

Love story filmed here

By JOHN TOON

It is a poignant story. A love affair that begins in Europe continues when the couple comes to Athens. But the romance ends, and when the man returns to Europe, the girl marries. Five years later, the man returns to Athens to find how much everything has changed—even himself.

The story sounds like a movie scenario, and that, indeed, is what Swiss director Steff Gruber had in mind when he planned it. But to Gruber, it is more than just a film. He is the man who returned to find that everything had changed.

"It's a love story, but it's not a romantic love story," Gruber explained. "It's a very strong movie psychologically—especially for me."

He tends to speak about himself in the third person when discussing the movie, parts of which have been shot here in Athens during recent weeks.

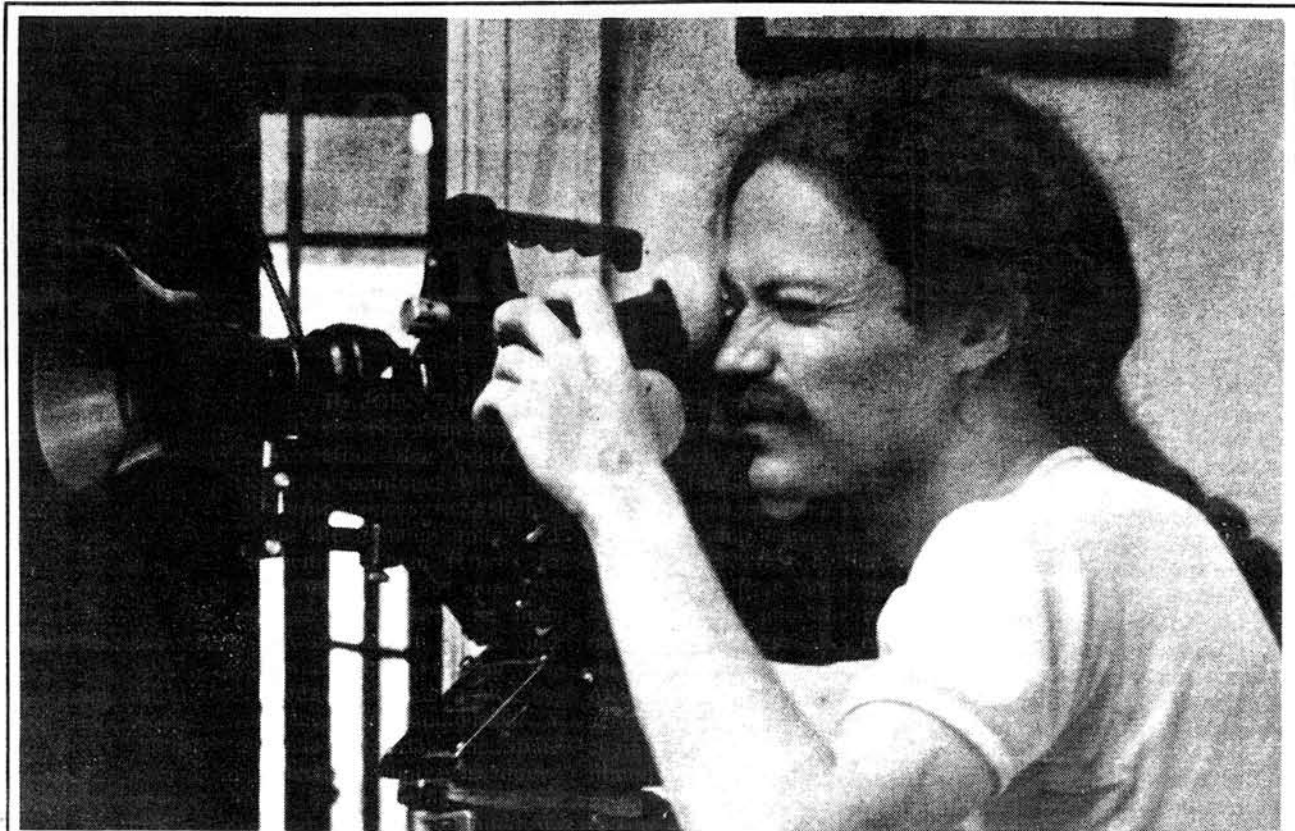
"It's not a reconstruction of the past. 'It's a

recounting of what has happened in the meantime," Gruber said. "He finds out that a lot of things have changed, and that a lot of people don't live here anymore, and that he has changed, too."

There are no actors in the movie, no rehearsals, no sets to build, and no scripts. All the stars are people who actually took part in the chain of events, and it is filmed in a style usually reserved for documentaries, telling how several lives intertwined briefly and then unraveled.

"The way we do it is completely different from the normal way of doing a feature film. We don't have real actors, but we work with real people who were involved in a story that took place five years ago. Some people are better than real actors."

In documentary fashion, Gruber places the principals in the action together before the cameras and sound equipment. The presence of the equipment initially in-



Swiss director Steff Gruber has been shooting scenes for an unusual kind of love story in the Athens area—a story that really happened.

hibited most people, but in the end its effect was beneficial.

"The presence of the camera was good...it tied people down and they were afraid to leave, so they kept talking and thinking and getting mad," he continued. "We got more out of the people with the camera than we would have without it."

Because of the particular style Gruber has used for

the film, he has found it necessary to do a lot of shooting to come up with enough good footage.

All that film is expensive, so to hold down the costs, he is shooting it in 16mm, and the results will be blown up to 35mm for showing in theaters.

When completed, the movie will be distributed in Europe, and Gruber said he hopes to bring it back to

Athens a year or so from now for a private showing to "cast" members.

Though there are two main characters in the story, about ten people in all have parts, and the scenery ranges from T.K. Harty's to the Georgian Hotel, and from Chatham McCommons' studio to a construction site.

Because the characters are real and the events really happened—and be-

cause "they still have to live here"—Gruber will not reveal the names of the people in his production.

The project, tentatively dubbed *A Place Called Shady Grove*, has an international crew, including Gruber from Switzerland and Andy Humphreys from Great Britain. Billy Sherrill, responsible for the lighting, and Jim Hawkins, doing the sound, are both from Athens.