

# Edinburgh Reporter Chats – Craig Henderson



Craig Henderson left, with Barry Wigg

Craig Henderson jokes about which one of his films was his first. I tried to compile a filmography of his work, but found it hard to pin him down as to what he considers his debut.

It is something he has not quite decided for himself yet. “I was thinking about it the other day when I referred to one of my films as being my first film. And I realised that in actual fact I’d probably made about seven or eight short films before that one. And you keep revising what you consider to be your first film, because they don’t really count since they’re too embarrassing to show anyone. Maybe I’ve not made my first film yet,” he jokes.

After seeing his production company The Thief of Brisco’s last two films *Under Seasoned* and *Lief Lost a Book* (made with Barry Wigg), it is unlikely that this is true, but I am happy to leave his filmography up to him. What he does say is that he has made “about a dozen short films in the last five years which involved either writing, directing, producing, occasionally shooting, sometimes editing.”

He may not be household name just yet but Edinburgh born-and-bred, Craig Henderson, is a film producer. This weekend The

Thief of Brisco company are taking part in the Glasgow 48 Hour Film Project. Their film *Under Seasoned* (also know as *Good Neighbour*) won the Best Use of Line and the Audience Award Winner: Group A at the recent Edinburgh 48 Hour Film Project in May. *Clerical Error* won the best 24 hour film award two or three ago at the Edinburgh University Movie Production Society. The production company are slowly building up a body of work.



It started with Lego. "My Dad," Henderson said, "always had video cameras around. Post-cine era he had quite an early video camera which I nicked and was mucking around with, probably from the age of 10 or 11, and trying to do stop-motion animation with Lego, which is not what the camera is designed for at all, sort of turning it on and off. So you get robot dancing Lego men. And then I was about sixteen I just forgot about it all until 2006 when I remembered again, 'Hang on, I was supposed to be making films, wasn't I?' I always like that quote 'life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.' I thought that applied then. I lost a decade. Then I went part time five years ago and started slowly trying to learn how to make films again."

His foray into film-making initially was not going to take that long. "The idea was that I was going to just take a year out and make a short film and get it out of my system. And then Citizens Advice Bureau offered me some work and I thought oh well I can turn a year out into two or three years maybe and then maybe I can fluke a bit of success and start making films. But it doesn't work that way, because you've got to graft at it and you've got to learn and the more I learned the more I knew I didn't know anything. So the year out turned into the five years we're up to now and long may that continue, because I'm just going to carry on."

Carrying on means Henderson works three days a week, and

spends the rest of the time making films. The company has recently been commissioned to make a documentary on the social and health impacts of debt – “our first proper budget,” he explained.

Once they have completed that, Henderson plans to spend a year or so writing a new script. “I’ve got the bones of a script already and I feel confident enough now to bash out a feature film. So *Lief Lost A Book* will hopefully get into some festivals and I’m hoping that will give me enough exposure to get a wee bit of funding so that once I’ve finish the script in maybe a year, a year and a half’s time then there’ll be a bit of money to go to pre-production and then maybe shoot early 2013.”

It’s something that is likely to happen, as Henderson demonstrates the determination to slowly bring his ideas to fruition.

On Tuesday evening, last week he held a short film night at the Cameo called *The Thief of Brisco presents...* It included films from The Thief of Brisco and other local Scottish filmmakers from Edinburgh and Glasgow and was screened to over 100 people. Henderson had the idea for the short film evening a few years ago. “There are so many aspects of film-making but the aspect of interacting with your audience only happens at the end of the line once you’ve got something to show and that’s quite a unique buzz which doesn’t exist at any other stage. So yeah, it was really exciting. It was really fun to have done that.”

That is not the extent of his goals however. He would like *The Thief of Brisco presents...* to become a regular event, but is also keen for the small but thriving Edinburgh film community to do more. “It’s a nice community and there are already things in place to allow that community to get together. But I would really like to see a lot more of that and a lot more collaboration in a non-profit making

cooperative kind of way. Because there is this enormous pool of talent in Edinburgh, which I think was hopefully seen on Tuesday, there's enough talent to make perfectly professional looking films, so why shouldn't we just get together a lot more and back each other up and start making feature films."

The short film evening has obviously had a great impact on him because Henderson continued:- "When you see films like that you suddenly wonder why can't there actually be a Scottish film industry, a proper Scottish film industry, even if it's a bit of a cottage one. I want to see Scottish films, I want to see Scottish locations and films showing Scottish people covering Scottish issues, and there's no reason why that can't exist, we just sort of need to get going with it and I think there could be a strong enough local market for that. I'm quite partial to CGI packed action thriller from Hollywood, but I definitely want to see Scottish films as well. That's as high as my aspirations go. I'd like to be part of an emergent industry, because I don't see why it can't happen."



Building on this, it's no surprise that Henderson often favours a collaborative approach to filmmaking. His most recent collaboration has been with Barry Wigg with whom he co-directed and produced *Lief Lost A Book* but he has worked with long term collaborator , Andy Dean, on all The Thief of Brisco productions. "I love co-directing with Andy because I've known him all my life anyway. So we talk in a reasonable shorthand. I'm usually producing, keeping an eye on a lot of the technical side of things and the framing of shots as well as a lot of the logistics of the story. That allows him to sit back and look at the bigger picture of where the story's going. And he's far better at directing the acting anyway. So it's just a division of labour which acknowledges our strengths and weakness. Hopefully between the pair of us we almost make one complete director."

Humour is a large feature of Henderson's conversation and also his films so far. He credits Dean for the dark comedy influence on their films together and says his films might be a bit more sentimental if he worked solely on his own. It's too early in the process for him to define any themes yet. "I like all genres of film; anyway I'd like to have a bash at all kind of things."

It is a process that he is enjoying and he is definitely in it for the long haul. He sees success happening in small increments and thinks that is how it needs to be. "I like the idea that if I carried on doing exactly this up until the day I died then that wouldn't be bad at all. That would be just fine. If hosting a night at the cinema and picking up a couple of minor awards for short films is as good as it ever gets, then that sounds really lovely.

He added with typical humour:- "It would be great to have tons of success as well of course."