

Songwriting slam gives voice to unknown artists

The event, which includes established local artists as judges, will feature various prizes such as studio time

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Foolscap Books is hosting a songwriting slam tonight at 9 p.m. in what is intended to be a showcase for unknown artists.

Similar to the popular Eugene Poetry Slam, which is also hosted at the bookstore, the event will invite local songwriters to perform their material and be evaluated by a panel of judges composed of established local musicians.

The event, like any competition, has a few restrictions regarding what the songwriters are permitted to perform. Material must be original and must not be previously published in

any form. The only accompaniment allowed is an acoustic instrument played by the performer (there will be a piano available). Each performer must be ready with three songs and will perform one song per five-minute round. Due to time considerations, only 12 songwriters will be allowed. If more than twelve people sign up, there will be a drawing to decide who performs.

Winners will receive prizes, the most lucrative being free recording time at Sprout City Recording Studios, located at 1145-1/2 Chambers St. There will be a variety of gift certificates available as well.

The current list of judges for the event includes a few mainstays of the Eugene music scene. Dori Prange and Tina Sarno of the rock group The Ovulators, Kelly Stats of the band Scrambled Eggs, John Shipe of John Shipe & The Scapegoats, and Dan Jones are all set to be on the panel.

Each judge is bringing his or her own way of looking at music to the role.

"I'm looking for honest emotion," Jones said. "I'm not looking for a polished performance, I don't even care if people are good at their instrument. I just want to see honesty."

If popular, the songwriting slam might become a regular event for Foolscap, akin to the monthly poetry slams. Foolscap owner Marietta Bonaventure said it would only be one of many upcoming changes for the bookstore.

"Our lease on this space runs out in May," Bonaventure said. "I'm looking to move into a warehouse space with more room for performances. I want to focus more of my time on community events."

Bonaventure added that the bookstore will begin dealing mostly

through online sales rather than through a storefront. But many of the plans for the bookstore's future, such as the location of the new space, will not be definite for several months.

For now, Bonaventure plans to focus on running the store and bringing such events to the community as a small concert on Saturday featuring The Ovulators and Dan Jones, giving a couple of the slam's judges a chance to show their own songwriting skills.

Until then, the judges are deciding how to evaluate the contestants.

"I'm not a fan of the World Wrestling Federation attitude in art," Jones said. "I don't want to 'slam' anyone. I want beginners to be able come out without being traumatized. Creative humans can be bruised easily."

The judges have high hopes for the performers and the Eugene music scene in general.

"I like the music scene here," Stats

said. "It's nice to see people show up at the performances I've been a part of."

Jones agreed.

"I think there are a lot of great bands and performers in Eugene," he said. "Sometimes, there are more great bands than there are people to see them. Which I guess is a better problem than having it the other way around."

Foolscap Books is located at 780 Blair Blvd. Sign-ups for the songwriting slam will take place from 8-9 p.m., with performances beginning at 9 p.m.. Ticket prices range from \$3-\$5 and will be available at the door. The performance featuring The Ovulators and Dan Jones will begin at 9 p.m. on Saturday and will have the same ticket prices.

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Photo illustrations by Lauren Wimer Emerald

Twelve songwriters will perform tonight as part of a songwriting slam at Foolscap Books beginning at 9 p.m. The musicians will compete for studio time at Sprout City Recording Studios and various gift certificates.

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portunity to raise money for the organization and to bring new art to Eugene.

"To tell you the truth, I was secretly happy," she said. "I just thought that a Carnival celebration would be fantastic. Eugene doesn't really have anything like it at all, and it was a perfect fit because Carnival is the Brazilian Mardi Gras."

The event will also feature exotic performances and showpieces in an exposition of Brazilian culture.

"Remarkably, the artists are all locals. The exception being The Illuminated Fools. They are from Southern Oregon, and they do a marvelous job with these enormous human puppets. They're quite spectacular," Callahan said.

Samba Já, a 40-person Eugene percussion ensemble that performed in 2003's Eugene Celebration parade, will also play, along with Edson Oliveira's

Sun Bossa Band.

Cultural Forum Heritage Music Co-ordinators Will Reischman and Ariel Zimmer worked with SHSKI on the project. Reischman said they were attracted to the idea of doing something other than the traditional American Mardi Gras.

"The Carnival celebration is all this music, dancing and costumes with the addition of pretty much nonstop drumming," he said.

Zimmer has previously danced with Samba Já.

"It's going to have lots of sound, lots of rhythm — you won't be able to not dance," she said. "You won't be able to sit down, and if you do it's going to be because you're so tired you just have to sit and watch."

Lisa Petit, a University student, will teach a free dance lesson, along with other students, at 6:30 p.m. The Netal, Brazil, native came to Oregon to study and live with her American father.

"(The dance), it's just in your blood, it's fun, it's exciting," she said. "It makes you want to move yourself. It can be very sexual but fun. The Samba is hard to learn but we're going to be teaching little step."

Both Callahan and Reischman were also enthusiastic about the Capoeira demonstration, a form of dance that was created by Brazilian slaves as a way to secretly practice forbidden fighting techniques.

"I'm very excited about the Capoeira demonstration," she said. "It's part dance and part fighting. If you've never seen it you should come just for that — it's stunningly beautiful."

The event begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are available at the EMU Ticket Office or Sundance Natural Foods. Ticket prices range from \$6 to \$12, with discounts for advance ticket sales and students available.

Steven Neuman is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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The possible combinations are rather endless when imagination is set forth. It's strange to think that no honest attempts have been made by the industry to promote diversity through technology. The thinking has all been inside the box.

But this is good for any smart college student with some entrepreneurial spirit. The music industry is a ripe new playing field. While the odds are against a new form taking shape, it's looking brighter every day.

We are living in a time when fresh ideas are blossoming at a feverish pace. The dinosaurs that roamed this land are not agile enough to change their ways. They can't adapt quickly enough and they are on their last legs.

Out of this slow extinction will emerge an entire generation of young, bright people who only wish to hear and promote amazing music. They won't care about the bottom line. They won't care about fortune, about fame. They are out there, right now, in the clubs, on the phones, in the studios, behind the computers and behind the scenes, planning the next logical step.

The power is shifting, spreading back into the people's hands again. The idea that is simmering will be one of musical diversity and equality. Music will be freed from the tyranny of industry and become the music of the people again, like it once was, back before dinosaurs roamed the earth.

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