



## Looking Glass Wars Expands

Sci-fi spin on Wonderland gets movies, comics, MMO's, novels and card games.

by **Christopher Monfette**

**October 6, 2009** - Wonderland is busy these days. After a long period of silence from down the rabbit hole, the last few years have brought us an unusual amount of activity bubbling up from the land of cats and hatters – namely, Tim Burton's upcoming theatrical adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*, a mini-series to air on the Syfy Channel and, of course, **Frank Beddor's sci-fi/fantasy re-imagining** of the mythology spanning novels, comics, card games and, eventually, films. We recently sat down with Beddor in advance of the publication of the third novel in his ongoing trilogy to get the full info-dump on all things Wonderland. The series, consisting of *The Looking Glass Wars*, *Seeing Redd* and *Arch-Enemy*, tells the story of Alyss, heir to the throne of Queen Genevieve Heart, who is forced to flee Wonderland – a fantastic landscape where imagination can conjure anything – along with her bodyguard, Hatter Madigan, during an uprising by her Aunt Redd. Thrust through a magical portal into our world, Alyss and Hatter are separated, beginning an adventure that will hold the very fate of Wonderland in the balance. "It started as a simple idea," says Beddor. "This notation that imagination is a tangible source, almost like magic; that one with a really powerful imagination could actually *manifest* something. And there's Alyss, who has this power, and she's been exiled to our world, yet when she gets there, in the most repressive of times, they basically beat it out of her. They convince her to fit in and be like everybody else. And that's the killer of art."



Starting with Lewis Carroll's original books and spinning outward from there, Beddor has opted to tell the tale from a number of different mediums, illustrating Hatter's 13-year search for Alyss through a series of graphic novels called *Hatter M.* -- initially developed alongside artist Ben Templesmith -- as well as creating a card game -- *The Card Soldier Wars* -- and an associated MMO.

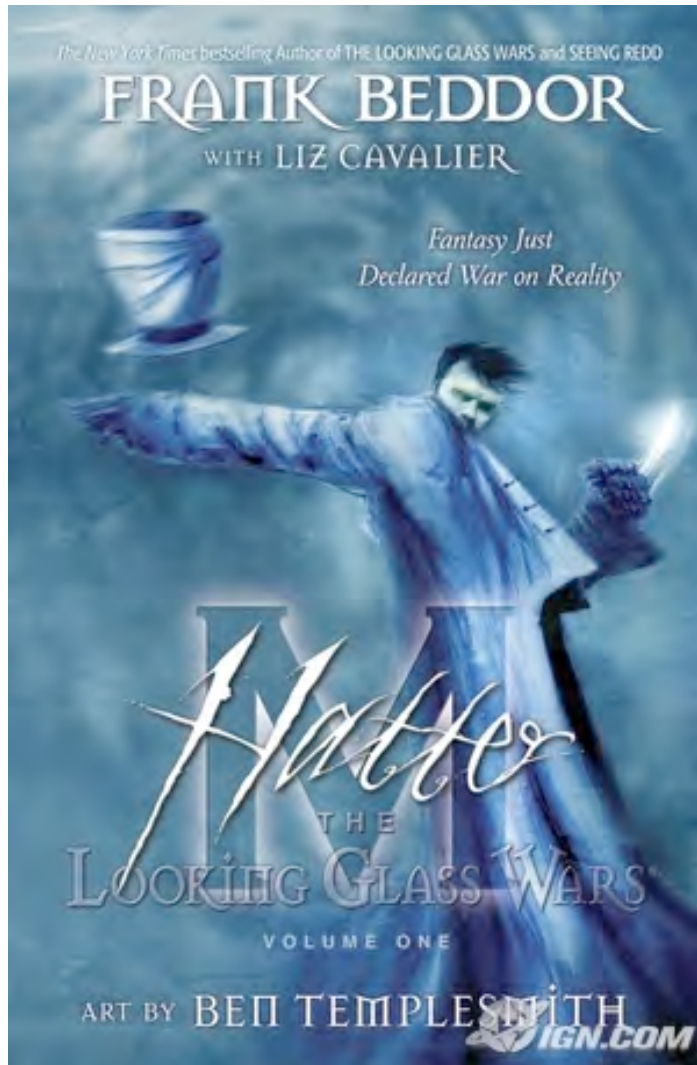
"Having been a producer in the movie business," says Beddor, who produced *There's Something About Mary* prior to writing the first book, "I thought about these different mediums and if there might be an interconnectivity that I could create that would make them all feel as if they were one entity... The art tells its own story and becomes a portal to the mythology. It was a way to bring reluctant readers into the story. That's how the website evolved. And with the card game and the MMO, this is a way for fans to stay connected."



Partnering with *Dark Knight* producer **Charles Roven**, Beddor is currently working to adapt the books into a series of feature films, waiting anxiously to gauge audience response to Burton's upcoming version of the classic Wonderland mythos. "On the one hand, it sort of opens up Wonderland again after many, many years," notes Beddor. "People are talking about it again. On the other hand, I have to probably push the pause button and see what happens... But Chuck and I are laying down the foundation. I've written both scripts. I'm not opposed to collaborating or having other directors, or whoever their go-to person is, come in and work on them... But let's put it this way: I've got all the great smoke and mirrors that I need for Hollywood!"

Even Roven himself agrees, chiming in to say, "It's a wonderful read, it's engrossing, it's exciting. The characters are rich; the background is rich; the reinvention is

wonderfully inventive. For all those reasons, it's at once challenging and exciting. There's a whole lot of complex issues to sort through in order to come up with what the best version of what the movie could be. That's why we're taking our time, trying to make sure that we get to a place where we think we've found it. But when you have that much rich material to delve into, it's actually more exciting than daunting. That doesn't mean you can always get there, but it's a lot better to have more than less!



Regarding the film itself, Beddor sees a number of storytelling opportunities: "I'm thinking that I can tell the movie from two points of view. I can tell it from Hatter's point-of-view, or Alyss'. In my prose book, it starts with her on her seventh birthday, but because this is a movie and we need a movie star, we could start on another important day: the day of her wedding. She's marrying this prince; she's reluctant and suddenly there's this huge event. She's whisked away, she's kidnapped. And as her memories come back, the audience learns who she is and what she's destined to do... The other way of going is starting from Hatter's point-of-view and following this mythical character – this big action figure – along his journey. You don't know if he's nuts, where he's coming from, if it's real, and the revelation is that when he finds her, finds Alyss, Wonderland is suddenly revealed. There's a few interesting options in terms of the

sequencing of the story." Of course, Beddor has already told much of the Hatter's story with *Hatter M.*, the action-based series of graphic novels that paired him with **30 Days of Night** illustrator Templesmith. Not wanting to drive the first novel past 500 or 600 pages, Beddor obviously couldn't tell the entirety of Hatter's journey to find Alyss without derailing the momentum of the book. But that didn't stop him from developing Hatter's adventures in his imagination, taking notes here and there for what would eventually become *Hatter M.*

"It was fairly spontaneous and organic," says Beddor of the revelation that Hatter was better suited to comics. "A lot of what I've done is to put things aside and do the best job possible with the story and the medium. Then I can look at whatever I cut or deleted and revisit it in a different form... I didn't have a book deal in the States at the time. I'd been rejected by a few publishers here, so I decided to publish the comic book first, which was risky. But I wasn't going to do it unless I got Ben. I loved his work and once he committed, I decided to do the series."

But making the switch from prose to comics was no easy task, laughs Beddor. "I didn't know what I was doing! It was real trial by fire, very trial and error. And I depended on Ben to help me with the paneling. But I was reading a lot, checking out a lot of other work. I was reading through Ben's work on *30 Days of Night*. I would say it took me the first four issues. If I was to do it again, I would do it completely differently in terms of storytelling. What writer doesn't look at his stuff and go, 'Oh, please let me do that again!' But when you have a good artist, you have somebody to collaborate with. You're not on your own... And eventually, I got my legs under me."



And so with three books, three potential movies, the *Hatter M.* series, the *The Card Soldier Wars* card game and an MMO all collected at the [Looking Glass Wars official Web site](#), there's no apparent end to Beddor's spin on the Wonderland mythology.

"I have so much invested – so much time, so much world-building – that it's hard to completely step out of that world," admits Beddor. "So I'm probably going to focus a little bit, in the short term, on some of these other aspects of the storytelling and see if I can evolve them. I have some interesting ideas with the graphic novel of where I can take Hatter's story and create some interesting obstacles... I've talked to my publisher about doing a Young Hatter story and exploring what life is like in the Millinery Academy. I had lunch with [Mike Mignola](#) about *Hellboy* and he said to me, 'Some days, I'm in the shower and I'll think of a minor character and then come up with a story for him.' And I feel kind of the same way. It's part of my DNA. I struggle with the idea of starting over. So I think I'll probably hang out in Wonderland for a bit."