

New Haven Register

New Haven karaoke bar will let you sing yourself silly

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*New Haven-- Andrew Lebwohl is opening "Karaoke Heroes" a new bar at 212 Crown Street.
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NEW HAVEN — Soon you will be able to walk through a phone booth and turn into your own version of Superman before walking down into the Batcave, past red, closed-circuit phones that the commissioner can call you on — and sing.

Patrons of the new karaoke bar, Karaoke Heroes, won't be handed weapons to become vigilantes, but they will be given a microphone to become rock stars.

Andrew Lebwohl, CEO and owner of Karaoke Heroes, practiced corporate bankruptcy and insurance regulatory law at Dewey and LeBeouf LLC of New York before changing careers to follow his childhood passion: karaoke.

"I have been a fan of karaoke since I was 8. I have performed karaoke on four continents, and I've sung with a number of a capella groups. In 2011, I actually won the first round of the New York City trials for the National Karaoke Championship," said Lebwohl.

"But I had that other passion I felt like I had given up on," he added. "I felt like I owed myself a chance to try other things while I'm still young."

Lebwohl received his MBA from the Yale School of Management and he was a fellow at the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute during the summer of 2011. That's when he decided to open a karaoke bar in New Haven.

"There is a wonderful karaoke culture in New York, but that is nowhere in Connecticut," he said.

According to Lebwohl, Karaoke Heroes, located at 212 Crown St., will be the first dedicated karaoke bar in the state. While other venues may offer karaoke, Karaoke Heroes will have three Japanese-style private, soundproof rooms and one large open bar area where American-style karaoke can be performed, complete with a VIP lounge.

And this won't be your average karaoke bar.

"Once I knew I would own and operate a karaoke bar, the next piece of the puzzle was how to embrace my other great love: superheroes," Lebwohl said. "The basic philosophy behind karaoke is that it's about being the best self you can become – a rock star – and that's also what superheroes are about -- being the guy with the cape on."

An artist and editor for Marvel Comics will design comic book art for the walls featuring Karaoke Hero.

The private rooms cost \$8 per person per hour and there will be more than 5,500 songs to choose from, in addition to songs in Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean and Spanish. The space will also offer specialty drinks and prepackaged sushi.

Lebwohl worked with investors and city departments, including New Haven's economic development team and the Town Green Special Services District, to bring his plan to fruition.

"I think we are going to see a new customer group coming over to Crown Street because of the uniqueness of the karaoke bar," said Chris Ortwein, manager of the Economic Prosperity Initiative at TGSSD.

The TGSSD will hold a grand opening on the Green from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday in the form of a karaoke contest. Sponsored by KC101, the contest will offer a first prize of \$1,000, among other prizes.

Lebwohl said William Hung, who is known for his stint on American Idol, will appear at the event.

Following that event, there will be a ribbon cutting and the doors to Karaoke Heroes will officially open.

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