



Porn Stars, Dr. Ruth, 'Freaked' Parents: It's Sex Week at Yale

By Tom Randall



[More Photos/Details](#)

Feb. 15 (Bloomberg) -- Free vibrating toys, a packed lecture by sex therapist Dr. Ruth, skin-tight latex bodysuits and a party at a bar named the Toad. Welcome to Sex Week at Yale University.

The fourth biennial event at the New Haven, Connecticut, campus started Feb. 10 with a gender-challenging comedy act and culminates this weekend with a sex-themed party, a spirituality discussion and the sex-toy giveaway.

The point is to raise student awareness of sex, safety, relationships and moral viewpoints, said this year's organizer, Joseph Citarrella, a 21-year-old economics major. The event also provides a marketing opportunity for corporate sponsors including the makers of Trojan condoms, sex-toy company Pure Romance Inc. and adult film maker Vivid Entertainment Group.

"Sex sells, but it's really an awareness program," said Citarrella, who recently changed his resume for Wall Street jobs after an interviewer "didn't get" the educational value of Sex Week. He said the variety of opinions and backgrounds at the event "is like the setup to a joke: a priest, a rabbi and a porn star walk onto a panel at Yale..."

Sex Week at Yale, founded as Kosher Sex Week in 2002 by Jewish student Eric Rubenstein, quickly became one of the school's most talked-about events. Yale allows students to use classrooms and equipment, as it does for other campus organizations, and doesn't pay for the activities, university spokesman Tom Conroy said.

Pure Romance, a sex-toy company based in Loveland, Ohio, with more than \$80 million in sales last year, gave the student organization that runs the week \$30,000 to pay for most of the 21 events, a student-made video documentary and a 60-page magazine circulated at Yale and the seven other Ivy League schools.

'Provocative Format'

"Yale's Sex Week is pretty much the foremost for its distinct, provocative format," Logan Levkoff, a sex educator and spokeswoman for Trojan, the condom unit of Princeton, New Jersey-based Church & Dwight Co., said in an interview after lecturing Yalies about the female orgasm.

Detractors include some participants, such as Dawn Eden, a panelist this weekend and author of the book "The Thrill of the Chaste." She said the week promotes premarital sex and endorses unhealthy images of sexuality. She objected to a porn debate between adult-film stars

Ron Jeremy and Monique Alexander, to be moderated by ABC television's "Nightline" host, Martin Bashir.

"This is how they get out the word, by having juicy events featuring porn stars and sexologists?" Eden said in a telephone interview. "I think that is very damaging, physically, psychologically and certainly spiritually."

Report Card

Trojan ranks Yale 14th out of 139 colleges and universities on its annual Sexual Health Report Card, which rates "sexually healthy" schools on access to disease testing, contraception and education on sexual harassment and assault.

Yale led the list in 2006, receiving a perfect score because of its "excellent resources" and Sex Week, Trojan said. Trojan included more schools in the latest rankings, giving top honors to the University of Minnesota and the University of Wyoming.

"When I first found out about Sex Week, I was with my parents," said Jordan Garner, a biology and religious studies major who plans to pursue a graduate degree in religious studies. "They freaked."

The organizers include "something for everyone," Garner said. "I have a lot of Christian friends, and they say they're really proud of this."

Masturbation, Body Image

About 300 students crowded a lecture hall to hear Ruth Westheimer, known as "Dr. Ruth" from her 1980s television show. Students giggled in the aisles as the 4-foot-7 (1.4-meter) sex expert talked about masturbation and body image and encouraged students to pursue sex studies.

Yale, founded in 1701, is America's third-oldest college. It's also the second-richest behind Harvard University, with a \$22.5 billion endowment. Alumni include actress Meryl Streep, New York Senator Hillary Clinton and the past three U.S. presidents.

"These students are going to be shaping society, and Sex Week lets these kids look squarely at this stuff in the face," said Jackie Coe, a third-year art-history major and the event's assistant director. Her first experience at Sex Week was watching the pornographic film "Pirates" two years ago.

"We don't necessarily want you to like it, but you need to know what's going on," Coe said beneath the 90-year-old stone archways of her dorm cafeteria. "If you don't like porn, then go to the debate and tell it to the king of porn."

Plunging Porn Sales

That might be Steven Hirsch, co-founder and co-chairman of 23-year-old adult-film maker Vivid Entertainment Group, based in Los Angeles, who will address Yale business students tomorrow.

"DVD sales are in a freefall," down 35 percent in the past year as pornography viewers turn to Web sites, Hirsch said. Sex Week is a "great opportunity for a healthy conversation, having them really talk to the adult-film industry as opposed to just scholars or feminists or anti-porn activists."

Pure Romance, which sells "bedroom accessories" at home parties, sponsored Sex Week as "a good learning tool" for students, Chief Executive Officer Patty Brisben said before her lecture on vibrators and female sexuality.

"We tell women you may need a lubricant, and that's OK," Brisben said. "You may have a decreased libido because it's finals week, and that's OK."

To contact the reporter on this story: Tom Randall in New York at trandall6@bloomberg.net .

Last Updated: February 15, 2008 00:23 EST



©2008 BLOOMBERG L.P. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Trademarks](#)