

When in Rome how Bailey shot a romantic comedy

John Bailey, ASC, describes *When in Rome* as "a straightforward, romantic comedy with a slightly surreal touch - kind of a blend of magic and reality. I strived to keep the cinematography grounded in the real world, so the characters seem like real people who are moving through real physical spaces."

The story is set in contemporary times. Kristen Bell plays Beth Harper, a curator for the Guggenheim Museum in Manhattan who travels to Rome to attend her younger sister's wedding.

The magic revolves around the fountain of love in Rome where people toss coins in the fountain hoping to find their true love. The twist is that each of these individuals will have an irresistible, burning desire to become the soul mate of whoever retrieves their coin.

Bailey initially met director Mark Steven Johnson about the project and was impressed with his easy-going, confident manner and felt certain that they would be a good match. Right from their very first meeting, they agreed that their goal was to make the story believable and let the magic come out of the plot and surreal circumstances.

Bailey suggested producing *When in Rome* in 35mm anamorphic format. "The story called for a widescreen (2.4:1) aspect ratio because the backgrounds would help establish a sense of time and place," Bailey explains. "Anamorphic lenses can help you render a more organic look on film." Johnson readily agreed.

There are scenes on the streets of both cities, around the fountain and a long wedding party sequence in Rome. Interiors included scenes on the rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum and on a gallery set built at Steiner Studios in Brooklyn.

After scouting locations in Rome for a fountain that was the right size to stage the action without distracting the traffic surrounding it, they decided to build one that was right for the story.

"Cinecitta (Studios) brought a couple of artisans out of retirement to design and build our fountain," Bailey says. "It included steps and a platform with a couple of sculptures in a classic renaissance style, including the goddess of love. The sculptures were made of wood, wire and plaster, but were aged like they had been there for 400 years. Several Italian newspapers wrote articles about how an American studio came to Rome and helped revitalize their great tradition of film artisans."

The package provided by Panavision included Panaflex Platinum and Panaflex Gold II cameras and a lightweight Panaflex used for Steadicam shots, anamorphic C Series 40, 50, 60, 75 and 100mm Prime and E Series 135 and 180mm lenses, and 40-80mm AWZ2 and 70-200mm ATZ zoom lenses.

Bailey had KODAK VISION2 250D 5205 and KODAK VISION2 50D 5201 color negative films on his palette. He used HMIs to light night exterior and interior scenes with the daylight-balanced film. Bailey used a very light Pro-Mist filter on the camera lenses while shooting daylight exteriors. He explains, it was just enough to take the edge off the look.



1

"We had a lot of physical movement with the actors who were very freewheeling," Bailey says. "Mark gave them the freedom to be spontaneous rather than sticking to the storyboard. It quickly became very clear to me that traditional dolly moves would not allow us to make corrections quickly enough for well composed images."

He and Johnson gave the Steadicam operators freedom to follow their instincts in those situations. Bailey was working with local crews in New York and Rome. His Italian crew was augmented by Steadicam operator Michael Tsimperopoulos who came from Greece. A camera operator Stephen Consentino handled Steadicam shots in New York.

"I covered scenes with two cameras whenever feasible," Bailey says. "On dialogue scenes, we tried to keep them on the same axis or as close to that as possible without compromising. The more you get off the axis with multiple cameras, the more difficult it is to do any kind of dramatic lighting."

Technicolor in Rome and New York provided lab services. Bailey timed the film, seamlessly integrating visual effects and putting final touches on the look in a digital intermediate suite at Technicolor Digital Intermediates (TDI) in Los Angeles.

When in Rome was produced by Touchstone Pictures and released by Walt Disney Pictures.

A longer version of this article can be read on the website at http://motion.kodak.com/US/en/motion/Publications/In_Camera/index.htm

1 Josh Duhamel and Kristen Bell star in *When in Rome*.

Photo Myles Aronowitz, SMPSP / © Touchstone Pictures, Inc. All Rights Reserved.