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WB finds its Sherlock

By Borys Kit

Robert Downey Jr. is in final negotiations to star as the title character in "Sherlock Holmes," a reimagining of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's super sleuth that Guy Ritchie is directing for Warner Bros.

The movie, which will shoot in the fall, takes its cue from a forthcoming comic book that producer Lionel Wigram wrote as a selling tool for a new take on the classic character. The concept sees Holmes as more adventurous and less stuffy than previous screen incarnations and mines more obscure character traits.

The movie will be Downey's first to go before cameras since "Iron Man." Downey's first move post-"Iron Man" was attaching himself to star in DreamWorks' "Cowboys and Aliens."

Joel Silver, Wigram, Susan Downey and Dan Lin are producing.

Downey came onto the project via his wife, Silver Pictures executive vp Susan Downey. Susan Downey and Joel Silver, who produced Ritchie's upcoming caper flick "RocknRolla," were working with Ritchie on his version of "Holmes." When actor Downey was in Silver Pictures' Warners-based offices, Silver showed him Ritchie's version of Holmes, sparking the actor's interest.

Warners is looking at an October 2009 release.

Warners' Holmes project will have to contend with Columbia's Holmes feature, this one starring Sacha Baron Cohen as the sleuth and Will Ferrell as his sidekick Dr. Watson. Judd Apatow is producing the comedy, which does not yet have a director attached.