



IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!

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Directed by: Peter Lord

©: Sony Pictures Animation Inc.

Production Company: Aardman

Presented by: Columbia Pictures,

Sony Pictures Animation

Executive Producer: Carla Shelley

Produced by: Julie Lockhart, Peter Lord,

David Sproston

Screenplay by: Gideon Defoe

Based upon the book by: Gideon Defoe

Director of Photography: Frank Passingham

Senior Animation Supervisor: Jay Grace

Animation Supervisor: Loyd Price

Visual Effects Supervisor: Andrew Morley

Edited by: Justin Krish

Production Designer: Norman Garwood

Supervising Art Director: Matt Perry

Music by: Theodore Shapiro

Voice Cast:

Hugh Grant (*The Pirate Captain*)

Martin Freeman (*The Pirate with a Scarf*)

Imelda Staunton (*Queen Victoria*)

David Tennant (*Charles Darwin*)

Jeremy Piven (*Black Bellamy*)

Salma Hayek (*Cutlass Liz*)

Lenny Henry (*Peg-Leg Hastings*)

Brian Blessed (*The Pirate King*)

Anton Yelchin (*The Albino Pirate*)

Brendan Gleeson (*The Pirate with Gout*)

Ashley Jensen (*The Surprisingly Curvaceous Pirate*)

Al Roker

(*The Pirate Who Likes Sunsets and Kittens*)

Mr Bobo (*himself*)

Mike Cooper (*Admiral Collingwood*)

David Schneider (*Scarlett Morgan*)

UK-USA 2012©

88 mins

Digital

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+ Q&A with director Peter Lord

'I loved pirate stories when I was a boy – particularly *Treasure Island*,' says two-time Academy Award nominee Peter Lord, a co-founder of Aardman and the director and a producer of the studio's new stop-frame animated feature, *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!* 'Real pirates probably weren't that great to be around, but these stories turned them into something glamorous, swaggering, and colourful – pirate stories revel in the tropical seas, the blue skies, the cannons and costumes. It's a magical irresistible world. So when we found this story about a crew of relentlessly optimistic pirates, I felt we were telling a story in a sort of classic tradition, but turning everything up a notch.'

The story does that in its characters: a collection of extremely hapless pirates that has got to be the most incompetent crew any captain could ask for. 'They're just rubbish at it – they are really, really, really bad at piracy,' says Hugh Grant, who takes on his first animated role in voicing the Pirate Captain. 'But the Captain is perpetually optimistic, and because of that, his crew is with him all the way. He loves his crew, he loves the ship's parrot – or, rather, what he thinks is the ship's parrot – and he is very vain about his luxuriant beard.'

The Pirate Captain has one goal that has eclipsed all others: to be named Pirate of the Year and be acknowledged as one of the great pirates of his day, like Black Bellamy and Cutlass Liz. 'It's like a sort of Oscars for pirates,' says Grant. 'He's entered many times, but he's always come in last. You win by having the most booty, but his booty haul is always tragic.' Still, Lord says, the Captain might be looking for love and respect in all the wrong places. 'None of that matters to his crew – they're like his family, very loyal, loving and trusting – if a little foolish,' says the director, who previously directed Aardman's first animated feature film, the 2000 hit *Chicken Run*. 'But when he goes off chasing this flashy prize, he risks losing what is most dear to him.'

The Pirate Captain's crew is loaded with misfits, from the childlike Albino Pirate to the Pirate with Prosthetics (who is seeing his anatomy constantly replaced with various pieces of flotsam and jetsam) to the Surprisingly Curvaceous Pirate, who nobody seems to notice is a woman. Even the supposedly highly serious real-life characters of Charles Darwin and Queen Victoria get the Aardman treatment and become hilarious and ridiculous, all in the name of a good time. 'Finding these people in a context you wouldn't expect them is always more fun,' says Defoe. 'Luckily, our pirates are masters of disguise, so they can pass themselves off in almost any situation.'

It is also Aardman's first stop-motion film in 3D, which Lord says is a perfect medium for Aardman's visuals. 'For example, take the captain's cabin,' he says. 'We've filled it with amusing, engaging, delightful things – they're jokes, but they're also expressive of his character. Now, in 3D, you feel like you're right in that space, immersed in that world, and that's a wonderful feeling. Or an action shot – when the ship crashes through the waves, you get the sheer impact of it.'

Production notes

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk