

follow the bouncing ball.

Karaoke in Chinatown

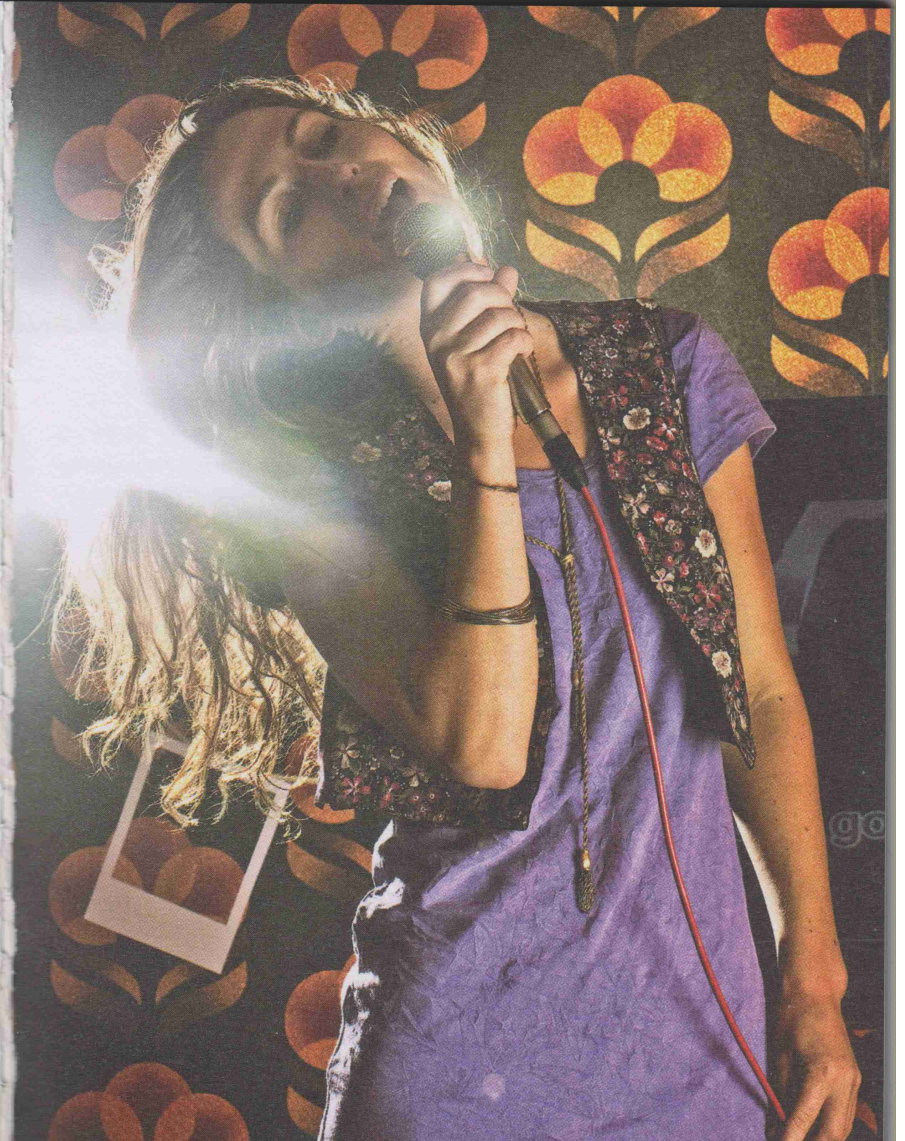
The karaoke experience in and around Melbourne's Chinatown can be broken into three main categories: public, private and mega-premium.

The first entails a stage and a room full of strangers. Basically you put your name on a scrap of paper and hand it to the MC, then you wait until they call your name. It's kind of like being in the emergency room with a blood nose. Try to stand out from the crowd, as the MCs tend to look out for the ladies. You'll find this kind of setup at Charlton's in Coverlid Place, and Jankara on Russell.

The next step up is private. Here, you and your friends can hire a comfortable room and sing sweetly to one another. This is a better option for some as it lowers the risk of hearing "Khe Sanh" as performed by KPMG's New Business Development Team. Better still, they bring you drinks, so the only thing you have to worry about is who you want to duet with. If this sounds more like your bag, try KBox on La Trobe or go old-school at Hollywood Karaoke on Bourke Street.

Mega-premium karaoke joints are generally reserved for student playboys and the types of Japanese businessmen you see in cartoons. One example is Party World in Melbourne Central. This is where you can buy X.O. by the bottle and they'll keep it for you in a special mesh-fronted locker. The microphones make you sound so good, we're pretty sure T-Pain recorded his album here.

Of course, sub categories are emerging all the time as Melbourne welcomes new karaoke joints seemingly by the day. Karpe d.m. on Market Lane heads up the booth-sized-bar-for-Korean-music-fans category. And around the corner at 206 Bourke is Rainbow Room Karaoke, which has exploded at the top of the scene in the deluxe-video-wall-make-your-dreams-come-true category.



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[Inset picture taken in one of the private rooms at Kbox Karaoke]