



NEWS

Rippon plans to skate like an absolute mad man

Seibert gives skater new direction: 'It's an era, it's a cool guy'

By Lynn Rutherford, special to icenetwork.com

(05/23/2012) - Next season, **Adam Rippon** will be traveling back in time -- to three-martini lunches at 21 Club and bygone Manhattan nightspots like The Stork Club and El Morocco, with an occasional detour to Greenwich Village for some poetry reading and smoky jazz.

The U.S. silver medalist will channel AMC's *Mad Men* protagonist Don Draper in his free skate, set to orchestral tracks from *The Incredibles* soundtrack.

Call it skating, with a dash of bitters.

"It's definitely a different direction I'm taking, but I think I have to explore it," said the 22-year-old Rippon, who placed 13th at the **2012 World Figure Skating Championships**. "I'm really excited to show it off."

His new free-skate persona is the brainchild of Michael Seibert, the five-time U.S. ice dance champion (with Judy Blumberg) who co-directed *Stars on Ice* for 11 years, winning an Emmy. More recently, he helped create routines for CBC's *Battle of the Blades*.

"Michael is very honest, which is good, and the way he goes about doing it is a very interesting approach," said Jason Dungjen, who, with wife Yuka Sato, coaches Rippon at the Detroit Skating Club (DSC). "I think Adam, at this point in his career, needs to learn different ways of doing things."

Honest doesn't begin to describe the personable, quirky Seibert, a Pittsburgh native in the process of moving from California to New York City, where he is establishing an interior design business.

"This is the first senior program I've done, ever," Seibert said. "All of the [judging system] rules are Greek to me."

Despite, or perhaps because of, his lengthy absence from the eligible skating world, Seibert felt free to deliver some blunt opinions. Watching several of Rippon's past programs, as well as those of some other top men, he found a key ingredient lacking.

"I want to see some testosterone," he said. "I just felt that some of it looked a bit soft, that it doesn't look impressive. People start out slow and I'm turning the channel. I want to be entertained, I want to be excited."

"Adam is receptive to that; when we Skyped, he was 'Yes, yes, yes.' He didn't know me; I'm not on the scene, so it's hard to come at somebody with such specific ideas when they have no context from which to take what you have to say. But it's worked well so far; everybody is happy."



Adam Rippon (right), with coach Yuka Sato and new choreographer Michael Seibert. (Jacque Tiegs)

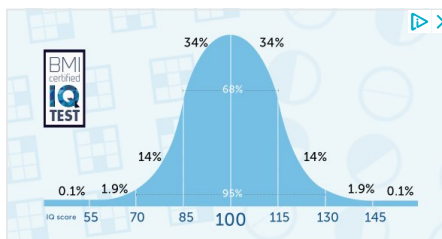
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After spending a long, rain-soaked weekend considering music choices, Seibert came up with selections from Michael Giacchino's score, including "Life's Incredible Again" and "Saving Metroville."

"Adam needs something more competitive, bigger; it's all sort of the same texture I felt was lacking," he said. "So I was all over musically, from [Joe] Satriani on down, and I happened to stumble on this.

"I don't really want to use the [animated] movie title *The Incredibles* because we started with *Mad Men*, and then I found this piece of music, which is very jazz-age, a big horn section, very Don Draper-esque."

Portraying a character inspired by the hard-drinking Draper, a Korean War veteran with dark charisma and womanizing ways, may not seem a natural fit for the angelic-looking Rippon, but choreographer and skater think assuming the cool persona of the 1960s advertising man could bring a new energy to the skater's performances.

"It was always in the back of my head: 'OK, I need to see this show, everyone is talking about it,'" Rippon said. "As soon as Michael brought it to the forefront, I started watching it, and it's a great show.

"I think my programs in the past have been a little bit more introverted, a little bit more subtle. This was definitely a change I was more than willing, and kind of excited, to go for."

Seibert emphasizes that Rippon isn't playing Draper on ice; rather, he's tapping into the character's iconic style.

"It's an era, it's a cool guy, it's a persona," he said. "It's a vibe of a confident, masculine male that the music, the horns and the jazz sound are all part of."

Seibert arrived at DSC last Thursday, and by Saturday had created the free skate's opening and several other sections, including a step sequence. As it stands, the challenging program doesn't leave much time for Rippon to rev up to his most difficult jumps; one triple Axel emerges with all the stealth of a *Mad Men* plot twist.

"Triple Axel is going to be his best friend by the end of the summer," Seibert said. "He promised."

"You get more respect even if you miss a jump, if you go after it and attack it," Rippon said. "That's how I'm approaching every element this year. The [2014] Olympics are one season away, and I've got to put it all out there on the table.

"I'm working very diligently with Yuka and Jason on the technical aspects; now is the time to really drill them. I plan to do two quads in the beginning and a triple Axel in the second half. It's going to be quite a challenge, but I need to do it, and I'm up for it."

Dungjen agrees that added aggression is just the tonic Rippon's skating needs.

"We brought Michael in to really push Adam this season, to grow as a skater and a performer," he said. "You have to do it this season, because you can't do it next season. The Olympic year is not the time to decide you want to go in a new direction."

Of course, all the successful pitches in the world won't add points to Rippon's programs the way a quad would, and the skater knows it.

"I've had success in practice with the Lutz and the Salchow," Rippon said. "I have really been working on the technique of the triple toe last year. I came back [after the world championships] and tried the quad toe, and I landed one or two with Jason in a few days. It's not all the way there yet, but it's definitely really close."

Sato and Dungjen plan to work with Dartfish this summer, although Dungjen emphasized they will use the computer imaging system differently than some.

"We use Dartfish more [to analyze] the mechanics of what's happening than with the [hang-]time issues," Dungjen said. "If the mechanics aren't right, realistically, the time issues don't matter; you're not going to rotate it anyway."

Next on Seibert's agenda: Create a short program.

"We want the two programs to be very, very different," Dungjen said. "We're all looking, but it's still up in the air."

Rippon elected not to compete at a summer competition last year, but he may do so this season.

"I think I will I try out [the free skate] at least once before the Grand Prix," he said. His first event, Cup of China, is scheduled for Nov. 2-4.

That leaves some time for costuming. Draper would be nothing without the right package: crisp shirt, smartly tailored suit and sharply barbered hair, perhaps with a touch of Brylcreem. That's quite a change from Rippon's current crop of blonde curls.

"Don't worry, don't worry," Seibert said. "The hair will work."

"It's a surprise," Rippon said.

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**Lois Elfman**

Looking forward to seeing this collaboration.

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**Jarrad Scooter Williams**

Looking forward to a revamped Rippon next season. I agree with Seibert's direction for the upcoming programs...including the hair.

Like · Reply · 2 · 6y

**Kenneth Corque Korka**

Its good to keep your skating fresh and going in a new direction is the smart thing todo. Good luck always.....

Like · Reply · 6y

**Steven O'Brien**

This should be fun.

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**Pete Murray**

Wow! I so respect Michael Seibert and it's time for Adam's programs to grow up, in a manner of speaking. This sounds like just the ticket to do just that. The 60's were the time of the Flat top haircut (for businessmen). So if this is going to be the image... folks be prepared for a complete Rippon redo!

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**Olga Flügge**

Wish you good luck with new programs! Please do not do anything with the hair.

Like · Reply · 1 · 6y

**Doreen O'Boyle**

I wish Adam the very best for the uncming season. I'm excited to see what Michael and Adam have planned.

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**Grant A Noroyan**

will be an interesting season now that johnny weir and evan lysachek are coming back....

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**Federica Rika Demori**

OH MY GOD Rippon is one of my favourite, this news is killing me... I'm too sad, I'm to worry... what will happend? A style like vulgar Amodio? Hair-gel like Scott Moir? OH GOD, WHY?

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**Stella Yong**

Very excited! Imagine Adam potraying a vintage character on ice, a 180 degrees turn! Must be fun... Good luck!

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