

A Shaun the Sheep™ MOVIE
FARMAGEDDON

PRODUCTION NOTES



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Synopsis

Strange lights over the quiet town of Mossingham herald the arrival of a mystery visitor from far across the galaxy...

For Shaun the Sheep's second feature-length movie, the follow-up to 2015's smash hit SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE, A SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE: FARMAGEDDON takes the world's favourite woolly hero and plunges him into an hilarious intergalactic adventure he will need to use all of his cheekiness and heart to work his way out of.

When a visitor from beyond the stars – an impish and adorable alien called LU-LA – crash-lands near Mossy Bottom Farm, Shaun soon sees an opportunity for alien-powered fun and adventure, and sets off on a mission to shepherd LU-LA back to her home.

Her magical alien powers, irrepressible mischief and galactic sized burps soon have the flock enchanted and Shaun takes his new extra-terrestrial friend on a road-trip to Mossingham Forest to find her lost spaceship.

Little do the pair know, though, that they are being pursued at every turn by a mysterious alien-hunting government agency, spearheaded by the formidable Agent Red and her bunch of hapless, hazmat-suited goons.

With Agent Red driven by a deep-seated drive to prove the existence of aliens and Bitzer unwittingly dragged into the haphazard chase, can Shaun and the flock avert Farmageddon on Mossy Bottom Farm before it's too late?

Star Power

The creative team behind the world's favourite woolly wonder explain how, in Farmageddon, they've boldly gone where no sheep has gone before...

Shaun the Sheep is already an A-list star, beloved by millions (of all ages) worldwide for his hit TV series and cemented as a movie star in smash spin-off SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE in 2015. But, for his second outing in cinemas, his filmmakers wanted to push the character to places he had genuinely never been. And in ways that were bigger, better – more like an epic, Sci-Fi movie. “That is exactly what we were trying to do,” says co-director Will Becher, an alumnus of the TV series and Animation Director on Nick Park’s *EARLY MAN*, who is making his directing debut with *A SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE: FARMAGEDDON*. “Trying to make it feel like a very big, cinematic, very much sci-fi extravaganza, and open up Shaun’s world in a way that we’ve never seen before. It really plays to that classic, Steven Spielberg-style sci-fi genre.”

In *FARMAGEDDON*, Shaun the Sheep’s blissful – if occasionally mischievous – everyday existence is upended entirely by the arrival of an extra-terrestrial – a cute, crazy, sparkly purple-blue one: LU-LA. And she’s not just an excuse for some hilarious and action-packed set-pieces, but a character who throws Shaun’s beloved family dynamic into chaos. Usually the rebel of the stories – straining against the authoritarian rules of the long-suffering sheepdog Bitzer (“Who is effectively his older brother,” notes Becher), while always trying to make sure his antics remain unseen by the farmer (“Our father-figure”), *FARMAGEDDON* sees Shaun discover an all-new, and deeply terrifying, emotional frontier. “For once, Shaun has to be, relatively speaking, the sensible one,” laughs co-director Richard Phelan, who also makes his feature-length directing debut here. “He has to start to grow up, to look after her. That’s something he’s never had to do before.”

LU-LA, an astonishing new Aardman creation, is an alien who has crash-landed on Earth and finds herself pursued by the dastardly Agent Red and her hazmat-suited goons, a bunch of secret and sinister government types out to prove the existence of aliens and capture their quarry by any means necessary. “It’s up to Shaun to get LU-LA home safely,” says Phelan. “But he’s going to have to pull off all of his greatest ever tricks if he’s going to do it.”

In a way, the seeds of *FARMAGEDDON* were sown almost a decade ago. “I remember when I first moved to Aardman, I said, ‘Why don’t we do a sci-fi movie?’” says producer Paul Kewley. But it was only when, three years ago, Richard Starzak, the Shaun series overseer who took Nick Park’s original “bit-part” character from 1995’s ‘A Close Shave’ and gave him the depth, shade and wit that would expand him out into a star in his own right, came up with the concept for Shaun’s big screen sequel that that idea became more fully formed. “When we first started talking about the sequel, it was Richard who drove it, saying we should do something about aliens,” remembers Kewley. “I was on board very quickly. We were drawn to this idea that the alien would come to Shaun and it would be set in our world.”

The story developed through intensive meetings and relentless questioning, with everyone contributing. Mark Burton, one of the writers and directors of the first Shaun movie, joined the *FARMAGEDDON* directors in thrashing out ideas, alongside editor Sim Evan-Jones and Kewley. “There are no egos in that room,” says Phelan. “There can’t be. You are allowed to be wrong

because we are looking for the very funniest version, the most entertaining ideas. We are springboarding around a big roundtable thinking, ‘Well, what would Shaun do?’”

“I see it from a character point of view,” says Evan-Jones, who edited the first Shaun The Sheep Movie, as well as Shrek and its sequel. “Shaun is always naughty – you know he’s always going to be skirting the corner of trouble. If you see Shaun walk past the sweet shop and see him stop and look in the window, you think ‘Aye-aye! Something is going to go on here!’ And LU-LA doubles that jeopardy. She is even cheekier and more out-there than Shaun.”

Add to that the fact that Shaun has to keep LU-LA secret from the world at large, hidden from Agent Red and her cohorts, and FARMAGEDDON has a scale and sense of adventure that smashes through the already considerably high ceiling Aardman has always set for its woolly hero. “The stakes are raised in that way,” says Evan-Jones. “First you see them [the government agents] just in their sinister black van... then you find out they have a secret base deep under Mossingham.” Not that things ever get *too* sinister, of course. “It’s a greater threat that is done in a very Aardman way,” reassures Evan-Jones. “It’s not quite life or death, but you know they are out to get her!”

For cinematographer Charles Copping, FARMAGEDDON didn’t just represent the chance to shoot Shaun in his most expansive, epic way to date – “Those sets were huge, extraordinary,” Copping marvels of production designer Matt Perry’s astonishing builds; “Agent Red’s underground lair is all very James Bond!” – but saw him come full circle with the character.

“I do feel a lot of affinity with Shaun,” smiles Copping, “because 25 years ago, my first ever job at Aardman was as a runner on ‘A Close Shave’. That was Shaun’s debut and it was my debut, so our paths have been truly in parallel. As Shaun has gone from TV to features, so have I. We have grown together.”

Forged from the whole team’s long-held love of the genre, FARMAGEDDON is at once a tribute to the classics, and an hilarious, Shaun-shaped reinvention of its many established tropes. “We studied classic sci-fi for ages,” says Phelan, “looking at the lenses they use, the frame, Kubrick’s compositional shots, Spielberg’s way of choreographing movement through the frame. Realising all this is incredibly meticulous in animation. You can’t just say, ‘the camera pans around’, you know?”

It all helped expand the setting from what regular viewers of Shaun are used to – contrasting the everyday, deliberate plainness of his home farm with the colourful and surreal alien world and hardcore military tech. “Shaun’s world in the TV series feels quite contained, quite small in a way,” says Phelan. “But here we picked at that surface, we said that underneath it are these secret government organisations. And that 10,000 light years away there is another planet. Then his world just gets huge.” Or, as Copping has it, “The visual elements become more exciting the bigger the journey he goes on. And this is the biggest adventure Shaun has ever had.”

Capturing that spirit of classic sci-fi – and appealing to all ages – was crucial for the FARMAGEDDON team. And, from the reaction the finished film has enjoyed at early screenings, it would seem to have paid off in spades. “The parents saw a really valuable story for their kids about responsibility of relationships. The kids loved meeting a new friend and a new character. It

worked on lots of different levels,” says Becher of the reactions so far. “Most great animation crosses divides, it reminds people that we’re all the same,” says Kewley. “This is a story about an alien coming to our world and getting accepted.”

But at the heart of it all remains a little sheep with a big naughty streak. “When Nick [Park] created Shaun, he created a perfect character,” says Kewley. “And what Richard [Starzak] did when he created the series was figure out how to take that character and build on it.” For them, Shaun is always about a spirit of rebelliousness, but always with a good heart. “The thing is that Shaun is not a good kid, and that’s great,” says Kewley. “I don’t want my seven-year-old to be an angel all the time. I want him to have a bit of the Devil in him. Shaun is the guy who will always press the red button, but he’ll always know he’s done something wrong when he has. That’s why we can all relate to him.”

Putting that relatable character – that has not just endured but grown exponentially over 25 celebrated, award-winning years – into a sci-fi adventure was a test for everyone involved, from the first-time feature directors to even the experienced Aardman crew. But, ultimately, it was all very much worth all the agonising.

“Shaun the Sheep has always remained a brilliant constant for us,” reflects co-executive producer Carla Shelley, who has been with Aardman more than 30 years. “Over the years, when we’ve talked to American partners, they’ve often said that they want to put a voice on Shaun, to have him learn things. Sacrilege! That’s not *Shaun*! Not only did we resist that, we turned it on its head. Shaun doesn’t talk - that’s his USP and it has connected so strongly with people for so long.”

Shelley pauses, reflecting on his 25 years of hair-brained adventure. “You know, when we first met Shaun, he was just a bit-part character, a pawn in the bigger Wallace and Gromit story.” She smiles, proudly. “And just look at him *now*!”

The DNA of LU-LA

The key creatives talk this brand-new edition to the Shaun the Sheep universe, his new alien best buddy who is blowing early audiences away...

Her character

“When we first sat down to talk about this movie, we knew we wanted to add a new element of nuance, of Shaun growing up. So, we needed a new character, one that he has to grow up to look after. That’s LU-LA. She’s a young alien who has crash-landed on Earth, and who needs Shaun’s help to get back home. She is a puppet unlike any other in the Aardman universe. She’s stretchy. She moves at a speed that no other character can. Her eyes bug out.” Richard Phelan, co-director

Her name

Shaun's new, extra-terrestrial visitor and friend was aptly named as a nod to the 50th Anniversary of the Lunar landing in July 2019.

Her charm

"Where LU-LA has ended up [after the lengthy production process] is that she's got such a warmth and charm that she's quite irresistible. It's taken a long time to get her there, but we know we've got her right. For a long time, she looked a bit like a dog, but then we felt that she was maybe a bit too pet-like, not alien enough. We didn't want to go the more obviously 'alien' route and make her ugly, we wanted her to be endearing and charming, but not vulnerable." Carla Shelley, co-executive producer

Her look

"We had the idea, but we didn't have LU-LA. We knew roughly the things she needed to do. She needed powers to do this or that. The designers went away and did hundreds of designs, crazy versions of her. Then, one of the designers drew a UFO with a little sort of rocket thrust underneath it. It was a silhouette and it was perfect. You've got think about what works in the world of Shaun because she has got to stand next to these characters and feel like she's from that universe. And that was it." Richard Phelan, co-director

Her voice

"We went through so many iterations of LU-LA. At one point, the conversation turned to her abilities. Highlighting her vulnerability and innocence was key – showing that aliens could be just as scared and sensitive as us. She's voiced by Amalia Vitale and her voice just fits the puppet so well. When we put the two things together, we went, 'Oh, *now* we're starting to see a character!' That blend of innocence and cheekiness is what we wanted." Mark Burton, writer

Her abilities

"LU-LA has emerged as this beautiful thing from a beautiful world, who is beautifully designed, by the way. It was decided that she would have certain otherworldly skills and party tricks. But until you put them into the plotting, you don't know how they're going to reveal themselves..." Sim Evan-Jones, editor

Her sound

"The first thing I wrote [on this movie] was LU-LA's tune. Because, really, she's driving this and her craziness is next-level. Where Shaun can, you know, throw a ball and smash a window, she can

levitate tractors. She is chaos on another level. For her sound, I used a plug-in, it emulates an old piece of kit called a crystalliser. It adds a bit of chorus fizz and unusualness. She had other sounds

but the main one for her melody was a celesta. I added reverbs and all sorts of different things, to up the unusualness. As soon as I heard it, I knew that was it. I sent it to Aardman and they loved it.

They put it in [the early temp track] and it stayed all the way in there until the end.” Tom Howe, composer

Her impact

“We did a test screening [of the movie] and the reaction to LU-LA was amazing. It was scary sitting there, because we knew Lu-La was going to appear on screen in about 30 seconds and they were either going to love her or hate her. So, when she came on screen and all the rustling of sweets stopped and the whole room went, ‘Ahhhh!’ we were like, ‘Thank God!’” Will Becher, co-director

Her future

“There are ideas that are knocking around in relation to that [LU-LA reappearing in future Shaun the Sheep adventures]. We have no shortage of ideas...” Paul Kewley, producer

Code Red

*Six steps to creating a truly iconic science fiction villain, by the people who did.
Get ready to meet the dastardly Agent Red...*

Shades of evil

“The sci-fi genre is famous for its iconic villains, and we really wanted to deliver on that with ours. So, we had various meetings trying to figure out who she was. There were lots of different approaches. But, really, we wanted to have a character that wasn’t black and white, who wasn’t a villain just for the sake of being a villain. That was Agent Red.” Will Becher, co-director

Double trouble

“Originally [in the script] there were two agents, almost a Men In Black-style thing. The idea was that one of the agents was good, in that she embraced the idea of extra-terrestrials, the other one was bad, quite xenophobic. But it complicated the story too much, so we cut one of the agents.

The thing with a good villain story is that you need to know the ‘whys’. You know, they’re doing the wrong thing, but maybe for reasons you understand. That’s important. We were searching for it, for her reasoning. We needed to figure out what was driving her, beyond just being a badass.”
Mark Burton, writer

A shot at redemption

“All the way through we were trying to wrestle with who Agent Red was. We realised that if we were going to redeem her, she had to be misunderstood. It’s taken a long time, with no dialogue, to find the right combination of shots and backstory, to make you understand her. She’s not cruel, she’s driven. She’s misunderstood.” Richard Phelan, co-director

Beneath the mask

“It’s easier to have someone just be a plain ‘baddie’ when you have no dialogue. In many ways, we made this way more difficult for ourselves! But we never wanted Agent Red to be that simple. We wanted her to be the best she could be, so it was worth the effort. Her human story makes for a much better resolution.” Will Becher, co-director

What a girl wants

“You know, this is a film for kids. At one point [in pre-production], Agent Red’s motivation was that she wanted a promotion, but for kids that doesn’t mean anything. What she wants needs to be clear from a child’s point of view. Money or promotion doesn’t resonate with children. It had to have a deeper emotional connection.” Richard Phelan, co-director

The Hazmats

“And she really is a great villain, even if the people she is surrounded by are useless! In particular, she has a team of guys in bright yellow hazmat suits. They’re kind of a comedic troupe that acts almost like a single character. They tend to sort of run around in a little gang, like idiots. Really, when you’re editing them, you deal with them like one character. One failed, not very successful, alien detector character! They frustrate Agent Red greatly, but she’s not just the ‘uptight boss’ – she’s got much more depth than that.” Sim Evan-Jones, editor

Steering the Space Ship

Producer Paul Kewley on the perils of stop-motion, and why Shaun the Sheep is to comedy what Chuck Norris was to action...

Falling into the entertainment industry when his brief vocation to be a doctor evaporated aged just 18 (“Without doubt, many patients’ lives have been saved as a result,” he notes dryly), FARMAGEDDON producer Paul Kewley has been with Aardman for just shy of a decade.

As the man tasked with wrangling a vast flock of creative types, it is perhaps no surprise that Kewley’s favourite character is that of authoritarian big brother, Bitzer. But while Bitzer is synonymous with taking himself too seriously, Kewley’s attitude is a mix of both the serious and the silly: the perfect qualities to steer Shaun on his biggest adventure yet. As he himself says, “The most important thing when you are in a position to make decisions is to make a decision quickly and concisely and if you are wrong at a later stage then make the right decision and learn from the mistake you made...”

Even though you’re close to release, everyone here at Aardman seems remarkably calm. Shouldn’t you all be rushing around now?

“We’re all just resigned to our fates! [Laughs] No, I think the process is always like your pants are on fire, when you make these films. Mark Burton [writer] actually describes it as a slow-speed car crash, making an Aardman movie, and I rather agree! Rather than having these high-speed moments, where everything happens at once, which happens in live-action, with these movies you can see the problems coming, but it takes longer to steer the ship around them. Trying to find a solution to those things, you might come up with an idea in the room and think you’ve fixed it, but then you have to go to storyboards and so on to see if that fix works. That takes a minimum of a few days. And the ramifications of those changes aren’t always simple.”

Is brainstorming your favourite part of the process?

“I love the process of trying to break the story, which is a poncey way of saying, ‘Coming up with the story.’ Trying to find the big ideas. But it can be really infuriating as well. You do find yourself at points talking about something for days and then someone says, ‘But hang on, what about this...?’ And then you see the whole thing crumble before your eyes. It’s about building and rebuilding. We’re constantly finding the foundations for the story. I love being part of that creative process.”

How about the test screening process? They must be fairly nail-biting, sometimes?

“They are *always* fairly terrifying experiences, but you learn over the years to walk into them and just go, ‘What will be will be.’ You can sit there and worry about it, but you won’t get anything out

of that. It's actually a really fascinating process, to watch how other people react to it. As you make the film, everyone who is involved with it has opinions about what is right or wrong with it. It's very difficult to dismiss those. But, when you see it with an audience, the reality is that it plays how it plays and you can't argue with that. I love it and I dread it all at once."

Whose reaction are you concerned about most, that of the adults or the kids?

"Both, because we're trying to make a film that works for both groups. It can't be that just kids love it, you know? I'm 48 years old, I don't want to sit through something with my seven-year-old and be bored to tears. I want to enjoy it as much as he does! So, you're trying to cater to both parties and I think that's what Aardman has done so brilliantly for all these years. I think it has worked for both groups kind of seamlessly."

Did becoming a dad change your filmmaking process in any way?

"I think you fundamentally become aware of what kids are watching. But I was always drawn to family films, even in my twenties, when I went off to the States to study all this at university. I loved Amblin films, these big popcorn family movies. And animation has moved more and more into that space. I'm not an animation 'geek' but I love that animation allows you to tell stories in a different way. And having kids just reminded me of that. I've got a seven-year-old and I've got 21-year-old, so they span generations. I've been able to see over those 20 years the way animation has changed and see how they've reacted to it."

As producer, are you called in to adjudicate between what is possible and what is not?

"Yes, a lot of what I do is adjudication. It's my job to make sure everyone is sailing in the right ship to the right port, which is so often not the case when you're making a film. It is my job to be the person who keeps all the plates spinning, to make sure that all decisions are made quickly and, hopefully, are the right decisions. One of the things I learned very early on in my career was from a professor I had, who was a really experienced producer. He said, 'There is no right or wrong answer. The most important thing when you are in a position to make decisions is to make a decision quickly and concisely and if you are wrong at a later stage then make the right decision and learn from the mistake you made.' If you let indecision rule, no film ever gets made."

Aardman is famous for how much it cares about character. Do all your characters have a backstory written down somewhere?

"Yes, all of them. Because it's important that everyone has the same understanding of a character. Because if you've got 20 animators all animating the same character, they have to all have the same idea of who that character is. It's essential. You try to keep the characters as concrete as they can be. The only time you might break that is for comedy, for a moment that is funny. And people know these characters. If you talk to kids, they will be able to tell you who Shaun is, who

the farmer is, who Bitzer is, and what they're like. So, if you change that fundamentally, people will be like, 'What have you done?'"

Why has Shaun stood the test of time as well as he has?

"When Nick [Park] created him, he created a perfect character. And what Richard [Starzack] did when he created the TV series [in 2007] is figure out how to take that character and build on it, to make him a character we all understand. Shaun is no angel. But I don't want my seven-year-old to be an angel all the time. I want him to have a bit of the Devil in him sometimes. That's Shaun. He's the guy who will always press the red button, but he'll always know he's done something wrong when he has. That's why we can all relate to him."

Is his and Aardman's unique comedy voice key to how big a star Shaun is, all over the world?

"Absolutely. The reason that the [Aardman] films travel, in the same way Mr Bean does – is because of their universal, physical comedy. The thing about Shaun is that in Germany, audiences think it was made in Germany. Same in Japan, the Middle East. He's like Chuck Norris. Action travels. So does physical comedy."

Twin engines

How co-directors Will Becher and Richard Phelan fused their skillsets and worked together to take Shaun interstellar...

For directors Will Becher and Richard Phelan, FARMAGEDDON isn't just a movie, it's a dream. "Not one without its nightmarish moments, to be fair," laughs Phelan, "but they've all been worth it."

It's their first feature-length collaboration as directors – and there's a lot of pressure that comes with that, from the first Post-it notes on the wall when they were breaking the story almost three years ago through to manning 35 shooting units on up to 70 custom-built sets and scoring the final product at London's iconic Abbey Road.

The pair have been working separately at Aardman for some time – Phelan in story, Becher in animation – but, having been brought together by producer Paul Kewley, they have fused into something entirely new, a two-headed co-directorial beast charged with a bold new direction for a company that has been a beloved part of British culture for four decades. "That was a huge part of the appeal," says Becher. "The chance to do Aardman's first sci-fi film."

The results have proved extraordinary, FARMAGEDDON at once elevating the world of Shaun the Sheep to epic new genre heights, but never forgetting the sheer pure heart beating beneath its

woolly exterior. “Will and Richard have sent Shaun on his biggest adventure ever on this,” says co-executive producer Carla Shelley – who, having herself been at Aardman for over 30 years, knows quite what a leap for sheepkind the studio has taken here.

With both Phelan and Becher having worked on the Shaun The Sheep TV series previously, they knew the character inside out. But what made them ideal partners was the complementary styles they brought to the process. After all, if you’re telling a feature-length story that has precisely zero dialogue, who better to convey that story through visuals than one master of story and another of animation? “Frankly, that was exactly the logic,” says producer Paul Kewley. “The combination of the two just brought out the best in each other. Will has a very strong understanding of the process, of how the films are made. And Rich has a great understanding of ripping things up and starting again...”

Shaun goes sci-fi in FARMAGEDDON – how did you turn that core idea into an actual story?

Phelan: “I think we just kept returning to the character and the relationship between Shaun and Lu-La. This is a movie that’s about friends and responsibility and what it’s about to meet someone and become best friends. But then we also bring some villains in. We have top secret government organisations, robots, gadgets and gizmos – so this whole world opens up. We’re always asking ourselves questions like, ‘What if Lu-La is as cheeky as Shaun? What does her planet look like? Why do they get along so well? Is her home a bit like his home?’ We’re always playing with those ideas.”

How much of her home are we going to see in the movie?

Phelan: “We get to go to her planet, in flashback, which was brilliant fun. I wish we could spend more time there, but the story demands we have to go back to Shaun’s world as that’s where everything will come to a head.”

Becher: “But we have some fun there, in space. An element of Lu-La’s home is her spaceship and we get to spend a lot of time in that. Shaun gets to explore, of course – because he’s the boy who always wants to press the red button, if there is one. For him, the spaceship is like the most amazing toy he could imagine.”

Why do you think audiences connect with Shaun so much? What is it that makes him so special?

Becher: “I grew up watching Wallace and Gromit, obviously. And Shaun had a tiny amount of screen time in ‘A Close Shave’, but he was just the most adorable and funny character. And his story that has come out of that since grew organically but had these really strong foundations, in that the characters are very clearly defined. Really, it’s all about family. Shaun’s stories are told through the eyes of a boy and his mates. And there’s limitless appeal to a sheep doing things in the human world that the humans don’t see. He’s a challenge to create because in some ways the possibilities are limitless. But there are certain rules without dialogue. We have to tell the character story as well as make it fun and slapstick. But I just love it. A lot of this is based on ideas that relate to our lives. Things that are universal in appeal, hopefully.”

How do you translate your experiences into story ideas?

Phelan: “That’s a tough one because in the series they are always seven-minute episodes. Fundamentally, they are about a cheeky kid with a good heart who always has adventures with his mates. Things go wrong and they put them in a really slapstick way. But, with this, we are trying to add a new element of nuance, of him growing up. So, we needed a new character. And then we decided that she – Lu-La – should be a lot younger than him, so he has to start to grow up to look after her. And that’s something he’s never had to do before. He’s always just been like, ‘Let’s have a laugh.’ But in FARMAGEDDON, Lu-La is in real danger because there are forces out there that will take her away. Shaun has to step up. These are feelings that many people with siblings will identify with.”

What did you want to achieve with this movie?

Phelan: “In the first movie, Shaun and his mates had a simple goal: they wanted a day off, to get out from under dad’s [the farmer] rules. In this, we wanted to look at the relationship between the brothers [Shaun and ‘older brother’, Bitzer]. How would that play out? Not that Shaun wants to get rid of Bitzer. He just wants to be free and always do what he wants. So, we wanted to give him a new character that would force him to take on the Bitzer role, where he had to feel what that felt like, where he would start to appreciate what he does for him. And through this whole story, Bitzer realises that he takes himself too seriously, that his rules are too much.”

Co-directing is very rare in live-action, but not unusual in animation. How do you two guys work together?

Becher: “We had already worked at Aardman together on various projects. Probably for 10 years or so. Then we started to work more closely together on story. And, at the start of this project, Richard was involved in story for a long period of time. Then, when I came on board, we really spent as much time together as possible, riffing on those ideas, trying to find the best version of the story. But from very early on we felt like we felt the same way about Shaun, the flock and that world. So, it was really fun just brainstorming how Lu-La would impact the Shaun world and what she would do. We spent most of the time together doing all the different work together in terms of design, story and edit. Then, when shooting started, we divided up the scenes and had different crews. We would always come back together for those edit sessions where everything comes together. But it’s very much day-to-day. Rich has some bits and I have some bits. But overall we’ve both got the vision of the whole film in our heads.”

There are so many moving parts to an Aardman movie, to the point that at some points on this you had 35 units shooting at once. How do you get your head around those kind of logistics?

Phelan: “It is rigorously planned in story. Then we pitch various gags. Then, it goes through a process where it is storyboarded and re-storyboarded multiple, multiple times. Every joke is fine-

tuned. And then it goes to the floor and the animators get involved and then the joke is refined even more. It's a constant, fluid process. It's not, 'Hey, I've had a wacky idea!' It's all very meticulously, rigorously thought out."

Becher: "And Sim Evan-Jones, our editor, has got an incredible experience in animated filmmaking. So, all of our combined efforts are going into this. He is overseeing the edit, which is vital in a film like this. Mark Burton [co-writer] has been really involved as well, and he also wrote and directed Shaun One [Shaun The Sheep Movie]. He has been pivotal in all the story sessions, as has our producer, Paul Kewley of course, who was invaluable in the creative process and steadied the ship at all times".

What is your relationship like with Mark, given that he directed the first movie?

Phelan: "That helps, because you're coming from the same place. He will pitch us an idea in story and we will take him to task. And vice versa. There are no egos in that room. There can't be. You are allowed to be wrong because we are looking for the very funniest version, the most entertaining version, of all of it. We are always finessing things. Always."

Becher: "We won't always have the same solution to a problem, either. Because Mark has been a director himself, he is really respectful of the fact that this is our film, but if he picks up on something, or if we pick up on something, then we will all chip away at the problem. All those notes are what make the film really good. You've got to always be questioning."

FARMAGEDDON feels decidedly epic, even more cinematic than Shaun was before. Is that down to the genre as much as anything?

Phelan: "The fact that it's sci-fi certainly plays a part because the genre is so big. We're in the sphere of influences like [Steven] Spielberg movies, '50s B-movies, John Carpenter movies... It just feels expansive, a whole new world to explore."

What sci-fi movies did you look at to get in the mood?

Becher: "As many as we could, from every era. We have watched every decade of sci-fi. The '80s, obviously. There were so many great sci-fis in the '80s – they gave that flavour to our youth."

Phelan: Even if you're not a sci-fi fan you'll get loads of these references, but if you are a sci-fi fan there's a whole substrata to the movie. And then there's the strata under that, for me. Where it's like, 'Yeah, I'll get that one!'"

Presumably, having this new genre to play in is a bit of a dream come true for all of you making it?

Phelan: "All the art department is so giddy because all of their influences can come to life. Everyone is geared up. It's Spielberg, it's Kubrick. Sci-fi is like a giant toybox."

Becher: "It is total dream-come-true stuff for me. Because I love Shaun, I've always loved working on Shaun. And to be working on a feature film with him, one that feels like it has a really strong,

genuine story at the heart of it, makes it feel like a great development for Shaun, as a character. This is not just a follow-on from the first one.”

Phelan: “That was the thing. We didn’t just want to re-tread the first film’s storyline and go, ‘Uh-oh! It’s happening again!’ That terrible sequel feeling, you know? We have gone on a totally different tack, it’s a totally different adventure. And it feels so different, so unexpected. That’s a really lovely feeling at the end of it. You go, ‘Phew!’ The first one is a really wonderful film and I am very proud to have worked on it [as lead character animator], but we didn’t just want to repeat it.”

Now the movie is finally about to be revealed to the world, how are you both feeling that you’re coming to the end of a three-year process?

Phelan: “I’m excited to show everyone. I’m also relieved we made it through. But I am also gutted that it is over because it’s been so much fun.”

Becher: “It’s been a rollercoaster. Every day there is a new problem to solve. But I feel similar to Rich. It’s been a marathon effort, a huge challenge to make a stop-motion film. And I’m really pleased. I’m really proud.”

Shaun the Sheep’s Creator

A household name for stop-motion magic, Nick Park discusses how his woolly partner in crime became a global icon (with a little help from Baby Spice)...

Nick Park is Britain’s most decorated filmmaker – not that you’d tell from the manner of this gentle, soft-spoken 60-year-old. He has four Academy Awards® and five BAFTAs – including one for 1995’s ‘A Close Shave’, the short that introduced an unsuspecting world to Shaun the Sheep. The imperilled sheep earned his name through being accidentally ‘shorn’ in that story – by the mechanised creation of Wallace, one of Park’s other iconic characters. “It was quite spontaneous, for [co-writer] Bob Baker and myself,” says Park of the day Shaun was born. “It was really just writing that scene, because you have to have a name for a character, for people to latch onto them, for people to relate to them. It was fairly instantaneous, because of the double meaning.”

The cheeky but warm scamp went on to secure his own TV series and became another unlikely pop cultural hit for Park, although he is keen to emphasise the work of others at Aardman who

developed the character. “For years I thought, ‘He could have his own series. He could get up to all sorts. He is both cute and cool at the same time,’” says Park. “But I didn’t have much more than that. Then Richard Starzak got hold of it and ran with that idea and really made it a lot more concrete. He really took that and expanded it and injected a humour I hadn’t established with the original character. That’s when it really took off.” Now, after five series and on his second feature film, Shaun has achieved more than anyone could have imagined. And is showing no sign of slowing down anytime soon...

You were busy directing EARLY MAN when FARMAGEDDON was in production – was your involvement on this essentially as a Yoda figure?

“I guess that’s one way to describe it! When I was doing *EARLY MAN*, I kept passing people who were working on this. They were always drinking lots of coffee. I would hear things like, ‘It’s aliens and sheep.’ I heard pitches of the story and was asked for my opinion. I feel very grateful and privileged to be involved.”

Shaun is 25 years old now. What was it about him, back in the day, that made you realise he was special?

“You have an instinct, but at the same time it’s kind of surprising when it does work! I enjoyed designing him, originally. I think it was his little woolly top and the shape of his face. It’s dead simple, really. He was designed originally as this younger sheep, quite innocent – a victim, really. He needed rescuing but turned out to be quite heroic as well – busting them [Wallace and Gromit] out of prison, things like that. He also, because of his simple and striking design, sold really well as merchandise. He suddenly took off. I guess that’s because people liked the character.”

Did his features inform his character, or the other way around?

“It’s hard to say which. It’s a chicken and egg thing because I tend to sketch a lot while we’re writing, so the ideas develop in tandem, really. The difficulty, because of how simple Shaun is, was how to get a human expression out of him. The animators are brilliant at using his eyebrows and mouth. We work with some of the best stop-motion animators in the world. It’s when you get something meaningful out of something simple – that is really quite magical. And Shaun does that. It’s funny. One idea often spawns the next, and you don’t even know it at the time. When I sit back and look at the films, there are lots of those details, like pictures on the wall, and they often

hold clues as to what the next idea is. For example, in *A Grand Day Out* [1989, six years before Shaun the Sheep ever existed], there’s a picture on the wall of a sheep jumping over a fence. And in *The Wrong Trousers*, Wallace had a giant marrow in a glass case, in a sort of a taxidermy way. And the subject of *The Curse Of The Were-rabbit* [which was made 16 years after *The Wrong Trousers*, in 2005] was giant vegetables. They all, the seeds of one idea, start in a previous film. Because they are always going around, these things, in my head.”

Shaun has a huge appeal all over the world. Have you been amazed by how far he has travelled?

“I am, actually. Both in a positive and a slightly disturbing way. When *A Close Shave* first happened, suddenly Shaun was out there and all the different merchandise happened. It was when the Spice Girls were big and Baby Spice was photographed with a Shaun the Sheep backpack and sales went through the roof. That was part of the big launch of Shaun, really. And I was actually watching a news item a couple of years ago, about Syria. There had been a bombing and people were being taken into makeshift hospitals... and there was a boy with a Shaun the Sheep T-shirt on. It was all very strangely real... An ironic mixture of feelings, really...”

Shaun is almost a silent movie star with a big heart – and he appeals across the ages. He’s the perfect character for this divided world, right?

“Yes, you’re right. It is very timely, isn’t it? This film is something that everyone, adults and children, can sit and watch and all laugh together. I think that is a great thing to have achieved. That’s a great thing, to bring people together. There’s nothing better than a laugh to let people forget their differences. What Shaun the Sheep is good at is sending up the way we are as humans. A lot of the premise of Shaun the Sheep is that a lot of what these characters are doing is behind the backs of humans, but we [as the audience] are privy to that. I think we relate to that. He is excitable and naughty. He’s a flawed character, but in an innocent way. He’s human, really. I think his basic flaw is that he doesn’t like to do what he’s told.”

Are you naturally a Shaun-type character, someone who doesn’t like to be told what to do?

“Probably. I think that’s important for creativity, to find ways of rebelling against the norm. I think as soon as you feel anything being expected of you, or that you are being institutionalised in any way, you tend to rub against it and try and step out of it. I relate to Shaun very much in that way.

Although, if I’m perfectly honest, I’m probably more like Gromit because of the way he is more introverted and looks at things in a more considered way.”

How did you start out on this career path?

“I grew up on animated films and cartoons. I saw every Disney film at the cinema. I loved watching cartoons on TV. I suppose what really got me hooked was when I would see animation and I would

think, ‘Oh, I could do that.’ It was things like Morph – that Pete [Peter Lord] and Dave [David Sproxton] had already started doing. I was a teenager then. Before that I used to watch Bob Godfrey animation, like Roobarb And Custard. That’s probably the thing that really got me going, because that was all wobbly drawings and very accessible. I could see that it was drawings, done with a felt pen and the colours were all shimmering and it wasn’t sophisticated and polished. But I

loved the raw humour that came out of it. That really got me fired up about making my own films.”

How did that manifest itself?

“Even as a young kid, I used to love drawing and making models. And I was always driven, ambitious, in a way. I saw a documentary about Walt Disney and saw how the whole thing started with a mouse, with him drawing a mouse. And I thought, ‘I’d love to have my characters known out there, in the world. That would be my life’s ambition.’”

It's amazing that you had such great focus as a kid...

"I guess so. I used to have these characters that I would have high hopes for. I would draw them on badges and wear them at school. I got caught by a teacher once, who told me to take them off and told me it was childish to have those sorts of things."

If only that teacher could see you now...

"Well, yes, I guess!"

Are you proud that Shaun is now a bona fide movie star?

"I feel immensely proud and pleased to see where he has gone and what he has become. As a film star, a movie star, and beloved by people. The fame and the profile of our characters, it means all the more when you know they've earned that respect from people."

Shearing Shaun

The man who cuts Shaun down to size, editor Sim Evan-Jones talks character, energy and stopping things ever getting sappy...

Ask literally anyone working on FARMAGEDDON (trust us, we did) and they'll tell you that if there's one man crucial to its success, it's Sim Evan-Jones, Shaun's editor.

Editing is crucial to the pace, clarity and humour of all movies, of course. But on Aardman ones that is amplified "to an almost extraordinary extent," according to producer Paul Kewley. As Aardman co-founder, David Sproxton, explains of the particular challenges when it comes to editing in stop-motion, "We always go back to *The Wrong Trousers* [made in 1993, before Evan-Jones' arrival at the company], as the model for economy [when we're editing]. When you look at that film, even now, there's not a shot that you don't need in there. There's no redundant screen time. People forget that the rough-cut ran to almost 45 minutes, and it had to be a 30-minute film. So, we had to lose almost a third of what we'd shot! And we might have lost one or two shots, but we didn't lose any sequences. We basically trimmed, a lot. But it still had a lovely pace. And a lot of times, that is what we're trying to get back to."

With FARMAGEDDON, an epic adventure featuring space travel, an alien, a sinister government agency and a quest for the perfect pizza, Evan-Jones has faced his most complex challenge to date – and the results are both seamless and brilliant. Having honed his craft in America at DreamWorks, where he cut the first two outings of their iconic green character, Shrek, Evan-Jones next enjoyed live-action outings to the land of Narnia, before he returned to England and sought

out the best place to work in animation anywhere in the world – Aardman, in Bristol – to learn how to edit movies to be the very best they can be. It’s fair to say the plan worked...

You’ve cut live-action family films, like The Chronicles Of Narnia and Nanny McPhee, as well as animation – how does the energy on an Aardman movie compare?

“We are very aware of energy when it comes to Shaun, with there not being any dialogue. It’s funny, at one point we were trying to develop a mantra. We came up with ‘clarity’ and ‘comedy’ but we could never think of the third ‘c’... I guess kinetic energy works quite well! You know, there’s always a sense that you need to keep things moving. You can’t just chuck a line in if something is unclear. There’s an energy that rolls forward. Narrative energy is a good way of describing it. You always need to keep the story moving.”

What’s the key to that?

“The answer to that is to keep layering. On all these movies we’ve done, there are these sort of ‘day in the life of’ montages that we use in the beginning to get the story moving. To set up the

stakes for Shaun. To precis and remind the audience of his world. To set up the story. Because of the genius of the Aardman approach, everything is done in a comedic way. Every little narrative development is another joke or another layer of comedy. The other brilliant thing that they always do – and it’s house style – is that undercutting of comedy. Or even undercutting the emotion, which you have to be really careful with. They never get too sappy or too overwrought or dramatic. I think that possibly is a British thing. I think it is definitely something that Aardman has specialised in over the years.”

Has Shaun changed over the years?

“I don’t know that he has. I think Shaun is a very clearly defined character and always has been. But in this movie, we definitely see new levels to Shaun. He is given responsibility. And we see

how he deals with that. It starts off as organic and then themes start to emerge. Producers and directors focus on things that they want to promote and Shaun having a taste of his own medicine for once was definitely something they wanted to focus on. Inside of the, ‘Yes, we are doing a Shaun the Sheep science fiction movie,’ there had to be the question of, ‘But what is this Shaun story?’”

How would you describe that story?

“It’s Shaun having to take on responsibility and discovering what it’s like to have to deal with someone who is *like* Shaun – his naughtiest sibling, basically. Because this new character we have – Lu-La – has emerged as this beautiful thing from a beautiful world, who is beautifully designed,

by the way. It was decided that she would have certain otherworldly skills and party tricks. But until you put them into the plotting, you don't know how they're going to reveal themselves. Also, everything she does has to reflect that character and those attributes. She has to be consistent. If we're saying she is cheeky and a bit of a handful, she has to be that."

Career-wise, you're in a real Aardman groove at the moment – you edited EARLY MAN too and next you're doing CHICKEN RUN 2. Why do you love working on these movies so much?

"There are a lot of reasons, really. I've got a very strong background in animation. And Aardman will always be one of the greats and are internationally renowned. I had always been really interested in the idea of coming here for a bit, and as luck would have it, I came in to work on the first Shaun [movie]. I was supposed to be here for four weeks... and that was about four years ago now. Because if you're pursuing animation, this is the absolute place you need to be."

Note perfect

Shaun the Sheep is synonymous with banging tunes, but Farmageddon takes that to all-new heights. Here's why...

The influences rock

"When we are assembling the movie, we just try things out [as temp tracks]. For a long time, The Clash was in there as it had that right anarchic feel. That's great, but what's the modern-day version of The Clash? You know, kids aren't going to be going, 'Yes! The Clash!'" Richard Phelan, co-director

There are brand-new 'needle-drops' – from Kylie and more

"The music has always been something that has set Shaun [movies] apart from other Aardman films – what Americans call the 'needle-drop' track. The first Shaun [movie] had tracks by Foo Fighters and Primal Scream dropped into the cut. But in this film, we have four bespoke tracks that were actually written for the film. Kylie Minogue and The Vaccines have done a collaboration [for a new track called 'Lazy']. Jorja Smith has done one. My daughter suggested her, so she's getting a signed T-shirt." Sim Evan-Jones, editor

Famous fans

"We love Kylie and we love Aardman, both [are] national treasures. Collaborating on 'Lazy' was an honour and a dream come true. [It is] maybe an unlikely pairing on the face of it, but [it's] one that

makes total sense in a world as wonderful and mischievous as Shaun's." Justin Hayward-Young, singer, The Vaccines

It was scored at Abbey Road

"Well, it's just exciting to be there, isn't it? A *lot* of my favourite movies were scored there. It also has a unique sound, as every studio does. Also, most of the time, composing is a very solitary thing, so to be able to go to Abbey Road and work with musicians I like and know and respect is exciting to me, because I get to hang out with them. The music I wrote for this is incredibly hard and fast, but they just nailed it. And it's a big group, too. Including the choir, we had over 100 people in the orchestra." Tom Howe, composer

It's Shaun, but not as you know him

"Because Shaun is way more than just a 'cheeky chappy' in this, I was able to explore a completely different harmonic language for him, above and beyond what you've heard before. I worked on

Early Man, so I've worked with these [Aardman] guys before. But this was an unusual project because it's the first time I've done a project of this length with no dialogue. That makes a big difference in terms of what the music has to do and how you approach it. It has to do a lot more heavy-lifting, but that's a great opportunity because it allows you to explore. I set up a mini-studio at Aardman and we'd just try stuff out on the spot. I took a leaf out of Bernard Herrmann [who did the famous Psycho theme for Alfred Hitchcock] and experimented with the Theremin – which is a really unique sound, a very odd instrument, that instantly says, 'Sci-fi, but funny.'" Tom Howe, composer

It is a time of heroes

"When you hear the words 'sci-fi' you immediately think John Williams. John Williams is just the best, isn't he? His tunes are nice and simple and hummable, but under the surface they are incredibly complex, rhythmically. Pretty much any film you can hum, he wrote the theme tune, he

wrote the score. Jaws, E.T., Star Wars, Harry Potter, Indiana Jones, Jurassic Park... I mean, come on – he's been nominated for 52 Oscars! That is a hell of a thing when you think about it. To have that many slam-dunks is unbelievable! I can't remotely put myself in that camp, but I hope I've done something that fits in the sci-fi genre really well. I'm proud of it." Tom Howe, composer

Higher Concept

Production designer Matt Perry's six reasons why scale, new characters and unlikely Alien riffs mark out this Shaun story as unlike any you've ever seen...

1. The name's Sheep. Shaun the Sheep

"The underground base [the sinister government lair in FARMAGEDDON] is very You Only Live Twice. It's the largest interior we have ever built, and I'm very proud of it. It needed to be that size because at one point we have a spaceship coming down in the middle of it, so we needed that kind of leap in scale on this movie. The agent whose lair it is [Agent Red] has changed in tone a bit in the final movie, but at one stage she was quite 'James Bondy', so that's where the inspiration came from. But even though she changed, we still kept that flavour in the design of the base because that felt like the right kind of language to use. The base is called MAD – the Ministry of Alien Detection. It's been where it is since way, way back, even though they've never actually found a UFO before! That's why the Bond theme fit, because this place was set up around the time of those earlier movies, in the '60s."

2. A Shaun for all seasons

"Shaun's environment on the farm has been so set for so many years. On the first film we did try to make it a bit more cinematic, painted better skies, put more details on the grass, but it didn't make that huge a jump. On this one, one of the first conversations we had was us saying that we really wanted to have crop circles in FARMAGEDDON, so obviously Signs was talked about a lot. Shaun's farm is set up almost like one in the American Midwest, isolated, with an expanse of cornfields around it and a big horizon in the distance, so we can play some great crop circle gags. But in terms of the mood, we wanted this movie to be quite eerie at points. So, we set it at autumn, which we also haven't done before, which let us get really cinematic with the colouring. It's quite cheeky, really [what we do with the seasons here]. It's high summer as far as the corn is concerned, but everywhere else it's autumn. That gives you your misty forest stuff for the scary bits and also some stunning colouration for daytime in the woods. This one has a very different feel, to set the tone right from the beginning."

3. Size does matter

"Because of that scale, the sets that we built were so big on this that one actually had to be built outside the studio, brought in in pieces and actually assembled on their side, with the cameras shooting it sideways. A bit like they used to shoot Batman and Robin climbing up the buildings in the old TV series, but hopefully a bit more convincingly! In the first Shaun [movie], we showed some scale, but on this one we actually had to build Mossingham village! That was a very big build. One of our biggest sets ever. A lot of time went into that. I would say that that set is at least a man-year's worth of work. Maybe a bit more."

4. Let's get cooking

“On this movie, we have around 50-70 sets, altogether. The art department is pretty full-on. It's like an architect's office. We have 35 shooting units [going at once] when it's really cooking. There are maybe 28 animators, so you always have units spare, but you're always getting them ready for the animators to jump onto when they are ready. You try to make sure they are never sat around, waiting. Even though it may seem like it's slow compared to live-action filmmaking, it's actually pretty full-on. The sets also need, of course, to be able to accommodate not just the cameras but the animators themselves. They are like giants in there! We'll sometimes slide panels out to let them get in and then slide them back in behind them.”

5. Meet Muggins

“Muggins is a robot I designed for the movie. He's not a high-tech robot; he's sort of an '80s throwback. He's supposed to be an assistant to Agent Red. But he's really pretty useless! He looks a bit like a security camera mixed with a filing cabinet. And he's a complete idiot.”

“Beyond imagination”

They met at school aged 12 and later formed Britain's most beloved animation studio. Peter Lord and David Sproxton talk their enduring partnership...

Bristol-based animation house Aardman has grown from a tiny, homemade operation in 1972 to a multi-award winning studio today, employing 100s of creatives and talent – all flowing from the dedication and inspiration of co-founders Peter Lord and David Sproxton.

They met in the 1960s, when Lord, having spent three years in Australia, returned to school in Surrey and the only seat in his new classroom was next to that of Sproxton. Gentle jibes about his accent gave way to a growing friendship and a shared passion: for storytelling. And animation in particular.

To begin with, they were both directors, working on commercials and shorts, but the business relationship and the company evolved as Lord started to work with Nick Park on Chicken Run, which would become the most successful stop-motion picture of all time. “Nick and Pete were working on the script and I said, ‘Why don't you guys direct it and I'll help manage the rest of the company?’” recalls Sproxton, explaining the division of labour between them. “The key things are that our values are very similar, in terms of the company, in terms of what we want to try to do.” This included setting up the company as employee-owned last year, sharing the decision-making with the staff who make up the Aardman family. It's a testament to their loyalty and values – and a friendship that endures after 50 years. Says Lord, with a smile: “Neither of us would be here without the other.”

How are you feeling about FARMAGEDDON now that it's nearly coming to release?

David Sproxton: "It's always a mad scramble for the finish, but it's looking good. The big problem you have with all these movies is getting the story to land. You realise that there are little, knotty things that you have to solve. You often do with a live-action film too, because you want to get the maximum emotion out of it."

Peter Lord: "It's the way it always feels: Elation that you've got there. Anticipation, of how the world is going to receive it. Exhaustion... And a faint sense of regret. Regret because it's over. When you work on a film like this, it's a very strong family, community event. You get a great team together and your job is to finish it. And when you get to the end, you go, 'Oh, I don't want it to finish now. I don't want that group to break up.' It's always the same. A bittersweet experience."

It's funny you mention the word 'family' – that seems to be very much the Aardman ethos?

Lord: "Yeah, it is. We don't talk about it very much or think about it very much, but it's instinctive. It's the understanding that people should enjoy their work. That's as important as anything else. They should enjoy the process of coming to work, they should enjoy what they do. And we are a very specialised group, aren't we? We've evolved over the years to do something highly

specialised, that we're very good at, so it does give you a sense of being in a family, a community, a club – all of those things."

How do you look back on the evolution of the company? This is four decades we're talking about... Do you ever take a moment to reflect on how you got here?

Lord: "Yes, I mean, as the years pass you do get more chances to do that. Recently, I was given the honour of Fellow of Arts University Bournemouth and part of that process is somebody reciting your achievements. You get to hear it and you get to think about it more and more... It always feels to me like a series of evolutions. It's been steady for us. When I say steady, that doesn't mean it hasn't been rocky – because you expect that over 40 years! We have had difficult times, challenging times. But, generally, we've progressed steadily. That's our temperament. Objectively, if I throw myself back to 1976-or-something, what we've achieved really would have been beyond imagination. I don't think that's an exaggeration to say. We were just two blokes in a room, me and Dave, wondering where the next job was coming from. From there to our mighty empire, our moderately-sized mighty empire, would have seemed unimaginable. At that time, when we were young, there wasn't a British animation company that was 'on the scene'. There were a series of small companies that we were aware of but that was it. So, I feel fantastic. When I stop to think about it, I think, 'Yeah, that's pretty damn good.'"

Sproxton: "It's been a hell of a ride. It was a series of stepping stones, in a way, that lead to a series of bigger and better things. Wallace & Gromit and the Oscars... When we started out in the late '70s we never thought we'd be making feature films, largely because there weren't very many actually being made. Then Warners came in, DreamWorks came in, CGI started to blossom, and everything took off. There is a natural organic nature to all of that. It's only when you look back that you think, 'Bloody hell, how did that happen?' And we're still learning."

The economy of your storytelling in FARMAGEDDON is more impressive than ever. Do you feel like you're at a stage with these movies where you are the best that you can ever be at it?

Sproxtton: "To be honest, it's hard work. When you go into the animatic phase that's where the heavy lifting is done. Especially with Shaun, who is so visual, because we don't have dialogue to guide the narrative. You start to say, 'Do we need that establishing shot?' Because, really, what you want to have is a lot of time for fun and games. You don't want to have your screen time taken up with plot; you want to have it taken up with emotion and silliness."

Is FARMAGEDDON your most ambitious movie ever?

Sproxtton: "We are literally taking Shaun and everyone into a different dimension and that was part of the gag. 'What happens if you take him to a different galaxy?' So, in that way, yes."

Lord: "We chose to shoot it widescreen, scope, to kind of humorously recall movies shot in the American Midwest, because that was part of the joke. I'm not even sure – and don't tell anyone – where Shaun the Sheep lives, but it was amusing to take that setting and make it big and widescreen, with big open prairies, just so we could get a ton of references to classic sci-fi movies. Maybe that makes it feel bigger. I hope it does. It does all sorts of ambitious things. It uses a lot of VFX, which is normal for movies these days. But the stuff people care about is still little puppets that are barely more than five inches high."

Is Shaun symbolic of the Aardman ethos? Very British, very cheeky, very full of heart?

Lord: "You're right! [Laughs] That's true, actually. Interesting. Obviously, everyone loves Wallace & Gromit. I love Wallace & Gromit. But there's a lovely everyman quality about Shaun.

Mischievousness is very important to us, actually. And to Shaun. Mischievousness is close to anarchy, in a good way. Youthful rebellion, that's his modus operandi, isn't it? There he is, in a very small world. The world of Mossy Bottom farm is deliberately very small and domestic. The farmer, as far as he's concerned, he keeps his sheep in the barn – that's all he's aware of. So, they should have a very constrained worldview. But good old Shaun, he doesn't accept that. He is always pushing the boundaries. And always getting away with it. That's the joy of him. I like mischief. I like Aardman, as a company, to be mischievous when we can. When you get big, it's hard to remember that. But a sense of fun, a gentle sense of provocation, a sense of rebellion, to not take yourself too seriously. I think that's important, to both Shaun and to us."

What do you feel about Shaun, after all these years?

Sproxtton: "It's a little like Wallace & Gromit – what you're trying to do is see these characters grow up a little. This is a bit of a learning-to-grow-up story. That was sort of the start point. It was, 'Okay, so we have this alien story... But what does that *mean*?' You're working backwards, always trying to think what's next for the characters, what's next for the relationships? The other interesting thing about these films, unlike other feature films, is that they are a serial, so you've got to end up back at square one. I remember we had this extraordinary discussion with Jeffrey Katzenberg [when Aardman was in partnership with DreamWorks] when we were shooting *THE*

CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT. He said, 'So, what does Wallace learn?' And we all looked at each other and said, 'Well, no, Wallace *never* learns. That's the point! You go back to the beginning...' And he said, 'Oh, okay, I see...' It was a different format than he had been exposed to, as opposed to, 'Something happens, the character learns something and moves on a bit.'"

Making Shaun the 'responsible one' is a clever touch on this, for the fans who have grown up with him and who now have younger siblings. Was that deliberate?

Lord: "We were certainly aware of that. You need to find accessible things, for a young audience. That doesn't mean showing them their own lives, necessarily. I think we take the view that there are certain experiences that are fairly common to most people, and certainly one of those is having a younger sibling, or a younger friend, coming along and sort of taking some of the limelight, the spotlight. The experience of being *obliged* to take responsibility. That idea of, 'Look after your brother for a minute...' The thing we worked hardest on, probably – the big debate – was, 'How much is Shaun taking responsibility?' Initially he has *no* desire whatsoever to take responsibility, to be a caring fellow. He just sees it as being great fun! An enormous potential for fun. It's a selfish choice, initially. And then, only as the story progresses, does he realise, 'Oh, crikey, this is really serious,' and he has to take responsibility. And then there's the fundamentally comic idea of the guy who has always been the mischievous one, now getting a taste of his own medicine."

Aardman went employee-owned last year – what can you tell us about that decision?

Sproxtton: "We are preparing for our future. The creation of an employee trust is the best solution we have found for keeping Aardman doing what it does best, keeping the teams in place and providing continuity for our highly creative culture. And of course, those that create value in the company will continue to benefit directly from the value they create"

The statistics show that employee owned companies are significantly more successful than conventionally owned companies. So we are very excited by the prospect of seeing Aardman roll far into the future under this arrangement and can rest easy that those four decades which have slipped by have paved the way for many more years of great creativity".

Aardman has a spirit – and a humour – inherent to it. But the movie industry as a whole takes itself quite seriously. Has that been hard over the years?

Lord: "Yeah, it has. [Laughs] It's a very interesting thing. British comedy in America has always been a mysterious thing. A few things cut through and work really well, and it's really hard to predict what. I think we've done incredibly well in that world, to make such an impact. We very

consciously set out to not take ourselves too seriously, because I was aware that Hollywood movies for children often contained a very, very strong moral message. It's become part of the package now. It's what people positively *expect* now. That's okay... But we're pretty subtle with that moral message! I like to think that in what we do, the most important thing is that goodness

wins out. Goodness, optimism, humanity wins out, and cynicism and calculation and evil doesn't. I mean goodness in the most profound sense. Shaun is profoundly good. That doesn't mean that he isn't mischievous, that doesn't mean he doesn't cause trouble. Ultimately, though, what he stands for is good and decent. But you don't have to labour that point. I think our stuff is fundamentally moral. I know that with the first [Shaun] movie, and I hope so with this, that people came out smiling. *Smiling*. Because they've seen something that was funny and warm and life-affirming, and that's always what we hope for from our films."

Shaun: the Stats

With Shaun turning 25 next year, here at the 25 top things you need to know about the planet's favourite sheep

1. Shaun the Sheep first appeared in Nick Park's Wallace & Gromit classic, 'A Close Shave', in 1995
2. Somehow, he is still just in his early teens (in sheep years)
3. He is part of the family for Aardman, the beloved British animation studio that was founded in 1972
4. Farmageddon is Shaun's second blockbuster event, after 2015's Shaun The Sheep Movie
5. That movie scored a cracking \$22 million at the UK box office
6. Shaun's follow-up, Farmageddon, is an even more epic adventure, that will see him journey into space for the first time – 10,000 light years away!
7. For FARMAGEDDON, its makers needed Shaun's biggest sets ever – up to 70 of them, in fact, with up to 35 units shooting on them at any one time
8. No less than 28 animators were tasked with bringing Shaun and his new friend, the magical alien called Lu-La, to life
9. On average, just two seconds of animation is produced, per animator, per day.
10. A typical Shaun the Sheep puppet is 17cm tall and weighs 100g
11. He also has over 5 million Facebook fans
12. Across the world, Shaun's brand has never been more potent, especially in Japan, where he has 100 different commercial partners

13. That's not to say Shaun says yes to everything. Far from it, in fact. "We say no to many, many things," says the man in charge of the Shaun brand, Sean Clarke.
14. In Japan, there are five Shaun the Sheep playparks, two cafes and a new Shaun the Sheep dining experience that is just about to launch.
15. The food in those cafes is particularly good, says Clarke. "But there's no lamb on the menu!"
16. Next summer, Shaun the Sheep will travel to Japan as a partner of the GB Olympic Team
17. His theme parks are taking off, too. The first launched in Sweden and he now has ones in Australia and Japan, with one planned in China too
18. Nick Park, Shaun's creator, credits Baby Spice as being a key part of his success, her being photographed wearing a Shaun backpack in the '90s skyrocketing his fame
19. To record his score for FARMAGGEDON, at London's iconic Abbey Road, composer Tom Howe enlisted an orchestra of more than 100
20. Shaun's voice (okay, 'baaas') is provided by Justin Fletcher, also known as children's TV favourite, Mr Tumble
21. John Sparkes, who provides Bitzer's grumbles, is also the narrator of Peppa Pig – and was part of the cult '80s sketch show Absolutely (if you're old enough to remember that)
22. To date, Shaun has shot 150 episodes of his TV show, 1 TV special and, now, two feature-length movies
23. The average time it takes to make a Shaun movie is more than three years
24. FARMAGEDDON has two directors – Will Becher and Richard Phelan – who have collaborated closely for those three years to bring Shaun to life on screen. "They get on really well, depending on what time of day it is," laughs writer Mark Burton
25. Shaun the Sheep has a presence in a whopping 170 territories worldwide

Biographies

Will Becher – Co-Director

Will Becher is a Director and Creative at Aardman Animations in Bristol. He began his career in the late nineties when he landed a summer work placement on *Chicken Run* – in the ‘clay wings’ department. During his degree in Edinburgh he kept in contact, and on graduation was invited by Nick Park to join the animation team on *Curse of the Were Rabbit* (becoming one of Aardman’s youngest ever feature film animators). The film went on to win the Academy Award and BAFTA for Best Animation. Will has since worked on series, commercials and feature films as a Lead

Character Animator on both *The Pirates!* and *Shaun the Sheep Movie*. More recently, he directed *Shaun the Sheep Series 5* before taking the role of Animation Director on *Early Man*. For the last 18 months he’s been working on *Shaun the Sheep Farmageddon* with fellow director Richard Phelan.

Richard Phelan – Co-Director

After graduating from the National Film and Television School, Richard worked at several London animation studios before joining Aardman as a story artist on *Shaun Series 3*. Since then he has worked on feature films and TV shows including *Shaun the Sheep: The Movie*, *The Farmer’s Llamas* and *Early Man*. He is currently directing Aardman’s latest feature film *Shaun the Sheep: Farmageddon*.

Paul Kewley – Producer

After a successful career as a TV producer, Paul was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study on the prestigious Peter Stark Producing Program at the University of Southern California in 1995. After graduating he set up numerous projects as an independent producer with major Hollywood studios and spent more than a decade working in the US film industry.

Paul returned to the UK in 2009 to join Aardman where he was a key player in developing the company’s feature film slate. Paul Produced the Oscar, BAFTA and Golden Globe nominated ‘Shaun The Sheep The Movie’ with Julie Lockhart. He also produced ‘The Farmers Llamas’ a BAFTA and EMMY nominated Shaun Sheep special with John Woolley. Paul raised financing for various films on Aardman’s feature slate including Nick Park’s ‘Early Man’ and was the architect of the BFI/Aardman Film Lab, a scheme intended to develop animated projects in the UK. Paul now has his own business PEK Productions through which he is developing films as well as producing SHAUN THE SHEEP THE MOVIE: FARMAGEDDON for Aardman Animations and STUDIOCANAL.

Mark Burton – Co-Writer

Mark cut his teeth as a comedy writer on such iconic British shows as the satirical puppet series *Spitting Image*, sketch comedy *Alas Smith & Jones*, and the long-running topical panel show *Have I Got News For You*.

His first foray into features came when he was asked to provide additional dialogue for *Chicken Run*. He went on to co-write *Madagascar* for DreamWorks; Aardman's *Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (for which he won a Bafta); and Miramax's *Gnomeo & Juliet*.

Shaun The Sheep Movie (2015) was Mark's first job as a writer/director, with Richard Starzak. The film earned them a Bafta and Oscar nomination.

He collaborated with Nick Park on *Early Man*, and is currently co-writing the next instalment in the *Paddington* franchise for Heyday Films.

Jon Brown – Co-Writer

Jon Brown is a BAFTA award-winning showrunner and screenwriter. He has created and written a number of successful shows for television, including *Dead Pixels*, *Loaded* and *Mongrels*. His extensive credits include the award-winning and critically acclaimed *Succession* and *Veep*, all for HBO, and *Peep Show*, *Misfits* and *Fresh Meat*.

Jon's most recent show, *Dead Pixels*, was a critical hit and was described by The Guardian as 'gut-bustingly funny ... the sharpest new sitcom of 2019'.

At present, Jon continues to write for *Succession*, alongside working on an adaptation of Lionel Shriver's hit novel *The Mandibles*, and also writing for Armando Iannucci's new show *Avenue 5* for HBO.

Peter Lord – Aardman Co-Founder and Executive Producer

PETER LORD is the 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 & 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 Lord and Sproxton 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 Oscar-winning first feature length film starring Wallace and his faithful canine sidekick Gromit. *Wallace & 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 Oscars) 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 were produced.

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

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

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

In 2016, the award-winning studio celebrated its 40th anniversary.

Lord's most recent film credits are as Executive Producer on Aardman's 2015 hit film *Shaun the Sheep Movie* 2018 comedy adventure *Early Man*, and the second *Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* is currently in post-production.

In November 2018, Aardman became an Employee Owned organisation, ensuring that the studio remains independent and securing the creative legacy and culture of the company for the future.

David Sproxton – Aardman Co-Founder and 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. Sproxton has served as a producer, director or cinematographer on a number of animated projects at Aardman.

Sproxton and Lord met at Woking Grammar School for Boys, and in 1970 made their first animated film using Sproxton's Bolex camera. It was a crude piece using cut outs and chalk drawings yet showed enough talent for a BBC Children's Television producer to offer the pair a chance to make short animated films for his programme Vision On. In 1972 Sproxton and Lord registered the name Aardman Animations at Companies House, as a school-boy prank.

After graduating from Durham University, Sproxton decided to pursue filmmaking full-time and in 1976 moved to Bristol, England with Lord. Their first professional creation was the character Morph, who went on to star in the BBC series *The Amazing Adventures of Morph*.

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

In addition to Park, the studio is known for discovering and nurturing new filmmakers. These include Steve Box who won a BAFTA Award for his direction of *Stage Fright* and co-directed *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* with Nick Park; the Oscar[®]-nominated and BAFTA-winning Peter Peake the director of *HumDrum* and many commercials; Richard Starzak, who directed the *Rex the Runt* series for BBC2 and the *Creature Comforts* series for ITV; the

Sproxton co-produced Aardman's first feature film *Chicken Run* (2000), *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005), and the CGI feature *Flushed Away* (2006), made in association with DreamWorks. Sproxton is co-producer of both *Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists* and *Arthur Christmas*, both produced in association with Sony Pictures. Sproxton is also co-producer on *Shaun the Sheep Movie*, *Early Man* and *Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon*, the studio's latest feature films produced with distribution partners STUDIOCANAL. Sproxton has also been involved in the many TV projects the studio has produced including *Shaun the Sheep*, *Chop Socky Chooks*, *Angry Kid*, *Timmy Time*, *Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death*, *Wallace & Gromit's World of Invention* and *Learning Time with Timmy*.

Sproxton spent nine years on the board of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Trust and three years on the Board of the UK Film Council. He is on the board of Encounters Film Festival (Bristol's celebration of the Short film) and a board member of We The Curious and also the board of Slapstick Film Festival.

Sproxton and co-founder Lord were awarded CBEs in the Queen's 2006 Birthday Honours list. In November 2018, Aardman became an Employee Owned organisation, ensuring that the studio remains independent and securing the creative legacy and culture of the company for the future.

Nick Park – Shaun the Sheep creator and Executive Producer

NICK PARK (Director/Producer) 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 most 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 for *The Wrong Trousers* and his third Oscar and 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 is 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. *Gromit Unleashed 2* has launched at the beginning of July 2018 and is on the streets of Bristol for the summer.

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's latest feature film *Early Man* with film partner STUDIOCANAL had a global theatrical release early in 2018.

Richard Starzak – Co-Director and Co-Writer of SHAUN THE SHEEP MOVIE and SHAUN THE SHEEP TV Series Director

Richard Starzak (aka Golly) joined Aardman in 1983 and during his first nine years with the studio is credited with working on *Morph*, *Sledgehammer* for Peter Gabriel, *Pee Wee Herman's Playhouse* in New York, his own film *Ident* and two *Rex the Runt* pilot films.

In 1992, Golly left Aardman to pursue a freelance career during which time he worked in New Zealand as Production Adviser for *Oscar and Friends*, and wrote and directed 13 episodes of *Rex the Runt* for BBC2, winning the Carlton Award for International Animation at The Indies in 2000.

He then went on to direct *Robbie the Reindeer* for the BBC ONE. *Robbie* went on to win 19 international awards including a prestigious British Academy of Film and Television Arts award (BAFTA).

After writing and directing the second series of *Rex the Runt*, and series 2 of *Creature Comforts*, Golly re-joined Aardman full time as Creative Director of the Broadcast and Development department going onto develop *Shaun the Sheep* for television. In 2015, Richard's first feature film *Shaun the Sheep Movie*, directed alongside co-director Mark Burton was released worldwide to critical acclaim. He most recently worked on the development of Aardman's next feature film production, *Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* which is set for theatrical release in 2019.

Carla Shelley – Executive Producer

Carla has produced a number of award winning and nominated feature films, shorts and commercials during her time with Aardman. She headed Aardman's commercial division for four years before moving into TV and film production. She won a BAFTA Award for her work as Producer on Nick Park's Oscar® winning short film 'A Close Shave' (1995).

Carla served as the Line Producer on Aardman's first full-length feature film, 'Chicken Run' (2000). She went on to take a producing role on the Wallace & Gromit feature 'The Curse of the Were-Rabbit' (2005), which garnered many prestigious awards including the Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature Film and a BAFTA for Best British Film. Both films were produced in association with DreamWorks.

Carla took a Producer role on Aardman's CGI feature 'Arthur Christmas' (2011) as well as acting as Executive Producer on the stop-motion feature 'The Pirates! A Band of Misfits' (2012), both for Sony Pictures Animation.

More recently Carla took a Co-Executive Producer role on 'Shaun the Sheep Movie' (2015) for STUDIOCANAL and subsequently went on to take a Producer role on Nick Park's stop-motion feature film 'Early Man' released by STUDIOCANAL in 2018.

Carla is currently acting as Executive Producer on both the Shaun movie sequel 'Farmageddon' for STUDIOCANAL due to be released by in 2019, and 'Chicken Run 2' for STUDIOCANAL and Pathe.

Career / Credit History**2018 – Date Aardman Animations – Executive Director, Feature Production**

2015 – 2018 Producer ‘Early Man’ for STUDIOCANAL

2012 – 2015 Co-Executive Producer, ‘Shaun the Sheep Movie’ for STUDIOCANAL

2008 – 2012 Executive Producer, ‘The Pirates! in an Adventure with Scientists’,

(US title: ‘The Pirates! A Band of Misfits’) for Sony Pictures Animation

2009 – 2011 Producer, ‘Arthur Christmas’ for Sony Pictures Animation

2005 – 2018 Aardman Animations - Head of Feature Production

2001 – 2005 Producer, ‘Wallace & Gromit in the Curse of the Wererabbit’ for Dreamworks

1997 – 1998 Producer ‘Hum Drum’ short film for Channel 4 Television

1996 – 2000 Line Producer ‘Chicken Run’ for Dreamworks

1994 - 1995 Producer ‘Pib and Pog’ short film for Channel 4 Television

Producer ‘A Close Shave’ for BBC Television

1991 – 1994 Aardman Animations – Head of Commercials Division – Produced various campaigns including Lurpak butter, Cadbury’s creme eggs, Heat Electric

Previously: Background in BBC radio production

Sim 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.

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

In 2014 Sim joined the Aardman Animations team, working closely with Directors Mark Burton and Richard Starzak turning much loved TV character, Shaun the Sheep, into a global movie star for Shaun the Sheep the Movie released in 2015. Since then Sim has worked with Nick Park, editing the 2018 release Early Man.

Sim is Editor of Aardman's most recent feature, A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon, released in autumn 2019.

Tom Howe - Composer

Tom Howe is an award-winning composer from the UK who has scored over 70 Emmy and BAFTA-winning dramas and documentaries, including recent films like Aardman's animated feature "Early Man," directed by Nick Park and Annapurna Pictures' "Professor Marston and the Wonder Women," starring Luke Evans and Rebecca Hall. In addition to his film & TV projects, Tom has also written several international Top 40 hits, as a songwriter.

After establishing himself in the UK Tom moved to Hollywood, and has written music for several major motion pictures, such as Fox's "Exodus: Gods and Kings.", Warner Bros. "Wonder Woman" and "Legend Of Tarzan".

Tom has recently completed work on animated film "Charming" from the producers of "Shrek" and releasing in cinemas in 2018.

Tom's abilities as a multi-instrumentalist, his fluency with large scale orchestral scores, combined with his talents in writing pop and rock music, electronic sound design, and his use of modern production techniques have given him an advantage few other composers can boast when scoring film, TV and other media.

Credits

Directed by	Richard Phelan & Will Becher
Produced By	Paul Kewley
Written by	Mark Burton and Jon Brown
Co-Produced By	Richard Beek
Based on an idea by	Richard Starzak
Executive Producers	Mark Burton Richard Starzak Peter Lord Nick Park Carla Shelley David Sproxton Ron Halpern Didier Lupfer
Edited by	Sim Evan-Jones, ACE
Director of Photography	Charles Copping
Composer	Tom Howe
Production Designer	Matt Perry
Puppet Designers	Kate Anderson Anne King
Animation Supervisors	Grant Maisey Loyd Price
Co-Executive Producers	Sean Clarke Kerry Lock
Production Managers	Richard Bowen Zoë Starzak Zoë Verrier-Stunt Kelly Lappin
Supervising Sound Editor	Adrian Rhodes
VFX Supervisor	Howard Jones
Technical Director	Tom Barnes
Shaun	Justin Fletcher
The Farmer and Bitzer	John Sparkes
Lu-La	Amalia Vitale