

Chili's specializes in unusual Texan cuisine

Something's brand new in the Chapel Hill restaurant scene, and it's called Chili's Grill and Bar.

The beginning of November marked the opening of Durham's own Chili's Grill and Bar, which joins the chain of 119 restaurants already in operation across the United States.

Located on 15-501 Chapel Hill/Durham Boulevard, the new restaurant may seem to be up against stiff business competition with Darryl's across the street and T.K. Tripps next door. However, Chili's has already become pretty popular with a crowded parking lot and a just-as-crowded waiting area almost every night since it opened its doors. So, how good is this "never-heard-of-it" restaurant attracting so much business?

Well for starters, Chili's has a most unusual menu, which, for the most part, expresses the restaurant's Texas origins. The menu begins by offering those standard appetizers and salads we all know but in a not-so-familiar way.

At the top of the "Starters" list are nachos with guacamole and sour cream for \$4.95, mozzarella cheese fries for \$2.95 and buffalo wings (actually chicken drumettes) for \$3.65. Appearing next on the appetizer list are tostado chips with hot sauce for \$1.95, tostado chips and guacamole for \$2.50, quesadillas for \$3.95 and finally an assortment of barbecue beans, cole slaw and cinnamon apples each priced at \$1.95 an order.

After the appetizers comes the out-of-the-ordinary salads. For \$3.75, the

Beth Buffington Restaurants

regular house salad is available, containing tomato, mushrooms, cheese, sprouts, bacon, chives and sesame seeds, plus the optional guacamole for an extra \$.75. Complete with mixed greens, kidney beans, cheese, taco meat, tomato, chives, sesame seeds and guacamole, the taco salad stands ready at \$4.95 for those who think that the regular salad is just too plain for them.

Of the three types of salads offered, though, the final salad, named "Chicken Frisco," has to win the prize for the most out-of-the-ordinary salad. For \$4.95, you get mixed greens, chicken chunks, diced eggs, tomato, sprouts and toasted almonds covered with a honey-mustard dressing. Now, that's a different salad.

Moving right along, Chili's menu really shows off its Texas flair with home style chili and tacos. For \$2.95, the Chili Lover can get a "Bowl of Red," with or without beans, or chili pie with chili, cheese, onions and chips. Tacos, alias "Honest Tacos," "Chili's Special Soft Tacos" and "Veggie Tacos," cost under \$4. These are made with either corn or flour tortillas and include stuffing combinations of the following: taco meat, cheese, guacamole, lettuce, tomato, chili, sprouts, pico de gallo, mushrooms and sesame seeds — not your average tacos.

The "Grill" part of Chili's name adds what may be the restaurant's specialty — its burgers. "Real fresh ground half-pound burgers cooked



Chili's on Chapel Hill/Durham Boulevard spices up local cuisine

DTH/Janet Jarman

medium rare" are served on white or whole wheat buns and really put McD's burgers to shame. Averaging at \$3.50, these hearty burgers take such names as "Oldtimer," "Alpine," "Rojo," "Chili's Trip," "Muy Mucho," "Terlingua Pride" and "Sierra Platter." I won't spoil the surprises, so you'll have to find out yourself what comes on these outrageous burgers.

Throwing a few other tasty meals under the "Something Different" heading (which really should be the name of the restaurant), Chili's

finishes off with its main course menu. Under this heading can be found the following: barbecue baby back ribs with cole slaw and cinnamon apples for \$8.65, country-fried steak with sausage gravy, fries and cole slaw for \$5.25 and fajitas with charbroiled steak or chicken and grilled onions for \$6.95.

On the back flap of the menu, the "Bar" takes over, adding those wonderful spirits and wines that attract the legal college crowd, as well as the swinging adult population. The bar offers a rather large selection of

drinks priced at about \$3.25. The phrase "you name it, they got it" really is applicable here, so you might want to try out your creativity.

The atmosphere is just as unusual as the menu. Chili's creates that fun sort of comical feeling from its unusual decorum of orange, green and red scenery made up of booths, octagon-shaped bar tables, plants and television sets. The noise from the large crowds might be unbearable for some, but if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

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No gray matter in these Brains

Jason Bott Albums

Plenty of good music is out there to listen to, but sometimes it's hard to find. This week we look at three good albums that may not have been heard.

The new album from **Bad Brains** of Washington, D.C., is entitled *I Against I*. "Who are Bad Brains?" one might ask. Well, they're a Rastafarian hardcore punk band. The group members' roots are in jazz fusion, but in the '70s, they fell under the spell of Bob Marley and the Sex Pistols. Their first album was produced by Ric Ocasek of the Cars (however, they sound nothing like that group).

I Against I moves the band more into the hardcore and heavy metal realm and further away from their reggae roots. It's a refreshing album — very gritty and tough, but also well played. The record is dominated by a heavy, grinding guitar.

The whole album is good, but a few cuts stand out. "Sacred Love" is tense, sinuous and features great vocals from the group's lead singer, H.R. His vocals are special in that they were actually phoned into the recording studio from a police station, after he had been arrested during the making of the album. "She's Calling You" is a fierce and funky metal tune with inspired guitar playing.

Throwing Muses, a group from the Boston area, recently released its self-titled debut album which is a stand-out first effort. The group is fairly

young (the average age is 20), made up of three girls on vocals, guitar and bass and a guy on drums. It's not the usual "girl group," though; they have more in common with Patti Smith than with the Bangles. For such a young band, they've made a very good, mature record.

Lead singer Kristen Hersh has a very expressive voice, somewhat reminiscent of both Kate Bush and Hope Nichols (of Fetchin' Bones). The band's music is a strange blend of gentle folk rock and harsher stuff. Sometimes, both sounds appear in one song. The songs seem very personal, serious and intense. For instance, in the song "Delicate Cutters," they sing, "Slide you head across the ice/ I throw my hands through the window/ Crash. Like poetry. A room full of delicate cutters." Listening to them, it's as if one was hearing a very personal, private conversation.

Some of the songs are quite pretty, like the album's best song, "Green." Some lean towards country punk, like "America (She Can't Say No)." Others are downbeat or abrasive, frenzied rock, like the jarring "Vicky's Box."

In general, Throwing Muses' first album is worth a listen. Curiously,

it's been released on 4AD, a British label, and is only available in the U.S. as an import, even though they're an American band.

One of the best bands around now is the **Fall**, a group from Manchester, England. The band was formed about 10 years ago, but its only surviving member from that time is founder and lead singer Mark E. Smith. The Fall's music seems non-commercial, but it's far from unappealing. Most of their songs are repetitive and heavy, building on a pounding beat that pulls the listener along.

The latest album from the group is entitled *Bend Sinister*, and it's another accomplishment for the band. The songs are smart and tough, without ever sounding too forced or pretentious. Smith's sarcasm and the band's playing save the music from seeming overblown. Among the best songs is a cover version of a '60s garage band tune called "Mr. Pharmacist." The music lurches along, while Smith sneeringly sings really way-out lyrics. "U.S. 80's-90's" is somehow about America, but the lyrics are so obscure, it's difficult to guess what they mean. Meanwhile, the music stomps along, dominated by a pounding bass and drums. The two versions of the song "Shoulder Pads" lighten things up a bit, led by a bouncy organ riff. "R.O.D." shows what an aura of menace the Fall can create within the framework of a song.