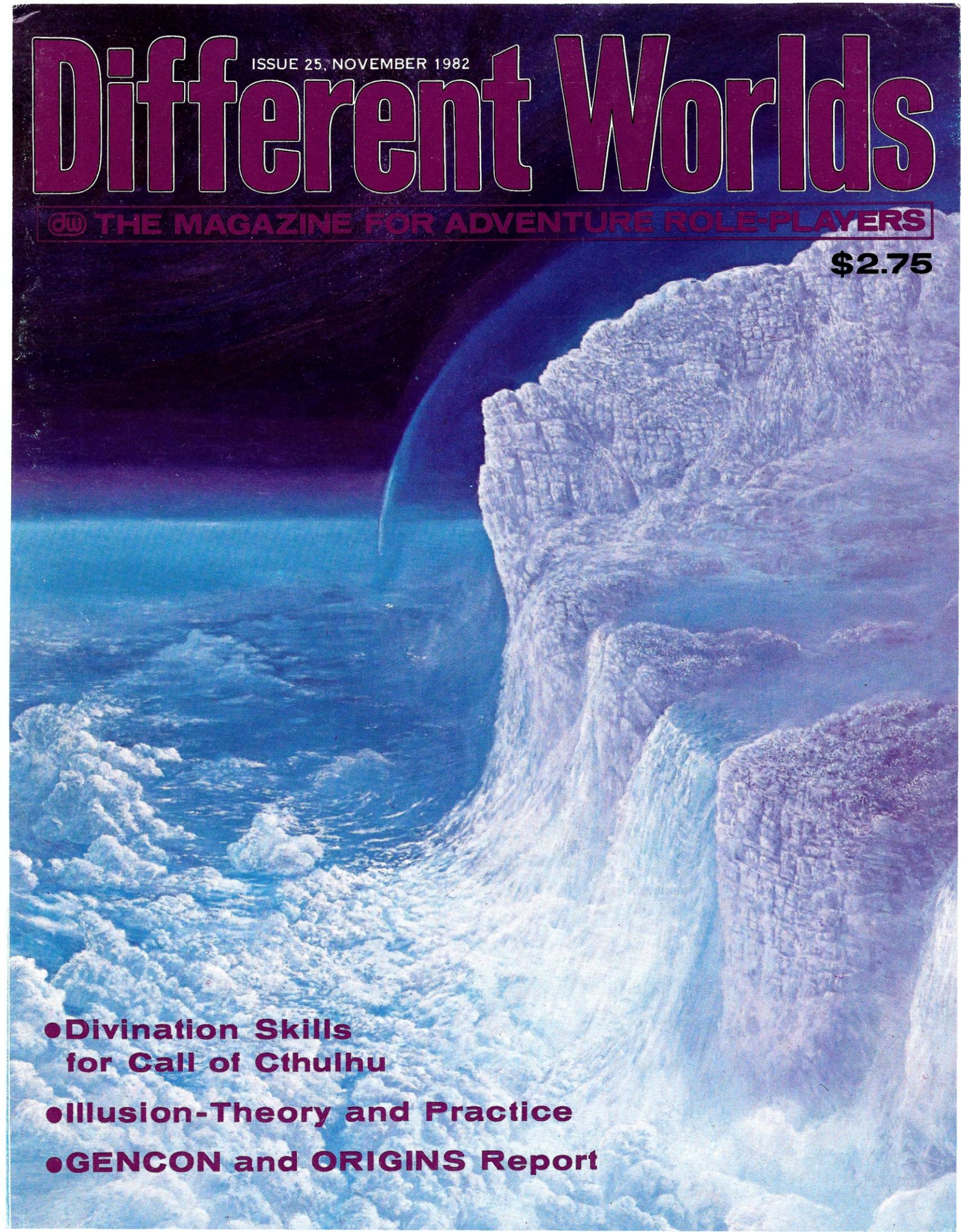


ISSUE 25, NOVEMBER 1982

Different Worlds

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- **Divination Skills for Call of Cthulhu**
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 - **GENCON and ORIGINS Report**

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By Randy McCall

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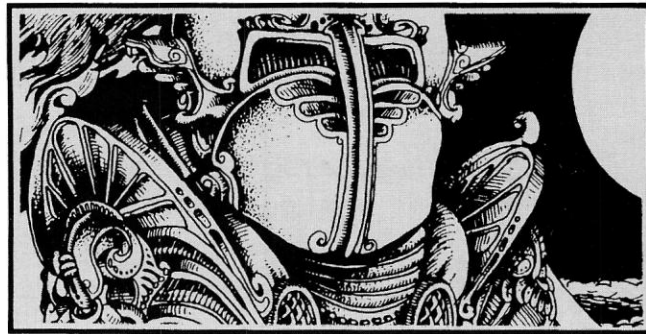
By William C. S. Affleck Asch Lowe

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WHAT I DID THIS SUMMER

Autumn is finally here and it gives me a chance to reflect on what happened this summer. I was very busy going from game con to game con, traveling across the nation. It was the busiest convention season yet.

It all started with GRIMCON in late May. Since it was a local con, the entire Chaosium staff and some friends attended. Local cons are great fun, traveling is easy and friends are plentiful. It was well-attended and well-organized as it was the organizers' fourth con in as many years. The proximity of the Oakland Hyatt to the Oakland Coliseum allowed us to catch an A's baseball game immediately after the con.

Real traveling began the very next weekend as Greg Stafford and I flew to Denver to attend GENGHIS CON. Greg was guest of honor and ran a few seminars. I manned the booth, answered questions, and snoozed when the thin Rocky Mountain atmosphere told me to relax. The Denver Gamers Association was well organized and helpful. Too bad it was not as well attended as it could have been, it was the first sunny weekend in the area for months and everyone took to the mountains.

The very next weekend I flew to Detroit for MICHICON. I had the help of two locals: Bill Worzell of Timeline (the *Morrow Project* people) and

Mark Harmon who contributed to Chaosium's *Borderlands* and *Questworld*, Mark ran several *RuneQuest* games for beginners. Bill and I ruminated at length as to where the hobby is going and what our respective plans were. We both agreed that we liked the heroic storytelling aspects of role-playing. It was the second time that Metro Detroit Gamers had put on a con at Cobo Hall. Experience showed and it was well-organized and well-attended. I was able to take a few hours off and catch the Irish Festival where I partook of some Irish food and enjoyed the music.

Would you believe four weekends in a row? Yep, the

next weekend I flew to Philadelphia for GENCON EAST. Hosted by TSR Hobbies, it was a bit disorganized as the original organizers bowed out at the last moment. Still, I enjoy visiting the east coast and especially Philadelphia's steak hoagie. I had two New Yorkers help me out: Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. We, along with Ken Rolston, ended up making plans for new projects to do and new games to design. We gamers always seem to have such big plans...

When I finally returned I had a month to get ready for ORIGINS. A month wasn't enough. Greg, Sandy Petersen, and I flew to Baltimore with *Troll-*

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paks without boxes. This seems to happen every year, and not only to us (Heritage's *Swordbearer* comes to mind). The big event for me was the Game Designers' Guild First Annual Banquet and Beer Bash for which I was the organizer. The food was good, people had a good time, and we got to meet and talk with fellow game designers. Did I mention awards? We picked up two Charlies and three GDG awards (*Call of Cthulhu* and *Thieves' World* won one of each and *Stormbringer* picked up the extra GDG award). John T. Sapienza, Jr., helped us out by taking photos of the events. You can see his work in the ORIGINS reports

this issue. Congratulations to Don Greenwood and Avalon Hill for doing a splendid job.

August was the month for GENCON. Steve Perrin, Yurek, and I flew to Chicago and drove to the con site. Mark Lukens met us there and ran the *RuneQuest* tournament. Steve got to run in an all-masters game hosted by Kerry Lloyd of *Gamelords*. Among the players were Lou Zocchi, Don Snow, Scott Bizar, Steve Jackson, Dave Arneson, and Mike Stackpole. Many thought it was the best session of role-playing they ever had. Chaosium almost swept the Strategists Club Awards, taking four (for *Call of Cthulhu*, *Vive L'Empereur*, *Thieves' World*,

and *Dragon Pass*). Many TSR people came to congratulate us and graciously told us they were very impressed with our achievements. Moments like this make it all worthwhile . . .

Two weeks later I flew down to Anaheim where Strategicon was hosting GATEWAY. The rest of the staff went to PACIFICON where they sold a hundred copies of *DW 23*. I sold out of the two dozen I brought to GATEWAY the first day. These things happen. I had Larry DiTillio help me out at the booth along with some local friends. Ken St. Andre was also there having come down for the event with Flying Buffalo. Larry and I stayed up until

3:30 am one night discussing the *Call of Cthulhu* project he's working on at the moment. Since I was in Tinsel Town, I caught three movies: *The Challenge*, *TRON*, and *Beastmaster*. When in Rome . . .

When I finally came home I realized that summer was finally over. I rested, reminisced, and began to tackle all the work that's been piling up. Will I do it again? I don't know. All I know is that I'm not going to worry about it until I go off to Detroit again and WINTERCON.

Happy gaming,

stamped self-addressed envelope for all submissions. Remuneration for articles is one cent per word of published matter, and artwork is paid at \$20 per printed page rate (i.e., ¼ page is paid \$5). Color covers are paid \$75.

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One year (12 issues) subscription in the U.S.A. costs \$24, a two year subscription costs \$46. Subscription in Canada, Mexico, and

abroad (surface mail) costs \$32 dollars in U.S. funds, while a two year subscription costs \$62.

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Tadashi Ehara editor-in-chief, Yurek Chodak managing editor. Lynn Willis, Sandy Petersen, Steve Perrin, Greg Stafford, and John T. Sapienza, Jr., associate editors. Charlie Krank, Gigi D'Arn, contributing editors.

DIFFERENT VIEWS

LETTERS COLUMN

The Super Issue

DW23 was indeed a dreamsend for me although others may lament the lack of *RuneQuest* or *D&D* material; as a *Champions* player, I found the issue exceptional. The *Champions* rule changes were welcome, and I am looking forward to *Champions II*. While I disagree with Glenn Thain's interpretations of the *X-Men*, they are usable as a base to reconstruct the merry mutants to the satisfaction of the individual GM.

The *Superworld* material was also interesting, and nicely illustrates the similarities and differences between *Champions* and the Chaosium's superhero system, although I would like to have Steve Perrin explain why his character generation system is so close to *Champions*, whether there was any influence . . .

It would be nice to see Gigi report on some incompetence at Chaosium for a change. Of course, if *DW23* is any indication of the Chaosium's quality, there may not be that much incompetence to report.

Scott Bennie
Abbotsford, BC, Canada

Dwarf Lover Blasts *DW24*

I recently received the long awaited Truth about the dwarfs and I must say that I am extremely disappointed in your narrow and slanderous view of these noble people, though I guess I shouldn't be too upset as this is only the dwarven outlook in one particular world. But how could the children of Mostal ever inspire the tales of wonder and heroism accepted by the majority of those who know, love, and frequently play the part of the stolid defenders of the earth? The Mostali seem to be the source of all that is wrong in any world, from basic uncooperativeness to the horrors of Soyilent Green, with no redeeming features other than a certain mechanical creativity, which would only be discovered by daring raiders or victims of ambushes and booby-traps. I just don't understand: the elves and trolls got a fair shake (More than fair in the case of the Aldryami. Can they possibly go wrong?), so why not give equal time to the dwarfs? Where is the creativity of Dvalin of Eddic fame?, the courage of Thorin Oakenshield?, the loyalty of the Seven Dwarves as told by the Brothers Grimm?, the love of beauty of Gimli, son of Gloin (I'm referring here to the

caves of Aglarond, not his un-dwarf-like respect and love for Galadriel, though here again is a situation that no elf ever matched in kind.) Gentlemen, on behalf of the Children of Mostal, I ask you to reconsider this biased and one-sided view of a proud and noble race.

Angus MacDonald
Santa Rosa, CA

DW21 Contest Winner

In reply to your contest I've decided to put down a few ideas about *DW*. First let me say that your magazine easily has the potential to become the best among all the RPG magazines. However, I feel that some changes in your format should be made.

With the passing of *Wyrms Footnotes*, *RuneQuest* players are in need of a new magazine to turn to. Since Chaosium more or less puts out *DW*, it would be easy to transfer some regular features like "Advice From Rurik" and "Dragon's Past," from *Wyrms Footnotes*.

There are already enough magazines partially or fully devoted to games like *AD&D*, and *Traveller*. I realize that you are trying to be a multi-topic magazine, but people who play the above games already have their own magazines such as *The Dragon*, *Pegasus*, etc. Gamers who play Chaosium games can find very few articles outside of *DW* about these games. But now *DW* has maybe two Chaosium articles per issue. I think the ideal composition for your magazine should be about 50% Chaosium games, the regular features, interesting articles on role-playing in general such as Robin Wood's "Healing Plants and Other Herbs," and maybe an article or two about other games.

Different Worlds has proven that it can obtain the most intelligent articles on every facet of role-playing. Now it is time to pick these topics.

John Buxbaum
Berkeley, CA

The Calendar

The regularized calendar suggested in my article in this issue would never be accepted by a large percentage of the world's population, here in the real world. Despite its astronomical precision, it relies on the concept of days that do not fit in a week (the Year Day and Leap Day parts of the calendar design), and this violates the religious beliefs of those people who

follow the biblical injunction to observe the week of six days followed by the Sabbath, without fail or exception. Devout sabbatarians would never accept the non-weekday concept.

There is a way around this problem, for those who find the idea of a more regularized calendar attractive. That is to adopt the 52-53 week system, which is used by some corporations today as an accounting system. The year would consist of 364 days, which means a regular year of exactly 52 weeks. Periodically, the drift of the calendar year away from the astronomical year would be corrected by inserting a Leap Week into the year, thus making the leap year exactly 53 weeks long. Calendars might be printed much as shown in the article, minus the blocks for Year Day and Leap Day, and with a Leap Week printed in at the bottom, between the end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn, possibly in dotted lines to show that it doesn't exist except in special years. Leap years would occur roughly every six years, with some fine tuning every couple of decades to make up for fractional days.

John T. Sapienza, Jr.
Washington, DC

In Praise of Paul

"Adventure by Design's" first installment was the most comprehensive yet compact explanation of true role-playing I have yet seen. Everything Mr. Jaquays wrote, from trash-for-cash gaming and inexperienced gamesmasters to themes and personality clashes for story adventures is absolutely true in my experience.

I disagree however, that conflict is the central theme of role-playing games. Certainly it is common, but interaction is a better term as the main theme in role-playing. An exciting adventure could be the diplomatic joining of two rival factions, almost an anti-conflict. In such an adventure the reward could very well be peace.

Gamers have trouble developing role-playing techniques because most supplements being published are merely sets of statistics with little reference to personalities. It is very easy to generate a monster, but a bit of imagination and literary talent is needed to supply it with its traits, temperament, and habits. □

John Buxbaum
Berkeley, CA

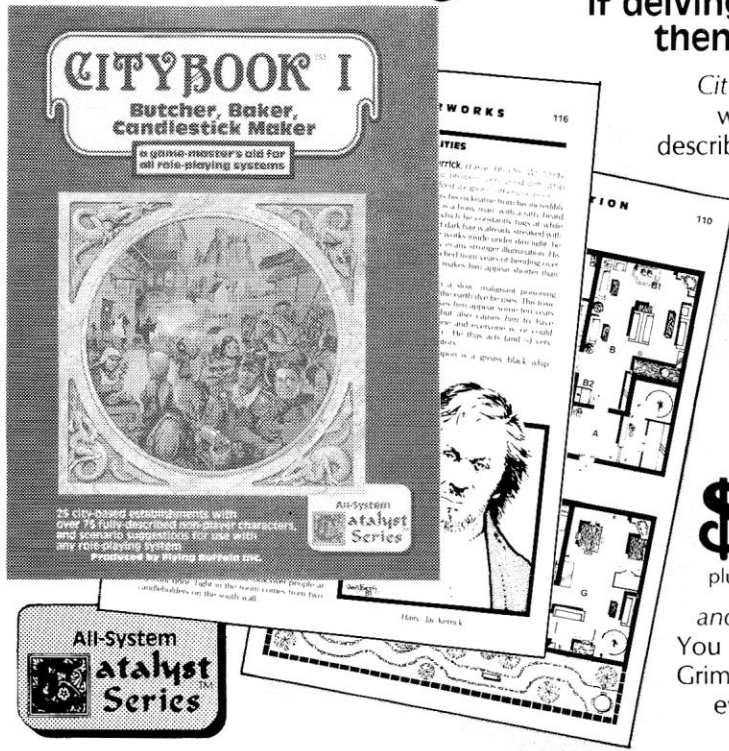
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illustrations by Dan Day

Divination Skills

By Randy McCall

During the last part of the nineteenth century, and the first part of the twentieth, the study of the occult had become a subject of fascination for millions across North America and Europe. Spiritualists — people who claimed the ability to communicate with the dead — were rampant, charging exorbitant fees for “contacting” a loved one who had “passed across the veil.” Indeed, some well-known spiritualists gathered large numbers of followers and attained a quasi-religious status.

But above all other studies of the occult, perhaps the most extensively practiced was the art of divination, or fortune-telling. Almost every small town had its own tea-leaf reader, or an old woman who (for a small fee) would turn the cards or read the lines on your hand and tell you what the morrow would hold.

As a team of investigators travels around the world, seeking clues and making contacts, it is more than likely that they will come in contact with a member of this occult fraternity; be it the medium in New York City, the woman who reads the stars in the hills of Vermont, or the savage casting bones on the ground to see what pattern they form.

The following table gives the technical names for a variety of divinatory techniques, a description, and an example of each one.

When the investigators do meet a soothsayer, you may select one of the following techniques as the one being practiced. This may help to add some variety to your game. Indeed, some of the techniques, such as anthropomancy — divination by the examination of the intestines of sacrificed humans — are suggestive of entire scenarios.

Descriptions:

Anthropomancy — Foretelling the future by inspecting the folds and lines of the intestines of human beings chosen for sacrifice. The victim in ques-

tion does not necessarily have to be dead at the time of divination, and, in fact, might possibly need to be alive.

Arithmancy — The use of numbers; either in patterns which reoccur around a person, or selected by the person randomly; to tell their past or future. Some might say that those working with statistics and probability in higher math use arithmancy. See also Numerology.

Astragalomancy — Divination by use of dice or marked pieces of bone. This includes modern dice, the Viking system of "casting runes," and the casting of knucklebones by African witchdoctors.

Astrology — This art is also known as astromancy. It has been practiced for thousands of years in every part of the world.

Astromancy — By the study of the winds one can tell what is to come. This technique studies both direction and wind speed. Certain directions at different times of the year were deemed to bring everything from bad luck to the plague.

Autonography — To use this technique, a medium will sit at a table, pen in hand, with a black piece of paper. A spirit will then, without conscious knowledge of the medium, use the hand and pen as a tool with which to write a message. This form of divination was very common during the first quarter of this century, and is still widely used today. It is commonly known as spirit writing, and is sometimes considered to be dangerous, as the medium opens himself to "outside" control, which does not always have to be friendly.

Belomancy — Foretelling the future or deciding upon a course of action by throwing arrows or pointers to the ground and observing the pattern formed. This particular technique is well-suited for use with primitive tribes of bow-users. It was historically known to be used by pre-Muslim Arabs and some ancient Jews.

Bibliomancy — The use of the Holy Bible in divination. A question is asked, then the Bible opened to a random page and a random verse chosen by a stab of a finger. This paragraph should then answer the problem or question, or have some relation to it.

Botanomancy — Botanomancy can take several forms. One type analyzes the type, shape, size, smell, etc. of a plant chosen by the questioner at ran-

Technical Names for Types of Divination

1 — Anthropolomancy	16 — Deuteromancy	31 — Necromancy
2 — Arithmancy	17 — Empromancy	32 — Nephelomancy
3 — Astragalomancy	18 — Felidomancy	33 — Numerology
4 — Astrology	19 — Geomancy	34 — Oneiromancy
5 — Austromancy	20 — Graphology	35 — Ophiomancy
6 — Autnography	21 — Haruspication	36 — Ornithomancy
7 — Belomancy	22 — Heptascopy	37 — Pegomancy
8 — Bibliomancy	23 — Hydromancy	38 — Pessomancy
9 — Botanomancy	24 — Ichthyomancy	39 — Phyllorhodomancy
10 — Capnomancy	25 — Kleidomancy	40 — Physiognomy
11 — Cartomancy	26 — Lampadomancy	41 — Pyromancy
12 — Cephalomancy	27 — Lecanomancy	42 — Stichomancy
13 — Chiromancy	28 — Metoposcopy	43 — Tasseography
14 — Critomancy	29 — Moleoscopy	44 — Theriomancy
15 — Crystalomancy	30 — Molybdomancy	45 — Xylomancy

dom (possibly from a small plot of similar plants) to find the answer to his question. Another form is to plant a small shrub or tree to represent a person, and as that person fares, so fares the tree. For example, if the person dies, so will the tree. In an especially bizarre form of magic, perhaps anything happening to the tree would also affect the person.

Capnomancy — In this technique, poppies (preferably opium poppies) are thrown on coals and the fumes are analyzed to arrive at the divination. It can be expected that one may well be seeing strange sights by the time the session is over.

Cartomancy — This form of divination is done literally by the "turn of a card"; by the use of special decks, such as the Tarot, or with an ordinary deck. This has always been one of the most popular kinds of fortune-telling, and has existed for centuries.

Cephalomancy — This is the study of skulls, either old and dug up from someplace, or the skull of the questioner himself. It is intended to find answers and possibly to tell the future. It is still used among some primitive peoples. ("And what does Grandmother's skull have to say about this?")

Chiromancy — The modern name of this art is Palmistry, and it should be well known to most people. The lines of the hands are supposed to contain the story of each person's life, and a trained reader can analyze this down to the last detail. The major lines of the right hand govern Life, Love, and Fortune.

Critomancy — Divination by studying the patterns formed by the grains in cakes, or the cakes themselves.

These can either be specially baked, or randomly chosen. An odd form of critomancy is still in use among some remote Greek villages. A cake is baked and marked with a cross, then rolled down a hill. If it breaks up on the way down, bad luck is foretold for the village.

Crystalomancy — Another common modern form of divination, this is the use of the crystal ball. There are various arguments among experts as to whether the visions seen in the ball actually appear in the crystal or if they appear in the seer's mind, and the crystal acts only as a focus.

Deuteromancy — Perhaps the favorite form of gaining access to hidden knowledge is with the help of a medium, who will contact spirits during a seance to answer questions. This has been a parlor game since the last half of the nineteenth century, and is also occasionally considered dangerous, as outside forces control the body of the medium. Several reported cases of "demonic possession" stem from people acting as mediums.

Empromancy — This covers divination through studying objects placed in a sacrificial fire; and especially concerns shapes and forms seen in the fire or smoke itself.

Felidomancy — This technique studies the behavior of cats to answer questions. It could be useful in a scenario in which there is a culture holding cats in high regard. (Such as Ulthar, city of cats?)

Geomancy — Divination by tossing pebbles to the ground and analyzing the patterns formed. These can be special pebbles, preserved for just this purpose, or stones picked up from a beach.

Graphology – The art of handwriting analysis. Normally it is used to reveal information about a person's attitudes and psychological makeup. But a few claim that the future actions of the writer in question are an open book to a true professional of the art.

Haruspication – Related vaguely to Anthropomancy, Haruspication is the examination and analysis of the entrails of animals and birds, where the future is supposed to be written. This technique is rarely used today, but exists in some rural areas of North America, and doubtless other, more primitive cultures as well.

Heptascopy – Another technique which uses living creatures for the raw material. This one uses the liver of certain animals as a base for the divination. Usually the exact type of animal used will depend upon the culture. The ancient Romans used the livers of sacrificed goats and sheep to tell the future and as auguries. Some medieval folk used only those animals that could be used as a witch's familiar, such as cats, bats, or frogs.

Hydromancy – This method requires the use of a small pool of water, and takes at least two forms. The first form analyzes the ripples and other disturbances of the water itself. The second form uses the water as a crystal ball; a focus for the scryer wherein images or answers are supposed to appear. Nearly always, the pool used was a special "magical" spot.

Ichthyomancy – Divination by the examination of the entrails of fish. Popular only among those primitive tribes depending upon fish for existence.

Kleidomancy – By suspending a pendulum over an alphabet, asking questions and writing down the letters over which the pendulum swings, this cousin of the Ouija board literally "speaks," giving secret information and foretelling the future. This method has been popular for at least two centuries in North America and Europe.

Lampadomancy – The wavering flame of a lamp becomes the basis for this technique. The shifting flame is analyzed to answer questions, or the flame might be expected to first flicker in one direction for "yes" and the other for "no." This sometimes requires a specially enchanted lamp.

Lecanomancy – One of the most beautiful, and most expensive, of the

divinatory arts. Gems are dropped carefully into water, and the ripples are analyzed.

Metoposcopy – Followers of this method believe that, like the hand, the lines of the forehead can tell a person's entire past, present, and even future.

Moleoscopy – This uses the placement of moles on a person's body as a basis for analysis. This can lead to some interesting, albeit embarrassing, situations.

Molybdomancy – Divination by observing the pattern formed by molten lead after it has been dropped onto a smooth surface or poured into a container of cold water. In olden days, Molybdenum was confused with lead, hence the peculiar name of this style.

Necromancy – One of the more satanic divining arts, scrying by this method involves using ceremonial magic to call up a spirit of the dead to answer questions. It could be used for matters as sordid as treasure-hunting, or to tell the future, since the dead were supposed to have passed beyond

normal human limitations as part of dying, so that the limitations of time were assumed to have no hold on them.

Nephelomancy – Everyone has seen shapes in clouds. People putting trust in this art take that view even more literally, claiming that the immediate future can be read by observing cloud patterns.

Numerology – This has been popular for the last hundred years. It is used to analyze those numbers connected with a person's name and date of birth. Usually the letters in a name are reduced to numerical values. Also, other names of persons, places, or things can be analyzed for numerological significance.

Oneiromancy – Divination by dream analysis. Since prehistoric times, dreams have been believed to foretell the future, whether through the influence of the gods, or another means. This art is good for scenarios, especially with the Old Ones sending their dreams to men, or with dreams



involving the Seven Hundred Steps of Deeper Slumber.

Ophiomancy — More used in areas where reptiles are feared or common, this skill observes the behavior of snakes in order to foretell.

Ornithomancy — The basis for this art is observation of the behavior of birds. This may be very simply done. For example, seeing a raven fly widershins around one's house could be taken as a bad omen.

Pegomancy — This is similar to hydromancy. However, it analyzes only water coming from a spring or fountain.

Pessomancy — This is divination by observing the size, shape, texture, etc. of a pebble drawn randomly from a pile. The pile may be especially made to contain a variety of stones.

Phyllorhodomancy — This takes literally the old saw that each flower tells a message. It analyzes the pattern formed by the petals and leaves of a rose. A very Victorian type of analysis.

Physiognomy — This art was greatly used around the turn of the century and earlier, but came into disrepute by the 1940's. It teaches that a person's entire personality is written upon his face. So strong was the belief in this system in the last century that there were several recorded instances of law enforcement officials making arrests based on the fact that the person had "criminal features."

Pyromancy — According to practitioners of this art, analysis of a fire can tell one what shall be. Special attention is paid to the flames, smoke, and sparks, rather than the burning of the fuel itself.

Stichomancy — This is a sort of poor relation to bibliomancy. A randomly chosen page and paragraph from any book would supposedly answer the questions of the enquirer.

Tasseography — The reading of tea leaves. The mainstay of old women in tea houses and restaurants the world around.

Theriomancy — Divination through the analysis of the behavior of various animals. The type of animal chosen for divination varies according to availability, as well as sociological and cultural beliefs. In some parts of India, sacred temple monkeys were used. Romans used geese, some folk used pigs, and so forth.

Xylomancy — The analysis of sticks thrown onto the ground. This is related to belomancy. The best known

and most respectable example of this system is the I Ching.

Skill Application

While the various divinatory arts can definitely be used as skills for player characters in *Call of Cthulhu*, there is a problem in allowing access to this range of techniques to all occupations as starting skills. The ability to look into the future, to even a slight extent, would be too much for many players to resist. The campaign could degenerate into watching the entire circle of players sit around trying to tell each other's fortune until someone successfully rolls his Divination score. This may definitely upset a campaign. Fortunately, there are several factors which can be used to alleviate this difficulty.

First, there is a problem in the availability of teachers in many of these arts. Just try to find someone, or even just a book, that teaches the art of Molybdomancy!

Another, and not the least, of the problems with allowing use of these skills is the difficulty and time necessary in learning the finer points of the various techniques. Each has its own flavor, and exclusive esoteric points and relationships which must be mastered before effective use of the skill is possible.

A final word: naturally, false divinations are common. Whenever a character attempts to divine some fact, the keeper should always roll the dice for him, hiding the result, and then tell the player what his technique "said." If the divination roll was failed, the keeper should make up some spurious result. If the character rolled a 01, then he should probably get extra details. If he rolls a 96-00, he should also get extra details, but they should be false. This way, the characters will not be sure as to whether they have read the signs right or not.

Only four occupations should be allowed to take divination as a starting skill: parapsychologists, authors, professors, and dilettantes. Appropriate types of divination techniques should be learned by the investigator. For example, a parapsychologist would probably confine himself to learning those types of divination common among modern "psychic" types, such as palmistry, astrology, spirit writing (autonography), the Tarot (cartomancy), crystalomancy, and so forth. The professor should choose those types of

divination used by primitives or the ancients, since he probably learned his techniques by studying such people. He would know things like belomancy, felidomancy, ornithomancy, and so on. An author or dilettante could initially learn any of the techniques (save, we hope, for anthropomancy!).

The most popular techniques during the early part of this century are listed below. Unless one is running a very bizarre campaign, these are the only techniques available to authors, parapsychologists, and dilettantes.

Astrology	Kleidomancy
Autonography	Numerology
Cartomancy	Oneiromancy
Chiromancy	Physiognomy
Crystalomancy	Tasseography
Graphology	

A keeper may, of course, add or subtract techniques to suit his or her campaign.

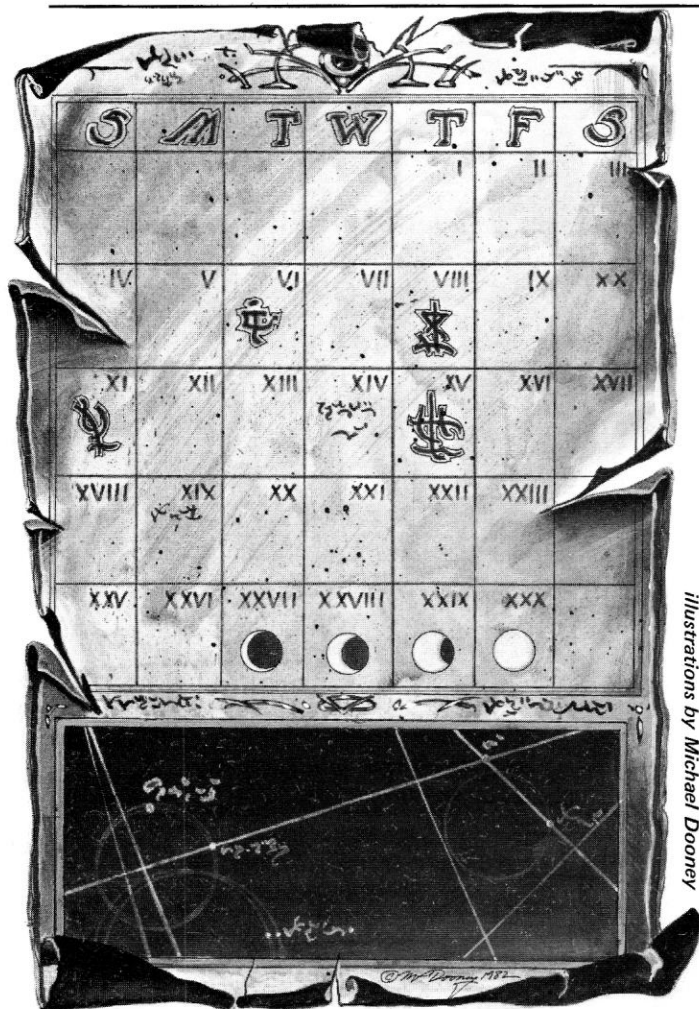
The various forms of divination should be considered to be Knowledge skills. They are rated from 0% to 100% like any other skill, and may be improved by successful experience. The base chance for success in any divination skill is always 00%. The study of the occult will help a little with most divinatory techniques. A character's Occult skill divided by 5 may be used for a divination skill. For example, a character with an Occult of 50% could use any divination skill with a 10% chance for success.

If a book on a divinatory art or a teacher of such an art is found, a character could try to learn divination. The character must study the skill for 30 days minus his INT in days. This will give him a base chance of 05% in the art. Each subsequent period of study (equal to the first) will add 05% to the chances for success until 15% is reached, when further study will not increase the score any more. From that point, the character may only increase in his divination skill through experience. □

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Campaign Tip



Illustrations by Michael Dooney

the CALENDAR & Your Campaign World

by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

The calendar is the framework of the world. It embodies both the scientific and the fantastic, for it reflects both our knowledge of how the patterns of nature recur every year and our basic superstitions about those patterns. The calendar tells the farmer when to plant, and also tells the priest when to pray, and to which god. In the middle ages, the Catholic Church made full use of the calendar to schedule observances that tied the faithful to the Church by means of rituals. It took the agreement and support of the Pope to push through the change in the calendar from the Julian to the Gregorian system to put the calendar back in alignment with the stars, from which it had gradually drifted over the centuries.

The religious nature of the calendar becomes more apparent when you examine the meaning of the names given to the days of the week and the months of the year. Every day of the week is named after a sacred object or person.

The Roman week, which is followed (with some changes) in the modern Romance languages, named the days after the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jove, Venus, and Saturn. The English week is essentially similar, but with Norse gods substituted for most of the Roman gods: Tyr for Mars, Woden for Mercury, Thor for Jove, and Frigg for Venus. Our months are taken directly from the Roman months (with some linguistic alterations). There is scholarly argument over the sources of some of the names, but the first six months appear to be named for religious reasons, with January named for the god Janus, February for Februalia (a religious purification festival), March for Mars, April for Venus (via the Greek Aphrodite), May for Maia (goddess of spring), and June for Juno. July and August were named for Julius and Augustus Caesar, and the rest of the months are numbers left over from the time when the Roman calendar had only ten months: Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth month, literally translated.

It is no accident that some of our major religious holidays coincide with times of the year having celestial importance. Practically every people living significantly north of the equator have an observance of the Winter Solstice, the nadir of the year when the night is longest and terror gnaws the heart — will the night continue to encroach upon the living, or will it be overcome by the powers of light? We can laugh at this today, but in some parts of the world there are still cultures which hold ceremonies to encourage the gods to get their act together.

With this in mind, I suggest that a lot of substance can be added to a campaign by paying attention to the calendar of your world. The calendar is not a mere recital of days, but is the way your culture looks at an important part of the universe. In *RuneQuest*, the authors built the religious structure of the cosmos right into the calendar, with days named for the elements, weeks named for the function runes, and seasons named for the elements again. Players planning the activities of their characters are constantly reminded by this structure of essential factors in the fantasy world. Anyone with imagination (and who else would play these games?) must get a helpful aid in living the character in terms of the world by thinking in terms of the world's calendar.

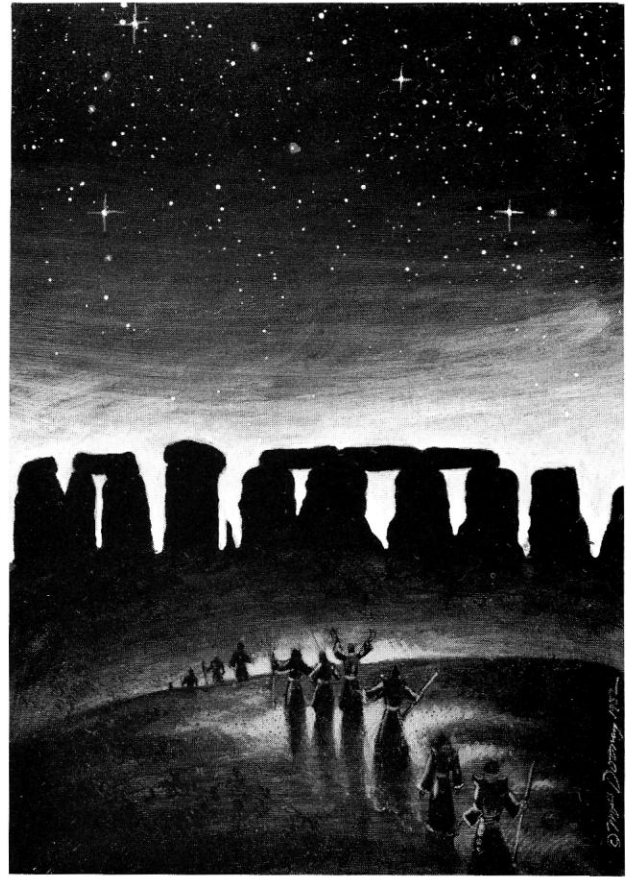
But suppose that you want to stick with the familiar 365 days to the year, seven days to the week, in a parallel world similar to Earth. Are you stuck with the creaky, irregular calendar of mundane life, with its load of obsolete gods? No. Let's consider regularizing the calendar. For convenience we can make all the months of equal length, and each will be exactly four weeks long. Then we can divide the year into its most significant units, the seasons (there are four of these in temperate regions). Each season is thirteen weeks long, which means that if the season is three months of four weeks each, we've got a week left over in each season.

How convenient! Let that week be named for its season (or whatever), and let it be the first week of that season.

Let the first day of each season-week be the actual beginning of the season in astronomical terms: the Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, Autumn Equinox, and Winter Solstice. This gives us loads of opportunities for special religious or civil holidays keyed into the activities of the temples and the state. That is to say, the beginning of each season would probably be a holy day, and in some cultures, the entire week would be the celebration of activities political, cultural, economic, religious, or all together. Maybe only one such week would be chosen as the grand holiday.

This gives us a year of 364 days, with a day and a fraction left. The full day is easy to handle — make it a non-week, non-month special day on which the beginning of the new year is celebrated. Given the morose nature of the Winter Solstice in so many cultures, you could move Year Day to just before the first day of spring, which is a natural day for celebration. It fits well into myths of rebirth found in many religions, which is right for the day on which the year is reborn. The remaining fractional day is handled the way you might expect. This is Leap Day, which is proclaimed every four years as falling after the last day of summer, and before the first day of autumn as a non-week, non-month day like Year Day. Sabbatarian religions could observe both Year Day and Leap Day as a second Sabbath that week, a continuation of their holy day, to preserve a seventh-day Sabbath obligation.

The result of these calendar reforms is shown in the Season System Calendar in terms of existing names for days of the week and months of the year. I have rearranged Sunday to the weekend. This system also avoids Friday the 13th,



for the superstitious. This calendar starts with Year Day, and then spring and summer, then read the same weeks again as autumn and winter (with Leap Day occurring on this side when appropriate, just where Year Day appears in spring and summer). Thus, this is a permanent calendar that has no need to change from year to year. Notice that spring and autumn are matched because they start with Equinoxes and summer and winter for Solstices.

I put this in familiar terms to make it easier to understand readily. You will, of course, want to change the names of the days and months to suit your own world, and possibly the names of the seasons as well. For example, Spring is the time for planting, and could be associated with Earth goddesses. Summer is hot, and could be associated with Fire. Fall is rainy, and might reasonably fit the Water element. And of course, winter is stormy and could reasonably fit the Air element. If you use the Greek elements, then these names could be used for the seasons.

You might want to change the names of the months to fit whatever you have chosen as the seasonal names. Or, you might want to name them for your own version of the Zodiac, or for deities. Or, you could name them after typical occupations in your culture: Smith, Farmer, Soldier, Trader, Sailor, Mason, Priest, Magician, and so forth. Similarly with the names of the weeks (if you name them), which can be identified with elements and other forces as in *RuneQuest*, or named for gods or powers as in our own calendar. Remember in using your imagination that the result you want is a structure that reflects your own world as a reminder for both your players and yourself of the kind of cultural atmosphere the characters live within. □

SEASON SYSTEM CALENDAR

Year	Day	mon	tues	wed	thur	fri	sat	sun	Leap Day
Spring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Autumn	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
April	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	October	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
May	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	November	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
June	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	December	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
Summer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Winter	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
July	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	January	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
August	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	February	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
September	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	March	
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		

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Effects of Mass in Traveller

By William C. S. Affleck Asch Lowe

Frequently, referees of *Traveller* have difficulty in dealing with the effects of non-human lifeforms (and, sometimes, human-derived ones) and their sizes and masses. I have found that the following general approximations work in most instances.

First, let's take size. For simplicity's sake let's assume we are dealing with the longest measurement of the life-form's body. Thus, a snakelike being would be measured by its length, a centaur by its length and height (whichever is greater), and a human by its height. Some adjustments are necessary if the being is a sphere or a very thin tube, but that is up to the individual referee.

Determine the size range next by figuring out the average size of such a being. Then determine the range of sizes (perhaps it has an average size of 2.30 meters and a range of .16 meters (from 2.23 to 2.38 m). Next find some sum of dice (preferably six-sided) that approximates this range (the preceding example has a range of 3D-2) and note down the size formula (the example gives us a formula of 2.20 +3D). Remember that you will have to determine different sizes for different sexes (unless they are the same size) and for immature stages (unless they are grown in clone-labs).

Third to consider is the effect of gravity at the place of birth. As most characters grow to their adult length or height before they enter play, you need only consider one gravity. The formula to use for this is as follows:

Adjustments to strength and endurance should be made for the mass of the planet as well; they should be made as follows:

strength. Using *Traveller* "Book 1" as a guideline, alter the values given by the amounts in the Character Carry Table below.

Strength and Endurance Due to Mass

	World Size							
	0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	A	B	C
Strength	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Endurance	-2	-1	+0	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3
Aging *	+3	+2	+1	+0	-1	-2	-3	-4

*Die modifier to aging; roll once aging starts (only for dexterity and endurance). Note: adjustments to stats will never make them less than 1 or greater than F.

Now we can determine the average mass (in kilograms) of the being with the following chart. This chart should be used as a rough guide: referees may choose to alter the unusual NPCs, but characters should be allowed to choose any mass that is at least 1/2 the value listed and not more than twice that value.

Character Carry Table

Height	Carry
0.50 or less	25% value
0.51-1.00	50%
1.01-1.50	75%
1.51-2.00	100%
2.01-2.50	150%
2.51-3.00	200%
3.01+	300%

Damage in combat involving brawling should be dependent on mass. See the Damage Adjustment Table below.

Average Mass Chart

Height (meters)	Strength							
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-A	B-C	D-E	F
0.50 or less	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
0.51-1.00	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
1.01-1.50	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	120
1.51-2.00	50	60	70	80	90	100	120	150
2.01-2.50	60	70	80	90	100	120	150	200
2.51-3.00	70	80	90	100	120	150	200	250
3.01 or more	80	90	100	120	150	200	250	400

The amount a character can lift should have a bearing on his size as well as his

Average Size

World Size	Meters (adjustments in centimeters)				
	0.51-1.00	1.01-1.50	1.51-2.00	2.01-2.50	2.51-3.00
0	+1D	+2D	+3D	+5D	+8D
1-2	+1D-1	+1D	+2D	+3D	+4D
3-4	0	+1D-1	+1D	+2D	+3D
5-6	0	0	0	0	0
7-8	0	0	-1D+1	-1D	-1D-1
9-A	-1D+1	-1D	-2D	-3D	-4D
B	-1D	-2D	-3D	-4D	-6D
C	-2D	-3D	-4D	-6D	-10D

Damage Adjustment Table

Mass (kg)	Damage Adjustment
-29	-3
30-49	-2
50-69	-1
70-89	none
90-99	+1
100-119	+2
120-149	+3
150-199	+4
200-249	+5
250-399	+6
400+	+7 □

Convention Report

Humor and Rumor at

GENCON XV

By Paul Reiche III

Gaming conventions are a bit like hell. The food is atrocious and monumentally overpriced, the sleeping accommodations are tortuous, and everywhere you turn there are hundreds of gamers yakking, gulping, snoozing or just sweating. Groups of tee-shirted young men and women huddle over worn out copies of *Panzer Leader*, *Risk*, and even *Dungeons & Dragons*. The experience may be too much for the weak of heart or feeble gizzard, especially if the game convention is called GENCON.

Where is Kenosha?

Let us examine the arcane locale of the convention, namely a medium-sized town known as Kenosha, located just above the Illinois border on the shores of Lake Michigan. If you find the name "Kenosha" a trifle odd, you are not alone. Prepare yourself for a shock. *We have been invaded!* Without a doubt the aliens have landed in Kenosha Wisconsin. My suspicions were first aroused by the names of the nearby towns which are undoubtedly outposts for the invaders. Have you ever heard of an earthling city called Mekwun, pronounced "Mech-1?" How about Oconomowoc, Mukwonago, or the mysterious Omro. If these names are human I'll eat my ovipositors. Still not convinced, eh? Well neither was I until I began to look around at the names of the local politicians, like Zaph and Phlug, and worst of all, Ekornaas, running for sheriff. And just what are those green and blue metallic

spheres which rest atop low pedestals in a number of Kenosha front yards? Upon finding a local earthling watering the grass around one of the artifacts I ask him, "Just what is that thing?" He smiles, spits and says, "It's just a decoration, that's all." As I drove away, I notice that all of the neighbors are watching me with the same unblinking stare. I hastily draw an Elder sign in the dust on my dashboard and speed away.

Convention Site

The convention is held a few miles outside of town at the University of Wisconsin Parkside. The school is a maze of glass-enclosed corridors and huge rooms with a myriad of tiny hallways leading off in all directions. A network of tunnels interconnect the buildings, but these are staunchly off limits, or so says a member of GENCON security.

Convention Start

The convention begins thursday morning with a bang; several hundred pre-registered conventioners have not yet received their badges or game assignments. The official story puts the blame on the mail, but sources very high tell a slightly different tale.

As furious gamers flock to the problems booth, arcane piping noises float down from above. Could it be shoggoths? No, it's just the First Time Gamer's Show, a slam-bang, song-filled affair arranged by one of TSR's newest members, Duke Siefried. The show stars the Duke himself, Mike Gray and other TSR employees of equally doubtful musical talents. By the audience's broad smiles and uproarious laughter I can only assume the First

Time Gamer's Show was a complete success, but face it guys, you can't possibly compete with professionals like Lou Zocchi, Woodie, and his saw.

Religious Picketers

A big sigh is heard from all quarters when the anticipated religious picketers fail to show up to protest the demon worship in fantasy role-playing games. TSR sighs because they have avoided an embarrassing confrontation, and gamers sigh because it all sounded so exciting. Perhaps the picketers' absence had something to do with those kids I saw drawing pentagrams outside.

The Dealers' Area

From the seething corridors of open gaming its just a short trek to the dealers' room, the largest such gathering to be found outside of trade shows. To everyone's surprise, Mattel has a booth and is displaying their new *Dungeons & Dragons* cartridge for the *Intellivision* game system. The game is surprisingly good, combining the usual dungeon/maze aspects with a high-resolution tactical view of the local terrain. Both views are randomly created, so that each game is different from the last. Just ten feet away is the *Dragon Magazine* booth proudly displaying their 1983 calendar, illustrated by Tim Hildebrant. Located a few doors down is fantasy artist Darlene with her first game, *Jasmine: the Battle for the Mid-Realm*. The game is lavishly illustrated by Darlene and is a must for anyone who enjoyed her comic strip, *The Adventures of Jasmine*. Over at the Heritage booth, the coordinator of ORIGINS '83, Gordon Griffith is glaring evilly at a nearby video screen

which has been playing the same ad loop for the past dozen hours. Worse yet, Gordon has apparently been positioned near the ad machine for the past few conventions and is beginning to recite the spiel in his sleep. Next door to the Chaosium booth are ex-TSR artists Bill Willingham and Jeff Dee, now with Nobel House and FGU respectively. Both fellows are sore troubled over *Alma Mater*, the new high school role-playing game which they had planned on selling at the convention. It seems that TSR's Board of Directors found *Alma Mater* (an Oracle Games product) to be "unsuitable" and banned the game from being sold supposedly due to *Alma Mater's* somewhat explicit artwork and text, or it could be that the Directors (E. Gary Gygax, Brian Blume, and Kevin Blume) are lacking in humor to catch the game's drift. In any case, is it within their rights to ban a game at their convention, or might this be considered restraint of trade?

On a similar note, rumors have it that TSR is attempting to institute a Game Code, similar to the Comic Book Code that would limit the amount of sex, violence and other "unsuitable" subjects that a game could include and have the "mark of approval."

New Products

There are a gaggle of new products to be purchased in the muggy confines of the dealers' area. From Chaosium we have the new and "revealing" (?) *Trollpak* for all you teratophiles. Jason Mc Allister, co-designer of *Titan* displays his newest effort, *Antwars*. Jeff Dee waits with baited breath to see how his new, vastly improved edition of *Villains and Vigilantes* will fare against the stiff competition of *Champions*. Can two superhero role-playing games co-exist in the same multiverse without upsetting the cosmic balance, the Sentinels, or the Comic Book Code? 'Nuff said.

TSR wins the contest for the largest quantity of new products with over a dozen new games and modules. One of the most interesting new entries is *Star Frontiers*, a somewhat confused role-playing/board/galactic cowboys game, slightly modified from an original design by Lawrence Schick and Dave Cook. Another winner is the long-awaited *Gamma World* module, *Famine in Far-Go* written by everyone's favorite Barl-nep, Mike Price

who answers the question "Why does the ugly, giant, mutated chicken with one green eye, a blast pistol, and a dubious intellect cross the road?" TSR expands into the computer game market with three programs for the TRS 80 and Apple microcomputers. The graphics in both computer *Dungeon*, and *Theseus & The Minotaur* are up to snuff, but the game mechanics are simplistic and quickly tiresome. The most interesting of the three new games, computer *Dawn Patrol*, was not available at GENCON, but has been released subsequently. This program combines a realistic WWI biplane flight simulation with aerial combat. The packaging and cover art of all of TSR's new releases are a quantum leap above previous levels due to the acquisition of three talented artists, Jeff Easley, Larry Elmore, and Timothy Truman.

The Robotic Presence

Without warning, a mechanical *delirium tremen* come-to-life trundles down the hall towards me, spouting praise for *Star Frontiers* and accosting unsuspecting young women. The robot has been hired from a local advertisement firm to publicize TSR's new game, and is guided via radio remote-control by a man pretending to smoke. This sends all the RC buffs at the convention into a flurry of activity to develop some way of taking over the droid for their own evil ends. Unfortunately, all attempts fail.

The Weather

Outside of the broiling dealer's area the weather is typical for a GENCON, i.e., cool and clear. Several groups of gamers take advantage of the climate to move their games outdoors. The most spectacular of these games is the U.S. Marines vs. the Horde of Plastic Dinosaurs miniatures battle. After suffering a near complete loss of the bipedal carnosaurus to a tactical neutron bomb, the dinos make a comeback to rout the puny humans.

Missing Persons Bureau

Several game personages are conspicuous by their absence. Among these are Kevin and Mary Hendryx, and Brian Blume. Could Brain be tucked away in some hotel room, feverishly playing *Championship Sumo Wrestling* and eating sushi? Or, as many suspect, is he actually hidden inside the *Star Frontiers* robot? The mystery remains unsolved.

Party Time

Saturday night arrives, heralding the First Annual Bad-Think Party, held at the Safe House in Milwaukee. Attending the function are TSR terminatti Erol Otus, Lawrence Schick, Evan Robinson, Jeff Dee, Bill Willingham, as well as two guys from Oracle Games, plus many others who shall remain nameless for fear of a new TSR purge. The event winds down to a close in the wee hours of Sunday morning after many hours of humor, rumors, and much bad-think. Sign up now for next year's fun.

The Last Day

Sunday morning arrives all too soon, leaving most of the party-goers only semi-sentient. The word is out that an *original* copy of *B-3* the module is up for sale, price \$200 dollars. *B-3* an *AD&D* module titled *Palace of the Silver Princess* was originally a bit more . . . how shall I put it, *adult* in flavor than the version presently on the market. 30,000 of the original were printed and were in the process of distribution when the TSR management finally got around to looking at the module, and when they did, they flipped! Mind you, they had been warned by their development staff several months earlier about the product's content. Every copy of *B-3* was recalled (well, almost every copy), cut in half, burned, and buried outside of town. The few copies that survived have become extremely valuable as collector's items, sometimes doubling in price at a single convention. By the end of the day, the module had been sold for an undisclosed sum to a collector from Chicago.

Meanwhile, dealers and conventioners are packing up for home. Some people have traveled as far as 2000 miles to come to GENCON, and are stoically girding themselves for the equally long trip home. Back in the dealers' area, Gordon Griffith is living out a fantasy-come-true. The owner of the videotape ad loop which has been driving Gordon and nearby dealers bonkers, has given the cassette to Gordon to do with as he pleases. The ensuing orgy of destruction would do an ankylosaurus proud, and leaves crushed spools, splintered plastic casing and meters of tangled magnetic tape strewn across the floor. Fearing a similar fate, the *Star Frontiers* robot pivots for the door at Warp 9 and exits the convention at emergency speed. □

Convention Tips



do you have **FUN** at fantasy role-playing Conventions?

The enclosed suggestions will make sure you do!

By Ken Rolston

I hate to see the sad faces of disappointed gamers at FRP conventions. The grim and anxious face of the young man standing in line, hopefully searching for an event that is not yet sold out. The crestfallen expression of the player who arrives late to my event only to find that his place has already been taken by an alternate; the disappointed tone of the gamer who traveled 150 miles and spent a fortune on a hotel room, only to discover that the fantasy role-playing portion of the convention program consists of one small room full of unruly youths and a desultory and disorganized schedule of events to be run at undetermined intervals: these faces haunt me when I speak to others of the pleasures of FRP conventions. For this reason, I've put together some suggestions on how to successfully enjoy the pleasures of FRP conventions and avoid their most distressing pitfalls.

Some suggestions are just simple common sense (though it is unfortunate how we often overlook the obvious); others are based on experiences from the numerous conven-

tions where I have attended and run events. I've organized my observations and strategies into three general areas: how to select an appropriate convention, how to prepare for a convention, and how to best utilize its resources while you are there. I hope these suggestions will help others avoid the most disappointing and irritating problems encountered at conventions, and further assist them to enjoy FRP conventions as I have learned to.

Selecting the Right Convention

In enjoying yourself at a convention, there is no factor so important as carefully selecting the right convention to attend. The most dramatic type of disaster you may encounter through careless selection of conventions is the phantom convention. Once I was scheduled to run a series of events at a World Con II, which was to take place in Philadelphia. I drove from my home in North Jersey to the City of Brotherly Love, whereupon I found that World Con had been cancelled. The failure of the con organizers to inform me of the demise of the con was in obvious poor taste; however, it serves as a salutary example of the result of selecting a con with a high unreliability factor.

Another example of a bum trip was the disappointing Mass Mini-Con. I was fairly impressed with the convention description I found in *The Dragon*, and subsequent correspondence with the organizers led me to arrange to run an event there. I was rather downcast when I arrived on the scene to discover the convention site to be a small high school, with a half-dozen cars in the lot. Inside the prospect was bleaker yet; no one seemed to know what was going on, or who was in charge. I prudently thereupon retreated and took the opportunity to catch *Superman: the Movie*, which seemed at least to have been carefully organized.

However, the Mass Mini-Con example demonstrates how difficult it is sometimes to determine the quality of a convention until you have attended it, and even then, the convention that was poorly organized one year may be a model of system and design the next year. I have personally found one of the largest, best known FRP conventions in the country, GenCon, to vary wildly in organization and reliability from year to year. Given this high degree of uncertainty even in well-established and recognized conventions, here are a few suggestions aimed at increasing your odds of having a positive experience.

First, rely on personal recommendation. A previous attendee with firsthand knowledge of the character and ambience of conventions can offer invaluable suggestions to aid you in selecting a convention that will satisfy your desires. Further, seek recommendations from gamers who share your general preferences in game style. If your meat is the role-playing-intensive model of FRP, solicit the comments of a similarly inclined acquaintance; he will be able to anticipate whether you will be disappointed by the type of events you will encounter. Regardless of gaming style, however, you will find any gamer can give you some idea of how well the events were organized, how likely errors in scheduling might be, and how brutal the level of general civilization at the festival will be.

Another way to discover a convention that will satisfy you is to carefully survey the various announcements of such festivities that are printed in the sundry professional and amateur magazines that service our fair hobby. In particular, a common feature of professional magazines is a convention calendar, which gives dates, locations, brief descriptions, and mailing address or contact. The primary benefit of these lists will be to enable you to discover events that are geographically within your means of transport. However, these listings only include those conventions which actively solicit publicity; many of the smaller conventions, hoping to preserve their intimate atmosphere, will purposely avoid such general publicity. Usually you will only find these conventions through personal recommendation or through the amateur magazines; also in the amateur magazines you will often find personal reviews and reports on various conventions, both large and small. Reading these commentaries will often give you an excellent idea of what a convention is like.

Once you have discovered a convention that seems to be geographically desirable, your next step is to contact the convention organizers for further information. The larger, better-organized conventions will send you pre-registration forms detailing the types of events, available accommodations, fees, and other pertinent information. This is usually a good indication that the convention has at least an acceptable level of organization. If there is no special information form available, or if the form fails to contain adequate information, you must personally write the contact for details. Be particularly certain to get the following types of information:

Accommodations
Distance to the convention and transit available
Directions to the event sites
Event preregistration and registration information
Type and size of convention
Convention and event fees
Schedule of events and opening and closing times for the convention at large
Description of convention facilities
Group sponsoring the convention and events
Description and number of openings in the specific events you are interested in

Many of the above types of information are self-explanatory, but some require special explanation.

The type of accommodations available, along with the travel costs, will probably be the most important factors in determining the expense of attending the convention. There are three main varieties of accommodations for conventions: motels and hotels, dormitory, and crash space. Commercial accommodations tend to be hideously expensive, but often no other accommodations are available, or the convenience of the expensive accommodations will seduce the gamer. If you must endure the painful costs, get recommendations from the organizers on the cheapest and most convenient lodgings. When dormitory space is available, it is usually pleasantly reasonable in cost. Sometimes the quality of the rooms is rather depressing, but rarely are they so grim as to endanger health or welfare, and, properly speaking, you will probably not be spending much time in them.

Sometimes, however, these accommodations can be rather noisy, or lack air conditioning, and the delicate should exercise some caution here. The quality of the crashing experience can vary greatly, but in general it is only for the hardy and tolerant. The penurious and dedicated will get along fine. If crash space is the choice, try to get some description of the area, whether it is in a private home or in some student lounge on a threadbare carpet. If possible, get reserved space with some local: I had a marvelous time at one convention where a local gamer provided floorspace and, for an additional dollar, a communal breakfast in the morning. His hospitality may be rather rare, but inquire anyway: you might be pleasantly surprised.

Transportation costs may loom large in your budget. If you are a member of the privileged class, and owner of an automobile, you may be able to control your travel expenses, particularly if you share expenses with other riders. Mass transit is apt to be bad news, both in terms of convenience and expense, but if that is your only option, you must carefully consider how it will affect the attractiveness of the convention. Also make sure you obtain some rough estimate of the travel time involved from your location to the convention; this will become relevant if you must rush to arrive in time for a specific event.

You will want to know if events can be preregistered. In fact, you will need to know if events can be registered for at all: many small cons simply expect gamers to show up and sign up on the spot, at the moment of the event. The registration fee for the whole convention is usually less expensive if you preregister, but it is very unlikely that you will be turned away from the convention due to overcrowding. Closed-out events, on the other hand, can be the tragic fate of many conventioners. In general, you will want to preregister for your events, so you can adjust your schedule accordingly. You may look with some suspicion at a convention that has no provision at all for registering for events; you may discover that this means that the organizers have no idea of who will run what events or when, a situation that may result in your acute discomfort.

There are two types of FRP conventions: the straight gaming convention, and the combination gaming and science-fiction convention. The problem with combination conventions is that sometimes it is difficult to tell how much gaming will be available, and, in any case, the gaming is usually only a sidelight to the SF fan scene. There are some exceptions to this pattern: I attended Urcon III, a small SF-FRP convention run on the campus of the University of Rochester, which effectively offered a balanced mix of events and activities, and it was actually nice to experience the variety of amusements.

It is also a good idea to know roughly the number of attendees expected and the number of events and activities that are planned. The monster conventions, like Gen-Con and Origins, are replete with variety and abundance, but sometimes they are a bit of a zoo, and they also may fail to offer an atmosphere of leisurely intimacy as effectively as a smaller con may. More will be said later on the subject of the desirable convention size.

It is very important to have a good notion of the character of the convention facilities. Determine whether the event is to be held at a hotel or motel, or at a college or some other large public institution. Try to find out how many rooms will be scheduled for gaming; this is often a

good indication of how serious the convention is about offering a good selection of FRP games. FRP gaming requires private rooms, unlike board gaming, which may run dozens of games in a single room. In general, I find that few hotels or motels have enough of the types of rooms that are good for FRP gaming; for these reasons, I consider FRP conventions at such establishments to be less desirable. Indeed, since most science-fiction conventions are held in hotels and motels, here is another reason to be careful in attending mixed SF-FRP conventions. Colleges, on the other hand, are ideal for FRP conventions: with lecturns, blackboards, numerous rooms provided with movable chairs and tables, a casual and informal atmosphere, often inexpensive (though occasionally grisly) comestibles, these sites entail fewer of the liabilities of commercial establishments like hotels

It may be helpful to know who is sponsoring the convention. Because students come and go at schools, it is not unusual to find that student organized events may lack established organizational structure, and it is often difficult to find the persons responsible for various aspects of the organization. Also, students tend to have important things like exams and papers which occasionally will take priority over their responsibilities to the convention organization. Established clubs, gaming groups, and groups of professional game manufacturers tend to be more reliable, since they are more concerned about the long term negative effects of screwing up.

Make sure you inquire specifically about the availability of types of events that you want to participate in. It is particularly important to find out if there will be sufficient openings in the events you prefer to warrant the time and expense of your attending the convention. I am often moved by the plight of the gamer who travels a great distance to a large convention and spends a fair amount to gain entrance to the convention, only to discover that there are few or no openings in the events he is interested in. Oddly enough, this does not appear to be an uncommon experience; I frequently hear tales of woe from participants in my convention events, who stood in line for hours, only to discover that all the other events they wanted to register for were closed out. Interestingly enough, I have found, on the other hand, that small conventions usually have more events scheduled than they have a demand for; with an abundance of rooms, and a less formal structure, such smaller conventions offer a far greater chance of giving an FRP fan the kind of events he wants in a sufficient abundance to justify his time and expense.

In Praise of the Smaller Convention

Most of what I discuss in this article is particularly applicable to very large conventions like GenCon and Origins; however, there are some special observations I will offer here about the attractiveness of smaller conventions. When I want to run a large group of events, I go to a large convention; when I want to enjoy myself playing, I go to a smaller convention. Such conventions are usually less expensive and less competitive, while being more informal, and intimate. I much prefer 200 people rather than 2000 people; you can get to know the players better. The smaller FRP conventions I have attended have also had a very acceptable variety of events; though a large convention may be able to boast a much wider selection of events, often

your degree of choice is illusory. Most of the events are of little interest to you, and the competition for registration is fierce, while at small conventions I've generally found ample openings for all players. I also appreciate the more relaxed schedule at small conventions; it is less of a hassle if you want to run overtime, and I have run in some events that have taken over twenty-four hours.

The place to look for notice of smaller conventions is in your local fanzine or apa. Contributors to such amateur press publications as *The Wild Hunt*, *Alarums and Excursions*, and *Pandemonium* will often recommend good small conventions to the readers, and some amateur publications have calendars and announcements of such events as part of their format. For example, *Pandemonium* regularly lists conventions in the NYC area, and frequently small local conventions will enclose notices for the readership in these publications. Also in these fan magazines, you will frequently find chatty and informed convention reports which may help you select a congenial convention.

Preparing for the Convention

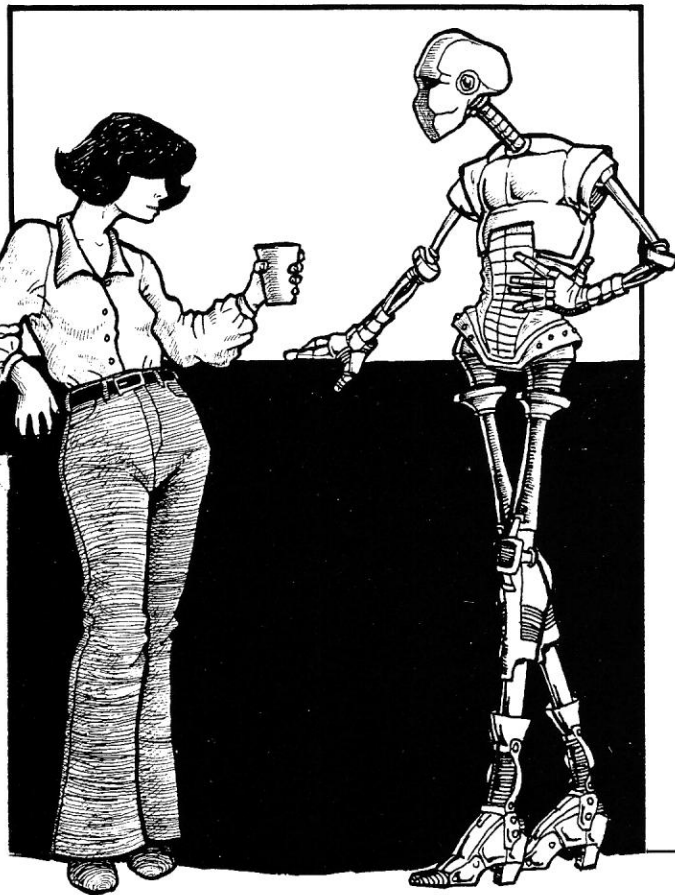
My first suggestion for preparing to attend a convention is to arrange to run an event there. If you have any skill at all as a gamesmaster or adventure designer, it is a very good idea to attend a convention as one of the exalted staff. There are often financial considerations; frequently all or part of your entry fee will be returned to you, and you may reap the rich rewards of the special privileges accorded to those who unselfishly devote themselves to providing part of the entertainment. For example, judges may get special preference on registration, or premiums from sponsoring organizations. You will also enjoy the less mercenary values of respect and adulation from the humble attendees, in addition to the camaraderie of the more renowned and universally recognized staff members and public figures at the convention. It is a simple way to distinguish yourself from the rabble, and to join the aristocracy of FRP fandom. You also will have assured gaming in felicitous surroundings; in fact, I organize events at tournaments just so I know I will have a nice place to run my campaigns with some new and fresh participants. It is a distinct pleasure to run an adventure for people who have paid for the privilege: for some reason, they seem to be more attentive to the gamesmaster than players from your own campaign ever are, and the degree of respect they give you is gratifying after the good humored, but often irreverent, abuse you may generally suffer from your regular players.

In general, it is not difficult to arrange to offer an event at a convention. No one ever asked for my credentials when I offered to run events at GenCon or Origins; no one asked to look at my event materials, and, when I ran my first events at these conventions, I was hardly a well-known figure in the hobby. If you do not feel particularly well suited to designing an event, it is still a good idea to volunteer to assist manufacturers and large tournament organizers in refereeing their larger events; simply let the convention organizers know you are interested in such duties, or contact the event organizers directly. For example, the TSR-RPGA runs large tournaments at conventions, and is always looking for capable judges to assist in running these events. At GenCon East last summer I volunteered to run a session of the RPGA tourney, and found myself judging one of the cleverest and most interesting *AD&D* adventures

I have ever seen for five very sophisticated and intelligent role-players. I enjoyed this more than any of the other events I played in that weekend, except, of course, my own.

Whether or not you decide to run events at the convention, I advise strongly that you preregister any events you want to play in, if it is possible. The major source of convention misery is the spectre of in-person registration, with long waits in lines, often with confusing or inadequate instructions and information from harried staff members, with the final stop at the event desk, only to view panoramic vistas of closed-out events. I have never really been able to understand why people come to conventions without at least a few assured event registrations. Perhaps some don't get enough advanced notice of conventions; some may be short of funds at inopportune moments; some may not be able to commit their schedule so far ahead. Nonetheless, with all the unhappy, frustrated conventioners I've seen disappointed by long lines, wasted time, and closed events, preregistration seems to me to be a most important factor in ensuring your enjoyment at FRP conventions.

When you sit down to select your events, let me suggest a couple of strategies that will enhance your enjoyment of the convention. One; plan to sample different games and gaming styles. If, for example, you've always been interested in *Traveller*, but no one in your circle has a campaign running, try the system out at the convention. Try introductory scenarios for less familiar FRP systems; this will give you a chance to look at some of the ideas offered by systems other than your current preferred systems. Two; catch a few seminars for a change of pace. It is a pleasure to hear folks discuss the more recondite topics of FRP gaming, and it is a good way to break the rhythm of intense competitive gaming. Three; in order to avoid the unpleasant deluge of clod gamers which inevitably congregate at these convocations, select the more sophisticated and complex



game systems which tend to intimidate the criminally simple or the terminally goofy. I find, for example, that *RuneQuest* attracts a fairly sophisticated clientele that tends to be skilled in role-playing and wargaming, organized, and well-versed in gaming etiquette.

When attending a convention as part of a group of friends, it is also important to consider whether you want to compete against your friends. Many events sessions send only one player on to the succeeding round, and if you arrange to play with your friends, you may be put in the position of eliminating them from the tournament. If you are traveling with a group of better players, you might prefer to schedule yourselves so you will be playing against strangers that you will have no compunctions about knocking out of the competition.

When arranging your schedule, there are a few considerations to keep in mind. First, register for enough events to prevent you from being closed out, if a few of the events are already closed at the time of your registration. Don't be a pig and register for two events that are scheduled for the same time: this is one of the big reasons why events get closed out so quickly. On the other hand, make sure you don't come up with no preregistered and assured events for a big convention; such is the foundation of many a bad scene. Next, leave enough free time that you can relax, eat, browse at the dealers' area, and generally unwind. One of the big mistakes I made as a first-time conventioner was to burn myself out with too full a schedule. After a while I was able to identify completely with the undead I was dispelling in the FRP events. Finally, make sure that you keep in mind the possibility of advancing to a second round of a tournament. It is painful to have to choose between playing an event you've long anticipated and playing an advanced round, and, if you plan your "free time" slots to coincide with later rounds of events you hope to do well in, you will avoid the irritation and expense of paying for events you can't attend. Of course, if you have sufficient funds to tolerate paying for a few events you can't attend, you will have the greatest flexibility; if you happen to foul up in an event and fail to advance, you'll have the consolation of another event to play in. You needn't feel terribly guilty as a hoarder if you don't use the ticket: if my general advice about showing up with alternate tickets or with the event fee, hoping for an opening, is followed, there should be plenty of alternate ticket holders and other hopefuls to fill your seat if you don't appear.

A few last details: make sure to bring all the materials you may need. Usually an event description will indicate if you need special materials; otherwise, simply be sure to bring your copy of the rules, any typically useful additional texts (like the *AD&D Monster Manual* or the *Cults of Prax*), paper and pencil, dice, and any others of the trappings of the hobby that you feel lost without. Don't forget to bring along a prized section of your campaign or some absolutely sure-fire scenario you have run with your buddies. This way you'll be well-prepared if you decide to get involved in open gaming, whether you just like that type of FRP, or you just couldn't get tickets for the events you wanted. Another tip for the poverty-stricken: check the bulletin boards at game stores for potential rides and riders. In addition to defraying the costs for an automobile jockey, occasionally you will meet interesting people beset by a similar enthusiastic affliction like unto your own.

Wait patiently for your registration materials to arrive, but harass the convention organizers early and often if your materials have not arrived as the convention draws close. Aside from the vagaries of the postal system, not infrequently random factors of error will intrude into your carefully orchestrated plans; who knows what horrors may have befallen your original preregistration form, and if you act quickly, something may be snatched from the jaws of disaster.

At the Convention

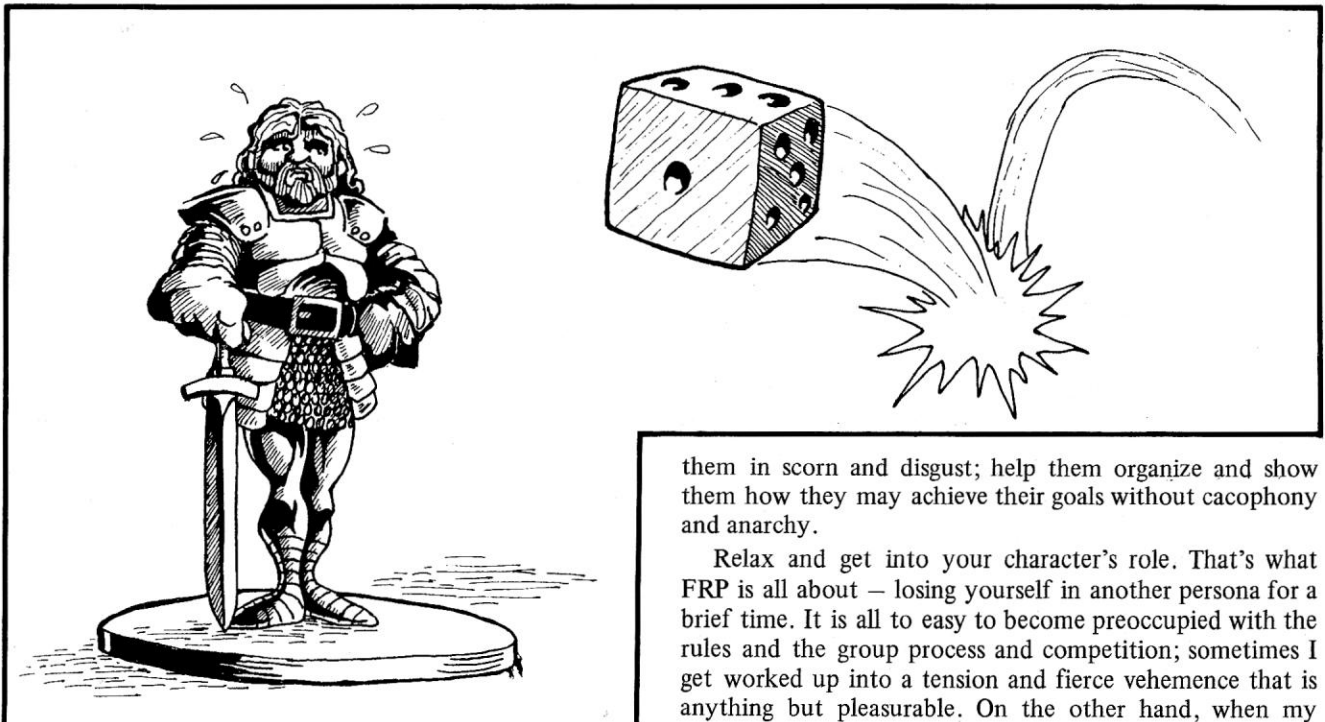
When you arrive at the convention, I suggest that you immediately endeavor to pick up the convention catalog and schedule or any further information about the convention and events that will be available in the registration area. Of course, collect your badges, tags, dorm assignments, event tickets, and make sure there is nothing amiss; then sit down with your event tickets and the tournament catalog or information sheet and determine the locations of your events. Check to see if you can find them: I can't tell you how many times I have turned away late ticket holders whose seats have been preempted by alternates, all because the player got lost on his way to the event. This is the simplest kind of mistake you can make, and also the most frequent. I personally walk through my schedule to check it for non-existent rooms and unscheduled trips to Room 13 in the Twilight Zone. Just last summer at GenCon East I found myself wandering through fire-escapes looking for a fictitious room where I was scheduled to run an event.

If possible, show up early at the event site and scope out the situation. If you are going to be divided into teams, look around for likely prospects and organize a good looking team. A good looking team for you will depend on circumstances; if you are among a group of good players looking to fill out your complement, select quiet, reserved who won't conflict with your already standardized strategies. If you are a single player, look for a quiet, but active, relaxed, but organized group. Whatever your personal pre-

ference, make sure you are actively involved in selecting your team; don't just passively await whatever group fate may bestow upon you. Don't be shy; the quality of the players with you will be crucial factors in your enjoyment of the event. Also, if you arrive early, you will be quick to discover unannounced, last minute, room changes; additionally, I have noticed that the first players to an event will set about organizing and structuring long before the event begins. If you don't want leftover characters and duties, or you want to have a say in the organization and planning for the party, get there early; otherwise, you may find it difficult to establish yourself as an important factor in the game.

Because you have a responsibility to yourself to have a good time, keep clear in your mind whether you are looking for competition or recreation, and adapt your style of play accordingly. If you're just out for a good time, relax and be playful; if you're earnest about being a winner, play hard; however, you also have a responsibility not to interfere excessively with the rights of other players to enjoy themselves. If you forget this principle, you may earn the kind of hostility from other players that will very likely cut into your enjoyment of the convention. Try not to run afoul of anyone who is not into your particular FRP style. If you are into being playful and freewheeling when you play, and everybody else is dead-set on seriously contending for tournament honors, you are going to make some folks very unhappy. Enjoy yourself, but be considerate of other's needs and aspirations, and don't hesitate to remind others to be considerate, if you can do it tactfully and without self-righteousness; try to avoid humiliating or embarrassing the offender, since it will not often help and may in fact make the situation worse.

Help, don't mock, the handicapped. Instead of abusing the berserk pinhead who wants to dash off without a plan and get into some serious genocide, gently but firmly remind him of the other values of the game. If you find yourself amongst unsophisticated neophytes, don't recoil from



them in scorn and disgust; help them organize and show them how they may achieve their goals without cacophony and anarchy.

Relax and get into your character's role. That's what FRP is all about — losing yourself in another persona for a brief time. It is all too easy to become preoccupied with the rules and the group process and competition; sometimes I get worked up into a tension and fierce vehemence that is anything but pleasurable. On the other hand, when my

street clothes seem to disappear and I feel my druidic robes, grasp my sturdy staff, and cautiously peer down from the ridge at the long-lost ruins of an ancient city, then I can say I'm truly enjoying myself. Don't let the pressures of competition rob you of FRP's greatest values.

Be prepared to adapt to the unfamiliar. The GM may operate with some different conventions of play than you are used to; the players may have very different styles from the group you play with at home; or the event may turn out to be something quite different from what you had expected. Nonetheless, be flexible, and try to find pleasure in the newness, rather than irritation: don't waste your opportunities for enjoyment by harping on "the way we do it at home."

Let us suppose that everything has not worked out as well as you had planned, and many of the events you had hoped to participate in were closed out. Here are some techniques for dealing with this situation and having a good time anyway. First, use those alternate tickets, or just show up at the room where a good event will be run. Often I have had a number of alternates fill events, and not infrequently, folk with no tickets will get a chance to play. The most profitable time for this type of hopeful endeavor is while other large tournaments are running their second and subsequent rounds. Many of the better players are also those players prudent enough to buy lots of event tickets, and seldom do they have a chance to pass on their ticket to another player. Another time to hope to get lucky is at the early morning events, particularly Sunday morning. After a long weekend of conventioning, the no-shows from convention burnout become quite numerous; I once ran an event at GenCon early on a Sunday morning that had been sold out long before the convention started, along with all the alternate tickets. When it came time to run the event, out of two eight-person sections to the event, I was only able to come up with three regular tickets out of sixteen. The reasons were that I was running opposite the final round of the *AD&D* Open, and all the regular ticket holders were either upstairs in the Open, or burned beyond recognition after four days of gala FRPing. Consequently I was able to fill my event with players who were tickled pink to get into it. Three of the players that didn't even have alternate tickets said that this event was the first that they had been able to get into all weekend; I was glad that their perseverance had been rewarded.

Another excellent strategy for those who have been closed out of events is to ask fellow players and gamesmasters from the events you did get into whether they have any tickets that they will not be able to use. For example; you find yourself in an FRP session with another good player: he is selected for the next round, and you are eliminated. However, it just happens that he has a ticket for an event that is scheduled at the same time as the next round of this competition. In many similar cases, where I, of course, was the triumphant winner, I cheerfully offered my unusable tickets to those left wretched by my good fortune. Similarly, after I have judged one of my own events and enjoyed playing with a fine group of players, I often will offer any event tickets I can't use to the players, and players will often give me tickets, hoping that I can pass them on to others that can use them.

Another excellent source of good gaming, if you don't get into the scheduled events, is the open gaming area. The

quality of the gaming is variable from extremely fine to extremely foul, but occasionally the open gaming will have some of the best action in the convention. A recent development I saw at GenCon East was the operation of the New York FRP Clearinghouse in the open gaming room. What the Clearinghouse had done was to organize the offering and to promote sign-up for open gaming events, adding a little structure and support to those who wanted to find an open game and for those who wished to run one. This is a fine idea; it had a great deal to do with making the GenCon East open gaming one of the most successful events of its type that I have ever seen at a convention. I hope the principle will be extended to other large conventions.

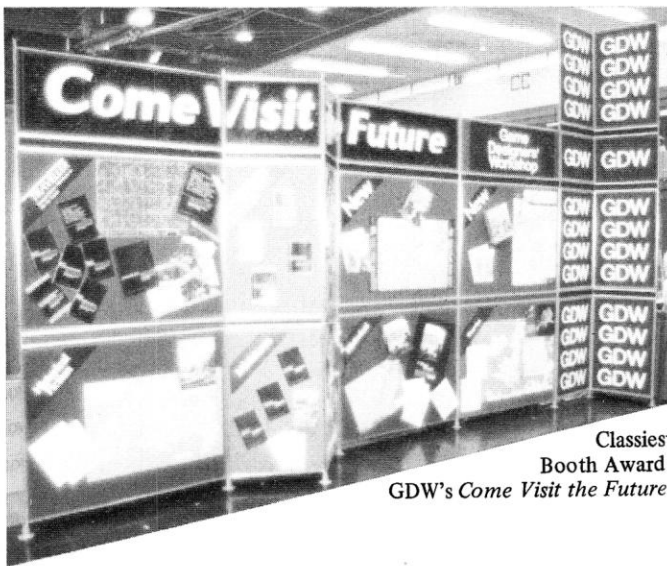
Another important source of superior gaming at conventions comes in the form of the private party. Some of the best gaming I have ever had has come in private rooms in the motels, running on early into the morning. Be open to invitations of this sort. If you distinguish yourself in an event, and find yourself solicited by other players to an after-hours game, give it a try.

When the thrill of tournaments and seminars has finally begun to pale, it is time to wander off to the dealers' area. Here you may dispell ennui by blowing some of your hard-earned bucks on toys. One particular tip I'd like to share with you: if you suspect that you will end up winning any of the sessions or tournaments you participate in, hold off on your spending spree until you find out whether the prize for the event you have won will duplicate some hasty purchase. Unless you have some reason to believe that an item is in short supply, wait until the last day to buy. Several times I have rushed to the dealer area and bought the latest release of some manufacturer, only to discover later in the convention that I had won the same release as a prize in a tournament.

On the Way Home

The convention has been a roaring success. You have earned the laurels for distinguished play, you have enjoyed numerous unusual and challenging adventures, and you have seen new and marvelous methods and techniques that you can bring home and show off to your friends. The ride home in the car has always been a period of great FRP creativity for me. It is this blend of total psych-up and fatigue poisons that provides the inspiration for some of my best scenarios. It is even better if you are sharing your transit with another fanatic who has just enjoyed the experience with you; you'll find that you'll just froth over with babbling genius.

Now you are well prepared to avoid the most common impediments to having a good time at a convention. If you carefully select the right convention for your tastes, and do your best to determine if it is likely to be a reliable source of pleasure, rather than a risky adventure, your prospects for enjoyment are enhanced, if not assured. If you are also careful in selecting, scheduling, and preregistering your events, you will avoid some of the more irritating disappointments that conventions-goers may fall prey to. And, finally, if you avail yourself of all the possible resources of a convention, even if you don't get registered for all the events you wanted, you have excellent chances for the full enjoyment of the FRP convention. □



Classiest Booth Award:
GDW's *Come Visit the Future*.



Captain Dynamo in his secret identity as Steve Peterson (co-designer *Champions*).

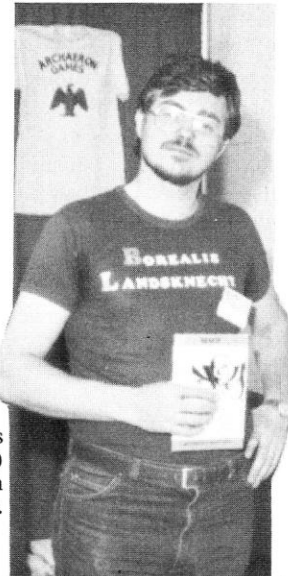


Lovebirds Marc & Penni Rubin of Rai Partha Enterprises.

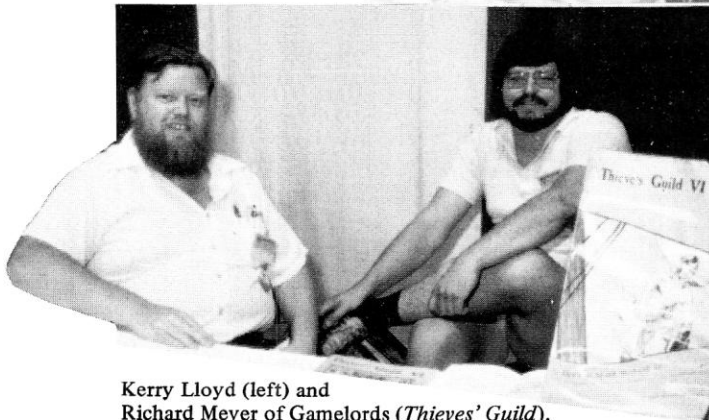
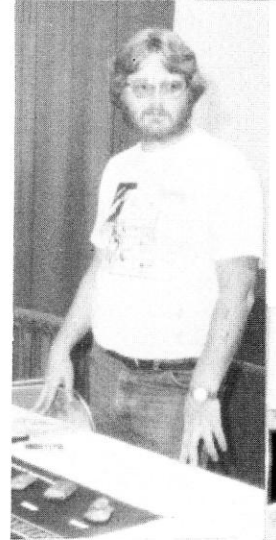


Scott Bizar of Fantasy Games Unlimited and Lee Gold (*A&E, Land of the Rising Sun*).

Wilf Backhaus (co-designer *C&S*) of Archaeron Games.



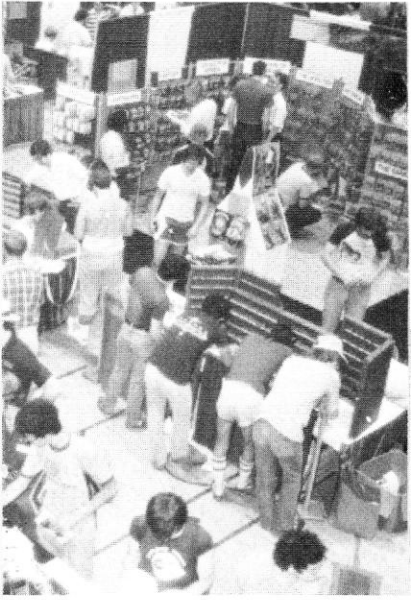
Stoic Forest Brown of Martian Metals.



Kerry Lloyd (left) and Richard Meyer of Gamelords (*Thieves' Guild*).

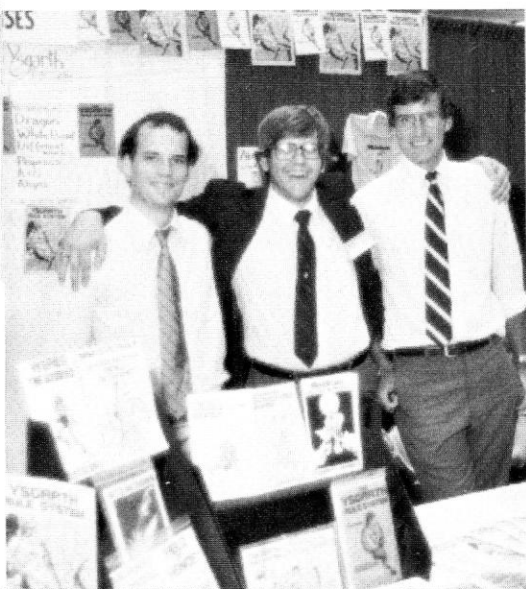


Three from California (left to right): Tadashi Ehara (editor *Different Worlds*), Greg Stafford (*Elric, Cults of Prax*), and Sandy Petersen (*Call of Cthulhu*).

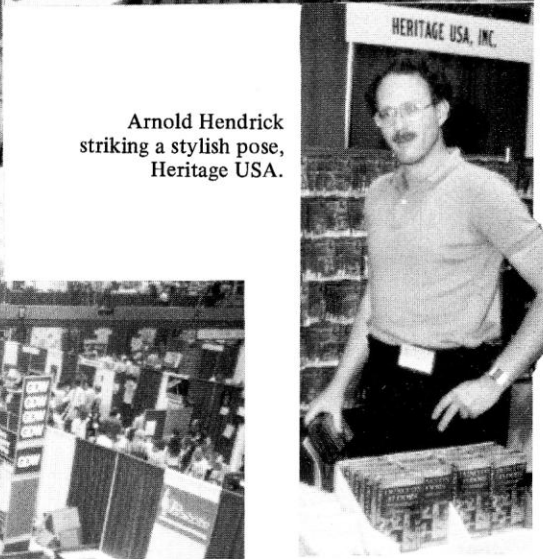


Steve Jackson with the latest in designer games.

“Do you have a female dwarf thief figure in leather armor with dagger and sling?”



Male models from Washington D.C.: Dave “the Second True Way” Nalle (left) and friends, Ragnarok Enterprises (*Ysgarth Rule System*).



Arnold Hendrick striking a stylish pose, Heritage USA.

ick Loomis
ying Buffalo.

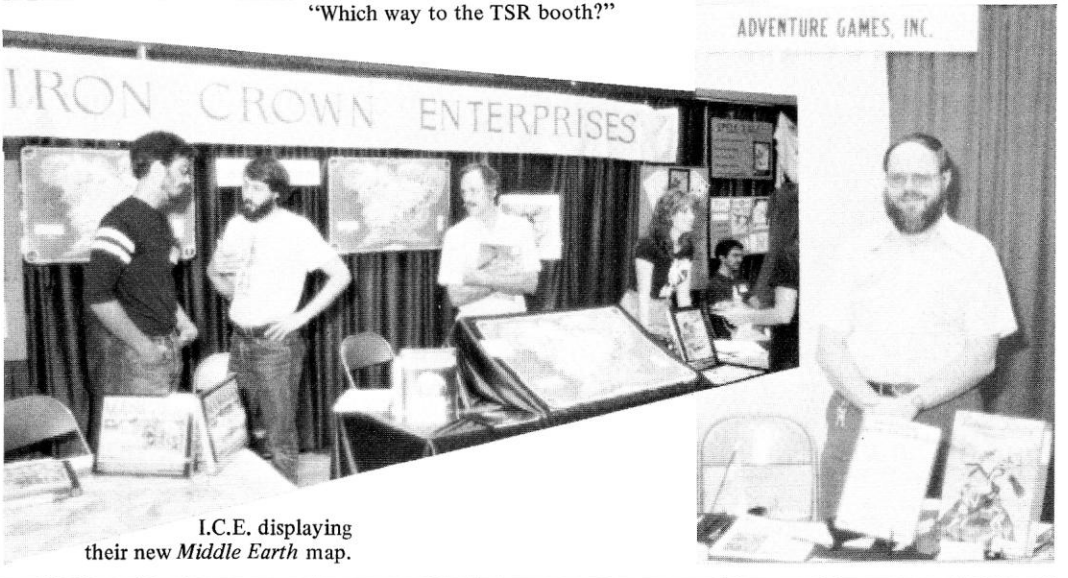


“Which way to the TSR booth?”

“Make sure you spell my name right.”
David Arneson (co-designer *D&D*), Adventure Games.

2 RIGINS '82 crapbook

by Tadashi Ehara
photographs by John T. Sapienza, Jr.



I.C.E. displaying their new *Middle Earth* map.

The First Annual Game Designers' Guild Banquet & Beer Bash

by Tadashi Ehara
Photography by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Over a hundred game designers and their guests attended as they wined, dined, and handed out awards. The banquet is held every Saturday night at ORIGINS.



GDG officers (l. to r.): Vice President Greg Stafford, Treasurer Jack Radey, President Marc Miller with friend Woody Knotts and Lou Zocchi provided the entertainment. Woody: "Was that *Call of Cthulhu* collect?" Nick Voss (Timeline): "What batteries do you use for your shirt, Lou?"

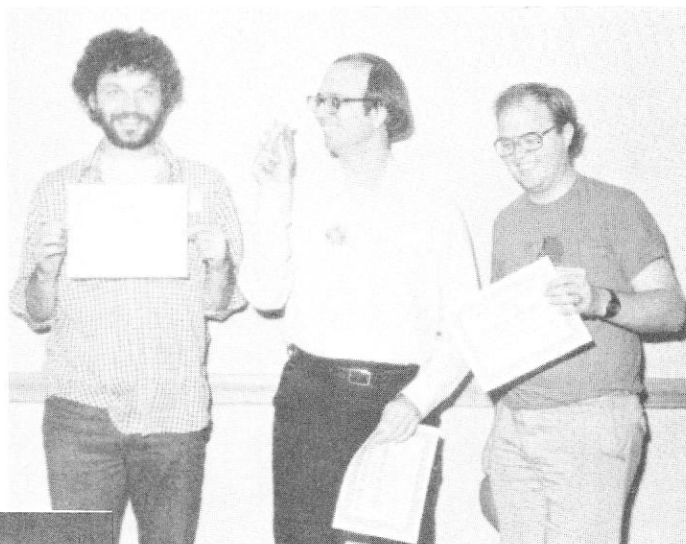


Editor Liz Danforth of *Sorcerer's Apprentice*.



Dave Arneson in his pin-striped suit.

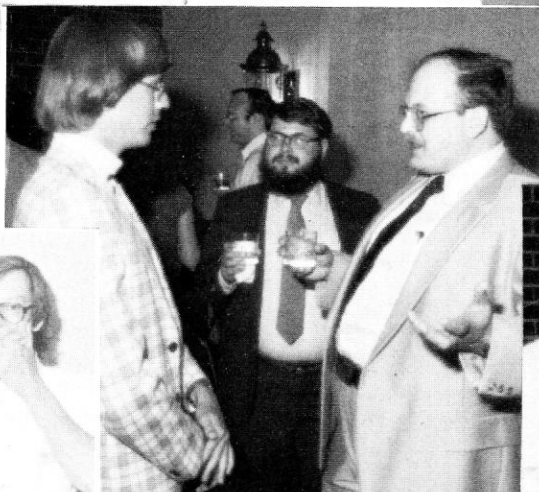
You are eligible for membership in the GDG if you have had a game published. Dues are \$20 per year. Send to GDG, c/o Jack Radey, 3972 Gardenia Pl, Oakland CA 94605. Members receive newsletters, free pass to the banquet, contacts with publishers, and other benefits.



Three happy GDG Select Awards winners from *Chaosium* (l. to r.): Greg Stafford (*Thieves' World*), Ken St. Andre (*Stormbringer*), and Sandy Petersen (*Call of Cthulhu*).



A trio of editors (l. to r.): Tadashi Ehara (*Different Worlds*), Loren Wiseman (*The Journal of Traveler's Aid Society*), and Steve Jackson (*The Space Gamer*).



Dave Wesely (left) chats with fellow game designer as Ross Maker (center) looks on.

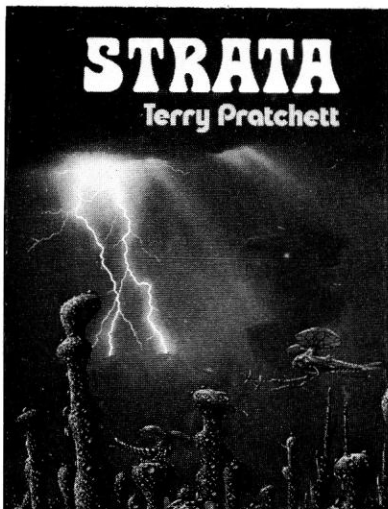


Hosts of ORIGINS '83: Metro Detroit Gamers' (l. to r.) Mike Bartnikowski, Paul Wood, and Bill Somers.



Ken St. Andre (*Tunnels & Trolls*) and Steve Petersen (*Champions*) discuss girls in gaming.

Books & Role-Playing



Strata by Terry Pratchett, published by Science Fiction Book Club, 183pp, \$3.98.

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

This novel hit me with the same sense of wonder as Larry Niven's *Ringworld*, which is high praise indeed. And if the underlying concept perhaps lacks the same degree of scientific plausibility, the flat world that arises from that premise is a lot of fun to think about, in terms of ways to use it in a science fiction role-playing campaign to add spice for the players.

A flat world? You haven't lost your senses. That's exactly what the characters in *Strata* go to explore. The disk is some 15,000 miles across. It is an artifact built by an unknown race of extraordinary engineering ability. But when, and particularly why is it inhabited by human beings? And why was it created in a shell containing artificial stars, planets, moon, and sun, leaving the inhabitants believing (quite correctly) in a Ptolemaic cosmology? And believing in magic not science, because there are enough magic objects around for people to collect them as a hobby; together with magical creatures that everyday folk may have seen for themselves, such as demons, djinn, and rocs? And the great waterfall at one edge of the World, where the ocean flows into the Unknown Void, sometimes carrying over a ship so foolish as to come too close to the edge?

The explorers crash on the diskworld because their ship is rammed by one of the artificial planets going through the "sky." Their appearance is awesome to the occupants of the viking ship they rescue from the Falls using their power suits and a line. The natives accept the human woman as a goddess of mercy, but take a while to accept the shand (somewhat like a bear 3m tall and 3m wide, with tusks) and the kung (which has a skeletal but muscular body over 2m tall, with four arms and no fear). They were accepted after the kung killed a dragon that attacked the ship. The quest is, of course, to find the masters of this artificial world so the travelers can get off

again. The complications to the quest make up the bulk of the story.

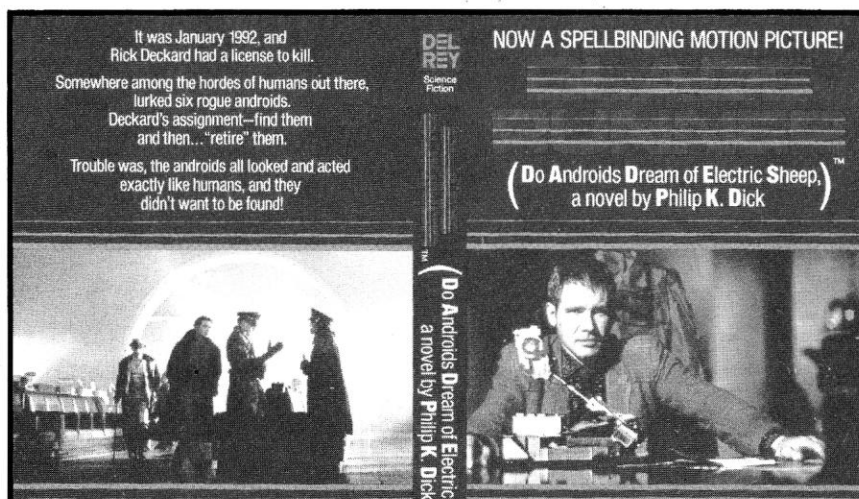
Pratchett mentions ideas that would justify novels in themselves, as mere color in *Strata*. For example, the world of the kung, their racial characteristics, and their relationship to humanity is worth further development. Another interesting concept used here is that the Earth that the lead character comes from is not our Earth. In hers, Leiv Eriksson the viking settled the Americas, and his people returned to conquer Europe generations later. She meets a Leiv Eriksson commanding the ship they save on the diskworld.

The most world-shaking concept in *Strata* is the cosmology. Humanity builds worlds to be colonized, complete with their own fossil history created by engineer/artists. But there's more — other races of world-builders existed before humanity, and before them were starbuilders, and before them were the stars that were themselves intelligent beings. A lovely idea, and one which the author tops at the end of the book! I highly recommend it. □

tric Sheep. Calling in Harrison Ford, he has made one of the most depressing, gripping, and nightmarish films of our time. And, although the movie (*Blade Runner*) is only based on the novel, it still owes a great deal to Dick's dreary vision of a bleak, hopeless future.

Blade Runner (the book's new title) is a morose tale of an Earth after too many wars. Almost all animals are dead; the government constantly urges those people left alive (who are fit enough and capable of reproduction) to migrate to Mars. Inducement for migration is one's very own android servant. The problem with the set-up is that the androids are being built too well. Capable of independent thought, many of them want freedom. Some are willing to murder humans to escape back to Earth.

When they do, it is the job of bounty hunters such as Dick's protagonist, Rick Deckard, to hunt them out and 'retire' them. Set against the background of a nightmarishly deteriorating world, it is a tale filled with hopelessness. Controlled by events and the society around him, Deckard



Blade Runner/Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick, published by Del Rey, \$2.75.

Reviewed by John Nubbin.

Even up until his death, earlier this year, Philip K. Dick was not one of the names that sprang to people's minds when they were asked to list their favorite science fiction authors. Most of Dick's work was too odd, too esoteric for the majority of the genre's audience. He had his fans, but they were not legion, like Asimov's, or Heinlein's. They knew what they liked, however, and they bought enough copies of his books over the years to keep him in business. Novel after novel was cranked out, each one a step closer to the eventual religious message which would be uppermost in the imagery of his work during his last years.

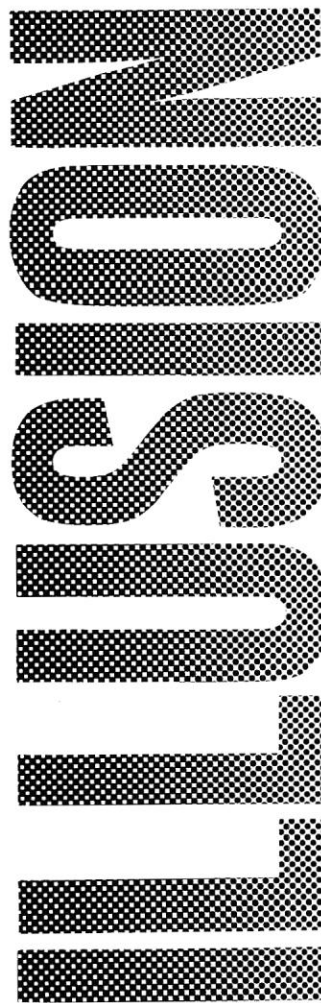
Recently, director Ridley Scott (*Alien*), decided to make a movie of one of Dick's classic novels *Do Androids Dream of Elec-*

is more at the mercy of his own nagging conscience than anything else. Doomed to fulfill a certain fate, he moves through the book leadenly, dreading what he knows will come to pass.

The opportunities for role playing (for those role players who love to both play intellectual games and to be depressed— is great. Besides the obvious hit-and-run set up afforded by the androids and the bounty hunters, there is the Voigt-Kampff scale. In the future, the only way to tell androids from humans is through a delicate battery of tests, ones which examine the moral conscience of the subject. Those tested in tune with nature, and sensitive to it, will pass as human; those who aren't, won't. The problem is, with the differences between Dick's future and our present, most people today wouldn't pass the test. The questions the readers themselves will fail are interesting indicators of just how civilized we all are, and just how bizarre a sense of humor the author had. □

ILLUSIONS

Theory and Practice



For All FRP Games

If you are interested in a spell system for using illusions, please see "Illusion Magic" in Different Worlds 16.

By Richard L. Snider

In the various role-playing systems of today, various forms of illusion are common. Whether the player is defending against the wiles of an attacking Jinn or leaving a spacecraft to explore a new world, he must be prepared to face many forms of illusion.

This article deals with illusions in many forms. It is intended to serve as a supplement to the basic descriptions that your game might provide, and, perhaps, to present a new way of thinking about illusions.

The forms of illusions fall into two classes. The first of these include *Active Illusions*. The second include *Passive Illusions*.

An active illusion is mobile, created to attack and inflict damage on any believing perceiver, and requires the control of the caster or device that created it.

In general, any illusion that poses an immediate threat to the perceiver through the simulation of a mobile, physical attack is an active illusion. Examples would include armored warriors, arrows flying toward the perceiver, violent whirlwinds, etc.

To maintain the illusion, the caster or projector of the illusion must be within a given distance of the party being

attacked and the place that the illusion is seen to originate from. During the illusion's duration, the caster or projector may do nothing except control its actions. Any break in the required concentration will dispell the illusion.

Passive forms of illusion are defined as immobile, in the sense that they are focused to operate in a particular place or on a particular object (or person) and will not move from this focus's location. Passive illusions are also designed to hide reality from the perceiver or to bar the perceiver's progress by an obstacle, camouflage, or threat. These are cast with a time duration that does not require the caster (or the projector) to maintain control.

The major differences between active and passive illusions are the mobility of the illusion and the control required over the illusion. Where active illusions are usually used to directly engage the perceiver's attention (whether by combat or otherwise), passive illusions are used to camouflage reality or to contest the perceiver's intended course of action. As such, passive illusions may now be further divided into major and minor families. These are:

Glamours used to camouflage (change) the physical appearance of animate beings or objects. (Minor form.)

Illusionary barriers and obstacles, illusions concealing the true appearance or existence of large structures or areas, and illusions that, by their very appearance, threaten the perceiver. (Major form.)

The division given above is not one of importance. It indicates the difficulty of the actions. As a general rule, the major forms require more power or expertise than the minor forms do. For any given wizard, the chance of creating a believable minor passive illusion should be greater than the ease of creating a major passive illusion. This should be reflected in the game by the gamesmaster.

With the above definitions complete, we should now look at some examples of illusion, the parameters that a referee should apply to adjudicate them, and the performance attributes of illusion in action. Example of an active illusion is given below:

Gunter Deadkiller, the greatest warrior of the Albaran kingdoms, was dispatched by the Vizier of the

High King to desecrate an altar in the hidden temple of Mastema. After months of misadventure, Gunter and the two remaining members of his platoon found the temple. They entered and, with difficulty, reached the inner sanctum of the temple's master. There, they found a hidden stairway.

At the stairway's base, they came upon a wide corridor. It stretched a hundred feet, and ended at a door of solid gold. As they marched down the hall, statues of lesser demons set in alcoves along the way appeared to take flesh and attacked the party. Gunter and one of his comrades were not misled by this illusion. The other warrior gave it credence, and felt himself being torn into strips by the monsters. His corpse dropped to the floor. Gunter and his remaining ally moved on, ignoring the attack of the deadly shadows.

The example above typifies a philosophy of illusion

that is in opposition to one generally held view. The premise held by these is that if an illusion comes into contact with a real person it will dissolve immediately. I do not accept this concept.

I feel that whether an illusion is believed or not, the fact remains that power has been expended to bring it into being. Likewise, contact with or by a real object does not negate the presence of the power that was applied. It seems folly to operate under the assumption that it does, especially in the case of those illusions created for the express purpose of attacking the perceivers.

In all cases, as long as the power behind the illusion remains in force or continues to be applied, the illusion will remain visible.

This is, of course, only an argument in philosophy. When it comes to illusion, what the player does or does not see is not the crucial question. The important question is: Do you believe it is real?

All forms of illusion gain their ability to affect the perceiver from the perceiver's belief in the illusion's reality. If the illusion is not believed, it has no substance and can be ignored. It does not disappear — it is ignorable. If the perceiver believes that the vision is real it is given substance by his belief in it. In his eyes and mind, it will possess all the strength and power he would normally attribute to the genuine article. This belief can kill.



In essence, the application of power by the caster or projector gives the illusion its form. He shapes the power to meet his needs and this shape can be seen regardless of belief or contact. However, it is the belief of the perceiver that gives the illusion its ability to affect him. In the example, Gunter and the surviving warrior did not believe. As a result, they were untouched by the illusion. The other warrior believed. He died.

To adequately referee this power, the referee must consider the factors influencing the strength and believability of the illusion. These are:

The power or expertise of the illusion's creator.
The experience and intelligence of the perceiver.
The expectations of the perceiver; i.e., his current situational biases.
The circumstances of the illusion's appearance.

The first two categories above have obvious relevance. A more potent caster will be better able to create a complete illusion and direct its movements skillfully. Likewise, a perceiver with high intelligence and/or experience will be more likely to see the falsity of an illusion.

The expectations of the perceiver set his psychological attitude. If the illusion is of some danger that the perceiver fears, or that he expects to encounter in the current environment, he is more likely to believe in its reality. On the

other hand, an illusion of something that the perceiver could not possibly believe would be in the current environs, or that stretches the limits of his imagination, will find the perceiver predisposed to disbelieve. The chances for the illusion's success should thus be less.

The final factor refers to the actual appearance of the illusion on the encounter scene, i.e., how it appears, where it appears from, etc. An illusion appearing on the scene in an unlikely or impossible manner is not as believable. This factor does not include the actual physical appearance of the illusion, which is a function of the caster's power and experience.

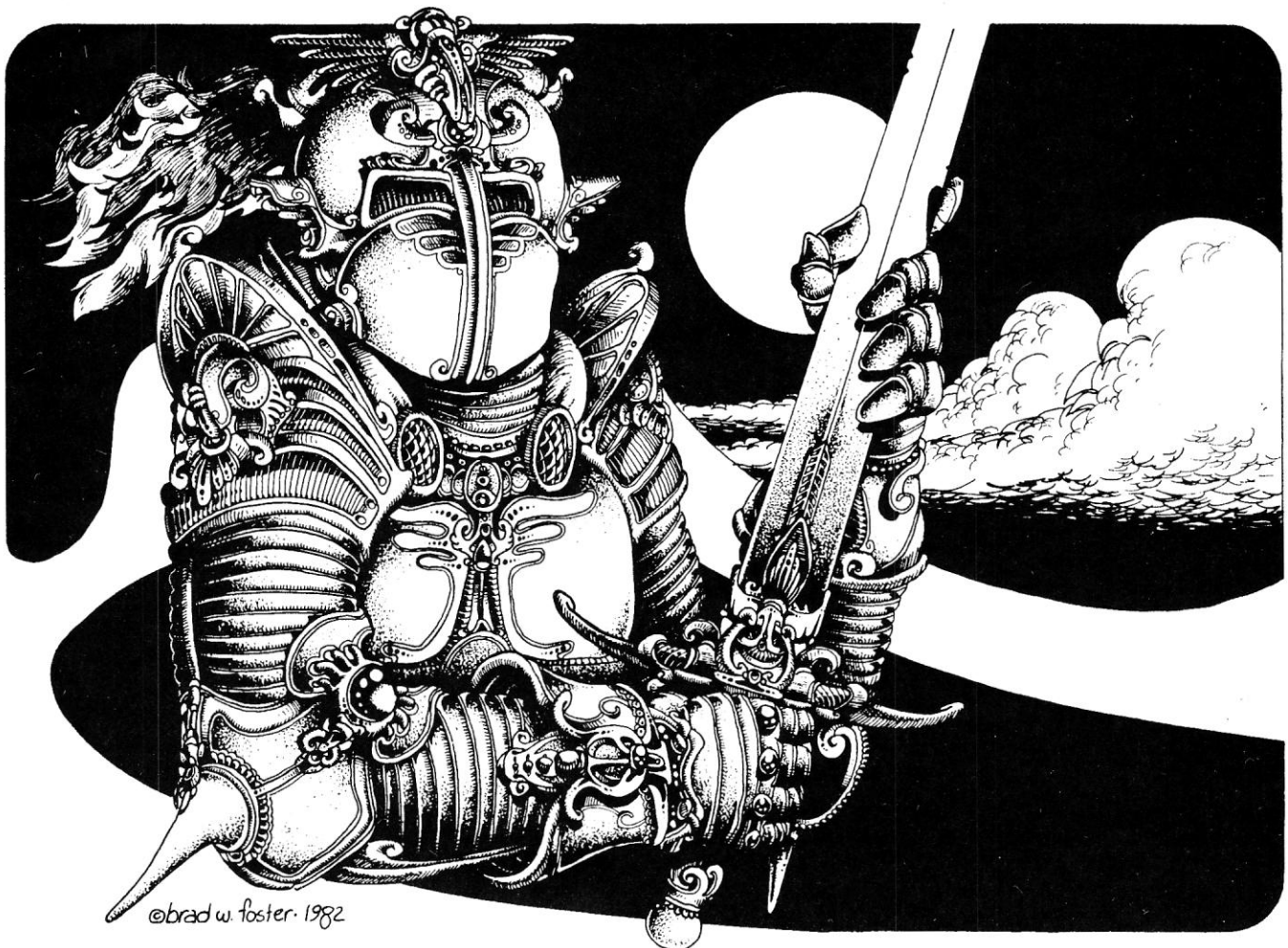
The referee should apply these four items as modifiers for the chances of a given perceiver making his saving throw. If the illusion is not believed, the character can ignore its presence. If it is believed, the player is affected by it.

As the encounter continues, the referee must monitor all those player-characters believing in the illusion. The fact that they start the encounter believing in it does not mean that they will believe it throughout the entire encounter.

In any encounter, after initial belief is established, the subsequent events will give the believing perceivers opportunities to doubt the illusion.

The main events of significance for producing doubt are:

Unreal Actions — Each time that the illusion does something that it should not be physically capable of performing, in the eyes of the perceiver.



Contact – Each time that the perceiver hits the illusion or the illusion touches the perceiver, doubt may be produced – this does not automatically dispell belief, but it may provide a chance to do so.

Until an opportunity to doubt arises, there is no chance for the believing characters to do so. Doubt may arise only through the interaction of the perceiver and the illusion. It is not influenced by other events.

While an illusion is believed, the perceiver is affected by any damage he thinks he suffers at its hands. Additionally, his belief will tap his mind in an effort to give the illusion reality. While belief persists, the target's own mind will inflict actual damage on his body in the areas that he believes have been affected. For example, the dead warrior in the example was bruised before dying. His mind created contusions in the effort to simulate the demons' rending claws.

If a victim believes that he loses a limb, he will lose the use of that limb and suffer contusions along the believed line of separation. When he subsequently discovers that the illusion is false, or is cured, the limb will regain its full potency.

When a player is damaged by an illusion, and not slain, the damage will heal at a faster rate than normal damage. How much quicker should be determined by the attributes of the individual, the amount of damage actually inflicted by his mind, and the referee.

When the referee is dealing with passive illusion, these same modifiers are used. In addition, each family (major and minor) have modifiers of special relevance to that family. The referee should take these into account as well as the general modifiers discussed previously.

For minor passive illusions, the greater the separation of the illusory form in appearance, race, or size, from the normal form of the affected being or object, the more power and skill needed on the part of the caster. Thus, the chance that the perceiver will not believe the illusion is directly related to the power and expertise of the magician, the separation of the forms, and the perceiver's familiarity with the illusion – i.e., what the item or person is being made to appear like. For example:

The lady Haro, a conjurer of A'Korchu and member of the thieves' guild, determined that her career would not be complete until she had stolen the scepter of the King of Solame.

In Solame, the king and all his possessions are protected from all unworthy eyes. His entire life, after coronation, is spent in an impenetrable castle surrounded by a moat of liquid fire. He is served by hereditary servants who never leave the castle, and are born and die there. The only outsiders granted entry to this cloister are the princes of the royal blood.

Haro has decided that the only way to enter this fortress is to disguise herself and her thug partner.

After reaching the sacred castle, she performed magical rites giving herself the semblance of one of the royal blood, and giving her partner the semblance of a horse. She then seated herself upon her partner's shoulders and rode up to the guard. She was upset

when the sergeant of the guard told her that she must dismount her peasant before crossing the bridge. (When one of the armymen told the sergeant "It looks like a horse to me, sir," the sergeant luckily replied, "They all do.") Haro crossed over, and her peasant/horse ran for the hills.

In the example above, Haro cast two illusions. The first caused her to look like a Prince. The second attempted to make her partner look like a horse. The first succeeded, and had a greater chance for success, because the forms of any two humans, even if they are male and female, are quite similar. This illusion was relatively easy. The second illusion was a partial failure, because the human and equine forms are dissimilar. It is more difficult to make a man appear to be a horse than it is to make a woman look like a man.

When illusions of this type fail, the disbeliever will see the enchanted object as it really is. If he has any talent in magic, he will also see a pale aura about the object.

In illusions on inanimate objects, the same rule of similarity still applies – a long, thin object like a spear may be more easily given the appearance of another long, thin object, like a pillar, than it could be made to look like a round object.

The major family of passive illusions is used to hide architectural structures (doors, corridors, etc.), create illusory obstacles, or make false terrain. It does not require some other object to be used as a foundation for the spell, as does the minor type of passive illusion. A house could be made to appear from nothing, or a floor created above an open pit, etc. It is also used to create threatening barriers with the potential of damaging the perceiver if he believes in it – such as walls of flame or poisonous briars.

The chance for belief is determined with a limited number of modifiers, these are:

*The power and expertise of the caster.
The intelligence and experience of the perceiver.
Any applicable situation biases.*

The rules of similarity of appearances does not apply, because these illusions, in general, require extensive ritual preparation to carry out and put in place. Thus, they are there long before any potential perceiver arrives.

To detect these illusions, the perceivers must have cause to inspect them to look at it curiously, have the ability to detect magic, or otherwise doubt it. If they do not, then they may not give the illusion the attention necessary to see that it is false. Anyone that does see the illusion's falsity will see what is really there. Others see only the illusion.

Threatening barriers have the ability to inflict damage on a believing perceiver, if entered. For example, if a perceiver believes that a wall of flame is real, and enters it anyway, he is burned. If the illusion is capable of producing damage, and is contacted, the perceiver may check for disbelief again. However, non-damage causing illusions will not be doubled by viewers unless a perceiver does something, in relation to the illusion, that he should not physically be able to do. □

Adventure by Design

This column is devoted to providing game mastering and scenario designing tips for gamesmasters of all types.

By Paul Jaquays

Beating Order into Chaos: Outlining Your Ideas

Even though you've established what your adventure is going to be about and decided on a theme, it's easy to be confused about your next step. If your methods for designing adventures are anything like mine, your theme is the only organized thing about your adventure at this time. Notes are scrawled all over and ideas are floating around unconnected. You know what you want, but aren't certain what to do about it.

What you should do next is outline your adventure. The outline structures your ideas into a usable framework like a skeleton waiting to be fleshed out. It lets you see the amount of work necessary to produce your adventure and has the added bonus of breaking down the tasks involved into less imposing modules.

Start your outline by analyzing your adventure. You've got your ideas, but what do you want to do with them? What features do you want to include in the adventure? What are the major focal points of the adventure? As you think of them, write each point down on paper (HINT: Leave extra space below each entry). Take as an example this rough outline of the major focal points for the *DragonQuest* adventure *The Enchanted Wood*:

History of the Area
The Enchanted Wood
Missions in the Enchanted Wood
The City of Karse
Wulgreth's Tomb
The Pillar of Karsus

Note that most of the topics deal with geographical areas of the adventure.

Now, look at your original notes and ideas for the adventure. Compare them against your list of focal points. Where do they fit in? Don't discard ideas if they don't have an obvious niche. Under each topic heading, write down those ideas that seem to apply to it. An example from *The Enchanted Wood* reads as follows:

Many unusual vegetable-type encounters
Minotaur riding on large black bull
Magic paths
Encounters all occur based on random selection
Players may encounter weird weather patterns

Don't be surprised if some of your topics do poorer than others as idea gatherers. Often these leaner sections will fill out as you get down to the details of design.

You've now begun to organize your thoughts. However, it's time to think about the formal organization of your project. Familiarize yourself with the organization of other adventures. Look at a variety of game adventures by different publishers (I strongly recommend that you include at least one of the three SPI *DragonQuest* adventures and a Chaosium or Flying Buffalo adventure or two in your research). Study the way that the information of the adventure is presented.

Is it set up in what appears to be a logical order? Look for mistakes to avoid in your own work, such as sections that confuse because they seem to refer to other sections that you haven't read yet. Does the adventure use unexplained jargon? Are crucial portions of the adventure difficult to find (such as character statistics buried inside vast pages of unrelieved text)?

Next, ask yourself what you would want to know first about the adventure. The information that ought to go first may not be from your original list of topics. Good adventures generally divide up the information contained into the following sections:

INTRODUCTION — This tells the game master how to use the adventure, and often contains an informal letter from the designer.

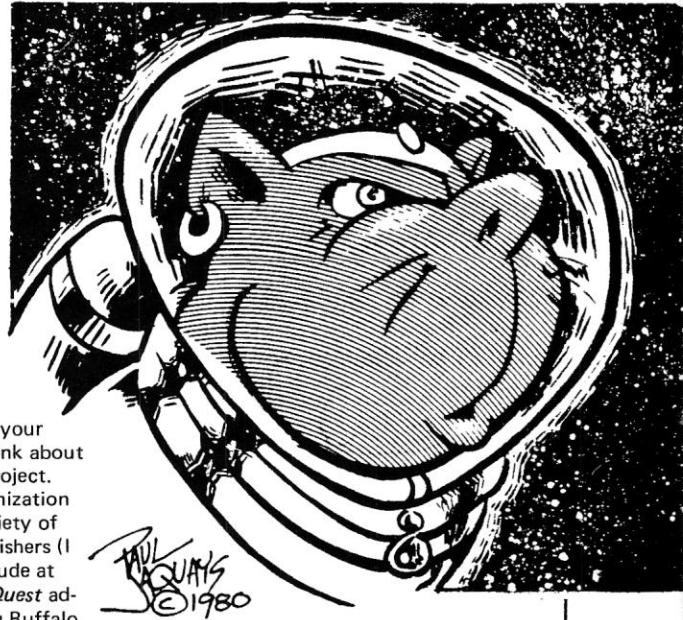
DEFINITIONS AND DIRECTIONS — What do the strange abbreviations used in the adventure mean? How are area descriptions formatted? What kind of dice will the players need? And so on.

HISTORY — This describes briefly (or in painstaking detail) the sequence of events leading up to the adventure. When working on my own adventures, I find it a good idea to start with the mythological beginnings of the area and then work forward. The more detailed your history, the more believable your adventure will be.

GEOGRAPHY — Define the area around your adventure. This too can be limited or far reaching. It all depends upon the scope of your plans.

SCENARIOS — If your adventure encompasses more than just a single storyline, you may want to have a section of possible missions and scenarios.

ENCOUNTERS — These are usually met with as the player-characters travel and should be distinguished from the castles, towns, or spaceships where the adventure often occurs. Often, encounters will be monsters.



CHARACTERS — These are the important non-player-characters that inhabit the adventure. They can be powerful or peniless, human or otherwise. Often, larger adventures will have several sections devoted just to the characters.

POINTS OF INTEREST — Dungeons, towns, spaceships, caverns, planets, and so on. Each point of interest in your adventure should be dealt with separately.

INDEX — A comprehensive listing of the information contained in your adventure. This is a lot of work, but is always appreciated.

Decide what information you want to go first, then second, and so forth, until all of your topics have been covered.

A final consideration should be information required by the publisher, if you are designing for publication. Most publishers have a standard format that they use for role-playing adventures. Check the existing works by the publisher to determine their format. The structure used by your intended publisher may be the determining factor in how you group the information in your adventure.

Now, write down each topic and its attendant ideas in the order you have chosen for them. This is your first complete outline for the project. If you desire, you can formalize the outline further by labeling your major points with Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.) and their subpoints with capital letters, and the points below those with numbers, and so on. With an outline in hand, designing the adventure can be done a piece at a time.

Remember that the outline is a tool to be used in constructing your adventure. It allows you to define your goals for your project at the beginning. Follow it, but don't feel that you are obligated to strictly adhere to it. Expect your outline to change as you delve deeper into the creation of your adventure.

When the project is complete, create a final outline. This minuscule bit of extra work gives you a table of contents for your adventure. □

GAME CONS

MYSTERYKON 7 November 26-28, 1982
Hilton Southwest, Houston, TX
Mysterykon 7
PO Box 772052
Houston, TX 77215-2052

DUNDRACON February 18-21, 1983
Oakland Airport Hyatt, Oakland, CA
Dundracon, Inc
386 Alcatraz
Oakland, CA 94618

GAME FAIRE February 26-27, 1983
Spokane Falls College, Spokane, WA
Shannon Ahern
Book and Game Company
West 621 Mallon
Spokane, WA 99201

FANTASY WORLDS FESTIVAL
March 18-20, 1983
Oakland Airport Hyatt Hotel, Oakland, CA
Lisa Waters
Box 352
Berkeley, CA 94701

SCIENCE FICTION WEEKEND
March 31-April 1-3, 1983
Grisworld's Inn, Fullerton, CA
Science Fiction Weekend
c/o Fantasy Publishing Company, Inc
1855 W Main St
Alhambra, CA 91801

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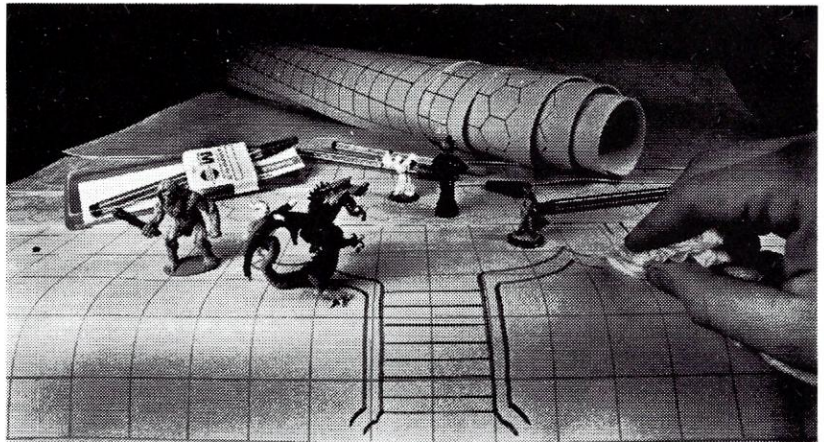
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REVIEWS

MAN, MYTH & MAGIC
ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS
CITIES
RUNEQUEST BORDERLANDS

MAN, MYTH AND MAGIC

By Herbie Brennan

Yaquinto Publications

\$19

Reviewed by William Hamblin

Man, Myth and Magic (MM&M) is a new fantasy role-playing game written by Herbie Brennan and developed by J. Stephen Peek. The game comes boxed (1½ x 9 x 11½ inches) and includes three rule books, two percentile dice (which are rather small and hard to read), a pad of fifty 8½ x 11 inch "Advanced Character Statistics" sheets. A set of 16 maps (8½ x 11 inches) with perforated edges for removal are also included for use by the "Lore Master" (referee).

Book I: Basic Rules (8½ x 11 inches, 24 pages, a few illustrations and charts, 3 full page maps) The basic concepts of *Man, Myth and Magic* follow the general principles of fantasy gaming. A note in the front cover of Book I states that those with experience in role-playing games need read only the sections on combat and then move on to *Book II: The Advanced Rules*. Generally speaking this is good advice, as the Basic Rules are fairly simple. It is somewhat difficult, however, to find the combat rules as they are introduced piecemeal in a scenario and it is not clearly marked which rules should be read before the experienced gamer can proceed to Book II.

The Basic Rules offer an introduction to the fundamental concepts behind role-playing, and take a novice player step by step through an extended scenario in which new concepts are introduced explained, and utilized. The setting for the entire game environment is the Roman Empire in the first century A.D. In the introductory scenario everyone begins as a gladiator in ancient Rome, and must make their way through the "Warren," a shady quarter of Rome filled with various thugs and criminal types. When (if) the characters arrive at their gladiatorial barracks they begin training as gladiators, a large part of which consists of passing through the "training labyrinth," in which the characters

are opposed by certain animals and warriors. Finally, when the characters have successfully passed through this training they are allowed to begin combat in the gladiatorial ring, where they gain experience and wealth.

This introductory system is generally very good at clearly introducing the concepts of role-playing, and at giving fairly clear concrete examples. In a sense the author of Book I is being the Lore Master for the novice player, describing everything just as a gamesmaster would when an actual scenario is being played. This has its advantages, but there is also the problem that whoever buys the book will naturally read Book I to learn to play. In the course of reading Book I the reader will learn the basic concepts of the game, but in doing so he will also learn the secrets of the scenario in Book I and thereby render playing the scenario useless, or at best very boring. The combat system in Book I is fairly simplistic, and advanced gamers will definitely want to read it quickly and proceed to the Advanced Book.

Book II: The Advanced Rules. (8½ x 11 inches, 40 pages, some illustrations, numerous charts). Unlike Book I, the second volume is concerned almost entirely with setting out the rules in a systematic way. In *MM&M* there are ten character types, based on broad categorizations of races within the Roman Empire: African (Subsaharan), Briton, Egyptian, Gaul, Greek, Hebrew, Hibernian, Visigoth, Roman, and Oriental. The characters are given many traditional characteristics (strength, intelligence, etc.) along with some unusual ones (courage, endurance). They are also given an inheritance, which includes mainly money, weapons, and possibly some magical items.

Pages 7-11 deal with weapons and equipment, including charts of the normal types of weapons used by each of the ten races, charts of the costs and value of different weapons and armor, and a list of other equipment and costs. Pages 11-13 describe the combat system, which is based on a basic 50% chance of missing your target. There are then various modifications to that basic chance based on experience, strength, skill, speed, courage, etc. *MM&M* does include an endurance factor, which means that warriors in this

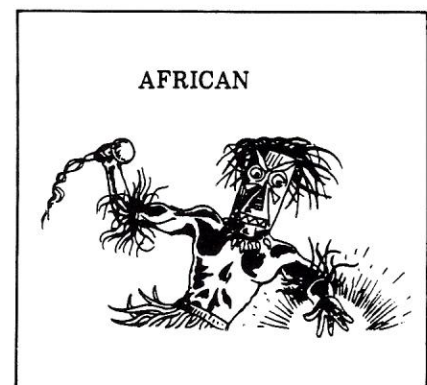
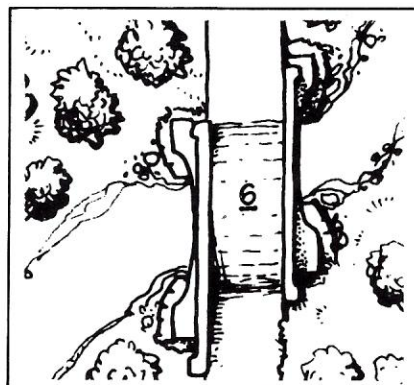
game can get winded (which does not occur in many other systems). This adds an additional dimension to fighting — you have to be concerned with tiring and other factors which could slow you down or get you killed as the melees progresses.

Power, the fundamental characteristic for magic, is dealt with on pages 13-15. Power is based in part on money, and affects your chances of hitting in combat, your potential for being reincarnated, and remembering skills of past characters. Power is naturally used up (temporarily) by casting spells and other activities.

In *MM&M* each of the ten different races have different bonuses or minuses in certain skills (pp. 15-24). Each race is further divided into a number of classes (warrior, sorcerer, merchant, etc.) each of which has a "Prime Ability," that is to say, a skill at which they are especially adept, and certain "Special Abilities." For example, an Egyptian sorcerer's prime ability is Magic, while his special ability is Mummification. An African witch doctor's prime ability is also Magic, but his special ability is Healing. There are also occasionally negative abilities for each character class. In general this idea has its advantages, in that it tends to push characters into developing skills in areas traditionally associated with certain classes of people or races. However, there is perhaps some latent racial stereotyping in all of this. For example, a Hebrew merchant gets an automatic 15% increase on all wealth while all other merchants only get a 10% increase (shades of Shylock!).

Each time a character dies he is automatically reincarnated arbitrarily into one of the ten races and subclasses, and can be reintroduced into the same game as a new character.

Other characteristics which characters can optionally have are listed and described on pp. 24-27. These include such things as Charm, Drinking (the ability to consume intoxicating beverages), Sight, and other interesting categories. There are a number of ways in which these optional characteristics can affect the play of the game. Additionally there are optional rules covering Combat Modifiers, Poisons (2 full pages), Power, Treasure, Weapons Damage and Target area where weapons hit. (All this is on pp. 28-32.)



Magic and other special powers are dealt with on pages 32-38. There are a limited number (13) of spells which can be used by sorcerers of all races. In addition, each race has certain magical powers which are limited to that race alone. (For example, African witch doctors can create zombies, and Hebrew priests can call manna from Heaven.) As far as I could tell, all of the spells in each class are automatically known by the sorcerer of that class. There seems no way to learn new spells, nor to increase your effectiveness at magic short of increasing your Power.

Book III: The Adventure Book (8½ x 11 inches, 52 pages, 7 maps, a number of illustrations, 2½ pages of encounter charts.) Pages 1-40 of Book III present five interrelated scenarios. The book ends with some general comments on how to be a Lore Master, how to use and modify the scenarios, and how to develop new scenarios of your own. There are also some general maps including outdoor terrain, caves, an underground complex, a small town, and a number of charts for encounters in some of the geographical regions of the Roman Empire.

So as not to spoil the fun, each of the scenarios will be described in only a general way. The first (pp. 3-6) uses part of the original scenario presented for beginners in Book I, and expands and modifies it for advanced characters. The goal is to assassinate a Senator and gather whatever plunder is available, while avoiding the pitfalls and traps in the house of Livia the Poisoner, who resides in the Warren. This scenario includes a full-page map and a detailed description of Livia's house.

The second scenario takes place in Rome, where there is word that a strange "dragon" has somehow found its way into Rome and is wandering through the streets of the city. The characters are to find and destroy or capture the monster (pp. 8-11). A map is also provided.

The next three scenarios are much more extensive than the first two, which were designed more to give practice to new players. The scenario "Apollo's Temple" (pp. 12-20) sets the characters on an adventure in Roman England. There have been strange reports of occult phenomena which the characters are sent to investigate by the Emperor Caligula (in reality, Britain was not conquered until the reign of Claudius, who became emperor after Caligula). Eventually the scenario takes the characters to Stonehenge, where a number of adventures are outlined. Two fairly good maps of the actual site of Stonehenge are included in the large sheet of tear-out maps.

The adventure of "The Witches of Lolag Shlige" (pp. 21-31) takes the characters to Hibernia, where they encounter a coven of witches in their lair (described in detail with a number of NPCs and three detailed maps).

Finally, "The Great Pyramid Revealed" is an adventure centered on the Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt (pp. 32-38). The Great Pyramid is fairly accurately described and utilized in this scenario (with the addition of a number of occult and magical elements of course). There is also a map of the interior of the pyramid in the maps section. (There is a new scenario recently published

by Yaquinto Press, "Death to Setanta," which is a sequel to this scenario.)

A pad of 50 character statistic sheets is included with the game. Each sheet also has on the back an excellent summary of the information the players will be using most often during play. There are 16 8½ x 11 inch maps, with two detailed maps available for the most important incidents of each scenario. Included among the maps are some general large-scale maps of Egypt, Italy, and England.

For me personally, the game system offered little that was unique (although it does have some interesting concepts). Indeed, it could almost be said that *MM&M* is a scenario system rather than a new game system. That is to say, it would be relatively easy to make slight modifications in the scenarios and then play them with another gaming system, ignoring the *MM&M* rules altogether. Of the 116 pages of text included in the game, nearly half are concerned with descriptions of scenarios rather than with general rules of play.

If the game system is not really unique, the game "environment" is much more interesting. The basic premise of the game is to recreate a "mythologicalized" Roman Empire in which fantasy role-playing can occur. In my opinion such a concept has great potential. There are numerous ancient ruins, mythologies, and histories which could be incorporated into a gaming "environment" to provide an essentially inexhaustible source of scenarios. The great advantage of this is that city plans, ruins, characters, geography, social and economic systems are all fully worked out in detail (by historians) which can be utilized to fill out environments for fantasy gaming which are otherwise often shallow and two-dimensional. The *MM&M* system touches on this possibility, but develops only a small part of its full potential.

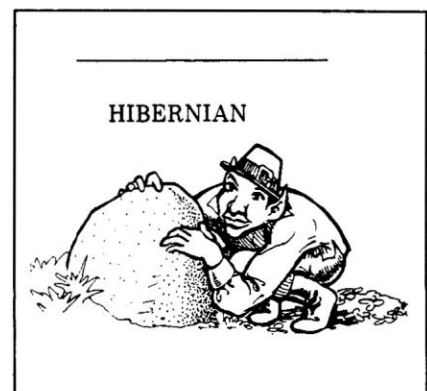
Although the game claims to be a recreation of the world of the early Roman Empire, in a very fundamental sense the designers basically ignored its most unique aspect — its historicity. There are numerous examples of what I mean by this. In Book I (p. 19) there is a chart to decide which Emperor will preside at any given gladiatorial game. Which emperor presides is important as it will determine the possibilities of rewards, opponents, combat type, etc. There are three possible choices for emperor; Tiberius (ruled 14-37 A.D.), Caligula (37-41 A.D.), or Nero (54-68 A.D.). One of the races in the game, the Visigoths, did not invade the Roman Empire until the Fourth Century A.D., over two centuries after the time the game is supposed to occur.

The monetary system in the game uses the names of ancient coins with complete disregard for their real worth. According to the rules (Book II, p. 7a) "10 copper denarii = 1 silver sestertium, 10 silver sestertium = 1 gold libra (often referred to as a gold piece.)" Now in reality, at the time of August (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.) 4 sestertii (which were small silver coins) were equal to 1 denarius (a silver coin weighing 3½ grams of silver). 25 denari = 1 gold aureus (of 8 grams of gold). The aureus is what is historically called the "gold piece." Five aurei = 1 libra (pound of silver, not gold). That is to

say, 5 aurei = 1 libra = 125 silver denari which would equal 468.75 grams of silver which was in weight one roman pound. The differences between the historical Roman monetary system and the one used in *MM&M* are quite profound. Likewise, the prices for various items in *MM&M* are usually unhistorical. There is a great deal known about actual prices for many items in the Roman Empire and with a little research, the author could have recreated an economic system based on the economic realities of preindustrial societies, instead of inventing arbitrary prices and coins and masking their inaccuracy behind historical names which have nothing to do with the coins and prices imagined. Another example of the game's inaccuracy is the fact that the longbow is a weapon available to characters, when historically, the longbow was not used in Europe until the late 13th century A.D., long after the Roman Empire had ceased to be.

A great improvement in the game would have been the inclusion of a bibliography. For the scenario which takes place in the pyramids of Egypt, it would have been a great help to have included a reference to useful books describing the pyramids. Indeed, a book with pictures of the interior of Cheops' pyramid, used by the lore master, could show the characters exactly what they are seeing at any given moment during the scenario, simply by showing the players the appropriate pictures applying to the part of the pyramid the characters are entering. Books on Stonehenge, gladiators, the Roman Empire, Druids, etc., should all have been mentioned, which would have given lore masters and players an extremely useful source for limitless detail for their scenarios.

It could be argued that, as *MM&M* is a fantasy game, any anachronisms are excusable as fantasy itself is, in a sense, basically anachronistic. But, the potential of developing a role-playing system using actual historical places and times, and overlaying the historical reality with additional magic, scenarios, monsters, etc., is one of the great areas of untouched potential in role-playing games. A game based on a detailed historically accurate reconstruction of the Roman Empire (or any other historical place and time) with the addition of the magical/mythical element congruent with that time and place, would open a whole new field to role-playing games. Unfortunately, although *MM&M* purports to be doing just that, in reality it is nothing more than an imaginary world given a facade of names from the ancient Roman world. □



ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS

By J. Andrew Keith, William H. Keith, Jr., Jordan Weisman, et al
FASA
\$12.50
Reviewed by Tony Watson

The Aslan are a faintly lion-like (at least in appearance) alien race that have their major expanses coreward of the human-dominated area of the galaxy. They are, in *Traveller* classification, one of the six major races; that is, they independently developed jump drive capability. As explained in the *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society* issue 7, the Aslan are descended from carnivore/chaser stock and live in family, pride and clan organizations. The male Aslan are proud and militaristic, not unlike feudal Japanese Samurai, and are very concerned with the ownership of land. It is the military aspect of the Aslan, however, that concerns the topic of this review.

The *Traveller* playaid, *Aslan Mercenary Ships* is an effort to integrate the Aslan race into the mainstream of *Traveller* adventures or *Striker* campaigns. The box contains three double-sided 21½" x 33" sheets of deck plans, two sixteen-page booklets and 112 counters. The latter have silhouettes of Aslan troops and starship crews; counters are die cut, but some of mine were very badly mangled (one had been mis-cut into a triangular shape). The deck plans depict two 3000-ton mercenary warships; there are three plans for each and they are printed back-to-back so that all of the plans for a given ship will be available at the same time. The plans are of the customary FASA detail and quality; staterooms are stocked with beds, desks and seats and control areas show consoles and seating positions. Plans for an Aslan launch and two land combat support vehicles are also included.

The two ships depicted are both types commonly employed by Aslan mercenary regiments. The first is the Hero-class intruder transport, designed to transport and support a company of Aslan troops. The second is the Warlord-class battle leader. This ship is used to coordinate the activities of Aslan battle-groups of battalion size or larger. Both of the ships are fully detailed in one of the two booklets, which also contains a couple of scenarios set aboard the ships. The deckplans have a half inch grid superimposed over them to facilitate playing



these situations out with the *Snapshot* or *Azhanti High Lightning* rules.

The second book is entirely about the organization, tactics, equipment and management of an Aslan mercenary regiment using the "Teahleikhoi" (Falling Night) regiment as an example. This information is very complete, and includes tables of organization and insights into operation. The pertinent information is given in terms of *Striker* rules so that the players could easily use the Teahleikhoi regiment in a miniatures campaign. Cultural factors regarding the Aslan are also covered, providing some of the booklet's most interesting reading.

Aslan Mercenary Ships offers a useful, pre-assembled package for introducing the operations of an alien race into a *Traveller* or *Striker* campaign, and should prove valuable to referees who conduct militarily oriented campaigns. The set is nicely presented and well thought out. My only caveat is regarding the price: \$12.50 is a bit high for what you get. For the referee who wishes to make Aslans an important part of his campaign, especially Aslans operating in a military capacity, the play aid would be useful. □

CITIES

By Stephen Abrams and
Jon Everson
Midkemia Press
\$6.95
Reviewed by Greg Stafford and
Anders Swenson

Occasionally there appears a real gem of a play-aid among the plethora of material appearing nowadays. Call them dungeon modules, scenario packs, play aids or items; few are great, most are average, and some are downright bad.

Cities is great.

Cities is a 72-page book which consists of some introductory notes, a city encounters section, a chapter on city design and keying, and a city life catch-up section. It has no maps or layouts or notes on specific cities, nor does it need them. It is concerned with the process of daily life in the city.

The volume under review is the second edition, with a slick paper color cover. Many stores still carry the first edition, with the black-and-white cardstock cover, which has a lot of the same material in cruder form, without the city design section.



The city encounter tables are used when the characters are in a city. It consists of a series of city-type encounter charts in the form of a series of interrelated tables. When a city encounter is desired, one looks at the Encounter Matrix, which will refer to one of 28 specific encounter categories. Most are types of people, such as "Soldiers" or "Priests" and some are ongoing happenings, such as "Already Occurring" or "Event."

After the general type of encounter is determined, the GM turns to the specific encounter chart to determine specific details of the encounter. The charts help determine how many soldiers there are, and if they are rowdy, drunk, or seeking employment. Some of the charts require two or more die rolls to fix all of the variable factors.

The charts will indicate what is occurring in a crowded city. They are not in themselves the basis for generating a complete scenario, but are rather useful aids to fill in the inevitable bustle and distraction we expect in a large city. There are some gaps; the whores never seem to have pimps in the background, there aren't any persistent street hawkers, and you never have clouds of small kids just hanging around. Some of the rolls are mainly for color ("characters encounter workgang cleaning the streets and sewers: terrible smells, chance of disease, etc."). Some are good leads for role-playing; any type of person in town can bump into a character or recognize him, correctly or mistakenly. Others are the basis for a real adventure: attempted robbery, etc.

The second major section is devoted to solving the problem of detailing all those buildings you just drew when you did your city plan. The rules presented can accommodate either villages or cities — there is a definite difference between the two types of communities in terms of possible services. Villages are basically agglomerations of farm dwellings with a few businesses and service buildings, while cities are mainly businesses with a sprinkling of dwellings and other buildings. The rules work by mapping a list of business types onto a list of building locations, much like the Sanctuary keying rules in *Thieves' World*. The number of buildings in town is the basis for determining what types of businesses are represented, and how many of each type there are. Random choice, modified by referee's whim, is used to decide what goes where.

The last section is called "City Catchup Tables." These are rules for a game simulating day-to-day life in the big city, and are intended to be used in campaigns where a strict accounting of time would require characters who ended their last adventures at different dates to catch up with one another so as to start the next adventure at the same personal calendar date. The tables assume that the character is just trying to live a normal life in town, rather than taking training of some sort, but this could be accommodated as well. There are provisions for living expenses, job seeking, week-to-week incidents, investment opportunities, financial disasters, gambling, and more. The section ends with a sort of random adventure table used in working out geases and the like, tables of costs for inns and stables, and the Midkemian calendar system.

Overall, this is a key volume for any GM who is seriously interested in city gaming. Many GMs who own the first edition may well want to invest in the second edition as well; the city keying tables are worth the price alone. This is a book which should be the property of most serious GMs. □

RQ BORDERLANDS

By John Boyle, Tony Fiorito, Mark Harmon, Reid Hoffman, Janet Kirby, Ken Rolston, and the Chaosium staff
Chaosium Inc.
\$16.00
Reviewed by Anders Swenson

Borderlands is the first new *RuneQuest* scenario pack to be issued in quite a while. This product, comprised of a very large adventure in the format of a boxed game, is a far cry from the usual run-of-the-mill scenario booklet. It is also quite different from previous *RQ* products. *Borderlands* consists of a 48-page Referee's Handbook, a 32-page Encounter Book, seven individual scenarios of four to eight pages each (one actually has twenty pages), a large map of the Borderlands area, two player maps to be handed out by the referee, and an introductory sheet listing the box contents as well as a Chaosium catalog.

RuneQuest Borderlands can be contrasted to the last scenario pack released by Chaosium, *Griffin Mountain*. *Borderlands* is specifically oriented to the adventurers with the focus being on the taming and settlement of nomad-occupied lands by a party of outsiders. Rather than the ecological approach of *Griffin Mountain*, where the environment was worked out in great detail and the adventures were left to be discovered, *Borderlands* is set up as a series of adventures that have been given a home along the River of Cradles, with ecological and other considerations subordinated.

Not that the ecology is neglected. The two books included in *Borderlands* give an ample stage setting. The Referee's Handbook begins by setting the stage and introducing the important non-player characters. It seems that a Lunar Duke, Raus of Rone, has been exiled from his ancestral Lunar Empire lands and has been given the right to settle a stretch of land along the River of Cradles. Duke Raus has found the land to be a hostile wilderness, and wants the player-character adventurers to hire on with him for a year to help tame the place so that farmers may be brought in and profitable crops raised. The physical and human ecology and history of the valley of the River of Cradles are sketched; a discussion of the usual Gloranthan military contracts, and the specific terms which the duke will offer the adventurers are given.

The rest of the Referee's Handbook is devoted to material on specific aspects of Praxian life. Articles on the Agimori and the Morocanth are reprinted from the magazine *Wyrm's Footnotes*, and new articles are given on Broos, Ducks, Newtflings, and Tusk Riders. The article on Broos in particular is

startling in its frank detail of these monsters. The last articles are a listing of *Plunder* style magic items, a short *Bestiary* describing Praxian creatures, Spirit Cult notes, net fighting, air and water fighting, and a list of ready-made characters who may be used as adventurers in this scenario pack.

The Encounter Book is a source for the equivalent of wandering monsters in other FRP games. The encounters in *Borderlands* differ from the generic wandering monsters in that most of the groups have a history in the region, a definite purpose in entering the Duke's territory, and often have friends who will notice if they are simply trashed out of existence. There are twenty-two encounter types, ranging from dinosaurs and tigers to humans and near-human tribesmen and finally to awe-inspiring spiritual forces. There is a standardized format for all of these encounters which is clearly based on the experience of veteran *RQ* game masters. First, a text article relates the history, motivation, and special characteristics of the group. Then, all the leaders or otherwise unique members of the encounter are given the usual character statistics, with attention to individualized detail. Finally, the common members of the encounter party are presented, with the average set of attack, skill and spell abilities given to be used for all, followed by individual characteristic and hit point listings for these ordinary party members. This system works out very well, and it should prove to be a standard for *RQ* encounter descriptions in the future.

The specific scenarios chronicle the major events of a long year of taming Duke Raus's portions of the Valley of Cradles. It is a little reminiscent of the clearing of a territory of a high level *D&D* character, only in this case, the player-characters are doing the clearing. The first scenario takes the characters on a tour of the valley, with interesting stops and encounters which shape the rest of the campaign. Next, the mercenaries are sent on a simple mission to roust some river pirates, and the third scenario involves rescuing the Duke's daughter from horrible kidnapers. Things get tougher yet with the fourth adventure, where the foes are dread Broos. The fifth adventure is a water dungeon crawl. The last two adventures transcend the usual combat scenarios — first the adventurers must ascend heights to obtain rare condor eggs, and then they are entrusted with the job of transporting these eggs to the fabulous trader-giant of the Elder Wilds.

The remaining material in the box consists of a large map of the territory, a mer-

cenary contract and two treasure-maps. None of the maps have a grid, which enhances the Bronze-Age quality of the game, but it makes them a lot less useful for a tired GM. I don't want to draw lines all over my map, but there's no other way to locate a wandering party with certainty with no grid for reference. The same is true of the maps in the scenario folders. I found this feature to be the most frustrating of the whole pack.

Overall, I found the pack to be a useful general reference for the eastern Prax area. The two included books give a GM an excellent source and example for running a Praxian campaign. Some Gloranthan buffs may object to the inclusion of material from *Wyrm's Footnotes*, but the two articles, though important, are a very small part of the whole product, and their inclusion simply means that the game purchaser won't have to try to obtain two rare magazine back issues to play the adventures.

The scenarios seem to be intended for a more mature level of play than one usually encounters. There is a reason for everything. The adventurer's contract seems to give the characters a lot less return for their labors than one expects in FRP, although the benefits that the Duke obligates himself to provide to the hired make the deal a lot better than it might look. The fullest enjoyment of this adventure might come from the overall atmosphere of pioneering on the frontier rather than from fighting the good fight or trying to become a Rune lord in only a year's time. The scenarios and the settings almost seem to be oriented toward providing more pleasure for the gamesmaster rather than the players, a trend which shouldn't be taken farther than it has been in this product, or dissatisfaction could result.

RuneQuest Borderlands is a product which will appeal mainly to the enthusiastic *RuneQuest* players and which will of relatively little interest to players who use other systems. The layout and printing are of very professional quality, and the radical packaging of a scenario pack in a box should be seen as a pioneering 'first' in the industry, worthy of emulation by other publishers. Its strongest point is the wealth of background material, and the weakest areas are the actual scenarios and the ungridded maps. But, scenarios are not hard to create and given the material in this pack, a totally new set of adventures could be easily conjured. This is a good buy for the GM of a *RuneQuest* campaign, and for all Gloranthan enthusiasts. ■



Metal Marvels

Characters and Monsters by TA-HR, Demon Lords by Spartan Miniatures

By John T. Sapienza, Jr.

TA-HR offers an extensive line of character figures, either in packs of six of the same kind for \$3.25, or in combination packs with several different figures of the same class or type. To obtain their catalog, write to TA-HR, P. O. Box 1854, Bloomington, IN 47402.

The line of character figures reviewed here is their MC line of spell casters (MC apparently stands for Mage/Cleric). The group is all human, and is evenly divided between male and female, and between mages and clerics. The *Magic User with Staff* (MC-01) is a bearded man dressed in tunic, trousers, and boots, over which he wears a hood and flowing cloak. He stands with feet braced, turned



slightly to the right. In his left hand he holds a signal horn, while he aims his staff with his right hand, evidently casting a spell. The figure is not fancy, but it has attractive pieces of detail. And it has a feeling of motion and drama, captured in sculpture. The figure is about 25mm from head to foot.

The *Female Magic User* (MC-02) has a similar feel of action. She wears a full gown plus a wrap over her shoulders and down her arms almost to the ground, seeming to flow around her. She is gesturing to cast a spell, with her right hand raised and her left hand down and forward, as if pointing where the spell is to go. Her face is fully carved, down to lips and eyeballs. This is a beautiful piece, which stands about 24mm head to foot, 30mm tall overall.

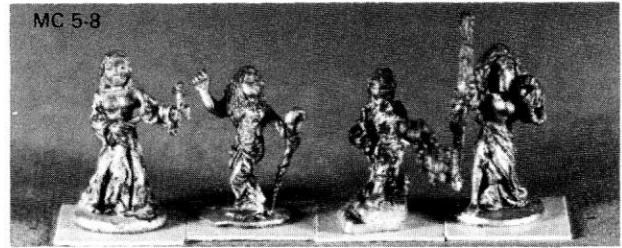
The *Male Cleric* (MC-03) is so enveloped in his hood and cloak that it is difficult to be sure what he's wearing underneath. A minor problem is that he certainly does not appear to be wearing armor of any kind, which is out of character for a "cleric" in *D&D* terms, which I assume is what was intended here, from the fact that he is carrying a sort of club as a weapon. It has a handguard somewhat like a sword, but sweeps up to a round club head at the business end. It's not very attractive or persuasive — the club head is as big as the character's head, which would be a clumsy weight to swing in battle! This figure should be redesigned to refine the weapon. It stands about 25mm from head to foot.

The *Male Evil Cleric* (MC-04) is fancily dressed, from a headband decorated with a skull, down a cape with a clasp featuring a pentagram, a tassled shirt, and trousers, to furry boots. He stands holding a cobra up in his right hand, almost like a staff, while gesturing with his left hand to cast a spell. The face is a trifle crude when compared with others in the group, but perhaps that's in character, too. The figure stands about 26mm head to foot, 32mm overall.

The *Female Cleric* (MC-05) is as disappointing as the Male Cleric above, and for the same reasons — although her mace is better done, she has no armor or shield. Just what was the figure intended to be used as, one might wonder? She stands with mace held at waist height in her right hand, and holds out a cross in her left hand. Cut off the mace, and you could have a pacifist cleric or healer figure; but this simply doesn't make it as a *D&D*-type cleric, which from the mace this obviously was intended to be. (When you

think about it, the *D&D* cleric is an artificial gaming construct that is easy to spot.) This figure is about 27mm head to foot.

The *Female Evil Cleric* (MC-06) is a lovely piece of sculpting. The woman's face is well-carved, and the positions of the body and limbs shows good attention to anatomy. She stands with her body



twisted completely to the left with her right hand raised, while with her left she holds a short twisted staff with a looped head. She could be turning in surprise, or dancing a ritual. Her costume, which is held together with find-linked chains, covers the bare essentials. This leaves us wondering what kind of character this is intended to portray, as she seems more of a sorceress or shaman than a cleric in *D&D*-type usage. An interesting figure, at any rate, she stands about 25mm head to foot.

The *Male Mage Casting Spell* (MC-07) wears traditional magician's robes as he stands in a semi-crouch with a scroll rolled up in his right hand while gesturing with the left. From that left hand springs a blast of fire. (He is standing, by the way, on a short flight of steps.) The figure is about 24mm head to foot, and about 38mm in width.

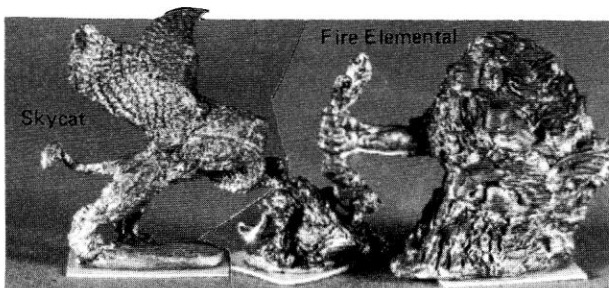
The *Female Mage Casting Spell* (MC-08) might well be called female mage with staff instead. She wears a dress or robe slit up the right side to expose most of her leg, with which she is bracing herself to cast a spell. She holds her staff upright with her right hand, and gestures with a clenched fist with her left hand. She wears no hood, and her hair covers her shoulders and most of her back; she is, however, veiled, with only her intense eyes showing. A nice piece of sculpting. She stands about 27mm head to foot, 40mm tall overall.

The next pair of figures are a male and female *Sathagreas* (pack PF-09, two of each, \$3.25). These are snake-people, with long lower bodies of snakes, covered with what appear to be heavy scales and



ending in a spiked tail that may be an artificial weapon. The male wears a roman-type helmet and what looks like a sort of plate upper armor. He holds a double-bladed axe that has a sickle blade at the end. He wears a shield over his back and a scabbarded sword at his waist. The figure is 45mm tall and 57mm wide. The female wears no helmet, but does wear upper body armor. At her waist is a belt holding a pouch and the scabbard for the sword she holds in her right hand. In her left hand is a shield carved with the same mystic pyramid symbol as the male's shield. This figure is about 40mm tall and 32mm wide.

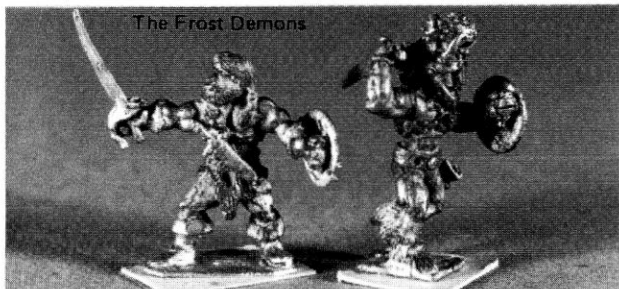
The *Skykat* (SB-01 \$3.75) is a giant feline with wings. The cat's body is heavily-furred, and the head sports three backwards-pointing horns in a row. Both the fur on the body and the feathers on the wings are nicely carved. I have mixed feelings about the skykat. On the one hand, it is an impressive piece. On the other hand, the figure is thick and heavy-looking, rather than the slender figure you'd expect on a flying beast. Make your own choice — if heavy dragons can fly, I guess an arctic-furred feline can. The left wing, by the way, has to be glued on, and fastens in a way I wish more companies would use. Instead of a mere pin and hole arrangement, this wing fits into a square socket that holds it firmly while the glue sets. The figure is about 67mm tall and 65mm from front to back.



The *Fire Elemental and Brazier* (EL-01, \$3.75) is a manlike bearded face, shoulders and arms emerging from a blazing fire. He is crouched over a brazier from which fire streams over one side and up in a plume which he holds in his right hand. The top of this plume forms a thin humanoid face, possibly another fire elemental being controlled by the large one? A nice figure, for anyone needing a fire elemental. The main figure is 40mm tall and 56mm wide.

Stephen M. Tofano is a sculptor who has designed figures for several different miniatures companies. His *Demon Lords* line is unique in the field, and if demons are your thing, I highly recommend these. They are available from Spartan Miniatures, P. O. Box 206, Deer Park, NY 11729. There should be a number of additional figures in the line by the time this review is printed, so write for their catalog.

The first set is not demons, but *Frost Giants* (\$4.25) This is two figures, each with three pieces of equipment to be glued on. The first wears his hair in braids, and has a fur clasped about his waist by a heavy belt from which his dagger is to be fastened. On his hands he wears heavy gauntlets with which he holds a cutlass and round shield. His only other clothing is a heavy pair of boots, and his muscles are impressive. The figure is about 40mm from head to foot, and this is in 25mm scale, remember! The second giant



wears fur boots, a heavy belt to which his scabbard is fastened, and an elaborate dragon helm. He holds a shield in his left hand, and swings his broadsword over his shoulder, again displaying much muscle. The figure is about 40mm from head to foot, 50mm tall overall.

Set 2 is *Baxthos the Boar Demon* (\$2.25). Baxthos has a man's body but with the head of a giant boar and claws instead of feet. He is described in the catalog as coming with tulwar and dragon shield,



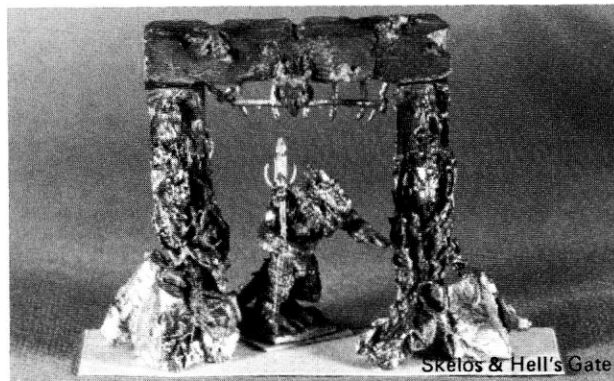
but my sample came with tulwar (a heavy curved sword) for the right hand and a spike of a dagger for the left hand. The figure is quite naked, and for that reason is not recommended as a gift to persons other than adults. He stands about 38mm from head to foot —er, I mean claw.

Set 3 is *Arras the Hawk Demon* (\$2.25), who, like Baxthos, is a man's body with a beast's head and claws. In this case, that means a ferocious bird's head (not exactly hawklike), with claws for hands as well as feet. Arras comes with a notched sword formed with a sort of katana's handle. Like Baxthos, Arras is naked and stands about 38mm head to foot.

Set 4 is *Raziel the Rainbow Demon* (\$7.50), who also happens to be a very impressive dragon. Like the previous two figures, this is a partially human, partially bestial figure and obviously male. (This may be why you don't see this line prominently displayed in the front of the shop when you ask for it.) This one, however, is almost all beast, including the scales, wings, and tail of a dragon; only the shoulders, arm structure and upper legs are humanoid. In his left hand, Raziel holds an enormous, elaborately-hilted broadsword. Both sword and wings have to be glued on. The wings have no prongs nor other aids to guide them into place, but glued solidly and exactly onto the shoulders on the first try, indicating precise design and casting. Raziel stands about 57mm head to foot, 85mm tall overall.

Set 5 is *Skelos, Guardian of Hells Gate* (\$4.50). This is a lizard man, with the usual combination of human and bestial features, and is also naked. The way the figure shifts from bare skin areas to scaly areas is nicely done. The design of the head and the spiked row down the back is almost dragonlike. The figure is described as coming with a halberd, but what you get is really more of a spetum (a spear with side prongs for catching a foe's weapon). The figure is about 40mm from head to foot, 53mm tall overall with weapon.

Set 6 is *Skelos plus Hells Gate* (\$11.50). The gate is two uprights that seem to grow right out of rough pieces of rock, and are surrounded at their bases by undergrowth. They are decorated with



skulls in elaborate candleholders. The crosspiece looks like roughly carved stone with a demon's carved head in the center, behind which can be seen a twisted portcullis. The top piece does not fit exactly onto the uprights, and is a bit difficult to glue into a stable position, but this apparently was intentional, to give the finished gate a crumbling look. Two lizards sit atop the gate watching for fools willing to dare the wrath of Skelos. The gate stands 80mm tall, 74mm wide at the top, and 105mm wide at the base.

Set 7 is *Varus the Demon Slayer* (\$4.50) who by his appearance is a demon who slays rather than one who slays demons. He is about the same proportions and design as the frost giants (set 1). Varus wears an elaborate winged helmet, and holds a spiral lance in his right hand, which sports an armored gauntlet covering his whole lower arm. He holds a round shield decorated with a dragon image in his left hand (both shield and lance must be glued on). He is



mounted on a giant hawk that itself wears a fancy helmet. The figure is 84mm tall because of the lance and 54mm front to back.

Set 8 is *Winged Mutation with Mounted Warrior* (\$6.50). The warrior is a bit smaller than Varus (he looks like he'd be about 35mm tall if upright) and wears no helmet. He is bald except for what is probably a warrior's topknot of hair, and has heavy eye-brows, mustache, and short beard. He carries a lance with a spiral shaft and a long blade. He is mounted on a beast with the body and wings of a reptile, but a bird's head. The figure really needs to be mounted on a base for stability, since it rests only on the curled tail of the beast, which appears to be in the process of taking off into the air (or landing). The figure is about 82mm tall because of the lance and wings.

Set 9 is *Sabbath the Judge on Ornate Throne* (\$7.50). This is a demon lord at home. He is seated on a throne decorated with dinosaurs holding it up and a skull over the back, up on a platform of

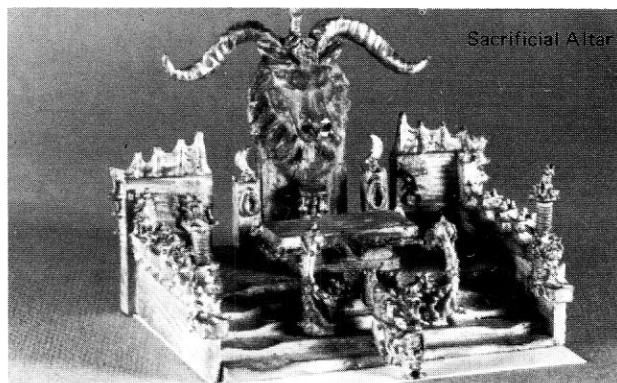


three steps. A pole holds a book at a convenient location, and fancy posts to either side of the throne hold large candles in what is obviously a pentagram. Sabbath himself is a naked male humanoid with a unicorn-like horn and the legs of a goat, and is about frost giant size.

Set 11, the *Judgment Platform* (\$13.00), is an accessory for 9, since the throne and its base fit neatly into the top of the platform. The platform itself consists of an upper and lower section.

The lower section has a font in front flanked by a pair of open oil lamps, on top of which are three carved bullheaded demons. This lower platform is accessible from either side via short stairways. The upper platform is accessible only from the stairs up from the lower platform. It is decorated on each side with images of flying dragons forming the side railings for the platform where the demon's throne fits. The platform is about 65mm wide and 92mm deep and 60mm tall, these being the extremities of each dimension.

Set 10, *Sacrificial Altar*, (\$17.00) is the most elaborate set piece in the line. It consists of a platform reached via a short stairway (realistically worn on the steps from hard use or great age). Its sides are carved into demon faces, with flying lizards or demons forming the bases for the large candleholders near the front. The rear is dominated by the huge horned demon head with an hourglass on a stand in front (to time the sacrifice?), flanked by platforms holding crescent moon symbols. These platforms are themselves flanked by short walls bearing demon faces. In the center of the platform is the altar itself, with a gutter to catch the blood of the victims and channel it into the front gargoyle, from whence it pours into a carved bucket. The gargoyle can be flanked by the demonic candleholders as shown, or you can glue them where you please. There are 17 pieces in all to this set, which is 100mm wide by 80mm deep and 80mm tall, these being the extremities of each dimension. □



StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

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StarMaster is a correspondence game of galactic exploration, diplomacy, and conquest allowing for interaction not only between each player and the worlds of the galaxy, but between the players themselves.

New players begin further out from the Galactic Center than established players allowing them to develop themselves among equals. You may lead a powerful reptilian race, carving out a vast empire of colony and subject worlds; or perhaps an insectoid species, engaged in a holy crusade to convert the galaxy to the worship of their many-legged god.

As the chosen ruler of your people, you must decide what diplomatic and military policies will be followed in order to lead your kind to dominance among the sentient beings of the galaxy.

The galaxies of StarMaster are a complete fantasy environment of solar systems, with geographies ranging from worlds near absolute zero to worlds where rivers of molten tungsten bubble, with technologies spanning from rock-throwing cave-dwellers to advanced Elder races with near-godlike abilities.

Nor is the StarMaster environment limited in terms of playing area. There are multiple galaxies allowing for extra-galactic invasions across the voids. There are both natural and constructed gateways to (and from!) other dimensions and parallel universes.

StarMaster is limitless in possibilities, bounded only by imagination! It is a game where, literally, anything is possible.

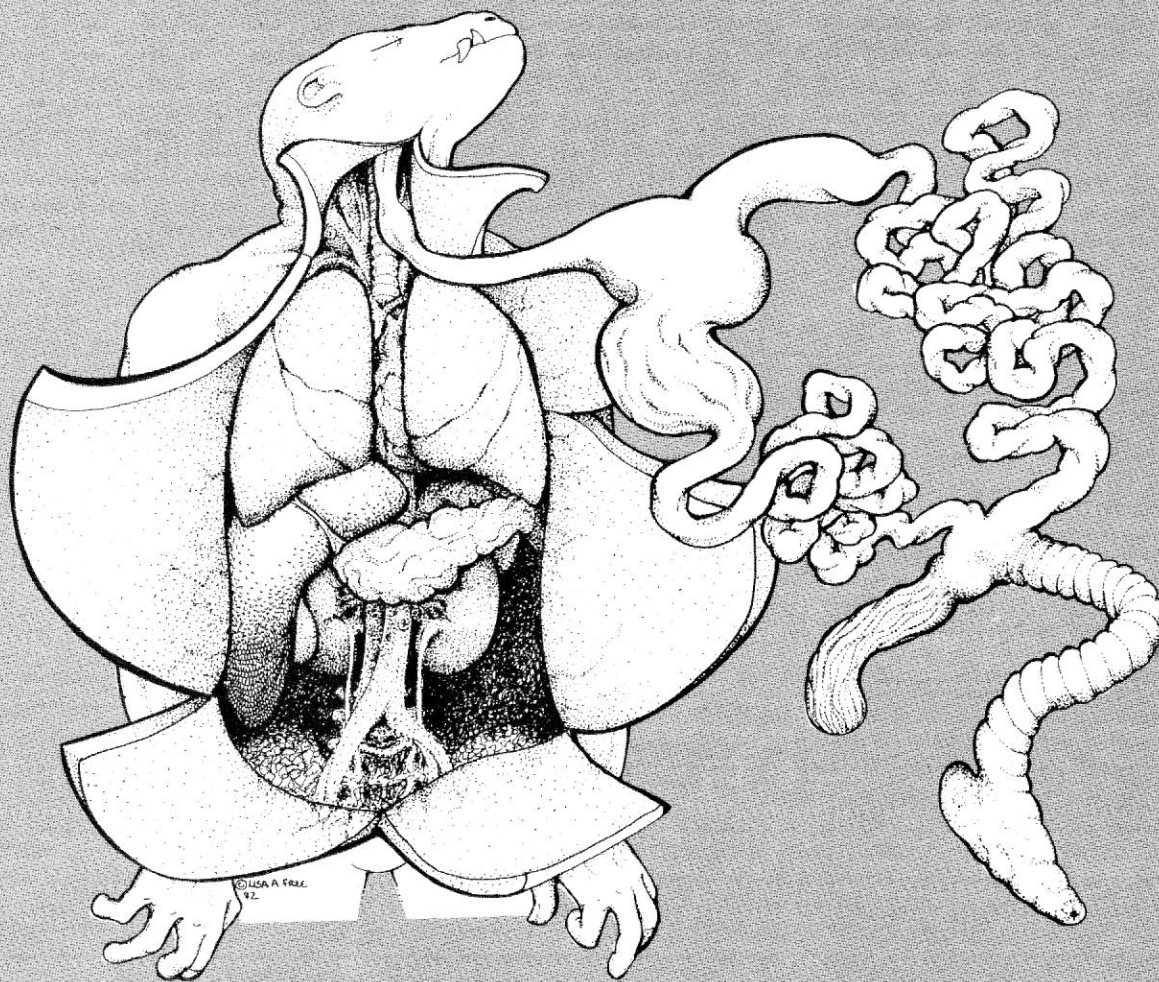
StarMaster offers these features:

- Design your species as if you could have directed evolution to this moment.
- Design your homeworld in terms of temperature, atmosphere, and mass.
- Choose your government and social order.
- You decide the production for all worlds of your empire, building colonizing ships, merchantmen, warships, warriors, and fortresses.
- Technology increases steadily, permitting faster, larger ships, deadlier weapons, and scientific breakthroughs.

The galaxies are dotted with the ruins of Elder civilizations lacking the strength to master the stars. Can you lead your world to greatness where so many others fell short?

StarMaster may be entered for \$12.00 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are \$3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased separately for \$3.50.

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QUICK PLUGS

Every issue of *Different Worlds* presents capsule descriptions of new products. Publishers are encouraged to send samples of their products for announcement in this column.

NEW SYSTEMS

SWORDBEARER — Comes boxed with six books in three volumes and a character data sheet. Designed by B. Dennis Sustare, the six books are: Characters, Fighting, Elemental Magic, Spirit Magic, Racial Index, and Gamemaster's Guide — 128 pages in all. This is a standard fantasy role-playing game not set to any particular world. Published by Heritage USA, 14001 Distribution Wy, Dallas TX 75234.

GANGBUSTERS — This is a role-playing game set in the 1920s. Designed by Rick Krebs and Marc Acres, the game comes boxed with a 64-page rulebook, 34"x22" and 17"x11" double-sided maps, 70 counters, a 16-page introductory module, pair of ten-sided dice, and a crayon to mark the numbers in the dice. The rules cover surprise, sighting, fistfighting, gunfights, cars, etc., as well as background material on typical costs of goods and services, historical characters, criminal activities, etc. Published by TSR Hobbies, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

STAR FRONTIERS — This is a science fiction role-playing game. It comes boxed with a 16-page basic game rules, 64-page expanded game rules, 32-page adventure module, 34"x22" and 17"x11" double-sided maps, 285 counters, a pair of ten-sided dice, and a crayon. The game involves combat with strange creatures on alien planets. Instructions on refereeing, campaigning, and creating adventures, as well as a bibliography of suggested reading are included. Published by TSR Hobbies.

KABAL — Comes with a 40-page players' guide, 36-page book of magic spells, 48-page referee guide, and assorted play aids. Designed by Ernest T. Hams, this is a fantasy role-playing game not set on any particular world. There are numerous charts and tables as well as extensive spell and creature lists. Sells for \$20, available from Kabal Gaming Systems, 12385 Rose St N, Seminole FL 33542.

THE MECHANOID INVASION — This is a 48-page rulebook describing a science fiction role-playing game set on the planet Gideon E. The planet has been invaded by the Mechanoids, cybernetic aliens. The Earth colonists must delay Mechanoid operations until help can arrive. Designed by Kevin Siembieda, there are extensive illustrations by the designer. Published by Palladium Books, 5669 Casper Ave, Detroit MI 48210, it sells for \$3.75.

THE TRAVELLER BOOK — This is a hard-cover version of *Basic Traveller* with additional adventuring material. Available from GDW, PO Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61701.

RECON — This is a role-playing game of the Vietnam war. The 44-page rulebook includes rules on mission planning, terrain generation, recon teams, helicopters, patrol boats, airborne drops, underwater combat, recruiting, debriefing, small arms, heavy weapons, mines and boobytraps, hand-to-hand combat, grenades, etc. Designed by

Joe F. Martin, it is published by RPG Inc., PO Box 485, Lincoln AR 72744.

MAN, MYTH, & MAGIC — The books are now available separately. Book I: Basic Game is \$6 and Book II: Advanced Game is \$8. Available from Yaquinto Publications, PO Box 24767, Dallas TX 75224.

VILLAINS AND VIGILANTES — Designed by Jeff Dee and Jack Herman, this boxed edition contains the 48-page revised rules, 20-page introductory scenario titled *Crisis at Crusader Citadel* (available separately), a 25½"x11" gamemaster's shield, and a sample character record sheet. This superhero role-playing game sells for \$12 and is available from Fantasy Games Unlimited, PO Box 182, Roslyn NY 11576.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES — This is a World War II role-playing game. Comes boxed with a 96-page book on character generation and basic rules, a 48-page book containing event tables, a 56-page book on missions, 112 counters, four 17"x11" double-sided maps, play aids, and a die. Rules cover sighting, night movement, surprise, weather, tanks, mapmaking, interrogation, medals and decorations, mines, paratroops, rangers, etc. It sells for \$20, and is available from FASA, PO Box 6930, Chicago IL 60680-6930.

ALMA MATER — This is a high school role-playing game designed by Steve Davis and Andrew Warden. The 48-page rulebook covers rules on high school character types; skills including cheating/plagiarism, crudeness, coolness, and dancing; encounters with teachers, police, and animals; social rules; alcohol and drugs; academics; wheels; etc. Available from Oracle Games Ltd, PO Box 1027, Sta M, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2X1.

FOR CAR WARS

CAR WARS EXPANSION KIT 1 — For \$3.50 you get 24 road sections, 124 counters, eight suggested layouts, and a new mini-scenario for racetrack combat. From Steve Jackson Games, PO Box 18957, Austin TX 78760-8957. Texas residents add 5% sales tax.

SUNDAY DRIVERS — Comes in a plastic pocket-size box, contents include two 21"x32" maps, 160 counters, and a 24-page rulebooklet. Designed by Aaron Allson and Stefan Jones, the game is a role-playing supplement for *Car Wars*, and involves killing and destruction. There are rules for burning buildings, spikes, mines, etc. Available from Steve Jackson Games for \$5.50.

FOR TRAVELLER

THE SOLOMANI RIM — This is a 48-page booklet designed by John Harshman. It describes 16 subsectors in the Solomani Rim as well as a history of the sector and notes on the Vegans who control a part of the sector. Available from GDW.

FOR VILLAINS AND VIGILANTES

ISLAND OF DOCTOR APOCALYPSE — Designed by Bill Willingham, this 20-page book describes an adventure where the heroes must save American cities from des-

truction by Dr. Apocalypse's killer satellite. Available for \$5 from Fantasy Games Unlimited.

FOR MECHANOID INVASION

THE JOURNEY — This 56-page book is designed by Kevin Siembieda. This volume covers new weapons, psionics, adventure on a mechanoid mother ship, mutants, magic, and more. Sells for \$4.95, available from Palladium Books.

FOR THIEVES' GUILD

THIEVES' GUILD VI — Now in bound book format, this volume is 64 pages. Designed by Kerry Lloyd and Richard Meyer, it contains freebooting scenarios and ship encounters for piracy. It also has new rules on ship design, weaponry, crewing, sea creatures, weather, combat, catapults, boarding actions, sea magic, etc. Available from GameLords Ltd, 18616 Grosbeak Ter, Gaithersburg MD 20879 for \$7.50.

FOR MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

DEATH TO SETANTA — This is a 24-page scenario designed by Herbie Brennan. It involves the Maze of Death where adventurers must solve a number of puzzle-like problems. Available for \$6 from Yaquinto Publications.

KINGDOM OF THE SIDHE — This is a 20-page scenario also designed by Herbie Brennan. This adventure is about a magical race that lives underground. Available for \$5 from Yaquinto Publications.

FOR BOOT HILL

LOST CONQUISTADOR MINE — This is a treasure hunt scenario with a town and wilderness section. Designed by David Cook and Tom Moldvay, it is a 32-page book. Published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR GAMMA WORLD

FAMINE IN FAR-GO — This scenario involves adventurers embarking on a perilous rite of adulthood through the savage wilderness. Designed by Michael Price, it is 32 pages long. It contains new creature descriptions, new robots, and new mutations. Published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR GANGBUSTERS

TROUBLE BREWING — This 32-page module simulates gangland warfare. Gangs involved, police, and hangouts are first described. Sixteen scenarios are then described, along with six short ones. Also includes additional counters for the game. Designed by Tom Moldvay, published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR MORROW PROJECT

LIBERATION AT RIVERTON — This 56 page module is designed by H. N. Voss. The Morrow team awakens to chaos. The team must clear the area around Riverton of tyrannical rebel soldiers. Additional material includes specs of the latest in military hardware. Available for \$7 from TimeLine Ltd, 3588 Blad Mtn Rd, Pontiac MI 48057.

FOR YSGARTH

DRINK THE WINE OF THE MOON — This 24-page supplement contains articles on the

arcane arts, training, a scenario, holy orders, native skills, experience, and Q & A. Edited by Davide F. Nalle, available from Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st St NW, Washington DC 20036.

PLAYER & GM RECORD SHEETS — This pack contains nine character record sheets and three adventure record sheets. Designed by David F. Nalle, available from Ragnarok Enterprises.

FOR SPACE OPERA

ROWSION II — This 24-page book involves a merchant service adventure. Designed by Kenneth C. Campbell, there is a description of the planet, its inhabitants, government, creatures, etc. Available for \$5 from Fantasy Games Unlimited.

FOR AD&D

LOST CAVERNS OF TSOJCANTH — An adventure for character levels 6-10 which covers a treasure hunt into the mountains. It comes in two 32-page books designed by Gary Gygax. The first book has wilderness encounters, an gnome lair, the lesser caverns, and the greater caverns. The second book holds new monsters and magical items. Published by TSR Hobbies.

FOR ARCHAERON

WARRIOR — This 48-page booklet is the combat module for the Archaeron Games System though it is designed to work with most existing role-playing systems. Designed by Wilf K. Backhaus, it has character generation, spending habits, attacks and parries, bashing, missiles, mounted combat, armor and shields, and wounds. Available for \$7 from Archaeron Games Ltd, 10119B 80th St. Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6A 3H9.

FOR THE FANTASY TRIP

THE WARRIOR-LORDS OF DAROK — This is designed by Richard Meyer and Kerry Lloyd. It consists of a 32-page book and a 17"x11" map. Darok is a primitive place where brute strength and fighting prowess are viewed as the true measure of a man. There is a description of Darok, its inhabitants, the village of Ghee, a treasure hunt scenario, challenge combat, horse-breaking, encounters, and random fighter, wizard, and thief generation tables. Available from Metagaming, PO Box 15346, Austin TX 78761.

FOR RUNEQUEST

SCORPION HALL — This is a 96-page solo adventure. The adventurer must locate the lair of scorpion men who have been raiding the local lands. A special feature is that the adventure can be run many times, changing things for the next run, until the adventure is finally completed. Available for \$10 from Chaosium Inc., PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706-0302. Add \$2 for postage and handling. California residents add appropriate 6% or 6½% sales tax.

TROLLPAK — All about *RuneQuest* trolls, this boxed module contains a 64-page book on troll legends and history, a 48-page book on creating and playing troll characters, a 64 page book of adventures in troll lands, a 12-page and a 6-page scenario book, eight pages of player handouts, and a 28"x22" double-sided map. Designed by Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen. It also contains rules for

Trollball. Available for \$18 from Chaosium Inc.

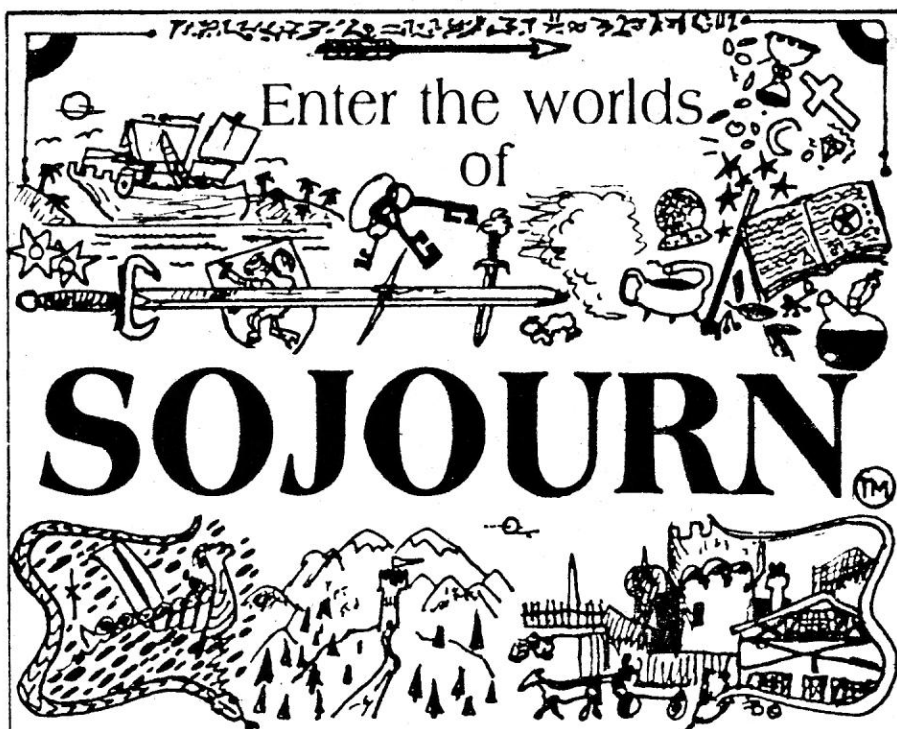
FOR ANY SYSTEM

CARDBOARD HEROES — Four more sets are available. *Cops, Crooks & Civilians* has 37 policemen, thugs, and ordinary citizens. *Giants* has 15 giants, including titan, cloud giant, storm giant, stone giant, fire, and giants of Norse myth, ogres, etc. *Dungeon Dangers* contain three sets of 44 different bats, wasps, birds, rats, crabs, carnivorous plants, spiders, snakes, scorpions, slime, etc. *Traps & Treasure* has three sets of 61 different piles of gold, silver, and copper, pits and man-traps, chests, bags, packs, weapons, armor, bodies, skeletons, etc. Painted by Denis Loubet and J. David George, they are available for \$3.50 each from Steve Jackson Games.

JONRIL — This is a city description. It comes with a 72-page book and an 11"x17" map. Designed by April Abrams and Raymond E. Feist, there are numerous floor-plans, a price list, several overview maps, a list of personalities, etc. Available for \$9.95 from Midkemia Press, 3410 Waco St (No. 1), San Diego CA 92117. California residents add 6% sales tax.

AMAZON MUTUAL WANTS YOU! — This is a 32-page book edited by Ben Ezzel. It contains four scenarios: a temple adventure, a sea trip, search for a missing person, and recovering a body from a haunted manor. Price is \$6, available from The Dragon Tree, 118 Sayles Blvd, Abilene TX 79605.

The listing of the summer crop of games will be continued next issue. □



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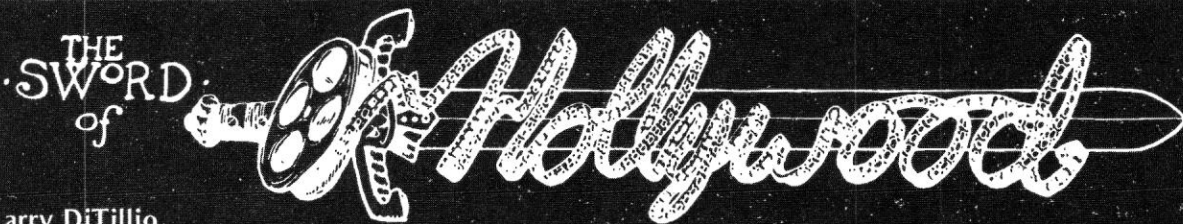
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Cinema News & Reviews



By Larry DiTillio

Wa Salaam Alaikum Cinema Nuts! Ye Ole Sword has some news, a "review" and a few germane comments concerning gaming and the movies.

CLASSICS FROM THE COMICS: Gary Kurtz and his Kinetographics animation company are planning two exciting animated projects, certain to delight fans of comic strips and books. The first is *Little Nemo*, Windsor McKay's comic strip concerning the adventures of the king of Slumberland. Rumor has it that none other than Mr. Ray Bradbury will do the script. Kurtz's second project is *The Spirit*, Will Eisner's classic pulp/comic hero and a big favorite of many comic buffs.

D&D ON FILM? In issue 63 of *The Dragon* Gary Gyax announced that a *D&D* movie is in the works at TSR. He claimed that work on the film is going slowly so that it will be the best of its genre ever made. Proposed date was 1984-5. Mr. Gyax also reviewed *Conan* in that issue, citing its weakness and blaming it all on director Dino De Laurentis. While Dino probably is a prime target for blame, he is not the movie's director. In fact Dino couldn't direct traffic in a ghost town. No wonder TSR is working slowly on their movie if their head honcho doesn't know the difference between a director and a producer. As *DW* readers know, John Millius was the director of *Conan*. What intrigues Ye Ole Sword about Mr. Gyax's words on a *D&D* film is the fact that *Mazes & Monsters*, the abysmal FRP-based book by Rona Jaffe has been slated for production, supposedly for TV. Wonder if *Mazes & Monsters* will be the target of yet another infamous TSR lawsuit? Those of you who read the book (pity, it stinks) know that the game they're talking about is *D&D*, despite the title change.

BOND'S BACK: Well after the usual wheeling and dealing, Roger Moore has finally signed on for the next Bond flick *Octopussy*. Yet what is even more intriguing is the story that Sean Connery is also returning as James Bond in a new production of *Thunderball*. This re-make is currently known as *Never Say Never Again*, but I predict that that title will be dropped (since it stinks). Irvin Kershner, director of *The Empire Strikes Back* will direct it. *Thunderball* is the only Bond story not owned by long-time Bond Producers Cubby Broccoli and Harry Saltzman. The beautiful Barbara Carrera will play the wicked Fatima Blush in *Never Say Never Again* and the plot will be very different from the original *Thunderball*. Both *Octopussy* and *Never Say Never Again* will probably be released about the same time, giving Bond fans double delight.

ALIEN MAN TACKLES FANTASY: Ridley Scott, who directed *Alien* and more

recently *Blade Runner* announced that his next picture will be a fantasy entitled *Legend*. "It's about elves and goblins and fairies," said Scott, "Marvelous stuff." According to Mr. Scott, we should be seeing *Legend* in about two years. How's that for advance notice? By the way, I know *Blade Runner* has gotten bad reviews and bad word-of-mouth but I personally found it an intriguing film, especially where visuals and music were concerned. Scott's vision of a future Los Angeles, where buildings spurt great gouts of flame and dismal rain falls constantly, is a downer, but a fascinating one. So, I'll go against the mob and recommend *Blade Runner*. If we can't take a little grit with our science fiction we'll see nothing but *E.T.*'s for the rest of our lives (not that *E.T.* isn't great, but as a steady diet?).

ROCK STAR BOWIE AS VAMPIRE: Rock Star David Bowie is the protagonist of a strange vampire flick called *The Hunger*, which should be coming your way in the next few months. *The Hunger* was made by Tony Scott, brother of the above mentioned Ridley Scott and also stars Susan Sarandon.

DISNEY DOINGS: On the slate for Walt Disney Productions is a film version of Ray Bradbury's classic novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Disney's new "adult" stance has not been too successful. Both *The Black Hole* and *TRON* were supposed to be indicative of this new stance, but outside of super special effects both suffered from the kiddie-american dialogue and plotting that characterize Disney. Let's hope *Something Wicked* fares better because it is a Super story. Meanwhile Disney is re-releasing *The Sword in the Stone* for Christmas.

A B IS A B IS A B: Just recently I caught a nifty little "B" picture called *The Sword and the Sorcerer*. Prior to viewing it, I heard lots of bad things about it and to give discredit where discredit is due, most of the bad things were quite true. The film's plot disappeared after 20 minutes (and it wasn't that good to begin with), the acting was hammy and the jet-propelled sword of the title was downright dumb. So why did I like it? Simple. It was a good time and that's what movies like this one are supposed to offer. *The Sword and the Sorcerer* makes no pretense at being great art. It's a B sword-and-sorcery picture, period! Now, let's face some facts gang. Sword-and-sorcery is a "B" genre. Most sword-and-sorcery plots are inane or non-existent and frankly that's okay. Sword and sorcery pushes different buttons than fantasy and a little sloppiness in craft might be regretful or annoying but it doesn't harm the fun. Look at your average "dungeon" game and you'll rarely find

great artistry in terms of story or situation. If you do, it's a plus; if you don't it's still fun. That's why I can't find it in my heart to condemn *The Sword and the Sorcerer* as others have. What I saw was nothing more or less than a medley of every dungeon-crawl I've ever been on. The hero was a wise-cracking rogue, the heroine was a spunky princess, the villain was a sneering blackguard and the sorcerer was an inhuman wretch. There was bloody combat, powerful magics (incidentally the film's effects were very well done) and impossible feats at every turn and I don't know what more a sword-and-sorcery freak requires. I know that deep in every film-goer's heart lurks a trenchant critic, but there is a time to lighten up on a film's flaws and *The Sword and the Sorcerer* is a perfect example of this.

TITLE CHANGE: *Tales of the Brass Monkey*, which I mentioned a few months ago is now *The Gold Monkey*. The series is ABC's cash-in on *Raiders* and deals with an independent adventurer tracking down artifacts and dealing with Nazi spies. Similar to this style of show is *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, a Columbia Pictures series which is based on the exploits of Frank Buck, the famed explorer/animal catcher. The odds in TinselTown seem to favor *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, but its you tube fans who will tell the tale.

FROM THE PAST: This time around my recommendation for gamers is right out of left field. The film is *Beauty & The Beast*, directed by Jean Renoir (yes, it is a French film). This black-and-white extravaganza was made in the early '40s and contains more true fantasy than any picture since. It tells the classic saga of Beauty and her gradual love for the Beast and tells it in a timeless, magical fashion. The film is loaded with eldritch atmosphere and gamemasters will be able to derive much from it for use in scenarios. You can catch *Beauty and The Beast* at art theaters or museums and occasionally it is on television (usually on a public station showing classic films). I also suggest it to organizers of game conventions as an appropriate piece for film programs. There was also another version, in English, made for TV and starring George C. Scott. While I prefer the Renoir film, this version is also excellent and well worth the viewing. If you want to see the difference between fantasy and sword-and-sorcery then see *Beauty and The Beast*.

Well, I'm out of here for the moment. But rest assured, I'll be back next issue with more tantalizing trivia from TinselTown. Until then, see ya at the movies. . . □

BEASTMASTER

Producer Donald P. Borchers
Director Don Coscarelli
Screenplay Don Coscarelli and
Paul Pepperman
Music Lee Holdridge

CAST

Dar Marc Singer
Kiri Tanya Roberts
Maax Rip Torn
Seth John Amos

Reviewed by John Nubbin

What has happened to the fantasy film? Did someone make it illegal to make a good one when my back was turned? After this summer, I am forced to wonder if anyone still remembers how (or cares to) make a serious, exciting, non-humorous adventure picture.

The latest hat tossed into the arena was hurled by MGM in the shape of their sword and sorcery epic, *The Beastmaster*. This one is the tale of Dar, son of a king and stolen in infancy through magic. He is shifted from his mother's womb to that of a cow's, and is then taken from the cow to be sacrificed. He is saved by a passerby, and raised by him. Their village is destroyed by roving warriors who don't seem to want food, women, gold, or anything except the chance to destroy. Dar vows vengeance and sets out after them.

Along the way, he is joined by Seth, a wandering priest who is really a warrior who is raising and training a youth who is really Dar's brother to be a warrior and a king. He is also joined by Kiri, a slave girl who is really a captured warrior, and a princess, and a lot of villagers who think they are warriors but are really only villagers.

Luckily, he is also joined by a large black eagle, two ferrets, and a huge black

panther. I say luckily, for if it wasn't for the animals, even with John Alcott's stunningly beautiful photography, the film would be unwatchable.

The animals and Singer are the only ones in the film able to stay in character. Singer, at all times, looks, sounds, and acts like he is supposed to. His swordsmanship is good for the most part; his dramatic moments, when not ruined by the howlingly funny ever-changing accents of John Amos and Tanya Roberts, are as convincing as any film needs. He is superbly built, a well-muscled actor capable of performing any scene given him, especially those he shares with his animal teammates.

Every moment the screen frames Singer and the animal cast is magical, capable of making up for much of the film's nonsense. There isn't an animal in the cast that can't outact anyone else in the film, except for Singer. They were all excellently handled, and their trainers and handlers should be well pleased with themselves.

Unfortunately, the picture is about more than just the master and his beasts.

Rip Torn hisses his way through the way of the high priest to the point where audiences begin to talk to one another on cue whenever his face appears. Amos wanders back and forth from a convincing, high-fantasy dialect to guttural street-black accentings, never staying in one voice for more than a few phrases.

But the worst by far is Roberts. Her nasal, cartoon-mouse voice makes her as womanly and desirable as a steelmill lunch whistle. She constantly moves, smiles, prances, and pouts like a 1980's fashion model.

Some of the smaller roles, such as that of Dar's adopted father, played by Ben Hammer, are filled out quite well, but overall the acting is not the major issue here. In the end, it is the story of *The Beastmaster* which ruins the film.



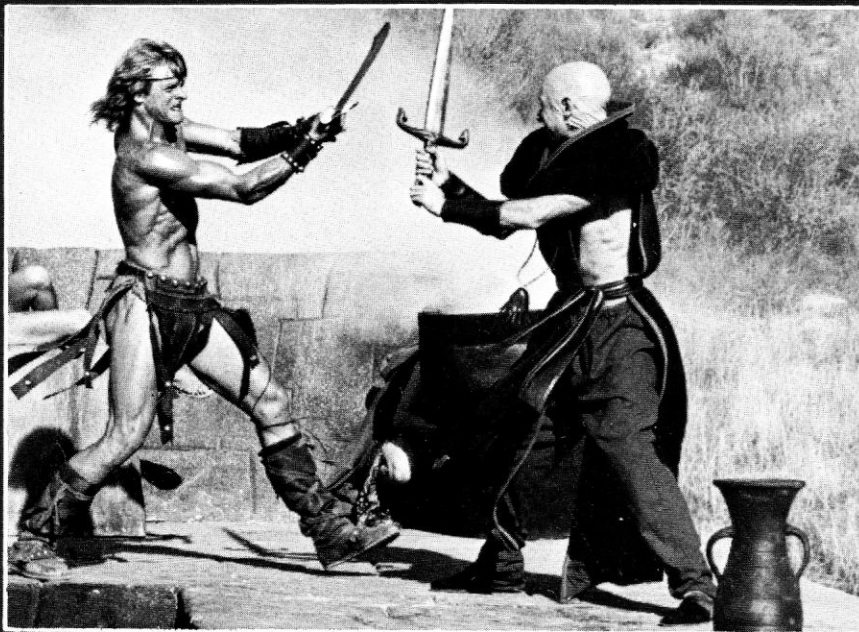
One minute deadly serious, the next comical, the next confusing; the basic chain of events of the film makes no sense. Why is young Dar taken out to a field to be sacrificed? Who is Seth, and how does he come to be a guardian of Dar's younger brother. Indeed, how does Dar even come to have a younger brother? Wasn't his mother killed when he was stolen, and wasn't his father made prisoner? Why is the front gate of Maax's city never, ever guarded? On and on.

The audience is not even sure how or why Dar is a beastmaster. Was it because of his fifteen seconds of life within a cow? Maybe. But we're never told for sure.

The Beastmaster has some fine moments. Most of the sets are stunning; the photography and soundtrack try extremely hard to make us forget what they are working with. Singer is good, the animals are great, and certain moments of horror, like the monsters on the cliff, are truly horrific. But the good moments just do not outweigh the bad.

With promises of a sequel tacked onto the end of this film, fantasy fans can only pray that the creative talents behind it are as clever as those who put together *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*. If they are, perhaps next year will see a well thought-out, enjoyable, serious, and great sword and sorcery film.

This year sure didn't. □



Dear Tadashi,

The design credits for *Star Frontiers* are listed as "TSR Staff." Why no names? I hear that LAWRENCE SCHICK, now of Coleco, is primarily responsible. TSR should take a cue from Chaosium and check out their *Borderlands* game module—the credits list over fifty names.

NPC news! Word is out that TOM ROBERTSON, president of TSR's Role Playing Game Association (RPGA), does not exist. As the story goes, the fictional head may have been created to provide a scapegoat for any problems that members may have with the RPGA. And that's how he got such neat handwriting. The vice president is really the one in charge. As a former TSR employee puts it, "They get crazier and crazier . . ."

Traveller joins the computer age! GDW will be releasing a line of software games early next year. They have formed a new division, GameSoft, to provide computer versions of *Traveller*, existing GDW board-games, and new games designed specifically for computers. Software will initially be compatible with Apple II, and eventually with Atari and other computers.

Among the games banned at GENCON were Steve Jackson's Games' *Killer* and Oracle Games' *Alma Mater*. I think they should be banned from this universe, and applaud the officials at the convention.

Another game designer defects to Coleco: it's B. DENNIS SUSTARE this time. He is the designer of FGU's *Bunnies & Burrows*, Task Force Games' *Heroes of Olympus*, and Heritage's *Swordbearer*.

Did you know that E. Gary Gyax has a bodyguard who carries a gun? He followed Gary everywhere at GENCON. Mugger beware!

A recent court decision has made *Monopoly* a generic word for a boardgame. Can *Dungeons & Dragons* be far behind?

At ORIGINS a new group was formed, calling themselves the Association of Several Steves. The membership so far includes STEVE CROMPTON, STEVE JACKSON, STEVE PERRIN, and STEVE PETERSON. Guess I can't make an ASS out of myself the easy way.

If I haven't mentioned it before, Heritage was licensed to do *Champions* miniatures.

DAVE ARNESON announces that he has made all employees in his Adventure Games company vice presidents. He himself will be President in Charge of Vice Presidents.

When will Martian Metals get their *Trollball* game out? President FORREST BROWN reports that SEAN SUMMERS is presently doing the last of the development work and it's due for release at least by early next year. They will release the miniatures soon to capitalize on the renewed interest in the game generated by *Trollpak*.

I heard Chaosium has sold their *Eric* and *Dragon Pass* boardgames to Avalon Hill. Any special reason?

It wasn't my gossip that said LARRY DITILLIO was working for Chaosium. I saw him in a nightspot recently and unless you have an L.A. office I will verify that my friend Howie Barash is no more accurate than I am!



Returning to TSR, Dept. C: their newest releases, like *Gangbusters*, are a step up in quality and concept. I think the bigger staff may be paying off. Congratulations to those concerned.

Another one bites the dust. Paranoia Press, publishers of several *Traveller* play aids, is officially out of business. Collectors better pick up their five releases quick!

TIM KASK calls them "twitchers," GREG STAFFORD calls them "munchkin," JOHN T. SAPIENZA, Jr., calls them "trollkin," KEN ST ANDRE calls them "squids." I know who they're talking about. Do you?

An unfunny thing happened on the way to ORIGINS. Steve Jackson Games' staff and Flying Buffalo's crew were traveling together to Baltimore when several miles out of Knoxville, TN, a semi abruptly pulled across two lanes of traffic forcing FBI's van to an abrupt halt. The following SJG car couldn't stop in time and hit the van. A third vehicle was also involved in the accident, but fortunately no one was hurt. Two creative staffs almost up in smoke! I always fly, myself.

Supplements for Hero Game's *Espionage* and for Flying Buffalo's *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* will be compatible with

either game. Congratulations to two companies who know how to work together.

Entertainment Concepts has acquired the rights from Paramount Pictures to operate a PBM game based on *Star Trek*. Rumors indicate Paramount may be cracking down on unauthorized use of *Star Trek* copyrighted designs. Don't rouse Mr. Spock.

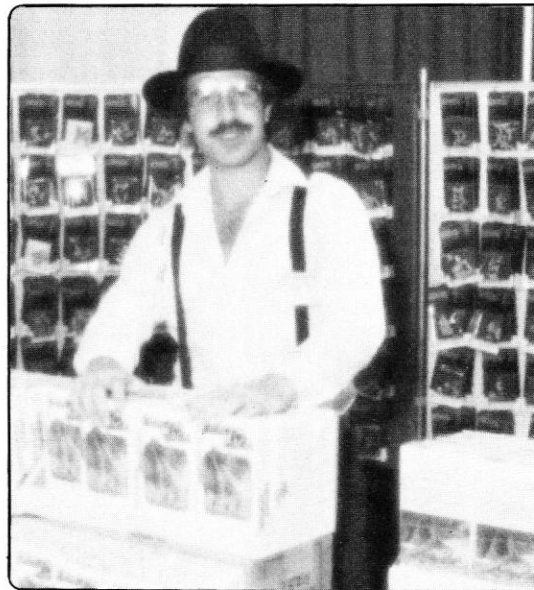
Despite a 30% drop in sales this year, TSR is actively recruiting more personnel for their company. They even had a table at GENCON this year soliciting attendees to fill out application forms. That "30% drop" may be an anomaly coming from unusually broad sales last year, remember.

Citadel's *Earthpigs* figures for their Weird Fantasy miniatures line were taken off the market because they resembled *Cerebus the Aardvark*, the popular underground comicbook character coming out of Canada. Another item for collectors to grab for quickly.

I hear that there may be some Elves in your future.

Love,

Gigi



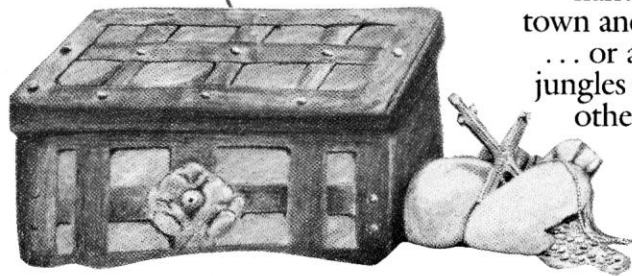
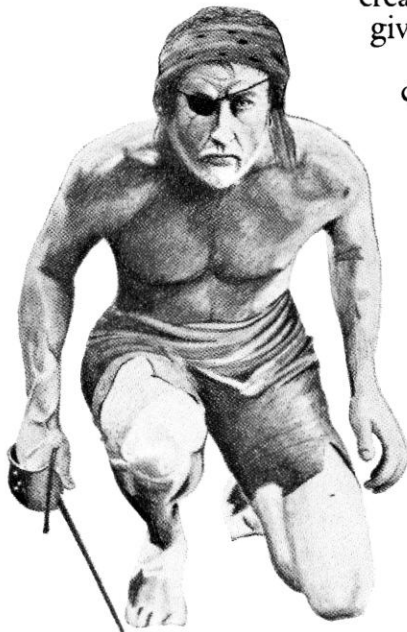
Is this man:

- a Texas underworld figure?
- a *Call of Cthulhu* player-character?
- a flunky for Heritage USA?
- editor of *The Insider* gossip sheet?
- Howard Barasch?
- most of the above?

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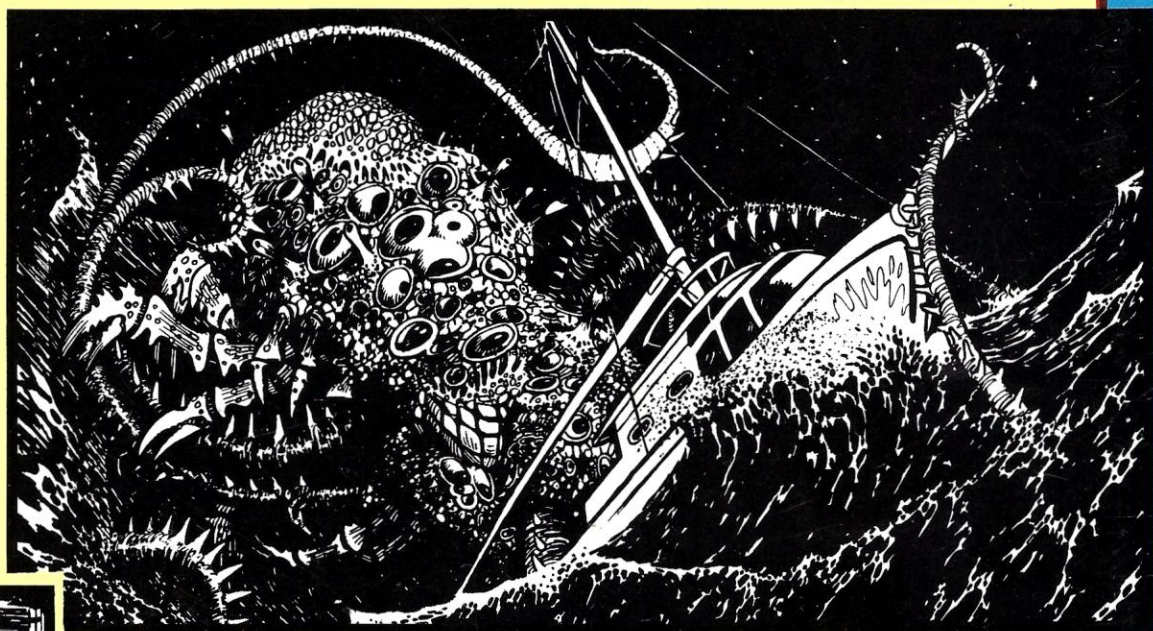
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