

THE Ancible

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Your portal to Sci-Fi and Fantasy Gaming

ISSUE 19



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THE Ancible

View from the Command Deck

Greetings of the season from all at Ancible Towers. Hopefully Santa brought you everything you wanted and if not then I am sure that there are lots of retailers out there just waiting to take your orders. Lets start the year off with a couple of announcements. Firstly having cleared it with domestic control I will be attending Gencon this year so I look forward to meeting some of you there. Don't worry UK people I will still be attending the various shows in the UK as I have a self renewing pass from domestic control for those. It will be great to catch up and see what you have been up to. Second I have started to pay about with some of the new Google+ community stuff and have created a page so why not come along and say hello. Later in the year I will be running some hangouts and you would be most welcome to come along and take part. It is a new year and possibly time to look for some new blood on the writing front so if you think you would like to have a go then get in touch. It is not as difficult as you might think and the guys here can help. Drop me an email at kenny@the-ancible.com but better be quick as the writers are already committing to articles for future issues. If 2012 was the year of Kickstarter then what will 2013 bring. Who knows but all we can do is continue to bring you what new and interesting in the work of Sci-fi and fantasy gaming. On another note I would like to draw your attention to the DONATE button on the web site. We all do this for nothing and have been bringing you the magazine for free for 2 years now and your donations allow me to keep the magazine running. Enjoy another issue.

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

Kenny R



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Reviews

Manufacturers and publishers are invited to send in samples of their products for our team to review in the magazine.

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Blue Table Painting

by Spencer D Taylor

Miniature wargaming, as many of us know, comes in two parts; the gaming itself and the hobby. The gaming is the part we're all most familiar with; the rules, the dice rolling and constant taunting of friends and mocking of futile efforts when you can't seem to roll anything other than 1's. The other part is the hobby aspect of it all; painting and putting the models used for the gaming together. For some of us the assembling and painting of models is the main draw; entering competitions and winning awards for their artistic skills. For others the rules of the game are the draw; fighting valiant battles and crushing your foes beneath your feet. I, personally, fall into the latter category, albeit with a good sense of humor about it all. I still paint and assemble the models I buy, but I'm slow and not very skilled which means that it takes me forever and then my stuff doesn't look that

great. I know I'm not alone in this; some people just can't seem to get this painting thing down, and for them there is help.

Nestled in the quiet town of Spanish Fork, Utah, is a company designed specifically to help people who aren't too good at, or simply don't have the time for, the hobby side of things; that company is called Blue Table Painting.

Blue Table Painting was founded in 2003 by owner Shawn Gately who started painting miniatures for profit out of his garage to make extra money after suffering pay cuts while working for the Palo Alto, California, education system. Shortly after Shawn and his family moved to Spanish Fork where he continued to work from his garage for about six months. After this time he decided to look for talent who shared





his dream of providing quality painted miniatures to their gaming brethren, and in the summer of 2004 Blue Table Painting opened their first studio. The company would stay in the small 700 square foot studio for nearly two years; providing a service that few ever thought to capitalize on before, and the company has since gone through more studios constantly needing more space to account for their ever growing business. Now the company stands at a little over 30 employees with a dedicated team of around a dozen dedicated painters and assemblers, and the Blue Table Painting is still growing ever larger. So you might be wondering where I fit into all of this, why I've been tasked with writing this little article, and the answer is simple; in late September I joined the Blue Table Painting crew, packed my stuff and left the Washington D.C. metro area to come out to Spanish Fork to start a new chapter in my life. You might gather from my previous statement about my painting skill and speed that I'm not a part of the paint staff, and you'd be correct. I handle all of the ordering of both supplies for the artists as well as models that clients ask us to get for them as well as transcribing final instructions for our artists.

The first step to getting a project done with BTP is to send us an e-mail with what you want painted and to what level, where you're from and how ready you are to get your project rolling. BTP offers five levels of painting; from the most bare bones of level 2 all the way up to display pieces at level 7 with level 3 being the standard tabletop quality. Once we get your e-mail with a list and details of what levels you want models painted to Shawn himself will send you an initial quote for the project. BTP offers not only painting, but also assembly, conversion work, decorative bases, bags, and other services. Once all

those details have been finalized all we need to get the project started is the deposit(usually 50% of the total cost of the project) and the models. Clients can provide their own models or we can buy them if that's what you want. Once the deposit is paid the client will receive an e-mail asking for final instructions; this is where the client gets to be as specific as they want in regards to assembly(mostly conversions and weapon load-outs for models), painting and basing. These are the instructions that I then transfer to a document which goes down to the artists along with the project. Once we have all the models they make their way down to our assembly department where any assembly that needs to be done is taken care of. Once all assembly work is done, including conversions if you want a truly spectacular custom model, your project goes over to our painters who begin the process of making the miniatures into true works of art. Once the painters have finished their work the models are sent up to digital photography where you get sent pictures of your models to give final approval. We also put pictures of your models up on our online gallery for the entire world to see and to use as reference points in case someone asks us to replicate something. Once we receive the final payment and your project is completely paid off we pack your models up and ship them to you so that you can enjoy them and use them for your gaming pleasure.

BTP doesn't just do wargaming; we also paint miniatures for roleplaying games and we even do pieces for board games. We've done pieces for Super Dungeon Explore by Sodapop Games, the recently





released Zombicide and several others; all to the same quality that we put into wargaming miniatures. You might be asking "why should I go with Blue Table Painting?" The answer is simple: quality work done in a timely manner. Most painting services are one or maybe two people in a basement or garage somewhere, and you have no promises on how long it will take them to do your project. With BTP the average turn-around time is between three and five weeks once everything makes its way down to the actual artists. That's BTP's modus operandi: quality service for a good price in a timely fashion. Everyone at BTP is a professional, so you're guaranteed the highest quality work from some of the most talented artist in the industry.

BTP is also spreading its name around the industry, making ties with gaming companies around the globe. Several companies have already commissioned BTP to paint their products including MERCS, Dream Pod 9 and Mantic Games with more on the way. So expect to see our work on official products from some of your favorite gaming companies soon; in fact you might already see it when this is published.

Blue Table Painting also wishes to connect with

our fans, our friends and our business associates. Several times each year we host our Valhalla event at Sundance Resort here in Utah where gamers from all walks of life can join some of the BTP crew at a cabin for several days of gaming, good food and fun. It's our way of reaching out to our fans, of letting them become a part of the experience and get to meet the people who perhaps painted the army they plan to use during those days. It's much more personal than simply setting up a booth at a convention and some of the names from the industry even make it out for the event to hang out with fans and spend time gaming with the crew. Our final Valhalla of 2012 saw Dave Lewis, creator of the widely popular game

Dropzone Commander, in attendance for example. We're not some cold heartless machine; we're people and gamers just like our clients and we want them to know that, and Valhalla lets us show that off better than anything else. It's our way of connecting, of reaching out and, most importantly, of spending time having fun with our fans and friends.

So if you're one of those folks who just can't seem to muster the skills or time to paint your models, or perhaps you want to give your favorite board game a little extra pop then contact us at bluetablepainting@gmail.com and we'll be glad to provide you with the quality your gaming pieces deserve.



DYSTOPIAN LEGIONS

BY JEZ FAIRCLOUGH

One thing you can't say about Spartan Games (<http://www.spartangames.co.uk/>) being is complacent. They don't sit back and churn out new versions of a game every couple of years like some companies. You can be sure that every year or so to date something new has come along to keep us busy, I mean we all have plenty of time to be painting something new and Shiny don't we?

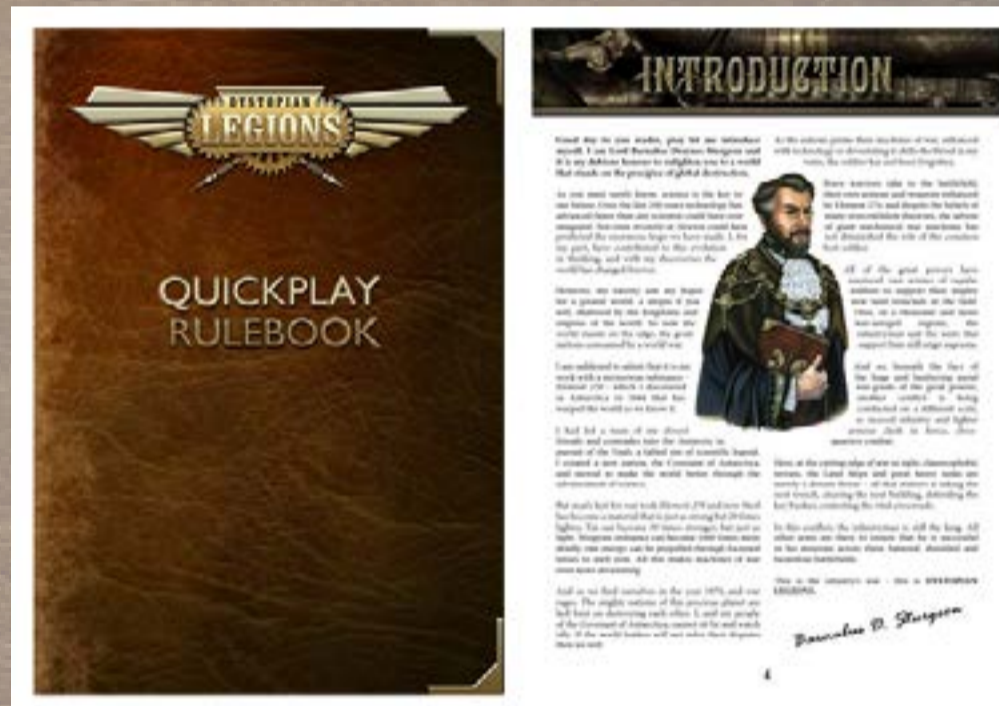
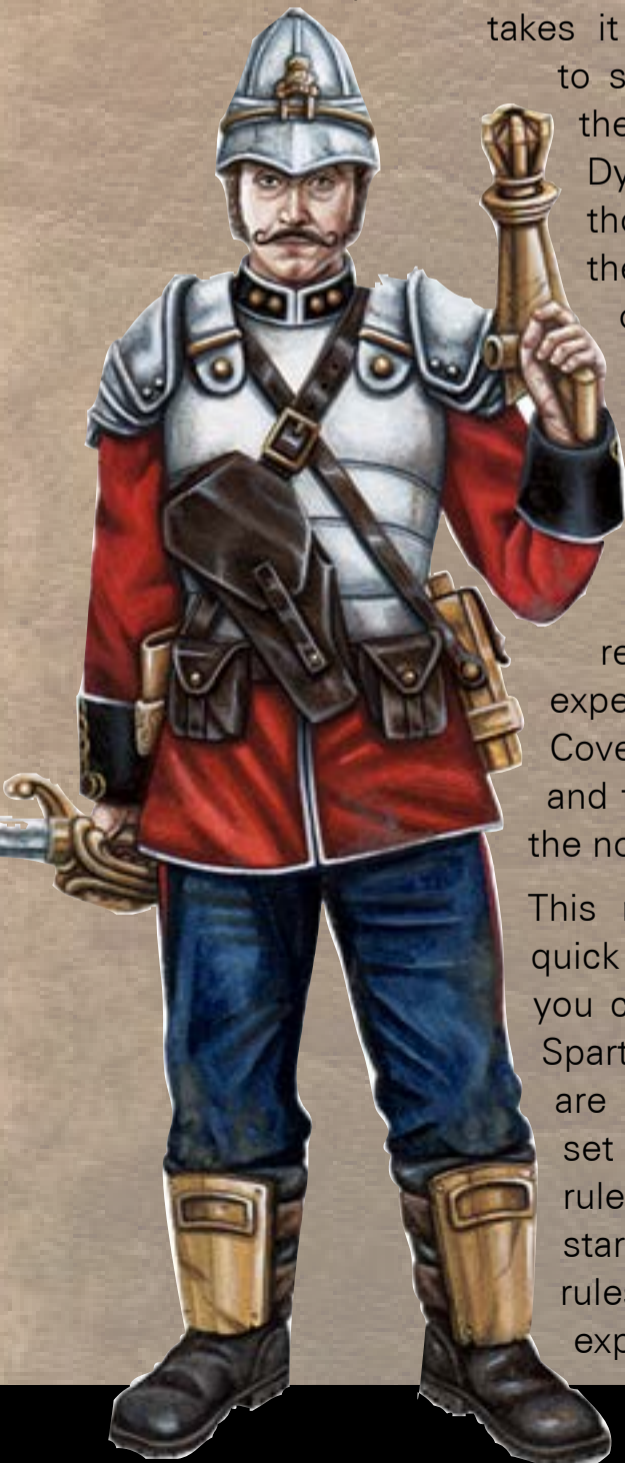
Spartans new venture brings 28/32mm Skirmish to their dystopian world. Based around the world created in Dystopian Wars, Dystopian Legions

takes it down a scale so to speak. It still uses the same forces as Dystopian Wars, though to date only the main forces of the Prussian Empire, Empire of the Blazing sun, Federated States of America and Kingdom of Britannia have been released. I would expect we'll see the Covenant of Antarctica and the Russians etc in the non to distant future.

This review covers the quick play rules that you can download from Spartans website and are also the same set as the A5 mini rulebooks found in the starter box sets. If the rules plan on being expanded to a bigger

version either in amount of information or in size is yet to be announced by Spartan.

The rule book has some nice images in it of painted miniatures and figures but is very light on fluff (background Story). In some ways that can be good if you know the world and just want to get on with it, but it doesn't give a person new to the world much to go on and leaves them very reliant on what can be gleaned from the website and from Dystopian Wars.



Dystopian legions uses the same sort of systems used by other Spartan games so the dice roll idea of 4,5,6's is the same we have cards that use the S*T*A*R system as you can in other Spartan games as well. Now some may see reusing a system time and time again to be an easy way out. But I would have to disagree; it makes it easier for a player to pick up the rules if he has played another game from the same stable. That's not to say it doesn't have its own little quirks as it does, as do all Spartan games.

So as I stated the dice are the same 4,5,6's will get you a hit or a wound. As with all games these can be modified by the skills of a model, distance and various other modifiers. What is added to Dystopian

Legions is additional coloured dice. Beyond the black ones supplied in the starter set you also get some Blue and some Red dice. In previous Spartan games a 6 was 2 successes and you rerolled it and kept rerolling it as long as you got a 6. That's changed if the Dice is Black a 6 is one success and that's it, if its Blue its two successes and that's it, if its Red its two successes and you roll again. Now the dice colour depends on the unit, it can also be affected by certain characters or even cards in play. It can make rolling different weapons at a unit slightly easier as a lot of the specialist weapons tend to use Blue or Red dice over the standard Black dice used by Troop weapons.



Range is a concept familiar to Spartan games and it's no different here. Each band is 8" in size with 48" being the maximum range in the game.

The Troops

Models in the game are split into 4 groups.

Infantry: The normal trooper no matter who he is or what he might be armed with.

Aeronaut: By one means or another these fast moving troops are going to be able to get around the table quickly.

Cavalry: Now it may no longer be a horse that gets these troops about but some sort of mechanical vehicle. But there idea is still the same.

Ironclad: This covers everything with some form of armored shell be it a vehicle or a personal protective suit of some sort.

As with any game each model has a set of stats that govern what its capable of.

Mv – Movement Value, so how far in Inches the model can move.

IR – Injury Rating, this is the number of successes required to cause the loss of a life point.

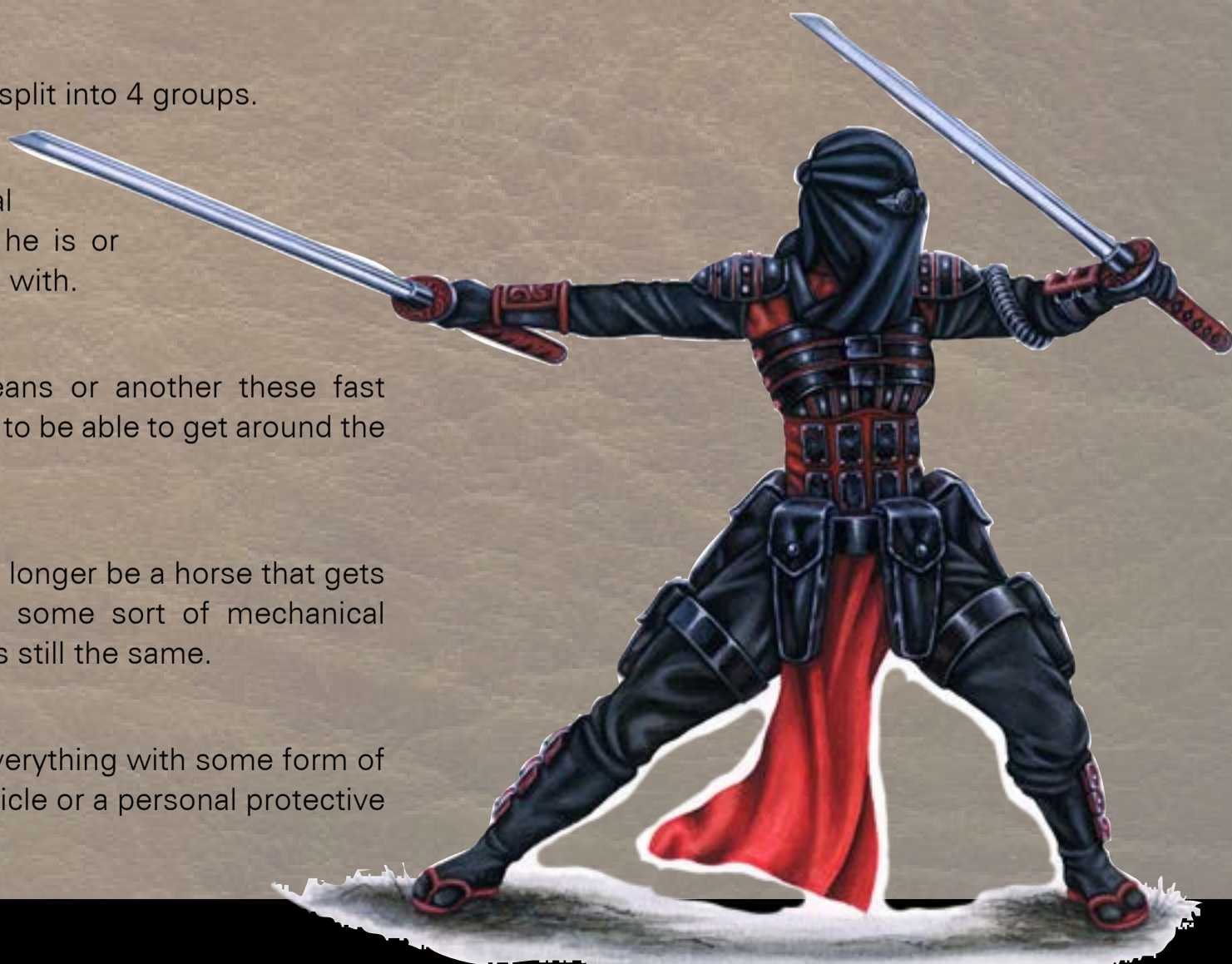
KR – Kill rating this is the number of successes required to cause the loss of all life points. Only a real factor in models with multiple wounds.

LP – Life Points, as in how much damage a model can take.

MAD – Melee Attack Dice, this takes into factor the equipment and sometimes the skills the model have. As mentioned before the dice used could be Black, Blue or Red.

The model will also have stats and rules for any Ranged weapons its carrying as well as any Model Assigned Rules (MAD).

When using Ironclads you gain Rotations which covers how many rotations can be made per move. Armour Rating replaces IR, though it will also have a different value for the Front/Side and Rear. Hull Points (HP) covers how much damage an Ironclad can take before it finally fails.



Combat

Okay I can safely say that Combat is probably one of the most daunting elements of the game. On first read some people might think you what, but trust me after a few reads and a couple of goes it'll make sense, honest.

The steps are easy its always down to what happens during each element that can confuse. Dystopian legions works on the fact that in many cases it's the worst case that works. So with Distance if 5 are in the first band and 3 are in the 2nd range band you tend to either have to shoot separate or everyone shoots at the longer range band. It's your choice, but as it tends to be the more successes the better sometimes taking the harder option is better in the long run. You are going to have to way up the odds.



Most weapons have a 360 degree arc for weapons; some have fixed 90 degree or even fixed forward arcs based on what they are. Ironclads tend to be those with a restricted arc of some sort.

Each model shootings will allocate a certain amount of dice to the combat. These are rolled and dependent on the colour of them as mentioned before will depend on successes gained. Once you have a total amount each time you reach a models IR a model is wounded, you tend to find with basic troops that's the end of them as they don't have multiple wounds so no KR and a LP rating of 1.

Example

A section of Empire of the Burning Sun Ashigaru has 12 combat dice. It's shooting at a Prussian Empire Grenadier Section. The Grenadiers have an IR of 3 and LP 1. So for every 3 success gained 1 Grenadier is going to be killed. Other members of the unit may have different stats and could last longer.

Sections that lose 50% in one turn will have to worry about leadership, if it runs it can cause issues for those friendlies nearby as I well know myself.

If your attacking Ironclads you are going to need weapons that can dent it so charging in with standard Infantry might not give you result your after unless they have something heavy to back them up.

Leadership

In more than one game what's beaten isn't the fact I can't hit a barn door at 2 paces it's been the fact that when things get a bit dicey and the lead or arrows are flying my troops get a bit yellow and run. Depending on how good the officer is (Rated from Tier 1 (poor) to Tier 6 (Inspiring)) will depend on just what the Leader can do. A Tier 1 officer can command models in sections up to 2" away from him, whilst a Tier 6 has a range of 12". They also effect the amount of bonus dice for morale you get to use or how many extra command points they have. Also the better he/she is the better the dice colour is as well, giving you more chances to get a higher success rate.

Game Cards

If you've played any other Spartan game you know how these work. If you haven't then let me explain, it's very simple every card tends to either give you a bonus or in some way make life harder for an opponent. Playing a card costs a variable amount of command points gained from your leader (Another reason why higher Tier is better), depending on a code on the card (S*T*A*R) will depend on when it can be played.

S- Section Cards have to be played on a section at a max of 1 per section per turn. It's played during the sections activation and because a section can be made up of troops with different profiles not all



models maybe effected.

T – Turn Cards are played at the beginning of a players turn. You can play a max of 1 Turn card per Turn.

A – Action Cards are like S cards you can play a maximum of 1 card per section per turn and you can play it at any point during the unit's activation. This makes them a little more flexible than S cards which have to be played at the start.

R – Reaction Cards, these are played on a section as a reaction to an action by an enemy section. They only last for the length of that action as well and not the rest of the turn.

You can hold a max of 5 cards in your hand at any one time, though this could be modified by other rules (Speculation here to a degree.) Some models will

also give you extra cards that can be swapped out with the standard deck to help you modify the way an army works and benefit from unique abilities (For example the Empire of the Blazing Suns Medic card.)

You will also have cards that represent the forces that you use (Deployment Deck). Each one covers a section or special character.

The Game setup

Spartan suggests that you play on a surface between 4x4 and 6x6 depending on the size of the force you are using. The smaller Patrol sized game which is about the size of the starter boxes is 100pts (give or take.) is good for a 4x4 table whilst bigger battles will need more space.

The rules contain simple guidelines and suggested statistics for the terrain that you decide to deploy on the table. The rules are simple and it does keep the game flowing if you don't

have to worry about the terrain being as deadly as your enemy. Though some terrain types can really cause issues for Ironclads.

Using the Deployment deck you will secretly decide the order in which your troops are deployed with players taking it in turns to deploy there forces. Once this is done then battle commences.

Your Force

At the moment the force composition system is very simple and I hope this will change, if it doesn't then it doesn't.

You have a platoon lead by a Lieutenant; he can command up to 3 mainstay sections but must have at least 1. It then has supporting Arms made up of a max of 2 Veteran Support, Characters and Battalion Support.

Different units have different options for upgrades be it adding a specialist character like a medic or swapping out the weapon choices as well.

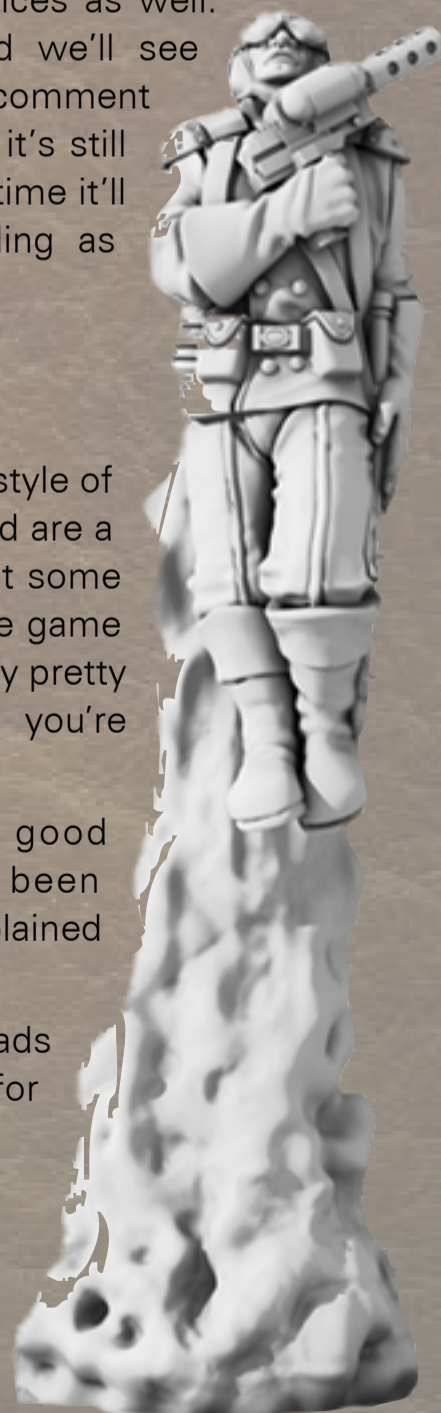
As the model options expand we'll see more choices and it's hard to comment on how balanced it all is when it's still limited. But I don't see why in time it'll keep people busy force building as much as any other game can.

Overall

So far I can safely say I like the style of the game. The rules at first read are a lot to take in and that might put some people off, but it shouldn't. The game is easy enough to be able to play pretty quickly once you know what you're doing.

My only hope is that we see a good selection of troops as that has been a factor I know a few have complained about with Dystopian Wars.

Once we start seeing Ironclads available I think we'll all be in for some fun and games.



DYSTOPIAN LEGIONS



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Watching Paint Dry

By Andy Walker

Facing my fears of good looking models



Introduction

Happy New Year!

There are some models that give me "The Fear". They're not necessarily gruesome or frightening, nor do they have to be particularly evil in nature. "The Fear" happens when I'm faced with painting a model that looks so good I'm worried that I won't be able to do it justice, or that it's so complicated and fiddly that I don't know where to start.

The figure I've painted for this issue's "Watching Paint Dry" is one of those models. Our glorious leader (that would be Kenny) asked me to paint this one for him to go in his collection. When he passed the model on he did say, "There's no rush..." but he (the model, not Kenny) has been sat on a shelf glaring at me for the best part of a year, waiting for me to get a grip and paint him. After some discussion about what this issue's article would be about, it was decided that I would paint the glowering gargoyle, and so I had to overcome the hang-up I've had about the model, pick up the brush and paint.

The model in question is Malus Darkblade a 70mm scale (I think) resin piece from Forgeworld. No longer produced, he's therefore quite rare, and I've found very few examples on the internet. He's a lovely model, very true to the Games Workshop Dark Elf archetype.

A little bit of Background and the Colour Scheme

For those of you not familiar with Games Workshop's Warhammer setting, Dark Elves (known in their own tongue As "Druchii") are an arrogant, sadistic,

cunning and bloodthirsty people, with a strong hatred for pretty much every other race living in the Warhammer world. They are pale skinned and dark haired, slender and graceful in build, but the hatred burning within them twists their elven good looks into sneers and baleful stares.

Malus Darkblade, the central character in a series of novels written by Dan Abnett and Mike Lee, takes all that nastiness and turns it up a notch. He is unscrupulous, cruel, and ambitious, and is prepared to do anything to get what he wants.

So how do you paint someone like that? I felt it important to keep the colour scheme dark, as I wanted to avoid any confusion with the Dark Elves goody-two-shoes cousins, the High Elves, so it meant that nothing could be bright, and the stronger colours would have muted highlights and deep shade.

Malus is wearing plate armour, so that had to be dark, but with some gold elements to highlight his aristocratic status in Druchii society. Skin (pale, almost albino) and hair colour were pretty much decided for me, the only decision I had to make was what hue of black I wanted to use for the hair. The cloak would be leather inside and green "Cold One" (a type of Lizard that many dark elves ride into battle) scales on the outside.

The only real decision I had to make was the colour of the cloth elements. I was very tempted to go for a straight black, but that would have left him flat and largely colourless from the front. The "standard" colours for Dark Elves are a blood red (unsurprisingly) or a deep purple, and while red was tempting, I've had a hankering to paint a dark purple on something for a long time now, and this was the ideal opportunity.

Construction and Undercoat

Thankfully, Malus was only a two piece model, which was quite surprising to me, as there's a lot of detail in and around the waist and between body and cloak that I would imagine would have been difficult to



cast (which shows how much I know about casting I guess). The first step was to wash off the model, to make sure there was no release agent from the casting process left on the model. As I've said before with resin models you really have to clean that stuff off, as paint is seriously repelled by it.

Kenny had done a lot of the preparation work already, so I had no mould lines to clean up. This was definitely a blessing as I didn't want to have to don the face mask, go outside in Britain's glorious December weather (i.e. rain) and sand off mould lines and flash.

I probably owe him for that...

The next stage was to pin and glue the sword to the sword hand. You can buy special pinning kits from companies like Army Painter, but I prefer to spend that money on more exciting things like miniatures, so for my pinning I use regular office paper-clips. Granted the metal is a little pliable, but when everything is

glued up together it's as solid as you would need it to be, and the amount of force required for it to come apart would destroy most models anyway.



With everything pinned and glued it was time to undercoat. With smaller scale models I would usually blu-tac them to old paint pots, but for a model this size I used a glass jar – this gave me something easy to hold while painting the miniature, stopped me getting undercoat all over my left hand (which normally happens), and is heavy enough to avoid the miniature toppling over on to the desk. Resin can be fragile, and this is a display model, not a playing piece.

Black seemed to be the obvious choice for undercoat, with a lot of metal and dark colours, so for one of the few days in the last 2 months that it didn't rain, I ventured out to undercoat the model.

As always when I'm working with resin models, I missed a couple of spots of release agent which had to be cleaned off, and I used a medium sized brush to undercoat those areas with GW Imperial Primer. (I swear I could spend a whole day cleaning a model and I'd still miss a bit.)

When it comes to overcoming "The Fear", it's getting that first coat of paint on the model that's the hardest. Once you've painted something on the model, it then gets steadily easier. It's definitely best to start with one of the bigger blocks of colour, just to get a sizeable chunk of the miniature done and give yourself a sense of progress. With Malus, I started with the armour.

Dark Steel

As I mentioned earlier, going too light with the armour would make him look like a High Elf, regardless of the other colours on the model. This meant beginning with a dark metal as the base coat, with heavy shading and being careful with the highlights.



1. Base: I'm not a fan of GW's new Leadbelcher metallic base paint. The pot I have is stodgy, requires a lot of thinning and doesn't give a smooth or even coat. So I bought myself some Gun Metal from Army Painter's Warpaint range. It's a little lighter than Leadbelcher, but it's a much smoother and more consistent paint, requiring much less thinning. I applied this in several thin coats, ensuring I had a solid base to work on.



2. Shade: As hinted by the name, GW's Nuln Oil leaves an oily, flat finish when dry, something I was very disappointed by when moving from the old Badab Black wash. However, this was exactly the sort of finish I was looking for when doing Malus' armour, as it really drags down the metallic base coat, taking the shine off and accentuating the shadows. I washed this over the armour neat, in two coats, ensuring that the first coat was dry before applying the second.

Washes take a while to dry so this is an ideal time to work on another project, make a cup of tea, feed the cats, etc. DON'T rush into doing the second coat before the first is dry! You can use a hair dryer to speed this process up, but I've not tried this process yet.



3. Highlight 1: I used the Gun Metal for the first highlight, blending it in from the top edges and surfaces, keeping away from the undersides and the shadows.



4. Highlight 2: GW Chainmail (new version: Ironbreaker) was blended in as a top edge/surface highlight.

5. Final Wash: At this point the armour is too light and bright for any self-respecting Dark Elf, so I washed the armour again with Nuln Oil to bring it back down to a shade more appropriate.

This worked well for the armour, but I wanted the sword to stand out against the armour so went a little bit brighter. I skipped the final wash stage and added some GW Mithril Silver (new version: Runefang Steel) as a top edge highlight on both the top edge of the blade and the runes on the face.



Gold

With the armour shadowy and dark, I could afford to keep the gold elements fairly bright. Generally speaking I hate using gold paint. It doesn't really flow very well for me, its coverage is typically pretty

dreadful, and it has a distressing habit of getting into places it shouldn't. The method I used here is the best I've found so far, as I feel it gives me better control:



1. Base: GW's Dryad Bark was applied in a couple of thin coats (I took the opportunity to base the leather elements on the model too, just to save a little time), giving a flat brown colour. This was intentionally dark enough that I didn't then have to have a "shade" stage.



2. Highlight 1: I used a 1:1 mix of the new GW Auric Armour Gold and the Dryad Bark. Adding the base colour to the gold makes the resulting mix a more solid colour with better coverage and is easier to control, resulting in a better blending experience. It helps that Dryad Bark is one of the "Base" ranges, which has better coverage than normal paints anyway.



3. Highlight 2: With the mix of base and gold providing a solid first highlight, the second highlight of pure Auric Armour Gold was easier and more effective. In hindsight, I could have mixed in a little yellow or sand coloured non-metallic paint, to work in the same way as the Dryad Bark did, but it didn't seem necessary at the time.



4. Final Highlight: A 2:1 mix of the pure gold and GW Mithril Silver (new version: Runefang Steel) was applied as a top edge and point highlight. The Mithril Silver works much like the Dryad Bark did, making the mixed colour more solid and easier to control

Leather

With the metallic parts dealt with, it was on to the flat colours, and as they were already base coated, the leather bits were next. Being a nasty, arrogant people with no respect for anything that isn't Druchii, Dark Elves aren't fussy about where their leather comes from, and it would be as likely to be made from the

hides of their enemies as it would from livestock or wild beasts. To fit in with the overall colour scheme, I decided to play it safe and go for a darker brown:



1. Base: Dryad Bark, as mentioned above



2. Shade: Like a lot of painters, I used GW's Devlan Mud a lot and would have loved to have used it here had I not run out. Its replacement, Agrax Earthshade, doesn't work in the same way, but Army Painter's Strong Tone wash is pretty much

Devlan Mud in a different bottle – result! I applied it, slightly diluted, in one wash to start with, then added a little more in the deeper recesses to accentuate the shadows more.



3. Highlight 1: A reapplication of the base colour, everywhere except for the darkest shadows, making sure that these highlights were blended in, avoiding any hard lines.



4. Highlight 2: A 1:1 mix of Dryad Bark and GW Steel Legion Drab was then blended in.



5. Final Highlight: Some GW Rakarth Flesh was added in to the mix and painted on as a top edge highlight to the belts, cords and straps, and used to highlight the small tears in the edges of the inside of the cloak.

Purple Cloth

Purple is a typical colour for Dark Elves across the fantasy genre. I needed this colour to stand out against the rest of the model, but not as a bright bold colour, so I went more towards the lilac side of purple than the maroon side.



1. Base: To cover any splatter from other colours added previously, I re-based the cloth elements with GW Abbadon Black.



2. Highlight 1: A 1:2 mix of the black and GW Xereus Purple was blended in as a first highlight, starting at the most exposed part of each cloth fold and blending into the shadows. At this point there should be mainly this highlight colour showing, with a little of the pure black in the deepest recesses.



3. Highlight 2: Pure Xereus Purple was then blended in to the first highlight.



4. Final Highlight: A 1:1 mix of Xereus Purple and GW Genestealer Purple was blended in from the top and very front edges of the folds in the cloth. You'll notice from the pictures that the bottom of the sash/loincloth has the brightest highlights, as it's flowing out from the shadow of the upper body of the miniature.

The purple cloth areas were pretty simple to paint. The secret was keeping the paint well thinned, giving me more time to work on the blending before the paint dried.

The Cloak

Like the purple, the scales of the cloak had to stand out against everything else, but not be too bright. This was straightforward for the front of the model, as the scales only show through in a couple of places. However, the back of the model is almost entirely scales, so I had to ensure that the shadows and highlights had enough contrast to avoid the back of the model looking flat and boring.



1. Base: Thinned P3 Cryx Base was applied in three coats. I've found Cryx Base to be a little more translucent than most of my paints, so the third coat was necessary to give a solid block of colour.

2. Shade: I used the Army Painter Strong Tone, but thinned a little, as an all over wash. The Cryx Base

is pretty dark to start off with, and I wanted to keep the wash to the recesses between the scales. I was careful to avoid any pooling of the wash, again to ensure things didn't go too dark.



3. Highlight 1: The first highlight was an “over-brush” of the base coat. Over-brushing is like dry brushing but with much more paint on the brush. It results in only the smallest and deepest recesses remaining shaded, and restoration of the base colour to the rest of the cloak.



4. Highlight 2: I applied a heavy dry brush of GW Castellan Green over the more raised areas. Here I'm starting to build up the highlights to give the cloak some depth. Dry brushing may seem a crude way of doing things on such a fine model, but painting each scale on the cloak individually would have destroyed what sanity I had left and for little more benefit.



5. Highlight 3: GW Death World Forest was then dry brushed on to build up the highlights on the folds of the cloak.

6. Final Highlight: GW Ogryn Camo was very lightly dry brushed on to the most prominent raised areas of the cloak.

At this point I was really pleased with the cloak, but there are areas around the edges where it looked like the scales have been worn off, and I changed the colour a little.

7. “Skin” Highlight 1: A light dry brush of GW Zandri Dust changed the colour to something approaching Khaki.

8. “Skin” Highlight 2: An even lighter dry-brush of GW Rakarth Flesh gave the edges a nice dusty look.

Aside from the base, which I did last of all, the cloak was the last “major” element of the miniature completed, and it was time to move on to the interesting bits...



The Devil's Drink - Glass Bottle

I did briefly toy with the idea of making this a metal vessel of some kind, but I really liked the idea of making this a dark glass bottle, something that would stand out against the rest of the model. Painting dark glass like this follows a similar method to painting jewels, and lenses, with an inverse highlighting method.



1. Base: As I did with the purple cloth, I re-base coated the bottle with Abaddon Black to cover over any splatter from the previous paint work.



2. "Highlight" 1: Very thinned GW Rhinox Hide was applied in a series of glazes, slowly building the colour up, avoiding a "hard line" between the black and the brown. The "highlight" is applied to the underside of the bottle and blended up the sides towards the top side. The detail at the base and neck of the bottle was picked out with solid lines of colour.



3. "Highlight" 2: Very thinned GW Scab Red (new version: Khorne Red) was glazed onto the Rhinox Hide, again working from the underside but stopping a third of the way down so it leaves the Rhinox Hide showing up the sides.



4. "Highlight" 3: Very thinned GW Blood Red (new version: Evil Sunz Scarlet) was blended in as a final highlight.

While this looked good already, it didn't look that much like glass. This was fixed by applying a thin coat of gloss varnish with a brush. I used the old GW 'Ardcoat here, but any acrylic gloss varnish will do the job. I did this straight away here to show how it works, but this needed redoing after varnishing the whole model at the end (see the pictures at the end for the final result).

The Face of Evil

The great thing about a model in this scale is the definition of the face. Wrinkle lines, teeth, flared nostrils are all possible when the face is this size, and it makes painting the face a much more enjoyable experience. As a dark elf in the Warhammer World, Malus has a very pale skin tone. With a black undercoat on the model, getting to that pale skin tone requires a bit more work, and here I like to start with a more medium tone as a base coat, use that as the "shadow" colour and build up from there.



1. Base: Thinned GW Steel Legion Drab was applied in two or three coats.



2. Highlight 1: A 1:1 mix of the Steel Legion Drab and GW Rakarth Flesh was blended in, leaving only the most recessed areas (eye sockets, inside the ear, etc.) showing as the base coat.



3. Highlight 2: Pure, thinned Rakarth Flesh was blended into the highlighted areas.



4. Targeted Shade: A little GW Druchii Violet (a very appropriate name) was carefully pushed in to the hollows of the cheeks and the eye sockets, giving a little colour to the face.



5. Highlight 3: A 1:1 mix of Rakarth Flesh and white, well thinned, was blended in as a top highlight.



With the skin of the face done, I quickly did the teeth, using the Steel Legion Drab as a base, and painted the individual teeth with white. The tongue was GW Screamer Pink blended from the tip back into dark of the mouth.

I had hoped that with the larger scale of the model, the eyes would be big

enough to introduce some colour, but unfortunately they're not, so to keep things neat and tidy, I settled for the standard black dot on white with a dark border. The lack of colour is not noticeable, and quite appropriate for a character such as Malus.

Coal Black Hair

Malus' hair had to be black, and I decided a blue-ish-green-black would work best. As with a lot of the other elements before, I re-base coated the hair in black first to make sure everything was solid, then went to work on the highlights.



1. Highlight 1: For the first highlight I carefully applied P3 Coal Black. I used a combination of dry brushing to get started and work out where the highlights should be, then to make things a little tidier and bolder, I went over some of the highlights with a small detail brush.



2. Highlight 2: I mixed in a little codex grey to the coal black and lightly dry brushed this over the upward facing parts of the hair.



3. Wash: After the second highlight the hair was a little too light, so a careful wash of heavily diluted Abaddon Black (being very careful to avoid getting any on the face) was applied to the hair. This tones down everything nicely.

I was introduced to Coal Black by The Dark Templar (a fellow blogger who recruited me to the Tale of 3 Painters Charity project I talked about a couple of issues back), and I'm definitely a fan. It's a nice alternative way of highlighting black from my usual range of greys, and I can see myself using this colour more often.

Speaking of greys, the last thing to do was the base...

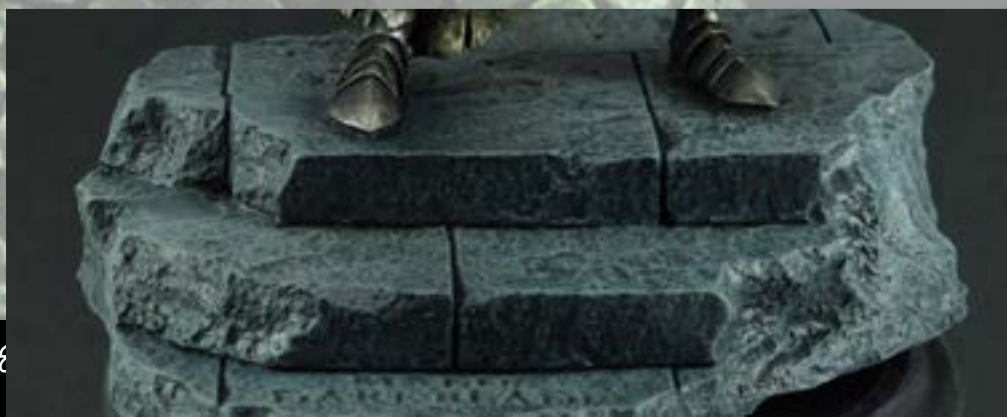
The Base

I wanted the Base to be a dark grey, matching the dark stone of Dark Elven architecture, but with a little colour, representing spilt blood, the effects arcane (and probably evil) sorcery and some general dirt.

1. Base: Vallejo German Grey, thinned quite a lot, was applied in a couple of coats all over the base.



2. Highlight 1: GW Adeptus Battlegrey (new version: Mechanicus Standard Grey) was then heavily dry brushed on, being careful to avoid the feet of the model.



3. Highlight 2: GW Codex Grey (new version: Dawnstone) was then dry brushed on, with lighter strokes than I had with the Battlegrey.



4. Highlight 3: GW Rakarth Flesh was then lightly dry brushed over the tops of the stones. I used this colour to keep it looking like stone. GW Astronomican Grey would have been an option usually, but this would have been too blue.



5. Glaze and highlight: I added a few light glazes of different GW washes (Seraphim Sepia, Druchii Violet and a watered down Castellan Green), then another light dry brush of Rakarth Flesh to finish.



With the painting finished, the last stage was to give it a spray of varnish, for which I used Testor's Dullcote. I had to give it two coats as the first one didn't dry particularly matt; thankfully the second one did the business. Of course this meant that I had to reapply the gloss varnish to the bottle, but once that was done the model was complete.

Conclusion

I'm really happy with the way the model has come out. On reflection his armour is a little lighter than I wanted, but I think it's still appropriate for a Dark Elf. The bottle came out really well (I'm probably most pleased with that part of the model to be honest), and I think the highlighting on the cloak has worked out nicely too.

While 28-32mm scale models will always be my favourite, I'm definitely tempted to try my hand at more larger scale models in the future.

Fear conquered!

[Kenny] as a small aside I too am happy with the way it turned out. An excellent addition to my collection.





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dakommittee@northlondonimps.com

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gladiators.wordpress.com
gladiator64uk@yahoo.co.uk

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The Three Daws Public House, 7 Town Pier,
Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0BJ.
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www.gravesendgamersguild.co.uk
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PO21 5EU
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mrfrankhill@yahoo.com

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Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1UB
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peter.cooke423@ntlworld.com

Chelmsford Bunker

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nktknights.tripod.com
nktknights@gmail.com

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outpost47.phpbb3now.com
mark@froglenut.co.uk

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Tunbridge Wells Wargames Society

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chair@bfgclub.org.uk

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royemunson@hotmail.com

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james.adams@hotmail.co.uk

Sad Muppet Society, The

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www.sadmuppets.org

DaveR@sadmuppets.org

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www.spikyclub.com

spikydavid@gmail.com

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benjaminlee422@gmail.com

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s6.zetaboards.com/Beasts_and_Bionics

Hendybadger@aol.com

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Church House, 30 Church Street, Calne SN11 0HU

Monthly - see website

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themonthlygrunt@hotmail.co.uk

Dice and Dagger Gaming Club, The

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www.diceanddagger.110mb.com

celfofkernow@aol.com

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exeter-inquisition.org

via website

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www.rygasroughnecks.com

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warren@gleesonclan.co.uk

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www.wcgc.webs.com

neilasharp@aol.com

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Warhammer World, Nottingham, NG7 2WS

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www.1stcompanyveterans.net

matt_rs2003@hotmail.co.uk

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awb1@btinternet.com

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hancockoliver@hotmail.com

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Kirkby-in-Ashfield Library, Ashfield Precinct,

Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, NG17 7BQ

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www.kiagamingclub.net

kiagamingclub@hotmail.com

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The Cube, Methodist Church Hall, Edward

Street, Nuneaton, CV11 5RH

Sunday 10am-3.30pm

www.nuneatongamesclub.co.uk

b.mccormack@hotmail.co.uk

Sutton Immortals

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<http://z7.invisionfree.com/SuttonImmortals/>

dabarker_382@hotmail.com

Tamworth Games Club

Central Methodist Church, 18 Glyndebourne, Tamworth, B79 7UD

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philhannigan2002@yahoo.co.uk

Warlords of Walsall

Hatherton United Reform Church, Hatherton Road, Walsall, WS1 1XS

Friday 6pm-10pm

www.freewebs.com/warlords-of-walsall

warlords_of_walsall@hotmail.com

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derbywargamessociety.com

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Derbyshire, DE5 3JE

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judith.hawcroft@derbyshire.gov.uk

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sixthkraven@hotmail.co.uk

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ross@hulls-angels.co.uk

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www.leedsgamesclub.co.uk

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www.gatekeepers.me.uk

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Alternate Sundays 12pm-4.30pm
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krissherriff@hotmail.com

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Saturday 9.15am-12.15pm
www.battleground.org.uk
info@battleground.org.uk

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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.



Ten Games Every True Miniatures Wargamer Should Play

by Robey Jenkins

I won't lie to you: this article is designed to stir up your passions, to get you foaming at my lack of rectitude, to hurl you headlong in the direction of the comments button (which hopefully will be working by the time you read this) to tell me what I've got wrong and why. Bring it on. Not because I intend to vigorously defend myself. Rather, because by doing so you will open doors to me that may otherwise have remained closed. If there's one thing I love, it's new games to read, play and discuss. This article was inspired by a thread on the infamous (unjustly so, in my opinion) Warseer forums and that thread pointed me in the direction of a number of games I had either heard of but never got around to trying, or had never heard of in the first place. However, that thread was inviting contributors to suggest the top ten best miniatures games. This article is doing something slightly

different. For a start, I've set up instant conflict by calling upon "true" miniatures wargamers and I can see I'm going to need to define my terms.

There are Warhammer players. There are Warmachine players. There are Saga players. There are HeroClix players. There are Malifaux players. These are good and worthy people who play good and worthy games. They have discovered a game that suits them and their gaming needs so perfectly that they play nothing else. They aren't interested in the existence of other games. Their attraction to miniatures made by other manufacturers is defined entirely through the question of "how can I use it in [my favourite game]?"

They are not – for the purposes of this article - "true" miniatures wargamers. There are also those who will happily and enthusiastically change their game of choice depending upon the winds of fashion in

their local community, club or Friendly Local Gaming Store. Everyone's playing Battletech? Great! I'll play Battletech. We're playing a Flames of War campaign for the next six months? Fantastic! Bagsy I'm Rommel! A Warhammer 40,000 6th Edition Planetary Empires campaign? Let me dust off my orks...

These are also good and worthy people and the backbone of any good gaming community, as they are always ready to pick up and try a new game. But they, too, are not "true" miniatures wargamers.

For the true miniatures wargamer is like a knight pursuing the Questing Beast: forever on the search for the perfect game yet forever aware that it will remain out of reach.

The true miniatures wargamer is the one who introduces new games, organizes campaigns and plans tournaments. The true miniatures wargamer is always there at the cutting edge of what's new and cool, one game ahead of everyone else and, like as not, never winning anything because he (or she) won't stick to a single system consistently enough to ever master it.

And every true miniatures wargamer has one all-consuming goal in life: to write and publish their own miniatures wargame.

So I could have phrased this article as "ten games every aspiring wargames designer should play", but that would have excluded those who already design games and, frankly, I want them to read this article too because I think there are some good designers out there who should widen their horizons if they're going to become great designers. But if I'd phrased it as "ten games every wargames designer should play", then it would have excluded those for whom games design is merely a fond pipe dream.

So as well as a contentious little "top ten" effort, this is also a call to arms. If you have a dream of writing your own miniatures wargame, then you need to get into these games. They aren't, necessarily, the best games in the world. Some of them I would even go

so far as to describe as bad games (although they still have dedicated followings who would lynch me if I identified them as such). But they all have some mechanics, ideas or appeal that anyone who wants to write their own games should bear in mind for a variety of reasons.

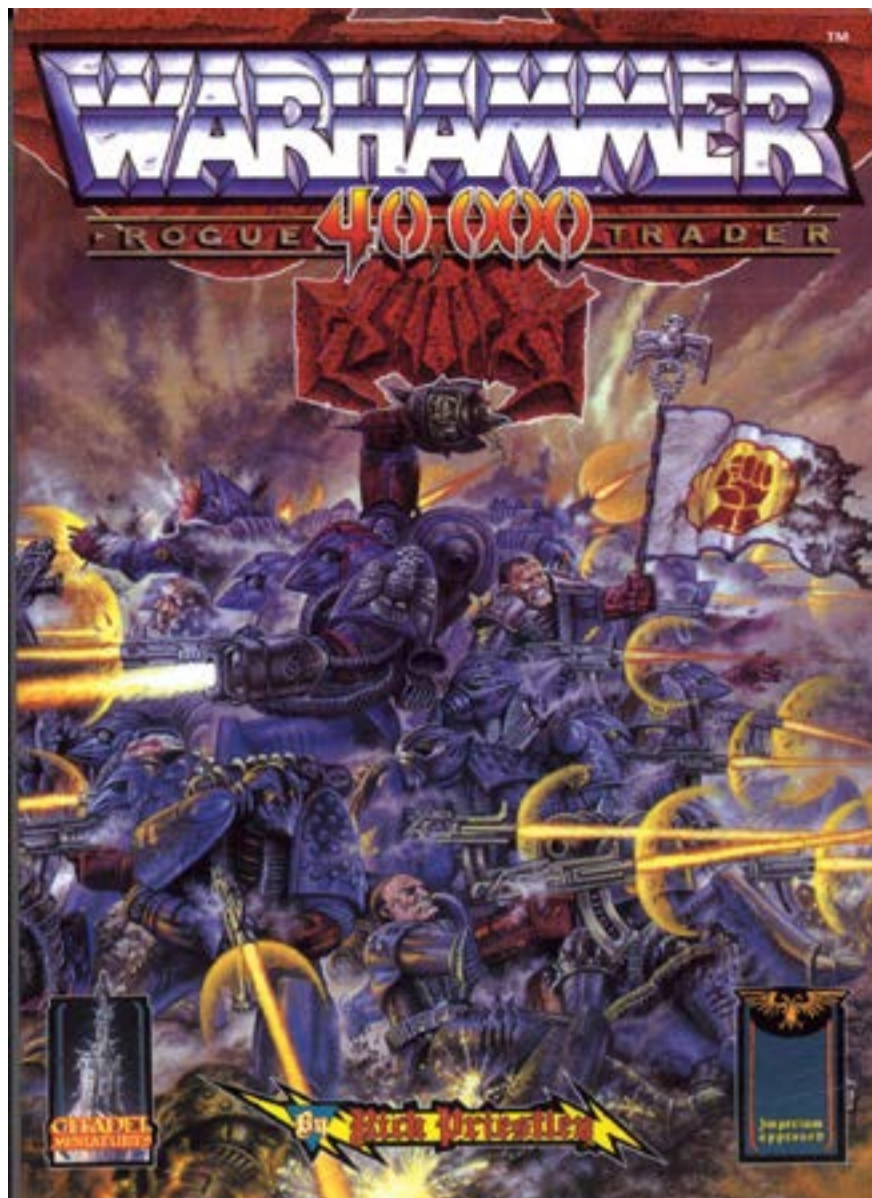
And I don't mean that you should only play them once. These are games that you should play enough that you have a strong grasp of the rules that bind them together, and an intuitive feel for the commonalities of expression that underlie the widely varied mechanics and innovations.

The list is in reverse order in terms of the urgency with which I would encourage you to learn and play these games. But otherwise, the list is designed to hang as a single entity. I have chosen exemplars in a variety of fields and could easily have chosen different, equally good, games in several fields. As I said at the start: I positively welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions and corrections. The list should not be considered definitive and I may well re-visit it in due course. For now, though, here you go:

10. Warhammer 40,000 Rogue Trader

A.k.a. Warhammer 40,000 1st Edition and not to be confused with Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay: Rogue Trader, this is the game that launched an empire. Of course, Games Workshop had existed for almost a decade before Rogue Trader was released and their flagship game at the time, Warhammer Fantasy Battles, had already made their name in the insular wargaming community of the time. But it was Rogue Trader and everything that followed its release that secured GW's future as the behemoth of tabletop miniatures wargaming.

You will find no shortage of opinions as to the entertainment value of the game itself, and I leave that conclusion for you to make alone. Because what the true miniatures wargamer should draw from Rogue Trader is nothing mechanical. Rather, you should see it as the small acorn from which a mighty oak grew. As you read and play the game, I encourage you to ask yourself "what was it about this game that made it so appealing that it built an empire?" I know what I think the answers are (and there's more than one), but you should draw your own conclusions.



9. Malifaux

This seems to be a bit of what we Brits would call a "Marmite experience". By which we mean that you either love it or you hate it. If you've not played or even encountered Malifaux before, it's a steampunkaltVictorian-Horror-Western-fantasy skirmish game (yes, they basically threw everything cool that they liked into a cauldron and baked the results into a background that works far better than it has any right to).

But that's not what I want to draw to your attention in this case. Rather, I think Malifaux has three qualities that it exemplifies in the market to which you should pay attention. The first is its innovative random number generating mechanics. Malifaux uses a deck of cards instead of dice. So far, so meh. Malifaux isn't the first game to do this. But Malifaux makes the broadest use of card-based mechanics I've ever seen. Every aspect of the deck – the value, the suit, the jokers – is given significance in a "trigger" system such that the right draw at the right moment can mean the difference between victory and defeat. But they fine-tune that randomness by providing each player with a hand of cards with which they can "cheat fate" - replacing a drawn card with one more



favourable to their needs. And to make things even more interesting, some characters provide certain triggers (such as a suit) automatically.

The second way in which Malifaux is an exemplar is in its use of named characters: these are troop selections around which your whole force (usually no more than a dozen models at most) must be structured, sometimes including more named characters who provide subsidiary structures. Malifaux doesn't use named characters as simply colour elements on the battlefield, but effectively implements them as complex building blocks that must be fitted together to give the perfect combination.

Which brings me to the third point: combinations.

I have elsewhere coined the term "Americombo" to describe a group of recently released games that includes Malifaux, Warmachine, Bushido, Pulp City and others.

These are games that have grown out of the Collectible Card Game tournament scene, mostly in the US, which use the very broad mechanic of combining certain characters (usually) and units (less often) to achieve specific tactical effects. Just as in card games like Magic the Gathering or Yu-Gi-Oh!, if you are able to implement the combo, you are likely

to win. If you are unable to implement the combo, you will probably lose.

Most games of Americombo systems involve manoeuvring and playing for time until the combo can be played. Whoever initiates their combo first usually wins. Now, that probably sounds dismissive and it's true that I don't really like Americombo games as a rule. But the system serves the competitive scene extremely well, so a wise game designer will pay attention to how these work and how popular they are becoming!

8. Warmachine (or Hordes) Mk 2

I've already mentioned Warmachine – for which, also read "Hordes", which is essentially the same game –above. This is a skirmish-to-platoon-level fantasy



wargame from Privateer Press. I don't encourage the "true" miniatures wargamer to linger over Warmachine.

The main reason you should try it is to compare and contrast with Malifaux.

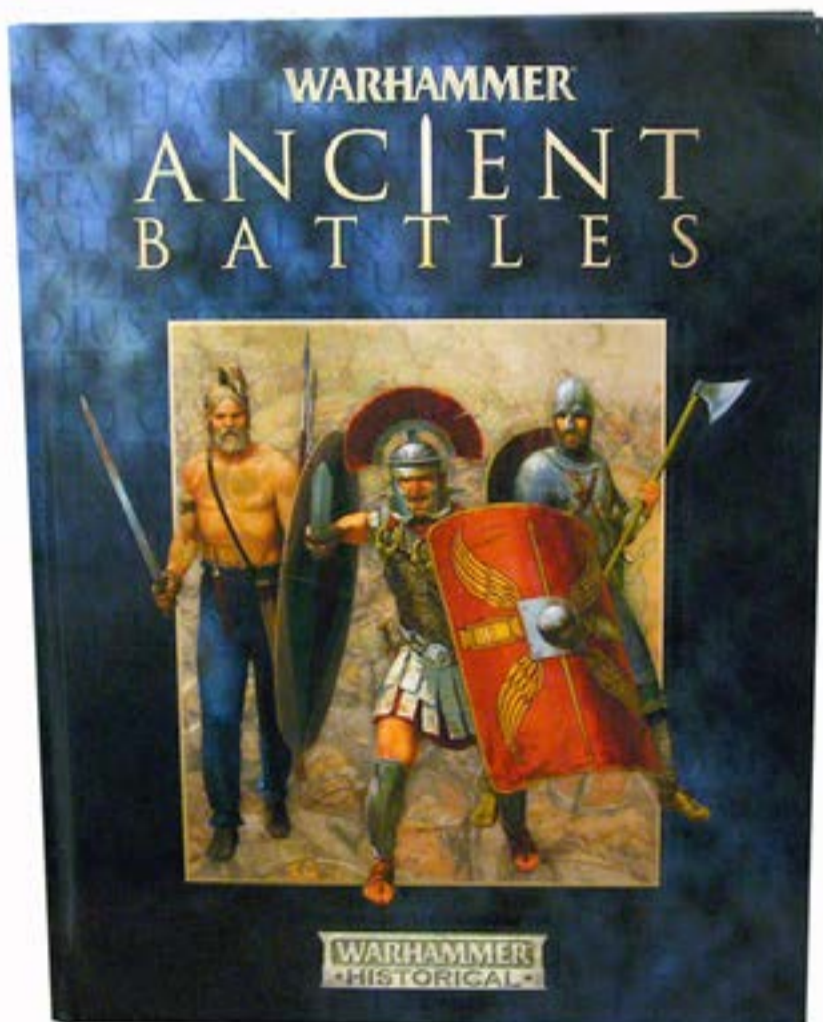
Malifaux throws a lot of design concepts into a single, quite small, package. By contrast, Warmachine focusses on two – the character as army component

and the combo tactic – in a somewhat larger tabletop event (games usually involve between ten and thirty models with more units and formation movement than Malifaux). Warmachine also uses a far simpler number generating mechanic (roll 2d6 and compare to a target number, essentially). As a result it is a simpler game, cleaner and easier both to learn and to master to the point of being competitive.

Whether this is a good or bad thing depends very much upon your tastes. For those I consider true miniatures wargamers, they will probably find it less interesting than Malifaux and less likely to hold your attention beyond a handful of games. Nevertheless, it is extremely well-designed for a competitive play environment and you should bear that in mind when thinking about your own ideas and plans.

7. Warhammer Ancient Battles 2nd Edition

No longer supported, although still technically in print, WAB2, as it is usually known, was the world's



dominant system for ancient (that is, everything up to Hastings, essentially) historical battle games. Since Games Workshop announced they had ceased supporting the system and would not be releasing further expansions, supplements or editions its

place in the rankings has slipped and it is challenged by newer systems such as Clash of Empires and Hail Caesar – all of which approach the methodology of gaming historical battles slightly differently. I should also acknowledge the permanent middle-ground occupied by De Bellis Antiquitatis (DBA), De Bellis Multitudinis (DBM) and their various clones, but I don't suggest that the aspiring game designer should take time out to study these other rules sets unless you have a particular passion for historical gaming (and even then...).

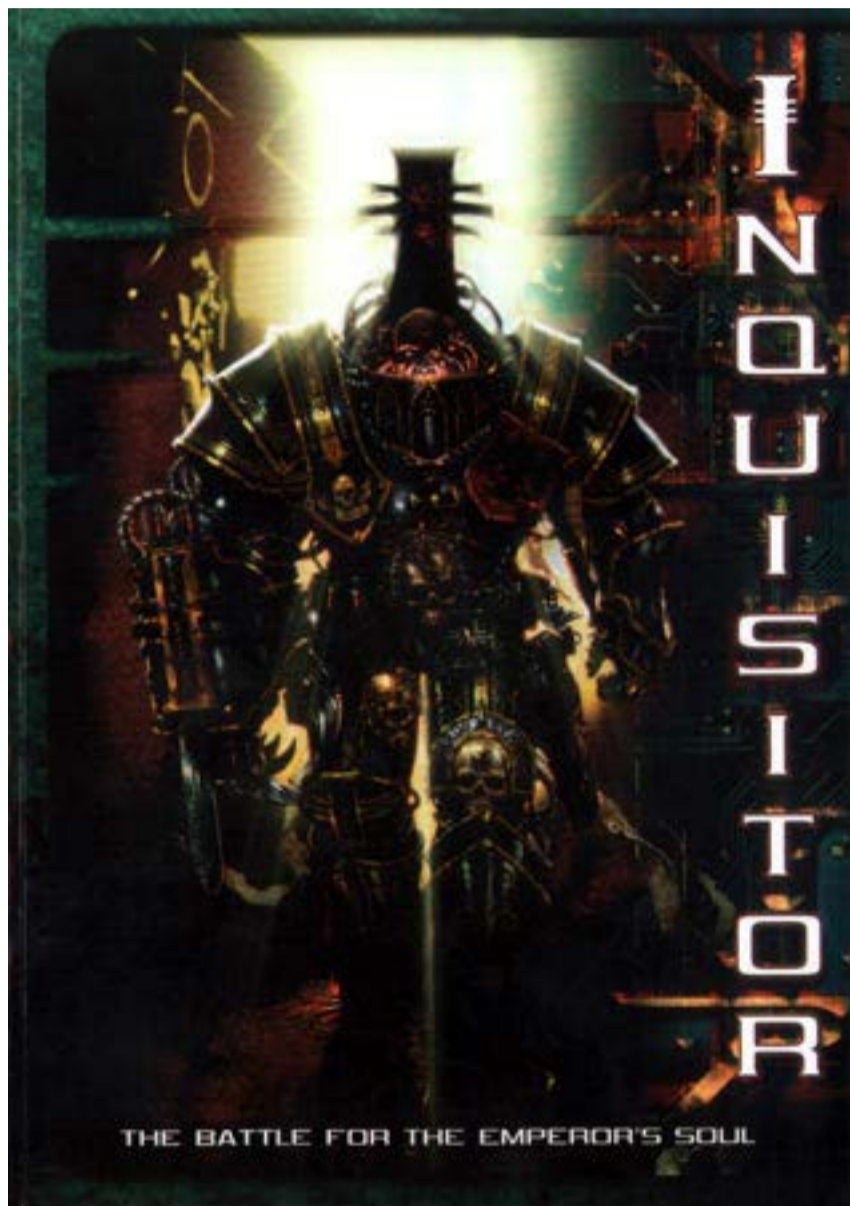
The fact is that few of these games are especially innovative or imaginative in how they approach tabletop warfare. Their designers may cry foul at that assertion but the fact is that they are drawing on a self-limited phase space: actual human history. We know how strong humans are and how much damage swords of various designs and periods could do. We know the effects of massed archers and the impact of a chariot (more or less). We know how effectively different commanders were able to control the performance of their warriors. And, as a result, there are limits to how far the designers can push innovation in their systems.

That, however, doesn't make them uninteresting games! On the contrary. I picked WAB2, rather than any of the others, because it can be most closely contrasted with its elder forefather, Warhammer Fantasy Battles. The two games took very different direction when WAB went to its 2nd Edition and WFB to its 8th, but their shared pedigree is still very clear. WAB2 is, at root, WFB with all the bells and whistles removed so that it is purely a game of tactical manoeuvre and timing. Without the substantial wild cards of mighty spells and awesome monsters, and without the vast capability differences between characters as diverse as, say, skaven slaves and Dragon Knights, WAB is reduced to a test of the generals' pure skill.

WAB2 – and its many competitors – cannot provide an epic spectacle to compare with the large-scale fantasy battle games (war elephants cannot, ultimately, compete with dragons and giant spiders), but they can still speak to a player's armchair general with more clarity and reality than the finest fantasy game precisely because those bells and whistles no longer exist to act as a crutch.

6. Inquisitor: the Battle for the Emperor's Soul

I need to 'fess up that I have a long-standing love for this game to the point that I nearly got to write a second edition for Games Workshop. I got as far as running a demo game for Gav Thorpe (after he'd left GW) and Jervis Johnson before a change in internal



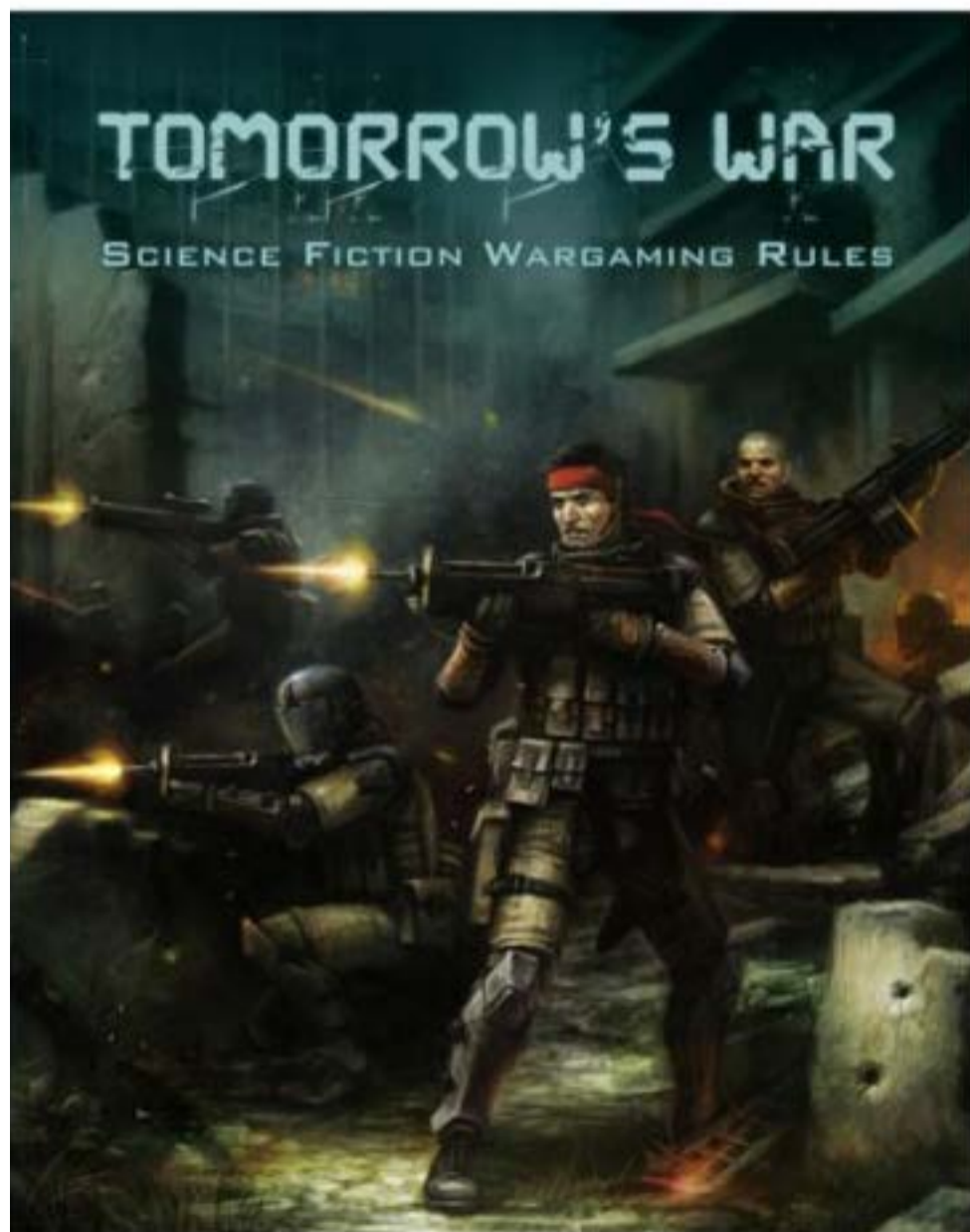
policy put paid to that idea. However, that's not why I put Inquisitor in this list. Inquisitor is here because it is the best miniatures wargame I can think of in which, played properly, losing is at least as interesting as winning. Inquisitor is a narrative skirmish game. This means that you are given carte blanche to design your characters – everyone in Inquisitor is a named character – and then participate in what amounts to an action scene from a movie or, perhaps, an action scene that happens to involve the heroes of two (or more) movies meeting in the course of their individual narratives.

The mechanics will be familiar to players of many roleplay games, including the Warhammer 40,000 roleplay family (which are in many ways the spiritual descendants of Inquisitor). There's little innovative in the design and, in fact, much of the design is rather

half-baked (if only there were a Second Edition!!). But a true wargamer should be sure to try out a game that so purely supports the idea of a narrative game. If a game of Inquisitor has a weak or insubstantial plot, it rapidly becomes boring and repetitive. If it has an exciting, challenging plot, meanwhile, it will only become more so as the game progresses. We all love to talk about those games when [insert mad and awesome thing] happened. In Inquisitor, these happen in every game.

5. Tomorrow's War

The offspring of an illicit mating between Stargrunts 2 and Force-on-Force (both also excellent games that probably deserve a place in this list), TW is the definitive hard SF, near-future platoon-level wargame. Like Inquisitor, it thrives on a coherent mission for both sides that brings them into conflict for a specific objective. Like Inquisitor, it isn't designed with points or army lists in mind but with players agreeing on a narrative that suits their available forces.



Unlike Inquisitor, its rules are baked to a perfect golden brown and it is designed to support forces of 20-40 models per side, and/or armoured vehicles of various sorts.

TW is an excellent game with clever, intuitive core rules (more-or-less borrowed wholesale from Force-on-Force, also written by the clever chaps at Ambush Alley Games) that are easy to learn and provide a fantastic "battle" experience. But TW also suffers from two important weaknesses that anyone serious about games design should learn from.

First, the designers tried to create a system with rules for everything. Now, that's not necessarily a weakness. It's good to be able to cover all the bases (for roleplayers amongst us, just look at GURPS!) so that new rules can be brought in to support more complex scenarios, larger forces or specialist troops/equipment. But AAG managed to write TW so that the integration of increasingly complex rules with the early core rules was too complete, making it very hard for players to master the former without also mastering the latter. TW essentially sets the apex of its learning curve too close to the y-axis for TW to effectively attract any but the more hardcore set of wargamers.

Second – and exacerbating the first flaw – they presented the rules in a beautiful-looking but very hard-to-navigate rulebook. This is mostly the fault, I suspect, of Osprey Publishing, AAG's partners, who are fairly new to publishing wargames rules. It's a flaw that can be overcome with good design, and good design in the rulebook could help to mitigate the first point, too. But, as it stands, TW is a very hard rulebook to read and that makes it a hard game to play. Which is a huge shame, because it's probably the best SF miniatures game on the market, with the possible exception of...

4. Infinity

It's tempting to say that Infinity has come out of nowhere, but that's not true. It's come out of several years in the wargames wilderness followed by a determined, intelligent and exciting marketing campaign that has served as a model for a number of other game companies seeking to copy the success of Infinity's Spanish parent company, Corvus Belli.

Infinity, like Tomorrow's War, enjoys a plethora of special rules and a wide variety of equipment. But,

unlike TW, Infinity can be played very easily with a handful of miniatures using either none or very few of the special rules, allowing new players the



opportunity to get to grips with the core mechanics before they engage with the game's substantial tactical depth.

But that's not the main reason I think true wargamers should engage with Infinity. Rather, it is Infinity's force-building philosophy that is its most radical contribution to the mainstream wargames arena.

In most miniatures wargames, there is a strong metagame involved in the analysis and design of army lists in the pursuit of the "perfect" list. An astonishing amount of time is spent by gamers comparing the value of unit x against the value of unit y under a variety of different tactical circumstances to decide which they should include in their army.

And many gamers enjoy this activity: it gives them something to do when they can't either play their favourite game or paint their newest miniatures.

But Infinity largely does away with this activity. Their philosophy – within fairly broad parameters – is "pick the miniatures you like and then play with them". Some armies are harder to master the use of than

others, but all armies can be potential winners. It makes for a highly dynamic play environment.

The game also includes an action pool (resource management) mechanic, a reactions system and a "critical hit" mechanic – none of which are original or innovative but which are combined in a way that makes the game especially appealing to serving and former military personnel for the way it replicates the unpredictable and dangerous environment of real-life urban warfare.

3. Hex Hex

This isn't a miniatures wargame at all. It's a card game produced by Smirk & Dagger Games for 3-6 players and is essentially a drinking game played by



wizards. I could have included a number of games in its place, such as Munchkin or Zombie Dice by Steve Jackson Games. And there is no shortage of great card and boardgames out there to enjoy that I could commend to you, from manufacturers like Fantasy Flight Games, Mantic Games and Privateer Press.

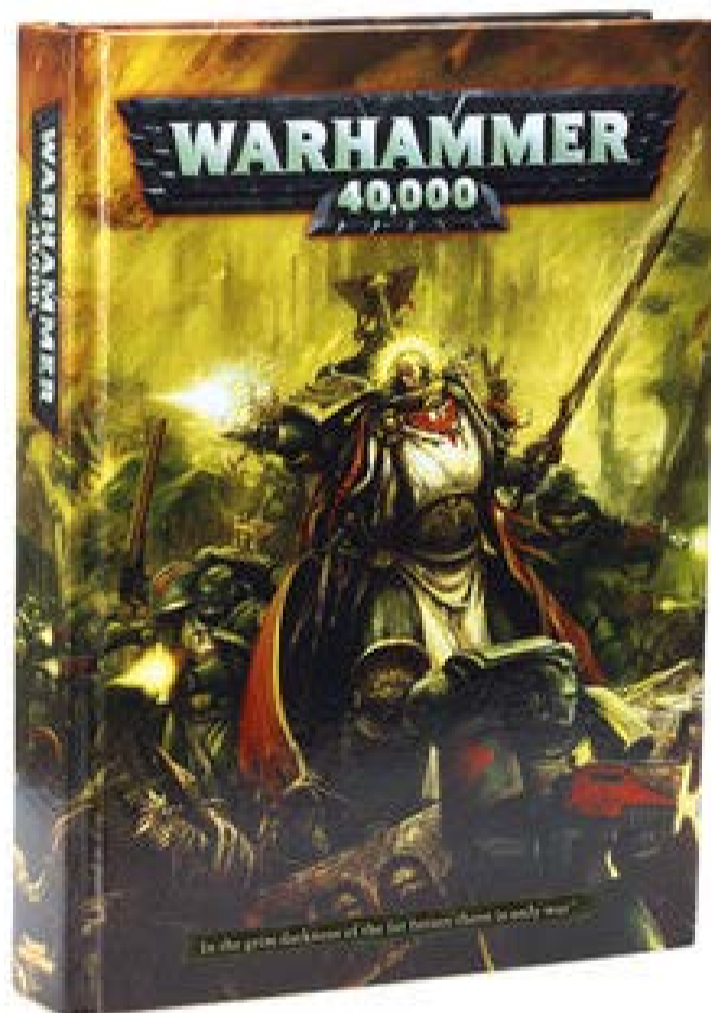
But I picked Hex Hex, because it is the perfect illustration of how a game can be simple, funny, fun and tactically challenging without needing to involve miniatures or model tanks or a table of artfully-created terrain. It's good for us to take a break from the endless march of tiny soldiers once in a while.

Plus, miniatures wargames designers don't have the monopoly on good ideas. I've already mentioned that the Americombo game borrows mechanics from collectible card games like Magic the Gathering and

Yu-Gi-Oh! As true wargamers, we should always be on the look-out for mechanics we can borrow or by which we can be inspired when designing or modifying our own games.

2. Warhammer 40,000 Sixth Edition

We can't escape it, however much some of us might wish to. WH40k is the game that brings more people into the hobby of miniatures wargaming than any other – probably more than all the others combined! It has an appeal of core mechanics and setting that have stood the test of time and now the game bestrides the world of miniatures wargaming like a colossus.



Many "serious" wargamers avoid 40k, ultimately, on no other grounds than that is it popular, as if there could be such a thing as a hipster wargamer! But if we're going to take wargaming seriously, we need to understand what it is about 40k that appeals and to see how GW has responded to its vast and demanding market (the real one, not the egomaniacal little one that makes so much noise on the Interwebz) in its latest edition.

Those of us who aspire to develop our own little corners of the wargaming industry can't realistically aspire to challenge GW for dominance. But we can engage with their market, identify what it is that

makes the game appeal so strongly to so many and try to replicate at least something of that in our own games.

To my mind – and especially with the new edition of the rules – the quality that GW is seeking in all three of its major game systems (yes, I play Lord of the Rings, too) is spectacle! It is the clash of mighty heroes; the smash of armoured behemoths; the roar of the horde; the fate of worlds. To my mind, whatever you may think of the game's mechanics, balance or verisimilitude, the newest edition captures that quality better than any previous edition ever did. It is a game of noise. In the clatter of dice we hear the throaty shriek of engines, the chatter of small arms and the calls of heroes punctuated by screams of the wounded.

The only game, to my mind, that comes close to capturing the same quality is Flames of War from Battlefront Games. But, because FoW is based upon the various stages of the Second World War, it – like WAB2 and other historical games – must keep one foot firmly planted in the realms of reality unlike, say, Spartan Games's Dystopian Wars and new Dystopian Legions which are set in a similar (albeit chronologically slightly earlier) world but with engines of war that not even Hitler's most vainglorious engineers could have got off the drawing board. Dystopian Wars is set at too small a scale to have that same quality of visceral battle that 40k enjoys. Dystopian Legions – at time of writing yet to be officially released – has the potential to deliver the same sort of gaming experience, but only time will tell.

In the mean time, Warhammer 40,000, love it or loathe it, continues to do the spectacle of battle better than any other miniatures wargame out there. And for that reason alone, it should be played. Not often, perhaps, but played nevertheless.

1. A game you wrote yourself

I have long argued for the value of making it up as you go along, and this article is another arrow in that quiver. Because although you don't have to know lots of different games in order to make it up, it certainly helps: it gives you confidence that no one game has the monopoly on how "it" should be done which, ergo, gives you permission to try your own hand at doing it your way.

So I encourage you to have a go at designing your own game and, as with all the games in this list, I

encourage you not merely to play it, but to play it often. Play it with your friends. Play it with your children. Play it with your partner. Play it at your FLGS (with the management's permission) with strangers (by far the best, as they'll give you the most honest feedback... apart from your children, obviously). Break it. Melt it down and re-shape it in a fresh, improved form. Then tweak it.

You'll find, I'm certain, that the temptation to keep tweaking will never entirely leave you. If you never intend to publish commercially then that tweaking urge can continue ad infinitum, even as you design another game and another... It's addictive and compulsive fun, writing your own games.

So if you want to, do it. And don't ever stop. Maybe the next time I write this list, yours will be on it.



THE Ancible

3 Years on! Part 2 *by Kenny Robb*



In the first part of this article I started on the story of how the magazine came about with some tails about some of the things that go into publishing a successful magazine, though the term successful is interesting as there are many ways to measure that success and not all of them are financial.

Anyway on with the adventure in publishing where we had magically, without incident, got issue 2 out the door and it was time to start issue 3.

This particular issue was a bit of a turning point in the evolution of the magazine and it was a bit of an eye opener to me. Having done everything I could have thought about with issues 1 and 2 I had thought, foolishly as it turns out, that things would be picking up by the time we got to the third issue. The magazine was showing a bit of longevity, we had some great feedback and that the word was getting out there and people wanted to get their hands on this issue. The problem was that with the way that printing works we would need to have orders for about 3000 magazines to make it start to work financially and that was not happening at this point in time. I took the decision

to go for it and sunk some more cash into printing issue 3 and the team set out to push hard and get the name out there in the hope of more sales. That didn't work. Sales went up but not by the number I had hoped. It was crunch time. To continue or not to continue? Having put a substantial amount of money into the magazine it was time to make the most difficult of decisions. At this point all the shine had gone out of the adventure, money had brought it crashing down to earth with a bump and it was time for soul searching and various other things to happen.

Time to hit the white board.

The team were dragged in and sat down in front of the white board and all the pros and cons of what we were doing were captured and weighed up. Costs were looked at and business plan was re-done about 4 times as decisions were made. (there is a whole section here I have missed out that you, the reader would not find interesting, unless you are planning to do it yourself in which case drop me a line)

What came out the other side was that we had enough content, we had enough interest





therefore we would embrace the digital age and go digital. PDF, iPad and anything else that was coming along. There would be a small charge for the magazine to allow for the occasional use of professional writers. The Ancible was re-born as a digital only magazine.

This brings us onto our next interesting insight. Even though the magazine stayed pretty much the same, same quality of production, photography, writer and subject matter and even though it now cost ¼ of what it had cost before it and there was not delivery charge, it was still not enough to get the interest going. What were we doing wrong? This question stumped us for a few issues then it stuck me that the market place, the readers, did not see something digital as having any value. Especially in the wargaming arena there is so much information out there that why would anyone pay for something when all they had to do was wait for a bit and someone would publish the same information for free on a site out in the ether.

I decided at this revelation to run a bit of an experiment and discount the magazine to zero cost and see what sort of effect that had.

Well, what can I say.... downloads doubled issue on issue. If it is free it will be downloaded. There is a market out there but people don't want to pay. OK I can roll with that.

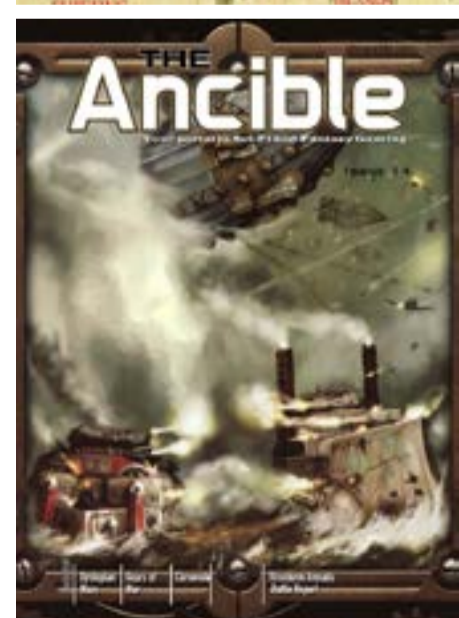
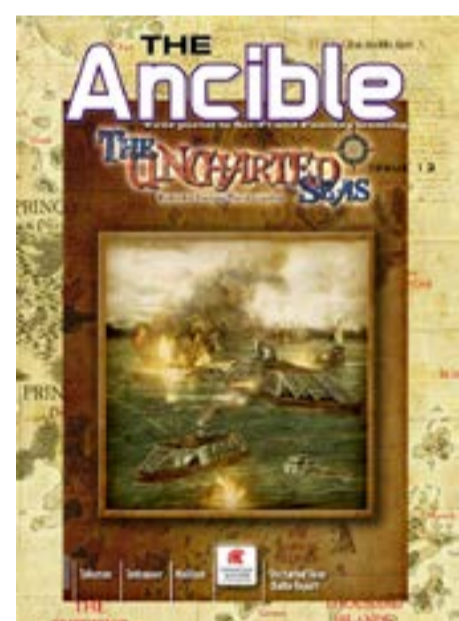
The Ancible was now a FREE download magazine with 15K readers and I now have a compelling tale to go back to the advertisers with. I will just

say that one of my life learning lessons at this point was there is no such thing as a sure thing. With the cost of advertising slashed and the number of readers increased the cost per hit was looking like something advertising execs dream of. Problem is that wargaming advertising reps have different dreams. It called free advertising and when I say free I mean it cost me for them to advertise. I will let you figure out how that works yourselves.

Still in saying that the issues kept on coming off the production line, content has never really been a problem and with the raft of new games that just keep coming along it has been interesting and frustrating trying to keep up with a landscape that just never stays still.

So what does a typical magazine publishing cycle look like?

I normally contact the writers in advance and we discuss who is available to do stuff and what if anything they might want to do. Based on that I have a planning board that I fill in with the number of pages for each article and what advertising will be going into the current issue. This starts to happen the day after I publish an issue. If there are things that have to be organised like review copies of things then I will start trying to organise that in the hope that stuff gets delivered in time for the team to do something with it. This normally happens 4 weeks before publishing. I have tried to get better at this but when you are dealing with other people they don't always share the same deadlines. There is always a case of





people missing deadlines and that usually means a quick redo of the content sometimes at the last minute. The observant amongst you may have spotted this month's re-shuffle.

When I get content I will have a quick read and usually send it off for editing, if I don't do some myself (see comment above about deadlines.....editing sometime happens as layout is being done)

About 2 weeks before publishing images and graphics will be produced, downloaded or taken and then in the final week layout is done. I find it best to do it once all the resources are together otherwise it all get a bit messy and you have half-finished stories and the like. Final proofing is done in the few days leading up to p-Day mainly checking for orphans

and widows and that the article flow well.

Once the final version is produced then it's time to get them onto the download sites and promote it

through the usual channels. Then the crazy downloads begin and the whole cycle starts again.

I hope you have found this if not useful then at least informative in showing you what goes into the production of the publication you download every 2 months. There is a lot of passion and effort goes into the creation (much more than I have written here) and it is not always plain sailing. On a number of occasions I have used the English language in some interesting ways when shouting at the computer but at the end of the day the sense of pride you get when you see the finished article is immense.

When I meet people they ask me which is my favourite game and I have to reply that they are all favourites because I get some sort of idea how much effort has gone into creating them.

What happens next with The Ancible.....well that will be an article I will write in three years time.



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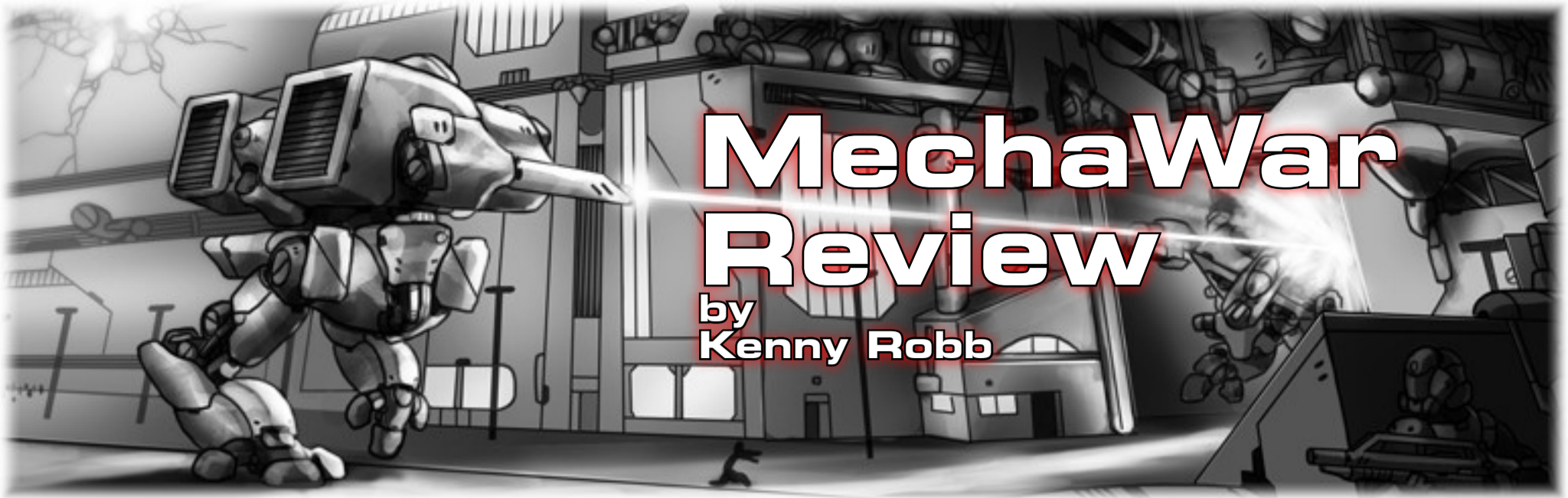


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MechaWar

Review

by
Kenny Robb

If you are anything like me then you are a sucker for big robots. There is something about the power of a leviathan of death battling it out with its peers for domination of the battlefield. There have been a number of companies who have entered this genre in the past, most famous of which is Battletech. However following on from Robey Jenkins challenge earlier in the magazine I said to him, "right back at you" so let's be having something you have written. Well I was put in my place and he sent me MechaWar by Precinct Omega Publishing. So diving straight in...



what's it all about? And you the discerning gamer might want to read this because there is a surprise at the end of the article, or you could just read the last paragraph but where is the fun in that.

The rule set is a whopping 21 pages and is a no nonsense set of rules that wastes no time and gets straight into how to play the game. There are pictures to explain some of the fundamentals but most experienced gamers will get these straight away without any help. The only thing that may surprise you is that this game uses D12's. It is a bit unusual but in the designers notes it says.....

Why d12s?

The answer is that I believe them to be a perfect balance between range – the number of numerical outcomes they generate – and manageability. They give a nice, clear result (unlike, say, d20s which can be a bit hard to read from a distance on the tabletop) and give plenty of room to stack modifiers without going nuts (unlike d6s, on which even a single +1 modifier is a massive probability swing).

However, I recognize that a lot of people reading these rules may dismiss them for the lack of d12s, so here's a way that you can test them out using your traditional six-sided dice: multiply all the results by 2. So a roll of 2 is treated as a 4, and a roll of 6 is treated as a 12. This skews the probabilities a fraction, but less than you might imagine – you'll get twice as many critical hits, but the DFR roll will be more effective, so it balances out pretty well.

If you like how the game feels, then invest in a batch of d12s. You can get 5 from Chessex UK for £3.79.



Like every other game each mech has a set of stats covering the usual stuff

- **Motive Power (MP)** - The primary use of power is to move the mech. A mech with no power cannot move! The higher the number, the faster the mech.
- **Firepower (FP)** - A high firepower may represent sheer volume of fire or a lower rate of fire applied with more accuracy.
- **Armour (AR)** - Some mechs rely upon smart camouflage, others on energy shields; most appreciate the use of slabs of physical armour. In any case, the higher this stat, the more of it they have. AR is also vital because, when it is reduced to zero, the mech is wrecked.

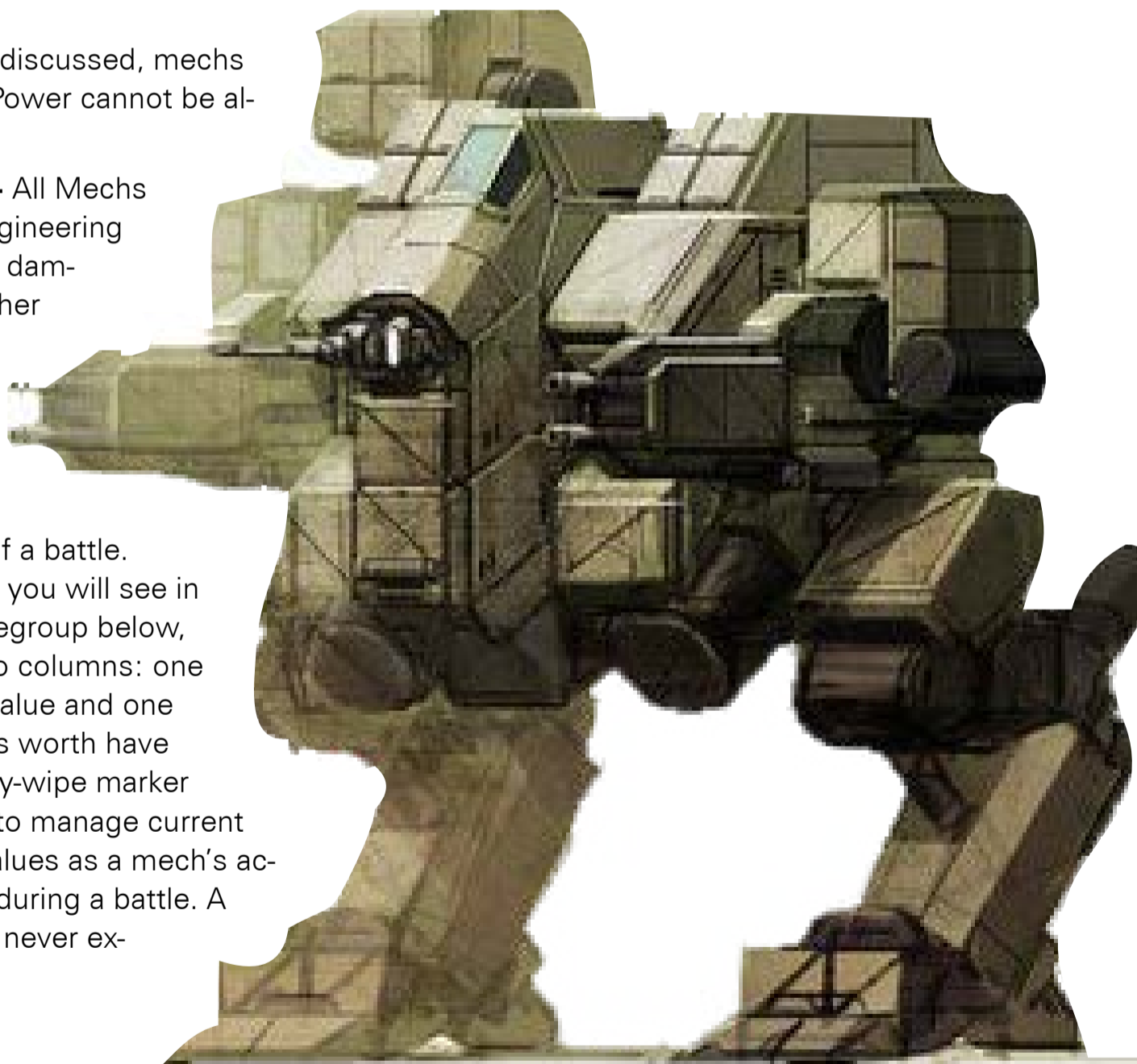
The passive stats are:

- **Mass (MA)** - As already discussed, mechs have a MA of 1, 2 or 3. Power cannot be allocated to MA.
- **Defence Systems (DS)** - All Mechs possess AI-managed engineering nanosystems that repair damage in real-time. The higher this value, the more efficient and sophisticated the system.
- **Active and Passive**
 - Active stats can be modified in the course of a battle. Passive ones cannot. As you will see in the sample 5-point battlegroup below, the active stats have two columns: one for the mech's starting value and one for the current value. It is worth have a pencil and eraser or dry-wipe marker and laminated army list to manage current values versus starting values as a mech's active stats may fluctuate during a battle. A stat's current value may never exceed its starting value!

Each player decided on the size of their battlegroup based on the (MA) stat. so if you decide on a (MA) of 7 you could have 3 mechs or MA 2 and 1 of MA 1 or 2 mechs of MA 3 and 1 of MA 1.

Each turn follow a sequence and there are mechanics for shooting and taking damage. The nice thing is that close combat is discouraged but is catered for in the rules. By the time you get to page 15 of the rules you have basics to play the game and all that is required is to pick your favourite mech models and off you go.

The rules set does not favour once scale over another and you are left to decided based on the models you have available, the space you have to play and the size of you battle group.





Some suggestions for models (these come from me rather than Robey)

- Classic Battletech
- Wizkids Mechwarrior (ignoring the click bases. I was wondering what I might do with the few hundred of these I have in the garage)
- Heavy Gear
- Reaper
- Critical Mass
- Spartan Games
- Hawk (Dropzone Commander)
- Games Workshop
- Rackham AT-43
- Even Lego
- Pretty much anything you might have that looks like a large robot.

Ok so now you have played the basic game and your thinking to yourself I like this but it needs more. Turn to page 15 of the rules and read on. Included in this section are various advanced rules and some ideas on scenarios you could play.

In Summary

When we look at a set of rules we always ask what make this set of rules so special. I could have gone into the amazing mechanics of this game in great detail but there was a reason I didn't, the mechanics are simple. In a lot of cases the games designers have been very clever about the way the rules work. Some don't use dice some incorporate other real world things. MechaWar does not do any of these. However these rules are special in their own right for a number of reasons.

1. They encourage you to re-use your models for something else. There is nothing more depressing for a wargamer to have painted up a load of models only to find that:
 - a. The company has gone under and there is no longer support
 - b. Their friends are no longer playing the game
2. Someone has taken the time to write a game for themselves, on a budget and taken the time to playtest and ensure that they are fit for purpose and then shared them with the world.
3. The rules cost £1, yes that's right £1

There is a very interesting statement at the end of the rules in the box on the last page. I am not going to share it with you but when I read it I immediately wanted to write this piece. I am going to suggest that you get you £1, hop over to www.precinctomega.co.uk and purchase a copy just so you can read the text in the box. Well done guys.

Also I suspect that we have not heard the last of One Pound Wargames.



HOT OFF THE PRESS

The enthusiasm for MechaWar has encouraged us to press ahead with plans for new rules. The second volume in our trilogy of inter-linked games - **AirFrame** - will be released for limited public beta on Monday 13 January 2013.

AirFrame is a near-future aerial combat game that stands on its own, but which is also fully compatible with MechaWar. So players can pit formations of combat aircraft against each other in lethal dogfights to dominate the airspace of new worlds, or dispatch air support alongside their mech forces. Once its final version is released, **AirFrame** will be, like MechaWar, £1.00 to download.

We also have new supporting material on its way. The MechaWar Mission Generator was released at Christmas to a terrific reception, and now - the people have asked for it and we're delivering - **MechaWar Advanced Rules** are coming soon, allowing you even more customization options for your mechs. What's next? The third volume of rules - **BattleGroup** - is entering alpha testing. And, again, responding to the demands of our fans, we are developing a bespoke setting for a fully-integrated, tournament-compatible campaign system.

To celebrate all of this Precinct Omega are offering a 9-point MechaWar force painted to Precinct Omega Studios' highest quality level in a colour scheme of your choice, worth over £80.00!

All you have to do is sign up to the Precinct Omega newsletter, register on their forums and then find and post in the relevant thread (it's not all that hidden). The winner will be chosen at random from all posts in the thread.

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THE LAST WORD

WITH
UNCLE BOMBER

The state of Kickstarter

When Kickstarter kicked off in 2009 I thought it was a rather clever little idea. People with ideas but without the infrastructure of a successful company behind them could try and make their dreams reach fruition without reducing anybody to penury. What's not to like? For wargaming, it potentially meant that the floodgates would open to great new ideas. And so they did. So why, three years and a bit later am I sitting here annoyed as hell at what has taken place since?

The answer is that the big boys have taken over. I should have seen it coming. I really should have. I curse myself for a lapse in my usual cynicism that allowed me to think this particular virgin would remain chaste. But no. Over the last year Kickstarter has been hijacked by the big boys. I won't name names as the boss will worry about going even greyer but I cannot be alone in thinking that certain companies now floating their ideas on Kickstarter are extracting the Michael.

That's not all, either. Like any other deflowered virgin (I'm really running with this one as you can probably tell) the young lady will never quite be the same again. Going against type I decided to actually do a spot of research this month and I discovered the following words on Wikipedia (no, calm down): "There is no guarantee that people that post projects on Kickstarter will deliver on their projects, use the money to implement their projects, or that the completed projects will meet backers expectations,

and Kickstarter itself has been accused of providing little quality control. Kickstarter advises sponsors to use their own judgment on supporting a project. They also warn project leaders that they could be liable for legal damages from sponsors for failure to deliver on promises. Projects can also fail even after a successful fund raise when creators underestimate the total costs required or technical difficulties to be overcome."

Not quite so rosy and full of innocence now, is she? This doesn't actually annoy me and it wouldn't have until the companies came along and started using Kickstarter for their own ends. One recent case has seen a hugely well known figure in modern gaming circles avail himself of Kickstarter to try and float an idea which almost suggests that the people funding it will do the work for him as well. This appears thinly under the guise of opening up a rare opportunity... yadda, yadda, yadda... you all get the drift. Except this guy is loaded, set for life and should not need Kickstarter for this. I ask you this simple question. Should successful gaming companies be floating ideas and getting you and I to pay for their research and development?

Put simply, if you have the money and you have the idea then you should also have the stones to try and make it happen without resorting to crutches. And before you think I am being hugely unfair, think about the knock-on effect. Going back to my crass and visually unappealing virginal analogy, think about

what happens to something that starts off looking really beautiful but gets tarnished by hanging out with the wrong guys. After a while the right guys either drift off or get filed in by the wrong guys' tough mates. Okay, you are probably losing me around now but I'm on a roll so live with it.

Like many of you I frequent the likes of TMP (even though I'm banned but we won't go into that now), Tabletop Gaming News, Lead Adventurers Forum and Frothers, and there was a time when the announcement of a new Kickstarter idea was something to dig into, to check up on and see if a new beacon of light was about to emerge in our hobby (okay, I've got to stop the caffeine about now or else) but recently the almost daily announcements about new Kickstarter projects from oh-so-familiar names in the hobby has really dirtied the water for me. Now I just roll my eyes and scare the dog as a

result. I no longer think about contributing because firstly I don't like helping the rich who I feel can most happily help themselves, and secondly, because the companies that are fronting these ideas are getting easy funding and licking their lips at the same time. It's becoming the avenue of choice for the charlatan. From my intensive research I see that Kickstarter has a success rate of 43.85%. If you think about it, that isn't really a great percentage, and for the benefit of the boss it's less than half.

There. I could go on but I won't. Enough to say that another beautiful virgin has been molested and won't be the same again.

As always you can disagree, but as always you'd be wrong.

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