

# Café Paradiso becomes high-tech study haven

Changes at the café, like adding Internet access, are geared toward making the shop more student-friendly

By Steven Neuman  
Freelance Reporter

It used to be that if people found themselves downtown on a weeknight, they were probably just stopping off at Eugene Station for a bus transfer.

However, with the reopening of Broadway and Olive Street, the downtown area has shown the first signs of revitalization. Café Paradiso, long known as an island of culture and life in a downtown of empty storefronts, isn't willing to be left in the dust. As a result, the café is changing its weeknight format in an effort to attract more students downtown and bring in those looking for a place to eat and study.

"We're really trying to cater to college students," said Greg Fleener, the café's venue manager.

Fleener, who usually books the café's acts, said it is taking the focus off mid-week concerts with a cover charge.

"The idea is: Create an atmosphere where students can sit for as long as they want and study, have some coffee, and eat some good food," he said.

Besides coffee, tea and soft drinks, the café serves beer and wine and is one of Eugene's few music venues that tries to please crowds both older and younger than 21.

Paradiso implemented one of its most recent upgrades specifically for student patrons: A new wireless network system — which lets users tap

into the Internet on their laptops without the need for wires — will let students do research from the comfort of their table. The café doesn't have a final price system set up for access time yet.

"Right now, if you buy any small item you get 15 minutes right off the bat," Fleener said. "If you buy any type of meal or dinner, which is usually around \$6, you get 4 or 5 hours of access."

The café, situated at the corner of Broadway and Olive Street, features comfortable chairs and tables, and already serves a full breakfast, lunch and dinner menu with vegetarian options.

"I love their cookies," senior Monica Blackburn said, "and I love going down there to study. Sometimes it's just nice to get off campus for a while; it gets to the point where you feel like you're in prison."

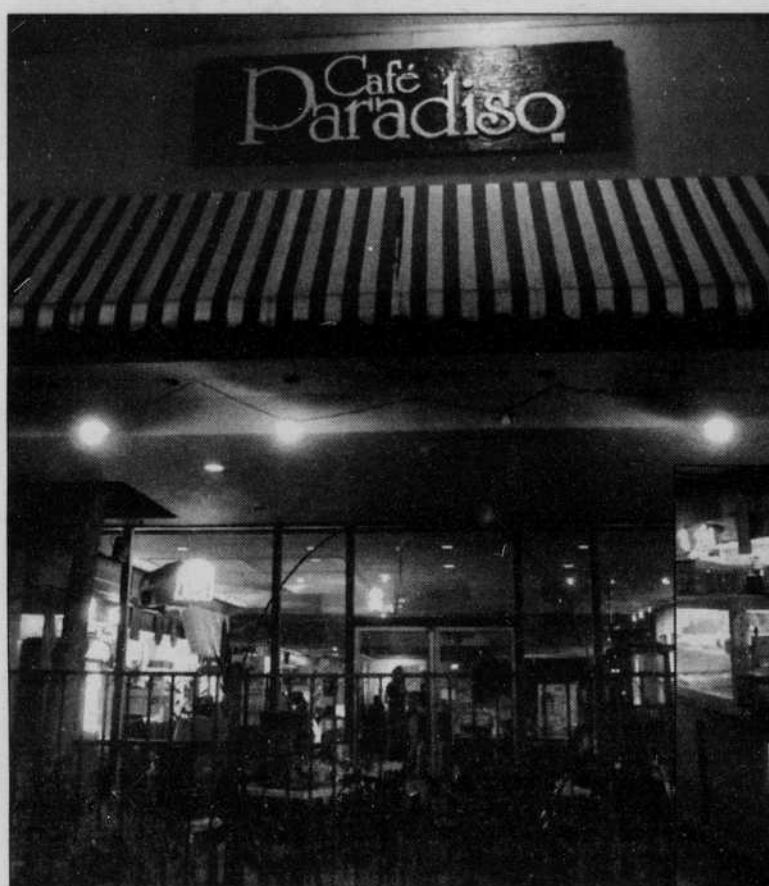
Blackburn said she feels the format change will help keep patrons in the café later.

"I love the great food, love the atmosphere, but I know I've felt like it got too noisy in the evenings, because they were doing a concert and I had to leave. This (change) is going to be really good in that way," Blackburn said.

The café will continue to feature an open mic night on Tuesday and Wednesday, as it has been doing for 10 years, but Fleener underscores that this should not be as disruptive as live bands.

"Tuesday night will focus on acoustic musicians, and Wednesday will focus on spoken word," he said.

Senior general science major Laura Winter thinks the changes are a good idea, but foresees problems



Jessica Waters Photo Editor

The outdoor patio at Café Paradiso is a popular place for customers to enjoy drinks and pastries while waiting for the band to start their first set.



Café Paradiso offers a wide selection of specialty coffee drinks, snacks and other treats to customers like Sommer Whitmarsh (below), who comes to enjoy the live music on Friday nights.

Jessica Waters Photo Editor

with convincing students who live close to campus to make the downtown trek.

"The (distance) is going to be a big obstacle," she said. "I know that I might go if my friend said, 'Hey, let's go down there and study,' but it seems like a long

way to go for a place to study. There are things available closer."

Fleener believes in time students will return to the area, and points out that at one time they dominated it.

"Weeknight concerts and music was never really our thing," he said.

"When we first opened, the student population was our bread and butter; a lot of that changed when (Broadway) closed."

Steven Neuman is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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