

USA FILM FESTIVAL

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PETER LORD TO RECEIVE GREAT DIRECTOR TRIBUTE AT USA FILM FESTIVAL

DALLAS -- The USA Film Festival, one of the nation's foremost cultural organizations dedicated to the recognition of excellence in the film and video arts, will present its **Great Director Tribute to Peter Lord** in conjunction with a special preview screening of his new film *The Pirates! Band of Misfits* on Thursday, April 12, 2012, at AMC NorthPark theatres. The evening will include a film-clip compilation tribute featuring clips from some of his works with Aardman Animations and an on-stage Q&A session with Peter Lord.

"The Festival is honored to be able to host Peter Lord in Dallas with this special screening and tribute" said Ann Alexander, Managing Director for the USA Film Festival. "The works of Aardman Animations are among the most magical and beloved contemporary film classics for audiences of all ages."

About the USA Film Festival's Great Director Tribute -- Since 1971, the Festival has regularly paid tribute to artists who have made enduring contributions to the film arts. Previous honorees include George Cukor, Frank Capra, George Stevens, Sydney Pollack, Michael Powell, Norman Jewison, John Cassavetes, Arthur Penn, Stanley Donen, Robert Altman, John Frankenheimer, Martin Ritt, Richard Brooks, Sidney Lumet, Mervyn LeRoy, William Wyler, Raoul Walsh, King Vidor, Alan J. Pakula, Budd Boetticher, Robert Benton, Michael Apted, Wim Wenders, Claude Lelouch and William Friedkin.

About the Film *The Pirates! Band of Misfits* -- Hugh Grant stars in his first animated role as the luxuriantly bearded Pirate Captain -- a boundlessly enthusiastic, if somewhat less-than-successful, terror of the High Seas. With a rag-tag crew at his side, and seemingly blind to the impossible odds stacked against him, the Captain has one dream: to beat his bitter rivals Black Bellamy (Jeremy Piven) and Cutlass Liz (Salma Hayek) to gain the much coveted Pirate Of The Year Award. It's a quest that takes our heroes from the shores of exotic Blood Island to the foggy streets of Victorian London. Along the way they will battle a diabolical queen (Imelda Staunton) and team up with a haplessly smitten young scientist (David Tennant), but never lose sight of what a pirate loves best: adventure! Directed by Peter Lord. Produced by Peter Lord, David Sproxton, and Julie Lockhart. Screenplay by Gideon Defoe. Based upon his book.

The Pirates! Band of Misfits is rated PG and opens nationwide on April 27th.

Peter Lord (Director/Producer) is co-owner and 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 again in 1996 for *Wat's Pig*. He has also earned BAFTA nominations for *Adam*, *The Amazing Adventures of Morph*, and *War Story*.

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 and Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* was released in 2005. He most recently produced Aardman's CG-animated *Arthur Christmas*, which was released November 2011. The film has been nominated for a Golden Globe and BAFTA Award for Best Animated Feature Film.

Lord first met David Sproxton in the late 1960s 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 them the chance to make short animated films for his program Vision On. Their first character as professionals was 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.

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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 more 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 Lurpack, Mita Copiers, Cadbury's Crunchies and Polo.

Lord was involved in the production of Aardman's first CGI feature film *Flushed Away* which was produced in collaboration with DreamWorks. It was Aardman's first foray into CGI and was released worldwide at the end of 2006.

Peter Lord is a visiting professor at UWE and also attends numerous animation and film festivals to give talks and sit on juries.

In 2006 Peter Lord and David Sproxton celebrated 30 years of Aardman and were awarded CBEs in the Queen's Birthday honours list.

Tickets for the program are free for USAFF members. Please contact the USA Film Festival for additional information at usafilmfest@aol.com

This program is made possible with support from Sony Pictures Animation and Aardman Animations.

About the USA FILM FESTIVAL -- Now celebrating its 42nd year, the USA Film Festival is a Dallas-based, 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to the encouragement and recognition of excellence in the film and video arts. The Festival's year-round programs and events include KidFilm®, Oscar Night® America Dallas, monthly programs and premieres, and the USA Film Festival, held each spring. The USA Film Festival is supported in part by the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs, the Texas Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Editor's Note: For interview requests, film artwork, etc., please contact Martin Long, Moroch & Associates, Mlong@moroch.com or 214-252-1717 or Lawrence Wilczewski at lwilczewski@moroch.com or 214-520-5164

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