

TINY MIX TAPES

Tonic Closes; I Cry Into My Glass of Gin

It's hard to spend any time on Manhattan's Lower East Side without hearing about the ravages of gentrification. In what has become the city's most well-known and bitterly ironic vicious cycle, venues for unorthodox music and art move into cheap neighborhoods where they can afford the rent... only to unwittingly raise the property values and, after a few years, be priced out of these very same neighborhoods by khaki-wearing, SUV-driving yuppies. The past few years have been particularly brutal, with CBGB's closing on Halloween '06 and Sin-e shuttering its space only a few days ago. Now comes word that [Tonic](#) will be the next victim. I had considered excerpting the message below, but its refreshing frankness and insightful observations about the politics of policing bear unedited reproduction:

Dear Musicians, Fans and Friends:

After more than 9 years as a home for avant-garde, creative, and experimental music, Tonic will reluctantly close its doors on Friday, April 13th, 2007. We simply can no longer afford the rent and all of the other costs associated with doing business on the Lower East Side.

The neighborhood around us has been increasingly consumed by "luxury condominiums", boutique hotels and glass towers, all making the value of our salvaged space worth more than our business could ever realistically support. We have also been repeatedly harassed by the city's Quality of Life Task Force which resulted in the debilitating closing of the [Tonic lounge](#) in January. Coincidentally, this campaign began as our immediate neighbor, the Blue Condominium building - a symbol of the new Lower East Side - prepared to open its doors.

As a business, we take responsibility for mistakes made along the way. If profit had been our chief motivation we could have changed our programming to something more mainstream and financially lucrative. Instead we were more committed to a certain type of music and loyal to the community that supported us. As a result, we've always just survived but never really prospered. It is, however, unfortunate that it is so difficult for small businesses to operate in this city and that a chain store that can afford a high rent is more desirable than a place like Tonic that has a different kind of value.

While this is certainly the end of Tonic at 107 Norfolk Street, we remain committed to what Tonic represents and plan to try again in some form as soon as possible. In the interim, Tonic will make efforts to present new music in existing venues such as the Abron's Arts Center located just a few blocks away. We invite you to join us as often as you can over our remaining days to help us celebrate Tonic and more importantly the amazing artists, our unwavering staff, and the nurturing community that made Tonic possible. It's because of you that we've stayed open as long as we have. Thank you!

Sincerely, Melissa and John

Obviously, Tonic has been a hugely important place, a small, intimate venue that dared to book adventurous, exciting acts, both new and established. Here's hoping that the owners find a new place (come to Brooklyn, guys!) to carry on the tradition. And come out to support these guys during their stellar farewell shows, featuring the likes of Ikue Mori, Erik Friedlander, White Magic, Yuka Honda, and Sean Lennon. A new "Tonic Presents" series at Abron's Arts Center also looks promising, with an opening show from Jandek April 14.

While I'm at it, I might as well break the news, much as it turns my stomach, that [the Knitting Factory](#) may be next.