

Locke (15) US/UK 2014 ✓

14 October 2019

DIRECTOR: Steven Knight

Running time: 81 minutes

LEADING PLAYERS: Tom Hardy (Ivan Locke), Olivia Colman (Bethan), Ruth Wilson (Katrina Locke), Andrew Scott (Donal), Ben Daniels (Gareth), Tom Holland (Eddie Locke), Bill Milner (Sean Locke), Danny Webb (Cassidy), Alice Lowe (Sister Margaret), Silas Carson (Doctor Gallu), Lee Ross (PC Davids).

SCRIPT: Steven Knight. PHOTOGRAPHY: Haris Zambarloukos. EDITING: Justine Wright. MUSIC: Dickon Hinchcliffe.

Most of you by now will be familiar with the setup of *Locke*: Ivan Locke, a construction foreman, drives home through the night on the eve of the biggest concrete pour of his career (and probably anyone else's), and in time to watch an important football match with his wife and sons. Then a phone call changes everything in his life that he has taken for granted hitherto. For the next eighty minutes we do not leave the car but hold his hand as he negotiates the seven circles of Hell (and I don't mean the Spaghetti Junction!).

Films confined to one location are few in number, and the forewarned viewer is understandably trepidatious. One thinks perhaps of *Secret Honor* (1984), which had Philip Baker Hall's Nixon confessing to his Dictaphone, or *Swimming in Cambodia* (1987), Spalding Gray's one-man show about the experiences gleaned while working on *The Killing Fields* in a very supporting role (!) But, generally, the cinema eschews such opportunities for theatrical unity of place; after all, one of the benefits of the medium is that you can hop around from location to location and add to the richness of the visual palette; added to which, contemporary film-makers are notoriously shy of the long take (viz. the Bourne films, for example). Editing equals excitement, right? If you're with the same guy in the same car for the whole movie, where do you cut?

For these reasons, films of plays have traditionally opened out the action so far as possible. Olivier's *Henry V* showed this process taking place before our eyes; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* takes time out from George and Martha's to visit a diner. Hitchcock's *Rope* bucks the trend, remaining in the apartment, and even disguises the cuts for the reel changes, but is generally regarded as an 'interesting experiment', nothing more.

All of which makes *Locke* the perfect film society film: you might not normally have gambled on what seem like meagre returns on your money and time, but you've paid your money and are prepared to be enlightened, so... here you go.

And I don't think you will be disappointed, for, like a fine dark chocolate, or a Bach solo violin partita, the lack of adornment focuses the attention on what remains. Celebrated writer and film critic David Thomson said of the film: "No film I've seen in recent years is more eloquent on where we are now, and on how alone we feel. There is little left but to watch and listen." In other words, do not expect escapism. Do expect to be brought face to face with your deepest fears, and empathy for a human being who might have been you.

Credit for all this must go in large part to Tom Hardy, who has come a long way since *Black Hawk Down*, and whose career really began to look interesting with *Bronson*, but who here shows what a truly fine actor he is. Shooting in real time over eight nights with three cameras, he would have had to know the content of several of the thirty-six telephone conversations he shares with family and colleagues over the course of the action; this and remain real while being towed around the M6 on a flatbed trailer. The script is also a *tour de force* of writing by director Steven Knight, previously screenwriter for *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Eastern Promises*. There is definitely a predilection for uncomfortable situations in this man.

David Clare

The Tunnel - Norway 2016, directed by André Øvredal. In an overpopulated future, a family travels home from the beach in heavy traffic; between them and the city in which they live, is a tunnel with a horrifying purpose. 14 minutes.