

THE TRIBUNE

# Arts & Entertainment

## Uncritical Mass revel in taking poetry to the wild side

KATE GILDERDALE  
Correspondent

Charlene Jones and Linda Stitt are giving poetry a good name.

Even professed phobics of the pair's chosen literary form will find themselves captivated by the heady mixture of wit, pathos, satire and sheer exuberance which characterizes each performance. Perhaps the most compelling thing about Uncritical Mass, which is how they bill themselves, is the brilliant way in which they get inside your head and read back stuff you didn't know was there, but recognize instantly when you hear it.

In fact it's not until you've been sitting, spellbound, for several minutes that you realize the reading has begun. Having established an immediate rapport with the audience, the duo eloquently tackles such topics as love, lust, loss, sexual politics and life's

absurdities in a seamless two-way performance whose only flaw is that it ends too soon.

Jones and Stitt are well known on Toronto's literary scene, having appeared at such



LINDA STITT

venues as The Idler and the Free Times Café, and will be performing at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Library on Wed., Oct. 1 at 7 p.m.

While most of their readings are done in tandem, they are joined on occasion by Cecile Kwiat, who brought them together in 1990, but who now lives in Calgary.

"I had been reading up until then on my own," said Stitt, a veteran actor with a deliciously-wicked sense of humour.

"Cecile took me out to the Café May in

Toronto because there was going to be a poetry night." While the event failed to materialize, "we stayed there and read to each other." Stitt and Jones returned the following week and Stitt got up on stage and read.

"Then it was my turn to read and I was so scared, I was shaking," recalled Jones, who had done little performance work until then. "I said to Linda, 'I can't get up and do this unless you get up here with me,' and she said, 'If I'm going to hold your hand, I'm going to read again,' so we held hands and read poems together."

That impromptu performance was greeted with enormous enthusiasm by the audience and a unique partnership was born. Both women select the poems they will perform on the spur of the moment, based on their reading of a particular crowd, and they somehow manage to do it as a team, bouncing ideas off each other as they go.

"We love that energy and a bunch of peo-

ple paying attention to us," observed Jones, with a grin. "It ain't the money — it's the high." The banter which links the poems is an art form in itself; all the more remarkable for being completely unrehearsed, while the poems continue to resonate in your mind long after you wend your reluctant way home.

With pieces which run the gamut from raunchy to hauntingly sad, Uncritical Mass takes you on an unforgettable emotional journey. Bring Kleenex to wipe away the mingled tears of laughter and sadness from your eyes and take heed of the advice of Allan Briesmaster, writing about the duo in *Scenes* magazine.

"When it comes to capturing the hearts of those who've never been to a poetry reading, they're second to none." Performance cassettes and copies of their collection of poetry, *Uncritical Mass in Consort*, will be available for sale during the evening.

## Excess Baggage loaded with fine performances



### Screen Scene

Stuart Green

*Excess Baggage* is one of those films that puts all its eggs in one basket — or trunk, as the case may be. That is to say that, for the whole thing to work, you have to buy into one aspect.

In the case of the new Alicia Silverstone vehicle (pun intended), it's the romantic chemistry between the Lolita-esque star and her mysterious and grungy co-star, Benicio Del Toro.

Silverstone plays a teen heiress who, in a ploy to generate sympathy from her pre-occupied tycoon dad (Jack Thompson), stages a mock kidnapping. But while waiting in the trunk of her car to be rescued, Del Toro, as brooding master thief Vincent Roche, steals the brand new vehicle.

When he discovers his additional haul, he decides it would be best to dump her while he makes his getaway.

But things get complicated when he sees a news report about the apparent kidnapping and becomes nervous that he'll be pinned for the crime.

So he keeps her, a move that simply adds to his problems, especially when her uncle (Christopher Walken), the police and a couple of small time hoods come looking for them.

As is so often the case in the movies, the



**BABY COME BACK:** Brazen teenager Alicia Silverstone (right) tries to pull off a phony kidnap scheme and make her rich father pay a handsome ransom, while Christopher Walken — playing her uncle — tries to convince her to come home, in this scene from *Excess Baggage*.

two develop a romantic attraction and that's where things fall apart. The problem is that there is no chemistry between them; nothing that really makes their odd relationship believable.

Despite all that, there are some good things about *Excess Baggage*, especially in the individual performances department.

Del Toro, in his first real leading man role, is

likeable in a weird-looking, mush-mouthed kind of way and Silverstone has the rich girl shtick down to a tee.

Walken, too, is strong as the mysterious Uncle Ray, as is Thompson as the cold-as-ice father. But ultimately, the unbelievable relationship between Silverstone and Del Toro brings the whole film crashing down.

### spotlight

#### RUSTY NICKELS

Their grand opening is Sat., Sept. 13 from 2 to 8 p.m. There will be a barbecue and corn roast with free hot dogs for the kids. All the corn on the cob you can inhale. Entertainment will be provided on the patio, weather permitting. Play NTN on one of their 10 TVs, or shoot some pool. Located at 9441 Hwy. 48. Call 472-9832.

#### SGT. PEPPERS PUB & GRILL

Wednesday it's Margarita & Pizza night. On Sunday nights bring your voice, instrument and friends to Jam Night and Industry Night, starting at 6 p.m. Located at 5694 Hwy. 7, Markham. Call 471-9876.

#### JAKES ON MAIN PUB AND GRILLE

NFL season is back at Jakes. Catch all the action on 20 TVs and a large screen. Located at 202 Main St. Call 470-6955.

#### HERITAGE ARMS

Live music is back on Thursday and Saturdays in September. Half-price wings on Mondays and Tuesdays. There are 24 draft beers on tap and an outdoor patio. Please call 294-1300.

To promote your event in Spotlight, fax the details to (905) 294-1538, mail to 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3, or e-mail to econsun@istar.ca.



3175 Hwy 7  
(East of Woodbine)  
905-477-1756

## SEPTEMBER EVENTS

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Sat. Sept. 13th & Sun. Sept. 14th from 12 to 4 p.m.

### Spot, the Dog

Eric Hill's loveable children's book character, Spot, will be in the My Books department to shake paws with your children. Stories and giveaways too!

Sat. Sept. 13th from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

### Ergonomics with Pam Manning - \*Back by popular demand!\*

Pam Manning will be joining us for a discussion and q & a about how you can reduce the strains and pains resulting from extended computer (etc.) use.

Thurs., Sept. 18th, at 7:00 p.m.

### WOW RESUMES

Featuring Rachel Lefkowitz

The Author of *WOW RESUMES*, the bestselling guide to resumes for administrative careers, will be at Chapters in Markham for a fun, informative and FREE discussion. Bring in a copy of your current resume in the field of office administration and obtain expert advice on how you can improve your resume. For further information on how you can take part in this valuable seminar, call or drop by in advance, or simply show up with your resume.