

THE KITCHEN

VIDEO

MUSIC

DANCE

PERFORMANCE FILM

512 West 19th St. (Btwn 10th & 11th Aves) New York, NY 10011

Reservations: 255-5793

Music:

Maryanne
Amacher

The New York Times

By PETER WATROUS

AT times during Maryanne Amacher's hour-and-a-half show at the Kitchen (where she kicked off a two-week festival of electronic music), the room seemed literally filled with sound — sound became tactile.

With three tape recorders and a huge set of speakers spread out around a darkened room, she used immense volume to make sound feel liquid, all-enveloping, as if it were pouring into ears, between fingers and through hair. Ms. Amacher layered her noises — buzzing tones wrapped in sandstorm textures, rumblings like faraway thunder storms late at night, an idling motorcycle, jets swooping by — into an apocalyptic, terrifying landscape.

About one-quarter of the way through the show, Ms. Amacher, calmly but theatrically adjusting the knobs on her control panel, made the music sound as if 1,000 cicadas had settled on the inside of the ear; the music sprang from inside a listener's head — an unusual experience. Suddenly music became dangerous, violating the body. Experiencing this discomforting penetration, the audience merged as if it shared a catastrophe, passengers on a plane that narrowly missed crashing. In a sense her music is similar to bass-heavy reggae sound systems or a high-volume Sonic Youth concert at CBGB — the extremes of volume and intensity make the experience communal, a shared natural event.

But this sense of physical danger is tied into something else Ms. Amacher, a long-time electronic and environmental music experimentalist, is getting at: by having the audience walk around the room and having music erupt from all sides, she readjusted the traditional relations of power between performer and audience. And by walking around, the source materials changed as a listener's relationship to various speakers changed, an obvious-enough metaphor for interpretation. Ms. Amacher urges us to wake up and notice that sound is everywhere, and that it affects us. What she's doing isn't new anymore, but it's still engrossing, and valuable. The Kitchen will be lucky if the rest of its programs are this good.

2/28/88