

in NYC  
with you guys  
(and half of  
Yorkshires  
and our parents)

# ADULT LIFE SKILLS

~~PRODUCTION NOTES~~ RAMBLE



Creative England presents  
a Pico Pictures production

in association with Steel Mill Pictures and Lions and Bears

in co-production with Film Väst, Filmgate Films and the Wellcome Trust

a film by Rachel Tunnard

→ and everyone else.

**Cast:** Jodie Whittaker, Lorraine Ashbourne, Brett Goldstein, Rachael Deering,

Eileen Davies, Alice Lowe, Edward Hogg and introducing Ozzy Myers

**Executive Producers:** Ken Marshall, Richard Holmes, Paul Ashton, Jakob Abrahamsson and Jodie Whittaker

**Producer:** Michael Berliner

**Writer, director and editor:** Rachel Tunnard

→ aspiring polymath.

a perfectly formed 96 minutes

WHAT MAKES A JOURNALIST ~~AN~~ ADULT?   
 brilliant

please tick



Being able to read their own handwriting?

Understanding the possessive apostrophe?

~~Having lots of pens?~~

Looking favourably on a <sup>★</sup>film<sup>★</sup> made by  
a load of scruffy women (and men) <sup>★</sup>  
from Yorkshire <sup>★</sup> who were paid in  
biscuits and high-fives...

→ who want to be women?

## SYNOPSIS...

Anna is stuck: she's approaching 30 and having an early-mid life crisis - one that's seen her regressing to a teenager, living like a hermit in her mum's garden shed and wondering why the suffragettes ever bothered.

She spends her days making videos using her thumbs as actors - thumbs that bicker about things like whether Yogi Bear is a moral or existential nihilist. But Anna doesn't show these videos to anyone and no one knows what they are for.

A week before her birthday her Mum serves her an ultimatum – she needs to move out of the shed, get a haircut that doesn't put her gender in question and stop dressing like a homeless teenager. Naturally, Anna tells her Mum to BACK THE F-OFF.

However, when her school friend comes to visit, Anna's self-imposed isolation becomes impossible to maintain. Soon she is entangled with a troubled eight year old boy obsessed with Westerns, and the local real estate agent whose awkwardness continually undermines his attempts to seduce her.

This is a story about confronting the things we are most scared of – that explores the universal themes of being lost and finding yourself, making peace with who you are, and regaining self-confidence and dignity.

It is basically the same themes as ROCKY if you think about it. But with thumbs. And a cowboy. And no boxing.



ONCE UPON A TIME.....

In 2014 made a 'pilot' for the film, called EMOTIONAL FUSEBOX, which was nominated for a BAFTA and a BIFA (British Independent Film Awards). It also won the audience award at Berlin Short Film Festival and 'best drama' at This Is England' film festival in Rouen.



This is supposed to be a BAFTA face. don't judge me.



But before this, when the film only existed in my head, I was having problems explaining how I would make a 'comedy about grief'. I was working as a film editor at the time and had no short films to demonstrate the 'tone' of ADULT LIFE SKILLS so I started making lots of crap to go alongside the treatment – crap with the solitary aim of making the 'purse string holders' at the UK public funding bodies laugh.

The governing 'meta-narrative' behind all this crap was:

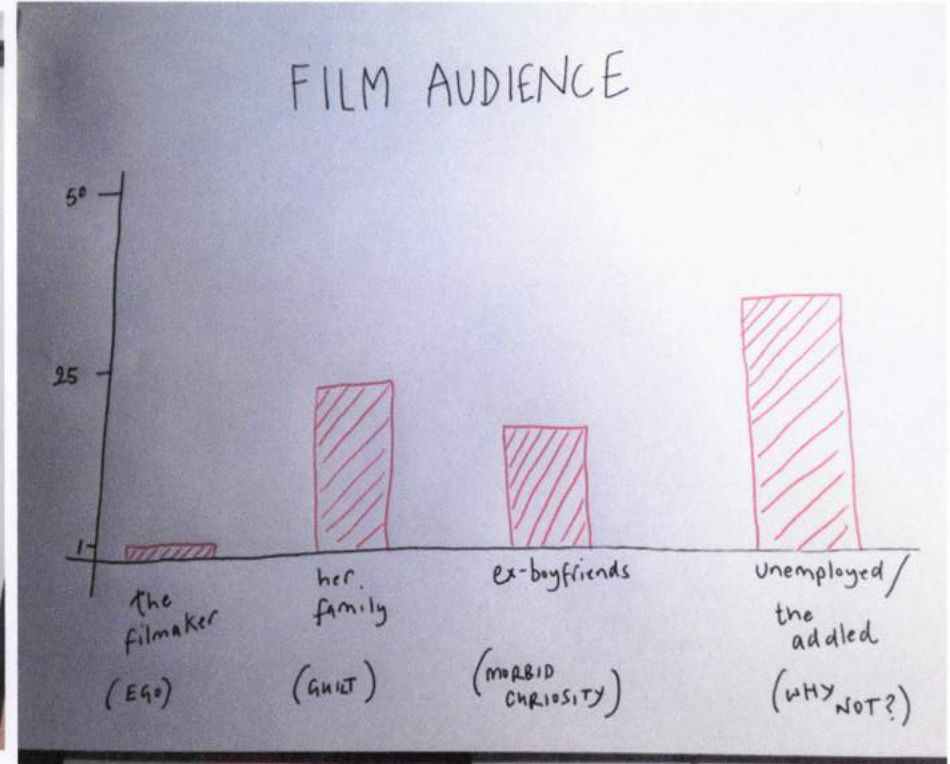
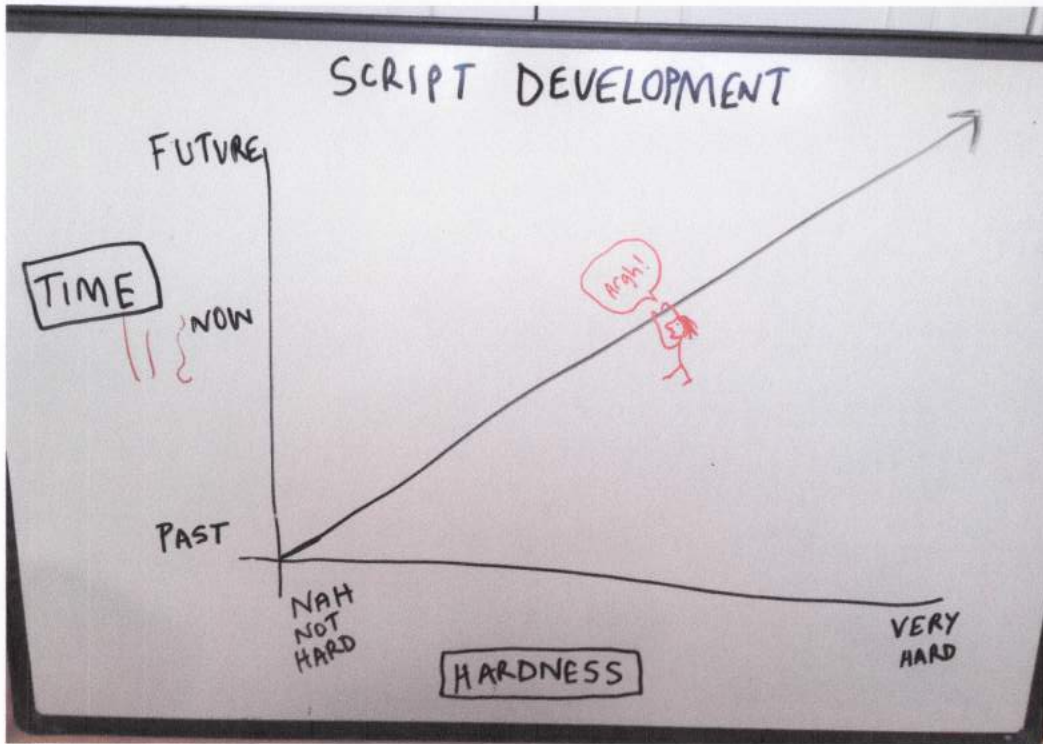
Development is really hard, in a Sisyphus-ian 'pushing a rock up a mountain forever kind of way' - and it is the fault of you, the execs, that I have no social life, no money and that I have started welling up on the underground whenever I heard 'THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL' by ABBA. Also: ~~please give me loads of money.~~

Some things I made include....

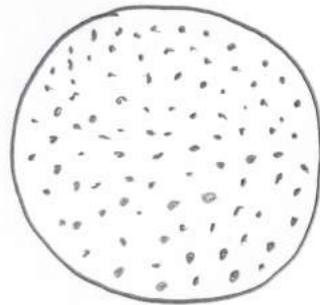


# GRAPHS!

(about themes, my mental state, which celebrity I fancied at certain points of development)



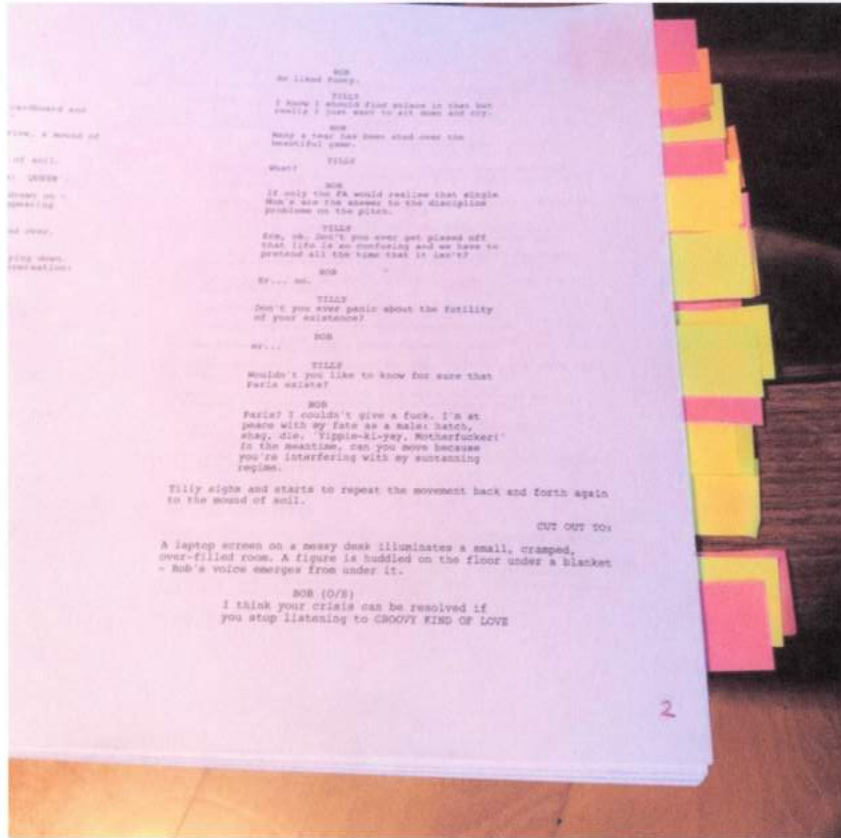
## THINGS THE PROTAGONIST CAN'T HANDLE



- ▨ HER MUM
- ▣ HER HAIR
- ▣ EVERY FUCKING THING OK?



## LIMERICKS



this one based on this

Mum proof read my script to check grammar,

Her despair at it caused her to stammer,

"I have failed as a mother,

because you and your brother,

butcher the English language in every conceivable way, I can't believe you are my children frankly. How have you got to the age of 32 without a firm grasp of the possessive apostrophe? I wouldn't commission your script just on a point of principle about the over use of subjunctives and lack of understanding of narrative forms. I mean, is this supposed to be a limerick? I give up."

Script with "a few" corrections from my mum  
pink = Spellings  
yellow = Grammar  
Green = WTF are you talking about / this makes no sense / you are no longer my child.



ON MY WEBSITE

(I also made a LOT of videos using my thumbs as bickering actors and a video with the two main actresses where they performed lines from seminal historical movie 'ROBIN HOOD PRINCE OF THIEVES'. I have 8 minutes of this impromptu Costner love-in)

I CAN SEND YOU THIS EVEN THOUGH THEY WILL HATE ME. SUCH IS THE POWER I NOW HAVE

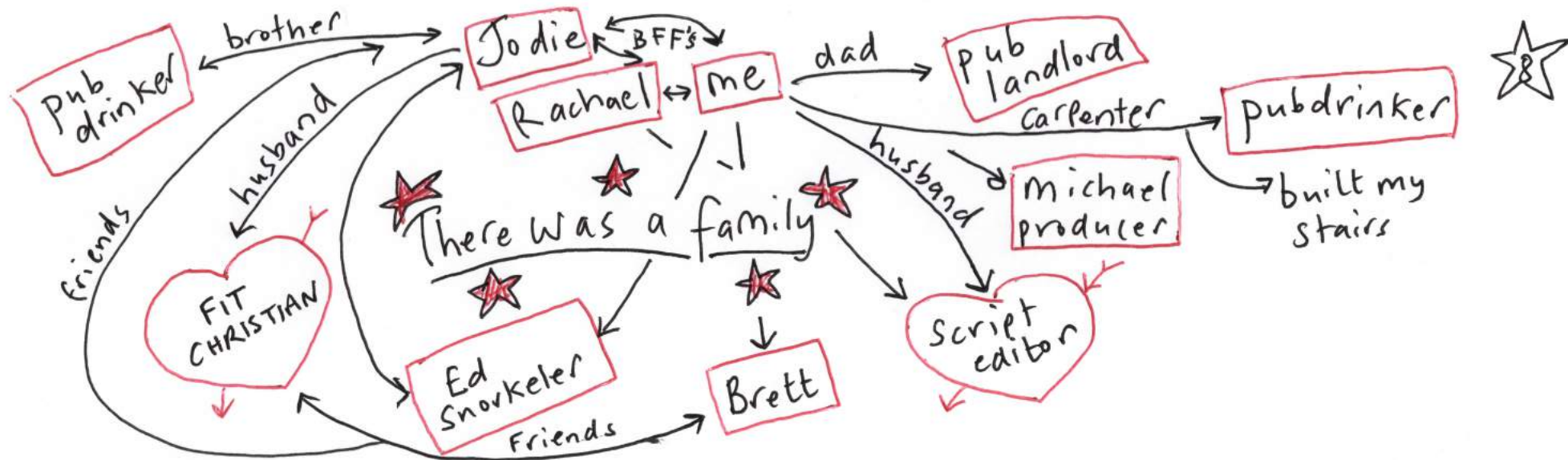


During this time we also received some research development funding from The Wellcome Trust a (charitable foundation dedicated to improving health through science, research and engagement with society). This enabled me to speak to experts in the field of Twin Loss, ensuring that the film had an emotional truth. Nb. Twin Loss is a specific area of scientific research due to the unique nature of the loss experienced by the surviving twin. The grief frequently prompts a crisis of identity as well as a wider existential crisis – and often the surviving twin still 'experiences' their dead twin as a real manifestation in their daily life.

We were funded by Creative England, private investors through the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme, Film Vast in Sweden, the Wellcome Trust, and through presales in the UK and Sweden.

Jodie (the lead actress) found out she was pregnant just as we were financing the film. We had to make a decision to either shoot immediately (in 6 weeks), delay the film for a year, or recast. I had written the film for Jodie, and she is one of my best friends, so the decision was pretty straightforward. Most of the crew did not know she was preggers however (although you can actually see her bump a bit in the film if you know). Her little girl is turning one during Tribeca film festival!

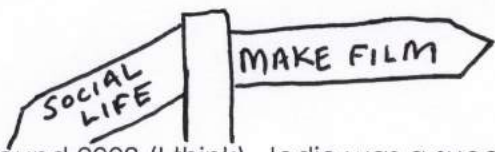




- Jodie (main character Anna), and Rachael (Fiona) are real life-long best friends. They have known each other since they were born and there are lots of embarrassing photos to prove it.
- Jodie Whittaker Rachael Deering (Fiona) and I are real life best friends.
- I met Rachael at Bristol University. We did the same course, we both were called Rachael and we were both 'Northern' with a shared love of panicking about everything. I met Jodie at Rachael's fancy dress 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party.
- Jodie introduced me to Edward Hogg, playing the snorkeler, at a Pulp gig about 7 years ago.
- I met Brett Goldstein (Brendan) after I watched his film 'Superbob'. I had been adamant that I didn't want a love interest in the film (because the answer to the main girl's problem was not 'a man') but then I saw Brett acting and I went "... oh maybe he could work..." So I basically love bombed him until he agreed and then I wrote the part for him.
- The pub landlord who plays the recorder is my dad.
- The pub clientele are Jodie's brother and my carpenter friend.
- Jodie's husband FIT CHRISTIAN plays Clint's dad. He is an American actor and writer – they have never acted together before.
- My step-kids and Jodie's niece are also in the film.
- My mum made the adult life skills badges
- Ozzy Myers, the little dude playing Clint, the cowboy, was 'street cast' from a school in Leeds. He had never acted before. Casting directors Des Hamilton and Lara Manwaring found him (they also found Thomas Turgoose for Shane Meadows' This Is England. Thomas won best actor for Somers Town at Tribeca 2008).
- SOMERS TOWN is written by my husband, Paul Fraser. He is also my script editor and did have a cameo in the film but I cut him out, cruelly and mercilessly according to him.



Who went on an adventure...



- Jodie, Rachael and I all went to Paris around 2009 (I think). Jodie was a successful actress, I was a film editor and Rachael was at drama school. We talked about how we never saw authentic versions of women like us - and our friendship - in film, and so I decided that I would have a go at writing one for us.
- A LOT of the things in the film happened to me or are based on personal experience. (apart from the twin loss bit), I lived in my cousins shed in London for a year; spiders crawled all over my bed in the night; I made videos with my thumbs; I am very close to my brother; I had a photo on my passport that put my gender in question (it JUST expired after ten long years); I am an asshole to children \*\*\*THAT IS A JOKE\*\*\*
- David Hasslehoff was going to be in the film in a dream sequence, he sent me a little video saying he was 'coming to save Anna from the spiders in the shed' (the scene didn't make the final shooting script)
- I met Texan musician Micah P Hinson at a gig in Bristol in 2003. He gave me his email address and I used it 14 years later to ask him to help with the film.
- It is my thumbs in the film.
- Whitesnake provided the end track, Here I Go Again. I had written the song into the script: "You need to stop listening to depressing hippy music and start listening to Whitesnake". I had to send David Coverdale personal letters and hound him on Twitter to get him to agree to license the track.
- The majority of our HOD's are women. And we are all very good friends. And a lot of them are coming to Tribeca for the festival to party. (with you?)



We had a competition on set to come up with the best 'shed' film or music pun:

- ★ Shed poets society
- ★ The Evil Shed
- ★ Shed Calm
- ★ Right Shed Fred
- ★ Night of the living shed
- ★ Shed Man Walking
- ★ Shaun of the shed
- ★ Shed Zeppelin
- ★ Freddy's shed: the final nightmare (clear out.)

PLEASE TELL US YOUR SUGGESTION HERE: @ADULTLIFESKILLS / WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ADULTLIFESKILLS

★ things to do in Denver when you're (in a) Shed



## ★ MAIN BIOGRAPHIES ★

### **RACHEL - WRITER, DIRECTOR, EDITOR**

Rachel is a BAFTA 'Brit to Watch' and was named as one of the 'Creative England 50' in 2015 (a study of the UK's most creative people and businesses). She was part of Guiding Lights 2014, on the Script Factory Talent List 2011 and nominated for a creative residency at The Hospital Club in 2011. Her short film EMOTIONAL FUSEBOX was nominated for a BAFTA and a BIFA (2015 / 2014). She is represented by United Agents.

As an editor, Rachel has cut BAFTA nominated feature films as well as shorts, trailers, music videos, and promos. Rachel was awarded 'Best Editing in a Feature Film' at Los Angeles HDFEST 2008.

Rachel has projects in development with Film 4, Channel 4, and eOne. (but she still had to make this document in MICROSOFT WORD because she can't use photoshop and it has pushed her to the limits of human tolerance.)

[www.racheltunnard.com](http://www.racheltunnard.com)

### **MICHAEL BERLINER - PRODUCER**

Michael is a producer with 14 short films behind him that have won awards including the Grand Prix du Jury at Angers Premiers Plans (Whore, dir. Fyzal Boulifa, 2010) and viral hits including School Portrait, which got a million views in ten days and a Webby nomination. He was a 2014 Screen International Star of Tomorrow, and a 2015 BAFTA best short film nominee. He's developing new projects including a post-apocalyptic sci fi with Dominic West and Maisie Williams attached.

### ♥ **JODIE WHITTAKER - LEAD CHARACTER ANNA, AND EXEC PRODUCER**

Jodie is an actor and recognisable face, having played lead roles in Venus, Broadchurch, Attack the Block and Black Mirror. Jodie is an exec producer on the film and is represented by Independent Talent in the U.K. and WME in the U.S. (also, when she sleeps she doesn't move, all night. AT ALL. IT IS LIKE SLEEPING WITH A DEAD PERSON. That's all.)

### **KEN MARSHALL - EXEC PRODUCER**

Ken Marshall set up UK based production company Steel Mill Pictures with writer director Paul Andrew Williams in 2005. Since the birth of Steel Mill Pictures, Marshall has produced five feature films including the critically acclaimed London to Brighton (2006), The Cottage (2008) and Cherry Tree Lane (2010). Song for Marion (2013), had its world premiere as the official Closing Night Film at the Toronto



International Film Festival 2012 and had a wide theatrical release in multiple territories around the world in Spring/Summer 2013, including a US release with The Weinstein Company.

A more recent UK box office hit was Filth (2013), a screenplay adaptation of the Irvine Welsh novel (Trainspotting). It stars award-winning actor James McAvoy (X Men, The Last King of Scotland) and a whole host of first class British acting talent including Oscar-winner Jim Broadbent, Eddie Marsan, Imogen Poots and Jamie Bell. Lionsgate released Filth in UK cinemas in September 2013, with Magnolia releasing in the US in May 2014. The film has been successfully sold around the world by Sierra Affinity. Marshall was a producer mentor for the Sundance winning Microwave feature film Liltng (2013) and a mentor for a NFTS final year student in the Producing Masters course.

KEY PEOPLE

Written, directed and edited by  
Produced by  
Executive producers

RACHEL TUNNARD  
MICHAEL BERLINER  
KEN MARSHALL  
RICHARD HOLMES  
PAUL ASHTON  
JAKOB ABRAHAMSSON  
JODIE WHITTAKER  
SEAN WHEELAN  
BET ROURICH  
BECK RAINFORD  
MICK WARD  
REBECCA GORE  
NICOLE STAFFORD  
MICA P. HINSON  
MATT BIFFA  
ANNA BERTMARK

Casting Director

Anna  
Marion  
Brendan  
Fiona  
Jean  
Alice  
The Snorkeler  
Clint  
Hank  
Luke  
Postman  
Young Billy  
Young Anna

DES HAMILTON  
LARA MANWARING

JODIE WHITTAKER  
LORRAINE ASHBOURNE  
BRETT GOLDSTEIN  
RACHAEL DEERING  
EILEEN DAVIES  
ALICE LOWE  
EDWARD HOGG  
OZZY MYERS  
CHRISTIAN CONTRERAS  
DAVID ANDERSON  
ANDREW BUCKLEY  
ALFIE WHEELER  
MAISY WHITTAKER

Co-producer  
Director of Photography  
Production Designer  
1st Assistant Director  
Costume Designer  
Makeup and Hair Designer  
Music by  
Music Supervisor  
Sound Designer

pub landlord  
pub drinker 1  
pub drinker 2  
↑ toothless

my Dad  
my Carpenter  
Jodie's brother } ♥



This is a questionnaire that I had to do for the Festival + maybe it is useful. Also, my mum spell-checked this....



**What influenced this work? (Can be anything - film or non-film!)**

The non-achievement of childhood dreams: To be rescued by David Hasslehoff in Baywatch; to have a perm and a shell suit; to have a waterslide from my bedroom to my swimming pool; to be a witch etc... Or that feeling when you are a kid when you are really angry and upset about something and your brother (or someone) makes you laugh. And you don't want to laugh - you want to stay upset - but you can't help it. In a more literal sense, my family, my friends, my own experiences (living in a shed, making thumb videos etc), and all the brilliant collaborators who elevated my ideas to the next level.

**What was your "Wow" moment while making your film?**

There's too many - the realisation that all those people were there to help me make something that I had invented in my pyjamas... that I was being allowed to make a film with lots of my friends and family in it... the sinking realisation that not everyone's hair goes frizzy in the rain, the point in the edit when I realised I wasn't going to be totally embarrassed about the film at the end...

**Tell us about an obstacle you had to overcome in making this film?**

Trying to get a tired 7 year old to act when he just wants to play hide and seek. I thought I was a failure and then I realised that if I offered him £1 to do the scene he would agree. So I would give the £1 to him, and he'd give it to his Dad to look after, then when the kid wasn't looking, his Dad would give it back to me. This happened quite a lot around the middle of the shoot. It made me realise I am not a failure - I am just manipulative.

**What is one quality every independent filmmaker must have or learn to have?**

To make cups of tea (to be humble basically).

**What social/cultural issues are you interested in right now?**

I am interested in all the social/ cultural issues that you would imagine a leftist female filmmaker who grew up in Northern UK in the 1980s obsessed with Chevy Chase and The Waltons would be interested in.

**What 3 words describe Tribeca for you?**

YEAH YEAH YEAH!  
 → COME AND PARTY WITH US ←  
 WE ARE DEAD NICE  
 ... SOMETIMES