

## [Q&amp;A]

## PW TALKS WITH ADAM DAVIES

## Looking and Spilling

Adam Davies's polarizing single-guy-in-the-city debut, *The Frog King*, had Brett Easton Ellis comparing him to Jay McInerney. His follow-up, *Goodbye Lemon*, out in August, earned a starred review in *PW* (May 8).

**How did *The Frog King's* reception affect the development of your latest novel?**

I had lived and worked for so many years in freakish, Gollumish solitude, and then all of a sudden the book was being discussed in newspapers and magazines and on TV and radio. One reviewer reproduced my photo with the caption, "Even this guy's author photo is irritating." A reader sent me a Polaroid of *The Frog King* impaled with an ice pick. I had no resistance to bad press and these responses depressed me for weeks. And a positive review elated me—to the point of uselessness at the keyboard—for weeks also. It took me a while to stabilize.

**What do you think you did right in *Goodbye Lemon* that you didn't in *The Frog King*?**

When I was editing *The Frog King*, I realized that one of my favorite words is apparently "apotropaic." It means "intended to ward off evil." I used it about seven times. It's absurd. I had to delete six of them, and it broke my heart a little bit. In *Goodbye Lemon* I didn't use it once. I think *Goodbye Lemon* is also fuller. And funnier. Maybe sadder.

**How closely does the dysfunctional clan in *Goodbye Lemon* resemble your own family?**

In the novel the father suffers a totally debilitating stroke and his estranged son, must come home to help. In real life, my father came within days, possibly hours, of dying. Our relationship at that time was agonized, but when he came so close to death, I discovered that he was not the man I thought he was. And neither was I. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Calpurnia warns Scout to be careful as she carries a silver pitcher of coffee. "Don't look at it and you won't spill it." But I think she wanted to spill it. I know I do. Ultimately, like most writers, I think, I had to. *Goodbye Lemon*, I suppose, is my way of spilling it.

**What's next?**

I am working on a third novel, a romantic comedy/heist story about a security guard. I've been doing a lot of research on the international black market for stolen art and "testing" museum security. I've staked out some galleries, I've fiddled with a few items at the Met. So far, so good: no scuffles, no arrests. No one's on to me anywhere. You aren't running a picture, right?

—Marc Schultz

