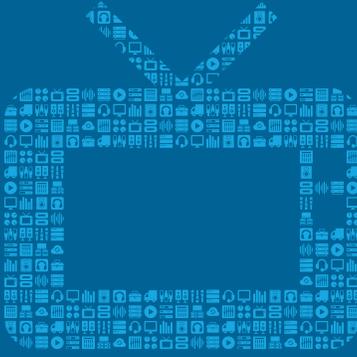


CASE STUDY



BROADCAST



OPPORTUNITY

The Apple TV+ series Schmigadoon! required a unique lighting approach to create realistic illumination on a 360-degree blue screen and recreate classic musical theater lighting.



SOLUTION

Director of Photography Todd Elyzen and Lighting Programmer Jason McKinnon used more than 200 Martin MAC Encore Performance fixtures to achieve a variety of looks during production.

SCHMIGADOON!, CANADA

Schmigadoon! is a six-episode Apple TV+ streaming series based on the 1947 musical Brigadoon, starring Cecily Strong and Keegan-Michael Key as a couple who find themselves transported into a golden-age musical. Set in an idyllic mountain village and full of dance numbers and homages to iconic musicals, Schmigadoon! required a combination of realistic daylight illumination and exaggerated theatrical lighting. Since much of the show was shot on elaborate sets with a 40-foot-high, 360-degree blue screen for digital set extensions, consistent illumination was critical yet lighting angles were limited.

To achieve the right look for every scene and be able to easily switch between and recall lighting setups, Director of Photography Todd Elyzen came up with the unorthodox idea to deploy a lighting rig primarily composed of moving-head fixtures mounted overhead. Lighting Programmer Jason McKinnon selected the Martin MAC Encore Performance CLD for the task, securing more than 200 fixtures with the help of Christie Lites Rental Representative Joe Foley. In the end, the team deployed half of those fixtures on the primary set at Vancouver Film Studios, supplemented by additional sources to create a base level of ambient light in daytime scenes.

"The show borrows from a range of '50s Hollywood musicals, from The Wizard of Oz to Oklahoma and everything in between," said Elyzen. "Oklahoma was shot on an exterior backlot in sunlight conditions and The Wizard of Oz was the opposite of that. Because we were blending so many of those different looks into our own story, I took the liberty of lighting in different ways. These lights allowed me to get hard sunlight where I wanted it or create a slightly overcast look with a bit of direction still coming through. We could also utilize them for feature lighting like lampposts and things like that."



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Designed for the stage and optimized for TV and broadcast applications, the Martin MAC Encore Performance CLD was perfectly suited to Elyzen and McKinnon's needs. The CLD variant specializes in generating pristine, full-spectrum light with ultra-high color rendition, which was ideal for the many daytime outdoor scenes in Schmigadoon! High Color Rendering Index (CRI) and Televised Lighting Consistency Index (TLCI) values ensured accurate color rendering on camera. Ultra-fast and silent movement, along with 16-bit DMX control of parameters like zoom, focus, dimming and gobo rotation, gave the team extreme flexibility and precision when programming the rig and recalling specific scenes. This functionality allowed Elyzen and McKinnon to easily switch between lighting directions for realistic outdoor lighting on an indoor stage.

"We wanted to be able to turn around and shoot in any direction," added Elyzen. "Instead of having four different lighting setups, all prefocused for that purpose, we were able to pre-program the same fixtures and light from any direction we needed to. They were so versatile and programmable that it allowed us to flip back and forth between directions with the push of a button."

In addition to the logistical advantages, the MAC Encore Performance CLD gave McKinnon the versatility to achieve a variety of creative looks. Five rotating glass gobos, an animation wheel, Animation effects system and variable soft frost diffusion gave the team nearly endless possibilities for creative effects. Four framing shutter blades with fully electronic control made it possible to direct light exactly where it was needed. According to McKinnon, the Encore's versatility was key to making Schmigadoon! come to life.

"The flexibility and versatility of the Encore were what made it such a great choice," said McKinnon. "One Encore would have a gobo to mimic sunlight coming through the trees, the one next to it on the truss would be shutter-cut down to frame an actor and the next one would be completely zoomed out filling in a blue screen. The adjustable frequency of the Encore from the console was also very handy and got used often when we would start shooting off-speed on the camera. I honestly don't recall a moment where I was asked to do something and had to answer, "The light won't do that.”"



Schmigadoon! was filmed between October and December 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to McKinnon, the unique all-automated lighting rig not only saved time during production, it also reduced the number of crew needed on set. This made production safer, reduced costs and increased efficiency—a win for everyone.

"The use of moving lights as the main lighting instrument for each scene is what made this project unique," added McKinnon. "Often, the catwalks are full of lighting techs, and many conventional fixtures constantly need re-focusing, but the Encores made this obsolete. We shot this during the lockdown part of the pandemic, so being able to have less people on set was crucial."

PRODUCTS USED

MARTIN MAC ENCORE PERFORMANCE CLD MOVING-HEAD FIXTURES



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