

Okay for KARAOKE?

Those who saw the tender romantic comedy, 'My Best Friend's Wedding' will remember the memorable karaoke bar scene: Delicious Carmen Diaz struggling valiantly through the lines of an old Motown classic, "I just don't know what to do with myself," with no help at all from her hopelessly out-of-tune vocal chords.

Movie magic.

Of course you can do better than that.

Explains the queue outside, when you're singing in the shower.

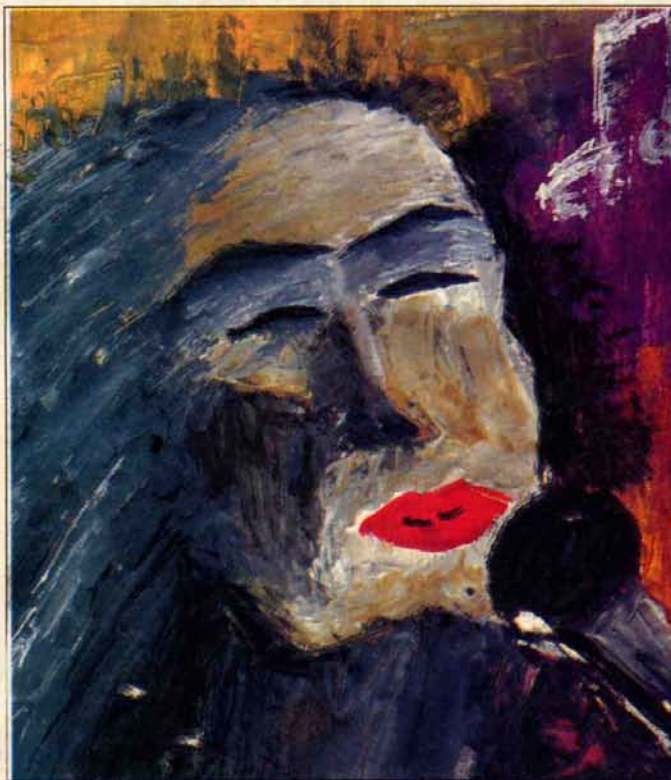
You don't mind being centre stage, and would grab the mike as eagerly as you do your monthly paycheck. Well there is the perfect place for you to exhibit that talent for harmony. Let it flow forth at the karaoke bar.

Entertainment at one of these bars—Radha Park Inn and The Mowbrays Inn both have the facility—begins once you choose a song from the book provided, and sing along with the lyrics that have been superimposed on a video of a track that comes without the lead vocals.

"For most people, karaoke bars are a form of relaxing at the end of a tiring day" explains Anbu Anand, a joint partner in Ande Entertainment, responsible for organising the Sing-A-Long Music Lounge at Radha Park Inn, that started four months ago.

"The concept is very popular in places like Singapore and the Phillipines. My partner Deepak Ramasamy used it in his MBA project at AIM, and we decided to introduce it in Chennai where there is little to do after 7.00pm—apart from the usual discos, amusement parks, restaurants and clubs."

Ande Entertainment started off on an experimental basis. Testing the market for two weeks, they found that "the kids just loved it." Now their collection has 1,000 songs, 800 of which are in English. The rest are in Hindi and Tamil.



Illustration/ Amit

*There are bars for those who
don't need a few quick ones to
burst into song*

They have hired three rooms at Radha Park Inn which Anbu says they plan to do up, and "we'll expand our music collection, soundproof the place... LDs in regional dialects are difficult to come by though."

A minimum of four people can use the music lounge—which accommodates from 60-80 people. The LD's have been imported from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, and

Chennai-based Stereo Vision has provided the equipment which has been manufactured in India.

Anbu says that they most of the hotels they approached with the concept were unaware of what it was all about. "The response has been enthusiastic though. On the very first day we received 120 phone calls."

The customer profile: upper middle-class young-

sters who freak out on Smokey's 'Living next door to Alice' and foreigners. "Corporate types fix up dates on Saturdays, just to relax."

Several parties have been organised in the room allowing participants to go wild at the mike.

Siddharth Krishnamurthi and Sanjay Chabbria, the people behind 'After Dark'—the Sindoori Hotel's popular discotheque—got the idea of starting the Mowbrays Inn Karaoke Bar while they were drinking soju at a Korean Restaurant that had the karaoke facility. The Karaoke Bar which caters to all age groups, consists a long narrow room used as a conference hall in the mornings.

Siddharth: "We believe that deep down inside everyone is a rockstar waiting to be set free. They can come on out at the karaoke bar.

"The atmosphere here is purposely casual. People who love music and want to have a night out, but don't want to go disco dancing can come here. We have readied a small dance floor for those who do. But most of the people who come here prefer to sing."

Weekends are crowded at the K Bar which is only advertised at the Sindoori. DJ's Rohit and Rody play the songs from the visible DJ's box. "People normally stay here for 1-1 1/2 hours. Songs—they have over 650—played are in English, on imported equipment consisting two cordless and two corded mikes, C-audio amplifiers, wharf tale speakers, Audio technical mikes, a Pioneer LD player, an LCD data projector and a 90cm screen.

Both bars have a long way to go in terms of interior decoration lighting and even technology, but its a start.

On the right note.

(The Sing-A-Long Lounge is open Tuesday to Friday from 6pm to 2am, and on weekends from 11am to 2am. Cost: Rs 60 per head, per hour. The Karaoke Bar is open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, from 9pm to 2.30am. Sundays are free for women. Entry is priced at Rs 250 per couple. No admission for stags.)