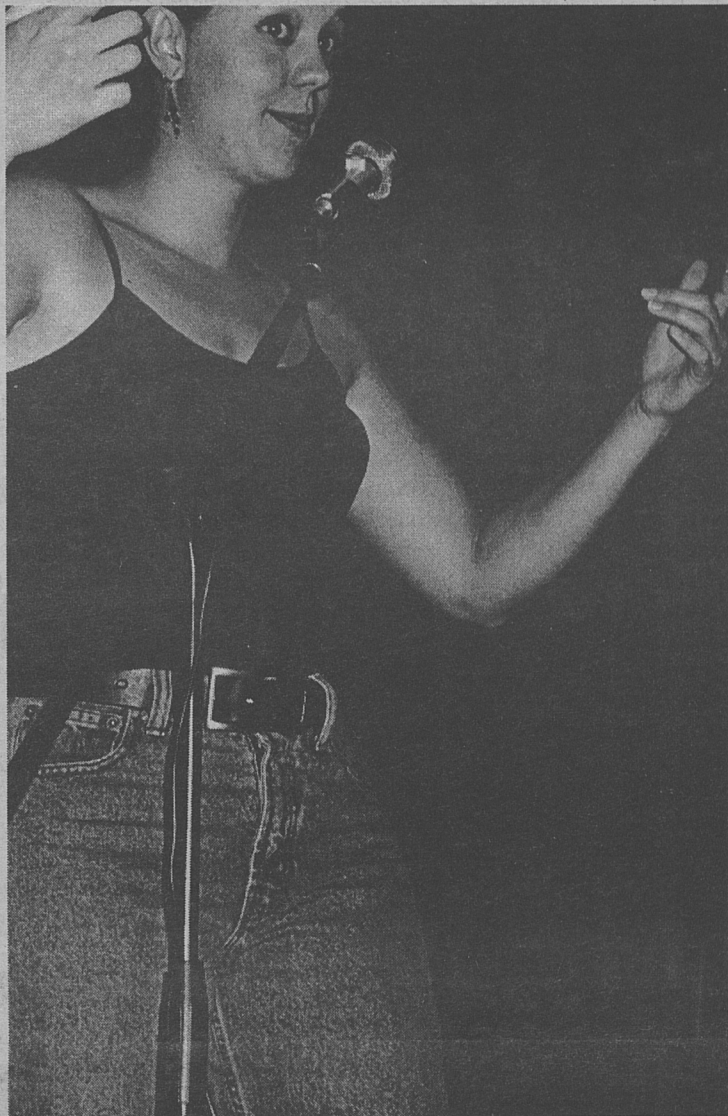


photo Cathy Resmer



Poetry Slam has arrived in Burlington, thanks to the Rhombus Gallery and many enthusiastic fans.

BY CATHY RESMER

It's Saturday night. You're in a crowded second-floor room on College Street in Burlington, Vermont. You're sitting next to a man who clutches a tattered piece of paper that looks like it was ripped from a spiral notebook. A woman on the stage announces a name, and the man beside you rises, steps to the microphone, and reads — gasp! — a poem.

It's a short poem, and it's about an ornery rooster. He sits down. The crowd claps, hoots, and hollers like Julia Roberts at a polo match in *Pretty Woman*. Up from the sea of faces pop five cards that say things like "7.5" and "8.3."

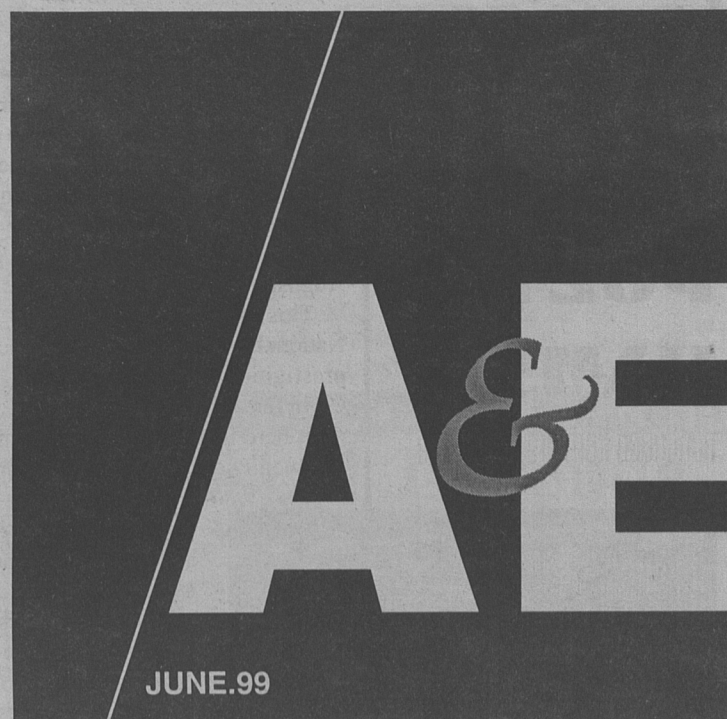
Have you stepped into some sort of post-apocalyptic infotainment-less world? Or are you at Rhombus Gallery for the Burlington Slam, the Green Mountain State's only poetry slam?

The realm in our sound-byte media-hype culture normally reserved for athletes and rock stars is now also populated by purveyors of verse — sharp-tongued, quick-witted souls pitted against each other in a series of rounds judged by audience members randomly selected for the task of assigning scores.

The slammers vie for top honors by reciting one poem per round. The poem must be their own original composition, and it must engage, enrage, inspire, titillate, or somehow woo the judges-and the audience — whose job it is to try to influence the judges with their applause and/or catcalls. And all this must happen in three minutes or less, without the use of props of any kind.

Poetry slams started as an attempt by poet/construction worker Marc Smith to bring poetry back to the masses — back to the time of accessible spoken word entertainment, like what a minstrel performing *Beowulf* must have been to a mead-hall packed with ravenous warriors and their hardy wenches. He devised the slam as entertainment for the Saturday night regulars at a bar in Chicago. It has since caught on worldwide as a way for poets to garner an audience for their work in a cultural landscape increasingly dominated by multicolored multimedia.

photo Cathy Resmer



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BAM!
POETIC
HAMS!**

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