

■ In my opinion



RYAN NYBURG  
BUDGET RACK

## Reality bites: Campus cultural life a crock

Sometimes I get a little depressed about the state of our culture. What gets me through is the fact that, when you look at the big picture, things generally aren't any better or worse than they used to be. It's the same with arts and entertainment as it is with politics (big difference there). Think this is the worst administration we've ever had? You obviously don't have much of an attention span.

But there are some things that are indisputably worse off than they used to be. Cultural life on campus, for example, seems bound to sound its death toll any day now. There was a time when colleges were on the forefront of almost every worthwhile cultural movement. Throughout the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s, the campus community could always be trusted to be on top of what was really happening. Now? Forget it. Sure, you can still hear better music on average at most college radio stations than the corporate-owned ones, but college radio as a whole is slowly pigeonholing itself into an indie-rock niche when it manages to be relevant at all. It's like that on almost all levels of campus artistic activity.

You can spot signs of decay here on our own campus. Just a few years ago the Cultural Forum hosted showings of art and avant-garde films every few weeks. Now, thanks to a deal with the Swank distribution company, we get to see "Troy" and "Shrek 2" right here on our own campus. Whoop-dee-crap, second run films a couple weeks away from being released on video. Great, that will save me the trouble of taking the free bus trip out to Springfield to see the same films for the same price. How convenient. (Springfield gets a lot of crap from Eugene residents, but when you get down to it, who has the theaters with the stadium seating?)

What's the point of this? This is aimed at students, right? As a university, one of the bastions of intellectual discovery, shouldn't we in some way be bolstering the cultural awareness of students rather than happily feeding them the same pap they can find at any local Blockbuster? Maybe I'm just being an elitist, but in the words of David Reese: "If 'elitist' just means 'not the dumbest motherfucker in the room,' I'll be an elitist."

A few decades ago this subject never would have even come up. In the 1950s, college students helped fuel the beat and folk movements; in the 1960s they were the home for a wide range of counter-culture activities; in the 1970s they were the home of experimental and avant-garde films; in the 1980s they were the primary audience of underground music. But since the 1990s this sort of activity has started to dissipate. And what do we have today? I'll give you a hint: It starts with

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■ Theater review

## 'Athens' musical tackles risqué themes

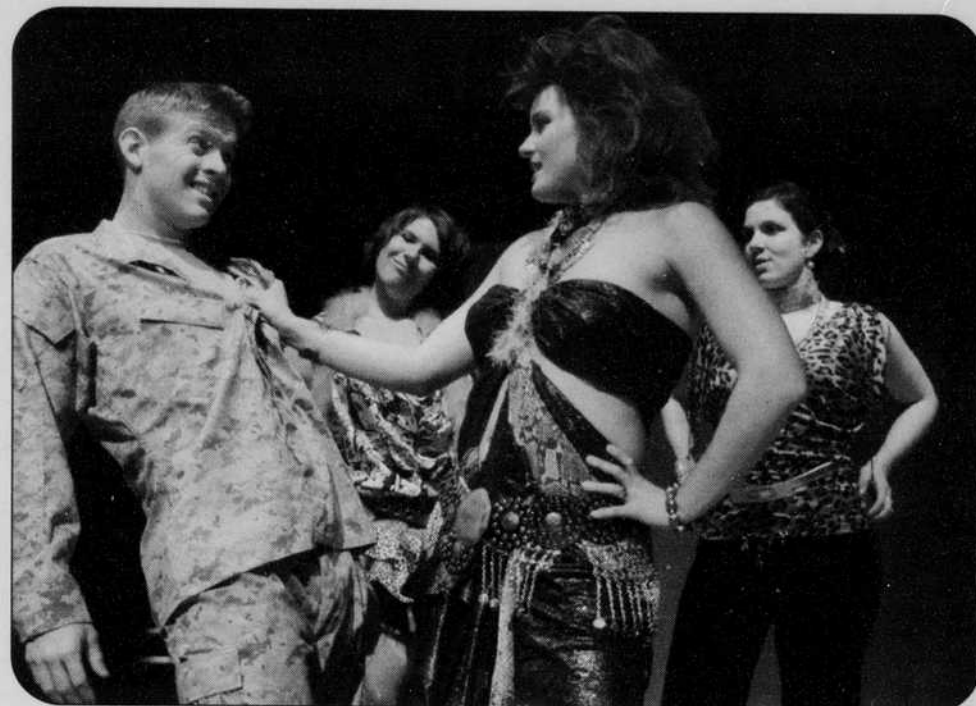
*Controversial scenes depict  
sexual references and remark  
on current political situations*

BY NATASHA CHILINGERIAN  
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

The University Theatre's production of "Good Morning Athens" is the perfect musical for someone who can't stand traditional musicals. Audiences won't hear indecipherable language or opera-like tunes in this show. Instead, show-goers experience hip-hop, sexual themes, political cracks and common language.

The story line encompasses themes that a typical University student is likely to relate to. The plot centers on General Tantalos, the leader of Athens, who bought himself into office and is now up for re-election. To gain popularity, he decides to launch an unjustified war. The women in town are furious that their men will be neglecting them for a pointless war, so they vow to withhold sex until their husbands give up fighting. Throughout this battle of war and sex, characters experience sexual frustration, have conflicts in their relationships and learn about the realities of combat. This tale is told amid a colorful, creative set, which includes a wall of graffiti, pillars, vibrant buildings and a border of female pop singer cut-outs including J. Lo, Britney Spears and even Janet Jackson with her exposed breast. An orchestra is absent from this musical; instead, cast members sing contemporary-style to prerecorded, instrumental background music.

Political references in the show are abundant, hilarious and perfectly reflect today's American politics. Tantalos, played by theater arts student Joe Oyala, is an obvious representation of President George W. Bush. Tantalos mispronounces lengthy words during his speeches and references the PATRIOT Act and the No Child Left Behind Act. In response to his wife's request to end the war,



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

From left: Joe Oyala (Tantalos), Danielle Kardun (Chrysis), Sarah Griner (Lysistrata) and Juliet Strong (Thalia) star in 'Good Morning Athens.'

he responds, "Where will we get our oil?" In the meantime, characters mock war by dancing with prop rifles and a noose tied around the neck of an accused "unpatriotic" person.

Controversial and risqué themes are stretched further in the show's blatant sexual references. After withholding for a while, the women begin to crave sex and express themselves by discussing their sexual dreams and dancing with vegetable dildos. In one scene, the cast dances with a giant prop penis and another showcases a gay makeout. These highly suggestive visuals, as well as liberal use of foul language, prove that the cast of "Good Morning Athens" isn't afraid to take chances, and their fearless attitudes are very admirable.

Exceptional talent radiates from the stage in this show. One powerful performance comes from Medea (played by theater arts and mathematics student Marissa Neitling), a blunt, alcoholic newscaster and single mom who struggles with her relationship with her ex-husband. Neitling gives a convincing portrayal of an angst-driven, intoxicated woman.

For those still grieving about Nov. 3's election results, "Good Morning Athens" might be a helpful remedy. The show inspires many laughs by poking fun at the President and his policies. This wild, risqué production that a "Good Morning Athens" writer calls an "anti-musical," is sure to please.

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## POWER OF SPEECH THROUGH POETRY

*Local poets perform original pieces of work at  
Territorial Winery and compete for cash prizes*

BY AMY LICHTY  
PULSE REPORTER

Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson are all well known for their original poetry, which has shaped the art as we know it today. But today, there are loads of local poets around that might make Poe, Frost and Dickinson rethink what they know about poetry. These poets participate in the Eugene Poetry Slam, a competitive art of performance poetry.

Marietta Bonaventure, the "Slammaster" and brains behind the operation, has been hosting the Eugene Poetry Slam for three years. Until this year, the nine-month-long Poetry Slam season was held at Bonaventure's business, Foolscape Books, previously located on the corner of Eighth and Blair. After Foolscape became a strictly online business, the nationally-recognized Eugene Poetry Slam lost its home, but not its 100-plus fan following. Luckily, Territorial Winery, at Third and Adams, was open for something fresh, and the Eugene Poetry

Slam got a new residence.

"This is a good venue and it's great to get people in here," Territorial Winery wine-maker John Jarboe said. "It's a big, huge open space and it's a good deal for everyone involved."

Poetry Slam participant Kitt Jennings seems to agree.

"It's a really friendly venue. It's really nice and a great atmosphere," said Jennings, who took first place in this year's first slam on Oct. 23.

The slamming takes place the second Saturday of each month in the winery's pressing room, a large warehouse where the wine is made, and is open to all ages. For those 21 and older, wines are always available for purchase at the wine bar and lounge.

The second round of the poetry slam will take place this Saturday at 8 p.m. with sign-ups starting at 7 p.m. A maximum of 15 poets can sign up to perform, but if more wish to participate, a lottery will take place to allow a few more to join in the fun.

Everyone is welcome to come watch the poets speak original work for a \$5 cover.

The top three winners of each slam win a cash prize and are automatically qualified for the playoffs, which take place in April. The winners of each playoff then advance to the finals, where the top four winners then become the Eugene Poetry Slam Team and participate in the national competition, to be held this year in Albuquerque, N.M.

There's also an option for those who love slamming poetry, but hate the competition side of it. The Spoken Word Showcase, held in the Downtown Lounge the first Sunday of every month, is open for anyone over 21 who wishes to spread his or her words without challenging anyone else.

Slam Poetry has become a popular art all over the country. Approximately 70 separate poetry slam teams participated in last year's nationals, which took place in St. Louis. The Eugene team is a good mixture of both sexes and Jennings warns that women are the ones to watch this year.

"Most of the time, the number

of men and women participating was about even, or at least pretty close. There were times where it wasn't quite even, which disappointed us, but we saw it as progress compared to how it was before," Jennings said. "But this year, I really think that the girls are the ones to contend with."

According to its followers, this growing art form has reached popularity because of the power of speech it gives people and the love for the art of poetry.

"I think the most amazing thing about slam poetry is there is a certain controversy to it; sometimes it becomes more performance and less actual poetry for some people. But basically it gives people a voice who normally wouldn't have a voice," Bonaventure said. "There's no other event where you see people running outside during breaks to sit down to write because they're so inspired."

"Slam is an interesting game," Jennings said. "And I'm glad that I've already qualified (for playoffs) because now I can just sit back and watch the drama unfold."

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