

Triggerfish make waves in SA animation

 By [Pasqua Heard](#)

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Stick Man, a short film animated by Cape Town-based Triggerfish Animation Studios, recently won Le Cristal at Annecy - described as the "Oscars of animation". Daniel Snaddon, director and animation supervisor at Triggerfish Animation Studios, discusses the award and the work that went into making *Stick Man* come to life.

Stick Man was an adaptation of the children's book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Alex Scheffler. Produced by UK based Magic Light Pictures, the film was directed by Jeroen Jaspaert and co-directed by Daniel Snaddon. It tells the story about a father who gets separated from his family and has to reunite with them in time for Christmas. Voiced by the likes of Martin Freeman (*The Hobbit*), Hugh Bonneville (*Downton Abbey*), and Jennifer Saunders (*Absolutely Fabulous*), the short film screened to nearly 10 million people on BBC1 at Christmas 2015.

Other than Le Cristal, *Stick Man* won Best Animation at both the BANFF World Media Festival and the Shanghai International Film and TV Festival, as well as two British Animation Awards.

Watch the trailer for *Stick Man* here:

■ Tell us how Triggerfish Animation Studios was selected to animate *Stick Man*.

Stick Man came to us through Magic Light Pictures, the producers of the film. They are based in London and have had great success with their previous Christmas specials, the best known of which is *The Gruffalo*, based on the beloved children's book by Julia Donaldson. They were looking for a new animation studio to team up with, and we were recommended by a mutual friend, Arthur Sheriff. They popped down, met the team, saw the studio and fell in love with the fair Cape!

■ Describe the animation process for *Stick Man*. Did you face any challenges?

Our biggest challenge was meeting the quality set by the previous films, and building on what they started. There was a lot we kept, including the interpretation of the illustrator's (Axel Scheffler) work and feeling that the world was hand built. The really tricky part was that we were not going to build any real miniature sets as had been done previously, mainly because

the scope of *Stick Man*'s world was too big! We have everything from wooded parks, to beaches to the open ocean, which would have been impossible to build. Instead we had to analyse the details that made objects look small, hand built and real, and work them into the CGI.

■ Who was your favourite character in *Stick Man* and why?

I have to say Stick Man himself. I'm really proud of the fact that we've managed to make quite a few people cry because a piece of wood is separated from his family. The animators really imbued him with a noble little soul, and Martin Freeman gave us such a great vocal performance – he won a British Animation Award for it earlier this year.



Stick Man wins Le Cristal at Annecy

■ What does winning at Annecy mean for Triggerfish Animation Studios and the South African animation industry?

Annecy really is the world stage. While we were there, we attended talks with ex-Dreamworks head Jeffery Katzenburg, and *Finding Nemo*/*Finding Dory* director Andrew Stanton. Everyone in animation is there! As a TV special, we were up against 25 other programmes, some from really big hitters including Cartoon Network and Dreamworks. The fact that we won is a huge thumbs up from the global industry to say that what we are doing here in SA is world class. We hope that it opens doors for Triggerfish, as we have huge ambitions and a lot of great projects in the works!

■ What are you currently working on?

Revolting Rhymes by Roald Dahl is currently in production with Magic Light Pictures Berlin, an exciting new studio with a formidable creative team behind it (both directors Jakob Schuh and Jan Lachauer have been nominated for the Oscar)! At Triggerfish, we are providing animation services, as well as some texturing, lighting, rendering and compositing. It's a really fun interpretation of the book and stays true to Dahl's anarchistic spirit and Quentin Blake's gruesome characters. It's a real treat to be working on it!

The Christmas special BBC adaptation of *Revolting Rhymes* will be screened later this year.

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