



EUDAIMONIA

A FILM BY DYLAN RHYS HOWARD AND ALEXANDRA DAWKINS



LOGLINE

A young artist with telepathic abilities searches for connection and meaning in a world of her own eccentric design.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Prudence, a dishwasher and housecleaner with the telepathic power to eavesdrop on people's stream of consciousness, creates eccentric characters out of clothing she steals from her clients and stages confrontational performances in the street. She's estranged from her mother, also an artist, and the only other person who shares this telepathic gift. As Prudence comes to terms with her mother's terminal illness and the knowledge that her telepathy comes at a cost, she gains a clearer understanding of how to find meaningful connections with others.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Prudence has always been able to eavesdrop on the surface-level thoughts of people around her, a talent which, as far as she knows, she shares with only her estranged mother. Though she makes a living as a dishwasher and a housecleaner, she spends most of her time constructing characters out of clothing she steals from her clients and taking these characters out into the streets as a kind of *bouffon*-style performance art.

Prude strikes up a romantic relationship with Chase, a line cook she works with, after his stray thoughts in the kitchen betray his feelings for her. This fleeting connection is quickly disrupted by an overwhelming attraction to a woman Prude is unable to read, a new housecleaning client known to her only as J. After a disastrous first date with J, Prude goes on a bender that culminates in a premonitory dream that her mother is dying. Prude travels to her childhood home in the country and reconnects with her mother, an author, despite their disparate approaches to living with their telepathic gifts. After her mother's death, Prude returns to the city with a greater sense of confidence. She soon falls in love with a poet named Hope, a person unafraid to give voice to nearly everything they think, and for the first time in her life Prude begins to feel a sense of acceptance and peace.





CAST AND CREW

Alexandra Dawkins — Prudence
Georgia Irwin — J
Kristine Nutting — Faith
Elena Porter — Rachel
Justin Khuong — Chase
Sarah Emslie — Hope

Cinematographer — K. Bray Jorstad
Music — Stefan Nazarevich
Writers — Alexandra Dawkins + Dylan Rhys Howard
Director — Dylan Rhys Howard
Producer — Micah Henry
Executive Producer — Blake McWilliam



DYLAN RHYS HOWARD

Dylan Rhys Howard is an independent filmmaker whose work has been described by the Canadian National Screen Institute as “fresh, nuanced storytelling and imagery that is evocative in its simplicity and intimacy.” In 2018, his short film *Peak Oil* was selected to be a part of Telefilm Canada’s *Canada: Not Short On Talent* program and screened at the *Marché Du Film Court* at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in France. *Peak Oil* also received an Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association award for Best Narrative Short and the A&E Short Filmmakers Award for Best Film at the National Screen Institute. His documentary *Lifetimes Of Snow*, a portrait of musician Jom Comyn and the hometown they share, was named the most outstanding Albertan short documentary at NorthWest Fest in 2016. His debut broadcast effort, *Digging In The Dirt*, a one-hour documentary about depression and suicide in Alberta’s oil and gas sector, co-directed with Omar Mouallem, premiered on CBC Television in September 2019 and was featured in Hot Docs’ *Spotlight Alberta* series in early 2021. His latest documentary as writer/producer/director, *Boys Will Be...Themselves*, premiered on CBC Gem in October 2022. He continues to live and work in Edmonton.



TO N E

Eudaimonia is a quirky, queer, coming-of-age drama with elements of speculative fiction and experimental cinema. It's a subjective film, closely aligned with the perspective of its protagonist, Prudence, a person with the ability to telepathically eavesdrop on people's stream of consciousness. We experience this telepathic ability via subtitles that appear on screen; rather than hearing their thoughts in a wispy, echoey voiceover the way telepathy is most often portrayed in films and television, we "read the person's mind" along with Prudence. We experience Prudence's dreams — sometimes premonitory, sometimes retrospective — as poetic interludes drenched in colour, washing over us in concert with crescendos in Stefan Nazarevich's ethereal electronic score.

Visually, the red and green hues that consistently creep into the palette reflect the alienation Prudence feels from the rest of the city she lives in (this stands in stark contrast to the wide open prairie vistas that the film gives way to towards the end of the second act). While stylized in its use of colour, at its core the film's cinematography prioritizes the powerful, dynamic performance of lead actor Alexandra Dawkins, giving her room to explore and create within the frame. This film is at once dream-like, improvisational, and rambunctious, buoyed by the emotional truth of Prudence's character. It operates within a grand tradition in cinema (and in storytelling more broadly): that of the outsider discovering connection, finding empowerment within themselves, and feeling a little less alone in the world.

REFERENCE FILMS

Under The Skin (2013, dir. Jonathan Glazer) // *Wings Of Desire* (1987, dir. Wim Wenders) // *The Double Life of Veronique* (1991, dir. Krzysztof Kieślowski) // *The Idiots* (1998, dir. Lars von Trier) // *Sid and Nancy* (1986, dir. Alex Cox) // *Upstream Colour* (2013, dir. Shane Carruth)





WRITER / DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The opening moments of *Eudaimonia*, in which a young girl is outside playing and receives a telepathic message from her mother to come inside for dinner, are adapted directly from a story my own mother told me from her childhood. By her account, she had the ability to communicate with her maternal grandmother this way, by projecting thoughts and feelings wordlessly, irrespective of distance. She's not the only one to report this kind of "paranormal" connection — to quote what the narrator says early on in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*: "these things happen all the time." Many of us have had the experience of being visited by some sort of astral projection of a loved one soon after they die, for example. These events are inexplicable, but much more common than we're comfortable discussing *en masse*.

Prudence's gift is essentially an extrapolation of the kind of telepathic connection my mom shared with her nana — but also the low-key telepathy that forms our everyday experiences of empathy (reading body language, feeling the "energy" of a room, etc.). Alex — my co-writer and lead actor — and I were curious to explore what life would be like for a character who had the ability to know what people were thinking if she chose to eavesdrop, to explore an expansion of what it's like to listen to the next table's conversation while you're pretending to focus on your book at the café. For Prudence, at least, life is pretty lonely. She feels othered, alienated, like a freak. She *could* cater to everyone's expectations if she wanted to, or outright manipulate people based on what they're thinking in the moment, but she chooses instead to retreat into her own head and a performance art practice that borders on *bouffon*, expressing herself erratically through the clown-like characters she creates out of her clients' wardrobes. Over the course of the film, Prudence must develop a level of acceptance with herself, which will in turn allow her to finally create meaningful relationships with others. This progression mirrors Alex's own experience coming out as queer, and learning to embrace her queerness as a fundamental aspect of her identity. It is our hope and dream that this film connects with weirdos around the world, that beautiful misfits recognize and resonate with Prudence's initial awkwardness and subsequent growth.

Eudaimonia was made on a shoestring budget in the middle of the the COVID-19 pandemic. The summer of 2021 was a time when all of us were reflecting on our mortality; Alex and I felt an unparalleled compulsion to make a film before it was too late. Our film is an act of protest against all the inhibitions that had prevented us from creating something like this in the past. May all of us, like Prude, learn to accept ourselves in all our freakishness and wonder.

- Dylan Rhys Howard, June 2023



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Duration : 99 mins

Language : English

Subtitles: French, Closed Caption

Sound Mix: 5.1 (DCP)

Aspect Ratio: 1.85

Camera: RED Epic // DZO Pictor Zoom Lenses

Formats: DCP, ProRes 422



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