

Palatine native, 'Ransom Canyon' star stays close to Chicago-area roots

Steve Zalusky of The Daily Herald

While attending Fremd High School, Jack Schumacher didn't dream of becoming an actor.

Yet Schumacher is now basking in the success of Netflix's series "Ransom Canyon," a Western romance that features him as the enigmatic Yancy Grey.

"I'm feeling very, very lucky to get to be a part of this," he said in a recent phone interview. "It's been kind of a dream come true. So I'm glad people are enjoying it."

A lot of people are enjoying it — it has resided comfortably among Netflix's top 10 shows and was recently in the top spot.

Schumacher lives in Los Angeles, but the Chicago area is never far from his mind. During the interview, he expressed the hope that the Chicago Blackhawks would soon find some help for their young star, Connor Bedard.

"I've been saying every year for the past five years that we'd be back in the Stanley Cup Finals in three years," he said. "I'm going to keep saying that."

Schumacher cherishes fond memories of running around Palatine with friends. He specifically recalled hanging out at the reservoir near Palatine Road.

"When you're a teenager, you're like, 'I'm going to get out of here,'" Schumacher remembered. "But then, as I've gotten older now, I really am nostalgic for that time and that place. I loved that area. I loved Fremd. (There were) just really kind, great people."

Schumacher didn't discover acting until after graduating high school. He initially considered becoming a counselor, mentioning he had been an assistant to psychology and social studies teachers at Fremd.

The acting bug bit during his freshman year at Loyola University Chicago, where he took an acting elective class. He received further training at Second City.

After roles on such TV series as “Chicago P.D.,” his breakout role came as Lt. Neil “Omaha” Vikander in his first movie “Top Gun: Maverick,” where he worked alongside Tom Cruise.

“I remember the first day when I met him on set. It was probably the most starstruck that I’ve ever been,” Schumacher said. “It was very strange. He knew my name. He shook my hand. I was like, ‘Oh, my God, this is crazy.’”

Based on the work of author Jodi Thomas and shot in New Mexico, “Ransom Canyon” is set in a Texas town and mainly revolves around the romantic tension between rancher Staten Kirkland and dance hall owner Quinn O’Grady. Schumacher’s character Yancy is a mysterious stranger who wanders into town and shakes things up.

For his role as Yancy in “Ransom Canyon,” Schumacher underwent extensive preparation, including three hours of daily “cowboy camp” for a few months. Training with cowboys and bull riders to make his performance authentic, he quite literally learned the ropes.

“When they’re in the chutes, I am actually on the bull,” Schumacher explained, while noting that professional stunt riders handled the actual bull riding scenes for safety and insurance reasons.

Playing Yancy on “Ransom Canyon,” he said, “has been the most fun that I’ve had. It’s definitely the most in depth that I’ve gotten to go into a character, and the longest I’ve gotten to stay with a project.”

Explaining the appeal of the show, he said, “It’s not heavy. It’s fun, it’s dramatic, and you can sit down and binge-watch it.”