

# Accent given to poetry reading

By LORRAYNE C. ANTHONY

This year, as usual, Harbourfront's World Poetry Festival from February 6-11 focused on English-language poetry. It is therefore not surprising that most poets at the festival were from the United Kingdom and the United States. However, the more interesting poets — P. Lal, Olive Senior, and Ruth Dallas — are from India, Jamaica, and New Zealand, respectively.

P. Lal has played a major role in the Indian literary world as a poet, publisher, and translator. During the earlier years of his career, Lal, like many other young poets, had difficulty getting published. So, in

1958, he and other Indian poets founded their own English-language press, The Writer's Workshop. Lal's poetry eloquently unveils the beauty of life in India, while paying special attention to rhythm.

Lal admitted, "I never write for the printed page only; all my poems are composed to be read aloud."

Olive Senior was born in Jamaica and educated at Carleton University in Ottawa. She has worked as a journalist and as a freelance writer but feels that poetry is the only outlet for her creativity. Senior reading focused on her poems about rural Jamaica. Occasionally she would read in a Jamaican dialect, which

lent an extra tone of authenticity to her poetry.

Senior received much attention when she won the 1987 Inaugural Commonwealth Writers Prize for her collection of short stories, *Summer Lightning*, beating Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the Canadian contingent was Wilfred Watson's number-grid poetry. The flu got the better of Watson, and he was unable to read at the festival. However, a group of U of T students performed a selection of his poetry under Watson's direction. The performance was unique, innovative and provocative.

# Believer: crime drama dropout

By MARK DILLON

*True Believer*  
directed by Joseph Ruben  
Columbia Pictures

It boggles the mind why James Woods, one of the screen's hottest actors (*Salvador*, *The Boost*) decided to do Joseph Ruben's new crime-drama, *True Believer*.

Hey, I don't even like Woods myself, although his abrasive personality was effective in *Salvador*. But in *True Believer* his acting style of sledgehammer subtlety is too hard to take. Maybe he was trying to add flavour to a dead script, but the resulting taste is far too salty.

Woods plays Eddie Dodd, a talented but dissipated lawyer once known as the champion of the underdog, but who now defends only guilty drug pushers. But then he teams up with starry-eyed Roger Baron (Robert Downey Jr.), fresh out of law school, who rekindles his passion for justice. Together they tackle a case where a Korean boy was sent to prison eight years earlier for a Chinatown murder he didn't commit.

But who cares? This is a crime film with one of the most involving



HELLO? HELLO? IS THIS THE PARTY LINE? James Woods stars in *True Believer*.

crimes in years. The script doesn't even offer any good twists to situations we've seen too many times before.

The cardboard characters don't offer much to keep our attention. Dodd is an unconvincing metaphor for how the ideals of the '60s have been replaced by '80s greed.

Downey Jr.'s character, which he overplays, is the yuppie lawyer of today — a harmless puppy but we're supposed to love him.

And then there are the typical, corrupt meanies in high places — in this case the police.

Maybe great directing could have made something out of all this, but Ruben plays his cards too soon. By showing us the actual crime at the film's beginning, he cuts the suspense in half.

Everything else after that is spelled out too clearly. The climactic courtroom scene (and courtroom scenes are well-worn these days) would have seemed trite 40 years ago.

One redeeming feature to a generally dull show is John W. Lindley's occasionally interesting cinematography, although mixing black and white with colour stocks is certainly nothin' new, and the overhead shots smack of *The Untouchables*. However, this film is overwritten, overacted, over-directed, and all the way through you'll just wish it was over.

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