

## Miami Beach's Lincoln Road: A cool, new sophistication

By **BARBARA MARSHALL**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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The hottest ticket in Miami Beach these days doesn't require a ticket at all.

But a BYO bottle of Prosecco and a cheese plate?

Essential.

That was Harriet Stein's thought on a recent Saturday night, as she and two friends from her Key Biscayne neighborhood sipped wine from plastic cups while watching a free New World Symphony concert, projected in seven-story-tall high-definition on the side of the orchestra's new home in Miami Beach.

"It's just incredible," she said .

On a formerly derelict block off Lincoln Road, the just-opened \$160 million New World Center is one of two buildings helping to rejuvenate Lincoln Road, Miami Beach's 11-block pedestrian mall.

The other is a parking garage - yes, a parking garage - with such stylishly nifty looks that it's been the scene of weddings and Art Basel parties.

Together, they create a reason to re-visit Lincoln Road, an hour-and-a half drive from West Palm Beach, whose shaded outdoor cafes seem far more European than American, especially right now when they're packed with actual Europeans on holiday.

But it seemed to be mostly locals streaming by the hundreds into the innovative SoundScape Park, adjacent to the New World Center concert hall, on foot, bikes and in-line skates for the symphony's live "wallcast" concert.

Surveying the multi-generational crowd toting kids, dogs and picnic baskets, Stein said, "Every other concert hall is losing audiences, but he's creating a new generation of classical music fans."

"He" is Michael Tilson Thomas, the symphony's conductor, who commissioned world-famous architect Frank Gehry to design a state-of-the-art concert hall that would blur the walls between audience and musicians.

As gusty winds heralded a late season cold front, the crowd perched on beach chairs and blankets between banks of surround-sound speakers. While musicians played inside the concert hall, technicians using four powerful projectors aimed a simulcast at the 7,000-square-foot stucco facade.

Thirty-somethings Alison Almeida and Adam Sloane walked over from their homes on South Beach, with Almeida's dog, Jobi, to watch.

"It's great to see a concert inside," Almeida said. "But this is more fun," interjected Sloane.

Wall-less 'architecture'

At the brashly beautiful parking garage at 1111 Lincoln Road, you expect bouncers to turn away the khaki pants crowd in their Ford Focuses or force them to pay extra for a VIP parking lounge.

"All muscle, no cloth" is the way architect Jacques Herzog of the architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron describes his wall-less "carchitecture," whose ceiling heights vary from 8 to 34 feet.

The top floor event space rents for \$12,000 to \$15,000 with developer Robert Wennet's penthouse sitting above that. The building also contains the hyper-trendy Alchemist boutique tucked into a glass cube whose walls glow in late-day light. Not surprisingly, the building has become a magnet for photographers.

"Every afternoon, people are aiming their big lenses through the glass," said a sales clerk.

On the ground floor, the boutique burger joint called Shake Shack offers a \$6.50 milkshake called Key Lime Pie Oh My, around the corner from a Nespresso coffee bar and Taschen, a German art book retailer.

The building spills into a new pocket park designed by the aptly named Miami landscape architect, Raymond Jungles. In this quiet "urban glade," mature cypress and moss-hung oaks stand in pools surrounded by black and white Portuguese paving stones.

But a few blocks east, Lincoln Road's traditions are intact. Pale Midwestern tourists look dazed among young girls wearing cut-off jeans with stilettos and groups of shirtless buff boys. One group stares open-mouthed at a hard-bodied, bikini-clad transvestite riding a pink bike.

At the jammed outdoor cafes, the polyglot crowd is speaking Spanish, naturally, as well as Italian, French, German and, is that Russian?

Dah.

Even the usual chain stores are more interesting here.

Banana Republic is in a former bank building and Guess spreads out inside a former Cadillac dealership whose original signage is intact. More interesting still is the outpost of UK retailer All Saints Spitalfields, in a synagogue-turned-Jehovah's Witness temple that once housed a restaurant owned by actor Michael Caine.

The old building with patterned concrete tile floors is filled with antique sewing machines, an allusion to the laborers who sew the shop's mysteriously draped tops and voluminous, balloon-shaped dresses in high-quality black and white cotton.

Instead of having dinner at Lincoln Road staples like Yuca or spring breakers' favorite Van Dyke Cafe, my husband and I headed to AltaMare, a buzzy seafood restaurant just west of the mall where Chef Simon Stojanovic serves a daily rotation of sustainable seafood.

My husband raved about his buttery hog fish, one of his favorite Keys' delicacies, while I tried pan-fried sheepshead. Every Florida angler knows sheepshead, an ugly but tasty fish so common only the most confident chefs would dare put it on the menu.

But after that dinner, I'll be looking for it.

Quieter Collins Drive

On previous Miami Beach visits, my husband and I have laid awake one-too-many nights while the non-stop Ocean Drive party swirled under our windows - or worse, in the room next door.

This time, we opted to stay on slightly quieter Collins Drive, where we found sanctuary in the Blue Moon hotel, once owned by Merv Griffin.

The hotel is actually two old hotels, one Art Deco and one Mediterranean, connected by a breezeway, with a porch on the street and quiet poolside breakfast terrace in the rear.

Our room in the Art Deco section was small but had modern Deco-style furnishings and a good-sized, updated bathroom, an amenity you can't always count on in mid-priced SoBe hotels.

Best of all, it was utterly quiet.

When we strolled down Lincoln Road the next morning, fruit sellers were already setting out fragrant piles of local bananas, oranges, guavas and papayas for the Sunday morning fruit market.

At one booth, the woman behind the counter swore her hangover cure of carrot, beet and lemon juices was foolproof.

It wasn't.

But then, we weren't in a hurry to go anywhere. At a café table, we spent a long morning watching the colorful Lincoln Road parade drift by.

Overhead, wild parrots screeched in palms reaching into a cloudless Miami sky.

That was free, too.

#### LINCOLN ROAD, MIAMI BEACH: WHAT TO SEE, WHERE TO GO

**IF YOU GO:** Directions to Lincoln Road: Take Interstate 95 south to I-395/MacArthur Causeway in downtown Miami. Go over the bridge and the Causeway becomes Fifth Street. Take Fifth to Washington Road, turn left, then left on 17th Street.

#### THINGS TO DO: MUSIC

New World Symphony, 500 17th S., Miami Beach. Wallcasts, 7:30 p.m., March 26, April 9, April 30. For more information: Visit [nws.edu](http://nws.edu).

#### THINGS TO DO: SHOPPING

All Saints Spitalfields, 910 Lincoln Road: The UK cult mega-brand's shop.

So Good, 532 Lincoln Road: This stuffed-to-the-gills pink lair of costume jewelry is right on trends for under \$30.

Books and Books, 927 Lincoln Road: A coffee shop and popular independent bookstore.

Alchemist, 438 Lincoln Road and inside the 1111 parking garage: Pick up a SoBe fabulous (and fabulously expensive) dress by Azzedine Alaia, Proenza Schouler or Celine.

#### THINGS TO DO: DINING

AltaMare, 1233 Lincoln Road: Fresh, intensely local fish, salads with Loxahatchee's Swank produce and heirloom tomatoes, great service. Dinner for two, \$100.

Shake Shack, base of 1111 parking garage: Hormone-free Angus beef and thick 'concrete' shakes, even a \$3.50 pooch-ini snack for Fido. Lunch or dinner for two, about \$20.

Van Dyke Cafe, 846 Lincoln Road: Go for the drinks and fun atmosphere, not the food. Lunch or dinner for two, \$25 to \$40.

Pizza Rustica, 667 Lincoln Road: A Miami Beach favorite, extra-large pizzas under \$20.

Yuca, 501 Lincoln Road: For updated new Cuban cuisine. Salsa classes Fridays from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. Dinner for two, \$100.