

# THE Ancible

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Your portal to Sci-Fi and Fantasy Gaming

ISSUE 15



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Cutlass

Rogue  
Trader RPG

Strange  
Aeons

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Expeditions

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# THE Ancible

## View from the Command Deck

**T**he Ancible team headed out to Salute and thanks to the excellent organisation we all got there in good time and joined the ever growing que at the Excel. A funtastic time was had by one and all and it nice to see so many people and get good feedback on our ongoing efforts. We met some old friends and hopefully made some new ones. Prize of the day had to go to TWTs who had managed to persuade one of his friends to catty all his purchases in his rucksack by telling him it was good training and would keep him fit. Much respect TWTs. Things never seem to slow down here and with a whole lot of new companies appearing and existing companies expanding and adding to their ranges we are still inundated with potential reviews and the like to do. In an effort to do something different we have all decided to try our hand at the Rogue Trader RPG and Jez is going to be doing his games master thing and reporting all the nonsense we get up to. This should be interesting and fun. I had mentioned that I was going to be making the trip to Gencon this year but that is now looking unlikley but hopefully I can persuade one of our colonial readers to do a report. You may have noticed that this issue is a bit light though, there is still a fair amount of varied content, this is down to me and and the big crack that appeared in the middle of the office causing all work to stop for a bit. Normal service will be resumed in the next issue

**Our aim is to introduce **YOU** to the games you don't yet know**

*Kenny R*



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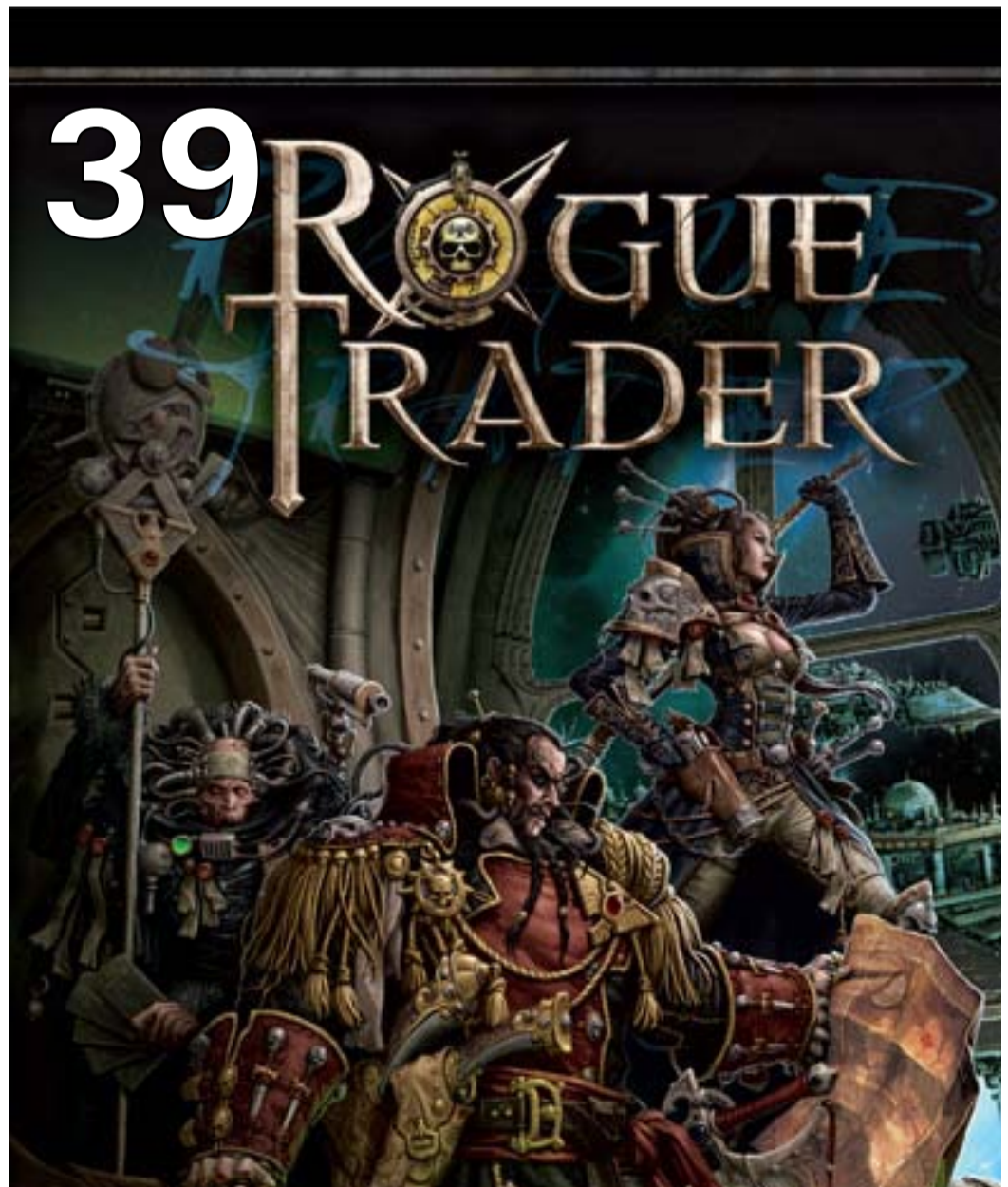
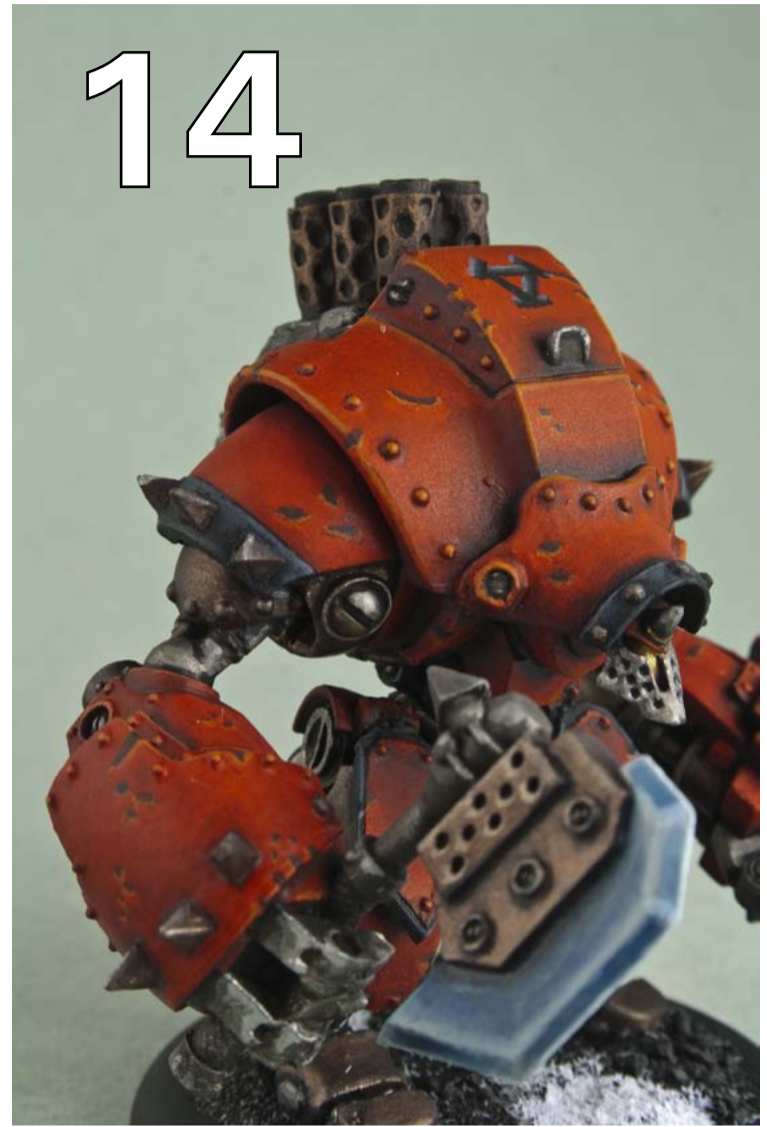
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# Cutlass!

by  
Spencer D Taylor

There are certain genres in miniatures wargaming that seem to be neglected, and amongst those is one of my favorite eras of history; the golden age of sail. That glorious time when massive ships sailed the high seas, empires expanded, new nations formed, exploration and discovery were around each corner. The other thing around each corner was pirates ready to rob every single ship they could blind. It seems like good pirate based games are extremely hard to find; the only other one I can think of being Freebooters Fate(which was covered back in issue 7). I would have thought with the massive success of the Pirates of the Caribbean films that more companies would have gotten on the pirate ship and set sail towards fortune.

Thankfully the good folks over at Black Scorpion Miniatures were kind enough to fill the void in my life for pirate goodness with their fantasy pirate game Cutlass!, and is it ever a good one. Cutlass is a 28mm skirmish game based during the golden age of sail, but with some unique twists. The

most obvious of which being the fantasy races dotted throughout. Right away I loved the premise because I'm a big fan of both fantasy and high seas adventure, so mixing the two so brilliantly as Black Scorpion have just makes me endlessly happy.



The book is written by Adam Clarke(who happens to run the company) and a name that should be familiar to many in the wargaming community; Gav Thrope.

The game has seven different factions which players can choose from: Royal Navy, Pirates, Privateers, Dwarfs, Elves, Orcs and Goblins and the Undead. Each faction has its own special rules and skills that models can either start with or gain throughout



campaign play. There's a nice variety in the choice between regular humans and fantasy races, and there's even some extra stuff thrown in simply for the sake of diversity such as the all-female pirate gang (who don't actually have different stats, they're just a visual difference to set them apart). I really dig this because there's a good balance, and it still leaves room for growth should Black Scorpion take that path.

The book comes in at 115 pages, but a good portion of those pages aren't rules related so really the rules of the game, including gang lists, comes in at a little under 100 pages. That's a good size, to me, and considering how much is crammed into those 100 or so pages I must say it's a very tidy little package.

There's one thing I don't normally discuss in my reviews, and that's the art inside books. Most times I just sort of ignore it unless it really catches my eye (like Heavy Gear and Infinity have for example), but I just want to, very briefly, touch on the art in this book. It's got a very old school 90's charm to it that really takes me back to my youth. Much of the art inside the book reminds me of the old art from Warcraft 2, although I am a little upset that it's black

and white. It's a somewhat perplexing case, then, that the cover art seems more stepped in realism than the art found inside. Still; even with my gripe about it not being in color I can't help but love the art inside simply for nostalgia's sake.

Moving on the game itself anyone who's ever played Mordhiem will be rather

familiar with how things go. You pick a gang from the seven factions, are given \$500 to purchase models and weapons, and then you play and gain experience. It seems like a pretty straight forward concept, but Mr. Thorpe and Mr. Clarke threw a few extra bits in to give the game a unique flavor.

Perhaps what makes this game most unique is how



it handles stats and characteristics. In a normal miniatures game you'd expect a static number to represent a model's skill at a certain thing, such as a close combat score of four. Well Cutlass does things differently from that. You see each model has a set of seven attributes: reactions, accuracy, combat, dexterity, constitution, damage and daring. What sets the game apart is that instead of having a static number, the game uses different types of dice to represent relative skill. So a model wouldn't have a combat score of four, he'd have a combat score of d4 meaning he'd roll a 4-sided die when using his combat attribute. It's a really neat system which will be familiar to anyone who's ever played the RPG Savage Worlds. Modifiers are handled differently as well. Instead of getting a flat +1 combat bonus there's two different modifiers; dice level and bonus dice. Dice level refers to the types of dice used, so a model attacking with a combat of d6 and gaining a +1 die level will instead roll a d8. As models get hurt during games they actually get worse as their dice levels go down from injuries. The other modifier, bonus dice, is pretty self-explanatory; you get to roll extra dice. So a model using his combat skill of d6

with a +1 bonus die will roll 2d6 and then pick the highest value rolled. I have to say I am absolutely in love with this system, and it adds so much variety and really makes dice rolls important. I've seen many a games where a single model can cleave through armies simply because it has a higher static number in an attribute. In Cutlass a model may have a d12 (the highest a model's stat can go) in his accuracy but there's still a good chance he'll miss simply because of the nature of dice rolling.

Unfortunately this is one of the few areas I feel the game falls a little short. Only having four categories of models to pick from feels really limited compared to something like Mordhiem which some groups had four different hero types alone. I know the mechanics are different, but I just would have liked maybe another one or two types of guys per gang to add some more variety. Equipment has a fairly decent variety at 22 items (if you split pistol and brace of pistols into two separate things) broken into two categories; common and uncommon. Still it feels like some of the items might be a bit similar in what they do given the fact that they either give you a bonus die or they add +1 level.

So now you've got your gang assembled and armed and ready to go, so let's get into how to play the game already. So once you and your opponent are ready to go you can either pick an encounter (the game's name for scenarios) or someone can roll a d8 and random determine the encounter to be played. Each encounter has its own special rules and deployment and so on and so forth.

Let's talk a little bit more about those stats for a moment, because they're very important. So the first stat is reactions, which is one of the most important stats in the game. You see when it's not your turn and an enemy model does certain things your models have the chance to react and possibly steal the turn so you get to start going again (I'll explain how that works in a moment). So, for example, if an enemy model comes within six inches of one of your models that model may make a reaction check, rolling whatever die they have for reactions and needing a four or better to succeed. If they pass then they get to react however you see fit, and it becomes your turn. This means there can be a nearly constant back and forth of the active turn switching hands as models make reaction rolls, and I think that's a really neat idea. One of the things that makes Infinity such an exciting game is its reaction system, and it's really nice to see other games working that type of thing in as well. It really does help prevent the game from being boring when it's not your turn. The next two stats are pretty self-explanatory; combat and accuracy. These are used for, no surprise, close combat and shooting. After that is dexterity which is used mainly as a defensive roll when being shot at,



So to begin a campaign in Cutlass you need to pick your gang, and as mentioned above you start with \$500 to purchase models and weapons. Each gang has four entries for models which can be broadly categorized as leader, officers, elite infantry and mooks (although the book prefers leader, seasoned hand, ordinary hand and lubber to be more pirate sounding). Each gang must have a leader, obviously, and at least a single elite infantry/ordinary hand.

They can then buy up to four officers/seasoned hands and any number of elite infantry or mooks from that point on. Then you can buy weapons for your gang varying from regular swords, to the famed cutlass, to muskets and even some special items like powder monkeys and lucky charms.



but it's also used when trying to do acrobatic feats or when sprinting. Next is constitution which is used as a purely defensive roll when trying to avoid taking damage. After that is damage which is the type of die rolled when trying to damage a model in close combat; which is then opposed by the target making a constitution roll. Lastly is daring; which is this games take on morale.

So once you've deployed your gangs each player rolls a die equal to a special stat only leaders have; authority. This authority roll is very important because it not only determines who goes first, but it also determines the number of action points available to your gang during that turn. Action points are handled rather interestingly in this game. As opposed to other games where each model might have action points, in Cutlass the total action points represents the number of models you may activate at that time. I know that's a little confusing, so let me give you an example. If I roll and I get seven action points during my first activation I can spend one action point to activate up to seven models, but all those models must perform the same action; moving, shooting or fighting in close combat. What then happens

is I would move my action points to six as I spent one already to, for the sake of simplicity, move seven models with my first action. Now I can activate again, but this time I can only activate up to six models who must all then do the same action.

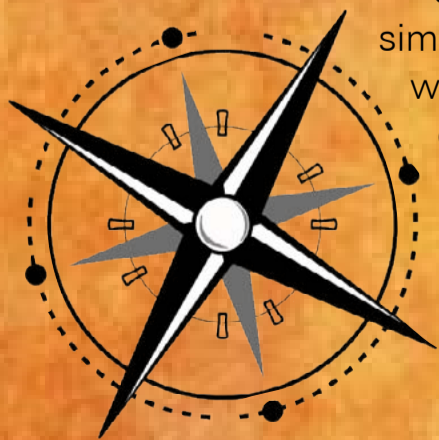
This means each time you activate you can activate fewer and fewer models, which means you need



to plan carefully. However you can lose the turn to the other player if they make a successful reaction roll. If you succeed in reacting you reduce your action points by one and then become the active player. If the model fails, however, you still reduce your action points by one and the model is given a "surprised" token. The turn ends when either both players run out to action points or both players pass their turn.

I really like how they worked in action points, and the being able to activate multiple models at a single time really does help move the game along. I'm also a fan of the fact that your action total is determined by your authority roll. I know a lot of people probably won't like that simply because it might seem too random, but it's a fairly good way to represent that sometimes not everyone is on the same page and that things don't always work out how you hoped.

Once you spend an action point you declare what action the models you're activating are going to do; move, shoot, fight in close combat or "special actions." You might have noticed that movement wasn't one of the listed stats, and that's because each model has a base movement of four inches. The only models exempt from this rule are the Elves who can gain the Agility skill which gives them a +1 to their speed, but not all the Elves start with this skill so in the beginning most of them will be moving the standard four inches. The other model exempt from this rule is the Giant who has a movement of eight inches. I have to say this is another minor fault to me as I'm just not a fan of a set movement speed for everything. I get that some stuff may move the same speed, but it's always been one of the game design





choices that rubbed me the wrong way. It doesn't ruin the game for me, but I still would have liked to see movement values.

Now when moving a model can also opt to sprint over open ground. This is done by making a dexterity check and then checking the corresponding table. This table will tell you how far you get to move during your sprint, but there's always the chance that you're model will roll poorly and only get to move d4 inches and get a "stunned" token in the process. It's just one more thing that adds chance to this game, and I'm actually a pretty big fan of that (mostly because there's few things I love more than rolling dice).

The next action available to models is to fire any ranged weapons they may have; be it a pistol, musket or other type of weapon. To do this you must, of course, have line of sight to your target. Models must be able to see at least 25% of their target if they wish to shoot it, using good old true line of sight. For those who might not be entirely familiar with true line of

can really be a game changer when it comes down to trying to snipe the enemy leader. There are three different ranges; point blank, normal and long with no weapons being able to fire beyond 32 inches. The two listed ranges with the accuracy are the point blank and the long range. Point blank is the listed range and closer, while long is the listed range and further. Normal range is anything in between the two. So, for example, if a model is firing with an accuracy of a d6 then his point blank is 0-6 inches, his long will be 16-32 inches and anything in between those two is his normal range. Firing at point blank gives you +1 level, and long range is -1 level. So once you establish any modifiers from range, cover and the weapon you're ready to shoot. Like most rolls in Cutlass this is a face-to-face roll between the two players; the shooter rolling their accuracy and the target rolling their dexterity. One of the beauties of this game is that the dice rolls are "open ended" meaning that if you roll the highest value on the die then you get to roll again and add that to the first roll. This means that, with some

luck, even the lowliest mook can take out a more powerful model. Once both rolls are made and totals tallied up you take the shooting model's roll and subtract the defending model's roll and consult a chart.

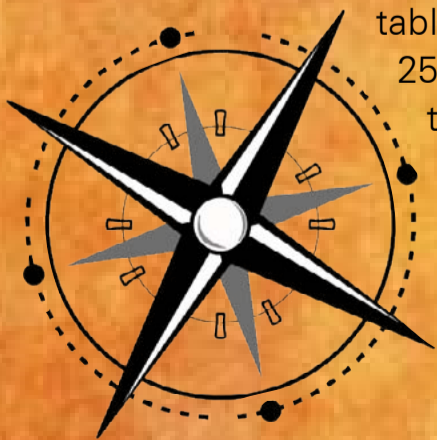
On a 0 the attack

misses, a 1-4 is a regular hit and a 5+ is a critical hit which lets you roll two dice on the damage roll (which I'll explain later).

Of course shooting isn't for everyone, and for those who like to be a bit more personal in your fighting you can engage your enemies in close combat like a true pirate. Close combat works on a slightly more complex level than ranged combat, but after a few goes at it isn't so bad. Models get modifiers based on being injured, attacking from outside the defender's 90 degree front arc, weapons and so forth. Before any attacks are made if the attacker is in the defender's front arc the defending model may



sight; it boils down pretty simply to "getting down to a model's eye view of the table." If you can see more than 25% of the model you want to shoot then you're free to open fire. If you have line of sight then you check the range based on the firing model's accuracy. This means the better a model's accuracy the longer the ranges it has, which



attempt to parry. They roll a dexterity roll and check the chart to see what happens. They can fumble and give the attacker an extra combat die, they can just fail, they can parry and get a bonus die for their combat roll or they can feint which gives them 2 bonus dice to their combat roll. Once all modifiers have been accounted for both models roll their combat skill, and you once again check a corresponding table. On the table you see where the two rolls intersect and that will tell you the result of the attack. There are several outcomes during an attack roll; miss, hit, critical, injured, taken out, counter and riposte. Injured and taken out cause immediate effects without having to roll for damage, while hit and critical work similarly to ranged combat. The interesting ones in close combat are counter and riposte. Counter allows the defender to make an immediate attack or to walk away from the combat after passing a 4+ reaction roll, and regardless of which you do you don't spend any actions to do so. Riposte does the same thing but without the needed roll. The best part is that if you get a counter or riposte result the active turn switches over to your gang.

Now that you've managed to hit your enemy it's time to see if you can hurt them. To do this the attacking player rolls a die equal to the damage of their attack (the damage of ranged weapons is listed in their profile while hand-to-hand always uses the damage stat of the model), and the defender rolls a constitution check. Once the rolls have been made you once again consult a table and check the result; no effect, stunned, injured or taken out. Stunned models take a -1 level to all tests and can't make reactions, but at the end of each turn they can roll a d6 and on a 4+ they get rid of their stun token. Injured models also take a -1 level to tests, but they can still react. Taken out means the model has

fallen unconscious and is just lying on the battlefield.

Models which are taken out cannot do anything and any tests they do have to make are made on a d4. If a model is injured while already having a taken out token they are removed from play.



Models can also, during their activation, perform special actions. These special actions include things like dragging friendly models to safety, hiding while in terrain to make it even more difficult for the enemy to see you, reloading weapons and so on.

Now one thing you might have noticed during this review is how often I mention referencing tables and charts, and I feel like this is where the game really rubs me the wrong way. This game is just loaded with tables and charts to check seemingly every time a model wants to do something. I can understand where they were coming from since there are so many opposed rolls in the game, but I can't help but feel that perhaps there was an easier way that didn't involve upwards of a dozen different tables. There's even more when





you get into the campaign, but those ones I'm willing to let off the hook because they're all post game stuff as opposed to being constantly checked during the middle of the game. It's a shame, too, because all the charts and tables really do

seem to bog the game down a bit and keep it from being everything I had hoped it would be. Don't let my words fool you; this is still a fun game with some really good concepts, but I just feel it's a little marred by all the tables.

Moving past all that doom and gloom that we get into the real prize of Cutlass; the campaign system. I've said it time and again in my articles here that I am a huge fan of games with campaign systems; I love the idea of a coherent story with my wargames, and it's even better when I get to actually write that story. I feel the campaign is really where Cutlass, and other games like it, shine. One of the neat twists that Cutlass has in its campaign system is the inclusion of a home base which players can buy additions for to give them bonuses. You can buy a storehouse so if a model dies instead of losing all their gear it just goes to the storehouse, a lockup to keep prisoners in, a surgical building to help with post game injury rolls and so on.

You may have noticed the mentioning of prisoners, and that's because in this game you can take captives and then ransom them back to their owners. Or try to convert them. Or you can just kill them and skip all the hassle. I think this is a neat little inclusion as it adds player interaction

in the post-game sequence as well, and it also adds a really neat little narrative touch. One gang keeps capturing your guys and ransoming back to you for money? Capture one of theirs and make an example of him with a swift execution. It's a great way to start in game grudges, and I have to say I was pretty surprised to find it in the book.

Another really interesting part of this game is the fame/infamy mechanic. Basically how it works is when you build your gang you decide if you want to be famous or infamous, and then through certain actions in games to can either gain fame or infamy. Such actions include things as kicking models while their down, executing prisoners, and winning encounters. By moving up or down the fame/infamy track gangs gain benefits as well as making it so members from that gang can be ransomed or have bounties collected. Being famous or infamous also allows you to buy certain upgrades to your home base, which is a nice touch. I think it's a really cool little mechanic that didn't need to be included, but again adds such character to the game and a good amount of story to the gangs being played.

The final important part of gameplay is the end game, or the final reckoning. When a gang reaches either a high enough fame or infamy, has amassed enough wealth, or gotten enough fighters then the final reckoning begins. This is a tournament style end-all-be-all fight to see who the most powerful gang on the island is. This is handled the same way many sports handle it; the most powerful gang(determined by multiplying their fame -converting infamy to positives- by ten and adding their total value in cash) fights the least valuable, and so on. This basically works as single elimination knock-out fight with the last gang standing taking control and winning the campaign. It's nice to see an actual end-game as most games seem to just say "whenever you're done, pick a winner." Black Scorpion really wanted to make sure a definitive winner is decided, and I love the way they chose to do it. It makes it so the most powerful gang isn't automatically the victor; everyone fights at the end to be the best of the best.

The last thing I want to discuss is the models, and how much I love them. Black Scorpion makes an impressive range of miniatures for this game(as well as other ranges such as fantasy football, wild west and a few others), and the designs I just love. The Navy, pirates and privateers are about what you'd

expect; looking as they did historically. The Undead look fantastic and creepy with tattered clothes and skulls for faces and skeletal hands gripping their weapons. The Dwarfs are short and stout with their beards, and thankfully only one of them is holding an axe. The Elves are a neat subject; they look really good, but at the same time they're sort of ugly. I don't mean this in a bad way, though; when I say they look ugly I mean the Elf models don't look like a bunch of pretty boys who don't belong on a pirate crew. They look tough and rugged while still looking like Elves. The Orcs look like Orcs tend to, and the Goblins look plenty silly with their giant ill-fitting hats. Then there's the Giant, and words almost can't describe the sheer beauty of that model. It looks like a proper lumbering behemoth of a thing with a ship's anchor in one hand, a person hanging from his belt (which is proper scale, so this thing is huge), and it just looks so good.

Overall I am very impressed with Cutlass, and it really did turn out to be everything I wanted. Freebooters Fate always looked great to me (the Amazon models keep tempting me into spending my money), but the diceless system always turned me off a bit. Cutlass gives me not only 28mm skirmish Pirate combat, but it also lets me roll dice and use Black Scorpion's beautiful models at the same time. For all my

complaining about how many tables there are I can't really say I don't recommend the game. Beyond the amount of tables the game is extremely well done and very solid, and there's plenty of room for expansion with new gangs, more types of members for gangs, more characters and just more of everything really. The campaign system is beautifully done with the fame and infamy mechanic, the fact there's player interaction in the post-game and the final reckoning was spot on.

So for all my minor gripes with the game I still have to give it the thumbs up and highly recommend it to anyone out there looking for fantasy skirmish games with a new twist. The book will run you 20 Pounds with models of varying prices so at the very least I suggest giving the book a look over and checking out Black Scorpion's impressive selection of miniatures. This game can only get better with new content, and if this does well perhaps we can expect more games from the kind folks at Black Scorpion games. It's a great game with tons of potential, and if you're like me and love the age of piracy with a healthy dose of fantasy, and want something that doesn't require a whole lot of models from the start, then I would say that Cutlass is just the game you're looking for matey.



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# Andy Walker

is ON THE SPOT

## How did you get into the hobby?

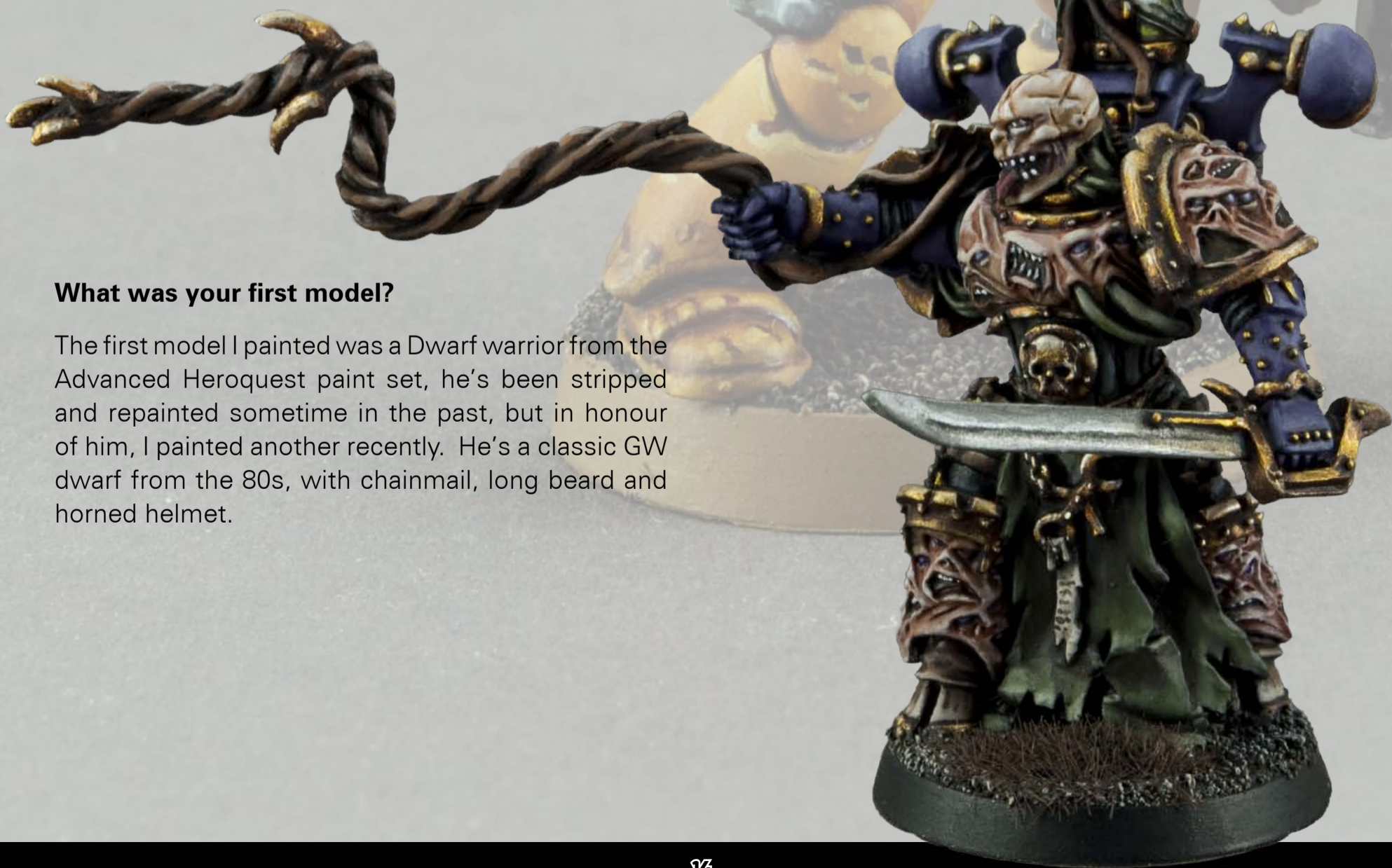
When I was about 12-13 years old, one of my best friends got a copy of Heroquest. Other than reading the Hobbit at primary school, I had never really got into Fantasy before, so this was something new and exciting (for us geeky types who thought swinging a sword around was cool). We then moved on to Advanced Heroquest and into Warhammer Fantasy Battle. I dropped out of the hobby when I was at University, but picked it up again around 5 years ago with a Crimson Fists army for Warhammer 40K. I'd bought and painted some miniatures from other games in the past, the now defunct Warzone in particular, but never really left the comfort zone of GW up until relatively recently. Then this Scottish chap turned up at work, convinced me to write for him and now I'm painting just about everything I can get my hands on...

## What has been your biggest challenge on the painting front?

Overcoming the "fear" when confronted with a large or complex model. I'm a procrastinator at the best of times, but when faced with a difficult model, or one that I know I have to pull out all the stops on, I get so anxious about painting it, I put it off and paint something easy (usually a GW Space Marine, because they're really easy) rather than face up to the challenge straight away. I'm getting better at overcoming the fear, but now I just get more and more challenging miniatures to paint (thanks Kenny!).

## What was your first model?

The first model I painted was a Dwarf warrior from the Advanced Heroquest paint set, he's been stripped and repainted sometime in the past, but in honour of him, I painted another recently. He's a classic GW dwarf from the 80s, with chainmail, long beard and horned helmet.





### What do you get asked to do most?

Lord of the Rings miniatures – I've always felt that the Peter Jackson movies pulled our hobby out of the shadows and into the light, and the Games Workshop Lord of the Rings miniatures are such great representations of the characters in the films, and are now recognisable and part of our popular culture.

I've also been asked for Doctor Who stuff, particularly the TARDIS. I painted one for a departing colleague, possibly the biggest Dr Who fan I've ever known, as a leaving gift from the team, and I've had several people asking for one of their own. Unfortunately I need to build myself up to painting "POLICE BOX" 4 times in tiny lettering, so any new ones may be a while off.



### What is your Favourite model of all time and why?

I really don't have one – a few years ago it would probably have been one of Games Workshop's Eldar models, but there's so much out there it would be impossible to pick just one.

### What would be your ultimate achievement?

I think I've already done it – writing painting articles for a magazine read by thousands of people around the world has always been something I've wanted to do, and I thought blogging was as close as I was going to get. To win a Golden Demon, Crystal Brush or any other painting trophy would be fantastic, but there's something incredibly satisfying seeing your work, and your words about it, in print.

### If someone was starting the hobby or was already in the hobby and looking to improve their skills what advice would you give them?

Learn the Basics, Read/research, Practice, Experiment/record.

Learn the Basics: Learn to walk before you run and get the basics right. All the fancy techniques work best when you start with a smooth, solid, neat base coat. Shading and highlighting will cover up some flaws, but it's much easier if you get the foundations of the colour right in the first place.





**Read/research:** When I first started out, I had one very thin painting guide from Games Workshop that came with the Advanced Heroquest paint set, and the odd article in White Dwarf and that was it. So I really only had a few techniques and I stuck with them for quite a few years. Now with the growth of the hobby and the internet, newcomers to the hobby have everything they need to learn the basics and carry on all the way through to the advanced techniques used by the top miniature painters. There is so much out there to read (and watch now with everything on YouTube), I can't think of any question that hasn't been answered!

It's not just technique either, there's a lot you can research – I've found Osprey books to be great for colour schemes, I've used Google images for rust effects and taken random photos when I've seen a colour combination or piece of architecture I've liked. Museums are great too.

**Practice:** Learning the theory is all well and good, but like every hobby, pastime, skill, etc it takes plenty of practice to get good at painting. I've also found that if I take a break from it for more than a few weeks, it takes me a while to get back into the swing of things, so keep going with it, even if it's just for half an hour every other day.

**Experiment/record:** One of the great things about miniature painting is that there's no one right way to do it, and it's a great when you find a new way to do something and call it your method. Ultramarines are blue and Khador are red, but there are many different shades of each colour, and many different ways of painting them. However, it's a really good idea to make a note of what you've done – it's very frustrating to come up with that great colour on a model, and then not remember what you used when you want to do it again. Always have a notepad somewhere handy, or make a note of it on your smart phone, or blog about it – if you've found something good, share it!

### **Give us one secret to good painting that you have.**

It's not really a secret, because most people will tell you the same, but invest in some decent brushes, and look after them. Don't use your best brushes to drybrush, or overload them with paint, and get some brush soap to clean them with. Good quality brushes make the painting experience much more pleasurable and you have much more control over what you do with the paint.

Don't ask me how it works, I've just accepted that it does...





**Whenever you are not painting related things what else do you get up to?**

I play a lot of computer games, my current addictions are World of Tanks and the Assassin's Creed series, but I do enjoy First Person Shooters and Role Playing Games. I read a lot of Fantasy and Science Fiction, because I like to escape into new worlds and lose myself. It's the same with movies, our DVD and Blu-ray collection has a lot of Sci-Fi movies in it. I have a BA in Archaeology, and my wife and I regularly visit museums, the British Museum being our favourite.

I'm also a staunch (some would say rabid) supporter of Swindon Town Football Club.

**What do your friends think about what you are doing?**

Both my family and my friends have been incredibly supportive! Many have had no contact with the hobby before, but are really enthusiastic about what I do. It did worry me about what people would think, but 99% of the people who know I paint miniatures are fantastic about it.



### What games do you play?

Warhammer 40,000 has been my main game for quite a while now, but thanks to The Ancible, I've spread my wings a bit. Last issue showed my disastrous leadership of an Aquan Fleet, a wrong which may never be righted, and I've been getting into some great board games recently, notably Munchkin Quest, Gears of War and Pandemic.

The phrase "I'm an artist not a fighter" sounds a bit wet, but I've definitely been more of a painter than player in the past. That situation may be changing though, as I have a warband for Bushido painted up, a crew for Malifaux in progress, and a Warmachine army on the way.

I also have a hellgun toting arch-militant character rolled up for the Rogue Trader role-playing game, ready for my first ever role-playing session with the Ancible team.



**Other than your home, what is the most expensive thing you have ever bought?**

The car. This year my wife and I bought a Kia "Soul Hunter", I think this is the perfect name for a car owned by a couple of people who are so obsessed with Sci-Fi and Fantasy.

I've been informed I'm not allowed to paint any skulls on it though...

**Do you have any models on your desk at work?**

No, bearing in mind how my desk usually looks after the cleaners visit it, I wouldn't dare leave any models on it.

**What was the last book you read?**

The Iron Jackal by Chris Wooding, it's the third in the "Tales of the Ketty Jay" series and it could be the best of the three so far – it's eighteenth century pirates meets not-very-tech-heavy Sci-Fi in the air (but not in space), with lots of humour, action and great story-telling. Retribution Falls is the first in the series.

I thoroughly recommend it.

**What's on your iPod?**

Mumford and Sons, Bellowhead, Laura Marling, The Dave Matthews Band, Blues Traveller, Jonathan Coulton, Barenaked Ladies. I've been getting into Folk type music a lot recently, while having Jonathan Coulton on there helps top up my "Geek Cred".

**What's your favorite movie of all time?**

I don't really have one in particular, but if I had to choose one it would probably be Bladerunner (I'm not fussy about the cut). I just love the atmosphere, the technology imagined, the soundtrack.

However, there are so many other movies that come close:

The Lord of the Rings trilogy

Hot Fuzz

Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark

The Matrix

300

...and I could probably name 20 others at least



### What other painters do you admire?

There are 3 in particular:

Mike McVey - I got to see the Studio McVey stand at Salute this year and his miniatures, both the sculpting and the painting, blew me away. Mike has always been a hero of mine since I first saw his work in White Dwarf magazine. His detailed brush work is so smooth and rich in colour.

John Blanche – He’s the granddaddy of the Games Workshop look for me and his miniatures are a wonderful reflection of his art work. I got to see a small selection of his miniatures at Games Day 2009 and the detail was incredible – the man does Gothic Grimdark so well, and it’s been interesting to see a few bloggers doing their own take on his style recently

Artur – I don’t know his full name, but he has a stunning gallery on CoolMiniOrNot.com. I really love his colour rich comic book style, and his non-metallic metals, not something I usually like particularly, are subtle and easy on the eye.





### Do you have a gaming/painting room at home?

Oh yes, early last year I decided I need my own space to paint, and so I have a number of desks along one wall of a spare bedroom, with lots of shelves and storage. In the past, sitting down to paint miniatures would involve a lot of setting up, which can be a little off putting, especially when you know you have to put it all away again – both activities eat into precious painting time. Now I just walk in the room, pop a couple of lids open, and I'm ready to go.

We are also cat owners - if you can ever "own" a cat, it's more a case of them gracing you with their presence in your home. Our two, Hex and Ponder, see everything on my painting table as a potential toy, whether it's a pot of paint, a fragile miniature or a sharp knife! So it's really important that I can shut my hobby away from meddling paws.





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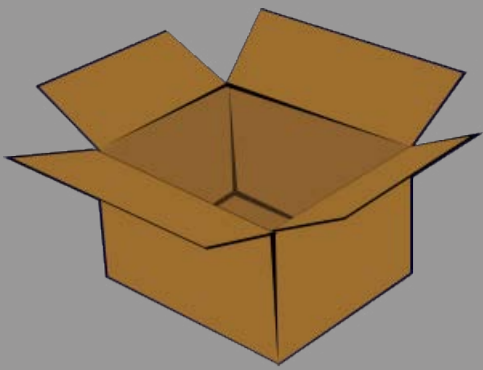
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# IN THE BOX

*with Kenny Robb*

**STAR TREK**  
*Expeditions*

A Cooperative Game by  
Reiner Knizia



Captain's log: Stardate 2259.26 - The Enterprise has entered orbit around Nibia, responding to an invitation from the Nibian government to open discussions about the planet joining the United Federation of Planets. However, now that the Enterprise has arrived, we find the President of Nibia less happy to see us than the invitation suggested, and Mr Spock has detected evidence that another star ship may have recently been in orbit. I'm beaming down to the planet with Mr Spock, Dr. McCoy and Communications Officer Uhura to begin the negotiations, and find out what's changed the Nibian's attitude towards the Federation.

Welcome to Star Trek Expeditions! You are now in the shoes of Captain Kirk and his fellow officers of the USS Enterprise. In addition to your diplomatic duties, you must investigate why the Klingons are so interested in Nibia. You will beam down to the planet, uncover numerous challenges and mysteries, and attempt to survive as dramatic events unfold on the planet and the Klingon fleet approaches....

The balance of power between the Federation and the Klingon Empire rests on the outcome of your mission. Can you succeed?







Before we begin there are a couple of things to be aware of. Firstly I am a massive Star Trek fan, doesn't matter which series, which ship, which film. I love them all in their own way. I don't think you can take one series over the other as they all have something unique to offer the discerning trekker.

It was with a falling heart that I went to watch the new prequel Star Trek movie and despite having a bang up to date and very trendy cast I did think to myself, has Hollywood committed the ultimate sin and ruined the whole thing. Should I have been worried, well of course I should, was it founded, no it wasn't. In my opinion they did a very good job of setting up an alternative timeline for movies and all sorts of other merchandise. This leads us nicely onto the subject of this review. I had been involved with Wizkids in the past, before the magazine started and I always found their attitude to the games and gamers to be second to none. So it was with excitement that I got my hands on a copy of Star Trek Expeditions. Things were looking good for this as the movie on which it was based was good and the company

responsible for production have always exceeded my expectations in any dealings I had with them.

Enough scene setting, on with the review.

Like all gamers, when I buy a game I like to feel the quality, or at least the weight of the box which promises all the gaming goodness that might be lurking inside, and on this front Star Trek expeditions by Reiner Knizia published by Wizkids games does not disappoint. You can be in no doubt that this game is based on the new film as the graphics splashed all over the outside of the box are straight from the film posters. The box itself is sturdy and well-constructed which I feel today should be the norm, there is no excuse with modern manufacturing techniques. This particular box looks and feels like it could quite happily go off to war and return without a scratch. Also the smell of a new game is just intoxicating or is it just me?

Now that I have had that little private moment it is time to actually open the box and see what's inside. As I

said before the weight of the box is pretty impressive and once you get that lid off it all becomes clear why. In the box you get a whole load of things, all constructed from heavy grade cardboard. The main playing board is about 1 inch thick in its folded state and that folds out to be about 24»x24». There are various other card based components all of which have the same solid feel to them. These include

- The mission Status Board
- The Captains Log cards which are used to drive the main mission
- The Captains Log supplemental cards which are used on the away missions
- Discovery Tokens
- Major Discovery Tokens
- Character Cards
- Energize cards
- Stardate cards

As if this was not enough, there is still more to come with dice, tokens and a rule book nearly rounding off everything you need to play the game.

Now at this point you will be saying, he has missed something and you would be right. Now before I go any further I need to mention the fact that a number of people have comment in the past about pre-painted models and also about the whole «click» model phenomenon. As I sit here and look at the contents of the box I can see nothing wrong with the quality of the



sculpts or the painting of the models. I think they are excellent for what they are.....ready to play. In the box you get 2 space ship models. The USS Enterprise (NCC 1701) and a Klingon D7 battle cruiser (and yes I knew that without looking it up) added to that you get the 4 main characters from the film. James T Kirk, Mr (not Dr) Spock, Dr Leonard McCoy and Lt Nyota Uhura. I added this note after Salute where I managed to pick up the expansion set that adds Montgomery Scott, Ensin Pavel Chekov and Lt Hikaru Sulu. This means that you can now play with more characters or as they suggest different characters which makes the game more difficult but more on that later.

Star Trek Expeditions is another one of the many co-operation style games where a group of friends plays against the game mechanic in order to try and win a scenario. The game offers a number of different options to make things interesting with three levels of play and multiple routes through the missions depending on how you approach and solve the various tasks. With this in mind no two games that we have played have been the same and we still have not got off the first level of difficulty.

The idea behind the game is that, like any good episode of Star Trek, there are a number of things going on that have to be juggled and balanced and only a certain number of key crew to do this. There is a fight going on in orbit between the USS Enterprise and a Klingon Battle Cruiser. There is a diplomatic mission in three parts happening on the planet and there are some other side missions which give you useful bonuses when completing the various bits of the mission. If that wasn't enough then add into the mix that each of the characters involved is good at doing a particular mission, but as missions are random it is not always possible to predict which mission is going to turn up and some missions have bad consequences if they are not solved first time. Also did I mention that you are up against time in the game as well, if things were not difficult enough.

When you first get the box open, look at the rules. I would suggest reading them at least twice before trying to set it up and playing it. The reason being that understanding how each of the bits plays is key to a fun game and there is so much going on it will take you a couple of reads through so you don't miss out on anything.

## Playing the game

Once you start playing the game it all starts to happen around you and with the time ticking and multiple things to manage it takes quite a bit of leadership and co-operation to achieve a successful conclusion. You all start on the ship and firstly you have to decide do you beam down to the planet or stay on the ship and fight the Klingons. The more characters who are on the ship during an attack then better but if you don't get down onto the planet and start solving the various missions and sub-missions then you are not going to succeed.

The planet is represented by a number of sections on the main board and as part of the setup one mission card and one token is placed face down in each section.

So let us suppose we leave the Enterprise to fend for itself for a bit and we beam down to the planet. Each character has a number of actions they can perform as well as a number of skills. These skills will become clearer later on in the mission so to speak.

Before each character takes their turn you draw an energize card that will dictate what is happening from the number of actions your character has that turn to the amount of in-game time that passes and not forgetting whether the Klingons attack the Enterprise or not. Your character can then use these actions to do a number of things from beaming to solving missions or performing their special actions like healing other characters (in the case of Dr. McCoy).

Each mission has certain criteria that must be met by using your character's stats, some extra bonuses and a roll of the dice which will determine whether or not you are successful. Depending on how successful you are will also determine how many victory points you get. You can also lose points for failure. Your character's stat line is a combination of the click value on the base of the character plus bonuses if your character matches the colour of the mission (red - engineering, yellow - command/diplomacy or blue - science) obviously each character has a specialist area. There are further bonuses but I am not going to go into them as that might spoil the game a bit but needless to say these fit in with the characters you are playing.

Completing the mission will result in a number of victory points and either a special token or it opens up the next part of the three main missions you have completed. Depending on how well you did will dictate the next part of the mission.

You continue doing this until either you finish all the mission, time runs out, the Enterprise gets destroyed or all your characters get killed.

The mechanics of this game are brilliant, fiendish and on the easiest of the levels it is fairly easy to win though, there have been a couple of occasions where the game has gotten the best of us. On the second and third levels it is nearly impossible to win, or at least it has been for us and the missions are usually over fairly swiftly. I believe that the game has longevity up to the point where you start to win every



time on level 3. I mentioned the expansion set earlier which introduced another three characters though Wizkids recommend only using one extra character but this could mean that you play a mission without the captain for instance and that makes some of the missions very hard because without his unique skills some of the missions become very tricky.

I am hoping that at some point there may be another expansion that has a new set of mission cards which would further extend the longevity.

## In conclusion

For all the fans of the Star Trek Universe this game is one way to play games with your favourite characters and that in its self will persuade a lot of people to buy the game. For the more hardened gamers this game offers a level of challenge that will have you and your friends staying up till after midnight with the cries of «Just one more game please» At a cost

of around £37 you get something that is complete and ready to play with 3 friends and the expansion costing around £13 will allow you add another friend. Buying the whole lot is just about the same price as starting a table top skirmish games with 1 of friend so it is great value for money. Co-operation games are a lot of fun and you could do a lot worse than go out and pick up a copy of Star Trek Expeditions. I know I did.

**STAR TREK®**  
*Expeditions*

A Cooperative Game by Reiner Knizia

Ages 14+  
For 1-4 Players

**WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD**  
- Small parts. Not for children under 3 years.

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[warlords\\_of\\_walsall@hotmail.com](mailto:warlords_of_walsall@hotmail.com)

**Derby Wargames Society**

Royal British Legion, 85 Chellaston Road, Allenton, DE24 9AF

Monday 7pm-11pm

[derbywargamessociety.com](http://derbywargamessociety.com)

[bencurry@derbywargamessociety.co.uk](mailto:bencurry@derbywargamessociety.co.uk)

**Ripley Terror Troopers**

Ripley Library, Grosvenor Road, Ripley,

Derbyshire, DE5 3JE

Alternate Thursdays 5.30pm-7pm

[judith.hawcroft@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:judith.hawcroft@derbyshire.gov.uk)

**Leicestershire Warrior Wargaming Club**

Arnesby Village Hall, Mill Hill Road, Arnesby, Leicester, LE8 5WG

2nd & 4th Wed 6.30pm-9.30pm

[www.lwwc.co.uk](http://www.lwwc.co.uk)

Via website

**NORTH****Doncaster Wildcats**

The Leopard, 2 West St, Doncaster DN13AA

Monday 6pm-10.30pm

[sixthkraven@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sixthkraven@hotmail.co.uk)

**East Cleveland Warsmiths**

St Margarets Eductaion Centre, Brotton, Cleveland, TS12 2PJ

Sunday 6pm-9.30pm

[james.borders@live.co.uk](mailto:james.borders@live.co.uk)

**Hulls Angels**

Unit 2, Grimston Street, Hull, HU1 3HG

Wednesday 4pm-9pm & Saturday 5pm-9pm

[hulls-angels.co.uk](http://hulls-angels.co.uk)

[ross@hulls-angels.co.uk](mailto:ross@hulls-angels.co.uk)

**Leeds Games Club**

Headingley Community Centre, Inner Ring Rd, Leeds, LS6 3HG

Thursday 7pm-10.30pm

[www.leedsgamesclub.co.uk](http://www.leedsgamesclub.co.uk)

[Webadmin@leedsgamesclub.co.uk](mailto:Webadmin@leedsgamesclub.co.uk)

**Leeds Nightowls Gaming Club**

Headingley Community Centre, Inner Ring Rd, Leeds, LS6 3HG

Sunday 10am-3pm

[www.leeds-nightowls.co.uk](http://www.leeds-nightowls.co.uk)

[admin@leeds-nightowls.co.uk](mailto:admin@leeds-nightowls.co.uk)

**Middlesborough Gamers Club**

St Marys Centre, 82-90 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 2RW

Tuesday & Thursday 6pm-10pm

[www.m-gc.co.uk](http://www.m-gc.co.uk)

[kevin.gibson4@ntlworld.com](mailto:kevin.gibson4@ntlworld.com)

**Northumbrian Adventurers Guild**

St Cuthbert's Church Hall, Bridge St, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 2AA

Sunday 12pm-7pm

[www.anythingbutaone.com](http://www.anythingbutaone.com)

[contact@anythingbutaone.com](mailto:contact@anythingbutaone.com)

**Redcar Ironbeards**

Coatham Memorial Hall, 7 Coatham Rd, Redcar,  
Cleveland TS10 1RH  
Monday 7pm-10pm  
www.ageofstrife.com/redcar-ironbeards  
ian.widdowson1@ntlworld.com

**York Garrison Wargaming Club**

Burton Stone Community Centre, Evelyn  
Crescent, York, North Yorkshire, YO30 6DR  
Tues & Wed 6.30pm-9.30pm  
www.yorkgarrison.co.uk  
warboss@yorkgarrison.co.uk

**NORTH EAST****Gobstyks Gaming Club**

St Andrew's Church Hall, Garmston Street,  
Lincoln, LN2 1HZ  
Thursday 6pm-10pm  
www.gobstyks.co.uk  
info@gobstyks.co.uk

**Lost Boys Wargaming Club**

Ainsdale Methodist Church, Ainsdale, Southport,  
PR8 3NQ  
Tuesday 5pm-10pm  
hez14badkarma@blueyonder.co.uk

**NORTH WEST****Coppull and Chorley Knights**

St Mary's Parish Centre, West Street, off  
Devonshire Road, Chorley, Lancs. PR7 2SJ  
Thursday 7pm-11pm  
cack-wargamesclub.net  
jt\_y@btinternet.com

**Winsford Warhawks**

The Edge, Winsford, CW7 1QS  
Tuesday 6.30pm-9.30pm  
winsfordwarhawks.forumotion.com  
winsfordwarhawks@hotmail.co.uk

**WEST****Gatekeepers Wargames Club**

The Gateway Education and Arts Centre, Chester  
Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 1NB  
Friday 6.30pm-10pm  
www.gatekeepers.me.uk

**Telford STAGS**

Hadley Scout Hut, Cyril Hayward Court, Hadley,  
Telford, TF1 5NB  
Alternate Sundays 12pm-4.30pm  
www.freewebs.com/telford\_stags  
qkg@btconnect.com

**SCOTLAND****Dunfermline Wargaming and Roleplaying Fellowship**

The Del Farquharson Centre, Netherton Broad  
St., Dunfermline KY12 7DS  
Friday 6pm-9pm  
www.freewebs.com/thegamesclub  
dwarfclub@aol.com

**The Gaming Kingdom**

The Meeting Place, Keith Crescent, Leuchars, St  
Andrews, Fife, KY16 0JX  
Monday 7pm-11pm  
www.thegamingkingdom.org.uk  
krissherriff@hotmail.com

**Kirriemuir Wargames Club**

The Guide Hall, The Roods, Kirriemuir, DD8 4EZ  
2nd Friday of the month 7pm-11pm  
www.kirriemuirwargames.co.uk  
daledsmith@btinternet.com

**Livingston Battleground**

Lanthorn Community Centre, Kenilworth Rise,  
Dedridge, Livingston, EH54 6NY  
Saturday 9.15am-12.15pm  
www.battleground.org.uk  
info@battleground.org.uk

**St Aidans Warriors**

St Aidans Scottish Episcopal Church, Mearns  
Road, Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 7EU  
Sunday 7pm-11pm  
www.ukclubs.org/info/StAidans  
staidans@ukclubs.org

**Stirling Wargamers**

Ochil Community Hall, Ochil Crescent, Stirling,  
FK8 1QJ  
Thursday 6pm-10pm  
stirlingwargamers.50webs.com  
info@stirling-wargamers.org.uk

**WALES****Bridgend Games Club**

Gilead Chapel Hall, Coity, Nr. Bridgend, Bridgend  
County CF35 6AU  
Sunday 5pm-9pm  
castlegamesclub.tk  
kyinpie@hormail.com

To get your club into the GCN register, contact  
robey.jenkins@gamingclubnetwork.org.uk.





## This is...Madness!

by *Marijn Bierhof*

**Back in Ancible #5 I reviewed the game Strange Aeons. It's a simple game, being a mix of H.P. Lovecraft, X-Files and Pulp gaming. It's lots of fun and a great one to play with many people and at events. Fortunately for the fans, Strange Aeons has three expansions by now. In this review I will look into the three expansions to check if they are worth the price.**

**The three expansions are: Shocking Tales #1, Shocking Tales #2 and Morbid Adventures.**

**Shocking Tales of Madness And Mayhem #1 (\$16.95 CAD)**

This was the first expansion to Strange Aeons and it was released in 2010. Strange Aeons was only several months old, but it was good to see a new expansion so fast. Shocking Tales (ST) is a 32 page softcover booklet, in full color. The layout is similar to Strange Aeons and is a nice continuation on the main rulebook. It has nice sepia photos, drawings and sketches which all fit in very well with the theme of the game.

The book is divided into several parts: an introduction by Uncle Mike, new weapons for the game, new promotions for experienced Threshold agents, animals for your Threshold team, prototype weapons, new scenarios, new Lurkers, scenes of horror and the first part of a story written by Uncle Mike himself. You can see that's a lot of information for only 32 pages. Yes, the book is crammed full of good stuff.

The weapons add new options for both the Threshold team and the Lurkers. You can now equip your heroes or villains with battle axes, Molotov cocktails or even a flamethrower. To top it off, there are options for special types of ammunition. It's always smart to take some silver bullets when heading off for a Werewolf! I really like the added weapons as they give for more options. And in a simple game like Strange Aeons



more options are a good thing as it allows for more variety.

The promotion rules give you options for more advanced Threshold teams. Whenever a Threshold team has won fifteen games, they will get a promotion. This basically means they can take on more difficult missions and they can employ trained animals, like attack dogs, falcons or horses. The rules for promotions are nice, but the requirement for fifteen wins is a bit silly. Usually, our team will last a maximum of ten games before either they're mauled or the players get bored by them. So to use them well, I would give Threshold a promotion after winning five games.

In the 'Special Branch' you can find some excellent and exotic weaponry for your games. Ever fancy a Martian Heat Ray? Now you can take one and fry your opponent to slag! There is one problem though: you need a promotion to take them. Argh! So lower that promotion demand and fry away.

In the Scenarios chapter there are four new scenarios. All of them require the Threshold player to expend Map Pieces, so they're not for new teams. Your team needs to have found Map Pieces to play these, so they are interesting for experienced players. There is a rescue mission, a supply drop, the investigation of a bad place and finally, the Threshold team needs to destroy a Doomsday Device.

Then we get to a fantastic chapter: new Lurkers! In total there are eleven new Lurkers, so lots of new choices. You can find small critters like swarms or

giant vermins to scary daemons like the fire daemon. There are also more humanoid choices, like a rogue Threshold character (who can pick a special weapon as stolen item!) or the suicide cultist. For me, this chapter really is the highlight of the book as it allows for lots of nice new miniatures to use in the game.

The Scenes of Horror explains how Lurkers can invest points to place D3 pieces of scenery on the table to help them against the Threshold team. They are very scary for humans and tend to be annoying 'bogs' to block incoming Threshold agents. The downside is they are quite expensive to field.

And finally, we have the story by Uncle Mike. The story reads like a battle report of Strange Aeons and is lots of fun. The main downside is that it is unfinished and will continue in a later book.

All in all, Shocking Tales #1 is a great first expansion to Strange Aeons. It gives all players nice new options: new weapons, more Lurkers and new scenarios. The promotions are okay, but I think you will never see them on the table unless you tweak the rules. For (\$16.95 CAD it is highly recommended!

### **Shocking Tales of Madness and Mayhem #2 (\$19.95 CAD)**

More than a year after ST#1 was released, Uncle Mike released #2. Like #1, this issue is softcover and a mix of full color and black and white. Like Strange Aeons and ST#1 it looks great and is perfectly fitting with a 20s Lovecraftian setting. This issue has gained eight pages and is 40 pages thick in total.

In contrast to ST#1, this issue has a theme to set it apart: Dinosaurs! So this issue is not only about scary monsters and unearthly Gods, it's also partly a 'Lost World' issue. The issue is divided into two distinctive parts. The first 22 pages are black and white and are about playing a campaign in a hostile jungle where time stood still. Neanderthals and dinosaurs roam the lands and the Threshold team must try to navigate through these dangerous lands to find a lost explorer. If they find the explorer in time, the Threshold team is successful and heads back to the known world. If not, they will be lost in the jungles and probably end up as a lizard's lunch. Before the campaign rules are explained, the book gives Threshold some more options for weapons and supporting characters. These characters can be





picked for the campaign, but also for regular games of Strange Aeons. After all, who doesn't want to have a Big Game Hunter with an elephant gun supporting his team?

The next chapter explains how the players can play a campaign, called a 'Black Dossier'. Each Black Dossier has its own rules, victory conditions, weapon tables and Lurkers. I assume this is how Uncle Mike easily sets each theme and Black Dossier apart and it works well. The Threshold player first builds an exploring team of models of any value. Of course, building a team of 50BP gives the Lurker player a field day and the option to take the really nasty critters, like the T-Rex. So it's wise to don't go overboard. But remember that you are stuck with the team and don't get any regular reinforcements. After all, you're neck deep in unexplored jungles. The nice part is that you are able to find new recruits in the jungles and you can arm them. There are severe limits on the weapons, so it will be common to find a survivor and arm him with a long bow. Roaming through the jungles is not easy as your team has to feed the group. This means you need to have enough food to feed the followers. If you fail to feed them, they will starve. At first this leads to decreasing statistics but eventually it will lead to death.

The team is in the jungle to find the missing explorer. There are several scenarios to play and ST#2 introduces five new scenarios for the Black Dossier. In some scenarios there is a chance the team find survivors or the explorer if they succeed.

The Lurker player has access to certain Lurkers. He can field cave men, velociraptors, pterodactyls and other Lurkers, including some of the existing Lurkers.

The main problem with the Black Dossier rules is that a Threshold team needs to win five consecutive games in order to do a Black Dossier. That's hard... very hard. So you might introduce some house rules here to compensate.

After the Black Dossier, there are 18 pages with more stuff for your regular games. ST#2 introduces ten new Lurkers, from the Witch (who has a new spell list), to zombie dogs and several types of ghosts. The Lurker player now has loads of enemies to choose from if you include Strange Aeons and ST#1!

Uncle Mike then introduces a very special type of Lurker: Mobs. These are groups of Lurkers working together as a crazed mob of villains. They are mounted on a regular CD and have lots of scary rules to simulate a group of madmen working together to bring down Threshold.

Next chapter shows the 'Frequently Asked Questions'. Iain Colwell compiled these on the Strange Aeons forum on Lead Adventure and Uncle Mike published them in this issue. Very nice for newer players and whenever you might have a rules discussion.

Finally, Uncle Mike continues his story which started in ST#1. A fun read, but once again it's not finished so we still have to wait for the next part.

All in all ST#2 is a great addition to Strange Aeons. It offers more options and a nice twist with the Black Dossier rules. They are a great way to offer themed games and other directions for your games. Now you can play Jurassic Park with the Strange Aeons rules and I think everybody loves dinosaurs. The FAQ is a nice touch, but wasn't necessary for me. I can relate if some players like the addition though, as Iain gives good examples on the rules to elaborate on them.

### **Morbid Adventures (\$24.95 CAD)**

Finally, we have the third expansion to Strange Aeons, which was released in January 2012. Morbid Adventures (MA) has that same distinctive look as the other books, is also softcover and full color. Like ST#2, MA continues the trend by being thicker than its predecessor and it counts 50 pages. It also has

a higher retail price, but still not too shabby for its price. Like the Strange Aeons rulebook, MA is spiral bound, probably because of the extra pages in it.

Morbid Adventures is mostly a collection of scenarios, Lurkers and equipment with some new additions. It starts with new additions, with the Necronomicon. This dreaded tome is a book which contains several spells. The Threshold team can find pages from this book in some new scenarios. Casting these spells can be a great boon as they bring powerful effects. On the other hand, they also come at a price. Threshold models gain 'Black Marks' from spells and these will have negative effects to the agents. At first it might show as side effects, like an increased Resolve score (which is bad), but eventually it might lead to a defecting agent which is lured by the dark side!

The book then goes full into the scenarios. It contains a new scenario table and all of the scenarios were reviewed to improve them. The book now has seven basic scenarios (without any requirements) and a whopping 23 (!) quest scenarios. The Threshold team needs to invest Map Pieces to play quest scenarios and with a total of 30 games, it will take years to play them all. Fantastic. In addition, Uncle Mike has provided most scenarios with simple variants to



spice them up and he has added game tips to give some tactical advice.

After the long chapter with scenarios, the book has five pages filled with all the Lurker profiles which were published so far. So not only do you have all the scenarios in one book, you also have all of the Lurkers in the same book. Nothing new, but it helps tremendously during gameplay.

The book then spends two pages on Game Modes, like solo play, multiplayer games, etc. All in all this chapter does not add a lot and I think most players will think up these rules themselves.

And finally, the book ends with two pages filled with all the weapons and special weapon rules together. No more flipping through three books to find it all. It's all in the back of the book. There also is a small table with all the scenarios and the requirements for each scenario. Once again, it was not required but it makes gameplay a lot easier and saves a lot of searching through the books.

Morbid Adventures is a bit of a strange book. On one hand it doesn't offer a lot of new stuff, on the

other hand it offers everything an experienced player wants. All of the scenarios, Lurkers and weapons are combined in one book. It also makes ST#1 and #2 a bit obsolete. Then again, since the Shocking Tales issues can be hard to get hold of, it's a nice way to get hold of the most important rules for the game.

### Concluding

So there you have it, three expansion books for Strange Aeons. There's a lot of new stuff and I think most of it will appeal to players. Basically, they are all three must haves for fans of Strange Aeons. They all offer lots of new rules and goodies for the game and I think it will take years before you get bored. If you are new to Strange Aeons and you're still not sure if this is your game, then I would advise to get Morbid Adventures. It gives you the most important things from all of the books and is an excellent reference piece during games.

From what I learned, the next expansion book by Uncle Mike will be 'Von Aussprechlichen Kulturen', which will introduce a new campaign system to give an experience similar to Necromunda or Mordheim, but then set in the world of Strange Aeons.





# MAD ABOUT WARGAMES ?

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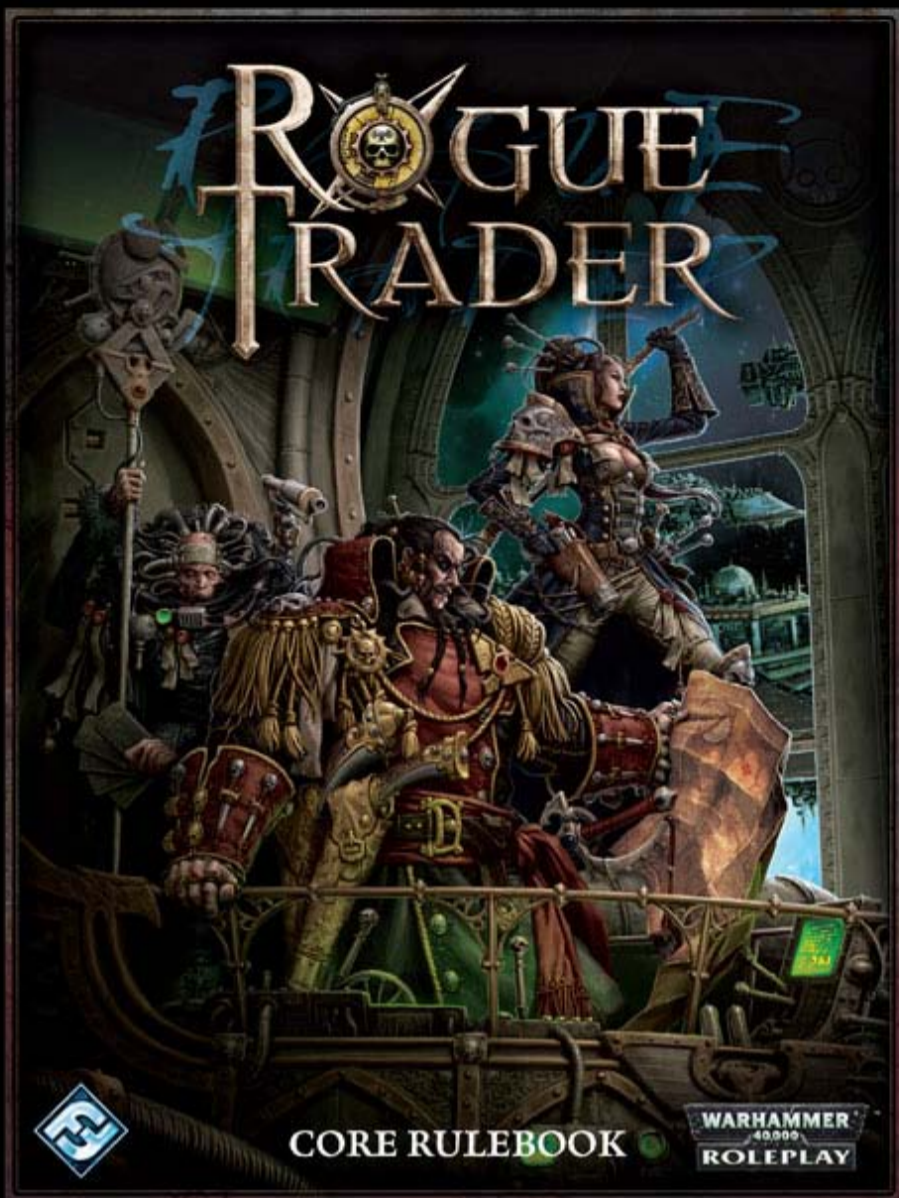
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BY  
JEZ "THE GM"  
FAIRCLOUGH



([www.fantasyflightgames.com/](http://www.fantasyflightgames.com/)) who produce the game under license from Games Workshop ([www.gamesworkshop.com](http://www.gamesworkshop.com)). They were more than willing to send us a copy of the main rule book and also the Games Masters Guide as well.

A few months ago I was surfing around the net looking at some of the new games out there and it seems that a new game pops up every other day. While looking around, I realized that as a group we hadn't run an RPG for some time and maybe the break would be a laugh. I do tend to find that our RPG sessions have no sanity whatsoever. We've played Paranoia far too many times to take anything serious, which can be both fun and frustrating.

I decided that it would have to be a Sci-Fi RPG as I fancied a break from characters running around semi dressed (And that's just the guys J). I also fancied a bash at something in the 40k Universe. As a group we all love the rich background that the Universe has been added to by people like Dan Abnett, Andy Hoare and Gav Thorpe to name a few.

The Universe itself offers a good option and choice of playing style. I settled on playing Rogue Trader. The idea that the group could start with a huge bank account and influence really interested me. Speaking to the other guys they were interested enough to take the plunge as well. All we needed was the book. Now for that I turned to Kenny and he spoke to his contact at Fantasy Flight Games

Although I've read a fair few books, you're always going to have moments when you don't know something. Instead of asking about I hunted online for a good Wiki. We all know that fan created wiki's are the best. So finding the 40k Wiki ([http://warhammer40k.wikia.com/wiki/Warhammer\\_40k\\_Wiki](http://warhammer40k.wikia.com/wiki/Warhammer_40k_Wiki)) was easy and I used it to find out about the area that Rogue Trader and Inquisitor RPG are set in. The 40k Universe is huge and knowing even a little bit can help you out. I also looked at planet types and got a better understanding of how Rogue Traders, the Ecclesiarchy and Administration work.

By the time the book turned up I was happy that I'd got a good understanding of the world around in which the game was set. As a Gamesmaster it's up to you to know everything even if it's a characters specialist subject.

With books from FFG you can't fault the quality and dedication they go to ensuring that you get a good product. Not every game is for everyone, but we should all be able to say when something positive when it has been done right. The book itself is a whopping 400 pages in size and it's really not something you're going to skim through in the first night.

## The Game Concept

As a concept, Rogue Trader does it a little different to the normal RPG's I've played in the past. In most cases you start low, hardly any power if any at all, and try to make a name for yourself. In Rogue Trader you are a member of an elite group whose name can make red tape vanish; you can call upon the support of Imperial Guard Regiments and members of the Legio Astrates as well. You have money come out of the piggy bank and power that scares people silly. So it's not the normal game start by any stretch of the imagination.

The idea is that your group takes the roles of a Rogue Trader and his loyal henchmen, playing the space-lanes to seek fortune and fame. To help you along the game provides you with a profit factor which can make buying things easy...no checking the local price or working out if you have enough money. Mundane things will come easy, bigger things will be a challenge, but what a Rogue Trader considers bigger things is beyond the normal citizen.

The game aids you with a ship and then you're off and running. The Gamesmaster, along with the players write the story and live out the highs and lows.

## Character Creation

Okay, right from the start, I had trouble with this. I just didn't get it. I read the main creation rules through twice and I still kept thinking I'd missed pages. It wasn't that the rules are complicated, far from it.

The creation process like most games starts with your stats; you roll 2d10 and add 25 to the result. Unlike some games what you have in your stats doesn't decide what sort of character you are. In some ways I like this as we all end up in jobs that we might not be the perfect choice for, but we can still do them.

The next element is what does it for me. In many RPG's you spend ages trying to help players decide their background, where they came from, what they have done in the past and so on. Rogue Trader uses a system called the Origin path. You start at the top and work your way down, you can go left or right of the option you're on as well. Once you hit the last

**THE ORIGIN PATH**

<b>HOME WORLD</b>	DEATH WORLD	VOID BORN	FORGE WORLD	HIVE WORLD	IMPERIAL WORLD	NOBLE BORN		
<b>BIRTHRIGHT</b>	SCAVENGER	SCAPEGRACE	STUBJACK	CHILD OF THE CREED	SAVANT	VAUNTED		
<b>LURE OF THE VOID</b>	TAINED	CRIMINAL	RENEGADE	DUTY BOUND	ZEALOT	CHOSEN BY DESTINY		
<b>TRIALS AND TRAVAILS</b>	THE HAND OF WAR	PRESS-GANGED	CALAMITY	SHIP-LORN	DARK VOYAGE	HIGH VENDETTA		
<b>MOTIVATION</b>	ENDURANCE	FORTUNE	VENGEANCE	RENOWN	PRIDE	PRESTIGE		
<b>CAREER</b>	ASTROPATH TRANSCENDENT	ARCH-MILITANT	VOID-MASTER	EXPLORATOR	MISSIONARY	SENESCHAL	NAVIGATOR	ROGUE TRADER

ROGUE TRADER

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level you have a good amount of information on your character, including some adjustments to your stats, skills, talents.

So in this example my Character is Void Born, born amongst the stars and may of not set foot on a planet ever.

My Birthright is that of a Stubjack, I'm a person happy with violence and someone whose had it around them all his/her life. My Lure of the Void is Criminal, so at some point I was running from something and may still be.

Trials and Travails is the Hand of War. Along with Stubjack and my Lure of the Void being Criminal maybe I'm running from the Imperial Guard army, shell shocked and scared. Or maybe while running I ended up in Imperial Service to hide from my past or was forced into Imperial Service because of my past.

My Motivation is Fortune, so I'm in it for the money! It's plain and simple for me.

Finally, my Career as Void Master shows that I've been on a ship some time, working my way up through the ranks to control a small part of the huge ship.



These subtle choices all change the base stats you rolled in various ways. For instance, Void Born means my Strength will be reduced by 5, while my Willpower will be raised by 5. Criminal, depending on what sub option I pick, could up my perception or give me an Enemy.

It's the little things like this that really help people flesh a character out and make them a little different from the cookie cutter style that is seen all too often.

Your Career is what you are, but like many games it doesn't fix you into a certain direction. For instance, not all Rogue Traders are the same, each one decides just how much he tows the Imperial line and some are seen as being no different than bandits and pirates. Others are seen as shining lights bringing old colonies back into the fold and guiding light of the God Emperor of man. So the stats are just the start.

Once you have gone through the Career Path the next element is to make sure you pick up the Skills and attributes that your Career gives you. Each one is different even if they might share a few similar skills. A Void Master who has forced his way up through the ranks to govern the Macro Batteries of the ship will have skills that the sneaky and trading Seneschal doesn't need. Why have the muscle when you can just hire it. Who, apart from the Explorator Emissary of the Machine Cult, needs such close contact and arcane knowledge of every sub system the ship has to offer? The Combat Master hidden in the guise of the Arch-Militant, master of nearly every weapon brings the group the muscle they might need. Though you don't always need physical strength to command the battlefield, both the Navigator with his third eye and ability to transverse the Immaterium and the Astropath Transcendent with his psychic abilities can turn the tide of any battle. They also bring powers some may see as witchcraft. Not to be missed is the fiery voice and belief in the God Emperor in the guise of the Missionary, always willing to help the lost back into the fold. But don't see these preachers as weak and easily mollified as more than one has called down total destruction on a planet for it heresy.

At the top of all this is the top man/women in the group, the Rogue Trader, holder of the Imperial Warrant.



But as I've said it's really the player that decides what or how their character deals with situations and there is plenty of scope to send a character in a specific direction. There is nothing to stop the Seneschal turning his gregarious personality into that of a cold and calculating spy master. The rules have plenty of scope to do this and so much more.

Once sorted and equipped you are ready for the Games Master to start you off. A few rolls are made for the group as one decides just how much fortune you have as a group. The other determines how much you have to spend on the vessel which will get you around on your adventures. It's only a small thing but pick wisely since the last thing you want is some rust bucket when the going gets hot.

Another thing that makes up your character is his/her skills and talents. Just because you can afford a Hellgun doesn't mean you have the ability to use it and even if you can you might not be very good with it. Guns really are the area the Arch-Militant excels in, he can pretty much use any standard weapon from a Bolt Pistol, through to a Lasgun. Taking him in a certain direction can also give him access to more exotic weapons used by various Xenos races.

In its essence, skills govern what you can do and how well you do it. Being unskilled in something means that although you can give it a go your chances of success are going to be slim at best. It's good to try and have a good mix of character types if you can. Your group might not be big enough to cover all of them but the more the merrier. As Games Master you should try to avoid people doubling up. It's possible to do this by introducing NPC's (Non Playing Characters, the faceless cast of thousands) but it's always more fun when the players make the mistakes themselves.

Talents, much like skills, are those unique things a character knows or can do. They are things picked up from living somewhere or doing a certain type of career. The rules don't stop you learning skills and talents outside your own career path; they just try to make it not so easy to do so.

The book has whole sections just dedicated to what you can do with your own strange ability. While loads of people can fire a weapon it takes a certain special person who can ride the warp or pick up a person's thoughts behind a closed door. If you're not playing this type of character there isn't any need at all to

start by reading those sections. If you're the Games Master then you need to make sure you've read these even if you don't have any characters who need to use these talents as you might have NPC's who do have them and you're going to have to know how they can affect the rest of the players.

Our first session as a group was going through the Origin Path getting everyone sorted out with what they were, what they had and the like. I used the Wiki afterwards to send them some more information to try and help them all out a little.

Our little group is as follows.

**Kenny – Seneschal**

**Ian B – Rogue Trader**

**Ian C – Missionary**

**Si – Explorator**

**Andy – Arch-Militant**

Although we don't have some of the more extreme character classes like Navigator or Astropath, we have enough to be going on with and I can supplement them with members of the ship's crew.

For Andy, this will be his first real go at a RPG so it's been fun trying to explain how it all works without miniatures. Though not to be deterred he's already started to find mini's to convert or use so that everyone will have something painted for his character. You can't keep a good paint monkey down!

One of the most interesting creation-type areas is the chapter on Starships. It doesn't just help you build the ship of your dream's, the one that's going to take you from port to port (remember my comment on rust buckets earlier). The rules give life to the ship through Machine Spirit Oddities and Past Histories. Maybe your ship likes trouble and doesn't want to run from a fight. It's something to deal with and keeps you on your toes a little.



It also explains in great detail how to deal with Ship to Ship combat. You might think it'll never happen but trust me it will, unless the Games Master steers you away from it all the time. In my experience, someone at some point going to say we have a bigger ship than they do, so let's open fire. The spoils of war for this sort of venture can be high. If you can cripple the ship space the crew (I mean hand them over to the correct authorities), it's your ship. It might take a few months in a space dock to hammer out the odd dent or two but you've expanded your fleet.

It is little elements like this that adds another direction to the game. Get a big enough ship, maybe a cruiser and what's to stop you going pirate hunting or taking on ships from the ruinous powers.

As a rules set, most RPG's work along the same idea: to do x you use y ability or z skill. Some of these skills won't have anything to stop you; some will be opposed to make life hard. You can't always brow beat someone to do something if that's what they normally do.

Okay the rules are slightly more complicated than what I've described but if you break it down it's not that bad. For instance, I want to shoot someone so I use my Ballistic skill, my target is my skill level or less modified by certain circumstances. If I want someone to do something I can intimidate them as well. But they could resist and if they do they might well see me in an even worse light than before. It's something every player needs to be aware of. When it goes wrong people don't always stay neutral, more often they get hostile. This is worked out using the degrees of success/failure.

Like any RPG, every game turn there could be a lot going on; it's not always simply shooting at people. The game gives you depth to expand and personalize what you feel is the way you as a group want to play. It brings in all the elements that a tabletop wargame would as well. The Injury system reminds me of what was used in MERP (Middle Earth Roleplay) as in it's not just a wound. Places can be hit, limbs can be lost and permanent damage can befall a character if he's not careful. This could lead to replacement limbs or organs, or the slip into madness or corruption by the ruinous powers. It can all happen, and if you're lucky it will.

The rules give you plenty of ideas on how to gain more profit value for your group and even ways to lose it. Other supplements expand on this as well as offering new and interesting ways to make a group more powerful, or as the Games Master, to make their downfall even more fun.

The last 100 or so pages of the book are turned over to helping the Games Master out by explaining how

to guide a game or deal with issues. It also has some good information on the Koronos Expanse, the area the game is played in, but it's not everything you need to know. The game has more than enough grey areas that allow you to add in new systems, new bad guys and anything else you need.

The final chapter in the book is a simple starter adventure, tricky enough to make the group think, but not dangerous enough that they should all be dead by the end of the first act. Well you hope that doesn't happen ;)

For my group this will be where we start. I've read it through a few times and I'd advise anyone running a game to do the same. Read each bit before you do it. Decide at what point you plan to stop and try not to let it go past that point. Most groups like to chat so filling in spare time is never a worry.

I know the idea of Trade and its style may not suit everyone, but it shouldn't put you off playing in the ever expanding universe. Dark Heresy covers all things Inquisitor and you can garner information for that or bring things over into Rogue Trader. The system also lets you play as Adeptus Astratus (Space Marines), Agents of the Ruinous powers and more recently the good old trusty Imperial Guard. There are more than enough options to keep everyone busy and interested. If you can't find a style to suit you, then you are looking into it too hard. With an ever expanding catalogue of expansions, the game isn't static as more is being added to expand your character (Into the Storm) or have a better ship (Battlefleet Koronus), and you can always keep pushing the envelope of choice and direction.

Thanks to Final Fantasy Games for the game and we'll keep everyone abreast of the group's adventures.



ROGUE  
TRADER



# Infinity Miniatures New Releases

## March New releases



### Force de Réponse Rapide Mérovingienne.

Finally, the long-awaited French-Ariadnan Sectorial Starter Pack has been released. This box is a compilation of previously released figures: 3 Métros - the Merovingian base troops; 1 Para-Commando HMG - with so powerful support weapon this parachutist is the true "death from above"; 1 Zouave - this skilled light trooper can be deployed in advance, able to take down any armored enemy with his D.E.P.; 1 female Moblot with Rifle - this tough Heavy Infantry is a conversion of a previously released figure. As a powerful mobile force, the FRRM is perfectly placed to respond to any threat or neutralize any danger at any point on the planet in a short space of time.



### Hafza (Spitfire).

The Haqqislamite Hafza is one of the few units that can use a Spitfire, the queen of the support weapons, as a Lieutenant. Thanks to their holo-devices the Hafza can disguise themselves by taking on the appearance of a different troop type. They are very useful as hidden Lieutenants but also in an Infinity Fireteam, where they provide more tactical flexibility, allowing creation of cheaper linked teams.



### Sun Tze v.2 (Marksman Leader)

This is the most tactical version of the Recreation of the legendary strategist. The "Marksman Leader" equipment provides him with the ability to shoot his enemies at a very long distance with his characteristic serenity and methodical precision. Now Yu Jing players can combine Sun Tze's Strategos Special Skill with his sniper ability.

### Gwailos (Spitfire)

The Gwailos are the Shasvastii strike force, always taking the direct path. Covered by their advanced Nanoscreen, the Gwailos perform devastating attacks ignoring hostile fire. Now you can add more firepower to your Gwailos Fireteam with this Spitfire specialist, so it will be more fearsome than ever.



### Druze Shock Team.

Created by the Druze Society, the Shock Teams are a mercenary assault unit with a wild and bloody reputation, equipped with sophisticated military gear. So, this Four multipart figures box is a gift not only for Haqqislamite players, who can form a Druze Fireteam in their Qapu Khalqi Sectorial Army, but also for the other Infinity players who can use them as Mercenaries.



# THE LAST WORD

WITH  
UNCLE BOMBER

## I have made a Descision

I have made a decision, I don't like gaming shops, you know the ones that have gaming tables in the shop area, and I don't like the way they only cater for kids. You know the ones, aged between 12 and 40, it's not that I don't like young people; it's just that I don't like young people. I imagine they have their place; I'm just not sure where it is. And why do they have to be so vocal when they game, why can't they just enjoy the experience without whooping and jumping around. And why do staffers of our friendly local gaming store feel it's a good idea by joining in. I like my shop staff to look at me with disdain when I come in, to treat me with barely concealed contempt, at least until they realise I am going to spend money.

My ideal FLGS would have large comfortable seats, the ones that you can just sink into, a bar in one corner serving grown up drinks. None of those fruit based drinks thank you very much. And it must have a library containing rulebooks and military reference books. And I want hot drinks and toasties available 24hrs a day.

In this mythical shop my figures would be moved around the tables by young ladies dressed as World War two air traffic staff, you know the ones who used the long poles to move little wooden aircraft around their plotting tables, we would all sit in the gallery imperiously commanding the girls to move our figures while sitting in comfortable chairs eating toasties.

I would make my figure purchases from a catalogue that would be brought to me by the barman when he delivered my large non fruit based drink to my comfy chair. The store would have a dress code and only be available to those of a certain age. Where any overt shows of enthusiasm by the younger members would be met by choruses of tutts and lots of eye rolling.

The shop would obviously have a direct line to all the suppliers

and designers out there; they would then lovingly pack your order before delivering it immediately to you in your comfy chair. I would do this because I know it's impossible for stores to stock every range available. I wouldn't have any of that internet rubbish in the store either; we would all get by with phones and having to speak to people, instead of relying on E-mails that get ignored.

A gaming store should be a refuge from the trials and the tribles of life; you should walk in the door and feel a sense of peace settle over you as you first catch a glimpse of all the figures and rule books lining the shelves. Gaming shops should be a haven, a place gamers can hide when wives and husbands drag us shopping at the weekend.

Our FLGS should have the same status as a religious center. We should be able to enter and claim asylum from the problems of everyday living. Gaming isn't a hobby, it's a way of life and our stores should reflect that. Who wants to play a game while being surrounded by shoppers after all?

OK, maybe my expectations are a little high, but we can all dream cant we. As always you a free to disagree with me, as always you would be wrong.

Uncle Bomber

If you have any comments you would like to make or if you have a subject that you feel Uncle Bomber should tackle then please send your emails to [unclebomber@the-ancible.com](mailto:unclebomber@the-ancible.com)



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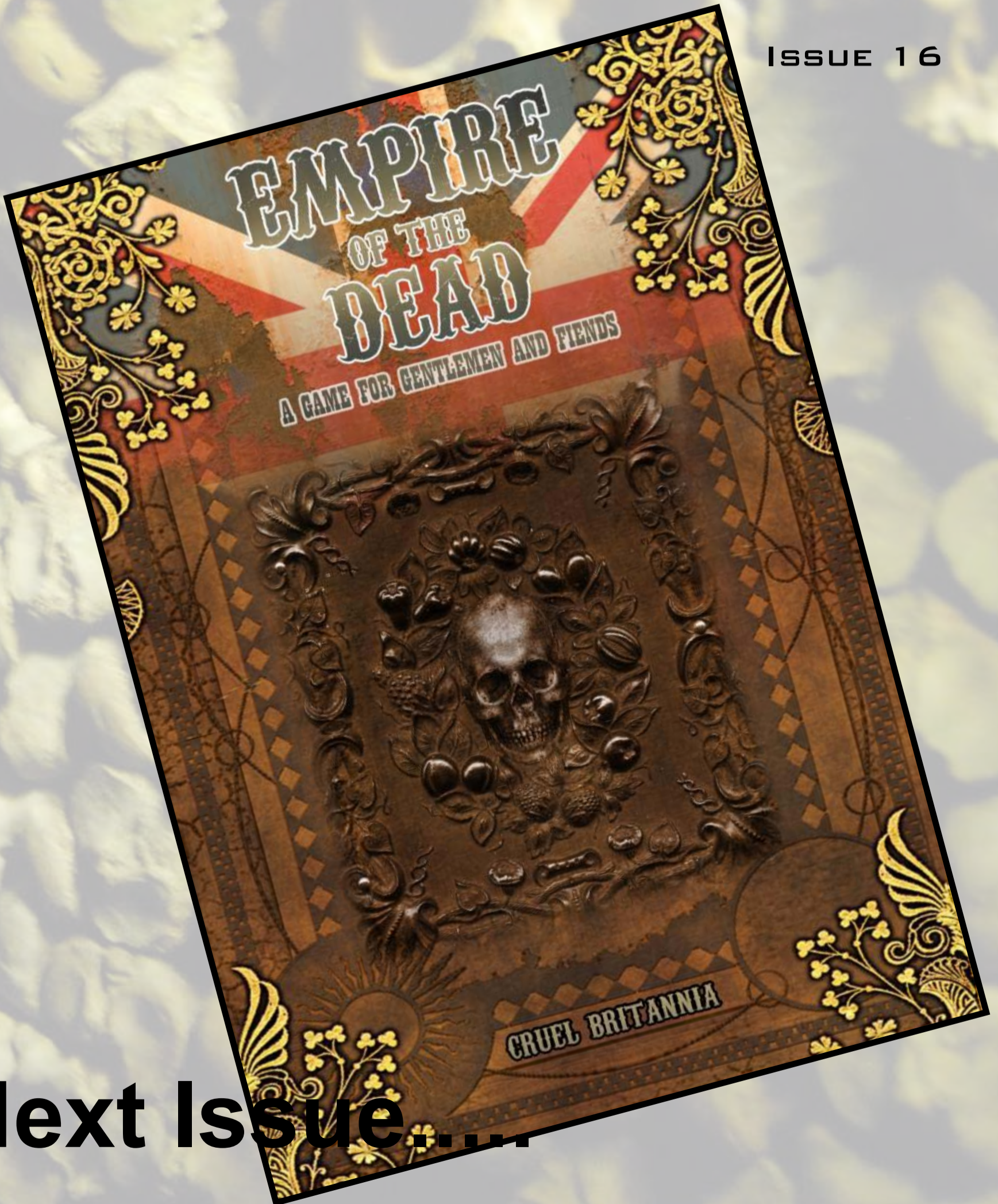


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