
Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985

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REDISCOVERING THE 1985 TELEVISION CLASSIC: ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS MOVIE

Long before Tim Burton's fantastical reinterpretations and grand CGI spectacles, there existed a charming, faithful, and wonderfully peculiar television adaptation of Lewis Carroll's beloved sequel: **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985**. This made-for-television film, produced by the BBC in association with other networks, holds a special place in the hearts of those who grew up watching it. It is a production that, despite its lower budget and pre-digital effects, captures the very essence of Carroll's surreal world with an earnestness and creativity that many modern adaptations lack. For fans of classic literature and vintage television, this version remains the definitive visual journey through the chessboard landscape of the Looking-Glass world.

In an era dominated by high-budget streaming series and blockbuster reboots, revisiting the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** offers a refreshing dose of nostalgia and a masterclass in theatrical storytelling. This article delves deep into the production, the cast, the unique set design, and the enduring legacy of this

often-overlooked gem. We will explore why this particular adaptation continues to resonate with audiences decades after its initial broadcast, and why it deserves a prominent place in the canon of classic fantasy cinema.

THE GENESIS OF THE 1985 ADAPTATION

The mid-1980s were a fascinating time for British television. The BBC, in particular, had a reputation for producing high-quality, literary adaptations that were both educational and entertaining. The decision to adapt *Through the Looking-Glass* came at a time when Lewis Carroll's work was experiencing a resurgence in popularity, following the release of major motion pictures that had brought renewed attention to Victorian fantasy. However, unlike those big-screen productions, the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** was conceived as a television event, designed to be broadcast to a wide audience during the Christmas holiday season.

A Faithful Adaptation of Lewis Carroll

One of the most striking features of this film is its fidelity to the source material. Screenwriter Alan Seymour took great

care to preserve the intricate wordplay, the nonsensical logic, and the episodic structure of Carroll's novel. While many adaptations take liberties to modernize or simplify the story, this version embraces the complexity of the original text. The result is a film that challenges its audience, rewarding attentive viewers with the famous "Jabberwocky" poem recited in full and the clever mechanics of the chessboard narrative. For purists, the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** is often cited as the most accurate translation of the book to the screen.

A STELLAR CAST BRINGING THE CHARACTERS TO LIFE

Any great adaptation hinges on its casting, and this film excels in bringing the memorable characters of the Looking-Glass world to life. The production assembled a remarkable ensemble of actors, many of whom were veterans of the British stage and screen.

Kate Burton as Alice

At the heart of the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** is Kate Burton's portrayal of Alice. Burton, the daughter of legendary actor Richard Burton, brings a unique combination of intelligence, patience, and polite bewilderment to the role. Her Alice is not a passive observer but an active participant in the absurdity around her. She questions the logic of the Red Queen, engages in debates with Tweedledee and Tweedledum, and navigates the chessboard with a growing sense of determination. Burton's performance grounds the film, providing

the anchor of reality that makes the fantastical elements so effective.

Iconic Supporting Performances

The film is also notable for its unforgettable supporting cast:

- **Carol Channing as the White Queen:** In a piece of inspired casting, Broadway legend Carol Channing took on the role of the scatterbrained White Queen. Channing's signature comedic timing and larger-than-life persona were a perfect fit for a character who lives backwards and remembers events before they happen.
- **Eve Arden as the Red Queen:** The role of the imperious Red Queen was played by Eve Arden, best known for her role in *Our Miss Brooks*. Arden brought a sharp, commanding presence to the character, delivering lines like "Off with her head!" with a chilling nonchalance that was both frightening and darkly funny.
- **Geoffrey Collins as Humpty Dumpty:** This segment of the film is considered a highlight by many fans. Geoffrey Collins, in heavy prosthetics, delivers a monologue filled with linguistic riddles and philosophical musings that perfectly captures Carroll's fascination with semantics and identity.
- **The Tweedles and The Lion and the Unicorn:** The film also features memorable performances from the Tweedle brothers and the battling Lion and Unicorn, each

adding to the rich tapestry of eccentrics that Alice encounters on her journey.

PRODUCTION DESIGN AND VISUAL MAGIC

Given that this was a television production from 1985, the visual effects are not on par with modern CGI. However, what the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** lacks in digital wizardry, it more than compensates for with inventive practical effects, stunning costume design, and beautiful set pieces.

The Chessboard Landscape

The central conceit of the novel is that the entire story is a giant chess game. The production design team embraced this literally. The sets are designed with checkerboard patterns, and the transitions from one square to another are depicted with clever stagecraft. The landscape is a mixture of studio-bound sets and painted backdrops, creating a surreal, theatrical atmosphere that feels like a dream. This aesthetic choice contributes significantly to the film's charm. It looks and feels like a stage play brought to television, which is entirely appropriate for a story that is, at its core, a performance of logic and language.

Costumes and Makeup

The costumes in the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** are a feast

for the eyes. The Red Queen's elaborate red gown and crown, the White Queen's flowing white robes, and Alice's iconic pinafore dress are all meticulously designed. The makeup and prosthetics used for characters like Humpty Dumpty, the Lion, and the Unicorn are particularly impressive for their time. They are clearly masks and costumes, but they allow the actors to emote and perform, which is far more effective than many modern, overly-slick CGI creations. This tangible quality gives the film a warmth and authenticity that is often missing from modern fantasy.

MEMORABLE SCENES AND MUSICAL NUMBERS

The **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** is structured as a musical, featuring songs that help to advance the plot and develop the characters. While not all songs are equally memorable, several stand out as highlights. The opening number, set in Alice's drawing-room, establishes her restless curiosity. The song performed by the White Queen, "Looking Through the Looking Glass," is a whimsical exploration of backward logic. Perhaps the most famous musical sequence is the one involving the Walrus and the Carpenter, a darkly humorous song that warns of false friends and flattery.

The Garden of Live Flowers

One of the most visually stunning sequences in the film is Alice's encounter with the Garden of Live Flowers. The flowers, played by actors in elaborate floral costumes, sing and dance, speaking in verse and engaging

in petty rivalries. This scene is a perfect example of the film's ability to blend the whimsical with the slightly unsettling. The flowers are beautiful but vain, and their interactions with Alice highlight the social absurdities that Carroll loved to satirize.

The White Knight's Song

The final major musical number, performed by the White Knight, is a poignant moment in the film. The White Knight, who is clumsy and kind, sings a song about his own inevitable decline. It is a moment of genuine pathos in a story that is often purely comedic. This scene reminds the viewer that *Through the Looking-Glass* is not just a book of nonsense; it is also a meditation on growing up, memory, and the passage of time.

CRITICAL RECEPTION AND CULTURAL IMPACT

Upon its initial broadcast, the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** received mixed reviews. Some critics praised its fidelity to the text and its strong performances, while others felt that it was too slow-paced and theatrical for a television audience accustomed to the faster rhythms of American sitcoms. However, over the decades, the film has been re-evaluated and is now regarded as a classic of children's television.

A Cult Classic on

Home Video

The film found a second life on home video. Released on VHS and later on DVD, the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** became a staple of school libraries and family video collections. For many children of the 1980s and 1990s, this was their first introduction to Lewis Carroll's work. The film's unique atmosphere, its memorable songs, and its faithful adherence to the source material made it a favorite for re-watching. Today, it remains a highly sought-after title among collectors of vintage fantasy films.

Influence on Later Adaptations

While subsequent adaptations of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* have taken very different approaches, the 1985 version has left its mark. Its emphasis on the chessboard metaphor and its commitment to the original dialogue are elements that later, more lavish productions have sometimes borrowed. For example, the 1999 television adaptation starring Tina Majorino and the 2010 Tim Burton film both acknowledged the influence of the 1985 version in their production notes. The **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** proved that a successful adaptation did not require massive budgets, but rather a deep understanding of the source material and a talented cast.

COMPARING THE 1985 FILM TO

OTHER VERSIONS

To fully appreciate the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985**, it is helpful to compare it to other major adaptations. Here is a brief overview:

- **1951 Animated Film:** Disney's animated classic is a composite of both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. It is a musical masterpiece, but it takes significant liberties with the plot and characters. The 1985 film is far more faithful to the book.
- **1999 TV Movie:** This adaptation starring Tina Majorino is visually spectacular, with high-quality CGI. However, it lacks the theatrical charm and the intimate performances of the 1985 version. It feels more like a spectacle than a story.
- **2010/2016 Films (Tim Burton):** These are less adaptations and more "reimaginings." They use the characters and settings as a backdrop for an action-adventure story. They are visually stunning but bear little resemblance to the tone or content of Carroll's books.
- **1973 TV Movie:** This earlier BBC version is often cited alongside the 1985 film as being a faithful adaptation. However, the 1985 version is generally considered superior due to its higher production values, its musical numbers, and its stronger cast.

THE ENDURING APPEAL OF THE 1985 CLASSIC

So, why does the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** continue to

captivate audiences nearly four decades after its release? The answer lies in its sincerity. The film never condescends to its audience. It treats Carroll's work with respect, allowing the absurdity to speak for itself. In a cinematic landscape where everything is constantly being reimagined, rebooted, and explained, there is something deeply comforting about a film that simply trusts the story. It is a time capsule from an era when television could still be a quiet, shared experience, and when special effects were used to serve the story, not overpower it.

A Gateway to Literature

For countless viewers, the **Alice Through The Looking Glass Movie 1985** served as a gateway to the world of Lewis Carroll. After watching the film, many were inspired to pick up the book and discover the original text. This is perhaps the greatest legacy any adaptation can have. The film did not replace the book; it illuminated it. It made the complex wordplay and philosophical puzzles accessible to a younger audience, sparking a lifelong love of language and fantasy.

Nostalgia and the Art of Practical Effects

There is also a strong element of nostalgia at play. For those who grew up watching this film, it is inextricably linked to