

VICTIM: KNIFED, THEN BOUNCED TO & FRO; [CITY FINAL Edition]

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Bleeding from the chest, a 21-year-old Brooklyn man called 911 from inside a Hell's Kitchen dance club while bouncers desperately tried to push him outside to avoid blame, his lawyer charged yesterday.

"I was crying to them and telling them I couldn't breathe," said Thomas McNiff of Bay Ridge, who allegedly was stabbed inside Club Exit, a popular nightclub now called Black NYC that authorities are fighting to shutter.

"The bouncers were grabbing at my cell phone," McNiff said yesterday, recalling the June 2001 incident. "They were telling me not to be a [wimp]."

McNiff and his 25-year-old pal, Gary Shaban, who also was stabbed during the skirmish, are seeking \$5 million in damages, said their lawyer, John Bostany.

The civil trial is scheduled to begin today in Brooklyn Supreme Court.

McNiff, a deli clerk, said he was attacked randomly and taken to the hospital only after a cop responding to his 911 call pushed aside the bouncers.

But James Roth, an attorney for the W. 56th St. club and its owner, David Marvisi, called the lawsuit baseless. "None of the claims have merit," he said.

Exit and another Hell's Kitchen club, the Sound Factory, have been targeted by authorities for their alleged ties to drugs. Both clubs were closed temporarily in February 2003 after undercover cops said they found "open and flagrant" drug dealing and abuse inside the venues.

Authorities allege the clubs let drug dealers operate inside because they help attract crowds.

Cops and federal agents raided the Sound Factory on March 7, arresting owner Richard Grant, 61, and his security bosses, Ronald Coffiel and Randell Rogiers, charging them under a federal statute that makes it illegal to provide a safe haven for drug dealers. Sunday, four clubgoers overdosed inside Black NYC, authorities said.

[Illustration]

Caption: Thomas McNiff

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