

JUDY AT THE ELECTRIC CIRCUS

By Judy Brin

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The Electric Circus is painted an electric blue outside — the whole building seems to merge into the night sky. On St. Marks Place in the East Village of New York City, it's one of the elaborate new discotheques lining the groovy city block jammed with barefoot rebels and grubby hippies.

On a recent Thursday night the sensation seekers at the Electric Circus were joined by Robert Joffrey and 12 members of the City Center Joffrey Ballet Company, seen at right.

A tall blonde, usually seen in toe shoes, wore a transparent plastic minidress foil circles on her bosom, her pale legs glowing in the alternating light and dark.

Joffrey, wearing an orange polka dot shirt, gleefully tossed his head. "The on and off of flickering "strobe" light arrested each joyous moment of his dancing. Loud laughter rose up as a dancer's movements, normally smooth and elegant became jerky beneath the blinking lights. Even simple walking looked odd, like something from an animated cartoon.

Suddenly a trapeze artist, hanging from his heels, was shot across the tent-like ceiling, dropping yellow daisies as he went.

Enormous balloons descended from the other corner in the spherical room, dropping down onto Edward Barton, a dancer often featured at Judson Church concerts and now working as a performer at

the Electric Circus. He picked his way amongst the public, walking on his hands around the big room, the light alternating from strobe flashings to spotlights which soaked the floor and the performer with bright colors.

Isn't it difficult to move and stay balanced in such unsteady light? Eventually, Barton says, you depend on the light itself for stability, but this must take a peculiar kind of practice for the non-Circus dancer becomes wary of moving along the floor. Tipping sensations even upset Herbert Migdoll (the company photographer) From simply resting.

The unconventional fusion of the arts (electronic music joining with rock music; the relentless lighting; the mixed media meeting of cinema and dance) gives the Circus-goer what might be called an Instant Art Experience. You tumble into new perceptions of dimension, space, balance, color and time. The pulsating environment stretches time, making an everyday action seem to go on and on past its normal duration.

Balance seems not to exist when light comes from below and behind and above. Perspective and equilibrium change and the Circus-goer, with a bit of a headache, resorts to laughter and frantic dancing as he becomes both performer and audience in his newest of happenings.