

"28 Days" refers not to the number of days in party girl Sandra Bullock's cycle, but to the number of days she spends in rehab after ruining her sister's wedding in her latest flick. ... page 8

Rah Rah Digga! Rapper Rah Digga, the First Lady of Busta Rhymes' FlipMode Squad, proves her prowess with her debut album, *Dirty Harriet*. ... page 7

When You Get Tired of Satellite Flying ... You can listen to Angie Aparo's debut album, *The American*. The first single, "Spaceship," is currently climbing up the G105 charts. ... page 7



DIVERSIONS

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Stars of the Bars

Chapel Hill's Karaoke Scene

Karaoke Finds Fans In Chapel Hill Bars

By DANIELE EUBANKS
Assistant Arts & Entertainment Editor

The signs began appearing years ago at bus stops, in bathroom stalls and on UNC campus message boards. Followers responded slowly, huddling around He's Not Here's glowing box on Sunday nights, lifting their voices tentatively in song.

These days, neon fliers proclaiming the message, "Karaoke Night!" are everywhere, and the phenomenon has spread to numerous Chapel Hill bars.

Weekly, Bub O'Malley's, La Hacienda and He's Not Here on the Village Green all draw crowds yearning to follow the bouncing ball and croon before the masses.

Although it has been around since the '70s, karaoke lost much of its popularity in the '90s. Now, like beads and fringe, it's back in a hip, retro kind of way, so *Diversions* hit the bars to find out what the resurgence is all about.

He's Not Here

For many UNC students and Chapel Hill residents, singing karaoke at He's Not Here is a Sunday night tradition.

Last Sunday, around 11 p.m., five girls jostled for a place around a microphone while bellowing in a monotonous cacophony "you gotta know when to hold em, know when to fold 'em."

Bernadette Burton, a UNC senior, sat watching with her friends. "Maybe they shoulda folded," she whispered, chuckling.

A bartender at Woody's Tar Heel Tavern on Franklin Street, Burton has seen her share of drunk people, but only on Sunday nights at He's Not Here does she get to join in the revelry.

She goes early every week with her roommates to stake out their table next to the stage and start drinking. "So we're ready to go when it gets busy."

They keep the

He's Not Here karaoke tradition because they say it is the place to be on Sunday night in Chapel Hill. "It's notorious," she said. "This is a place you come back to when you're alumni."

Burton said karaoke was more fun than just hanging out at a bar and drinking because it facilitates community unity. "People join together and sing along instead of clumping into smaller social groups like in normal bars," she said. "It's an interactive thing - a performance you don't have to pay for - and it's different every time."

Explaining her love for karaoke, Burton said it was simply a fun means of self-expression. "It's like singing in the shower - you can belt out your favorite songs and not worry about sounding perfect," she said.

"Of course, we sound better at the night goes on," she added, taking a swig from her blue cup. Two more cups and she would be ready to sing.

While most women seem to prefer to sing in groups, Ami Warren, another UNC senior, boldly sang an "I Touch Myself" solo.

Warren said years of experience singing karaoke has given her confidence. "My mother's an executive for Sound Toys, and they sell the karaoke CDs, so I got started young," she said.

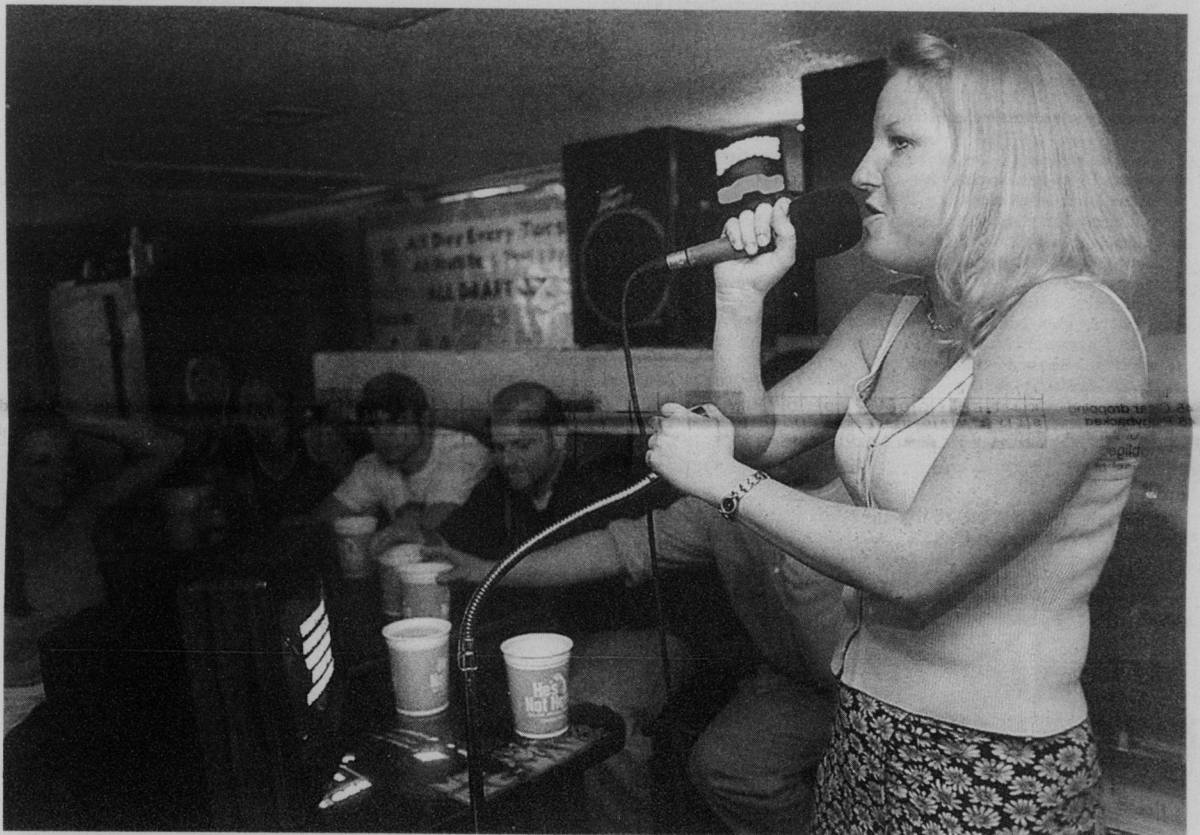
Brad Lesley, a student at N.C. State University, sat in his usual corner booth with his two friends, Greg Moore and Parker Stevens, and watched Warren perform.

Since he comes weekly as a karaoke spectator and sees many packs of women take the stage, Lesley expressed surprise that Warren was singing alone.

"Girls won't come to a place by themselves. They won't go to the bathroom by themselves,"

"They won't do anything by themselves. Guys just don't care," he said

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Ami Warren and her friends come early every Sunday night to He's Not Here for karaoke night. Warren got an early start in karaoke because her mother works for Sound Toys, a company that sells karaoke CDs. The practice paid off in an inspiring performance of "I Touch Myself" on Sunday.

From Japanese Roots to MTV: Karaoke's Creation

Now universal, the karaoke trend has come a long way since its inception in a small bar in Kobe, Japan.

By ALLISON ROST
Staff Writer

For years, generations of hopeful performers sat silent, not knowing how to take a turn in the spotlight. But the invention of a new technology almost 30 years ago changed all that, and the world has never been the same.

Karaoke, the popular entertainment practice of singing along with prerecorded songs, originated in the early 1970s at a snack bar in Kobe City, Japan.

A strolling guitarist regularly appeared at the bar, and when the bar couldn't afford to pay him, the owner played tapes of accompaniments to popular songs. Vocalists enjoyed singing along to the tapes.

The word "karaoke" even emphasizes the fact that there are no recorded lyrics: "kara" comes from "karappo," which means empty, and "oke" comes from "okesutura," which

means orchestra.

Karaoke exploded out of Kobe City to become a Japanese phenomenon. It was invented around the time of great economic prosperity in Japan when people had time to pursue entertainment-related activities, so its popularity increased rapidly.

Jan Bardsley, assistant professor of Japanese language and literature at UNC, said karaoke's immense popularity in Japan could be attributed to the love of singing in the Japanese culture.

"It's a way for people to get up and sing and perform and make fools of themselves," she said.

Bardsley said Japanese karaoke mostly took place in a work environment. Corporations where client relations are important depend on hostess bars to break the ice.

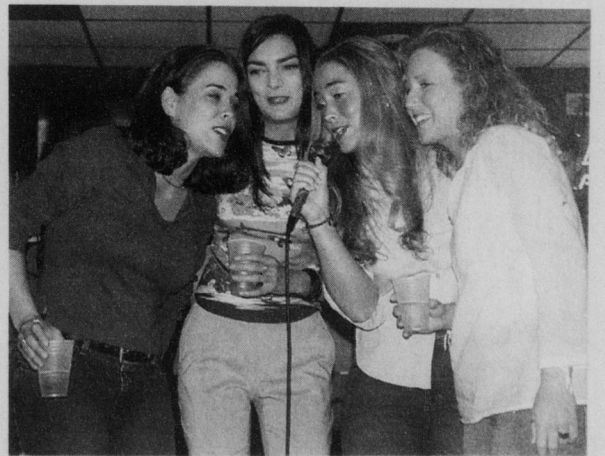
Women working at these hostess bars engage the businessmen in conversation, and being handed a microphone to sing a song isn't uncommon.

In the 1980s many new technologies were developed to enhance the karaoke experience.

At first, karaoke was performed with just the aid of an audio tape, but the advent of the CD made it easy to locate the beginning of a song and allowed for the display lyrics on an accompanying TV monitor.

Karaoke became portable with the marketing of family-use karaoke sets, which became very popular in Japan and elsewhere by extending karaoke from night clubs to the home.

In 1984, entrepreneurs created the



Stephanie Perrin (third from left) and her friends shows their diva sides, hoping to be discovered at Bub O'Malley's on Thursday night.

first karaoke box, a facility with sound-proofed walls for singing. The first box was built in a rice field in the Japanese countryside, fashioned from a converted freight car.

Karaoke boxes are still very popular in Japan, particularly among young people and housewives. They rent the box for a certain period of time and sing along to window-rattling sound systems and massive video screens.

Tour buses in Japan feature screens that come down and show karaoke

videos. The karaoke industry came to the United States in 1988 with the availability of analog tape players with microphones for karaoke use. In 1993, the Super K, which superimposes lyrics on a television set through VHS tape, hit the market.

This led to the development of the Compact Disc & Graphics format, which is a CD-based version of Super K.

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Local Karaoke Bars

Bub O'Malleys - Thursday Night
He's Not Here - Sunday Night
Hacienda - Thursday Night
Doyle's Sports Bar
(Duke) - Saturday