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DIVERSIONS

Karaoke hits high note

BY JEROME WATT
Staff Writer

It's 8 p.m. Saturday night and one karaoke crowd leaves Markham's Take One Studios to prepare for the next wave of would-be singers — the after-10 p.m. crowd.

The 10,000-square-foot karaoke mecca runs seven days a week and stays open as late as 4 a.m. some nights, featuring 36 private rooms, better known as karaoke boxes, as well as a lounge for crooners.

Owner Albert Chu says Take One Studios is the largest karaoke bar in the country.

"Is karaoke alive or dead?" he asked. "That's not a valid question. It's very much alive — two (karaoke bars) have opened in the last month. More and more are opening."

It's true.

You get a high from it.

It's kind of an addiction.

You don't necessarily

(want) to be famous,

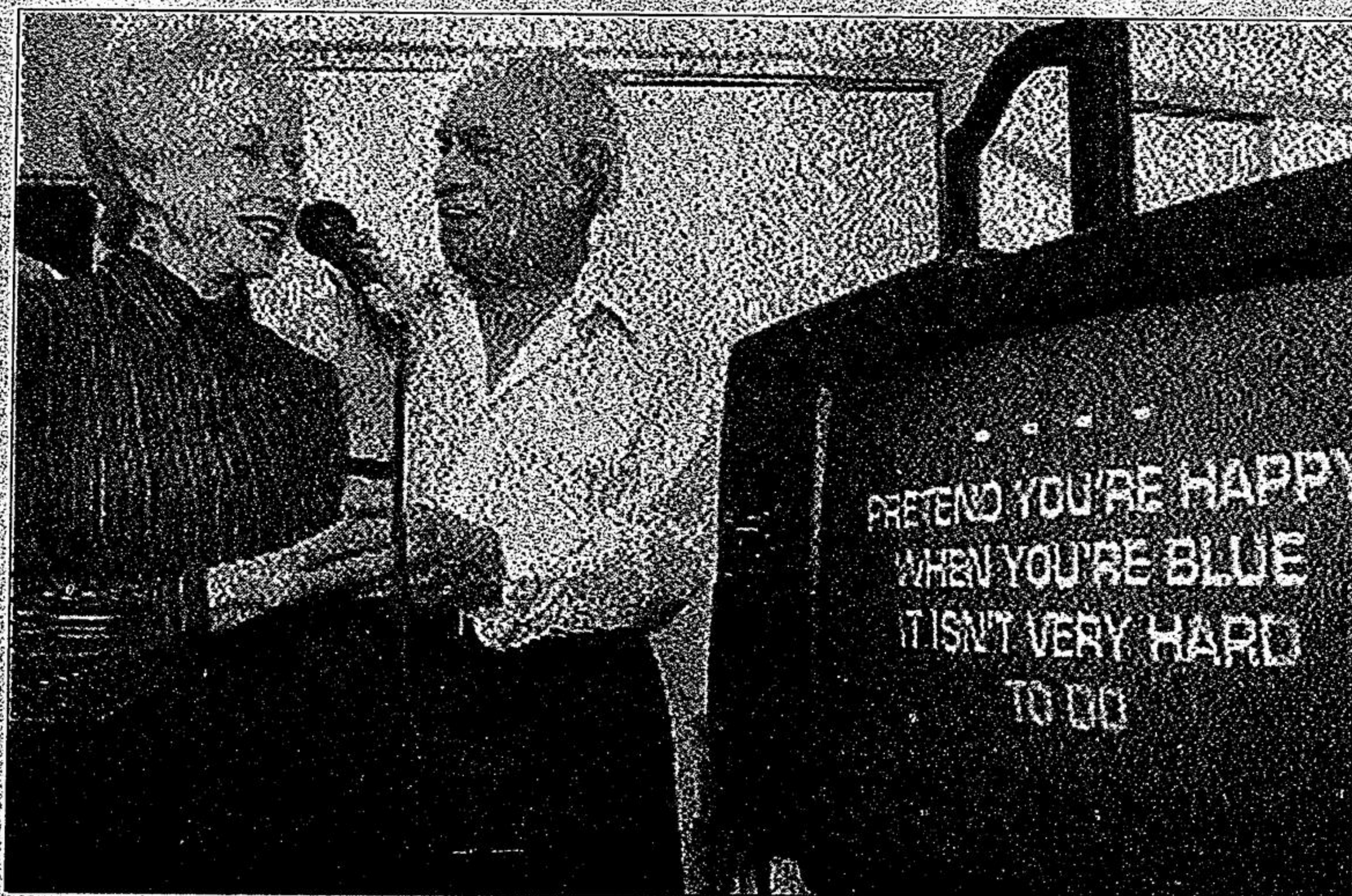
you just love to do it.

A short drive along Woodbine Avenue reveals at least two other karaoke bars and it's easy to spot a few along Hwy. 7 and ditto for Steeles Avenue in Markham.

Dedicated karaoke bars are a little harder to find in the north end of York Region, but many places set aside one or two nights a week for the pastime.

Mr. Chu said he started offering the karaoke boxes 10 years ago, following a trend popular in Hong Kong. In Asia, karaoke is huge, he said.

Legend has it karaoke began at a snack bar in Kobe city in Japan



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Ruth Dover and Reg Castello of Stonehaven Avenue in Newmarket sing Nat King Cole's Pretend on their karaoke machine.

roughly 20 years ago.

The story, if true, is the owner of the snack bar prepared tapes of accompaniment recordings for times when strolling guitarists couldn't perform at the bar. It turned out vocalists enjoyed singing to the tapes.

Karaoke is a Japanese abbreviated compound word: kara which comes from karappo meaning empty and oke is the abbreviation of orchestra.

Since then, karaoke has proliferated across Asia and has become a popular form of entertainment in the West.

Mr. Chu hopes to increase the diversity of people involved in karaoke.

"Up until now, it seems to be

mainly oriental clientele," he said. "We hope to have (more) non-oriental clientele."

Patrons can choose from over 10,000 song titles and sing along in Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Japanese, English or Italian at Take One Studios.

Customers are usually divided into the serious singers, who come in the afternoon, and the late night crowd, who comes out for fun, according to 23-year-old Kevin Liem.

"It's the way to chill (out)," he said. "People after 10 come to drink and have fun. That's usually how it works."

Mr. Liem, the lead singer of a band, comes partly to refine his singing skills and have fun. He

usually shows up in the afternoon.

In Newmarket, downstairs at Timothy's Steakhouse Fridays and Saturdays, locals come to sing. There are no karaoke boxes in which to hide. Participants share their singing talent, good or bad with the audience. KJ (the karaoke equivalent of a DJ) Jim Lewis or "Pops" spins the tunes.

As far as this 11-year veteran knows, there aren't any dedicated karaoke bars in Newmarket.

"This is as good as it gets," he said.

But 75-year-old Ruth Dover is just as dedicated to the artform as her counterparts in Markham.

For the past couple of years,

See **SOME**, page 21.



Evelyn Wolf

In the Garden of Evelyn

Perfect time to move plants is now

Q I hear conflicting advice about when it's best to transplant. I have a healthy, three-year-old burning bush I would like to move. When is the best time?

A. The best time to move most plants is in mid to late fall. In other words, now.

At this time of year, all perennial plants, whether herbaceous (hosta, day lily) or woody perennials (shrubs and trees) have shut down their feeding systems and are entering dormancy.

This is what fall colours are about. Plants are draining the last of the chlorophyll from their leaves and have stopped producing more.

When plants are in their dormant period, they undergo the least amount of shock when transplanted. Think of it as though they are in a deep sleep. They can be moved around without even noticing it and simply wake up in a new "bed."

Dig up your shrub, getting as much of the root ball as possible. If your soil is heavy, this may be a real chore, but what I often do is get an old bed linen and lift or roll the root ball on to it and drag it to the new spot.

If your soil is loose and falls away from the roots, don't worry about it. This is actually a better situation, since you have a chance to spread out the roots in the new planting hole, where it will be in direct contact with fresh soil. Just be sure to not expose bare roots to sun or wind.

I usually hose down roots and cover them quickly with something until they are safe in the ground again.

See **WATER**, page 22.



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Help us shape the future of our community today
Phone Survey of Town of Markham Residents

Starting in the week of October 20, the Town of Markham is asking residents for their opinions on parks, recreation, culture and library facilities. Markham is updating its master plan and priorities for future development in these areas. This survey is one component of the public consultation program. Other elements include feedback from community groups and community Search Conference with residents.

Monteith Planning Consultants will be conducting the telephone survey.

We encourage our residents to take part in this important survey when contacted.

Find out more by visiting us at www.markham.ca/masterplan for regular updates or by contacting Sara Tam, Town of Markham, at 905-415-7533 or stam@markham.ca.