

UNTITLED THOUGHTS

A SHORT FILM TO START A CONVERSATION

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT



UNTITLED THOUGHTS

Running Time: 6 minutes

Format: Digital

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Audio Format: Stereo L&R (5:1 available)

Language: English

Written & Directed by: Eva Grzelak

Produced by: Melisa Daly
Eva Grzelak

In Association With: Kickass Chick Flicks

With Assistance From: Mercury CX

Website: UntitledThoughts





“Sure, we can talk about mental health. But can we listen?”

SYNOPSIS (short)

A melancholy GIRL finds herself consumed by thoughts she can't quite describe or explain. To untangle the web in her head she can only reach out to the one who knows her best... but is it enough?

This semi-biographical piece is designed to help start a conversation amongst viewers about mental health.

SYNOPSIS

GIRL, who could be any high school student, is intrigued by, yet struggles to understand, her changing thought processes. GIRL keeps to herself not knowing why she feels the way she does.

Her friends are oblivious to her plight, but she doesn't want to bother them. Besides, everyone has their own problems.

Her family knows something is up, but they fail to comprehend. And they have other things to deal with like work, bills and a son who needs to get to training on time.

GIRL soon discovers the one who can listen but in doing so she experiences even more new emotions following her path of self-realisation ... not necessarily resulting in the answers she's been looking for.

In the end, she finds acceptance in herself and, more importantly, hope.

THE STORY

Untitled Thoughts was written in 2018, on a warm, creative, contemplative evening. Writer/Director, Eva Grzelak, kept returning to the memory of a moment in high school when what she was starting to experience in her head didn't fit with her environment, her emotions or her feelings, yet they were vastly influenced by it. To add to the contradiction, at the time it did not seem out of the ordinary to her but it continued throughout her life.

As society becomes more aware of mental health where contemporary content, like movies *Silver Linings Playbook*; *Cake* and Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, explore the external influences including death, bullying, childhood trauma and assault that could lead a person to "dark thinking" and suicide, *Untitled Thoughts* considers those who have unprovoked depressed thoughts, not-understanding where they came from or why they are suddenly there. "Crossed wires" in the brain or genetics and the internal mental passage of that helpless state. In that lies the conversation. To address the stigma of "why are they so upset when they have a perfectly normal life?" ... on the outside. But inside?

In exploring this theme it was important to create three different spaces for GIRL. The cold "outside world" at school in contrast to the friendly people around her. At home the scene is reversed where her bedroom is warm and inviting, like a safe place should be, against her cooler relationship with her family. GIRL's conversations occur in a neutral space. A black room.

Untitled Thoughts, was shot with simplicity and with little soundtrack to allow viewers an uninfluenced interpretation of what they witness. Designed this way so that afterwards the audience can talk about what they saw, can or cannot relate to, or do or do not understand.



Untitled Thoughts will be released on the film festival circuit, specifically mental health film festivals in Australia and overseas. In conjunction with this, it is also a priority to present *Untitled Thoughts* to schools or interested programs to screen as a conversation starter on both the external and internal triggers in mental health. Not only to be used as a tool for parents, counsellors, friends and families to start a conversation but, more importantly, to listen. Because listening is as important as talking about mental health.

"The whole piece gives a strong sense of a character's internal challenges and doesn't use cliches or heavy handedness"
Sandy Cameron — Former Production Executive, Mercury CX



MAYA RAE DONATO as the GIRL

Since 2010, 14 year-old Maya has been learning and performing in South Australia's Theatre Bugs, and has featured in several episodes of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's *Behind The News* as well as independent short films *Playing With Fire* and *Wrong Tracks*. For future reference, all of Maya's potential co-starring love interests will be required to pass her Penn Badgely hotness test.

"I loved working on *Untitled Thoughts* and it was great to be challenged, stepping out of my comfort zone to play a character I wasn't sure I was capable of. I am thankful and grateful for Eva's guidance, support and encouragement as we worked together so that by the time filming began, we trusted each other completely and I felt the confidence to do the role justice. The film is very important to me because I felt connected to GIRL and some of the things she was going through. The story behind the script also gives a great example of what some people are going through in their lives."

Maya Donato

"Watching Eva work so closely with Maya and seeing them grow throughout the process of telling such a personal story was definitely a highlight for me, and Maya's performance reflects the hard work the two of them put in."

Rebecca Duncker — Cinematographer

WRITER DIRECTOR PRODUCER

Eva Grzelak

Backed up with a 30+ year career as an AV technician in a variety of fields, and working as both an actor and vocalist on the local, national and international stage, Eva is now building on her technical knowledge and creativity as an independent filmmaker. *Untitled Thoughts* is Eva's directorial debut and she has found a unique enjoyability in watching *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* with the volume turned down, replaced by Slipknot's 2004 album *Vol 3: The Subliminal Verses*.

"I had two anxiety attacks whilst filming *Untitled Thoughts*. Both on the first day of shooting at my former high school. One was the realisation that, whilst working with Maya on the high school balcony, I was standing in the exact same place as we re-enacted the exact same moments of my original "untitled thoughts" 35 years ago.

The other melt down was not being able to comprehend that, after spending my entire working life busting hump to make others people's dreams and visions come true, here was a team of amazing individuals giving up their time and their all, to make *my* vision happen.

I'm not sure why I'm admitting all this in an EPK for my directorial debut. Most certainly not for sympathy. Perhaps to add to the conversation I'm trying to start when people watch *Untitled Thoughts*, and maybe so they can identify their own."
Eva Grzelak

[Eva Grzelak Website](#) - [IMDb](#) - [Contact Email](#)





PRODUCER Melisa Daly

In 2017 Melisa took a leap of faith leaving her 20+ year career as a manager and senior advisor in the financial services industry to start her own production company, Kickass Chick Flicks, producing award-nominated web series *INK*, music video *The Next Disaster* and adventure documentary *The Tipping Point*. Mel's recent on set experience encompasses working alongside luminaries such as Joel Edgerton, Rachel Griffiths and Zac Efron.. All of whom she has an unapologetic crush on.

“I’m a highly motivated workaholic, so it wasn’t a surprise when a coffee date with Eva turned into an impromptu, fast turnaround, short film planning session! Eva had an idea, a script and a very short timeline before she had to fly out of the country (obviously pre Covid) so it was all systems go immediately.

Having long standing relationships with cast and crew really helped us pull this together in a short space of time and the assistance and guidance we received from Mercury CX, and Sandy Cameron in particular, was invaluable.

With no room for error it was extremely gratifying to see everything come together incredibly quickly and smoothly and that comes down to the team... our talented team were generous, committed and inspiring to work with.”

Melisa Daly

CINEMATOGRAPHER & EDITOR

Rebecca Duncker

After completing Cert 3 and 4 in Media at Adelaide College of the Arts, Rebecca majored in Cinematography and Directing during her Diploma and Advanced Diploma of Screen and Media at MAPS Film School. In 2017 she received the Cliff Ellis Emerging Cinematographer award for *Wishing You Well* at the Australian Cinematographers Society awards, as well as a bronze award for *The Blue Pony*. Rebecca will not start her day on-set without assurances there is an adequate supply of her favourite iced coffee on hand.

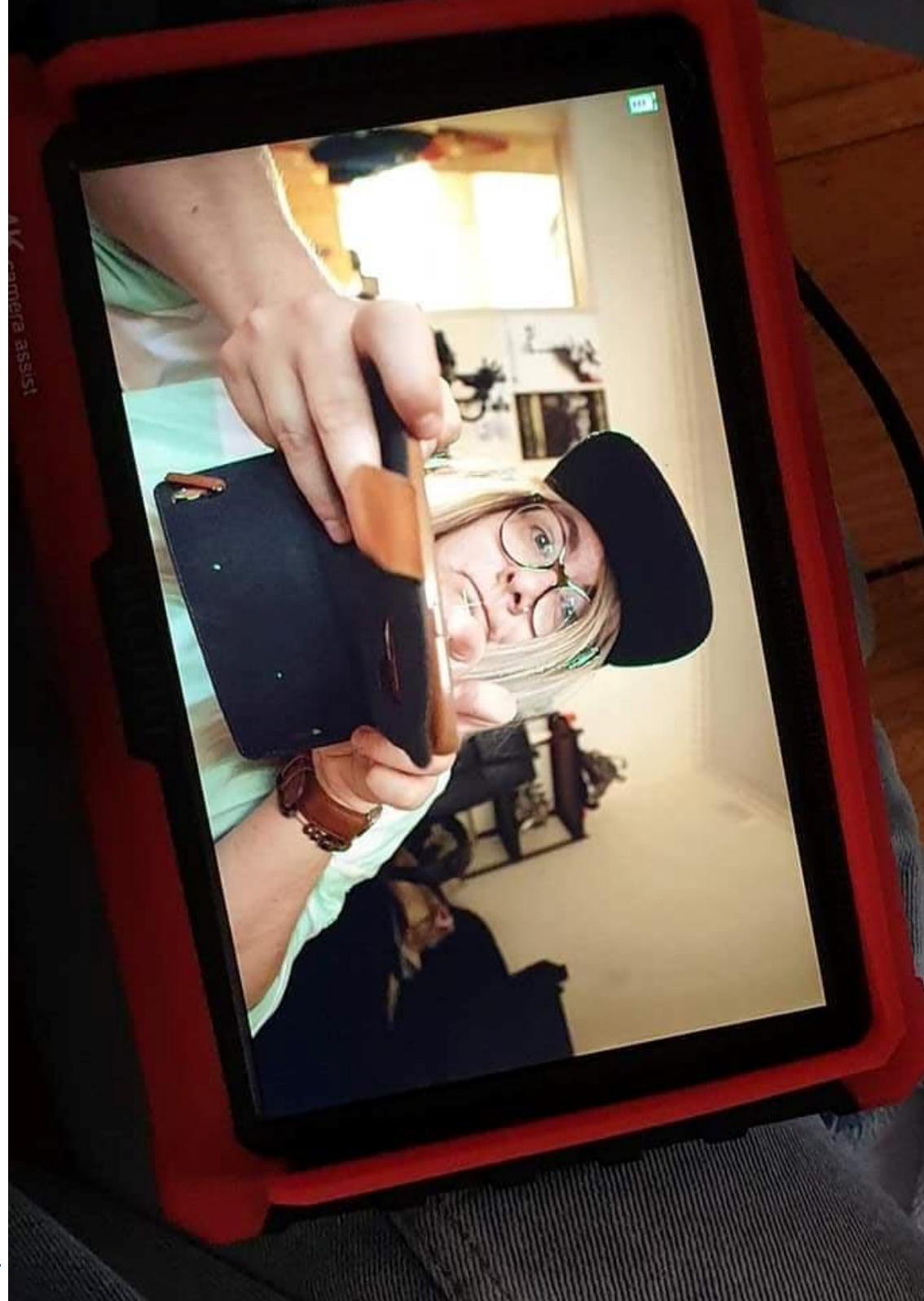
“Eva had a very clear vision from the get go, but was never closed off to taking other ideas on board. This allowed us to move away from the more locked off, almost claustrophobic style that mirrored the character’s inner thoughts, and incorporate some more dynamic camera moves where appropriate.

Working at heights over a banister for most of the film meant that working with a small and light camera build was a must, so we went with the Blackmagic pocket cinema camera paired with the very light and versatile Fujinon Cine Zoom lens. Style wise we tried to keep everything neutral and soft, with the most important consideration being to not detract from Maya’s performance. This applied to both on set during shooting, and for the audience during viewing.

It was fantastic working with a director with such a well communicated and clear vision, who at the same time also managed to create such an open and collaborative working environment.”

Rebecca Duncker

[Rebecca Duncker Showreel](#)





CREW

PRODUCERS: Melisa Daly
Eva Grzelak

DIRECTOR: Eva Grzelak

WRITER: Eva Grzelak

CINEMATOGRAPHER: Rebecca Duncker

1ST AD: Johan Bosma

LOCATION AUDIO: Adam Orłowski

ART DEPARTMENT: Julia Light

CAMERA ASSISTANT: Tommy Eyres

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS: Vincent Donato

Carolyn Corkindale

Ethan Donato

CATERING: Jodi Donato

EDITING/COLOUR: Rebecca Duncker

SOUND DESIGNER: Adam Orłowski

ADDITIONAL AUDIO: Chris Savvy

CAST

GIRL: Maya Donato
FRIEND #1: Seerat Kaur
FRIEND #2: Delanee Eustace
FRIEND #3: Reagan Fell
TEACHER: Melisa Daly
WOMAN'S VOICE: Eva Grzelak
MOTHER: Jodi Donato
BROTHER'S VOICE: Ethan Donato
FATHER'S VOICE: Vincent Donato



L-R Seerat Kaur, Maya Donato, Delanee Eustace, Eva Grzelak, Reagan Fell

SURE, WE CAN TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH... BUT CAN WE LISTEN?

UNTITLED THOUGHTS

A SHORT FILM TO START A CONVERSATION

A SHORT FILM BY **EVA GRZELAK** IN ASSOCIATION WITH **KICKASS CHICK FLICKS** AND **MERCURY CX**
FEATURING **MAYA DONATO** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **REBECCA DUNCKER** PRODUCERS **MELISA DALY** AND **EVA GRZELAK**

POSTER

SURE, WE CAN TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH... BUT CAN WE LISTEN?

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A SHORT FILM TO START A CONVERSATION

MADE IN ASSOCIATION WITH **KICKASS CHICK FLICKS** AND **MERCURY CX** WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY **EVA GRZELAK**
FEATURING **MAYA DONATO** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **REBECCA DUNCKER** PRODUCERS **MELISA DALY** AND **EVA GRZELAK**

Q & A WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR EVA GRZELAK

You have been performing in the Adelaide scene for over 20 years now, what made you decide to become a film maker?

I'm not sure. Um ... I know I wanted to make my script a reality and I haven't been good at relinquishing control over my projects in general over the years. I've always liked the form of short film — music videos, fashion advertising, Quibi, short stories — so, as both a performer and a theatrical technician, I was excited to learn and develop my skills in another part of the industry. Gosh! I've learned so much! Maybe that's why I decided to become a film maker. To keep learning in life and about myself.

Films about mental health are becoming more prevalent now. What makes *Untitled Thoughts* different from the rest?

Firstly, it's great there is more content out there dealing with mental health and they are all different. Just like mental health affects each individual differently. Just like treatment for mental health is different for everyone. The trick is matching it all up, finding what fits best to help us all navigate through life. A good way to find that fit is to talk, and to listen, and I wanted my film to encourage that by not leading the audience into what they should think or feel. I wanted viewers to be able to watch and then ask themselves questions like: What is GIRL thinking about? What is she feeling? Who is she talking to? Who are her friends/family to her? etc. Hopefully this questioning can spill into conversations as comparisons, or memories of relatable experiences and so forth.

Why did you choose Maya Donato for the lead role of GIRL?

Several times I was advised to not cast Maya as it was thought she wasn't experienced enough or capable enough to carry the story. But to me it was a no-brainer. Maya and I first met on Carolyn Corkindale's *Playing With Fire* as younger and adult versions of the same character. We hit it off straight away and remained really good friends. Because of this friendship and the sensitive nature of the film to me, I felt comfortable talking to her about my experiences in order to help her develop the character of GIRL. We workshopped *a lot*, delving into dozens of techniques I had learned over the years as an actor, particularly emotions, to help Maya find what worked for her. The level of trust between us leading up to, during and after the shoot is unlike any relationship I've had with anyone and is so precious. And those non-believers? I believe she proved them all wrong. She told my story naturally, honestly and stayed true to herself. I am so proud of her.

continued ...

Why was it a conscious decision to use a soundscape instead of a soundtrack?

Oh. I looove music. I love how we can have such a strong, emotional connection to music. And that is exactly what I didn't want for *Untitled Thoughts*. I did not want music to influence what the viewer was seeing or what they should be feeling. I found soundscapes created by (Sound Designer) Adam Orłowski the perfect way to create an environment, not a mood, to allow audiences to come to their own conclusions.

What is behind your choice of locations for *Untitled Thoughts*?

The school location, for me, *had* to be my old high school. In fact, it was the first thing I had locked down before getting anyone else involved in the film. I wanted to be able to tell the story where it happened. Needless to say it was a bit of a head-trip going back there after all these years.

For GIRL's bedroom, it had to be somewhere Maya would be comfortable and it was fortunate that we could use her own room after a few suggested décor tweaks by (Production Designer) Julia Light. The "void" was made using push up drapes from SpaceAV in a separate room at the Donato family home. To keep it a safe environment for Maya as we worked the scene, all crew operated outside the room so it was just the two of us and (Cinematographer) Rebecca Duncker. This helped Maya a lot with letting go of her emotions and insecurities. It also helped me take the journey with her.

Tell us about your relationship with Melisa Daly.

We first met at an acting workshop in Adelaide a few years ago and not long afterwards she tracked me down to star in her company's (Kickass Chick Flicks) inaugural production, web series *lnk*. We kept hanging out and working together since and she was my first port of call for advice on my script. That request for advice over coffee turned into Melisa taking the bull by the horns and throwing me on the back of it! I don't think this film would have gotten off the ground if it wasn't for her. It was a new level of working together for sure. She accepted my need to control everything but advised me how to take criticism on board. She let me run ahead like a child jumping the cracks in the pavement but was ready to call me back to safety when I hit the curb.

Why call the film "Untitled Thoughts?"

It certainly was a struggle to find an appropriate title for my first short film. The script had been sitting for 2 years as simply "Untitled" because I couldn't think of what to call it. For the Mercury CX Helium funding we pitched the script as "Girl: Untitled," then during the edit process it changed to "Girl Withdrawn," but I still wasn't satisfied with the title. Then I remembered how, at the time in my life we were re-creating, I didn't know what those thoughts in my head were. I didn't know what to call them. They didn't have a name that I knew of then because nobody openly talked about mental health in the 80s. They were Untitled Thoughts.

***Untitled Thoughts* is semi-biographical. Can you tell us more about what was going on for you in the film?**

I don't want to influence what you'll see. I'd much rather you watch the film first and then we can talk about it together, and what it means to each of us.

UNTITLED THOUGHTS



L-R: Johan Bosma, Rebecca Duncker, Maya Donato, Eva Grzelak, Jodi Donato, Vincent Donato, Carolyn Corkindale, Adam Orlowski, Ethan Donato