

## Reviews in Shecky's

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### Double Happiness

Hidden down a staircase with the sign “Watch Your Step” on Chinatown’s unassuming Mott Street, Double Happiness is a trendy basement lounge with checkered floors, a nice mix of downtowners and uptowners, and a different live DJ every night. Although the three-room dungeon space has a long New York history (it used to be a members-only gay social club and later a mafia restaurant), this is its first reincarnation as a hipster hub, opened three years ago by the owners of the Orchard bar. Recently the place has lost some of its “neighborhood joint” appeal, as a doorman stands outside on weekends checking ID, and often doesn’t let people in if the place is too packed. The loud music, humidity, and cigarette smoke can get a bit dizzying and claustrophobic for a spoiled chick like myself.

### Sweet & Vicious

This Nolita neighborhood bar has wooden floors, a long bar, wooden tables with benches, and plenty of colorful Christmas lights. It feels like a spacious and cozy living room of a well-off close friend. The staff acts in accordance, often neglecting to serve your table, even on a pretty empty weekday night, expecting you to come to the bar, and “get your own drink”. Although they don’t serve any food, the owners encourage you to order your own pizza if you are hungry. The weekend scene is quite different, with a doorman checking IDs and a louder early twenties crowd, supporting a decent “get drunk and get laid” young meat market.

### Void

Walk in through the residential building on Howard Street, through the hallway and a dark door, and you will find yourself inside the large, dark space of Void. With the help of five mini spotlights cutting through the darkness, you will notice the part gothic, part new age interior: lounge sofas align the walls with coffee table that have playing TVs inside (two such table contain internet- computer for free surfing); a large stage-screen reigns the far left corner continuously projecting images. Every Weekday night at 8:00 PM there is a free film screening with hard-core artist and film enthusiast smoking cigarettes and making comments from the crowd. But the most cutting age Void experience is the post-screening parties, which involve D.J.s mixing alternative music in collaboration with V.J.s spinning video images on the walls.

### Ideya

This two-year-old SoHo restaurant and bar serves warm stools and tables, a good looking-yet-unpretentious crowd, some great Latin and Caribbean appetizers and an all-

out Island feel. The walls have colorful murals of beaches and carnival, and the tables and bar are classically candle lit. The super friendly staff serves up potent tropical drinks, and most people come for good bar vibe, rather than the food (although it is superb). On Mondays a live Salsa band performs (starting at 9:00), and Tuesdays are “Domino night” – there is usually a Spanish DJ, and everyone plays dominos or cards.

### **Baby Jupiter**

In its three years of existence Baby Jupiter has managed to build itself quite a reputation. The restaurant part is the Lower East Side’s version of Union Squares Coffee Shop – a booth-filled diner style décor with a happening young scene that takes over every night after dinner. The kitchen is open until two on weekend nights, which makes for a perfect late night clubber’s meal. Adjacent to the restaurant is the Baby Jupiter performance space, where the best emerging bands in New York City play anything from Jazz and funk to Rock, Pop, trip hop and jungle. There is a 3-4 band line up seven days a week, with a \$5 cover charge.

### **Orchard Bar**

Orchard bar remains the crème de la crème of the ever-expanding Orchard street bar stretch with its unique and slick décor including part-of-the-wall aquarium installments, and a wooden wine cellar ceiling. It no doubt deserves to win Shecky’s “The Greatest Lower East Side Bar Award!” The later you arrive, the swankier the scene of black wearing beautiful and successful artsy types. Every night there is a live DJ mixing mainly jungle and trip hop, showing off their turn-table moves near at the entrance.

### **Swim**

This lower East side neighborhood bar has recently taken a more mellow tone. Since June 99, when the Fire Department shut down the “hazardous” sushi restaurant on second floor, Swim has grown smaller (only the first floor bar), and cozier (no more bridge and tunnelers!) The décor is classic Lower East Side with wooden tables and benches and some funky art doodle-displays embedded in the walls that raise a million questions. Every night a different DJ spins live, and on weekends the grungy artist crowd gets a nice dance scene going.

**357** – Club/Dancing and Lounge/Swanky/Upscale  
357 West Broadway (bet. Broom and Grand)  
965-1491  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

About 3 days out of the week there is some model agency party at this “So SoHo” lounge that used to be Magnum. In this long and narrow bar space, with half circle sofas aligning the back room, and a rectangular high DJ booth carved out of the back wall, you will find

young emaciated male and female models, showing plenty of collar bones and pelvises through their minimal clothing, chatting, giving looks, and keeping dibs on who is the newest hot face. Kevin Conner, 357 owner (and cousin of Lenny Kravitz, who makes occasional guest appearances), makes sure his DJs play tunes that are current, yet funky and groovy. The space is always packed, but remarkably, the crowd manages to throw in some dance moves as they focus on gossip. There is no cover charge, just a style test at the velvet ropes in front of the anonymous entrance, so if you are told at the door “sorry, there’s a private party going on tonight”, that means you are just not cool enough for this young fashion crowd.

**Aria** - Club/Dancing and Lounge/Swanky/Upscale  
539 West 21<sup>st</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> avenue)  
560-7438  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

In the space that used to be called Opera, way, way West of Chelsea, miles beyond the thriving gay scene, a good-looking downtown meat-market reigns. With newly-installed velvet ropes and an impressive line of people trying to make the “rope-cut”, this place is definitely a happening scene. The cover charge is \$20 on weekend nights, \$15 reduced, and no cover during the week. The main room has women in black bikinis dancing on elevated cubes, slightly-cheesy techno music, and a black gothic gate with lit candles running through the center, separating the dance floor from the lounge area (with tables that are always taken or bearing a “reserved” sign). They just added a new large room (enter it by walking towards the bathrooms), called the Garden, with indoor trees, its own DJ on weekends, and more, intimate party feel.

**CentroFly** - Club/Dancing, Lounge/Swanky/Upscale and Food  
45 W 21<sup>st</sup> (5 and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues)  
627-7770  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

One of the huge large and impersonal new dance clubs to open on “club row”, CentroFly has a main dance floor with a mixed NYC crowd, and a few couch-lounge areas off to the sides. The design is the coolest and freshest in the city, with black and white psychedelic pattern on the floors and colorful futuristic furniture. The VIP room is a whole other bubble world, and most attendees remain there for the entire evening. This exclusive lounge offers a different DJ, a long wooden bar, roughly 30 sit tables and a transparent swinging sofa. The VIP room is a fully functioning open-to-all restaurant for dinner, serving steaks, seafood, and salads. Try the amazing oysters and/or the tuna tartar.

**The Lounge at 203 Spring** - Lounge/Swanky/Upscale  
203 Prince (at Sullivan Street)  
334-3855  
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

In this unassuming residential corner of SoHo formerly known as Lily's Cafe, you will find a nameless lounge with Victorian velvet sofas, a young, professional crowd and live funky DJs spinning on weekends. The music is great for a party or an intimate conversation, everyone is friendly, and people who didn't come together often end up sharing a sofa. This is definitely a recommended "impress-your-date" spot for an after dinner drink. They do not serve food and the drinks are on the expensive side. (Open weekdays until 2:00 AM, weekends until 4:00 AM)

### **Lot 61**

(same address and rating as prior year)

On the deserted and industrial west end of Chelsea (take a cab if you don't like walking a few desolate and long avenue blocks all alone), you will find the happening-for-awhile-now, Lot 61 – a large industrial space with high ceilings, brick walls, and black and red sofas, organized like a maze in the center of this candle-lit lounge. Although some uptowners have already made it their regular bar, they tend to be of the good kind, and the crowd is still mostly downtown. After all, why wouldn't the Lot (as the cool people slang it), still be funky and beautiful, it's got all the New York requirement for a hot spot: An upscale dinner menu, room to dance, room to smoke, room to be anonymous, and most importantly, a number for a name, and no sign outside.

### **Spring Lounge**

In its downtown "trend-setting" location, the Spring Lounge remains, the ultimate "anti SoHo." - simple wooden tables and benches, and a friendly "cheers" neighborhood vibe. This corner joint attracts an after-work crowd, street bums, and mostly just normal people. The crowd can get somewhat rowdy and drunk, so if you are stopping by late night on a weekend, don't expect to have an intimate conversation, and watch out that no frat boy spills his beer in your lap. The bar opens before breakfast everyday, and even though they serve nothing but alcohol, they will welcome you with coffee and the morning paper, or with your Dean & DeLuca sushi lunch.

### **Spa**

This hot club spot comes to us from the owners of life, and boy is it swanky. Thursday nights include the finest of the fashion gay crowd in a party called Ultra, and Friday and Saturday have the finest of the hetros. Good luck getting passed the velvet ropes if you're not on anybody's guest list. But it's worth the try just to see the beautifully waterfall-backed bar in the first room, the packed main dance floor with some of the best DJs in New York, and the loungier chill room with everything from the plastic sofas to the bar rims painted in white.