

eat&amp;drink



## worth a trip

Some Kind of Wonderful pizza (\$13-\$21)

The Stop Along 1812 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-394-4694

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

There was a time when Camaros were bitchin' and neon was a primary color. If you didn't live through that era, maybe you've seen the movie "Hot Tub Time Machine." If neither of these things is true, there's still a good chance you love Prince or Madonna and you have a thing for Shia LaBeouf's "Transformers" work or Michael Bay's "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." Without Pac-Man, there probably wouldn't be an Xbox or a PlayStation. Though the 1980s don't have the same charm as the 1920s (think flappers and bathtub gin), the decade is responsible for some great things.

And unlike the '20s, the '80s are easier to re-create. Most of the people from the '20s are dead. Most of the people from the '80s are very much alive, and some of them still have the original "Star Wars" action figures in the box to prove it. You can still buy Swatch watches and Cabbage Patch Kids or rock out as a Brony over episodes of "My Little Pony." You can travel back in time via YouTube

to watch Michael Jackson Moonwalk. In Chicago, ground zero for such a trip is The Stop Along in Bucktown. Your host on this adventure is owner Taylor Hammond, a self-described Army brat and former lawyer who gave up torts for pepperoni.

Hammond has the era down at his new pizza and burger parlor. Dining bills are rubber-banded to 8-bit Nintendo game cartridges (the ones you had to blow into in order to get them to work on the finicky system). My brother had the same Powell Peralta Steve Caballero skateboard deck that hangs on the brick wall near the back of the restaurant. When I was much younger, I sipped Cherry Coke and fed quarters to the same kind of Ms. Pac-Man table arcade game that you'll find at The Stop Along while my parents had key parties and drank Old Style at Buddy's Pizza in suburban Detroit. OK, I'm lying a bit; my parents are still married, and I'm 99 percent sure swinging was a '70s thing. My point is Hammond built a place that you'll recognize if you were a child of the '80s. And

if not, you're still going to have fun.

Nostalgia aside, one of the reasons you'll enjoy your visit is that the pizza—a refined New York-style slice—is top-notch. I say refined because while the long, thin, triangular crust with puffy edges has a kinship to legendary New York parlors like John's Pizzeria of Bleecker Street or Patsy's Pizzeria, it also has integrity and a satisfying chew that's reminiscent of a great Neapolitan pie. There's no tip sag or pool of grease.

This all speaks to Hammond's dedication. He spent months training at Goodfella's Pizza School in Staten Island (ancestral home of Vinny Guadagnino and Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino of "Jersey Shore" infamy). Once he left Goodfella's, Hammond hosted a lot of dinner parties and cooked hundreds of pizzas at home before launching the business. "I think my wife got sick of pizza after a while," Hammond laughed.

Most of The Stop Along's pies reference '80s movies and TV shows with names such as Pretty in Pink, Back to the Future and Wonder Years. The cult favorites also play on the restaurant's flat-screens, and the night I visited, "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" graced the TVs with a teenage Sarah Jessica Parker and pre-"Beverly Hills, 90210" Shannen Doherty.

My favorite pie, and the one you should

try, was the Some Kind of Wonderful (named after a movie written by late Chicagoan John Hughes. Molly Ringwald reportedly turned down a role in the movie because she wanted to pursue more adult roles, which ended her long working relationship with Hughes). The sauceless pizza features oozy mozzarella and fluffy fresh ricotta drizzled with chili-spiked honey, a dash of truffle oil, parsley and other dried herbs. It's a righteous tango of sweet, spicy and funky.

When you're done, head to the back of the parlor and play a round of "Mike Tyson's Punch-Out." (Pro tip: When King Hippo opens his mouth, punch him in the face, which will expose his Band-Aid-covered belly button for a merciless unabated game-winning pummeling.) And while you're playing the game, look up and admire a tapestry featuring a shaggy-haired Jon Bon Jovi (long before he was the gray-haired grandpa playing guitar in people's living rooms on DirecTV ads). "Yeah, this was an eBay find," Hammond said. "My sister is the biggest Bon Jovi fan you'll ever meet. We used to share a room, and she had one just like this on a sloped wall above her bed. It was the first and last thing she saw when she woke up and when she went to sleep."

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE CONTRIBUTOR. REPORTERS VISIT RESTAURANTS UNANNOUNCED, AND MEALS ARE PAID FOR BY REDEYE.