

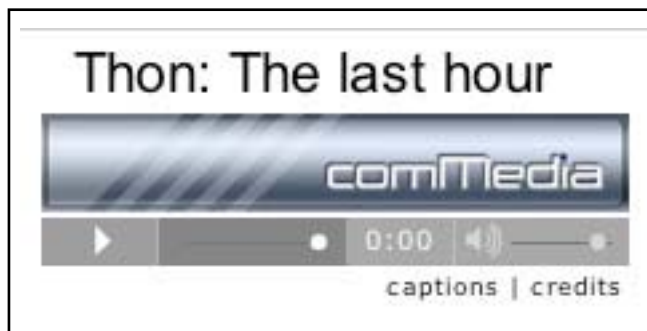
Winding It Up

By Scott Snipkie

Thon 2008 coverage written for Comm 460

Dancers congregate together propping up one another. Each group creates a panel, some standard reds or blues, others risqué pinks and magentas. Occasionally, an independent dancer speckles the mob like a stitch in the patchwork. The Bryce Jordan Center is a seething human quilt. This is the 46th and final hour of THON.

The marathon wears down the dancers over the course of the weekend and committees struggle to keep the group going; by the last hour the whole group slowly shimmies toward a halt. Just before the writhing mass looks ready to seize up though, the emcee hits the stage.



“For the last time... to the stage... morale captains... THON 2008,” says the man in front.

Every year, Penn State students from as far away as Philadelphia and Erie trek to University Park for the largest student-run philanthropic event: the 46 hour dance marathon referred to simply as THON. Some 700-odd dancers take the floor of the Bryce Jordan Center to dance, mill around, do anything but sit down, from 6 p.m. Friday night until 4 p.m. Sunday to raise money for pediatric cancer.

At the sound of the voice the sea of bodies swings in lock step toward two enormous screens above the stage. Children stream across the screens, music rolls, lyrics scroll. In seconds, the arena comes alive again and teems for 60 minutes.

The whole venue shakes with singing, cheering and dancing. Arms flail, bodies twirl and a wave erupts. The end is in sight for the dancers and that, along with the sight of the tiny children boogying on the stage pushes them into a dead sprint for the finish.

Finally the emcee bellows, “Three... Two... One... Sidddown!”

The whole crowd collapses onto their backsides at 4 p.m. sharp, satisfied that the Four Diamonds Fund, the destination for money from the marathon that helps families battling pediatric cancer, is nearly \$7 million richer.

“This was my first THON; my feet are killing me; it was awesome,” said a member of the Fayette THON dance team.