

Ole seeks extras for "mockumentary"

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Imagine your favorite wizard attending "Pigblemish" rather than Hogwarts after his parents died in a freak golfing accident. What if the Sorcerer's Stone was really a phone? What if Harry Potter and his classmates tramped around in bathrobes instead of wizard robes? And what would happen if the proverbial sorting hat was really a PGA baseball cap that told limericks? St. Olaf sophomore Jeremy Gustafson, creator and producer of "Harry Putter," a "mockumentary," is about to find out.

Gustafson and his friend/actor/comedian Matthew Feeney are together producing the Harry Putter mockumentary, a parody of the Harry Potter series that portrays the character of Harry Potter as a "real" boy. Currently, shooting is expected to last throughout a five-day period in June, but editing will take months more. Gustafson hopes to be finished with the entire film by early December. According to Gustafson, the last day of auditions will be May 20. Those interested in being invited to audition should visit www.harry-putter-movie.com for instructions on how to apply to audition.

Gustafson hopes to involve around twenty crew members and to have a speaking cast of about twenty as well, though extras are also

needed for the project, which should last about fifteen minutes in length. Ultimately, Gustafson is planning deferred contracts for all actors and crew: "If and when the film makes money, [cast and crew members] will receive a percentage, but otherwise it will be mutually understood that this is a volunteer venture on their part for the love of the art."

According to Gustafson, he and his crew have already completed one day of the auditions, and from that were able to cast all the adult roles. There is another day of auditions scheduled for 20 May, to finish selection for the leads. He noted that, although the website calls for people of ages 14-16, anyone who can "look" that age is also welcome to audition. He said, "TV and film are wonderful in sometimes being able to make 30-year-olds look like teenagers, so college students should not necessarily feel discluded just because they don't match the age in 'real life.'"

Gustafson, an avid fan of the Harry Potters books and films, claims that his mockumentary is not intended to poke fun at the stories, but rather to "serve as my own little tribute to their genius." Gustafson got the idea for this documentary several years ago at a comedy scriptwriting meeting, when people commented on the physical similarities between Gustafson and Daniel Radcliffe,

who plays Harry Potter in the films. Says Gustafson, "When I started thinking about it more, I realized that there is a lot in the books that was useable in a comedic setting; ideas such as the Mall of America as "Diagon Alley" and getting into more trouble with the invisibility cloak started coming to mind, enough of which seemed funny enough to weave together into a nice little script."

Gustafso became interested in film during his senior year of high school at Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis, while participating in the acting, filming, and editing of high school comedic videos, along with being a production assistant for an independent film called "Stealing Summer" the summer after he graduated from high school. "This gave me the chance to get my feet wet in the Minnesota film scene," comments Gustafson. Gustafson's "largest splash" in the industry came in June of 2005, when he worked as an extras casting assistant for the feature "Fall Into Me," which he describes as a "fairly large budget indie."

Because "Harry Putter" is a parody and probably cannot be sold without a lawsuit, the mockumentary's primary source of distribution will be through online downloads. Gustafson is also planning to submit "Harry Putter" to film festivals around the country.