

Alice au Pays de Merveilles

(aka: "Alice in Wonderland")

France / UK / US : 1951 : dir. Lou Bunin & Dallas Bower : UGC / Rank / Bunin : 83 min
prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

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Carol Marsh; Stephen Murray; Pamela Brown; Felix Aylmer; Ernest Milton

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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*All stills shown are taken from the 4-page cover feature spread "Alice in Movieland"
from (Film ?) Illustrated Weekly (29/5/48)*



Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

"Static adaptation of Lewis Carroll classic with gimmick of mixing live action and puppets; most of the wit and charm are missing. ** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review - identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Often interesting if sometimes crude version with Bunin's puppets, filmed in Nice; the simultaneous Disney cartoon version effectively kept it off the world's screens. Stephen Murray = Lewis Carroll; Pamela Brown = Queen Victoria; Felix Aylmer = Dr Liddell. * "

Comment from **The Good Film and Video Guide** review of "ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND" (72):

"They will go on attempting the impossible. Disney's "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" is the

one to see, though there are moments in Bunin's 1951 puppet version (which resurfaced in 1985 after years in oblivion)."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Combination of live action and puppets is interesting, faithful to Lewis Carroll's book, but the film is rather disjointed. **½ "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Bunin, puppetoonist extraordinaire, encountered many frustrations during his lengthy battle to bring his Carroll to the screen (the quaint live action prologue is directed by Bower). First he came up against Technicolor, who refused to handle the processing, thus forcing him to use inferior Ansco Color. Then he was drummed off the screen for daring to release his film in the same year as Disney's all-American version. And finally, Bunin discovered that he sailed too close to the satirical winds by identifying an imperious Queen Victoria (Brown) with the off-with-his-head Queen of Hearts, thus keeping the film out of

Britain. Bunin employs a diverting combination of actors and puppets against a simple Klee-like background: purists will enjoy moaning at the songs while acknowledging that elsewhere he maintains the sharpness of the original."~~~~~

See attached 4-page feature article - "Only One Star is Human" - from Illustrated weekly (29/5/48)

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Since the film was 90% shot in Nice by a French puppeteer, it seems only proper to give the French title precedence, though it's often still identified as a British film. What must have been most galling of all (no pun intended) to Bunin was that his film was so devastatingly upstaged by an animated travesty of the source material - more Disney than anything remotely British - which itself flopped at the box office. However, he is not to be excused the cardinal sin of strapping some grown woman (Marsh was 24) into a costume resembling the Tenniel drawings, and passing her off as an eight-year old Victorian middle class child. There's something rather bizarre about these geriatric Alice's - whoever heard of a 24-year old Jim Hawkins? or Oliver Twist? The nearest comparison to be made in classic boy roles would be Huckleberry Finn, who has been incarnated by even older actors on the screen. That scarcely negates the criticism, it merely duplicates the folly.

As an unreconstructed purist - at least where these books are concerned - I do resent the persistent inclination of film-makers to take both Alice books, which are subtly different in mood and pace - and bash their heads together to make one portmanteau story, a kind of "Alice's Greatest Hits", brushing all Carroll's musings and mental meanderings aside, and reducing the tale to a series of disconnected set-piece encounters. This is to over-egg the pudding. Two shorter films shot back-to-back, dealing with each book separately, would be more honest to the source material and less like a revue. No-one treats Twain this way.

That said, Jan Svankmajer's more recent Czech surrealist version "**NECO Z ALENKY**" (aka: "**ALICE**") managed to catch the darker moods of Carroll's writing far better than any other version and, while injecting many visual ideas wholly his own, remained more faithful to the narrative structure than more literal English language versions. It was also practically unique in employing an actress of precisely the right age to play Alice. Dennis Potter's "**DREAMCHILD**" (85) used Jim Henson Creature Shop animatronics in the dream sequences which perverted Alice's encounters into a nightmare of repressed anxieties over Carroll's sexual feelings toward Alice Liddell as a child.

See **ALICE IN WONDERLAND - GENERAL NOTE** for all other known interpretations, and subject index under **FANTASY / FAIRY TALES / FOLK TALES**. See also under **ANIMATION / LIVE ACTION COMBINATIONS** for other hybrids with varying degrees of success.