

RAP NIGHT AT THE O.N. KLUB (ALMOST)

Review of first
performance 8/6/81
under the name of
Age of Consent

Remember that 1960s poster which asked the rhetorical question, "Suppose they gave a war and nobody came?" Well, something like that happened with the Rap Night presented by the O.N. Klub Wednesday night.

The idea behind Rap Night is a fine one. Rapping, the funk style which features spoken-sung vocals laid over skeletal funk rhythms, is the latest sensation among New York's rock trendsetters. Theoretically, the idea of bringing together rock hipsters and black rappers lured by the promise of an open mike at the Silver Lake club offered a potential crossing of musical boundaries that Los Angeles' highly segmented music scene seldom sees.

What transpired fell far short of the possibilities. The O.N. Klub was crowded, but it was a heavily music industry-dominated audience which spent most of the evening gathered around the edges of the dance floor waiting for something to happen (presumably, the arrival of some representatives of the black scene this music sprang from). The evening's principal entertainment consisted of Herald-Examiner rock critic Ken Tucker (attired incongruously in a ZZ Top T-shirt) seated on stage spinning funk and rap records.

The open-mike policy yielded four fledgling rappers, primarily members of local bands whose contributions ranged from third-rate Grace Jones imitations to passable raps that seemed motivated more by a desire to dabble in what is hip than by a deep commitment to the genre. That definitely wasn't true of Age of Consent, a gay duo which opened the live segment with a beautifully executed blend of self-deprecatory humor, gay pride and militancy that fully displayed rapping's potential.

Let's hope that the O.N. Klub hosts more Rap Nights —and that such shows produce more bona-fide, quality rappers like Age of Consent and less hip posturing.

—DON SNOWDEN