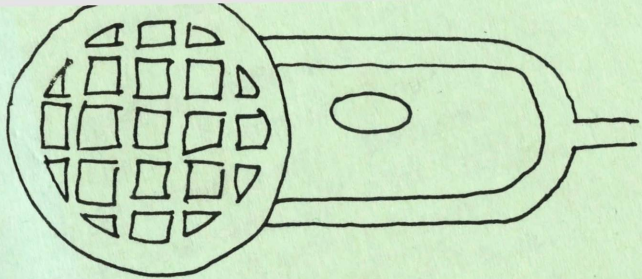


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**THE  
KARAOKE  
ISSUE**



a wee cul-de-sac

wee cul-de-sac #2      May 1999  
the karaoke issue

published by  
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## Why The Karaoke Issue Exists...

Back in September 1998, Liz and I fell into Karaoke Night (at Lounge Ax 2438 N. Lincoln, Chicago, the first Sunday of every month). Now, I knew I always wanted to try karaoke, but I never knew how famous it would make me feel. I get way off on performing on the microphone in front of the wee-somewhat crowd-like crowds at lounge ax. this has become the one reliable pleasure in my life. I can only hope that this zine will give some publicity to karaoke night at lounge ax, so that the tradition may continue and I can live out my pathetic dream of stardom every month.

Wee cul-de-sac-sac's filled the void left by the life pressures that keep Liz and I from putting out life-size cul-de-sacs more often. This issue of cul-de-sac is far more self-indulgent than usual for these reasons: 1)Liz and I took far less time doing it. 2) We are discussing a very specific happening in our lives, but even if you don't practice karaoke (duh, you should be), we think many of the articles will still be applicable to your karaoke-less lives. 3) We love karaoke, and we don't care if you do or not. So here it is: a little writing for less money in less time. It fills our craving to write and hopefully your craving to read, and I'm sure you'll at least be amused by some of this.

Throw your hands in the air if you's a true playa,  
Julie

## KARAOKE ETIQUETTE

### BY JULIE

Throughout my vast karaoke experience, I have picked up these handy rules the should be followed in order to achieve peace in the Karaoke World:

- 1) Always clap and "woo" *before and* after someone goes on. People need encouragement and to know others are listening.
- 2) Do not boo, unless you know the person and they know you are trying to be funny. (Liz and I don't appreciate boos for us in any situation.)
- 3) If someone does the song you planned on doing, bitch a bit, but then quickly choke it up and choose another. Do not jeer at them while they are on stage. (This happened to me when I was doing "Bust a Move." Some guy and his friends were making rude and lewd comments as I rapped and Liz was my fly girl. I confronted one of the less stupid boys and asked why his friend was such a dick. He replied that his friend was planning on doing "Bust a Move," and was bitter because I went first and upstaged him. Poor, jealous soul.)
- 4) If you must leave, do it after a song is over. Leaving during a performance may make the singer feel jilted, prompting them to yell, "I had to sit through yours, you fucking asshole!" through the mic. ♪

## **SETTING THE STAGE**

### **BY LIZ**

At Lounge Ax the karaoke MC dresses up as a different offensive character every week, like Hitler or Jesus, and the week he dressed up as a retarded person they didn't have the stage out by the time it started. So while they were pulling it out and setting it up, he announced, "This next song will be sung by a piece of wood." And that's about the extent of the karaoke stage used. They use this really small one to two person-sized wood thing saddled up next to the sound board. It's probably about 5' x 5'. Sort of like a lady's tee-off platform in golf without any astroturf. They don't use the same stage they use for all the real bands that play at the venue which makes me sad because I can't live up to any amount of rockstarness with such a small stage. At the same time, this small one is nice because you don't feel overwhelmed. Also, I think they use this small stage because the DJ told me that the karaoke set-up they use is this CD-ROM situation wherein the music plays along with the words displayed on the TV screen; it could be the cords don't stretch far enough to the rockstar, real stage. . It's pretty intimate even when it's crowded, because unlike Chinese restaurant karaoke where they frequently have a dance floor, there is none here. What there is though, is a couch directly to the side of the stage in front of the cigarette machine. If you sit there you can see the TV screen with the lyrics, useful for such songs as "Loser" when it would be nice to actually learn what the words in the chorus are: "whoa/open the door/I'm a loser, baby" which I'm intuiting as incorrect, but imaginative enough of the CD manufacturers. ➤



## **Dress for Karaoke Success with Julie**

These helpful fashion tips are embarrassingly specific to indie rockish clubs. For some reasons, both known and unknown, I feel compelled to dress with a particular "market" in mind. There are usually cute indie rock boys at indie rock clubs, but with indie boys it's hard to figure out which way to go. Do I want to look like a rocker? Do I want to look skanky? Do I want to look cute? Ugh. All of this combined with a shirt that won't show sweat rings or prohibit my movement, makes for dressing for karaoke a difficult task. I usually do this: wear some sort of tank top or velvet shirt (neither show sweat), well-thought-out jewelry and pants that make me feel good or a funny skirt. This look combines the three principle questions of indie rock dress and gives the wearer a look that transcends genres. It also gives you an illusive quality, leaving viewers questioning: is she really cool or just some karaoke dork? ♪

**Being on Time  
Vs. Being Fashionable  
by Liz**

The past couple times we've gone we've gotten there a little bit after ten when it starts, so we're pretty much there when it starts. We sign up and when we're called to sing the crowd is only beginning to assemble. It used to be even worse! We'd get there at like 9:30 and sign up so that we were singing right away and there'd be no audience. The crowd gets pretty heavy about 11:30 and tapers off by 1-ish. If we got there around 11 we'd be fashionably late and have a reasonably-sized audience when we're called to sing. The problem with that is that we have to leave early (to get up for work or school Monday morning) which means that we'd spend so little time at the joint that it almost seems pointless to go, especially if we're going home at 12:30! The obvious answer to the whole dilemma is to actually go early and not sign up for an hour or two, but it's hard to not begin to feel antsy. I hate being the opening band. 🐟



YOU SUCK:  
SONGS NEVER TO SING AT KARAOKE  
by Julie

"IN THE GHETTO" By ELVIS PRESLEY

Yeah yeah, Elvis, but this song is slow and long and stupid. Maybe people do it because it's about Chicago, but it's not like anybody that goes to Lounge Ax karaoke has lived in the ghetto anyway. Plus, the rhythm of this song is particularly hard for every single person who sings it, so the song just turns into this uncomfortable jumble where the singer has to keep pausing and waiting until the next verse starts up so that maybe, just maybe, they can find that missing, white boy rhythm.

"PARADISE BY THE DASHBOARD LIGHT" by MEATLOAF

Shut the fuck up already! This song is sooooo awful, and it's, like, 34 minutes long. People love to do this, and during that time I like to go to the toilet. The only time it was ever entertaining (the song, not me going to the toilet. Some may say that's extremely entertaining.) was when the singer and another guy started flailing around on the floor with a folding chair during it. This is the only song that I allow "boos" at, even if you don't know the person singing.

ANY MADONNA SONG

Her voice is way higher than yours, despite what you may think. All of her songs are too long and repetitive to keep an audience's attention for the duration. The only song I would ever attempt of hers is "crazy for You," but it would have to be done in a goofy, sappy way. ♪

## **The Logistics of Accompaniment by Liz**

Last time a very tall man did "The Heat Is On" and three different people told me they thought it was the perfect Huey Lewis song, to which I remembered it was actually a Glenn Frey song. Anyway, instead of a saxophone doing the little interludes, the CD had a musak keyboard that I thought made all the difference in raising the cheese factor. It was excellent! I would like to take this opportunity to point out though, that occasionally the discrepancy between the original and the karaoke accompaniment is so drastically different that it detracts from the performance ("Spice Up Your Life" missed some drum beats and just tripped us up monstrously). Sometimes the version on the CD is all bunk too, like when I did "Fernando" there were vocals already on it. (Why would the manufacturer bother?) I said "Isn't there some button you can press?" to the DJ. Some wise-acre cracked, "You mean to make this good?"

**d e s p e r a t e l y   s e e k i n g   k a r a o k e   b o y**  
**b y   j u l i e**

In Chicago we have The Reader, a fat, phat, free paper to let us know what's up each weekend. Within The Reader is the Missed Connection section, personal ads for those lost beauties you didn't have the nerve to pick up at the time.

There was a notably cute guy at first karaoke I attended at Lounge Ax. I must say there were very few sparks flying between us because most of the sparks that he seemed to have were for himself (such is the life of an indie rock boy). But, being curious as to whether or not the Missed Connections ads ever worked, I decided to place one in search of the Karaoke cutie. The ad said: Lounge Ax Karaoke 9/2. You wore a black Seventeen T-shirt. I sang Barbra's part in "You Don't Bring Me Flowers." Care to be my karaoke partner next month?' (Those words aren't exact, by the way, but there's not much room for flubbing those poetic lines up.)

Every day I called the phone number to check for his message. The ad ran for two weeks: no reply. my assumption is that he just didn't see it because no matter how attached he may have been to a beautiful woman or man, as long as you've got an ounce of intrigue in your body, you'd have to call just to *see*, right? I mean, I'd shit a brick if someone put an ad in that seemed remotely like me (hint to all those loyal cul-de-sac fans). And you can be damn sure I wouldn't be stupid enough to miss it. ♪

## KARAOKE CHARACTERS

BY LIZ

We have seen some real, um, *interesting* individuals on our monthly karaoke excursions. The first time we went Poppy was there. She was this cute waif of a girl that did "Que Sera Sera" and was on so many ludes that after the song was over she continued a cappella. They didn't stop her. They didn't throw her off the stage or even turn off the mic. Perhaps they were amused because she was such a freak. At one point in the evening I heard, "Dude! Call the cops! Poppy's passed out in the toilet!" Sidenote: last night I learned through the karaoke gossip vine that she had alcohol poisoning.

A few times there's been these girls that get there way early and do songs like "Crazy" and "Son of a Preacher Man." They're really serious and they've been practicing for weeks with their voice teachers or something. They pull the list out of your hands and harp down on the clipboard to sign up to sing as soon as it's down. Freaky.

Also once there were these three guys wearing cowboy hats doing "Let's Hear It For the Boy." The problem was that it was too early in the evening for it to be that funny. There weren't enough people there to fully appreciate the surrealism of it all.

In general, I think the successful kareokers understand the multi-faceted, unspoken rule that says: a) it's asinine to do songs that are *cool*, like this Cardigans song that I've actually seen on the list, and b) it's equally asinine to take yourself too seriously. Somehow the wackier the song the better. Karaoke is the only place I actually don't mind embracing that "whoa crazy eighties!!!" foolishness that I usually shun with intellectually non-nostalgic chagrin and announce "I hated it then why would I like it now? The eighties was not that long ago." >

## **Julie's Proudest Karaoke Moments**

- 1) This guy Liz and I went to high school with went up and said "hi" to Liz. He had no idea who I was, but I had a big crush on him when Liz and I were freshmen and he was a senior. I performed Def Leppard's "Photograph" that night. After I sang, the guy came up, put his arm around me and told me I rocked. Then this other dude high-fived me and said I rocked his world.
- 2) I did Tone Loc's "Wild Thing," and at the next month's karaoke, some guy I thought was really cute the last time came up to me and told me how good I was the month before.
- 3) At the first karaoke I ever went to, I fulfilled my dream of singing Barbra's part in "You Don't Bring Me Flowers." I got such a great audience reaction that I couldn't fall asleep the whole night.
- 4) I did "What a feelin,'" and I heard someone say "I've seen her before; she's really good."
- 5) See "Bust a Move" story
- 6) When Ellen (Lounge Ax worker) and I did a duet to "Wanted: Dead or Alive" by BonJovi, and some guy lit a lighter. (OK- he actually *held up* a lighter-- I guess lighting a lighter wouldn't be that thrilling.) We actually harmonized!
- 7) Singing "18 and Life" by Skid Row. It was my first metal number, and it helped me realize that if I really wanted to, I could fulfill my dream of becoming the next Lita Ford! ♪



## **MY PROUDEST KARAOKE MOMENT BY LIZ**

The fourth time we went to karaoke at Lounge Ax I did the Donna Summer version of "MacArthur Park" and brought down the house. Normally 2+ beers is a bad scene for my karaoke talents, because then I can't remember what key the song is in, the screen gets blurry and I can't read the words, like last week when I did "Sound of Music." Somehow this time, however, I made two beers work to my advantage. The magic came together and I hit the high notes, for a rather long interval complete with vibrato. I really enjoyed myself, which I'm beginning to learn is the secret. I think the beer has very little to do with it, now that I think of it. Also, if I get caught up in the "I'm performing" aspect then it doesn't become magical. After the song I got serious applause, and then we immediately made our dramatic "retire while you're still hot"-Michael Jordan exit. The next week I tried to relive the experience with "Hot Stuff" thinking that I was onto something with this Donna Summer business but I just couldn't seem to achieve the same karaoke-Zen state. I was too busy dancing and I missed cues...It just wasn't the same. Ah, my day in the sun. ☀



# **SONGS I'D LIKE TO SEE ON THE KAREOKE LIST**

## **BY LIZ**

We've handed in a few lists for list requests, hoping to see some of our dream songs although one of the lists got lost in a couch before we could hand it in, so we had to compose the list again on the spot from memory. I have picked three things that immediately come to my mind to share, because I feel these requests to be my most pressing. I would really like to see some Corey Hart songs on the list (see CDS issue #2 for the full low down on that one). I don't care what song, even if it's just "Sunglasses At Night." I actually know what he's saying in the chorus. It's "Don't switch the blade/on the guy in shades/oh no," that first line alternating with "Don't masquerade" and "You've got it made." Also, I'd really like to see "Sympathy For the Devil" because I've been working on my Mick Jagger impression that consists of putting my hands on my hips and pointing at people. Arguably the gesture is a little Motown-ish so I have to perfect the posture and facial expression, but it's coming along nicely. The song is a little long and has more than one instrumental part, both real karaoke no-no's, but it's so danceable and people could do the "woo-woo's." I think this interactive audience component compensates for the song's problems. I also think certain Joni Mitchell songs would work well too ("Carey" springs to mind), because I could really Alanis it up and make it funny. ☘

## 'The Hunt for Karaoke

by Julie

When I lived in Melbourne, Australia, I became fixated on singing "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" at a karaoke bar. I had never been to a karaoke bar before, but in my heart I knew it was something I had to do.

My Aussie Boyfriend, Bernie, and I had very close birthdays, and we decided to have a joint karaoke birthday bash. We went out on a hunt for the perfect karaoke bar, but all the ones in Chinatown were super-expensive, private booth-types. After much searching and disappointment, we came upon a place called The Happy Palace. It had a disco floor, and the sign outside said "free karaoke on weekends." We were thrilled and asked the owners if a crowd of ten or so would be OK on a Friday night. They told us yes.

Happy Palace, my ass. When we got there on the birthday eve, they totally screwed us over. After we ate dinner (around 9:00), they told us that they closed at 9:00! Plus, if we wanted to do karaoke it would cost us \$12 each! Weekends, they claimed, were Saturdays and Sundays.

It has now been many months since that karaoke fiasco, and, even though I have since sung that song at karaoke, I still have a void in me, calling out for the perfect partner to be my Mr. Diamond. ♡