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Talking With Frank Beddor

Frank Beddor, world champion freestyle skier, actor, and producer of the comedy hit *There's Something About Mary*, has turned his attention to writing. The result is the strong first book in a proposed trilogy, the intriguing tale of a young girl from an alternate world called Wonderland. *The Looking Glass Wars* was an immediate hit, appearing on the *New York Times* bestseller list for weeks.



After *Mary*, why *Alyss*? “I like strong women. What can I say?” Beddor says. “I felt somewhat destined to write the story, even though as a young boy I did not like the *Alice* books.” While visiting the UK, Beddor discovered some ancient playing cards at the British Museum. They led him to an antiquities dealer who had some of the cards from an incomplete deck. The art on those cards and the story behind them became the foundation for his book. “Because it’s a parallel world, it’s about ‘world creation,’” Beddor says. “For the first two years I worked nonstop on the rules. I couldn’t work on the narrative until I had the rules in place.”

In Wonderland, Princess Alyss Heart; her bodyguard, Hatter Madigan (who wears the most lethal hats since *Odd Job*); Dodge Anders, her first love; Her Imperial Viciousness, Queen Redd; and an impressive array of characters make their home near the Crystal Continuum, the Pool of Tears and Outerwilderbeastia. “When it came time to record the audiobook,” Beddor says, “we listened to audition tapes, and Gerard Doyle’s leaped out.” The actor and the author worked together on the right tone for the audiobook, the characters, and the ways to distinguish between the two worlds.

Beddor listens to audiobooks occasionally. *His Dark Materials*, by Philip Pullman, is his favorite. “His voice is amazing. I’d read the book, but I had a different

experience listening to it. It uses different sensorial responses. A person's voice can have such a powerful experience on the listener, very different from looking at the words on the page." Listening to his own book was exciting. "Gerard gave the characters fullness, creating just the right visceral momentum through some of the action chapters."

The Looking Glass Wars is a novel with its own soundtrack. "Many musicians have been inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*: Jefferson Airplane, Elton John, Tom Waits." Beddor was interested in what the musical aspects of his world would sound like. The audiobook contains a bonus track by the LA-based band Hypnogaja. Beddor explains, "The song 'Looking Glass' is Lewis Carroll's nightmare as he wrestles with his choice of taking Alyss's biographical story and converting it to this whimsical fairy tale." With two other songs, "Burn in Wonderland," and "Shattered," Beddor promised Gerard Doyle he would make him a pop star. "Short of that, at least his daughter would find him super cool!" Grammy nominee Adam Freeland took samplings from the audiobook, including Doyle's voice, "and distorted it with a heavy echo effect, and it sounds fantastic." Audio samplers from the book and the soundtrack are available on the *Looking Glass Wars* Web site, but fans will have to wait until next fall to hear *Seeing Redd*, the second episode in the trilogy.—*S. J. Henschel*