

a Sam Chou film

The Death of James

starring
Isaiah Lehtinen
Kyle Bailey
Amanda Brugel



(this actually happened)



LOOK MOM! PRODUCTIONS AND LAKESIDE ANIMATION STUDIOS PRESENTS "THE DEATH OF JAMES"

STARRING ISAIAH LEHTINEN KYLE BAILEY AND AMANDA BRUGEL

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER IOURI STEPANOV JOSH BOWEN PRODUCED BY COURTNEY WOLFSON

WRITTEN BY ELLERY VANDOOYEWEERT DIRECTED BY SAM CHOU



The Death Of James (Short Animated film 13:45 min)

The Death Of James

LOGLINE

Two best friends contemplate the meaning of life and death and they try to decide the best way to put a pet ferret out of its misery...with their own hands.

[TRAILER](#)



SYNOPSIS

Based on a true story, "The Death of James" tells the unique journey of two young friends grappling with mortality as they are confronted with the impending loss of a cherished pet ferret. Humorous, awkward, and deeply heartbreaking, the film takes an unflinching look at death, loss, euthanasia, and the uncertainties that may or may not follow, viewed through the eyes of two characters navigating these challenges for the first time.

Renowned animation filmmaker Sam Chou and acclaimed writer Ellery Vandooyeweert, known for their award-winning collaborations, reunite to deliver a compelling dramatic short film, "The Death Of James."

Director's Statement

Yes, this is a true story, and **Kevin** and **Ellery** are real people—good friends of mine. The events of this film unfolded in the early 2000s in Vancouver's West End, a time when we were young artists embarking on our first jobs in the animation industry.

"The Death of James" is a deeply personal journey inspired by a profound moment between these two inseparable friends. Kevin and Ellery faced a heart-wrenching decision surrounding Kevin's pet ferret, James, setting the stage for a tale that has taken over 10 years to bring to life.

In the film, we immerse ourselves in the lives of two young lads in their early 20s as they confront the imminent loss of their cherished pet ferret. 'The Death of James' invites us into their world, touching on themes like death, the afterlife, faith, and atheism. It's a meaningful exploration that encourages us to reflect on life's mysteries through the eyes of these remarkable individuals.

"The Death of James" delves into **how** we grapple with death—processing it, fearing it, using humor to distance ourselves from it, and finding solace in our beliefs about the afterlife. Through young Kevin and Ellery's eyes, we get a peek into life's complexities, revealing the quirky, awkward, yet deeply human ways we confront mortality.

This film is a tribute to friendship, a celebration of life's nuances, and a testament to the profound journey we navigate in the face of mortality.

Fun fact: The real-life Ellery crafted this script in 2009, during his days as a budding writing enthusiast. And we've spent the last 10 years chipping away at this passion project.

Despite facing uncertainties throughout the production journey—a decade of trials, and failures, learning the intricate ropes of the animation pipeline, and eventually evolving into a filmmaker myself—this moment fills me with immense joy as I finally unveil this beautiful story to the world.

-Sam Chou



Starring



Kyle Bailey, a Canadian actor, takes on the role of Kevin, deeply troubled by the impending loss of his pet, causing sleepless nights. Known for diverse roles, Bailey voiced and motion-captured characters in "Little Hope," the second installment of The Dark Pictures Anthology, alongside his performances in "Speak Now" (2015), "Heartland" (2015), and "Bitten" (2016).



Isaiah Lehtinen takes on the role of Ellery, Kevin's closest companion enlisted as the "idea guy" to navigate the predicament surrounding James, the ailing ferret. A Canadian actor, Lehtinen garnered acclaim for his standout performance in the 2022 film "I Like Movies," securing the award for Best Actor in a Canadian Film at the 2022 Vancouver Film Critics Circle Awards.



Amanda Brugel plays Dr. Amanda, the empathetic veterinarian reluctantly called by Ellery in the film. Born in Québec, Canada, Brugel is a versatile actress known for her roles in "The Handmaid's Tale," and "Kim's Convenience." Notably, she received awards for her performances in "Sex After Kids" and has earned accolades, including two Canadian Screen Awards for her work in "Kim's Convenience" and "Canada's Drag Race."



Exec Producer Josh Bowen and Iouri Stepanov

Produced by Courtney Wolfson

Production Designer Kristoffer Mikkelsen

Storyboards Seo Kim

Voice Director Lee Porter

Animation Director Marina Patrakeeva



Director bio

SAM CHOU an accomplished series creator and director hailing from Ottawa, Canada, proudly graduated from Algonquin College's animation program and now resides in Toronto. With a rich background in traditional animation, Sam contributed to notable feature films such as *Osmosis Jones* (2001) and Adam Sandler's *Eight Crazy Nights* (2002) before gaining acclaim at esteemed festivals like TIFF and Sundance. In 2014, Sam co-created and directed the web series *Crime: The Animated Series*, a Sundance and TIFF premiere that earned the Best

Series for Adults accolade at the Ottawa International Animation Festival. Sam's recent endeavor, *VRDLK: Family of Vurdulak*, premiered at the Fantasia Film Festival, earning him the Best Animated Short at FilmQuest and the Audience Choice Award at Lusca Fantastic Film Festival and GIRAF Festival of Animation.

In 2023, Sam was honored with the Kaj Pindal Award from the Toronto Animated Arts Festival International, recognizing his enduring impact on the world of animation. Currently serving as the Creative Director of Development at Look Mom! Productions, Sam leads the creative development slate for the production company. Eager to push the boundaries of storytelling, Sam is presently immersed in the development of an animated feature film—a horror/comedy project inspired by his animated thriller, *IN THE HEAT*, which premiered at the prestigious Annecy International Film Festival in 2023.

Embracing the belief that animation is a versatile cinematic medium, Sam advocates for its use across various genres, emphasizing its potential to tell compelling stories beyond the realm of children's entertainment. For Sam, animation is a powerful tool that can bring any narrative to life.

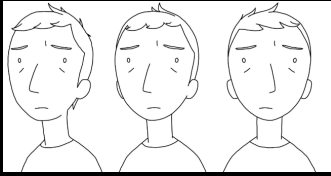
Writer bio

ELLERY VANDOOYEWEERT has written for and directed multiple animated series for Mondo Media including *Master of Castles*, *City in Crisis*, and *The Wrong Block*. Over the last few years, Ellery has worked at Cinesite Animation as a development writer, and as head writer and head of development at Nitrogen Studios Canada where he has written for various projects including the children's CG series *The Red Canoe* and the animated feature *Space Rabbits, Go!* Ellery has also helped develop many other series and shorts for other studios and creators including the award-winning *Writer's Duel* and was the sole Canadian writer hired to write on *Thomas the Tank Engine* for Hit Entertainment in London.

When not writing/creating, Ellery works as an editor, where he recently finished editing on the upcoming feature film, *Blazing Samurai*. Other editing work includes Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg's, R-Rated CG animated, *Sausage Party*, Guillermo Del Toro's *Troll Hunters*, and MGM's *The Addams Family* where he won the Canadian Cinema Editors award for Best Editing in Animation.

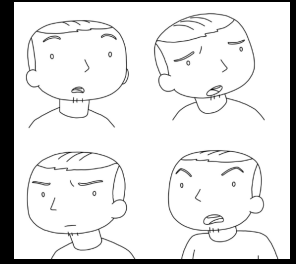


Production Technique

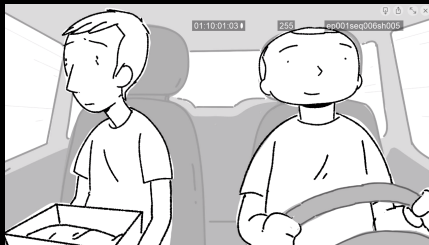


"The Death Of James" is a 2D hand-drawn animation production that unfolded over a decade-long journey.

Our first focus was on **character design**, drawing inspiration directly from the real-life individuals, young Kevin and Ellery.



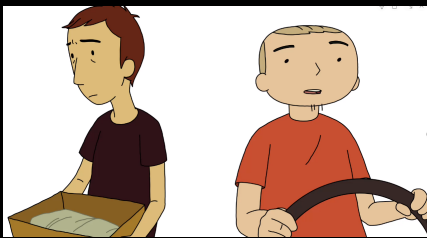
Our **storyboarding stage** followed, starting with rough sketches and meticulously refining each moment until we captured the essence of every scene.



These panels were used to create an **animatic**, where we assembled them to focus on the film's pacing. This allowed us to assess if shots were too fast or if



lines needed more time. The animatic gave us a broad picture of the emotional beats we needed to convey the story.



Moving to the **animation phase**, we hand-drew the characters frame-by-frame, ensuring their performances stayed true to both the narrative and the characters' behaviors. Subsequently, we refined the drawings, closing any gaps, and prepared them for **digital coloring**.

In the final stage, we brought everything together in the **compositing phase**, uniting layers, backgrounds, and special FX elements to complete the frame. Phew! I skipped a few steps but you get the idea. It was a lot of work!



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Lakeside
ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES



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