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2003 Pop Conference Bios/Abstracts

Caryn B. Brooks

Caryn B. Brooks is the Arts and Culture Editor at *Willamette Week* (a Portland, OR, weekly) whose work has appeared in *Metropolis* magazine, the *Utne Reader*, and her self-published 'zine *Sex Variants*. She is currently helping to produce a Hedwig tribute record with Off Records. Her signature karaoke song is "Tomorrow" from *Annie*.

Panel(s):

This Is Pop?

Saturday, April 12, 2003, 1:30 - 3:00

Abstract:

"Why Can't I Be You: Karaoke and the New Music Order"

Much has been said in recent years about the effect of technology on the way music is made, sold and appreciated, but the cult of karaoke that recruits growing numbers in tiny clubs and bars across the country is rarely a part of this conversation. This bastard son of Atari and MTV continues to shape the way people view music while it plays into the growing strain of populism that infiltrates culture at large. On a small scale, karaoke trumps the reality television trend by being more pure: it unravels in front of you without a filter and involves no editing. The selection process consists of handing in a choice and waiting a turn.

Just as the online experience has created a visceral new way to experience music, so, too, has karaoke. Participants pour over the books to pick their songs, and one can often hear dueling interpretations by multiple performers in a single night. This paper intends to show via discussion and video clips that the sometimes-dismissed culture of karaoke should be evaluated for its important influence on how music is being consumed in narrowcast format and how that may, in turn, influence the marketing of music on a grand scale. As with the "real" music that karaoke piggybacks onto, questions of sexual politics, creativity and elitism all come into play in this format. This paper will evaluate the extent to which these influences affect music appreciation at large.

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