

# Chinese buffet pleases palate

BY DYLAN HERX  
Reviewer

Chinese restaurants are aplenty in most towns.

A friend of mine, in response to my claim that Kirksville had too many cafés and needed to diversify, noted that every town has Chinese restaurants, Mexican establishments and pizza joints. And I, in retrospect, realized that I've only represented one of those demographics. So on to my review of China Palace, located on the corner of Franklin and Harrison streets in the downtown district.

Before I begin, I'd like to say that I'm not going to drudge up any back-and-forth about which China Palace is the original or politicking about why there were two China Palaces at the same time. I am here only to review, and review I shall. I chose this China Palace simply because a friend suggested it.

Upon entering, the place seemed lively, and I was seated at a booth near the buffet. The first thing that caught my eye was the large, intricate wall mural on the right side of the restaurant. Without falling into stereotypes, most Chinese restaurants tend to emit a similar Asian vibe, usually marked by small, calm waterworks, an extensive array of Chinese character décor and bamboo placemats or wall paneling. Although it adds atmosphere, I often wonder if restaurants actually located in China carry such a smattering of Eastern culture, or instead, have unique styles of their own. China Palace, mi-

nus the aforementioned mural, seems relatively plain, which, depending on one's necessity for being immersed in Americanized Eastern culture, could be a good or bad thing. One touch I did like was the round booth in the corner. A round booth is a rarity in most dining establishments, but it definitely fosters conversation among friends.

China Palace is wise to have another normal facet of most Chinese restaurants: a buffet. The great part about the buffet (other than the fact that you might need to be rolled away in a cart due to overindulgence in spring rolls) is that at China Palace, seafood portions are available throughout the week instead of just on weekends. If I'm going to be gorging myself on unhealthy (although MSG-free) lo mein, I might as well top it off with some buttered shrimp and crab. One travesty that befalls many buffets is the accursed heat lamps. These blessings and curses of culinary technology dry up food and cause it to appear withered. Luckily, at China Palace, that rarely was the case. Each serving of General Tso's or peppered chicken seemed relatively fresh, and employees always were strolling in and out of the kitchen with new trays. I have to commend China Palace on its crab rangoon for this very reason. Perhaps I just timed it right, but I have never had such a warm and creamy rangoon heretofore in my life. Props, China Palace.

For those worried about gluttony (and who shouldn't be, really), China Palace offers the ability to order from the menu or for takeout. I took the



China Palace worker Michael Lin tends to the buffet. The array of selections is MSG-free, and the restaurant is located at the corner of Franklin and Harrison streets. Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

challenge and requested some Kung Pao chicken to go. At the reasonable price of \$4.50 for lunch, my heaping bowl of Kung Pao came complete with egg drop soup and those delightful crispy wontons. I can't complain about the portion size or the content. For once, I didn't have to ration my chicken to be sure I had some left for the last few bites, as there was more than enough for equal distribution. The peanuts in the Kung Pao were the right consistency and, with the exception of a few mushrooms suffering from freezer burn, the lunch special was worth every penny. And, as noted earlier, it's a great way to make sure you don't feel miserable afterward from overeating. For most non-voracious

## Boiled DOWN CHINA PALACE

**Atmosphere:** typical Eastern decor, but not overdone

**Food:** large quantities, fresh taste, even on buffet

**Price:** varies from \$5-\$12; lunch is most cost-effective

Lunch specials MSG-free

**Overall:** of the many options, China Palace is a great choice.

**Address:** 124 N. Franklin St. Kirksville, MO  
**Phone:** (660) 627-7400

individuals, there probably will be enough for leftovers, so the meal pays for itself really.

One expects to pay at least \$8 for dinner nowadays, so the prices are not unexpected. Just be assured that China

Palace has a smorgasbord of choices, each with a reasonable price to boot. Sadly, I doubt I'll reach every Chinese restaurant in Kirksville before the year end, but China Palace was a pretty good starting point.

# Teenage one-man band debuts strong album

BY FRANKLIN K.R. CLINE  
Reviewer

Playradioplay! is about as mainstream as indie music gets.

This has both positive and negative connotations, but if you find your appetite for music satiated by today's top-40, specifically the emo-rock style popularized by bands like Panic at the Disco! and the Postal Service's grown-up-but-not-quite-grown-up electropop angst, you'll really dig this band.

Playradioplay! is 18-year-old Dan Hunter from Aledo, Texas — that's right, a one-man band — who has been making

music in his basement using Garageband loops for years and his popularity on MySpace. Hunter managed to receive a record deal at the age of 17 — arguably a stronger, if much less publicized, testament to the power of the Internet than Radiohead's and Nine Inch Nails' Web-only releases of their latest records. Island Records must have figured the kid was hot and they should capitalize on it soon,

and boy, have they. "Texas," his debut release, is basically a 50-minute peek into an alternately lovestruck and heartbroken teenager's diary set to music that could have been produced by Death Cab For Cutie and Postal Services' Ben Gibbard.

The album is saturated with now-standard emo that builds into epic, synth-punctuated, repetitive choruses and then falls back down into a hushed

near-whisper for the verses, probably to drive home the "it's just you and me and our souls" vibe propagated by so many tail-chasing bands.

I can't hide my initial disdain for this album — I opened it up, read through the lyrics and rolled my eyes. But, in spite of myself, Playradioplay! won me over with its sheer potential. As a first album, "Texas" shows a lot of maturity from a musical standpoint. There are interludes between most of the tracks that have a great deal of density and dexterity that help to add flavor and depth to an unabashed emo album. This depth is much-

needed — emo's been done to death, and it's difficult to sort through the different bands to find distinguishing characteristics, but Playradioplay! does have his own sound. Yes, at times this album sounds eerily similar to "Digital Ash in a Digital Urn," Bright Eyes' 2005 release (which Gibbard produced a couple of tracks for) that was a semi-ironic foray into mixing emo and electronica (emo-tronica, anyone?), but more often than that Playradioplay! is fooling around with the genre, poking holes in it, stretching it far more than Conor Oberst or Gibbard probably ever will.

Lyricaly, on the other hand, Playradioplay! is a few steps behind someone like Bright Eyes or Panic at the Disco, which puts him about at the songwriting level of an 18-year-old. The lyrics are contrived, simple and boring — again, exactly what one would expect from a teenager.

Don't get this album expecting any sort of revelation — get it if you really enjoy mainstream emo-rock bands like Bright Eyes, the Postal Service and the like. If you absolutely hate emo, then at least keep the name Playradioplay! in the back of your head — this kid's got a bright future in the music world.

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