

# STUDENT LIFE

## Behrend student finds therapeutic release in writing

By Chris LaFuria  
editor in chief

Ross Zambanini has always lived his life breaking stereotypes. The 22-year-old International Business and Marketing major with a steady job and many different skills may seem like the least likely candidate for publishing a book of poetry and short stories. However, the senior from Ridgeway has too many complex thoughts and life experiences to not share with the world. Recently, Zambanini published a collection of his works from the last four or five years, a compilation of these thoughts and experiences. "It was therapeutic for me, a release. It was the encouragement of my friends who said I should put together a book," says Zambanini.

In his anthology, entitled "All Apologies,"

Zambanini explores his life, being a student and living on two different continents, tracing his thoughts and goals in 110 pages of genuine, sometimes incomprehensible events that have shaped his life. From poems about his friends to his thoughts on Erie, even to his thoughts about text messaging, Zambanini leaves no aspect of his life out of this collection. "There are some 'love and lost' poems in this book, but I write from my head to my hand, and most writers don't do that," says Zambanini.

According to Zambanini, who is in his last semester at Behrend, thoughts do not stop. He spends about an hour each day recollecting his thoughts and emotions, and depending on the story, writes his ideas down somehow, whether in a journal or on a napkin. "My brain just does not shut down," he says. "I usually only sleep four hours a night just because

my brain refuses to quit."

In his writing, Zambanini emphasizes that it is the importance of the ideas and not the words that make good poetry. While some poets focus on elaborate metaphors and endless analogies, he focuses more

"Aaron Smith is one of those 'Head to Hand' poets who aren't very eloquent, like Frost and Maya Angelou, but still send a very good message," he says.

When publishing his book, Zambanini took extra time to make sure every intricate detail was exactly how he pictured it. On the cover of the book is Zambanini on the ice dunes at Presque Isle, overlooking a placid, frozen Lake Erie. In the publication, Zambanini uses the name Ross Michael Romandetti, as a tribute to his family. The memories and thoughts of his family are some of the things Zambanini says helps him to write his poetry. "Many people of the Romandetti family have either died or married off," he says. "That's why I use this name to keep the family name."

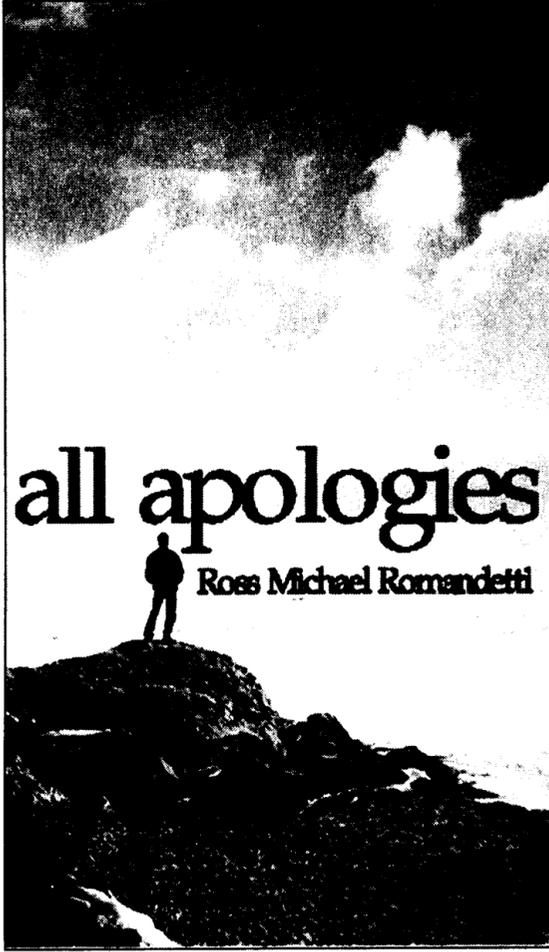
One of his favorite entries in the book is an untitled poem in which he writes about the people who seem to have

on the messages. "A lot of poets use big words and phrases to convey their messages and don't talk about what's real, like alcohol, drugs, strippers, and hangovers," he says. A reason for his style of writing is that sometimes it's difficult to stand in the way of a train of thought. He says that he gets rapid streams of thought that would be compromised if interrupted by form and punctuation. That is why some of his poems do not follow conventional shape and form.

While he respects the works of Robert Frost and Maya Angelou, Zambanini feels that there are other poets out there who are more real. One of his influences is Aaron Smith, who publishes through University of Pittsburgh Press. Smith's poetry won the 2004 Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize. His release "Blue on Blue Ground" catapulted him onto the scene of noteworthy local poets.

all the answers and, sometimes, they are the ones who are at the biggest deficit. He writes, "Those of us who seem to be in the know have holes in their souls that grow and grow." According to Zambanini, many of the people that seem to know everything about everything are the ones who need the most help. Even when he approached people with a background in English and Literature, he was turned down for having poetry that was "self-inflated, immature and amateurish." But that is one reason why he feels people should read his work. "The poetry is amateur," he says. "But it's real. It's genuine."

"All Apologies" is available to download for \$9.99 or to order a printed paperback copy for \$11.99. It is available by following the link <http://www.lulu.com/content/753539> or by contacting Ross Zambanini.



Look for "All Apologies," available online in print or online.

## Bright Eyes brightens up

Conor Oberst reaches his full potential

By Joshua Lane  
student life editor

The first three minutes of Bright Eyes' new album *Cassadaga* will make you think you just accidentally purchased the soundtrack to *2001: A Space Odyssey*. There are weird dissident chords that sound like someone is randomly hitting an 80s Casio keyboard. In the background are the ramblings of a psychic, "Just because you get the death card doesn't mean you're gonna die!" The song takes a turn as it slowly breaks into a fully orchestrated down-tempo piece that is melodic and unhurried. To some fans, this can seem like a bit of a disappointment. For others it feels like Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst has never hit his full potential. It seems that he overworks his songs just slightly past the point of absolute greatness and maybe he should just leave a great song alone. Luckily for these fans, it only takes these three minutes for Oberst to get this out of his system and concentrate on just doing great songs.

The rest of *Cassadaga* is pure magic. Oberst is at his full potential beginning with the second track, "Four Winds," which is an unapologetic alt-country, alt-rock masterpiece. It's almost unrecognizable as a Bright Eyes song. It's not until Oberst's unmistakable vibrato hits that you realize it may be the greatest Bright Eyes track... that is until you hear the next one.

The album is much more up-beat than 2005's *I'm Wide Awake It's Morning* and, to be honest, it's much more com-

mercial. Oberst finds the balance between writing a catchy song without selling out. In the song "If The Brakeman Turns My Way," Oberst writes his thoughts on bullet trains and opium dens and ties it all together with one of the catchiest choruses he's ever written.

This is certainly the most complete album Bright Eyes has done. It is also one of the simplest. Aside from the first track, there isn't a whole lot of random noises and layer upon layer of useless sounds. It is also easily the best album Bright Eyes has ever done, and the best album of the year. Pick up *Cassadaga*; it may be the best thing your ears hear all year.

*Cassadaga*: A+



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Conor Oberst brings his best alt-rock stuff on new album *Cassadaga*.

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