

STUDENT LIFE



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mark Steensland (right) with Jerry Only (center) and Greg Ropp at this year's Eerie Horror Fest. Steensland premiered his latest short film, *Peekers*, Thursday night at Behrend.

By Scott R. Muska
student life editor
mjs5387@psu.edu

Award-winning filmmaker and Penn State Behrend professor Mark Steensland recently finished production on his latest short film, *Peekers*, and premiered it to an Erie audience Thursday night at 7:30 p.m. on campus at the REDC.

Peekers is a film based on a short story written by popular horror author Kealan Patrick Burke, who has published numerous novels and short stories. Steensland purchased the rights from Burke to adapt the story and said that, "Kealan is very, very pleased with the results of the film." He went on to say that the story had caught his attention and would make a good film because it was very effective, very strange and creepy.

"I thought it would make a good short film," Steensland said. "I didn't have to change very much at all for the adaptation."

Also contributing to the production of the film was acclaimed and prolific author Rick Hautala, who composed the screenplay and often works with Steensland.

Steensland feels good about the potential of *Peekers* saying, "As a filmmaker I always hope to improve. I have especially high hopes this time around because I'm working with some truly stellar talent."

Part of the talent that Steensland refers to are the cast of the movie, who are all Erie area locals. Albert Braun plays Zach Newstein, a man who sees someone or something that looks like his wife staring creepily at him from the upstairs level of their home. He believes that the woman is not his wife. Agnes (who is played by his wife, June Braun) since she is supposedly out of town. Newstein enlists the help of his neighbor Larry Morgan (Mike Lechner, a Behrend graduate) for help with the anomaly. From there, the movie takes on a creepy and suspenseful tone that does much to keep the viewer guessing until the surprising outcome.

Steensland hopes to enter *Peekers* in a plethora of upcoming film festivals. "It's already been entered in six festivals. I just sent it off to festivals in Portugal, Brussels and a few others." He also plans to enter the film at Screampfest in Los Angeles, The New York City Horror Film Festival, The Festival of Fantastic Films in Manchester, England and The San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain.

The film's premiere was precluded by a showing of three films Steensland has completed in the Erie area since moving here a few years ago from California. The first was *Sucker*, a film dealing with a child predator and his prey. The second film, titled *Lovecraft's Pillow*, was adapted from an idea that infamous author Stephen King suggested in which an aspiring writer trades his laptop computer for a pillow that H.P. Lovecraft allegedly slept on. The final movie before *Peekers* was called *Dead@17*, which was an adaptation of the graphic novel by artist Josh Howard and deals with the murder of a teenager and her dealings with the occult. *Dead@17* had its world premiere at the 2007 FrightFest in London and was shown in October at the Eerie Horror Fest.

There was a short Q&A session following the film during which Steensland discussed some of his future projects. "I have the rights to adapt a novel into a full-length feature," he said. "It's a story about an author that is kind of a celebrity in his town because of his success. He discovers the body of a young girl on his property and the town sort of turns against him, so he has to protect himself in something that basically turns into a siege towards the end." He also revealed that he has the rights to a few short stories that he is working with. He also has one original full-length script.

Steensland also revealed his love for the Erie area, saying, "[Erie] really offers itself. I like this kind of atmosphere. When I was living in California I was drawn here because I saw a lot of opportunities." He also said that he likes the weather in Erie. "That condition where people get really depressed in the winter, well I think I have the opposite of that condition. All of that sun in Southern California was driving me crazy. I like the clouds and stuff."

After viewing the films presented Thursday night, it's easy to see that Steensland has improved steadily with each production, and that he has a knack for composing and finding alluring ideas that make for extremely interesting, suspenseful and often frightening films. With such promising work, it wouldn't be surprising to find his name popping up soon among high-profile film production companies and gurus.

Ideally, Steensland would like to create make another full-length feature. When asked whether he would rather make a full-length or short film, he said, "I'd rather do a feature, as long as I had the resources available."

FIGs help students get involved

By Aerialie Cooksey-Kramer
staff writer
aak5101@psu.edu

Getting involved as a freshman on a college campus is intimidating, and in many cases, it is often a nerve-wracking feeling trying to find the right organization to join. There is one organization, however, that is seemingly doing its job of helping incoming freshmen that have similar majors to become connected.

Penn State Behrend offers freshmen a chance to get involved with other freshmen that have similar interests. The Freshmen Interest Groups, or FIGs, are a unique asset to Behrend's campus, adding a boost of involvement for those incoming students looking to seek friendships and credit for experience in a specific major.

There are many FIGs to look into for majors ranging from Electrical Engineering to Environmental Science and American History. With such a broad spectrum to choose from, an incoming freshman cannot go wrong. There is also a FIG specializing in "undecided majors", helping those students along who do not know where they want to go with their degree.

Just as there are positives and negatives to any given class or area of study, students share their experiences by giving feedback about specific FIGs. One freshman expressed that she enjoyed her FIG primarily because of the hands-on work dealing with her specific major. Another freshman indicated that she had made friends; relationships that were similar to hers because of interests as well as possible majors.

However, one student commented on the fact that her FIG wasn't the experience she was expecting. "We did absolutely nothing. I went to two meetings and only one other person came with me." The downfall for this student was the fact that no other students showed up, or who showed a particular interest in the class at all. "There was no point in going anymore." She continued to explain that there were no grades given, and no credits for showing up, therefore she felt no compelling reason to continue with attendance.

Despite the fact that some students feel it useless to be in a FIG, other FIG members enjoy the fact that the housing assignments are arranged so that students participating in the same FIG live in the same general vicinity in any given dorm. Many students have combined interests, and have formed close relationships because of the FIG housing services. For example, the Business Freshman Interest Group students are primarily located in Senat Hall, as well as many of the other FIGs.

For the most part, Freshman Interest Groups have been enjoyable for students and a good way to make friends with similar interests, especially if focusing toward the same major. They each are unique in their own way, and all maintain different strategies to help freshmen become more involved on campus, and seek guidance toward whatever field of study he or she may want to pursue. Becoming involved on campus can often times be hard, however, choosing a FIG that coincides with a student's specific major can help the transition for an incoming freshman become easier.

Upcoming events on campus and in the Erie area

The Penn State Behrend Concert Choir and Chamber Choir will be performing their annual Winter Concert Friday Nov. 30 at 8 p.m. at the Larry and Kathryn Smith Chapel. Tickets are on sale to the general public for \$5 each and students can purchase them for \$3. Tickets can be bought at the Reed Union Building Information Desk or at the door prior to the show.

There will be a Masquerade Ball on Saturday, Dec. 1 in the McGarvey Commons from 7-10 p.m. It is sponsored by The Matchbox Players, SGA, SAF and Trigon. Semi-formal/formal attire is requested and masks will be provided. Admissions and refreshment are free.

The Rhythm of Life Series will be presenting Animusic, a special presentation of 3D computer graphics, music and animation, on Wednesday, Dec. 5. It will be held from 12:15-12:45 p.m. in Bruno's Cafe. Admission is free of charge.

There will be a panel discussion on whether or not the War in Iraq is justified will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. in the Larry and Kathryn Smith Chapel. It is free and open to both students and the general public.

The 59th annual Hanging of the Greens Candlelight Service will be held at the Wintergreen Gorge Cemetery on Friday, Dec 7 at 6 p.m. Transportation will be provided and those who need it and they should meet at the RUB Information Desk at 5:30 p.m.

Comedian Jim Gaffigan will be performing live at the Junker Center on Friday Dec. 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>.



Better Ingredients.
Better Pizza.

Behrend College Specials

Monday - Thursday

2 Large 1 Topping
\$15.99

or

UNLIMITED TOPPINGS*

3 Medium
\$21.00

Thursday - Sunday

Buy 1 Get 1 Free**

824-8282

* Excludes double toppings and extra cheese
** Cannot be combined with any other offer or special

Top 5 Animated Disney Movies

By Scott Muska

5. *The Little Mermaid*
4. *101 Dalmations*
3. *Aladdin*
2. *The Lion King*
1. *Peter Pan*