



March 3rd, 2010

Running Time: TBA

Alice In Wonderland

Preliminary Production Information

For 19-year-old Alice Kingsley (MIA WASIKOWSKA), life is about to take a turn for the unexpected. Proposed to by Hamish, the worthy but dull son of Lord and Lady Ascot, during a Victorian garden party thrown in her honor, Alice flees without giving an answer, heading off after a rabbit she's spotted running across the lawn, wearing a waistcoat and a pocket watch.

Following the White Rabbit (voiced by MICHAEL SHEEN) across a meadow, Alice watches as he disappears into a rabbit hole, then, suddenly, finds herself pulled down after him, tumbling through a strange, dreamlike passage before landing in a round hall with many doors. After a spot of bother involving a bottle labelled "DRINK ME", whose contents shrink her, and a cake with the words "EAT ME" iced on top which makes her grow, Alice eventually finds her way through a door into a wondrous and fantastical world known to its inhabitants as Underland.

There, she meets a menagerie of colourful characters, from a swashbuckling Dormouse to an off-his-rocker Mad Hatter (JOHNNY DEPP), from a grinning Cheshire Cat (voiced by STEPHEN FRY) to a hookah-smoking caterpillar called Absalom (voiced by ALAN RICKMAN), from a creepy White Queen (ANNE HATHAWAY) to her spiteful older sister, the Queen Of Hearts (HELENA BONHAM CARTER), the petulant ruler of Underland.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND marks both a return to Disney for director TIM BURTON ("Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street", "Charlie And The Chocolate Factory") and the seventh time he's worked with JOHNNY DEPP ("Public Enemies", "Pirates Of The Caribbean" trilogy). The film is produced by RICHARD ZANUCK ("Yes Man"), JOE ROTH ("Hellboy II: The Golden Army") and SUZANNE and JENNIFER TODD ("The Accidental Husband"), and executive produced by PETER TOBYANSEN. The screenplay is written by LINDA WOOLVERTON ("The Lion King", "Beauty And The Beast"), inspired

by the novels "Alice's Adventures In Wonderland" and "Through The Looking Glass, And What Alice Found There" by Lewis Carroll. Visual effects supervisor is four-time Academy Award® winner Ken Ralston ("Beowulf", "The Polar Express").

Working alongside Depp, Wasikowska, Bonham Carter and Hathaway are British comedian Matt Lucas ("Little Britain") who plays the dual roles of Tweedledee and Tweedledum and Renaissance man Crispin Glover ("Beowulf") who stars as Stayne, the Knave Of Hearts.

Providing the voices for Underland's menagerie of inhabitants is an eclectic and impressive mix of acting talent, many of whom have worked with Burton before, and some who haven't, including: TIMOTHY SPALL (Bernard), BARBARA WINDSOR (The Dormouse), CHRISTOPHER LEE (The Jabberwocky), MICHAEL GOUGH (The Dodo), and PAUL WHITEHOUSE (The March Hare).

For Burton, whose work has frequently dealt with dual worlds and always celebrated the outsider, the prospect of being able to put his own fresh spin on such a timeless classic as **ALICE IN WONDERLAND** was impossible to pass up.

"It's so much a part of the culture," he reflects of Carroll's tale that has inspired numerous stage, television and film adaptations down the years, including Disney's much-loved 1951 animated feature. "But as a movie, I've never seen a version I've really liked. It's always been about a passive little girl wandering around a series of adventures with weird characters. There's never any kind of gravity to it. So that's the attempt with this, to take the idea of those stories and shape them into something that's not literal from the book but keeps the spirit of it."

Incorporating characters, story elements and the central themes from both of Carroll's books, Burton's **ALICE IN WONDERLAND** is an entirely new story, with Wasikowska's Alice returning to Wonderland for the first time since she was a child although having no memory of her previous adventures there.

Part of what appealed to Burton in Woolverton's script was that it centred on an Alice who, at nineteen, was not only substantially older than in Carroll's books, but who also felt both real and identifiable.

"Everyone has their idea of Alice, and it was important to take away the baggage and make her as real a teenager as possible, but

also keep some of the original aspects of her character," says Wasikowska. "It's exciting to bring those characters and stories to another generation."

As Alice undergoes her latest trip through Wonderland, the shy, self-conscious girl at the start of the film, is transformed into a strong, confident young woman. "In the beginning, Alice is very awkward and uncomfortable in her skin," Wasikowska continues. "So her experience in Wonderland is her reconnecting with herself and finding herself again, and finding she has the strength to be more self-assured and figure out what she wants."

Playing such an iconic role as Alice was a dream come true for the Australian-born actress, although she admits to feeling a little intimidated at first. "There's a lot of pressure in a way," she notes. "Everyone thinks they know who she is, and you can't please everyone. So the hardest thing is making her your own, and making yourself comfortable with her and confident in the decisions you make."

"I just liked her quality," says Burton of his nineteen-year-old star who underwent four auditions before winning the part. "I always like it when I sense people have that old soul quality to them. Because you're witnessing this whole thing through her eyes, it needed somebody who can subtly portray that."

For a fabulist filmmaker renowned for creating fantastical and breathtakingly elaborate worlds, Carroll's rich tapestry of bizarre characters and their magical world afforded Burton ample opportunity to run wild with his imagination, putting his own, indelible Burton-esque stamp on the material.

"What's amazing about Carroll's books is that his imagery is so strong," says Wasikowska. "Which is kind of why it's so exciting that Tim is doing it because he's such a visual person. The two of them together is really exciting."

Indeed, when it comes down to it, the very idea of **ALICE IN WONDERLAND**, as reimaged by Tim Burton, is a match made in cinematic heaven. Using a mixture of visual effects techniques, including actors shot against green screen, all CGI characters, as well as motion capture performances, and 3D, **ALICE IN WONDERLAND** promises to showcase Burton's characteristically

quirky, surreal and dark vision in a unique, richly detailed, and slightly disturbing way.

"The thing about Wonderland, like any fairy tale land, there's good and the bad," Burton muses. "The thing I liked about Wonderland is that everything is slightly off, even the good people. That to me is something different."

ABOUT THE CAST

MIA WASIKOWSKA * (Alice Kingsley) has, in the space of a few short years, established herself as a rising star of cinema.

A trained ballerina turned actress, Wasikowska recently starred in Edward Zwick's *Defiance*, and received critical acclaim for her portrayal of a tormented and suicidal teen in the HBO series *In Treatment*, winning the "Breakthrough Actress" Award from the Los Angeles-based organization *Australians In Film* (whose Host Committee includes Cate Blanchett, Naomi Watts, Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman, among others) for the role.

Wasikowska began acting in her home country of Australia, landing a recurring role on the popular medical drama *All Saints*. She was awarded the "Best Young Actor" award by the Australian Film Institute Awards for her debut feature, *Suburban Mayhem*, and followed that with acclaimed performances in *Lens Love Story*, *September*, and Greg Mclean's horror film *Rogue*.

Wasikowska will next be seen in Mira Nair's *Amelia*, the biopic of female navigator Amelia Earhart, alongside Hilary Swank and Richard Gere. Currently, Wasikowska is in production on "The Kids Are All Right" as the daughter of Annette Bening and Julianne Moore, who sets out to find and pursue a relationship with her biological father. Lisa Cholodenko is directing for Overture Films.

** Pronounced "Vah-she-kov-ska"*

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

TIM BURTON (Director) joined Walt Disney as an animator in 1979, working on the animated features *The Fox And The Hound* and *The Black Cauldron*.

In 2007, Burton directed an adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's blood-soaked, Tony Award-winning musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street*, starring Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter, which won an Academy Award® for Best Art Direction as well as nominations for Costume Design and Actor (Depp).

Prior to that, Burton directed an adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic children's book, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, starring Depp and Freddie Highmore, which opened to impressive critical and box office success and continues to entertain audiences everywhere. That same year, Burton also directed and produced the dark, romantic stop-motion animated feature *Corpse Bride* voiced by Depp and Bonham Carter.

Burton's previous film was *Big Fish*, a heartwarming tale of a fabled relationship between a father and his son. The film was hailed as Burton's most personal and emotional to date, earning respectable reviews and box office, starred Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Jessica Lange and Billy Crudup. Prior to *Big Fish*, Burton directed *Planet Of The Apes*, a project that brought him together with producer Richard D. Zanuck, the former 20th Century Fox studio head who had greenlit the original film in 1968. Burton's *Planet Of The Apes* starred Mark Wahlberg, Tim Roth, Helena Bonham Carter, Michael Clarke Duncan and Kris Kristofferson and was a summer 2001 box office hit.

Burton began drawing at an early age, attended Cal Arts Institute on a Disney fellowship and, soon after, joined the studio as an animator. He made his directing debut for Disney with the stop-motion animated short *Vincent*, narrated by Vincent Price. The film was a critical success and an award-winner on the festival circuit. Burton's next in-house project was the live-action short *Frankenweenie*, an inventive and youthful twist on the Frankenstein legend.

In 1985, Burton's first feature film, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, was a box-office hit with the director praised for his original vision. He followed that with *Beetlejuice*, a supernatural comedy starring

Michael Keaton, Geena Davis, Alec Baldwin and Winona Ryder, and another critical and financial success.

In 1989, Burton directed the blockbuster *Batman* starring Jack Nicholson, Michael Keaton and Kim Basinger. Following the triumph of *Batman*, the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) awarded Burton the Director of the Year Award. The film also won an Academy Award® for Best Art Direction.

Edward Scissorhands, starring Depp, Winona Ryder and Diane Wiest, was one of the big hits of the 1990 Christmas season and acclaimed for its original vision and poignant fairy tale sensibility. In 1992, Burton once again explored the dark underworld of Gotham City in *Batman Returns*, the highest grossing film of that year, which featured Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman and Danny DeVito as the Penguin.

In 1994, Burton produced and directed *Ed Wood* starring Johnny Depp in the title role. The film garnered two Academy Awards® for Best Supporting Actor, for Martin Landau, and Best Special Effects Makeup.

Burton conceived and produced the stop-motion animated feature *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, an original holiday tale that has become a seasonal perennial. He also produced 1993's *Cabin Boy* and 1995's summer blockbuster *Batman Forever*, as well as the 1996 release of *James And The Giant Peach*, based on Roald Dahl's children's novel.

Burton produced and directed *Mars Attacks!*, a sci-fi comedy based on the original Topps trading card series, starring an array of leading actors including Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Danny DeVito, Pierce Brosnan and Annette Bening.

In 1999 Burton directed *Sleepy Hollow*, which was inspired by Washington Irving's classic story and starred Johnny Depp, Christina Ricci, Miranda Richardson and Michael Gambon. The film was nominated for three Academy Awards®, including Best Costume Design and Best Cinematography and won the Oscar® for Best Art Direction.