



COPERNICUS

DEC. 2, 7P.M., AMERICAN THEATER OF ACTORS, 314 W. 54TH ST. 4TH FL 691-6969

DEC. 8-10, 7 P.M. TRIBECA LAB, 79 LEONARD ST. FREE 330-8086

Copernicus, a cross between a rock poet and a philosophical rapper, is talking about his years performing in clubs. He's done his show at the World, Max's Kansas City, the Knitting Factory, CBGB's and countless other New York nightspots. Sometimes he did verbal jams with musicians in the background and music has always been a major part of his show. He even hit the tops of the charts of the College Music Journals' radio-play survey. And the club circuit, with its anything goes atmosphere, has affected the show.

"All of a sudden some drunk throws beer in my face. When I'm up there, I'm roaring. It stings. I'm now splashed with beer," he says of one show. "He stands up and he's wobbling. And I say we're not barbarians and I put my arms around him and we both tumble down."

Of course, spur-of-the-moment situations like that are what makes playing in clubs exciting and irritating. Copernicus, whose spoken word set to music is presented in a radio-smooth voice, has cut records with musicians. At least now, in addition to the studio and the club, he's also moving to the stage. And he's part of a revolution in the definition of theater performance being held at the Performance Zone Festival. It's all about breaking down barriers. And with an appearance as King Lear in the Guerrilla Rep's production slated for Washington Square Park in warmer months as of August, Copernicus is coming at you more than ever. Free staged readings of that show are slated for Dec. 8-10 at Tribeca Lab, 79 Leonard St., at 7 p.m. (212-330-8086).

"This is a much more gentle Copernicus," he says with his nearly trademarked soft tones that connote a storm beneath the surface. "Warmer. More compassionate."

Somewhere between Theodore and Lou Barroll and God and Godzilla, Copernicus has performed for about two hours surrounded by a crowd of clubbers from clubs where he once performed at Max's Kansas City and the Club. Someone says that the show is recorded rather than live, but how many of those new shows are recorded rather than live? Maybe we don't return more to the club circuit in clubs in which many are extinct.



between Brother Reed, between Jim Nietzsche, between his persona has endeavored for decades. He lives in a city filled with posters of shows he has performed ranging from City to CB's and the once said we all exist live? Copernicus, being presented with live music, says he doesn't really "exist" at all. At this point he's done the club circuit including many that

"A lot of them don't even exist anymore," he says. "8BC. The Cat Club."

Now he's among a core of performers, creating their work in the crucible of the club circuit, making a transition to the stage. The performers sometimes thrived on the sense of being unexpected at the clubs. And at least he's sorry to have seen some clubs get ploughed under over the years by progress, regress or just plain time.

"It was great, a great place," he says of Max's Kansas City. "The only place in town, tremendous atmosphere."

Performance artists often have experimented in clubs. And some like Copernicus blend music and the spoken word. As poets such as Reggie Gaines lead the revolution of the spoken word, Copernicus is part of the march. Nobody wants (or most people don't want) to be the word poetry, but that's a big part of this. "The angel is in you like the carriage passes/ that hang alone/ in the/ Sea's/ Desert/ Pebbles. Dreaming pebbles/ sweating in the rain/," he says in "No Borderline." "Spirits/ Eating through the lava/ waiting for the sand/ to smother the kiss."