

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

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Michael Snow Presents His 2 Musical Guises In Program at Kitchen

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Michael Snow has made a name in experimental circles for his extraordinary films—minimalist explorations that hint ominously of a world of seething emotion without capitulating to it.

But he is also a musician, self-taught but hardly unskilled. This past week his music has been on display in two guises at the Kitchen. During the afternoons (through today) there is a sound installation. And Thursday night and last night the Artists Jazz Band, of which he is a member, held forth in full improvisational splendor.

Of the two, the installation was appreciably more interesting. Mr. Snow's work in whatever medium starts with very simple ideas that have evocative ramifications. Here he has taken an electric metronome and set it ticking in one corner of the irregular Kitchen space.

Then he placed one small cassette recorder 10 feet away and taped the sound in the room, complete with distant, random street noises and echoey ambience. Then he set it to playing back and taped the two sounds with a second cassette in the middle of the room. The same process was repeated with a third cassette. Then he taped the whole mélange from a half-flight down on the stairwell. The whole piece thus has the metronome and four cassettes clacking away polyphonically, each with different degrees of echo and background noise, full of shifting rhythmic patterns. It sounds just lovely.

The Artists Jazz Band in its current configuration consists of eight Canadian artists, most of them from Toronto; Mr. Snow plays piano and trumpet. Perhaps it was because this observer's

attention was focused on him, but Mr. Snow sounded the most interesting player of the bunch: his piano style is genuinely fluent and inventive, and it's fascinating to see such a contained artist give a peek into his more passionate emotions.

The group as a whole plays rolling free improvisations, full of energy and occasional nice moments but hardly original in idea or execution. Still, one suspects they don't worry much about that; hobbies serve partly as therapy for everybody concerned, and this is clearly a hobby in the best sense of the word.