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TALES OF ARCADIA

FROM GUILLERMO DEL TORO

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Guillermo del Toro's 'Wizards' Brings His 'Tales of Arcadia' Trilogy to a Close

For executive producers Chad Quandt and Aaron Waltke, the third and final series, now available on Netflix, sadly concludes their work on the ambitious science fantasy that began life as a live-action feature project almost a decade ago.

By [Victoria Davis](#) | Friday, August 7, 2020 at 9:13am

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The final installment of DreamWorks and Guillermo del Toro's 'Tales of Arcadia' trilogy, 'Wizards,' premieres today on Netflix.

Today, the animated series *Tales of Arcadia* comes to a close with the third and final installment in the trilogy, *Wizards*, now streaming on Netflix.

The science fantasy adventure, created by Oscar-winning director, producer and designer Guillermo Del Toro, has taken quite a wild ride in its decade of existence; it was initially developed as a live-action feature but, for budgetary reasons, eventually became a novel, "Tales of Arcadia: Trollhunters," which was picked up by DreamWorks and Netflix on its way to becoming an animated TV series trilogy that first launched in December 2016.

The series has won 5 Annie Awards, 8 Emmy Awards and 3 Kidscreen Awards. For co-executive producers Chad Quandt and Aaron Waltke, working on both *Trollhunters* and *Wizards* has been a dream-come-true. "Once we even got wind of this project almost a decade ago, our eyes and hearts just lit up because we already had such a huge respect for Guillermo," says Quandt of *Tales of Arcadia*. "And every single movie he's made and everything he's crafted were already inspiration points for us. So, getting to work with the master himself was so awesome."



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Tales of Arcadia follows the citizens of a suburban town named Arcadia Oaks, secretly the home of various supernatural creatures. *Trollhunters* tells the story of James Lake Jr. (Anton Yelchin), a young boy who becomes the first human “Trollhunter,” responsible for protecting both trolls and humans from the “Gumm-Gumms.” In *3Below*, the second installment of the series, two royal alien siblings (Tatiana Maslany and Diego Luna) must escape to Earth (specifically the town of Arcadia) when their home planet, Akiridion-5, is taken over by the evil general Val Morando. Finally, *Wizards* re-introduces *Trollhunters* character Douxie (Colin O'Donoghue), a wizard-in-training, and the original Troll-hunting-heroes of Arcadia, who all get lost in time in medieval Camelot, and find themselves engaged in a full-scale war over the control of magic.

“It was fun getting the opportunity to introduce a new main character because one of our primary focuses of *Wizards*, among other things, was to re-introduce our audiences to who Douxie is,” Waltke says. “He had little moments in *Trollhunters*, but because we knew we weren't going to find out who he was for another at least 26 episodes, we were very mysterious with him. He's a bit of a cipher. So, this gave me and Chad the chance to work with a blank slate to uncover, ‘What is Douxie's motivation? Why was he reluctant to engage in *Trollhunters*? What was he waiting for?’”

“And we now get to illustrate the answer: Merlin doesn't think Douxie is ready,” he continues. “Douxie thinks he is, of course, but has these underlying doubts of whether or not he can do it. That gave us a really interesting dynamic to play with, where Douxie, as Merlin's apprentice, has this need for validation from Merlin that he eventually realizes he never needed.”



Quandt and Waltke were initially writing science fantasy stories of their own before joining del Toro on *Trollhunters*. One of Quandt's and Waltke's stories was so similar to the *Trollhunters* script, the team was quick to hire the writers because they already knew the world of Arcadia so well.

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"We wrote a teenage parable pilot that was sort of a *Veronica Mars* meets *Lovecraft* and as it was passed around it made it to the desk of the Hageman brothers and Guillermo and that crew working on *Trollhunters* and they resonated with it," says Quandt. "It wasn't until after *Trollhunters* that we found out we were essentially writing an alternate universe take on *Trollhunters*. There were so many similar characters--even an evil principal. We had really manifested this show."

"Guillermo was like, 'Oh I get it. They've already written *Trollhunters* on their own,'" added Waltke. "Chad and I both love fantasy and horror and basically everything that Guillermo also loves, so it really wasn't hard work when they asked us to come write on a show about monsters and goofy teens. That's literally our dream."



In addition to del Toro's body of work, the world of video games was a big inspiration for Waltke and Quandt, and it's evident in the show, from Douxie catching small magical creatures and working his way up to the ultimate "boss," as Quandt puts it, to the characters' increased collection of magical items and the show's vibrant 3D animation.

"I'm not surprised our love for video games has rubbed off in this series," Quandt explains. "Aaron and I are both big video game fans and I think there are so many interesting inspirations of the fantasy genre that you can connect with video games, like the hero's journey. We wanted these characters to feel like they were powering up and Douxie's staff, this clear sign of a wizard's respect and age, totally comes from this mentality of, 'Hey, I've been playing overwatch for 400 hours and I have items to prove that I know what I'm doing.' That's totally evident in *Wizards*. There are even some direct homages to specific video games in this trilogy."

"Like with the Triumbric Stones in *Trollhunters*," Waltke adds. "Each stone unlocks a new ability and when you have the whole set of stones, you'd get an extra ability--that was inspired by the video game *Diablo*. *Dungeons and Dragons* is another game Chad and I both love and that was another huge influence, in addition to movies like *Army of Darkness* and *Time Bandits* and novels like *Sword in the Stone* and *The Magicians Trilogy*."

Wizards features an all-star cast, including *Star Wars*' Mark Hamill, *Harry Potter*'s David Bradley, and *Game of Thrones*' Lena Headey. Regarding production, the animation isn't just colorful, it's fluorescent, with magical sword fights and flaming neon battles that almost leap off the screen, rivaling some feature film animation.


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"We owe so much of these beautiful scenes to not just our production team and writers and art directors, but the directors for *Wizards*, Andrew L. Schmidt and Johane Matte," Quandt notes. "They helped figure out what we could best use to the best of our skills and bandwidth to let this series be as cinematic as possible and feel like a feature film on your screen. They were constantly finding amazing ways to stress that and make it sing. We owe them a lot."

But the eye-catching animated magic, cinematic battles to save the future of the supernatural worlds, and the tip-of-the-hat to childhood videogames and adventure tales aren't the main show features that set the series apart from other Netflix animations. For Waltke, it's the story's message of self-affirmation and healing. "The scenes between Douxie and Merlin are very powerful," Waltke shares. "At a point, Douxie must wrap up all these complicated feelings he has for this mentor, who abandoned him for centuries and who is stern and rough but also saved Douxie's life. Those feelings and images really resonated with me because I had moments like that in my childhood and I had friends that grew up in families where things really weren't perfect. So, getting a chance to see a kid like that come to terms with not having the perfect home life, but kind of a neglectful one, was really wonderful and deeply moving."

The emotions don't stop there. In a clip introducing the character of Callista (Stephanie Beatriz) in Arthur's dungeon with half-troll Jim (Emile Hirsch), the topic of stereotypes, racial injustice and emotional and physical abuse are illustrated, ideas that weren't initially planned in the beginning stages of Arcadia's story arcs.



"We had goals in mind and an idea for where we wanted these characters to end up," Quandt says, "but as we approached each season and character arch, the characters influenced their own stories and it turned into something even more beautiful."

Starting out as writers on *Trollhunters* and now riding out the *Tales of Arcadia* trilogy with *Wizards* as co-executive producers, has also been emotional, in the best way, for Quandt and Waltke, who were able to say goodbye in their own way to this series and their team. "We're fans of these

characters, we love this entire cast,” Quandt says. “Even the characters that aren’t supposed to be loveable, we love them. It’s meant a lot to us to get to come back and offer our final goodbyes and be there for that was a huge honor. Also, getting to return to write a Steve Palchuk line, that was like, ‘Ok I’m home.’”

“The transition from *Trollhunters* staff writers - even though the Hageman brothers and Marc and Guillermo were all very generous in allowing us to have a profound influence on the story and the characters - to coming back on *Wizards* and suddenly being in the driver’s seat as the head writers, it was like getting to do a bunch of wish-fulfillment with our visions for the show. Writing for these characters again has been like writing for old friends.”



Though the series has ended, there might be potential for *3Below* and *Wizards* to follow in *Trollhunters*’ footsteps and be turned into video games by WayForward, which developed *Trollhunters: Defenders of Arcadia*.

“We can’t say much, except that Aaron and I are both fans of WayForward and the stuff they make, and I think it would be an awesome idea,” says Quandt. “It’s a full, living world with a lot of potential.”

And, it should be noted, that as of the morning of this article’s publication, Netflix announced *Trollhunters: Rise of the Titans*, a new animated feature film created by del Toro for release on Netflix in 2021. Fans of the series now have even more heroic *Tales of Arcadia* adventures to look forward to.

Tales of Arcadia: Wizards is now available to stream on Netflix.





Victoria Davis is a full-time, freelance journalist and part-time Otaku with an affinity for all things anime. She's reported on numerous stories from activist news to entertainment. Find more about her work at victoriadavisdepiction.com.

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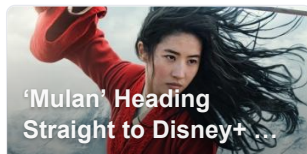
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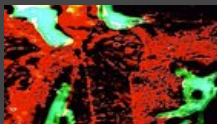
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