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'Uptown Underground OC' transforms Costa Mesa

The event combined music, dance, art and alternative culture.

By **RICHARD CHANG**

The Orange County Register

The community plaza at the Orange County Performing Arts Center – plus an unused lot adjacent to it – transformed into a civilized kind of rave Saturday night.

KCRW/89.9 FM and the center joined forces over the weekend to present "Uptown Underground OC," a free party that included urban dance music by DJ Jason Bentley, an outdoor dance/art installation by David Michalek, and a mixture of young hipsters and the well-dressed older set filtering out of the Kirov Ballet, Branford Marsalis and South Coast Repertory.

"I'm excited to see culture in Orange County," said Cambri Hilger, 26, of Costa Mesa. "You

usually have to go to Los Angeles to see stuff like this."

Between 4,000 and 5,000 people attended the event, according to center publicist Heather Cho. "Uptown Underground OC" took place between 10 p.m. and midnight – unusual hours for an outdoor Performing Arts Center event.

Some attendees stood and watched Michalek's slow-motion video piece "Slow Dancing," which was projected on the exterior walls of the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. Others socialized, danced to the pulsing, hypnotic rhythms, or ducked into Leatherby's Café Rouge to get some liquid refreshment.

"It's a perfect alignment of elements," said Bentley, who deejays "Metropolis" on KCRW. "You get all walks of life here. I don't think we see this audience enough. That's the reason it was first introduced."

"Uptown Underground" debuted last year at the Music Center in Los Angeles. That event, which also featured Bentley as DJ and Michalek's outdoor installations, attracted about 3,500, according to a KCRW spokeswoman.

Sophia Grigoriou of Orange attended "Uptown Underground OC" with her friend Belinda Villalpando of Newport Beach.

"I'm really impressed that people are coming out to appreciate dance and art and it's all free," said Grigoriou, 29.

Matt Nichols of Newport Beach brought a group of friends to the event. "It's interesting that it's here at the Performing Arts Center," said the 32-year-old. "I like it. I like this kind of music. You would expect more of the ritzy crowd here. But this is cool. It's interesting. It's great."

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