

STUDENT LIFE

Hurd impresses students, professors with reading

By Rachel Reeves
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Penn State Behrend's annual Creative Writer's Speaker Series brought author Barbara Hurd Behrend on Thursday, October 4. At 6:00 pm, students and faculty gathered in the Smith Chapel living room to meet Hurd and listen to her read excerpts from her work.

First she read a passage from *Entering The Stone: on Caves and Feeling Through the Dark*. The audience very well received the story that began with conquering a childhood fear. The book itself won the Library Journal Best Natural History Book of the Year award in 2003. From Kirkus Reviews, "In the act of entering, taking that first step into the stone, there is the transition, the twilight zone, that Hurd evokes with such chilling care."

She also read from another published book, *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination*, which won the Los Angeles Times Best Book award in 2003. The New Yorker reviewed, "Delving into these wetlands, she finds in their array of strange fauna and flora an objective correlative to the place in the mind where artistic inspiration occurs: a place of blurred borders, shifting identity, and strange odors, of rot and death, of Zen peacefulness."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Barbara Hurd read some of her non-fiction to students last week.

The students and faculty even got a sneak-peek at Hurd's new book to be published in the spring, *Walking the Wrack Line: On Tidal Shifts and What Remains*.

These awards are not Hurd's only accomplishments. Her essays have been twice selected for The Best American Essays Series in 1999 and 2001. Her essays also appear in the Yale Review, the Georgia Review, Audubon, and Sierra. She received the 2002 NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) Fellowship for Nonfiction and Pushcart Prizes in 2004 and 2007. She has also won the Sierra Club's National Nature Writing Award.

She currently teaches creative writing at Frostburg State University in Maryland, and in the Stonecast MFA program at the University of Southern Maine.

One student was very impressed with the reading. "She's a good storyteller," said student Aeriele Kramer. "She was very descriptive, which made it engaging." She said that she enjoyed little tidbits that Hurd shared with the audience about herself, like the fact that she always has a pen and paper on her wherever she goes. Since most present were involved in the creative writing program, they felt they could relate to Hurd as a fellow writer.

Hurd was well received by all present. Students were eager to ask questions when Hurd had finished her readings, and at the end of the evening, "the applause was enormous," recalls Kramer.

George Looney, Behrend's associate professor of creative writing and the coordinator of the speaker series, also enjoyed the reading. "Barbara Hurd's prose is lyrical and wise," he said. "Its music makes us want to listen, to know what she has to say to us."

Coming next to Behrend to participate in Behrend's Creative Writer's Speaker Series on Oct. 24 is Imad Rahman, to share from his short story collection, *I Dream of Microwaves*.

Broken Social Scene ends brief hiatus



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Broken Social Scene consists of 19 members, but their new record was written solely by Kevin Drew.

By Matt Schwabenbauer
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Broken Social Scene has become one of the most important names in Indie Rock since they released *You Forgot It In People* in 2002. After constant touring and another full-length release caused the band to go on a short hiatus in 2006, many figured Broken Social Scene were just going to fall off the radar. With their most recent release, *Broken Social Scene Presents: Kevin Drew Spirit If...* they have proven otherwise.

Spirit If... has all the hallmarks of previous Broken Social Scene albums. Chaotic rhythms, somber ambience, and a list of cameos the size of a small army, it is easy to consider *Spirit If...* just another Broken Social Scene album. The difference is that the album was written almost entirely by Social Scene co-founder Kevin Drew. Separating from a band with 19 members, Drew proves he can make an album every bit as compelling as a standard Broken Social Scene release all on his own. With songs about relationships, personal struggle and sex, *Spirit If...* is the perfect soundtrack to high school drama.

The opening track, "Farewell to the Pressure Kids" explodes with loud, trashy drums complimented by airy guitars and ambient leads thrown on top. Drew's vocals are a mix of whispering and yelling, made all the more inaudible by distortion. The lyrics take more of an enigmatic approach "Well the pressure kids... they own asphalt, they won't roll the die." Starting out noisy and energetic, the song quickly degenerates into a spacey, drawn out section that sets the tone for the rest of the album.

Many of the other tracks on the album deal with similar subject matter. The fast-paced "bif" has Drew lamenting a girl he never had, and "Safety Bricks" tells of a failed relationship.

One of the more rock-and-roll influence songs on the album, "Lucky Ones" has the longest running time on the CD. Featuring Jason Beck of Gonzales, and Ohad Benchetrit of Broken Social Scene, "Lucky Ones" is one of the only songs on the CD that sounds like it would fit right in place on the

radio. The tenth track on the album titled "Big Love" shows Broken Social Scene giving a nod to the Postal Service with an electronic drum beat and samples all over the place. Performed by Broken Social Scene members Charles Spearin and Benchetrit, Drew's airy, falsetto vocals make this track stick out from the rest of the album. Directly after "Big Love" is the grungy anthem "Backed Out On The..." which features Dinosaur Jr. guitarist J. Mascis. Being the most generic and stereotypical rock song on the album, Drew goes so far as to admitting the song is a cliché in his lyrics. "Everyone can write this song, but they can't write you and me," he admits. With fuzzy guitars, a catchy chorus and wailing solos, this is a song that revels in its own unoriginality.

Spirit If... wraps up with a folk influenced ditty called "When It Begins." With a single acoustic guitar, and a chorus of people singing along with Drew, "When It Begins" sounds like it was taken right from a campfire in the 70s. Simple lyrics, a repeated melody, and easy instrumentation make this is a rare, bare-bones moment for Broken Social Scene. With the multiple instruments at once assault that has become the band's signature style vacant from this track, "When It Begins" is a pleasant oddity.

Broken Social Scene Presents doesn't stop with *Spirit If...* Early next year there is another solo effort coming from the group, this time from the other co-founding member, Brendan Canning. As they did with *Spirit If...* the rest of Broken Social Scene will be performing on the album, but Canning will be doing the writing. Having just released an album, Broken Social Scene is one of few bands that can release material this quickly. They plan on releasing more solo albums in the near future.

With a substantial 14 tracks, *Spirit If...* is an album that could stick with you for a while. Kevin Drew proves that he has the ability to make a great album on his own, but keeps the Broken Social Scene feel to the album by featuring the rest of the band. Broken Social Scene is doing nothing but growing, with constant touring through the year. With another Broken Social Scene Presents album coming early next year, Broken Social Scene isn't a band you should be forgetting about anytime soon.

Some students are troubled by roommate issues

By Aeriele Cooksey-Kramer & Kayla Wright
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Pungent feet, bathing issues, stolen ketchup, missing beer bottles, and boyfriend catastrophes...these are simply a few problems that can occupy the thick tension between roommates. A little over a month has passed since the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, and roommates are inevitably getting to know each other better. They are learning more about each other's study habits, sleeping habits, choice of music, and when to stay out of the room while the other roommate has a boy/girlfriend over. However, the better roommates know each other, the more confident they each become to say how they are feeling and to let the other person know, sometimes very explicitly, that he or she is getting on their nerves.

The living arrangement is not so new anymore, and especially as a freshman, the boiling points have reached their maximum. Pent up disagreements are unleashed and rise to the surface as full-blown arguments. Cat fights, fist fights, and uncomfortable anger that is exploding on every person except the roommate is found to be taking place, and this is an issue that is in dire need of confrontation.

A junior girl describes her roommate experience as a freshman, and as she relives a few horrific moments, she's glad she doesn't have to experience that scenario again. She had wondered what her roommate would be like during the first few weeks before she began at the Behrend campus. Would they become close friends? Would they share any of the same interests in music or movies? On one hand, she was excited, and then there was the fearful anticipation of not knowing what to expect. When she finally got to meet her roommate for the first time, they were cordial toward one another, and for a while, they let their differences slide. "She

would talk to me nicely, but it was a fake-nice," she said. Around mid-October, that's the tension became too much to bear. "Her boyfriend would stay over for six nights in a row, without my consent, and they often times 'did stuff' when she thought I was asleep. But when I would have my boyfriend over for 2 or 3 days, she would talk about us behind our backs." The anger and backstabbing between the two roommates went on for more than a month. "Eventually she opted to move out at the beginning of November because I had found someone else to room with."

This is simply one scenario that freshmen might be suffering through on a daily basis, however, there are a number of problems and issues that are rising to the surface between roommates now that the fall and winter months are around the corner.

Many have had to deal with these problems but few know how to fix them. There are two ways to approach a roommate problem if you are sure that you want to make a switch. The first is to get a Housing Contract signed by your current roommate, the person that you want to room with, your RA, and the people at Housing and Food Services. This seems quite simple but this requires that both you and your roommate are willing to make the change concerning housing arrangements. If your roommate does not want to make a change, there is still a possible solution. If the reason that you can't bear to live with them is because they are constantly committing acts that violate your roommate contract or university policies, you can file a complaint. If these complaints are violated on several occasions, Penn State administration will move the violator. It is advised that you confront your roommate about the problem before reporting them. Often the case is that the roommate causing the problem is unaware of the fact that there is a problem. Simply trying to confront the issue could get them to make a change and possibly help you to avoid the situation of having to move all of your belongings to a new environment where you may end up having similar problems.

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Fans choose price of Radiohead's new record

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Since the early 1990's, Radiohead has made a lasting impression on the music scene with a number of records and singles. Their 1997 album *Ok Computer* is often hailed as the greatest album of the 90s (quite an honorable title, most would agree).

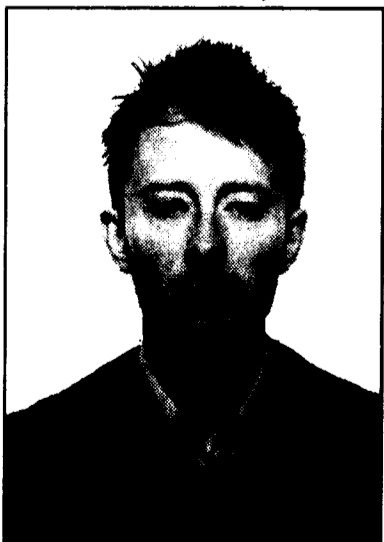
Their contract with their record label EMI, however, ended in 2003 with their release of *Hail to the Thief*. This more or less left Radiohead with no record producers or anyone of that sort to assist a release any new material.

In 2006 frontman Thom Yorke released a solo album entitled *The Eraser* with little marketing and not much more than Radiohead cult followers purchasing the album. It would seem to the dismay of many that Radiohead had taken their final bow. It wasn't until about a month ago that they had come out and proudly announced the upcoming release of their newest album *In Rainbows*.

There were many different things about this new release, however. For one, there was no record label to release it through, leaving Radiohead with a plethora of ways to get the material to their fans. They chose to put their album out first as a digital download, which came out this Wednesday. While most presumed to have to pay 99 cents a song or maybe ten bucks for the download, they got smacked in the face with a blank box. A question mark link standing next to it brought you to a site saying in large print: "It's up to you." For anyone puzzled by this, there is another question link which

leads you to another site, assuring: "No, really, it's up to you." This bold move gave them the opportunity to not only give away their music for free, but any price paid went directly to them, and not the middlemen of a record label.

So what of *In Rainbows*? Like *Ok Computer*, it is lyrically haunting and almost disturbing. Yorke emphasizes a lot of anguish and frustration towards humanity, ending on a cynical and suicidal note. The last lyrics on the album are as follows: "This is



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Thom Yorke of Radiohead.

my way of saying goodbye/because I can't do it face to face/I'm talking to you after it's too late/From my videotape/No matter what happens now I shouldn't be afraid/Because I know today has been the most perfect day I've ever seen."

It's chilling how Yorke can so blatantly and at the same time so subtly reveal his emotions and his views. From a musician's standpoint, the album is much more sparse and spacey than their previous releases. There is minimal music diversity and not that much depth, much like

Yorke's solo release. The songs nonetheless rear a good hook and are not only catchy but still have the same irreplaceable tone of Radiohead. They are able to stick their sharp mechanical hand down your throat and pull your heart out, and while you lay on the floor gasping for breath and looking in amazement at the horrific bliss Radiohead has presented to you, you will finally know why they are so praised and so humbled. And you will be humbled as well.