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A Different Kind of Bar In Jackson Heights

Posted on [May 25, 2011](#) by [dospino](#)

If you show up on a weekend, [Terraaza 7 train Cafe](#) gives off the feel of an old venue, like Knitting Factory when it was still in China Town, except you won't find bouncers in front of the open barn doors checking ID's or collecting a cover, you'll just have to make your way through a mostly twenty something Latino crowd smoking cigarettes and discussing politics or art in spanglish.

You can always tell who's making their way over to grab a drink and karaoke, watch a film on cine-club Mondays, listen to poetry the first Tuesday of the month, or catch some live music between Wednesday and Sunday after 10pm; they clash with the backdrop of the other Jackson Heights nightlife. The cholos who sold fake social securities in the daytime now whisper "chicas, chicas, chicas," on Roosevelt Avenue. The disheartened day laborers, once looking for work, stagger out of bars where women charge you for a dance. Straight men under full moons transform into drag queens, but Terraaza's crowd never changes.

They are a diverse group of Latino [hipsters](#) who buy in even less to the mainstream. They wear a slightly outdated regalia of bootcut jeans and UFO pants, baggy t-shirts, fedoras, and artisan jewelry and accessories. They cultivate their own local music at Terraaza and use the rickety stage to shed light on social issues through art. It has become their own.

"Valuable are the spaces that allow for creative uses of free time in ways that add to the quality of life of the neighborhood's inhabitants and generates ownership," said owner Freddy Castiblanco, sitting lopsided on a worn couch by the entrance. "Artistic expression is a way to empower a neighborhood, and particularly important in immigrant communities," he added.

Castiblanco opened the doors to Terraaza 9 years ago, in June of 2002, in hopes of bringing together diverse Latin American expressions. What he found was a group of people more interested in rock and pop.

"Before, I used to be young, and they used to play metal, and it was fucking awesome. Crappy bands of course, but interesting people," said Jessica Ilm, a local sheltering herself from the rain with a hand above her head.

After a year of giving into the demands of the neighborhood, however, Castiblanco sought a different sound. He began by creating an in house Latin-jazz band that later incorporated Afro Colombian instruments like the tambor and gaita. And as the music matured, so did the crowds.

"It opened the doors...to people that were concerned, or that would care about something interesting that would happen in a melody, something interesting that would happen lyrically in a song, rather than 'that's a nice beat i can shake my ass to that.'" said Juan Velez, a classical guitarist who attends open mics.

Castiblanco also uses the space as a platform for political expression. With [Main Street Alliance](#), Castiblanco spearheads talks and has even spoken in front of Congress to combat unfair treatment of small businesses. "I think small businesses have an important roll in the development of a neighborhood," vehemently preached Castiblanco during our meeting. Organizations like [Make the Road](#) and Movement for Peace in Colombia have also used to space host events and talks with local leaders and politicians.

Just standing outside, you feel the difference from other venues in the atmosphere. It incorporates the neighborhood and its needs in an unprecedented manner. It cares, in large part, because of Freddy.

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[Paragon 8020](#) says:
October 4, 2011 at 10:48 pm

Interesting article about the modern nightlife that seems strange when I look back at the nightlife I used to live. Certainly no pants named after martians. Anyway, no talk about the food, but can't help but think that must be a big crowd pleaser with their ability to stay open for so long.

[Pozycjonowanie Czechowice-Dziedzice](#) says:
January 7, 2012 at 2:43 am

Pozycjonowanie Czechowice-Dziedzice i okolice dobrze tanio – Mateusz Kasperek
😊😊

[Pamiętniki z wakacji](#) says:
April 8, 2012 at 12:16 pm

Great post. :) Thanks!

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Mr. Horner, a multiple Oscar and Grammy winner, was flying solo in a single-turboprop plane that crashed and burned in Southern California.
SAM ROBERTS
- [Review: Make Music New York Teaches Buildings How to Sing](#) June 25, 2015
This festival on Sunday included klezmer, Bach and the premiere of "Concerto for Buildings," which featured percussionists striking cast iron in SoHo.
CORINNA da FONSECA-WOLLHEIM
- [Growing Older With Madonna](#) June 24, 2015
The singer's efforts to fight the effects of time is both inspirational and somewhat discomfoting.
JANCEE DUNN
- [Review: The Knights Are Spirited in Central Park, Despite Soggy Weather](#) June 24, 2015
This orchestral collective's performance opened the season of free Naumburg Orchestral Concerts in Central Park.
JAMES R. OESTREICH
- [Review: Colleen Focuses on Precision With Fingers and Feet](#) June 24, 2015
Cecile Schott, the French musician who performs as Colleen, used a treble viola da gamba to recreate songs from her recent album at SubCulture.
JON CARAMANICA