



Publicity still from 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit'.

Wallace and Gromit: The Curse Of The Were Rabbit Review by Megan Spencer, 2005

In 1989 claymation characters 'Wallace and Gromit' caused a sensation when they first appeared in the short film *A Grand Day Out*: that next year the film was nominated for an Academy Award.

Its creator Nick Park had to wait until their second short, *The Wrong Trousers* (1994) before winning that little golden statuette. By this time however the pair of very British stop-motion characters had already triumphed, winning over millions around the world appearing in more shorts and commercials. That's when American studio Dreamworks came a-calling..

Created by Park at his Aardman studios, these wee claymation superstars have now made it to their very first feature film, *The Curse Of The Were Rabbit*, a movie about vegetables and big, bad, wascally wabbits. Absent-minded, cheese-loving inventor Wallace and his patient, ever-faithful sidekick dog Gromit are now in pest control.

But as their town's annual giant veggie competition looms, something terrible appears to be attacking their gardens - something that is "not quite natural". To top it off, Wallace falls for local gentlewoman Lady Tottington (Helena Bonham Carter), much to the irritation of her snotty suitor Victor, voiced by Ralph Fiennes.

The effort that has gone into Wallace and Gromit's transition to feature film has paid off for Park and co-director Steve Box. The story is sustained beautifully over 90 minutes. There is romance, the writing and characters are superb, the horror movie references are completely on the money, and the balance between playful and political is delightfully left intact.

There is not a hint of the 'Americanisation' that ever-so slightly compromised *Chicken Run* (2000), Aardman's first feature collaboration with Dreamworks.

In this instance, Aardman remains faithful to the characters and their particular British sense of humour. And they have a ball poking fun at the ruling class, with Lord Victor Quartermain (Ralph Fiennes) copping the brunt of their 'social critique'.

The Curse Of The Were Rabbit underlines just why we love Wallace and Gromit so: they are little heroes from Little Britain. May they rule on.

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