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New wind in the 'Willows'

RG teams with Weta for live action version of classic tale

By DAVE MCNARY

"The Wind in the Willows" is being developed in a live-action and animatronics version by RG Entertainment for a fall shoot in New Zealand, with Peter Jackson's visual effects company Weta Workshop onboard.

Ray Griggs ("Super Capers," "I Want Your Money") will direct and produce the \$30 million feature, based on the 1908 tale by Kenneth Grahame. Richard Taylor will handle special effects, and Kim Sinclair will be production designer.

The "Willows" script was penned by Bill Marsilli ("Deja Vu"), who recently teamed with Terry Rossio to sell their "Lightspeed" pitch to Disney and Jerry Bruckheimer Films for low-seven figures against \$3.5 million.

"The Wind in the Willows" centers on the quartet of talking animals -- Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad -- in a story that mixes adventure, morality and camaraderie. It's been adapted as a feature several times, including the 1949 Disney animated film "The Adventures of Ichabod Crane and Mr. Toad" and Sony's 1996 live-action version directed by Terry Jones.

In the Marsilli script, the animals join forces to save their land from a sinister plot that threatens to destroy the uneasy truce between the peaceful animals of the Willows and what remains of Mankind. Story begins when Mole ventures out of his lonely home for the first time and finds a world of new friendships, wonders and adventure waiting for him in the land of the Willows.

"At its heart, 'The Wind in the Willows' is a story of friendship and the joys of home," Griggs told Daily Variety.

Griggs, owner and president of RG Entertainment, said he's raised the funds through private investors and is expecting to announce cast members soon. He plans to record the dialogue first and shoot the film with the actors in animal costumes with state-of-the-art animatronics being used to duplicate facial expressions.

Griggs' political docu "I Want Your Money" opens in theaters this fall. RG Entertainment, founded in the early 1990s in Missouri, moved to Los Angeles in 2005.

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Griggs

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