

STUDENT LIFE

Dr. Archie Loss explains the meaning of a cultural classic

By Tiffany Mak
staff writer
October 7, 2005

Archie Loss, professor of English and American Studies at Behrend, gave a talk about the song "American Pie" to the freshmen in Senat Hall on October 4 from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Loss was successful in explaining the American culture and music of the '60s and '70s to the attending students via the song "American Pie."

In order to give the students an awesome opening, Loss played the song "American Pie," which is sung by Don McLean. This song has long been the hallmark of the fusion of rock n' roll music and folk music in the counterculture era. It achieved the number one status on the charts in the U.S. in 1972, but the album containing this song was not released until later.

The reason that "American Pie" is so popular among Americans even today is not because of the popularity of McLean,

but because of the lyrics and the time when the song came out.

"It was only the '70s when the people started to look back of their fifties and their complexity," said Loss. "After the Broadway [musical] came out in the seventies, people investigated beneath the surface to get what the song is really about."

The entire song was McLean's tribute to three prominent rock stars, Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and The Big Bopper, who died in the same plane crash in February of 1959. The plane, "Miss American Pie" which took the lives of the rock stars at the time, February 3, 1959, signified "the day the music died".

Since rhythm and blues began to intrude into American music culture in the '60s, the counter culture era was hard for rock n' roll music. While lamenting the death of the three rock stars "he admired the most", McLean also lamented the swift death of the rock music "that used to make him smile".

Other than his view on music, McLean also included his religious and political views in his song. However, some interpretations of his lyrics are still unclear, such as the vague image of "rollin' stone" and "queen in a coat."

Most of the audience thought that "American Pie" was an interesting song, and Dr. Loss focused well on the details.

"We are going to enroll [in] his American Studies class next semester," said Pat Sharbaugh, a first semester chemistry student, and Ryan Mocniak, who is in his first semester in the Department of Undergraduate Studies.

"It is meaningful to learn about the American culture and Dr. Loss did a pretty good job," said Chad Bosko, CE 01, another audience.

Grant Reschenthaler, the Student Academic Leader, expressed his satisfaction towards the program. He was happy to see that "American Pie" inter-



Tiffany Mak/BEHREND BEACON
"The three men I admire most: the father, son and holy ghost," Dr. Loss recants a favorite line from the song.

ested a lot of the students.

"We hope we can organize a program which is not that academic, but at the same time the students can learn something from it," said Reschenthaler, Biology, 03. "It works really well."

Reschenthaler expects a similar talk

for his Senat freshmen a few weeks later.

Jill Forsman, the Coordinator of Housing, will be invited to talk about the "Mid-term Expectation." It will be held in the lobby of Senat Hall and is open to all of the residents.

"Heaven Can Wait" delivers a one-two punch

By Annie Sevin
editor in chief
November 11, 2005

Penn State Erie's Studio Theatre is presenting Harry Segall's "Heaven Can Wait" for the fall production. Under the direction of Dr. Christine Mangone, the acting company generated a passionate, warm performance. The company of performers included (in alphabetical order), Prema Banger, Casey Brown, Matt Davidson, Donte Hart, Jared Kaiser, Amanda Kinross, Julie Kosin, Njomza Latifi, Jose M. Rosas and James E. Salyers.

"Heaven Can Wait" begins slowly with actors arranged throughout the audience as they await their names to be called so they can proceed into Heaven. Joe Pendleton (Davidson), a 1930s world-class boxer, enters and contests that he was prematurely taken to Heaven by a messenger (Kinross) and he adamantly tells Heaven it can wait for him. Pendleton is returned to earth to gain a new body, but he quickly finds himself in a sticky situation. He takes Mr. Farnsworth's body and has to take on Farnsworth's life, including his wife (Brown).

Relationships and plots unfold as Joe tries to convince people, including his boxing manager, that he is not dead. He also finds love with Miss Bette Logan (Latifi) and refuses to let her go; attempting to win her remains his main drive to stay on earth. It's emotionally entertaining to watch Joe change his goals. He goes from

caring only about boxing and training his body to be beautifully showcased "in the pink" to basing his earthly existence on loving Bette. He accomplished falling in love with Bette while still technically married to Mrs. Farnsworth.

Davidson's performance engages the audience into the 1930s era. His dialogue is chock-full of nostalgic 1930s speech which adds grace to his "nice-guy" character. He is extremely energetic and passionate throughout the entire play. His portrayal of Joe the boxer is intimidating and at times comical due to the fact that no one but his manager believes who he really is.

Brown's performance added much hostility and animosity to the cast. She pulled off her character with elegance and grace, much like the head messenger from Heaven, Miss Jordan (Banger). Banger was confident, steady and well-poised as she guided Joe through his new state of life.

This performance could be construed as a slow story, but Davidson's energy drives the plot and his growing yet innocent passion for Bette helps the audience to sympathize with his plight.

Show times will be Nov. 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 and 19 at 8 p.m. There will also be two matinee performances Nov. 13 and 20 at 2 p.m. All performances will be held at Behrend's Studio Theatre. Reservations can be made at the RUB Desk in the Reed Union Building. Admission is \$3 for students and \$5 for non-students.



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The cast of "Heaven Can Wait" takes audiences onto a majestic ride back to the 1930s through the death and life of a boxer.

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