

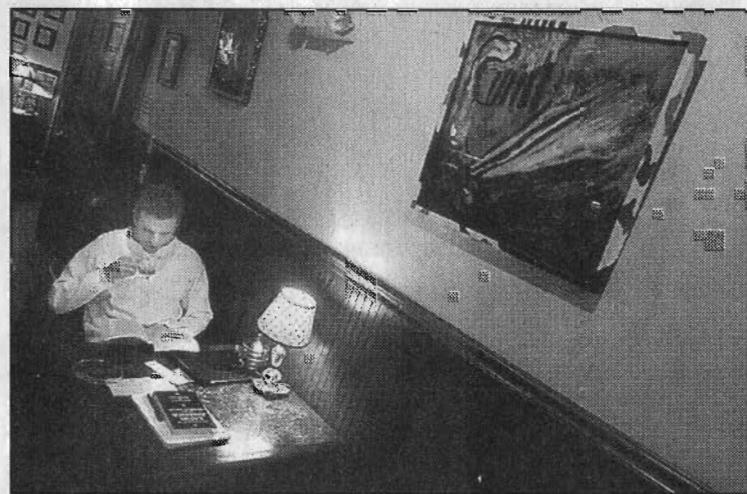


Richie Kindler, left, and Comet Creekwater enjoy coffee and conversation as Faris Azen plays the guitar.

— Messenger photo by Robert Caplin

Donkey Coffee and Espresso

Coffeehouse a natural for Athens



— Messenger photo by Robert Caplin
OU graduate student Steven George studies at the Donkey.

By **MONICA NIEPORTE**

Assistant news editor

At Donkey Coffee and Espresso, there is only one "coffee of the day." Forget the artificially flavored blends that taste like a candy bar but leave a bitter aftertaste. Express, a dark roast blend of organic beans from Madagascar and East Timor, makes a perfect cup of joe every time.

A true coffeehouse, the West Washington Street business owned by Chris and Angie Pyle is focused on coffee and espresso. Sure, there are some other items available, but those are made by other area businesses. Employees at the Donkey don't have time to make deli sandwiches or breakfast croissants. They must devote their attention to the espresso machine.

"If the grind is off just a little, the espresso will be too acidic or can get too oily," explained Will Deaton, manager and self-styled Supreme Commander of Caffeine Distribution. "It has to be adjusted throughout the day. If we started focusing on other things, we would lose quality."

The atmosphere is unlike anything else in Athens. A shelf of board games beckons customers to while away a gray afternoon playing Scrabble or Trivial Pursuit. For those who didn't bring along their own reading material, literature on social justice and environmental organizations is stacked on a table. Lingered by patrons isn't just tolerated, it's encouraged.

A blackboard in the restroom reminds customers that "even in jest, words can be cruel" and that in order to love someone else, you must first love yourself. Such philosophical ideals are imparted with a smile by the friendly crew behind the pastry counter. There is no hustle-bustle, only good music, good conversation, interesting art and a place to unwind.

Socially-aware customers will appreciate the fact that their brew is made from "fair

trade" coffee beans. Deaton explained that this means that the beans are bought only from small coffee farms, and at a price from which the farmer can earn a living wage. Those who want to advertise the coffeehouse can do so without losing nary a minute's

bands, examples being Stella and Longfellow.

But meeting at the cafe can be less formal. Deaton said the location is perfect for small gatherings of any sort, but warns that space is available on a first-come basis. Lest you mistakenly think that only Ohio University students and environmentalists hang out at the Donkey, you will also find the spot is a meeting place for the county's judges, a church board, a knitting circle and professors.

Donkey Coffee is open from 7 a.m. until 1 a.m. on weekdays. But during finals week each quarter, the lights are on and the coffee is brewing 'round the clock.

"You see a real mix of people in here. In the mornings, until about noon, it's mostly town-folk, but by lunchtime there are more students. On nights where there is entertainment, it depends upon the band. Some attract more stu-

dents and others have more of a local following," Deaton said. During the day, the coffeehouse shies away from playing Top 40 music and instead plays blues, gospel and soul in the background. "We like to play things that our customers might not come into contact with any-

place else. The w rotating a ferent art Artists ar hang thei said. Mos for sale. A are handr Studio an Edible such as m Muffin, b baker Lor Goodfella ies from t few.

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"Our g here sole profit is n for the co dents and one anothe social jus

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— Messenger photo by John Halley

Donkey vital statistics

Location: 17 1/2 W. Washington St.

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday 7 a.m.-1 a.m.

Saturday 10 a.m.-1 a.m.

Sunday noon -1 a.m.

Phone: 594-7353

sleep in a "sweatshop labor-free" T-shirt.

Entertainment is a big part of the Donkey Cafe experience. Tuesdays at 9 p.m. there is open stage poetry reading and on Thursdays at 9 p.m. there is open stage music. Friday and Saturday nights are reserved for local



place else," Deaton explained.

The walls of the coffeehouse are a rotating art gallery, with works by different artists featured each month. Artists are booked in advance and hang their own masterpieces, Deaton said. Most of the artwork is offered for sale. Also available for purchase are handmade gifts by PassionWorks Studio and Good Works.

Edible treats are also available such as muffins from My Favorite Muffin, baked goods made by local baker Lori Johansen, white pizza by Goodfellas and pizza rolls and cookies from Crumbs Bakery, to name a few.

If coffee isn't your cup of tea, well, Donkey Cafe has that too. There are also a wide variety of cold beverages, including Italian sodas and a milkshake-like drink called Frescante that comes in 16 different flavors.

"We want our customers to sit down and stay a little while. We want to get to know them a little bit, get to know their names," Deaton said.

While the business has established a base of regular customers since opening in June, Deaton said new faces are always welcome.

"Our goals are different. We're not here solely to make money, although a profit is nice too. We provide a place for the community to interact, for students and townsfolk to get to know one another and learn a little bit about social justice," Deaton said.

And if the IRS board game orphaned on the bookshelf is dusted off and played a few times, so much the better.



**Donley employee
Beth Gherlein serves
up some cake to a
customer.**

— Messenger photo
by Robert Caplin