What is Spoken Word?

Introduction

- Spoken Word is an umbrella term that covers everything from performance poetry, to dub, hip hop, slam and storytelling. Each sub-genre has its own unique aesthetic.
- Some types of spoken word are closely related to other, more easily defined art forms, such as stand-up comedy and dramatic monologue, and of course poetry "on-the-page."
- All forms, however, use oral expression, live performance, and the interplay between performer and audience. (see this excerpt from Andrea Thompson, poet and spoken word artist).
- See http://www.spokenoak.com/define.html for a discussion about the difficulties in defining "spoken word".

Where did it come from?

Spoken word as an art form evolved from the oral tradition – with its roots in pre-print literature. In Western literature, these roots can be seen to have originated in works such as Homer's "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey", and in African culture in the role of the Griot, a praise singer and wandering musician. Before the written word, stories and history were told orally, and children memorized these stories. There were wandering musicians and storytellers in all ancient cultures.