

Poetry Slamwich

Eugene's poetic wit competes for national showdown.

Poetry. Sublime descriptions of sadness souring the corners of your mouth below the tongue, and you fight back tears. Maybe motivational elation on swifts' wings, taking flight from stretched smile to twirling microphone, causing you to shake your fist and silently promise that tomorrow, dammit, you'll mow the goddam lawn. Or a poet, shouting sexual elations, searing, sating frustrations, might awaken a stirring in yer' loins, and make you squiggle, yelp, look around for help.

Slam! Announcing, Saturday, May 15 at Foolscap Books, a competitive conflagration of wordsmiths among you, a bare-bones, blood-thirsty battle of maximum verbosity, or sometimes, poignant silence, from some of Eugene's finest poets.

Last year, Foolscap owner Marietta Bonaventure put together the first-ever Eugene poetry-slam team. It went to Chicago, placing 36th out of 64 teams, a remarkable accomplishment for a first-year squadron of quill-wielding romantics. This year the competition's on steroids, featuring 80 teams, all going mic-to-mic, Aug. 3-8, in St. Louis.

But first, Eugene poets gotta duke it out amongst themselves. Hence, the finals: Six poets, three rounds, each poet reading one poem a round, and the four poets with the highest total at the end of round three, well, how do you spell St. Louis?

The evening begins at 8 pm, featuring an open mic and performances by Seattle-based poetry collective, ORATRIX.

This is Foolscap's final event. From now on Foolscap will move to internet sales, at www.foolscapbooks.com Books before May 15 are 75 percent off. Head there for your literary lusts and page-turning thrusts. Support local bookstores.

And now, on to the finalists!

Cassie Sorenson

Sorensen a 21-year-old queer female studying English literature (which reminds her not to write like pretentious dead white guys) and women's and gender studies (which informs her poetry with politics and women's issues). Her best work comes to her in the wee hours.

Do you have any sneak attacks for winning the slam?

My secret technique is that I plan to flash the audience.

Kitt Jennings

Jennings has been a firefighter and muralist, a riverboat deckhand and snake handler. She strives to tell an entertaining story through specific experiences, with the belief that the more personal a thing is, the more universal underlying feelings become.

If you could have any super power?

The ability to control bugs. If you could just control three flies in a room, you'd pretty much

have free reign to do what you wanted.

Shea Shattuck-Faegre

She has been a janitor, a tutor, a mime, a forensics data assistant, a stripper, a vegan baker, a waitress, a painter, a tutor and an organic farmer. She's marched in the streets of Boston and New York, and claims that she writes especially for her 6-year-old sister.

Do you have a special technique for slams?

Most people want to be mad. They're mad about something but they can't put their finger on it. I try to connect people to their intuition.

Jahan Khalighi

Originally from the Bay area, Khalighi has been active in the slam poetry community for about three years. Khalighi was a member of the first Eugene Slam Team to compete at the 2004 National Poetry Slam in Chicago.

What makes a poem work at a poetry slam?

It's got to reveal something about the poet's personal experience, and in that uncovering, the rest of the room can partake.

Samuel Rutledge

Growing up in a middle class development in northeast Eugene, Rutledge struggled with his identity as a white, middle-class male from a young age. This struggle has been thematic in his writing from the beginning.

Any secret techniques you have to winning a slam?

I try to be as blatantly honest as possible, without going overboard into self-indulgence.

Olivia Pepper

Pepper is a 21-year-old novelist hopeful who has vivid dreams about Frida Kahlo stealing her cigarettes while they get matching tattoos. She's a mixed-blood pirate-queen descendent of Penahwapskiek Indians, Roma gypsies, Irish Farmers and French Jews. She hopes to go on a slam tour, move to San Francisco, publish novels, marry her best friend, have babies and settle down into some form of radical feminist domesticity.

What is poetry slam?

Poetry slam is a horrendously nerve-wracking experience of tragic bliss and horrifying beauty.

If you had a super power?

Invisibility. I'd find out what people secretly want, and then I'd do whatever I could to make that happen for them.



SUMMER EVENTS

ISSUE 5.27.04

WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT ALL
MUSIC FESTIVALS
 FROM SF TO SEATTLE
 AND POINTS EAST AND WEST
WINE TASTING
 EVENTS AND TOURS
MICROBREW FESTIVALS
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TICKETS AT THE DOOR: \$5 GENERAL, \$3 STUDENTS/SENIORS
 Info: 541-346-3761

FUTURE SLAM EVENTS: Eugene vs. the Universe 2003 Eugene Slam Team documentary, 12:30 pm, Bijou Theatre; Slam, Saturday, June 12, Downtown Lounge; Slam, Friday, July 2, John Henry's; Slam, Saturday, July 3, Saturday Market; Slams, July 9, 10 and 11, Oregon Country Fair; Slam, Friday, July 30, Sam Bond's Garage; 2005 Eugene poetry slam season kickoff, October 23, Territorial Winery Pressing Room, 907 W. 3rd. Ave.