

# diversions

Crack That Whip Amanda Peet (below) pounds a few philandering playboys into shape in the new romantic comedy "Whipped." ... page 6



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## I Want My \$TV

UNC's own TV network creates and broadcasts original programming

### Student TV Provides Experience, Entertainment, Camaraderie

By GEOFF WESSEL  
Staff Writer

For most students, "General College" — a soap opera on Student Television — might not take precedence over reruns of "Dawson's Creek" as an evening's entertainment.

"We like to think people watch us," said Station Manager Rick Ward of the student-run station, which airs 11 original shows weeknights on campus cable Channel 22. "About 1 percent of undergraduates are members of STV, so we can assume they and their friends watch."

For the more than 150 writers, actors and directors who create this and other shows, STV means much more than a five-minute break from channel surfing.

"We have all kinds of people," Ward said. "Everyone has a lot of fun here, obviously, or they wouldn't do it. There are no paying positions, it's all volunteer work, and everyone has a lot of fun."

"A lot of people come in just to learn the equipment and they end up staying because they like the atmosphere."

Junior communications studies major Kara Mannix works as both cast and crew on several shows.

"I want to go into film," she said. "I think (STV) has been a lot of experience. It's where you learn to tell a story with pictures, more than you would ever learn in any class."

Ward said the entertainment-focused shows, which include the "COPS" parody "STV-PD" and the sketch comedy revue "Off the Cuff," tend to be a hit with those students who tune in.

"The feedback we've gotten has been almost universally positive," Ward, a senior communications studies major, said. "The comment we get most often is 'I watched the show last night, and boy was it funny!'"

But some reactions to STV haven't been so enthusiastic. Last spring, some student body president candidates and their supporters criticized the producers of "Feedback Live," a popular call-in show that was handling STV's student body elections coverage.

Alex Mehfar, campaign manager for Student Body President Brad Matthews, said then that STV officials did not allow him access to the room where results were being announced. The elections were a hectic time for all concerned, including the crew of "Feedback Live," who were confronted with technical difficulties that caused major delays in the release of results.

But the elections are old news, and with a history of strong growth, Ward said he is excited about the station's future.

"I'd like to see STV continue to grow," Ward said. "I'd like us to serve the students more."

"Right now we don't have a whole lot of involvement with student groups. I'd like to see that change."

He said STV is saving money for a remote camera system, which he hopes the station will acquire within the next two years. The system will enable the televising of more events, a goal that junior Charlotte Stewart said she admires.

"I get a kick out of seeing (STV) on campus," Stewart said. "They should televise campus events like Di-Phi debates as well as community interest stories like the Chapel Hill Museum and new businesses on Franklin Street."

STV's program lineup has grown steadily since its founding by five students in 1983, Ward said.

"STV Presents," the station's first program, premiered that fall. The show was a hit, Ward said, even though it was only shown in the Student Union. By 1987 production had begun on other shows, including "Off the Cuff," which is still running today.

As STV's lineup has grown, so has its audience. Cable television's 1998 arrival on campus radically expanded STV's audience. The station can also be seen weeknights on Chapel Hill cable Channel 4.

Ward said he hopes one day STV will be shown in Carrboro, but that this will have to wait until Time-Warner upgrades the cable system there.

With beginning of a new academic year and STV season, the casts and crews of various shows have spent much of the past few weeks looking to the future and working to recruit new members. Ward said this year's incoming freshman class showed a lot of enthusiasm.

"At our general interest meeting I almost felt like a game show host," he said. "I was trying to hype up the crowd. In the last two or three years, interest has grown incredibly."

Ward said STV is still looking for new members. "We're not a club you have to join at the beginning and stay for four years. People determine their own level of involvement and of course what they get out of it is what they put into it."

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SALEEM RESHAMWALA

STV's Lance Brown, Chris Dovichak, Matt Barker and Sara Culp (left to right) pose for a scene from the opening sequence to the horror series "Darkness Falls."

### STV Yuks It Up on Sketch Comedy Set

By JUSTIN WINTERS  
Staff Writer

Student Television can be very strange.

That was the first thing to come to mind as junior Rob Manuel, producer of STV's longest-running show, the skit-comedy program "Off the Cuff," greeted me after recently filming a skit in the homey confines of the bottom of Lenoir.

"I just want to know one thing," he said as he shook my hand and wiped a smiley face off his other hand simultaneously. "Did you think it was funny?"

"Very interesting," I replied, with the knowledge that my journalistic ethics should always keep me stonefaced and serious.

On this rainy Saturday, Manuel, his hand and two apparently ready-for-anything actors were filming a skit revolving around an extremely strange double date. I was there with the mission of infiltrating an STV taping and giving the lowdown on what makes the talented group behind the camera tick.

The skit, which Manuel said he had written over the summer, evolved out of a humorous discussion on dating he had with a friend. Many of STV's skits are born out of its group meetings, which use a democratic method of picking out the funny and weeding out the lame.

When I arrived at Lenoir, the trio of STVers and a cameraman were going over a scene in which freshman Sarah Culp complains to her date about the creepy guy across the table (Manuel) with a smiley face drawn on his hand.

"This is not a double date," she said,

as Manuel watched carefully. "He has a smiley face on his hand. It keeps staring at me."

As onlooking Lenoir employees strolled by with their eyebrows arched, the group went over the scene several times, each one a twinge different from the next. Freshman David Doll, who could successfully double for radio personality Casey Kasem, was having trouble with his last few lines.

"Find your cave, find your spirit animal," Manuel joked as the actors set the scene up again.

"Okay, let's do it one more time just for kicks and giggles."

After scoring another take, Manuel suggested that the other actors take a break while he filmed a scene with his five-fingered date.

"OK, I need just a long shot of me arguing with the hand, and then, a good close-up after that," he said.

As Culp tried her best not to giggle uncontrollably, Manuel got in a fight, with the hand (which spoke in a Yoda-ish voice) about his cheating ways.



DTH/KATE MELLNIK

Working at STV gives students valuable television experience, including camera operation, production techniques and screenwriting skills.

"Who is she, huh?" his hand yelled as a small crowd, some of which were parents being shown around by their college-aged children, assembled near the Chick-Fil-A booth.

Once the scene was finished, the producers, actors and the cameraman all headed upstairs to eat as Manuel washed his hand.

"What do you think about the magic of filmmaking?" he asked Culp.

Culp was still noticeably disturbed by my presence as she wrapped everything up and approached the escalator. "You were watching us the whole

time," she said, as I revealed the purpose behind my standing around watching a guy yell at his hand. "You must have thought we were crazy."

Maybe, but what other people think doesn't matter that much to the crew at STV.

"We're truly our biggest fans," Manuel said. "We're all just one big family."

The next shoot would have to wait until after lunch.

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#### Prime Time

Tune in to campus cable Channel 22 or Chapel Hill cable Channel 4 for some must-see TV brought to you by fellow University students.

- 6 p.m. **Classic "Off the Cuff"** — Repeats of the station's popular sketch comedy show from years gone by.
- 6:30 p.m. **Classic "General College"** — Reruns of last year's enthralling soap opera installments.
- 7 p.m. **"Tar Heel Focus"** — Conventional news program with in-depth reports on student issues.
- 7:30 p.m. **"Sports Xtra"** — Campus athletics spotlight goes beyond football and basketball.
- 8 p.m. **"Center Ring"** — Showcases independent student productions.
- 8:30 p.m. **Programming Guide** — What's on and when.
- 9 p.m. **"The Suite Life"** — Sitcom set on South Campus.
- 9:30 p.m. **"General College"** — All-new installments of the titillating campus soap opera.
- 10 p.m. **Show of the Week** — An assorted grab bag of STV delights.
- 10:30 p.m. **"Six-Fifty"** — Get the scoop on new movies in a film review show named for the going Chapel Hill movie ticket price.
- 11 p.m. **"Off the Cuff"** — New episodes of the wacky sketch comedy.
- 11:30 p.m. **"Darkness Falls"** — Creepy! A dark, bloody, supernaturally tinged drama anthology in the "Outer Limits" vein.
- **Midnight "R.A.V.E."** — Kooky! Random Acts of Violent Entertainment. It's just like having HBO.
- 12:30 a.m. **"STV-PD"** — The original reality television "COPS" gets parodied, with special emphasis on violence and profanity.

SOURCE: STV

DTH/CAROLINE GOBBLE