

## Local, International Journalists Intrigued with Debate and University

Contributed by Tobie Baker  
09/25/2008

Crew members from the BBC tape a report outside the network's US08 Election bus. UM photo by Tobie Baker.

OXFORD, Miss. - The first presidential debate hosted by the University of Mississippi is a source of interest for journalists across the country - and across the pond.

Ben Ferguson, host of Radio America's "The Ben Ferguson Show," said it's gratifying to serve as an ambassador for Ole Miss, and he's thrilled that the entire world can now experience "our Southern hospitality." Ferguson is a UM alum, author and, at age 27, the country's youngest nationally-syndicated political commentator. He is broadcasting live this week from 8 to 10:45 a.m. from the Student Union Plaza.

BBC journalists and producers work inside the network's US08 Election bus, parked in front of Weir Hall on the University of Mississippi campus. UM photo by Tobie Baker.

"It's fun to showcase the place so many of us love," Ferguson said. "I felt a huge personal pride when I found out that Ole Miss was hosting the presidential debate. I haven't been this excited about politics in a long time."

When asked about the negative stereotypes so many have about Mississippi, Ferguson said, "The old South perceptions are a foreign subject to young people my age. Now the entire world will be able to see that it's a new day for Ole Miss."

As part of its multimedia US08 Election bus tour, the BBC also stopped in Oxford for the debate. Jonathan Chapman, BBC's news-gathering assignment editor, said the international community is fascinated with the 2008 presidential election.

"The world is incredibly interested in this election, and we are trying to reflect that and explain what's going on in the process," Chapman said.

The BBC US08 Election tour started Sept. 10 in Los Angeles and stopped in Las Vegas, Phoenix, Albuquerque, N.M., Dallas and Jackson before arriving in Oxford on Sunday (Sept. 21). Following Friday's debate, the tour continues to Memphis, St. Louis, and Nashville, Tenn., with its final stop in New York on Oct. 17.

"It's a six-week tour, and thus far we have covered issues such as home foreclosures, gun crime and gun ownership," Chapman said. "But the economy has been the major theme of the entire trip."

The hunger for international news is growing, and Americans are tuning increasingly to the BBC to discover what's happening across the globe, said Paul Rasmussen, BBC communications manager. The BBC is the world's largest international broadcasting network.

While at Ole Miss, Rasmussen has taken the opportunity to look around campus, and is impressed with what he has seen.

"The university is spectacularly beautiful," he said. "It's the most beautiful university I've ever seen."

A supporter of Liverpool's Everton soccer club, Rasmussen added that he was awe-struck at the sight of Vaught Hemingway Stadium.

"It's incredible - the scale of your football stadium," he said. "Yours is so much nicer [than ours]."

For more information on the presidential debate or related events, go to <http://debate.olemiss.edu/> .