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# The Gouverneur Times

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## **Hatter M: Mad with Wonder by Frank Beddor (Automatic Pictures Publishing)**

I was quite taken by surprise when I read the first volume of Hatter M a couple of years ago. Here was a modern, revisionist take on the Alice in Wonderland theme...Think of it as Wonderland on steroids and "R" rated...or at least PG-13. Wonderland as written by Lewis Carroll was always darker than portrayed in the Disney Cartoons but Frank Beddor takes the story to even grimmer shores.

Hatter M, i.e., Hatter Madigan is a member of the Royal Bodyguard of Wonderland. He has left Wonderland to go in search of the long lost Princess Alyss who disappeared while escaping a coup attempt by the murderous Queen Redd Yet his search is constantly hampered by forces from within who don't want the Princess to be found...ever. The Royal Bodyguards are not without their own resources...they wear special backpacks which hold a variety of deadly bladed weapons which can fire weapons, slash like swords, or whirl in a circle creating full-metal death. Madidan also wears a large top hat, which can be thrown like a boomerang, again having a series of blades, which issue forth.

This volume finds Hatter M tracking Alyss first in Paris in 1857 and then through Civil War-era America. He thinks he has finally located her amongst the people of a sideshow. When bandits kidnap the girl, Hatter and the sideshow freaks join forces to track her down as he faces off against a whip-wielding villain who is working for the evil Red Queen of Wonderland. Latter Hatter is captured by Confederate soldiers and imprisoned in an insane asylum.

Sami Makkonen provides the art and his style is a dead-ringer for Ben Templesmith's, who was the artist on the original book. It might have been nice to see a different style of art but it does maintain the book's consistency. Hatter M is a strange and fascinating storyline. It can occasionally be a little too abstract and weird for its own good but there's a dark elegance to its story and art that is rarely seen in comics today. **Grade B+**