

## Audiences were asked to keep their cell phones turned on



Photograph by Donald Swearingen

**Pamela Z has come to resemble Monk, emphasizing pure, often wordless crooning.**

## VOICE GEEK

BY KYLE GANN

With all the heaviness going down election week, I suppose it was a blessing that Pamela Z's *Voci* was little but a joyride. The Kitchen billed her October 28-30 concerts as a "polyphonic, one-woman opera," and it wasn't that at all. Instead, it was a series of songs built around one subject, and that subject was the voice. For a performance artist, Z has turned out peculiarly introverted. Her new CD, *A Delay Is Better* (Starkland), unrelated to the Kitchen gig, is a lovely listen, but its closest approach to social relevance is the track "Geekspeak," a comic continuum of loops of guys stuttering while they talk about being geeks and computer nerds. Once reminiscent of Laurie Anderson, Z has come more to resemble Meredith Monk in her emphasis on pure, often wordless crooning. And in place of Monk's emotive aura of compassion, Z evinces a drier fascination with technology and its ability to create conceptual puns.

For instance, in the middle of *Voci* she put on a bathrobe and excused herself, disappearing behind a screen on which was projected a video (through frosted glass) of her taking a shower. Even here the emphasis was vocal, because she did what you do in the shower: She sang. In "Cellovoice," she played an imaginary cello, as digital machines transformed her voice into cello tones. In "Voice Lesson," invisible voice teachers offered her singing advice that called forth from her bel canto singing, Tuvan throat singing with overtones, and perfect Bulgarian folk yodeling. And in the most elucidating trick of all, she took a recorded birdsong, slowed it down by octaves until it was in her register, imitated it as perfectly as possible, recorded herself, and then sped up her own voice into the bird's register, only to reveal how foreign to a bird's voice a human's

ultimately is, even discounting register. They didn't match at all.

Reversing the usual theatrical caveat about turning off cell phones, Z even drew voices from the audience. Before the show, ushers went through the space collecting people's cell phone numbers. At intermission they passed out all those numbers to people on opposite sides of the hall, and for a piece called "Keitai," Z instructed everyone to call their given number, and for the called person to let the tune play as long as it would, then answer the phone and shout in his or her most obnoxious cell phone voice, "Sorry, I can't talk right now, I'm attending a performance, gotta go, bye!" First we heard a wild menagerie of "Ride(s) of the Valkyries" and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, but what was funny was that people either couldn't quite remember what the phrase was, or couldn't resist giving it their own twist, or seemingly out of habit demanded, "Who's this?" Gradually trailed off like the last few popping kernels of popcorn, it was a vocal theme-and-variations, and the audience seemed almost relieved at a rare chance to let their phones ring at a concert without getting glared at.

### In 'Cellovoice' her voice digitally transformed into cello tones.

Another *Voci* theme was a typewriter: Visuals of old-fashioned typewriter keys abounded, and at one point, using barely visible sensors on her fingers, Z typed on an invisible typewriter and elicited the sound of typing from loudspeakers, then sang the nonsense letters she typed. In one song she mimicked losing her voice, and in another (as she later admitted to me) she actually did for a moment, life imitating art. With civilization hanging in the balance, it seemed odd to just listen to a singer sing about singing (though there were some famous singers in the audience, like Joan La Barbara and Shelley Hirsch). In retrospect, it may be the kind of personal, relaxing art we could stand to indulge in for a while.

Call clubs for times and cover charges. For shows playing one to two times during the week see the first day. For shows playing three or more times in one week, see the Long Runs section listed at the end of music.

**Pick** Voice Pick

F Free  
\$ \$12 and under  
\$\$ Over \$12

## WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1

**'AREYTO FOR LIFE'**

Club Deep, 16 W 22nd, 212.613.0900  
World AIDS Day Benefit for Latino Youth in Action.  
At 7:30. \$\$

**Pick** BILLY NAYER SHOW

Tonic, 107 Norfolk, 212.358.7501  
Singer/filmmaker/electric autoharpist/madman Cory McAbee's multi-media circus is kind of like a Zappa happening, if Zappa were influenced by the Who's rock operas, and all of his songs were catchy. The latest BNS record is a cabaret-punk concept album based on a short story about a sexy-dancing jackrabbit. With Jukeboxer. At 8. PHILLIPS

**Pick** DR. EUGENE CHADBOURNE

Galapagos, 70 N 6th St, Bklyn, 718.782.5188  
The avant-guitarist dominates the stage for a solo evening of hyperactive stream-of-consciousness music spew. Chadbourne's extremely mixed bag includes an off-the-cuff assortment of deranged covers, brilliant guitar and banjo improvisations, piquant Southern-fried-lefty satire, and... the rake! At 8. \$ GEHR

**Pick** ELI DEGIBRI

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia, 212.663.1967  
A voluptuous tone is central to the young tenor player's sound, and in *The Beginning* finds that tone being applied to an array of well-designed solos. As Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter already know, when DeGibri takes off, he pulls you with him. At 9. \$ MACNIE

**GALAPAGOS4 'DESTROYING ALL LINES TOUR'**

Lion's Den, 214 Sullivan, 212.477.2782  
With an artist named Meaty Ogre and a full-length called *Potholes in Our Molecules*, the multiracial, Chicago-based Galapagos4 posse is clearly a little more eccentric than your average indie hip-hopsters—but just a little. The only thing funny about these meat-and-potato rappers and producers are their names. At 10:30. \$ HSU

**ELIZABETH HARPER**

Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St, Bklyn, 718.302.3770  
At 10. Free

**MAGGIE KIM+THE PILLCRUSHERS+DAVE DOOBININ**

Luna Lounge, 171 Ludlow, 212.260.2323  
At 7:30. Free

**LAKE TROUT**

Tribeca, 16 Warren, 212.766.1070  
The long-running dark stars of the improv-rock scene (imagine a somewhat less-tight-arsed Radiohead) turn down the volume and turn up the vibe generator for an all-instrumental sit-down evening of ambient sounds and video projections. At 9. \$ GEHR

**FRED LONBERG-HOLM**

Barbès, 376 9th St, Bklyn, 718.965.9177  
This composer-cellist is quite a gadfly, moving from God Is My Co-Pilot to work with Jim O'Rourke, Anthony Coleman, and Peter Brotzmann among others. Just don't compare his ensembles to John Zorn's free-flowing Cobra groups—in Longberg-Holm's bands, he is the self-proclaimed dictator. At 9. GROSS

**Pick** LYCAON PICTUS

Delancey, 168 Delancey, 212.254.9920  
This local pro-wolf, anti-human synth-bass-drums trio keeps getting better—and scarier. Their new album features goth beatboxing, catatonic vocals, lyrics about cannibalism, and a mantra-like theme song. Just listening to it could give you rabies. With White Oni, a new band featuring Rop from Semiautomatic and the PeeChees. Also: BP Fallon. At 9. \$ PHILLIPS

**Pick** MACHEL MONTANO

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick, 212.243.4940  
Remember this supple-waisted Trini superstar singer winin' and jukin' at warp speed atop a truck in the video to his early-'90s "Come Dig It" dance hit? American indie Delicious Vinyl rightly bet Montano could transmit TT Carnival delirium to American culture big time. It hasn't happened... yet. Grab this chance to witness a mega-talent at work. At 10. OUMANO