

Thursday, June 11, 1981

Happy crowds sing along with the music

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

Even people who can't carry a tune in a basket can participate in a sing-along.

Maybe that's what makes this kind of entertainment so much fun at bars and at the movies in the suburbs.

From Oakton to Wayne county, the action draws crowds for listening and singing along with a piano player, organist or group. Individuals who can carry a tune shine at the sing-alongs — they're the ones who may get up to do a solo, or lead the customers in a favorite song.

THE HURLING GREEN, an Irish pub in Avon Township, features Pat McDunn and the Gaels playing music the crowd sings along with. The musical group features a singer backed by accordion, banjo and guitar, inspiring the sing-along from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Wednesdays and Fridays.

The manager, who is known as Tommy, said, "McDunn gets people up to sing with him. He's involved with the crowd, getting them swaying back and forth singing with him."

The small pub holds about 100 people. The age range is from 25-35 most nights, including the sing-alongs. Naturally, a lot of Irish songs are played at the Hurling Green, 2550 Rochester Road (phone 852-5571).

—NEALEE'S PUB ON THE HILL in Rochester has only been offering sing-alongs for the last two months. Charlie Savage is at the piano and Neal Patterson leads the singing from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturdays.

Fred Inda, owner, said that the pub burned down last year and was closed for five months. It's a family place that never had entertainment before, but the sing-along has proved popular and may be expanded to a couple of other nights, he said.



"It's a real mixed crowd — 25 or 30 people and a person can sing along," Inda said. "We have an extra mike for those who can't sing."

Inda, who sang with the Four Dukes, are co-owners of Nealee's Pub on the Hill, 288 W. Tienken (phone 652-9550).

Music for singing and dancing is offered from 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Woody (Robert Collingswood) plays the organ, electric piano and synthesizer and leads the crowd in singing. Woody has been the featured performer for three years.

Owner Bob Salvati said many amateur singers entertain the customers. "We seem to appeal to the over-40 crowd," he said. People come from as far as Detroit's east side and Canada, he said, to enjoy the singing at McGinn's.

MIC GINNEY'S TIN GOOSE on the border of Redford Township, which has been around for 20 years, has an old Ford Tri-Motor airplane as setting for its sing-alongs.

"Songs of the '40s are very popular, even with young people."

Having been the entertainer there for so many years, she declared, "It's just like a family to me. We have a beautiful clientele." Sing-along fans are "a lot of couples, and children of couples who are children of couples."

Customers can sing from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. Tuesdays-Sundays at Harold's Bar and Grill, 25524 Five Mile Road (phone 532-9212).

MERRIE MELODIE THEATRE in Avon Township provides an opportunity to sing along before and after movie classics, at special senior citizens matinees.

Theater owner John Anderson plays the organ for the audience to join in three or four songs. Anderson first started subbing in theaters while in his teens and later played in nightclubs and stage shows around Detroit.

"We put the words on the screen," Anderson said. "We make our own slides with old-fashioned artwork."

Groups of seniors, or any group of 20-80 persons, can make reservations for the program, which also includes lunch at the Oceania Inn.

Seniors are encouraged to come on stage and lead the group. The less bold are encouraged to participate, too.

"We ask them to sing from their seat," Anderson said.

The movie "Meet Me in St. Louis," starring Judy Garland, runs through Tuesday and is the attraction for the seniors program through the month at Merrie Melodie Theatre, 166 N. Adams (phone 375-0011).

PIZZA & PIPES restaurant in Pontiac Township was originally going to have only organ entertainment when it opened in 1979, but the crowd began singing along.

Customers like to sing "current songs and the older ones," she said.

The pipe organ installed in the Birmingham Theatre in 1928 is the basic

instrument of the Pizza & Pipes organ, a composite of several organs. With its traps and special effects, the organ can recreate more than 40 different sounds.

Fr. James Miller, a Catholic priest, plays on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Sing-along entertainment is offered from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mondays-Fridays; 5:11-8 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays; and until 1 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays (Sunday hours are 2-3 p.m.). Silent movies are presented afternoons and evenings, preceded and followed by sing-alongs.

Singles, parties and club groups v for space at long tables and benches. Customers "go from 1 year old and younger to 90 or older," said Valerie Hilsen, WCAR radio personality who does some of her shows from Pizza & Pipes at 2105 E. South Blvd. (334-0775).

THE DAKOTA INN in Detroit is probably the metropolitan area's best-known sing-along spot. Owner Ed Kurn's parents opened the rathskeller in 1933, and sing-alongs started a few years after.

Southfield resident Mike Montgomery plays piano for the crowd, starting at 7:30 p.m. Fridays. The other performers are Wally Baugher, beginning at 8 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays, and Bill Jones, at 8 p.m. Saturdays. Closing time, depending on the crowd, is up to 2 a.m.

German beer and food keep the customers merry.

"We get people age 21-90, from all walks of life," Kurz said. Mae, the waitress, occasionally does a solo. Other regulars who perform for the cheering audience include Basil, who has a Broadway-show voice, and anyone who volunteers to lead the German favorite, the "Schnitzelbank" song, pointing to pictures on the familiar board.

The Dakota Inn is at 17324 John R in Detroit (phone 657-9722).

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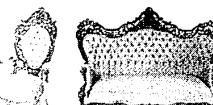
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