



## Gerald Potterton - Biography

In a career that spans over four decades, three-time Academy Award nominee Gerald Potterton has built an international reputation for excellence in filmmaking. A native of London and student of Hammersmith Art School, he emigrated to Canada in 1954 to work with the world-famous animation film unit at the National Film Board. The films he has created, produced, directed, written or designed, whether live-action, animation or a combination of both, have won critical acclaim and popular approval from audiences around the world.

Potterton is perhaps best known for directing the animated feature film *Heavy Metal* for Columbia Pictures. He supervised all eight sequences in the film and the work of more than 65 animators in Canada, England and the U.S. An instant cult classic, *Heavy Metal* was the top-selling video for four consecutive weeks in the U.S. when it was released on video in '98 and is currently enjoying a successful launch in DVD.

Potterton also worked on a sequence for the animated Beatles' feature *Yellow Submarine* and produced and directed his own animation/live-action feature *Tiki-Tiki*, which *Variety* called "a circus of humour, excellent animation and perfect for the entire family."

Famed as an animator, Potterton's next love is live-action comedy. He wrote and directed *The Railrodder*, a three-reeler for the National Film Board of Canada starring Buster Keaton, who many consider the finest comic in history.

He left the NFB to form Potterton Productions, a company of filmmakers whose varied talents combined in the late-sixties for ten years into one of the largest private film corporations in Canada, producing features, commercial films and animation. Working in conjunction with Reader's Digest Corporation in New York, Potterton Productions created animated films for television from classic fairy tales by Oscar Wilde and Hans Christian Andersen. *The Selfish Giant* in particular became a landmark in animated children's entertainment.

Potterton produced and directed *Pinter People*, a brilliantly-conceived one-hour special for NBC's "Experiments in Television." *Pinter People* was based on an interview Potterton conducted with British playwright Harold Pinter, interspersed with animated versions of some of Pinter's short sketches. *Pinter People* won Best of Festival and Best in Network Entertainment at the Chicago Film Festival, as well as a Peabody Award. Praised by the *New York Times*, *Variety* and *Time* magazine, *Pinter People* was described by critic Louise Sweeney of the *Christian Science Monitor* as "the most brilliant and stimulating TV production of the season."

He wrote and directed the comic feature *The Rainbow Boys*, starring Kate Reid and Donald Pleasence, which won Best Foreign Feature at the Atlanta Film Festival. Potterton was Associate Director with Richard Williams (*Roger Rabbit*, *A Christmas Carol*) on the animated feature *Raggedy Ann and Andy* for I.T.T. and 20th Century Fox in New York and Los Angeles.

With partners Donald Pleasence and Ringo Starr, he created *Scouse the Mouse*, an illustrated children's book and musical recording about a singing mouse from Liverpool who stows away to America to seek his fortune.

Potterton directed and animated *My Financial Career* and *The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones*, two short animation classics for the National Film Board based on stories by Canadian humourist Stephen Leacock. He produced and directed *George and the Star*, a half-hour animated TV Christmas special, which





garnered Gemini nominations for Best Animated Program and Best Music Composition (Paul Anka) and *The Ghost Ship*, a half-hour animated TV special narrated by Vincent Price.

He created and directed *Stop the Smoggies!*, a 53-episode animated series for children. A France-Canada co-production, this highly-successful series was the first of its kind to attempt to entertain and educate young children about environmental issues. It continues to run in many languages on television networks around the world. Potterton subsequently directed several episodes of the *Favourite Songs* series and animation sequences for *The Energy Picture* and *Energy II*, two award-winning educational films produced by Media Cinema of Toronto.

In 1998, Potterton was selected by the World Animation Celebration in Pasadena as one of "Ten Men Who Have Rocked the Animation World." His work has been honoured with retrospectives at the Ottawa Animation Film Festival (1994), the Seattle Film Festival (1997) and in southern India (2000). He served on the international juries of the World Animation Celebration and at the 1998 Atlantic Film Festival.

He is currently in pre-production on *Albert and Atom*, an animated series he created for children inspired by the character and scientific theories of Albert Einstein, and is developing another animated children's series and a stop-frame puppet feature film from his studio at his farm in Quebec's Eastern Townships.

Potterton served as Vice-President of l'Association Internationale de films d'animation (ASIFA) from 1970-71. Since 1975, he has been a distinguished member of the Royal Canadian Academy (RCA).

