

Sing Along with Karaoke

Some say that music soothes the savage beast. While that may be true, karaoke can bring out the animal in even the shiest performer.

Everyone

wants to be in the spotlight, even if it's for just a little while. Through song, we can relieve daily stresses and leave the rat race behind. Therapeutic stress relief aside, singing is just plain fun. It's a great activity to share with families and friends, particularly through mini concerts or group jam sessions.

The Japanese word Karaoke is derive

from two words: Kara, which means "empty", and Oke, short for okesutora, or orchestra. Karaoke entertainment systems provide pre-recorded musical accompaniment of popular songs. In most cases, karaoke performers follow the lyrics on a video screen as the music plays on.

Karaoke music

and parties have fully swept Asia, and is now making a solid presence in North America. Since the first virtual concert machine was introduced in 1970's Japan, karaoke parties have favorite pastimes for music aficionados of all stripes. Karaoke became so popular, the media adopted the term to use on occasions when a live performance was substituted by pre-recorded or "canned" music.

Japanese traditions are rich with

musical elements. This form of entertainment is reflected in Japanese culture, history and mythology. Even Samurais use music, singing and dancing as part of their training and education.

The history of

karaoke can be traced back to the early 1970's, and a singer named Daisuke Inoue. A crowd favorite at a bar called Utagoe Kissa, Inoue was often asked to provide recordings of his music so that fans could sing along. Realizing the potential, Inoue created a tape recorder that played a song for a 100-yen coin. At that time, 100-yen was about the price of two typical lunches, so it was considered expensive to use this new music machine. Even so, the combination of old-time jukebox and future karaoke machine proved to be a huge hit in Japan. Inoue decided that instead of selling the machines, he would lease them so that the stores and bars would not have to purchase new songs on their own.

The invention

proved such an important social success that Daisuke Inoue was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. The basis of his award was for "providing an entirely new way for people to learn to tolerate each other."

"Karaoke

Time" has been a popular form of entertainment in East Asia since the early 1980's. Like a global virus, the karaoke phenomenon spread to other parts of the world. Karaoke's popularity was reaching record highs, and it soon became a very productive industry. Before long, the karaoke craze reached North American shores and took the entire continent by storm.

The

new entertainment import industry flourished in the Western world. Enterprising Americans were quick to see the investment potential in a brand new type of entertainment that provided cool, relaxing fun, as well as bringing people together in a tolerant, patient manner. Karaoke bars

and nightclubs known as "KTV boxes" opened across North America, providing eager would-be performers with fresh new venues, software and equipment.

Since

its inception in the United States and other western countries, people have begun to take karaoke more seriously. American bars are unlikely to have karaoke seven nights a week as they do in East Asia. Many however, have upgraded their equipment from the small, standalone machines that started the craze over two decades ago. Crowds can follow song lyrics on television screens displayed throughout the bars, and some even offer big screen TVs.

The karaoke sensation has also entered our homes. From

inexpensive children's versions to high-end machines, home karaoke systems can be connected to a pre-existing entertainment center and families can join in the fun. Karaoke music can be downloaded from the Internet, and fans can sing along with their computers if they do not have a personal karaoke machine available.

If you've always wanted to be a star,

karaoke is a great way to get your fifteen minutes of fame. Grab the mic and get in tune with the party animal in you!