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The Michigan Daily

'U' Prof. 'Sounds' off on cable station

By Angela Bardoni
For the Daily

Physics Prof. Franco Nori experienced stardom for the third time last week when he appeared on a science program produced by The Learning Channel.

During the week of Feb. 1, the program "Odd Sounds" aired on TLC. The series allowed its viewers to take a look at the theories behind strange sciences and the myths that explain supernatural events.

Nori contributed his knowledge on how sand avalanches produce sound.

Through experiments, Nori said he has been able to study the high and low frequencies that are produced by sand avalanches.

His experiments have led to a detailed explanation of the scientific reason for these phenomena.

Late last year, TLC contacted the University's physics department and expressed their interest in creating a show about the phenomena of sound.

Based on the research Nori and his colleagues have conducted, TLC created a script and filmed the show in Ann Arbor.

Much of the footage took place in the Randall Laboratory, where Nori was able to conduct simple demonstrations.

Nori said he has been on television twice before, but this show was a different experience for him.

"I've never been filmed in a lab setting before," Nori said.

Nori said the physics department was the only science department in the nation that participated in the show.

"The biology department was asked to participate, but it was requested that I complete the project," Nori said.

There is a section devoted to the sounds of sand avalanches on the University physics Website.

Odd Sounds not only presents scientific data, but also reveals some unexplainable events that take place in the world.

The show features other segments including "Talking Ghosts," "Glassolalia," "Ringing Rocks" and "Taos Hum."

A TLC spokesperson described each of the individual segments.

"Talking Ghosts," the TLC spokesperson said, covers the investigation of a sunken ship and a girl's voice that is said to haunt the remains of the boat.

"Glassolalia" describes a religious group whose voices speak only nonsense syllables.

"Ringing Rocks" addresses strange rocks that ring like a bell when struck with a hammer.

"Taos Hum" discusses a New Mexico Artist colony who has witnessed a low-pitched hum that is constant throughout the day and night

Inhabitants, the spokesperson said, think the sound is coming from secret underground government labs.

Nori said other related scientific events on campus include the Saturday morning physics series - lectures that are open to the public and cover many different scientific theories.

Specific disciplines include material sciences, biology, economics and astrophysics.

People who missed the series on TLC can catch Nori in action during the Saturday morning lecture series.

Nori is giving a lecture called "Collective Motion and Avalanches" Feb. 20 and 27 that will cover most of the topics presented in Odd Sounds.

TLC will also be rerunning the Odd Sounds program through the rest of this week.

For more information about the Saturday morning lecture series, contact the physics department at 764-4437.

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