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# Portland to rock with new karaoke lounge in NW PDX!



## *Voicebox* to offer the ultimate karaoke experience – private rooms

Sound familiar? You've waited hours to sing, and they still haven't called your name (despite the generous tip you laid on the KJ). And when they call your name, it's only once during the entire evening. There is a solution. *You need your own box!*

Portland's all-new Voicebox Karaoke Lounge – opening October 17 in Northwest Portland – will feature Asian-style boxes (private rooms), where you can push those vocal chords to their limit *as often and as much you want*. Invite family and friends for an instant party. Meet co-workers after work and belt out a few tunes. Or add octane to a night out on the town. *Dinner, a movie and karaoke, anyone?* Long the rage in Southeast Asia, karaoke boxes make any get-together a special occasion.

Available by the hour, Voicebox's private rooms are each equipped with its own state-of-the-art playback and sound system. There's no KJs to deal with or tip. *You* control the music, the mic and who gets in! Just make your song selections from Voicebox's playlist of over 20,000 songs (in multiple languages), enter the codes into a remote control, and let it rip.

Need refueling? Use your remote to hail a waiter and order from Voicebox's tasty selection of Asian snacks – including steamed dumplings with wild dipping sauces, vinegared tofu bites, shredded squid jerky, and steamed edamame. Thirsty? Choose from a range of quality sakes (including Oregon's own acclaimed [SakeOne](#)), micro and imported beers, and wines by the glass, as well as soft drinks.

Voicebox's modern industrial environment, accented with Japanese pop influences, includes a central bar and six boxes of varying sizes – each with its own soothing color palette accented by an impressionistic overlay of traditional Japanese crests. The furnishings will be a combination of custom built-in cushy benches and contemporary couches, along with ottomans that roll out of the way to expose the dance floor.

“It will be as if we turned your living room into your own personal nightclub,” says founder Scott Simon, a 31-year-old former Silicon Valley hardware engineer and self-proclaimed karaoke fanatic who has spent over a year developing Voicebox, inspired by visits to such global hotspots as Korea, Australia, and Thailand.

Simon first discovered karaoke boxes while working on the core team at Cisco Systems that played a leading role in the development of what would become the ubiquitous wireless Internet. During a business trip to Seoul, he met three locals who had just returned from a year in Vancouver, B.C.. They insisted on showing him what karaoke is like in Korea, and led him through a maze of narrow alleys where tourists rarely venture. “It was astonishing. Everywhere you looked, it was neon, lights and a mob of people. There were even bars five stories high,” he says.

While at Cisco, Simon would often drive up to San Francisco to meet up with friends at [Do Re Mi](#), a private room karaoke club in Japantown. “We always had such a good time. We would sing for birthdays, going away parties, whatever. We loved it! That's when it became obvious to me how cool this was. What I didn't realize was how much I would miss it.”

After six years of life in a cubicle (despite loving engineering and the work he was doing at Cisco), Simon left his job three years ago and began travelling the world, staying in hostels as much as possible to save money. Along the way, he fed his karaoke habit by stopping off at local boxes and bars – many of them in such unlikely places as the Mongolian Gobi Desert, where a small Soviet-built shack was, amazingly, equipped with the necessary apparatus.

Last summer, nine months after settling in Portland, Simon wanted to take some friends out for the evening, but couldn't find a private-room karaoke box. "That's when the wheels started turning in my head. I had always dreamed of owning my own business, but this time the situation finally felt right." So he developed a business plan, scrapped together the money, then spent months trying to find the right location.

The motivation behind Voicebox, he says, has always been to give people an opportunity to experience what karaoke has brought to his own life. "Singing in a karaoke box is a simultaneous expression of your individuality and your strongest relationships. When friends sing together, it's special. People form really strong bonds in that space. It's freeing, intimate and exhausting fun!" he says.

Voicebox is located at 2112 NW Hoyt, just off NW 21<sup>st</sup> and within a half block of the Cinema 21. Advance reservations are recommended. Hourly room rates begin at \$35 for the first five people (food and beverage not included). Drop-ins for drinking and dining only are also welcome. Hours: 1 pm – 2:30 am, Friday / Saturday. 4 pm – 2:30 am weeknights. Closed Mondays. Minors welcome until 9 pm, as long as no alcoholic beverages are not present in the same room. The entire facility can also be reserved for office parties, team building, fundraisers, anniversaries and birthdays. For more information prior to opening, send an email to [Info@VoiceboxPDX.com](mailto:Info@VoiceboxPDX.com).

### About Karaoke...

Karaoke – which translated means “empty orchestra” – was inadvertently invented in 1971 in Japan by Daisuke Inoue, who sang professionally at a bar called Utagoe Kissa. As the story goes, he was often asked to provide recordings of his music so that fans could sing along, so he created a tape recorder that played a song for 100-yen and leased it out to businesses.

So profound has been the impact of his device that *Time Asia* magazine included Inoue in its list of the 100 most influential Asians of the century. “It's time to praise (and occasionally curse) the muse of a million cocktail lounges, the genius who gave voice to the common man in the 20th century... Signs for "karaoke nights" now appear outside mom-and-pop stalls in Third World villages and on the glittery billboard of the Hollywood Park Casino in California. Global icons practice it in films like 'My Best Friend's Wedding,' and steelworkers howl away in English towns, where 'carry-okie' sounds like a cousin of 'cash 'n' carry.' Religious figures have been heard to say that karaoke is as essential to the soul as tai chi, and 53 million Japanese alone have inflicted their voices on the world. Even in a city like Phnom Penh you can sing everything from 'O Sole Mio' to 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.'”

Indeed, it's hard to imagine where pop culture would be today without karaoke. *Wired* magazine summed it up in late 2006: “Over the past 35 years, karaoke has evolved from fad to punch line to lucrative

business to global phenomenon. It has become one of the truly universal cultural institutions on the planet – like soccer or pornography. No matter where you go, it seems, everybody speaks a little Whitney. There are now dedicated karaoke cable channels, ringtones, MP3s, and iPod accessories. YouTube hosts more than 15,000 karaoke clips, most of which seem to feature aspiring Kelly Clarksons singing to a videocam.”

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