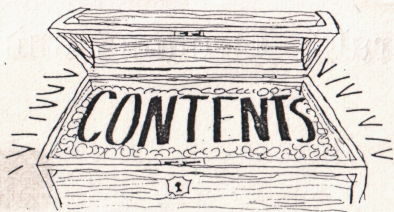


Generals, Dragons and Dice





GENERALS DRAGONS AND DICE

Issue #19, November, 1991

Cover: "Alien Queen" by Ash Graphics

FEATURE ARTICLES:

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Demon Players - fun from Tjiet Twofinger</i> | 4 |
| <i>Oh, No! Not Again! - News of the World from Tornado</i> | 8 |
| <i>Beyond First Impressions - ASL from John Knowles</i> | 9 |
| <i>Two Exciting Things to do to an SRM6 Pack - Battletech from the Grey Mage</i> | 14 |
| <i>Naming Your Character - from Tornado's rec.games.frp</i> | 20 |
| <i>In the Beginning - by Sharon Andrews</i> | 27 |
| <i>Hit Locations for Roleplaying Game Combat Rules - by Euan Ritchie</i> | 29 |
| <i>Wolvings - a new AD&DII race from the Grey Mage</i> | 30 |
| <i>What's that room used for anyway? - Construction hints from Steve Martin</i> | 31 |
| <i>The Complete and Utterly Enjoyable Munchkins Handbook - idiocy from Tornado</i> | 32 |

REGULARS:

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Editorial</i> | 3 |
| <i>Previews and Reviews: Drow of Underdark</i> | 7 |
| <i>Aliens RPG</i> | 25 |
| <i>Joe the Adventurer #9</i> | 21 |
| <i>The Page of the Grey Mage - Tales of the Shire 3</i> | 22 |
| <i>Club Notices</i> | 34 |
| <i>Letters Section</i> | 36 |



Within the citadel, the defenders breathed a sigh of relief. After 8 weeks of seige, there now seemed some ray of hope on the horizon. Despite the setbacks they had faced, they now knew they would get out! Get out, that is, this issue of *Generals Dragons and Dice*!!!

As most of you have probably realised, Issue #19, October '91, of GDD is late. Very, very late. So late that Issue #19 is our November issue. For your information, as usual, there will not be a January issue, just our normal, larger Christmas issue. Fear not, those of you who subscribe, your subscriptions cover a number of issues rather than a time period, so you will not be disadvantaged.

Things still progress, however: articles are still trickling in, but more would be nice, *especially* on subjects other than AD&D specifically, and other than roleplaying in general.

A few notes: people, take a look at the adverts in this issue for Discontinuity, and HWIG for those who play Traveller. Discontinuity will, as the ad' says, feature none other than that great literary master Terry Pratchett and a roleplaying convention, and is likely to be *very* good. The only problem is that Natcon, the National Convention of Wargamers is on in Palmerston North at the same time (over Easter). Natcon, as anyone who has been can tell you, is a real experience, and normally includes a roleplaying competition, painting competition, Warhammer Fantasy Battle competition and lots more.

Anyway, hope you all enjoy this issue which has taken so long to come. If you don't, then write in and complain, or better yet write about something you *do* like and send it in! Have a good month folks!

Steve Martin

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

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You've had the Demon Dice...
Now, you have...

The Demon Players

The Murphy's Law of Gamemastering

by Tjiet Twofinger

In Issue #13, you were graced with some of the idiosyncrasies of those dreadful little game-munchers - the Dice! I, however, have been wondering of late, whether there is another factor in my campaign game which is at least as demonic, and has at least as failsafe a muck-up-your-plans-effect. I'm sure that the destruction of a carefully-constructed game can be just as equally attributed to... The *Players*!

Now, don't scoff; surely you have encountered these natural laws below:

1. The importance of an NPC to the success of the adventure is inversely proportional to the likelihood of the Players recognising this fact. [*Now, we wanna meet someone important!*]
- 1a. The importance of an NPC to the scenario is inversely proportional to their lifespan once they have encountered the party. [*Who's he think he is!*]
2. The wimpiness of the character is directly related to the player's penchant for getting the other characters into a conflict. [*How much for de liddle gerl?*]
- 2a. The strength of the character is inversely proportional to the player's willingness to take on a challenge in the character's area of strength. [*Who me? Na, that'd be silly.*]
- 2b. The strength of the character whose player conducts it to challenge the *wrong* NPC is a three times the total strength of the other characters. The NPC who is challenged will be the one most likely to direct their response to the other characters as well. [*C'mon, lads, you're with me, aren't ya!*]
3. The greater the need for accomplishing a particular feat, the smaller the chance of the players attempting it. [*Why don't we try that lever instead?*]
4. The bigger the dragon, the more likely it is that the wimp in the party will call out "Ya mother wears combat boots!" [*You're tough, guys, you'll take it easy!*]
5. The more obvious the scenario hook, the more likely it is that it will be ignored. [*So, what do we do now?*]

6. The evening the Gamemaster forgets to bring one piece of paper detailing some irrelevant campaign point will be the evening the players decide to take the avenue described on it for their next actions. [*We've been thinking, there's good money to be made in trading fish-eggs in this town...*]
- 6a. The off-the-top-of-the-head detail which the Gamemaster concocts to cover (6) above will always be just wrong enough for the players to make a fuss when the actual paper is rediscovered. This detail will always become the hub of the players actions until the next paper is forgotten. [*But the fish-egg market is booming, you said!*]
7. The less relevant the error made by the GM, the quicker the players will be to pick it up, and the louder they will be in pointing it out. [*I thought you said this Joergle was a woman!*]
8. The rules-lawyer will always sit next to the GM, and will always speak just loud enough so that the GM cannot ignore them, or respond to other players while they are speaking. [*No, no. I think this is an important point - there is a precedent, you know...*]
- 8a. If the rules-lawyer is late, and the seats beside the GM are taken, they will take the farthest seat, and behave as above, with the same effect (note that this requires a greater effective volume). [*...I've got it written down: last week it was only a -4 penalty.*]
9. The player who plays the character requiring the most persistent reference to the rules will be the one without a rulebook of their own. [*If I could just grab a "Player's Aitch", I'll tell you exactly what it does this round.*]
- 9a. The new player to the game-system will always pick the character-type which requires the most working-out and the most in-game explanation. [*What was that thing about "not being able to go into cities without a" something-or-other?*]
10. The more straightforward the conundrum to be solved, the more likely it is that the players will assume that "That's far too easy, it must be something deeper". [*It could mean something about that guy we met in the pub last time we were in town. What did he say about fish-eggs?*]
- 10a. The harder the GM has tried to make the clues straightforward, and consistently pointing toward the goal, the more players will misinterpret them. [*D'you think it means "left" or "right" when it says "Toward the Image of the Sun"?*]
- 10b. The players who misinterpret clues will always be the loudest ones, and the most convincing and adamant in their argument against the correct solution. [*No, didn't you know that "the eye of a needle" had to do with*

getting camels through a town gate?! It's got nothing to do with "unachievable feats!"

- 10c. The simpler the puzzle, the more radically the players will cock it up, and the more likely it will be to have a far-reaching effect. *[I think it means we've got to kill the King.]*
11. The shorter and more insignificant the encounter, the longer the players will take to deal with it. *[Well, what exactly does he say?]*
12. The player whose character has been assigned a destiny to perform some vital deed will go out of their way to get the character killed. *[I've got a quest to fulfill! I won't die here against a piddly daemon!]*
13. The player whose character is given the vital clue to the success of the mission will always consider it inconsequential and omit mentioning it to the party. *[What a funny dream... oh, well. What's for breakfast?]*
14. The player who sits and thinks quietly will always be the one to come up with the correct solution to a puzzle; s/he will also be, without exception, ignored on mentioning it. *[Er... guys...?]*
15. The new adventure module that the GM is so excited about running (and paid the earth for) will be the one that three of the players played two-or-three years ago, and hated. *[Oh... that adventure...]*
16. The more time the GM has spent creating options to offer, the more likely it is that the players want to do something completely different. *[Well, we were thinking, a sea voyage might be nice... go and meet some island natives.]*
17. The session the GM prepares a "thinking" challenge for, will be the session the players want a hack-slash game, and vice-versa. *[Y'know what I feel like doing tonight?...]*
17. If the treasure is down the passage to the left, the players will choose the passage on the right, where the dragon is.



Previews & Reviews

THE DROW OF UNDERDARK

AD&DII Sourcebook Review

by Avon

We already know that spiders are hairy bastards that run fast, right? But how much do we know about their masters? A lot more now than we did before. Speaking as a DM, I'm going to have a lot of fun with this one. It's good. Damn good.

The introduction features the ubiquitous Elminster and an ex-apprentice of his - a drow. Cute, but not terribly informative... and contrary to the book's back cover, no mention is made of Elminster's nearly having married her. This aside, I found precious little to gripe about. The book has chapters on the history, society, and religion of the drow (including one section which goes into considerable detail on the subject of the gods of the drow) providing a wealth of background material. This was to be expected, I suppose, given that the book's written by Ed Greenwood, TSR's house guru and the chap who designed the Forgotten Realms in overwhelming detail some years back. There are a few features which don't quite fit, such as the information on artificial limbs for injured drow. This would seem to be in contravention of TSR's Dark Elf trilogy, which explicitly states at one point that a drow amputee would simply be cast out or killed, yet elsewhere in the sourcebook, bits and pieces from the trilogy have been pressed into service. Besides - cyborg drow? Naaahhhh. Seems a mite dodgy to me.

Another thing that seems a trifle dodgy is the fact that around 15% of drow are now supposed to be non-evil, and there's an openly good-aligned drow' goddess floating around! I certainly won't be using the "15%" figure, and in the event that I use the goddess, there are going to have to be some serious changes made. Although any bits like this seem superfluous, I'll be blown if I can see anything that should have been included but wasn't. Any smart-alec who *can* is free to tell the Editor about it - he knows where to find me.

Aside from the silly bits (like flippin' elves with built-in bleedin' combat weapons - sigh) there are also a lot of nice bits ("candy" to use the Editor's pet term), like a lovely list of Priest and Wizard spells with which the DM can equip his/her psychopathic NPCs - there's a gorgeous one on page 56 which turns the target's limb into a spider, which then starts munching out on the rest of the body. And on the facing page is a rather nice full-page colour illustration which sums up, quite nicely, what drow are all about. There are a few of these illustrations throughout, though the rest seem to be duplicates of artwork from the covers of the Dark Elf trilogy.

Also included are chapters on drow magical items (there's some *really* nasty stuff here: the chapter's bent towards weaponry is entirely appropriate when one considers that the book's about people who make Freddy Krueger look like a well-adjusted, harmless kind of chap), on language and names (few drow are pathetic enough to be regarded as faceless catapult-fodder, so these could well come in handy) - and monsters. Some of these have already appeared in the pages of *Dragon* magazine, but this chapter remains a favourite of mine - I thoroughly enjoy scaring the living **** out of players, and one of

the best ways of doing this is to confront them with something they don't have the foggiest idea how to fight.

In short, there is a wealth of original, interesting and useful gear in here. Even the bits brought in from elsewhere - various First Edition hardbacks and the old GDQ module series among others - have been expanded and tinkered with, and generally go down a treat. Conclusion? Well worth the money - though like anything from TSR, it's not cheap. Is it nasty, though? There are two schools of thought on this one. DMs will love it. However, speaking as one who takes on the mantle of player from time to time, I can't help praying for the spontaneous combustion of the DM's copy.



OH, NO! NOT AGAIN!

Taken from the Rec.games.frp section of Tornado

by Pierre Savoie

[This piece has been copied wholesale to let you know what is happening in the world of gaming. This case sounds very interesting and we will try to let you know how it ends up. -Ed.]

I'd be very interested in reaching game fans from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, for help on an emerging situation. The evolving case could be of interest to others as well.

On December 8, 1990, Jamie Harrison, 19, committed suicide in Mountain Hall Residence at the U. of G. by jumping down a stairwell. Because he was a member of the campus Games Club, this caused speculation on whether or not his participation in games such as Dungeons & Dragons had to do with his death.

Because such claims in the past go generally unchallenged (I blame this on TSR's inactivity and on the independent, dispersed nature of game fans), it sticks in the minds of some people that there have been "many" such D&D suicides. Without realizing where the claims originate (racist groups, religious bigotry groups), they are taken up by respectable people, including the Guelph Police Department. There's going to be some inquest on the boy's death, where D&D will be dragged in as a cause. No doubt people like Dr. Thomas Radecki's groups - the National Coalition on Television Violence (and the Canadian affiliate C-CAVE) - will be nosing their way, trying desperately to get a court to agree that D&D induces thoughts of suicide and crime (although the media gives the impression that courts have said this in the past, in fact no such ruling has **ever** been made. In one "incident" in British Columbia, the judge dismissed a D&D link as a "red herring").

Fortunately, this time, gamers aren't caught with their pants down. I am on this from the start, based on connections made after a successful pro-D&D radio show in Canada. But if anyone from the region knows anything about this, I'd appreciate hearing more.

Wanna hear something funny? A guy from Guelph got in touch with me about this, and sent me clippings and his own personal university essay on the "D&D witch-hunt". In it, he relates that a woman accosted him and tried to get him to give up The Demon D&D, and to see the light of Jesus Christ. That is not an unusual attitude among misinformed denominations. What **was** funny was that she was under the impression that D&D was the acronym for a drug, just like LSD or PCP! *Sigh*



BEYOND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

PART II

A review of the last 5 scenarios of ASL Module 1 Beyond Valour.

Well, as I promised, my first article was to be continued, I would have hoped a little sooner than now. But never mind. Read on . . .

Scenario 6 Red Packets

Rating 55% Pro Russian

Attraction: A meeting engagement of recon forces play a deadly game of hide and seek amongst a suburban battlefield. A very mobile and violent scenario when should be enjoyed by all.

German Advantages: Leaders. ROF. No Commitment to Engage Enemy. Stream.

When you're outnumbered, there's nothing like a few good leaders to even up the score. I like to put the 9-1 Armour Leader in the SPW 251/10 for 2 reasons; first, it has a ROF 3, and second, the MA will malfunction on a '12', rather than an '11'.

Anyone who has used Armoured Vehicles in the Squad Leader Game system will appreciate that he who has the first shot in an armoured engagement has a big advantage. With this thought in mind, the German player should look to place vehicles so as to block the Russian advance. Lastly, use the stream to your advantage, the enemy vehicles must use the bridges.

German Disadvantages: Lack of numbers. Time.

There is definitely a worry of numerical inferiority here, especially in squads. You will have to keep a watchful eye on those Russian squads. The PzKw 111F can be quite useful with it's 8 factor CMG.

Also time. The Russian has a lot of time, so forget any ideas on suicide missions, a lucky hit and kill or a vehicle can have disastrous repercussions.

German Deployment: First, move on the PSW 231. Being CE and with 17½ MF, you can just get to I8 and stop with the VCA facing J7/J8. This should stop any early exploitations across the bridge, since the enemy must get quite close, which gives your gun an advantage, and if you are seriously outnumbered, get into reverse motion, and move to H7 and live to fight another day.

Next, move the PzKw 111F to H1 (CE Facing I1/I2).

Lastly, move the SPW 251/10 to H2 using ESB of 2 MF so that you can stop. Becoming immobilised at this position is not so bad, since you can see a very important area, including both bridges. Next move, unload the 2-4-8 HS, 8-1 LDR, 3-8 LMG, and ATR (which comes inherently in the vehicle, German vehicle note 65). Your eventual aim should be to move the infantry and SW to the 2nd level of H4.

If an opportunity presents itself, use the PSW 231 to overrun squads and the IAG 10 AA Truck (remember, it cannot fire through it's VCA), but always make sure that you have enough MF to get away from the BA-6 AC and ambushing squads.

Russian Advantages: Numbers. Good hitting power. Time.

Well, the Russians hold the trumps in quantity with both their infantry and vehicles. Also they need not feel inferior, when their vehicles have the killing power to comfortably engage all the vehicles the Germans have to offer. (Hell, the 76LL could Kill a Tiger, let alone halftracks and armoured cars!) This will surely force the Germans to hide amongst the woods and buildings, but with 8 turns available to a fully motorised force, it would at first seem too easy.

Russian Disadvantages: Platoon Movement. Poor off-road mobility. Need to engage enemy.

Take a careful look at the BA-6 AC, you will notice that they move as trucks. With only 19 MP available, they will be very sluggish across non-road terrain. Also to win, you must destroy all enemy vehicles, or exit 18 VP off the west edge of the board. This means that you will have to engage the Germans at one point or another, who will doubtlessly be in an advantageous position, blocking the road.

Russian Deployment and Attack: You have a lot of time, so use it wisely. Don't move across vast areas of non-road terrain; this will show the German player where you are going, and he will get there before you. I believe it is better to win by destroying all 3 vehicles, since casualties will always be high in armoured engagements, and at least this way you will not have to worry too much about losses when engaging the German. Try to deal with each vehicle individually if possible, using your infantry in preference to vehicles. Stay together, and stick to the roads.

Conclusion: The German Recce platoon will seek to close the road to Zhabinki, so as to isolate the strung out Russian defenders. However, the Russians will no doubt try to force the position, and are willing to make an ultimate sacrifice in doing so.

Scenario 7 Dash for the Bridge

Rating 55% Pro German

Attraction: A light recon troop probes through the defences of an SS Anti-Tank company. This is bound to become a cat and mouse game very quickly. A unique situation whereby the attacker wins by avoiding combat.

German Advantages: Morale. FP. Good AT ability (the best). HIP. Confining nature of terrain. Leaders.

Well, by now any astute ASL player knows that when the ol' 6-5-8's come out to play, the German is fielding the best squads available. With 8 morale (broken morale 9), Smoke, and as of 1944 ATMM and PF, these guys should be an enemy tank crew's worst nightmare. Also getting to set up using HIP in two confining boards is a real plus, remember to look for street fighting advantages. Lastly, a ratio of 1 leader for every 2 squads is hard to beat.

German Disadvantages: Need to engage enemy. Need to leave squads off-board (as per SSR 4). Lack of mobility.

This is the hard reality time for the SS. To win, you must engage the enemy, a situation the Russians will doubtlessly prepare for. Also, it is necessary to leave squads off-board to deal with SSR 4. But, the biggest disadvantage is that you have a serious lack of mobility, in other words, most squads will turn out to be a one shot wonder.

German Defense: Do not place too many squads way up front. The longer the Russian has to spend looking for squads, the better. Try to place squads at choking points. Give the AT guns a good field of fire (don't forget DI and APCR and HEAT). Remember to bore sight.

Here is my recommended set up.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Off-board | 2 Squads, 7-0 Leader (Mandatory). |
| 21C8 | Pak 35/36 ATG. 2-2-8 Crew (Fac C7/D7 Bore sight C4). |
| 21D0 | Roadblock (Fac E1). |
| 21D9 | 8-0 Leader. 6-5-8 Squad. |
| 21V4 | 6-5-8 Squad. |
| 21FF8 | Pak 35/36 ATG. 2-2-8 Crew (Fac FF7/GG8 Bore sight FF2). |
| 21GG4 | 6-5-8 Squad. |
| 21GG7 | 3-8 LMG, 6-5-8 Squad. |
| 20L6 | (Level 1) 8-1 Leader. 7-16 HMG, 6-5-8 Squad (Bore sight |
| 20K6). | |
| 20X1 | 9-1 Leader. 6-5-8 Squad. |

The author wishes to point out that this set up is quite similar to one employed by a P J R R Palmer, and would like to at this point in time place credit where credit is due for an excellent set up (which bettered me on the day playing Russians).

Russian Advantages: Time. Easy VC. Mobility.

Well, exiting 3 out of 6 AFV's in 11 turns, how hard can that be? All you have to do to win is avoid a contest versus the SS. This is very true; to win, you must take all steps to avoid a duel with the enemy, who will surely chew you up if you don't. You have ample time, so use it.

Russian Disadvantages: Vulnerability of vehicles. Lack of infantry support. Confining nature of terrain.

As previously mentioned, avoid a duel with the enemy. Panzerfausts and ATMM are real killers versus any vehicle, and even those 'Door Knocker' (Pak 35/36) with ROF 2 and HEAT 6 are pretty formidable. Watch out for Deliberate Immobilisation.

Also, it is a tough job for your infantry to keep up with the AFV's so take it slowly for the first few turns or so to avoid unnecessary casualties. This terrain is very dangerous for AFV's, so make sure to stop in locations that have sound escape routes, and try to keep the SS guessing, as to where you are going.

Russian Attack: Attack is probably not the best word to use, since a passive victory is one you should have in sight.

Move about 3 AFV's off-board as per SSR 4; 2011 and 10110 are good locations. When the tanks return, you will know how many squads and ATG's to expect on board. (I mean hey, this is a reconnaissance platoon after all!)

Use your infantry to search, and don't be afraid to lose them. Do not unbutton your T-70's unless it is 100% safe to do so. Small arms fire can be very effective versus 1MT (read D5.341).

Don't despair if you lose a few tanks, because the more SS squads and ATG's that you locate, the easier your VC become.

Conclusion: The tanks will slowly creep through the ghostly quiet streets of Warsaw with their support infantry close at their heels. The infantry will at first watch in horror as their reconnaissance platoon is promptly wrecked by panzerfaust and sticky bomb ambushes. But now the Waffen SS know that it is their turn as the Russian infantry outflank them and force them ever westward.

Most of the 13th SS Anti-Tank company defending the Vistula have little thoughts of victory, as the defense of Warsaw has now become a matter of honour.

Scenario 8 The Fugitives

Rating 60% Pro German

Attraction: 3 German Kampfgruppen try to force their way through a stretches Soviet defense line. The Soviets must hold out long enough for their reinforcements to arrive, hopefully plug the gap, and turn the tide.

Russian Advantages: Reinforcements. Canal. HIP. SW.

Your reinforcements are so vital to the Soviet cause. They will be the reserve which will be used to plug the gap (and believe me, the Muenchebergers will either find or make one). The canal is also important. To win, the German must cross the bridges, there is no other way, this should give you a few ideas on which to defend. Use your HIP squads to disorganise the Germans. If each HIP location costs the German a move/squad/vehicle, you have justified your choice of location. And, at last, humble Ivan emerges after 4 years of total war with more SW than his German counterpart. All the better to keep the Havel closed.

Russian Disadvantages: Numbers. Leaders. Pre-dawn twilight (SSR 4).

Even the least mathematically minded of us will soon figure out that 2 squads do not go a long way when forced to defend the width of an ASL board lengthwise. Also, with only 3 leaders, a lot of squads are going to find it difficult to rally.

Lastly, the pre-dawn twilight (SSR 4) will make it difficult to impede movement across open ground.

Russian Defense: You should look to impede the German advance, and conduct a fighting withdrawal across the canal. The Germans can easily mope up squads that break and end up trapped with the canal to their backs. Use a few squads and the ATG to form a killing ground, and use the rest of your force to channel the enemy into this area. The rubble can be a great asset to this tactic.

Here is my recommended set up.

Rubble (The 1st co-ordinate is the building location, the second is where it should be ideal for placing an adjacent rubble counter).

20B6/20A6
20I3/20J2
20K2/20J2
20P9/20Q10
20Z7/20Y7
23Z6/23AA6

Board 20

20 B4 (?), 4-4-7 Squad.
20G1 (?), 2-6 LMG. 4-4-7 Squad.
20J5 4-4-7 Squad (roll for concealment).
20M4 4 x (?).
20Q2 2 x (?).
20AA1 (HIP) 8-1 Leader. 4-10 MMG. 4-4-7 Squad.
20FF1 (?), 4-4-7 Squad.

Board 23

23F6 (?), 4-5-8 Squad.
23H5 (?), 4-5-8 Squad.
23I6 8-0 Leader. 6-12 HMG. 4-5-8 Squad (roll for concealment).
23N9 (HIP) PTP Obr 43 57LL ATG. 2-2-8 Crew. (Fac N8/09).
23O10 (HIP) 4-4-7 Squad.
23Q9 (?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23AA6 (?), 4-4-7 Squad.
23CC7 7-0 Leader. 2-6 LMG. 4-4-7 Squad.

German Advantages: Numbers. Optional Entry. Pre-dawn twilight. Leadership.

It is always very tough on a defender, when he has no idea where his enemy is going to approach from. Use this to your advantage. I feel that it is good to bring on all 3 groups in the same location to use overwhelming numbers to swamp to Soviet positions (when required to do so). The pre-dawn twilight really helps your initial rush to board 23. Also, as usual the Germ OB has a magnificent supply of leaders, so this will allow you to split up, should you be required to do so.

German Disadvantages: Canal. Low Ammo.

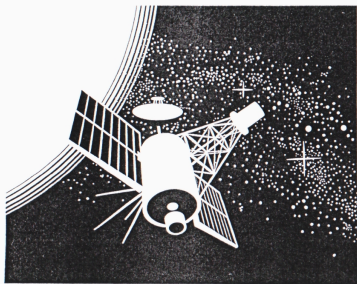
The canal is very channelling, so try to get there as soon as possible. You will be either frustrated, surprised or impressed at how such a small force can effectively hold up a large force whilst guarding a bridge.

Also the ammo bins are low, so only fire at important targets (use MG's first in preference). Should the MA of an AFV malfunction, don't attempt to repair it, Risking a Recall is irresponsible, and the vehicle is still worth plenty as it is.

German Attack: Use your superior units (ie 1st line squads, and Armour) to open a breach for the more 'soft' targets (trucks, conscript squads) to move through. Speed is important, don't be scared to move in the open during moves 1-4. You have 79 VP, so don't be afraid to loose a squad or two.

Keep your options open if you can. The Russian reinforcements should be able to plug one gap, trying to plug two should prove impossible.

Conclusion: The Muencheberg Division will hurl itself relentlessly at the thin Russian line in a furious pace towards the west. Caught off balance, the 2nd Guards will halt them at every opportunity, awaiting reinforcements to turn the tables. But the men of Muencheberg will press on regardless, and will die with their face to the enemy in preference to defeat.



TWO EXCITING THINGS TO DO TO AN SRM6 PACK

House Rule for Battletech (no pun intended)

by The Grey Mage

For the uninitiated, SRM is short for Short Range Missile. The six is how many missiles are fired from the pod. The two following rules can be introduced, immediately, or as part of a "technological breakthrough" if you play Mechwarrior.

Heatseekers

Before the Clans, technology for guiding weapons was some what limited. Houses Davion and Kurita began experimenting with infra-red targeting by using sensor arrays taken from mechs. Implanting it into the missiles, they were to improve accuracy by locking on to heat emissions. What they got was somewhat disappointing, but still

effective. Unfortunately, in order to work, the target must be emitting heat, and a lot of it. In game terms, find the current heat level of the enemy, and consult the table below:

| Current heat | Target No. mod | Missile strike mod. |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 5 or less | -0 | +0 |
| 6-10 | -0 | +1 |
| 11-18 | -2 | +2 |
| 19-25 | -3 | +3 |
| 26-30+ | -4 | +4 |

The target number modifier is subtracted from the target number, making it easier to hit. For example: if the enemy's heat level is 12, and the target number is 8, then deduct the Z-point modifier to make it 6, thus it is easier to hit. The missile strike modifier applies only if a successful hit is scored, in which case you throw two die to see how many strike as normal but apply the modifier, increasing the amount of missiles that hit.

In the above example, 1 hit. Rolling two dice I get a 7. Under normal circumstances, only four would hit. But applying my modifier of +2, it becomes 9, so looking at the table again, I see that 5 hit.

In all other respects it conforms to a standard SRM6 pack (range, weight etc.), however each ton of ammunition costs 5 times the normal amount. If you are not using the Mechwarrior system, assume only 1 in 12 (a Company) carries heat seekers. Anything capable of mounting an SRM6 pack may carry heat seekers (eg. vehicles, aerospace fighters etc.) but infantry cannot.

AMMs (*Anti Missile Missile for those of use that slept through the Gulf War*)

Because of Laio's ...setbacks, they had to "dig in" against assaults. Because of the fact they have mostly light mechs, they cannot hope to match the fire power of the long range missiles, so they spent a lot of time, energy and money into producing AMMs, capable of downing enemy rockets. (A pack of AMMs cannot also be heatseekers.)

The enemy missile strike must be within line of sight and within the pack's firing arc. In order to give the AMMs a chance to locate the target and launch, the enemy missile must be launched from at least medium range (8 hexes). Any shorter, and the AMMs cannot respond. The base target number to hit a volley of missiles is 6, modified only by the carriers movement. On a successful hit, they have intercepted some of the enemy missiles.

Roll on the missile strike table to see how many hit. each successful missile destroys one enemy missile, thus it inflicts no damage. On a roll of 12, the entire cluster is destroyed and is thus void.

AMMs are effective only on long range missiles. Initial instalment prices are twice that of a normal SRM6. If you are using Mechwarrior, assume 1 in 4 mechs carry one. They cannot be used in normal warfare, their only use is intercepting missiles.

I'm sure you little goblins could think of something else to do with an SRM6 pack, but I'm not allowed to print that sort of thing.



DONALD

A Problem to Ponder

by Steve Beeston

Donald sat brooding over his beer. He was beginning to wonder if he was really cut out for adventuring. Sure, he was strong, but he never seemed to have anything but bad luck. His party had taken on these large beetles, and it was not until after he had lost his magic armour that they realised that they were rust monsters. If that wasn't bad enough, his friends had to cut his arm off after he had been poisoned by a spider's bite.

Just lately, he had come across a new sword that the cleric had told him was highly magical. Needless to say, he jumped at the chance to take it - he had even given the other fighter his slightly-less-powerful sword to get it. Too bad that it had turned out to be cursed. It had cost him all of his money to get a mage to summon a rust monster so he could feed the sword to it. Even that had gone wrong: the rust monster had ended up being as big as a house!

The party had gone heavily into debt to pay a priest to bring him back to life after the rust monster had trampled him. (It's all well and good to suggest running after the cursed sword had been devoured as the best idea, but things look different when you have a humungous beast bearing down on you!) The last adventure had just about paid off the debt collector, but all of those slimes and oozes had taken a toll on the group's possessions. Still, all of his friends had nothing to complain about. The psionicist had inherited a castle. The other fighter had a good sword (his old one!). He couldn't think of anything special that the cleric had, but she must have something quite good, she always seemed so god-damned happy. He had nothing except the clothes that he stood in. Life was so unfair!

Then it came to him. At that moment everything became clear. He knew what the problem was - he was cursed! He even knew who had done it. It was that bane of his life, that evil of all evils, the Dungeon Master! That was it! Life was no longer worth living. Everybody knew that once you had the dreaded Curse of the Dungeon Master, it was only a matter of time before you bought it. Even the most powerful *Remove Curse* wouldn't work on this one. The only answer was to beat the DM to it, and kill himself first! He got up from the table, sculled his beer and plunged his sword into his breast.

That was the end of Donald. His friends gave him quite a nice little funeral, and promptly forgot about him.

The story above might sound a little bit silly, but something like did happen. Donald didn't kill himself, though; the person playing Donald threatened to kill his character, because he felt that he was being victimised by the DM (myself).

This came as a complete surprise to me, as I thought I had gone to a lot of trouble

to keep his character alive! After thinking about what had happened, I realised that, to a large extent, I had caused the problem myself...

One of the things that I have always had problems with is poison: I hate the idea that a high-level characters can die so easily if they fail a simple saving throw. Donald was incredibly unlucky. He had taken on a wyvern and it had stung him. I decided to change things so that he was just paralysed. The other party members killed the wyvern without much of a problem, but I felt bad about changing things, so I decided that the next time something like this happened, I would do things differently. It was not long after that when they met up with some spiders. Donald was poisoned again. He should have died, but I wimped out, and gave the party a chance to save his life by chopping his hand off.

This was my big mistake. He now was playing a character who he felt was never going to be as powerful as if he had two hands. It really got to him. I refused to let him get his hand regenerated in any easy, cut-price way, because I felt that, as I had saved him from death, he should have *some* penalty.

The mistake was in keeping him alive: if he had died, it would have made a lot more sense, and that would have been the end of the matter. The person playing Donald would have been happy (well, perhaps not exactly *happy*...) because he "took the risk, and knew that he stood the chance of dying" if he got bitten. By trying to save the player (and myself) from the pain of having the character die, I ended up cheating both the player involved, the other players, and myself.

So, next time you go to fudge die rolls in the favour of the characters, think twice before you do. Sometimes, to make the some characters more worthwhile, others have to die along the way.



THE BATTLE OF BUS DEPOT PARK

A Rede of the Event

by The Eskin Valkyrie

`Twas the second hour after noon when the two armies met in the blustering northerly of the Wellington shore. The Welsh Imperial Throne had mustered a good force, with their Good Druid there to minister to the wounded with the Holy Leek, and the Magician to render the enemy weak, and the Throne invulnerable. Lo, the Commander of the force was in good form, and expounded many a good recipe in the True Tongue to his followers. Azure and Blood-Red shone on the quartered shields, and tight were their sword-papers rolled. Strong indeed were their sword-arms, and high their spirits, but alas, `twas not enough

Alf's Imperial Army had also their Commander in good fortitude and their numbers were greater by far. Further, there was the ever-emboldening presence of the Sacred Video-Camera to boost their morale. They wielded their bright paper swords, and thrust sturdily their plywood shields to the face of the enemy and did attack then which much vigour and tenacity. Their uniforms of red and white as ever did surely impress their foe, and cause them to pause in wonder at the awesome discipline and financial outlay exhibited by the Alf's troops.

So it was, then, that upon the resolution of the first skirmish, sorely pressed was the position of the Welsh Imperial Throne. Alf's Imperial Army had taken the hill south of the gate with distressing ease, and had caused many more casualties than it had taken. The Welsh Imperial Throne was in dire need of a turn of fate to raise their chances in this battle above a sure debacle. The frantic wavings of the Holy Leek must have perked the ear of one of their myriad gods, for lo, there came, streaming from the carpark in white and blue, holding high the banner of the Swan and Tower, the Eskin Knights to strike from the flank and push the dastardly Alf's back to the low ground.

There followed an orderly retreat by Alf's Imperial Army from the immediate field, to the next hill. The red and white did in a perfect line make haste to reform their ranks. At this point, the Welsh Imperial Throne did greet their fellows and oft times was the query heard "Where the h*** were you b*****s?!" The Eskin Knights demurred, suggesting only that lunch had taken a little longer to cook than expected. It was nice enough for their Celtic friends to know that they had turned up at all.

From thence did the battle go more evenly. Atop the second hill, to the north of the gate, was there a long and vicious melee, in which many good souls were felled, and only the ministrations of the Saintly Nurses did render them able to continue. Alf's Imperial Army did use many well-constructed ploys to foil their opponent, but the sheer enthusiasm and savagery of the Welsh was not so easily flouted, and they fought well and hard to retain their position.

Then did Alf's Imperial Army engage their Secret Weapon to take care of the enemy's resolution. Their mighty water-cannon did slay many of the minions of both the Eskin Knights and the Welsh Imperial Throne. Long were the Allied Forces defenceless against this mortal threat, until one of their number perpetrated a fortuitous strike with magic glitter, which turned the bearer of the cannon against his own comrades for a time. Using this diversion, the Welsh Imperial Throne and the Eskin Knights regrouped and, having determined to be wariest of the deadly Water-Cannon, joined battle again with renewed vigour.

After many a slap of paper sword, and many a dose of the Curing Port, or the magical *Argh!*, the two opposing forces stood off again and did have some counsel. The Druid of the Welsh did distribute the Flowers of Imperviousness, and thus was the company bedecked with invulnerability. During a Conference of the Generals, was it discovered that there were spies near the camp, and mercilessly were they despatched. The Eskin Commander was at this point driven by a desire to renew the armaments of the Knights so that the final melee might be advantaged to the maximum, and repaired to the Battle Train in the carpark. Alf's Imperial Throne did retreat aways in their impressive marching order, to survey the enemy from the next hill, to the west.

The Knights, unaware of their Commander's invisibility, and being naturally suspicious of the intentions of the Alf's troops, did construe that the Alf's retreating column was making to ambush their beloved leader and did charge to intercept the foul deed. It became apparent, however, that this was not the case, and the Knights succeeding in halting this endeavour, which would have meant a good many casualties to no purpose. They proceeded to march behind the Alf's Imperial Line, and escort their Commander back to the Main Force.

The Commander of the Eskin Knights, however, wished first to parley with the Commander of the Alf's force, and it was revealed later that he had made an offer of treachery to his Welsh Allies. This offer was foolishly declined by the Duke, who could have used the Knights to much effect against his main foe. The Eskin Knights returned to their Allies, to watch the enemy beat the doogies out of one of their own men.

Without much more ado, battle was joined anew. It was a fierce fight, and although the Alf's Imperial Troops did fight hard, the resilience of the Allied Army was beginning to wear them down.

At last it came time for the final charge. 'Twas advised that for the sake of the Sacred Video-Camera, all were to complete the advance in slow motion. 'Twas a mighty charge, and equal numbers of both forces fell. It was during this charge that the Valkyrie of the Eskin Knights did suffer a mighty blow to the nose with a cardboard shield, and as she writes, this noble wound besets her still with agony.

Then at last were the welcome words heard: "Hate to tell you, chaps, but it's all over. Time for the jousting!" One almost wanted to inquire as to the availability of Lashings of Ginger Beer, as one cheered. The jousts went admirably, with one side winning a bout each. There was much jollification, and congratulating. There were raised cheers, although Alf's did rather spoil the spirit of it all by cheering themselves as the losers!

The spoils of battle were cleared from the field, and the mortal remains of many a flour- or sludge-bomb were given their final rest in the WCC Rubbish Bin. All in all, a very jolly little battle.

Participating in mock battles, or Pacifist Warfare, has been downtrodden by some as "glorifying war", thus scarcely pacifist at all. I would refute this, being a pacifist myself, and having a very high opinion of the value of mock battles. As I said to one person who hassled me for joining in on this sort of activity: "It will be a glad day indeed, when all battles are fought with paper swords, and the soldiers clean up the field before they leave."

Mock battles do not honour the concept of war - they take the mickey out of it, as I hope I've demonstrated in my history above. Human nature drives us to create conflict: when all conflict arising takes place on a game board, in a park or playing field, on a green-sheeted tabletop, pacifists will have truly overcome the violence in our society.



NAMING YOUR CHARACTER

*A list of names taken from the Rec.games.frp section
of the Tornado Computer Bulletin Board*

by Harold D Stewart

The following are all real names of actual medieval rulers. Perhaps some of you might want to use some of the more interesting ones in your campaigns (Priest-Hater, Law-Mender, Evergood, etc.). My personal favourite is *Black Charles the Good*.

Alfred the Great
Magnus the Law-Mender
William the Toulousan
Edgar the Peaceful
Haakon Longlegs
Geoffrey the Bearded
Aethelred the Unready
Sven Forkbeard
Fulk the Younger
Canute the Great
Erik the Memorable
Erik the Lamb
Rene the Good
William the Conqueror
Boleslav the Cruel
Conan the Crooked
Merfyn the Freckled
Boleslaw the Curly
Otto the Child
Idwal the Bald
Leszek the White
Henry the Singular
Llywelyn the Last
Leszek the Black
Magnus the Pious
Pepin the Short
Vsevolod Big Nest
Henry the Middle
Charles the Bald
Ivan the Gentle
Henry the Pacific
Charles the Fat
Bohemond the One-Eyed
Herman the Learned
Louis the Sluggard
Robert the Pious
Vermudo the Deacon

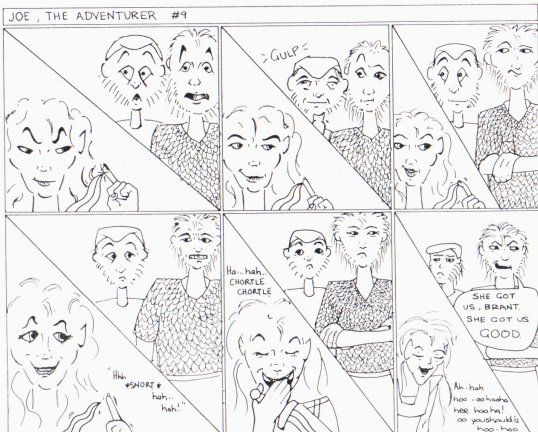
Fulk the Red
Edward the Elder
Erik the Priest Hater
Geoffrey Grey mantle
Edward the Martyr
Harald Bluetooth
Fulk the Surly
Edmund Ironside
Erik the Evergood
Geoffrey the Fair
Charles the Lame
Edward the Confessor
Erik Ploughpenny
Alan Wrybeard
Richard Lionheart
Wladyslaw the Exile
John the Conqueror
Rhodri the Great
Casimir the Just
Otto the Severe
Hywel the Good
Wladyslaw Spindleshanks
Otto the Mild
Niall of the Nine Hostages
Vlad the Impaler
William the Victorious
Louis the Pious
Simeon the Proud
Ernest the Confessor
Louis the Stammerer
Ivan the Dread
Henry the Iron
Charles the Simple
Baldwin the Leper
Louis the Peaceful
Henry the Rich
Louis the Fat

Henry the Fat
Richard the Fearless
Robert Curthose
Robert the Wise
Arnulf the Unfortunate
Henry the Blind
Godfrey the Hunchback
Richard the Justiciar
Philip the Bold
Hugh the Black
Philip the Handsome
William the Silent
Frederick the Simple
Piero the Gouty
Humbert Whitehands
Amadeus the Great
Amadeus the Green Count
Charles the Warrior
Charles the Good
Peter the Great
Alfonso the Benign
John the Hunter
Alfonso the Magnanimous
Alfonso the African
Manuel the Fortunate
Henry the Cardinal
Henry the Fowler
Henry the Proud
Leopold the Glorious
Albert the Lame
Albert the Patient
Thibaut the Great
Alfonso the Liberal
Peter the Ceremonious
Martin the Humane
Denis the Farmer
John the Perfect Prince

William the Constant
 Louis the Lion
 Alfonso the Monk
 Eberhard the Quarrelsome
 Louis the Stubborn
 Ordone the Bad
 Harald Fairhair
 Erik Bloodaxe
 John the Good
 Charles the Wise
 Sancho the Fierce
 Olav the Gentle
 Charles the Victorious
 Henry the Sickly
 Sigurd the Crusader
 William Towhead
 Joan the Crazy
 Inge the Hunchback
 William the Troubadour
 Alfonso the Battler
 Sancho the Wise
 Charles the Noble
 Raymond the Crooked
 Raymond the Great
 Ramiro the Monk
 Charles Emmanuel the Great

Alfonso the Chaste
 William the Just
 Philip the Bold
 Sancho the Fat
 Ulrich the Beloved
 Philip the Tall
 Vermudo the Gouty
 Sancho the Strong
 Sancho the Desired
 Harald Graycloak
 Charles the Mad
 Ferdinand the Summoned
 Manus Barelegs
 Ebalus the Bastard
 Henry the Impotent
 Magnus the Blind
 William the Brave
 Garcia the Tremulous
 Haakon the Broadshouldered
 Garcia the Restorer
 Charles the Bad
 Wilfred the Hairy
 Berengar the Fratricide
 Raymond Berengar the Saint
 James the Conqueror

Henry the Navigator
 Louis the Child
 Welf the Fat
 Henry the Black
 Frederick the War-Like
 Rudolf the Founder
 Ernest the Iron
 Thibaut the Posthumous
 Robert the Magnificent
 Geoffrey the Fair
 Baldwin Ironarm
 Black Charles the Good
 Gozelo the Sluggard
 John the Victorious
 Eudes the Red
 John the Fearless
 Charles the Rash
 Conrad the Pacific
 James the Just
 Cosimo the Elder
 Lorenzo the Magnificent
 Humbert the Fat
 Aymon the Pacific
 Amadeus the Red Count
 William Longsword



TALES OF THE SHIRE- Part Three

By the Grey Mage

Psycho Cecil stood before our four heroes carrying his nuclear-powered weedeater and an industrial-strength egg-beater. "Hahahahahahaha! I'm going to cut you all into thousands of millions of blood-splattered pieces all caked in intestines! Hahahahahahaha!" Cecil laughed. And laughed. He laughed so hard he got the hiccups.

Wally broke own sobbing. "Please," he sniffed miserably "If you're going to do that, please, don't damage these" he said holding up a pair of Y-fronts.

"This is (hic) strongly against (hic) policy, but I'll take (hic) care of 'em" announced Cecil snatching the underwear, and putting them on (for all you fashion freaks, he looked pretty stupid). "Satisfied?" he asked impatiently. His eyes went bloodshot. His weapons dropped to the ground with a clatter and he bent over, groaning. "AAAARRRGH!!!" he screamed "Built-in Codpiece of Devouring!"

Doris Biblebasher, Abattoir Bloodbath, Maurice Bloodbath and Wally the Wizard trekked across a barren desert. Cactuses were the only relief offered to the spartan landscape. "This is bloody hot!"

"Ah ha! That's my cue! Not as hot as it will be fools!"

"Lodrack bloody Bottybane!"

"Yes!" cried the evil necromancer, leaping from behind a cactus. "Now, meet your deaths fools! Meet Alfred the asthmatic air elemental!" A huge air elemental leapt from behind a cactus. "And meet Fido the hell-hound!" A huge hell-hound leapt from behind another cactus. "And meet Compost the shambling mound!" A huge shambling mound leapt from behind yet another cactus. "And meet Percy the Pixie!"

"Just a blooming minute! Why should we be afraid of a bloody Pixie?"

A huge T-12 tank drove from around from behind a cactus, bristling with rocket launches and automatic rifles. Poking his head out of the drivers seat was a small man with a ring through his nose. 'Anarchist to the core' was tattooed on this forehead. "Hello" squeaked the delinquent pixie "we're going to hollow out your heads and use them for potties, do chaotic evil things to your toe-nails, and feed you to a horde of carnivorous budgies!"

It's always the little guys you have to watch out for.

"Trash 'em boys!" cried Lodrack sadistically.

"Why do you do this?" asked Doris in a pleading voice.

"Because I'm evil".

"How evil?" chorused all present.

"REALLY evil. Slavery, torture, fatty foods. I've been into them all". Suddenly music sprang out of nowhere.

"I powerslam my teddybear,

I kick the cat without a care,

I'm evil, evil, evil as can beeeee."

I put kittens in pickle jars,

And throw them under moving cars,

I'm evil, evil, evil as can beeeee.

I kick old ladies up the bum,

Any cry "Oh what joyous fun",

I'm evil, evil, evil as can beeeee.

Christmas eve, help me not,

I put a mine in the chimney pot,

I'm evil, evil, evil as can beeeeeeeeeeeee!"

As the battle raged, a solitary voice broke the throng of combat. "I say, has anybody seen a battalion of armoured cybernetic pickles around here?" The melee stopped.

"Yeah, the battle will be held as Mount Adog" said Maurice. Standing before him were a thousand ten-foot-tall belly-buttons carrying howitzers, automatic grenade launches and 12-gauge pea-shooters. "Who are you?" "Colonel Umbilicus is the name. I'm in charge of Navel Warfare".

"My, my, goblins, that was slack!" the Grey Mage produced a twink pen. "This ought to do it." But alas for the Grey Mage, it slipped...

"Prepare to die!" announced Lodrack, his cronies surrounding him. But the order was not to be fulfilled, for all were smothered under gallons of unthickened twink. As the evil ones drowned, our heroes made their escape... A dozen belly-button men were torn to shreds as an atomic gherkin detonated in their midst. General Skrudge laughed. Despite the 24 inch guns Colonel Umbilicus's men carried, the vampire sturling and the vegemite dragons, it seemed the 21st Armoured Cybernetic Battalion had the upper hand. Striding from a ground-zero nuclear explosion came a huge, muscular figure. Hair caked on arms, legs and face, and it carried a menacing battleaxe. "Mummy!!!" chimed Avattoir and Maurice. "Hello boys" grunted Mrs Bloodbath "I was just about to grab a few gelatinous cubes and(this is censored for your own good)". "Oi Skrudge, ya fleets double-parked, That's a 9999999999999999 fine". General Skrudge blinked. It was the last blink he ever blinked because he was run over by Elvis the Giant Animated Turnip in his pink cadillac. "Howdy Ma'm" he said to Mrs Bloodbath. "Please, call me Prescilla". And so it came out that Maurice was part turnip.

Thus goblins, ends the tale of five little goblins. But what became of them after this pinnacle of literacy excellence?

Doris - dedicated her life to Elohsra, and became patron saint of hairy buttock cheeks.

Wally - became a millionaire after he invented sunglasses for beholders.

Maurice - learned to read and spent his life writing 'Out of Order' signs for impotent minotaurs.

Abattoir - wandered the Shire giving orcs crash-courses in sword-swallowing.

Rupert - you will a glad to know, spent his eternal afterlife on the plane of cocordant opposition fondling daises.



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Previews & Reviews

ALIENS RPG

A Review from Rec.games.frp, International BBS

by James Davis Nicoll

The *Aliens* RPG is finally out, and I had a chance to skim it this afternoon. At this point, I should clearly state my biases: I'm one of those weenies who sits down and fiddles with numbers in Sci-Fi RPGs for the fun of it, and I'm a nitpicker. Oh, yes... and I'm a retailer.

It's a softbound book around 190 pages long. There's no index, but the table of contents is fairly complete. The choice of art for the cover is, I think, poor (Drake and Vasquez, but the shot is rather dark, and hard to make out across a room). The Canadian cost is about \$24.00. The internal art is mainly photos from the film, and the layout of the book looks pretty good.

Character generation is pretty straightforward, and they give both a random generation system and a design system. At first glance, it looks like PCs have to be Colonial Marines, Mercs, Corporate Retainers, or Free Strikers (who seem to be corporate Ronin).

The future history is pretty unimaginative. It's a standard "Powerful Corporations, Weak Central Government" future, with a little rebellion around the edges of known space to give it some flavour. This isn't a criticism: LEG was limited in the inventiveness it could display, by the movie this RPG is based on. The history's also pretty patchy, so there's room to let the GM customise the culture of the ICC to taste.

They give a map of each of the settled worlds, and brief descriptions of them. Interstellar navigation is difficult, so PCs will tend to stick to the settled routes. (One minor plus is that the ICC uses automated probes to do much of their initial exploration of systems - something which is logical, but not done in most SFRPGs). The descriptions are very brief: little details, like surface gravity, are left out.

Okay - First Gripe Section:

Aliens suffers from the "One System, One Interesting World" Syndrome. Look at our system. We have nine planets, fifty moons, several hundred thousand asteroids and perhaps billions of comets. Most of them are "interesting" places, although the commercial value of some of them (Venus, the Gas Giants) may be low. Now, *Aliens* RPG had to fit into a book that the average gamer could (1) afford, and (2) carry, so the OSOIW Syndrome is one valid solution: one supposes that they are just showing the most interesting planet in the system.

Aliens also has some systems that look to me not to be reasonable systems. Arcturus has a habitable, non-terraformed world with indigenes, but Arcturus is a K type giant, and should have habitable planets. I dimly recall that Arcturus is also Population Two, and wouldn't have heavier elements than hydrogen or helium in any great

quantities, and so shouldn't have non-gas giant planets. Also, I think the folks at LEG don't quite understand how profound an effect life has had on the geological and atmospheric history of Earth.

The worlds seem to be uniform-climate worlds, but that's probably just a side-effect of the brief descriptions. One huge, stupid world design is that of Tartarus. Tartarus is a planet that has an Earth-like climate, and a 40-terrestrial-year "year". Without going into picky details, this means that Tartarus' star is about four to five times the mass of our sun, and that means it should be a type A or O star, while on the main sequence, and that the star's stable life-span on the main sequence should only be about 100 million years, which is a very brief time to evolve a local ecosystem as complex as Earth's.

Yeah, I know: "Who cares?" One fix is to assume someone "terraformed" the worlds which shouldn't have life bearing worlds, but do anyway.

The Aliens are given a fair bit of detail. I didn't see any info which confirms the "bioweapon" theory, or that denied it either. We don't find out their homeworld, either. The bugs are gross: nuke 'em from orbit.

Spaceships are covered in a 7-8 page section. More weenie gripes: I don't think you can justify the events of the movies with the system of jump drives they give. Also, they have many more potential jump routes than they use: discovering new routes must be very difficult and expensive.

Anyone want to tell me why hypersleep is needed? I didn't see it in the rules, and each jump only takes a day. Mind you, this is all on the basis of one fast skim, so maybe I missed it...

I haven't played with the combat system yet. If it's like other LEG products, combat will be deadly.

Another minor gripe: the margin quotations have nothing to do with the text they appear next to, and a cynic might say that they are blatant padding. In most LEG products, the sidebars are amusing.

On the whole, *Aliens RPG* is an average-quality RPG, which can, in the hands of a competent GM, probably could be a lot of fun. You don't have to go bug-hunting. They do have other directions the PC's can go, and frankly, I doubt anyone but me gets irked by astronomical errors. [*Is that referring to "astronomy" or the size? Read it as you like! -Ed.*]

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

by Sharon Andrews

I was asked to write this article (nagged, would be more accurate), to remind all you 'old-timer' D&D players what it is like when you begin playing.

I wasn't sure D&D was really for me. Being a basically sane person, (others may disagree), running around playing drunken dwarfs, (the closest character I have to reality), to beastmasters with pet tigers, is a big transition.

The hardest thing when you first play D&D is playing with 'old-timers'. They know their way around everything. They know which spells to use and when; which scrolls and potions to ask about or buy and what they do; which weapons to use on what (for example, using a sword when up against a rust monster is about as useful as a twig against an ooze). I realise that their 'character' may not have this kind of knowledge or experience but it still affects their role-playing.

I get a little frustrated not having the knowledge and experience of the other players in the party. What happens is you tend to get 'shut out' of the game a bit. The suggestions come thick and fast about what to do in a situation and the decisions are made before you have had a chance to work it out for yourself.

In one dungeon, our party encountered a new—and it turned out, relatively harmless—creature, in a room that was the reverse of the map we had. My character was trying to work out what was going on and what alternatives we had but obviously took too long. Another party member called him a coward and we went in 'hack slash' and blew everything away. This sort of situation leads you to believe that 'hack slash' is the answer, but I have found out since that is not the case.

Another character was offered an opportunity to fight for money (along with two guards), so he whipped out his sword and plowed in only to have the two guards attack him as well. It turned out to be a fist-fight and the guards thought that a sword was a bit too much of an advantage. I never considered fighting with anything other than the weapons made of steel. I may seem stupid, but it's just inexperience.

7 months later . . .

Now I only get frustrated sometimes instead of always. I still have the least experience in the party but at least I don't do stupid things ALL the time.

I still have the odd problem, like the thief that can't steal (he did it once and is now R.I.P.), or the bard who writes great songs (well, I think so), but he can't sing!

I also find I'm a little blasé about low level characters dying (and you play that accordingly). Other characters I have a real affection for and would be devastated (or at least really pissed off) if they bit the big one.

But for all that, I love the game (much to my surprise). The inter-character role playing can be really hilarious. D&D gives you a chance to stretch your imagination and one day a week you can pretend to be something really bizarre—which is more difficult for some than for others.

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HIT LOCATIONS FOR ROLEPLAYING GAME COMBAT RULES

by Euan Ritchie

For calculating injury in combat, it is more important to know where a character was hit, than it is to know what they were hit with. A 5.56 ball bullet in the heart or eye will kill you just as dead as a .44-40 Express, and both will cripple an arm, or may pass clean through. General terms of injury are more dependent on location than weapon. This holds true of all types of weapons, although of course extreme differences in weapons may produce markedly different results, but I'd still rather be hit in the leg with a broadsword than stabbed in the chest with a dagger.

Assuming we're playing with a game system that does not already have hit locations, I have designed a hit table. This table is primarily intended for missile combat, but is probably equally useful for melee. I do not address the problem of strikes to specific locations, as I see that as an aspect to be considered in determining chances to hit.

To hit table

Throw 1D20, modify AWAY from the centre line by 2 if chance to hit was less than 50/50. Odd numbers are left side, even for right side.

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| 17 - 20+ | Arm |
| 15 - 16 | Head |
| 11 - 14 | Chest |
| -----Centre line----- | |
| 5 - 10 | Abdomen |
| -1 - 4 | Legs |

This table is designed on the assumption that you're aiming to hit the target with your best odds and thus if your odds were good, you tend towards hitting nearer the person's centre of mass.

You'll note that as most chances to hit anyone in a fight are less than 50/50 (I presume), there is a 60% chance that injury will be to the arms or legs rather than torso (only 30%). This is statistically accurate, regardless of whether the damage is from shrapnel or direct fire. Look at anybody who is avoiding you or digging in - no one is presented facing you like an anatomy drawing, parts of their body are obscured by their limbs. I designed this table from information gleaned from UK army records of injury in combat over the last fifty years.

This table's application to melee combat is debatable as strikes to the head are far more frequent than allowed for here, but the limbs are still the most frequently hit location as they constantly get in the road.



WOLVLINGS

A New Race for AD&D

by The Grey Mage

Wolvings are fiercely proud creatures unrelated to gnolls. They appear as men with definite canine features and have short, clinging fur. Their life-span is approximately 220 years. The average wolving is easily aggravated; they are hostile and avoid other races, as they are often mistaken for werewolves. They war constantly against *Kats* [Issue #15, pg 23].

Violence and warfare rule their society, and each is extremely territorial. They have customs, for the marking of property and meeting new friends, that tend to offend more sensitive races.

Wolvings can be fighters, rangers, thieves, fighter/thieves or bards. Their language consists of growls, barks and tail positions. Being possessed of incredible strength and being generally hardy, they gain +2 Strength and +1 Constitution. They are, however, offensive, dull-witted and tend to lack foresight, thus are penalised with -1 charisma, -1 Intelligence, and -1 Wisdom. Their base movement rate is 14. They *automatically* receive Running proficiency with 3 slots invested in it. These are not taken from the initial proficiency allowances [ie, are a Bonus proficiency]. A wolving's fangs inflict 2d4+2 damage (+ any strength modifier), and claws 1d2 each (Speed 3 for man-size creature).

Their reputations tend to be their main enemies; any "civilised" race (especially elves) go out of their way to be unpleasant (-4 reaction penalty).

Due to their hand construction, they are unable to use short or long bows, and have difficulty loading crossbows (taking twice as long to do so). Their leg construction prevents them from doing martial arts unless they spend twice the amount of proficiency slots. And of course, they are often mistaken for werewolves...

Wolving thief adjustments

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Pick Locks | -5% |
| Move Silent | +10% |
| Hide in Shadows | +10% |
| Cannot Climb Walls | |

Age groups

| Middle Age | Old Age | Venerable |
|------------|---------|-----------|
| 75 | 115 | 160 |

Height adjustment

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Base 70/67 | mod 4d6 |
|------------|---------|

Level restrictions:

| Cleric | Fighter | Ranger | Thief | Wizard | Bard |
|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------|------|
| 0 | U | 15 | 9 | 0 | 7 |



What's that room used for any way?

A Guide to 'Building' Castles

by Steve Martin

When I was working on a castle design for an upcoming scenario I found that I had very little idea of what actually was in there, ie, what were all the rooms used for? Once you know which room is used for what purpose, you can determine relative frequency of encounters, and what that encounter is likely to be.

Here is a list I compiled, originally for *Space 1889*, or *Call of Cthulhu*, but it should do well enough for most games. Obviously some uses will not apply to all genres, and not all castles will be so well-equipped as to have all the rooms listed here.

- Bakery
- Brewery
- Cellars/food stores (2 - Wet and Dry)
- Chapel
- Coal store
- Dancehall
- Dining hall(s)/room(s) (2 - one for servants)
- Drawing room(s)
- Dumb waiter shaft/Sergeries
- Furniture stores
- Generator rooms (2 - two generators, one as back up)
- Guests' quarters (probably 3-10 rooms)
- Guests' servants' quarters
- Kitchen
- Ladies' Parlour
- Laundry
- Library
- Linen stores
- Midden/garderober
- Servants' quarters (probably 2-5 rooms)
- Smithy/Garage for car
- Stables (large enough to have at least one carriage, must have hay loft, possibly tack room also)
- Study(s)
- Sun room(s)
- Switchboard/telephone
- Trophy room
- Washrooms
- Wine cellars (2)/Dungeons



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REAL MEN, REAL ROLEPLAYERS, LOONIES AND MUNCHKINS

The Real Man

The tough macho type who walks up to the attacking dragon and tells him to leave before he gets hurt

The Real Roleplayer

The intelligent cunning guy who tricks the constable into letting you all out of prison

The Loonie

The guy who will do anything for a cheap laugh, including casting a fireball at ground zero

The Munchkin

Need we say more?

Chapter One

PLAYER RELATIONSHIPS

REAL MEN

Real Men think they're brothers in arms

Real Roleplayers hide behind them

Loonies harass them with stupid suggestions

Munchkins say "I'm a Real Man, too!"

REAL ROLEPLAYERS

Real Men protect them, on the off-chance they may come up with something useful

Real Roleplayers sigh with relief to know they're not alone, and then get their characters involved in love affairs and death feuds

Loonies harass them with stupid suggestions

Munchkins say "I'm a Real Roleplayer, too!"

LOONIES

Real Men ignore them

Real Roleplayers sometimes harass them back by taking a stupid suggestion and making it work

Loonies declare a pie fight at 20 paces and cheat

Munchkins try to imitate the jokes, and fall flat

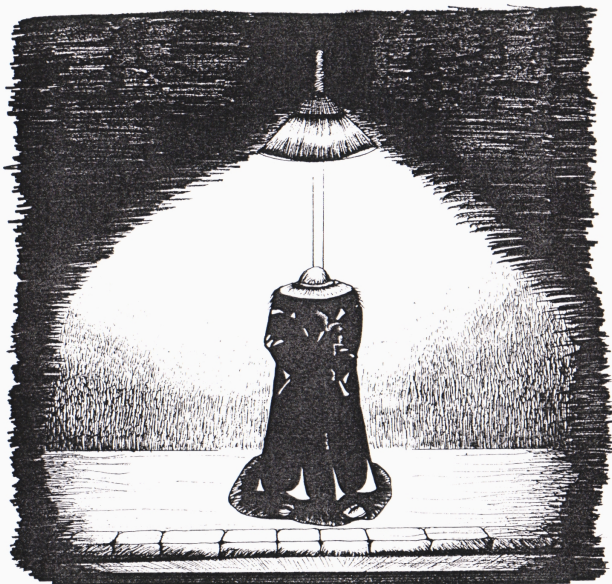
MUNCHKINS

Real Men attack them on sight

Real Roleplayers trick them into being cannon fodder

Loonies make reasonable-sounding suggestions that will get the Munchkin killed in an amusing way

Munchkins query, "What's a Munchkin?"



GDD has been provided with a comprehensive list of Wargaming Clubs all over the country, and below, thanks to Dillon Burke and *Raider's Digest*, for your information, are contacts for wherever you want to whatever!

Auckland Wargames Club

Derek Cassidy, 28 Roick Pde, Glen Eden, Auckland

Blenheim Wargaming Club

Keith McNelly, 1 Kingweel Dr, Blenheim

Hawkes Bay Wargaming Club

Les Hall, 240 Flaxmere Ave, Hastings

Kapiti Military Miniatures Society

Tim O'Neill, P O Box 262, Paraparaumu

Nelson Garde du Corps

Michael Woolf, 21 Marsden Rd, Stoke, Nelson

North Shore Wargames Club

Paul James, 8 Harrison Ave, Belmont, Auckland

Otago Miniature Tacticans Society

The Secretary, P O Box 5474, Dunedin

Palmerston North (name of club unknown)

Kevin O'Kane, 81 Roy St, Palmerston North

South Auckland Miniature Wargames Club

Bryan Orbourne, 183 Coxhead Rd, Manurewa, Auckland

South Canterbury Wargaming Club

Kevin Taylor, Mause Rd, RD13, Pleasure Point, South Canterbury

Taranaki Miniature Warfare Society

Alastair Mundell, 59a Seaview Rd, New Plymouth

Tauranga Wargames Club

Brian Turner, 102 Greerton Rd, Tauranga

Upper Hutt Wargamers

Andrew Frost, 53 McLeod St, Upper Hutt

Wairarapa (name of club unknown)

Andrew Brazendale, 140 Colombo St, Masterton

Wanganui Wargaming Club

A R Urbahn, 59 Maxwell Ave, Wanganui

Wellington Roleplaying and Boardgaming Forum

Steve Sigley, 28b Aparima Ave, Miramar, Wellington

Wellington Wargames Society

David Rowe, P O Box 12-188, Thorndon, Wellington

Wellington Warlords

Vincent Cholewa, 26 Tarikaka St, Ngaio, Wellington
Steve Lodanyi, 34 Rata Rd, Hataitai, Wellington

Also, a contact for Club Aktyv:

Rob Adams
P O Box 87
Wellington.

The activities Club Aktyv offer are, in general, games based, but also indulge in such things as group bookings for concerts, ski trips, etc.





Letters



Mightier than the Sword



Dear Goblins,

Here I present yet another bunch of pages of the Grey Mage, from the Mage of the Grey Page! (Print them in their entirety, team, lest I send a horde of trolls around armed with potato peelers, who will proceed to pickle your private bits!) And as for you, goblin editor, why were you on holiday when I *planeshifted* from Moonshire to Wellington? It's not every week that you get an avatar with a hormone overdose in your shop! (or is it?)

I've just had a great idea: a GDD binder! Stop the cat walking all over your issues (specifically my page!) and prevent wear and tear. (Just a thought.)

What about: thieves do it with lock-picks?

[Issue #13!? Sorry, we gave up on those, GM, under a chorus of disapproval! -

Ed.]

PALLADIUM

Regrettably I didn't have a chance to tell you off about contradicting me earlier. Palladium *isn't* particularly... balanced. You walk into a dungeon, acquire tens of thousands of gold pieces, and (hopefully) leave. Every module is loaded with money (except the ones that I write). The only real way to get rid of that money is to buy magic items from your friendly Alchemist, and, of them all, Power circles are the most expensive. (In Palladium, incidentally, weapons and armour are easily destroyed.) Almost every ingredient prescribed in these can be bought from the Alchemist (for an enormous sum of money), and then (and only then) is a Summoner strong enough to take on a Wizard (who can, at first level, can cast 11th level spells).

I stand strong on the stance that the power circles I sent you should be considered for printing. The only exception is the Disaster circle, which although quite balanced, takes powers from a Warlock (thus discouraging playing the latter). And besides, chances are, the players won't get their hands on the formula anyway, but will get it used against them!

Yours immortally,
Perverts Inc.
(AKA The Grey Mage)

P.S. Save the environment - don't flush the loo!

[Thanks for your - ahem - thoughts, Grey Mage. You may be interested to know, along with any other Palladium players (I'm sure there must be some...), that the Grey Mage's Power Circles may be in the running shortly. Your Tales of the Shire perked our interest so much more that we printed it first, is all, so don't give up... yet.

By the way, yes, we have thought of a GDD Binder, but - as you'll know if you've tried to find one - "they" don't actually make Magazine Binders for A5 size. If any generous printing organisation out there wants to sponsor some though... ?

-Ed.]



The Nature of Intelligent Weapons

Most of us have come across, or at least heard of intelligent weapons. Most of us probably take them for granted as just an extremely useful item. There are a few questions that I would like to know if readers have an answer for:

If Swords are intelligent and have personalities, are they alive?

If they are alive, can they be killed?

If they are alive and can be killed, can they be resurrected?

Some people will say that they cannot be alive because they have no soul. If you are one of these people, could you please tell me what the difference is between someone's personality and someone's soul?

Steve Beeston.



`Tis! `Tisn't! `Tis!

Dear Sir,

The criticism levelled at Warhammer 40K in Issue #18 comes as no real surprise. I did outline in the review that the system was not perfect. The points system and army lists can only go so far to create a state of fair play in the game. Beyond that, the players must rely upon the sensibility of the Gamemaster to ensure that no one side is at a gross disadvantage. That is why, in league games overseas, two GMs are used (each rotating to different games after a period of time), so that a consensus between both is reached, and consistency between games is ensured. Other than that, I am puzzled as to why your correspondent continued to play for two years, as surely boredom would have superseded the desire to win, after a few unchallenging games...

It was also asserted that Games Workshop manufactures products that are substandard, overpriced and generally not worth the Swedish recycled paper they are printed on. While having no special affinity with Games Workshop, I find nothing wrong with a group of game designers who want to expand beyond a cottage industry and capitalise on their success, bringing more publicity to RPGs and wargaming hobbies in the process. Game designers, publishers, typesetters, artists, office staff, modellers and authors (not to mention staff of Flame Publications and Citadel Miniatures) of which Games Workshop employs around 150, full-time, do not work for peanuts.

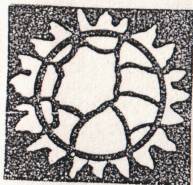
Their wages, coupled with other high overheads, require the wholesale price of their products to be relatively high. In the UK, Europe, America, and soon in Australia, Games Workshop outlets are able to sell these goods at reasonably low prices, with basically no markup. A *White Dwarf* magazine (\$NZ14 retail) costs 1p50d - equivalent to \$NZ4-50. New Zealanders pay more because of the costs of importing the games across the globe, and because shopowners here have to make a living as well. Besides, as Steve Beeston pointed out in *Previews and Reviews* (Issue #18), TSR's popular roleplaying system does not come cheap either.

Substandard? A matter of opinion and misfortune. For truly pathetic examples of gaming paraphernalia, look no further than such blatant abortions as TORG. Games Workshop, the UK's largest gaming manufacturer, on the whole attempts to deliver value for money. Their frequent supplements, like those promulgated by TSR, are merely expansions to the existing system. Their monthly magazine, *White Dwarf*, sells 300,000 copies per month, with an estimated readership three times that. Perhaps, as S Murphy maintains, they are all deluded...

Yours sincerely,
Scott Abel.

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