Different Worlds

THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURERS

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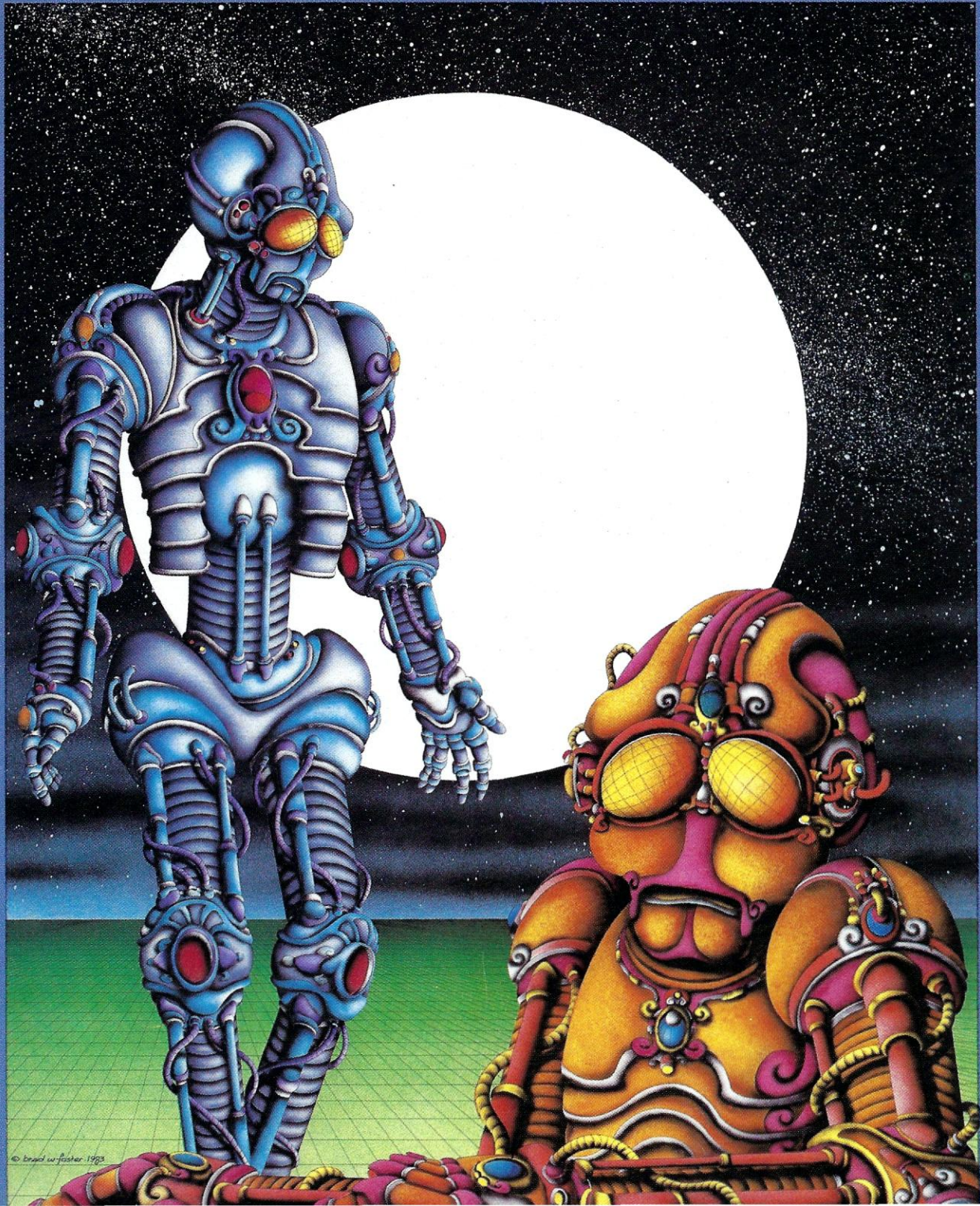
Different Views

THE FAULTS OF ISSUE 37

DW 37 had so many faults that I must catalog them. "What Happened to *RuneQuest*" was simply a two-page advertisement for *RQ3*. It adds nothing for people who already own a copy because it did not address the reasons for the changes from *RQ2*. The players around here call *RQ3* the "great leap backward," and although I like the new rules, in some ways I agree with them.

"Louis Wu & His Motley Crew" is a fine scenario, except that Louis himself got shorted at least 1800 points on his skills.

If *Different Worlds* is ' The magazine that dares to cover all the role-playing games and only role-playing games" (from the ads), why do you have book and movie reviews? "Sword of Hollywood" is a good column, but out of place in a gaming magazine. On the other hand, any reviewer who liked *Red Dawn* (Cubans attack Colorado) instantly loses all credibility, now and forever.

Please, not another "Tree Swingers Tribe" poster! If I want pin-ups, I'll buy pin-ups. *DW* is a gaming magazine, not an art magazine, or so I thought. The cartoons are great, and I like Hogan's illos of his articles well enough. But I object to art, even "fantasy art," by itself.

Martin R. Crim
Durham NC

GIGI CAUGHT WITH FOOT IN MOUTH

After reading *DW 38* I was a bit dismayed to see the alleged rumor in your "Letter from Gigi" column that *Stardate* Magazine would be a "casualty" of the recent shakeup at FASA Corporation. I'd like to assure you and your readers that *Stardate* is alive and well on its way. Issue 3/4 has just recently been released and I am finishing up issue 8 and getting it ready for the typesetter. We are far from being a "casualty."

Dale L. Kemper
Editor *Stardate* Magazine

ISSUE 38 BEST EVER

C'mon *DW*. Only two letters in issue 38. Other than that I must say *DW* 38 was one of the best ever. The long-awaited *Stormbringer* review was wonderfully done. "The Cult of Uleria," although it should perhaps be rated "R," was an excellent piece of cultural material. The commen-

tary on "Women & Gaming" was a good explanation on women in adventure gaming and wargamer circles.

Though I no longer play *Call Of Cthulhu*, the "Eye of Sitar" was an interesting scenario. I'm sure my *RuneQuest* campaign will soon hear of the "Sons of Chaos" cult. Even the game reviews were above your normal high standards especially that of the aforementioned *Stormbringer*.

Other than a sadly lacking "Different Views" and a somewhat laid back "Letter from Gigi," *DW 38* was superb stuff.

One note, fantasy role-playing is not dead nor has it ran out of steam. Fantasy role-playing will remain alive and well as long as there are dreams and storytellers to make our reality a little closer to what should've been.

Scribed by:
The mad poet Horse Tongue
For: The Sons of the Sword
Newburg MO

FANTASY GAMING ALIVE AND WELL

I have to disagree with you on fantasy gaming ("The Gamer," *DW 38*). Obviously I can't argue the figures (although established gamers probably already own a fantasy game so any new purchases would more likely be in a different genre), but I don't think fantasy is anywhere near played out. Only fantasy and science-fiction games can present clashes between cultures, and fantasy can perhaps do it better because we can use historical models. One of the things that intrigued me about FGU's *Lands of Adventure* game was its Greek culture pack, where the Hellenes are invading the Pelasgian-inhabited Greece. I also

think fantasy or science-fiction games are the best place to get both realism and a sense of wonder (both are lacking from the superhero genre, fun though it might be). Finally, I prefer fantasy because it seems to be the easiest genre in which to run a campaign which doesn't emphasize violence.

Of course, this is not to say there's anything wrong with the other genres. But I do think fantasy gaming will always be with us, simply because it's the most flexible and easiest to use setting.

David Dunham
Goleta CA

WOMEN IN GAMING

In reference to the article "Women & Gaming" by Lewis Pulsipher (*DW 38*), can you really be surprised at the lack of women in the hobby when most gaming materials, including your magazine, are so male oriented? This very same issue of *DW*, after all, features a scantily-clad woman but no scantily-clad men.

"Women & Gaming" (which incidentally was written by a man) discusses several possible reasons for the relative absence of women in wargaming and adventure gaming. While Mr. Pulsipher's ideas are sound and, for some women certainly, accurate, he misses the point by not going to the source of the information, the women themselves. If he had quoted some of the women he mentions in his article or perhaps indicated that he had just asked for their ideas about gaming, the article would have profitted for it.

Returning to the "Poster Girl," while the artwork for the poster is very nice, when will we see some

of the men from the "Tree Swingers Tribe"? It isn't that I object to half-naked women in your artwork, but rather that I wish that you would acknowledge the few women who do read your magazine and show us some half-naked men. We too can be appreciative of a titillating drawing.

In closing, let me just say this. There are women out here who do play adventure games and even a few of us who play wargames. Most of us, however, do so in spite of the treatment we are given by the primarily male gaming community. Of the various gaming magazines available, *DW* is the only one to which I subscribe, and I do believe that it is an excellent publication. You publish articles by and about women, something some of the other magazines can learn from, but the bias still occasionally shows through. By paying a minor amount of extra attention to your currently few female readers you might find that more will magically come out of the woodwork. If the best gaming magazine was to acknowledge the female members of the hobby, fewer new female players might be intimidated from playing.

Leslie Welch

NEW COLUMN PROPOSAL

May I suggest that you add a new column to *Different Worlds*? I would like to see a column devoted to small ideas, especially rules changes, that readers have for their adventure games. These would be ideas too small to develop into articles but still worthy of note. The letters column might serve this purpose now, but only for replies to something written in the magazine. I cannot tell you how large a response you would get, but I know I have several small ideas, none worthy of an article by itself. I envision submissions first stating the game systems for the changes, then giving the reasons for the change, and finally giving the change itself.

Jonathan Tweet
Northfield MN

Done, send your suggestions to a new "Game Tips" column. In addition to the above-mentioned guidelines, contributors should add a title to their proposals. Tips should be no longer than 250 words. Each published tip will be paid the budget-busting amount of $2.

—*Editor*

NOW THIS BABY WAS OWNED BY A FREUDIAN PSYCHOTHERAPIST WHO NEVER TOOK IT OFF THE WALL.

Editorial

The Adventurer

STEPPING STONES TO ADVENTURE

With this issue, *Different Worlds* has a new publisher—Sleuth Publications, Ltd., of San Francisco. Until now, the magazine was published by Chaosium, Inc., the award-winning publisher of many popular adventure games as *Call Of Cthulhu, Stormbringer, Ringworld,* and *Elfquest.* Chaosium is also responsible for the Avalon Hill Game Company's *RuneQuest,* probably the most respected adventure game ever developed.

Sleuth, on the other hand, is well-known for their *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* game, a mystery game in which the players match their wits against the master sleuth himself in ten baffling cases. The game already has two supplements with additional cases to solve—*The Mansion Murders* and *The Queen's Park Affair*. Additional cases will also appear in *DW* as modules. Sleuth is presently developing a hard-boiled detective game, using the same system as *Consulting Detective*, set in San Francisco in the 1930s titled *Gumshoe.*

The move is entirely my responsibility. For personal reasons I had moved back to San Francisco, the city where I grew up and where I wanted to live. Coupled with the opportunity to work in the same city as my residence, Sleuth's better job opportunity and their promise of support for *Different Worlds* were offers I could not refuse.

I do not regret the eight years I spent with Chaosium but I do regret having to leave many friends there. It was a pleasant place to work and I learned much about business and life in general during my tenure. But I plan to continue communicating with them in the future as *DW* has many feature articles planned on Chaosium games.

What are the other future plans of *Different Worlds*? How is it going to change for the better? Some of you may have noticed that the sub-head on the cover has changed from "The Magazine for Adventure Role-Players" to simply "The Magazine for Adventurers." The game aspect of the magazine will remain intact but the magazine will focus more on the pulp-adventure genre featuring heroes like Indiana Jones, Sherlock Holmes, the Shadow, and Richard Burton, and the not-so-heroic as the infamous Jack the Ripper. Look for the "Game Cons" feature retitled to simply "Conventions" and include science-fiction & fantasy cons as well as comic cons in its bimonthly listing. Also be ready for adventure stories featuring break-neck action and cliff-hanging plots by some of the most insidious writers around.

Happy adventuring,

Tadashi Ehara □

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Brad W. Foster
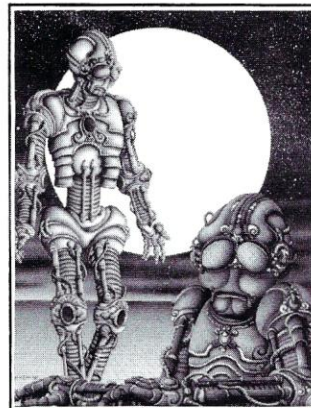
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DIFFERENT WORLDS
Module

SUPER MAP 1
"The Waterfront"

By Michael Gray

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REGULAR FEATURES

CARTOONISTS

Sword Of Hollywood

It has been said,
The pen is mightier than the sword.
How about celluloid?

By Larry DiTillio

Felicitations oh feral fans of feature film and television. It's about March for you readers, but for Ye Ol' Sword it's still December so let me take this opportunity to wish you all a belated Merry Christmas and a most Happy New Year. I trust Santa left your favorite games and accessories under the tree and that 1985 is a banner year for all your varied worlds and characters. Since this does constitute the first column of the New Year for me, I thought I'd throw you a little variation this time around. After all, change is healthy and just writing news all the time gets boring. Therefore I have decided to tackle head-on, the one recurring question/complaint I get about this column, to wit: "What does all this have to do with gaming?" Glad you aked.

Let me start this frenzied foray into facetious philosophy with a wide-open generalization about what the column is supposed to achieve. First and foremost, "Sword Of Hollywood" is a source of information about upcoming films of interest to gamers and this information includes little gossipy tidbits about why a certain film might be good or bad or simply delayed in reaching the screen. Secondly the column through its "From The Past" section, is meant to hip younger gamers to some of the classic films in fantasy, science-fiction, horror, adventure genre, as well as touting some more recent but lesser-known films to all gamers. One of my hopes for the column was that con organizers could get ideas for film programs that departed from the usual standard convention fare, unhappily that hope seems to be a pipe dream. (As a big fan of keeping hope alive, let me say this, if any con organizers would like a list of films I think would make a fine convention movie program please drop me a line c/o *Different Worlds* and I'll be glad to send it along.)

Now then, back to the original question, what's this all got to do with gaming? To answer you, here's another sweeping generalization: Gaming is a social experience, an experience that works not only through sets of rulebooks and the throw of the dice, but also through the collective input of players and gamemaster. The source of this input is manifold, it comes through the things we've lived through, the people we've met, the books we've read and yes, the film and television we've viewed. The more varied and imaginative the input, the better the game. Get the idea? Good. Let's forge ahead.

A film, whether action-adventure, fantasy, or any other sort, follows a definite pattern. It begins with the introduction of a hero or heroes (or even occasionally heroines) to a situation which demands a resolution. To reach this resolution, our heroes must face obstacles, minor ones at first, then later major confrontations with whoever happens to be the chief opposition. The heroes must fight their way through obstacles, or flee them, or talk them out of being obstacles (sometimes turning obstacle into ally). The important point is that the early obstacles be overcome in order to get our heroes to the big climax during which they achieve their grand triumph (usually in a fantasy or action-adventure, not always in other kinds of films).

This rather simplified outline of the dramatic pattern could as easily be applied to a role-playing game; heroes overcoming obstacles to teach a goal, small ones that can be dealt with first, bigger ones that may or may not slaughter the adventurers later. So now that I've established a little common ground between games and films, let's take a look at how observation of film structure can help improve scenario design in role-playing games.

A film must accomplish many different things all at once and all unobtrusive to the experience of the film as a whole. A flim must tell a story, create a believable atmosphere, give us a protagonist we care about and keep us both interested and entertained. A flim that was nothing but constant battles with no connective tissue wouldn't be very satisfying, yet in games we all too often get precisely that. Obviously our games are more flexible than a ninety-minute or two-hour film, but rather than making this flexibility a plus, some gamemasters make it a minus by filling time with cardboard cut-out encounters that eventually wear thin enough to put even the most dedicated munchkin to sleep. By viewing films with an analytical eye, gamers can discover techniques to avoid such tedium and broaden the game experience. Shall we get analytical folks? Yes? Follow me!

Film writing, especially adventure-film writing, works in a manner sometimes called the "roller coaster" effect. This means that you set your story rolling, then bring it to a peak moment and then bring it down again. As the film goes on, the peaks get higher and more exciting, the lows get faster, all leading to the biggest peak of all, the smash ending. Why highs and lows, you might ask? Why not a succession of peaks? Simply because an audience cannot handle too many highs. Audiences need breathing space to appreciate action, breathing space provided through comedy, romance, and revelation of plot. The biggest peaks in a film will come very close to the beginning (to hook the audience in) and at the end. The in-between peaks are building blocks, setting up anticipation for what's to come, even as the lows inform or amuse us to give us some time to appreciate the peaks. Look at any well-crafted film and you will see this effect in operation. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is a good example, think over how the picture builds and you'll see the roller coaster taking you up, level off, and taking you right up again. In a game scenario, this same roller coaster effect is a good model to follow. Start your players off, then hit them with a big encounter early on (they should be able to survive it remember), something they can ooh and aah over, or really show their stuff in. Then level off. Make the next encounters milder, perhaps merely simple negotiation or some comedy incident (my favorite in this vein is a party of my players trying to coax a six-foot parrot out of a potion-seller's wagon without harming it. The parrot was the potion-seller's pet and had gotten into one of his growth potions). These milder incidents are a perfect way to advance the story with clues or rumors or suggestions. As the players get nearer their goal, start the roller coaster moving faster and climbing higher. A few orcs firing arrows now becomes a whole army of orcs heavily-armed, the next follow encountered along the road becomes not a mere seller of potions but a powerful and utterly cantankerous wizard. As your players ride the peaks and valleys they will be building more and more anticipation about the final peak, the big climax. And they'll be having fun. This pattern works not only for fantasy games, but for any other type of role-playing game as well and the best part of it is that it's in plain sight of any good film you see. As for bad films, well, you can learn from them too, just by observing where the film went wrong in developing its story.

Now let's look at another facet of flim and gaming, atmosphere. As a visual medium, a film has to have atmosphere. Games on the other hand deliver atmosphere through suggestion, e.g., "the castle is dark and gloomy and looks like it hasn't been lived in for centuries." In a film, you'd see it and it's enough. By viewing the various atmospheres created on flim, you can heighten your descriptive powers and give your players the exact feeling you want them to have. It's simply a question of recalling, consciously or subconsciously what struck you visually in a scene. If something seen in a movie really impacts with you, i.e., it scares you or excites you or makes you tense or makes you laugh, chances are by describing what you saw you can instill the same reaction in players. This technique is very useful in heavy-atmosphere games like *Call Of Cthulhu* where chilling players with horrid sounds and sights is necessary. It can also sometimes give players a more concrete idea of surroundings, e.g., "you see a lake with jets of fire shooting out of it, you know, like the one in *DragonSlayer*." Assuming they've all seen *Dragon-Slayer* no more need by said. Keep in mind that sound is also part of atmosphere and many movie soundtracks make excellent background for role-playing games.

Well, I could go on with this discussion for several thousand more pages, but the magazine isn't that long. I do hope that some of what I've said has inspired and helped you some and that you will give me some feedback on it in the near future. At the very least it should bury once and for all the complaints about "Sword Of Hollywood" not being related to games. If you do find this variation to your liking, I'll be glad to do more pieces like it in the future, but without your feedback I'll never know will I? □

Curios war es mir zu horen, dass night gar weit von heir ein Dorf existiren soll, dessen Bewohner bei Nacht sich in Leoparden verwandeln konnen und dann Menschen todten und verzehern.

—Emin Pasha

SECRET SOCIETIES
Part 3

The African Leopard Men

By E.S. Erkes

This month, in contrast to the general run of this series, I'm going to focus on a primitive secret society. Historically, the group I'm going to discuss here has not had any great influence: no one seemed to follow in its footsteps; very little literature exists on it, unlike the secret societies of the more developed world; and in general it is regarded as little more than a footnote in African history.

I've chosen this group anyway because it illustrates how pervasive the idea of the secret society really is in the human psyche. In every population, even in nearly non-technological ones, people have felt compelled to separate themselves from the social mainstream: We can find groups taking secret oaths, submitting to arcane rituals, and using special methods of self-identification in every stratum of civilization—even at its beginnings. The Leopard Men of Africa are such a group.

Why should a forgotten cult that sounds like the title of an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel interest us? For one thing, the Leopard Men were not, as one might suspect, a small intratribal group; nor were they a tribe of their own. Leopard Man groups, in several variations, were distributed over vast areas, in a multitude of tribal and linguistic classification. Incidents of Leopard Man activity were reported in an area stretching from the Gambia River in west Africa to what is now Tanzania in east Africa—a distance of thousands of miles, equivalent to the area from coast to coast in America. From north to south we know of Leopard Man groups ranging from the Sudan, on the border of the Sahara, to Mozambique, not far from the south African coast.

This is remarkable, considering the period when the leopard cult was at its peak—the late 19th century. At that time, central Africa had virtually no real roads, railways, or systematized communication. The whole region was only then being mapped and explored by Europeans. It was inhabited by an incredible variety of tribes and sub-tribes, many of whom were perpetually at war with each other. That a cult—one universally-hated, as we shall see—could spread across such a large area is nothing less than astounding. Activity was greatest in three regions: In east Africa in what is now Sierra Leone, in the present-day Cameroons, and in the eastern Congo basin.

There was not, however, a single Leopard Man organization, although some lodges (if that is the correct term here) exerted their influence over vast territories. Different groups had different practices. These variations were inevitable, given the great distances between the lodges. But on the whole, the Leopard Man rituals were strikingly consistent.

Three typical practices marked Leopard Man custom. The first was the wearing of Leopard skins (or body paint in the manner of leopard spots) to simulate the appearance of the great cats. The second was the use of false iron "claws" to either simulate the print of the leopard and to kill their victims. The third and most variable practice was cannibalism.

The costumes seem to have been worn equally for disguise and for ritual purposes. In many cases the cultists wore only the animal skin, sometimes including the head with jaws; but there was no absolute conformity here. They used make-up to look like both yellow and black panthers. Some groups wore nets which mottled the skin with sunlight, giving the appearance of leopard spots. Others wore intricate woven tunics. The proper clothing was of great importance to the Leopard Men, for they never killed without it.

The pseudo-claws used by the cultists varied considerably. They had from two to five prongs, or were often nothing more than daggers hidden in a glove; some were attached to the glove, some not, some were curved, some straight. In all cases the claws were definitely functional; they had to be able to slash through human flesh.

Leopard Man attacks generally followed the same pattern. The cultists would be crouching in full costume, often on all fours, in the underbrush while a traveler, usually a woman, approached. The attacks usually took place at night, and both singly and in a group. The Leopard Man would leap out and bury one or both sets of claws in the victim's neck, immediately severing the jugular. Generally, the neck was always the first target.

What happened after the victim lay dead differed according to the local customs of the cult. In almost all killings, though, the body would be mutilated and various parts removed, either at the murder scene or at a predetermined ritual location. The list of removed body parts varied wildly: The heart, the right hand, either leg, the lungs, the brain, the liver, the kidney, the intestines. The drinking of blood was also common. In certain of the groups, the victim would be captured alive and then sacrificed in a ritual. One group specified that a new member's first victim must be either his first wife or eldest daughter.

For some Leopard Man groups, the act of murder was a part of the ritual, for others an act of initiation. Many lodges required that each member kill at least once every four years. Others mandated killings only on nights of the full moon. At least one group recruited new members by getting them to dine with them; after the meal, the

recruit would be told that he had just eaten human flesh and was now consecrated into the order, whether he liked it or not. "You are one of us already," they would say.

Cannibalism was integral to Leopard Man culture. Historians disagree as to whether this was strictly for ritual purposes, or if it was simply a way to obtain human flesh in peacetime (some groups hunted animals in the same way). There was a common belief among the Leopard Men that various human body parts had certain magical powers. Intestinal fat was supposed t to confer invisibility when rubbed on the killer's body. Many adherents of the order carried a black medicine bag or *borfima*, which contained a mixture of human, animal, and vegetable ingredients kneaded into a paste. The human components were said to come from a variety of sources—skin from the palm of a hand or the sole of the foot or the forehead, parts of male and female genitals, the liver, the cloth from a menstruating woman. The *borfima* was either consumed as a medicine or carried around as a fetish.

The identity of the Leopard Men is a little harder to determine. We know that they admitted only men. The membership took in all social strata, including some who had received European education. Leopard Man activity was found among many indigenous African religious groups, but not in Moslem areas. Historians disagree as to how structured the groups were. Certainly—and here is where they differ dramatically from the European and Asian secret societies—they had no single goal, political, social, religious, or otherwise. For example, at a time of the most horrible colonial atrocities in the so-called Congo Free State, Leopard Man attacks on whites were very nearly unheard-of. The societies seemed to have no political or social conscience whatsoever. Perhaps this is why they died out in the years thereafter.

The attitude of African society at large toward the order is somewhat easier to calculate; it is probably most accurate to say that most people hated the Leopard Men. They kept their membership secret out of necessity because exposure typically meant death. For except where the cult was so strong that it dominated political life in its region, captured Leopard Men were always burned alive. The universality of this practice makes clear the horror and fear which African society felt toward the order. In it there was as much disgust for their practices and fear of their alleged magic powers as there was self-defense (and I am speaking here of strictly African reactions to the cult; the colonial authorities dealt

with it with the usual juridical means, and with little success—possibly because, as noted, Leopard Man violence was not directed against whites). We know of one instance where a small rival cult of Chimpanzee Men successfully opposed the Leopard Men by simply exposing them to the tribal authorities. The cultists often took precautions to prevent exposure. Witnesses to killings were singled out for murder, and those who could not be killed were paid to keep silent. Relatives of victims were similarly paid off. These methods generally proved successful, as people knew the consequences of opposing the order.

In many ways the Leopard Men were as advanced as their European and Asian counterparts. The order had its own secret handshake; individual lodges had their own special names; and there was even a special Leopard Men "language" in some areas, a non-verbal system of eye-blinking that enabled cultists to communicate in otherwise hostile situations. There was also evidently a system for transport of body parts (hidden in banana leaves) between lodges—presumably when such items were in short supply.

But the Leopard Men were purely African in another respect: Their continual reference to African tribal magic. While most secret societies dabble in the occult or at least pay lip service to it, the Leopard Men took their reason-for-being from it.

Traditionally, African folklore regarded leopards that killed men as being possessed or directed by the spirits of other men. The Leopard Men took this belief one step further: They fostered the opinion that they could transform themselves into leopards and from all appearances believed it themselves. Stories from west Africa speak of various powders which, when eaten, cause the transformation: They body shape changes, the nails become claws, and spotted fur emerges on the skin. Other groups from the same area believed that wearing leopard skins was enough to cause the change.

In fact, wereleopard legends did not begin with the Leopard Men. There was a whole separate tradition of stories about men shapeshifting into leopards, and other, mostly dangerous beasts: Lions, alligators, hyenas, antelopes, large snakes, hippopotami, various birds—and even that famous European wereanimal, the wolf. The Leopard Men are notable for having exploited these legends into a system of belief. We have no absolute proof of this, but it is probable that the Leopard Man killers were convinced that at the moment of the murder, they were transformed into actual leopards.

And there were a number of rival sects, roughly contemporary but of much smaller size and range. Besides the aforementioned Chimpanzee Men, there existed Baboon and Gorilla Men, Lion Men, and the bizarre and half-legendary Alligator Men, who were supposed to have lurked in rivers waiting for passersby in canoes, and who were never known to have been captured alive. The much wider fame and distribution of the Leopard Men owes to the wider distribution of the leopard itself, and to the animal's grace and exotic beauty, which has always captured the popular imagination.

By the thirties of this century, the number of leopard murder cases began to decline dramatically in most areas. It's probably simplest and most accurate to say that Africa was simply outgrowing the Leopard Men. For what gave the movement its great strength—its implied promise of occult power—was also its great weakness, rooting it in a past that modern Africa had no time for. The Leopard Men were apolitical and asocial in the fullest meanings of the words, and this ultimately doomed them. Scattered reports of Leopard Man activity continued into our own day, but the huge, genuinely Pan-African movement is no more.

The Leopard Men as they actually existed would be fairly ludicrous in a role-playing game. Except in a strictly-controlled scenario, players would hardly find a bunch of men dressed in leopard skins with false claws threatening. To make them interesting, the gamemaster would have to allow them the power of transformation into actual leopards. Because of the recent period in which they operated, they could be fitted into any modern-day scenario set in Africa.

A final thought that role-players may want to consider: The Leopard Men were outmoded in the modern era and dissolved, replaced by other secret societies. As Joseph Conrad reminds us in *Heart Of Darkness*, it was not so long ago that Europe was precivilized. What primitive secret societies must there have been in Europe that we don't even know about? What ancient cults were destroyed there by the onset of civilization? An imaginative gamemaster, using knowledge of early European history and the Leopard Men as an African example, could extrapolate a whole system of ancient European secret societies.
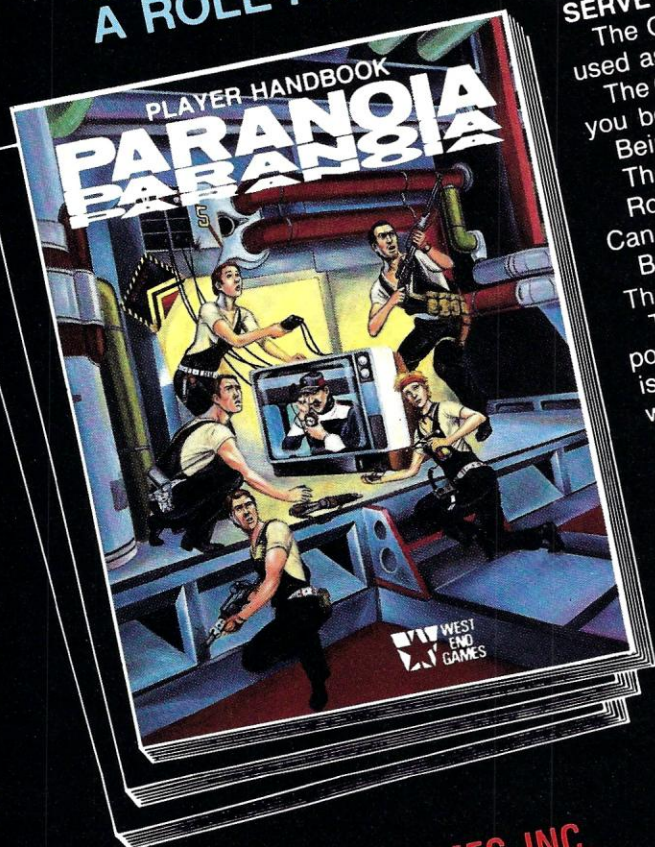
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V.W.P.B.N.L.

The abbreviation stands for "Void Where Prohibited By Natural Law." A discussion of superpowers in superhero adventure games.

THINGS YOUR GAMEMASTER NEVER TOLD YOU

By Quentin Long

Truly it is written that when one looks for oddness one will surely find it. This is particularly true of the limited arena of superhero-dom.

Take Batman, for instance; back when he was part of the Justice League of America, the JLA had superintelligent aliens, Nobel Prize-winning scientists, world authorities on esoteric subjects, and an average IQ in the 4-digit range; but when trouble happened, they all stood around mumbling "Gee Batman, what do I do now?" Clearly, Batman has the power Area Effect Intelligence Drain . .

Does anybody remember the Wasp? You know—flight, shrinking, and energy blast? The thing about the Wasp's energy blast was that it was defined in a screwy way: the smaller she got, the stronger it got It could have been done this way: 6 or 7 levels of always on shrinking and a 2-slot multipower, of which one slot is the energy blast, and the other is enough growth to get back to normal size So when the Wasp was full size, most of the multi-power went into the growth; but as she turned down her growth, that freed up some points to be shoved into the blast End result: The smaller she got, the stronger her blast got.

I don't usually pay attention to *Supergame*, a rules system I personally find worthless, but here's a beaut of a crock in that game: Suppose you've got a hand grenade that does say 100 points of damage; it'll cost you 100 of your 250 character construction points But you can also carry other hand grenades which only do 99 points of damage without paying any extra points for them. The crock is that hand grenades, having the limitation of being strictly one-shot weapons, only cost half of what they ordinarily ought . . . so you can carry around an infinite number of 99-point *Supergame* hand grenades for an investment of a mere 50 points.

I've been a fan of the Flash from many moons ago, and so I was pleasantly surprised to read the "Special Effects" page of the *Champions* book—"Speedster wants to be able to run at hundreds of kph to be able to run up buildings and down cliffs. . ." Then I got to the officially recommended way to do it: Flight that only works while you're touching a surface. Feh! Here's how to use honest-to-god Running to get a speedster: get an Elemental Control whose slots are Running, extra Dex, and extra Spd. Yes, yes, "Elemental Controls should not contain Characteristics"—but "should not" is not "cannot," and if your gamemaster allows it you're fine. Oh, and throw in Clinging, to be able to run up walls.

You, too, can push your activation rolls: Consider a 12D6 Energy Blast with 11+ Activation.

Its 60 active points cost you only 30 real points. That same EB bought with a 14+ roll would cost 40 real points. Keeping in mind that Pushing is essentially a way to turn END pips into one-shot Power Points, the owner of the 11+ EB should therefore be able to burn 10 pips of END for the express purpose of raising his target number from 11 to 14.

CREATING REALISTIC CITIES

For Fantasy Adventures

By William Hamblin, Ph.D.

In nearly all fantasy role-playing adventures a number of events occur in cities, and in many campaigns a city will be the center of the adventure. When this is the case, it becomes very important to have accurate and detailed knowledge of the city. Unfortunately, many descriptions of cities used in fantasy role-playing scenarios, both the "professional" and the "home-brewed" type, are somewhat haphazard concoctions which naturally emphasize the aspects of the city which will have the most direct bearing on the flow of events in the adventure. Too often the net result of this is that the patterns of cities as found in most fantasy role-playing games bear little resemblance to any collection of edifices in which self-respecting medieval men and women would dwell. However, by following some simple rules based on historical urban patterns from the Middle Ages and Antiquity, it is possible to design cities based on realistic pre-technical economic and social life, and thereby enfuse fantasy role-playing adventures with an added element of realism. This article is an attempt to outline some basic steps, which if followed will help the would-be architect of a fantasy role-playing city to develop greater detail and realism in his creations.

In order to better be able to discuss urban centers, it will be useful to establish some basic definitions. Although it is often the case that when we speak of towns and cities we do so using the terms as being generally synonymous, the terms will be used in a technical sense in this article. Table 1 represents the classification system which will be followed.

For now it is only important to note that whenever hamlets, towns, cities, etc., are mentioned in this article, they will have reference to the urban centers of the relative size and population given in Table 1. When referring to all types of cities in Table 1 inclusively the word "urban center(s)" will be used. The word "pre-technical" means the type of civilization found in Europe before c. 1500, and many other non-European civilizations to even later dates; that is to say before the scientific and industrial revolutions.

The sources for the information which will be presented here all come from studies by historians on cities in antiquity (see Bibliography). However, for a brief article such as this a great deal of simplification and generalization is necessary. The charts and stats given therefore represent general simplified patterns from which there were many historical variations, but which can be very useful in giving a general picture of the nature of pre-technical cities.

STEP 1: CLIMATE

The first thing that must be considered when attempting to design an urban center for fantasy role-playing scenarios is the climate and geography in which that center is to be found, which in many ways determined the potential size and type of urban center that could be developed. The first step in developing your city, then, is to determine the type of climate in which the city will be situated. For convenience I have divided climates into the following categories:

1. Arctic: By Arctic I mean regions where there is usually perpetual frost. In pre-technical times human cities were seldom found in such regions. (Of course cities founded by non-human races would change this general rule.) Exceptions were almost exclusively small hamlets founded for trading purposes, which never grew to any great size and maintained consistent contact with other larger towns and cities for food supplies. The Norse colonies in Greenland, founded to facilitate travel to Vineland (i.e., Canada and northeastern U.S.), were very short lived, and never amounted

TABLE 1		
Type of urban center	Population	Area in hectares*
hamlet	50-400	less than 4
village	400-1000	over 4
town	1000-3000	over 10
large town	3000-10000	over 30
city	10,000-100,000	over 100
imperial city (metropolis)	100,000-500,000	over 500

*A hectare is a measure of land in the metric system which is the equivalent of 10,000 square meters or 2.47 acres. A hectare could be formed from a square 100m x 100m. Roughly speaking a hectare is the area of two football fields laid side by side.
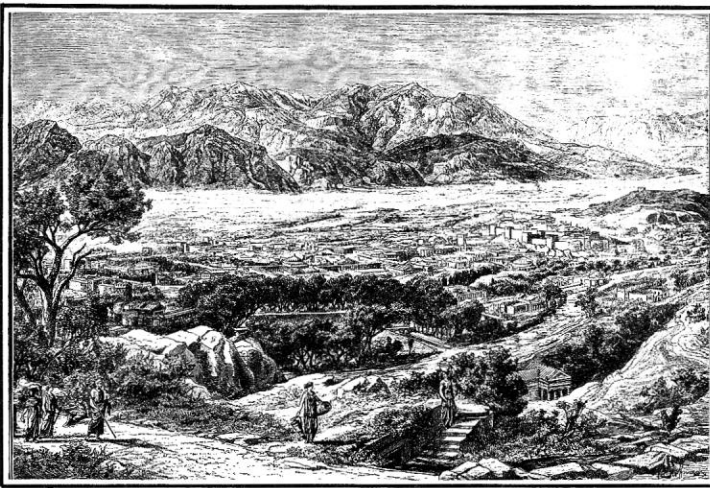
Ancient Sparta
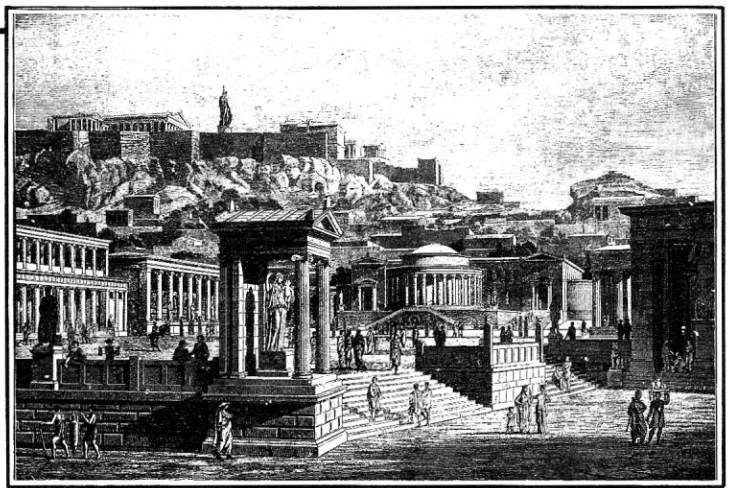
Marketplace of Athens

to more than a few hundred people at most. Likewise hamlets centering on fur trapping (in northern Scandinavia and Russia for example) were never large and always highly dependent on other cities in warmer climes for food, industrial goods and repopulation (as the death rate and infant mortality rate increased in arctic regions.) The most widespread pattern of civilization in Arctic zones would be similar to Eskimos, or certain Northern Siberian tribes.

2. Nordic: The most well-known regions with a "Nordic" climate would be Scandinavia and southern Alaska, where there is a short growing season, but where winters are long and harsh. Large towns were usually the largest type of urban center which could be found, only occasionally perhaps reaching into the lower parts of the "city" category. For example, Stockholm didn't reach a population of 50,000 until the 18th century, and the population of all of the Scandinavian countries combined was seldom over 1,250,000 during the Middle Ages. Large populations could not be supported in Nordic climates with primitive methods of agriculture and fishing (although, of course, annual raiding Viking-style would increase the potential size of urban centers based on the continual influx of slaves and wealth).

3. Temperate: A region with four distinct and roughly equal seasons, with a good growing season, and a good winter snowfall. Most of the northern U.S. and northern Europe would fall into this category. In this region all types of urban centers could be found. However, it is generally the case that in pre-technical times there were no imperial cities ever founded in temperate climates. The reason for this is that to have a city of 500,000 people it was necessary to be able not only to gather supplies from distant agricultural regions by sea or river, but also to reap two or three crops a year in the agricultural regions supporting the urban center.

4. Moderate: A region with a long growing season, cold winter, but which seldom receives much snowfall. It is often possible to grow selected types of crops in such regions all year round. Examples of this type of region would be the Mediterranean areas of southern Europe and the southern regions of America (southern California is probably the best known example). All types of urban centers could be found in this region.

5. Tropical: A region with nearly a year round growing season, usually divided into a rainy and a dry (or often only 'less rainy') season. All types of urban centers could be found there. It is almost universally the case that imperial cities in pre-techincal times were to be found only in moderate or tropical climates. Southern India, tropical Africa, and parts of South America and southeast Asia are regions which could be classified as tropical.

6. Semi-arid: Regions receiving adequate rainfall during a part of the year to enable one crop to grow, but which require extensive irrigation in order to have true agricultural prosperity. Much of the Middle East and the more arid regions of America are good examples of this type of climate. Imperial cities were often found in such regions, but almost universally connected with large rivers, extensive irrigation, or seaports.

7. Arid: Regions which have a brief growing and rainy season but which are otherwise in a state of near perpetual drought. Most urban centers in such regions are limited to towns, although cities might appear under special conditions and in association with rivers and irrigation. The usual form of civilization in such regions is pastoral nomadism.

The streets of Peking

TABLE 2

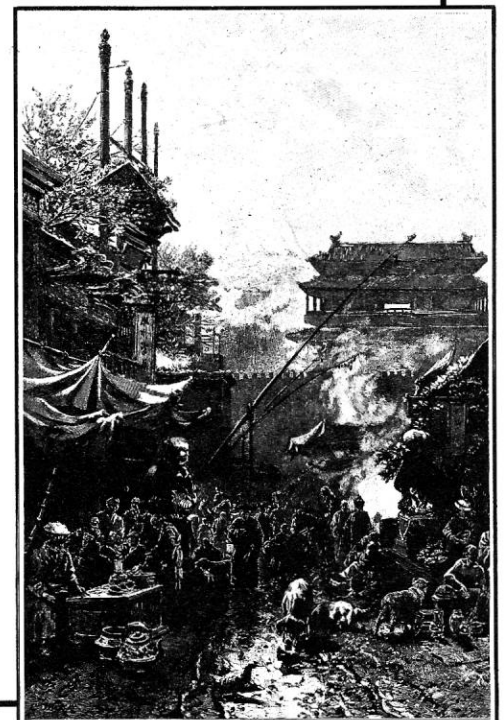| Climatic region	Maximum Population
1. Arctic	300
2. Nordic	20,000
3. Temperate	100,000
4. Moderate	500,000
5. Tropical	500,000
6. Semi-arid	500,000 (with extensive irrigation)
7. Arid	10,000
8. Wasteland	0

8. Wasteland: Regions which receive no rainfall and can support little if any life. Not even hamlets could be found in such regions in pre-technical times. Parts of the Sahara, Saudi Arabia, and other great deserts are wastelands.

The climatic limits on the sizes of urban centers in pre-technical times are summarized in Table 2, where the maximum population for an urban center in each given region is listed.

The first step is to decide what the climate of the region in which you wish to design your urban center is to be. The limitations given above should be exceeded only under very special conditions.

It should be also noted here hat the numbers given in Table 2 represent the absolute maximum for each region. The norm was usually much less than the maximum which in addition would have been reached by only a very few cities in history. (For example, there were probably not many more than a dozen imperial cities on Earth throughout the entire history of pre-technical times.

STEP 2: GEOGRAPHY

For the purposes of fantasy role-playing the various types of geographical regions of the world can be divided into the following broad categories:

1. Alpine: Very mountainous regions interspersed with valleys which hold the largest part of the population. Examples of civilizations in such regions would be the Incan, Tibetian, and Nepalese.

2. Rugged: These regions would have some large mountains, but be interspersed with plains and other types of terrain, and have a fair number of valleys and fertile regions. This type of area would be exemplified by Afghanistan and the Hindu Kush, the Atlas mountain regions of Morocco, the Caucasus mountains, and the highlands of Spain, southern France, Italy, and Greece, etc.

3. Moderate: Rolling hills, a great deal of forested region with meadows and plains all with good agricultural potential. Much of Europe and America would be this type of region.

4. Steppe: Completely flat plains with high grasses and good agricultural potential. The steppes of Russia and the plains of the U.S. are examples.

5. Riverine: Civilizations which center on massive rivers which flood or give enough water for extensive irrigation or rice-paddy type agriculture. These rivers often flow through geographical zones of the other types. Examples would be the Huang and Yangtze in China, the Mekong river in southeast Asia, the Ganges and Indus in India,

the Nile, Oxus and Tigris/Euphrates in the Middle East, the Danube in Europe, the Mississippi and Amazon in the Americas, the Congo in Africa.

6. Coastal: Regions by the sea. As a whole these tend to be smooth level regions, but of course many can be mountanous or rough—the fjords of Norway for example.

7. Oasis: An area, sometimes quite large, characterized by a large number of wells and natural springs which provide abundant water in otherwise arid or waste land. The oases of Mecca and Medina in Arabia are the most famous, but Damascus is probably the largest city founded on an oasis.

Now it must be realized that all of these regions overlap with the various climatological regions listed in Table 2. That is to say you can have alpine regions which are wastelands (the Tibesti mountains in Chad and the Ahaggar mountains in southern Algeria—however, what little rainfall there is in wasteland regions tends to be trapped by mountains which therefore make them much less arid than surrounding areas). Likewise you could have a riverine geography in an arid climate (the Nile in Egypt) or in a tropical climate (the Congo and Amazon). Steppe geography in nordic climate equals tundra.

There is no need to summarize the geographical data on a table, as any geographic zone can maintain urban centers up to the city size (100,000 people) if the climatological and social levels are sufficient. However, what is important is that never in pre-technical history has an imperial city developed which has not been on a coastal area or on a navigable river. (Rome had the Tiber, London the Thames, Paris the Seine, Constantinople the Bosporus, Cairo the Nile, Baghdad the Tigris, Delhi the Jumna, etc.) There are notable examples of very large cities in all types of regions, however: Lhasa, the capital of the Tibetian Empire in the Himalayas, Cuzco the capital of the Incas in the Andes, Damascus in an arid rough zone, Ghazna the capital of the Ghaznavid Empire in the Hindu Kush, Karakorum in the steppes, etc. If any of these urban centers were ever able to advance into the imperial-city size it was only at the very lowest level (i.e., perhaps 100,000-150,000) and then such a high population was maintained for only a very short period of exceptional prosperity.

STEP 3: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL OF CIVILIZATION

It was usually the case that major population centers developed in fairly consistent relationships to each other. This principle is represented by two

major factors. First, major cities tended to be supported by consistent numbers of "satellite" cities. Small cities with a population of from 3000-10,000 usually had about a hundred "satellite" towns, villages, and hamlets within a 20-30 km radius which served as the agricultural basis for that city.

In regions where the level of agriculture was highly developed, the ratio of urban to rural population (which is to say, the ratio between those living in hamlets, villages, and towns, and between those living in small cities, cities, and imperial cities) was about four to one. That is to say, in pre-industrial times in the best of conditions, 80% of the population lived in rural centers and 20% lived in urban centers. However this ratio was found continuously only in the Orient: the Far East, India, and the Middle East. For western Europe the ratio tended to be about nine to one or more, meaning that between 90-95% of the population of an area lived in rural centers.

What this means is that one important factor which must be taken into account in developing a fantasy world is the agricultural development of the region. The social/economic level of a civilization can be divided into the following five somewhat arbitrary classes:

1. Pastoral Nomads: (Examples: Turkomen, Huns, Avars, Mongols, Bedouin Arabs.) It is often thought that pastoral nomadism is a primitive way of life, but close studies of such societies have demonstrated that in reality nomadism is the best adapted way of life for certain marginally productive regions of the world which could not sustain agriculture and cities of the traditional kind. No society was ever entirely nomadic, but rather the nomads lived in strict interdependence with urban centers on the fringes of, or oases within, the zone of nomadism. Such urban centers would generally be trading centers, and would seldom be larger than the small-city size. Exceptions would be when the nomads of a region banded together to form a Nomadic Empire (Mongols, Huns, Arabs, etc.) in which cases true cities could develop, but which would never last for more than a few generations. Mecca in the first years after Mohammed, and Karakorum during the early Mongol period are the two most famous examples. Even so, Mecca was forced to get its grain supply from Egypt via the Red Sea/Nile canal. Nomadic societies in marginal climatic regions couldn't maintain large urban centers for long.

2. "Semi-Nomadic" Tribes: (Examples: Celts, early Slavs, Teutonic tribes, early Vikings—whose "nomadic

aspect was crossing water on boats, North American Indians, most Bantu African tribal groups.) These groups tended to dwell in semi-permanent urban centers, where they would farm a region until they had exhausted the fertility of the soil, and then move on. They would also engage in extensive raiding on other tribes or on more developed regions, often migrating *en masse* into new regions. The largest urban centers that could develop under such circumstances (except in rare cases) would be small cities.

3. Primitive Agriculture: (Examples: western Europe during the Dark Ages—i.e., c. 500 A.D. to 1000 A.D., southern India, Russia, and much of eastern Europe during most of the Middle Ages, the great western African Negro Empires of Ghana, Songai, and Mali centering on the Niger River basin.) For the most part all people are permanently settled in such a society, and nearly all are engaged in agriculture on a very primitive level (i.e., bad plows, no horse collars, no multiple field systems, etc.). The crop yields under such circumstances are extremely low (i.e., two to four bushels harvested per bushel sown), and usually 95% of the population are engaged in agricultural pursuits.

4. Advanced Agriculture: (Examples: the Roman Empire, many regions of the Orient, western Europe during the High Middle Ages—i.e., 1000-1500 A.D., the Byzantine Empire.) Technological, social, and agricultural improvements allow advanced forms of Agriculture which increased the yield per acre, thereby allowing more people to be fed from a given amount of land which resulted in an increased potential size of urban centers.

5. Intensive Agriculture: (Examples: the great river civilizations of Egypt, Iraq, the Oxus river, the Ganges and Punjab in India, and the Yangtze and Huang in China. Other areas would also often come under intensive agriculture for a period, especially in semi-arid regions such as Tunisia and Syria.) Such regions were generally served by extensive irrigation systems which required a great deal of centralized government control to maintain. Such intensive agricultural societies were also very delicate and required constant good management to maintain high productivity. As long as this productivity was maintained intensive agricultural societies could produce some amazing results. For example, despite the fact that Egypt has at most 35,000 square km (that is 3,500,000 hectares) available for agriculture, Egypt was able to constantly maintain a population of between four and five million.

(i.e., about one-and-a-half people per hectare of agriculture land. Europe during this same period maintained only one person per 3-10 hectares.) Because of the great agricultural surpluses achieved by intensive agriculture, such regions could maintain imperial cities with relative ease. During its history Egypt was almost continually feeding an imperial city with over 300,000 people; Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople all depended on Egyptian grain, and medieval Cairo at its apex contained as many as 500,000 people, and was one of the largest and richest cities in the world. It was only at the end of the Middle Ages that European nations began to practice the system of intensive agriculture which China, India, and the Middle East had been practicing for thousands of years.

Step two is to decide what the social and economic level of the civilization in which your city is found to be. If you want an imperial city it will be necessary to have the civilization based on either advanced or intensive agriculture. Semi-nomadic Vikings simply did not have the social, governmental, or technological skills necessary to create an imperial city.

Table 3 summarizes the most important information concerning social and economic level of civilizations.

An example of how to use Table 3 would be the following: In a society in the primitive agricultural social level, cities historically were seldom over 40,000 people and very few cities reached that level. 90-95% of the total population of a primitive agricultural society would live in small urban centers, i.e., in urban centers with a population less than 3000 people.

STEP FOUR: DECIDING ON THE POPULATION OF YOUR URBAN CENTER

This step can only be accurately formulated in final form after steps 1 through 3 have been completed. However, as long as the population size is within the bounds established by Tables 2 and 3, the population of any given center is up to the designer of a given campaign. Perhaps a couple of examples will be useful here.

Suppose for your fantasy role-playing campaign you need a massive imperial city. According to Table 2, imperial cities were historically found only in moderate, tropical, or semi-arid regions with intensive river irrigation. Therefore, you should develop the geography for your city in one of those three types of areas. According to Table 3, however, the social and economic level of your civilization must be either advanced or intensive agriculture. Historically, it was only within these geographic and social limits that imperial cities were found.

As another example, suppose you are a Viking freak and insist on having your fantasy role-playing campaign take place in a civilization patterned after the Viking model. In such a situation you are fairly well stuck with having your civilization centered on a Nordic geography. Furthermore, the social and economic level is semi-nomadic. Taking both of these factors into consideration it becomes clear from Tables 2 and 3 that a Viking-type civilization could not have cities with a population over 20,000, and that some 95% of the total population would be living in small urban centers, with population less than 3000. (It should be noted here that it was only after 1100 A.D., when Scandinavia moved from semi-nomadic to primitive agriculture, and only in the semi-temperate regions of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark— i.e., the southern edges—that urban centers over 20,000 ever developed.) No matter how much you may want a city the size of Rome in a Nordic climate populated with marauding Vikings, historically it was geographically and economically impossible.

STEP 5: DETERMINING THE PHYSICAL SIZE OF AN URBAN CENTER

This step has two different aspects to it. On the one hand, you may already have designed your urban center in great detail with its size fairly well established. In this case you would want to be able to determine how many people would fit in an urban center of that size. On the other hand, if you are starting from scratch and know about how many people you

TABLE 3: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVELS

Level	Maximum urban size	% small urban *
1. Nomadic	10,000	95%
2. Semi-Nomadic	20,000	95%
3. Primitive Agriculture	40,000	90-95%
4. Advanced Agriculture	500,000	85-95%
5. Intensive Agriculture	500,000	80-90%

*Percentage of the population living in hamlets, villages, or small towns.

The Roman Forum

Saint Angelo, the early fortress of the popes

want in the urban center, you will want to be able to establish the physical dimensions of an urban center which could contain them. I'll begin with the first situation.

Historically there was a more or less contant ratio between the physical size of the city and the number of people in that city. This is rather obvious. There were two major variables which modified this ratio. The first is the social level of the civilization (outlined in Table 3). As a basic principle, civilizations with a higher social level tended to pack a greater number of people into a given area. This was often a function of architectural technology and social organization. The higher the technology, the taller buildings could be. (Buildings in Rome and Cairo had four or five stories.) Furthermore, the more organized a society was the more food, water, and other necessities it could transport effectively inside the city, thereby allowing a higher population. The second is the amount of area in the city given over to gardens, palaces, vast temples, or other open areas.

The first thing you have to do is measure your city. This can be done with simple geometric formulae for measuring area. (Note: it is important to make all your measurements according to the metric system to fit in with this article. If your measurements are in feet and yards you can, for simplicity's sake, assume that one yard equals one meter and go on from there.) Let's suppose the boundaries of a city, Hamblinopolis, is a perfect square measuring 1000m x 1000m. This gives a total area of 1,000,000 square meters (i.e., 1000 x 1000). However, the unit of measure historians generally use to determine city size is the hectare (mentioned in the note to Table 1). A hectare is 10,000 square meters, or 2.47 acres, and is equal to a square 100m x 100m. So, to determine the number of hectares in Hamblinopolis you can divide the total number of

square meters by 10,000 which gives 100 (i.e., 1,000,000 divided by 10,000) or you can divide the boundaries into 100-meter lengths, and determine the number of hectares directly. (i.e., the boundaries measure 1000 meters, divided by 100 gives 10 hectares per side. 10 x 10 gives 100 hectares for the city.)

The city of Hamblinopolis, then, contains 100 hectares. What is its potential population? First we must determine the social level of the civilization in which Hamblinopolis is found. Being the mighty metropolis that it is, it is in the intensive agricultural social level (Table 3, number 5). Once this has been determined you should consult Table 4.

To use Table 4 you must determine whether your city has sparse, moderate, or dense population. This is in part a value judgment, but it is based on the following factors:

1. Recent drastic decline in population: If there has been plague, famine or siege/conquest in the recent past the population will be in a lower bracket.

2. If there are massive gardens within the city walls, or open spaces for hippodromes, churches, military practice fields, etc., the population will be in a lower bracket.

3. If there is a massive palace for the ruler, massive military fortifications, or a large number of mansions for the wealthy.

4. If the general population lives in buildings with four or more stories (which is generally only possible with societies of advanced or intensive agricultural social levels) then the population category should be raised by one.

5. If most of the population lives in general squalor in extremely crowded conditions, raise the category by one.

As a general rule, if less than 25% of the area of a city is covered by categories 2 or 3 the city will have dense population, if 25-35% moderate, and if over 35% of the area of a city is in categories 2 or 3, it will be sparse. Further, if the city fits in category 1, it should be lowered one level.

As for Hamblinopolis, it is a provincial capital, with 25-35% of the area of the city taken up with temples, palaces, and fortifications, placing it in the moderate category. With a social level of intensive agriculture, and moderate population density, we get 150 people per hectare, giving Hamblinopolis, which contains 100 hectares, 15,000 people, making it in the lower part of the city category (Table 1, number 5).

Now, if you haven't yet designed the physical layout of your city, but you know about how many people you want to live there, you can determine the rough physical size in the following way. First determine the social level (Table 3), then the population density as described above, and finally, turn to Table 4, find out how many people live on one hectare, and divide that number into the desired population. The result will be the area of the city in hectares.

For example, I want Williamsburg to

TABLE 4: PEOPLE PER HECTARE

Social level	Sparse	Moderate	Dense
1. Nomadic	50	60	75
2. Semi-nomadic	50	65	80
3. Primitive Agriculture	70	85	100
4. Advanced Agriculture	100	125	150
5. Intensive Agriculture	100	150	200

contain 20,000 people. It is a city with a social level in primitive agriculture. If the city has sparse population density, the size would have to be 266 hectares (i.e., 20,000 divided by 75). If the population is moderate, the size would be 200 hectares, while if it is dense, the size would be 160 hectares.

Table 4 should be taken only to represent the maximum possible population size. An urban center in a given category should not exceed the figure given in Table 4. However, it can potentially be lower than that number. For example, when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the population of the city was about 40,000, even though the city walls were the same as those when the city was at its highest population of perhaps as many as 500,000. Much of the city had become ruins, many buildings were abandoned, and people were even farming large tracts of land within the city walls.

STEP 6: CLASS STRUCTURE

Once you have established the size of your urban center and its population, you can begin to make some calculations as to the class structure and breakdowns in the population.

Table 5 outlines in general form the percentages of the population in a given city in the designated calss according to wealth.

TABLE 5: ECONOMIC CLASS

Class	% of total pop.
Rich	2-3%
Middle class	10-20%
Poor	50-65%
Destitute	10-25%

Note: A rich person spent 10-33% of his income on food, the middle class 25-50% on food, poor spent 60-80% on food, the destitute starved.

Table 6 breaks down the population into categories according to jobs. Both this and Table 5 hold true only for larger urban centers (i.e., large towns and above, c. 3000+). Small urban centers tended to be as much as 80% involved in agriculture. It should also be emphasized that these tables serve as very general estimates, and actual percentages could vary greatly. Finally, Table 6 refers to the total working population only. About 50% of the population in all medieval urban centers were dependents (children, sick, old, etc.).

Note: The destitute in both Tables 5 and 6 refer to those "without visible means of support." These include beggars, thieves, etc., as well as the very

TABLE 6: EMPLOYMENT

Job type	% of pop.
Lords	0.5-1%
Clerics	3-7%
Professional*	3-5%
Merchants	3-7%
Craftsmen	5-10%
Soldiers	4-7%
Servants	15-20%
Agriculturists	15-25%
Laborers	20-35%
Destitute	10-25%

*Lawyers, doctors, scribes, teachers, etc.

old, orphans, insane, etc.

As an example on how to use these tables, I will give actual figures for the above mentioned famous city of Hamblinopolis which are based on these tables. The total population as given above was 15,000. Of these, 7500 are dependents and will not be included in our calculations. This leaves 7500 people in the "workforce," which can be given in real numbers as follows:

75 Lords (these would include wives, children over 17, cousins, etc., perhaps only 5-10 noble families)
400 Clerics
300 Professionals
400 Merchants (this would include small shopkeepers, 10-20% would be great merchants in perhaps 5-10 "houses" or merchant families)
600 Craftsmen (divided into a number of guilds, each with 20-50 members)
500 Soldiers (only official government soldiers: many in the servant class would double as private soldiers for their masters)

1725 Servants
1500 Agriculturalists
2000 Laborers
1000 Destitute

Of the 1000 destitute 25-50% would be included in the criminal element of the city, i.e., 330-500 criminals. Most would be petty thieves, etc., and many of these would already be in public jails.

The population can also be divided into categories according to patronage; that is, who is directly attached to the service of whom. Table 7 gives figures for various upper class people and how many people are directly in their service. For the nobility, none of these figures include soldiers, and they should be taken as minimums. For clergy and private citizens the figure represents the maximum.

Tables 5, 6, and 7 should be used mainly if you want to try to work out some of the specific details for your urban center of how many people are where and doing what. They aren't necessary for urban centers which are not going to be central features of a campaign. However, if much of the action will center around a specific city, these figures can be useful. First, it can give you some estimate of the criminal class in relation to urban size in case the adventurers ever get mixed up with that dubious element (or even belong to it). Second, it can give you some idea of the relative size of the retainers of different people.

For example, if, as part of an adventure in Hamblinopolis you get involved with the cult of a villainous god Blukka, you can determine the following things. Hamblinopolis has 15,000 people, therefore you know that the cleric portion of that population will be between 3 and 7 percent. First be

TABLE 7: RETINUES

	Profession	Number of Attached Persons
Nobility:	King	200-500*
	Duke	30-50
	Count/Earl	10-30
	Baron	5-15
Clergy:	Bishop	40-200†
	Cathedral	20-50
	Monastery	20-100
Private:	Merchant	5-50
	Guildsman	1-10
	Large Farmer	1-10
	Professional	1-5

*This figure would vary directly in proportion to the importance of a king. Some Muslim lords had as many as 50,000 servants working for them in massive palatial establishments.

†About 30-60% of the people under "Clergy" would actually be clergy, the rest would be servants of some sort.

Bazaar in Cairo

Maximilian in Ghent

figures for almost any segment of society for use in fantasy role-playing.

Table 8 is a list of the population of a number of historical towns over a large period of the Middle Ages to give some general idea of the relative size of cities and the fluxtuation of population. All of the following represent estimations, based on the books in the bibliography. However, each author tends to give different estimates and none of them can be considered exact.

Note: In Europe before 1100 there was probably no Christian city with a population over 20,000. The first city to reach a population of 100,000 in Christian Europe after the fall of Rome was Paris c. 1300 A.D.

By following these six basic steps the prospective designer of a fantasy role-playing city will easily be able to create a realistic and functional city which maintains correct historical proportions and which can be logically integrated with all other aspects of a fantasy world. When this basic function 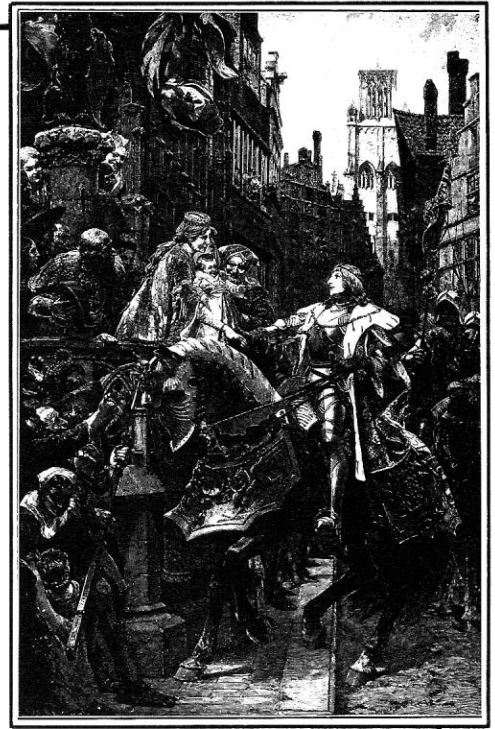of economic, geographic, and social reality has been firmly established—instead of being based on the arbitrary whimsy of the gamemaster—subsequent adventures can begin to have a quality of consistency and detailed vividness which will allow adventure gaming to become more challenging and enjoyable.

There is a great deal of other useful information on pre-technical cities, such as details of the physical layout of cities, and the relationship between cities and the countryside in terms of population, taxes, etc. These topics can perhaps be dealt with in later articles.

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sure to discount the 50% of the population that are dependents (children, old, etc., leaving 7500; 3-7% of that is 225-500 clerics in the town, including male and female. You can decide how many cults exist in the town and their relative power and divide the number of clergy accordingly. This might leave 200 clerics serving the vile Blukka. These then could be divided up into the various monasteries and temples in the town, and the servant/retinue population could be added to each. For example, each temple (cathedral) require from 20-50 people to run it, of whom about half would be clergy and the rest servants (Table 7). So the 200 clerics of Bukka might be divided as follows:

75 clerics + 75 servants in the main temple with the high priest (bishop)
50 clerics + 50 servants in a major monastery
25 clerics + 25 servants in each of three small temples
200 clerics + 200 servants total in the city

Thus we have been able to establish the size of the cult of Blukka and the number of its servants (of whom perhaps 25% could serve as armed guards as well), we know how many places of worship they have, how many people in each, and have it all in direct realistic proportion to the actual population of Hamblinopolis, instead of basing it on arbitrary guess work. In pre-technical economies, a city of 15,000 could not maintain a population of more than 225-500 clerics.

With a little imagination and juggling of the figures in Tables 5, 6, and 7 you should be able to get accurate general

TABLE 8: HISTORICAL POPULATIONS

City	Date (A.D.)	Estimated Population
Aachen (Charlemagne's capital)	c. 810	10-15,000
Florence	1200	20,000
	1300	95,000
(post plague)	1400	55,000
Rome	100	500,000
	500	50,000?
	1300	40,000
	1400	50,000
London	1200	15,000
	1300	30,000
	1400	60,000
Constantinople	500	500,000
	750	70,000
	1000	300,000
Baghdad	800	500,000+
	1100	100,000
Cairo/Fustat	1000	200,000
	1180	300,000
	1300	500,000

Dwellers in the Aztec Night

Nightmares of the Mexican Indians

By Ernest Hogan

The Sun, that makes the crops grow, giver of life, does not stay over the One True World constantly. At the end of the day, Xolotl, the deformed animal god, bringer of bad luck, dark twin of Quetzalcoatl, Venus in the form of the Evening Star, pushes the Sun, and the world, into darkness. At this time Huitzilopochtli, the great tribal god of the Aztecs, is no longer accompanied by the magnificent birds that are the souls of warriors who fell in battle, but the Tzitimime, the sinister deified spirits of women who died in childbirth, "because they bore a man in combat, a prisoner in the womb," according to Miguel Leon-Portilla in *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico*. It was the time when Itzpapalotl, Obsidian Butterfly, beautiful goddess of unpredictable fate, fluttered in the darkness, with her fangs, strange soft claws and cold, black skin, visiting men's souls with terror, making them feel what C.A. Burland called in *The Gods of Mexico*, "the spirit of ultimate evil which one senses in the most terrifying nightmares. . ."

It was when the Aztecs dreamed dreams that they believed predicted death and disaster: Dreaming of their teeth falling out meant their children were to die; eating meat, their spouses were to die; being carried off by water, their property would be stolen; flying, they themselves would die.

This was the Aztec night, when the Moon, the head of Coyolxauhqui, Huitzilopochtli's sister, who he beheaded, and the stars, their four hundred brothers, gods he also killed, appeared in the black sky and the woods and forests became infested with monstrous supernatural beings, spectres, spirits, ghosts, even roving nighttime manifestations of the gods.

Like Xaltocan, Lord Night Wind, who visited the hero of Gary Jenning's *Aztec*, making him realize, "if he had been Night Wind, then by tradition I was due to get my heart's desire."

Others could be beneficent, but at a price. Chalchiuhtotolin, Jeweled Turkey, a form of the god Tezcatlipoca and god of pride and riches, spread fear in the night with his strange, magical, gobbling cries. The Jeweled Turkey would offer those who saw him power and wealth—if they were bold enough to approach him and demand it. Those who weren't that bold simply ran away and died of terror.

Other night apparitions would offer nothing but a slim chance to escape with your life and sanity, like that of Xiuhteccuhtli, the Fire Lord. Sometimes an Aztec walking at night on a road near the dreaded woods would see a light glowing in the distance and hear sounds like a man chopping wood. On investigating, he would come upon a horrifying skeleton-creature with a lolling tongue and blazing eyes, and a rib-cage that swung open and shut, making the chopping noise, behind the ribs was the being's exposed, beating heart. Only the few who were brave enough to walk up and grab the heart could see him without going insane and dying.

Only priests could travel safely at night, and then only if they had painted their bodies with *teotlacualli*—food of the gods. This was a black, sticky substance, the ingredients of which varied depending on the god that was to eat it. It consisted mostly of poisonous creatures—scorpions, vipers, centipedes, lizards, even according to Fray Diego Duran in *Book of the Gods and Rites*, "hairy black worms, their hair filled with venom, injuring that who touched them"—which were gathered by young novice priests on ritual night journeys. The bodies of the creatures were burned, mixed with tobacco, and a type of morning glory called *ololiuhqui* for hallucinogenic effects. They drank it to produce visions and offered to the gods as a divine food as well as worn to destroy fear and provided protection against the dwellers in the night.

And magical protections were needed, for the history and mythology of the Aztecs happened in a dark time, a long night, the time after the time of the last Toltec rulers, when worship of the peaceful Quetzalcoatl became secondary to that of the warrior/wizard Tezcatlipoca. In the time of Quetzalcoatl, it was said that the Toltecs developed the most advanced civilization the world had ever seen, with art and science far beyond that of the Aztecs, who thought of them as we think of Atlantis; but under Texcatlipoca things changed. There were wars and tales of giants and strange people. Tezcatlipoca used magic to lead the Toltecs to their doom, either leading them from their cities and causing mountains to fall on them, or becoming a giant who died, and spread disease out of its rotting corpse, all out of a spirit of mischief.

So the time of the Aztecs was one of evil magic, when wizards and magicians abounded, for Tezcatlipoca was the god of wizards, thought of as a fierce, brave, young warrior who possessed the power to change shape at will. His name means "smoking mirror," after the black obsidian mirrors used to look into the future. He also bore the title Titlaycan—"he who is at the shoulder," whispering thoughts into every ear to divert all actions

towards his direction of darkness and cruelty.

According to Warwick Bray in *Everyday Life of the Aztecs*: "People born on the days 3 Alligator and 1 Wind were predisposed toward black magic, and all days which bore the number 9 were especially favorable for their activities." They were called "hearteaters" that could cause wasting diseases, and madness with the evil eye, and would bury objects in a path like magical land mines that placed poisonous stones and even animals inside people's bodies. These *amo qualli tlamatini*, "the not good wise men," were considered to be thieves, deceivers and troublemakers, witch doctors that made diseases worse, that used deadly medicines, and had secrets that they would not reveal. Of course, their services could be bought for money. They were the *nahualli*, the magicians, who practiced *Nahualism*, the ability to change into an animal at will, and could also make animals and insects do their bidding.

A peculiar form of Mexican magic was the "hand of glory"—the forearm of a woman who died in childbirth, stolen from the fresh grave and waved before the doorway of a house to be robbed, sending those inside into a deep sleep, allowing the thieves to do their work undisturbed.

Tlazolteotl, Goddess of Filth and Lady of Witches also had witches and magicians among her followers. Some were sacred prostitutes who were sacrificed and left to rot in the marshes after they took away the evil desires of the young warriors. Others would use the bones of a dead woman's foot for magic, fortune-telling, and making medicines.

Other gods whose followers practiced magic were Lord Yacatecuhtli, He Who Goes Before, god of merchants, to whom slaves were sacrificed and great festivals and secret rituals took place behind high walls so that the nobles would not become jealous; and Mixcoatl, Cloud Serpent, Lord of the Hunt, who aided hunters with magic to keep the game from escaping.

And of course, the Aztec night was full of spirits, as Tepeyollotl, Lord of Jewels, the Heart of the Mountains, god of a special class of warriors, who was a strange gigantic jaguar and the form of the Sun as it traveled under the Earth at night, caused earthquakes, and roared through volcanic eruptions and avalanches. To the Aztecs, plants, trees, springs, rocks, and even caves had a divine quality that they would make offerings to. They would appear as spirit beings, fairly-like creatures that were manifestations of the major gods.

Although the dead returning as ghosts were rare, and when they did it usually was to bring direct warnings or to invite friends and relatives to join them, there were kinds of spirits that were once human.

Some were the birds that were fallen warriors that accompanied the Sun as it rose, others were called the Tzitzimime, Mocihuaquetzque, or Cihuate

(which means "divine women"), who accompanied the Sun as it set. They were the deified spirits of women who died in childbirth, and at sunset they would decend to Earth like a rain of arrows in the Aztec night. Their faces were sad, naked skulls, and they were jealous of the living, so they preyed on them, causing contagious diseases and injuries to children. It's reasonable to imagine that they made life miserable for those who mutilated their corpses and defiled their graves to make a "hand of glory." Often one would sit weeping at the side of a road, if anyone came up to see what was the matter, she would turn around and terrify them by showing her fleshless face.

Related to the Tzitzimime were the disease spirits that would appear during epidemics, many of which were reported during the smallpox epidemic during the Conquest. They would wander through the fields, giving mournful cries and warning people of the coming of the disease by showing their skull-faces.

An encounter with one was described by Jamake Highwater in his novel *The*
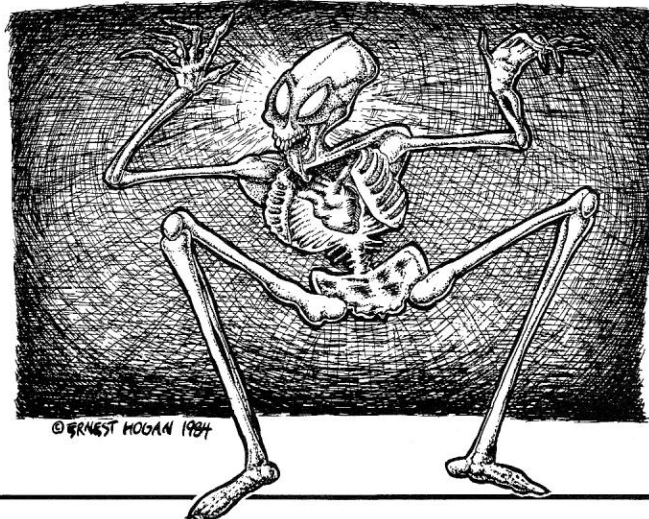
Sun, He Dies. The hero Nanautizin meets a beautiful woman who tries to seduce him, then she says that her name is Small Pox, and as she grows near he sees tiny sores break out all over her lovely face, worms creep out of her nostrils, and that "Her long black hair was matted with excrement, dried pus and urine. Her eyes possessed no iris or color but were blank and milky white."

So the Aztecs slept uneasily in fear until sunrise, and the return of Huitzilpochtli and the warrior birds.

Their empire is long dead, but the Aztec night lives on. Throughout the southwestern United States, every Mexican-American community has its own location—usually near a river, but lacking that some trees or park will do—for the dwelling place of *La Llrona*, the Crying Woman, who's cries, like those of the Tzitzimime and the disease spirits bring fear, for mothers still tell of this woman who lost her baby, and now cries at night and searches for a child to take its place...

And human sacrifice to the gods to crime, war, and insanity either on a nearby street or a distant battlefield are so common that we sleep soundly through it as if burglars had used a "hand of glory" on us.

Would you be willing to take a long walk after dark without some protection as effective as the Aztec priest's magic black paint? Would a coat of *teotlacualli* be enough to ward off what is lurking in your own night?

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Don't miss it!

My Life & Role-Playing

Famous gamers reveal their experiences in role-playing.

ON THE ROAD

By Aaron Allston

Aaron is presently editor of Hero Games' Adventurers Club *magazine. He is also designer of many* Car Wars *and* Champions *supplements as well as co-designer of Hero Games'* Justice, Inc.

It'll probably come as no surprise that the first role-playing game I played was the grandfather of the genre, *Dungeons & Dragons*.

One high school summer, my brother brought me to a gathering of his friends who were playing *D&D*. I'd heard of it, and now I had the chance to play it.

I was immediately disappointed. It wasn't because of the game itself—so far as I could tell, it was perfectly adequate. No, it was the style of play that turned me off.

I had only a vestigial understanding of what alignments meant, but it seemed to be wrong that a Lawful-Good sorcerer would send low-level followers to open vaults that were probably trapped on the promise that he'd clone them back to life when the trap went off. Something was wrong there. Something was wrong with Lawful-Goods sacking innocent caravans, and with Chaotic-Evils and Lawful-Goods cooperating in an adventuring party— not just cooperating, but amiable as the best of friends.

And then one player compounded my bad reaction by claiming that the party's adventures could be written up in prose style and be just as good as the fantasy fiction already on the market. I thought about that, about writing up a series of unrelated butcheries, sackings, rather random wanderings through wilderness terrain, all perpetrated by characters with names and alignments and powers but no personalities, and I realized what I wanted.

I wanted stories; I wanted my role-playing to resemble the novels I liked to read. Robert E. Howard's *Conan*, *Lord of the Rings*, and Jack Vance's "Dying Earth" tales were all inspirations for *D&D*. However, they weren't random violence (violence there was, but it wasn't random) or hapless meanderings; they were tightly plotted and well-executed stories. I wanted to game adventures of the sort that Princes of Amber and Elric of Melnibone and Ganelon Silvermane and King Arthur Pendragon and other heroic and mythic characters had.

What I wanted was personality. I wanted interesting and coherent settings, non-player characters worth talking to (not just to stick a sword into), and adventures that really did resemble novels and short stories. *Dungeons & Dragons*, however good or bad it may have been, didn't have these and didn't teach beginning dungeon masters how to come up with them. So we were left with dungeon trips and unlikely wilderness sacks.

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a lot of role-playing games on the market.

And then, when *Car Wars* was released, so was *Champions*. Steve brought back to Texas a copy of Hero Games' superhero role-playing game. It was, to date, the closest thing I'd seen to a high-personality role-playing game; it had smooth mechanics without a lot of chart consultation, and, because it was so easy to duplicate the existing comics, you could have a very rich game-world available to you simply by digging your comics out of the closet. I started playing *Champions* a good deal, and learned *Car Wars* and began playing it as well.

STARTING TO WRITE ADVENTURES

I was assistant editor to Forrest Johnson by this time. One day, three pages and a cover letter came in from writer Stefan Jones. This submission consisted of two cramped typewritten pages of notes and a map; it was a *Car Wars* adventure titled "Wheels vs. Walkers."

Well, it was an interesting idea. I knew we ought to publish it. But, instead of typesetting it as-was and print it as a two-page filler piece, I told Forrest Johnson that I'd like to develop and expand it. So it became the magazine version of *Sunday Drivers*.

Meanwhile, he asked me to write a *Champions* scenario, which became "School Holiday." Then, he resigned to edit a California computer magazine, and I became editor of *Space Gamer*.

Finally, to round out a season which was really treating me nicely, Steve decided to publish *Sunday Drivers* as a boxed supplement to *Car Wars*. Finally, I was in print outside the pages of *Space Gamer*.

That was a start. I was finally writing the sorts of adventures I liked to play, and they were being published. Now, I wanted to expand my market.

HERO GAMES

I'd been corresponding with Hero Games' Steve Peterson since just after ORIGINS '81, when *Champions* was released. Eventually, he asked me to contribute a piece to the upcoming *Champions II*. I proposed several, the two strong contenders being an article on campaigning in general and a variant piece on gaming pulp-era heroes in *Champions*. Well, I only had time to write the first one. In that article, I finally crystallized for the first time my thoughts about plotting and personality and characterization and all the other things I'd been pushing for so long.

Then, I successfully pitched a supplement idea to Steve Peterson, an idea for *Champions* organizations. He surprised me by accepting. By late 1982,

I'd delivered three organizations to him; they were accepted for publication, and the first two were released a year later as *Organizations Book I*.

(Oh, yes. Since there wasn't enough room for the pulp-variant piece in *Champions II*, I pitched it again as a supplement for *Champions*. Some time later, Steve Peterson surprised me by turning it around and proposing it as a whole role-playing game. Eventually, it turned into *Justice, Inc.* Just goes to show you where magazine article ideas can lead you.)

BACK TO ROLE-PLAYING

Well, that was how my writing career got started, and in late 1983 I went freelance and haven't looked back. But this article—this series—is entitled, "My Life & Role-Playing," and it's the role-playing itself we should be looking at.

As you will have probably guessed from that little history, I gradually came to the conclusion that a lot of role-playing games lacked an essential ingredient: Personality. This means setting, and flavor, and interaction. Any game could provide characters for you to stick a sword into. But not any game would actually teach gamemasters how to make stories of their campaigns, with continuity and recurrent characters and fiction substance.

Of course, many gamemasters won't want to; they just want hack-'n-slash. I say, power to 'em. But many, many other gamemasters never had the opportunity for anything but hack-'n-slash because the game didn't teach them any other purpose for their characters. Blame for this can be stretched back as far as *D&D*, which allowed characters to gain in stature only by killing things and taking their stuff.

So, what I've been trying for some time now is just to work on personable adventures for various games. A gamemaster can always strip out the personality and just play out the combats; but a gamemaster can't always put the personality in.

And, also, I work to make the campaigns I actually run meet that one player's boast of several years before. Most of the adventures actually could be written up as stories—stories with start-to-finish plots, concrete settings, and interesting primary and secondary characters.

One week, the hero-team Strike Force will deal with the minions of Cobalt (when we're playing *Champions*); the next, heroes of the Empire Club will deal with the villainous minions of a South Seas volcano goddess (*Justice, Inc.*); the next, a 21st-century sheriff and his deputies will defend a small town against the bike-gang called the Comanches (*Autoduel Champions*); in the next, the heroic Astro-Rangers will take up their giant robots and defend the Earth from the villainous Maklan invaders (*Wars of the Robots*, a design I haven't yet sold).

Thankfully, there are a lot of companies out there which stress high personality contents in their role-playing games and supplements (and, sometimes boardgames); among them are Hero Games, Chaosium, Flying Buffalo, Steve Jackson Games, West End Games, Pacesetter, and Fantasy Games Unlimited. So long as companies like these are publishing, you can count on buying adventures that are enjoyable to read in addition to being enjoyable to play. And that's what I've always wanted to see. Let's hope the trend continues. □
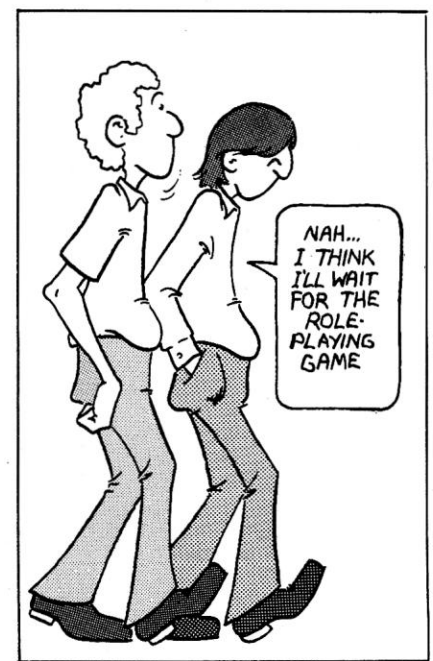
Cons

Conventions are the best place to meet new gamers and others interested in the action-adventure genre. Con organizers should send details of their event at least six months prior to the date of the convention for announcement in this column.

If you wish to see your convention listed in Different Worlds, send us the event name, dates, location, who to contact, number of attendees expected, and number of attendees you had last year. There is no charge for this service.

LITTLE WARS
May 4-5, 1985
At Willow Creek Hotel, Palatine IL. Miniature gaming. Contact: Todd Fisher, 6908 N Oakley, Chicago IL 60645, (312) 465-7006 (evenings).

MADNESS 85
May 11, 1985
At Middletown High School, Middletown NY. Adventure gaming. Contact: MADNESS 85, 34 South St, Middletown NY 10940.
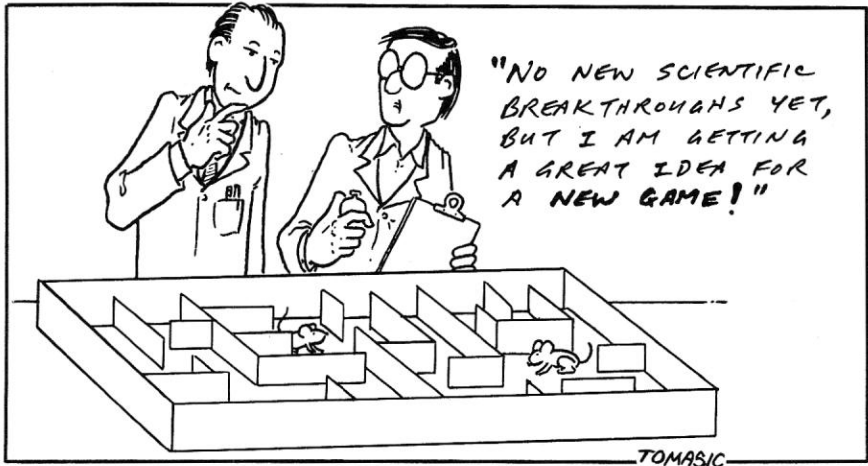
KEYCON 85
May 17-19, 1985
At the Winnipeg Marlborough Inn, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Adventure gaming. Contact: KEYCON 85, Box 1378, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 4E6.

BLOODY SUNDAY (M.I.G.S. VI)
May 26, 1985
At Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Police Association Recreation Centre, Cambridge, Ontario Canada. Adventure gaming. Contact: George M. Bawden, 11 Veevers Dr, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 5P6.

CAMP CON '85
June 1 1985
At Camp Emmanuel, south of Astoria IL. Adventure gaming. Contact: Kevin B. Sager, Box 833, Astoria IL 61501, (309) 329-2934 (home), (217) 323-1790 (work).

HATCON 3
June 7-9, 1985
At Ramada Inn, Danbury CT. Adventure gaming. Contact: Kennedy Poyser--CT SF Society, 108 Park Ave, Danbury CT 06810, (203) 743-1872.

POLYCON 85
June 21-23, 1985
At Cal Poly State Univ, San Luis Obispo CA. Adventure gaming. Contact: SAGA/POLYCON, Box 168, Julian A. McPhee Univ Union, Cal Poly State Univ, San Luis Obispo CA 93407.

SHADOW CON IX
June 21-23, 1985
At the Quality Inn at LAX, Los Angeles CA. Horror, mystery, fantasy. Contact: Shadow Con 8601A W Cermak Rd, N Riverside IL 60546.

ORIGINS XI
June 27-30 1985
At Towson State Univ, Towson MD. Adventure gaming. Contact: ORIGINS 85, Box 139, Middletown NJ 07748, (301) 298-3135.

SEAGA '85
July 5-7, 1985
At the Airport Ramada, Atlanta GA. Adventure gaming. Contact: SEAGA, Box 930031, Norcross GA 30093.

OZARKON I
August 3-4, 1985
At Ramada Inn, Joplin MO. Adventure gaming. Send SASE to: OZARKON I, Box 2151, Joplin MO 64803.

GEN CON 18
August 22-25, 1985
At MECCA Convention Hall, Milwaukee WI. Adventure gaming. Contact: GEN CON 18 Game Convention Registration Request, c/o TSR, Inc., Box 756, Lk Geneva WI 53147.
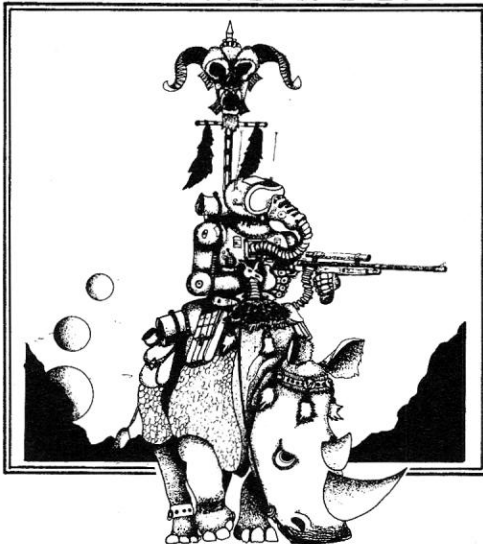
FANTASY FAIRE
August 31, September 1-2, 1985
At Griswold's Inn, Fullerton CA. SF&F, adventure gaming. Fantasy Publishing Company, 1855 W Main St, Alhambra CA 91801.

For further information contact the convention organizers directly. □

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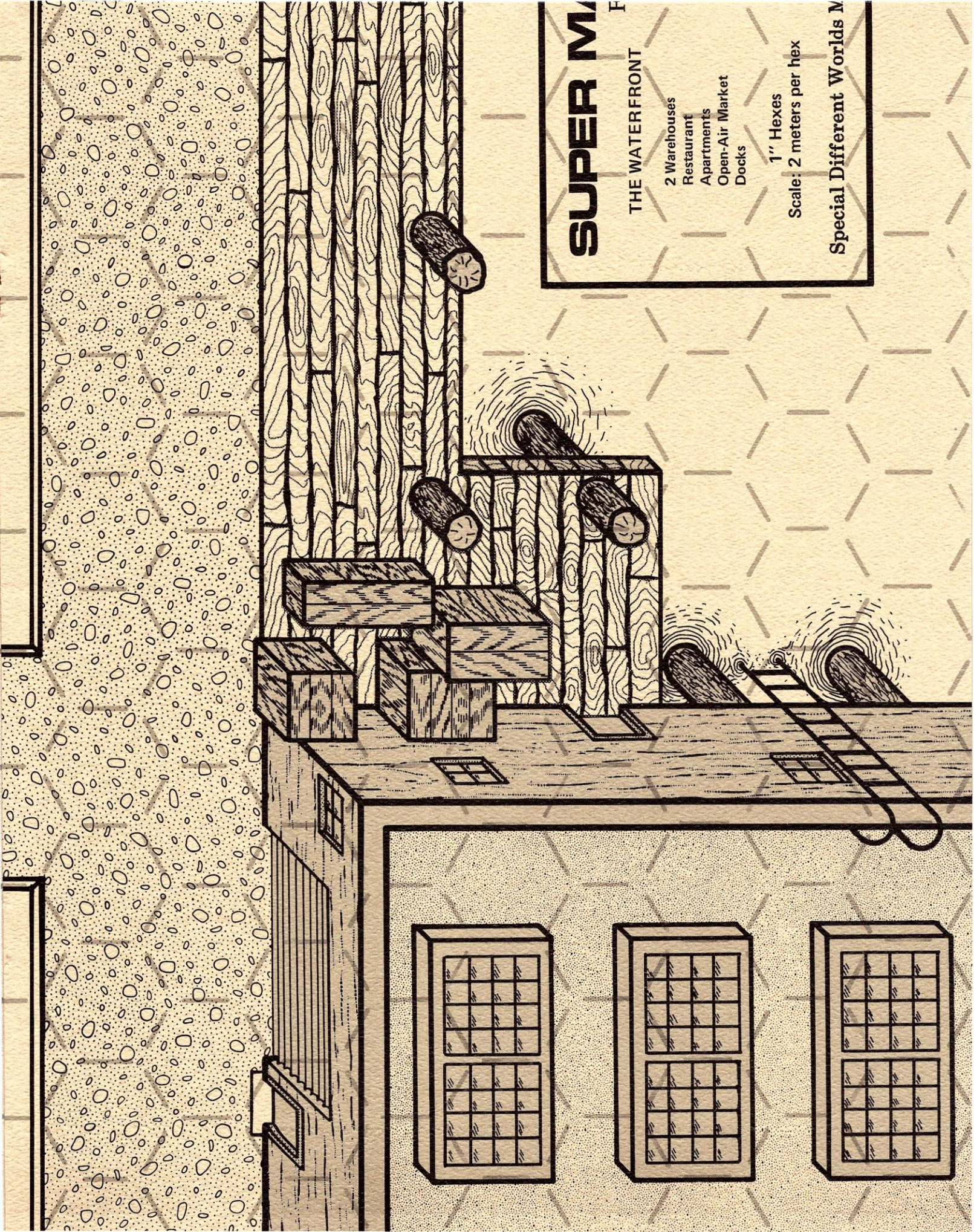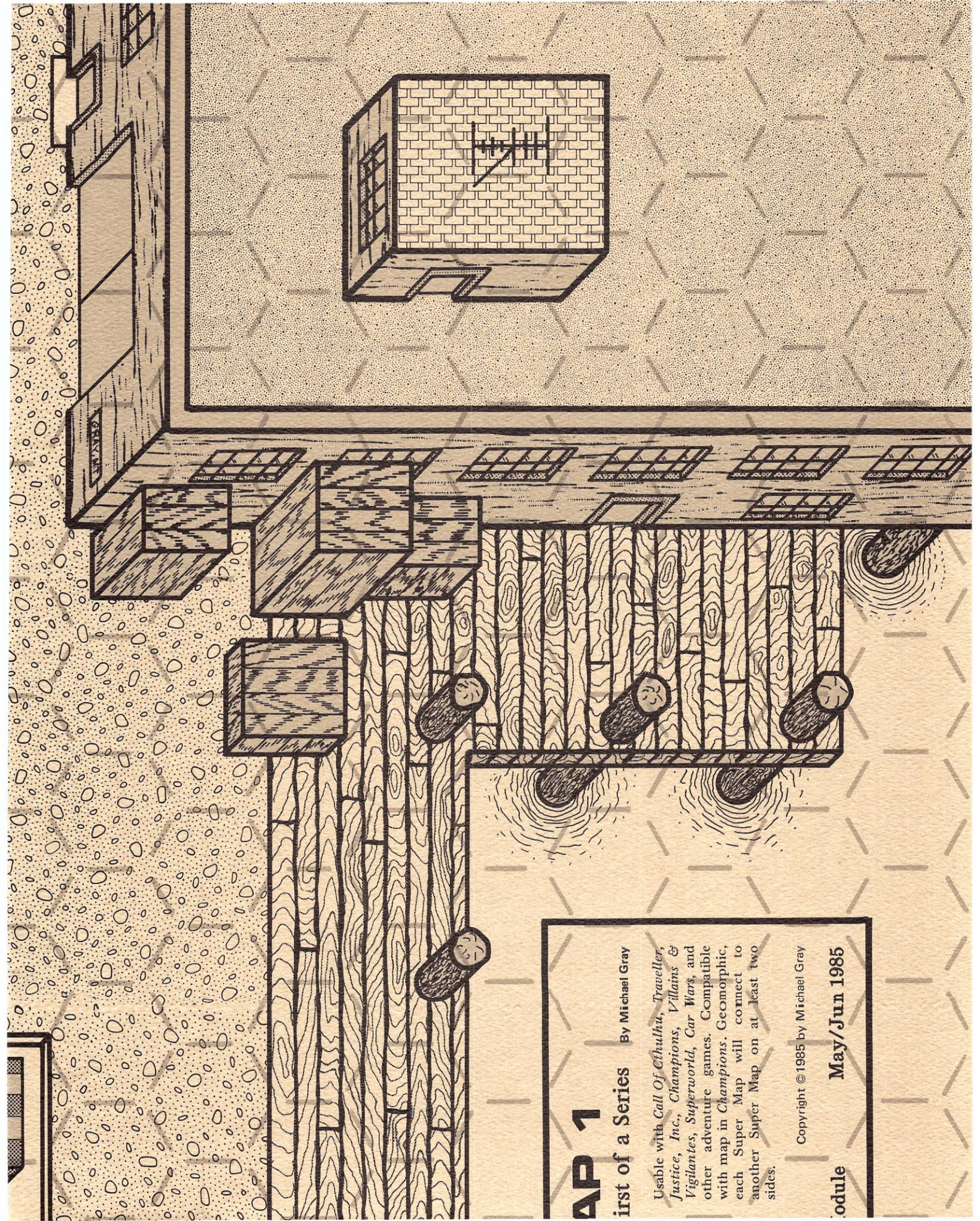
AP 1   irst of a Series   By Michael Gray

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odule   May/Jun 1985

Game Reviews

Paranoia/Element Masters/Indiana Jones/Temple of Doom/Raiders of the Lost Ark/Octopussy/You Only Live Twice/TimeMaster/TimeMaster Screen/Crossed Swords/Other Suns/Stalking the Night Fantastic/ Thieves' Guild/The Fungi from Yuggoth/Champions III/ Heroes 1 & 2/Star Trek III Sourcebook Update/Veterans

☆☆☆☆

PARANOIA

By Daniel Seth Gelber
(West End Games, $16)
Reviewed by Larry DiTillio

"Fear and Ignorance. Ignorance and Fear." These are the watchwords of *Paranoia* and you'll run across them numerous times in the rules of this outrageous new role-playing game from West End Games. *Paranoia* calls itself "a role-playing game of a darkly humorous future" and guys and gals, they ain't kidding. *Paranoia's* vision of the future finds players citizens of Alpha Complex, a self-sufficient underground warren run by "The Computer" (translate that as the gamemaster). Unhappily, said Computer is quite bonkers and in its never-ending quest to keep all citizens deliriously happy, much carnage ensues. How humanity got itself into this fix is extensively detailed in the GM Handbook of *Paranoia*, but I fear I can say no more than I've already said, lest I violate the dictum of fear and ignorance. You'll understand when you buy or play the game.

Life in Alpha Complex borrows heavily from varied science-fiction sources, particularly from such works as *Brave New World* and *Logan's Run*. All citizens are classed according to their security clearance levels, levels that are color-coded to follow the colors of the rainbow with the addition of infrared at the low end of the spectrum and ultraviolet at the high end. Attire is also based on security clearance, all citizens wearing colors matching their clearance. Lower-classed citizens must always defer to those of higher clearance or be charged with treason. Next to fear and ignorance, treason is the wrd most often used in *Paranoia*. Besides the just-cited example, it is treason to belong to a secret society (and there are tons of them in Alpha Complex), treason to have an unregistered mutant power, treason to know certain
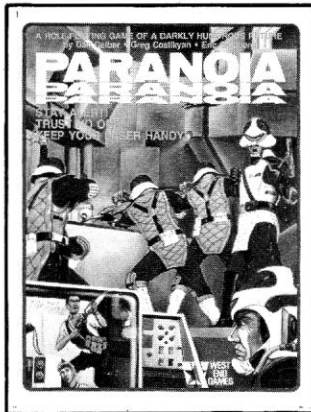
skills, and treason to question orders from the Computer. As for anything else, well it just might be treason. Death is the usual penalty for treason and slaughter of traitors by citizens is heartily encouraged. Now get this—all players in *Paranoia* start out both belonging to a secret society and having an unregistered mutant power. In other words they are already traitors. If the Computer is given proof of this, they will be sentenced to death. And everyone in Alpha Complex is armed with lasers. As the Computer often says, "Stay Alert, Trust No One, Keep Your Laser Handy." And you wondered why they call the game *Paranoia*.

Players begin their *Paranoia* life at Security Clearance Red, just one notch above the poor Infrareds. In this guise, each player becomes a troubleshooter for the Computer. Troubleshooters get the worst jobs imaginable. They are sent to terrible places, they're shot at, scorched, crushed, mangled, incinerated, electrocuted, and vaporized. And if they do manage to survive, they might still be charged with treason for failing a mission or not returning some precious piece of equipment. It's a tough life, but according to the Computer it's a fun job. And since it's about the only way to rise in security level, the players are stuck with it.

If you've gotten the idea that life expectancy is short in *Paranoia*, you're right. Fortunately, when a player creates a character, he also creates five identical clone duplicates of the character. These six clones constitute a "clone family" and when Clone One bites the big one, Clone Two is immediately sent to take his or her place. Should a player's entire clone family be wiped out, he

must create a whole new one. But at least you get six chances (and you'll need them).

Paranoia characters have eight Primary Attributes: Strength, Endurance, Agility, Manual Dexterity, Moxie (though it means nerves, here it's more like the ability to think on your feet), Chutzpah (sheer brass), Mechanical Aptitude, and Power Index (which simply determines the strength of the character's mutant power). These attributes are rolled on one or two 10-sided dice and certain attributes also have numerical modifiers, e.g., Strength is rolled as 1D10+8. From Primary Attributes, players get Secondary Attributes by using a chart. Secondary Attributes are things like Carrying Capacity and Believability Bonus (which determines how well you can lie). Once attributes are determined, players use more charts to determine secret society affiliation, service group (every citizen has a service group, e.g., Internal Security— basically it is what your job was before you became a troubleshooter), and mutant power. Players then have six skill points to spend on varying skills. The skill system in *Paranoia* is a "tree" system, whereby characters buy a blanket category that includes a number of skills and then may up certain skills under that category. This makes for a wide range of skills and is an interesting new variation, if somewhat hard to follow at first reading.

Both secret society affiliation and mutant powers are supposed to be chosen secretly in conjunction with the gamemaster, who fills the players in on what they are all about. This interesting method keeps players in the dark about what their fellow players have and makes it more difficult for one player to accuse another of treason. (By the way, the concept of player vs. player is a large part of the foundation of this game, so those of you who like cooperating with each other better steer clear. In *Paranoia*, it's everyone for themselves.) There are extensive details on secret societies in the rules and a lot of different mutant powers. The powers can help, but it's dangerous to use them openly, because such use is treasonable. A player may register a power with the Computer, but registered mutants are always suspect in Alpha Complex. However, a registered

mutant may use his power openly. Certain powers are cause for instant execution so only a suicidal player would try to register them.

Character creation in *Paranoia* is very easy and nicely balanced. As for other mechanics, they are just as simple, for *Paranoia* is insistent on espousing role-play, not qualifying for a degree in advanced calculus or military strategy. Indicative of this bias (and it is a bias, indeed some wargame oriented individuals might even take offense at some of the comments in the game) is the combat system, which the designers call "Dramatic Tactical Movement and Combat." Roughly translated, this means the players say what they want to do in a situation and the gamemaster decides the results. No hexes, no movement rates, basically it's catch as catch can. Damage is not rolled up, there are no hit points, rather a chart tells players if they have been stunned, wounded, incapacitated, killed, or vaporized and appropriate action is taken. Make no mistake, combat is very deadly in this game and it is purposeful. A kindly gamemaster can use the system to keep players alive a little longer, but this is not in the spirit of the game.

Where skill use is concerned, players use percentile dice to get the results according to this formula: Basic Chance = 15% + (5 x highest skill number). *Tunnels & Trolls* players will recognize this formula, it's the same one used to get a particular level saving roll. However in *Paranoia* Secondary Attributes and conditions can provide modifiers to skill rolls.

Physically speaking, *Paranoia* is an excellent value. Its three books, Players Handbook, GM Handbook, and Adventure Book, constitute 140 pages of material, covering everything you want to know. Indeed, *Paranoia* is one of the most complete games I've ever seen on the market, one that does not scream for additional supplements, something gamer wallets will appreciate. The writing is both clear and very literate, another big plus. The designers did a good job at setting a very sophisticated satirical tone and this predominates throughout, making the rules quite delightful to read. Of course no game is perfect and art-wise *Paranoia* is not even adequate. Then again,

GAME RATINGS

☆☆☆☆ Superb
☆☆☆ Mighty Fine
☆☆ Good
☆ Flop

the two 20-sided dice that come with the game are already inked, so I guess we can live without nice art.

Where *Paranoia*'s content is concerned, well that's the point at which many gamers are going to diverge. *Paranoia* urges the gamemaster to keep players off-balance, afraid, down-trodden, ignorant, and humiliated. Not characters alone mind you, players. It also urges completely ruthless and gleeful slaughter of characters to the tune of 50% to 100% kill rate per expedition ("Kill the bastards" is the exact phrase used in a summary of the perfect *Paranoia* gamemaster's methods). If that doesn't sound like a way to have fun, well maybe it is and maybe it isn't. *Paranoia* depends on the nature of the players and those who take role-playing very seriously are advised to steer clear. I can easily see players (not characters) at each other's throats over a session of *Paranoia*, especially with a real nasty gamemaster at the helm. On the other hand, role-playing is about living vicariously and *Paranoia* is an excellent role-playing game even though the vicarious living is of a tense variety. This is in fact *Paranoia*'s greatest strength, it provides guidelines for role-playing that can actually

strengthen the role-playing experience. Its adventure book even contains detailed explanations of what kind of feeling the players should get in the situations and offers suggestions of how to achieve those feelings through role-play. Veteran gamers may not need this text, but I found it very interesting and were I a novice my appreciation would be multi-fold. The insistence on secrecy in the game also heightens this feeling (players are in fact denied access to the GM Handbook which is readable only by security clearance Ultraviolet, the highest.

A player who puts forth knowledge from the handbook in a game is automatically charged with treason for having knowledge above his security level, an interesting way to forestall cheating). By the same token, the secrecy does not make *Paranoia* an easy game to run. The gamemaster must keep track of a lot of elements and unlike other games, he cannot share any of these elements with the players (e.g., the gamemaster secretly must allot treason and commendation points to players. Treason points determine how quickly the character will be charged with treason, commendation points offset treason points. Players never

know how many of either they have) but the gamemaster must always know). Also to be expected is lots of note-passing and private conferences, so a potential *Paranoia* gamemaster has to be good at thinking on his or her feet. Fortunately the wealth of detail and suggestion in the game, far outweigh its difficulties and it was something I was definitely eager to try and run, despite the problems. Whether anyone else will agree with me, well I just don't know. My guess is that *Paranoia* will have its greatest appeal among older, more sophisticated gamers seeking a change of pace. Power gamers will definitely hate it, younger players will probably find it too offbeat. Some of its quips and comments and a lot of the material on secret soceities may very well offend a few sensibilities, but this is par for the course in a game that is primarily satirical. And please, take that last comment with a good grain of salt. *Paranoia* is satirical, but it is no joke. It is a solid, well-designed game, admittedly off-the-wall, but not to be dismissed as an attempt to grab your bucks with a few cheap yuks. Its yuks are good and so is the rest of it. It belongs in every dedicated gamer's library if only for its insights into the role-playing experience. Well done! □

some merely serve to remove the burden of being inventive from the players and delegate it to dice. Skills such as Ingenious Idea, where the player can arrive at the perfect solution to any problem or situation based on a roll of the dice seems to defeat one of the fundamental principles of role-playing, the idea that survival is based on thinking as much as, if not more than, fighting. In all fairness, though, the large number of non-combat skills (with the noted exceptions) make *Element Masters* a flexible and comprehensive game system.

The combat system is also simple and comprehensive. Each weapon has a basic chance to hit, expressed as a percentage, modified by exceptional personal stats. When this number or less is rolled on a D100, a hit can occur. Critical hits and fumbles are taken into account if exceptionally low or high scores are rolled. Damage can be avoided if a character makes a successful parry. If the attack does hit, damage is subtracted from the armor that exists at the point of impact and if the total is exceeded, crippling, maiming, or death may occur.

Combat is made easier by the simple mechanics of the combat round. Any three actions may be undertaken in one round, as long as no more than one offensive spell, one attack, and one parry are done in the same round. So if a character wished to take 1/3 of his movement, cast an offensive spell, and attack in one round it would be legal. This system provides an almost infinite number of variations and greatly speeds play. Combat itself is also quickly resolved and provisions are made for bashing, pummeling, and grappling, and attacks at night or from horseback.

The magic system is based on an individual's manna as expressed by his magical power points. Power points are expended in casting spells and also as defense from spells being cast against you. As power points are lowered from casting spells, defense also is decreased. Magic on Vinya is of three types: common, spell spheres, and element magic. Common spells are easily obtained by nearly anyone and are available in numerous offensive and defensive varieties. Spells have a basic chance of success plus modifiers based on the difference in power between caster and target. Offensive spells have a chance of failure based on the target's current magic point total. Defensive or non-offensive spells do not have to overcome any magic resistance. Spell spheres are devices left over from a time before common spells were

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☆☆☆

ELEMENT MASTERS

By Kenneth D. Burridge, et al
(Escape Ventures, $14.95)

Reviewed by Scott Dollinger

Element Masters is a new adventure game that combines aspects of both the traditional fantasy and science-fiction genres as characters join together in an attempt to rid their world from invading hordes of alien beings. *Element Masters* uses the world of Vinya as its setting.

According to the history provided in the introduction to the rules, Vinya was one of a plethora of worlds that were created as a sort of compromise between a pantheon of bickering deities. Each deity wished to create beings that reflected their personal view of the universe and conflict arose over which view would prevail. Ultimately, it was agreed that any deity could create and populate worlds as they saw fit, Vinya was one of these.

On Vinya, magic and technology co-exist and in earlier times combined to create a golden age of peace and prosperity. The rulers of the golden age were the Council of Twelve, a group of the most powerful element master magicians. Under their direction,
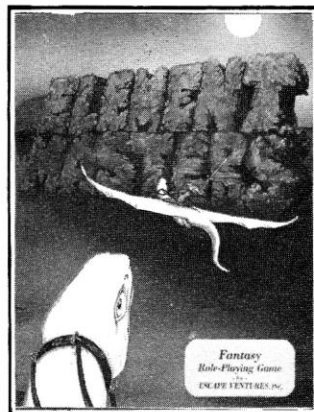
a powerful network of teleportation gates were constructed that linked all of Vinya and led to other worlds as well. The purpose of the gates was to promote cultural exchange and spread knowledge across the universe. Unfortunately, the gates also put Vinya into contact with other, less hospitable, races who seized the opportunity to invade and make war upon the gentle Vinyans. In a desperate attempt to close the gates, the Council over-extended themselves and, in a great mystic backlash, were destroyed. Vinya fell into a period like the Dark Ages and the ability to do elemental magic was lost. Now, many years later, children have

been discovered with the potential to work element magic and end the dark times.

These children are, of course, the player-characters. Characters in *Element Masters* can be generated as any of several races: human, elf, dwarf, half-elf, unspeakable (hobbit/gnome), and half-tron. The races, with the exception of the half-tron, should be familiar to any reader of fantasy literature and no new insights are really presented in *Element Masters*. Characters' personal stats are generated by rolling 5D4 and adding the appropriate racial modifiers.

One rather interesting feature of *Element Masters* is the inclusion of previous experience skill bonuses and personality traits as part of the character generation process. Such information as how brave, stingy, or moral a character is can be instrumental in deciding how to play it, especially in a system that has no character classes or restrictions on actions that characters may wish to perform. Phobias, professional skills, and leisure interests are also taken into account during the generation phase. Numerous other non-combat skills abound in *Element Masters*, so many, in fact, that one wonders whether they are all necessary or whether

readily available and when gestures, incantations, and material components were necessary. The spheres are thrown at opponents or crushed for self-use. They "explode" on contact and the trapped spell effect is released. Spell spheres have abilities that duplicate common spells but they also have functions unique to themselves. Element magic is incredibly powerful and offers an opportunity for players to exercise a great deal of creativity.

Characters have a very difficult time qualifying to use element magic but once learned, they can become element masters. Element masters can use common magic and spell spheres like everyone else, but they also totally control one type of element: earth, air, fire, or water. Control can manifest itself as a minor or a major manipulation. Minor manipulations are much like powerful common spells based on a certain element. They can be offensive, defensive, or knowledge oriented. Major manipulations are controlled through the use of a focus. The focus alone can do 15 points of damage without manipulating any amount of a given element or can be used to pull large amounts of the element through and shape it, or move it in any way the caster desires. The great diversity of actions possible make the element magic system a stimulating addition to adventure gaming.

Element Masters is contained in a 150-page book. Included with the book are a blank character sheet and map of Vinya. The book contains all the afore mentioned rule sections as well as a 64-page section on Vinyan monsters, and a large example of combat. The text of the book is fairly well written although typos and awkward phrasing are far from uncommon. The artwork is regrettably inconsistent. Illustrations in the monster section are quite good, but the rules illustrations and cover art leave a great deal to be desired.

Element Masters may never replace your favorite game, but it represents a worthwhile effort and is well worth looking into. □

☆☆☆

THE ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES

By David Cook (TSR, $13)

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

By Tracy Hickman and Michael Dobson (TSR, $6)
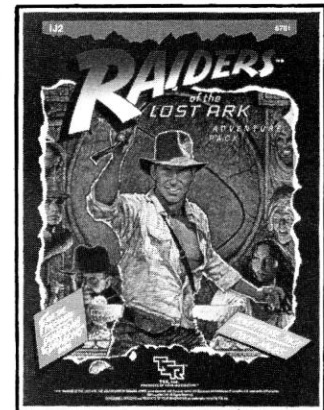
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

By Doug Niles (TSR, $6)

Reviewed by Russell Grant Collins

Back in the days before *Dungeons & Dragons* or any other adventure game, my brother and I would occasionally recreate various movies. Sometimes we'd even go a step further and create the further adventures of our heroes after the movies were over. It is to this sort of play-acting that *The Adventures of Indiana Jones* game addresses itself. It gives the players all that they need to know to recreate either of the movies (especially with the appropriate modules) and a start toward producing further adventures in the series.

Indy can use his whip to keep thugs at bay, swing to safety, or grab something just before the villain gets it. He can slug it out or shoot it out; face wild animals, deadly traps, or evil forces beyond the ken of man. And at any time, he can be found some of the best companions a hero could ask for—Marion, Sallah, Short Round, or Willie. The adventures never end. At least in theory. . .

There are two main flaws with this game. The first is that the designer doesn't seem to make up his mind whether the game is a simulation of the movies or a standard adventure game. In the movies, Indy can achieve whatever he has to without serious injury and his allies enjoy similar ability and protection (except for various spear-carriers included in order to prove how deadly Indy's opposition really is). In an adventure game, Indy may have better characteristics than others in the game (he does), but he enjoys no special protection from being killed; neither do his allies. Usually, the designer gets around this by making it very difficult to be killed. Unfortunately, this makes it impossible for Indy to shoot that big swordsman, since anyone can shrug off even a "serious" wond and keep coming (incidentally, though, serious wounds do slow you down and take too long to heal, considering Indy's stamina in the movies). So much for simulation.

Okay, it's an adventure game; however, it lacks a character generation system and an experience point system. For character generation, there is a list of characteristics for Indy and his main allies from both movies, the same for the villains and thugs in each adventure, and a simple rule for generating thugs and villains (roll percentile dice for each stat, add 10 to Strength and Prowess for thugs, 10 to all six stats for main villains, and reduce any that go above 100 to 100; assign skills as necessary). This rule doesn't allow for completely horrid rolls or unusually great ones, either giving Indy no challenge or overwhelming him. And of course with no rule on what skills or how many to give characters, it cannot be easily adapted to creating new heroes.

What passes for an experience system is called "Player Points." The good thing about Player Points is that, for once, the game-master gets them too. The other players decide on how many points to give him, depending on how enjoyable he's made it and how well he's playing his characters. On top of that, though, each episode in the larger adventure has certain points assigned to it for each side; the gamemaster alone knows what they are. In some cases, unfortunately, the adventure is set up so that either the gamemaster or the players get points, depending on what happens (i.e., in *Temple of Doom*, the gamemaster gets a point for killing Wu Han (Indy's waiter-ally in scene one) and the players get a point for keeping him alive—and the module tells the gamemaster to cheat to insure Wu Han's death). Player Points have only one use—paying five such points reduces damage from one attack one level. A player can accumulate a maximum of 15 points at a time. This isn't a very good system.

The other problem is that basically Indiana Jones is The Hero; the others are his sidekicks. His attributes are the best and he has more skills than the others. Besides, if you don't play Indy, you might be Sallah in one episode and Katanga in the next and play Wu Han and Short Round in the next adventure. Indy is the only constant. This game really works best as a two-player game with one player playing Indy (and perhaps his minions) and the other playing everyone else. In such a case, though, care should be taken to avoid becoming antagonists beyond the scope of the game.

Two things do stand out in this otherwise poor game, though; the character-figure tri-panels that are similar to *Cardboard Heros* and work well in play (how about a similar design for their *Marvel Super Heroes*?) and the Chase Flow Chart that handles chases in a unique manner which simulates the effect without requiring the gamemaster to have a street map for wherever (and providing a gamemaster's screen with the boxed set at least prevents them from issuing one separately with a so-called mini-module at a full module price).

Of the two modules, *Raiders* is definitely the better one. The gamemaster is given the situation and told how to handle most common deviations from the movie (once Indy is recruited, his actions invariably lead him to Nepal and thence to Cairo; what happens after that varies a bit but the only difficulty I see is what happens if Indy is killed, a drawback to every adventure in this game).

On the other hand, *Temple of*

Doom suffers from the fact that Indy has to make the correct choices to even get into the main adventure; if he leaves town by car instead of plane or heads directly to Delhi instead of the village, he can miss the whole thing. This module tells the gamemaster to force the players in the correct direction, if necessary using dozens of thuggee thugs. On the other hand, Indy might not live to reach the adventure, because he has to get the antidote and survive the plane crash and river ride and the various dangers of the journey and the assassin before reaching the temple in question. Each of these requires a number of attribute rolls to achieve (and there are more to come). If he continually fails his rolls, well, bye-bye Indy! The worst of the system is highlighted in this concatenation of attribute rolls disguised as an adventure. The designer should have realized that it's no fun for anyone if Indy and company are killed in the crash on their way to the Temple of Doom and simply said that any even half-way plausible scheme to survive would succeed well enough to enable our heroes to arrive at the village intact.

In conclusion, avoid this game; if you play some other system that is set in this time period and are willing to do the conversions, the modules might be worth it, especially *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. □

OCTOPUSSY ☆☆
YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE ☆☆☆

Both by Neil Sullivan (Victory Games, $6.95 and $7.95 respectively)

Reviewed by Larry DiTillio

Anyone who read my review of the *James Bond 007* game in *DW 34* knows I'm a fan of the game. I mention this bias so you'll know that what I'm about to say about *Octopussy* doesn't come from a dislike of the game itself. If that sounds like my enthusiasm for the game didn't carry over to the module, you're right. There's not much to be enthusiastic about between the covers of *Octopussy*.

The particular mission in *Octopussy* is to tail a villain named Kamal Kahn and discover whether or not he has ties to Soviet Intelligence in India. Step one for the players is to attend an auction of a fabulous Faberge Egg at Sotheby's and somehow switch it for a phony. Said phony contains a transmitter which will allow the players to eavesdrop on whoever buys the egg; naturally it is assumed that this will be Kamal Kahn (though if players foul up they may wind up the buyers themselves). This opening will be familiar to anyone who saw the movie and while it doesn't make much sense here (why risk blowing an agent's cover to plant a transmitter in a piece that logically Kamal Kahn would probably not carry directly on his person), the auction play is a nice opening. Unhappily things go downhill from here as the players follow Kamal to Udaipur, India, where he is to turn the egg over to Octopussy. The problems start with getting the players in on the real plot, a plot that unhappily works on a hidden time limit (since the players don't realize this and the gamemaster has no way of informing them, there is no sense of racing the clock to save the world and there should be). Moreover, logical actions on the players' parts are meant to be disallowed by the gamemaster, and wait until you try to explain this to the players. A good example is that the gamemaster is supposed to dissuade the players from having the real Faberge Egg examined at M.I.6 because to do so would blow the big "trick" in the plot. Quite naturally, of course, that's the logical place to take it and the minute you start coming up with excuses, the players get suspicious. Besides that, it also seems logical that if Kamal Kahn wants the egg so badly (which he does) any good spy would have it checked out. The designer suggests a few ploys for defeating this error, but they are feeble. This is only the start of the trouble, for once in Udaipur, the gamemaster will have to improvise heavily to get the agents on the right track (we're told in the module where they are supposed to go, but not an inkling of how to motivate them in those directions). There's nothing wrong with improvisation, indeed the *Bond* game requires a talent for it. Nevertheless, when you pay money for a scenario and spend most of your time wondering what to do next, you're not getting your money's worth. Oddly, the designer spends lots of space on useless details (like three pages on character descriptions of some bland jewelry experts who are supposed to brief the players for the Sotheby gambit and on M's new secretary), while leaving out physical details that are sorely missed. Examples are a layout of Octopussy's circus train (we're told it has "several" cars and Octopussy's car is in the middle when what we need is an exact number and descriptions of who might be where), and some idea of the layout of the Oberai Shikarbadi, a hunting club owed by Kamal Kahn. Both places are meant to be action sites and both must be played largely by ear. These omissions are compounded by an outright contradiction concerning the defusing of a bomb, the key action in the plot (unhappily I can't explain the contradiction without blowing a secret, but you'll know it when you cross it). In most cases in the scenario, the players just don't have the motivation to check out what the designer seems to assume they will. My players are some of the sharpest role-players I know and I had to lob villains at them like grenades to get them oriented (they got disoriented wondering why their quite logical steps were being discounted). The time limit also poses a problem, several, in fact. The players must travel all the way from India to Yugoslavia, not too short a trip, but we are never given a clue as to how long it might take, which really fouls up your bookkeeping on the time limit. Moreover, the players could be categorically wiped out if they don't meet the limit. As for the title character of the piece, she's been switched from the dynamic, exciting character she was in the movie to a spoiled rich girl, given to all sorts of ever-changing moods. Poor Octopussy; what cruel fate hath done to you! If you've already bought the scenario, my suggestion is do a little work using the movie as an inspiration to link up the locales more logically and come up with a few new clues or encounters to get the players to the real plot sooner. And put some kind of pay-off on Octopussy's circus train, right now it's anybody's guess as to why agents should pursue it. If you don't have the scenario, avoid it. You can do better with one of the other *Bond* modules, e.g., *You Only Live Twice*.

You Only Live Twice is designed by Neil Sullivan, the same man who designed *Octopussy*. However, it seems that Mr. Sullivan learned from his mistakes because *You Only Live Twice* is much more satisfying. It's also more expensive than *Octopussy*, probably because of the longer book and the addition of a gamemaster screen showing vital locations for the mission. This screen is very useful, unlike the merely decorative folder you get with *Octopussy*.

In *You Only Live Twice*, players know immediately what they're after, a Soviet space lab that fell out of orbit and plunged down somewhere in the Sea of Japan. The lab supposedly has some strains of a deadly virus aboard, a virus that originated from British experimentation. The British abandoned the research when they discovered it was deadly, but the Soviets managed to get hold of it and continued the research. Naturally if the virus should escape into the sea or atmosphere it would cause an untold number of deaths and possibly bring discredit on British intelligence for originating the virus. The players are supposed to find the lab and have the virus neutralized. Speed is of course of the essence.

This very clear, very straightforward beginning keeps the agents on track and makes certain that they won't spend undue time in useless endeavors. Again there is a time limit, and again the players are not aware of it, but at least in this scenario they know they must act quickly and so have a better chance of succeeding within the time given.

As in the movie, the characters work closely with Tiger Tanaka and various minions of the Japanese Secret Service and get access to all sorts of spiffy Q-Branch items, like Little Nellie (that wild autogyro with which Bond downed four attack choppers, a scene that is replayed in the scenario), cigarette rockets (though the rocket guns from the
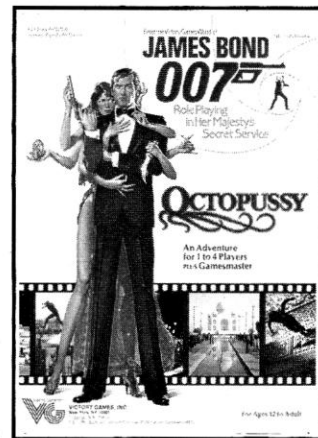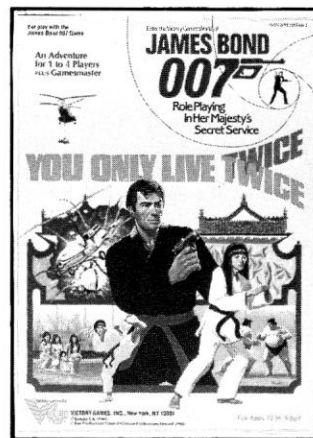
movie are missing, these could be provided out of the *Q-Manual*) and a handy-dandy safecracking device. Since the action is confined to Japan, it's helpful if one of the players has knowledge of Japanese language and customs, but not essential. The scenario does provide a short background of Japanese character, as well as a "Thrilling Cities" write-up on Tokyo for gamemasters deficient in Nipponese culture.

The clues and encounters in *You Only Live Twice* are very well linked and much more linear than those in *Octopussy* (i.e., A leads to B which leads to C, etc.). There's also a lot more excitement. Players don't flounder around here and the gamemaster has the details he needs, including lots of maps of the action areas. The villains the agents will track down are members of TAROT, the *Bond* game's imitation SPECTRE, but Bond purists could very easily play them as SPECTRE agents.

If there's a flaw in *You Only Live Twice*, it's the same flaw that bedevils all the *Bond* modules, namely because the scenarios adapt the Bond films, players can seldom be surprised by certain tricks and traps that come directly from the movies (it's a good assumption that most *Bond* players do see the movies, most of mine have seen them several times). The *Bond* modules do change the plots somewhat (successfully so in *You Only Live Twice*, rather less successfully in *Octopussy*) and the recognizable encounters do lend the Bond flavor to the modules, but I look forward to the day when we're provided with some totally new material. So far Victory Games has published adaptations of *Dr. No, Live and Let Die, Goldfinger*, and the two films reviewed here, so it's going to be a while before anything new does appear, nevertheless, I think that day will come.

Physically-speaking, both *Octopussy* and *You Only Live Twice* are handsome products, nice books with nice large print, "Top Secret" envelopes with full-color handouts, and gamemaster screens. The difference between them is play value, *You Only Live Twice* has it, *Octopussy* doesn't. Get it? Got it? Good! Pass the vodka martinis, hand out the Walther PPKs and let's save the world! □

☆☆☆

TIMEMASTER
By Mark D. Acres
(Pacesetter, $12)
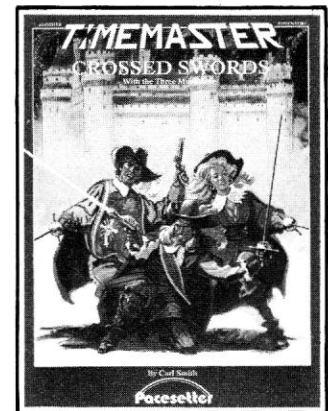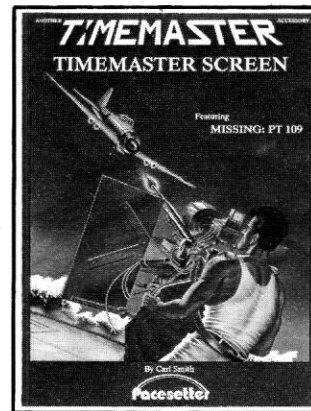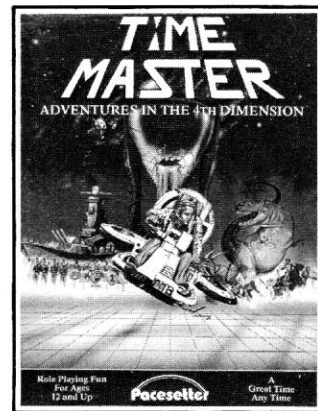
TIMEMASTER SCREEN CROSSED SWORDS
Both by Carl Smith
(Pacesetter, $6 each)

Reviewed by Russell Grant Collins

In my opinion, *TimeMaster* has one of the most workable backgrounds of all the recent time travel games. It deals with a time patrol in the far future which is defending its past from aliens bent on destroying it and free-lance time travelers who aren't careful enough about what their actions are doing to the fabric of time.

The system has eight characteristics which are figured as 2 x (3D10)+20 for a range of 26 to 80. If three or more of these stats are below 40, these can be rerolled. The player selects his background and age at recruitment and two skills appropriate to his background as well as a paranormal talent. In addition, the character gets the skills Time Corps Stunner and Historical Specialty for the era they came from and the talent Paranormal Memory, which allows characters to recall how time should really go when something has changed it.

Paranormal talents in general give the character abilities that aid him in detecting aliens, fighting longer when wounded, and setting things aright when the aliens are stopped. There are eight of them. All but one of them require Willpower to use and cannot be used if the result would lower the Willpower value to below 21. This tends to limit them to occasional use only, which is appropriate in most cases (although in one play session, over 24 hours went by while the one character with the ability to rearrange people's memories, to fit the timestream as it should have been, fixed up the memories of all the people affected by the aliens' plot so that they woundn't remember what happened).

Skills, on the other hand, represent the sort of things that anyone could have, even if they are not suited for time travel. Unfortunately, the system falls somewhat flat here, with a total of only 65 skills, of which 45 are combat related. Most skills are very broad—one skill covers flying anything from the Wright brothers' airplane through WWII bombers, Boeing 747s, and the Space Shuttle to advanced spaceships. Helicopters aren't mentioned, but it's easy to assume that they're covered by this skill as well. At the very least, a modifier should have been added to some skills to represent a difference in technology from what the person is used to (at higher levels, this modifier could be ignored as the character gets more used to different technologies). Better still would be an expanded skill list, in the case above separating Airplane Pilot, Helicopter Pilot, and Spaceship Pilot (if not more divisions).

Each skill has three levels: Specialist, Expert, and Master. A beginning character starts off with his skills at the Specialist Level and can increase them through experience. Certain skills have prerequisite skills that must be at Expert level before they can be purchased. Unfortunately, these skills include the ability to fight on horseback (the prerequisite, of course, is Equestrian skill). This means that no matter how long a person existed as a cavalryman before he was recruited into the time patrol, he cannot start out with the ability to fight while mounted. There should have been some manner that such a character could be created. Also, most skills are considered exclusive, meaning that a person has to have the skill to be able to perform it (as opposed to certain combat skills that a person without training could attempt, albeit without as much ability); this is all well and good, but all non-combat skills given here are treated this way, including skills like Swimming and Stealth that most people have at least some chance at performing, even though they are far from proficient at them. And the fact that most gamemaster-characters get more skills than beginning characters should speak for itself.

Whenever the character wishes to do something that's not automatic, he makes a percentile roll against the appropriate skill, paranormal talent, or characteristic. If it is just a general check (i.e., does he do it or not?) he simply has to roll less than that score. If there is a question of how well he does it, he cross-references the amount he made the roll by with a column on the action table, the column depending on a number of factors. In the case of combat, the result determines not only if the person hits, but how much damage he inflicts.

The concept of using one table for everything is not a new one. However, in this case, there's a problem because although there's one action table for all specific checks, the interpretation of the results is almost always different, meaning that in every case the Continuum Master has to flip through the Traveller's Manual in search of the proper chart. If they wanted to do things this way, they should have provided a separate listing of all the keys in one place for easy reference. I guess that many games suffer this same fault with their abundance of tables being scattered throughout the rules, but since this system appears at first to use only one chart for everything, it seems even more noticeable.

(Incidentally, the *TimeMaster Screen* they recently released does not contain all the charts in the game, although it needlessly reprints the action table and the skills list. And the mini-module seems greatly slanted against the characters. I'd advise only compulsive completists to pick it up.)

One interesting part of this system is the ability for characters to participate in historical battles in an effort to ensure that they turn out correctly. The same pieces can represent a number of different forces depending on the era and the size of the battle. It takes a bit of getting used to at first, but seems quite a playable system, with one exception. The counters have been back-printed in another color so that one side represents the player-characters and their troops and the other represents the enemies. However, this is done by using the same set-up on each side so that what's on the front has no relationship to what's on the back, making it hard to find the appropriate counter when you need it (of course, it does enable you to use all the planes on each side, for example, in the same battle). Also, irreparable harm can be caused if things don't go the way they should (imagine trying to Restore Memory on everyone involved in even a minor skirmish; it might make sense to say that insignificant people will automatically recall things the way they were supposed to be if all else is set aright).

The game also includes a book entitled "Guide to the Continuum" that contains an article on the enemy aliens as well as background articles on half a dozen time periods that the gamemaster might want to set adventures in. Each article consists of an overview of the period, a military summary, a political summary, and stats for two or three major gamemaster-characters (usually rulers at the time). In addition, in the back is a timeline for each period, listing a number of events in the period and rating how significant each is, as well as a listing of a number of the most important events in world history outside of the detailed eras. As such, it is more of a background book than anything else.

The scenario included is pretty good, but the players I ran in it finished it up more quickly than the scenario expected them to, keeping us from testing out the battle rules using it. Also, one of them pointed out that certain of the pre-generated characters included for the scenario had paranormal talents they could never use because one use would lower their Willpower below 21 (including the only person with Memory Restoration, the talent necessary to set things right and complete the mission successfully). I assume that this was just an oversight on their part, but it seems hard to explain.

Crossed Swords is the first full module for *TimeMaster*. It's based

on Dumas's famous novel *The Three Musketeers*. The adventure has two parts to it. The first involves the famous portion of the novel in which d'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers journey to London on a mission for the queen. The player-characters get involved because d'Artagnan has disappeared. The second part involves the search for him and the foiling of the plans of the alien who caused him to disappear.

The first part suffers from the fact that the author chooses to let the players know what the situation is by having them search it out; this means that everyone knows things that were more-or-less private in the novel. It seems more natural that the characters would be told this information in

the briefing before the mission.

The second part suffers from a lack of understanding of the rules of the system. First of all, one of the aliens has taken the place of a character from the novel and yet is also said at one point to have "dominated" that character, a completely different and incompatible Paranormal Talent. Also, Carl Smith seems to think that the aliens can only detect unsuccessful Telepathic Probes (which in some ways makes more sense, but isn't the way the rules are written). Lastly, the scenario climaxes in a battle which did not take place historically (in the novel). Even assuming some people get killed, there are over 300 people who have to have their memories restored. How-

ever, most players should be able to think of a more subtle way of achieving their ends which will greatly reduce this number.

The concept behind this adventure is a good one; with a little work it could be a great one. I recommend it particularly if the gamemaster has read the original (preferably recently) and is willing to fix up a few things.

The bottom line on this game is that once we got used to the system, my friends and I enjoyed it and plan to play it in the future. It is by no means perfect, but still enjoyable. For those who are interested in that sort of thing, *TimeMaster* is supposed to be totally compatible with Pacesetter's other adventure games, *Chill* and *Star Ace*. □

☆ ☆ ⚹

OTHER SUNS
By Niall Shapero (FGU, $16)
Reviewed by Troy Christensen

Other Suns is a game of the far distant future and is the third science-fiction role-playing game from FGU. The science-fantasy genre, however, is populated with so many other games that a new system must be original and contain innovative rules. *Other Suns* offers nothing new or spectacular to the science-fiction scene to make it more playable or more enjoyable than those already populating the role-playing field.

Other Suns contain the following books and materials: one 71-page "Characters and Skills" rulebook, one 65-page "Starship and World Construction" rulebook, one gamemaster screen, three 6-sided dice, and two 20-sided dice.

Other Suns character generation is one of the most complicated and time-consuming systems I have ever seen. Characters in the game have twelve characteristics ranging from strength to telepathic strike capacity. Besides these twelve characteristics, which are rolled on 3D6 for humans, there are another twelve abilities derived from the characteristics. These abilities range from accuracy to stealth and all involve long mathematical formulae to derive their scores. The average formula is no more complicated than 9th-grade mathematics but they do slow down character generation considerably. An average calculation looks like this: PAR = (2 x DEX) + WIL + ((STR + INT)/2) - SIZ - 22.

In *Other Suns* a player can choose between eleven races. Each race is deeply developed and thoroughly detailed. The races
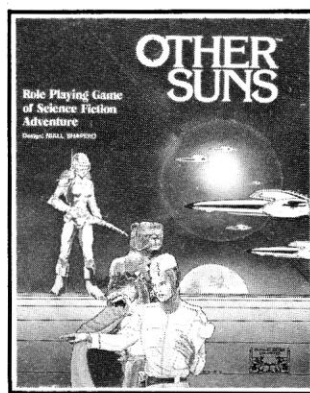
tend to be mammalian in form though each race possess unique qualities of its own. Each race is given six paragraphs of description. The first explains how to play the creature and its general game mechanics. The second paragraph describes the creature's biology, the third details the creature's homeworld, and the fourth explains the creature's particular weapons. The last two describes the race's language, psychology, and attitudes towards the other playing races. This section of *Other Suns* is probably the best in the entire game. However, eleven detailed creatures, however well they may be described, is still not worthy enough to make this game a good buy.

The game comes with one hundred skills which are broken down into several categories. Besides the seven categories a character is given a specialty and a primary subfield skill list. A player picks the specialty and from that list picks the skills which will become his character's subfield skills. All the skills in the game are thoroughly described and all their possible applications in the game are detailed. There were, however, many rules which were difficult to understand because of the

complexity of the language or terminology used.

Combat is fought in 12-second rounds, with each participant using action points to perform attacks, moves, or skills. A detailed list of all possible actions is provided so that it is easy to find out your character's action point cost. There are several modifiers that come into play—character's dexterity, length of the weapon, and size of the character all figure in the final calculation of action points. Each action, attack, or move costs a number of points. By totaling the amount of points spent, a player determines when his character will be able to perform his desired action.

The game also uses a to-hit location system, where attackers roll a 20-sided die to determine where on their opponent's body their weapon hit. *Other Suns* uses two types of points for the life energies: hit points and endurance points. On most occasions, unless attackers are using melee weapons, damage is subtracted from both categories. Hit points are used to measure the total physical properties of the character while endurance measures the total ability of the character to withstand injury and pain.

Combat is worked on a percentile system which includes dodging, parrying, attacking, and other assorted offensive and defensive maneuvers. The opponent can dodge or he can try to parry the attack if the weapon has the capability to block the attacker's weapon. The system is quite similar to the *RuneQuest* rules. In addition to a normal hit, each weapon type has special hits, critical hits, and critical fumbles. In all three cases the to-hit number that is needed to be rolled is derived by dividing the adjusted to-hit score by a number. This is

just another combat hindrance along with to-hit location, dodging, parrying, and the other assorted maneuvers.

Thinking that psionics would be a great addition to *Other Suns*, Mr. Shapero has added this system. He however gives only two pages to describe what and how it acts. Psionics, or mental powers, have almost become a steadfast rule in science-fiction games and any new system should at least try to bring something new to the topic. *Other Suns*, however, seems to have added psionics as an after-thought more than as a detailed and developed system.

In book two, *Other Suns* explains how to build starships, solar systems, and creatures to inhabit those worlds which can support life. Like the rest of the rules, Mr. Shapero uses endless formulae for deriving starships. In addition to these formulae, he presents charts which can be used instead. Building ships is much like *Traveller* in that players choose the weight of their ship in tons and then fill up the space with system units. There are many different systems which can be bought; life support, power generators, congravity systems, shield generators, and telepathic screens are only a few of the many varied units which can be implemented on the starship. *Other Suns* offer many examples of constructed ships, they however offer no step-by-step example of building a starship which would have been helpful.

Other Suns does offer a unique planet and solar system creation system. Mr. Shapero has gone to great lengths to design a system which will generate realistic and detailed systems. However, I think he spends too much effort in this endeavor—for example, he spends twelve pages in endless columns of numbers which detail temperature and length of year for each spectral class and its planetary orbit. He goes on to show how to determine radius, orbital period, escape velocity, planetary atmospheres, atmospheric pressure, life forms, and technology ratings for those worlds with intelligent life forms. Many of these points of interest do not have charts but long and complicated formulae. In addition to the formulae, the typesetting seems to have mixed the symbol for one-half with the symbol for the square root. I will state that if a gamemaster or player is looking for a detailed planet generation system and they like to work with formulae and numbers, they may want to look into this game. But for the average gamer, this system rates too complicated and too bothersome to be of any real use.

Other Suns also lists a number of creatures which can be played into any environment. *Other Suns* details these creatures thoroughly enough but the presentation of their characteristics are similar to other games in which each characteristic is given a die roll. I could see the sense of this if the creature played a significant role in the game. But to spend precious minutes of game time to simply determine the strength and intelligence of a Bailey Jumping Mouse is a little ridiculous. Creatures that are presented for encounters should be brief and to the point, gamemasters should not need to spend minutes before or during a game to roll up random encounters.

Overall I found *Other Suns* to be just too complicated for the rewards that it gave. It does have some interesting rules but they are shadowed by the immense complexity which *Other Suns* is built around. I would strongly suggest new science-fantasy role-players to look elsewhere for excitement. For those who have been playing for many years I would give my recommendations only if the players deeply enjoyed playing with realistic solar systems and complicated rules. □
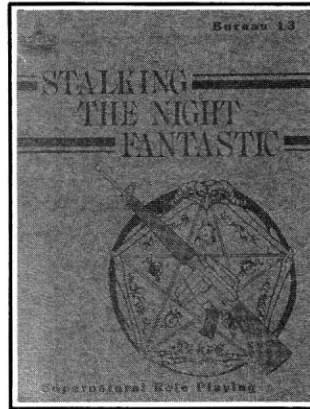

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STALKING THE NIGHT FANTASTIC

By Richard Tucholka and Chris Beiting (Tri Tac, $13)

Reviewed by Scott Dollinger

In recent years a new genre has appeared among the ranks of the traditional fantasy- and science-fiction-based adventure games. This genre is, of course, the horror or gothic adventure story. These literary works have long enjoyed popularity with the same readers as fantasy and science-fiction novels so it is only natural that they should appear as adventure games. Like any new entry into a market, some of these games are better than others. In 1983, Tri Tac released its contribution, *Stalking the Night Fantastic*, to the marketplace. Sadly, it falls far short of the mark it could have achieved.

In *Stalking the Night Fantastic*, players are informed that they are in the employ of a top-secret government agency whose purpose is to seek out and destroy the destructive elements of the supernatural, wherever they might be found. This agency is known simply as "Bureau 13." Sounds like a rather interesting premise but the designers can't seem to leave well enough alone. They go on to add that Bureau 13 has been in existence since the civil war and, as the belief in the supernatural has diminished because of the Bureau's efforts, the agency has become a large ultra-modern force with branches in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The problem is that players are told not to expect any aid from the Bureau if they get into any trouble with law enforcement agencies nor can they expect the Bureau to soften whatever punishment the law decrees. They try to justify this non-protection policy by stating that Bureau 13 agents act as "free" agents and use the agency as a source of information, supplies, and living expenses. The agency does not wish to chance revealing its existence by becoming directly involved. Well maybe, but I have a hard time believing that a top-secret intelligence network that has been in existence for over one hundred years cannot find a way to protect its agents from local police. How about giving agents fake CIA identification and invoking the National Security Act to get agents released? I guess that would be too risky for an ultra-modern trans-national force.

Another problem with Bureau 13 is the gamemaster-characters that are given as typical agents for the example section of the rules. A little humor in adventure games is refreshing but these characters are more like the Keystone Cops of the supernatural. The designers would have us believe that some government agency will pay people $1000-2500 a week to drive around in a Winnebago and fight such terrors as Sun Yen Yen, a poorly disguised Rev. Moon, and the infamous Windwillow Coven, whose leaders look remarkably like the couple from *American Gothic*.

Character generation entails 16 personal stats found by rolling 4D6-4. Several of these stats seem redundant; for example, take the categories dexterity, agility, throw, accuracy, and dodge. One would think that some of these could have been combined but all are used differently during the resolution of combat based on what weapon is being used at the time.

One of the stronger points of *Stalking the Night Fantastic* is the way in which non-combat skills are obtained. A certain number of skills, based on intelligence and education may be chosen after a primary occupational skill is picked. The skills are chosen from an extensive list and each point of skill that the character possesses gives him a 5% chance of success using that skill in play. Bonus points are allowed if the skill is something that is a hobby, work-related, or a creative talent of the character. Skills may be improved as the characters gain experience. Special skill sections are also included if the character is a doctor, priest, or an extra legal. In addition, Bureau-related skills can be learned.

There are two different recommended combat systems in *Stalking the Night Fantastic*. One is for player-characters and the other is for monsters and gamemaster-characters. The system for monsters and gamemaster-characters is simple and fast. A player rolls his attack; if it hits, he rolls his damage and subtracts for any armor the target might have and the result is subtracted from the target's hit points. Simple. Fast. Efficient. The rules suggest that if a quick and easy game is desired or if younger players are involved, this method may be used for player-characters as well. However, the recommended combat system for player-characters, or to be more precise, how to calculate damage done to player-characters is considerably different. Any possible type of damage that has ever been used to harm a human being has been taken into account and probably has a chart depicting the results of said actions. There are also modifiers for almost all the damage charts and each type of injury is hit location specific.

The hit locations are of two types, general and specific. The specific locations go into anatomical detail, specifically what bones, major blood vessels, and major organs are possibly affected and whether or not additional damage from shock, blood loss, or spinal damage should be added to the basic weapon damage. Such damage is, of course, modified by terrain, body position, darkness, and the presence of any armor, and of course strength damage for hand-held weapons. While this anatomical detail adds copious

amounts of realism to play, one wonders just how long it takes to get used to handling all of the myriad charts and modifiers necessary to use this system. In all fairness, the more I playtested characters, the easier it became and it was rather fun once one finally became accustomed to the procedures (although it does take considerable time to do so).

In a game that deals with the supernatural, magic and psionic powers are absolutely essential. The system used here is considerably easier than the combat system. Both magic and psionic powers are based on the notion that the players are like batteries which store variable amounts of the energies necessary to utilize magic or psionic powers. The difference between magic and psionics is clarified by stating that magic makes use of ritual and material components to contact magical beings and enlist their aid for specific ends. By contacting these other entities, the magician places himself at risk of reprisals by these beings, especially if the practitioner is involved in black magic. Psionics, on the other hand, are described as being gifts from God and that the effects are caused by proper utilization of the power of the mind. Fairly complete lists of magical and psionic powers are included along with the inevitable modifier tables.

Stalking the Night Fantastic is a complete adventure game system that is contained in a 104-page book complete with a section on monsters and blank character sheets suitable for photocopying. The problems with the system itself are not that insurmountable. If the combat system seems cumbersom, one can always use the fast method. The major problems with this game stem from the lack of quality taken in the production of the materials and poor background material on Bureau 13. The stock used in the book is third rate. It appears to be photocopied, not printed. The ink on the cover and interim pages smudges with very little handling. The artwork on the cover looks promising but the interior illustrations look as if they were done by talented junior high school students. These shoddy production standards mar what might have been a very pleasant new game and should definitely be corrected in future editions. □

☆☆☆⟡
THIEVES' GUILD

By Richard Meyer, et al
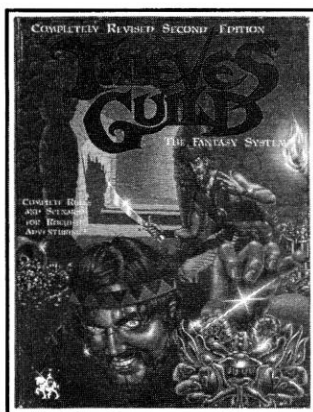(Gamelords, $15)
Reviewed by K.L. Campbell

Thieves' Guild's second edition is a likeable, fairly complete system for thieves and their "professional" activities. It is designed to stand alone, but it could easily be modified and included in virtually any other fantasy system. The painting on the box is handsomely done, and this attractiveness holds true for all the artwork throughout the game; some of this art is also very funny. *Thieves' Guild* contains one rulebook of 40 pages, a character creation book and a set of sample scenarios of 32 pages each, 4 pages of maps, and one character sheet.

This system would more than likely confuse novice gamers in a few places. There are large numbers of abbreviations, though these are described at the beginning of the rulebook, and enough parentheses to boggle the mind. For these two reasons, one will find oneself rereading a few sections. Don't stop though, the system is, overall, well written and fairly descriptive. The authors also give some good examples of play in the foggier areas, and this helps to make up for any earlier brain drain.

The combat system is workable, though skeletal, and it adds a bit of realism to weapons-play. Gamelords' experience point system, especially if this is how all their games work, is a masterpiece of effective simplicity. A calculator is necessary for larger and more difficult maneuvers, but the drudgery of totaling up workaday monster values is seemingly lost in the mists of memory.

One problem with this system if it's meant to stand alone, is that there are no monster stat listings. Sure, these can be used from other systems, but such could be either too powerful or too weak. If any gamemasters intend to use this system alone, I would suggest tracking down something by Gamelords that includes monsters. Thieves don't normally engage monsters in a combat situation, but one never knows. . .

I must praise, loudly and vociferously, several sections included within the rulebook. Somebody at Gamelords really knows their poisons. The poison section was fantastically realistic and of superb quality. Also deserving of many pleasing words are: the system for fencing stolen merchandise, ransoms and how they can backfire, the judiciary system for those unlucky enough to be caught at work, and the rules for guilds. All of these were well-detailed.

The booklet "Basic Character Creation" is also innovative in its way. On the whole, it is less confusing than the rulebook. The write-ups on family background, inborn and sense abilities, fields of training, and equipment were very good. Some of these things I've never encountered before, and they were pleasant surprises indeed. Quite a few of these rules can be used in other systems "just because" to their advantage and improvement. The sample adventures were well set up and easy to gamemaster and play. With minor adjustments, these can be used in other games as well.

On the whole, this is an above-average system, even with its drawbacks. It offers many opportunities for thieves to actually role-play, which is a fine and splendid thing. Seriously, this game is a must for anyone who allows a thief or thief-like class in any game system. Thieves used to be a bore to play at times, but no more. The possibilities are practically endless. . . □
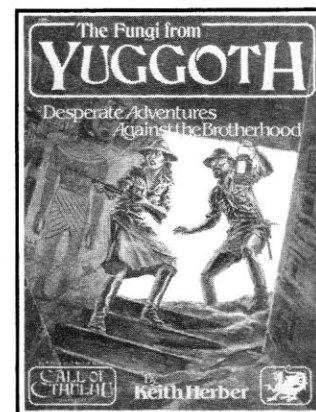
☆☆☆☆⟡
THE FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH

By Keith Herber
(Chaosium, $10)
Reviewed by Ed Wimble

The Fungi from Yuggoth is the third adventure released by Chaosium for its game *Call Of Cthulhu*. Preceeded by *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth* (1982) and *The Asylum* (1983), *The Fungi* resembles *Yog-Sothoth* most in that it is also a campaign of sequential scenarios threaded together by an integrating plot. There are eight of these scenarios and two optional scenes, plus extremely well-organized appendices and a handy index. An added bonus is a cutout section of play aids in the center of the book. These are well-conceived and if used properly will add another dimension to player interaction. The layout and production are up to Chaosium's usual high standard of quality and the illustrations by Chris Marrinan run from the purely functional to down-right intriguing. So much for the appearance of the book; now for its content.

The first scenario begins conventionally enough. The investigators find themselves in Buffalo NY and in the well-appointed parlor of a distraught mother. Her son is missing and she has advertised in the local papers a substantial amount of money for information leading to his safe return. Her reasons for suspecting foul play are legitimate. As she describes her son's peculiarities and occupation, an aura in the classic Lovecraftian sense will become obvious to those playing the game. The son is a dreamer, plagued by nightmares and bouts of amnesia. He is also a psychic who had learned to turn a good buck once introduced to a less than reputable promoter. I've described these initial moments of This scenario because I believe that within them lies the crux of the campaign. When this hapless lad is rescued, his singular talents begin to call the shots. Where his dreams lead, the investigators follow until events begin to take their own course.

This journey is as bizarre as it is varied. Without going into too much detail, let me just say that the investigators will be traveling via camel and llama, encountering gypsies, Asians, Hispanics, Arabs, and Indians—to name a few—while at the same time attempting to literally keep both feet on the ground. The critters they encounter along the way are a veritable *tour de force* and read like the combined resumes of Vincent Price and Christopher Lee, including Dalek! There is even a mad scientist who puts to shame the combined abilities of Einstein,

Zarkhov, Tesla, Davros, Rotwang, and, of course, Dr. Phibes (with all these to draw on, it's no wonder he's a bit absent-minded).

Treated properly, one of the strengths of *The Fungi* can be the manner of the campaign's presentation, and prospective keepers should bear this in mind. Rather than there being a strictly logical progression from the end of one scenario to the start of another, this book is actually a *melange* of very independent scenarios, each containing a seemingly insignificant clue. These clues will eventually lead to a realization of staggering proportions but not necessarily will they lead to the next scenario. This technique obviates one of the main problems encountered in multi-scenario campaigns, in that play often degrades into a quest for the next scenario, rather than the matters at hand. If the keeper is not careful in his initial presentation of the material, I can see this happening here with frustrating results. The presentation can, therefore, be one of this book's weaknesses. Unfortunately, a truly tired device is utilized to tie in a number of the subsequent scenarios. At least three times during the course of *The Fungi*, the keeper's favored gamemaster-character is called upon to vomit forth another dream. Circumventing this cliche is something that will require a little creativity (this over-emphasis upon the mechanistic dream tempts one to suggest a new title: *The Jungi from Fuggoth*).

I mentioned earlier that *The Fungi* resembles the format of *Yog-Sothoth*. There is one more disturbing aspect that players may find it has in common with the latter. If they do not restrain themselves on numerous occasions, they will suffer from what I call the French Foreign Legion Syndrome—that is, a unit that rarely wins a battle, but often dies well. However, this might be what *Call Of Cthuhu* is all about. Very few of Lovecraft's narrators ever stuck around to do a second story; one being enough.

A major difficulty lies in the nature of the integrating plot which the players are to discover. There are so many forces at work, each dependent on their own ephemeral clue, that, though they spring from the same source, I can't imagine the investigators grasping them all. They might arrive at the right place at the right time but still not know why they are there. This plot resembles the cast of critters mentioned earlier, and by the end of the adventure players will be expecting a multi-horrored kitchen sink.

My biggest beef with *The Fungi* lies in the gradual loss of its 1920s

ambiance. The book degenerates into electronic zombies, international corporations, death rays, robots, terrorists, and cloning. . . this is no problem if the subject was the planet Mongo and weird Howard had written the Flash Gordon series, but he didn't. The introduction states, "This campaign is peculiarly modern in content and would prove particularly easy to transfer from the usual 1920s format to the 1980s." I heartily agree and think that both of the scenario's major problems would have been solved if the author had been bold enough to have done this himself. This is not to say that *The Fungi* lacks any redeeming qualities. It has just mixed too many genres that

would have been cured by this shift into a 1980s format.

Besides, what is magic for?

Chapters II, IV, and V are nice and traditional in content as evidenced by their titles: "The Thing in the Well," "Sands of Time," and "Mountains of the Moon." Chapter VI, "By the Bay: Part 1" will thrill Warner Oland fans. They have some genuinely superb moments and demonstrate an amount of control the author seems to have lost in the later pieces. *The Fungi* also adds some dandy new spells. Optional Scene 1: "Halls of Celaeno" could easily be used in any other campaign—at least its inspiration, because it is a brilliant treatment of that inaccessible Bibliotheque. This book also

utilizes the Cthulhoid texts better than I've seen done in any other adventure. New insights are provided for the use of spiritualism and there is a ruthlessly ingenious application of optics that will scare the bubbles out of the most stolid investigator's beer.

Overall, I'd say that *The Fungi* is a better buy than either of its predecessors. In spite of its flaws (and they are really not too serious or prevalent) the real bread and butter issue is how the adventure play. This is where *The Fungi from Yuggoth* excels. The three to five nights you spend in company with this book will be some of the best (albeit, at times with tongue in cheek) you've had in gaming. □


☆☆☆

CHAMPIONS III

Edited by Steve Peterson
(Hero Games, $9.95)

Reviewed by Russell Grant Collins

Champions III is full of things that most *Champions* gamemasters and players will find useful. In addition to a number of new powers, advantages, and limitations, as well as explanations and expansions of many of the old ones, there is an extensive treatment of Danger Rooms, including a method of running a character through one without a gamemaster, a section on campaign planning, and a random character generator for those who don't want to take the time to create characters using the more complex way of choosing powers. All-in-all, a pretty good mix.

The random character generator is miles ahead of similar systems in *Villains And Vigilantes* or *Marvel Super Heroes*. The first thing you do is determine what sort of character you are creating—a Brick, an Energy Projector, a Martial Artist, an Egoist, or an "Other" (which covers drains, transfers, killing attacks, and stretching). This decides the starting characteristic package (at a cost ranging from 100-120 points —Martial Artists also get basic Martial Arts in this package) and affects what sort of offensive powers the character winds up with, as each type has its own Offensive Powers Chart. Then you roll on Major and Minor Defensive Powers Charts, on the Movement Powers Chart, and up to three times on the General Powers Charts (which also include skills and characteristics). This will give you a character with something in each of the major areas. At this point, the rules advise you to take a close look at your character and decide what to do next. If you
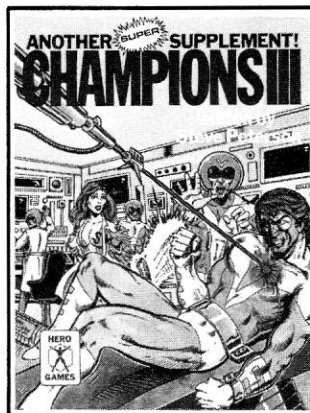
need more in a specific area, roll on the appropriate chart. If a certain power doesn't seem to fit in with the others, drop it and, if necessary, replace it by a new roll on that chart. If the character seems to need a certain power or skill, just give it to him without rolling. if you aren't sure what the character needs, but you feel it still needs something, there's an Additional Powers Chart to tell you which table to roll on for a new power.

After you've finished assigning him powers, you have to determine what Disadvantages he's got, starting with a Secret or Public ID (and if Public, whether he's got Unusual Looks) and then the other ones. In addition, there are optional charts to determine if the character has limitations on some or all of his powers or if he has an Elemental Control or Multipower.

I find that these charts are useful even with the older method of choosing powers because these have been sorted so that I can see my choices at a glance. I have only three real complaints about the system, two of which are relatively minor and one of which is a major defect of these charts. I would have put Desolidification amongst the Defensive Powers

rather than the Movement Powers (although I admit that it's both) and I think it is possible to have Unusual Looks (especially with the expanded explanation of them in this volume) and a Secret ID. The major defect is that only powers, limitations, and disadvantages from the original game are included, whereas there are certain ones in *Champions II* and *III* that are worthy of being included, although they are listed as being optional.

Speaking of powers in *Champions III*, the new ones effectively fill in most of the cracks in the *Champions* system so that any character you could make in *Superworld* can now also be made in *Champions*, albeit sometimes with difficulty. I think that it was a good idea to make some of these powers optional as they are easy to abuse if any of the players in your campaign are of that bent. I disagree, though, with the implication at one point that a certain power be reserved for gamemaster-characters only. I think that any power that the gamemaster-character can have, the player-characters should be allowed to have as well and vice versa. I recommend that the gamemaster study these powers very carefully before allowing any of them into his campaign.

In addition to new powers, there are a number of new Limitations (including a reference to one that isn't included) and Advantages, some of which are reprinted from *Adventurer's Club* magazine.

The combat section details a new maneuver that a Brick can use to knock everyone around him down. One player in my campaign feels that even before this, Bricks had too many advantages over other character types because they get 2D6 of damage free and Strength also adds to figured characteristics. However, I disagree and feel that since Shock-

waves are done all the time in the comics, it is only fitting that it be possible in *Champions*. There is also a highly useful list of the effects of negative characteristics due to Power Drains, Transfers, and Destructions (a new power in *Champions III*).

In the article on Danger Rooms, there is a chart missing (to determine what the computer sends up against the player next) and another one is mangled (the numbers along the top of the Damage Conversion Chart should go in sequential order from -1 to 2,

moving from left to right). Otherwise, it is a pretty good simulation of what one sees in the comics. My only other complaint is that this system raises the cost of a Danger Room from that given in *Champions II*. It is hard to see why it's worth paying for one, even if you can wager experience points once or twice, especially in the case of characters whose main powers are mental or NNDs.

The campaign planning section is quite useful, even to people using systems other than *Cham-*

pions. It covers Agencies and Supervillain Groups and how to keep planning what they're doing and how they rebuild when the heroes trash some of their bases or take out some of their Agents. It also helps players define the background of their characters and helps the gamemaster to take advantage of their Disadvantages while plotting adventures. Using this system helps keep track of everything that is going on in the campaign, so that the gamemaster can maintain continuity at least as well as certain comic book

companies.

I recommend this supplement to anyone who plays *Champions*, especially the harried gamemaster who can't keep straight how far Dr. Evil has gotten on his master plan or how many VIPER bases the heroes have trashed this month. One last minor quibble, though. Aaron Allston's article, "Mystery Powers and Disadvantages in *Champions*" is reprinted from *Adventurer's Club*, but he isn't credited anywhere in the book, unless he counts as part of "the normal Hero Games crowd." □

☆☆⚡

HEROES 1 & 2

Edited by William E. Peschel (The Avalon Hill Game Company, $3 per issue)

Reviewed by Tony Watson

Recently, the Avalon Hill Game Company has made a rather belated, but concerted, entry in the role-playing game genre with *Powers & Perils*, *Lords Of Creation*, *James Bond 007* (through their subsidiary, Victory Games), and a reissue of *RuneQuest*, acquired from Chaosium. Apparently someone at AH decided that a magazine was needed to support these titles, a sort of *General* for role-playing games. That magazine, *Heroes*, has recently made its appearance.

It may be a bit premature and unfair to review a magazine that has only printed two issues; after all, it may take a magazine a year or more to settle into a pattern and develop an identity. That seems to be the case with *Heroes*; it seems that the direction for the magazine hasn't quite been settled on.

Prior to publication, AH indicated that *Heroes* would cover the full range of AH's line of fantasy and science-fiction games. Presumably, *Starship Troopers* and *Dragon Pass* would get equal coverage with the role-playing games. *Heroes 1* included a review/strategy article on *Amoeba Wars* and a review of the computer game, *Telengard*. Yet in issue 2, the editor states: "*Heroes* is here to promote the four role-playing games that AH and Victory Games puts out. That is our only function." Nevertheless, that issue had articles on the *Elric* boardgame and a review of the *Legionnaire* computer game.

Gamers who subscribed to *Heroes* based on a more eclectic, boardgame/role-playing game mix (like myself) could justifiably be a bit miffed about a format devoted sole to role-playing game material. At the present time, two of AH's four role-playing games have real-

ly caught on: *James Bond 007* and *RuneQuest*, which came from Chaosium with its own following. *Powers & Perils* and *Lords Of Creation* are still relatively new and the jury is out on these titles. Since AH practices a policy of discussing only its own games in the pages of its magazines, it seems clear that the success of *Heroes* is largely tied to the popularity of AH's role-playing titles.

The article mix in the first two issues of *Heroes* reflects the magazine's preoccupation with the company's role-playing games. Greg Stafford (apparently uncredited in the first issue) has provided a series of pieces on the history of the *RuneQuest* setting, Glorantha. Richard Snider, designer of *Powers & Perils*, offers "A Traveller's Guide to Donara" as a support article for that game. Both Snider and Stafford wrote introductory articles concerning their respective games for *Heroes 1*. Snider's article, while informative, was marred a bit by the rather self-congratulatory tone in which it was written.

Clearly, the best features in these two issues were the role-playing game scenarios. Tom Moldvay, designer of *Lords Of Creation*, provided an excellent adventure for that game in issue 1. "Survival Run of the Star-nomads" is an intriguing situation requiring the players to both fight and think their way out of some tight spots. Running 18 pages, the

adventure has plenty of space to include the necessary maps, illustrations, information tables, and background material for a first class scenario. The adventure is a sort of futuristic dungeon for prospective members of the Star-nomads, requiring the characters to solve problems and defeat dangerous creatures and foes. Similarly, Richard Snider's "Doom Manor," a scenario for *Powers & Perils* included in *Heroes 2* is a well thought out and prepared adventure for that game, involving a haunted manor house, great treasure, powerful magic, and a bit of political intrigue. This is a haunted house story, one that requires more than a hack-and-slash approach to solve. Once again, the scenario is fully presented and

supported by numerous maps and gamemaster-character listings. If *Heroes* can keep up the quality represented in these two scenarios in future issues, then it should prove to be quite a bargain for players of AH's role-playing games.

The physical quality and presentation of the magazine is good; equivalent to that of its sister magazine, *The General*. These two issues each ran 46 pages and were liberally (and appropriately—that is, the pictures were directly tied to the topic of the article they accompanied) illustrated. There was even a little use of color in the interior pages, reserved for several maps.

One cannot make authoritative judgments about a magazine after only two issues, but the indications are that *Heroes* will prove to be a valuable aid to players of AH's line of role-playing games. The magazine's appeal will be limited by the fact that it deals solely with AH products and apparently will in the future concentrate almost exclusively on role-playing games. Only afficionados of *RuneQuest*, *Powers & Perils*, *James Bond 007*, and *Lords Of Creation* will be interested in subscribing, but if AH can maintain the quality presented in the first two issues, *Heroes* would be a good bet for these gamers. □
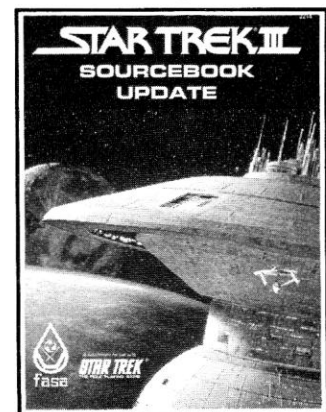

☆☆☆⚡

STAR TREK III SOURCEBOOK UPDATE

Edited by William John Wheeler (FASA, $7)

Reviewed by Frederick Paul Kiesche III

The *Star Trek III Sourcebook Update* is provided for all those players of *Star Trek: The Role Playing Game* who enjoy playing the game but wish to set it in a different time period. It updates the original rules and the second

edition of the rules to the time of *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*.

Physically, the book is 48-pages long. It comes in a folder with an extra "pocket" for the storage of notes or other items. It is beautifully illustrated both with pictures from the *Star Trek* films and diagrams of the various ships and items of equipment. Included in the update material is a timeline that brings the official history of the *Star Trek* universe to the end of *Star Trek III*. The timeline also puts into perspective when the animated adventures (anybody remember them?) and the various *Star Trek* role-playing adventures take place. The update also mentions what has been happening in the various interstellar governments and defines some of the new technology (such as the "Genesis Device") that has appeared since the first movie. A long section marked "Star Fleet Command" updates a variety of items, including uniforms and insignia (Why does everyone in *STII* and *STIII* wear *Enterprise* insignia? Because the *Enterprise* was the only *Constitution*-class ship of the original line to return in less than two pieces. . .), equipment (including those fancy belt buckles from the first movie) and sidearms. Not only are descriptions given for the various items, but "technical data" needed to incorporate the new items into the game is included. A section on ships includes most of the starships seen in the movie—the new *Enterprise*, the ill-fated *Grissom* and *Reliant*, Spock's shuttle from *STI*, the *Excelsior*, the *Kobayashi Maru*, and the *K-22* (Klingon "Bird of Prey").

Of course, no game of *Star Trek* would be complete without Kirk, Spock, et al, so the familiars from *Star Trek* are updated (with new pictures), along with the new faces of Captain Terrell, Saavik, Drs. David and Carol Marcus, Admiral Morrow and Captain Kruge. This data is invaluable for those who want to play these as their characters or for gamemasters wanting to use them as gamemaster-characters. Stats are given using the slightly revised rules from the second edition.

Also included are a revised weapons table and a set of charts listing skills, attributes, etc., replacing a similar table in the second edition of the rules. It is very useful to have all of this information compiled in one place; it saves much "flipping" time through various supplements and rulebooks.

Finally, topping it all off, the *Sourcebook* includes a short adventure ("Missing and Presumed Dead") which takes place

in the time of the *Star Trek* movies. This adventure is an indirect sequel to a TV episode (the name of which would spoil the surprise). "Missing" is a taut little adventure, perfect stuff for the paranoid player-character.

There is little I can find fault with this supplement. There are a few typographical errors ("Kluge" for "Captain Kruge" and "Surak" for "Sarek"), the characters of Ilia and Decker from the first movie are not mentioned in the

new character list, and the freighter from *STIII* and some smaller work ships from *STI* and *STIII* are missing. Hopefully these will appear in *Stardate*, FASA's magazine devoted to *Star Trek*.

Overall, this supplement is an excellent job and something that was long needed for the game. The text is clearly written, the diagrams and pictures are beautiful, the adventure is clearly in the spirit of the series and movies. More! More! □

☆
VETERANS

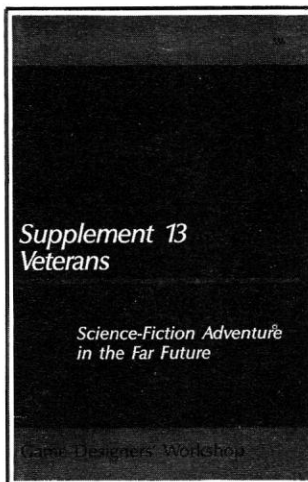By Tim Brown (GDW, $4.98)

Reviewed by William A. Barton

When GDW first started publishing supplements for *Traveller*, the initial offering in the line was less than a blockbuster—*1001 Characters*, a book of nothing but pregenerated characters for those who had neither the time nor, I suppose, the will to create their own. It was of limited use, mostly to gamemasters when they needed gamemaster-characters fast. Subsequent *Traveller* supplements were somewhat more meaty (number 6, *Citizens of the Imperium*, was in the same pregenerated vein, but at least had tables for generating your own new character types, inadequate as some of those, such as the scientists, were). With supplement 13, *Veterans*, GDW has, unfortunately, returned to those unauspicious beginnings. The supplement is, simply, an entire book of pregenerated mercenary characters.

Veterans is divided into two main sections. The first is the player's information on the scads of mercenary characters provided. Here each merc in the book is listed in terms of his resume of decorations, equipment on which he's qualified, etc. For most purposes, this is the least useful information available on a merc gamemaster-character, unless players are hiring them and are so into role-playing that such information actually becomes important (in all the years I have played *Traveller*, it never came up in a game; hired mercs were usually cannon fodder, so their resumes made little difference in the final tally).

The second main section, toward the back of the book, gives the gamemaster's information, providing the attribute scores (strength, dexterity, endurance, and so on) for the characters and including actual game skill levels for the equipment on which they're listed as qualified in the earlier section. A short introduction in the front of the book summarizes some of the basics of

Supplement 13
Veterans

Science-Fiction Adventure
in the Far Future

Game Designers' Workshop

the skills involved, though this is generally superfluous for those who own book 4, *Mercenary* (and few who don't would probably buy this supplement anyway).

For a gamemaster who constantly throw mercenary gamemaster-characters at his players or whose charges are always hiring mercs, *Veterans* does indeed present a lengthy list of lambs for the slaughter. GDW is perhaps following in this case the philosophy that the sheer quantity of data in this supplement will compensate for the lack of anything innovative or actually new. Ignoring the not-quite-endless roster of combat-ready gamemaster-characters, the most useful piece of information I was able to find in the entire supplement is located in the introductory section: Here it is finally made clear that LMG (light machinegun) skill falls under the skill category of Auto-weapons and not the Heavy Weapons skill, a point on which *Mercenary* was somewhat fuzzy.

The main problem I can see with a supplement such as *Veterans*, besides its lack of any material that even a rank beginner at the game couldn't generate on his own, is the fact that, with so may previous GDW or licensee products offering pregenerated merc characters (*Broadsword* for one, or some of FASA's *Traveller* adventures), having a whole book of them seems unnecessary. After

all, if a gamemaster really needs some merc gamemaster-characters for an adventure, it's much easier (and less expensive) simply to create them to fit the scenario, making up skills and stats as appropriate, rather than try to find some close enough to alter your needs from a book such as this.

Another fault with *Veterans* that is especially annoying is that each character's description is split up between the two sections of the book, requiring a lot of leaf leafing back and forth to check out all his qualifications. This is particularly a pain if you find yourself in the need of several merc gamemaster-characters on the spur of the moment and have to flip first to one place, then to the second to complete the character, then to the first for a second character, and so on (though again, unless the players are hiring, little in the first section will be of much use).

To look at the supplement strictly from a player's standpoint, I again see little cause to pay money for a book of pregenerated characters; most players I've known (myself included) seem to prefer generating their own characters rather than having to take or pick pregens—at random or otherwise—from a book, making *Veterans* of even less value to players than to gamemasters. With such really useful supplements as Gamelord's *The Undersea Environment* coming from licensees, GDW's own recent *Traveller* supplements appear quite pale by comparison, *Veterans* being, sadly, a typical example.

This supplement impresses me most as one of those likely to find its way into the library of those simply must have absolutely every item ever published for *Traveller* (and, I must admit, I, too, once fell into that category before I discovered better, more satisfying game systems such as Chaosium's various *Basic Role-Playing*-based systems and FASA's *Star Trek*), rather than as one that will really be used much in play. Still, I suppose if a gamemaster really had the need for a lot of mercenary characters for *Traveller* and didn't have the time nor the inclination to create them himself, he might find *Veterans* to be worth its price tag.

If, on the other hand, those of you out there who are serious gamers opt to spend money elsewhere, perhaps GDW will get the message and start turning out more creative designs for *Traveller* again (or perhaps give J. Andrew Keith, currently one of their few innovative designers, a freer hand in his offerings), rather than going

for an easy dollar, as it could very easily appear to some, with seemingly quickly designed and produced supplements such as this one and the previous *Forms And Charts* (which might have been of some use to novice gamemasters and players who'd never seen the forms in that volume that were reprinted from earlier GDW works or who felt they actually needed such new inanities as forms for filling in animal encounters). In comparing *Veterans* to some of GDW's previous designs and recent works by licensees, I can only fervently hope so. □

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Book Reviews

A SEPARATE STAR

By Frank Kelly Freas
(Greenswamp, $14.95)

Reviewed by C.J. Henderson

The World Science Fiction Society gets together every year to give out their annual awards for the best of everything in the field. They present congratulations to the best novelist of the year, the best short-story writer, even the best amateur press publisher. Of course, in science fiction, no one giving out awards could possibly cover those areas, and leave out the year's best artist. The Society doesn't.

Every year, they look at all the book covers they can, movie posters, private portfolios, etc., and find the person putting the most original effort, the most talent, and the most style forth before the public. Then, the Society gives them their award. It is called the Hugo.

Frank Kelly Freas has been given that award ten times. Before one brushes by that statement, one must pause and consider it. Frank Freas has won the Hugo *ten times*. No SF author has that many Hugos. In fact, no one in
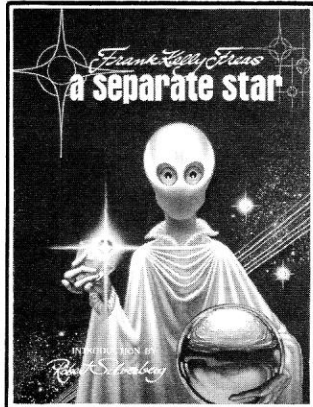
the entire field has that many. Major awards of any kind are not given lightly—there are no multiple Nobel winners, the number of people with more than one Oscar is nothing you need a calculator to total.

And yet, time after time, Freas walks away with it. How? The answer is painfully simple—he is one of the best artists to ever grace a science-fiction or fantasy cover. He practically has no competition. To be sure, there are people who rival facts of his work. There are other great artists working in the genre. Frazetta certainly has the power, Maitz and Whelan have the style, Warhola breathes elements of classic painting into his work which seem all but forgotten today, and yet—Freas is better.

There is a texture to his work that is so far unrivaled. His paintings seem almost simple, only because their complexity is so complete, and yet so subtle, the average viewer cannot even begin to unravel his technique.

Freas is more than merely a

anatomy is flawless. His handling of shadow and drapery rivals that of the late Roy Krenkel, who was America's master in those areas.

For those who know Freas's work, however, no hard-sell is necessary. One can not look at his work and not understand immediately that they are looking at the best. And, conversely, for those who do not know his work, it is all only words and opinion without backing. Luckily, however, there is a way for people to judge for themselves.
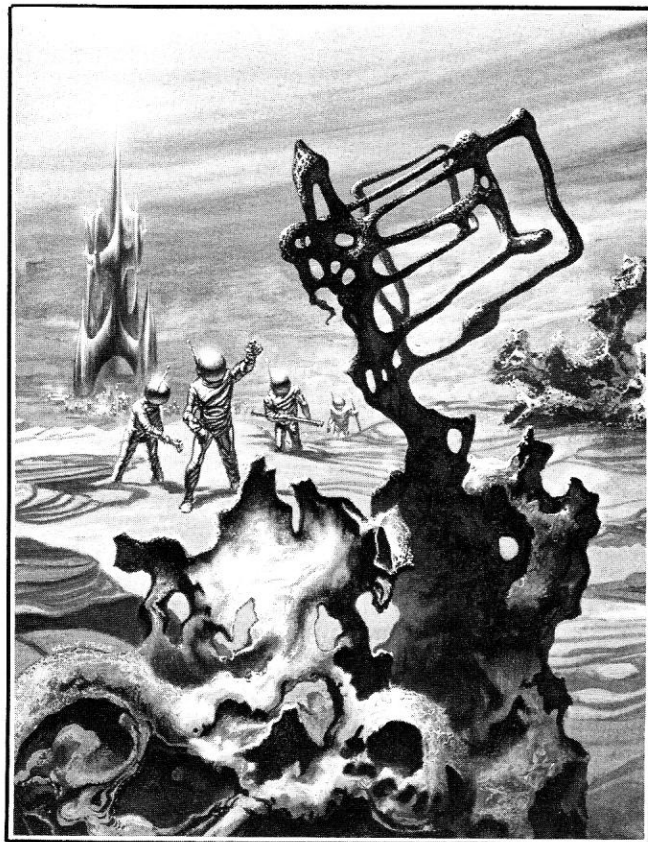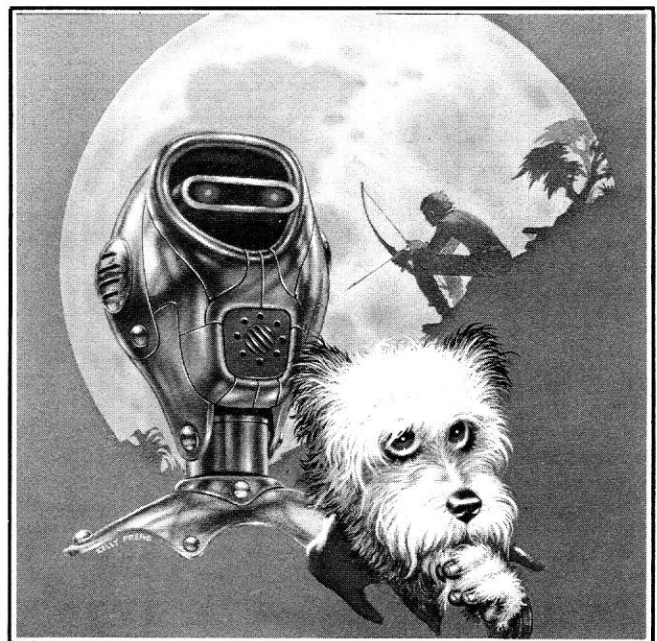
science-fiction artist or a fantasy artist, he is an artist. No matter how fantastic his subjects, he rarely fails to transcend the genre's limitations, discovering a depth of mood in each work which makes it exciting and moving to everyone, not just fans of a particular field.

His work has been exhibited at conventions, true. It has also been shown in slightly more prominent places, however, such as Buhl Planetarium, the Smithsonian, the Chrysler Museum and NASA-Langley, to name just a few.

The reason for all of this is style. Throughout the realm of science fiction, no more singular a stylist can be found. His work has a range which is unapproachable. Looking into, not just at, a Freas painting is a rewarding experience. Unlike so many others, he works across the spectrum, mixing colors with an astounding knack. His understanding of

For those lucky few who already have it, or can possibly find an old copy, his work was once gathered together in *The Art of Science Fiction*, a marvelous collection of many of his major pieces. For those who cannot find one of those, however, there is good news. Recently, a second volume of his work, *A Separate Star*, has been released. Containing over a hundred pieces, nearly half of them in dazzling color, it is a bargain not to be ignored by anyone seriously interested in the best SF art available.

As we all know, SF&F art is a great place to look for characters, and Freas is no exception. He manages to breathe such life into his creations that more than just their form is left on the canvas when he is finished. One can read their moods, see the strength or weakness within each figure.

For those who know the work of Frank Kelly Freas, and have

been waiting for this volume, it can be ordered through the mail from Greenswamp Publications, 4216 Blackwater Rd, Va Bch VA 23457. For those skeptics who need proof beyond what has been shown here, one can only suggest that they haunt the book stores. Once one can get a copy in hand, and begin to flip through, and then study the pages, they will be convinced.

Afterall, a picture is supposedly worth a thousand words. If such is the case, then *A Separate Star* has over a hundred-thousand words of particularly hard-sell waiting within to convince them. □

THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF CONTEMPORARY WEAPONS

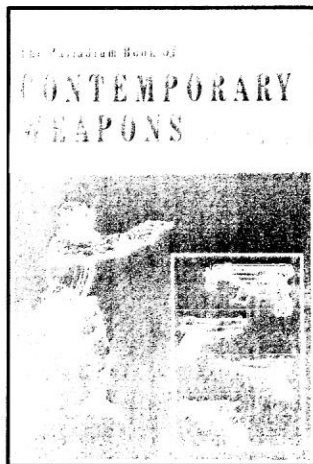Compiled by Maryann Donald (Palladium, $4.95)

Reviewed by William A. Barton

The *Palladium Book of Contemporary Weapons* is the newest in Palladium's line of weapon reference books for gamers. It does for modern firearms what previous entries in the series did for ancient and medieval melee weapons. Dozens of pistols, rifles and submachine guns, plus some shotguns and a fair number of machine guns from around the world are included within its pages. Most entries are illustrated, and each provides data on cartridge types, weights, barrel lengths, muzzle velocities, effective ranges and rates of fire.

A separate section at the beginning of the book gives damage information on the various types of ammo used by the weapons covered. This is especially handy for a gamemaster's use in translating the weapons into various adventure game systems. And those who play any of the Palladium games, especially *Heroes Unlimited*, can use the damage listed directly. One problem here is that a rating system used for damage and penetration isn't adequately explained, which could lead to some confusion, especially since some of the ratings seem inconsistent with the explanations given.

Among the highlights of Palladium's *Contemporary Weapons* are Kevin Siembieda's excellent line drawings of most of the guns covered in the book. These give a clear picture of how each weapon looks (more so than some photographs I've seen elsewhere)—especially helpful to the layman. The inclusion of some recent variations, such as the Ruger AC-556 assault rifle, that for some reason didn't make it into other, similar playaids is handy (especially to anyone wishing to emulate TV's *The A-Team* in their modern gaming). The hard data on each weapon's specs should allow relatively easy conversions into most games with this book.

Contemporary Weapons exhibits other flaws, however, in addition to that concerning the ammo ratings already mentioned. For example, damage for a weapon is totally determined by its ammo; yet, while shotguns are covered briefly (too briefly actually, consider how popular the weapon seems to be in most games), shotgun ammo has been overlooked entirely! A bad oversight. Also there are other odd quirks exhibited here and there in the book, such as the listing of M-16 ammo as 5.56mm in the weapon description and as .233 Armalite in the ammo section—a potential stumbling block for those unfamiliar with such conversions (after all, not all gamers are gun experts—if we were, there'd be little need for sourcebooks such as this in the first place).

Occasionally it's difficult, too, to determine exactly to which description a particular illustration belongs from the layout on a page. Most are clear enough on this point, but those that aren't are annoying. A significant number of machine guns, however, aren't illustrated at all—a serious omission unless you subscribe to the theory that a machine gun's a machine gun's a machine gun. . . .

Another limiting factor on *Contemporary Weapons'* usefulness is that it's a bit too contemporary. The firearms covered, with a few notable exceptions, are restricted to post-1930s weapons. Undoubtably this was necessary to keep the length in line with the previous books in the series. However, it makes this aid of a very limited use at best to players of pre-1930s games such as *Call Of Cthulhu*, *Gangbusters* or *Boot Hill* (and even for most '30s games—*Daredevils*, *Indiana Jones*, *Justice, Inc.*—as many of the weapons still in use in the '30s were of pre-1930s origin).

All in all, Palladium's *Contemporary Weapons* book probably won't prove as useful to most people interested in modern combat as the more complete references available, such as Firebird, Ltd.'s *The Armory, Vol. 1*. Those interested in the greater detail and variety of weapons

such offers would undoubtably best save up the extra money and buy *The Armory*. However, for those whose interest in firearms is limited to what a select few look like and just enough data on them to use them in play, and who, therefore, wouldn't require the more extensive (and more than twice as expensive) works such as *The Armory*, Palladium's excursion into the field of firearms could be sufficient for most uses, in spite of its limitations. And for those with very limited budgets, or who play Palladium systems, *Contemporary Weapons* might even be ideal. □

UNICORNS!

Edited by Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois (Ace, $2.75)

Reviewed by David Dunham

Unicorns seem to be the latest fad, judging by the plethora of unicorn merchandise available nowadays, and I was afraid this book might be just another attempt to cash in on the fad. Whether or not it is, *Unicorns!* stands on its own as a worthy collection. It contains an essay and fifteen stories about unicorns, including Roger Zelazny's Hugo-winning novelette, "Unicorn Variations," as well as a bibliography (an inclusion I applaud). While only two of the pieces are new, I had only seen a few of the others before.

Since there are so many, I will not try to describe all the stories. They range from unicorn hunts to love stories (including one between two ghosts) to genetically created unicorns to a man who turns into a unicorn to purely symbolic use of unicorns. Instead, I will concentrate on the unicorn lore presented.

The most obvious feature of a unicorn is its horn, and the horn almost always has some sort of magical power. Usually it confers protection against poison, and some unicorns can turn brackish water pure by dipping their horns into it. Some also considered the horn to be a potent aphrodisiac. In one story, unicorn horn is harder than metal. These features made the horn rather valuable, worth "twenty times its weight in gold," according to one source. A whole horn could be worth six or seven thousand ducats, according to another. The horn could be made into a drinking cup to protect against poison, powdered as a medicine, or left intact.

Most legends agree that the unicorn is a symbol of virtue, and can be tamed only by one who is pure. Several authors in this collection make the distinction between purity or innocence and virginity, however.

If there is no one to tame the unicorn, it can be a vicious fighter, impaling people on its horn and then tossing them high in the air.

One author says that unicorns can detect truth at a glance, which is how they can recognize those of pure heart. Another author states that the unicorn's keen sense of smell enables it to sniff out virgins.

While not all unicorns talk, they are usually intelligent. Their fatal flaw is their trust in virgins, who often serve as bait for a trap.

About a third of the authors used the unicorn more as a symbol than as a real, living creature. This is what struck me most about this collection: although unicorns may be actual, breathing animals, they are first and foremost legendary beasts. The unicorns of *RuneQuest* and the *AD&D Monster Manual* have always seemed like horses with fancy horns, a far cry from fiction, where they are creatures of wonder and mystery. Unicorns, as role-playing "monsters," do have to have characteristics and hit points. They do not need to be played as a run-of-the-mill monster, however. They should be rare (none of the stories in *Unicorns!* has more than one unicorn in it), so rare that the player-characters should be in doubt as to their existence. Few of the stories of sighting unicorns will be first-hand. This may be because unicorns are native to another land (for example, the Greeks knew that unicorns lived in India). Unicorns are shy, succumbing only to the truly virtuous. Being mythical creatures, they will be regarded with awe, as will anyone fortunate enough to ride one. If a unicorn is killed, its parts will not go to waste, as they fetch a high price.

Read *Unicorns!* and restore a sense of wonder to the unicorns in your campaign. □

Which Alien Is Dangerous?
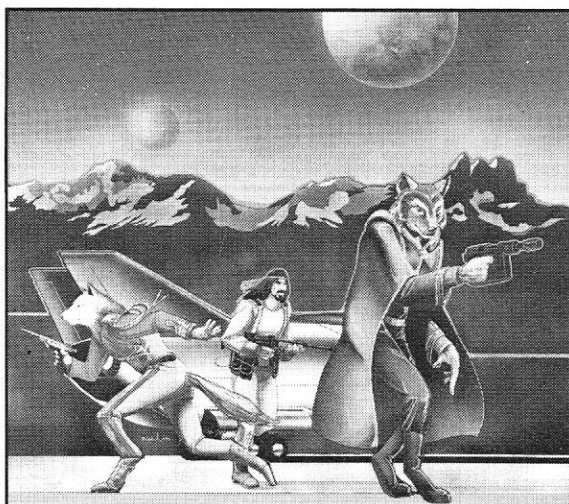
Freebooting Encounter with the Wolves of Space

Vargr

Adventure and Intrigue with a Proud Warrior Race

Aslan

Encounters with the Enigmatic Centaurs

K'kree

The Aslan—a carnivore with a warrior culture?

The K'kree—a gregarious plant-eater?

The Vargr—a genetically engineered Terran wolf?

You've probably guessed this is a trick question, and you're right: the K'kree is the dangerous one. But why?

Vargr are unpredictable, easily offended. Don't insult a Vargr, his leader, or his species. But if you do get into a fight, the Vargr is smaller and weaker than you are; if you watch out for his teeth, you can probably beat him.

Aslan are trained fighters, deadly in combat. Their complicated code of honor is easy to transgress. But Aslan respect humans—they've lost too many wars not to. An Aslan will consider you honorable enough to challenge you to a duel, and Aslan duels are formal, ritualized, almost never fatal. You fight, you lose; you have a scratch, and the Aslan is satisfied.

K'kree are very big and powerful, and they always travel in groups. They don't like you: they can tell you're a meat-eater; they can smell it on your breath. They're also very arrogant and don't consider other races civilized. And K'kree in groups are very aggressive. An Aslan fight ends in a gesture of submission; a K'kree fight ends when the loser runs away. Running away is a good idea, if you can; better hope they don't chase you very far.

The point of this is that **Traveller** aliens are not easily described by a short tag or label. They're complex and unique—just like humans are. **Traveller** aliens are carefully worked out; they're full of surprises—but all the surprises make sense. Even the Vargr are much more than just wolves on two legs.

That's what **Traveller** Alien modules are for. Each one takes a single race and covers it in the detail a truly alien species requires: biology, history, culture, psychology, languages, and more, plus a complete character generation system and adventures designed to illuminate alien ways. A **Traveller** Alien module lets you meet aliens as friends or enemies, and—for a real roleplaying experience—play them.

Traveller Alien modules: *Aslan, K'kree,* and *Vargr*. $7 each.

NEW! *Zhodani:* This alien module proves that you don't have to be non-human to be alien. The Zhodani are a strange branch of *Homo sapiens*, with a culture based on extensive use of psionic powers. The implications, as in all alien modules, are not at all obvious, and are worked out in detail. $7.

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KING ARTHUR
PENDRAGON

Chivalric Roleplaying in Arthur's Britain

Relive the glory of King Arthur's court. Uphold the chivalric ideals of fair play, courage, honesty, and justice as your valiant knight-character undertakes perilous quests and risks monstrous dangers in legendary Britain. He'll smite bloodthirsty giants and crush treacherous invaders for King Arthur and his own glory.

illustration by Lisa A. Free

To play the *Pendragon* roleplaying game, you create and take on the role of squire, knight, or noble of the realm. Armed and Armored, you overcome life-and-death struggles, impossible frustration, and ruthless enemies to join the Fellowship of the Round Table.

The gamemaster leads the other players in interpreting the *Pendragon* rules and is central in bringing the adventures to life. He commands the magic of Merlin and Morgan le Fay, the actions of King Arthur and Queen Guenever, and the plotting of Mordred and Agravaine.

Game Features

Roleplaying — innovative game mechanics awaken passionate love, hate, and loyalty in your characters, leading them to acts of mercy, cruelty, lust, piety, valor, and cowardice.

Campaign play — customs, manners and weapons change during the phases of Arthur's long reign. Over these years your character-knight begets a family whose reputation depends on the glory he achieves. He passes his hard-won inheritance and grudges to his sons. Up to four generations of knights will live and die during Arthur's reign.

Game system — easily-remembered, simple-to-play mechanics feature a single die roll to determine combat, settle personality encounters, and resolve skill use.

Character generation — create a squire, knight, noble, or fair damosel, of Roman, Saxon, Cymric, Pictish, or Irish heritage. Select from the Christian, Wotanic, or pagan religions.

Background — includes a 22" by 34" color map of Britain showing kingdoms, castles, keeps, Roman roads, fortified walls, and battle sites. A bestiary of natural and mythical creatures includes avancs, barguests, dwarfs, elves, giants, spriggans, unicorns, and the Questing Beast among many others. You are provided with character statistics for major personalities, such as Arthur, Guenever, and Lancelot. Also enclosed are lesser-knowns such as Balin le Sauvage, Breuse sans Pitie, King Mark, Nimue, and Percivale. A chronology includes wars, adventures, customs, campaign escalation, and characters of note, all to support campaign play. An extensive bibliography provides further sources of background information.
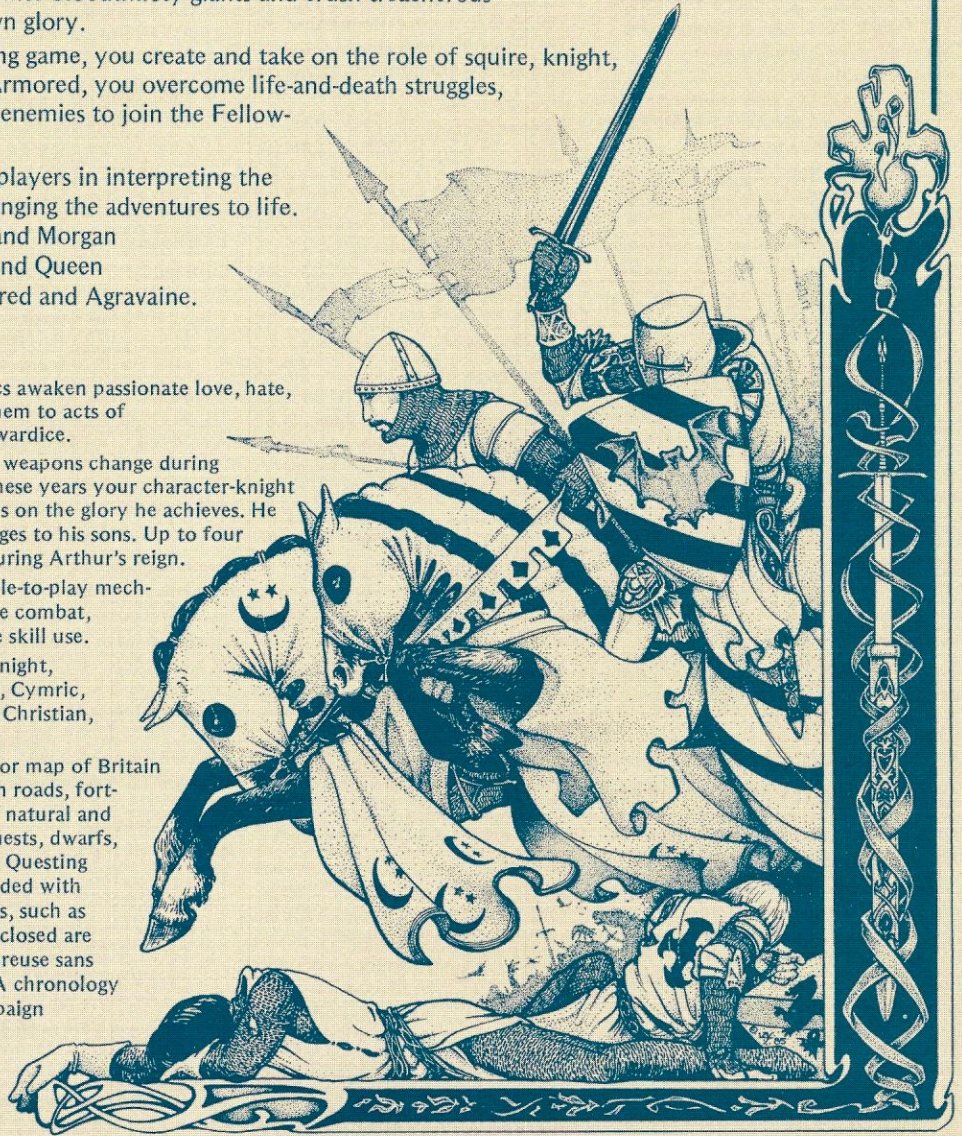
The Game of Quest, Romance, & Adventure

What's New

New products and publications for the fearless adventurer. Publishers are encouraged to send samples of their new releases for announcement in this column.

NEW GAME SYSTEMS

Adventure! (Tori Bergquist, Box 117, San Simon AZ 85632, $6) by Tori Bergquist. "A generic role playing game of action and adventure." This 48-page book is "designed to allow you to play in any time, age, and world imaginable. Complete and easy rules allow you to design an interesting and unique campaign as you wish, or to simply play unrelated adventures going from world to world and time to time.'

Time & Time Again (Timeline, Box 11051, Lansing MI 48901, $?) by H.N. Voss and W.P. Worzel. "The Time Travel Role Playing Game." Comes boxed with a 52-page book a 48-page book, three 4-page scenarios, and playaids. ". . . you can stand beside Napoleon at Borodino, watch the pyramids being raised, journey down the Mississippi with Sam Clemens, travel with Marco Polo to Far Cathay, join the legions and cross the Rubicon."

The Valley of the Pharaohs (Palladium, 5669 Casper, Detroit MI 48210, $?) by Matthew Balent. "Relive the wonders and mysteries of ancient Egypt in this exciting new historical role-playing game." Comes boxed with a 48-page booklet, a 16"x22" map of Egypt, and thirteen 14"x 8½" maps.

FOR AD&D

C3: The Lost Island of Castanamir (TSR, Box 756, Lk Geneva WI 53147, $?) by Ken Rolston. For character levels 1-4. "It is terribly cold. . . The first thought that crosses your mind is whether it would be better to freeze to death up here in the wind or fall into the hands of Castanamir the Mad, the unpredictable." A 32-page book.
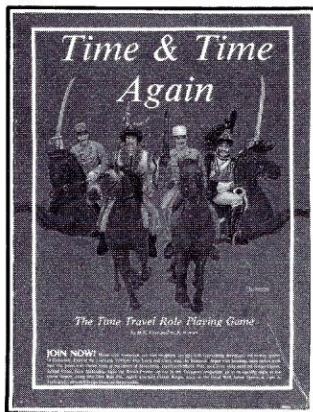
DL5: Dragons Of Mystery (TSR, $?) by Michael Dobson. "Sourcebook for the incredible Dragon-Lance saga!" This 32-page book with 17"x11" map "gives you the background and tools necessary to run a complete DragonLance campaign adventure, an epic quest through the world of Krynn, threatened by the domination of the inhuman draconians. Can you win against the powerful forces of darkness?"

Throne Of Evil (Mayfair, Box 5987, Chicago IL 60680, $6) by Stephen Bourne. For 4-6 characters of skill levels 4-6. "The Old King is dead, but who controls the new king? Join a group of hardy adventurers as they thread their way through a tangled web of deceit and intrigue in 12th century England." A 32-page book.

Clockwork Mage (Mayfair, $6) by Susan Stone and M.E. Allen. For 4-6 characters of skill levels 2-5. "Humbert the Mage is missing, and you must find him. It won't be easy; his house is a trickster's delight filled with traps. Some of them are harmless, but a few are quite deadly. Featuring a new monster class and a lady flying a feathered red dragon." A 32-page book with a 17"x11" map.

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

Masks Of Nyarlathotep (Chaosium, Box 6302, Albany CA 94706-0302, $18) by Larry DiTillio. "Perilous Adventures to Thwart the Dark God." Comes boxed with a 4-page Introduction, five campaign books (16-page New York, 28-page London, 32-page Cairo, 20-page Kenya, and 32-page Shanghai), and handouts. "Horrifying schemes, deadly adversaries, and sanity-threatening events challenge the coolest investigator as the team attempts to unravel the fate of the Carlyle
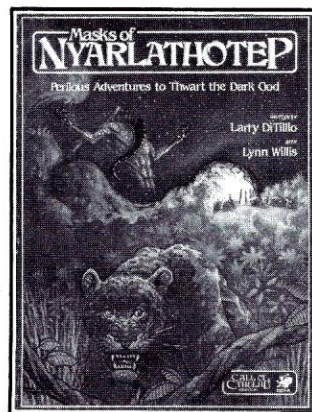
Expedition."

Les Ombres de Yog-Sothoth (Jeux Descartes, $?) by John Carnahan, et al. French edition of *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth*. "Une Campagne Mondiale pour Sauver l'Humanite."

L'Asile d'Alienes (Jeux Descartes, $?) by Randy McCall, et al. French edition of *The Asylum*. "Sept Sinistres Situations."

Supplement de Cthulhu (Jeux Descartes, $?) by Yurek Chodak, et al. French edition of *Cthulhu Companion*. "Adventures Effroyables & Etudes Approfondies des Legendes et Traditions."

FOR CAR WARS

Convoy (Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760, $5.95) by Steve Jackson and David Ladyman. This 64-page booklet "is a 'programmed' adventure that can be played either solo or with a referee and 1-6 players. You have 13 hours to drive a tanker full of algae from Lexington KY to the starving city of Memphis. . . and someone doesn't want you to make it."

Expansion Set 6: The AADA Vehicle Guide Counters (Steve Jackson Games, $3.95) by Kim Strombo, et al. "Over 150 black & white, color-them-yourself counters, ready for action! Create autoduelling teams, corporate fleets, or vigilante groups. . . you can even put your personal colors on your favorite vehicles!"

FOR CHILL

Haunter of the Moor (Pacesetter, Box 451, Delavan WI 53115, $6) by Gali Sanchez. "Three Tales of Terror." This 32-page book "features three separate, spine-tingling adventures spanning nearly a century of terror. To play, you'll need. . . two to eight hardy souls."

FOR D&D COMPANION GAME

CM:3 Sabre River (TSR, $?) by Douglas Niles and Bruce Nesmith. For character levels 18-22. "Relax while you can, friend, because these new arrivals are about to lead you to a crimson sailor, a cozy Tower of Terror, and a river with an aching heart." A 32-page book.

FOR INDIANA JONES

IJ3: Crystal Death (TSR, $?) by Tracy Raye Hickman. "From the French countryside to the steaming heart of Africa, Indy sets out

on a fantastic adventure that tests his skills. . . and the skills of those who guide him." A 16-page book with 21"x16" double-sided map and magic viewer.

FOR MARVEL SUPER HEROES

MHAC-3: Adventure Fold-Up Figures (TSR, $?) by Jeff Butler and Bruce Nesmith. "This package includes over 125 figures: the Mighty Avengers, Fantastic Four, Uncanny X-Men, A.I.M., Doctor Doom, Galactus, and bunches more. . . four sheets of full-color, fold-up figures and simple, illustrated instructions."

MH-5: Cat's Paw (TSR, $?) by Jeff Grubb. "Terror stalks the north! Can ALPHA FLIGHT stem the tide?" This package includes a 16-page adventure book, 33" x 21" color map, character cards, and complete information on ALPHA FLIGHT and their fatal foes.

FOR STAR ACE

Lightspeed Raid (Pacesetter, $6) by Mark Acres. This 32-page adventure is "packed with enough action, intrigue, and suspense to challenge any Veteran Star Team member. Inside, you'll find a wild and dangerous adventure that takes you on a breakneck interplanetary chase."

Campaign Master's Screen (Pacesetter, $6) by Marc Acres. "Quit searching the heavens for those *Star Ace* charts and tables! This stand-up screen brings them right into your galaxy. Inside, you'll find four panels of charts, all arranged for easy reference. You'll also encounter four blank character sheets and 'Ace in the Hole,' a swashbuckling mini-adventure."

FOR STAR TREK

Termination: 1456 (FASA, Box 6930, Chicago IL 60680-6930, $?) by Dale L. Kemper. "It is suspected that Admiral Krador, a brilliant veteran of the Romulan wars, has been gathering forces to overthrow the Emperor. . . you and you crew. . . will. . . take appropriate action against Krador and his senior officers. The mission is a vital one. . . and it must be accomplished, even at the expense of your lives." A 48-page book.

The Outcasts (FASA, $?) by Fantasimulations Associates. "You will be contacted by a Vulcan named Salak, who is on a mission

of utmost secrecy dealing with a renegade Romulan. I urge you and a few of your best fellow officers to aid him with his mission, though you will have no official Star Fleet sanction." A 48-page book.

Star Trek Tricorder/Starship Sensors Interactive Display (FASA, $?) by Wm. John Wheeler. "Now players can test their skills at operating and reading tricorder or starship sensors. This unique playing aid. . . allows players to make tricorder readings or starship sensor scans, and then use their character's skills to interpret the results." Also comes with a 16-page rulebook.

FOR SUPERWORLD

A Companion to Superworld (Chaosium, $10) by Steve Perrin. This 72-page book "expands the evergrowing world of super-powered roleplaying. It includes . . . changes for and variants of *Superworld* powers. . . new powers. Also included. . . are conversion systems to *Champions* and to *Villains & Vigilantes*, an in-depth treatment of weather and weather-related powers. . . and a fully described base with working danger rooms for heroes or villains. . ."

FOR TIMEMASTER

Clash Of Kings! (Pacesetter, $6)

by Mark Acres. "A Tale of Arthur and Merlin." For 2-8 characters. "Relive the magnificent saga of a bastard lad named Arthur. . . Hear the crowd gasp as he draws Excalibur from the stone. Witness the boy's phenomenal rise to power, and discover the startling secret of Merlin's magic." A 32-page book.

Sea Dogs of England (Pacesetter, $6) by Gali Sanchez. ". . . a swashbuckling 32-page adventure . . . Inside, you'll find maps, historical background, naval counters and rules, characters, and all the plot encounters you need for hours of fun in Elizabethan England."

FOR ANY GAME SYSTEM

Encyclopedia Harnica 10 (Columbia Games, Box 8006, Blaine WA 98203, $6) by Gary Steinhilber, et al. This 20-page issue contains information on Burzyn (Chybisa's mighty Royal Castle), Atlas Harnica (the Kingdom of Chybisa); and Chybisa (history, politics, and clans).

Encyclopedia Harnica 11 (Columbia Games, $6) by Gene Siegal, et al. This 20-page issue contains information on Telumar (the enigmatic Earthmaster site in Anadel); Ilme (the unique Meredragons of Ilmen Marsh); and the Bujoc (a shy and secretive people).

Fluffy Quest (Bad Dog Publications, Box 389, Camanche IA 52730, $?) by Rick Reid. "Fluffy, beloved pet of the realm is missing. The only one who can save her from the clutches of the sinister Phantom is YOU!" A 32-page booklet.

ENDLESS QUEST BOOKS

The following are 160-page pocketbooks (TSR, $2.25 each). "Pick A Path to Adventure."

Book 23: Blade of the Young Samurai by Morris Simon. Based on the *D&D* game. "For ten years, you have been trained in the fighting skills of a samurai warrior. Now, with rival factions battling for control of the empire, you face your first and most important quest—at the request of the emperor himself, with the fate of the empire hanging in the balance!"

Book 24: Trouble On Artule by Catherine McGuire. Based on the *Star Frontiers* game. "When you became a human interplanetary exchange student on the remote planet Artule, you never realized you'd have to deal with prejudice . . . But deal with it you must, if you're ever going to unravel the secret behind the mysterious incidents at your school. . ."

Book 25: Conan The Outlaw by Roger E. Moore. ". . . hunted by

Vammatar's strange Witchmen and haunted by terrible nightmares of the evil wizardess's unliving creatures, you face unspeakable dangers wherever you turn. Can even Conan hope to defeat Vammatar's magic and fiendish, undead followers?"

Book 26: Tarzan and the Well of Slaves by Douglas Niles. "You have followed the trail of the strangely clad figures with their leashed leopards deep into the unexplored mountain country in hope that they will lead you to the answer behind the strange disappearances among your loyal Waziri followers. . ."

OTHER GAMES

Battledroids (FASA, $?) by Jordan Weisman. "A Game of Armored Combat." Comes boxed with two 3-inch tall plastic model robots, two 22"x17" maps, 74 counters, a 32-page rulebook, and two 6-sided dice. "The battlefields of the Succession Wars are dominated by the most awesome war-machines in man's history. . . Now you can control the Battledroids, infantry, and tanks in this exciting game of warfare in the 30th century Successor States."

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective (Sleuth Publications, 689 Florida St, San Francisco CA 94110, $25) by Gary Grady et al. New box edition. □

Film Reviews

By John Nubbin

Get ready to argue. This Christmas season brought a number of top science-fiction films, and people have yet to agree on them. The critics didn't agree, and neither did the public (with the critics or with each other). So, knowing there is no way to get everyone to agree with the following, it is just best to present it, and let everyone make their own decisions. As always.

STARMAN

Director . . . . . John Carpenter
Producer . . . . . Larry J. Franco
Screenplay . . . . . . Bruce Evans/
Raynold Gideon
Photography . . . .
Donald M. Morgan, A.S.C.
Music . . . . Jack Nitzsche

CAST
Starman . . . . Jeff Bridges
Jenny Hayden . . . . . Karen Allen
Mark Shermin . . . .
Charles Martin Smith
George Fox . . . Richard Jaeckel

There is little doubt that Columbia's bid for the holiday season's science-fiction dollars was the weakest one in town. It tricked a lot of people, but all in all, there was little to *Starman* except a desire to fill cash registers.

The movie is about an alien who comes to Earth on a peaceful mission. Because of wreckless human intervention, the envoy from beyond is stranded on our planet, a situation which will kill him if he does not get back into space. The only way he can survive is to get help from an earthling. Luckily, he finds one who has recently lost a loved one, a role he unwittingly fills as he uses this person to escape Earth's killing atmosphere, and dissection-minded officials.

If the above has started to sound at all familiar, it is because you probably saw *E.T.* And that is sadly all *Starman* is, *E.T.* for adults. The film is filled with unanswered questions—it is actually not science fiction at all, but a fantasy without the slightest nod toward a genre it drapes itself with.

How do the Starman's ball bearings do what they do? Do they give the power or does he? How can they perform such a variety of functions? How does the government continually find him without clues? How does the Starman bring a dead animal to life, an animal with no blood in its body, or oxygen in its brain?

As one can see, the questions get harder to answer. So also does it get harder to find the reason for making such a film. *Starman* is just another soap-opera-drama dressed up to resemble something popular in the hopes of turning a profit. There is no exploration of the human condition, no thought given to what is really happening in the film.

A woman watches a heap on her floor change in a matter of seconds into a form which resembles her dead husband. She starts out with the reasonable reaction of being terrified of this thing in her living room, but comes to love it enough to lie for it, protect it, threaten other human life for it, and to go to bed with it and bear its child. Why? Because she wants to, sort of. Because she is lonely and grief stricken over her husband's death and an alien that looks like him just must be telling the truth. The fact that the government wants him, well, doesn't that prove he's okay if the big bad government wants him?

This is rather unclear thinking, letting us know that Jenny Hayden is somewhat of a jerk. All she knows is that an alien from another world has taken her husband's form and has threatened her at gun point into helping him. The radio says he must be caught and stopped—perfectly logical to assume that the radio is lying, and that the 'being from another planet' next to her is the good guy.

Filled with routine special effects, *Starman* is nothing special. It is a filler movie, just taking space on the screen until something else comes along. It is nice to hope that when aliens do land they will be smart and wise and able to heal and distill all the knowledge we need, etc. As a film plot, though, it is already getting a bit tired. It was nice that Jeff Bridges and Karen Allen got some work, but one can only hope that the next time we see them that it is in something worthwhile. □
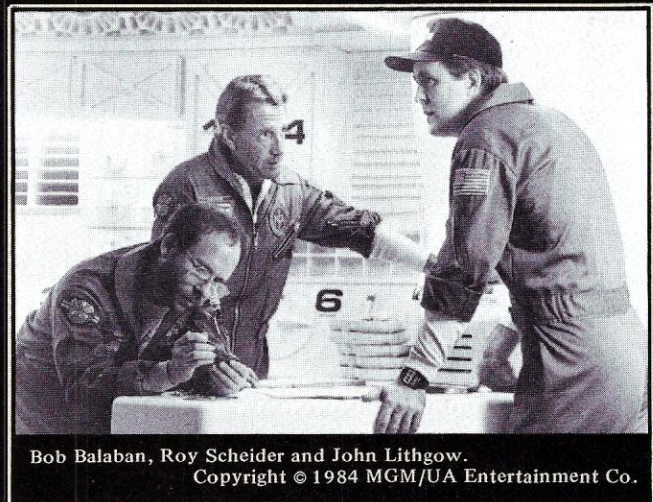
Bob Balaban, Roy Scheider and John Lithgow.
Copyright © 1984 MGM/UA Entertainment Co.

Jeff Bridges is a harmless alien and Karen Allen is the confused, yet caring earthling who becomes his only hope for survival on earth.   Copyright © 1984 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

2010

Director / Producer / Screenplay /
Photography . . . . . Peter Hyams
Music . . . . David Shire

CAST
Heywood Floyd . . . Roy Scheider
Walter Curnow . . John Lithgow
Tanya Kirbuk . . . . Helen Mirren
R. Chandra . . . . . Bob Ballaban
David Bowman . . . . Keir Dullea

2010—the one everyone was waiting for. There has never been another motion picture as disagreed over as *2001*. Everyone loved it. Everyone hated it. Everyone was confused by it. Everyone got great cosmic significance out of it.

Since *2001* was first released, everyone has argued over its meaning, whether it was good or bad or meaningful or empty, etc. In fact, for those who saw the first film, there has only been one unifying thought; the only thing that everyone really had in common was the desire for a sequel, either to give them more of the same, or to explain away the first. The latter group seems to have won.

Although generalizations are hard to arrive at here, it seems for the most part that those who loved the first film were somewhat disappointed by the second, and that those who hated the first loved the second. Those in the middle ground between love and hate for the first seem pleased enough.

So the concensus seems to be that *2010* was pretty good. Although not a 'mystical' as the first, it was still all right. Why people are all that worried about comparing it to its seventeen-year-old predecessor is actually the biggest question. *2001* was made as an experience, not a movie. It is a disjointed loose collection of scenes which do not make a perfect sense. The film is a stab at putting feelings on the screen—
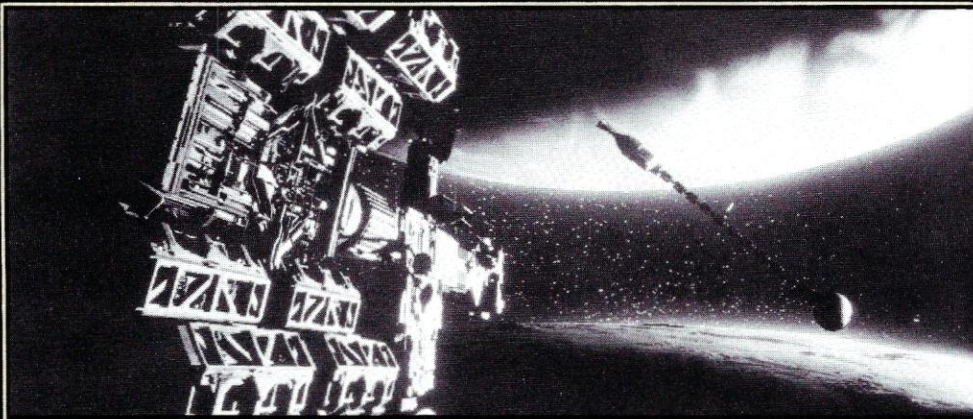
The Russian spacecraft *Leonov* (left) is stationed a safe distance from the derelict American spacecraft *Discovery* (right), which is tumbling dangerously in a decaying orbit between Jupiter and Io, one of the planet's largest moons. Copyright © 1984 MGM/UA Entertainment Co.

not a story.

2010 is just the opposite. As *2001* was scripted as it went along with a book following trying to explain everything, *2010* was a book first, which was followed by a film.

2010 is an inferior film experience, but a far superior story. It is not only internally consistent throughout, but it even manages to remain faithful to the first film, not wrecking that experience, but actually helping to explain some of its ancestor's gaping holes.

It was well-acted, perfectly edit-ed, and inspirationally directed. The story is tight, scientifically accurate, and consistent. The ending is a bit too pat; one must wonder if war would cease on Earth due solely to the discovery that we are not alone. Outside of that, however, it is a surprisingly competent film, one which unlike feeble-minded fables such as *Electric Dreams* or *Starman* deserves the title 'science-fiction.'

The film is complete for those who read the book and for those who did not. There is actually nothing much to complain about within it that would not make one look like the meanest of nit-pickers. *2010* was produced carefully, with respect for its author and its audiences. Like the book, it is no stunning addition to the genre, but unlike so many others, it is in no way an embarrassment either.

It was a good, common denominator film. Despite its too happy ending, it is well-deserving of the praise it received, and little-deserving of any strong criticism. A good, solid picture, the kind we need a lot more of. □

evil, and then secondly by evil itself as a foe to be crushed. Luthor, insanely well-played by KISS star Gene Simmons, could escape the law and begin again. He chooses not to; he chooses to force Ramsey to chase him.

The movie has its problems. Its ideas and concepts were often more than its budgets could portray perfectly. There are points where its logic breaks down, where too much is forced on the audience in a single phone call or revelation, but the film's spirit makes up for a lot.

The difference between something like *Starman* and something like *Runaway* is approach. In *Starman*, the powers and aliens and spaceships, etc., are merely backdrops to unwind a love story against. In *Runaway*, however, 'science' is the word in caps, not 'fiction.' Each robot is intelligently thought out and displayed. Multiple uses exist for the same designs—form follows function, not human aesthetic.

In many ways, the recent influx of small budget pictures such as *Ice Pirates* and *The Terminator* and *Runaway* is a good sign of better things to come. New, fresh people are trying to deliver the new, fresh ideas that large sections of the public want, and not just repackaged the same old stories in rocket foil and alien ribbon.

As long as we keep getting films like *Runaway*, there will still be hope for the science-fiction and fantasy genres as a whole in film, and not just their pretenders. □

RUNAWAY

Director/Screenplay . . . .
. . . . *Michael Crichton*
Producer . . . . . *Michael Rachmil*
Photography . . . .
. . . . *John A. Alonzo, A.S.C.*
Music . . . . *Jerry Goldsmith*
CAST
Ramsey . . . . *Tom Selleck*
Thompson . . . . *Cynthia Rhodes*
Luthor . . . . *Gene Simmons*
Jackie . . . . *Kristie Alley*

The best of the lot. Honest.

Voices ring out—"How can it be?" "What's he talking about?" Along with the ever popular, "Well, I always said he was nuts—now I know it."

None of it changes anything. *Runaway* beats lame attempts at science fiction like *Starman* with ease, and edges by glossy productions like *2010* by just having more of the most important ingredient any film can have—heart.

The plot is simple. A ruthless maniac gets his hands on a computer component which will allow him to reprogram simple household robots for murderous purposes. In the future society of the film, one populated with hundreds of types of automated workers, a man who could kill through the machines around everyone would be more than a menace, he would be a wizard. Or a god.

Opposed to the film's evil manipulator is Ramsey, an ordi-nary cop on the runaway robot squad. As in all great adventures, it is the hero who is chosen first by fate to stand in the way of

Jack Ramsay (Tom Selleck) tries to get himself out of a tight spot as destructively programmed spider robots move in for the kill. Copyright © 1984 Tri-Star Pictures

A Letter from Gigi

Adventure news and gossip from our intrepid reporter, Miss Gigi D'Arn.

Dear Tadashi,

So you left Chaosium for Sleuth and *Different Worlds* has a new publisher. I wish you continued success and good luck with your impending marriage to MIYAKO IHARA. Is she a gamer?

Who else has skipped Chaosium? None other than STEVE PERRIN who will now be freelancing game designs. His first assignements are for Hero Games and the shorter-staffed Chaosium.

Sleuth's next *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* supplement will be *Gaslight*, scheduled for release in late spring.

The "lost city" in the Peruvian Andes that Univ of Colorado archaeologists announced on January 31 with great fanfare apparently involved wel-known ruins that are touted in tourist guidebooks as an interesting place to visit. "I don't know what the big deal is," says a specialist in South American archaeology. "The Peruvian highlands are filled with ruins all the way from Machu Picchu (500 miles to the south) on up."

Is Adventure Gaming, the Minnesota game company that gave us *Rails Through the*

Rockies, gone? I heard President DAVE ARNESON traded the company's inventory for stock in Arizona's Flying Buffalo.

Is adventure gaming dying? KEVIN BLUME has resigned as president of TSR, publisher of many adventure games including *Dungeons & Dragons, Indiana Jones,* and *Marvel Super Heroes*. The company is up for sale: asking price $6 million and dropping. Their magazine, *The Dragon*, is also for sale at $1 million. Lorimar, Norman Lear's production company, is interested in TSR if GARY GYGAX stays to run the company.

In addition, TSR has closed up their miniature figures shop which grossed $800,000 last year. The figure rights will go to England's Games Workshop.

In addition to that, Rumour reports that ROSE ESTES, author of many Endless Quest books, is suing TSR for reneging on a stock purchase plan. I also heard that taking them to court is DAVE ARNESON who allegedly has not received any *Dungeons & Dragons* royalties since October.

So what will happen to TSR's yet-to-be-released *Amazing*

will you join me in the crypt for a little game?

Ray Nelson
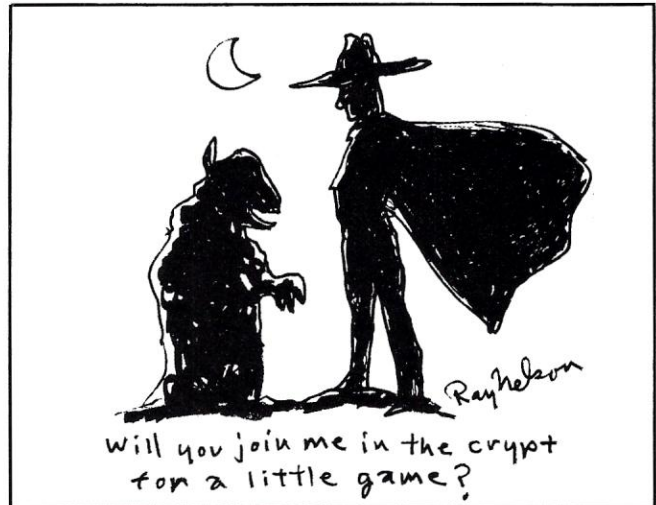
Stories Game which is based on their science-fiction magazine? This fall Universal Television will unveil on NBC Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* TV series which is under license from TSR.

Grenadier Models has announced their 10th anniversary. The Philadelphia miniatures company of adventure gaming figures is celebrating the event by releasing a boxed miniatures set called *Dungeon Raiders* to also commemorate the origin of adventure gaming; namely the dungeon adventure games which started the whole craze in the first place.

Were time-travel games invented in 1996?

Twenty-four play-by-mail companies have formed the Play By Mail Association. The PBMA's purpose is to promote responsible play-by-mail moderating and will be responsible for handing out annual Play By Mail Awards at ORIGINS, the national gaming convention. Anyone interested in more information can write the PBM Association, 8149 E Thomas Rd, Scottsdale AZ 85251.

Pacesetter Ltd. of Wisconsin has licensed a Swedish version of their adventure game *Chill* which in Sweden will be called *Chock*. Pacesetter has also licensed Grenadier Models to produce miniature figures for *Chill*.

Three million Fighting Fantasy Game Books has been sold to date and congratulations goes to one of the series' first writers, STEVE JACKSON of Games Workshop, England, on the birth of his first child, BENJAMIN JAMES. Meanwhile, STEVE JACKSON of Texas' Steve Jackson Games has

contracted to write one also.

FASA, the Chicago publisher of the *Star Trek* adventure game, has licensed from BBC to do a *Dr. Who* adventure game. FASA is also going to publish a *Masters of the Universe* adventure game aimed at the 6-12 year olds with the instructions in comic-book form.

Mayfair Games of Chicago has been granted a license from Donald A. Wollheim of DAW Books for the Dray Prescott series. The license will be used to produce an adventure game module featuring the hero Prescott, his world Kregen, and the Star Lord's alien technologies.

One of Mayfair's upcoming Role Aids releases, *Lich Lords*, features a cover by FRANK FRAZETTA.

Victory Games of New York announces three new *James Bond 007* adventure modules: *Goldfinger II: Man with the Midas Touch, The Man with the Golden Gun,* and *Thrilling Locations*.

Baltimore's the Avalon Hill Game Company reports that the *RuneQuest 3* adventure game has sold more in its first four months than the first-year sales of *Powers & Perils* and *Lords Of Creation* combined. If you laid each game end-to-end will it reach Washington DC?

Due to the popularity of *Trivial Pursuit*, the name of the game this year has been changed to *Common Knowledge*.

Love,

Gigi ♥

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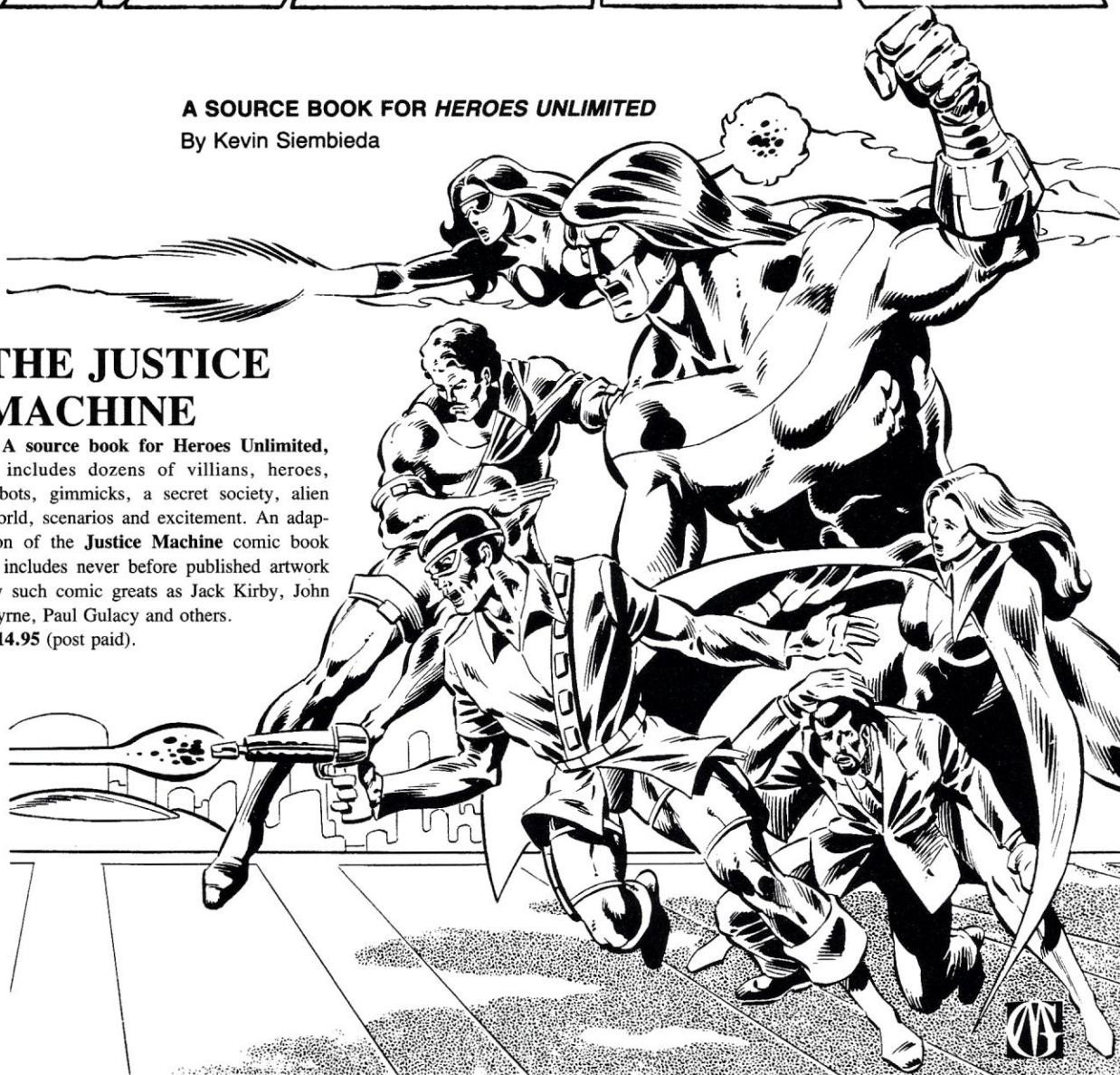
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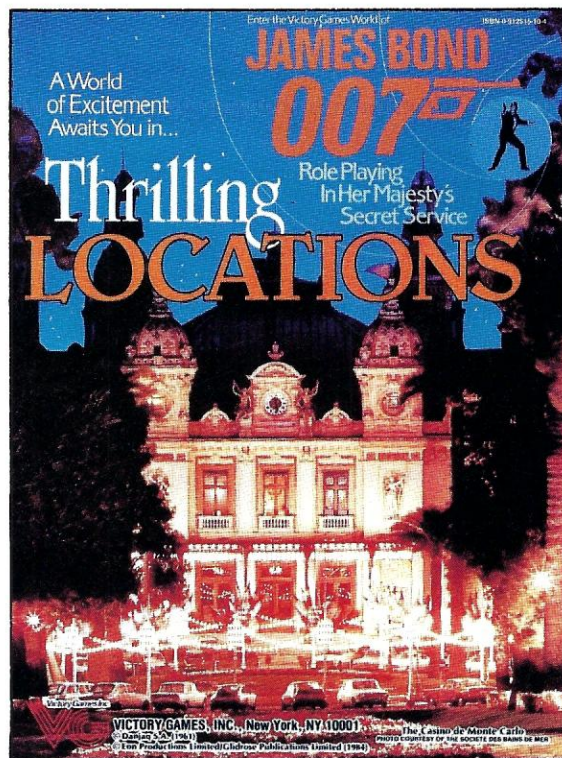
. . . And Two New Adventure Modules!
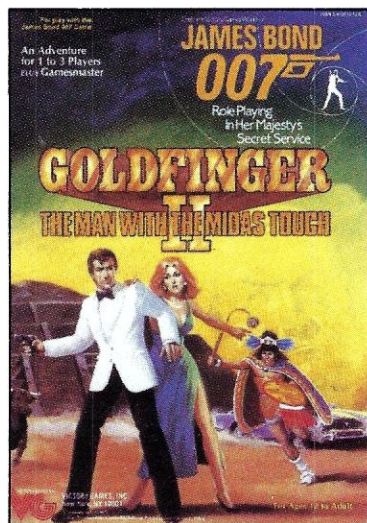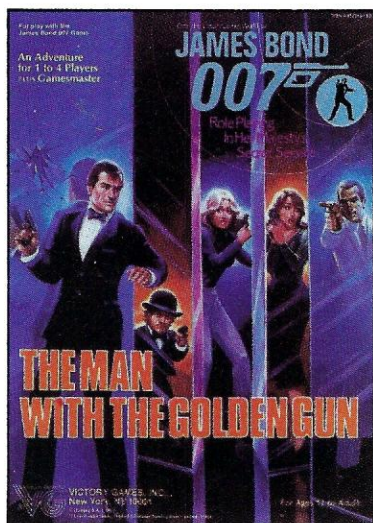
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