

AfterDark

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Party, participate with Bill and Andy Show

By **ALEX RUDINSKI**
Staff Writer

What's better than a crowd sing-along at a bar? A sing-along with free shirts, that's what.

"We have trivia, and we give away merchandise for right answers," says Andy Hladek of the Bill and Andy Show. They're an acoustic duo, two troubadours roving from bar to bar to distribute kazoos and T-shirts to each lonely village's inhabitants.

Well, not quite. You might get a shirt, but don't expect any lutes. Both Bill and Andy still hold down day jobs, and the band is something they do on weekends.

"This is our release from the week too," says Bill Hadam. Bill and Andy work as a marketing director and an IT business solution provider, respectively.

The music is something they do as a side project, and they try to make their music as much fun for the audience as it is for them.

When they started playing together, Bill and Andy both knew they wanted to do something different from most acts. They had been to bars before where someone would sit on a stool in the corner and softly play background music, and knew they wanted to engage the audience more than that. That's why they constructed a show that's all about audience participation, and creating a party atmosphere.

"We asked ourselves, 'What would we want to see when we went out?'" says Andy. So, before they play, Bill and Andy read the rules of their performance. They go like this:

Rule 1: Singing along is encouraged.

Rule 2: Dancing and conga lines are encouraged.

Rule 3: We take requests, even if we don't know them.

Sometimes, to get an audience to join in on their songs, Bill and Andy will pass out instruments, like kazoos for the audience to play along with.

"We're not great whistlers," says Andy, so they pass out the kazoos

Info

Bill and Andy Show

**Saturday May 31
The Grapevine
Restaurant & Lounge
Tuckerton, NJ**

For more information
visit their Web site,
BILLANDANDYSHOW.COM



Bill Hadam and Andy Hladek from The Bill and Andy Show perform a gig at the Surf City Beach Club. (FILE PHOTO)

and ask the audience to play the whistling lines to their songs.

"It's funny," says Andy, "people tell you they know how to play a kazoo, and really, they don't." But once the instruments are handed out, pretty soon "the whole bar starts playing," says Andy.

Imagine that — a slightly boozy kazoo choir buzzing the whistling line to "Centerfold."

They're also not afraid to employ props from time to time. For the more tropical songs, Bill and Andy will don Banana Boat hats. They'll even become part of the crowd. They recently invested in a wireless system for their guitars and microphones so that they can traverse the bar while still being heard on the PA system. This lets them engage everyone in the room, even those sitting way in the back.

The Bill and Andy set list is pretty extensive as well. It's got about 250 songs, stretching from

standards like "Sweet Caroline" and "Margaritaville" to more modern songs like "Basket Case" by Green Day. They've also recently put together some medleys of similar songs, such as their '50's doo-wop medley, or a medley that goes from Steve Millers "The Joker" to "Beverly Hills" by Weezer before finally ending up at "Angel" by Shaggy, which samples the bass line from "The Joker."

This wide range of music reflects the type of audiences the duo gets, from freshly-21 patrons asking for their dad's favorites or older folks asking them to play at their retirement homes. If there is a song requested that Bill and Andy don't know, they'll either learn it for next time and add it to their ever-increasing set list, or attempt it right on the spot by ear — sometimes with mixed results.

"All the mistakes you hear are performed live," says Bill. "No

prerecorded goofs."

The show evolved naturally, says Bill. He and Andy had known each other for a while by the time they started playing gigs together, so the banter and the rapport came naturally. The two grew up playing: bands around New Jersey, like Andy's old metal band Take No Prisoners. The two had been friends since high school, so when Bill needed someone to fill in for a duo that had suddenly turned solo, he called up Andy. The rest, as they say, is history. They've been together for about five years now, playing in venues all across New Jersey.

So if you like to sing along to your favorite songs (and who doesn't?) make sure to see The Bill and Andy Show this Saturday at the Grapevine. Get yourself a kazoo, a T-shirt and have a few beers. As the Bill and Andy Motto goes, "The More You Drink, the Better We Sound."*