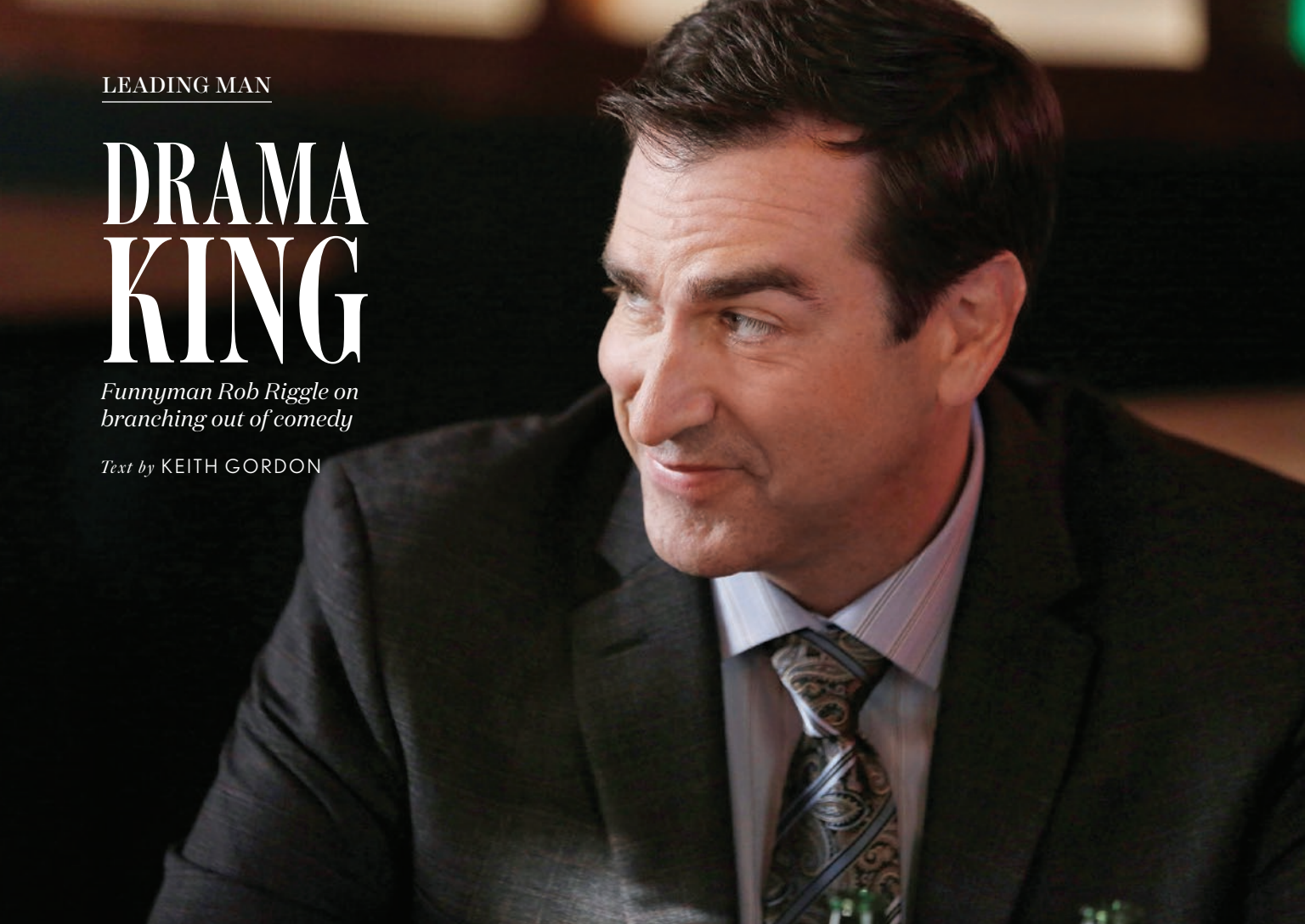


DRAMA KING

Funnyman Rob Riggle on branching out of comedy

Text by KEITH GORDON



You know Rob Riggle: He's that guy from *The Daily Show*, *Step Brothers*, *Modern Family*, and the *21 Jump Street* films. Perhaps you know Rob Riggle from his appearances on *Fox NFL Sunday*, or from his brief stint on *Saturday Night Live*. You know Rob Riggle—he's that really funny guy. Except the truth is you really don't know retired Lieutenant Colonel Rob Riggle, because if you did, you'd know that humor is only a part of what makes him one of today's most interesting actors.

Before Riggle conquered comedy, he had a career that was much harder to survive: as an officer in the Marine Corps, where he stayed for 23 years (including the reserves), only retiring in 2013. Riggle channeled that experience earlier this year in the drama *12 Strong*, playing Colonel Max Bowers, a Special Forces commander leading one of the first post-9/11 operations in Afghanistan. In real life, Riggle was deployed to serve under the actual Colonel Bowers in Afghanistan a month after the events depicted in the film unfolded.

"The movie takes place in October of 2001, and their goal was to make it to Mazar-i-Sharif before Christmas. I ended

up joining that unit at the end of November [in Mazar-i-Sharif], so I got to meet a lot of the guys that you saw in the movie in Afghanistan way back in the day," Riggle recalls proudly.

If Riggle felt uneasy about portraying a real event, his former commanding officer assuaged his worries. "I hadn't talked

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to [Colonel Bowers] since Afghanistan, and we exchanged emails when this project came about," Riggle explains. "He had seen a screening of it and was very happy with what he saw, so that made me happy." Riggle's impactful dramatic acting didn't

impress only the colonel; with turns in more serious films, like *12 Strong* and the teen drama *Midnight Sun*, Riggle has shown the public a side of himself they never knew existed.

Breaking out of comedy has been a long time coming. "At the beginning of my career, I'd say yes to everything. But now I'm very fortunate—I'm getting some opportunities to do some more dramatic work," Riggle says. "It's very cliché for actors and artists to talk about wanting to expand and do different things, but I get it now. If you do something in Hollywood and you do it well, they want you to keep doing it over and over, and it gets very hard to break out of that lane."

Still, comedy remains his passion. Riggle stars in one of the most anticipated comedies of the year, *Night School*, alongside two of today's arguably hottest names in comedy, Kevin Hart and Tiffany Haddish. He's also releasing his own series on Sony Crackle, *Rob Riggle's Ski Master Academy*, a comedic project he stars in and executive produces. There's no evidence that this funnyman, or his comedic projects, is slowing down anytime soon, but something bigger is at work that we all need to stop and take notice of.