

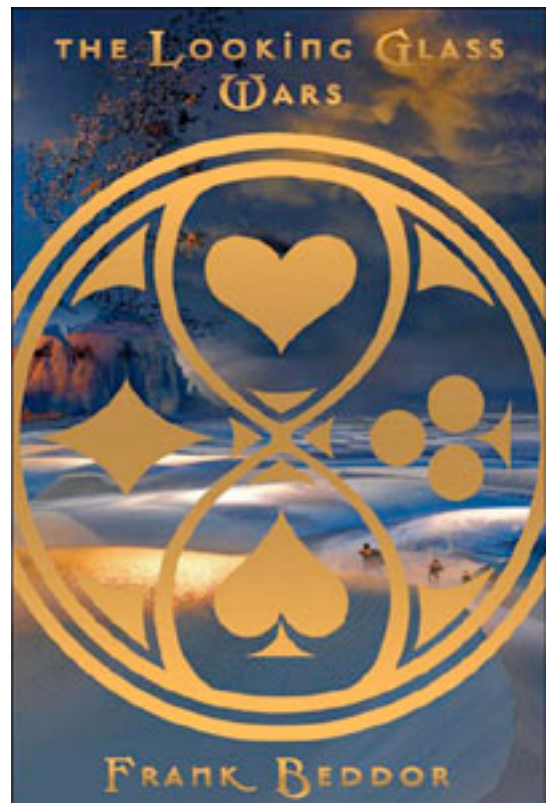
## There's Something About Alice

by James Bickers, Children's Bookshelf -- 8/3/2006

When Alexandra Ripley was given the task of writing the sequel to *Gone with the Wind* some 15 years ago, there was much mumbling from critics, and much of it was negative. Who was this person, and who did she think she was, taking on such an established classic?

Frank Beddor says he got the same response when the first volume in his *Looking Glass Wars* trilogy was released in the U.K. in 2004.

"An American rewriting an English classic? How dare I?" says the former actor and Hollywood producer (perhaps best known for the comedy *There's Something About Mary*), who spent two years researching the world of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland setting before beginning work on his own tale. "But that controversy created a lot of awareness and fun, which ultimately fueled the paperback [reprint] selling out pre-publication," due to the number of pre-orders.



Beddor says his first spark for the idea of the book came seven years ago when he was visiting the British Museum and saw a deck of illuminated cards. It was his first real introduction to Carroll's oeuvre, as he says he was "definitely not a fan" of Alice as a boy.

Once the spark was lit, Beddor locked himself away in an old Art Deco building in Los Angeles. He commissioned a visual artist to help flesh out the world he was imagining, and after two years of research and five years of writing, he had the first volume in his planned trilogy.

The book, *The Looking Glass Wars*, is about to jump the pond to the States in September, but Beddor doesn't anticipate a similar storm of outrage this time. "The U.S. views pop culture more freely, and so far public opinion has been very

high," he says.

Emily Romero, v-p of marketing for the Penguin Young Readers Group, says the company has launched a full-on marketing assault for the U.S. release: a \$150,000 campaign that began six months prior to publication, a bookseller pre-pub tea-party tour, floor displays, tea-party events at BEA and ALA, consumer advertising and an online publicity partnership with AOL Red.

"Because the buzz campaign for *Looking Glass Wars* worked so well and interest in Frank was so high from the accounts," Romero says, "we crashed in a national two-week media and book signing tour. This is unusual for a first-time author."

And that's not the only thing that is unusual about the marketing of *LGW*. Also included in the media onslaught was a special "trailer CD," which consists of an animated Flash movie-style trailer for the book complete with narration. The CD also includes a recording of the song "Looking Glass" by Los Angeles rock band Hypnogaja.



*Frank Beddor*

Romero says that full credit for the trailer CD idea rests with Beddor himself. "With his Hollywood background, it was a natural way for him to promote his book," she says. "For us, it was entirely new and unique. We worked with Frank to offer big consumer Web sites like IGN and AOL Red exclusive premieres of the book trailer. By running with the idea, we were able to generate tons of excitement for the book many months before the publication." Beddor adds that the online version of the trailer has attracted more than 25 million viewers per month on IGN alone.

The trailer wasn't the only thing generating pre-launch excitement. Beddor also created a four-volume comic book mini-series based on the character Hatter M (his reworking of the Mad Hatter).

"Every review and article written about [the mini-series] mentions the source material as being *The Looking Glass Wars* trilogy," Beddor said. "I make appearances at comic book conventions around the country to promote the LGW universe."

In October Beddor will head out on a 12-stop tour through 11 states, with appearances at bookstores and trade shows.