



STOP MOTION: CELEBRATING HANDMADE ANIMATION ON THE BIG SCREEN

ParaNorman (2D)

ParaNorman

Directors: Sam Fell, Chris Butler

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a LAIKA production

A Focus Features presentation/A Focus Features release

Produced by: Arianne Sutner, Travis Knight

1st Assistant Directors: Dan Pascall, Ime Etuk

Casting by: Allison Jones

Written by: Chris Butler

Director of Photography: Tristan Oliver

Visual Effects Supervisor: Brian van't Hul

Lead Animators: Travis Knight, Jeff Riley, Payton Curtis

Edited by: Christopher Murrie

Production Designer: Nelson Lowry

Art Directors: Francesca Berlingieri Maxwell, Phil Brotherton

Director, End Credits Sequence: Aaron Sorenson

Music: Jon Brion

Music Conducted by: Jon Brion

Re-recording Mixers: Tom Myers, Juan Peralta, Stephen Urata

Supervising Sound Editor: Ronald Eng

Voice Cast:

Kodi Smit-McPhee (Norman Babcock)

Tucker Albrizzi (Neil)

Anna Kendrick (Courtney)

Casey Affleck (Mitch)

Christopher Mintz-Plasse (Alvin)

Leslie Mann (Sandra Babcock)

Jeff Garlin (Perry Babcock)

Elaine Stritch (Grandma)

Bernard Hill (The Judge)

Jodelle Ferland (Aggie)

Tempestt Bledsoe (Sheriff Hooper)

Alex Borstein (Mrs Henscher)

John Goodman (Mr Prenderghast)

USA 2012©

93 mins

Digital 4K (2D)

When a small town comes under siege by zombies, who can it call? 'Norman!'

From Focus Features and LAIKA, the companies behind the Academy Award-nominated animated feature *Coraline*, comes the comedy thriller *ParaNorman*. Following *Coraline*, *ParaNorman* is the second stop-motion animated feature to be made at LAIKA, an all-new frightfully funny, magically emotional, and hilariously spooky story.

ParaNorman is set in the town of Blithe Hollow, whose locals profit from mining the town's history as the site, 300 years ago, of a famous witch hunt. Eleven-year-old Norman Babcock (voiced by Kodi Smit-McPhee of *Let Me In* and *The Road*) spends much of his days appreciating the finer points of scary movies and studying ghost lore. In fact, Norman is gifted with the ability to see and speak with the dead, such as his beloved grandmother (Elaine Stritch). Most days, he prefers their company to that of his flustered father (Jeff Garlin), spacey mother (Leslie Mann), and deeply superficial older sister Courtney (Anna Kendrick). At middle school, Norman dodges bullying Alvin (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), confides in the impressionable Neil (Tucker Albrizzi), and tries to tune out his blowhard teacher Mrs Henscher (Alex Borstein).

Norman is unexpectedly contacted by his odd Uncle Prenderghast (John Goodman), who floors him with the revelation that a centuries-old witches' curse is real and is about to come true, and that only Norman will be able to stop it from going into overdrive and harming the townspeople. Once a septet of zombies – led by The Judge (Bernard Hill) – suddenly rises from their graves, Norman finds himself caught in a wild race against time alongside Courtney, Alvin, Neil, and Neil's musclebound older brother Mitch (Casey Affleck) as Sheriff Hooper (Tempestt Bledsoe) chases them all. Worse, the town is up in arms and taking up arms. Norman bravely summons up all that makes a hero – courage and compassion – as he finds his paranormal activities pushed to their otherworldly limits.

'To do stop-motion animation – or, as we call it in Britain, stop-frame animation – you have to love it... for years on end,' says director Sam Fell, who has extensive experience, and was self-taught, in the art. 'On *ParaNorman*, we wanted to try a new, fresh approach to the animation – with less of a theatrical feel and more of a movie one.' *ParaNorman* director Chris Butler reflects, 'Writing *ParaNorman* was a labour of love. I wanted to do a zombie movie for kids – taking a *Scooby-Doo* mystery to its logical conclusion, rather than having it be debunked – and there was also a "what if" idea that had to do with my relationship with my grandma. So I combined them into a script that would be irreverent and full of adventure, and also be about identity. One of the themes of our movie is, "You can't judge a book by its cover."'

Fell sparked to Butler's concept of 'John Carpenter meets John Hughes,' and he was tantalised by the idea of Hughes' *Breakfast Club* outcasts dealing with a *Fog*-like undead curse. Fell says, 'It became us working together to capture that spirit. Chris was very open to my ideas about working out the structure a bit. We wanted to make something that a family would enjoy seeing, as well as play around with beloved genres. Chris and I both knew we were channelling a 1980s vibe, not doing a pastiche, and that we would take it visually down that road as well – into a small American town. Even though we're British! *ParaNorman* is visually stunning, and a thrilling homage to entertainments that we grew up with. But it also holds deep emotional resonance and poignancy. Even during the broad and absurdist moments, we treat the subject matter seriously.'

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STOP MOTION: CELEBRATING HANDMADE ANIMATION ON THE BIG SCREEN

The Golden Voyage of Sinbad

Sun 4 Aug 14:50 (+ intro by Alan Friswell, conservator and restorer of Ray Harryhausen's models); Wed 14 Aug 20:30

Chicken Run

Sun 4 Aug 13:00; Sat 24 Aug 11:40

The Emperor's Nightingale

Sun 4 Aug 20:30; Tue 13 Aug 18:20

ParaNorman

Mon 5 Aug 12:20; Thu 15 Aug 12:10; Wed 28 Aug 12:20

The Boxtrolls

Tue 6 Aug 12:20; Mon 12 Aug 14:10; Sat 17 Aug 12:00

Journey to the Beginning of Time

praveku

Tue 6 Aug 20:30; Thu 22 Aug 18:30

Isle of Dogs

Wed 7 Aug 12:10; Sat 10 Aug 20:30; Sun 25 Aug 18:30

Kubo and the Two Strings

Thu 8 Aug 12:20; Sat 10 Aug 18:15 (+ Q&A with Travis Knight, director and President & CEO of LAIKA); Fri 30 Aug 12:20

Missing Link

Fri 9 Aug 12:30; Mon 26 Aug 15:20

Frankenweenie

Sun 11 Aug 14:30 BFI IMAX; Fri 30 Aug 20:30

Jason and the Argonauts

Wed 14 Aug 18:00

Coraline

Fri 16 Aug 12:30; Sat 17 Aug 15:30; Wed 21 Aug 12:15; Thu 22 Aug 14:20

Stop-Motion Shorts Scene – BFI Backed + Q&A

Fri 16 Aug 18:10

Funday: Stop-Motion Children's Favourites

Sun 18 Aug 12:20

Stopmotion + Q&A with director Robert Morgan

Wed 21 Aug 20:40

Aardman Shorts

Sat 24 Aug 14:30

Tim Burton's Corpse Bride

Sun 25 Aug 14:30 BFI IMAX; Fri 30 Aug 18:20

Fantastic Mr Fox

Sun 25 Aug 16:15

Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio

Tue 27 Aug 20:40

Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas

Thu 29 Aug 20:50

LAIKA: Frame x Frame

Embark on a journey behind the scenes of LAIKA, one of the world's foremost pioneers in stop-motion animation. This immersive new exhibition will transport you into the boundary-pushing art and science behind every one of the nearly one million meticulously constructed frames that bring each of LAIKA's five groundbreaking feature films to life. Opens Mon 12 Aug

Thanks to Jez Stewart, BFI National Archive

Butler reflects, 'Amblin [-produced] movies from the '80s, like *The Goonies*, had spark, warmth, and affection – and they didn't condescend to kids. In this fun rollercoaster ride, there would also be what kids contend with on a daily basis in the real world – fitting in, facing bullying – as well as something they don't usually face; a zombie invasion.' Fell remembers, 'I was watching those movies, too, when I was a teenager. They had an edge, and dealt with issues. While being a haunted-house ride, *ParaNorman* addresses bullying, but not in a preachy way, and Chris' script takes Norman's story – and the audience – to a really strong ending.'

The directors' past experiences in stop-motion animation meant that they knew what it would take to conceive and implement a boy's world and its fantastical invading elements – often in miniature. Butler notes that the aesthetic, and the stop-motion process itself, also called for their 'capturing naturalism – not realism – in the performances, in the animation, in the design. The entrée into Norman's world for the audience is that it's the dead people who have more time – all the time in the world – for him, and generally he can communicate better with them. He has a special gift that separates him from those around him, but it's his gift that can save the town from a 300-year-old curse. The heart of the story is how he reaches a better understanding with both the living and the dead, including his own family acknowledging and accepting that he is different.'

Production notes

A filmmaker well versed in fear, and trusting of children's ability to digest it, is Chris Butler of LAIKA studios, the stop-motion expressionists behind films such as *Coraline* (2009) and *ParaNorman* (2012) – he directed the latter, and describes it delightfully as 'a gateway horror movie'. Norman sees and talks to dead people and this 'weirdness' makes him an outcast in his town. For Butler, it's about maintaining a balance – 'whenever you have something that is very intense, being sure to burst the bubble by having a moment of levity or comedy. I have a love of horror movies: if I was making a horror movie for adults, I wouldn't worry about constantly giving them an out.'

He considers most children's movie-making in the streaming, multi-screen era too anodyne: 'I don't like the idea of animated movies as a babysitting device. I hate it. I understand why it's necessary but I hate the idea of making something that is so safe, so put through a filter, that you can just plunk a child down in front of it and they're fine for an hour and a half. I want to make something that challenges a child to think. If I go back to my childhood, the books, the TV shows and certainly the movies that I liked most were the ones that pushed me a bit.

'I'm all for complexity in kids' movies today, I do think sometimes we get a little bit too caught up about explaining why a bad guy is bad, or, "Maybe they're not so bad after all." And I've even done that myself in *ParaNorman*. I do think there's a danger there that you start to even everything out.

If you go back to traditional folk and fairytales, and their purpose in the socialisation of children, part of it was to present something that was frightening. Sometimes we move away from that in order to make things safer. I don't want to get into didactic filmmaking, but I do think part of a kids' movie is imparting some kind of emotional truth which is a lesson. It needn't be as on the nose as a moral, but it should make a child think about who they are and what they're doing.'

Chris Butler talking to Isabel Stevens, *Sight and Sound*, April 2024