

Shmanners 170: Karaoke

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Travis: Hey, it's me, your friend Carrie! Do you wanna go sing in a bar tonight?

Teresa: Carrie, okay!

Travis: It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, Internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Dear.

Travis: Hello.

Teresa: [laughing] Hello.

Travis: Uh, and of course, joining us in studio is our special guest, Bebe Lee McElroy, who we thought—

Teresa: Can't hear.

Travis: We thought we had her set up to watch TV, and then she hopped out of her chair, and now she's just running over and staring at us as we record.

Teresa: [laughs] But she still has her headphones on, so she can't—

Travis: Still got her headphones on.

Teresa: She can't hear us talking about her.

Travis: Yes, or else she probably would've talked by now. How's every—hey, how is everybody?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Out there? Getting ready for the holiday weekend, here in the US of A. we've started doing this series of episodes about like, evenings out—

Teresa: [laughs] 'Cause we don't go anywhere anymore.

Travis: No fun evenings out. Oh, Mylanta. Feeling great, doing great, looking great. Achieve it, believe it, and... 'sneeve' it.

Teresa: I thought you were gonna say "sneeze it."

Travis: And sneeze it. So, uh, I have been going to karaoke. I have been sneaking into bars to do karaoke since I was 15.

Teresa: Oh my gosh.

Travis: A Dickensian waif. [British accent] "Please, sir, might I sing some Journey?" Sneaking in to karaoke bars. Uh, I've been... so that's, what, 20 years? 2 decades, I've been doing karaoke. I've competed in karaoke competitions. I've done private rooms. I've done, uh, stages.

Teresa: Open bar.

Travis: I've done live band karaoke. I love it. Teresa and I, for a long time, for the first like, two, three years of our relationship, went to karaoke I would say three weeks out of four.

Teresa: Yeah, we had a pretty, uh, long-standing karaoke date.

Travis: Yes. And then, you know, our friend group shifted as people, you know, settled down, us included, and we stopped going to karaoke as much. That said, still do it from time to time.

Teresa: And then we found a nice karaoke place in LA, too, when we moved out there.

Travis: Yes, that's true. I love that place, went there. It was just a hop a skip and a jump away from our apartment, so we hopped, skipped, and jumped there all the time. Uh, now—

Teresa: I didn't actually start doing karaoke until college, um, because even though... well, you know? Actually, I think had I had the chance, I would've done it, but I wasn't able to sneak into bars, or it never occurred to me to sneak into a bar when I was underage.

Travis: I wasn't sneaking in to drink, mind you.

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: Yeah. I was just going in and ha—I—I say "sneaking." I walked a bar—

Teresa: You did your illegal drinking at home.

Travis: Mm-hmm. I walked into bars and hoped nobody kicked me out is, I think, a better way to put it.

Teresa: I feel like by the time I was going to bars, they were checking IDs at the door.

Travis: Yeah, well see, that's the thing is a lot of the bars, like at least in Huntington, they'd check IDs on the weekends, but karaoke tends to be on off nights.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: So like, you go in on a Tuesday, and nobody's checking IDs on a Tuesday, there's 10 people there! That's another—much like trivia, which we talked about last week, karaoke, at least here in the states, is designed to be like, "How do we

get people to come to the bar on days when people do not normally come to bars?"

Teresa: Yes, indeed.

Travis: And so that is where karaoke comes in. Now, I would say that the different—uh, the only exception to that of my recent experience is Northside Tavern, here in Cincinnati, will... not regularly, but often, do live band karaoke on Saturdays.

Teresa: And that is an event.

Travis: Yes. I think that is much more of an event. Um, limited slots compared to normal karaoke. It's like, three rounds of 10?

Teresa: Yeah, because when you have a live band playing, they—you know, they're not machines. They need breaks.

Travis: That is true. Unless the—

Teresa: They can't play all night.

Travis: Unless the live band is Rock-afire Explosion, at which point they are machines, and a band.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: All right. So, we're gonna talk so much about like, karaoke and stuff, but let's start a little bit with the history. Now, I'm gonna guess, Japan.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Well, okay.

Travis: Wha—

Teresa: Well...

Travis: Well?

Teresa: So, it probably... karaoke as a phenomenon, yes, Japan. It is not, as some would say, Japanese for "tone deaf," which I had heard in several TV sitcoms. It is a portmanteau, actually, of kara, or "empty," sometimes translated as "ghost—"

Travis: Is it "empty voice?"

Teresa: No. Oke, or "orchestra."

Travis: Ahh, so just the music.

Teresa: Yeah, just the music. I've heard it—I've heard it translated "ghost orchestra."

Travis: Oh, I like that too.

Teresa: I really like that. I think that that—that definitely, um, evokes something different from "empty orchestra."

Travis: Can I talk about why I love karaoke for a minute? I know I told you to talk about the history, but can I tell you why I love it?

Teresa: Side-eye. Sure.

Travis: Okay. So, here's the thing. Many people mistakenly believe that karaoke is about singing. This is not true. Karaoke is about performance. I have known many people who, if they auditioned for a musical or tried to launch a singing career, would fail miserably, but get them on a karaoke stage where everybody is supposed to be like, a dynamic front person, and it's just gettin' the crowd on board, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So it's not about—it's not American Idol, right? It is just, like, America's Got Talent. It's just—

Teresa: It's "Give 'em the ol' razzle dazzle."

Travis: Right! That's the thing is I am an okay to mediocre singer, but I am a great performer.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And so that's—well, you didn't have to agree that quickly, but okay.

Teresa: You are a great performer!

Travis: Okay, you were agreeing with that part, not the medi—okay, great. But like, you know, for me, it's that I really love getting a crowd on my side? I like performing. And a lot of people—I've heard a lot of people say like, "I don't wanna do karaoke, I can't sing." It's fine. That's fine! You don't have to sing. Just go and have a great time. Okay.

Teresa: So, like I said, karaoke specifically, yes, is Japanese in origin, but singalong type events have been happening for a very long time, um, and canned music, or just like the track without the vocals, probably actually became a social event in the Philippines, about a decade earlier.

Um, the machines were invented by a musician. I'm going to really do my best here, but, you know—

Travis: Just run at it.

Teresa: Okay. Daisuke Inoue.

Travis: Okay! I don't have any reason the believe that that's not correct.

Teresa: Um, in 1971. So, he—

Travis: Man, that's so much more recent than I—I mean, I guess that's true.

Teresa: The machine.

Travis: The technology, yeah.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I'm sure that there were people singing as music played with like, a paper printout of words.

Teresa: Certainly. I mean—and like I said, in the Philippines, you—there's documentation of probably in the mid 50s early 60s of social events, especially like, television shows that were billed as singalongs, which also happened in the US.

Travis: Man, that's the thing that doesn't happen anymore. "Follow the bouncing ball?"

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: No one does that anymore.

Teresa: No one does that anymore.

Travis: No. Mickey Mouse Club used to do that all the time.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: Both the original and, I believe, the new generation in the 90s.

Teresa: So, um, he was a musician and he would play drums in a band that would accompany bar patrons. So like, you know, live band karaoke, as they say. Um, but he created the machine to play for him when he couldn't or didn't want to play. Um, and he started with just 11 machines, and he started leasing them to local businesses so that—I mean, this is a—this is genius, right?

Travis: I bet he made bank.

Teresa: Uh... no.

Travis: No?!

Teresa: We'll get to that.

Travis: Oh... bummer.

Teresa: Um, and by the 80s, um, karaoke was in—in every, like, every high street of Japan, right? Because every—every community had their own bars, and every bar had a karaoke machine, and it was like, everywhere. But America's—sorry, the US's first karaoke bar opened in LA in 1982.

Travis: I'm not surprised by that. I mean, I'm surprised by 1982, but I'm not surprised by it being in LA.

Teresa: Well, I mean, it was like, the first like, actual "We are a karaoke bar."

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I'm certain that karaoke was being done, like, you know, everywhere.

Travis: Yes. Absolutely.

Teresa: Um, here's the thing. He never patented the machine.

Travis: Oh, no! You got—TM, TM, TM! You gotta patent!

Teresa: TM, TM. Yeah, I mean... in order to—to patent something like that, you have to be aware of the whole thing, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: He basically just wanted to... he wanted to make some extra dough, be in more than one place at once, right? With his machines—

Travis: But he didn't see—he didn't think, like, "This is the new wave of this."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Ugh...

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: What a bummer!

Teresa: Yeah... um—

Travis: Man, I'm glad we're talking about him now, though, 'cause he deserves some retroactive credit.

Teresa: Well, he did—he did eventually get credit.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: So, in 1999, Time Magazine named him one of the most influential Asians of the century.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: Very cool. And in 2004, he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Um—

Travis: For karaoke?!

Teresa: For—[laughs] this is—this is what the master of ceremonies said. "An entirely new way for people to learn to tolerate each other."

Travis: Yes! Oh my God—wait, karaoke won a Nobel Peace Prize?

Teresa: Yes. Well, the—

Travis: Karaoke—

Teresa: The inventor of the karaoke machine.

Travis: Teresa. Karaoke won a Nobel Peace Prize. What a world!

Teresa: What a world.

Travis: What a world we live in! I'm so excited! See? I told you, karaoke is good, and brings people together.

Hey folks, quick correction there. We said the Nobel Prize. It was the Ig Nobel Prize, which is a parody of the Nobel Prizes, so a much different thing. Uh, still... still cool, just a different thing. Now, back to the show!

Teresa: Um, so then, the things that you need to have now for karaoke...

Travis: Mm-hmm. Bebe, do you like karaoke?

Bebe: Yeah.

Travis: Okay, there we go. You heard it hear first, folks!

Teresa: Is, um, you need to have—

[mic thumping]

Travis: [laughing] Don't grab the microphone! [distantly] Go back to watching TV, you monster. Okay.

Teresa: Uh, not only do you need to have the canned music, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: You also need to have some sort of screen, or lyric sheet, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, and you need obviously the mic hookup and the speakers, and all of this kind of like, amassed over time. That's not how it originally started. Um, it was probably just cassette tapes, um, where the same—

Travis: With no—with no singing.

Teresa: Right. One side probably had the lyrics, the other side probably didn't, and that's—that's pretty much the way that my at home karaoke machine works.

Travis: This is the one of the reasons I'm fascinated by karaoke, is that, like you said, 1982, right? I was born in 1983, so my lifetime—karaoke, as being popularized in the US, is only one year older than me, so I have seen, in my life, the evolution of Ameri—like you—sorry, I keep saying America. There's a lot more places in American than just the US. In the US, 'cause that's all I can speak to, I have grown up watching karaoke grow up, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: From like, printed out on a piece of paper, singing along to a—singing along to a cassette tape, right? To then on CD, right? With a printed out piece of paper, to then CD with it on a screen, to then blow the whole thing wide open, just connecting a computer—

Teresa: Yeah, digital files.

Travis: To your karaoke—now, I—I remember going to karaoke bars and the book was like, 20 pages, 'cause it was the CDs that the karaoke DJ brought with them, right? To then, basically—the place that we loved in LA, the DJ was like, "Name a song." And it, like—there was no—basically, there was no book. The book was there to give you ideas, but you could just walk right up, write down any song, and they could look it up on the internet and play that immediately.

Teresa: Yes. Yes. The—the possibilities, now. They're endless.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: Because that's also the other thing. The turnaround... 'cause it also used to be that if you wanted to sing a song that you heard on the radio, you had to wait for that karaoke CD to be published, and now the turnaround can be like, you heard a song that just came out today. Tomorrow, you're singing it at karaoke.

Teresa: Well, and—the early karaoke machines—I mean, I have one from the 90s.

Travis: Yes, Bebe likes to play with it.

Teresa: She does. Uh, you—you have the option of separating out the hertz frequencies so that you can dial down, and it creates almost like a shadow of the voice?

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: It doesn't get rid of the voice completely, but it does really turn it down so that if you turn the mic sound up, your voice pretty much replaces that voice.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Um, and that's how you can make karaoke with—with the cassettes that still had the voice on it.

Travis: I would also to, as long we're talking about karaoke technology, I wanna throw a little bit of credit also to Rock Band and Guitar Hero.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Where that was a, like, karaoke for instruments, and in the case of Rock Band, for singing, that I think probably... a whole new generation of people, like, had a new karaoke experience in their home where they could like, karaoke with instruments and sing along and play the whole band with their friends.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Anyways, I love Rock Band. Okay. I love—I love karaoke! I love performing.

Teresa: Um, that's—there were some... some patent problems in the 80s, and some of them still continue today. So like I mentioned, in the Philippines, um, this was kind of a concurrent timeline, right? As far as like, the idea of singalong. Um, there's a machine called the Minus One.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which makes sense, because it's...

Travis: You remove one voice.

Teresa: You remove one—you remove the voice, you remove one something. Um, that was developed in the Philippines, which is, I mean, basically the same thing as a karaoke machine, the kind that, you know, you would have in your home.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, and so there were some—some patent suits. There were some, you know, court cases that have resulted in the ownership of the idea. Um, but like,

nowadays, I feel like, like you said, the—the digital experience of karaoke has really made the karaoke machine obsolete.

Travis: Yes. Now you can basically do it, like, with a regular sound system and a computer.

Teresa: Yep. Yeah.

Travis: Which is good?

Teresa: I guess.

Travis: I mean, that's the thing, 'cause this is very similar, I think, to how we talked about trivia last week, which is like, now it's a thing that has exploded and is all over the place. But I will also say, as someone who has performed karaoke in countless bars all over this world, that like, some places are amazing for it, and some places are terrible for it, and if you go to a place that's terrible for it and that's your first experience, you're that much less likely to wanna do it again, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, I've gone to Tokyo Kitty here in Cincinnati, which is a private room karaoke place.

Teresa: Which we'll talk about, is—is a little different from open bar karaoke.

Travis: Right, and I've also—I think you and I and some Dayton friends went to like, a Dayton bar that was like, a restaurant, that like, moved a table and set up a microphone while everyone was trying to eat dinner, and it was terrible!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It was one of the worst, like—I had fun with you, but it was one of the most, like, least conducive karaoke experiences I've ever experienced.

Teresa: Yeah, 'cause I mean, if you're gonna set up in front of an audience, you want the audience to watch, right?

Travis: [distantly] Right.

Teresa: [laughs] Not eat.

Travis: Like I said, it's—it's performing, right? And if the audience is like, "I don't like that you're here!" It's not good performing!

Teresa: So, that brings up a good point. Um, the KJ, or the Karaoke Jockey, is often more host than, um, than, you know, audio engineer, at this point. Um—

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: 'Scuse me one second. I need to help my daughter. Teresa, please, keep talking!

Teresa: [laughs] And—and so when you have the situation of an audience in a bar—

Bebe: [babbling]

Teresa: Um, in—in like an open scenario—

Bebe: No, no.

Teresa: —it really falls to the KJ to—to keep the crowd involved, um, because like you said, it's about the performance, and sometimes the KJ can really help amp that up. Now, when you're in private room karaoke, a lot of the places it's just an interface, right? Like a computer interface.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, you don't—

Travis: And at Tokyo Kitty, there's even a robotic server that brings drinks to you in a special tray that lowers from the ceiling. [excitedly] It's really cool!

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so it's a little more up to you to create the atmosphere in a private room situation, but hopefully if you're in a private room, that's all your friends anyway, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm, yes.

Teresa: So you—you have a little more, uh, familiarity with the situation.

Travis: Um, you know what? We have so many questions that we're gonna talk about, but first, how about a thank you note?

[theme music plays]

Travis: We would like to give a special thank you note to... we have a Jumbotron this week, been a while. We want you to join in as Connor, Kirsten, Kyle, and Nick answer listener questions, would you rather, and hypotheticals. How do they manage to jump from topic to topic? That's easy, with an awkward segway! So that's the name of the podca—is Awkward Segway, is the name—

Teresa: I got it, yeah.

Travis: Okay, you got it?

Teresa: You really punched it.

Travis: Okay. So it's S-E-G-W-A, right? Segway. Look for—

Teresa: A-Y.

Travis: A-Y. Yes, that's what I meant.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: S-E-G-W-A-Y. Look for Awkward Segway on iTunes or almost anywhere else podcasts are found, and subscribe! Do it! Awkward Segway.

[music plays]

Speaker One: I listen to Reading Glasses because Brea and Mallory have great tips!

Mallory: You're a comics reader and you wanna use a library connected app. You can try out Hoopla.

Speaker Two: I listen for the author interviews.

Speaker Three: I'm mad at myself that I waited as long as I did to start reading Joan Didion.

Speaker Four: They give me reading advice I didn't even know I needed!

Brea: If you go in person to an event and go up to an author or a filmmaker or anybody and tell them what you don't like about their work, you're a trash baby.

Speaker Five: I—look. I understand you didn't like Heroes Season Three, that's fine.

Brea and Mallory: [laughs]

Speaker Five: I like—I don't actually need to know that information?

Brea: I'm Brea Grant.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory O'Meara.

Brea: We're Reading Glasses, and we solve all your bookish problems, every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[music plays]

Travis: We have so many questions. This might be, uh, right up there with like, our topmost questioned topics.

Teresa: Noice.

Travis: All right, are we ready?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Let's do this. Uh, this is from Kit.

"When doing private room karaoke, what do you do if someone else picks a song that you also wanted to sing? Is it appropriate to sing it yourself later, or should you sing it with the other person as a duet?"

Teresa: Now, wait a minute. I saw you shake your head at this, while you were reading it—

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: —and it's private room karaoke. Do whate'er you want!

Travis: Here's—okay, the reason I shook my head, 'cause I shook my head—like, except for very, very, very specific circumstances, which I will list when we get to the question, I don't think you should ever repeat a song that someone else has sang, right? Because invariably you are inviting comparison, which is not the goal of karaoke. Um, I think that if you see someone do the song, it is perfectly within your rights to say, "Hey, can I sing with you?" Right? It's private room, go for it. You're all friends there, it's about having a good time.

Now, we also questions about this, but if it is not private room and just like, open bar karaoke, and someone's singing a song that you like, especially if you don't know them, but if you haven't discussed it before, I personally am against the idea of like, hopping onstage and grabbing a mic and helping them sing.

Teresa: Absolutely. That's—that is one of the—the etiquette faux pas, I would say, as far as like, open audience karaoke, because... especially if you don't know them, like, what's this—what's this person doin' up on stage with me?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: But, um, in that situation, what will usually happen is if you submit a song that someone before you has already submitted, the KJ will call you over and say, "I'm not gonna do a repeat."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or, what they might do, um, is if you're doing a song... say, like... this is a little more of a specific situation. If the song was like, in the first hour, and then—

Travis: Yes, so this is the question from Adam. Let me incorporate—"Is it ever okay to sing a song you heard earlier in the night?" Yes, in this specific circumstance, go ahead.

Teresa: Yes. If the song was in like, the first hour, and it's like, the last hour, um, then like...

Travis: If the person sang and there were like, three people at the bar when they did it...

Teresa: And—and that's what a good KJ will do.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: They will weigh out the situation and figure out how, you know, how to read the room and see, "Okay, well, we did this song but nobody was here, so I'll do the song again."

Travis: Right, yes. Especially if it's like a banger that's gonna get the audience involved. Sure. That's the only circumstance in which I think it's okay, is like, listen. The people who were here who heard it the first time are not even here anymore. Yeah, okay. Um, okay. So, next question. This is from Murdoch.

"When choosing a karaoke song, is it better to pick a crowd pleaser or a song that you really like that you might lose to crowd with?"

Teresa: Crowd... pleaser.

Travis: Now, hear—I will say, 9 times out of 10, crowd pleaser. I will say, the thing is, is, is it a song you're gonna lose the crowd with because it's, uh, like a really... okay. This is the inverted—like, the equation, right?

If it is a crowd pleaser, you don't have to super duper nail it for people to enjoy it. If it not a crowd pleaser, but you can kill it, like it's the greatest performance you can do, okay! Maybe take a swing at it. You know what I mean? But like, I saw lots of people joking about like, doing Tequila, which is a song that's like, 18 minutes long, and has like four words in it, and all the words are Tequila.

Teresa: [laughing] It's not 18—it's like, 6 minutes long.

Travis: But don't do that song, right? But then again, I've also seen people do, like, I Would Do Anything For Love, or Bohemian Rhapsody, but like, they don't know the words, or like, they're awkward doing it. If there's a song that you know

backwards and forwards and you feel really good doing, even if it's not a crowd pleaser, if your energy can get the crowd on board, go for it.

Teresa: I suggest never doing anything that Freddy Mercury sang. You are not gonna be able to do it as good as him.

Travis: [high pitched voice] Well... you say that...

Teresa: Hmm?

Travis: But I've heard Griffin do some great Freddy Mercury. Like I'm saying there is—the exception to the rule is always, "But can you kill it?"

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Sure, yeah.

Travis: Like, I one time did Prince's Kiss, and listen. I'm—you know I'm not a good a singer as Prince. But, put the energy into it, and people liked it, right?

Teresa: You know, I do have to say... who was it so we saw do The Edmund Fitzgerald?

Travis: Uh, I think that was our friend Jeremy.

Teresa: Yeah. He, like... one, that's a weird song.

Travis: Yes, but he sold it.

Teresa: There's something else to that title, right? Isn't like The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald or something?

Travis: Yeah, I think that—yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Wh—

Travis: [singing] The wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald!

Teresa: Yeah. It's a very... it's a very niche tune.

Travis: It's a dirge!

Teresa: It's a dirge. Um, but he was just so into it. No, you know who I think it was? I think it was Billy.

Travis: It might've been Billy. Anyway, this is not important, but they nailed it.

Teresa: They nailed it.

Travis: And that's the thing is, if you are engaging, the crowd will be engaged with you. What I don't recommend is, "I'm going to sing a dirge-y or like, crowd-losing song, and I'm just gonna like, stare at the monitor the whole time, and this is just for me 'cause I wanna hear this song."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, maybe not then. Uh, and Nerd Piggy asks, "What type of songs are off limits? Is there a certain song length, genre, or singing difficulty that one should stick to?"

Teresa: Well, we touched on this just a second ago. Um, I think that long—super long songs, um, also super overdone songs... you know, everyone—Don't Stop Believing—

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: Don't—Don't Stop Believing, unless... unless you're like, Steve Perry incarnate.

Teresa: Not even Steve Perry can sing Steve Perry anymore!

Travis: That's so true, baby. That's so true. Um, I would say that, uh... also, problematic but quote unquote "fun" songs—don't do Blurred Lines, for example. Everyone will roll their eyes, and you will lose the entire crowd.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Do not do that. Don't do Gold Digger. Um... you know, these kinds of songs. Um, now, I would say one of the kinds of songs to avoid is the songs that have an extremely long, repetitive tail. Unless you walk offstage when it's done. Like, for example, I really like doing Downeaster Alexa by Billy Joel, but like, the ending of that song is just "Ya ya yo" over and over and over and over again. At which point, just say like, "Thank you!" [laughing] and walk offstage.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Don't stand onstage for five minutes just saying "Ya ya yo!" Well, we should do this, 'cause we haven't yet in the episode. What are some of your go-to karaoke hits?

Teresa: Um, let's see. Holding out for a Hero.

Travis: Yeah, you do nail that one.

Teresa: That's one of my good ones.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Now, that is one that I... I retired for a while, um, because it has a 20 bar intro.

Travis: Yes, this is correct.

Teresa: And so sometimes it's really hard—it's really hard to keep the energy up when you're standing onstage for 20 bars. Um, so I retired that one for a little bit. Let's see. Um, Firework was a good one for me for a while.

Travis: Katy Perry's Firework, I do enjoy that one.

Teresa: And, uh... You Belong With Me by Taylor Swift. That's a bop. That was good.

Travis: That's good one.

Teresa: People really liked that one.

Travis: Audience gets into that one. Um, I really—like I said, Downeaster Alexa is one of mine. It's a good, like, epic story one.

Teresa: What's that one... I got soul...

Travis: That is, uh, All These Things That I've Done, by The Killers.

Teresa: Yep, I love it.

Travis: That's one of my, like—it's one of my go-to, like—

Teresa: I love when you do that one.

Travis: Thank you. Uh, I also enjoy... now, listen. I have been known to do Creed, My Sacrifice.

Teresa: [muffled laughter]

Travis: Um, because that is one of my performance songs where I do the full blown Creed impression, uh, where there are like, no consonants in anything I say.

Teresa: This is like, a read the room sitch—sitch—

Travis: Yeah, this is the thing of, like—

Teresa: —situation, though.

Travis: —If I've got 'em, I might do my Creed impression. [Creed impression] My sacrifice!

Teresa: All right, all right.

Travis: And... let's see. Did I say, uh, All Night Long, by Lionel Richie?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, anything by Lionel Richie. Basically like, 80s songs.

Travis: They kill.

Teresa: They kill all the time! They're really, really great for crowd enjoyment.

Travis: Same with like, 90—there's some 90s ones, uh, you know, which is a— here's a good dirge one: Creep by Radiohead. You can get the crowd on your side with that one. I don't do that one, but I've seen it done. Uh, let's see. Other questions.

Uh, Spencer asks, "What if you're real bad? What then?"

Well, once again, right? I have seen people who could not carry a tune in a giant bucket, right? Get up and get the crowd on their side because they're engaged, right?

Teresa: I would also... if—if you're really bad at it but you enjoy it, I would recommend private room.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Because that's a place where you can really let your guard down, 'cause you're with your friends. And especially, like, if you're really bad at it, really just like, go for it—

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: —with your friends.

Travis: Yes. Because eventually, you might work up the confidence to do it. Or you won't! Whatever, you know?

Teresa: I—I—in general, if you are not, like, into singing, I would say private room is the way to go, for the first couple times, so that you can your feet wet without, you know—without the self-consciousness that comes with being up onstage.

Travis: Along those same lines, Jerica asks, "Is it okay to go to karaoke with friends, even if you have no intention of singing?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "I get stage fright but still wanna hang out." Yes.

Teresa: Totally. Some of the best people who go to karaoke are good audience members!

Travis: Yes. Karaoke cheerleaders are great. 'Cause that's the thing: I like performing, I just need people to go—I don't wanna go by myself, that feels weird. Yes.

Teresa: Um, and I do recommend—here are a couple of like, etiquette things I'm gonna put in here at this point. Um, do clap for everybody.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: You should never boo anyone at karaoke, or—and like, you may think that you're super funny, Statler and Waldorf style, but don't heckle people.

Travis: No, no heckling! Do you know how scary it is to get up there?

Teresa: So scary. Um, also, don't walk around while people are singing, especially in front of the stage. The wait staff can walk around. That's their job, but if you're going to submit a song or, um, go up to the bar, do it in between numbers.

Travis: Yes. Or at the very least, try to low profile. Don't like, stand up and go, [loudly] "Anybody want anything?"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, be chill.

Teresa: Sometimes when you have to—when you gotta go you gotta go, so like, just—

Travis: Well, when you have to go potty, stop and go right away.

Teresa: Thanks, Daniel Tiger. Um, so, you know, be discrete about it. Um, also, while I'm on the subject of handing in song sheets, make sure that it is legible.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: You put the right number with the song, because you never want the—the KJ to guess. That is—that's a bad look, there.

Travis: Especially since sometimes, especially when we're talking about like, CD versions, there can be multiple versions of the same song—

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: —especially if it's a song multiple people have covered, yes.

Teresa: Um, and you can only submit one song sheet at a time. So—

Travis: Yes. So, that's the question from Carmen. "How many songs should you submit at once?" And the thing is is, there's a couple reasons for that. One: everybody wants to sing.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Two: a lot of times if you do that, DJs will like, hold your name off to the side until you go anyways.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: At which point they might lose your other song, or it met get, you know, shuffled in somewhere else.

Teresa: Or, you know, you might feel like it's your turn, but you have to go home or something.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So like, um—and a group performance counts as a performance for you, so don't submit something when you have a group performance in submitted until that is over. So what you can do is... I've even seen a lot of people take a second slip up with them when they have their name called for their first song. That's perfectly acceptable. You take the slip up, you hand it to the KJ as you're going onstage. That's totally cool, totally fine.

Travis: 'Cause that's the thing. One of the really important things to remember... the next question from Katie makes me think about this.

Teresa: You should also... put a dollar in their tip jar...

Travis: Tip the—yes.

Teresa: When you do that.

Travis: Tip the DJ. Katie asks, "Should I tell the DJ to take my name off the list if I leave before my song comes up?"

Here's the thing. Yes, because all of these things, especially if you are thinking about doing this as a regular event, like, this is the DJ's show, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So if you tip the DJ, if you are—

Teresa: You keep saying DJ—

Travis: KJ.

Teresa: —but the proper name is KJ.

Travis: Yes, KJ. If you're courteous to them, if you let them know that you're leaving early so that they don't waste time calling your name, if you only take up one at a—like, you're building a relationship with this person that does things—so like, if you wanna submit a song that someone's already sang, they'll analyze and see if it fits and maybe do a you a solid more than if you haven't tipped them, if you've been rude to them, if you've handed them—you know what I mean? Like, you're building a relationship with this person.

Teresa: And with that, also remember to take care of their equipment. I know, the mic drop is like—

Travis: [emphatically] Don't mic drop.

Teresa: —a super, like, punctuated ending, but just don't do it. That's their equipment. Don't, um—don't bring your drink up onstage. And I've seen Travis do this a couple times with a beer, but—

Travis: Now, here's the thing. But once again, that was after I'd built a relationship with the DJ, and DJ could trust me. And like, most of the time, I set it to the side.

Teresa: Yes. Um, because you might spill on their equipment—

Travis: Yes, or on the stage. [laughs]

Teresa: On the stage, and like, this is usually equipment that they bring with them.

Bebe: [laughs]

Teresa: This is the stuff that they take from bar to bar, or this is their own, personal stuff, so please take care of it. Um, also, like, no one wants to be the singer after the singer that has like, [laughing] put the microphone in their mouth.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's gross.

Travis: And that's— that's bad sound quality, holdin' it that close! Um, once again, this ties in a little bit.

S. Gappy says, "How drunk is too drunk at public karaoke? There's no way I'm singing in front of anybody without a solid buzz going."

I would say... okay. In general, if you are someone who partakes in alcohol, right? Then the biggest danger is the drinking quickly out of nervousness.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Do not do that. I think that there is a difference between like, having a beer before you go up to sing versus like, "Oh, I'm so nervous, I'm gonna take three shots and then go sing." Right? 'Cause then it's gonna—

Bebe: [babbling distantly]

Travis: —kick in, and getcha there—

Bebe: [babbling]

Travis: And like, you don't want to be at a point where you can't sing the words, or you're falling down or anything. So there's definitely a too drunk, um, and if that's the point and you're like, "Ooh, I don't know. I don't feel good standing in front of the audience now," take your name off the list, or like, tell the DJ to wait while you drink some water or whatever, 'cause once again, building a relationship with your karaoke venue.

Uh, let's see. Let's do two more questions. Um, let's see. Alexa asks, "At what point is encouraging someone to sing too aggressive?"

Teresa: Um, sidebar? That name?

Amazon Alexa: [distantly] Sorry, I'm not sure I heard that.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: [gasps]

Travis: Oh yeah, our Alexa kicked in!

Teresa: Shh, stop saying the name!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh—"At what point is encouraging someone to sing too aggressive?"

Teresa: Um, I—just like in life, two times, right? The first time is a polite refusal, the second time is for reals. Um, that's the way that I operate, as far as like, asking people if they're okay, if they're fine, calling back, things like that.

The first time you say, "Oh, would you like to sing?" And they go, "Oh, no, I don't... Mm... Mm, don't think so." Then you say again, a little later, "Hey, why don't you go up and take a turn?" They have already politely refused, so if they say no again, that's it.

Travis: Yeah. I think, also, as we've often talked about on the show, there's a big difference between "I don't know, I'm really nervous," right? In which that sentence, like, they're asking for encouragement! Versus, "I am not interested in singing." Right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Because if they're nervous, offer to do a duet or a group song, maybe to get them, you know, more comfortable being onstage. If they are not interested in singing and you'd like them to continue going to karaoke with you, forcing them to sing or giving them a hard time about it is going to ruin their experience.

Teresa: Agreed.

Travis: Uh, one last question. This is from Praetor.

"Is it okay to sing the same song every week for karaoke night?"

Teresa: It is absolutely okay! Um, that's the way that you—you hone your performance. That's the way that, um, you know, you could be known for a certain song if you go to the same place every week.

Travis: There was a singer who went to—

Teresa: [whispers] Oh yeah...

Travis: —who did Purple Rain and killed it, and like, when he would get up to do it, we would get excited.

Teresa: Aw, man. Yes.

Travis: 'Cause it was—like, we would invite people to join us at karaoke and be like, "[gasps] This guy! Watch this guy! It's amazing."

Teresa: It's Tony, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: His name was Tony.

Travis: So good.

Teresa: So... good.

Travis: And so like, yes. And you know what? The other thing is, when you are onstage, right? At karaoke, it's your stage, right? You're performing. You're the performer, and if that's the song you wanna sing, yes! Go for it!

Now, I would recommend being open to trying other songs, 'cause usually in an evening, depending on how crowded it is, you could get two or three in. maybe trying another song too and being like, "Oh, I also—"

Teresa: Three? You'd have to stay forever. [laughs] Okay.

Travis: Some people do. You know, some people stay out past 10:30.

Teresa: [gasps] What?!

Travis: I know. Um, and so maybe like, you try a different song and you're like, "Oh, I like this one too," so now you're gonna rotate. You know, that kind of thing. That would be... 'cause like, you don't need a catalog of 40 karaoke songs.

Teresa: Exactly. If you've got one or two that you can rotate and do well, that is perfect.

Travis: Uh, so I think that's gonna do it for us. Uh, let's see. Teresa, am I forgetting anything?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Um, also, thank you to K—okay. Bebe's trying to get up in my lap, here. [laughs] Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art—

[mic thumping]

No, don't touch the microphone!

Travis: I'm sorry, Teresa, but I wanna touch the microphone!

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and you can follow us on Twitter @shmannerscast. That's where we submit our, uh, our topics of discussion and ask for questions. So, uh, take a look at that and ask your questions there. Um, also—

Travis: I'm watching our child's face, and there's nothing she wants more than to grab the microphone right now.

Teresa: Also, thank you—

Travis: As soon— oh, there it is.

Teresa: Oh, Bebe, Bebe. Bebe-Bebe-Bebe. Uh, also, thank you—

Travis: Bebe, will you say hi? Okay.

Teresa: No, no, no.

Travis: Yep, all right.

Teresa: No, stop.

Travis: Everything's going off the rails.

Teresa: Okay, okay. Thank you to the, uh, newly renamed Bruja Betty Pinup, she took our—formerly Keely Weis Photography—took our, um, cover banner for the fan run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, which is a good place to get and give excellent advice for other fans, but if you would like to submit a topic request, please do email us, Shmannerscast@gmail.com. Um, we're always looking for new and interesting topic ideas, and that's the place where we go to most often!

Travis: Um, and as always, thank you to Maximum Fun, our podcast home. Thank you to everybody who submitted questions, thank you to everybody who submits topics. Um, over the next couple weeks, between conventions and a family vacation, we're gonna try not to miss episodes, but, you know, we'll do our best. Things can get pretty chaotic around here, and I'm sure you've figured out by now.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, but we will do our best to consistent, because we know that that matter to you! Um, so that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

[theme music plays]

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