

STUDENT LIFE

WGA strike frustrates students



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Julia Louis-Dreyfus supported the Writers Guild on the picket lines on Monday.

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The medium of television has become the most popular American pastime in recent years, especially in the fall and winter months when new episodes of fan-favorite shows are run every night or week. Consumers return home from a long day of schooling or work to kick their shoes off and settle down on the couch to watch the newest episode of their favorite programs.

What would happen if the new episodes stopped and television entertainment sunk into a world of continuous reruns?

That's exactly what has begun and will continue to happen since the Writers Guild of America went on strike Monday morning. Members of the Guild have abandoned their posts behind typewriters and computers to stand in picketing lines throughout Los Angeles and New York.

Their contracts ended last week, and attempts to negotiate a new one went sour, and the writers believe they have been getting the short end of the stick for quite sometime as far as "new media" is concerned. "New media" includes technological advances like the downloading of television shows to computers from iTunes and the free internet viewing of episodes on network websites, both of which the writers do not garner any royalties from. Writers also seek to increase the royalties they collect from DVD collections from four to eight percent.

This strike differs from the last one that took place in 1988 and lasted 22 weeks because the writers are not only fighting to possess some piece of the technological advances of television that have already debuted, but are also attempting to insure that they will own portions of the new media that have not yet become available or even been invented.

"There are going to be new types of media," says David Duchovny, star of the new hit show *Californication* when he showed up at the LA picket lines earlier this week to support the Writers Guild. "We don't know what they are, but I'm sure people are thinking them up, maybe this minute. People much smarter than you or I. It's a difficult discussion to have, because you're fighting over air at this point, but I think it's an important discussion to have."

Penn State sophomore Bryan Ramsey, an avid fan of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, said about the strike, "It sucks. I watch it almost every night, and I always look forward to it. It's disappointing whenever you turn the TV on and realize that it's a repeat of the show that you saw just last week."

Many actors appeared on the picket lines to support theirs and all writers, including Leno who said,

"I've been working with these people for 20 years, so I support them. People kinda get the wrong ideas what writers make. I know I'm cheap and don't give them anything, unless they get royalties from these DVDs and other stuff. I think it's a good cause."

Leno went on to say that he wouldn't cross the picket line and do a new show during the strike, but he would cross it to pass out doughnuts to the protestors, which he did.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus, former *Seinfeld* star and current star of *New Adventures of the Old Christine* showed up in Burbank, CA to support the writers of her show. She joined picketers in chanting, "Hey, hey, pencils down, Hollywood's a union town."

"How this is resolved will directly affect our union, too," Louis-Dreyfus said, speaking of the actor's union, whose contract expires in 2008.

Movie star and writer Tim Robbins (*Mystic River*, *High Fidelity*) also showed up on the picket lines and sought to forward a message through CNN. "Our detractors will tell you this is a dilettant strike of millionaires and it's certainly not. This is a middle class issue...This is about putting kids through school and paying mortgages."

The Colbert Report on Comedy Central is arguably the show that could take the hardest hit from the strike, since it was one of the fastest growing shows going into the contract disagreement. It had hit a recent boom in ratings due to his satirical run at the Presidency.

"It's not so bad, because his old shows are good too," said sophomore Frank Nagy. "It gets frustrating at times, though, because I'll look forward to watching it at night and turn on something I've seen before. I miss the updates he gives on politics and want to see him bash the other candidates since he was not allowed to run in the race. I hope they remedy the problem soon so everyone can get back to work and fans can get back to enjoying their work."

Shows that are filmed nightly like Leno's and David Letterman's late-night programs are anticipated to be affected the most by the strike, but weekly sitcoms should not be affected for some time since their scripts are written and shows are recorded far in advance of the season's beginning.

The strike is anticipated to last for quite some time, much to the chagrin of the actors and avid fans of the entertainment industry. "It all starts with these incredible people who sit in a room by themselves for hours on end coming up with ideas, and there's nothing, no story, without the writer first, that's where it begins," said Joan Allen (*The Notebook*).

If they don't come to an agreement soon, the writers will also be where show business ends.





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Upcoming events on campus and in the Erie area

"Picasso at the Lapin Agile" at the Studio Theatre. The play will be shown at 8 p.m. Friday Nov. 9 and Saturday Nov. 10. Tickets are available for \$5 for Behrend students, faculty and staff. General admission tickets are available to the public for \$7. To reserve tickets, call (814) 898-6242.

"Stump the Chump," a program hosted by the Behrend Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship to help answer questions that students have about God and religion. It will be held on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in the REDC 180 conference hall. Free food from Subway will be available.

The 20th annual **Thanksgiving Dinner for Six** will be held on Thursday at 5 p.m. in the McGarvey Commons and is offered free for Behrend students, faculty and staff. If interested in attending, RSVP to the Office of Student Activities. They can be reached at (814) 898-6171.

An **information session for the nursing major** will be held on Monday at 6 p.m. in room 101 of the Otto Behrend Science Building. It is free and open to both traditional and adult students. Registration is requested for the information session and can be made by phoning the Penn State Behrend Office of Admissions at (814) 898-6100.

Comedian **Jim Gaffigan** will be performing live at the Junker Center on Friday December 7. Tickets cost \$20 for Behrend students and \$30 for the general public. They are available at the information desk in the Reed Union Building or online at <https://estore.psu.edu/home.asp>.

Video games remain popular pastime at Behrend, despite rising costs

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Video games are becoming more and more important in the life of most college students. Walking down the hall of any dormitory or apartment complex, you will see many people sitting in front of their televisions playing games. Almost every college student owns at least one video game system, and having more than one isn't very uncommon.

With the holiday season fast approaching, there is a veritable flood of new video game releases. On Nov. 13 alone, there are 39 new releases on the three major consoles combined. Such a massive amount of titles is proving problematic to the average person on a college budget. With little spending money, it is unlikely for most college students to buy more than one video game a month, if that often.

"Video games are getting really expensive," says Behrend freshman Matt Kirkpatrick. "Most games cost around \$60, and sometimes even more if they come with accessories or are a collector's edition."

The cost of video games is rising quickly. With the last generation of video game consoles, an average game cost around \$40-\$50. Unfortunately, in the past few years the price of games increased substantially. With the new consoles, there is rarely a game that costs less than \$60.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rock Band, released around Christmas, should be a big seller among students.

When games come with controllers or extra accessories, their price increases even more. One of the most popular games for college students to play, *Guitar Hero III*, costs \$99 for the Xbox 360. The high pricing is a result of the game being bundled with a guitar controller required by the game, but is still a stretch with a college student's tight

budget. *Guitar Hero* is a staple at many college parties, which shows its high pricing is a non-issue to college students.

A game similar to *Guitar Hero* called *Rock Band* is being released this holiday season, but instead of being bundled with just a guitar controller, *Rock Band* is going to include a guitar, microphone, and an entire drum set. With such a large amount of items bundled together, it is priced at a startling \$160. Regardless, it is expected to be a hit with college students this holiday season. "I will definitely be purchasing *Rock Band*," said Behrend freshman and video game enthusiast James Svolos. "It may cost an arm and a leg, but when you think about all the possibilities you have with *Rock Band*, such as getting your friends together for practice, or even playing with other people online. *Rock Band* is impossible to turn down." Despite the high costs of video games, college students aren't going to quit playing them anytime soon. Although games such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* are obvious choices for college students to play at parties and get-togethers, video games are also quickly becoming something more than just a pastime. "I buy one to two games a month," says Behrend student Luke Tabacchi. "Games are getting expensive, but that isn't too big of a deal when you consider all the fun things you can do with them."