

Alice in Wonderland

❌ Walt Disney Pictures | Starring Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Mia Wasikowska, Anne Hathaway, Alan Rickman, Stephen Fry | Rated PG

Sometimes a filmmaker finds the perfect story to match his or her particular talents, and I can't think of a better match in recent memory than Tim Burton making *Alice in Wonderland*.

Lewis Carroll's two Wonderland novels combined an imaginative, fantastic children's world with a somewhat creepy undertone of insanity, and Burton is known for his visually stunning style that combines creativity and creepiness.

Getting to see his take on Wonderland is a real cinematic treat, and more than makes up for some of the film's lesser shortcomings.

First the good stuff—*Alice in Wonderland* will blow you away with the creativity of its visuals. The combination of art direction, makeup and computer-generated images (CGI) creates a beautiful, extraordinary and bizarre world for the Carroll characters to play in. Burton deserves extra credit for the innovative ways he combines live action and CGI, rather than going all computers, a la *Avatar*.

The most creative examples are the actors who have had parts of their bodies distorted through CGI to make them look like characters from a storybook. Watching Helena Bonham Carter trudge around as the Red Queen with a giant, bulbous head is a delight. This combination of technologies makes her seem like an animated character while still giving us her full acting performance, rather than just a voiceover.

I haven't mentioned the story yet because, honestly, it takes a secondary place to the visuals. The plot is a pretty standard movie tale, but it's done well enough that it doesn't

detract much from your enjoyment. It follows Alice on a return trip to Wonderland after the events of the original books, only she doesn't remember her original visit. She meets all the zany characters again, from the Mad Hatter to the White Rabbit to the Cheshire Cat, and then gets involved in an adventure to overthrow the evil Red Queen. While the plot may be standard, the script has a clever, sharp sense of humor to it that works well in the hands of the actors.

Alice in Wonderland combines an excellent cast of British actors, plus Johnny Depp. Depp, with his typical brilliance, plays the delightful and surprisingly heroic Mad Hatter. He likes to push his characters to the brink, and watching him randomly switch between two accents while delivering Carroll's nonsensical writing is a joy.

As mentioned, Carter is perfectly cast as the tyrant Red Queen, and the young Mia Wasikowska plays a pitch-perfect Alice. She looks to have a bright future in movies. Other standouts include Alan Rickman as Blue Caterpillar and Stephen Fry as Cheshire Cat.

The other thing Burton has managed to do well with this film is to make it enjoyable for both adults and children. Given his proclivity toward bizarre, often macabre, settings and subjects, I was worried he would make Wonderland a little too scary for the little ones. Thankfully that's not the case here, although it's probably too much for the younger age groups. The plot and some of the jokes will hit home with the kids, but there's enough intelligence in the screenplay to keep adults entertained. If you're looking for a fun movie this spring, *Alice in Wonderland* is a good choice.

Content Watch: *Alice in Wonderland* is rated PG, mostly for scary images and some fantasy violence. Some of the monsters will definitely scare the little kids, but older kids should have no problems. The movie doesn't offer much of a positive message, but there's nothing negative that you have to watch

out for, either.