

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe (film)

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe is a 2022 coming-of-age romantic drama film written and directed by Aitch Alberto. It is an adaptation of the 2012 novel of the same name by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. It follows two Mexican-American teenage boys who find an instant connection in 1987 El Paso, Texas, and stars Max Pelayo and Reese Gonzales as the title characters. Verónica Falcón, Kevin Alejandro, Eva Longoria and Eugenio Derbez complete the rest of the cast.

Aristotle and Dante had its premiere at the 47th International Toronto Film Festival on September 9, 2022. It was theatrically released in the United States on September 8, 2023, by Blue Fox Entertainment.

Plot

In 1987 El Paso, Aristotle "Ari" Mendoza is a surly teenager frustrated by his parents' refusal to tell him about his incarcerated brother Bernardo. At a public pool, Ari meets unconventional fellow Mexican-American Dante Quintana, who teaches him how to swim. The two boys become fast friends despite their differences. Dante's well-off parents invite Ari on a camping trip, where both he and Dante appreciate the vastness of the night sky. During a rainy evening near the end of the summer, Dante tells Ari that the Quintanas will be moving to Chicago for the following school year due to his father's professor job. Dante gets distracted by a baby bird and is nearly hit by a car; Ari gets injured pushing him out of the way.

In the year that follows, Ari adopts a dog, is gifted a truck by his parents, and slowly begins to fit in at school. He begins fooling around with a female classmate, Elena. Meanwhile, Dante's letters speak of burgeoning homosexuality. Ari finally learns what caused Bernardo's imprisonment – he had killed a trans prostitute as a teenager.

The Quintanas return at the beginning of the next summer. Ari and Dante drive out to the desert, where Dante asks Ari to kiss him. The kiss makes Ari uncomfortable and he insults Dante.

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Aitch Alberto
Screenplay by	Aitch Alberto
Based on	Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz
Produced by	Byron Archard Dylan Sellers Chris Parker Eugenio Derbez Ben Odell Lin-Manuel Miranda Kyra Sedgwick Valerie Stadler
Starring	Max Pelayo

Ari's Tia Ophelia also passes away, and he learns that she had been disavowed by most of the extended family for living with a female partner.

Dante is hospitalized after some homophobic boys attacked him in an alley after seeing him with his boyfriend Daniel. A furious Ari tracks down Daniel, then one of the perpetrators, and brutally attacks the latter. A discussion with his parents causes Ari to realize that he is in love with Dante. The two boys drive out to the desert, where Ari confesses his feelings. The film ends with them lying in the back of Ari's truck, holding hands.

Cast

- Max Pelayo as Aristotle "Ari" Mendoza
- Reese Gonzales as Dante Quintana
- [Eugenio Derbez](#) as Jaime Mendoza
- [Eva Longoria](#) as Soledad Quintana
- [Verónica Falcón](#) as Liliana Mendoza
- [Isabella Gomez](#) as Gina Navarro
- [Luna Blaise](#) as Elena Tellez
- [Kevin Alejandro](#) as Sam Quintana
- [Marlene Forte](#) as Tía Ophelia

Production

In early 2017, it was revealed that Aitch Alberto was in the process of developing a screenplay based on Benjamin Alire Sáenz's novel.^[3] In 2016, she had flown to Texas to pitch her idea to Sáenz and discuss the rights to adapt his novel; she first read the book in 2014 and had written a *spec script*. At the beginning of 2018, she contacted [Lin-Manuel Miranda](#), who had narrated the audiobook for the novel, inviting him to board the pop project as a producer.^{[4][5]} [Kyra Sedgwick](#)'s newly launched Big Swing Productions joined the project in 2018.^[6]

[Xolo Maridueña](#) and Reese Gonzales, the latter of whom would go on to reprise his role in the film, performed a live reading of Alberto's screenplay at the 2018 [Outfest](#). Also on the live reading were [Norma Maldonado](#), [José Zúñiga](#), [Liz Torres](#), [Ana Ortiz](#), [Madison De La Garza](#), Martin Morales, Norio Chalico, and Matt Pascua.^[7]

It was announced in October 2021 that Max Pelayo and Gonzales would respectively star as the titular characters in the film adaptation with [Eugenio Derbez](#), [Eva Longoria](#), [Verónica Falcón](#), [Isabella Gomez](#), [Luna Blaise](#), and [Kevin Alejandro](#) rounding out the cast. Derbez would also produce the film for 3Pas Studios alongside Valerie Stadler, [Ben Odell](#), Dylan Sellers and Chris Parker for Limelight. David Boies and Zack Schiller of Boies Schiller Entertainment would executive produce the film and CJ Barbato would co-produce.^[8]

	<div>Reese Gonzales</div> <div>Verónica Falcón</div> <div>Kevin Alejandro</div> <div>Eva Longoria</div> <div>Eugenio Derbez</div>
Cinematography	<div>Akis</div> <div>Konstantakopoulos</div>
Edited by	<div>Stefanie Visser</div> <div>Harry Yoon</div>
Music by	Isabella Summers
Production companies	<div>Limelight</div> <div>3Pas Studios</div> <div>5000 Broadway Productions</div> <div>Big Swing Productions</div>
Distributed by	<div>Blue Fox</div> <div>Entertainment</div>
Release dates	<div>September 9, 2022</div> <div>(TIFF)</div> <div>September 8, 2023</div> <div>(United States)</div>
Running time	96 minutes
Country	United States
Box office	\$407,838 ^{[1][2]}

Principal photography began in early October 2021,^[9] and was confirmed by director Aitch Alberto to have wrapped on November 2, 2021.^[10]

Sarah J. Coleman, who illustrated the book cover, was brought on board to design the film's main title and credits. Alberto has also stated that a film adaptation of the book's 2021 sequel is being considered.^[4]

Release

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe had its world premiere at the 47th International Toronto Film Festival on September 9, 2022, with additional screenings on September 11 and 15.^[11] It was theatrically released in the United States on September 8, 2023, by Blue Fox Entertainment.^[12]

In August 2022, the film was first announced to be premiering at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival's "Discovery" section,^[13] and following its premiere, the film was reported to be seeking distribution.^[14] In April 2023, it was announced that Blue Fox Entertainment had acquired the North American distribution rights to the film, with a wide theatrical release planned for summer 2023.^[15]

In December 2022, it was announced as a selection for the 34th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival in the "New Voices New Visions" Category,^[16] with screenings on January 8, 9, and 15, 2023.^[17] On January 31, it was announced as a selection for Miami Film Festival,^[18] with a screening planned for March 10, 2023.^[19] The film had been offered a prominent slot at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival, but Alberto opted to hold off until the autumn festivals to allow more time for "fine-tuning". She was included in Variety's prestigious "10 Directors to Watch" in January 2022 for her work on the film.^[20]

The film was released for digital platforms on November 14, 2023.^[21]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 88% of 49 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7/10. The website's consensus reads: "A sweet, well-rounded coming-of-age story, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* adapts its source material with tenderness and care."^[22] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 69 out of 100, based on six critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[23]

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External links

- [Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe \(https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9428746/\)](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9428746/) at [IMDb](#)
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