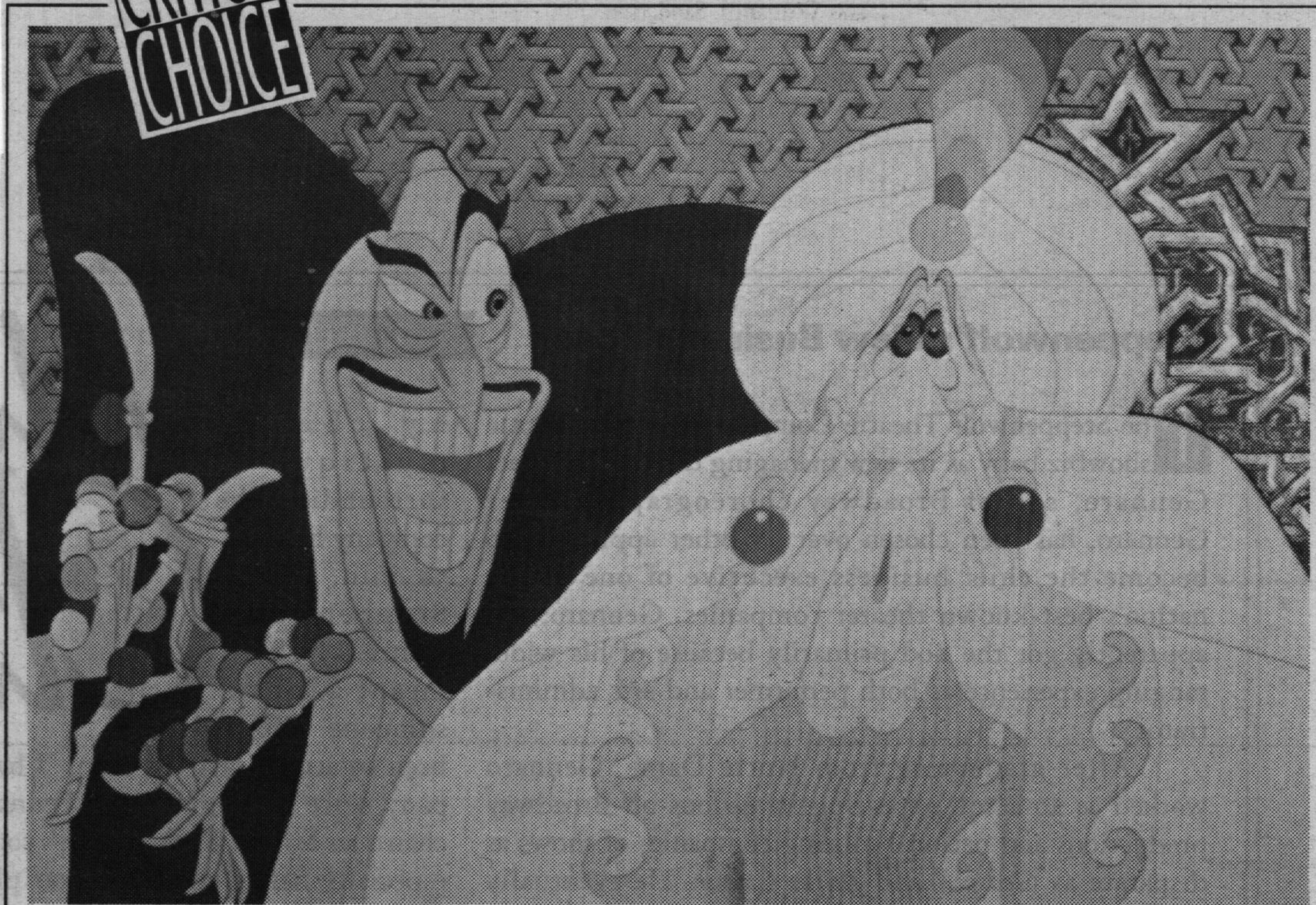


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Arabian Knight

The neglected Canadian animator Richard Williams directed and coscripted this mind-boggling London-made cartoon musical feature, the first to be made in 'Scope since Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* in 1959. It's a movie that's been in and out of production since 1968, apparently because Williams mainly worked on it as a labor of love in between more lucrative projects (such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*). Eventually he lost creative control, and it's impossible to say whether the movie would have been more or less coherent without the postproduction interference: the storytelling is perfunctory, but the imaginative animation, which revels in two-dimensionality, is

often wonderful—an improbable blend of Escher, op art, Persian miniatures, and Chuck Jones that shoots off in every direction and seems great for kids. *Arabian Knight* is a lot more memorable than either *Aladdin* or *Pocahontas* (though its cultural references are much more varied and confused). The cast of offscreen voices includes the late Vincent Price as the main villain, Matthew Broderick as the hero, a humble cobbler, Jennifer Beals as the princess, Eric Bogosian, Toni Collette, and Jonathan Winters as a disreputable thief. Margaret French collaborated on the script, and Robert Folk and Norman Gimbel wrote the songs. Water Tower, Evanston, Norridge, Lake.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum