

Putting it to Bed: Revising and completing A DIY feature film.

Patrick Gillies, Southern Institute of Technology

The expression, "One can't see the wood for the trees", holds true in art as it does in life. As practitioners, we are often so close to our work that it is hard to recognise its faults. *My Name Is Heather* is a no-budget DIY feature film that I first began making as part of my Master of Fine Arts thesis project in 2012. The film is a found-footage psychological-drama about a sex worker on the streets of earthquake-stricken Christchurch, struggling to turn her life around, whilst coping with a deadly stalker. Through the process of making this thesis film, I intended to explore techniques in diegetic filmmaking – essentially weaving together a narrative from mixed media formats – as well as testing the validity of the conventional Hollywood three act structure. Whilst an acceptable version of the film was completed within a year and submitted for assessment as part of my thesis, the film failed to find a positive response from film festivals and sat on the shelf for nearly four years. Fast-forward to mid-2017, and I found myself compelled to revise the film with a view to finding some kind of audience and, hopefully, gaining film festival selection. This presentation is a practice-based investigation into the process of finessing my feature film over a six-year period, detailing the revisions that I made to the story in order to more successfully resonate with an audience, as well as detailing some of the technical processes necessary to update the film for modern online audiences.