

'Crazy dream' turns into supperclub, cafe

By SUSAN FREEDMAN

With a name like "Stephen's... after all," the new supperclub and cafe in Chapel Hill is bound to draw a bit of a crowd. But it is first-rate quality and entertainment that

owner Stephen Barefoot believes will transform the interested crowd into a captive audience.

The idea of combining a supperclub and cafe is a new one to Chapel Hill and promises to offer an evening unique to anything available in the area to date, said Barefoot, executive president of After All, Inc. "Stephen's... after all" is different from anything on the entire east coast.

"Stephen's," the supperclub, is similar to a dinner theatre where the meal is followed by a performance. But, while a dinner theatre features a small cast of actors in a play or musical, the supperclub offers a variety of performers and entertainment. Food and music are paired for evenings of ragtime, waltzes, madrigal celebrations, and just about everything in-between.

What about Rock 'n Roll? "Sure," Barefoot says. "A rock band can offer just as much quality entertainment as anything else." Music performances, plays and musicals are all on the agenda at "Stephen's."

"After all," the cafe, is a cozy room complete with sofas, bar, and piano, that provides a light menu for the person who wants to sit down with friends and chat over a cup of capuccino and a pastry.

Trying to coordinate all of this could give one quite a headache, but Barefoot has help. Marnie Carmichael was performing with Barefoot at Chez Condoret about a year ago when he casually mentioned a crazy dream of his to open a supperclub and cafe in Chapel Hill. Marnie did not think the idea was crazy, and after many late night talks, the dream started to take shape and the ideas began to snowball.

The overall production would be Barefoot's concern, and Marnie Carmichael would serve as artistic director. Although having had experience as an actress, Carmichael's job as coordinator and director will carry some very different responsibilities.

She does not mind though. "It offers me so much room for growth — it's incredible how much I learn every day!"

But Barefoot wanted one more person to round out his artistic team. Enters Paul Epstein, who will serve as musical director for the club. Epstein will be coming here from New York, bringing with him some rather impressive credentials. In his latest job, he served as rehearsal pianist for Mikhail Baryshnikov. Among other duties, he will work with Carmichael to present a special evening of entertainment on Tuesdays, entitled "Tropical Tuesdays." Each Tuesday will be devoted to offering an act different from anything presented during the rest of the week. Wednesday through Sunday the supperclub will showcase scheduled performers who will be booked for two week stints.

First-class entertainment is of supreme importance to those individuals behind "Stephen's... after all." As Carmichael put it, "We are striving for honest and quality work to touch people."

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Marnie Carmichael and Stephen Barefoot of "Stephen's... after all" ... the supper club and cafe, in Kroger Plaza will open Oct. 10.

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