

Ashley Jensen talks physical comedy and *Agatha Raisin* Season Two

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Ashley Jensen is back for *Agatha Raisin* Season 2 and *Hidden Remote* had the opportunity to talk with her about the show's comedic success and what fans can look forward to next.

Emmy-nominated actress, Ashley Jensen has played a [number](#) of colorful characters in her career, from the sweet and socially inept Maggie Jacobs on *Extras* to the fashionable and vivacious seamstress Christina McKinney in *Ugly Betty*. But for Jensen, comedy has always been her first love and she seems to have found a new home as the star of Acorn TV's *Agatha Raisin*, which is premiering its second season Monday, Nov. 19.

Jensen is returning as the stylish, amateur detective in this dramedy murder mystery for the show's long-awaited second season. Based on MC Beaton's best-selling novels, *Agatha Raisin* follows a London PR boss-lady turned sleuth, who finds herself tangled up in small-town mayhem after opting for [early retirement](#) in a small village called Carsely.

Season 2 will adapt three of MC Beaton's novels — “The Wizard of Evesham,” “The Curious Curate,” and “The Fairies of Fryham” — as three 90-minute television movies (or six 45-minute episodes).

Jensen sat down with *Hidden Remote* to talk about the show's second season, how *Agatha* became Acorn TV's darling child, and her long-time love-affair with physical comedy.

Hidden Remote: I want to start off, Ashley, by saying I loved how you captured Agatha as a stylish, fun, comedic, amateur crime-solver in the show's first season. Was it difficult to pull all those personality traits together into one character?

Ashley Jensen: I mean, we have the basis of the book, which is an amazing starting point. It's a joy to play her. I've been working for quite a long time and I feel as though I've been working my way up the career ladder. I really started at the bottom. So I've met a lot of people and worked in a lot of places, doing all sorts of things like dramas and comedies, so when I approach a character, I will find aspects of that character that I think I would possibly have and expand on that. There's certainly an element of Agatha that is Ashley Jensen. But somebody said the other day that my Agatha was a cross between Jessica Fletcher and Lucille Ball, which I took as a huge compliment.



Hidden Remote: That's a great description of her. It seems like almost every character on this show has something colorful about them that's endearing and makes them stand out.

Jensen: I think everyone's so passionate about the show that being on set is almost like a playground. We have this little army of madcap, eccentric, sort of rag-bag characters that are all played by actors who are supremely talented and a vast experience in comedy, so I think everyone was bringing their own bag of skills onto the set.

There's a sense of fun about the whole thing and the whole cast will always go for the more interesting and fun way to play a scene. We didn't want it to be mundane, so instead of just stepping out of a taxi, let's roll out of a taxi and land on our knees.

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Hidden Remote: Was it that sort of “playground” atmosphere and sense of [rich](#) comedy one of the reasons you wanted to get involved with the show in the first [place](#)?

Jensen: One of my passions has always been physical comedy, but to be honest, sometimes it wasn't even there on the page. I'd look at the script and see this was a scene where Agatha is looking through the window and I'd look at the window and go, “Why look through the window when I can climb up the wall, and hoist half my body through it?” There's also a scene where [this dog](#) was meant to mount my leg and the dog clearly had no affection for me, so we thought maybe I have to be on the ground and I was like, “Right, don't worry, leave it to me.”

We're very much allowed to take the part and make it our own a little bit. It really wasn't constrained where someone said, “No you can't do that” or “You're taking it a bit far.” I think that's one of the reasons why our guest actors really had a ball when they came on because you can be free and play. But one of the elements that we've certainly cranked up in this second season is the element of physical comedy as well as smart writing.

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Hidden Remote: Props to you for doing what it took to get that dog to mount your leg. That's the essence of dedication. What are some of your other favorite memories or moments from working with this cast?

Jensen: There's so many, really. The burlesque scene was something that I never thought I'd find myself doing at my age. But, that episode is about empowering women and being able to stand up and be counted for and not have to answer to anyone else and be proud of who you are, regardless of what you look like. I think that was a great moment and it was really fun to be a part of a scene like that.

Another bit I loved about this show was when Mat Horne and I would look around the set and say, “We should be eating in this scene,” and it's one of those things where other actors are always like, “For god sakes, don't eat in a scene because you'll end up eating chicken for four hours.”

But we had a blast with it. We'd make pancakes and eat sprinkles. People kept saying we'd get sick but we were like, “No let's do it.” It became a running joke with our props department.



Hidden Remote: That's hysterical. I know I'm definitely looking forward to seeing more comedy like in the first season. It's another reason so many of us are thankful Acorn picked up the show and made a second season possible.

Jensen: Being supported by Acorn has just utterly given us the confidence. We were all a little bit floored after the first season because we couldn't understand why the show wasn't being picked up. But we have the most amazing and tenacious producer, who saw that this show had legs and he wasn't going to let it go.

He figured, if England wasn't going to do it, then he'd hop over the pond. I think it actually gave us more confidence having American back-up, and that confidence comes across in our playground that was this set.

Hidden Remote: And does that confidence shine through in the comedy for Season 2?

Jensen: I think so, I really do. The show has a huge sense of fun about it. Although we're taking the job seriously, it's still very whimsical and arched-eyebrow.

It looks beautiful and you have all these fun eclectic characters who all relate to one another in a playground way. But at the base of it all, it's a murder mystery and I think the format of murder mystery has stood the test of time and continues to stand the test of time. And in many ways, I think it's very archetypically British and contains the best of what is English and I hope Americans will find it charming.



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Thanks for the interview, Ashley! Be sure to tune in to Acorn TV streaming to see the premiere of *Agatha Raisin and The Wizard of Evesham*. You can also catch Jensen on Acorn TV's *Love, Lies, and Records*.