy bodies covered only by tie-dyed, g-strings in the front and double elastic straps in the back; faces painted white, elongated false chins sprouting black three-day growths, huge noses, one a sharply pointed wedge at a ninety degree angle to the face, the other curving down almost to the chin, nesting into the stubble, all this topped off with softly gathered black rubber shower caps.

A woman friend said that the Kipper Kids were the first men she ever saw who really make fun of their cocks.

Their sheer appearance is a hard act to follow but they do all right, about 45 minutes of anxiety-provoking, repulsive, unbearably funny numbers. English Music Hall comedians regressed into giant infants hurling their libidinous, scatological impulses into very precise routines. I've seen comedy this profound in films before, but never on stage, excepting some brief moments in Richard Foreman plays where the comic and the grotesque are similarly allied.

The Kipper Kids are singing "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend." They each have three-quarters of a pickle on strings about their necks. Between lines they munch on the pickles. At the end of the song, they open their mouths to let the half chewed pickles ooze to the floor.

The routines are short, about a dozen in all. Songs, musical instruments, a range of speech from naturalism to barely audible gibberish, a lot of props. The gags are mainly visual, hardly ever linguistic. A lot of the humor comes from the manner in which they maneuver their masses of bare flesh around the stage. Facing each other in a semi-crouch, arms extended, thumbs up, they await some signal that will allow them to begin a number simultaneously. These elongated preparations are as funny



The Kipper Kids: a hard act to follow

as the toppers.

I was seated in the back of The Kitchen and the sight lines aren't all that great, so I couldn't figure out some of the routines that used small props on a waist-level table. There was an elaborate tea ceremony with a teakettle, made from a piece of disconnected plumbing, which did a complete "body by-pass"; the tea went in one end and came out the other. The kettle finally got plugged up and onto a Bunsen burner. The ceremony was attended by some weird looking dolls that kept having their heads twisted up and off. Teacakes were assembled from various foodstuffs, topped with candles which exploded when

lit, and were finally eaten and spat out.

For the finale, the Kids donned goggles, replaced the soft caps with skin tight ones that they peeled down over their heads, ready for rough stuff. They threw cups of dye that they'd been cooking up over each other, threw flour on themselves and the audience, covered the tops of the caps with shaving cream, stuck exploding candles in the shaving cream and lit up.

The audience was large and diverse. One of the most interesting things about the performance was the kinds of laughter it evoked, from incredulity to deep wrenching spasms. Since the wind-ups for the gags are as funny as the clinchers, people laugh individually, different laughs breaking out constantly, uncontrollably from various parts of the audience.