

# SETTING THE BAR

Monthly bar review by Kelly Archer

## *The Baxter Bar & Arcade*

**Location:** 108 N. Graham St., Carrboro, N.C., 27510

**Price:** \$\$

**Age range:** 21 and up

### Atmosphere

One look at the large marquee letters spelling “Arcade” perched atop a brick, industrial building, and it’s clear that Carrboro has been waiting for Baxter, affectionately coined “Barcade,” its entire life. Picnic tables out front guarantee a lively spillover from inside, and the colorful glow of arcade games yet-to-be played through the large windows will tug at your inner child immediately. The bar is also at the very back on the large open room; don’t be intimidated by this. Yes, you may have to wade through a most eclectic bar crowd to get there, but as soon as you step through the doors, you’re swallowed into the jeers and cheers of a relaxed and jovial bar crowd. Eclectic might even be an understatement, but everyone is there to have fun, and we’re all blended in a median age of

about 12 when you stick us in front of an arcade game.

### Uniqueness

Where else can you grab a drink while conquering Donkey Kong or mastering pinball? The games only add to the bar’s charm. When going out for a drink around town, you’re more likely to come across a sprawling mahogany elbow rest with craft brews on tap and cocktail mixers on hand. It’s not that The Baxter doesn’t have a bar; a metal bar circles around a blindingly lit display case of collectable memorabilia — a clever nod to the usual assortment of glassware and barrel-aged whiskeys. It’s that you’re far less likely to find cocktail enthusiasts and customers huddled around it in quiet, lofty conversation than you are to find them huddled over the shoulder of their friend about to beat the high-score on the Star Wars game. The walls are painted with giant comic strip-style murals and

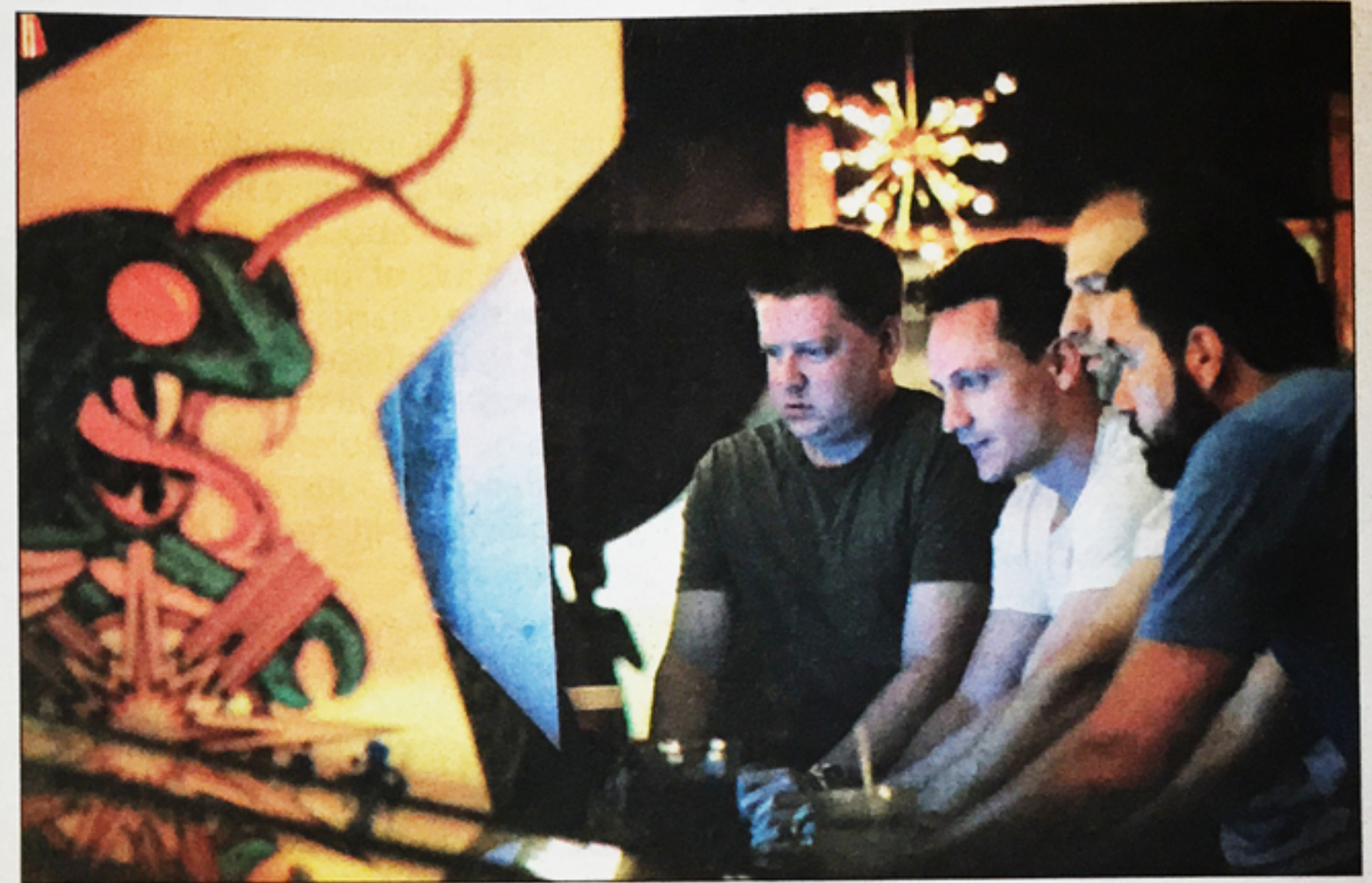


Photo by Kelly Archer

Friends gather around an old-fashioned arcade game while enjoying a few beers at the Baxter Bar & Arcade, also known as the ‘Barcade’ in Carrboro.

low-hanging, exposed bulbs and chandeliers give off a vintage vibe while making sure it’s dark enough for machine lights to cast a colorful glow. Two corners have mini-lounges of plush couches you can sink into with a beer. There’s a row of movie posters to frame a giant screen that usually plays old movies, and occasionally holds screenings of “Game of Thrones” or basketball games. There’s a high-score board because this is a respectable arcade, and next to it is the drink menu.

### Menu

A large chalkboard lists the drink menu under gold letters spelling “Beer.” Fitting, considering how extensive the beer list is, with draughts from North Carolina craft breweries like Big Boss and Foothills, and a bottle for all tastes; however, if you’re looking for any kind of fancy mixed drink or cocktail, this probably isn’t your scene. The “specialty” drinks are reminiscent of the candy-colored, plastic summer drinks of your

youth, with names like “SHE HULK.” Sweet, green and more fun than sophisticated. I grabbed an “Abita Purple Haze” for the hot summer night, and totted it around on a convenient beer stand, so my brew never had to be more than arm’s length away while I played.

**Verdict** ★★☆☆

Baxter easily earns an almost perfect score for me; it has mass appeal and is a must try for all ages — they even have a family day on Sunday afternoons until 5p.m., with pizza and a movie screening. It’s an inexpensive and easy way to let loose any day of the week (don’t miss nerd trivia on Tuesday nights!) with any number of people. If you haven’t made the trip out yet, get a handful of friends on a Wednesday night and do it. Make sure you grab a handful of quarters on your way out, or dollar bills for the quarter machine and be prepared to not take yourself too seriously. If you’ve ever been a child, you won’t regret it!