

ISSUE
16

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PREVIEW





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Australian Realms

Issue 16, March/April 1994

The Australian Magazine of Role Playing

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Editorial Letters

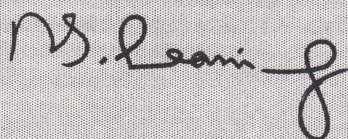
Firstly, I'd like to welcome aboard all our New Zealand readers. As of issue 15 we have entered the Land of the Long White Cloud. I look forward to hearing from some of you soon.

The time has come again for you to stand up and be counted. I know everyone reading this editorial is right behind the magazine - you wouldn't have paid for the pleasure if you didn't like us. I want to know why you find us worth while so that we can continue to please. But I also know you have a number of gaming friends who for one reason or another are ignoring the fact that Realms is building a gaming industry in this corner of the globe. I'd like you to shove Realms in their face and ask them why they are not supporting us. Tell your recalcitrant friends that Realms values their opinions, but suspects that they are missing the point of having a home based magazine. Tell them, without Realms, there is no voice for gamers in Australia and New Zealand.

If they tell you there is something seriously wrong with the magazine, then please write and tell us about it when you fill in you Reader's Poll form. We value equally the opinions of those who love us, those who hate us, and those who couldn't care less. Its the only way we can move more people into the first category.

This positive and negative feedback is important as Realms is about to enter a new phase of operation. We have a release schedule set for the next twelve months which will include such things as the A-Team book, A-Team miniatures, an Unae World book, a book of How To Essays featuring leading industry figures as well as our own authors and other products. Yep, an Australian company is going to bring out products! So again, I urge you to spread the good news.

Great times are ahead.
Be there!



Nick Leaning.

Jenny Nossol-Cattapan
Preston, VIC

Hi AR,

I would like to say I think your magazine is FANTASTIC! My favourite part of AR is the The A-Team. It is the best comic strip I have ever read; the characters seem so alive and I absolutely love the sense of humour of Edgar & Daniels. I have enclosed an envelope for an order form for The A-Team Book, as per issue #14 of Australian Realms.

I have one suggestion for the magazine - include a few more pictures of female characters and perhaps a story or two centred around a female. The articles by Karen Ogden were refreshing to read.

Thanks again for a great magazine.

Jenny, ta for the compliments. The A-Team have taken on a life of their own, probably because they started out as 'real life' PCs in a group and are still playing AD&D. What's more, they will soon be available in their own book! Due out in late April, the Adventures of the A-Team book brings together previously unpublished strips from the start of the series, Andrew's brilliant scripts plus a whole new story and strip that will never be seen anywhere else!

For more female coverage - check out the Amazons article on page 6 for starters - I will have a chat to our contributors and see that they give due attention to your suggestion. Stay tuned.

Jason Chaplin
Willetton, WA

Dear Realms,

I have played many RPG systems and have found Warhammer Fantasy Role Play to be the best (with Paranoia, TMNT and AD&D's Dragonlance Campaign close behind), so I would have to agree with Matthew Pittard (issue 15) that WFRP would be the perfect system for UNAE, especially now that Games Workshop has stopped with it. (I don't know why? Its bloody good!). Anyway congrats on an excellent magazine.

Thanks for the feedback, Jason. We agree that Warhammer Fantasy Role Play was a great game and suits the Unae world very well. Unae is also ideally suited to an AD&D campaign, in fact virtually any fantasy rpg as we are trying to keep the world as generic as possible.

We'd like to hear other peoples view on what games they prefer, and why so please take the time to fill in our Readers Poll (see page 33) and write to us at the same time. To make the effort worth your while we are offering over \$500 worth of prizes.

Gregory Howard
Moonie, QLD

Dear Nick,

In reply to Matthew Pittard's letter in issue 15 I'd like to take up my *Holy Avenger* and strike him down for his blasphemy! AD&D is not boring. AD&D is a very exciting game if the DM and players know what they are doing. My group has not yet tried playing in your Unae world, but I'm sure AD&D will be every bit as good there. Obviously the reason Warhammer died is because not enough people played it to make it worth Games Workshops' while to continue with it.

Gregory, threatening violence doesn't help anyone's argument. Besides, a Holy Avenger should always be used in the cause of law and good; I don't think anything as emotive as which is your 'favourite' rpg qualifies for righteous condemnation. Any other opinions out there?

Kevin Bradshaw
Woolloomooloo, NSW

Dear Nick,

I'm writing to you, not just to compliment the AR team on producing a great magazine, but to use the letters page as a forum.

In particular my gripe is with TSR. I've played Advanced Dungeons and Dragons for nine years now and as I've viewed the various products coming out I've been less and less impressed.

Obviously TSR is a commercial organisation and is thus trying to appeal to the masses, but the 'soft slop' which they have been producing has been getting worse and worse. My case in point is the Forgotten Realms. There is nothing 'hard and nasty' about it, compared to Greyhawk it's barely a wimpy shadow. As far as I can see this is endemic of all TSR produced products.

Anyhow, 'nuff sed, congrats again on the magazine.

Kevin, its good to see someone with the guts to speak their mind. In defence of TSR, though, the success of their mass market material does a couple of useful things. Firstly, it keeps them in business so that they can produce some of their better stuff (eg. Dark Sun and Ravenloft) and secondly it brings new players to the hobby.

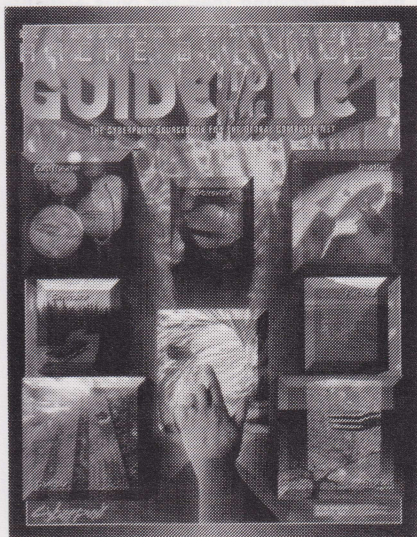
I just wonder whether you need to make a change - if you're not happy with TSR you're best course of action is to let them know by either writing to them, or by voting with your pocket and refusing to buy the 'soft slop'. If you'd like to wait a few more months, Realms will be producing a world book for Unae which we promise will be 'hard and nasty'!

Reviews

RACHE BARTMOSS' GUIDE TO THE NET

Cyberpunk Sourcebook
by R.Talsorian Games RRP

Reviewed by Paul Mitting



The roleplaying opportunities for a party of Netrunners was pretty limited I feel in the earlier edition of Cyberpunk. Even the 2nd edition didn't inspire me to 'jack in' my players and I left the Netrunning to NPCs. Enter this latest supplement from R.Talsorian. This sourcebook is a gold mine of information on the various Net Regions, what they look like to a Netrunner, and a rundown on the good and very bad things you can encounter in there. The text is 'written' by Rache Bartmoss, an amoral Net jockey who claims to have done everything and been everywhere. His tall stories are edited and given game mechanics by Spider Murphy, a surviving associate.

Surviving? Yes, you see Rache is dead (gunned down in the Net as it were). However, that hasn't stopped him from spending his last months in a slowly deteriorating life support system spilling the beans on all the places he's cracked and the bad things he's done whilst there. Not all his activities are limited to malicious interference in other people's files. He also seems to have spent some time battling the various Corps and their lackeys such as Netwatch.

Netwatch has been introduced as the all round bad dudes who show up to rain on the Netrunner's parade. They're tough, mean and tend to be of the ice 'em first and run an interrogation report later type. To top it off,

they're not alone. Most Corporations and Governments run their own Netrunners as well, often for the express purpose of locating and removing other Netrunners. Life in the Net can be just as fast and deadly as in the meatworld.

Of course, no set of bad guys would be complete without the good guys to do battle with them. My favourite group has got to be The Round Table. When they tackle their foes, it's with Knights and Horse icons charging rampant amongst the normal usual runner icons. Rache threw in a few damsels with torn bodices just for effect. There are various lone Netrunners (like Rache) that get mentioned too, complete with gaming stats and background.

The scope of the supplement is world spanning - there is a chapter on each continent with sections on the main points of interest in each - and even includes background and rules for space based netrunning which ties in very well with the Deep Space supplement.

To sum up, **Rache Bartmoss' Guide to the Net** presents a whole new world for Cyberpunk players to explore. The potential for adventures is enormous, every section spins off a new set of ideas in my mind. Production quality of the book is good, with some neat computer generated colour art used as illustrations of the different regions and occupants. Another top notch production from R.Talsorian.

THE ISLAND ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Palladium RPG Adventure

By Palladium Books RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Island is an extended scenario designed to be played from one end to the other with the adventurers gathering information, beating up on the nasties and working their way from the ubiquitous Inn to the equally ubiquitous Saving of the World.

The adventure swings from city to alpine mounts to forest kingdoms and requires the characters to interact with the whole gamut of NPCs provided. Each of these NPCs is provided with both stats and well developed character description. The area descriptions are clear and concise, but this is definitely not a pick up and play scenario. The referee needs to read the book thoroughly beforehand as there is a good deal of fleshing out to be done.

The plot line is well structured with plenty of clues and red herrings to be sorted out by the players before in order to prevent the Bad Guy from winning.

Island is designed for use with the Palladium fantasy rpg but can be easily adapted to any fantasy campaign. This book offers something which seems to have lost its way in gaming - fun! Its fantasy where the guards look like bears and you get to kick the Bad Guy's rear! Who could ask for more?

HOT SPOTS

Battletech Supplement

By FASA RRP \$22.50

Reviewed by Graham Holman

Hot Spots comes as two booklets and are designed as companions to the Mercenary's Handbook. The books provide a variety of mission briefings which detail employers, types of action, unit type and sizes, pay rate, support details and available transport. To support each mission there is a short section on behind the scene politics, possible headaches, potential garrisons and local conditions.

The Contracts book is designed to be photocopied and handed to each player when contract are organised. This adds realism to pre-mission negotiations. Missions range from simple Garrison Duty up to Planetary Assaults. Some of the instructions for referees seem a bit condescending but this set is targeted at those starting out in Battletech. More experienced players will still find **Hot Spots** a quick way to create some basic scenarios with scope for tailoring them to your campaign; which is after all 90% of the fun. Is it your fault the mercenary players want to attack the only garrison on the planet that happens to have three legions of Clan Wolf Mech's based there? Maybe if they weren't so quick with criticisms of the last campaign they'd have better intelligence this time!

For those just starting out, or out of fresh ideas, this is worth adding to your collection.

BOOK OF ARTIFACTS

AD&D Accessory

by TSR RRP \$39.95

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

This attractive 160 page hardback will look good on your bookshelf if you are a collector of AD&D 2nd Edition, because to be brutally honest, that's where it ought to stay. Remember those mega-destructive, block-buster magic items from the 1st Edition that all but passed out of sight in the 2nd Edition Dungeon Master's Guide? Well *they're baack!*

Although the author (Zeb Cook) has gone to great lengths to re-assure us that these items are not necessarily a health hazard to your campaign, any referee who introduces the Hand of Vecna or Baba Yaga's Hut is asking for trouble. And that's what's packed tight into this colourful tome of terrible delights; more trouble than a party full of tenth level hack and slashers trapped in a kobold lair.

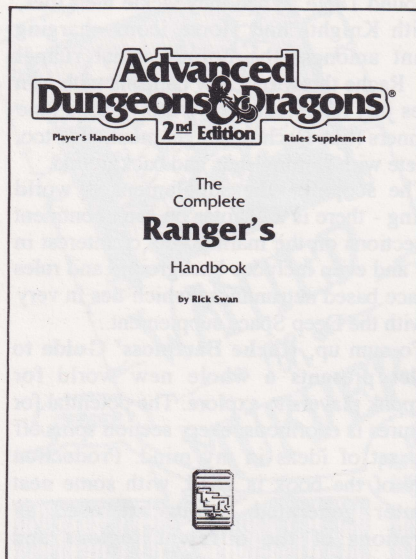
The items listed include the old favourites plus a number of new items that fit into the various campaign settings created since 1st Edition. Each gets a couple of pages of description and there are some suggestions given as to how to use them as plot devices. Add to this rules for manufacturing magic items and recharging which are long overdue.

I've been playing AD&D for over ten years and have only ever encountered three artifacts. How often will this book get used? Rarely, I hope for all our sakes!

RANGER'S HANDBOOK

AD&D 2nd Ed Rules Supplement
by TSR RRP \$34.95

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard



This, the latest offering in the *Complete Handbook* series by TSR, covers one of the more popular character classes in the AD&D game, the Ranger. Coming in at 128 pages in length, it follows the standard handbook format, with chapters on new kits, proficiencies, magical items and spells and equipment. In keeping with the ranger theme, there are additional chapters on attracting followers, roleplaying, religion and forgatherings (ranger jamborees).

As always, the full-page colour illustrations are excellent, but I found many of the black-and-white illustrations (like some parts of the text) a bit juvenile. The chapters on new magical items and spells, proficiencies, equipment and forgatherings were quite useful and enjoyable to read, even for non-ranger character players (in particular, the tracking proficiency is nicely expanded). It's when the book details the new ranger kits that the problems arise.

As you read through this handbook, it soon becomes obvious that after having produced so many other *Complete Handbooks*, the various writers at TSR are probably beginning to run out of ideas for new character kits. The 15 kits provided in this particular volume therefore run from the very good and usable (the *sea-ranger*, *explorer*, *mountain man* and *pathfinder*) through the well-written but

with limited use (the *falconer*, *feralan* and *warden*) down to the down-right silly (the *greenwood ranger* - as you advance in level, you turn into a tree bit by bit!). It's a great pity that the ranger kits suggested as ideas only in the "Creating New Kits" section weren't developed fully in the handbook, as many of those (*lycanthropic ranger*, *survivalist*) sound much more interesting than the ones actually included in the handbook.

Where all of these various *Complete Handbooks* excel is in the way in which they speed up play, and this one is no exception. The initial character creation chapter and the excellent Ranger Character Sheets (for photocopying and use by the player) make creating and playing ranger characters very quick and easy, with all the relevant tables from the *Player's Handbook* reproduced in full as an additional aid. After looking at this particular handbook, I'm now tempted to rush out and buy some of the earlier *Complete Handbooks* for this very reason alone.

For those of you that play ranger characters fairly often, or would like to spice up your current ranger character, or would just like to have a complete collection of these handbooks, there is enough new material in this one to warrant a purchase. For myself though, I'll probably pass on this one and go and buy the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* instead.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

- The Player's Guide

AD&D Accessory by TSR RRP \$35.00

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

Ed Greenwood's home grown campaign has bloomed into the high fantasy world *par excellence* for AD&D. There has been so much material published and so much has happened that this handbook fills a much needed role - to give player's a cohesive guide to the campaign world and happenings. This is a newcomer's best chance to catch up.

Dipping into this 128 page softback I expected to find quite a dry almanac, but was soon hooked into the story as told by Furian Arcanus of the Seekers adventuring group - the book doubles as the annals of their adventures as they explore the Realms.

The book is produced in large type with 'generous' margins, but does include some good art, utilitarian maps and boxed text explaining many of the finer points of mystery and history to be discovered in the campaign.

As a player's guide this is a very useful book. It is good fun to read, and fills in a lot of the blanks for players who have not had the time or money to access all the many novels and sourcebooks that make up the Forgotten Realms campaign. This is TSR's main high fantasy campaign, and now into it's second edition I have no doubt it will continue to grow for some time yet. Well worth a look.

CAERNS - Places of Power

Werewolf Sourcebook

By White Wolf RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Colin Taber

This latest sourcebook for *Werewolf* comes in at 160 pages and includes a handy colour fold out map of the Earth's main moon bridges in the back. The cover art is excellent and the interior very good, this combined with a common sense structure of the content make it a good easy to use sourcebook. Better than many previous products.

What's it cover? It details various Caerns across the globe, including places such as Australia, Greece, the United States, Germany, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan, Morocco, Russia and Tibet. In these sections it discusses all the relevant details of the caern site, history, surroundings, the local tribal custodians and maps.

Other sections of the book detail the *Kitsune*; the Japanese Werefox and also the Black Spiral Dancers. Perhaps I should also say that as it is mainly a 'background' sourcebook it shouldn't be outdated by the new *Werewolf* second edition due for release in April.

In short this sourcebook is one *Werewolf* product that is pretty close to a must. With the good detail of each site, the extra information on moon bridges and the reference map in the back it is the kind of book that will most definitely be handy.

GERMANY SOURCEBOOK

Shadowrun Sourcebook

by FASA RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

This release comes in at your Shadowrun standard 150+ pages and also includes an assortment of colour plates that are all pleasing to the eye.

The book covers the AGS, the Allied German States including details on history, German magic, equipment and most importantly the data on the German sprawls. This was all written by native Germans and translated for FASA's English edition. It reads well, is full of interesting ideas, and it has to be said is pleasingly authentic. The real thing.

So, what's the AGS like in the Germany Sourcebook? It's a mess, but its being rebuilt after a series of environmental disasters that included a full scale nuclear meltdown, toxic spirits in the North Sea, duelling carts on the Autobahns, a troll kingdom in the south, and the predictable but well delivered anarchist city of Berlin.

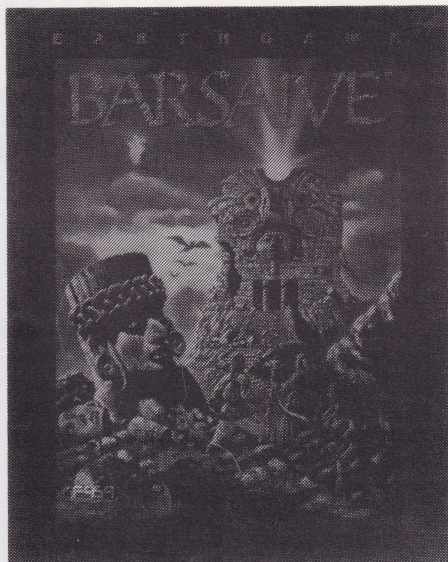
For more details you'll have to buy a copy, but in summary; if you are playing in a European setting, or playing a global campaign that sees a lot of travel this product will work well. If you are running in Europe it will be an asset with the London Sourcebook and Paranormals of Europe.

Well worth the wait.

BARSAIVE

Earthdawn Campaign Set
by FASA RRP \$49.95

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler



Earthdawn is one of those rare games that only comes along once in a blue moon, in short it's a gem. **Barsaive** is the first major release for the new fantasy RPG, and it's of the same impressive quality as the game book. Clear, inspiring and well created, everything a game should be.

Barsaive comes as a boxed set which holds 2 books; the Explorer's Guide (130 pages), the Gamemaster Book (64 pages), a beautiful map, treasure/creature cards and some 'tools' for the map. For my taste I must say not enough, I would have liked to have seen another map or two. As for the treasure/creature cards, I can only say that I looked at them once put them back in their box and will no doubt forget about them. But, aside from those let downs, everything else was above average or downright excellent.

The two books provide a great deal of information, so much of it presented in that wonderful Earthdawn style that teases you to find out more. Alongside the passages of text are FASA's fantasy version of Shadowtalk from Shadowrun. Here it is dwarven scholars from Throal and not deckers who make their own comments. Well executed.

The major topics covered in the Explorer's Guide are Barsaive's history, the Scourge, magic, travel, culture, the land, towns and cities, the Kingdom of Throal, Blood

Wood, the Theran Empire and the denizens of Barsaive. All well detailed and illustrated in an easy to use format, very informative.

Unlike the Explorer's Guide, the GM's book was compiled by the 'regal staff of FASA corp' and contains information that is not the domain of players such as the details of various cults, new treasures, creatures and legends (two of which were previewed in Realms issue 14 page 10).

To me at least, the most important part of this second book is the section on GM characters. What has made Earthdawn different, and to me so appealing is the use of legendary figures. Detailed and (in)famous personalities pepper Barsaive and await introduction to your characters. Here, in the GM's book is over forty of these living legends, many with pictures. It is this original approach to role playing that adds depth and scope for adventure and makes Earthdawn a classic game and **Barsaive** the best setting currently available.

The books, a beautiful map, the map tools, and even an index in the books! What more could you want.

If you are into high fantasy but haven't yet tried Earthdawn, stop wasting your time and have a look at it. If you are already playing Earthdawn, **Barsaive** is a must.

SPACE WOLVES CODEX

Warhammer 40,000 Supplement

By Games Workshop \$29.95

Reviewed by Ron Fielding

Now that Warhammer 40,000 has entered a new edition the lads at the Games Workshop Design Studio have a horde of new miniatures and supplements to release to support this best-selling wargame.

The **Space Wolves Codex** follows on from the softback rulebooks in the main box and is very similar in format. The 88 page supplement presents all you need to know and more about this Space Marine Chapter. The well constructed material covers the planet Fenris (home to the Space Wolves Chapter), the history of the Chapter and it's current organisation, wargear cards, special rules, special characters, preferred tactics, army lists and the Chapter's especial enemies and goals.

Throughout is the usual top quality art evoking the grim chaotic world of the Warhammer milieu. In addition to the black and white and shaded art, there are some great colour plates illustrating a battle report (Space Wolves versus Orks) and some useful pics for those wishing to know the Chapter's 'colours'. The only disappointment here is much of this material has already appeared in White Dwarf.

Only value for money if you are going to run a Space Wolf Marine Chapter; but that's fine as there will be other Codex's to follow (I believe Eldar are next). Polished.

SACRAMENTS OF EVIL

Six Cthulhu Gaslight Adventures

By Chaosium RRP \$35.00

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Sacraments of Evil collects six tales of terror together centre in what is horror's premier setting, Victorian England. Its the 1890's. Inside those born to rule dine with Mr. Holmes while outside Jack the Ripper haunts the fog shrouded streets of London. The investigators, in service of Queen and Country are obliged to defend not only the innocent, but their honour, prestige and social standing.

Here we have several traditional English horror themes distilled into six scenario settings for Cthulhu By Gaslight. In the first adventure a seance goes badly wrong leading to an untidy web of murder and intrigue. Then it's off to defy a family curse and find a family treasure before going on a dark trip into the haunted forests of Wales. The fourth exposes a horrifying secret in the Venerable aisles of York Minster cathedral. The fifth tosses out to sea in "The Scuttling", before heading back to London in the last adventure in pursuit of as a ritualistic serial killer. Each episode is complete and can be played either alone, or joined to any of the others, or better still as a campaign.

Chaosium's writers do a brilliant job of setting the scene for a great night of horror. The characterisation, intricate plots and stories created are well worth the asking price.

THE GLORY OF ROME

AD&D Campaign Sourcebook

by TSR RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

This 96 page release is smaller in pages than the Forgotten Realms Guide, but has a lot more text. The two products are targeted at different audiences. **The Glory of Rome** is directed mainly at those role-players who have been around a while and are looking for a change of scenery, a new challenge, and are willing to try a more 'historical' campaign.

This is the fifth in a series of historical references for AD&D 2nd Edition, and to my mind the best to date. The authors have managed to compact a lot of history and background into a short space without losing much of the essential flavour of the period (the rise and fall of Rome took over 1200 years).

Beginning with a history of the Empire, the book also covers how to integrate the AD&D character classes, magic and religion. Also included are chapters on equipment of the era, armies and enemies of Rome, the games and Roman culture.

As I said earlier, there is plenty of text here and all well written. The art is average quality, but accurate enough to satisfy the historians, and the colour wall map is excellent.

Having always enjoyed the films and books covering the Roman world, I have a hankering to use this book to start a campaign.

My best buy this month.

The Amazons

Warrior Women of the Steppes

by Brad Martin

This article looks at the way of life of women who took up arms and the role of the warrior - the Amazons. The historical sources have been analysed and interpreted so that the information contained therein may be used by the referee to add an authentic and distinctive nation or people to her campaign. The information given is translated into AD&D 2nd Edition statistics but can be easily adopted to all fantasy game campaigns.

Legendary Beginnings

The Greek warrior-hero Herakles, son of Zeus and Alcmene (daughter of the king of Tiryns), stood on the fertile coastal plain at the mouth of the Thermodon River near the Amazonian capital of Themiskyra.

He shouted out to the Amazonian queen Hippolyte, "Valiant Lady, I have come to these far shores on a mission of atonement. As foretold by the Oracle of Delphi I must perform ten labours set by King Eurystheus of Tiryns, for in a fit of madness I killed his wife Megara and their children. My ninth labour is to fetch your symbol of power - your girdle. I have no wish to kill defenceless women, so I request you hand over the said prize at once." His companions, including the kings Theseus of Athens and Telamon of Salamis, struck their spears upon their shields and shouted out their support. Many spoke loudly of how the gods would punish the women for taking up arms. Some Amazons began exchanging insults with the Greeks. Before things could get out of hand, Hippolyte strode forward and untied the girdle. However, before the girdle could be handed to Herakles, the goddess Hera, alarmed that the hero could accomplish one of his tasks so easily, whispered into an Amazon's ear that her queen would be betrayed. The Amazon swiftly loosed an arrow which struck Nicostratus in the eye. The other Amazons began pouring a hail of arrows onto the Greeks, laying many of them low. The Greeks in turn threw their black javelins and took cover behind their great shields.

After the missiles had been expended the two armies drew up facing one another, ready to close for combat. Herakles moved to the fore and challenged the Amazonian champions to single combat. One by one he slew the woman-warriors. First Aella, then Philippis, Prothoe, Eriboe, Celaeno, Eurybia, Phoebe and finally Alcippe. Seeing their most valiant warriors being struck down by the 6'6" giant who never missed his mark, the Amazon army became demoralised and finally broke. Many were killed in the rout, the survivors fleeing to Themiskyra, which was then put under siege by the Greeks. The Amazons stoutly resisted until Hippolyte's sister Antiope, who had fell in love with Theseus, betrayed them. The city was razed and the surviving Amazons scattered. Hippolyte was set free after Herakles accepted her girdle as ransom.

The Labours of Herakles is one of the most well-known of the world's innumerable myths. That the Amazons should be included as targets for Herakles, along with fantastic creatures such as the Nemean Lion, the Hydra, the Erymanthian Boar and the Stymphalian Birds, indicates how strange they appeared to the "civilised" world. The people who recorded what little is known



Hippolyte, Queen of the Amazons

about the Amazons were used to women being confined at home with no public power. Even though many reports were exaggerated it is still possible to discover important facets of their social organisation, culture and methods of warfare.

Society and Way of Life

There were three different tribes of Amazons. The Themiskyreans led by Hippolyte, the Lycastians led by Asteria, and the javelin throwing Chadesians. The major urban centre was Themiskyra, at the mouth of the river Thermodon, one of the world's great rivers. It was a major trading artery, linking the forest steppes to the city, and from there to the Black Sea and the Inner Sea. The main trade goods were grain and slaves. The grain was grown by subject tribes, and the slaves were taken in the incessant wars with the tribes of the interior. They were traded to foreign merchants for wine, olive oil, weapons, pottery and manufactured luxury goods. The city itself had little political value, having grown to meet purely economic needs.

An urban environment was therefore the home of only a minority of the Amazons and their people. Most followed semi-nomadic lives, travelling the great steppes continually searching for fresh pasture for their vast horse herds. Amazonian culture was tied to the horse, which was used for food, for transport and its hide was used to make tents. The horse was also a symbol of wealth. The greater number of horses a clan or a leader could claim, the higher their status. When great Amazon leaders died, their best horses were slaughtered and buried with them in vast catacomb graves (these may extend over a diameter of 320 feet and be over sixty feet high, and are constructed of tree trunks and black earth).

Life was also fashioned by the climate of the steppes. Winter was long (from mid-october to mid-April) and severe. The virtually treeless environment meant that most heating and cooking needs had to be met by horse dung. Summer was subject to drought and most rivers were intermittent. The few springs that existed were held to be sacred.

Amazonian society was a matriarchy. The Queen was the head of the tribe, and power descended to the eldest female of the family. Succession of the eldest was not, however, assured. She had to demonstrate her suitability and survive any challenges mounted by rivals. The process of succession was supervised by the Council of Elders, made up of the ten Shaman-matriarchs. They have the power to "sanctify" the claimant and if necessary appoint a regent if all claimants were killed or found unsuitable.

Outside of each royal family was an unstable group of "nobles". These were women who have demonstrated their battle prowess through duelling. Membership of the group is continually changing as individuals are "removed". Below the nobles were the common woman-warriors and the juveniles. A large male and slave population carried out most menial tasks.

Amazons were prohibited from marrying until they have proved their courage by single-handedly killing an enemy. After their first menses the girl-Amazon was sent out onto the steppes, naked and armed only with bow and arrows. She had to find food and water and could not return to the encampment without proof of a kill. "Marriage" consisted of choosing any healthy male and solemnly swearing to meet all his needs. The contract was only binding as long as the male caused girl-children to be born. If a male child was born an automatic divorce was granted. As no other Amazon would take on such a male, this normally resulted in his death by starvation or exposure.

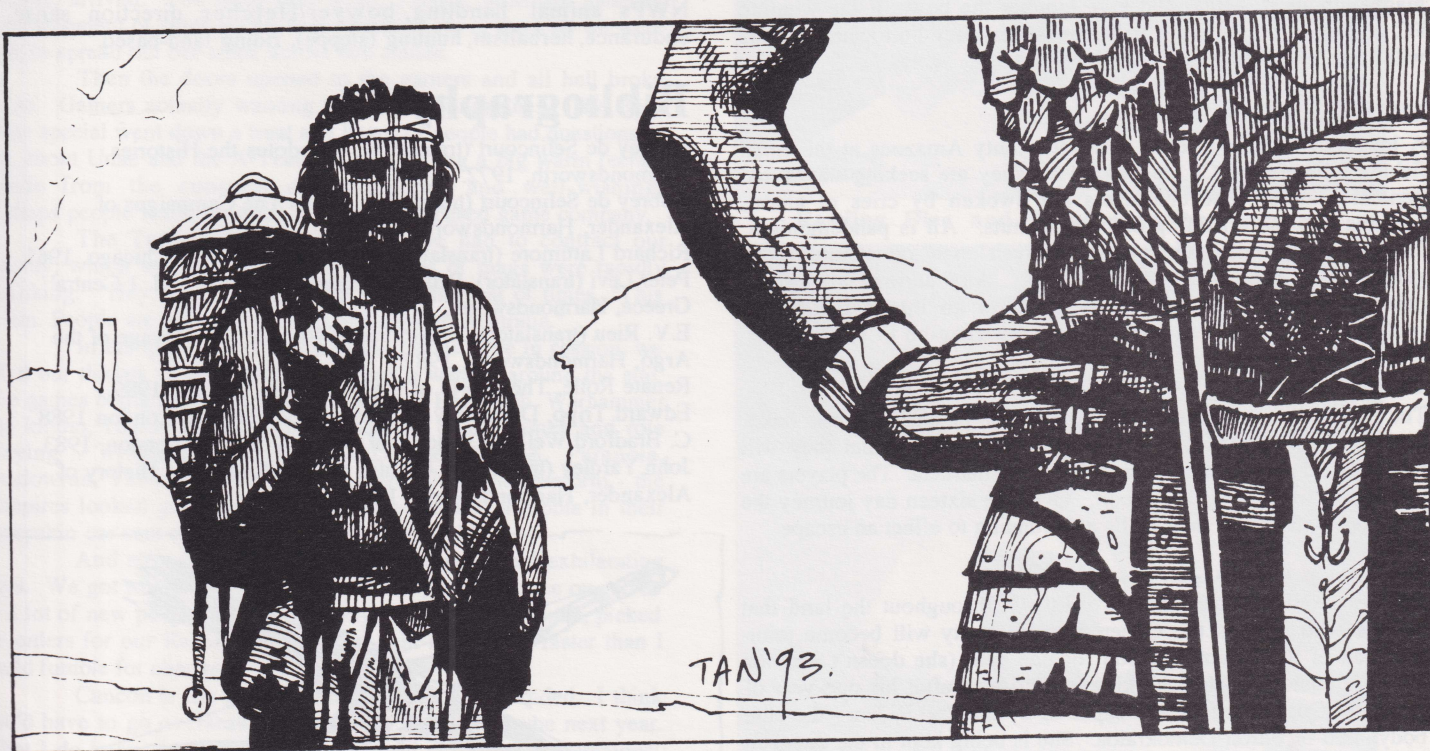
The Amazonian Art of War

The burden, and glory, of warfare in Amazon society fell on the women. To the men was assigned the spinning of wool and such other domestic duties as belong in other societies to women. Able-bodied girls were trained from childhood to be expert archers and horse-riders. Malformed girl-children were exposed at birth. The women mutilated the arms and legs of the male children making them useless for war, and ensuring that they remained in a state of subjection. However, as warrior-women only make up some twenty percent of the adult population of an Amazonian settlement, men still played some role in warfare. A very restricted role - mainly that of porter, weapons-bearer or lightly armed skirmisher.

The bow and arrow was the weapon with which the Amazon was most skilled. With this weapon "...they struck not only when the facing the enemy but also when in flight, by shooting backward at their pursuers...". The small composite bow was assembled from a single wooden core whose ends are reinforced with wrapped string and bone plates. A master-bowyer could take 5-10 years to produce a superior quality weapon. It was carried in a gorytus, which was worn hanging from the belt, strung ready for use. Arrows were kept in a special moisture-proof pocket at the front. Thorns were fixed to arrowheads to make their removal difficult, and poison derived from adders (the body of the snake was allowed to decompose, then placed in a vessel filled with human blood and buried in dung, until putrefaction) or hemlock, was used. Amazons were ambidextrous in the handling of the bow, firing about twenty arrows a minute. They could shoot an arrow over a distance of 500 metres.

For hand-to-hand fighting the Amazons carried axes, instead of spears, and used light targets instead of the ordinary cavalry shield. The long and short sword, chain flail and whip (the nigaica, a short firm handle bound in gold tape, with knotted leather thongs used to strike at the face of an enemy) were also used in battle. Bronze and iron scale armour were commonly used by nobles. Fighting belts trimmed with stripes of iron, protected the groin. Shields were covered with iron plates and can be carried on the back.

Amazonian battle tactics were typically unplanned, with each noble tending to attempt to outdo their rivals. Crises were met by frontal attack - usually a massed cavalry charge, culminating in the rapid firing of arrows to disorganise the enemy, before closing



A large male and slave population carried out most menial tasks.

for single combat. Strategic leadership was virtually nonexistent - only when threatened by a major invasion would the Amazons unite. The mobility provided by their reliance on the horse, did however, allow the Amazons to concentrate superior force on enemy detachments.

Amazonian Dress and Fashion

The dress of the Amazons did not cover the entire body: the left side was bare to the breast but clothed beyond that, while the skirt of the garment, which was gathered into a knot, stopped above the knee. Some fanatics kept only one breast whole, for feeding children of female sex, whilst cauterising the right breast to facilitate bending the bow and handling weapons.

For more ceremonial occasions women of the upper echelons wore long robes (with furbelows round the lower edge), and over these long, baggy, richly ornamented coats. Shoes or short boots with gild decorations were worn on the feet, diadems with long flowing purple veils were used as headdresses. Jewellery consisted of numerous rings, gold wrist bangles, bracelets of pearls, and solid gold neck rings. They also used cosmetics.

Scenario Hooks

What follows are some suggested ways you could incorporate an Amazon culture in your AD&D 2nd Edition campaign.

To Further The Race

The player characters are confronted by twice their number of Amazons. The warrior-women are looking for enemies but have not been able to find any. They decide that the strangers are the next best thing. Unless the PCs can talk themselves out of the situation an Amazon maiden will ride forward and challenge one of the characters to a fight to the death - she needs to kill an "enemy" before she can marry.

Dead-Eye

The players hear about the remarkable skill of a women archer. She is said to have won all the village archery contests that season, and is now favourite to win the Lord's Cup. A PC entering the contest will discern that she is an expert with the bow (THAC0 8). She is hoping to win the contest so she will be able to purchase a horse so she may return to her homeland. If the PC wins she will be magnanimous in defeat and give him/her the bow. If the winning PC is a male, the Amazon will request that they lie together so she will be able to capture his superior genes.

Midnight Alarm

A longboat drops a raiding party of twenty Amazons at the small fishing village the PCs are staying at. They are seeking slaves and general plunder. The characters are awoken by cries of alarm, screams and the crackling of burning huts. All is pandemonium. The Amazons will avoid centres of resistance, concentrating on getting their loot back to their boat. Any serious attempt to prevent them leaving will cause them to go into a battle fury (villagers will attempt to restrain the more gung-ho PCs).

The Enslaved

The enemy army was defeated. Among the prisoners of war was a contingent of Amazons. The general has decided that they will fetch a good price down south, at the slave-markets. The players are detailed to form the guard-escort. Over the sixteen day journey the Amazons will use all their skills and cunning to effect an escape.

To Share A Throne

The Amazonian seeress makes it known throughout the land that anyone who rescues the Queen from captivity will become joint-monarch of the Amazon nation for one year (she doesn't mention that it is customary that the king is sacrificed after his one year of service). Queen Asteria was captured by the Red Riders - the elite bodyguard of Baron Demokratos. She is being kept in the dungeon of the baron's riverside keep as a hostage - to prevent the Amazons from interdicting the river barges that ply the great river, Meander.

Asteria

Grand-daughter of the famed Salaris, Asteria accended to the Amazon throne after the untimely death of her mother, Jassare. As she had not yet killed her first enemy, she was kept under the tutelage of the Council of Elders. In a break with precedent they appointed Tallinon, a man, to be regent. By this move they hoped to prevent any of the rival claimants from making a challenge for the throne - to challenge a man of the tribe would be an absolutely dishonourable act.

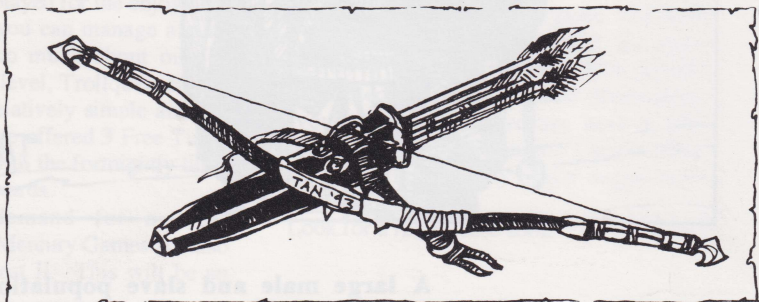
Asteria however, chafed at having to adhere to the instructions of mere male. On her fourteenth birthday she therefore did the unthinkable - she challenged the regent to a Death-duel. Tallinon, untrained in the arts of warfare, did all he could to avoid the duel. He gave up the regency, hired a substitute, and promised a ransom of twenty fine horses. All to no avail. By tribal custom, the challenged could not decline a Death-duel. He was pushed into the ring by the Elders but refused to fight. Regardless, Asteria stepped forward and thrust her sword into his heart. She then rushed forward and grabbed the long braids of the substitute - forcing her down to the ground. The woman rolled over on to her back and spread her arms and legs as a sign of submission. Asteria slammed her foot down on the woman's exposed throat, crushing her windpipe. Having made her first kill, the gathered warrior-women acclaimed her queen.


Over the years Asteria grew in strength and endurance. Her long black hair washed daily in olive oil, glowed in the sun. Her large black eyes, although alluring to her lovers, blazed with a zest for battle. And the battles were frequent. The scars from numerous duels did however add beauty to a face and body that few could call attractive. Some said (not to her face, of course) that her taste for battle and her never sated aggressiveness is why the number of warrior-women is decreasing year by year. Apart from battle losses, suitable male prisoners tend to meet a swift death rather than being kept for the purpose of procreation. Her recent capture by Baron Demokratos was another manifestation of her boldness. She sighted the baron and his retinue resting at a riverside, and charged into their midst with only two companions. The weight of numbers was too much - she was captured. It is unlikely that she will survive long in the baron's dank dungeon - some say: "Good riddance."

AC 7 HP 52 LVL 8 Class Warrior/Barbarian THAC0 13
STR 15 INT 12 WIS 10 CON 16 DEX 17 CHA 14
WPNs composite bow, javelin, light lance, long sword
NWP animal handling, bowyer/fletcher, direction sense, endurance, herbalism, hunting (steppe), riding land-based.

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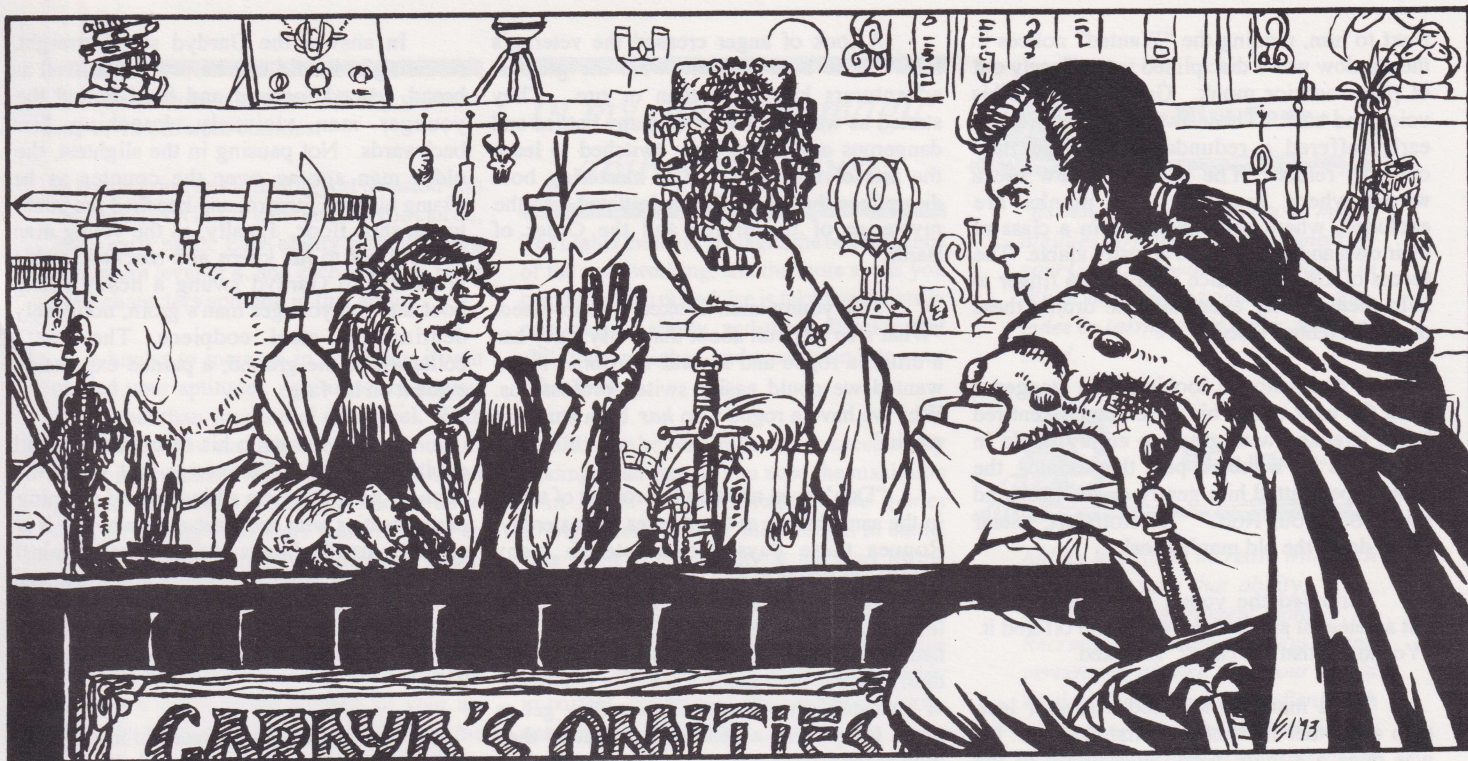
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Warrior's Whine

An Old Hand Mourns the Passing of 1st Edition AD&D

by Ben Frayle

The bespectacled old shopkeeper examined the booty offered by the young adventurer. The young man, his stylish hair, his heavy cloak and his enormous sword at the hip marked him as a warrior adventurer. In contrast, the old man, Gardyd, was over sixty winters of age, yet his heavy body was obviously well muscled and showed scars and markings in places.

"You young people these days, you don't know how tough it used to be for a warrior. Back in the good old days, my word son, you weren't allowed to even think about building a fortress until you had sliced and diced your way through hordes of screaming humanoids, soul-sucking undead and hideous creatures from the Outer Planes."

The younger man nodded impatiently, wanting to complete the deal and get off onto the next adventure: "But warriors these days do just as many noble deeds, rescue maidens, kill evil wizards and stuff. What's the difference?"

"Ho ho ho", the older man bellowed, "Young fellow, your so-called warriors these last few years wouldn't stand a chance against an accomplished warrior of the old school. Do you think we had weapon specialisation back then? Do you think there was training to allow you to use two battleaxes at once? I even hear

from my old comrade-in-arms, Imdell the Halfling, that warriors these days get experience points for surviving any old adventure. Apparently even killing something is such a novelty these days you get bonus experience points for it! In my day you got experience points for killing the monster, then a few more for what was in his treasure chest and if you got a decent magic weapon or armour out of the adventure you scored a few hundred more!"

The younger warrior paused, then replied, "Old man, the hordes of monsters and evil-doers are certainly greater than they were in your day. There are inter-planar travellers, evil character classes, several volumes of documented creatures. And despite this the warriors of today do okay."

"Okay! Okay! In my day, you didn't get lots of hit points as you advanced in level due to luck and divine guidance, it was because of the constant torture and punishment you met on the battlefield. Why in my prime I traded blows with a company of fire giants and made it back to camp unaided. There wasn't any of this new fangled healing proficiency nonsense. If you didn't have a cleric to heal you back then you had to rest fully for two weeks before you got back any hit points at all. Why do you think healing potions have gone down in value so much recently?"

The young warrior put down the trinket and listened more intently to the shopkeep.

"And you claim that the monsters you face these days are more numerous and varied? Nonsense I tell you. In my day such beasts were common in the catacombs and caves beneath so much of the surface world. My word, in a few hours searching you might come across giant ants, a few ogres, half a dozen ghouls, a company of kobolds and a minor demon or two. And that was only on the first few levels."

"I always wondered about that", mused the young hero.

"I never did understand it myself," said Gardyd, "But I can tell you it was damn useful when you wanted to stay within your abilities. Nowadays you have to hope that the fates and the Dungeon Master don't place the high level vampires, dragons and elementals where you find yourself going while still low level. No wonder dungeon bashing is less popular than it was..."

The pair were interrupted as a small but sharp dagger, dripping with poison, imbedded itself in the throat of the King hanging on the wall behind the counter. They turned to look at a retired half-orc assassin innocently rummaging in the bargain bin beside the door.

Next to him, reading the "Wanted" notices in the window was a disciplined yet strangely out of place warrior monk. Gardyd lowered his voice and said: "Those two were both retired early, offered a redundancy package they couldn't refuse. The poor lads now see a world where assassins and monks are excluded, where psionists are in a class of their own and paladins are actually viable. The forces of Game Balance won't lift a finger to help them. Why even half the druids these days are Neutral Good!"

A disillusioned looking man staggered from the back room, his once magnificent red beard streaked with grey, an empty bottle in hand. As he wobbled past the counter, the shopkeeper patted him gently on the back and said: "See you, Rolf." As Rolf left, a tear rolled down the old man's cheek.

Surprised the young adventurer pulled out an elegant silk handkerchief and offered it. "You know that old chap?" he asked.

"That man has suffered a greater loss than any other hero of the First Edition. He was once a mighty bard, an aspirant to the highest college of his order. Now the title bard goes to any street pedlar or messenger boy with above average charisma."

"But I thought all bards ever did was sing, cast low level spells and steal a bit when the public's charity wore thin?"

A look of anger creased the veteran's face. "The bard's of old were the greatest adventurers known to man or orc. They started as warriors and after many battles and dangerous adventures they switched to learn the arts of the thief. After mastering both disciplines they were finally initiated into the mysteries of the druids and the Order of Bards."

The young man looked unimpressed. "What's so difficult about that? My party has a druid, a rogue and several warriors. If we wanted we could easily switch professions. Why we have a rogue who *has* been studying magic."

"Don't even mention the rogues of today in the same breath as the thieves of yesterday. Rogues these days accumulate so many experience points at low levels they don't even have to leave town before they reach third level. In my day thieves were real heroes, they had to earn their XPs like the rest of us - it didn't matter how many traps they disarmed, or backstabs they made. Today they get as much for picking a peasant's pocket as they used to for slaying a troll."

The younger man hesitated and then finally asked, "But sir, what one argument sums up the claims of the older generation against the achievements of the new generation of warriors?"

In answer the Gardyd stood straight, revealing as he did that he was tall as well as broad, leaned forward and head-butted the younger man viciously, knocking him backwards. Not pausing in the slightest, the older man sprung over the counter as he swung his bare forearm and knocked the youth to the shop floor. Finally, as the young man dazedly got to his knees and reached for his broad sword Gardyd swung a heavy riding boot into the younger man's groin, noticeably denting the steel codpiece. The youth collapsed to the ground, a pained expression evident on his face.

Gardyd turned to his other patrons, and explained, "The difference is that while the younger generation are sitting around planning peace treaties with orcs, debating whether it is ethical to use the blunts of their swords against evildoers and whether shields are worth the loss of the use of one arm, the older generation is getting on with the job, slaughtering monsters and having a good time while they do it."

The small crowd cheered the old man, as he retrieved his backpack and halberd from a shelf under his shop counter. "I'm off to bash heads."

And if anybody disagrees with this viewpoint, I'll send the old guy around to debate it. What do you think he is, a SNAW? (Sensitive New Age Warrior). ■

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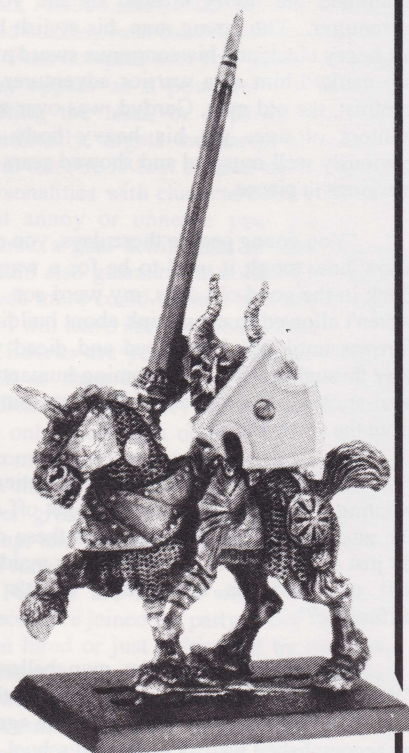
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FOR THE SHADOWRUN GAME**



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AUTO PATROL SECTION

Auto patrol units usually consist of two officers and a car. The preferred vehicle for this operation is a Chrysler-Nissan Patrol One. The alternative vehicle is a modified Ford Americar (although some of the more specialized patrol units include a rigger with a modified Turbo).

>>>>>[The Chrysler-Nissans were first issued to patrol operatives in 2052. They've been hugely successful in the brief time they've been on the streets. However, there are still a lot of Americars and ZXs out there (especially in very large cities where operating budgets are spread too thin to upgrade all the equipment and in small backwater bergs where they just don't need the new stuff).]<<<<<

- Flashpoint (14:37:23/10-11-54)

Because patrol officers must be prepared to face almost any type of situation, they're equipped with a wide range of weapons and gear. A typical patrol vehicle will contain the following:

1 dash-mounted microcomputer with a cellular link to a sub-processor in the precinct computer system. The computer has a fold-up monitor or can be switched to a Heads Up Display on the windshield of the car. (Lone Star officers *never* jack into a computer while on patrol duty. One officer jacking in effectively cuts the patrol in half.) the computer is also equipped with an in-line data encryption and decryption system. There are also 3 colour LCD monitors that are used to display information from the vehicular cameras and transmitted images from surveillance drones.

1 full set of exterior security shock plates. Anyone touching the vehicle when these are triggered suffers the effect of a taser hit.

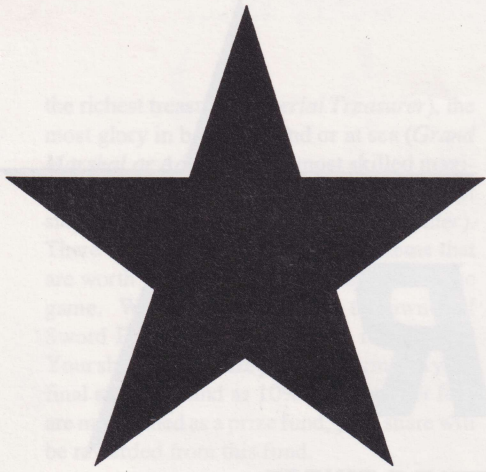
1 full-length taser pad embedded in the back seating bench. This can be activated from any of the front seat positions, automatically affecting a rear-seat passenger taser hit.

1 Defiance Super Shock taser pistols.

>>>>>[Covered in cobwebs, no doubt.]<<<<<

- Core Tex (00:56:35/10-13-54)

2 Mossberg CMDT/SM Combat Shotguns with smartgun adapters.



2 armoured torso plates stored in the trunk and easily strapped on in a heavy combat engagement. [Armour 6/4]
 Front and rear FlashPaks integrated with the top mounted light and siren array. These can be activated from inside the automobile. (See **Street Samurai Catalogue** for details.)
 6 pairs of metal hand cuffs
 3 packets of 10 plastic strip restraints and two heat-fusers.
 2 Mage masks
 3 pairs of containment manacles or 3 pairs of pulse cuffs
 2 Headjammers
 5 Jackstoppers
 2 Skilltwitchers
 1 DNA Scanner
 1 Blood tester
 1 Cyberware scanner (Rating 5)

>>>>>[Breaking Into A Lone Star System from a Patrol Vehicle Minicomp

OK. Here's how you get into an LS computer system through the back door. It's faster and easier than calling on them through their LTG system access node, but it puts you (that is, your flesh-and-blood body) at a slightly higher-than-average risk. You'll need to get access to the car, but you're resourceful right?

Next, deck the car's system and slip deep inside the LSSS system via the cellular link. Be warned though, decking through a cellular link bucks pretty bad. Something to do with insufficient bandwidth. Once your in, however, you've saved yourself a lot of hassle working your way down through the hierarchy of unimportant drek that's clustered near an LTG SAN.

One word of warning. If you set off a system alert while in the car, the system will trace you by your cellular transmission. If you're in the car or within LOS (line of sight), it'll use the car's cameras to snap your pretty mug. If you aren't, it'll simply ask a local surveillance drone to do it. Lone Star installs additional alert utilities in states that have the highest incident of computer crime. These additional alert utilities not only trace the transmission, but send an alert message to the riggers in the Department of Surveillance. In a case like this, having your picture taken is the least of your worries. The rigger cops might just track you with a high-altitude drone and wait for you to contact your shadow mates before striking, or they might send a hunter drone to shoot you down with your deck still in your lap. (You take the bad with the good, chummier.)<<<<<

- Argent (14:27:58/10-17-54)

>>>>>[Yea, and I hear that Patrol Services has begun installing internal security systems in the vehicle. Additional shock pads, gas, fun stuff like that. They catch somebody drekking with one of *their* cars and there will Hell to pay. You have been warned.]<<<<<

- Toby Tuna (16:02:18/10-17-54)



>>>>>[Chromer Cops

Most Patrol Division street grunts are off-the-rack, we all know that: slow, dumb, undergunned, meat for the beast.

Most.

Lone Star ends up with a lot of wizzer chrome on its hands, chummers. Gear confiscated at street scenes. Shrapnel left over when a perp's shot while trying to escape. And on and on. Where does that wizzer chrome go?

Some of it gets slapped onto street cops, chummers, that's where. Most cops don't know this, but their contract allows Lone Star to install any cybermods it feels like anytime a cop goes under the laser on the corp's tab. For example, you're a patrol street monster, and you have a difference of opinion with a troll packing a two-by-four. Licky-boom-boom-down, out go the lights, and you wake up in a recovery room.

Missing both arms, and both eyes. While you were under the laser, the Star - in its infinite wisdom and compassion - decided you could really use some of that chrome that was gathering dust on some shelves at HQ. (Even though the troll with the two-by-four never did squat to your eyes or arms...) Suddenly hey presto, you're a chromer cop. Sur-*priise*, sur-*priise*, sur-*priise*!

Some chromers end up getting transferred to other divisions or departments, like TacDiv. Some just get put back out on the street, doing the old patrol work - foot, cycle or auto. The odds are against meeting a chromer cop in any given confrontation, but the chance is always there, and it can be enough to ruin your entire fragging day.]<<<<<

- Snow White (17:16:00/9-8-54)

DEPARTMENT OF AIRBORNE PATROL

Flying the friendly skies of your local precinct is Airborne Patrol. These officers fulfil much the same responsibilities as an auto patrol officer, but much quicker and with more firepower. The most commonly-used aircraft in the Lone Star Air Patrol Department are the Northrop PRC-50f Wasp and Yellowjacket. Both of these are single-man rotorcraft, enabling Lone Star to maintain a strongly-armed air-police presence without committing a disproportionate number of personnel to the department. Almost all air patrol officers are outfitted with Vehicle control cyberware.

>>>>>[Air patrol officers aren't contractually obliged to have rigger cybermods installed, neither is it a prerequisite to joining the department, but Lone Star sure makes it worth an employee's while to get the surgery. There are all sorts of benefits, discounts on medical programs and insurance packages... the list goes on.]<<<<<

- SPD (00:09:46/9-19-54)

If a Lone Star air patrol officer is cybernetically capable, he will also have one or two hunter or surveillance drones either flying with him in formation or harnessed to his patrol craft, ready to be launched when necessary. These are slaved to the officer's vehicle control rig.

>>>>>[To cut down on costs, LS tends to go for the plain-vanilla standard models of drones. Don't count on that, though. When there's a need - and the civic contract is lucrative enough - Air Patrol pops for top-of-the-line models like Wandjina RPVs they buy direct from the CAS military.]<<<<<

- Clutch (13:41:58/9-17-54)

>>>>>[Wandjinas? Hoy Drek...]<<<<<

- Suddenly Paranoid (00:44:55/9-18-54)

cyber TYCOON

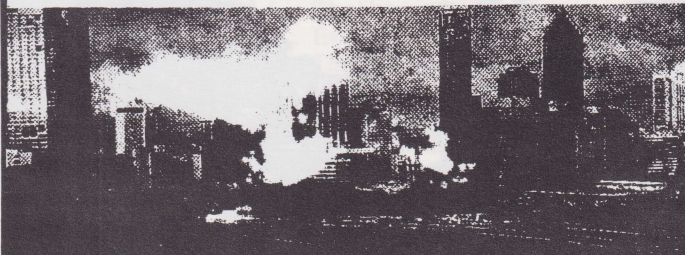
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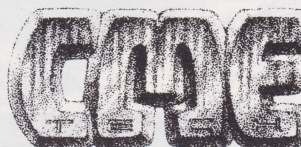
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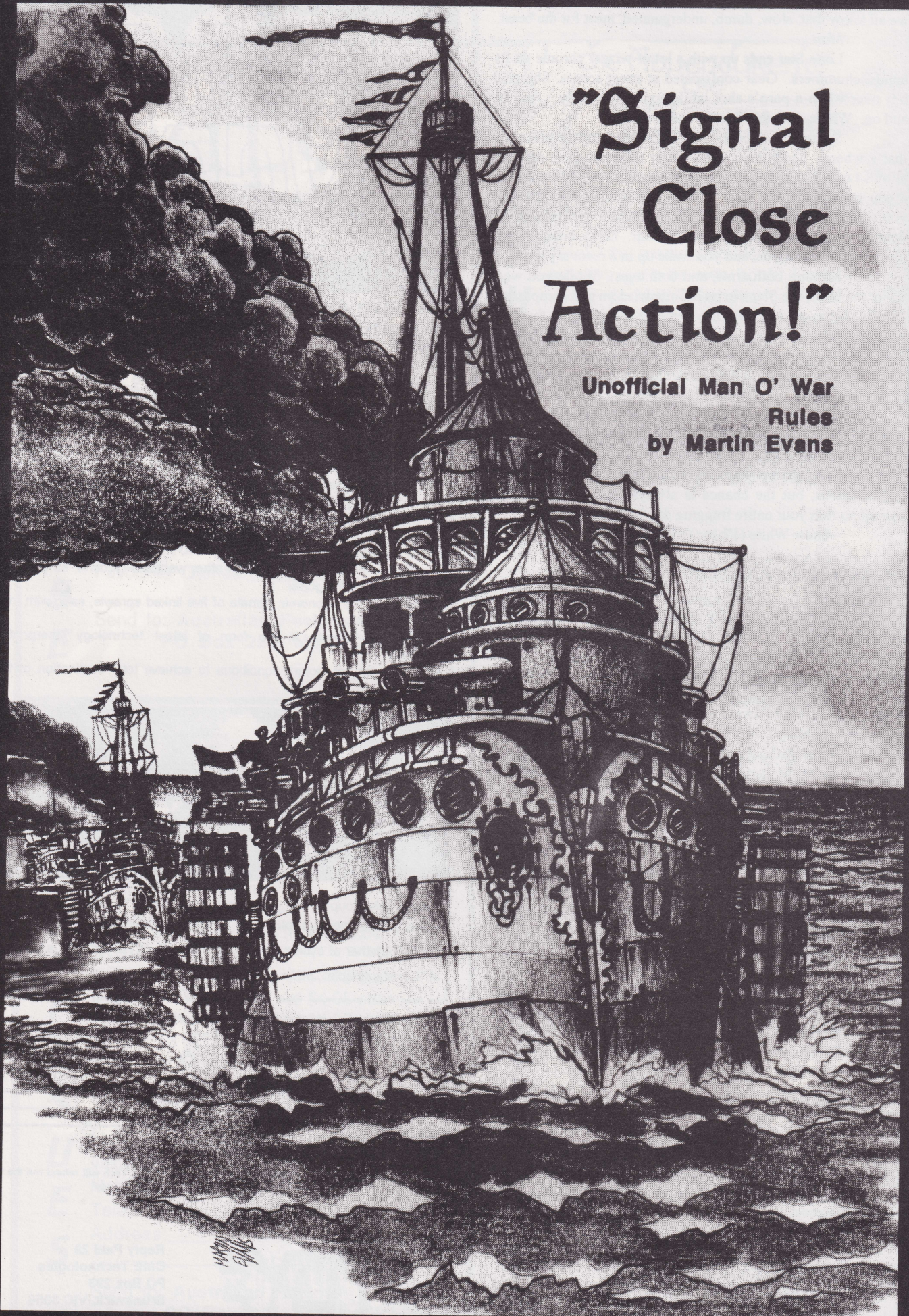


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"Signal Close Action!"

Unofficial Man O' War
Rules
by Martin Evans



Unofficial Rules for use with Games Workshop's fantasy game of naval combat - Man O' War.

Naval Supremecy

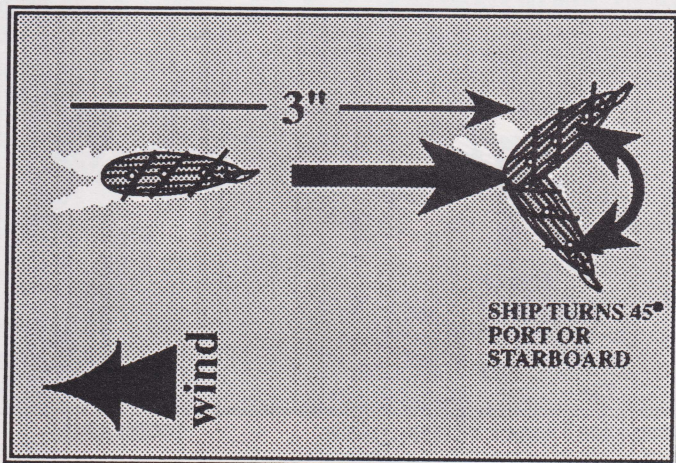
As soon as nations go exploring or try their hand at international trade, they discover a simple fact - control the seas and you can control the world.

Man O' War is a fine set of rule for naval combat in the fantasy setting of the Warhammer world. In a place like the Old World, where travel by road is slow, painful, and often deadly, the open sea is a far more attractive option for merchant and traveller. As a result, it becomes an equally attractive magnet for pirates, cut-throats, desperadoes, and other nice people. Along with them come the forces of your foes, so you have to send your own troops to sea - and then war is only a keel length away...

Man O' War fails to take into account only two important aspects of sea combat - Tacking into the wind and the Raking Broadside.

Tacking

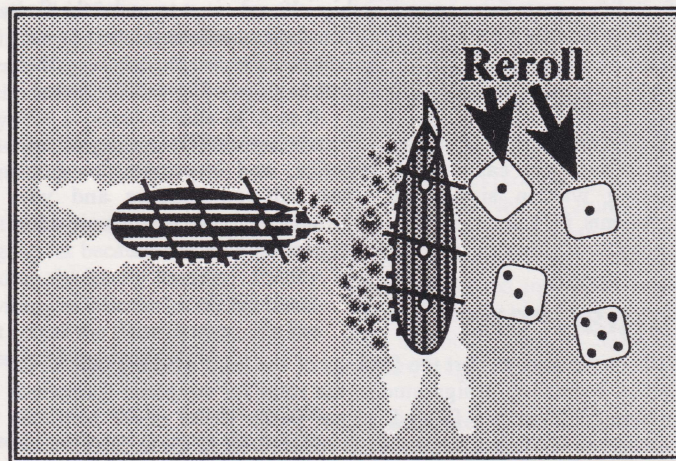
Tacking is a process that allows a sailing ship to travel against the direction of the wind by continuously changing course from port to starboard, catching the opposing wind in the sails strung along the bowsprit and swinging the ship until the wind catches in the mainsails and pushes the ship forward. This is a long slow process, but it is the only way that a sailing ship can make progress when the breeze is coming from the wrong direction.



In Man O' War tacking is accomplished by sailing your ship into the wind at half its speed with the wind abeam. At the end of it's movement, roll a die. If the score is even, turn the ship 45 degrees to port. If it's odd, turn 45 degrees to starboard (see Figure #1). Note that galleys that are not lanyard-rigged cannot tack. But then again, they rarely need to, that's what the oars are for. As I said this is slow going but as any sail-reliant fleet commander will tell you, any headway against the wind is something precious when the steaming dwarves are gaining on you.

Raking Broadside

Raking an enemy ship from her bow or stern with a crippling broadside is one of the most important tactics in sea warfare. Cannonballs don't stop after the first row of timbers that they encounter, they drill deep into the hull of their victim and take whatever they can find with them. That means that they can do far more damage if they are shot down the length of a ship then across it - the shot is inside the ship longer, and doing lots more nasty things. In the game, this is represented by firing a broadside at a ship that is perpendicular to your own. When you do so, any dice that are rolled in attack and a roll of 1 may be rerolled. However, the result of the second roll is final.



Signalling

Another aspect to bear in mind is signalling. After all, perhaps the most important part of controlling a fleet of warships in the heat of battle is communication. You cannot wield your ships as a single weapon if you cannot co-ordinate what they are doing.

Ships in Man O' War, unfortunately, manoeuvre by 'remote control'. That is, they are assumed to automatically obey your orders as you make them. This probably can be explained away by magic, but taking just a cursory glance the distances involved in a naval engagement should tell you that this is a bit silly. After all, how loud can you bellow?

Historically ships communicated by a mixture of shouted word, signal lamp, flags, and signal guns. To represent this on the gaming table is one of the things that very few game writers have been able to do successfully, so if you find the whole signalling thing too much to handle - ignore it, this is just a suggested optional rule which I believe adds to the realism of naval combat.

When playing Man O' War, any ships in your fleet that fall within medium range on the range ruler to your flagship obey your orders in the turn that they were issued - you can shout your orders to them. Those outside this distance have to be commanded by using coded visual signals, and that takes time to organise, issue, observe and decipher. Therefore, any and all ships outside of medium range don't act on your orders until the next turn, and if there is any land mass blocking line-of-sight between your flagship and ships in the fleet, then they don't carry out the order at all - they simply don't see or hear your orders.

Of course the orders you issue should be fairly generic like "Follow me" or "Fleet will turn to starboard". As this is a fantasy game, and every captain is a hero, he or she should have at least some intuition, and not have to be told everything: "Repel boarders" is something that ships will do automatically. Your captains know their jobs.

New Turn Sequence

So, to put all of that into a sequence -

1. At the start of the turn, write down your orders for that turn. Those ships within medium range of your flagship immediately obey you.
2. Write down or indicate with markers those ships outside medium range. These will obey your order next turn. Until then, they will continue to obey the last order they were given.

Note that a good option is to not execute your orders until every ship in your fleet is ready to act. That way you can still manoeuvre your fleet as a whole. For example, suppose you have new orders for your fleet to form into line of battle, and three ships are outside

of medium range from your flagship. If you want to make the fleet move at the same time and maintain their positions relative to each other, you can simply order the ships close to you to delay their new instructions until the three furthest ships carry out the order.

All this may seem rather time consuming and frustrating at first, but it becomes easier with practice, and improves the game. Passing written signals to your sub-commanders and your opponents in a multi-player game can be particularly enjoyable, especially if you can trade some especially vile insults.

Squadrons

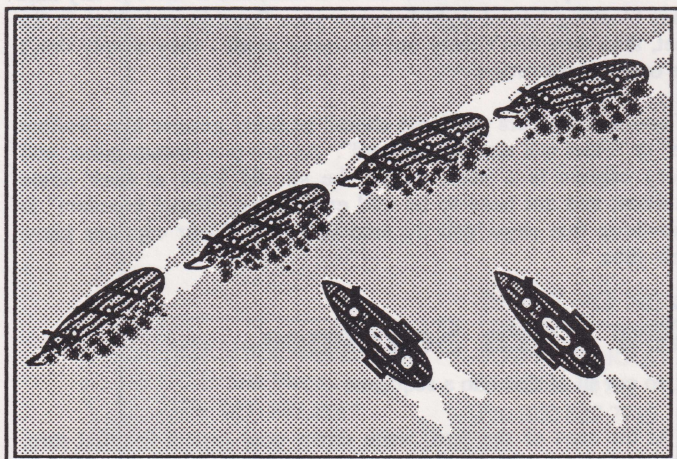
Without wishing to hurt the feelings of the hard working lads at the Games Workshop design studio, the rules for squadron formations in Man O' War are flawed. Real battle fleets never restricted themselves to such a degree as is insisted on in these rules. Only three ships to a squadron and only 6" between the squadron Commodore and his commands? Look, no squadron should be restricted in size. It's just that deploying a lot of warships under one officer is not always a good idea, but all in all, this should be left in the hands of the players. As for the distances for formation keeping; well, it's a good thing Nelson didn't obey this rule! Put your squadron commander anywhere you like within his formation, (preferably at the front ye lilly-liver'd coward!) and open the deployment distances from 6" to 9".

Tactics

If you are an experienced naval wargamer you may have noticed that Man O' War players - especially inexperienced ones - simply place their ships on the board and hurl them around at each other. There is no indication of knowledge about forming Line-of-Battle, crossing the enemy's 'T', gaining the Weather G, or... do any of you know what I'm talking about?? Okay, here's a few simple tactical hints to help you win at Man O' War.

Line of Battle

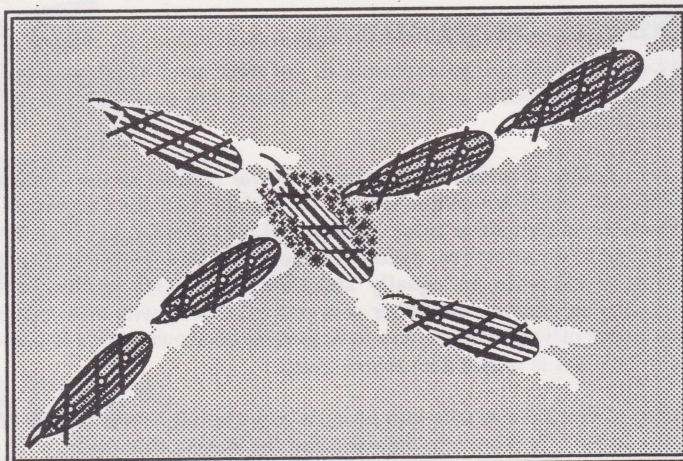
For centuries, the principle method of engaging one's enemy was by forming a line. The ships of the fleet with the most firepower should simply line up one behind the other, presenting the enemy with a solid wall of cannons. It is from this formation that we get the expression 'Ship of the Line'. Figure #3 demonstrates this.



Crossing the 'T'

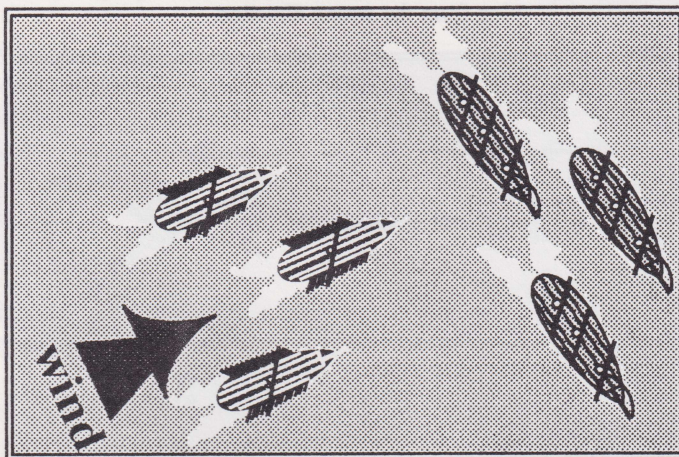
As you might have guessed, simply forming line with two opposing fleets and then slowly belting the living daylight out of each other makes for a very boring wargame. Historically, it wasn't much fun, so the British invented (by accident) Crossing the 'T'. This involves sailing directly at the enemy's line, smashing a hole through it, and sailing your ships through that hole. As you can see from the illustration in Figure #4, the ships

that pass through the line can get in raking broadsides on the enemy ships to Port and Starboard, then they can turn and engage the enemy from the side, perhaps with more of their own ships engaging from the other side! Try surviving that for very long!



Gaining the Weather Gauge

The Weather Gauge is the position of victory in Sail Warfare. It is simply the name given to the act of placing your own fleet upwind of the enemy as per Figure # 5. The idea is, with the wind behind you, you can close very quickly with your opponent, ideally to cross his 'T' or to make a ram.



Ramming

Ramming is one of the most important tactics available to a number of fleets, and in particular, the Empire. The Imperial Fleet is heavily based on the warfleets of the Mediterranean during the Renaissance. These fleets owed a lot to the Greeks and the Romans as far as tactics were concerned. In fact, the only real difference was the addition of guns, and they were only there to soften up the enemy before the ram hit home and both sides got down to the gritty business of beating each other up hand-to-hand.

So, what sort of tactics and skills were most useful to a commander of Galleys? Put in its simplest terms, the secret of Galley warfare is massed numbers. When you try to take apart the big Bretonian, don't send in your squadrons piecemeal - gang up on 'im! Hit him from all points at the same time with as many as six ships at once. He'll be lucky if his four dice broadsides can save him. Board your adversary as soon as you can - if your massed ram fails, and it can, then boarding him is your only hope. Withdrawing will almost certainly result in gunfire blowing your rowers to matchwood.

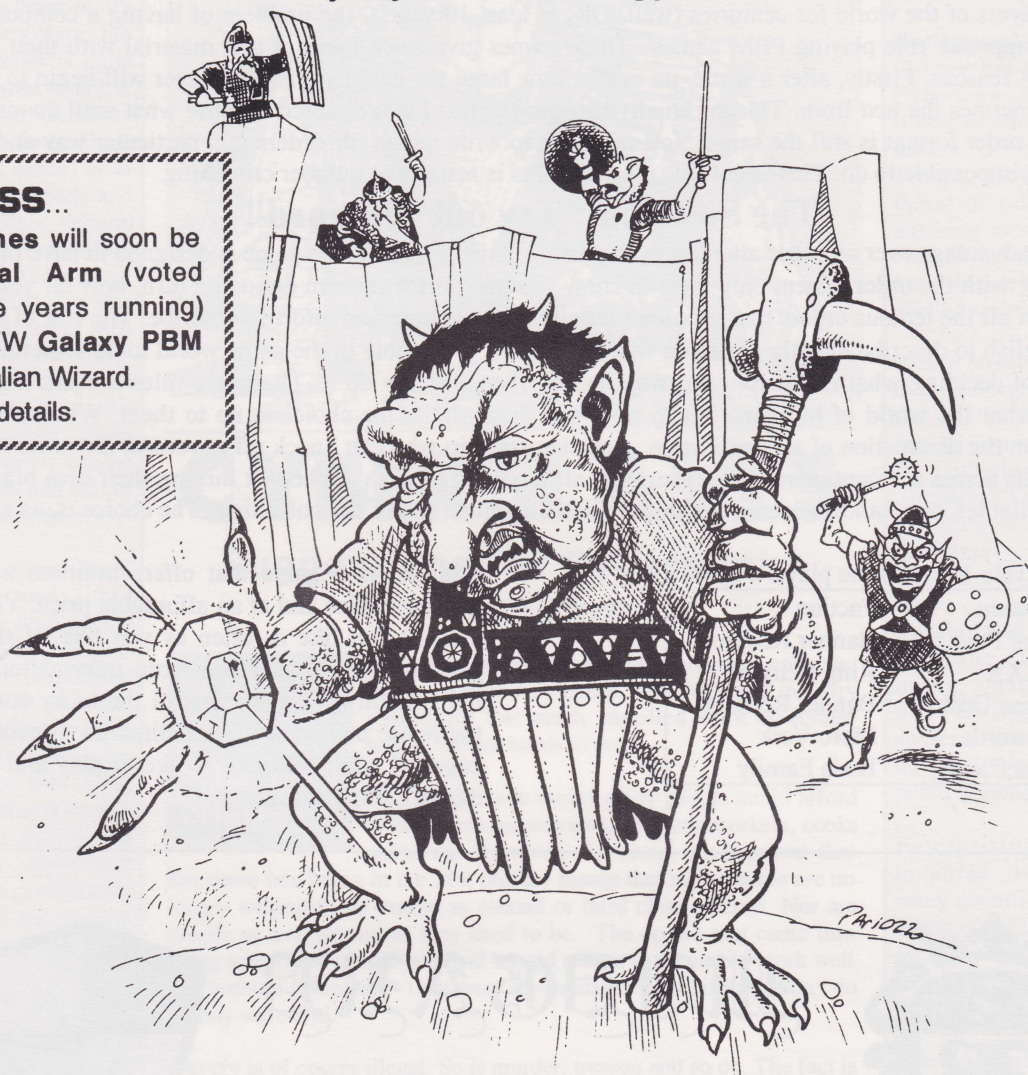
And that is about it. I hope that this information proves to be of use to fellow captains everywhere - and if it doesn't then just remember, you've got to catch me afore ye make me walk the plank...

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MIDGARD

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The Problem : How can there be true role playing using a PBM Format?

Puzzling the role players of the world for centuries (well, OK, at least 10 years), the problem of having a computer as the primary referee has lead to supposed 'role playing PBM games'. These games give truck loads of text material with their print out yet they still fail for 2 distinct reasons. Firstly, after a while, no matter how large the data base is, the player will begin to detect the pattern that the computer generates the text from. This eventually leads to the text being ignored because what really counts is the computer's result. Secondly, the order format is still the same. You still have to write down the orders in a particular way and if there is not an order for it, then it is impossible to do. This is not role playing. This is restrictive number crunching.

The Solution : Try out Midgard !

Midgard has a huge advantage over all other attempts at PBM role playing. Firstly, the game is designed to have the players describe what they want to do, with the order system only there to show you how much you can do in one turn, how far you can move in one turn, and to get rid of all the tedious orders that shouldn't require all your time and effort to describe. The rest of the turn sheet can be written out in English to describe **exactly** what you want to do. If it is possible in the game world to do something, and most role players are capable of deciding what is possible and what is not, then you can do it. The game rules are just a guide. They allow players to discover what the world of Midgard has to offer and from there, the choice is up to them. Whether you want to be a barbarian lord bent on the destruction of all civilisation, a master assassin who can knock off anyone at any time with his / her own Network of informants across the continent filing reports on all likely targets, an Alchemist mixing their own brand of concoctions (all brand names available), or a bandit wishing nothing more than a quite life of toll collecting. The choice is, as always, yours.

Ranking's as of Cycle 12 (for the player's ego)

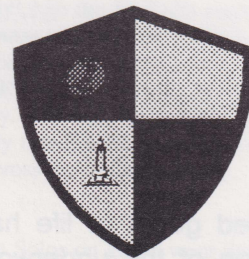
Rank	Clan Name	Faction
1	Ogres of Ptui	Banner Religion
2	XXXXXX	Ring Religion
3	Gormless Geeks	Banner Religion
4	Silverswords	Merc Verk
5	Clan McCloud	Boda Family

Midgard is a game that offers limitless adventure with quality service and at an affordable price. You can play as long as you like as often as you like. If this all sounds good but you want some more information, just ask for our free (always a big plus in the lucky country) copy of the house magazine at no obligation. It contains about 20 pages of what Midgard is like to play and what you can expect from playing it.



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Turn fees are \$7 a turn with a turn around of at least 10 days, with no other hidden charges. The game is not dirt cheap but the quality is guaranteed to be superior. Quality turn sheets that are not just churned out by a computer are worth it.

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MONSTER GALLERY



Matagots

By Tonia Walden

Frequency: Very Rare
Armour Class: 2
Move: 18"
Hit Dice: 3
% in Lair: 5%
No of Attacks: 3
Dam/Att: 1-2/ 1-2/ 1-2
Spec Attacks: see below
Spec Def: see below
Magic Resistance: nil
Intelligence: Highly
Alignment: Neutral
XP Value: 750

The Matagots are cats who have learned to communicate with humans and also learn the ways of magic, usually acting as the familiar to a magic user. Their favourite trick is to charm humans into doing their bidding which usually means obtaining more magic in either the form of spells or magic items. They are very cunning and do not mind what lengths they have to go to as long as their ends are achieved - people and their lives mean very little to matagots but they are not otherwise malicious. They may strike up a friendship with a magic user of equal merit (as long as the relationship is beneficial to them).

Matagots will often act like common cats to spy and observe and then surprise people that they like by talking to them. They have powers of a fourth level mage and will always have *suggestion* and *charm person* memorised. Amulets of protection or potions are favoured magic items, though scrolls can be used with assistance. Items are hidden in the lair, often an abandoned building. Although they try to avoid combat they can attack like a normal cat and if both fore-claws hit, they automatically rake with rear claws for 1-2 points.



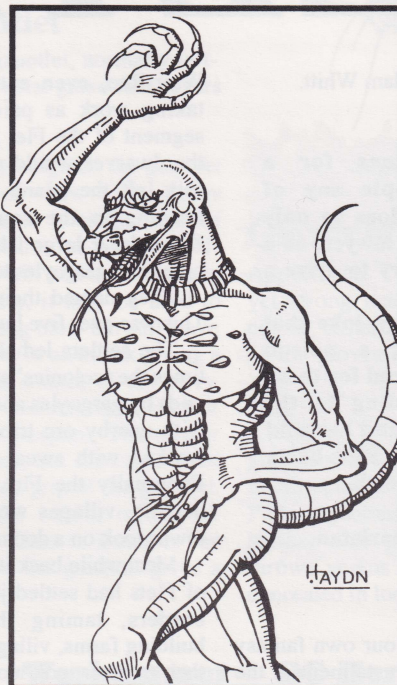
Sendings

By Tonia Walden

Frequency: Very Rare
Armour Class: 0
Move: 18"
Hit Dice: 5
No of Attacks: 3
Dam/Att: 1-6/ 1-6/ 1-6
Spec Attacks: see below
Spec Def: see below
Magic Resistance: 90%
Intelligence: Animal
Alignment: Evil
XP Value: 650

A Sending is a reanimated cat created by an evil mage. They are created by stuffing a cat skin with magical herbs and straw and giving it moonstones for eyes. The cat is activated by the command word of the name of the person it was created to plague - it will then become animate and find the named person. It will attack its victim, preferably at night, trying to gain surprise by attacking when they are asleep. A successful bite will cause a wasting disease that causes 1 point of Strength to be lost per day. The cat then haunts the cat until the person dies, continuing in its attacks on the person. The curse is only lifted once the cat is destroyed.

Sendings are only able to be hit by magical weapons. If a sending succeeds in hitting both times with its front claws it gains an automatic hit with its rear claws for 1-8 damage.



Terrorizor

By Neil G. Wornes

Terrain: Sub-trop & tropical
Frequency: Uncommon
Organisation: Pack
Activity: Day/ night
Diet: Carnivorous
Intelligence: Low
Treasure: Q (15%); A
Alignment: Neutral Evil
No Appearing: 4-16
Armour Class: 4
Move: 12"
Hit Dice: 3
THACO: 17
Attacks: 3 or 1-6
Dam: 1-3/ 1-3/ 1-6 or 1-4
Spec Att: Poison Spikes
Spec Def: Immune to poison
M R: standard
Size: M (6'6" tall)
Morale: Elite (13)
XP Value: 650

Terrorizors are upright standing reptilians. Their skin is leathery brown except for their abdomen which is yellow (the female's abdomen is orange). They have sharp claws and razor sharp teeth along with a three foot long tail and spikes which protrude from their chests. Their eyes are black.

The first thing terrorizors do in combat is fire their spikes. Roll d6 to find how many they launch. The spikes have the same range as thrown darts and cause 1-4 points of damage per hit. Each spike is poisonous and causes d10 boils to appear on the victim (if a saving throw versus poison is failed). After one round the boils explode doing a further one point of damage per boil. Terrorizors have 6-24 of these spikes and once they are fired they will grow back at the rate of one per week.

After the spikes have been fired, the terrorizors move in to close combat range to attack with their claw/ claw/ bite routine. Although they can wield handheld weapons they rarely do so.

Packs of terrorizors can be found in any terrain but usually live in forests. They are nomadic but in an area with a fairly good food supply they will set up camp for extended periods. Shelters are made out of sticks and leaves, or if the trees are large enough, terrorizors will sleep on the boughs. Camps consist of 20-40 males with half that number of females and half again of young. Young terrorizors have 1 hit dice and do not have any spikes; these grow when the young reach maturity at twelve years of age. Each pack is led by a 6HD terrorizor who gets the pick of the food and mates.

They have their own language and live for twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. Terrorizors love to fight and frighten others; they will ally themselves with other evil beings so they can spread their own special brand of terror.

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Every rpg campaign has its exotic creatures, the spawn of the GM's blighted imagination. Why not share them with us? Simply write to:

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FROM THE REALMS CAMPAIGN WORLD OF UNAE

FLETLAND

By Colin Taber & Adam Whitt.

When death comes for a Heletian, those people say of themselves that she does so only when she can bring a lawyer, as a Heletian will always try to drive a bargain, even in death.

The Flets, well, they joke that they carry Elfbane, a poison specifically manufactured for those of Wair-Rae. According to the Flet's, death is an elf, and her cold pointed ears lead her to Flets like a compass points to the north.

-Forwao, Elven Charlatan

UNAE

We have been detailing our own fantasy world since issue 7. This instalment is the 4th 'source' article. Future issues will see *Kalraith*, *Wair-Rae* and *Burvoy* detailed.

THE FLETLANDERS

For the past six centuries the south of Kalraith has been populated by the human aryan people, calling themselves *Fletlanas*. This culture was originally native to the east coast of Wairanir but has since spread from there. The reason for this migration is historical, either fleeing slavery or genocide. Flets you see, have many enemies.

FLET HISTORY

The Flets come originally from the eastern coast of the island of Wairanir. The Flets have no written records of this, just an oral history that indicates the deep valleys of the area were their original home land.

Flet society never matured of its own accord. While still being relatively backward they were forced into slavery by the Dwarven Citadels of northern Wairanir. This was over nine centuries ago and lasted three hundred years. Eventually, during one of the dwarves' many inter-city wars the slaves in *Ghon Moar*, led by *Franz Van Goet* staged a rebellion. The underground Flet Cabal spread news of the unrest and uprisings occurred in other slave camps. Within weeks the slave powered dwarven society had collapsed and the Flets headed south. Many died on this long, sad road harried by the forces of their bitter former masters.

The Flets settled in south eastern Wairanir, encroaching on the elven nation of

Wair-Rae, even entering their cities and taking work as paid servants. A smaller segment of the Flet population was certain the dwarves would seek retribution. These folk left the island of Wairanir for good, heading to the south western coasts of Kalraith. A large island inhabited by orcs, ogres and gargoyles to the east.

They named their new home *Fletland*. This was over five hundred years ago.

The settlers led short brutal lives, many times the 'colonies' seemed doomed. Winter raids by gargoyles and year round skirmishes with nearby orc tribes meant the soil was worked with sweat and soaked in blood. Eventually the Flet population started to decline, villages were abandoned and the towns took on a doomed mentality.

Meanwhile back in Wairanir the majority of Flets had settled just outside Wair-Rae's borders, taming the wild valleys and building farms, villages and towns. Many of their number took work in the elven cities as servants, labourers, gladiators and miners. While welcomed at first by the decadent elves, later they were to be resented. After one hundred and fifty years Flet families had amassed enough wealth to move into the pillar-cities, and to trade on equal terms with the elves. The only things the Flets did not yet have in the eyes of the conservative elves was land, titles and elven blood. Dark thoughts became quiet jokes, then polite jibes, soon arguments broke out, then fights on the streets between Flet and elven youths.

On the eve now known as *New Moons Night* rioting swept the capital Yamere. High King Caemarou was forced to act, he announced a curfew and ordered the *Silvan Guard* on to the streets with orders to kill any who would not return to their homes.

The guards mirrored the general feeling of the population, and had decided that the Flet's home was not to be in Wair-Rae. Cheered on by elven mobs the Silvan Guard fought, chased and slaughtered the Flets of Yamere regardless of whether they were on the streets with swords or asleep in their beds. Riders were dispatched to carry the order to all cities and towns. The people and then their High King had endorsed the murderous actions of the Silvan Guard.

By morning an army was being raised. While the survivors fled to the Flet towns in the east. When the elven army reached the small area held by the Flets they walked straight through the towns and villages until they had killed the defenders in their path or pushed them into the sea.

Fortunately many had heeded the warnings from the bloodied survivors of Yamere and fled by sea. As these once-more-refugees sailed out of their ports they watched their homes burn behind them.

The survivors made their way to the settlements on Kalraith in whatever ships, boats or rafts would take them. This terrible moment of Flet history is known as *Def Turtung* (the killing).

This is why the Flets hate the elves with such a passion, this occurred one hundred and twenty one years ago, in 393EK.

FLETLAND'S SECOND CHANCE

What saved Fletland was the arrival of the tens of thousands of refugees from *Def Turtung*. They carried with them only themselves and the terrible news of what had befallen their homes. But this fired a will to survive and build again. With help from the Prabesk & Heletian merchants who had dealt with the Fletland towns now for nearly a century things started to improve.

The effective doubling of the population that occurred gave the Flets enough of a numerical advantage over the orcs so that they were pushed back. In a scene reminiscent of the Heletians taking of the Sidian Valley (see issues 12 & 13) the Flets finally secured their home.

MODERN HISTORY

Fletland has since grown, going from a series of towns and villages to an organised grouping of cities and river towns that harvest the riches of Kalraith.

But all is not well, the rulers of these thriving cities are aware of new threats, and the re-emergence of some old ones;

The Reavers: Elven pirates are now raiding the villages along the southerly coasts. These raids started four years ago and have slowly increased in frequency. Now some parts of 'Fletland' are abandoned (west of Adonis). Some say that the Reavers are financed by nobles from Wair-Rae who are trying to expand their land holdings.

The Church of Baimiopia: The Order of the Heletite is the branch of the Heletian church which controls missionaries. Many of the Order have a *radical* outlook. Missionaries have travelled to Fletland and are preaching the same intolerance and narrow mindedness that they do in the Heletian League. At the moment such preachers are ignored by the powers that be

in Fletland, as they want very much to be part of the Heletian League (issue 11-13).

So, for the time being radical Heletites are tolerated and in some cities encouraged. It is seen as a necessary compromise; the Flets will have to become more *Heletian* before they can join the League, even if it means selling some fellow Flet souls.

Needless to say the established religions are not at all happy about the encroachment by the powerful Church of Baimiopia, but as the Flet religions have never gained any strong hold over the Flets (due to the number of faiths and their turbulent history) they have not a strong enough voice to stop it.

The Gargoyles of Kalraith: For as long as anyone can remember Kalraith has been home to the gargoyles. They reside in the north east of the island, living in huge towering stone hives built amidst the ruined cities of a long forgotten civilisation. Every winter great groups of the beasts leave the hives and head south, raiding farms for food. Raids can occur year round, but are most common near the end of winter (issue 17).

As the Flets have discovered, nothing can be done to stop the raids, one just has to be prepared to survive them. Large cities don't get targeted, only farms, villages and every couple of years a small town. It is for this reason that all buildings have strong, cellars that are accessed through concealed doors.

The Ogre Clans: The Clansmen are not a large threat, they are more a hindrance to the few travellers and woodsmen who pass through the foothills and mountains where they are based (see issue 12).

The Orc Towns: Most of the orc tribes who originally attacked the new Flet settlers have either been vanquished or have moved deeper into the forests. Many such groups have been advancing and learning from the Flets themselves. There are several large orc villages in the forest, even two towns (Irgim pop. 1,800 & Atinar pop. 3,600). They welcome people who come in peace or to trade and are quick to kill those who don't. The orcs speak their own tongue *Varmor* and Fletlander, they use Flet coin.

Surrounding these towns live groups of bandits and thugs. These thieves have taken to accosting the merchant caravans that make the journey to the new orc markets.

The Colonies: These settlements on the western coast of Kalraith are extensions of the estates of the nobles of Wair-Rae and have been established over the past century. While the colonies are not causing any direct problems or confrontations they are thought to contain the bases for many of the Reaver ships, and thus are at the very least accomplices in the crime of piracy.

The Kults: The Flets fragmented society has meant the establishment of many religions, some of which would be called kults in Greater Baimiopia. The Flet authorities interfere little in spiritual matters, having



outlawed only kults that encourage murder and other diabolical acts. Consequently the kults of *Mortigi* and the *Callers of Malsano* (issue 15) are illegal, but others like the *Kult of Battle* is accepted and appreciated for its followers honourable talents.

The threat that the kults pose to the Flet rulers is that the illegal sects are making connections with the Heletian kults. The Invisible Empire grows...

The Ossard Connection: It is rumoured that the independent Heletian city of Ossard, north of Greater Baimiopia is controlled by kultists. The city sends out many merchants and travellers to trade and more.

All should be wary of any who claim to be of Ossard, this city state is home to many things best not spoken of. It even has been forsaken by the Church of Baimiopia (future issues will expand on the decay of Ossard).

THE FAITHS OF FLETLAND

It has been said that in Fletland there are as many gods as there are Flets. This is said as many regions do have their own local gods, alongside the more well known. The Flets call churches *Kirshes*, only the Kult of Battle differs, calling them temples. The most popular faiths are listed below;

WODEN - God of the Wild

Woden is the god of natural forces. He controls the elements and seasons, thus, with Meervaten (Goddess of the Sea) he is a joint custodian of time. Woden is described as a powerful and is master of the natural forces

and beasts from swamp spirits and the wind to simpler things such as wild pigs and trees. His symbol is the wolf. The first day of each season are his most holy of days.

Woden has no 'constructed' Kirshes dedicated to him. Most of his Kirshes are forest glades, hill tops and other significant natural sites. The current high priest can be found atop Wolfen Hill, two days east of Adonis within Woden's most sacred grove.

MEERVATEN - Goddess of the Sea

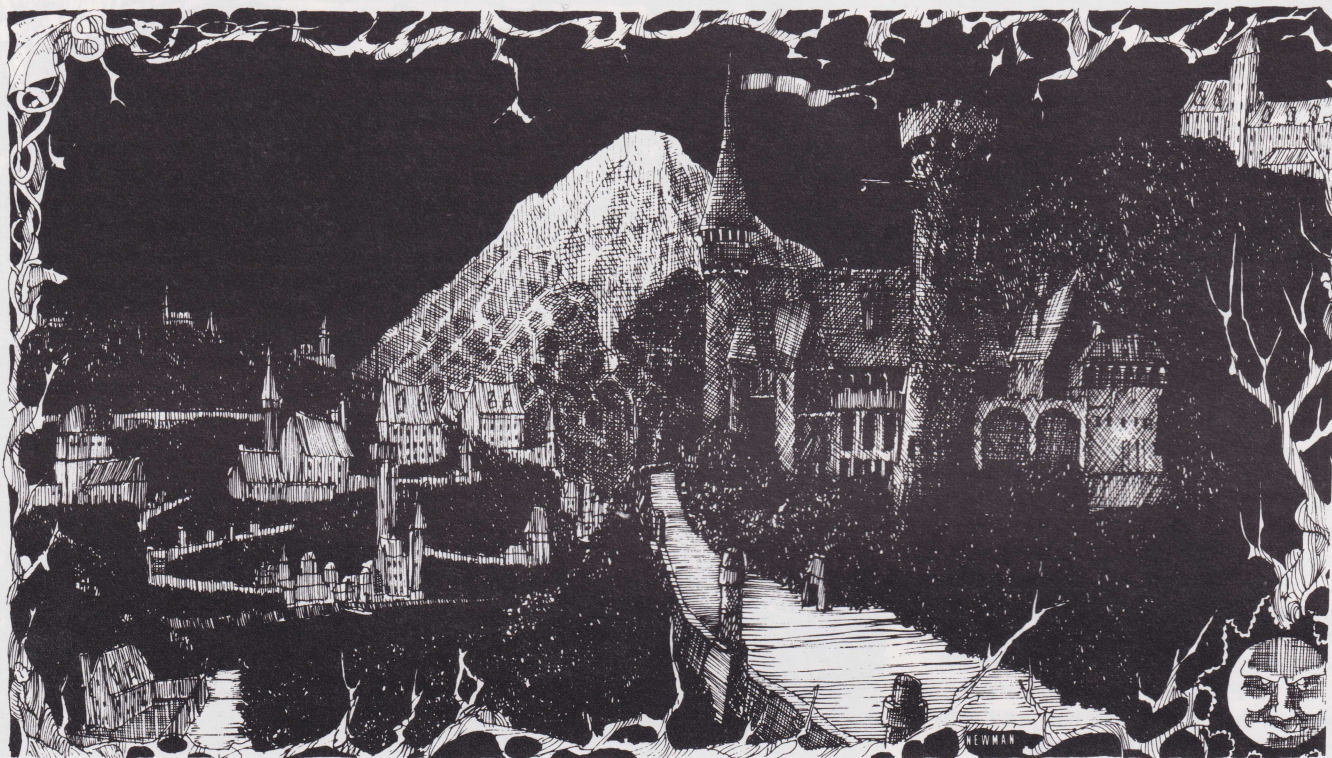
Meervaten is the power in control of the sea, the tides, squalls, sea life and the joint custodian of time. Her symbol is the Albatross and her sacred day is the last day of each month. None of the faith will sail between dawn and dusk of this holy day.

All Flet ports have Kirshes to Meervaten. The buildings are easily distinguished by their simple one room design. The better Kirshes have a single bell tower that is white washed and stands over the main entrance. The governing Kirsh of the faith houses the high priestess in Bayner.

KAVE - God of Battle & Honour

This is a strong faith amongst the Flets. Their history and current situation demands that they produce excellent warriors, which guarantees a following for the Kult of Battle. Kavists take part in a never ending feud with the illegal Kult of Mortigi (issue 15).

The Kult of Kave is legal in Fletland, Ossard, Kaid-Onor, the Dwarven Citadels, Saldæ and Evora. It's symbol is the Sword and any day of battle is held as sacred.



Temples are often built on old battle fields and in all Flet cities. Temples follow the outline of a knife. The walls of such temples are high with steep roofs. No towers are used and the interiors are covered from floor to roof with murals depicting conflict. The ruling temple of the Flet branch of the Kult of Battle is in the lake-city of Korstrich.

GEILAN - Goddess of Mercy & Healing

Geilan is the force of Justice, Mercy and Healing. She is presented as a winged woman robed in white. Her symbol is a white winged red heart and the first day of spring is her most sacred day.

Kirshes can be found in all Flet towns and cities and all answer to the *Kathedral of Segen* in Bayner. Most kirshes are two floors high, follow a square plan and house a hall for worship, a hall for judicial hearings, a garden courtyard and finally an area of cubicles that is used by priests, initiates, missionaries and for treating the sick.

SCHOPERDE - Goddess of Life

Schoperde is the Flet equivalent of the Heletian's *Patrino* of the Tergaia Kult (issue 15), also known as the Mother Goddess. Druids are her priests, the leaf or 5 circles within each other their symbol. Each full moon and solstice are her sacred days.

Schoperde does not have *built* kirshes, all her sacred places are natural foci for magic and thus the faith has had disagreements with followers of Woden. Most of her sacred places are old groves deep within the forests.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF FLETLAND

The territory known as Fletland is part of a large, flat plain. It is covered in thick forests that occasionally gives way to swamps. Many rivers and lakes dot the

landscape before draining into the sea. Fletland finishes before the highlands begin, this territory is held by ogres and orcs.

LIFE IN FLETLAND

Fletland is a dynamic place with much happening within. Part of the joy the people of this harsh land display is sourced from their relief that they at last have their *own* homeland. It may have taken over half a millennium to find, and it may have dangers and threats, but it is theirs. It is this confidence that things are finally getting better for the Flets that powers them.

The average Flet leads a life of more freedoms and rewards than the average Greater Baimiopian. The balance of this is the shorter life spans and hard work required due to the dangers of the dark forests that are the founts of the nation's misery.

Daily life is not regulated by any one powerful church so people are curious and encourage innovation and invention. This is a promised land, one of few restraints where any man can win the rewards of success.

Fletland mints its own coins called *Guilders* that come in gold, silver & copper. Five Flet Guilders are worth 1 Evoran Dinar (issue 14) or 2 and a half Heletian League Florins (issue 11-13).

THE MAJOR CITIES

Bayner is a city of 51,000 has stood for over six centuries and is the bustling centre of Flet society and culture. This includes it being home to the head kirshes of the faiths of *Meervaten*, *Geilan* and local branches of the *Church of Baimiopia* (issue 12) and *The Messengers* (issue 14). The city is growing quickly and some say it will be the future Vangre (issue 11 & 12) of the west.

The city is ruled by Fletland's most

eligible bachelor, one Karl Van Murren. A thirty one year old accomplished warrior and follower of Kave. He governs harshly but efficiently from his residence, the Fort Monbargen which over looks the city. He has opened the city to the world, allowing *freedom* of 'sanctioned' religions and free access and travel to all foreigners, even elves (though none have dared test it). Anything new that comes to the city such as a faith or import; for example a new smoking weed such as Qat must be assessed and sanctioned by Van Murren himself.

Adonis is also known as 'The City of Seers' and houses 38,000 and is home to the head of the Flet branch of the Cabal. It also marks the westerly limit of Fletland. Anything west of Adonis is free territory, previously it was tamed farm land populated by small Flet villages but the Reavers have slowly destroyed these, turning the coastal plain into a deserted prairie. Occasionally elves have been sighted in the area, and rumours tell of a new village three days travel from Adonis.

Adonis is seemingly safe from the raids of the Reavers due to the strong Cabal presence in the port. The city itself is controlled by a Countess Iris Brumoer whose family has ruled the city for over four hundred years. At fifty three years of age, and suffering the recent loss of her husband she has become a cool, calculating governor. Currently she rules well, trying to mimic the policies of Bayner, hoping to gain the same prosperity. The militia is trained by a priest of Kave, a Heletian from Thapsuss by the name of Epdus Tirano.

There are many followers of Woden in Adonis as the God of the Wild's most sacred shrine is only two days east of the city.

The port itself is an unexceptional place, it spreads across a small peninsula that juts into the huge Dormach Bay. The city docks and slums cover the west of the city's shore while the centre holds the markets and civic buildings and the east shore most of the middle and upper class residential districts.

Migell is the most northerly city in Fletland is only two hundred years old and houses 29,000. It has grown from being just another local centre for farming communities to become an important economic centre. Many merchant houses are represented here because of its closeness to the Prabesk's port of Nerva and some of Migell's specialised exports such as wines, cloth and a growing narcotics trade. Also in Migell is the Flet headquarters for the Church of Rosemagne.

Currently the city is controlled by Lord Sef Hagen, an individual who is renowned for the high society parties he and his wife Mary host. The city is 'controlled' but it does have a fairly casual attitude to such things as patrols, petty theft and prostitution.

OTHER TOWNS

Korstrich is one of many large inland towns (11,000) built along the banks of the many lakes and rivers that drain the vast plains of Fletland. This city is over three centuries old and contains the most sacred temple of Kave on Kalraith. It was built on the site of a major battle between the original Flet colonists and the Derbast orc tribe. The altar of the temple is actually a carefully crafted glass box, within which at the base of the altar can be seen the very soil the battle was fought upon, including the foot prints of the vanquished orc chieftain and the victorious Flet High Priest of Kave. Also in the soil is the now skeletal hand of the orc. This is illuminated by two lamps and is a place of great importance to those who follow Kave.

It is said that any of the faith who stands at the altar and peers down from directly above on a day of great battle will see the one destined to kill them, and thus can prepare for that day. This gift is only bestowed on a day which also sees a great battle fought by the followers of Kave. With all the conflicts in Dormetia, for example the Reavers and the continuing Ogre Wars, it is said that there are many suitable days.

The Lake & River Towns marked on the map provided all have at least 5,000 people. All the inland towns are largely constructed from wood, including their walls and are home to mainly followers of Woden and Kave. These regions of the interior are yet to be influenced by the arrival of the *foreign* churches. This is frontier territory, where the woods are thick enough to hide all manner of threats and where the waterways are deep, cold and dark. This is a dangerous place.

TERRORS IN FLETLAND

The history of Fletland is a bloody affair. The only things yet to be discussed are the wild things of the forests, mountains and lakes. Here many things can be found including giants, bog dwellers, ancient things in the deep lakes and it is said, even dragons (see future Monster Gallery's).

MAGIC - THE CABAL

The Flets have always viewed magic as an important part of their society, often it has been what guaranteed their survival. Flets on a personal level are cautious about magic, but curiosity, plus knowing its many benefits mean that Flet society as a whole accepts cabalism. It was the secret cultivation of cabalists in underground colleges that enabled the rebellion against the dwarves of Wairanir to succeed six centuries ago. Because of their acceptance

within society the Flet Cabal has public offices in all cities. These buildings are stores of knowledge and teaching. Among the human nations of Dormetia such a tolerant attitude towards the Cabal can only be found in Evora, The Kramer city of Portre and the blighted city of Ossard.

The Fletlander branch of the Cabal is a strong organisation with well over a thousand members. The only restriction the organisation does have is based in its aversion to Blood Magic. No Sango Drago are allowed in Fletland by the Cabal's decree, that includes non-Flet Cabalists. Sango Drago are treated as renegades, and all other branches of the Cabal (including the Wair-Rae Cabal) respect this restriction. This does mean that on average there are more renegades in Fletland than any other nation (besides the Heletian city-state of Ossard), but even so they number only fifty.

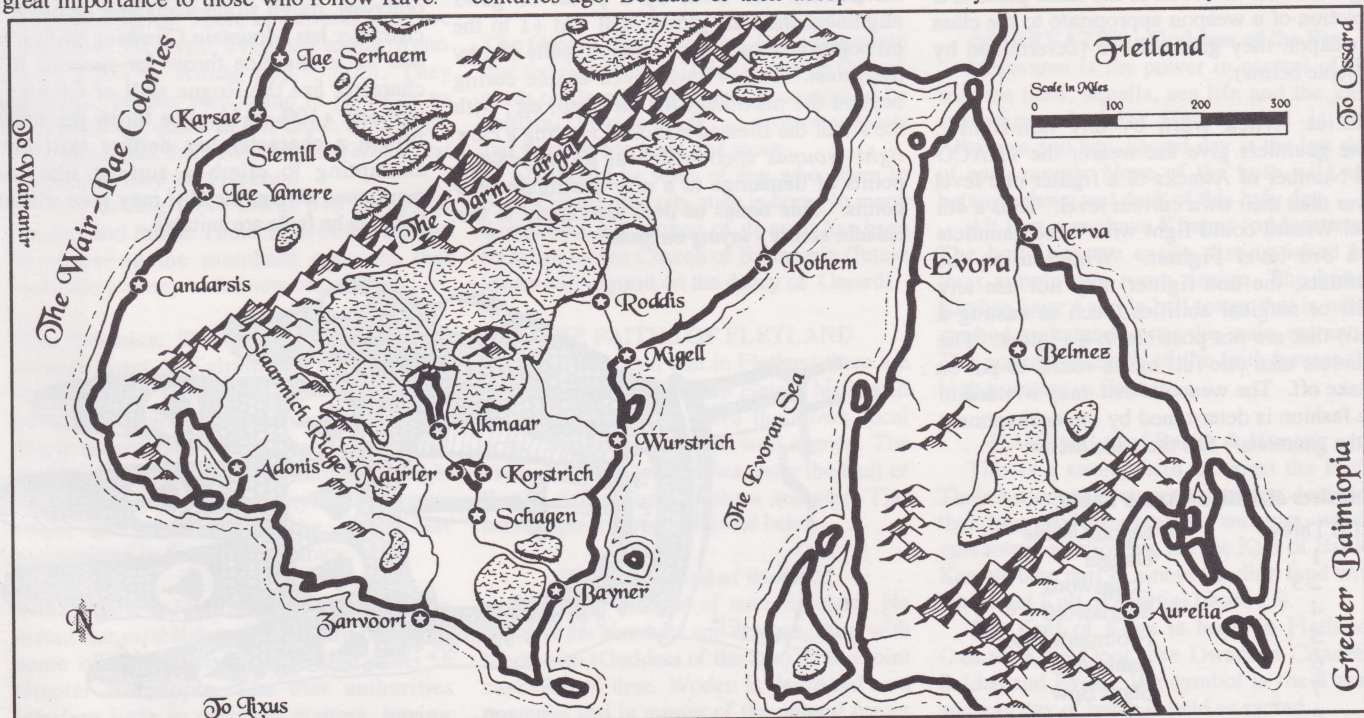
RUMOURS

Some say that the ruler of Bayner, Karl Van Murren is ill. That he has a mind fever that comes and goes. One that sees him cower or rage. Most say it is because of the horrors he saw in his many battles with the gargoyles. Other stories tell that Countess Iris Brumoer is trying to catch Van Murren's eye. Even though he is 22 years her junior it is a marriage that could benefit the lonely Countess and Adonis greatly.

It is also whispered that Mary Hagen, wife of the ruler of Migell is secretly seeing Kristoff Berring, the head cabalist in Migell.

Much happens within Fletland, kilt feuding, raids by reavers, gargoyles and hostile orcs. Also, now with the introduction of the bigoted Church of Baimiopia there has been vandalism of Cabal property, something that does not bode well.

The year is 514 EK, it is early summer ☼



The Hands of Power

by Paul Mitting

In the highly magical world of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition, it is quite common for many useful magical items to be fashioned in the form of everyday objects of clothing. The Dungeon Master's Guide describes various magical boots, cloaks, robes and hats. The advantage of these apparently mundane items is that they are rarely identifiable at a glance as magical. This aids the wearer who can then use them without attracting undue attention.

To date, however, gloves have been almost neglected (although there are several gauntlets available) so detailed below are a variety of gloves, gauntlets and hand coverings that can be introduced your campaign if you see fit (no pun intended). These are unofficial additions to your campaign and you should check with the other players first before allowing them.

In all cases these magic items come in a matching pair and both gloves must be worn to gain the benefits of the enchantments.

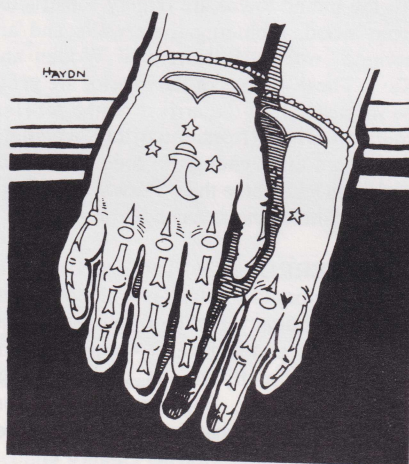
Gauntlets of Skill at Arms

Appearance: These appear as a pair of finely wrought mail gauntlets, with plate protection across the back of the hand and knuckles. Engraved into the back of the hand piece is a depiction of a weapon appropriate to the class of weapon they give skill in (determined by the table below).

Abilities: When worn by any non-fighter, these gauntlets give the wearer the THACO and Number of Attacks of a fighter one level lower than their own current level. Thus a 4th level Wizard could fight with these gauntlets as a 3rd level Fighter. Whilst using the gauntlets, the non-fighter may not use any skills or magical abilities (such as casting a spell) that are not possible to a Fighter. The gauntlets take one full melee round to put on or take off. The weapons that may wielded in this fashion is determined by the enchantment on the gauntlets. See the table below:

Gauntlets of Skill at Arms Table:

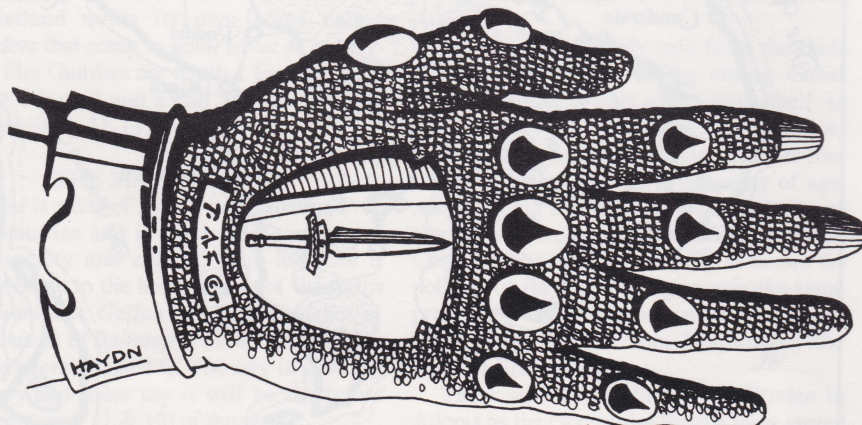
D8 Throw	Weapon Usable
1	Dagger
2-3	Longsword
4	Shortsword
5	Footman's Mace
6	Battle Axe
7	Short Bow
8	Roll Twice



Blessed Hands of Healing

Appearance: A matching pair of white gloves woven from supple cotton, with the symbol of a healing or good aligned deity embroidered in silver thread across the back of the hand.

Abilities: When worn by any individual with the Healing non-weapon proficiency the wearer makes all tests for success with a +1 bonus. The healing provided will always be the maximum that the skill allows (normally 3 hit points). If worn by a priest of good alignment then the gloves will add +1 to the hit points restored by all curative spells cast by the priest. This +1 will even enable curing beyond the maximum for the spell; eg., with the aid of the Blessed Hands of Healing a *cure light wounds* spell will heal up to 1d8+1 points of damage to a new maximum of 9 points. This bonus also applies to the paladin ability - *laying on hands*.



Mighty Mitts of Mauling

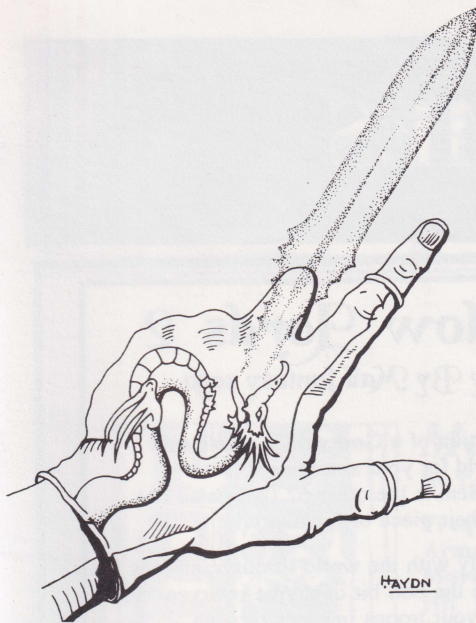
Appearance: Stout leather mittens, similar to light cestus or boxing gloves. The striking face of each (across the knuckles) has a row of steel studs. Emblazoned on the back of the hand is the emblem of a local barbarian war god.

Abilities: When worn by a Fighter or Rogue, these mitts allow the wearer to punch twice per round as a standard attack. Each attack is at +2 to their normal THACO and does D6 normal damage. These gloves are particularly favoured by veterans of the fighting pits in seedy dockside taverns where they have been outlawed more than once but still find favour with those crowds who enjoy the sight of blood. Note that the Mighty Mitts of Mauling they are far too bulky to use with any other weapon except for bludgeoning types.

Mittens of Mountain Climbing

Appearance: Two warm, thick but flexible woollen mittens of a pale cream colour. The palms of these gloves are smooth cured hide.

Abilities: When worn by any character they will enhance his ability to climb rocky or stony surfaces. This covers mountains, rocky outcrops, rough stone walls and so on. If the character has Mountain Climbing skill, it will add +2 to his dice throw for success. If the character has the Rogue skill of Climbing it will add +10% to his dice throw for success. Where a character has neither skill but is attempting to climb a surface like those mentioned above, the GM may give whatever bonuses he feels are suitable.



Gloves of Sudden Steel

Appearance: A pair of fine black leather gloves. On the back of each hand is a silver dragon cunningly worked so that as the glove moves the dragon motif gains the illusion of being alive. When activated, a 6 inch blade of finest steel springs forth from the dragon's mouth which is aligned with the pointed index finger of the owner's hand.

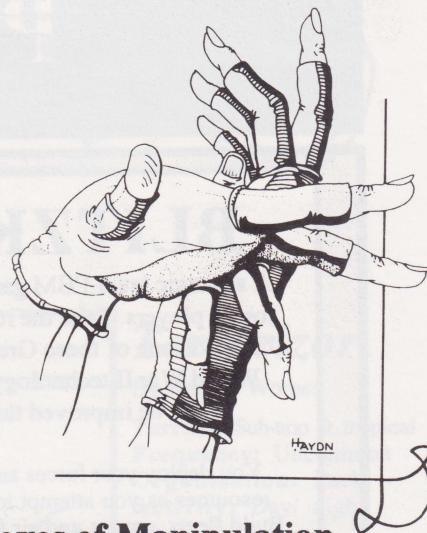
Abilities: By pressing the thumb and smallest finger together, each glove can be made to spring forth its enchanted blade. The blades

are magically created each time the gloves are activated, and most pairs will only have 1 to 6 charges in each glove (roll 1D6 for the number when first found). Unlike many other magical gloves, these will function when only one is worn. The blades are treated as normal daggers, but have a +1 bonus to hit and do +2 normal damage. If used by a Rogue, the blades will have +2 to hit and do +3 damage. This bonus is added to the base damage before multiplying when used to backstab.

Parrying Gauntlet

Appearance: A single gauntlet, normally left-hand, with an extended wrist guard that covers the entire forearm.

Abilities: When worn by a fighter, the gauntlet may be used a number of ways. First, it may be used as an adjunct to a single handed weapon to block stray blows or help fend off attacks. In this mode it will add a +1 bonus to Armour Class. Secondly, it may be used to actively block an incoming blow but still leave the wearer's weapon free for an attack giving a +1 bonus to the success chance of the parry. Thirdly, it may be used exclusively to attempt capture of an attacker's weapon. The wearer may not attack that round, but can capture the weapon in the steel plated grip of the gauntlet. Success is based on the wearer rolling an attack against Armour Class 0. Bonuses for high strength apply, and the gauntlet gives a +1 bonus itself.



Gloves of Manipulation

Appearance: Two thin gloves made of supple yet strong leather. They are a simple dark colour, either brown or black. The fingertips of the gloves have been left open for better 'feel'.

Abilities: When worn by a Rogue, these gloves add +10% to all skills that relate to manipulation. Examples are Picking locks, Picking pockets, Disarming traps. Their strong leather also grants a +1 bonus to saving throws versus poisons delivered by needles concealed in locks and similar places. ■

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Neural Limiter

Cost: 500 eb

Humanity Cost: 1D6

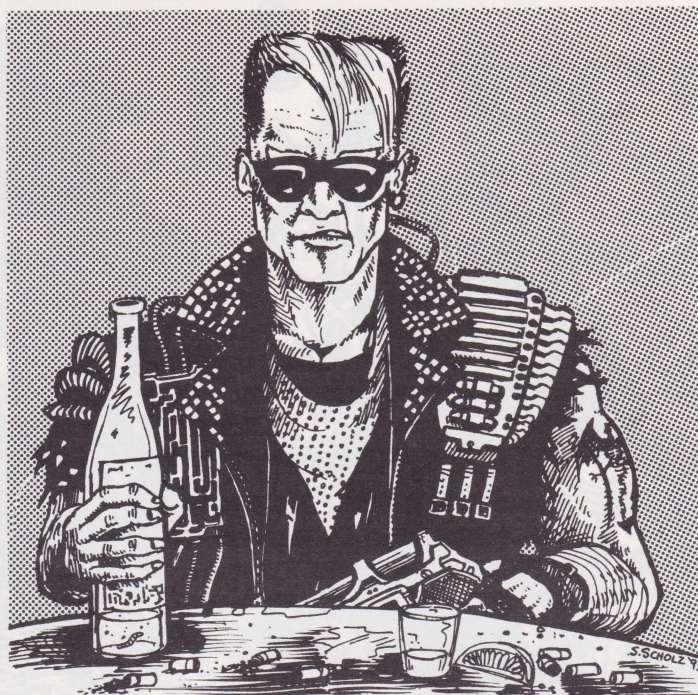
Availability: Black Market.

Description: Similar in some respects to the Neural Processor, the Limiter is designed to interface with and exert influence upon the brain of its user. Unlike the processor, the purpose of the Limiter is quite sinister. It can be used to either pacify an individual (removes extreme emotions from them such as anger, hate, desire) or to cripple nearly all their body and mind functions. This second state leaves the individual paralysed, unable to talk or respond to stimuli. The implanted person can still breathe and the heart and other essential body functions continue. Depending on the whim of the controller, these functions of the Limiter can be temporary (turned on and off) or made irreversibly permanent.

The Limiter has three main components. The two fitted inside the recipients skull are the Transmitter/Receiver Unit and the Neural Interface. The Neural Interface actually does the work on the brain, sending signals through it's probes to cause the desired effect in the user. Both units are quite small and have a shared battery that provides 2 years of normal operation. Installing the Transmitter/Receiver Unit and the Neural Interface requires major surgery.

The Controller is the third component of the Neural Limiter. It can be either be a hand held device about the size and shape of a small flashlight or a sub-component of a computer system. When handheld, the unit has three standard settings; they are 'Off', 'Pacify' and 'Disable'. Some units also have an additional switch which sends a signal to the Limiter to make it permanent. This signal 'burns out' the Limiter and irreversibly affects the recipient with either the equivalent of a Lobotomy or Total Paraplegia and loss of voice. Either way, Intelligence is lowered by 2D6 to a minimum score of 1.

When tied into a computer, the Controller can be set to restrict movements to a given area (a preselected setting is activated if the user goes beyond the boundaries) or can be voice controlled by the owner. In the



CYBERSLAVES

Suggestions for Cyberpunk®

by Paul Mitting

SLAVERY IN AMERICA 2020

With the advent of the world economic collapse, labour became very cheap. Automation of industry also meant that much unskilled work no longer needed human hands to do it.

This would have meant many people could afford to have personal servants, domestic workers, cooks and so on. However, the social environment that has come into being in the 21st century means that most people are no longer willing to be treated as second or third class citizens. Nor are people as trustworthy as they used to be. The option that came into being was to use people who had a good reason to do menial work well and without complaint - they were slaves and suffered if they didn't do as they were told.

Slavery is of course illegal. So is murder, treason and so on. The fact is that people most interested in having slaves are also the most powerful and usually manage to be 'above the law'. The introduction in 2017 of the Neural Limiter and its associated cyberware saw Slave Trading boom. Now a slave could be kept well and truly under control. They couldn't even escape to let their plight be known, as their owner controlled even where they could go in safety. Most people in 2020 aren't even aware that slavery has come back into vogue. Most wouldn't care anyway. The difference between an employee of a corp and a slave is a slender line of definition at the best of times. The boundary is easily crossed if the corp flunky is not careful.

Rebel Nomad gangs make up some of the largest slaver groups. With their mobile lifestyle and contempt for the law they find it easy to 'pick up' stray folk and sell them off at the next stop. Ripperdocs often work in concert with these gangs to fit Neural Limiters to prime specimens. Another source of slaves is shady Ripperdocs operating in slum areas. Every so often, a client who wants a Neural Processor may wake up from the anaesthetic with a Neural Limiter instead. Once its in your head its too late, you're a slave.

Corporations are not above doing this same trick to their employees. The up and coming executive may never know 'til its too late that her Processor has a buddy snuggled up alongside. Some are booby trapped too, so don't think about getting it removed. The same can be done to field operatives, especially teams involved in covert/illegal operations. The mission goes wrong, they lose their heads.

second situation, the computer would normally be set up with voice identification equipment to prevent unauthorised tampering with the settings. Whether handheld or built into a computer system, most Controllers have a 4 digit access code.

Background: The Neural Limiter has been described as Cyberware of the blackest sort. It was developed in Korea as a means of controlling State Troops, as there is often the threat of military coups. By ensuring most troops and their leaders had these devices fitted, any insurrection could be quelled at the flick of a switch.

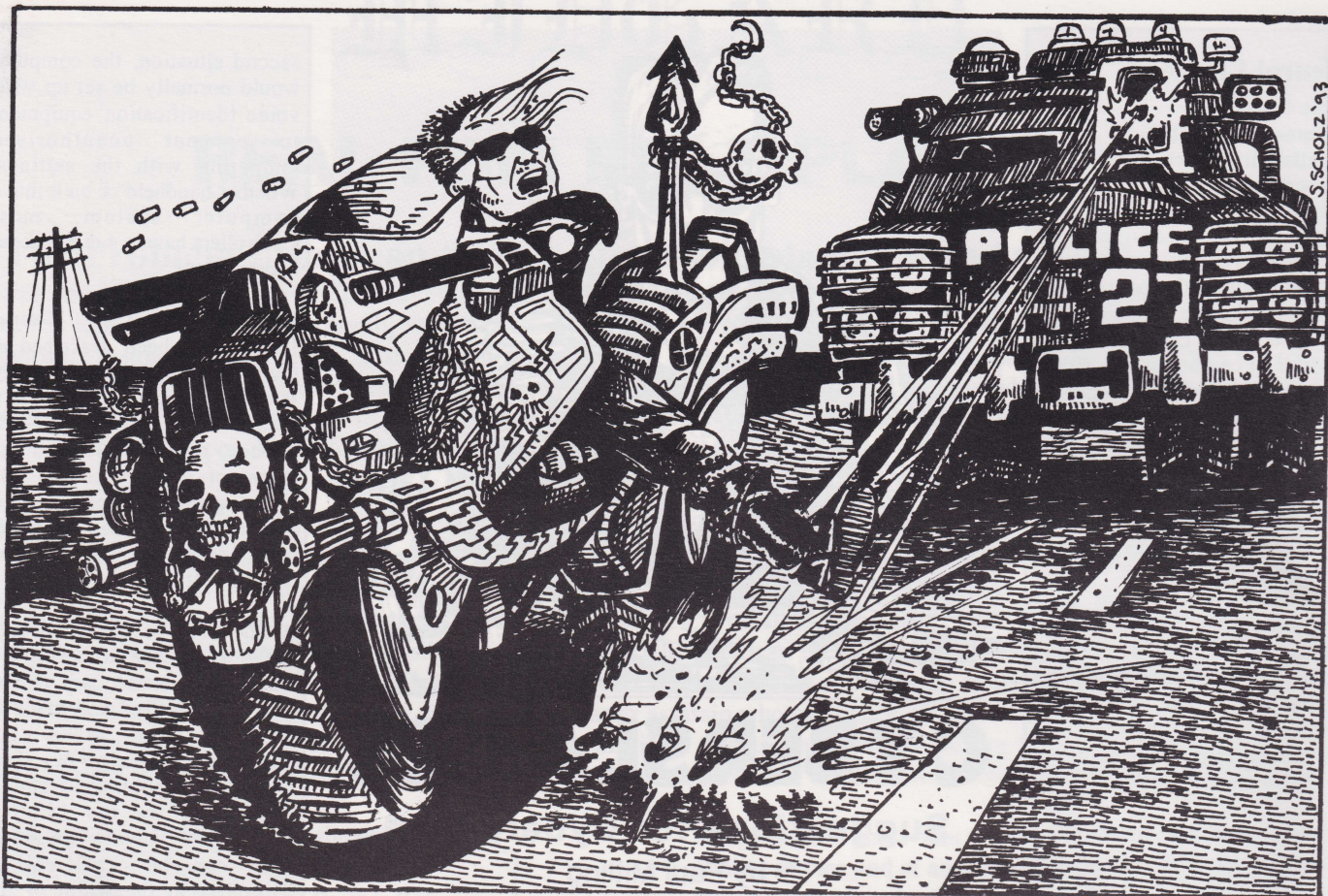
A side effect of this technology is the resurgence of slavery. By fitting this device, any person can be controlled and made to do whatever tasks are demanded. The danger of a slave revolting is eliminated almost completely by the Limiter. Unless the slave cooperates, they can be 'Pacified' or 'Disabled' at the whim of the controller. The threat of this being permanent means unswerving loyalty and subservience. The slaves who do rebel are quickly and quite publicly punished.

Enterprising Fixers have imported these devices into many countries. The selling and fitting of the Limiters is a capital offence, but then so are many other crimes regularly committed in the 21st century.

The opportunity of having a human slave who has no choice but to obey commands has gained in appeal, especially in high corporate circles. Many corporate workers have been fitted with these devices without their knowledge during surgery to fit other cyberware. The recipient often doesn't even know they have one inside their head until the first time it is used on them.

Game Note: For this reason, the Humanity Cost for Limiters fitted without knowledge of recipient has no effect until they find out about it.

The use of Neural Limiters has also sparked the development of some even darker cyberware to be used in concert with them. These are the Pain Box and Capsule Charge.



LITTLE GIRL LOST

A nomad gang calling itself Hi Balls has taken up the trade of Slavery. The gang has split from its Family due to its tendency for unnecessary violence. All the members are young, the oldest being only 21 years of age. With an exceptionally low regard for human life, they have found their new trade very profitable as well as satisfying their hunger for violence.

The gang leader is Redd (Freddy) Frampton. Freddy is heavily augmented and borderline psychotic, however he has a shrewd head for making fast money. Freddy met Jackson Greene, a Ripperdoc of low repute, whilst having his Wolver installed. After some discussion over a bottle of Tequila, they set up shop together. Freddy and his gang supply the bodies, and Greed implants the Neural Limiters, then Freddy finds the market for the slaves they have created.

Normal operation is for the gang to cruise with their Meatwagon and bikes looking for fresh bodies. Typical targets are lone vehicles, hitchhikers, isolated steeds, or gas stations; anyone dumb enough to hump it alone in secluded areas. If things do get heavy, the Hi Balls carry enough firepower to overwhelm most likely targets, although they prefer not to put holes in the healthier looking bodies - spoilt merchandise fetches a much lower price. The gang use a lot of gas grenades, tranq fletchettes and tasers to accomplish this.

Once they have a haul of flesh, the better specimens are implanted in the back of the Meatwagon by Greene. The gang then rejoin their convoy of living vehicles and transfer the recovering slaves to the 'Bed 'n' Breakfast'. This is a large converted bus with numerous bunks aboard, each separately lockable. Here the slaves can recuperate and be tended. Most are treated well, although especially rowdy or uncooperative ones will be given a taste of ten or the Limiter. Any really uncontrollable slaves will be executed in a brutal fashion by Freddy in front of the other slaves.

Once the slaves have been transported a reasonable distance from their place of capture, the Hi Balls will contact one of the local Fixers. If possible, the gang will sell off all slaves on hand. Freddy knows if they are ever stopped and searched by Police troopers the game is over

for him. Of course if that happens he has plans to go out in style.

Few slaves are kept permanently by the Hi Balls, and then only if exceptionally useful or good looking. Two long term slaves currently with the gang are Melissa, a young girl of 15 who is very beautiful, and Trigger, a middle aged ex-merc who was once a bodyguard to one of the gang's victims. Trigger is fitted with a Pain Box and Freddy keeps him for sport - beatings and humiliation.

THE STOLEN GIRL

Two days ago the Hi Balls encountered a picnic in the outer city zone of some rich corp kids and their bodyguards. The brats were living it up with the best food, drink and drugs corp money can buy. It was only because the Hi Balls regularly travel back roads and byways that they came across the exclusive party.

Freddy wasted no time. The Solos on guard went down in a surprise hail of fire as the gang roared into their midst, with the Hi Balls taking only a few wounds. It was quick work to subdue the dozen kids, who ranged from 15 to 18 years of age. The Meatwagon was loaded up and all valuables stripped from the cars and the dead Solos. The whole bloody raid only took 15 minutes from start to finish; these Nomads know their stuff.

Amongst the kids was Jennifer Trant-Gerbins, a pretty 17 year old. Her father is Hans Gerbins, a moderately wealthy industrialist who manufactures cheap cyberware in Mexico then sells it across America. He heard of the raid soon after it happened and dispatched a band of Solos to reclaim her. Unfortunately, the band couldn't track where the perpetrators had disappeared to. All these Solos came back with was information; they'd been able to determine that the attack was an unplanned event by Nomads who had chanced across the picnickers, probably whilst on a slaving run.

Gerbins has now posted a reward of 10,000 eb for the safe return of his daughter. He has contacted all his daughter's friend's parents. Of those, the families managed to raise a further 3,000 eb per child if they can be recovered alive.

Pain Box

Cost: 300 eb

Humanity Cost: 2

Availability: Black Market

Description: The Pain Box must be fitted in conjunction with a Neural Limiter. The Pain Box causes excruciating agony when activated. In games terms, this reduces REF, COOL, MA by half each. To perform any actions, the victim must save under their reduced COOL to function. Even then, all actions take a penalty of -2 in addition to any lowered stats.

Pain Boxes are designed to deliver jolts of pain lasting 3 to 5 seconds (1 combat round). This can be repeated indefinitely, but each jolt after the first must be saved against (using BODY stat). If the save is failed, the recipient will black out until the pain ceases plus 2D6 rounds. If pain jolts are sustained for more than 5 consecutive rounds, the recipient must make another separate BODY save to avoid cardiac arrest and death.

GETTING IN ON THE ACTION

The Hi Balls will have travelled about 100kms south and inland by the time the chase begins. They haven't gone far because they had to wait for the victims to be implanted, including the lovely Jennifer. Freddy has already contacted a Fixer who is willing to take the lot off his hands for a tidy sum. All he has to do is get across the State Border. He has decided to dump Melissa with the Fixer and keep Jennifer.

If the players are struggling to keep up with Freddy, a twist of fate brings him back into their hands. Freddy's attempt to cross the border at a secluded spot has gone terribly wrong. A Police chopper noted the large group of vehicles moving at speed towards the State Line and called in two ground units to intercept. True to his nature, Freddy decided to fight it out rather than submit to a search. He lost most of his living vehicles and some of his bikes, but escaped back into the state with the Bed 'N' Breakfast and his Meatwagon intact.

The players hear of the shoot out with suspected slavers over the grapevine, especially as a few people know they're interested in such things by now. A quick check with some contacts will reveal the approximate location of the fight and which direction the survivors headed off. The players encounter Freddy in a very bad mood. Unless they are extremely lucky, the players will find themselves engaged in a very heavy firefight with acorned Freddy. His last desperate move will be to try to break free from the attack, guns blazing with Jennifer on the back of his bike. Try not to damage the merchandise! ■

Capsule Charge:

Cost: 100 eb

Humanity Cost: 0

Availability: Black market

Description: The Capsule Charge is a small, remotely detonated explosive. It is fitted alongside a Neural Limiter as a form of last ditch protection against insurrection. Although typically fitted inside the brain case, it can be planted anywhere in the body such as near the heart, lungs or in the throat.

The charge can be detonated by a signal via the Neural Limiter. It can however be fitted by itself with just a small receiver unit to activate the explosive. Damage caused by the explosion is fairly small, but is applied directly to the recipient's body. Extensive organ and tissue damage tends to result. Actual damage done is 3D6+1 when triggered in the head, or 2D6+2 in the torso. Body Type Modifiers do not apply due to the nature of the damage and the affected character must make a BODY save or go into shock.

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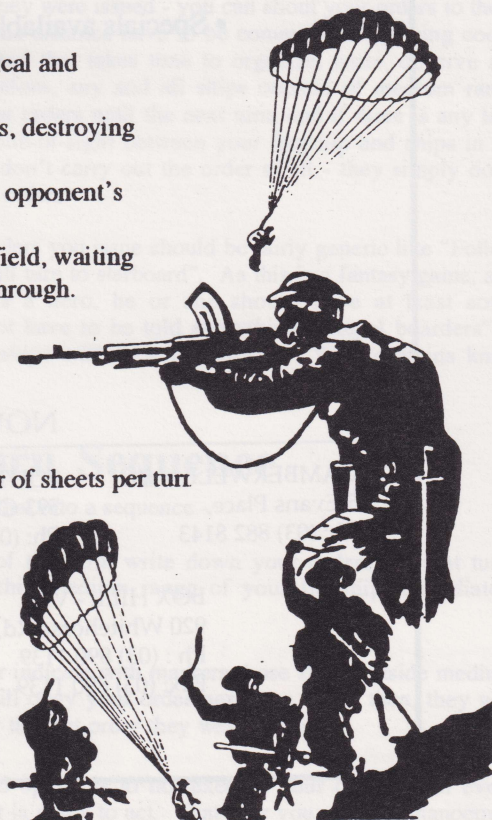
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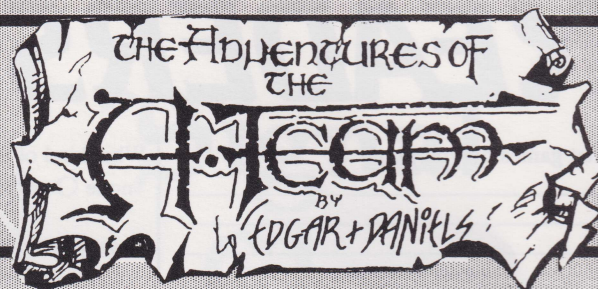
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Epic adventure and conquest combine perfectly in...

► So What's Different?

I have always felt it would be difficult to combine fantasy wargaming with individual character adventuring, in a Play By Mail (PBM) game. The ability to pursue quests, to challenge heroes to duels and to slay monsters is ultimately lost to the dominating macro environment of battles, conquest and war. All of the fantasy Play By Mail games I've played over the last ten years, from *Earthwood* in 1984 to the current *Legends*, have not met this challenge.

Adventurer Kings is unique in that it successfully combines the enjoyable aspects of adventuring with the imperial conquest always found in fantasy wargaming. Victory cannot be achieved by mere domination of the world. A good balance of exploration, monster slaying and mastery of magic is required to win.

By Cameron Thomas

Adventurer Kings is Unique

It successfully combines the enjoyable aspects of adventuring with imperial conquest...



► The Contest

Each game of *Adventurer Kings* contains from 8-12 players on a randomly generated map of 162 provinces. Each player has the same aim, to reunite the world under their own King, awarding Imperial Offices to those heroes or Kings who have demonstrated most merit in their field, regardless of their creed.

Each player starts out with as a King of a small empire, with two subordinate heroes (*to lead armies, explore and adventure*), one home province (*which generates income*), a couple of armies (*to conquer other provinces and armies*) and a small amount in treasury (*to pay for your armies and heroes*). The way you expand from this starting position, and how you aim for the varying Imperial Offices, will determine your standing at the end of the game.

► Leaders are the Key...

The game mechanics of *Adventurer Kings* revolve around the characters or leaders of the game. An army cannot move without a leader, and only a King or his heroes can complete any of the activities within the game. Each turn represents one year, and is broken down into five action phases representing Spring, Early and Late Summer, Fall and Winter. So on the first turn you have the ability to complete fifteen actions with your King and two heroes (*five for each leader*). Later in the game, as you hire or charm other leaders, the number of actions you can complete increases, as does the enjoyment of the game. Each turn your hero or king can choose from 16 basic actions, that allow a range of actions from moving alone or with armies, casting spells, encountering features to fight monsters, pursuing armies or leaders or even practising to increase skills.

► Turn Results

Each turn you receive an informative and very comprehensive printout, that is written in descriptive prose that defies normal expectations of a 100% computer moderated game. This is by far one of the most attractive features of the game. It is far from repetitive as might be expected, and reads more like a chapter by chapter story. Your results are recounted as deeds, with a mixture of imaginative humour and language, supplemented by detailed charts and tables.

Firstly, the deeds of your King are recounted for the year. Then all of the heroes in your employ write to you of their adventures for the turn. The state of your Kingdom is reported, tabling your provinces, characters, armies and finances. All the features and the guardian monsters within, together with the treasures they possess are reported next. Finally a general intelligence report details the activities of other players around you, and any characters belonging to other Kings that may be active in your provinces. A separate colour map is also provided each turn, which vividly sets out the world as you know it.

► Victory

Victory is achieved by securing the greatest prize share of the Imperial Titles available. There are eight major Imperial Titles each awarded at the end of the game to the character who has gained the most merit points for the office. These are awarded for merits such as



the richest treasury (*Imperial Treasurer*), the most glory in battle on land or at sea (*Grand Marshal or Admiral*), the most skilled magician (*Archmage Palatine*), and the greatest slayer of monsters (*Lord High Defender*). There are also ten Greater Magic Items that are worth 1 merit point each at the end of the game. Who can question that the owner of Sword Excalibur should not be recognised? Your share of the prize points determines your final standing, and as 10% of the player fees are maintained as a prize fund, your share will be rewarded from this fund.

► PC gamers covered

Adventurer Kings can also be played by on your computer or by Electronic mail. The game has a superb player assistance program called SAGA, which is available for free to any player wishing to play by 3.5" disk or by modem. Roma Games have many players including myself that play via disk mailer or on the companies bulletin board. SAGA warns you if you try something not allowed in the rules, as well as guiding you through your orders. Along with the colourful map it displays, playing via SAGA and electronic mail has only one advantage over playing by mail, its cheaper.

► Getting Started

How you start Adventurer Kings can have a large bearing on your future standing within the game. You are required to choose your Kings alignment, race, gender, temper and abilities, and apart from gender (*it makes no difference whether your male or female*), each of these can have an important affect.

• Race

You can make the choice of one of four races, Human, Elven, Dwarven or Orcish. The race you choose, usually determines what starting terrain and troops you start with. For e.g., If you choose a Dwarven King, you will start with Mountains and Axemen, both advantageous for that race. (*Each race has one terrain and troop type that they favour in combat*). Whatever race you have chosen for your King, you will also receive two heroes to help your position, one the same race as your King. The race you chose will affect how you expand also. You will not be able to effectively lead troops of other races, unless you have sufficient Druid Ability.



• Hint One •

There are more Human provinces in each game of AK, than any other race, therefore choosing Human can be an advantage.

• Temper

The Temperament of your King only effects how he fights in personal combat. You can choose between Berserk, Brave, Cautious and Cowardly, which each have special advantages. This choice has only a small effect on the game. Your 2 secondary starting characters will start with the same or a close temperament, but you have no control over the temper of characters you acquire later, except leaders of similar temperament will be more likely to join you. Your King will normally only accept peaceful encounters, and is nearly always safe, unless you chose to risk him. Only those who choose to start their King as a fighter, to defeat the monsters of the land, need to put some thought into this choice.



• Hint Two •

Berserk offers a rage bonus, which gives 1-4 bonus hit points in combat. Since all characters only have 10 hit points to start with, this can make a big difference, especially since some combat spells can do over 10 points in one hit.

• Alignment

There are 7 Alignments to choose from, ranging from the holy Divine, down to the anti-holy Undead. Your choice of alignment controls what special abilities you can use in the game, and the way you relate to other players, and un-owned heroes.

Divine: Your troops have a 50% chance to become fanatical in battle, and you start with a zero aptitude in Necromancy, but the big starting advantage is that you can start with +1 to your White magic level, after you have allocated your points, which means you can start with level 3 in White.

Good: Your troops have 40% fanaticism, and you have double aptitudes in White magic and Sage ability.

Druidic: You can automatically Treat with a player who is neutral to you, and make them allied. Monsters close in alignment to you may aid you in battle. You have double aptitude in Psychic magic and Druid ability.

Neutral: You receive +1 to melee and Archery ability in encounters against other characters and against humanoid monsters. Double aptitude in Illusory magic and Spy ability.

Pagan: Receive +10% chance to cast spells, except white magic spells. Double aptitude in Elemental magic and Explorer ability. At high level, your spells will rarely fail.

Evil: 25% chance of fanaticism with your troops in battle, and most importantly, you can break alliance at the start of the turn. (*Alliances are usually broken at the end of turn*). This ability can be used to great effect. Double aptitude in Necromancy and thief ability.

Undead: All skeletal armies have 100% fanaticism, and you make Break Treaty at the start of the turn like an Evil Player. The Charm spell (*normally Psychic magic*) is used by Undead characters with their Necromancy skill level, and again, a big advantage, your King may start with +1 to his Necromancy skill, enabling him to start with Level 3. There are negatives to this position, zero aptitude to White magic, and your Undead characters are susceptible to spells that effect the Undead.

Choice of alignment is yours. Its biggest effect is in the way your deal with other players, and heroes in the game. A Neutral player will be able to hire most un-owned leaders in the game, as normally you can hire up to 2 alignments away from your own. Undead would be very limited in those leaders that could be hired. Your alignment difference from the alignment of the player who is voted World Emperor at the end of the game, affects your finishing score. Most people will work with or support same or close alignments to their own, as the bigger the difference in alignment the more points are lost.

There is no golden rule to choosing your alignment. Each have their advantages and problems. Both Divine and Undead, because of their uniqueness, have their alignment declared to any player who comes in contact with them. With the other alignments, it is often a guessing game, and this does not stop players lying about what alignment they follow. Its often easy to pick. Good and Evil players get fanaticism in battle which enables a player to pick between the two within the text descriptions, Druids often use their ability to treat, for the security of alliance. Neutral and Pagan are hard to spot, and this itself is an advantage of these positions, as you can easily fake another alignment, to your own advantage.



• Hint Three •

Choose your alignment on how you intend to play. If you plan to lone wolf, then Undead or Evil might suit you, as little diplomacy is needed to break treaty and attack another neutral player. If you plan to take the Adventure side more seriously, Neutral alignment. If you want lots of diplomacy, Druid is for you.

• Abilities

You are allowed to allocate 4 ability points to any of 15 different abilities.

In starting out, this is the biggest decision you can make, as it limits what actions you can do, in the early turns. Each ability normally has a maximum level of 4, and each ability is rated for a characters aptitude in that ability.

It is harder to increase in an ability if you exceed your aptitude. Aptitudes are always two higher than your initial skill level. With each ability you can allocate a maximum of two points, which is where Divine and Undead give an advantage, allowing a start of up to level 3. Kings also start with +1 level to Archery, Melee and Sage abilities... So within these limits, where do you allocate your points...?

Tactics: Not really necessary, but each point gives you +20% to the strength of your armies.. You can gain tactics from battles, so the points are usually better spent elsewhere.

March: In my mind a must to start with. Level 2 allows your unmounted troops an extra movement point, which means you can take two adjacent provinces consecutively, with the one large force, instead of splitting your army to fight in separate provinces.

Naval: If you start with any naval ability, you will be given a coastal province, and fleets as your second troop type. There is always a lot of sea terrain to be taken, so getting an early start in this area, will give you an advantage, but not huge.

Archery/Melee: You start with 1 in each of these skills already, so unless you choose a path to become an Adventurer, defeating the monsters of the land, and forego expansion, no need to add any more points here. I would suggest any player who chose this option to take some magic points also, because the majority of monsters in the game, have some form of magic ability.

Magic Abilities: White/Necromancy/Elemental/Psychic/Illusory

You can't cast magic without ability in that field of magic. Each magic ability gives you a range of 5 spells, you can cast in the world as an action, or in combat encounters. e.g., Tornadoes are an Elemental spell, which can suck up and destroy units in the same or adjacent province. Mirror Image Phantasm is an Illusory combat spell that creates a mirror image of your enemy, to fight for you. Magic has a strong influence of the play of the game. A flood spell can stop the largest army from leaving its province. A plague could destroy an Elite legion as easily as a Green Garrison.

In my opinion, magic ability is a must.

The higher the level of magic, the better chance of the spell working, and the more spells you can throw. So my advise is take two points in one magical ability, and try to develop that ability even higher, and cross train it to your other leaders.

Druid: Can be very important in successfully leading other races. You need the maximum 4 in Druid to lead Dragons (*the games strongest unit*) at their full strength in battle. One point in this ability at the start of the game, is enough to ensure you can lead all four of the humanoid races, Orcs, Humans, Elves and Dwarves. If you choose Human as your start race druid level may not be immediately important, because of the human predominance in the AK world.

Thief/Spy/Explorer: Not good abilities to waste your important starting points on, because you can do all these abilities successfully, without an ability level.

Sage: You King starts with one point in sage, and that is enough to start with. Later in the game, sage inventions will be discovered that can negate or dampen many of the Magic spells in the game, as well as increase non-magical abilities, and increase income for your empire.



• Hint Four •

Its not necessary to choose magic abilities, to follow your alignment. If your Good, you will have aptitude 4 in White already, maximise your aptitudes by taking other magic skills instead.



• Hint Five •

Ability levels can increase with each action that uses that ability. E.g... talking to an intelligent monster, or Recruiting or Hiring gives you a small percentage chance that your Druid level will increase. So it is often worth say casting a low level Bless, just as much for the benefit of the bless, as for the chance to increase in White Magic Skill.

So that is your setup. You have chosen your position, and now all you have to do is wait for the first turn, to see what surrounds you home province, and what skills and aptitudes your two secondary leaders start with. With this information, you can start your journey through Adventure Kings.

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Plotting Help

How to Encourage Player Participation & Get More Out of Your Non Player Characters By Colin Taber

I was standing in the street. The sounds, sights and smells of Thapsuss hit me like... how to put it politely... a brick! Thapsuss in summer time, down by the stagnant water of the docks is a place that just reeks of roasting sewerage. Deciding now was a great time to go somewhere else I headed down Port Road towards University Square.

Ahead of me I saw an old lady, she was staring about the place as if she had lost something, wringing her hands as if they were filthy.

Ignoring her I continued on, seeking adventure. As I rounded a bend I came upon a crowd gathered around an entrance to an alley way. The mob was five deep and from the gossiping and stares I could only guess that another victim of the 'Slayer' had been found. I hurried on.

Crossing the Lantern Bridge I headed up hill towards the square. The street trembled as a deep roar shook the building next to me. Peering down an alley amidst the smoking ruin of the rear of a money lenders's premises I saw a masked man flee with a sack over his shoulder.

From the smouldering money lender's I could hear faint cries for help. Having seen enough I continued on as a throng of spectators gathered around the ruined building.

Finally the Square was within sight. My steps quickened, but then stopped as I turned towards a whisper from a dark side street. There, in the shadows stood a black robed man with a medallion of silver sitting on his chest. He called me softly again. I turned towards him but was yards from his reach. He asked me if I was looking for work. Pushing my sword's scabbard back into place and moving my hand so as to cover my Mercenary Medallion I said no. His face seemed to lose interest and he darted down the street, I turned and finally reached the square.

Now, where would I find adventure?

-Ramos Palmero, the adventureless.

This article covers two main topics:

- 1) It suggests how to snare your players.
- 2) It discusses how to effectively use NPC's.

The two are related, as the second can be a cure for the first problem; participation.

Participation

If you find it hard to snare your players with your plots then consider why they are resisting. Is it because they consider the plot predictable, realising as soon as they see the old house on the hill that they should be reaching for the garlic. Or, could the problem be that they feel that they have no control over the plot? Do they think that you are pushing them down a road that you want them to take without considering where *they* may want to go? Perhaps it is a combination of these reasons, making them react in a style reminiscent of Ramos Palmero in the text to the left. There are many simple solutions to player resistance, but first you should understand the nature of the problem.

If the problem is that your players are finding play predictable, produce the only cure, do the unpredictable. Failing coming up with new original plots, consider at the very least a change in game worlds. Ideally change games, moving for example from AD&D to Shadowrun or Cyberpunk. You should be aiming to change genres, as much as games, as it is probably the genre that is the base of the *rut* your group is in.

If perhaps predictability is not the problem, but lack of player's freedoms is, consider this: Think of your current campaign as an example. Did you direct them to where they are now? Would they have tracked down what/whoever they sought without your hints and gentle pushes? Do the players actually seem interested in following this up? Most importantly, what's in it for them?

Simple questions. I know that I am often guilty of forcing players down certain roads. But what I have learned is that I can direct the party where I want if they feel that they are in control. How do you do this? Well think of it this way, when would you think you are in control? Basically, only when you are able to make the decisions. So, the answer is to give your players choices. Of these choices include your preference, whatever else is going to be realistically available and if possible some *dressed up*

choices which lead to your preference in any case. If the players don't take your preferred option you can always put them at another set of crossroads later.

The obvious question here is: "What if players keep taking the *wrong* choice?" Well if they do, it is most likely that they don't want to be part of the plot you are trying to involve them in, either hook them back in with a sub plot or let them go and start a new story line. If they do want to stay on the original plot but continually choose the *wrong* options or perhaps they are losing interest you need a special *something*. An ingredient that will liven things up, something that is also our second topic in this article and also one of the best tools a referee could ever have; the NPC.

The NPC

Non Player Characters are a huge asset, they are your 'cast of thousands' and most importantly won't eat all the chips!

There are three broad groups of NPC's; *Foes*, *Fellows* and *Extras*. All are commonly used but they each have different purposes.

Foes compete with your players, whether they appear as a powerful Necromancer stifling the land, or a pesky thief who continually targets the party. In whatever form the *Foe* is best created by filling such personalities with characteristics and habits that annoy or unnerve your players. Of course, a goal detrimental to your players' should also guarantee a worthwhile climax. Much more could be said here about *Foes*, but I will leave that for another time.

Extras are your high-turnover NPC's, such as shop keepers, barman and local nobles. Generally they are personalities that are only dealt with once or twice, if they become more involved than that chances are that they are moving on to one of the two other groups. This brings us to the last group, and the one that most of this article will focus upon; *Fellows*.

Fellows are NPC's who for whatever reason have joined the party. They may have been hired or just befriended by the party, perhaps the players and the NPC have been drawn together by a force more powerful than coin. Regardless of how they wind up together, the *Fellow* is going to be one of your greatest tools. While *foes* are good for dramatics and goals, and *extras* are just plain



practical, the Fellow, given the opportunity can become the invisible engine of your plot lines.

They will let you lead players in a less intrusive way, allow you to drop hints, rumours, sub plots and much more. In short, they can be as important as any plot, and are a gold mine for starting dozens of others.

Creating such a handy tool takes time. By this I mean game time, not real time spent rolling up stats.

When introducing characters such as 'Fellows' you will need to allow the players time to get to know their new 'party member', 'guide' or whatever other guise the NPC operates under. Within this time your objective is to build up a realistic and liked (or at least needed) NPC. This means you will need to keep control of your NPC's; don't introduce them and forget them or let them be used as cannon fodder. You need to treat them as you would your players, that is give *them* game time, let *them* speak. If you want your NPC to be accepted (and perhaps more importantly be a useful tool) you will need to play the character with a high profile. By doing this you will establish the character, eventually your players will understand that they can ask their 'guide' or 'seer' information, instead of just pushing them to the front of the party if the going gets tough. If played well NPC's can out-shine party members, which is appropriate as most NPC's will sooner or later head back to their own lives, leaving the party behind.

Before you introduce them you should organise their skills, race, outlook and so on. This includes exploring the NPC's goals, they are not always going to be the same as the party's, and this hidden conflict may eventually make its appearance, opening up new avenues of play based on something that

you perhaps previously considered unnecessary. If you have spent your time wisely you should have one of your extras nearly ready to make their break for 'stardom'.

I will stick to the Hollywood theme for a moment here. Picture this, you have a glowing soul, garbed in the fantastic and this is their big chance. But instead of having a script for a big budget thriller, they get stuck with a role in a B-grade horror. The hint here is that if you are going to go to the trouble of making an NPC on paper, you should make sure that you put at least the same effort in making them happen during the gaming session. They are here to interact with the players, not to lead them by the hand and save them from harm whenever that convenience is needed. NPC's are also their own persons, with their own goals. Should the party try to take advantage of any of them they will be offended and most likely leave, some may not be satisfied with such a peaceful ending to the relationship.

NPC's will be what you make of them. I have provided some examples of NPC's I have used in the past, hopefully they will give you ideas for your own 'tools'.

Rillane was a minstrel based loosely on the NPC of the same name in the *Power Behind the Throne* adventure for WFRP (but with alterations). This life-loving elf lead the players through the mountain city of Middenheim, to parties, adventure and eventually nearly the Chaos Wastes. Rillane became a genuine friend of the party, all of the players were fond of him because Rillane took the time to treat each of them individually. Over the course of a few months he taught some sword play, others spells and the remainder songs and jests. Rillane was the closest thing to a 'friend' that

an NPC can ever be. When Rillane finally met his end the players were respectfully quiet, caught in thought as I reminded each of the gifts of knowledge and friendship they had exchanged. Rarely does grief make a showing in any RPG.

Valar Swiftfin was a rich fool and thus a handy tool. He was a sea elf (who thought he was a) mage. Decked out in wizard's robes he would 'cast' spells and use trickery and other's stupidity to mimic magical effects. He was even seen at one time throwing his hands in the air and yelling "Teleport!" within 'biting' distance of a demon - while his comrades snuck around to the beasts rear. Valar is an example of an NPC best labelled as 'mostly harmless' or a 'bluff'. While the players didn't think as much of him compared to Rillane, they enjoyed his bumbles. He was functional and light relief.

Chico Budakeet was an NPC who was so likable that the players insisted that he travel with them. This warm gypsy-like character with his wit and cliched lines was a simple fellow to start with, inspired solely by a humorous one liner used as a radio station promo featuring the Gypsy Kings. This NPC after three sessions of play could have got the players to do nearly anything, all it took was an accented voice and a big grin.

Forwao is a current favourite who has been treading the streets of Unae now for over two years. He is a two faced charlatan and exceptional at what he does. On the surface he is your average Flet-hating elf, but underneath he is a much more cunning and calculating fellow. He is an NPC who can be anywhere or anyone, it is his job. This is the kind of NPC you will easily fit into any campaign, and a particularly enjoyable one to use as his own agenda decides on a day-to-day basis whether he is the players friend or foe, mostly he will be the latter.

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CAN CON '94

Report
by Nick
Leaning

Those of you who have been watching closely will realise that **Australian Realms** represents the gradual evolution of an Australian based gaming industry. Sure we have a lot of writers and artists in this country working for overseas rpg companies, but Realms is making it possible to get published here. And we have plans to manufacture other products. The future is full of exciting possibilities for those who want in. In line with these goals we decided it was time for us to show our faces, and what better place than the *de facto* National Convention for role playing and war gaming - Cancon.

That is why we left our comfort zone in Perth, bleary eyed at around 6am to cross the Nullabor desert, touching down briefly in Sydney before bouncing over to Canberra in a flight that took us across a couple of time zones and into a whole new world of publishing adventure.

On the ground and greeted by a couple of friends, we made a quick visit out to Copeland College to check the venue and our stand location. Looked good. Then we went to check in at our hotel. Colin and I are pretty close, hey we've shared a lot of vindaloo, but we didn't feel like sharing a double bed for three nights so we had reception re-allocate us a twin share. With the hotel almost full we were shunted into a 'deluxe suite'. It seems in Canberra, deluxe means a few extra square feet, an air-conditioner and access to a balcony. But heck, who comes to a convention to wallow in the hotel room?

Day One and we drove down to the College and set up our stand early before the people we'd really come to meet, the role players, arrived. The stand next to us, Tactics, were still awaiting their shipment of stock so the first couple hours of the Con we were able to spread out our stock across two stands.

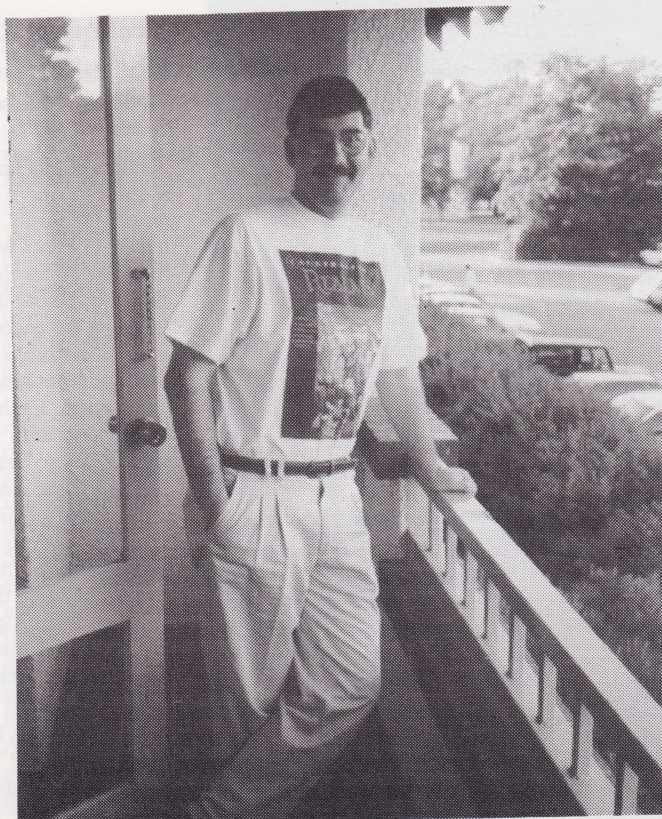
Then the doors opened to the gamers and all hell broke loose. Gamers actually wanting to buy our magazines. The Back Issue special went down a treat and heaps of people had questions to ask about Unae and the A-Team. I was getting a big warm feeling inside from the constant congratulations and well-wishing. Perhaps people really do want an Australian-based game company.

The Tactics stock arrived and we had to contract our display, which was just as well as the piles of mags were rapidly shrinking. "Hey," said Colin, a shy lad at the best of times, "This is fun. People are asking me about Shadowrun, Australia."

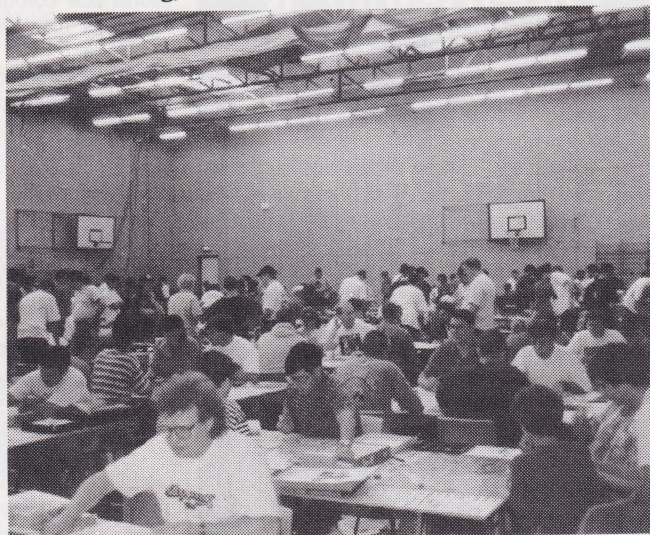
In the quite moments when the games were in session, we oiled our throats with hot tea, and I took a wander around the site. The games being played at the Con included Battletech, Warhammer (all kinds), Historical Miniatures, assorted board games and role playing - systems such as AD&D 2nd Edition, Paranoia, Shadowrun, Vampire and Werewolf, systemless and freeform - the vampires looked great, but the Flintstones looked a rabble in their sheepskin car seat cover costumes, or is that rubble?

And so it continued for three exhausting, but exhilarating days. We got to meet many of our readers, plus introduce ourselves to a lot of new people. We gave away many maps of Unae, picked up orders for our Realms T-shirts and sold magazines faster than I could fumble for change.

Cancon is the biggest and best, that I've attended. I think you'd have to go overseas to experience better,... maybe next year. What I do know, is that Cancon confirmed our deepest suspicions; Australia does want its own home grown product, gamers here do want to support a local gaming industry. While I'm at the helm, Australian Realms will deliver that promise.



Nick Leaning, On the Balcony of the Deluxe Suite



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Colin Taber & Mike Page at the Realms Stand

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Trollquest Review

from Mercury Games
Reviewed by Adam East

Trollquest pits up to 16 competing players in a quest to find a 'Gem of Life' buried deep within the Earth. The play area consists of a matrix of rocks which is 20 'blocks' wide, 20 long and 10 levels deep. Your clan starts in a cave just below the surface (Level 1). After grasping the concept of being able to move in three dimensions for a change, I discovered that the remaining game was pretty easy to understand. Each player controls a clan of tunnellers, with your first decision being what Race to make your clan. All of the people in your clan will belong to one of four professions - Miners, Fighters, Sages and Workers. Your Race will determine the distribution of new men which your clan creates, between these professions.

Your clan operates in two forms - Colonies and the smaller Units. Colonies produce new men and Units for you whilst also serving as protective bases. The professions from your clans are assigned into Units, which are then sent out according to the orders you give them. Amongst other choices, Units will do your mining to the lower levels, fight off wandering monsters, build new colonies or try to divine where a 'Gem of Life' is for the four rounds during each turn.

Colonies and Units have initial limits as to their size and composition, but these can be raised through the spending of money as the game progresses. Your clan treasury increases as you discover minerals and gems whilst mining or occasionally plundering treasure from monsters. The occasional magical item may also be found which will help your clan in some way.

Most of the decision making relies on increasing the production of your Colonies, which will increase the number and effectiveness of your Units, and in deciding what to do with your Units.

The game I'm in has lasted 14 turns so far, and I'm only down to the 7th Level, but its now taking longer to mine through blocks of rock, and the monsters are getting nastier. Rumours have one of the other players down to the 9th Level, where the Gems are likely to be found. This is where one variation from other PBMs shows up - there is practically no communication between the players. You are likely to bump into the tunnels of other clans, but that is about the extent of interaction. There is some strategy to capturing other clans caves and thereby restricting their movement, or depleting their resources through attacks, but it has much the same effect on your own clan.

Trollquest is best played for the enjoyment of seeing how well you can manage a clan, and not worrying too much about outside interaction. On that level, Trollquest can be recommended as a relatively simple and fun PBM. New players are offered 3 Free Turns by Mercury Games with the fortnightly turns costing \$5 each afterwards.

Realising the demand for a more competitive version, Mercury Games are also bringing out Trollquest II. This will be an

all-out combat version where destroying enemy Colonies will now also gain you treasure. The new objective will be to become richer than the other players combined. Other variations will also be incorporated into Trollquest II which should make it appealing to those who prefer fighting skills to the more management oriented skills required in Trollquest.

Victory! Apology

Douglas Coff sends his sincerest apology to everyone who received a rules disk for **Victory!** at Cancon 94. Many of you will discover the rules, in fact, are not on the disk as previously intended. Instead the disks contained the entry program. In an attempt to restore any damage done Imagination Games would like to offer ANYONE the rules disk (with the rules actually on them this time!). Just write to the Imagination Games address as per their advertisement (see page 31) asking for the rules disk and stating either IBM compatible or Macintosh and Doug will send you the rules free of charge and free from any obligation to play.

Australian Wizard Closure

Sad news from Kevin Flynn, one of the stalwarts of the PBM industry in Australia closed down just before Christmas. He has decided to take some time off and just develop PBMs - already in the pipeline are **Balkania** (an El Mythico scenario) and **Aquilonia** (a long term project).

Some of his games have already been taken over (El Mythico by Roma Games, **Galaxy** and **Spiral Arm II** by Mercury Games) but he does have other games ready for someone to run if they are interested. These are - **Realms of Fantasy**, **Continental Rails**, **Kingdom**, and **Postal American Football League**. Contact Kevin at - PO Box 1171, Stafford, QLD, 4053. Kevin's enthusiasm and skill will be a sad loss, but we feel sure he'll return revitalised and with a great new game before too long.

Dino Wars

Cancon 94 saw the first live playtest of this new PBM from **Roma Games**. The Realms stand found it to be a very entertaining way to fill in time between gaming sessions. Players take over the minds of dinosaurs in a quick and deadly fight against ten other players. We were lucky enough to have a T-Rex join our side and from then on in we were the terror of the game, gobbling up other players' dinos. The object of the game is to recover 5 of the 10 lost Rings of Darkness (although I believe this may change).

Dino Wars is a fast paced game with skill and luck both playing their part. Its main attraction is the great graphics which include laser printed computer scanned illustrations of your dinosaurs (there are over a 100 different species in the game). I know Peter Catling took home many player suggestions for improvements.

Look for a full release soon.

Post-It Games

Chris Edwards, the GM at Post-It is asking for play testers for his new Fantasy game, **The Game of Kings**. The playtest is scheduled for the end of March and new participants are welcome. The cost to playtesters is \$2 per turn, fully refunded if they join the commercial games. Also new from Post-It Games is a revision of **Blitzkrieg** with loopholes closed and new features added. The new 2nd Edition rules will be available in a few weeks time with Game 2 starting shortly thereafter. Tinkering with **Star Quest** is also nearing completion with Game 5 about to start shortly. Positions are open in Game 6 of **Shadow Lords** and **Blood, Gore & Guts Across the Galaxy** Game 2. To contact Post-It check out the details in their ad on page 28.

Combat

Another brand new release in the ever growing world of PBM comes from Dynamic Games. **Combat** is a game of combat on a global scale. One hundred players, each control one city complex, its production and research centres, its armed forces and espionage network. Radiation bursts during a global nuclear war has scrambled databanks world-wide, causing a massive loss of knowledge. Technology has regressed to a level comparable to that in our world shortly after World War 1. But the hi-tech stuff is out there waiting to be rediscovered. The object of the game is world domination.

The rulebook was still under construction when I had a look through it at Cancon, but all should be ready for a launch this month (see ad on page 10). The game looks strong on planning and production with a large range of unit types and orders to make it a medium complexity PBM for wargamers and power merchants. We'll tell you more after we've played a few turns.

The Sydney Play By Mail Club

The Sydney Banquet is a regular meet for PBM players in Sydney. The Banquet was originally organised by players of Legends, but now has expanded to include a wider variety of games. Any player of any game is welcome to join in the discussions that happen throughout the meet, with a nice meal set out and gobbled up in between. Currently players of Legends, Midgard and Adventurer Kings dominate the forum, but others have joined as well. A few players are veterans of several games, and between them have tried out most PBMs on the market.

Dinner usually costs around \$15 plus drinks, with a wide variety of dishes served, including after-dinner port! The meet is normally held on the second Saturday of each month with changes if most regulars agree. "Meet the GM" nights are arranged if the organisers can get sufficient interest and a promise by the GM to attend. James Chao is possibly the most accessible of all regulars who turn up, so if people need to know what is going on, they can contact him day or night on (02) 872 3263, or on his mobile 018 212 248.

1994 Flagship PBM Awards

In issue 14's Australian Guide to PBM you were given the opportunity to vote in this year's Play By Mail Awards. Below are the results:

- Most Popular Game - **Quest** (Dynamic Games)
- Highest Average Anticipation - **Gameplan** (PBM Sports)
- Highest Average GM Quality - **Gridiron Stats** (PBM Sports)
- Highest Average Depth - **Darkness of Silverfall** (Roma Games)
- Highest Average Interaction - **Rugby Stats** (PBM Sports)
- Highest Average Value for Money - a tie! **Isle of Crowns** (Dynamic Games) & **Starweb** (Chameleon Games NZ)
- Best Overall - **PBM Sports** (Runner Up **The Baron's Australian Midgard**)
- Most Supportive Partner - **Sylvia Read** (the Dynamic lady!)

The award certificates were awarded at a lavish, star-spangled gala ceremony at the PBM Banquet at Cancon 94. Special thanks go to John Tindall, the Australian editor of **Flagship** magazine (for PBM) who organised the awards. If you'd like more details on Flagship, contact John on (02) 952 2005. ■

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There is a shortage of quality writing in Fantasy and Science Fiction in this country. And the blame must be shared between the writers and the publishers and the readers. The writers for failing to exercise their gifts properly, for not pushing their imaginations to the limit, for being happy to churn out hackwork in place of real prose. The publishers for taking an easy out to fill a perceived market niche with sub-standard products or for failing to provide the editorial support that even the most gifted writers need. And the readers for putting up with sub-standard garbage that should be lining the bottom of Polly's cage.

Pan Australia has, to its credit, been supporting local Fantasy writers. I salute their efforts. What I find hard to understand is the poor quality of most of that product. Sure you can argue that, "Hey, its just escapist fantasy and it shouldn't be judged as great literature." Its written to fill a market niche, no more, no less. What an empty argument! If you had a choice between well written, imaginative, ORIGINAL fantasy and the sort of crap we see so often on the stands; what would you pick? Hands up everyone who votes for boring, derivative, poorly written hack slop regurgitated by people who are letting their enthusiasm outrun their ability. I don't see any HANDS! What's the matter with you people? Don't tell me you actually want to read quality fiction!

Pan are not the only ones supporting sub-standard work. A lot of it is marketed as game tie-ins and I know there is a strong demand for it. But I still think a lot of it is pretty poor. Fantasy is not the only genre that supports poor quality formula-written junk, but it is the most obvious from where I'm sitting. Lets try to discriminate, don't settle for second best or worse. You will get what you pay for in the end.

I generally have a hard time wading through formula fantasy. Heroic young people (usually male people, though that is changing) battle impossible odds, evil sorcerers, grotesque beasts with fangs /wings/red-eyes/all-of-the-above, double-crossing usurpers, distrustful maidens, lousy weather; you can rattle off the list as well as I can, all marching to the tune of an ancient prophesy that everyone except the protagonist knows about. Ho Hum. Enter Martin Middleton with **Fortalice** (Pan Australia \$11.95). I tried, Allah knows I tried. But I couldn't get passed the absolutely ridiculous situation laid before me in chapter One. Middleton would have us believe that the heroic young Alaric (and how often have you seen a name that like that in these formula fantasies - this is cookie cutter fiction, people - this is not real writing) who has been imprisoned in a dungeon under his murdered father's castle by an evil usurper (the king's brother). All this happened when Alaric was TEN YEARS

The Analytical Engine BOOK REVIEWS

by Peter Crank

*The good, the bad and
the downright ugly!*

OLD. Alaric is now fifteen and is to escape with the aid of loyal retainers now that he has come of age. Give me a break! Five years in a dungeon for a child is not going to give you a well balanced, fighting fit heir to the throne - no matter how many pushups he did to while away the years. That's bullshit, pardon my French, and I refuse to read any more. Besides, Middleton's delivery is better suited to Mills and Boon. Purple, Purple, Purple. Dear, oh, Dear. Next!

Pan got it right when they bought **Zenith** by Dirk Strasser (Pan Australia, \$12.95). True, many of those heroic fantasy elements lurk in the background, but they are not the whole story by a long stretch and Strasser can write rings around Middleton (with his eyes closed and his PC tied behind his back). This is what Pan should be publishing, this is what its authors should be producing. A good story. As simple as that? Yeah. The application of imagination, a real story, real characters with believable backgrounds and an ability to write more than just cliché-ridden grungy prose. That's Mr Strasser, it is not Mr Middleton. **Zenith** is not perfect, but it works and I enjoyed it. If anything Mr Strasser is guilty of not making his story big enough, because the colossal canvas on which he has set his piece deserves it. I would have liked to have seen more about the mountain and its people, more about the Faemir. More detail, its the richness of the details that makes or breaks this sort of fiction. That, and a good story. I won't spoil your fun by giving away the story, try it for yourself. I think Dirk has what it takes to be big in this field and deserves our support. More of this please Pan Australia, and less of the other.

Aphelion Publications is a small specialist Aussie publisher that I shall be looking at in depth in the future. This sort of publishing is pretty common in the States, not so here. They deserve our support; their product is classy. For now sample **Twilight Beach** (Aphelion \$12.95) by Terry Dowling, a truly great Aussie writer. This volume contains more of the life and times of Tom Rynosseros, the man who won Rynosseros and who was given Blue and who is driven by the vision of a ship, a star, a woman's face... This stuff gives me goose bumps. Best enjoyed late at night over a good glass of port.

Time to look at the international scene. **Doomsday Book** (NEL - Hodder and Stoughton \$14.95) by Connie Willis. I don't remember reading any of Willis's longer fiction, despite her having been around for a while - a shameful admission. Doubly so as this book easily qualifies itself for inclusion in my top ten for '93. The story involves a parallel narrative, one stream follows the fate of Kivrin in the Fourteenth century, the other the attempts of her fellow academics to unravel the mystery of her temporal mis-location and the cause of the viral infection sweeping through their present (our near future in which time travel is a tool of historians and archeologists). You see Kivrin was supposed to be safe in early Fourteenth Century Oxfordshire learning the ways of the mediaeval contemps, but an accident has put her some years later than targeted, smack in the middle of the plague years. The effects of the plague on the small community in which Kivrin finds herself, and the attempts of her co-workers to survive their own viral plague and rescue Kivrin, had me reading late into the night (way past my bedtime). The Black Death, as it was known, is spread primarily by the fleas on small mammals and can still be found today in squirrels and other rodents in the USA, California particularly. It is a revolting disease in any of its three variant forms and people still die of it today. There was an epidemic in Sydney last century that caused the quarantining of a big section of that city. SBS had a great doco on it last year. Nasty stuff, great book. Willis has captured the period perfectly.

Another great read is **Aristoi** (TOR SF, \$11.95 - an import) by Walter Jon Williams. Williams is one of my personal favourites. For my money he has not written a bad book, though he can be a bit slow to start. Overly long story development is probably this imaginative space opera's biggest weakness. An absolutely fascinating protagonist is its main strength: Gabriel with his peacock posturing and bisexual lifestyle is an unlikely saviour for mankind. He spends his time running his domain, partying with his fellow Aristoi, writing opera, making love; often simultaneously. The use of virtual space

and servant sub-personalities makes this highly parallel existence possible. In fact some of the early dialogue is split into two columns down the page with the verbalisations of the characters on the left and Gabriel's consultations with his sub-persona's on the right. Imaginative and unusual, this method very quickly gives you a taste of Gabriel's highly parallelised life. At one point Gabriel makes love to two of his lovers at the same time. One in the flesh, the other via the medium of the oneirochronic space - William's variant of cyberspace. Williams has given us a cleverly developed future with humanity under the guidance of a special group of humans, the Aristoi. These overmen are the pinnacle of human development, they exhibit high intelligence, extraordinary levels of creativity and a high level of concern for the welfare of humankind; especially the humans in each Aristoi's personal domain. Here the Aristoi are free to set the rules. They oversee the development of their society as a whole and also guide individuals who aspire to membership in the Aristoi. Newly graduated Aristoi are given new domains within which they terraform new worlds and invite immigrants to share their vision of society. The system is made foolproof by the inviolability of the common data pool, the Hyperlogos. The story develops from Gabriel's discovery that the Hyperlogos is not secure and inviolate and that the peace and

prosperity enjoyed by humanity under the guidance of the Aristoi may be swept away by the insanity of war. Recommended.

Money blues got you down? Try your local discount store for remaindered books. In the last two weeks I have picked up ten decent titles at, wait for it, Big W. The price? Would you believe \$1.36? That's right folks; **Berserker Blue Death** - Fred Saberhagen, **Dracula Unbound** - Brian Aldiss, **Dreams of Gods and Men** - W. T. Quick, **To the Land of The Living** - Robert Silverberg, **Ivory** - Mike Resnick, **Patterns** - Pat Cadigan, **Heathern** - Jack Womack, **Metrophage** - Richard Kadrey, **Memory Wire and A Hidden Place** - Robert Charles Wilson. Ten books for the price of one. I call that good value and a clever way to fill out your collection with quality material.

Last but certainly not least; **Snow Crash** by Neal Stephenson (Bantam Spectra - an import, \$14.95 ouch!). This book may put an end to Cyberpunk as we know it. I mean, after this what else could you do? Hiro Protagonist (that's his name, honest) is a freelance hacker and also claims to be the world's greatest swordsman. His preferred weapon; the Katana. The Metaverse (read cyberspace) is where Hiro reigns supreme as swordsman. Why is he so good? Because he wrote the software, man. When we meet Hiro he is the Deliverator, in the

employ of Uncle Enzo's Cosa Nostra Pizza (they guarantee the pizza will be delivered in 30 minutes, or Uncle Enzo will come and apologise in person and the driver will be in BIG trouble). After an hilariously spectacular unsuccessful delivery Hiro finds himself sans job and the main action starts. Just what is that combination designer drug and software virus called Snow Crash? Ah, read on and discover some of the most inspiring, maniacally different, positively twisted writing you never imagined. This guy is so good at this its obscene. Buy it immediately, don't quibble at the outrageous price, because waiting for the English rights edition is a wait too long. Who ever heard of funny Cyberpunk? Its an outrage I tell you!

So. Some goodies and one dud. Not a bad result. But notice anything? You will if you read these books. The overseas product, the American product, is more polished. They show the effects of some seriously hard work on the part of the authors. They display all the benefits of rigorous editorial work. They also have dynamite cover art (So do Aphelion, to be fair). There is absolutely no reason why we cannot turn out a hefty handful of books to match these in looks and content! No reason but a lack of fire in the belly and a lack of good support from everyone in the industry. That includes you, the enduser. The guy who votes with his/her wallet. Caveat Emptor.

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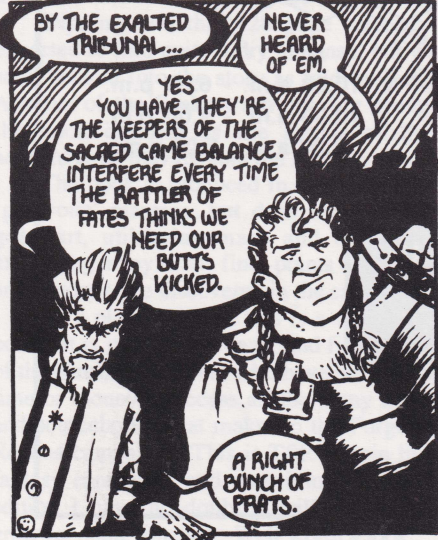
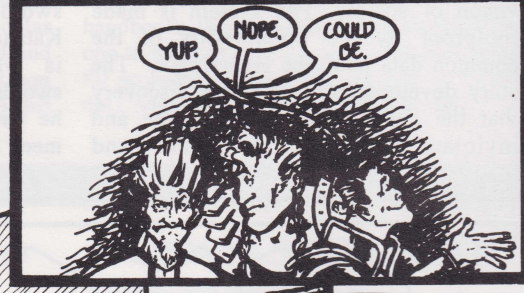
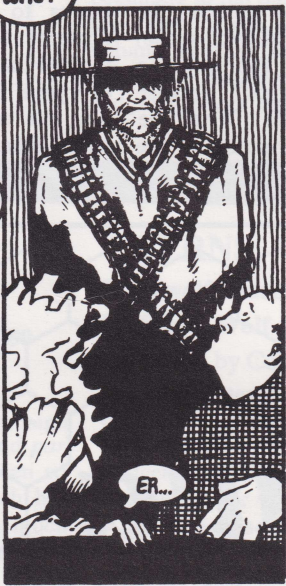
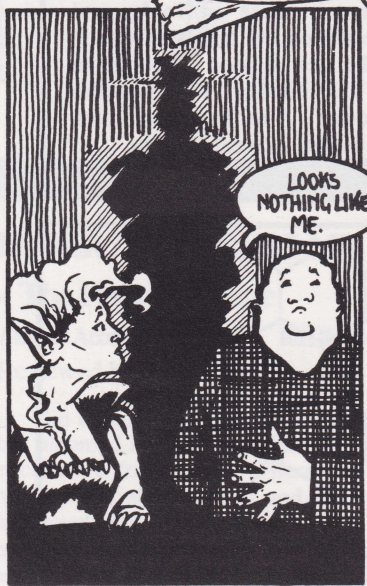
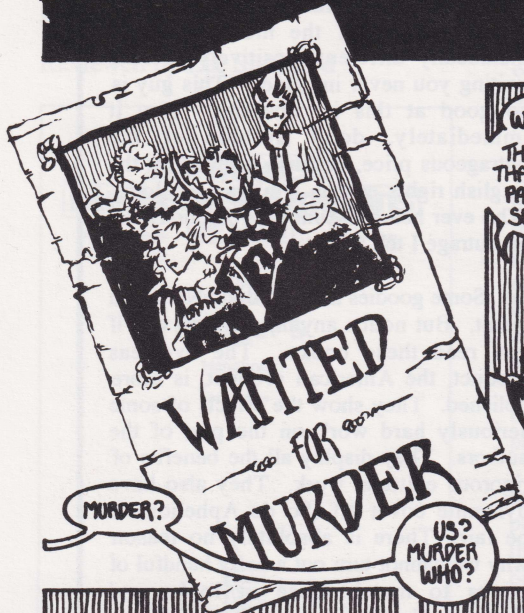
THE ADVENTURES OF THE A-TEAM

BY EDGAR + DANIELS

TROUBLE?

DAMNED RIGHT!

READ THIS.

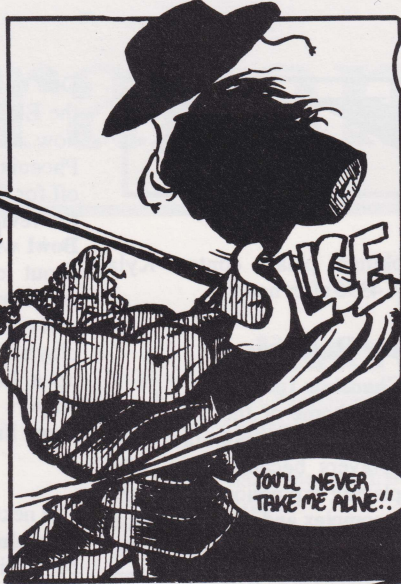




DAMN YOU PILL!

OH NO!

MANGO'S CONE BERSERK! RUN!



YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE!!



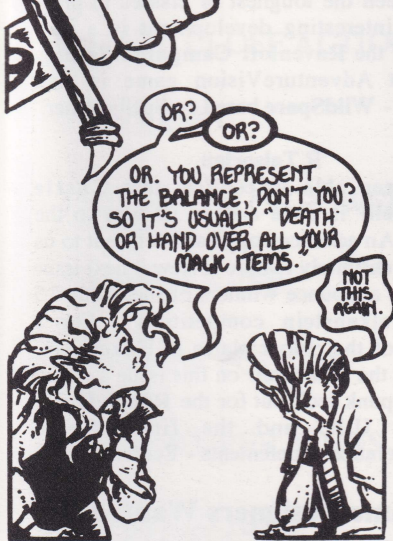
THAT SORTED THAT.

PRINKS ANYONE?

FUNNY HOW MANY FALL FOR THAT OLD BERSERK ROUTINE.



...AND YOU ARE SENTENCED TO DEATH.



OR?

OR?

OR. YOU REPRESENT THE BALANCE, DON'T YOU? SO IT'S USUALLY "DEATH" OR HAND OVER ALL YOUR MAGIC ITEMS.

NOT THIS AGAIN!



WELL, I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU A CHOICE, BUT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BEG FIRST.



THE FULL SIX-HOUR SUPPLICATION DO?

WHY NOT. VIRGIL, YOU GET THE PRINKS IN.

GET FOR ME.



SO, THREE HOURS LATER.

NONO! PLEASE!

NO, MORE BORING ROLE-PLAYING! MAKE HIM STOP!



I WAS JUST GETTING TO THE GOOD BIT, WHERE VIRGIL HELPED THE OLD LADY ACROSS THE STYX.

SHE WAS AN OVERNIGHT HING...



MEMBERS OF THE A-TEAM, I HEREBY BANISH YOU TO...

OH NO. NOT ANOTHER CHANGE OF KEEPER.



-THE PLANE OF -

NOT BACK TO THAT BORING PLACE WITH THE RED SKY, PYRAMID-SHAPED HOUSES AND BEAMS OF DESCRIPTION ABOUT SIX-LEGGED LIZARD-BEASTS THAT SERVED THE PURPOSE OF OXEN.

I MEAN, WHY NOT JUST MAKE 'EM OXEN?



GOTH. THERE YOU MUST PROVE YOUR WORTH BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO RETURN.



OH SHIT!

ANOTHER SAVE-THE-WORLD-FROM-THE-DIABOLICALLY-EVIL-MANIAC QUEST!!!

NEWS

Conquest '94

This convention will be held April 1st - 4th at the Melbourne University High School, Victoria, Australia. Events include role-playing, freeforms, computer games, miniatures, board games and painting competitions. RPGA sanctioned events are also included. Registration is \$20.00 plus a small competition fee. Write to: Conquest '94, PO Box 312, Knoxfield MDA, Victoria, Australia, 3180.

Arcanacon XII

This convention will be held July 7th - 10th at the Collingwood Education Centre, Cnr Cromwell St & McCuthean Way, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia. The special guest will be Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, freeforms, workshops and lunchtime seminars. For further details write to: Arcanacon XII, PO Box 125, Parkville, Victoria, Australia, 3052.

Readers Poll

In case you missed it on your way to this page, I'd like to draw your attention to the Readers Poll on page 33. This chance to give your feedback to the magazine is so important to us that we've arranged over **\$500 worth of prizes** as inducement. Send in your form now and help shape the bright future of Australian roleplaying!

Walking Billboards

Ask not what the magazine can do for you, but what you can do for Australian Realms. To help promote the magazine, we're asking you to wear our colourful covers on a **T-Shirt**. These are a neat way to spread the good news and they look great on. If you don't believe me, see pic of Nick on page 41 before heading to page 34 to fill in your order form. Believe me it's what all the best people will be wearing at GAMA Trade Fair in the US this year!

Short Story Competition

Aurealis magazine is holding a short story competition for High School students. Entry is free and there are over \$500 worth of cash and prizes to be won. Stories must be either fantasy, science fiction or horror. For an entry form, send a stamped self addressed envelope to Aurealis Short Story Competition, PO Box 538, Mt Waverley, Victoria 3149.

Live Role Play Event

YSEDA's first twilight game **There's a Light** will be run on the 4th, 11th and 18th of June. Each session will run about four hours, into the night and will cater for fourteen participants in two groups. Spirit magic, mercenary soldiers and lots of creeping around in the dark, (light spells provided). For further

details and bookings, please contact Kyla Ward on (02) 764 4336 after hours.

New Releases

Chaosium Inc

Conventions are the home of the 'freeform' game. These games are popular with organisers and players because they offer freedom of role-playing expression without the encumbrance of a complex and unwieldy game system. It was only a matter of time before the games companies began looking at ways to tap into this market. **White Wolf** had a dash at it with *The Masquerade*, and now **Chaosium** are about to follow suit. **NEXUS** is billed as live action role-playing game for 44 people, 5 gamemasters, and one great weekend. The action in **NEXUS** takes place at a science fiction convention where some of the people dress up like aliens, only this time some of the guests are not really in costumes. Due out in May, it will be interesting to see how the market reacts to this entry.



FASA Corporation

In April, Earthdawn devotees will be treated to **Denizens of Earthdawn Vol 1**. This book will provide a glimpse at four of the Name Giver races - Elves, Humans, T'skrang and Windlings. An invaluable resource for both players and gamemasters. Due in late May is another adventure for Earthdawn, **Infected**

For Battletech players there's a novel - **D.R.T.** by Jim Long and a Second Edition of **CityTech** which expands on the Battletech Third Edition rules on artillery, infantry and more. This boxed set includes new 1/285th scale 'Mech miniatures two each of: Javelin, Centurion, Orion, Victor, Iller, Black Hawk, Mad Cat, and Daishi.

Shadowrunners can look forward to the **Lone Star** sourcebook (previewed in this issue of Realms), and **Fade to Black** a novel by Nyx Smith.

Games Workshop

Due out in March for Warhammer 40,000 is the **Eldar Codex** detailing the craft worlds, how to build Eldar forces and introducing Phoenix Lords (Eldar exarchs). Also not far off for WH40K is **Dark Millennium** - look for the review in Realms soon. Fans of **Blood Bowl** will be pleased to know a new edition is about to be released (April) with a support supplement for campaign rules to follow in early June. The Design Studio loved playtesting Blood Bowl so much they've set up a League. Warhammer Fantasy Battle players are not forgotten with the Undead Army lists out in May with new figures.

TSR Inc

The next in the Player's Handbook series is the **Complete Paladin's Handbook**. This should be an interesting read as the paladin has always been the toughest of classes to play. Another interesting development is a new edition of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**. The next AdventureVision game is also imminent - **WildSpace** based on Spelljammer.

R.Talsorian

We've been able to confirm that **Castle Falkenstein** is done and on its way to the printers. An advance copy has been sent to us and we'll definitely feature review it next issue as well as announce winners of the issue 15 Castle Falkenstein competition. For a foretaste of the colour plates in Falkenstein, check out the **Wild Hunt** on this issue's cover. for Cyberpunk look out for the **Rough Guide to the U.K.** and the first of the Cybergeneration supplements - **Ecofront**.

Game Designers Wanted

As Australian Realms enters the next phase of its evolution we are now looking for competent writers and artists who have developed a relatively complete game manuscript. Anything of reasonable quality will be considered - roleplay or board game - in any genre. What we are doing is compiling a list of local talent who we can call on to advance our own production schedule. If we are lucky this may include something exciting from you! Write to our address for more information: PO Box 220, Morley WA 6943.

A-Team Book

Realms is extremely pleased to announce that the A-Team book is on schedule and should be available before issue 17. Scott and Andrew have cooked up some very humorous moments for the book so look to get your copy by mail order or through Realms stockists (we will not be sending it via newsagencies).

Australian Sourcebook

Colin Taber is currently finalising the manuscript for this Shadowrun sourcebook. He has asked us to call for any last opinions or comments that you may want to make regarding the project which is based on the series of articles in issues 6-9, 11 & 15. If you would like to express an opinion send it to Realms, P.O.Box 220 Morley WA 6943.

...see you round like a d100!



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