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A FILM BY GERARD JOHNSON

TONY

LONDON SERIAL KILLER

**KEEPING A
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

Release Date:
5th February 2010

Running Time:
78mins

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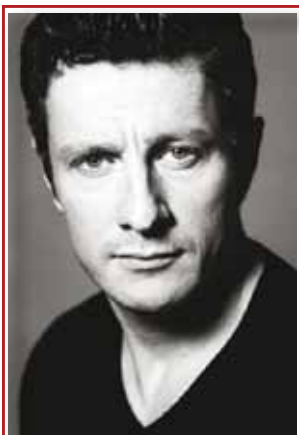
TONY

Isolated, alone and socially awkward but with an underlying capability of violence, Tony is an unusual and unforgettable character brought to the screen by first time feature director Gerard Johnson. Written and directed by Johnson, this dark, brutal and bleakly amusing psychological thriller was part of the official selection for the Edinburgh Film Festival in 2009 and has already drawn favourable comparisons to John McNaughton's seminal *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*.

This alarming cinematic anti-hero is played exceptionally by lead actor Peter Ferdinando who went through an extreme physical transformation to capture the essence of Tony. Externally Tony is geeky and unhealthy which ensures his moments of rage remain chilling and shocking.

Shot entirely on location in London, the city acted as an additional character in the film, both beautiful and deadly especially when accompanied by a delicate, occasionally pulsating score from the reclusive Matt Johnson, AKA The The.

Tony is an exclusive glimpse into the day to day life of this ordinary serial killer.



Peter Ferdinando - The Actor



Peter Ferdinando - As Tony

Revolver Entertainment

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TONY

Short Synopsis

TONY takes the audience through a week in the life of an alienated psychopath with severe social problems, an obsession for action films and a horrible moustache. Unemployed and unemployable, Tony (Peter Ferdinando) prowls the streets, his nervous attempts to make human connections invariably rebuffed by laughter or contempt. But occasionally he snaps, and violence is the result...

Long Synopsis

Tony (Peter Ferdinando) lives alone in a small council flat with very few possessions no friends and no job. His days consist of cereal for breakfast, action videos on the TV and going out for long walks across London.

It is during his frequent walks that Tony makes odd attempts to interact with various people he meets on the street but his stilted attempts at conversation are usually ignored or worse, cause anger and distrust. In a local pub, Tony's intense interest in an argument between a couple in the corner -Paul (Ricky Grover) and Lisa (Kerry Ann White) aggravates Paul. He turns his attention to Tony and gets up to attack, but the barman quickly jumps in and throws Tony out of the pub.

Later whilst Tony is in a phone box, making calls to prostitutes, he is approached by two junkies, Mackey (George Russo) and Smudger (Francis Pope) who need to use the phone. Tony makes way for them and his curious interaction with them leads to his offering them money for drugs.

The three of them walk at an old derelict cinema and they go upstairs to a red room to meet Pecker (Cyrus Desir). Peter is clearly the chief supplier for Mackey and Smudger but Tony's interest is hooked by a girl lying exceptionally still on a sofa. It's impossible to tell whether she's unconscious or actually dead.

Back at Tony's flat, the junkies prepare the smack as Tony gets them a drink. It is while the junkies are feeling the effects of their hit that Tony comes back into the room with talc on his face and a plastic bag in his hand; he puts the bag over Smudger's head and suffocates him.

Tony's monotonous days continue as he is in bed with a corpse. He asks the corpse if he would like breakfast before going into the kitchen to cut up guts and innards from the kitchen sink and put them in blue bags. He takes the bags along to the canal where he throws them in.

Back at the flat Tony opens his door to Dawn (Vicky Murdock) who need a plaster for her cut finger. Tony lets her in and gets her a plaster asking her if she would



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like a drink. Dawn stays for a brief chat before inviting Tony to a roast dinner in her flat on Sunday.

It seems that Tony's jobless existence is at an end when he meets employee Mike Hemmings (Neil Maskell) at the Job Centre. Mike refuses to allow Tony to continue living off the state after being unemployed for 20 years. He sets him up with an interview, telling him he will stop his money if he doesn't turn up or is late.

The interview is not a huge success. Tony is awkward and uncertain but aware he has to get this job. He is put on a trial period and later is seen walking around the West End holding a big advertising sign.

Tony's new job puts him in the middle of London and he pops into a porn shop to look at some magazines and then goes to a doorway - "Model". A girl from Eastern Europe opens the door but both Tony's lack of money and his strange manner make her uncomfortable and eventually she calls out for the madam who is quick to throw Tony out of the building.

Tony's evening sees him in a gay pub. He watches a guy dance, the guy notices Tony and follows him into the toilet. As Tony is washing his hands the guy, Alex (Lorenzo Camporese), starts chatting to him and offers to buy him a drink. They stand in the packed pub, Tony with his bottle of coke and Alex with his bottle of poppers.

Back at Tony's flat, Alex has made himself at home and Tony is trying to find some alcohol. He doesn't have any, which upsets Alex. Alex is more interested in his coke and invites Tony to sit next to him on the couch. Alex continues to proposition Tony who becomes uncomfortable enough to push Alex aside and run into the bathroom, slamming the door. Alex goes into the bedroom and sits on the bed. He takes his top off when notices something in the cupboard. As he goes forward to check what looks like a hand, Tony appears into the room and hits him over the head with a hammer.

Meanwhile back on the estate, Paul's (Ricky Grover) son Davey has gone missing and Paul and his wife Lisa have been searching everywhere for him. When he and his mate see Tony, they approach him asking if he's seen Davey. Paul loses it again and throws Tony into the rubbish.

This is not the end of Tony's encounters with Paul. Paul is now convinced that it is Tony who has taken Davey and is keeping him in his flat. He threatens Tony through the still locked gate but Tony refuses to let him in the flat. Paul leaves shouting that he will be telling the police. And in fact the next morning, Tony



opens the door to Dave Reynolds (Ian Groombridge), a CID detective. Dave asks Tony a variety of questions relating to missing Davey. Dave also notices a bad smell and is suspicious. He asks to look around the flat and Tony is tempted to use a potato peeler on the table to stop Dave but he is saved from the decision by the ring of Dave's mobile. They've found Davey.

Tony looks out of his window down at two police cars returning Davey home. Later he takes more rubbish bags full of body parts down to the river and throws them in.

The Transformation into Tony

Peter Ferdinando

When preparing and researching I like to cover a lot of ground. I don't like to leave any stone unturned - the more avenues I explore the more choices I have.

I started reading and watching lots of interviews with real serial killers. Studied a lot of photographs of how they looked, dressed etc. Nine times out of ten they were American, from horrific backgrounds and childhoods. Even though we don't show it I wanted to get a real sense of his inner turmoil caused by his upbringing. So I created a background for myself, like a biography. I feel it's vital to create a foundation, a history for my character. For me, whatever you see on the screen it's what happens before the scene starts that's important.

Tony is a mixture of several different people. Aspects of serial killers I've researched but also real people that I know. Just the characteristics - the voice of one person, the walk from another. Just little things. Then it was just a case of making the character my own.

It was a challenge to tackle such an isolated character, getting into the mindset that drives him to kill. The physical aspect was very important; Tony doesn't take care of himself, he's gorky, undernourished and sallow. So I went on a strict diet to get the desired affect. I monitored my weight for months and the shoot date kept moving back and back. In the end I dropped about 35 pounds.

I also moved into Tony's flat for the duration of the shoot, a couple of days before actually. It helped me familiarise myself with his surroundings and personalise the flat, practice his lifestyle. The flat is very much part of TONY; it's his safe haven from the world where his dark side unravels itself I feel that Tony never really grew up. He's stuck in a time warp and never developed as a man; just pushed into a corner and has become this creature of habit. He is a man that is painfully lonely, starved from any form of love, care and



attention. Not a member of society. Desperate to make a connection, but doesn't know how. That's a recipe for a disaster. I see Tony as a victim, not just a cold blooded murderer.

The History of the Project - The Initial Idea

Gerard Johnson

I initially had the idea for Tony in 2004. It became a short and after showing it to Paul Abbott I was offered the chance to turn it into a feature. It took a year to raise the funding and I wrote a 40 page outline explaining the scenes with a lot of dialogue already in place.

We spent many weekends over a six month period working on the development of the whole piece. This would involve a closed environment with the actors and I working out character and performance. It was important that everybody was on the same page so when we did get to the set I had the luxury of trying new stuff.

Dan McCulloch

I was working as a personal assistant to Paul Abbott at his production company at the time. I'd just completed my first short film and was starting my career as a producer. Paul wanted to give Gerard the chance to make a feature following the success of his short film endeavours. We were never asked to provide a script; already by this point Gerard had nearly finished casting and acting workshops were well underway. The Film Council got involved off the strength of a two-page story outline and the pedigree of the people already attached. Though the budget sounded small at that stage we never thought about it - in a way the film was already made in Gerard's head. It felt more like how can we do his ideas justice with the contacts and resources we had around us at the time. Gerard worked closely on the schedule and scouted locations with my co-producer Kirstie Edgar. Together we made the production elements fit in line with a timeline Gerard devised to work over 12 days.

Of course there was an element of control in the organisation of what we were doing, but really the whole machine felt very natural and grew or adapted as we got nearer that first day of principle photography. The actors were consistently professional, amazing since some had never acted before, and worked very hard with Gerard to achieve an authenticity, which paid dividends in the final film.



Working with Family

Gerard Johnson

Peter (Ferdinando) and I have worked together before so we cast the film from mostly people we knew. Some had never acted before but I wanted to find out about the person first so we spent a lot of time just talking. I needed to find out if this person could relate to who they were playing. This may sound obvious but for me it was the difference between a good performance and a bad one. Then we worked on the character, which we did to a level that by the end of the shoot they were the character.

Matt Johnson

Since Gerard was 3 foot tall he has been obsessed with films. He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of cinema and as our personal tastes are very similar if he recommends a film then it's pretty much guaranteed I will like it too. So sharing similar aesthetics made it very easy for us to work together and consequently Tony was a very smooth project. Gerard knew exactly what he wanted and what he didn't want and he trusted me to get on with the job.

Peter Ferdinando

They say "never work with family, you'll be bashing heads before long" but it was a luxury for us. Gerard and I are very lucky in that we have a creative partnership that works, we're close cousins and know each other inside out and draw a lot from personal experience. We just compliment each other.

Ahead of the shoot we did a lot of detailed preparation and rehearsal. Once we were on set we ran with it as if we were one unit.

Gerard's very good with actors; he allows the actor freedom and is very open to their ideas. He knows when something doesn't ring true. He also creates a good atmosphere on set, depending on the nature of the scene - which is very important.

Dan McCulloch

I don't think you can ask more than what Peter Ferdinando gave the lead role. In every scene, he maintained a high level of concentration but also went with the spontaneity of whatever was happening on that day. The crew loved working with him.



The remainder of the cast

Ricky Grover

Gerard's dad and brother have connections with my family going back years ago in the east end and I liked that. They was well thought of so I knew Gerard came from good stock. It's all about the pedigree where I come from and although I was playing a thuggish, bully type of character, he had a gentle side that he showed glimpses of... I thought Peter was outstanding in the film and deserves every credit he gets for that. Peter is a method actor like me and just becomes the character so at the time of the film I wouldn't have asked him to babysit and he wouldn't have knocked me back otherwise he probably would have got a clump.

Neil Maskell

We first started rehearsing in 2007. I've known Peter [Ferdinando] since we were very small kids, Gerard less so but still a long amount of time.

Gerard got in touch and showed me the short, which I liked very much. The character they wanted me to play wasn't in it, but I knew a load of the actors involved - Mark Mooney, George [Russo], Francis [Pope] and Lucy [Flack] - and that my character was being brought in to heighten the humour and play that angle a little bit more.

We started from the fact that we knew Tony at times would have to have a normal day, interact with people and so on. So we sort of laughed about that a lot and Gerard said how about the character of trying to get Tony a job.

Lucy Flack

I was lucky enough to have been a part of Gerard's short film 'Mug' and I was also in the short of 'Tony', although I played a different part.

I didn't really get to read the script so I only knew my character's life history and obviously the scene I was in. It was all a mystery for a very long time. In fact, it was only revealed to me in Edinburgh (Film Festival.) My character is a young Eastern European prostitute who has no judgment of Tony except he is another time waster who wants something for nothing.

This is just another day in the brothel and another prostitute Tony can be close to, even if it is only for a few seconds.

Gerard is an amazingly talented director who knows what he wants and how to create it. He not only gave me the freedom and sources to explore and develop my character, but gave me the opportunity to experiment as an actor.



The Shoot - The Challenges of low budget filmmaking

Gerard Johnson

We shot the film in 12 days and for a feature that is very short. Also the fact that we had limited film stock meant we really had to be on top of our game in relation to how we could nail the scenes and we had to be quite guerilla in our methods on such a low budget.

Dan McCulloch

It took more than a year to edit the film. For no other reason than the fact that we couldn't afford a solid stretch of cutting, we had to edit around day jobs and available rooms. Like any of the other challenges though, this really became an advantage, the reality of post production is that no-one ever has enough time. We made that work for us, every time we revisited the most recent cut we had a fresh pair of eyes to it.

Peter Ferdinando

We had a six month period where we developed the script further through workshopping all the characters, which fleshed out the scenes more. Even though it wasn't set word for word, we knew we had certain beats we had to hit in each scene. But that still allowed it to be loose on set, keeping it spontaneous and fresh every time. Shooting in chronological order was brilliant for me, a luxury for any actor.

London in a new light

Dan McCulloch

I don't think I've seen this side of London depicted in a movie for a long time. East London has such character and history, but also an underbelly where someone like Tony can thrive.

Matt Johnson

Compared to other world cities such as New York and Paris, London has been seriously under-used as a film location for many years. I think the amount of thought and care Gerard took to create such a personal and distinctive London atmosphere really shines through.

Gerard Johnson

I've lived very close to where Tony lives. I've walked those streets. I've lived on those estates so when writing Tony, I knew where he would walk. The final sequence around the west end is my love letter to the city. Instead of showing a claustrophobic view I'm opening it up to create beautiful images to coincide with Tony's apparent epiphany (although I think it's a temporary one); to leave a thought



of uplifting optimism to such a dark story. I wanted all locations used to be real. The flat was very important as most of the film takes place there so we viewed quite a few before settling for that one and we rented it for a month so Peter could move in and live there.

The Director's Vision

Gerard Johnson

The film's about solitude, the loneliness of big cities and the fascination of what goes on behind the walls of London today; violence boiling underneath the surface, the forgotten classes and certain people falling through the net of society.

I want the film to lodge in the mind and shake the viewer a bit. The power is in the fact that we can all meet somebody like Tony. Although he is a victim in some ways, the fact that he is a real human being is probably the most frightening aspect. He is not some exaggerated killer with a hockey mask.

Ricky Grover

I think Gerard shows he has a true to life vision of this world. It was really well cast with some lovely performances and it's the type of film that stays with you and makes you think; always a good thing in my book. I questioned some of the scenarios as I think it's much stronger to let the viewing punter decide rather than be told on the nose about everything but the film was beautifully shot and all in all a true slice of life. I will always look back on Tony as something I was proud to be part of.

Neil Maskell

I think it's a black comedy. The film actually is a bit bleaker than I thought it would be. I was quite surprised to see it play in horror festivals as I don't think of it as a horror film. It's closer to social realism. I think there is a serious message in there. Maybe if we were all a little bit more inclusive as a society.

Matt Johnson

Like the rest of the Johnson family Gerard likes his humour dark and dry. I hope viewers look beneath the surface of Tony, and the more gruesome moments, and appreciate the humour of this film as it is extremely funny in parts yet also very poignant too. As much as we may think the human animal has been successfully domesticated the film shows how excessive exposure to mindless violence allied to a lack of meaningful human contact can so easily crack the thin veneer of contemporary civilisation and allow darkness to climb through. Perhaps there is a Tony lurking inside many of us?



Dan McCulloch

Past the loneliness, the neglect and the poverty TONY it is a very funny film. I've seen it so many times and it still makes me laugh. So much of it to me is just about his independence and how he operates day to day, which also is actually fascinating. Serial Killer movies have become their own genre, but this character is totally new. It's highly original, both in its creation and execution.

TONY is so uniquely Gerard - his ideas, his humour and we worked hard to communicate that. I think the experience of watching the film will be entertaining and shocking, but no one person will take away one thing. For 73 minutes a lot of current issues are played out in the story - unemployment, sexuality, society - there's a lot to talk about afterwards.

Cast Biographies**Peter Ferdinando – Tony**

Peter Ferdinando transformed himself for the role of Tony; his first film lead role. His other credits range from guest appearances on both comedy and drama TV shows including LONDON'S BURNING, SOLDIER, SOLDIER, THE BILL, MY FAMILY, HUSTLE and HOLBY BLUE. He has also acted in THE ONLY BOY FOR ME alongside Helen Baxendale, TITANIC TOWN with Julie Walters, THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTORS with Pete Postlethwaite and Antonia Bird's FACE alongside Robert Carlyle and Ray Winstone. Tony is his third collaboration with director Gerard Johnson with whom he had already worked on short films LONE MAN and MUG.

Ricky Grover – Paul

Ricky Grover was most recently seen in the dramatic adventure CARGO and Guy Ritchie's REVOLVER. Additional credits include MURDER MOST HORRID, OLIVER TWIST, RED DWARF, MIT – MUDER INVESTIGATION TEAM, BLACK BOOKS and TWISTED TALES. He has also been filming the vampire movie DEAD CERT with actors Dexter Fletcher, Billy Murray, Craig Fairbrass and Steven Berkoff, which is schedule for release in 2010.

Neil Maskell – Mike Hemmings

Actor Neil Maskell began his career in such popular UK TV series as SOLDIER, SOLDIER, LONDON'S BURNING and WYCLIFFE. Further TV credits include THE BILL, CASUALTY, SHAMELESS and SILENT WITNESS. Feature films include roles in Nick Love's THE FOOTBALL FACTORY, IT'S ALL GONE PETE TONG alongside Paul Kaye, the hilarious MIKE BASSETT, ENGLAND MANAGER as well as starring alongside Sharon Stone in BASIC INSTINCT 2, Julian Gilbey's crime drama THE RISE OF THE FOOTSOLDIER, horror comedy DOGHOUSE and the critically



acclaimed ATONEMENT. He will next take the role of Craig Rolfe in the film BONDED BY BLOOD which starts production in December 2009.

Lorenzo Camporese - Alex

Lorenzo Camporese has a strong selection of television credits including series 2 and 3 of FOOTBALLERS' WIVES, THE BILL, LONDON'S BURNING, SILENT WITNESS, CASUALTY, EASTENDERS, GETTING OFF, THE FUGITIVES, A GOOD MURDER and THE FINAL QUEST, both directed and starring David Jason.

Camporese previously collaborated on director Gerard Johnson's short film MUG and other film credits include A TIME TO LOVE, DIANA AND ME and the horror DOMINION, PREQUEL TO THE EXORCIST.

Lucy Flack - Prostitute

Tony is only Lucy Flack's second feature role. She early starred in the drama NADINE, directed by Ian Simpson. She also took on the role of Lucy in Gerard Johnson's earlier short film MUG. On television she could be seen in the role of Young Jenny in the long running BBC police series DALZIEL AND PASCOE.

The Filmmakers

Gerard Johnson - Director

Born in 1973 in East London, Gerard Johnson has always had a passion and ambition for cinema. After years of dead end jobs he finally entered the industry as a commercials runner but found more regular work at a post-production company. It was here that he able to develop his ideas and make short films completely independently, learning all he could in the process.

With actor and cousin Peter Ferdinando, Gerard created his first short film called LONE MAN. From here a creative partnership was formed, which would be built upon throughout all his future projects. Gerard's next short, MUG, won the Big Issue Film Festival award 2004, was distributed by Brit Shorts and caught the attention of Bafta winning Writer/ Producer Paul Abbott. Gerard then created a new character and filmed it with Peter, some friends and a hundred quid over one weekend - the short was to be called Tony.

On seeing the first cut Paul Abbott suggested to turn the character in to a feature film, which he wanted to produce through his new talent focused company, Abbott Vision. After an intense six month casting and rehearsal process, Tony was shot around the East End with Abbott Vision and the UK Film Council



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financing. Officially selected for Edinburgh Film Festival in 2009, Tony was awarded the completion funding needed for it to be theatrically released.

Winner of the Trailblazer Award for emerging talent at 2009's Edinburgh Film Festival Gerard currently has several new ideas in various stages of development including The Trainer and Hyena.

Dan McCulloch – Producer

Dan's started in Film and TV Drama as Hilary Bevan Jones's and Paul Abbott's personal assistant at Tightrope Pictures, during this time the company turned over a dozen hours of world-class prime time television drama. After a short-lived writing career at the BBC, Dan became a Development Producer, where he helped run the large, writer-led company slate comprised of both new and experience industry talent.

His first short film as producer was THE STRONGER (directed by Lia Williams), which won best short film at Raindance and was nominated for a BAFTA and at this year's Sundance. Dan has recently completed THE ODDS, directed by Paloma Baeza starring Mark Strong and Ian McDiarmid as well as Tom Shkolnik's new short film ANOTHER FILM for BBC Films and UK Film Council.

Dan is currently in post production on his first feature film, Gerard Johnson's TONY which is Exec'd by Paul Abbott and will be released in the UK and US in January 2010.

