

GOQ DETAILS

POP CULTURE ■ THE YEAR AHEAD IN TELEVISION ■ BOOKS ■ GEAR ■ ART ■ TRAVEL

MASTERS OF ALL THEY SURVEY: Sterling Cooper's senior partners – Bert Cooper (left) and Roger Sterling Jr.



MAD MEN'S MAIN MAN

Matthew Weiner is the genius behind what's widely hailed as the most stylish TV drama series of all time. Who better to explain the appeal of the man we all secretly wish we were?

It has to be said. Matthew Weiner is nothing like his famous creation Don Draper. Not physically. "All the characters in the show are related to me, but I'm certainly not Don," the short, balding, middle-aged Weiner chortles, taking a very unDraperish delight in his self-humbling wit. "If anything he's a handsome alter-ego."

Of course, on a more profound level, Weiner most certainly is Don Draper, the 35-year-old, conflicted copywriter he dreamt up when he was a 35-year-old, conflicted TV writer. "I was happily married with three children, had a lucrative job related to my lifetime dream. And I was thinking, 'Is this it?' There were all these questions about mortality and my humanity. The men of Don's era had a very clear definition on some level — clear but confusing. You had to be the baseball coach, the ideal father, the great husband but you also had to drink as much, smoke as much, and get laid as much as possible. And that's a conflict in the American male, whether externally or internally imposed, that hasn't gone away."

Is that what resonates with the male viewers of your show?

"With Don I'm interested in what that conflict is doing to him, how he's trying to resolve it, what the psychic cost of that is. He is being led around by his Id, but at the same time he has a conscience. Don's also about wish fulfilment. He does what isn't allowed. He drinks, smokes, sleeps with a lot of people. But



QUEEN BEE secretary Joan Harris slaps Don Draper into line.

he's tortured. There's something about him that makes men say, 'I know that guy. Maybe he's me, maybe he's my dad, but I'd like for the world to know that that is who I am.'

What did we lose when the '60s happened and the world moved on from the kind of value system that Don adheres to?

"Well, there's so much that's better. We would never have had a half-black President, the amount of women we now have in power would just never have been allowed..."

But...

"There was an embrace of individualism and a turning away from communal responsibility. People began sharing everything about themselves. There was a celebration of indulgence without any sort of guilt. We lost a sense of shame, which, culturally, is something very valuable in keeping people in line. The expectations of behaviour back

then, unrealistic as they were, did force a sense of gentility. Things were more civilised. There was formality but that formality was a form of respect."

How weird is it to have sparked a retro-fashion craze?

"I'm thrilled. That was a golden age. Even though there was a great pressure for conformity, men and women did dress differently from each other, which they don't really do now. Men are vain and that era embraced that. There's something great, whether you're wearing a cape or a suit and tie, about saying, 'Some of my power comes from my uniform and I'm going to value and use that.'"

What's the lesson you want the audience to learn from Don?

"Assimilation is one of the big stories in American culture. Don's an American archetype, a Jay Gatsby figure. People abandon their past, change to succeed, but those past, inauspicious beginnings are something that haunt all of us if we become part of the culture. Maybe that's universal, but it's certainly true in societies such as Australia and America. There's a cost for that mobility, you have to give up a lot of your past, but you can reinvent yourself, you can aspire to change your status, you can move towards a higher expression of yourself, whether that's financially or artistically or anything else. I hope people look at Don and the other characters and say, 'That's the process of living. Aspiring to improve yourself.' Don has transformed himself. At great cost, but I love that he's done that."  Mad Men's third series premieres on Movie Extra in February.



FAD MEN: Weiner's show has made mid-20th century American fashion cool again.

THE DE-DRAPERING OF MODERN MAN



1963

The Feminine Mystique kickstarts feminism. Women's heads filled with dangerous ideas of equality, independence and having their own careers.



1964

Beatlemania erupts. Rat-pack-style sophistication consigned to the ash heap of history as 'yooof culture' triumphs.



LATE '70s/EARLY '80s

Sexual harassment legislation introduced. Flirting with your pneumatic secretary becomes a report-straight-to-HR, career-destroying no-no.



MID '80s

Smoking banned in workplaces. Advertising types reduced to snorting coke in the office toilet to fuel the creative process.



THE 90s

Political correctness takes off. Dead, living (and even fictional) white males reviled for their phallogentric, homophobic, racist, classist attitudes.



2008

Old-school, suit-wearing, charming, philandering war veteran with hot blonde wife defeated in presidential election by African-American Gen Xer.



TALKING HEADS

With 2010 shaping up as a great year for Aussie TV, *GQ* asks the network bigwigs which programs they rate.

David Mott Network 10	Tim Worner Seven Network	Matt Campbell SBS Television	Questions	Kim Dalton ABC TV	Michael Healy Nine Network	Brian Walsh Foxtel
Replacing <i>Big Brother</i> with <i>MasterChef</i> . It was a huge risk and it delivered equally huge results.	Sticking with <i>Sunday Night</i> .	To believe my team when they told me <i>Man Vs Wild</i> would work on Monday night.	What was your best decision of 2009?	Having ABC3 ready to launch once the government gave the green light.	We've made good and bad decisions. And we feel them all.	Signing Sarah Murdoch as the host and co-executive producer of <i>Australia's Next Top Model</i> .
<i>The Spearman Experiment</i> . But working with Magda Szubanski was fantastic.	Axing <i>All Saints</i> . But it was the right call at the time and we have two new drama projects in development.	BBC Worldwide moving <i>Top Gear</i> to the Nine Network.	What was one regret?	That <i>The Chaser</i> would only do 10 episodes for us, and that we only got to screen 8. I would've liked 28, as in 2008!	Not doing more with food after our success with <i>Chopping Block</i> , <i>Kitchen Nightmares</i> and <i>Hell's Kitchen</i> .	There really isn't a single decision I made last year which I regret.
Two surprises: <i>MasterChef Australia</i> and <i>Talkin' Bout Your Generation</i> .	<i>TV Burp</i> . It's a great show and we're committed to its further development.	 <i>Man Vs Wild</i>	Which program surprised you the most?	<i>Midsomer Murders</i> - this long-running show just keeps increasing its audience every year.	<i>MasterChef</i> . It's fair to say it surprised and excited just about everyone.	<i>MasterChef</i> . It really demonstrated that Australians were attracted to feel-good television.
 <i>Underbelly</i>	The rugby league - there's a lot Seven could do with it.	I'd like to get <i>Top Gear</i> back off Nine.	Which program from another network would you love to have?	<i>Packed To The Rafters</i> . Great writing, great performances, a zeitgeist hit and ratings standout.	 <i>MasterChef</i>	<i>The Vampire Diaries</i> . It would be a terrific companion piece to <i>Gossip Girl</i> , and vampires are in vogue.
For Ten, <i>MasterChef</i> , <i>The Good Wife</i> (a legal drama) and <i>Modern Family</i> (a sitcom).	(WWII miniseries) <i>The Pacific</i> , <i>My Kitchen Rules</i> and (reality series) <i>The Marriage Ref</i> .	The new series of <i>Wilfred</i> .	What do you think will be the strong performers of 2010?	<i>Poh's Kitchen</i> , (whodunit game show) <i>Sleuth 101</i> and (twenty-something rock-themed drama) <i>I Rock</i> .	Nine and GO. We have a great line-up slated for 2010, which now includes <i>Top Gear</i> .	Foxtel's Commonwealth Games coverage, <i>Australia's Next Top Model</i> , <i>Ultimate School Musical</i> .
<i>The Good Wife</i> , starring Julianna Margulies, is one to watch. Everything about this drama is superb.	 <i>My Kitchen Rules</i>	If I knew the answer to that one I'd own a private jet and a chateau in France.	Which upcoming show will perform the best?	<i>Spicks and Specks</i> . Our audience love this show so I expect it will remain our No 1.	<i>Underbelly: The Golden Mile</i> . It's sexy 'Rockstar Gangstar' all over again, and as good as its predecessors.	<i>Ultimate School Musical</i> . It combines the best elements of <i>Australian Idol</i> with a show like <i>Glee</i> .
Take more risks.	Sitcoms. They're the hardest formats to get right but they deliver the greatest rewards.	Satire and comedy for sure, it's the holy grail. There aren't enough clever laughs on TV.	What should Australian TV do more of?	More Australian content! It's what consistently rates best and it's what our audiences love.	Having more money for investment in local content would be great for the industry and viewers.	Edgy drama and provocative documentaries that chronicle our history and stir our social conscience.

MUST-SEE TV IN 2010

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WORDS JASON DI ROSSO.