



*In his first interview, we sit down with Steve Conway and discuss his award winning debut feature length film, 'Electrician'.*

*Tapestry are very proud to have colour*

*graded the film, so we were eager to sit down with him and pick his brains over the film which was five years in the making. We get*

*the lowdown on the unique challenges*

*Steve came across in production, things such as the entire cast, except for one, being made up of people who are not actors by trade.*

# Electrician (2020)



**Thanks for taking the time to speak with us Steve. I guess we should dive straight in! So, where did it all begin - when did you first become interested in film-making?**

From as young as I can remember I have always been obsessed with films. The storytelling, imagination and escapism of it all, I just loved it. How you can be totally transported and immersed into another world for two hours.

We have a family home video somewhere, probably taken around 1992, I was eight years old and it's of my younger brother and sister chasing and play fighting each other in the living room, causing havoc and performing for the camera basically. In the background I am sat totally engrossed and mesmerised watching 'Ghost-

busters', completely zoned out watching it on television while all this mayhem goes on around me. In a way I think that kind of sums me up.

I never went to college or university to study film-making; I tried a few very short courses when I was younger, but I didn't particularly enjoy them. I found what worked for me best was to get a camera and to just be constantly filming and editing stuff, literally all of the time and study films by religiously watching them which I do anyway.

**Being self-taught, you must have had a lot of inspiration, right? Are there any specific films that spring to mind that you particularly admire?**

Well coming from a working class background and being

an independent filmmaker, I think I have always had an affinity to similar filmmakers and films, but it is definitely a mixed bag to say the least.

The first two films I can remember seeing when I was younger which sparked the notion of 'I'd love to do this' are on completely different ends of the spectrum - the first being 'Withnail & I' and the second being 'Terminator 2'.

Both of those films I am totally obsessed with but for completely different film-making reasons. I have also always been massively into films from the 60s and 70s, I love how they were crafted. Films like 'The French Connection', 'Dog Day Afternoon', 'The Ipcress File', 'Taxi Driver', 'Bullitt', 'Get Carter', 'Mean Streets'... I could go on and on.



## # TAPESTRY TALKS

**I'll have to put a few of those on my list to watch, that's for sure. Moving to directors, are there any that really influence you and your style of work? Or just directors in general that you look up to?**

I am admirer of the work of directors such as John Carpenter, William Friedkin, Ken Loach, Alan Parker, Michael Mann, Sidney Lumet and obviously Kubrick, Scorsese and Hitchcock to name but a few. Although it isn't just directors that I feel have influenced me as a filmmaker. The work of cinematographers, film score composers, film editors, documentary filmmakers and stills photographers have also.

However, it was the work of some home-grown British directors that inspired me to push on and actually make a feature film. I have always

been a fan of the work of Christopher Nolan, Shane Meadows and Ben Wheatley. I followed their careers carefully and while they are all quite different types of filmmakers, the one thing they all had in common was at some point early on in their careers they decided to just make a feature film, to just get on and do it. That very much inspired me. Gary Oldman's 'Nil by Mouth' was also a big inspiration for Electrician in the sense of the world he created.

**Speaking of inspirations for Electrician, where did the idea for the film originally come from?**

Well the idea of Electrician, the feature film, came from the short film version of the same film I wrote and made back in 2010. Whilst there were a few slight plot dif-

ferences, such as the short film concentrating on race related issues, overall the idea was mostly the same, about a lonely electrician called 'Mark' living in London consumed by city life and trying to reconnect with his estranged family. In-fact, four of the original cast from the short film including Rory Farrelly, who plays the lead, and Peter Clarke, who plays opposite him, go on to appear in the feature film all reprising the same roles.

Once I decided I was going to make a feature film and in the manner of which I was going to make it, I knew I had to write something that was feasible for me to actually execute. First of all, there was no budget. It had to be a film that I could make with whatever I had around me at the time, the filmmaking tools I had, locations available to me and people to appear



derstandably, most people not connected to the film in some personal way would not be interested.

**The film took five years to complete. Did you always know it would be a long project, or were there certain unexpected obstacles that lengthened the process?**

The feature film script was written in 2015 along with the start of pre-production, principle filming finished in 2018 and the film itself was completed and signed off at the beginning of 2020. Naturally I had no idea at the start of it all that the film would take me five years to make. Three years of filming wasn't because the film itself consists of any dramatic car chases or lots of technically involved scenes, it was purely because we were fitting it in and around every day life and could only get shots done in people's spare time outside of their paid jobs. It then took another two years to complete in the edit and post.

Initially I did look into the options of trying to source and apply for funding/ film-making grants etc and put a proper crew together. This is 100% a good option to look into if you are a filmmaker, and I am not saying that the way I went about making a feature film is the best way for everyone. Yes, if given any

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in it etc. Whilst writing Electrician I was always bearing these things in mind, so my circumstances very much dictated how the film was written.

Another main reason why the film was based around an electrician is because I happen to know that world very well, I grew up knowing a lot of electricians and could easily tap into it. So I knew this could help

heighten the sense of realism I wanted to create and so it made sense to base a film around that.

I knew there would be no clear end date to when the filming side of it all would even be finished let alone a completed film, so trying to convince outside crew members or professional actors to be a part of it would be a hard sale. Un-





To earn an income during the period of making the film Steve worked with real electricians, assisting them on construction sites.

funding it may have helped speed things up and lightened the load and essentially it would have maybe been the “proper” way of going about it, but the more I looked into it the more I just felt it wasn’t for me. Looking back now I feel that was still the right decision for me personally and the film. Yes, it took longer than anticipated, but one of the reasons why *Electrician* works in my opinion is actually because of the somewhat unconventional way it was made.

**And how did the dynamic differ, directing people that you know and who aren’t professional actors - Was it difficult or did it actually turn out to be easier?**

Whilst I was writing the feature script, one of the very first things I did was talk to Rory Farrelly who plays

the lead role ‘Mark’. I have known Rory for the best part of 20 years and he has always been very encouraging to me and my filmmaking and he has appeared in a lot of stuff I have filmed over the years including the short film version of *Electrician*. Whilst he is the first to say it is not his chosen field, I can tell you he is a very talented actor. I knew from the off that Rory had to be involved and play the lead role again for the feature.

The nature of what I was filming was based around construction workers and working class people, I knew that all the other people who were going to appear in the film also know those worlds very well - they came from them. Working with “non actors”

It goes back to what I was saying earlier about having your circumstances dictate what you write and there were obvious pros and cons to using non-actors. I knew the script could not be dialogue heavy, but the story still had to go from A to B via dialogue. There were times

**“...THERE WERE OBVIOUS PROS AND CONS TO USING NON ACTORS.”**

when I needed the actors to say the lines exactly how they were written, but other times I would allow them to get to where I needed them to get to in their own words, just as long as they included information I gave them. Sometimes I would help get them started with a specific sentence or I let them improvise as I very much enjoy improvisation and seeing

what will happen in the moment. I also made sure I kept everything relatively within all of their comfort zones, not just the dialogue, but what I asked of them physically such as walking around and hitting markers and such. Overall, I think they all done superb and some of the performances at times are nothing short of extraordinary.

**It’s quite a multifaceted process to make a film, what have you learned from the experience and is there anything you might do differently with hindsight?**

Hindsight is always a wonderful thing and there are plenty of things I would do differently if I could go back.

One thing for example would be to perhaps ask for help a lot earlier on, not just with filmmaking aspects but outside of that also such as

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promotion and the social media side of things which is a whole separate beast in itself. It also took me a long time to accept that the film was finished, because I just constantly thought I could do better, whether it was how I shot something or how I edited a certain section. It is easy to say now, but I think if I could go back and give myself one piece of advice it would be to try and enjoy it more. Enjoy the process. I

was so obsessed with making the film I am not sure of how much I actually stopped to take it in and enjoy it.

I was 29 when I wrote and started to film *Electrician* and 35 by the time it was completed. Not only does it test you to your absolute limits, but also the people around you as well, friends and family who have to put up with you. There are also a lot of sacrifices involved that I don’t think anyone can prepare you for and various struggles and pressures put on many aspects of your life.

Once the filming was completed it then became a very solitary road again for a long time during the edit. By the time I got to the later stages of editing and went into final post-production I



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was more than ready to start working alongside others again to help breathe life into it.

That side of things I very much enjoyed. Meeting and working alongside the likes of musician Hannah Holland who would go on to create an amazing award winning original soundtrack for the film which she worked on tirelessly.

Rick Smith who came onboard as the dubbing mixer and done an unbelievable job straightening out all of the sound, the guys at Tapestry who did all of the colour grading which was also an absolute monster of a job where nothing was too much trouble for them and artist Dominic Hailstone who designed and created a brilliant award winning film

poster. I was lucky because all of these super talented people and others that were involved were a dream to work with. Overall the edit and final post to sign the film off took two years.

### What are your hopes and plans for the film now it's finished?

In March 2020 we were lucky enough to have a private premiere screening of the film for everyone involved plus family and friends in the main screen at the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton. That was a very special night none of us will ever forget, ten years in the making really. As of January 2020, Electrician has been off around the world doing the film festival circuit. As of today, in July 2020,

it has been on a great run winning six awards including Best Feature Film and Best Music at the Top Indie Film Awards in Tokyo, Japan and Best Director at the New York Movie Awards while also being nominated for another fifteen awards in other festivals which has been fantastic and I am so very proud of everyone involved.

The film is scheduled to be in festivals right up to the start of 2021. My goal is to get the film out to as wide an audience as possible whatever platform that may be on and I am currently looking at and discussing what the various options are for this to happen.

### Finally, what's next up for you? Any other future projects in the pipeline?

For me it was always a dream and ambition to make a feature film.

That is all I wanted to do from a young age and the reason why I wanted to be a filmmaker. Whilst it was extremely difficult to achieve and a very long hard road, I am happy that I did it and that I persevered with it and I will always be grateful to those who helped me. Naturally the experience has been invaluable moving forward to work on future projects. As well as continuing to work on

getting Electrician to as wide an audience as possible, I am currently developing a second feature film script to direct that I am excited about.

I am also in the early stages of creating all of the online video and stills content for an exciting British tailor called 'Harry Joseph Tailoring'. I am always open to meeting and discussing projects with people and whilst I will always be a film director at heart and I want to continue directing, there are definitely other things I'd like

to do such as shoot, edit and write features for other directors, get involved with documentary filmmaking and also more stills work. Other than that, you will find me spending time with George our family dog.

**Well thanks again for taking the time to chat with us and we are really looking forward to seeing Electrician taking it even further in the film festival circuit.**

Poster design by  
Dominic Hailstone

