

Wallace & Gromit
THE CURSE OF THE
WERE-RABBIT

The cheese-loving Wallace (Peter Sallis) and his ever faithful dog Gromit—the much-loved duo from Aardman’s Oscar[®]-winning clay-animated “Wallace & Gromit” shorts—star in an all new comedy adventure, marking their first full-length feature film.

As the annual Giant Vegetable Competition approaches, it’s “veggie-mania” in Wallace & Gromit’s neighbourhood. The two enterprising chums have been cashing in with their pest-control outfit, “Anti-Pesto,” which humanely dispatches the rabbits that try to invade the town’s sacred gardens.

Suddenly, a huge, mysterious, veg-ravaging beast begins terrorizing the neighbourhood, attacking the town’s prized plots at night and destroying everything in its path. Desperate to protect the competition, its hostess, Lady Tottington (Helena Bonham Carter), commissions Anti-Pesto to catch the creature and save the day. Lying in wait, however, is Lady Tottington’s snobby suitor, Victor Quartermaine (Ralph Fiennes), who’d rather shoot the beast and secure the position of local hero—not to mention Lady Tottington’s hand in marriage. With the fate of the competition in the balance, Lady Tottington is eventually forced to allow Victor to hunt down the vegetable-chomping marauder. Little does she know that Victor’s real intent could have dire consequences for her...and our two heroes.

Nick Park (“Chicken Run”), the original creator of Wallace & Gromit, and Steve Box are directing “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” from a screenplay by Steve Box & Nick Park and Bob Baker and Mark Burton. The film was produced by Peter Lord, David Sproxton, Nick Park, Claire Jennings and Carla Shelley, with Michael Rose and Cecil Kramer serving as executive producers.

Peter Sallis, who has voiced the role of Wallace in all of the shorts, reprises his role in the feature film. Two-time Academy Award[®] nominee Ralph Fiennes (“The English Patient,” “Schindler’s List”) and Academy Award[®] nominee Helena Bonham Carter (“The Wings of the Dove”) are the voices of Victor and Lady Tottington, respectively.

An Aardman production, “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” is presented by DreamWorks Animation SKG and Aardman Features, and will be distributed by DreamWorks Distribution LLC.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

Just over 16 years ago, movie audiences were introduced to an eccentric, cheese-loving inventor named Wallace and his loyal canine companion, Gromit, in a clay-animated short titled “A Grand Day Out.” The short film comedy—which takes Wallace and Gromit to the moon and back in the quest for an unlimited supply of cheese—was the brainchild of a young stop-motion animator named Nick Park.

Six years in the making, “A Grand Day Out” had started as Park’s graduate project when he was a student at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, England. Midway in the production, he connected with Peter Lord and David Sproxton, who had already made a name for themselves in the field of stop-motion animation, under the Aardman Animations banner. Impressed with the work Park was doing, Lord and Sproxton invited him to bring his film to Aardman, where they could collaborate on multiple projects.

In 1990, “A Grand Day Out” was nominated for an Academy Award® for Best Animated Short, competing with another Park creation, “Creature Comforts.” The latter took the Oscar® that year, but Wallace & Gromit would soon get their due. In 1994, Park’s second Wallace & Gromit film, “The Wrong Trousers,” won the Academy Award® for Best Animated Short. Two years later, the Wallace & Gromit short “A Close Shave” brought Park back to the Oscar® podium to accept his third Academy Award® in the same category. All three Wallace & Gromit shorts also won BAFTA Awards.

With each new adventure, Wallace & Gromit built on their devoted fan following, which began in England and gradually spread around the globe. Now, for the first time ever, the inventive entrepreneur and his faithful, four-legged friend are headlining their first feature-length movie, “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.”

“It’s really a dream come true,” director, writer, producer Nick Park states. “Wallace & Gromit were my college creations, and it is quite something to think that they are starring in their first full-length feature film.”

“Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” marks the second collaboration between DreamWorks Animation and Aardman. The two companies had previously teamed on Aardman’s first feature-length film, “Chicken Run,” which was an unqualified success. An unabashed fan of Aardman’s work, DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg notes, “I saw my first Wallace & Gromit short about 15 years ago and, like everyone else in the world, I was captivated by the characters. There is something wonderfully absurd and appealing about them. I think the charm of Wallace & Gromit comes from Aardman’s unique style of animation. It’s such a visual medium—it doesn’t matter what language it’s translated into; it’s funny and delightful and witty.”

Producer Claire Jennings observes, “It seems, over a long period of time now, wherever Wallace & Gromit have gone, people have taken them into their hearts. People around the world love them. It will be interesting to see how a new generation takes to Wallace & Gromit.”

Producers David Sproxton and Peter Lord acknowledge that having a known commodity actually added to the pressure of expanding Wallace & Gromit’s world. “In a way, ‘Chicken Run’ was easier because it had entirely new characters,” says Sproxton. “Nobody knew anything about them, so we were free to show them in whatever light we saw them.”

Lord continues, “So many people know and love Wallace & Gromit...and, of course, there are also people out there in the world who have never seen them before. We knew we needed to tell a story for those people as well as for our loyal fans.”

To stay true to the history and traditions of Wallace & Gromit, Park, Lord and Sproxton assembled a creative team that has spent many hours in and around the animated duo’s 62 West Wallaby Street address. Helping to lead that team was Park’s fellow director, Steve Box, who had served as an animator on both “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave.” “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” marks Box’s feature film directorial debut.

“Making a 30-minute Wallace & Gromit movie is time-consuming and requires a lot of patience and care. Making an 85-minute feature is like making the Great Wall of China with matchsticks,” Box laughs. “It’s a monumental feat, actually. It was five years of solid work, because every tiny, little thing matters so much. But I think the

biggest challenge of taking these characters from 30 minutes to 85 minutes was finding the story.”

Mark Burton, who had worked on “Chicken Run” and more recently co-wrote “Madagascar,” and Bob Baker, a co-writer on both “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave,” collaborated with Park and Box to craft the story and screenplay for the movie.

“It took a while to come up with an idea we felt was expansive enough to suggest a full-length movie,” Park recalls. “Steve and I sat for hours on end with the other writers, and we suddenly hit on this idea about a Were-Rabbit. You know, the Wallace & Gromit movies have always referenced other film genres, and we thought a great genre to borrow from would be the classic Universal horror movies. But, in our movie, instead of a werewolf, we have a Were-Rabbit...and instead of devouring flesh and blood—in Wallace & Gromit’s world, it’s got to be something more absurd—we made it vegetables. It’s a vegetable-eating monster so, in effect, “The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” became the world’s first vegetarian horror movie.”

SAY CHEESE

Without question, the least challenging aspect of the making of “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” was the casting of the title roles: Gromit, for the obvious reason that he never speaks; and Wallace because that casting decision had been made more than 20 years ago. Peter Sallis has been the voice of Wallace since the character’s inception so, for the feature film, Lord states, “There was never any discussion about it. It had to be Peter.”

Park affirms, “I couldn’t imagine Wallace without Peter now. Peter is Wallace and vice versa. Back when I was in college creating these characters, Peter seemed like a natural for Wallace. I knew him from his series, ‘Last of the Summer Wine,’ and his voice just stood out to me. I was a shy student with not a lot of money to make the film, but I wrote to him and he very happily obliged me.”

Sallis relates, “Nick Park liked the sound of my character on ‘Last of the Summer Wine,’ and that was really what started it all. I went to the Beaconsfield Film School, where Nick was a student—this was back in 1983—and we literally sat side-by-side and recorded ‘A Grand Day Out’ with a microphone on the desk in front of us, no fancy glass

booth or anything like that. I would say the lines and Nick would interrupt and say things like, 'I think it would be better this way...' At first, I'll admit, I was just a little bit skeptical. I thought, 'This guy is a student here, and I've been in the theatre for, how many years?' But it dawned on me, after a very short time, that he was absolutely right...and he's been absolutely right ever since.

"Of course, in 1983, I hadn't any idea what would become of it," Sallis continues. "For one thing, Nick couldn't even show me the character models; all he had was a storyboard. But six years later the phone rang and it was Nick saying, 'I've finished it.' I thought, 'Oh, it's only taken him six years, goodness me.'"

Park offers that Sallis' vocal performance contributed to more than just how the character of Wallace sounds. "Wallace had a very different looking face, at first. It was really the way Peter formed his vowels and said words like 'cheese and crackers' that suddenly made me picture him differently. I let Peter's voice dictate to me how Wallace looked, and it evolved from there."

Now, all these years later, Park says, "Peter sounds as young and as bright as ever. He brings so much energy to the part, and we just enjoy working together so much; he just makes us laugh all the time."

Through all of his adventures, Wallace has had a silent partner at his side: his dog, Gromit. Sallis says, "Wallace & Gromit live and work together and they are quite chummy. People who are familiar with the characters will tell you that Gromit is the brains of the outfit, but," he counters, "that does not alter the fact that Wallace is a rather clever inventor. I mean, he got them to the moon and back much quicker than the Americans did," Sallis smiles, referring to the duo's first adventure in "A Grand Day Out." "You have a man who, on one level, is so brilliant that he can put his hand to making almost anything, but, on another level, is really a bit 'thick.' And then you have a non-speaking character with the most expressive eyes and ears that have ever been created. Together, they have great chemistry, which is entirely due to Nick Park."

"Obviously Gromit can't say anything, but that's an important part of Wallace & Gromit's relationship," Park notes. "They don't have to talk; they have a bond that goes much deeper. Wallace is the daffy inventor who acts first and thinks later. Gromit is the opposite; he is very cautious. Wallace is a doer, but Gromit is a thinker; he is definitely

more intelligent—the long-suffering partner who has to get Wallace out of his own self-made scrapes. So much of the comedy relies on Gromit’s reactions to Wallace.”

Although Gromit doesn’t talk, Steve Box agrees that his expressions speak volumes. “I think Gromit is the character the animators most fear because his expressions are so important. In fact, when we wrote the script, we wrote actual dialogue for Gromit—‘What the heck was that?’ or ‘If only I could keep him under control’—so his performance is crucial to the film. And because he needs no words, he can communicate in any language.”

In “The Curse of the Were-Rabbit,” Wallace’s latest inventions are being put to good use. The townspeople have been anxiously awaiting the Giant Vegetable Competition, where they can finally parade their prized produce. Meanwhile, the town’s prolific rabbit population is threatening to turn the sacred vegetable gardens into an all-you-can-eat buffet. Riding to the rescue is Anti-Pesto, Wallace & Gromit’s humane pest control company, which promises total plot protection, complete with an “eye-popping” early warning system.

Things really start hopping when the competition’s official hostess, Lady Tottington, employs the services of Anti-Pesto. Lady Tottington is voiced by Helena Bonham Carter, who says, “Lady Campanula Tottington is an upper-class lady, although she is somewhat batty...a bit eccentric perhaps. Her passion is growing vegetables; however, she has a bunny problem—her lawn is infested with hungry rabbits—so she phones up Wallace & Gromit, who run a humane pest control company—*humane* being most important to her. I think she’s lovely. She doesn’t look anything like me—unless I have really bad self-perception,” Bonham Carter laughs, “but she has a very sympathetic heart and I love her.”

Bonham Carter is not the only one who loves Lady Tottington. Peter Sallis notes that Wallace immediately has eyes for her. “Wallace can’t believe that he’s actually going to meet her, and when he does, he can hardly speak. And so, she becomes the centerpiece of the whole event, as far as Wallace is concerned. He is determined to rescue her by ridding her beloved vegetable garden of all those pesky pests.”

Wallace’s infatuation with Lady Tottington draws the ire of her pompous suitor, Victor Quartermaine. Victor has been courting the wealthy lady of Tottington Manor and begins to see Wallace as a possible threat to his fiancée or, more truthfully, his finances.

Ralph Fiennes, who gives voice to Victor, observes, “I suppose you could say he is posh, but he is more what we would call a cad. He’s outrageous; he thinks he is the most important person in the world, not to mention the most attractive and the bravest, but I think he is a bully. He despises Wallace—to him Wallace is a non-entity, just a little man getting in his way with Lady Tottington. Victor is trying to woo Lady Tottington by helping her dispose of her rabbit problem. The trouble is Victor wants to shoot the rabbits—blast them with his shotgun—but Lady Tottington loves the rabbits and doesn’t believe Victor’s methods are appropriate. She hires Wallace and Gromit’s company, Anti-Pesto, to humanely solve the rabbit problem, which infuriates Victor.”

Directors Nick Park and Steve Box were thrilled with the casting of Fiennes and Bonham Carter, and say that the two Oscar® nominees, who are better known for their more dramatic roles, had tremendous fun with the broad comedy of “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.” “Helena had so much energy and brought such a bubbly eccentricity to her character,” Box comments. “I also loved Ralph’s characterization of Victor, which I think is absolutely hilarious.”

Park recalls, “We showed the model of Lady Tottington to Helena, and she was immediately inspired and starting talking in a rather posh, yet goofy way. She is a great classical actress, so I was in complete admiration of the way she was able to have fun with the character. Like Helena, Ralph was so willing to have fun with the part and play Victor in such an arch way. I just loved the quality of his voice and what he brought to the part.”

Hailing from England, Fiennes and Bonham Carter had been longtime fans of Aardman and Wallace & Gromit, so both actors jumped at the chance to be a part of their world. “There was never any question of whether or not I wanted to do the movie,” Bonham Carter states. “I love everything Aardman does. Their films have such great heart and such a keen observance of human nature. They are very good at picking up on those little idiosyncrasies that make people tick, and with Wallace & Gromit, they hit upon two adorable characters who are a terrific double act. They are like a great comedy team who have a different way of communicating.”

Fiennes notes, “One of the reasons I wanted to do this film was I particularly like this form of animation. Clay animation doesn’t have the graphic slickness of other kinds of animation; the very fact that the animators have to animate each figure gives it a

hands-on quality. There is something about it that is akin to a child playing with toys...a feeling that you could possibly reach out and play with these characters. Then there is the sheer imagination and inventiveness of the Wallace & Gromit films. I was a huge admirer of the films even before this. I find the sublime silliness of the comedy to be very funny.”

Also lending their voices to the main cast of “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” are Britain’s award-winning comedy favorite Peter Kay, playing the town’s skeptical policeman, PC Mac; veteran actor Nicholas Smith as the town’s Vicar, Reverend Hedges, who is terrorized by the Were-Rabbit; and veteran actress Liz Smith as Mrs. Mulch, who will do whatever it takes to protect her treasured harvest.

MODEL PERFORMANCES

In any animated film, the characters’ performances belong as much—or more—to the animators as to the actors providing the voices. That is especially true in the world of stop-motion animation, where the animators spend countless hours bringing inanimate puppets to life, bit by infinitesimal bit.

The process begins with the design of the puppets themselves. In their short films, Wallace & Gromit rarely encountered other human characters, but that was not to be the case in their first feature film. Model production designer Jan Sanger and her team were charged with the design and creation of an entire neighbourhood of both people and animals of assorted ages, shapes and sizes. In addition, because the characters’ hair and clothing are molded and hand painted on each individual puppet, the modelmakers also had to serve as a de facto costume designers and hairstylists—albeit for clients with decidedly eccentric tastes.

Park offers, “The central characters of Wallace & Gromit were already established, but there were many more townspeople involved in the story. We had a great team building the models for about 40 additional characters in the film, including Victor and Lady Tottington. It was a lot of work designing those two characters, especially Lady Tottington, who needed an entire wardrobe of dresses. There were some pretty heated debates about which dress she would wear in what scene,” he admits laughing.

Sanger says, “It was very interesting having Lady Tottington and Victor come on the scene, because they are flamboyant and it allowed us to introduce another dimension to Wallace & Gromit’s world. They were fantastic characters to work with. Victor is quite pompous and has his own agenda for what to do with the rabbits. We generally had him in his safari hunting outfit, which leaves no doubts about his intentions. And Lady Tottington: with her grace and elegance, we spent a lot of time looking through fashion magazines to create a wonderful costume range for her.”

Sanger reveals that Wallace’s flirtation with the posh Lady Tottington even had an influence on his all-too-familiar wardrobe. “Wallace sets out to charm Lady Tottington, so we managed to get him out of his green vest and into a new zigzag patterned vest. Obviously, we had to work closely with the directors to get just the right zigzag vest, so we went through several stages of designs on that one.”

Each of the puppets has essentially the same construction, beginning with a metal armature, which acts as the character’s skeleton. Obviously, there are variables based on size and whether the character stands on two legs or four legs or, as in the case of Gromit, whichever suits him in the moment.

The model department then molds each puppet using a special blend of Plasticine, nicknamed “Aard-mix,” which is slightly more durable than ordinary Plasticine. Audiences who remember Aardman’s first feature film, “Chicken Run,” will notice a distinct difference in the puppets used in “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.” Where the chickens had a smooth exterior, the models in this film were intentionally designed to retain the irregular appearance of clay, in keeping with the tradition of the Wallace & Gromit shorts—to “see the thumbprints,” as Nick Park was often heard to say.

Peter Lord expounds, “You can see the fingerprints. It tells you that they are real; they are tangible. Luckily for us, our audience has always appreciated that personal touch.”

“It’s that slight imperfection that gives it that handcrafted look,” David Sproxton adds. “I think when something is handcrafted, you register that it was made by somebody with love and care.”

Every character had to be duplicated in different poses and in various costumes—some more than others, depending on how many scenes he or she was in. For example,

there were 35 versions of Wallace, and well over a dozen versions of Lady Tottington and Victor. In addition, there had to be an assortment of interchangeable and replaceable parts for each puppet, ranging from eyes and ears to heads and hands. Dozens of mouth shapes were also molded for each character so the animators could synch the characters' mouths to the words coming out of them.

Once all the models were completed, they were turned over to the animators who would spend the next couple of years making the puppets "perform." Guided by the vision of the two directors, supervising animator Loyd Price led a team of 30 key and assistant animators on "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit."

It is almost impossible to fathom the countless hours of meticulous work and the level of concentration required to make a film in the Aardman style of animation. If you think of it in numeric terms alone: there are 24 frames per second of film time, so depending on the action in a sequence, it is possible to have 24 separate poses to shoot per character for every second in a scene, each pose involving the tiniest increment of movement for body, head, arms, legs, hands, fingers, eyes, ears, mouth, and so on. In addition, the Plasticine used is malleable, so there is constant resculpting involved.

Multiply all of that by every character in every scene, factoring in the movements of any props that are on camera, and you begin to understand the task that is literally "at hand." Perhaps the greatest testament to the patience and tenacity of the animation team is that on days when as many as 30 sets were in simultaneous operation, the optimum goal was to accomplish a mere 10 seconds of completed film.

"It is very, very slow motion," Sproxtton attests. "The animators have to know every step of the action before they start. They may even act it out themselves first...whatever it takes to get it into their brains."

Lord adds, "It may be slow motion, but in a bizarre way, it is a live performance. An animator may have all day to do a single line that may be only three seconds long, but he only gets one go at it. With a long shot, it might take a week, and by the end of that week, you are desperate not to mess it up because you will lose a week's work. So it may be slow, but there's real adrenaline churning around in their bodies. There is some real fear attached to this kind of work," he laughs.

Consistency was another element that added to the pressure for the animators. Being the title characters, Wallace and/or Gromit are in virtually every scene, so it was

impossible for one animator to generate all of their actions. Nevertheless, anyone who lent a hand to either of them had to follow in the same style. Key animator and second unit director Merlin Crossingham, who was the lead animator on both Wallace and Gromit, acknowledges, “Pretty much everyone had a go at animating Wallace and Gromit at some point during the filming, purely because they are the heroes of the story and are in almost every sequence. From that point of view, I couldn’t possibly animate them all the way through alone, so we had to make sure that everybody was on the same page in terms of the movements and expressions.”

Animating Gromit posed some of the greatest challenges for the animation team, as everything he is thinking and feeling has to be expressed without a single word. Having no mouth, he can’t even smile or frown; it’s all in his brow, eyes and body language. His performance is entirely—and literally—in the hands of the animators, and the results even impressed Gromit’s award-winning co-star Helena Bonham Carter. “Gromit is a bit like a silent movie actor. He doesn’t need to speak; you know exactly what he’s thinking. In a way, he’s the best screen actor ever,” she smiles.

Although seen comparatively briefly, the Were-Rabbit presented key animator Ian Whitlock with a different set of challenges, beginning with the fact that he is covered in fur instead of Plasticine. If Whitlock had used his fingers to move the Were-Rabbit, he would have left impressions in the fur in various places, which, in stop-motion animation, could have looked like something was, in his words, “creeping around in there. We had to find way of handling it without actually touching it, which was very tricky.”

To solve the problem, the modelmakers fixed small levers into the back of the Were-Rabbit puppets, which gave Whitlock access points from which to manipulate them, using small tools instead of his hands. The puppets were also much larger than those of the other characters, so the inner frameworks were much heavier and more intricate. The increased weight was another obstacle to overcome. Whitlock explains, “The thing with a bigger puppet is that it’s a constant fight with the armature, because you have to keep it under heavy tension just to lift its leg or keep the arm where it is. There’s also a lot of stress on it with the stretch of the outer fabric pulling on it, so you can’t have the armature as light as you would have liked it. You have to put quite a lot of force onto it, which is awkward when you’re trying to do something quite refined.”

3D IN 3D

Computer animation and clay animation could both be termed 3D animation, although they are worlds apart in terms of execution. “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit” represents the most extensive use of computer animation of any Aardman film to date, long or short.

Nick Park remarks, “There are limits to Plasticine. You can’t do fog or smoke or water—I mean, you could, but it would take forever. So we went to The Moving Picture Company (MPC) to create our visual effects.”

“We’re not biased towards any one technique,” Steve Box states. “One is as important as another; it’s just a different tool that we use. We’ll use the right technique for the right job. We used CGI for things like water and smoke and dust and dirt, and it added so much to the film. The way the vicar walks down the path towards the church and the fog swirls behind him—gone are the days of cotton wool on strings. MPC did the most amazing work, and it really gives a new dimension to the film.”

The most extensive use of computer animation in the film is seen in two of Wallace’s latest inventions: the Mind-O-Matic, where visual effects were employed to add a light show of thought waves; and the Bun-Vac 6000 where, once the rabbits are sucked into the chamber, they float around in mid-air until they are released without harm to hide nor “hare.”

Getting the rabbits to fly around in the Bun-Vac 6000 without colliding was relatively simple. However, Jason Wen, MPC’s lead animator for the computer-generated rabbits, offers, “We didn’t want static bunnies to just swirl around; we needed to add a little of that ‘Aardman touch’ to each shot. I had to go in and hand animate all 30 rabbits—I added some cute bunny motions, like waving or grabbing at something or making their ears twirl around—to help sell the shot and make it more humorous.”

Interestingly, the biggest challenge to the computer animators was to make the computer-generated bunnies look like the more rough-hewn Plasticine models. Wen attests, “We had to study the texture closely. When the clay animators have to bend an arm or move an ear, there is no way it will look as smooth and precise as a computer generated model. We had to add those slight, random movements that happen when the animators get in there with their hands and manipulate the clay, and to simulate the subtle

fingerprint impressions you can see on the clay models. It took quite a bit of research and experimenting, but I think we pulled it off.”

“It was very important to us that they gave the rabbits a Plasticine finish, and I think they replicated the rabbits really well,” Park affirms. “Even I have a hard time telling the difference.”

A SMALL WORLD

Despite the influence of computer animation, “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit” does not compromise on the classic, old-world style for which Aardman’s most famous duo is known. In fact, while technology has revolutionized much of the animation industry, the painstaking techniques of stop-motion animation—though refined over the years—have remained virtually unchanged since the genre’s inception.

In some ways, clay animation actually has more in common with live-action filmmaking than other forms of animation, because the characters and sets are all physical, not drawn or computer-generated. Aardman has often referred to their particular style of filmmaking as “live action in miniature,” miniature being the operative word.

There are no location shots in clay animation because, short of traveling to Lilliput, it would be impossible to find locations to fit characters who range from 10- to 12-inches tall. Production designer Phil Lewis was charged with designing 30 individual sets down to the very smallest detail. Having served as the art director on the Wallace & Gromit shorts, Lewis was all-too-familiar with the design of the pair’s home at 62 West Wallaby Street. One major change to the décor was the wall of portraits of Anti-Pesto’s clients, fitted with flashing eyes that sound the alarm if rabbits are on the prowl for vegetables.

In contrast to Wallace & Gromit’s modest residence, the Tottington Hall sets were designed to be elegant and imposing. The stately home of Lady Tottington—complete with its breathtaking rooftop conservatory and lavish gardens—was mainly inspired by the National Trust’s landmark Montacute House and took eight weeks to build.

Over 100 varieties of foliage were researched and recreated to add an authentic look to the countryside gardens, woodlands and greenhouses. The greenhouses

themselves feature tiny panes of real glass. Filling the gardens, more than 700 little plaster vegetables—mostly melons, pumpkins and carrots—were molded, painted and planted in the ground in anticipation of the “giant” vegetable competition.

All of the wallpaper seen in Tottington Hall and other sets was entirely hand painted. The gardening tools, as well as those seen in Wallace’s workshop are working tools, crafted in miniature.

Tremendous attention to detail was paid in the creation of Wallace & Gromit’s Anti-Pesto-mobile, which is a miniaturized Austin 35. Various scale models of the van were created, each probably costing more than the original Austin. Virtually everything about the car worked, from the headlights, to the turn signals, to the windshield wipers. The windows, doors, hood and trunk all opened and closed and the doors could even lock. The car builders even made sure that when the tires drove over the ground, they would have the proper compression.

Given the meticulously slow pace of the production, filming was always happening on multiple sets simultaneously. Directors Nick Park and Steve Box split the scenes each would cover, often walking five miles over the course of the day to check on the various sets in operation.

There were also two directors of photography, Dave Alex Riddett and Tristan Oliver, who were responsible for controlling camera movements and maintaining correct light and shadows throughout the filming of a scene, which could take days, weeks or even months. Taking a little of the pressure off of the cinematographers, camera moves are now controlled by computer, so the animators could block for the camera and know exactly where it was going to be at any given point. Nevertheless, if a mistake was made, it was virtually impossible to go back and fix it. Oliver explains, “In live action, you have the luxury of another take. With this kind of animation, you can’t do that. If you make a mistake and have to retake, you’ll have an animator cursing you because something you’ve done has cost him six days of work.”

In lighting the scenes, Riddett and Oliver were able to apply a lower level of light because stop-motion camera shutter speeds are slower than those in live action. Rather than film lights, they used theatrical lighting, which is smaller and more controllable. Carefully positioned mirrors were also used to angle light down into the small sets, and colored gels helped to create the proper tone.

For longtime fans of the Wallace & Gromit shorts, there is nothing that sets the tone better than the strains of a Yorkshire brass band playing the instantly recognizable themes composed by Julian Nott. Hans Zimmer, who collaborated with Nott as a music producer, notes, “It was easy to find the tone, because Julian had done all the groundwork with the shorts. One of the things I thought we should try to do was to amplify the feeling of the shorts through the music. We may have a bigger band than Julian used before, but it’s still the familiar sound of a Yorkshire brass band.”

Julian Nott acknowledges, “It was a very different process for me dealing with a 90-piece orchestra. It’s also almost wall-to-wall music for about 85 minutes, and if you don’t do it right, I know it can get on your nerves. But I learned certain techniques from Hans, and Hans is obviously an expert on getting it right.”

Park offers, “Julian and I met at college and he has always been the Wallace & Gromit composer. He wrote fantastic music for all the shorts, so he was an absolute must to compose the score for our first Wallace & Gromit feature. Hans Zimmer came over as a consultant and it was great to have someone of his caliber here, but the score very much reflects Julian’s take on everything.”

“The most important thing to capture was the charm of Wallace & Gromit,” Nott says. “They are very optimistic and there is not a drop of cynicism in them, which is pretty rare for a British product. But mostly it’s the charm; you can’t help loving them.”

Park agrees. “We didn’t want the music to be too big; it still had to be the Northern brass band. We didn’t want to get away from what *is* Wallace & Gromit. We had the production values of a feature film, and yet we maintained the handmade quality, which I think is quite important. We had a giant production behind us, but it was our duty to keep it looking as if we’re still just a couple of blokes working out of a shed in Bristol. There is a feeling of ‘smallness’ that was important to keep. That,” he concludes, “is where the charm is.”

ABOUT THE CAST

PETER SALLIS (Wallace) has provided the distinctive voice of the cheese-loving inventor Wallace in all of Aardman's award-winning "Wallace & Gromit" animated shorts, beginning with 1989's Oscar®-nominated "A Grand Day Out," and continuing in the Academy Award®-winning shorts: "The Wrong Trousers," in 1993; and "A Close Shave," in 1995. He also voiced Wallace in the Wallace & Gromit mini-shorts, collectively known as "Cracking Contraptions."

Most recently, Sallis completed a cameo role in the upcoming film "Colour Me Kubrick," starring John Malkovich. He also co-starred in the ITV drama "Belonging," with Brenda Blethyn, and was a guest lead on the BBC series "Doctors."

Sallis has been acting for more than 60 years, beginning as an amateur during a stint in the RAF during World War II. Immediately after the war, he trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and, in 1946, made his first professional appearance on the London stage in Richard Sheridan's "The Scheming Lieutenant." He then toured in "The School for Scandal," before returning to London's West End in "The Three Sisters," with Ralph Richardson. Other West End appearances followed, including "The Dark is Light Enough," with Edith Evans; Orsen Welles' production of "Moby Dick"; "Look After Lulu," with Vivien Leigh; "Rhinoceros," with Laurence Olivier; "Two Stars for Comfort"; "A Shot in the Dark," with Judi Dench; Hal Prince's production of "She Loves Me"; "Wait Until Dark," as Roat, opposite Honor Blackman; and "Cabaret."

His additional theatre work includes the role of Mr. Bennett in "Pride & Prejudice," at the Old Vic; Elijah Moshinsky's production of "The Three Sisters," at Greenwich; and "Ivanov" and "Much Ado About Nothing" at The Strand. He also spent two seasons at the Lyric, Hammersmith. In the United States, Sallis has been seen on Broadway in Hal Prince's production of "Baker Street," as Dr. Watson, and in John Osborn's "Inadmissible Evidence," with Nicol Williamson.

On television, Sallis is perhaps best known for the role of Norman Clegg in the series "Last of the Summer Wine," which is the BBC's longest-running program. He more recently portrayed his character's own father in the spinoff series "First of the

Summer Wine.” Peter also played the title role in the BBC’s production of “The Diary of Samuel Pepys.” His other television credits include “Come Home Charlie and Face Them,” “Holby City,” “Rumpole of the Bailey,” “The New Statesman,” “The Bretts,” “Mountain Men,” “Strangers and Brothers,” “The Pallisers,” “Bel Ami,” “The Moonstone,” “Leave It to Charlie,” “She Loves Me,” and installments of “Armchair Theatre.”

Sallis has also had roles in such films as “Witness for the Prosecution,” “Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?,” “Full Circle,” “The Incredible Sarah,” “Taste the Blood of Dracula,” 1970’s “Wuthering Heights,” “Inadmissible Evidence,” “Charlie Bubbles,” “The V.I.P.s,” “The Mouse on the Moon” and “The Curse of the Werewolf.”

In addition, together with his wife, Elaine, Sallis has written plays for the radio, as well as his own adaptation of Boucicault’s “Old Heads and Young Hearts,” which was presented at the Chichester Festival Theatre.

RALPH FIENNES (Victor Quartermaine) is an award-winning actor of the stage and screen. He next stars in the indie films “The Constant Gardener” and “The Chumscriber,” which debuted at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. He also stars in “Chromophobia, which premiered as the closing night film at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival. This fall Fiennes stars in two very different films: first starring in James Ivory’s “The White Countess,” with Vanessa Redgrave and Natasha Richardson; and then playing the dreaded Lord Voldemort in the much-anticipated blockbuster “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.”

A two-time Academy Award® nominee, he earned his first nomination for Best Supporting Actor in 1994 for his performance in Steven Spielberg’s Oscar®-winning Best Picture “Schindler’s List.” Fiennes’ chilling portrayal of the cruel Nazi Commandant Amon Goeth also brought him a Golden Globe nomination and a BAFTA Award, as well as Best Supporting Actor honors from numerous critics groups, including the National Society of Film Critics, and the New York, Chicago, Boston and London Film Critics.

Fiennes received his second Oscar® nomination in 1997, this time for Best Actor, for his work in another Best Picture winner, Anthony Minghella’s “The English Patient.” He also garnered Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations, as well as two Screen Actors

Guild Award nominations, one for Best Actor and another shared with the cast. In 2000, Fiennes was recognized with BAFTA and London Critics Circle Award nominations for his role in Neil Jordan's "The End of the Affair."

Fiennes' film credits also include "Maid in Manhattan," opposite Jennifer Lopez; "Red Dragon"; Neil Jordan's "The Good Thief"; David Cronenberg's "Spider"; Martha Fiennes' "Onegin," which he also executive produced; Istvan Szabo's "Sunshine"; "The Avengers"; "Oscar and Lucinda"; "Strange Days"; Robert Redford's "Quiz Show"; and "Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights," in which he made his film debut.

A graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, Fiennes began his career on the London stage. He joined Michael Rudman's company at the Royal National Theatre and later spent two seasons with the Royal Shakespeare Company. In 1994, Fiennes opened as Hamlet in Jonathan Kent's sold-out production of the play, which became one of the theatrical events of the year. When the production moved to Broadway, Fiennes won a Tony Award for his performance. He reunited with Kent in the acclaimed London production of "Ivanov," later taking the play to Moscow.

In 2000, Fiennes returned to the London stage in the title roles of "Richard II" and "Coriolanus," and in a cameo in Kenneth Branagh's production of "The Play I Wrote" on London's West End. He is currently on tour in Deborah Warner's production of "Julius Caesar" and, in early 2006, will again team with director Jonathan Kent for Brian Friel's "Faith Healer," which will premiere at Dublin's Gate Theatre before going to Broadway.

HELENA BONHAM CARTER (Lady Tottington) has starred in a wide range of film and television projects both in the United States and in her native England. This summer she co-starred with Johnny Depp in the smash hit "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," for director Tim Burton. Bonham Carter will next be heard voicing the title role in the stop-motion animated film "Corpse Bride," which reunites her with Burton and Depp. The film is due out in September 2005. She also stars opposite Aaron Eckhart in the live-action film "Conversations with Other Women." Bonham Carter will have a dual presence at the 2005 Toronto Film Festival, as both that film and "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit" are screening there.

In 1997, Bonham Carter starred in Iain Softley's romantic period drama "The Wings of the Dove," based on the novel by Henry James. For her performance in that film, she was honored with Academy Award®, Golden Globe, BAFTA and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for Best Actress. She also won Best Actress Awards from a number of critics organizations, including the Los Angeles Film Critics, Broadcast Film Critics, National Board of Review and London Film Critics Circle.

Bonham Carter made her feature film debut in the title role of Trevor Nunn's historical biopic "Lady Jane," as the doomed young woman who reigned as Queen of England for only nine days. She had barely wrapped production on that film when director James Ivory offered her the lead in "A Room With a View," based on the book by E.M. Forster. Bonham Carter went on to receive acclaim in two more screen adaptations of Forster novels: Charles Sturridge's "Where Angels Fear to Tread" and James Ivory's "Howard's End," for which she earned her first BAFTA Award nomination.

Her early film work also includes Franco Zeffirelli's "Hamlet," in which she played Ophelia, opposite Mel Gibson; "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein," directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh; and Woody Allen's "Mighty Aphrodite." Bonham Carter has more recently starred in the acclaimed drama "Big Fish" and the sci-fi actioner "Planet of the Apes," both for director Tim Burton; the independent features "Till Human Voices Wake Us," "The Heart of Me" and "Novocaine"; and David Fincher's controversial drama "Fight Club," with Brad Pitt and Edward Norton.

Bonham Carter has also gained recognition for her work on television. She earned both Emmy and Golden Globe Award nominations for her performance in the Gulf War drama "Live From Baghdad" and for her role in the miniseries "Merlin." She received her first Golden Globe nomination for her portrayal of Marina Oswald in the historical miniseries "Fatal Deception: Mrs. Lee Harvey Oswald." Bonham Carter more recently played Anne Boleyn in the British miniseries "Henry VIII," and just finished filming "Magnificent Seven," for the BBC.

PETER KAY (PC Mackintosh) has emerged as one of England's most popular comedy stars. He recently wrote, directed and starred in the series "Max and Paddy's

Road to Nowhere,” for which he won a Montreux Award for Best Comedy Actor. He is currently working on the release of the series on DVD.

Kay’s first big break as a writer/performer came on a mock-documentary style comedy entitled “The Services,” broadcast as part of Channel 4’s “Comedy Lab.” His inimitable style led to his first series, “That Peter Kay Thing,” which premiered to great critical acclaim in early 2000 and won Kay the Best New Comedy Series Award at the British Comedy Awards.

Following that success, Kay co-wrote, co-produced and starred as three characters in “Phoenix Nights,” a six-part comedy-drama, which originally aired in early 2001 and was later released on DVD due to overwhelming demand. Kay also made his directorial debut during the the second season of “Phoenix Nights,” which won the People’s Choice Award at The British Comedy Awards, and was nominated for Best Television Comedy. In addition, Kay won the award for Best Writer, and earned a nomination for Best Comedy Actor. He was also recognized with two BAFTA Award nominations for Best Comedy Performance and Best Situation Comedy.

Kay’s additional acting credits include the films “The League of Gentlemen’s Apocalypse” and Michael Winterbottom’s “24 Hour Party People”; the television miniseries “Butterfly Collectors”; and episodes of such series as “Coronation Street” and “Linda Green.” He is also well known in England as the “John Smith Man” for his series of popular commercials.

Born and raised in Bolton, Lancashire, England, Kay started out as a stand-up comedian. He had been performing stand-up for less than a year when he won Channel 4’s “So You Think You’re Funny?” competition in 1997. In 1998, he was nominated for the prestigious Perrier Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and for Top Stand Up and Top TV Comedy Newcomer at the British Comedy Awards.

The following year, Kay embarked on a sold-out tour of the North West of England and starred in his first live stand-up video, “Peter Kay Live From the Top of the Tower.” His hugely popular “Mum Wants a Bungalow Live Tour,” began in September 2002 with 75 sold-out nights around the country, and continued selling out during its five-month run. The tour culminated in a record-breaking performance at the Manchester Evening News Arena in July 2003. The resulting television special, “Peter Kay Live at Manchester Arena,” was seen by more than seven million viewers. The “Mum Wants a

Bungalow” tour also spawned the DVD “Peter Kay Life at Bolton Albert Halls.” Kay also recorded a remake of Tony Christie’s classic hit “Is This The Way to Amarillo” for Comic Relief, the single of which went to number one in the UK.

NICHOLAS SMITH (Reverend Clement Hedges) graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1957 and has since worked extensively in theatre, film, television and radio. His theatre repertoire encompasses both plays and musicals and includes “Portrait of a Queen,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “The Mikado,” “Ten Little Indians,” “Doctor in the House,” “My Fair Lady,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Who Dunit?,” “The Plain Dealer,” “School for Scandal,” “The Relapse,” “The Mousetrap,” “How the Other Half Loves,” “Me and My Girl,” “As You Like It,” “Aladdin,” “Lloyd George Knew My Father,” “I Have Been Here Before,” “The Return of Sherlock Holmes,” “Pirates of Penzance,” “Cinderella,” “Dick Whittington,” “Sylvia’s Wedding,” “Taming of The Shrew” and “Macbeth.” He also spent two years with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and most recently played the Butler in “Murdered To Death.”

Smith is perhaps best known to television audiences for the role of Mr. Cuthbert Rumbold, which he first played for ten seasons on the acclaimed BBC series “Are You Being Served?,” followed by two seasons on the series “Grace & Favour” (aka “Are You Being Served? Again!”). He more recently appeared in the miniseries “Martin Chuzzlewit” and in two seasons of the BBC sketch show “Revolver.” His extensive television credits also include “Doctor Who”; the 1973 musical adaptation of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” starring Kirk Douglas; “The Door of Opportunity,” based on the story by W. Somerset Maugham; the miniseries “The First Churchills”; the series “Z Cars” and “The Frost Report”; and a myriad of series guest roles, beginning in the mid-1960s.

Smith has also been seen in a number of feature films, most recently including the British comedy “What Rats Won’t Do.” His additional credits include Gene Wilder’s “The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes’ Smarter Brother,” Federico Fellini’s “Casanova,” Pier Paolo Pasolini’s “The Canterbury Tales,” Mel Brooks’ “The Twelve Chairs,” John Huston’s “A Walk with Love and Death” and Richard Donner’s “Salt and Pepper.”

LIZ SMITH (Mrs. Mulch) was most recently seen in the role of Grandma Georgina in Tim Burton’s summer hit “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.” Her

upcoming films include Roman Polanski's screen adaptation of Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" and the comedy "Keeping Mum." Earlier in her career, she won a BAFTA Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in Malcolm Mowbray's "A Private Function."

Smith began her career in 1947 at the Gateway Theatre in London, where she performed in repertory. Over the next seven years, she worked all across England in small theatres and repertory companies. She then left the theatre for a time to raise her two children. Returning to acting, she joined Charles Marowitz's permanent company, then called The Stage, where she stayed for five years. Following that, she spent six years mainly playing leads with the Forbes Russell Company. Her theatre credits include such titles as "Endgame," "Playhouse Creatures," "This is a Chair," "Just Between Ourselves," "Cell Block H," "Why Me?," "When We Are Married," "Once a Catholic" and "Enjoy."

In 1971, Smith made her feature film debut as Mrs. Roberts in director Mike Leigh's "Bleak Moments." Two years later, he cast her in the starring role of Mrs. Thornley in the telefilm "Hard Labour." They more recently reunited in Leigh's award-winning film "Secrets & Lies." Smith also played the role of Marta Balls in three of Blake Edwards' Pink Panther movies: "Trail of the Pink Panther," "Curse of the Pink Panther" and "Son of the Pink Panther." Smith's other film credits include "Dead Cool," "Tom's Midnight Garden," "The Revengers' Comedies," "Haunted," "Pretty Princess," "Dakota Road," "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover," "Bert Rigby, You're a Fool," "High Spirits," "Little Dorrit," "The French Lieutenant's Woman" and "The Duellists."

On television, she has been seen in a long list of miniseries and telefilms, including "A Good Thief," "Between the Sheets," "The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby," "A Christmas Carol," "Alice in Wonderland," "Oliver Twist," "Imaginary Friends," "When We Are Married," "Separate Tables," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "Spend Spend Spend" and "David Copperfield." She has also had regular roles on more than a dozen series over the past 30 years, including "The Royle Family" and "2point4 Children," in addition to guest starring on numerous series.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

NICK PARK (Director/Screenwriter/Producer) is a three-time Academy Award® winner in the category of Best Animated Short for the films “Creature Comforts,” “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave.” All three films were created at Aardman, where Park is a Co-Director, together with founders Peter Lord and David Sproxton. “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave” starred Park’s most famous creations, the cheese-loving Wallace and his faithful canine companion, Gromit.

In 2000, Park directed and produced DreamWorks Animation’s “Chicken Run,” the first feature-length film from Aardman, starring the voice of Mel Gibson. The film went on to be an international box office hit and was named the best-reviewed movie of that year.

Park became interested in animation as a child and started making films in his parents’ attic at the age of 13. One of his earliest works, “Archie’s Concrete Nightmare,” shot on standard 8mm film, was shown on BBC Television in 1975.

He went on to earn a BA in Communication Arts at Sheffield Art School in 1980, before moving on to the National Film & Television School in Beaconsfield, England. While there, he began working on “A Grand Day Out,” which marked the introduction of Wallace & Gromit. In February 1985, Park joined Aardman where he completed the film. He then directed “Creature Comforts” for Aardman’s “Lip Synch” series for Channel 4 Television.

In 1990, “Creature Comforts” won the Academy Award® for Best Animated Short and “A Grand Day Out” received a nomination, giving Park the rare distinction of having two films Oscar®-nominated in the same category in the same year. He also garnered BAFTA Award nominations for both films, this time winning for “A Grand Day Out.”

Park won his second Academy Award® and another BAFTA Award for the Wallace & Gromit film “The Wrong Trousers,” and his third Oscar® and BAFTA Award for “A Close Shave,” also starring the beloved duo. Two of the most successful animated shorts ever made, “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave” have won over 80 additional awards between them. Collectively, Park and Aardman were also honored

with a BAFTA Special Award for Original Contribution to Television. In 1997, Park was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire).

During his tenure at Aardman, Park has also served as a director and animator on numerous projects, including pop promos, title sequences and inserts for children's television.

STEVE BOX (Director/Screenwriter) started his career with a small studio in Bristol called CMTB Animation. Thrown in at the deep end, he quickly mastered the skills of all aspects of animated film production. During Box's tenure, CMTB produced over 60 short films, mainly for children's television. One of these, "Trap Door," is still recognized as a very influential piece of work and is regarded as a cult classic.

After six years with CMTB, Steve joined the Aardman studios. Quickly making his mark as a talented and valued animator, he was asked by Nick Park to join the team filming what became the Academy Award®-winning short "The Wrong Trousers," starring Wallace & Gromit. It was Box who animated the dastardly Penguin, Feather McGraw. In 1995, he again collaborated with Nick Park on another Wallace & Gromit Academy Award®-winning short, "A Close Shave," on which Box animated that beauty of the silver screen, Wendolene Ramsbottom.

In 1997, Box directed his first short film for Aardman, "Stage Fright," which premiered at the San Sebastian Film Festival. Box's tale of Victorian ambition and deceit went on to win a BAFTA Award for the Best Animated Short Film of 1997, in addition to many other prestigious awards. In 1999, Nick Park and Peter Lord invited Box to be an animator on Aardman's first feature film, "Chicken Run."

"Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit" marks Box's feature film directorial debut.

PETER LORD (Producer) is co-owner and Creative Director of Aardman, which he co-founded with his longtime collaborator David Sproxton in 1972. As a director, Lord has been honored with two Academy Award® nominations for Best Animated Short, the first in 1992 for "Adam," and again in 1996 for "Wat's Pig." He has also earned

BAFTA nominations for “Adam,” “The Amazing Adventures of Morph” and “War Story.”

In 2000, Lord directed and produced Aardman’s first full-length feature, DreamWorks Animation’s “Chicken Run,” starring the voice of Mel Gibson, which was a commercial and critical smash.

Lord first met David Sproxton in the early 1970s at school, where they started experimenting with animation techniques on their kitchen table. They tried a range of methods before settling on clay model animation. While they were still in their teens, a BBC children’s television producer offered them the chance to make short animated films for his program “Vision On.” Their first character as professionals was Morph, who later starred in his own series “The Amazing Adventures of Morph.” As a testament to Morph’s enduring appeal, he still appears in new productions today.

Moving to Bristol in 1976, Lord and Sproxton built Aardman into one of the world’s leading model animation studios. In 1978, Aardman was commissioned by BBC Bristol to make two short films entitled “Animated Conversations.” The resulting “Down and Out” and “Confessions of a Foyer Girl,” both co-directed by Lord and Sproxton, broke new ground in animation by using recordings of real-life conversations. That led to a series of five “Conversation Pieces” for England’s Channel 4, all of which were co-directed by Lord and Sproxton, including “Early Bird” and “On Probation.”

Expanding into music videos, Aardman collaborated with director Stephen Johnson and the Brothers Quay to create Peter Gabriel’s award-winning video for “Sledgehammer.” In 1987, Lord created the video for Nina Simone’s “My Baby Just Cares for Me.” Two years later, Channel 4 again commissioned Aardman to create the five-picture “Lip Synch” series, which included Lord’s “War Story.” Lord’s other directing credits include “Going Equipped” and “Babylon.”

Together with Sproxton, Lord has also played a major role in encouraging and promoting new directors. His executive producer credits with Aardman include “Creature Comforts,” “Rex,” “HumDrum” and “Stage Fright.”

Aardman’s special brand of animation has also been seen in commercials for such products as Chevron, Lurpack, Mita Copiers, Cadbury’s Crunchies and Polo.

DAVID SPROXTON (Producer) is the co-owner and Executive Chairman of Aardman. Together with co-founder Peter Lord, he has overseen the company's growth from a two-man partnership into one of the pre-eminent animation houses in the industry. Over the years, Sproxtion has served as a producer, director or cinematographer on a number of animated projects at Aardman.

Sproxtion previously served as a producer on 2000's "Chicken Run," which marked the first feature collaboration between Aardman and DreamWorks Animation, and was a worldwide hit with both critics and audiences.

Sproxtion and Lord met in grammar school and, in 1970, made their first animated film using Sproxtion's Bolex camera. A crude piece using cutouts and chalk drawings, it nevertheless showed enough talent for a BBC Children's Television producer to offer the pair a chance to make short animated films for his program "Vision On."

Following graduation from Durham University, Sproxtion decided to pursue filmmaking full-time. In 1972, Sproxtion and Lord formed Aardman and, in 1976, moved to their permanent home in Bristol, England. Their first professional creation was the character Morph, who went on to star in the BBC series "The Amazing Adventures of Morph."

During this period, the duo made two short animated films, "Down and Out" and "Confessions of a Foyer Girl," applying the groundbreaking technique of using recorded conversations of real people as the basis for the script. Later, five more films called "Conversation Pieces," using the same "vox pop" technique, were commissioned by Channel 4. "Vox pop" was also utilized in Aardman's "Lip Synch" series for Channel 4, which included Nick Park's Oscar[®]-winning "Creature Comforts."

In addition to Park, the studio is known for discovering and nurturing new filmmakers in the field of stop-motion animation, including Steve Box, who won a BAFTA Award for his direction of "Stage Fright." Other talents developed under the Aardman banner include the Oscar[®]-nominated and BAFTA-winning Peter Peake, the director of "HumDrum"; Richard Golezowski, who directs the "Rex the Runt" series for BBC 2; and Darren Walsh, whose "Angry Kid" series was released directly onto the Internet.

CLAIRE JENNINGS (Producer), a multi-award-winning animation producer, began her career in 1989 working for John Coates at TVC London. During her five-year tenure there, she worked on such productions as “Father Christmas” and “The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends.”

Moving on to become an independent producer, Jennings produced the animated shorts “Jolly Roger” and “The Canterbury Tales,” both of which went on to earn Academy Award® nominations in 1999. In addition, Jennings won a BAFTA Award for “The Canterbury Tales,” and received another BAFTA Award nomination that year for “Jolly Roger.” In 2000, Jennings produced the acclaimed animated short “Father and Daughter,” which won both the Academy Award® and the BAFTA Award for Best Animated Short, as well as numerous other honors at international film and animation festivals.

Jennings has also been involved in the production of several television series, including “Stressed Eric” and “The Big Knights,” both of which received critical acclaim. In addition, she has worked as an Executive in Charge of Development and as an executive producer for two of the largest animation studios in London, Studio AKA and HIT Entertainment.

In 2003, Jennings joined Aardman’s team as a producer on “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.”

CARLA SHELLEY (Producer) has been a film producer at Aardman for more than ten years. Most recently, she served as the line producer on Aardman’s first full-length clay-animated feature “Chicken Run.”

Shelley won a BAFTA Award for her work as a producer on Nick Park’s Oscar®-winning Wallace & Gromit film “A Close Shave.” She also produced Peter Peake’s Oscar®- and BAFTA-nominated short “HumDrum,” as well as his BAFTA-nominated “Pib & Pog,” for Channel 4. In addition, Shelley worked on the series “The Amazing Adventures of Morph,” for BBC television.

Before moving into film production, Shelley was head of Aardman’s commercials division for four years. She has produced numerous commercials, including the Lurpak

campaign; the Heat Electric ads featuring Nick Park's famous "Creature Comforts" characters; and ads for Cadbury's Crème Eggs.

Prior to joining Aardman, Shelley had a background in radio production, working for the BBC.

MARK BURTON (Screenwriter) is a UK-based comedy writer with a widely varied career in film and television on both sides of the Atlantic. He has won several awards for his writing, including the British Comedy Award and the Premier Ondas Award. He most recently co-wrote DreamWorks' computer-animated hit "Madagascar." He had earlier collaborated with the Aardman team when he provided additional dialogue for the clay-animated smash "Chicken Run."

Burton has written extensively for many leading British comedy shows, including "Clive Anderson Talks Back," "Jack Dee's Happy Hour," "Never Mind the Buzzcocks," "2DTV," "Have I Got News For You" and "Spitting Image." He was also the co-creator and co-writer of the BBC sitcom "The Peter Principle," which starred Jim Broadbent.

BOB BAKER (Screenwriter) first collaborated with Nick Park to write the Wallace & Gromit short "The Wrong Trousers," which won numerous awards, including an Oscar®. Three years later, he and Park teamed again to write the third Wallace & Gromit short, "A Close Shave," which won an Oscar® in 1996 and an Emmy in 1997.

Educated in Bristol at Air Balloon Hill School, Baker attended the West of England College of Art. After leaving college, he began making animated films in a home built studio, including a series of short cartoons for the BBC.

Together with his then-writing partner, Baker started his writing career scripting nine episodes of the popular series "Dr. Who," which retains a cult following to this day. Baker went on to write ten series over nine years. He also wrote many television plays, including "Thick as Thieves," which won the British Television Society Award for Best Drama. In addition, he wrote a number of popular children's series, including "King of the Castle," which was nominated for a BAFTA Award.

Baker has also written for a number of primetime police series in the UK, including “Z Cars,” “Shoestring” and “Bergerac.” He also spent several years at HTV, where he oversaw all script matters for numerous international co-productions.

MICHAEL ROSE (Executive Producer) enjoyed a long association with Aardman, where he oversaw the studio’s film and television projects for eight years. He was closely involved in the development of “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.”

Rose left Aardman in 2002 to set up the London-based feature film company Magic Light Pictures, which he runs with producer Martin Pope. He is currently working to build Magic Light’s slate of live-action and animated features.

Rose served as an executive producer on Aardman’s first full-length feature, “Chicken Run.” In addition, he co-produced a number of Aardman’s short films, winning BAFTA Awards for his work on Nick Park’s “A Close Shave” and Steve Box’s “Stage Fright.” He also served as a producer on Peter Lord’s Oscar®-nominated “Wat’s Pig” and Peter Peake’s Oscar®-nominated “HumDrum.”

Before joining Aardman in 1994, Rose worked at Britain’s Channel 4, buying series, movies and shorts. He began his career programming independent cinemas.

CECIL KRAMER (Executive Producer) has more than 20 years of production experience within various fields of the entertainment industry. She is currently producing the upcoming computer-animated comedy “Flushed Away” for DreamWorks Animation. She previously held the post of co-head of production for the studio, where she oversaw the developmental aspects of such animated features as “Antz,” “The Prince of Egypt,” “The Road to El Dorado,” “Chicken Run” and the Oscar®-winning “Shrek.”

Prior to joining DreamWorks Animation, Kramer produced visual effects for live action films, including “Crimson Tide” and “Cabin Boy.” She also served as the photography supervisor for the visual effects unit on “Honey, I Blew Up the Kid.” In addition, Kramer was a production executive at Buena Vista Pictures and at Walt Disney Imagineering.

Kramer began her career as a feature film costumer and later worked as a production coordinator on various TV commercials and as a production manager in the public broadcasting field.

JULIAN NOTT (Composer) has composed the scores for all three award-winning Wallace & Gromit short films: “A Grand Day Out,” “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave.”

Nott has also scored both feature films and television dramas. His film composing credits include the features “A Christmas Carol – The Movie,” “New Year’s Day,” “My Mother’s Courage,” for German director Michael Verhoeven, “A Man of No Importance” and “Weak at Denise.”

In addition to his composing work, Nott directed, produced and co-wrote “Weak at Denise,” earning a British Independent Film Award. He also produced the short “Chicken,” for which he received a BAFTA Award nomination for Best Short Film.

For television, Nott has written music for such diverse projects as the BBC miniseries “A Respectable Trade”; the telefilms “Gentlemen’s Relish,” “H-E Double Hockey Sticks” and “Lorna Doon”; and the series “Sunburn” and “The Vice.” He also scored the animated short “Flatworld.”

Nott was educated at Oxford University, where he won a music scholarship. He then attended the UK’s National Film and Television School as a film music scoring student. It was there that he met Wallace & Gromit creator Nick Park.

HANS ZIMMER (Music Producer) is one of the film industry’s most prolific composers, with more than 100 film scores to his credit. In 1994, he won both an Academy Award[®] and a Golden Globe Award for his score to the animated blockbuster “The Lion King,” which also spawned one of the most successful soundtrack albums ever. Zimmer’s music for “The Lion King” continues to draw applause in the award-winning stage production of the musical, which earned the 1998 Tony Award for Best Musical, as well as a Grammy Award for Best Original Cast Album.

Zimmer has garnered six additional Academy Award[®] nominations, the latest for his “Gladiator” score, for which he also won a Golden Globe Award and earned a Grammy Award nomination. He has also been Academy Award[®]-nominated for “The

Prince of Egypt,” “The Thin Red Line,” “As Good As It Gets,” “The Preacher’s Wife” and “Rain Man.” Earlier this year, he earned his seventh Golden Globe nomination for his score for James L. Brooks’ comedy “Spanglish.” He had previously earned Golden Globe nominations for his work on “The Last Samurai,” “Pearl Harbor,” “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron” and “The Prince of Egypt.”

Zimmer’s long list of film credits goes on to include the recent hits “Madagascar,” and “Batman Begins,” the score for which he co-wrote with James Newton Howard, as well as “The Ring Two,” “Pearl Harbor,” “Matchstick Men,” “Shark Tale,” “Black Hawk Down,” “The Ring,” “Hannibal,” “Crimson Tide,” “Thelma & Louise,” “Driving Miss Daisy,” “Mission: Impossible 2,” “A League of Their Own,” “Black Rain,” “Backdraft,” “True Romance” and “My Beautiful Launderette.” He has a wide range of films upcoming, including Gore Verbinski’s “The Weather Man,” the animated comedy “Over the Hedge” and the “Pirates of the Caribbean” sequel.

In addition to his composing work, Zimmer heads DreamWorks’ film music division. His appointment marks the first time a composer has headed the music department of a major studio since the days of Dimitri Tiomkin at MGM and Alfred Newman at Twentieth Century Fox.

DAVID McCORMICK (Editor) makes his feature film editing debut on “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit.” He had earlier edited the 2000 documentary “Wallace & Gromit Go Chicken” for the BBC. He also served as an editor on the “Lip Synch” animation series, as well as on several television dramas, including “Robin of Sherwood – The Enchantment.”

Since 1981, McCormick has enjoyed a long career as an editor on a wide range of documentaries. He has edited numerous nature documentaries and documentary series for the BBC, including “Snake Hunter,” “Natural World,” “Giants,” “Living Europe,” “Land of the Tiger,” “Great Natural Journeys,” “Wildlife on One,” “Nightmares of Nature” and “Realms of the Russian Bear.”

GREGORY PERLER (Editor) counts “Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” as his first stop-motion animated film, although he has worked as an editor on both traditional and computer-animated films.

He was an editor on “Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius,” which earned an Oscar® nomination for Best Animated Feature. His other animation credits as an editor include “102 Dalmatians,” “Tarzan” and “A Goofy Movie.” Earlier in his 20-year career, Perler worked as an associate editor on “Beauty and the Beast,” which is the only animated feature to earn an Oscar® nomination for Best Picture.

For television, Perler has edited the specials “Eloise at Christmastime” and “Eloise at the Plaza.” Educated at New York University, Perler has also worked on short films and as a sound editor.

DAVE ALEX RIDDETT (Director of Photography) joined Aardman in the mid-1980s, and has served as a lighting cameraman, director of photography or director on numerous films and over 50 commercials. His credits as a director of photography also include all three of Nick Park’s Oscar®-winning films: “Creature Comforts,” “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave.” He later served as the supervising director of photography on Aardman’s first feature-length film, “Chicken Run.”

Before moving to Aardman, Riddett was a co-founder of the original Bolex Brothers, creating various music promos and title sequences. He also directed three animated television serials for “Round the Bend.”

Additionally, he has worked as a cartoonist, photographer, painter and technical lecturer on film.

TRISTAN OLIVER (Director of Photography) began working with Aardman as a lighting cameraman on Peter Lord’s Academy Award®-nominated short films “War Story” and “Adam.” His credits as a director of photography include the Oscar®-nominated “Big Story” and Steve Box’s BAFTA Award-winning short “Stage Fright.” He also served as a co-director of photography Nick Park’s Oscar®-winning Wallace & Gromit films “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave,” and, more recently, on Aardman’s first feature film, “Chicken Run.”

Oliver first made his name as a cinematographer lensing more than 170 television commercials in his native England. He won a Kodak craft award for the “Heat Electric – Parrots” commercial, which won an award as the best commercial of the year. He also

worked on a number of award-winning short films and television dramas, in addition to shooting several successful stills campaigns.

Oliver graduated from college before enrolling in film school, where he won the Fuji and BP Kodak Cinematography awards for his student film “Casino.” He later attended film school in Moscow as part of the Kodak award.

LOYD PRICE (Supervising Animator) began his association with Aardman on a freelance basis in 1994 and joined the staff two years later. He initially worked primarily on commercials for such campaigns as Chevron, Rice Krispies and Cadbury’s Coronation Street, as well as Wallace & Gromit advertisements for the Japanese Putschin’ Pudding. Later, he worked as an animator on Nick Park’s Oscar®-winning short “A Close Shave.” More recently, Price was the supervising animator on the clay-animated hit “Chicken Run,” which marked Aardman’s first full-length feature.

Before coming to Aardman, Price worked as a lead animator on Tim Burton’s “The Nightmare Before Christmas.” From 1984 to 1992, he was an animator for Cosgrove-Hall Films where he worked on many productions, including the BAFTA Award-winning “Wind in the Willows” and “Fool of the World and the Flying Ship.”

In 1996, Price set up and tutored the first two Animator Training Courses run by Aardman in conjunction with the University of the West of England, with the aim of training new character animators to work on Aardman’s feature films.

PHIL LEWIS (Production Designer) studied at Twickenham College of Art and Design, and worked as a freelance model maker and art lecturer throughout the 1970s. In the early 1980s, he joined Asylum Models & Effects in London, initially as a model maker and eventually as a designer and director of the company. During this time, he worked on numerous pop promos, still shoots and commercials, collaborating with such filmmakers as Terry Gilliam, Ridley Scott and Lester Bookbinder, among others.

Moving to Bristol in 1989, Lewis began working with Aardman, serving as an art director on the Wallace & Gromit films “The Wrong Trousers” and “A Close Shave,” as well as on many commercials for the studio.

In 1997, Lewis joined forces with scenic artist and set builder Tim Farrington, in response to Aardman’s feature film needs. Their collaboration resulted in Lewis serving

as the production designer and head of the art department on “Chicken Run,” and Farrington Lewis Co. Ltd building the sets and models. The partnership lasted until 2001, during which time they designed and built sets for many commercials and other productions.

JAN SANGER (Model Production Designer) became the head of Aardman’s model making department in 1997. Recently, Sanger was the model production designer on Aardman and DreamWorks’ first feature film collaboration, “Chicken Run.” She also headed up the model making department on the TV series “Cracking Contraptions.” Working with the directors, she oversees her department on all aspects of the puppet making process, from initial designs through completion of the production.

Directly after graduating from Art College, Sanger came to Aardman 19 years ago, when the company was a small independent first establishing itself in the shorts and commercials industries. She set up the company’s first model making department in 1989.

Sanger has worked on a wide range of award-winning films, including stints as art director, assistant director and animator on Peter Lord’s “War Story” and “Adam,” and art director on “Wat’s Pig.” Her work at Aardman also includes Nick Park’s Oscar®-winning “The Wrong Trousers,” Steve Box’s BAFTA Award-winning “Stage Fright” and Richard Golezowski’s “Ident.” Her early commercial credits include Cadbury’s Creme Eggs, Lurpak, Discos and Cadbury’s Crunchies.

MERLIN CROSSINGHAM (Second Unit Director/Key Animator) joined Aardman from the company’s animation training course, run in conjunction with the University of the West of England, after completing a degree in Film and Photography at Newport Film School.

Almost all of Crossingham’s animation experience has been with Aardman. He was a key animator on the feature film “Chicken Run,” and has also worked on “Morph,” “Creature Comforts” and many television commercials. In addition, Crossingham filmed the world’s first stop-motion 3D IMAX test. Apart from Aardman, Crossingham also had the opportunity to work with the legendary Ray Harryhausen.