

Front of the House

2007: A Year in Review

A&O PRODUCTIONS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



Letter from the Chairman

To Alumni Young and Old,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Alex White ('08) and I have had the privilege of serving as chairman of this organization since the beginning of this past Spring and will remain in this position through Winter Quarter this year. You may notice that the format of this update has changed from paper (costly and a LOT of returns) to electronic. We feel this better serves what we are trying to achieve.

There has been a lot going on with A&O since you last heard from us. We've created three new exec positions: Director of IT responsible for website, listserv and computer maintenance. The Director of Alumni Relations is now the Director of Internal Affairs and responsible for alumni outreach and fostering inter-group cohesion. Lastly we have reinstated a Director of Public Relations who deals primarily with The Daily, North By Northwestern, the administration and the student body. The former "member at large" program has been revamped as the Street Team (for those who we want on A&O but don't have room for on our committees). The Street Team provides extra help with flyering and crewing. Its members are given a chance to demonstrate their

commitment to A&O and rewarded with preferential treatment during applications next year.

This past academic year we have seen performances by Sarah Silverman, Steven Levitt (author of *Freakonomics*) and Wilco featuring The French Kicks. All three shows were sell-outs, very well received, and will be addressed in this e-newsletter.

The transition to the new exec board went smoothly in the spring and this fall we had over 100 applicants interested in joining our organization. Since that time the committees have all been hard at work. Internal affairs organized a free trip to the Museum of Contemporary Art's rock n' roll art exhibit entitled "Sympathy for the Devil" and also had a holiday party. IT has been planning a new/more functional website to be launched this month. This past weekend A&O's showing of *Superbad* attracted over 400 students to McCormick Auditorium. Promotions, Speakers, Production, Finance and Corporate have all continued to improve their various committees.

On December 5th A&O's fall show featured OK Go and Ben Kweller and

was a charity show benefiting Dance Marathon's beneficiary Bear Necessities. For the past year A&O and DM exec members have been brainstorming feasible and mutually beneficial ways for the two largest student groups on campus to work together. DM provided substantial help promoting the show (which fell during reading week when *The Daily* is not printing) and the fact that it was a charity event may have been a factor in OK Go confirming the show.

If you have any questions or concerns, want to come to any of our events, will be in the area or just want to talk about anything A&O related feel free to contact me or any member of our executive board. Happy New Year!

Alex White

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A&O Productions welcomes 3 new committees

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

One thing all A&O members (past and present) share is a love for the organization. From CD listening parties to downtown concert trips, the Internal Affairs board has the opportunity to act as somewhat of a "social chair" to help bond and create a cohesive A&O board. The second responsibility of Internal Affairs is to help maintain a strong relationship with alumni, which includes graduates who work in a variety of industries.

NEW MEDIA/IT

In entertaining thousands of NU students, A&O committees work hard to prepare professional entertainment. The IT committee's job is to help the rest of A&O do their jobs more easily by designing and maintaining a new website and by providing tools for the other committees to simplify their work flow.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

As the biggest student group on campus we are in a position of great public scrutiny. Adding to this, we are allotted the most funding of any other student group, a contentious issue among the dozens of other organizations on campus. This committee is responsible for maintaining and improving A&O's good name with the student body, including coordinating co-sponsorships with other student groups, managing our relationship with the press, helping to handle crisis, and generally acting as the students' liaison to A&O.

Alumni Andrew Bird Brings Unique Brand of Music to Pick-Staiger

On Monday May 14, singer, songwriter and Northwestern Alum '95, Andrew Bird returned to the Evanston campus to perform songs from his new album "Armchair Aprocrypha" as well as some of his older works, for a packed Pick-Staiger Concert Hall.

Playing an array of instruments ranging from guitar to violin to keyboard to recording loops, Bird captivated the attention of the sold-out crowd for an hour and a half, throwing question-answer session into the mix.

"I thought it was really cool to get to hear Andrew Bird talk about his creative process and also what he was able to take with him from Northwestern," said Bird fan Aliza Epstein, 19, a Weinberg freshman.

Bird received a bachelor's in violin performance from the School of Music in 1995, and played as a member of the orchestra on the very same Pick-Staiger stage over a decade ago.



"Here I am back where I used to be in the orchestra." Bird told his audience. "That's kind of a trip."

Bird's latest album was released in March, however he did not just stick to new material. The musician used the platform as a chance to test the waters and try out one of his even newer pieces, which he referred to as a "work in progress."

"I really, really liked the new song," said Medill freshman Alexandra Ilyashov, 19, who was excited to hear a song that was still in the creative process.

The show, which sold out in a matter of hours, is part of the A&O Alumni Speaker Series, an ongoing project which, in the past has normally only brought speakers.

"It was cool that A&O brought an alumni musician because it gives the campus one more concert to look forward to," said Weinberg sophomore Lexie Komisar, 20.



OK Go and Ben Kweller Rock Sold Out Fall Show

A&O brought OK Go and Ben Kweller to Northwestern for this year's sold out fall show. Headliner OK Go's distinct power pop and opener Kweller's signature folk-rock brought a dynamic sound to Patten Gym on December 5th.

Over 50 A&O members gathered at Patten Gym the morning of the show to set up. "We had an incredible crew of over 50 people – the biggest ever for a Patten show – so the typical challenges were lessened," A&O chairman Alex White said. However the day did bring challenges. "We had four to five inches of snowfall, so OK Go's first flight was cancelled," White said. "Both their second flight and Kweller's first were delayed, so that was what I was most worried about," he said.

Promoting the show also brought difficulties, as it was announced a full week before the day of the concert. Promotions director Brendon Lavernia said his committee attempted to find a new promotional strategy everyday. "A&O members put down fliers in the freezing cold, painted the Rock, handed out quarter sheets, created amazing concert posters, sent numerous emails to a variety of listservs, advertised on Norris TVs, flooded Facebook with images, and placed the concert on a number of university calendars," Lavernia said. Teaming up with Dance Marathon also helped, as well as raised money for their charity,

Bear Necessities. DM members were able to reach people through their own listservs, announced the event at fundraising events, and spent hours handing out quarter sheets. The promotions tactics paid off, as the show sold out only hours before Kweller took the stage.

Ben Kweller is "the quintessential college act", White said. He ended his 15-month tour at Northwestern, performing solo and alternating between guitar and keyboard. He showcased new material as well as hits such as the lively "Penny on the Train Track", the rocking "The Rules", the emotive "Thirteen", and a spot-on cover of the Beach Boys "God Only Knows". "While very much a pop-star," Lavernia said, "Kweller appeals to music "snobs" because of his musical variety and heavy touring."

OK Go was set to play last year's Dillo Day, but fell through. Originally from Chicago, the quartet gained fame (and a Grammy!) from their homemade, choreographed music videos. The foursome played an energetic electric set on-stage, then made their way into the center of the crowd for a short acoustic set. "My concert highlight was buying a Glockenspiel at a guitar store in Arlington Heights for OK Go's acoustic set," A&O member Dave Lowe said. Including catchy hits "Here it Goes

Again", "Invincible", "Get Over It", and a raucous version of Electric Light Orchestra's "Don't Bring Me Down", OK Go's set lasted nearly 90 minutes. Complete with projected videos and light-up jackets, the performance was both musically and visually stimulating. "I was particularly impressed by how loud the audience cheered for an encore!" White said.

Winter Events

January 25th

Girl Talk

February 16th

BJ Novak

March 6th

Comedy Speaker Event

Check out our
brand new
website at
aoproductions.net

Wilco and the French Kicks Headline A&O Ball

Last Spring's A&O Ball was undoubtedly a big success as we hosted Chicago-based band Wilco with an opening set from the French Kicks.

Alex White, A&O chairman, was excited about the show from the time the band was booked. "It's not often that a band in the height of its popularity falls in our price range and is available on a date that works for us," he noted.

The bands played to a sold-out crowd of 1,200 at Patten Gym. Students began lining up at the Patten doors four hours before the French Kicks took the stage and the wait was worth it.

At the time, Wilco was preparing for their European tour and used the show as a dress rehearsal performing several songs off their most recent album, "Sky Blue Sky," as well as older material.

A&O added to the experience by making Patten feel less like a gym and more like a lounge. Merchandise and concessions were moved into the lobby and the walls were lined with past A&O memorabilia.

More than 30 A&O members showed up at 7am on concert day to begin building the stage and work with sound and lighting engineers to set up for the two acts.

After the long preparation, everyone agreed that the atmosphere during the performance was electric.



The stage in Patten Gym all set



The French Kicks



Jeff Tweedy of Wilco getting the crowd excited



Wilco doing their thing

Dethklok Takes over Tech Auditorium for Adult Swim Presents



On November 20th, 2007, A&O brought Adult Swim rockers Dethklok of hit show Metalocalypse to Northwestern. The show took place in Tech Auditorium, an unlikely venue for the make-your-ears-bleed volumes concertgoers were subjected to. Still, Dethklok drew a huge crowd, selling out the event and bringing fans together from throughout the Chicagoland area. The event included a cross-promotion with Guitar Hero III, a popular game on Northwestern's campus, and Verizon Wireless. Representatives facilitated a Guitar Hero tournament, with the quick-fingered winner performing live for the audience and calling into question how much time Northwestern students actually spend studying. The show was opened by ...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead or, rather, Trail of Dead for short. A&O member Dave Lowe recounts the Trail of Dead guitar player's fascination with the Northwestern campus: "Whoa, this school is really old, huh? You guys have ivy and stuff on the buildings. Is that Lake Michigan?" Dethklok performed an hour-long set, precisely set to clips from the hit show. One clip included an explanation of moshing and, for a second, Tech

Auditorium was any other metal venue in America. However, the constant hawking of corporate products did little to support that illusion. A&O member Katherine Hadley describes the scene: "Clearly they want to capitalize on our generation's 'obsession' with gadgets. Either way, it was an interesting presentation. The worst part was certainly the bloody, white fake hands. They fit around my throat, not that I tried to fit them there. But I did."



Comedian Sarah Silverman Makes NU Debut

On April 1, Sarah Silverman performed in front of a sold-out crowd of 1,000 at Pick-Staiger Concert Hall. What an April Fool's Day. A&O Productions and the Fiedler Hillel Center co-sponsored the event, originally slated for February 15th.

In a recent interview with *Time* reporter James Poniewozik, the comedienne claimed that her comedy was "not racist but about racism, stating, "I'm not saying 'I can say n*gger because I'm liberal.' There is a certain aspect of that that I'm starting to get grossed out by. 'Oh, we're not racist. We can say it.'"

After an opening performance by comic Doug Benson, Silverman playfully assaulted the crowd with her own brand of mock-racist humor. Mostly, she re-hashed sketches from her popular Comedy Central show, *The Sarah Silverman Program*, as well as songs and routines from her film *Jesus is Magic*. Between jokes, Silverman chatted with Daily photographers in the front row (calling them her "new friends with cameras") and marveled at Pick-Staiger's spaceship-esque ceiling.

Silverman's comedic material mostly comprises quips about minorities. Still, no one in the audience seemed particularly offended. They laughed just as hard at her comparison between a rapper and an old Jewish woman (they both wear track suits and like their sneakers clean) as when she pretended to have sex with a wheel of cheese.

Bestselling Economist Speaks to Sold-Out Crowd

On February 27 in Tech Auditorium, bestselling author and economist Steven Levitt spoke to an audience of 600 people about his book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (2006). Before the show, it was all most of the campus could talk about, and at the show, students eagerly filled their seats waiting for Levitt to share his thoughts on economics, incentives, and social behavior; themes that are the core of his book. Levitt was given a warm welcome by Mark Witte, professor in the Department of Economics, who prefaced Levitt's speech well by telling the audience that, despite the title, the book was not about the kind of economics most NU students are used to, rather it was a study on incentives through Levitt's "new take" on economics. Levitt then took the stage, and engaged his audience of students, faculty, and Evanston residents through a few of the many studies from his book. One of those in particular was about his research partner at U. Chicago who polled drug dealers and gang members in the Chicago projects in order to further understand their cocaine operation. He found that it was run much like a modern corporation, complete with hierarchy and intricate bookkeeping. Levitt spoke with humor, at one point speaking of a study on the incentive of hand washing in hospitals: nurses and doctors did not wash their hands when polled, however, when Starbucks cards were offered as an incentive, the hand washing began. The audience responded well to Levitt's lecture and had the opportunity to ask questions at the end. All in all, Levitt's visit to NU was a great opportunity for the community, and blended elements of academics and entertainment to create a well-received speech.

A&O Alumni Speaker Series

Last spring, the A&O Alumni Relations committee put on an Alumni Speaker Series event featuring leaders in the music and entertainment industry. The event, which took place at Harris Hall, allowed students to get an inside look at careers in the field, and get valuable advice from successful A&O Alumni about how to succeed in a highly competitive industry.

Featuring:

Erik Selz: Founder, Red Ryder Entertainment (Andrew Bird and Magnetic Fields)

Ben Levin: Tony Margherita Management (Wilco Management Team)

Eric Herz: Senior talent buyer, Bill Silva Presents

Doug Lefrak: Founder, Feisty Management (Motion City Soundtrack)

Dan Sullivan: Talent Buyer, Jam Productions

John Nieman: Freelance Music Industry

"Even from a few rows back it was easy to see that the Panel was a success for all involved. As a Concerts Chair it helped me learn not only about the other side of the booking process that I'm engaged in now, but also about what I can expect should I go into the business in the future. And it was no secret that the alumni benefited from the panel too: the alumni were able to glean insight about the album-buying and concert-going habits of some of music's most avid fans. At one point someone brought up the recently released grassroots doc *Before the Music Dies*, but the irony was that between the range of perspectives in the room, in many ways we had a better view of the contemporary music business than that film."

-Forrest Wickman

"The Alumni Speakers Panel provided a great opportunity for A&O members, and non-members as well, to pick professionals' brains about the music industry and how to succeed. Actually, I think they got just as much out of it as we did because we closed the discussion with the panel asking us questions about our music buying habits and how we find new music. The music industry is changing rapidly and it can be frightening for sheltered university students to take that leap, but like the panel said as long as you are a thick-skinned, take-charge, and patient person you will be just fine. Personally, I've got to work on the patience part, but I've got enough chutzpah in me to last a lifetime and then some!"

-Syd Cohen

Fond Memories From A&O Crew

Dan Jagla:

"When I told Ben Kweller he was going on in 5 minutes, he turned on his iPhone speaker phone and this was the conversation:

Ben Kweller (to son): 'I love you!'

Son (18 months old): 'Bye bye, daddy!'

So cute!!"

Diana Richter

"My favorite A&O memory is when Nels Cline of Wilco left Patten after their incredible performance with his arms full of food from the green room and sheepishly said bye to all of us. I realized that mega-talented musicians like free food just as much as college students."

Barry McCardel:

"Seeing Tech Auditorium transformed from my 11 o'clock Economics lecture hall/nap zone to a death metal venue for Dethklok complete with 15-foot tall speaker towers and fake bloody hands was a once in a lifetime experience."

Alex White

"Hearing the whole gym screaming for OK Go to come back onstage and get even louder when they came out wearing those LED lights on their backs that spelled "OK Go."

Zach Kahn:

"Two words: B Fest. 24 hours of movies so bad that they're good and an auditorium full of film geeks from around the world. Yeah, that was cool."

EXECUTIVE PROFILES



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Hometown: Ithaca, NY
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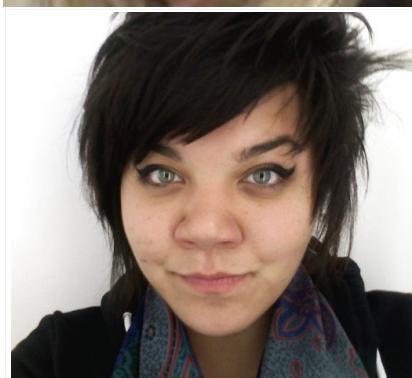
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WRAP UP

Thanks for reading!

This year, Internal Affairs hopes to further strengthen our bond with our Alumni. We welcome all alums to shows and events and ask that you please feel free to contact us for information and tickets! We hope to send more updates and encourage you to visit the website for the most recent news. We also hope to create an internship/job database for the mutual benefit of both alums and current undergraduates. If you are interested in participating please email me (stephanies918@gmail.com). Also, if you would ever be interested in visiting, feel free to drop us a line! We would love the chance to meet with all alums.

Have a great year, we hope to see you all soon!

-Stephanie Sorensen

Director of Internal Affairs

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