

‘Pool’ parties may not be over

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The plan for the renovated McCarren Park Pool may include a small indoor music hall, a nod to the pool's recent history as a concert venue.

By Ben Muessig
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The fat lady — or, more accurately, the guy in skinny jeans — hasn't sung for the final time in Greenpoint's McCarren Park Pool.

Live music might remain a part of the landmarked the Lorimer Street pool after it is refurbished to welcome swimmers for the first time since 1984.

The brand new horseshoe-shaped swimming pool, ice-skating rink and community center that are scheduled to open in 2011 also includes an indoor performance space, said Parks Department spokesman Phil Abramson.

It just won't rival the size of the abandoned pool — which had room for 7,000 concert-goers and featured high-profile acts like M.I.A., Yo La Tengo, and Sonic Youth, who played the final outdoor show at the venue on Aug. 30.

“There is going to be an exercise room, space for yoga, and there might be space for small performances,” Abramson said.

The Parks Department couldn't estimate how many music fans could fit in the 4,800-square-foot space, but JellyNYC concert promoter Dan McGinley said the space would be too small for even a truncated version of his organization's raucous outdoor shows that boasted slip 'n' slides and dodgeball games.

“We can certainly do shows that size, but it wouldn't be a Pool Party,” said McGinley, who started throwing shows in the McCarren pool in 2003.

JellyNYC is still searching for a new Williamsburg or Greenpoint venue that could host next summer's

Pool Parties, and neighborhood activist Evan Thies says it's not too late to find an equally aquatic venue for the 2009 season.

"Hopefully it's the end of these types of events in the pool and the start of a new series out on the waterfront," Thies said.

But even if the Pool Parties find a new site for next summer, the renovation of McCarren Park — though good for the neighborhood — would mark the end of an era, said blogger Keith Wagstaff, who runs the seminal Web site Williamsburg is Dead.

"Everyone I've talked to feels bittersweet about the Pool Parties," Wagstaff said. "The pool had that kind of gritty, Williamsburg aesthetic that people move here for. It would definitely lose some of its cachet if the shows are just in a park, but most people realize that it would serve more of the community if there actually was a pool instead of it just being for the white 20-something hipsters."

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