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**Jon Joffin, ASC Crafts *Schmigadoon!* Season 2 “Technicolor” Look**

**with Zeiss Supreme Prime Radiance**

Jon Joffin, ASC brings decades of experience to craft the look for Season 2 of *Schmigadoon*, the musical comedy extravaganza, with a star-studded ensemble led by Cecily Strong and Keegan-Michael Key. The cinematographer has been instrumental in shaping the looks for shows like *Star Trek: Picard*, *Keep Breathing*, and *Julie and the Phantoms.* Showrunner (and the show’s songwriter) Cinco Paul tapped Joffin to create a new look for Season 2, which would pay tribute to a different era of musicals than Season 1. In approaching the need for deep color space and reliable optics that could handle the intense workflow of such a highly choreographed show, the cinematographer chose Sony Venice 2 with Zeiss Supreme Prime Radiance lenses.

*Schmigadoon* is the story of a couple who end up in a strange town where all the residents are living in a musical. “The main characters want to go back into this musical fantasy land, but instead they end up in a town called Schmicago, which is darker and seedier," explains Joffin. “The first season was brighter than I normally do, but the creators wanted the second season to be based on *Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *Hair*, *Godspell*, *Sweet Charity*, *Umbrellas of Cherbourg–*all these visually interesting films.”

For the second season, the show planned to depart from the happy, theatrical coloring of Season 1 and move to a much darker version of the three strip Technicolor film prevalent in the 1930s-1950s. The process exposed three separate strips of black and white film, which relied on an internal beam splitter to each capture a different color wavelength: red, green, and blue. The process required lots of light on the subject, lending a tendency for vivid color, but flat lighting. “I wanted to put my own stamp on the show and give it a Technicolor, but more modern look.” Joffin worked with the Company 3 to create a unique LUT for *Schmigadoon*. “I worked with Jill Bogdanowicz and my gaffer and we came up with this Technicolor look that still had lots of color separation information, but also has a softer light and richer contrast.”

To complement this custom look, Joffin selected the Sony Venice 2 with Zeiss Supreme Prime Radiance lenses. “One of the reasons we used the Sony Venice 2 was for its deep color space.” He elaborates, “When we set out to pick a lens package for *Schmigadoon*, we wanted something that was vintage because it's a period film.” He tested a lot of vintage lenses, along with the Zeiss Supreme Prime Radiances, optics Joffin is familiar with, having participated in the original Zeiss focus group during the lens design process. “The thing about the Radiance lenses is they're reliable and I always know exactly what I'm getting. After two weeks of shooting, we realized we weren't using the vintage lenses and we sent them back.”

One of the cinematographer’s most fondly remembered sequences is the *Chicago*-reminiscent ‘Bells and Whistles’ musical number starring Jane Krakowski. “We all fell in love with Jane when she came out and we saw her performance for the first time. Everyone was so excited about it: she came down from the ceiling; she was roller-skating; she was blindfolded with the scales of justice; she did the splits.” There were only two days allotted to the sequence which is dense with varied coverage. “We wanted to do everything possible to get as many shots as we could, because it was such a special performance. When you see the sequence, I think it's a great achievement. It was great having the reliability of the Radiance lenses for that scene.”

*Schmigadoon* pushed an ambitious and demanding production schedule. Each episode has its own choreographed musical numbers and the ability to shoot efficiently without compromising shooting time to deal with temperamental equipment was critical. Frequently, the first time the crew saw the entire performance of a musical number in person was the day of shooting. “Another thing to mention is that about 85% of the performances, were recorded live. The performers are not lip-synching. When we shot Ariana Debose’s ‘Over and Done,’ it was a such a tough song, with a lot of vocal gymnastics in it, we were told she could only do it four times. So we had to be very strategic in how we shot it. Having a great, reliable camera with reliable lenses made all the difference.” ‘Over and Done,’ a *Dreamgirls* tribute, wraps up the season finale with smooth panache.

“You've got these performances with A+ actors, and you really want to see it all. You don't want to hide any of it. Most of my job is just doing justice to what with the production design, the costumes, and the actors are doing,” says Joffin. *Schmigadoon* continues to please, with all six episodes of Season 2 available for streaming on Apple TV+.

Watch Jon Joffin’s conversation with Zeiss Cinematography: <https://youtu.be/KmmXA7oIJQk>

Or for the full Lenspire interview: <https://lenspire.zeiss.com/cine/en/article/jon-joffin-asc-on-getting-the-look-for-schmigadoon/>