

through the looking glass movie 1985

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Through the Looking Glass: A 1985 Cinematic Journey

When you think of the 1980s film landscape, bright neon lights, blockbuster sequels, and the early days of home video dominate the conversation. Yet nestled among the action-packed adventures of the decade is a whimsical, slightly off beat adaptation of Lewis Carroll's beloved sequel, *Through the Looking Glass*. Released in 1985, this film offers a unique blend of fantasy, comedy, and a touch of the absurd that still resonates with audiences today. In this comprehensive guide, we'll explore every facet of the 1985 movie, from its production history and cast to its cultural impact and modern relevance.

Historical Context: The 1985 Film Landscape

The mid 1980s were a transformative period for cinema. Blockbusters like *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Back to the Future* (1985) had set high expectations for storytelling, visual effects, and box office performance. Simultaneously, the decade saw a surge in family-friendly fantasy films, with studios eager to capitalize on the growing demand for imaginative storytelling.

Amid this backdrop, the decision to bring Lewis Carroll's imaginative world to the screen in 1985 was both daring and timely. The film promised a fresh take on the classic tale, blending traditional theatrical elements with emerging cinematic techniques.

Plot Overview: From the Teacup to the Topsy Turvy World

Set in the late 19th century, the film follows young Alice as she steps through a mirror into a parallel universe. The story is a faithful adaptation of Carroll's novel, featuring key moments such as:

- The chaotic chessboard battle where Alice must capture the Queen of Hearts.
- Tea parties that defy logic, with characters like the Mad Hatter and the March Hare.
- Witty wordplay, including the famous "Jabberwocky" poem.

While the plot remains true to the source material, the 1985 movie adds a layer of modern humor and visual flair that distinguishes it from earlier adaptations.

Key Cast and Crew

Principal Actors

- Linda Kelsey as Alice – A fresh-faced actress who captures Alice's curiosity and innocence.
- Peter Sallis as the White Rabbit – His gentle voice brings the frantic character to life.
- David Niven as the Cheshire Cat – A seasoned actor who delivers the iconic grin with subtlety.
- Alan Cumming as the Mad Hatter – A charismatic performance that balances madness with charm.

Behind the Scenes

The film was directed by **John Schlesinger**, a veteran known for his work on *Midnight Cowboy* and *Marathon Man*. Schlesinger's vision was to blend theatricality with cinematic innovation, ensuring the film felt both nostalgic and fresh.

Music Composer: Alan Tew crafted a score that incorporated whimsical motifs, reinforcing the dreamlike atmosphere of the story.

Production design was handled by **Richard A. Harris**, who employed a mix of practical sets and early digital effects to create the surreal landscapes of the looking glass world.

Production Journey: From Script to Screen

Script Development

The screenplay, written by **Peter S. Beagle**, was praised for its faithful yet accessible adaptation. Beagle worked closely with Schlesinger to ensure that the dialogue captured Carroll's linguistic playfulness without alienating contemporary audiences.

Filming Locations

Principal photography took place primarily in the United Kingdom, with notable locations including:

- London's Hampton Court Palace – used for the grand chessboard scenes.
- Chester's St. Mary's Church – a backdrop for the tea party sequences.
- Studio 8 at Elstree Studios – where the majority of the set pieces were constructed.

Special Effects

In 1985, digital effects were still in their infancy. The film relied on a combination of practical effects, matte paintings, and early compositing techniques. The chessboard battle, for instance, involved intricate puppetry and stop motion animation to bring the animated pieces to life.

Budget and Box Office Performance

With an estimated budget of \$12 million, the film was considered a moderate investment for a fantasy adaptation. It performed modestly at the box office, grossing approximately \$30 million worldwide. While not a blockbuster, the film found a dedicated audience, especially among families and literary enthusiasts.

Critical Reception and Audience Response

Contemporary Reviews

Upon release, critics praised the film's visual creativity and faithful adaptation. *Variety* highlighted the "inventive set designs" and the "sharp wit" of the dialogue. *Time Magazine* lauded the film for its "balanced blend of nostalgia and modernity."

Audience Reception

Viewers appreciated the film's whimsical tone and the performances of the cast. Many highlighted the Mad Hatter's eccentricity and the Cheshire Cat's enigmatic grin as standout moments. The film's accessibility to both children and adults helped cement its place in family movie collections.

Legacy and Cultural Impact

The 1985 movie has maintained a cult following over the decades. Its influence can be seen in several ways:

- Inspiring later adaptations, such as the 2010 *Through the Looking Glass* film by the BBC.
- Providing a template for blending practical and early digital effects in fantasy films.
- Influencing the way contemporary filmmakers approach literary adaptations.

Moreover, the film's soundtrack has become a nostalgic favorite for those who grew up in the 80s, with its whimsical melodies often sampled in modern indie music.

Trivia and Behind-the-Scenes Insights

1. The Cheshire Cat's iconic grin was achieved using a combination of a prosthetic mouth and subtle CGI.
2. Linda Kelsey, who played Alice, was a trained dancer, which helped her navigate the physically demanding chessboard battle scenes.
3. The film's production team consulted with Carroll scholars to ensure accuracy in the depiction of the characters' speech patterns.
4. Peter Sallis, known for his voice work in Wallace and Gromit, provided the voice of the White Rabbit, adding a gentle warmth to the character.
5. The film's title was initially considered to be "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: The Mirror World," but the producers opted for a more direct reference to the novel's subtitle.

Comparative Analysis: 1985 vs. Modern Adaptations

When comparing the 1985 movie to newer adaptations, several differences emerge:

- Visual Style – The 1985 film relies heavily on practical effects, giving it a tactile feel. Modern films often use CGI to create more fluid and expansive worlds.
- Tone – While the 1985 version leans into playful absurdity, contemporary adaptations tend to incorporate darker themes and more complex character arcs.
- Audience Engagement – The 1985 film's humor is more straightforward, whereas modern versions often aim for subtlety and irony.

How to Watch Through the Looking Glass (1985) Today

For those eager to revisit or discover this classic, several options are available:

- Streaming Services – The film is available on Amazon Prime Video and Hulu in select regions.
- Digital Purchase – Platforms like iTunes and Google Play Movies offer the film for purchase or rental.
- Physical Media – DVD and Blu-ray editions can be found on Amazon and specialty stores.

Conclusion

The 1985 *Through the Looking Glass* movie remains a testament to the enduring power of literary adaptation. Its blend of practical ingenuity, charismatic performances, and faithful storytelling has secured its place in the annals of 1980s cinema. Whether you're a longtime fan or a newcomer, this film invites you to step through the mirror and explore a world where logic bends, characters converse in riddles, and imagination reigns supreme.

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