



### **Paddington - An Ode to Slapstick**

Paddington, the innocent, well-mannered, marmalade-loving bear, is one of Britain's most iconic characters. Created in 1985 by author Michael Bond in the children's book *A Bear Called Paddington* and brought to life by illustrator Peggy Fortnum, the duo made over 20 Paddington books - and thus the Bear from Peru became an essential part of every Brits' childhood.

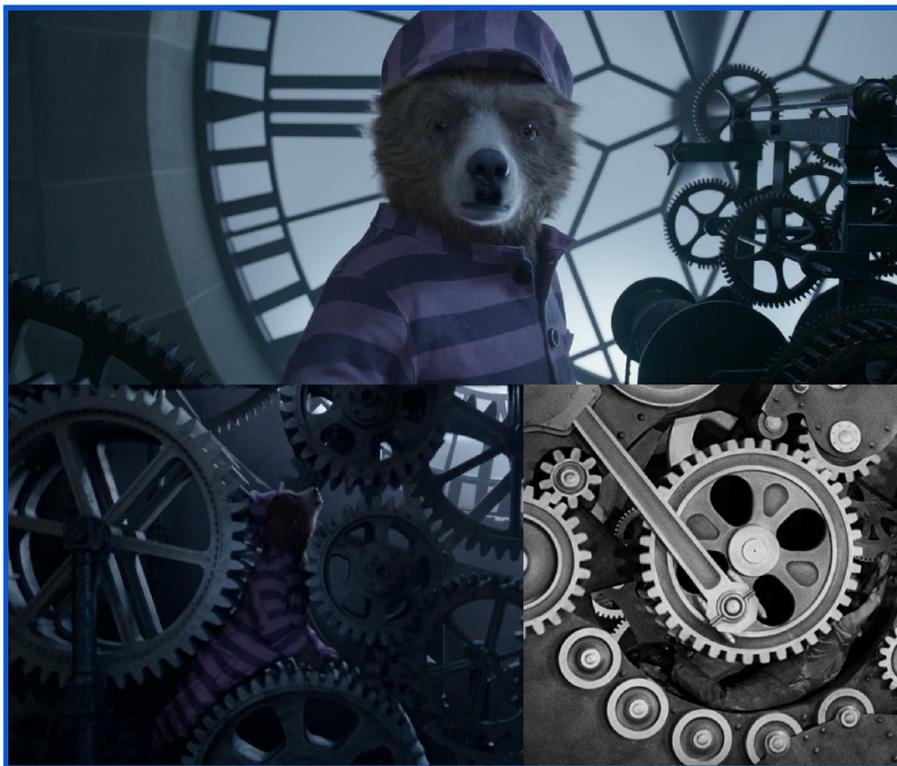
Fast forward to 2021, and Paddington has not only remained a part of British culture, but he has also become the leading star in not one but two BAFTA nominated feature films. *Paddington* (2014) and *Paddington 2* (2017), directed by Paul King, were released to incredible box office success as well as wide critical acclaim - and It's not hard to see why. The films, much like the books, were instant classics - they have everything that makes for a perfect rainy-day movie.



Featuring an all-star cast of some iconic British actors, like Ben Whishaw, Sally Hawkins, Hugh Bonneville, Julie Walters and Hugh Grant, Paddington is set in an idealised London, ripe with red telephone booths and double-decker buses. The films are full of delightful wit, glorious costume and set design, lively performances, perfectly evil villains and, of course, are packed full of visual comedy and physical humour.

Which brings us to why we are here. The standout aspect of both the Paddingtons for us is, of course, its fantastic use of slapstick and the clear inspiration drawn from silent film. From Paddington Bear's infamous first encounter with a bathroom, to the climactic chase scene across a moving train, it's full of perfectly executed Buster Keaton homages.

In their review of the second film, The New Yorker described Paddington as 'Chaplinesque'- the perfect way to describe the bear's charming antics. The film also features a beautifully crafted reference to Chaplin's Modern Times (1936), in which Paddington gets thrown through a series of gears and comes out the other end with a soot mark on his face which forms Chaplin's iconic moustache.



The Paddington that Paul King has created is truly moulded after some of the silent era's greatest stars, something he has talked about multiple times when asked about the process behind the film. In an interview shortly after the release of Paddington 2 King said that Chaplin allowed him to 'properly discover comedy' and He also drew a comparison between the actor's work and his film, "it has that same mixture of pathos and humour and magic,

and dream sequences” going on to point out that for Paddington bear, slapstick tendencies are ‘inherently in his DNA

At Slapstick Festival we pride ourselves on building new audiences for silent and visual comedy. So, it brings us great joy to see a film display such a high appreciation for the films that came before it. The two films also stand as a testament to the universal brand of comedy that is slapstick, and they make for a guaranteed laugh for all ages.

We will be screening the first instalment of Paddington during the festival this January, with an introduction from the UK’s most-loved CBeebies presenter Andy Day, a massive Slapstick and Paddington fan, who is sure to give this film the perfect introduction.