



## BOOK REVIEWS

CHECK THIS OUT

ROBERT PRIEST

**MIC CHECK: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SPOKEN WORD IN CANADA** edited by David Silverberg (Quattro), 100 pages, \$16.95 paper.  
Rating: **NNNN**

The poems in *Mic Check* are surprisingly good. I dreaded having to wade through some of spoken word's famous excesses. But editor, poetry magnet/magnate and sometime NOW writer Dave Silverberg has chosen well.

There's hardly a poem here that requires a performance in order to be at its best. And some, stripped of the clutter of spoken word's more over-the-top histrionics, are much better on the page than on the stage.

Happily, they reveal that the genre is inclusive. All sorts of aesthetics and approaches are at work in these poems. Vancouver's R.C. Weslowski for instance is the best new surrealist I've discovered since the young Albert Moritz.

Magpie Ulysses's confessional poems hit hard and take the reader through intense visceral terrain but never wallow. I love the wonderful moment of brevity that Andrea von Wichert gives the collection when in her poem *Small Me* she "holds the huge" in her arms.

In my favourite, Toronto's L.E.V.I.A.T.H.A.N. appropriates and recycles the names of trendy cars – "I need you to Ford Focus on what I'm gonna tell you" – to take us on a wild journey into the sick heart of the culture.

Then there's local actor/writer Amanda Hiebert. If she doesn't first become a famous movie star, I can see her being an icon of Canadian literature in about 10 years. She is so readable, inventive and clear.

Valentino Assenza finds the sad grace in being a heavy?weight and cleverly refashions it into Cohenesque come-ons.

If you like your poetry noetic, *White Noise Machine* (aka NOW's Mike Smith) will thrill you. He's the city incarnate, a prickly glom of voices, wit, whimsy and insight. Another of my favourites is Ardath Whynacht's chilling poem about a near-death experience on her motorcycle, a masterful feat of narration.

**Highly recommended.**