

CROOKED CITY



The Backstory

Rare Americans, known globally for their envelope-pushing storytelling and animated music videos, have solidified their reputation with sold-out shows in over 15 countries and **more than half a billion streams**. Yet, what sets them apart even more is their complete independence in an industry ruled by major labels.



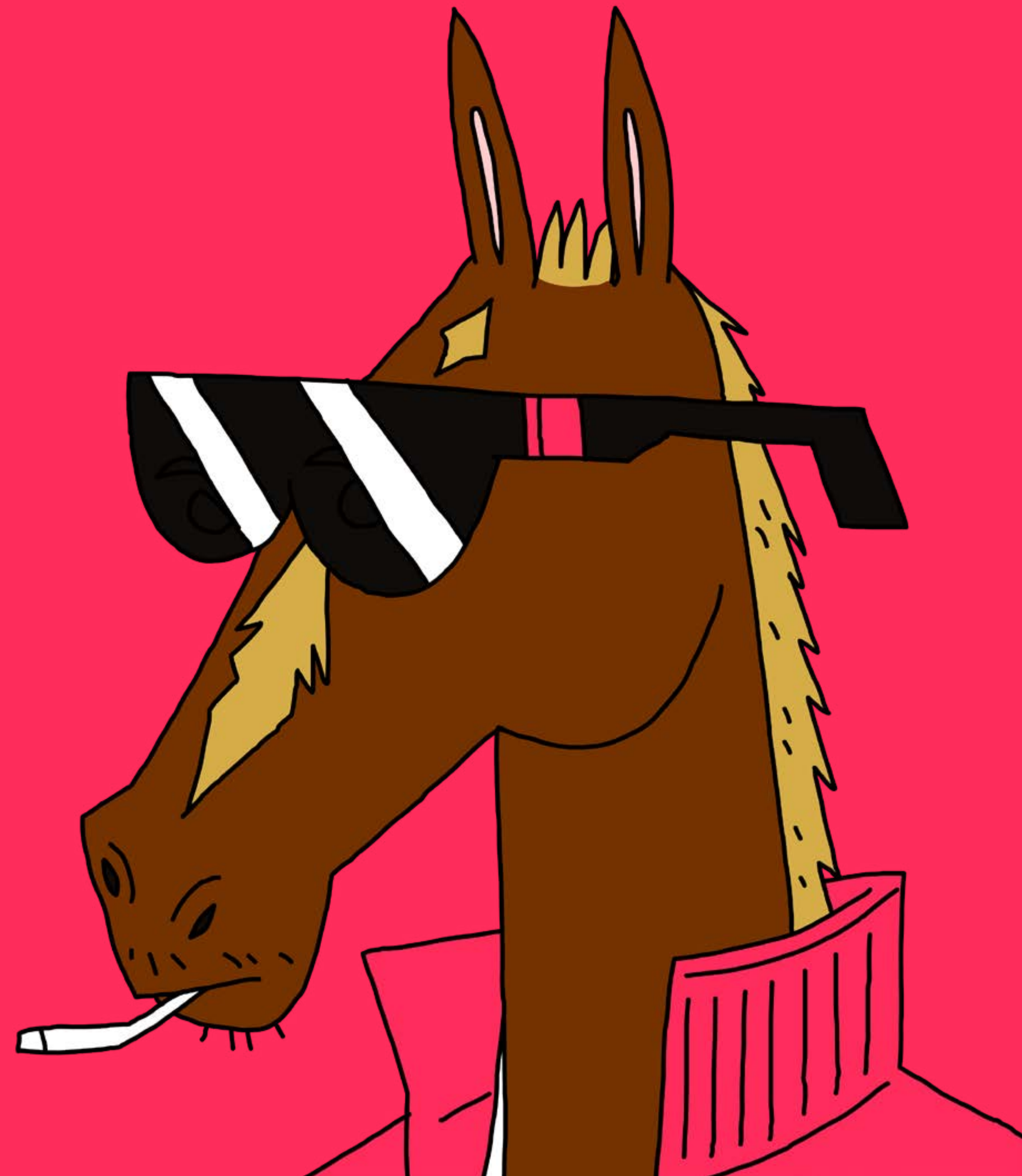
But why stop at music videos? Inspired by their journey as independent artists battling against the industry machine, they envisioned a series that resonates with independent creators across all disciplines. They posed the questions: How do you resist an industry that tempts you with wealth, success, and glamour? How do you discern what's genuine from the seductive sales pitches designed to control your every move?

Crooked City is born from these questions. The series offers an unfiltered and metaphorical look into the music industry through the eyes of Jamesy Boy, a naïve but optimistic musician who finds himself ensnared in a web of corporate manipulation.

This narrative not only entertains but also mirrors the challenges faced by artists striving to maintain their integrity in the face of overwhelming pressure to produce hits.



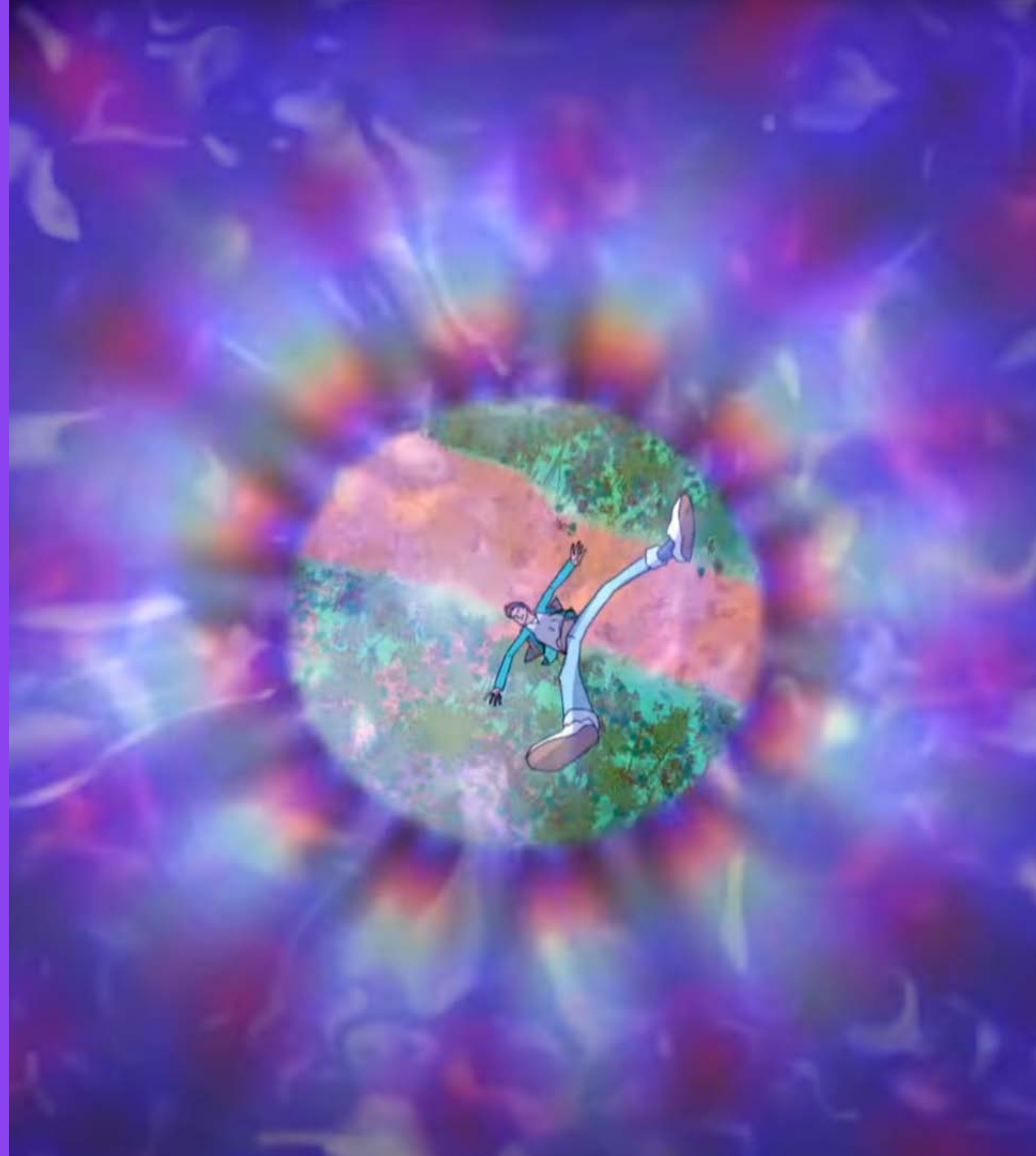
[Click to view teaser](#)



Logline

Crooked City follows the misadventures of Jamesy Boy, a struggling musician, who is transported to a vibrant city of anthropomorphic animals under threat from Sneaky the Crow's dystopian metaverse.

He must decide between false fame or fighting to restore the city's vibrant culture.





Nesting Hills

The Wilderness

Rat Town Prison

The Platform

Cat Alley

Rhythm Kitchen

City Hall

Dog Town Markets

Alfred's Lair



Synopsis

“Crooked City” follows Jamesy Boy, a struggling musician from Earth whose dreams are shattered when his record label decides to replace his music with AI-generated content. Disheartened and at a crossroads, Jamesy encounters Indigo, an old flame and indie musician whose art embodies the true spirit of independent artistry. Their brief reunion offers a glimmer of hope, but his life takes an unexpected turn when he is chased by a murder of crows into a mysterious portal, landing him in a vibrant metropolis inhabited by anthropomorphic animals.

This once-organic city, Crooked City, is a place where creativity and culture flourished. However, it is now under the looming threat of a high-tech dystopia orchestrated by Sneaky the Crow, a self-made tech mogul with grand plans to launch his metaverse product, “The Platform.” This platform aims to control the city’s citizens through addictive entertainment, transforming Crooked City as if it went from 1960 to 2030 overnight.

Upon arrival, Jamesy is welcomed by Alfred, a talking weed-dealing horse, and his eclectic crew: Scribs the bear and Mona the owl. They reside in the culturally rich Dogtown Markets, a stark contrast to the tech-heavy transformations creeping through the city. Alfred and his crew help Jamesy navigate this bizarre new world, while Sneaky prepares for his Metaverse product launch, aiming to monopolize and control the city’s citizens.



JAMESY



ALFRED



ALFIE



MONA



SCRIBS



LOLA



In search of answers, Alfred sneaks Jamesy into the Rhythm Kitchen, owned by Lola, his longtime on-and-off love and purveyor of information. However, they stumble upon Sneaky's scheme as he wines and dines the mayor to gain land rights over Dogtown Markets for his Platform redevelopment plans. During an overly sexualized and raunchy pitch performance by one of Sneaky's stars, Jamesy recognizes the voice—it's Indigo, realizing she too has somehow been drawn into this strange world.



Jamesy spots an ad announcing Indigo's upcoming performance at the launch of "The Platform" and convinces Alfred and his crew to attend the event. Eager to find out what's happening, Jamesy attempts to get close to Indigo. However, one of Sneaky's employees mistakes him for a performer, thrusting him onto the center stage. Doing the only thing he knows how, Jamesy performs one of his original songs. Unexpectedly, his genuine performance resonates with the audience, making him the standout star on The Platform and putting him in the spotlight.

Riding the wave of this newfound popularity, Jamesy proposes staging his own concert. Alfred steps up as his manager, leveraging his connections in Crooked City and arranging for a news anchor friend to promote the event on air. However, Sneaky, aware of Alfred's plan, sabotages it by bribing the news anchor to promote his own competing event instead. Alfred's laid-back approach gets the best of him, and he neglects other promotional efforts, resulting in a disastrously attended concert. Disillusioned and let down, Jamesy finds himself at odds with Alfred, who arrives late and drunk.

In the midst of their fallout, Sneaky conveniently swoops in, offering Jamesy everything he's ever wanted—fame. Feeling betrayed and vulnerable, Jamesy takes the bait, not realizing the trap he's stepping into. The PLATFORM's insidious nature becomes apparent as it starts dominating entertainment and controlling citizens' financial and personal information.

Eager to reconnect with Indigo, Jamesy presses Sneaky, who manipulates him into agreeing to a duet with Indigo, orchestrating a carefully managed reunion.

Back on Earth, the real Indigo searches for Jamesy but is also transported into Crooked City, landing directly in Sneaky's lab. She is forced into stasis, her creativity siphoned to power an Indigo cyborg. It is revealed that Sneaky can adjust the levels of real consciousness vs AI consciousness in the cyborgs, riding the line with Indigo to be just believable enough that Jamesy doesn't sense something amiss.



Meanwhile, Lola uses her influence over the mayor to rally support against Sneaky's redevelopment plans of her home in the Dogtown Markets. However, upon discovering the mayor's murder, Lola sees an opportunity to reshape the power dynamics in Crooked City.

Lola captures footage of Sneaky's murder of the mayor and strategically blackmails him into a political alliance, offering her support of The Platform's expansion in exchange for his backing in her mayoral campaign.

As Jamesy and Indigo prepare for a highly anticipated duet live on The Platform, Jamesy senses something amiss. He stumbles upon a hidden room where humans, including Indigo, are being siphoned for their creativity and discovers a cyborg replica of himself. This revelation confirms the grave danger they are in and the depths of Sneaky's plans.



During the live event at Rhythm Kitchen, Jamesy deviates from the script, exposing Sneaky's exploitation and manipulation. The unexpected declaration shocks the audience and PLATFORM viewers.

As chaos ensues, Alfred and Scribs arrive to save Jamesy, causing further disruption. Amidst the commotion, Indigo's cyborg self briefly gains autonomy, revealing memories of her past, confirming she retains some of her original consciousness.

The series concludes with Jamesy escaping with Alfred, marking the beginning of a resistance against Sneaky's control over Crooked City. Together, they aim to dismantle the digital dystopia and restore the city to its vibrant and cultural roots, fighting for a future where creativity and authenticity prevail.



CROOKED
CITY
STUDIOS

Episode springboards

#101 WELCOME TO CROOKED CITY

Jamesy Boy, a struggling musician, learns that his record label plans to replace his music with AI-generated content. Disheartened, he encounters Indigo, an old flame and indie musician whose music embodies the true spirit of independent artistry. They plan to meet and catch up, hinting at a rekindled connection. On his way home, Jamesy is chased by a murder of crows into a portal, landing in Alfred's weed-crop field in the culturally rich Dogtown Markets.

Alfred, a talking weed-dealing horse, and his crew, Scribs the bear and Mona the owl, welcome Jamesy to Crooked City and help him navigate this bizarre world. Meanwhile, Sneaky the Crow, a tech mogul, prepares for the launch of his Metaverse product, "The Platform," aiming to control Crooked City's citizens through addictive entertainment.

Alfred sneaks Jamesy into the Rhythm Kitchen to meet Lola, a club-owner and purveyor of information, for help getting him back to Earth. Instead, they find Sneaky wining and dining the mayor to gain land rights over Dogtown Markets for his Platform redevelopment. Sneaky's pitch includes a performance by one of his stars from The Platform, a seductive and overly sexualized act. Jamesy, hiding in the basement, recognizes the voice and takes a peek—it's none other than Indigo.



[Click to view pilot](#)



#102 THE PLATFORM

After his eye-opening first day in Crooked City, struggling musician Jamesy Boy is reeling from a surprising encounter with Indigo, his old flame from Earth. Shocked to discover that she, too, seems to have been transported to this bizarre world, Jamesy spots an ad announcing Indigo's upcoming performance at a product launch for "The Platform," a new metaverse project by tech billionaire Sneaky. Eager to find out what's happening, Jamesy convinces his new acquaintances, the weed-dealing Alfred and his crew, to attend the event in hopes of finding Indigo.

At the launch, they uncover the truth about The Platform: it's a dangerous social media app that captivates users with content and creates pop-star personas using real stars from Earth. As Indigo takes the stage, an attempt by Jamesy to catch her attention backfires, and he inadvertently finds himself in the spotlight. Caught off guard but driven by the moment, Jamesy performs one of his songs. His genuine performance, starkly different from Sneaky's manufactured stars, unexpectedly resonates with the audience, sparking his first real taste of musical success and causing his popularity on The Platform to surge.



#103 SABOTAGE

The PLATFORM launch by tech billionaire Sneaky is a roaring success, yet the spotlight unexpectedly falls on Jamesy Boy, whose genuine performance captivates the crowd. Riding the wave of this newfound popularity, James proposes staging his own concert. Alfred steps up as manager, leveraging his connections in Crooked City and arranging for a news anchor friend to promote the event on air. However, Sneaky, aware of Alfred's plan, sabotages it by bribing the news anchor to promote his own competing event instead.

Alfred's misplaced confidence leads him to neglect other promotional efforts, resulting in a disastrously attended concert. Disillusioned and let down, James finds himself at odds with Alfred, who arrives late and pissed drunk. Amid the fallout, Sneaky, having orchestrated the sabotage, approaches James with an offer to join The Platform as a star. Feeling betrayed and vulnerable, James accepts, stepping into a trap laid by Sneaky to control his artistic future.



#104 POWER

As the PLATFORM's influence grows, it begins to reveal its insidious nature. Citizens find themselves increasingly indebted to Sneaky's company, which now not only dominates entertainment but also starts controlling their financial and personal information, offering loans for those craving more celebrity interactions and virtual experiences. Sneaky tightens his grip on Crooked City, becoming a looming presence in every aspect of life.

Meanwhile, an unsuspecting James, dazzled by the trappings of success, records an album under Sneaky's guidance, complete with top-tier producers, stylists, and video crews. Eager to reconnect with Indigo, James presses Sneaky, who, while praising the music, claims the audience isn't ready for it yet. Instead, Sneaky manipulates James into agreeing to a duet with Indigo, orchestrating a carefully managed reunion.

The episode also delves into Alfred and Sneaky's contrasting pasts through flashbacks. We see Alfred's childhood in the culturally rich Dogtown Markets juxtaposed with Sneaky's harsh upbringing under an abusive father who is the police chief. Back in the present, Sneaky's ambition escalates as he plots the mayor's murder, aiming to consolidate his control over the city.



#105 OPPORTUNISTS

The episode opens back on Earth, where the real Indigo is searching for the missing Jamesy Boy. Like James, she is chased by mysterious crows into a portal, but instead of landing in Alfred's pastoral weed fields, she emerges directly into Sneaky's lab at Platform HQ. There, she is forced into stasis, and her mind and creativity are siphoned into powering an Indigo cyborg.

Meanwhile, Lola leverages her unique influence over the Mayor—stemming from his not-so-secret desire to win her affections—to persuade Alfred to join her in advocating against Sneaky's destructive redevelopment plans for their cherished Dogtown Markets, now slated to become sterile "Tech Homes." However, upon discovering the Mayor murdered, Lola's reaction diverges sharply from Alfred's shock; she sees not tragedy, but an unexpected opportunity to reshape the power dynamics within Crooked City.



#106 REVELATIONS

James meets Lola for the duet writing session but senses something amiss, though he can't pinpoint exactly what it is. As Sneaky had predicted using his intricate data analyses, the duet expectedly becomes a massive hit, captivating users with the strategically crafted "love story." As James's popularity surges on the app, Sneaky tightens his grip, controlling James's image to an uncomfortable degree, including insincere ad endorsements and stonewalling his musical aspirations.

Meanwhile, Lola seizes a strategic opportunity by meeting Sneaky in private to propose a political alliance. She offers to support his ambitions in exchange for his backing in her mayoral campaign. Given her widespread popularity as the owner of Rhythm Kitchen and her favorable standing among the citizens of Crooked City compared to Sneaky, she positions herself as an ideal candidate.

In a revealing twist, James sneaks out one night and stumbles upon a hidden room where humans, including the real Indigo, are being siphoned for their creativity. He also discovers a cyborg replica of himself, confirming the grave danger he is in and the dark depths of Sneaky's plans.

Sneaky wants James and Indigo to go live on the platform, to perform their duet live from The Rhythm Kitchen. Lola suggests they use this live as a way for him to also endorse his bid for her mayoral campaign publicly. James sees this as a potential opportunity to escape.



#107 LIBERATION

Sneaky plans a grand event at Rhythm Kitchen, intending for Jamesy and Indigo to perform live together for the first time. Lola insists that both Sneaky and the performers endorse her mayoral campaign during the event, leveraging their popularity.

Alfred, feeling guilty for his previous failures, notices that something is wrong with Jamesy through the PLATFORM videos. Determined to save him, Alfred and Scribs learn about the live performance and head to Rhythm Kitchen.

During the live event, Jamesy deviates from the script, revealing the truth about Sneaky's manipulation and control, exposing that he and others are humans from Earth being exploited. The unexpected declaration shocks the audience and PLATFORM viewers.

As Sneaky attempts to shut down the live feed, Alfred and Scribs arrive, causing chaos. Amid the commotion, Indigo's cyborg self briefly gains autonomy and reveals a personal detail from a planned date with Jamesy from Episode 1, confirming she retains some of her original memories. Indigo's cyborg then shuts down, and Jamesy escapes with Alfred, marking the beginning of a resistance against Sneaky's control over Crooked City.



Comparables

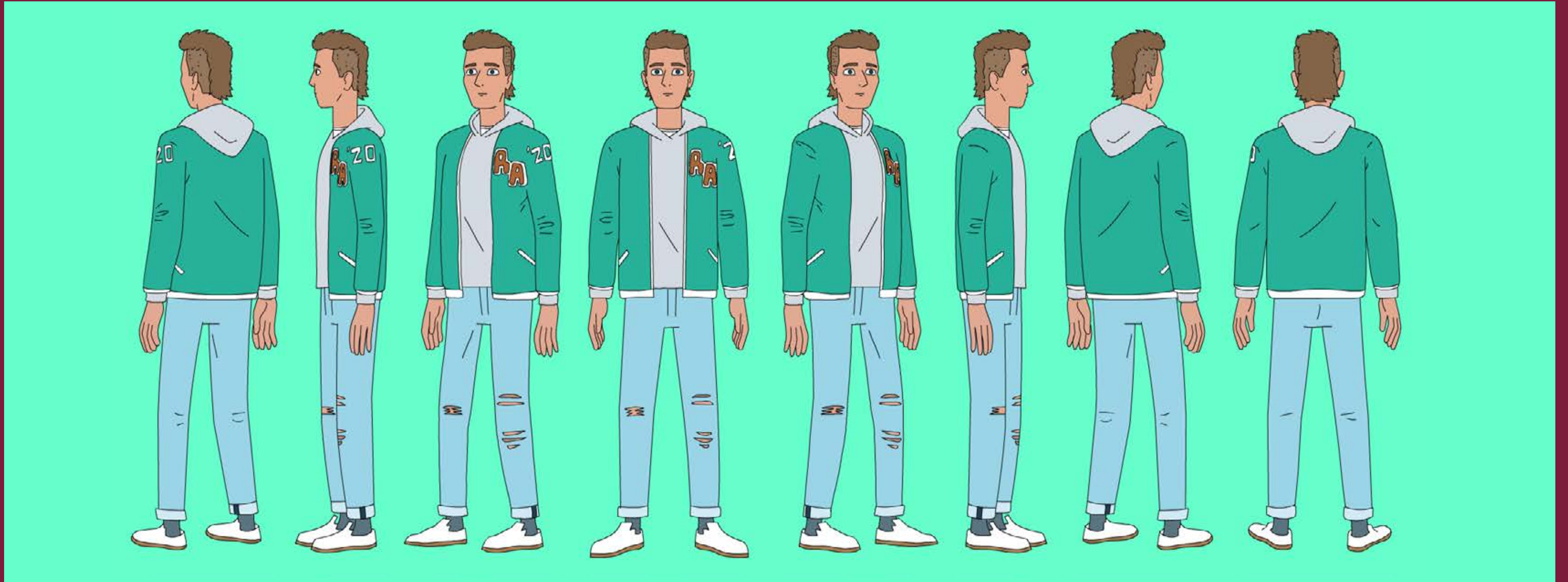
NEW TEXT + IMAGES

Character Design

RAID



James



Alfred



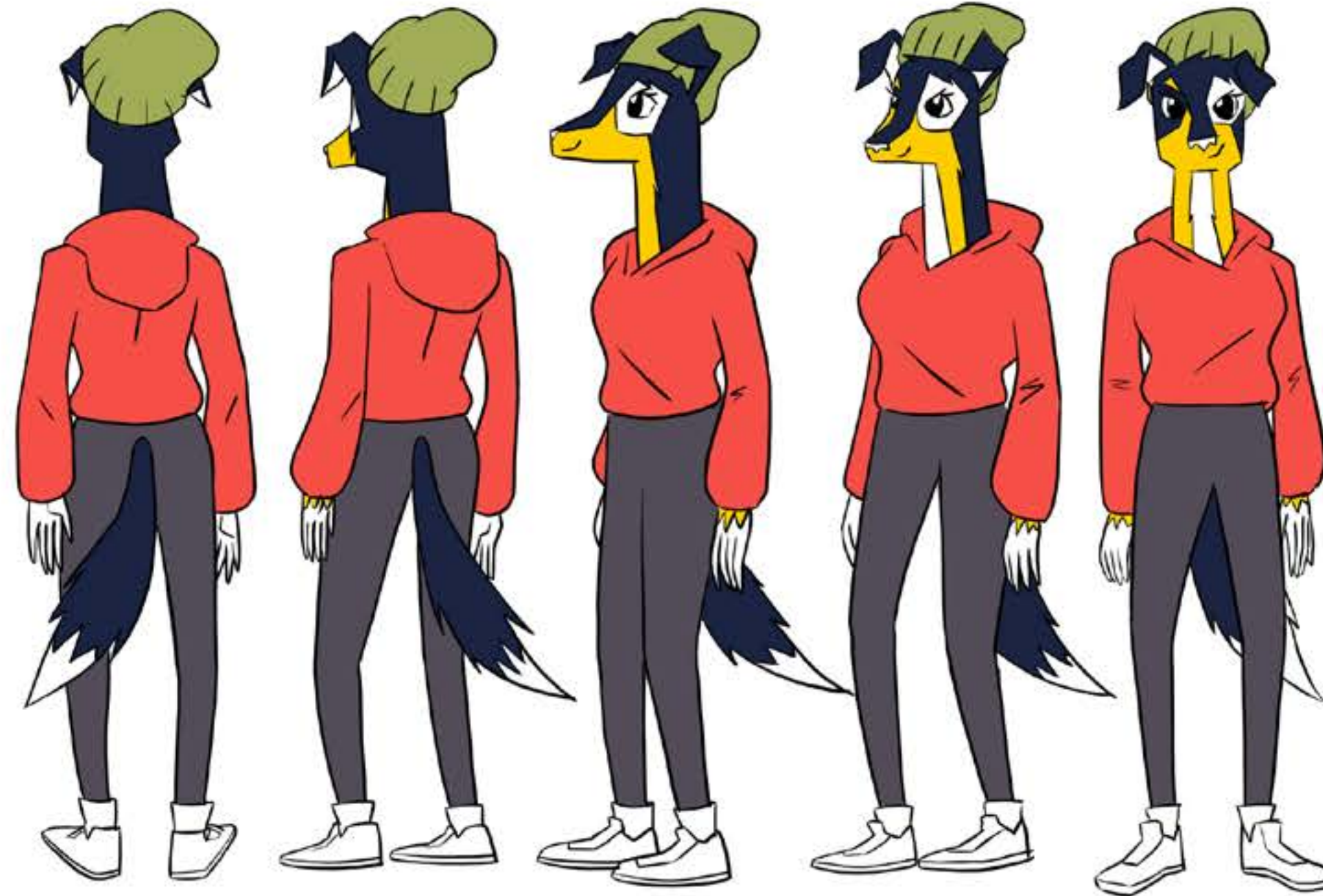
Sneaky



Lola



Alfie



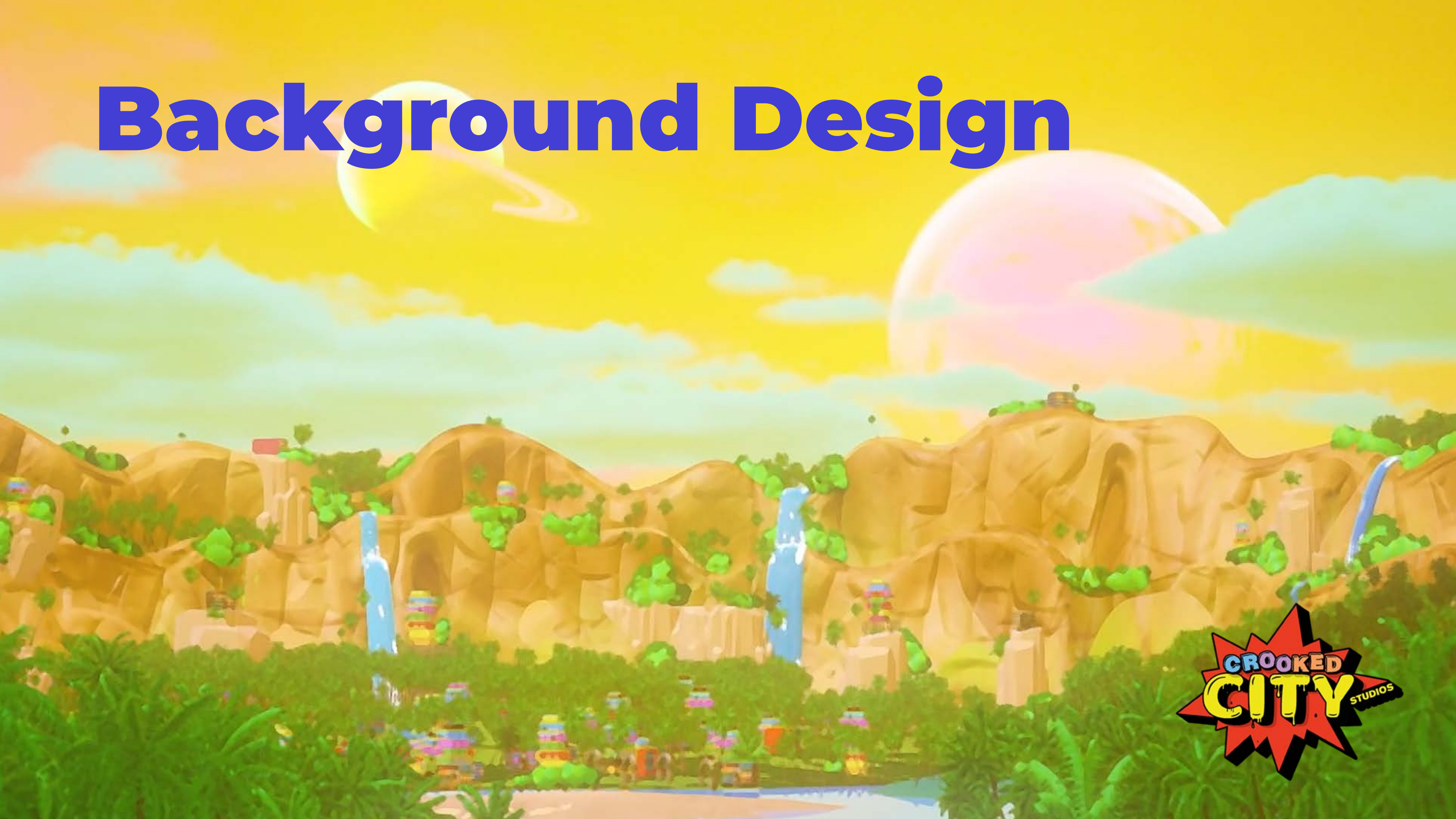
Scribs



Mona



Background Design



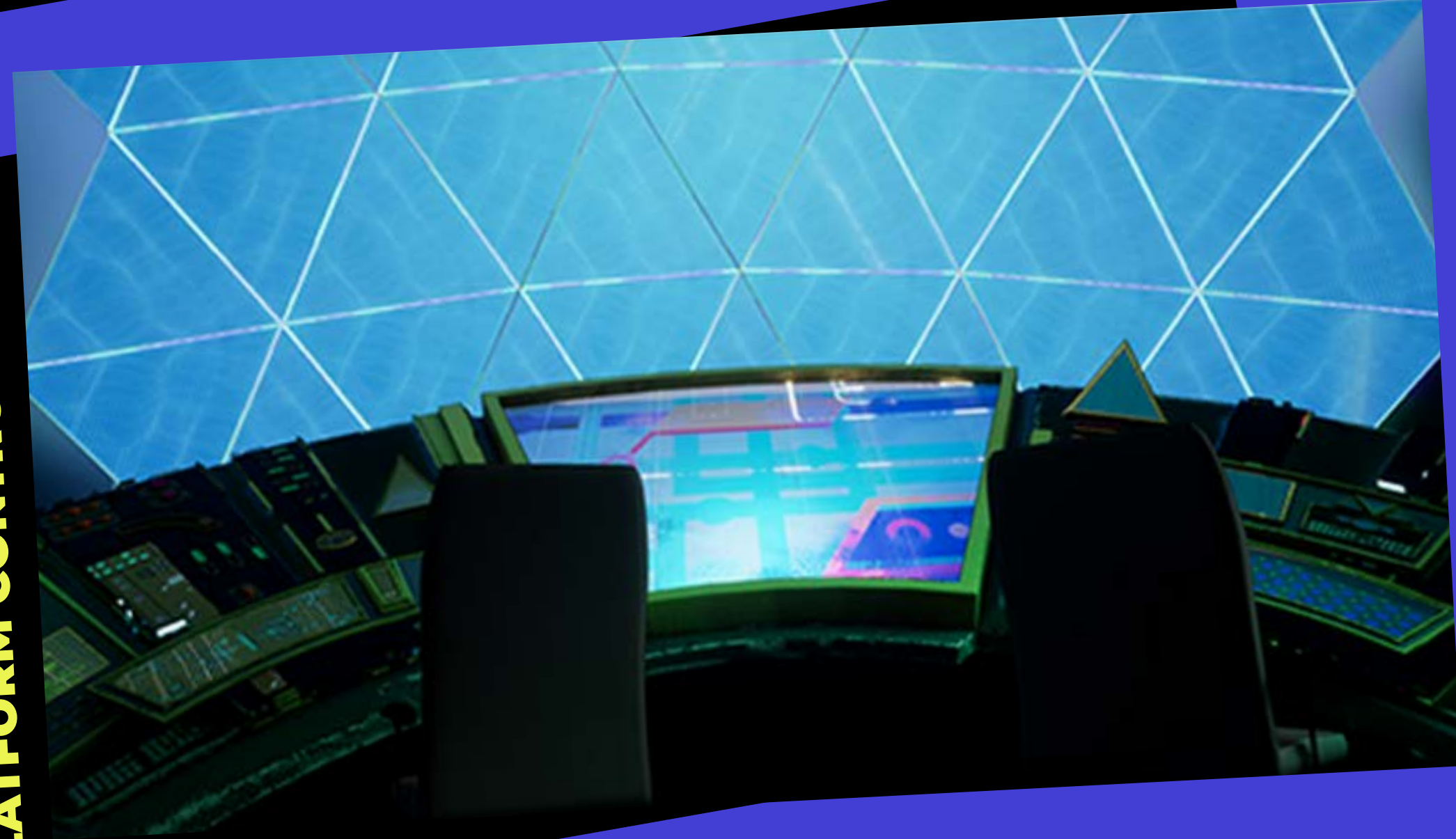
ALFRED'S LAIR



ALFRED'S LIVING ROOM



PLATFORM CONTROL ROOM



RECORDING STUDIO



SNEAKY HEADQUARTERS



DOGTOWN MARKETS



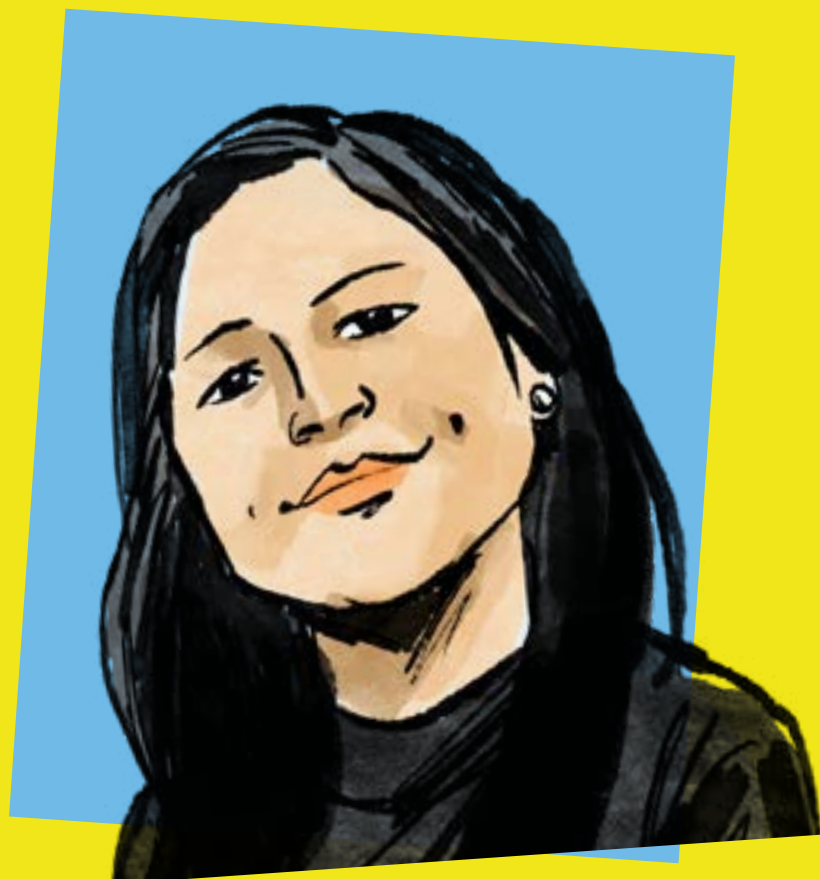
RYTHMN KITCHEN



EARTH ALLEY



Crooked City Studios



LEAH



JAMES



LES



LOU



JAROD

Founded in Spring 2021, **CROOKED CITY STUDIOS** is the dynamic progression of a music video collaboration with **Solis Animation**, an award-winning independent studio and **Rare Americans**, a storytelling and genre-blending band.

The co-founders are **Leah Solis**, **Les Solis** and **Lou Solis** of **Solis Animation** and **James Priestner** and **Jared Priestner** of **Rare Americans**. Together they create narrative music videos, which have garnered millions of views worldwide.

In addition to the content for **Rare Americans**, the studio has also helped produce **Tom CJ Brown's** award winning short film **Christopher At Sea**, the shorts

Kimotiwin: The Act of Stealing and **MONSTR** for HBO Max's **Only You: An Animated Shorts Collection**, the animated sequences in **Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck's** feature **Freaky Tales**, and commercial spots for **New Balance** and **Hulu**.

Most recently, **Crooked City** has completed production on its feature length animated punk rock opera, **(S)KiDS**, which will have its worldwide premiere at the **2024 Annecy International Animation Film Festival**.



CROOKED CITY STUDIOS





Questions?



crookedcitystudios.com

DECK DESIGN BY ROSE+NELSON CREATIVE LIMITED

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