

Snowpiercer Season Two Adds Another Train to the Track

Named Big Alice, the new locomotive is “a frightening place,”
production designer Stephen Geaghan tells *AD*

By Mara Reinstein



Daveed Diggs's character (left) takes up residence in what was formerly known as the Folger car this time around. Photo: David Bukach

Snowpiercer was conceived as a nonstop thrill ride, and season 1 of the TNT hit lived up to its promise. In the twisty finale, Daveed Diggs's ex-cop character Andre Layton finally triumphed over the titular train's ruling class. But just as Layton and hospitality chief Melanie Cavill (played by Jennifer Connolly) joined forces, they and the other passengers aboard the 1,001-car locomotive learned of additional postapocalyptic-

world survivors aboard a rival second train. Its name is Big Alice. And though the train is attached behind Snowpiercer at the start of season two (which premiered January 25), it's front and center of the action.

The whole point of production design is to create an environment so that the audience can look at something and know everything about its inhabitants without anyone saying one word," veteran production designer Stephen Geaghan—who went to work on the 85-foot-long, 14-foot-wide train on the Vancouver set last summer—tells *Architectural Digest*. "I hope we get that 'ahh' moment on Big Alice, and people know that it's a frightening place."



Melanie Cavill (right, played by Jennifer Connelly) and Mr. Wilford (Sean Bean) meet in Big Alice's control car: "The actors found the new train quite compelling," production designer Stephen Geaghan says. Photo: David Bukach

That's because the Big Alice is under the rule of the mysterious and powerful Mr. Wilford (*Game of Thrones* alumnus Sean Bean), whom Geaghan describes as an aristocratic mix of Henry Ford, Hannibal Lecter, and P.T. Barnum. Designing

Wilford's private car was such a top priority that Geaghan started conceptualizing it before Bean was cast in the role. "I could sense he would pick a very traditional environment," he says. For inspiration, he looked to the interiors of European trains from the 1920s and '30s and placed special emphasis on rich fabrics and textures in the room. Set decorator Bobbi Allyn sourced the Louis XV chairs from the Ann Getty residence in Los Angeles. He also adorned the walls with curated art pieces—including, at the entrance, a Francisco Goya painting of the god Saturn devouring his children. It's a metaphor.



"We had to show that Wilford was the most brilliant and powerful man in the world—and show he'd been plotting his course for seven years," set decorator Bobbi Allyn says. Photo: David Bukach



Allyn describes the Wilford bedroom as “imperialism grandeur and technological elegance in a swanky bachelor pad.” Photo: David Bukach

Wilford’s carriage isn’t the only Big Alice standout. “The interiors definitely reveal a different kind of social and moral order than what we’ve seen on *Snowpiercer*,” Allyn says. In future episodes, viewers will see a multi-level state-of-the-art research area—known as Headwood’s Lab—where two nefarious bio-scientists study the effects of intense cold on humans. There’s also a dining car, a sub-engine room (built from scratch), a multi-purpose car, storage car, dorm car, connector car to *Snowpiercer*, and a compost car where one main character ends up later into the season. “What we did was develop a look that’s not so much in contrast to what *Snowpiercer* looks like,” he says. “I continued the original zeitgeist but expanded on the world.”



Wilford crosses through from Big Alice to Snowpiercer via the Border Car. Photo: David Bukach

And while Snowpiercer's dining car, tail car, and engine cockpit remain intact, there is one key change: After Layton takes control of Snowpiercer, he gets to reside in a deluxe first-class car and make it his own. Now labeled "The Schwartz car" (named after architect Milton Schwartz, who hit his prime in the 1950s), it exudes a midcentury-modern style thanks to Wassily chairs, a custom-built couch, and Mayan-style masks commissioned from a local artist. "I acquired the furniture during a mad two-day shopping spree in Palm Springs!" she says. She also acquired the "spectacular" Lucite bar from a Slim Aarons photo shoot and purchased the books from a retired architect's library.



Rowan Blanchard (in the Big Alice engine room) plays Connelly's long-lost teen daughter Alexandra, who aligns herself with Wilford. Photo: David Bukach

The production team has yet to slow down. Geaghan shares that he's been in Vancouver since September mapping out production for season three. He won't say much, except to cryptically hint that the design element will be "interesting for those who read books." Oh, one more thing: "There will be even more for everyone to see!"