

# 'It means the world to our team': Puppet masters who made the stars of Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio hail Oscars triumph

The puppet masters who created the stars of Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio have reacted to the film's Oscars triumph.

Altrincham-based Mackinnon & Saunders collaborated with the Hollywood director to manufacture the miniature stars of the Netflix stop-motion animation.

The film won the Oscar for best animated film at the 2023 ceremony last night. It had already emerged victorious at the BAFTAs and Golden Globes.

**[READ MORE: Click here to sign up to the BusinessLive North West newsletter](#)**

Pinocchio was the first puppet that has been made using 3D printed stainless steel.

The innovation was made possible through the Made Smarter [North West](#) adoption programme, a government-funded initiative to help SME manufacturers digitalise, decarbonise and drive growth through new technologies and skills.

Funding support and advice enabled Mackinnon & Saunders to test and trial brand new 3D techniques with Laser Prototype Europe (LPE), a rapid prototyping service bureau based in Belfast.



The creation of Pinocchio at Mackinnon & Saunders  
(Image: Mackinnon & Saunders)

Peter Saunders, co-founder of Mackinnon & Saunders, said: “We are thrilled to have played a part in creating such a successful film which has been watched and loved by so many.

“It means the world to our team to have worked on an Oscar-winning film. It is also testament to what can be achieved through programmes like Made Smarter, who gave us such valuable technical support and facilitated our exploration of this game-changing technology.

“That support has kept us ahead of the game and given us great confidence to focus on the next big potential Oscar-winning productions.”

Founded by puppeteers Mr Saunders and Ian Mackinnon 30 years ago, the company has brought to life some of children’s most beloved TV characters including Bob the Builder, Postman Pat and the new Clangers.

It has also previously worked with Hollywood directors Tim Burton on Mars Attacks!, Frankenweenie and Corpse Bride; and

Wes Anderson on Fantastic Mr. Fox.

Mr Saunders added: “We have developed a lot of knowledge about 3D printing over the years. All that sum of knowledge gathered up was put into Pinocchio.



Ian Mackinnon and Peter Saunders of Mackinnon & Saunders  
(Image: Mackinnon & Saunders)

“Made Smarter arrived at the perfect time. We were able to access funding and advice to trial the latest development in the metal printing machines.

“Our collaborators LPE really understood what we were striving for and pushed their machines to the absolute maximum to achieve fine metal printing work to retain the details, while ensuring the parts fit together to create a moving puppet.

“The animators who used Pinnochio were delighted with the outcome, because it was a very delicate puppet, but it was indestructible.

“We’ve built a team of over 100 very creative, innovative, and brilliant people. But we work in a highly competitive industry. We’re a minnow in comparison to some of our rivals.



Guillermo del Toro’s Pinocchio  
(Image: Netflix)

“Without the support of Made Smarter we would never have been able to achieve what we have with Pinnochio. Made Smarter has really helped us keep ahead of the game.”

Commenting on Mackinnon & Saunders’ achievement, Donna Edwards, director of the North West adoption programme, added: “I congratulate Mackinnon & Saunders on their role in making Pinnochio such a success.

“The company’s attitude and approach towards adopting technology perfectly encapsulates the ethos of Made Smarter. I am delighted that they were able to tap into our expertise and

invest in technologies which have put them on the world stage.

“I would encourage any North West manufacturers who are wondering where to go next with technology to help manage their business more efficiently and sustainably to get in touch with the Made Smarter team.”

**READ MORE:**

- [The five challenges facing fast fashion after the rise and fall of In The Style](#)
- [Championship leaders Burnley placed under transfer embargo by EFL over delayed accounts](#)
- [The Co-op, JD Sports and KPMG: The 40 latest North West hires and promotions](#)
- [Wigan Athletic delay paying wages over 'liquidity issues'](#)
- [CBI to open new North West office at Sci-Tech Daresbury](#)