

# Lifestyle

By Mark Taylor

Staff writer

**S**moke curls blue against a matte-black background. Bebop jazz drifts like an echo as a blond woman wearing a black beret, slacks and jacket slinks onto the tiny stage of the basement nightclub. She purrs a paean of the mysteries of lunar power from behind the spotlight, suspended paper moon.

Her face a shadowy profile, she probes man's mystical connection to the moon.

The scene could have been lifted from a Greenwich Village coffeehouse 30 years ago.

But it's not. It's one of Chicago's increasingly frequent poetry readings.

Poetry, as a form of popular entertainment, is returning.

Part-performance art, rap and avant-garde artistic expression, today's recitals resurrect poetry from dusty library journals into nightclubs and taverns where it has become an accessible and viable entertainment medium.

There's little danger of poetry replacing rock music or bumping couch potatoes from their VCRs. But the readings, like this recent one at Chicago's Lower Links Club, have left the academic circles and come out into the streets. The Lower Links hosts poetry readings at least once a week, bringing in poets like Tony Fitzpatrick and Jean Howard to read their works in a place that looks like a charcoal pit with people.

The Green Mill Lounge, a Chicago jazz club, offers the weekly Uptown Poetry Slam, attracting area poets and several hundred poetry lovers to the Sunday night revivals.

And bars like Lincoln Avenue's Red Lion slate poetry readings



Jean Howard presents her poetry.

Photos by Larry Bretts

## The beat goes on

Poetry is found alive  
in city and that's no jive

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