

## CHEAP EATS

By LISA RUDY  
Special Writer

Beware! Caution! Yikes! Chit chat, gab, gossip. And no stealing other's forks but most important: have a good time!

These are but a few of the many rules listed on the menu at Royal Oak's La Fondue. This all-fondue establishment features everything from pickles and angel food cake to cod and tenderloin all fit for swishing into various concoctions perfect for dunking.

Aside from the chain restaurant booth seating, the scenery inside La Fondue isn't half bad. Dim lighting, assorted wine bottles and muted pink and green tones make up most of it. No need to get bored, however, because once your appetizer has arrived, you're too busy to notice your surroundings anyway.

The appetizer choice is CHEESE. You decide on swiss or cheddar. Both are prepared (along with everything else you order) in a fondue pot situated in the middle of your table. Beer and garlic is heated to "very hot" and Kirsch, some secret spices and mounds of cheese are melted to "bubbly."

Sliced Granny Smith apples are good for dipping, assorted breads (french and rye) are handed out in a basket and vegetables are also available for a little extra. La Fondue makes a big oops by serving bread a little on the boring side and way too soft.

Fondue entrees are pretty much guaranteed to suit anyone's taste — chicken, beef, cod and shrimp are offered separately — and if you just have to have it, all tell your server. "I'll have the feast." Take note that back when fondue first started out, times were rough and food was scarce, so you be the judge as to whether or not the feast is really a feast by today's standards.

"Fondue," your entree can be fun but tricky business. Take for instance the time factor. In front of you is a plate of the feast, everything on it is cooked for different amounts of time and it's up to you to monitor it. You and your entree each place your matching pieces of beef into the boiling pot, you begin to talk about how great a time you had last weekend. You chat, you gossip. You forget just how long your beef has been in there, and then you forget just how long it's supposed to be in there. Relax, and remember next time to check your watch.

If your still up to yet more fondue fun, order dessert. Fresh fruits, marshmallows and bits of angel food cake can be dunked in either dark or white hot chocolate. Heavy, but it's chocolate heaven.

One word to the wise for safe fondueing: leg crossers beware; the heating element underneath the table encourages the use of asbestos kneepads. And another thing share everything, or you'll burn a hole in your pocket!

### LAFONDUE

111 Main St., Royal Oak  
399-1440  
Hours: 5-10 p.m. Monday through  
Thursday, 5-11 p.m. Friday and  
Saturday, 4-9 p.m. Sunday

Birmingham's Midtown Cafe is one of those surprising exceptions to the rule that larger restaurants are cold and impersonal. The cafe's interior has an unbelievable presence, hinting at an upscale New York cafe atmosphere and wide open airiness with walls fit for an art gallery. Comfort reigns here with numerous tables for four and cross-hatched pine bedecking the vast wall space, giving the place a laid back feeling.

The wait staff is highly efficient, well-versed in the day's fare and interesting and funny to chat with. Not only that, they look pretty spiffy in their all-black attire and they actually look like they are enjoying their work.

Newcomer chef Rich Redmer deftly balances traditional fare with some of his own innovative touches. Rich is fresh in from New Orleans and has been at the cafe for about two months. He's gotten rave reviews from many satisfied patrons. A hint of creative surfaces in many of Redmer's creations, subtle enough not to overpower entrees, but definitely there. Menu offerings are changed on a daily basis, but favorites find their way onto the menu in one variation or another.

In the way of appetizers, Maryland crabcakes are nicely set off with spicy cocktail sauce and Duck Gallatinus with pimiento and fresh fruit are expertly prepared and beautifully presented. Nachos are still a big hit and tasty pizzas sport artichokes and pesto.

Whatever the Midtown does, it seems to do well. Roast beef is accompanied by spicy red pepper

See EATS, 8A

### MIDTOWN CAFE

139 N. Woodward Ave., Birmingham  
642-1133  
Hours: Noon to 1:30 a.m. Tuesday  
through Saturday, noon to 12:30 a.m.  
Sunday and Monday

## Indies: Little labels, big dreams

■ Bands have to start some place on the road to success and many times it's with the indies. They're small record labels where the president is everything from promoter to salesman, public relations executive and accountant.

By KYLE GREEN  
Special Writer



Commercial success is what all recording companies want with its releases.

On the other hand, independent recording companies pray that someone will listen to its releases.

Nevertheless, when you are the president of a local independent recording label with a Royal Oak post office box and you receive orders from as far away as the Great Britain, France, Poland and Italy, your company has hit the big time.

"The records get out to places that groups have never heard of: the bands definitely get exposure, but for me I want to build my catalog,"

### STREET BEATS

Icon Records founder Dennis Breton said, "I look at the last four years as a major time and money investment."

In today's mass produced, high powered music industry, independent recording labels, such as Icon Records, are slowly edging their way up to the top. Detroit plays host to hundreds of indies (the inside name for independent labels) who may be in the shadows of major recording companies at first place, but in due time could become an equal.

#### Work, work

Indie owners walk a narrow line as the promoters, sales people, public relations executives, accountants, managers, company presidents, secretaries and gig organizer, while the majors with high power and expense accounts, are viewed as big brothers which George Orwell could have never conceived.

"The indie scene is more human; they are doing it for the music," said Sue Summers, founder of Detroit's Chaos Network and Records. "The majors don't listen to the music. Summers recently changed her



WILLIAM HANSEN

company's name from Chaos to Statie after Sony Music Entertainment Inc. notified her that it had a label named Chaos. Summers, who hadn't trademarked her 3-year-old name, filed the appropriate papers for Statie. Her roster includes Mental Landscape, Brothers From Another Planet and Red September. Even with a fresh start, her goal remains the same.

"To get out these bands I heard from the Detroit area... The majors are avoiding us because they want to see how the indies are doing," she said. "They seem to be avoiding us because we don't have a sound. Atlanta and Seattle have a distinct sound, where Detroit doesn't."

"I think I can help in getting the music out there and if a band places it, I'll push it."

The love for the art of music is the root to majority of independent labels. Many labels are formed specifically to allow groups which are generally overlooked a medium to express themselves. Other Detroit indies are open to all sounds.

"When I started out there were a lot of cool bands and a lot of cool stuff here that doesn't get chronological," Breton said, "and there are a lot of people who think that the local music scene sucks and I'm out to prove them wrong."

Icon's listings range from a 1960s rock 'n' roll surf riff of The Golden-tones to the energetic ska sounds of The Exceptions and rock edge of The Colours.

#### Basic training

Local bands are usually comprised of "people with day jobs who enjoy jamming on the weekends or starry-eyed teens who dream of the ultimate recording contract." Indies provide the basic training for these bands, according to Entertainment Promotions (EP) founder Mark Barnowski.

"Indies are the life line for new talent such as a lot of new acts in country music," said Barnowski, who performs under the name Mark Edwards. "The majors don't have the time to develop the talent."

EP is the promotions division of R&A Records which was started by Barnowski and his brother after receiving some success as members of the group the Relation in the early 1980s. After the group disbanded, Barnowski and his brother formed their label and later developed the promotions division to work with major labels. Today EP is promoting such artists as Bruce Hornsby, Rosanne Cash and Regina Belle out of its Troy office.

Once an indie likes a band's or performer's sound and are signed either to a written or verbal contract, it is typically up to the artist to bear the costs to record the material. From there, the indie may charge or even absorb the cost of publishing on cassette or compact disc.

Transmat Records was formed in 1986 by Detroit and techno wiz Derrick May to release "Strings of Life" and "Nude Photo" which has received success in Europe and only

heard in dance clubs stateside.

Indies know the only way people will hear material is with radio, DJ and retail support.

The lack of that musical infrastructure in Detroit dismays KMS Records founder Kevin Sanderson who has won several gold and silver albums from the United Kingdom as founder of the techno-dance group Inner City.

"I think as a music scene we need to network and help each other then we have in the past," said Sanderson, a Southfield resident. "We need support here in Detroit. We get a lot of support overseas, but as soon as I see the support here I think we can survive."

"That's frustrating, frustrating enough not to do it any more," said Statie's Summers in doing something about that. She is one of the developers who brought about the Detroit Music Alliance, a support group for local acts which meets monthly in the metro area to learn about the music industry and find support with one another.

Indies know it takes more than just band fraternization to succeed with the majors, many times it has to be truer than life.

Icon's releases are printed on colored vinyl to attract attention, Breton said, even though he has made a profit since he started his one-man company four years ago.

Reality for many indies is that they never see a profit and fold faster than they started, but Breton sees a future for indies.

## Posies enjoy sweet smell of success



Sweet smell: Finding success pleasing to their sense is The Posies — Ken Stringfellow (from left), Jon Auer, Dave Fox and Mike Musburger.

By CHRISTINA FUOCO  
Staff Writer

The Posies frequently dreamt about whom they would play with when their band made it big. Big Star wasn't one of them. It seemed impossible.

"It's one of those things that I never thought I would experience; it's not like I thought, 'Someday I want to play with Big Star,'" said the soft-spoken Ken Stringfellow.

Stringfellow and fellow Posie Jon Auer played with Big Star and its original members Alex Chilton and Jody Stephens on April 25 in Columbia, Mo., as part of a festival organized by KCOU, the University of Missouri's radio station. It took a little bugging, however, to get the duo in.

"The college radio station had its own people in mind — R.E.M., Matthew Sweet — they did not want to do it. By the time the show came up, they had faced our furious wrath

long enough," Stringfellow said with a laugh. "You could see how we could fit in with the Big Star tradition."

Big Star with Stringfellow and Auer will play again on Sunday, Aug. 29, at the Reading Festival in England.

The Posies are trying to start their own tradition with their two-part Beatlesque harmonies and powerful guitars. However, sometimes they find there's a bit of confusion with the other "P" bands.

"I was in L.A. and I went into an Italian restaurant and I saw Kevin DuBrow, lead singer for Quiet Riot. When I was like 13 and in junior high, Quiet Riot was quite the item. Then there's Kevin DuBrow in the bathroom of this Italian restaurant, said Auer, lead guitarist and vocalist.

The excitement continued until they spoke.

See POSIES, 8A

### Monday, July 26

MARY MCGUIRE  
Backseat Saloon, Keego Harbor. (acoustic rock)  
682-1119

### Tuesday, July 27

BON JOVI  
With Extreme at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 175 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. (rock)  
377-0100

MYK RISE AND MARY MCGUIRE  
Mr. B's Bar, Novi. (acoustic rock)  
349-7039

PREHENSIBLE MONKEY-TAILED SKINK  
With The Hunchmen at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
996-8555

### Wednesday, July 28

DAVID CROSBY AND GRAHAM NASH  
With Shawn Colvin and Graham Parker at

Pine Knob Music Theatre, 175 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. (POSTPONED UNTIL AUG. 2)  
377-0100

21 GUANAS FROM EARTH  
The Ritz, 1045 and Gratiot, Roseville.  
778-8404

DROVERS  
Avin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.  
832-2355

DROPPING NAMES  
Featuring Mary McGuire, Julie Kovach and Ron Elman at Gayle's Chocolates, Royal Oak.  
398-0001

### IN CONCERT

Saginaw St., Pontiac.  
334-7411

THE DEL-KATS  
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
996-8555

CROSSED WIRE  
Headlines an Earthfirst benefit at Lil's 21, 2530 Jacob, Hamtramck.  
872-6555

BROTHERHOOD RECIPES AND TRASH KATS  
Headline "Two Floors of Fun" at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.  
996-8555

### Friday, July 30

DISNEY'S SYMPHONY FANTASY  
With the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 175 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston.  
377-0100

See IN CONCERT, 10A