



BFI AND AARDMAN ANIMATIONS LAUNCH PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP NEW ANIMATION FEATURE FILMS

The BFI Aardman Animation Development Lab to support animated feature film projects

BFI Aardman Animation Development Lab to offer support and professional, hands-on experience to emerging talent with a passion for creating animated family films

LONDON – Friday 3 October 2014. The BFI is partnering with Aardman Animations, a world leader in stop-frame and CGI animated filmmaking and creators of *Wallace & Gromit* and *Shaun The Sheep*, in launching a new scheme today backed by £1 million of Lottery funding to help support the development and production of new animated feature films and the creative talent making them.

The BFI will provide funding for up to two years, to three filmmakers or filmmaker teams (writers, directors, producers) to develop their projects with dedicated development support through **The BFI Aardman Animation Development Lab**. The process for developing animated feature films is lengthy and expensive limiting the opportunities for British filmmakers. Aardman will work with the filmmakers – animators, writers, directors, producers – to shape their ideas with the aim of emerging with a set of ‘greenlight’ materials for their films, ready to advance to production. The closing date for applications is Friday 28 November 2014.

Ben Roberts, Director of the BFI Film Fund says, "The beauty of animated features lies in their ability to combine great artistry with commercial ambition. This all comes at a cost, and so the development opportunities are limited. Tapping into that Aardman brain to work in depth on a small number of carefully chosen projects from promising filmmakers, is a great opportunity for us to move some exciting and commercially appealing work closer to a reality."

Peter Lord, Co-founder of Aardman Animations says, "Feature animation is the ideal medium for filmmakers. It allows us to reach the widest possible cinema audience, in terms of age and demographic, without compromising our standards or patronising our viewers. It offers magnificent scope for the fundamental film skills of cinematography, design, editing and performance. And as filmmakers we can win over audiences not only through humour, but also through deep emotion and visceral excitement."

From *Animal Farm* and *Watership Down* to *The Snowman*, *Arthur Christmas*, *Peppa Pig* and even last year's John Lewis classic Christmas commercial – *Rabbit and Bear* – the UK has a long tradition of producing world-class animated films for global family audiences and iconic TV programmes.

Aardman is a British and international success story having produced a number of international hit animation feature films including *Chicken Run*, *Wallace & Gromit: Curse Of The Were-Rabbit* and *The Pirates! Band of Misfits*, as well as the forthcoming theatrical release, *Shaun The Sheep The Movie*. In addition, animated feature films such as *Tim Burton's Corpse Bride* and *Frankenweenie* were made in the UK and last year animation was the leading genre at the UK box office.

In seeking projects for the Lab, the BFI and Aardman will be looking for stories that engage, inspire and entertain audiences, explore universal themes, work for family audiences in entertaining both adults and children, and which demonstrate the filmmaker's ambition to dramatise stories on a bigger canvas. The Lab will offer funding but also creative support from Aardman in helping to develop character design and visuals, as well as exposure to and education around the animation process, with the aim of helping filmmakers to get their projects made and to market.

The Lab is actively encouraging applications from talent coming from a range of creative and cultural backgrounds and who may have worked in other mediums, such as theatre, television and comedy, as well as film. Applicants may be writers, writer/directors, directors or a producer with a writer or a writer and a director but they will need to have a strong track record in their current area of expertise, the ability to tell a compelling story and/or a distinctive directorial vision.

In applying to the Lab, filmmakers need to outline their initial story idea for their film and explain why it is suited to animation rather than live action. Film projects also need to be capable of being developed as an animated theatrical feature film, obtaining theatrical and video release certificates no more restrictive than a BBFC 'PG', and qualifying as a British film. To be eligible, projects also need to have limited or no development finance in place.

Writers wanting to apply to the Lab need to have at least two writing credits from a long-form fictional work which will have been commissioned for broadcast (television or radio), from a published work (eg novel, short story, poem), or a theatre staged play; and/or an outstanding live action or animated short film that has been officially selected or screened at a film festival, a theatrical or professional digital distribution release, won an award, or which has been picked up for broadcast.

Directors must have a demonstrable track record with work that indicates a distinctive directorial vision. They should have at least two credits for screen-based work including live action feature films, drama/comedy broadcast on television, animated television or conceptual music videos, commercials or artists' film and video; in theatre directing, perhaps demonstrated by acclaimed reviews; and/or an outstanding live action or animated short film that has been

officially selected for a festival, may have won an award, achieved theatrical or professional online distribution, or has been picked up for broadcast on television.

Producers need to have at least two producing credits or have worked as a development executive with a recognised film, television or digital production company on a complete live action feature film which has been theatrically released/selected and screened at a major film festival. They may have produced a screen-based work including on TV or online, or conceptual music videos, commercials, documentaries or artists' film and video; and/or an outstanding live action or animated short film that has been officially selected for a festival, been an award-winner, received theatrical or professional online distribution, or picked up for broadcast on TV.

In the interest of helping new filmmakers, the Lab is not open to anyone who has written an animated feature film that has been released theatrically or broadcast on UK terrestrial television, or developed an animated feature project previously with Aardman.

A Development Executive is currently being appointed to work out of Aardman's Features Development department with the animation feature film projects and filmmakers that are being supported by the Lab.

The guidelines for filmmakers wishing to apply to the BFI and Aardman Animation Development Lab can be downloaded at www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/bfi-film-fund/funding-production-development/bfi-aardman-development-lab

The closing deadline for applications is 5pm Friday 28 November 2014

For further information:

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BFI FILM FUND

With over £26m to invest a year, the BFI Film Fund is the UK's largest public investor in film - supporting first-class film-making through development and production, to distribution and international sales.

Recent releases backed by the BFI Film Fund include Matthew Warchus's **Pride**; Lone Scherfig's **The Riot Club**; Jonathan Glazer's **Under the Skin**, Ralph Fiennes' **The Invisible Woman**, Amma Asante's **Belle**, Ken Loach's **Jimmy's Hall**, Joanna Hogg's **Exhibition**, Stephen Frears' **Philomena**, Lenny Abrahamson's **Frank**, Dexter Fletcher's **Sunshine on Leith**, Ruairi Robinson's **The Last Days On Mars**, Richard Ayode's **The Double**; John Michael McDonagh's **Calvary** and André Singer's **Night Will Fall**

New films that the BFI Film Fund has backed include Mike Leigh's J.M.W Turner **Mr. Turner**; James Kent's **Testament of Youth**; John Boorman's **Queen & Country**; Randall Wright's **Hockney**; Peter Strickland's **The Duke Of Burgundy**; Carol Morley's **The Falling**; Guy Myhill's **The Goob**; Yann Demange's **'71**, Duane Hopkins' **Bypass**; Daniel Wolfe's feature debut, **Catch Me Daddy**; Debbie Tucker-Green's **Second Coming**; Gerard Johnson's **Hyena**; John Crowley's **Brooklyn**; Andrew Haigh's **45 Years**; Louise Osmond's **Dark Horse**; Rufus Norris' **London Road**; Sarah Gavron's **Suffragette**; Yorgos Lanthimos' **The Lobster**; Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's **20,000 Days on Earth**; John Maclean's **Slow West**; Terence Davies' **Sunset Song**; Richard Bracewell's **Bill**; Destiny Ekaragha's **Gone Too Far!**; Brian Hill's **Thomas Quick**; Beeban Kidron's **InRealLife**; Jon Wright's **Robot Overlords**; Morgan Matthews' **X+Y**; ; and David Farr's *The Ones Below*.

BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for
- today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences



Aardman

Aardman, based in Bristol (UK) co-founded and run by Peter Lord and David Sproxton, is a world leader in animation. It produces feature films, television series, advertising and digital entertainment for both the domestic and international market. Their multi-award winning productions are novel, entertaining, brilliantly characterised and full of charm that reflects the unique talent, energy and personal commitment of the very special people who make up the Aardman team. The studio's work is often imitated and yet the company continues to lead the field producing a rare brand of visually stunning and amusing independent and commercials productions. www.aardman.com