

The Gruffalo

The Gruffalo was produced by Magic Light Pictures Limited, a London based independent production company, in association with BBC, ZDF and Nick Jr. The film was animated by Studio Soi, Ludwigsburg, Germany. A half hour animated film based on the classic picture book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, *The Gruffalo* tells the magical tale of a mouse who takes a walk through the woods in search of a nut. Encountering three predators who all wish to eat him – a fox, an owl and a snake – the plucky mouse has to use his wits to survive. He invents a monster who then turns out to be only too real.

The Gruffalo was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 7-11 Fiction category.

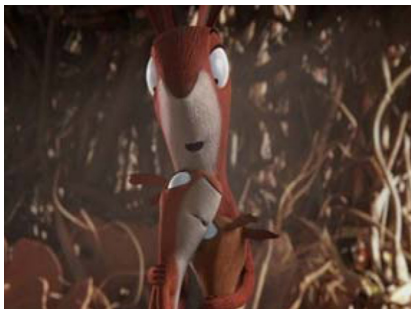


Figure 1: Mother squirrel tells her kids a story about a mouse searching food in the dark woods.

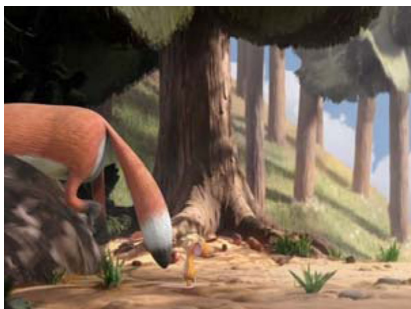


Figure 2: The mouse scares a fox who wanted to eat him by telling him about the Gruffalo.

International experts' opinions

Almost all the international experts loved the program for various reasons. “It was exquisite; I just thought it was so beautifully done. Just the musicality of the language from the book translated into the film, just the rhythm and the pace of it – it is a wonderful story, but also just the way it was told” (male expert, USA). “I think it was lovely. It was an absolute treat for my co-producers who made a Christmas program. I can’t wait to see the casting, a whole movie, the second one” (male expert, Norway).

The experts also admired the way the program was directed. “The subtle details, which instead of like big, broad, side gags, were all subtle things about how an eco-system works. You saw: this eats this, eats this, eats this, and then a fish goes up and gives you a sad little book. There are so many subtle details; it didn’t need to go big. They could be played and take their time. Really, it was so well crafted. It is good to see at least that much money spent well. The acting and the performance on the voice was wonderful” (male expert, USA).

The international experts appreciated the fact that the program could be watched by children across age. “I think *Gruffalo* could work for all the different ages. I thought there were lots of little clever things in there” (female expert, USA). They appreciated the pace of the program that could retain the interest of the children. “I just loved *The Gruffalo*. But, I would be interested; because somebody asked me whether the kids might find it too slow in pace. I felt it kept going, because there was always this tension of seeing *The Gruffalo*. I thought that was an interesting comment from somebody just saying: she liked it, but she thought it was made by grown-ups for kids, rather than really having a kid sense. I didn’t agree with that, but I just thought I would throw that out” (female expert, UK).



Figure 3: The mouse uses the same Gruffalo story to scare away an owl and a snake.



Figure 4: The mouse meets the real Gruffalo and told him about the animals.



Figure 5: They meet the snake who quickly runs away from the Gruffalo, who thinks it was the mouse he was afraid of.

Some thought that the program was for the whole family. “That is interesting, because you see when it was transmitted, Christmas Day at 5:30 in the afternoon, so it is not like your normal time where you are going to sit your children down in front of the TV. It was a family viewing and high quality. I think, therefore, it was pitching to parents as much as to the kids” (female expert, UK).

The experts loved the animation in the program. “*The Gruffalo* was really fun. It was nice, the animation was really great, and the story was good” (female expert, Jamaica). They were also impressed by the popularity of the program. “I was looking for the characters on the net and on Facebook before Prix Jeunesse. Surprisingly *The Gruffalo* had a fan page. Apparently the space is popular. When I saw it, it was confirmed; it was wonderfully made, and the character is so wonderful with the faces and the expressions, very nice” (female expert, Colombia).

Since the program was based on a book there were also discussions about its popularity. “I think it is based upon the book. I think that is already twelve years old. It was published first in England. In Germany it is super popular, and I think maybe in the rest of Europe, too” (female expert, Germany). The popularity of the book also helped the program. “It is such a well-known book as well. Most people bought it for their kids. It is a story of the children; they know the story, and they know that the little mouse is ok at the end. If you come to it cold, then yes, it might scare some of the very young ones” (female expert, UK).”

They also respected very much the fact that the program was able to justify its high budget. “But what we have to say: I think this may be the program with the biggest budget. This was so super expensive, and you can see it. That is great. It was worth it” (female expert, Germany). “I loved it, just thought it was wonderful. I thought it was one having all that talent and all that money worked. That doesn’t always work together, but it really did” (male expert, Canada).



Figure 6: The same thing happens to the owl and the fox.

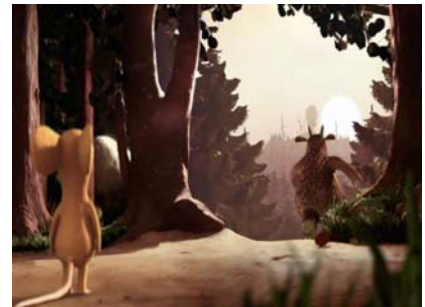


Figure 7: Seeing other animals’ reaction to the mouse, the Gruffalo is scared at the mouse and runs away.