

All aboard for White Lotus 2

Ageing helps Jennifer Coolidge take risks on screen, writes Kerry Parnell

You'd have to wonder why anyone would book another stay at The White Lotus, but the stars of series two couldn't sign up fast enough.

Leading the new cast for a second season of the smash-hit show is Jennifer Coolidge, who returns as billionaire Tanya, one of the best comedy characters ever created, including the actor's previous incarnation as Stifler's mom. This season, the action has moved from Hawaii to Sicily.

"I love going around the world. But what I like better is when someone else is paying for it," Coolidge tells Insider.

"It's just a win-win. To have had this double gift of being able to do another

one ... I can't even convey my gratitude."

Coolidge, 61, says she fell in love with Tanya instantly.

"I really love to play someone who's kind of a mess," she says, adding she threw herself into the role.

"I do think ageing helps.

"You're just thrilled that you have another day on the planet.

"The closer you get to the grave, the more chances you take. Is that too dark?"

Darkly funny is what The White Lotus is and the second season is as hilarious as the first. As well as the taut script of creator Mike White, the cast was encouraged to ad lib. Taking on the role of put-upon hotel manager Valentina is Italian actor Sabrina Impacciatore, who



Sicily sets the scene for the anticipated White Lotus 2, starring Jennifer Coolidge.

spontaneously cracked one of the best – and harshest – one-liners in the second episode, at Tanya.

"I looked over at Mike and he said, 'I'm not going to put that in, I don't want you to feel bad,'" Coolidge says. "Guess what happened?"

"She's created a legacy," says co-star Jon Gries, 65, who plays Tanya's husband Greg, also back from season one.

The cast, which includes Michael Imperioli (The Sopranos), F. Murray Abraham (Homeland), Theo James (Sanditon), Aubrey Plaza (Criminal Minds) and Tom Hollander (Us), filmed in Sicily for four months, in the Four Seasons' San Domenico Palace, Taormina, overlooking Mount Etna.

Imperioli, 56, says he

couldn't stop watching the first season.

"I was like, I've got to do this. Let's make it happen somehow. And fortunately, it did," he says.

Despite the on-screen drama, the cast bonded.

"The hotel had almost summer-camp vibes," says Adam DiMarco, 32, who plays Albie, son of Imperioli's Dominic and grandson of Abraham's Bert.

"We were big on karaoke nights," he says. "It was an amazing shoot and such a beautiful location. I've never filmed in a different country for four months before. It definitely felt fortunate to have such a great group of people to lean on, specifically Haley, Meghann (Fahy), and Michael."

Haley Lu Richardson, who plays Portia, Tanya's beleaguered assistant, agrees.

"It's rare when you work on something that all, or a lot of you, get along, but it's another level when you make genuine friendships that you think could go beyond the time working together," she says.

The White Lotus 2, like its first incarnation, trades on the characters being anything but best friends, as they unravel internally. So, who would they take on holiday for real and who would they knock off?

"I would definitely keep Lucia (Simona Tabasco), she'd be a fun time," says Haley, "and I'd kill Bert."

Luckily, Murray, 83, isn't taking it personally. "We got along so well," he says, and "had such respect for each

other". He says the on-screen family trio of himself, Michael and Adam became a unit.

"What turned out to be three really different men became a family. It was a good, fine thing."

The other star of the series is Sicily, adds Michael.

"The themes of this season are very personal, yet more timeless than season one," he says, "which reflects the connection to the ancient world, being in Sicily. There's a sensuality that permeates this season that's very potent."

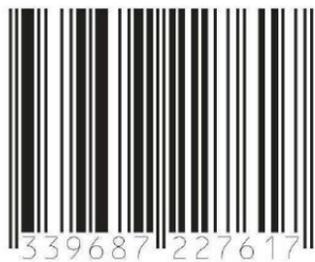
Despite the bucolic setting, the family's journey to rediscover their Italian heritage doesn't work out as planned.

THE WHITE LOTUS 2 PREMIERES ON FOXTEL AND BINGE, OCTOBER 31



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