

Shock and Awe: The Story of Electricity

A mysterious force that can revive the dead, fuels our modern lives and could offer unlimited power.



Shock and Awe: The Story of Electricity

Programme running: 3 x 60 mins Production: BBC

The electrifying story of our quest to master nature's most mysterious force – electricity. Until fairly recently, electricity was seen as a magical power, but it is now the lifeblood of the modern world, fuelling our lives and underpinning every aspect of technological advancement. Without it, we would be lost. This series of three programmes tells of dazzling leaps of imagination and extraordinary experiments. It's a story of maverick geniuses who used electricity to light our cities, to communicate across the seas and through the air, to create modern industry, and to give us the digital revolution...

Episode 1: Spark

In this episode we tell the story of the very first 'natural philosophers' or scientists who started to unlock the mysteries of electricity. They studied its curious link to life, built strange and powerful instruments to create it, and even tamed lightning itself. It was these men who truly laid the foundations of the modern world.

Electricity was without doubt a fantastical wonder. This is the story about what happened when the first real concerted effort was made to understand electricity; how we learned to create and store it, before finally creating something that enabled us to make it at will: the battery.

Episode 2: The Age of Invention

Just under 200 years ago scientists discovered something profound; that electricity is connected to another of nature's most fundamental forces – magnetism. Harnessing the link between magnetism and electricity would completely transform the world, allowing us to generate a seemingly limitless amount of electric power, power we could utilise to drive machines, communicate across continents and light our homes. This is the story of how scientists and engineers unlocked the nature of electricity in an extraordinary century of innovation and invention.



Episode 3: Revelations and Revolutions

Electricity is not just something that creates heat and light - it connects the world through networks and broadcasting. After centuries of experiments with electricity this is the story of how a new age of real understanding dawned – how we discovered electric fields and electromagnetic waves. Today we can hardly imagine life without electricity – it defines our era. As our understanding of it has increased, so has our reliance upon it, and today we're on the brink of a new breakthrough, because if we can understand the secret of electrical superconductivity we could once again transform the world.

Image of man with shocked hair: iStock

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