

DINING

Partners with good 'Karma' get ready to open club

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER
cfuoco@oe.homecomm.net

Mark McConnell has a suggestion for visitors to his dueling piano bar Karma.

"Check your shy personality at the coat check," McConnell said.

In late January, the sounds of dueling pianos and rousing sing-alongs will fill the vibrantly colored Ferndale club.

"It's a Disney-like concept that's been popular for a couple years in Florida. It's a fun way to interact. It's an uplifting experience," McConnell explained.

Karma is the creation of longtime Detroit DJ McConnell, and Rob Potter, a Rochester resident and co-owner of Pontiac's The Velvet Lounge.

The building formerly housed a Rite-Aid and underwent a massive seven-month reconstruction to turn it into a hip, acoustically sound club.

"The atmosphere is through the lighting, not through stuff screwed on the wall," McConnell said. McConnell is a Bloomfield Hills native, and Lahser High School graduate said during a tour of the building.

Upon entering Karma, patrons will be greeted with a coat check and cashier. Prisms from wall scones reach up to the funky slanted ceilings of a long hallway that keeps the main room a mystery. A quick turn at the end of the hallway reveals high ceilings, a giant stage on one side of the room, and a raised private area overlooking the club.

Opening Soon

What: Karma 22901 Woodward Ave., north of Nine Mile Road, Ferndale, (248) 541-1600. It will be open to those 21 and older.

Menu: The menu will be simple yet elegant offering peel-and-eat shrimp, vegetarian dishes, and a variety of other food. The prices will be moderate and all credit cards will be accepted.

Opening day: Scheduled to open in late January. The grand opening celebration is set for mid-February, perhaps Valentine's Day weekend, and will be a charity event. Check the Dining page in Entertainment for details.

"The cigar-martini thing's been done. We're selling wine and champagne (in this room). There's private bathrooms. The room overlooks the rest of the place. It's a great sight line to see a band," McConnell explained.

Contrasting colors — primarily red with darker hues — provide a comforting atmosphere.

"We tried to pick vibrant colors to create a warmth and make it an inviting atmosphere," McConnell said.

An entertainment director will oversee the piano players. But the stage will be shared with mainstream, contemporary pop, rock and rhythm and blues bands, as well as comedians.

Although there are other dueling piano bars in the area, McConnell said "there is nothing on this scale." Karma measures in at 11,000 square feet and holds 1,000 people.

"We built this in mind to be a multi-use facility. We want to try to appeal to a different audience."

His target audience is those

who are 25 and older, well behaved, and interested in hearing good music. Good food is also on the plate at Karma.

"We're putting in a full-service kitchen and look forward to private rentals and in-house catering of events. The menu is going to be small but really good. We'd rather expand the menu than pull it back."

McConnell described the menu as simple yet elegant, stepping above the typical bar offerings. Peel-and-eat shrimp, vegetarian dishes and turkey burgers will be on the menu.

"We'll have a signature flavor," he added.

Although Karma is scheduled to open in late January, the grand opening celebration is set for mid-February, perhaps Valentine's Day weekend, and will be a charity event.

Opening a nightclub was a logical progression for McConnell. In the early 1990s, he was a DJ at industry in Pontiac, and was an on-air personality on WHTF-FM, now known as WFLB-FM. McConnell, a former Billboard



Partners: Mark McConnell (left) and co-owner Rob Potter with one of their two baby grand pianos at Karma.

chart reporter, was also a manager at the Hayloft Liquor Stand in Mount Clemens. His office is lined with platinum records, from Depeche Mode and

The KLF.

"It's been an interesting experience over the last so many years. I've gone from being a DJ

to being on the radio to running a couple premiere places. I'm finally running my own place. If there was ever a time to blossom, 1999 is my year."

When you're in a hurry with no time to cook, order soup

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER
kwygonik@oe.homecomm.net

"When the weather outside is frightful," there's nothing more comforting than a bowl of homemade soup. If you've been busy shoveling snow, and don't have time to cook, don't worry, a bowl of soup like mom's or grandma's is just a phone call away. Some restaurants offer soup by the cup, bowl or quart to go. Ask when you place your order.

Here are some of our favorites:

■ Chicken with dumpling or

chicken noodle — Steve's Family Dining, 40370 Five Mile Road, west of Haggerty in Lake Pointe Plaza, (248) 420-0368.

■ Minestrone on Mondays, Beef Barley on Thursdays, and chicken soup every day at N.Y. Deli & Catering — 19216 Newburgh Road, Livonia, (734) 591-DELI.

■ Crushed lentil — La Shiah, 37610 W. 12 Mile Road (at Halsted) Farmington Hills (734) 553-0700.

■ Minestrone Buddy's Pizzeria — 33605 Plymouth Road, (between Farmington and Stark

DINNER TO GO

Roads) Livonia (734) 261-3550; 31646 Northwestern, (just west of Middlebelt Road), Farmington Hills (248) 855-4600; 4370 Highland Road (east of Pontiac Lake Road), Waterford, (248) 683-3635; 3637 Maple (16 Mile Road at Lahser) Bloomfield, (248) 645-0300; 4264 N. Woodward, Royal Oak, (248) 549-8000.

■ Spiced soup, New Peking Chinese Restaurant, 20105 Ford Road, Garden City,

(734) 425-2230

■ Zoup! Fresh Soup Company — With over 20 different homemade soups to choose from everyday, making a decision is difficult. 29177 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, (888) 778-SOUP or (248) 799-2800.

When you don't have time to cook, what's your favorite place for dinner to go?

Send, fax, or e-mail recommendations for restaurants to

feature in Dinner to Go! to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax (734) 591-7279 or e-mail kwygonik@oe.homecomm.net.

Include as much information as possible — address/phone of restaurant, what's your favorite dish to go? and why is it your favorite.

Restaurants, if you offer something out of the ordinary to go,

tell us about it. We're hungry for some dinner suggestions. Send menu, which highlights your specialty soups, and any other special items for consideration in upcoming columns.

WHAT'S COOKING

Send items for consideration in What's Cooking to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax (248) 591-7279, or e-mail kwygonik@oe.homecomm.net. If you're planning a Chinese New Year celebration, be sure to let us know.

■ Stone Crab Dinner — at the 6430 Farmington Road, (north of Maple Road) West Bloomfield, 7 p.m. Monday

or Tuesday, Jan. 25-26. Menu features conch chowder, Champagne & Lemon Granite, Islamorada Stone Crab Claws with mustard sauce or drawn butter, Lyonnaise potatoes, asparagus, and coconut cream tart with Macadamia nut crust. Cost \$39 per person, includes coffee, other beverages, tax or gratuity not included. Call (248) 691-4466 for reservations/information.

■ Mardi Gras Celebration — 1-4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14 at

Schoolcraft College in Livonia. New Orleans cuisine, cash bar, entertainment by SCool Jazz and SCool Jazz Prime, dancing to the sounds of Tom Saunders and "The Detroit All-Stars" Band. Tickets \$30 per person, call (734) 462-4417.

■ A Southwest Feast — 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27 at Moris (248) 642-1094 and Thursday, Jan. 28 at No. VI Chophouse & Lobster Bar, (248)

305-5210. Cost \$34.95 per person, not including tax and gratuity. Call for reservations.

■ Pick-A-Bone Rib House & Saloon — 30326 Six Mile Road, Livonia, (734) 762-RIBS or (734) 762-2063, celebrates its one-year anniversary on Jan. 28. Restaurant hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, closed Sunday.

Mr. Z's STEAK HOUSE 537-5600
27331 Five Mile Rd. (Corner of Lahser)
Appearing January 22nd and 23rd
ELVIS ASH, LAW & ASSOCIATES
AUTHENTIC 50'S, 60'S & 70'S...
Friday & Saturday
N.Y. STEAK & CRAB LEGS \$14.95
Make Reservations For Valentine's Day
GREAT DINNER SPECIALS!

LOOK WHO'S COMING TO...
SKATIN II STATION!
It's CHUCKIE from NICKELODEON!
RUGRAT DAY
SUN., JANUARY 24TH
Lunch with Chuckie 11:30 - 12:30 PM \$8 per person
Includes: Hot Dog, Chips
Advance Tickets Required
Tickets at the Door 12:30 - 4:00 PM ADMISSION: \$5 PER PERSON + SKATE RENTAL: \$2
MEAL DEALS Choose Nachos & Drink \$2.50 Pizzas with Drink \$3.00
8611 Ronda Dr. • Canton • (734) 459-6401

Buddy's RESTAURANT PIZZERIA
We're Your **PARTY PLACE**
Call us now to reserve your special date!
• Rehearsal Dinner • Shower
• Business Meeting • Birthday
• Graduation • Anniversary
• Road Rally • Kid's Party
• Sports Banquet • Holiday
ALL YOU CAN EAT PARTY PACKAGES...
— for groups of 10 or more!
LIVONIA
33605 Plymouth Road
(West of Farmington Road)
(734) 261-3550
DEARBORN
22148 Michigan Avenue
(Between Southfield & Telegraph)
(313) 552-5900
Other Buddy's Locations:
• Farmington Hills • Bloomfield
• Royal Oak • Auburn Hills
• Detroit • Warren • Pontiac Plaza
Bring this ad for \$2.00 off your party!
Only valid for parties of 10 or more.
Not valid with any other discounts.

Adult Novelties
• Nylons
• Leathers
• Shoes
• Dresses
• Swimwear
• Lingerie
Mention this ad and get **10% off**
Fun & Fantasy
325 E. 11 Mile Rd.
Royal Oak
248-542-8864

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
January 22-23-24
2 Golden Globes in one film!
Production cost: \$10 million
CENTRAL STATION
★ ★ ★ "highest rating"
Reviewed by 40 critics
monday January 25
a part of the National Movie System
SLAMMATION
"Makes poetry sexy again!"
Reviewed by 10 critics
MON, ONE SHOW ONLY 7:30
the detroit institute of arts
5200 Woodward Avenue
call to find showtimes
313.833.2323

Having Our Say
by Emily Mann
Based on the best selling book by Sarah L. and Elizabeth Delay with Amy Horvitz
January 6 through January 31
"Their story is our story and it's all true. Having our Say is a national treasure."
— Joel Siegel WABC-TV
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY'S PROFESSIONAL THEATRE COMPANY
MEADOW BROOK THEATRE
Made possible with the support of **DAIMLERCHRYSLER**
For Tickets Call Meadow Brook Box Office (248) 377-3300
Ticketmaster (248) 615-6666
Hobson & Laramie House

24kt. Club
Swing, Big Band, Jump Blues & Lounge
Tuesdays — Advanced Swing dance Lessons
Wednesdays — Beginner Swing Lessons
Doors @ 7pm / Lessons @ 8pm
Friday & Saturday
No cover (Excluding live performances)
Great people, music, martinis & dancing
Sat. 1-23-99 Imperial Swing Orchestra
Sat. 1-31-99 Swing Syndicate
28949 Joy Rd. (2 blocks E. of Middlebelt) Westland (734) 513-5030