



Men of a Certain Age

is a perfect fit for Super 16mm

Ray Romano's award-winning television series *Everybody Loves Raymond* ran for nine years, and more than 200 episodes. Romano is now hoping to strike gold twice as the driving force behind TNT's *Men of a Certain Age*, which follows three lifelong friends facing the realities of middle age. Romano stars with Scott Bakula and Andre Braugher, who earned a 2010 Emmy® nomination for his performance.

"It's a drama, so the characters aren't always laughing, but comedy grows out of the situations," says director David Boyd, ASC. "At the same time, it touches the heart. It's an extremely well-written show, based on funny observations and real human feelings."

Boyd, who is best known for the visually distinctive series *Friday Night Lights*, photographed *Men of a Certain Age* in the summer of 2009, and eventually began directing episodes. One of his operators, Mark Davison, took over cinematography duties.

Men of a Certain Age began as a single camera, one-hour episodic series. Under Boyd, the approach to the visuals evolved, becoming more unconventional and intuitive. The normal "master-single-single" method of coverage has been replaced by a universal lighting

set-up, so the three operators who handhold the cameras can cover the action from almost any angle, following their instincts. Operators Chris Murphy, Mick Froehlich and sometimes Rocker Meadows have a tremendous amount of autonomy.

"Ray Romano is a comedian," says Boyd. "He does something different every time. You have to be ready to get it."

"We put the camera where we think we'll get the most benefit in terms of coverage, giving the editors the most options," adds Davison. "This helps us photograph with as few set-ups as possible. It's a very efficient approach."

The operators are on the same page, but often proceed without specific instructions about what shot to get. "It sounds funny, but they basically go and do what they want," Davison explains. "They are very intuitive and extremely imaginative operators, so you can trust them to see what's there and find the best way of visually telling the story."

"That's the way we set it up," says Boyd. "We talk about things afterwards, rather than beforehand because that way no one is afraid. If they see a close-up moment coming, they can go right in, following their instincts. The actors

also know they have the freedom to change from take to take. That spontaneity feels real to the audience. As a director, it's great, because they are giving me what I need before I even know I need it."

The format is Super 16. The cameras are ARRI 416s, usually fitted with Canon 10.5-180mm zoom lenses for maximum flexibility on the fly. They use KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T Color Negative Film 7229.

"Last year, we were using (KODAK VISION3 500T Color Negative Film) 7219, which is one of the best film stocks ever manufactured, in my opinion," says Davison. "But Ray asked for a little more grain structure and more meat to the image. We tested a few and found that the 7229 was perfect for our needs. Like the 7219, it has a lot of latitude, especially in the high end."

"Ray is discerning," Boyd notes. "He has a good eye, and he loves how he looks on film."

About half the show is shot on stages and the rest is done on practical locations around Los Angeles. Each episode takes about seven or eight days to complete.

"Shooting film means we can walk into places and shoot them as they are using existing lighting," says Boyd. "We don't need to budget time and money to change out fixtures. As a director, I can spend less time thinking about the technical side. I know I'm going to get what I'm after. Shooting Super 16 means we don't have to bring in a tent and DIT and all those things that add so much to the time it takes to get set up. The cinematographer can be near the actors. Mark can hear and be heard, rather than sitting in a little tent."

Key Data at a glance

Director	David Boyd, ASC
Cinematographer	Mark Davison
Camera	ARRI 416 with Canon 10.5-180mm zoom lenses
Format	Super 16
Film stock	KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T 7229.