

Singing Between the Lines

Students step up to the mic and live out their rock 'n' roll dreams as karaoke takes College Station's nightlife center stage

By MANISHA PAREKH
 Staff Writer

Many people dream of being a musical superstar and performing in front of a live audience. The reality is most people never exhibit their vocal talents beyond the shower and radio sing-alongs, but there are some places where musical dreams can come true, if only for one night.

On Wednesday and Saturday nights, Bryan-College Station residents have the opportunity to take center stage at local nightclubs by performing karaoke.

Karaoke, which was developed in Japan, involves taking popular songs and recording them without the lead vocals. The tracks are then distributed to nightclubs and

karaoke bars across the country, where patrons have the chance to belt out their favorite songs in front of the entire club.

Needless to say, karaoke is not for the faint of heart.

Andrea Spence, a junior marketing major, said the karaoke nights at Bullwinkles and Shadow Canyon are a great way to have a few laughs.

"I think it's hilarious," Spence said. "I think that everyone has a lot of confidence to get up there [on stage]. Especially the ones who think that they can sing well, but their friends haven't told them the truth."

Spence, a self-proclaimed "regular" at Bullwinkles' karaoke nights, said she has sung there several times.

"Once I sang 'I Will Survive'

and another time I sang 'Hard to Handle' by the Black Crowes," Spence said. "That was interesting because I had to change all the 'hers' [in the song] to 'hims.' It was great."

Scott Cavendish, a senior mechanical engineering major, said the crowd at Shadow Canyon was enthusiastic about karaoke.

"It was very happy and fun," he said. "There were a lot of intoxicated people who wanted to get out of the crowd and into the spotlight."

Cavendish also commented about some of the singers at karaoke night.

"There were a few talented people," he said. "But there were quite a few shower singers who weren't in the shower anymore."

Jessica Brenner, an incoming biomedical science major, said

the crowds at karaoke performances encourage the singers.

"Everyone is singing along trying to encourage them," she said. "My favorite is when people would get up there and sing crazy songs and not try to sound good. People are not embarrassed to get up there."

Although Brenner has sang at karaoke nights in Beaumont, she was unable to sing at Bullwinkles' karaoke night.

"We thought about singing, but the line was too long," she said. "I would have loved to sing because it is so much fun to get up there and get crazy. I've sang 'Elvira' and 'Strawberry Wine.' It was just a whole lot of goofy stuff."

The popularity of karaoke nights can mean big crowds for local establishments.

Cavendish also was unable to

sing at Shadow Canyon's karaoke night because there were a lot of people ahead of him.

"I wanted to sing 'Black Water' by the Doobie Brothers because it's a song that I would not mind subjecting people to," he said.

Though both businesses offer karaoke nights, each one gives the evenings a unique spin.

Spence said there is a difference between the atmospheres at Bullwinkles and Shadow Canyon.

"Shadow Canyon has a country/western atmosphere, even with karaoke. But it's a lot less crowded because it's so much bigger," she said. "I like Bullwinkles because there is a lot more group participation and sing-alongs. There are a lot more people paying attention to you, and they are very supportive."

Charlie Cain, general manager and part owner of Bullwinkles, said the patrons have been very enthusiastic about karaoke.

"We started karaoke in 1991 just to offer the town something more to do than just go out at night," Cain said. "A lot of people just come for karaoke night, and we have a lot of regulars."

Cain said Bullwinkles has a list of over 800 songs for patrons to choose from on the Wednesday and Saturday karaoke nights. Shadow Canyon features karaoke on Wednesday night.

But Spence said two nights of karaoke a week are not enough to showcase her talent.

"I'm amazing," she said. "I'm going to get discovered at Bullwinkles. That's why I go every week."



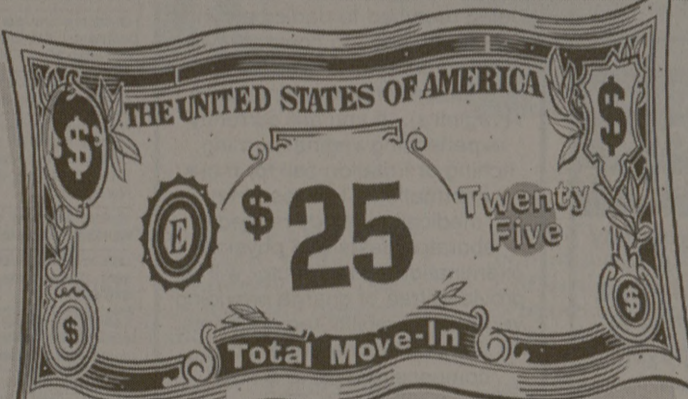
PHOTOS BY RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION



Top: A student duet croons a thoughtful version of Third Eye Blind's "Semi-Charmed Life," while the lyrics appear on the screen behind them.


Middle: Five United States Department of Agriculture workers, in town for a three-week course at Texas A&M, take a break Wednesday night to sing a few songs for the college crowd.

Bottom: Becky Kessler, a sophomore English major at Blinn College, belts out Jewel's "Foolish Games" to the back row on karaoke night at a local establishment.



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