

Punchlines battle domestic abuse

THOMAS WAGNER
News Staff

On Wednesday afternoon, Ben Atherton-Zeman, an actor and activist from Acton, Massachusetts, performed his one-man play *Voices of Men* at the University of Alberta to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women.

The play deals with issues of consent, domestic and dating violence, sexual harassment, and the objectification of women through the use of well-known movie characters such as Rocky, James Bond, and Austin Powers.

In these live skits, the various characters come to an understanding about how they treat women and why what they were doing is wrong. For instance, Austin Powers reads a feminist theory book in order to get a girl's number, and along the way realizes that he had been objectifying women all along.

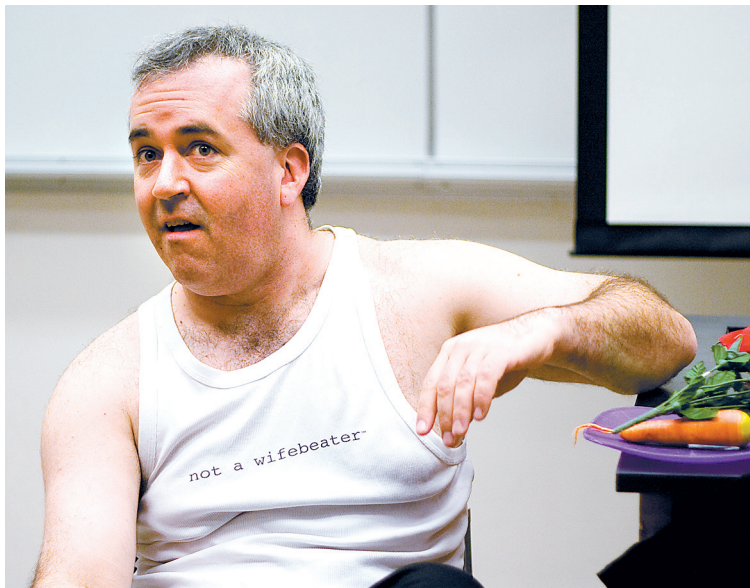
Throughout the play, Atherton-Zeman is careful to employ comedy in the live action parts, as well as drama through the use of filmed public service announcements and a chilling recording of a 911 emergency call.

He explained that this is all to make sure the audience continues to pay attention to his serious message.

"When somebody laughs, it makes them more receptive to information," Atherton-Zeman said. "So, I try to make my play comedy stuff and serious stuff, so that when, right after [the audience] laughs, there's that sort of vulnerable moment where they're willing to hear what I say."

The main message of the play is to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, while inspiring men to speak out against it. Atherton-Zeman highlighted the importance of increasing awareness by citing the large amount of abuse and domestic violence in Canada and the United States.

According to Atherton-Zeman,



ANDRIY CHERNEVYCH

COMIC CRACKDOWN Funny man Ben Atherton-Zeman was on campus yesterday raising awareness about physical and sexual assault against women.

every twelve seconds, a man in Canada or the US abuses his partner, and every two minutes, a woman is raped. In Canada, more homicides are attributed to family violence than gang violence.

According to Patti McClocklin of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS), our province is a leader in family violence.

"We are first in reported incidences of stalking, of murder-suicide, and of domestic assault, and we're third in domestic homicide," McClocklin said.

According to McClocklin, from 1 April, 2006 to 31 March, 2007, 13 000 women and children were taken in by shelters across Alberta; another 27 000 were turned away, more than half of whom because the shelters were full.

"What's happening is that women are often times forced to return to their abuser because they don't have other alternatives, considering the way the housing situation is today," McClocklin said.

However, both Atherton-Zeman and McClocklin explained that vio-

lence against women can't truly be stopped until men take it upon themselves to get involved.

"We as men need to be the ones to stand up against what our brothers are doing," he explained. "And not just rape and violence, but the attitudes and behaviours that support them."

Among these attitudes and behaviours include such small things as sexist jokes and material that objectifies women, all of which Atherton-Zeman feels men should confront in order to break down the parts of our culture that perpetuate violence against women.

Even men who are skeptical or resistant to speak up often do when they realize the potential effect of the issue on women they care about, said Atherton-Zeman, commenting that 1 in 3 women will be subjected to sexual assault or attempted sexual assault in their lifetimes.

"That's either my mom or my sister or my wife, in my case, and I don't want to choose," he said. "I want it to be none of the above."

U of A on track to being world class—Babiuk

RANKING • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Secondly, you have to have great support for graduate students [and] postdoctoral fellows because a lot of this takes teamwork," Babiuk said.

Larger Canadian universities that had made the list in previous years, such as the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia, didn't make it this time around. But, as Charles Crosby with Dalhousie University media relations explained via email, the size of an institution isn't the only factor influencing workplace satisfaction.

"At the same time, one's physical location matters. Living in Halifax—not too large and imposing a city but just large enough to get your share of city life—really makes a difference too," Crosby said.

Babiuk added that the fact that if people at the U of A feel that the institution offers an appealing work environment and that there were U of A life scientists willing to go and put the effort into filling out the questionnaires, that's still an indication that the U of A is on the track to truly "becoming one of the great universities of the world."

"These are surveys that we always take with a grain of salt," Babiuk said. "But when they're positive, we obviously don't throw them away either."

IT shortage hitting Canada

Parents need to encourage their kids—Schaeffer

IT • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"He said, 'I could hire your entire [computer sciences] graduating class, and that would not fulfil my needs,'" Schaeffer recalled.

Schaeffer explained that if the IT job market is so demanding in Edmonton, then it must be hitting the whole country hard, and that while some people believe that the job market will regulate itself by means of the law of supply and demand, companies have been attempting to solve this problem themselves by looking to other countries.

"The reality is a lot of people are outsourcing to India because you can't find anybody in Canada. China is another source, so you open an office there and hire people at a cheaper price because you find the people."

Schaeffer said that there are five factors that are causing the shortage issue, including students' parents. That's because they remember the dot-com bust, he explained, when stock markets in western nations underwent a sharp decrease in value in the Internet sector and those related to it.

"Parents are the ones who are counselling their kids not to go into computing. It's [also] the media, which are very good at reporting stories like 'Outsourcing to India,' and aren't very good at writing stories saying 'There's a shortage of IT people.'"

As for high schools, Schaeffer

explained that sometimes they don't introduce students to computing sciences because they don't have the resources, facilities, or trained teachers to educate them, and the counsellors and teachers aren't informed enough about the computer-science field to encourage students to pursue further education in it. He said that they've now held conferences at the U of A in order to educate them on the value of the industry.

He also added changes should be implemented in the U of A's department of Computer Science to make the education more relevant to what prospective IT employers need.

"Students have changed; students are much more wired than they used to be. We need to change our programs to match what today's students are interested in and what today's companies are interested in."

He noted that the U of A has started programs that introduce younger students to computer science. In 2007, the High School Internship Program was launched. Talented high-school students are hired to work for six weeks at the U of A on a research project in order to spark their interest in the field.

"That's been very successful," Schaeffer explained. "Students love it [...], and several of them have decided to switch from whatever they are interested in to computing."

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