**ZEISS Cinematography**

**User News**

**Effective: Immediately**

[www.zeiss.com/cine-democenter](http://www.zeiss.com/cine-democenter)

**Gavin Smith CSC Captures Colorful Creativity of “*Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock! S2*” with ZEISS Supreme Primes & ARRI Mini LF**

Setting out to film the second season of Henson Group’s *Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock!*, Gavin Smith, CSC (*Wynonna Earp*, *Ginny and Georgia*, *Jane*) knew he had some changes to make. After lensing the first season of the puppet-filled, musical children’s programming extravaganza, Smith decided it was time to make strategic adjustments to his camera package. For the second season, the cinematographer chose ZEISS Supreme Primes with ARRI ALEXA Mini LF, prioritizing the duo’s color congruency and close-focus capabilities to meet the unique mandates of *Fraggle Rock*.

A reboot of the 1983–1987 hit children’s show, the modern *Back to the Rock!* is a whimsical, color-filled children's musical fantasy comedy, starring Jim Henson’s Muppets. The show’s titular Fraggles (traditional arm-operated puppets) embark on-lesson-teaching adventures and misadventures that usually involve interacting with other Muppet-denizens, including giant Gorgs (three-times the size of a human) and teeny-tiny, work-obsessed Doozers.

When first approaching the shoot, Smith had anticipated the challenge of working with these differently sized stars, however he quickly learned that when it came to *Fraggle Rock*, one of the most important qualities would be color. “The puppets, no matter what situation they were in, always had to be shown in their true color,” Smith explains. “Color is a recognition factor. Psychologically, kids recognize colors almost before they recognize anything else, so the color is associated with who the character is.” This led to a somewhat challenging color grade following season one. For the show’s second season, the cinematographer decided to change his camera package bodies to ARRI ALEXA Mini LF for its “natural color space” to better preserve the all-important Fraggle pallet.

With a new camera body selected, his next priority was selecting complementary lenses. “Some of the main tests that I have are for the way a lens flares because I tend to put a lot of in-camera lighting into a show. In *Fraggle Rock* the little Doozer vehicles have lights that shine right at camera and create beautiful natural flares. Another thing I look at is how the lenses show or hide little imperfections. It's very different photographing a puppet’s face compared to a person. The puppet has to stay true to its color and you also don't want it to be too clinical, revealing the fuzz or any mistakes on them.” After testing several lens sets, Smith had his answer: “The Supremes were the perfect lens to pair with the Mini LF.”

Having chosen a camera package that would protect the show’s intended color space, the next major challenge was filming the tiny Doozers who live side by side with the Fraggles. Only a few inches tall, filming the Doozer puppets and sets were super scaled down compared to the rest of the show. “I really love the LF because the large format really makes very small things, like our puppets, look more three-dimensional. You get this beautiful macro effect to everything,” Smith elaborates. “We had to approach everything with the Doozers more like macro-shooting. One of the most important things for me was the close focus of the lenses. When you are really in close on the LF with the ZEISS Supremes, it made working with the little Doozer puppets absolutely beautiful.”

Another way the cinematographer helped blend the Doozer scenes aesthetically with the rest of the show was shooting at a surprisingly high T-stop. “Usually, when you film a face, you shoot it around anywhere from a T4 down to a T2. When working with the Doozers, you had to shoot from T8 to T11 because you needed as much depth of field as possible shooting that close to the puppet. The warmth and roundedness of the ZEISS Supreme Primes lenses at such a high stop is what really sold me on them.” Whenever the super small Doozer engineers are portrayed, the focus fall-off is non-distracting, keeping important scene visual information legible.

*Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock!* has been critically applauded as a successful revival of a beloved television show. “*Fraggle Rock* has amazing writing,” gushes Smith. “It's a really contemporized, wonderful show. It was both challenging and interesting–a different way to work that made me re-jig the way I approached the cinematography from the outset.”

Watch *Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock!* now on Apple TV+.

To read the full interview with Gavin Smith CSC: <https://lenspire.zeiss.com/cine/en/article/gavin-smith-talks-lensing-fraggle-rock-with-the-zeiss-supreme-prime-lenses>