Featured Article

Warrant Officers

by Jeff Wheeler

Contents

From the Editor

Once again, it's time to put out a request for articles—we're getting a bit thin on the ground in some sections, and in others, we need to track down some authors so that we can work with them to make a previous submission publishable. That makes it a bit difficult to fill an issue, sadly.

Any section is fair game; if you're willing to write it, we're willing to look at it. Some sections—most notably "The Shipyard"—have somewhat tighter requirements than *Freelance Traveller* does in general, but we'll be happy to work with you to explain them; write and ask.

We'd like to see more regular features, along the lines of Mike Cross's "Slice of Life", or Shannon Appelcline's "Fifth Imperium". If you want to be a regular columnist, you don't need to have a theme tying your column together across issues; you just need to be willing to write something on a regular basis (not even every month; we're perfectly willing to have columnists alternating to fill a space).

"In A Store Near You" has a some subsections that could benefit from your creative juices—"The Prome-nade", "The Gun Shop", and "Handle With Care" are all lighter on material than we could wish.

Reviews are also good. Review what you wish; don't worry about whether it's already been reviewed by someone else—multiple viewpoints and opinions are good. Don't worry about it being out of print, either—much of the early *Traveller* material is now available on one or another of the FarFuture CD-ROM collections, so reviews aren't entirely meaningless. Non-*Traveller* gaming supplements that you feel would have interest to the *Traveller* player or referee are also fair game; that's what the "Other People's Toys" subsection is all about. "Off the Table" is for the recreational reading that you think will appeal to the *Traveller* fan.

And, of course, if you have house rules ("Doing It My Way") or settings ("Kurishdam"), or if you've turned your hand to writing fiction ("Raconteurs' Rest") or adventures ("Active Measures") in the *Traveller* milieu, or if you have an artistic bent ("Multimedia Gallery")… or anything else (if we don't have a section, we'll invent one!)… we're interested. Write and ask, or just send it on, to any of the usual addresses—we'll be here!   ⬡

Mongoose Traveller Supplement 8: Cybernetics

Reviewed by "kafka"

Mongoose Traveller Supplement 8: Cybernetics.
Lawrence Whitaker.
Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
98pp, softcover
US$24.99/UK£16.99

Cybernetics is one of those funny things in *Traveller*: it has them but nobody really wants to talk about them. In fact, some editions of the rules purposely shy away from them. Many *Traveller* games that I have run had high powered enforcer-types with glittering metallic extrusions or had games where the objective was to hack into computers in order to get the security plans that players were charged by the patron to get a hold of (only to find out an old fashioned B&E was compulsory/complemented to complete the job). The one set of rules that defined the chrome and set the mood of the 1980s was *Cyberpunk 2020* and this volume is very much a homage to that work, save that it focuses more upon *cyber* than having a *punk* in its attitude, thus bringing it more in line with traditional *Traveller*.

First off, the rules present a clear and easy method of incorporating cyber careers into the game system. Like all Mongoose *Traveller* careers, they are meant as add-ons for character development, thus one could have one term in a cyber career and multiple terms outside of one. This was not clearly stated, but became clear after reading the entire section. Fortunately or unfortunately, the section was not illustrated in the manner of previous books/rulebook. The artwork done for the careers sections of different books has been a real mixed bag – brilliant in *Alien Module 3: Darrians*, but abysmal in the main rulebook (for example). *Cyberpunk 2020* had a definite style—one grounded in the punk æsthetic of the 1980s/1990s in which chrome becomes an extension of "cheesecake" art. Any *Traveller* book/supplement aping it would be in danger of not fitting in with rest of the *Traveller* æsthetic. The rules for character generation are seamless and mesh very with the previous rules offered. One complaint: the career entitled "Army" really ought to be named "Military", in line with other parts of *Traveller*, as Army was one too many nods to a certain astronaut who cost the US establishment several MCr.

Next, there comes a chapter entitled: "Before the Chrome" – guidelines to make your characters into cyborgs. I liked it. While it does not under power cybernetic implants, it does a great job in bringing balance to their usage (again, in line with a *Traveller* game). It does describe some of the drawbacks of having bionics, without going into the cliché of man-machine rejection syndrome that has gotten tiresome in some Science Fiction stories and styles (yes, I am looking at you, Anime). There is even a section on biotechnology and the possible uses of biotech enhancements that had not occurred to me. The discussion on alien cybernetics was scant but did provide good guidance for referees. Here was an opportunity to touch upon cybernetics in the Official/Original *Traveller* Universe (OTU), but sadly, no real discussion transpired. So, we might never learn that the Vilani are gung-ho about

cybernetic implants and the Solomani would not augment themselves with a 10 foot pole. Or vice-versa.

Next up come a series of chapters on augmentations – essentially an equipment list of possible cybernetic add-ons. These are separated into "Body Augmentations" and "Head Augmentations". The art in these sections is phenomenal. Although I might not see the need to replace one's torso with that of a K'kree mechanical construct, my *Traveller* universe will be richer now that it's an option. They have a nice chapter on chips and plug-ins to augment the mind. This chapter I found one of the weakest and am not sure how it can be improved. Perhaps it is simply still too much in the 1980s (Cyberpunk) æsthetic than the more contemporary (read: Transhumanist) SF æstetic. The next chapter discusses weapons, which I found to be more on the punkish side of the equation and a marked difference from the other chapters. I was never a fan of comic book superheroes that had these "powers", so I never really saw the need to incorporate them into my *Traveller* game. While the rules are solid, it is perhaps just not my cup of tea.

What discussion of cybernetics could not be complete without a discussion of cyberspace or hacking? This is where one leaves the constraints of the body and allows the mind to meld with that of the machine. The rules cover "low brow" hacking exercises and "high scale" heists that may involve entering a *Matrix*-type virtual world. It does use the language of cyberpunk quite liberally here,

possibly to keep the language familiar and in line with the expectations of the reader; however, in a *Traveller* supplement, I thought it might be more fun to create a new vocabulary. The book concludes with a discussion of patrons or potential employers/jobs. The jobs are generic and can be fitted into almost any *Traveller* universe.

Now, I understand that Mongoose did not and does not want to be constrained by the OTU in their generic supplements (which this is), but more nods to it would have been appreciated. I found more nods to *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *Cyberpunk 2020* than I found references to the OUT; more focus on incorporating cybernetics into properties that have been developed under the Mongoose *Traveller* umbrella would have certainly been appreciated. The art as noted above is fantastic but meagre – it would be nice to see more art, but it would likely have clashed with the cyberpunk æsthetic that this book wanted to avoid. We need to see more art like this in *Traveller*. So, if your game can use cybernetic augmentation without destroying its *persona*, buy this book. If your game already incorporates Transhumanist ideas then you might find this book slim pickings and not enough for your needs.

This supplement brings some the notions of cyberpunk into the *Traveller* game by focusing upon the *cyber* and trimming away much of the *punk* attitude. It is a worthy supplement that allows one to play in the worlds bequeathed by *The Six Million Dollar Man* and/or *The Matrix* without ever leaving the conventions (Hard Space Opera) that underpin *Traveller*.   ✵

We've already decided on what our first couple of Theme Issues should be, and we'd like you to think about generating content aimed at them. While not all types of article will be relevant to all themes, we won't rule out any specific kind of article for any particular theme (our imagination may overlook something that you spot).

As indicated in January's "From the Editor", we'll accumulate material and hold it until we have enough to make the theme issue, then announce it

and print it. The usual policies regarding rights and credit apply.

These are our currently planned themes:

Psionics: Don't feel limited to focusing on the Zhodani for this one; there's lots of room beyond them. But don't feel that you have to avoid them, either…

The Cruise: What's it like? What's the ship, the destination, the activities, the adventures (expected and unexpected), the stories… ? Tell us!

Allport-class Short Hop Commuter Ferry (TL8)

by Timothy Collinson

Cities built on harbours or rivers often have need for commuters to be able to cross the water efficiently in large numbers. The *Allport*-class Short Hop Commuter Ferry is designed for short crossings of just a few minutes and can also be used as a vehicle for short cruises of a few hours visiting local coastal attractions. Even on worlds where grav technology may be available, these boats may be useful in more remote areas or where cost is a factor. Typically there are two main decks, the upper deck only partially covered, with a bridge that runs the width of the ferry providing good views of the mooring stations whether docking on the port or starboard side. 300 passengers can be carried, 250 seated and another 50 either standing or in the 'cargo' area which splits the lower deck longitudinally from a saloon. Life jackets are carried for 300 people along with other life-saving equipment as law or prudence dictates.

The power plant is a twin Nils RSI 1241D internal combustion engine with fuel tankage for up to 10 hours operation. Cruising speed is 9 knots (17km/h). The crew of three is augmented with an engineer and 2 stewards when conditions or regulations warrant. The ropers clip tickets as well as mooring and unmooring; on a cruise they may act as additional stewards, or as relief helmsmen. The excellent controls permit rotation through 360° of the twin azimuth propellers (fore and aft) which drive the vessel, so that the ferry can maneuver or dock very easily in restricted space. Two operator stations are located on the port and starboard sides of the bridge with large windows to provide clear views. A third is in the engine room. Entrance and egress is through steel gates to maximize passenger flow. Where usage warrants, a variant design with a half deck below the lower deck may be employed, allowing another 50 passengers.

A small kiosk on the upper deck allows a steward to serve drinks and light snacks. There is just room on the upper deck for a small band to set up towards the after end of the vessel. Dimensions: 30m (waterline), 32m (overall) × 10m × 7m.

Note: A real world example with specifications, illustrations and deckplans can be found at: http://www.camarc.com/#/ferrycrew-boats/4552916852 (Flash required, heavy use) by selecting the data-sheet links for the 32m vessels at the bottom of the page.

The River Ferry on page 79 of Supplement 5: Civilian Vehicles, appears to have misquoted the weight of the passenger seats by a factor of 10. On the other hand, it's very fast, particularly given the power output should be 2400 instead of 1650. (Top speed 50kph). ✪

Short Hop Commuter Ferry (TL8)		Volume (m³)	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr)
Hull	2100 m³ (base 2100 m³) Standard configuration, Steel, Waterproof	-	210,000.00	420,000
	Hull: 525 Structure: 525	-	-	-
Drive system	Water-Driven	210.00	31,500.00	1,050,000
Power Plant	Internal Combustion-8 Power output: 4860 Fuel Consumption: 180/hour	180.00	12,600.00	270,000
Fuel	1800 liters (10 hours operation)	1.80	1,800.00	-
Armour	Steel 3	-	-	-
Sensors	Basic (1 km, +1DM)	0.50	1.00	500
Communications	Radio-10 (range 10 km)	0.00	0.25	250
Equipment	Controls, excellent (Agility +3=1)	21.00	2,100.00	2,100,000
Crew	3 (1 helmsman, 2 ropers)	-	-	-
Operating stations	3	3.75	375.00	-
Passengers	300	300.00	30,000.00	-
Utility Areas	Bar	5.00	375.00	6,250
Cargo	102 Td	1,377.95	137,795.00	-
Agility	+1 DM	-	-	-
Speed	Cruise: 17 km/h Top: 23 km/h	-	-	-
TOTAL		**2,100.00**	**426,546.00**	**3,847,000**

Up Close and Personal

Aubrey Wills

profiled by Ken Murphy

Sir Aubrey Wills 79687A Age 30 (Noble) 5 terms (Household Troop)
Human Male
Grav Vehicle-0, Equestrian-0, Survival-1, Rifle-2, SMG-3, Computer-0, Brawling-1, Tactics-2, Foil-3, Polearm-2, Steward-1, Carousing-2, Streetwise-1, Sm. Watercraft-3, Linguistics-2 (Russian, Chinese), Brandy Afficianado-2

The fourth son of a minor noble family on pastolar Mindabar, Aubrey was fostered to House Desmond, the wealthy noble family who owned most of the Northern continent, including the Brookstone Downport Startown (though not the Downport itself).

Under the tutelage of his betters when not working as a servant, groomer, and gopher, Aubrey acquired a little polish and culture, and became the Squire to Sir Ektor, a Knight in Desmond's service. The troop of which Aubrey was a member accompanied Lady Yasmina, with her flock of handmaidens, everywhere as personal escorts and bodyguards.

A decade of fairly easy duty followed; all spit-and-polish with little to do besides keep a weather eye peeled and fulfill any of the Lady's (or her handmaidens') wants.

On a visit to Barton, where the Lady hoped to see the famous Hanging Gardens and Amberwood trees, criminals with knowledge of Lady Yasmina's itinerary attempted to kidnap her as her motorcade snaked through the lush Hanging Gardens at Meyer's Reserve. Their ambush went off without a hitch, and the lead and trailing vehicles were hit by portable rocket fire, trapping the two remaining vehicles. The Lady and her entourage, guarded by the household troops, abandoned the cars and found cover behind nearby trees. Several rockets buzzed by, to no effect.

A fierce gun battle ensued, with both sides weaving amongst the trees to get better positions. At one point, Sir Ektor, Aubrey and a few of the other Squires advanced to a point where they could fire into the main enemy force to great effect. A last rocket tore towards them and slammed into a tree, cutting down Ektor and one Squire in a spray of jagged wood.

With most of the criminals dead or injured, the remaining gunmen fled into the woods.

Once back to Mindabar, after the after-action report was read by the Viscount, Lady Yasmina spoke to her father of the bravery of the household troops—citing Aubrey in particular. Viscount Lord Desmond shortly knighted Aubrey and put him in charge of the Lady's protection detail.

Eventually Yasmina was married off to a more powerful House, and the protective force went with her, only to find the Lady's new partner informing Aubrey that he and his men would no longer be required, as there was just no room for "provincials" there. Aubrey retired a short time later.

Sir Aubrey is a slightly short, but otherwise average-looking fellow with dark brown hair and bushy sideburns. He has only one eye (green).

He grew up on an island, and had operated boats of various sorts since he was a kid.

Aubrey enjoys drinking brandies of various types, and smoking a pipe. He collects amber, and has several pieces of jewelry using amber.

Aubrey feels women are less capable than men, and is somewhat patronizing toward them. ✪

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

January 2012

- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Quick Worlds 21: Karnataka* and *Quick Worlds 22: Minerva*.
- **"Close the Airlock"**, a *Traveller* role-playing podcast, debuted at http://closetheairlock.com. At the time that this issue went to press, seven episodes had been recorded.
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released two more "d66" lists: *d66 Criminal Hideouts* and *d66 Planetary Bureaucracies*.
- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Technical Manual 1:* Reprieve-*class Escape Pod* ✪

Creatures of Distant Worlds Compendium 1

Reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Creatures of Distant Worlds Compendium 1.
Dale C. McCoy, Jr., and Alex Greene.
Jon Brazer Enterprises http://jonbrazer.com
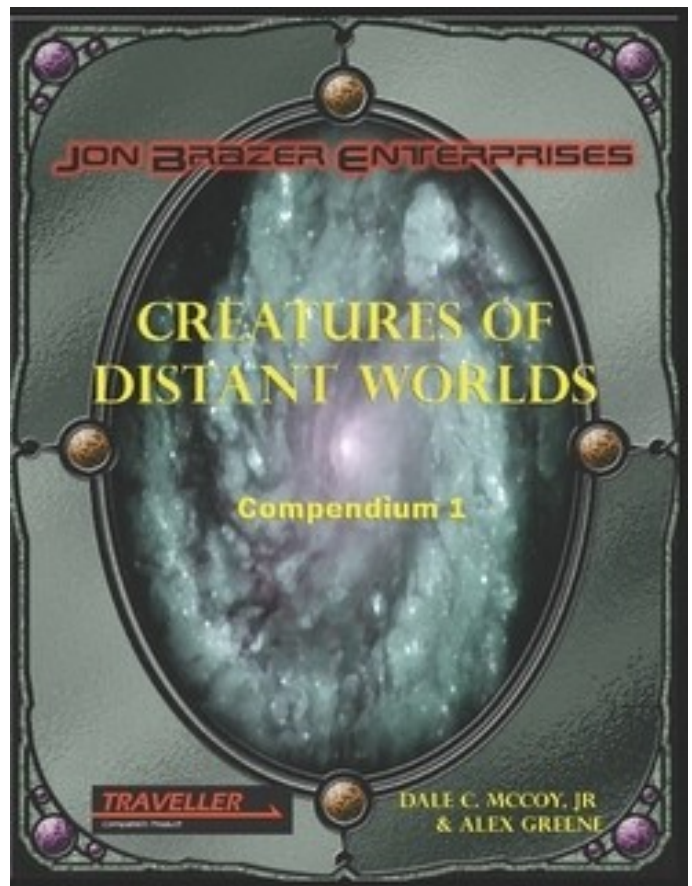16pp, softcover
US$9.99

On the Shelf

This product is available only via the online store at Lulu.com, so you won't actually see it on a shelf. The cover is abstract, with a design in the center suggestive of a wormhole or spacewarp, framed in what might be stained glass bossed with hemispheres of a pink- or purple-and-black stone. This display is overprinted with the company name in black with red 'glow' near the top, the title in yellow near the center, and the *Traveller* Compatible Product logo and authors' names (the latter in yellow) near the bottom. As a whole, the volume is quite slim, and if shelved, spine out, between equivalently-sized books of any significant thickness, it would get "lost".

Initial Impressions

In comparison with other products at this price point, this volume is perhaps disappointingly slim. However, Lulu is the modern-day equivalent of the vanity press of the latter part of the last century, so the purchaser is paying for that. Nevertheless, what substance the volume does have appears well-organized, with the sort of detail that will appeal to "gearheads" and to the typical player both.

On Closer Inspection

There's not a lot beyond what you see in the initial impressions. The introduction promises 30 creatures, but only twelve are described (counting Jump Angels separate from Jump Demons, even though they share an entry). A further twelve standard Terran animals have stat blocks in Appendix I, but that still doesn't bring the total to the promised 30. The creatures described are a mixed bag, with most seeming like reasonable variations on familiar terrestrial creatures. A few, however, seem aimed at horror or "space fantasy" campaigns, and are unlikely to find homes outside such campaigns. Each creature described gets roughly a full page of description, including a picture and a stat block. Descriptive material includes some behavioral information and the creature's ecological niche, possibly some historical and social information, and a few ideas for use. Three appendices provide stat blocks for terrestrial animals (as mentioned above), symptom and game effect data for a selection of diseases, and effects of a selection of poisons. The Intro-and-contents page and the text of the OGL round out the volume.

Conclusion

I really wanted to give this volume a better review, but there simply wasn't the backing for it in the product. For what you get, $9.99 isn't a bad price—but it's not a good price, either. If you've been looking at getting the individual Creatures of Distant Worlds in PDF form, you might want to get this instead; it represents a noticeable saving off the individual purchases. ✪

Beached

by J.E. Geoffrey

Required Equipment: The PCs need their own ship.

A large cargo ship on a regular run was apparently delayed beyond the 10% jump margin of error, but arrived in the system a week ago. Since then it has been hanging there, close to one of the gas giants in the system, and has not responded to any calls in the meantime. The company owning the ship is getting slightly nervous: Not all the goods on the ship have been declared accurately. It might be bad if the planetary forces have a closer look at what exactly is on that ship, and only slightly better if the Imperial forces look at it first. And there are a few scavengers in the system who might notice that there is a ship hanging somewhere in the system and not responding to any calls. Someone needs to go up there and have a look at that, and do it fast, lest there be any more losses.

Possible Denouements

If the scenario lasts for more than about a week of game time, a response to an inquiry sent out by the company's office here will come back from the ship's previous port-of-call indicating that the ship left there as scheduled, and appeared to jump without incident.

1. ***Plague Ship:*** The ship had an outbreak of a virulent and deadly sickness while in jump, and all aboard are dead or so weakened that they cannot function even minimally. The only way that anyone will be able to board the ship to investigate is via EVA to open an emergency lock. Any PC that breaks vacc suit discipline while aboard the ship should roll 1D each hour, and will be infected on 3+. The referee should decide on initial presentation of the disease and its subsequent progress and treatment, but note that anyone exposed to an infected individual (or corpse) within a week of infection is at the same risk of infection noted above.

2. ***Psychotic Break:*** One of the passengers, for no discernible reason, snapped after three days in jump. He (or she) became panicked and started to murder the passengers and crewmembers. The psychotic passenger is the only one left alive on the ship, and will attack anyone on sight.

3. ***Mass Psychosis:*** Several people aboard experienced psychotic breaks, as above, but at least one of them has directed her violence at various ship's systems. There are a few remaining (sane) crewmembers holding against a siege in Engineering; they are maintaining life support, but cannot get to the (possibly destroyed) comm equipment.

4. ***Mystery Killer:*** People just started dying, getting murdered, usually but not always in their sleep, but nobody seems to know who it really is, and everybody seems to have an alibi. The bodies of the bridge crew—and of anyone who subsequently tried to enter the bridge—have been found, headless, in various areas of the ship. The few remaining crew members are holed up, one small group in Engineering, one small group in the cargo bay. They will attack anyone that attempts to break in to their areas, or anyone that they see that is armed.

5. ***Fast Forward:*** The ship experienced a temporal mishap when in jump. In-jump time was longer than real time, and nobody survived the trip. Examination will reveal that the ship experienced approximately 300 years in jump.

6. ***Marie Céleste:*** There will be no sign of struggle or damage, and there will be no sign that anything is missing, including personal possessions of the crew or any passengers. Nothing will appear amiss in entries in the ship's log, or in any departmental logs or personal diaries. But there will be nobody aboard the ship, and no bodies. Any pets brought aboard by crew or passengers will also be missing, but any live animals in cargo will be present and untouched (as will the rest of the cargo).

Complications

Feel free to let the whole thing get investigated by one or more antagonist groups with own agenda:

1. Any group whose cargo was declared inaccurately might seek to recover it before the authorities do.

2. The System Space Command will want to investigate why this hulk is hanging there unresponsive for days

3. Imperial authorities trying to investigate the same

4. An Agency-Which-Shall-Not-Be-Named investigating some rumours about Psi drugs being smuggled on this ship

5. Scavengers trying to make some profit from this, under salvage laws.

6. a rival company tries to steal some trade secrets from the ship computers   ✹

Warrant Officers: An Expansion for Military Careers in MegaTraveller

by Jeff Wheeler

Background and Rationale

In 35 years of playing GDW's version of Classic *Traveller* and *MegaTraveller*, I have always felt that something was missing: the character generation was too basic for my tastes. The Classic *Traveller* books *Mercenary*, *High Guard*, *Scouts*, and *Merchant Prince* fixed things a bit. I was happy for a while. *MegaTraveller* carried the advanced character generation idea forward. But as I got more experience in both gaming and the "Real World" (mainly military experience), I saw a need to carry character generation further, and incorporate my experience, along with piecing together the scattered background information provided in various GDW and DGP magazines into something that made sense for *me*.

This is intended as the first of a series of articles, in which I will be expanding on character generation; adding items described in *Challenge* and *The Traveller Digest* magazines, such as The Imperial Guard Corps and the IISS Imperial Personal Protection Unit; some ideas picked up from the Web, like alternatives to Commando School; and ideas I have thought of out of my years of military and gaming experience, such as combat medics and this article's subject: Warrant Officers. My writing will be set up mainly for the *MegaTraveller* character generation system, but with a little work, they can be used in any of the other *Traveller* incarnations. Feel free to incorporate it and adjust it to fit your game/campaign. Now let's get the show on the road!

What Are Warrant Officers?

These are the "experts in the field" of the military arts. They are highly skilled in their military field of training, usually the field they trained in as an enlisted. Warrant Officers can and do command detachments, units, activities, vessels, aircraft, and armored vehicles; usually put into a position of command mainly where an officer with a goodly amount of technical expertise is needed, but not an officer with the rank to match the expertise. The Warrant Officer's duties also include the need to lead, coach, train, and counsel subordinates and less experienced officers. However, the Warrant Officer's primary task as a leader is to serve as a technical expert, providing valuable skills, guidance, and expertise to commanders and organizations in their particular field. One thing to remember, if you want a Warrant Officer to be a commissioned officer, they need to go to OCS. They advance no further than Master Warrant Officer.

Warrant Officers receive their authority, their "warrant" from an authorized responsible party, usually the minister of War, Defense, the Army etc. In the United States, for example, the various service secretaries issue the warrants for WO1s (the lowest grade of Warrant Officer), and the President issues the rest. Feel free to do things your own way.

I am using a modified form of the Warrant Officer as used by the United States military, as most other militaries include "warrant officers" in their senior enlisted ranks. An example of this would be the British and Commonwealth militaries Regimental Sergeant Major. I am also not using the archaic "warrant officer" used in the 17th- to 19th centuries, as these particular warrant officers' duties were turned over to commissioned officers or were made obsolete. Examples of these Warrant Officers would be Sailing Masters (responsible for navigation), Pursers, Surgeons and Chaplains for the Navy; the Army and Marine equivalent would be Gunners, Master Gunners, Quartermaster Clerks and Paymasters.

Why add Warrant officers at all, when Commissioned officers can handle these jobs just as well? For starters, some jobs require the authority of a junior officer, but the experience that one generally finds only with senior officers. A naval example of this might be in the shipboard storage of supplies, spares and equipment. Do you really want a wet-nosed ensign on their first cruise doing this lowly, but important job? So give it to a Warrant Officer, call him "SuperCargo", and just sit back. An Army example would be the motorpool. Again, why put a snot-nosed 2nd Lieutenant in charge when a crusty CW-4 will do?

Active Measures

Adding Warrant Officers to Character Generation

Warrant Officer Ranks		
Rank	**Title**	**Basic Rank**
WO1	Warrant Officer 1	
WO2	Warrant Officer 2	
CW3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	1
CW4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	1
MW5	Master Warrant Officer 5	2

Warrant Officer Candidate School (All Services)

Open to rank E4 to E9. If rolled by E3-, reroll. If WOCS is rolled again, a waiver is granted. Advance to WO1 (E7 to WO2, E8 and E9 to CW3) in current or cross-trained branch. WO1 and 2 roll once on staff and branch skills tables. CW3 roll once on the staff officer table only. Warrant Officers roll for command duty as per assigned branch, but receive command on an unmodified roll of 12 only.

Non-Combat Awards

As in the real world, I feel characters should have the ability to receive awards for outstanding work in non-combat assignments. These are not awards for valor, but awards for achievement. Just use the same modifiers and die rolls as combat medals. One possible set of equivalences is shown above to the right.

Award Equivalences	
Combat Award	**Suggested Non-Combat Equivalent Award**
Starburst for Extreme Heroism	Distinguished Service Award
Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry	Meritorious Service Award
Meritorious Conduct Under Fire	*Service** Achievement Award
* Replace *Service* with name of service, e.g., Army, Marine, Navy, COACC, etc.	

I could go on and on, but I feel this is enough. If you want, go ahead and research military awards and make up a table of your own.

Warrant Officer Life Tables

Characters with Warrant Officer rank roll on their service Warrant Officer Life Table, below, instead of on NCO Life or Officer Life Tables. ✪

Warrant Officer Life			
1D	**Army, Marines**	**Navy**	**COACC**
1	Heavy Weapons	Vacc Suit	Aircraft
2	Technical	Gun Combat	Admin
3	Mechanical	Gunnery	Mechanical
4	Leadership	Mechanical	Technical
5	Fwd Observer	Medical	Leadership
6	Instruction	Zero-G Environ	Gunnery
7	Jack-of-all-Trades	Instruction	Instruction
8	Physical	Engineering	Engineering
DMs (all services): +1 if WO2+, +2 if WO4+			

Kurishdam

Old Reliables

by Sam Swindell

In a recent naval recruiting poster, KiKi Dish, the most popular Shugashi Metal scene singer in the Spinward Marches, and recently well-received Holovid actress, wears a small jade amulet in the shape of a *Rampart* fighter on an iridium chain, an enticing smile and little else. There is no text. There does not need to be, for the totem KiKi wears is far more famous than she, and the fact that

her eyes match the color of the little ship just highlights this powerful confluence of images that makes this wordless poster one of the most effective recruiting tool since the Imperial Navy has been counting. The poster's real star is the playing piece for a game about two and a half centuries old, the limelight of which KiKi has been lucky to share.

Indeed, what game? In 857 the commander of the 1158th Imperial Heavy Fighter Squadron ("Old

Reliables"), then-Lieutenant Commander Baron Alfred Thayer Mahan Ling, worked with the research and development group of Ling-Standard Products to develop a space flight simulator in a small gaming console that was to make a colorful, wide mark on the habits of many star farers across centuries. LCDR Ling's idea became the Old Reliables game, quickly being dubbed the "ORbox." The ORbox is a portable holographic console, played by players who each use their own playing piece, or ORbit. He had a number of prototypes first made for the 1158th, and required the 1158th's flight crews to always have one with them whenever on pass, at the officers' club, or off the base at a social engagement. This requirement quickly passed from being treated as a noble's bizarre eccentricity to a mark of pride for the Old Reliables.

However, the ORbox's initial profusion beyond the ranks of the Old Reliables themselves was much slower. Favored watering holes of the Old Reliables were lent a few ORboxes, and they gradually spread to other naval pilots in the first couple of generations. By 950, naval veterans in civilian service and a handful of scouts carried ORbits. This glacial spread continued, though, into pilot ranks generally, spurred by Ling's making ORboxes standard equipment in starship lounges, and a trend for veteran scouts to tout themselves as the "real pilots" during and after the Fourth Frontier War; the genesis of this latter trend is obscure. By 1025, there was not a pilot bar in any starport without an ORbox, and by 1050, there was not an A starport without an automated kiosk for turning out ORbits. Still, most of these were bought by pilots and gunners; it was a rare crewmember who did not have a few that followed his career through the ships they represented. Over the next half century, though the mystique of these electronic jousts, carried out by those whose skills were the stuff of glory and survival, steadily rose. While games and other entertainments bloomed and faded like wildflowers, the ORbox steadily gained market share over the next couple of generations, with those in the Imperium who understood the pull of the stars but could not follow or return to them. The spread

was probably hastened by Chandlers' decision to start carrying them in 1075, spreading to all their stores by 1084, though some claim that the sea change came with the central role that ORduels played for the star of the blockbuster 1074 holovid *Scout Quinn*, the tragic hero played by Umu Meagher. That Umu was killed in an apparent pirate raid on his yacht a few months after the movie's release magnified his mystique, and even spurred a somewhat tasteless marketing campaign by Chandlers of Regina to "buy one for Umu," which led to an acrimonious outcry by Meagher's heirs and an ugly lawsuit; it also spurred record-breaking sales for ORboxes and ORbits throughout most of 1075 and 1076. The ORduel was by then a household name throughout the Marches, and the popularity of *Scout Quinn* continued to spread throughout the Imperium, by then bound up in the story of Meagher's death, the Chandlers ORbox lawsuit, and the romance of the ORduel.

The ORbox is a squat, 20 cm square console with a trapezoidal profile, designed to be placed or mounted in the middle of a table. It scans player hand movements that mimic actual manipulation of ships' controls , and projects images of each crew display onto players' corneas, while a stylized version of the battle is projected holographically in the air about 1 m above the ORbox for the benefit of spectators. It allows up to 4 players to play simultaneously, each placing a specially-manufactured ship model, or ORbit, into a small cradle on their face of the ORbox. The ORbit's manufacture records, in addition to the ship characteristics, the actual crew station setup of the ship in question. Crew stations can therefore be played as either pilot or gunner stations, and more than one crewmember can play the same ORbit. Tradition is that the pilot would use his own ORbit, but gunners typically carry one as well. Up to 4 ORboxes at a time can network to accommodate up to 16 players, but the spirit of head to head competition usually keep contests small. This character of direct competition was probably the impetus leading such contests to be called "ORduels." Usually, they are played on a "gentleman's bet," or for a drink. Less often, in commercial or mercenary circles, they

may be played for money. The greatest challenge is a "bit-for-bit" challenge to an ORduel, with each pilot playing for the other's ORbit. It would be an eccentric pilot indeed who headed to his favorite watering hole with an ORbox, because the ORbox has become a given in any such establishment; it would, however, be quite normal for a pilot to sally forth with one or several of his ORbits. The bar usually has some to lend, of course, to cater to the neophyte who the serious types haven't scared off.

The ORbox can and often does pit unequal ships against each other, but it scores the ORduels on the skill exhibited, rather than ultimate outcome of the contest. Thus a Patrol Cruiser facing a Sulieman would be expected to win the battle, but the Scout can prevail in the ORduel by taking longer to perish or by doing more damage than the odds would have predicted. Like many cultural practices, the ORduel can appear odd to the uninitiated: the participants of any ORduel resemble twitching idiots locked in some bizarre hallucinatory trance, but the bystanders typically focus on the holographic ballet occurring midair. Fighter pilots, free traders, big ship gunners, and scouts all come together in the dark back rooms of places with names like Decayed ORbit or Rampart's Bane, filled with those who understand. There is not a concourse in any major starport without at least one automated kiosk, that can carve and program ORbits, in any of several metals or semiprecious stones. The ORbox has become wildly popular with hobbyists, fans, and "wannabes." Many family members or sweethearts of spacefarers have souvenirs sent to them of the ships their loved ones have been posted to. The College of Social Sciences in Rhylanor University estimated that only 34% of ORbits are ever actually played; the rest are gifts and mementos. Of those 34% that are played, 95% of those are played by those with no rating. By 1100, the ORbit had become one of those rarities, a true, enduring cultural icon in the multicultural jumble which is interstellar society. ✪

Slice of Life: Holographic and Immersive Technology

by Mike Cross

This article was originally posted to the Terra/Sol Games blog at http://terrasolgames.com on December 24, 2011, and is reprinted in Freelance Traveller with the author's permission.

The ability to place someone in a whole new environment or artificial world has long been a staple of science fiction. From holo decks to the electronic frontiers of cyberspace, our settings have always striven to find new and different places for us to explore. The Twilight Sector in the 30th century is no different. Our setting explores both of the major branches of science fiction's human made artificial worlds, holographic and digital. This article describes the abilities of holographic technology to create such artificial worlds within the Twilight Sector setting.

Holographic technology has become big business in the 30th century. It is a training platform used by many organizations seeking to teach physical skills and despite the advantages of cyberspace it is still a popular if expensive entertainment platform. This technology should not be confused with computer-based Virtual Reality, the so called cyberspace. Holographic and Immersive Technology (H&IT) creates an overlay on the real world and the user actually interacts with this overlay on a physical level. On the other hand, cyberspace creates a Virtual Reality that exists solely within the mind of a user. For teaching physically-based skills, like combat, sports, or anything where muscle memory is a key in the learning process, it has been found that H&IT, whether an immersion suit or the far more effective Holo chip, is the most effective training platform to teach physical skills.

For the uninitiated, let's start by defining Holography as it is understood in the 30th century. At its core holography is a 3D recording of…pretty much anything that can be seen in the visible spectrum and then transferring that recording to a three dimensional light projector. The basic technology is light projection that provides a 360° view of an object. Improvements to Holography came by adding quantum computing tech-

nology to the equation which provided the processing power to take a static 3D image and impart realistic animation to it, animation that can adjust to a user's interaction with it. Practically, what that means is that a holographic vase, although only a light projection, feels like a physical object to a H&IT user. This technology created a paradigm shift in the training and entertainment industries that quickly spread.

The Immersion piece of H&IT is a second generation technology that is symbiotic with holography. IT takes holograms and makes your mind think they are real. It tricks the mind by providing the senses of touch, taste and smell. Sound is usually provided by a separate audio system that in itself is quite impressive and can augment the sense of touch via vibration. IT is accomplished via a number of technological devices, ranging from visors to whole-body suits, but perhaps the most ingenious and effective is the IT chip. Implanted in a wafer jack this chip actually sends out a series of tendrils into the various centers of the brain connected to the five senses and, with the proper authorizations, supplants reality in telling the body what it is sensing.

Applications for holographic technology alone are most commonly communications and entertainment. But where the technology has really changed things is when it is combined with IT and creates virtual environments that feel real to the user. Examples of how this technology has changed the human condition come from a number of fields. At its most basic level the ability to record and then share a human experience and then allow the user to interact with this recorded environment was and is profound.

For example, during the Mutant Wars the ability of journalists to record the scenes of carnage and mayhem around them down to the smells of the battlefield created the ability for the average man on the street to experience and understand what the war was actually like. But unless physical interaction with the environment of the recording is needed or desired, a Virtual Environment Overlay (VEO) part of computer based Virtual Reality is a far simpler and cheaper technology to accomplish the same task.

Other examples include sports and entertainment. The popularity of watching sports was even more enhanced when you could experience every event as if

you had sideline seats at mid-field. The cold wind whipping your face, the smell of the hotdog being eaten by the fan next to you, all of this made it possible to experience a sporting event that might have occurred many light years from you as if you were actually there. Then there was the rise of Immersive cinema where a patron could feel like they were literally in the middle of the movie. Once again, these effects can also be accomplished by VEO far more inexpensively. However many aficionados of H&IT claim the experience in an H&IT recording is superior and more immersive than a VEO experience of the same recording.

As discussed above many of the uses of H&IT can be approximated through computer based Virtual Reality, especially with the use of VEO technology (which will be detailed in the forthcoming sourcebook 'Mutants and AIs'). This experience is usually not as 'real' as H&IT but monetarily VR is a much more friendly technology for the average person's pocketbook. Where VR can't compete with Immersive Technology is in training. With immersive technology it is possible to train people for any number of jobs, especially those with an integral physical element to them. VR cannot train muscle memory; H&IT can. The military was quick to embrace the technology which allowed them to train their personnel in any number of dangerous situations up to and including combat. The usefulness of the technology in training people for dangerous jobs can't be overstated as they can be put into realistic appearing situations without the threat of real injury. Other dangerous professions quickly followed the military's lead.

Top of the line computer equipment is necessary to run an H&IT simulation or presentation (entertainment such as a movie). At a minimum a Model/2 ships computer with a quantum core is necessary to run an immersive program.

IT Wafer Jack Chip, TL 15, Cost: 15,000 Cr. This is a chip designed to fit into a standard Wafer Jack or in the case of most new models they come as standard equipment. The chip allows the user to record and, with the aid of communications equipment, broadcast up to 10 hours of their personal experiences. Because of the broadcast ability of these chips they also provide a form of technological telepathy. By broadcasting a chip user can contact another chip user communicating directly via their chips, this noiseless

communication in essence becoming a weak form of technological telepathy. These broadcasts can of course be intercepted or jammed.

IT Suit, TL 14, Cost 10,000 Cr. (Deluxe Suit 12,000 Cr.) IT Suits come in a variety of styles and options but at their heart they cover the user's body head to toe with millions of sensor pads which react to the visual cues being relayed to the mind via IT goggles. This quite effectively mimics the sense of touch. The IT program and the suit and goggles need to be synced for the effect to work. Deluxe suits also come with a scent feature. The suit can release a variety of chemicals to mimic the sense of smell and to a lesser extent the sense of taste. Note that a VR suit must be used with VR goggles for the full immersive experience. Where the IT Suit is deficient is the sense of taste. Without an IT chip the technology has no good way to mimic this sense.

VR/IT Goggles. These goggles can be used in a variety of ways, from simply providing a richly immersive experience with entertainment or news programming to part of a VR Suit to provide an interactive experience in an entertainment program or as part of a training program. The goggles are available in a number of configurations: simple eye coverings similar to glasses, wrap around goggles, or contact or bio-replacement lenses.

H&IT Display/Training Area, TL 14 Cost 10,000 Cr. Per 3 Meter Sq. In order to work properly, H&IT needs a place to call home, an area where a

IT Glasses or Goggles	TL13	2,000 Cr.
IT Contact Lenses	TL14	2,500 Cr.
IT Bio-replacement Lenses	TL15	5,000 Cr.

training exercise or entertainment program can be presented to users, a holo deck type of environment. These facilities can be immensely expensive. The area is specially constructed with holographic and sonic projectors embedded in the floors, walls, and ceiling. Some also contain chemical projectors to mimic smell and to a lesser degree taste. The size can vary from just a 3 meter square to huge areas hundreds of meters on a side. One of the few limitations of this type of device is in replicating open vistas like plains and the like but clever programming can overcome this problem in

most instances.

H&IT can be used in conjunction with a real-world environment and often elements of a real-world environment are used in an H&IT display/training area. They save money and computer processing power.

How does this affect my game? Well, this one is a game changer but in a very good way. The fact that we have fully immersive technology lets a GM do a couple of really cool things. One-off adventures can be used in the middle of a campaign, presented as either training or entertainment. That especially dangerous adventure you had in mind that would probably kill everybody off but you're just dying to run can now be played without the worry of permanent player characters death and without you the GM having to hold back and potentially lesson the dramatic impact of the adventure.

The H&IT can be the introduction to an adventure as well. Players with IT chips would likely be able to find work recording unusual experiences. For example footage from the front lines of the latest bush war would be valuable to news organizations. An IT recording of Goliath Corp.'s latest invention would be valuable to its competitors (An IT recording is the perfect espionage tool.). Any number of IT recordings of dangerous or exotic locales could be sold to clients ranging from movie studios to travel agencies. So, as a plot device, the need for an IT recording of place X could be the beginning of any number of adventures.

The possibility of electronic telepathy can also be an interesting sidelight of the IT chip. Whether you use psionics in your campaign or not this can be an interesting foray into telepathy, and with the possibility of eavesdropping and jamming of the PCs' telepathic communications it does not unbalance even a game without psionics. It would be GM gold to see the bewilderment on the player's faces with the bad guys cavalry shows up at just the right time because they intercepted the players "telepathic" communication. "It was like they were reading our minds!"

Special Note: This article hasn't really touched on one of the most obvious uses of the technology: pornography or the sex trades. In the interest of propriety I will not go into detail beyond noting that this technology would have a profound effect in this area. "Sexting", for example, would take on a whole new meaning! ✪

Gateway to the Stars

reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

Gateway to the Stars. Pierce Askegren
Original Publication: 1998
Current Availability: Uncertain

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in November of 2009, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Author's Note: I think that one of the best ways to prepare yourself to run a game is to immerse yourself in its fiction, and thus get a real sense of its milieu. Thus, this series of reviews, which looks at some of the fiction that influenced Traveller, was influenced by Traveller, or is actually set in the Traveller universe.

T4, or *Marc Miller's Traveller*, was the first edition of the game to really treat its setting as a multimedia opportunity. Thus, it very quickly published a novel and filled its magazine with short fiction. The results…well, they were what you'd expect when you very quickly publish a novel just for the sake of doing so.

This fifteenth review covers *Gateway to the Stars*, by the late licensing author, Pierce Askegren.

About the Story

Gateway to the Stars is the story of one man—a man known as Navis Redling—as he flies his trading ship through some backwater of the Third Imperium. Except Navis Redling's not his real name, but rather one that he's bought. And, trading isn't really his goal; instead, he's trying to get out to a cache of priceless Droyne artifacts unnoticed.

And, the problems don't stop there. A member of the well-known Guy-Troy race—and the founder of the biggest megacorp in the whole Imperium, the Kaal Corp—has taken passage on Redling's ship for reasons of his own. Meanwhile, his engineer might not be what she seems as all.

If you think Redling's ship is going to make it to its destination without drunken K'kree, an assassin Aslan, political kidnappers, and sly pirates getting in his way…then you probably haven't read the book, because all of that indeed happens.

I should probably mention that *Gateway to the Stars* never finishes its main plot and in fact ends with a "to be continued", but if you were reading it for the *Traveller* content, you'll be just as happy to toss it to the side when you get there, for reasons that I'll describe.

Genre & Style

Gateway to the Stars falls into the genre of publishing that I call "licensed books". This typically means that a gun-for-hire is brought on board to write a book in a specific setting. I find that the results are more polished but less accurate than writing done by people truly familiar with the setting. Unfortunately, in *Gateway to the Stars* the result is a lot less accurate, but I'm going to save that for the next section.

I find it a bit ironic that a licensing writer was brought on to author *Gateway to the Stars* because he wrote a book that might as well be "RPG fiction", too—by which I mean a story that could have been a roleplaying adventure. The plot is entirely picaresque. We have our roguish hero going on a journey. There's a bit of continuing tension due to the mysteries surrounding certain peoples on the ship (as noted above), but almost all of the actual adventure is centered on the troubles that the crew of the *Gateway* gets into on each planet.

Much like a lot of RPG fiction, *Gateway to the Stars* has pretty flat characters too, usually characterized by one or two simple characteristics each: the captain is confident and skilled; the navigator is an inveterate gambler; and the gunner is stoic. I couldn't even tell you what the Guy-Troy and the engineer are like, simply what they do.

That's not to say that the writing of the book is all bad. Askegren does a good job of keeping things moving. His one extended action sequence, involving a fight against kidnappers, is quite engaging. Unlike a lot of rpg/journey adventures that I've read, this one remains interesting rather than bogging down.

Overall, I've given *Gateway to the Stars* a Style of "3", because it's engaging enough to rise above its deficiencies. However, I've only given it a Substance of "1", and that largely reflects its pathetically bad depiction of the *Traveller* universe.

Applicability to Mongoose Traveller

Gateway to the Stars is worse than useless for GMs of *Traveller*. Though its maintains the facade

of a story set in the Third Imperium, it gets the feel and the specifics so wrong that it's more likely to damage your understanding of the *Traveller* universe than improve it.

With that said, let me explain in more detail:

Pierce Askegren clearly has no idea what he's talking about when he tries to depict the setting for *Traveller*. Instead, he just makes it all up. In His *Traveller* Universe, the "Core Worlds" are a powerful political faction, while the "Core Worlds Ruling Council" controls the Imperium. Individual worlds are run by "Colonial Governors". That's right: no Barons, no Emperor, no Moot, and no loosely connected polity of worlds where the Imperium is largely a government between the stars.

I could continue to list many more errors, like the fact that not a world that he mentions actually seems to exist in the Imperium; not that I really knew where to look, mind you, because both his precise setting and his time period are entirely vague. (I would have guessed a time period of Milieu 0 given this was a T4 book, but instead it's clear that Askegren's Imperium is entirely mature.)

Rather than listing piles of specifics, I'll instead offer up the three biggest groaners from the book:

1.) He thinks that the Droyne are a long-dead race of sophonts and that people eagerly race around the Imperium looking for their artifacts—which seem quite common as we more than once hear about ship holds full of them.

2.) He treats the Guy-Troy like they're a major race that everyone in the Imperium would recognize on sight. In truth, they have to be pretty darned minor because the T4 book Aliens Archive is—as far as I know—the only source that discusses them.

3.) Based on the point-of-view of one character (who might be crazy or something, though the book doesn't suggest it), the Third Imperium is an entirely racist empire of human supremacists who not only think they could kick the butt of every other sophont in the galaxy, but they even have a secret police organization especially tasked with keeping all of those other races down.

I find it pretty ironic that *Gateway to the Stars* was called "the first Traveller novel". Not just because it wasn't "the first"—and if you've been reading this series of articles, you've seen the predecessors, at least nine of which deserve the title more than this book—but also because it misses the mark on the setting so badly that it's hard to call it *Traveller*. Out of that whole marketing phrase, the one word that's not a lie is "novel". By which I mean a book-length piece of fiction, because *Gateway to the Stars* isn't particularly new and innovative.

I can't really excuse such shoddy work on the part of a professional licensed writer, but even worse is that the folks at Imperium Games either didn't bother editing this book, were too ignorant to recognize the constant errors, or saw them and didn't care. But inconsistent editing and production were really the biggest hallmarks of T4's brief time in the sun.

In case you missed it: don't buy this book, *Traveller* GMs.

Conclusion

Seriously, don't buy this book. You'll just corrupt your understanding of the *Traveller* universe. Though I've found other *Traveller* books harder to read and/or enjoy, this was nonetheless the worst novel I've read for this series. ✪

We're continuing to have problems with connectivity at the intended server site, but we think we have almost everything we need on the software side to get the Forums back up and running. We hope to have something set up for limited testing soon, and are seeking volunteers for testing and discussion of various features. Interested people should contact us at *tech@freelancetraveller.com*. We apologize for the continued delay in restoring this service.

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 13

With the med bay empty, Doc Billings was busy doing what he did best, sitting in his heavy grav chair, reclining with his feet up on the corner of his desk. Comfortable, the doctor had dropped off, and was dreaming he was in Afflak's back room again, back on Hargrave, betting on the Tri-V telecast of the dog races, as he always did, but this time, instead of losing as he always did, he was winning, and winning big. Even his bookie, the fierce old crone The Babba Yagga, was, in an uncharacteristic mood, buying him shots of Old Newshound.. Then the crone put a hand on his shoulder and said "Doc, I think my nose is broken."

Then a second time, "Doc, I think my nose is broken."

By the third time, Billings had woken to find himself facing a bloodied Milo Hertzog.

"Broken?" the elderly Doctor asked, getting to his feet and examining Milo's nose.

"I can fix this in a jiffy, Mr. Hertzog." the Doctor told him, adding "Now this may hurt a bit." as he grabbing the First Officer's nose in both hands, and none-too-gently wrenched it back into place. "Now go sit down and I'll get out the bone knitter. Within an hour Hertzog's nose was once again restored to its aquiline splendor.

Brodie turned a chair round and sat, arms crossed across the chair back, and resting his chin on the back of his left hand.

"So who all's playing?" the ape asked, looking at the others.

"It was me and Tam…" The Professor said.

Hearing her name, Tam turned, and seeing Brodie sitting there, she nodded to him, smiling.

"…against Kalifra and Davey." The Professor continued.

Hearing his name, Dave turned and raised his own bottle of Dahli Lama to Brodie.

"But me," The Professor said, "I'd really rather watch than play, so I dropped out to nurse this

Whitehall. And Davey, there…" The Professor pointed at the gunner.

Davey simply shrugged.

Kalifra, serious about her game, was up on the ball of one foot, her other knee resting on the edge of the table as she bent low over the table lining up her shot; her long, blond braid within a few centimeters of the deck.

As Atomic Era greats Lynyrd Skynyrd played *Simple Man on the Micro*, Kalifra took her shot; the sound of clacking balls on slate indicative of success, as two stripes; the 13 and 9, were sunk.

Watching the cue ball rebound in such a way as to leave her no shot, Tam scratched her head.

"Two at once, Kali. You're a regular Jack the Giant Killer!" the little brunette said, taking her cue and hovering over the table before finally taking a shot at the three ball… sinking it in a beautiful shot—along with the cue ball.

Tam placed her stick on the table. Kalifra was about to object, having not sunk the eight ball yet.

"You win, hon'." Tam laughed, hugging the tall blond, who tossed her stick onto the table and hugged back. With a quick move Kalifra pinned Tam's arms behind her and bent in for a kiss.

"Oh no you don't!" the thick brunette replied, twisting herself free and laughing.

Sipping down the last of his soda, Dave went to the fridge and got himself another. Then, hitting the Beer Locker, grabbed an armful of Whitehalls for the table; handing one out to each of the women, The Professor, and Brodie.

Opening the bottle on the table edge, Brodie took a chug, then looked closely at the label; the giant structure that was the citadel at Whitehall was in ruins; aflame, with smoke billowing up into a starry night sky. It made him think of some old tapestry from the Middle Ages.

"Say Davey," Brodie began, "Weren't you at the Siege of Whitehall?"

"Not me, Brodie. That'd be little brother Thom. Me, I was a mechanic back on Dahl durin' the war."

"A mechanic, huh? Well that sounds like the right gig to have during a war, to me." Brodie replied.

"A mechanic?" Kalifra said, incredulously. "With your gunnery training I'd have thought you were in The Service." she said, of course inferring the Imperial Navy.

"No ma'm," Dave replied. "'Came aboard *Waffles* as a Drive Hand—a glorified mechanic, really. Must'a been into my second week aboard. We were off Rialto, just heading in-system when pirates attacked. The starboard turret took a bad hit." he said, face screwed up in horror for a moment as he remembered. "Anyways," he continued, "Helped man the turret. Hence, my position as Gunner."

"Oh hell, and here I was thinking of giving you some because you were a Navy man." Kalifra laughed.

"Sure Kalifra, sure." Dave replied, taking a bite from one of the cookies Brodie had set on the table earlier.

The *Chicken and Waffles* emerged from whirling Transitional Space back to a volume of Normal Space. This time, luckily, just Outsystem of brilliant Wolf 424's gravity well at twenty three degrees below the system plane.

The deep, insistent, double-tone of the N-Space klaxon sounded, followed by the automated voice informing all aboard of total time spent in Transition—for administrative purposes, of course, as well as alerting passengers to the possibility that any time-sensitive plans may have been disrupted. Of course, with the previous misjump, any plans the passengers may have had would've already been irrevocably ruined by now, regardless of the length of this Crossing..

"Return to Normal Space." the ship's computer decreed, "Elapsed time eight thousand, eight hundred ninety six minutes."

"Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time 6 days, 4 hours, 16 minutes."

The *Waffles*' Crossing had taken less than a standard week. All in all, an excellent bit of Navigation, all things considered.

Sitting just beyond the red dwarf's gravity well, the Waffles was only 0.7 AUs from the tiny star. Its single planet, a huge gas giant called Ymir, orbited at some thirty million kilometers. Circling the massive gas giant was a single small world, Eitr, or Nordic Prime; a trip of a bit more than twenty one hours at full thrust.

This time around, Nordic System Control contacted the *Waffles* of its own volition.

"Inbound ship entered Nordic System at 1641 Hours Local Time. Welcome, strangers. Name and registration for our records, please."

"The *Chicken and Waffles*" Captain Fyyg replied, "Registration alpha two zero zero seven two zero one two seven niner seven."

"Thank you Captain." System replied. "We have fuel and entertainment facilities available. Simply follow the homing beacon. Cleared for landing at Bay zero one."

"We've been in space quite a while, System Control. It will be good to touch terra firma again!"

"At current acceleration," System told them, "we show your ship arriving in 21.4 hours; approximately 013.44 Hours Local Time. Welcome to Nordic Prime, *Waffles*"

"Roger that, System." replied Fygg. "*Waffles* out."

Talking it over with his bridge Officers, Fyyg came to the conclusion that their shabby treatment on initial entrance in the Nordic System must have simply been due to a single individual, rather than some problem endemic of Nordic's System Control. Still, the Captain decided, the individual with whom he'd originally dealt, whoever he was, was going to get a pop in the nose if he could be found.

With the *Waffles* about to make planetfall, one of the black gang, pale Engineer's 3rd Mate, Yohan 'The Butcher' Gleiser, as was his custom, pulled an entire side of blue ox he'd bought on Mica from storage in the freezer, and then, stretching it out over the Number 4 Heat Exchange back in Engineering, set it to slowly cook. This inevitably filled the engineering and crew spaces of the *Waffles* with the smell of delicious BBQ; the aroma eventually, and quite insidiously, permeating the entire ship. On such a day, the Captain, who'd hailed from green Holt, would find some pretense to descend among the black gang and try a piece, being no stranger to venison. Captain Nordel Fyyg had never

(Continued from page 17)

found anything wrong with any of the meat Yohan had ever cooked, so when the Captain took the Engineering 3rd Mate aside, 'The Butcher' wondered.

"Fabulous as always, Yohan. Really superb! It remind me of roaming the woods back on Holt as a boy with my muzzle-loader!"

At this point the Captain leaned in close, an arm around the little Engineer's shoulder.

"I was thinking perhaps you wouldn't mind if we shared our fare with the passengers for our last meal together, Yohan? Sitting around a dingy Starport goes easier when you've a full belly, yes? And Nordic Prime, I believe, is going to be one of the dingiest."

Later in the Crew Lounge, beers were consumed and meat gnawed from numerous bones, while on the next deck up, in the Passenger Lounge, a variety of beers and wines, and other potent potables were consumed and meat gnawed from numerous bones. Music was played on the Micros, and a good time was had by all.   ✪

The T4 JTAS Short Fiction

reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society. Various.
Original Publication: 1996-1997
Current Availability: eBook (via FarFuture Enterprises T4 CD-ROM)

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in November of 2009, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Author's Note: I think that one of the best ways to prepare yourself to run a game is to immerse yourself in its fiction, and thus get a real sense of its milieu. Thus, this series of reviews, which looks at some of the fiction that influenced Traveller, was influenced by Traveller, or is actually set in the Traveller universe..

Besides one novel, Imperium Games also published a handful of *Traveller* short stories during their short period of existence.

This sixteenth review covers the short stories that appeared while Imperium Games was briefly in the *Traveller* publishing business.

An Overview of the Magazine

When Imperium Games started putting out *Marc Miller's Traveller* (T4), they also revived the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* (JTAS), the long-time house organ for the gaming system. Given the problems of Imperium it shouldn't be a surprise that the revived JTAS only lasted two issues, and that it was as uneven as the rest of that product line.

Despite that, it's of interest to this review series because of some of its contents. Under Imperium, *Traveller* was being treated as a multimedia property, and thus each of those two issues also included two short pieces of fiction—all four of which are reviewed here.

The Stories

"Warden of the Everlasting Flame", Peter Schweighofer (JTAS #25). This is the story of Cwmir, the only survivor of a disaster which destroyed his world. When newcomers from Imperium corporations descend upon his planet, he tries to warn them of the terrible weapons which still dwell below.

It's a well-told story, and one that I think is well suited for the exploratory ideas of Milieu 0. My only real complaint is that there's not enough detail to see where and when the story actually does happen within the Imperium.

There's not a huge amount of heft to this piece, as it's just 3 pages long, but as a short story with a single thrust, it works well. I give it a "4" for Style and a "3" for Substance.

Applicability. This story offers up ideas about the dangers that explorers might face in either a Milieu 0 setting or a New Era setting, when planets are being newly discovered. Beyond that, it can remind a GM of the power and place that megacorps hold in *Traveller*'s universe. Overall, the main applicability of "Warden of the Everlasting Flame" is as a thematic piece which can help get you in a *Traveller* mood.

"Free Trader Beowulf", Don Perrin (JTAS #25). Perrin uses the iconic distress call of *Traveller* (*"This is Free Trader* Beowulf*, calling anyone ... Mayday, Mayday ..."*) as the basis of his story, where a Patrol Cruiser comes to *Beowulf*'s aid. Unfortunately, the result is a bit awkward and doesn't have a lot of depth.

I was quite surprised how stilted Perrin's language is at times, given that he'd already written a handful of novels by the time of this story's publication. The problem is at its worst in his dialogue, such as the following:

"The registry has been tampered with. Unbeknownst to whomever edited the registry, there are certain check sums built into the coding. They did not check out."

The story itself is OK, as the *Intrepid* tries to figure out what's going on with this distress signal. However, there wasn't much meat to it, and thus I doubt I'll look it up again. As a result, I've only given this piece a "2" for Style and a "3" for Substance.

Applicability. "Free Trader Beowulf" is the first story I've read that actually is set in the Milieu 0 setting. It even hints some at the politics of the time period, meaning that the setting is more than skin deep—though there's only so much you can put into a four-page short story. Beyond that, the whole investigation of the *Beowulf* could give a GM ideas for running a similar scenario of their own—when players pick up a distress signal in space (though I think that the plot as presented here descends into anti-climax by the end of the story).

"Hidden Cost", Michael Siverling (JTAS #26). This story is another short offering in a definitive Milieu 0 setting—as is evidenced by the fact that it all takes place in the Sylea Highport. A merchant captain who regularly walks a fine line with regard to the law offers to take a passenger off planet for a large fee, with no questions asked. When he gets shot, he starts to realize that he's taken on a contract with a higher cost than anticipated.

This story is well told, other than a couple of jarring metaphors that made me cringe ("a 10,000

joule smile that should have melted hullmetal"). I also liked that it highlighted several aspects of the *Traveller* universe, including the nobility and megacorps. Unfortunately, much like the previous stories, it's so short that it can't offer much meat. I've given it a high "3" for Style and a high "3" for Substance; it's slightly above average in both aspects.

Applicability. This story could be useful in much the same way as "Free Trader Beowulf". It highlights some of the schisms in the Imperial power structures and also offers a story that could be directly adapted as an adventure. It also includes T4 stats for the main characters.

"Herlitian Dreams", J. Robert King (JTAS #26). On the gas giant Herlitor, a team of doctors tries to find out what has gone wrong among the genetically engineered laborers who are working for the Imperium mining liquid hydrogen.

This is a well-written story that has a very good scientific basis—probably better than any other *Traveller* story that I've read to date. It offers up lots of interesting details of what it might really mean to work—really work—in a gas giant. Unfortunately, it also gets most of the *Traveller* background wrong, as I'll discuss in a minute. Overall it earns a Style of "4"; its Substance would also be "4" if it were a generic science-fiction story, but its mangling of the *Traveller* background instead pushes that down to a "2".

Applicability. As with *Gateway to the Stars'* author, Pierce Askegren, J. Robert King seems to largely be a gun for hire—though his writing has almost exclusively been for TSR and Wizards of the Coast. I suspect that Imperium Games brought him in to offer up some better quality writing, and the results were unfortunately just as bad as Askegren's, because of the same lack of understanding of the *Traveller* universe. OK, not just as bad, because King seems to be a very capable writer, whereas Askegren was more mediocre.

When you begin your story with the premise that the Imperium needs to undertake extensive genetic engineering programs as well as the production of "plasma ships" (which are filled with a

breathable viscous liquid), you know things aren't going well. That'd be because ships in the *Traveller* Universe having fuel scoops that let them skim hydrogen off a gas giant. Beyond that the scientific advances felt pretty un-*Traveller* (generally being too modern). Finally, I was really thrown when they started bring up all sorts of stuff regarding Earth, given that the T4 Milieu 0 was centered several sectors away.

Maybe this story was all intended to be set in some other Milieu. Somewhere in the distant, distant past of the Imperium it might have made sense, and I would have quite liked it if it were positioned as a historical piece. Lacking that, as with *Gateway to the Stars*, I have to say don't read this story, lest you give yourself incorrect ideas about the science of the *Traveller* universe.

Summary Thoughts on the Stories

The short fiction in the Imperium Games version of JTAS was certainly better than the short fiction of *Traveller Chronicle*, but perhaps that's not saying much. It was interesting to see a bit of Milieu 0, but only two of the four stories were defini-

tively set in that time period—and unfortunately it was the best two that were more ungrounded. The end result of all of this was stories that, on average, were technically good but very forgettable.

I've given The Imperium JTAS fiction Style and Substance ratings of "3" out of "5" as a result.

Availability Notes

Though I've had JTAS #25 for years, I picked JTAS #26 up a few months ago for a few bucks on eBay. I expect you can get both of them for that price with some patience.

However, I don't think they're particularly worthwhile for the fiction and none of the rest of the material particularly stands out to me—though there are some long adventures in both issues.

Editor's Note: Both issues of the Imperium Games JTAS are available from FarFuture Enterprises as part of the T4 CD-ROM.

Conclusion

The revived *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* published better fiction than its predecessor, *Traveller Chronicle*, but the results aren't either memorable or important enough to spend much time searching for. ✪

Noble Actions

by Jeffrey Schwarz

Editor's note: As originally provided to Freelance Traveller, these adventures were only the outlines, and unnamed, with no complications. The names and complications were added by the editor.

Holding Out

The man in the corner of the quiet starport lobby on a backworld idly plays with a well worn deck of cards at a table near the street-side exit of the room. His clothes are very well worn, but are in the style that was fashionable at Court a decade ago—and it's obvious they're being worn becase this gent is down on his luck, but trying to make a good impression.

"Excuse me sir—bit of a wager? This fine gold watch, against low passage off this rock? Easy win

for you, sir—just tell me which card is the red queen…"

Arronax Winsword is a minor noble who is in the process of losing his fief. As soon as the process servers catch up to him, and the paperwork arrives, his life will go 'way downhill. Unskilled in the normal things of the world, he's fallen back on his gambling skill and 'three card monte' to move him out of where the Heralds are looking.

If he can survive the year and a day that the Warrant for his removal is good for without them catching him, he can go home… until then, he can't draw on any funds from home or let anyone know where he is.

For the next 117 days, he does not care which ship he's on, or where it's going... as long as it's not back to any place he's been.

If offered working passage, he will be willing to accept, but will indicate that he has no relevant skills.

Possible complications

1. Another passenger on the PCs' ship is one of the process servers chasing Winsword. As long as Winsword stays out of sight of the server, nothing will happen. If Winsword must confront the server, a character that succeeds on a **difficult (INT, Legal or Admin)** task will recall that service of process aboard a ship under way must be approved by and done in the presence of the Captain. Winsword will know this; the server will on a **routine (INT, Legal or Admin)** task.

2. The warrant is good for a year and a day—but the terms of Winsword's holding say that if he is not in residence for a year and a day, the fief will be declared vacant. To be in residence, he must be present on the fief or a subsidiary entailment for one day, commencing with the notification of the Seneschal of his presence, and establish a calendar with at least one piece of business pertaining to the fief.

3. Winsword can "kill" the warrant by abdicating in favor of an heir, as the warrant is against him, personally, and not against his title or any actions taken in his noble capacity. He can even name a heir while the warrant is outstanding. He's not willing to do this, however, unless he can be assured—by more than the prospective heir's word—that he will be taken care of for life after he abdicates.

4. Winsword is actually the villain of the piece. He's a usurper, but his claim was recognized through some shenanigans at a higher level, that have now been found out. If he can remain at liberty for the year and a day, he'll still lose the fief—but he won't lose his head.

5. The PCs can hire Winsword as a trainee for any position whose holder also holds Instruction-2 or better. However, such trainee positions must be for a minimum of one year (not working passage), and *will* be audited at each planetfall. Winsword will reluctantly consider it, but would prefer not to be absent any longer than necessary to outlast the warrant.

6. Winsword is a fraud. Neither his title nor the warrant exist, and the main reason he's grifting his way from world to world is simply because he wants to. However, some of his cons *really annoyed* certain underworld figures, and they've sent out "agents" to "invite" Winsword to have "a talk".

Palace Coup

The party has completed an adventure in which the payoff was a deed to a large amount of land/wealth/ship... however, it must be signed off by Count Lassar for the transfer to be legal.

After a long journey to his fief, they discover the Count is in residence… and is, in fact, the Last Count of Fallen Lassar. If he dies without heir, the title and fief, and all holdings revert to the Imperium, which includes the item the players have deed to. The count is well into old age, and the medication used to deal with nerve injuries from years ago interferes with anagathics.

Recently, the Count had a stroke and fell into a coma. Thinking fast, the Count's personal physician stuck him in a low berth… and then had a discussion with the Seneschal.

In effect, the staff have staged a 'palace coup', with the Senseschal handling all affairs in the Count's name, and no one telling the outside world the Count is on ice, since doing so would mean the entire staff losing their cushy jobs, and numerous starship crews finding their ship's ownership in question, etc.

In come the players, asking for just a minute of the Count's time to sign this paper…

Possible Complications

1. An Imperial megacorporation has a productive facility that is a part of the Lassar fief. If the fief reverted to Imperial holding, their tax rates would go way down.

2. If the world reverted to Imperial holding, an Imperial megacorporation would lose their right to operate on the world—and worse, a competitor would have a very strong claim to the leasehold complete with improvements.

3. Many years ago, Count Lassar fathered a son on a mistress (he never married), and refused to acknowledge the boy, and exiled him. Although irregular, the Seneschal, in his capacity as *de facto* Regent, could provisionally acknowledge him, and designate him as the heir presumptive. This would preserve County Lassar, subject to an examination for fitness. The problem is that nobody in the County Lassar administration knows where the son can be found. All they have is copies of the passage tickets that mother and son used to leave the world. The Seneschal offers a *quid pro quo*: if the PCs find the son and bring him back, the Seneschal will, as Regent, sign off on the deed and cover the PCs reasonable expenses in the search besides. If the PCs refuse the offer, they'll have to hope that Count Lassar recovers….

4. While transfers of the nature outlined in the PCs' deed do in fact require Count Lassar's signature, the PCs' deed is flawed, and could not be executed, even with the Count's signature. The Seneschal helpfully points out the flaws, and tells the PCs how to get them corrected—but doing so is up to them, and will require that they go back to the person who gave them the deed. Of course, once the problem is corrected, there's still the issue that the Count is in a coma….

5. One of the PCs looks enough like the Count to be able to pass as him, except in the closest situations. The Seneschal takes this character aside, and explains the situation, and asks the PC if he'd be willing to stand in for the Count "temporarily" for a public appearance ("Petitioner's Day"). If the imposture can be pulled off, nobody loses. If the imposture fails, or if the PC refuses, it could be the beginning of the end for County Lassar.

6. While guests of the Count (really, of the Seneschal), one of the PCs overhears something suggestive of blackmail against one of the Seneschal's aides. The threat is that the blackmailer will "tell the Duke the truth about the Count" if his demands aren't met. How does the PC react?   ✸

Information Center: Request for Information

Here is a list of all of those publishers that we are aware of that are currently putting out material for Traveller (any version) or Traveller-compatible material not specifically for Traveller (this list is based on products that the editor owns, and notifications from "follow your favorites" from DriveThruRPG). If you know of others, or if any of those on this list are not in fact currently operating/publishing, please write and let us know. We'd also appreciate either lists or pointers to lists of all of the Traveller and Traveller-compatible material put out by any of these companies, or any companies that we may have omitted from the list. If you have contact information, we'd appreciate that as well.

List of Traveller/compatible Publishers

Avalon Game Company
Avenger Enterprises
D.B. Design Bureau
DSL Ironworks
FarFuture Enterprises
Forever People
Game Designers' Workshop(!)
Gypsy Knights Games
Jon Brazer Enterprises
K-Studio
Loren Wiseman Enterprises
Mongoose Publishing
Postmortem Studios
QuikLink Interactive
Samardan Press
Sceaptune Games
Scrying Eye Games
Spica Publishing
Steve Jackson Games
Terra/Sol Games
Toxic Bag Productions

These images were found in a folder on a disk removed from one of *Freelance Traveller*'s earlier working computers. The folder was marked "kardaen" and had no further information, and contained only these two images. If you can identify the artist, so that we can give proper credit (and encourage him/her to do more work!), please write to the editor.

Feedback

Please tell us …
- what you think of both magazine and website
- what you think of the articles we publish
- how we can make our magazine better
- how we can make our website better
- what kind of articles you do or don't want to see
- what you think of our look
- how we can make it better

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: *feedback@freelancetraveller.com*.
- feedback form at *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html*.
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Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: *http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13*
Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.

Traveller on the Internet   IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

Freelance Traveller sponsors channels for *Traveller* fans on the Undernet and Otherworlders IRC networks, and the two channels are "bridged" so that if you're visiting either, you can see what's going on in the other, and talk to people there. For more information about both channels, see our informational pages at *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC* and *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html*. Come talk "live" with other Traveller fans about anything at all, Traveller or not, and make both channels "jumping" places to hang out!

You can also run "play-by-IRC" game sessions in either channel; please stop in and ask one of the channel operators (FreeTrav or EMT_Hawk) to schedule it, so we can ensure that the 'bridge' and the 'bartender' are set into a nondisruptive mode.

Please watch the Traveller Mailing List, the Mongoose Traveller forum, and the Lone Star section of the Citizens of the Imperium forum for announcements of Topical Talks!

Multimedia Gallery   K.H. Wodenssen

About *The Burrowwolf*

At the time this issue of *Freelance Traveller* "went to press", no new chapter of *The Burrowwolf* was ready for inclusion due to other pressures. We are assured that the comic will resume as soon as possible.

Submission Guidelines

What is *Freelance Traveller* looking for?

We're looking for anything and everything to do with *Traveller* – reviews of products, house rules, alternate settings, NPC profiles, world write-ups, adventures, equipment, starships, fiction, "color" articles… If you see it in *Freelance Traveller*, or on our website, we're interested in it. Even if you don't see it in the magazine or on the website, we might be interested; write to ***editor@freelancetraveller.com*** and ask.

Some things that we want that you might not think of as "*Traveller*" would include reviews of non-*Traveller* products that easily lend themselves to being 'mined' for ideas for use in *Traveller*, or reviews of fiction (in any medium) that "feels" like *Traveller* in some way. In these cases, your article should focus on the *Traveller*-esque aspects of the item. There may be other things, as well; if you're not sure, write to ***editor@freelancetraveller.com*** and ask.

What about …

The rule of thumb is "If it's a *Traveller* ruleset, or a setting that has been published for use with a *Traveller* ruleset, go for it!". That includes the non-Official *Traveller* Universe settings that have been published for use with any version of the *Traveller* ruleset, including (but not limited to) *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Babylon 5*, *Reign of Diaspora*, *Twilight Sector*, the two *GURPS* variants on the Official *Traveller* Universe, Avenger Enterprises' *Far Avalon*, and the forthcoming *Traveller Prime Directive*.

…Hyperlite?

We've made the decision to support *Hyperlite* as though it were an alternate *Traveller* setting, much like *Twilight Sector* or *Reign of Diaspora*. The changes that Sceaptune Games has made to *Traveller* to get *Hyperlite* aren't really much more than the differences between Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller*, and Mongoose *Traveller*, and converting between any of those systems and *Hyperlite*, in either direction, should be 'trivial'.

… Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

If your article is about "crossing over" between these products and any of the "standard" or supported *Traveller* rulesets or settings, by all means, submit it! If it's support for those systems beyond *Traveller*, we'll accept and hold the submission, but will not print it unless/until we've had a reasonable level of expression of interest in such support from our readers.

How should I submit my article?

What needs to be in the submission?

At the very minimum, we need the submission itself, your name (for credit), and a valid email address to contact you at if we need to.

What format should I submit it in?

That depends on what you're submitting. Generally:

Text should be submitted in Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word 2003 (DOC) or 2007/2010 (DOCX), OpenOffice Writer (ODT), or plain text (TXT). Most word processors will support one of those; if yours seems not to, please write to us for assistance. Avoid PDF if at all possible; it is difficult to reformat PDFs for our magazine or website.

Graphics should be submitted in the format that's best for the type of graphic. Most of the time, that will be GIF, PNG, or JPG/JPEG. Submitting in higher resolutions is better; we have tools to resample a picture to make it smaller if we need to – but it's not possible to make a picture larger without it becoming pixellated.

If you're submitting a graphic that you'd like to see us use for a cover of an issue, please make sure that it will fit nicely on both US Letter and ISO A4 pages—we'll crop the picture to fit, to avoid distorting shapes, so please leave reasonable "margins"; don't run "critical" imagery right to the edge where it will look bad if we crop it. A good resolution is 100 dpi or more.

Plans (deck plans, building plans, maps, etc.) may be better submitted in a vector-based format such as CorelDRAW! format (CDR) or any format that can be imported into CorelDRAW! X4. Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG), Windows Metafile (WMF), Enhanced Metafile (EMF), Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), or Microsoft Visio (VSD) are some common vector formats that can be imported.

How do I get it to you?

Email it to us at our submissions address, ***submissions@freelancetraveller.com***. Your subject line should specify the type of article that it is, and what section you think it should be put in, e.g., "Combat Rules for Doing It My Way".