- **First Look: Battletech-Movie Project**
- **War World Exclusive Coverage**
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SUMMER 2006

ARGENT FIRE

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Volume 2, Issue 2

OPENING VOLLEY

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Argent Fire.

And we're off...with a running start! The success of the first issue re-release of Argent Fire was overwhelming for me. As of this writing, over 1600 downloads of the E-Zine are circulating on the computer screens of Battletech and Mecha fans, a number much higher than I had anticipated! The wonderful feedback I have received from fans, the constant requests for email subscriptions that I can hardly keep up with, and the support offered by the community at large makes it all worthwhile! A big thank you also goes out to the guys at Commando Quarterly for their support of Argent Fire. You guys are awesome!

I must also take a moment to thank the subscribers of Battletech Universe for their support of Argent Fire, both financially and otherwise. Several members of the Argent Fire staff come from the ranks of the subscribers on BTU, which goes to show their high level of dedication towards Battletech.

Well, we're back for round 2, or is that issue 2? Whichever it is, we've got a great issue packed with content to dish out for you this time around. As the visibility and popularity of Argent Fire increases, we will be getting more and more resources available to us from which to provide you with quality content for your viewing pleasure. In a moment, I will touch on some of the subject areas that this issue will cover.

But first, I have several requests to make from you – from the reader base at large. What makes a fanzine like this most successful is active assistance from the community. The magazine staff does a great job at going out and tracking down content for each issue, but all of our entertainment interests could better be served by additional help from you!

We want to hear from fan sites out there that would like to be involved with Argent Fire. Whether you're a Battletech site or another Mecha site, we would like to work with you in promoting your cause, and get you to help promote ours.

One way that this can be done is by offering up content that we can use each issue. If you hold contests, let us know! We can showcase your winners. If your members write quality fiction, send it in! If you are a part of some project team developing some kind of a custom project for your Mecha universe, we would love to talk with you and present your work to the world! Everyone's interests can best be served by working

together and communicating with each other. Argent Fire is a FAN magazine, and we're interested in what you have to offer as a fan.

Another way to work with Argent Fire is to join our new affiliate program. Just visit www.argentfire.com and click on the "Affiliates" tab near the top to find out how to join. You can become an official Argent Fire Affiliate, committing to an image/banner link exchange program. This is designed to increase traffic to all of our respective web sites. Becoming an affiliate also means that we would like you to post up any updated news that Argent Fire has going on. We can submit news releases to you for updates. If your site doesn't have a news section, that's fine; the banner exchange is sufficient. But if you do have a news section and would like some more content, we can certainly help!

And finally, I ask that you periodically check the Argent Fire home page at www.argentfire.com for any news and announcements we have going on. From time to time we may even have temporary job positions that need filling! And of course, while there, you can download past issues of Argent Fire that you may have missed.

If you have anything that you want to contribute to Argent Fire, please send an email to editor@argentfire.com. I will read each and every email that comes through. I look forward to you or your site wanting to work with Argent Fire to continue the spread of our favorite Mecha universes!

Submission Guidelines

These submission guidelines apply to all content submitted to Argent Fire for publication. Please briefly read through this section before submitting any content. For all content, please send your submissions to editor@argentfire.com

Fiction

Please include your personal contact information and a formatted copy of your story. Accepted formats are MS Word, Corel WordPerfect, OpenOffice.org Writer, or any other well-known word processor. Please keep the story under 10-15 pages. If the story is longer than that or if it is a multipart story, please let us know. If accepted we may spread your story over several issues. Please also name any fan sites you are affiliated with and your call sign on them. Due to many submissions, you will be notified on whether your story will be in an upcoming issue.

How-To Articles

If you have a miniature painting/assembly guide, terrain construction guide, or other how-to article of your creation, please submit the text of the article and the pictures separate. The pictures can be in any known graphics format (e.g. JPG, GIF, TIF, Photoshop PSD, etc). The higher the resolution and size of the picture, the better. Smaller resolutions (640x480 or lower) may cause picture degradation during formatting.

BattleROMs

For BattleROM submissions, please submit the text of the ROM separately from the images. As stated above, please try to include quality resolution images for better display. The BattleROM must be very descriptive: an in-depth play-by-play of the turns is important.

Reviews

If you have done up a review of a game or other project that affects the Battletech or similar Mecha universe, we would like to know about it. Your review may be highly informative to the rest of the Mecha community. Preferred reviews should be no more than 5 pages in length, and include several pictures/screenshots.

Other Content

We are always interested in hearing about other ideas that the fans have that benefits the Battletech community. If you have other kinds of content that you feel deserves publication, please contact me at editor@argentfire.com to discuss it with me. I would be glad to work with you to include other kinds of appropriate content.

Now, on to the content. This issue of Argent Fire spends a little more time focusing on a few other-Mecha universes outside of Battletech. Primarily, we will be looking at War World, a tactical third-person game that plays like a cross between MechAssault and Halo. I so much enjoyed this game, that I felt we should spotlight it for this issue. We start off with an interview with the CEO of Third Wave Games, the software developer of War World, and follow it up with a full-fledged game review of the War World PC game. To coincide with the launch of this issue, a giveaway contest is also underway.

Now, to return to the world of Battletech, we have some great follow-up information on the re-branding of Classic Battletech, including some feedback from the fans themselves about the rebranding announcement, as well as about the release of the Total War and related product lines. Next up is a peek into the Battletech-Movie project, a fan-inspired short Battletech film currently in production.

We will also be having a look into the Succession Wars online strategic Battletech game that is currently under development. The game has the potential of becoming a huge success. Its complexity is overwhelming! Check out the article on Succession Wars in this issue. We have plenty of other great articles for you, including some award-winning fiction stories, painting and construction how-tos, and much more! It's now time for less talk and more quality content. On to the good stuff!

Andrew "Odysseus" Kissel
Managing Editor of Argent Fire

HPG News Feed

CBT Rebranding Continues

The weekly BattleBlogs over at the official CBT website have continued with nary a glitch or the last few months, and as such many more details over the future release have come to light. The BattleBlogs themselves make interesting reading and some of the snippets coming our way are sure making for an interesting months away. We've seen previews of the new staterbook (Sword and Dragon) as well as the main event: Total Warfare.

Possibly the largest (and arguably only) departure from the rules of old is the presentation of the book. All in all, the plan appears to be a tighter integration between the rules and the use of miniatures. The majority of previews thus far have shown picture after picture of painted miniatures which will decorate the book from cover to cover (hopefully leaving some room for the rules themselves).

In very related news, the Classic Battletech web site has undergone a facelift. The new look Classic Battletech website has been launched sporting a much cleaner, and less graphically intensive look.

This event also happily coincided with the March Battlechat and the first BattleBlog. All worth reading if you have the vaguest interest in the upcoming rebranding! Watch this space for further news of this seemingly promising set of releases! http://www.classicbattletech.com/

Second Quarter Commando Quarterly Released

The second quarter of 2006 issue of the Commando Quarterly has been released this past weekend. As per usual, it is well worth a few minutes of your time for a perusal.

This latest release contains Classic Battletech fiction, a Q&A with Randall Bills about Total Warfare and a painting guide based around the upcoming Sword and Dragon mechpack.

Once again two versions have been released: a hi-res version (5.4Mb) and a a low-res version (2.9Mb). Enjoy!

http://www.commandohq.com
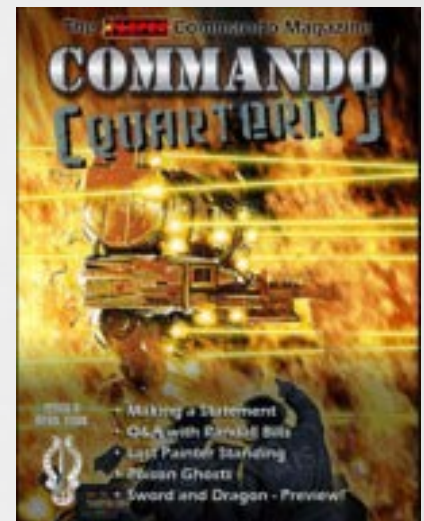
MechWarrior Movie Trailer Released

Those people working over at the DAVE school at Universal Studios Florida have been busy the last few months working on a short MechWarrior mini-film.

They have just released released a trailer which showcases a lot of their animation work. Things seem to be looking promising indeed - be sure to check out the trailer at the DAVE school site. http://www.daveschool.com/

German Newsletter Released

Online newsletters seem to be getting popular in this day and age! Alongside the Commando Quarterly, and Argent Fire a new official CBT German newsletter has been set loose onto the world. An English translated version is also available at the appropiate website.

http://www.battletech-newsletter.de.vu/

MechWarrior: Wolfstike and Other Releases

WizKids over the past couple months have continued to unveil their upcoming Vanguard release with many additions to theit online Vanguard gallery. However, they have also started to release some pics and details of their September Mechwarrior release - Mechwarrior: Wolf Strike.

Also announced, Wolf Strike marks the start of a fairly substantial change to the Mechwarrior line. From this release onwards each (slightly more expensive) MW booster will contain two mechs instead of one, and no faction will be omitted from any release. Wolf Strike will also introduce squad cards to the game which are used to grant additional new abilities to battle forces constructed of units from a variety of expansion.

Alongside with this information new pics of some of the sets new units have been released, as well as prize support for Wolf Strike events. Be sure to check out the WizKids site for further information.

Enter The Gods of War

Over the past few months the LinkNet reports over at the WizKids website brought word of a fairly sizeable change to what might be considered Battletech canon.

In a mock news article from the Age of Destruction a picture has been released of a seemingly giant new mech design - a design that makes even an Atlas look small.

A few weeks later WizKids have just announced the introduction of a new class of mech - the colossus weight class - weighing from 105 to 135 tonnes. These new beasts of 'mechs will first be released at the upcoming Origins convention (a set of three), and available for sale a few months later (assuming some are left). The more recently announced Poseidon has been given a release date of October 2006.

And of course whilst this news is unlikely to effect the core CBT rules at any point in the near future, at some point it is bound to occur! Check out the full announcement at the WizKids website for this interesting development in the future Battletech universe!

Nintendo DS Awaiting MechAssault Release

With the recent E3 event in Los Angeles more details regarding the new DS MechAssault title have come to light. First reports have been mainly positive, and few scraps of plot information have come to light. The game has been reported to feature multiple missions across four planets and will feature the usual assorment of 'mechs, tanks and flying machines.

The game was originally reported to have a May release date, but this seems to have been pushed back - potentially until December.

MSN Games Retire Matchmaking Service

It has been many years since the original release of both the MechWarrior 4 and MechCommander 2 line. However, after all this time, Microsoft has decided to withdraw online support for both games. As of Jun 19th, the online CD-ROM matchmaking program provided by MSN games was discontinued. Ah well - both games have had a good long run of official support!

No Console MechAssault En Route

After speculation that the new next-gen game that FASA studios have been working on was some sort of Battletech license, our hopes here at Argent Fire have been cruelly dashed. Apparently their amazing new game is based upon the Shadowrun universe. Apparently there are trailers and the like hovering around cyberspace, but we're all too busy nursing our shattered dreams to hunt them down. It will come. Eventually.

EARTHCON CENTRAL

WORLD WIDE GAMING CONVENTIONS SUMMER 2006

These are current listings of world wide gaming conventions during the months of June through August. This section will be updated as new information on Events are received. Most of these CONS feature Mecha or Wargames of some sort. If I have missed anyone, it is not intentional. Please feel free to send in your CON or Gaming Event information for future listing to: matahari@battletechuniverse.org. If anyone is participating, or visiting any of the listed CONS, please contact "Matahari" (at above listed email) as I am in need of reporters at these various events. ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

June 2006

UNITED STATES (USA)

06/02-04: Die Con 6 - Collinsville, Illinois
http://www.diecon.com/
Gateway Center
One Gateway Drive, Collinsville, IL 62234

Die Con returns for the sixth year. Die Con is a three-day all-gaming con in the St. Louis metro area. Events include historical, sci-fi and fantasy miniatures; a Spycraft interactive RPG; board games; family games; collectable card games;a Command Operations Center event plus dealers. Registration is $18 until April 15; $25 after that. Contact Jon Bancroft dieconhq@diecon.com

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06/02-03: Snake River Game Convention 2006
Idaho Falls, Idaho
http://www.hinsel.com/snakerivercon.htm
A-Street Games, 489 Park Avenue

The Snake River Game Con 2006 is a two-day entertainment extravaganza that takes place near the lovely green belt surrounding the famous Snake River that flows through downtown Idaho Falls. Within walking distance, convention goers will find movie theaters, fine dining, and hotels set in a rustic western atmosphere. Come down to meet new friends, participate and learn to play new games, and network with hundreds of others concerning the game community of eastern Idaho! Contact Michael Offutt: kavrik@ida.net

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06/09-11: Project A-Kon 17 - Dallas, Texas
http://www.a-kon.com/
Adam's Mark Hotel and Convention Center
400 North Olive Street

A-Kon is the oldest running Anime convention in the US. We have various of activities for Anime, Manga, and Japanese culture A-Kon has and does hosts a wide variety of gaming, from table-top RPGs, Live-Action, card games, miniatures games, as well as PC and Console gaming. We've also have had a Gaming Guest of Honor for several years now. Contact David Doub: ex_mutants@hotmail.com

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06/16-18: Sci Fi Summer - Atlanta, GA
http://sfscon.tripod.com/
Holiday Inn Airport North, 1380 VIRGINIA AVE

Kick off the summer with Sci Fi Summer. Sci Fi Summer includes all the great aspects of a con including: Gamming, An Arcade, Movies, Music, A Dealers Room, A Con Suite, Great Panels, Parties and More!! Contact Greg LoCurto: glocurto@yahoo.com

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06/23-24: Wizard Fest 2006 - Stamford, CT
http://www.wizardcards.net/
The Westin Stamford Hotel, One First Stamford Place.

Friday evening is a social event in Wizard's suite. Casual play of Wizard cards and socializing. Saturday is all day play of the Wizard Card Game in Ballroom. No fees, no selling, just fun. Over $1000 in prize money to winners. Visit www.wizardcards.net for registration, directions and other details. Practice playing online at www.wizardcards.com. Contact Ken Fisher: wizard5@globalserve.net

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06/23-25: ApolloCon 2005 - Houston, TX
DoubleTree Hotel Houston Intercontinental Airport
(formerly Hyatt Regency Houston Airport)
15747 John F. Kennedy Blvd.,Houston, TX 77032

Houston's General Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Con. GOH: Peter S. Beagle,Artist GOH: Alain Viesca,Fan GOH:Tim Miller,Filk GOH: Steve MacDonald. Panels, Art Show, Masquerade, Dealers Room, Filking, Book Exchanges, Film Screenings. A relatively new convention guaranteed to carry you worlds away into the realm of Fantasy and SF.A place where fun and imagination come together. For more information send email to info@apollocon.org

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06/28-02: Origins International Game Expo
Columbus, Ohio
http://www.originsgames.com/
Greater Columbus Convention Center

The Origins International Game Expo is one of the largest

and longest-running game conventions in the world. Started in 1975, the show celebrated its 30th Anniversary in 2004, and it continues to grow in both size and importance. Players of any kind of game will find a place at our game tables. Manufacturers and publishers come to Origins to show their best and newest wares. Tournament organizers host their finals and championships at Origins. Most importantly, the finest players in the world come to Origins to compete and to share their love of games with a fellowship of players the likes of which they simply won't find anywhere else. Contact Sean Fannon: events@gama.org or Jodie Panzeri: ops@gama.org

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06/30-02: PortConMaine - South Portland, Maine
http://www.portconmaine.com/
Sheraton by the Maine Mall

Welcome to PortConMaine 2006: Revenge of the Pirates! YAR!! PortConMaine is Maine's biggest and best Anime & Gaming Convention! Fan run and for fans, the convention has succeeded year after year to bring anime and gaming funs events such as: a cosplay, anime music videos, two anime rooms, a video game room, panels, discussions, workshops, CCGs, miniature events, RPGs, board games, an auction, extreme geek, Cthulhu, karaoke, an artist ally, contests, free stuff,Dance Dance revolution, vendors, and more! Stock full of goodness, with enough events to keep you busy and wanting more- this convention is a family friendly outing for all ages! Contact Julie York: info@portconmaine.com

UNITED KINGDOM
06/16-18: Q-Con XIII - Belfast, Northern Ireland
http://www.q-con.org.uk/
Queen's University Student's Union

Q-Con XIII is this year being held in the newly refurnished Student's Union at Queen's University Belfast. A huge variety of games and events are on offer from tabletop role-play, ccg's,console games,wargames and anime screenings. Q-Con will have a variety of participation games (free to enter) and competition games over the weekend. Anyone who pre-registers before 30th April will recieve a free con t-shirt and entry into a X-Box 360 prize draw. Contact Jonathan Glover: exocet@hotmail.com

EUROPE (WESTERN/EASTERN)
06/02-06: Lincon - Linkoping, Sweden
http://www.lincon.se/
Linkoping University, C building

Swedens second biggest convention. Events will take place during all 24 hours of every day during this 4-day weekend. The con will be open for 93 hours and it only costs about 35 euro for an all-weekend pass. Contact Bjorn Lagerstrom: rick.s.chris@gmail.com

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06/22-25:Arcon 22 - Oslo, Norway
http://www.spillfestival.no/
Universitetet i Oslo, Blindern

ARCON is a con for gaming enthusiasts from all over Norway. The con is arranged yearly and collects creative and imaginative people from all over Norway to play boardgames, role-playing games, collectible card games, miniature games, see movies, participate in debates, exchange ideas, and have a good time. Contact Jo-Herman Haugholt: johannes@huyderman.com

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND
06/02-07: ConClave - Auckland, New Zealand
http://conclave.sf.org.nz/
Allenby Park Motor Inn

Welcome to Conclave, the 27th New Zealand National Science Fiction Convention! The convention is being held at the Allenby Park Motor Inn in Auckland, over Queen's Birthday Weekend 2006 (Friday June 2 to Monday June 5).Our Guests of Honour are Steve Jackson of SJ Games fame, award wining writer Joan Vinge, editor Jim Frenkel,and Fan GoH Kevin McLean. Check the rest of the site for further details, or let us know if you have any questions. We'll be updating the site frequently over the coming year. Contact enquiries@conclave.sf.org.nz

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06/08-12: ConFlux - Canberra, Australia
http://www.conflux.org.au/
National Museum of Australia

Over 100 sessions across 4 days of panel discussions, presentations, interviews and parties * Largest art show and film festival to be held at an Australian science fiction convention * Gaming rooms, trader's hall, cocktail party, feast,masquerade disco, readings, mass book signing, and more. Contact info@conflux.org.au

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06/09-12: Conflux 3 - Canberra, ACT
http://www.conflux.org.au/
National Museum of Australia

Huge con in Australia's capital: * Over 100 sessions across 4 days of panel discussions, presentations, interviews and parties * Largest art show and film festival to be held at an Australian science fiction convention Contact Stuart Barrow, 8/84 MacGregor St,Deakin,ACT 2600

July 2006

UNITED STATES (USA)

07/07-09: ConnectiCon 2006 - Hartford, Ct
http://www.connecticon.org/
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Blvd

Multi-genre convention featuring webcomics, console gaming, LAN gaming, Japanese animation (anime), board games, card games, roleplaying games, and other geeky goodness =) Contact Mathew Daigle: m.daigle@ConnectiCon.org

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07/07-09: M.O.O.N. CON - Richland Center, Wisconsin
http://www.mooncon.bravehost.com/
Ramada Inn/White House Conferrence Center
1450 Veteran's Drive

General Science Fiction Fan Convention with Gaming, First time ever in this community, first time ever for this convention. Contact Robert H. Poole: rpoole@mwt.net

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07/12-16: DEXCON 9 - East Brunswick, NJ
http://www.dexposure.com/dexcon9.html
The Hilton East Brunswick Hotel
3 Tower Center Boulevard

96 HOURS OF GAMING including RPGs, Board and card games, war and strategy games, CCGs, fantasy and historical miniatures, LAN and console games, and more than 60 LARPs as part of INTERCON NORTHEAST! Over 40 National Championships! RPGA and NAGA campaigns! SUGARFEST 2006 and chocolate fondue! $2,500 Badge Puzzle! NO PER GAME FEES! Come and play! Contact Rebecca Badurina: becca@dexposure.com

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07/14: Aurora-Con - Anchorage, Alaska
http://www.auroracon.org/
William A. Egan Civic & Convention Center
555 W. 5th Avenue

On July 14th 2006, Aurora-Con will have its first ever Japanese Cultural Expo and Anime Convention to be held at the William A. Egan Civic & Convention Center in Anchorage Alaska. Aurora-Con will offer anime fans of Alaska and Canada and any other place that wants to come aboard, a chance to gather in a warm and friendly setting to learn more about the culture of Japan and to share in the experience that is the anime fan culture. Easily accessible and conveniently located in the heart of downtown Anchorage on 5th Avenue, Aurora-Con welcomes anime fans and Asian cultural enthusiasts across the north to join us for this special inaugural day. Mercedes Totman: information@ auroracon.org

07/21-23: Trinoc*coN - Raleigh, NC
http://www.trinoc-con.org/
North Raleigh Hilton
3415 Wake Forest Road
Tel: +1-919-872-2323

Trinoc*coN is an annual speculative fiction conference held in Durham, North Carolina. We support the exploration of the science fields, their related technologies, and celebrates those creative arts that strive to answer the great \"What if?\". Trinoc*coN is dedicated to the promotion of imaginative inquiry into all aspects of speculative fiction and scientific exploration — its past, its present, and especially its future. Contact Huey Hoague: lof-huey@nc.rr.com

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07/27-30: PHOENIX CON GAMES - Mesa, AZ
http://www.conevents.com/
Hilton Phoenix East on the 60 Fwy & Alma School Rd.
1101 W. Holmes Ave. Mesa 85210

This year's Con Games convention has 24 hour gaming with all of your favorite stuff. Come play Magic against Peter Adkison, or do Roleplaying with The Dead Gentlemen! You'll find the MIB's and all of your favorite Steve Jackson Games there. We have White Wolf sanctioned events, as well as a Live Action Old West Poker Tournament and much more. Contact Mary Erickson: mary@icehouseproductions.com

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07/28-30: OGC - Manchester, NH
http://www.ogc-con.com/

Radisson Hotel on Elm Street across from Verizon Arena. Three day gaming convention with SJG, RPGs, CCGs, board games, miniature games(BT, CAV, Warhammer (40K and Fantasy), Hordes, WM),LARP, RPGA, and much more! Contact Lisa Sussenberger: OGCcon@yahoo.com

EUROPE (WESTERN / EASTERN)

07/28-30: Rol En Quart - Quart de Poblet, Valencia, Spain
http://www.rolenquart.org/
Colegio Publico Villar Palasi, Quart de Poblet

RolEnQuart (ReQ) is a con developed with the intention of develop bonds between the multiple groups of roleplayers in the area of Valencia. We try not only to make tournaments and play rpgs, we're trying to make friends with the same interests. Contact Alfredo Tarancon: req.staff@gmail.com

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07/29-30: MittsommernachtsCon
Laimering/Augsburg/Munich, Germany
http://www.spielespieler.de/

Gasthof Asum in 86453 Laimering

large first time convention for around 200 people: roleplay, table-top, trading cards... Contact Melanie Schubert: info@spielespieler.de

AUGUST 2006

UNITED STATES (USA)

08/01-06: World Boardgaming Championship
Lancaster, PA
http://www.boardgamers.org/
Lancaster Host Resort
2300 Lincoln Highway East (Route 30)

A gaming convention where boardgamers come first. More than 1,000 people from around the world compete in 100 featured boardgame \"Century\" events, plus \"Trial\" events and open gaming. Junior Program for children through age 12. Quality competition. No experience necessary; demos scheduled throughout the week. Admission all inclusive. No event fees. Contact Kaarin Engelmann: kaarin@boardgamers.org

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08/04-06: Fandemonium - Nampa, Idaho
http://www.fandemonium.org
Nampa Civic Center
311 3rd St S, Nampa, ID 83651

Fandemonium is a three-day celebration of Media Culture and Fandom, with many events throughout the weekend. [Screenings]: Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Anime, Horror & more, movies and series. [Tabletop Gaming]: Role Playing Games, Collectible Card Games, Miniatures Games, Board Games & more. [Video Gaming]: Console, PC & Arcade. [Contests]: Fan Film, Fan Music Video (Fanvid), Fan Art, Short Story, Masquerade/Cosplay Costume & more. [Learning & Participation]: Panels, Workshops & Demonstrations. You can also meet and talk with a wide variety of Industry and Genre Guests of Honor. Contact Chad Walker: harold.walker@mountainhome.af.mil

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08/10-13 GenCon Indy 2006 - Indianapolis, Indiana
http://www.gencon.com
Indiana Convention Center

Gen Con Indy is non-stop pedal to the metal action – RPG's, TCG's miniatures, board and electronic games, over 5000 events and hundreds of exhibitors. It is is the original, longest running, best attended, gaming convention in the world. Last year, more than 26,000 unique attendees experienced Gen Con Indy. The biggest complaint we hear is that there is simply too much to do, see, and experience. Contact Stacia Kirby: stacia@speakeasy.net

08/11-13: Pi-Con - West Springfield, MA
http://www.pi-con.org/
Sovereign Best Western, Route 5

Pi-Con is a science fiction/gaming/fandom convention. With a guest of honor no less than Jacqueline Carey, Voltaire as musical guest, and two rooms of gaming, Pi-Con will have all the fun of a sci-fi convention and a gaming convention under the same roof. Contact Michael Whitehouse: chair@pi-con.org

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08/18-20: Bubonicon 38 - Albuquerque, New Mexico
http://www.bubonicon.com/
Wyndham Airport Hotel
2910 Yale Blvd SE, (800) 227-1117

Bubonicon is a science fiction convention located in Albuquerque since 1969. It is held on the last full weekend of August before Labor Day weekend. Thus, it usually is the weekend before Worldcon (unless Worldcon dates change like in 2005 and 2006). The convention is focused primarily on literary authors and artists with a dedicated gaming area and an anime/media room. Contact Dante Stewart: dmstewa@gmail.com

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08/23-27: 64th World Science Fiction Convention
Anaheim, California
http://www.laconiv.org/
Anaheim Convention Center/Anaheim Hilton/Anaheim Marriott
Contact Ira Ham: iraham@aol.com

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08/26-27: Battle for the Cure - Ballston Spa, NY
Table Top Games 82 Milton

This is the fourth convention/fund raiser that we have done and we are slowly trying to become bigger and better by adding more game compaines. All the money raised at the fund raiser goes to the Children's Hospital in Albany NY. We have been steadily growing in size and looking to become bigger and better every time. Contact Person: Nicholas Malinowski: Mournelyth@hotmail.com

EUROPE (WESTERN / EASTERN)

08/12-13: Augsburger Spieletage - Augsburg, Germany
http://www.spielespieler.de/
Bürgerhaus Pfersee in Augsburg

Roleplay, tabletop, trading cards...gaming whatever you want Contact Dominic Niederhoff: info@spielespieler.de

SALUTE

Europe's oldest and biggest Gaming convention

We have several new article additions to EarthCon Central! First off, every issue we will present one or more writeups on gaming conventions from around the world. Next, we plan on bringing you exclusive reviews straight from the conventions! Stay tuned to future issues of *Argent Fire* for our exclusive reviews. This issue, we are proud to bring you several writeups of gaming conventions from around the world. Game cons are a great way for fans of Battletech and other Mecha universes to come together, share ideas and stories, create new friendships, and increase the fun factor of playing.

Every con that we will present will be one that offers several venues for Mecha fans, albeit Battletech or another universe. Take the time to learn more about them. If any are near you (or seem cool enough to fly out and visit), check them out!

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The History of Salute
Article by Brian Cameron, South London Warlords
http://www.salute.co.uk/

So, we're looking for stuff to fill the programme and John Treadaway says to me, "you've been involved with Salute since the beginning, how about a history of the open day over the years".

It occurred to us both that there are few shows that have been in existence as long as Salute, or changed as dramatically over the years in terms of scale – though not in objectives! Every year since the move to Olympia in 2000, we have asked the gamers who come through the door – the life-blood of the hobby, after all – what they think of the day and what they want next year. One of the questions on the form (which you really should take the opportunity to fill in and win a fab prize!) is always "How many Salutes have you previously attended?" It's great when we get variations on "20", "25" and even "all of them!", but for some, of course, the answer is "one", "two" or even "none"

So sweeping aside my long grey beard so I can get at the keyboard here's a bit of an overview of the years. It's aimed at those who've hardly ever been to Salute before to give them some context of how the South London Warlords Club open day came to be what it is. But I guess it can also be viewed as a little bit of nostalgia for those who were there at the beginning!

It really started back in the dim and distant days of 1971. I was newly down in London (not being a native of these parts) and had just started at college. I'd innocently wandered along Rye Lane in Peckham and stumbled across the Rye Stamp and Hobby Shop. The nice gent inside (the late Bill Brewer), busy selling wargames figures, told me of a new club which was starting, the South Bermondsey Military Modelling Society (snappy title eh, bet you're wondering why we changed it to the South London Warlords after about six months). I went along and became an active member (more than I've been in recent years, mainly because of work commitments). Dave Rotor, a very active member who had been one of the driving forces in getting the club started, and I went along to a 'do' at the Russell Hotel run by the North London Wargames Group. There must have been six trade stands and three wargames. It was impressive stuff for the time.

Dave and I came away saying, "our club could run something like that". And so it did, in April 1972, at the Surrey Tavern at the Oval the very first Salute was run. By the end of the day we'd taken enough money on the door to pay the balance of the hall hire and so considered the day a great success! I can't really remember the traders we had along apart from Skytrex (which must make John Hammond our longest running supporter) but it was, of course, quite a modest affair. Af-

ter that, though, we just had to do it again... and over the next few years the South London Warlords hired function rooms at a variety London hotels and the show grew in size. Our first settled venue was Old Chelsea Town Hall in the Kings Road where we held Salute for the first time in 1975, as I recall. We stayed at Chelsea – with one interlude – until 1978 but we

did, in '77, run Salute at Margate Wintergardens on the south coast, as a weekend. Although this was deemed moderately successful (British holiday resorts in October: how bracing!) Salute returned to London for the following year, but the Margate idea was retained and a separate additional show was organised at that location several times more over the late seventies and early eighties – the last being in '82.

But back to Salute 'proper': in 1979 we outgrew Chelsea Town hall and moved to the new Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall (which, for several years, confused a few people who turned up mid morning saying they'd been to the old place). It was in the 1980s that we really started to grow the event, attendance rising from about 800 in 1981 to about 2500 in 1985, years in which I learned a lot as the show co-ordinator.

Now each year at Kensington we'd find and hire a bit more space. We added the upstairs hall after a couple of years. Then we hired some of the meeting rooms, and - eventually (and because they knew we were good guys who didn't make a mess) - we were allowed to use the "mayor's back passage" (so to speak) and eventually the foyer across from the entrance. Oh, and the library in the other wing. But still the placed was packed out and the biggest complaint was that people just couldn't move. I knew what they meant. If ever I wanted to go from the information stand on the stage in the main hall to the entrance I used to go upstairs, past the upper hall and down the stairs by the lifts because it was a darned sight quicker than going through the main hall! The show was "heaving" and we had to do something: traders couldn't serve customers; gamers who turned up with families couldn't get there small kids around without fear of them being trampled and there was hardly room to get chairs around the participation

gaming tables that we have always taken great care to try and attract. Something had to give, so...

So it was off to our new home, Olympia. We had a shaky start because of the need to enter via the lifts but we held our hands up it in what was clearly regarded as a very credible fashion, said we'd fix the problem and did. And now we manage to give, judging by the kinds things people say on our questionnaires, a tad short of 5000 people a very enjoyable day with plenty of opportunity to see what is available from the trade, see some very good looking days and to take part in some very good games. And that's not to neglect what is clearly a great opportunity to meet up with friends new and old and just natter about wargaming.

Where is Salute going in the future? Well - even with the internet making it's presence felt – we at the Warlords feel (obviously) that there's no better way to buy figures than at a show where you can see and handle the wares and have direct contact with the many traders – well over a hundred and twenty this year – who come to the show. But – on top of that – there's the games themselves, and other displays by re-enactors and so forth. But all this needed more space and – to enable Salute to move forward and get better – we moved Salute Zero Six to Excel London!

All of the wargames shows that fill the calendar of a gam-

ing year are a testament to the hard work of the clubs that organise them (and it usually is clubs running them for the love of their hobby) and we at the Warlords are proud to contribute to that as best we possibly can.

Brian Cameron

South London Warlords

SOUTH LONDON WARLORDS

A Club History of one of the UK's Oldest and largest running Gaming Clubs

Beginnings

In September 1971 under another name (The South Bermondsey Military Modelling Society), the South London Warlords was formed by three wargamers: Jim Shiels, Dave Rotor and the late Bill Brewer. Bill ran the Rye Stamp and Hobby shop in Peckham for many years and – until his death in 1998 – was a professional figure painter of some renown and was instrumental in raising the standard of painted wargames armies.

Locations

The Club met in a small hall in Bermondsey in South London but in 1974 opened a second branch in Eltham. In 1975 the 'Bermondsey' branch moved its location to a more suitable hall in Dulwich where it stayed for almost twenty years.

In 1985 the two branches, after some tempestuous wrangling, split into two individual clubs and so the South London Warlords became concentrated again at one branch in Dulwich. In 1995 the Dulwich branch moved again to larger premises – St. Barnabas Church Hall a bigger hall in Dulwich – which is the Club's current home.

Periods and Interests

The Club's original name was the South Bermonsey Military Modelling Society and, when the name was changed (rather rapidly) into something a little more dynamic, the opportunity was made to change the named emphasis to reflect the Club's activities. So the Club became the "South London Warlords Wargaming and Military Modelling Club" more often referred to as the "South London Warlords" or just plain "The Warlords".
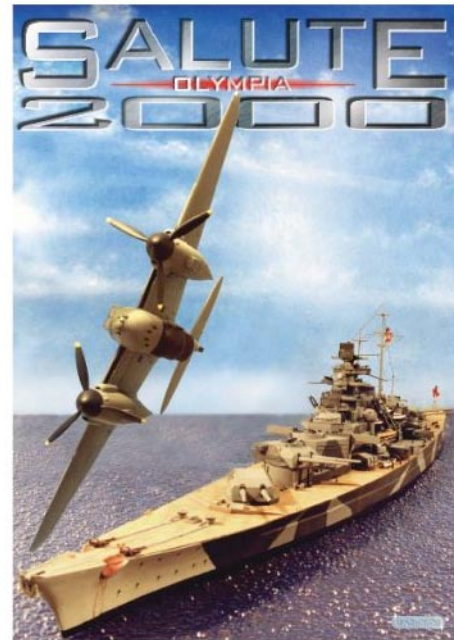
Throughout its life the Club's interests have waxed and waned and – inevitably – been driven to some extent by popular culture. Napoleonics were popular early on, particularly so because of the film Waterloo. Samurai armies were popular in the early eighties after the TV series Shogun. In the mid seventies, fantasy armies were popular based on The Lord of the Rings, but in the late seventies Dungeons & Dragons became the craze of the moment: role playing had arrived at the Warlords.

Early on there were problems because the themes of D&D and other role-playing systems were quite 'alien' to the accepted, historical wargaming culture but there were also complaints amongst some of the older membership about these new games' formats. Some of the role playing games used hardly any metal figures and that some of those that were used were not actually painted...

After a while, the world, it was noted, hadn't stopped spinning on its axis, and role-playing became an accepted part of the Club's activities leading to it's inclusion in the Club's name: The South London Warlords Wargaming, Role-playing and Military Modelling Club.

COMMAND POST 1999-2000 Issue 3
SALUTE OLYMPIA 2000
South London Warlords
Wargaming, Roleplaying & Military Modelling Club

In around '87, some of the membership began experimenting with Live Role Playing. This initially involved the Club premises but rapidly outgrew the facilities and so – after some late night 'activities' on public ground – reputable venues were hired and games run external to the Club. Some of the membership running around the woods shooting 'laser' guns caused a degree of friction within the Club – was LRP 'proper' wargaming? – but, as of the current date, most of the current Club's activities seem to coexist along side each other.

The Warlords regularly attends other club's shows around

the country and has, for many years, gained a reputation for putting on quality games for a (largely) participation audience.

"The Club has pretty broad tastes in gaming: I've seen pretty much every historical period played over the 27 years I've been a member, but my chief interest, I guess, is Fantasy and SF and that's very strong at the Warlords. I'm a big Lord of the Rings fan – it got me into gaming in my youth – plus Star Trek, Babylon 5 and other SF including stuff based on the book series by David Drake "Hammer's Slammers": I like that kind of material."

Warlords show games – the sort they produce to run at their own event plus other shoes around the UK – concentrate on a mix of participation games and demonstration games. These have included, over recent years, games based on both Vietnam (20mm with helicopters) and Pearl Harbour (1/1200th scale), but the ones that John gets involved with usually involve an SF theme: "Over the past few years, we've done Star Wars using 4 inch "action" figures; UFO – based on the Gerry Anderson TV series – in 1/100th; War of the Daleks in 1/35th; Cloudships of Mars – Victorian 'steam punk' – in 28mm; Hammer's Slammers in 28mm; Starship Troopers – even large ship Star Trek a few years back" says John.

Other things the Warlords involve themselves in is Live Role Play using a derivative of the Mattel 'Lazer Tag' system which first appeared in the late 1980's. "We have a big section of the Club that plays Warhammer of both kinds, plus War Machine, Flames of War and all sorts of things on a regular basis at the moment. Over the years I've seen Battletech, Void, Silent Death, Full Thrust... you name it and Warlords members have played it! But we do an awful lot of 'home made' rules for games: I guess that, after all this time playing games, many of us are just not content to get a game out of the box and play it 'as is' – we can't resist fiddling with it! We write rules up, try 'em out and stick them on our website for everyone to take and try and – I have to say – it's pretty gratifying when you get emails from all around the planet from people who've done just that" adds John.

Where are we now?

The Club's membership is a little smaller than it has been in recent years although in actuality, the highest numbers it ever attained were (not surprisingly) in the mid eighties when there were two branches. Not so much emphasis is currently placed upon LRP or Ancients Competition teams as had been the case in the past. Similarly, fantasy card games, like elsewhere, have 'had their day'.

The Club meets every Monday evening at St. Barnabas Parish Hall in Gilkes Place, Dulwich Village, London between 7:30pm and 11:00pm, with extended Saturday sessions around eight times a year. On the last Monday of each month the Club usually puts on a large participation game, an ideal opportunity for new members to join in and for established members to try something new.

Many periods gamed currently are firm favourites that would have been in play on a Club night at any point for the last three decades: Napoleonics, Ancients, WW2. Others - Warhammer, Warhammer 40k and various other SF and Fantasy genres – have also survived the tests of time. Hopefully the quality of figure painting and modelling at the club has advanced over the years, as have the commercially available figures and scenery, but that aside, many games on a Monday night at the Warlords would have been recognisable thirty plus years ago – and vice versa.

Conclusions

The Warlords is now in it's fourth decade of existence and - inevitably - only a very few of the original, first year members are still present. Like most Wargames clubs the Warlords struggles with an ageing membership who find playing with wargames figures (and owning them and painting them) difficult to justify to their careers, loved ones and bank managers. Running around the woods shooting infra-red toy guns also proved troublesome to the knees.

The Club, nevertheless, tries to excel in all areas - and lead in most - and is justifiably proud of its achievements since its early days in the seventies. Members still meet weekly to game and, often, outside of Club hours on a social level. Furthermore, Salute has become - and maintains its position as – the premier show of its kind in the country.

John Treadaway
Club President

THE GREAT CANADIAN BAYCON

Welcome to the first Convention review of 2006! This brief review covers the Great Canadian BayCon, held on May 4, 5 and 6 in Hamilton, Ontario.

The Great Canadian Baycon (bacon) 2006
Edited by Terri "MATAHARI" Gillingham

This annual spring convention was once again held in Hamilton, Ontario (The Hammer). That's in Canada for all our geographically challenged gamers. The Convention featured a full range of games, from role-playing, ccg's, clix, board games and miniatures.

Games, Reaper Miniatures, Flipquest, Savita Games, Fantasy Flight Games, Looney Labs, Margaret Weis Productions and Hidden City Games. This year the special guest was Jamie Chambers, author of many Dragonlance rpg titles and the new Serenity role-playing game.

Gaming rooms were available and open to Midnight on Friday and Saturday for the die-hard gamers. The historical gang

Batletech was played throughout the con, all day Saturday and Sunday. Btech's little cousin Mechwarrior was also feature with events both Saturday and Sunday, including several tournaments.

was well represented with a Flames of War tournament for two days. The 4th annual Canadian National Settlers of Catan tournament was held over the weekend, the winner got a free flight to Germany and entry to the World Championships

Unlike most gaming conventions in Canada, the Great Canadian Baycon featured direct manufacturer support. Factory and publishing representatives were onsite all weekend from; Rackham (in France), Chessex, Mayfair Games, Sabertooth

of Catan. Attendees came from across central Canada, Quebec and the North East United States. We hope you can join us next year for the coolest gaming convention in Canada, May 4th 5th and 6th 2007.

sentry BOX

We recently visited the Sentry Box, a veritable Canadian mecca for sci-fi/fantasy and military games and were taken aback by its enormity and variety. Read on to learn about the tale of Canada's largest gaming venue.

Reported by Terri "MATAHARI" Gillingham

A long time ago (1973) and far away, in a land called Alberta, there was a bored housewife (or fairy princess if you prefer) whose husband and son liked painting 54mm miniature soldiers. Since she had nothing else to do that day, she waved her magic wand and created an extra-dimensional space off the front entrance of a bookstore (Evelyn deMille Books) in Calgary. This little pocket dimension was about 10' by 10' in size. Waving her wand again, she filled it with miniatures that her husband and son liked and a few games from SPI since they were also about soldiers. Since the space was so small and was filled with soldiers, she decided it should be called "The Sentry Box." After a couple of years of dealing with the kind of people who search out military stuff in pocket dimensions, she decided enough was enough, waved the wand again, and disappeared into another far away land. Little did the princess know that she had left clues to her true name (Liz Crane) and that there was an elderly gnome (John Blue) looking for her. Neither the fairy princess or the gnome knew that a young dwarf occasionally came to the dimension looking for games which could transport him to different times in history. (More on him later.)

Some time later, the gnome caught up with the fairy princess and gave her a small quantity of gold. For this, he got the rights to the magic of the name "The Sentry Box" and some leftover miniatures and games. The gnome decided he needed a bigger pocket dimension and moved to a new location at the corner of street named after an Indian Chief and a famous King (Crowchild and Kensington). As this dimension was way to big (about 450 sq. ft.) for the gnomes needs, he divided it into two sections; one of 250 sq.ft. in which he put the miniatures and games, and one of 200 sq.ft. which he loaned to another gnome who liked plastic models. As the second gnome had another job, he was only seen on weekends and his name is lost in the mists of time.

The elderly gnome had a gruff but likable personality but knew absolutely nothing about what he sold and why these strange people would come to his dimension. What he did know

was that small amounts of gold passed into his hands on a daily basis and that he didn't have to do any hard work. To this day, it is unknown what paths the elderly gnome traveled to find the fairy princess and why he wanted to buy the magic of the name in the first place.

Putting the floors

While all this was going on, the young dwarf we spoke of earlier had grown older and wiser and was now toiling in the depths of the earth taming steaming dragons (running a boiler room in a hospital). Since taming dragons needed to be done day and night (shift work), the young dwarf had time on his hands during the day when all of his friends were digging for gold. The dwarf had bought an abode but it had cost so much gold that he needed to find a way to cut down on the cost of the games he liked so much. While traveling to a far land for a meeting of fellow gamers (Origins 78 in Ann Arbour), he met a purveyor of games who sold only to owners of pocket dimensions. Thinking quickly, the young dwarf created a pocket dimension in his abode and started to sell to his friends where they met to play games. Any profits from these sales could of course written off as the interest on the abode was tax deductible. Realizing that tax deductions were a good thing, the dwarf decided to name his new enterprise T.D. Imports (which was the short version of Tax Dodge of course).

One day, another young dwarf suggested that it might be a good idea for our hero to sell his wares to shopkeepers in other dimensions as well as to his friends. Seeing the wisdom in these words, he did so and thus met the elderly gnome. The elderly

The Sentry Box outside...the beginning

gnome gave the young dwarf many words of wisdom, one of which was "If you sell to your friends at a discount, I won't buy anything from you and I buy a lot more than they do." Being a dwarf with a big mortgage on the abode, and being tired of hauling boxes of games to the areas where his friends played games, the young dwarf changed the direction of T.D. Imports and it began to sell to many more dimensions. Eventually, it became one of the largest purveyors of its kind in the land (but that is a tale for another time).

While doing all this new purveying, the young dwarf was still taming the steam dragons night and day and not getting a lot of sleep. One magical day, the young dwarf had a moment of inspiration; he would try to give gold to the elderly gnome to buy his pocket dimension. He would then be surrounded by his beloved games and life would be good as he could sell to his friends again. After much convincing, the gnome agreed to sell, and the date of the transfer was set as the first day of the new decade due to its auspicious omens (and because the elderly gnome was no fool and wanted one more Christmas season to sell things). The moment of truth came and on January 1, 1980, the pocket dimension passed into the hands of the young dwarf (Gordon Johansen) who at this point had just reached the dwarvish age of majority (24).

The young dwarf immediately decided that if you could purvey a certain amount of games in a small dimension, you could sell more in a bigger one. Since the unknown gnome who liked models, didn't seem to like selling them, they were returned to his abode and everyone was happy. (In an amazing coincidence the unknown gnome sold the models to another unknown young dwarf who many years later would be a schoolteacher for the firstborn child of the new owner of the magical name.) With such an abundance of space in the pocket dimension, the young dwarf quickly added more items to his displays that he thought would sell well. One was a game about the real world called Dungeons & Dragons which then bred variants like Tribbles.

After a couple of years the young dwarf heard a rumor that the chariot path in front of his dimension was to be widened and that the new path would go right through his place of business. He then embarked on a quest to find a new pocket dimension from which to purvey his games. After much looking he found a much bigger dimension to rent and signed a five year lease with the Galactic Overlord (United Management, of which no more will be said in case I start swearing). The new dimension was located on a chariot path called 33rd Avenue just off the famous Crowchild Trail. It had so much space (1440 sq.ft. that the young dwarf could put his other business, T.D. Imports in the back and still have leftover space in the front. This made life even better as he now had more space to play games in the basement of his abode.

With all this room, the young dwarf thought he should add some new items to his inventory. After much thought, he decided on his one other true love (besides young female dwarves). Parchments about the far future and other fantastic lands were just the thing. He had read lots of them. and if he sold them, there was the added advantage of being able to get his own copies at cost. Since these parchments would require a special talent to order, he eventually hired a lost soul (Leonard Halmrast) to take of this for him. This soul is still with the young dwarf to this day and spends much time in the depths of the earth making sure that the demons in charge of the magical calculating devices are maintained properly and that the building does not fall down.

Historical miniatures section

One memorable moment occurred while in this dimension and it was known as the Great Flood (as compared to the innumerable minor floods which would haunt the young dwarf to this day). A connection to the land of the water elementals broke in an abode in the dimension above The Sentry Box, and for many hours hot water poured into it. Much damage was done and much inventory was thrown in the proverbial dumpster. There are respectable dwarves to this day who remember this as their first experience with the sport of dumpster diving. Many unsalable, but still usable games and modules were rescued in this manner and given good homes by young lads.

Several years passed and once again the young dwarf realized that he needed a larger pocket dimension. The search began and luckily he found a new location only a few dimensions away (20th Street and 34th Avenue). This space was twice as large as his current dimension so he could still run both his enterprises in the same location; one in the front and one in the back. There were even two abodes attached to the top of the space that he could rent for gold. Even better, this dimension was for sale

and the young dwarf would not have to pay rent to evil overlords. A minor mortgage against his soul was taken out and the dimension was purchased. Business was so good that after a few years, more space was again needed. It was easy to do this time as they moved T.D. Imports to another dimension under the supervision of the world's tallest dwarf (Ross Jepson) where it continued to prosper eventually becoming one of the largest wholesale purveyors of games to purveyors of games in the country. Eventually it was sold to the aforementioned worlds tallest dwarf and disappears from our tale. The parchments were moved to the sub-dimension at the back and business continued to improve.

One day, one of the abodes above The Sentry Box was empty and the young dwarf thought this would be a good place for other dwarves to play games and for dwarven clubs to meet. Several small sections of the abode were locked off and used to start another enterprise called Nucleus Information Services which dealt with sending imps down wires to carry information to their friends. This was run by some other very young dwarves who showed promise in their particular field of magic. The young dwarf had admired the incentive shown by these other very young dwarves and loaned them gold to buy the components for their spells. This relationship carries on to this day with the dwarf owning a small percentage of this enterprise.

Around this time, a new game called Battletech came out and caught the eye of the young dwarf who enjoyed it a lot. It even came with stories on parchment and a history of its own dimension. Unfortunately the dwarf did not get to play as often as he liked but he does have fond memories of singlehandedly shooting down a dropship with an Axeman (after all, what else would a dwarf operate?). It was probably the most incredible series of lucky die rolls that the dwarf ever managed in his life and is still talked about in the nether hells by the dropship crew.

Again, several years passed and the pocket dimension was getting full once more. This is a common problem with dwarves who as we know, never throw anything away and seem to want to have one of everything they like. The floors of the dimension were starting to bow from the weight of all the games and if they broke, who knows how far (and to where) the dwarf might have fallen. The now, not so young dwarf once again embarked on a epic search for a new home. This time he decided that he would try to find a large space in the real world so that he would never have to move again. After many adventures, a cavern was found that might do. It had four walls, a roof, and a large area which would provide security from marauding dragons. Once again, his soul was mortgaged to the Gnomes of Zurich and the new building purchased.

Since there was nothing at all in this cavern, plans were made and construction started. It was a grand adventure with many perils to overcome. There was the tested and fully trained steam dragon that immolated itself rather than once again provide heat. New dragons were quickly raised and taught what to do. The infamous "city hall planners" made many attacks and had to be beaten off with changed blueprints. The world's slowest painters had to be whipped into shape and the roof had to be fully repaired so the water and ice elementals could not sneak in and cause damage. Through all this, the other dwarf (Leonard) worked tirelessly night and day to battle the attacking forces and to keep the lizardmen workers in line. Finally it was done and the grand opening was set for March 1st, 1994. The doors were opened and there were many oohs and ahhs and the dwarfs friends and customers entered the edifice for the first time. To this day, a new shopper used to they typical size of a purveyor of games, can be easily spotted when they enter the store. The "Oh, my God" and the five minutes of leaning against the railing of the mezzanine is usually a dead givaway.

The size of the cavern is what catches customers off guard. It is 13,000 sq.ft in total with 30' ceilings in places. This includes offices, a cage for the steam dragons, a shop to build things, a large mezzanine area for other dwarves to play games when the shop is open, an after hours room with a separate entrance for dwarven fighting clubs to meet, and more secret rooms and passages than you can shake an axe at. There are many and varied treasures in these secret rooms of which even the now somewhat older dwarf has forgotten their location. It often happens that a lost relic turns up after a dangerous journey into the depths. In common parlance the magic name is now usually shortened to "The Box" and a new generation of gamers is now coming in with their fathers or by themselves. Even their mothers, wives, and girlfriends are finding games and books of interest. Many challenges are sure to arise (his own children being one of them) in the future but the dwarf will surely persevere.

It has now been 26 years since the young dwarf bought the magic name "The Sentry Box." Eleven years have passed since the dwarf moved into his new location and there have been many changes (not the least to his weight and hairline). He has given a percentage of the business to the lost soul for his years of dedicated service, helpers have come and gone as have genre's of games. One thing however has not changed; the dwarf and his helpers still love games and parchments and think of most customers as friends.

FIRST LOOK:
The Battletech Movie Project

By Andrew "Odysseus" Kissel

For the past several years, a project has been in the works to produce a Battletech short film. The inspiration for this came from Jan "Col. Gooseman" Mackowiak, founder of Battletech-Movie.com and of the Battletech Movie project.

Since its inception, the project had made a lot of headway with regards to the CG modeling and scripting of the film. For a no-budget, fan-involved project, it's moving along quite well. I'm sure most of you would agree with me when I say I would like to see this project reach a successful end!

I've spoken with Jan on several occasions regarding the project, and I felt that it was important to get the message out. This review covers the general storyline of the movie, as well as its current progress and future goals.

If you haven't heard of the Battletech Movie project, take some time to familiarize yourself with this brief review, and check out www.battletech-movie.com from time to time for more updates on the project!

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Our goal is the production of a short movie dealing with the Gray Death Legion and Battletech from the LosTech age. For this end, real-life film shots of actors, props and anything that belongs to this shall be composed together with CG of Mechs, landing ships and further assets.

Project Status

- work on the 3D models representing BattleMechs and combat vehicles is 70 % finished
- creation of the script is roughly 70 % finished
- creation and acquiring of props is roughly 10 % finished
- real-life shots are 0 % finished
- creation of the final movie is 0 % finished

Story

The short movie deals with an incident between a mercenary unit and the Gray Death Legion directly after the battle of Helm (3rd novel of the Gray Death Trilogy).

Directly after fleeing from the Marik space, the Gray Death Legion obtains a short-term garrison contract for the Planet Mizar. Mizar is within jump range of the Mercenary Planet Galatea, on which a desperate mercenary unit learns of the stationing of the Legion, and the highly valued prize it took from Helm. Not being able to resist the temptation to attack the weakened Legion and to obtain their valuable Star League material from Helm, this mercenary unit executes an attack on the stationed Legion forces. In consequence it comes to a clash of the mercenaries, who are disguised as pirates, and the weakened units of the Gray Death Legion.

The Film

After a short but intense introduction and presentation of the key mercenary figures, the BattleTech short movie is especially meant to cover a great number of famous elements of the BattleTech universe.

For example, there will be spaceship scenes (jump ship landing ships undock, drop ships touch down), preparation for battle (unloading of a drop ship, deploying of forces and preparation for attack) and battle scenes, of which the latter will mainly take place between BattleMechs. In addition, Infantry and vehicles will be found in different battle scenes.

As an important aspect, the situation of the 3025 LosTech age is being accounted for. This is especially shown in the severely handicapped BattleMechs of both sides, which in many cases enter combat damaged or with only limited combat readiness.

As a special treat, there will be both exterior and interior graphical views both of the space ships and combat vehicles (including the BattleMech cockpits).

Mercenary BattleMechs and Vehicles

At this point, the following Battlemechs are completed: Locust 1V, Locust 1S, Stinger 3G, Stinger 3R, Wasp 1A, Phoenix Hawk 1, Hunchback 4G, Trebuchet 5N, Shadow Hawk 2H, Rifleman 3N, Catapult C1, Catapult C4, Thunderbolt 5S, Battlemaster 1R. As for vehicles: Mobile HQ, Galleon, Hunter, Manticore, Demolisher

Gray Death Legion

At this point, the following BattleMechs are completed: Stinger 3G, Wasp 1A, Phoenix Hawk 1, Crab 27, Griffin 1N, Hoplite 4C, Shadow Hawk 2D, Shadow Hawk 2H, Rifleman 3N, Crusader 3R, Archer 2R, Warhammer 6R, Marauder 3R, Thug 11E. As for vehicles: M.A.S.H., Galleon, Bulldog, Condor. Furthermore, there is a completed model of an Invader class jump ship and a Union class landing ship.

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We will be bringing you major updates an announcements concerning this project in upcoming issues of Argent Fire. Be sure to check out our web site for more information when it becomes available at www.argentfire.com.

WAR WORLD

TACTICAL COMBAT

In this special section of Argent Fire, we have exclusive coverage of the new PC Mecha game, War World: Tactical Combat.

- Check out our exclusive interview with the CEO of Third Wave Games, creator of War World

Plus: We get our hands dirty uncovering the ins and outs of the game itself with an all-out assault...er...review, of War World

THIRD WAVE

ARGENT FIRE EXCLUSIVE

Interview with the CEO of Third Wave Games

By Andrew "Odysseus" Kissel

I was recently given the opportunity to talk with Morten Broderson, the CEO of Third Wave Games, about his company's success in the recent release of War World: Tactical Combat. War World is a new Mech-based game, and while not related to Battletech, it holds its own in both quality and creativity. The game went Gold in February, just prior to it's retail market expanding into Europe. Due to the fanfare and rave reviews the game has had, I wanted to find out more about how the game was created and developed, and to learn more about the process of thought to finish.

Morten, first off I would like to thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about War World, and of course Third Wave Games. Please help us get started by telling the readers about who you are and your role at Third Wave Games.

Well, my name is Morten Brodersen and I am the Chief Executive Officer and Lead Programmer at Third Wave Games.

So exactly who do we have to thank for War World? Was it a collaborative idea by a team at Third Wave Games, or was this the brainchild of a particular individual?

Third Wave Games was founded by just two people, Johnni Christensen (our Art Director) and myself. We have talked about starting our own development house for years but now the time was finally right for us to do it.

Besides the two of you, what kinds of other human resources did you initially start out with, regarding CG artists, programmers, etc?

We just started out with the two of us. Johnni was doing the art and I did the programming. We later added a musician to the team. We are completely self funded which makes it possible for us to work on projects that we want to do.

Did the War World development team have much experience in game development prior to War World itself?

Yes. We have quite a few years of experience in the games biz starting out working for *Rare*, a top development house located in England. Between the two of us, we have worked on 5 million (sales) console titles.

So you have a development team and the resources to put together a new game. What came next in the timeline of progress of the game development? Were there any obstacles in getting the idea of War World down onto paper?

We started out wanting to do an updated version of Virtual On – a very successful arcade game. But after brainstorming on how to improve the game we ended up with a number of cool things that we wanted to add to the game – such as credit based customization of mechs etc. So the end result is quite different from Virtual On, and definitely its own game.

What kind of thought processes and creative development went into the storyline creation of the game, the actual game environment, and of the actual Mechs themselves?

The overall look was mainly decided by Johnni. He played around with different visuals and ideas and I gave him feedback on what I liked and didn't like. I personally spend more time on the game design side of things; making sure that the weapons and mechs are balanced for example.

What model, if any, did you use in creating the specific playability of War World? I personally see it as a cross between Xbox's MechAssault and Halo games. Did these, or other games, provide a foundation for how you wanted War World to be played?

Yes and no. We obviously have experience playing other games but in this case we started with a simple, quick-to-

implement interface and then continued improving it step by step until we got it right. So a very iterative way to develop.

What influences of other Mecha genres were there during the development of the War World storyline and in the design of the Mech units? Specifically (as I am sure many of the readers may want to know), did the Battletech Universe play a role as an influence in the development?

The funny thing is that Johnni is more of a 1st person shooter fan and I am more of a RTS strategy game fan so none of us are hard core mech fans. We started out with a shared love of the arcade game Virtual On which is a very fast mech game and basically iterated from there adding what we felt would be good for the game. So we didn't (for example) sit down and carefully research the Battletech Universe.

Was the online multiplayer integration part of the initial plan for War World, or a latter update that came as a result of the current success of online-based multiplayer games?

The online part of the game was designed from day one of development. We didn't know whether people would prefer the singleplayer or online player version of the game so we basically put both in just to cover all bases.

Is there any kind of update cycle to the game? Can players download newly created upgrades, newer levels, units or more to the game as you have them available?

War World has been updated a lot since the initial release and has now been published in retail in Europe. How much we are going to continue upgrading the game depends on a lot of things including sales, other opportunities, publisher requests etc. It is a very complex decision making process.

So where do you go from here? What is the future of War World? Can you share some secrets on what we all might get to see from Third Wave Games and War World in the near future?

A lot of things are going on right now. We are talking to publishers but it is too early to talk about anything in public.

That is certainly understandable. We'll just have to wait and see. Well Morten, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to talk with you about Third Wave Games, and about War World specifically. I look forward to seeing what else you guys might have in store for this game in the future.

GAME ON!

Argent Fire dives head first into the War World PC game to bring you full coverage and highlights.

Review and Photos by Dave Carey

Third Wave Games, a new Australian-based game development house, brings us War World, a Mech-based arena-style game of both accomplishment and some entertainment. This review covers the ins and outs of the game, from startup to shutdown. To start our journey, let's begin where War World blows away even some of the top XBox titles with its stunning visualizations. War World is graphically nothing short of excellent. The terrain is both functional and attractive, the Mechs are distinctive and well-animated, and technologically the game manages a good, clean level of playability on systems of substantially different specifications. You don't need a brand new powerhouse PC to be amazed at the graphical superiority of War World. Lighting and lighting effects are adequate, weapons and explosions are well scaled and pleasing to the eye. In essence, the game is lovely in its demonstration of futuristic destruction.

Game play qualifies for another pat on the back for Third Wave. War World does an excellent job of taking a simple interface and allowing a surprising degree of tactical variation with it. I can think of no situation in which I felt like the interface was interfering with what I wished to do.

jet-booster system (either for jetting forward, straight up in the air, or strafing from side to side), and an energy shield system.

A variety of different systems can be fitted to each hardpoint, with systems of increased performance costing more credits. Buying and selling back components is always done without a loss, so the in-game effect is actually one of putting together a good combination of gear that won't exceed your fiscal limits. If anything doesn't work for you, just swap it out for something else before next match.

Every piece of information necessary to keeping yourself up and fighting is readily accessible, and generally obvious in meaning. A few simple cockpit sounds round things out comfortably. The Mechs handle well for the tempo of the game, or rather, those that *should* handle well do.

From a competition standpoint, the game is fairly well balanced. Between matches, players configure their Mechs with an assortment of equipment based on a simple economy of

The prices for different pieces of gear can seem arbitrary at first, but after some practice most players should find that the right piece of equipment is well worth its cost *if* it is used under the correct circumstances.

The highest level of missile launcher, for example, costs as much as a twin-array of the best primary beam weapons in the game—a virtual in-game fortune!—but the launcher is

equipment performance. Each Mech chassis has the same set of hardpoints: a primary weapon (chain-gun or laser) in each hand, a missile hardpoint on the back, a shoulder mounted support weapon (mine layer or mortar launcher), a

worth every credit when it is being used to decimate an enemy from cover at great distance. Besides, it's fun to watch your missiles streak off toward a target you can't even see and then watch his red blip disappear from your radar.

The chassis are quite simple in their variations, and the difference in their cost is almost academic. Small chassis are much faster than large ones, and get more out of their jet-booster systems, but carry less ammunition for their weapons and have a *substantially* lower tolerance for damage.

Big ones are, of course, the opposite. Here I would also make the comment that most players will probably find the two largest chassis to be basically worthless under most combat situations; simply too slow to be effective for this style of game. They can stand up to a lot of damage but they basically can't dodge incoming attacks, and their poor mobility really hurts their ability to gather powerups. And remember, in War World, all weapons require ammunition (lasers and jump-jets included, MechWarrior).

As for the actual playability of the game, War World offers some variety, but nothing especially out-of-the-ordinary. Single player has a death-match, team death-match, customizable, and a 100-round arcade campaign. Multi-player adds capture-the-flag and deliver-the-bomb scenarios (which could both use some instruction in a tutorial, incidentally).

In single player mode, you basically fight through mission after mission, each time increasing your Mech budget until you basically become a one-man wrecking crew for whom money is no longer an object. For me that occurred right around the 78th round, but your mileage may vary. Future upgrades to the game should include more combat variety, especially in single-player mode.

Another area of improvement is in the variety of maps that are available. Not that they aren't fun (they are) or fair (they are that also) or attractive (boy, are they ever!) but that there are only eight of them! Indeed, probably the single most disappointing element of the game overall is in the field of variety. To be honest, the only real variety on a map comes from how many enemies you face, how they are outfitted, and how they are deployed when you arrive. I would highly recommend Third Wave Games focus on outfitting War World with additional maps and levels to spice things up a bit.

The most serious question for determining how much Bat-

tleTech fans will appreciate War World will probably center on the game's pacing. War world is an *arena* game. Fast pacing, lots of explosions, rapid respawning. This is not MechWarrior 4, with a large map and concrete mission objectives. It isn't MechCommander, with *vast* maps and squad tactics based around securing territory. And it isn't MechAssault, with sequential combat engagements strung loosely into a story. In terms of game play War World feels like the most intense combat engagements in MechAssault; except that these engagements are continuous.

War World is an arena game. You move fast. You kill fast. You die fast. Money matters, but only in the sense that they way you spend it determines how exactly you will kill your enemies. It doesn't take much to get into or out of. You can have as much fun with it in 15 minutes as you can with an hour or two or three. If you are looking for action, great visualizations, War World has what you want. And it looks good while doing it.

War World: Tactical Combat can be purchased off of the War World web site at http://www.warworld.net. The price of the game is a very low $29.95. Pick up your copy today! If you have any feedback you would like to add about War World or this review, please send them to feedback@argentfire.com

Knights of the Phoenix

Become a part of an elite organization, a group of Battletech fans who go above and beyond the call of duty. Become a Knight of the Phoenix.

The Knights of the Phoenix support ongoing endeavors taken up by the Battletech fan community. Their overall goal is multi-faceted:

- Support fan-based projects that have the credentials of improving the game of Battletech
- Provide sponsorship programs for viable fan-based endeavors focused on the Battletech line
- Provide financial assistance needed in organizing fan-run game meets and tournaments
- Support efforts on Battletech Universe to provide a high level of entertainment value for fans

The *Knights* is a subscription-based membership, with multiple contribution levels that you can choose from. Battletech Universe is the home of the Knights of the Phoenix, and manages the funds provided by the *Knights* that are used in support of Battletech.

The benefits of *Knight* membership go well beyond the satisfaction of having a profound impact on the continued success of Battletech. To further enhance your membership experience, Battletech Universe (BTU) provides a myraid of benefits to the *Knights*. Some of the benefits include:

- Access to the MechWarrior's Lounge and Knights Court, exclusive and private forums on BTU
- New release pre-order ability at Exodus-Road Hobbies, one of the best Battletech retailers
- A personalized Battletech Universe Email Account
- Web site storage options, from 25 MB to 100 MB
- Permanent discounts to Exodus-Road Hobbies, ranging from 5% to 10% off each order

These are just a few of the many benefits given to the *Knights*. Join the Knights of the Phoenix today, and join a new class of Battletech fan. For more information about the Knights of the Phoenix or to join, please visit http://www.battletechuniverse.org/Knights/

GET YOUR GRAND STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN ON!

SuccessionWars, a new Online Grand Strategic Simulation, may forever change the way large scale Battletech gaming is played.

*By Eric "Mendrugo" Salzman Mark "Speck" Yingling*

The introduction to the "Inner Sphere in Flames" section of Combat Operations (FanPro 10979) states: "A diligent player can construct a campaign that spans a few worlds or literally takes into account all two-thousand plus worlds in the Inner Sphere. The size and scope of any given campaign is left up to each player and player group. Using the considerable body of fiction covering the various worlds, factions, factories, forces and so on, published in numerous BattleTech sourcebooks and novels, will provide the players with the tools they need to design campaigns of virtually any type and size."

Summary

What we've put together is a full-size campaign, featuring every combat unit, from the mightiest line regiment to the lowliest planetary militia, as well as every factory, every fort, every city, every star system, etc. that we could find reference to amongst the millions of words written about the BattleTech universe.

Fans of grand-strategic BattleTech campaigns face a Catch-22 situation – the campaign becomes more engaging and involving as more detail gets added, but gets harder and harder to manage as abstractions are replaced by specifics. Many campaigns start off hoping to include everything but the kitchen sink, but then end up with rule sets that require every player to have a general staff to handle the minutiae. On the other hand, highly abstract systems like the "Quick Campaign Resolution Table" from the original Mercenary's Handbook (FASA 1616) or the Succession Wars boxed set (FASA 1619) don't satisfy the player's desire to feel like they're really playing within the massively detailed BattleTech universe that FASA, WizKids and FanPro have developed.

SuccessionWars.com is an attempt to give players the best of both worlds – providing a highly detailed campaign setting with all the armies, locales, personalities and equipment they've seen in the sourcebooks, novels, video games and other media, while letting an online database take care of all the recordkeeping duties. The mechanics of the game are hidden behind the scenes, letting players manage their assets through a user-friendly point and click web-based interface. Not a game in and of itself, the SuccessionWars.com system provides data management tools to allow thousands of players around the world to participate in highly-detailed grand-strategic BattleTech campaigns without the recordkeeping burden that all too often causes players and/or game masters to abandon ship.
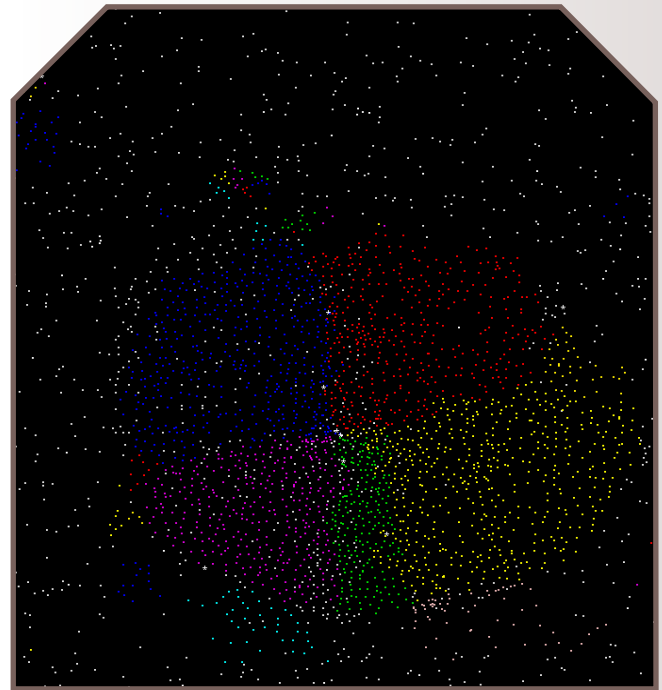
Our initial beta-test will be using a database set in 3025, designed to re-create the situation immediately preceding the Fourth Succession War. Once the kinks are worked out, we'll be working up databases for campaigns set in 3039 (The War of 3039), 3049 (Operation REBIRTH), 3057 (Operation GUERRERO, Operation PROMETHEUS and the Refusal War), 3060 (Operation BIRD DOG, Operation BULLDOG, Operation SERPENT and the Great Refusal), 3063 (FedCom Civil War, Xin Sheng War, Jade Falcon Incursion, and Ghost Bear/Draconis Combine War), and 3067 (Word of Blake Jihad). As more detailed information becomes available through the Historical sourcebooks, we'll be able to add databases for those eras as well. We also plan to create a set of Game Master's tools so that other groups can custom-design their own databases for whatever era they want to simulate.

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Overall Functionality

• **My Wars Control Panel** – Is the first stop on a player's way to join or play in a game. Here is where players will be able to view all of the open games and games that they are in. When they click on a faction that they are in, it will take them to the Command Interface. If they are not in the game, they will have the option of joining.

• **Map** – Players will have access to a starmap page that shows the current affiliation of each system, and indicates which ones are currently contested. A navigational tool indicates which systems are within one jump of the planet in the crosshairs.

The map includes thousands of uninhabited systems that can be used as transit points for JumpShips or even colonized. The database includes every star system ever mentioned, whether or not it's appeared on a map, so in addition to famous worlds like New Avalon, Tharkad and Strana Mechty, we've got obscure places like Kore, Longbow Mountain, and New Horizons (aka "Crotch"). Abandoned worlds are also included, marked with biohazard symbols.

• **Planetary Information** – Clicking on an icon brings up a planetary info page, showing a local starmap (all worlds within 30 light-years); the planet's Universal Socio-Industrial Index Rating (USIIR) from sourcebooks when available, modeled on the fluff text when possible, and randomized otherwise; population; in-system transit time; recharge time; and other vital statistics. If a world is contested, a pie-chart displays which faction controls what percentage of the population.

• **Military** – Players can review their troops and organize them as they see fit. Units are organized into brigades (Sword of Light, Marik Militia, Chesterton Reserves, Wolf Alpha Galaxy, etc.) and by sub-units within a brigade (5th Sword of Light, 13th Marik Militia, 14th Battle Cluster, etc.).

Finally, the database contains listings for every combat unit in the game, from massive WarShips to individual infantry squads. The troops can be micromanaged (including tools for naming pilots and their machines) so that players can have full control over the configuration of their force.

• **Command Interface** – Each unit has 30 days of action every game turn. When orders are transmitted by the commander, the game deducts the time the HPG message would take to arrive (depending on how far away the commander is), then gives the player an interface screen with tools for loading and offloading DropShips, moving DropShips around the system, hooking up with JumpShips at jump points, and moving JumpShips from system to system. Once the unit arrives at its destination, players can issue operational orders including: "Attack Facility", "Defend Facility", "Attack Unit", "Defend Unit", "Defensive Patrol", "Loot", "Take Slaves", "Cadre Duty", "Search for Caches", "Trade with Locals", "Hold Position", and "Intercept" (for aerospace units attempting to establish a blockade). Clan players can "Declare Trial" to set the terms of a ritual battle for possession, grievance, etc.

• **Intel** – Players can use intelligence tools to gather information about military forces and strategic targets in a particular star system, suppress unrest in their own population centers, steal technological secrets, sabotage enemy facilities and equipment, stir up unrest in enemy population centers, and assassinate enemy personnel. Each attempt checks the relative strength of the player's Intel service against the defender's security strength.
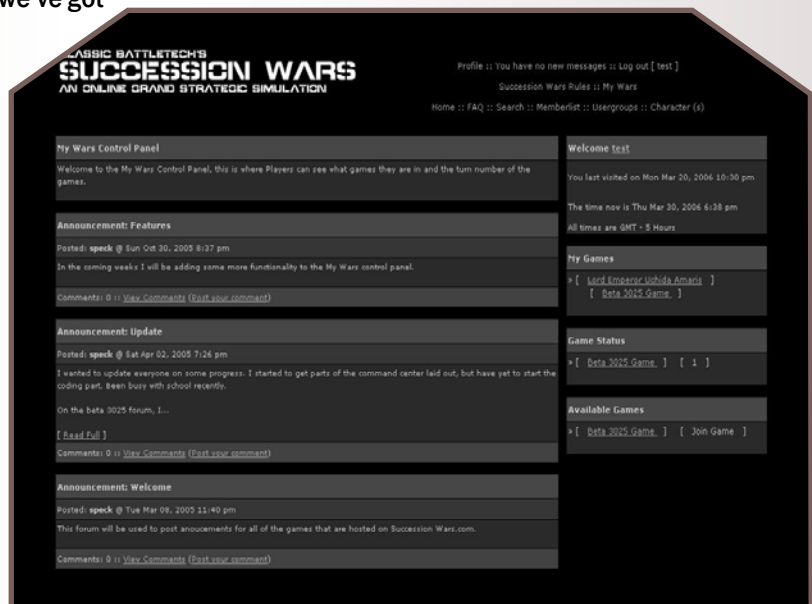

• **New Equipment/Personnel** - Many factions have control of factory complexes that produce new 'Mechs, DropShips, JumpShips, AeroSpace fighters and tanks at a certain rate per month, as well as academies that turn out a set number of pilots once per year.

Players can place orders at their factories and place personnel requisitions with academy placement offices, and will be provided with the desired equipment and pilots on a first-come, first served basis. If desperate for pilots, a unit can recruit warm bodies from a nearby friendly population center, but putting AgroMech drivers with no combat experience in BattleMechs will greatly lessen the unit's effectiveness in battle.

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Mercenaries and pirates, which usually don't have access to factories or academies, can obtain new personnel at hiring halls (Galatea, LeBlanc, New Hessen, Pirates' Haven, etc.) where experienced troops of all sorts are randomly generated each game-turn, and will hire on with the highest bidder for their services. Infantry can be recruited from local population centers and armed with rifles, machine guns and flamers. Worlds with high industry/technology USIIR ratings can equip their infantry with jump packs, lasers and SRMs. Every squad of infantry created deducts seven people from the population center, and new squads have no experience, making them only marginally effective on the battlefield.
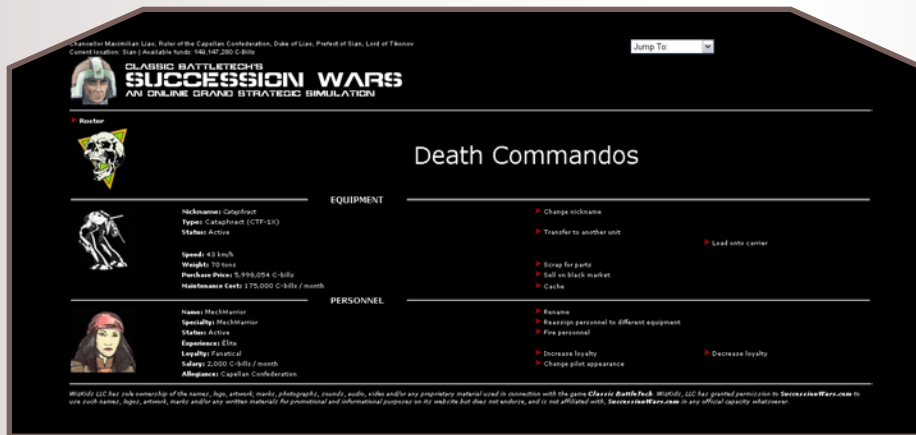
• **Planetary Management** – Players can manage the systems they control, investing in repairing war damage by improving the planet's USIIR rating, and building new facilities, including HPG stations, factories, academies, research laboratories, population centers, fortresses, space stations, and shipyards.

Worlds can be colonized by building a population center on an uninhabited world and transferring population into it. Military units can obtain colonists by transferring population from a friendly population center to their DropShips, or by seizing slaves (or bondsmen, or servitors – whatever your faction calls them) from an enemy population center. Players can also set up secret outposts in on uninhabited worlds where they can manufacture weaponry and stage troops away from prying eyes.

• **Economics** – Each month, every planet generates a Gross Planetary Product figure determined by multiplying the number of inhabitants by the sum of the USIIR figures. Players that control population centers can set their tax rate according to their financial needs. The higher the tax rate, the greater the chance that population centers will revolt, creating a small army of insurgents who begin attacking the ruling power's forces and facilities. HPG stations also generate revenue for their owner, and thereby provide much of ComStar's operating revenue.

• **Diplomacy** – Players can use the diplomatic tools to make deals with other factions they've been in contact with. They can transfer facilities, population, money, equipment, troops, technological secrets, etc. from one player to another.

Members of a larger faction (larger factions have up to six player slots) may choose to secede from their parent faction and start their own. Troops under their control perform a check based on their loyalty to the parent state and those that fail the check join the breakaway commander in rebellion. Free Skye Republic Forever!!!

• **Mercenaries** – Players can post job offers at hiring halls and then mercenary players can submit bids for doing the job. The hiring player can then select which one gets the contract, and then has a variety of payment options. Lump sum at the outset, lump sum at the end, regular payment each month, or even a landhold giving control of one or more population centers to a merc group and allowing them to collect the taxes from it.

If a new player doesn't want to run one of the available canon merc groups, they can start with a war chest and start recruiting for their own merc unit at a hiring hall of their choice.

• **Research** – Each faction begins with a list of known technologies and blueprints for components and vehicles. They can assign research centers (NAIS, Tikonov Institute, etc.) to research components (XL fusion engine, gauss rifle) as long as they already have the prerequisite technologies (researching "Heavy Gauss Rifle," "Light Gauss Rifle," or "Silver Bullet Gauss Rifle" require that the player already have "Gauss Rifle" researched).

If players want to research an existing design, they must have knowledge of how to make all of its components. Players can also submit home-made designs to be researched, and once they have the blueprints developed, their faction can either convert an existing production line to manufacture it, or build a new factory for it.

• **Combat** – At the end of each turn, the GM will close down player input and use some automated tools to resolve any battles resulting from player orders. Based on loca-

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tions, timing, and orders, the GM sorts units into "attacker", "defender" and "neutral" columns and then feeds them into the battle algorithm, loosely based on the "Quick Campaign Resolution" tables in the original Mercenary's Handbook.

A maneuver phase (where fast units and more experienced units get bonuses) determines if there's a battle, and what percentage of each unit gets involved. Fast, experienced units will bring a greater percentage of their troops to the battle, enabling an Elite battalion to carve up and destroy a Green regiment piecemeal.

Once the roster of the attacking side and the defending side is determined, the two sides fight each other, units are damaged, disabled and/or destroyed, some downed pilots die, others eject safely, and a winner is determined. The winner collects all the disabled machines as salvage, and collect all downed enemy pilots as prisoners.

Repairs are made drawing from parts stocks, and if sufficient parts aren't available, some of the salvaged material is scrapped for parts. Surviving pilots on both sides increase in experience. The morale of the winning side increases and that of the losing side decreases.

If the computer determines that it was a decisive loss, the losers make a morale check and, if they fail, they retreat to a nearby population center or, if there are none left, to their DropShips for an offworld retreat. If the defeated unit has no DropShips and no friendly fallback points, they surrender.

Inspiration

The original idea of doing a grand strategic BattleTech campaign goes back to an article by Robert M. Bigelow in his "Through the Looking Glass" column published in Dragon Magazine (#161 & #162). A simple system, it relied heavily on abstractions to create a Sphere-spanning campaign that could be played out with miniatures battles. I had attempted to run the campaign when I went to college in 1992, using an array of house rules to make it match more closely with the then brand-new Objective Raids sourcebook and all of the other FASA publications.

That campaign ground to a halt due to a variety of factors, not least of which was the difficulty of resolving battles using the standard BattleTech tabletop rules in a campaign setting where players could move and concentrate their forces as they wished. (A battle for Hesperus II involving over 100 'Mechs was abandoned after just three turns had been completed in eight hours.) Recordkeeping also became a substantial burden, with players carrying around thick binders of troop rosters and turn sheets, while the map was a blow-up of the one in the back of the Succession Wars boxed set rulebook mounted on corkboard with thousands of colored map pins marking each system's affiliation.

Over the following summer, in an effort to make recordkeeping less of a burden, I wrote a database program that allowed players to update troop locations, TO&E, and view a map of the Inner Sphere.

I also seeded certain worlds with Star League caches, which players could use search tools to find (or, as I found later, simply open the database file with Norton Utilities). I distributed this database program to the players on diskettes, and we launched another campaign. The database helped with record-keeping, but we still ran into difficulties resolving battles using miniatures.

Years passed and I lost all the copies of the database program. I'd completely forgotten about it when, in 2001, a member at www.classicbattletech.com posted a set of campaign rules they'd found on the Internet that "apparently used some sort of database".

Lo and behold, there were my campaign rules from 1994. Having recently learned how to program web pages that could interact with online databases, I realized that I now had the tools to create a vastly improved version of the original campaign software in a manner that would allow players all over the world to get involved in a grand strategic campaign over

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the Internet. Re-inspired, I posted a basic outline of what I was planning to create on the CBT site, and attracted the notice of Mark Yingling, who also had substantial previous experience running grand strategic BattleTech campaigns, and was willing to host the database and interface on his server, as well as re-write all my code into a form his server could understand. Thus, SuccessionWars.com was born.

Current Progress

Completed Items

• The database has been mostly fleshed out, though I continue to add tidbits of planetary data gleaned from MWDA novels and BattleCorps stories as they are released.

• Interface pages have been coded for management of military forces, moving units around the universe, and giving operational orders.

• Pages are also coded for placing orders at factories and academies, and for managing those facilities.

• A combat algorithm has been coded, but still needs to be further tweaked and tested.

• All of the map pages and planetary information pages are fully functional.

• Espionage tools are fully functional

• I've set up reporting pages giving each player's vital statistics (population, income, costs, size of military, number of systems controlled, etc.), as well as an "Event Log" which will track events affecting each faction as the game progesses. These events include incidences of sabotage, assassination, technology theft, enemy attacks against your holdings, contracts signed, diplomatic agreements, and so forth.

• A forum has been established at www.successionwars.com, where players and developers can discuss new additions to the game. This interplay has resulted in the evolution of the system from a highly abstract one where regiments were merely collections of numbers to one where players can track the progress of individual warriors through the Succession Wars.

It's also allowed us to catch oversights and problems in the development stage, such as a now-resolved situation

that would have allowed players to cram over 1,200 Savannah Masters or over 44,000 infantrymen into an Overlord.

Still on the "to-do" list

• Code planetary management tools

• Code the research system

• Establish tools for facility management

• Code the diplomatic tools

• Set up hiring halls and mercenary contracts.

• Add Clan Trials to the combat system

• Set up end-of-turn tax collection, maintenance/salary payment, contract payment, and execution of orders by victorious units.

• Convert functioning pages from ColdFusion to PHP and upload to the server.

You can check out the Succession Wars web site at http://www.succesionwars.com. We will be keeping you informed of future updates to this project in other issues of Argent Fire, as well as on our web site at http://www.argentfire.com.

COMBAT WORKSHOP

An Assembly And How-To Design Guide

THE MARIK MILITIA

by Peter "pthw199" Wraight

In my humble opinion, no scheme screams more "Marik" than that sported by the Marik Militia - probably the largest military command structure within the Free World's League.

It is for this reason that this issue's painting guide will detail the methods I use in the implementation of this scheme.

Step 1: Preperation

Before any painting can begin, one has to prepare for the task at hand. One has to determine schemes and paint choices, as well as constructing the miniature in question.

Scheme wise, we have already decided to detail the painting of a Marik Militia unit. So we simply have to determine which paints to use. Whenever I paint a miniature I tend to use four pre-mixed shades of the colour in question - one shade, one basecoat and two other colours for the highlight. In this instance Games Workshop (GW) acrylics have been used - the various colours created from varying mixtures of Liche Purple, Warlock Purple and Skull White. Details will be explained as the article progesses.

The miniature in question for this article is a reseen Goliath. It was put together in the usual fashion and attached to an IWM hex base. The base itself was filled with GW green stuff before the Goliath was attached.

Step 2: The Undercoat

Now the painting can begin! The miniature was first given a basecoat of GW Chaos Black. This provides a nice consistant coating from which to paint the rest of the scheme.

Step 3: The shade

The miniature is then given a covering of GW Liche Purple.

Step 4: Base Color

Next the base colour of the purple was painted over the shade colour. This base colour was mixed using a mixture of both GW Liche Purple and GW Warlock Purple.

This layer of paint itself was applied only to the tops of the panels. Regions of shade between the panels were left unpainted. This allows for depth within the scheme without the use washes etc.

Step 5: Highlights

To provide highlights the two lighter shades of purple/pink were applied - shades created using the addition of Skull White to the previous shade of purple used for the base colour.

The two small insets shown to the side show how the highlighting method works. Firstly the outlines of the panels are painted using the first of the two highlight colours. Then the second highlight colour is used to provide a further indication of depth to the miniature.

This highlighing method is applied across the entirety of the minature.

Step 6: Red Detailing

To move the scheme within lines of the canon Marik Militia scheme a series of red highlights was painted to the right hand side of the miniature.

This red striping was painted in much the same way as described for already detailed purple colour. The colour was built up from GW Scab Red, GW Blood Red to a mixture of GW Blood Red and GW Fiery Orange.

Step 7: Blue Detailing

Similiar blue highlights were then added to the left hand side of the figure.

This time the colour was built up using GW Midnight Blue, to GW Ultramarine Blue to highlights from GW Ultramarine Blue and GW Skull White.

Step 8: Final detailing

Final details were then added. The cockpit was jewelled a green colour - using Foundry paints this time (Bright Green 25A-25C). And the central weapon jeweled blue - using GW Enchanted Blue as a base colour.

Step 9: Basing

The base of the miniature was then completed. At this stage further details, such as unit logos, could be added if so desired using decals or otherwise.

But apart from that, nothing is left to do but enjoy the final product!

If you have a how-to article involving assembly, painting, custom work, etc for game pieces such as miniatures, buildings, terrain, scenes or any other related assembly item you can think of, you may submit them to editor@argentfire.com. Your article must be thorough, providing plenty of pictures of each step, and being detailed in description of assembly. Please also provide your personal and contact information as neccessary.

Exodus Road

HOBBIES AND MINIATURES

SPIDER ASSEMBLY GUIDE

by Jason "Lawgiver" Klotz and Corey "Deluge" Fulmer.
Created for Exodus-Road Hobbies

This assembly guide is just one in a line of upcoming miniature assembly guides created by the guys at Exodus-Road Hobbies, a Battletech retail shop (www.exodus-road.com). Each issue we will showcase an assembly guide. Battletech fans new to miniature building may find these guides useful for getting started.

11 pieces total:

Torso
Left/Right Arm
Backpack
Two different chin weapons
Two mandible pieces for the torso
Two claw pieces for the arms
Waist with Legs

Remove the parts from their sprues, file away mold lines

- -
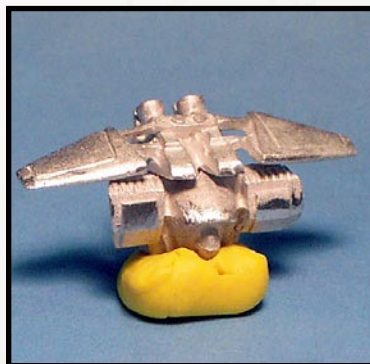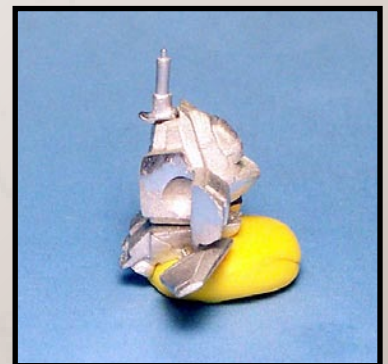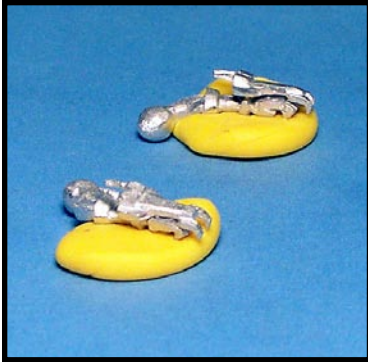

Step #1

Epoxy the Backpack to the torso. I used putty to level the torso while the epoxy cured.

Step #2

Use putty to set the torso on its back and epoxy one of the two supplied chin weapons to the torso.

Step #3

Epoxy the forearm claws to the arms using the tabs and slots provided on the pieces. The arm claws have the 2 spikes at the rear of the claw.

Step #4

After the chin weapon epoxy sets a bit, you can add the mandible pieces to the torso. Make sure the chin weapon is set enough that it wont get knocked off the torso. The epoxy should be thick enough to hold the mandible pieces in place while it cures.
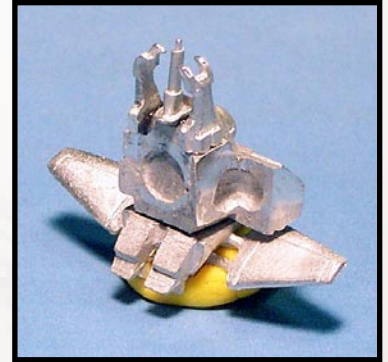
Step #5

Epoxy the arms to the torso using putty to support the pieces.

Step #6

Epoxy the torso to the waist/leg piece. The pieces should not require putty to support them.

Step #7

Mount the mini on an Iron Wind Metals base or your own homemade base. Find one or more local gamers and go test your new unit on the battlefield!

Stay tuned next issue for another miniature assembly guide. If you have any questions or comments concerning this Spider assembly guide, feel free to contact Jason "Lawgiver" Klotz, owner and operator of Exodus-Road Hobbies, at lawgiver@exodus-road.com

Return of the Black Widow, Part 2
By "Triptych"

DropShip Roger Young
High Orbit, Solaris 7
Lyran Alliance
October 3066

On most DropShips, sickbays are usually nothing more than staterooms with medical equipment. But due to the cramped spaces of the Roger Young, it sometimes doubled as an impromptu briefing room as well, despite being inhabited by patients in some instances. It was one of those times.

"I think the worst is over. It looks like she will pull through." The man in the white coveralls said after examining the young, red-haired woman lying on the sickbay bed.

"Thank you Doc. Can Ronson and I talk here for a minute?" Kelly Ravin asked. "Sure thing, I'll be back later to check on her." With that, the doctor left the room John Ronson dug his hands into his fatigue pockets. "I ain't really comfortable talking about this you know."

"Look Ronson, I'm gonna have to make a report to the Colonel exactly what happened and how we got into this mess. Let's just get it over with okay?" Kelly Ravin was senior to Ronson both in rank and experience. She had the certain patience and coolness that was essential in leaders.

Ronson looked down at the metal floor and then looked up at her. "I... I don't really know where to start. It's just that I did get lost in a Periphery world out there in the boondocks and the next thing I know all hell breaks loose."

"Let's start from the top okay? How did you meet this girl?" "I didn't met her, she just sort of popped in. I was able to make it from that Periphery hellhole to New Syrtis where I was just shooting the breeze, waiting for you guys to pick me up when all hell breaks loose. Victor decides to retake the Commonwealth back from his sister."

Kelly Ravin's green eyes focused on the young woman in the bed. "Go on." "Well, the whole city erupts in chaos. Lootings. General lawlessness everywhere. I try to mind my own business until I saw her being chased down the street by armed men.

She looked so helpless; she was wounded in the leg and had nothing on except a tank top shirt and shorts. She looked like she got beaten up. I was observing her as the men surrounded her, they didn't look like typical gangbangers but rather professional soldiers made up to look like a gang. Do you know what I mean?" Ronson asked. "I do, please continue."

"Well it looked like she was a goner for sure cuz they had cut her off and cornered her in an alleyway and I felt she was dead before I could get to them. But she gave a hell of a fight, when the first guy tried to grab her she side stepped him and broke his neck with one with one flick of her elbows. She was pretty quick, almost too quick. And this was even when her left leg was gimpy. Never seen a technique like that before."

For a split second, Kelly Ravin's eyes defocused in deep thought, then it went back to normal again. " I have heard of a technique like that. It's a lost martial art something called Jeet Kune Do. Nobody I have heard knows how to teach that style anymore. Not since the Star

League days anyway."

"Okay, but then it looked like the goons learned their lesson cuz when they came at her a second time, they came as a group, not as a mob but as a combat team.

They were able to almost hold her down when I was able to knock out the closest guy to me with a rabbit punch on the back of his neck. That's when two of them turned around to face me and one of them pulled out a vibroknife." Ronson continued.

"And then?" "Well, I was able to take one of them out but the guy with the knife cut me on the side of my chest. Deep wound. I fell sideways and he was about to slice me up and then.. and then..."

"And what?" He had Kelly Ravin's full attention now. "And a figure came out of the corner of my eye. He seemed to move as fast as the girl but with better coordination. He was carrying a handheld gauss rifle in his arms and he just shot it like he was cradling a toy. The slug hit the knife guy dead center in his chest and blew a six inch hole in it."

"What did he look like?" Kelly Ravin inquired. "Couldn't really tell. It seemed like his body was in shadow half the time. His silhouette seemed that he had shoulder length hair and he was wearing fatigues with an armored vest. His arms had huge muscles on them and he cradled the gauss rifle casually, like it was an ice cream cone." Ronson kept going.

Kelly Ravin didn't need to goad Ronson into continuing. The young man kept talking. "You wouldn't think that with all that hardware and that thick

body of his he couldn't move quick but he was the quickest I ever saw. He took down the rest of the thugs before anyone knew he was there. I was starting to black out and the last thing I saw was that he was checking on the girl and then taking the thug's wallets."

Kelly Ravin said. "Hmmmm… Sounds like a brigand. A highwayman. Did he take your wallet?"

"No, that's the weird part. He didn't take anything from me and left me there with the girl. We both recovered a few days later and the only thing she would tell me was her name."

Ronson again looked confused. "Which is?" "That's another weird thing. She can't seem to remember much of her past. She said her name was Karen and that's all she knew. She didn't know why the thugs were after her or who that Brigand was either." Ronson said.

Kelly Ravin had one more question. "Hmmm… Now how about that battle we pulled you out of?"

"Oh yeah, that. Well, I got my mech out of the storage bay when the Loyalist attack on the planet started and was making my way to your ship's beacon when I noticed that Karen had stolen another mech, a Hatchetman from the hangar. Since two Mechs are better than one I shrugged it off and made my way to the outskirts of the city with Karen right behind me. That's when they hit us."

"Who? Loyalist forces?" "I'm not exactly sure, I mean they had the insignias of the Ridgebrook CMM but I just think it was a ruse. I mean, the Mechs were way too advanced like they had a Spector, a Devastator and even a new Uziel. No way those were militia Mechs.

Even their tactics were different. My guess is that it was the same person who hired those thugs to take us out in the alleyway." "And that's when you lost your mech?"

"Hey! There was three of them against me! I took out the Spector and dented the Devastator's armor somewhat but the sheer volume of firepower tore both my legs off. Thank God for Karen, she took out the Devastator's head off with the hatchet but the Uziel blasted her from behind.

I think she suffered her concussion from the feedback from her neurohelmet from that. But She took out the Uziel by a precise headshot from her autocannon as she was going down." Ronson looked up again.

"That's one remarkable - Kelly stopped in mid sentence. A groan came from the figure on the bed. Karen stirred.

The first thing Karen noticed as her eyes swam back into focus was two figures standing over her. She was in a bed and her head felt like a nail had been driven through it.

"Karen, can you hear me?" The brown-haired woman with the green eyes asked. "Yes." Karen's voice came out light and raspy. "My name is Lieutenant Kelly Ravin. You are in a sickbay of a DropShip orbiting Solaris 7." The woman continued.

But Karen wasn't paying attention anymore. The moment she heard the planet Solaris mentioned a jumble of memories began to flood and overwhelm her senses.

Kelly Ravin stopped talking. She sensed that the young red haired woman wasn't listening anymore. Ronson was observing this as well as examining Karen's physical state. What struck him the most was that Karen seemed quite young based on her general appearance. No more than 17 years old

he suspected. But the muscles underneath her medical gown showed that she was in superb shape. But it was the eyes that confused him the most.

She had the stare. The thousand-yard stare that doctors say that soldiers acquire through constant combat. It was the sleepy look. The look of an executioner.

DropShip ???
Location Unknown
November 3066

Anyone who knew him called him the Gentleman. Like his partner, no one knew his real name. His actions and deeds earned him the sobriquet and the reputation. He was a gambler, an arms merchant and a lover of women.

He always traveled in a stealthy Union-class DropShip of indeterminate origin. Such was his reputation that when he made planetfall women would swoon to him and traders of all sorts would bargain for his wares.

In the usual sense, he was always carefree and had an animal magnetism that would make one either cringe with fear or bow down in reverence. But on this day, this hour, he was troubled.

Dressed in the finest clothes of a bygone age, the Gentleman sat in his luxurious stateroom, where solid metal walls were decorated with rich tapestries and artwork from a lost epoch. Sitting in an ancient chair once used by mariners of Terra's oceans and pouring over reports on his solid oak table, the Gentleman arched his brow and brooded.

"The fighting in Tharkad and New Avalon has gone up to fever pitch. It looks like Victor's Alliance will carry the day." A seated figure on the far side of the room commented.

The Gentleman did not look up. "Yes, but we have other, more pressing

worries to deal with." "By that you must mean the Bounty Hunter?" The figure was obscured by the heavy tapestries. His face partially hidden in shadow.

"Yes. It seems that he has begun to make his move." The Gentleman scratched at his left pork-chop like side-burn. "Then we must act. Bring your DropShip to Solaris 7 so that I may secure the replicate."

"My intelligence reports are saying that the Falcons will hit Solaris within two weeks time." "Why? Solaris 7 holds no strategic value." "Khan Marthe Pryde suspects something is amiss. She may have some inkling as to the Bounty Hunter's intentions there."

"You mean as to eliminating the replicant?" "No, the replicant is nothing more than a luxury to the Bounty Hunter, that's why he has not committed his own forces to kill her, rather he was using mercenaries hired through third party intermediaries." The Gentleman answered.

"What then? What could the Bounty Hunter possibly want in Solaris 7?"

"It's a matter of sentimentality, my dear Brigand." The Brigand leaned over so that his face came out of the shadows. "I don't understand."

"Just before Snord's Irregulars began fighting, they reached a mutual agreement with the Solaris government on transferring a few of their artifacts from their museum on Clinton to the Battlemech Museum in Solaris City for safekeeping."

"And?" "Think about it. What artifact would warrant the Bounty Hunter's attention?" The Brigand leaned back as if he had finally gotten the picture. "The Amaris throne."

"Correct. The throne is on display in a glass cage on the upper-left wing of the

museum." The Brigand's fist clenched. It was as if he could break rocks. "We should destroy it."

"We'll let the Falcons do that for us. Khan Pryde is quite angry at being tied down by Victor's strategy that she wants a little bit of revenge. But I have already instructed the crew to alter course for Solaris 7."

"What for then?" "Why, to secure the replicant of course. As you suggested." The Gentleman gave a wicked smile as if contemplating a private joke to himself.

-From Meridian's Journal

I once gave a lecture to our newest graduates of that term. They were an advanced class of splicers. Of course, most were young and therefore full of energy and boundless enthusiasm.

But being so full of prime does have its disadvantages, such as an inherent feeling of invincibility, much like a child seeing the outside world for the first time, one sees nothing but opportunity and is blind to the dangers. It is rather a pity then that the perpetrator must be made an example of to serve the many.

There were about 40 splicers present in the classroom, seated in the audience area. They seemed to be quite enthusiastic, due to the fact that rumors had filtered on down to the student body that our Leader had finally decreed that we would make our presence felt all across both Clan and Inner-Sphere space.

And this group had every reason to be excited. For these splicers were the first of the batch in the successful fusion of the Kerensky and Amaris bloodlines. It would be a curious mix of the Kerensky aptitude for tactics and leadership with a sprinkling of Amaris cunning and guile.

Each student, though only in their late teens, were conditioned to kill human beings in the fastest, most efficient way possible. Each one had already killed over 150 slave fighters in hand-to-hand combat before their twelfth birthday. However, one can only judge an experiment a success upon testing it.

I discussed the essence of the faults of the first Star League and why it had fallen. This lecture was primarily focused on why we needed to liberate the Inner-Sphere from the clutches of the Star League. I had highlighted the superiority of a society with no feudalism and no castes. There would be no war, no poverty, and no traumatic events that would destabilize the lives of ordinary people.

"The original Star League had created a symbol of unity for all humanity, or so the League publicists would have you think." I continued. "Yet they had to commit several hundred SLDF regiments on 'peacekeeping' operations in the Periphery which caused the lives of millions of people."

"So the bulk of humanity was united, but at what cost? Is the abuse and exploitation of 800 million justified in order that 150 billion could live in prosperity? Did the Star League stop war? Has the new Star League abolished war? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding no."

"The only answer to lasting peace and prosperity for all mankind is the complete abolishment of the Star League and its power base, namely the Great Houses and their respective militaries."

One of the students, a young man, raised his hand. "What of the Clans?"

I answered. "The Clans of Kerensky are nothing more than misguided chil-

dren who have reverted into something far worse than barbarism, they have become an abomination that must be completely destroyed. A caste-based society ruled by psychopaths seeking every excuse to start a conflict. How completely ridiculous.

"I may hold the Great Houses in much contempt but these Clans are even less than maggots on flies. Only an insane individual who was ravaged by brain disease could have envisioned that type of society, and I think even less of those that had accepted it."

"Nevertheless, do not underestimate them. A pack of cowards are just as dangerous as a single well-trained individual. They may outnumber us now, but we have the advantage of surprise as well as a superior cause." I continued.

"Unlike the Clans, we make use of every tactic, every piece of technology. Our assassins are the best infantry troops in the galaxy. While Clan elementals use powered armor, our assassins use a combination of stealth suits and personal force shields.

"This branch of science was abandoned a long time ago by their idiotic scientist caste as being un-Clan like. But of course based on our mutual experience, there has never been nor will there be any rules in war."

I held up a death wand for all to see. "Another one of our innovations. The death wand was in the experimental stage in the SLDF laboratories as a way of harnessing dark matter. Little did they know at that time that we have at last perfected this science as a most lethal handheld weapon known in existence."

With a flick of my wrist, I activated the wand, letting loose a twisting beam of black matter that swayed and curled with the movements of my wrist.

"This black beam will cut through any known metal in a matter of milliseconds. Science such as this will enable our assassins to achieve a five to one kill-ratio against opponents in powered armor.

This beam can bend around walls, even curl up a spiral staircase to kill its target. Of course, one must be trained from birth to use this weapon because one is liable to cut a new hole in himself as much as the enemy."

The audience erupted in laughter. Another young man stood up. "Then nothing will withstand against us. Why doesn't our Leader unleash us now? Let them tremble before our might!"

"Easy my young pup." I countered. "You are young and still do not know the full extent of our strategy. Why bother to commit our forces now when we can let those fools pound themselves into oblivion. We shall bide our time, only when it is right do we strike."

"But we are the most advanced soldiers of all time. You yourself had said that we are the pinnacle of science!" The young man would not be silenced.

I remembered his name now.

"Voldoss, what if I were to tell you that you are not the pinnacle of science?"

Voldoss stood in silence until his anger overwhelmed him. "I have beaten everyone in this class. I am the best."

"A splicer is not the ultimate in evolution Voldoss. Only when you have achieved replication can you consider yourself as among the 'best' as you say." I was smiling now. "Replicants are inferior." Voldoss said haughtily.

"To be a replicant is the ultimate honor. It means that you have achieved the pinnacle of your evolution. Why bother to splice your genotype with another when you are already perfect? With combat conditioning and memory implants, you can create hordes of perfect, proven soldiers."

"I don't believe that." Voldoss replied in anger. Apparently he could not fathom that he was not the ultimate warrior.

"Then this will be your hardest lesson Voldoss. Not just for you but for your class as well. For I am a replicant."

Voldoss registered only a slight surprise as I unleashed the black beam of the death wand and sliced off the top part of his forehead.

It was a hard lesson, but it was one learned by the rest of the class. No one dared risk angering me again.

Get ready for the conclusion of the Return of the Widow in the next issue of Argent Fire!

If you have a fiction short story relating to the Battletech Universe that you would like to see published, please send in your request to fiction@argentfire.com

STARLIGHT QUARTERLY

This issue's Starlight Quarterly features the *Forgotten Few*, a custom unit by William "sounguru" Burt

THE FORGOTTEN FEW

"With Age Comes Wisdom…."

When you imagine a froneline active House unit, most expect to see a highly buffed, 'spic n span', young combat ready team. However this is not what you get when you first lay eyes on the 1st Planetary Assualt Group the "Forgotten Few".

Most of the members of this 'hodge podge' Veteran unit are of mid to old age, many of which have pot bellies and slouch, and look very uninspiring in general, one would expect to see most of these guys in a saloon bar haveing a slow quite drink or just sitting on the porch watching the world go by.

But as the saying goes "never judge a book by its cover" the majority of these warriors have been up against the Clans best, and have lived to tell there tales and many have the scars to prove it too…..

They are all as keen as the day they joined the LAAF, they are still very much able to out perform any advisary they come up against on the field of battle. There combat experience is supreme and their true grit, courage, and determination have proven them time and time again.

Capt. Matlock is the commander of the Fogotten Few. He has a very unusual battle record and way of command. Capt. matlock is the only warrior to have 13 mechs shot out from underneath him and lived to tell about it: 12 were in battles with the clans and 1 was in a duel over a Major's daughter; the latter being the reason he was kicked out of the service! When it was decided to form an Assault group, the High Command went through every available commander that they could find and found none that filled the requirements.

1st Company Fire Support

The 6th pilot to join the Forgotten Few is none other than Pvt. Fredrick "Hand Toss" Samuels. Alot of the Lyran people will recall when Samuels destroyed a Clan Dasher by hand by tossing his last round of LRM ammo on the Dashers cockpit from Dead Man's bluff. Samuels is recently back from the rim worlds where his lance has been fighting pirates on a desert planet. A pirate Marauder got a real surprise when he closed with what he thought was a common Longbow. The 7V's ER large lasers and 5 medium pulses lasers tore through his leg armor like butter.

This was the 7th recruit for the Forgotten Few. Daniel "flips" Hanner is an old school warrior with an impressive string of kills. Flips gets his name from his weird foot apperal. It seems that somewhere in time Flips saw and old Terran Beach Party movie from the 20th century. On this holo-vid he saw a kind of footwear called flip flops. Falling in love with the idea of the light weight sandals he found a local boot maker to make him several pairs. Flips now wears nothing but his flip flops, and this has caused a few problems.

The 1st Planetary Assault Group called the Forgotten Few are made up of older mech warriors. When the Lyran Alliance needed a assault group and could not afford to pull their best out of other units to form a new one, and the recruits were far too green. They turned to the old veteran Clan fighters and asked them to build a new combat unit. Under the command of Capt. Matlock the newly formed unit is taking shape.

Capt. Matlock has a little different unit structure than most house units. The captain sets his Companies up with a 4 lance structure 3 fighting lances and one command lance. This is a real pain to the Lyran supply command when they are asked for new mechs or parts for a company.

Also, the mechs are numbered as they join the unit, which is a real nightmare on the logistics department when they try to figure out which mech goes with which lance or company for station or combat orders. The confusion caused by this formation and numbering of the unit has actually turned out to be a real boon for the Forgotten Few. The supply and logistics department rarely like to work together so alot of stuff winds up getting double shipped.

The units' symbol is a dagger through a set of orders to disband, the symbol came from a tattoo on one of the pilots arms when he was ordered to stand down after the Clan threat was over because he was considered too old to fight.

1st Company
The Forgotten Few 1st Company unit colors are a base of sandy brown with the camo pattern this only changes depending on the theatre of operation. They disdane parade colors and only repaint the mechs when needed.

1st Company Recon Lance
    20 Fireball ALM-8D
    30 Scarabus SCB-9A
    35 Wolfhound WLF-3S
    45 Stealth STH-1D

1st Company Fire Support
    65 Catapult CPLT-C2
    70 Archer ARC-5S
    80 Salamander PPR-6T
    85 Longbow LGB-7V

1st Company Assualt Lance
    80 Zues ZEU-9S
    80 Awesome AWS-9Q
    85 Gunslinger GUN-1ERD
    95 Hauptman HA1-OB

This is the latest recruit to the Forgotten Few and also the youngest. Jimmy "Joyride" McGee was asked to join by Capt. Matlock right before the fire support lance left for the rim when the previous pilot turned out to be a primma donna. If you grew up during the Years of the Clan wars you may remember Joyride. He was famous when at the age of 15 he stole a Salamnder that was parked at the side of a training field. When

the judge asked Joyride how he learned to pilot a mech at such a young age, he attributed it to the X-Vid Holo Console. He was also a computer hacker when he wasn't playing his buddies via FPG Net. The judge sentenced Joyride to 10 years of imprisonment or join the local mech school. Needless to say Joyride took the school. His battle record still shows his kills on that fateful day (A running joke with all of his previos commanders) 3 trees, 4 Hillsides, 2 parked hover trucks, and 1 spiny tailed rabbit. Joyride says the rabbit was the hardest because he couldn't get a good target lock. He has piloted nothing but Salamanders ever since with the 6T as his variant of choice.
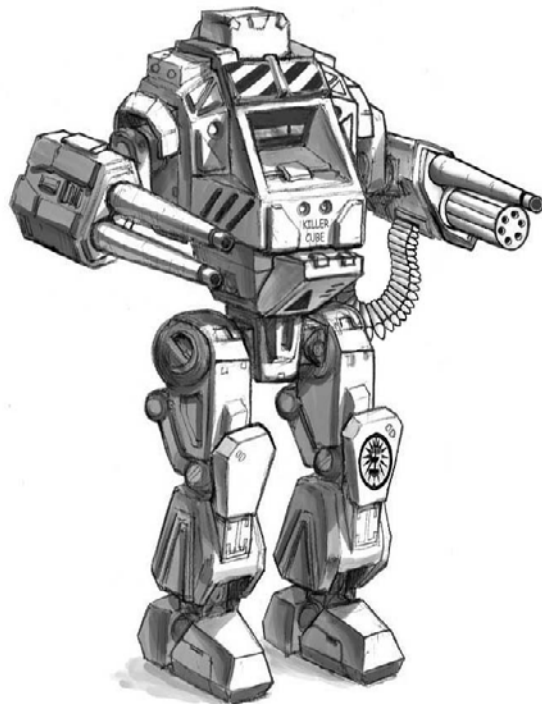
1st Company Command Lance
    60 Black Hawk-KU BHKU-OC Capt. Matlock
    70 Caesar CES-4S
    75 Penetrator PTR-6S
    85 BattleMaster BLR-4S

CANON CANDIDATES

Canon Candidates debuts a variant of an existing Canon 'Mech. Every variant was thoroughly examined for accuracy and skill, and we feel it has the potential for permanent canon status.

==Overview==

Like the Avatar, the Sunder was an attempt to re-engineer captured Clan equipment to make it compatible with Inner Sphere technology. The Sunder used captured Loki and Thor chassis as its basis. Unfortunately, this 'Mech's development process was plagued with false starts and technological failures. The first problem to crop up involved the chassis design and weight allocation - the Sunder was intended to carry twenty more tons of equipment than the ClanLoki and Thor OmniMechs on which it was based. The engineers at Luthien Armor Works believed they could easily add this extra weight, and it is true that the additional stress did not cause catastrophic failures in the skeleton. However, the Sunder's actuators wore out at an alarming rate and had to be replaced with larger and more robust versions.

The upper torso was redesigned to accept a bulkier Inner Sphere engine. This change meant rearranging the 'Mech's internal spaces, and so the designers moved the torso weapons bay above the cockpit. This reconfiguration posed no problems when the weapon pods were loaded with energy weapons, but firing missiles sprayed caustic gasses all over the cockpit canopy and sensor arrays. The engineers eventually fixed the problem, but the delays made the Sunder one of the last DCMS OmniMechs to be authorized for full-scale production.

==Capabilities==

When compared to other Inner Sphere assault 'Mechs, the Sunder is an extremely capable machine. However, the inferior quality of its Inner Sphere weapons technology makes it no real match for the Clan Masakari and Gladiator assault 'Mechs. The Sunder's bay can accept an equivalent weapon load, but Inner Sphere weapons tend to be bulkier and less efficient than their Clan equivalents.

==Deployment==

The Sunder -OX was first deployed to presigious units such as the Lyran and Davion Guards. The greatest concentration of the new Mech was in Lyran space near the Clan Occupation Zones. Having been issued to both Steiner and Davion units the Sunder-OX's tour baptism of fire unfortunately came during the savage FedCom Civil War where it was used to lethal effect by former comrades against each other.

Type/Model:	Sunder SD1-OX
Tech:	Inner Sphere / 3062
Config:	Biped OmniMech
Rules:	Level 2, Standard design
Mass:	90 tons
Chassis:	Standard
Power Plant:	360 Hermes XL Fusion
Walking Speed:	43.2 km/h
Maximum Speed:	64.8 km/h
Jump Jets:	None
Jump Capacity:	0 meters
Armor Type:	Standard

Armament:
  3 ER Large Lasers
  1 Rotary AC/5
  2 ER Medium Lasers
  1 ER Small Laser

Manufacturer: Robinson Standard BattleWorks, Defiance Industries
  Location: Robinson, Hesperus II
Communications System: Johnston Q-Rotor 2
Targeting/Tracking System: Federated Hunter Mk II

Equipment:		Crits	Mass
Int. Struct.:	138 pts Standard	0	9.00
Engine:	360 XL Fusion	12	16.50
Walking MP:	4		
Running MP:	6		
Jumping MP:	0		
Heat Sinks:	20 Double [40]	18	10.00
(Heat Sink Loc: 1 RA, 2 LT, 3 RT)			
Gyro:		4	4.00
Cockpit, Life Supt., Sensors:		5	3.00
Actuators: L: Sh+UA	R: Sh+UA	12	.00
Armor Factor:	264 pts Standard	0	16.50

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head:	3	9
Center Torso:	29	41
Center Torso (Rear):		12
L/R Side Torso:	19	28/28
L/R Side Torso (Rear):		10/10
L/R Arm:	15	30/30
L/R Leg:	19	33/33

Weapons & Equipment	Loc	Heat	Ammo	Crits	Mass
2 ER Large Lasers	RA	24		4	10.00
1 ER Large Laser	LA	12		2	5.00
1 Rotary AC/5	LA	1	60	9	13.00
(Ammo Locations: 2 LA, 1 LT)					
2 ER Medium Lasers	CT	10		2	2.00
1 ER Small Laser	HD(R)	2		1	.50
CASE Equipment:	LT			1	.50
TOTALS:		54		70	90.00
Crits & Tons Left:				8	.00

Calculated Factors:
Total Cost:	28,462,593 C-Bills
Battle Value:	1,647
Cost per BV:	17,281.48
Weapon Value:	3,283 / 3,283 (Ratio = 1.99 / 1.99)
Damage Factors:	SRDmg=39; MRDmg=26; LRDmg=8

CANON CANDIDATES
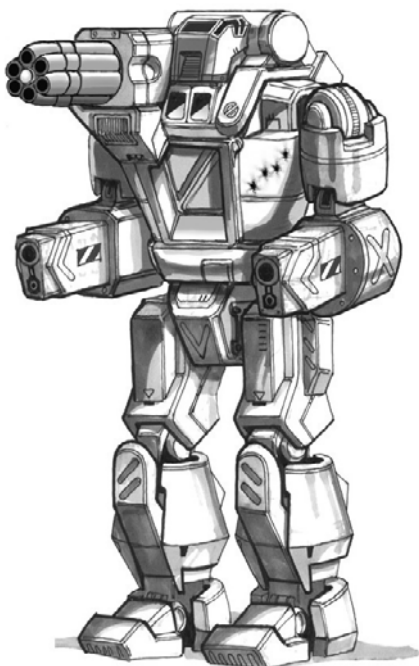
==Overview:==

This variant was designed and built around a cobbled together battlefield upgrade that showed potential during the recent FedCom conflict. The Hunchback HBK-5D has become one of the most favored 'Mechs to be put into full production in recent years by House Davion. It is a popular machine according to a survey taken of MechWarriors who have been assigned to pilot it as well as those who have witnessed the variant under real battlefield conditions.

During the Civil war spare parts and equipment where becoming a luxury for both the Loyalist and Allied forces alike, so it was quite a common sight to see BattleMechs being repaired with whatever battlefield salvage that could be obtained during this conflict. Whomever had the brilliant idea to incorporate a replacement RAC 5 for the damaged class-20 autocannon is unknown, but the person must have been a wizard when it came to retooling and re-calibrating spare parts. Thanks to the genius of this unknown mechanic the foundation was laid for one of the most renowned 'Mech variants to roll off the production lines after the Civil war ended.

Several techs have stepped forward to declare that they had a hand in the battlefield creation of the RAC variant and one now deceased tech has been named as the "wizard" who fit the RAC into the original Hunchback. As yet, there is no definitive evidence to suggest who really worked on it since all 4 techs were on planet. However, circumstantial evidence does point to the deceased tech as being the main person behind the re-build. Her file shows a genius for "doing the impossible" as her commanding officer has noted several times. It was on his word that Tech Sgt Nicola Cole was named as a possible designer.

==Capabilities:==

After the Civil War the NAIS institute was commissioned to design and build a new variant based off the now relatively common RAC equipped Hunchback. Designers, techs and mechanics rebuilt the venerable 'Mech from the ground up and created a medium 'Mech that was capable of out-gunning many heavier adversaries.They replaced the fusion engine withthe lighter but bulkier XL version to free up enough weight for the new weapon load.

==Deployment:==

At present plans are under way to bolster the 17th Avalon Hussars with the new HBK-5D varient with the initial production run.

```
Type/Model:    HUNCHBACK HBK-5D
Tech:          Inner Sphere / 3067
Config:        Biped BattleMech
Rules:         Level 2, Standard design
Mass:          50 tons
Chassis:       Hollis Mark X Standard
Power Plant:   200 Core Tek XL Fusion
Walking Speed: 43.2 km/h
Maximum Speed: 64.8 km/h
Jump Jets:     None
Jump Capacity: 0 meters
Armor Type:    Durallex Super Ferro-Fibrous
Armament:
  2 BlazeFire Systems Large Lasers
  2 BlazeFire LongShot ER Small Lasers
  1 Mydron Tornado Rotary AC/5
Manufacturer:  Kallon Industries
  Location:    Talon
Communications System:  Hector VII
Targeting & Tracking System:  BlazeFire Tracker with
RangeCheck
```

```
Equipment:                            Crits    Mass
Int. Struct.:  83 pts Standard           0     5.00
Engine:        200 XL Fusion            12     4.50
   Walking MP:   4
   Running MP:   6
   Jumping MP:   0
Heat Sinks:    12 Double [24]           12     2.00
  (Heat Sink Loc: 1 LA, 1 RA, 1 LT, 1 RT)
Gyro:                                    4     2.00
Cockpit, Life Supt., Sensors:            5     3.00
Actuators: L: Sh+UA+LA    R: Sh+UA+LA   14      .00
Armor Factor:  161 pts Ferro-Fibrous    14     9.00
  (Armor Crit Loc: 3 LA, 3 RA, 2 LT, 2 CT, 2 LL, 2 RL)
```

```
                        Internal    Armor
                        Structure   Value
   Head:                    3          9
   Center Torso:           16         22
   Center Torso (Rear):                8
   L/R Side Torso:         12        17/17
   L/R Side Torso (Rear):             6/6
   L/R Arm:                 8        15/15
   L/R Leg:                12        23/23
```

```
Weapons and Equipment   Loc  Heat  Ammo   Crits   Mass
------------------------------------------------------
1 Large Laser           RA    8            2      5.00
1 ER Small Laser        RA    2            1       .50
1 Large Laser           LA    8            2      5.00
1 ER Small Laser        LA    2            1       .50
1 Rotary AC/5           RT    1    60      9     13.00
  (Ammo Locations: 3 LT)
CASE Equipment:         LT                 1       .50
------------------------------------------------------
TOTALS:                      26           77     50.00
Crits & Tons Left:                         1       .00
```

```
Calculated Factors:
Total Cost:       6,933,250 C-Bills
Battle Value:     1,072
Cost per BV:      6,467.58
Weapon Value:     1,484 / 1,484 (Ratio = 1.38 / 1.38)
Damage Factors:   SRDmg = 33;  MRDmg = 20;  LRDmg = 2
```

Product Updates

We provide a continually updated list of product offerings for FanPro/CBT, WizKids/MWDA and other Mecha Universes. While we will not advertise for a particular company or entity that would like to promote their business for personal gain, we will promote products for as many Mecha-related universes as possible in an effort to spread the popularity of all of them. If we are currently not listing products for FanPro/CBT, WizKids/MWDA or other Mecha Universes that you would like to see, please send an email to editor@argentfire.com. NOTE: All release dates are set by the product manufacturer and are subject to change. Argent Fire has no control over any changes in release dates.

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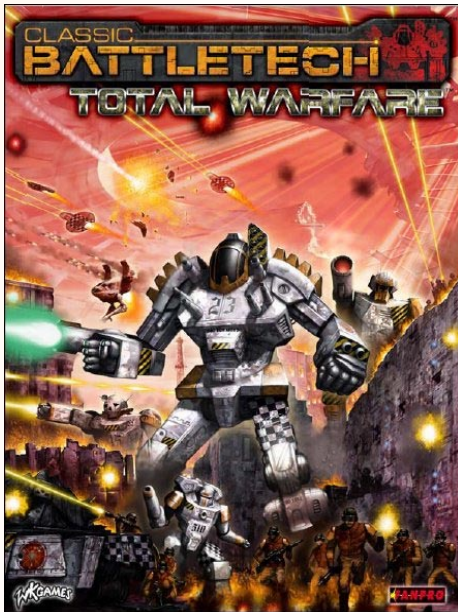
Total Warfare   Coming Soon

The product of over twenty years of gaming experience, Total Warfare presents the rules of the BattleTech game system as never before. Fully integrated and meticulously updated, Total Warfare provides the most detailed and comprehensive rules set published to date for BattleTech; the perfect companion for standard tournament play.

Status : Coming Soon
Release Date : August 2006
Product # : FPR 35101
ISBN # : 1-932564-77-2
MSRP : 39.99 USD

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Starterbook: Sword and Dragon   Coming Soon

House Davion and House Kurita are ancient enemies, with centuries of war and bloodshed staining the worlds along their mutual border. Despite recent years of relative peace between the sword and dragon, or the commands of a House leader on a far off capital, only the annihilation of the enemy with suffice.

Sorenson's Sabres: A detached command from the legendary Fifth Sword of Light, Sorenson's Sabres are a deadly unit among the elite of House Kurita's samurai, dedicated to cutting a swath through new and ancient enemies alike.

Fox's Teeth: McKinnon's Company of House Davion's Seventh Crucis Lancers, the detached "Fox's Teeth" have been an independent raiding force for centuries, their lightning hit-and-run tactics making them equally respected and feared.

A new series, the Starterbooks are a perfect way to jump into the further excitement of the Classic BattleTech universe once players have tried their hands at BattleTech. Starterbook: Sword and Dragon provides a short synopsis of the conflicts between the ancient enemies of House Davion and House Kurita, as well as a brief history and personal dossiers on the members of these two legendary combat commands. Including record sheets for everyone in the command–which includes eight, never-before-seen 'Mech variants–as well as a unique track system that allows players to develop their own scenarios, players will be firing autocannons and tossing PPC lightning at one another in no time! Can be used with Iron Wind Metals' 'MechPack: House Kurita and 'MechPack: House Davion.
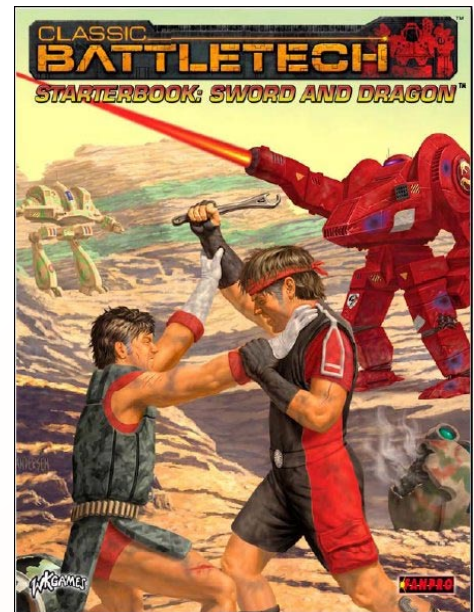
Classic BattleTech RPG

May 2006

It is the 31st century. Across the vastness of interstellar space, awesome powers vie for supremacy. Amidst this swirl of unending conflict stride BattleMechs®, huge robotic weapons of war piloted by elite MechWarriors®. Join the action, taking on any one of an endless variety of roles, from spy to smuggler, mercenary to MechWarrior. As a character from the Inner Sphere, the Clans or the Periphery, you will decide the ultimate fate of the galaxy.

Enter the exciting BattleTech® universe, stepping outside of your BattleMech and embracing the richness of a vast, detailed science fiction setting. Classic BattleTech RPG™ contains all the rules and source material players and gamemasters need, including a unique character creation system that generates game abilities and background story at the same time. Time to let your imaginations soar!

Handbook: House Davion

September 2006

House Davion has dominated Inner Sphere politics, especially the military-industrial complex, for centuries. A drive for technological innovation that reaches both the military and civilian sectors; a society built around the freedoms of the every-day man; a feudal system that empowers the First Prince of House Davion like no other: the swords of the Federated Suns have sliced out the largest and arguably most powerful realm in the history of mankind. Despite of the recent ravages of a civil war, the people of House Davion know their place in history.

Handbook: House Davion™ provides an in-depth look at the politics, the cultures and the ever-present military of one of the most dominant players in the Inner Sphere. Yet Handbook: House Davion includes more than just background information, providing a plethora of new creatures, personnel weapons, life paths and more, for both Classic BattleTech and Classic BattleTech RPG™ campaigns set in the Federated Suns!
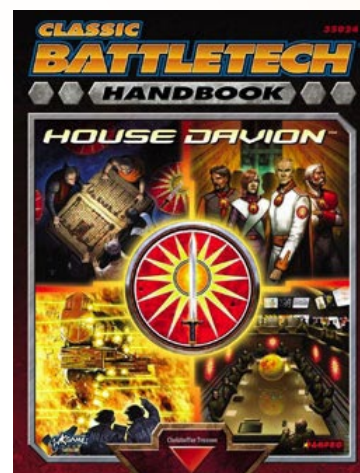
Vehicle Annex

July 2006

MechWarriors receive all the glory; aerospace fighter pilots a close second; vehicles are considered the workhorses of any military; infantry are even given their day in the sun in the minds of the common citizen. But no battle could be waged, nor won, without the mammoth apparatus of support vehicles that feed the war machines of the Great Houses. From cargo trucks to tank airships, airborne MASH to communication satellites, armored transport rails to coastal patrol boats, hauler exoskeletons to LoaderMechs, even hover and wheeled police cruisers or civilian vehicles conscripted into the military: the support vehicle is the true backbone of any military machine.

Built using the construction rules found in Combat Equipment™, Classic BattleTech Technical Readout: Vehicle Annex™ provides a never-before-seen look at the support vehicles behind the militaries of every faction, as well as a slice of every day life in the BattleTech® universe. From tracked land-trains to police cruisers, Luxury VTOLs to Fix-wing passenger planes, satellites, super-heavy naval surface ships, IndustrialMechs and more: the gamut of the BattleTech universe, fully illustrated for the first time.

Technical Readout: 3058 Upgrade   May 2006

In the 3050's, the discoveries of long-buried Star League records led to a plethora of new cutting-edge BattleMech and vehicle designs by the end of that decade, resurrected from the blue prints of design firms centuries old and thought lost to antiquity. Now, ten years later, these designs have moved from novelty to workhorse, as the Inner Sphere once more finds itself at war!

Fully updated to circa 3070, Classic BattleTech Technical Readout: 3058 Upgrade™ launches these designs into the current time frame, including notable MechWarriors/pilots, as well as new variants. Additionally, a battle armor section has been included, providing full Classic BattleTech stats, and updating the histories for twenty venerable designs.

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Mercenaries Supplemental Update   August 2006

October 3067 unleashed the horrors of a war not seen since the First Succession War. Yet for the mercenaries of the Inner Sphere, this is a war unlike any in history. With the heart and soul of the mercenary trade annihilated on Outreach, and the very reliability of every mercenary command shaking the foundation of every House — causing some to now consider their most stalwart work-for-hire commands as enemies — mercenaries, from the elite to the dregs, are fighting for their lives… and more importantly, their very reputations.

Classic BattleTech Mercenaries Supplemental Update™ details the fall-out of the opening years of the Jihad and how it relates to mercenaries. Providing updates on all major mercenary commands currently embroiled in the Jihad, as well as covering the various Hiring Halls, this product also details brand new mercenaries commands springing up from the shattered remains of commands destroyed in these opening Jihad years. Rules for running mercenary commands during this era are also included, along with a section detailing newly premiered battlefield units.

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Technical Readout: 3050 Upgrade   October 2006

General Aleksandr Kerensky and three-quarters of the Star League Defense Force departed human-occupied space more than two hundred and fifty years ago, only to return in 3050 as the Clans: a society dedicated to the highest warrior ideals and bent on conquering the Inner Sphere. With their superior technology and OmniMechs, they almost proved unstoppable, before their defeat at Tukayyid and its fifteen year truce. The year is 3070, and while the Truce of Tukayyid has expired, the Jihad rages. The Inner Sphere 'Mechs hastily upgraded with field modifications to counter the Clans are proving their worth, as notable pilots rise to become heroes and new, more time tested variants—sporting weapons right out of R&D labs—make their presence felt, while the Clan OmniMechs continue to prove they are still the cutting edge of military technology. Classic BattleTech Technical Readout: 3050 Upgrades™ fully updates this venerable product, fleshing out the history of each design, including notable MechWarriors/pilots, as well as providing fresh illustrations. Additionally, all the 'Mechs, vehicles and aerospace fighters originally found in the now out-of-print Technical Readout: 2750 are included.

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Historical: Brush Wars   August 2006

The Ronin Wars. The Andurien/Magistracy invasion of House Liao. The Anton Revolt and subsequent Marik Civil War. Against the empire-spanning conflicts of the Fourth Succession War, Clan Invasion and FedCom Civil War, historians all too often forget such important conflicts, relegating them to the category of "low intensity warfare." Yet it is these very conflicts that tend to shape the internal politics and culture of each faction, often with more profound impact than the largest wars.

The Historical: Brush Wars campaign sourcebook details the actions involving every line unit in the most important "low level conflicts" of the early thirty-first century. Maps and full regiment listings convey additional details, while ample campaign rules provide a framework allowing players to replay every detail of each war.

PARTING SHOTS

A lot of work went into getting this issue out. After the success of the first issue of volume 2, the rebirth of the magazine, there was a bit more expectation for what lay ahead. I feel that we have easily succeeded expectations - heck, I feel like we've simply blown right past them.

When I took the reins of this project, I knew that the first few issues would be a learning curve, and that along the way, Argent Fire would create for itself a stronger identity. This second issue branched out a bit more from the core of Battletech into other realms. I think this was an important move. While our core focus will always be on the Battletech Universe, I see a need to be supportive of other similar Mecha universes as well. This is an industry and a hobby driven primarily by the will and passion of the fans. If Argent Fire can reach out to a larger community base by offering a multi-faceted range of reviews, articles, and more, then I say all the better for everyone.

As some of you may know, I also run Battletech Universe (http://www.battletechuniverse. org), one of the 'Net's top Battletech fan sites. It was through BTU that I attained the rights to Argent Fire, and its due to BTU that I can publish Argent Fire today. The subscribers of BTU, also known as the Knights of the Phoenix, make this possible with their monthly subscriptions to BTU. They do this not just for the case-full of benefits they receive from it, but also out of their desire to see the joy of Battletech spread. This is also the desire of myself and the staff of Argent Fire.

The continued success of Argent Fire will rely on the support of the fan community. As stated in the Opening Volley, we want your input and contribution to the magazine. We want to be representative to the entire community. So I ask again for your support in accomplishing this with submissions to the magazine. Other ways to support Argent Fire are:

Donations

Argent Fire will accept donations from the community. The donations will go directly in support of Argent Fire. Donations will be used for any publication costs, advertisement costs (eg flyers), staff payments, and other costs associated with maintining the magazine. Donations in excess of $25 entitles you to receive a FREE print copy of the most recent issue of Argent Fire, sent to your home or address of choice. To donate, please visit http://www.argentfire. com and click on the "Make a Donation" link. Choose any amount that you wish. If you would like to donate via another method other than paypal, please email me at editor@argentfire. com and let me know how I may accomodate your choice.

Flyers

Argent Fire has flyers available for distribution at conventions, game shops, fan meets, private games and any other venue you can think of. If you would like to receive an order of flyers for distribution, please contact our Conventions Coordinator, Terri, at matahari@battletechuniverse.org. Please let her know what venue the flyers will be distributed at, location/shipping information, and an approximate number. Depending on the venue and the quantity of flyers, you may receive either color or black & white flyers. If you have any additional questions regarding flyer distribution, please contact Terri. You can also print out flyers yourself for distribution to your local gaming store. You can download and print the flyer off of our web site at http://www.argentfire.com/AF_Flyer.pdf. The flyer is in Adobe Acrobat 6 or later format.