

# THE NIP OF GAMING MAGAZINE



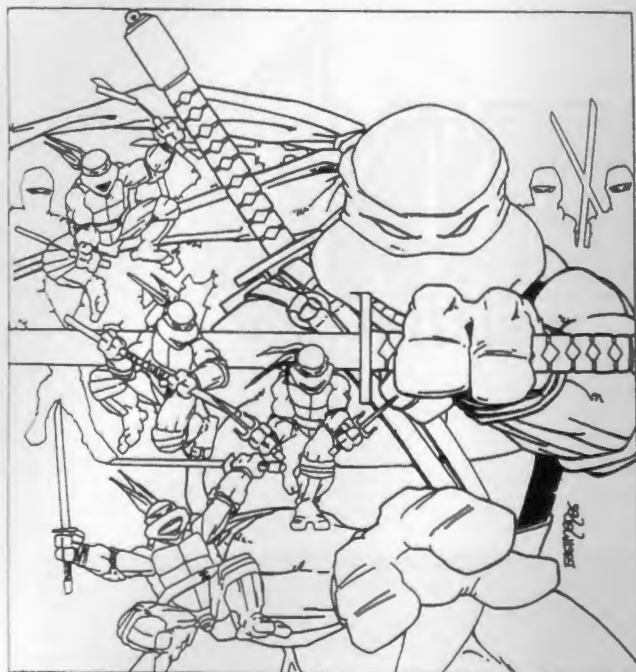


# THE VIP OF GAMING MAGAZINE



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER  
ISSUE NUMBER 5  
\$3.50

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Artwork includes the never before published Noble Comics J.M. cover #6 by Paul Gulacy (introducing Ms. Liberty) and a never before published Justice Machine splash page by Jack Kirby. Other contributing artists include John Byrne, Bill Sienkiewicz, Mike Grell, Bill Willingham, Terry Austin, Mike Vosburg, Bob Layton, Mike Zeck and page after page of inspired artwork by Mike Gustovich.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

"But Seriously, Folks..." (Editorial) .....	1
Spacegamer .....	5
Fantasy Gamer .....	17
Correct Counter Contest .....	26
Origins '86 Report .....	27
Battleplan (Board Gaming) .....	35
The Computer Gamer .....	43
First Class Gaming (Play-By-Mail) .....	51
The Skirmish Line (Miniature Gaming) .....	53
Observation Point .....	55
Under Cover (Book and Product Review) .....	57
Gamers Guide .....	61
Murphy's Rules .....	64
<b>Publisher:</b> .....	Alan Emrich
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<b>Asst. Editor:</b> .....	Gary E. Smith
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The Space Gamer .....	Allen Varney
Battle Plan .....	Gary E. Smith
The Computer Gamer .....	Robbie Robberson
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The V.I.P. of Gaming Magazine is published BI-monthly (six times per year) by Diverse Talents, Incorporated, 5374 Village Road, Long Beach, CA 90808 - (213) 420-3875. Application to mail at Second-Class postage rates is pending at Long Beach, California and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The V.I.P. of Gaming Magazine. All rights reserved. Subscription rates as of June 1, 1985: In the United States - 6 issues \$18.00; 12 issues \$35.00. Outside the US - Please add \$.75 per issue (Canada) or \$1.50 per issue (foreign) for surface mail.

International rates are subject to change as postal rates change. NOTE: All payments must be in US dollars, drawn on a US bank. Printed in the US by Futura of Austin, Texas.

## "But Seriously, Folks..."

### The End Of the Beginning

Like Game News, Gameplay, and too many other magazines which have tried to cover the entire adventure gaming hobby spectrum, The V.I.P. of Gaming is ceasing publication (per se) with this issue. (Don't panic! Keep reading!) (The age of topic/theme specialization is upon us and (although difficult for us of this hobby who thrive in fantasy and historical alternatives) reality must be faced. The V.I.P. of Gaming, as it is produced now, is dropping out of the marketplace.

Unlike its illustrious predecessors, however, The V.I.P. of Gaming is not folding. Like AT&T, we're breaking up, which is an easy project for this magazine. Each department is really a magazine unto itself anyway, so we're just going to separate magazines, each more specialized (ie. "give 'em what they want"). Okay, done!

Two to three months from now (these things always take a bit of extra time for transition), two magazines will emerge where before there was only The V.I.P. of Gaming. Look for the return of Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer, and the new publication: Battleplan. The question remains, what changes will you see inside them?

As you can see, the magazine is being split up between historical and science-fiction/fantasy. Thus, V.I.P.'s sub magazines for computer gaming, play-by-mail, miniatures, books, conventions, etc. will be transplanted, along the appropriate subjects, into both magazines, therefore, people like Robbie Robberson (our computer gaming editor) and Nolan Bond (our play-by-mail editor) will be going "schizophrenic" contributing to both magazines. Oh, well. They knew the job was dangerous when they took it!

Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer will create a rebirth of those popular magazines. As a continuation from the past, SGFG will begin with issue number 77. Many of the veteran Steve Jackson Games' staff, still having cordial relations with the magazine, will continue to write articles and guest columns. SGFG, however, has come of age, and so is either a.) increasing its tech level, or b.) gone up another

character level, depending on how you play it.

This means that Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer is under a new editor and new art director. Its new editor is Anne Jaffe, formerly the editor of Game News magazine. Anne is not only highly qualified (and esteemed), but energetic, organized, and extremely devoted. If you're attending World Con in Atlanta this Labor Day Weekend, she'll be there, covering it for the new Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer.

SGFG's new art director is Vince "Avant Garde" DeNardo. Vince is also currently the art director of Fire & Movement and Computer Gaming World magazine. He has been cooking up a new look for SGFG, one that will work well with the expanded 64 page format DTI (the publisher) is allowing. With Anne committed to details, Vince dynamically advancing the magazine's art, design and graphics, and DTI increasing the size of the magazine by 16 pages, so look for one incredible rebirth of Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer.

**Battleplan** will be something different entirely. Since DTI also publishes Fire & Movement, some serious decisions had to be made about a second historical gaming magazine. Essentially, there was only one solution. <sup>1</sup>Battleplan would be everything F&M isn't! Please examine the following point by point example:

1 While F&M is nobody's "house organ" and remains independent with a neutral eye towards reviewing every company's wargames, Battleplan will be every wargame company's "house organ," providing them opportunities they could never have short of publishing their own magazines! Battleplan can publish their "office" game variants, scenarios, errata, as well as serve as an open editorial sounding board for these companies who do not publish their own magazines. This is something we plan to actively pursue.

2. Fire & Movement is primarily a news and review oriented magazine with secondary emphasis on errata, variants, etc. Battleplan will be just the opposite. Variants and scenarios will be the primary thrust of each issue. Furthermore, while F&M is written largely by the very cream of this hobby's journalists, Battleplan will be the wargame magazine for every wargamer to cut their teeth on writing for. Their "home made" variants and

scenarios will be the "guts" of each issue — wargamers sharing what they've done with to favorite games with other wargamers. C'mon, everybody's fudged around with their favorite game. Now's your chance to share a few of your good ideas!

3. Battleplan will also offer deluxe variants and "mini-games." By deluxe variants we mean cards and counters that you can cut right out of the extra-thick cardstock insert of the magazine. We'll put in very useable color additions to your favorite wargames.

Mini-games means just that. Wargames utilizing maps no larger than 11" x 17" with four to six pages of rules and probably no more than 200 counters. These maps would be on coated paper in the center of the magazine (about as thick as the cover), in color and ready to pull out and play. Unlike other magazines which publish full size games in each issue, we promise to publish "player's games" of low to moderate complexity, playable in reasonable amounts of time and quickly assimilated by veteran (while trying to remain comprehensible to novice) wargamers.

While there will be many other differences between Battleplan and

other wargaming magazines (including DTI's Fire & Movement), Editor/Art Director Pete Flahive, with the trusty assistance of Gary Smith, Christopher Cummins, Marion Bates, Alan Emrich, Robbie Robberson and a host of others, all promise to bring you a truly "user oriented, get into it" wargame magazine. Look for 48 bi-monthly pages with full color covers, an 11" x 17" cardstock insert, an 11" x 17" color map (when a game is included), and a format suitable for (illegally) copying and cutting up to put each individual variant and scenario in the correct game box.

### **So, Breaking Up is Hard to Do?**

Not really. Our subscribers are all receiving post cards in the mail asking them which magazine they wish to continue getting as part of their subscription. By December, you will see two magazines where V.I.P. stood before (actually, three — we've decided to import BREAKOUT! magazine from Australia and distribute it in North America as well). Thanks for staying with us, and we'll see you on the news stands!

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# SPACEGAMER

## FantasyGamer

# IS BACK



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Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer magazine is returning well in time for Christmas, and with so much to herald, we want to make sure you get the right gift! Space Gamer magazine has been published for eleven years, and has served Science-Fiction and Fantasy gaming fans faithfully through the years. It is a magazine with a long history, an outstanding reputation, and now it's having a glorious rebirth.

The new Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer magazine will be appearing in stores and mailboxes throughout the land by December. Issue number 77 will mark a new era of creativity for one of the longest-published magazines in the hobby.

The new Editor is Anne Jaffe, formerly of Game News magazine. Anne is not only one of the industry's most qualified (and esteemed) editors, she is also energetic, organized, devoted, punctual, and has a great eye for the details that make all of the difference in a quality magazine product.

The new Art Director is Vince DeNardo, currently Art Director for both Fire & Movement and Computer Gaming World magazines. Vince is giving Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer a new look, dynamically improved over previous issues, and an advance for all magazines of this genre.

Even the publisher is giving you more with the new Space Gamer / Fantasy Gamer. An increase in size from 48 to 64 pages (while still keeping the current cover price) is one heck of a fine gesture. They're not stopping there, however, because this notice also includes the following new subscriber deal:

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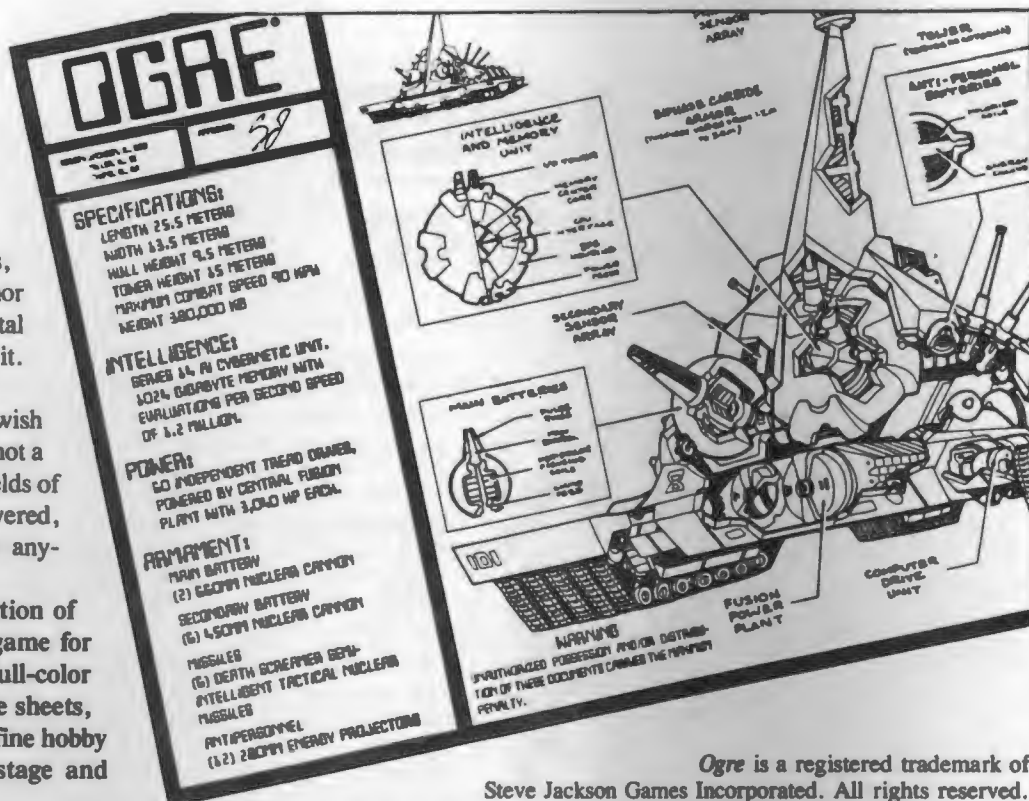
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# ***Space Gamer***

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

High-tech Crimebusting, by Michael Porter .....	5
Fast Damage Allocation in Star Fleet Battles, by Walt Mizia .....	7
Exploring the Universe of Cosmic Encounter, by Scott James Prouty .....	8
Necro-Jihad, by J. Michael Caparula .....	10
Dark Emperor Design Overview, by Greg Costikyan .....	11
Int Sec Agents at the Earth's Core, by Ken Rolston .....	13
Goodfire, by Tony Watson .....	15
New Rules For Dune, by Roger Cox .....	16
Editor .....	Allen Varney
c/o Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760	

## HIGH-TECH CRIMEBUSTING

### Law and Crime in SFRPGs

by Greg Porter

After thinking about it for a while, I have come to the conclusion that it is nearly impossible to find a roleplaying game in which you can have fun without breaking most of the laws in that continuum; stealing treasure, wholesale murder of peace-loving monsters, espionage, assassination, smuggling, the works. Even in games where you play squeaky-clean good guys (such as superheroes), you still walk around with vast amounts of unlicensed power which destroys a lot of private property when you miss — which is more often than most of us would like to admit. Maybe FRP is corrupting the finest minds in America with all this. So what? Somebody has to do it.

Anyway, the question this brings up is law enforcement, specifically in science fiction RPGs. Who is going to be the force of law and order in your

futuristic world? The police, of course. The problem is that while your characters are using all the futuristic tricks they can think of, your police forces are probably still using tactics and methods from the 1950s. This isn't too fair, and your players deserve to run into state-of-the-art police. It will give them a challenge, and make their lives just a little bit bleaker. You owe it to them.

Police technology today is a bit more sophisticated than a lot of people realize, some of them realizing it too late. Some major cities have nearly instantaneous call tracing. If you call the police station, the phone number you are calling from is flashed on the operator's screen, as well as the address and name of the person the phone is registered to. No more anonymous calls from home. In the future you can expect

visiphones to have automatic police overrides on the camera, allowing pictures of careless callers or as a simple surveillance measure.

### The Scene of The Crime

On some worlds, high levels of technology have been in constant use for hundreds or even thousands of years, and concepts that we are only thinking of may be commonplace — things like cities where everything is under the same roof, a single building that covers several square kilometers and reaches vertically for several hundred stories. Such a structure could have an integrated security system. Residents might have special tags, different from local visitors, which would in turn be different from off-world visitors. This would not have to

be obtrusive, but could be built into a keychain, or be a key itself. Everything about the person (within limits) would be on the tag, including medical information, whom to contact in an emergency, etc. Depending on the society, it might also include financial status, criminal record, political affiliations, and other, more personal information.

It would be a short step, both technically and politically, to make it possible to interrogate these tags remotely. Even now, credit card companies are considering building microchips into each credit card. As technology advances, it seems reasonable to suppose a small transceiver could be added. Think of the possibilities. Each person could be monitored, tracked, and "protected" electronically. If a person must be located, the central computer could do it in a matter of minutes or seconds.

Of course, your RPC characters in this society could leave these tags behind, accidentally "forgetting" them. However, they wouldn't be able to buy anything, use public transport, or even get out of the city without them. Even worse, a legal card could be deactivated, making the person an electronic pauper, unable to do much of anything until things are straightened out.

The police can use special versions of these tags, tied into a police computer. This way, their exact location in the city is known at all times. If help is needed, not a second is wasted in determining the officer's location. Lest such a system seem too effective, remember there are always counterfeiting, bribery, theft, and other alternatives. For more on this idea, read *Oath of Fealty* by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle and the *To The Stars* trilogy by Harry Harrison.

## How To Break The Law

An electronic society is likely to have an electronic underground, and maybe an electronic black market. All the standard services are there, but with new twists. Characters might be able to get forged IDs, or devices that mimic their operation. This would require tapping into the main computer, an operation that requires a lot of skill and (naturally) money. Other operations include pilfering of electronically-held money. If the authorities have put a hold on your cash, someone will be glad to

get it out for you electronically... for a modest 50% fee.

As image-recognition technology gets faster (and you bet it will), a city could have TV cameras set up in random areas, or maybe floating around on little grav-pods. These could be linked to a file of wanted criminals at the police stations. If a warrant is out for you and you walk by one of these cameras, you set off an alarm, alerting authorities to your location and which way you are going.

In sprawling areas you may have computerized traffic control. It is almost required in some of our urban areas, and the problem won't get any better as long as everyone drives his or her own vehicle, or at least has the right to. It might be possible to put remote controls in each vehicle, so that a traffic computer could manipulate traffic for optimum flow. You just punch in your destination, and the computer plots the best route, automatically avoiding accidents or other traffic tie-ups. This could double or triple the number of vehicles on the road without increasing the congestion beyond present levels. It could also be used the other way around, to slow traffic down. Supposedly there has already been one instance of a computer-initiated traffic jam used to stop fleeing bank robbers (I believe in New York City). It's a nice idea. Smart characters might find ways to use this traffic control to their own advantage.

## Catching The Bad Guy

The police are likely to have advanced weapons also. Certainly they may have access to things that are illegal for the average citizen to possess. Since the characters may be similarly armed, this works out about the same. Police devices may be "personalized," so that they only work for that officer or other officers on that shift. ID rings, implants, or similar devices may prevent the officer's own weapon from being turned against him. Small grav-robots, no larger than a football, could scout ahead, open doors, and peer around corners, saving the officer these unpleasant tasks. Of course, one good shot will blow it to bits, but better that than catching it in the head.

Forensic science will also be vastly improved. What we can do now is

impressive. We can lift fingerprints off almost anything, and this will improve to the point where virtually any surface can be checked for prints, including such unlikely things as rough cement or even fur.

Trace forensics will become an art. Anything left behind can be analyzed to the point that near-certain matches can be made. Perhaps it will even be possible to do chromosome prints from flakes of skin or stray hairs left at the scene of a crime. Additional things, like reconstruction of height and build from footprints, are icing on the cake. Naturally, a lot of these sophisticated techniques will be expensive and/or time-consuming, and so common criminals may escape such microscopic scrutiny. However, important crimes may warrant the expenses, and of course anyone willing to pay can have the work done privately.

As the world grows more complex, so will the police officer. He will be familiar with a wide variety of equipment, and an even wider variety of criminals — all the standard ones, plus those in such areas as petty computer crimes, microchip counterfeiting, illegal clone shops, unlicensed regeneration parlors, starjacking, and gene smuggling. Get the idea?

The criminals aren't going to sit still for all of this. Criminal technology will be right up there with the other side (I hesitate to say "good guys"). At times the criminals will have an edge, then the police will. This depends on the society.

This level of technology may exceed the imagination and/or knowledge of your players. If a player has a *Traveller* character with Smuggling-5, you know the player doesn't have any idea what tactics the character uses. In this case, the level of skill is more important than player action. The ingenuity of your players is very important, but in futuristic situations, remember that the character skills can cover things that neither you or your players may be aware of.

# Fast Damage Allocation in STAR FLEET BATTLES

by Walt Mizia

The most tedious procedure in **Star Fleet Battles** is the endless rolling of dice. Sure, it's fun for an attacker to roll for those hits on the combat results tables. But when it comes time to determining what systems those hits have destroyed, lethargy sets in — especially in fleet actions where fifty or

sixty internal hits must be resolved on the Damage Allocation Table.

Various proposals have been advanced to speed up this process. One magazine article suggested that predetermined groups of systems be eliminated by one roll of the dice. Task Force Games brought out **Battle Damage**

**Code Red**, which used a deck of cards to deal out the damage.

There is an easier, more accurate method. Use a random number table.

A random number table is a list of pre-rolled dice results, in sufficient number to discount biased results. To construct one, sit down with a cup, a pair of dice, pencil and paper, and roll the dice 256 times, recording the result of each roll in sixteen columns by sixteen rows. (See the boxed example.)

A normal random number table give each number an equal chance occurring. The results of rolling two dice do **not**. The compilation of dice results will describe a bell-shaped curve. The proper use of the **SFB** Damage Allocation Chart depends on this curve to produce internal hits accurately.

For example, for every one hundred rolls, the odds are that the "two" result will come up about three times (2.7%). The "seven" result should appear seventeen times (16.6%). The greater the number of dice rolls, the closer to these desired percentages will be the results.

Using the 16 x 16 random number table in a game requires three dice. The columns are numbered from 3 through 18, as are the rows. Roll the three dice. This will indicate which column to use. Roll again to determine the row. The point at which the column and row cross will be the first number used to compute damage. Continue down the column, using these numbers instead of individual dice rolls. When the column runs out, start at the top of the next column to the right. Repeat as often as necessary, going to the first column and first row when you reach the end of the table.

Trust me, it's easier than it sounds. It's fast. The results approximate the same effect as if actual dice were rolled. If ten or more hits are to be resolved, give the random number table a chance.

RANDOM NUMBER TABLE

	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
3	3	5	6	2	8	8	5	5	7	12	7	5	6	6	5	9
4	9	6	7	12	4	8	5	10	7	11	4	10	10	5	7	6
5	5	4	7	5	11	6	3	6	5	11	9	12	7	7	5	3
6	8	6	10	4	8	7	6	5	7	5	5	6	9	6	6	3
7	8	8	6	6	6	7	8	7	7	5	7	6	12	7	4	9
8	11	6	2	11	6	4	7	7	3	8	7	8	11	11	4	5
9	7	6	9	11	9	7	3	5	12	11	8	7	3	9	6	9
10	12	12	7	9	4	8	7	6	10	11	6	10	9	8	3	9
11	5	11	8	3	8	9	8	5	2	10	6	5	9	7	9	5
12	5	9	7	8	5	4	5	5	2	9	8	8	8	6	9	5
13	8	9	10	7	11	9	8	7	11	3	3	10	8	8	4	10
14	10	6	9	4	11	5	3	8	7	7	9	7	8	11	10	11
15	9	5	6	11	10	9	6	7	9	6	7	8	3	8	4	10
16	4	7	9	3	4	8	8	9	7	8	5	8	11	5	8	8
17	10	8	8	7	8	11	9	10	11	12	6	09	8	3	7	3
18	9	12	9	7	11	10	4	3	6	8	4	09	4	4	5	7

## EXPLORING THE UNIVERSE OF...

# COSMIC ENCOUNTER<sup>®</sup>

by Scott James Prouty



A **Cosmic Encounter** fanatic is one who owns the game and all nine expansion sets. A **Cosmic Encounter** veteran is a fanatic who gloated over the few **Cosmic Encounter** articles in various gaming magazines while anxiously awaiting the next expansion set. Both fanatics and veterans alike stop at nothing to add more inspired chaos to their games. With these people in mind, I respectfully submit the following variations and additions to aid in the quest for controlled chaos.

### Unexplored Planets

1. **Set-up:** After players have placed Moons in their systems, each player then draws one more Moon *without* looking at it. Players place this Moon on the Warp or Warp/Draw hex next to the hexside facing their systems. These Moons are **unexplored planets**.

2. **Play:** When your color is flipped on the Destiny Pile, instead of challenging your own planet or a Moon, you may choose to challenge any **unexplored planet**. If you challenge an **unexplored planet** that has previously

been occupied (even if it is currently unoccupied), treat the challenge exactly like a Moon challenge. If you challenge an **unexplored planet** that has never been previously occupied, the following rules apply:

a) The **unexplored planet** has a defense value of four tokens, but has no Lucre and no alien power.

b) The **unexplored planet** invites every possible player to ally, so each other player may choose to help defend the planet (an especially attractive idea if the cone is reversed).

c) The offensive player plays a challenge card. The player to the left of the offensive player then draws a card from the deck. If it is a challenge card, that becomes the challenge card played by the **unexplored planet**. If not, it is discarded and another card is drawn. Continue drawing and discarding until a challenge card is drawn. This becomes the card played by the **unexplored planet**. Resolve the challenge normally.

d) If the offensive player gets consolation, he draws it from the deck. If the **unexplored planet** gets consolation, the player to the left of the offensive player draws the proper number of cards as usual, then discards them to the discard pile.

e) In a compromise/compromise situation, the offensive player may occupy the **unexplored planet** if he has

four of his own tokens on the cone (the **unexplored planet** agrees to let the offensive player provide full protection against any intruders). He must move all four tokens onto the planet. If there are three or less of the offensive player's tokens on the cone, no deal is made. The offensive player loses three tokens, but the **unexplored planet** is unaffected.

f) No Edicts or Flares function during an **unexpected planet** challenge (**unexplored planets** are in extremely deep space). The following powers do not work against an **unexplored**: Bully, Delegator, Diplomat, Disease, Fungus, Gambler, Healer, Judge, Laser, Loser, Mind, Negator, Seeker, Skeptic, Sniveler, Terrorist, Trader, Visionary, Witch, and Wrack. It should be obvious when other powers work against an **unexplored planet**.

3. **Occupation:** Immediately upon occupation and thereafter, treat an **unexplored planet** exactly like a Moon, using all the pertinent Moon rules (especially the effects of Moon occupation). The two exceptions: You can only challenge an **unexplored planet** when you flip your own color on the Destiny Pile; and bases on **unexplored planets** do count as bases for victory conditions.

4. **Notes:** Challenging **unexplored planets** can be a tricky business, but it is usually worth the effort. On the average, using **unexplored planets** slightly shortens games.

### New Moon List

Expansion Set 5 left the effects of New Moons (#96-100) up to the owner of the set. The following are suggested effects for the New Moons:

96. **New Moon—Moon of Peace (C)** As long as this moon is occupied, all attack cards are turned into compromise cards.

97. *New Moon—Moon of War (C)* As long as this moon is occupied, all compromise cards are turned into attack cards of 15 strength.

98. *New Moon—Moon of Mirrors (C)* As long as this moon is occupied, all attack cards are modified as follows: 1) All double digit cards have their digits reversed (e.g., a 12 becomes a 21, a 10 becomes a 1 (01), etc.). 2) All nines become sixes and sixes become nines.

99. *New Moon—Moon of Meat Cleavers (I)* As long as this moon is occupied, all double-digit attack cards have their first digit chopped off (i.e. a 15 becomes a 5, a 20 becomes a 0, etc.).

100. *New Moon—Moon of New Races (I)* Upon occupying this moon, you may randomly draw one additional alien power to use.

**Note:** The effects of continuing moons are applied in the order in which the moons were occupied. For example, if the Moon of Peace were occupied, then the Moon of War, and then the Moon of Mirrors, all challenge cards would be attack cards of 51 strength!

# The Science Fiction Game For Everyone

## Super Edicts

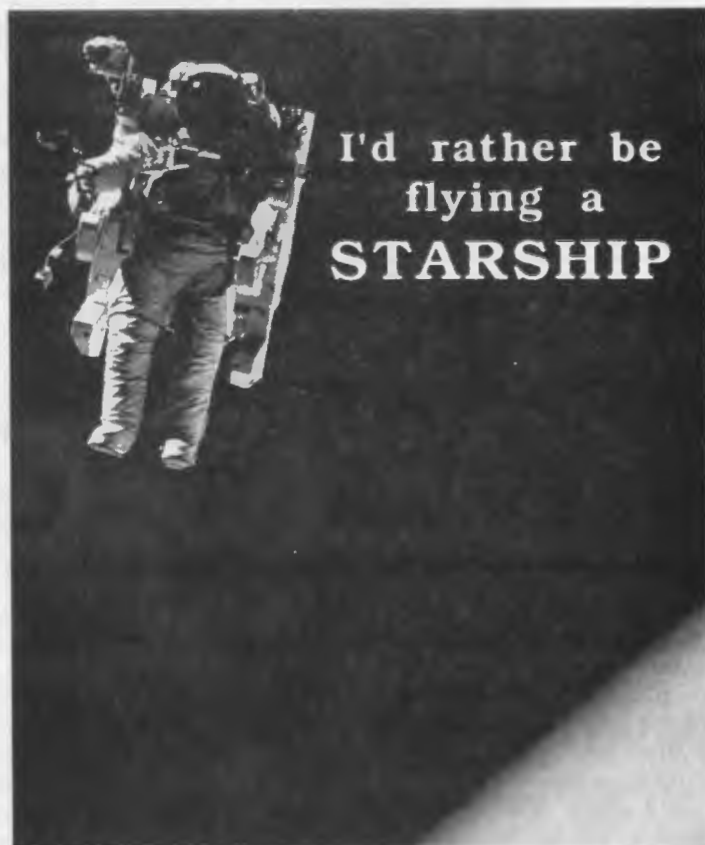
Super Edicts are played in the same way that Edicts are played; however, any Flare, Edict, or Alien Power that specifically effects an Edict does not affect a Super Edict (e.g. Vulch, Mesmer, The Plague, Keeper, etc.).

Use the blank cards from Expansion sets 3 and 8 to make one of each of the following Super Edicts:

**Flare Overload:** The victim must discard all his Flares and send one token per Flare discarded to the warp. Play at any time. This card is not discarded after it is played, but instead must be shuffled into the remaining face-down deck!

**Gravity Wave:** Play between challenges only. When played, all Flares, Wild and Super, are Zapped for the duration of the challenge. Discard after use.

**Black Hole:** Play at any time. The player may force the victim to discard one card into the "Black Hole." the player may specify in any way the card the victim must discard, but if the victim does not have a card that fits the specifications, then the player draws one card randomly from the victim's hand to go to the Black Hole. No cards ever escape the Black Hole! Discard after use.



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# NECRO-JIHAD

by J. Michael Caparula

## **Dark Emperor**

**Reviewed by:** J. Michael Caparula

**Published by:** The Avalon-Hill  
Game Company

**Design and development:**

Greg Costikyan

**Price:** \$20.

**Complexity Level:** Moderate

**Rules Clarity:** Good

**Graphics Quality:** Good

I have always considered adventure gaming to be a literary experience. What I mean by this pretentious sounding statement is that playing a game is much like reading a work of fiction. In both cases, the participants, through the power of imagination, are swept into a self-contained world and become caught up in its characters, plots, intrigue, etc. What sets gaming apart is its ability to allow players to direct the outcome themselves.

**Dark Emperor** is a rich and colorful game that would make a great novel. The setting is Loslon, a magical world with a unique geography of great impact basins. Inhabiting this land are the sundered descendants of a once great empire, scattered by plague, war and rebellion, sharing an uneasy peace. From the Realm of The Dead, comes Padrech dar Choim, banished necromancer, and his legions of terror: Tol Morn, Lord of Vampires, and the evil seductress Mezal. The game simulates the desperate scramble for allies as the fate of Loslon is decided.

The game system is unique and challenging. Player-turns consists of taxation, recruitment, movement, combat, and diplomacy, with appropriate magic phases throughout. Each Kingdom allied to the player has a Taxation Value, which is reduced

through enemy occupation. The player uses this revenue to recruit new units to the mapboard. Additionally, the Necromancer player may recruit new Vampire units, depending on the number of cities he controls (after all, Vampires require human victims for sustenance).

Movement is interesting in that units do not possess movement points, but instead accumulate Attrition Points as they move. Thus, units are capable of unlimited movement, but the more a stack moves, the greater its chances of losing units. It is often wise for the players to move large stacks of units, especially since stacking limits are judged only once per Player-turn.

Combat is mandatory between opposing units within the same hex. The game uses an odds-ratio with modifiers based on the presence of leaders (which can make or break a battle). The designer has dispensed with a matrix CRT and has chosen to resolve attacks with a straight modified die-roll. This is ideal for beginners but a bit confusing for experienced players. Casualties inflicted on The Kingdom Player remain in the hex and can be "raised" as Undead by Death mages.

After combat is resolved, the player then attempts to gain the allegiance of neutral Kingdoms. A 10 or better on two dice is required for an alliance. The die roll is modified by the Kingdoms basic political leanings and spells cast to woo kings. Mercenaries are also available for hire, using the same system. Though not as powerful as an allied Kingdom, Mercenaries are desirable because they can appear anywhere that there are friendly units.

Magical items are abundant in the world of Loslon. Usable by Leaders, they can enhance (or give) magical

abilities, and/or increase Hero Ratings. Most magic items begin the game already in the possession of Leaders, but many are scattered across the map, hidden to both players. Some of these may turn out to be creatures, like the serpent Ssstothe or The Dragon Sirax. These can be gained as allies or attacked via Heroic Combat. The most desirable magic items are the powerful swords that can permanently eliminate The Necromancer's legions (including The Necromancer himself).

**Dark Emperor** is an exceptional game in that it combines elements of traditional board wargaming with those of fantasy role-playing (Mr. Costikyan tried and failed at this some years ago with **Swords & Sorcery**). The world of Loslon and its characters come alive through a well-developed setting, complete with history and language. This game raises an important question; why can't the time that is devoted to FRP worlds also be devoted to boardgame worlds? Loslon could certainly use more developing, colorful as it is. I would surely like to see more games set in the same world.

On the "hardware" level, the game systems are complete, playable, and well-integrated. I couldn't help but notice a slight favoritism to the Kingdoms player; he does not have to play with near as much care as the Necromancer, who must gain control of cities early on to guarantee the arrival of his powerful Vampire forces. The victory conditions also seem to favor the Kingdoms player; victory is determined by the production values under the player's control, but the Necromancer only receives points for hexes directly under the control of Necromancer forces (not allied Kingdoms). The players must also put up with some annoying production problems: Leader and Magic item counters are indistinguishable, the production value for Zolahaureslor is printed twice on the mapboard (each a different value), and many of the cross-references in the rules are inaccurate. These should hopefully be corrected with a second edition.

In his designer notes, Mr. Costikyan says that he gets his ideas "from the Muses", but then laments that there is no Muse of game design. **Dark Emperor** is the latest in a series of excellent games by the single most inventive designer in the business. If there is a Muse of game design, Greg must be it.

# Dark Emperor Design Overview

by Greg Costikyan

## Influences

**Dark Emperor** began to take shape when I bought Steve Newberg's **Jihad** (Simulations Canada), a simulation of the rise of Islam in the 8th and 9th centuries. What struck me as particularly interesting about **Jihad** was the fact that the Christian player's units were backprinted with converted Muslim ones. After a Christian nation was conquered by the Islamic player, he could raise its units as his own.

That, I thought, was a great idea for a fantasy game. How better to show a necromancer's ability to raise units from the dead than by backprinting "living" units with "undead" ones?

The other seminal influence was, of course, **White Bear & Red Moon**, (Greg Stafford, Chaosium), latterly rereleased by Avalon Hill as **Dragon Pass**. I say "of course," because **White Bear & Red Moon** must be considered a seminal influence by any fantasy game designer worth the jeweler's powder to blow him to hell. **WB&RM** showed how strange lands, powerful magics, and fell prophecies could be combined in a boardgame to produce an emotionally compelling work. Though it never sold particularly well, its impact on designers cannot be overestimated.

## Simulation of Fantasy Fiction

My foremost intention with **Dark Emperor** was to design a game which simulated a fantasy novel. No, there is no fantasy novel of the same name; no, the characters in **Dark Emperor** will not be found elsewhere; but **Dark Emperor** tells a story in the same way that a fantasy novel does:

An ancient evil, banished to the Fields of Decay centuries ago, reenters the world, bringing with him Terror, Death, and undead by the thousands. The skies over the cities he conquers are dark with eternal night; in his wake follow

vampires by the score, who fatten on the blood of his conquests. Only a few lone heroes escape from the kingdoms he conquers; they must voyage forth in desperate quest to awaken humanity to its direst threat, to assemble an army, to search out the long-buried weapons which alone can defeat him.

That could be the blurb for a fantasy — but in fact, it's a description of how **Dar Emperor** plays. One player represents Padrech dar Choim, the Great Necromancer; the other represents the human Kingdoms. The Necromancer decides which kingdom he will first invade; since he comes from another plan of existence, he may appear anywhere. He appears with legions of vampires, which can conquer the kingdom in short order. But his vampires need a base population of humans on which to feed, just as any predator needs a base population of prey. Until the Necromancer can conquer wide enough territories, his vampires cannot support themselves, let alone reproduce.

Each kingdom has certain heroes — its greatest leaders, magicians and military men. Sooner or later, one or several will escape invasion and flee to neutral lands — to rally the divided human kingdoms against the Necromancer.

But fighting dar Choim alone does not suffice. Being of the dead, he is immune to death. Only one of the great weapons of the ancients can destroy him. So the human heroes must quest for the tools to defeat Death.

If this doesn't sound like a fantasy novel, I've done something wrong.

## What the Game is Like

The board is divided into ten human kingdoms. The Necromancer enters anywhere he wishes with ten Greater Vampire units. Only the kingdom he

invades begins at war with him. Each kingdom has leaders; if the Necromancer does not destroy all of the kingdom's leaders on the turn of invasion, they may flee to other kingdoms.

Leaders in neutral kingdoms can conduct diplomacy, trying to persuade the kingdom to enter the war. Necromantic leaders as well as human ones can use diplomacy, but each kingdom leans toward one side or another. Only in the totalitarian dictatorship of Tal Pletor is the Necromancer likely to find an ally. As the game progresses, the human player will persuade more and more kingdoms to enter on his side. In addition, on turn 11, Zolahaureslor (the Great High Empire — historic foe of the Great Necromancer) enters on the human side if it has not already done so.

Diplomacy may also be conducted with various mercenaries, minor powers, magicians and brigands, such as Lord Montoy (legitimate heir to the Kingdom of Montoy, recently conquered by the Stavrek barbarians) and Cos Dol Cos and his fanatic Sons of the Morning, foes of all magic.

Scattered about the board in "magic hexes" are the most powerful magic items and beings of the world. Here, individual heroes may quest to find the few weapons which can destroy the Necromancer for all time. They may instead find themselves in heroic combat with the world's last remaining dragon, with Slub, or with the dreaded serpent Ssstoith.

Movement is unlimited in principle, but the farther a stack moves, the greater the attrition it suffers. Players quickly learn to mass their armies. Combat is by a simple odds-ratio system.

There are ten different Colleges of Magic. Each magic-wielding character has power over one sort of magic only. Each of the colleges has its own powerful rituals, which may affect

events even on the strategic scale of the game.

### Back to the Goal

A typical fantasy novel details the actions of a few characters, who rarely have much understanding of the strategic situation and the implications of their actions. In essence, they are like individual soldiers, who must accept on faith that their orders make sense in a larger context. There is a scope of conflict beyond their ken.

This is, in fact, what simulation games do best; ignore the details and bring out the important aspects of a situation. **Dark Emperor** is a simulation of a fantasy novel, but only in a sense; it attempts to create the dramatic effect and richness of detail of a fantasy novel, but unlike a novel it concentrates not on the actions of individual characters, but on the course of a whole war. Because it

simulates heroic fantasy, individual heroes are of great importance—but the concentration is still on the whole and not on the particular.

### Is There a Market for This?

I had a great deal of fun designing **Dark Emperor**, and I fervently hope that it does well. Among other things, if it does, I can persuade someone to let me do another game like it, and there is little I'd like more. I doubt that anyone particularly cares about dramatic effect or richness of detail, though. **Web & Starship**, which won the Charles Roberts Award for Best SF Game last year, likewise simulates a science fiction novel and concentrates on drama and background — and has sold very poorly.

So I have my doubts that a market exists for well-realized science fiction

or fantasy. The market for both has been destroyed by years of licensed garbage and adolescent trash. Though my main desire is to design the best games I can, I'm enough of a realist that if I find the market doesn't want intelligent SF and fantasy, I'll stick to adolescent humor, ala **Toon** or **Paranoia**.

### PS:

I note that the rules for **Hero's Swords** seem to have been omitted from the final rules. For those of you who are puzzled: **Hero's Swords** increase their wielder's Hero Rating by 1. Unlike **Living Swords**, they do not permanently kill Greater Vampires.

Greg Costikyan  
New York, NY

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# PARANOIA PARANOIA



Art: James Holloway



## IntSec Agents at the Earth's Core

### A PARANOIA Adventure by Ken Rolston

by Greg Costikyan

(The following **Code 7** adventure is designed for use with the forthcoming **PARANOIA** supplement **HIL Sector Blues**, a campaign pack permitting Troubleshooters to rise to the unimaginably exalted rank of blue Clearance Internal Security troopers, indefatigable guardians of law, order, and the will of The Computer in Alpha complex.

Of course, there's no reason why you shouldn't assign poorly-equipped, pathetically-overmatched Red Level Troubleshooters on this mission if you want.

C'mon. Did you really think it would make any difference?)

\* \* \* \* \*

# MISSION ALERT! ARMED CITIZEN CREATING A DISTURBANCE IN SECTOR POWER SERVICES BUREAU OFFICES. RESPOND AT ONCE. SUBDUE CITIZEN. CITIZEN IS NOT TO BE HARMED. REPEAT! CITIZEN IS NOT TO BE HARMED!

\* \* \* \* \*

**Summary:** Tooner-V-ILL-6, a Violet level R&D genius on his last clone, has gone to register a complaint against Power Services for power interruptions that are ruining his experiments. He has gone armed — R&D style. His already-none-too-tranquil temper is fanned to flash point by the ever-cooperative and solicitous staff of the Power Services complaint department.

After incinerating a few offices — full of low-clearance bureaucrats, Tooner has holed up in Power Engineering with a dozen mid-level hostages and the power control monitoring systems of HIL Sector. Among Tooner's complaints was the fact that Power Services would never deliver power he requested in sufficient quantities to really test the capacities of his device. He claims to be able to divert all of HIL Sector's power to his weapon; now he can really test its potential. According to alarmed colleagues in R&D, his weapon may be sufficient to establish intimate communication with the Earth's core.

The PCs should prevent Tooner-V from further decimating Power Services' staff, from obliterating the sector Power Engineering facilities, and from setting off a chain reaction which could end life as we know it on Spaceship Earth.

They also should avoid damaging a weapon capable of all this mischief (or the designer of said weapon). Armed Forces is real interested. ("Oh, boy! KaBOOM!") R&D is real interested. (Oh, boy! BigBUDGET!") The MAD Science Network is interested. ("Oh, boy! Whatta concept!")

**Characters:** Tooner-V-ILL-6 is a bespectacled, frantic, frizzy-haired, wild-eyed maniac of the Gene Wilder **YOUNG-FRANKENSTEIN** variety. He has slipped his trolley, so to speak. When speaking as Tooner-V, tilt your

head back, peer at your players wide-eyed along your cheeks and nose, open your jaws wide, and rock your head to and fro in time to your ravings. Wiggle your fingers in the air from time to time.

When challenged, rave about the irresponsible interference of Power Services with your very important research. "How can I do my research with all these interruptions?" When coaxed and cajoled, be self-righteous, indignant, and distrustful. "No, someone must PAY for this indignity!" "Why should I trust YOU? You're as bad as the rest of them!" "I'll do it my way!"

**Setting:** Imagine a set-up like the command deck of the starship **Enterprise**. Around the circular room are a number of monitoring and engineering stations. In the front of the room is a large screen which graphically displays the status of power in HIL Sector. In the center of the room on a lower level is the station for the chief engineer and his assistant. Delete Kirk's chair. Access to the room is through a door opposite the large screen.

Tooner-V has gathered his hostages, disarmed them, and forced them to sit on the floor in the center of the room. Tooner-V has taken over one of the engineering stations equidistant between the screen and the door. He has patched into the power system at this station and claims to be able to divert all of HIL Sector's power into his experimental weapon.

**Gaming Fun:** The problem is figuring out how to render Tonner-V harmless, take him into custody, and recover the weapon undamaged. It would be nice to save the lives of the hostages, preserve the Power Services Engineering department, and avoid releasing the contents of the Earth's core.

Bank, Bank

The PCs could ignore their orders and drill him on the spot. If they get lucky and incapacitate him with the first shot, they can keep him from blowing everything and everyone up. Otherwise he fires the weapon.

Maybe the weapon doesn't work so well at full power. Maybe only the hostages, Tooner-V, and lucky PCs get killed. Power Services is destroyed. Power is out for two weeks. HIL Sector must be evacuated. Surviving PCs wish they were killed.

Maybe the weapon does work. Activate Terra II. Or dust off the orcs and elves.

Think, Think

Here are some good ideas:

- request support from Armed Forces specialists in chemical weapons (sleep gas)

- cut off power to the Engineering room (get support from Tech Services)

- use mutant powers

- reason with Tooner-V ("If your device works, you won't be able to write up your experiment in *The Journal of Big Explosions*.")

- disguise a PC as a scrubot and send him in to polish the metalwork on Tooner-V's weapon.

Less ingenious players (or players with fiendish GMs— may have to make decisions about the priority of various objectives. For example, killing Tooner-V is bad, but letting him blow up the hostages, power services, and his super weapon is worse. In debriefing you'll have to weigh how persuasively they defend their actions.

**Staging Hints:** Give the PCs no information until they arrive at the scene. (The computer is keeping a lid on this incident.) Describe the situation and let them talk to Tooner-V. Then let

them brainstorm some solutions.

Rookies will probably try to solve the problem on their own — bad idea, since they are used to shooting a lot, and shooting is a low-percentage risk in this situation.

More experienced troopers will try to get some help from specialists. Let them talk to Tooner-V's colleagues back at R&D Central; they may have some idea how the device works, or whether it works — it's up to you.

Tooner-V is an impulsive loony: he'll fire the weapon in the round immediately following provocative PC action. Don't give the PCs a second chance.

And what does the weapon look like? What does it do? Look around the house for some object with a power cord — a floor lamp, table radio, vacuum cleaner,

portable drill, television. Imagine it as an unimaginably powerful weapon. Pick something to be the trigger. Pick something else to be the point out of which ravaging energies will pour forth when you touch the trigger.

Plug the object into the wall outlet, set it in your lap, and tell your players that **this** is what the weapon looks like. Put your finger on the trigger. Act crazy, and think about burning a hole in your living room rug, all the way down to the Earth's core. Cackle a lot. It may give your players clever ideas, like using area weapons for a sure hit on the power cord.

**The Computer's Gratitude:** This difficult mission is worth two commendations if they save Tooner-V, his weapon, the hostages, Power

Services, Alpha complex, and the planet Earth. (If this seems a bit niggardly for saving Earth, toss in a couple of tickets to the Blue Troopers' Annual Meritorious Loyalty Ball or a couple of plaques or something.) If they kill Tooner-V, but save everything else, they get one commendation and one treason point. Other varying degrees of failure result in treason points — up to 15 automatic for interruption of power service.

Or maybe the PCs get assigned a lousy autocar. Maybe they don't get to Tooner-V in time. Maybe they get executed. That'll teach 'em to get on the bad side of the motor pool.

# GODSFIRE

**GODSFIRE** (Task Force Games); \$19.95. Designed by Lynn Willis. One 28" x 40" two-piece mapsheet, 16-page rulebook, 15 system control sheets, player reference card, 432 diecut counters in four colors, money counters, two dice. For two to four players; playing time two to six hours. Original (Metagaming) edition published 1976; Task Force edition published 1985.

Like its Metagaming brother, **Stellar Conquest**, **Godsfire** is a game of space warfare that seeks to meld economic and internal political considerations with strategic and tactical elements. The game's map is a three-dimensional representation of the Narym star cluster. The 3-D effect is achieved by regulating horizontal movement with large, offset squares and a system of "cells", smaller boxes within each square used to denote units' position above or below the plane of the map.

Most of the action takes place on the fifteen world displays. These multipurpose game aids divide worlds into four quadrants, record the political party in control and its loyalty level, and keep track of finances and taxation,

defending forces, and any enemy units assaulting the planet. Military units include squadrons (space attack and control craft), planetary defense forces, and assault groups (with both space and planetary abilities). Combat occurs in both space and on planetary surfaces, using a simple odds table.

The best feature of **Godsfire** is not the combat system, but the economic and political structures of each player's sides; this is the game's true forte. Each player must confront financial limitations needed for economic development, and delicately manage the political balance on each of his worlds. Each unit type can only be built in regions in which certain political parties are in power, and disaffected parties can revolt or affect the world's economy. Military policy is thus shaped by internal considerations.

The game's methods of handling 3-D space and quasi-simultaneous movement (a somewhat cumbersome alternating series of movement rounds is used) belie the game's mid-70s origins (the first edition appeared in 1976). The game's systems are not exactly state of the art, but the 3-D representation is

workable and smooth, which is more than can be said for most attempts to simulate the third dimension. The various facets of the game take some getting used to, but are certainly worth the effort. There is only one major change in the game; the Metagaming versions had counters and jplayaids for sixe (later eight) players, but the new edition accomodates only four. Task Force, however, has made an add-on set for four more players available, should one wish to expand the game, for \$4. Other possible drawbacks include the space needed to set up and play the larger scenarios, and the time the game requires.

**Godsfire** is a somewhat complex game, but one that rewards the time taken to master its systems and strategies. Those gamers looking for a simple shoot-'em-in-space may find the game too involved, but those interested in a more varied and involved game, that stresses the political and economic in equal measure to the strategic, will find **Godsfire** an impressive design.

— Tony Watson

# DUNE

## NEW RULES FOR

*"One day, water will not be a precious commodity on Arrakis."  
— Duke Leto Atrides*

## The Water of Life

Perhaps not, but until the last chapter of Frank Herbert's science-fiction epic **Dune**, water is both precious and essential. Unfortunately, the importance of water is not reflected in the Avalon Hill game of the same name. This was probably intentional, an effort to keep the game uncomplicated. **Dune** is an excellent game as is, but the addition of water need not slow the game down — and that is the purpose of this article. With water such a rare necessity on Arrakis, it should certainly command the same respect as spice (the other form of currency).

**The Water Round** — Immediately after the battle round, all tokens which occupy desert areas and rock areas are tallied. Each player must pay one spice at this time per token for water (it isn't cheap!). Bene Gesserit tokens in co-existence are not immune to this rule. Any tokens not so supplied with water are eliminated. Take note that this phase takes place before the collection round, hence a player cannot use spice which he/she intends to collect to buy water. Units in strongholds and the Polar Sink do not pay for water.

**Fremen "Endless Water" Rule** — The Fremen have a tough time in the game anyway (always broke and little to bargain with), so in keeping true to the book, the Fremen have plenty of water. Furthermore, if they wish, they may bribe other players by offering to sell them water supplies at a better price than one spice each. They may also give water to their allies at no charge. This rule may seem too slanted toward the Fremen, but after playing over 300 games of **Dune**, I can attest to the fact that the Fremen need all the help they can get.

**A New Card** — The original game of **Dune** has five "worthless cards." One of these is the Jubba Cloak, a garment worn in conjunction with a stillsuit on Arrakis. A stillsuit allows the wearer to

survive in the open desert for long periods of time without carrying water, because the suit retains body fluids and filters out impurities. So — let the Jubba Cloak card represent a stillsuit. A player may play this card either as a worthless card or, during the Water Round, to supply all of his tokens with water for that turn at no cost.

### Questions sure to arise —

1) No, the Fremen cannot give water away for free unless actively allied (as per a Nexus). The Fremen must charge something, at least one spice, for his water.

2) Any player may pay for an ally's water, but until alliances are formed, any such funding must abide by the rules governing bribery.

3) Spice not paid to the Fremen for water goes to the spice bank.

4) If the Shield Wall is blown by Family Atomics, tokens in Carthag, Arrakeen must begin paying for water during the Water Round, since they are no longer protected from the elements.

**Optional Rule** — If paying for water with spice proves to be too great a financial burden for some players, try this. In the Water Round, a player may choose to render one of his leaders for his/her water value. If this is done, the leader is placed in the tanks, but the dead leader will supply a number of tokens equal to his/her combat value. And no, the Harkonnens may not use captured leaders for this purpose (sly devils!)

If this variant seems to make **Dune** into more of a wargame by, in effect, adding supply rules, I plead guilty. But note that the book on which the game is based is a story of war. And that war was more strategic in scale than any game I have ever played (except perhaps **Godsfire**). So give it a try, **Dune** players. It will add spice to your game, and take spice from your pocket!

Roger Cox

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# Fantasy Gamer

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Drunkenness in Runequest, by Michael De Wolfe .....	17
The Tomb (A Runequest Scenerio), by Galan Akin and Michael De Wolfe .....	19
Ambushes For Fun And Profit, by Lawrence Person .....	21
Giving The Undead A Chance, by Jeff Albanese .....	25
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# DRUNKENNESS IN RUNEQUEST

By Michael DeWolfe

An adventurer that drinks even one glass of ale or strong liquor could become slightly inebriated. It's not uncommon for a player to say that his character is sitting in a tavern, waiting; but if that character were to just sit there and purchase nothing, the tavern keeper would become at least a little angry. And, if a character had to wait long enough, drinking, he may become drunk. These systems cover drunkenness and sobering up.

To define just how drunk a character can become, the following system may be used. First, when a character takes a drink, gauge the drink's Potency (referred to as POT) per glass, mug, shot or whatever one unit would be equal to. Some drinks may have little alcoholic content to a mug and others may have a huge amount in one shot glass. After finding the Potency of a single drink, match it against the character's CON on the resistance table; the CON taking the active role. If the adventurer's roll succeeds, then no effect has reached the character and the next roll is made when the adventurer finishes his next

drink. A drink's POT is reduced by one if its intaker is drinking on a full stomach. A character cannot survive unaffected if more than the combined POT of the drinks consumed in a sitting is greater than his (SIZ+CON). So, if a character drinks four mugs of ale (combine POT of 20 (4 drinks x 5 POT)) and successfully conquers the effects of all of them, his next drink, which will make the combined POT greater than his average STR and SIZ, automatically takes one effect. Also, if the roll involving this fifth drink fails, not one but two effects are incurred.

The effects of a failed resistance check cause the following; these stay in effect until the character is once again sober. Each failure causes the adventurer to lose 1D4-1 Fatigue Points and 1D3-1 Magic Points. All skills and percentile chances are temporarily reduced by 2D4 percentiles per failure. When a character's Fatigue Points drop to (STR+CON) less than zero, he is considered to be drunk and unconscious. For each failure, a character will sleep twenty minutes

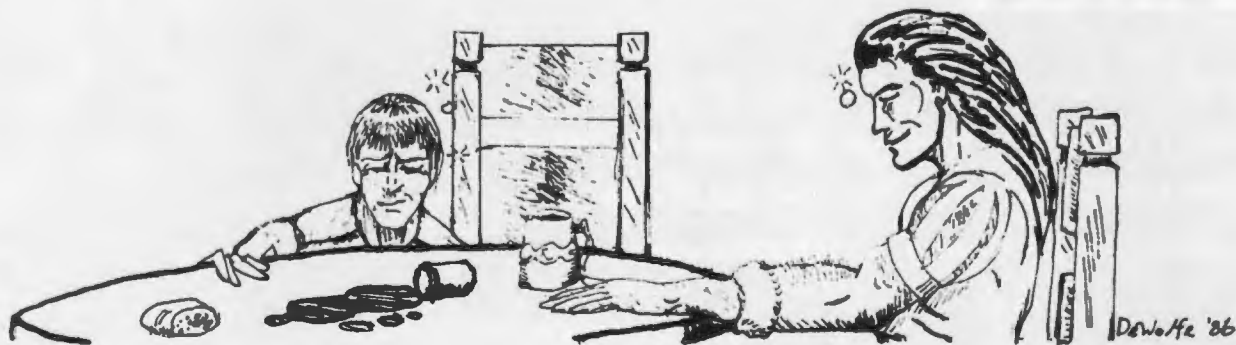
longer than usual. So, if a character fails rolls three times he'll sleep an hour longer than normal. Characters however can feel lesser effects of pain while drunk. For each three failures, add one CON multiplier to any roll that requires a check to find whether a character can move or remain conscious. For example, a drunken character with three failures that has later been attacked to bring his abdomen Hit Location to zero, he has a CON x 2, instead of CON x 1, to be able to fight heroically with the severe wound.

Characters, that become drunken, eventually become sober again. They regain sobriety as they do Fatigue Points but at the slower rate of 1D6-2 points per full turn of little or no activity. This regaining of Fatigue Points does not start until (25-CON) turns have elapsed without the character taking a drink. Once the character is sober again, he'll have a 'hangover' if he fails a (CON x 2) roll. This hangover reduces 2D6 percentiles from all non-Knowledge, non-

Communication and non-Perception skills. Knowledge, Communication, Perception and Magical skills are

reduced by (1D6+10) percentiles. This remains until the character makes a (CON x 5) roll; one roll is permitted per

half hour. Characters may be magically sobered and avoid these effects completely.



### SAMPLE POTENCIES

Below is a list of sample POT values for certain drinks of liquor. The POT is for one amount of the drink; for example, ale comes in mugs, wine in goblets and whiskey in glasses. If only a fraction of a drink is downed, only that fraction of the POT can be applied.

ALCOHOL	AMOUNT	POT
Ale	mug	5
Beer	mug	4
Wine	goblet	3
Cider	mug	2
Rum	glass	5
Whiskey	glass	6
25 proof alcohol	glass	3
50 proof alcohol	glass	5
100 proof alcohol	glass	7

# THE TOMB — A RUNEQUEST SCENARIO

By Galan Akin and Michael DeWolfe

## Introduction

This adventure is designed for three to five characters of moderate ability. It deals with a group of adventurers entering a tomb. The tomb is the resting place of three Merovingian kings. The adventurers find, after entering the tomb, that it is haunted.

The reason for the characters to enter this place is up to the gamemaster. They may have come here to search for riches, to escape a bad storm or powerful enemy, or they may be on a grand quest with this tomb containing a sphere of magical power.

## The Beginning

The characters sight a burial mound in the distance. It is marked by a five meter high obelisk. The obelisk is marked with ancient runic hieroglyphics. If a character in the band can translate Latin, they know that this is the resting place of the Merovingian kings.

The tomb is under the burial mound. To get to it, the player-characters must enter through a small stone archway that is behind a large stone slab. To move the slab, one or more characters must match their strength against the SIZ 24 of the stone slab. If they are successful, they can move the stone enough to bare the entrance. The passage is a meter high and a meter wide. It is ten meters long from the mouth to the tomb. It slopes gently, so characters can walk down and back without much extra care taken.

## The Tomb

Without illumination, the tomb is dark. There are no openings to allow light in, but the room glows with a very dark grey light. A torch placed in this room can fully light it to expose all of the details.

The tomb is layered with age. In the center of the room is a slab containing the mummified bodies of three kings. The center king is dressed lavishly in comparison to the others. He holds a

Greatsword in his dead hands. At the foot of the slab is an iron stand holding a glowing sphere. At one wall there's a chest containing gold and silver coins and numerous jewels and gems, all of great value. At each side of the entrance, there are three suits of platemail armor. They stand in an 'at ease' position with their swords in hand. To the adventurers, the suits are only empty armor, but when something is moved they can come to life and block the exit. The armor is enchanted. Each suit has several abilities that allow them to protect the treasure. The statistics of these ghosts are listed below. Note that if the characters have come for the glowing sphere, they may be allowed to

leave with it; but the treasure is out of the question.

The ghosts are unconventional. They have STR, POW and DEX. They use Greatswords to attack. To kill a ghost, one must take one of two approaches; killing one physically or killing one mentally. To kill one physically, a character must attack a ghost and penetrate the armor's 15 AP. When the armor of the ghost is penetrated ten times, the ghost is considered dead. The ghost is also vulnerable to spirit combat. When its POW is brought to zero, the ghost is vanquished. The ghosts will do whatever they can to stop someone from looting the tomb.

GHOST 1  
STR 21  
POW 20  
DEX 16  
MOVE 10  
GREATSWORD SR 5 2D8+1D4  
A% 67% P% 72% AP 10

GHOST 3  
STR 23  
POW 18  
DEX 17  
MOVE 9  
GREATSWORD SR 5 2D8+1D6  
A% 68% P% 70% AP 12

GHOST 5  
STR 21  
POW 20  
DEX 16  
MOVE 10  
GREATSWORD SR 5 2D8+1D4  
A% 67% P% 72% AP 10

GHOST 20  
STR 19  
POW 22  
DEX 17  
MOVE 11  
GREATSWORD SR 5 2D8+1D4  
A% 68% P% 78% AP 11

GHOST 4  
STR 24  
POW 20  
DEX 16  
MOVE 10  
GREATSWORD SR 5 2D8+1D6  
A% 70% P% 72% AP 12

GHOST 6  
STR 20  
POW 24  
DEX 15  
MOVE 12  
GREATSWORD SR 6 2D8+1D4  
A% 69% P% 78% AP 9

### The Kings

The three kings appear to be dead, though their spirits hover nearby to watch over their bodies and protect them from grave robbers. If anyone attempts to profane their bodies or steal their personal possessions, they will begin spirit combat with the transgressor. If the character stops his act, the spirit combat will also cease.

The center and most important king has a POW of 29. The king, to the right, has a POW of 21. The one to the left has a POW of 22. If the kings were to win spirit combat they would kill the losing opponent.

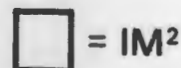
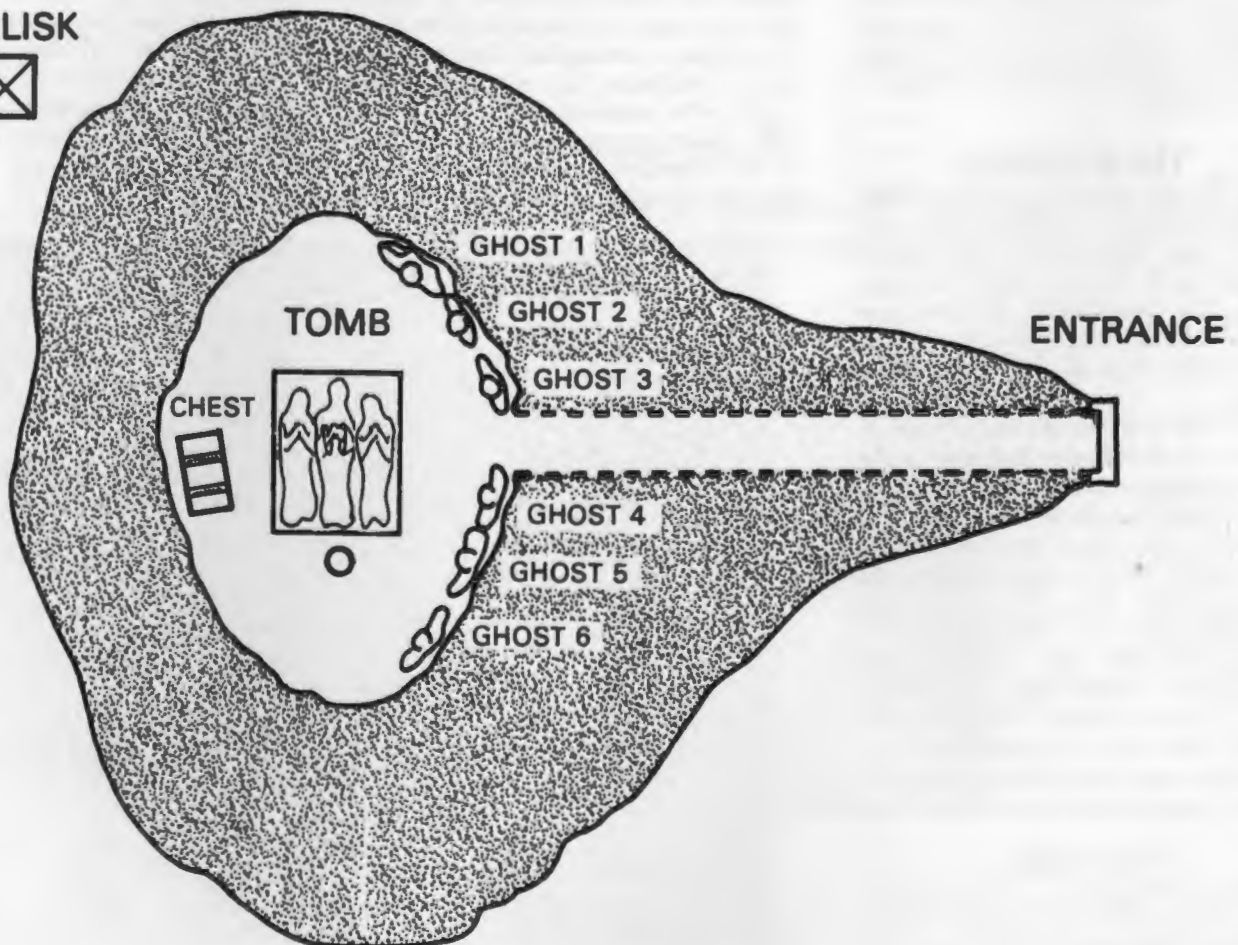
### GM Notes

An air of suspense should be included in this adventure. This Tomb of Death is

not just a normal place to wander into. The kings and ghosts will only communicate simple and ghostly commands, such as, "Leave the treasure," or "Do not profane the Merovingian kings." The adventurers are not welcome here and they would soon sense it.

## MAP TO "THE TOMB"

OBELISK



# AMBUSHES FOR FUN AND PROFIT

By Lawrence Person

From the castle, to the dungeon, to the town, to the castle, to the dungeon, to the...

Sound familiar? Do the characters in your AD&D campaign waltz unmolested from their heavily guarded strong-hold to Generic Hole Full of Monsters #38 and back again, at most being subject to random encounters that merely provide practice for more experienced characters? If so, there is a rare art form that I am offering you in this article to add spice to those little journeys that all dungeon delvers take. This art form is known as the **ambush**.

Sure, it is quite easy to have a group of Big Nastys jump out of the trees to attack a party, but a well planned and well executed ambush is another animal entirely. This is an area where a little preparation can go a long way. This article will present you some guidelines for constructing your own ambushes, as well furnishing several good working examples that can be dropped whole (with little or no modification) into just about any campaign.

And now, the guidelines...

## SETTING

An ambush should always take place in an area where the ambushers can conceal themselves, where little organized law enforcement exists, where travellers frequently pass, where there is a way to stop such travellers, where these travellers can be spotted before they reach the actual ambush area, and where the victims' escape routes can be easily blocked off. This may seem like a large number of prerequisites, but there are actually a large number of areas that fit these requirements. Mountain roads, low hilly areas, forest and jungle roads come to mind.

## POTENTIAL VICTIMS

A party of potential victims should never consist of more than half the number of the ambush party. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but in most cases bandits will prefer the odds, as well as the element of surprise, in their favor. Likewise, if there appears to be a

wizard or other such powerful character in the party, the ambushers may decide that this too shall pass. But the one outstanding requirement of any potential victim is **WEALTH!** A group of ambushers will not waste their time waylaying a party of wandering beggars. At the other end of the spectrum, an ambushing party will often ignore the 2-1 rule if the potential victims appear sufficiently wealthy to warrant the risk. Favorite ambush targets are traveling nobles and lightly armed merchants.

## THE AMBUSH PARTY

For the purposes of this article, in order to deal with true ambushes and not just highway robbery, we shall assume that an ambush party shall consist of no less than six members. This party shall usually have one leader, one lieutenant, and lots of fighting troops. These troops, depending on terrain and racial (i.e., dwarvish, orcish, etc.) makeup, should be evenly divided between footmen, horsemen, and bowmen. This arrangement is very good for ambushes set in the hilly areas mentioned before. There is, however, very little use for horsetroops in, for instance, a jungle. So use discretion in making up your ambushing forces. Often, an ambushing force will stack the odds even more in its favor by using a little extra 'firepower' in the form of a catapult or a high-level spellcaster. Also remember that you don't have to limit your ambush party to human forces. On the contrary, trolls and ogres, among other creatures, are extremely fond of the ambush. Here again, the six member rule and the 2-1 ratio can be ignored.

Below are a few of my favorite ambush set-ups. Feel free to use them in your campaign, or as role models for building your own.

## AMBUSH I: THE BRIGANDS ON GREAT SWAMP ROAD

In this ambush a party of brigands lies in wait near a road that skirts the edges of a swamp. This road is a major artery for traffic between the capital

and one of the outlying provinces. Ten to twelve traveling groups pass the ambush point every day, mainly merchant caravans. The actual locale in which the ambush takes place is a mere two miles from the swamp and is both forested and hilly. The ambushing forces are made up as follows (see Map I):

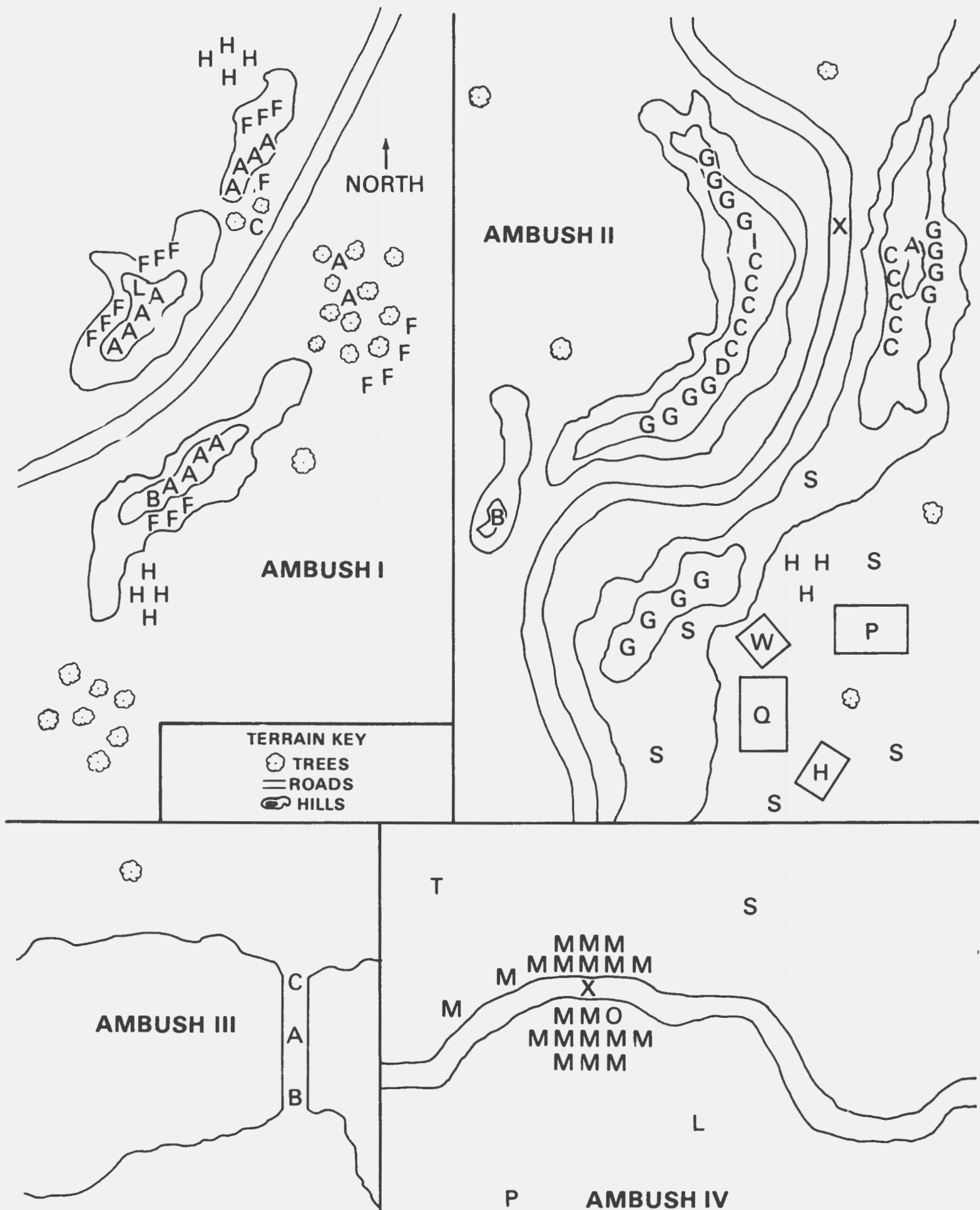
**A-Archers.** Four are hidden in the tall grass on each of the three major hills, with two additional archers being hidden in the trees to the west of the road. These archers will fire one volley into the group being ambushed after the tree is felled (see C). They will fire more at the command of Lathzar or Balthasor. All archers have a minimum ST of 10 and a minimum DX of 12. They are armed with longbows and wear no armor. All are Brigands (see Monster Manual, P. 66-67, for more details).

**B-Balthasor,** Lathzar's lieutenant. Balthasor was in the same mercenary band that Lathzar was in, and left at the same time his commander did for the same reasons (see L). He is originally from the city of Thurn in the North, and is somewhat pale skinned. His statistics are as follows: ST-15, DX-14, INT-10, CHR-12, CON-12, WIS-8. He is a fifth level fighter with 24 hit points. He is armed with a two-handed sword and wears a knife at his belt.

**C-Roadblock Tree.** This is a large and somewhat lush tree. A footsoldier (see F) is hiding in the lower branches, waiting for a word from Lathzar to pull a pin that will send the tree falling into the road, blocking the path of any travelers.

**F-Footsoldiers.** These are the troops lying in wait to close in on any trapped victims after they have been peppered by the archers arrows (see A), and trapped by the horsemen (see H). They have a minimum strength of 12 and an average of five hit points each. They all carry shortswords and wear leather armor.

**H-Horsemen.** These are the riders who lie in wait behind the hills to rush out and block the ambushed party's escape routes. They all have a minimum strength of 12 and an average of six hit



points each. They all ride heavy horses, wear leather armor, and carry halberds.

**L-Lathzar.** Lathzar is a former mercenary commander and a veteran of the fierce Olgi-Ha wars against the orcs in the Tilan Mountains. He left half of his troops dead and the other half plotting rebellion. After that, he and Balthasor slowly gathered together the band he has now by searching the lowest taverns and dives for recruits. He will continue to lead this band, ambushing and waylaying travelers until he has accumulated enough money to build a real mercenary force. His stats are as follows: ST-18, DX-13, INT-12, CHR-14, CON-8, WIS-7. Lathzar is a 9th level fighter with 46 hit points. He is armed with a magical +1 two-handed sword. He is wearing chainmail and has a poisoned dagger concealed in his left boot. In his money pouch (strapped under his clothes on his left side) he has 300 gps and a ruby worth 500 gps. If he is directly attacked, any nearby troops will stop whatever they are doing to come to his aid.

The complete sequence for the ambush goes as follows: The potential victims are spotted coming down the road from the Southwest by Balthasor. He signals Lathzar, who signals the rest of the troops to conceal themselves and prepare for battle. As soon as the victims reach a point just before the tree, Lathzar gives the signal for the tree to be felled, blocking their path. Immediately following this, the archers will fire a volley into the trapped party. At the same time, horsemen will block both ends of the road to prevent escape. Lathzar will continue to fire until the ambushed party appears to be sufficiently weak and confused to be handled by the foot troops. At that time he will signal the foot troops to surround the party, after which he will call out to the surrounded party to surrender or die. If the party surrenders the footmen will take all treasure, horses, and easily carried goods away from the victims, leaving them only their clothes. If the party surrenders he may or may not let the travelers go on their way (make a roll). If they resist, they will be systematically slaughtered. In any case, the area will then be cleaned up in order not to alert the next traveling party.

## AMBUSH II

In this setting we have a wizard/illusionist who has set up an ambush for purposes of his own. Although this ambush is set in the same type of terrain as the previous ambush, there is one big difference. In this ambush, the bandits have their encampment set up nearby.

**A-Antar.** Antar is the leader of the crossbowmen (see C). He is second in command only to Illithar himself. His stats are as follows: ST-16, DX-13, INT-8, CHR-8, CON-10, WIS-11. He is a fourth level fighter with 21 hit points. He is armed with a +1 longbow and 20 arrows, plus a bastard sword. He is wearing cloth armor and has 32 gp on him in his belt pouch.

**B-This** is a crossbowman, just like C, but his only purpose is to stand watch on this crag for any potential victims.

**C-Crossbowmen.** These are the troops that will fire a volley of crossbow bolts at Illithar's command. They all have a minimum strength of 12 and a minimum dexterity of 10. All are armed with light crossbows, have no armor, and have an average of four hit points each.

**D-Dalius.** This is Antar's assistant. His stats: ST-15, DX-9, INT-8, CHR-16, CON-12, WIS-7. He is a third level fighter with 17 hit points. He is armed with a battle axe and is wearing leather armor. He has 12 gp concealed in his belt. Antar is just a little afraid that Dalius will usurp his command with his high charisma.

**G-Goblin Foot Troops.** These are the troops that followed Illithar after he demonstrated his power to them and offered them a share of any treasure he obtains. They are all as normal Goblins (see *Monster Manual*, p. 47.). They are all armed with hammers and wearing cloth armor. They are bound to Illithar by oath and will defend him unto death.

**H-Horses.** These are the horses for the leaders of the band. They are normal horses, tethered to a post in the ground.

**I-Illithar.** This is the wizardly leader of the party. He was born and raised many years ago in the land of Volius. Since then he has roamed the width and breadth of the world searching. Searching for what, he himself couldn't say. This little ambush set up is just

another stop along that long road. He will use the money gained from this venture to finance a trip across the Salathar Ocean to find a legendary sceptre he has heard rumors of. He also has another purpose for this ambush, in that he is looking for powerful magic items, especially weapons of ice and cold, for in his visions he has foreseen a coming duel with a wizard of fire. His statistics are: ST-10, CX-13, INT-17, CHR-12, CON-17, WIS-12. He is a 13th level illusionist with 51 hit points. His spells are as follows: Color Spray, Dancing Lights, Darkness, Hypnotism, Phantasmal Force, Blur, detect Magic, Invisibility, Mirror Image, Deafness, Hallucinatory Terrain, Fear, Dispel Illusion, Paralyzation, Massmorph, Phantasmal Killer, Minor Creation, Chaos, Shadow Magic, Shades, Permanent Illusion.

He is armed with a Staff of Power and has a bag tied to his belt with 7,500 gp rubies in it. He also has an Amulet of the Planes around his neck. If the battle appears to be going badly for his side he will use his invisibility spell to retreat.

**P-The Crossbowmen's Barracks.** This is a plain hut with five bunk beds in it. Roll one dice for each bed the characters examine (if they examine them) for treasure. On a roll of 4 there are 3-18 copper pieces hidden in the bed. On a roll of 5 there are 2-12 silver pieces, and on a roll of 6 there are 1-6 gold pieces. Otherwise there is nothing of value in the bed. The situation will be very different if the characters come upon this encampment at night (see section on nighttime encounters).

**Q-The Goblin's Barracks.** The setup in this hut is the same as the crossbowmen's barracks, save there are eight bunk beds. Treasure chances are the same.

**S-This** is the place where a sentry will be placed at night. See below.

**W-Wizard's Barracks.** This crude hut contains one fairly neat straw bed with 524 cps, 128 sps, and 38 gps hidden under it. In one corner there is a medium sized chest that serves as Illithar's wizard's chest. This hut is where Illithar sleeps at night. At such times his Staff will be leaning against the chest, which is just a few steps away from the bed.

**X-A** large pit, upon which Illithar will place a Hallucinatory Terrain spell to

make it appear as a solid stretch of road. A Detect Magic spell and other similar enchantments will reveal where and/or what the pit really is. anyone who doesn't see the pit will go tumbling into it, taking 1-6 hit points worth of damage from the 10' fall. In general, it should trap the first three riders who go into it. The sides should be fairly hard to climb.

**Y-The Leaders' Barracks.** Here reside Antar and Dalius. Antar's bed is against the far wall and Dalius's is near the door. There is 170 gps under Antar's bed and 112 gps under Dalius's. At night both their weapons will be near their beds.

The complete sequence for the ambush goes as follows: The crossbowmen on the crag sights the potential victims, judges their wealth and strength, and if they appear to be a likely target, signals Illithar. He then motions all the troops to take their positions and wait silently for his orders. He then walks down the slope, places a Hallucinatory Terrain spell over the pit, then goes back up the hill to wait for the first group of victims to go tumbling into the pit. When that happens Illithar will order his crossbowmen to volley into the victims. This will continue until they appear sufficiently weak for the goblin troops to move in, or until the ambushed party tries to escape. If the party appears to have a strong leader, a wizard, or other such powerful figure, Illithar will throw a Phantasmal Killer at that person. In any case, the battle will be fought out until the victims surrender or until Illithar runs away. Since there is little law enforcement in this somewhat remote area, Illithar will let anyone who surrenders keep their horses (in addition to their clothes).

Again, an important difference between this ambush and the last one is the fact that the ambushers have their encampment nearby. At night these troops will sleep in the barracks assigned them (see above) and post guards (see S) around the camp. These guards will be evenly divided between goblin and human troops and will switch off every two hours. Any troops that are sleeping will have their weapons nearby just in case. If any guard is attacked, or he is sure that the camp is being invaded, he will raise the alarm and wake the rest of the camp. Regular night combat rules apply, with the campfire and regularly placed

torches. This light is not visible from the road, but partially illuminates most of the encampment.

Ambushed characters may wish to come back to the scene of the ambush to extract their valuables and a measure of revenge from their ambushers. The ambushers will not be hard to find, but they will not be easily surprised nor easily dealt with.

### **AMBUSH III: THE TROLLS UNDER THE BRIDGE**

This is the classic ambush of Fairy Tales-The mean, nasty Trolls Under The Bridge, lying in wait to eat unwary children or characters. Among all the ambushes presented here, this is the most simple. That does not mean, however, that it is ineffective!

In this ambush eight trolls have banded together for the purpose of waylaying unsuspecting travelers. They will stop all travelers and threaten them with death if they do not surrender all of their valuables. If the characters surrender their valuables, the trolls will kill them anyway (ain't life a ditch?).

This bridge is set over a 50' ravine, so any non-troll who goes over the side is so much ghoulish meat. The geographic location of this bridge is high in the Telguard Mountains, far away from any law enforcement or help.

**A-The Bridge Itself.** This bridge is 10 feet wide and 55 feet long. It has a guard rope one yard above the bridge itself, just at waist height. However, the guardrope is easy to slip through and is not very strong.

**B-Three Trolls.** The trolls here will wait for the trolls at the other end (see C) to jump out first, then they too will leap out, blocking off the party's retreat. They will attack if attacked or after the party has made their decision about giving up their valuables (see above). Their hit points range from 30 and up, but otherwise they are all normal trolls as in the Monster Manual (See P. 97).

**C-Five Trolls.** These are the trolls that will jump out and block the party's forward progress. They are all just like the other trolls, except that one troll (the leader) is slightly stronger than the rest. He is the one that organized this band, but in other respects is just like a normal troll.

### **AMBUSH IV: THE MALACHI**

This ambush takes place deep within the Dubantsowanta Jungle. The most remarkable thing about it is that the ambush is being undertaken by a little known race of humanoid creatures known as the Malachi (see attached creature description). In this situation the Malachi have set up an ambush on a jungle path that has many interlacing overhead branches above the path itself. They have done this in retaliation to hunters and trappers who have slain their people and their animals both for their pelts (the green pelts of the Malachi are worth a great deal on some markets) and for sport. They are also looking for someone in charge of these people (thinking that all humans must be controlled by one person) to force that person to stop the killings. They will not attack if obviously outnumbered.

**L-A Lion.** This is an animal that just happened to be wandering through the area at the time of the ambush. This could be a potential hinderance to any fleeing characters.

**M-A Malachi Warrior.** This represents one Malachi armed with a spear. They have no other possessions (See statistics of Malachi).

**O-Oranamus, Leader of the Malachi.** He directs the ambush and all the Malachi will defend him if he is attacked and flee if he is killed. His statistics are as follows: He is a 7th level fighter, a 4th level shaman, and has 31 hit points. He knows the druidic spells: Entangle, Pass Without Trace, Predict Weather, Speak With Animals, Cure Light Wounds, Produce Flame, Call Lightning, Neutralize Poison. He is armed with an exceptionally well made spear that is handed on from leader to leader down through the years. He will give the orders for the net to be dropped and for the attack to begin. He has taught himself the human language from previously captured humans and will personally question the prisoners. In other respects, he is just like a normal Malachi.

**P-A Large Sharpened Pole.** Victims found wearing Malachi fur will be impaled upon this stick, causing 3 dice worth of damage (no armor protection, though natural skin protection magical (i.e. Stone Flesh, etc.) counts).

If the victim survives this ordeal he or she is thought to be protected by Tita, God of the Jungle, and is set free.

S-A Giant Spider. Serves the same purpose as the Lion (See L).

T-A Tiger. Ditto.

X-the Net. This consists of a large net covering all the area indicated by the box on the map when it is dropped. When it is dropped it will automatically entangle anyone or anything under it.

The sequence for the Ambush and the aftermath goes as follows: The Malachi at the bend of the road signals the rest of his band by method of birdcalls that a human band is moving down the road. When a majority of the human party is under the net the leader will order it dropped. Those near the edges of the net may have a chance to escape before it

falls (DM's discretion). Once the net has fallen all the nearby Malachi will move in to pin down the edges of the net. Anyone who manages to cut their way out of the net, or whoever was unsnared in the first place, will face the rest of the Malachi. After the adventurers have been caught, they will be taken to the Malachi's village, some two miles to the East, where they will be questioned. If ornamus is convinced that the party is innocent of harming the jungle and the Malachi, he will allow them to go free. If found guilty, they will be impaled upon the pole.

\*\*\*

Remember: A well planned ambush can be devastating and deadly. So use them with discretion and common sense.

Now the host, emerges, a shadow starts to fall.

Not one knows what hit them, none can see at all.

Even as the end approaches, still they're not aware.

How can you fight a foe so deadly  
When you don't even know it's there?  
And now that the job is almost done  
Maybe some escape, no, not even one.

—Genesis, "Cul-de-sac", Duke.

Have fun guys!

# Giving The Undead A Chance AD&D Rules Variant

By Jeff Albanese

How many times have you seen the following: A party opens up a coffin, which contains a Wraith, and a simple 6th Level Cleric rolls his/her 10 or better, and turns it. This act is seen over and over again in AD&D because the Clerics have too good of a chance to turn Undead. The following table shows the changes that I have made to help the Undead.

Type of Undead	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-13	14+
Skeleton	12	10	8	6	4	2	T	D**	D**	D**
Zombie	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	T	D**	D**
Ghoul	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	T	D**
Shadow	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	T
Wight	20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2
Ghast		20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4
Wraith			20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6
Mummy				20	18	16	14	12	10	8
Spectre					20	18	16	14	12	10
Vampire						20	18	16	14	12
Ghost							20	18	16	14
Lich								20	18	16
Special*									20	18

\*Same rules still apply toward these creatures

\*\*Number affected is 7-12 rather than 1-12

T = Automatic Turning

D = Automatically Destroyed

So, as you can see, the chart works on a base of two, rather than a base of three as is currently the system. Also, this allows low level Undead to have a chance vs. a high level party, and makes the higher level Undead more nasty!

# CORRECT COUNTER CONTEST



Gary Smith (Associate Editor) and Alan Emrich (Publisher) have chosen the counters and are the official judges, (though we may have a wine cooler or two first). Obviously, no one from DTI, VIP, F&M, Intersim, Strategicon or Libya (employee, volunteer lackey or indentured servant) may enter.

Good luck, and get those entries in, ONE PER PERSON, by December 1, 1986. Of course, this is void where prohibited by law, but so are a lot of things. Please include your address, so that we can contact you should you be a winner.

# ORIGINS '86 REPORT

By Gary E. Smith



*Dealers showing their wares.*



*"You showed him what!"  
Alan talks with Anne Jaffe, Space  
Gamer Editor.*

Even before returning to the West Coast this Origins had one strike against it, the previous one held out there. Regardless of the passage of time, the bitter taste left by Pacificon's Origins caused GAMA (the Game Manufacturers Association, Origins' sponsor) to be more than a bit leery about trying the waters again. But, convinced that if anyone could pull it off it would be Diverse Talents' STRATEGICON division, GAM consented to an L.A. Origins in 1986. In the end the "west Coast stigma" has convincingly ended! By nearly all accounts, Origins '86 was quite a success, drawing attendees from around the world (West Germany, Australia, Japan and Egypt), as well as the usual traveling cadre who traditionally go to every Origins.

The weather was typical for Los Angeles (fair and mild). The site was excellent in that no part of the show was any further than a 5 minute walk from any other part and a truly helpful Hilton Hotel staff added to the pleasant surroundings. All in all, this Origins ran more smoothly than the previous



*Whadda mean we can't auction  
Scotch Tape?!*



*Dealer Room before storm.*



*Dealer Room during storm.*



regional show the staff put on (ORCCON, held just five months prior to Origins). The DTI convention staff proved that experience counted as the administrative staff (6 people) has a whopping total of 72 conventions under their collective belts (the "least experienced" administrator had "only" ten!). There may not be a convention staff of like experience anywhere else.

Most of the attending exhibitors reported good to excellent sales, with several saying they had the best Origins ever. Steve Jackson Games released GURPS to an eager crowd, and TSR saw their re-releases of Terrible Swift Sword and Barbarosa do brisk business. Perhaps the most "tragic" story is that of Milton Bradley (their second Origins). It seems that they were only going to bring 70 pre-production copies of their new Fortress America game. Alan Emrich, the exhibitor liaison, indicated this was too few for expected demand, so they bumped the total number of copies brought to 200 (which, to be fair, was nearly all they had assembled). On opening day, they quit selling Fortress America 15 minutes after the doors opened, in order to have ANY left for the rest of the show! The next day, the remainder were gone 10 minutes after the doors opened.

The gamers had themselves a great convention, too. Tournaments were very full, Open Gaming took a heavy load and the seminars were well attended. The security staff kept good crowd control, so much so that Killer-style games were not in evidence anywhere. As expected, games and gamers spilled out of the rooms and onto hallway floors, into every quiet nook and even sprang up in the hotel gardens.



*Registration. Moving right along.*



*Wake me when it's my turn...*

Some enterprising people made a major move and ended up playing by the pool, ordering snacks and cool drinks, surrounded by the L.A. tanning community and other poolside dwellers. Ah, the life of Origins gamers, California style!

This Origins also featured very large computer gaming events, with PC's as well as video arcade games. While the hackers and programmers played Rogue, F-15 Strike Eagle, Wizardry and Reach for the Stars, the arcade gamers had a field day with Gauntlet, Star Wars, Crystal Castle and Tempest. The quarter feeders kept themselves very busy, mostly on Gauntlet, which was busy all hours of the day. It was interesting to see the convention manager (Alan Emrich) and Steve Jackson pumping quarters into a Gauntlet game on Monday morning after the convention was over, intensely zapping monsters and grabbing "food," laughing all the way. It shows you we're all just gamers under the skin.

Open Gaming had several interesting things going on. First, all the copies of Fortress America seemed to end up being investigated there. Everywhere one looked, seven, eight, or nine games of this new Milton Bradley wonder were going all the time. Second, several new, small game companies were playtesting their hopeful hits for the crowds, with Power Game's "Power, The Game" being the most noticeable. The local L.A. Europa crowd had set up ALL the Europa maps into a giant campaign version (we're talking a map at least 10'

x 10', folks) with added-on territories not yet produced by GDW. This was but one of **three** Europa campaigns going on. TSR also had an ongoing game of their newly re-released Terrible Swift Sword for spectators.

Miniatures, with its unique flavor, bright colors and non-traditional gaming approach (not your standard table games, you see), always attracts the TV crews when they show up at conventions. All four crews that came to Origins '86 took shots of that area, and all four used those shots on their

telecasts. This is the best way for any convention you may consider sponsoring to assure visual media coverage. Miniatures are so unique, compared to the other table top games, that TV stations will use footage from there to "justify" a one or two minute piece on the air.

Other aspects of this Origins worth recounting include:

The hotel mid-price restaurant was right off the lobby/main passage way. Being set up as a sidewalk cafe (a 3 ft high divider between the restaurant and



*Splendiferous Boardgaming*



Part of the large Australian contingent.

the lobby?, one could pass by anytime and see the industry greats and near-greats in conclaves, dotted here and there amongst the tables. Several times, business transactions were going on over the divider, passersby having discussions with company moguls who were holding court at ringside seats, so to speak.

There was a noticeable lack of costumes at this Origins, with most gamers being more intent on "doing" rather than "being," so to speak. The local fast food emporium (luckily located next door to the Hilton), was warned about a potential swarm of starved gamers not wanting to pay hotel prices. They laid in a stock of extra supplies, and were repaid for their warning by crowds at all hours, eager to stretch their food dollars.

The hotel gardens, feared by some as being where potential Killer type games would, like moths to a light, be drawn to, were instead the sites of near-pastoral gaming, with people keeping still and enjoying the surroundings with quiet, "peaceful" conflict simulation gaming.

For the You-Always-Wanted-to-See-That category, Steve Jackson Games auctioned off the right to smack Steve Jackson HIMSELF in the face with a beautiful cream pie (for a worthy cause). surprisingly, the bidding was

not as spirited as you might think, but Alan Emrich, with the high bid of roughly 30 pieces of silver, was able to deliver a classic roundhouse shot to Steve's intrepid face. The pie covered Steve, the floor, the wall behind and the ceiling above, with the drippy remains of whipped cream. In the words of Abraham Lincoln: "Here lies the remains of a great battlefield..."

At the annual GAMA meeting, the Origins site selection committee put forth the tentative Origins schedule for the next three years (choices are made two years in advance). The 1987 Origins will be in, or course, Baltimore, with



"Let's see... I've almost got it... this is a... game!!"

1988 taking a new twist. The site selection committee agreed a combined Origins/GENCON ("OrigENCON") proposal submitted by TSR, to be held in Milwaukee, and 1989 planned again (but not confirmed) for Boston or possibly returning to Los Angeles. Thus, GAMA is working to rotate Origins through the four geographic areas of the US, as the National convention should be.

To all of you who could attend Origins, the hobby is glad you could make it out for the show and all the fun. For those of you who couldn't; you missed a great time and one of the best Origins conventions ever.

See you in Baltimore in 1987!



VIP Associate Editor Gary Smith and Convention Coordinator Jeff Albanese unmasked.

# CHARLES ROBERTS AWARD WINNERS ORIGINS '86

*Best Historical Figures*

**SAMURAI**  
Ral Partha

*Best Fantasy/SF Figure Series*

**Dragon of the Month**  
(Grenadier)

*Best Vehicular/Accessory Series*

**STAR TREK SHIPS**  
(FASA)

*Best Miniatures Rules*

**BATTLE SYSTEMS**  
(TSR)

*Best Role Playing Rules*

**DC HEROES**  
(Mayfair Games)

*Best Role Playing Adventure*

**YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES**  
(West End)

*Best Role Playing Supplement*

**PENDRAGON CAMPAIGN**  
(Chaosium)

*Best Professional Role Playing Magazine*

**THE DRAGON™**  
(TSR)

*Best Professional Miniature Magazine*

**THE COURIER**

*Best Play-By-Mail Game*

**ILLUMINATI**  
(Adventure Systems)

*Best Pre-20th Century Game*

**PAX BRITANICA**  
(Victory Games)

*Best 20th Century Game*

**WORLD IN FLAMES**  
(Australian Design Group)

*Best Professional Boardgame Magazine*

**THE WARGAMER**  
(3W)

*Best Adventure Game for the Home Computer*

**SILENT SERVICE**  
(Microprose)

*Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine*

**VIP OF GAMING**  
(Diverse Talents)

*Best Graphic Presentation*

**PAX BRITANICA**  
(Victory Games)

## FIRE & MOVEMENT'S OWN F&Mee AWARDS

*Innovative Design*

**WORLD IN FLAMES**  
(ADG)

*Writer of the Year*

**RICHARD BERG**

*Best Historical Figures*

**SAMURAI**  
(Ral Partha)

*Wargame of the Year*

**WORLD IN FLAMES**  
(ADG)

*Hall of Fame*

**THE AVALON HILL GAME CO.**  
(TAHGC)

*Computer Wargame of the Year*

**Kamphgruppe**

*Designers Achievement Award*

**JIM DUNNIGAN & FRANK CHADWICK (tie)**



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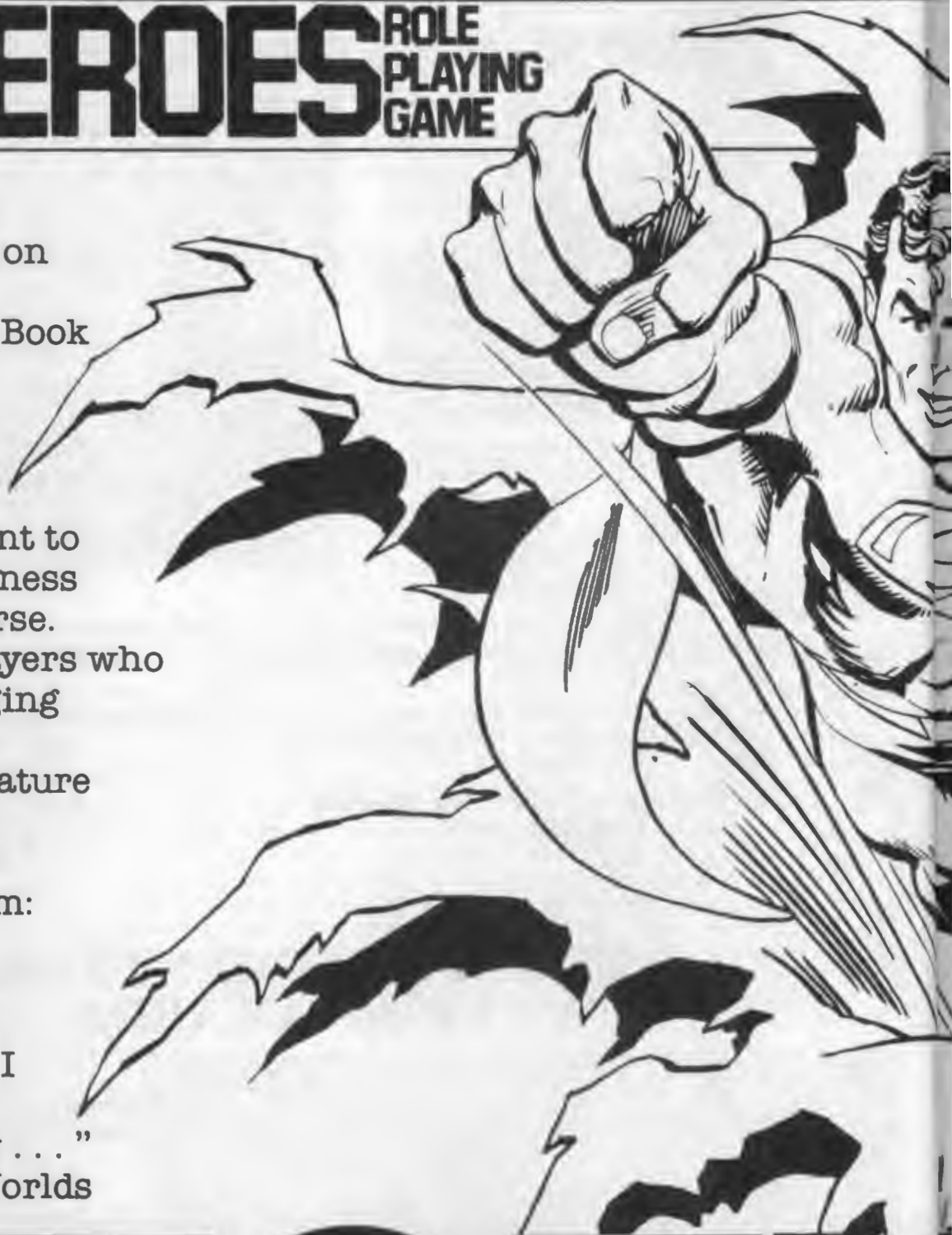
—Comics Feature

"★ ★ ★ ★

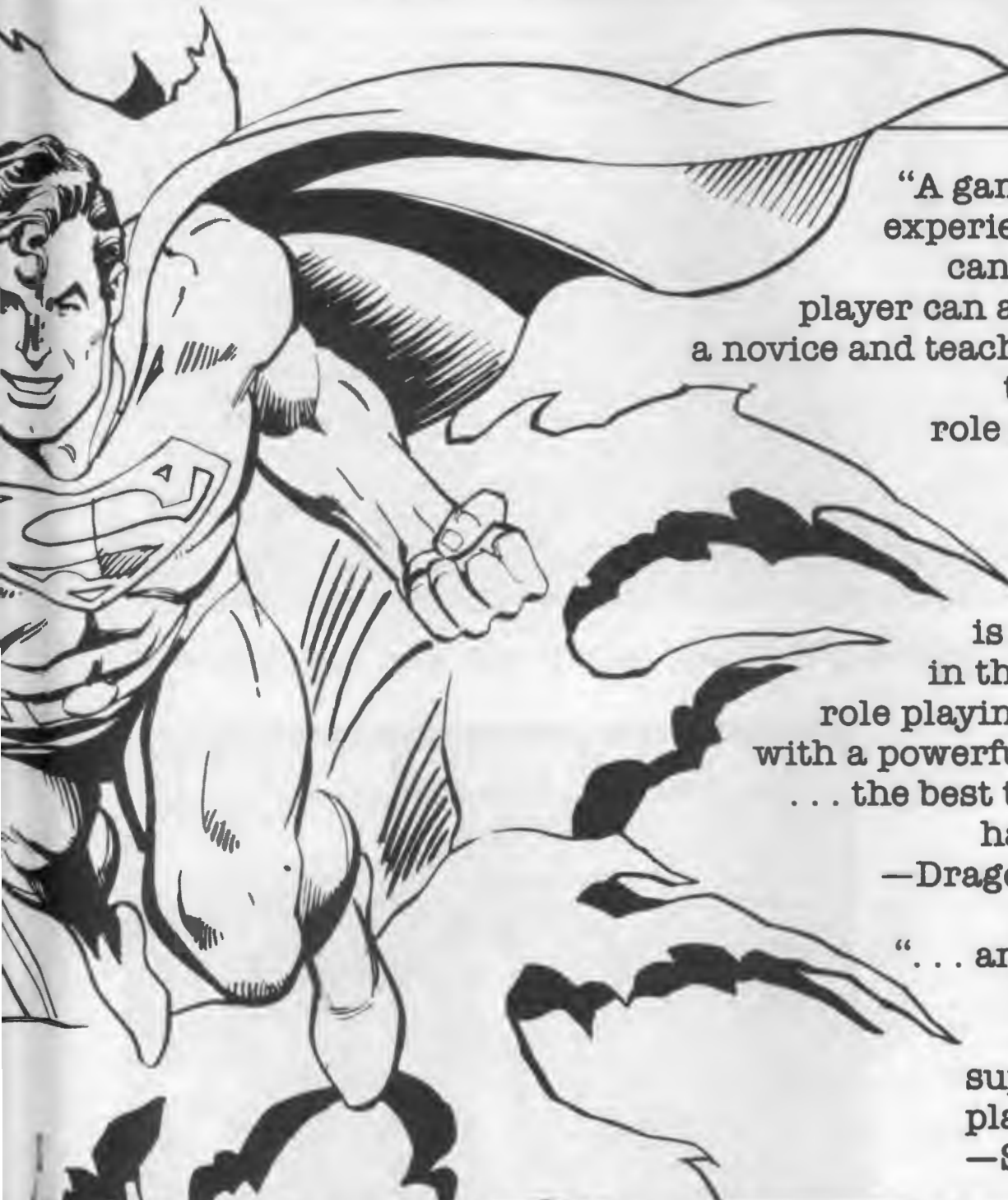
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# NDARY

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# BATTLEPLAN

*Board Wargaming Magazine Supplement*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Eylau, by Dale L. Kemper .....	35
Torch, by Marion Bates .....	37
Hitler's Counterstroke In France, by James G. Gordon .....	38
Main Battle Area, by Marion Bates .....	40
Amplifying Axis & Allies, by Roger Vivrette .....	41
Editor .....	Gary E. Smith
c/o P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808	
Contributing Editors .....	Alan Emrich, Marion Bates, Ron Morley

## *Napoleon's First Setback*

# EYLAU



**Title:** La Bataille de Preussich Eylau, 1807

**Designers:** Monte Mattson, Dennis Spors, Ed Wimble

**Company:** Clash of Arms Games

**Address:** P.O. box 668, King of Prussia, PA 19406

**Release Date:** August, 1985

**Catalog Number:** 0011

**Price:** \$22.00

**Complexity:** Intermediate-Experienced

**Solitaire:** Low

This extremely tactical game is the newest release in a continuing series of games on the Napoleonic Wars brought out by the old Marshall Enterprises Company and now by clash of Arms Games. Other titles in the series include **Bataille de Auerstadt** and **Wagram** (the only title available from the five or so games in this series published about ten years ago) and the soon-to-be-released **Talavera**. All of these games come with the same set of Standard Rules with Exclusive Rules & Historical Commentary for each specific game included.

The components of **Eylau** are

generally well made. The cover art depicts a black & white illustration of the Battle of Eylau. The map is of average quality, yet quite functional. What really sets the game's components above the rest are its counters. This series of games comes with some of the most colorful and complicated playing pieces I have ever seen in 17 years of gaming. Arrayed on the mapboard they are a beauty to behold. Unfortunately, this complicated beauty does not always lend itself to ease of play. The counter designations are so intricate, in

## THE BATTLE OF EYLAU 8 February 1807 Morning



some cases, that it is hard to distinguish Russian from French units at a glance. The order of battle included as well as the scenario set ups do not aid you much in your search for certain units. Such lines in the scenarios setups as, "place Napoleon's staff at the Battle of Eylau"? Well it never tells you who they were, you're supposed to know enough about the battle not to need that information apparently. These little problems occur quite a bit (what batteries are attached to the 2nd Division of the French IV Corps? What composes all of Detachment Markov or Baggavut?). The designers are certainly experts to the nth degree on Napoleonic history. Is it fair to expect every gamer who buys their games to be one also?

The price of *Eylau* seems fair to me, considering what you get. The colorful

counters alone are worth alot of the price. There was an apparent problem with some of the counter sheets in some of the games sold, however; some of the back-printed information on the die-cut counters were so off-center as to be unreadable. New, improved counter sheets have been completed by Clash of Arms and it wouldn't hurt any owners of this game out there with faulty countersheets to get in touch with them.

The standard rules to *Eylau*, as with all of the games in this series, caused the most problems for me. Some of them sacrifice playability almost totally for the sake of realism. The biggest offender is the rule which states that all units in column formation must have their counter's front facing a hexside and all units in line must face hex corners. Just try to keep that

straight with nearly 600 counters on the board for the campaign game. When I asked an avid player of *Wagram* (with over 1,000 counters) about this rule he simply said, "Well, you just have to be careful." I maintain that that kind of tedious care is far more effort than I wish to make. A rules simplification is in order and I like to use the one employed in GDW's *Borodino* game (itself a revision of the old Marshall Enterprises game entitled *Bataille de la Moskow*) which uncomplicates formation rules considerably.

Another problem I had with the game organization is that the two Order of Battle charts are set up for the campaign game only; they are nearly useless for any of the scenarios. The reason is that they are organized by flank, not by corp or army designations. Therefore you can find the 2nd and 3rd Division of the French IV Corps in the OB on the Left Flank, the 1st Division of IV Corp on the right, and some of its cavalry in the reserve. This adds more confusion to an already confusing OB. Combine that with the fact that some of the unit fronts are unreadable on the OB chart (they came out too dark to see the unit designation on my copy) and you are presented with the sad situation in which you have to guess just where certain units are supposed to go.

However, all the above problems can be corrected with some work by the players. They don't detract that much from the enjoyment of the game once you are into it. What certainly can be said for the game is that it is authentic, innovative, and fun to play. The replay value should be high as you attempt different strategies on the two sides. Games on this scale (120 meter hexes, 100 infantry, 50 cavalry, or an artillery section per strength point) are about as close to miniature gaming as board wargames are ever going to come and *Eylau* is not exception to that fact. The panorama of its dramatic unit counters on the board is quite appealing. Play balance appears to be factored into the game, with the French initially having the upper hand in the campaign game, but with the burden of attack under nasty condtions countering their superiority. All in all this is a fine addition to Clash of Arms' line of tactical Napoleonic games and we can only hope that other new and re-released titles continue the line for some years to come.

— Dale L. Kemper

# TORCH

*The Invasion of Northwest Africa, 1942-43*



**Designed by:** John Astell

**Published by:** Game Designer's Workshop, P.O. Box 61701, Bloomington, IL 61701

**Price:** \$24.00

**Reviewed by:** Marion Bates

**INVENTORY:** Two 22 by 28 inch mapsheets; 480 die-cut, backprinted counters; 44 page looseleaf rulebook; eight charts; two six sided dice. Boxed.

**Torch** is the most recent addition to the **Europa** series of games from Game Designer's workshop. When the series is completed, all the games can be combined into a single massive simulation of the Second World War in Europe and North Africa. Those who are collecting the **Europa** series don't need this review. This review is for those among you who are uncertain whether or not this game would be a worthwhile addition to your collection.

The game covers the American landings and subsequent operations in northwest Africa during 1942 and 1943. There is also a scenario to combine **Torch** with the **Europa** games **Western Desert** and **The Near East**. This would cover the entire campaign in North Africa in grand style from the initial unpleasantness between the British and the Italians in 1940 to the destruction of the Afrika Korps in 1943. Map scale is 16 miles per hex and each turn represents two weeks of real time. Ground units are divisional and smaller while air units represent formations of

40 to 50 of similar aircraft.

At the heart of **Europa** and therefore **Torch** is a relatively conventional sequence of play including regular movement, air operations, combat, and motorized movement. Units exert control into adjacent hexes that inhibit enemy movement. Combat is voluntary.

Upon this basis is built a rather intricate game system with a series of interesting wrinkles that gives **Europa** the flavor it has. Unit differentiation is the key to understanding and using combat effectively. This not a mere matter of movement. Units effect combat depending on their armor effects in an attack, armor effects in the defense, and anti-armor capability. All these factors must be considered and will be very telling. These mechanics are not simple but become second nature with a little play.

The air game is quite detailed for a game of this scale. Air units are rated for air attack and defense as well as strategic and tactical bombing capability. Possible missions include interception, patrol, escort, transport, and bombing. These missions may be accomplished entirely within a separate air phase or in concert with ground operations where applicable. There are also rules for airborne operations. The air game is not simple to integrate with the ground game. This of course was a lesson to be learned in real life as well.

There are also some rather abstract naval rules, entirely subordinate to the specific campaign, including transport. Of course, since this game is about an invasion, there are rules for amphibious

and special forces operations.

Of interest to many will be the debut of U.S. units in **Torch**. There are also plenty of Vichy units to resist the Americans as well. Needless to say the counter mix also includes plenty of German and Commonwealth units.

In spite of the general fascination with the campaign in North Africa, few games have deigned to cover the operations in Northwest Africa. This alone serves to make **Torch** essential. The scenario itself is an interesting one though lacking the mobility of the desert campaign. However, there are some pretty rough times to be had during the landings and the subsequent counterattacks. This is a very good treatment of an interesting subject that combines to create some great gaming.

What is really exciting though is the prospect of joining **Torch**, **Western Desert**, and **The Near East** to play the **War in the Desert** scenario. This is a microcosm of **Europa** at work at the campaign level. While playing it would be time consuming and certainly merit team play, it offers a fascinating gaming possibility. I would recommend this even to someone who is not necessarily sold on **Europa** is North Africa is your cup of tea.

**COMPLEXITY:** High

**EXCITEMENT LEVEL:** Given an interest in the subject and a tolerance of relatively intricate rules, high

**SOLITAIRE SUITABILITY:** Fair

**COMPONENTS:** Very good, even for GDW.

**OVERALL:** B+



# HITLER'S COUNTERS IN FRANCE

by James C. Gordon

Published by Task Force Games  
20" x 24" Map, 84 Counters  
16 Pages of Rules, \$7.95

Slowly but surely, Task Force Games is establishing itself in the field of WWII games (including the distribution of other company's products). One of their latest additions is **Hitler's Counterstroke in France**, simulating the battle of Mortain (August 7-8, 1944). After the Allies broke out of the Normandy beachhead, Hitler ordered a counterattack to recork the bottle. The German force, originally planned as eight panzer divisions, was reduced by half (with one division never committed and another one arriving late). Tenacious American defenses and the timely arrival of reinforcements turned the attack into an abortive effort.

**HCF** includes 84 counters, a fairly small map, and a basic game system of moderately low complexity. The Germans field two infantry divisions in addition to the four panzer divisions, plus some Corps units. Opposing them are two U.S. infantry divisions at start, reinforced by two armor and one infantry division, backed by air support. Most units are battalions, with company breakdown (into two units) for U.S. infantry units, plus a few regiments. The map offers clear terrain in the north and south, laced with rivers



and roads, bordering "mixed" areas toward the center which is dominated by rough terrain, with some hills and crests. American roadblocks and fortifications create formidable obstacles. The colors contrast easily and the features are clearly defined.

Both sides follow a move-combat-move sequence, starting with the Germans, with the second movement phase for mechanized units only. Movement is rapid along the roads and tortuously slow across the hills and rough areas, especially in bad weather when movement rates are halved. ZOCs require a unit to stop but combat is optional. Combat results are retreats and elimination of units, the latter is one source of victory points. Using a strength differential method, an attacker needs a +4 advantage at least (for DE results), which equates to 3-4:1 advantage in units, allowing for terrain benefits to the defender. Ranged artillery support is handled through a



"bidding" system; the attacker declares his supporting fire, then the defender does the same, then the attacker has a second chance to allocate barrage fire, and then back to the defender and so on until one side stops. Artillery can be used offensively and defensively in the same turn, within a 12-hex limit (a substantial portion of the map). American air power makes itself felt three turns each day (a total of six out of twelve), weather permitting. Air

# STROKE



attacks produce disruptions or no effect and German AA fire can lessen the effectiveness, a critical element in protecting the Corps HQ unit.

Although both sides have a Corps HQ unit only the Germans operate under any command control restrictions. The CC radius decreases as the battle progresses, at the same time that German units are becoming more spread out. Lacking CC halves the combat strength for attacking,

increasing the disadvantage to the Germans. The combination of command control, movement restrictions and objective hex locations tends to channel the German attack into either a northern or southern approach. I favor the northern advance because more objective hexes are located within a smaller area, although the U.S. position is easier to defend.

Victory rests on compiling points by eliminating units, exiting units (German only), and controlling certain cities. The game can end on any turn if either player has sufficient victory points, but that number increases constantly (making victory more difficult). A quick victory in the first couple of turns is unlikely as it requires phenomenal success in eliminating enemy units without losing ones own. But an initial advantage which increases over several turns in a cumulative effect can bring an early end to the battle.

The German player should not be wowed by the apparent thinness of U.S. defenses at start and the distance that must be traveled to reach substantial victory objectives. A rapid advance will probably leave defensive pockets in the rear, stretch the command radius beyond its effective length, and lead the Germans to spread their forces in search of the route of least resistance. I favor a slower advance, centered on the primary roads in the northern sector, using massed strength to eliminate the American units and thereby compiling victory points. As the American player, I try to protect the key intersections and block the easier avenues of attack that the German might choose. Using air support and artillery fire is essential to a successful defense, which makes the weather a critical factor. The Americans must rush their reinforcements to the battle line quickly, before the original divisions are overwhelmed (leaving the field open for a rapid German advance). The third division to arrive enters the map from the southeast area which places it almost in the German rear area — another reason for the Germans to make a northern advance.

**Hitler's Counterstroke in France** offers a challenge to both sides, wrapped in a basic simulation package with a couple of interesting twists. I wouldn't expect it to set the wargaming world on fire, but it would be a good introduction to the hobby. For all the talk lately about how the hobby is ignoring the new players, this game is one answer.

# MAIN BATTLE AREA

## MODERN TACTICAL COMBAT IN EUROPE

**Designed by:** Bill Gibbs

**Published by:** Omega Games, 6728 Memorial Highway, Suite 149, Tampa, Florida 33615

**Price:** \$30.00

**Reviewed by:** Marion Bates

**INVENTORY:** One 20 by 31 inch mapsheet; 600 die cut, backprinted counters; two U.S. scenario cards, two Soviet scenario cards, one each Soviet and U.S. Combat Results Table, Basic rulebook including Level I rules, Level II, Level III, and Level IV rulebooks; One set each of Soviet and U.S. planning sheets; Glossary of Terms; and two decimal dice. **Main Battle Area** is a simulation of tactical combat in Europe between forces of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Units represent one to four vehicles, up to six infantry teams, or a single aircraft. The map is overlaid by an offset square grid, each side of a square being equal to 250 meters. Turns represent five minutes of real time.

Most modern tactical wargames are complicated and can be very difficult to get into. **MBA** is different because it features four different play levels, the lowest being quite simple while the highest offering a great deal of complexity and simulation detail. This ensures the accessibility of this game to a wide range of gamers.

Using only the Level I rules, **MBA** is a quick playing shoot-em-up, offering the basic of maneuver and combat. The combat tables are simple and fast. Merely cross index the type of firing unit with the target type, roll the dice, and find a result in lost steps. There is also the possibility that the target unit will be suppressed.

Indirect fire is particularly simple, especially considering there is no need for plotting fire missions and there is no delay. Unfortunately, indirect fire seems unduly lethal in its effects. This is not a major factor though, in light of the limited availability of artillery.

The map is worthy of mention for its lack of hexes. Instead, it is overlaid by a



grid overlaid by offset squares so that the effect on movement is similar to hexes while the feel is rather more "military." The map is rather stark and drab thanks to the limited amount of color and the use of white to represent clear terrain. The effect is also rather military, but may also result in boredom. The army doesn't have to be fun, a wargame should be.

At Level II, one meets the meat of **Main Battle Area**. At the heart of the game, and introduced at this level, is planning. Now formations' activities must be planned before the game begins. A player is compelled to consider this objective carefully and make plans for as many contingencies as possible. Space forbids us from going into much detail but planning adds a very novel and interesting element at a cost in playability that is minimal.

Also introduced at Level II is command control. This is tied to planning and requires the players to think in terms of formations rather than individual units. The effect is realistic. Command control is facilitated by the use of color coding on the counters to differentiate units of differing formations. This is an excellent idea that should see wider adoption.

Levels III and IV add chrome to a game system that is mostly realized in Level II. These added factors include

tactical air and helicopter/airmobile operations, anti-armor ambushes, chemical warfare, and radiation contamination (there are no nuclear warfare rules, per se). Most of the options offered at these last two levels bring quite a bit of complexity with the realism they offer but players are free to play at a complexity level with which they are most comfortable. In fact, that is one of the strong points of the game.

**Main Battle Area** is a nice tour de force of modern tactical combat and has a great deal to offer even gamers with a most casual interest in the subject. A glance at the inventory would seem to justify the \$30 pricetag and play value of the game should be considerable.

**COMPLEXITY:** Moderate to high  
**EXCITEMENT LEVEL:** High, decreasing somewhat as more complicated options are added.

**SOLITAIRE SUITABILITY:** Fair at Level I becoming minimal at Level II and beyond.

**COMPONENTS:** Apart from the mapsheet, which is at least serviceable, very nice.

**OVERALL:** A-

Marion Bates

# Amplifying Axis & Allies

## Major Variet Proposals: Part I of III

by Roger Vivrette

### Introduction

Players may question the suitability of some of these rules, pointing out that they are too much on a tactical scale for a strategic level game. My answer to this is quite simple: If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen... oops, sorry, wrong cliché... how about: If you don't like the rule, don't use it. (That's the one!) These rules are not intended to be chiseled in stone. If you feel that a particular rule doesn't belong in **Axis & Allies** as a strategic level game, simply leave it out. However, before you are too quick to judge a particular rule at least give it a chance, I think you will find it works quite nicely and adds a new element to the game.

### Rules Clarifications

—Transports may not load units at the end of their second move. Transports may pick up one infantry unit from each of two different territories during the course of its move and still be able to land them (as long as it does not exceed its movement allowance of two.) A Transport may only make **one** amphibious landing per turn, but can make **two** pickups.

—The landing of units into an **enemy** controlled or occupied territory by a Transport is considered a combat situation. Therefore, when a Transport lands units in such a situation, he may not take part in any other combat situation that turn. If the Transport lands units into a **friendly** or **allied** controlled or occupied territory, it is **not** considered a combat situation. Example: Germany lands 2 Infantry into Syria/Iraq (enemy occupied at the time) with a Transport. He may **not** then take that Transport and use it as a cheap loss in a naval battle in southern Europe.

—Neutral territories cease to be neutral only when they have been occupied by land units (Tanks or Infantry.) A plane flying over a neutral territory does not cause that territory to lose its neutral status (i.e. it remains neutral.)

—All land units **must** stop upon entering a neutral territory. This includes tanks, and is an exception to their "blitzing" ability. An aircraft must pay the 3 IPC penalty (assuming the territory is still neutral), but may then continue on its way. Note also that aircraft must pay the 3 IPC penalty **every time** the neutral airspace is violated (as long as the territory remains neutral, that is.)

—A territory is **not** considered controlled (for any purpose) until **after** the Place New Units phase. Therefore: 1) Aircraft may not land in just-captured territories, 2) Ships may not pass through restricted sea passages (i.e. the Suez Canal) if either of the adjacent, restricting land areas were just captured this turn, 3) New land and air units may not be placed in just-captured territories with Production centers, and 4) New naval units may not be placed in just-captured sea-zones adjacent to territories with Production centers.

—**Loans are prohibited.** Funds may not be transferred between players (as this tends to shift the game balance to favor the Allies.)

—If a player obtains Rockets with Weapon Development, he must specify **one and only one** Anti-Aircraft unit as the rocket launcher. This AA unit then remains the rocket launcher for the rest of the game.

### Suggested Rules Additions

—During the Place New Units phase, naval units that have just been constructed **may not** be placed in sea-zones which are held by enemy forces.

In addition, naval units may not be built at the beginning of the turn if there is no friendly sea-zone in which to place them. Example: American warships control the sea-zone around Japan. The Japanese player, during his turn, (and assuming he has no other production center) may not build naval units, as he would not be able to place them at the end of his turn (even if he cleared the sea-zone). This rule was included to avoid the problem that when placing units at the end of the turn, they were being placed in a combat situation. Also, logically, if enemy warships controlled such a sea-zone, they would not allow the shipyards to remain in production.

—The Straits of Turkey operate similarly to the Suez Canal concerning allowable passage. However, only one of the two countries bordering this passage (Eastern Europe, or Turkey) need be controlled to allow movement into the sea-zone.

—During an amphibious landing, losses from any off-shore bombardment by Battleships are taken before being allowed to counter-attack. This is similar to the way in which a Submarine's sneak attack works.

—Players should feel free to experiment with the initial forces of the sides. Most people are under the impression that the Allies tend to win most of the time, and I think I agree with them. However, I have found that by adding **one** German Tank in Algeria, the game plays in a slightly more balanced fashion. This extra tank gives Germany quite an edge in Africa which tends to ease their problems elsewhere.

### New Units

**COMMANDO'S:** A COMMANDO unit has an Attack strength of 2, Defense of 1, Movement of 1, and Cost of 3 IPC's. A COMMANDO unit completely ignores the restrictions of neutral territories

(including the 3 IPC penalty.) **COMMANDO'S** do not capture territory they move into (including Neutral territories.) It is easiest to think of them as not really being there except for combat purposes. Other than what is listed above, a **COMMANDO** will behave in all respects as regular infantry. A maximum of 1 **COMMANDO** may be built per turn, and no one player may have more than 3 on the board at any one time. A **COMMANDO** unit is specified as such by folding a small colored sticker around the rifle of the Infantry piece.

**TRANSPORT PLANES:** A **TRANSPORT PLANE (T.P.)** unit has an Attack strength of 0, Defense strength of 0, Movement of 6, and Cost of 5 IPC's. T.P.'s can only carry one infantry. They may **not** carry Tanks or Anti Aircraft units. The T.P. may pick up the infantry at any point during its flight, but may only **load once**, and **unload once**. It must end its turn in a friendly territory, where the infantry **must** disembark (if it has not done so already.) An Infantry unit cannot move once it has disembarked. A T.P. cannot land in an enemy controlled or enemy occupied territory. T.P.'s are not allowed defense rolls when attacked; however, they may be taken as casualties before more valuable units. T.P.'s benefit from Long-Range Aircraft. A T.P. is specified as such by the placement of small colored stickers onto the wings of Bomber pieces.

**NAVAL MINEFIELD:** A **NAVAL MINEFIELD** has a cost of 8 IPC's. It may be placed only in sea-zones which meet the following criteria: 1) It cannot have enemy ships in it, and 2) It must have friendly (**not** allied) ships in it. If enemy ships enter the mined sea-zone, the owner of the minefield rolls one die. If the result is 2 or less, the enemy must immediately remove one of his ships (of his choice) from the board. After any ship is destroyed, there is a chance that the minefield has become useless and must be removed; the player owning the minefield tulls one die and if the result is a 3 or less, the minefield is removed from the board. However, another minefield may still be placed in that same space later (at the players discretion). A maximum of 1 minefield may exist in any one sea-zone. A minefield is symbolized by a control

marker of the owning nationality being placed in the sea-zone in question. Friendly or allied vessels may pass freely through mined sea-zones. Players may question the suitability of this rule in a strategic game or be disturbed by the idea that the entire sea-zone has mines all over it. You might find it more acceptable if you think of it as only mining key spots in the sea-zone (i.e. choke points, shallow sections, etc.) and supplementing them with various small craft (Destroyers, PT Boats, etc.) that would not normally be represented in the game.

**CRUISERS:** A **CRUISER** unit has an Attack strength of 3, Defense Strength of 3, Movement of 2, and Cost of 16 IPC's. A **CRUISER** is specified by the use of Transports with small colored stickers folded over the bow. They may **not** bombard land territories the way Battleships do. The **CRUISER** was included to fill the gap between Battleships and Submarines.

## Expanded Turn Sequence

### A. PURCHASE UNITS

### B. DEVELOP WEAPONS

### C. COMBAT MOVEMENT

1. Defender fires Anti Aircraft Guns
  - a. Anti-Aircraft casualties are removed
  - b. Surviving Bombers fire
  - c. Defender surrenders IPC's
  - d. Land attacking Bombers

### 2. Naval Combat

- a. Attacking Submarines fire
  - 1) Submarine inflicted casualties removed
  - b. Attacker fires remaining units
  - c. Defender fires units
  - d. All casualties are removed
  - e. Any submarines may withdraw
  - f. Attacker may withdraw

### 3. Land combat

- a. Attacker fires Battleships supporting an amphibious assault
  - 1) Battleship inflicted casualties are removed
  - 2) Attacker removes any supporting Battleships
- b. Defender fires Anti-Aircraft at any Planes
  - 1) Anti-Aircraft inflicted casualties are removed
  - 2) Defender removes all defending Anti-Aircraft units
- c. Attacker fires remaining units
- d. Defender fires units
- e. All casualties are removed
- f. Attacker may withdraw

### 4. Replace surviving units on game board

### 5. Land attacking aircraft

### D. NON-COMBAT MOVEMENT

### E. PLACE NEW UNITS

### F. DETERMINE TERRITORY OWNERSHIP

### G. ALLIANCES APPOINT COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

### H. COLLECT INCOME

### I. CHECK VICTORY CONDITIONS

## Allowable Targets

	Inf	Arm	Ftr	Bmb	Bat	Car	Trn	Sub	Ind
Infantry	—	—	—	—	X	X	X	X	X
Armor	—	—	—	—	X	X	X	X	X
Fighter	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	X
Bomber	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	S
AA	X	X	—	—	X	X	X	X	R
Battleship	A	A	—	—	—	—	—	—	X
Carrier	X	X	—	—	—	—	—	—	X
Transport	X	X	D	D	D	D	D	D	X
Submarine	X	X	X	X	—	—	—	—	X
Industry		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

X - Prohibited

D - Defend only

S - Strategic Bombing Raid only

R - Only if Advanced Rockets have been developed

A - Amphibious support only



# THE COMPUTER GAMER

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Battle of Antietam, by Robbie Robberson .....	43
Under Fire, by Tom Dworschak .....	46
Battalion Commander .....	48
War On The Ice, by Eric Guy .....	48
Rescue Raiders, by Robbie Robberson .....	49
Editor .....	Robbie Robberson
c/o P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808	
Contributing Editor .....	Tom Dworschak

## Bloody September BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

by: Robbie Robberson

**Published by:** Strategic Simulations, Inc.

**Designer:** Chuck Kroegel

**Developers:** Chuck Kroegel and David Landrey

**Price:** \$59.95

**Complexity Level:** Medium/High

**Rules Clarity:** Good

**Graphics Quality:** Good

For some reason or another, the American Civil War has been a topic practically ignored by the software industry. Aside from GDW's *Chickamauga* and SSI's *Road to Gettysburg*, there hadn't been any computer simulations that took advantage of the many battles that were



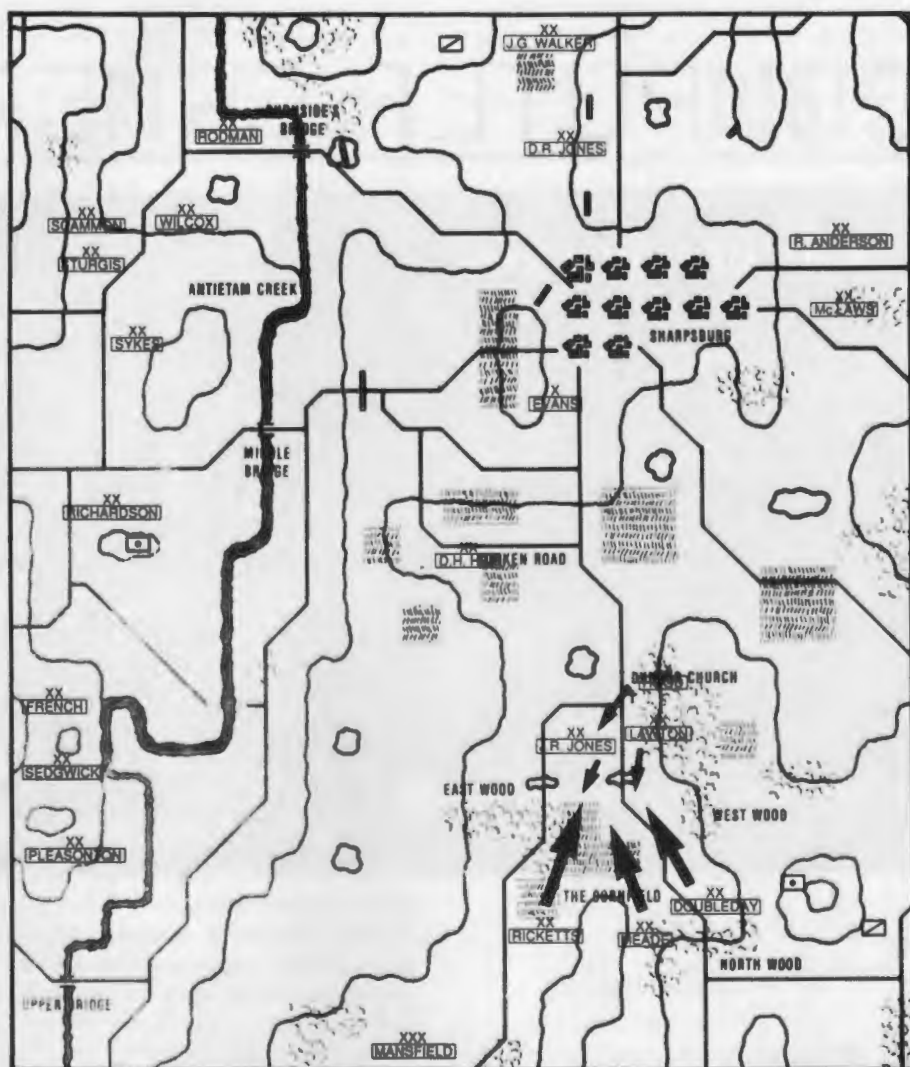
fought in that war. SSI's newest Civil War entry, *Battle of Antietam*, however looks as though as this situation is being quickly remedied. And in good

time, I might add.

While *Road to Gettysburg* really dealt with a strategic overview of that particular battle, *BOA* is a simulation of the Sharpsburg battle at the tactical level. The basic unit is the "demi-brigade" (two to three regiments) representing anywhere from 100 to 1200 men, while artillery is grouped into 2-4 batteries of 10 to 30 guns. With a scale of 200 yards to the hex, this game can be compared with many of the traditional Civil War boardgames that have tactical systems.

The first nice thing about this game is there are really three games in one. For those who have never had experience with this type of game, a "beginner's" game is available. Units are represented by icons, so that the artillery, cavalry and infantry units can be readily recognized. The intermediate and advanced games use rectangular shapes which tend to lend a more realistic view of the battlefield as you form your 'demi-brigades' into line formation. You can't tell by looking at them however whether it's infantry or cavalry; information on the unit's makeup, along with its status is relayed at the bottom of the screen.

The basic game uses a simple



HISTORICAL SITUATION MAP

ATTACK OF HOOKER'S CORPS  
6:00 AM to 7:30 AM

defensive/offensive movement and fire phases with simple rally and rout rules. The intermediate game refines the system by including ammunition depletion/replenishment, column and line formations, forced marches and fortifications. The advanced game adds a command control phase and leaders to realistically portray the problems of trying to keep an army, or a corps or a division for that matter, together as a cohesive unit. If a division's brigades get too far from headquarters, it will receive no orders until it is within distance of the commanding officer.

Despite the size and scope of the game (approximately 200 units), there is no problem keeping track of what has moved/fired and what hasn't. A 'next'

function will move to each unit on the board, so there isn't any chance of skipping over units in the 'fog of war'. The status report at the bottom also includes the unit's morale, fatigue factor, and current divisional or corps officer.

The screen map has done away with the hex grid, and from what I can determine, the game has seemed to throw away the grid as well. Movement can be in eight different directions (the return of the square!). It doesn't effect the play of the game to any great degree, and lends a more realistic view to the player. The fields, trees, and streams as used give you the 'you-are-there' feeling instead of those silly hexes we've all seen with a single tree in it that is

supposed to represent a forest hex.

There are two minor drawbacks. The first is that the game is a long one. This is probably the first computer game that takes as long to finish as the historical battle did - eleven hours worth. Each turn can take up to an hour to complete, depending on the circumstances, since there two rounds of movement and fire for each side on each turn. It is not a game you can play at one sitting (thank goodness for the 'save' utility). However, if you decide to quit early, the computer will give an up-to-the-date casualty score to let you know how well you were doing. No partial scenarios are offered, which would be difficult for a battle that lasted only a day.

The second drawback is the subject of the game itself. Antietam was a battle that should have never happened. For those not familiar with the scenario, the Army of the Potomac, led by the cautious General McClellan, had cornered Lee's outnumbered Army of Virginia in a bend of the Potomac river. Under ordinary circumstances, Lee would have merely run away, but knowing that McClellan was the type of general to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, he stood his ground. What followed was a battle of ironies, mistakes, and pure slaughter. McClellan, the conservative, never committed his entire force, and with assistance by the bumbling Burnside, managed to lose this one as well. In order to simulate this lack of effort of McClellan, the designer had to instigate a set of activation rules which simply allow the Union commander to move only a few divisions per turn. The rest of the army must sit idle. There is an option to do away with this limitation, but then the game becomes terribly unbalanced in favor of the Union. It would have been much better if SSI had chosen another battle to introduce this new system, which is excellent. There were many battles in the Civil War that had a better balance of sides and command decision than Antietam. (At the time this article was going to press SSI announced that Gettysburg was the next battle to be simulated in this system).

One more pleasing note is that unlike other games in the past, you can play either side in solitaire mode. This allows a player to see both sides of the battle and get an excellent value out of the game. SSI is encouraged to keep this trend up as well.

# UNDER FIRE! TACTICAL WWII COMBAT

**From:** The Avalon Hill Game Company

**Designed by:** Ralph E. Bosson

**Price:** \$60.00

**Contents:** —One twenty page rulebook

—One twelve page Mapmaker Appendix/Designer's Notes/Technical Specifications

—Two 5¼" floppy disks (copy protected)

**Complexity level:** High

**Rules Clarity:** Excellent

Apple version reviewed; 64K required; joystick optional

No other versions currently available

by Tom Dworschak

In **Under Fire!**, The Avalon Hill Game Company has opted for a small scale in its simulation of tactical World War II combat. Units portray individual vehicles and ten-man infantry squads, while players can set the scale to between 12 and 72 meters per square depending upon the type of battle to be fought. Russian, German, and American forces are all provided, thereby permitting a US-Soviet battle. Perhaps because **Under Fire!** is billed as a recreation of "World War II infantry combat", a total of only twelve different types of armored fighting vehicles are included with **Under Fire!**, and among the absentees are the Tiger, Jumbo Sherman, and T-34/85. The availability of expansion disks at additional charge from Avalon Hill offers the promise of more vehicles.

There are no pure historical scenarios in **Under Fire!**; instead, players opt between a Pre-Set and a Design-Your-Own scenario. In the Pre-Set variation, players select one of the three pre-made fictional maps representing urban, congested rural, and open rural terrain, and then decide to fight an assault, breakthrough/delay, or meeting engagement. The Design-Your-Own variation allows each player to build his own force and then wage battle on a map constructed from scratch by the players. These constructed maps may be saved on a disk and later reused.

Regardless of which type of scenario



is played, the contestants are afforded considerable latitude in tailoring **Under Fire!** to suit personal preferences. Besides selecting a human or computer opponent and a handicap level, players can elect to dispense with ammunition supply rules as well as pick the season of the year for the battle. Players also choose between two forms of combat control, one unlimited and one which restricts a player's commands over non-vehicles to those formations within 100 meters of the leader unit. During the course of the game, players may alternate the display between a tactical view and an overall strategic view, the latter of which lets contestants literally see the important "big picture".

Because the battles portrayed are platoon-sized, **Under Fire!** provides a

large amount of detail. Formations are ranked as Green Seasoned, or Crack, with corresponding effects upon firepower and morale. Smoke grenades, satchel charges, paratroopers, individually named leaders, damaged vehicles, and two-story buildings are a few of the items which are included; the small scale also permits beautiful graphics complete with multi-hex structures and properly aligned tanks. Unit density is also low, with a maximum of nine pieces per side in the pre-set scenarios rising to a total of 32 for both sides in the Design-Your-Own scenario.

The number of units in play is best kept small, for few things transpire in **Under Fire!** without explicit orders from the players. If a unit's objective is

several moves away, only that portion of the distance which can be covered that turn may be plotted at a single time; as a result, each leg of the advance must be attended to at the start of each turn. Moreover, every time a unit fires, which may occur as often as six times a turn, the player must manually move the firing cross from the firing unit to its target. Even though most units don't fire every turn, this cross placement is somewhat tedious on those occasions when you're repeating the same fire

several turns in a row.

**Under Fire!** plays smoothly and realistically, and the only complaint I have concerns victory conditions. Specifically, there really aren't any. The rules state that "(d)etermining who won and who lost is a subjective task saved for the greater glory of the argument before and after the game." As a consequence, at the conclusion of a scenario the computer will show the players the location of all friendly and enemy units as well as inform the

players of the number of men each side had to begin with, the number of men each side lost in the course of the battle, and the number of men each side had in the objective area at the battle's end. Armed with this information, the players are left to hash out for themselves who was the victor. I feel that this amorphous conclusion detracts from the game, but nevertheless **Under Fire!** is a realistic and entertaining depiction of tactical World War II combat.

# **East Goes West** **BATTLEGROUP**

*Tactical Combat on the Western Front, 1943-45*

by Tom Dworschak



**BattleGroup**, SSI's sequel to its acclaimed Eastern Front armored tactical game **Kampfgruppe**, moves players to France and North Africa and pits the forces of the United States and Great Britain against the Wehrmacht.

Units depicting five-vehicle armored platoons and thirty-man infantry platoons engage in combat over a battlefield measuring 200 yards per square. A total of 27 Allied and 20 German armored vehicles are provided,

and each is rated for speed, silhouette, year of availability, number of machine guns, front and side armor thickness, and range, accuracy, penetration, and shell size of the main gun. Towed guns, off-map artillery, mortars, head-

**From:** Strategic Simulations, Inc.

**Designed by:** Gary Grigsby

**Developed by:** Joel Billings

**Price:** \$59.95

**Contents:** —One twenty page rulebook

—One Unit Specifications Sheet

—One 5¼" floppy disk (copy protected)

**Complexity level:** High

**Rules Clarity:** Excellent

**Graphics Quality:** Good

Apple version reviewed; 48K required

Commodore version currently available; Atari version due out Summer 1986



Because the basic game system has remained essentially unchanged, anyone familiar with either of **BattleGroup**'s predecessors will be able to get into a battle as soon as the disk boots. However, **BattleGroup** does differ from both **Kampfgruppe** and **Mech Brigade** in several key respects. The most significant modification is the addition of morale rules which now compel units to check for rout whenever losses are suffered; formations which panic disregard all commands and flee until rallied. Other new provisions prohibit stacking more than two units in a square and permit armored vehicles and infantry to ford rivers.



quarters units, infantry, and infantry support weapons are also included. The computer can play either side, and adjusting the handicap level can compensate for unequal opponents. **BattleGroup** need never grow stale: Besides the four historical scenarios, players may elect to fight a hypothetical assault, pursuit, or meeting engagement with forces of their own choosing on a computer-generated but player-modified map. Victory points are earned by destroying enemy forces and, in certain scenarios, overrunning a designated objective area.

Players give maneuver and firing instructions to their forces at the beginning of each two-minute turn; simultaneous movement followed by sequential combat is then conducted in the four thirty-second pulses of each turn. What makes **BattleGroup** so easy to play is the game system, which allows players to give orders to units, or groups of units, and these orders often last for several turns. For example, a formation can be assigned a maximum gun range and be ordered to advance towards one or two objectives. The units will then proceed to their destinations, halting only if an enemy is spotted within the pre-set firing range; such a sighted enemy will be engaged automatically and continuously unless the player designates a new target. This combination of automatic activity and a manual override keeps players from having to constantly give orders to their units, and therefore allows players to control their forces with a minimum of effort.



Unfortunately, **BattleGroup** has not incorporated the provisions for firing smoke which were first seen in **Mech Brigade**, and tanks continue to be unable to obtain hull-down positions.

These minor flaws aside, **BattleGroup** represents a superb addition to one of the finest computer wargame series in existence. While the computer handles the drudgery of line-of-sight, ammunition supply, command control, and hit probabilities, the contestants are free to concentrate on maneuvering their forces, targeting enemy units, calling in artillery fire, and the other aspects of command. And perhaps best of all, the streamlined game system makes it easy for players to intelligently control upwards of a hundred units. All in all, **BattleGroup** would make a fine addition to anyone's computer wargame collection.



# MODERN WARFARE BATTALION COMMANDER

**From:** Strategic Simulations, Inc.  
**Designed by:** David Hille  
**Developed by:** Joel Billings, Chuck Kroegel

**Price:** \$39.95

**Contents:** —One twenty page rulebook

—One 5¼" floppy disk (copy protected)

**Complexity level:** Introductory

**Rules Clarity:** Excellent

**Graphick Quality:** Excellent

Apple version reviewed; 64K required; joystick optional

Atari, Commodore version available

It's been said that if someone designs a game which is simple to play, only a simpleton will want to play it. SSI's **Battalion Commander**, a computer game of modern tactical warfare, is an introductory level simulation which belies the notion that a game which is easy to learn and play is necessarily unrealistic.

In **Battalion Commander**, the player selects either a Pursuit and Exploitation, Meeting Engagement, Novice, Attack, or Defense scenario involving a combination of U.S., Soviet, and Chinese forces. Competition is strictly you against the computer—no two-player versions are provided. Play balance can be altered by amending the strength of either your or the computer's forces; automatic alterations occur depending upon the nationalities involved. These hypothetical contests are fought over one of forty pre-made battlefields, also selected by the player, which are composed of various mixes of cities, rivers, roads, woods, hills, and rough areas. All of these battlefields consist of 100 meter squares measuring in total 6.4 kilometers east to west and 12.9 kilometers north to south, although in Pursuit and Exploitation scenarios the battle will eventually move an additional 6.4 kilometers to the north. In

all scenarios, victory points are earned by destroying enemy units, and in the Attack scenario points are garnered for overrunning a designated objective area.

As the game's title suggests, you become the commander of a battalion in all game versions except the Attack scenario, where you personally are still in charge of a single battalion but are assisted by a second, computer-controlled battalion. Most units are platoons, so in general a player controls some two dozen units. There are no structured turns, since **Battalion Commander** is a real-time simulation in which activity occurs as time passes; fortunately, pressing the space bar freezes the game and allows the player to survey the battlefield for as long as desired.

Despite its introductory nature, a large amount of detail has been elegantly incorporated into **Battalion Commander**. Upon command, the computer can display the number of men and vehicles in each unit, its remaining fuel and ammunition by type, and a composite fatigue/morale rating termed condition. Some units are given amphibious capabilities, and the effects of facing on both visibility and combat and the presence of minefields are simulated. In addition, constructing and demolishing bridges, mounting and dismounting infantry, digging in units, resupplying units, firing smoke, and calling in artillery fire are only a few of the activities players may direct.

Of course, **Battalion Commander** is not **Mech Brigade**. Instead of the new American Bradley APC and Abrams MBT, or the Russian T-80, contestants are limited to the obsolescent M-113, M-60A1, and T-62. The game system in **Battalion Commander** is also somewhat more cumbersome than that in **Mech Brigade**. Specifically, the only way you can first find and then issue orders to your formations is to manually move the cursor on top of the desired unit, a procedure which results in a lot of time

wasted scrolling all over the battlefield to give commands to all your forces.

These shortcomings may disappoint some veteran computer wargamers, but **Battalion Commander** is directed toward novice, and in this endeavor it is quite successful. First and foremost, the game is simple to learn and easy to play, thanks in large part to a mere six succinct pages of actual rules. Nearly two-thirds of the rules booklet is devoted to information on the weapons and forces portrayed in the game, supplying the player with all the information he needs to intelligently control the forces he will be commanding. For a person with a less than fervent interest in all of the complexities of modern tactical warfare, **Battalion Commander** admirably fits the bill.

Tom Dworschak

## War on the Ice NORWAY 1985

by Eric Guy

**Published by:** Strategic Simulations, Inc.

**Designed by:** Roger Keating

**Developed by:** Phillip Bradley

**Price:** \$34.95

**Complexity Level:** Low

**Rules Clarity:** Good

**Graphics Quality:** Good

Reviewed for the Apple II series, available for C-64

This is the fourth game in Roger Keating's "**When Superpowers Collide**" series. While the three previous games, **Germany 1985**, **RDF 1985**, and **Baltic 1985**, dealt with more realistic topics of a massive Soviet invasion in the well-known hot spots of the world, a Soviet takeover of Norway would seem only to be a useless simulation.

**Norway 85** is based on a skeletal Superpowers system. The Soviet player has most of his original complement of forces, except for tank, airborne and engineer units. The NATO player must get by with ski units and mortar units. Although these units don't seem to have the punch to take on the armored personnel units, they more than make



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## FEEDBACK VIP #5

### How to use the Feedback card

Once you're done reading this issue, please read the Feedback questions and answer them by putting the answer-numbers on the card in the spaces which correspond to the question number. Check the insert for the reply card. Please answer all the questions. Your answers are very valuable in helping to improve VIP.

### The Numbers Answered

When you answer questions, 0= not applicable. A 1 is the worst rating, a 9 the best, and a 5 is an average rating. Any other number is a shading of approval or disapproval. However, please check the question section title for any special rating notes.

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1. Guest Editorial
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8. Counter Mix
9. Miniatures
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Please rate the following game formats:

11. A game with 4 pages of rules, 100 counters, 8 1/2" x 11" map
12. A game with 8 pages, 200 counters, 11" x 17" map.

Should game counters be printed on:

13. the pages of the magazine?
14. cardstock counters?
15. die-cut counters?

Considering your responses to question 11-15, what cover price would you think fair to charge for VIP?

16. Keep it the same.
17. Raise it to \$4.50
18. Raise it to \$5.50
19. Raise it to \$6.50
20. Raise it to \$7.50 or more if needed.

Please rate the following magazine formats:

21. An increase in the size of VIP, up to +80 pages.
22. Going monthly (12 vs 6 issues per year)
23. Adding more Fantasy material.
24. Adding more Space Gamer material.
24. Adding more Space Gamer material.
25. Adding more Wargame material.
26. What level of game complexity do you prefer? Rate this preference on a 1-9 scale, using higher numbers to show more complexity.

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28. Your sex: 1=Male; 2=Female.
29. Education: 1=11 yrs or less; 2=12 years; 3=13-15 yrs; 4=13-15 and still in school; 5=16 yrs; 6=17 yrs or more. Hopefully you can read this.
30. How long have you been playing games? 0=less than 1 yr; 1=1 yrs; 2=2 yrs....8=8yrs; 9=9 yrs or more.
31. What is the average number of hours you spend a month gaming? 1=1; 2=2-5 hrs; 3=6-9 hrs; 4=10-15 hrs; 5=16-20 hrs; 6=21-25 hrs; 7=26-30 hrs; 8=31-40; 9=40 or more.
32. How many games of all types (from all publishers) do you own? 1=less than 5; 2=6-10; 3=11-20; 4=21-30; 5=31-40; 6=41-50; 7=51-60; 8=61-70; 9=71 or more.

Answer the following (Y) or (N) or no opinion (X).

33. Are you a current subscriber?
34. Would you subscribe/resubscribe based on this issue?
35. Was this issue better than the last?

up for this by their speed and numbers.

The game centers around more of a guerilla style of warfare since the Soviet Union has already hypothetically conquered Norway. As such, the map portrays a sample of Norwegian territory in which the NATO units prowl. The object is to sieze strategic areas like villages and towns or airfields to deny the Soviet player air support. Occupation of these vital hexes gives victory points to either side, which makes it mandatory to capture with a force that can survive the eventual counterattack.

Movement is simple hex-to-hex with rigid zones-of-control. While **Germany 1985** employed a number of movement modes, in **Norway 1985** the terrain opens up the options of mechanized units, especially with the ability to cross frozen rivers (no need for bridging). In order to take advantage of the snow covered terrain, units are allowed the option of hidden movement, which forces both sides to do reconaissance before committing their army to a massive attack.

Three levels of play are offered with solitaire play for either the NATO or Soviet side. The computer does a good job at the higher levels; don't be surprised to lose the first few games. The computer plays with an intensity I've rarely encountered before without the usual handicaps employed such as extra movement or reinforced units. You can only sit back and admire as a sudden rush of ski units come swarming over the town that you had thought was previously safe.

The game is kept simple enough without having to worry about calculating every odd and factor. Players will find that they have to weigh when to attack and counter-attack; too soon and they will fritter away their forces; too late and they will run out of time since the game ends on random game turn (14, 15 or 16). It also demands that the player maneuver his forces and keep them hidden until they can be used, and that he keep a mobile reserve ready to exploit or to shore up the defences of a threatened victory point hex.

When a game is able to employ the basics of strategy and tactics as described above, in my book, that game

is a winner. **Norway 1985** may not have a lot of chrome and fancy tricks, but it

does the job a providing excitement and playability.



## ARCADE COMBINED ARMS RESCUE RAIDERS

by Robbie Robberson

**Published by:** Sir-Tech Software, Inc.

**Developer & Designer:** Greg Hale & Arthur Britto

**Price:** \$34.95

**Complexity level:** Low

**Rules Clarity:** Good

**Graphics quality:** Good

For Apple II

What if there was an evil conglomerate that had discovered a way to go back into time and defeat the D-Day invasion of Normandy? Or for that matter what if they were to defeat the Allies completely in France? That's the situation you're faced with in *Rescue Raiders*, an arcade simulation, where you take a helicopter back in time to defeat those mad scientists.

It would be a hard task doing it alone, but fortunately you have your own time device which will allow you to transport your own ground support forces to the scene. Your object is to destroy the time machine which is protected by an array of pillboxes, barrage balloons, anti-tank and anti-air

guns. At the same time the enemy is spitting out his own ground troops which you must nullify. Your chopper is equipped with a machine gun and two 'smart missiles' but these won't do the job against the time machine. Its bane is the electronics vehicle which must enter the time machine site to destroy it. Up to that point the vehicle is vulnerable to anything and everything. If and when you make it to the end, the machine blows up, and you are rewarded with a congratulatory message and a brief history lesson on the particular French city you have saved.

Keeping aloft in the air with your chopper (which handles like the one in Broderbund's *Choplifter*) earns you credits to keep buying those land forces or extra choppers to replace the ones you lose. No free spares here. You have to earn and pay for them.

Most players will find this game a real challenge. I haven't been able to progress beyond the fourth level. It will take persistence and an insight to the particular combination of combined arms that will penetrate the defences. If you need a real challenge for your joystick, then pick up a copy of *Rescue Raiders*.

You and Your Micro Computer, a Match to Set

# Europe Ablaze

by Alan Emrich

Sure, I'd read the reviews for **Carriers at War**, the smash computer wargame release from last year by these same guys at Strategic Studies Group, but I've never played it. Somehow, the subject just didn't hold interest for me. Ah, but the air war over Europe from 1940 to 1945 was a different matter! Besides, the review copy arrived on my desk just before lunch so I popped in the office Apple computer on my break. I ended up stretching my break until it broke and staying up half the night with my new copy of **Europe Ablaze**. For people like me, this game needs a warning label that addiction can cost you your job and be hazardous to your health.

I'm not a veteran computer wargamer, either. I've knocked around with over a dozen different computer wargames (compared to scores upon scores of board wargames), but I've seen enough to know what I like. **Europe Ablaze** is a winner, particularly for the strategist who doesn't like to "get his hands dirty" moving every little unit. "War at the top" is so well represented that it makes the game "fly" with an open cockpit and a breath of fresh air.

Packaged in a 9" x 11" sturdy folder, **Europe Ablaze** includes the sacred disk, large double-sided map card, menu and information cards, 20 pages of the most user friendly rules imaginable, plus the ultimate "free gift" — a design manual for your varying of the game itself! All is presented so that the computer does all the work, while the wargamer enjoys the game. Someone has got the right philosophy at SSG!

The introduction and tutorial get you so rapidly into the game as Herman Goering ordering the Luftwaffe to attack Britain in 1940 that the Blitz starts before you can say "Where's London?" This is where the game becomes love at first sight for the wargamer discovering computer wargaming. I was the C-in-C issuing general orders to my Luftflotte commanders! They (as represented by crackerjack artificial intelligence programming) took care of the details

for planning and timing each strike, scrambling fighters and reading radar reports. Me? I just sat back and watched the action, waiting for the end of the day reports on estimated damage to enemy facilities and enemy aircraft losses (I later found out that my boys had a penchant for large exaggerations!). Armed with this new information at the end of the day, I issued new orders, prayed for better weather, and sent 'em flying again.

This is not to say that **Europe Ablaze** is only brilliantly programmed for those of us who like to command safely from the rear. Instead, you can command your own Luftflotte or Air Command Group. On this level your C-in-C sets target priorities and turns you loose to study the map, set your objectives, plan and time your raids and fighter cover, etc. This will test your organizational and administrative abilities to the limits of the great strategist you are.

**Europe Ablaze** offers you three scenarios: The Battle of Britain, Bomber Command Strikes by Night (July 1943), and The 8th Air Force Turns the Tide (February 1944). If that weren't enough, the Design Manual had me running through the Battle of Britain scenario programming in my own squadrons of

German heavy bombers! Just like that I created a variant to the game! The manual even included an entire new game (map and all) for me to program in, bit by bit, for an Italian based bomber campaign game. Surely this game must be heaven for the strategist who just loves to tinker with a game.

The programming affords the gamer about the widest variety of options I've ever seen. You can have persons play on either side, and have separate people for the C-in-C as well as each Air Group Commander. Alternately, the computer will play any (including all) other positions, which is a great way to playtest the balance on anything you create by "setting and forgetting" the game, leaving it to run by itself while you check the score at the end. Great stuff!

The only bad thing I can say about it is that the subject is not, perhaps, as thrilling as the brilliant programming that the game deserves. A certain amount of excitement is not thereon a moment by moment basis (which the so called "real time" games excell in). That aside, I found **Europe Ablaze** to be absorbing, complete and user friendly beyond my dreams. This is the stuff that new industry standards are made of.





# FIRST CLASS GAMING

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms of Envolvement (Editorial), by Nolan Bond .....	51
Stardragon .....	52
Alamzaza .....	52
Editor .....	Nolan Bond
c/o 2925 Fair Meadows Drive, Garland, TX 75042	

## TERMS OF ENVOLVEMENT

by Nolan Bond

I just got through with participating in the DallasCon gaming convention where - as an experiment - I ran a seminar on PBM. On the panel with me were Rick Loomis (the Buffalo, himself) and Charles Christy (of Adventures Design Group). In the seminar, we discussed everything from an explanation of PBM itself to the future of PBM. Since the convention was primarily for board, miniature, and RPG gamers, I was encouraged by having over 25 people attend. This is not bad considering that the convention drew a crowd of around 700. What was even better was that seven of those attending had never played a PBM game! If our segment of the hobby is to grow, it will take more new gamers rather than more new games.

One of the topics was what was needed for PBM to become "big time". Some of the ideas raised and discussed were having our own convention and marketing boxed set-ups through game and hobby shops to get wider distribution. Also discussed were the problems of running a PBM company and surviving as well as problems faced by GMs with gamers and vice versa. Let's talk about the most important of these topics - how to help our hobby grow.

When all the dust had settled at the seminar, the general consensus of opinion was that PBM's biggest problem was that it tended to be - by its very nature - isolated and even incestuous. Having its own convention - assuming such an event could even happen - would only compound the problem. Face it! We are not a high-profile group such as RPG people. What we need to do is work within the existing framework of GAMA (Game Manufacturer's Association) and let our influence be felt. Attend events such as Origins (in LA this year) and attend as many PBM-related events there are as possible. If you have published articles or designed games, join GAMA and become a voting member. Even if you can't join GAMA, at least take the time to vote for the PBM award which it gives at each Origins. Didn't know that there was one? Shame on you! Contact Rick Loomis about the PBMA (Play-By-Mail Association). While I am not sure that I am all for this group, at least they are trying to do something for the hobby. In short, as long as we are content to remain in the shadows and quietly submit our turns, PBM will always appear to be "small potatoes" and never have any clout. The best example would be RPG when they first

came on the scene. While D&D was extremely popular, it took joining and participating in GAMA to make them visible to the general gaming world. Look at them now and see what PBM could be with just a little time and effort from each of us. I, for one, think that the results would justify our involvement. Don't you?

## HELP WANTED

I am looking for people who want to write reviews or articles about PBM for VIP.

Haven't written for publication before? I don't care. Don't know anything about form and style? I don't care. If you are playing a PBM game and think that it deserves publicity (good or bad), get with me NOW! I am also looking for reviewers for several review positions. All you have to do is write Nolan Bond, 2925 Fair Meadow Dr., Garland, TX 75042 and say, "Use me." I promise to respect you in the morning.

# STARDRAGON

P.O. Box 201  
Chincoteague, VA 23336  
Computer-moderated game  
\$7.50 (Set-up with rules and first three turns.)  
\$2.00 (Turn fee)  
**Compuserve charges:** \$.75 per turn  
Started 1983

As the ads say, you can "Explore near star systems. Exploit them in your bid for power! Enslave and exterminate the opposition!! Become the new STARDRAGON!!!" certainly, this is not a quiet game of thrust and parry, but more of a death duel for the players.

Each game starts out with eight players and 200 star systems. Victory depends on the type of "Dragonlord" the player decides to be. Warriorlords are out to conquer systems, they receive points for holding systems and having fleets. Anarchists are even more nasty, since they gain points by toasting or capturing systems, not owning. Draconianlords are religious fanatics whose mission is to spread "the tidings". The "Cult of the Dragon", naturally. Players must attempt to convert systems to their ways. Naturally, the other players may attempt to "deprogram" these affected systems. Finally, there are Scholarlords who collect artifacts, whether by trade or by theft or by conquest.

Each player starts out with an identical system with 30 Tech, 50 Pop, 30R's and 5 RP's (that's Technology, Population, Resources and Resource Production). Basically, one Pop, Tech and R are needed to build a ship. RP's give you the amount of R's produced for use in the next turn. You can use Tech to increase your Tech at the rate of six to get one. Resource Production increase on their own at the rate of one every five turns or so.

The systems in the game connect via jumps to other systems. There can be as many as four connections, or only one, or even a dreaded "one-way" jump. No going back! Obviously, keeping an accurate map will be of great benefit

here. Fleets may travel to a max of four systems in one turn, but with 200 systems, it still takes a while to go everywhere.

As is common with these types of games, you should try to grab all the territory you can quickly. Collect all the artifacts, neutral fleets and systems you can to gain clout. By doing so, a player can create a large boundary that other players may not dare to cross until they can solidify their own area. After all, they may not want to challenge others too fast. Once you have expanded as far

as you can, then you can clear up those backwater areas while bluffing off your opponents. You can even appear magnanimous and "barter" some of the border areas away for security, (if you trust them!).

This game has been around for a while and is recommended to those players for whom action is desired over talking and negotiation. You can do both of these in **Stardragon**, but the game does incline towards combat. Write the company for more information at the address noted.

## Notes on PBM Companies

### ALAMZAZA

#### PEGASUS PRODUCTIONS

P.O. Box 70636  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307

Pegasus Productions is expanding their game of **Alamaze**, a computer moderated heroic fantasy game for fifteen players. This game includes diplomacy, magic, politics, military operations, spying and economics. Over ninety actions are available for all players to choose from, yet each kingdom has several options unique to it alone. Which ties in nicely to the fact that victory conditions are tailored for each kingdom, some games even being set up to allow three-player victories to occur. Games run forty turns, so players must move quickly and efficiently to

take advantage of their fellow gamers.

Recent additions to the game include more High Priestess orders, blackmail (a popular passtime), bribes, combat improvements, as well as status points. Players should remember, forty turns is not a lot to deal with, so do not attempt to "try out" all the order types that are available. Define your plans, make allies where possible, but be efficient. Don't deviate from your path to victory to tinker within the game.

Set-up costs are \$12.00, which includes two rules books, a color map, any items you might need to operate your portion of the game, and includes two free turns. Each turn after the first two cost \$4.00 each, which includes all actions your kingdom can make. No hidden charges. Write to the above address for more details.



# The Skirmish Line

Reviews of Products for the War, Miniatures, and Adventure Gamer  
by Robert L. Trimble

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Croissant...A Name To Remember by Pete Flahive .....	53
The Rolls Royce of Metal Miniatures by Lawrence Person .....	54
Editor .....	Norm Flam
335 N. Golden Mall, Burbank, CA 91502	
Contributing Editor .....	Robert L. Trimble

## CROISSANT.. A Name To Remember

by Pete Flahive

This reviewer receives many figures a month which are considered for reviewing. New lines come and go. Many are good, and many aren't worth reviewing and are never seen again. Every now and then a manufacturer comes along with a line of figures that is outstanding and in all ways exceptional. Croissant Miniatures 285th Scale WWII aircraft fit into this category. They are extremely well researched and exceptionally sculpted.

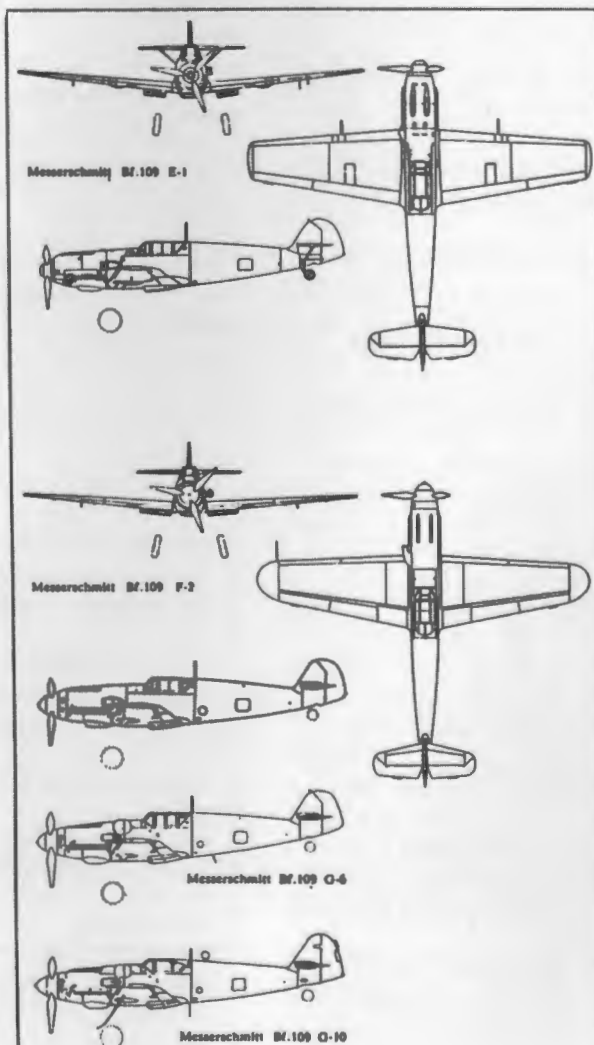
These one piece figures are designed to be used as gaming pieces, therefore have no small parts to break off easily. They are packaged individually in reusable plastic boxes with cut out plastic propeller discs for those who just have to glue something to their figures.

Chris Croissant, the creator of the pieces, was by profession, a jewelry designer, and is known in that industry for some of his unique pieces. I say "was" because he has quit the jewelry business to devote full time to his miniatures. The demand has been so great that he can no longer do them as a part time business.

As of this writing, Croissant Miniatures has 51 different WWII planes, but six more have been completed and are presently being produced. These should be ready before

Christmas.

If your field is WWII, or if you just like airplanes, or if you just want some excellently sculpted figures, Croissant Miniatures airplanes are for you.



# THE ROLLS-ROYCE OF METAL MINIATURES

by Lawrence Person

When it comes to quality and consistency in manufactured goods, a handful of names stick out. There's Roll's-Royce in cars, Rolex in watches...

And Ral Partha in metal miniatures.

Back when the rest of the industry was casting misshapen hunks of lead that bore faces that only a mother could love, Ral Partha was already turning the craft of sculpting metal miniatures into an art form. Over the years, the standards of the rest of the industry rose, and other companies (most notably the much berieved Martian Metals, and, more recently, Citadel Miniatures, among others) have produced miniatures almost as good as Ral Partha's. But only Ral Partha produces a line of miniatures that are, year in and year out, constantly and consistantly excellent. The ongoing line of **Ral Partha Imports** are a case in point.

Perhaps the best features of this latest batch of miniatures (besides their obvious fine quality) is their personality, and the **humor** with which they were cast. A case in point is the amusing and well sculpted **Spaced Out Druid** (WF4). This figure is literally loaded with personality! Carrying a flower and holding out two fingers in a "peace" sign, this miniature is probably the most humorous figure in my entire collection. The two shrunken heads on his belt also provide a scathing counterpoint to his befuddled, bewildered, bearded face. Another figure chock full of personality is the **Dungeon Torturess w/Whip** (FS6). This rather kinky lead casting is just the sort of thing that would send **The 700 Club** into frothing fits of apoplexy. A hooded, bare breasted female stands holding a long whip. The sculptor obviously took loving care with every curve and point on this figure!

Moving to some less controversial figures, we find Ral Partha's fine

collection of lizard men. The two I have (**Lizard Lord w/Spear & Shield** (FF78) and **Reptile Warrior with sword** (FF31)) are both excellent castings. The detail taken with the texturing of the skin is, for the most part well crafted and finely detailed. these are the best Lizard Man figures I have seen anywhere. Another fine non-human casting is the **Orc Bodyguard w/Mace of Thunder** (FT015) miniature. This figure is a masterpiece, from teh ferocious expression on its face all the way down to the detailed texturing done on its fur cloak. Another feature of this line is ethnic varity of the figures presented. No longer must all of your dungeon delvers be Anglo-Saxon! Their **Princess Dar: Sorceress of Light** (FF95) miniature is a well casted wizardress of african descent. The fur trimmings and lacing on her outfit is another example of Ral Partha's attention to detail.

Even the least exciting figure of the line (the tall **Barbarian fighter w/Two Handed Sword** (FTF4) for example) shows this same attention to detail in such areas as the leather wrapped sword hilt, or the individual strands of hair. Another interesting figure is **The**

**Cimmerian** (FTF7), a miniature which is obviously patterned after Conan. As with the previous figure, the musculature of the arms, legs, and chest is clearly defined.

In fact, the quality of this line is such that one is hard pressed to find fault with the work without quibbling. The only significant problem I had with any of the figures was that the detailed texturing of the lizard men was not present on their rather human chests. There was also a little flash on the lizard man figure with the sword. Even the very least of the figures I bought (**Wandering Minstrel** (FS16)) was a good, well sculpted figure, the only problem being its somewhat angular face. Other than those minor problems, these figures are virtually flawless.

As with anything, you pay more for the best. At \$1.25 each, these castings are at the upper end of the fantasy miniatures price scale for 25mm figures. However, it is money well invested. These are indeed the Rolls-Royce of metal miniatures.

Now, if only I could find time to paint them...

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# OBSERVATION POINT

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# PT 11

by Marion Bates

In 1981, I started writing for the late and lamented JOURNAL OF TWENTIETH CENTURY WAR-GAMING. This was my first forum in the hobby press and since, I have been fortunate enough to contribute to many publications with which we are all familiar. In that time, the bulk of the writing I have done has been reviews. I have discovered in my own reviewing and in reading others' reviews, that reviewers tend to assume or slip into certain personnae in their reviews.

A discussion of what constitutes a good review is probably in order. A review, regardless of whether it is a brief mention or an extended analysis should be, above all, informative. Useful basic information such as components, packaging, and price might be considered essential. From there we should find some description of mechanics, hopefully with a limited amount of editorializing. Sometimes in a short review it can be useful but one must be careful. And it is important that opinion be clearly identified as such. It is not good enough to merely describe a game's mechanics as "cumbersome." It should be demonstrated by describing these mechanics and stating perhaps that the reviewer found them so.

In the end though, such matters as playability and play value are matters of opinion. The reviewer should state these opinions but then back them up with information, facts. This is the way to a useful review.

I believe that in general, my colleagues and I tend to begin with a fairly positive attitude. After all, we like gaming and it would be silly to offer

to review a game we didn't expect to like at least a little. Unfortunately, after opening the box we find that a game does not live up to our expectations and we feel obligated to communicate that disappointment on to our readers. On the other hand, many of the games we review get good reviews and those are a pleasure to write.

As a writer, it is impossible to write without a point of view but sometimes these points of view can be less than useful in a review. Before discussing these, I would like to say that most reviewers fall into these errors at one time or another no matter how conscientious they are. It is our human nature to be fallible and perhaps if readers are familiar these fallibilities, they'll know what to look for.

One of the most dangerous, and — unfortunately — prevalent, reviewing personnae is that of **The Critic**. Now, instead of starting with a positive attitude, the Critic takes that attitude that no game is perfect and that he will find the flaws and report them to the unsuspecting reader.

One of the reasons for this approach is the quest for objectivity. Remember, a reviewer is already a gamer and was probably kindly disposed to the game in question or he wouldn't have accepted a copy for review (after all, nobody wants to have to play a game they don't expect to like.) Thus, to ensure objectivity one may become hypercritical.

The result of this is a review that dwells on whatever imperfections may exist in the game and gives insufficient attention to what is good about a game. I think we are all most interested in what

is good about a game, so the Critic does us a particular disservice by digging for and dwelling on the bad.

On the opposite pole is what I call **The Psychophant**. We have all read this reviewer's work. The game in question is flawless, imminently playable, and a virtual give-away at the price being asked. The quality of your life and your gaming will be impoverished if you don't buy this game.

Sure. Just remember that love is blind and that someone who writes a review like this has not got his eyes open. Occasionally these reviews are self-serving but all too often they are the product of simple infatuation. Sometimes a game is that much better than you expect. Unfortunately, there are also reviews written by playtesters and real psychophants that also fall into this category.

We are all familiar with the work of **The Cheap skate**. The game under review is, for one reason or another and without regard to anything that might be found to be good about it, overpriced. There is no reason for a sane person with a dollop of frugality in his nature to spend this much money for a game.

First of all, who's to say what a lot of money is? Is it better to spend \$10 for a game you will never play or \$50 for one that will give you immense and longstanding pleasure? And let's face it, we all have different budgets and different ideas about what we can afford.

So perhaps it is a matter of money spent for value received. Now at least part of the value of a game is the pure component cost incurred by the manufacturer. To this is added the manufacturer's markup, the distributor's markup, and the retailer's markup. Now if these markups remain fairly standard from one game to the next, I'm a little puzzled at where a great

rip-off would take place. Such a rip-off would be possible but I believe they are rare.

This leaves only the question of play value and this is not something that a reviewer is in a position to judge for someone else. For example, I read a mostly positive review on a game which ended with a statement implying that it was, nonetheless, overpriced. If the game is mostly a decent game and no one is making an unusual amount of profit on it, cost is a very personal and totally subjective issue. It probably doesn't belong in a review as a rule.

And let us not forget the reviewer that has been in the hobby for such a long time that he has become jaded. **The Groggnard** is not impressed by a game featuring any mechanics he has seen before or a complexity level that does not qualify as *mind boggling*.

Unfortunately, the Groggnard has become very prevalent due to that fact novices do not generally become reviewers because they're bloody novices. The result is a review by someone who can't relate to games for less experienced players and who is just too bored by convention. This, of course, is particularly damaging to the hobby as it means that games for beginners rarely get good reviews so that few manufacturers are emboldened to produce them. How is one to respond to a remark such as, "This is a nice simple game but who would ever want to play it?" As a result, we have less to offer new would-be gamers.

Last and undoubtedly least is **The Narcissist**. Unfortunately, many reviewers are writers and possess a certain infatuation with the English language. This can lead to one becoming so enraptured with the way something is being expressed that one loses sight of what is actually being communicated.

It does not please me that my best examples of this come from my own writing. In one review I thought I was very clever in creating a certain nickname for a well-known personality which was arguably libelous. I was fortunate on that occasion, in reference to a game I was reviewing, I brought the review to a clever conclusion which brought more criticism to the manufacturer than was called for. These remarks found their way into print and I will regret them forever, no matter how clever they may seem.

A reviewer must be careful to avoid inserting himself too much into a review. They should be primarily informative, not entertaining. While they certainly should be pleasant to read, content should not become subordinate to style.

The point of all this is that readers must approach reviews critically. Reviewers are subject to the same human foibles they are and this can result in a less than perfect, often less than useful, review. Reviews that are mostly negative or overly complimentary should be suspect. Also, after a while, you will notice that some reviewers tend to agree with you more than others. Keep track of these and pay more attention to them. There is a lot of useful information to be gleaned from game reviews and not a little entertainment. Enjoy it but chew thoroughly.

Any reviewers reading this column should have recognized themselves

once or twice while reading. Most of us could stand to clean up our act a little; a few could stand a major housecleaning.

**BY THE WAY:** It seems that in Australian Design Group's very nice *World in Flames* units must be drawn at random. At least one reviewer has complained that this requires over a hundred cups from which to draw. As solutions go, that one is very silly. Go down to your local office supply store and buy a bunch of small (2"x3" should be fine) coin envelopes. Write the unit types on each one and seal it with a paperclip. This will help solve your storage problems and will ease play considerably. It does use a lot of envelopes but they are cheap. It's probably wise to divide major nationalities into bigger envelopes which you can seal with a bigger paperclip. This solution will probably cost you two dollars or so for the envelopes and under 50¢ for a box of paperclips. Splurge.

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# UNDER COVER

A Selection of Previews and Reviews

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Continuing Mission, by Gary Smith & C. Stanley Lord .....	57
State Of The Art Vampires, by Lawrence Person .....	59
Editor .....	Gary E. Smith c/o P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808

## *The Continuing Mission* THREE STAR TREK NOVELS

Reviewed by: Gary Smith and C. Stanley Lord

### **Dwellers in the Crucible #25**

By Margaret Buanno  
Pocket Books, 1985  
309 pages, \$3.50

*Dwellers in the Crucible* is author Bonanno's first Star Trek effort. The basic plot has a good concept, with the Federation adopting a policy, taken from Vulcan culture, of sending the first born child of the leaders of the various Federation members to Vulcan to be held as "hostages", or honored guests. In doing so, the members are warranting peace among themselves, hence the "guests" are called the Warrantors of Peace.

Naturally, with such a tempting target, the Romulans and Klingons form an unholy alliance, kidnap the

Warrantors to extort a ransom, but really to cause civil war amongst the Federation members. Now, this all sounds like a good setup to allow our heroes the opportunity to use their cunning and wit to save the day amidst shrieking phasers and exploding photons, doesn't it? Sorry. This book was one of the more boring Trek novels I have ever read.

Setting aside the fact that an unmarked Romulan ship lands undetected on Vulcan (damn sensors again!) and kidnaps the VIP's (no guards even, and they're Warrantors yet!), the readers are expected to suspend their disbelief to accept this 22nd Century hostage crisis. Talk about headline following.

For the most part, the book goes on to study the "unusual" relationship that

starts to form between the female human and Vulcan representatives. Naturally, the Klingons are the guards, and as such, play the role of loutish, evil spacefaring molesters we know they aren't. The Enterprise and crew play only cameo roles to keep the plot moving, though we know that they will be in on the rescue. While this system of plotting works well, (see **Paws and Symbols**), it doesn't work well here. This plot is reduced at times to character development of the human and Vulcan Warrantors, and as such makes for a slow grind.

By the end of the novel, I was hoping that the cruel Klingons would actually kill these two in a blood orgy and end my suffering. If this book were a low budget movie, it would be titled *Star Trek: The Soap Opera*. This book is better than *Mindshadow*, mostly because the style of writing is superior. Would that the style of action were.

## Pawns and Symbols #26

by Majliss Laeson

Pocket Books, 1985

277 pages, \$3.50

The second book of the trilogy, and the best. Author Larson has wisely (here at least) chosen not to write a novel about the Enterprise and its adventures. Instead, we have a novel about Lt. Jean Czerny, a young woman sent into the Klingon Empire on an espionage mission (of sorts). This is her story, with our familiar cast acting as the underlying bass line to propel things along. Everyone comes together in the end to "solve" the various problems that have come up.

The good points here include a more compassionate view of the Klingons (with some very good social mores detailed), a strong sketch done of Kang, the central Klingon character, and a well scripted interplay between the various new characters. Sorry, no phaser battles, no stern chases at warp

## Mindshadow #27

by J. M. Dillard

Pocket Books, 1986

252 pages, \$3.50

This book, however, was written by someone with little wit and poor knowledge of the Star Trek mythos, but with a good working knowledge of Star Trek cliches.

Here we have a planet of simple farmers being ravaged by Romulan pirate ships. While Spock is planet-side investigating, he is mysteriously gravely injured, and may die! A brand new doctor on the Enterprise, Emma Saenz, assigned to treat him, is a Romulan agent. But she and Dr. McCoy fall in love! Of course, Capt. Kirk tumbles for her also, so jealousy raises its ugly head!! And, she is making Spock worse, but nobody notices!!! Won't any of our heroes see through this charade and save their best friend!?!

Worse, the Enterprise creates a force shield to surround the planet and keep out the pirate ships. Suddenly, the ships appear under the shield, ravaging and killing. Horrors, how did they

5, or any other pseudo-scientific/space warfare goop.

There are, alas, some not-so-good points. About 28 pages are devoted to an Enterprise/Chekhov encounter with a female Romulan from a disabled ship, said encounter having nothing to do with the main plot at all. In a similar vein, eight pages are spent informing us that Klingons cannot see the color red,

can see two colors in the ultraviolet range that humans can't. Overall, the action gets somewhat static, but only breaks free when another "chance encounter" pops up to rev up the plot.

All in all, **Pawns and Symbols** does break some new turf and shows that there are other characters worthy of novelization beyond the Big Three and the Supporting Four.



but penetrate the shield and not be picked up by ship's sensor even approaching the planet? It takes author Dillard 174 pages and two months to have our heroes deduce that maybe, just maybe the Romulans have a hidden base on the planet, see, and they sneak out now and again to pillage. Clever, these pirates. Not so clever, this author.

Not to spoil the fun, but Kirk and McCoy stay friends, discover what Emma is up to, get Spock back good as new (whew!) and by way of shuttling

Federation ambassadors on the Enterprise to a conference, (an ambassador is killed by a spy, remember that plot device?), plastic surgery to make Kirk look like a Romulan (hmm, remember that one?), and a final climatic scene wherein a defeated Romulan commander chooses to self-destruct his command (on camera) after a short haughty speech to Kirk (boy, that one sounds familiar!), this book mercifully ended.

# State Of The Art Vampires

by Lawrence Person

## *The Vampire Lestat*

by anne Rice  
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.  
New York 1985  
481 pages  
\$17.95

## *Vampire Junction*

by S.P. Somtow  
Berkley Books  
New York 1985  
362 pages  
\$3.50

## *The Books of Blood*

By Clive Barker  
Sphere Books, Ltd. (Berkley Books)  
London 1984 (New York 1986)  
Around 150 pages each  
13.95-\$4.50 each (\$2.95 each)

There are many that say horror fiction is a dying (or dead) art. Or worse, they view it as a one man field, that one man being, of course, Stephen King. While it is true that it is getting harder and harder to find truly original ideas, there are still gems of horror being written. And while it is also true that Stephen King just about outsells the rest of the genre's writers combined, there are a number of other talented authors out there writing excellent and original horror stories. Cases in point are many of the books listed below.

Finding a truly great book, however, is difficult. Finding a sequel that is better than the original is even more difficult. Finding a sequel to a great book that is better than the original is impossible.

With **The Vampire Lestat**, Anne Rice has done the impossible.

It is hard to find enough praise for this book, Rice's sequel to her excellent (and highly successful) **Interview with the Vampire**. It is, quite simply, the most dazzling novel I have read in a long time. It is also that rarest of avia, the

sequel that actually surpasses the original.

Written from the viewpoint of its title character, the vampire we first met in a supporting role in **Interview**, **The Vampire Lestat** is resplendent with magnificent and beautiful imagery. His story, told in his own words as seen through his own heightened vampiric senses, gives true meaning to the phrase **to see through new eyes**. The effect and images of this masterful work are nothing short of enchanting. Even the simplest objects (a rack of silk ties, for example) become fascinating as seen through Lestat's eyes. Especially good is his joyous description of 20th century America. Rice's prose is so stunning and exquisite that it nearly overwhelms the reader.

But beautiful images and magnificent prose are not the only things that this masterful novel has going for it. Rice's characters are also engrossing and fully drawn. Though Lestat has become something both more and less than human, we feel and care for his plight. He journeys through the worlds of 18th

century Paris and 20th century America, drinking of both the light and blood of the human condition, but forever cut off from its warmth or love. His joy and his pain come through with amazing empathy, which is what makes this book such a fine work of horror.

Lestat's evil is both beautiful and seductive, causing one to wonder just how evil someone has to become before they are forever cut off from human sympathy. Lestat's innocent victims far outnumber those of Charles Manson, yet we never lose that vital empathy with him. This is as sublime a horror novel ever written.

The plot of this book is interesting but unspectacular. It meanders as much as any life story might. Lestat grew up in aristocratic France, becomes a vampire, seeks out others like himself, searches for the meaning of his existence and, finally, when he can bear the pain of his condition no longer, burrows under the earth to sleep like one of the dead, only to reawaken in our own day and age to join a rock band in order to tell his story. This plot synopsis is somewhat

cursory, for it is not the destination that makes **The Vampire Lestat** a great novel, but the journey there.

By the time you read this, **The Vampire Lestat** should be out in paperback. If you have already read **Interview with the Vampire**, then by all means buy this book. If not, buy **Interview**, then buy **The Vampire Lestat**! You shall not be disappointed.

Although I'd recommend this book to anyone, many of you out there in Readerland may be wondering; why is this review in a wargaming magazine? The answer is quite simple. In my many years of Role Playing, I have noticed that the Vampire in a Fantasy or Horror RPG is often treated as just another monster to kill or, at best, a melodramatic creation culled straight from B-movies. This is a great shame because the vampire is one of the most fascinating monsters ever created. Both **The Vampire Lestat** and the book I shall review below are excellent sources on how to make vampires in your campaigns more interesting. Why not a theatre of vampires or a vampire rock star, or even a shipload of vampires ala' George R. R. Martin's **Fevre Dream**? Remember that hoary old RPG cliché; your campaigns are limited only by your imagination.

The next source we turn to for state-of-the-art vampires is **Vampire Junction** by S.P. Somtow (A pseudonym for Somtow Surcharitkul). While **The Vampire Lestat** was both excellent and interesting **Vampire Junction** is, unfortunately, only interesting.

This is quite a deviation from your standard vampire fare. There are (more or less) three different (but interrelated) plotlines going on at the same time in this somewhat convoluted book. The first involves the story of Timmy Valentine, a vampire rock star who appears to be twelve years old, but who actually has been alive several centuries. He is talking to a psychiatrist in an attempt to come to grips with his vampirism. This leads to the second plotline, where we learn of Timmy's life through a series of flashbacks. The third plotline involves Steven Miles, the former husband of the psychiatrist and a second rate classical conductor, and his band of decadent former high school cronies who try to kill Timmy. They do this because several years before they held a magical ceremony in which they believe they "summoned"

Timmy. Got all that? Well, if you don't, don't worry. Clarity is not one of this book's strongpoints. In addition to all of this, the whole book is filled with Neojungian symbolism about vampires as primal archtypes. To be blunt, it's not exactly light reading.

His book reminds me of the quote from MacBeth: Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing-or at least very little. The psychoanalyze-the-vampire premise was carried off with much greater success than here in Suzy McKee Charnes excellent "Unicorn Tapestry" novella. This is not to say that the book is overwhelmingly bad. It's not. In fact, Somtow gives us some fascinating thematic exploration, and some interesting characters. Unfortunately, the interesting central characters are surrounded, for the most part, by two-dimensional supporting players. Though the novel and the prose are interesting and energetic, the work is less than the sum of its parts. Finally, though Somtow displays touches of true horror throughout the book, by the end we are left with little more than muddle that never quite coalesces into a solid novel. Thus the final effect is interesting-but no more than that.

The final work I am going to mention is not one book, but six. It's a collection of short stories by British horror writer Clive Barker, and is entitled, simply enough, **Clive Barker's Books of Blood**. The title is not only simple, it is apt; you would be hard pressed to find a bloodier or more graphic collection of stories anywhere. However, the blood in these books is not used gratuitously, but with great skill.

The two words that come to mind when I think of these stories are "powerful" and "disturbing". In this, Barker's work provides a sharp contrast with Rice's. Where Rice used finesse to bring out the horror in her books, Barker uses a sledgehammer. However, that sledgehammer is skillfully applied. Barker intentionally breaks just about every human taboo you can name, all with the intention of shocking or horrifying the reader. In "Rawhead Rex", for example (my personal favorite among all the stories included), from Book 3, we are treated to graphic scenes of infanticide, something Stephen King even turned away from in **Salem's Lot**. Needless to say, these books are not for the squimish.

Barker's writing style is hard to nail

down. More often than not he merely lets the story tell itself. Occasionally, however, his masterful command of the language is apparent, as in his discription of the haunted roads that the dead travel in the neatherworld. The subjects of Barker's prose are a varied lot, ranging from the excellent, but non-supernatural, "Dread", to the neo-Lovecraftian tale "The Midnight Meat Train". Barker even engages in a bit of clever humor with "The Yattering and Jack".

Until recently, these books were only available as imports from England in their Sphere Books edition, costing from \$3.95 to \$4.50 each. Fortunately, however, Berkley Books has, as of this writing, just put out Volume I in an American edition selling for just \$2.95. These books were well worth the \$4.50 import price, when you could find them, and they are doubly a value at \$2.95. Pick up Volume I and see if it's to your taste. If not...well, horror fiction was never for the faint of heart anyway. Read Clive Barker-and prepare to be disturbed.

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El Cajon, CA 92021  
(619) 447-5118

FTF opponent wanted for WSIM, Flat Top, Submarine, or Ironclads. I'm also interested in naval miniatures but don't know a good beginner's system.

### John W. Leggat III

1222 Calle Las Trancas  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360  
(805) 498-4427  
w-(818) 887-8769

Wanted-FTF or PBM opponents for most AH, SPI, TSR, 3W, West End Games, especially WWII, Civil War, Napoleonics and Modern.

### Brian Lum

1612 Castleview  
Visalia, CA 93277  
(209) 825-9039  
w-(209) 732-0385

Skill: intermediate to advanced. Opponents: 21 years and up preferred. Interests are military miniatures of most periods. Especially Victorian Colonials. Call home number after 5 pm.

### David McKnight

829 Hill Rd. CT  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
(303) 633-5850  
w-(303) 528-7748

Wargamer: Interested in finding new opponents to play, The Longest Day, Armor, ASL, World in Flames, Titan, Victory in the Pacific, Naval Miniatures, Kingmaker, and most any other wargames.

### Patrick Moore

3331 Williamsburg Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
(313) 973-1643

Looking for intermediate level STFB opponent in Ann Arbor, MI (summers); upper peninsula (fall), Fort Lauderdale, FL (winter & spring). Interested in ost games including Traveller, Micro games, etc.

### Pat 'Rom' Morris

11371 Loch Lomond  
Los Alamitos, CA 90720  
(213) 493-4120  
w-(714) 960-3292

Still looking for AD&D, Traveller, Champions players (et al). I-m 20 years old and would prefer to GM/play with people old enough to remember the D&D Blue Book.

### Frank Price

612 Doheny Rd.  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210  
(213) 275-4786

Preferred games: AD&D, Top Secret, Gamma World, Star Frontiers. Preferred Ages: 12-15. Anywhere in LA or Ventura counties.

### John Redden

4056 Sawtelle Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90066  
(213) 391-6068

Rolegamers 21 and older please call for Call of Cuthula, Paranoia, V&V, Variant Runequest, Variant

Traveller (non-Imperium, Other Suns, Space Opera), Toon. Minimum hack-n-slash power gaming.

### Earl Ryan

4517 W. Oakfield  
Santa Ana, CA 92703  
(714) 554-5594

FTF Squad Leader to GI opponents needed. Will travel as necessary. Call evenings.

### Thomas E. Safer

8031 Sepulveda Blvd. #41  
Van Nuys, CA 91406  
(818) 904-9375

w-(805) 989-8894

Interested in various board-games.

### John A. Sampson

24596 Covington Way  
Moreno Valley, CA 92388  
(714) 242-5950

## OPPONENTS NEEDED!

Games: Champions (230-2907) Carwars or AD&D (all levels). At: Riverside/Moreno Valley. When: We're not sure! Call: John (714) 242-4950 Write: The above address.

### Michael Savage

8040 Saloma Ave.  
Van Nuys, CA 91402  
(818) 781-1832

## BEGIN MESSAGE

TO: All killers, assassins and mercenary cutthroats. MESSAGE: The Valley Assassin's Guild is looking for a few good men. SJG rules used. Contact anytime.

## END MESSAGE END REPORT

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w-(619) 485-3285

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### Ronald Spitzer

761 N. Bundy Dr.  
West Los Angeles, CA 90049  
(213) 476-2077

Players Wanted! SFB, am willing to travel to 30+ minutes. Serious players only. Any skill level. Duels and campaign games. Single or multi-player. I am 25. Teenagers ok only if mature.

**Ronald Spitzer**

761 N. Bundy Dr.  
West Los Angeles, CA 90049  
(213) 476-2077

Players, GM's and ideas wanted for SFB campaign game. **Serious** players only. Teenagers ok only if **very mature**. I am 25. Players only wanting duels are also welcome to call.

**Janiece Swilling**

7645 Laurel Canyon Blvd. #10  
North Hollywood, CA 91605  
(818) 982-1544

I'm looking for a new game. Will playtest board and role games with you. I'm also interested in R&R music trivia.

**Mark Szekrenyi**

584 W. 17 St. #8  
San Pedro, CA 90731  
(213) 831-1433

Wanted: AD&D player.

**Kevin Totosz**

24092 Salero  
Mission Viejo, CA 92691  
(714) 830-4373

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13965 Olive Grove Ln.  
Sylmar, CA 91342  
(818) 362-1222  
w-(818) 902-9522

AH-classics, Chess, Risk!, Monopoly, Diplomacy, 3rd Reich.

**Ed Tyrrell**

12152 Cliffwood Road  
Garden Grove, CA 92640  
(714) 971-2443

I play and GM for AD&D, V&D and Champions and I play Axis and Allies and Call of Cuthulu. I can play during most weekends.

**Cory Wells**

P.O. Box 82  
Malibu, CA 90265

Looking for Air Force (AH) or (BL) FTF players in the LA area plus Dawn Patrol or Wings. Also interested in learning "Up Front".

**Michael A. Zupke**

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San Clemente, CA 92672  
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**Bob Titran**

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Columbia Station, OH 44028  
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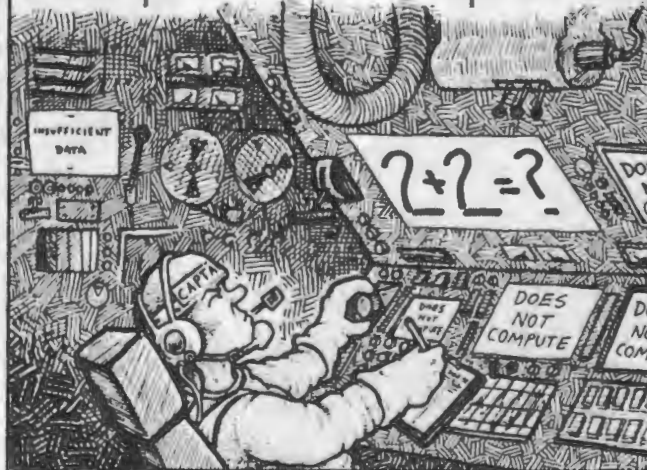
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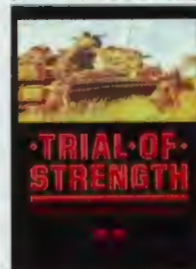
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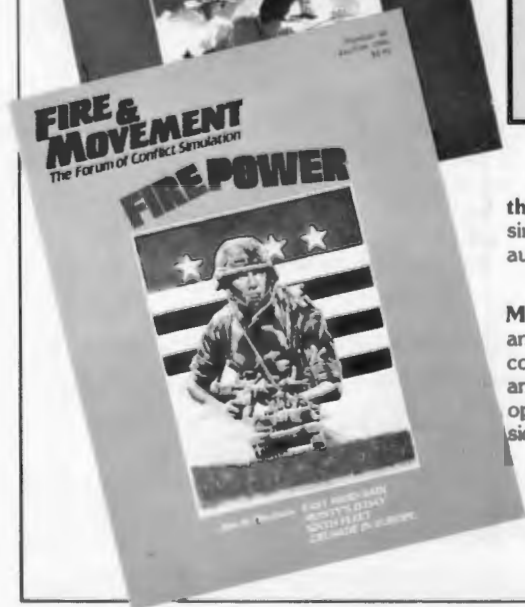




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