



Biz Buzz

Katherine Lowrie ► Zoom Zoom Zoom

So much entertainment, so little time... If you want your autumn social calendar to consist of a lot of fun and a whole lot of go-go-go, you might need to drop by a slew of new coffee spots for a little caffeine to keep up the pace.

Bearclaw Coffee Co. (649-5828) opened a drive-through location at 2232 Ellsworth Road in July. The window opens at 5:30am Monday-Friday for groggy commuters and students and at 7am on Saturday and Sunday.

Shelly Jones, who owns the place with husband Mike, says each beverage order comes with a signature Tootsie Roll – a hit with most customers. “You can get a 20-oz. cup of coffee here for \$1.50. That’s cheaper than most places and we really strive for good customer repoiere.”

The coffee oasis also features low fat or dairy-free Dr. Smoothies, which Jones calls “a flavorful puree of fruit,” hot chocolate with fresh whipped cream, made daily, and fresh bear claws (puffed pastries with cheese or berry filling).

Although American Spoon is no more, **Beaner’s Gourmet Coffee** opens this fall at 539 East Liberty. The chain’s first Ann Arbor store is a mere jump or skip from the Michigan Theater which may encourage post-movie discussions over coffee or dessert. Owners Mark and Leslie Mechigian will serve up micro-roasted coffees, teas and tisanes (caffeine-free herbal infusions), pastries, wraps, bagels, soups and salads.

Those who crave an espresso or latte like a dog craves a rawhide, can get their caffeine buzz at **Akire Coffee & Smoothies** (786-8212) at 619 Packard, which opened late last month. The place features a full 100 percent fruit smoothie bar, along with specialty frozen and hot espresso drinks. Erika Grande, who describes the spot as “comfortable, friendly and colorful” says she only serves Fair Trade Latin American coffee. “We are very proud to know that thanks to our efforts, farmers across various Latin American countries are feeding their families and sending their children to school instead of working in the fields.”

And what’s life without a little sweet tooth indulgence from time to time? **Portofino Coffee Shop** (222-6066) at 2550 W. Stadium Boulevard will help you get your sugar on thanks to Birmingham-based Master Pastry Chef Matt Knio, who is supplying the shop with a plethora of pastries and fresh-baked goods.

Those who hanker for live music minus the cover charge can pop a squat at **Live At PJ’s** (623-7400). The space, above **Goodnite Gracie** at 102 S. First Street (previously the home of D’amatos) will host live bands and DJs Tuesday-Saturday, giving the college set and those with a few more decades under their belts the chance to mingle on a sunken dance floor or lounge on leather sofas and easy chairs surrounded by velvet curtains. And those on a budget – take note: PJ’s will dole out free pizza 6-9pm Thursdays-Saturdays.

Marketing director Nick Hanna says the venue, which has a swanky feel, appeals to a more mature customer without eliminating younger customers.

PJ’s boasts a pool table and 10-foot high definition TV, and will host private parties with food catered by

Rush Street. Laith Al-Saadi plays rock ‘n’ roll and blues Wednesday nights while Thursday Audio Nights belong to DJ Scotty Styles.

If you like your sandwich with a side of karaoke, **D’Angoras Bar and Grill** (544-9831) just might be the place: The grill, at 517 W. Cross Street in Ypsilanti, features karaoke on Wednesdays and Sundays from 9pm-2am and oodles of gyros, burgers and spinach pie. Karaoke at 2am? Now that might be well worth a looksee.

Blue Karaoke (302-3673) at 404 W. Liberty Street, which opened a few months ago, runs a free shuttle to and from campus filled with karaoke-addicts and newbies alike. The venue features box-style karaoke –

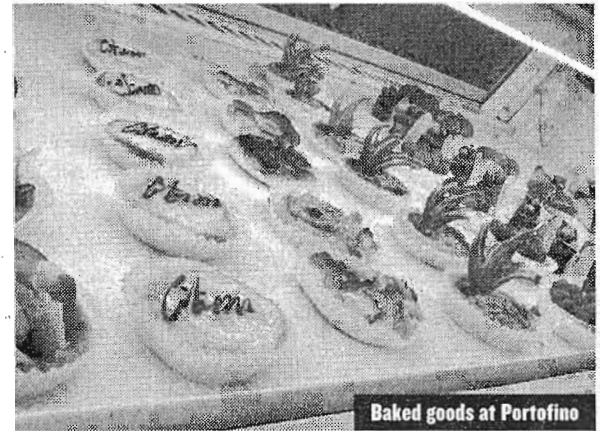
Asia’s original form – which encourages friends to sing together. Soda and bottled water is on hand to keep the vocal chords at the ready.

Briarwood Dollar Movies (994-4670) opened mid-September just in time for throngs of

film-seekers and cold-weather haters to cozy up in the theater. The location, which features four screens, formerly housed Madstone and Village Theaters.

Alan Teicher, president of Teicher Theatres, says the theater draws both those who can’t afford first run theaters as well as those who missed the first run of a

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film. The theater launches each film, including art house efforts and blockbuster numbers, a day to several weeks after they come off their first run.

Shows are a buck each until 6pm and \$1.50 after 6pm. All movies are a mere 50 cents each Tuesday. “With today’s economy, you can’t go wrong for a buck,” Teicher says.

So, don’t let the chill in the air get you down. There’s plenty of new local digs to check out with friends and dates in tow. Have at it!

Katherine Lowrie lives in Ypsilanti with her partner, where they can be spotted walking their Mut and Jeff dogs, a five-pound chihuahua and a 55-pound chow mix. Have any business news? Send it to buzz@sgipub.com, and if you have anything to say about this column you can write to feedback@sgipub.com.