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Steve Coogan and John C Reilly to star in Laurel and Hardy film

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Stan & Ollie, written by Jeff Pope - who worked with Coogan on Oscar-nominated Philomena - tells the story of their final tour in 1953.

Head of BBC Films Christine Langan said Coogan and Reilly were "dream casting" to portray the "genius creative marriage" of the pair.

Jon S Baird, director of James McAvoy comedy-drama Filth will direct it.



The film will depict the duo's final tour

Pope described Laurel and Hardy as his "heroes".

"When I watch their movies, in my head it is forever a Saturday morning and I am six years old watching the TV at home utterly spellbound," he said.

"I am aware of the huge responsibility of bringing their characters to life, but I have not treated the boys with kid gloves or looked at them through rose-coloured specs.

"They are living and breathing characters, with flaws and shortcomings. The research into this story threw up so many details and facts that I had no idea about.

"But everything I have done has come from a place of love and more than anything else I hope this shines through."

## 'Dream casting'

Baird said: "Like so many others I grew up watching Laurel and Hardy and I'm therefore honoured to help bring this incredible true story of love, laughter and friendship to the big screen."

Their final tour saw Laurel and Hardy travel to variety halls across the UK. The film will reveal that while audiences were initially low, the tour became a hit - although Hardy was suffering from failing health and the pair were aware their career was nearing an end.

Langan said: "John C Reilly and Steve Coogan are dream casting for Stan & Ollie, bringing to life with uncanny accuracy and irresistible gusto the genius creative marriage that Jeff Pope's script explores so lovingly."

Langan added that Suffragette producer Faye Ward would be producing, adding: "BBC Films is extremely excited to crank up this gem".

Laurel was born in Ulverston - then in Lancashire, now in Cumbria - before emigrating to the US and finding fame in Hollywood as foil to Hardy's pompous blusterer.

Hardy eventually died in 1957 at the age of 65 and Laurel died eight years later aged 74.

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