NEW!

FANTASY SCI-FI HORROR

ENCOUNTER
8 page pull-out
scenario inside

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the roleplaying magazine

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Build your
own world

Elemental Magic

Deck-building
for beginners

Virtual World

Battletech
in cyberspace

Skeletons In
The Closet
How roleplaying
was born

SHADOWFIST AND FENG SHUI

Demons, guns, mutants
and kung-fu collide
in our feature review

Infinity
Beckons
Roleplaying
on the net

Card Mania
Can anyone
stop them?

Also reviewed this issue • Everway • Dragon Dice • Necromunda • Faeries
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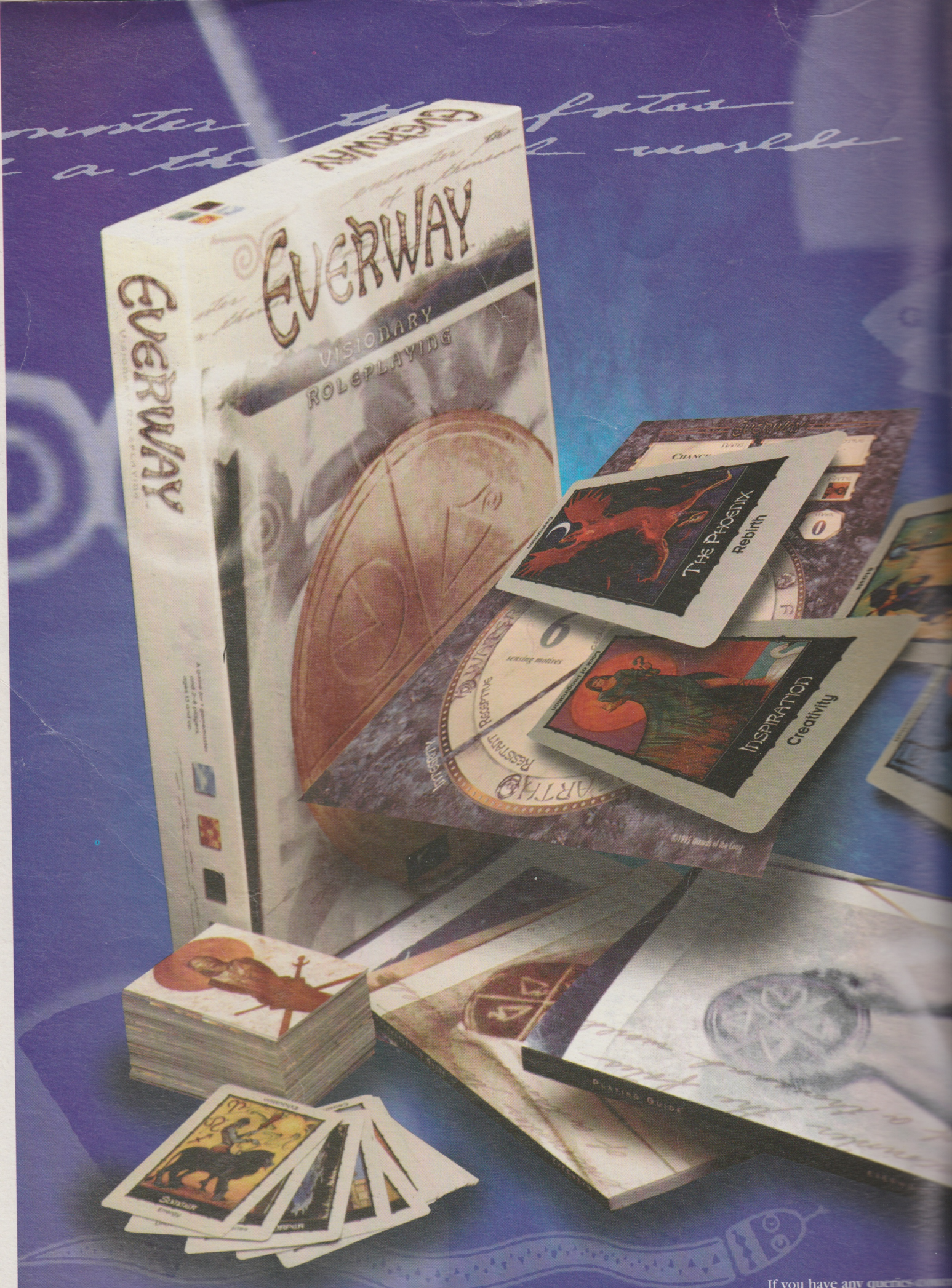

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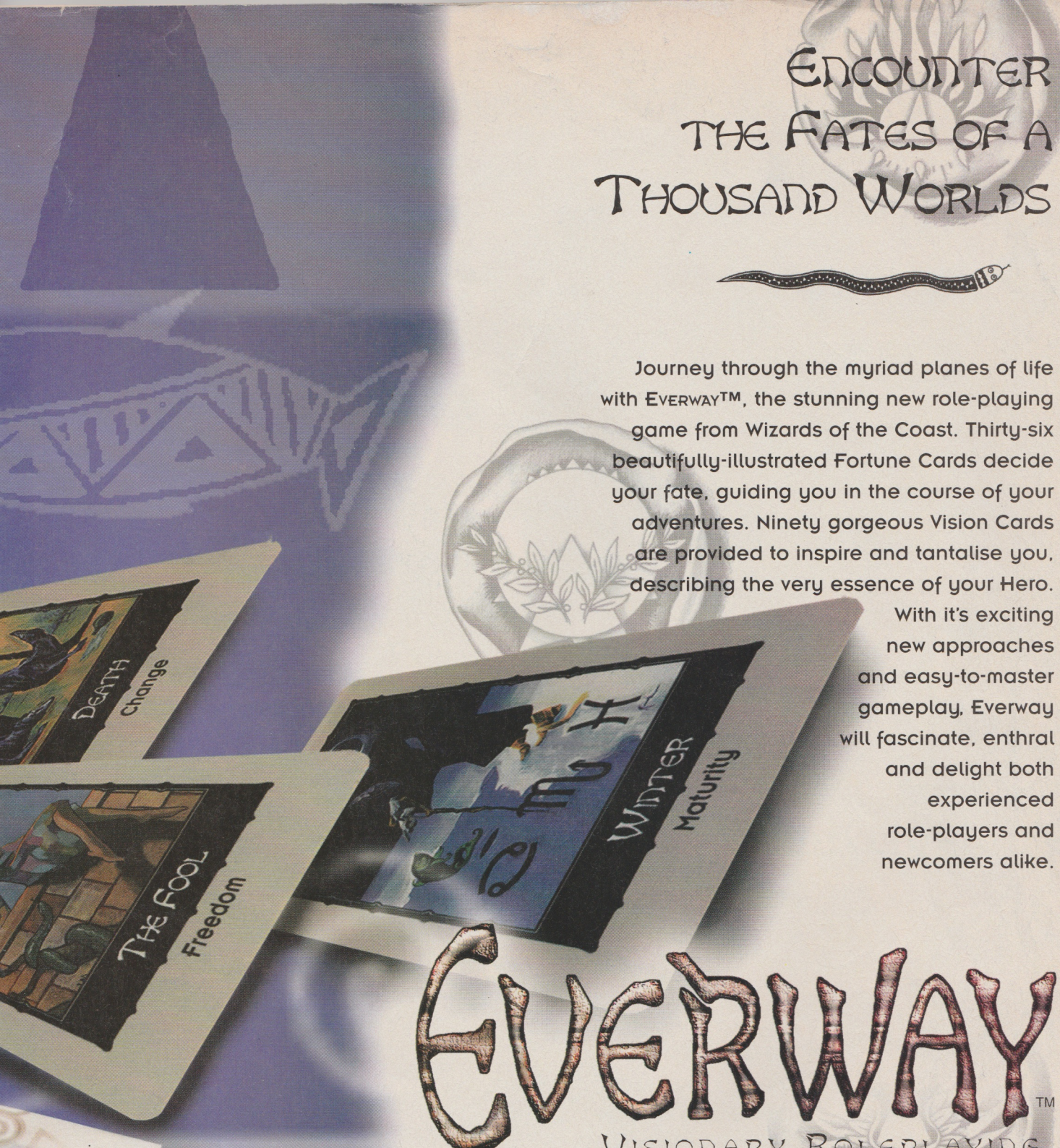

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arcane

the roleplaying magazine

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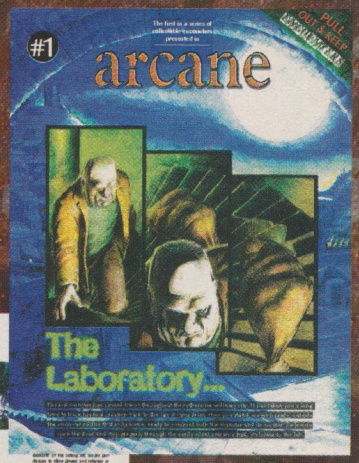
Feng Shui And Shadowfist

Join in the Secret War as mutants battle gangsters in these two great games. arcane's investigation starts on page 24





Encounters: The Laboratory

Starting off our regular pull-out & keep section, we ask: Is everything quite as it appears down at the doctor's surgery? It starts on page 43

Skeletons In The Closet

How roleplaying was born. We pull back the curtains of time to reveal all on page 38





Elemental Magic

Master the basics of *Magic: The Gathering* deck design with our simple strategies on page 52



Be God

How to build a world, arcane-style on page 34



Kill The Past To Seize The Future

NETHER WORLD

A 140+ CARD EXPANSION FOR SHADOWFIST™
FROM DAEDALUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC.
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Fire Assassin © 1995 Rob Alexander

Up Front

Welcome home, welcome to the first issue of **arcane.**

I've wanted to see this magazine for years. Sixteen years in fact. That's how long I've been a roleplayer. And in all that time, there's never been a gaming magazine quite like this one.

What makes **arcane** different? Our philosophy, that's what. We think there's more to gaming than turning up once a week at your friend's house for a game and then going home again. We think that gaming's something to be *passionate* about. It's something to talk about and argue about.

That's why we've gone to such lengths to make this magazine the best we possibly can. We've stayed up late so that we can talk to games companies around the world, we've scoured the Internet for snippets of news, we've spent hours playing games, we've lost our minds and only found them several hours later behind the fridge.

We've also managed to take the time to find some cracking artists and top writers to work for us. Artists with vision and flair. Writers with years of experience and dedication to this great hobby of ours.

We hope that all this hard work has turned into something good. Something that becomes as much a part of your life as it has ours. Something that we all look forward to every month.

I hope you enjoy reading **arcane** as much as we've all enjoyed making it.

If you have any comments or suggestions about how the magazine could be improved, please get in touch with me and let me know. We're not too proud to change...



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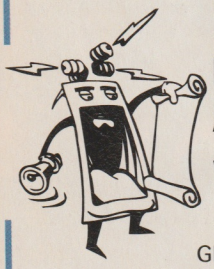
This issue would have been impossible without...
The Red Hot Chilli Peppers, The Carpenters, *and* **Maria's tea.**
This issue would have been a lot easier without...
Reproflow *and* **randomly exploding vehicles.**

Despatches



All around the world our agents are at work, sifting through seemingly meaningless information to discover a pattern that will enlighten you.

Card mania



Man the barricades, the next great American cultural assault is on the way. And this time it's Magic...

GET READY FOR AN AVALANCHE. An avalanche of collectable card games that's set to hit Europe in the Spring. **arcane** has quite simply lost count of the number of new card games that are now in the shops, in production, or on the drawing board. We're frankly terrified and think that you, our readers, have a right to know the full details. In our estimation there are currently over 100 card games already here or imminently on the way.

The bubble has to burst some time. There's no possible way that over 100 card games will even fit on the shelves of your local games store, nor can any of us afford to buy that many games and then try to keep up with all the expansions. And what would happen to all the roleplaying games if that happened? Where would they find room for them all in the shops? **arcane** hopes and prays that sense will eventually prevail.

The arcane Big Ones

There may be too many card games coming out, but some will survive the test of time. Here are the ones that arcane thinks will last...

Magic: The Gathering. The original and arguably still the best, *Magic* has sold too many cards to ever stop being played, and seems to go from strength to strength. The new expansion, *Homelands*, will be reviewed next month.

Marvel Overpower. It's got the Marvel name and it's allegedly a fine game too. You can't get it in the UK yet, but we wouldn't be surprised to find this going straight to the top when you can.

Heresy: Kingdom Come. Another fantastic-looking game that's coming here soon.

Mythos. Anything based on *Call of Cthulhu* has to be a winner in our books.

Netrunner. Wizards of the Coast's newie looks certain to succeed. If only because of the support they'll give it

Shadowrun. Allegedly due out next summer; the card game of another of our favourite roleplaying games. That's got to be good news.

Shadowfist. We've seen it, we've played it and we like it (see page 28). This will last.

Goldeneye is the card game of the new James Bond film. No, really.

Stranger yet is *Wing Commander:* the card game of the computer game. This is getting silly.

The three worst Card games of all time

3 Spellfire. We're sorry, TSR, but this was the most blatant attempt to leap on a creaking bandwagon that we've ever seen. All the artwork was reproduced from existing books, and the system sucks big time. A definite candidate for euthanasia, and the only card game with unopened packets lying around the office. **arcane** says: "No more expansion sets, please."



2 Dragon's Wrath. Originally made in Spain but now available in the UK, this is the most appalling rip-off you could imagine. The game is *Magic:The Gathering* but with awful artwork. Wizards of the Coast told us they'll sue if any more are printed. **arcane** says: "Sue now, before anyone is suckered into buying it".



1 And the top prize goes to Jan-Ken-Po. Not yet widely available over here, this game from Hawaii is so bad it's amost appealing. Hang it, it is appealing. Your deck is divided into four kinds: there are special, one-off cards, like the fantastic 'You Lose!' card pictured here, and three other kinds. The first has a fist on it, the second an open, flat-palmed hand and the third a hand making a scissor shape. Yes, you've guessed it; it's scissors/paper/stone with the element of out-guessing your opponent taken out of it. Truly staggering.





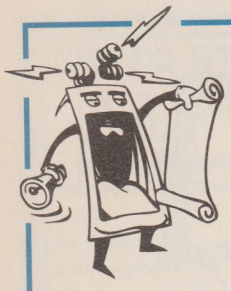
Those card games not quite in full

So here it is: an exhausting list of imminent arrivals and old favourites.

Banemaster	Drumond Park
Battlelords	New Millennium Games
Bloodwars	TSR
Car Wars Card Game	Steve Jackson
Chrysalis: Borne of the Supernature	Comico
The Crow	Heartbreaker Hobbies
Dixie	Columbia Games
Doomtrooper	Heartbreaker
Dragon's Wrath	Westnedge Games
Echelons of Fire	Medallion Simulations
Echelons of Fury	Medallion Simulations
Flights Of Fantasy	Destini Productions
Galactic Empires	Companion Games
Gangland	Corglenburg Limited
Goldeneye	Heartbreaker
Gridiron: Fantasy Football	Upper Deck
Guardians	FPG
Heresy: Kingdom Come	Last Unicorn Games
Highlander The Card Game	Thunder Castle
Hyborian Gates	Cardz Distribution Inc
Illuminati: New World Order	Steve Jackson
Jan-Ken-Po	Playtime Inc
Jyhad/Vampire: The Eternal Struggle	WOTC
Kabal	Multisim
Kult	Heartbreaker Hobbies
Legends Of The Five Ring	Alderac Entertainment
Magic: The Gathering	WOTC
Middle Earth: The Wizards	ICE
Moons Of Khadar	Valkyrie Games
Mythos	Chaosium
Netrunner	Wizards of the Coast
Nuclear War	Flying Buffalo
On The Edge	Atlas Games
One-on-one Hockey Challenge	Cardz
OverPower	Fleer Entertainment, Inc
Pacific Campaign	Medallion Simulations
Powercardz	Caliber Games Systems
Quest for the Grail	Horizon Games
Rage	White Wolf
Redemption	Cactus Game Design
Shadowfist	Daedalus Entertainment Inc
Shadowrun	FASA
SimCity	MGI
Spellfire	TSR
Star of the Guardians	Mag Force
Star Quest	White Buffalo Games
Star Trek The Next Generation	Decipher Inc
Star Wars Customizable CG	Decipher Inc
Superdeck!	Card Sharks
Super Nova	Heartbreaker Hobbies
Tempest Of The Gods	Black Dragon Press
Towers In Time	Thunder Castle Games
Ultimate Combat	Ultimate Games
Wildstorms	Aegis Entertainment
Wing Commander The Card Game	Magforce 7
Wyvern	US Games Systems

There are even more, but we got tired of typing them in ...

COMING SOON



FRUP

Hogshead Publishing £16.95 Due in February '96

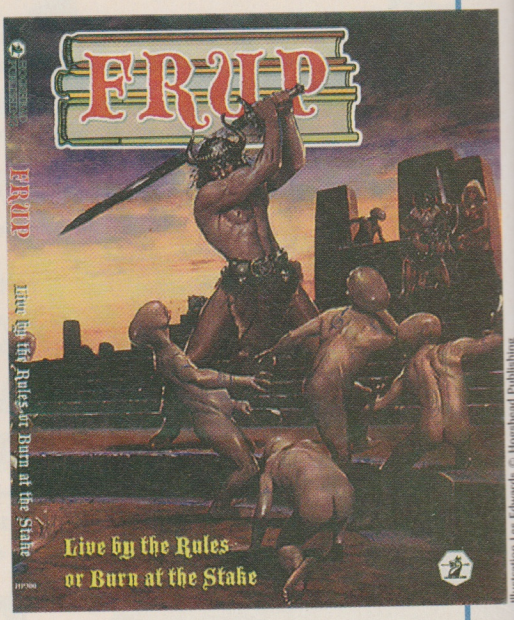


Illustration Lee Edwards © Hogshead Publishing

'FRUP'. It's what happens when you try to pronounce FRP, apparently. FRUP. It's also an almost-ready and rather exciting game from Hogshead Publishing...

IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, A world where, many years ago, the rulebooks for a fantasy roleplaying game that bears no resemblance to any roleplaying game either living or dead and certainly not *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, oh no sir, definitely not, fell from the sky into the bewildered arms of the inhabitants.

And then imagine that the people who lived in this world took these books to be a sign from the gods, and set up a complete religion and society based on the material contained within them.

If you could imagine that, you're imagining *FRUP*. *FRUP* is a forthcoming roleplaying game from Hogshead Publishing, the people who brought *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* out of Games Workshop's dungeons and re-released it. We phoned up James Wallis, Hogshead's head honcho and games designer, to ask: how did you get the idea for *FRUP*?

"I was in America, after splitting up with my girlfriend, I'd just finished reading *Satanic Verses* and I was spending 26 hours on a greyhound bus. Suddenly out of the blue the idea came to me: what would happen in a world where *Dungeons & Dragons* rulebooks fell from the sky and people took them as a message from the Gods? I was in an strange frame of mind.

"The only person I really mentioned it to was Steve Jackson at a games convention sometime in the early '90s. He laughed so hard that beer came out of his nose."

Despite having the idea five years ago, it wasn't until earlier this year that James started work on it. It's been absolutely his own project, and he's written everything himself, although the three artists working on *FRUP* have contributed a lot of ideas simply by drawing them and forcing James to put them in. For example, the race of monsters known as 'the nameless ones' are only in the game because they're on the cover.

So how does James feel about *FRUP* as it nears completion? "I'm pleased with the way it's been going. It won't just be a collection of jokes; it should be a playable game. I'm particularly pleased with the magic system and the whole theology."

What **arcane** has seen of *FRUP* has certainly impressed us (yes, we lost some tea through our noses). We particularly enjoyed the way that while the monsters in the game appear to be intelligent, they're slaughtered wholesale by the people of *FRUP* for their experience point value. And the way that the officials in *FRUP* are known as 'rules lawyers', and the fact that the highest official in the land is known as 'The Surrogate Referee' (or 'The SR' for short).

This is certainly a game to look out for – just be careful with your drink.

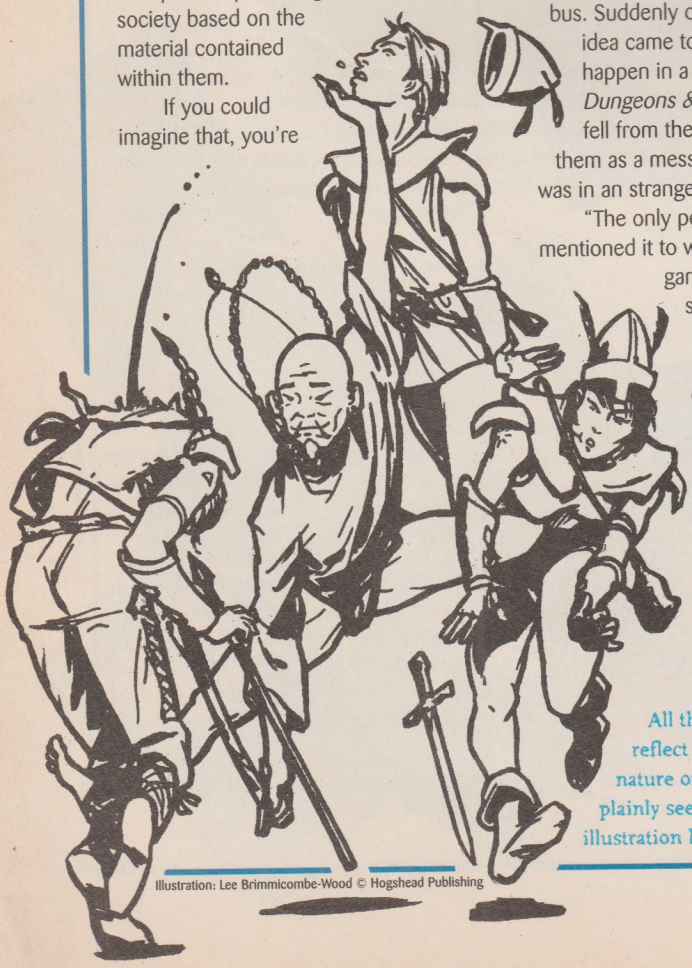


Illustration: Lee Brimmicombe-Wood © Hogshead Publishing

All the artwork in *FRUP* will reflect the serious, academic nature of the game as we can plainly see in this charming illustration here.

FRUP will be 192 pages long and have a complete background and history as well as rules, character generation, magic system and combat system, plus an introductory scenario.

There are rumours that *FRUP* is a diceless system. It's not: it's just that the characters have to roll dice, not the players.

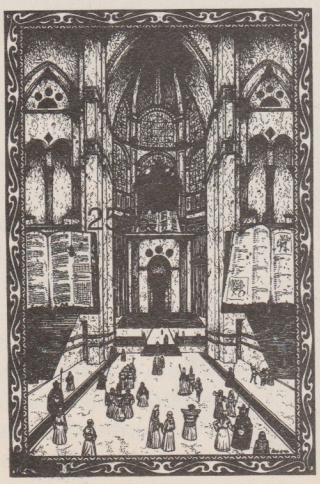


Illustration: Ralph Horsley © Hogshead Publishing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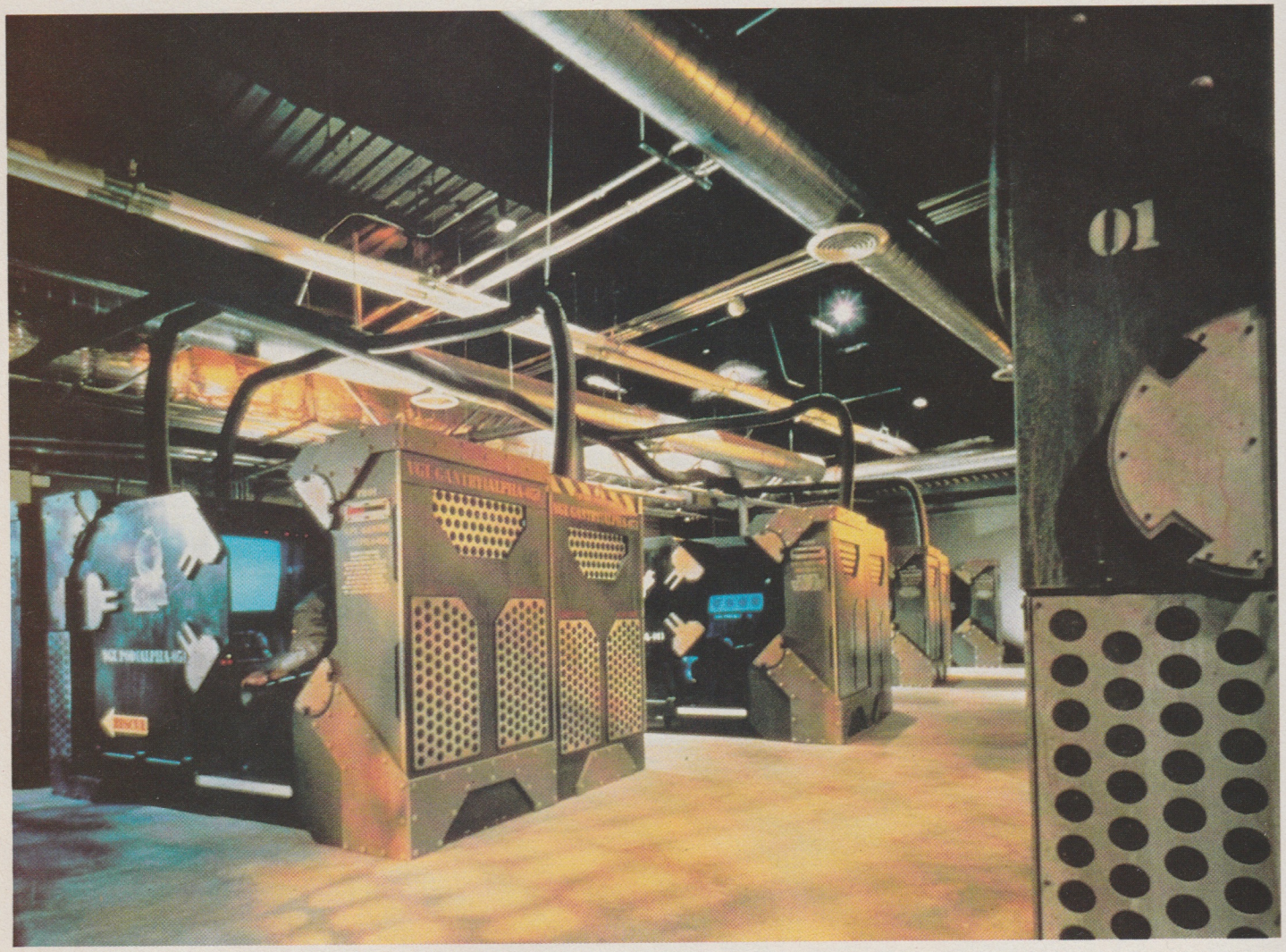
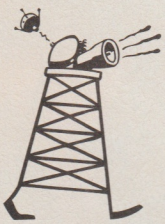




Virtual World

Rumours of hundred-foot high robots rampaging around central London caused us to rush immediately to the scene



Ever since they thought of *Battletech*, FASA's founders have wanted it to be a head-to-head computer simulation. Unfortunately they had to wait several years for technology to catch up with their ambitions.



NESTLED ON THE LOWEST level of London's Trocadero entertainment centre, in the heart of Picadilly Circus, is a place you'd be forgiven for thinking was, at a first glance, an upmarket yuppie pub with an aviation motif. A closer look reveals an attraction far more engaging and interactive than its neighbours *Emaginator* and *Alien War*. Welcome to *Virtual World*, gateway to exploration and adventure...

Back in 1990 the first *Virtual World* site opened in Chicago using technology spun-off from military flight simulator research, enabling players to enter the world of *Battletech* for 'real'. Created by Jordan K Weisman and Ross Babcock (founding fathers of games studio FASA and co-designers of the original *Battletech* wargame), *Virtual World* brought one of the gaming world's most successful combat systems from tabletop and dice status to a wholly interactive medium. In the five years since, the company has opened over a dozen sites in the United States, Canada, Japan and now the United Kingdom.



The original *Battletech* game and all its subsequent revisions and supplements took place in the war-ravaged world of the Inner Sphere, where diverse 'houses' fought against each other to achieve supremacy. A futuristic wargame, *Battletech*'s main staple is its battlemechs, hundred foot high armoured robots equipped with laser cannons, missile launchers and particle beam weapons. Players take the part of their military pilots.

The game proved successful enough to spin-off a series of novels, comic books, cartoons and of course, video games. But unlike the Nintendo- or PC-based *Battletech* simulators, *Virtual World*'s version has something extra... real enemies.

Each *VW* player climbs into a 'translocation pod' equipped with throttle, joystick and a whole array of screens, panels and buttons. Projected into the game, players go head-to-head with each other, scoring points for strikes and kills as they fight across four different landscapes on the arena planet Solaris VII. First timers are introduced to the game via a short movie and orientation presentation before the ten-minute game begins. After the battle, the players are debriefed with a replay and a record sheet showing points scored. As players advance in skill they can choose different battlemechs and weapons variations and utilize more and more of the pod's controls. At more expert rankings, players form off into 'mech lances and square off in lengthy planned battles with set objectives. Meanwhile, players waiting for a game or just relaxing in the lounge can watch battles 'live' via monitors.

In addition to *Battletech, Virtual World* also run *Red Planet*, a hi-tech demolition derby on Mars. Imagine *Car Wars* with hovercraft and you'll get the idea. A third game, *Voyage to Atlantis* is currently under development.

Equipped with 32 pods, the site can run eight players in four arenas simultaneously. At the moment, the Trocadero site is the only one in Europe, but more are planned for 1996, including a German location and others in the UK.

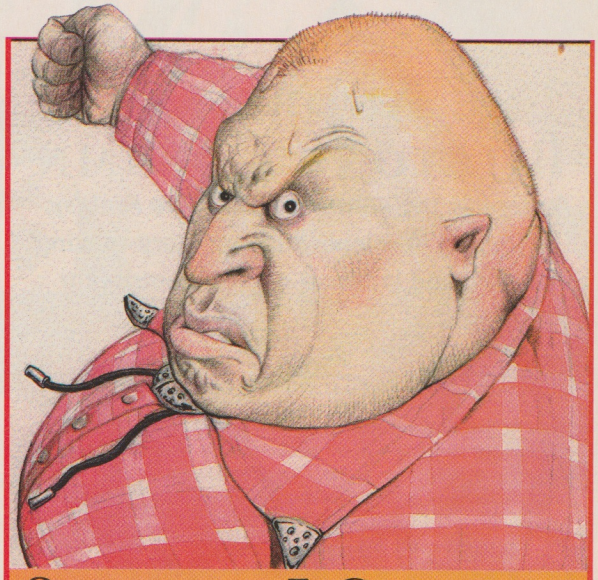
Prices are £1 for global *VW* membership and a bi-monthly newsletter and a fairly steep £7 per player per game. Frequent players (and students) get discounted missions as indeed do **arcane** readers.

Now having read all that you may be thinking to yourself: "That sounds like a lot of fun, although £7 sounds like a lot to risk if it's not." Well that sounds fair enough to us, so we got straight on the phone to Virtual World and organised a special promotion for all arcane readers. Simply take along a friend and the voucher below and they'll let two of you in for the price of one. Bargain.

Virtual World and arcane

We promise to give the bearer on demand entrance for two at the same price as entrance for one.

This voucher is valid until 31 December 1995
arcane magazine issue 1



Seymour J Clancy III's great outing

Every month Seymour reveals the identities of famous gamers...

Ah have a mission. A mission to expose to the world the FOUL and CORRUPT individuals that indulge their mortal passions in the SATAN-SPAWNED pastime of DEVILS & DOORWAYS, the EVIL SEDUCER of youth today. None shall be safe from my OUTING, neither the highest nor the lowest shall escape the SCOURGE of my WRATH.

There ah was at the Canadian Comic and Card spectacular in Toronto earlier this year monitoring developments amongst the FILTHY SCOUNDRELS of the gaming industry when, not greatly to my surprise, ah espied that foul, long-haired layabout and star OJ witness, BRIAN 'KAITO' KAILIN scurrying about. Ah denounce him now. HE IS A ROLEPLAYER and damned for all eternity. Ah find it particularly galling that a young man who is so much of a FIGUREHEAD to American youth should allow himself to be associated with the HELL-BORNE scandal that is DEMONS & DONKEYS. Surely this ONCE GREAT NATION *(Snip - Ed).*

Are there any famous people that you know who enjoy roleplaying games? Seymour has several arcane T-shirts to give away to those of a moral enough nature to expose them to ridicule...

Trouble in store



Games Workshop sued by angry American distributors

The saga of Games Workshop's quest for global domination continues, but not as smoothly as the Nottingham giants would like. On 1 September, GW's US branch announced that it would start selling its products direct to retailers in North America – cutting out the distributors who normally fill the gap between publisher and shop. This would mean faster stocking to retailers, and up to 50% more revenue for GW. It is speculated that GW would follow this move by opening a chain of its own retail stores, as it has done elsewhere in the world.

Three of the biggest distributors in the USA (The Armory, Wargames West and Greenfield) have taken Games Workshop to court, alleging that GW has breached several promises it made to its distributors, and is generally being nasty and mean. GW has been placed under a restraining order, forcing the company to continue trading with distributors on its old terms. As this issue went to press GW was still working to have the restraining order lifted by a different court.

Games Workshop, the only hobby-gaming company to have floated on the Stock Exchange, is growing annually at around 30%. North America is the weak link in its chain right now, with only around 1/6 of the company's total sales, and slow growth. The outcome of the case, and what it will mean for GW's future operations in America, is not certain at all. **arcane** will bring you more news as it happens.

The Andrew Rilstone Column

Andrew is the editor of *Interactive Fantasy*, the journal of roleplaying and story-making systems, and is also a regular contributor to arcane.

Miniatures – Who Needs 'Em?

I used to think miniatures were compulsory. I did my best, but I was the sort of person who used to give my art teachers nervous breakdowns. Grasping my paint brush delicately in my fist, I was lucky if I could put a blob of flesh-coloured paint in the general direction of the model's face, let alone paint the whites of his eyes.

Worse, there were 376 monsters in the old *D&D Monster Manual*. That's more lead than I was ever going to be able to afford. Players were understanding. 'You can still see some of the detail underneath', they would say. 'And of course we can use a giant spider if you don't have a model of a dragon.'

The final straw was when a real miniatures enthusiast joined the group, with a collection that had to be seen to be believed. If the scenario mentioned an albino kobold with one arm, he had a model of an albino kobold with one arm. And the painting! Every one of his figures ought to have been in a glass case in the Tate Gallery. As opposed to on a gaming table.

With him in the group, every combat was punctuated by the sound of a grown man crying: 'Hold it by the base! Hold it by the base!' He cringed with fear every time I rolled a dice across the table. We had to ban Pepsi from our games in case the figures got sticky.

Right now, my gloss-white skeletons and fluorescent green gnolls are mouldering in a box somewhere. They aren't compulsory. They distract people's attention from the game. They cause more problems than they are worth. And my imagination can conjure up a battle five times bigger and more detailed than the best miniatures collection.

Virgin's increasing commitment to gamers

More stores across Britain and Ireland



Virgin is set to stock roleplaying games and collectable card games in another 12 stores by Christmas. Two megastores will be opening in Bromley and Oxford stocking the full Virgin range of games and the other ten, in Maidenhead, Telford, Falkirk, Slough, Dublin, St Helens, Basildon, Romford, Harlow and Carlisle will initially stock only CCGs, although a spokesman assured **arcane** that customers would be able to order roleplaying materials at any of the new stores.

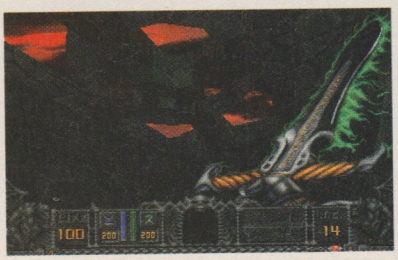
This will bring the total number of Virgin stores stocking fantasy games in the UK to 46. Virgin has ambitious plans for the remainder of this century, aiming to bring this number to over 80 by the end of next year, with an ultimate goal of 200 stores by the year 2000.

COMING SOON



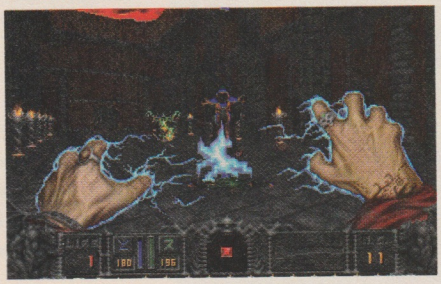
Hexen

The ultimate in hack and slay will arrive on the PC soon



STRICTLY SPEAKING it might not have been roleplaying, but *Heretic*, the fantasy version of *Doom*, certainly was a lot of fun. Anyone with a taste for ceaseless carnage will be pleased to hear that the sequel, *Hexen*, is nearly finished. Developed for id Software by Raven, the people behind *Heretic*, *Hexen* offers even more first person 3D exploration and combat with a new version of the *Doom* game engine.





The biggest change is the addition of three different character classes. Rather than being stuck with a single character and one set of weapons, players can now choose to be a Fighter, Cleric or Mage. Each class has its own characteristics (Fighters are faster moving than Mages, for example), and its own range of death-dealing implements, each with different advantages. Each class also makes different use of the various items and power ups to be found scattered about the levels.

On top of that the graphics have been completely overhauled, allowing for even more cool effects, such as smashing windows and leaves blowing in the wind, and much improved sound. Top it off with the standard multiplayer options (where each player can be a different class) and a non-linear level structure, and id has probably got its hands on the best hack-'em-up ever.

Hexen will be released in December by id Software. More information and a playable demo can be found on the World Wide Web at http://www.idsoftware.com/



WIND BLADE

Banemaster™: The Adventure

The Action Adventure Collectible Card Game

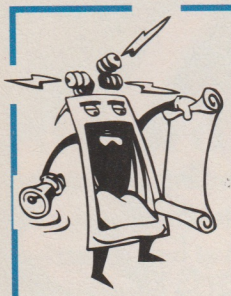
Banemaster: The Adventure™ is unique. It's the only truly role playing collectible card game with TWO different decks. Banemaster is also about story telling. Players say what they're doing, how they're attacking and defending, and the Banemaster gloats over his triumphs and trickery.

Banemaster: The Adventure™ follows a group of Adventurers into the Banekeep, high on it's black crag. Players take turns at BEING the Banemaster, protecting their plundered treasure hoard and attacking the Adventurers who are trying to recover it. Adventurers explore the Keep using Power, Weapons, Spells and Potions to claim Treasure. The appalling Banemaster describes the scene with Place cards, furnishes them with Features, and defends his Treasure with Marauders and Traps - he may also cast cataclysmic Events which the group must overcome together or suffer the consequences.



Get it play it and collect it. If you can't find it locally Banemaster is available mail order from: **Drumond Park, Banemaster Sales, POBox 12607, EH52 6ZD, West Lothian.** Starter Decks of 70 cards £5.00+40pP&P and 14 card Boosters £1+30pP&P (10 Decks or 60 Boosters per display - whole displays £2.80 P&P).

COMING SOON



In Nomine

In Hell, everyone can hear you scream...

© Steve Jackson Games 1995



"The author again thanks the Inquisition; John Paul II's position on the use of condoms; and the help offered by Pius XII to Adolph Hitler, without which this game would never have seen the light of day."
From the French version of *In Nomine*

"The characters won't interact much with God. He has other things on his mind. By definition, he has **everything** on his mind."
From Derek Pearcy's version

IF YOU ARE WAITING FOR the chance to roleplay punk demons and find out how many hit points God has got... hard luck! *In Nomine*, the much awaited new roleplaying system from Steve Jackson Games has again been postponed. Steve Jackson is not announcing a new publication date for the game, which was originally scheduled for last summer.

When it finally sees the light of day, *In Nomine* will deal with the epic struggle between the forces of ultimate good and ultimate evil – with present day Earth as their battlefield. And when they say 'ultimate', they aren't kidding. This is the only RPG we've come across where God or Lucifer might conceivably make a guest appearance.

Player characters are cast in the roles of minor demons and angels in the service of powerful Demon Princes and Archangels. 'Minor' is of course, a relative term: all the PCs are apparently going to be of 'celestial potency'. We're not exactly sure what that means, but it sounds gross. *In Nomine* is the first SJG role-playing game in years that isn't part of the *GURPS* line. The characters are so powerful that *GURPS* just couldn't handle them. PCs attach themselves to the entourage of a particular Prince or Archangel. These high ranking beings have specific spheres of control – one devil controls 'Dark Humour' and one angel is in charge of 'Dreams'. PCs are given special duties and sent on different missions depending on whose service they are in.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the Angels and Demons often vehemently disagree among themselves about how the battle should be waged, creating intrigues and conspiracies on both sides. God and the Devil are, of course, far to busy and far too mysterious to come and organise what their minions are doing.

In Nomine started life as two different games: *In Nomine Satanis* (dealing with the diabolical end of things) and *Magna Veritas* (dealing with the guys with wings and halos). They are created by someone known only as 'Croc', published by a firm called Ideojeux – and written in French.

The French games were very dark and cynical in tone, satirising Roman Catholic theology and religion in general. They depicted a world in which 'The Bearded One' had lost control of the universe, leaving the various angels and devils to pursue their own agendas. Jesus was an angel who founded Christianity by accident. And apparently Gabriel started Islam because he didn't think Christianity was moral enough.

Steve Jackson commissioned Derek Pearcy to re-write the game for an English-speaking audience. His version retained most of the themes of the French original, but also introduced an air of zany humour into the proceedings. The new version of feels a lot like Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens*. The demons are still trying to steal men's souls and



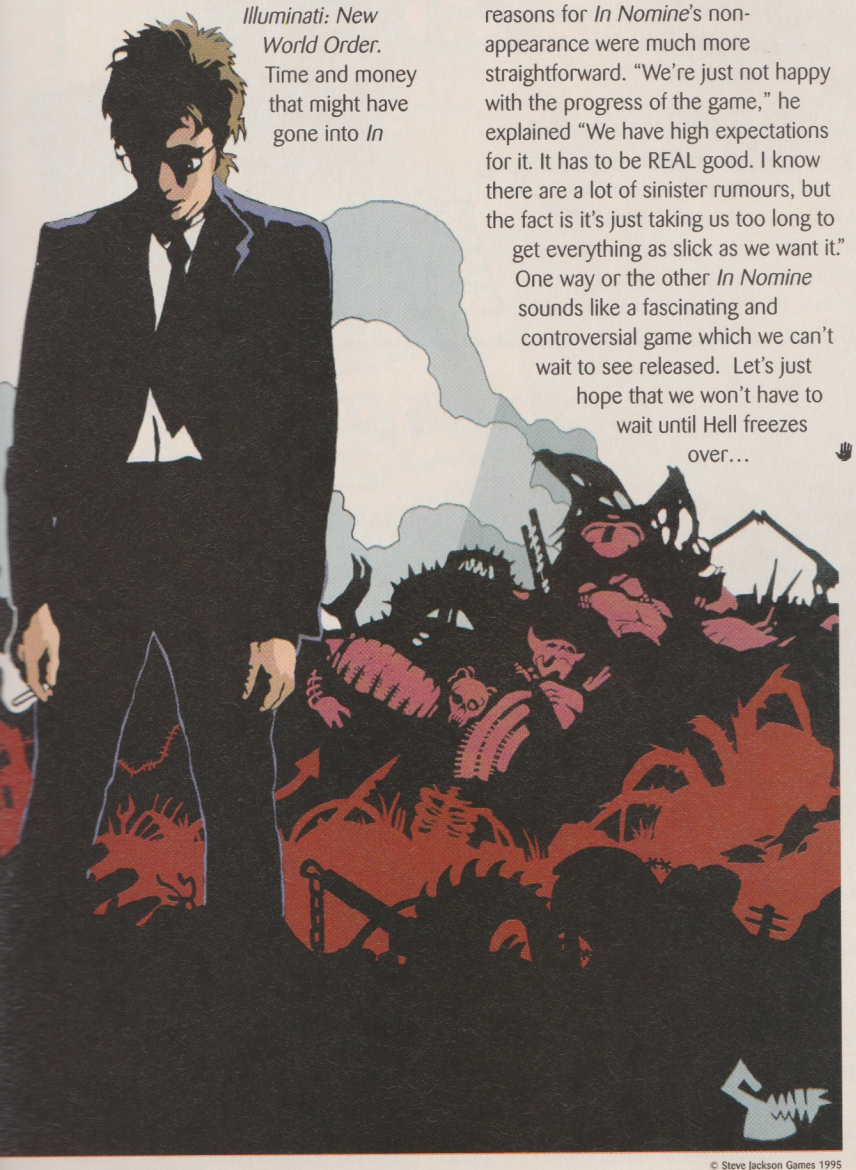
© Steve Jackson Games 1995

control the world, but they now have names like 'He Who Does Not Return Phone Calls'. They use sinister artifacts like the 'Hard Drive of Fear' and 'Hula-Hoops' to drain people's 'essence'. The game mechanic is based on three six sided dice, which is inevitably known as the D666. Even the Almighty gets in on the act, popping up in the form of Groucho Marx (he's God, he can look like anyone he wants to) with the words "Is that your aura, or are you just pleased to see me?"

So why haven't we seen the game yet? For one thing, SJG put virtually everything else on hold while they jumped onto the collectable card game bandwagon. They revamped their classic card game *Illuminati* as the hugely successful CCG *Illuminati: New World Order*. Time and money that might have gone into *In Nomine* were presumably spent on *INWO* instead.

But rumour has it that there was also a serious disagreement about the direction of the game. According to one source, Derek Pearcy completed his version of the game, and Steve Jackson rejected it outright. Steve disapproved of the wackiness Derek had introduced. He had been looking for something dark and sinister that would appeal to players of White Wolf's successful *World of Darkness* series. If this is true, then we can expect a long wait while someone writes a new version of the game – presumably more in tune with the original French version – from the ground up.

When we interrogated Steve about this subject, he maintained that the reasons for *In Nomine*'s non-appearance were much more straightforward. "We're just not happy with the progress of the game," he explained "We have high expectations for it. It has to be REAL good. I know there are a lot of sinister rumours, but the fact is it's just taking us too long to get everything as slick as we want it." One way or the other *In Nomine* sounds like a fascinating and controversial game which we can't wait to see released. Let's just hope that we won't have to wait until Hell freezes over...



© Steve Jackson Games 1995

Inphobia shuts down

The end of the road for White Wolf's game magazine...

INPHOBIA, THE MAGAZINE published by White Wolf Games Studio, is to close with issue 59. No official reason has been given, but it is rumoured that sales figures have plummeted by as much as 80% since the magazine changed its name from *White Wolf Magazine*.

It started life as a general RPG magazine in the 1980s. As its parent company became associated with hipper, more fashion-conscious gamers through its *Storyteller* series of RPGs, the magazine tried to adjust to appeal to these people's tastes.

However, the move away from traditional subject matter to interviews with movie directors, discussion of comic books and a multitude of opinion columns combined with challenging graphic design, only drove away Inphobia's regular readers. Recently *Inphobia*, under the stewardship of Editor Ken Cliffe, had begun to get back to its roots, but the change of heart has come too late and the October issue will be the last. We are sorry to see it go.



The lone samurai returns

Bushido to be released in a new edition

GREAT NEWS FOR ALL NOSTALGIC GAMERS who harken back to the good old days when every enemy was a goblin and every action was resolved with a dice, is that *Bushido*, the game of Japanese adventuring, is to be re-released.

Bushido is a roleplaying game set in feudal Japan and filled with samurai, ninja, wandering priests and unusual monsters. It was originally published by Fantasy Games Unlimited who also released *Aftermath* and *Daredevil* and mysteriously disappeared from the scene a few years ago.

It is now to be republished in a new edition by another American company, Gold Rush Games of California.

"The second edition of the game, published in 1981, has been out of print for over a decade, " said Mark Arsenault of Gold Rush. "Of the few game that have been published in this genre, *Bushido* is far and away the best."

Bold words indeed, but as long time fans of the game, we can't wait to get our hands on a review copy sometime in the new year.



Homelands

Wizards of the Coast discover a hidden world...

Wizards of the Coast are preparing to release the latest expansion set for *Magic: The Gathering*. *Homelands* adds over 100 new cards to the game, all of them coming from a new world in the *Magic* setting.

The story behind the cards is that a powerful wizard had shut the world off from the rest of the universe, protecting it from the planeswalkers for centuries. When he died, though, the enchantment was broken; and now planeswalkers have rediscovered his world, allowing players to add the cards to their decks. *Homelands* contains new examples of many races that will already be familiar to *Magic* players and it resembles *Fallen Empires* in that races are associated with a specific colour. Red, for example, has several types of Minotaur, while Green has many Faeries.

As well as new creatures, there's also a range of other spells, as well as some new lands, several legends and even a card that destroys all *Homelands* cards in play.

A special *Homelands* sealed-deck tournament was held at the *'Magic: The Gathering* 1' event in New York City recently, and reactions from the players involved were very positive. Wizards of the Coast claim that *Homelands* is the most balanced expansion set yet released for *M:TG* and has the best-developed and richest background. *Homelands* will be released in November, with eight-card booster packs priced at £1.30 each.

Win yourself a Homeland

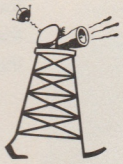
Well, maybe not an entire world, but a pretty significant chunk of one. To celebrate the release of the *Homelands* expansion, Wizards of the Coast have teamed up with **arcane** to offer you the chance to win a whole box of *Homelands* booster packs – that's 480 cards! In addition, five runners-up will receive a Wizards of the Coast goody bag packed full of great stuff.

What do I have to do?

In order to win one of these fabulous prizes, we want you to design your own *Homelands* card. Don't worry if you haven't seen any others – just bear in mind that this is a world that was once a part of Dominia, but has been cut off for hundreds of years, so that many of the races and names are similar, but the specific creatures and spells have changed and evolved over the years. Likewise, we're not looking for the best artwork, but the best-designed card, so don't worry if you can't draw. It's the idea and how well the card fits in with the rest of *Magic: The Gathering* that's important.

Post your entries to 'Take me home country roads competition', **arcane**, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW, England, and make sure that we get them before December 30th 1995.







The small print

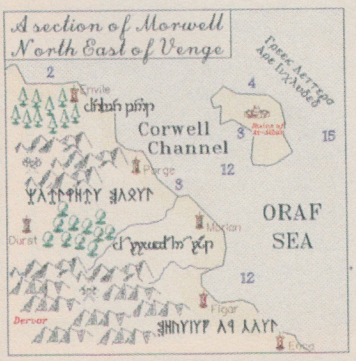
1. Closing date for entries is 30 December.
2. All entries will be judged by the editor and Chaz Elliot, managing director of Wizards of the Coast UK. Their decisions will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
3. Employees of Future Publishing or Wizards of the Coast are not permitted to enter, no matter how much they want to. So there.

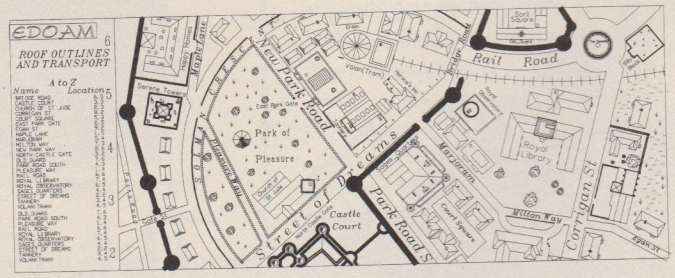
City Designer

ProFantasy Software get architectural

Following its *Campaign Cartographer* computer-aided design package for the PC (see review, page 76), ProFantasy Software is soon to release the second expansion disk, *City Designer*. The disk adds a range of new commands and features to the basic *Campaign Cartographer* program which will help in the design of city, town and village maps.

They're also putting the finishing touches to *CC-Fonts 1*, a disk of 28 text and symbol fonts for use in *Campaign Cartographer* and any of the expansions.





City Designer and *CC-Fonts 1* will be released in November, priced £24.95 and £10.95 respectively. Neither can be used without *Campaign Cartographer*.

Win! Budding city planners will be pleased to hear that ProFantasy Software is offering five **arcane** readers the chance to own a copy of *Campaign Cartographer*, complete with the new *City Designer* expansion. In no time at all you'll be creating vast continents and populating them with fully detailed settlements for your games.

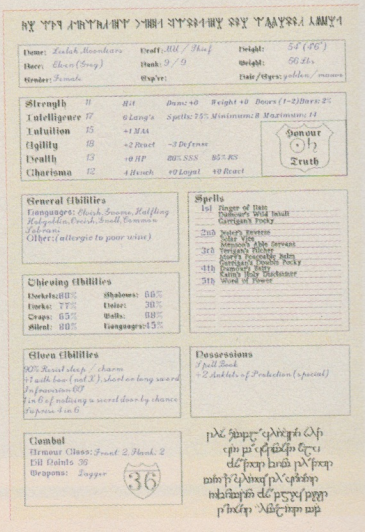
To enter, just answer these three simple questions:

1. What was the first ever city-based roleplaying supplement?
2. Which British Cathedral houses the world famous Mappa Mundi?
3. What is the name of Michael Moorcock's Eternal City, which exists on every plane?

The first five entries pulled out of a convenient container will have a copy of the software winging its way through the post to them before you can say a relatively short phrase. Post or e-mail your answers to 'Third left after the Rampant Unicorn, then straight on competition', **arcane**, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW, England or arcane@futurenet.co.uk. Make sure we get them by 30 December 1995.

The small print

1. Closing date for entries is 30 December.
2. The editor's decision is (amongst other things) final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
3. Employees of Future Publishing or ProFantasy Software attempting to enter will be sniffed out by our highly trained competition detectives and their entries ritually burned.
4. Likewise, multiple entries will be disqualified.
5. *Campaign Cartographer* requires at least a 386 PC with VGA graphics.



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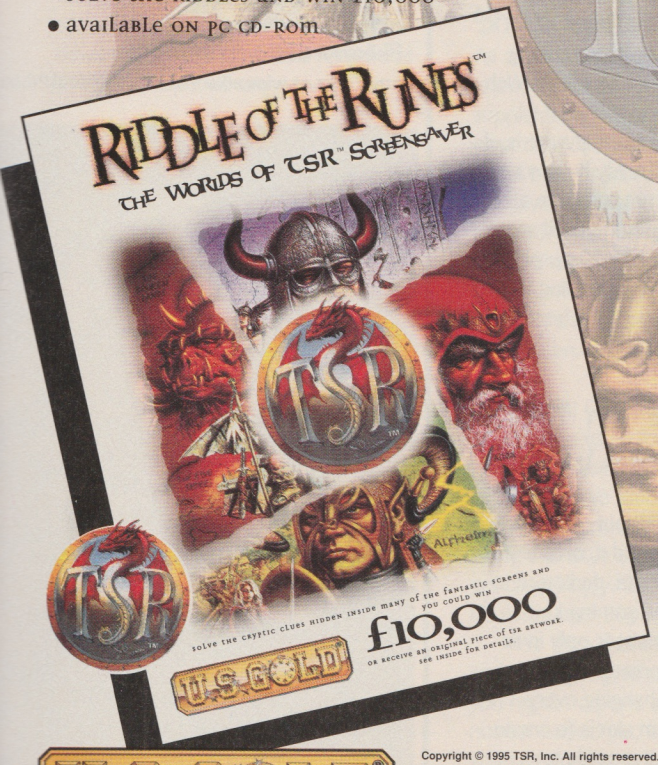



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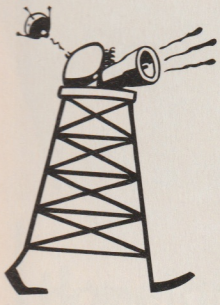
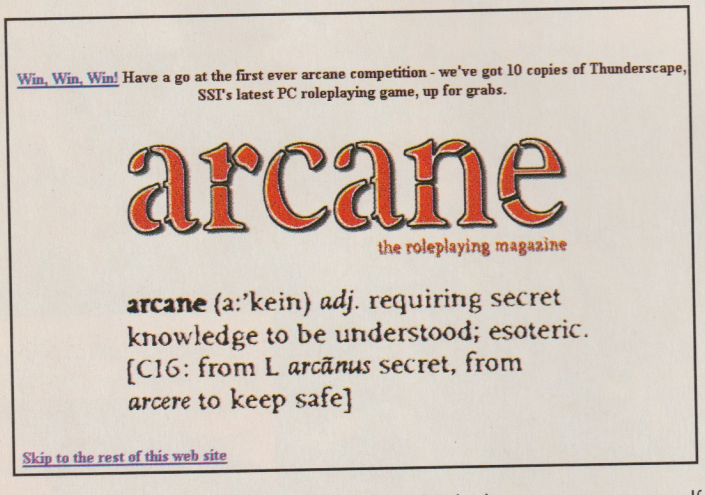


Infinity beckons...

Just how useful is the Internet to you?

JUST ABOUT EVERYONE must be aware of the Internet by now. TV shows, Sunday supplement magazines, newspapers and radio shows have all jumped on the bandwagon and rattled on about the wonders of the information revolution (or something similar). The problem, of course, is that such coverage very rarely tells you anything specific. It might sound like the best thing since, well, the last best thing, but finding out whether it's actually of any use to you can be quite tough.



Futurenet, our web site, is accesssed 1.2 million times every week.

After an extensive period of playing around on the InformationSuperWhatsit when we should have been working, though, we can definitely say that, for roleplayers at least, it's an incredibly handy thing. Perhaps it's because a lot of students roleplay, and a lot of students get free Internet access, or perhaps it's because a lot of roleplayers are quite computer literate, but whatever the reason, the global electronic communications network is jam-packed with gamers of every persuasion.

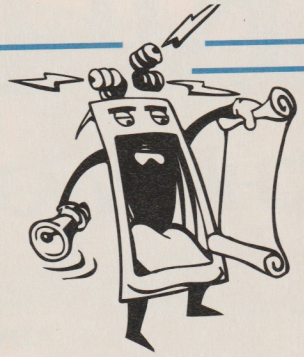
Regardless of what games you're into, you're virtually guaranteed to find a vast amount of interesting stuff. Take *Shadowrun*, for example. There are several mailing lists dealing with various facets of the game and a Usenet Newsgroup that receives up to 100 messages a day. In addition there are literally dozens of Web sites dedicated to the game, and between them and the FTP archives at various locations around the world you can find anything from new character sheets to fully-fledged unofficial sourcebooks weighing in at hundreds of pages. It probably won't be too long until FASA has an official Web page of its own.

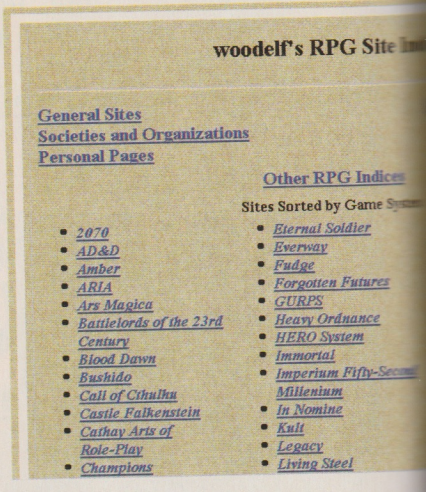
So the short answer is, if you don't already have access to the Internet and have a home computer, give it some serious thought. The problem isn't going to be finding interesting stuff, it'll be tearing yourself away from it.

arcane on the World Wide Web

Not ones to be left out of anything interesting if we can avoid it, **arcane** also has its very own Web site, dedicated to both the magazine and gaming in general. Although the site is only in its early stages at the moment, the pages will be growing and changing every month – our long-term aim is to create the most comprehensive guide to roleplaying resources on the Internet. You can find us at:

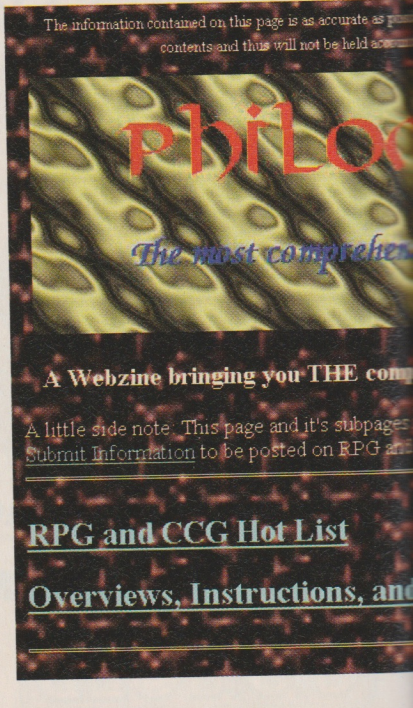
http://www.futurenet.co.uk/



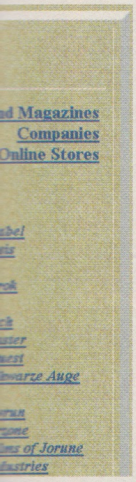


Wood Elf's RPG Index
http://dax.cs.wisc.edu/~woodelf/RPG/RPG.htm

Philommedes
http://dax.cs.wisc.edu/~woodelf/RPG/RPG.htm



Hot sites



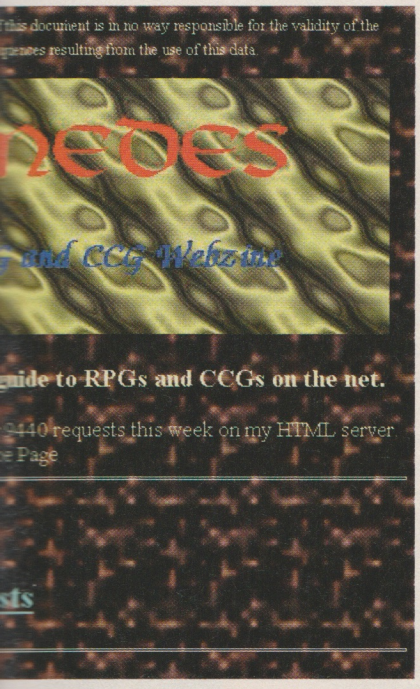
THESE ARE TWO of the most useful World Wide Web sites for roleplayers that we've found.

Wood Elf's RPG Index

An absolutely vast index to other roleplaying resources on the Internet, including WWW, FTP and Usenet - this image shows only a part of the contents page...

Philommedes

"The most comprehensive RPG and CCG webzine" might sound a bit pretentious, but Philommedes is certainly impressive. Loads of links to other roleplaying resources, as well as news and release schedules for several of the major publishers.



HERE ARE TWO of the more esoteric sites around, just to give you an idea of the variety that's out there. Links to both of these (and many, many more) will be appearing on the **arcane** web pages soon.

Al Azif: The Manuscript Liber Logaeth

This strange Web page claims to contain nothing less than the text of the *real* Necronomicon, as translated by several authors, including incantations and signs. Any *Cthulhu* referee should find almost limitless inspiration here...

Shadowland

As anyone familiar with *Shadowrun* will know, nearly all of the game's supplements take the form of electronic documents posted on an illegal bulletin board system called Shadowland. This rather clever interactive web site is an attempt to create a real world version of the system, where players and referees can chat and exchange advice and information.

SO AS YOU CAN SEE there're loads of good things to be found on the Internet. We can't count the number of sites that we've found in the last couple of months while we've been doing this issue (it makes our heads get disturbingly hot, so we stop), but it's easily over 300.

We think that the Internet is great and we're going to carry on bringing you regular reports on it. So if you're not connected yet, why not? Get yourself on-line so you can use all these excellent resources.



World Wide What? Okay, so just about everybody knows that the Internet is a vast network of computers spanning the globe. But what do they mean when they talk about FTP or Usenet? Here's the quick **arcane** guide to the most common jargon...



E-mail: Electronic mail, which is just what it sounds like – a method for sending messages to other Internet users all over the world.



FTP: File Transfer Protocol, a way to, erm, transfer files from one computer to another over the Internet.



World Wide Web: An incredibly simple to use system for accessing information on other computers, which is laid out in pages, much like a magazine.



Usenet: A vast collection of Newsgroups – Internet discussion groups dedicated to a specific subject.

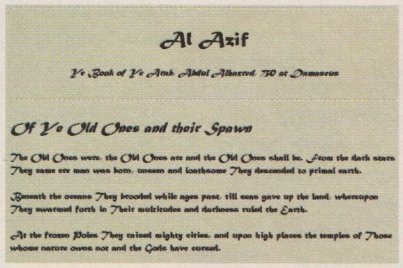


Shadowland

http://ta3.cs.uiuc.edu:8000/index.html

Al Azif

http://www.primenet.com/~ottinge/n.html



Getting on-line

In order to access the Internet from home, you'll need a computer and a way to connect - the simplest (and cheapest) is a modem. Then you'll need to get in touch with a Service Provider, a company that sells Internet access. There are loads of these, just check out a magazine like *.net* or you could try:

Pipex – 0500 474739
Bogomip – 0800 137536

Most companies charge you a set-up fee and then a monthly rate. The initial cost normally includes all the software you'll need to get started.

COMING SOON



Games Workshops new release

The boys from Nottingham are getting very busy

WHEN THE PHRASE, 'OOH – it gets earlier every year', begins to crop up in conversation it's obvious that we're beginning to fill with the spirit of a certain pagan festival of indulgence. From somewhere, buckets of cash have to be found to blow on goodies.

No one appreciates this demonstration of Christmas spirit more than Games Workshop who, in the interests of giving and receiving, will be fulfiling dearest wishes with a host of new releases during November and December. This means knocking the punters dead with kit for *Warhammer 40,000*, whose enduring popularity was amply demonstrated by the fact that the Tyranid Codex miniatures became the fastest selling Games Workshop range of all time.

November 6th is the day of the *Imperial Guard Codex*. Until now The Guard have been the whipping boys of *40K*, running around with weaponry that has all the potency of flashlights. However the *Codex* promises more protection than a can of mace and a course of self-defence classes. Guard commanders can expect reinforcements in the form of Basilisk artillery pieces, which look awesome, and Hellhound fire throwers, both vehicles being based on the Chimera chassis.

Also imminent, but this time for life's winners, is the *Angels of Death Codex*. This fabled tome contains details of the deviant Marine Chapters of the Blood Angels and Dark Angels. This is unlikely to be available before Santa arrives, but will almost certainly ambush some Christmas dosh in the New Year. This *Codex* will herald the release of dedicated ranges of Blood and Dark Angel miniatures depicting Captains, Librarians, Chaplains and characters. Mercifully non-Deathwing Dark Angels will shed those prairie Indian feathers in favour of a more masterful mediaeval look.

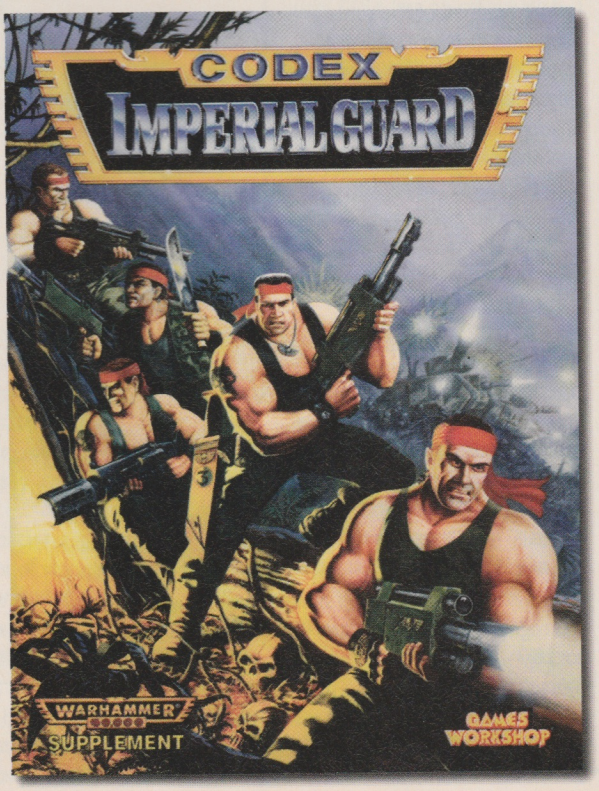
The Dominatrixes among you will be pleased as Ripper Swarms (late November) and Zoanthropes (early December) swell the broods of the Great Devourer to form – oh my – a complete army. Now there's a novelty.

For those who care to indulge in wild speculation and uncertain conjecture, Games Workshop games designers at the September *40K* tournament in Nottingham were the source of lots of gossip. A *Chaos Codex* is planned for next year with special guests, the Dark Eldar.

However, Galaxy trembling news guaranteed to make you fall to your knees and praise the gift of life, is the announcement of the return of the Slann. More popular than National Health glasses, the mystic Amphibians will be transmogrified into Space Lizards. Hurrah!

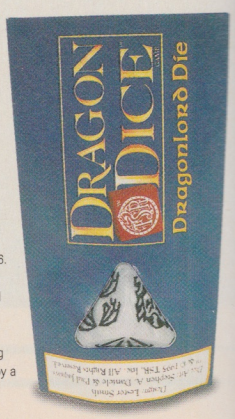
Indeed, anyone wearing their clever clogs will have noticed that the conditions for a parallel development in *Warhammer* have already been created. In the *Dark Elf Armies* book an innocuous-seeming reference is made to evidence uncovered by Dark Elf Scouts of an advanced Reptilian race lurking in the subterranean depths of the Underworld Sea. Remember, you heard it here first.

The Internet newsgroup 'rec.games.miniatures.warhammer' is one of the most popular there is with nearly a hundred postings every day.



Dragon Dice

DRAGON DICE is the new collectable dice game from TSR and it's really rather good as you can see in our review on pages 62-3. In addition to the ordinary dice that come with the game, TSR have produced a range of special dice which they only hand out at conventions to their close friends. These Dragon Lords are extra-specially large four-point units with the ability to cast cantrips, smite their foes and TAME DRAGONS. They are already massively sought after items in America with postings on the Internet offering all kinds of money for one. **arcane** has 100 of these beauties to give away to the first hundred people to write in and demand one.

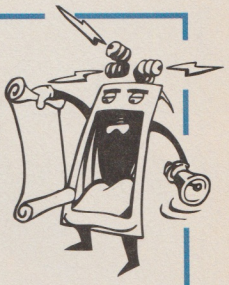


Address your applications to "Gimme, Gimme, Gimme... I must have one", **arcane**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. To give the whole world a chance to enter, the competition closing date is January 30th 1996. There are, of course, some rules.

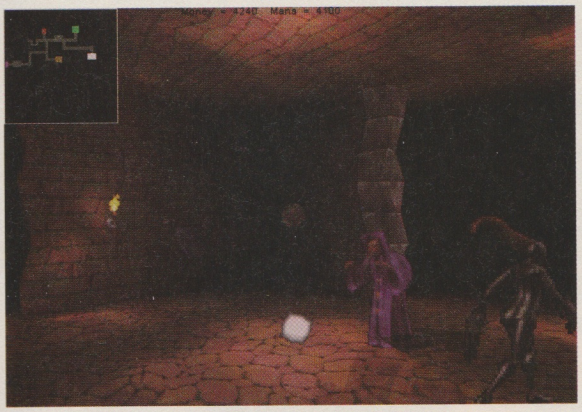
1. Multiple entries will be noticed and all disallowed
2. The editor's decision is final
3. Employees of Future Publishing and TSR will be followed home by a sniper and shot if they enter.

COMING SOON

Dungeon Keeper



A new angle on computer RPGs?





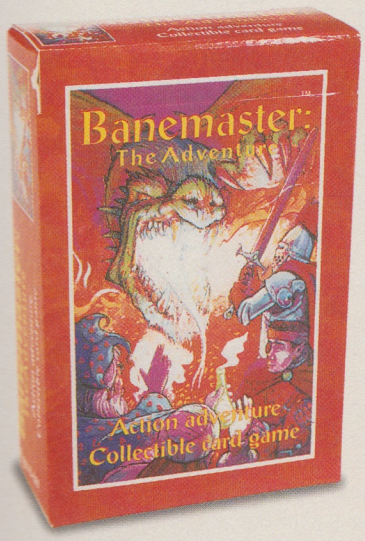


UNTIL NOW computer RPGs have always been designed from a player's point of view – offering the chance to control either a single hero or a small group on a predetermined quest. With its first roleplaying game, UK developer Bullfrog, the name behind *Syndicate, Theme Park* and *Magic Carpet,* has done something different. The game still revolves around the age-old cliché of a small band of adventurers exploring a dungeon in search of treasure, but it's not your job to control them. It's your job to stop them.

Dungeon Keeper casts the player as an evil wizard whose dungeon is being invaded. You must design your dungeon and populate it with monsters of all kinds in order to stop the pesky adventurers from stealing your loot.

With over 40 different types of monsters, 25 spells and a vast assortment of building options, *Dungeon Keeper* seems to have a lot to offer. Add to that a completely new artificial intelligence engine that lets the heroes learn and adjust to your playing style and the ability to directly control any of your monsters from a first person perspective, and Bullfrog could have another winner on their hands.

Dungeon Keeper will be released on PC CD-ROM in November, priced £44.99. More information can be found on the World Wide Web at http://www.bullfrog.co.uk/



Banemaster INVENT A MONSTER Competition.

WE – FRANKLY – WEREN'T ALL THAT IMPRESSED with *Banemaster* as our review (page 66) clearly shows. However we do concede that younger players may find it much more fun than we did and accordingly have arranged a massive competition with Drumond Park, the game's designers.

The idea is fairly simple. You have to create an appropriate monster to go with the game. Just a simple, text description will do in under thirty words. The game already has creatures such as the Mad Vampire Sheep and Flesh Eating Fang Fog (whatever that is) as well as more normal monsters like Skeleton Warriors and Mud Gobblers. What Drumond Park want from you is something weird and wonderful designed with a sense of humour, so just be as imaginative as you can...

In an extraordinary gesture of generosity, Drumond Park are prepared to send the first 1500 entries that they receive a free Banemaster booster pack. After they've chosen the winners, the top ten entries will get four starter decks of 70 cards each.





Some things to bear in mind:

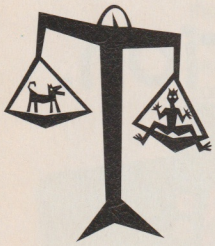
1. Don't send your entries to us, we'll only burn them. The proper address is below.
2. Remember to keep your entry to under thirty words or Drumond Park will burn them.
3. No employees of Future Publishing or Drumond Park may enter.
4. The Judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
5. The closing date is 30th December,1995.

Send your entries to:
Drumond Park
arcane competition, PO Box12607
West Lothian EH52 6ZD



FLYING HIGH

Just when it seems that gaming is dominated by huge companies, newcomer Daedalus arrives. Andy Butcher found out more about the new kids on the block...



Things are just a little busy at Daedalus Entertainment right now. As well as moving offices from Toronto to Seattle, which adds all the hassle of immigration and visas to the usual fun and games of relocating your place of work, the company has just released its first collectable card game, *Shadowfist,* soon to be followed by a roleplaying system based around the same background, called *Feng Shui.*

Despite this John Tynes, director of marketing and roleplaying games, is cheerful and relaxed. I asked him how Daedalus Entertainment got started. "Jose Garcia, the president and co-founder, has been playing and designing RPGs for fun since he was a kid," explains John. "While working in a video store he finally decided that he really wanted to start a games company. So he saved up some money and enlisted his sister Maria as a business partner.

"Jose was already working on the roleplaying game *Nexus: The Infinite City* and decided to make a real effort of it so that it could be his first published RPG. To get started, he talked to John Nephew and Peter Atkison, the presidents of Atlas Games and Wizards of the Coast, to learn how the industry worked. He also went to the GAMA trade show to learn more about the business, and talked to as many people as possible to learn the ropes. All of this quick-and-dirty education led to the release of *Nexus,* and now *Shadowfist* and *Feng Shui."*

And why Daedalus? "Well at one point, Jose considered calling the company Quijote Games," says John. "He wanted it to sound very non-corporate, but thought it should suggest quality and class. 'Daedalus' literally means 'cunningly wrought'. Daedalus was the father of Icarus, the original mad scientist inventor who built the Cretan Labyrinth to imprison the Minotaur and also built the famous wings. But we're not gonna pull an Icarus. We're gonna keep on inventing powerful toys and catch as many good winds as we can." John's confidence is far from unfounded – with *Shadowfist* and *Feng Shui,* Daedalus Entertainment has not one but two potential smash hits on its hands.

Both games are set in the same fictional world of the Secret War, an unseen battle that's taking place for control of the world. Throughout time, various groups have come to learn and harness the power of the Earth itself, by controlling Feng Shui sites – places where Chi, the natural energy of life, is concentrated and stored. Attuning yourself to a Feng Shui site allows you to draw on that energy, gaining great fortune in matters both mundane and mystical. Whoever controls the most Feng Sites literally controls the world – →


lboro
©1995 Roger Raupp

← whatever their aims and desires, the vast forces of nature shape themselves to allow them. If you favour magic over technology, for example, the whole world will slowly become more magical, making spells easier to cast and spirits easy to summon, while technology will become less reliable and harder to manufacture.

This in itself is worth fighting for, but several of these factions have discovered the Netherworld, a strange dimension that exists in parallel to ours, but out of time. At present the Netherworld is connected to ours at four different time periods, or 'Junctures' – 69AD, 1850AD, the present day and 2056AD. The factions realised that by travelling through the Netherworld they could extend their power over history – and whoever controls the Feng Shui sites of the past also controls the future.

And so the Secret War began in earnest, and has raged ever since. Every faction has its own aims and its own agenda to achieve them. Some are more powerful in some junctures than in others. But all of them wish for nothing less than absolute domination of the Earth, not just in their own times, but throughout history.

This unique setting, which is virtually overflowing with potential, accounts for much of *Shadowfist* and *Feng Shui*'s appeal. I asked John where the idea for it came from. "The major source of inspiration was Hong Kong action cinema," he said. "The best-known examples of such films are director John Woo's flicks *Hard-Boiled* and *The Killer*, but there're lots more. Hong Kong action movies are relentlessly entertaining – these aren't the cheesy kung-fu flicks you may have seen on late-night television. They range from the far past to the far future, and cross just about every genre – from romance and drama to action, science fiction and horror – often within the same film.

"It was this incredible diversity that led to the notion of there being different time junctures in the world, across which the various factions of the game wage their war. In this way we can include anything from junkyard cyberpunks to renegade cops to ancient Chinese demons. Since the original idea, though, the concept has expanded beyond Hong Kong cinema, to encompass action movies in America and elsewhere. That's where you get *Shadowfist* characters like Average Joe and Everyday Hero, for example."

In fact, it was the continual expansion and evolution of the these basic ideas that resulted in Daedalus ending up with both a collectable card game and an RPG. "Originally, *Shadowfist* wasn't a card game at all,"

"Anything from junkyard cyberpunks to renegade cops to ancient Chinese demons"

So what does Jesper Myfors really dislike? "Fly-by-night CCG publishers who are just out to make a buck, and dishonest game company executives who treat their creative people like cattle." We agree.

The games they play...

So when they're not producing games of their own, what do the staff at Daealus play to relax?

Jose Garcia, president: "*Over the Edge* (from Atlas Games) and *DC Heroes* (from Mayfair–a guilty pleasure). I like *OTE* because it has a cool background and minimalist rules that work. *DC Heroes* appeals more from a mechanics standpoint - the one-roll chart that was extremely flexible and could give you a wide range of results. As for card games, besides *Shadowfist*, I also play *Magic: The Gathering* and *On the Edge*. *Magic* has a wide variety of possibilities and strategies that let you continue to enjoy the game again and again. *On The Edge* was the first CCG with a really great background, and it's terrific in multiplayer play."

Maria Garcia, vice president: "I love the *Star Wars* RPG and *On The Edge*. I used to love *Magic*, but I've gotten out of it."

Ian Brannen, editor: "*Millennium's End*. A great genre that's very well reproduced in game terms. It's limited in scope, but it perfectly recreates what it sets out to emulate. *Shadowfist* is the only card game I ever play, though. Because it's lots of fun!"

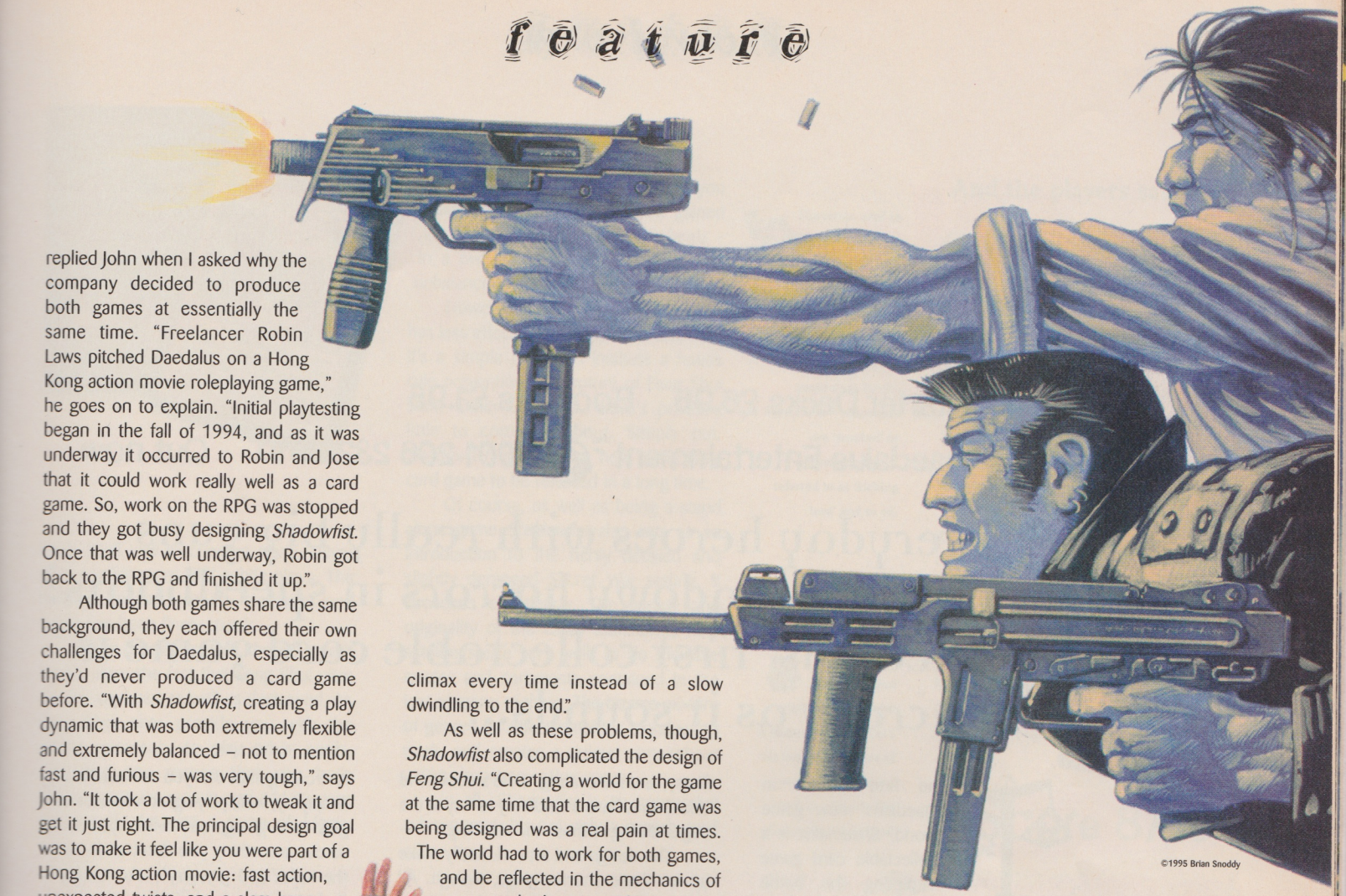
Rob Heinsoo, designer: "*Over the Edge*, *Earthdawn*, and *Everway*. *OTE* is a wicked real-world playground that's a lot of fun to gamemaster, *Earthdawn* has a great take on the heroic fantasy genre, and *Everway* is the game I've wanted for years that I can use with my non-gaming friends. I also play *On the Edge*. I'm really fond of the world setting, and I think it does a really good job of simulating conspiracy wars."

Jesper Myrfor, art director: "*Call of Cthulhu* and *Talislanta*. *CoC* because it remains faithful to the books and still is playable, *Talislanta* because of the richness of the world. I like *Magic: The Gathering* because it was the first and was very exciting to work on, and *Dark Cults* because it really makes you think and sort of bridges the gap between card games and roleplaying games.

Daniel Gelon, art director: "*Call of Cthulhu*, because of all the gooshy monsters, and Underground, for its delicious irony. I also like *Dark Cults*, for the same reasons Jesper likes it. I play *Guardians*, *Shadowfist*, and some *Magic* just for the artwork."

John Tynes, marketing director: "I play *Call of Cthulhu*, because it succeeds in recreating a very specific experience – the stories of H.P. Lovecraft. And I also play *Shadowfist* and *On the Edge*, simply because they're the two best trading card games out there."

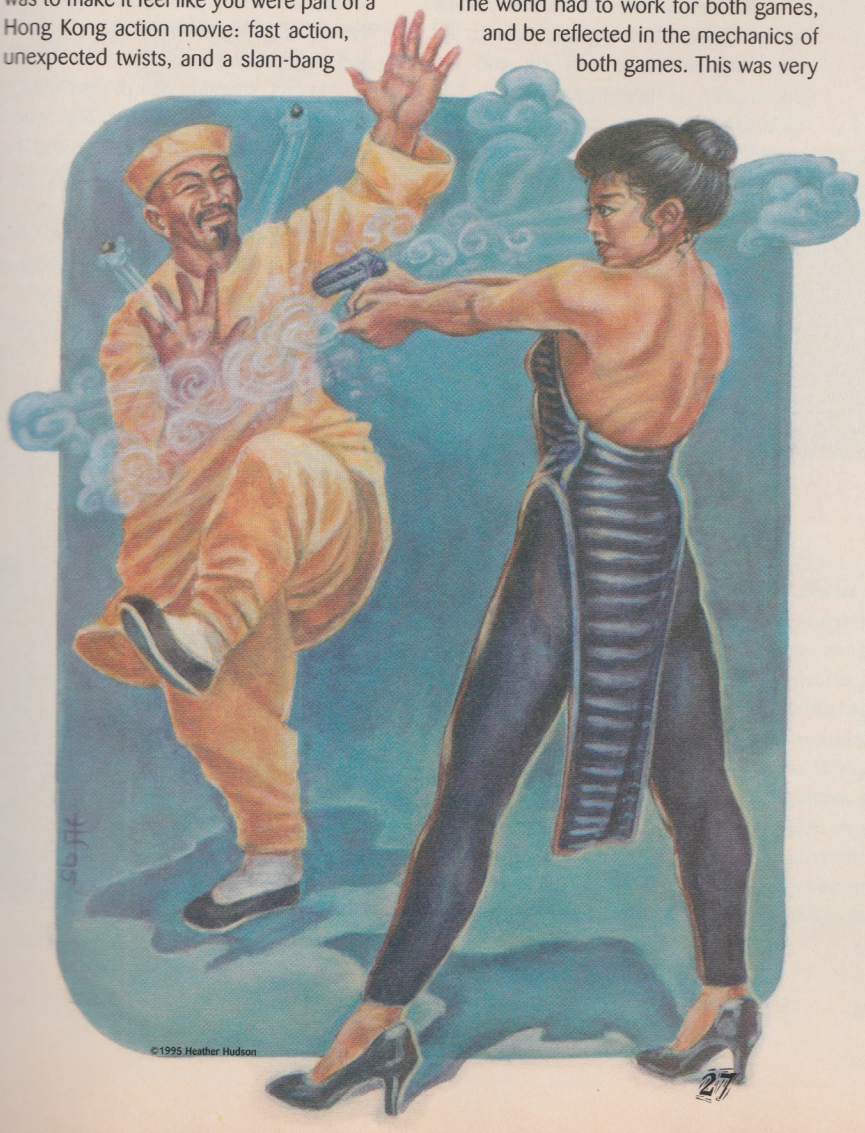
©1995 Glenn Kim



replied John when I asked why the company decided to produce both games at essentially the same time. "Freelancer Robin Laws pitched Daedalus on a Hong Kong action movie roleplaying game," he goes on to explain. "Initial playtesting began in the fall of 1994, and as it was underway it occurred to Robin and Jose that it could work really well as a card game. So, work on the RPG was stopped and they got busy designing *Shadowfist.* Once that was well underway, Robin got back to the RPG and finished it up."

Although both games share the same background, they each offered their own challenges for Daedalus, especially as they'd never produced a card game before. "With *Shadowfist,* creating a play dynamic that was both extremely flexible and extremely balanced – not to mention fast and furious – was very tough," says John. "It took a lot of work to tweak it and get it just right. The principal design goal was to make it feel like you were part of a Hong Kong action movie: fast action, unexpected twists, and a slam-bang climax every time instead of a slow dwindling to the end."

As well as these problems, though, *Shadowfist* also complicated the design of *Feng Shui.* "Creating a world for the game at the same time that the card game was being designed was a real pain at times. The world had to work for both games, and be reflected in the mechanics of both games. This was very tricky. Apart from that *Feng Shui* wasn't that hard to design – we just kept it fun, simple, and entertaining."





So what's Daedalus' opinion of Gary Gygax? "We all kiss the ground he and Dave Arneson walk on, because they opened up a whole world of imagination for millions of people around the world." Hmm. Very tactful.

Remarkably, now that *Shadowfist* is on the shelves and *Feng Shui* is almost ready to be printed, there's very little that Daedalus would like to change about them. "There are a few very minor tweaks we'd like to have done to *Shadowfist* in retrospect," admits John, "but overall everything we originally wanted to see in *Shadowfist* has found its way into the game either in the basic set or in Netherworld, the first expansion. We're very pleased with the way the game turned out." And *Feng Shui?* "Overall it's come together like a dream."

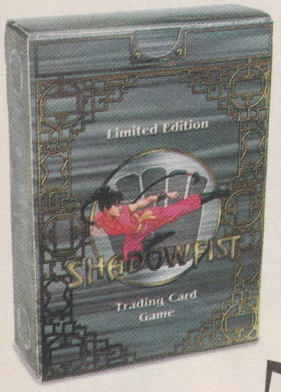
Finally, I asked John how he sees the future of Daedalus Entertainment. "We're here for the long haul," he says "Daedalus didn't spring up out of nowhere to cash in on collectable card games, and we want *Shadowfist, Feng Shui* and all our other games to be as exciting, challenging, and replayable as possible." And what's the most important aspect of any game, in your opinion? "That's easy," he replied instantly. "Whether or not it's fun to play. That's the draw of games, and it's the thing you have to keep in mind." With an attitude like that, we're sure that Daedalus will be around for a long time to come.

Shadowfist



Starter Decks £6.95 **Boosters £1.95**

Daedalus Entertainment  **001 206 232 2519** **Out now**



everyday heroes with really big guns battling shadowy horrors in speedboats? daedalus' first collectable card game is as crazy as it sounds...



The first release in Daedalus' new game world, *Shadowfist* is a collectable card game depicting the battle that's being fought for domination of the Earth. Two or more players struggle over places of natural power, the Feng Shui sites around which the Secret War revolves, and the first player to control or destroy enough of them wins.

Players take consecutive turns, split into two phases. In the Establishing Shot you receive power points from your sites, 'unturn' all your cards and draw enough cards to bring your hand up to six. Then, in the Main Shot, you may play cards, attack with your characters and so on.

The cards themselves are defined in two ways – faction and type. The factions are the different groups that are fighting the Secret War. The first edition of *Shadowfist* contains five major groups and two minor ones, as well as 'neutral' cards, such as the Feng Shui sites. In addition there are five types of card – sites, characters, states, events and edges (see 'Lights, Camera, Action!').

Physically the *Shadowfist* cards are a little disappointing. The card stock is a bit thin, making the cards feel somewhat flimsy, and the coating, while smooth and clean, does have a tendency to fray at the edges during enthusiastic shuffling.

The design and artwork easily make up for these shortcomings, though. All the cards are easy to read, and the information is presented clearly. The different types of card are clearly marked, and the colour coding used to differentiate the factions manages to be obvious without resorting to garishness.

Complimenting this clear design is the artwork, which is of a high standard throughout. Not every card is a work of genius, but there are very few poor illustrations. Interestingly, most of the artists seem to have concentrated on only a few factions. This, combined with the use of common colours and imagery, helps give each group a coherent look that's far more appealing than the mish-mash of different styles more common in collectable card games.

As with the cards themselves, *Shadowfist*'s rules are well laid out and clearly explained. It's obvious that the designers have paid attention to the slip-ups made in many previous card games, and there are clear sections on timing and the sequence of multiple effects.

Getting started is simplicity itself – *Shadowfist* is one of those increasingly rare card games that you can learn to play simply by, well, playing. A reference card gets you going, and when you come across something you don't understand, the index and glossary make it easy to find what you want quickly.

In fact, speed is one of the defining characteristics of *Shadowfist*. The action is fast and furious from the start, and the balance of power can shift dramatically. Your 'surefire, can't fail whatever happens' game winning plan can crumble before your eyes in one turn, only for you to spot a new one in the next.

Because any player can intercept any other player's attacks, and event cards can be played at any time, you have to constantly update your strategy. Given the game's pace, there's a remarkable amount of this involved – *Shadowfist*

"Shadowfist is the best new collectable card game to be released in a long time"



Feng Shui is the Chinese Art of Place. It governs the relationship of objects to each other within a space and has recently become popular among Western interior designers as a guiding principle.



Each Faction has its own look, from the Ascended's slick 'businessmen' to the monsters of the Architects Of The Flesh.



All but the most basic Shadowfist cards have special powers and abilities, making for unique strategies.

lends itself well to cunning plans, clever card combinations and subtle ploys. The balance between speed, simplicity and depth has been finely struck.

There is one problem, though, and it results from the fact that Feng Shui sites can be captured as well as destroyed. As Feng Shui sites provide you with the power necessary to play other cards, capturing one means that you both deprive your opponent *and* add to your own supply. Imagine a game of *Magic: The Gathering* where every time you damaged your opponent you gained life points, or stole one of their lands – in a two-player game this can quickly unbalance things.

However, as you tune your deck this has less effect on play, and if all else fails, it's a simple matter to institute a house rule preventing the capture of Feng Shui sites. Other than that, there's precious little to complain about. Simply put, *Shadowfist* is the best new collectable card game to be released in a long time.

Of course, as well as being a stand alone game *Shadowfist* also acts as an introduction to the richly detailed and slightly deranged Secret War setting. It succeeds effortlessly. The variety and originality of the cards themselves help set the scene very well, as do the little quotes and comments contained in the text of many of them. The bizarre mixture of genres on offer somehow manages to work, and creates a unique atmosphere unlike almost any other game.

In all, *Shadowfist* is an impressive achievement. It's not only a superb card game, but it's also a great introduction to a new and imaginative game world.

What other game lets you attack a family restaurant with a pair of grenade launcher-toting Shaolin Monks and a genetically engineered monster from the future, only to have them intercepted by a gang of immortal eunuch magicians and a SWAT team carrying demonic swords?

Andy Butcher

The terms used in Shadowfist are a tribute to the Hong Kong action movies, schlock horror films and Japanese animes that formed the inspiration for the Secret War – characters are 'smoked' or 'toasted', combat is referred to as 'kicking butt' and so on.

One of the lead artists on Shadowfist is Jesper Myfors. What's his best known piece of work to date? Have a look at a Magic: The Gathering Plains card!

And the players said...

CHRIS: "It's fast, it's frantic, it's silly, and I like it a lot."

STEVE: "I love the background and I like the game, but it might get a bit dull eventually."

BEN: "And I thought those Japanese animated movies were mad..."

PAUL: "Why can't all card games be this much fun to play?"

Score 8/10

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Laying it on the table

There are five types of card in Shadowfist, and as they are played they are arranged in a specific order. This is an example of a single player's cards after a few turns of play...





These are the **Draw**, **Smoked** and **Toasted** piles. **Toasted** cards are out of the game for good. **Smoked** cards are 'down but not out', and still contribute **Resources**, the symbols in their bottom left corner. **Resources** are needed to bring certain cards into play.



The green card is an **Edge**, these stay in play and have a permanent effect. It's just had an **Event** played on it – **Events** can be played at any time and cause an instant effect.

These are **Sites**, which produce **Power**. The first is a Feng Shui site that's had a **State** played on it. Behind it is an unrevealed **Site**. Together they make up a **Location**.



This is a **Character** with a **State** played on it. **Characters** can move between **Locations**, defend their current **Location** and any **Characters** there, and can attack enemy **Locations** or **Characters**. **States** are played on **Characters** or **Sites** and have a permanent effect on them.









Feng Shui

£TBA | Daedalus Ent Inc | 001 206 232 2519 | February

Hot on the heels of shadowfist comes the secret war roleplaying game...



John Woo hates handling guns and also never wears earplugs when using them in his films, even though everyone else on the set does.

Although the factions detailed in *Shadowfist* are the real powers in the Secret War, not everyone involved owes their allegiance to one of them. Throughout history people have stumbled onto the truth, or part of it, and found themselves caught up in events beyond their control. Once they realise what's going on, they normally do their best to avoid the whole mess, or join one of the factions. However a few people, appalled by the nature of the major players, realise the consequences of one of them winning control of the Earth and decide to fight to stop them.

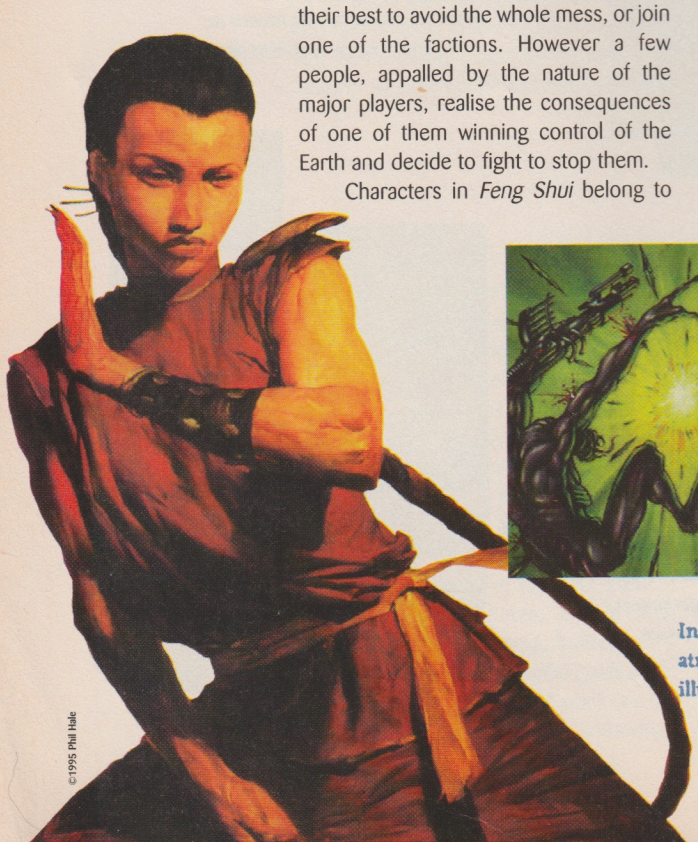
Characters in *Feng Shui* belong to this last group. They might be hard-faced assassins from the present day, ex-super soldiers from the future, ghosts or even supernatural creatures, but somehow they've come together to oppose the fanatical powers set on world domination.

Uniquely, just how these wildly different characters come together is largely unimportant to the game. The whole Secret War setting is based on action movies, especially those produced in Hong Kong, and *Feng Shui* is firmly rooted in the same films. Although nearly all roleplaying games are based on a specific genre, hardly any have ever managed to capture the spirit of their source material this completely.

Regardless of their origin, almost all action movies share a singular version of reality. They portray a world where guns never run out of ammunition, but are no more effective than a throwing star. A world where heroes can soak up a vast amount of punishment and still keep on fighting with only the odd grunt of pain and their blood-soaked clothes to show that they've been hit at all, while extras without number drop in their droves from a single burst of the hero's gun. A world where insane risks reap great rewards, baddies always stop to gloat at the critical moment, and there's no such thing as impossible odds.

Obviously a roleplaying game trying to recreate this kind of world needs fast moving, simple rules. *Feng Shui* uses the same basic system as Daedalus' first RPG, *Nexus*. For any given task characters have an Action Value, which is either an attribute or the sum of an attribute and a skill. To determine success or failure you roll two six-sided dice, one positive and one negative. The total is added to your Action Value to produce an Action Result, which is compared to a

"The rulebook is a joy to read and obviously the work of experienced gamers"







In both *Shadowfist* and *Feng Shui* the illustrations are superb. They add a great deal of atmosphere to what might otherwise be a slightly confusing melange of genres. Through the illustrations everything falls into place.

©1995 Phil Hale







And the players said...

BEN: "Games like this are the reason I started roleplaying in the first place."

STEVE: "A refreshing blast for even the most cynical players."

JAMES: "Both guns blazing, non-stop fun."

EMILY: What gaming is all about – having a great time and enjoying yourself."

Difficulty Number set by the referee. If your Action Result equals or exceeds the Difficulty, you've succeeded. The amount by which you beat the Difficulty determines how well you do. It's an elegant system, and because most rolls are 'open' (if a six comes up on either die, you keep it and re-roll, adding the result) there's always a small chance of success or failure, regardless of the character's ability or difficulty of the task.

Likewise, the character generation system is possibly the simplest around. Players choose from a long list of different 'types' – typical action movie characters, such as the ones mentioned earlier; gamblers, super-soldiers, martial artists and so on. Once the basic character is chosen, you come up with some details about him, her or it, including a 'melodramatic hook' – a single defining character trait or event that the ref can use to create adventure ideas. You then get to modify the character's attributes and skills, pick some special powers and choose some weapons. And that's it. You can literally generate a character and get into the action in 20 minutes.

There's more to *Feng Shui*'s dedication to the action movie genre than just having a simple rules system, though. Action movies have shaped the very heart of the game, and their influence pervades the entire book. In some ways this is a game that actually works better with players completely new to roleplaying. It's uncompromising in its pursuit of the action movie atmosphere, and old hands may have trouble 'unlearning' many of the gaming conventions that have no place in a *Feng Shui* session. Agonising over character generation decisions, detailed equipment lists, pages of intricate combat modifiers – none of these are even remotely relevant to *Feng Shui*. If it's not relevant in an action movie or to the plot, it's just not important in *Feng Shui*.

As such, there's no need to keep track of money or gear – if the player can convince the referee that his character should have a certain item, he has it. Players are encouraged to attempt outrageous feats. Spellcasting, for example, is modified positively if the effect is flashy, impressive or advances the plot. Subtlety and effects that will derail the action are penalised. There's no spell list – mages have areas of power, and create effects at will by using them. The only rules given are for common uses, such as offensive spells and healing.

Simply put, *Feng Shui* is brilliant. The rulebook is clearly written, humorous and easy to understand. Everything is clearly explained, with many examples and a casual style. The book is packed with ideas and advice to referees and players alike. It's a joy to read, and is obviously the work of experienced gamers who haven't lost sight of what it's like to be a newcomer to the hobby, or why we started in the first place – because it's fun. These are rules that have been designed to drive storytelling and roleplaying. They're not afraid to point out that many elements of the setting are simply plot devices to allow players and referees as much leeway as possible, or that several areas are intentionally unrealistic.

Raymond Chandler is reputed to have said that whenever he got stuck for a plot development, he just had a guy come through the door with a gun. In *Feng Shui* the guy in question is more likely to be a slavering demon from another dimension or a cybernetic monster from the future, and will almost certainly come through the door without opening it first, but the principle's the same. As superb as it is, *Shadowfist* is really only the trailer. *Feng Shui* is the feature presentation.

Andy Butcher

Feng Shui is the first game ever to be awarded the arcane seal of approval; the highest accolade this magazine gives.

Score 9/10



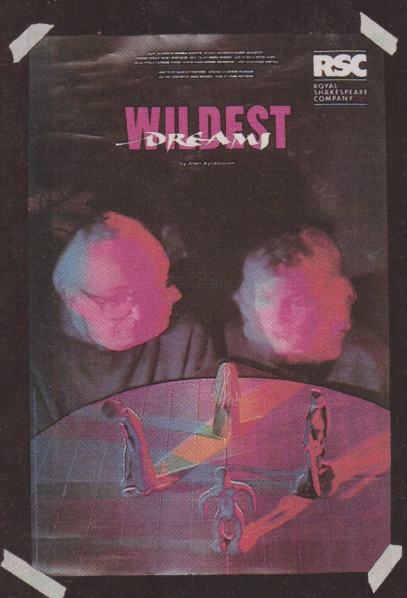


or, The arcane guide to roleplaying in popular culture.

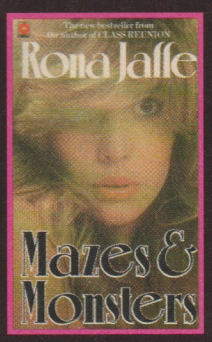
Roleplaying games. They're jolly popular and yet nobody ever talks about them, it's funny isn't it? And they never seem to get in the papers, on the telly or sung about. Well that's not quite true. Very occasionally they do surface as arcane discovered with a quick survey of our friends. So we proudly present to you:

Wildest Dreams – Alan Ayckbourn

Right. So it's a play about roleplaying. The four main characters are: a teacher, his wife, a spotty, young computer-geek who never leaves his room (except to go roleplaying) and a spotty girl who's too shy to be able to talk. And they all talk in ridiculous high fantasy voices when they're playing their game ("We must ask that of Xenon, the Far-sighted One. Whither now, Xenon?") and the thing's so poorly researched that they're playing in a game that doesn't even have a referee. And it's the only Alan Ayckbourn play the Royal Shakespeare Company have ever seen fit to perform? Now ordinarily we're completely opposed to the burning of literature, but in this case...



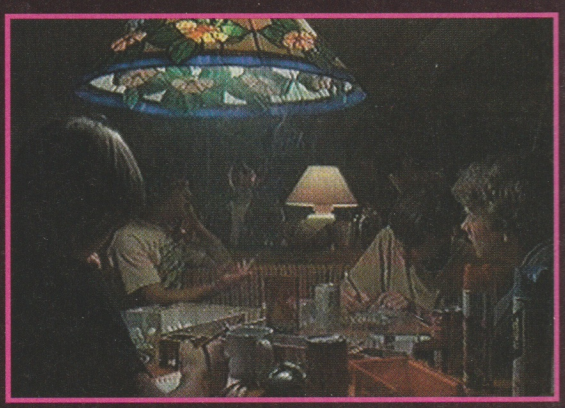
Mazes & Monsters – Rona Jaffe



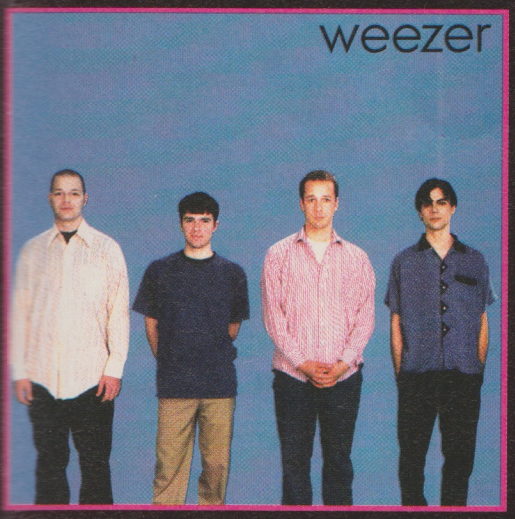
The book that rocked a nation and spawned a film. At the height of the early '80s anti-*AD&D* hysteria in America this helpful women delivered a murder mystery based on, you guessed it, *AD&D*. The 'plot' was something about kids getting too involved in playing the game, ending up believing that there were orcs and goblins in the real world and, er, going around murdering people. Of course. And in Britain, it was released as a romantic novel... Yeah, right.

ET – Steven Spielberg

After some panicky thrashing about in the undergrowth with loads of men with torches chasing something we can't quite see the film finally gets going. We draw in slowly to the warm and inviting looking house. There are children, sitting around a table. They are happy. They are playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. The American Moral Majority go bananas and try to ban the film. These people just aren't very well balanced, are they?

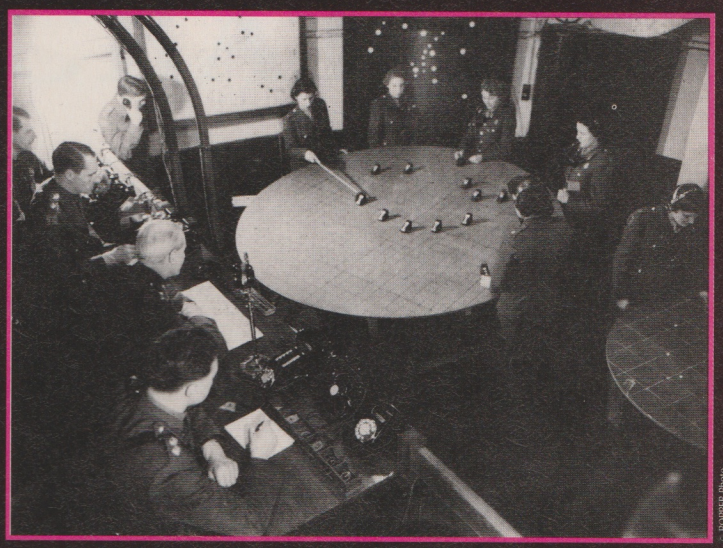


15 minutes



Weezer – In the Garage – Weezer

Those lovable, 'cross between the Pixies and The Beach Boys', post-modern, 'revenge-of-the-nerdsters', superstars Weezer *(I think that means 'American Guitar Band' – Ed)* celebrate their love of roleplaying with this graunchy, guitar-smashing classic from their eponymous debut album. "I've got my *Dungeon Master's Guide*, I've got my twelve-sided die" they sing. And we believe them. Unfortunately, they go on to claim in the same song that their favourite rock band is Kiss, so maybe they're being ironic and actually think roleplaying's a bit sad. Bastards.



© POPPER Photo

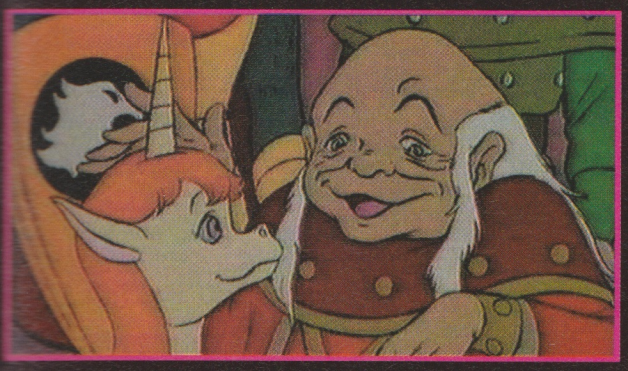
The Second World War

Remember those tremendous WW2 newsreel shots of plastic women pushing little counters around the map of Europe, pretending someone's got a clever plan? One bakelite plane represented one squadron. There was clearly a move at one point to get one bakelite plane to represent one real plane and if that had caught on roleplaying games could have been born 30 years earlier. Certainly one of the first examples of roleplaying games in the media.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™ Cartoon®

– Marvel Video Comics

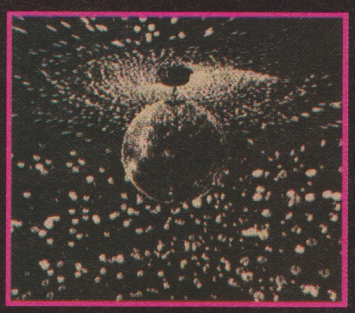
You remember the one. A bunch of sickly American children take a rollercoaster ride and end up in a 'magical world' where Yoda from *Star Wars*, wearing a very thin disguise, pretends to be the "Dungeon Master', their friend, and secretly tries to kill them by encouraging them to fight a fully grown, nasty big bloke in black armour. If you recall they spent all their time trying to get home and only the 'Dungeon Master' knew the way. So why didn't they just stick a knife to his throat and force him to tell them? Eh?



Mirrorball, I'm the Ocean

– Neil Young

Neil Young and Pearl Jam, the kind of combination to make **arcane** cry out in delight. And Neil's obviously got Magic on his mind when he sings: "They play baseball, they play football under lights, they play card games and we watch them every night." Oh all right, it's horribly tenuous, but we've been working very late.

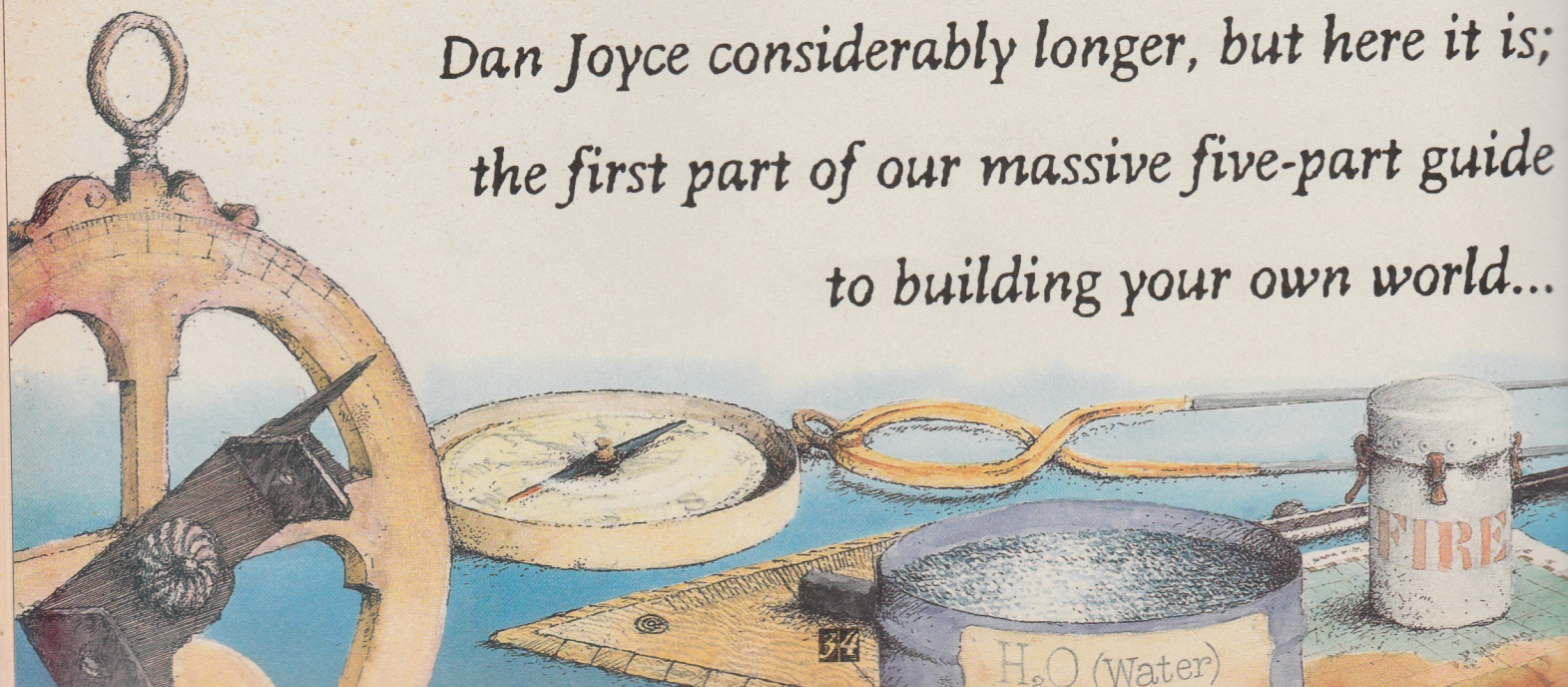


Unless of course... you know better

So that's that then. A fairly sorry catalogue of appearances, the majority of which seem to show roleplayers in a less than favourable light. We're sure that there are many more examples of roleplaying games popping their heads over the parapet of everyday life out there, which we think the world should know about. We'll go so far as to offer a prize of a gorgeous **arcane** T-shirt every month to the best example you send in. Send your entries to:
15 minutes
arcane magazine, 30 Monmouth Street
Bath BA1 2BW

Illustration: David Atkinson

It took God seven days to do it. It's taken Dan Joyce considerably longer, but here it is; the first part of our massive five-part guide to building your own world...



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

After you've been playing roleplaying games for a while it inevitably occurs to you that you could be doing a much better job of creating a world than the people who write those shrink-wrapped, off-the-shelf games. Then you sit down and have a think about it, and you realise that creating a world of your own could take you a very long time indeed. But don't be daunted. Designing your own world from scratch is one of the most satisfying and interesting things you can ever do. The thing to bear in mind is to minimise your workload, using the time-honoured techniques of, er, **lying, cheating** and **stealing...**

Before You Start

The first task of any world designer is to decide what kind of world you and your players want. There's no point giving them sand worm riders and a desert planet jihad if what they really want is an orc-bashing session down a dungeon.

As a rule of thumb, the further you move away from what your players are familiar with, the more work you'll have to do. Everyone can relate to alien races that are human except for hairy feet and a height problem (Hobbits) or heads that look like Cornish pasties (Klingons), firstly because these races are pretty much like us, and secondly because the sources are familiar. Samurai ducks don't always go down so well.

This doesn't mean you're stuck with yet another Tolkien or *Star Trek* rip-off. What you can do is utilise various ideas with which the players are familiar (or vaguely familiar) and weld them into your own world.

If that doesn't sound creative, get this: that's exactly what most authors do. Tolkien plundered Old English and Norse language and mythology; *Star Trek* was put forward as 'A *Wagon Train* in Space'. It doesn't matter where you get your pieces from; what matters is how you put the thing together.

Here's One I Made Earlier (Or Lying)

If you're looking for a new world, Earth is always a good stand-by, either: a) before a cataclysm, as with Robert E Howard's Hyborean Age, Michael Moorcock's Young Kingdoms, and arguably Middle Earth; b) after a cataclysm, like the *Planet of the Apes, Mad Max* or *Waterworld;* or c) as an alternate earth, like ours but following a different history, like Philip K Dick's *Man in the High Castle* or the graphic novel world of *Watchmen.*

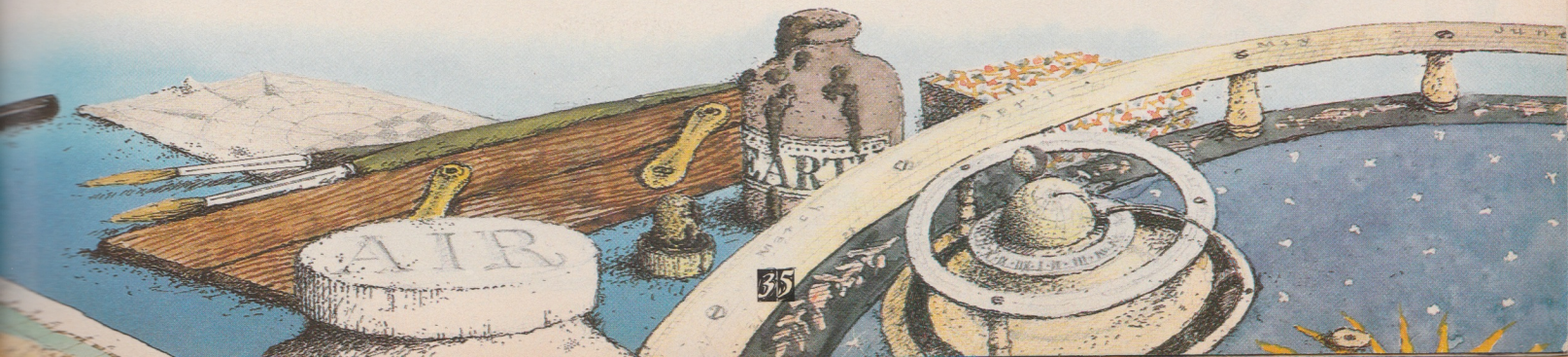
> "The map was the first thing I'd do; I've always enjoyed drawing the maps. Whilst drawing the maps I'd be thinking around the story. I don't start with a preconceived beginning, middle and ending. Images are the important part."
> **Michael Moorcock** quoted in the long deceased *Imagine* magazine.

Using Earth cuts down on your work a lot. The ground rules are all the same, except for the ones you bend, and you've got an inexhaustible supply of background material. All without lifting a finger.

Cataclysms, whether you create your own or assume that one in the past never happened, are a useful filter – you can take what you like from current maps, animal encyclopedias, history etc and change the rest. Atlantis could still be out in the Atlantic, or a new ice age could be gripping non-equatorial areas. Horses or birds or whales or whatever may not exist; other creatures such as dinosaurs, mutants, aliens or mythical beasts might. Basically, it's Earth as smörgåsbord. Take whatever you want.

Alternate histories leave you with only a little bit of history to fill in. In *Man in the High Castle,* Dick writes from the premise that the Allies lost the Second World War. In *Watchmen,* history only really changes course from the '60s (and often in subtle ways) after the creation of the superman, Dr Manhattan.

Forget dry and turgid history lessons. Maybe the Romans beat off the Huns; or maybe the Saxons withstood the Normans; maybe Da Vinci really **did** invent a helicopter and a bicycle and lots of other things at the end of the 15th Century; maybe a meteor hits Earth



Brian Aldiss on world building

If you're on the net, world building ideas are everywhere. One good launch pad is at http://thule.mt.cs.edu:8001/sf-clearing-house/authors/.

Brian Aldiss is one of Britain's best ever SF authors. He's won lots of awards (Hugo, Nebula, 'World's Best Contemporary Science Fiction Author', etc). His three *Helliconia* novels – Spring, Summer and Winter – are among his best.

***Helliconia* is a great example of the kind of world you can create for yourself. It is a world on which seasons last for centuries – it revolves, along with its weak star Battalix, in a 5,000 year ellipse around a huge second sun, Freyr. The drama of the novels is shaped by this cosmology. *The Guardian* newspaper called *Helliconia* 'The most lifelike of invented worlds'. And it is.**

arcane put on its 'How do they do that?' hat, and asked the SF meister, er, how he did it.

"There were two primary motivating ideas: i) my old obsession with time prompted me to dream of a planet where a whole year was not our tin-pot 365 days but five thousand Earth years; ii) the world, the name, *Helliconia* drifted up into my consciousness. Then I knew I had to go."

The result feels like science fact as much as science fiction. "I do think a foundation of scientific fact greatly assists. For one thing, it may clear the writer/researcher's mind of silliness. We're talking science fiction here, not fantasy."

Which explains the way differences feel built in to, rather than grafted on to, Aldiss' worlds. "In *Hothouse,* I simply took the basic premise of an Earth which has ceased to rotate as the Sun goes nova. Then I created a mainly jungle world – no problem, since I knew jungle. But there must be dozens of ways of going about it. The subconscious always helps."

Could he pinpoint any other useful sources – Attenborough's *Life on Earth,* perhaps? "A good starting point in my case is that I have read science fiction avidly since an early age. You get to know what to do and what not to do. Your suggestion of Attenborough is a good one. No writer can construct a world as complex as ours."

Or a people. *Helliconia* has human protagonists, like most SF novels; Aldiss says outright in *Spring* that 'No one wants a passport to a nation of talking slugs.'

"Well, it's humans we're interested in, isn't it? In *Dark Light Years,* I opposed the utods (physically disgusting but cultured aliens) to humans, mainly to make a satirical point. But slugs? Fergit it."



Photography: Peter Stone

Terry Pratchett played *D&D* before doing his *Discworld* stuff. "I remember when I first discovered *D&D,* in the early '70s, walking home in an absolute daze, thinking this was it, this was a whole new art form and I had to get into it... There are certainly some fantasy game images in *Colour of Magic.*" *Adventurer #11*

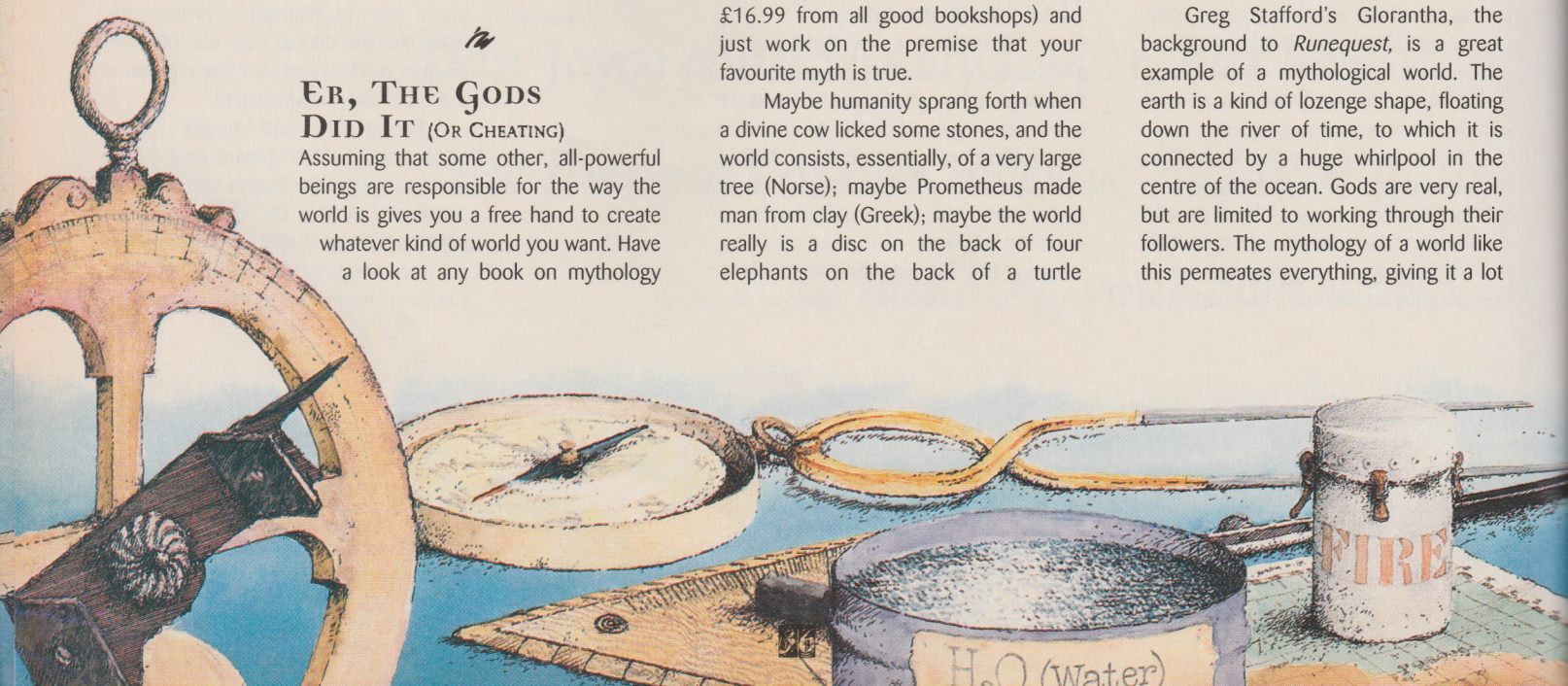
tomorrow, knocking us slightly out of orbit, the possibilities are endless...

Er, The Gods Did It (Or Cheating)

Assuming that some other, all-powerful beings are responsible for the way the world is gives you a free hand to create whatever kind of world you want. Have a look at any book on mythology (the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology is a good one, and costs £16.99 from all good bookshops) and just work on the premise that your favourite myth is true.

Maybe humanity sprang forth when a divine cow licked some stones, and the world consists, essentially, of a very large tree (Norse); maybe Prometheus made man from clay (Greek); maybe the world really is a disc on the back of four elephants on the back of a turtle (Pratchett – though he claims he took this straight from one mythology or other).

Greg Stafford's Glorantha, the background to *Runequest,* is a great example of a mythological world. The earth is a kind of lozenge shape, floating down the river of time, to which it is connected by a huge whirlpool in the centre of the ocean. Gods are very real, but are limited to working through their followers. The mythology of a world like this permeates everything, giving it a lot



more soul than all those Tolkien takeoffs.

If you are running a fantasy world, you don't have to deal in planetary physics. Let the players fear sailing off the edge of the world; let the Elizabethans' music of the spheres be just what it was thought to be.

And even if you're running a science fiction world, don't discount 'gods'. Any race that is intelligent enough to create a world is effectively a god in this sense. The world could be a kind of Niven-esque *Ringworld,* a *Star Wars* Death Star or a barren planet hit with that Genesis Weapon thingamajig from *Star Trek.*

However, be careful not to go overboard here: it's one thing to have mediaeval characters wandering around inside a *Ringworld;* it's quite another to do one of those horrible *Twilight Zone* sting-in-the-tails where the world is (dee-dee-dee-dee) inside a child's snow-shaker.

Planetary Robbery
(Or Stealing)

Perhaps the easiest way of creating a usable world for your players is to take someone else's world or universe wholesale. And there are plenty of games and supplements out there that do this already, of course.

But it can be more satisfying to do it yourself. For example, although I think ICE have done some great work for *Middle Earth,* I'm not happy using the relatively high-powered magic system they offer.

And maybe there isn't a supplement for your favourite book or film. But you can still use the world. It can help if your players have also read the book/seen the film. They'll have an instant feel for the world, and will have absorbed the kind of detail you'd never have had the time to have written. The disadvantage is that your players might know the source too well, and utilise what they know to affect the plot; nicking off with the Millennium Falcon, perhaps, or trying to jump Frodo in the Prancing Pony.

So if you're using a fictional source, use the world, not the story. Either explain that they're in a kind of alternate history, where the events they've read about won't necessarily happen, or put the players in a different time period to the original story.

If you're really set on creating as 'realistic' a world as possible, GDW's *Traveller: The New Era* can be a handy source. *The World Tamers' Handbook* supplement revolves around the most detailed system for world generation you can imagine, taking into account axial tilt, surface albedo, atmospheric composition, average temperature and more – all based on real planetary physics. There's also an interesting section on colonising planets

Frank Herbert said he got the idea for *Dune* when he was walking along the beach one day. All that sand...
The novel he then wrote was rejected by nearly 20 publishers.

Now Write It Down

Before you forget, get the basics of your world down on paper. To begin with, do it in shorthand – you can elaborate as needed. Some game supplements, *GURPS Magic* and *Fantasy Hero* for example, offer A4 sheets for you to photocopy and fill in for just this purpose. You get a thumbnail sketch of the world and details of any house rules by writing a sentence or two alongside prompts like 'Known non-human races' and 'Brief description of campaign state and its neighbours', 'Source of Magic', 'State of Religion' and 'Civilisation/Technology Level'.

Starting to develop your world like this is a lot easier than starting with the Complete History of the World in longhand. More elaborate details can be filled in on a need-to-know basis. As long as you know roughly what's underpinning everything, you don't have to write a 100,000 word thesis on it.

The most important thing to remember is that players must know a lot about what's close to home – where they live, who they know, what the nation's beliefs and laws are (we'll cover this in future issues). They don't need to know for certain that they're even on a flat earth until they see the waterfall at the edge...

If it looks right and it feels right, let science fact take a back seat and throw in a deus ex machina. Even in the hard science, desert-world epic *Dune* there are fudges – like, where does Arrakis get its oxygen? Technically, no living green plants means no chlorophyll base means no oxygen. Herbert's theory, which doesn't appear in the novels, was that oxygen came from the digestive processes of the sand worms. Yeah, right... But it hardly ruins the novel, does it?

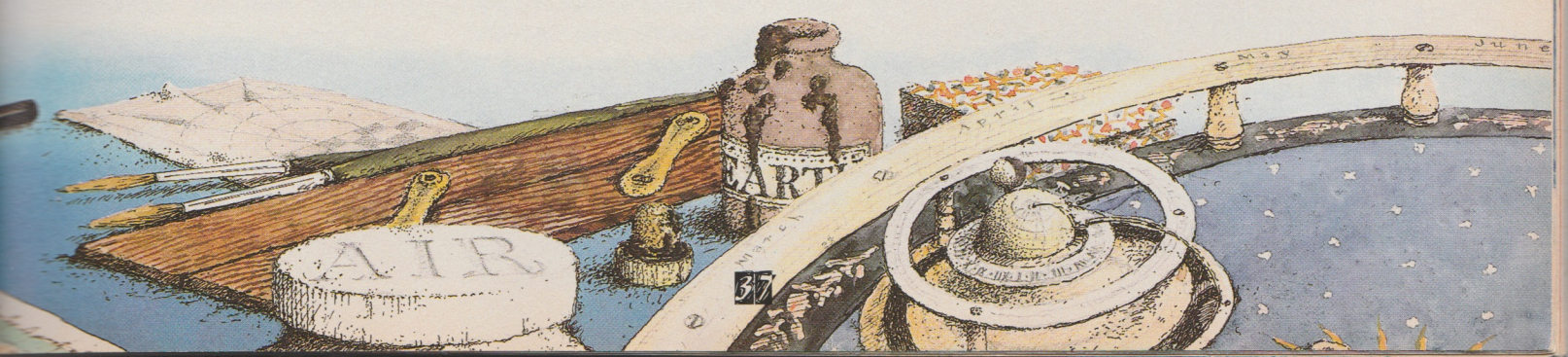
And Next Month

Join Dan for part two of the series where he will be tackling the thorny topics of flora and fauna in your brave new world and discussing what it is that makes a lizard man tick.

A Different Perspective

This series of articles takes a logical approach to designing a world, starting with basic concepts and gradually adding details, but that's by no means the only way to go about things. If you have a few clear ideas about the world you want to create, start with them and work backwards, creating the world as you go. Suppose you want a society that doesn't use bows, and believes that spirits reside in all natural things. Why aren't there any bows? Is it a cultural thing, with bows being seen as dishonourable, or something more mundane, such as there being a lack of suitable materials? If it's the former, you have to decide why bows are seen as a bad thing. The latter case is also possible, but a world without any naturally occurring 'springy' materials would be very different to ours – no horn, no bamboo, no straight-grained wood. Likewise, what's the truth behind the belief in spirits? Is it just that – a belief with no basis in truth – or do these spirits actually exist? Maybe some energy exists in natural things, but not a 'spirit' as such?

As you can see, just explaining these two parts of a society can lead to many questions about the nature of the world, and every answer decided upon not only helps to flesh out the background but creates more questions of its own. By the time you'd explained both, you'd already have a much clearer picture of the world you're creating.





Out of t

Across the world, thousands of people sit down every night with rule books, pen & paper, peculiarly shaped dice and little painted minatures. What started them all off? What moment of genius gave the world roleplaying games? Andrew Rilstone tells the tale...

It was 1971. A group of gamers arrived for their regular meeting in Dave Arneson's basement, expecting to play a Napoleonic wargame. But what Dave actually ran was a fantasy adventure set in his imaginary land by the name of Blackmoor Barony. Each player controlled a single fantasy character.

Although this wasn't the first time the gaming group had tried to inject some roleplaying into wargames, Dave later called *Blackmoor* 'the first fantasy campaign'. It's unlikely they realised at the time what they were starting.

Round about the same time another gamer, Gary Gygax, was writing the second edition of his mediaeval wargame *Chainmail*. Wargames traditionally used a single model to represent ten or a hundred men on a small-scale battlefield; *Chainmail* represented each soldier with its own model. Gygax says this was embryonic roleplaying: each model was a single soldier, so each soldier was potentially a character.

Chainmail's 'Fantasy Supplement' also made it the first game ever to allow players to field dragons and werewolves alongside knights and siege engines in their mediaeval battles. These armies could include heroes and wizards, the direct ancestors of the player characters of today's roleplaying games.

At this point, the story gets a little complicated. Dave Arneson started to use the *Chainmail* system to run his *Blackmoor* game, which up to that point seems to have been a 'kriegspiel'; that's to say, a wargame entirely adjudicated by the referee. *Chainmail* included rules for fighting in tunnels, which was apparently a feature of medieval siege-warfare, and Gygax thinks that this gave Arneson the idea of running an adventure set in an underground labyrinth. Arneson, on the other hand, reckons that in that very first game of *Blackmoor* players went into the catacombs beneath Blackmoor castle.

At any rate, Arneson's playing group liked the idea of underground adventures so much that one of them, Dave Megarry, went away and invented a complete board game based on the idea.

The game's name was *Dungeon.*

By 1972, all the ingredients are there. Dave Arneson is running a game set in a fantasy kingdom. Dave Megarry has written a board game in which heroes slay monsters and steal treasure in 'dungeons'. And Gary Gygax has designed rules for epic battles involving swords, sorcery and monsters. Ideas are converging. Something important is about to happen. You can almost hear an expectant hush in the air...

Gygax met Arneson at a games convention, and they began to correspond, swap ideas, play in each other's games and work together on a new game that would bring together the best elements of *Blackmoor, Dungeon!* and *Chainmail.*

This new game was published in 1974 and was described on the box as 'Rules for Fantastic, Mediaeval Wargames



le Closet

Campaigns, Playable with Paper and Pencil and Miniature Figures.' It was a modest little production; nothing more than a small box containing three duplicated pamphlets: 'Men and Magic'; 'Monsters and Treasure' 'Dungeon and Wilderness Adventures.' They called it *Dungeons & Dragons.*

Did they know what they were starting? Probably not. Wannabee games designers can take comfort from the fact that virtually every company in America turned the game down. Gygax went ahead and published it himself. In order to do this, he started his own games company, Tactical Studies Rules.

Originally *D&D* was extremely sparse and confusing. It assumed that you had a background in wargaming and knew *Chainmail.* There were only three character classes (Fighting Men, Magic Users and Clerics), and a very small range of monsters. If you wanted to play the game, you more or less had to invent your own house rules and variants: and this is what many gamers started to do.

Gary Gygax has always frowned on this. 'Nobody,' he has said, 'would take seriously an article proposing that land mines be added to chess.'

As the game's popularity spread, largely by word of mouth, Tactical Studies Rules put out official supplements for the game. *Greyhawk* (early 1975) introduced Thieves for the first time. *Blackmoor* (late 1975) brought in monks and assassins; druids arrived in *Eldritch Wizardry.*

Although some gamers look back nostalgically to this time when no two sets of *D&D* players could be assumed to be playing the same game, the truth was that *D&D* was becoming a muddle. By this stage, the game was very much Gygax's own baby – Arneson had left the company – so in 1976 Gygax set about editing the diffuse mass of disparate material into a coherent system. This ambitious project took three years to complete, and became the first edition of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons.*

Dave Arneson was not credited as co-creator in *AD&D,* and it was this that provoked him to start a legal action against Gary which was finally resolved in 1981. *Dungeons & Dragons* is now legally recognised as being the joint creation of Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

While Gary was working on *AD&D,* he also commissioned another games inventor, Eric Holmes, to produce an introductory version of the game. This was *Basic Dungeons & Dragons,* the form in which many of us encountered the game for the first time.

The big, glossy box contained an introductory rulebook that tried to boil the hugely complicated *D&D* down to just a few pages; an introductory scenario; and a bag of dice. It was probably the first product that most people who enjoy the hobby today would recognise as a roleplaying game.

It was 1977. An industry – some would say a way of life – was born.

Gary Gygax Says...

"As co-author of *Chainmail,* I had the duty of answering fan mail that the publisher of the work forwarded to me regularly. The book was selling well. The mail poured in. Several thousand enthusiasts were immersed in the fantasy aspect of miniature gaming... surprising news! Although the fact may have been only vaguely perceived as such at the time, this set of rules allowing one figure to represent one man was the breakthrough that led to the creation of the first roleplaying game."

Gary Gygax *(quoted from his book "Roleplaying Mastery")*

Dave Arneson Says...

"The first game that stands out in my mind is a little mediaeval game, a very dull period of war games. Dave Wesley had a dull set of rules, and we were bored. To spice it up, Dave gave each of us a little personal goal in the battle. Well, that kind of got us all thinking about "wasn't that neat". Someone said "Let's have a big mediaeval campaign, with half a dozen different people playing the little powers with fifty or sixty men: that way you're a knight or a king or whatever." And it developed from there. That got us into roleplaying. "

Dave Arneson *(quoted by Gary Alan Fine in "Shared Fantasy")*

the source

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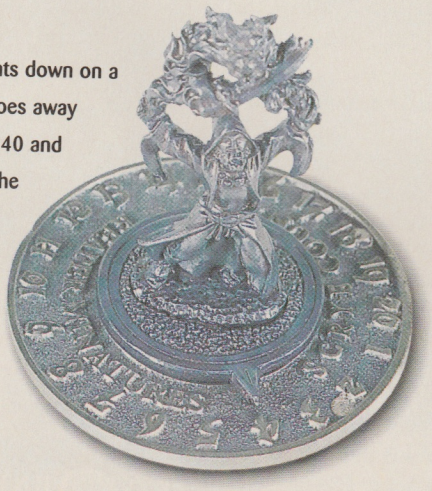

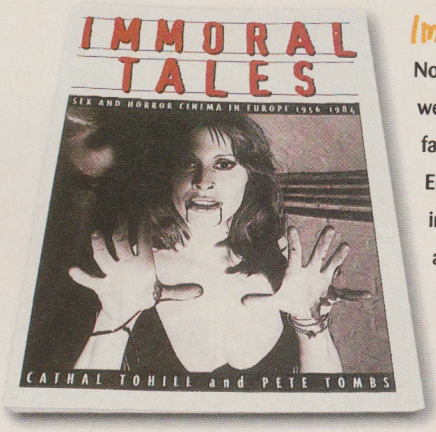

Immoral Tales

Not strictly gaming-related, we agree, but this fascinating history of the European horror film industry is packed with astonishing ideas (and pictures). Look for it in you bookshop.

Titan Books £14.99



Mana Packs

If the Scrye counter doesn't appeal then these mana packs are pretty good too. And you can use the counters on cards as well as for your own life...

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Belts and Buckles

Our jaws dropped. Drool collected in the corners of our mouths and fell, unheeded, on to our chests. Gold-plated *AD&D* belt buckles for £45! Blimey.

From TSR 01223 212517

Gold-plated belt buckle £44.99

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Belts, between £9.99 and £13.99



T-shirts, Calendars, Caps...

TSR make an astonishing quantity of merchandise and we got fed up of photographing it all. So we stuck the rest of it in a pile. Here it is.

From TSR 01223 212517

T-shirts £12.99 Sweat shirts £29.99 Posters £4.99

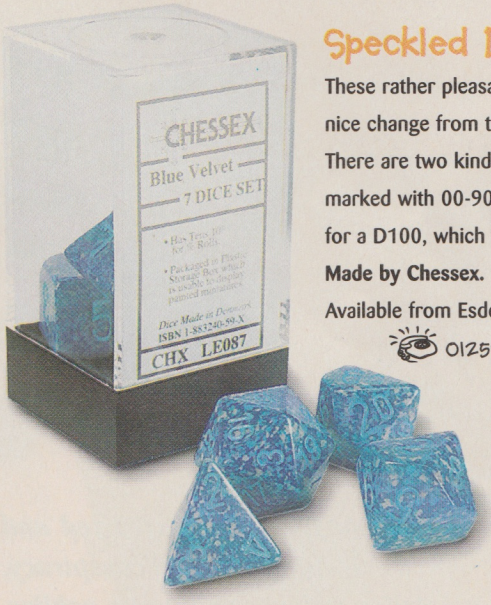
Caps £5.99 Calendars... oh, phone 'em and ask.





AD&D "Pogs"

Is there no end to the merchandising possibilities of *AD&D*? Apparently not. These are probably going to be available in the UK soon, but nobody seems quite sure who'll be importing them. Or what they are. We just thought we ought to warn you...



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These rather pleasant dice make a nice change from the ordinary sort. There are two kinds of D10, one marked with 00-90 to act as the tens for a D100, which we approve of.

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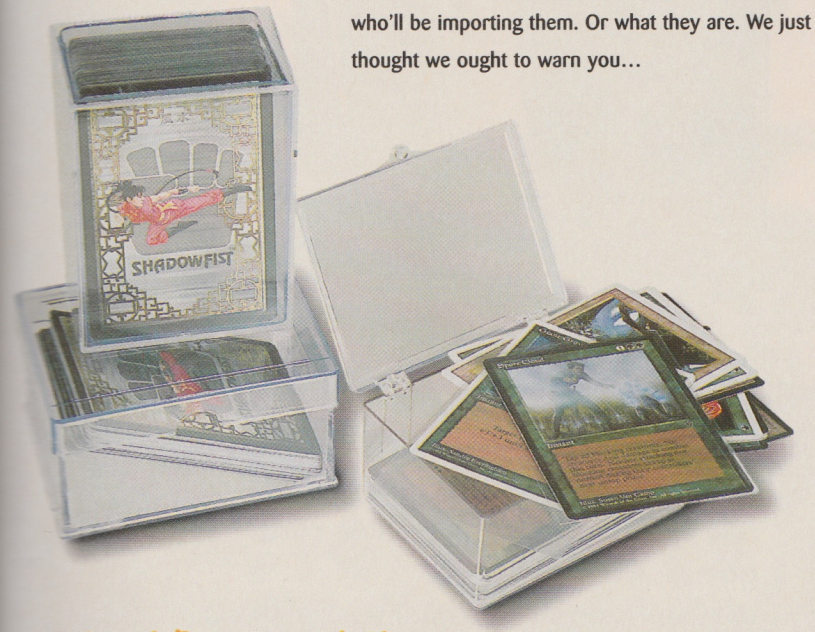

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Keep your cards safe and well organised with these boxes and plastic sleeves (or 'card condoms', as they're known).

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Neck Thongs, Key Rings and Badges

Actually, of all the things that TSR sent us, it's these that finally caught our collective eye. A couple of the neck thongs *aren't bad* (no, really) and are hardly indentifiable as *AD&D*-related at all.

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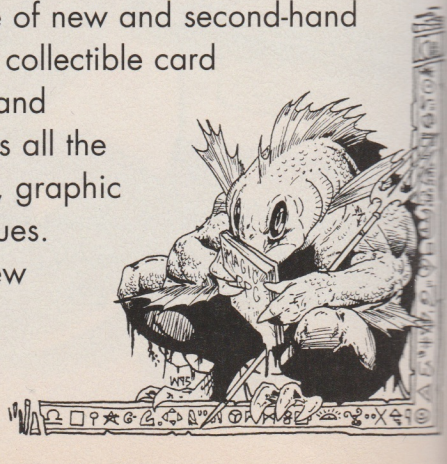

#1

The first in a series of collectable encounters presented in

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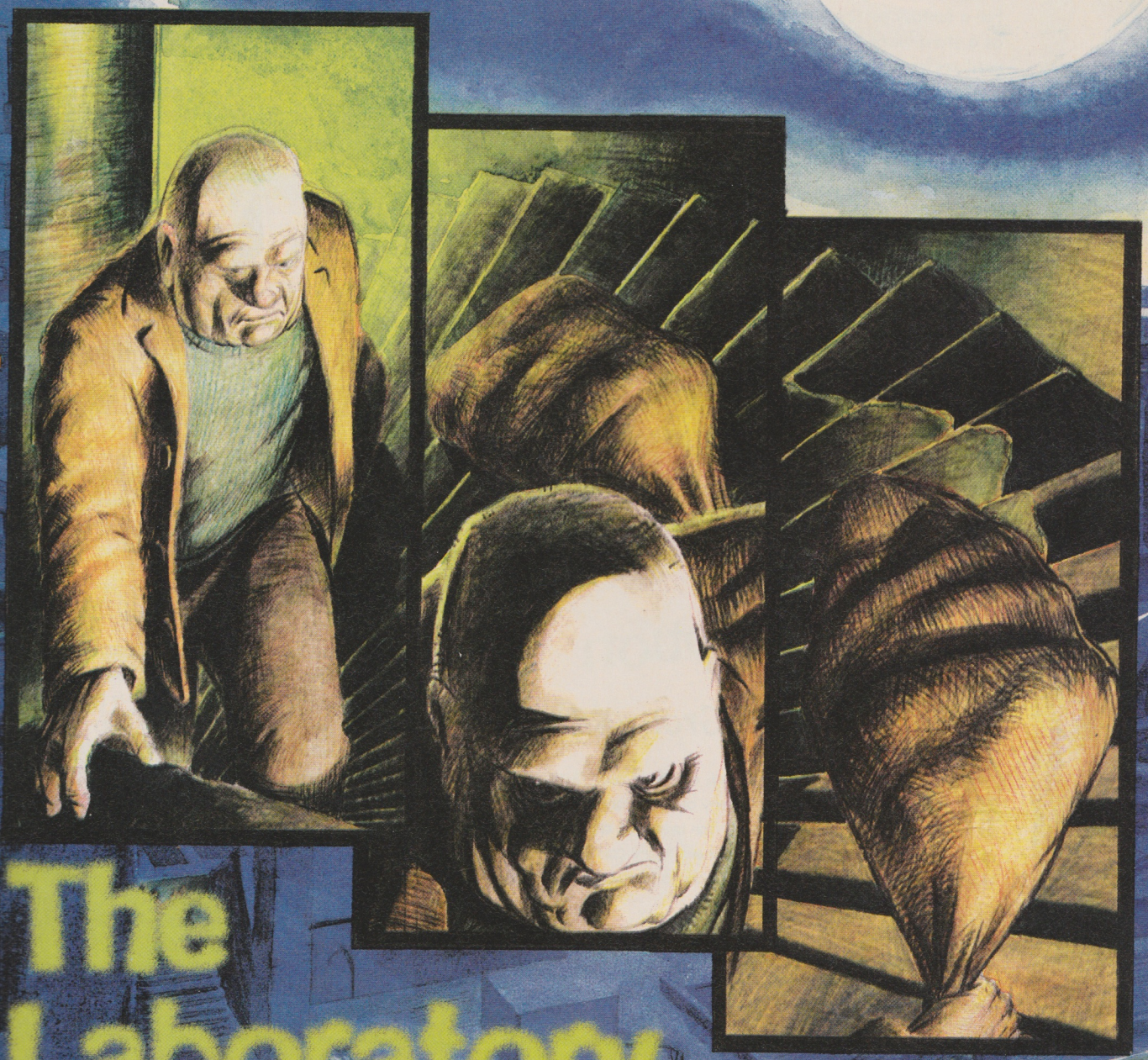


The Laboratory...

His evil monster has caused havoc throughout this otherwise ordinary city. It has taken you a long time to track his foul creation back to the lair it came from. Now you stand, weapon ready, outside the ominous edifice that is its home, ready to confront both the monster and its creator. So jemmy open the door and step gingerly through the eerily silent entrance hall. Welcome to the lab.

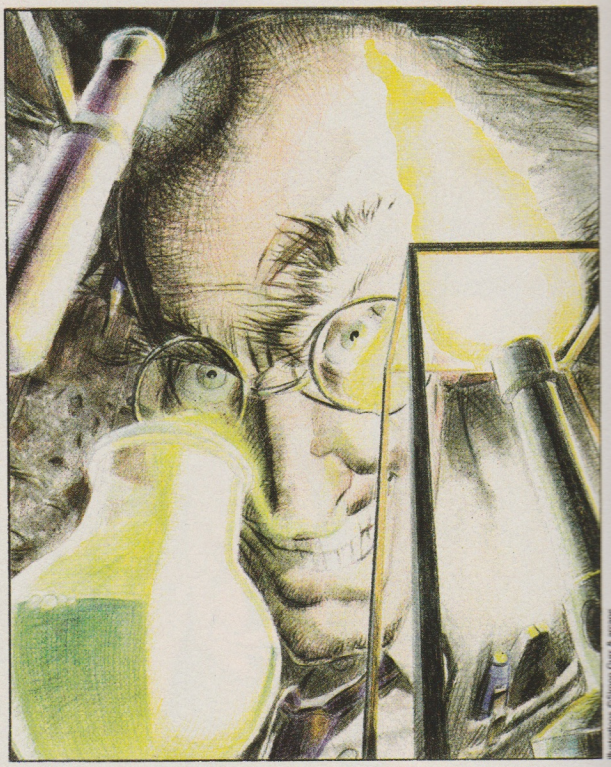


What lies behind the closed doors of the doctor's surgery? Read on...

The Doctor's apartments and laboratory are situated over two floors. One is at ground level and the other is in the basement. For a fantasy setting, you might wish to have the ground floor as a stand-alone building; in a more modern-day setting you might prefer it to be the ground floor of a larger house. The Doctor may have apartments upstairs, or in another part of the city – you decide.

The Doctor is a well-known specialist in the area and runs a practice from the first floor. It would be a good idea to introduce him to the players whenever one of them needs some special treatment for an injury. Other entry points into this encounter include having the players approached by concerned locals regarding the nocturnal habits of Klench; having bodies disappear from the graveyard in town, with the players being asked to investigate; or having the players witness some strange goings-on themselves.

Remember right from the beginning, though, that you can play this encounter two ways. The first is that the doctor is an evil character who is reanimating corpses à la Frankenstein, while the second is that he is merely pursuing a quest for knowledge. Burke and Hare, the two infamous London grave-robbers, were only providing parts for surgeons to investigate...



House description

Ground floor

Entrance Hall

The entrance to the house is through a sturdy door that would survive a lot of damage. It has a very old-fashioned and solid lock. The area contains a large pot for umbrellas and the like; a hat stand; a receptionist's desk where Mary can be found during the day; a pigeonhole for mail; and a circular carpet.

Waiting room

A fairly well-appointed room with a shelf full of books in a recess to the north-east. There are several chairs and a large table in the centre of the room. A fireplace is perfectly useable, but a fire is rarely lit due to the doctor's legendary meanness. As a consequence, the room is usually quite cold. The single sash window is securely locked every night by the conscientious Mary.

Consultation room

This is where the doctor meets his patients. Behind screens there is a comfortable couch on which the doctor carries out his examinations. During office hours, the doctor is ordinarily to be found seated behind his large desk and it is here that he will first interview patients. He keeps his medical records in a locked cabinet behind his desk. (These records may also be the source of many adventures...) The two sash windows in here are usually bolted by the doctor, unless he has something on his mind, in which case he can be absent-minded.

Office

The Doctor's office is where he spends any breaks he may have, and where he goes to do his paperwork after the surgery closes. The dominating feature is his large desk surrounded by bills and other miscellaneous bits of paperwork; invoices for

The System

You're a smart person, right? We don't need to patronise you with detailed rules on how to translate these people and events into your own system, do we? But just in case you're uncertain, here's a couple of tips. Whenever we do a character description (you'll find them all at the end), we'll say something like 'Doctor Bloggs has a fine, incisive mind and this is complemented by a strong, athletic body. As a child, however, he suffered from a rare lung disorder that means he has difficulty in sustaining effort. He is also prone to making rather impulsive decisions.' In game terms this would mean that Doctor Bloggs has above-average strength, intelligence and dexterity and below-average constitution and wisdom. Exactly how much above and below average is up to you and the strength of your party of adventurers. This is also the case in systems that use levels. Give the encounter's characters the sort of levels that will make them a challenge for your players. You'll find similar descriptions of all important physical objects, such as 'the door is paper-thin' or 'this glass is bullet-proof'. Now stop reading this wibble and get stuck in.









specialist equipment and drugs and so forth. The doctor actually spends most of his time in this room sitting by the fire and reading journals to keep up with current medical practice. The bookshelf contains many interesting books on the human (and inhuman, if you like) body. The other major item of interest in here is the medicine cabinet, which is stocked with a wide array of drugs suitable to your campaign. The doctor has experienced many attempted break-ins to this part of the house, and as a consequence the doors and windows are all kept firmly locked when nobody is here.

Kitchen

The kitchen is clean and sparse and rarely used. The doctor prefers to eat out. Klench eats what he forages. There's a good selection of knives knocking about in here, but little else to excite the experienced adventurer. The door to the kitchen is never locked. The window hasn't been opened in months and is consequently stuck shut. A really good shove would open it up immediately, though.

Toilet

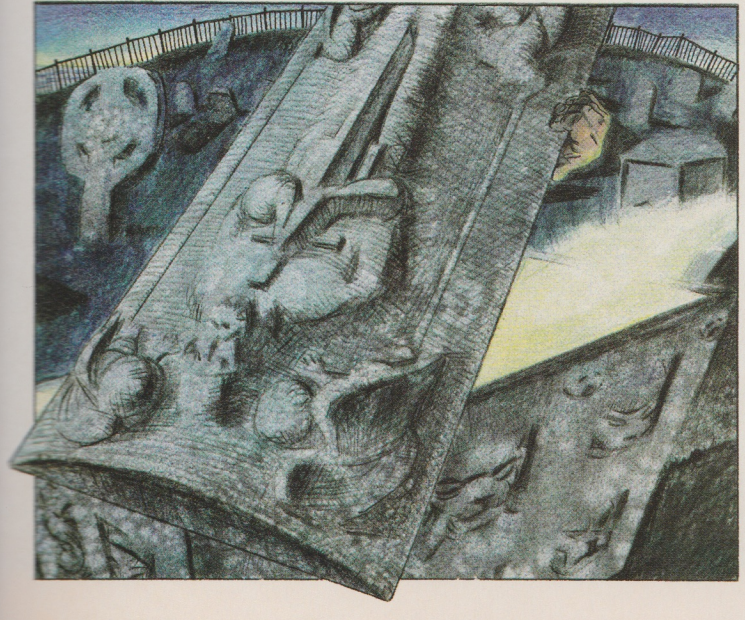
Always suffering from the number of patients (with all sorts of problems) who pass through here, the toilets are not the most pleasant experience. The windows in here are far too small for an ordinary human being to crawl through, but they might succumb to something smaller...

Hallway

It's a hallway, and there's not that much that you can say about a hallway. Except, perhaps, that as well as some pictures, it has a loose floor rug, which is always good for comic relief when rolling for chases. The back door to the alley behind the house is very secure, usually being bolted as well as locked.

Storeroom

Filled with miscellaneous cleaning equipment, the storeroom is usually locked, albeit with a very flimsy lock. A large chest full of old rags sits in the middle of the floor, which could prove to be just a little inconvenient, because it hides the stairway to the cellar below.



basement

Laundry area

This is the house's washroom. It has a flagstone floor, big sinks, a drying rack and a mangle. There's a shelf up against the door through to the rest of the basement which doesn't hide the door very well at all (it's not really meant to).

Coal store

Behind a huge pile of coal is Klench's simple bed. There are also a few scavenged personal effects here, although there is little of any real value.

Wine Store

Racks for several hundred bottles of wine run down both sides of this room, with only a smallish gap through the centre to walk through. There are only a very few bottles in here, though. Anybody searching may well be pleasantly surprised at the quality of the wines. The former owner of the house was a connoisseur who died before finishing all his wines. They have lain here undiscovered for several years, since the doctor and Klench have little interest in them.

Store Room

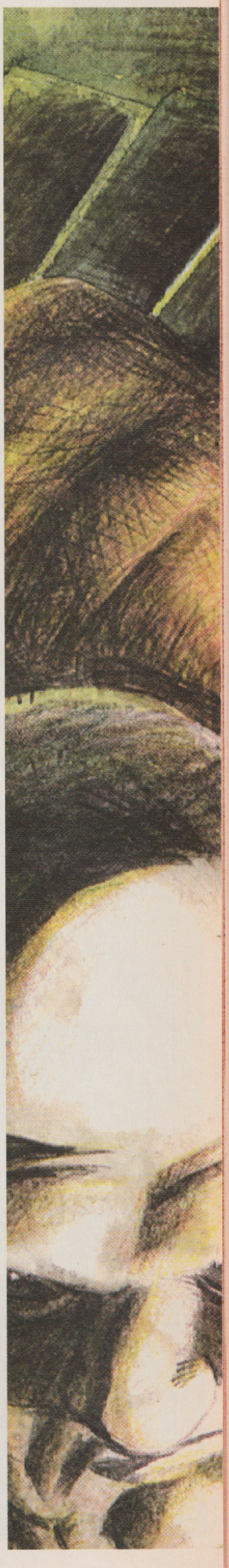
This is filled with old packing cases that equipment has arrived in, bits of broken equipment, cobwebs and dust.

The Laboratory

This location is the crux of the matter. When the players finally find themselves here, the scenario you are running will probably be resolved one way or the other. So have fun letting the suspense build up. Make sure everything's in darkness when they get here and they have to fumble about a bit first.
The south wall is all cupboards containing the doctor's notes and a variety of equipment suitable to your background. In the room itself, there's a trolley with equipment on it that can be wheeled around the operating table. This is surrounded by four lights on large stands (in a fantasy setting these can be permanent light magic spells) covered with black hoods. There's a round glass case containing a whole body in the north-west corner; or possibly it's a humunculus, or a kind of Frankenstein's monster. Running south along the west wall are shelves with other bits of bodies in jars. In the north-east corner is a bookshelf filled with valuable and rare books.

The various pieces of distilling equipment dotted around the room can be used for any purpose you think fit. Suggestions regardless of genre include; the manufacture of Zombie potions that destroy the will of the imbiber; revitalising potions that bring life back to corpses; alcohol (just in case the doctor's innocent); a revolutionary medicine that will be a panacea for all ills; and so on.

One important element not clearly visible on the map is the secret entrance that's hidden behind the palettes in the hallway from the coal cellar and laundry into the laboratory. This leads via a tunnel into a crypt at the nearby local cemetery. Klench dug it himself, and it's quite prone to collapse if used. This secret route comes out actually inside a sarcophagus. Klench removed that body first in his grave-robbing exploits (more by



luck than judgement). This secret entrance inside the graveyard means that even when the graveyard has been watched to see if anyone is stealing from graves, nobody has seen anything. Their mistake is to have watched the obvious entrances and exits to and from the graveyard. The likely upshot of this is that many will believe that there is some supernatural force at work abducting the bodies.

Don't forget there are two major possibilities here. As well as the very obvious "mad scientist in making monster" story, there's also thge possibility that the doctor could be a victim of the player's preconceptions. The woman screaming? Could just be the cleaner being terrorised by a rat in the cellar. The body in the glass jar? Possibly it is merely a medical sample that he's keeping for legitimate research. The hunchback's secret entrance into the graveyard? Might be the only way he can get to visit his love, the gravedigger's daughter, without her jealous father knowing. Everything does not have to be as it first appears.

Doctor Von Erhartz

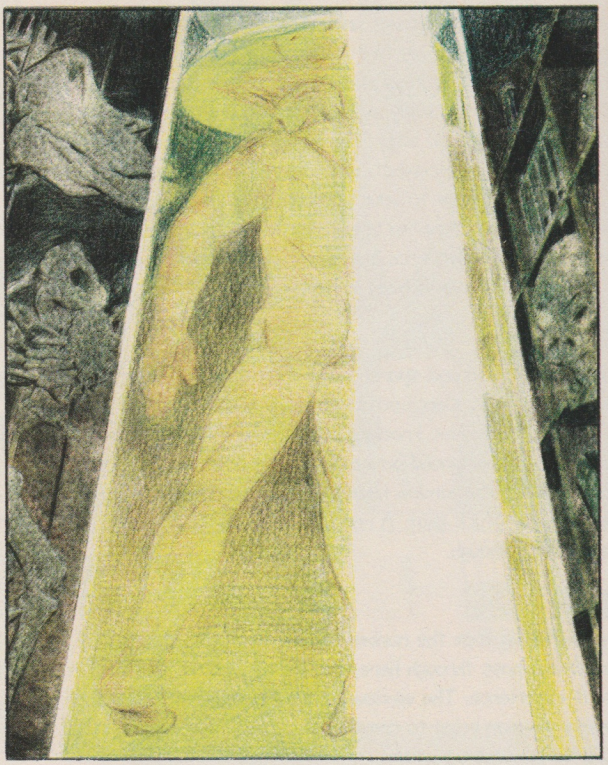
The doctor is an extraordinarily intelligent man with a great store of accumulated wisdom. His strength and constitution are poor; the referee may wish to portray him as having a consumptive cough. He tends to care little about his physical appearance, so the players may well find him untidy-looking and a bit musty-smelling. He is very well versed in necromantic arts; in a fantasy setting he will have strong magical abilities in the realms of reanimating the dead, and in any other setting he will be a scientist with an interest in the occult. As with all these things, the extent to which the doctor's actions are magical or scientific is up to the individual referee and his own campaign.

The doctor should be portrayed as a fairly kindly old man with a sinister air about him. Comments like "You catch the doctor looking at you strangely," or "The doctor stares off into space for a very long time, his eyes unfocus and he appears to go into a trance," may unnerve the players sufficiently when they encounter him.

Klench

The Doctor's sidekick, Klench, is a poor unfortunate that Von Erharz took in as a child. Klench is physically deformed and a little simple. Depending on how you decide to play this encounter, Klench can either be an evil hulking brute or a poor tortured unfortunate. Klench is tremendously strong, although a little simple and clumsy. He does all the heavy work around the





office and laboratory. He sleeps in the coal room. Klench can easily be portrayed as slightly sinister. Have him drool on the players; have him creep up behind them and grunt loudly. Klench is extremely proficient at moving quietly, having learned how as a survival technique on the streets. He is also possessed of a cheeky sense of humour that is easily misinterpreted.

Mary Harper

Mary is the doctor's receptionist and housekeeper. She is an intelligent but uneducated woman who turns a blind eye to some of the 'funny goings-on' at the surgery. Physically she is unremarkable in every way. She is very loyal to the doctor and would take a lot of convincing that something untoward is going on. Even when presented with evidence, her natural inclination is to 'not rock the boat'.

Frank Fullerson

Anybody who visits the doctor's surgery often enough will get to know Frank, even if only by sight. A rather pathetic-looking hypochondriac, Frank is nearly always sitting in the waiting room, snuffling away. Unknown to most people, Frank is actually the son of a very wealthy family. He trusts Doctor Von Erhartz implicitly and travels incognito a long way across town to see him. Every day. The money that Frank brings in is one of the main resources that the doctor has. Frank is pathetic himself, but is likely to take a shine to any adventurous-looking characters. The players may well find themselves listening to his torrent of medical problems.

Next month...

The Golden Dragon Inn. This fully-fleshed out environment is a place for adventurers from any era to use as a base for all their exploits, or to drop in to for a drink, a gossip or a fight.

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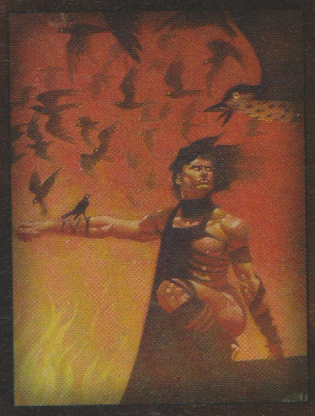



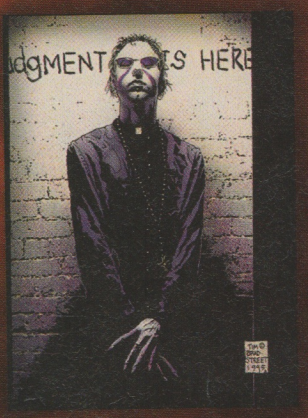





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Of Cartomancy

Learning to play Magic: The Gathering is relatively simple. Learning to build a playable deck can be slightly more difficult. If you're new to Magic and can't seem to get your cards to work together, Andy Butcher's here to show you how...

Magic: The Gathering presents new players with two very distinct challenges. The first of these is learning how to play the game, the second is learning how build a deck. Unfortunately, while the neat little manual that you get with the starter deck does an admirable job of teaching you the rules, it's far from informative on the subject of deck building. It's no surprise, then, that this seems to be the area that gives newcomers to *Magic* the most trouble.

The problem is really due to the nature of the game itself. Although the rules are quite structured and easy to get to grips with, deck building is the complete opposite. While playing a duel, on any given turn there are only so many things you can do, depending on the spells and lands you have available. But when you sit down to design a deck, the options are virtually limitless, even with a fairly modest selection of cards.

Of course, this freedom of choice is one of the very reasons for *Magic*'s success, and the source of the 'Simple strategies... Infinite possibilities' slogan on all the advertising. But it's also the reason why it's so hard to find any hard and fast advice on deck construction. With so many possible combinations, it's nearly impossible to say that something is always 'right' or 'wrong', and so much depends on personal taste and which cards you actually have. As such, what follows isn't an attempt to tell you how to build the ultimate 'killer' deck (if there is such a thing), but a series of pointers to help you create something balanced and playable.

In The Beginning

So, let's start with the basics. Firstly, decide how many cards you're going to use. Setting a limit right at the start is a good idea because it encourages you to consider you choices more carefully, and helps to avoid ending up with a deck so large that it's impossible to shuffle, let alone play with. Having loads of cards might seem like a good idea to start with, but it's actually counter-productive.

One of the keys to a successful *Magic* deck is consistency – getting the cards you want when you need them. The more cards you have the less consistent your deck will be, as you'll have less chance of seeing a specific card in a given duel. Having said that, although Magic allows as few as 40 cards, 60 is probably a better number. Not only does it allow for a little more variety, but if you ever feel the urge to start playing in tournaments, you'll already be used to building decks of the right size.

Life Is Colour

Next you should think about how many colours you want to play with, and which one(s). Single colour decks have the advantage of being relatively easy to play, but they're ultimately one-sided, inflexible and (worst of all) predictable. Each colour in *Magic: The Gathering* has specific weaknesses, and in a deck of just one colour these are exaggerated. In addition, single colour decks are also vulnerable to many spells, such as Circles Of Protection or those that destroy all of a certain type of land.

On the other hand, many-coloured decks are very hit and miss, as you'll rarely get the right type of lands to cast all the spells in your hand. The best



Cards like this make playing with a single-colour deck a risky proposition at best...



Red and black both work well with green, but will make very different decks. It's important to consider which colours suit your playing style.



compromise, then, is two colours. If you work at it, you can make one or three colours work, but they'll rarely be as effective as a good two-coloured deck.

Choosing which colours to play with is largely a matter of personal taste, playing style and the cards you have available. However, it's worth giving some thought to how the colours work together. Some combinations compliment each other, with one colour making up for the other's weaknesses, whereas others simply boost each others' strengths.

For example, say you want to use green as one of your colours. Green is very strong on creatures, and has some great creature enchantments as well. As such, red would be a good complimentary colour, as its strengths lie in direct damage spells like Fireballs and Lightning Bolts. Black, on the other hand, is also strong on creatures and creature enchantments, so it would simply boost green's already impressive strength in these areas.

Both approaches are valid, but it's important to appreciate the potential strengths and weaknesses of the decks they'll create. Nearly all the possible combinations of colours have something to be said for them, but some are definitely more useful than others and some are actually a bad idea (white and black, for example, are very hard to get to work together effectively).

The Foundations

With the colours and number of cards decided, it's time to start getting specific. Lands should come first. Although balancing the proportion of lands to spells is a subject worthy of an article in itself, starting off with a third lands is normally a good bet. Split these lands equally between your colours. For example, let's say that we're building a 60 card red and green deck. That means 20 lands, so the first thing to do is to count out 10 forests and 10 mountains.

Next choose your artifacts. As with so many aspects of building a deck, there are a couple of ways you can deal with this The first is to choose artifacts that will go some way towards balancing a weakness inherent to your choice of colours. Black and red decks, for example, are very popular as they combine some nasty creatures with good direct damage spells. However, neither black or red have any healing or damage prevention spells to speak of, so it might be an idea to use suitable artifacts to counter this.



Throne Of Bone allows a black deck to actually gain some life, balancing the colour's host of destructive powers.

Alternatively, you could do the opposite, and choose artifacts that simply add to your colour's strengths. The important thing, though, is not to go overboard. Artifacts can provide useful powers and effects, but the core of your deck should be based on the colours you've chosen (unless, of course, you're building an artifact deck, but that's another matter altogether).



Bigger is not always better. They might not be huge, but Scryb Sprites are one of green's most powerful creatures.



Deciding between these two cards isn't very difficult, but comparing each card with others of a similar cost is the way to spot the best value for mana.



Pass My Pointy Hat

Finally we come to the real nuts and bolts of *Magic*, the spells. Again, the simplest way to organise these is to split them evenly between the colours.

So, in our example red and green deck, assuming we chose four artifacts, that leaves us with 36 cards to choose to make the numbers up to 60, or 18 of each colour. Furthermore, it's a good idea to try and split these fairly evenly between creatures and 'other' spells. Creatures are the single most effective way to deal damage to your opponent, so it's important that you have enough of them. Breaking the example down further, we're going to need nine creatures of each colour and nine 'other' spells of each as well.

Here Be Dragons

When choosing your creatures, don't fall into the trap of only picking the biggest, toughest and nastiest monsters that you own. Powerful creatures are all very well, but they're useless until you've played enough lands to pay their summoning costs.

Small, cheap creatures may not provoke the same level of fear in your opponent, but you can get them into play and start dishing out damage much earlier. Try to limit yourself to a couple of biggies per colour, and make up the numbers with a mix of small and medium creatures.

Likewise, don't go overboard on walls – they're usually nice and cheap, but as they can't attack they're essentially passive and won't actually hurt your opponent. By all means pick a couple, but try to go for ones like the Wall Of Fire (A red 0/5 wall that gets +1/0 for every point of red mana you put into it) or the Carnivorous Plant (a green 4/5 wall), that can at least kill or damage the creatures they block.

Also, be sure to compare different creatures and their casting costs, and pick the ones that offer the most for the least. Consider the different special abilities some creatures have, and whether or not they're worth the extra casting cost.

Above all, don't underestimate the usefulness of flying creatures. For example, in our green and red deck, we're going to have nine creatures of each colour, which would probably break down as a couple of toughies, four wimps and three mediums for each colour. For the red wimps, we'd be a lot better off choosing Goblin Balloon Brigades than Mons Goblin Raiders. Both are 1/1 creatures costing 1 red mana to summon, but the Balloons can fly for a turn at the cost of 1 red mana and are thus much better 'value'.

I Kan Spell

When you get round to it, choosing your sorceries and enchantments is a similar process – be sure to include a mix of cheap, medium and expensive spells, as well as a mix of types. In both cases, always consider each card both on its own merits, as well as considering how the different spells and creatures will

work together. There's little reason to have a card that gives all Goblins +1/+0 unless you have several Goblins in your deck.

Likewise, unless you're constructing the deck for a specific purpose (such as demolishing your friend's black and blue creation that pasted you last night), be wary of spells and creatures that have restricted targets or uses. Creatures that can't attack unless your opponent has islands in play aren't much use against someone playing without blue, unless you have some way of giving them an island.

Come On Then

Once everything's been chosen there's only one way to test your design, and that's to play with it, preferably against as many people as possible. What works against your best friend might not even scratch a player with a different deck and a different style, and it's important to see how your creation fares against various combinations of colours.

Only by playing can you see where the weaknesses in your deck lie, and then alter your deck to solve them. If you never seem to have enough land, either swap a few spells for some more lands, or try choosing some cheaper spells, and vice versa. And if you notice a key weakness, try replacing some cards to make up for it, and so on. This kind of fine tuning can turn an average deck into a great one, but be patient and don't change several elements of the deck at once. Try one alteration and then play a couple of games to see how it affects the balance of the deck. If the problem persists, or worse still a new one arises, try another change.

By observing the way a slight change in card mix can modify how a deck plays, you'll learn a lot more about deck design than if you simply start again from scratch. Only if your deck fails miserably time after time should you scrap it and build a new one...



Is it better to be able to attack, or do you need more effective blockers? Choosing between cards like these is what fine tuning your deck is all about. Playing is the only way to test your decisions.



The advantage of this structured method of deck building is that it helps you to create a fairly balanced deck, and forces you to think about the cards you're going to use and what role they'll play. However, once you've played a few games you'll probably start to realise that a less rigid structure can be more useful. For example, let's stick with the green and red deck. Having nine creatures and nine 'other' spells of both colours is perfectly playable, but it's possible to make more of each colour's strengths. You might want to try increasing the number of green creatures, and lowering the number of green spells, while doing the opposite with your red cards. In this way you keep the same number of creatures in the deck, but take advantage of green creatures' generally low casting costs. Likewise, you keep the same number of spells, but you also allow yourself more of red's great direct damage cards.

On The Edge

As you gain more experience, you'll find yourself experimenting with even more extreme mixes of cards. A recent tournament winning deck contained only two ways of doing damage to the other player – a pair of Serra Angels (White 4/4 flying creatures that don't tap when they attack). Every other card in the deck was geared towards defence, making the player almost invulnerable to harm. This is an extreme example, but it does demonstrate clearly the advantages that can be gained from being more fluid in your designs.

Above all though, be prepared to have a bit of fun when you start playing *Magic* and don't mind too much if you happen to lose the majority of your early games to more experienced players. All that ignominious defeat will teach you much more than repeatedly winning ever could.



The Serra Angel might seem expensive, but it's special abilities make it a handy card in *any* white deck.

The wizards speak

When we asked them what advice to give new players, Forbes Manson of Wizards Of The Coast's customer support had this to say:

"The first thing for beginning players to do is to look at how many lands they have - when you haven't got many cards lands are the limiting factor, and you'll have to play with the colours that you have enough lands to support. If you've got enough lands to have a choice of which colours to use, just pick the ones that appeal to you. No colour is any better than another, they just have different strengths and weaknesses. Having said that, blue is probably the toughest to learn to play, as lots of its spells require you to understand the timing rules.

"Play as much as you can, against as many people as you can. Watch what people do and when they do it, and try to learn from them. If someone does something that you really don't understand, or that seems pointless, ask them to explain it. You'll find that nearly all *Magic* players are very helpful and will happily give you as much advice as you ask for, either while playing or in-between games.

"Finally, start trading as soon as you can, especially with experienced players who have a lot of cards. Don't be afraid to trade away any rare cards. Lots of people think that rare cards are better than others, but that's not true - common cards are often more useful, especially when you're just starting out. An experienced player will normally offer ten or more common cards for a single rare one, as they'll have more copies of them than they can use. Some will even give away lands if you ask them. Later on, when you've got more cards, you can always get the rare cards back by trading, but to start with you need those basics. Before you trade, though, always have a look at a price guide in a magazine or chat to an experienced player that you can trust."

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arcane reviews

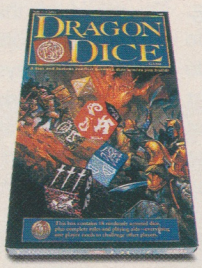
The judgement starts here...

We know you. You're the kind of person who is keen to know what's new in the shops, but you don't want to waste your money on rubbish. You want to find out what's worth buying; and what's totally great. So every month we're going to set you up with a complete guide to every new gaming release, from whole roleplaying systems to the latest expansions for collectable card games.

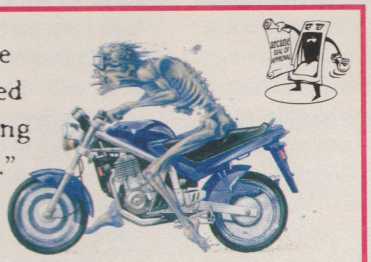
Our reviews are written by experienced gamers and independent, professional journalists; people who play the games you do. We're not owned by a games company, and we can't be bought by bribery or by advertising revenue. So if you want to read definitve reviews of games and expansions, you've come to the right place. Welcome to **arcane.**

(And while you're here, a note about prices. A lot of stuff reviewed in **arcane** is imported from the USA by a number of different distributors, so the prices we've given must be viewed as guidelines only. Ah, the joys of a free market...)

"It's hard to imagine two conflicts ever being the same."
Dragon Dice
Page 62



"These rules are carefully designed to drive storytelling and roleplaying."
Feng Shui
Page 30



The icons

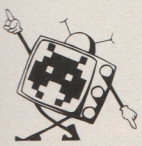
Each review in **arcane** is identified with a rather nifty icon showing what kind of game it is. Here's what they mean:


Roleplaying systems


Collectable card games and expansions


Board games, miniature systems


Dice games and expansions


Computer games and utilities


Books and supplements

The Scores

Everything reviewed in **arcane** gets a mark out of 10. Here's a guide to what the individual marks represent...

Score 10/10 Perfect. There's simply nothing better.
Score 9/10 Excellent; a classic. Highly recommended.
Score 8/10 Very good, with few problems. Recommended.
Score 7/10 Good, but not exceptional.
Score 6/10 Above average, but not without problems.
Score 5/10 Average, or a mixture of good and bad.
Score 4/10 Below average, but not without merit.
Score 3/10 Poor, crucially flawed in some way.
Score 2/10 Very poor; should be avoided.
Score 1/10 Appallingly bad, no redeeming features at all.

arcane seal of approval

Every month we pick just one thing and say: we think you should buy it. It's going to make us argue with each other, but we'll do it. For you.



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Necromunda



£39.99 | Games Workshop | 01773 713213 | Out now



games workshop step firmly into the third dimension with a new game that will embroil you in inner-city firefights...

Necromunda is the latest miniatures-based tabletop battle game from Games Workshop. It's a spawn of the *Warhammer 40,000 Universe* and the family resemblance is marked, but this time there's a rumble in the concrete jungle. And fortunately, you're in the thick of it.

Necromunda is a hive world with an image problem: A place where the entire planetary population is crammed into the futuristic equivalent of Tower Hamlets. A Tower Hamlets that is ten miles high. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time. While the architect slopes off to another part of the galaxy to be showered with awards, Necromundans are starting to rue the loss of community spirit associated with living in this sort of monstrous carbuncle.

It's a sad fact of life, but if people can't gather in the local post office for a chat about the weather, they're inevitably going to start blowing each other's heads off. And this sort of pastime is never more fun than when you do it in a gang.

Thus, you find yourself controlling a gang in the underhive; the wrong side of the Necromundan tracks that makes South Central LA look like Surbiton. You're a bunch of tough hombres who fancy themselves a bit. So you and the brothers are out in the Bad Zones lookin' to earn some respect. Loosely translated: you and your hired thugs are going to use any old excuse to pick a fight with some like-minded fellows and maim each other.

You owe vague allegiance to a House of the feudal persuasion. This influences your gang's combat style and, more importantly, what your miniatures are going to look like. In the box you get miniatures that represent two of these gangs; the Goliaths and the Orlocks.

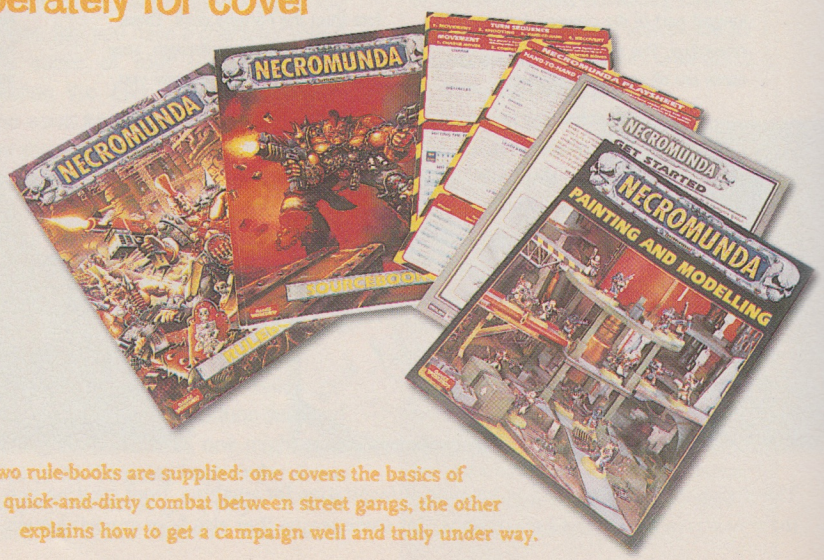
The Goliaths, beautifully stripped and oiled, are your traditional steroid-pumping meatheads. Brute strength and ignorance is their strong suit.

The Orlocks, on the other hand, are basic, honest-to-goodness, salt-of-the-earth street thugs who sport a natty line in bandanas, leathers and strategically placed wristbands.

Four other gangs are also described in the game: the techno-boffin Van Saars; the shifty Delaques; the lip-smacking, plum-squeezing all-girlie Escher gang; and the Cawdors, brothers of redemption who purge infidels. Apparently metal renditions of all these gangs will appear in boxed sets and blister packs over the next few months, with the Cawdors and

"There's nothing more satisfying than watching a wounded piece of scum crawl desperately for cover"

Games Workshop (GW) are the UK's most successful fantasy gaming company with shops all over the country, but they are not to be confused with American roleplaying games manufacturers Games Designers' Workshop (GDW).



Two rule-books are supplied: one covers the basics of quick-and-dirty combat between street gangs, the other explains how to get a campaign well and truly under way.

Orlocks already available. The rulebook and figures in the box describe a wide range of weaponry with which your gang can be tooled up. Once you're packing heat, you're ready to rumble.

At its core, *Necromunda* is a fairly simple skirmish game. Gangs weigh in at around ten models a side and fight fast, bloody, dirty little firefights. The gameplay during battle is almost pure *Warhammer 40,000*, the mechanics having been tweaked in order to magnify the level of detail to more accurately represent the personal nature of the conflict. So now, weapons can run out of ammo (aargh!) and hits may only inflict flesh wounds, leaving a combatant down, seething with inner rage, but not out.

Essentially, though, it's the same formula of tape measures, generic stats for categories of troopers, and Mister D6 playing the fickle finger of fate.

It's an easy system to learn. The rules are presented clearly and digestion is aided by a generous measure of diagrams. Further, its a system that works. It results in well-paced, balanced encounters that evoke the imagery of the source material, especially when played over the three dimensional hive terrain provided. This network of buildings and gantries enables you to construct an alluring yet lethal killzone that suits the miniatures well.

Dammit! I can't deny it any longer: it's also a corking concept. I like the idea of being embroiled in a vicious, bloody firefight over a piece of wasteland. I even found myself becoming emotionally involved with my gangsters. A rather vulgar state of affairs.

On a number of occasions I found my carefully conceived tactics breaking down as I sent an ill-equipped gangster haring across a gantry to bail out a brother, isolated from my gang and receiving a mugging from gleeful rivals. And there's nothing more satisfying than watching a wounded piece of scum crawl desperately for cover, before popping him with a solid slug from a shotgun.

What's more, the game doesn't have to end when the last bloke who dissed your Auntie is greased. A large part of the material that comes in the game deals with the Necromundan campaign system: yes, by stringing together a series of delinquent acts of extreme violence you can advance your gang to a high level. Thus it transpires that *Necromunda* is a chimera, made not only of *Warhammer 40,000* but also of the choicest cuts from the still-warm corpse of *Blood Bowl*. This provides a sleek, simple experience points system which gains your gangsters new skills and abilities without clogging up the gameplay. It can also provide back-up in the form of hired guns such as Scouts and Bounty Hunters.

During a campaign, you start to carve out your own turf and must prevent competitors from muscling in. Further, your various rackets draw in an income which can be used to buy more exotic equipment and weaponry. This introduces a strategical element to *Necromunda*. Certain skills and equipment which seem pointless in the basic game become vital in the scenarios of a campaign.

This brings us to the hazard warning. The *Necromunda* you truly want to play isn't really the *Necromunda* you have in the box. To play the ultimate *Necromunda* you'll soon be investing in new gangs, special gang members in blister packs and the inevitable, essential supplement: *Outlanders*. Rest assured, *Necromunda* will be given more support than Manchester United. Just be prepared to get in deep.

Mark Donald

Score 8/10

So what's in the box?

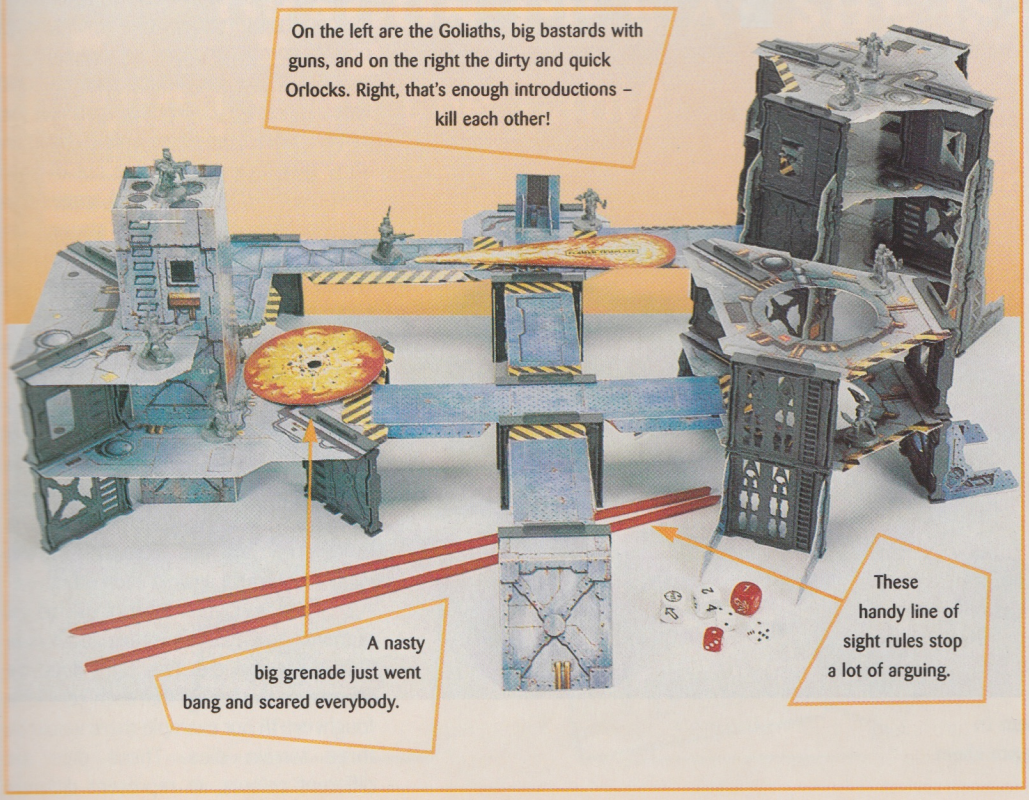
The phrase usually on Games Workshop's lips at the time of a major product release is 'it was so huge we were worried it might not fit in the box'. Well, ye cannae change the laws of physics, but they've managed to cram it all in once more. You do, in fact, receive a fair haul of kit for your £39.99, considering the going rates. Twenty-four high-quality plastic miniatures with a good selection of weapon fits, the necessary array of counters, dice and templates, plus the main draw: the lavish full-colour cardboard building and gantry network complete with bulkheads. The rules and rich source material arrive in the form of two comprehensive manuals: one that charitably explains the best methods to deal GBH to your opponents, and another that reveals how you may prolong the pleasure in a campaign.

We've heard a rumour that Robin Williams is a very keen player of *Warhammer 40,000*. Well, Robin, you'll like this one too. Three four.

Another confusion to get out of the way is that Games Workshop no longer make *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. That game is currently published by Hogshead Publishing.

BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!

Necromunda's mean streets



Dragon Dice

£6.99 | TSR | 01223 212517 | Released in December

play TSR's new collectable game? I'd rather die. Aha ha ha.

So there was this world, right? And the elemental powers decided to populate it with some elves and some dwarves. So they did. And all was peace and harmony, until Death got annoyed with everything being so lovey-dovey and decided to create two races of his own; the goblins and, er, some other elves.

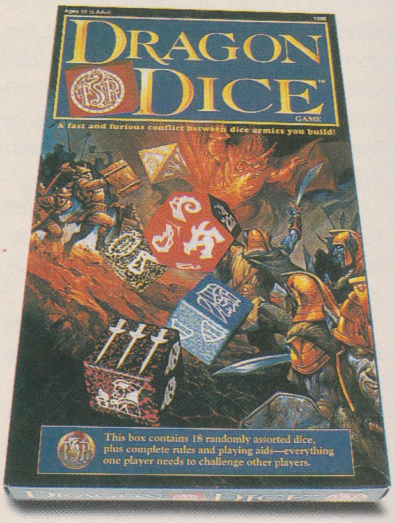
And the original, coral elves and the dwarves started fighting the goblins and the upstart lava elves and everything degenerated badly until every hand was turned, one against the other.

And that's where you come in: as commander of a rag-tag army made up of any combination of the four races, you face up to anybody who wants a fight.

Each of the six-sided dice supplied with *Dragon Dice* represents a unit in your army. There are four colours of dice – one for each of the races – and three sizes. The smallest dice are one-point units, the middle dice are two-point units, and the largest dice are three-point units. The points represent how much damage you need to do in order to kill a unit.

On the six faces of each die are symbols that represents that die's abilities. One face always has an icon that represents the unit type; some unit types are spellcasters, others are cavalry, others are infantry troops, and so on. The other five faces of each die represent things which that particular unit can do.

An elven infantry unit die will typically have three faces that represent combat, one for movement and one for missile fire. A dwarven infantry unit would have exactly the same, except that instead of a missile icon, it would have a shield. A Goblin spellcaster, in addition to its icon, has three faces for spellcasting, one for combat and one for movement.



Each race has fifteen different unit types, and the collectable part of the game comes from being able to build an army to a total points value out of your available dice. You can build armies that are strong on magic, strong on movement, strong on missile attacks or strong on mêlée. Or you can try various balances in between.

Once your army is settled, you can begin to play. Your army is divided into three groups for three terrains; your home army, your campaign army and your horde army. Your opponent does the same and the two armies square up to each other; your home army against his horde army, and vice versa, and the two campaign armies against each other.

There is another kind of die, as yet unmentioned, that I must talk about now. This the terrain die. This eight-sided die represents the terrain that each conflict is fought on; in our example there would be three terrain dice. These dice are different colours, to represent different

Some of the fighting units in *Dragon Dice* have special abilities that are represented by unique symbols. Some can fly, for instance, while others have counter-attacks that take effect immediately and yet others have cantrips; spells that can be cast in the middle of combat.



And this is what you get for your money. The bag (allegedly a collector's item in itself), the rules, a reference sheet and a collection of dice.

terrain; each race has a 'home' terrain that gives them an advantage. The terrain die is numbered from one to eight, each number representing a range. The range of each conflict is set at the beginning of the game by rolling the dice; low numbers are magic, middle numbers are missile and high numbers are melee (there's an icon showing this). The eighth side is one of four types of building, control of which confers a special ability to the victor.

The object of the game is to move two of the three dice to the eighth face. This is done by manoeuvring. On your turn, you may attempt to move a terrain die. You roll all your army dice at that location and add up the number of manoeuvre icons you get; then your opponent does the same and, if you win, you move the die up one; get it to eight and you win control of it.

As well as these manoeuvres, you can take actions. These are governed by the state of the terrain die; you can only cast magic at a terrain die with the appropriate symbol; you can only use a missile attack at a terrain die with the appropriate symbol; and so on.

All actions are resolved in the same way as the manoeuvres are, with you throwing all your dice and adding up the appropriate icons to see how much damage you do, or how many magic points you generate, or whatever.

One final thing to explain is dragons. These are represented by special 12-sided dice and can be summoned by magic and placed at any terrain. They then act as a random factor, attacking every army present at that terrain until they are either defeated, or fly away.

Now I know I've taken up a lot of this review to explain what happens rather than telling you how good *Dragon Dice* is, but that's because it's a new concept. And as such, it's fantastic. Initial criticisms I had about the incomprehensibility of some of the colour schemes and icons have rapidly faded as I learned to recognise everything very quickly.

"I just want this game to catch on, so that I get plenty of opponents"

Here's a bonus for ya: some free promotional Dragon Lords. These fearsome generals are four-point monsters with the ability to tame dragons and cast cantrips. **arcane** has 100 of these beauties to give away – check out the Despatches section for details.

Dragon Dice can be played by more than two players. The basic rules are exactly the same, but up to three armies may contest a single terrain.

And the players said...

CHRIS: "It's a unique strategy game, but the symbols should have been standardised."

ANDY: "I don't know if there's enough strategic depth to make it last."

STAN: "I loved it. Let's have another go."

PAUL: "I'm confused."

So the long and the short of it is that this really is a superb game. The strategies available are virtually limitless and, in common with other great games, it's hard to imagine two conflicts ever being the same. There will now have to be a place kept in my ever-present shoulder bag for a set of *Dragon Dice* to go beside the obligatory *Magic* deck.

I just want this game to catch on so that I get plenty of opponents...

Steve Faragher

Score 9/10

DRAGON DICE AS SHE IS PLAYED

Laying it on the table



Coral elves guard my home: the terrain dice (at the top) is a coastline, which suits them.



My campaign army is composed of goblins.





My horde is composed of dwarves and lava elves. The black dice is a nasty ol' dragon who's hanging around.



Home



Campaign



Horde

Vampire: The Eternal Struggle

In the game you are a super-powerful vampire known as a 'Methuselah'. The original Methuselah was an Old Testament patriarch, reputed to have lived for 969 years.



Starter Deck £6.75 **Booster Pack £2.20**

Wizards of the Coast 0141 226 5666 **Out now**

so finally it's here; Jyhad is reborn as vampire: TES. But have the changes really made all that much difference?

ampire: the Eternal Struggle is the re-launch of *Jyhad*, a collectable card game of former times in which players, acting as ancient vampires, control packs of young vampires. These minions could be equipped with cards and could attack other players until only one player remained.

Calling a game about vampires *Jyhad* was a mistake. It didn't tell players what the game was, and it allegedly hurt sales in Israel. And then there's the often-reported problem that players were finding the game took too long to play.

Wizards of the Coast are taking the opportunity to re-release the game with a new name and to put in some new rules, too. So how has it all worked out?

Well, we'll look at the rules changes first. Wizards have introduced two new elements to counter the criticisms of the game. The first is the new basic rules system, and the second is a set of optional rules designed to speed up play.

The basic rules system is designed to help introduce new players to the game more quickly and make everything easier. To this end, several cards must be removed from your deck. These are the cards that deal with difficult concepts, such as prolonged combat between vampires, or 'torpor', a state into which vampires go when badly damaged until they are either destroyed or rescued by another vampire.

This extraction of the trickier bits certainly does make the game easier to explain and play (although the two novices I played a game with still found it pretty hard going). It also has an unfortunate side effect, in that it bars about a third of the cards from the game, so if you and a friend have just bought two starter decks and sit down to play, you'll find that by the time you've removed the necessary cards you'll be left with hardly enough to play.

Wizards seem to have come up with a novel method of pre-empting any basic rules questions, too; namely a sentence that reads 'If you encounter any cards that do not seem to work under this set of rules or seem overly confusing, remove them as well'. Ah. That's that sorted, then.

The optional rules that come with the new, revised edition are intended to

THOSE DIFFERENCES IN FULL...

Plus ça change...

The first difference is that Wizards are no longer printing their cards exclusively through Carta Mundi in Belgium. The new *Vampire* decks are printed in America. As far as I can tell there's no difference at all between the quality of the two types of cards.



The text has been changed on most cards in an attempt to clarify some rules questions, and the background colours of some cards have been changed for the same sensible reason. This last change is particularly welcome, since it makes sorting out what kind of cards you have much simpler. All the changes are of the subtle variety, though.

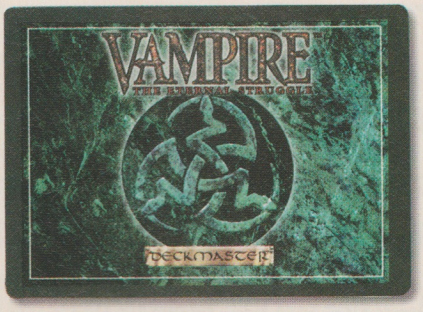
And the players said...

GIDEON: "It was good, but it won't keep me away from the football."

ANDY: "Still the most complicated and one of the most satisfying card games."

JON: "*Vampire* is certainly fun, but take a good book to read between turns."







speed up play, and that they do very effectively, although they revolve around giving each player's vampires the ability to do more damage than before, whether to each other or to the players.

As for everything else... well, it all stays pretty much the same. Wizards say there may be a couple of cards dropped, but they refuse to be drawn on which. The advanced rules are just the same as they were and the mix of cards will stay the same.

So there's really only a cosmetic change here. You can't blame Wizards for that. Among some players, *Jyhad* was tremendously popular; but if they're hoping to gain for *Vampire* the same sort of broad acceptance that *Magic* has achieved, then I think they've failed.

"the sense of being involved in a diabolic death struggle is brought over excellently"

There's some consolation in the fact that at least they haven't ruined the strong game that already existed. *Vampire* has one of the most satisfying story-telling atmospheres of any card game I've ever played, and the sense of being involved in a diabolic death-struggle is brought over to the player excellently.

Vampire is also the most intriguingly political card game I've played, with factions and alliances being formed and broken throughout the game. I just feel that Wizards could have achieved a better re-working of the rules.

Steve Faragher

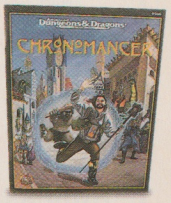
Score 7/10

The first expansion pack for *Vampire: TES* is *Dark Sovereigns*, which should be out in the very near future.

Chronomancer

Timewasting characters for AD&D

£9.99 TSR 01223 212517 Out now



Steven Hawking says time travel must be impossible, or we'd meet tourists from the future. Thumbing its nose at this theory, *Chronomancer* sets up a wizard class that specialises in leaping around in time and not being seen.

The chronomancer's spell list seems underpowered at first, yet its true power (spookily in character, this) only becomes apparent after time. Far sooner than non-specialist mages, chronomancers get their hands on serious spells that, when used precisely, cause major carnage. The third-level Minor Paradox, for example, messes with the present by changing some seemingly insignificant thing in the past.

Such spells are dangerous, and the referee is offered control over their impact by the manual's split player/ref structure. Secondary spell descriptions are provided for the referee's benefit and open up some truly entertaining roleplay possibilities: when a chronomancer tries a new spell, he has only a rough idea of its ramifications.

With such a complex idea as messing with time there are inevitably grey areas, and this may discourage some from dabbling; but those who dare will be rewarded with a game in which both the PCs and the referee can be truly surprised.

Trenton Webb **Score7/10**

Lost Trinity

An Episode Script for Immortal: The Invisible War

£17.99 Precedence 001 602 8941812 Out now



Lost Trinity is the second scenario for *Immortal: The Invisible War*, and like the previous scenario, *Dream Stroke*, it has a dreamlike quality. In general, *Immortal* is a weird, atmospheric game with a richer background than *Vampire* or *Nephilim*. The system is quite easy, but it is not a beginner's game because of its heavy reliance on jargon and odd concepts.

The presentation of all *Immortal* products is stunning and this is no exception, with 17 full-colour prints, a colour map and a wonderful CD →

Dungeon Master Option: High-level Campaigns

£11.99 TSR 01223 212517 Out now

why did alexander weep when he saw there were no more worlds to conquer? because he knew he'd have to get the d6 out and start from scratch. again!

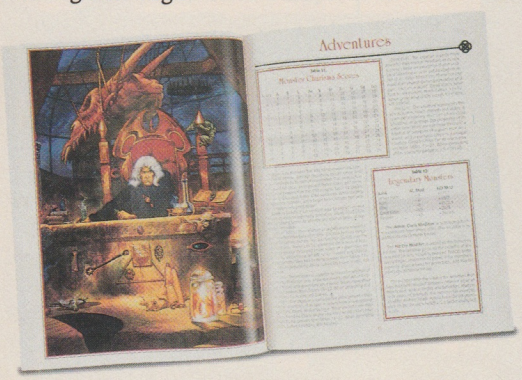
The *AD&D* system has a fundamental flaw: characters eventually become so potent that they can cope with anything the world (or alternative planes, or gods) can throw at them. *High-level Campaigns* seeks to remedy this, aiming to provide new inspiration and sensible controls for... er... high-level campaigns.

The book is split in seven sections. It starts with *The Seven Maxims*, a series of common-sense principles. Second is *Adventures*, an attempt to reinvigorate the level-challenged DM by offering a mechanic to generate custom lands and creatures.

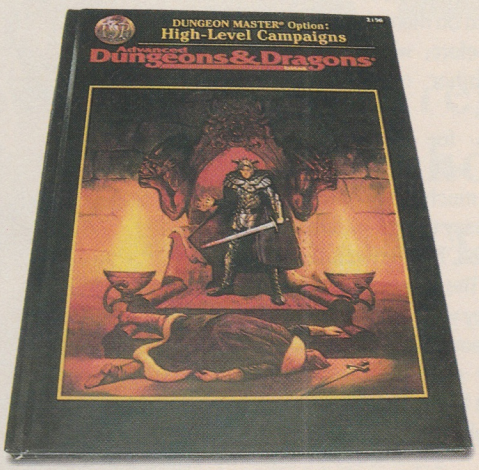
Spells and Magical Items addresses the nature of extreme magical powers, detailing suggested limits for both spells and magical booty, while *Creating Magic Items* deals with the natural urge of high-level wizards to create weapons and wands for their group and *Magical Duels* introduces a novel mage-specific combat system. *True Dweomers* is the obligatory additional spell list, with more 'earth-shaking' magic, while *High-level Characters* suggests extra abilities to give powerful people a truly heroic swagger.

The Seven Maxims is the most essential section, though it contains little more than solid, common-sense rules that focus the minds of DMs and players.

Similar strong-but-simple ideas are crystallised in *Magical Duels*, with the idea that wizards can fight by proxy in a psuedo-world in which they can unleash their mightiest magic



Looks nice enough and offers some good ideas, but too much of this book is just yet more extra tables.



for show, for profit or for keeps. This is a complex but calculated system with unique spell-on-spell combat rules that make for invigorating battles.

The new powers in *High-level Characters* fall into two kinds: style and substance. The style side is great, helping PCs to develop nuances of character, but the abilities in the substance part are really trivial things that will be overlooked by referees, but that players will attempt to transform into life-saving skills.

These three good chapters constitute the majority of the book and are recommended reading. The other four chapters, however, fall into the trap of so many TSR supplements and guides; namely that rather than replacing or refining rules, ever more tables and lists are heaped on top of the old.

High-level Campaigns is of interest but by no means essential. The *Seven Maxims* could add clarity, and *Magical Duels* might add excitement. Essentially, though, *High-level Campaigns* is an ideal present for a referee friend. That way you can borrow it, check out the good bits, and avoid that sinking feeling of having paid £12 for another earnest *AD&D* debate and yet another spell list.

Trenton Webb

Score 4/10

containing music, effects and also the "Radio Eternity" broadcast, which provides an early plot lead.

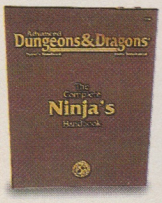
The scenario uses an easy-to-follow format with plenty of referee's hints, tips, cues, background reminders and cross-references to relevant rules. This helps make the scenario a joy to referee, even if you have not run *Immortal* before.

Lucya Szachnowski **Score 7/10**

The Complete Ninja's Handbook

A rules supplement for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

£10.99 TSR 01223 212517 Out now



Ninjas are always fascinating. Partly it's a cultural thing, but in part the appeal is egotistical – a player who passes notes back and forth with the referee and who has goals he keeps secret from the rest of the party is bound to feel he's a bit special.

TSR's 128-page handbook details the class itself clearly; referees will be glad to know that ninjas aren't as overpowering as some of TSR's previous classes. Optional kits mean players can modify the base class slightly, favouring certain abilities.

Chances are you'll want martial arts abilities, and extensive rules culled from the *Oriental Adventures* book are included, enabling the modelling of real martial arts such as Kung Fu and Jujutsu, or the creation of new styles. It can be complex, but both basic and advanced rules are provided.

The handbook gives plenty of good advice on how a ninja can keep his identity hidden from the party. Such secrecy and intrigue might be a pain to referee, but it provides chances for great roleplaying.

Cliff Ramshaw **Score 8/10**

Banemaster

A collectable card game

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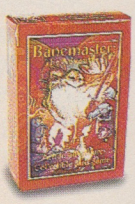


Sometimes you despair. The first thing you notice about these cards is that every time you take the cellophane off a pack, the box springs open at the side where the glue doesn't hold properly. And what's more, when you get the cards out you are struck immediately by the poverty of the artwork – not even *Towers in Time* looks this bad. The game, too, is very basic. One person

is the 'banemaster' and lays down locations, treasures, traps and monsters. The others (yes, it's multi-player) are 'characters' and attempt to beat each other to the treasure in a sort of non-stop dungeon bash. In an attempt to inject some fun, players are supposed to tell a story to explain cards as they are played.

A clue to the intentions of this game probably lies in the recommended age group on the side: 'ages 6-60!' it reads, but it is only to the younger age range that I can imagine it would really appeal.

So it's an introduction to RPGs written by somebody who's never played one, that could only be found interesting by someone not yet into puberty.

Steve Faragher Score 3/10

Sword and Crown

A scenario for the AD&D Birthright campaign

£5.99 TSR 01223 212517 Out now



Sword and Crown, TSR's first adventure for the *Birthright* campaign world, quickly embroils players in a major political incident. The occasion is a meeting of Anuire's leaders being held in the realm of a regent player character. Things go awry when the daughter of one of the leading noble houses is kidnapped on PC soil by soldiers wearing the livery of a rival house.

The PC regent and friends are called on to arbitrate and to rescue the princess. The players track the princess's kidnappers through the wilderness, unearthing clues that point to a cunning plot. They are accompanied by two knights from each of the rival houses and soldiers from the PC regent's retinue: with a party this size things can become unwieldy, and the author suggests you use *Birthright* skirmish rules to resolve large-scale combats.

The trail is littered with half-dead kidnappers ready to confess their sins, so it isn't long before the players track down the perpetrator and learn the truth.

It's all fairly straightforward to referee until the closing scene, when the PCs return with the princess and are forced to arbitrate between the two feuding houses. It's suggested that a trial takes place, but no mechanism is provided and, no matter the outcome, the players will earn the enmity of one or the other of the noble houses. It seems a trifle unfair, but I guess that's just the risks of power politics.

Cliff Ramshaw Score 6/10 →

Changeling: The Dreaming

Rule Book £14.99 Cantrip Cards £1.75 per booster

White Wolf Game Studio 001 404 292 1819 Out now

The latest in the storyteller series concerns a strange race who are locked, peter pan-like, in a nostalgic childhood...

White Wolf's *Storyteller* series of RPGs concludes with this episode in which player characters are faeries exiled to Earth from Arcadia. Changelings are like children; they exist to play games and have fun. Many are under 12 years old, others are teenagers and only a few, known as Grumps, are over 25. The older changelings get, the more the world's banality weighs on them, making them forget their magic.

The game has a real angst about mourning the passing of childhood: "the lost children of the fae are metaphors for our lost youth". Whether the idea of roleplaying a kid appeals or not is a matter of taste, but it makes a refreshing change from tragically hip vampires and doom-laden wraiths.

Unfortunately, most fae are supposed to have emigrated to America. Obviously this will appeal to American players, White Wolf's largest market, but it might seem perverse to European players since it wastes the chance to set stories in the homelands of the brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Anderson.

Changeling uses the same basic mechanics as the other *Storyteller* games. Characters are created by point allocation and defined by attributes (things like strength or intelligence), abilities and advantages, among the latter being the ability to cast faerie cantrips – *Changeling*'s primary gimmick.

Cantrips are cast using cards. Each player has his or her own set representing the Arts and Realms that players are using. Bunk cards are drawn to check for success and also give the character a kind of forfeit to do – things like singing a song backwards or picking their nose. The only cards that come with the game are blank, black-and-white photocopyable templates. Full-colour cards are sold separately like collectable cards (10 per pack at £1.75). You need several packs to get a sufficient variety to play with. Most people will feel obliged to buy some, but you can't really mix them with photocopied ones.



However, the rules offer a cardless, dice-rolling option, which just about excuses White Wolf from a charge of blatant profiteering, and the cantrip cards are appealing and add to the game's flavour.

Changeling comes with one ready-to-run, single-session scenario, plus plenty of ideas for expanding this into a longer campaign. There is also an excellent chapter on designing stories.

The main problem is that it's bland compared to other White Wolf games or their *Ars Magica Faeries* supplement. It fails to create a unique atmosphere.

It has a history of the changelings and outlines different kinds of faery and their society, but doesn't give enough on how they live and what they do. It's crying out for supplements to fill the gaps. Referees will borrow elements from other *Storyteller* games, or from novels and films; or just use changeling characters for light relief in other, gloomier RPGs.

If *Changeling* had been the first *Storyteller* game I doubt it would have sold as well as *Vampire*.

Lucya Szachnowski

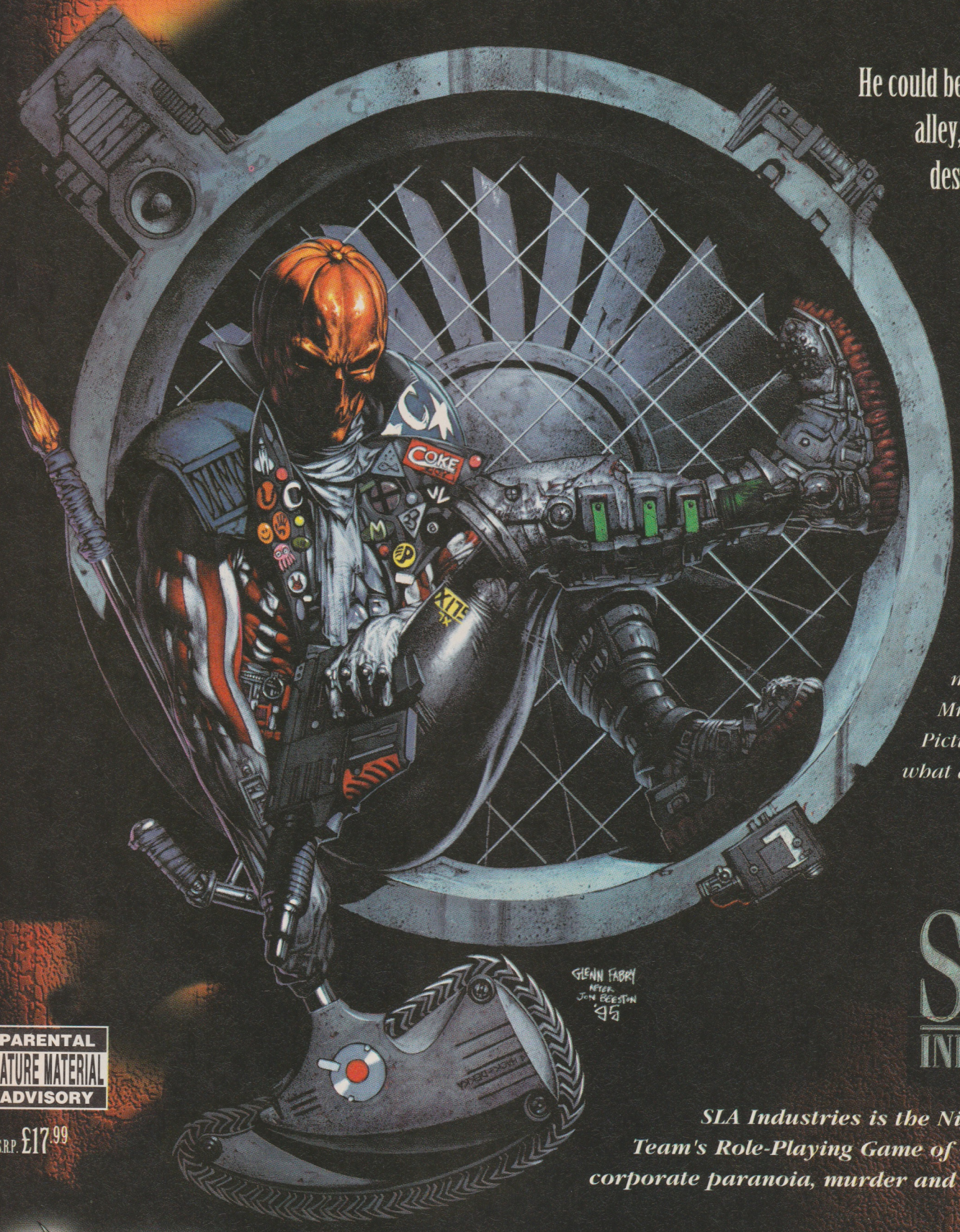


Faery children casting cantrips make a nice change, but it would be good if the rulebook had more depth.

Score 6/10

Truth Kills.....

Halloween Jack is out on the town, searching for more victims—more statistics



He could be anywhere; a dark alley, an old doorway, a deserted factory deep underground. He could be behind you.

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COMING FULL CIRCLE

A four-scenario campaign for Call of Cthulhu

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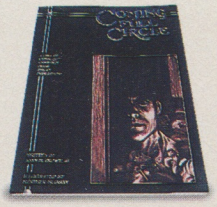


Vast, not in geographical terms but in the amount of game time it absorbs, this set of four loosely connected non-*Mythos* scenarios requires more than a bit of due care and attention. Demands on both keeper and players are high: the keeper must diligently read the 160 tightly-packed, text-heavy pages in order to appreciate the complexities of the plot and understand the plethora of characters, and players, too, must understand the interests and relationships of all the NPCs.

While the author's ability to weave an involving tale without recourse to *Mythos* is clever, the campaign ultimately suffers: regular players will be looking for a *Mythos* source to the mysteries in which they are embroiled, and frustration is a danger.

The ten-year timespan is a long time indeed, especially if the keeper intends to run other scenarios during interim periods (as, surely, is only right). There is a danger that the 'master' campaign into which *Coming Full Circle* is slotted will take dramatic turns during those ten years.

Astute anticipation of campaign events and tight control over the whims of the players are essential requisites of the keeper if the inclusion of *Coming Full Circle* is to work in an extended campaign.

Paul Pettengale Score 6/10

Apocrypha Now

A companion volume for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

£8 Hogshead Publishing

0181 673 6340 Out now



Huge though it may be, this is an extremely usable companion. Both the layout and the presentation are good, allowing easy access to oodles of new material for one of the most playable systems around.

Most of the material is reprinted from old copies of *White Dwarf* and out-of-print supplements for the first edition. Of the three sections, the first is for rules, adding the new career of nobles and rules on the social standings of the Old World. There are critical fumble tables and →

Birthright: Player's Secrets

£4.50 each TSR 01223 212517 Out now

A series of supplements designed to help player characters establish themselves as rulers of realms.

Perhaps the single most important aspect of *Birthright* is the ruling of domains. Player characters are encouraged to take on the burden of rulership, but are left with the tricky task of inventing compelling, textured domains over which to rule. The aim of the *Player's Secrets* series is to help players' imaginations along.

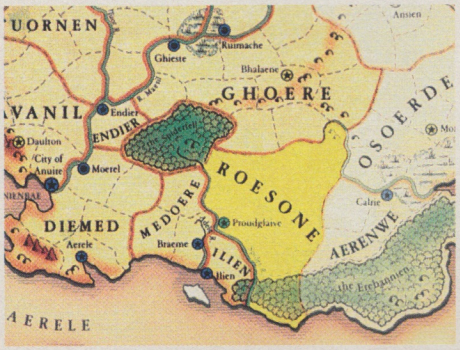
The structure of each £4.50 set is the same: the laminated covers fold out to reveal colour maps, city and castle plans and so on. The text begins with an introduction 'written' by one of the domain's most important NPCs, outlining the current state of affairs for the PC who is about to take charge.

After this comes the history of the domain, complete with peculiar names (some of which are actually pronouncable), tales of great battles and so on. The geography of each domain is described, with important towns, guilds, temples and magical holdings all outlined. And stats for important NPCs – both friends and rivals of the player – are given.

Finally comes a series of adventuring ideas presented as rumours circulating in the domain or as secrets known only to the ruler and his close advisors. The ideas are generally inspiring and imaginative – perhaps the 'spy in the camp' plotline crops up a *little* too often – but some would be better as the referee's, not the player's, secrets.

At £4.50 each, these sourcebooks are a bit overpriced and some of the history behind the domains is hackneyed or tedious. But all the sourcebooks help you to create believable worlds, with enough conflicting agencies to create strong and imaginative plotlines for years to come.

Cliff Ramshaw



Presentation of these guides is excellent; as, mostly, is the content (apart from some hackneyed elements).



The domain of Tuornen is suited to a warrior PC. Two rival neighbouring lords are vying for your loyalty; to the north is the lair of the vicious Rhuobhe Manslayer; and, worst of all, the court toymaker is a covert operative for a rival power…

Tuornen: Score 8/10

Also for the warlike character is Roesone, a state recently carved out from bandit lands. Baron Tael to the north reckons one of your provinces ought to belong to him; the Count of said province agrees.

Roesone: Score 7/10

The small domain of Endier is for a thief to run. Keeping its borders intact involves much diplomacy and plotting. There's an intriguing sub-plot about a riddle, sadly let down when the answer is revealed.

Endier: Score 7/10

Ilien is another weakish region, for a wizard to rule. The player inherits a stash of magical spells and items, along with a rival wizard and a shifty guild-master who's importing arms faster than Iraq.

Ilien: Score 6/10

Clerics get a look in with Medoere, where the ruler should be of lawful-goodish alignment. The province awaits a champion; the ruler has a +5 Holy Avenger to give away. Some DM intervention is called for.

Medeore: Score 8/10

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optional combat rules, an extended firearms section and a tidy, if not exhaustive, list of magical items and armour. (A lot of this section is clarifications of rules that really ought to have been in the original rulebooks.)

The second section kicks off with a useful chapter on non-human psychology. Nothing startling, but some common-sense suggestions enrich the roleplaying of elven, dwarfish and halfling characters. The section adds three new character classes for non-humans, my favourite being the elven wardancer, a sort of fantasy dervish.

The third section details some cracking NPCs and some intriguing mini-scenarios, the best being 'The Emperor Luitpold', a luxury river-liner that looks like an excellent place for an adventure.

If I have a criticism, it's that not much of the material strikes me as very original. It's vital for all *WFRP* referees, though.

Steve Faragher **Score 7/10**

Thunderscape

A PC roleplaying game
£44.99 Mindscape/SSI
01444 246333 Out now PC 486DX2, 8Mb RAM, double-speed CD-ROM

When its licence to produce computer games based on *AD&D* expired last year, SSI decided to create its own fantasy scenarios and came up with The World Of Aden, a once-idyllic paradise now corrupted by the evil power of the Darkfall.

Thunderscape is the first game set in this new world. A vast Darkfall army led by the demonic Nocturnals is approaching the Northlands. You control a party of adventurers who must reactivate Skellon's Shield – a vast magical barrier across the only pass through the mountains.

The game uses a simple combination of levels- and skills-based character development. Although the majority of the action occurs in real time, combat occurs in rounds, permitting you to make tactical decisions for each of your characters.

On the plus side the graphics are fast and smooth, the game is simple to get in to, and it's very large, with many different locations to explore. Unfortunately, it's let down by poor monster graphics, confusing automap and the structure of the game itself (it's a dungeon bash, where the aim is to find the exit to the next area of the game and defeat the monster guarding it, so the majority of the game is combat).

It isn't a bad game. It's fun and mildly absorbing. But it doesn't offer anything new and soon becomes boring.

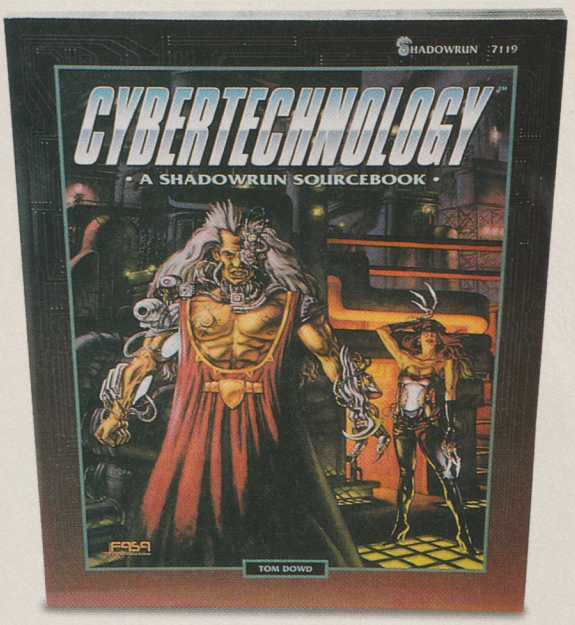
Andy Butcher **Score 6/10**

Cybertechnology

A Shadowrun supplement

£10.99 FASA Corp. 001 312 243 5660 Out now

It's taken a long time for Shadowrun to get a supplement dedicated entirely to cyberware. Has it been worth the wait, or will the chromed street-monsters be disappointed?



As with all *Shadowrun* sourcebooks, *Cybertechnology* pretends to be an electronic document posted to the underground *Shadowland* bulletin board. Once again, the text comes with numerous comments and opinions from fictional characters.

The bulk of the book is filled with a personal account from a street samurai shadowrunner whose last job didn't go too well – he's in intensive care, and is unlikely to recover without some radical surgery. His writings are split into two main sections.

In the first he talks about 'ordinary' cyberware, dealing with it in a number of ways. As well as supplying information about some new systems, he takes a new look at many existing ones, and gives an insight into the psychological impact of cyberware on its user. The section finishes with rules for dealing with cyberware in the game, bringing together information from previous sourcebooks and adding some new material.

The second part of the book deals with Cybermancy, a revolutionary (and potentially dangerous) technique that enables characters to have negative Essence ratings and still live. This is the process that is shortly to be performed on our suffering shadowrunner corrsepondent, and the information is sketchy. In addition to the author's comments, other characters have supplied details of conversations, and documents from varied sources. The book ends with a referee's section that offers rules for dealing with the process in the game.

Since the game was originally released over six years ago, the *Shadowrun* universe has grown and developed in many ways. In the last couple of years, though, the direction that these changes are taking has begun to concern some players who think that magic and magical threats seem to be taking precedence over the cyberpunk side of the game. The long-awaited release of *Cybertechnology* was expected to allay these players' fears. Unfortunately, it's not going to. There's a relative dearth of new toys for the street monsters to play with, and nearly half the book is dedicated to Cybermancy, which involves high-level magic and ties in to the 'Enemy' storyline, albeit in a minor way.

Even for players who are unconcerned by the current developments, *Cybertechnology* isn't exactly a required purchase. The bulk of its 104 pages is background material – well written, imaginative and interesting, but not vital to anyone's game. In addition, some of the new material is of questionable use. Some of the cybersystems are potentially deadly to their users, and it's unlikely that many players will ever get to use the rules for Cybermancy on their characters.

Cybertechnology isn't a bad book – it's well written, and provides potentially useful insights and information about cyberware in *Shadowrun.* Anyone looking for the equivalent of *Cyberpunk 2020*'s *Chromebooks,* though, will be disappointed.

Andy Butcher

Score 6/10

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Heroes Of Might & Magic

A PC strategy game

£39.99 US Gold/New World Computing 0121 625 3366
Out now PC 386 4Mb RAM CD-Rom & SVGA

The Might & Magic series of computer roleplaying games returns, only this time it's not actually a roleplaying game at all...

Not, as you might first imagine, a compilation of old *Might & Magic* RPGs, but an all-new fantasy strategy game. The idea of turning an RPG into a strategy game is not new – SSI have been doing it with *AD&D* for some time – but what makes this stand out is that it's pretty good.

From a slightly isometric, overhead viewpoint you look down on a world scattered with towns. To win, you must capture all your enemies' towns and hold them for at least a week.

You control armies led by heroes of four kinds (knights, barbarians, warlocks and sorceresses). Troops are supplied to your towns, of which there are also four types, each type of town giving a different range of units. Human towns, for example, can produce peasants, archers, pikemen, swordsmen, cavalry or paladins, but which troops you get depends on what buildings you have constructed. Taxation of towns produces gold with which to buy more buildings, units and heroes.

In addition, most buildings and some units require special resources, which are generated by mines that can be claimed by your heroes.

The game is played in turns which represent a day and is controlled with a very simple point-and-click mouse system. You move your heroes around, discovering more of the map and claiming mines, bonus resources and treasure chests whenever you find them. If you find a town, or encounter a group of monsters or an enemy hero, combat ensues.





At last my catapult has knocked down the walls, and my knights can move in. Unfortunately, I think that's the end of my archers in the top left...

The fight takes place on a sideways-viewed battlefield. You move and fight with just one unit at a time, and it is each unit's initiative and speed which will determine your success. It's all rather simplistic, but different combinations of units mean that a fairly large range of situations can arise.

The presentation is an odd mix of good and bad. The game runs in high-resolution SVGA throughout, so the graphics are highly detailed, but it is let down by some dubious artwork and a generally 'twee' feel. Some of the background sounds are atmospheric, but the music is awful and many of the effects in combat are laughable.

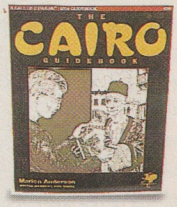
Gameplay is rather limited, and combat largely comes down to who has the largest number of the toughest units. But in spite of its problems, *Heroes Of Might & Magic* is still a good game.

Its very simplicity, although ultimately limiting, is appealing, and the computer opponents are far from easy to beat. In terms of depth and long-term interest it's not a real challenger to MicroProse's *Master Of Magic*, which it resembles, but it is a whole lot simpler to get into. **Andy Butcher**

Score 7/10

The Cairo Guidebook

A Call of Cthulhu City Guide
£TBA
Chaosium 001 510 547 7681
Out now



These *Call of Cthulhu* city guides are a great idea, and this one in particular is full of superb information that's applicable to anyone running a campaign (of any sort) set in the '20s.

You don't need to be playing *CoC* to get a lot of use out of this, and Chaosium's very straightforward rules systems mean that you would never have any trouble with conversions to a different system. There's even a lot of stuff here that would be useful to a referee wanting to run modern-day expeditions into Egypt.

The book has over thirty useful maps and building plans and lots of atmospheric information (the author, Marion Anderson, doesn't just tell you where the main railway station is in Cairo; she actually describes what it would have been like to arrive there) and it even offers a gaggle of little scenario ideas.

Okay, it's not the greatest looking book that's ever been produced and it would have been nice to have a couple of full-length scenarios to give some practical examples of how to use the material presented here and to help get the referee started. But those are only minor niggles and don't detract greatly from a very useful and inspiring supplement.

Steve Faragher Score 8/10

Wyrms Footprints:

Gloranthan Legends and Lore
A sourcebook for Gloranthan RuneQuest campaigns
£TBA
Chaosium 001 510 547 7681
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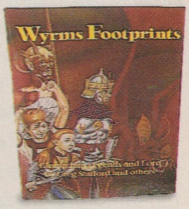


Indeed, 'twas a sad day for all *RuneQuest* GMs running Gloranthan campaigns when the last of Greg Stafford's *Wyrms Footnotes* went out of print. Now, more than 12 years later, some of the finest articles to appear in the 12 issues of his magazine have been reprinted.

Collected together for the first time, and a must for all GMs of Gloranthan-based *RuneQuest* campaigns, this is a →

series of articles and scenarios originally printed in *Wyrms Footnotes*, a regular bi-monthly magazine which bit the dust back in 1982. This collection, covering new deities, treatises on Gloranthan legend and lore, snippets of background information, and (would you believe) recipes for cooked Walktopus, helps any GM embellish his or her Gloranthan setting. While the staggering variety of content may give the impression that chaos rather than order has predominated in the compilation of the supplement, this doesn't detract from the book's utility.

Paul Pettengale Score 8/10

Quest for the Grail

A collectable card game of Arthurian legend (special Preview Edition)
£TBA ($7.95 in the US)
Horizon Games N/A **Out now**

This 'Preview Edition' is a limited pre-release version which Horizon Games demonstrated at US GenCon. You can't buy it. Which we mention just to make sure you know what's going on.

Even if the actual production version (the soon-to-be-published 'Limited Edition') is no better than this preview set, it will still be worth buying.

Players control Arthurian knights who challenge each other and undertake quests in order to gain valour points. Once a knight has 12 points he may "Quest for the Grail" to win the game.

Each player holds a Court deck and a Quest deck. The Court deck consists of knights, squires and lady companions, plus various event cards, weapon cards and armour cards. The Quest deck has wyrms, giants, brigand knights and so on.

The artwork is superb. Much of it appears to come from traditional sources – pre-Raphaelite pictures, old maps and book illustrations – although none of it is credited. Hopefully, this will be rectified in the Limited Edition, which will have two hundred new cards and expanded rules.

Expanded rules should help, since the current ones are a little unclear in places. Nevertheless, the game is quite simple and easy to learn. Each player needs his or her own starter pack, at least, and the combat system requires two D6. You also need a pen and paper or more dice to record each knight's valour.

The game brims with atmosphere. It has a simple yet satisfying system and lends itself well to storytelling and roleplaying the characters, if you feel like it. I eagerly await the Limited Edition.

Lucya Szachnowski Score 8/10

Faeries

A sourcebook for Ars Magica 4th Edition

£TBA ($17 in the US) **Wizards Of The Coast/Alter Ego Games**
0141 226 5666 **Out now**

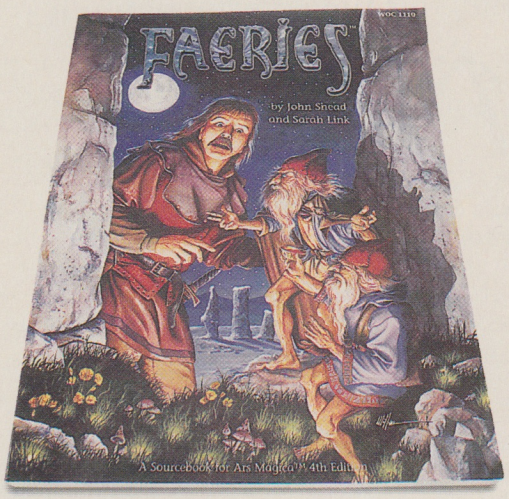
stranger than strange, weirder than weird: to understand the faery character you must be prepared to do some reading...

Ars Magica depicts a "mythic Europe" in which (allowing for a largish dollop of artistic licence) all the beliefs and superstitions of the Middle Ages are true. In such a world, faeries are strange, unpredictable, alien creatures: dangerous, but not actually evil.

But how on earth do you write a rule book dealing with creatures who are incomprehensible and inscrutable? Not easily. Two-thirds of this book is spent telling tales of faeries from the point of view of characters in the *Ars Magica* world. We read the story of Gerin, a troubadour with faerie blood; we read a manuscript by Rebecca, a student of faeries in the Order of Hermes. These illustrate what faeries are like, without dispelling the sense of mystery. They are more entertaining than many games supplements.

The stories contain very few reference to game-mechanics, but this gives the book excellent cross-system compatibility. It is easy to imagine a good many *Pendragon* GMs making use of it.

The idea is to gain some insight into how faeries think. They have a strange attitude to possessions and will steal a human's belongings, or even a baby,

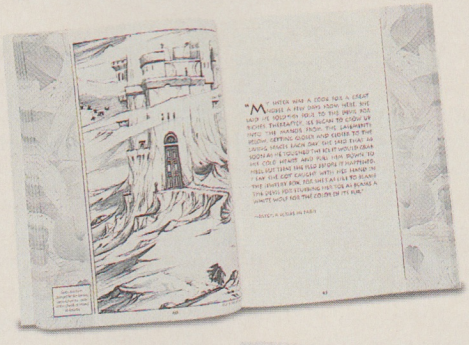


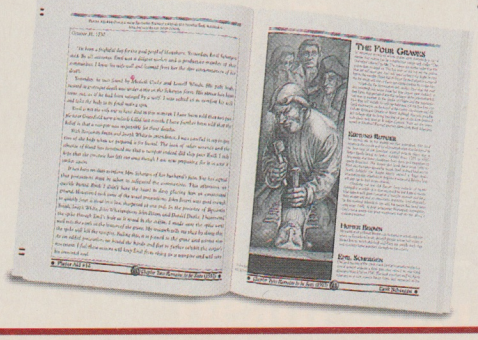
without thinking they are doing anything wrong. We also learn about the faeries' homeland, Arcadia (though it would take a very imaginative referee to run a scenario in this land, where 'summer' and 'winter' are compass points, and the same road may not always take you in the same direction).

The remaining third of the book is given over to new rules and statistics for the benefit of *Ars Magica* story guides. There's a nice bestiary of faerie creatures, and suggestions about running faerie player characters. Players could take the role of a faerie who has become a companion at a covenant of magi, or play a magus with faerie blood. However, you're advised against allowing full-blooded faerie magi, as such characters would be both too powerful and too strange. Indeed, I wonder how many role-players are going to be able to play the role of even a half-breed convincingly.

It would be a shame if the end result of this evocative tome was just new characters with special powers and funny eyes.

Andrew Rilstone





The book is sumptuously presented, with plenty of highly atmospheric line drawings and a clear design.

Score 7/10

Sky Point & Vivane

An Earthdawn Supplement

£14.99 FASA Corp. 0121 312 243 5660 Out now

earthdawn is dominated by the vast theran empire. now, players can come face-to-face with this mighty nation...

Sky Point & Vivane is the third boxed 'Campaign Set' for FASA's fantasy roleplaying game *Earthdawn*. It details the city of Vivane, the nearby military base of Sky Point and the surrounding area of Vivane Province, and it contains new information on the Theran Empire and the lands it controls. In addition, it provides GMs with advice on incorporating the city into an ongoing *Earthdawn* campaign, or using it as the starting point for a new one.

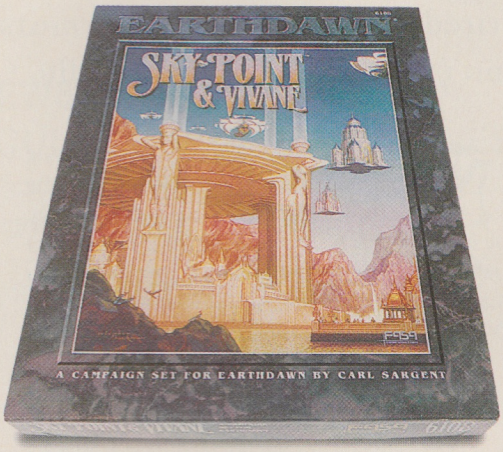
Lying to the south-west of Barsaive, Vivane was the first city to be captured by the Therans in their original conquest of the area. After the Scourge, Theran expeditions returned to annex Barsaive, but were beaten back. Vivane is now the Theran stronghold in the area: Barsaive continues to resist. The situation is one of uneasy peace.

The *Sky Point & Vivane* boxed set is made up of three books, two maps and a collection of player hand-outs and props.

The first map shows Vivane city, the second depicts the surrounding area. Each of the books deals with a different aspect of the city and its environment: 'Barsaivian Vivane' records the history of the city and its Theran occupation and features general information about the Theran Empire and its attitudes towards Barsaive, then goes on to detail the Barsaivian part of the city. (Vivane is still split in two – the original Old City is walled off and is home to the Theran Government and Noble Houses, while the rest is nominally under Barsaivian control.) 'Theran



Splitting information among three books makes it easy to find what you're looking for.



Vivane' deals with the Old City (now called the Theran Quarter) in a similar way, while 'Vivane Province' deals with the surrounding area, as well as describing Sky Point and the town of Vrontok that has sprung up at the base of the huge structure.

As with most of FASA's larger releases, it's obvious that a great deal of work has gone into this. A real effort has been made to create a setting that is not only imaginative and rich in ideas for adventure, but also internally consistent and logical too.

The impression gained is of a real, living place. Even reading through the books once is enough to spark a dozen or more ideas in any GM's mind.

The books are well laid out and easy to read, and the maps are clear and lovingly detailed in full colour. In fact, there are only two problems. The first is the interior black and white art, which is sparse and of varying quality. Second, is the ordering of the books. 'Barsaivian Vivane' comes first, but contains a fair amount of information about the Therans. Odd.

All the same, *Sky Point & Vivane* is a great supplement. The central conflict makes the place hugely interesting, and it's packed full of enough information and ideas to provide a solid base for a whole campaign.

Andy Butcher

Score 8/10

GiantCraft

Supplement for AD&D

£9.99 TSR 01223 212517

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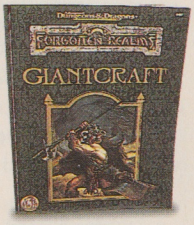

Giants, hmmm. Been there, killed them. Now let's fight something a bit more interesting.

If that's your attitude to the big blokes, then *Giantcraft* should be allowed to permeate your gameworld. It offers a refreshingly different perspective on giants.

These are not the two-dimensional, high hit-dice end-of-campaign bosses we've grown accustomed to. They are fully fleshed-out stars. And not only does the *Giantcraft* supplement slip seamlessly into *Forgotten Realms*, but also it requires only minimal tweaking to transport all the bits you want to any *AD&D* universe.

Giantcraft tackles every aspect of giant life, from the social structure (the Ordning) through to the internecine political squabbles that have plagued cloud giants of late. It reveals a little of the Jotunbrud (giant) mythology and the aspirations of the various races, and details the Ostoria's (the Colossal Empire) rise and fall. *Giantcraft* invokes a rune-based magic system, debunks anti-giant propaganda and fully fleshes out the unsatisfactorily brief descriptions in the *Monstrous Compendium*.

Sadly, however, *Giantcraft* lacks cohesion and direction. Sure you're told a lot, but you're told the same lot repeatedly. Some sections are plain laughable ("Giants are BIG! Get up on your chair and loom over the players" – General Role Playing Tips, page 29) while others, such as the chapter on giant-kin, are plain tedious.

Almost by accident, though, *Giantcraft* does manage though to reinvent one of *AD&D*'s less glamorous creatures with a liberal sprinkling of great ideas, anecdotal character descriptions and veiled hints (who or what is behind the Twilight Spirit? What secrets could a great wizard glean from the Levendhule, the living wall? What great treasures are held by the cloud giant fortress that crashed in the Anauroch desert?)

The lack of focus and reptitive nature force *Giantcraft* from the 'must read' list but next time you want an inspiration hit, you should find it here.

Trenton Webb **Score 5/10**

Dungeon Designer

Expansion disk for
Campaign Cartographer
£19.95 ProFantasy Software
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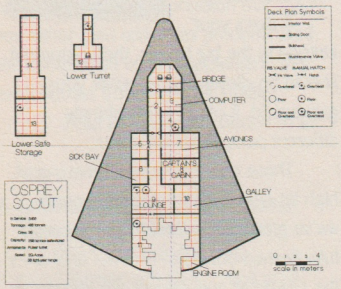
Several new commands and features are added by this expansion to the *Cartographer* mapping system (opposite). The new bits are all intended to help in creating dungeons and building



Creating starship deck-plans or an office tower is just as simple as a fully fledged dungeon complete with secret rooms.

floorplans. There are also two new fonts and a large selection of objects to use in your maps, such as tables, chairs, treasure chests and so on.

The new tools are relatively simple to use, and very powerful. Layouts can be sketched out by drawing centre lines which are later converted into corridors of varying widths, complete with walls of differing thickness and intersections. A range of new tools makes it trivially simple to connect these things to each other precisely.

In addition, there's a new design system that lets you lay out maps using a collection of modular icons in hardly any time at all, and a variable scaling system that means you can print out the designs at precisely the right size to be used with different scales of miniatures.

Dungeon Designer doesn't really enable you to create anything that you couldn't already have done using *Campaign Cartographer,* but it does make it almost immeasurably simpler. Basically, it does for floorplans what *Campaign Cartographer* does for large-scale maps, enabling you to draw anything – from a small cave system to the deck plans of a vast spaceship – both accurately and extraordinarily quickly.

Considering how often these kind of maps are needed in most games, this makes *Dungeon Designer* even more useful than *Campaign Cartographer* for most gamers, which is high praise indeed.

Andy Butcher Score 9/10

Campaign Cartographer

A game-mapping utility for the PC

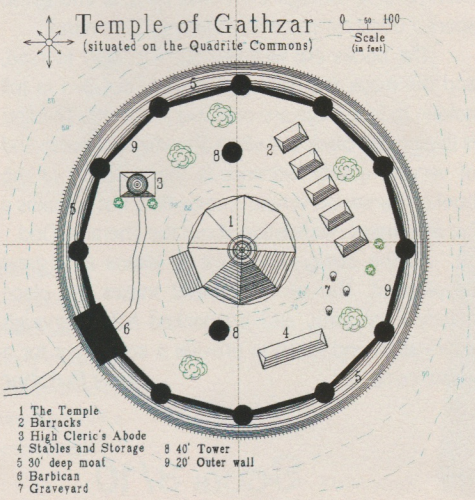
£49.95 ProFantasy Software 0171 237 0027 Out now
PC 386 and VGA

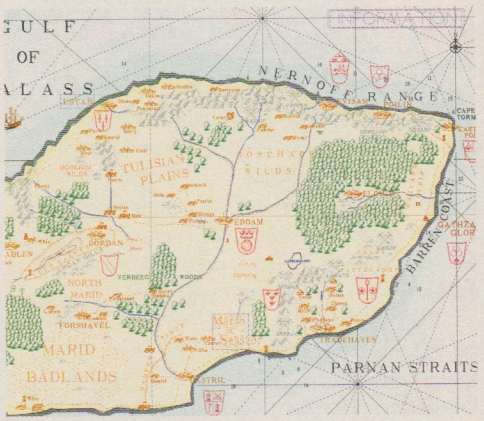
Tired of scribbling on beermats? Do your maps professionally.

Maps are a vital accessory for roleplaying games, but sadly not all of us have the artistic skills to draw our own effectively. A few scribbles on the back of a napkin are all a referee really *needs, but* it adds a lot to a game if you can give players a professional-looking piece of work. Which is where *Campaign Cartographer* comes in.

Specifically created for roleplayers, it attempts to make designing and updating maps of all scales a simple task – and it succeeds admirably.

Initial impressions are not promising. It appears to be little more than a jumped-up paint package, and at over 150 pages the heavyweight manual is quite off-putting (though if you take time to skip through it, you'll find it explains everything clearly with many examples). But it is, in fact, a fully functional 2D Computer Aided Design package, with many features and tools that are normally only found in software costing more than £500. Paint packages let you draw, but generally once something's been done it's part of the picture, and editing or changing it is very hard. CAD packages work by defining everything you





Because you're able to edit maps simply and easily, you can start off small and gradually build up to this level of detail and complexity.

do as a specific 'entity', which can then be selected, moved, changed or deleted at any time. Much better.

In addition, *Campaign Cartographer* implements the concept of 'layers'. Each map is made up of a number of pictures that are overlaid, and you can display these layers individually or in groups. This makes it easy to, for example, create a map showing secret or undiscovered areas on a separate layer.

On the down side, the program does take a while to learn – some tools and features are complicated until you get the hang of them – and it can be tricky to design towns and buildings because the program lacks the tools to make working at these scales simple. There's also a strong bias towards fantasy genres, but this is far from insurmountable.

All the same, *Campaign Cartographer* is an incredible program. It really does make it easy to create highly detailed maps of anything from a planet to a small forest. For systems such as *Earthdawn* or *Traveller: The New Era,* where exploration is an inherent part of the game, this could be an incredibly handy program.

Andy Butcher

Score 8/10

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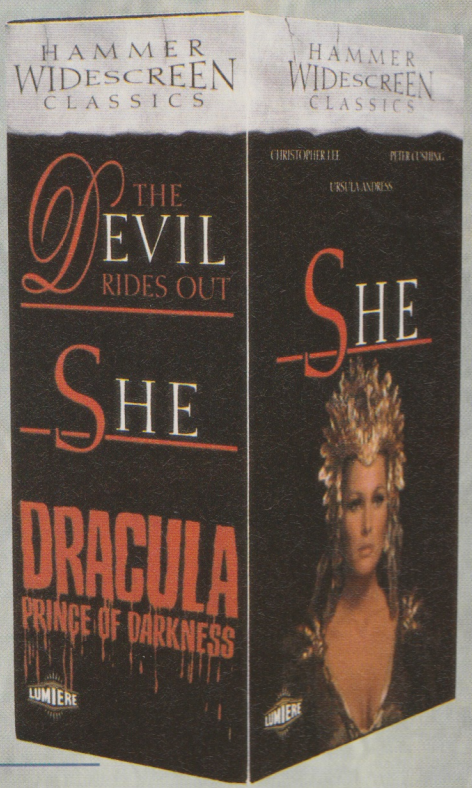

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arcane brings you the **Richard Garfield interview.** The inventor of *Magic: The Gathering.* Richard tells us what inspired him and how he feels about the way it's all turned out. And it all ties in perfectly with our extensive *Homelands* review.

There'll be part two of our definitive five-part world-building feature with hints and tips on how to make monsters work for you.

We'll have a guide to the 10 most ridiculous skills ever published in a roleplaying game, from 'arcane mutterings' to 'looking innocent'.

Join us as we explore the twilight world of the fanzine and reveal the best to the blazing light of public adoration…

Plus our usual blend of exhaustive news and definitive reviews, somewhat plumped up by the onset of Christmas…

And

There's our second encounter, The Golden Dragon Inn. A fully fleshed-out location for exciting roleplaying in the past, present and future, this tavern has everything you need to form a focus for your campaign or to use as somewhere for your players to drop by and have a swift half. And it's even bigger than this month's…

So we'll see you all there on Thursday 14th December

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The Great Library

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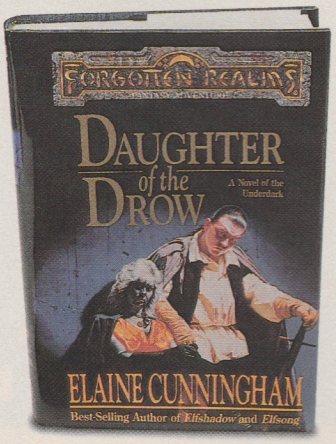
Daughter of the Drow

by Elaine Cunningham Published by TSR
Hardback £10.50 Out now

A disappointing Underdark novel about a drow princess who, after giving up all hope of escape from her chores as an evil spider-god priestess locked in a bitter struggle for power, bumps into a berserker warrior. Enter talisman of power, baddies, true love etc.



Daughter of the Drow is a stab at a mini-series that quickly degenerates into a weak soap opera. The only interesting character is Gromph, the bitter and twisted archmage, and he rarely makes an appearance after the opening. The rest of the cast creak almost as loudly as the plot.

But most sadly lacking is any feel or atmosphere. Although most

"And if there was anything Liriel enjoyed, it was a good fight. Weapons in hand, the drow inched her way down the tunnel."

of the action takes place deep within caverns of the Underdark, there is no fear, mystery or suspense. There are plenty of wands, portals and monsters, but alone they are not enough to engage the reader.

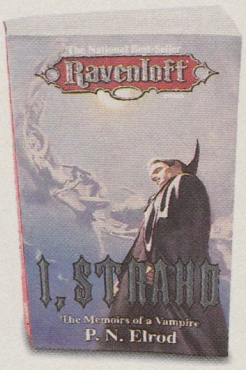
There are, though, some good moments; like the spectacular duel between tow wizards in the centre of a volcano, or the scene when, as Gromph is about to cast his daily spell to re-start the city clock, a flock of evil spider-priestesses fly by on magic discs.

Unfortunately, such moments are few and far between and fail to lift the story out of the ordinary. **Gideon Kibblewhite**

Score 4/10

I STRAHD The Memoirs of a vampire

by PN Elrod Published by TSR
Paperback £4.99 Out now



Arrooding and eerie, punctuated by dream-like bursts of violence, *I Strahd* is a full-bodied tale of unrequited love and insanity.

Army commander Strahd Von Zarovich takes up residence in Ravenloft and then, consumed by envy and regret for lost youth, succumbs to the temptations of the black arts. The story, at first simmering with menace, boils over into a surreal blood-bath as we follow him into the shadows.

The memoirs of a vampire... it's not a new idea, but this one is done so well. It allows us to fly with him and the bats, to run with the wolves, and to sleep in the tomb. Obviously at home with her subject, Elrod describes, with an uncanny touch for time and place, the ecstasy and horror of an eternal half-life.

"Like their master, they would find no sanctuary, for I knew every stone, every corner: this was my home."

And in Strahd she has created a compelling figure. Intimately painted are his dusty sense of humour, his remote sense of honour, and his castle. He is as poisonous as the fog bordering his lands.

Beautifully written, dark, and tragic; and thoroughly recommended to vampire hunters everywhere. **Gideon Kibblewhite** **Score 8/10**

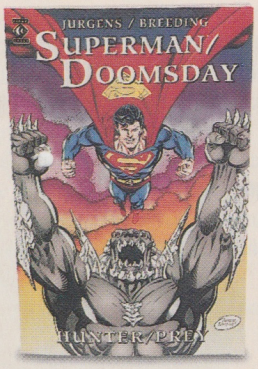
Superman/Doomsday – Hunter/Prey

by Jurgens/Breeding Published by Titan Books
Paperback £9.99 Out now

I've never been a fan of Superman. He has always belonged way too firmly to some kind of mythical American past, where anything is achievable, mankind is genuinely, irrevocably good and heroes are not only square-jawed, athletic and white, but also possess irreproachable motives.

Now that we're approaching the end of the millennium and the world is taking a distinctly darker turn (ooer), the traditional superhero seems even more of an anachronism. You'll believe a man can fly? Only if he's done too much acid. And in the full realisation that Superman seems a little... well... *corny* these

days, his creative team set about plotting his demise. And so it was that Superman first met the villain of this piece, Doomsday, and the much-hyped death of Superman occurred. That was some time ago; and now the man of steel, strangely returned from the grave, must face his nemesis again. This time it's a punch-up to the bitter end.



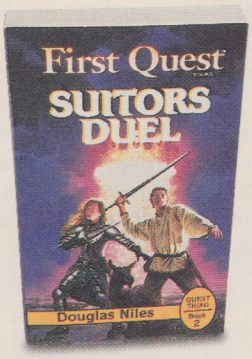
The plot of this book is – frankly – poor, and although some of the artwork is excellent, it belongs too firmly to the Boris Vallejo school of musclebound virility to be exciting as well. Writer Jurgens and artist Breeding do their best

"It hits me like a nuclear blast. Emotions flooding through me. Horror. Terror. Madness. Memories of the pain. The Death!"

to inject some angst into the well-chronicled cape-wearer's philosophy, but they're up against a wall of steel and their well-intentioned attempts fail to add anything new to the myth of Superman. **Steve Faragher** **Score 4/10**

Suitors' Duel

by Douglas Niles Published by TSR
Paperback £3.99 Out now



Written by an ex-high school teacher whose books have now sold over one million copies, this is a simplistic tale of treachery and love that will appeal most to the younger members of his former pupilage. Nothing wrong with that, of course, but you have been warned.

It starts well enough; an imaginatively written prologue about a wager between a capricious fairy and her cantankerous elder. The plot is set up here, but unfortunately this is the last we hear from this amusing duo until the decidedly weak epilogue, by which time it seems that the author has become rather bored with the story.

The tale centres, bizarrely, around the quest for a goat which yields wine from its udders instead of milk, and it quickly declines into a gratuitous troll-bashing feast. Luckily, the hero – a farm boy with a remarkable aptitude for

"Still, the monsters followed tenaciously. The wiry beasts jogged in the tracks of the horses, several dozen of the brutes stretching into a long, deadly column."

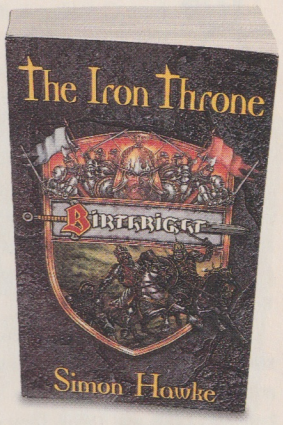
things martial (and also a dab hand at milking goats) – is well equipped for the task, with a sword that slays trolls so they stay slayed. Without this artifact, and given the number of the beasts that are afoot, this light novel could easily have become an epic. The reader begins to feel that while troll-bashing might be good sword practice, it is hardly literature.

Material for referees is scant; the only things of interest are the Sword of Lodestone, one depressingly predictable familiar, and a crown which conveys some interesting properties to the wearer. Beyond this, it's all evil trolls, simpleton yetis, dwarves with hammers, elves with arrows etc, etc.

So one point for a cameo appearance from the yetis; one for the Crown of Vanderthan; one for the trolls, as there are so many of them, and one for being a generally entertaining read. **Jonathan Palmer** **Score 4/10**

The Iron Throne

by Simon Hawke Published by TSR
Paperback £5.99 Out now



This is a veritable saga set in a beautifully believable land where humans have vied with other races for empire since their arrival from the ancestral continent. Subjugation of the elven aboriginals, and the bitter feud that ensued, was compounded by the constant threat from the other races who wish to claim the continent as their own. War, somewhere, is inevitable, and those who have the blood-power in their veins are trained in its arts from youth.

Within the human realm, all manner of deceit and treachery is born of the ambition to assume the Iron Throne. We find sister pitted against brother, husband against wife, the crown against ambitious pretender; all the ingredients necessary for a civil war that will encompass the entire continent.

Despite their bloody history, the elves form a tenuous alliance with the humans, to fight against the forces of evil spawned of the primordial battle where the gods gave up their lives and the dynasty of the blooded was born. And this is where the story really starts…

"Die…die…die…die…die!"
"She's out of her mind, thought Aedan, cowering behind his wooden shield as he warded off the rain of blows."

The author shows a good understanding of history and geography, of their effects on military campaigns and battlefield strategies, and of the fortifications and defences necessary to withstand attack and siege. Of particular interest to referees will be the impenetrable elven capital.

Even the erotica is surprisingly well-written by the usual standards of the genre: marriages of political convenience and ill-conceived romantic liaisons of inconvenience abound. There is no respite from the intrigue of court life. The reader feels as though he (or, indeed, she) is a silent servant to the court, observing all the machinations of the courtiers, but at the same time being powerless to intervene. The whole thing is made all the more credible by its generally well-developed characters (even the non-human ones).

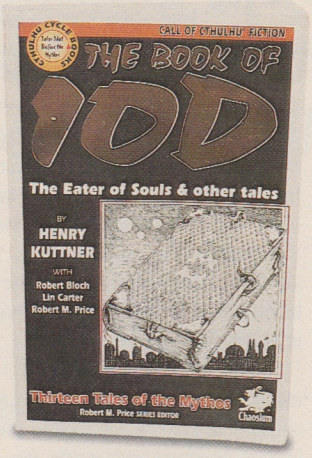
It has taken a writer who lives alone with his motorcycle on an Indian Reservation in Arizona to have the patience to create such a wonderfully alive fantasy world, with a mythology and captivatingly intricate plot to match. This is a truly splendid read with hardly a weak moment from start to unpredictable end. **Jonathan Palmer**

Score 9/10

The Book of Iod

by Henry Kuttner **Published by Chaosium**
Paperback £7.95 **Out now**

Rather a fine collection of stories, this is the latest offering from Chaosium in its 'Cthulhu Cycle Books' series. Kuttner was a young man profoundly influenced by HP Lovecraft, who became a member of the Lovecraft circle in the year before the Grand Old Man of Horror died. Kuttner submitted several manuscripts to Lovecraft for approval and had many of his stories published in *Strange Stories and Weird Tales*.



Only eleven of the thirteen stories in this volume are by Kuttner and these were all published between 1936 and 1939. They share a characteristic claustrophobic feel and are superb tales of the mythos

"Alvin Doyle came into the Wizard's House with a flat, snub-nosed automatic in his pocket and murder in his heart."

that will supply any enterprising referee with bagfuls of inspirational material. As works of fiction they're reasonably good, too, although they do, unsurprisingly, seem a little dated now.

The other two stories presented here are one by the editor, Robert M Price, and one by Lin Carter. The reasons for their inclusion seem a little tenuous but both are pleasant enough tales that fit the mood of the volume well.

So all in all, *The Book of Iod* is a tremendous resource, not just for *Call of Cthulhu* referees but also for both players and referees of all horror systems.

Steve Faragher

Score 8/10

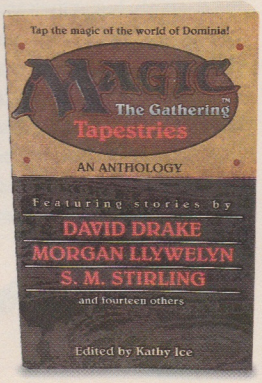
Tapestries

by various authors **Published by Wizards of the Coast**
Paperback £4.99 **Out now**

Learning from the lucrative spin-offs of other fantasy games, Wizards of the Coast have produced a collection of seventeen short stories set in the worlds originally created for *Magic: The Gathering*.

In each of the stories the author gives the reader an insight into life in the worlds of Dominia. Quests, thieving, fighting and wenching are rife, and that's entertaining enough in itself.

If, however, you are looking for handy playing hints from the characters themselves, then look elsewhere. Nameless, a Benalish Hero featured in Michael Stackpole's *What's in a Name?*, is far too preoccupied with his seduction of a cat warrior to worry about how many lives he could lose to her claws, or whether her boyfriend might have a bolt of lightning up his sleeve.



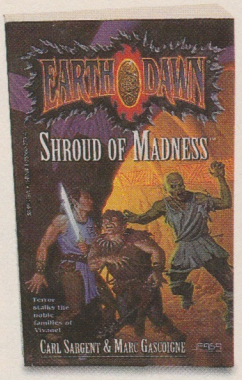
In fact any of the absorbing aspects of *Magic* which could be discussed in fiction, such as the relative strengths of, and possible interactions between, the different colours of magic, are wholly brushed over. *Tapestries* plumps for the straightforward approach of borrowing the odd name or setting and occasionally, when the author is feeling adventurous, including the concept of mana.

Don't be put off if you have never shuffled a *Magic* deck: but then again, don't expect to gain anything from it if you have.

Ben Rodd **Score 5/10**

Shroud Of Madness

by Carl Sargent & Marc Gasgoine **Published by FASA**
Paperback £4.99 **Out now**



Having a rich, detailed background for a roleplaying game that's constantly evolving is hardly a new idea, and neither is publishing spin-off novels based on RPGs. FASA, however, seems to be the only company to have hit upon the notion of combining the two.

For some time, *Shadowrun* novels have been referring to recent events in the game universe, and are in turn referred to in new supplements for the game. Perhaps the best example is *Burning Bright*, which described the events leading up to the *Bug City* sourcebook. Now the company seems set to continue the trend with its *Earthdawn* novels.

Shroud Of Madness is set in the Theran-controlled city of Vivane, and details a series of grisly murders and apparent suicides that rock the major noble houses. Cassian, an elven 'praetori' (investigator), is despatched to discover what's going on. It's a combination of fantasy and detective fiction that, despite some good ideas and effective

"Across the city a small and long-fingered hand, almond-nailed and very pale of skin, traced its way down a list of names; some already crossed through, four remaining."

passages, doesn't quite work. The plot is overly complex, there are too many characters introduced too quickly, and the identity of the killer becomes obvious far too soon.

As a stand-alone novel, then, *Shroud Of Madness* isn't going to win any literary prizes. But it does have its uses for *Earthdawn* referees interested in using the new *Sky Point & Vivane* campaign set (see page 75). The book complements the supplement well, covering different aspects of the city and its politics, as well as providing a simple way to flesh out the characters of many of the major figures in the Theran Quarter. It's not required reading, by any means, but anyone planning to run adventures in and around the city will find lots of useful background detail for their games.

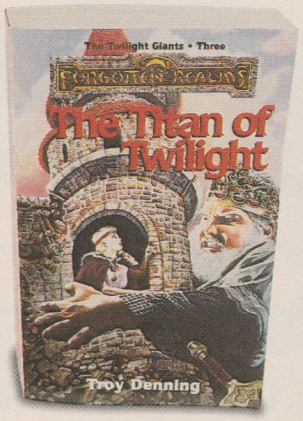
Andy Butcher **Score 6/10**

The Titan of Twilight

by Troy Denning **Published by TSR**
Paperback £4.99 **Out now**

Perhaps it will not surprise you to learn that this is the third (and final) instalment of the *Twilight Giants* series. An enjoyable romp, it is, too. The body count is extraordinarily high, with expendable soldiers and leading

characters on all sides meeting all manner of gruesome deaths. Indeed, this is one of the book's strengths. The story begins with a vicious battle and thereafter a steady shower of lopped limbs keeps things ticking along nicely.



The cause of all this bloodshed is the bastard child of Queen Brianna of Hartsvale. The giants of the land believe the babe to be evil and want its head on a spear. Unsurprisingly, the Queen and her armies disagree.

Troy Denning has great fun dishing up a variety of tricky problems and hideous monsters for our heroes to tackle as events roll towards a stunning finale where the legendary titan himself makes an appearance.

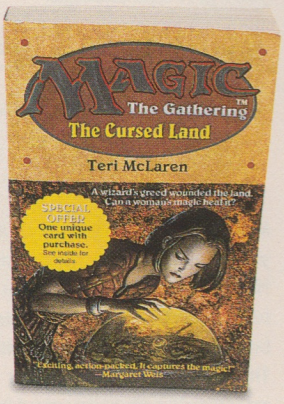
"The fire giants lashed out wildly wth their swords, slicing off burly arms and slashing into thick chests, filling the air with the charnel-house stench of spilled entrails and scorched flesh."

Not one for the faint-hearted (you'll never win a fair lady either) but for the rest of us an above-average read. **Gideon Kibblewhite** **Score 6/10**

The Cursed Land

by Teri McLaren **Published by Harper Prism**
Paperback £4.99 **Out now**

There are certain themes and ideas that have been used so many times in fantasy novels that they've almost gone beyond the level of cliché. Unfortunately, *The Cursed Land* is full of them.



The book begins with perhaps the most overused of them all, the 'evil influence corrupts the insecure but basically all right bloke' plotline. A mysterious 'trader' visits the idyllic island of Cridhe, turns one of the inhabitants against his friends and family and persuades him to try to take the power of the Clan Tree, the magical centre of the islanders' world. Doing so, of course, unleashes a dark curse, splitting the community and bringing all kinds of unpleasantness.

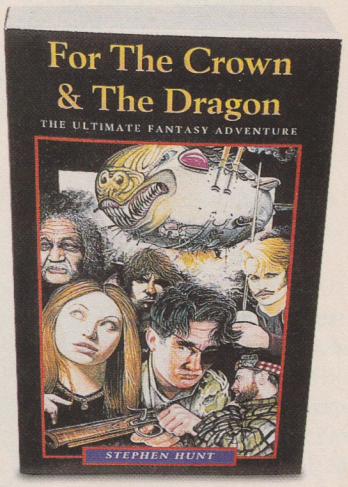
"Just then, a terrible rending sound shook the cell and a deep basso filled the damp air with a deafening croak."

When, Ages later, only the innocent young mage Aylith can stand between the now thoroughly evil bad guy and the culmination of his dastardly plans, you will hardly be surprised to discover that the aforementioned female magic user is 'talented but inexperienced', will you?

It's not that *The Cursed Land* is badly written. It's actually quite enjoyable, and mercifully avoids drawing too heavily on the specifics of *Magic: The Gathering* of which it is a spin-off. It's just that you've probably read so much of it before. In fact, if you've ever roleplayed in a fantasy game, you've probably *played* a lot of it before... **Andy Butcher** **Score 5/10**

For the Crown and the Dragon

by Stephen Hunt **Published by Green Nebla**
Paperback £4.99 **Out now**



Sven Hassel almost meets Fritz Leiber in this rousing story based in an almost Napoleonic alternative reality.

An 18th-Century map of the world has Britain split into three islands lashed together by a cold-hearted and isolationist regime: the rest of Europe is divided into a patchwork of warring city states. Everywhere there are vast tracts of wilderness and forest populated by bloodthirsty half-beasts.

In a fresh and clever blend of history and myth, Stephen Hunt has delivered a fast and furious swords and sorcery epic with tanks and flintlocks. The story

"Moving closer, Taliesin saw a vicious mob had come from under the shelter of one of the rotting dock buildings, but far from stopping the beating the on-lookers urged the seamen to greater violence."

centres around Taliesin, a lowly army captain, and his motley band of cannon fodder. Sent on a mission impossible in which they must bring back a defecting member of the royal family, they soon have tinderbox Europe up in arms.

There is more than a touch of Robin Hood about Taliesin. Steadfastly he leads his troops against the most unlikely odds in the service of the powers that be, while at the same time railing against the poverty and repression he sees about him. Looked up to by his men, he is very much a people's champion.

Yet the tale is stranger and more cynical than a mere Sherwood Forest chestnut, and the raft of great characters have a black sense of humour to match. The battles are likewise well done, so that we are soon spattered not only with blood and gore, but with dirt, filth, rain and brine as well.

Hopefully the second and final part of this series will be every bit as entertaining as this.

Incidentally, the author is currently talking to Alternative Armies about producing a range of miniatures based on the book.

Gideon Kibblewhite

Score 7/10

Hot Metal

arcane's monthly guide to the newest and best in fantasy miniatures, with Karen Newis

Tyranid

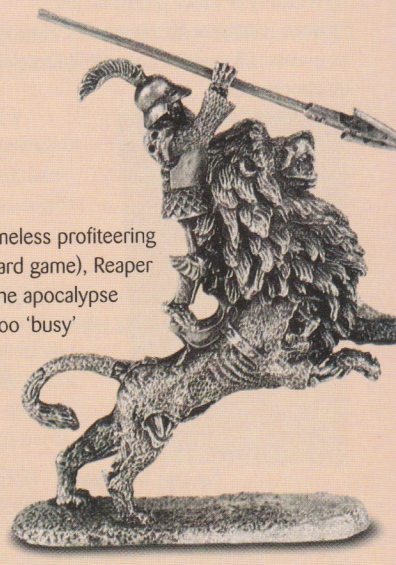


Still the best-known figures maker in the UK, Citadel have vast quantities of experience: but it really doesn't show in the quality of this model. The flair once visible in all of Citadel's work has been diluted; we are expected to pay well over the odds (£4.99 for three figures) for uniform, formulaic sewage.

This is a Tyranid, a kind of skeleto-alien for *Warhammer 40K*. It's largely bland and flat, so I was shocked to discover that the designer is none other than the usually excellent Michael Perry.

Games Workshop Mail Order 01773 713213 £4.99 for three

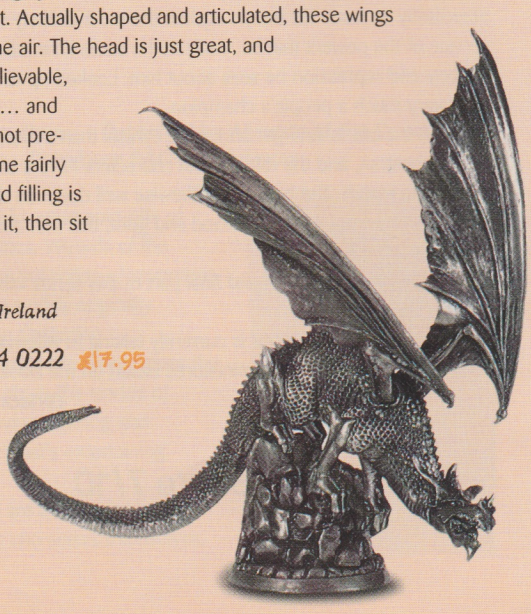
Horsemen of the Apocalypse: War



If you ignore their iffy skeletons and shameless profiteering (figures to adorn 'life counters' for *that* card game), Reaper do good stuff. Their four 'horsemen' of the apocalypse are not terribly well cast, and are a little too 'busy' on the detail front, but if you paint and clean carefully, they look convincingly repulsive. "War" (02003) is sculpted by R Kerr and really makes the skin crawl. His mount's dish-mop mane is a bit much, but otherwise it's a damn fine anatomy lesson. Phone Reaper and you'll get a free catalogue.

Reaper Miniatures, Texas 001 214 434 3088 around £2.99

Scafa the Worm



Mithril Miniatures have come good with this wonderfully posed dragon. Okay, so the scales aren't hugely detailed, and the leg joints are a little odd, but the wings are magnificent. Actually shaped and articulated, these wings could really shift some air. The head is just great, and the whole thing is believable, interesting, animated… and gorgeous. Scatha is not pre-undercoated and some fairly intricate assembly and filling is required. But just do it, then sit back and enjoy!

Mithril Miniatures, Ireland

00353 264 0222 £17.95

Barbarian Heroes



Kev White, take a bow. Now put an arrow in it and shoot the idiot who ruined your lovely sculpting in the casting process. Beautiful though the Barbarian Heroes (3101) must have been before casting – and can be again – they're not recommended for novice painters because the casts are heavy with flash. The chap with two handaxes is magnificent, with a very good face (quite Sean Connery, really). The detail that has gone into his belt is superb, and the pose, though static, is quite believable. Also in the pack of three are a bald, skirted madman wielding a large sword and an extremely bulky chap with a deerskin headdress.

Harlequin Miniatures 0115 942 2119

about £2.99 (three-figure set)



RAFM Angels

A new range at GenCon this year: Victory (3300), Judgement (3301), Law (3302), Grace (3303), Archangel of Light (3304) and Avenging Archangel (3305). All are well sculpted, but casting is below par, especially for new moulds. Still, nice to see that at last someone has worked out that it is possible to cast winged creatures in one piece without resorting to the 'road-rollered' look. 'Course, no-one's perfect, and the Avenging Archangel needs one wing attached. Shown are the Angel of Victory (with the sword) and the Angel of Grace (the one with the harp). The designer has resisted the urge to fudge the detail in complicated bits, as you can see from the detail of Victory. Not quite an industry first, but close.

RAFM Company Inc, Canada *001 519 623 4832* around £3.95



Gordon's Highlanders (for Flintloque)

The Figure Company, eh? Well, they were up all night thinking of that name, weren't they? Also known as Alternative Armies, The Figure Company have recently branched out into racial slander. Why should Scottish folk accept being portrayed as RATMEN? How dare they?!

To support the soon-to-be-published *Flintloque* game, these are kilted rodents wearing ridiculous feathered turban-shaped 'bunnets'. The Gordon's Highlanders (36882) are, I am told, a humorous parody of our fierce and savage race. My indignation knows no bounds.

That aside, the figures are designed nicely by Mark Kay, with clean, surprisingly intricate detail, and are competently cast.

Alternative Armies *(01159) 287809* around £3.95 for four



Barbarian Raiders

Good, clean, anatomically correct (if a little exaggerated) detail – yahoo! Nice touches on the design front, and kinky little extra bits that you simply don't expect: this I like. Like the Heroes, Barbarian Raiders (3102) are not brilliantly cast (well, okay, they're appallingly cast by today's standards) but persevere; it's worth it. The last of the three is very definitely a Conan, despite the somewhat mincing facial expression.

Harlequin Miniatures *0115 942 2119*

about £2.99 (three-figure set)



Razorback Riders (for Leviathan)

To support their new 25mm tabletop fantasy battle game, *Leviathan,* Grendel are bringing out some quite splendid critters, mostly cast in resin. Eschewing 'standard' fantasy strictures, Razorback Riders (20008) are a good example. A huge punk boar with rhinoceros skin and Conan's little brother sitting astride, it's simply excellent. You'll get two in a pack and they'll be surprisingly cheap. Very, very fine detail and casting, but you expect nothing less from those once known as Fantasy Forge. You can actually see the eyes behind the helmet.

Grendel Productions Ltd *0131 554 5540* £TBA



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arcane scribblings

Welcome to the first of our letters pages, your chance to air your views, shout, rant and hurl abuse in safety.

How did we manage to get letters for our first issue? Well, due to the wonders of the "InformationSuper CanalBarge" that is *Futurenet* we've been on-line for several weeks already (read more about our Internet pages in Despatches) and we've been encouraging people to get in touch with us. Here's a selection of their communications. Some have been mailed straight to us, and others we've taken from the **arcane** forum on *Futurenet*.

Dear arcane one,

This new magazine of yours sounds very interesting: let's hope it can become what *White Dwarf* once was, before it turned into an advertising supplement for Games Workshop (sorry, maybe that should be '*Warhammer* Workshop'). I look forward to seeing the first issue (and my e-mail in a pre-emptive letters page).

Yours elfishly, **Hedley Coppock**

Genuinely the first letter we ever received. Well done, Hedley. The original of your masterpiece now adorns the **arcane** *office wall in a sturdy frame.*

Hello there!

It's about time for a British RPG mag, and who better to publish it than Future. I'm sure it'll be a glossy, well-designed mag, and at last I'll be able to put away my *Dragon* subscription, which is getting a bit long in the tooth. Besides, British writers seem to have more humour than American ones.

Okay, I'm not 100% sure that I'll like the mag – I'll have to see it first. Future mags can often look better than they read. *Format* mags, for example (I've read *Amiga Format* and *PC Format*) seem a bit shallow. But *Amiga Shopper* was good, which probably means that an editor's touch can help.

I'll have to think a bit about subscribing, but I'll sure look **arcane** up in any case (that's nonsense, of course; deep down I already decided to subscribe, and I just need to convince myself that these 27 pounds for 6 issues is money well spent).

Once I see what **arcane** is really about, I'll see if I can contribute anything as a writer. I'm always glad to try new writing projects, if I like what they're about. Not that I've got real writing experience (I never got paid for writing), but I do write and roleplay (you can check my web page to see some of the things I'm into).

Goodbye for now, **Eyal Teler**
teler@cs.huji.ac.il
ET's home page is at
http://www.cs.huji.ac.il/~teler

Thank you, Eyal. You may notice that former Amiga Shopper *editor Cliff Ramshaw is writing* AD&D *reviews for us. We hasten to add that £27 is what it costs to subscribe for anyone living in America. It's less in the UK and Europe. If you're interested in subscribing, there's more info on page 79.*

Dear arcane,

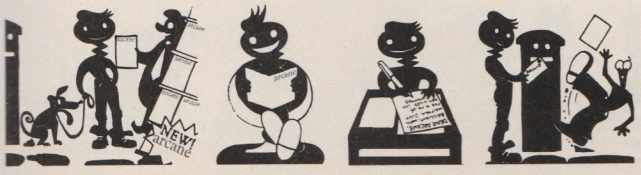
Nice idea for a mag. It'll be nice to read something that isn't totally biased to one manufacturer (Games Workshop, TSR, etc).

If you want an idea for a feature, I really would like to know why GW always seem to be bringing out new games, but then drop them after a few months. The only one they seem to keep going is *Warhammer*.

Me and a few friends started playing *Man O'War*, but they dropped that before we could get really into it.

Chris Adams
chrisa@luna.co.uk

What a nice letter. Thank you, Chris. As to Games Workshop (who already seem to be →



coming in for some stick here) we don't know why they dropped Man O'War. *Perhaps they'd care to write in and tell us...*

Dear arcane,

Interactive Literature – also known as Live Action or Freeform Roleplaying – hasn't had much coverage so far in Britain. Yet in Nottingham in September, 50 people gathered for an intense roleplaying experience. This was *Cafe Casablanca* – an interactive literature game written in America by a team including Sandy Petersen of *Call of Cthulhu* and *Doom* fame. It was run over here by a team led by Kevin Jacklin.

Players took on roles based on characters drawn from a variety of film noir, such as *The Maltese Falcon, Key Largo, The Thin Man* and *Think Fast Mr Moto,* as well as the titular *Casablanca.* Each character has his or her own background, skills and goals, and spends the playing time interacting with the other players, all trying to make their own goals happen. Although six 'directors' gamesmaster the event, most of the action happens solely between player characters. It's like all the NPCs are PCs.

Rules are at a minimum, with no dice rolling and just the simple mechanic of playing scissors/paper/stone to resolve any fights or other skill tests. The emphasis is on roleplaying and drama.

This kind of live roleplaying is a long way from LARP, which is seen as "hitting people with rubber swords" (I know that's derogatory). Instead, it is much closer in feel to the murder mystery dinner parties. It's not just for devoted roleplayers and can appeal to people who like to act, enjoy mysteries, and/or don't think of themselves as liking (tabletop) roleplaying games.

People who don't roleplay enjoy murder mystery weekend breaks at hotels where they watch actors play out a story and have to deduce "whodunnit". In interactive literature games, they'd be full participants rather than spectators. Games can be for 10 to 100 people and can run for a few hours to a whole weekend.

We hope that **arcane** will cover Interactive Literature in its roleplaying coverage, and not just report on traditional LARP dungeoneering. We also hope that we've piqued people's interest in this form of gaming. Having played in a few games small and large, we joined the Interactive Literature Foundation (ILF), which is based in America (there are currently only three members here in Britain, but we hope numbers will grow soon). ILF offers members access to a library of interactive game scenarios which you can run on your own: it also produces a newsletter and organises events.

We know that this sounds like a huge advert, but we are extremely enthusiastic about this form of roleplaying and hope to get many more people hooked on it so that there are more Interactive Literature games for us to play in!

Paul Snow and Heidi Kaye

It all sounds great, and **arcane** *does intend to run some features on LARP, but we have two problems. First, where do people get hold of this Interactive Literature Foundation, and second, if there's only three of you in Britain, of how much interest will it be to our readers? We'd like to hear from anyone who thinks it sounds interesting.*

Dear Sir,

I was interested to stumble across your site promoting **arcane** on the WWW. I wondered whether you have yet decided whether you intend to feature live roleplaying systems on a regular basis?

Perhaps sending one or more people to sample adventures at a variety of systems and then asking them to report on their findings would be a pleasing format?

D P Rowbottom,
PHY5DPR@LUCS-03.NOVELL.LEEDS.AC.UK

Is this a conspiracy?

If you want to add your opinions to the **arcane** forum you can contact it at http://www.futurenet.co.uk/Forums/arcane3/index.html

If you'd like to write for **arcane** rather than simply writing to us, send a 500 word review of a game you like to the usual address and mark the envelope 'submissions'. We do get a lot of people hoping to write for us, though, so make sure you really impress us.

On-Line

Here're some of the things people have been saying on our forum about whether card games are killing roleplaying...

I started by playing RPGs but a friend of mine got me interested in *M:TG* and so now I do both. Okay, okay, okay, I'm a *Magic* addict and have thousands of cards now. But my roots still lie in RPGs, and that will never be replaced by card games...

Dave Couch scouch@ibm.net

Like most people here, I started on RPGs, but I tried *M:TG* after I was given a pack by an American I chanced to meet. I loved it, I really did, but then came the deluge, and like so many other genres, it's now got some real crud in there. Still, *INWO* is one of the most fun/sinister games I've EVER played, RPG or not.

justicar@cdp-ltd.demon.co.uk

I don't have the drive or the patience to play card games, but evidently some of the members of my gaming group do. Nothing embitters me more than walking in to our gaming-place to find that the game I have been anticipating all week has been pre-empted by "Just a few" games of *Magic*...

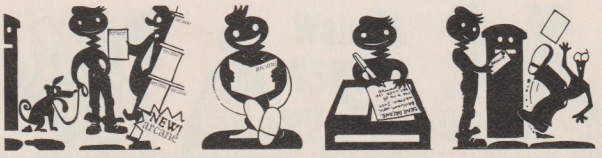
huy@satyrs.cs.csufresno.edu

Roleplayers "hate" CCGs mostly because they distract players from RPGs, I think. Mind you, CCGs do tend to provide RPGers with a fair amount of ammunition. Legendary overheard statement; "*Rage* is great! It's like *Werewolf*, but without any of that boring roleplaying!" And there're stories about store owners failing to obtain RPG material that's been on order for weeks, because they want to maximise their cash in hand to purchase the latest CCG releases...

phil@philm.demon.co.uk

communication

If you'd like to get in touch with us there are several ways. The most traditional is to send us a letter addressed to **arcane**, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW. *The slightly more technically advanced can send us a* fax on (01225) 446019, *while all you fully fledged InfoCyberOtakuNauts out there can e-mail us at* arcane@futurenet.co.uk *or visit our web site on* http://www.futurenet.co.uk/entertainment/arcane.html. *We look forward to hearing from you.*



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IT WAS A TIME OF DARKNESS

by TB Falsename Episode Two

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

Martin, Barry and Betty – roleplaying game fans (and some girl) – have bought a strange new game called Orcish Wars *from a mysterious shop. Opening the box, they find themselves magically transported to The Land, the savage world where the game takes place, and within six minutes they are killed by a marauding band of orcs.*

Rufuxrufcud, a wizard, witnesses the slaughter and, recognising the three as the 'otherworlders' mentioned in The Book of Foretelling, prepares a powerful spell to resurrect the chums as reincarnations of the ancient heroes Martinus, Barrabus, and some girl, when he is killed by a troll. Meanwhile, intrigue is afoot in the faraway town of Akansaxchukabuk.

Now read on.

(Scene: The bustling market. There is much bustling. We dissolve to an alleyway. A merchant walks along. He has the look of a storyteller about him. A man steps across his path.)

MAN: A moment.

MERCHANT: Oh! Pardon me, sir – I was busy with my thoughts. What is to become of Princess Breasts? As you know, with her father, the king, Mortleigh II, away on a diplomatic mission, she is held captive by the villainous Captain of the Guards, Raxinfraxin. And we have all heard how he desires to be king himse–

MAN: I know all this already. Obviously.

MERCHANT: Indeed, and as you also know, there is a small but determined resistance to Raxinf–

MAN: Look, give me all your money or I'll kill you.

(We pull back to see that the scene is being watched from a high window by Captain Raxinfraxin.)

RAXINFRAXIN: The people seem to be displeased. *(He rubs his chin.)* If only I cared in the slightest way. No matter. *(Two small boys enter.)* Sumgrew – Sumtew – come here and let daddy dandle you upon his knee, although I'm still not quite sure what that involves. *(He tries valiantly, but it is an unpleasant effect.)* How are you, my boys? Wasn't there a third one at some point? I trust my brother took good care of you and that you stayed away from the locked room three corridors along and six flights up that you undoubtedly would never have heard of had I not mentioned it.

SUMGREW: Our uncle Saxinraxin was perfectly super, father.

SUMTEW: He took us to see the conjuror, Mister Dixdastardlax, and we had jellies and fun.

RAXINFRAXIN: God, I hate you. *(He shuts them in a cupboard. Suddenly there is a loud commotion from outside.)*

VOICES: Hurrah! It is as The Book foretold! Sawtoad, the apprentice has brought the 'otherworlders' who will free us from the – oh. Well, help your master down so he can perform the spell of – ah.

ANOTHER VOICE: Let me through, I'm a doctor. Like that counts for anything in the eighth century.

(Raxinfraxin turns back from the window.)

RAXINFRAXIN: Ha. The fools. Now I will marry Princess Breasts and ascend the throne to rule, with the help of my brother and the magician. No longer will Mortleigh snicker at Saxinraxin, Raxinfraxin, Dixdastardlax.

(The door opens and Princess Breasts burst in.)

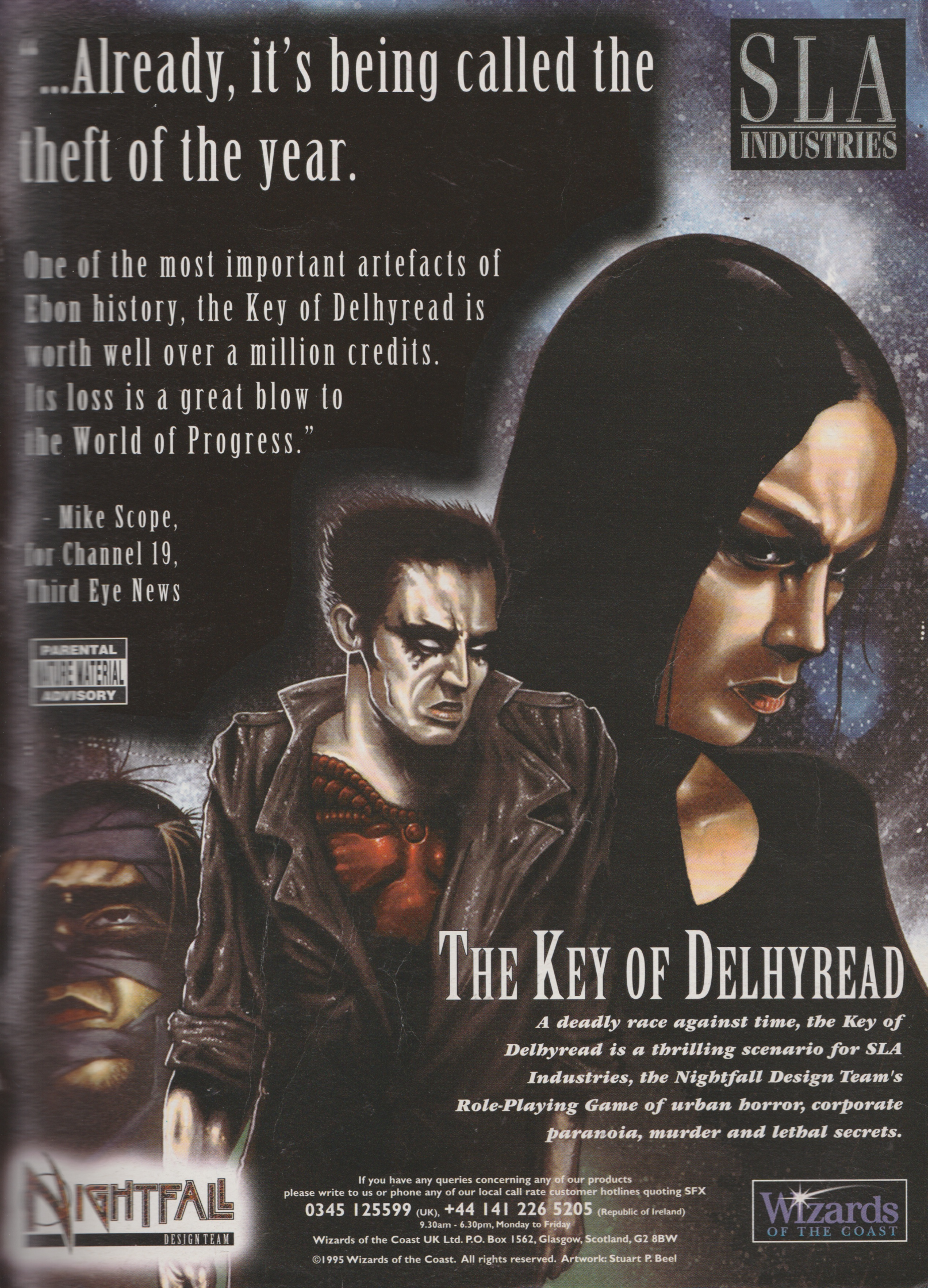
PRINCESS BREASTS: Not so fast. Don't reach for that sword. (She brandishes a Browning 9mm.) This is an anachronism – deadly at twenty paces. *(Raxinfraxin leaps back twenty-one paces.)* Curses!

SUMGREW *(muffled)*: Can we come out now, father?

RAXINFRAXIN: Shhhh!

What tricks has Raxinfraxin got up his sleeve? Can Princess Breasts truly be free, when she continues to repress that childhood memory of being lost in a milliner's and so retains an irrational fear of hats? Who is the gaunt stranger not mentioned in this episode?

TO BE CONTINUED...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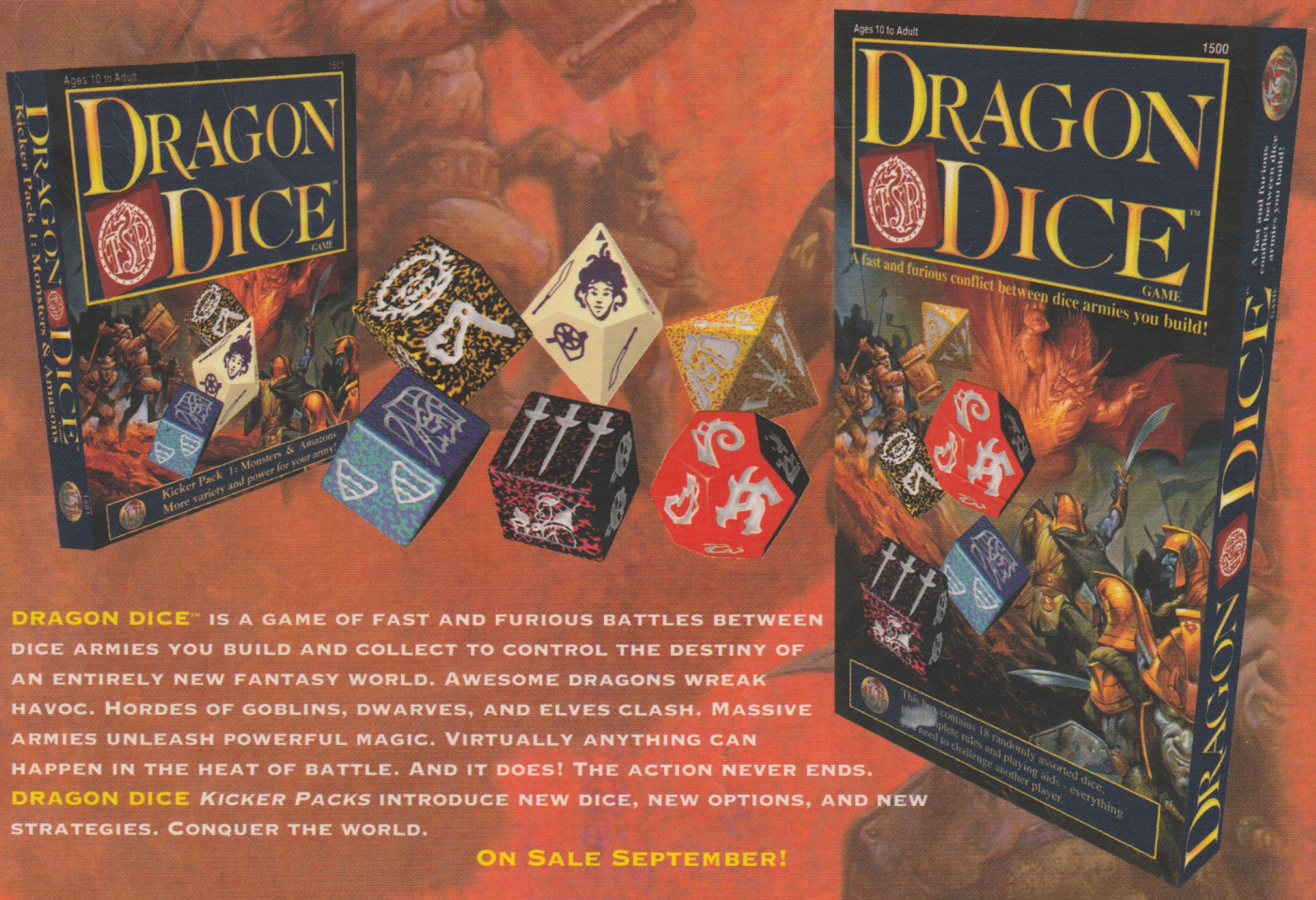

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