

Wallace and Gromit's Fright of the Bumblebees Review 1

Written by Marc Spess

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Recently [Telltale Games](#) contacted us and asked if we would be interested in reviewing their newest video game release called Fright of the Bumblebees. The game is one of a series of Wallace and Gromit's Grand Adventures from the company. The screenshots showed they paid a lot of attention to the very traits and details that make Wallace and Gromit the famous characters they are, so I agreed!

Before doing a review I asked them a few questions to learn what happened behind the scenes. This is one of the only video game companies to work with the famous [Aardman Studios](#) in the UK and I was interested to see how this game came about. Below are many designs direct from the company and Telltales responses to how it all happened. On page two you can read the game review itself by Mike Flem Jr. Mike contributes in our message boards, sends us news articles from time to time and is a member of our previous site Stop Motion Magic. So who better to ask to help us with the review?



Animate Clay: How did the idea to make a Wallace and Gromit video game first come about with your company Telltale Games? Were you fans of the original films and characters?

Telltale Games: Yes, we're huge fans. We have a lot of animation geeks at Telltale, and Wallace and Gromit is a big favorite around here! We tend to go after licenses that we think would be really fun and exciting to work with. One of our marketing guys met someone from Aardman at a trade show and they expressed an interest in seeing what we could do with Wallace and Gromit.

We use computer animation rather than stop-motion, so it was important to Aardman that

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anything we created stayed very true to their style. We put together a one-room prototype of Wallace and Gromit in the living room and our CTO flew out to the UK to present it to Aardman, and they were really impressed! Once they were convinced that we would do right by the license, we entered into a partnership with Aardman and started dreaming up Wallace and Gromit's Grand Adventures, the four-episode series that launched for PC in March and will be coming to Xbox Live Arcade in the near future.



Animate Clay: Can you briefly describe how you came up with the four Adventure story ideas that Wallace and Gromit go through in the games?

Telltale Games: It was a process involving a lot of collaboration between our team and Aardmans. Several of our writers closed themselves off in a room for a month or so and dreamed up story lines for the Wallace and Gromit games. Our writers came up with story ideas and sent them to Aardman, and Aardman's team would make some suggestions, which we incorporated, until we had four story seeds that everyone was happy with.

Then it was time to start writing scripts and programming the games. At this point started working with a British writer / editor named Tristan Davies, who was recommended to us by Aardman. He had worked on other Wallace and Gromit projects before and had a really good grasp not only of the West Wallaby Street universe, but also of the dialect and slang that Wallace and the other characters would speak with. We worked out a process where our writers do a first pass at a script, which then gets sent to Tristan for editing, and then to Aardman for approval.

This has definitely been a lot of work, but as a result we ended up with four original stories that really feel like the plot of a Wallace and Gromit film, and we're very excited about them!



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Animate Clay: How did you manage to make all the characters look so similar to the clay puppets?

Telltale Games: This, too, was a collaborative process. We would send over concept art, and Aardman would send back suggestions for making the character look more Wallace and Gromit-like. Several of our artists and animators have visited Aardman's studio, to meet their animators and get a feel for what they thought was important in the look of the characters and the locations. We really wanted the characters to look like their clay counterparts, so our engineers built new tech into our game engine that would allow this. Rather than being shiny and smooth like standard 3D models, our Wallace & Gromit characters have pockmarks and imperfections, just like you'd see in the films. Aardman suggested adding fingerprints to the models, which we thought was a great idea!

Animate Clay: Who did the character voices for the video game, and were you lucky enough to get the same voice actors from the original films?

Telltale Games: We weren't able to get Peter Sallis, the man who plays Wallace in the films, but we are working with an extremely talented voice actor named Ben Whitehead who serves as Peter's official stand-in and is a dead ringer for Wallace. He was recommended to us by Aardman and has done Wallace's voice in other projects. The rest of the characters are new for our games and not people you've seen in the films before. (Well, except for Gromit...) Authenticity has been important to us in all aspects of this project and all of the voice actors are British. Our voice recording takes place at London.

Animate Clay: Did you try to keep the character animation similar to the way Wallace and Gromit move in their films? For example Wallace usually gestures by wriggling his fingers and shaking his arms.

Telltale Games: We played around with frame rate and studied Aardman's Wallace and Gromit films to ensure that our animations looked as much as possible like the stop-motion animation Aardman fans are accustomed to. Wallace's mouth shapes were especially important to Aardman. They loaned us some resin models of Wallace's face that they use while making their films, so we could copy his trademark expressions for our games. And yes, Wallace does plenty of finger wriggling!



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Animate Clay: Are there any new inventions that Wallace and Gromit make in the game that viewers might be familiar with?

Telltale Games: In each episode you'll see several new inventions, some that are directly related to the story and others that are just there to amuse.

In the first episode, *Fright of the Bumblebees*, Wallace has started up a honey business using a huge contraption called a magnetronic pollinator that turns flowers into honey (with a little help from a swarm of industrious bees). He tries to step up production by whipping up a growth formula for the flowers, but after the giant flowers go through the pollinator, the bees become gigantic as well. It's classic Wallace and Gromit, with their business venture going awry and Gromit having to bail Wallace out when the giant bees attack. The episode also features a machine that helps Wallace get dressed in the morning, a cheese-detecting robot called the Sniffer 3000, and a Rube Goldberg-type contraption in the kitchen used for making eggs.

In the second episode, *The Last Resort*, Wallace and Gromit turn their house into a beach resort, and there are all kinds of fun gadgets related to that, such as a candy floss machine, a photo booth, and the Deductomatic, which Wallace uses (somewhat unsuccessfully) to try to read the minds of his house guests.

Plus you'll see lots of references to the previous movies. The porridge gun from *A Close Shave* and the robotic pants from *The Wrong Trousers* show up in the first episode. If you look around really carefully you can even find the hatch from Wallace and Gromit's moon expedition in *A Grand Day Out*!

Animate Clay: Will there be future Wallace and Gromit Adventure games from Telltale?

Telltale Games: We're starting with the four episodes, and then we'll see! Since our games are episodic, we approach our games like TV series, defining how many episodes we'll have in the first season and focusing on those before we start thinking about the future. We've loved working on Wallace and Gromit's Grand Adventures so far and the series is getting great reception, so it would be great to be able to do more someday!

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