MARCH 1983 NUMBER 61 $3.00

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

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MICROFILM MADNESS: ADVENTURE APPROVED FOR *CHAMPIONS*

STARLEADER: ASSAULT! REVIEWED

WINNING THE *D&D* WAR

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Game Illustrations: Courtesy Flying Buffalo, Inc.: 38. Courtesy Iron Crown Enterprises: 37, 40. Courtesy Metagaming: 2, 4. Courtesy Task Force Games: 36, 40.

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THE SPACE GAMER (ISSN 0194-9977, USPS 434-250) is published monthly by Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957. Second class postage paid at Austin, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.

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Printed in USA by Futura Press, Austin.

Subscription rates, as of 4-7-81:

In the United States — one year (12 issues) $21; two years (24 issues) $39. A lifetime subscription is $250. Outside the U.S., please add $5 per year for surface mail. International rates subject to change as postal rates change. NOTE: All payments MUST be in U.S. dollars, made by International Money Order, or checks drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank.

THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 61 — MARCH, 1983

IN THIS ISSUE

We have a pretty straightforward issue for you in March: our usual mix of reviews, articles, scenario, and departments.

A featured review of Metagming's *Starleader: Assault!* leads off the issue. (*Starleader: Warpship* is due later this spring, so watch for a review in coming months). Our centerpiece is a scenario of urban madness for *Champions,* written by George Mac Donald, the game's co-designer. Articles on role-playing in general, economics in *TFT,* Berserkers in *StarWeb,* and more appear throughout, and our pages are rounded out with lots of capsules and our usual columns and features.

But I'm not sure I should be telling you this. Why? Because I've learned that *I'm* the only person of the TSG readership who looks at the "In This Issue" box. No one in the office does. No one I've spoken to at conventions does. The typesetters read it but don't keep it in memory. (Sniffle.) Can anybody hear me?

—Aaron Allston

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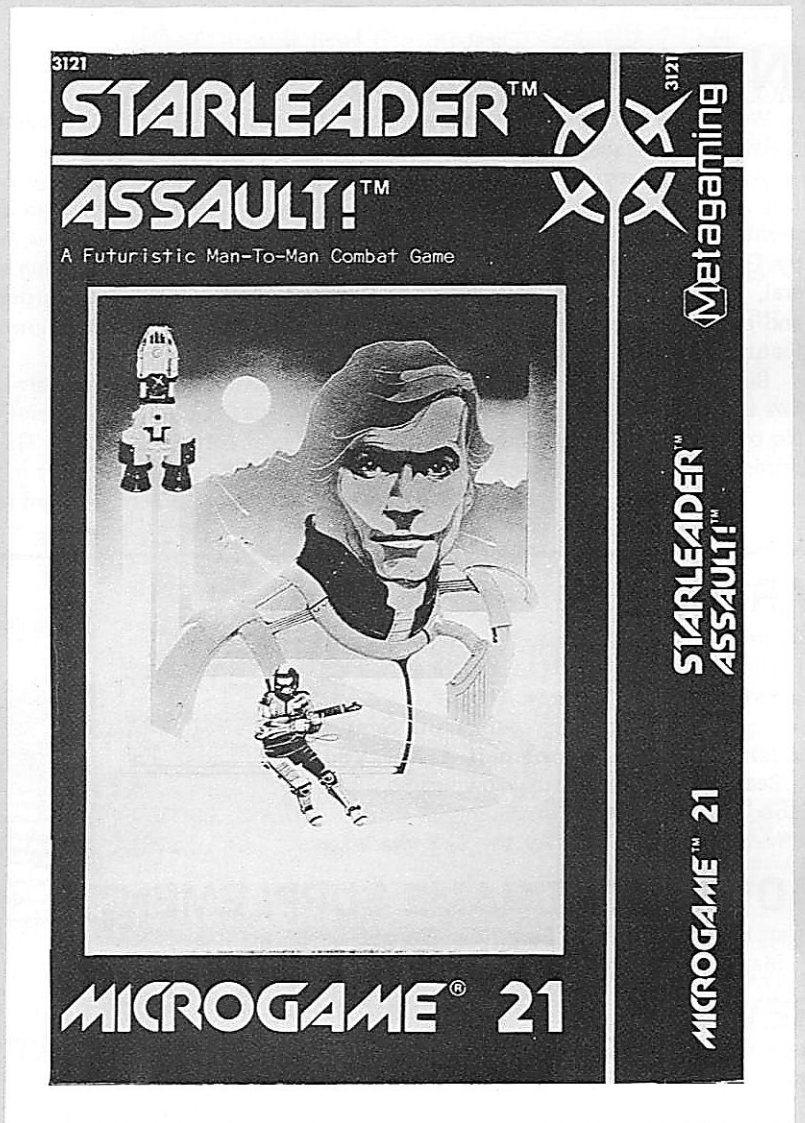
Featured Review

STARLEADER: ASSAULT!

by William A. Barton



When Metagaming's ***The Fantasy Trip*** appeared on the fantasy role-playing scene, it was a breath of fresh air amidst fantasy systems that, with a few exceptions, were either overly-complicated, illogical, or unrealistic. ***TFT,*** with its combat and magic modules, ***Melee*** and ***Wizard,*** was elegantly simple, yet had just enough complexity and realism to make it a welcome relief from ***D&D*** and its clones. Today, the field of science fiction RPGs seem to be reaching a similar point in gaming evolution, though the SFRPGs are generally superior to the earlier fantasy systems.

As the SFRPG armada began to blast off in earnest, word started to circulate that Metagaming was working on several ***TFT***-based game systems, among them a science fiction RPG. Aha, thought I. An SFRPG using the ***TFT*** system might just be the game to really give ***Traveller*** a run for – if not its money – at least some of its following. But then came ***Starleader: Assault!,*** and I knew that GDW, at least for now, had little to worry about.

Starleader: Assault! is the first module in Metagaming's planned ***Starleader*** SF RPG. It is a combat module ("The game of man-to-man combat in the 30th century [Space Era]" reads the subtitle) . . . what ***Melee*** was to ***TFT.*** And there the resemblance almost ends. I suppose I should admit that, in going through the back issues of Metagaming's *Interplay* magazine, I can find no actual statement that ***S:A*** was to be ***TFT***-based. I do have a strong impression, however, that the connection was at least insinuated somewhere along the line. The impression was strengthened by the publication in *Interplay* of a ***TFT***-based SF variant (which, incidentally, also has a ***TFT***-based combat module that I've been privileged to see that is, in my opinion, superior to ***S:A***). Yet Metagaming's ***official*** SF combat module, except in a few minor details, is not ***TFT***-based at all! Hence my disappointment – and that of other ***TFT*** aficionados as well.

To be fair, there are *some* echoes of ***Melee/TFT*** in ***Starleader: Assault!:*** Movement is on a hexgrid (though megahexes have disappeared entirely), a ghost of the ***Melee*** combat actions can be found in ***S:A*** (though hardly more than in several systems), and beginning characters have three attributes that total up to 32 points, with the final values determined by player distribution of several free points onto the set values of the three attributes. Oh, and a character gets one experience point for each point of damage inflicted on an opponent (plus EPs for actions, too, including each point of damage he takes as well as inflicts). Other than these shadows of ***TFT,*** however, the game that it more closely resembles is GDW's ***Snapshot,*** the ***Traveller*** combat board game. Like ***Snapshot, Starleader: Assault!*** uses a system of action points that the player must expend each combat round to move and perform various actions. Also as in ***Snapshot,*** (as in ***Traveller*** itself), the roll to hit is more dependent on the weapon being used and the status of the target than on any characteristic of the attacker. In fact, in ***S:A,*** the attacker's skills or attributes have *no* effect whatsoever on the chance to hit, as

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Starleader: Assault! Structure Mapping System
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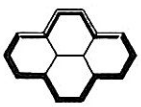
Open Space: Used for rooms and corridors. Extra heavy lines designate walls.

Air Lock: May be entered from any side not blocked by a wall. The Handle Object Action opens or closes that side. Operation is instantaneous. Will not open if vacuum or non-matching atmosphere is outside ship.

Jumper: All three hexes of the Jumper module are operational. Anything that can fit the area will be jumped. Someone must be next to the control hexsides to operate them.

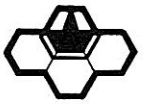


Cargo Bay Doors: These are on the exterior hull of a structure. It takes three combat turns for cargo doors to fully open. They open enough for characters immediately. They will not open unless cleared by pilot module.

Power/Drive Module: These provide conventional power and non-warp movement for the ship. At least one module of a P/D grouping must be at the hull and presumed rear of a ship. A ship needs one power/drive module per 250 ship tons.

Warp Drive: Provides space warp movement ability to a ship. It may be anywhere on a ship. Cargo Pods connected to a ship core need not have their own warp drives.

Equipment Module: Special modules usually support the operation of the structure.



Science Module: These modules provide scientific analysis and service depending on their technological level.

Weapon Module: Three types of weapon module are beamer, missile and projectile.

Control Module: Control modules provide local controls of various modules. Any module may be operated this way unless ship design specifies overriding control in a control module, such as Pilot, Drives, Science, etc.

Force Screen Generator: Anywhere on a ship next to at least one power/drive module. Projects a protecting force field.

Sliding Doors: These appear along hexsides and may be operated by anyone adjacent.

opposed to ***Melee***'s dexterity roll. Even ***Snapshot*** allows some modifiers based on dexterity and skill to affect combat.

So how does the game work? To focus on character generation first, ***Starleader: Assault!,*** as noted, uses 32-point characters with three attributes, just as ***TFT*** does. However, instead of the familiar strength, dexterity, and intelligence, ***S:A*** characters have Prowess (PR), Emotion (EM), and Intelligence (IQ).

Prowess, which encompasses *both* strength and dexterity (the latter having no function at all in this game), is used to determine how much damage a character can take, much like strength in ***TFT,*** and to compute the character's combat order. It is the only attribute that has any real part to play in the system, at least in this initial module.

Intelligence is used in ***S:A*** only to determine the highest tech level weapon a character can use. This is a shaky assumption at best – higher TL weapons do not necessarily take a higher intelligence to operate. After all, a pistol's a pistol's a pistol – whether it's a slug-thrower or an energy gun. Unless it's so radically different it no longer *is* a pistol, someone who can use one should have at least a chance to operate another, higher TL or not.

Emotion, the third attribute, is used in ***S:A*** only for panic checks – an optional rule that the module can easily be played without. Personally, I'd have preferred to see emotion left (as IQ was in ***Melee***) waiting for a module in which it has some real use.

In any event, the three attributes are assigned minimum point values – 10 for IQ, 8 each for PR and EM – and the player is allowed to distribute the remaining six, then equip his character with weapons, armor, and miscellaneous gadgets (determined for you if you play the set scenarios). Now he's ready to play.

Play, this being a combat module, means combat. How a character will perform in combat depends on his combat order, his adjusted action points, and the weapon and armor he has. Every character receives eight action points, regardless of his attribute values, a departure from ***Snapshot***'s DX/END-based total. A character's action points are adjusted downward if any of his equipment costs

S:A! designer Howard Thompson

APs (action points) to carry. Pistols carry no penalty; most rifles and gadgets cost 0 or .5 APs, though a few rifles cost 1, and armor costs .5 or 1 AP. After AP totals are adjusted, prowess scores are added to the result to obtain combat order. The character with the highest CO can perform his actions first, similar to ***TFT*** in which a higher DX allows earlier actions. Initiative is rolled only if two characters on opposing sides have equal CO values (actually, you roll initiative each round after the first, in which attackers have the initiative, but if no one on opposing sides has the same CO, it's unnecessary). Characters in turn may then engage in movement, dodging, handling objects, weapon fire, snap fire (firing an unaimed ready weapon at a -6 penalty) or special actions (the effect and AP cost of which are determined by the GM), all at various AP costs. There is a counter-fire action which, if announced prior to any actions taking place, can occur at any time in the round, even between actions in another player's turn. This is a nice touch, avoiding the annoying and unrealistic problem in ***Snapshot*** in which a character can run into a room, shoot an opponent and run out again before the target can do anything about it. Metagaming has learned from someone else's past mistake here, and should be applauded for it. The counter-fire option's effectiveness is somewhat lessened, however, by its being limited to one use per round, regardless of one's AP total, and having a -3 penalty to hit. At least characters aren't total sitting ducks to opponents with higher COs.

The types of movements, combat positions, and actions available, along with the combat sequence, are all fairly simple. I do advise anyone who wishes to play ***S:A*** to use all the optional rules, however. There just isn't enough to the game to make it worth trying without them. I will mention again my complete dissatisfaction with the method for determining the to-hit roll *and* the damage a target suffers. To hit a target, four dice are rolled in an attempt to obtain a number less than a value determined by adding the density of the weapon used (what this means exactly isn't explained) to the target's size (noted on the game counters) and subtracting the target size of any obstacle in the way, then figuring in any other adjustments (penalties for counter or snap fire, etc.). Prowess has nothing to do with it at all. Johnny Starslayer, with a prowess of 14, has no better chance to hit a certain target than Eddie Earthslogger, with a prowess of 8, provided they're using the same weapon and firing at the same target at the same distance and angle. Except with the higher-density weapons,

that four-die roll makes hitting pretty difficult if you have very many penalties to account for or have a small target behind an obstacle. I'd have preferred definite damage values for the weapons, too, rather than the formula of a two-die roll plus the weapon's punch minus the target's armor value plus any other adjustments. At least the punch value does do something to distinguish one weapon from another.

That's another sore spot: the weapon tables. In ***Starleader: Assault!***, there are only two kinds of weapons – pistols and rifles. Oh, there are lots of them to choose from – 22 pistols and 41 rifles, all distinguishable only by the name of their manufacturer (I think that's what it is) and their stats. Other than that, there's no explanation of what they are. Oh, some you can tell are slugthrowers, because they have a magazine or slugpack listed, or energy weapons because they have a powerpack or "maxpak." But with most, you can't even tell that because they have *nothing* else listed! No lasers, no blasters – such terms are never used. I supposed the designer thought there was more color is stating "I'm readying my Tenocha!" – or Imphal, or Ryglon, or Dvina – than in laser pistols or fusion rifles and the like. Perhaps. But I'd prefer to get down to the business of playing rather than having to learn a whole new vocabulary just to know what I'm firing. I suppose the lack of ammo requirements for weapons isn't really crucial. However, the complete lack of any rules for hand-to-hand combat (armed or unarmed) other than a 13-line section giving rough guidelines on coverting ***Melee*** to ***S:A*** (practically impossible if you're not familiar with ***TFT***, difficult even if you are), is a sad oversight. Even future combat will not be totally limited to ranged weapon fire – especially in the tight confines of a ship.

And speaking of ships, the ship interior map poses a bit of a problem, too. I guess I just have trouble envisioning a ship layout based on hexes – the rooms look so *wrong!* You'd think that since they were going to depart from ***TFT*** so much in this module, they'd at least made a logical departure from hexes to a square grid for the interior maps. Oh well. I do like the use of the "jumper" transporters to get on and off ship, eliminating the hassles of airlock boarding. (Though an airlock hex is pictured in the map key, none appears on the *Trek Heaven* map). A good cue taken from *Star Trek* (wait a minute – ***Trek Heaven*** . . .?).

Well, now that I've panned ***Starleader: Assault!***, I'm going to have to make a reversal before ending this review. In spite of all I've said thus far, paradoxically ***S:A*** isn't a bad little game if you want to play a few quick, simplistic man-to-man combat actions aboard a starship – no worse than several similar games. In fact, now that I'm over my initial disappointment in not finding a ***TFT***-based SFRP system, I may even play it now and again. As a boardgame. For, as a boardgame, with the characters taking the place of abstract fixed-value counters, ***S:A*** works – if no more than adequately. As the first module in a role-playing system, though, it's hard to accept. In the SFRPG field, ***S:A*** just doesn't stand out enough to make it worth the effort. Except for die-hard Metagaming fans, I doubt many gamers will abandon ***Traveller, Space Opera,*** or any other SF system for ***Starleader*** – unless future modules, additions, and GMed materials show a lot more promise than ***Assault!***

Starleader: Assault! *is designed by Howard Thompson and published by Metagaming. It retails for $4.95 and includes a 28-page rulebook, 42 die-cut counters, 12" x 14" map of the warship* **Trek Heaven**, *one six-sided mini-die, bagged and boxed in microgame format. Published 1982.*

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Report from the Trenches: The *D&D* War

by W. G. Armintrout

When the phone rang in my office that Thursday afternoon, I had no way of knowing that war had been declared. I picked it up and found myself talking to the head librarian from the city library.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but we've had to cancel your game class at the library. I know this is short notice."

Since the class was on Saturday and today was Thursday, I had to agree with her. "How come?"

"These orders came down from the city. I'm just an employee."

"You mean, the Mayor ordered this? Why?"

"He told me that you haven't obtained the proper licenses. When you have your paperwork in order, he'll let me know."

"Wait a minute." My head was starting to spin. "I need a *license* in order to reserve the basement room of the library?"

"I'm only an employee of the city, Mr. Armintrout . . ."

It was bizarre. The Toole Gamers Association, preparing for its annual Dungeonfest, has scheduled a room at the library for a beginner's class on role-playing games – a little ***Tunnels & Trolls*** followed by a little ***Dungeons & Dragons***. The library had approved it. The Mayor, considering involving the city in promoting the Dungeonfest, had told me that members of the Chamber of Commerce would be attending the class.

So why had the Mayor canceled the class?

I rang city hall, but nobody official was there. No one could tell me anything about getting clearance for the library. Faced with a newspaper deadline, I hustled down to the *Transcript* offices to let them know the class had been canceled (since the class had been advertised county-wide, I wanted to save people the fifty-mile drive into town only to find the class not there). It was too late to take it as an article, so it was placed as a Letter to the Editor.

The first battle of the war was fought Friday morning, as I arrived in my office. The phone rang. It was the Mayor's secretary, asking me if I could come down to city hall right away.

"No, ma'am, I can't," I explained. "I'll be with a patient all day."

She spoke for a moment to someone else. "Could you speak to the Mayor on the phone, then?"

"Sure," I said.

I then found myself in conversation, thanks to a telephone amplifier, with the city mayor, the president of the chamber of commerce, and an attorney for the city.

"What's this about needing clearance for the library?" I demanded.

The mayor sidestepped. "First things first. We've decided not to waive any of the applicable licenses for the Dungeonfest."

I blinked. That meant he was insisting on licensing us in the same category as a *carnival* – park use permits, special licenses, bonding, all to the tune of hundreds of dollars!

"I received a call the other day from a president of the Utah Association of Women," continued the Mayor. "Now what's this about people going mad after playing ***Dungeons & Dragons*** and chopping off other people's hands?"

I suppressed an urge to giggle.

"And," he said, "I hear that people who play witches in the game go on and become witches in real life."

The entire conversation went like that. I tried to explain role-playing games to them, though they refused once again to let me demonstrate a game. I pressed them to at least allow me a hearing to go through these charges against ***D&D*** and show that someone had his facts wrong.

"Well," said the Mayor, "I'll call you back and let you know my final decision."

The next body blow came in the next edition of the newspaper, in the letters to the editor:

"Editor:

"We would like to applaud Mayor Oren Probert for his decision not to allow our public facilities to be used by special interest groups for the purpose of promoting and teaching 'role-playing games' such as '*Dungeons & Dragons*' and '*Tunnels and Trolls*.'

"According to recent national publicity and reports given in testimony in the Wasatch School Board of this state in 1980, the game *Dungeons & Dragons* is currently under much scrutiny and is considered damaging when played on the advanced level . . ."

The letter continued in the same vein, suggesting that ***D&D*** was a plot to draw people into playing it at a more and more advanced level, that the summit of the game was something called ***Eldritch Wizardry***, that the game was spiritualist, violent, pornographic, and satanist. It even suggested that the game could lead to suicide. The letter was signed by three women of whom I had never heard.

The ***D&D*** war was on . . . in my little town.

The uncomfortable truth is that the ***D&D*** war can erupt with startling speed and ferocity anywhere in this country. It's a matter of politics.

Just a few years ago, it was only guerrilla warfare. Local groups made sporadic, unorganized attacks on ***D&D*** – as in a county in the southern part of my state, where a school board fight over honors-students playing ***D&D*** made the local evening news. Our enemies were mostly conservative, often from "pro-morality" groups . . . but there were exceptions, as

when a Denver library class on ***D&D*** was charged as being anti-feminist!

Since that time the political climate has changed. There is now the New Right movement, with conservative data files available to groups on a statewide and national basis. Anti-***D&D*** material has somehow gotten into these files.

And look what happens . . .

In my town, the Utah Association of Women eventually became aware that our club was playing ***Dungeons & Dragons.*** They called for information on ***D&D*** from their other chapters. In a few weeks, they were armed with armfuls of documents – school board transcripts, letters from schools and churches, copies of supposedly "incriminating" evidence from out-of-date ***D&D*** rulebooks – more than enough to put the fear of God in our local city officials. And, considering the impressive appearance of some of the material, little wonder.

And those same data files, or others similar to them, are available on a national basis to any group that decides to call on them. An anti-***D&D*** drive can, therefore, be organized with almost blinding speed anywhere.

The availability of such data files has changed the balance of the war. This is difficult to gauge, since television has tired of airing battles over ***D&D,*** but it seems that in conservative parts of the country, more and more battles are breaking out. And the anti groups seem to be winning – banning games from school districts, harassing conventions with ***D&D*** tournaments, creating the idea among the general public that there is something wrong (or evil) about ***Dungeons & Dragons.***

We've compounded our own problem by our reaction to attack. Our natural responses to political blitzkrieg assault are shock and anger – shock that immobilizes many players, or even convinces them that there is something shameful about the game, and anger that often leads to foolish speeches and letters to newspaper editors that only seem to make every charge about ***D&D*** look true.

There's no reason this tide can't be reversed. With a little common sense, and a smidgen of mutual experience, I think we can win out over our opponents.

In our club, like everywhere else, our first reaction was absolute shock.

There is something horribly paralyzing about being accused of "satanism." I, who if asked beforehand would have said that I'd have laughed such a thing off, found it not pleasant at all. There's a real psychic shock when someone who seems to know what he's talking about denounces you for being involved in "evil."

That shock can lead to some pretty silly fears. Some gamers thought they might lose their jobs, others thought they would lose church positions, another was afraid she'd ruin her political career. Someone even told me that he'd heard the "Mormons" were out to get us!

All of that wore off after a few days. We were unusually resistant to such propaganda – by coincidence, we happened to be holding our Friday Dungeon Nights at the home of a local minister in those days. I, as president, was well known for my church service (I was called into a Mormon elders quorum presidency in the middle of all the controversy); my vice-president was preparing for ministerial college! That helped to calm us down.

Our next step was a crucial one. We decided to get through the whole thing as a team. For the first time, we appointed

a club spokesman. Everything we said publicly – to the city, to the newspaper, to anyone – went through that one person, and everything he said had to be approved, in that time of crisis, by the membership. One for all, and all for one . . . and we stepped on people's toes until our hotheads saw the light. Our greatest fear was that some gamer we'd never met would write some stupid, offensive letter to the newspaper. But none did.

Then we sat down as a club to decide what to do. We made a lot of decisions that probably had no effect: We elected a new president, to see if the Mayor would like him better. The Mayor never spoke to us again, so it didn't matter. We decided to change our club name, since the word "gamer" meant "gambler" to so many people . . . but it took weeks before we could agree on a new name! (Being gamers, we of course made a competition out of choosing a name . . .)

Then we made two decisions that, in retrospect, saved our hash.

First, we decided not to try and argue with the women's club. Nobody has any respect for people who argue incessantly, particularly in Letters to the Editor columns. Instead, we instinctively decided (without realizing it) to go for educating the public. Therefore, we limited ourselves to two letters to the newspaper – one explaining ***Dungeons & Dragons,*** and a second one describing our dream for the Dungeonfest. And there we stopped, even when the opponents replied with an offensive letter that misquoted our own letters, and triumphed "Would the Savior play ***Dungeons & Dragons***?" (According to a Buddy Hackett joke, Jesus and Moses play golf together quite often. Who am I to tell God He can't play ***D&D***?) Continuing our policy of education, we scheduled an Open House at the county courthouse – where people could see us, see the games, and make the sort of informed judgment impossible from just reading letters in a newspaper.

Second, we had a good hard think about what we really wanted to do. This was prompted when someone raised his hand and shouted, "What do we need this great big extravaganza for?" He did have a point. The problem with a big convention is that you want to attend everything, but you can't – the ***Car Wars*** tournament overlaps with the ***D&D*** tournament, and the ***Stellar Conquest*** tournament takes all weekend . . . it's a particular problem in this part of the country, where a good many people feel that playing games on Sunday breaks their Sabbath. That leaves only a one-and-a-half-day weekend.

When we were done thinking, the Dungeonfest had been transformed. And, yes, we were influenced partly by the fact that the propaganda had scared away so many local merchants, but I feel that we also did what we really felt was right. We split the Dungeonfest up into twelve little pieces, and now in Tooele, Utah, there is something going on every month – here a chess tournament, there an ***Ogre*** contest, and the Dungeonfest is now only the largest of the smaller events. We rethought and decided what we really wanted.

And, in every way that counts, we won our share of the ***D&D*** war. The Utah Association of Women hasn't uttered a peep in months – at least, not about us. Our game events go on, even more public than before. Although the Mayor did ban us from the city library, we simply moved to the county courthouse where there are two spacious auditoriums and a building engineer who loves the way we clean up after our events. (There's even cooking facilities, and a row of snack machines.)

We gained a little prestige, community-wise, when an international chess star from Yugoslavia won our last tournament . . . and there is a possibility, a glimmer of hope, that we might be able to work with the other Utah game clubs and take the Dungeonfest to a new home in the state capital!

All in all, I'd say we came out all right.

Translating from experience into rules of thumb, I'd say that winning the *D&D* War requires:

Confidence – Don't let these morality groups get you down. Don't surrender the moral high ground – believe in your own goodness!

Discipline – Speak and work as a team, and curb those with quick tempers who want to mail diatribes to the local paper.

Organization – Odd as it may sound, a club can actually grow together in the heat of battle . . . I almost miss the days of standing shoulder to shoulder on our moral barricades . . .

Goals – Fight for what you want, but first choose what you need to fight for. Wrestling in the letters to editors columns is often a blind alley.

Educate – Speak out about your game, explain to people why you like it and why you play it. Stand up proudly! Avoid the trap of refuting every silly charge your opponents make. (An open house is always a good idea.)

A few years back I had a most embarrassing experience. I was playing a game of *Bundeswehr,* an old SPI game about the Third World War, and I was extremely proud of the way my armies had hedgehogged around a river town on the border. I was sure holding up the Russkies . . . except for a small pile of counters that was speeding for the west edge of the map. That didn't bother me at all – I was holding the border! He wouldn't defeat my army! So I sat there with a very silly look on my face when my opponent ran that column right off the map, and then proceeded to remind me that he got several million victory points for doing so – terrorizing the back country, or something. It didn't matter that I later destroyed every combat unit he had left – I won the battle, but I lost the game.

The same thing applies here. The way to win seems so obvious – out-shout our enemies, argue in the newspaper, call them names, and egg their houses. But, with a gamer's perspective, that's nothing more than winning a battle while losing the war.

There's one last fact that needs to be brought out about these political anti-*D&D* groups. We have some advantages over them.

Think about it from their standpoint. They are a political group, out to swing public opinion. They *cannot afford* to look silly – and that's just what will happen if you stand up to them and look halfway intelligent. Besides that, they have other issues they want to wrestle with – sex education in the schools, fluoridation in the water, censoring cable television, and regulating pinball arcades. Their style is political blitzkrieg, blasting one target and then turning to another . . . and if you refuse to be blasted, they may just decide to quit and go pick on someone else.

Therefore, the secret to winning may very well be not to fight at all. All you might need to do is out-last them, and present yourself to the public in such a way that you look credible and decent.

This strategy will get you through nine times out of ten. There is only one exception – the pitched battle. You might be *forced* to argue with them, battling for your rights before a school board, a city council, or even a state legislature. That's rare, and it can be avoided, but if you get into that, it's a whole different kettle of fish.

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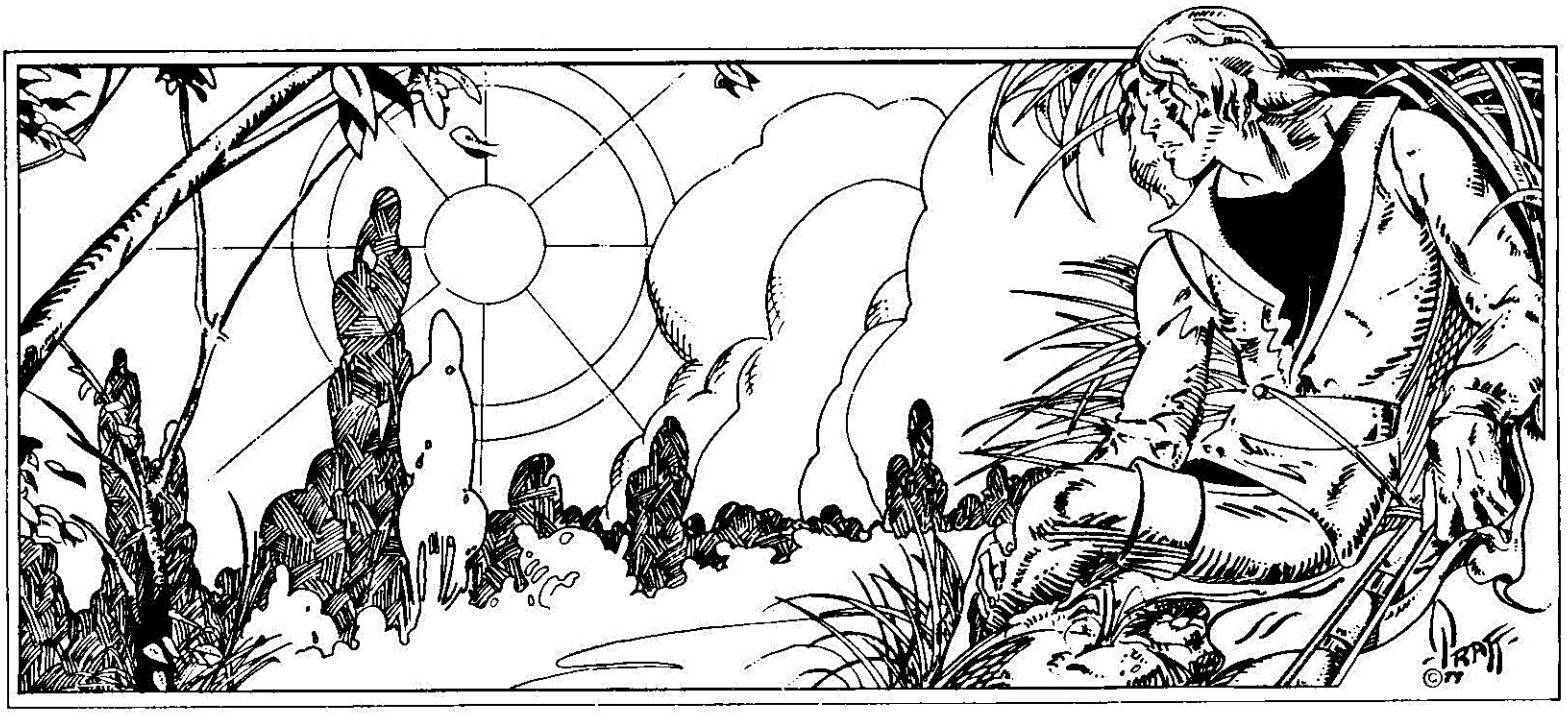


SATURDAY KNIGHTS

by Aaron Allston

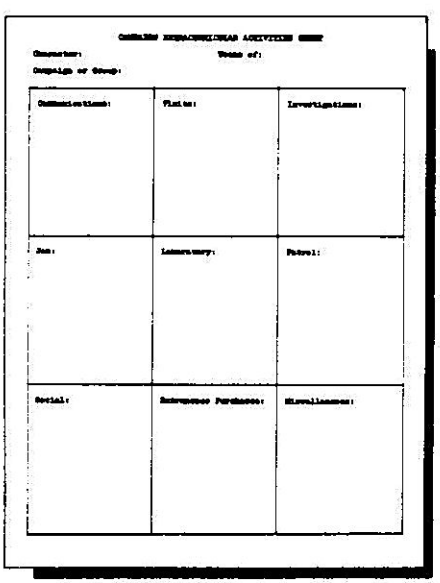
Every so often, a role-playing campaign clicks. The campaign-world is fleshed out and enjoyable, the gamemasters are imaginative and fun, and the players and their characters are three-dimensional and interesting. And all those elements come together like magic, making for a campaign that's more than the sum of its parts. So what's the problem?

Everybody wants *more.* When you have a character so interesting and coherent that he's almost alive when he's played, his player is going to want to know what's happening to him between adventures. When a favored player leaves – moves to another town, joins the Air Force, whatever – he'll generally want to eliminate his least-favorite characters, but he just as often wants his favorites to continue on – either as an NPC or as a semi-retired individual, just waiting around for his player's return. Players often want chronicles of their adventures. If a campaign world has multiple GMs, there needs to be a lot of communication between them to keep facts straight and history unbent.

It's a lot of work. And while it's not exactly a fate worse than death, managing a very popular campaign can take a lot of your time and effort.

Activities Sheet

Yes, that really does say "activities sheet," vaguely like something you'd see on a dull cruise ship or summer camp clipboard. It's an aid for players who want to keep their characters active seven days out of the week.



Sample Activities Sheet

It's a natural inclination: You've just run eight characters through the Quest of the Bilious Bedpan, they've straggled back to their manors and castles and taverns, and you decide that 3 a.m. is about quitting time. You close down the game. And there's always one player (at least) who says, "But I wanted to follow up on the rumors we heard at the Golden Coxswain, and to pick up a new set of weapons by the next adventure, and tell the Lady Dulcinushka about the gargoyle-prince's prophecy and –"

That's when you hand him the Extracurricular Activities Sheet. Such sheets are usually divided into several sections – these sections vary from game milieu to milieu, but usually contain areas for Communications, Personal Life, Patrol, Expenditures, Visits, Investigations, and so on. A simple piece of paper ruled off into six or nine areas, each area bearing one of those designations, and madly photocopied will do. You hand your energetic player the activities sheet and tell him to fill it out and return it some days in advance of the next game. Give one to everyone in the game. That way, you know what everyone's thinking about doing and they know that their individual activities are being attended to.

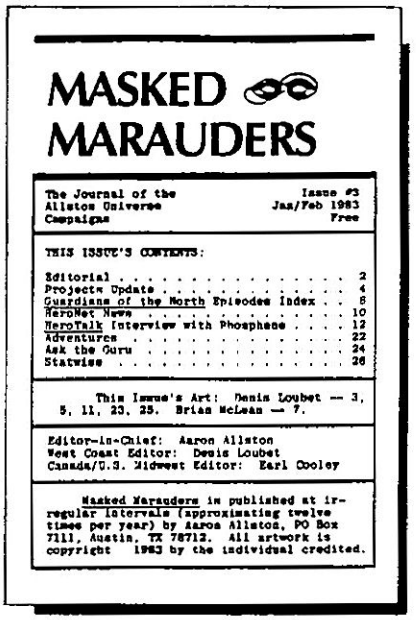
This approach has other advantages. You can sit down with the returned sheets all together and write the responses to the characters' actions all at once, with a minimum expenditure of time. And the whole project encourages characters to develop their lives, backgrounds, and interactions with NPCs; most aspects of a character's non-adventuring life can be handled through the activities sheet. A

character who is a nobleman, for example, when confronted with such a sheet, will think carefully through what he needs to be doing as a function of his social stature; he may realize that he needs to write an epistle to the Crown about his last adventure, that he should set up a regular guardsman patrol in the village that reported strange nighttime occurrences, that he should consult with his herald about the dirtied banner with the unknown coat of arms he'd found at the ruined mill, and so on. And the GM has it all in writing – it's a lot easier to keep track of all the random and interesting details that crop up in a fleshed-out campaign.

On the flipside, though, the players themselves will have records of what they've asked and what they're doing, and if you miss a detail, they're likely to be a little peeved, so tread cautiously . . .

Newsletter

I have to recommend that any regular campaign, especially those with multiple game-masters, ought to have some sort of regular periodical – perhaps no more than an 8½" by 11" letter, typed and photocopied and put together every two or three months.



MASKED MARAUDERS

The Journal of the Allston Universe Campaign — Issue #3 — Jan/Feb 1983 — Free

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This Issue's Art: Denis Loubet – 3, 5, 11, 23, 25. Brian McLean – 7.

Editor-in-Chief: Aaron Allston
West Coast Editor: Denis Loubet
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Why? There are several reasons, not the least of which is that players like to have concrete evidence of their characters' activities. A little sheet which contains short recounts of their players' adventures is usually considered a boon by the players, and it's not terribly difficult to put together.

But you can do more with such a project, and the more you want to do, the more popular the project is likely to be.

For example, among the eight or ten gamers I game with, some thirteen *Champions* campaigns are being prepared or run (not to mention one *TFT*, one *RuneQuest*, and two *D&D*). After we'd had two of our best players join the Armed Forces and three new campaigns from the same game-world start up in not-so-nearby Houston, I began putting together a small newsletter with the above parameters in mind. *Masked Marauders* was just going to be an infrequent listing of adventures updates. However, it didn't work out quite that simply.

Quickly added to those adventures updates were comulative adventures indices, rules discussions, character artwork, game statistics for new weapons, vehicles, and silly NPCs, editorials, soapbox columns, interviews with characters, campaign and campaign-world histories, and so on – all in a regular, 8½" by 5½", 24-to-32-page format. I'm not recommending that all such campaign newsletters be that extensive (but if you have the time and talent handy, it's a lot of fun for contributors and other recipients alike).

Give it, and the activities sheet, a try – you may be surprised at what they can add to a campaign.

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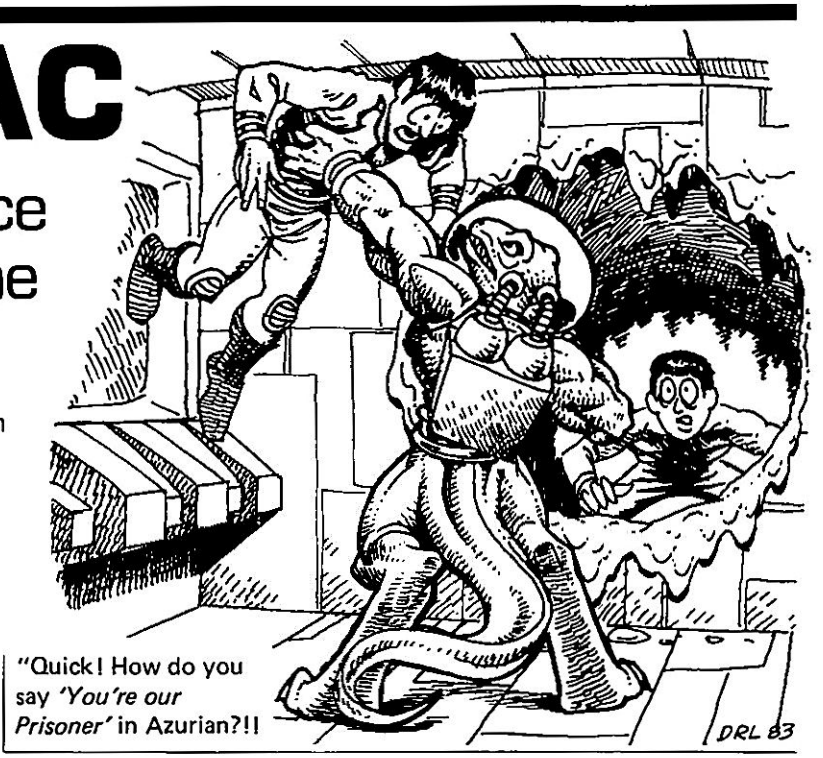

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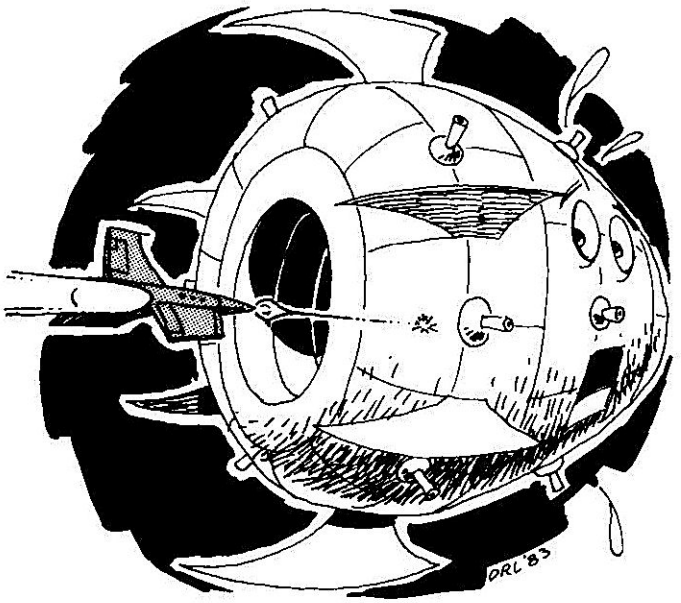


Or, How to Beat the Bersks

by A.D. Young

Well do I recall those halcyon days of SW84, when all was new and ***StarWeb***'s many mysteries surrounded us. I played a Collector in that game, and early on met an Empire Builder who became a close ally. It was an alliance for mutual protection more than anything, for we were both threatened by that scourge of the Web, that fearsome tinthing, the Berserker.

Please understand that it was not that this particular Berserker had attacked us, or even looked like it might. As a matter of fact, he did not appear to be doing much of anything, but we were ready nonetheless. Apart from the usual opening pleasantries between players, my ally and I wrote long epistles on tactics, and were determined to meet this threat with all the force at our joint command. We swore eternal loyalty and mutual assistance and girded our loins, and never were the bios so prepared. The first sign, the very first sign of a Robot, and in we would go, boots and all, with no quarter given.

It is difficult to express the concern we felt over this dread fiend. I cannot now recall what convinced us of his cybernetic quality. In reality, he turned out to be a quite inoffensive little EB, who soon dropped.

I relate this anecdote, not only because it is true, but because the attitude exhibited is very common against inexperienced ***StarWeb*** players, if perhaps verging on idiocy in the case above. A casual reading of the rules tends to confirm the impression that Bersks are a bad lot. What chance for friendship, let alone rapport, can you have with a machine whose sole reason for being is to wipe you out? Talk about clutching a viper to the bosom. This scaly cad has the whip hand at 4:1 odds if your people fight its robots, and twice that when its ships are converted to them. Who may stand against such odds?

Relax, you're getting perspiration all over the page. It's really not that bad. On the contrary, Berserkers are pushovers, militarily weak, vulnerable to the *nth* degree and no great threat at all. You don't believe me? Let us consider the facts.

The average winning ***StarWeb*** score is 7500 VPs and it is achieved, again on the average, at Turn 22. The standard deviation is about 1600 VPs, so that a final figure to aim at must be 8000 VPs at the very least. A figure of 9000 VPs would be wiser, but let us leave it at 8000, since this is a conservative estimate. A Berserker can score in the following ways:

- 2 points for each population killed,
- 5 points per turn for each world owned that is populated by robots,
- 2 points per ship destroyed, if the entire fleet is destroyed,
- 200 points for dropping a PBB,
- 5 points per turn for possessing each Titanium or Sword artifact,
- 15 points per turn for possessing the Titanium Sword,
- In addition, there are the other gains and losses associated with artifacts.

This article is about how to beat Berserkers in ***StarWeb.*** Let us concentrate on the two factors which are the most important for our discussion and which need to be clearly distinguished. These are (1) to be militarily successful, and (2) to achieve the highest possible game rating. There is a good deal of confusion between these aims, since (2) will often require (1). They are, however, quite distinct; as witness, the fact that many a player who has achieved military success has wound up with a lousy rating, and many winners have hardly fired a shot in anger, or even suffered military defeat.

We are concerned with the second aim, that of achieveing the highest possible game rating, and will concern ourselves with military matters only to the extent that they impinge upon that aim. In claiming that Berserkers are relatively easy to defeat, I mean that it is easy to limit their scoring opportunities such that they will go down in the ratings. You may go down militarily in the process, but I would point out that this is not necessarily a disaster.

Let us assume that the game is to end on Turn 22 at 7500 VPs, and so 8000 VPs is the score to aim for to ensure victory. This is the assumption to which a Berserker must work, at least initially. Let us further suppose that our Bersk has managed, on the average, to acquire 25 VPs worth of artifacts held for 20 turns. That is a total of 500 VPs, a likely upper limit. Suppose also that our Bersk has been very successful and managed to place robots on 30 worlds for an average of 5 turns (most going down near game's end, of course). That is another 750 VPs. To accomplish that would mean the demise of at least two other Empires, but we shall return to that later. The next mode is the destruction of whole fleets. This is a fairly rare event, as it turns out, and the fleets are usually small, having first been reduced by other fire. Let us say 100 VPs in all. This gives a grand (and generous) total of 1350 VPs.

The remaining 6650 VPs must come from population killed and from Planet Buster Bombs dropped. They must also be obtained before Turn 22, in our average game at least. The last scoring opportunity is the turn before the game ends; the last chance to build is, at best, the turn before that – all of which supposes that a target exists within one jump of the industry. Efficiency and planning are a must for Berserkers!

Leaving aside the question of PBBs for the moment, our dreaded Bersk has to kill off in excess of 3300 people! Since the average world's population is about 30, this means that 100 worlds are to go under the hammer. The sheer impossibility of this forces us to consider those PBBs rather smartly. Before that, however, we need some more calculations of the lethality of Berserkers, for they can kill population in three different ways.

The first way to kill is by firing at population. This is slow and does not gain many points, but has the virtue of conserving ships, and can be used to "milk" a population. Suppose there are five fleets of ten ships firing at renewable population for ten turns. That is about the maximum that an active Bersk can manage, and accounts for a further 500 VPs.

The second mode of killing, robot attack, is the most efficient for populations less than 100. Each ship converts to two robots (and ceases to exist), each robot kills four population. Thus, each ship has a one-time kill of 8 population by robot attack and scores 16 VPs. This is worth repeating. *Each* Berserker ship is worth 16 VPs. A PBB is built from 25 ships, and is thus worth 400 VPs. To drop it on any population of less than 100 is not to obtain the full value. To drop it on a population of greater than 100 is sheer profit, for the Bersk at any rate.

Let us concentrate on the figure of 16 VPs associated with each Bersk ship, for it is the central fact of existence for a Berserker. To make up the required 6150 VPs, a Berserker needs to have at its disposal at least 6150/16 = 384 ships, and they are only those that it destroys by robot conversion or building PBBs. We have not counted transports, escorts, Home Fleets and, oh yes, battle losses. We shall return to them later. The beauty of the 16 VP figure is that it applies equally to ships and to PBBs. Thus, we have a handy rule-of-thumb by which to gauge the potential of a Berserker for fulfilling the primary aim. Which is, of course, to maximize the game rating.

In practice, robot attacks don't achieve the full value of 16 VPs. The range is usually about 12-14 VPs, depending on the course of events. The reason for this is that there is always the need to place a few robots on a conquered world to run the place and, in the case of HWs, it is 30+ robots (say, 16 ships). The other major cause of this failure to realize full value is, again, battle losses.

Similarly, PBBs are not the veritable gold mine that a casual observer might suppose. In the first place, they are very vulnerable. Unlike potential robots (ships), the Bersk cannot swap them between fleets, and thus the opposition knows exactly where to aim its shots. This can be expensive in terms of escorts (16 VPs each), and *very* expensive if the PBB itself gets clobbered. Secondly, there is not a vast abundance of 100+ population worlds in the Web. There are even fewer which are accessable, and fewer still within easy range of the Bersk's industry. What this boils down to is that, even though a Berserker may make a killing on a few worlds, many other PBBs will have to go to populations less than 100 – some, if things are desperate enough, to robot worlds. A 250-population world brings 700 VPs, or 300 VPs profit, but a robot world brings only 195 VPs and -5 thereafter, unless time (and further VPs) are wasted in dropping robots.

If we assume that there are gains and losses on swings and roundabouts, a PBB is worth about 400 VPs and our figure of 16 VPs for each Berserker ship still stands. What with one thing and another, but excluding battle losses, a Berserker must reckon on having the use of (which in practical terms means building) well in excess of 400 ships to even look like a winner!

> "... a Berserker must reckon on having the use of ... well in excess of 400 ships to even look like a winner!"

Assuming full production by Turn 8, which would need to have been Merchant-assisted, and continuous production until Turn 20 (the latest useful build if the game ends on Turn 22), there are 390 ships available from the original HW. Clearly this is not enough. The Berserker needs more, and you (its friendly bios neighbor) are deisgnated as the chief supplier. In short, another HW is called for: yours. Furthermore, since those battle losses keep on thrusting themselves to the fore, it turns out that one more HW is probably not enough. The Bersk is driven relentlessly to expend precious points gaining ships in order to get even more.

We have, of course, found the Bersk's Achilles' heel. Of the six ***StarWeb*** character types, the Berserker is the one who can least afford to lose ships.

It reminds me of Australia's new aircraft carrier, which will not have fixed-wing aircraft, but only helicopters, since it is required for an anti-submarine role. One cannot help feeling that there must be a better way. For the Berserker, there is no better way. It must expend precious ships to protect ships. Optimizing this conundrum is the chief task of the Berserker player.

How, then, do you defeat this callous cybernetic killer? Simple: You shoot up its ships and deny it the means of making more. It does not matter a tinker's cuss whether you go down screaming in the process; the Berserker will be nobbled. Remember, we are discussing a ratings win. Getting chewed up militarily does not do anyone much good. However, if you keep in there slugging, taking losses and (more importantly) inflicting losses in ships, the other characters must do better than the Bersk, whether it realizes this or not. A Berserker needs another HW and needs it quickly. Any delay is fatal, at least in terms of our primary objective, a ratings win.

In fact, it is the Bersk who does not understand the true facts of Berserkerdom who is apt to cause you the most trouble. In ***StarWeb,*** there is much misunderstanding of the true nature of each character type and its strategy. Unfortunately, the novice Bersk is likely to believe its own propaganda and go barrelling in where a more sagacious metal ogre would fear to tread. This does it no good at all, but may cause considerable discomfiture to you while it thrashes about. In game terms, however, the ignorant or inexperienced Bersk is no threat to an opponent armed with the above facts.

Much more dangerous are those with a little knowledge. They know enough to choose their targets carefully and to avoid firefights. These guys you have to hit and hit hard if they attack you. Make it perfectly clear that you understand the facts of Berserkerdom, even if they do not. Tell them that you will be aiming at their ships, and particularly at their productive capacity, industry, RMP worlds, and transports. In the event that your HW is under attack, determine to blow the industry rather than let the Berserker capture it. A Berserker faced with losses of 30-50 ships, 30 robots down, and nothing to show for it but 100 kills, is a very sick Bersk.

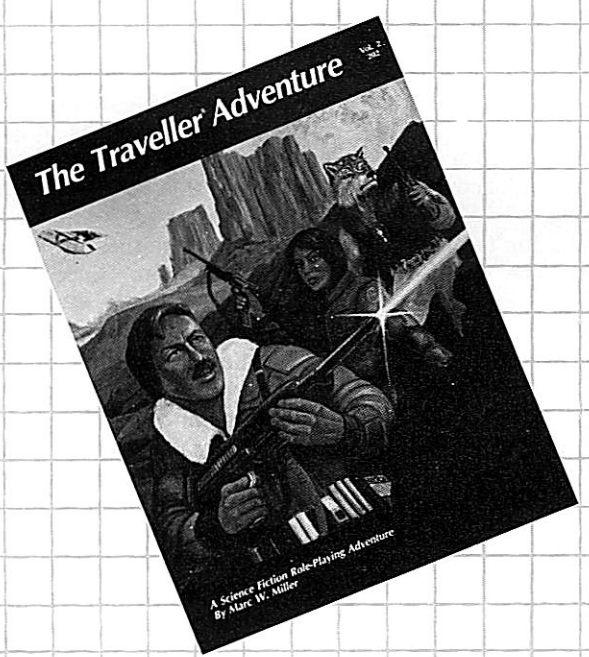
If worse does come to worst and you blow the industry, then be sure to assure the Bersk that the bad times are just beginning and that you will devote the remainder of the game to screwing it up unless it leaves you alone. If the tinhead has any sense, it will rack off as fast as possible to salvage something by trying for another HW. In that event, your losses may not be so severe as you had at first thought, and you will certainly outrate the Berserker.

The Bersk who understands the facts as outlined above is the easiest to handle of all. Just make sure that this Bersk knows that you know, and are willing to act upon this knowledge, and you will have no trouble from it. The reason for this is best summed up in Young's Bersk dictum:

Berserkers are fundamentally gun shy!

The Berserker, in fact, has amazing similarities to the lion. Both have the reputation of fearless killers and are widely reported as such. In reality, both tend to prey on the weak or the inexperienced, deeming the strong as best avoided. It is not because they could not, but rather because they dare not.

I was going to finish by regaling you with the story of the Apostle, the Web's most aggressive character who, once upon a time, took on and thrashed two Bersks. That, I fear, will have to await another time. To those dedicated Berserker players who may have had a few cherished illusions shattered, I offer the consolation that playing Berserker is the second most difficult position in ***StarWeb.*** To gain a victory as Berserker is no easy task – they really are a bunch of creampuffs!



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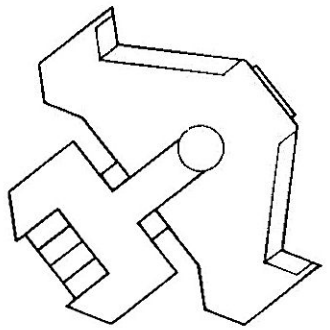

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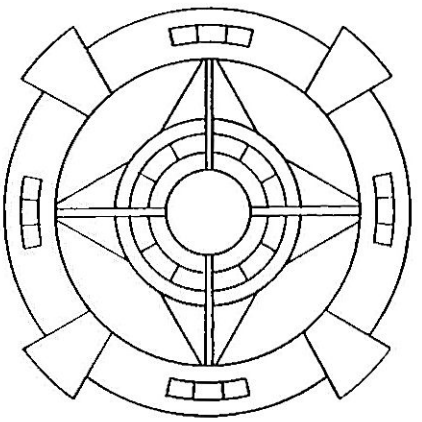

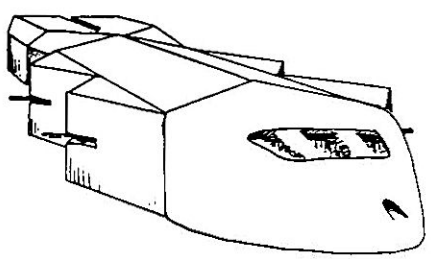

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Economics in *TFT*

by Ronald Pehr

On of the fascinating aspects of ***The Fantasy Trip (TFT)*** is its economic system. Not only are prices given for items that player-characters might want to buy, but salaries are shown for different jobs they might undertake between adventures. Naturally, it would take a whole rulebook to list all the jobs one could possibly have, and doubtless players who want to have their characters work at something not on the list can extrapolate from the list.

However, characters might find it easier to find part-time, or short-term jobs, rather than have to work around their steady occupations when they want to go adventuring.

In order to be attractive to employers on a one-shot basis, characters will have to be able to present an efficient, knowledgeable appearance. After all, who's going to hire an armor-polisher if the latter's sword and shield are rusty? To apply for temporary or part-time jobs, characters must be spending a minimum amount on lifestyle – this simulates having the appropriate clothing and buying drinks for the correct contacts or licensing officials.

For any job requiring a skill costing 1 IQ point – $10/week

For any job requiring a skill costing 2 IQ points – $20/week

For any job requiring a skill costing 3 IQ points – $30/week

These costs are in addition to the basic $20/week required of all ***TFT*** characters. For every $10 short a character is of his lifestyle total, he receives a -1 on his roll for employment. Other modifiers to the roll include: Any bonus or minus to reaction rolls, -2 if the character does not have all of the skills required for a job, -5 if the character has none of the skills required for a job (but it's still possible to con a prospective employer, if you have enough brains and charm), +2 if the character is well-known as a good worker or "industry leader."

Of course, not all jobs are worth having, for some characters. In a city of reasonable size – say, 2,000 inhabitants– a character looking for a job will find varying numbers of opportunities for different types of job. Income levels of jobs available and how many are easily found are as follows:

Income Level	Number of Jobs Available
Subsistence	40/week
$5/week	20/week
$10/20/30/week*	10/5/3/week
Normal salary for employment type	2/week

For simplicity's sake, assume a proportional increase/decrease in the number of jobs available for different sized communities. For example, if the community is twice the size indicated – about 4,000 residents – simply double the availabilities. If a community is half the size, divide the availability in half. If the availability falls, in a small community, to "one-half" a job or less in a week, consider that a job only becomes open at GM's option.

A character may apply for five jobs in the course of a week. To apply, he makes his intelligence roll, plus any modifiers from the list previously given. If he makes his roll he has found a job which will last for 2d6 weeks (or GM's option).

Also at GM option will be what sort of jobs become available at the higher income levels – it's quite likely that there will be short-term occupations available, but none for which the character is qualified.

*That is, $10/week for a job requiring one IQ point in talents, $20/week for two point's worth, etc.

Budding entrepreneurs have a place in *TFT*, too. Those wishing to go into business for themselves, using a mundane skill, must make an investment in property, equipment, inventory, etc. This investment is the weekly salary that is normal for that type of work multiplied by:

15 for 1 IQ-point skills
30 for 2 IQ-point skills
50 for 3+ IQ-point skills.

Once this investment has been made – and it may be paid by installments if the NPC representing vendors or suppliers agree – the business can start making money. Each week, roll one die:

1 Lose twice the normal weekly salary for that type work.
2 Lose the normal weekly salary for that type work.
3 Break even.
4 Earn the normal weekly salary for that type work.
5 Earn twice the normal weekly salary.
6 Earn three times the normal weekly salary.

Of course, this is just an abstraction – if a character in an ongoing campaign wants to become an entrepreneur, the GM will probably want to make the business in question more concrete, complete with a location, NPCs business decisions, trade embargos, etc. The numbers above are for a very small business, assuming a small business location (say, a tavern) and two employees (in the case of a tavern, probably a cook and a maid/servant).

Naturally, to make a business work, you have to be there. Characters may be off two days per week – to go adventuring or anthing else they want to do – and the business will run. For every day a character is off in a week beyond the second day, it is -1 to the income roll (limit -3). This -1 may be prevented by having a capable employee run the business in the owner's absence. Roll to acquire an employee as you would to be an employee looking for that type of work. Once hired, employees will continue to work as long as desired – these are not adventurers. Employee salary is at the normal rate for that type of work, and when you're rolling for weekly results, must be subtracted from a die roll of 3 and added to the loss on rolls of 1 or 2. However, after the employee has been on the job for awhile – four months per IQ point cost – the salary is subsumed into the die rolls.

Moreover, after a year and a half, the employee's production will have improved to the point where you may add +1 to the die roll (a result of 7 bring in five times the normal weekly salary). If an employee is not hired, business will be presumed to have improved in any event within a year, allowing +1 die rolls (except for those weeks where you have taken more than two days off). Employees will generally quit if not paid in a given week.

Those wishing to expand a business must invest whatever it cost originally to set it up, and may then hire an additional employee for each sum so invested. Each additional employee after the first adds or subtracts 10% to the amount earned/lost.

Additional Jobs

Skill	*IQ / Skill Required*	*Income*	*Risk*
Cobbler	9	$20	–
Bricklayer/Mason	9	15	–
Carpenter	9	15	–
Glassblower	9	50	3/18
Lampmaker	9	15	–
Miner	9	20*	3/17
Perfumer	9	25	3/18
Ink/Dye Maker	9	25	3/18
Rope Maker	9	15	–
Valet	9	5**	4/18
Blacksmith	9	25	3/18
Innkeeper/Barmaid	Recognize Value, Business Sense	50	3/18
Miller	9	15	–
Tailor	9	15	–
Bureaucrat	Literacy	10***	3/18
	Diplomacy also	25***	
	Courtly Graces also	50***	
Bordello Worker	Sex Appeal, Charisma	50	5/16
Tinker/Peddler	(May have any or all of the following) Sex Appeal, Charisma Recognize Value, Diplomacy Business Sense, Detect Lies	10/skill	3/17

*May be considered an IQ 8 skill, $10, in areas where mining is a large industry and there is a lot of manpower.

**Low rate of pay because of room and board in relatively high style and chance of making beneficial contacts.

***May also get $1/week more for each additional skill which may be beneficial to that particular bureaucracy.

All of the above presume characters are in a place where they can find work at these occupations, not every part of Cidri may have every sort of work. The salary for a bordello worker presumes a legal bordello; for illegal bordellos, income is $75, risk factor is 5/15. Note that Tinkers and Peddlers do not work for anyone else. They are independent. Investment/income rolls are not necessary, however, the character must either deduct the $20 basic lifestyle costs from profits *or* must be an itinerant and cannot sell wares in the same town for more than a week at a time.

Contest Contest Results

The contest in issue 57 was another nuisancy one. Readers were dragged off screaming and forced to create *new* contests – for still more nonsense in future months.

Surprisingly, there were a lot of entries. Some of them were even usable. So, for the next several months, you'll be treated to competions dredged from the minds of your fellow readers. (Hee, hee, hee.)

Our first-place winner is Ed Simons, a frequent letter-writer and repeat Murphy's Rules offender. Ed wins a $50 gift certificate for his entry, which is:

Write a table for generating something useless. Examples? Sack lunch generation tables, wizards' desks' contents tables, high-tech carnival grab-bag tables, etc. In fact, those same topics may be written up and submitted as entries, if you wish – though we'd prefer original topics.

Entries will be judged on cleverness, humor content, and actual gamability (will someone be able to actually sit down and generate the ingredients of Arcturan lasagna from the table?).

The first-place winner will receive a $50 certificate from SJ Games; the second-place winner will receive one for $20. these may be used for any product made by SJ Games (and are redeemable only by SJ Games – don't annoy your local shops with them). Entries must be postmarded by no later than April 15, 1983 (mail 'em with your taxes). All entries will become the property of TSG; we reserve the right to award fewer or no prizes if we receive no entries of publishable quality.

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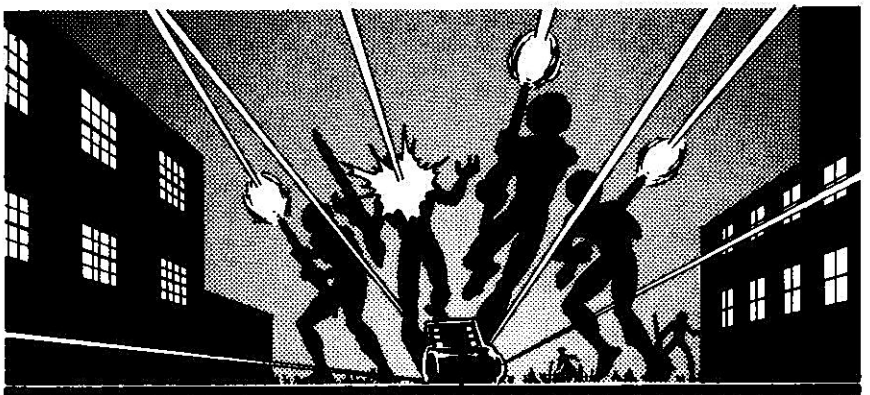


MICROFILM MADNESS

Adventure for *Champions*

by George MacDonald

Microfilm Madness is a ***Champions*** scenario for two to four beginning heroes. It relates an encounter that can occur during the time covered in the "Vipers Nest" scenarios that come with ***Champions***, between the "Tanghal Tower" and "Combat in Christopher Park" engagements, or can be played as a separate adventure.

The players' heroes in this engagement should be built on around 250 points and have fewer than 25 points of experience. For balance, they should have Attacks of around 40-60 active points, Defenses of 10-30, a Speed of 4-6, and a Dexterity of 15-30. Characters significantly more powerful than this will have too easy a time in the scenario. Those weaker than this will have to work extra-hard to stop the villains. Players in this engagement should stop reading here.

One Dark Night

Harry slept slumped against a cold alley wall, a paper bag in his hand. Through a sleepy haze he heard the slap of pounding combat boots – two soldiers marching rhythmically in front of the building across the street.

The wino sat up and cradled his bag. The soldiers, in orange uniforms and brown body armor, ignored him and gazed down separate streets. They kept their rifles ready, evidently guarding the book depository at the corner of the T-intersection. Harry thought of the warm depository and fumbled for the bottle in his paper bag.

Harry raised the bottle to his lips and stopped, staring wide-eyed as two ominous vans rolled soundlessly around a corner. The soldiers on the corner, unaware of the vans, continued their rhythmic marching. The vans stopped and two men in green emerged, carrying huge bazooka-like weapons on their shoulders. Silently, the men crouched and aimed at the troops on the corner. Harry lowered his bottle, cringing as twin explosions blew the orange soldiers into the side of the building.

The wino came shakily to his knees as the street exploded in color. Green troops scrambled out of the vans, and orange troops rushed down the street toward them. Within moments, costumed figures lit the sky with golden energy blasts. Harry flopped to the ground and quivered behind a garbage can as a stray blast burst above him. He was in the middle of a nightmare – and he hadn't even had a drop from his bottle of Thunderbird.

The battle at the Perez Memorial Book Depository is unusal because of the large number of different factions present. The criminal organization VIPER has stolen a piece of microfilm from the law enforcement agency UNTIL. This microfilm contains the codes necessary to change the information in UNTIL's computers. This would allow the owner of the film to change criminal records, erase identities, or engage in computer crime. Unfortunately, the film has been misplaced.

Almost simultaneously, three groups have figured out that the film is in the Perez Memorial Book Depository. They are all rushing to the depository to get the film before anyone else can. The circumstances surrounding the encounter are detailed below, in the words of the participants.

Briefing given to VIPER Agents while en route to the Perez Memorial Book Depository:

"We're in a hurry, so stop talking and listen up. I know that some of you guys have never worked together, but you're about to become close friends, real fast. We haven't had enough time to plan a full assault for this mission, so stay alert!

"One of our undercover agents managed to steal a roll of microfilm that contained the codes necessary to tap into the UNTIL computers. He knew that the investigators were on his tail, and that he could be captured at any moment. He decided to drop the microfilm at one of the safe points that we have around the city, a local branch library. Later, he was killed in a shootout with the police. UNTIL Investigators are scouring the city in search of the missing film.

"When our other agents went to the various safe points looking for the microfilm, they found nothing. Microfilm at the branch library had been rotated into the Perez Memorial Book Depository.

"We were going to sneak into the depository and look for the film tomorrow. Unfortunately, UNTIL has surrounded the place. They're in the process of obtaining legal papers to open the depository tonight. So we've put you guys together as a scratch force. You're going to attack the building and secure the film tonight, before UNTIL gets inside."

Briefing given to UNTIL Agents while en route to the depository:

"All right. I know this was a rush, but this is a very important mission. The access codes to the UNTIL central computer have been stolen. If the microfilm with those codes gets into the possession of VIPER, the entire structure of UNTIL will be compromised.

"We've tracked down the microfilm to a VIPER message drop. Unfortunately, the drop, a book depository, is locked up for the night and we can't legally get in. We've been sent to guard the building while our lawyers get permission to open the depository.

"Two of our Defender agents are already standing duty around the building. We don't know if there's going to be any trouble before we can get at the film, but High Command isn't taking any chances. VIPER will stop at nothing to get their hands on that film. All of us will guard the building until city representatives come to open the building.

"When we get there, we'll check with the agents on duty and get their reports. Then you'll all split into buddy teams and fan out around the block. Try to be polite to any bystanders, but do not allow any compromises of security. If that film drops into enemy hands, all of our lives are in danger."

Briefing given to GRAB supervillains while en route to the depository:

"I'm glad that you could make it here tonight. Our sources indicate that we can get our hands on a rich target, if we move fast. A small spool of film in a library holds the access codes to the UNTIL computer banks. With those codes we could wipe your criminal records from the books, give you large international bank balances, and create cover identities for use at a later time. Once we've finished with the codes, there are buyers who would pay millions for them.

"The codes are on microfilm on a container marked 'The Secrets of Mongolian Stir-Fry,' by C. Lee. All we have to do is break into the library, find the film in its container, and get away. Unfortunately, our sources in UNTIL and VIPER tell us that they will also be at the library. With luck, we can use the confusion to sneak away with the film. If we can't, we'll simply crush every agent in our path and steal the film. In any case, after tonight we shall all be much richer!"

The Book Depository

The Perez Memorial Book Depository is built of reinforced concrete walls. The interior walls and doors are heavy wood. The part of the building currently in use contains six rooms.

The Card Catalog Room (labelled A on the map) has two doors, one from the street and one from the Librarian's office. The room is filled with three giant wooden card catalogs. The catalogs contain reference numbers for all the books currently in the depository. As the building is closed, the room will be dark and the doors are closed and locked.

The Librarian's Office (B) is a small room between the card catalog room and the book stacks. The office contains two 200 kg metal desks and two wooden chairs. Four large metal filing cabinets cover one wall. A teller's window leads from the office to the card catalog room. This room contains reports, paperwork, and files on the latest books and microfilm that have come into the depository.

The Book Stacks (C) comprise the largest area of the building. The book stacks can be entered from a door in the Librarian's office, a set of double doors from the garage, and a door into the microfilm library. Nine rows of ceiling-high wooden book shelves fill the stacks. Each shelf weighs 800 kg per hex of shelf. The stacks cannot be sighted through until the books in them have been pushed (or blown) out of the way. Any ranged attack will clear a line of sight through one hex of shelf for every 2 BODY done. The rows between the shelves are extra-wide so that the miniature forklift in the garage can drive between the shelves.

A small Bathroom (D) sits in the lower left corner of the map. The bathroom contains a 25-kg toilet and a 12.5-kg wash basin. The bathroom door and walls are thin plywood.

The Garage (E) is a dusty room with a concrete floor and a two-story (4") ceiling. A steel garage door and a heavy wooden door lead to the outside. The locks on these doors are very old. Anyone attempting to pick them gets a +2 on Security Systems. A set of wooden double doors lead into the stacks. A large 3200-kg delivery truck fulls most of the garage. An 800-kg forklift sits next to the lower wall. The forklift has a maximum lift of 400 kg and a maximum speed of 2" per phase. The keys for the forklift have been left in the forklift ignition. 14 50-kg boxes of books (DEF 2, BODY 5) cover the upper wall. Two 12.5-kg hand carts (DEF 4, BODY 2) lean up against the lower wall.

The Microfilm Library (F) is the target of the whole mission. Inside this room are 28 steel cabinets with drawers for holding microfilm. Each cabinet weighs 200 kg and has 14 drawers. "The Secrets of Mongolian Stir-Fry," by C. Lee is in the fifth drawer of the cabinet marked M. If that cabinet is hit by an attack, find the total number of BODY that penetrates the cabinet's defense of 5. If a 2d6 roll is less than or equal to the remainder, then the target microfilm is destroyed.

Battle Tactics

VIPER

VIPER will send a base team of six of their agent types: two Assault, one Undercover, one Flying Cavalry, and two Heavy Weapons. They will have four more agents for every hero in the run. The VIPER Support Table, listed with the VIPER Agent Characteristics, lists the different types of agents. Roll once on the table for every four extra VIPER agents. On the segment 12 after the engagement starts, the GM should roll 1d6. On a roll of 1-3, a team of four more VIPER agents will show up.

The VIPER plan is simply to assault the building through the garage door. They will then flood inside, searching every corner and door for the microfilm depository. Once they find the depository, they will spend 2d6 phases looking for a canister that says "The Secrets of Mongolian Stir-Fry" by C. Lee. The microfilm is hidden inside that canister.

When VIPER gets the film, they will use their standard tactics: They will cause as many diversions as possible and, during the confusion, will hand the film off to a Flying Cavalry agent or an Undercover agent for safekeeping. The agent will try to sneak the film off the battlefield.

UNTIL

UNTIL will send a base team of four Defender agents. For every hero in the run they will send four more agents. UNTIL troops will enter one turn after VIPER agents have arrived on the scene. Each turn after the battle starts, there is a chance for UNTIL reinforcements to show up. Each segment 12, the GM rolls 1d6. If he rolls 1-3, four more UNTIL Defender agents will show up on Segment 4 of the next turn.

Once the building has been penetrated, they will attempt to bypass any VIPER agents outside and get inside. Once inside the building, they will try to keep any VIPER agents, or anyone else, from leaving.

If the building has not been penetrated, the UNTIL agents will try to position themselves between VIPER and the building. The UNTIL agents don't know where the microfilm is in the building. They will attempt to stop anyone they think might have the film.

GRAB

GRAB will arrive two turns after the VIPER agents and one turn after the UNTIL agents have arrived. They will attempt to sneak past any opposition without being noticed. If they are spotted, they will use their speed and striking power to blow past the agents into the building.

GRAB does not know where the microfilm room is in the building, so they

will have to search for it. Once they have found the room, it will take them 2d6 phases to find the film.

If GRAB was undetected entering the building, they will attempt to sneak out. If this is not possible, they will give the film to the conscious member with the greatest mobility. That member will run with the film while the others help any downed comrades to get away.

Battle Characteristics

The heroes can enter this engagement in many different ways. They could have connections in UNTIL – the UNTIL informant would tell the heroes that a big operation is going down, and that VIPER might be involved, but would probably not tell the hero about the microfilm.

Someone from the other side of the street might alert a hero – a hero with criminal or VIPER connections might learn of the operation. Likewise, a hero might learn of the operation from a GRAB member, or former GRAB member. Any hero or group with connections can get into this battle.

As always, a hero can come across the battle accidentally: He might work in, or near, the battle site; the noise of the battle would draw patrolling heroes for blocks; a hero could even be flying to another emergency and see the battle happening below. In general, it will be better to have the battle be a surprise to the heroes.

The engagement should happen so fast that the characters will not have time to think about it. Dozens of enemy agents, friendly agents, and supervillains will be all over the depository. The heroes will most likely not know what is going on, or whom to stop. If the heroes are smart, they will identify the UNTIL agents and get the story from them. Unfortunately, once the shooting starts, most UNTIL agents will assume that anything that's not in an orange uniform (or a *very* well-known costume) will be hostile.

This battle happens at night, so most people will have problems seeing. The street lights are out around the building. A moving figure will be visible in the moonlight. It will take a Perception Roll with night modifiers (-3, -1 per 1") to see a static figure. A Perception Roll with night modifiers will identify a moving figure. A ½ Perception Roll with night modifiers will identify a static figure. The villain Black Claw has UV vision and thus takes no night modifiers.

There are a number of different modifiers to the Perception Rolls. UNTIL agents in their international orange uniforms are +3. The GM may give other characters bonuses or penalties depending on their costume colors and notoriety. Remember, any fighting figure will be fair game to most agents.

To make things simpler, here's a timetable that describes when and where the villains and heroes enter.

Before start of engagement: Two UNTIL Defender agents patrol the corner on guard duty.

On Turn One: VIPER agents enter on south side of map. They will set up and take out the guards.

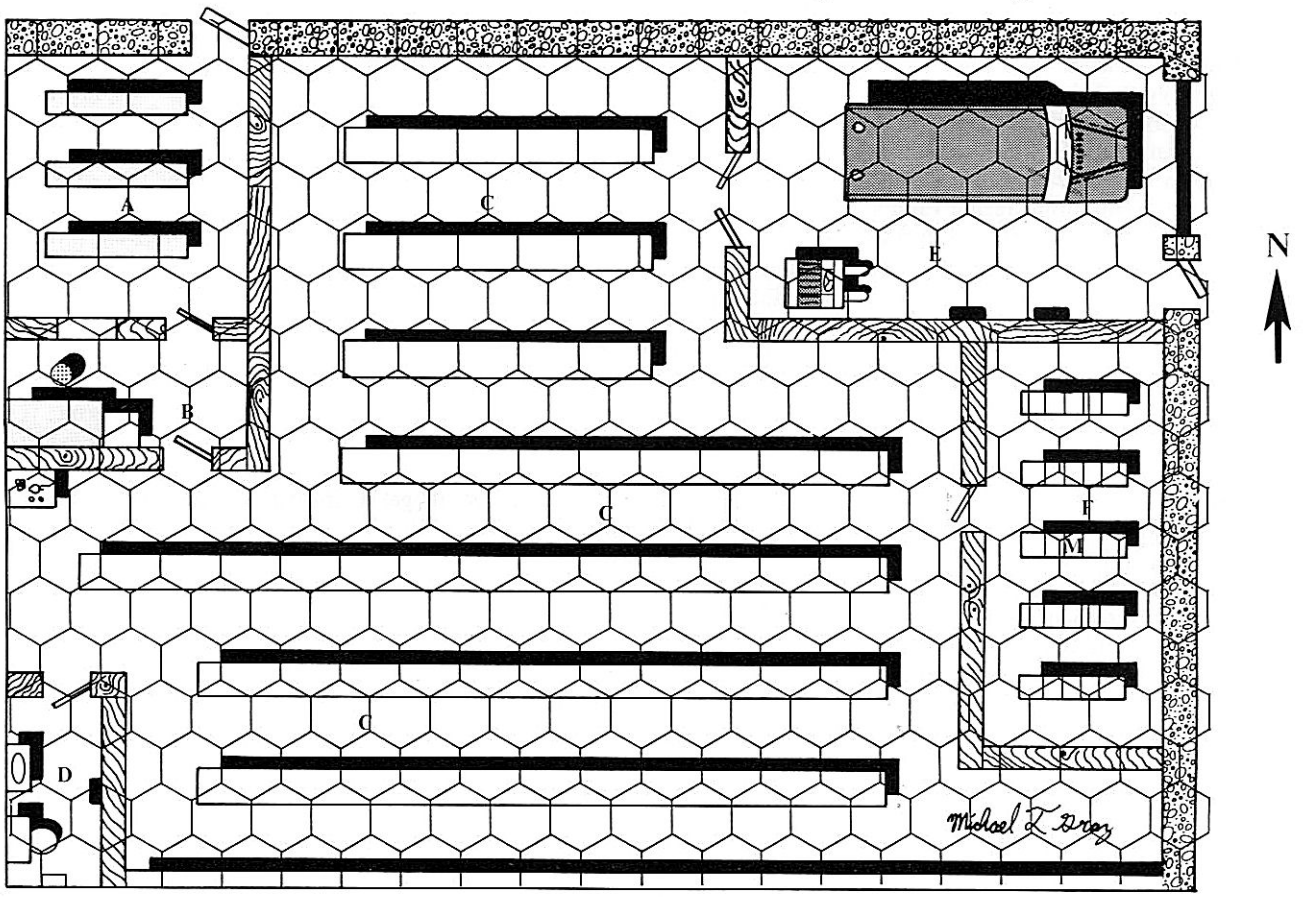
On Turn Two: UNTIL reinforcements show up from the east side of the map. If they do not see any fighting, they will approach slowly. If there is fighting, they will burst in at full speed. Possible VIPER reinforcements (on a 1-3 on d6).

On Turn Three: GRAB will arrive from the west side. They will attempt to sneak into the building. They will blow their way in if they are spotted. Possible VIPER and UNTIL reinforcements (each on a 1-3 on d6).

On Turns 4+: Possible VIPER and UNTIL reinforcements (see above).

Anytime: The heroes will either be

Perez Memorial Book Depository



in or around the building at the start, or be drawn in by the fighting. They can arrive at any time.

Options

The flexible background of this engagement leads to a variety of options for the GM. These options personalize the engagement and provide tension. They can expand this simple engagement to cover several gaming sessions.

UNTIL was considered rushed at the beginning of this engagement, and sent only two Defenders so as not to cause any panic in the general area. An additional group of four or eight UNTIL Investigator agents could easily be hidden around the area in disguise. Remember, though, for every four additional UNTIL agents that are in the engagement, VIPER should also get four additional agents.

An option that gets a hero directly into the engagement is to have him work at the depository in his secret identity. If the hero was working late, he would be in the thick of any engagement from the start. If a hero's secret identity is somewhat transient, he could be a janitor in the building. If the hero is scholarly, he could be doing research using the books in the building (with special permission to be in the building at night). In either case, the GM could use the player's identity to get the player into the thick of things.

Finally, the canister may not even be in the building. This would lead to confusion as everyone rushes around looking for it. The canister could have been taken to another branch library, been misfiled, or been taken home by an unscrupulous employee with a microfilm reader (and a love for Mongolian food). Such a option is more complex and would lead the GM outside the bounds of this engagement. The GM is encouraged to try such additions to the engagement as a way to expand this scenario.

Tournament Play

The multi-faction aspects of this engagement make special multi-player games possible. The game would still be controlled by a GM, but each of the four sides of the engagement could be controlled by a separate player. Each player would attempt to get the microfilm for himself, while keeping the others from getting it. The heroes should be picked carefully to balance the supervillains and the agents. The hero player should take four superheroes. The heroes enter one at a time: one on Turn One, one on Turn Two, etc. The VIPER player would get

22 assorted agents to start and the normal reinforcements. the UNTIL player gets the two agents that start at the building, 20 agents on Turn Two, and normal reinforcements. The GRAB player gets all four supervillains on Turn Three.

Given that all the players know when and where they come in, they should play the scenario out normally. Each player would get victory points from the list below. The player with the most victory points would win the engagement.

Victory Conditions	**Victory Points**
Everyone's Victory Condition	
Getting away with the microfilm	100
VIPER's and UNTIL's Special Conditions	
Capturing enemy agents	2/agent
Capturing any super-characters	5/char.
If the microfilm is destroyed (UNTIL only)	50
GRAB's Special Conditions	
Capturing heroes	5/hero
Leaving captured GRAB mem.	-10/mem.
Heroes' Special Conditions	
Capturing VIPER agents	1/agent
Capturing GRAB villains	5/villain
Harming an UNTIL agent	-2/attack

Obviously, the way to win is to get away with the microfilm. Second, third, and fourth places will be decided, however, by the performance of the players. Each group's unique objectives and strategies is reflected in the victory-point listing. The players in tournament-style games should know the victory point list before the game begins so that they can make proper game decisions.

There are several criteria for escaping with the film. A character who gets off the board unnoticed with the film has escaped. A character who gets off the board and has superior mobility to all his pursuers has escaped. If a character with Stealth gets off the board and all his pursuers blow their Perception Rolls when looking for him, he has escaped. And if a character runs off the board and no one follows him, he has escaped.

The Principals

On pages 23-24 are the characteristics of the participants in the battle at the Perez Memorial Book Depository.

VIPER agents come in four different kinds. All of the different agents have the same characteristics, but each has a different package of weapons and skills. A chart allows the GM to roll 1d6 and find the type of agent each group of agents contains.

All of the UNTIL agents used in this engagement are Defender agents. The GM may substitute Investigator agents for Defender agents, but the loss of firepower could hurt UNTIL.

Four members of GRAB are shown. GRAB includes many different villains. The GM may include villains from his own campaign to provide continuity.

Finally, Harry's characteristics are not given for reasons of space. Harry is a normal, and is frightened, burned out and possibly hung over.

The Map

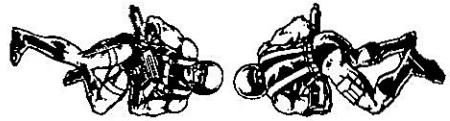
The map provided covers only the Perez Memorial Book Depository. When the GM transfers the map to a full-sized board, he should surround it with the streets and buildings appropriate to where he's located the depository. This will allow for a more free-form and interesting battle, and will make it more difficult for anyone to sneak the microfilm canister off the board.

Finishing Up

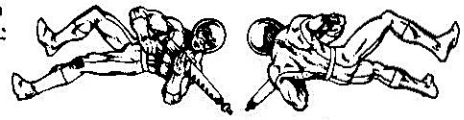
No matter how the game is played, the aftermath of the battle will probably be as confused as the battle itself. Reporters and city police will be swarming over the area to investigate. UNTIL will attempt to cordon off the depository if the film got away and will make an inch-by-inch search of the area and the characters in the area before admitting that the film is gone. The news media will make a big story out of the battle, using it to push "The VIPER Menace!" This is a chance for the heroes to get lots of good press if they win, and lots of bad press if they lose. In either case, it's a good chance for the heroes to collect a lot of bruises. What more can they ask for?

VIPER Agent

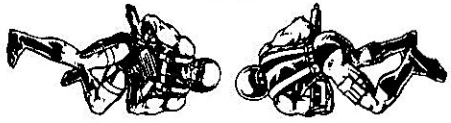
UNTIL Agent



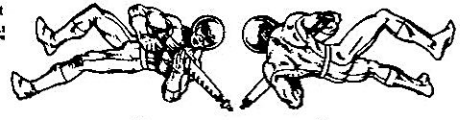
VIPER Agent



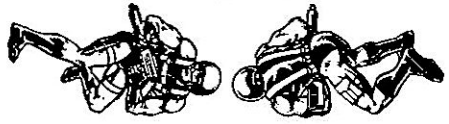
UNTIL Agent



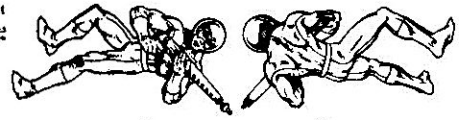
VIPER Agent



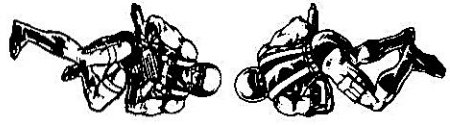
UNTIL Agent

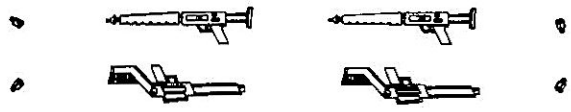


VIPER Agent

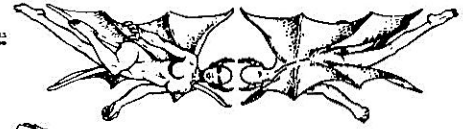


UNTIL Agent



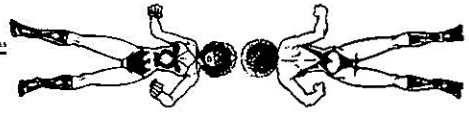


Gremlin

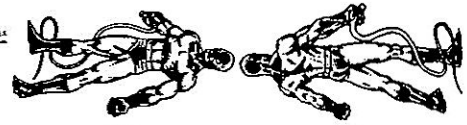


Black Claw

Black Diamond

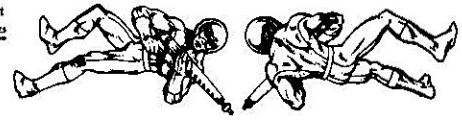


The Whip

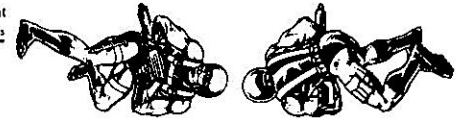


Harry

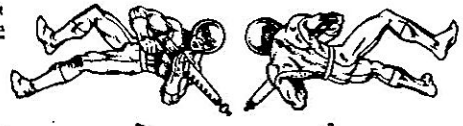
VIPER Agent



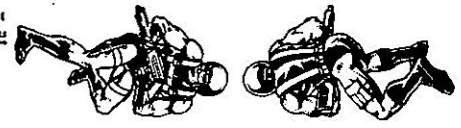
UNTIL Agent



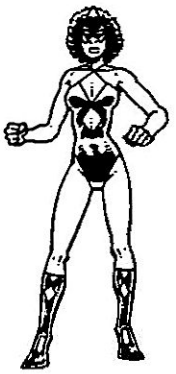
VIPER Agent



UNTIL Agent



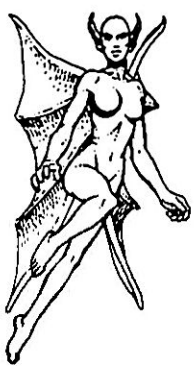
Black Diamond



VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers	END	100+	Disadvantages
30-60	STR	20	60	Density Increase, use CHA after dash when full mass. Also: -6" Knockback, weight 6,400 kg.	0	25	Berserk 14 or less when criticized about her ineptness, Recover 11 or less
18	DEX	24					
10-40	CON	0				30	Hunted by VIPER on 8 or less
10-16	BODY	0					
11	INT	1	60	0 END cost on Density Incr.		20	Hunted by FBI on 8 or less
10	EGO	0	3	Stealth 13, only when normal mass		15	Dependent NPC, scientist brother
10-25	PRE	10					
10	COM	0	6	2 Levels on Offense in HTH combat		15	2d6 Susceptibility to strange magnetic or gravitic fields
6-24	PD	0					
2-20	ED	0				10	1½x STUN from all Force beam, gravitic, or magnetic attacks
4	SPD	12					
8	REC	0				10	2d6 Unlucky
20-80	END	20				15	Secret Identity
30-66	STUN	24					

Maxine Smith had had a hard life. She had been neglected while her father showered all his praise on her brother. Her brother was a brilliant science student who specilized in gravitics. His experiments in artificial gravity brought him worldwide acclaim. The radiations from those experiments also gave Maxine strange abilities. Maxine still loves her brother, even more because she now has the power to pound people into mush. Maxine has taken up with several groups, hoping to become a big-name supervillain. Unfortunately, she is not cut out for that kind of work and often botches jobs. But she keeps trying to make it big, while attempting to keep her secret from her brother.

Gremlin



VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers	END	100+	Disadvantages
35*	STR	20	14	*AP on STR	1	25	Hunted by Gargoyle on 11 or less
23*	DEX	31	10	*½ END, STR, and AP			
28*	CON	29	18	*†Flight 20"	4	25	Hunted by VIPER 11 or less
13*	BODY	5	4	*Knife Resistance			
13	INT	3	7	*3 Levels with Flight		15	Loves to humiliate Garg.
10	EGO	0	6	*Ego Defense on 10		15	Radical Womens Lib
20*	PRE	8	5	Security Systems 12		10	2d6 in sub-zero temps.
10	COM	0	5	Stealth 11 / 14		10	2x STUN from all cold-based attacks
20*	PD	10	10	Acrobatics 11 / 14			
19*	ED	10	5	Instant Change		15	Secret Identity
5*	SPD	14					
13*	REC	0		†OAF Wings			
60*	END	0		*Only in Hero ID			
45*	STUN	0					

Linda Shane was a radical female terrorist in the organization called WITCH. WITCH, looking for an advantage in its war with VIPER, sent Linda on a special mission with the superhero known as Gargoyle. Linda helped Gargoyle clear himself of a phony murder charge. In return for her help, Gargoyle was forced to give Linda a sample of the formula that gave him his powers. Linda split the formula into two parts; half she gave to WITCH for analysis, half she drank herself. Now she can change at will into the lizard-like Gremlin! She still does occasional work for WITCH, but mostly uses her powers for her own gain.

Black Claw

VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers	END	100+	Disadvantages
25	STR	15	15	†1½d6 HKA, 3d6 with STR	3	25	Berserk 11 or less after taking BODY, Recover 8 or less
26	DEX	48	3	*Knife Resistance			
23	CON	26	17	2" Rad Darkness, stops normal sight (No Range)	4	25	Berserk 8 or less when surprised or startled, Recover 11 or less
10	BODY	0					
15	INT	5	5	Stealth 14 or less			
11	EGO	2	13	Clinging at 25 STR	3	15	Shy, non-offensive
10	PRE	0	10	Infrared Vision		15	Very Greedy
16	COM	3	10	+5 DCV in HTH (not vs. characters with any of Resistant PD)		30	Hunted by UNTIL 8 or less
15	PD	10				25	Hunted by the Destroyers 8 or less
15	ED	10					
6	SPD	24	7	½ END STR		15	Secret Identity
10	REC	0	5	Security Systems 12			
50	END	2	10	Super Leap (10" x 5")			
45	STUN	10					
				†OIF Metal Claws			
				*OIF Metallic Costume			

Randall Standish never wanted to be a supervillain, but when his bills built up and the creditors pounded on his door, he turned his mutant powers to crime. Second-story work was easy with his strong body, night sight, and darkness powers. Randall was caught once, but found a knife on the premises and bluffed his way out. He decided that knives would be a perfect tool for intimidation, and built himself a set of claw attachments and a metallic suit that resisted knives. Black Claw doesn't really want to hurt anyone, but he will if he has to.

The Whip

VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers	END	100+	Disadvantages
20	STR	10	27	†Martial Arts, +½x Multiple AP on Martial Arts and STR (8d6 Punch, 10d6 Kick)	3	25	Berserk 14 or less when heritage is insulted, Recover 11 or less
27	DEX	51					
18	CON	16					
11	BODY	2	10	†Missile Deflection 14 or less		30	Hunted by Eurostar 8 or less
10	INT	0	10				
8	EGO	-4	10	†Stretching 4"	4	20	Hunted by Utility 8 or less
20	PRE	10	10	Swinging 10"		20	Very Proud, will argue on anything
12	COM	1	5	Acrobatics 14			
20*	PD	10	10	Security Systems 11		15	Secret Identity
20*	ED	10	10	+2 levels with whip			
5	SPD	13					
8	REC	0		†OAF Whip			
40	END	2		*OIF Padded Costume			
37	STUN	7					

Szandor Kryogya was born in a gypsy wagon somewhere in Europe, shortly before World War II. His early years were a nightmare of persecution and terror. The gypsies thought the horror was past when the Allied armies appeared to liberate them from the Nazi oppressors. Unfortunately, the platoon that encountered the gypsies was poorly-led, and the gypsies were destroyed in a bloody firefight. Young Szandor and his injured father were the only ones to escape. His father trained him rigorously in the use of the whip and other fighting arts, and Szandor became a tool of revenge. Now, as The Whip, he roams the world, seeking to slay the members of the platoon. The KGB and other groups often hire The Whip as a freelance assassin, for he truly enjoys his work.

UNTIL Agents

VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers
13	STR	3		SKILLS OF ALL AGENTS
15	DEX	15	13	Martial Arts (4d6 Punch, 6d6 Kick, and 6d6 Punch with Billy Club)
13	CON	6		
10	BODY	0	3	+1 Level with blaster
13	INT	3		
10	EGO	0		GADGETS OF ALL AGENTS
11	PRE	1	10	*+6 PD, +6 ED Armor, 14 or less
10	COM	0	4	†1" Rad Darkness, impervious to normal sight, 2 charges
4*	PD	1		
4*	ED	1	4	$+2d6 in HTH combat, not usable with kick, cost 2 END
3	SPD	5		
5	REC	-2	2	!5 points Flash Defense, 8 charges
26	END	0		
24	STUN	0		WEAPONS FOR AGENTS
			30	Weapon combinations by agent type

OCV = 5
DCV = 5
ECV = 3
PHA = 4, 8, 12

*OIF Armored Vest and Helmet
†OAF Smoke Grenades
$OAF Billy Club
!OAF Flash Visor

CHA Cost = 34 + 66 = Power Cost Total = 100

Any time UNTIL agents are called for, the GM can use Defender agents. If the GM wants to try a different tactic with UNTIL troops, he can exchange some Defender agents for Investigator agents.

All agent-specified weapon, skill, and equipment combinations cost 30 points.

Defender Agent
Auto Blaster Rifle, 6d6 Selective Fire, 30 charges, -1 per 5", -1 per 3" on autofire.

Investigator Agent
Auto Blaster Pistol, 6d6 Selective Fire, 12 charges, -1 per 3", -1 per 2" on autofire.
Detective Work 12 or less.
Security Systems 12 or less.

VIPER Agents

VAL	CHA	Cost	Cost	Powers
15	STR	5		SKILLS OF ALL AGENTS
14	DEX	12	10	Find Weakness 11 or less with blaster
13	CON	6	5	+1 Level with all guns
10	BODY	0		
11	INT	1		GADGETS OF ALL AGENTS
10	EGO	0	2	!5 Points Flash Defense, 8 charges
15	PRE	5	10	*+7 PD, +7 ED Forces Fields at 0 END, 14 or less
10	COM	0		
3	PD	0	8	†2d6 Flash in 2" radius, 2 charges
3	ED	0		
3	SPD	6		WEAPONS FOR AGENTS
6	REC	0	30	Weapon combinations by agent type
26	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

OCV = 5
DCV = 5
ECV = 3
PHA = 4, 8, 12

!OIF Helmet
*OIF Reinforced Costume
*OAF Flash Charges

CHA Cost = 35 + 65 = Power Cost Total = 100

Each group of four agents will be of the same general type. When the engagement calls for VIPER agents, roll 1d6 and consult the chart below to find their special equipment and skills. GMs with ***VIPER's Nest*** handy can use the VIPER Forces Table for reinforcements.

All agent-specified weapon, skill, and equipment combinations cost 30 points.

Roll 1d6 on the VIPER Support Table:

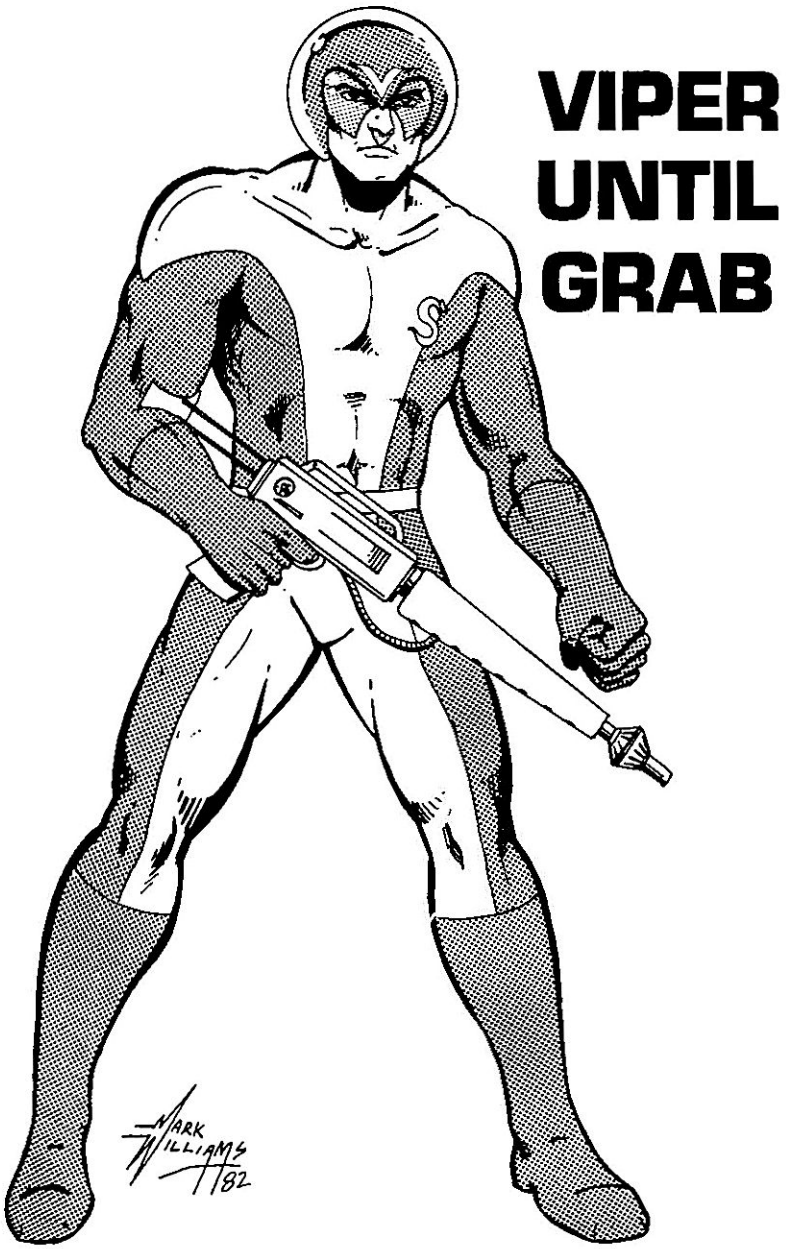
1-3 **Assault Agent**
Auto Blaster Carbine, 5d6 Selective Fire, 30 charges, -1 per 4", -1 per 2" on autofire. Includes 1d6 (2d6 with STR adds) HKA Bayonet (costs 6 END).

4 **Heavy Weapons Agent**
Heavy Shoulder Blaster, 12d6 Energy Blast, 12 charges, -1 per 5".

5 **Flying Cavalry Agent**
Auto Blaster Pistol, 1½d6 RKA Selective Fire, 16 charges, -1 per 3", -1 per 2" on autofire.

6 **Undercover Agent**
Auto Blaster Pistol, 1½d6 RKA Selective Fire, 16 charges, -1 per 3", -1 per 2" on autofire.
Stealth 12 or less.
Security Systems 11 or less.

Official Histories:



VIPER UNTIL GRAB

As an added bonus, George Mac Donald has sent us the histories of the three organizations featured in ***Microfilm Madness*** – straight from the designer's own campaign-world.

VIPER

The world's largest villain organization began as a loose alliance of powerful political and corporate leaders toward the end of World War II; it was initially formed to fill the projected post-war power vacuum.

The alliance remained unstructured during the post-war years, into the early 1950s. It operated only occasionally, and then only to crush a competitor or stifle government investigations. Escalating greed and mutual jealousy throughout the rest of the '50s hampered the group's acitivites, and could have disbanded the conspiracy – but instead led to its greater power and efficiency.

In early 1962, two members of the power group – a crime boss and a labor organizer – clashed in a dispute over territorial domination. The other members of the conspiracy moved to quash the impending gang war. When the dust settled, the alliance's members decided to pool their resources into a single enforcement arm so that no one member could dominate any other.

Plans were drawn up for a parliamentary force of agents and their assassins. The conspirators also decided to centralize their research and technological resources into the new organization, as a support group to the military force. In a few weeks, the idea of a uniform enforcement arm was transformed into a massive plan for the creation of VIPER.

Throughout the next few years, the organization grew. VIPER technicians developed the giant Serpentine computers, into which all intelligence reports generated by agents were placed. Soon, Serpentine contained the world's largest database of covert information outside of Washington and Moscow. VIPER agents infiltrated every major governmental and private security organization known, amassing further information and influence.

With the close of the Vietnam war, VIPER was able to take on greater numbers of military-trained personnel than ever before. As the 1970s came to a close, the organization's military arm exceeded 100,000 troops and its financial assets made it equivalent to the 12th largest country in the world.

VIPER's greatest problem turned out to be internal security. The larger it grew, the less security its members had. By 1976, UNTIL had begun serious investigations into VIPER operations. Despite its size and power, the organization was still being forced to operate underground, and was having to expend more and more political favors to squelch investigations.

As a result, VIPER reorganized, and scattered individual installations ("nests") all over the world. The nests were capable of individual initiative and had computer links with the central Serpentine system. The autonomy of the nests, and the fact that they could not be traced back to the main VIPER headquarters, enabled agents to become much bolder and engage in open conflict with police, superhero groups, and agents of UNTIL.

UNTIL

After World War II, the United Nations wrestled with the question of permitting nuclear weapons in the hands of individual nations. The US was willing to give up its atomic monopoly only if all other countries in the UN were willing to abandon all hope of owning nuclear weapons. But the Soviet Union, which wanted very badly to secure its position as a superpower, was working feverishly to perfects its own atomic weapons. The debate in the Seciruty Council was long and hard-fought on both sides.

The Soviet Union used every political trick it had to lengthen the debate over UN control. At one point, when it looked like the US had swayed the rest of the council into calling for a vote on the resolution, the USSR brought up the point that the UN had no military or security arm to control the weapons. It was suggested that a tribunal be convened to study the problem. The US representative could not stop the motion to convene the tribunal. During the next four months, the United Nations Tribunal on International Law (UNTIL) was formed. It quickly started laying the groundwork for an organization that would have sole control of atomic weapons. Administrative, intelligence, and research branches were created to allow the organization to quickly assume its duties. In mid-1948, the tribunal announced that the United Nations now had an organization ready and willing to assume the responsibility for mankind's deadliest weapons.

In late 1948, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics exploded its first atomic bomb. All possibilities of UN control went down the tubes: It would have been impossible to convince the Russians or the United States to give up their atomic weapons when the other had the capability to manufacture them. Suddently, the United Nations had a major paramilitary organization with nothing for it to do. Bureaucratic inertia kept UNTIL's administrative and intelligence departments active while the General Assembly debated on the final fate of the tribunal.

As the debate went on into 1949, many smaller UN members found the intelligence reports from the tribunal very useful. These reports were clear, concise, and without the bias of the superpower intelligence services. When, in the spring of 1950, the Korean conflict involved the United Nations in its first real war, the tribunal quickly expanded its intelligence services to keep track of UN forces in the field.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, UNTIL made a major push to help stop the increasing wave of terrorist activity. As the 1970s dawned, the age of "commercial" terrorism (plus supervillains and super agent groups) forced UNTIL to change its focus. It is now the premier interntional organization dedicated to the destruction of world conspiracies like VIPER.

GRAB

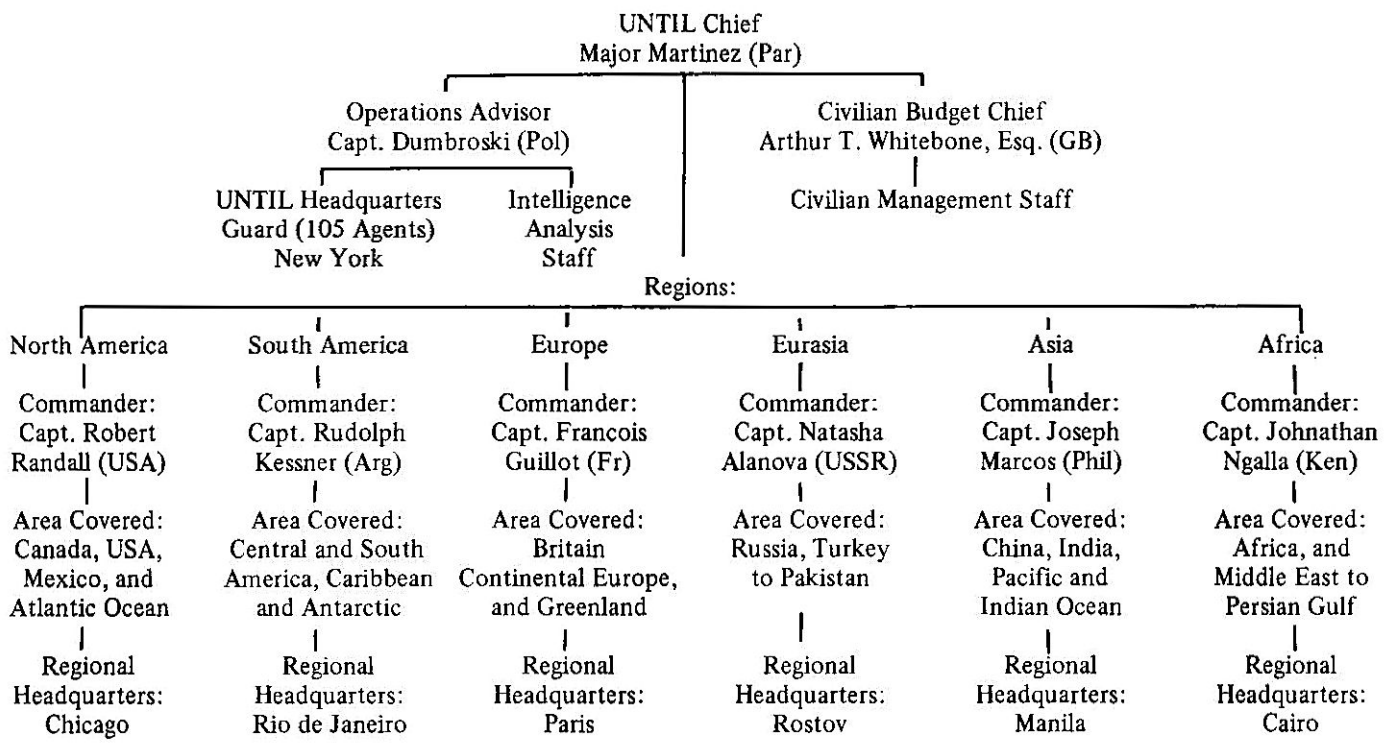
GRAB is an example of that rarest of organizations, a democratic supervillain society. Its members are thieves and bandits, rather than megalomaniacal world-conquerers.

The group began as a trio of supercriminals who, tired of being captured and convicted, decided to organize into a mutual-assistance organization. Each member donated 10% of the take from his last three hauls. The money went into a fund which was then used to provide lawyers, safe houses, and other benefits for the team members.

The organization's name came out of a late-night drinking binge, from "Grab all the gusto you can!" It didn't sound quite so good to the various members the following morning, but it stuck, and was at least better than nothing. With a champagne christening and ceremonial bank robbery the next week, the name was made permanent.

GRAB does a lot for its members. Its information net allows them the first crack at special thefts. Its lawyers help keep them out of jail. It provides a common ground for acquaintances with similar problems and interests. So long as all members keep the penthouse quarters a secret and pay their 10% commission on each job, GRAB will continue to provide them with the extra advantage of organization.

UNTIL Organization Chart



Arg = Argentina, Fr = France, GB = Great Britain, Ken = Kenya, Par = Paraguay, Phil = Philippines, Pol = Poland, USA = United States of America, USSR = Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Each Regional Office controls between 10 and 30 Local Offices. Each Local Office has between 50 and 500 agents assigned to it and twice that many administrators. Local Offices are controlled by a Senior Lieutenant. Companies (105 agents) are controlled by a Commander, and a squad (12 men) is controlled by a Sergeant.

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SCANNER: NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ADVENTURE GAMING

New & Upcoming Releases

The HIA show – the hobby industry's annual trade fair – was held January 30 through February 2 in Anheim, California. This is the show that most gamers never see; it is open only to manufacurers, publishers, distributors, and retailers. But it ranks with Origins as a release date for new adventure game material.

New products on display or announced as coming soon included:

Hovertank is now available from Close Simulations. *Alert Force*, in which an Air Force base fights off terrorists, will be on sale within a few months.

Victory Games announced that it has negotiated a license to produce a James Bond role-playing game. The basic set, plus three supporting products, is set for a September release.

GDW has a new box for its starter *Traveller* set – and won the HIA Creative Excellence award for it! *Asteroids*, *Mayday*, *Dark Nebula*, and *Snapshot* have also been repackaged (but not changed inside). *The Traveller Adventure*, a hardback companion to *The Traveller Book*, will be out in late spring. *Traveller* Adventure 9, *Nomads of World Ocean*, is out now; *Western Desert* (Rommel in Africa in the *Europa* series) and *Tabletop Wars*, miniatures rules for the Seven Years' War, are due before Origins.

Grenadier is bouncing back in advance from the upcoming loss of the *D&D* figures license. Their new lines include *Masters of the Universe*, GDW's *Traveller*, and SJ Games' *Autoduel* and *Ogre;* other licenses, including a superhero license, are being negotiated.

Avalon Hill will be releasing *Powers & Perils*, a role-playing game, and the former Chaosium products *Elric* and *Dragon Pass*, in early summer.

Eon will soon re-release *Cosmic Encounter* in a larger box at $20.00. Also on the horizon is a *Borderlands* expansion set. Eon recently signed a game development contract with the Children's Computer Workshop, a subsidiary of the Sesame Street creative empire. Eon's house magazine, *Encounters*, premiered.

Midkemia now has available *Heart of the Sunken Lands*, a wilderness adventure, for $11.95. Coming soon are two more booklets, tentatively titled *Wilderness* and *Traps and Treasure*. Also on display at the Midkemia booth was *Magician*, a novel by Richard E. Feist, now in its second printing from Doubleday. *Magician* is set in Midkemia, 900 years before the time depicted in the game supplements.

Hero Games has picked up the independently-published *Privateer* ($11.95), and has released *Champions II* ($9.95). Available very soon will be *Espionage*, a role-playing game ($12.95) and *Deathstroke*, a *Champions* adventure ($5.95).

FASA is now shipping their licensed *Star Trek* role-playing game, retailing for $25.00. Available soon will be 15mm deck plans for the *Enterprise* and the D-7 Klingon ship. According to a FASA spokesman, *Star Trek* will become their first priority, but they will continue to produce *Traveller* supplements. A boxed game, *Combots*, will be available in mid-April.

Flying Buffalo will release *Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes*, their long-awaited modern RPG, in mid-March, as a $9.95 rulebook. A solo scenario, *Adventure of the Jade Jaguar*, will be out soon thereafter at $4.95, with *Savage Island*, a game-mastered adventure, and a GM screen to follow soon after.

Castle Creations is producing licensed superhero figures for *V&V*, and is working on an *Espionage* line.

Adventure Games won "Best Booth" at the show, beating out many larger and gaudier displays. Their new releases are *The Complete Brigadier*, a miniature system set in the black-powder era, and *Resolution 502*, a *Harpoon* scenario for the Falkland Islands conflict. Coming by April will be *Pentantastar*, a fantasy boardgame. *Mutant*, a SFRPG, should be out by late 1983.

Iron Crown Enterprises will soon release two *Lord of the Rings* RPG items: *Court of Ardor* and *Northern Mirkwood*. Two more, *Riders of Rohan* and *Southern Mirkwood*, are set for July.

Chaosium has released *The Snow King's Bride*, a solo RuneQuest adventure ($8.00), and *Shadows of Yog-sothoth*, a game-mastered *Call of Cthulhu* adventure ($10.00).

Ultra Force: In the Name of Justice (a *TFT*-based superhero variant) and *Conquerors of UnderEarth* (latest in the *UnderEarth* series), at $7.95 each, were displayed by Metagaming for late spring release. Also shown were *Runesword at Regalan* and *Prison of the Spectral Demon*, two *TFT* MicroQuests for release in March at $2.95 each.

Phoenix Games has two new releases: *Alien Combat* (SF) and *Chickamauga – River of Death* (Civil War), both boxed at $22.00.

Yaquinto has a new role-playing game, *Timeship*, about time travel ($12.00). *Yaquinto's Close Assault*, a WWII infantry combat game, is set for March release. (The choice of the name *Yaquinto's Close Assault* was made to avoid conflict with a similar product from Avalon Hill, which has in turn been renamed *Avalon Hill's Close Assault*.) Yaquinto's March releases will be two *Man, Myth & Magic* scenarios: *Egyptian Trilogy* and *Werewolf of Europe*.

Gamelords has released *Secrets of the Labyrinth* (Haven), for $12.95. Coming in March are two generic adventures, *Mines of Keridav* (a re-release) and *Demon Pits of Caeldo*, both $5.00. *Intrigue in Plaize*, a $5.95 *TFT* adventure, is set for mid-April, and *Lee's Guide to Interstellar Adventure*, Gamelords' first *Traveller* product, is set for May or thereabouts.

TSR has released *Blizzard Pass*, an "invisible ink" module for *D&D* in which players use a chemical pen to reveal results as they go through a programmed adventure. Two new *Endless Quest* books are out, and a second *Monster Manual* volume is expected soon.

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News Briefs

Heritage USA Folds

Heritage USA, long-time producer of lead miniatures and (more recently) of the Dwarfstar line of minigames, has announced that it is ceasing operations.

The company suffered recurrent financial problems throughout 1982. After reviewing financial prospects for 1983, company officials decided on January 14 to fold Heritage. Assets of the company will be sold in subsequent months to pay creditors.

President Howard Barasch says the company can only solicit bids for Heritage properties. "The court and the creditors must approve the written bids before we can sell," he said. The company is operating under Chapter 11, a forestalling of debts and reorganization under the auspices of a federal judge. Barasch said the selling off of Heritage's properties was keeping them "quite busy" and that the "pace has almost tripled" since the Hobby Industry of America trade show in early February, where he contacted many prospective buyers.

Martian Metals Offices Burn

The Austin-area offices of Martian Metals, producers of the licensed *Traveller* line of miniatures, burned to the ground January 30. Everything in the offices, including molds for all the miniatures lines, was destroyed; the masters for the miniatures, however, were in another location. The cause of the fire has tentatively been identified as an electrical short, but no final determination on the matter has been reached. The Martian Metals offices were fully insured and the company will be back in production in the near future.

CORRECTION

Last month we erroneously reported that *Amazing* editor George Scithers had resigned from his position. Mr. Scithers reports, "I have never resigned. I am happy editing *Amazing Magazine* at Dragon. There has been no editorial interference. Rumors to the contrary are false." Our apologies to all concerned.

Convention Calendar

*March 24-27: AGGIECON. SF con. Contact Cepheid Variable, P.O. Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844.

March 25-27: FANTASYLAIR '83. Gaming and SF con. For information contact Northern Oklahoma Dungeoneers, P.O. Box 241, Ponca City, OK 74602.

March 26-27: NOVA 8. Gaming and SF con. Contact The Order of Leibowitz, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48063.

April 16-17: OSCON '83. SF and gaming con. Contact OSU Wargamers, 700 West Scott No. 321, Stillwater, OK 74074.

April 22-24: CONTRETEMPS 2. Gaming and SF con. Send SASE to Contretemps, P.O. Box 12422, Omaha, NE 68112.

April 23: COLUMBIA WIZARDCON. SF and gaming con. Contact Brad Lewis, 902 Furnald Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

*April 29-May 1: TREASURE-CON I. SF and gaming con. For information, contact Treasure-Con I, 306 4th Avenue, Laurel, MT 59044.

April 29-May 1: TRI-STATE CON '83. Gaming con. For information contact Cincinnati Adventure Gamers, 11020 Reading Road, Suite 175, Sharonville, OH 45241, phone 513 / 984-8011.

May 20-22: CWI CON '83. Historical and fantasy gaming con. Contact Chicago Wargaming Inc., P.O. Box 217, Tinley Park, IL 60477.

May 27-29: SWAMPCON-4. SF con. Send SASE to BRSFL-SwampCon, P.O. Box 14238, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

May 27-29: CONQUEST IV+10. SF con. For information contact ConQuest IV+10, P.O. Box 36212, Kansas City, MO 64111.

June 3-5: WARGAMER'S WEEKEND. Gaming con. Contact Chris' Game and Hobby Shop, 1 Hales Court, Newburyport, MA 01950.

June 10-12: X-CON 7. SF and gaming con. For information, contact X-Con, P.O. Box 7, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0007.

June 17-19: GENGHIS CON V. Gaming con. Contact Denver Gamers Association, P.O. Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161, phone 303 / 798-1404.

June 24-26: POLYCON '83. Gaming con. For information contact Society of Wizards and Warriors, P.O. Box 168, Julian A. McPhee U.U. Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

*July 2-4: TEXCON: 1983. Gaming con. Send SASE to David Ladyman, 8028 Gessner No. 1805, Austin, TX 78753.

*July 14-17: ORIGINS '83. Adventure gaming con. Contact MDG, Origins Events / Info, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

PBM Update

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the May issue is March 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

Zorph Enterprises

Louis Pace has won the first ***Zorphwar*** tournament, completed January 3, 1983.

Playtesting has begun on our new game, ***Quest of the Great Jewels***, which we hope to put into full production in May 1983. This is a computer moderated multiplayer fantasy wargame.

Mike Shefler

Capps & Capps

Company News: ***Galac-Tac*** began in December, 1982. So far, two galaxies have filled and we have begun on the third. We are setting up special games for overseas players. These games have longer deadlines and if you're ready for some international competition, please let us know.

Galaxy 1: Still in the set-up stage, but some of the initial race descriptions are great! A note from the THREK Empire: "To those who would oppose us, may your children have better sense and enjoy enslavement..." More later.

Galaxy 2: Nothing to report. But, by the time you read this, it should be under way.

Jon Capps

Clemens & Associates

Universe II

Quadrant I: The quandrant is in turmoil! Battles have raged for control of starsystems, with the UES Knights distinguishing themselves in combat.

Quadrant II: The industrial bases built up by many colonies are becoming more important due to the tougher stance taken by the Etuel.

Quadrant III: Several major groups now bear the UES name. It is only a matter of time until the conflict of interests will result in hostilities.

Quadrant IV: Two of the largest industrial colonies have expanded their capabilities by developing research facilities to discover new products to manufacture.

Regajian Empire: The Regajian Empire is steadily growing. Our successes bring a constant flow of new recruits. Battle groups can now operate in all parts of the Empire simultaneously.

Ixtli Empire: The Ixtli Empire has expanded rapidly. An era of cooperation and coordination is beginning. The new members have brought with them the opportunity to tackle many tasks at once.

Muar Empire: Our boundaries are now secure again. A period of reorganization is starting.

Jon Clemens

Schubel & Son

Game News

The Tribes of Crane

Crane I: After 11 months of bitter civil war, the city of Xenia may have at last found salvation. Brutal fighting again erupted in this once proud Grand Union city when Sygmata Khan ordered an attack on the remaining Loyalist and Nativist forces in an attempt to crush the opposition. Unknown to Sygmata Khan, the Loyalist leader, Shaman Vongar had enlisted the aid of the powerful Rainbow Empire. Several Rainbow Empire units were rushed to the city and arrived just in time to meet the Khan's First Empire attacks! In the indecisive battles that erupted between the evenly matched combatants, thousands of warriors and non-warrior city people died. Appalled by the carnage the High Kinglord's Envoy, Pragan, who had been secretly observing events for weeks, exercised his authority and ordered an end to the fighting. A High Court of Crane has been called to end the conflict and punish those found guilty under the High Laws of Crane.

Crane II: The powerful Halton Factor alliance, having crushed the Celtani Federation, has now turned its attention towards destroying the Cult/Shadow Alliance forces led by Belladona and the infamous Darkon. The Shadow Alliance had attacked and captured the south polar city of King and looted the city. The combined Halton Factor/Valorous/KPA Mende forces counterattacked and after an extended siege, recaptured the city. In the city of Arcola the population rebelled against the unjust Cult/Shadow Alliance leadership. City leader Sauron would have crushed the rebels were it not for the timely arrival of the Halton Factor. The Halton Factor continued to pour in troops and supplies and eventually destroyed the Cult/Shadow leadership, turning the city over to the rebels. Several hundred miles east of Alexis, the mighty Second Cult Army was destroyed by wave after wave of war hawk mounted Halton Factor warriors. The Halton Factor may be stretching the limits of its strength as incidents with the Western Alliance of Tribes continue to push the factions toward war.

Star Venture

Star Venture has continued to grow and is now not only our third largest PBM game, but also our most popular computer moderated game. In a mere six months the game has grown to contain nearly 800 ships, over 150 ground parties and 60 colonies. The more successful individuals and groups have even accumulated enough wealth to purchase many special classed ships. These include 1 scout, 3 Explorers, 1 Tanker, 2 Heavy Freighters and 3 Super Freighters! One bold pirate group, presently raiding near colony Rex, is said to be saving their wealth for the purchase of a Battleship, the largest warship outside of Imperia! The acquisition of this vessle could make their fleet the most powerful in the galaxy!

StarMaster

Throughout the galaxies, terror has swept the minds of the "new" races. The dreaded Dark Shapers or their apparent descendents have returned to the known galaxies! The New Shapers, as they are now being called, are apparently unable to enter this universe unaided and can only manifest themselves temporarily. The New Shapers are seemingly attempting to establish bases in this universe to aid in their attempts to enter. In the now famous "Day of the Demons" the New Shapers unleashed hordes of Psi, Ice and Fire Demons on dozens of unsuspecting Home Worlds, slaying billions of innocent beings. But without the direct leadership of the New Shapers, many of the attacks fell prey to the valiant defense by Home World garrisons and armed civilian populations. And yet, not all of the attacks failed; those that failed did so only after causing terrible destruction. Are the New Shapers now able to enter this universe and if so, will the races be able to unite to combat this terrible menace?

Duane Wilcoxson

Counter Intelligence

by Aaron Allston

The 1982 Game Survey came out two issues ago. This time around, it was a project plagued by problems. Notable, we suffered through a mountainous mixup in our circulation department, which meant that circulation manager Chris2 Smith, who was slated to help put the survey together, was suddenly unavailable – which meant that the task abruptly fell to me, executive vice president Pat Mueller, and production head Elisabeth Zakes.

The results of this kind of shakeup are fairly predictable: Several folks and titles got left off the survey. We anticipated this with an advanced apology on the survey itself, but we'll be pointing out the omissions as they're pointed out to us. (Of course, some of the companies' products omitted were not because of the mixup, but because they never communicate with us, so we won't take the wash for everyone.)

Of particular note (of the ones mentioned to us so far) is the omission of Gamelords' 1982 ***Thieves' Guild*** releases. Also, a section of the survey we placed for our own amusement – an updated overview of some 1981 and earlier RPG releases – failed to contain Chaosium's well-regarded ***Call of Cthulhu,*** plus ***Stormbringer*** and some other titles. Sorry, folks – no insult intended.

On the Other Hand

Back to the circulation mixup for a minute – naturally, whenever there's a direct mail problem, people get irritated. Naturally, they write letters. That's all well and good. But remember: If you're going to try to make us feel bad and admit our mistakes, *always include your name and address on the query.* We find it very hard to feel abashed and apologetic when we're snickering at someone who hasn't bothered to tell us who he is or where he wants his replacements sent. And we've had quite a few in the months of December and January. (Chris2 informs me that we've just added two *Autoduel Quarterly* subscribers and have no idea where to send their copies. Oh well . . .)

Pipe 'Em Aboard

We've just added two new recruits to the TSG editorial staff: Assistant Editors Christopher Frink and Richard Steinberg. Both are University of Texas students who've been misled into the wonderful world of wargaming, and with their help I may get the magazine's editorial functions back on schedule and pointed in the right direction.

Meanwhile, in Anaheim

As this column is being written, most of our administrative staff is in the process of flying off to Anaheim, CA for the annual Hobby Industry of America trade show. Next issue (somewhere) we'll talk about the first releases of 1983 and give you an idea of what to look for. For a basic listing of the HIA debuts, see the "New & Upcoming Releases" column in this month's *Scanner.*

That about wraps me up for March. Next month is our dreaded annual April issue – be prepared.

NEXT ISSUE

Next month is April. We like April. April is fun. This is what we'll give you in April:

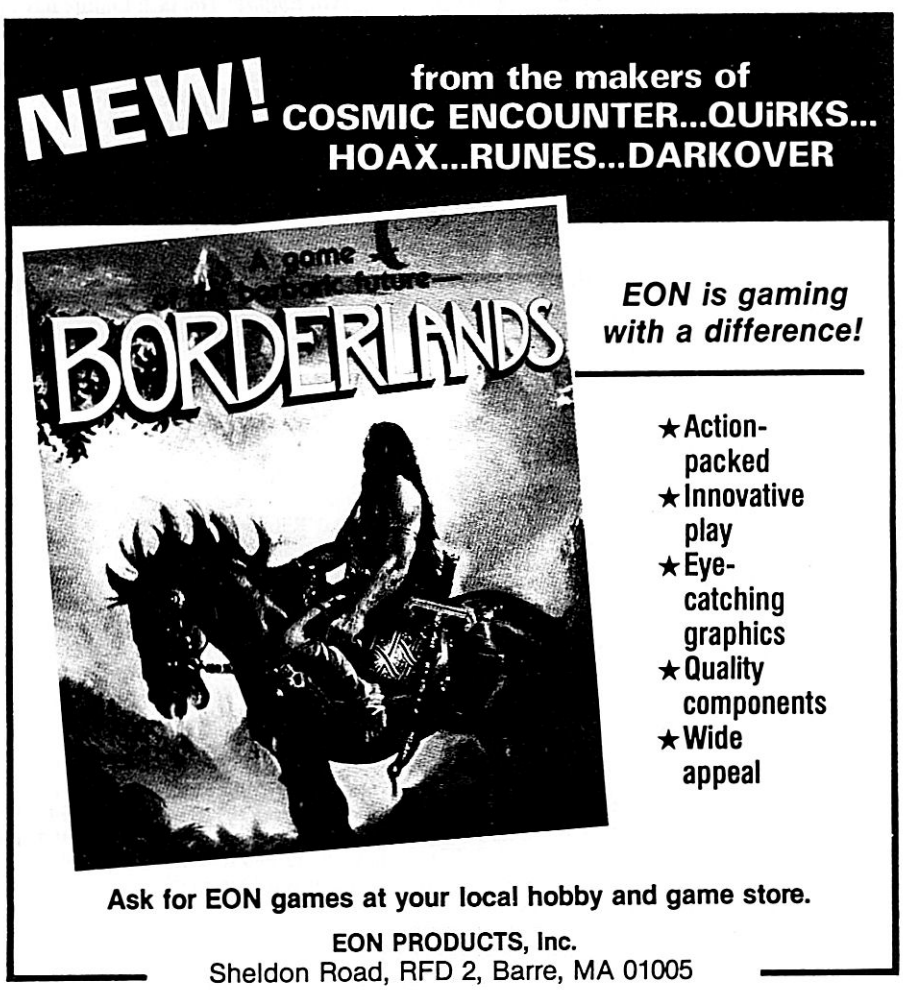
GLOBBO: A complete game of madness in an alien nursery (by Allen Varney, mastermind of "IGDRIP," POND WAR, and more);

"Novas in COSMIC ENCOUNTER," a new unit to confuse friends, foes, and yourself;

"Master's Thesis," scholarly fiction with a bent bent;

Featured review of Chaosium's TROLLPACK; and

Turtles, turtles, and more turtles.



MURPHY'S RULES

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE--
In the fifth edition of FBI's TUNNELS & TROLLS, an average man may make 10-second sprints topping 60 miles per hour. An exceptional runner could sprint at 118 mph. (--*Mark T. Hayes*)

MANUAL INSERTION--
In TSR's VAMPYRE, one of the weapons provided to fight off Dracula's legions is a silver bullet, used for killing werewolves. But on page 16 of the rule book, it is stated that "a gun is not needed to use this item." (--*Steve LaPrade*)

HE CAN'T EVEN MAKE CUTTING REMARKS--
An expert with "daggers" in SPI's DRAGON QUEST does not necessarily know how to use "knives."

I LOVE THE NIGHT LIFE--
In SJ Games' UNDEAD, being up one hour after dark (or sunup, as the case may be) constitutes an "all-nighter."

LUSH PROFITS--
Metagaming's IN THE LABYRINTH states that a full one-liter wineskin costs $2 but an empty one costs $3; you receive $1 profit for downing a liter of wine. (--*David Dunham*)

BEN SARGENT---

WHERE WE'RE GOING

I can't believe it. We actually got all the new game material to the printers . . . almost on deadline . . . and nobody (quite) died. It was pretty weird around here for a while, though. One of these days we may learn that it's hazardous to our health to put out five new releases at once. I got to spend a lot of midnight hours on the pasteup table, and Pat Mueller got to fly to Kansas City on two days' notice to supervise the printing of the new labels, and David Ladyman and Jim Gould got to stay up all night working out a new crash/collision system for ***Truck Stop*** – which was so long that it didn't get used after all . . . So it goes.

But it's all under control now. The only real "glitch" in the whole batch is that ***Truck Stop*** has one component that's not listed on the back label . . . because at the last minute, rather than cut the rules to fit, we decided to put in a separate folder for record sheets, to leave room in the rulebook for everything else. It makes it a better game; it's just irritating that we didn't decide to do it sooner.

That makes it time to start planning spring and Origins releases. This isn't final yet, but it looks like we'll have two or three new ***Car Wars*** releases (probably including a referee screen) in spring. There will be a new batch of *Cardboard Heroes* for either spring or Origins. Game releases at Origins will definitely include expansion sets for both ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** and ***Battlesuit***, plus some new games (which ones, we don't know; there are still lots of possibilities).

And work continues (slowly) on our new RPG. Don't look for it any time real soon, but don't write it off.

Panic in the Mailroom

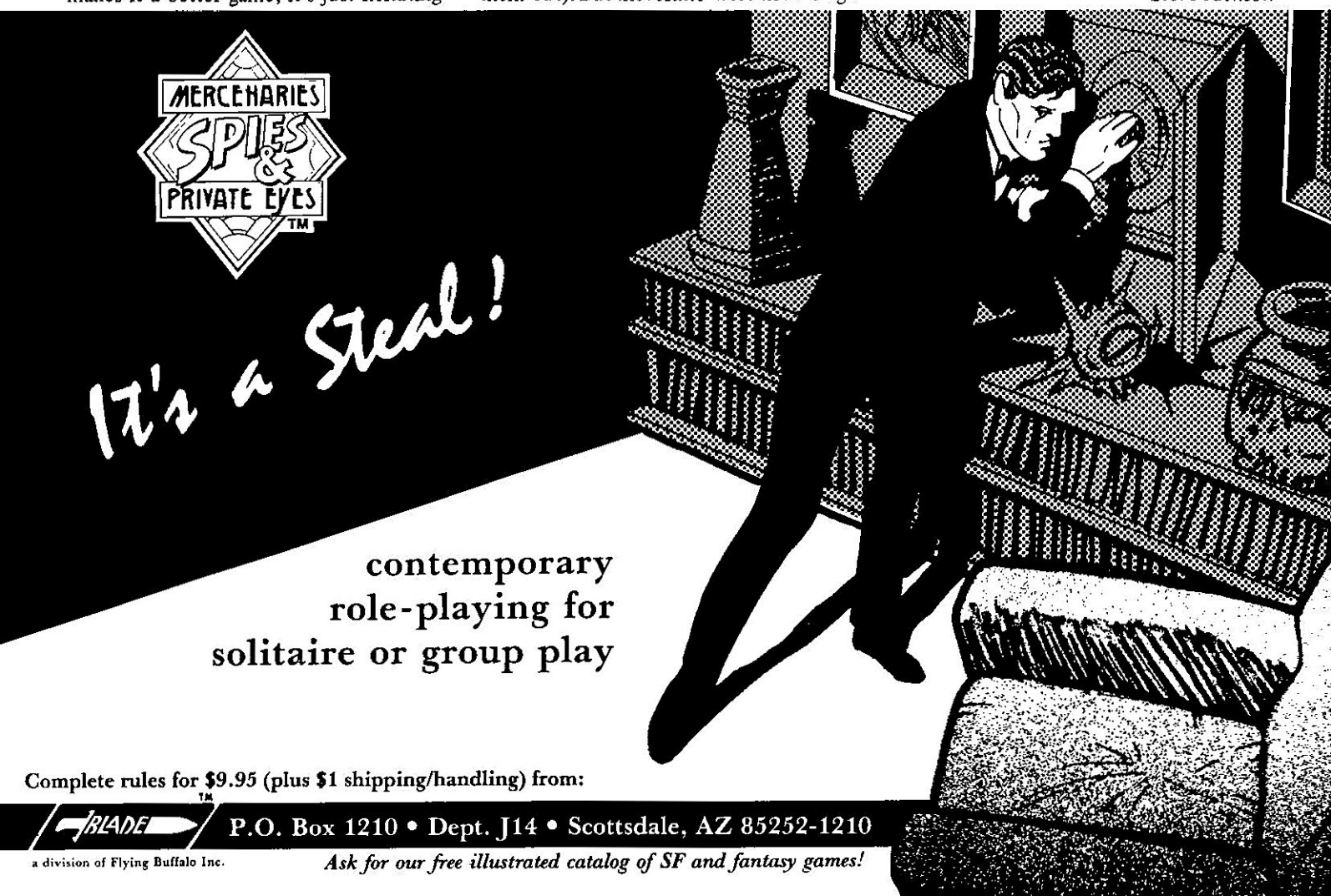
We had a little problem around here in the last months of 1982. The details are too disgusting to reveal (translation: I'm not going to raise my blood pressure by thinking about them long enough to type them out). But the *results* were that a large number of direct-mail orders and subscription forms got filed as "entered" when they hadn't been. Fortunately, they were not *marked* as entered; the situation was salvageable.

Anyway . . . we think it's all fixed. But some of you folks out there are entirely too patient. So if it has been longer than, say, six weeks since you placed an order, and you haven't gotten it, please write us *now*, including a copy of your cancelled check, and we'll get right on it. I hate to have a situation like this come up, but it has, and the only thing to do is to be upfront about it.

ADQ Arrives

Now for some good news. The first issue of our new ***Car Wars*** magazine, *Autoduel Quarterly*, will be out by the time you read this. It's edited by David Ladyman; you may remember him as the author of ***Kimberani's Tomb*** in TSG last year, and Southwestern gamers know him as an experienced convention and tournament organizer. ADQ is a good-looking little magazine. Those of you who are into ***Car Wars*** will like it. Those of you who are *not* into ***Car Wars*** shouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. Fair enough?

Steve Jackson



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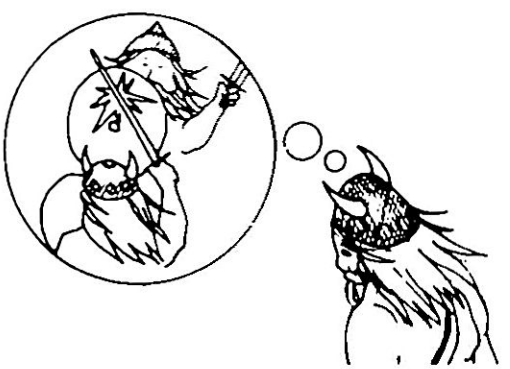

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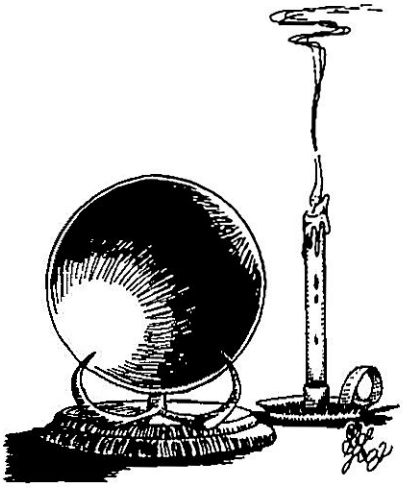


I have grown tired of waiting for you to reveal the naked elf woman. Why not put her inside the back of the mailing cover? If you announce it in advance, subscriptions will probably increase 200%.

I think Mr. Byford is right. I would very much like to see a Behind the Scenes at TSG. How about an article like the one in TSG 41 by Mr. Gygax? I already feel that I know you guys, but I would like to know more. And you can't help but like a guy for adding an issue to my subscription for a mistake he didn't even make. When I read things in the *Dragon,* I get the feeling of looking upwards at Zeus, throwing lightning bolts down from Olympus at innocent GAMA members and mailing covers . . .

Thank you for taking the time out to consolidate; it means that your chances of staying around are much greater. I'm also relieved that you are getting out of miniatures. My favorite game store went under after trying to get in the business. I think that you can make it big, and I hope you do. But try to avoid going the way of TSR and Task Force. (Remember Zeus?)

Kenneth A. Megill
Newark, DE

The game ***Battlesuit*** looks good, but a more tactical (detailed) combat system would have been nicer than the abstract attack point system used. I think the effects of tacnuke shells would be more "noticeable," blowing holes in the terrain and so on. The map was a neat innovation, and sure to show up in other games.

I was struck with a minor inspiration whilst looking over the counter sheet for ***Battlesuit.*** Next time you run an RPG adventure, include a set of black-and-white "Cardstock Heroes" (superhero, spaceman, etc.). If the set were printed on matte cardstock, the game owner could color the figures with ink markers, colored pencils, or crayons. Think of how neat it would be to get an adventure like ***School Holiday*** complete with Denier and his gang, and a bunch of schoolkids.

It's nice to see *Murphy's Rules* back. The new artist gives it a nice look. The humor fiction was good, too – a nice short piece connected with gaming.

Autoduel Quarterly sounds like a good solution to a problem (too much ***Car Wars*** material in TSG), but don't go too far by splitting TSG into fantasy and SF magazines. Occasional good fantasy material is desirable in TSG, but enough other magazines cover fantasy well enough.

Hermaphroditic Gumby-oids? I'd think someone was veering from the straight 'n narrow path of sanity (at least, more than usual) at your office if it weren't for the fact that the "lotta fairies," "the Blivit," and the insidious Post Office mentioned in the last few "Next Issue" features all turned out to be real. I can't wait . . .

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

The idea of using Cardboard Heroes *as bind-ins for our magazine adventures is a good one. We's had something similar in mind for other releases, but had never considered magazine figures. So take a look at this month's bind-in cards, folks – we'll be doing this a lot.*

Well, if you've seen issue 60, you've been apprised of the true nature of the hermaphroditic Gumby-oids. But I assure you that no one at SJ Games would ever veer from the path of sanity. If we could find it, that is.

–AA

This letter is prompted by material in the January issue of TSG (which, by the way, was an excellent issue). *Murphy's Rules* was marvelous, and I loved JDW's mailing cover cartoon (even though he made both characters left-handed; did you notice that?).

And the cover art! I was sorry to hear about the changing of the name, and the recall of all those posters, or I would have bought one! As it is, I'm going to try and paint it.

Tell Steve Jackson and Co., those persons who put their work into ***Battlesuit,*** that they did a frighteningly good job. The battlefield of the 21st century is *murder!* The game represents the infantry combat very well, but left me wondering: Where were the vehicles, the crucial force of the world of ***Ogre/G.E.V.***? It wouldn't take much to put them into the picture as well, since the game strikes me as being a magnification of the over-run procedure from ***G.E.V.*** I hope that the design team is working on this.

Craig Sheeley
Springfield, MO

Glad you like the cover art for ***Battlesuit.*** *By the way, some of you out there may remember the cover to TSG 43, also a Dave Martin power-armor scene. That's the cover art of the separate game release.*

Steve is currently working on a projected ***Battlesuit*** *expansion for Origins '83 to cover precisely the subjects you've mentioned. Look for it . . .*

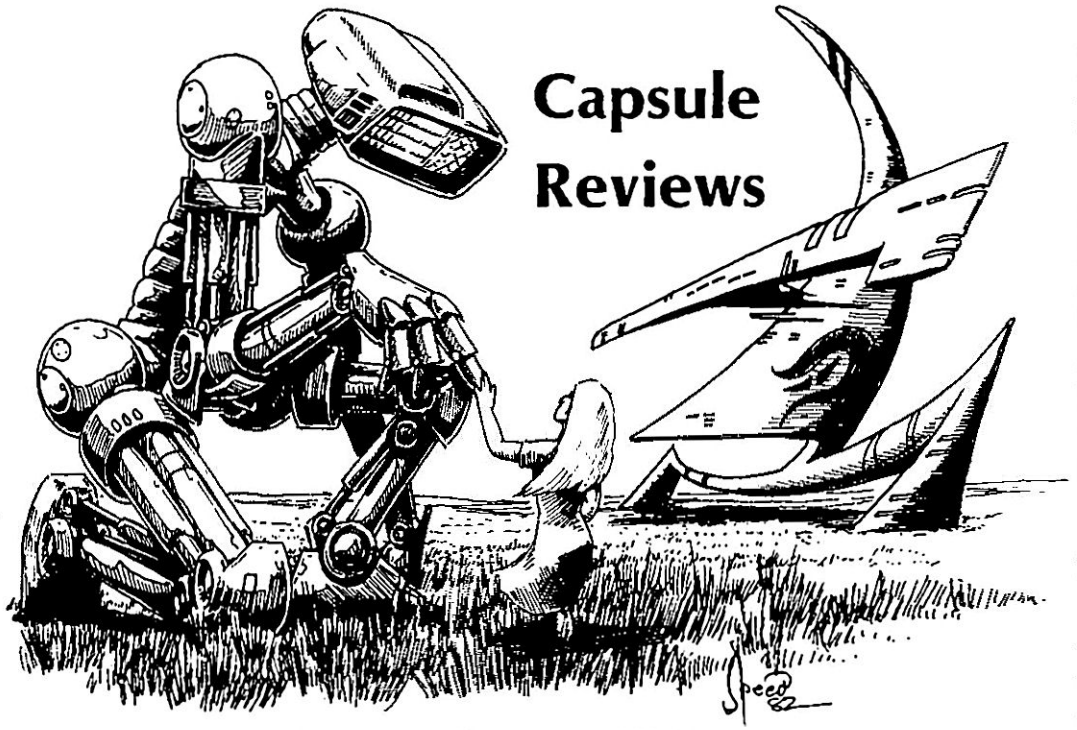
–AA

Despite the fact that there are over 400,000 words in the English language, there are not enough superlatives to describe your magazine. *The Space Gamer* has to be the best gaming magazine on the market. Now with the new slick format, it's gotten even better. Your ***Car Wars*** articles are positively the best. As a matter of fact, all your articles are great. *The Space Gamer* even beats out Gygax's *Dragon.*

Speaking of Mr. Gygax, I find his behavior to be childish. Just because he brought RPGs into the open gives him no right to push everyone around. I especially find that excerpt from the letter you received from TSR's lawyer, which you printed in *The Space Gamer* 59, to be extremely offensive.

You've also done a great job with *Fire & Movement.* The game included in the December issue was great. If you do half as good a job with *Fire & Movement* as you've been doing with *The Space Gamer,* it will be the best strategy game magazine on the market.

E. Michael Kwan
Glendale, CA



Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent – IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Games and game items for which we have assigned or received reviews include ***Ascent to Hell, Atlantis, Berzerk, Cards of Power,*** revised ***Champions, Cosmic Ark, Curse on Hareth, Death to Setanta, Demons to Diamonds, Earthwood, Encounters, Endless Quests, Feudal Lords, Fire Fighter, Ganglord, The Glastonbury Labyrinth, Goblin, HexChess, Iceberg, Kingdom of the Sidhe, Lost Colony, Newgrange Reactivated, Pitfall, Player Boards, Rolemaster, San Succi, Space Jockey, Star Venture, Swordbearer, Through Dungeons Deep,*** revised ***Villains & Vigilantes,*** and ***Yar's Revenge.***

Games and game items for which we are seeking reviews include ***Battlemats, Behind Enemy Lines, Book of Treasure Maps III, Champions II, Complete Dungeon of the Bear, Corsairs of Tallibar, Crystal Caverns, Demons of Dundurn, Dragon Rage, Druids of Doom, Epidemic, Famine in Far-Go, Fasolt in Peril, FORCE, Gamesmen of Kasar, Gangster, Ghoulash, Heroes and Villains, Illuminati, Kamakura,*** Letters Mapstamps, ***Nexus, Oracle, Pirates of Hagrost, Questers, Question of Gravity, Questworld, Recon, Runes, Sanctuary, Shield Maidens of Sea Rune, The Snow King's Bride, SoloQuest II (Scorpion Hall), Star Explorer, Star Maze, Star Sector Atlas 2, Starfleet Voyages, Starsilver Trek, Sunday Drivers, Tome of Mighty Magic, Trollpack, Voyager I, Warrior, Warrior-Lords of Darok, Weapons & Castles, Witches Court Marshes,*** and ***Wondrous Weapons.***

ATTACK FORCE (TSR Hobbies, Inc.); $4.95. Designed by David Ritchie. Nine-page 4" x 7" rulebook, 11¼" x 14" map, 84 back-printed die-cut counters, two dice in a clear plastic box. Two players; playing time 15 minutes to an hour. Published 1982.

This minigame is a depiction of the attack on the Death Star from *Star Wars.* Only the names have been changed to protect the legal department. One player is the Arcturan Federation (Rebels) and must destroy the Novaship (Death Star) with his Eagle and Falcon StarFighters (X- and Y-Wings). The only point vulnerable to attack is randomly assigned and its location is known only to the Arcturan player. The Empire of the Firstborn player defends with randomly-selected laser, pompom, and blaster batteries. Additionally, he may either launch Cobra (Tie) StarFighters each turn, or attempt to locate the weak point in his ship. One modified and very potent Cobra, which also appears randomly, is flown by Vaj Korsen (Darth Vader) himself.

The full-color map is beautifully done. But the real high points of the game are the elegant, simple systems for movement and attack (which is carried out at any point during movement). The designer not only captures every element of the *Star Wars* scene, he does so with an overall approach that is clear and easy to learn.

Unfortunately, what could have been an enjoyable little game is horribly flawed by numerous mistakes. Stacking limitations are never fully defined. Money was obviously lavished on the components, so it's very disconcerting to find that the counters are not only garish and difficult to read, but don't fit the hexes. With the game's high counter density, this means a lot of pieces will be jostled. Worse still, the set-up numbers for the Novaship hull markers (one of which conceals the vulnerable point) have been left off the map. All of this might be forgiven if it weren't for the fact that the game is fatally unbalanced. The Arcturan StarFighters can use hit-and-run tactics (*a lá* first-edition GEV tactics in *Ogre.*) and, barring totally rotten dice luck, win every time.

The unbalanced solo scenario and the one-dimensional nature of the game preclude it from becoming a favorite. To be fair, ATTACK FORCE was really designed to introduce 10- to 12-year-olds to the joys of adventure gaming. Alas, in this respect, it fails. If the ambiguities and poor development bother an experienced gamer, they're liable to turn away the novice.

–John Rankin

DAREDEVILS (FGU); $15. Designed by Bob Charrette and Paul Hume. One 8½" x 11" 64-page rulebook, one 8½" x 11" 30-page adventure book, GM shield, character sheet, boxed. For three or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

Inspired by the popularity of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and the revival in interest in the various pulp heroes of the '30s – Doc Savage, the Shadow, *et al.,* – DAREDEVILS provides rules and guidelines for playing out those larger-than-life adventurers. The rules for DAREDEVILS are, basically, derived from the authors' ***Aftermath*** system being, for the most part, a simplification of those rules; those who found ***Aftermath*** a bit too much should have an easier time with DAREDEVILS. The same system was also the basis for ***Bushido.*** In addition to the rules on character generation, skills, combat, weapons, vehicles, and other basics, DAREDEVILS includes optional rules to cover luck (to preserve the lives of the characters even when the odds say no, as so often happened in the pulps), special powers (which enable players to emulate the abilities of heroes such as the Shadow, with his ability to cloud men's minds), and gimmicks. There are also sections on The World of the Thirties, which include a timeline of important events, adventure creation, NPCs, beasts, and appendicies on designing firearms and other helpful information. The adventure book presents four varied '30s-type scenarios, including two featuring the inscrutable Oriental

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villain Fu Sung, and sample player-characters based loosely on Mike Hammer, Tarzan, Indiana Jones, and others. The GM screen includes a map of the world of the '30s.

DAREDEVILS is quite successful in giving a feel of the world of the pulps. Especially helpful to players will be the section on The Hero, which outlines some of the pulp heroes of the '30s, giving examples such as the Avenger, Doc Savage, Batman, and even Nero Wolfe for players to identify with. The rules are very complete and seem to cover most possible situations that might come up in a game.

DAREDEVILS does have its problems, though none are fatal. Although the talents rule is listed as "advanced," it is necessary for creating even basic characters. The only place the important rule on development points is mentioned is in the character setup section – and only in the example is it actually explained. This could be troublesome, since these points are necessary to buy skills and increases in skills and attributes. More should have been said on this. The Value Number Table is also the NPC Reaction Table, but isn't listed as the former at all, which could cause confusion if the brief reference to it is missed. Some might find, too, that the special powers give characters too much of an edge. Powers such as hypnosis, compulsion, invisibility, and shadow blend may prove *too* powerful.

Overall, however, DAREDEVILS is a most interesting and satisfying game. Unless you didn't like the ***Aftermath/Bushido*** game system at all, you should find DAREDEVILS a more than adequate RPG to propel you into '30s action and adventure.

–William A. Barton

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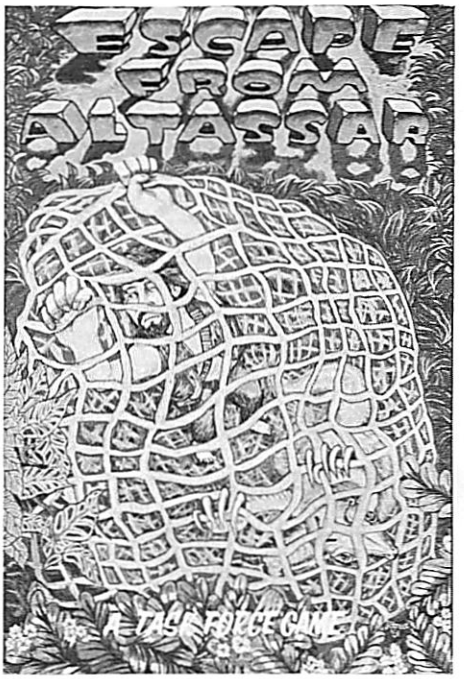

ESCAPE FROM ALTASSAR (Task Force Games); $4.95. Designed by Daniel Campagna. 16-page rulebook, 17" x 22" full-color mapsheet, 54 die-cut counters. Two players; playing time one to two hours. Published 1982.

ESCAPE FROM ALTASSAR is an SF game set on the planet Altassar, where the aggressive alien Spikus have established a penal colony to house some of the prisoners they have taken in their 300-year war with the Galacta Condederation. The Condederation is made up of a number of races, including humans; the Spikus are singularly nasty fellows, in traditional space-Nazi style, and the males are given to a twice-a-year feast of their hapless prisoners. The game simulates an escape attempt by an assortment of Confederation prisoners, who have managed to break into the Spikus armory and are fleeing toward a transport waiting to take them to freedom. During the course of the game, the Confederation player moves his handful of prisoners across Altassar's rough terrain while the Spikus player pursues with an array of foot soldiers, tracker tanks, robotic trip nets, and high-speed Drystal flying ships. The prisoner counters are augmented by dummy counters; both are moved upside down to confuse the Spikus forces and are revealed as a result of combat or by moving into the field of a Spikus signal post. Combat can be either ranged or adjacent and results in exposure, retreat, stun, or elimination. The Spikus pursuit is hampered by the fact that their troops are compelled to move to nearby corpses to feed, and by the time limit imposed by fuel and the effect of climate on the Spikus foot soldiers.

This game has several things in its favor. First and foremost is its original premise; with the multitude of SF titles currently available, it's nice to see a new topic. The rules for the variety of Spikus weaponry, and the rules for camouflage and flight for the prisoners certainly seem to capture the *flavor* of a prison break. The painted map is very attractive and colorful.

Unfortunately, the bad things about ESCAPE FROM ALTASSAR outweigh the good. *The Great Escape* it isn't. The prisoners' main defense is their hidden status, but the rules for losing and maintaining hidden status are unclear – a crucial crippling of the game. When prisoners are attacked, they can attempt to evade, but dummy counters cannot. This makes it fairly easy for the Spikus player to attack hidden counters and determine their status without an exposure result. Of course, the prisoner could refrain from evading his prisoner units to fool the Spikus player, but such can be suicidal if faced with a high-odds attack. Which brings us to another point: the combat system. As one might expect from the situation, the prisoners are heavily outgunned. This is certainly realistic, but not particularly exciting for the Confederation player who can rarely afford to initiate combat. The Spikus weapons, especially the fast flying Drystals, are all well armed and have long range capability. Since intervening terrain has no effect on fire, weapons have considerable ability to project power around the board. The Confederation player has the rather uninteresting task of cowering around the board; I've yet to get a Confederation victory.

I can't recommend ESCAPE FROM ALTASSAR. Although it has some interesting chrome, there's nothing solid to hang it on. What begins as a nice premise degenerates into a turkey shoot. Task Force Games has done better in the past, and gamers have a right to expect something a bit more polished and refined.

–Tony Watson

VIKING GODS (TSR Hobbies, Inc.) $3.98. Designed by Allen Hammack. Boxed, with a 7" x 4" 18-page rulebook, two six-sided dice. 84 color counters, and 11½" x 14" hex map. For two players; playing time one half to one and a half hours. Published 1982.

VIKING GODS is based on Ragnarok, the classic last battle between the Gods and forces of Chaos in Norse mythology. To win, the Gods must either kill Loki or crush the army of Chaos itself. Chaos has to destroy the Tree of Life – Yggsdrasil.

The two scenarios (basic and advanced) are simple to learn. Those who have some knowledge of Norse mythology can easily identify the Gods' powers. Many who enjoy reading the tales of Valhalla and play fantasy wargames will get a real kick out of it. VIKING GODS captures the Norse flavor well.

For such a simple design, VIKING GODS has many flaws. The only real strategy in the basic game involves movement and placement of counters; the advanced game goes just beyond this by adding special abilities and terrain effects as other factors in strategy. The advanced game favors the victory of Chaos rather heavily. Abilities given to nearly every piece in the advanced game weigh more to Chaos. Terrain affects Chaos a lot less than it affects the Gods. Finally, Hel, goddess of death, is extremely dangerous to the defenses of the Gods. The Gods of Asgard have never won the advanced game of the games I have played. A comment about the component quality: The small counters used in the game are hard to store in just the box (the game comes with no bag or other container to store them in) and are difficult for use in play (if someone bumps the table, all the counters spread out all over the map).

Despite many flaws in this game, it provides good entertainment for fans of Viking lore. It is inexpensive, and at least the components are durable and attractive. But if you find fantasy and mythology-oriented games unappealing, you should spend your four dollars elsewhere.

–George R. Leake III

SUPPLEMENTS

ANGMAR (Iron Crown Enterprises); $10. Designed by Heike Kubasch. 8½" x 11½½ 48-page book with 16" x 20" double-sided color map insert. Published 1982.

ANGMAR (*Land of the Witch-King*) is Iron Crown Enterprises' first detailed module set in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth. Whereas the initial module in the series gave a map and general overview of Middle-Earth, this release zeroes in on the land of Angmar, where the Witch-King, Lord of the Nazgul, rules prior to his part in *Lord of the Rings.* The module includes a double-sided, full-color map of Angmar and the region of the Northern Misty Mountains, backed with a map of Carn Dum, the Witch-King's capital. The book itself is full of information on the geography, inhabitants, flora and fauna (including dragons, trolls, giants, and other monsters), climate, politics, history, culture, languages, and armies of Angmar. There are floor plans for four different structures and several smaller insert maps throughout the book as well. Statistics are provided for major NPCs and creatures – including, of course, the Witch-King himself, along with guidelines for converting these into other systems using d20s, 3d6s, and 2d6s. Illustrations of siege equipment, castles, wargs, and other appropriate subjects add to the book's flavor.

ANGMAR is a much better buy that the first Middle-Earth module was, providing a lot more useful information for the price. It is quite faithful to Tolkien (as it, no doubt, had to be to get an official license), and only the most devoted Tolkien fans should be able to tell where I.C.E. had to do some filling in. The maps and descriptions of the cities and structures are quite helpful in visualizing the Land of the Witch-King, as are the definitions in the front. In fact, one could run a Middle-Earth campaign entirely in Angmar with little need for the general module at all. The list of Healing Herbs is nice, too, as is the siege equipment, though the latter would have been more useful if put into game terms.

The main problem with ANGMAR, which will probably appear throughout the rest of the series, is that all the NPC stats are set in I.C.E.'s *Rolemaster* system (which was to be expected, I suppose, but which puts the lie to the broad claims of the series being suitable for all systems). Conversions from the d100-based system won't be too difficult for some other systems that use the d20, 3d6, or 2d6 systems, such as *D&D,* which the *Rolemaster* system seems to emulate somewhat with its levels, etc. But conversions from systems such as *TFT,* for example, would be difficult – and what systems other than *Traveller* use 2d6s for stats? Spell conversions would be a problem, too – for some it may be necessary to own *Spell Law.* I.C.E. would have done better to use a generic system, as FASA has in its *Thieves' World* scenarios.

Despite the conversion hassles, though, ANGMAR holds a lot of promise for anyone who's been wanting to adventure in Middle-Earth. If the rest of the series is as good, I.C.E. will definitely have a winner on its hands.

–William A. Barton

GRIMTOOTH'S TRAPS TOO (Blade); $10. Edited by Paul O'Connor, Pat Mueller, and Michael Stackpole. One 8½" x 11" 72-page book. Published 1982.

Those players whose characters met their dooms in one of the fiendish devices from Flying Buffalo's *Grimtooth's Traps* had better begin quivering in anticipation once more – Blade (a division of FBI) has released the sequel, GRIMTOOTH'S TRAPS TOO, a further compilation of mayhem. Part of FBI/Blade's All-Systems Catalyst series, TRAPS TOO offers for your delight 101 more traps described for use with any RP system. (I haven't actually counted them to confirm the number – every time I try, I start reading the entries and end up on the floor in fits of fiendish laughter.) Like *Grimtooth's,* the sadistic snares of TRAPS TOO are divided into categories – room traps, corridor traps, door traps, items and things – and each is marked with from one to five skulls to rate its deadliness. Several are delightfully illustrated

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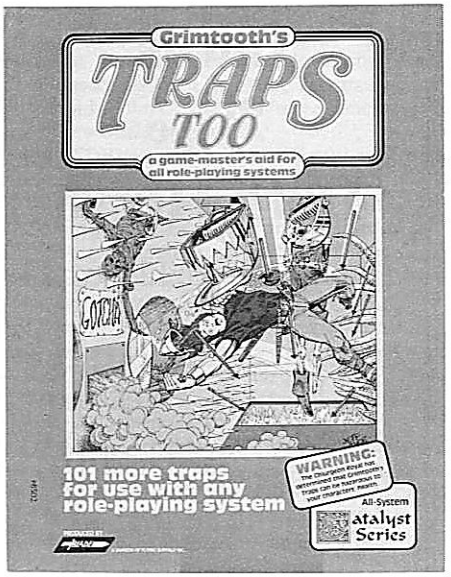

as well. The 101st trap is coded in runes as a bonus to the cryptanalysts among us. The table of contents lists a 102nd trap as well – also coded – which runs throughout the book.

Like its predecessor, TRAPS TOO is cleverly conceived and executed (no pun intended). Even if you *never* use a single item from its pages (for which your players would be grateful), it's great fun just to read. Among my favorites are Black Widow Pinata, Genius Gold, Chuting Gallery, Step This Way Please, Archimedes' Revenge, Cretin in the Circular Citadel, and the Door-Lover's Room. (To describe these here would spoil the fun.)

The faint-hearted might find some of the traps in the book a bit too deadly – the devious kraken traps, for instance. It is true that many could prove too devastating for most lower-level characters, However, the more deadly are great ways to dispose of those pesky super-characters (you know, the ones who eat dragons for breakfast and pick their teeth with balrog bones) that infest too many campaigns.

Though a few might think the idea is stretching thin after two volumes, most GMs should find TRAPS TOO useful for ideas to plague their players – who may want to buy it in self-defense and memorize its contents to know what to look out for. Either way, it's sure to enliven (endeaden?) RPG play.

–William A. Barton

JONRIL: GATEWAY TO THE SUNKEN LANDS (Midkemia Press); $9.95. Designed by April Adams and Raymond E. Feist. Adventure supplement for FRPGs. 65-page book, 17" x 20" pullout map. Published 1982.

Jonril is a large city designed for use with most FRP systems (and some SFRP systems, as well). It is populated with a wide variety of characters, many of whom are furnished not only with personalities, but also with suggested adventures and encounters. A cross-referencing index in the back of the book eliminates the need to memorize the whole text.

An extensive amount of work has gone into the development of Jonril. Its people are nicely fleshed-out, there is a good variety of shops and other places to waste time and money, and the city is rich in adventure material. While you might not want to base the rest of your campaign out of the city, several weeks of play time could be spent campaigning here.

Even with its good points, JONRIL lacks in a couple of areas. It is called the "Gateway to the Sunken Lands," but nothing is said about the Sunken Lands except that they lie to the north and may contain lost cities. Nobody likes putting together an area to cover such a gap and later find it invalidated by another supplement release.

Altogether, though, JONRIL is a very worthwhile setup. It is well put together, and can be used without too much pregame planning. It's well worth the money.

–Kelly Grimes

STAR FLEET BATTLES EXPANSION 3 (Task Force Games); $6.95. Designed by Stephen Cole. Expansion module for ***Star Fleet Battles***. 38-page 8½" x 5½" rulebook, 26 new SSD sheets, and 104 die-cut counters. Published 1983.

EXPANSION 3 introduces even more complexity into the Star Fleet universe. New ships, new scenarios, new rules (plus errata) add to the load of references that a ***Star Fleet Battles*** player must recall during the course of play. The new ships include the Light cruisers of the General War: "lean and mean" vessels, with the firepower (but not the endurance) of larger ships. Minesweepers, mostly conversions from older ships, come into play with the new minefield rules. And the Romulans finally get a new navy, with ingenious new designs, including the Sparrowhawk modular cruiser. The Andromedans introduce the Dominator, a monster ship capable of taking on a B-10, as a presage of the future.

The nine scenarios (including one mini-campaign) cover the short operational term of Fi-Cons (Needles towing fighters), incidents and battles on the mysterious and highly radioactive Wyn border, and a minefield scenario. Even the

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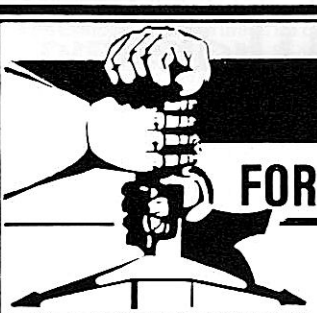

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Unfortunately, the rules are still in the "old" system, and finding the ruling you need requires a well-trained memory and a lot of luck. This expansion does not include a pair of ziplock bags, as the first two did, and some of the printing is a bit cheap (computer type). The first flaw is being rectified; the comprehensive rulebook is on the way, they say. Unfortunately, the days of Task Force games including containers is probably gone for good.

The expansion is a must for ***SFB*** players, despite the problems (and ***SFB*** players are used to dealing with them by now).

–Craig Sheeley

UMBAR (Iron Crown Enterprises); $10. Designed by Brenda Gates Spielman. 8½" x 11" 52-page book with 16" x 20" double-sided color map. Published 1982.

UMBAR (*Haven of the Corsairs*), the second detailed area module in Iron Crown's Middle-Earth series, focuses on the infamous pirate city that Aragorn conquered at the end of the Third Age. Like its predecessor, ***Angmar***, UMBAR is quite detailed and quite faithful to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, as befits a game supplement licensed by Tolkien Enterprises. In fact, I.C.E.'s Middle-Earth modules are so thorough that one hardly even needs to have read the books to run them (though, of course, it's a lot more fun if you have). Like ***Angmar***, UMBAR contains lists and descriptions of important NPCs; notes on flora and fauna in the area, along with climatic, geographical, and other physical information; a history of the city including a timeline; the cultural organization of the city including the various guilds and professions in the region; and numerous maps and floor plans of Umbar and the surrounding lands. These latter include several underground mazes, dungeons, or cavern complexes for delvers so inclined, plus several castles and towers, such as Minor Mar, the

Black Tower. A history of the Dark Religion and its hold on the area is also provided for those who wish to involve Sauron's touch in their play. The large, full-color map insert is quite nice, featuring a map of the entire area on one side and one of Umbar itself on the other.

There is much to commend in UMBAR, particularly the attention to detail. The floor plans of the inns and taverns are nice touches, as these are typical stopping points for most adventurers. Also nice is the inclusion of a map of the city's sewer systems. The tables of items, NPCs, etc., are helpful, as are the notes on game plans, the glossary of people and places, and the guide-

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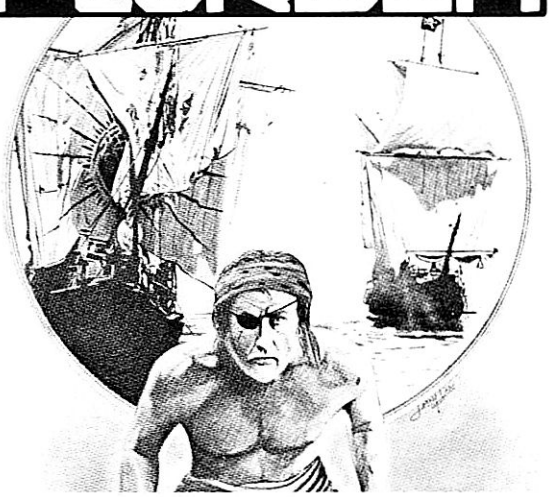

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lines on running adventures in various different ages from the book's main focus on T.A. 1607.

There are few problems found in UMBAR. There is the conversion problem it shares with *Angmar*, since all NPC stats are in I.C.E.'s *Rolemaster* system. And I'm quite surprised there wasn't a single deckplan of a ship – after all, this is the city of the corsairs.

Other than that, however, UMBAR is quite worth the price if you're looking for a place for fantasy adventures that has the flavor of Middle-Earth, yet is far enough from the occurrences of the books to leave plenty of room for independent action.

–William A. Barton

COMPUTER GAMES

GALAXY (Avalon Hill); $20-$25. Originally designed by Tom Cleaver for Apple; translated for other computers. 16K tape for the TRS-80 models 1 and 3, Apple II+, Pet, or Atari 400/800; disk version for 32K TRS-80 models 1 and 3, Atari 400/800, and for 48 D Apple II+. Published 1981.

GALAXY is a strategy game of galactic conquest for 1-20 players, but it works best with six or fewer. The object is simply to own the most planets at the end of a preselected (by the players) number of turns. Options include: letting neutral worlds produce, rejection of any given computer-generated setup, and saving the game at the end of any turn. Players can change the number of turns, turn the sound off to speed play, display the map, calculate distances and times, and drop out at any time.

Played solitaire, the game rapidly becomes predictable. The only graphic display used is a text map showing the position and ownership of the (up to 40) planets. The computer won't remind you how many ships you have sent out, or where they are headed, so it has to be written down. Forms are provided for this. The ships can't change targets until they arrive at the target planet. They have to survive a battle to the death unless you already control the world. No retreats are allowed. Some worlds have industry, but all the industry builds is ships.

None of the above problems are important when multiple players are involved. There are several built-in aids for multiple players. The start and end locations and the number of ships dispatched do not appear on the screen as they are typed in, preventing others from knowing your intentions. Tactical combat is handled quickly and simply, leaving the players to concentrate on diplomacy and strategy. And that is the attraction of the game: the variety of player interaction.

In the multi-player computer games market, there are not that many games. This is a welcome addition to that collection.

–Dana Holm

STARFIGHTER (Aardvark, 2352 S. Commerce, Walled Lake, MI – not to be confused with the Adventure International game of the same name); $9.95. Available for the TRS-80, Color Computer, and OSI. One player; playing time 5-10 minutes. Published 1979.

In STARFIGHTER, you take command of a starfighter in the Alpha Centauri system. You will be challenged by starfighters, battleships, cruisers, and supercruisers and use your phasers, photon torpedoes, and missiles to destroy them.

This is a simple game with a fun feel. It moves rapidly as you try to maintain proper distance between yourself and the enemy and to use the right weapon at various ranges. Since you only have 25 phaser charges, ten torpedoes, and ten missiles, it is important to use them wisely. There are ten levels of difficulty, so as you become experienced, the challenge can be increased. I was pleasantly surprised to find a program listing provided with the instructions. The listing is useful for finding bugs and making modifications.

This program has several bugs. Words are misspelled, a missing semicolon causes a display line to be erased and, perhaps worst of all, the game is preceded by instructions that are very poorly formatted. Also, there are no sound effects.

While I have enjoyed playing STARFIGHTER, I refuse to recommend a program that so badly needed additional debugging.

–Bruce Campbell

WINDSLOE MANSION and KLONDIKE ADVENTURE (Adventure of the Month Club, 6 South St., Milford, NH); $7 each cassette, $10 each disk. 16K TRS-80 (32K for disk). One or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

These are text-oriented adventures similar to those made popular by Scott Adams. In WINDSLOE MANSION, you must rescue the Pumpkin Man, who is held captive by nasties in a haunted house. KLONDIKE requires you to retrieve five treasures in the frozen arctic.

Adventure of the Month Club issues the least expensive adventures of which I am aware. Generally they take hours, or at most a few days, to solve. They are written in Basic, so if you are totally blocked, it is possible to examine the listing for a clue. Response time is reasonable. I enjoyed the unique setting as well as the puzzles presented by KLONDIKE.

The major problem with Adventure Club is that many of their adventures lack save-game capability. KLONDIKE could be saved, but WINDSLOE MANSION could not. Fortunately, using a utility to identify variables, I was able to add "save" and "load" commands. WINDSLOE MANSION primarily consists of determining which weapon to use on each monster. Guess wrong and you die. Without save-game capability, this means you must start over.

WINDSLOE MANSION is a loser. For a relatively simple adventure, KLONDIKE is a good buy. If you get stuck, try yelling.

–Bruce Campbell

ARCADE GAMES

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (Atari); $34.95. Cartridge for the Atari 2600. Includes cartridge and 16-page instruction booklet. One player; playing time highly variable from about 20 minutes or more. Published 1982.

In RAIDERS, the player takes the part of Indiana Jones in a search (covering several video screens) for the lost Ark of the Covenant. To aid Indy in covering the difficult terrain and dealing with the unsavory enemies, there are a dozen items, varying from a tame timepiece to a lethal grenade. The player has three "lives" with which to figure out that the puzzles and use the right objects to locate the Ark. After the third life, or if you're successful, the game rates the player's skill by raising Indy on a pedestal to the appropriate height.

It seems that adventure games have finally arrived in full force for the home Atari 2600. Following up on the success of *Adventure* and Imagic's *Riddle of the Sphinx*, RAIDERS offers a more complex challenge than ever before. The

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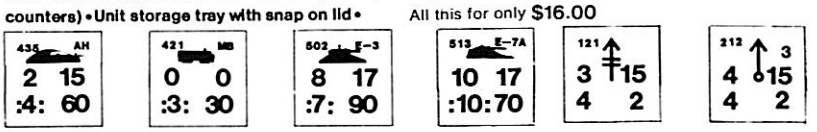

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rulebook is divided into three parts to allow each player approach the game at his own pace. The first section explains just the basic controls and offers virtually no clues about using the objects or solving the puzzle. The next section shows the different screens and objects that will be encountered. Though it gives a lot of information to the player, it does not solve the problems of solving the puzzle. The last section is labelled "solutions," though it is mostly just partial solutions or the answers to particular problems than a final solution. And no matter how much information the player begins with, he will still have to dodge the snake, bargain with the black sheik, cross the mesas by grappling hook, and accomplish many other feats of arcade daring.

Though the graphics are not great (but they are fairly good) and the RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK theme song has a note or two off-key, this is still *the* adventure cartridge of the year. Those gamers who prefer magic items, puzzles, and thoughtful play mixed with arcade movement should find RAIDERS well worth the price.

–Richard A. Edwards

SWORDQUEST: EARTHWORLD (Atari); $34.95. Cartirdge for the Atari 2600. Includes cartridge, 48-page comic book, 8-page instruction booklet, and entry form. One player; playing time unknown. Published 1982.

The player in EARTHWORLD takes the part of a thief wandering through twelve zodiac chambers deep beneath the earth in a quest for the Talisman of the Penultimate Truth. Searching through rooms consists of moving through a doorway and pushing the joystick button to discover the contents of the room entered. Four rooms have arcade challenge screens which must be overcome before entrance is permitted. Most rooms contain one or more of the fifteen magical objects which can aid game play and are the keys to solving the game's puzzle. The real object to EARTHWORLD, one of a set of four such challenge cartridges to come, is to solve the puzzle. Clues can be found by placing the correct objects in the correct rooms. These numeric clues lead to the comic book, which provides the final clues which are to be entered on the contest form and sent to Atari. The prize for the ultimate winner, after a playoff round, is a $25,000 medallion.

There are two challenges in EARTHWORLD. The first is being able to get past the arcade screens to enter four special rooms. These action sections are challenging and graphically well done, and add greatly to the play value of the game. The second part, finding the clues, should prove difficult for even the most determined players – for finding them does not depend on arcade skill, but thought.

Unfortunately, the clue hunt which makes the cartridge so thought-provoking and challenging is also the part which turns the game into drugery. The actual "play" value of this cartridge is very low, as its strength lies in the difficulty of finding clues, not in reflex action. Those not interested in spending many days huddled over their machines with comic book in hand, trying to find just the right combinations of objects and rooms, will soon find this game boring.

The only reason to purchase a copy of SWORDQUEST: EARTHWORLD is to try and

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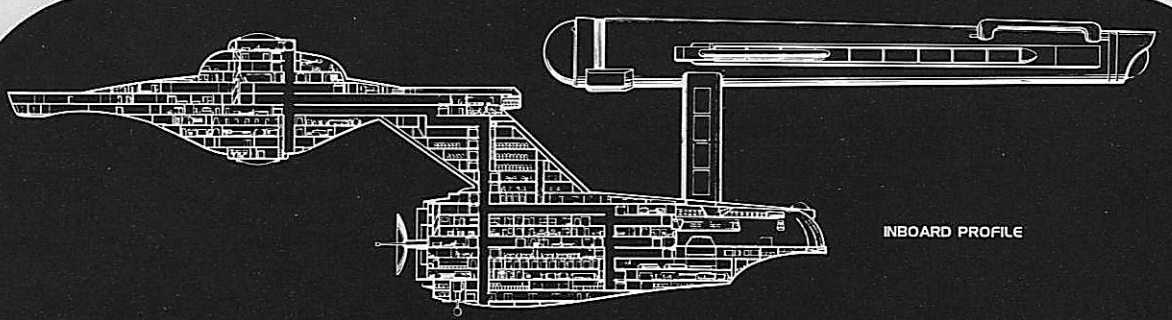
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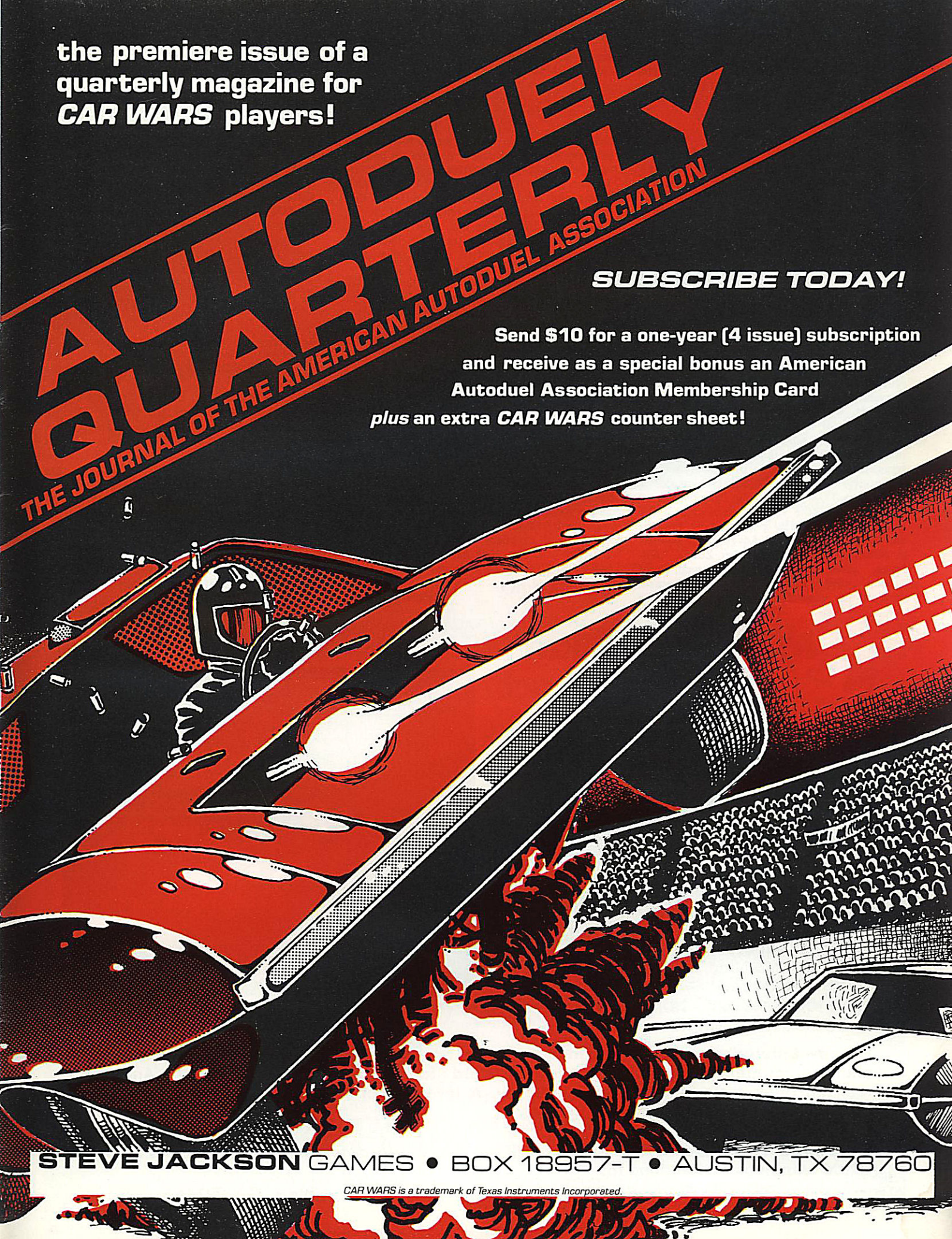

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solve the puzzle and win the prize. Gamers not interested in spending the time required should pass this one.

–Richard A. Edwards

PUBLICATIONS

FAR TRAVELLER (FASA); $3.95. Edited by J. Andrew Keith. Approved for use with *Traveller*. 6" x 9" 64-page magazine. Issue 1 published December 1982.

High Passage, the excellent *Traveller* magazine published first by the High Passage Group, then jointly with FASA, is no more. In its place, FASA has started publication of a new magazine titled FAR TRAVELLER. Edited by J. Andrew Keith, who also edited the last issue of HP, the new magazine appears to be carrying on HP's standards of high quality and shows a lot of promise. Apparently, several columns which appeared in HP will carry on over to FAR TRAVELLER, including the Port Authority Handbook, the section on equipment, and a subsector map, now set in Marischal Adventures' Reavers' Deep sector. HP's feature adventure has given way to Port of Call, an in-depth presentation of one particular planet, including maps, encounter tables, notes on history, culture, flora and fauna, population, government, transportation, and places of special note to adventurers. This issue's featured world is Roakhoi, a TL-4 planet in the Ea subsector of Reavers' Deep (the featured subsector of the issue) which is jointly populated by humans and Aslan. The featured Adventurette (similar in nature to the JTAS' Amber Zone), "Jailbreak," takes place on Roakhoi as well, and a section called "Library Computer" features data on the area. Traveller's Gear features a laser designator sight and a sniper barrel for pistols, which should prove handy for pistol toters looking for more lethality.

FAR TRAVELLER's intital offering shows a lot of creativity and thoroughness, especially in the Port of Call feature. This is the most fully defined planet ever presented for *Traveller* play anywhere. Particularly nice are the animals with excellent accompanying illustrations by William Keith; the deck plans for the wooden sailing and steam ships of Roakhoi, the first ocean-going ship plans yet released; and the section on the Lion's Den bar, with floor plans, NPCs, and patron encounter table. The latter, especially, could be lifted and transferred to almost any world near Aslan space.

There are a few problems evident in FAR TRAVELLER 1, most having to do with production. Pages 61-64 quite obviously belong after page 37, and prior to the material on page 38, which could prove a bit confusing. Oddly, the editor's introduction, Traveller's Log, comes even before the table of contents, making for a strange appearance upon lifting the cover. Too, no page numbers are listed in the table of contents, making it necessary to leaf through the magazine to find things. The main problem some may find, however, is in the length of the Port of Call feature. All but eight pages out of 64 concern the planet Roakhoi, leaving little else for those not interested in this world. Indications are, however, that future issues will have a somewhat more balanced content.

Overall, FAR TRAVELLER looks like it should be an excellent addition to the world of *Traveller* products. *High Passage* will be missed, but FAR TRAVELLER should go a long way to fill the void.

–William A. Barton

SOFTSIDE (515 Abbot Dr., Bromall, PA 19008); $3. 8½" x 11" 96-page glossy magazine. First published 1978.

SOFTSIDE's focus is computer entertainment programming for the TRS-80, Apple, and Atari. Occasionally it will branch out into other areas such as data base management, or word processing. Each month is preseents three or more program listings for each system. The magazine has articles and reviews, but relatively little advertising.

SOFTSIDE has evolved from a pulp tabloid to a slick, professional magazine. A wide variety of programs are featured: arcade games, adventures, economic situations, board games, educational programs, and more. In general, I have found these of higher quality than most listings in books and magazines. The program listings are well annotated for easier understanding. The editorial board includes Lance Micklas and Scott Adams. Cassette and disk subscriptions are available to those who wish to avoid typing. The disk version also includes additional programs.

Some subscribers believe that SOFTSIDE has spread its resources too thin by covering three systems. Soon the editors plan to add a fourth system, the Color Computer, which could increase this concern. The editors are sensitive to this issue and attempt to insure that the quantity and quality of material provided for currently covered systems do not diminish as new systems are added. Some readers may be disappointed that there are not many ads. However, this does keep the magazine from becoming unreasonably large.

For Basic language listings of entertainment programs, SOFTSIDE is recommended.

–Bruce Campbell

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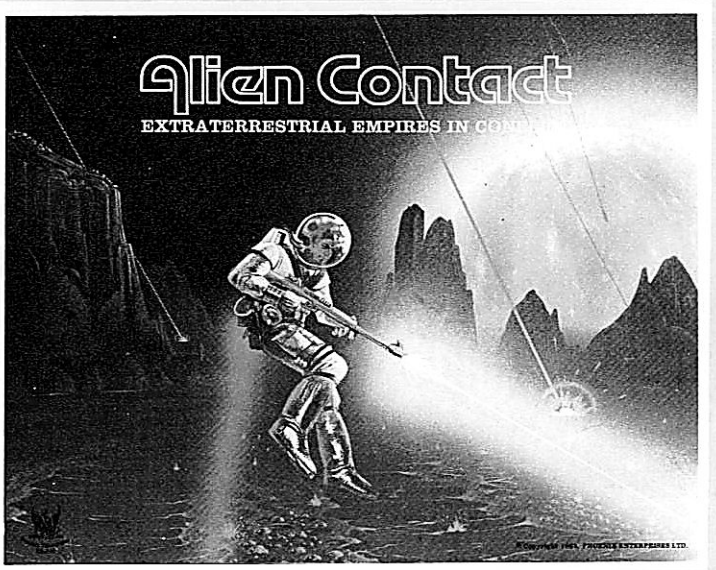

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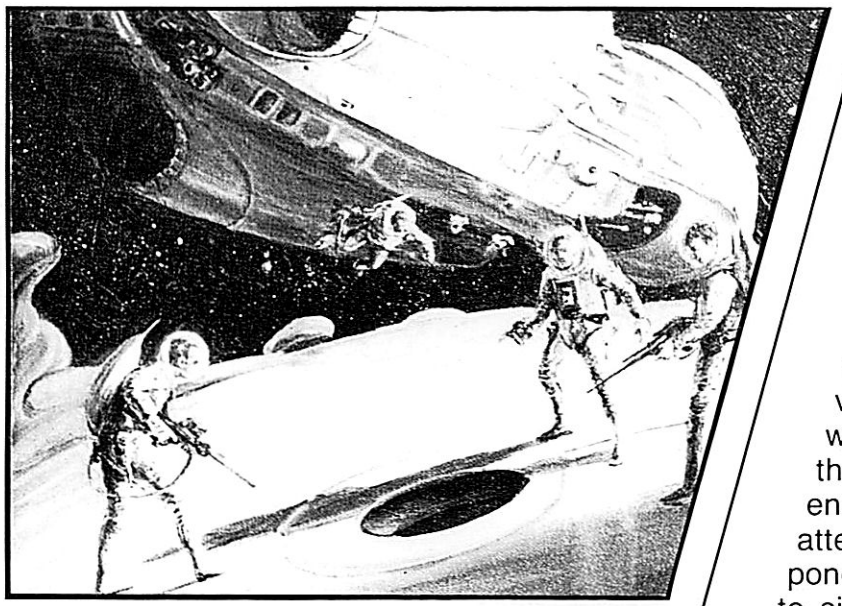

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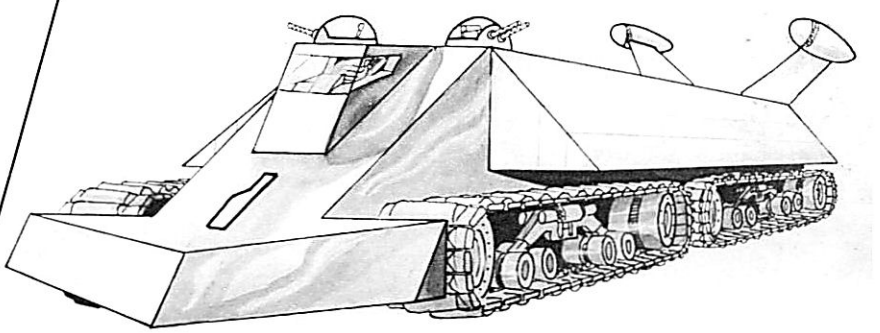

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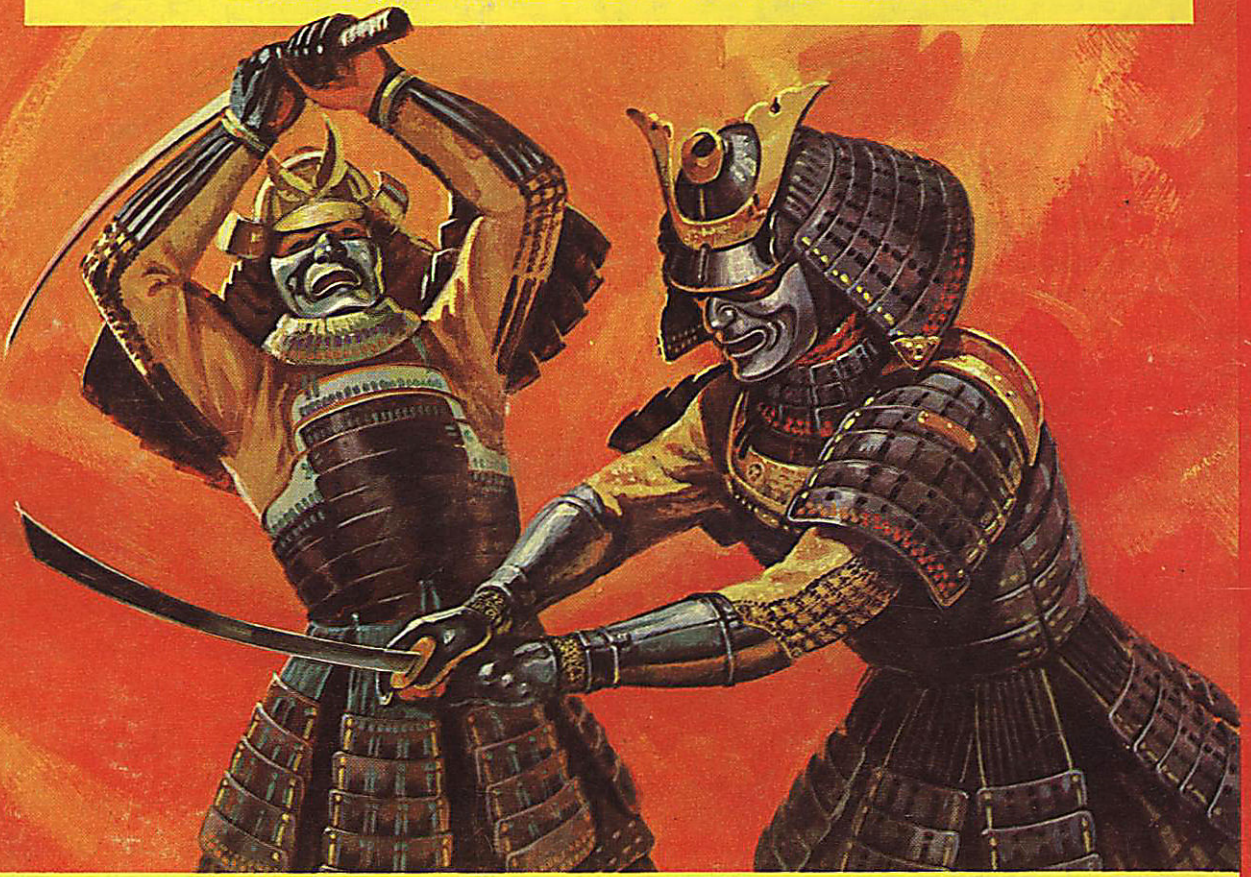

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