



Aranyó creates summer

High School

When *High School Musical* was released in January 2006, it quickly became a worldwide phenomenon. The Disney Channel original movie is the story of two students, basketball team captain Troy Bolton (Zac Efron) and scholarly Gabriella Montez (Vanessa Anne Hudgens), who resist peer pressure and rival cliques to follow their dreams of playing the lead roles in their high school's musical. It's estimated that 160 million viewers watched the movie on television, and a stage version of the story has been mounted at thousands of high schools.

The highly-anticipated sequel, *High School Musical 2*, teamed Daniel Aranyó and Kenny Ortega, who first collaborated on *The Cheetah Girls* sequel, another Disney musical telefilm. Ortega, a director with a background in choreography, directed the original *High School Musical* as well. Aranyó is a native of Barcelona who studied cinematography at the American Film Institute. His credits include *Aizea: City of the Wind*, *Little Iron Men* and *Cross Bronx*.

The movie begins in the familiar classroom setting on the last day of school, but the majority of the story unfolds in and around a country club, where Bolton takes a summer job. The production shot at a country club in St. George, Utah, against a backdrop of red rock canyons.

"Because of the change in location, Kenny and I felt that we could redefine and re-establish the look of the movie," says Aranyó. "I spoke with Gordon Lonsdale, who photographed the first film, and he explained their approach. We were able to recreate that feeling with soft overhead light for the first scene and tie the films together."

For the first big dance number, which begins when the bell rings, Aranyó wanted to contrast the white light of the classroom with light from the outside that beckoned the kids to the more fun world of summer. He accomplished this by coloring the light from outside with CTS and yellow gel.

Once the story breaks out of school and reaches the golf club, the images become more vibrant and electric. "Kenny was a student of Gene Kelly, and he likes the tradition of 50s and 60s Technicolor musicals like *An American in Paris*," says Aranyó. "We took that to the next level in terms of the camera movement and the visuals. We managed to get a look that was within the Disney nature, but felt almost like a Technicolor movie. Much of the lighting was designed to make the kids' skin glow, to communicate how excited they are to be in this different environment in summertime."

Aranyó says that his collaboration with production designer Mark Hofeling was one key to the look. "Before you place one light, the decision is made about what to place in front of the camera," he says. "We worked very closely with Mark and the costume and makeup people to create that colorful world in front of the camera. I was always trying to find an edge light and strong backlight to make things stand out from the backgrounds, even when it might not feel natural. We were trying to create a new, vibrant world. I used HMI's or the hard side of the shiny board."

Efron has very large blue eyes, which Aranyó emphasized with his lighting. "We used very large sources, like big China balls, Chimeras and 12-bys so that the black part of his eyes



vacation for

Musical 2



would become very small," says Aranyó. "That way most of his eye would be blue. There were many close-ups in the film, and for these we used long lenses, also to make the actors stand out from the environment."

The camera package from Otto Nemenz included a Moviecam, which was usually used on a Steadicam rig, as well as several ARRI cameras. The lenses were Cooke S4s, which Aranyó chose because of a softer quality that better suited his aesthetic.

Aranyó made extensive use of Tiffen Classic Soft filters. He says they smoothed out some imperfections in the teenaged actors' skin, and added a sheen that was consistent with the 50s Technicolor look they were updating.

The choice of film stock dovetailed with this visual design. "We chose to shoot most of the film with KODAK VISION2 200T 7218 film," Aranyó says. "I really like the contrast and vibrant colors, with beautiful saturated tone rendition. We used a tungsten film even though we shot most of the movie outside. We corrected using filters or in post. There were a few night exterior situations, and in those I used KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 film."

Processing was handled at FotoKem, and dailies were transferred at Keep Me Posted, a division of FotoKem. "I had very close communications with the lab, especially Hawk Hamilton at Keep Me Posted," says Aranyó. "I always shot a color chart, exposed with 3200 or 5600 degrees Kelvin light. I took stills of every single shot, and each night I would retouch

them in Photoshop and email them to the dailies timer. They could match the contrast, color and saturation based on my stills. I was very aware that the Disney executives would be judging and making decisions based on the dailies, so I wanted to have a lot of the look already there in the dailies, rather than just going with a one-light transfer."

The film was photographed in 16:9 aspect ratio and will be seen in that format on the DVD release. But the broadcast premiere on the Disney Channel will be seen in 4:3. Aranyó and the crew protected for the 4:3 image during the shoot.

"My crew was really amazing on this shoot," says Aranyó. "They responded incredibly well to every difficult situation, despite the long hours and many location changes and big lighting set-ups. I'm extremely grateful, and I'm looking forward to the next opportunity to collaborate."

High School Musical-mania also has inspired a bestselling series of junior novels, a themed show at Disneyland Parks and Resorts, a sold-out 42-date arena concert tour in North America and a five country concert tour in Latin America, a stage adaptation touring the world and a touring ice show premiering in late 2007. "High School Musical" was the top-selling album of 2006 and the year's most-watched TV movie on DVD in the U.S. In 2008, Walt Disney Studios is scheduled to release *High School Musical 3* on cinema screens.