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JR. E-WALK: 2001

Tuesday, November 20
Law-Puryear Field

10:00 Bands begin 11:00 Fajita lunch
10:30 Games begin 1:00 Speaker
2:03 Junior E-Walk

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- Place: Rudder Auditorium

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\$5 Adults
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AggieLife

Thursday, November 15, 2001

THE BATTALION

Silence of the Ag

SWAMP brings silent film *Shhh!* to A&M location

By THOMAS PHILLIPS
THE BATTALION

Lights! Camera! Aggies! Aggies? That's right. Today and Friday, members of the Aggie Screenwriting, Acting and Movie Production club (SWAMP) will shoot director Steve Landin's short film *Shhh!* at locations around campus, mostly around the Langford Architecture Building, Eller Oceanography & Meteorology Building and the Sterling C. Evans Library.

Landin, a senior environmental design major, began working on this movie near the end of last spring and plans to enter it in the Texas Film Festival, which is held on campus next spring.

Shhh! tells the story of a downtrodden 20-something, played by Ben Johnston, a senior environmental design major, who falls for a classically beautiful coed, played by Stacie Moffett, also a senior environmental design major. Johnston's character, the protagonist, sees his vixen long before he meets her, goes through a number of hopeful "what if" thoughts and must decide whether to meet her and risk failed love or to let his perfect memories live as a substitute.

"The inspiration behind the movie is personal experiences," Landin said. "I've always just thought that anticipation was the best part of anything, that anticipations, sometimes, can be better than the real event."

Landin hopes to accomplish all this without one small element — a script.

"It's a modern silent film," Landin said. "I feel like the whole point of the story can be conveyed without dialogue."

And so, throughout the two-day shoot, *Shhh!* will be seen and not heard.

"We're basically trying to incorporate Chaplin-style silent film with a modern look to it throughout the music, the visual effects, the actors and how they look," Landin said.

Landin will not be alone in his endeavor, having enlisted the help of fellow filmmakers Vishwanand Shetti, a junior computer science major, Casey Pinkston, a senior environmental design major and other members of the SWAMP club.

"I'm going to be the main camera guy," Shetti said. "[Steve's] helped me on projects before, so he knows how I think, and I kind of know how he thinks, so hopefully he trusts me."

Making a movie, even a 10-minute short film, takes a lot of work and help. Landin said he plans on using a crew of about eight students to carry out the various tasks involved with the projects. While the actual filming is a large part of the process, moving equipment from one location to the next, directing the actors, controlling crowds and editing the film also keep the filmmakers busy.

"We all have our own independent films, but for this one we came together to work as a team," Pinkston said. "So doing anything Steve needs us to do, like lighting or crowd

control, sound, well there probably won't be any sound, since it's a silent film, because you only have a certain amount of time to get things done."

The group plans to shoot the other's projects within the next month or two, and hopes that by

"We want to influence anybody so that if they do have an interest — not just in movie-making, but any other hobbies or creative talents — to take that step and pursue it; to always be progressing in [their] ideas ..."

— Steve Landin
Director of *Shhh!*

filming on campus, they can spread the word about the SWAMP club.

"We want to influence anybody so that if they do have interest — not just in movie-making, but any other hobbies or creative talents — to take that step and pursue it, and not just think about it; to always be progressing in [their] ideas, and always getting better," Landin said.

Moffett, who has never acted before, is taking her first step toward pursuing an interest in films.

"I asked him [Landin] what I should do," Moffett said. "I was like, 'I really haven't acted

before,' and so he told me what he thought I think I'm going to be taking a lot of, we may have to do a lot of retakes."

Despite her inexperience, Moffett has no apprehensions about acting in a large part to her director.

"Steve is so laid back and so easy to work with us," she said. "It doesn't make me nervous because I know he's what I need to know."

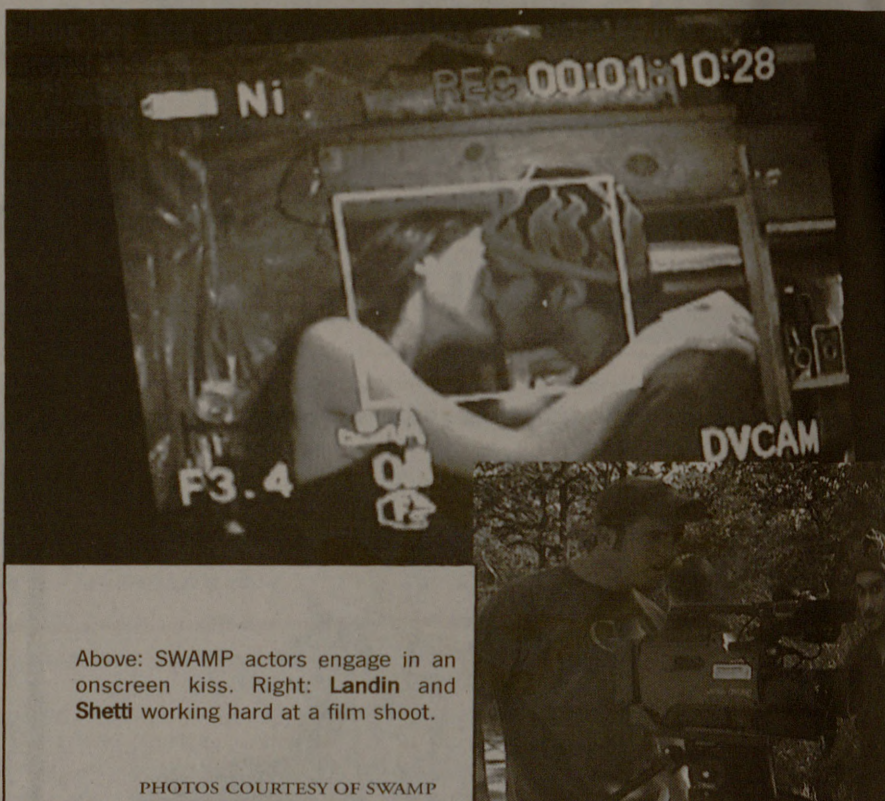
Johnston, however does have experience in front of the camera. Scenes from *Rushmore*, starring Bill Murray, were at his high school, and Johnston acted in bit parts of that movie.

He likens the style of acting in silent to theater acting.

"In theater, it's a principle that you can be much bigger in your movements so you can see from a distance all your emotions," Johnston said. "Here, it's a silent film, but it's similar in the sense that there's more going to be a lot less close-ups of you where you can see the emotion that's going through a person, and more of seeing you takes the entire body."

While Moffett and Johnston may not have a chance at silverscreen fame, both claim as only a small part of their life and career ambition.

"I don't have an overwhelming desire to act, but I think he [Landin] approached me because we're both secure with ourselves to take on putting ourselves in the people," Johnston said. "Not everyday you get to be in a student film that you'll get with a copy of that you can show your children and have all of them laugh at that utterly ridiculous you look."



Above: SWAMP actors engage in an onscreen kiss. Right: Landin and Shetti working hard at a film shoot.

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