

# Café offers fresh, homey feel

BY DYLAN HERX  
Reviewer

The name "Manhattan Café" might remind one of Fifth Ave. shops, Greenwich Village and Seinfeld, not corn fields and Goody's.

But for those in my readership who desperately miss their ability to get scrumptious baked goods and a light soup-and-salad lunch, as Kirksville is sans a St. Louis Bread Company (and yes, I know the bitter rivalry between proponents of the St. Louis moniker and the more universal Panera), Manhattan might serve as a replacement.

Ascribing to the fact that every good sandwich shop should be able to craft a delightful Reuben sandwich, I put Manhattan through its paces. Described in the menu in great detail, I looked forward to the corned beef on toasted, homemade rye with a covering of Russian dressing and sauerkraut. An unorthodox addition to the otherwise classic sandwich is Manhattan's dab of pesto sauce to the rye prior to toasting. It gives the rye an extra zest that makes this Reuben stand out from others I've had.

Manhattan Café is not just open for lunch, however, and the café has a handful of meals for dinner as well including hot, open-faced sandwiches or Broasted" chicken dinners. One of Manhattan's attributes, much like Northtown Café and Washington Street Java Co., is that it serves fresh, home-cooked meals. The gravy was hot and had all the characteristics of a good yellow sauce: bold chicken flavor with a medley of seasonings. Although Manhattan's meals are not the cheapest option in town, they are consistent with the prices of most other café and bakery fair, which is not terrible at \$6 or \$7 for a sandwich and side.

Manhattan is first and foremost a bakery. Upon arriving for breakfast one morning, I was a bit disappointed by the small



Krista Goodman/Index

The Manhattan Café serves breakfast, lunch and bakery goods, using fresh ingredients and a homemade touch.

selection of pastries offered. In fact, it doesn't even have a breakfast menu. The choices essentially are toast, sticky buns or cinnamon rolls. This, although initially a downside, isn't as bad as it sounds because Manhattan's cinnamon rolls rival my dear grandmother's in quality. On the same token, the sticky buns also are quite good.

Manhattan's choice of Breve coffees make up for the mediocre selection of food. German chocolate cake and bourbon flavors are just a few of their five or six daily offerings.

It is a bit discouraging that the coffee's brand name appears on the menu (taking away from the just-for-you, homey environment), but it beats anything found at the local Wal-Mart.

As far as atmosphere goes, Manhattan Café does an excellent job of carrying out the small-town façade. One woman, upon breaching the doorway, declared, "Oh, this is just darling." Darling is a great way to de-

scribe the décor of Manhattan Café. Fresh-baked goods are available for sale right inside the door, and small, pleasant tables line the wall and the middle of the room ornamented with real flowers.

Except for the odd, matching "You are now entering a trans fat free zone" signs at each end of the room, Manhattan captures a certain bare-bones barista nature. The coffee and bread pans are in plain sight, and the low lighting and interior brick keep it from being kitschy.

As far as service is concerned, my few trips to Manhattan have been completely different experiences. The one commonality is friendliness. The servers at Manhattan always are willing to explain menu items or to chat about local events. If they are busy, however, it may take a few minutes longer than expected to place a drink order or obtain a menu.

Manhattan Café does a lot of things right. It really comes down to what you're looking for in a café experience.

Kirksville has a wide variety of them to choose from, though, so it shouldn't be extremely difficult to find your place to be a regular.

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# Johnson aims for raw lyrics

BY BEN YARNELL  
Reviewer

It's cold outside. But that doesn't mean your mindset has to be cold. A good CD can put you in that beachfront frame of mind.

Normally, Jack Johnson would be just the man for the job. But that is not the case with his latest endeavor, "Sleep Through the Static."

This is not to say that Johnson has totally abandoned his style. The set-up of a guitar, a limited drum set and the occasional piano or harmonica still is the same. But right out of the gate, the tone is markedly different.

The first track, "All at Once," comes at you just as the title of the song suggests. As opposed to his past cuts, in which the mood seemed more happy-go-lucky, listeners are blindsided with minor chords. But it is not just the instruments that sound darker. Gone are the days of singing about banana pancakes and jungle gyms. With lyrics like "The sun is the new hell," Johnson lets listeners know they are in for something a little different.

The title track "Sleep Through the Static" gives more evidence in support of this notion. Again, Johnson chooses lyrics unfamiliar with his past, with his distaste for war dominating the song. Combined with the previous song, the blunt force of the change in atmosphere definitely throws the listener for a loop.

And then, while you are reeling from the one-two punch, things are right back to the way they used to be, with the aptly named track "Hope." Here, the song feels like a long-lost track from Johnson's "In Between Dreams." The style is happier and compels you to bounce with the beat.

After this rapid change in mood, listeners might feel a bit confused about what direction the album as a whole is going. Although nothing is as drastic as the opening, the listener still must be on guard for more melancholy lyrics. They don't show up everywhere, but when they do, you will know immediately.

An interesting aspect of this album is its raw feel. Yes, the emotions he evokes do touch on some nerves. But there also is not as much alteration to the work. Tracks blend seamlessly into one another. Listeners will get the feeling they are listening to Johnson simply playing whatever is in his notebook, regardless of length.

With all of this change, one might think Johnson has abandoned his lazy-afternoon sound. But don't worry, "Sleep Through the Static" is merely a broadening of a talented artist's repertoire. It is a solid listen and worth the money. Just don't expect it to always warm you up inside.

Besides, it will be warmer outside soon enough.

# MJ remake fails to thrill

BY FRANKLIN K.R. CLINE  
Reviewer

A word to the wise, Michael, will.i.am, Fergie and Kanye: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I'll point out that the first nine tracks on "Thriller 25" — that is, the songs from the original album released 25 years ago — still are incredibly captivating, catchy and enrapturing. It's impressive how little "Thriller" has aged over the years. Even the silly-but-enjoyable ballads like "Human Nature" are not far from the realms currently inhabited by chart-toppers like Akon and Ne-Yo.

From the opening rat-tat-tat and smooth groove of "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" to MJ's raw-throated pleas for love that close the moving ballad, "The Lady in My Life," those nine tracks collectively set a template for the perfect pop album, right up there with "Pet Sounds" and "Abbey Road."

Those first nine tracks are so solid, in fact, that they eclipse the rest of "Thriller 25," which consists of five very bad remixes and one forgettable track left on the cutting room floor for good reason.

I wish I could blame will.i.am and Kanye West for taking perfectly good tracks and adding more contemporary production that ultimately dilutes the power of the initial tracks and loses much in the translation, but I can't because Michael Jackson is listed as

co-producer on every track. In most cases he provided alternate recordings, though mostly in 25-year-old demo form, for the remixes to spice them up even further.

I'm not entirely sure why Michael would want to do this. After all, from what I understand, the original cuts still are club staples, and Quincy Jones, the album's original producer, clearly knew what he was doing behind the mixing board during the initial recording sessions of the album a quarter of a century ago.

If this is an attempt on MJ's part to appear still relevant, then it fails miserably. To paraphrase Bart Simpson, "If you want to be cool, then you're not cool."

The songs fail for many reasons, not just because they take a good thing and suck the life out of it, but also simply because they stand alone as bad songs. I was so excited for Kanye West's remix of "Billie Jean" — after all, he cut his teeth in the rap game as a producer and was responsible for the best beats on albums like Jay-Z's "The Blueprint" and Talib Kweli's "Quality" — but it misses the mark by stripping the song of its trademark bass and adding a drum track that sounds like a throw-away from "Graduation."

Ultimately, though, Kanye's remix of "Billie Jean" is harmlessly boring, and it's not the near-sacrilege that



will.i.am's horrible mishandling of my two favorite tracks off of the album ("The Girl is Mine" and "P.Y.T.") is. Originally a cute and fun duet with Paul McCartney, "The Girl is Mine" was a nice, lighthearted tune that perfectly fit between the brass-and-synth-driven funk of "Baby Be Mine" and the eerie, spacey thump of "Thriller." The remix, produced jointly by MJ and will.i.am, totally removes Sir Paul and replaces him with will.i.am moronically reciting "She mine, she mine" or even worse, "She like the way I rock/the way I rock/the way I rock/the way I rock."

The remix of "P.Y.T.," on the other hand, simply removes everything that was initially catchy about the song, mixes MJ's vocals down to near-illegibility and adds more of will.i.am needlessly yelling things and even sort of rapping. His line, "You lookin' really cute in them jeans/I'll peel 'em off like a tangerine," totally misses the sweet, subtle sexiness of the original song.

The worst of the worst, though, is the remix of "Beat It" featuring a very uncertain-sounding Fergie doing



Photo courtesy of Sony BMG Music Entertainment  
**Thriller 25, the anniversary Thriller album, showcases the nine tracks with Michael Jackson and bonus tracks by various rap artists.**

her best Michael Jackson (or maybe George Michael, I'm not too sure) impersonation.

The rockin' aspect of the song almost is absent in this remix, with the exception of the blistering hair-metal solo. However, in MJ's defense, modern hip-hoppers and their producers flirt more with electronica than rock.

The only good part of the remixes comes in the first minute of Akon and MJ's re-imagining of "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin,'" which features just a piano, a synthesizer and Akon's wonderful voice but somehow maintains the groove of the original. Unfortunately, even this minute is plagued with an annoying abundance of reverb that gets

in the way of Akon's vocal prowess and the eloquent piano. I'd love to hear Akon sit at a piano and go at the track live, though. I imagine it would be a very beautiful rendition.

Overall, "Thriller 25" is worth getting only if you don't already own the original album, and even then, only if you can't find a cheaper copy without all the bonus tracks. I can't say enough how great the first nine tracks are, but everyone and their mother has already celebrated that album for nearly a quarter of a century — and with good reason. The bonus tracks will only let you down, though — don't even bother, unless you have a morbid curiosity.

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