

ON THE LAM

Paul Kewley (producer): It was a challenge to take the series and turn it into a film, but the first thing we thought about were the characters. In the series the flock has always been this interchangeable chorus line of characters, but with the film we've been able to define the rest of them. We've given them characteristics, named them all, and they all have their own little storylines or jokes that run throughout the film. **Richard Starzak AKA 'Golly' (co-writer/director):** Nick Park has been on hand for advice. The great thing about working here is you have this heritage, and we absolutely use it.

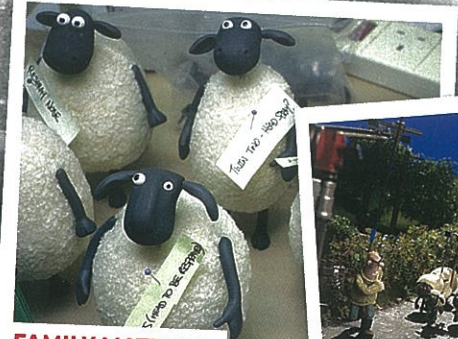
EXCLUSIVE!

Sheep thrills

SHAUN THE SHEEP THE MOVIE

Buzz goes behind the scenes at Aardman Animation in Bristol to get the lowdown on the former Wallace & Gromit bit-player's big-screen

Shaun the Sheep is a woolly wonder. Since his debut in Aardman Animations' 1995 Wallace & Gromit classic *A Close Shave*, he's spawned 130 episodes of his own TV series (shown in 180 countries), another spin-off show from that spin-off, various videogames and even theatre productions. Buzz heads on set of his debut movie to see what the flock all the fuss is about...



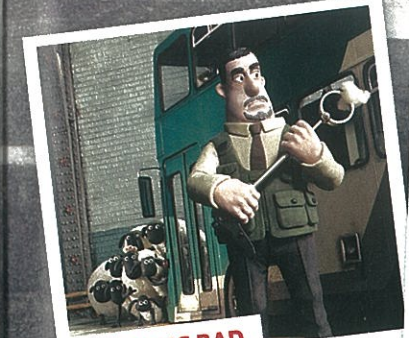
FAMILY MATTERS

Golly: The way we structured the series meant that Shaun isn't the head character. He's in the middle of a bunch of characters, which makes it a very fertile area to tell stories with. **PK:** When Golly pitched the series, he originally conceived the farm as a factory set-up and the flock as workers, but it quickly became apparent they're actually a family. Shaun's the 12-year-old kid who's at that point where he wishes his Dad got off his back. If there were a big red button saying 'do not press' he'd press it. He loves a bit of chaos, but he loves his family as well.



LEADING THE CHARGE

Peter Lord (Aardman Animations co-founder): The basic art and craft is very much the same at it's been for a hundred years – that relationship between animator and puppet. Technology makes life easier, and technical mistakes can be fixed digitally, but the technique is still the same as it's been since *King Kong*, and we celebrate that. There are other studios out there making very polished, sophisticated computer animation which is fantastic, but I feel like on a technical level ours is more obviously puppet animation. For me, smooth and perfect are not good words. I'm much more interested in energetic and alive.



BREAKING BAD

PK: Trumper's our bad guy and an 'animal containment officer'. He's a guy who always wanted to be a policeman but never made the grade, and he terrorises animals. Trumper's pretty Robert De Niro-like and even ends up stalking them *Cape Fear*-style towards the end. We've also brought in new characters, including Slip, an orphan city dog desperate for a parent. Her story's the opposite to Shaun's, but they meet in the city, team up and we all end up falling in love with her.



STREET ART

Mark Burton (co-writer/director): The animators are actors in themselves, and the more challenging and subtle the performance, the more they like it. Two seconds of footage a day is the average. Animators are treasured individuals and you can't get them to work any faster. **Steve Cox (animator):** We use LAVs [live action video, where humans act out each scene] to plan the shots out and get the comedy timing right. We aim to make two seconds of movie footage a day, and work to 12 movements per second instead of 24, which gives the animation a more cartoony, Aardman style.

'It's very British. We have instincts about comedy that are natural'

PETER LORD



TO THE WIRE

Andy Bloxham (Model Maker): Usually we start with a 2D image, like a sketch from the director. Then we make a rough sculpt [to visualise] them in three dimensions before making moulds of each separate body part, and then cast material ore into those to make different parts of the puppet. From there, we make a wire armature and then use silicon, foam latex or fibreglass to build it up, before we start painting. From initial sculpt to finished product can take around 12 weeks or so. We made 12 Shaun's, and around 117 'average' sheep in the end.



CRAFTING COMEDY

PL: The sort of things we want to make films about... It's very British. We have instincts about storytelling, performance and comedy that's natural to us. **MB:** We never dumb it down. The humour's meant to be universal – you go for a joke adults will find funny as well. **Golly:** Buster Keaton was a touchstone; the deadpan face, but you know what's going on in his head. It's the same with Shaun. He's a simple character, but if the storytelling's good you know what's going on in his head.



FINDING THE WARMTH

PK: This is the lowest point of the film. Shaun and the flock are in the city but have been abandoned, and they end up in this place where other strays live, a kind of purgatory for animals who are desperate for owners. It's a very poignant moment. One of the things we were clear with was to find a strong, simple emotional through-line for our lead character. **Golly:** I do genuinely think the film will surprise a lot of people. I think the series has always punched above its weight and the film's like that, too. It's got a lot more of a powerful story than people will expect. **MR**