

**Title:**

Karaoke Gets Personal: Handheld Devices Turn Up the Volume

**Word Count:**

502

**Summary:**

People enjoy singing and performing, and there's no device that's more successfully leveled the playing field for public performances than the karaoke machine.

**Keywords:**

Lyrics, Music, Mp3 Downloads, Karaoke, Mp3 Players, Hot Gadgets

**Article Body:**

While the subject of karaoke elicits a roll of the eyes for many people, there's no doubt that karaoke has had a huge cultural impact, first in Japan and then around the world. For a myriad of reasons, people enjoy singing and performing, and there's no device that's more successfully leveled the playing field for public performances than the karaoke machine.

Traditional karaoke machines incorporate a microphone, a recording of the instrumental tracks of a song, an audio output device, and a video screen that displays the lyrics of a song. Singers (or those who consider themselves to be singers) use the microphone to sing along to the music while following the lyrics on a video screen. Karaoke singing gained popularity in Japan in the 1980s and then spread throughout the world in the 1990s. Typically, people would gather in bars or clubs for "Karaoke Night," although some clubs featured karaoke every night of the week.

In the new millennium, karaoke machines got much more personal. Singles and families started buying home karaoke machines for their own enjoyment, as well as for entertainment at parties. It was easy to simply hook them up to the television, put a disc in the DVD player, and have a blast. Karaoke continued to evolve when "Karaoke Revolution" was released for the PlayStation 2 gaming console. The player used a USB microphone or headset to sing along and received a score based on his or her performance. Subsequently, several more versions were released, including a "Party Bundle" for the PlayStation2, Nintendo GameCube, and Xbox. The latest offering in the franchise, "Karaoke Revolution: American Idol," built on the smashing success of the TV series, "American Idol." In this version, up to eight people can compete in duets, in teams, or as single

players.

There's no doubt that "American Idol" has been a factor in the continuing popularity of karaoke. The premise that almost anyone has what it takes to become America's next singing sensation (and that, even if you don't, you can still get sympathy votes) has aficionados singing their hearts out - whether at home or in public.

The television series has also brought about the next evolutionary step in karaoke - turning MP3 players and MP3 downloads into hot gadgets that are perfect handheld karaoke machines. These specialized MP3 players allow aspiring "American Idol" contestants - and anyone else who enjoys singing out loud - to buy and download any song, input the lyrics, then remove the vocal track and record their own voices over the music while reading a display of the lyrics. The internal speaker and microphone, as well as the display screen, make recording and playing karaoke-style songs a breeze. That's probably why this type of MP3 player is touted as the most widely used, pocket-sized karaoke player.

These types of hot gadgets, the continuing success of "American Idol," and the spawning of similar television shows like "The Singing Bee" and "Don't Forget the Lyrics!" all prove that karaoke is alive, well, and evolving to new heights.