

Word of Mouth

Get caught up in the unrestrained passion during Open Mic Poetry Night every Monday at The Buzz, where the poems jolt the coffee-drinking crowd



Ryan Starkweather Emerald

Another poet takes the stand to serenade The Buzz audience with her reading. The EMU coffeehouse — and the breezeway just outside — turns into a high-energy venue every Monday night.

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

In a folkish, rappish, rhythmic beat, The Announcer speaks into the microphone. He's new. He's fresh. He's a poet. It's poetry.

He sings. He shares his soul. His words are spit into the crowd of pencil holding, coffee sipping fiends.

Fiends for self enlightenment. Self destruction. Self.

Poetry night at the Buzz — 9 p.m. Open — Encouraging — Raging — Healing.

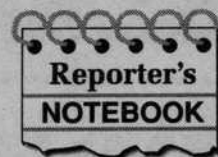
The espresso machine drowns out the voices of the meek. They have to scream to overcome the wrath of the doublelatte cappuccino-americanocafeaulait maker. But hold it in until we get outside.

And we will go outside. Outside to scream. Scream it out — soon. A cigarette break is coming. The climax is coming. And after it's over, the poets will roll back into their shelter, shaded from the harsh weather outside. They will nestle back into their plastic chairs and listen to each others' voices. The voices from inside — yearning to be heard. Breaking, tearing, pleading to be heard.

Suppress the urge for now, however, to be heard too loud. Whisper into the abyss of self-righteous students who pretend

to listen but are really composing their own prose inside their own heads. The mild side must speak. Soak it all in.

First On The List steps into the spotlight. His black trenchcoat kisses the floor as he sits in a chair that's too low. Blond hair sweeps from his crown — glistening in the manufactured light seeping from a manufactured bulb. But his voice is quiet as he talks about playing shrink to a friend and getting out of bed to face one more day.



He retires to a table in front.

The stage is consumed by The

Smart Ass who feels sorry for the kids these days who try to commit suicide but get it wrong by cutting horizontally instead of vertically.

The Smart Ass doesn't stop there. "Give me an issue. I'll give you a tissue. I'll wipe my ass with it," he says in a different poem.

The Announcer again. This time to the beat of "Tom's Diner" by Suzanne Vega. Sing along everybody — or not. You all suck.

Change it up. The art moves from esoteric rhetoric to funda-

mental lines that rhyme every time. Every single time. "Pain is love," says The Christian who later thanks Jesus for dying on the cross for all of "our" sins.

Back to what was. Mountain Dweller turned graduate student reads a poem from a journal he kept during his hermit phase. Then it's back to love. He's in love.

"This one is for the girl at New Frontier Market; I have a crush on her," Mountain Dweller reveals to the audience. He pleads for all the girls to listen — "I want your opinion." Listen to the words. They do.

"Love knows all of our rules aren't even guidelines," the poem reads. Should I give it to her or not? Give it to her. Of course, the girls agree.

"OK, but if I get beat up I'll come back and read you the beat-up poem," Mountain Dweller says.

No way. The poem is too sweet. The Sparkler reads next. Her purple glitter shirt dances on the walls as she reads an "Ode to Denny's." She's fast. It's over. Her memory wafts through the cafe.

Choppy, blocky, punchy, pulpy — The Pierced is next.

"The noise keeps on growing from the tick tock in my head," she says.

It's 10 p.m. now. An hour of restraint has passed. It's time to succumb to the calling of the outside. It's time. Time for the bitter cold of the February night. Time to scream. Time to smoke.

The Pierced screams too. Outside, she stands on a chair in front of a black-clad, wide-eyed, anticipating crowd.

"I have very little that's my own. Just the scars, and the holes and the words that I write," she says to the exuberant audience that cheers wildly for every participant in the open-air jam session.

It becomes a popcorn, piece meal, jump in, jump out, waltz of words.

"I will no longer let myself be censored. Who will shout out with me, and together we will grow louder and louder and louder until all you can hear will be poetry?" yells The Pierced.

Set to a perfect backdrop of Eugene rain, these poets let it all out.

The Preacher guides the operation. He's older. He's bald. He has a goatee. He says he wants to rant a real man, so he reads from "My Life is My Sundance," by Leonard Peltier, a Native American who has spent the last 24 years of his life in prison despite the fact that the government has admitted on numerous occasions that they do

not know who is responsible for the murders of two FBI agents he was convicted of killing.

"I am everyone," The Preacher reads from the book. "Everyone who ever suffered for being human, being free, being indigenous."

The Preacher appears many times.

"Last week I read my first love poem in my life," he discloses later on in the night. "Then we broke up, fought all week and then got back together."

His Hard Headed Woman stands behind the crowd, listening to his declarations. Her smile reeks of adoration.

Back and forth like a tennis match fought with grammar, the poets play on.

Rain drips and wind billows through stark, white bones sheltered only by the fragile flesh we all share.

Share. Share words. Share praise. Share yourself.

The Preacher encourages his following to use the words of each other "because good artists steal," he says.

The mantra is well received.

Screams echo, as they do every Monday night at The Buzz.

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