

# THE NEW YORKER

## GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN, Concerned Citizen (September 16, 1991)

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#### CONCERNED CITIZEN



*"Liberty Prop," a new sculpture just erected at the Broadway edge of City Hall Park, is a comment on the sometimes schizophrenic ways in which Americans use political language and imagery. The piece's main component is a gigantic box open at the top and bottom. It hangs from a flagpole that's covered in outsized sections of Old Glory and huge flash cards that spell out the word "OATH." Inside, also billboard-size, are a quiz about the Constitution, the answers to the quiz, some information about the Vice President's and President's jobs, and a list of such political words as "REPUBLIC," "MINORITY," and "DEMOCRACY," along with their definitions.*

*The sculpture, commissioned by the Public Art Fund and on view through December, seems particularly well placed: the park is said to be the site of one of the first public readings of the Declaration of Independence. To the work's south stands a statue of Nathan Hale, shirt open and feet tied, ready to give up the one life he has to give, and between that work and City Hall is a pole commemorating the liberty poles patriots gathered around before the American Revolution. Artist David Schafer, who collaborated on his piece with architect Jeffrey Cole, says he continues to find new meanings in it: about patriotism, about the way cities govern their citizens, about dissemination of information. "I'm not an anarchist, I'm a taxpayer," Mr. Schafer says. "This is my way of getting up on my soapbox, I guess."*

#### EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

THERE were some guys with ties sweating bullets down front in the box seats, but otherwise Jimmy Connors does not attract a "Tennis, anyone?" type of crowd. Not that any racket-wielding Breck girls, or boys with names like action verbs, and wearing white ducts, pleats, and cables so deep you suspect their skin is grooved, would feel at home at the National Tennis Center's stadium. Excuse us, The Louis J. Armstrong Tennis Stadium. How's that for a tribute to Satchmo?

U.S. Open or no U.S. Open, as sports-enthusiast nights on the town go, this is slumming in the grass. How else can you characterize a pleasure dome uglier than a Channel Home Center, parking facilities that must make the owners of IKEA laugh, a Quonset-hut clubhouse, victuals that could set anyone's training regime back a season, and enough hawking of

Ray-Ban, Fuji, K-Swiss, Nike, and Fila (at retail, yet) to make the tournament grounds seem like a shopping mall with nets? There's a Haagen-Dazs cart for each time McEnroe ever cursed a call.

From far away, the box seats look genteel, and the patriarchal announcer does a decent deadpan John Cleese, but up in the cheap seats it's nachos, cigaretes, and quart-size Cokes. Sports psychologists are everywhere. "Michiel Schapers can't beat Connors," says one wise-ass. "Look at him. I'd forfeit rather than wear that shirt." But all defer to a seventy-three-year-old Frenchwoman who told us she hits the Open every day at eleven. "Guts. Tennis is guts," she intones, thicker than Aznavour. "Not long hair and posing for calendars. I saw that Agassi in the clubhouse before that game of his. Such an attitude. Like he was going to the cinema. I said to him, 'You have three hours to shape up or you're a loser.' Ha." Just then Connors lunges for an almost impossible shot and makes it. "Alles, yas-y/Bon! That man has guts," she beams like his prom date. Connors hits an ace down the middle. "See. The crowd adores him." Connors hits one into the tape and it bobbles over to a disbelieving Schapers. "Even the net loves him. I can't wait to stand and cheer when he wins, because—" Suddenly the Frenchwoman breaks off in mid-sentence, rises, howls joyfully, and throws in some flailing arms to boot. "You missed it," she rebukes us. Reminded that Connors is still two sets from victory, she flicks her hand dismissively and motions us to hurry. "Pay attention! You are worse than Agassi. *Levez!* Get up! Raise your hands! Oh, I love this part."

Do they really do the Wave at Wimbledon?

#### IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

**I WAN JAH PUPPET THEATRE**—Hand puppets perform to music. (Taipei Theatre, Rockefeller Center, 1221 Sixth Avenue, Level 2. 373-1850. Sept. 9-14 at 7:30.)

**ANNE SPRINKLE**—In her new one-woman show, which is, explicitly, about sex. (Sanford Meisner Theatre, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 206-1764. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, Saturdays at 7 and 10:30, and Sundays at 7:30. Through Sept. 22.)

**NAM JUNE PAIK**—The artist, in collaboration with the American Museum of the Moving Image, is presenting two days of video art accompanied by music and performance. Sept. 14-15 at 2:30: A bus leaves the Emily Harvey gallery, 537 Broadway, at Spring St. for the American Museum of the Moving Image, in Astoria, Queens. Mr. Paik, Rain House, and James Johnson will be performing live on the bus. Sept. 14 at 4: A concert by Mr. Paik and the alternative-rock group Bad Brains, with video by Joseph Beuys. Sept. 15 at 4: A "video opera," which includes dance, live music, and Mr. Paik's footage of Merce Cunningham and John Cage. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. For more information and reservations, call 1-718 784-4520.)

**P.S. 122**—Sept. 12-15 at 8: Ken Campbell in "Furtive Nudist," a one-man show. Sept. 12-15 at 9: "Faint Shirts" with choreography by Jennifer Monson, music by Zecia Parkins, and sets and costumes by Prince. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

days at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Closed Sundays.

**RAINBOW & STARS**, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A moon dust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a lot. There are plenty of nieces if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking, "Is the water warm?" **JULE WILSON** can be found here for the next few weeks. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

**RED BLAZER TOO**, 340 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTWALKERS**, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Slompers. Show times vary.

**RITZ**, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This decaying theatre was once Studio 54, where the late Steve Rubell's henchmen helped popularize the policy of turning away the unbeautiful. Now it's the home of one of the city's biggest, oldest, and loudest rock clubs, which was formerly housed in a decaying ballroom in the East Village. The club features a broad stage, mobile-home-size speakers, plenty of room to shimmy, and for the sedentary, a giant Big Brother video screen. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

**SWIFT BANJ**, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerant group for the international jazz stopper who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk cafe; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-in ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The **LAZLO GARDONY** trio appears on Sept. 11. The electrified big band of the late Gil Evans, now under the direction of his son, the trumpeter **MILES EVANS**, is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

**TRAMPS**, 45 W. 21st St. (227-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that has become an urban Disneyland (a pool hall, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trippy night diner, Lime-light around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is slicker and roomier than the original Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. On Sept. 13-14, Donald Harrison and Tommy Ridgley make music with the Guardians of the Flame Mardi Gras Indians, with **DR. JOHN** joining them on the second night.

**VILLAGE GATE**, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—In the gym-size downstairs room—which, with its black walls, black pillars, and black pipes and ducts, resembles a live-in Nevelson sculpture—salsa bands pack them in on Mondays at nine.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windless, wedge-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holiday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The decor is homey and a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. The **ARTHUR BLYTHE** quartet is on hand Sept. 10-15. **TERENCE BLANCHARD**'s quintet takes charge on Sept. 17. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. Music after nine-thirty.

**WETLANDS**, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. Were we in the business of dispensing stars, we'd send three or four **SACHARY RICHARD**'s way. The Louisiana-based singer-accompanist, who'll do his joyous zydeco stomping here Sept. 12-13, released "Women in the Grass" last year, an album of music as whimsical as Lyle Lovett's and as wistful as Daniel Johnston's. Richard's live performances are as good an opportunity as Manhattaners are likely to get to do the Cajun two-step, although the singer's softer, more thoughtful side tends to get lost in all the shuffling. Music at ten.