

Filmmaking Equipment Concerns

Steve Conway Films



How do I Make a Film Without a Big Budget
for Equipment?

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Thank you for downloading this guide.

Hopefully I can shed some light on some things, based on my own experiences, and can help you feel like some of the power is back in your own hands to getting your film made.

So, you've decided to make a film with the money you have, which may be very little or none even, you're debating whether to buy or rent a camera and other equipment, and when you consider the camera's total cost with all the extras you see that a significant portion of your budget has now already been eaten up.

Or the aspect of equipment in general has stopped you in your tracks.

When I take on consulting jobs, or really any film project at all, one of the main topics always brought up is equipment. With good reason, without it, there is no film of course.

Particularly a camera, sound recording equipment and lights, to name only but a few of the seemingly endless things you could need to shoot a film but let's agree for now those three things are probably the most important, just in its *very* simplest terms.

“Unless we have the latest super high-end cinema camera (or insert the name of any cinema camera), there is no point shooting this film”.

You could very easily hear someone say, or indeed have *already* heard someone tell you before you even get going.

Ridiculous

Like most ambitious filmmakers, I also had the same worries before deciding to start shooting my first feature-length film in 2015, [‘Electrician’](#).

It took me a while to get rid of those concerns, but it also helped that I had no other choices at all, because I decided to proceed without a budget. So, it was very much a case that I use the tools I currently have or nothing at all, and ultimately I don't make a film.

Back around 2011 I managed to invest in some equipment for myself. That consisted of:

- A Canon 5D MARK2 DSLR camera that recorded full frame 1920x1080p HD video.
- Camera tripod.
- 50mm lens.
- 24-70mm lens.
- 70-200mm lens.
- Zoom audio recorder.
- Rode shotgun microphone.
- 1 x LED light with stand.

I then spent the next three to four years continuously using all that equipment, on a variety of film projects, *prior* to me deciding that I could also use the very same equipment to take on making a feature film, so needless to say I was very familiar with it all.

My motivations for making a feature film are numerous and varied, and there is simply too much to cover in this short document focusing only very briefly on equipment. But let's just say that nothing could stop my burning desire to make a film, not even lack of a budget.

Lack of budget also meant that no equipment was hired out. But, also due to worries I had, I didn't want to spend too much time learning how to use a hired camera that was completely different from the one I already own and am familiar with. When I was making my film, I needed to make the most of every minute I had available to me. I didn't want to waste time learning how to operate a new camera on shoot days.

I also decided that although my set-up is not the best available on the market, it is discrete, quick to put together and then take apart again, and it is perfect for guerilla filmmaking, which we will use a lot of. This could also enable much more intriguing material to be shot.

I asked myself, *where* would people ultimately watch my film long-term? The likelihood is online, and the equipment I have is more than sufficient to create a film that will be watched on devices, monitors and screens streaming films online. Would an audience be worried if the film wasn't shot on a high-end cinema camera in those circumstances? Doubtful.

I also understood I had to fit the film around the equipment in order to use the tools I had available to me, not the other way around. "Horses for courses", as they say.

Essentially, I just didn't want to put off trying to make a film until the "right tools", or "better tools", were available to me.

In the end, the film I shot using a DSLR camera, and the equipment mentioned above, was shown on UK television several times (so far, as of 2024), as well as on various online film streaming platforms such as Prime video, Tubi and Apple TV, and in a huge cinema.

I don't say it to brag or sound arrogant at all, but rather to try and ease some fears you might have about you not having the greatest, or "most appropriate", filming equipment to your disposal.

Of course, there are very clear reasons why better cameras, better lenses, and all-around better equipment, could help improve the film, be-it visually and technically, without a doubt. However, I am also of the opinion that having a "better" camera doesn't necessarily translate into *better* film, and the job of the filmmaker (you) is to create something interesting with whatever tools you have, and please do pay just as much attention and respect to the area of sound recording as you do with your visuals.

If money isn't an issue, go ahead with acquiring the best equipment, however, if it is (as it generally is), don't let the lack of having the newest, super-computer cinema camera on the market (or alike) stop you from moving forward with your project.

I have a strong desire to help aspiring filmmakers and to share any useful information I have with them. Thank you for downloading this guide and reading it; I sincerely hope it has helped you in some way.

Best,
Steve