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Frank Beddor interview



Frank Beddor is an actor, producer (*There's Something About Mary*), and writer (*The Looking Glass Wars*). Now he can add comic book writer to that list with Image's **The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M**. Westfield's Roger Ash recently contacted Beddor to find out more about this series.

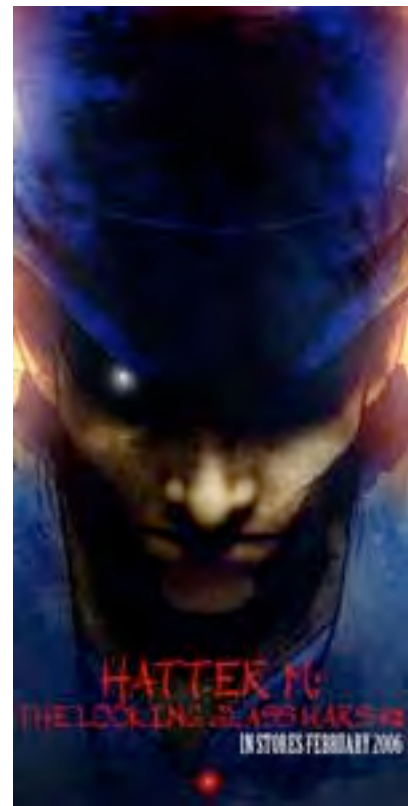
Westfield: How much does **The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M** tie-in with your *Looking Glass Wars* novel? Can the comic be read and understood without having read the novel?

Frank Beddor: Hatter M the comic just seemed like a necessary, organic progression from all of the work I did with artists on *The Looking Glass Wars*.

In *LGW Book 1*, Hatter M was introduced but his story was only explored for about four chapters. There was so much more to tell about his mad search for Alyss that I realized he needed his own forum - and comic books would allow this dark, compelling, more mature story to be told best. Hatter M is a classic, archetypal comic book hero with his angst, his loss, his barely suppressed rage as he searches the world. Also, by doing Hatter M as a comic book series I am able to connect to and expand upon the universe of *The Looking Glass Wars* as it was introduced in Book 1 and as it will continue

in Books 2 and 3. So for those fans of the series in the UK and other countries who have read Book 1, the comic is a great way to deepen, enhance, and bridge the world. Of course, since *LGW Book 1* will not be available in the states until next year, Hatter M's adventures will be what introduces American readers to the *LGW* universe. It's a total reversal - but the bridge will be there for anyone wanting to experience more of the world.

Actually it will be the exact inverse - characters introduced in the **Hatter M** series will next be seen in Book 2 of the *Looking Glass Wars* trilogy. **Hatter M** is written as a stand alone read - we've inserted plenty of flashbacks and conduits to Wonderland to fill in the gaps for readers who haven't read *The Looking Glass Wars*. If readers want more, *The Looking Glass Wars* will be available in September 2006 to satisfy any rabid curiosity aroused by **Hatter M**.



Westfield: Who is Hatter M and who are the other major characters in the mini-series?



Beddor: For those unfamiliar with the first book of the *Looking Glass Wars* trilogy, the bigger story reveals the true history of Wonderland based upon a stunning discovery which unmasked the ultimate literary lie, a twisted fabrication that had existed for nearly 150 years. While universally accepted that Lewis Carroll was inspired to write his classic children's books to entertain 7-year-old Alice Liddell it is far from true. Lewis Carroll did not tell Alice Liddell the story of Wonderland, she told him! Alice was not born into the Liddell family, she was adopted. Her true identity was Alyss Heart, the future Queen of Wonderland. Lewis Carroll had changed everything and everyone including the identity of her royal bodyguard. **Hatter M** is not the story of a Mad Hatter. Hatter Madigan is an expert bladesman, a ranking High Cut of the Wonderland Millinery and not the tea guzzling madman of children's lit. Aggressively focused on the

one purpose in his life, Hatter's search for Alyss commences immediately and continues incessantly leaving the whispers and totems of myth in the wake of his non-stop quest.

It's important to realize that this is not the story of a Mad Hatter. As I mentioned earlier, when I discovered the truth behind the deck of playing cards it soon became clear that Lewis Carroll had changed everything. After my discovery of the cards in the British Museum and the true story behind Lewis Carroll's Wonderland books, I began putting all the pieces together and weaving the revelations of just how different the real Wonderland and its inhabitants were compared to the children's lit version the world had known and accepted for nearly 150 years. Carroll's choices in how he changed Alyss's story were so fascinating (he even changed her name!) - the monsters and heroes of her lost world became these cheery reinventions. It was such a betrayal on Carroll's part and was in fact, the reason for the rift that eventually



occurred between the writer and his muse. For instance - the characters we know as the White Rabbit, the Red Queen, the Cheshire Cat and of course, the Mad Hatter all appear in *The Looking Glass Wars* as they were intended to by Alyss when she told Carroll her harrowing tale. The White Rabbit was in fact Bibwit Harte, the six foot tall albino royal tutor for all Wonderland Queens (Carroll had anagrammed his name to create the White Rabbit), while the Red Queen was in truth Alyss's aunt Redd, the revenge maddened usurper to the throne ably assisted by her top assassin, The Cat, a man size feline who morphs from adorable kitten to giant mutant feline when called upon to kill. So you see, there is a lot of truth to be uncovered. Hatter Madigan's non-stop, at times heartbreakingly loyal, search across several continents for Alyss is a story that I felt deserved telling.

Westfield: What can you tell us about the story of the mini-series?

Beddor: The comic book mini-series (Geo-Graphic Novel Volume 1) **Hatter M** tells the parallel story of Alyss's 13 year exile through the travels of her Royal Bodyguard, Hatter Madigan as he crisscrosses the globe in a desperate non-stop search to find the lost princess after they are separated in the Pool of Tears while escaping a bloody coup in Wonderland.



Hatter M will track the hero's search for a lost princess as he circles the globe from 1859-1872 in a non-stop quest to save the future Queen of Wonderland and redeem himself. Hatter Madigan is wracked with guilt and shame over having lost Alyss in the Pool of Tears after her mother had elicited what amounted to a deathbed promise that he would keep her daughter safe and make certain that she someday return to Wonderland to rule. Heavy stuff for a Royal Bodyguard to feel he has failed at. But as in most quests, the end-point is not the entire point. As he travels, Hatter M will meet many of history's famous and infamous characters. He will influence historical battles, save lives and leave behind a legacy of service to Imagination.

Westfield: What do you think artist Ben Templesmith brings to the book?



Beddor: Initially I was attracted to Ben's use of color and how he conceptualized his characters. I'd liked what he had done in *30 Days of Night* and saw that he had the ability to do horror which occasionally pops up in Hatter's fantastical journey. But it was all luck and intuition that really brought me to Ben. Since working with him I have discovered his sense of humor and this is coming out more and more. It's not all shadows and solitude for Hatter - much of who and what he encounters is bizarre, twisted and funny. Ben's art nails it every time.

Westfield: Would you like to do more comics in the future?

Beddor: We have two more comic book mini-series planned to complete our trilogy of 'Geo-Graphic' Novels. Rather than

graphic novels we've been playing with the idea of calling them Geo-Graphic Novels since the adventures are broken up geographically and follow specific maps for each volume. The first volume tracks Hatter through Europe, the

second follows Hatter's journey aboard the HMS Christina to South America, but the ship is attacked by Chinese pirates and Hatter finds himself on San Francisco's Barbary Coast about to embark on a search for Alyss that will take him across the battlefields of the Civil War to a historically suppressed meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. And the third volume will find Hatter in the Far East where he reunites with a fellow Millinery Man.

I am planning another comic series featuring Queen Redd - the main villain of the *Looking Glass Wars*. I've always been intrigued by the fact that every villain considers themselves the hero of their own story. So I would like to explore Redd from this angle - from her perspective - as she rages against Alyss, vanquishes Wonderland and sends Dark Imagination on to other worlds. Besides, villains are the most fun to write.



Westfield: Are you working on any other projects you'd like to mention?



Beddor: One of my top film projects right now is *Pretty Wicked*, a psychological murder mystery surrounding a teenage girl's obsession with power. It's basically a revenge fantasy exploring the prepotent energy of teen girls when they discover their emerging sexuality and how this power can be used for good or evil. Along with the film, I want to do a graphic novel to be able to illustrate more of the heroine's inner world of flying dreams, retribution and demon guardians.

I'd just like to mention our website, www.lookingglasswars.com and encourage anyone who can to check it out. A lot of time and creativity went into designing it and I think most people will really enjoy it. We're putting up preview pages for **Hatter M** and there's an animated trailer for the

novel. We've developed a card game drawing on characters and elements in **Hatter M** and *LGW* and this is going up first as a web based game. We'll be previewing the game and giving out playing decks at GenCon in Anaheim in November. And I will be adding a Gallery showcasing the art I've commissioned from artists like Doug Chiang, Chris Appelhans , Brian Flora, Branislav Hetzel, Matt Wilson, Ryan Meinerding, Kristi Valk, Andrea Wicklund, Catia Chen, Toby Wilson, David Saccheri and Eddie Rainwater.

Upcoming plans will also be posted, under CURIOSTIES, check out the Looking Glass Maze Rollercoaster. It would be great to have feedback from anyone visiting the website so sign up and email us - I 'd love to hear their thoughts on the series.

Westfield: Any closing comments?

Beddor: Recently in Hatter Madigan's journals I read how he had re-created Wonderland foods on Earth during his travels because he missed them so much - he had written the recipe for tarty tarts and I baked my first batch last week - absolutely my favorite food so far.