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'Great Porn Debate' brings legendary XXX star Ron Jeremy to Rowan U.

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Congratulations Rowan, you know more about hardcore pornography than any other college.

At least, that's what "porn pastor" and anti-pornography activist Craig Gross said after last Thursday's sold-out presentation of The Great Porn Debate, with Gross and celebrity porn star Ron Jeremy. The Enyon Ballroom in the Mark M. Chamberlain Student Center was packed with over 400 students for two hours of intelligent and serious discussion about the pros and cons of the pornography industry.

Ron Jeremy is one of the world's best-known adult film stars and has appeared in more than 1,800 films, in addition to a recent appearance in VH1's reality show, The Surreal Life. Gross is the co-founder of XXX-Church, an anti-porn movement that aims to help people struggling with porn addiction and raise awareness about the negative effects of the sex industry.

Gross began discussion by pointing out the average age that people are first exposed to porn on the internet is 11 years old. Jeremy argued that pornography is "for consenting adults, watching consenting sex" and targeted towards people aged 35-49 years old.

Gross's strongest argument is that pornography is unfair and demeaning to women because it portrays unrealistic expectations, and presents negative role models to young women.

"The young girls today aren't looking at Jenna Jameson; they're looking at people like Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears. There are so many other role models, good or bad, out there," Jeremy responded.

After both sides presented their case, they offered the chance for students to get involved and ask questions. With the exception of a few fairly crude questions, most students had very specific and intelligent topics to discuss and Jeremy and

Gross stayed to answer and elaborate on all of them.

Jess Landolfi, sophomore, asked Gross about his feelings on the afterlife and where he thought Jeremy's fate lies.

"Jesus loves all and doing porn won't hold him back," said Gross. "No matter if you are a porn star, a pastor, a soccer mom, a liar, a thief - His love is the same for everyone."

Gross and his XXX-Church have received a lot of criticism from fellow Christian groups for their work with the debate.

"Ron makes a good point, that I am more accepted in the porn industry than he would be in a church, and that's upsetting," said Gross.

Alfred Campbell, junior, confronted Jeremy about a particular video called "Bang Bus: Ron Jeremy on the Motha F*ckin Bus" in which an actress was treated unfairly and left on the side of the road. Jeremy responded that the video was simulated, "along with a lot of what you see in videos," and that the actress was not treated unfairly. He mentioned his work to clean up the industry, referring to organizations like the Protecting Adult Welfare Foundation (PAW), which aims to improve and protect the lives of adult film stars.

The question and answer session concluded when Charity Carson, a former porn actress and Jeremy's long-time friend, went up to the microphone to confront Jeremy about the harmful effect the sex industry has had on her life. Jeremy and Carson bantered and argued playfully about the negative aspects of pornography on women.

"I've seen things that normal women don't really see on a daily basis, and I'm telling you the porn industry is a miserable world," said Carson.

The debate was not the raunchy spectacle that most students expected - Jeremy and Gross were intelligent and mature while they discussed and debated a controversial and rarely discussed topic.

"Originally I thought I'd hate the religious guy but at the end I thought he was pretty cool," said junior Ross Isokowitz. "I was more excited to see Ron Jeremy at the beginning but at the end I was more intrigued by what Craig had to say."

Gross and Jeremy lingered after the debate, answering further questions, taking candid photos with students, and signing autographs along with a few cherished porn DVDs.

"If we had done something about world hunger or on AIDS in Africa, maybe a couple hundred people would come out," said Gross, comparing the massive turnout at the porn debate to attendance at more serious lectures. "We need to talk about this issue more and help the people that need help getting away from it."