

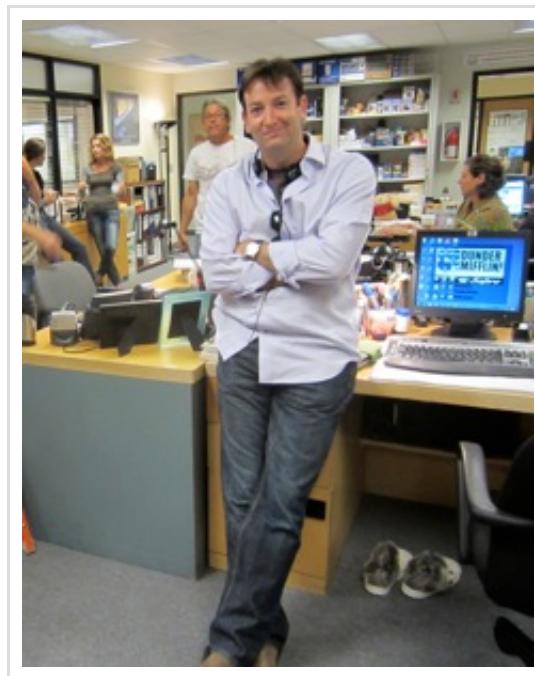
5 Questions for Director and Editor David Rogers

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Welcome to another edition of PuzzleNation Blog's interview feature, 5 Questions!

We're reaching out to puzzle constructors, video game writers and designers, writers, filmmakers, and puzzle enthusiasts from all walks of life, talking to people who make puzzles and people who enjoy them in the hopes of exploring the puzzle community as a whole.

And I'm overjoyed to have David Rogers as our latest 5 Questions interviewee!



An Emmy-award-winning editor, producer, and director, David has worked on *NewsRadio*, *Seinfeld*, *Entourage*, and *The Office* (as well as the sadly short-lived but very funny shows *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* and *The Comeback*).

During his time on *The Office*, he edited 60 episodes and directed 9, including the funniest episode of the show's final season, "A.A.R.M." He's currently contributing to *The Mindy Project*, which is in its second season on Fox.

David was gracious enough to take some time out to talk to us, so without further ado, let's get to the interview!

5 Questions for David Rogers

1.) You're both a director and an editor for *The Mindy Project*, which means you play a significant role in taking disparate scenes and shots and assembling them into a cohesive, entertaining whole. Sounds like just about the ultimate in real-life jigsaw-style puzzle solving. What goes into the production of a given episode, and what are your thoughts as you prepare it for air?

I think the process of putting together any episode of any television show is more like solving a puzzle than anybody watching at home actually realizes, and The Mindy Project is a perfect example of this. From the moment the writers start on a script, they have to be conscious of who is currently doing what and what has happened before, and what's going to happen down the road. Once the script gets into the hands of a director and the production staff, then more puzzle solving begins.

You break it down and start scouting locations and casting guest stars and then the first ADs (Assistant Directors) put together a shooting schedule. But they have to build it in a way where they can accommodate actors' availabilities, place locations on a day where we can get the most done, and they also have to be aware of "turnaround issues" for cast and crew, that is whenever we wrap on one day, the cast and crew get a certain amount of time off before the next day's call time.



An example I'll give is when I directed "Bro Club For Dudes," we shot two days, Thursday and Friday, of a Mixed Martial Arts Arena fight down at Hollywood Park. But we had a cameo from Dana White, the president and owner of the UFC, but he was only available Tuesday morning and we didn't have the location for that day.

So we shot at another location that looked like a dingy hallway that looked like it was a part of our arena, and we also shot a street fight in the loading dock there between Morgan and Ray Ron, and since they were near our stages at the Universal lot, we finished a little after lunch and then came back to our stages and shot more there.

Another example was Adam Pally, who really kicked ass in his fighting scenes, wasn't available to shoot on the following Monday and we had a hospital room scene of he and Mindy bonding as she stitches him up. Our solution was to build a small three-wall set at our Hollywood Park location and shoot the scene at the end of Friday night.

As an editor, you're getting multiple takes and different jokes and plenty of alternate lines and performances, and you really have to sift through everything to figure out what's the funniest, what's the best, and how do they all connect

together to make a cohesive story. It just takes time and building different versions until you see what truly works the best.

And in the process of cutting out time and sharpening the story, you move scenes around, add and change lines with additional dialog recorded later, and there are lots of other elements that come into play including music, sound FX, and what we call “invisible” visual FX that all help make the show we want to make.



[David with his Emmy Award for Outstanding Single-Camera Picture Editing for a Comedy Series (one of two he's won for *The Office*!)]

2.) You're a big fan of comic books. What influence does that sort of long-form serialized storytelling have on your approach to TV production?

I am a huge fan of comic books and have been ever since I was 5 years old and got my first “[The Brave and the Bold](#).” It’s interesting that when I was younger I was all about the art, and as I got older it was all about the writing and the art didn’t have to be from [John Byrne](#) or [George Pérez](#) or [Neal Adams](#). But when you read a comic book, you’re really watching a TV show or movie in your head. You’re “casting” voices for the different heroes, you’re imagining what the action scenes and explosions are like, and you’re giving life to still images on a page much like a director uses a set of storyboards.

And that’s the part of a comic book where even if the artist isn’t a favorite like the ones I mentioned above, their work is still essential to what makes the comic book a living, breathing thing. There are these great examples given in [How To Draw Comics The Marvel Way](#), where [John Buscema](#) and [Stan Lee](#) demonstrate two different pages of art work for the same material. One is fine and gets the story across, but the other is so much more exciting and dramatic and really puts you into the action — and that’s what good directors are constantly aware of when they’re shooting a scene.

What is visually better for the material? What adds to the humor or the drama or the action? And in TV where the schedule is so tight and the budget is always being looked at, what can you do with the tools and time that you have?

I came from The Office, where we were limited with how to shoot scenes because of the hand-held documentary style of the show, but we would still focus on things like shooting it spy or in the room, cross-covering with two cameras, or whipping around with just one, and really blocking positions and making the most of what our shots looked like without them looking like they were set up.



In the penultimate episode “A.A.R.M.,” I directed a scene where Dwight runs Angela off the road and then proposes to her with a bullhorn as traffic goes by in the background. The shots included a go-pro camera set up in Angela’s car where we would see Dwight pull alongside of her as they both “free-drove” — that’s when the actors are really driving the cars.

Meanwhile we get a “boat to boat” shot, where a free-driving process trailer — a truck made for rigging cameras and lights — leads in front of them with two cameras shooting straight back to cover the action. The shot from inside Angela’s car shows their faces very clearly as the scene plays and really brings out the comedy of the situation. Then from the outside, our Stunt Driver Dwight cuts off and runs Stunt Driver Angela off the road and this shot really highlights the action and danger of the stunt.

When we get to the next part of the scene and the cars are on the side of the road, we blocked the actors and cameras in a way so that when Dwight is tender and heartfelt (and yet proposing with a bullhorn), we can see the noisy cars going by on the street behind them, which adds to what should be a very intimate and yet very comedic marriage proposal.

Choosing how to shoot and compose a scene like that, and then executing it is absolutely like putting together a gigantic, complicated, wonderful puzzle!

3.) I understand you're also a classic television automobile enthusiast. What can you tell us about that?

I don't know if I'm so much a classic television automobile enthusiast as I am a Super Car enthusiast. I love the Mach 5

from Speed Racer, the DeLorean time machine from Back to the Future, the 1966 Batman television show Batmobile, Herbie the Love Bug, and of course K.I.T.T. from Knight Rider. I just bought a full sized Trans-Am Firebird replica of K.I.T.T and I'm in the process of adding a Season 4 1-TV dash and really making the interior look like the car did on the show. It's a fun side project and it's something I've wanted since even before I could actually drive!



4.) What's next for David Rogers?

I hope to continue editing, directing, and producing on The Mindy Project, which I really think is an exceptionally funny, very high quality, well-made show. I am also starting to develop some of my own ideas for TV shows as I look to direct more things down the road, including hour-longs and maybe even an independent film.

5.) If you could give the readers, puzzle fans, and aspiring TV and filmmakers in the audience one piece of advice, what would it be?

Persistence. Never give up and always work on your skills. So often getting the first job is really all about being in the right place at the right time. And you have to be ready to deliver when the pieces all come together and the time comes for you to step up and show everyone what you can do!

Many thanks to David for his time. You can see his work on *The Mindy Project*, which airs on Tuesdays at 9:30 P.M. Eastern on Fox, and be sure to check out his full filmography on [his IMDb page](#). I can't wait to see what he crafts for us next.

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