

PENNY DONELLO

Curriculum Vitae | Screenwriting

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:

I am a Scottish screenwriter with a background in Animation, VFX, and Product Design, bringing a visually inventive and technically confident approach to character-driven storytelling. My work focuses on thrillers and socially conscious dramas that challenge power, morality, and justice, often through a David vs Goliath lens. Since completing the Edinburgh Council Screenwriting Course in 2018, I have developed a strong portfolio of original short films, features, and television pilots. In 2025, I completed an MSc in Screenwriting at Edinburgh Napier University (ScreenSkills-accredited), where my work was noted for its ambition, emotional depth, and distinctive voice. I enjoy receiving and giving feedback, both positive and critical, and found peer reviewing to be an essential and rewarding part of the Masters experience. I aim to tell stories that blend realism with imagination, and that resonate with contemporary audiences through sharp dialogue, layered characters, and a fearless look at the systems shaping modern life.

EDUCATION:

- **Edinburgh Napier University (2025)**
MSc Screenwriting, accredited by ScreenSkills Scotland. Coursework focused on professional development, collaboration, and the creation of original feature and television scripts.
- **Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, University of Dundee (2017)**
MA Animation and VFX, awarded with Merit. Emphasis on storytelling through visual design, modelling, and digital world-building.
- **Edinburgh Council Screenwriting Course (2018)**
Completed an eight-week intensive in screenwriting. Wrote first short screenplay *Blue Balloon*, noted for its natural dialogue and strong characterisation.

- **Edinburgh Napier University (2005)**
BSc Product Design Engineering, First Class Honours. Developed strong technical design and problem-solving skills with a focus on user-centred innovation.

EXPERIENCE

- **Angels on Call (2025):** Screenwriter – short film collaboration with the MA Film students at Edinburgh Napier University.
- **Screenwriter (2019 – Present):** Writing and refining feature films, shorts, and TV/web series almost daily. Current projects include The Jax Project, a twelve-episode political thriller series, and Beneath the Cassock, a feature film exploring faith, guilt, and forbidden desire within the modern church.
- **Edinburgh Council Screenwriting Course (2018):** Completed an 8-week course, writing my first short film, Blue Balloon, which received strong feedback for its natural dialogue and narrative talent.
- **DC Thomson – Beano (2017):** Production Manager / Rigger / Animator
Contributed to an animation marking 100 years of DC Thomson, celebrating the iconic Beano comic.
- **“Chiwow and Emi” (2017):** Short Film -
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lYxCWILDI>) Creator / Director / Producer / Modeler / Rigger / Animator: Short animated film produced as part of an MA in Animation and VFX (DJCAD, Dundee). Story focused on an alien’s escape with the help of an AI robot.
- **48-Hour Film Project (2016):** Assistant Director / Producer / Scene Scouter
First exposure to collaborative filmmaking and screenplay development.

BODY OF WORK:

A selection of original feature and television projects exploring morality, justice, and psychological tension.

- **Beneath the Cassock** : *Feature, Psychological Thriller/Drama*
(Master’s project, achieved a Distinction)

A faithless, coke-addicted priest, stewing in a town clinging to doctrine, is forced to confront his past when the identical twin of the man he killed arrives - awakening ghostly visions of his victim and a spiral towards self-destruction.

- **Lie – Run – Snitch** : *Feature, Crime Thriller / Family Drama*
After crossing a crew of violent loan sharks, a debt-ridden Scottish father flees Sheffield with his two daughters. But once they reach Edinburgh, he realises the only way to save them may be the one act guaranteed to get him killed - snitching to the police.
- **The Jax Project** : *Television Series, Crime/Political Thriller*
A Scottish ex-pat in America, accused of assassinating the President, faces off against a forensic psychologist whose probing sessions become a battle for truth, sanity, and identity.
- **The Open Field** : *Television Series, Psychological Crime Drama*
After his girlfriend vanishes without a trace, a man with an anxiety disorder becomes the prime suspect in her disappearance, forcing him into a tense psychological duel with detectives determined to break him.
- **Steel** : *Television Series, Crime/Drama*
When a cynical ex-thief, a grieving pensioner, a struggling engineer, a touch-starved therapist, and a battered drag performer are recruited for a government “ethical thievery” experiment, the line between justice and temptation blurs - until their training turns deadly.
- **Pace** : *Television Series, Legal/Drama*
When a young Black man is wrongfully charged with killing a police officer, a 91-year-old witness ignored by investigators sets out to expose the truth - igniting a chain of moral reckonings that pits a disillusioned prosecutor against the system he serves.
- **Scammers** : *Television Series, Thriller/Crime*
Two Scottish graduates move to Thailand for a dream job that turns out to be a cyber-fraud trap - forcing one to catfish a lonely English tourist who may be her only way out.

FEEDBACK:

The following is feedback I have received from lecturers and tutors while studying at Edinburgh Napier University.

30-Minute Pilot:

- **Tutor wrote:** Penny's a hard worker, she's fun to be around, and she's brimming with ideas. she has a lovely attitude, and I'd instinctively like to see her succeed. I really like the engaging mix of SF concepts and local realism.
- **Marker Wrote:** The script reads easily and well - it's engaging and pacy throughout.

On Major Project: Beneath the Cassock

- **Marker 1 Wrote:** A spiritually rich and sincere reflection on guilt, culpability and penitence, with several engaging characters, some well-written monologues and some striking scenes and moments. There's an oblique sparring quality to some of the dialogue which reminds me of great crime fiction of both page and screen, and lots of deep emotion underpinning the drama.

The dialogue is often skilful and engaging – there's a choppy quality (in the screen directions too) that reminded me of crime writers like David Peace and James Ellroy.

- **Marker 2 Wrote:** This is a terrifically engaging read.

THE FUTURE:

I am continuing to develop new screenplays for film and television, and I am keen to collaborate with producers and creatives who share a passion for distinctive, character-driven storytelling across a range of genres.