

# EARLY MAN

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

EARLY MAN is the new prehistoric comedy adventure from four-time Academy Award®-winning director Nick Park and AARDMAN, the creators of WALLACE AND GROMIT and SHAUN THE SHEEP. Shot in Aardman's own distinctive style, the film will take audiences on an extraordinary journey into an exciting new world, unleashing an unforgettable tribe of unique and funny new characters voiced by an all-star British cast.

Set at the dawn of time, when prehistoric creatures roamed the earth, EARLY MAN tells the story of courageous caveman hero Dug (EDDIE REDMAYNE) and his best friend Hognob, as they unite his tribe against a mighty enemy, Lord Nooth (TOM HIDDLESTON), and his Bronze Age City to save their home.

STUDIOCANAL is co-financing alongside the BFI (British Film Institute) and will distribute in its own territories, the UK, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, selling worldwide. The BFI (British Film Institute) is proud to support EARLY MAN with National Lottery funding.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Set in prehistoric times, EARLY MAN follows the story of courageous caveman hero Dug (EDDIE REDMAYNE), living in a thriving valley together with his best friend and sidekick Hognob and a tribe of fellow eccentric and lovable tribe members, headed by Chief Bobnar (TIMOTHY SPALL).

While ambitious Dug aspires to hunt mammoths and go on adventures, Bobnar is quite happy with the tribe leading a quiet, unperturbed life chasing rabbits. However, their peace is shattered suddenly when their valley is invaded by an enemy the likes of which they have never encountered before, in the form of the pompous Lord Nooth (TOM HIDDLESTON), governor of the Bronze Age town, and his army. A money-loving tyrant, Lord Nooth has found bronze in the tribe's beloved valley, and so invades with an army with armoured mammoths in-tow, forcing the cavemen to flee and take shelter in the inhospitable Badlands.

In the drama of the invasion, Dug is accidentally captured and ends up in the unknown, intimidating world of Bronze Age Town, where he first meets Goona (MAISIE WILLIAMS), a spirited young girl who sells bronze pans. Dug, swept up by the Bronze Age townspeople, eventually finds himself in a huge stadium filled with a ravenous crowd, seemingly there to attend a cult spectacle - which he soon discovers is in fact a game called football.

Spotting an opportunity to win back his home, Dug challenges Real Bronzio, the imposing local team full of football stars, to an almighty football match as the ultimate clash of civilisations.

He travels back to the Badlands, eager to share the news and let the tribe know that they have a chance to return home to the valley if they win the match. The only problem? If they lose, they face a lifetime sentence working in the mines.

He manages to convince sceptical Bobnar to let him train the tribe: an endeavour which he initially has very little success in. His hopes are further dampened by their one and only football getting accidentally destroyed. With Hognob by his side, Dug has no choice but to return to the Bronze Age town to retrieve more balls.

Dug and Hognob sneak into the stadium, where they meet Goona once again and are surprised to discover that she is herself a mightily talented football player with dreams of playing in the crowd-filled stadium. Unfortunately, being a girl, she is forbidden from playing on the sacred turf.

Goona agrees to travel back to the Badlands with Dug and Hognob to help train the tribe, in turn using this chance to compete on the pitch herself and realise her own dream. Thanks to her skills, Goona teaches the cavemen the rules and techniques of the game, as well as the importance of teamwork. Soon the tribe begin to harness their passion for football inspired by their ancestors who once played the game.

Meanwhile, Lord Nooth is under increasing pressure from Queen Oofoefa (MIRIAM MARGOLYES), who is communicating with him through aggressive messages sent via Bronze Age telecommunications technology - a Message Bird - making it clear that the cavemen should not be given a chance to beat Real Bronzio.

Nooth sets out to destroy Dug's confidence, by revealing to him that his ancestors had no real football skills at all, and convinces him to forfeit the match on the day of the face-off and accept to let go of his valley forever.

However, Dug's fellow cavemen and hog arrive to save the day, united by the confidence instilled by Goona's training and the courage and determination that Dug himself inspired in them. What ensues is a memorable football match the likes of which nobody has ever seen before.

## **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

*Early Man* is the largest production mounted by Aardman in its 40-plus year history. It went into production in May 2016, and finally wound up in the last few weeks of 2017. However, preparatory work began well before the cameras started rolling.

Director Nick Park had been contemplating and refining the idea of this caveman comedy since 2010. Though he has directed short films, including the legendary *Wallace & Gromit* titles broadcast on the BBC, and jointly directed *Chicken Run* (2000), and *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005), this marks Nick's debut as sole director on a full-length feature.

Nick was determined to direct *Early Man* alone – which meant significant changes in the way the production, at Aardman's Aztec West studios, was organised.

Aardman production veteran Carla Shelley notes that whereas Nick would normally be 'directing the floor,' overseeing and doing the rounds of all the animators creating different scenes, that task was assigned to two other Aardman stalwarts, Merlin Crossingham and Will Becher, who served as animation directors. This left Nick free to direct the voice actors and to keep refining the story as filming progressed, along with writers Mark Burton and James Higginson.

Carla views *Early Man* as a step forward for the studio: "As elaborate and expensive as other films may have been, this one has been more challenging in some ways. Nick pitched it as '*Gladiator* meets *Dodgeball*.' He really wanted that sort of gladiatorial feel to the stadium and to the football scenes. So there's been a lot of effects work, including computer graphics, creating the huge crowd. If we'd built that football stadium for real...well, we couldn't, it would have been bigger than our

whole studio! So there were lots of technicalities in matching the physical and digital elements for the film.”

Some of the statistics regarding the making of *Early Man* are remarkable. Around 150 people have been directly involved with the production, and at its peak 33 animators were working on the film. *Early Man* has required 273 puppets, made by 23 different modelmakers over a 30-month period. Every individual puppet was created over a period of more than 10 weeks, with the model making team completing a total of 18 Dug puppets, and eight of each member of the Stone Age tribe. An astonishing total of 3,000 interchangeable mouths were crafted for the film’s characters by hand.

As for the sets, Aardman’s art department made 60 trees for the Stone Age tribe’s forest – each taking about a week to complete.

This extraordinary pace was maintained in a gigantic work area.

The combined space at Aztec West is approximately 51,000 square feet - roughly equivalent to four Olympic-size swimming pools.

“It has been incredibly intense work,” Carla notes. “We’ve had up to 40 units on this one, working simultaneously. Normally we contain it at ~~out~~ at 35, but at its peak there were 40 cameras on the go at once.

“The reason we’ve pulled it off is we’ve got such an experienced team some of whom have worked with Nick for 25 years. All the model makers, set makers, the DoPs and floor crew, know their craft so well and they’re the ones who managed to pull it off. There is a shorthand between them and Nick that has been invaluable....

“It’s a challenge at this budget level because there’s expectation around the production quality of an Aardman film so you can’t compromise on that.”

Visitors to the set have marvelled at the intricate work done to replicate the prehistoric era. Arguably the ‘main attraction’ is the Bronze Age city, which includes the gigantic stadium – scaled down to miniature size, while retaining all sorts of architectural detail.

Matt Perry, who designed the sets along with Richard Edmunds and their team, stresses: “We wanted to make the point that these were two worlds colliding – Stone Age and Bronze Age. Cavemen live in a world that’s soft and lovely – bucolic with trees. The Bronze Age is the opposite -- architectural and exact. It’s technical, industrial, the least hospitable place on the planet, and they’re mining for their bronze ore, which is a source of wealth.”

Nick discussed with Matt and Richard the notion that everything in the Bronze Age had to be ‘branded,’ as befits a ruthless, ideological society. So there are designs of sharp, hard, spiky helmets everywhere – even the arches of the stadium. The other recurring visual emblem in the Bronze Age city is the football, with its distinctive hexagonal patterns. It’s even on its soldiers’ shields. The city’s team, Real Bronzio, is just about unbeatable – it’s a symbol of the city’s power.

## THE CAST

Most members of the all-British cast playing characters in the lovable but dim-witted Stone Age tribe were played by actors who were newcomers to Aardman.

The three most prominent roles went to actors with a high profile, for whom voicing animated characters was a completely new experience.

The key role of Dug, the teenage boy who inspires his tribe to fight for their future in their valley they all love, is played by Eddie Redmayne, who won an Academy Award for Best Actor® for playing Professor Stephen Hawking in *THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING*. But Nick Park was already aware of him, well before he won his Academy Award®.

“I’d seen Eddie in a film called *BLACK DEATH*, in which he played a young monk in the Middle Ages,” Nick recalls. “He had a sort of vulnerable feeling, which I really liked. I was looking for someone to play a teenage caveman, who is boyish and eager – but not necessarily confident.

“That vulnerable side of him really worked. The first time I met him and we worked on Dug’s voice, he said to me: ‘How about if we go a bit younger?’ I was amazed by how he played Dug as a dishevelled 15-year-old, and it really appealed to me.”

Goon, the feisty young teenager girl who inspires Dug and the tribe to fight for the valley, is played by 20-year-old actress Maisie Williams, whose debut screen role as Arya Stark in the hit TV series “Game of Thrones” launched her career in spectacular fashion. “We needed a female character,” says Nick, “and I wanted her to be the expert -- the best footballer of them all. Someone who could teach this bunch of idiotic lunkheads in the tribe how to play.

“And Maisie turned out to be great casting. She’s an ideal Goon.”

The third major role is a character who is not in the tribe, but its sworn enemy – the dastardly Lord Nooth, overlord of the Stone Age people. He is played by Tom Hiddleston, best known to cinema audiences as villainous Loki in the Marvel Comics movies, but also acclaimed for his lead role in the TV drama series “The Night Manager”. Tom plays Nooth with a comically exaggerated French accent. Nick hit on the idea of casting Tom as Nooth when he saw him on the BBC’s Graham Norton Show, doing a brilliant impersonation of Robert de Niro – with de Niro himself at the other end of the sofa. “You wouldn’t expect him to play that role,” Nick says. “It’s all in fun. Tom himself said the accent was a bit ‘Allo! ‘Allo! And you don’t expect that from him either. He’s the quintessential English gent.”

One notable non-newcomer to Aardman was Timothy Spall, who plays Bobnar, the tribe’s kindly but cautious chief. He had already worked with Nick on *CHICKEN RUN*, voicing the character of Nick, a rat who is an expert smuggler. “Tim was always very obliging, and I really wanted to work with him again,” Nick says. And I love the quality of his voice and his London accent. He’s perfect for that role.”

Comedian-impressionist Rob Brydon did double duty, voicing both the TV commentators at the Bronze Age football matches; they’re inspired by real-life soccer pundits John Motson and Alan Hansen and also the Message Bird, mimicking the voice of Queen Oofoefa.

The rest of the tribe include actor-comedian Johnny Vegas, who plays Asbo, a caveman who rushes around energetically to little purpose. Mark Williams (TV's "The Fast Show", Mr. Arthur Weasley in the *HARRY POTTER* films) is slow-witted Barry the Brummie, whose best friend is...a rock, to whom he talks. Selina Griffiths plays Magma, a cheerful, strong-minded northern woman, always up for a good fight. Versatile actor-writer-director comedian Richard Ayoade is Treebor, who looks tough but is inwardly more fearful; while Simon Greenall voices Eemak, a Geordie; he speaks but no-one can understand a word he says. Comedian Gina Yashere is Gravelle, a hypochondriac tribe member who likes to share details of her ailments.

The tribe is rounded out by Hognob, Dug's pet pig and sidekick. He communicates exclusively in unintelligible noises. Hognob is voiced by a certain Mr. Nick Park.

## THE DIRECTOR

Never a man to pass up the chance of making a joke, Nick Park refers to his caveman film, set in prehistoric times, as 'a mammoth production!'

Yet in terms of scale, execution and preparation time, 'mammoth' is an accurate definition. As Nick tells it, the idea for *EARLY MAN* has been on his mind since 2010. "It's been on the back burner for many years now – the writing alone has taken more than three years. Mark Burton started writing it with me, then went off to do *SHAUN THE SHEEP*, and came back again.

"It's just the way we do it at Aardman – We cut the storyboards together first, for the whole film, then edit it, add the temporary music and voices. We've written and re-written everything 100 times, it seems. We'll decide a scene isn't funny enough or simply not working. And that goes on for two years before we even start filming. I feel like I've made the film twice! But it's worth it."

Filming actually started in May 2016, but as Nick points out: "We've still been re-writing as we're shooting."

*EARLY MAN* marks Nick's first directing work since the Wallace & Gromit short *A MATTER OF LOAF AND DEATH* (2008). Before that he jointly directed two feature-length films: *CHICKEN RUN* (2000) with Peter Lord and *CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT* (2005) with Steve Box. Why did he decide to go it alone on *EARLY MAN*?

"I just wanted to try it, really," he says. "I'll always be grateful to Peter and Steve, and I enjoyed directing with them. But I just wanted to be at the reins more."

He hasn't always found it easy: "It's been good to do it, but this way is a re-structure. If it's just me at the top you have to have other people you trust on the floor. I haven't been able to spend all the time with animators I'm used to. Merlin and Will have done all that.

"I've had some time on the floor, but not as much as I'd like. It makes a difference being in touch with the animators yourself." He laughs: "I can be more of a control freak! Obviously I trust Will and Merlin, they do a great job. They've been my eyes and ears on the floor. And I still have all the fingers in all the pies."

To those outside the animation business, of course, it all seems like an incredibly slow process. As Nick puts it: "If we get three seconds (filmed) at the end of a day, and if it's good, that's very satisfying. And if we're creating more than a minute a week? Well, in animation terms, that's rocking."

Going feature length, he says, “gives you more to think about – it’s a big statement, a bigger scope, a bigger crew. For me, it’s also being involved with the design of each character so they all look as if they’re from the same stable.”

He thinks of *EARLY MAN* as “a story that’s epic in style, with a prehistoric twist. It’s about this one little guy who decides to save his tribe. When the Bronze Age people come into their valley, take it away from them and banish them to the badlands, Dug fights to get it back. He knows from cave paintings that his tribe played football, which is now almost like a religion in the Bronze Age, so he brings a football home and trains his tribe to beat them.”

Nick isn’t interested in football himself: “I’ve always supported my local team (Preston North End) out of loyalty, but that’s it. And I feel as an outsider I can tell a story other people can also relate to. There are parallels in *EARLY MAN* about money changing the game. But really it’s not about football at all. It’s about a tribe that has the right spirit.”

Nick also felt his story was ideal for working in clay: “It felt very earthy. I’m a clay man myself, so I felt my style would lend itself to clay animation. It’s human and there’s a charm to it. I feel something of yourself comes through. It’s very hands-on, quite literally, and there’s a lot of nuance and expression: you’re imbuing the puppets with life. I think the real strength of Aardman films is subtlety in characters -- which is where clay comes in.”

He also broke ground by voicing a character himself – Dug’s sidekick, the pig called Hognob. “I did it just for fun to start with, but I got voted in,” Nick admits. “He’s got a little bit of Gromit about him -- but he’s more of a pet.”

He found the hardest part of *EARLY MAN* was ‘creating new worlds – the badlands, the valley, the forests -- in model animation, in a way that it all looks good -- not like a train set. We’re making an epic movie on a budget here. It’s a nod to *KING KONG* and to (animator) Ray Harryhausen’s movies.” He’s particularly proud of the extraordinary Bronze Age city that has been created for *EARLY MAN*. It’s a triumph for Aardman’s art department - and Nick revealed that every member of the team got to design a house within the city that will appear on screen – a kind of ‘signature’ for each one. The film’s settings, he adds, “were all based on research from the Bronze age world.” He smiles: “With a bit of artistic licence!”

Nick was determined to create characters from the tribe members that would come from all parts of Britain – Bobnar is clearly a Londoner, Barry (the one whose best friend is a rock) is a Brummie, while Asbo is northern and the incomprehensible Eemack is a Geordie.

“I wanted to show the diversity of Britain,” Nick explains. “When you talk about the Bronze Age there’d have been lots of people here of different ethnicity. I also wanted a multi-racial mix, because of the football aspect. I didn’t want to end up with an all-white team. Football today is definitely multi-racial.”

In the same spirit, Nick wanted a major role for a woman – and created Goona, the Bronze Age-raised girl played by Maisie Williams, whose gender disqualifies her from playing football.

“It wasn’t a cynical move,” Nick says. “But women’s football has really taken off in Britain recently – and in America teenage girls have been playing soccer for years. It seemed cool to have a female character who’s also such a great footballer.”

One of Nick's main strengths as an animator is his unswerving attention to detail. As an example, he worked long hours on getting Dug's haircut exactly right. "We would test record Eddie," he recalled, "then take it back to the model. Then we'd change the hair a bit. We didn't want him too clean-cut or neat. The hair needed to be a bit dishevelled. But then again, you want to see his eyes. If you can't see his eyes, how do we light the scene? So you can make one decision and, it affects several other decisions."

Nick also 'acted out' his characters on video, imitating their voices as best he could and suggesting their physical actions. It looks comical, but there's a purpose behind it: "For me to act it out has been a way of putting across to Will and Merlin what I'm thinking."

Eight years is a long haul. Does he feel the time he spent on *Early Man* is justified? He thinks it through: "It's taken a long time, yes. It has. But that's the amount of effort it takes, really, to do it right."

Now he's aware there are great expectations surrounding *Early Man*: "But there's nothing you can do about it. Just do my best and hope people like it." He smiles: "I'm going to like it!"

### **THE AARDMAN EXPERIENCE**

Nothing in an actor's training can quite prepare them for what it takes to voice a character in an Aardman film. For Eddie Redmayne, Maisie Williams and Tom Hiddleston, the actors who voiced the three main roles in *EARLY MAN*, it was an exhilarating departure from anything they had ever experienced as actors before.

Eddie recalls: "When I got home and told my family I was getting to voice an Aardman character, I've never known such excitement – from everyone, my parents' generation, my niece and nephew. Everyone was *so* excited. It was a rare thing.

"When I got a call saying Nick was interested in me voicing Dug, I was convinced I'd screw it up. So I insisted on a workshop day with Nick. For years I'd idolised him and all of Aardman's works. So I didn't want to be the one who came along and screwed it up. That day we had an amazing time playing around, and ever since it's been pure joy.

"I think that's one of the things that Aardman and Nick do so well -- they create a world in which cynicism has been removed. Watching those films, it's like going back to being kids ourselves."

As Eddie tells it, he had five or six voicing sessions over a two-year period: "In each session you'd just do a little chunk of the script and find the character. I'd seen a little model of what Nick wanted Dug to be, but I had to find the character in him – and Nick was right there, in the booth with me. He has such a vision, it's amazing. And Nick is the kindest man you've ever met. He has the most generous spirit – along with this beautifully clear vision of exactly what he wants.

"It was such a relief that he voiced Hognob, so we got to voice together, which was great. But we'd do some stuff and sometimes it would be just noises: 'Huh?' 'Uh?' And then he'd come back months later and they've managed to animate that scene in stop motion. Now I'm a deeply unfunny person, but it made me laugh out loud. And I thought: "That's genuinely the funniest I've ever been!"

Eddie became fond of the little character he was playing: "Dug is a plucky, incredibly friendly dreamer. He lives in the valley with his group of cavemen, with Bobnar in charge, and they hunt rabbit. They're a wonderful bunch, lively, eccentric and fun. But they're not particularly ambitious --



whereas Dug is aiming for the stars. He believes they can hunt things bigger than rabbits, and maybe even one day spear a mammoth, yet Bobnar tells him not to aspire so hard. But he won't take no for an answer. There's an underdog vibrancy about him. He sees the world with open, optimistic eyes, and without cynicism."

While he was voicing Dug, Eddie became convinced that many of Nick's characters are his 'alter ego': "On the first day, when I was auditioning for Nick, he showed me the model of Dug with a big grin that we so associate with characters like Wallace. And when Nick then smiles, you realise they come from him.

"I've known of Nick since I was growing up, watching him win Oscars, and those amazing award speeches he'd give, and when he's interviewed. He's the most affable gentleman. It's the same when you spend time with him, he's so disarming.

But the wonderful thing is, he's a passionate man, who knows exactly what he wants. And he doesn't stop until he's found it. I might try one single line 70 times. The most frustrating times were when Nick did a reading of it. You can hear it in his voice, and you know exactly what it's meant to be. You can't quite reach it yourself, but you keep trying because you don't want to let him down. He finds a very polite way of asking you to do it...70 times! But he's also that teacher you desperately want to impress. You want Nick's seal of approval."

Is Eddie a football fan? "No! And under no circumstances do you need to like football to like this film. I come from a family that are obsessed with it, and for years I'd sit around at Sunday lunch and get mind-numbingly bored with football chat. You don't need any knowledge of sport or football to enjoy this film. It's filled with extraordinary new Nick Park characters, and really it's love, humour and family that are at its core."

Maisie Williams recalls she was given a warm welcome by the crew from the first day she walked through its doors. "They had an 'introduction day' for Goona," she says, laughing in disbelief as she recalls it. "That day at Aardman was just incredible.

"We went in and saw all the different steps in creating the film, and it was so interesting. The story boards, the scripts – and of course the voice recordings. Once they've got those, they then put people in suits that match whatever shape the character is, so they put bellies on these cavemen, and then they play lines of dialogue while they act out how they want it to look on screen. So when the animators come to do it, they're not in the dark, they can copy what they see."

She recalls being amazed when she first saw the Bronze Age city, with everything about it in minute detail: "I just couldn't believe it, the length and scale and the craft that had gone into making it."

Maisie came to feel her role as Goona was significant as work progressed: "When you sit and watch a kids' film, it's a fantasy world and you're watching little pieces of plasticine, but it really is drawing on things we're all familiar with -- and issues that you want your kids to understand when they're watching this.

"It's so important to me, playing Goona. She's a little girl in this male-dominated world, yet she prevails and her dreams come true. I think that's really special. It would have meant a lot for me to watch that when I was younger, so it's nice to give back to kids now.

"Goona is from the Bronze Age city, where if you're a girl you're not allowed to play football for their football team Real Bronzio. Despite this, she's an avid football fan. When she meets Dug from the

Stone Age, who needs to win a football match, Goona is adamant that she's going to help because she'll get the chance to live her dream, and that's all she's worried about -- until she meets the tribe and realises they're all hopeless at playing football.

"Because she's so good at it, she becomes the coach for the cavemen and all they have is the badlands and it's a pretty treacherous place, so she comes with these activities that they can do. It's all about her teaching the tribe and watching them get better and better. It's very cool!"

She was also impressed by her collaborators on the film. "Nick is really good at coming into the booth and telling you, 'this part you're doing, it's great, keep it up.'

"And it was amazing getting a chance to be with Eddie in the booth and watch him work. For him to have won an Academy Award® and played serious adult characters, and then completely put himself out there and become this child! It was wonderful to watch, and gave me a lot of confidence. I felt, 'well, if *you're* going to put yourself out there, then I will too.'"

Maisie was overawed by the level of manual labour involved in creating the sets and characters on *Early Man*: "That's really great in a world that's predominantly digital now – to see people still creating with their hands -- and creating something really special. These days, when it's all high definition and everything looks clean, brushed up and photo-shopped, there's something beautiful about that. It's cool being part of something man-made and real."

Tom Hiddleston has been a fan of Aardman films since childhood: "They were so sweet and skilful, so representative of a particular kind of British charm, and I loved them. Nick himself has a natural warmth and sweetness, and all his characters in his films are ordinary, but they do extraordinary things. It's their ordinariness that makes them heroic.

"What else I learned about Nick is his sense of humour and his extraordinary detail and precision. He will go to painstaking lengths to crack a very British joke.

"I found while working with him that he's always trying to refine the joke, to make almost the purest version of it, whether it's a prop or a piece of physical comedy, or the delivery of a line. He really wants it to be the sweetest, purest form of silliness. And I think that makes you like the characters so much"

"What I find so astonishing about Nick -- and Aardman -- is the lightness of touch when you see it finished, compared with the diligence and rigour, that it took to craft those scenes. I voiced Lord Nooth for 16 whole months, but for Nick and the crew it's been a whole lot longer. It's extraordinarily detailed work, with an end result that's so light and silly. And I love that duality: so many people working so hard for a really good joke."

Tom recalls there were occasions when he couldn't voice his lines because he was laughing too much – notably in a scene when Lord Nooth is receiving a relaxing massage, unaware that it's being administered by a pig – Dug's sidekick Hognob, voiced by Nick who was also in the booth. Nooth unwittingly makes two pig-related comments, and Tom found himself unable to complete those lines, he was laughing too hard. "I finally said, Nick, I need to go outside and have a word with myself, otherwise you'll never get these lines down."

Tom recalls meeting Nick when they were together in a queue for a film industry event, and they started chatting. "Then I heard he was making this film and wanted me to be in it and play this part.

He sent a script and a drawing of (Nooth). It was an amazing moment. I'd been a fan of Aardman since before I wanted to become an actor."

The script, he recalls, "made me giggle all the way through: And I loved the fact that Lord Nooth was this puffed-up, pompous, idiotic villain. I've played villains before, but there's something so self-important and stupid about him. He's not really menacing, he's just an idiot. And as soon as I saw the drawing of him, with this enormous chest, small hands and bald head, I thought, 'Wow. Nick's seen my true self. He's gazed into my soul and cast me very close to home!'"

Nick was clear he wanted Nooth to be French: "And then, says Tom, "it was just finding the right level of pomposity, self-importance and frustration. I asked Nick how correctly French I should make it, and he said: "Let's go for the funny option every time.' "So basically, we nailed it when I made Nick laugh."

He agrees there's not much to like about Nooth: "He's constantly worried about what people think of him, so there's vulnerability there, I suppose. But he's a greedy, vain, self-important, pompous, puffed-up governor. Also, he has designs on increasing his wealth by enslaving Dug's tribe to work in the mines, to dig up ore and minerals from the ground."

Tom relishes the fact that *EARLY MAN* has an all-British voice cast: "I've managed to listen to them all, and everyone brings something unique yet immediately recognisable."

As for the film, he says: "I think *EARLY MAN* manages to hold on to the hand-made quality people associate with Aardman and make it special. But it also has this epic scope. It's dazzling film-making."

## THE PRODUCERS

Two of *EARLY MAN'S* producers are Peter Lord and David Sproxton, the co-founders of Aardman Animation, a company they launched over 40 years ago while they were still in their teens. The third producer is the film's director Nick Park, who Peter and David hired in 1985. At that point there were just five people in the entire company.

They've all come a long way since then. First Aardman became a by-word for animation in Britain, thanks to its short *WALLACE AND GROMIT* and *CREATURE COMFORTS* films broadcast by the BBC. Then with such animated feature films as *CHICKEN RUN* and *THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT*, it broke the lucrative U.S. market. And more recently it has become a company with a genuine global profile – partly through the success of the TV animation series *SHAUN THE SHEEP*, which also became a feature film. It proved a success in such territories as China, India and throughout the Far East and Middle East, as well as Aardman's traditional territories.

David and Peter both regard *EARLY MAN* as a logical progression in Aardman's continued progress, and another success for Nick Park.

Says David: "Nick's had this idea in his head for a good few years in the same way as *CHICKEN RUN* was exploring something new before we did *CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT* with Wallace & Gromit."

Peter agrees: "It's evolution rather than revolution for the company. Sequels are important, but new ideas are great. Dave and I don't care where they come from -- but if they come from the brain of Nick Park, that's a very good start: 'If you like it Nick, tell us more.'

He did. And both Peter and David greeted the idea with enthusiasm.

“It’s what Nick’s always done,” Peter says. There are so many layers of humour. There are jokes in there for people who understand archaeology. There are an awful lot for people whose idea of the past is fantastically simple. It’s full of contemporary references. When Dug arrives in the Bronze Age town, there are lots of sight gags in there -- a sliced bread machine, a zebra crossing. Just jokes.

“Nick’s notebooks are always full of gags and ideas around a theme,” according to David. “And his stories are built around those key ideas.”

“I know the way he works,” Peter chimes in. “He chases the brilliant joke always -- whether it’s a verbal or visual joke. The idea that you have Real Bronzio playing football against people who look like Vikings! In fact, there’s a few thousand years between them. The inspiration is comedy: it’s the story you care about, and characters you care about. Having got that clear, then you can have as much fun as you can with the setting and characters.”

Both men are amused by the liberties Nick has taken with the portrayal of the Bronze Age city: “It’s a mash-up,” says David. “I know the art department looked at a huge number of references. My archaeology professor would have had a fit!”

Peter adds: “I don’t think it’s disloyal to say Nick isn’t interested in that at all. It’s a feat of imagination – and just being mischievous and playful with history.” Peter and David both observe that Nick tries to make his films better and better as they’re being shot. “Not long ago, he was thinking of new jokes for the ending while there was still time,” Peter recalls. “It’s what he does. Ending these films is difficult. He’d been thinking about that for a whole year.

“The thing about Nick is, he’s very good at laughing at his own jokes. I think that’s when he knows he has a good one. He’ll move heaven and earth to get it into the film if he possibly can. Making the audience laugh is what he loves to do best – not to take away from the importance of character.”

*EARLY MAN*, then, is quintessentially an Aardman film. But what is it that makes Aardman different? “It’s the craft,” David observes, “but also we’re quite British -- because it works to make films in our own culture. We’re different from the stuff that comes out of Hollywood.”

And Peter adds: “We want to keep doing it because it’s our culture, our instincts. But having said that, the assumption is the rest of the world will love it too!”

## Biographies – CAST

### EDDIE REDMAYNE – Dug

Multiple award winner Eddie Redmayne has most recently been seen playing the role of ‘Newt Scamander’ in *FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM*. The adaptation of J.K. Rowling’s series, directed by David Yates, saw Eddie star in the lead role alongside Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller and Colin Farrell and was released in November 2016. Eddie will reprise his role in the sequel *FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD*, due to be released on 16th November 2018 and once again directed by David Yates.

Eddie will next be seen lending his voice to Aardman Studios’ upcoming prehistoric animated comedy adventure *EARLY MAN*. Also starring Maisie Williams and Tom Hiddleston, the Nick Park directed film will be released 26th January 2018 in the UK and 16th February in the US. From the creators of ‘*WALLACE AND GROMIT*’ and ‘*SHAUN THE SHEEP*’, the highly anticipated stop-start animation will see Eddie voicing the role of Dug, who, along with his sidekick Hognob, unites his tribe against the mighty Bronze Age in a battle to beat them at their own game.

2015 saw Eddie in Tom Hooper’s *THE DANISH GIRL* alongside Alicia Vikander. Inspired by the true story of Danish painter Einar Wegener and his wife Gerda, the story follows their passionate and unusual love story, set in the twentieth century. Eddie’s leading performance in *THE DANISH GIRL* received him Academy Award®, Golden Globe, SAG and BAFTA nominations. 2015 also saw Eddie in the Sci-Fi production *JUPITER ASCENDING*, directed by Andy and Lana Wachowski and starring Channing Tatum and Mila Kunis.

Eddie is perhaps best known for his portrayal of the world-famous physicist Stephen Hawking in *THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING* (2015). Directed by Academy Award® winning director James Marsh and starring alongside Felicity Jones, Emily Watson and David Thewlis, the film, penned by Anthony McCarten and inspired by Jane Hawking’s memoir ‘*Travelling to Infinity: My life with Stephen*’, follows the love story between the Cambridge cosmology student and Jane Wilde, the arts student he fell in love with in the 60s. For his astonishing performance he received the Academy Award® for ‘Actor in a Leading Role’, the Golden Globe for ‘Best Actor’, the SAG for ‘Outstanding Male Actor in a Leading Role’ and the BAFTA for ‘Best Actor’.

2012 saw Eddie in the multi award-winning musical *LES MISERABLES*, which was nominated for the Academy Award® for ‘Best Motion Picture of The Year’ and won the Golden Globe for ‘Best Motion Picture in a Musical or Comedy’ 2013. Eddie starred alongside 2013 Academy Award winner Anne Hathaway and 2013 Academy Award® nominee, Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe and Amanda Seyfried. The film was directed by BAFTA and Academy Award-winning director Tom Hooper. Eddie won the ‘Virtuoso Award’ at the Santa Barbara Film Awards for his portrayal of Marius Pontmercy. A ‘Best Actor Nomination’ at the Evening Standard Film Awards was among several of the other nominations.

Among his other film credits, Eddie starred in The Weinstein Company’s *MY WEEK WITH MARILYN* (2011), in which he played the role of ‘Colin Clark’ opposite Michelle Williams, Dame Judi Dench, Emma Watson and Kenneth Branagh. In the States Eddie was also seen in indie films *THE YELLOW HANDKERCHIEF* (2008), with Kristen Stewart and William Hurt and Tom Kalin’s controversial work

*SAVAGE GRACE* (2008) opposite Julianne Moore. Eddie made his on-screen debut in 2006 in Robert De Niro's dramatic thriller *THE GOOD SHEPHERD* playing the son of Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie. In 2007/8, he also had supporting roles in *ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE* directed by Shekhar Kapur, and co-starring Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush and Clive Owen and *THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL* with Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson.

Eddie's vast CV also includes his work in British television. In 2012 Eddie was seen in "Birdsong" with Clemence Poesy. This two-part series for BBC1 was an adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' epic love story, set during the First World War. The Times of London described how 'It is impossible to imagine how a seminal modern novel could have been done better.' In 2011, Eddie was seen in the Golden Globe and Emmy nominated "The Pillars Of The Earth", an epic television mini-series adaptation of Ken Follett's bestselling novel, in which he starred alongside Matthew MacFadyen, Hayley Atwell and Rufus Sewell, with Ridley Scott as executive producer. His other television credits include the leading role of Angel Clare alongside Gemma Arterton in the acclaimed BBC adaptation of "Tess Of The D'urbervilles".

In 2010, Eddie won both Tony and Laurence Olivier Awards for his outstanding performance in Michae Grandage's critically acclaimed theatrical production 'Red' which transferred from the Donmar Warehouse to the Golden Theatre on Broadway. Eddie starred opposite Alfred Molina in this two-handed production.

He received critical acclaim for his West End performance in Edward Albee's powerful drama *The Goat Or Who Is Sylvia?*, where he played a troubled teen opposite Jonathan Pryce. The role won him the 2004 London Evening Standard Award and the 2005 London Critics Circle Theatre Award for Outstanding Newcomer. He was also nominated at the 2005 Olivier Awards for the Best Performance in a Supporting Role. Following this, he took to the stage in Christopher Shinn's new play, *Now Or Later*, showing at the Royal Court Theatre. Eddie was also seen portraying Richard II, in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which opened at the Donmar Warehouse in London for which he won the Critics Circle Award. Eddie's impressive body of work lead him to earn a nomination in the Orange Wednesday's Rising Star Award category at the prestigious 2012 BAFTA Film Awards.

### TOM HIDDLESTON – Lord Nooth

Tom graduated from RADA in 2005. In 2011, Tom was seen in his breakthrough role in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award® and Golden Globe nominated film *WAR HORSE*, as Captain Nicholls. He was cast alongside Jeremy Irvine, Emily Watson, David Thewlis, Benedict Cumberbatch and Eddie Marsan.

Tom was seen starring in his first Hollywood Blockbuster as the villain Loki in Kenneth Branagh's *THOR* for Marvel, a role that he reprised in the 2012 blockbuster hit Marvel movie *THE AVENGERS*. In 2013, Tom won the Best Villain award at the MTV Movie Awards for his role in *THE AVENGERS* as well as Best Fight, which he shared with Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson and Jeremy Renner.

2012 saw Tom nominated for a BAFTA Rising Star Award and an Evening Standard.

Film Award in the Best Actor category for his roles in Joanna Hogg's *ARHIPELAGO* & Terence Davies's *THE DEEP BLUE SEA*. Tom was the winner of the British Rising Star Award at The Richard Attenborough Regional Film Awards and won Best Male Newcomer for his role in *THOR* at the 2012

Empire Awards. Tom was seen on our screens portraying Prince Hal in “Henry IV Parts 1&2” and the title role in “Henry V” which aired on the BBC as part of the highly anticipated Cultural Olympiad. Tom won the Times Breakthrough Award for this role at the 2013 South Bank Sky Arts Awards.

In October 2013, Tom returned to his role as Loki in *THOR: THE DARK WORLD*, alongside an all-star cast including Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman and Idris Elba. He was nominated for the Best Supporting Actor role at the 2014 Empire Awards for his role in *THOR: THE DARK WORLD*, as well as the Favourite Character award at the MTV Movie Awards.

Tom is also known for his stage role as Coriolanus. Tom starred opposite Hadley Fraser and Mark Gatiss and was directed by the Donmar's Artistic Director, Josie Rourke.

In February 2014, Tom starred opposite Tilda Swinton, John Hurt and Mia Wasikowska in Jim Jarmusch's *ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE*, as well as 2015's *CRIMSON PEAK*, alongside Academy-Award®-nominee Jessica Chastain, Mia Wasikowska and Charlie Hunnam.

In 2015, Tom starred in Ben Wheatley's thriller *HIGH-RISE*, alongside an all-star cast including Jeremy Irons, Luke Evans, Sienna Miller and Elisabeth Moss. Last year, Tom received a nomination for Best Leading Actor for his role in *HIGH RISE* at the 2015 Moët British Independent Film Awards. Tom also starred in *I SAW THE LIGHT*, the independent biopic about the country music icon Hank Williams. Directed by Marc Abraham, the film is based on Colin Escott, George Merritt and William MacEwen's 1994 book, *Hank Williams: The Biography*. The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival 2015.

2016 saw Tom starring opposite Hugh Laurie in the television adaptation of John le Carre's novel “The Night Manager”. Tom was nominated for an Emmy for his role, and also been nominated in the Favourite Drama Performance category at the National Television Awards 2017 and won a TV Choice Award for Best Actor. Tom recently won a Golden Globe for his performance as Jonathan Pine in the ‘Best Performance by an Actor in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television’ category at the Golden Globe Awards 2017.

Tom will soon be seen reprising his role as Thor's adoptive brother, Loki, in the seventeenth film instalment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in *THOR: RAGNAROK*. The film was released in November 2017. Tom was most recently seen starring in Legendary's King Kong origins story, *KONG: SKULL ISLAND*, directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts. Tom starred alongside Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, John Goodman and John C. Reilly. Set in the 1970s, the film follows a team of explorers who are brought together to adventure into an island in the Pacific and into the domain of a mythical giant gorilla known as Kong.

In 2018, Tom will star in Aardman Animations' *EARLY MAN*, an adventure animation film directed by Nick Park. Tom will be voicing the role of Lord Nooth and will star alongside Eddie Redmayne and Maisie Williams. And next year, Tom will return to the Marvel Blockbuster franchise as the villain Loki in *AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR*. Directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo, the film sequel is set to be released in May 2018.

### **MAISIE WILLIAMS – Goona**

Maisie Williams was born on April 15, 1997. She is best known for her role as Arya Stark in HBO's “Game of Thrones”, which is now filming its eighth season.

The role has earned her two Portal awards, in 2012 for best supporting actress and best young actor in television - the youngest actor to achieve this - and was followed in 2013 by the Radio 1 Teen Award for Best British Actor. In 2014 Maisie was named as one of the UK's international screen stars of tomorrow and also won The Entertainment Weekly's award for best Supporting actress.

At the beginning of 2015 she picked up a European Shooting Star Award at the Berlin Film Festival for her role in Carol Morley's feature *THE FALLING*, she also received the 2016 London Critic's Circle Award for Best Young performer and The Evening Standard Rising Star Award for the same role. Her portrayal of teenager Casey, in Channel 4's *CYBERBULLY*, prompted critical acclaim and a BAFTA nomination for best single drama. Maisie is currently starring in Netflix' first UK original feature *IBOY* and has recently completed filming on 3 movies, Departures with Asa Butterfield, X-Men New Mutants, directed by Josh Boone and Aardman's animation *EARLY MAN*, with Tom Hiddleston and Eddie Redmayne.

### **TIMOTHY SPALL – Bobnar**

Timothy Spall OBE is one of Britain's best-loved and most talented character actors. He received wide acclaim for his role as J.M.W Turner in Mike Leigh's *MR TURNER* (2014), for which he won seven international awards, including the Cannes Film Festival Best Actor Award. He trained at the National Youth Theatre and RADA and began his acting career in the theatre, with seasons at Birmingham Rep and the RSC. We recently saw Timothy return to the stage in the most lauded *The Caretaker* at The Old Vic.

Timothy is perhaps best known for his role as Peter Pettigrew in the *HARRY POTTER* film series, and his diverse film work includes: *THE KING'S SPEECH*, *THE DAMNED UNITED*, *SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET*, *PIERREPOINT*, *ALL OR NOTHING*, *LUCKY BREAK*, *TOPSY TURVY*, *SECRETS* and *LIES*. TV credits include: "Fungus the Bogeyman", "The Enfield Haunting", "Blandings", "The Syndicate", "The Fattest Man In Britain", "Oliver Twist", "The Street", "Bodily Harm", "Auf Wiedersehen Pet", "Perfect Strangers", "Shooting the Past", "Our Mutual Friend" and his own documentary "Timothy Spall: Somewhere at Sea".

Other recent screen credits include: Sally Potter's *THE PARTY*, Phillip K. Dick's *ELECTRIC DREAMS* for Channel 4, Denial with Rachel Weisz and Tom Wilkinson, Nick Hamm's *THE JOURNEY* and David Blair's *AWAY*. He has recently wrapped on a trio of further screen projects, *THE CHANGEOVER*, *FINDING YOUR FEET* with Imelda Staunton and Celia Imrie and *HATTON GARDEN* for ITV.

### **ROB BRYDON – Message Bird**

Rob was born in Swansea and studied drama at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He commenced his professional life as a radio and television presenter for BBC Wales.

Rob first came to the public's attention in 2000 with the shows "Marion and Geoff" and "Human Remains", winning British Comedy Awards for both. Since then his comedy credits have included "A Small Summer Party", "The Keith Barret Show", "Directors Commentary", "Supernova", "Cruise Of The Gods", "Black Books", "I'm Alan Partridge", "Little Britain", "Live At The Apollo", "Rob Brydon's Annually Retentive", "QI", "The Big Fat Quiz Of The Year", "Have I Got News For You", "Gavin and Stacey", "Rob Brydon's Identity Crisis", as well as hosting the successful panel show "Would I Lie To



You?”. He has also appeared in the following drama productions on television and film: *OLIVER TWIST*, *HEROES AND VILLAINS: NAPOLEON*, *THE WAY WE LIVE NOW*, *MURDER IN MIND*, *KENNETH TYNAN: IN PRAISE OF HARDCORE*, *MARPLE*, *LOCK, STOCK AND TWO SMOKING BARRELS*, *24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE*, *A COCK AND BULL STORY*, *THE TRIP*, *BEST OF MEN*, *THE TRIP TO ITALY*, *CINDERELLA*, *THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER’S WAR* and the latest instalment of the Trip series, “The Trip To Spain”.

Rob made his theatre debut in 2011 playing opposite Kenneth Branagh in *The Painkiller* at The Lyric Theatre in Belfast, which subsequently came to the West End in 2016. He has also appeared in Alan Ayckbourn’s *A Chorus of Disapproval* in the West End and *Future Conditional* at The Old Vic, as well as his successful one man show *Rob Brydon Live* (West End and Tour). His most recent one man show, *I Am Standing Up* toured the UK in 2017.

Rob is also well known for his versatile voice and is a regular contributor to popular radio programmes including *I’m Sorry I Haven’t A Clue*, *Just A Minute*, and *Loose Ends* and is the voice of many animated characters in major films including *THE LEGEND OF TREASURE ISLAND*, *ROBBIE THE REINDEER*, *THE GRUFFALO AND THE GRUFFALO’S CHILD*, *ROOM ON THE BROOM*, *HIGHWAY RAT* and *EARLY MAN* for Aardman.

In 2009 Rob went to number one in the charts with Ruth Jones and Sir Tom Jones and the Comic Relief single *Islands In The Stream*. Rob has won five British Comedy Awards, a GQ Man Of The Year Award, a Royal Television Society Award and two South Bank Awards. In 2013 he was awarded an M.B.E.

### **RICHARD WEBBER – Grubup**

On Graduating from Newport film school in 1992, Rich worked on “Rex the Runt-series 1” for Aardman. He then joined Bristol based Cod Steaks as a model maker and set builder, working on shows such as “Crapston Villas”, Peter Lord’s *WAT’S PIG*, *CHICKEN RUN* and various music videos. He then went on to work for CMTB Animations as an animator on Tony Hart’s Art “Box Bunch” (BBC). He continued to animate on various short films and commercials for Bolex Brothers before becoming a member of the animation team for “Robbie the Reindeer: Hooves of Fire” for the BBC.

In 2000 Rich joined Aardman Animations, working as a key animator on *CREATURE COMFORTS*, *ANGRY KID*, *MORPH*, a short film for the World Wildlife Fund and numerous commercials. He wrote and directed his first short film *LEN’S LENS* in 2001 and added to his directing credits with some ‘stings’ for E4 and commercials for The Countryside Code and ‘Serta’ mattresses.

Between 2004 and 2006, Rich created, wrote and directed a series of shorts called *PURPLE AND BROWN* for Nickelodeon, which went on to win a gold Promax award and a Children’s BAFTA. He then directed five episodes of the first series of “Shaun The Sheep” and wrote and directed another series of *PURPLE AND BROWN*.

In 2007 and 2008 Rich continued to work for the Aardman Commercials department, directing a series of Chevron commercials a short for the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, Funcheez and a campaign for Hotels.com; and in 2009 and 2010 Rich directed series 2 of “Shaun the Sheep” for which he received a second BAFTA.

Between 2010/2012, Rich designed and directed a series of shorts for Cartoon Network and Warner Brothers called *DC NATION SHORTS*. Which were nominated for an Emmy and won a National Cartoonist Society award. He then started developing his own animated series for Disney.

From 2013 to 2017, Rich worked on the character design and voice for *SHAUN THE SHEEP THE MOVIE*. He also directed more commercials, for BetFred campaign, Aldi snowman, Funky pigeon.com, Sudafed, Frubes, Brantano, Airb b&b, a series of short films celebrating David Attenborough's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, and most recently a series of shorts Clod for Aardmans Aardboiled youtube channel.

Alongside his design and directing talents Rich is also known for voicing characters such as Shirley in *SHAUN THE SHEEP*, Purple from *PURPLE AND BROWN* and Grubup from Nick Park's new feature film *EARLY MAN*.

### **MARK WILLIAMS – Barry**

Since graduating in English from Oxford University, Mark Williams has become a familiar and much-loved figure in film, TV and theatre.

His many film credits include Arthur Weasley in the *HARRY POTTER* films; Matthew Vaughn's *STARDUST*; Metin Hüseyin's *ANITA & ME*; Mel Smith's *HIGH HEELS & LOW LIFES*; Peter Hewitt's *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HAROLD SMITH*; John Madden's *SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE* and Pete Hewitt's *THE BORROWERS*. Prior to this Williams starred opposite Glenn Close and Hugh Laurie as 'Horace' in Stephen Herek's live action adaptation of Dodie Smith's *101 DALMATIANS*.

Williams is also well known in the UK as a regular in BBC TV's "The Fast Show" having starred in four series and a Christmas Special to date. Other notable television credits include: *RED DWARF*, *STUFF*, *BOTTOM*, *HARRY ENFIELD*, *TUMBLEDOWN*, *MAKING OUT*, *KINSEY*, *BAD COMPANY*, *HUNTING VENUS*, *HAPPY BIRTHDAY SHAKESPEARE*, *RANDALL & HOPKIRK (DECEASED)*, the co-lead in Rob Grant's series *THE STRANGERERS* and two series of *CARRIE AND BARRY* for the BBC. He was team host in the Sky quiz show *JUMPERS FOR GOALPOSTS*.

In 2002 Mark presented a 10-part series for the Discovery Channel about the Industrial Revolution, entitled *INDUSTRIAL REVELATIONS WITH MARK WILLIAMS* and followed this in 2003 with another 10 part series for Discovery *ON THE RAILS WITH MARK WILLIAMS*. In 2005 he made a third series for Discovery *MORE INDUSTRIAL REVELATIONS WITH MARK WILLIAMS*, 2006 he made *MARK WILLIAMS' BIG BANGS* for SKY One and in 2012 a one-off special *MADE IN BRITAIN* for Discovery.

Mark has played Sir John Middleton in *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* for the BBC, Rev Beebe in ITV's *A ROOM WITH A VIEW*, Richard Sharpe in the award winning *THE INDIAN DOCTOR* for BBC TV, Regus in *BEING HUMAN*, a guest lead in *HUSTLE* for BBC TV, Beach in the new series *BLANDINGS* for ITV and Brian Williams in two episodes of *DOCTOR WHO*. Most recently Mark has played the eponymous role in *FATHER BROWN*, a new 10 part series for BBC TV.

He has directed for the Channel 4 Sit-Com Festival as The Riverside Studios and co-produced *IN EXILE*, a sit-com series for Channel 4.

Since spending three years touring by narrowboat with the Mikron Theatre Company, his theatre credits have included the title role in *WILLIAM* for the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writers Festival,

FANSHEN at the National Theatre, 'Coquin' in DOCTOR OF HONOUR for Cheek by Jowl Theatre Company, THE CITY WIVES CONFEDERACY at Greenwich Theatre, MOSCOW GOLD, SINGER, A DREAM OF PEOPLE and 'Touchstone' in AS YOU LIKE IT for The Royal Shakespeare Company. In 1997 he played the role of 'Ivan' in ART in the West End. In 1998 he enjoyed a sell-out season at Labatt's Apollo of THE FAST SHOW LIVE ON STAGE and in 1999, played the role of 'Blakey' in Richard Wilson's production of TOAST at the Royal Court Theatre. In 2002 THE FAST SHOW LIVE TOUR played all across the United Kingdom with great success.

Mark has been awarded an Honorary Degree of Letters by the University of Birmingham and the Newman University, Birmingham. In 2015 he was awarded The Baird Medal at the Royal Television Society Midlands Awards.

### **GINA YASHERE – Gravelle**

Gina was born & raised in London UK, of Nigerian parents, and previously worked as an elevator engineer for Otis.

Gina has been a stand up and TV star in the UK for several years now, with appearances on iconic TV shows such as Mock The Week and hosting Live At The Apollo, as well as creating & performing popular comedic characters on The Lenny Henry Show.

She broke onto the American comedy scene with her appearances on Last Comic Standing (NBC), where she made it to the final 10, and then never went home!

Gina went on to be named one of the top 10 rising talents in the Hollywood Reporter. She is also known in the US for being the only British comedian to ever appear on the iconic Def Comedy Jam, as well as for her hilarious appearances on The Tonight Show (NBC), Crashing (HBO), @Midnight on Comedy Central, her 1 hour Stand Up Special, Skinny B\*tch on Showtime & now as the British Correspondent on Comedy Central's The Daily Show with Trevor Noah.

Her 3rd Stand Up Special, Gina Yashere: Ticking Boxes, filmed at the iconic O2 Brixton Academy, London, in front of over 2000 of her fans, was sold to NBC owned, Seeso TV in the US, in 2017, and she has just shot a 4th stand up Special for Netflix, which will be released in 2018.

Gina has performed for audiences not just in Europe, the US & Australia, but she is in fact, a highly sought after comedian in Asia, making numerous sold out appearances in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia & Hong Kong.

It's a wonder she found the time to pick up her 4th award in a row for "Best Comedian" at the recent Black Entertainment & Comedy Awards (UK).

Gina has performed numerous times at the prestigious Just For Laughs Comedy Festival in Montreal and Toronto.

Feature films appearances have included Kiss Kiss Bang Bang and Mr. in Between, and She has also appeared on the West-End stage in The Vagina Monologues.

Gina currently resides in New York and tours non-stop around the world.

### **SIMON GREENALL -Eemak & Thongo**

After studying at the Manchester Polytechnic School of Theatre, Simon has enjoyed a long and varied career which has included hundreds of different roles across film, television, theatre and radio. Numerous TV credits include playing Michael in 'I'm Alan Partridge' as well as appearances in 'Dr Who', 'Harry Enfield and Chums' and 'Hoff the Record' among many others. In addition to 'The Hive', Simon has also provided voices for many other hit animation series including 'The Mr. Men', 'Octonauts' and 'Shaun the Sheep, The Farmers Llamas'. Simon's voice can also be heard on many TV and radio adverts, including as the meerkats from the well-known comparison website advertising campaign.

### **SELINA GRIFFITHS – Magma**

Selina Griffiths is an English actress and writer. Her career includes numerous credits in television, radio and theatre productions.

Selina trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and made her professional stage debut at the Lyric Theatre in *The Way of The World*, subsequently adding roles in productions such as *Noises Off* at the Piccadilly Theatre, *Hotel in Amsterdam* at the Donmar Warehouse, *The Sea* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, and more recently, *Is there Wifi in heaven*, at the National Theatre. Her television experience is also extensive: Selina has appeared in well-known shows such as 'The Smoking Room', 'Cuckoo', 'Being Human', 'Jonathan Creek', 'Not going out', as well as 'Benidorm', amongst other productions.

Selina is the voice of Magma in the new upcoming Aardman Animations film *EARLY MAN*, released in 2018.

### **JOHNNY VEGAS – Asbo**

Johnny is an English actor and comedian. His extensive list of credits includes theatre and radio as well as film and television roles.

Johnny started and developed his career as a comedian with roles in BBC productions such as 'Night Class', on BBC Radio 4, and in the sitcom 'Ideal' for BBC Three, a role which extended from 2005 to 2011. In 2001, he won the 'Best Comedy Newcomer' prize at the British Comedy Awards. He toured with his own show, The Johnny Vegas Show, from 1998 to 2002; and between 2007 and 2009, Johnny starred in the high-profile sitcom 'Benidorm' as Geoff Maltby aka The Oracle, a role he returned to recently for the 8<sup>th</sup> series of the show.

His television credits also include, amongst others, the role of Mr. Croombe in the television adaptation of David Walliams' children's novel 'Mr Stink', as well as playing the characters of Crit Cop in 'Red Dwarf' and Wet Eric in 'Still Open All Hours', both for the BBC.

On the big screen, he has appeared in *THE HARRY HILL MOVIE*, *TULIP FEVER*, and *THE BROTHERS GRIMSBY* amongst other titles.

He can next be seen on the big screen voicing Asbo in the new Aardman Animations film *EARLY MAN*, directed by Nick Park and releasing in 2018.

**RICHARD AYOADE – Treebor**

Richard Ayoade is a multi-award winning comedian, actor, writer and director. The success of Garth Marengi's Dark Place (which he co-wrote, directed and starred in) was followed by his BAFTA award winning role in The IT Crowd, and numerous other TV credits including The Mighty Boosh. Ayoade wrote and directed the BAFTA nominated film Submarine and wrote and directed The Double starring Jesse Eisenberg. He currently presents Travel Man and The Crystal Maze for Channel 4 and has released two books, Ayoade on Ayoade and The Grip of Film both published by Faber & Faber.

**MIRIAM MARGOLYES – Queen Oofefa**

Born in Oxford, England in 1941 & educated at Newnham College, Cambridge, Miriam Margolyes is a veteran of stage and screen, an award-winning actress who achieved success on both sides of the Atlantic. Winner of the BAFTA Best Supporting Actress award in 1993 for THE AGE OF INNOCENCE, she also received Best Supporting Actress at the 1989 LA Critics Circle Awards for her role in LITTLE DORRIT and a Sony Radio Award for Best Actress in 1993 for her unabridged recording of OLIVER TWIST. She was the voice of the Matchmaker in MULAN & Fly, the mother dog, in BABE.

Major film credits during her long and celebrated career include YENTL, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, I LOVE YOU TO DEATH, END OF DAYS, SUNSHINE Scorsese's THE AGE OF INNOCENCE, COLD COMFORT FARM and MAGNOLIA. She starred in Stephen Hopkins' THE LIFE AND DEATH OF PETER SELLERS MODIGLIANI, Istvan Szabo's BEING JULIA & LADIES IN LAVENDER with Maggie Smith and Judi Dench. Margolyes played Professor Sprout in HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS and HARRY POTTER & THE DEATHLY HALLOWS (part II). Recent film credits include THE LEGEND OF LONGWOOD, OUTLIER, and THE MAN WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS opposite Dan Stevens, Christopher Plummer and Jonathan Pryce.

Most memorable TV credits include, OLD FLAMES, FREUD, LIFE AND LOVES OF A SHE DEVIL, BLACKADDER , THE GIRLS OF SLENDER MEANS, OLIVER TWIST, THE HISTORY MAN, VANITY FAIR & SUPPLY AND DEMAND. She was Franny in the CBS sitcom, FRANNIE'S TURN and had guest star roles in DHARMA AND GREG and MISS MARPLE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE. Her 2004 BBC TV documentary series about Charles Dickens in 2004; Dickens in America was a worldwide success. Credits from the last few years include: MERLIN. DOC MARTIN. THE MISS FISHER MURDER MYSTERIES for ABC in Australia, the Sky comedy series TROLLIED, the Australian hit-series, RAKE, and PLEBS for ITV 2. In 2016 Miriam shot THE REAL MARIGOLD HOTEL documentary series for BBC 1 to huge critical acclaim. She also recently starred in Frog Stone's comedy series BUCKET for BBC Four.

Stage credits include Madame Morrible in both the London & Broadway productions of WICKED, Madame Arcati in BLITHE SPIRIT (Melbourne Theatre Company) Miss Prism in THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (dir. Sir Peter Hall) , Lady Wishfort in THE WAY OF THE WORLD at Sydney Theatre Company, THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES, Sir Peter Hall's Los Angeles production of ROMEO AND JULIET, SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER & ORPHEUS DESCENDING in London (dir. Sir Peter Hall) THE KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE, THE THREEPENNY OPERA (Tony Richardson) & her own award-winning, one-woman show, DICKENS' WOMAN, performed at Festivals in Edinburgh, London, Sydney, Jerusalem, Santa Cruz, USA, New York City, Boston & all over India. Most recently, she starred in Theatre du Complicite's West End production of Beckett's ENDGAME, playing Nell, for which she won the WHATSONSTAGE award for Best Supporting Actress for the second time. She played the Duchess in the revival of ME & MY GIRL at the Sheffield Crucible in December 2010. She

starred in A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow. In 2012 Margolyes once again completed a world-wide tour of DICKENS' WOMEN starting in Australia and New Zealand and touring around the UK and the USA. Returning to Australia in 2014, she starred as Ana in the Adelaide State Theatre's highest grossing production of NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH and in the Melbourne Theatre Company's one woman play I'LL EAT YOU LAST as the indomitable Hollywood Agent Sue Mengers. In 2015 Margolyes toured Australia with her one -woman show THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING MIRIAM, a passionate discovery of words and music, just released as a CD. She most recently performed as the leading role in MADAME RUBINSTEIN at the Park Theatre in 2017.

Her voice work has been internationally acclaimed & she is regarded as the most accomplished female voice in Britain. She has recorded many audio books including Oliver Twist, Great Expectations, Alice in Wonderland & Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Matilda, Pinocchio, The Worst Witch series, The Queen & I (one of the best-selling audio books in the world) The Little White Horse, The Sea, Troy & Wise Child ). She voiced many TV documentaries, including The Human Body, & numerous commercials, the most famous probably being the Manikin Cigar ads, the Cadbury's Caramel Bunny & Dolly, the Chimp in the PG Tips Campaign. She is now the voice of Mama in the Dolmio TV commercials. She is also Nana Sheila in the Disney Mini Series NINA NEEDS TO GO and NINA NEEDS TO EAT, and The Weathersnike in BOTTERSNIKE & GUMBLES (Netflix/CBBC).

Radio is a medium she excels in 2012-13 she completed series 1 & 2 of "THE GLOOMSBURYS" the radio parody of the Bloomsbury Group by Sue Limb for Radio 4. 2015 saw Series 3 coming to air with more of Vera Sackcloth-Vest and the rest of the Bloomsbury Set. Series 4 will be aired in 2017. Miriam is currently starring in the second season of THE REAL MARIGOLD HOTEL for BBC One following the success of the first one, in which she joins three of the original cast members to explore and tour China and Cuba.

In 2002, H.M The Queen awarded her the Order of the British Empire for her services to Drama.

### **KAYVAN NOVAK – Dino/Jurgend**

Kayvan Novak is best known for FONEJACKER which he co-created and co-wrote with together with Ed Tracy, this went on to win a BAFTA & 3 RTS awards. He later starred in the 2011 spin-off series called FACEJACKER and the 2012 chat show as the main character Terry Tibbs, which also won an RTS Award. He has also appeared in the most recent adaptation of THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO as Brains, ASYLUM, DANGER MOUSE, SKINS and THE INCREASINGLY POOR DECISION OF TODD MARGARET. Some of his film credits include PADDINGTON, PREVENGE, FOUR LIONS and CUBAN FURY.

## Biographies – CREW

### NICK PARK - Director/Producer

Nick Park is a four-time Academy Award® winner, three in the category of Best Animated Short Film - *CREATURE COMFORTS*, *THE WRONG TROUSERS* and *A CLOSE SHAVE* and more recently in the category for Best Animated Feature Film for *THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT*. All four films were created and produced at Aardman, where Park is a co-director with founders Peter Lord and David Sproxton.

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 onto the National Film & Television School in Beaconsfield, England. At the NFTS Park began working on *A GRAND DAY OUT*, marking the introduction of Wallace & Gromit. In February 1985 he joined Aardman where he completed the film. He then directed *CREATURE COMFORTS* for Aardman's Lip Synch series for Channel 4 Television.

In 1990 both *CREATURE COMFORTS* and *A GRAND DAY OUT* were nominated for the Academy Award® Best Animated Short film giving Park the rare distinction of having two films nominated in the same category in the same year; *CREATURE COMFORTS* won. Both films were also nominated for a BAFTA®, this time *A Grand Day Out* was the winner. Park won his second Academy Award® and second BAFTA® *THE WRONG TROUSERS* and his third Academy Award® BAFTA for *A CLOSE SHAVE*, both starring the much-loved duo. *THE WRONG TROUSERS* and *A CLOSE SHAVE* have won over 100 prestigious international awards.

In 1996, Park and Aardman were honoured 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). In June 2000, Park's first feature film *CHICKEN RUN*, co-directed with Aardman co-founder Peter Lord, was released worldwide to critical acclaim and box office success. *CHICKEN RUN* has grossed over \$250m worldwide, it was the 'best reviewed film of the year' in the US and established the Aardman studio as a major force in animated feature films.

In 2005 the first Wallace and Gromit feature film *THE CURSE OF THE WERERABBIT* was released worldwide. Along with co-director Steve Box, Park picked up his fourth Academy Award®, this time for Best Animated Feature Film (2006).

Wallace and Gromit's *A MATTER OF LOAF AND DEATH* was broadcast on BBC One on Christmas Day 2008 to a record beating 16.15M viewers. The 30-minute film was directed by Nick Park and co-written by Park and Bob Baker (Baker co-wrote both *THE WRONG TROUSERS* and *A CLOSE SHAVE*). The film won the BAFTA® for "Best Short Animation" and in the US, the Annie Award for "Best Animated Short Subject".

In the Autumn of 2010, "*Wallace and Gromit's World of Invention*", a six-part factual series for BBC One, saw Wallace and Gromit turn their hand to 'TV presenting' for the first time. The animated duo introduced films featuring interesting, unusual and extraordinary real-life inventions from around the world.

During the summer of 2013, Nick Park introduced over 80 giant Gromit sculptures to the streets of Bristol. The 'Gromit Unleashed' trail was on one of the highest-profile charity arts-trails the country

has ever seen, an eclectic line-up of artists, celebrities and fashion designers created designs for the 5ft Gromits. After 10 weeks the trail culminated in an auction which raised £2.35M for Wallace and Gromit's Grand Appeal and Bristol's Children's Hospital. This unique charity initiative was replicated with 'Shaun in the City', where 120 giant Shaun the Sheep sculptures decorated the streets of London and Bristol in the Spring and Summer of 2015 which went on to raise over £1,000,000 for children's hospitals throughout the UK.

Over the years with Aardman, Park has also served as a director and animator on numerous projects including pop promos, title sequences and inserts for children's television.

Park is currently directing his latest feature film *EARLY MAN* with film partner STUDIOCANAL, set for global theatrical release in 2018.

### **MARK BURTON – Writer**

Prior to co-writing and co-directing *Shaun The Sheep The Movie*, Mark has enjoyed a long history with Aardman having been a writer on both *Chicken Run* (Aardman/DreamWorks 2000) and *Wallace and Gromit Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (Aardman/DreamWorks 2005), which won an Oscar® for Best Animated Feature, and a BAFTA for Best British Film. He has also acted as consultant for Aardman's Feature Development team.

Mark started out as a comedy writer on numerous Brit TV shows including *Spitting Image*, *Alas Smith and Jones*, *Clive Anderson Talks Back* and *Have I Got News For You*. He co-wrote two series of BBC sit-com *The Peter Principle* and later adapted John O'Farrell's novel *May Contain Nuts* for ITV.

He has subsequently worked as a screenwriter on both sides of the Atlantic with projects for BBC Films, Working Title, Universal, Fox, Warners, Disney and DreamWorks. His other film credits include *Madagascar* (DreamWorks) *Gnomeo & Juliet* (Touchstone/Disney) and *Aliens in the Attic* (Fox).

### **JAMES HIGGINSON – Writer**

James Higginson is a screenwriter and senior story executive based in-house at Aardman. James previously headed feature development at Wasted Talent Ltd (CONFETTI, KILLING BONO), before coming to work at Aardman in 2011. James assists in overseeing the Aardman feature film development slate, and has worked in-house as a writer on several Aardman features in development, as well as co-writing *EARLY MAN*.

### **PETER LORD – Producer**

Peter Lord is co-owner and Creative Director of Aardman, which he co-founded with his long-time collaborator, David Sproxton, in 1972. As a director, Lord has been honoured with two Academy Award® nominations for Best Animated Short, the first in 1992 for *ADAM*, and for *WAT'S PIG* in 1996, and Best Animated Feature for *PIRATES! IN AN ADVENTURE WITH SCIENTISTS* in 2013. He has also earned BAFTA® nominations for *ADAM*, *THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF MORPH*, *WAR STORY* and *CHICKEN RUN* and, as a producer for *WALLACE AND GROMIT, THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT*.

Lord first met Sproxton in the early 1970's at school, where they started experimenting with animation techniques on their kitchen table. They tried a range of methods before settling on plasticine/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 programme, Vision on.



After going professional in 1976, their first success was with the clay character 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 the UK'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 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 THE RUNT*, *HUMDRUM*, *STAGE FRIGHT* and *THE PEARCE SISTERS* as well as the spectacularly successful series of films starring Wallace and Gromit including, most recently, *A MATTER OF LOAF AND DEATH*.

Aardman's special brand of animation has also been seen in TV commercials in various countries for such products as far ranging as Chevron, Lurpack, Mita Copiers, Cadbury's Crunchie and Polo.

In 2000, Lord teamed up with Nick Park to co-direct Aardman's first full-length feature *CHICKEN RUN*, starring the voice of Mel Gibson, which was a commercial and critical smash. Lord also produced the Academy Award-winning first feature length film starring Wallace and his faithful canine sidekick Gromit. *WALLACE AND GROMIT – THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT* was released in 2005.

Lord was a Producer of Aardman's first CGI feature film, *FLUSHED AWAY*, which was produced in collaboration with DreamWorks in Glendale LA and released worldwide at the end of 2006. In 2011, he was Executive Producer on Aardman's second major CGI project, *ARTHUR CHRISTMAS*, directed by Sarah Smith. This time the film was made in collaboration with Columbia and Sony Pictures Animation.

A second project with the same studio saw Lord returning to the classic Aardman technique of stop-frame animation. He directed his first solo venture: *THE PIRATES! IN AN ADVENTURE WITH SCIENTISTS*, a delicious confection of piracy on the high seas, which starred the voice of Hugh Grant. The film was released in 2012 to critical acclaim worldwide and nominated for an Academy Award® (2013 Oscar's) in the Best Animated Feature Film category. Towards the end of 2013 Peter fronted an extremely successful Kickstarter crowd funding campaign to 'Bring back Morph'. The campaign quickly exceeded its target funding and consequently more episodes of Morph than originally planned are currently in production.

In 2009 Lord and Sproxton were presented with a Special Award from BAFTA® in the TV Craft Awards.

In 2012 Peter he was the Honorary President of the Hiroshima Animation Festival and attends numerous animation and film festivals to give talks and sit on juries.

Peter and David Sproxton were awarded CBE's in the 2006 Queen's Birthday honours list, the same year that saw them celebrate 30 years of Aardman.

Peter's most recent film credits are as Executive Producer on Aardman's recent hit film *SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE* and the studios upcoming animated comedy adventure *EARLY MAN*.

### **CARLA SHELLEY - Producer**

Carla Shelley is Head of Feature Production for Aardman and has produced a number of award winning & nominated features, shorts and commercials during her time with the company.

In addition to serving as a producer on "Early Man," Carla was previously a producer on Aardman's CGI feature film "Arthur Christmas" (2011) and executive producer on Aardman's stop-motion feature film "The Pirates! Band of Misfits" (2012), both in association with Sony Pictures Entertainment. Prior to this she was one of the producers on "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Wererabbit" (2005), which garnered many prestigious international awards including the Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature Film and a BAFTA for Best British Film; and she served as the line producer on Aardman's first full length feature, "Chicken Run" (2000), both in association with DreamWorks Animation.

Carla won a BAFTA Award for her work as producer on Nick Park's Oscar® winning short film "A Close Shave" (1995). She also produced Peter Peake's Oscar® and BAFTA nominated short "Humdrum" (1998), as well as his BAFTA nominated "Pib and Pog" (1994), for Channel 4. In addition, Carla worked on the series "The Amazing Adventures of Morph," for BBC television.

Before moving into film production, Carla was head of Aardman's commercials division for four years. She has produced many 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, Carla had a background in radio production, working for the BBC.

### **DAVID SPROXTON – Executive Producer**

David Sproxton is the co-founder and Executive Chairman of Aardman. Together with co-founder Peter Lord, he has overseen the development of the company from a two-man partnership to one of the pre-eminent animation houses in the industry. Their first professional creation was the character 'Morph'.

David has served as a producer, director or cinematographer on many of the animated projects at Aardman.

Aardman's film *The Shaun the Sheep Movie* (2016) has been nominated for numerous Awards including an Academy Award® and BAFTA®.

David Sproxton spent 3 years on the Board of the UK Film Council. He is now chairman of Encounters Festival (Bristol's celebration of the Short film).

In 2006, David and Peter celebrated being awarded The CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

David's most recent film credits are as Executive Producer on Aardman's hit film *SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE* and the studios upcoming animated comedy adventure *EARLY MAN*.

### **RICHARD BEEK - Producer**

Richard Beek has worked at Aardman for the past 17 years, starting as a Runner on *Chicken Run* he has been key part of many of Aardman's most loved projects – *Creature Comforts* (Floor Manager), *Shaun the Sheep* (Production Manager / Line Producer), *Wallace & Gromit* (2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director / Production Manager) and *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists* (Production Manager). 'Early Man' is his first Producer credit on a feature film.

### **WILL BECHER – Animation Director**

After a degree in animation at Edinburgh College of Art, Will joined Aardman Animations as a trainee assistant animator on *WALLACE & GROMIT'S CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT*. Since then he has worked on feature films, commercials and TV shows including *THE PIRATES! IN AN ADVENTURE WITH SCIENTISTS*, *CREATURE COMFORTS* and *SHAUN THE SHEEP THE MOVIE*. Will directed the most recent series of "Shaun the Sheep", and is currently working as Animation Director on Nick Park's latest feature film *EARLY MAN* at Aardman.

### **MERLIN CROSSINGHAM – Animation Director**

Merlin joined Aardman as an animator in 1996 having completed a degree in Film and Photography at the Newport Film School.

Initially working on commercials before taking the roles of Key Animator on the feature film *CHICKEN RUN*, and Second Unit Director on *WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE RABBIT*. Merlin then co-directed the "Creature Comforts" USA series for CBS, for which he gained an Emmy nomination.

In 2009, Merlin took on the role of Creative Director for Wallace & Gromit where he directs all aspects of the Wallace and Gromit brand from merchandise and live shows, to commercials and short films.

Merlin also recently directed and voiced the re-launch series of Aardman's oldest stop motion character, Morph, in 2014 and the second series which is out in October 2016.

Merlin is currently working as Animation Director on Nick Park's latest feature film *EARLY MAN*, which is set for global release from January 2018.

### **DAVE ALEX RIDDETT – Director of Photography**

Dave Alex has been working as a Cinematographer / Director for over 35 years, specialising in the wonderful world of Stop Frame Animation.

Along with fellow filmmaker, Dave Borthwick, he co-founded the film collective Bolex Brothers in the early 1980s.

Collaborating with Aardman since the mid-1980s on early classics such as *Creature Comforts* and the *Sledgehammer* music video Dave Alex went on to work as Director of Photography on the Wallace and Gromit short films and TV specials as well as countless commercials.

As well as occasionally Directing commercials and short films he has continued his role of Director of Photography on the feature films 'Chicken Run', 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the WereRabbit', 'Shaun the Sheep Movie' and the recent 'Early Man'.

He was made a fellow of Arts University Bournemouth on 2013 for his contribution to Cinematography and Animation.

### **KATE ANDERSON – Puppet Designer/Creative Head of Department**

Despite having an early childhood love of stop motion animation, Kate only started to specialise in puppet making after 10 years as a general modelmaker in London.

Joining Aardman in the mid-nineties she has built puppets & headed up teams on the majority of Aardman's productions since that time, including 'Chicken Run', 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit' & 'The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists'.

As well as running the puppet builds for two series of Creature Comforts & three series of Shaun the Sheep, her most recent credits are as puppet designer & creative head of department on the 'Shaun the Sheep Movie' & Nick Park's 'Early Man' film.

### **SIMON EVAN-JONES – Editor**

Sim worked for Stephen Spielberg's Amblimation in London during the early nineties, first as an Assistant Editor on 'American Tail II' and then as Co-Editor on 'We're back and Balto', both distributed by Universal Pictures. In 1995 he moved to Los Angeles as one of the first employees of DreamWorks Animation, working on the 'Prince of Egypt' as an Associate Editor and then went on to cut 'Shrek' and 'Shrek 2' for director Andrew Adamson, as well as helping out on the first 'Madagascar' movie.

Sim then began working for Disney, editing the live action, New Zealand filmed picture 'The Chronicles of Narnia; the Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe' and returned to the UK in 2007 to cut the 'The Chronicles of Narnia; Prince Caspian', again with Andrew Adamson.

Sim went on to edit 'Hippy, Hippy, Shake' for Beeban Kidron and 'Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang' for Susanna White, both at Working Title. He spent some time in New Zealand, again with Andrew Adamson, cutting Cirque du Soleil's 'World's Away' 3D, shot in Las Vegas, and 'MrPip', starring Hugh Laurie, shot in Papua New Guinea.

More recently Sim was consultant editor on the 3D effects movie 'Pompeii', and the animated movies 'Free birds' and 'Book of Life' for Dallas' realFX.

### **MATT PERRY – Production Designer**

Matt Perry studied Architecture at Leicester Polytechnic for 5 years before gaining architectural experience in Hong Kong. After a year there he changed tack pursuing career in model making and sculpting. In 1996, after travelling and working for four years across Asia and Australia, he returned to Britain. He settled in Bristol specifically to gain experience with Aardman.

After working on several advertisements for them, he began preliminary build for test Sets and Props on 'Chicken Run'. He was shortly elevated to a design role designing the key props 'The Pie Machine' and 'The Flying Machine'.

On subsequent projects Matt took on the role of Art Director for Aardman. These included Wallace & Gromit's feature and short film, 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit' and 'Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death'.

He was Supervising Art Director on the 3-D feature 'The Pirates – In an Adventure with Scientists' receiving an Annie nomination for Production Design, before moving up to a Production Design role on 'Shaun the Sheep Movie'.

Matt was the Production Designer on *Early Man*, released January 2018, and is currently heading up the Design team on Aardman's latest feature length project 'Shaun the Sheep 2' due for release in 2019.

#### **HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS - Composer**

Harry Gregson-Williams is one of Hollywood's most sought-after composers, whose scores span the spectrum of high-profile projects from action to drama to animation – each infused with the emotional punch and atmospheric intensity that mark his distinctive musical style. He was the composer on all four instalments of the blockbuster *SHREK* franchise; garnered a BAFTA nomination for the score for the first *SHREK*; and received Golden Globe and Grammy Award nominations for his score to Andrew Adamson's *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE*.

His most recent projects underline his uniquely diverse range and appeal: Aardman Animations upcoming *EARLY MAN*, directed by Nick Park and Warner Bros. *THE MEG* starring Jason Statham and directed by Jon Turteltaub. His other current projects include *THE EQUALIZER 2* starring Denzel Washington and directed by Antoine Fuqua and Disney Nature's *PENGUIN* slated for a 2019 release.

In addition, he wrote the original score for *BREATH*, which marked the directorial debut of Simon Baker who also co-stars in the film and the music for *THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE* starring Jessica Chastain and directed by Niki Caro, which was released in March 2017. He also composed the music for the dramatic crime thriller *LIVE BY NIGHT*, starring Ben Affleck who also directed the film from his own screenplay. The film, which marks their third collaboration, is based on the award-winning best-seller by Dennis Lehane.

Other recent scores include HBO's *CONFIRMATION* which stars Kerry Washington and Greg Kinnear, the blockbuster *The Martian* starring Matt Damon and directed by Ridley Scott, *MISS YOU ALREADY* for director Catherine Hardwicke, and *THE EQUALIZER* starring Denzel Washington and directed by Antoine Fuqua.

His long list of film credits also includes the critically acclaimed *THE TOWN* directed by Ben Affleck. Gregson-Williams first worked with Affleck as the composer on *GONE BABY GONE*. He has worked multiple times with other directors including Joel Schumacher on the films *TWELVE*, *THE NUMBER*

23, *VERONICA GUERIN* and *PHONE BOOTH*; Tony Scott on *UNSTOPPABLE*, *THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3*, *DÉJÀ VU*, *DOMINO*, *MAN ON FIRE*, *SPY GAME* and *ENEMY OF THE STATE*; and Ridley Scott on *PROMETHEUS* and *KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*. Gregson-Williams' prolific output has also seen him scoring Mike Newell's *PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME*; *X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE*; Jon Favreau's *COWBOYS & ALIENS*; *BLACKHAT* for Michael Mann; Adamson's *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN* and *MR. PIP*; Beeban Kidron's *BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON*; Aardman's animated films *ARTHUR CHRISTMAS* and *CHICKEN RUN*; the unique documentary *LIFE IN A DAY*; Len Wiseman's *TOTAL RECALL*; *RETURN TO SENDER* and *SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW*, both for director Bille August; Antoine Fuqua's *THE REPLACEMENT KILLERS*; and the first computer generated animation from Dreamworks, *ANTZ*.

Gregson-Williams has scored three of the five games in the highly successful *METAL GEAR SOLID* franchise for Konami and recently scored *CALL OF DUTY* for Activision which became the top selling video game of 2014 and which earned him various music gaming awards.

Born in England to a musical family, Gregson-Williams earned a music scholarship to St. John's College, Cambridge at the age of 7 and subsequently gained a coveted spot at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama from which he recently received an Honorary Fellowship. Gregson-Williams then turned his attention to teaching, initially in schools in England but later in Alexandria, Egypt. He started his film career as assistant to composer Richard Harvey and later as orchestrator and arranger for Stanley Myers, and then went on to compose his first scores for director Nicolas Roeg. His subsequent collaboration and friendship with composer Hans Zimmer resulted in Gregson-Williams providing music for such films as *THE ROCK*, *ARMAGEDDON* and *THE PRINCE OF EGYPT* and helped launch his career in Hollywood. He has also been a regular and valued mentor at the Sundance Composers Lab working directly with talented emerging composers from all over the world. Gregson-Williams has five children and has lived and worked in Los Angeles since 1995.

**KEY CREDITS**

<b>Directed by</b>	Nick Park
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Mark Burton and James Higginson
<b>Story by</b>	Mark Burton and Nick Park
<b>Produced by</b>	Carla Shelley and Richard Beek Peter Lord, Nick Park and David Sproxton
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Alicia Gold Ron Halpern, Didier Lupfer and Danny Perkins Ben Roberts and Natascha Wharton Sim Evan-Jones A.C.E. Will Becher and Merlin Crossingham
<b>Edited by</b>	Dave Alex Riddett
<b>Animation Directors</b>	Harry Gregson-Williams and Tom Howe
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Matt Perry
<b>Music by</b>	Loyd Price
<b>Production Designer</b>	Kate Anderson
<b>Animation Supervisor</b>	Ben Barrowman
<b>Puppet Design</b>	Zoe Starzak
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director</b>	Adrian Rhodes
<b>Production Manager, Art &amp; Puppets</b>	Howard Jones
<b>Supervising Sound Editor</b>	Tom Barnes
<b>VFX Supervisor</b>	Sean Clarke, Paul Kewley and Kerry Lock
<b>Technical Director</b>	Gail Stevens CDG
<b>Co-Executive Producers</b>	
<b>Casting Director</b>	
<b>Dug</b>	Eddie Redmayne
<b>Lord Nooth</b>	Tom Hiddleston
<b>Goon</b>	Maisie Williams
<b>Chief Bobnar</b>	Timothy Spall
<b>Queen Oofoefa</b>	Miriam Margolyes

**The Message Bird**

**Dino & Jurgend**

**Brian & Bryan**

**Treebor**

**Magma**

**Asbo**

**Barry**

**Gravelle**

**Grubup**

**Eemak & Thongo**

**Hognob**

Rob Brydon

Kayvan Novak

Rob Brydon

Richard Ayoade

Selina Griffiths

Johnny Vegas

Mark Williams

Gina Yashere

Richard Webber

Simon Greenall

Nick Park