

Comics

Frank Beddor Continues to Fight THE LOOKING GLASS WARS



By [Jill Pantozzi](#), Newsarama Contributor

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Frank Beddor has donned several different hats during his career - actor, producer, stuntman and even freestyle skier - but his ability to create a universe where a royal bodyguard protects his charge with a very special hat has earned him scores of devoted fans.

Beddor's **The Looking Glass Wars** trilogy of New York Times best selling novels captivated Lewis Carroll fanatics in another unique interpretation of Alice's classic tumble through Wonderland. In his trilogy, Alice is really Alyss, a Princess originally hailing from Wonderland who is lost in our world and found by author Charles Dodgson (aka Carroll). Dodgson, so captivated by Alyss' stories of her world, turns them into his [now](#) famous work, albeit with a few major details changed.

The producer of 1998's *There's Something About Mary*, Beddor

transforms Carroll's askew universe into a more grown-up, harrowing tale of wars, card soldiers and imagination as weapons. The success and appreciation of **The Looking Glass Wars** led him to create three graphic novel spin-offs featuring Alyss' bodyguard Hatter Mattigan, a stoic officer whose skill with a blade is unrivaled in their kingdom. Renowned comic book artist Ben Templesmith illustrated the first volume, released in 2008, while the second and third (released this past October) has relative newcomer Sami Makkonen on artist duties. Newsarama spoke with Beddor about the latest graphic novel release in the series, his approach to writing comics and his ever-expanding Wonderland universe.



Newsarama: Where did the idea to further **The Looking Glass Wars** story in graphic novel format come from and why did you choose to take Hatter M and others on a new journey instead of say, just retelling the novels in graphic novel format?

Frank Beddor: Royal Bodyguard Hatter Madigan's 13-year quest in our world to find the lost Princess was introduced in four chapters in book one of **The Looking Glass Wars**. It was an exciting overview and arc of the character and his mad search and it caught the Imagination of one small boy in London who told me I absolutely must do a comic book about Hatter. Absolutely must! Following this visionary's advice I was able to interest artist Ben Templesmith in illustrating a limited series of comic books. And the boy was right! The first 4-issue mini-series proved very popular and was nominated for an Eisner Award.

Rather than continue with single issues we moved to doing full books and have so far completed a second and third volume. Volume 1 - Far From Wonder (illustrated by Ben Templesmith), Volume 2 - Mad With Wonder (illustrated by Sami Makkonen), and our latest, Volume 3 - The Nature of Wonder, (Illustrated by Sami Makkonen). The re-issue of Volume 1 in hardback and the newest Volume 3 - The Nature of Wonder in both hardback and paperback arrived in stores on October 15, 2010. We are currently working on Volume 4 - The Zen of

Wonder, and plan to debut this as a special hardback edition at the 2011 San Diego Comic Con. Hatter M as a graphic novel was a natural veering off point from the prose series. There was so much more to tell about his quest to find Alyss and I believe the graphic novels have allowed this dark, compelling, more mature story to be told best. I would love to do more graphic novels based on other LGW characters and stories but this will have to remain on my 'to do list' for a while since the list is quite long at present.

Nrama: Are you a comic book reader or fan? If so, what do you read?



Beddor: I am a reader and a fan, and enjoy the works of Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, Robert Crumb, Frank Miller, Harvey Kurtzman among many, many others. Some of my favorite books are *Honour Among Punks* by Guy Davis and Gary Reed, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and Mike Mignola's Hellboy series. The list could go on and on. I'd prefer nothing more than to read, browse and buy graphics and comic books on a daily basis.

Nrama: Being it's such a unique format, did you have to learn how to write for comics? Did you approach how you told the story any differently?

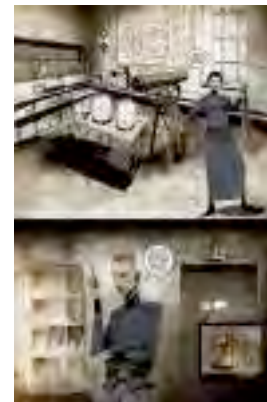
Beddor: Writing 'scripts' for comics is somewhat similar to writing scripts for films. So I had a good level of familiarity with getting visuals on a page and how dialogue should flow, where transitions would work -- but all of this from a cinematic point of view. So while the overall medium of comics felt familiar to me and made for a smooth transition as a writer there was another level of craft that evolved through practice and invention and experience. The storytelling potential of 'the page' and what can be created when working with a talented artist is amazing. The only limit is your imagination, the ability to communicate and collaborate with the artist and the parameters and physical space of the page.

As for our approach to telling the story of Hatter's 13-year search for Alyss we were able to break time and add flashbacks and bring out the

backstory of Alyss's exile from Wonderland in a non-linear fashion as well as introduce another element to Hatter's journey -- his older brother, Dalton Madigan. The mystery of Hatter's lost brother and how this affects Hatter's search is unique to the graphic novel series so at the same time as readers familiar with the prose books 'know' Hatter will find Alyss they know nothing of the relationship between the brothers and how this resolution is integral to Hatter's discovery of Alyss. It's the mystery hidden inside the enigma of Wonderland's lost princess and the loyal bodyguard who has pledged to bring her home.

Nrama: Well-known comic artist Ben Templesmith illustrated the first graphic novel while Sami Makkonen the second and third. What was it like working with them? How did the experiences differ?

Beddor: Well as you know Ben Templesmith pioneered the series with Volume 1 Hatter M. Because of scheduling conflicts there was just no way Ben would be available to work on the next 4 volumes that I have planned. So, I went on a search that lasted nearly 2 years to find the next artist for the series and was fortunate enough to find Sami Makkonen whose artwork in Volumes 2 and 3 is getting extremely positive reviews. While each artist has their own unique style, there is enough of a shared aesthetic that the shift from artist to artist did not 'jar' the series or the fans. This was a huge concern of course, so in terms of working with two separate artists the visual shift was quite seamless.



Ben (who now lives in California) lived in Australia while we were doing Volume 1 and Sami currently lives in Finland, so with both artists I have had the same cyber relationship of emailing scripts and [downloading](#) art while never being in the same room with them. This long distance collaboration demands the scripts really be precise – there is no working it out in the room. So for both artists it was necessary to develop online working relationships where you really tune into the artist's style so you don't waste time or frustrate them while at the same time hopefully inspiring them to have fun and really go for it with their own unique style and imaginings.

The main difference in working with Ben and Sami was the fact that Ben was more of an established artist with an aesthetic style that was well known to readers and fans. Sami is a newer artist who has worked with us on a level where the visual aesthetic of the Hatter M series is being developed alongside his own. It is fascinating to observe how Sami's work evolves and morphs with the storytelling -- the difference between his work in volume 2 and volume 3 shows an enrichment and a growing familiarity with characters and moods. Where as Ben went ahead and did what he did best, Sami has been evolving with the writing and creating of an ongoing world. Both artists are incredibly talented. Both artists bring their unique talent to the series.

Nrama: The third graphic novel was recently released. Talk to us a little about where we left off in the story and where we're headed in this one.



Beddor: In Volume 3, *The Nature of Wonder* we open with a rather surreal return visit to the asylum where Hatter was incarcerated in *Mad With Wonder*. Elijah, the Imagination vampire exiled from Wonderland is now Doctor Elijah Von Wonder and he and the inmates have taken over the asylum. They are in the process of celebrating Imagination and Wonderland by staging a play recreating Hatter and Alyss' escape from Wonderland following Redd's bloody coup. In volume 2, Elijah had read aloud from Hatter's journal to the inmates. His description of Wonderland and the lost princess struck a deep chord with the mad and they can think of nothing else but going there. Dr. Elijah points out that while travel to Wonderland is unlikely, they can still access it through Art, Creativity and their Imaginations.

We then catch up with Hatter in Washington D.C. where he has been told, "all the secrets are kept." Hatter hopes to discover information about Alyss but instead becomes caught up in the last days of the Civil War, the assassination of President Lincoln and the adventures of a team of government paranormal investigators hoping to discover the antidote to the Darkness that has engulfed their nation. Hatter then

travels west with the investigators in search of the White Flower Shamans and their ability to distill White Imagination into a potent physical force in this world. Hatter's adventures with the Indian tribe and the U.S. Cavalry lead to his understanding that there is more of Wonderland energy in this world than he had previously known and that it can be found in....Nature.

Nrama: Besides the books and graphic novels, you've created tons of extras to tie into the story and online community. There are dolls, music, games and blogs. How important was it to you to further your imaginative efforts?

Beddor: What's most important to **The Looking Glass Wars** saga is keeping the Imagination channel open...not shutting it down and saying that something doesn't fit my paradigm. I don't want to close the paradigm to potential because that's when elements become stale. It is a balancing act to maintain an inviolate central line for the series and at the same time allow non-linear, lateral elements to come into their own and evolve. Some of these ideas and elements take off with great fanfare while others remain the quiet, loner type who keep to themselves and then one day, perhaps, surprise and delight you with something amazing. That's how I like to think of these elements, each given its own space and time to develop.



Nrama: There was also talk about a possible film adaptation of your story. The last word on your website said Chuck Roven, the producer of *The Dark Knight* was onboard. Anything new you can tell us?

Beddor: Chuck and I are still partners and working to set up the first film in the series. The first film will feature Alyss in exile, Hatter's adventures as he searches our world for her and glimpses of the Wonderland and the loved ones each has left behind. What's new is the possibility of **The Looking Glass Wars** musical opening in conjunction with the first film.

Nrama: How do you think the recent Tim Burton *Alice In Wonderland* and Syfy's mini-series *Alice*, play into the exposure for your own work?

Beddor: The endless enthusiasm for adaptations of Lewis Carroll's novel on the part of creators and audiences indicates to me the richness of the material and keeps my work in the news. Any adaptation that highlights the 'official' version of Alice in Wonderland is excellent for **The Looking Glass Wars** which exists as a fantastical counterpoint to the status quo story. In my work Alyss was born a princess in Wonderland and escaped to our world through the Pool of Tears where she proceeded to tell her harrowing tale to Lewis Carroll who promised to write a book...and then changed.....EVERYTHING! People first need to know what is false to appreciate what is true.

Nrama: Anything else you'd like to tell our readers?

Beddor: Thanks for all the great questions! I would like to invite anyone who is interested to visit my free online game CardSoldierWars.com, come be my friend on [Facebook](#) where friends can view new Hatter M webisodes for free and if you still have time before bed, follow myself and the Glow on [Twitter](#).