

# ...and THE BEAT GOES ON

Shout out for Holler

By Kim Thomas

"The only thing that can save the world is the reclaiming of the awareness of the world.

That's what poetry does."

—Allen Ginsberg

If the ice and snow kept you barricaded in your home and you had to miss last week's *Holler Poets Series 9*, *Holler* returns with Series 10, on February 18, beginning at 8pm at Al's Bar & Grill, where the beers are cheap, but the poetry is rich.

Holler 10, featuring Chuck Clenney and Crystal Wilkinson and hosted by Eric Sutherland, will follow with music by Devine Carama (whose album, *Divine Intervention* was just released this past Saturday). Admission is FREE.

Poet Laureate Jane Gentry Vance headlined the group of eight poets that night, and according to Sutherland, "we had a huge turnout. At that point, [Al's owner] Les Miller asked me if I wanted to do something at Al's on the regular. I decided a monthly poetry and music gig would be just what the community needed and set about organizing Holler."

The first event happened in May, with Jude McPherson and Maurice Manning headlining. The excitement and energy was so great, Sutherland then organized about four or five months' worth of events at one time.

On February 4, *Holler 9*, the ninth show in the series had Al's packed to standing room only within a half hour.

Sutherland has an enthusiasm that seems to have touched people of all ages, and

live and both bring incredible, yet different styles and topics to the forefront. They are extremely driven by their craft and it is plainly evident that their work ethic to continually progress and get better never diminishes. They unknowingly push me to strive to reach my potential and hopefully carve out a name for myself one day on a larger scale. Maybe one day I can have people pay to come see me speak. That would be unbelievable."

Kimble didn't know until he was in college that wanted to write, "I had dreams of being a NBA basketball star but when that fell through, poetry found its way into my heart and never left."

The crowd at Al's was moved, and rewarded Kimble with shouts and applause for

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—Sunny Montgomery

Since the Holler Poets Series is followed by such a diverse and thoughtful group of poets, writers, thinkers and people who just automatically give you a good vibe that creativity is alive and living at Al's, it's not surprising that Sutherland describes *Holler* as "THE literary event in Lexington."

## How Holler Happened

The Holler Poets Series is the burgeoning brainchild of Eric Sutherland, a socially conscious advocate and encourager for local musical and vocal artists. Sutherland admits he had organized a similar series years ago, but "had descended into creative hibernation. Over beers at Al's one night, I was having a chat with a friend, and poet, Chuck Clenney about the need for a poetic response to the 5 year anniversary of the Iraq invasion. *Poets for Peace* was born that night and took place at Al's in March, the 5-year marker."

in all walks of life.

Jim Embry says he considers Sutherland to be, "one of the most incredible artists not only in the Bluegrass, but just about anywhere." You can't get a better nod than that.

At the *Holler* shows, Sutherland never misses a beat, knows everyone who walks in, and most importantly, shows his respectful support by being an rapt listener.

## Featured Holler Poets

One of the spotlighted artists at *Holler 9*, **Mike Kimble** met Sutherland through going to Holler.

Kimble says, "He's an incredible poet and infectious with creative energy. I think Holler's success has a lot to do with that energy." Kimble has been writing for several years and names two main inspirational influences, Saul Williams and Black Ice.

"I have had the pleasure of seeing both

his courage, when he proudly voiced his devotion to and admiration for his family, especially his younger brother, who has autism.

## Open Mic Opens Up Avenue for Expression

One of Sutherland's regular open-mic readers who always draws a keen interest is Sunny Montgomery, who had everyone in stitches at *Holler 9*, bringing down the house with her hilarious story about office etiquette.

Montgomery is grateful to the *Holler* scene, and believes that "it's not so much that I feel like *Holler* has brought the writer out in me (I've considered myself a writer since I was ten), but something it's done for sure is give me a reason to keep turning out new pieces. I tell myself that I have to have something new to read at open mic every month, so I'll write a lot of stories before I get one that I'm comfortable reading to a crowd. Coupling a passion for writing with a fear of

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rejection is definitely making me become a stronger writer!"

Montgomery thinks another element of *Holler's* success is because everyone is always so supportive to the open mic readers. "I've made some good friends and met a lot of really talented writers who've seriously inspired my writing (Donna Ison, Maurice Manning, Kristen Roach Thompson for example). *Holler* has been a great literary network for me. I mean Al's Bar was already a really cool place to be (shout out to the black bean burger) — you combine that with the amazing energy and creative spirit that *Holler* brings and I believe this is easily the greatest literary event to happen in Lexington."

### HOLLER POETS SERIES 9

At *Holler 9*, host Eric Sutherland began the evening with the open mic session, an assortment of readings that covered every subject from Sunny Montgomery's hilarious story about office etiquette to Donna Ison's irreverent snippet from her book, *The Miracle of Myrtle: Saint Gone Wild* (which is now available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)).

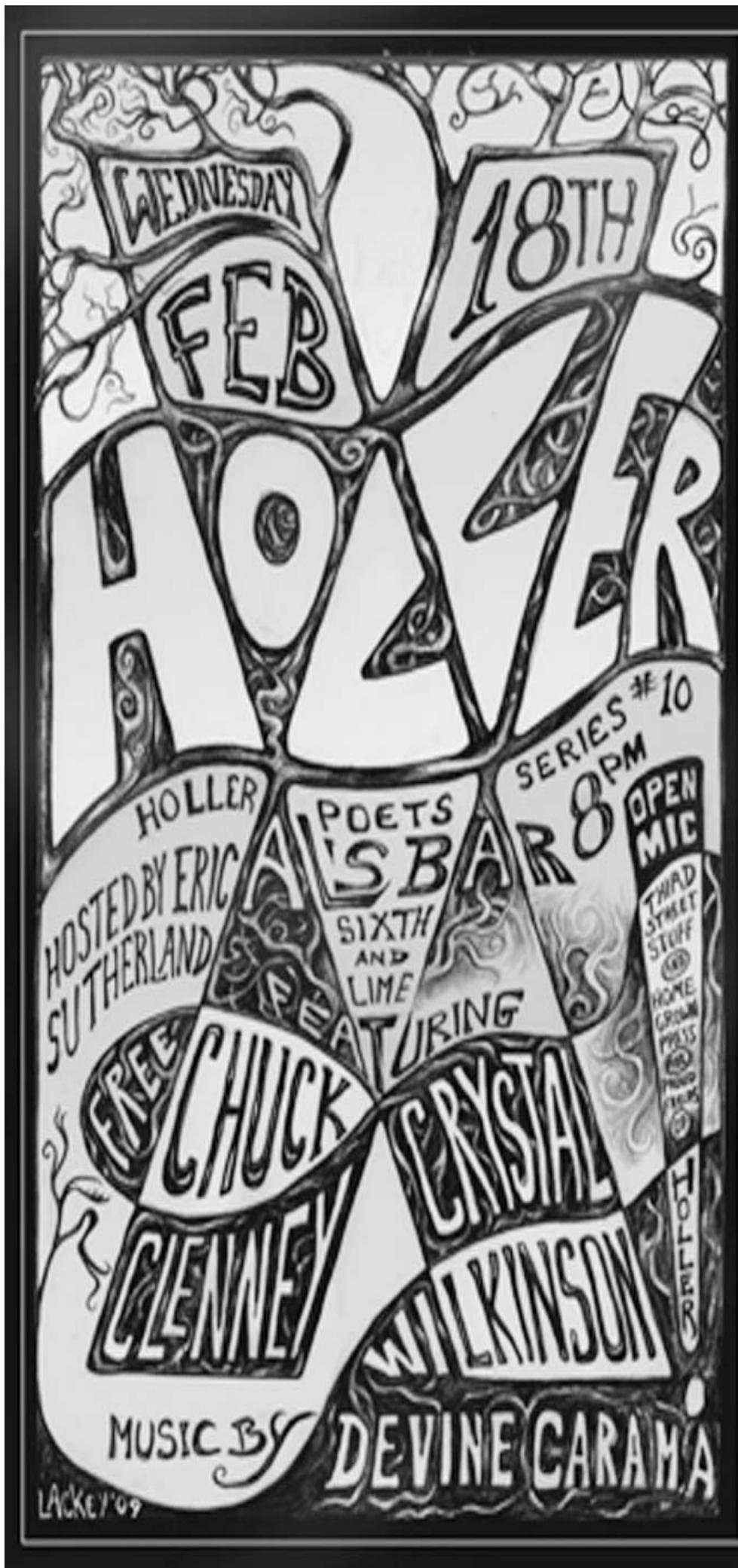
Open mic concluded with readings by Sutherland and Devine Carama, adding just enough solemn verse to sober the audience and set the mood for featured poets, Kristen Roach Thompson and Mike Kimble.

Although much of the evening was spent in laughter, Thompson and Kimble both reflected their contemplative nature through their spoken word. Thompson's musings revealed how her wry sense of humor had helped her survive several bouts with melanoma, at times simply saying, "here's another cancer poem," as an introduction. Kimble completed the verbal portion of the show with prose on a multitude of topics. At one point, he stepped to the side and finished his performance off-mic, speaking with an open heart about his love and respect for his younger brother, who is autistic.

Sutherland, the master of gentle persuasion, often shushed the spirited crowd during readings, but the air of respect for him was palpable and likewise, they obeyed.

With the below-zero wind chill, how comforting to find this pocket of poetic warmth by going a little bit out of my way last week. Even those who think they don't like poetry should make an effort on February 18th to witness *Holler's* showcase of local talent. After all, these are the stars of tomorrow!

Sutherland promises an even bigger *Holler* extravaganza in March. Stay tuned for more in *Ace* and on the *Ace* blog about this collection of poets, which in the past have included the following: Maurice Manning, Jude McPherson, Bianca Spriggs, Jane Gentry Vance, Willie Davis, Ed McClanahan,



Gurney Norman, Rebecca Howell, Katerina Stoykova-Klemer, Crystal McGee, Makalani Bandele, Matthew Haughton, George Ella Lyon, NAM, Chuck Clenney, Theo Edmonds.

Photos courtesy of Erin Cutler

NOTE: Another much-anticipated facet of *Holler Poets Series* is the poster artwork by John Lackey. Visit: <http://www.myspace.com/hollerpoets> or <http://www.myspace.com/esutherland>

### HOLLER CREATOR, ERIC SUTHERLAND, IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I was a writer as a teen, but more prose, letters, diary type of stuff, you know the broken hearted teen thing. My first thing I really wrote was a short "book" called the game, when I was in 8th grade. It was an assignment in a program for gifted students called *Inquire*. Well, I guess it was for those who scored high on their standardized tests ... but the first poem I remember writing was when I was 19, about the Rodney King beating and watching that whole scene unfold on CNN.

My parents were encouraging of whatever I wanted to do, really. I was more of a jock growing up, though I really wanted to be a visual artist and told folks so as far back as 8 years old! I guess I knew I had a talent for expressing myself in writing, but never really thought about being a writer. It wasn't until I discovered other poets in the Central Kentucky scene that I found my place in this poetry world.

I like to write about whatever inspires me to put pen to paper. Mostly, I guess, I write about our connection to the natural world, both the beauty of it, and the destruction of it. This would include modern politics. I also write about love, both happy tales and tragic ones. It seems that most of my inspiration to write comes from being pissed off, depressed, sad, etc. about the state of affairs in the world whether that is on a personal level or a national level.

Sutherland's influences are diverse. He explains, "John Lennon was there from the beginning, I mean, I really found poetry through music. My parents had a great diverse record collection and I spent hours playing them, reading the lyrics. In fact, I can point to the Pink Floyd song, *Pigs*, three different ones, from the album *Animals*, as a major influence in my thinking and later writing life. The Beatles were great, but I had a certain affinity toward John, and as I learned more about him and his social and political awareness and activism, I truly held him high up. In his song *Working Class Hero* he sings "a working class hero is something to be" and I guess I have become just that, a working class man trying to make a positive difference in the world. As far as writers go, I guess you would have to start with Wendell Berry.. I grew up a mere 20 miles from where he births his earth centered visions

All photos courtesy Erin Cutler



**Holler If You Hear Me  
Poetry is Back  
By Bianca Spriggs**

One of my favorite quotes of all time is, "The king fears no one but the poet." As far as I know, it's anonymous, but still poignant. There's a reason, I feel, that it's been so long to have a poet included in the Inaugural ceremonies. There's a reason a bunch of poets turned down an invite to the White House during the past eight years and since have begun a Poets Against the War initiative.

January not only marked the Inauguration of a new president, but a national Welcome Home to poets everywhere. Poetry is again apart of the national lexicon. Yes, this is the answer to the question we've been asking ourselves: How do poets stop writing poetry for other poets and stop alienating readers of all ilk? In other words how do poets break back into national interest and make poetry inclusive? Well, you elect a president who reads poetry and get represented at Inauguration by a bonafide Class A poet. Duh.

So on that note, you too have an opportunity to be part of this new crop of cool. Wednesday, February 18, if you looooooooooooooove poetry and if you looooooooooooooove Al's Bar, then there's only one place in Lexington that you need to be. And that's front and center at Al's at 8pm, eagerly awaiting the open mic and featured writers of the Holler Poetry Series, hosted by Eric Sutherland.

I met Eric about 11 years ago at the Bluegrass Baking Company at a monthly reading he used to host.

He gave me my first feature spot, ever, and though the years put a halt to that particular set, and have opened and closed other local venues, over the past year, Eric can still put one a heck of a good show. He has revitalized much of the ardor for live poetry in Lexington, through the Holler monthly reading, which have occasionally featured riveting Poets Against the War sessions, and have boasted such Kentucky authors as Poet Laureate, Jane Gentry Vance, Guerney Norman, Jude McPherson, George Ella Lyon, Leatha Kendrick, and Rebecca Howell, not to mention a sampling of the buffet of local music.

The crowds, as you might expect in a bar scene, are rowdy, talky, and engaged. This is not your Mama's poetry set, folks. Do not expect golf claps, finger snaps, or polite discussion about meter. Do expect loud conversation closer to the bar (read: get a seat by the stage), every topic from love to politics, and hands on, down and dirty, and intellectually call and response, poetry. Roll up your sleeves, grab a bottle of PBR or a knot of Buffalo Trace, order some local, sustainable fare, and get your seat early for this month's line up featuring Mike Kimble and Kristen Roach Thompson and music by the Comfort Creatures.

Open mic begins at 8pm (please limit your poems to under 4 minutes for courtesy's sake), and of course, as always, the show is F to the R to the Double E. Bring a friend, a poem, and your fine self on down!

And on that note, I'd loveta leave you with one of my favorite riffs, a little Yeats:

*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

—The Wind Among the Reeds

*and was turned on immediately by his straightforward profundity. I first discovered him through a book of essays given by my mother for Christmas and it was like someone had flipped a light switch on in my head! His poem, "Manifesto: Mad Farmer*

*Liberation Front" is probably my favorite poem...and then there are the beats, particularly Kerouac, Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg's howl is also one of my faves, and arguably could be the greatest poem of all time. Of course, Walt Whitman, Robinson Jeffers, t.s. eliot ... I could go on and on."*



Artist Mike Kimble



Artist Kristen Roach Thompson

