Graham reflects on Emmy win, 30-year career



Glitz n' glam

Daryl Graham, a Lucknow-area native, was a long way from home earlier this month when he was whisked away to Los Angeles to claim his Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation for his work on *Love, Death and Robots*. Graham says he's still digesting the whole experience. *(Courtesy photo)*

By Shawn Loughlin
The Citizen

Last week, Lucknow-area native Daryl Graham was backstage at the Peacock Theatre, being shuffled through the process of receiving a stand-in Emmy Award, saying his thank-yous (he had about 15 seconds) and then moving along. Jamie Lee Curtis was back there, he noted to *The Citizen*, though he didn't get a chance to talk to her. This week, he's back home in Oakville and his mother has absconded with his Emmy, leaving him a tasty-sounding type of homemade trail mix in its place.

Graham won the 2025 Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation Emmy Award for his work as the 2D Animation Supervisor for the "400 Boys" episode of Netflix's *Love, Death and Robots*.

Graham's award comes in a juried category as part of the 77th Creative Arts Emmy Awards, presented over the weekend of Sept. 6-7, ahead of last Sunday's Primetime Emmy Awards. The Creative Arts Emmy Awards honours achievements in animation, costume design, emerging media programming, and motion and title design ahead of the main ceremony.

For its part, the anthology itself won a handful of additional Emmys in addition to Graham's, in the Character Design, Production Design and Storyboard categories.

In an expansive telephone chat, Graham describes the whole Emmys experience as being surreal. In addition to rubbing shoulders with his fellow creatives, as mentioned, Jamie Lee Curtis was part of the festivities; he remembers coming out for his short speech and seeing famed director Ron Howard in the audience. Home in Ontario for a week and swiftly back to work, Graham says he's still processing the whole experience and what it means for his now-30-year career in the world of animation.

Graham grew up on a farm just outside of Lucknow and, by the tender age of about two, he was already drawing whenever he had a piece of paper set in front of him. Even at such a young age, he remembers a handful of formative artistic memories, like spending Sunday nights with his grandparents, eagerly anticipating *The Wonderful World of Disney* with them and being blown away by the artistry (he became grumpy if it happened to be a live-action program that week) and his mother's extensive collection of science-fiction and fantasy books, which he couldn't read at that age, but whose cover art always impressed him.

He continued on in school, drawing a lot throughout his time in the classroom, eventually with designs on a career as an illustrator. A trip to the guidance office at F.E. Madill Secondary School in Wingham introduced him to Sheridan College's animation program. It was also around that time that he happened upon a program hosted by future Governor General of Canada Adrienne Clarkson during her time with the CBC about several animation program graduates from Sheridan College and decided that it might be for him.

So, he planned to head to Oakville to study, thinking he might be able to find work as an animator, but always with an eye on eventually settling into a career as an illustrator - but decided to follow the work and stay in animation.

(As mentioned in *The Citizen* a few weeks ago, Graham worked briefly as a co-op student in his high school years with North Huron Publishing, illustrating ads and other projects for *The Citizen* and *The Rural Voice*, even designing a t-shirt for *The Rural Voice* once upon a time. He also spent some time in the CKNX art department under Don Vair, another helpful colleague along the way.)

He was recruited while still a student to work on *Space Jam* in 1996 as an assistant animator though, near the end of the project, Graham says he was able to animate a few bits here and there for the film. It should be noted just how groundbreaking *Space Jam* was for its time. Not only was it one of the first films to use digital technology, but it was among the first to have live-action actors intermingling with animated characters.

Then, with his future laid out in front of him, Graham was faced with many options and work that would take him around the world. However, he always wanted to stay in Canada, not just for national pride, but to maintain a proximity to his family and his grandparents specifically, so he took his next steps with those ideals in mind. In fact, Graham remembers getting a phone call from Jeffrey Katzenberg, the long-time chairman of Walt Disney Studios and eventual founder of Dreamworks Pictures, to the home farm. Graham's father, after hearing that Katzenberg wanted to hire Graham and set up a tour of the studio, told the Hollywood tycoon that his son was busy in the barn, but already had a job. Graham never did get to talk to Katzenberg, though he would tour Dreamworks as a possible career choice later in his life.

Graham was working at Chuck Gammage Animation in Toronto and, after *Space Jam*, eventually moved into directing commercials, which he was doing at the age of 23. While his Internet Movie Database (IMDB) credits reach the high twenties, Graham did a lot of work during this time that doesn't necessarily get him a film and television credit, like, for example, redesigning the iconic Tony the Tiger, the Frosted Flakes mascot.

He would go on to work on *Quest for Camelot* and *The Drew Carey Show* (1998), *Osmosis Jones* (2001) and *Curious George* (2006). In 2006, he worked on multiple music videos for Gorillaz, the wildly successful side project of illustrator Jamie Hewlett and Damon Albarn, the frontman of Blur, one of England's most enduring bands and one of the major figures in the

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‘Surreal’ weekend for Graham at Emmys

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mid-1990s’ Brit-pop scene. This was the beginning of a relationship that has spanned four projects over more than a decade.

In fact, speaking of Brit-pop, Graham also tells a story about working in England on a Gorillaz project and staying with his boss. He was erecting a fence on the property in his down time and happened upon nearby neighbour Noel Gallagher of Oasis and his family. They remained friendly during his time there, with Graham even illustrating a few pictures for the Gallagher kids, and, when it was time to return to Canada, Gallagher told him to reach out, as Oasis would be performing in Toronto as part of their upcoming tour; Graham promptly, yet accidentally, lost the number.

Back in Canada, Graham began working with Starz Animation Toronto. There, he worked on 2009’s *9*, which earned Graham a Visual Effects Society Award nomination, and the Golden Globe-nominated *Gnomeo and Juliet* in 2011. He is currently working with Passion Pictures, one of the many studios that produced episodes of *Love, Death and Robots* for Netflix, in a freelance capacity. There he has now worked under esteemed animator Robert Valley for 20 years.

All this while also trying to chip away at his own projects that he’d like to get off the ground one day, but that can be difficult in a world obsessed with existing intellectual property (IP) and the power of big studios and equally big teams. He says that, even today, the work can be gruelling and all-encompassing with someone always ready to take your place if you’re not meeting the expectations and deadlines.

One of the projects he’s been most proud of in recent years has been animating for 2020’s *Belushi*, a documentary about the late, great comedian and actor, John Belushi. A big part of that pride, he says, is that many of Belushi’s contemporaries are people Graham has greatly admired over the years, like Dan Aykroyd and he says it was great fun animating performances of Belushi and Aykroyd together.

As time has gone on, the projects Graham has made his name working on have grown increasingly adult and dark, such as *Love, Death and Robots*, a series definitely aimed at an adult audience. He says he has always done the work that’s in front of him, but can’t help but notice how it’s drifted into a different realm than that of the magic and artistry of those early Walt Disney films he’d watch at his grandparents’ house.

As for the Emmy Award win itself, Graham says he’s still processing it, what it means, the experience he was afforded as a result and what the future holds for an Emmy Award-winning animator living in Canada. Being able to boast about winning an award like that, he said, is always helpful when speaking with executives or other decision-makers in the entertainment business, so it may open up some doors for him in that respect, but, as an animation supervisor, he’s always taken a very democratic approach to leadership. That means giving his animators their time in the sun when they do something good and absorbing the criticism when something doesn’t quite hit the mark.

He also says that, after working with large teams of animators on big projects, he’s always seen the world of animation as one big wheel, with the animators, himself included, all spokes on that wheel. If one spoke is longer than the other or isn’t as strong as the others, the wheel won’t turn properly, but, if everyone is there, equal and getting their work done to the standard that’s required, the goal will be achieved. So, in that respect, he said he shares his win with all of his colleagues and those who worked on the episode as well.

He also admits that the business is at a bit of a crossroads, with technology and artificial intelligence eroding the industry and making it tougher and tougher for genuine creativity to shine through. And yet, his inbox remains full and the work continues to come in, as long as he’s able to keep up with it.

Graham maintains a blog that serves as a window into his work and the projects to which he’s leant his talents over the years, complete with images, stills and videos. You can find it online at darylgraham-animation.blogspot.com.



It’s fair time

Over the weekend, the Seaforth Agricultural Society held its annual fall fair, including its extensive parade on Saturday morning. The weekend began on Friday night with the crowning of a new Ambassador and Junior Ambassador (Rachel Gras and Jillian Simpson, respectively, and continued into Saturday with plenty to see and do both indoors and outdoors, including the parade. *(John Stephenson photo)*

Treasurer resigns one week in

By Scott Stephenson
The Citizen

When North Huron officially welcomed its new Director of Finance, Maria Thornton, to its staff on Aug. 25, it seemed that the township had reached the end of its Annette Fletcher era. But, as it turned out, Thornton’s tenure was to be short-lived - just one week later, council found itself accepting her letter of resignation.

On Sept. 2, council passed a bylaw to reappoint Fletcher to the role as the township’s Interim Treasurer. Fletcher has been on loan from the County of Huron since early February. When *The Citizen* reached out to Clerk Carson Lamb for comment, his response was that “The Township has received a letter of resignation, and as a result, Annette Fletcher will continue serving as Interim Treasurer.”

Fletcher will continue to serve in North Huron until a suitable replacement for Thornton can be found.

The transforming power of the Spirit!

(J. C. Ryle, "The Lord's Garden")

"To all those in Rome who are **loved** by God
and **called** to be saints." Romans 1:7

Believers are separated from the world by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit calls them out from the world, and separates them as effectually as if a wall were built between them and it. He puts in them...
new hearts, new minds,
new tastes,
new desires,
new sorrows,
new joys,
new wishes,
new pleasures,
new longings.

He gives them...
new eyes,
new ears,
new affections,
new opinions.

He makes them new creatures. They are born again--and with a new birth they begin a new existence. Mighty indeed is **the transforming power of the Spirit**!

A Grace Gem
Submitted by: Immanuel United Reformed Church
Listowel, ON 519-291-3887

What’s up
Huron East
Get involved in Huron East
www.huroneast.com



TAX BILL INFORMATION

If you have not yet received your second Tax Bill that includes installments 3 & 4 for 2025, it should be arriving in the mail soon.

519-527-0160 or huroneast.com/propertytaxes

UTILITY BILL INFORMATION

If you have not yet received your third quarterly utility bill that covers from July 1 to September 30 2025, it should be arriving in the mail soon. You can expect your fourth quarterly utility bill at the end of November.

519-527-0160 or huroneast.com/utilities





HIGHWAY 8 CONNECTING LINK RECONSTRUCTION

Starting September 2 | Construction expected to last eight weeks

Phase One of the Highway 8 Connecting Link Reconstruction project will begin on September 2, 2025 and involves the reconstruction of Goderich St. W spanning from Harpurhey Rd. to Sparling St.

519-527-0160 or huroneast.com/connectinglink

WINTER SWMMING LESSONS

Vanastra Recreation Centre

Registration for winter swimming lessons at Vanastra Recreation Centre (starting January 2026) opens on Wednesday, October 1 through our RecDesk portal!

519-482-3544 or huroneast.com/recdesk

