

Noisy Club Six faces entertainment permit suspension

BY JOHN GOINS

CLUB Six, the SoMa dance venue used in the movie musical "Rent," might have its entertainment permit suspended after angry neighbors packed an Entertainment Commission hearing Feb. 20 and complained that the club's loud music keeps them awake.

A suspension would mean that no live entertainment or DJs would be allowed at the club, Entertainment Commission Executive Director Bob Davis said in a telephone interview.

The hearing was initiated by the commission's sound technician, Vajra Granelli, who conducted two random sound inspections at the club in February and found that it exceeded the commission-set sound levels.

The club is a hotspot for late-night dancers. Bay Guardian readers voted it the city's best dance club in 2004. It packs 'em in Friday and Saturday nights, the crowd spilling

SOUTHSIDE

into Sixth Street and Stevenson, the alley around the corner.

The Club Six façade during the day looks like a forlorn movie theater gone broke. But when it blinks open at night, crowds gather under a white hemispheric marquee with a stand of multicolored letters on top spelling out Club 6.

The spacious main floor has 20-foot ceilings, a big bar and couches. Downstairs is the big noise. Under a low ceiling in a cavern, DJs spin out loopy house music — reggae every Thursday. A throng of dancers contort, pop and lock in a room that wraps around island walls into corners and back out. And it is loud.

"It's really out of control. My window is 50 yards from their front door. I've been a walking zombie," said Rodd Walton, a resident of the nearby Hillsdale Hotel.

Walton said he had witnessed several disturbing incidents outside the club at night, including a knifing last August. "The police did a lineup right outside the club," he said.

"He (the owner) has no respect for the people who live upstairs, who have to put up with noise," says James L. Ayers, a 14-year resident of the Lawrence Hotel above the club. "All I want is a peaceful life. Everyone thinks we're parasites. We have rights and they're being violated." Ayers said the walls, windows and doors of his room shake from the heavy bass vibrations emanating from the music below.

Club Six owner Angel Cruz, interviewed Jan. 30 after a contentious community meeting at his club, said he had tripled the number of sound curtains at the club, installed custom-made sound rugs, spending \$15,000 since November to tone down the sound.

At that meeting, Cruz agreed to lock his sound system at the 88 decibels set by the Entertainment Commission, and to keep the doors and windows closed. But Granelli's inspections recorded sound levels as high as 97 decibels.

TL historian hopes you can help

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toric photographs, drawings, prints or paintings showing Tenderloin locales and people. He is also hunting for written works that include stories or information about the Tenderloin's past. Finally, he is hoping to interview people who have information about the Tenderloin's "recent and/or remote past."

According to Field, the first evidence of any structures in what we now call the Tenderloin is an 1853 U.S. Coast Survey map. It identifies the area as "St. Ann's Valley," and shows 16 structures centered around Powell and Mason, Eddy and Ellis.

"It was an isolated little valley," Field

Granelli, the Entertainment Commission's only sound technician, said the brick building where the club is housed does a poor job containing heavy bass vibrations.

"There's definitely a valid complaint there," Granelli said.

Paul Hogarth, a community activist and managing editor of Tenderloin Housing Clinic's online Beyond Chron, echoed Granelli's findings, saying the brick building that houses both the Lawrence Hotel and Club Six resonates sound.

"Sixth Street is a residential neighborhood where over 1,000 SRO residents live," he said. "All we're asking is for Mr. Cruz to comply with the (Entertainment Commission's) Good Neighbor Policy."

Section 8 of the Good Neighbor Policy states: "There shall be no noise audible outside the establishment during the daytime or nighttime hours that violates the San Francisco Municipal Code 49.... Further, absolutely no sound from the establishment shall be audible inside any surrounding residences or businesses that violates (San Francisco Police Code) 2900."

"You should really be aware of where you're doing business," Commissioner Audrey Joseph told Cruz.

"I work in a flower market and have to get up at 3:30 a.m.," said James Carl MacDonald, a two-year resident of the Seneca Hotel across Stevenson from Club Six. He said some nights he can't sleep for all the noise.

Safety Network organizer Meital Amitai said, "The people at the Lawrence are suffering."

In one exchange between Commissioner Jim Meko and Cruz, Meko referred to Cruz's initial request for an entertainment permit, saying, "You told us that the loud music would be confined to the basement."

Cruz disagreed. "My intention was always to have mixed-use space."

Meko said he distinctly remembers Cruz saying that the loud music would be in the basement and only ambient sound upstairs. "We can always check the minutes," Meko added.

"It doesn't matter if you live in a SRO or a luxuriant hotel room, people on Sixth Street have just as much dignity as anyone else," Meko said. "You've been getting complaints for three years. I don't see any solution but for the committee to schedule a meeting for the suspension of your entertainment permit."

Loud applause erupted from the audience.

When the committee voted 7-0 to hold the additional hearing, the audience applauded again, prompting a warning to be quiet.

Cruz was not available for comment after the meeting.

"I'm glad the neighbors were heard. I'm glad we were able to get a fair hearing on this," Hogarth said afterward.

The future hearing is not the only problem that Cruz, a stockbroker, has to deal with. He and two other brokers were recently

named as respondents in a complaint by the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD). The three men are accused of generating about \$700,000 in profits "by trading ahead of a firm customer without disclosing that the firm was realizing such a profit on the customer's transactions," according to an Internet notice posted by the law office of David Liebrader. If found guilty, Cruz could face fines by the NASD or even a suspension of his stockbroker license.

Commission Director Davis said it will be several weeks before the next hearing on Club Six as the meeting hasn't even been scheduled. He said Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Choi would probably prosecute the case.



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO


Angel Cruz, owner, had his Club Six checked twice by the Entertainment Commission sound tech and was found to have violated the commission's Good Neighbor Policy with late-night loud music levels up to 97 decibels, 10% more than allowable.

If Club Six's permit does get suspended, it would not be permanent, Davis said.

Cruz would have the chance to rectify the problem. A second violation would mean a longer suspension. Upon a third violation, his permit would be revoked.

"I do feel that there is enough evidence to move forward with the process," Davis said. "It's important." ■

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