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Lou Bunin's ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Last known print! Unseen for 30 years!

The week of July 27, 1951, brought two versions of "Alice in Wonderland" to New York. One was from Walt Disney, and it went on to become a popular success. The other, a live action and animated puppet film by Lou Bunin, got the better reviews and then languished in almost total obscurity.

"It seems to have survived six feature-length productions that have come and gone, and I know why, too," Mr. Bunin said. "Someone who's making 'Alice in Wonderland' has to make a girl enter a world where caterpillars are snobs and arrogant, where turtles are sad creatures that sing about soup—well, you can't cast it in life. And all the other productions, aside from Disney's, tried to typecast real actors." Mr. Bunin's form of "type-casting," as he calls it, involved the use of animated sculptures less than seven inches high, which are sized on film to suit the live-action Alice, played by a British actress named Carol Marsh.

"I think that Walt Disney didn't quite understand Lewis Carroll," Mr. Bunin said. "He ignored some of the best situations and the best lines. I don't mean to denigrate Walt Disney, no one does. You can't be mean to this man as an individual. But he didn't do 'Alice in Wonderland' justice at all, he made 'Mickey Mouse in Wonderland' instead."

Mr. Bunin did not begin work on his film until he read a *Hollywood Reporter* story saying that Disney's planned "Alice" would not be made. Nevertheless, he said he ran afoul of the Disney organization. Chain theaters refused to play his film, he said, fearful of losing subsequent Disney business, and Technicolor would not process it, forcing him to use the Ansco process. "This was normal business procedure," said Mr. Bunin, who went on to make short subjects, television pilots, industrial films and many commercials. "Nothing personal."

The color on the Ansco prints of his film was so erratic, he said, that he had blocked showing of the film for 15 years. But the Thalia Theater in New York persuaded him that the color was not a major drawback. And he is close, he said, to a deal that will make his "Alice" available on video cassette. "Amazing, miraculous color corrections can be made electronically," he explained.

—Janet Maslin
New York Times

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