

Juliet Supperclub stares down eviction after fatal stabbing, shooting

West Chelsea venue popular with Rihanna, Jay-Z, other celebs

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By Leigh Kamping-Carder



From left: Juliet Supperclub founder Jon Bakhshi, who sold the club before the recent crimes, the interior of Juliet and musician Rihanna

A New York state judge could decide as early as Thursday whether the Juliet Supperclub, a West Chelsea hotspot popular with celebrities, must close its doors. Its landlord is trying to evict the club after two murders were committed on the premises in recent months.

A man was stabbed to death outside the club, at 539 West 21st Street between 10th and 11th avenues, in September, although a Juliet spokesperson said at the time that the victim was not a patron. In late November, a gunman opened fire inside the venue, killing one man and wounding at least two others, according to news reports.

Several days later, the building owner, an entity of the Newark, N.J.-based Edison Properties, sent the club an eviction notice, claiming Juliet was operating a nightclub at the site, in breach of its lease, which bars nightclubs. Juliet had allowed “a culture of lawlessness and violence” to flourish there, the landlord said in the Nov. 18 notice, citing the deaths, as well as alleged fights, underage drinking and drug use.

But Juliet contended that it had complied with the lease, and on Nov. 25, 2011 filed a lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court seeking a ruling to that effect.

“The reality is, all over New York City at times there are violent events,” Andrew Miltenberg, a partner at Nesenoff and Miltenberg who represents the club, told *The Real Deal*. “That doesn’t mean that [Juliet] is violating its lease.”

It's only now, with the West Chelsea neighborhood morphing into a hot area, that the landlord is using the September and November incidents to evict the current tenant in order to maximize rent, Miltenberg said. "The landlord's been well aware for at least several years of the fact that it is a supperclub," he said.

Founded by nightlife impresario Jon Bakhshi, better known as Jon B., in the fall of 2009, Juliet quickly gained a reputation for drawing celebrities and athletes to its glittering interiors. (Bakhshi told *The Real Deal* he sold the club about a year ago, long before the murders took place. The current owner is named 539 JB ENTERPRISES LTD.) The singer Rihanna, rapper Jay-Z, actor Chace Crawford, and several members of the New York Giants have all made well-documented appearances at the establishment.

Though the club was open for New Year's Eve, an outgoing voicemail message at the venue today said it was closed for renovations for the month of January.

At a Supreme Court hearing scheduled for Thursday morning, Judge Milton Tingling will hear evidence from both sides on whether Juliet operates as a supperclub or nightclub, and is therefore in breach of its lease, sources said.

James Famularo, managing director of retail at New York Commercial Realty Services, who specializes in club and restaurant properties but was not familiar with the case, said the definition could turn on whether people "can make dinner reservations there, and people actually do.

"I'd say most landlords just want their money at the end of the month," Famularo added. "But when people start getting murdered at your building, I think it would raise a concern with any landlord."

Adam Leitman Bailey, who represents the landlord, declined to comment. He has taken the unusual step of using Facebook to solicit evidence, including eyewitness accounts and video, to bolster the argument that the venue is a nightclub.