

Armadillo Droppings™

ARMADILLO GAMES

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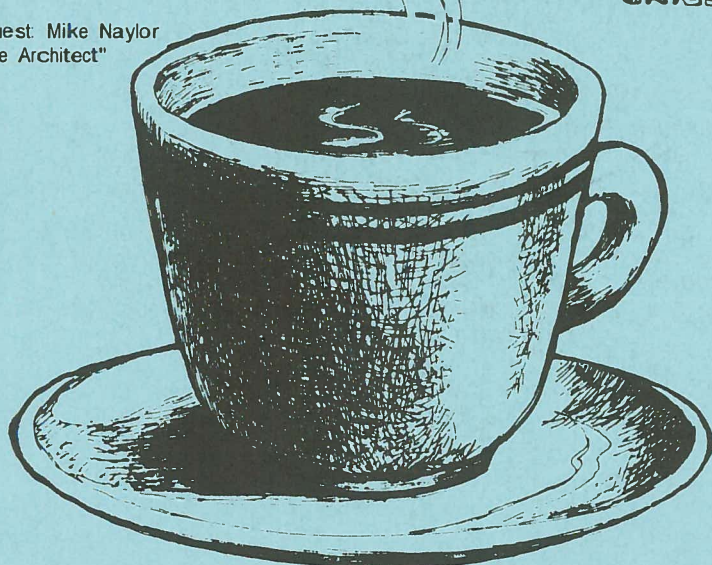
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GOOD TO THE LAST Droppings



EDitorial:



Welcome my friends to the final issue of the Armadillo Droppings. Yes that's right it's the end of the Armadillo Droppings, the Irregular Entertainment Quarterly of the NorthEast. Many of you might notice that we have been experiencing gaps between issues. Well there are several good reasons for that.

First off, Keith and I decided to have the Droppings printed up instead of photocopying them. As a result the finished product is much nicer in appearance, but printing costs money. We had wanted to continue to be able to offer this 'zine free of charge, so that meant we had to wait until funds are available before putting out the next issue.

Secondly, we didn't want the stores that carried the Droppings to have to pay for advertising, nor did we wish to have to keep track of billing them for such even if they agreed to help us underwrite this 'Zine.

When I had finished typing and editing this issue, we had not intended to stop publication of the Droppings, so I had not solicited articles with this in mind. But since Keith decided to pull the plug, we just put the usual junk in hoping that you like it anyway. We have a Road Trip article, a long overview of recent Palladium Rifts releases by the Visitor, some capsule reviews, a minor complaint and a self-indulgent whining piece from yours truly. Keith explains why he made the decision to stop publishing the Droppings in a separate article, but I wish to stress that since we have such an extensive mailing list of fine retail stores, you may see an annual version of the Droppings, or some other such 'zines sometime in the future. As Keith suggests in his article, we're always interested in your comments. You can call me at (518) 463-8955 evenings after 6, or Keith at (518) 355-6517 also in the evening.

Before I say goodbye, I would like to thank all our contributing editors and anyone who has ever written anything for the Armadillo Droppings. Special thanks to Mark Shamon, Brian Malone, Jim "the Thug" Malone, Kyle and Tiya Madden, Mike Naylor, Kurt Schneible, Pete Huston, Charlie Santino and anyone else I have forgotten. Special thanks to Keith Houghton who gave me this chance to editorialize and express myself without getting arrested. Thanks to all the stores that carried the Droppings especially the local ones. And finally thanks to all our readers, even if you used the Droppings for the litter box!

Originally, the theme of this issue was Voiding the Contract with America. It stems from both Keith and my own feelings that the contract was null and void well before the Republicans ever swept the elections in November. As Newt Gingrich and the rest of the Republican party find ways to drop certain articles from the so-called contract, I sit here laughing and humming that old song by the Who "We Won't Get Fooled Again". Guess what America, we did get fooled again and we only have ourselves to blame. As I join the ranks of the unemployed thanks to Governor George Pataki's bone headed decision to abolish the NYS Energy Office, I can only say I'll miss working on the Armadillo Droppings. It was a welcome break from rewriting my resume. See you all on the golf course. I'll be the one playing at taxpayers expense since I'm collecting unemployment.

Ed's note - the following rebuttal is printed here as part of the Armadillo Droppings policy of allowing our readers to correct our mistakes and fill up space in an issue. It is also a desperate attempt to reinforce Michael Naylor's fragile psyche in the hope that one day he will write something we can really use.



Hiya folks...

I think your editor deserves to be sacked. Now I like Ed, he's a great guy, a wonderful person and all around sensible chap, but anyone who lets this Thug guy print lies about me deserves to be sacked. I'm not disturbed with the Thug, for he seems to be the victim of lack of medication or at least hallucination.

Because while I would like to claim that the beautiful, legal and fully licensed 40K Reaver that was entered in the 1994 Golden Demons was mine, I can't because it just ain't true. The Titan that the Thug saw was the "Howling Griffons" demo model that's been circulating around the country for about a year or so - it has shown up at GENCON two years now and was the model that inspired me to get my own Reaver. I think the Titan belongs to the California Crew who follows Mike Biasi (the guy who makes the resins) around from convention to convention.

My Titan is a beautiful blue grey urban camouflage model, and is used to support the Temple Deunann Chapter of the Space Marines, NOT the Howling Griffons.

Sheesh, doesn't the Thug even know his chapter markings?

Please don't sack Ed too hard. Just a gentle sacking. It's not his fault that he's got a bozo for a Thug.

But he is Ed the Editor after all, so it's all his fault.



Mike

Capsule Reviews:

by

Ed Rotondaro

Due to the lag between issues, I intend to cover some products that have been available for several months. As usual I will concentrate on science fiction role playing games and science fiction tactical wargames.

R. Talsorian has been quite busy these past few months with supplements for Cyberpunk. First off there is the **Rough Guide to the UK** which retails for \$12.00. This detailed sourcebook gives you an extensive background to the political, economic, military and cultural life of England

in the 21st. century. It starts off with a brief overview of the military takeover and the subsequent restoration of the monarchy. The military forces and their specific equipment are also detailed. For all you firepower freaks, this section should prove interesting. The Brits have some serious guns and special munitions to go with them.

England is divided into several regions complete with their own conurbations, metroplexes and sprawls as well as contested areas such as Scotland and Ireland. Law and order is either provided by the government or by corporate police agencies. A large segment of the population are part of the wandering nomadic movement who are basically nature worshipping pagans. The environmental damages of global warming have caused severe flooding that affects even the major cities like London.

With pirates in the marshlands and Celtic revival clans in the hills, Britain is one hell of a place to run a Cyberpunk campaign. The writing is somewhat derivative of both *Shadowrun* and the movie *Split Second* but still this guide is a quite useful and very entertaining. Overall it rates an A.

A more recent supplement is *The Pacific Rim Sourcebook* (\$12.00). The format is similar to the UK guide. The major nations of the PacRim are described along with timelines of their future histories. The major countries covered are Japan, the newly united Korea, China which now includes Hong Kong, Australasia, the nations of Southeast Asia such as Viet Nam and Thailand and the island states of Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei.

In each case the militaries, corporations, special weapons and cultures of these nations are detailed with Japan, Korea, China and Australasia getting the most coverage. Adventure hooks are included for certain areas as well. The sourcebook also includes a revised martial arts combat system. Packed with material for players and gamemasters, I rate this sourcebook A+.

From GDW comes *Fire, Fusion and Steel* (\$16.00) which is subtitled *The Traveller technical architecture*. It is also bundled into the deluxe boxed edition of *Traveller the New Era*. FFS is meant to be both a stand alone product and guide to the technologies of the Traveller universe.

Traveller has long been the most technologically realistic science fiction role playing system out there. Considering that it was also the first such system, this is quite an accomplishment. GDW states that the diversity of science fiction gaming requires more than mere lists of equipment. Players should be able to understand some of the science behind the technologies presented in the game, if only to know the capabilities and more importantly, the limitations of certain technologies.

FFS is divided into three books: *Major systems* which deals with spacecraft and vehicular designs; *Subsystems* which covers different types of faster than light drives, armor, fire control, cybernetics and life support; and of course, *Weaponry* which covers everything from personal firearms up to fusion guns for spacecraft.

FFS is at its best when it explains how certain systems would theoretically work if the engineering principles were solved. At other times, the book reads like a physics textbook written by a bunch of MIT or Cal

Tech geeks. There are a few examples of equipment designed using these rules to guide you through the process, but the formulas are so complex that it resembles a class in linear algebra.

FFS stated goal was not to provide players with a listing of equipment, but rather to allow them to design anything they wanted for their Traveller campaigns. The only problem with this approach is that most gamers would prefer those lists of equipment. The amount of time and mathematical skills needed to actually crank out new ships, weapons, etc. means only the most dedicated gamers will want to attempt this. If ever there was a product that should have been released on CD ROM for a PC, this is it.

I am forced to give FFS two grades: A for presentation and background and B- for usefulness. Unless you are a true detail freak I'd skip this one.

Also from GDW we have **The Reformation Coalition Equipment Guide (20.00)**. Despite the claims of FFS, this is what Traveller players needed and wanted, a comprehensive listing of weapons, armor, vehicles and spacecraft in service with or encountered by the Reformation Coalition also known as the "Star Vikings". The guide also covers equipment used by the Hivers, the Mercantile Guild and the myriad worlds of "the Wilds". Tech levels range from TL14 Imperial heavy grav tanks down to TL2 longbows. The guide includes a section of rule expansions to supplement the design sequences of FFS.

The Coalition or Star Vikings are the setting for much of the New Era's material. The concept of a race of technological scavengers comes from H. Beam Piper's classic future history series which includes a novel entitled "Star Viking". The book and the series are highly recommended. If Piper were alive today, perhaps he would have reaped more of the acclaim he deserved.

This guide is essential for any Star Viking based Traveller campaign. The usual GDW standards of writing are apparent, although the color illustrations are not anything to brag about. Overall, this one rates an A.

Turning to FASA Corporation and Battletech, we have several new releases. **Rogues and Royalty (\$10.00)** is the latest Mechwarrior adventure supplement. Consisting of a series of interlinked episodes, the player characters are hired by the lord of Federated Commonwealth planet to rescue his kidnapped daughter and help combat the raids of a band of pirates. All is not as it seems and the players soon find themselves dealing with multiple threats on different worlds. I've never been a big fan of the Mechwarrior adventures since they are generally unimaginative and require too many things to happen in precise order for a successful resolution. The best these adventures can do is give game masters more background on the Battletech universe in which to set their own campaigns.

The module includes a record sheet for an arena variant Crusader as well as a few interesting NPCs. Some decent sidelines are included that could form the basis for future role playing, but overall this one rates a B-.

The Black Thorns (10.00) is the newest Battletech scenario pack. The fifteen scenarios cover the adventures of a company sized mercenary unit and its quest for vengeance against the Clans. Mechwarrior statistics are included for Jeremiah Rose and certain other members of his unit. Several

new Star League vintage battlemechs and Clan Omnimech designs are introduced, although record sheets are included for only those units that are used in the scenarios.

The scenarios are a mixed lot covering the history of Jeremiah Rose from his days as a Comstar mechwarrior to his battles against the Nova Cats on Courcheval. My one fault with these scenarios is the fact that the battles have to follow the plot line of the novels from which the Black Thorns originated from. Some of the battles are merely training battles between various members of the unit, while others are so contrived that only a lucky shot can produce the outcome from the novel. In one instance, the Thorns have to ambush a helicopter to rescue prisoners. Try shooting down a chopper in a game without destroying it sometime! This is a battle that would have worked better as a Mechwarrior scenario with the characters using their out of mech skills to sabotage the helicopter. There is even a BattleSpace scenario in which the Thorns attempt to run the Clan blockade around Wolcott.

The final scenarios are interesting because several members of the Thorns pilot captured Clan Omnimechs. Considering the amount of damage that the unit takes in the final battles, one wonders where they get the spare parts to repair these mechs. Overall this one rates a B+.

Invading Clans (\$18.00). is a sourcebook for the remaining five Clans who invaded the Inner Sphere and fought Comstar on Tukayyid. Each Clan's history is traced along with the worlds they conquered and their current military strength. There are also ten new mech designs ranging from Omnimechs to second line units with each Clan having two unique designs. Unfortunately there are no record sheets included for these designs. Color pages show uniforms and scenes from the history of each Clan. The Clans run the full gamut from rabid Crusaders such as the Smoke Jaguars to the almost benevolent Diamond Sharks who of course were practically wiped out on Tukayyid. This is a must for any serious game master who wants to run a Mechwarrior campaign. Overall I give it an A.

Finally we have **CityTech, 2nd. edition (\$25.00).** This release is similar to the 3rd. edition boxed set of BattleTech in that it revises the game to conform to the new BattleTech Compendium. It includes 16 plastic battlemechs along with record sheets, mapsheets, counters for buildings, vehicles and infantry.

The mechs that come with this edition are all one piece without excessive flash. Also, the new record sheets include a revised and corrected 3050 Victor. The new mech design software that FASA uses not only produces a better looking record sheet, it catches all the design errors that used to appear in the technical readouts.

The new edition of CityTech is a stand alone product that includes all the rules for BattleTech plus the rules for infantry, vehicles, artillery and urban combat that are found in the Compendium.

My only complaints are very minor. I would have preferred that the plastic mechs didn't include duplicates. I really don't need two Javelins or two Orions. I could use more Omnimechs, and since this game includes four Clan mechs, why not give us eight or more different Omnimechs? Also for

some strange reason, you get a record sheet for the Wolfhound mech, but no plastic mech for this design.

Overall, the new CityTech is a winner. If you're just getting into the Battletech system this game will prove invaluable. I give it an A+.



"A Final Word from
the Publisher"
by Keith E. Houghton

I suppose it's time to confess that it's all my fault. The end of the "Droppings" that is. Without a doubt it was a difficult decision to arrive at, with many factors to be considered. However the bottom line was the great investment of time and money as well as an inkling that it was time to move on.

I certainly get a feeling of accomplishment when I think of all the issues of the "Droppings" we put out over the years. It was fun, instructive and a nice little ego inflator. I'm not completely slamming the door on 'zine publishing though. There may something in the distant future such as specials or even a resurrection of the "Droppings" itself. But there are no immediate plans for further publications.

There are a lot of people that contributed to, helped out with and distributed the "Droppings" that I'd like to thank. Since I'm too lazy to name them all, I'll simply say thank you for the support, it couldn't have happened without you. I will make one exception however and that is a special thanks to our editor, Edwin J. Rotondaro. Without Ed's great efforts and direction, the "Droppings" never would have become what it is today, extinct. (Just kidding Ed.) (Thanks for the memories Keith! - Ed.)

Just one final note to our over 2000 readers. I would like to hear from you. Your comments, complaints, suggestions. Anything you'd like to say about the "Droppings". As a special thank you for this effort and your support over the years, I will send you a free copy of "Sponge Sports", a parody of the small game company efforts you have no doubt witnessed over the years. Truly a collectors item, "Sponge Sports" is not available anywhere else. (For good reason). So send me your comments and get a free game.

Good bye for now and I hope we meet again some day.

Much Thanks,



If you've got a good memory, you'll remember that Bruno slugged his Space Factory boss (Rebo, the Poltaygian Urb-Ape), stole his flyer, and was escaping when he found himself at the business end of the law's fire pistol.

Bruno McGurk's heart
was as soft as his head.

RAMMER

by CHARLES SANTINO

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Part 3

"Da cop has gotten da drop on old McGurk," Bruno mumbled. He adjusted his focus from the policeman's weapon, which was still pressed against his bulbous schnozzola, to the aluminum badge pinned at a sloppy angle on the officer's chest.

"*Cray Flekk*," Bruno read the two syllables on the badge as slowly as possible. "Dat's a Batbattleblapp name, ain't it?"

Bruno was playing for time.

He knew that Batbattleblappites had a profound and well-deserved sense of inferiority, and any attention he gave the creature might distract him. Then Bruno would strike with lightning quickness, smashing his opponent's crusty exoskeleton. He'd discover if Batbattleblappites really had the dazzling, iridescent innards their enemies supposedly used to make lava lamps.

Getting past that fire pistol was the hitch in Bruno's counter-attack plan.

"Bruno McGurk, you're under arrest!" Flekk barked, the brittle joints of his mandibles clattering in a percussive rap.

Flekk continued: "You have the right to clam up if you want, *et-set-tra*, *et-set-tra*. Or we can work something out between us, friendly-like. If you catch my meaning."

"I'd like to work yer friggin' arms outta yer shoulders!"

"Relax! You see, my orders are to bring you back dead or alive. Give me trouble and I'll kill you right —"

"I'd like ta see ya try!"

“Let me finish why don’t you! Like I said, I’ll waste you if you force me. However, if you give me your money bag, get out of here, and never, ever come back, I’ll tell Paymaster Rebo you escaped — when he recovers, of course. I’ll probably be demoted for my negligence, but a duffel bag full of brand new, freshly printed 10-, 20-, 50-, and 100-kvecky notes should make losing my stripes a lot easier to take. I hope you managed to grab a lot of those 100-kveckies!”

“Ya call yerself a cop? Yer no better’n a crook!”

“You should talk! You assaulted Rebo, burned up that poor Kur-gashiansquid-guy, destroyed Payday Bay, and tried to steal a Government flyer. What does that make *you*?”

“A Space Factory worker goin’ on vacation!”

Without warning — because it’s awfully ill-advised to warn an adversary that you’re about to kick him in the groin — Bruno kicked Flekk in the groin, or what passes for the groin in Batbattleblappite anatomy.

The impact sounded like a jack boot crushing a horseshoe crab, which, given Bruno’s bulky footwear and the nature of Flekk’s groin, should surprise no one.

The blow staggered Flekk.

He forgot all about the deadly weapon he wielded, letting it fall to the floor of Rebo’s cabin as he punched Bruno square in the chest.

Bruno slipped in a puddle of the dazzling, iridescent innards that he was now able to confirm lurked beneath the Batbattleblappite’s crusty exoskeleton. Bruno’s kick had fractured Flekk’s so-called protective outer layer and he was leaking onto the floor. Fortunately for Flekk, his species’ genitalia reside elsewhere: specifically, behind their third row of teeth.

(Yes, I know what you’re thinking: mandibles *and* teeth? The doubters among you may refer to *Audobon’s Field Guild to the Extraterrestrials*, 15th Edition, Volume 6, pages 123-127. And I’ll say “I told you so” in advance.)

Bruno’s fall put Flekk’s discarded gun right at his fingertips, just like in the action-vids. He scooped it up and drew it on Flekk.

“Get in,” Bruno gestured towards Rebo’s flyer.

Once inside, he strapped Flekk into the passenger seat and placed the fire pistol against the buckle of the safety belt.

A tap on the trigger of the pistol produced a marble-sized dollop of liquid fire that spread over the buckle, fusing it into a single, solid, non-functioning mass. As it cooled off, Bruno pulled on the straps. They

would hold.

Bruno's deft handling of the flyer's controls allowed him to steer it noiselessly on its floor track from Rebo's personal quarters into Rebo's personal airlock.

"I'll just add kidnapping an officer of the law to your growing list of infractions, buddy."

"Shuddup."

Looking at the ship's clock, Bruno realized that six minutes had passed since his assault on Rebo. Any more delays and his getaway would surely fail.

The airlock *thoomped* open. Messrs. Bruno McGurk and Cray Flekk were off to parts unknown.

In reality (a realm into which Bruno made the occasional foray) he and the Batbattleblappite weren't off to parts unknown at all.

In reality they had two choices, one foolish and one chancy ("they" meaning, of course, Bruno, since Flekk was still his prisoner). They could hop to a nearby Space Station (foolish) or they could spiral down to Delta Gamma Sigma 5, the planet around which the local orbitals orbited (chancy). Showing up at a Space Station could only result in Bruno's arrest — the news of his misdeeds *must* have gotten out by this time. Attempting to land on DGS5 risked crashing and/or burning because Rebo's jaunt-class flyer wasn't designed for re-entry. It wasn't designed for intra-system planet cruises, either, so that option wasn't an option, it was suicide.

Bruno swung the flyer around to see if the Space Factory had launched a pursuit vehicle.

Nothing. Were they so incompetent?

"Gimme a close-up of da view on-screen."

"You can work your own controls, you criminal."

"Not you, bug-face. I'm talkin' to da compuda."

"No kidding."

Flekk was ready to hurl further sarcasm Bruno's way when he was distracted by what he saw in the zoomed-in picture of the Space Factory.

Bruno looked, too, and saw that his co-workers had bigger problems than bringing him back. Meteors were bombarding the Factory's invisible shell of protective force. Lots of meteors.

Some of the meteors were getting through. The field slowed them down enough for the Factory's lasers to zap them, but how long could they hold out?

"Perhaps we should go back and help our comrades?"

Bruno was silent.

Just then a huge meteor popped through the Factory's field.

A thin red line streaked from the Factory to meet it. The laser blasted the rock into a thousand fragments, all too small to do any damage.

Except one.

A chunk the size of a bowling ball slammed into the living quarters deck. Into Bruno's cabin.

Bruno watched in shock as his meager possessions were sucked into space, each item zipping off in a different direction.

His holograph machine flew by, switched on and running a recorded program of tavern dancers he bought as a souvenir on a visit to Planet Fun in the Telos system.

Bruno stifled his anger and stayed quiet. He didn't think he could endure the ribbing Flekk would inflict on him if he knew that was Bruno's stuff making its maiden voyage into the wild black yonder.

"So what do you think? Should we go back and help? You know, a crafty lawyer might be able to get you off and get your job back. But only if you've got a job to go back to. Yes? No?"

Bruno's face scrunched up hard. He tried to think quickly.

Flekk had a point. The factory needed all the help it could get. Rebo's flyer had laser defenses that could knock off a few dozen rocks for the cause. That was logical. Not so logical was Bruno's burning desire for revenge on a bunch of lifeless boulders for wrecking his cabin.

There was one thing about this meteor shower that didn't sit quite right with Bruno. The barrage seemed as if it was aimed directly at the Factory.

The projectiles pelted the structure relentlessly and exclusively: none missed the mark. It was as if they were flying in formation, in a concentrated stream, an inanimate kamikaze fighter squadron.

They didn't "tumble" like regular meteors, either.

Very strange.

A desire for job security, a passion for reprisal, and plain old curiosity: Bruno was a seething cauldron of emotional turbulence.

He headed back to the Space Factory.

Flekk smiled and settled into his chair.

If he hadn't nestled his head into the supporting cushions behind it, the marble-like meteor that pierced the flyer's hull at that precise instant would have pierced his brain instead.

(to be continued)



Desperately Seeking:



The following letter was received here at the Droppings, last December. It refers to the Armadillo Games shop, then located on Broadway in Schenectady NY.

69 Trinity Place Apt. 210
Albany, NY
December 19, 1994

To the previous/ex-owner/operator of Armadillo Games
RR #6, BOX 105
Schenectady, NY 12306

Dear Sir:

First, let me begin by asking that this letter be directed to the attention of the ex-owner of Armadillo Games before it is read by anyone else, as it is sure to only confuse and amuse. Second, I understand that this letter is quite strange and out-of-the ordinary, but then again, so seems much of what I read in Armadillo Droppings. So, assuming this has made its way into the proper hands...

Sir... on a cold, blustery day about 4 or 5 years ago (I'd like to say about February of 1990), I came to your store to sell some used games. My father had lost his job and we were moving to Oregon, and we wanted to take as little with us as possible. On that fateful day, I sold to you (see enclosed copies) about \$2,000 worth of mint condition TSR products for the lowly sum of \$125. At the time I thought nothing of it...

Meeting my father in Oregon, I almost lost my head and have suffered ever since, due to his anger at the price fetched for those items. He said I misunderstood his instructions, etc. To make a long story short (it's too late already), I have spent the last four years at great pains and even greater cost trying to replace those items that you purchased from me. I have travelled the country and doled out about \$2,500 to try and mend my error. To make a long story short, I need any help you could offer me.

I assume that when I sold all of that TSR stuff to you 5 years ago that you had no idea it would become so hard to find and that you were not taking advantage of a naive 17-year old. But my problem is this: I cannot find or replace the following items: *D&D Modules X2 Castle Amber, U2 Danger at Dunwater, C2 Ghost Tower of Inverness, S1 Tomb of Horrors, D3 Vault of the Drow, L1 Bone Hill, The Rogues Gallery, Top Secret Basic Boxed Set and TS003 Rapid Strike.*

I guess I was praying that you had purchased this from me in good faith and that you might be of aid in my gaining it (and my father's attention) back. You are my last hope--I figured I had to break down and go back to the source: Could you please find it in your heart to either sell these items of mine back to me (I WILL GLADLY PAY THE CURRENT GOING RATE), or direct me to someone (ANYONE) who might even possibly have one or more of these items for sale. I implore you--PLEASE help me find some way to restore these items into my father's possession.

I apologize for the strange nature of my request. I don't mean to play on your sympathy, but you cannot imagine how that simple act in your store five years ago has ruined my life. All that I can ask is PLEASE HELP! I also pray that this letter sparks some memory of my arrival at the store (with three huge trunks, whose contents filled the table in your back room). I cannot verbalize my desperation well enough. All I can say is please. I don't want it all back; just any of the stuff above that you might still have which I have been unable to replace. I will pay any price. Even if you knew someone else who might have it. (No companies do -- i.e. Zocchi Dist.-- trust me) PLEASE!!!

Anxiously awaiting,

Patrick Hines

P.S. My father has never forgiven me for Castle Amber....

Postscript.....

Well there you have it. A fellow gamer in desperate straits. If any of you can help Patrick obtain any of the items listed in his letter, contact him as soon as possible at the address above. If you wish you can call us at the Droppings at (518) 355-6517.

It sounds pretty important that Patrick make amends with his father, so go easy on him. No price gouging please.

Socially Correct Time

by Kurt Schneible

A Column devoted to Social Etiquette for Men

Everyone knows how important it is to be politically correct. I mean no one wants to be a poor man's Rush Limbaugh - a rotund porker who accumulates substantial girth by consuming three thousand donuts each day, and blathers on with offensive drivel about "Femi-Nazis" or the Newt Gingrich Orphanage for Homeless Democrats.

But what about the oft neglected area of Social Correctness? Don't understand it? Not to worry, we're here to help.

Everyone's been in this situation. Invited by an acquaintance to a high class soiree, you're finally mixing with the beautiful people. Unfortunately, you don't know anybody and you don't have the slightest idea what to say.

Being both sophisticated and circumspect, I usually know what not to say (see Rush Limbaugh, above).

But that's not enough. You need to be able to engage in witty and stimulating conversation, as you might bump into a world renowned conductor or the CEO of some multinational corporation. What you need is a conversation generator, commonly known as an "ice-breaker".

Looking for an interesting suggestion? Try conspicuously displaying a bathmat in the side pocket of your trousers.

That's right, a bathmat. Make sure the bathmat is new and still in its plastic wrapping. Don't even consider substituting a used bathmat, which is likely covered with a couple of inches of slimy scuzzy soap scum.

But how will carrying a bathmat enhance your social standing you ask? Elementary my dear Watson. The curious sophisticate at our hypothetical dinner party would undoubtedly clamor for an explanation, thus creating countless opportunities for witty conversation.

Explain that you always carry a bathmat with you. After all, one never knows when an emergency shower will be deemed necessary and who wants to be unprepared? Men will respect your decisiveness, and women will be impressed by your dedication to cleanliness, be it real or imagined. After all, everyone knows about the germs lurking at the bottom of a typical bathtub or shower stall. And your highbrow dinner party is certain to include say, a Nobel prize-winning scientist or chairman of the board of Dow Chemical or Johnson and Johnson, persons who will readily understand the danger caused by revengeful germs. Even if your party does not include people who would be in a position to appreciate your preparedness, there is still no cause for alarm. In the very least, you'll be viewed as a rich eccentric. Perhaps like the late multi-millionaire, Howard Hughes.

As an added bonus, your bathmat can be used quite effectively for dramatic gesturing. Sidle up to that attractive blonde who appears to be engrossed in studying some obtusely confusing "work of art". Whip out your bathmat and point dramatically. "Is that a genuine Andy Warhol, or are those Campbell soup cans a flashback from lunch?" Trust me, romance will be in your future. I know you have many questions about dramatic gesturing. We'll cover that concept in much greater detail in the future, rest assured.

In the meantime, start toting that bathmat wherever you go, and watch your social standing rocket.

Well, that's all for now, it's been almost two minutes since I washed my hands. Then it's off to pilot the Spruce Goose II...



PALLADIUM, PUTTING OUT BOOKS?

By Aurelius



Yes, Palladium is now a contender, thanks to Rifts. This isn't Palladium's first chance at being a large game company. In the past, they saw a high in the market with games such as 'Teenage Mutant Ninjas Turtles' & 'Robotech'. But they failed to follow up with support products while the game was at a peak in popularity. In the end, both games burned out.

Rifts was not a licensed game like the other two were. This time, when Rifts got popular, Kevin Siembieda (owner and creator of Palladium) was completely free to do whatever he wanted to. For the first time in Palladium's history he let others write and contribute art. This was a significant breakthrough for a man who only a few years earlier, would never let anyone work on his game.

Finally, he realized that he had to get out support products. The first book to help turn around the company was *The Rifts Conversion Book*, which enabled you to bring in anything from any other one of the Palladium game's into Rifts. Thus, was born the Megaverse.

Jackpot! With this one move, sales on all the other Palladium games soared. The conversion book was designed so that all the other in-house games would now be brought into the Rifts World. It was inevitable at this point that Rifts books would sell, but by putting out this one book they could start to push all the other games in the Palladium Megaverse because they would be Rifts books in a way. Thus, we will take a look at some of the releases and see just what they do offer the Megaverse.

Rifts Mercenaries: ***** By C. J. Carella, \$15.95. Like the first Sourcebook, it has more of what should have been in the basic game book if there had been room. It provides material that works very well when moved into a no-Rifts world, such as *Heroes Unlimited*. A solid Palladium book that is as good as any from the pre expansion period. 9 new OCCs, 160 pages.

The Mechanoids, Rifts Sourcebook 2: ** By Kevin Siembieda, \$11.95. A rush job to make a buck. All it does is reprint most of the pre-Rifts Mechanoids material, but in a Rifts setting. Sham on you Kevin. The Mechanoids had been planed for a full space game bringing back all the old favorites like the Nigeliens. But noooo! Rifts got popular so they just slapped some of the tired old shit together and sold it. The game that was printed in the last 1/3 of the mechanoid comic book was far superior to this! Nothing here but a bunch of alien tin cans to shoot at, so load those already overpowered guns and start blasting, and while your at it, shoot the book. PS: If you play *Heroes Unlimited* they do make for a good ALIEN type creature. 120 pages.

Mindwerks, Rifts Sourcebook 3: *** By Kevin Siembieda, \$11.95. Some good new races, but most of the material on the Gargoyles will be found in the NGR. Not much to bring into the other games, except for maybe the occasional exotic creature. 14 new OCCs, 112 pages.

Atlantis, Rifts World book 2: ***** By Kevin Siembieda, \$14.95. Finally a five star supplement, or is it? Many would disagree with a top rating. Thus let me defend my stand on this book. Rune Magic! Working on the assumption that you are familiar with the Palladium Universe, then you know that Rune Magic is at the top of the power ladder in the Palladium RPG. Thus the chain is made whole. It links the Old Ones with the Splugrth, which in turn link us to all of Atlantis. If you are not into the Megaverse, then I would only give it ***. So embrace the game world, not the power and take a look at some of the other games. Remember, this world has been slowly forming for more the fifteen years now. Take sometime and get into the mythos rather than the power! 20 new OCCs, stone magic, Tattoo Magic, 160 pages.

England, Rifts World Book 3: **** By Kevin Siembieda, \$15.95. The best overall world book for Rifts I had seen till the release of Phase World. He definitely spent more time on the world, rather than what powerful thing can we put in this part of the world. Don't think it is lacking in power though. After all it is a Palladium Rifts book and that means a leaf from a tree that can save your life, if you get hit from a Mech! Don't misunderstand, The Temporal & Nexus Knights, are way cool dude, and kick some major @\$\$! Especially cool to send them on quests into the other Palladium world. Most excellent journeying dudes.

Africa, Rifts World Book 4: * By Kevin Siembieda, \$15.95. I didn't think I would ever see a Palladium book worse than Mechanoids for Rifts, but here it is. This book only has two thing going for it. First, are the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Good for taking out those most powerful characters that somehow seem to be almost omnipotent in your game. If you characters manage to defeat all four of them, I think it is time you take up a new game, maybe Battletech, so you can just bash each other all day. Have fun, I will see you after that game. Second, are the Gods of the Nile. They should have been the lead and the bulk of this book. Instead we get one chapter. The rest of the book would have made a nice tree in my back yard. This book has never seen any use in any of my Rifts games. The Horsemen and the Gods I have used in a more Heroes Unlimited type game. 9 new OCCs & RCCs, 160 pages.

TRIAx and the NGR, Rifts World Book 5: *** By Kevin Siembieda, \$19.95. They're back! Power armor this, power armor that, I guess you need it with all the damn Gargoyles running around. This book plays like Battletech. (Settle down Ed, you don't need to buy it, just put giant Gargoyles in your game. Sound good? No? Well, I can't figure out a way anyone would play this one straight myself.) Look if you need more Power armor in your game, you will find it in this book, but how in the world could you possibly need more? So how can I justify three stars?

Literally, the last two dozen pages out of this 224 page book cover the Gargoyle Empire. 24 pages. You really couldn't find room in the other book for 24 more pages? I hear cash changing hands as I play. Can't I find some use for all that wonderful power armor? Sure I can, take them into your Heroes Unlimited game one at a time. They make great one shots for 20 bucks. (Pun intended.) 20 new OCCs.

South America, Rifts World Book 6: * By C. J. Carella, \$15.95. Hum, I need to find something good to say about this one, but what? I know! It has dinosaurs, Cat people, and more power armor. Unless you are as bad as I am when it comes to this company, I would strongly suggest taking you sixteen bucks and taking a date to the movies. The real world awaits and a few more book like this one and some of you might actually be forced to ask someone out. God forbid! 20 new OCCs & RCCs. 160 pages.

Wormwood, Rifts Dimension Book 1: *** By Kevin Siembieda, \$15.95. Strange, very strange in a good way. Not much to export in my opinion, but it is the best world to visit if you come from any other Megaverse game (At that time it was the only other dimension book). If you D-Travel in your game this is a must. If you are a GM who likes to bring in the strange and unusual, then this book is for you. But if you play any one Palladium game straight, pass this one. 17 new OCCs, 30 Monsters, Crystal magic?, 160 pages.

Phase World, Rifts Dimension Book 2: ***** By C.J. Carella, \$19.95. Wow! They call this a Rifts book, but if they ever had any intentions of a true high-tech Megaverse supplement, they did it and subconsciously. I would much rather see a title along the lines of 'Megaverse Conversion book. 30+ new Occupations & RCCs. Space ship construction & combat. The Splugorth are back. The Three Galaxies, have finally been defined. I wish I could go into everything this one has but it is worthy of a full review on it's own. (Watch for one in future issues.) I have also just been made aware that there will be a Phase World Sourcebook released within a few months! My copy arrived in the mail at 3PM, by 6PM that same day, it was already in play in my Megaverse Heroes Unlimited game!

Pantheons, Rifts Conversion Book 2: *** By C. J. Carella, \$19.95. This game needed more powerful creatures like . . . Remember the four horsemen, they ain't got shit on the gods listed here. And if you can't find one you like then you can always make a new one as a player character! A Player Character! What the hell is the matter with these people? Anyway, I have found this book to be useful in using the gods in my Heroes Unlimited game and my Fantasy RPG. Do you see a pattern here? When a Rifts book has no place in my game, it finds its way into Heroes. I did a little checking and others have made this same transition. Thus, the new Heros Unlimited books, but more on them later.

Villains Unlimited: **** By Kevin Long & Kevin Siembieda, \$19.95. Way overdue! New Powers, organizations and their creation, 80+ villains,

Super weapons & gimmicks, adventure ideas & some small full adventures. There are even things scattered throughout that hint at the Rifts world to come. Then there are the speed demons. I am not much for speed powers in my game, purely from an esthetic point of view, but from the statistical point of view, they are nasty. (Yes more excessive power, but not raw power. Well thought out strategic power. This I can handle and even like.)

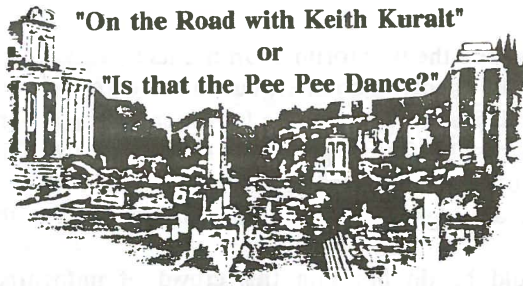
Aliens Unlimited: **** By Wayne Breaux Jr., \$19.95. More Powers, too many new aliens (84 to be exact.) and a nice alternative way to create aliens. Where are the aliens that we have come to know such as the Nigeliens that I mentioned before? For campaign gamers and Phase World travelers, this book is a must. If you are looking for some Dbees, they sure can be found in this one. If you are looking for a Predator look-alike they have it, if you are looking for a Coda warrior, like Zealot, from Image Comics, their look alike can also be found in the pages of this book. And finally if you can't find the one you are looking for, just make it yourself. 200+ pages.

Mystic China: *** By Erick Wujcik, \$19.95. If you like and use the 40 types of Martial arts from 'Ninjas & Superspies', then you will no doubt like and use the 14 new Chinese forms. (But how could you possibly need that many, when the variations on some make next to no gaming difference in the world.) The GM section in the beginning covers real life Chinese to English conversions. Do you really need this in your game? About a dozen good new character types are provided. But I am sorry they should have been in N&S to start with. The powers have been greatly expanded, and I can't help to wonder if there was no Megaverse, would they have ever made it to print in the first place. Are you ready to learn what 'Mudra' is and how to use it? MC expands my Megaverse game so I like it, and the Immortals are cool! But the extended detail that Wujcik went in to is not needed for a game. Let alone the upcoming supplement. That book was never meant to come out, but MC just got too big, so vola, two books. As a campaign setting, you will never need any more information then this trio of books.

Island at the Edge of the World, Palladium RPG Book 6: *** By Thomas Bartold, \$15.95. This is the one with the crystal magic. Including The Crystal Gateway, why if it wasn't for the crystals, this book would only get one star. A very nice addition and it works well in Rifts. (Could you tell I was looking for good thing to say? I hope not, I got \$1,000 for that line. Ha Ha)

RIGHT! SO WHO
KNOWS A GOOD
MARCHING SONG?
LARRY?





So there we were, at 10,000 feet without a parachute. Actually it was six feet. That is to say, the Thug, the Bishop and me, on our way to do some post-Christmas shoppings. Oh, I feel like such a gamer.

T'was the day after Christmas and all through the car, you could hear the Thug wailing from near and far. "You bastards have played this tape three times already. I can't take anymore! Put on some Iron Mama. I hate monks!" The Thug did cry out and in the back he would thrash about.

"No really! This is still the first side. The Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo DeSilos are the hootiest, don't you think Thug?" came the reply from the command module.

"Nooooo! Nooooo!" was all we heard for the next hour. At first it seemed to be part of the chanting, but then... oh well. When you think about it, there's no better way to pass the time on a road trip than torturing small animals and Thugs.

We were on our way to Cave Comics, located at **57 Church Hill Road, Newton, CT 06470**. Their phone number is (203) 426-4346. Newton is a typical small New England town where some past president is probably buried or something. It's not hard to find the shop because there's only six streets in town. We drove down all six of course and finally came to Cave Comics, housed in an old railway station. The best thing to look for when searching for Cave Comics is the eighteen wheeler stuck under the railroad underpass. You can't miss it.

We found Cave Comics to be a nice shop filled with all manner of comics and collectibles, windows and floors, games and miniatures, gamers and sales folk, accessories and supplies. Owner Pat Callahan told us they run games at the shop on a regular basis. In fact, Cave Comics is a Games Workshop Chapter Approved store and specializes in running GW games. They of course had a good selection of Citadel minis and GW games as well as the traditional TSR, FASA, etc.

As quickly as we arrived, we were off to our next destination. On the way however, we found it necessary to stop at O'Willie's Big Bang Burger Bar for lunch. There we were treated to a large selection of yuppies and a fine buffet. The Thug and I downed a few brews. The Thug had numerous beers in fact. So many, he couldn't remember what he was drinking. Then we were off to find Pony Soldiers located at **40 Center Street, Chicopee, MA 01013**. Their phone number is (413) 592-1999. On the way we were waylaid at a MobilMart for an emergency pit stop by the Thug's bladder. Leaping from

the car, he spotted the wizerorium. Oh no, its locked. There must be a key. Yes, there at the checkout counter, but lo there are lots of folks in line. So the Thug stands in line, first on one foot then on the other and back again. Pain etched across his face he gets up to the clerk, only to find that someone in line ahead of him has scarfed up the toilet key. He whirls around and sure enough there are eight other guys standing in line for the facilities. The Horror!

What could he do but join this crowd of unfortunates. Now I am watching all this from outside while the Bishop pumps gas. By this time the Thug is half bent over, hopping around like an old Indian rain maker. Even his face is hopping around. I for some reason found this to be enormously amusing and began to laugh at the Thug uncontrollably. Noticing my joy at his pain, the Thug began making gestures at me with this finger. Hop, hop, gesture, hop, hop, hop, gesture, gesture. Could it be? Yes, this was indeed the ancient Pee Pee Dance I had heard some much about. Performed by the Thug with such alacrity. It was truly awesome to behold. After twenty minutes in the can, the Thug emerged no worse for wear.

We arrived at Pony Soldiers a short time later and perused their fine selection of games, miniatures and accessories. The store manager, Shawn told me they run GW tournaments because they too are a Games Workshop Chapter Approved store. Also at the same location was the Video Game Castle. Their phone number is (413) 592-3995. However the owner Ralph told me he will soon be moving to another location. This means both he and Pony Soldiers will have increased space and both plan to increase their stock. Ralph said he likes to buy out other stores and offer these video games at cut rate prices. Shawn plans to add plastic models and increase the gaming space in the store. Sounds good to me.

We enjoyed our visit to all three stores and recommend that you see Cave Comics, Pony Soldiers and the Video Castle the next time you're in the neighborhood.

Tell 'em the Thug sent you.

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Figuratively Speaking by Ed Rotondaro

Figuratively Speaking returns this issue with a brief overview of some new products for the miniature painter.

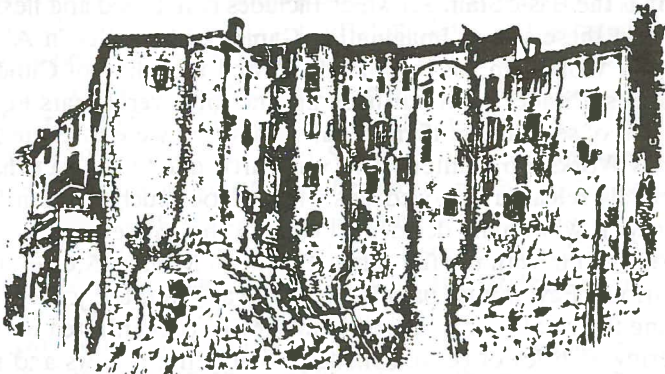
A few issues back, I talked about a line of acrylic paints from Chessex known as **Dragon Colour Acrylics**. Recently, these paints have begun to appear in sets ranging from three to six colors. Out of curiosity, I bought the **Armour Paint** set. Priced at **\$5.50**, it consisted of three colors: **Armour Base**, **Bright Silver** and **Armour Wash**. The set also has brief instructions for using the colors. Other 3 bottle sets include **Ork** and **Skeleton** colors. There is a basic set of six colors that has a science fiction miniatures slant with colors such as **Heavy Weapons Black** retailing for **\$11.50**. Another six color collection is the **Basic Stain Set** which includes rust, blood and flesh. Locally, you can find these sets at **Imagination Games and Comics** in Albany.

Games Workshop has completely revised their line of **Citadel Colour** acrylic paints. Citadel paint has been around for several years now, but the line was full of several less than useful shades that were rarely used even by the Games Workshop painters. This was partly due to the fact that the line was originally released as boxed sets without too much concern for overall consistency. It was finally decided to revamp the entire line to ensure that all the colors fit in with the full range. Fortunately, Mike McVey, the author of the various 'Eavy Metal painting guides was given the job of overseeing and testing the creation of the new paints. Mike concentrated on improving the covering abilities of certain shades, notably the yellows and reds while formulating colors that match the tones used by Games Workshop's staff artists. The line is gradually being released in boxed sets that cover the various **Warhammer Fantasy** and **40K** races. Additional specialized colors are planned after the core range is completed.

I obtained a sample of the basic **Citadel Colour Paint** set which includes nine paints, one wash, a sable brush and two plastic miniatures (**\$20.00**). The set includes a full color instruction booklet showing how to paint the two plastic miniatures along with a color chart for the new range. The new paints are now packaged in hexagonal plastic bottles instead of the round tapering jars. Some of the changes to the line include a much better looking **Bronzed Flesh** tone, a completely revised group of brown tones and eighteen washes and glazes. Besides the basic set, there are a variety of six bottle sets (**\$12.99**) available: **Titan Legions**, **Undead**, **Ork** and **Gretchins**, **High Elves** and **Glazes**, to name just a few.

Games Workshop is to be congratulated on improving an already superb line of paints and inks. Hopefully the line will be available individually so that you can avoid buying sets to get one or two specific colors. The new **Citadel Colors** are a must buy for serious miniatures artists.

Turning to reference books, Games Workshop has released the latest 'Eavy Metal Guide entitled **Warhammer Armies Painting Guide (\$20.00)**. This book concentrates on techniques and color schemes for painting up the large number of figures that make up a Warhammer Fantasy Battle Army. Author Mike McVey shows you how to paint up the large number of rank and file figures that make up the bulk of an army. Each army from the Warhammer system is covered along with the special character figures that form the centerpiece of a miniatures army. My one complaint is that while the illustrations are great, the actual colors and washes used to paint the character figures are covered in a somewhat cursory manner. This trend is also evident in the most recent issues of White Dwarf magazine. One interesting note is that the text frequently refers to the newly revised Citadel Colors, so at least you have something to guide you when trying to duplicate the efforts of the Games Workshop painters. Overall, this book is a useful compliment to the other guides and I rate it A-.



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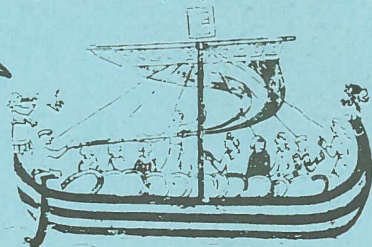
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