songs I’d never heard in a language I knew just well enough 21 years ago to get a 3 out of 5 on the AP test. Anyway, it was great. It was a very unexpected heightening of what I love about karaoke in the first place, which is that it forces me out on a limb. Now, I am not an adrenaline junkie. I will never skydive or bungee jump or be a Tough Mudder. But to go up on a stage in front of strangers, mic in hand, ready to sing but not sure at all what’s about to happen, is one of the great pleasures of my life. I forget myself in those moments. I get out of my head – the place where I otherwise seem to live 24/7/365. I've sung with good ol' boys in North Carolina and with strippers in Portland. I've sung in front of a tight, professional, five-piece band, and I've sung along with crummy MIDI tracks that sound like they were generated on an Atari 2600. I've sung in private rooms with friends, and in packed bars where I didn’t know a soul. But each and every time I take hold of a microphone, I feel that same sense of queasy excitement – the knowledge that I am delightfully ill-prepared for what is about to happen, and that everything could go wrong, but I am gonna feel so good while it’s happening.

And it’s not just me. Singing is, literally, good for you. In her book *Imperfect Harmony: Finding Happiness While Singing With Others*, Stacy Horn notes that singing causes the body to release endorphins and serotonin. One study even suggests that singing helps the body generate prolactin, the chemical that provides...
When do I get to sing? Only a very tiny percentage of Americans – as little as .0001% – are rock and roll stars who sing every night before adoring crowds, and even fewer are Broadway ingénues. Some larger percentage of us sing regularly in church choirs or choral societies or amateur garage bands. Even a larger percentage seize the opportunity of having children to sing lullabies, or amateur garage bands. Some even larger percentage of us sing regularly in church choirs or choral societies who sing every night before adoring crowds, and even as little as .0001%! – are rock and roll stars who get to sing? Only a very tiny percentage of us sing regularly in church choirs or choral societies who sing every night before adoring crowds, and even as little as .0001%!

Kevin Fischer and Wendy Christensen celebrate cheating death with a duet on “I Love It” for the 746th consecutive time.

singers whom I would never ask to stop screaming in my face.

3. my adorable children, who are of course amazing singers behind her. It was a pure performative moment: a song sung as a matter of survival, chosen without pretext or dick-measuring intent, picked by friends for a friend with the specific intent of giving her a good time. It’s that feeling of unfettered pleasure I’m attempting to recreate – or at least interrogate – in SCARYOKE!!!

Depending on which of our singing environments you choose – the private shower, the semi-public car, or the karaoke stage – other visitors will be able to see you a little, a lot, or not at all. You can sing by yourself or with a friend or a group of friends or however many strangers you can stuff into the shower with you. With the help of John Brophy, KJ and creator of Baby Ketten Karaoke in Portland, I’ve chosen 15 tracks specifically for the different challenges they offer singers. There’s classic rock, hip-hop, contemporary pop, indie rock, punk, country, and more. Songs range from 7-minute epics to an under-three-minute nugget of pop perfection. You won’t know what song is going to start playing when you press that button. But they’re all fun to sing – that’s my guarantee as your friend.

And as your friend I’m also urging you forward, even though you’re nervous. You’ve never sung in front of many strangers you can stuff into the shower with you. With the help of John Brophy, KJ and creator of Baby Ketten Karaoke in Portland, I’ve chosen 15 tracks specifically for the different challenges they offer singers. There’s classic rock, hip-hop, contemporary pop, indie rock, punk, country, and more. Songs range from 7-minute epics to an under-three-minute nugget of pop perfection. You won’t know what song is going to start playing when you press that button. But they’re all fun to sing – that’s my guarantee as your friend.

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