

SUNDAY SERVICE

Tonight Cat, I'm going to be...

Words: Conor Creighton **Pictures:** Brian Migdol

While doing my vegetable shopping on Camden Street one afternoon, my eye is drawn, almost instinctively, toward a poster in the window of The Village and in particular, a quotation:

"Whooooo, we're half way there/Whooooo, livin' on a prayer/Take my hand and we'll make it I swear/Whooooo, livin' on a prayer"

Intrigued, and because vegetables are not that exciting, I wander over to investigate. It's an advertisement for Songs of Praise, a new Rock Karaoke night on Sundays at The Village. This confirms two things for me: (i) that Bon Jovi were, and still are, the most relevant rock band on the planet, and (ii) that karaoke, once the preserve of overweight men at Christmas parties, is cool again.

My heart begins racing and my mind flashes back to my youth as the lead singer of The Bearded Lady, a soft-rock combo that me and three school friends started in an abandoned turf shed near my home. For two months we painstakingly rehearsed and, despite protests from our mothers, grew our hair long. Then, just a week before our first gig, my friends decided we should split up, citing "artistic differences" as the reason. Naively, I believed them, until a week later, when as an audience member of the village Battle of the Bands competition, I watched as The Bearded Lady performed with a new front man. He had proper long hair (mine was still at that getting past the ears stage) and he could play the guitar solo to Livin' on a Prayer. I was gutted. I went

home and consigned my axe to the attic, my rock star dream shattered.

Staring at this poster in the foyer, I felt something reawakening in me. The wannabe rocker, who's long since turned his ripped up jeans into dusters and is screaming out for one more chance to live the dream and sing live on stage.

"Honey", I tentatively say to my girlfriend when I get home that evening. "Do you wanna go to karaoke on Sunday?" She laughs at me. "No, I'm serious," I protest, "I need to sing a song". She stops laughing and gives me a look that says: you men are pathetic, insecure creatures. "Is this some identity thing?" she asks, all knowingly. "Can I bring all my friends?"

I wake up on Sunday morning feeling apprehensive. By evening, it's grown into an all out sweaty palm knee-knocking panic. Two pints and a whiskey later, we head to The Village. It's around ten and the place is reasonably full of what look like regulars and confused couples who aren't entirely sure of what's going on. The song list ranges from the Pistols to the Mondays. Karaoke it is, but not as we know it.

The first people up are these two guys who do a very impressive rendition of Ziggy Stardust. The crowd are a little slow to react but Barbara, Songs of Praise presenter extraordinaire and quite possibly the most enthusiastic person to grace the Dublin club circuit, does enough clapping to compensate. The next guy up does Yazz: The Only Way is Up, including all the high bits, a cute Danish girl does Blondie and

that's the end of the first set. The crowd, now sufficiently warmed up, love it. Rory the DJ is jumping up behind the decks, clapping his hands in the air and Murt, the only man cool enough to get away with wearing a silk scarf in Dublin, is bent over the mixing board, in wonder and paroxysms of laughter at what is possibly the strangest mix of talent and pure balls ever assembled in Dublin.

My nerves are slowly fading away, I think I can do it and just as I go up to the bar to get one more drink before I put my name down I hear it, my song: the opening bars of Livin' on a Prayer. It's the two boys who did Ziggy Stardust. My heart sinks and for the second time in my life I've been upstaged at the last minute. They're good though, and I later discover they're members of some band called Loot, in Dublin to record an album. Bloody Professionals.

It was over. I didn't have the heart to sing any other song. It was Livin' on a Prayer or nothing, so we left. I trudged slowly up Camden Street while my girlfriend skipped beside me because Matt, the lead singer from Loot, asked for her number. "He's cute!" she says, oh so pleased with herself. Witch.

Songs of Praise is good now and it's only been running a few weeks. Once word gets out and they pack the place, it's going to be brilliant. Sundays have always been about making an effort, so go on - get on stage and sing your praises: Karaoke is back. **TD**

Songs of Praise, The Village, 9pm Sundays