

Jon Labrousse



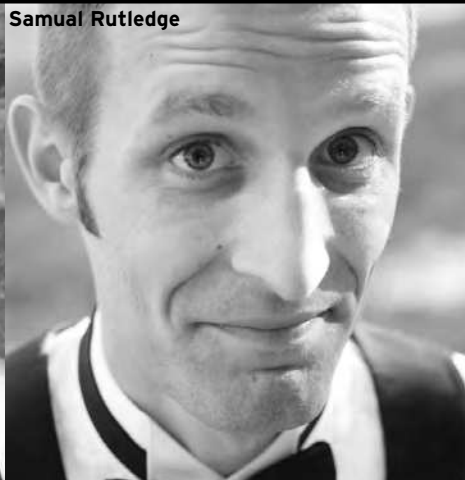
Miranda Willette



Kitt Jennings



Samual Rutledge



Poets, Pinot and Puddin'

2005 Eugene Slam Team named at Finals.

On Saturday night I found myself, along with perhaps 80 others, in a dark and gloomy warehouse, the home of Territorial Winery in Eugene. Our cause? The Eugene Poetry Slam Finals, with featured guest Mike McGee.

"I like you similar to how pirates and frat boys like booty," says McGee in his poem "Like." "You're a pocket full of awesome." McGee, a nationally recognized slam poet, kicked off the event by performing poems that ranged in topic from cuddling to love to the love of pudding.

Among the eight competitors, Samuel Rutledge spoke about Peter Pan and disillusionment. Jes Painter spoke about being a lesbian and the many ways to tie a tie. Jon

Labrousse talked about fatherhood and Superman. The energy in the warehouse was electrifying — or maybe it was the Pinot

'It's raw, it's intense and anything goes'

Noir. Either way, the poets were on fire.

Of the eight finalists, four were chosen to go to this year's Poetry Slam Nationals in Albuquerque, N.M.: Miranda Willette, Samuel Rutledge, Kitt Jennings and Jon Labrousse. Rutledge and Jennings were also members of the Eugene Slam Team for the

2004 Nationals in St. Louis. "Nationals in St. Louis was both one big disaster and one huge party," says Jennings, 23, who has been writing since she was five.

The Saturday night event marked the close of the Eugene Poetry Slam's third season. Marietta Bonaventure, organizer of the Slam, says this year was different than previ-

dience members, who don't necessarily know much about poetry. But that's the point. "This is the heart of poetry slam ... the idea is that poetry should be accessible to the average person," says Bonaventure. The competitive aspect also adds a different dynamic to poetry slams than to a typical reading. It makes poets work harder, says

ous years because the finalists were not only great performers but also "all real poets." The drawback to slam poetry, she says, is the audience doesn't respond as much to "well crafted poetry, but rather its flashiness" or the performer's ability to hit a punch line.

The judges are made up of volunteer au-

Bonaventure. She says she's seen poets "become twice the poets they were at the beginning of a season."

Bonaventure loves slam poetry because she views it as a vehicle for empowerment. Jennings loves it for its lack of rules. "It's raw, it's intense and anything goes," she says. **EW**

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