

FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



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Freelance Traveller is published monthly in PDF form by the editor. The current issue is available from the Freelance Traveller web site, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com>.

From the Editor



First, another apology and our thanks for putting up with yet another delayed issue. This time, a little bit of real life got in the way; the editor has been temporarily reassigned at his day job, and even though he has slightly *more* time in the evenings to work on the magazine, the demands of the new assignment have meant that he gets fewer—and shorter—breaks during the day when he can work on it.

Second: We’re committed—*Freelance Traveller* will be at TravellerCON/USA in Lancaster, PA, the weekend of October 15/16/17, 2010. We’re looking forward to meeting some of our fans there—and some of the vendors whose products *we’re* fans of. Come join the fun!

Third, more thanks—as usual, the community has been coming through with good material, well-written, for us to put into *Freelance Traveller*. Thirty-two pages this month makes this one of the largest issues—if not *the* largest—so far published.

Once again, that says a lot about the *Traveller* community.

Fourth... We’ve got so many projects “on the back burner” that we’ve decided that we need some technical help for what should be one of the smaller projects. To that end, we’re asking that anyone who can (and is willing to) help us design a database, and anyone that can (and is willing to) write PHP code to *query* a database, *please* contact us at tech@freelancetraveller.com.

Finally... Cover art. This has actually been the hardest thing to come by for us, and this month, we’ve resorted to one of NASA’s Astronomy Pictures of the Day (we chose one that we know has no rights issues based on NASA’s own policies). We know that our previous cover artists have set a high standard, but that’s no reason to concede the field to them—try your hand at doing some *Traveller* art; you may be surprised at just how well you can do if you make the effort without letting your self-comparison to others get in the way...

Mongoose Traveller: Compendium 1

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Mongoose Traveller: Compendium 1. Multiple authors
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
176pp, hardcover
US\$34.99/UK£20.00

Mongoose Publishing distills their house magazine, *Signs and Portents*, for *Traveller* players.

On the Shelf

The orange color used for the *Traveller* logo on this volume matches the orange used for the word “Traveller” on the spine of Mongoose’s setting and adventure volumes. Unlike those volumes, however, *Compendium 1* sports the otherwise-unadorned black cover that characterizes “generic” volumes. There is no tagline.

Initial Impressions

There is a wealth of material in this volume, ranging from adventures to ships to characters to new rules and careers, and more. It unfortunately doesn’t appear to be organized for easy lookup and identification; the table of contents just lists the individual articles in order.

On Closer Inspection

Some effort to actually organize the volume has in fact been made; the beginning of the volume is all adventures, the middle sports a bunch of rule expansions, and there is a section of careers near the end, but Mongoose didn’t carry through and actually rigidly enforce such a structure on the volume - some material appears to be “out of place” for its type, and there is no actual indication as to whether a particular title represents an adventure, a career, or a rule expansion.

Most of the material appears to be well written. This shouldn’t be surprising, as *Signs and Portents*, unlike *Freelance Traveller*, does pay for published material, and would thus necessarily make an effort to see that any articles printed meet the highest standard that they could reasonably manage — even though *Signs and Portents* itself is available free.

The image shows the cover of the book 'Mongoose Traveller: Compendium 1'. The cover is black with the word 'TRAVELLER' in a large, bold, orange font. Below it, the word 'Compendium 1' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. A horizontal orange line with an arrow pointing to the right is positioned below the word 'TRAVELLER'.

Because the volume is a mixture of article types, a one-sentence summary/description of each article would have been a good idea; the lack is no more than an inconvenience, however, and a minor one at that.

Conclusion

It’s possible to argue both ways about the value of this volume. On one hand, there’s the convenience of having a good amount of well-written *Traveller* material immediately to hand, in hardcopy, in one place. On the other hand, that same material and more is also available free from the publisher, in electronic form, via *Signs and Portents*, though scattered about the eighty-four (so far) issues to date. *Signs and Portents* also has non-*Traveller* material that you can mine for ideas; none of that would be available here.

In the final analysis, you’ll have to decide whether it’s worth the purchase price to you; for once, I can’t come to a conclusion on it.

Less Dangerous Game

Dombrowski's Lion (a.k.a. Kimpali Cheshire Cat)

by Scott Diamond

Homeworld: Kimapli (B667556-11 Agricultural)

Type: Carnivore/Pouncer

Weight- 279kg

Length- 2.1m (+1m tail)

Height- 1.2m (at shoulder)

Hits= 25/10 Armor= Jack (side) or Cloth (front)

Teeth +3 (2D6+6 damage)

Claws (2D6 damage)

Attacks – Always

Flees – If Surprised (but will tend to double back to “investigate” in a short time)

Speed = 2 (but only for about 50-75m, then it is reduced to 1)

Dombrowski's Lion was discovered, studied, and cataloged by the eminent xeno-biologist Professor Manuel Dombrowski, Chairman Emeritus of the Department of Xenozoological Studies of St. Ekaterina University. He came to the attention of the Grand Archives Project when his monograph on the lion's chameleon capabilities as a predatory strategy earned him fame in the scientific community.

Regrettably, that very quality of color shifting camouflage so remarkable in such a large mammalian predator also contributed to Prof. Dombrowski's tragic death after he returned to Kimpali to make further studies of the lion and its hunting strategies used to take its largest prey, the Paisley Bison. While no trace of the professor was ever found, the mystery of his disappearance was solved a year later when hunters found his pocket computer in the Humberk Lowlands – an area known to have a large population of both the lions and their prey.

The last recording shows that the professor was tracking what he believed to be a young bachelor

lion when it turned out that the lion had doubled back and tracked him. The last image shows the gaping “grin” of the lion and its baleful yellow eyes seemingly floating in the waving grasses before lunging at the professor. The recording finally ends 12 hours later when the storage unit is full.

Cheshire Cats are the apex predator of Kimpali, and the largest carnivore found on that world, including in the seas. The lions mate for life after reaching sexual maturity at 5 years (local) of age. As K-strategy reproducers, this long-term pair-bonding helps ensure the successful upbringing of the young, of which only one is born at a time. A female can realistically expect (given an average lifespan of 30 years including the average potential lifespan that would include bearing young and raising them) to have 3-4 cubs in her lifetime. Therefore, maximum protection and effort is spent in nurturing the cub to adulthood.

For the first two years of the cub's life it will primarily live in the den, coming out only when the mother is close by. These burrows are dug out by the female when she is in estrus and are later abandoned after the cub reaches 4.5 years of age.

WARNING TO TRAVELLERS

Because the den may still be occupied by any combination of female and/or cub anyone travelling in the Kimpali hinterlands and Grass Seas of the Humberk Lowlands are cautioned to NOT APPROACH any large holes in the ground, especially if they are near a rock tumble.

During the first 2 years of its life the cub has a short and much coarser coat than the parents, and its coloration tends towards dark brown with large randomly patterned gray blotches. Because the cub doesn't leave the den until after dark, and/or only in the company of its parents this coloration proves to be excellent protection, especially since it doesn't develop its chameleon coat until it is over 2 years of age. At that time the cub begins to gain mass and exchange its juvenile pelt for the long (up to 60cm

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Less Dangerous Game

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around the head, reaching back as a flowing “crest” from the eyebrow ridges to all along the spine), wispy adult coat that has been described as looking like smoke or a hazy mist billowing around the animal when viewed outside the tall grasses of its preferred habitat.

At 4.5 years of age the cub is driven away by both parents, but usually they leave on their own with only mild ritualistic aggression on the part of the parents to “encourage” the separation. This ritualistic aggression behavior causes the release of hormones in the female which begins the estrus cycle again so she can be ready to breed within 14 days.

The young lion will then search out an area of hunting ground that it can stake out as its own, and beginning calling for a mate in the dusk. Males do this by climbing to the top of the largest pile, or tumble of rocks it can find in order to be well above the grasses and roar as the sun goes down. This can go on for an hour or more and if a female is near, she will answer back. They will call back and forth until she arrives at the tumble (also called locally a “koppie”), and if she finds him to her liking they will mate. Otherwise she will not approach closely enough for him to see her before she leaves.

Outwardly the only sexual dimorphism between the lions is the slightly longer, but slimmer build of the female and her heavier, longer front claws. It is believed that this is to help her to dig and live inside the burrow she will raise her cub in. Since the male never enters the den this is probably accurate. The male also has considerably heavier forequarters and a denser bone structure, which aids in his role as the designated killer of the pair when hunting. The male also has far less flexibility in the neck and shoulders, causing him to have a limited ability to change direction quickly, but since it is caused by providing the anchoring for the heavy muscles that drive the shearing power of the lion’s jaws, and grip of its claws in holding down prey much larger than itself, the limit on mobility seems a fair trade. And as will be discussed later, this limitation of mobility is compen-

sated for by the hunting strategies of the pair-bonded lions.

The lion is a quadruped with a tail that is relatively thick and rounded at the tip. The hindquarters are narrower and lower than the forequarters, although overall the animal is heavily muscled and slopes from front to back. Obviously not a chaser-type predator, the lion has short claws on the rear paws and much longer, non-retractile ones on the front. In fact the animal appears to the layman as out of proportion, having legs that appear too short and thick for the overall size of the lion. Since the animal is obviously not of the chaser-type of predator it doesn’t need longer legs and “runner’s cleats” for claws, and this design works in the lion’s favor by helping it to drag down prey by use of weight and a low center of gravity instead of wrestling with it and risking injury.

The Cheshire Cat can run faster than a human for approximately 50-75m, but then usually gives up the chase. Its preferred hunting strategy is to use its camouflaged coat and partner to sneak up on its quarry in the tall grasses. The coat of the lion has the same base color as the yellow grasses of the Kimpali hinterlands and the “Grass Seas” of the Humberk Lowlands. In both of these regions the grass can reach as high as 2.5m or more and are very flexible; constantly moving in the winds and giving the appearance of a shifting yellow ocean. The lion’s coat contains cells which shift brown and yellow colors to match the shifting shadows in the grass around them and thereby produce the chameleon effect. Because the hair is very fine the lion spends a great deal of time grooming it to remove any grasses that are tangled within its layers. This fur’s blending ability is what gives the lion its local nickname of the Kimpali Cheshire Cat; usually the lion will not be noticed except for the large yellow eyes and its gaping mouth with long tusk-like teeth seemingly floating in the waving grass.

The lion’s ears are small, and laid back against the skull indicating that it does not rely on hearing so much as smell and sight for acquiring and tracking

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Less Dangerous Game

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prey. The enlarged sinus cavities with holes in the skull to allow the ballooning sinuses to enlarge as the lion inhales huge amounts of air to “taste” with the millions of specialized sensing buds lining the cavities show how important this sense is for the animal. Tests have shown that the lion can acquire, provided the wind is right, the scent of as little as a kilogram of animal dung up to 10km away – and be able to distinguish it from potential prey or another type of animal not worth bothering with (or even a threat from another lion). Prey as large as a Paisley Bison, or Unicorn Gazelle, can be tracked from up to 20km. The lion is a diurnal hunter so while it doesn't have particularly powerful sight, once it is within visual range of the prey it relies on its parallax sight to make the kill. And unlike most of its prey, the lion

sees in the full color range.

In the early mornings the lions can be seen standing tall atop “their” koppies sampling the wind with their mouths agape to search for prey, monitor what animals might have passed through their territory the night before, etc.. Then they dive down into the grass to go on the hunt.

The hunting strategy is simple: the male and female separate and slowly make their way towards a prey they have acquired the scent of and gradually widening the distance between them. When they parallel the prey, the female moves to an area approximately 25m or so ahead and upwind of the prey, while the male moves approximately 50m or more behind and down-wind. The prey will begin to scent the lion to the front and become nervous; ready to bolt to the rear, but not detect the male. The female

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Less Dangerous Game

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also puts out a powerful scent from her musk glands that increases this effect and masks the odor of the male by increasing her own to the prey's front.

The female advances slowly to the prey, crouching low as possible and moving very slowly. The male will be positioned by now. The female's chameleon ability will hide her in the waving grasses until she will be so close that she can see the prey – at which time she will roar loudly and make a feinting lunge at the prey. The prey will predictably bolt in the direction of the male. The male will then lunge at the prey as it approaches, or passes by, grabbing it with its powerful front claws and clamping down with the shearing canines around the prey's neck and head. The lion then literally just hangs its body weight onto the prey (the short legs help with this) which drags prey even twice the lion's size or more to the ground. If the prey's head and neck haven't been crushed or torn from the body by this attack, then it is almost always so damaged, and weighed down by 600kg of lion hanging from its neck, that the prey cannot fight back. The female then arrives and helps to finish it off.

The kill will usually be devoured at the spot; any scavengers will know to stay away until the lions are finished, but if a cub needs to be fed the female and male will carry the kill between them back to the den.

While fascinating to xenologists and hunters, Dombrowski's Lion is considered a pest by ranchers and gamekeepers. The lions have been known to dig under fences to get at domesticated Paisley Bison (who have had their "can-opener" horns removed and so are unable to defend themselves) and other farm animals wreaking tremendous damage. Since they hunt during the day they can be dealt with relatively easily by a rancher if he is at home when it happens, but it is still a dangerous business. A wounded lion's mate will attack the hunter or rancher that fires on the other lion, so even professional hunters consider the Cheshire Cat to be among the most dangerous game in known space, exceeded possibly only by the Nikolas Damnthing and the Victoria Glider-Wolves.

The skull of a male lion (picture, previous page) shows the high sagittal crest and broadly arched zygomatic arch indicative of the massive size of the jaw muscles which contribute to the shearing power of the canines. The canines are slightly angled outwards from the mouth (and protrude slightly as a result – giving the impression that the lion needs braces) and grind against each other to maintain a sharp edge. The heavy brow ridges help shade the eyes from the bright sun over Kimpali and against any prey that might survive the initial attack to fight back. The lion has a gullet that expands to allow for gulping the large chunks of meat it tears from the prey and will usually eat enough in one kill to lie torpid and digesting atop its koppie for up to 48 hours.

Doing It My Way

Stargates - Suitable for Traveller?

by Mark Barner

Introduction

We've all seen them. They're essentially step-through doorways to distant worlds. Fantasy and Science-Fiction authors have used them as plot devices to remove the protagonists from the resources and comforts of their homes and place them in hazardous situations, often with little or no hope of ever returning home any time soon.

Sometimes, stargates are huge structures that you could pilot a battleship through. Other times, they're just large enough for humans to march through in single file. Some are artifacts of ancient alien technology, while a few are developed through secret government programs or 'mad science'.

Regardless of their origins or what they look like, stargates may have a place in *Traveller* if used with discretion and with concern for maintaining game balance.

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What Stargates Are Not

A stargate is not a transporter, which allows people and objects to be moved between any two points within range of the transporter equipment without the existence of another transporter device at the far end. Thus, a character could not set up a stargate near a bank vault and hope to ‘beam out’ large quantities of cash without first setting up another stargate within the bank vault as well. The psionic ability **Teleport** already accomplishes this discretely.

Arguments Against

Traveller already has a reliable means means for interstellar transit - the Jump Drive. Given the right equipment, any location within six parsecs ($3.26 \text{ ly} \times 6 = 19.6 \text{ ly}$) can be arrived at within a week (168 hours \pm 10%), barring incident or accident. The Jump Drive is ‘good enough’ for getting characters around the *Traveller* universe. There is a wide body of literary work surrounding the Jump concept, and most players and referees are already used to the game mechanics. Why change?

When one considers that the rules of *Traveller* do not allow for FTL communications—messages can travel only as fast as the Jump-capable ships that carry them—this renders irrelevant the point that the character are isolated from their home resources, unless they carry those resources with them.

Stargates are not canonical, except in the ultra-tech (TL-16+) environment of Grandfather’s pocket universe (CT A12; *Secret of the Ancients*). Even then, Grandfather’s ‘Portals’ are limited in range and function, with each portal constructed and programmed for only one destination.

Arguments For

Admittedly, the best argument for the inclusion of stargate technology within the *Traveller* universe is that it is a Really Cool Idea—one that has untold possibilities for opening up new storylines and adventures: “Who made them?” “How did they get here?” “Why were they made?” And most important,

“How do we exploit them and use them to our advantage?”

Another feature of stargates are their relative convenience of use versus Jump drive technology. No more low passage tickets. No more skimming gas giants for fuel. No more fighting of corsairs and crooked customs agents. Just key in your destination, wait for the green light, and then walk through. When you’re finished, reverse the process and be home in time for supper.

Recommendations

Stargates should be extremely rare—no more than two or three per sector! Certainly, no more than one world out of 200 or so should even be a candidate. They should be located on worlds that either have no exploitable resources, little or no population, or some kind of environmental hazard that makes the world inhospitable to life. Worlds that are ‘off the beaten path’ could also qualify.

- A barren world with no resources could be explainable if the resources were all taken away by the stargate builders, or if the former population used the stargate to escape a war or natural disaster that nearly obliterated their world.
- If the worlds are inhabited, then the population should either be ignorant of the existence of the stargate, ignorant of its true purpose, or in a state of religious or superstitious fear concerning the stargate and its location to such an extent that even discussing it is a major taboo. Strict governmental or religious controls (GOV: 6 or 10+) or low technology (TL: 3 or less) would support these ideas.
- Worlds that may have once been habitable have undergone major upheavals—natural or cultural—that poisoned the environment. Perhaps a biological or nuclear war occurred, or the star the world orbits around is unstable.
- The world should be somewhat isolated from the others around it. A minimum three-parsec jump to the nearest neighbor should help

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keep the stargate secret, and still provide a need for Jump-capable ships to get to and from the stargate world.

- The world should have enough dry land and sufficient breathable atmosphere for characters to survive, regardless of other hazards (ATM: 4 through 9; HYD: 0 through 9). This way, if there is no way for the characters to determine what's on the other side, then the trip won't be immediately fatal.

Otherwise, here is a simple procedure for determining which worlds IYTU would have a stargate:

1. Roll 12+ on 3D for each system. This provides a one-half of one percent chance of any given world having a stargate somewhere on it.
2. For characters to find the stargate (if looking for it), roll 12+ on 2D per week of searching. Dice modifiers would include skills for sensor operations, if using technology to help with the search.
3. Once found, determining how to operate the stargate should be automatic, but only if the characters have either prior experience in doing so, or if they have some kind of 'User Manual' to guide them.

World Designations

For an Imperium-based campaign, worlds accessible through the stargate might be designated as **XYZ-NNN**, where the first character indicates whether the world is a planet orbiting a star ("P") or a moon orbiting a planet ("M"). The next character represents the sector that contains the stargate, while the third character represents the subsector (A through P).

This assumes, of course, that the Imperial sector map is the primary reference. The Zhodani, for example, might use a completely different method.

The last three characters match the UWP physical characteristics of the world that the stargate is on. Thus, if there were a stargate on Gagamshir in the Regina system, the stargate designation would be

MLC-534 (UWP is F534328). The address used to activate the stargate to this address is up to the referee. I use a random, linear-weighted sequence of hexadecimal characters, seven digits long, for each 'gate address.

IMTU, the stargate address for MLC-534 is A705BC9. Yeah, lots of numbers and details to remember, and lots of opportunities for a group of characters running from a life-threatening situation to key in the wrong address...

Particulars (IMTU)

It might be important to keep the appearance of all stargates generally the same. IMTU, they all have these features in common:

- The stargate itself appears as a ring of an unknown substance, 10 meters in diameter, standing vertically on its edge. It has no visible moving parts, but does emit a low-level EM signature on certain bands that could interfere with ship-to-ship communications. These emissions are indecipherable, but seem to have a repeating pattern.
- There is a nearby control console, of the same unknown substance, with 16 palm-sized pads, marked in an unknown language. Pressing these pads in specific sequences activates the stargate as soon as the final pad is pressed. The symbols on each key could represent numerical values, arcane glyphs, or images depicting possibly mythological creatures and objects.
- It takes 7 or 8 symbols to activate the stargate, and not all combinations will work. The referee could assign these 'addresses' at random or use an orthogonal grid pattern as coordinates. Either way, the addresses should remain constant, and not change from one adventure to the next.
- There is a 'cool-down' period between activation attempts while the stargate resets itself. This could be long—a day to as much as two weeks—in order to keep the characters

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from spending an entire game session mapping out the stargate network. I recommend that the referee roll 2D secretly each time the gate is activated; the result is the cool-down time in days before the next activation may occur—from either end.

- During activation, the interior of the stargate appears to become misty and translucent. While no actual mist is generated, objects viewed through the stargate become blurry and indistinct. Once activated, the misty area seems to solidify into a slightly shimmering, mirror-like surface.
- Activation produces a sharp, seismic jolt that is hard enough to be felt, but that does not cause any damage. This jolt is the primary reason why most stargates were either located outside populated areas, or mounted on extra heavy-duty shock absorbers.
- People stepping through the stargate will experience a brief sensation of falling, then a minute of disorientation after they arrive (DM-1 on all attack and skill rolls). No other sensory information will be perceived, and even high-speed recording devices will only record a brief moment of darkness (Note: Some players have suggested that this is because they were directly exposed to Jump-space ... as the referee, I have never put forth the effort to confirm or deny this speculation ...).
- The stargate is one-way, from the departure side to the arrival side. A person or object that is less than half-way through may pull or be pulled back, but passing through half-way or more makes returning impossible. So far, no one has been caught at the half-way point when the stargate shuts itself down ... so far ...
- Radio, meson and telepathic communications will not work through a stargate, but shots can be fired blindly from the departure side to the arrival side. Lobbing a tactical nuclear

device through an active stargate is not only a violation of Imperial law, but could make for an unpleasant reception from the survivors on the other side.

Introducing Stargates Into YTU

The first time IMTU involved a government-controlled archeological dig, and group of characters that had run afoul of the military. They were offered a reprieve if they would ‘volunteer’ for a dangerous mission, the details of which they would learn only after arriving at the dig site.

After volunteering ‘willingly and with full understanding of the circumstances’ (e.g., do it or spend the next ten years at a hard-labor prison), the characters were given survival packs, projectile weapons, daggers, jack armor, et cetera ... and a crash course in what little was known about the theory and operation of a stargate.

Once through, the characters found themselves in a cave on a high plateau overlooking a jungle environment. In the distance could be seen something that looked like a ruined city, but they could not be sure. There was no way off the plateau, so the characters tried to activate the stargate and go home again. Unfortunately, the stargate would not function for a full day, even when they tried several alternate addresses they had been given. Then, when the stargate finally did activate and they stepped through, they arrived someplace other than their original location—the address they had been given for the trip home was incorrect.

Eventually, they made it back to civilization, but only after finding themselves on the following worlds:

- A desert world, inhabited by insectoid aliens that considered the stargate a holy relic of the gods that created them.
- A frozen world similar to Terra during its most recent ice age, complete with cave-people, giant wooly animals, sabre-toothed predators, and all the amenities that a TL-0 world could offer.

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Doing It My Way

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- An octagonal chamber, deep underground, that seemed to be a major nexus for the stargate network. Each wall supported a single stargate, and there was a raised platform in the middle where the stargate controls were operated. There was no way in or out other than by stargate, and only one stargate still functioned.
- A laboratory-like setting. Less than a minute after their arrival, alarms sounded. Within a few minutes after that, a tall gentleman entered the room and demanded to know their business. This man was wearing a turban...

Other means of introducing stargates to YTU could involve:

- The characters come into the possession of an Ancient artifact inscribed with images that lead the characters to a certain location.
- A government agency contacts the characters to discretely investigate a series of strange events and/or rumors.
- A scientist needs a few volunteers to go on an excursion.
- While stumbling around the wilderness of a low-population world, the characters find what seems to be a temple. One of them triggers a trap, which drops them into an underground stargate room.
- The events from CT A12, *Secret of the Ancients* could be played out up to the point where the characters explore the Ancient site at Boughene, and instead of boarding the ship, they find a stargate room. This keeps

the concept of the stargates' origins in line with the Ancients-Did-Everything theory.

Other possible scenarios could be played out.

"G'vrk, sensors are picking up an odd EM signature from the planet below. Long-range imaging shows a bunch of ruined buildings clustered around a large open area, in the middle of which is a ring-like structure approximately 10 meters in diameter standing on its edge. The EM signals in the G-band seem to come from this general vicinity..."

...

"Men, you have been selected to investigate the disappearance of the crew of one of our survey vessels. The ship was found ... let's see ... derelict and orbiting a so far un-named world of a type M8 dwarf star ... UWP is X761000-0 ... no known resources ... the star is an irregular flare star ... radiation hazard ... unpredictable ..."

...

«Noble Sir, a matter for your attention.»

«Proceed, Intendant.»

«Intelligence reports unusual Imperial activity focusing on system 227-1113, just inside their border. It is a barren world of no known significance.»

«Curious. Details?»

«As follows...»

...

Summary / Conclusion

Stargates can fit into the *Traveller* multiverse without endangering game balance, provided that their use has limitations that prevent or inhibit commercial exploitation. Their presence can even enhance an already-existing game milieu and provide a multitude of adventuring opportunities.

Active Measures

By Force of Arms

by Michael Brown

Equipment required: none.

Setting: any Agricultural world with government type B.

Synopsis

The adventurers find themselves at odds with a petty warlord's homebrew eugenics program while rescuing a diplomat's fiancée.

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Active Measures

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Players' Information

Years ago, the popular planetary ruler died and was succeeded by his much less-beloved nephew. The new ruler has proven to be an inept leader; the initial support he enjoyed has evaporated. As he loses his grip on government and society, he has relied on ever-harsher measures to regain it. This in turn has kindled vigorous armed rebellion. Worse, the rebels are becoming factionalized, as commanders involve themselves in various succession wars and intrigues. The populace, caught in the middle, flock to the protection of one strongman or another. The resulting social instability in turn has prompted the IISS to consider classifying the planet as an Amber Zone.

The PCs are summoned to the home of an Imperial baronet. The baronet has recently become engaged to the daughter of a district leader friendly to Imperial interests. The girl's father has given the couple his blessing, and the baronet wants to spend time with his intended to discuss wedding plans. Unfortunately, the area in which she lives has seen increased rebel activity; the baronet will pay the PCs Cr2000 each as escort and discreet security while he is there. If the planet has a high Law Level, the baronet will arrange for the group to receive special dispensation concerning what weapons they are allowed to carry; each PC will be given documents effectively subtracting 3 from the local Law Level as long as the team travels with the baronet. The documents are subject to inspection by law enforcement upon request.

The fiancée lives in a rural compound 18 kilometers west of the starport. The baronet can provide transportation, but will not object if the team prefers to do so instead. He makes it clear to the visitors that they may make whatever security plans they wish, so long as the couple are not disturbed.

The trip to the house is uneventful; the baronet and his intended—a pretty dark-skinned young woman dressed in traditional local garb—soon leave with a picnic basket for a lightly-wooded glade be-

side a stream, a ten-minute walk from the compound.

Thirty minutes later, sounds of gunfire will come from the direction of the compound. Almost simultaneously, two battered pickup trucks roar along the stream headed toward the picnicking couple. Each truck has been outfitted for off-road travel and has improvised armor bolted to the chassis (equivalent to twice Combat Armor rating; the armor does not protect occupants unless they crouch down out of sight.) One truck is armed with a machine gun in an open pintle mount (similar to an M60). This truck carries five men of which one is the gunner. The other truck carries six men. Each man is dressed in a hodgepodge of civilian and military clothing and carries an automatic rifle.

The interlopers seem intent on kidnapping the girl. Five gunmen will leap out of the trucks and try to grab her while their companions keep vigil. Any interference will be met with gunfire. The hapless young woman will be unceremoniously tossed into one of the trucks as they speed away, covered by a hail of gunfire.

The baronet will be beside himself and will offer the PCs an additional Cr25000 each if they will find and rescue his love.

A similar group of gunmen meanwhile attacked the compound, abducting several of the fiancée's male relatives, including her younger brother. There were no serious injuries or damage. Tire tracks from the vehicles are easily seen in the dirt.

GM's Information

The gunmen are members of a rebel faction that has been abducting young men and women on orders from their leader, a disgraced former planetary army colonel named Woluq. Woluq has a reputation for ruthlessness (and insanity). He is conscripting young men into his rebel army, now about a thousand strong. He is using the young women for a mad homebrew eugenics program; he intends not only to seize power, but also to perpetuate his rule through a line of "supermen". To that end, he has carefully selected and has been kidnapping women he deems suitable in the region, intending to breed them with

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Active Measures

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someone he considers an ideal of strength and intelligence: himself. The supposed super-children from these unions will form the core of a “master race”.

To aid in the mad plan, Woluq’s army has seized several locations around the district to use as processing stations for captured women and training camps for conscripts. One such place (and the one the tire tracks lead to) is a farm located about 24 kilometers northwest of the starport (or, about 16 kilometers north of the fiancée’s compound). Large by district standards—about 5 square kilometers—the farm sits on the open savanna 75 meters west of a road running north-south. The northern, southern, and western areas of the farm consist of cultivated fields of waist-high wheat-like plants. Vineyards form the northwestern and southwestern sections of the land along with an associated small pond and solar-powered irrigation system (if the world’s Tech Level is too low to allow for solar power, then the irrigation system is powered by a small windmill.)

The main compound is defined by a low stone wall supplemented by a recently erected wire fence. The compound consists of the main house, a barn, an equipment shed, two bunkhouses, and a small military-surplus tent city set up in the compound’s southeastern section. Around the clock, rebel soldiers can be seen patrolling the farm, training conscripts, and guarding the farm’s remaining few field hands as they work the fields. At designated rest periods, the hands are kept under guard in one of the bunkhouses.

Careful observation will reveal that the base has a low number of troops, perhaps 150 at most. More than two-thirds of these appear to be conscripts, poorly-trained and possibly scared. They are equipped to the planetary Tech Level-1, but with either very light or no body armor.

The road approach to the compound is heavily guarded; at least two sentries are on duty at the entrance from the road, and two more guard the gate to the compound proper. Patrols also walk the perimeters of the compound and sometimes venture out into the fields. Every thirty minutes, the GM should throw 8+ for a patrol to approach close enough to detect the PCs. A DM of +3 applies if the adventur-

ers think to approach by crawling through the plants, which will hide them from casual view while doing so. If the team is detected, the patrol will immediately summon help with walkie-talkies while trying to fall back to a more secure position. Up to 3d rebel soldiers will join the battle within one minute.

The bunkhouses are large enough to house 50 people each; one of them holds 20 young women, including the baronet’s fiancée, under heavy guard. Many of them have been mistreated. They have all been cowed into submission, and are too frightened to help the PCs or offer more than token resistance. The other bunkhouse holds Woluq’s male conscripts. During the day, this bunkhouse is empty as all the conscripts are forced to train. At night, they are all in the bunkhouse and the door is locked and guarded.

Woluq himself is not currently on the premises, but does visit his “banks” regularly. At the start of each 24-hour period, the GM should throw 9+ for Woluq to make an appearance at some point during that day. He is a large, dark-skinned man in full military garb and never seen without a pair of sunglasses. He is a megalomaniac, and regards all those around him as tools, slaves, or cannon fodder, depending on his mood and their perceived usefulness to him. He is always accompanied by 2D heavily-armed soldiers and as many servants. These individuals are fanatically loyal to Woluq and will gladly give their lives for him. 15D rebel fighters armed and equipped similarly to the rebels tending the farm will accompany Woluq and his personal entourage. The difficulties involved in capturing or killing Woluq are up to the GM, but it should be a difficult undertaking, and in any case is not the focus of the adventure.

Rescuing the baronet’s fiancée successfully concludes the adventure, since this is all the baronet asked of the PCs. Other goals equally worthy include rescuing the other captive women and the conscripts and returning them to their families. The adventurers can also certainly strike a blow against the kidnapers themselves; especially clever players could find a way to rally the conscripts to help fight their captors, or even get the rebels to turn on Woluq when he shows up. Such extended activities are beyond the scope of this adventure; in any case, the GM should determine the flow of subsequent events.

Essay Question

Essay Question is designed to allow our readers to share their experiences and ideas in playing or refereeing *Traveller*, or in designing things to be used in campaigns. Each issue, we'll print one or more questions, either submitted by one of our readers, or invented by the Editor. Readers are invited to send their answers (and their questions for future issues) to us at questions@freelancetraveller.com; we'll print a selection of the answers received in each issue.

This month, we get replies to some of our previous questions, and we add two new questions.

New questions for this month:

Do you feel that a well-developed “canonical” background is essential for *Traveller* gaming? Why, or why not?

When running/playing in an adventure, do you feel that accuracy should take precedence over story, or vice-versa? Why?

Previous questions:

Someone has just asked you “What is *Traveller*?”. It’s obvious that they want a better answer than “It’s a SF/space-opera role-playing game, like D&D is a high fantasy role-playing game.”. How do you answer them?

“kafka” answers: *Traveller* is merely the toolkit for adventure. The way the game has been played up to now...

It combines Hard SF (of *Outland/Alien*) with a roguish sensibility (of *Firefly*) set against a vast Space Opera (like *Star Wars*) with quaint 19th century notions from the Age of Sail (travel does take a long time and players must make decisions in the field rather than ask for help a la *Master & Commander*). There are aliens but also human civilizations that are equally alien. There is familiar tech (e.g., shotguns in space) but also a touch of the fantastical (e.g., laser weapons). Action can take place on alien world, a starship or even with a computer simulation. Players usually do not have enough money to make ends meet and the universe doesn't care. But, they have the chance to rise to become heroes and be rewarded with wealth beyond their wildest dreams (well actually knowledge...but who says knowledge is not wealth).

What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of a “good” adventure? Does it vary based on the context in which the adventure is being run? If so, how does it vary?

“kafka” answers: A good adventure is one where everyone has fun. Pure and simple. If something doesn't work...fix it, improvise and change it. Plot is a series of guidelines or benchmarks that you want the players to achieve. However, the good *Traveller* adventure depends upon use of familiar tropes and making the setting somewhat fantastical or very hard. *Traveller* requires that one put a lot of thinking (although not really work) into thinking about the setting. There has to be something that tells the players that they are no longer in Kansas anymore. And, as I game with newbies and seasoned players alike, I usually throw a few bones to the old time grognards by citing something from canon, e.g. when players were investigating an old abandoned First Imperium Space Station need in the Corridor...they found computers that did not need switches for some basic functions. Suggesting that Vilani-Zhodani cooperation taking place. And, indeed, as the main Boss was a vicious predator from the Foreven Sector that escaped its pen and was feeding on the other lifeforms (including, its own kin) that inhabited the station it was perfectly in keeping when I presented subsector maps with the names shaved off of the Avalon polity.

So other than setting, mood, if I am aiming for something creepy. I will add in creepy special effects. If I am doing something exploration based...I might add in natural elements such as the sound of Thunderstorms and counterpoise it with the relaxation track also containing thunderstorms when they make camp but all the time...terror is perhaps present. Similarly, when the mood is joyful, I might select a playful piece of music to convey that such as when they were meeting the head of crime syndicate, I played the Godfather theme...it provided a cue to the players who they were meeting was not going to be a nice trader as he appeared in respectful society.

Have an interesting cast of characters. Mongoose chargen makes this extraordinarily easy. Use what

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Essay Question

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they have or improvise if you are doing pregens. Take a cue from *Starblazer Adventures* and have your players build some of their characters by simply looking at their bare stats.

Previous questions, not yet answered:

What is your favorite type of “one-off” adventure? Why?

What is your favorite type of campaign adventure? Why?

Other questions previously appearing in this column can be found on Freelance Traveller’s website, at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/columns/eq/>.

We encourage our readers to answer any question that has appeared in Essay Question, past or present, previously answered or not. We also encourage our readers to propose new Essay Questions to questions@freelancetraveller.com.

Fifth Imperium

Shannon Appelcline



This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's Traveller, the fifth incarnation of the Traveller game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the gamemaster, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.

Editor's note: The initial Fifth Imperium column was published on the RPG.Net website in July 2009, and appeared in Freelance Traveller's initial issue in November 2009. This column originally appeared on the RPG.Net website in September 2010.

#13: Genre-ic Plot Seeds, Part Three: The Wacky Ones

Earlier this year, I suggested that you can design *Traveller* adventures by choosing another genre and introducing it into your game as the base of a single story. My first two articles in this series covered mystery and horror, plus a few other related genres.

This month I'm going to be expanding on the idea by talking about two of the more far-flung genres that you can mash up with your *Traveller* game. You won't find these genres in as much use in published *Traveller* sources, but they do still have plenty to offer your own *Traveller* games.

The Fantasy Genre

The line between science-fiction and fantasy can be pretty thin, as shown by series like Anne

McCaffrey's *Pern*, Steven Brust's *Vlad Taltos*, and of course George Lucas' *Star Wars*. All three of these settings demonstrate how science-fiction ideas can be used as the explanations for fantasy elements (like dragons, spells, and magic swords).

Generally I think you can create a fantasy adventure via two different means. On the one hand, you can draw upon Medieval history and create a Medieval-type setting, full of serfs, knights, and lords. On the other hand, you can draw upon Medieval legend and create a magical setting with fantastic beasts and powerful magics. Much fantasy includes both elements, but that's certainly not a necessity.

It's easy enough to fit Medieval history into the *Traveller* universe. Just choose a planet that's evolved only as far as a late-era TL 1. It could easily be full of feudalism and people saying “thee” and “thou”. An interesting plot seed for this sort of setting is a real clash of cultures. The players could be asked to make first contact with the world (after it lost contact with the rest of the Imperium during the Long Night) or they might have snuck onto a red zone planet which was interdicted to protect a developing culture. Trying to introduce the locals to high tech is probably just as interesting as trying to hide it from them.

In order to create a setting with high-fantasy elements, you need to come up with science-fiction explanations for them. Monsters of various sorts could have been created biologically, either as a draw for

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tourists, for a military purpose, or for some more obscure reason. “When biotech/fantasy animals go wild!” could be the basis for a light one-off adventure where the players have to shoot up unicorns and pegasi on a resort planet.

Magic is most easily explained by psionics, though you might need to flesh out the *Traveller* system some to get more magical-looking effects. This could then be the basis of a fun “against the psi lords” campaign, where the players are trapped on a planet (or even in a pocket empire) where dictators with magic/psionic powers oppress the little people. Alternatively you could go with Clarke’s Third Law, that “any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”. Thus, conjurings, evocations, and other spells can all be the result of a magical doodad—perhaps one that its wielder doesn’t even understand.

Traveller References. There have been a few primitive cultures in *Traveller* adventures, including *Nomads of the World Ocean* (though they use plenty of high-tech equipment) and the classic *Uragyad’n of the Seven Pillars*, but those were both about nomads rather than Medieval states. I’m sure there must be some Middle Age style adventures amidst all the *Traveller* pubs, but none strike me immediately.

As for more fantastic things, the original *Secret of the Ancients* offers up a basis for super/magical technology, while Mongoose’s *Traveller Book 4: Psion* includes some psionic powers that start to edge over to sorcery in my mind.

Other References. Pern and Vlad Taltos are both excellent places to start in the fantasy-as-science-fiction genre, though it’s relatively subtle in both cases. They both tend to feature the psionics-as-magic meme. If you want to instead go with high-tech-as-magic, *Babylon 5* offers a great example with its technomages (though they’re perhaps a bit too on-the-nose).

If you want to read about science-fiction cultures interacting with less developed planets, H. Beam Piper’s *Space Viking* is a classic, while *Hammer’s Slammers* is a more modern take on the same. “The

Tank Lords”, a novella found in *The Complete Hammer’s Slammers, Volume 1* focuses on the topic.

The Super-Hero Genre

In many ways, I find the super-hero genre to be fantasy for the modern day. It’s similarly about larger than life figures and a magical world just underlying reality, but it’s set in the 20th or 21st century, not the 10th or 11th.

The underlying focus in any super-hero game of course must be people with extraordinary powers. (We’ll leave the non-powered super-heroes alone for the second, as they’re tied more tightly to the pulp genre, which will be touched upon in a future article.) If you want to go beyond that, then you need to make the whole setting larger than life, with threats that can endanger the whole planet—or the whole universe. Super-technology, cackling super-villains, and a clear line between good and evil can help fill out the genre, depending on which direction you want to go in.

There are a few easy answers as to why you’d have superhumans in the *Traveller* universe.

The first is (again) psionics ... pointing out once more how close the fantasy and super-hero genres can be. Again, you’ll probably want to expand the game system to suggest some of the more heroic or malevolent super powers that might be about.

A second answer is genengineering: someone is creating superhumans through biotechnology. Genengineering is currently not that popular in the Imperium, but there have been past examples of it, most notably including the creation of the Jonkeereen, a race genengineered to survive on desert planets. The Solomani also have some skeletons in their closet concerning attempts to create a race of superhumans.

Great *Traveller* adventures concerning superhumans could easily come from these two bits of canon.

Attempts to expand the evolution of the Jonkeereen could result in a race of powerful beings that’s already alienated by the Imperium. Perhaps they’ll be used for ill purposes, or perhaps they’ll turn

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against their creators all on their own, forcing player characters to step in, then find that neither side is really “right”.

Some of the Solomani super-human experiments definitely escaped Terra, using either generational ships or early jump drives. Stumbling upon a colony of them could result in a *Star Trek II*-like misadventure.

Other adventures could center around all the more interesting questions that arise when superhumans began to interact with regular people. Do they try and take over the government as the clearly superior species? Does the rest of humanity hate and fear them? Do they make a great exodus to the stars, hoping to find a place of their own? A planet doing its own genengineering could lead to any of these adventure seeds.

And what happens when the players run into super-human Vargr or Aslan? Not only might they have to deal with these individual problems, but they might also need to trace them back to their place of origin ... and destroy it.

These adventure hooks generally put the PCs on the edges of a super-human adventure, because they aren't super-humans themselves. But what happens if they are? What if they wake up one morning and found that they've been kidnapped, experimented upon, and now have powers beyond those of mortal men ... ?

Finally, super-hero adventures can blend right into transhuman adventures, a topic that I'll cover in a few months when I talk about science-fiction sub-genres.

Traveller References. There aren't any *Traveller* adventures that I'd call super-hero, though again I'll point you toward *Traveller Book 4: Psion* for some powers trending in that direction.

The idea of the Solomani creating a super-race has shown up from time to time in the literature. The

subsequent Gene War gets a page of coverage in DGP's *Solomani & Aslan* (p. 28). The big surprise is that when the genengineered super-humans were created, the Solomani ended up destroying them out of fear and ignorance. The super-humans didn't actually try to rule the galaxy or anything! Of course in the modern day survivors might or might not be innocent, as you prefer.

Other References. There have been a couple of RPGs that take a serious look at realistic super-heroes. *Brave New World* is set in an alternate, fascist reality. *Aberrant* is another modern look. For super-heroes in a near-future SF setting, there's *Underground*.

There's similarly plenty of great comics that provide realistic modern looks at heroes, including *Kingdom Come*, JMS' *Rising Stars*, and *The Authority*. Any comic book is going to be a great source, but these provide some of the more interesting interactions between heroes and society.

Meanwhile, *The 4400* covered some of the same topics on television. What I found most interesting was the last season or so. After these 4400 super-humans have been oppressed for a while, they start looking for ways to make more super-humans, no matter what the cost.

Finally, *Star Trek* has done a great job of investigating the overlap between super-heroes and science-fiction that's found in genengineering. This is all covered in “Space Seed” for The Original Series, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, and a three-part *Enterprise* arc containing “Borderland”, “Cold Station 12”, and “The Augments”. Though I haven't read them, there are apparently also three novels on the topic, beginning with *The Eugenics Wars: The Rise and Fall of Khan Noonien Singh*.

Conclusion

That's it for this month's look at genres you can use to create *Traveller* adventures. Next month I'm going to move on to the Action Genres.

Solomani Naval Doctrine

original author unknown; contributed by Kevin Walsh

The Solomani Navy is a well-trained force, equipped to TL14 and TL15 standards. The Solomani emphasize *Blitzkrieg* tactics in their naval doctrine. Assault units and heavy battleships will break the main line of resistance, pinning down heavy enemy forces. While the enemy heavy forces are neutralized, the raiders will move into the enemy rear areas. This is an embodiment of the Solomani “Total War” concept; the raiders will move against headquarters areas, supply depots, starports, shipyards and merchant ships, with the intent of paralyzing the enemy’s military and economy. These raiders will be accompanied by Confederation Marines, who will land on planets to destroy important military and economic facilities and to carry off loot and prisoners. Prisoners are questioned for data on other raid targets, and are then generally released unharmed, unless the prisoner is an important person politically, socially, militarily or scientifically.

A Solomani naval attack will either be a raid, or will have raiding elements attached to it. In a full multi-fleet attack, half of the committed fleets will remain in the reserve. In each attacking fleet, the two assault groups of the fleet will engage the enemy’s main line. An overstrength raiding group, with twice the number of squadrons as an Assault Group, will generally split into four to six task forces, each with 1 to 3 squadrons. These will zip into the enemy’s territory, with the intent of raiding for four to eight weeks before returning. At that time, the entire fleet will go into the reserve, returning to base for repair and replenishment. It will be immediately replaced on the front line with another fleet from the reserve, which will do the same. This doctrine is very rough on the fleets; the first set of attacking fleets will generally suffer 50% casualties and be forced to combine with other damaged fleets to build a full-strength unit. However, the effects on the enemy are immediate and devastating; the enemy’s main line

will suffer some casualties, but the main damage will be apparent when supplies stop reaching the beleaguered defenders. As the bases, depots and starports are hit, supplies will dwindle. The losses to civilian shipping will prevent supplies from reaching the defenders, and needed reinforcements will be pulled away to chase down the raiders. And, as the economies of the worlds near the battle line begin to falter, the defenders may be faced with insurrection or desertion.

The Solomani also have some other unique unit types in the navy. One is the Interdiction Task Force. This is a unit made up of typical escort-type ships, with one or more Interdiction Squadrons as its main force. These squadrons are made up of Interdiction Cruisers, which have a low Jump rating but are configured for long stays in orbit interdicting ship traffic and acting as a bombardment platform. This sort of unit is used on worlds suffering from an Interdiction Edict from the Confederation Assembly or Security Council. This may happen due to disease, rebellion or disobedience of Security Council regulations concerning war with another Confederation world.

Another unique unit is the Customs Squadron. Employed in especially-busy systems, this consists of an Escort Carrier and a number of Customs Cruisers. These ships are small and fast, with moderate armor and armament. They are used to carry a squad of troops to perform inspections on ships entering or leaving the system. These units are used in systems with piracy problems, or in systems that have been given some form of economic sanctions from the General Assembly or Security Council.

As with ground forces, the Confederation Navy may call upon the naval forces of member worlds when necessary. The procedures are similar to that described for the ground forces, but it is rare for a world to field large naval forces, so such units are generally consolidated into Subsector or even Sector Squadrons, and are generally used for patrol and escort duties.

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Solomani Ships

“dtons” is the standard abbreviation for “standard displacement tons”

Dreadnaught: Generally 750,000 to 1,000,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and are generally rated for 3G thrust or less. They are heavily armored, and usually carry multiple fighter wings and up to a full Regimental Combat Team of Marines. These ships are named after Secretaries-General of the Confederation or its predecessor, the United Nations of Terra. There are three classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *U Thant* class, 1,000,000 dtons, TL 14
- *Regalbuto* class, 800,000 dtons, TL15
- *Li Kwan* class, 750,000 dtons, TL 14

Battleship: Generally 500,000 to 750,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and are generally rated for 3G or less. They are heavily armored, and usually carry about a wing of fighters and a Marine Assault Unit. These ships are named after stars and stellar anomalies. The *Antares* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Excelsior* class. There are four classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Nova* class, 500,000 dtons, TL15
- *Antares* class, 500,000 dtons, TL14
- *Pleiades* class, 600,000 dtons, TL14
- *Cygnus* class, 550,000 dtons, TL14

Battle Cruiser: Generally 100,000 to 400,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and are generally rated for 3G thrust. They are heavily armored, and generally carry several fighter squadrons, as well as a company of Marines. These ships are named for planets in the Solomani Confederation or old Solomani Autonomous Region. The *Terra* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Vland* class. There are three classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Dingir* class, 200,000 dtons, TL15
- *Home* class, 200,000 dtons, TL14
- *Terra* class, 250,000 dtons, TL14

Interdiction Cruiser: Range from 100,000 to 250,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 2, and are generally rated for 2G thrust. They are heavily armored, and carry a full wing of interceptors, as well as a company of Marines. These ships are named for famous members of the Security Council. There are two classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Gormancy* class, 100,000 dtons, TL15
- *Urquides* class, 150,000 dtons, TL14

Missile Cruiser: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and have 3G thrust. They are moderately armored. They carry several auxiliary spacecraft, and usually have a platoon of Marines for security. These ships are named for famous ground sieges from Solomani history. There are three classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Sevastopol* class, 80,000 dtons, TL15
- *Melbourne* class, 100,000 dtons, TL14
- *Vicksburg* class, 50,000 dtons, TL14

Cruiser: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and have 3G thrust. They are moderately armored. They carry several auxiliary spacecraft, and usually have a platoon of Marines for security. These ships are named for heroic naval officers from Solomani history. The *Nelson* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Raciborz* class. There are six classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *John Paul Jones* class, 60,000 dtons, TL15
- *Kutusov* class, 75,000 dtons, TL14
- *Nelson* class, 50,000 dtons, TL14
- *Jaracara* class, 100,000 dtons, TL15
- *Mendoza* class, 100,000 dtons, TL14
- *Matsuhira* class, 50,000 dtons, TL14

Heavy Raid Cruiser: Range from 100,000 to 250,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 5, and are generally rated at 3G thrust. They are well armored, and carry several fighter squadrons and several platoons of Marines for defense and boarding actions. These ships are named after Solomani commanders famous for raiding tactics. There are two classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Guderian* class, 200,000 dtons, TL14
- *Al-Kebir* class, 200,000 dtons, TL15

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The Shipyard

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Light Raid Cruiser: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 5, and are generally rated at 4G thrust. They are moderately armored, and generally carry only a few utility spacecraft and a squad or two of Marines for defense. These ships are named for historical Solomani weapons. There is only one class currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Broadsword* class, 50,000 dtons, TL15

Heavy Carrier: Range from 500,000 to 750,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and are generally rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry up to 10 wings of fighters and other spacecraft, as well as a platoon or more of Marines for security. These ships are named for historical Solomani sea and space carriers. There are two classes currently in Solomani fleets:

- *Enterprise* class, 700,000 dtons, TL14
- *Ark Royal* class, 700,000 dtons, TL15

Assault Carrier: Range from 200,000 to 500,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 3, and are rated at 3G thrust. They are moderately armored, and carry three to five wings of fighters; half of the fighter complement is configured for ground-attack. There is usually a platoon of Marines for security. These ships are named for historical Solomani fighter craft. There are currently two classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Mustang* class, 300,000 dtons, TL14
- *Sukhoi* class, 250,000 dtons, TL15

Raid Carrier: Range from 100,000 to 250,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 5, and are rated at 3G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry two or three wings of fighters and a platoon of Marines for security. The ships are named for historical Solomani cavalry soldiers and mounts. There is only one class in Solomani fleets:

- *Stuart* class, 200,000 dtons, TL15

Escort Carrier: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and are rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry one wing of fighters and a platoon of Marines for security. The ships are named for moons in Solomani space. There are four classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Luna* class, 50,000 dtons, TL15
- *Phobos* class, 75,000 dtons, TL14
- *Astarte* class, 60,000 dtons, TL14
- *Fury* class, 80,000 dtons, TL14

Frigate: Range from 10,000 to 25,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and generally are rated at 4G thrust. They are lightly or moderately armored, and carry several auxiliary spacecraft and up to a company of Marines for security and minor ground or boarding actions. The ships are named for historic Solomani naval personnel (non-officers). The *Ivanova* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Guuliira* class. There are seven classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Burell* class, 25,000 dtons, TL14
- *Reiter* class, 20,000 dtons, TL15
- *Dimock* class, 20,000 dtons, TL14
- *Magnuson* class, 15,000 dtons, TL14
- *Iwada* class, 10,000 dtons, TL15
- *Ivanova* class, 10,000 dtons, TL14
- *De Granaldo* class, 10,000 dtons, TL14

Missile Frigate: Range from 10,000 to 25,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and generally are rated at 4G thrust. They are lightly or moderately armored, and carry several auxiliary spacecraft and up to a company of Marines for security and minor ground or boarding actions. The ships are named for historic Solomani naval personnel (non-officers). The *Bronson* class are modifications of former Imperial Navy ships of the *Guuliira* class. There are two classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Gunnar* class, 20,000 dtons, TL15
- *Bronson* class, 10,000 dtons, TL14

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The Shipyard

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Raider Escort: Range from 10,000 to 25,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 5, and are rated at 5G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry a few auxiliary spacecraft and two Marine squads for security. The ships are named for fast-moving animals found in Solomani space. There is one class in Solomani fleets:

- Jaguar class, 10,000 dtons, TL15

Destroyer: Range from 2,000 to 10,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and are rated at 4G+ thrust. They are lightly or moderately armored, and carry one or two auxiliary spacecraft. They usually carry a squad of Marines for security. The ships are named for winners of the Solomani Honor of Man medal winners. The *Tomizuka* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Yser* class, and the *Sanchez* class are former Imperial Navy ships of the *Iberia* class. There are eight classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Lucien* class, 5,000 dtons, TL15
- *Keye* class, 3,000 dtons, TL15
- *Sanchez* class, 7,500 dtons, TL14
- *Gulbertson* class, 5,000 dtons, TL14
- *Gionetti* class, 4,000 dtons, TL14
- *Tomizuka* class, 3,000 dtons, TL14
- *Mbele* class, 3,000 dtons, TL14
- *Narayana* class, 2,500 dtons, TL14

Destroyer Escort: Range from 1,000 to 2,000 dtons. These ships are Jump 4, and rated for 4G+ thrust. They are lightly armored, and usually carry one or two auxiliary spacecraft. The ships are named for decorated Solomani naval personnel who did not rate the Honor of Man medal. There are four classes:

- *Inman* class, 1,000 dtons, TL15
- *Walbrecht* class, 1,000 dtons, TL14
- *Ziao* class, 1,000 dtons, TL14
- *Kwamele* class, 1,500 dtons, TL14

Customs Cruiser: Range from 200 to 800 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 2, and generally rated at 4G+ thrust. They are lightly to moderately armored, and often carry an auxiliary craft and a squad of Marines for boarding actions. The ships are named for famous Solomani law enforcers. There are four classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Robertson* class, 500 dtons, TL14
- *J. Edgar Hoover* class, 600 dtons, TL15
- *Ravi* class, 800 dtons, TL14
- *Earp* class, 500 dtons, TL15

Close Escort: Range from 200 to 500 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 4, and generally rated at 3G+ thrust. They are lightly to moderately armored, and often carry an auxiliary craft. The ships classes have no overall naming conventions. The *Fiery* and *Gazelle* classes are former Imperial Navy ships of the same respective classes. There are three classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Fiery* class, 300 dtons, TL15
- *Gazelle* class, 300 dtons, TL15
- *Swath* class, 400 dtons, TL14

MAU Assault Transport: Range from 10,000 to 25,000 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 3, and generally rated at 3G. They are lightly armored, and carry numerous auxiliary craft, drop capsule facilities, and carry a Marine Assault Unit (a reinforced battalion configured for independent operations). These ships are named after famous Solomani Marines. There are two classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Henderson* class, 20,000 dtons, TL15
- *Juliard* class, 25,000 dtons, TL14

MRCT Assault Transport: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 3, and generally rated at 3G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry numerous auxiliary craft, drop capsule facilities and a Marine Regimental Combat Team (a reinforced Marine Regiment configured for independent operations). These ships are named for famous Solomani battles involving Marines. There are three classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Bellau Wood* class, 60,000 dtons, TL15
- *Betelgeuse Alpha* class, 75,000 dtons, TL14
- *Iwo Jima* class, 100,000 dtons, TL14

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The Shipyard

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Division Transport: Range from 75,000 to 150,000 tons displacement. These ships are generally Jump 3, and are rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry numerous auxiliary craft (largely shuttles). They generally have a platoon of Marines assigned for security, but are designed to carry about 5,000 troops and their equipment. These ships are named after famous Solomani land battles. There are four classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Rhineland* class, 80,000 dtons, TL15
- *Kursk* class, 75,000 dtons, TL14
- *Gorinta* class, 100,000 dtons, TL14
- *Gettysburg* class, 125,000 dtons, TL14

Corps Transport: Range from 75,000 to 150,000 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 3, and are rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry numerous auxiliary craft. They generally carry a company of Marines assigned for security, but are designed to carry about 3,000 troops and their equipment. They also carry enhanced command and control facilities to allow management of a ground battle from orbit, as well as expanded medical and missile weapons facilities. These ships are named after famous Solomani non-Marine commanders. There are two classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Rommel* class, 80,000 dtons, TL15
- *Muramoto* class, 100,000 dtons, TL14

Hospital Ship: Range from 50,000 to 100,000 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 3, and are rated at 1G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry numerous auxiliary craft. They carry a platoon of Marines for security, and a 1,000 to 2,500 bed hospital with all supporting facilities. These ships are named for famous Solomani doctors. There is one class in Solomani fleets:

- *Dr. Crenshaw* class, 80,000 tons, TL15

Squadron Tender: Range from 10,000 to 25,000 tons displacement. These ships are generally Jump 3, and are rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry several auxiliary spacecraft as well as a Marine squad for security. These ships have expanded machine shop and fabrications facilities, as well as a very large cargo area that can carry cargo modules or fuel bladders. These ships have no overall naming conventions. There are three classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Connestoga* class, 10,000 dtons, TL15
- *Provender* class, 15,000 dtons, TL14
- *Milch Kow* class, 20,000 dtons, TL14

Fleet Tender: Range from 100,000 to 250,000 dtons. These ships are generally Jump 3, and are rated at 1G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry several auxiliary craft and a Marine platoon for security. These ships have expanded machine shop and fabrications facilities, as well as a very large cargo area that can carry cargo modules or fuel bladders. These ships have no overall naming conventions. There are three classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Cornucopia* class, 150,000 dtons, TL15
- *Breadbasket* class, 250,000 dtons, TL14
- *Ipswich* class, 200,000 dtons, TL14

Fleet Courier: Range from 200 to 800 dtons. These ships are Jump 6, and are rated at 2G thrust. They are lightly armored, and carry enhanced communications and sensor gear. These ships have no overall naming convention. There are two classes in Solomani fleets:

- *Mercury* class, 500 dtons, TL15
- *Delivery* class, 600 dtons, TL15

Combat Scout: Range from 100 to 400 tons displacement. These ships are Jump 4, and are rated at 4G+ thrust. They are lightly to moderately armored, and carry enhanced communications and sensor gear. These ships are named after famous Solomani military scouts. There is one class in Solomani fleets:

- *Kit Carson* class, 250 dtons, TL15

Starblazer Adventures

reviewed by "kafka"

Starblazer Adventures. Chris Birch and Stuart Newman
Cubicle 7 Entertainment Ltd. <http://www.cubicle-7.com>
632pp, hardcover, PDF
US\$29.99 (at time of publication of this review)

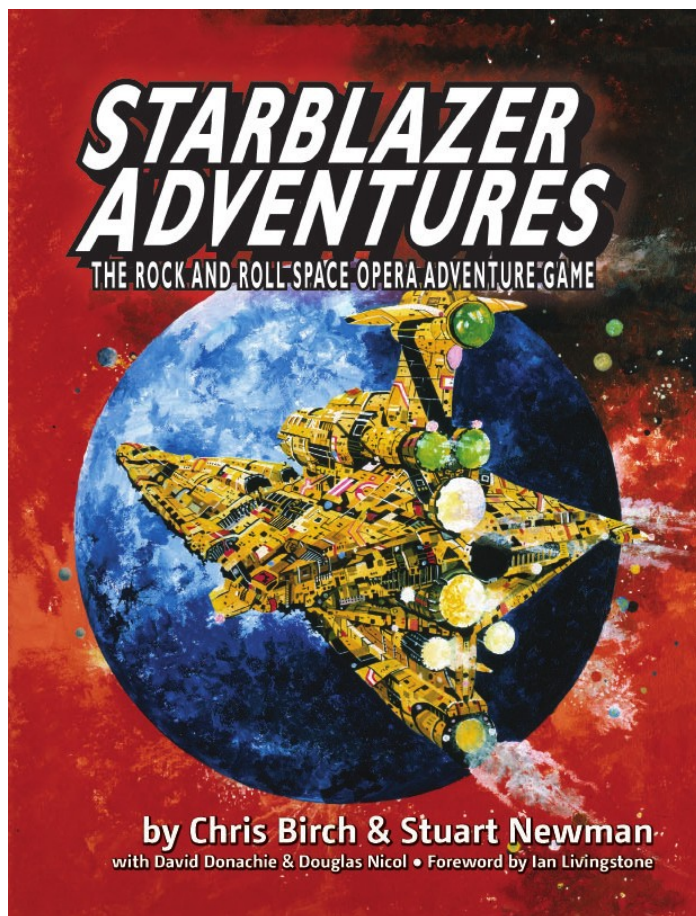
AUTHOR'S DISCLAIMER: *I received a complementary copy of Starblazer Adventures from the publisher after purchasing the PDF from Drivethrughrpg in exchange for this review because, I simply could not read a 632 PDF and needed to have something to hold in my hands.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The decision to run this review rests entirely with the Editor, who takes the position that, as with Hyperlite or the 100 Plot Seeds articles, the product being discussed may be of interest to Traveller players as a potential source of ideas to mine. Publication of the review does not imply endorsement or further support of the product by Freelance Traveller, and all reviews are solely the opinions of the authors.*

I know, I can hear some of criticism/flamethrowers revving up, “&^#*\$#! What in the blazes is ‘kafka’ doing reviewing a competitor to *Traveller* in a *Traveller* fanzine????”

In my defence, there are a couple points to consider. *Traveller* still remains a game system in whatever incarnations remains the closest to my heart—therefore, I come here to praise portions of *Starblazer* and not to bury *Traveller*. Secondly, the FATE system is an up-and-coming mechanic that *Traveller* already has a fan adaptation (called: *Spirit of the Far Future*) floating out there on the web; while this amateur effort should gain praise for its adaptation of FATE, it is still a fan effort not a professional production like *Starblazer Adventures*, lacking the playtesting and vigorous editing that accompanies professional productions. Lastly, I do believe that any game system that cannot graft on elements from other games or at least get inspired is a stagnant and decadent system not worthy to be played...and that *Traveller* is hardly that.

Starblazer Adventures, “the Rock and Roll Space Opera Adventure Game”, is a licensed game product produced by Cubicle 7 based on a line of a little known British comic books series published by DC Thomson in the 1980s, lasting a mere 281 issues (although, it has been a while since I read comics in



fact not since the 1980s, I would say 281 issues is fair enough as *Marvel Star Wars* lasted only 107 issues¹. It featured several British comics talents such as John Ridgway and Grant Morrison. The art, therefore, is top notch, and very reminiscent of the work of the Keiths (you sometimes wish they could edit out the cartoon balloons and other times you wish you could read the rest of the story). However, if you do not like the Keiths, as even sometimes I don't (being more a Blair Reynolds fan myself) – then you might find the same “constipated expressions” in panel after panel tiresome.

Starblazer Adventures, like *Spirit of the Century*, *Diaspora*, *The Dresden Files*, and an increasing number of new school RPGs, is based on the FATE system. Whereas *Spirit of the Century* is indisputably early 20th-century Pulp, *Starblazer Adventures* is based on the genre of Space Opera, which this book defines as “science fiction without all the detail that bogs you down... Everything from *Star Wars* to old

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school Star Trek is space opera..." Therefore, this should be a warning for those who— like myself— tend to play *Traveller* toward the harder edge of Science Fiction. However, as it has been endlessly debated, *Traveller*, especially in its Mongoose mode, is very much a Space Opera.

For like many of the underlying principals of *Traveller*, the foundations of Space Opera are unreservedly based on the cultural premises of original science fiction in the first half of the 20th Century, in that it sets up the heroes are defending a society very much like Western (white, European, American) civilization, exploring alien (non-white) territories and frequently clashing with the natives as well as trading baubles for huge tracts of land containing vital resources. Notwithstanding there is also an unspoken assumption of the premises of a more progressive ideal that would take eventually the place of imperialism—a belief in equality, science and progress, an emphasis on reason and a belief in negotiation before violence.

The Foreword starts off with a comic panel of a giant starship rising off into space, under this caption: "Steve Martin and the Last Warrior of Rhea blasted out into space to fight for justice and peace far out on the Galactic Rim." And, I again, I cannot speak for others but I like when *Traveller* (as in MgT's *Prison Planet* or GDW's *Hard Times*) gives us purple prose to set the mood.

Chapter One: Introduction is the standard text in almost all RPGs over introductory concepts such as "What is *Starblazer*?" "What is FATE?" and "What is a Roleplaying Game or Adventure Game?" This was neither the best nor the worst example of said introductions. The author defines the RPG less as actual roleplaying (acting) than an Adventure Game or "mutual story telling experience" about the player characters might raise alarm bells in the purist roll playing camp. In further appraising the basic concept of the roleplaying game, the author is very engaging: "What's most important is the story, always, forever and amen... The reason you're all sitting around playing this game is to have fun, not to score, not to

win, not to gloat... I want you to have so much fun playing *Starblazer Adventures* that all your friends wonder why you talk about it with such a gleam in your eye, why you're always laughing about what happened, and eventually want to join in!"

Chapter Two, logically titled "How Do I Play This?" gives this game's version of the FATE system. Consistent with the "story emphasis" *Starblazer Adventures* calls the Referee as the "Story Teller" and NPCs as "Extras", important NPCs are "Named Characters", bad guys may have "Minion" extras while the PCs have named "Companion" characters who are still described with simpler stat blocks than PCs. The game goes straight into presenting an example character on page 20 with a fairly detailed stat sheet. It then goes over basic rules, similar to but not quite identical to standard FATE systems such as *Spirit of the Century*. In which, one rolls one d6. Then you take a different color d6 and subtract its roll from the first roll. This yields a range of +5 to -5. (Ed.: This produces the same curve as a roll in *Traveller of 2D-7*) To this you add your character's relevant stat, which is graded on an "adjective ladder" where different grades of ability are given game ratings, ranging from -3 (Abysmal) to 0 (Mediocre) to +8 (Legendary). This roll with stat gives a result that is usually compared to a difficulty which is itself based on the ladder—so if the difficulty for your task is Fair (+2) and you have an Average (+1) ability for the task, you succeed as long as your roll result is at least +1. Each point of success over the difficulty is a shift, and shifts can be used to further enhance the result of the task (called shots, stopping the warp core breach in 5 minutes instead of 10, etc.).

Each player has a certain number of Fate Points that can be used in various ways: as a generic 'invocation' to give +1 to a die roll, to use a "Stunt" based on one of their skill trees, or to invoke Aspects. Aspects are, well, aspects of a character, an environment, or pretty much anything that could be given an aspect. PCs get these in character creation to refer to certain character hooks (like 'Girl in Every Starport'). They might also guess the Aspects of an environment or NPC from Story Teller/Referee de-

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Critics' Corner

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scription. The thing about Aspects (and why they're so cool in storytelling terms) is that they have to be defined as double-edged swords (the 'girl in every starport' being a great example) such that the player can spend a FATE Point (FP) to invoke his Aspect to add to the roll OR re-roll the task, BUT he can also have the Aspect 'tagged'—that is, invoked by another character or the Story Teller/Referee. In such cases the tag forces a compel on the PC such that the hero has to act under its strictures (like getting captured because you're a 'Clumsy Ass'). For going along with the drama, the PC gets a FATE Point. He can always choose to avoid the compel, but that requires spending a FATE Point rather than gaining one. Characters can always tag an Aspect of an NPC if they know it or can guess it. A character can discover or create an Aspect by changing the scene or inflicting a condition on a character, in which case his first tag of the Aspect is free (and other characters can tag this new Aspect for the standard Fate Points cost). Likewise guessing a "Hidden" Aspect allows a free first tag.

Inflicting conditions on characters - either as the result of physical action or social interactions- creates stress levels on characters, and in most cases a PC can take 5 Physical or Composure (mental) stress levels before being "Taken Out" due to being killed, panicked or whatever the Story Teller decides is appropriate. To forestall losing these Stress Levels, a PC can take consequences that can be tagged as Aspects until the character is able to recover- anything from a cut eyelid to long-term shell shock.

Chapter Three, Character Creation, is actually foreshadowed in the last part of Chapter Two, which gives a quick PC generation process (come up with up to five Aspects, get 10 Fate Points minus any Stunts bought, and come up with a pyramid of 10 Skills where one is Great, two are Good, three are Fair and four are Average).

Proper character creation, is a group activity. It is made up of up to five phases, depending on how experienced the Story Teller needs the PCs to be (a 'Gritty' game has three phases of character creation,

'Standard' is four and 'Heroic' is five). The first phase, Training, is when the PC first starts developing skills. The player writes a brief character history for the events of this phase and comes up with two Aspects that he would have picked up at the time.

Phase Two, Starblazer Legend, is the character's first "legend", equivalent to his first appearance as a character in the Starblazer comic book. This requires coming up with an appropriate and cool Space Opera title for the story, but the story doesn't need to be described beyond summary level. Phases Three and Four, "Guest Star", are where the group interaction comes in. The Story Teller takes each character's legend title, shuffles and hands titles to the group so that each has another character's legend. The player who made the legend in Phase Two and the player who got dealt that title have to decide how the second player appears in the first player's legend. At each step you write down two new Aspects that tie into the events of the story. Step Five is basically the same thing, or it might be a group adventure involving all the characters. This has great advantage of encouraging group cohesion but the drawback that it is difficult to do as a solo activity and unless you already have a gaming group it becomes hard to just do a one-shot without becoming bogged down in Chargen but that can be true of any RPG.

Skills are bought with points, with a Gritty game yielding 15 points, Standard 20 and Heroic 35. They cost according to their bonus (so Average +1 is one point and Superb +5 is five), and still have to be arranged in a pyramid, such that you must have at least one more skill than the level above (so you can't have a Superb skill until you have at least two Great, three Good, four Fair and five Average- which incidentally requires the full 35 points for Heroic level). Any skill not actually bought defaults to Mediocre (+0). Characters also get three, four or five Stunts depending on starting level. Starting equipment includes free access to any equipment on the list of Mediocre or lower cost. Getting something better requires rolling against the item's cost level, against the Resources skill. Thus, if you want such gear, get the Resources skill with your skill points. The skill

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list appears on page 35. The equipment list is in Chapter 5.

Chapter Four, *Careers & Character Types*, goes over optional career types that can be used in character generation to bring to life a PC's experience, and also give specialized Stunts that define the character's abilities. These examples also give a little detail into how Stunts actually work.

For instance, the Explorer path starts with the Stunt 'Maps' (has access to alien territory maps). He can also get the Scout Corps Gear Stunt (+1 to Resources checks once per game). Maps is a prerequisite for 'Interesting Location' (where the character knows the location of an interesting place, which is a guaranteed story seed). Scout Corps Gear and Interesting Location (and thus, Maps) are prerequisites for Scout Ship (the character has his own little one-person ship).

Chapter Five, *Equipment & Gadgets*, provides the equipment catalogue. Again, requisitioning equipment requires a Resources check. And given that most goods are a "Good" price or higher, you again want Resources to be one of your statted abilities. Especially if you want weapons. For a major purchase (namely a starship) there is the option to set up credit payments. Starships also have maintenance costs, which add to the credit payments and mean that major ships are usually outside the resources of a single character or PC group. There are also stats for various combat and non-combat items, and a long shopping list of items from the original *Starblazer* comics that are left as options for the Story Teller to develop or allow or not.

This chapter also contains the rules for engineering/gadgeteering, which requires the "Weird Science" stunt for really special modifications, with even more strange results requiring Weird Science as a prerequisite for "Mad Science".

Chapter Six, *Aspects*, goes over how Aspects are chosen and used. The Aspects system is the FATE system's main strength. Whereas other games would require you to define the details of your character abilities in rules terms, FATE games just have you

pick appropriate character hooks and use the Aspects rules to invoke the details of them, either for or against you.

Chapter Seven, *Skills*, likewise goes over how Skills work, giving a master list of skills on page 98. As with Resources, some of these encompass what other games would define as traits, characteristics, or advantages. Mechanically, while an Aspect can be invoked to modify a skill roll, the character's skill rating is his base modifier for the skill before Aspects, Fate Points, or other modifiers are applied. Thus, you might have a character with an Aspect making him as strong as a "Mandroid" but unless you buy the Might skill at a decent level, you're not going to have any more physical prowess than an average human before the Aspect is applied, and the Aspect can only get you so far.

Some skills can be used for assessment, where investigation of a situation allows the player to discover a temporary Aspect of the environment—or they can also be used to make a declaration, where a character's Knowledge skill can allow the player to instantly create an appropriate Aspect of the environment, as with an archaeologist using his skills to declare that the civilization that built a tomb would have placed a secret compartment in a certain spot, or a criminal using Burglary skill to "case" a scene and assess a useful Aspect of it.

Chapter Eight, *Stunts*, lists Stunts that link to certain Skills and are essentially specializations of skills. That being the case, the book advises that the character not take a Stunt on a skill that he has not bought up to at least Average. "Put more simply, Stunts allow the usual rules about Skills to be broken – or at least bent." Some Stunts are powerful enough to require the spending of a FATE Point, have a prerequisite Stunt (thus creating a Stunt tree) or even a prerequisite Aspect.

For instance, the Alertness skill (which is normally used to determine combat initiative, in addition to making perception rolls) has a "Reflexes" Stunt tree. Buying the "I'm On Top Of It" Alertness stunt allows the character to spend an Fate Points to go first, although the action cannot interrupt a de-

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clared action. I'm On Top Of It is prerequisite for "Ready For Anything" which effectively adds one to the character's Alertness for determining initiative, thus breaking ties, and can be taken multiple times. Ready for Anything is prerequisite for "Cut Off", which allows a character to stop an enemy's defensive 'spin'. Cut Off is prerequisite for "Run Interference" which not merely interrupts an action, it allows the character to hold an action and spend Fate Points to have a target truthfully declare his action, allowing the character to Block that target out of order, if the target attacks him.

So that leads to Chapter Nine, Fate Points. What do they do? Again, they are used to power Aspects (either invoking or tagging them) or some Stunts. You can also spend an Fate Points to create a "generic" adjustment of +1 to a roll; usually Aspects will be superior (+2), but your Aspects may not apply to the situation. You can also spend an Fate Points to "make a minor declaration" and hope the Story Teller accepts it (like 'Dramatic Editing' in *Adventure!*). The book informs the player (and Story Teller/Referee) that the request is more likely to be accepted if it plays with one of your Aspects. Fate Points refresh between adventures, at a rate equal to ten minus the number of Stunts the character has. Otherwise they are earned by having a character's Aspect used against him, which again is called a "compel", as in it compels the character to some direction. And he can of course refuse the compel but that costs an Fate Points instead of earning one.

Then that leads to Chapter Ten, How to do Things. This is basically more detailed analysis of basic task resolution that was first gone over in Chapter Two, with other chapters going into even more specifics (like Starship operation). In doing things, dice are rolled only where there is "an interesting challenge with meaningful consequences". There are three types of die rolls: simple action roll, a contest between two characters (opposed rolls) and a conflict, which is like a contest but "where resolution is not as simple as a contest". Combat is an obvious example of a conflict. In running a conflict

(which could be a combat, negotiation or what have you) the Story Teller/Referee has to frame the scene, which includes detailing any scene Aspects the characters would notice, the area of the scene (loosely defined in 'zones'—where you can punch somebody in the same zone, throw something at another zone, and shoot something two or maybe three zones away), and establish any groups, given that character companions and minions can help their patrons in a conflict. Next, initiative is determined by Alertness score (Empathy skill in social contests). In both social and physical contests, you can attack (which in the social context means using your social skills to put the target at a disadvantage) or manoeuvre (the game, like the source, uses British spelling), essentially changing the combat conditions to set up a more advantaged attack. The manoeuvre itself is either a simple action or attack. It can be used to set up a temporary Aspect on either the target or the scene (like firing into a fuel can to create the Aspect 'On Fire'). Fortunately pp. 224-25 have useful examples of manoeuvres and how they work.

Normally you can do a certain number of free actions (like shouting a warning), full defense (+2 to defenses), hold an action or block. A held action must be taken after your normal initiative but cannot interrupt someone else (except in special cases like the Stunt tree described above). A Block is usually declared in advance for oneself or another character; he rolls the skill he's using to block as "block strength" and any attacker going on the blocked target has to do an opposed roll of his attack vs. the block strength. A supplemental action (like a simple action to draw a weapon before an attack) is a -1 to the primary action roll. There is also the factor of combining skills, which is similar to the Complementary Skills rule in HERO (a secondary skill here granting +1 to the primary roll) but there is also the concept of restrictive skills, where for instance you need to perform a certain extended task and also make Endurance rolls to avoid taking a penalty for fatigue. On that score, an attacker may try to draw out a conflict to force an opponent to use restrictive skills to keep going.

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Again, an attack result plus shifts causes a certain number of physical or mental stress boxes, and usually a PC can only take 5 in a category before being “Taken Out” of the contest in whatever manner is appropriate (if the contest was a gambling bet, the loser cannot give up his mortgages to the winner if that was not a condition of the bet). A consequence can be taken to shave off a number of temporary stress boxes, the price being an Aspect that disadvantages the PC until he can recover. This is on a scale where a “Minor” consequence like Dazed would take off 2 stress and wear off in a few minutes and an “Extreme” consequence can take off a full 8 boxes but will cause a potentially permanent Aspect change like being branded a traitor or having to be rebuilt as a cyborg. The decision is tricky given that stress normally wears off in a few minutes after the consequence anyway, so the question is what the PC wants to sacrifice for the sake of the contest. Note also in this setting that advanced science and medical resources can speed healing of relevant consequences.

Earlier the chapter mentions groups. Minions are usually bad guys who take a certain level of stress (up to three depending on quality) and who gain a certain benefit on team actions (+4 for up to ten minions). Any overflow damage goes to the next minion, allowing the PCs to take out one minion “character” in true cannon-fodder fashion. When a mastermind attacks with his minions he gets their group attack benefit to his own rolls, and they also “soak” any stress applied to him. This means the minions no longer attack independently, but soaking is “more or less their job”. Companions are named characters who are usually loyal sidekicks or lieutenants whose main function in combat is to soak a number of consequence stress levels by being taken out of the conflict. Given that these characters are often taken hostage by bad guys, the game recommends also buying them as Aspects, so as to get Fate Points benefits for having them tagged.

Then the chapter gets into the concepts of overflow and spin. Again, an example of overflow is when an attack does more damage than is required to

take out a minion; the game specifically allows overflow to hit another minion in the group. When this is not possible, or after doing overflow on a “name” character, the overflow basically allows the attacker to take a non-offensive supplemental action. “Spin” is a type of overflow that occurs when the character gets 3 or more shifts, which he can use as a +1/-1 factor on the next action used by anyone in the scene (explaining how the character’s followup either assists him or hurts an attacker).

Chapter Eleven is about Running the Game. *Starblazer Adventures*’ operating principle in requiring die rolls is that the Story Teller/Referee be able to consider the results of both success AND failure. That is, “You want to make sure that both outcomes are interesting, though interesting doesn’t need to mean good”. This means the Story Teller needs to consider the difficulty level of the roll on the adjective ladder, given that ‘shifts’ determine how well the roll was made and give additional benefits that the Story Teller has to determine. Requiring any roll at all implies some chance of failure, but the book advises keeping difficulties low, “so that the number of shifts a character generates on a roll becomes the yardstick you can use to frame how something turns out. The bottom line is that every roll should be fun, whether it succeeds or fails”. Thus setting the difficulty for a player’s assessment or declaration is likewise scaled for whether the results would be interesting, whether the assessment is correct or not. For example if the proposed declaration is amusing, proposes an interesting course of action and has interesting consequences if wrong, a Mediocre difficulty is appropriate.

This chapter also has a time chart, which is important when roll shifts would allow a character to accomplish his task in less time than usual. You can also go up the time chart to get bonuses for taking your time, up to 4 levels for +4. The chapter also has the environmental rules for fighting in Zero G, vacuum (exposed characters ‘suffer a consequence every turn they are exposed to vacuum’), diseases and radiation (‘In the world of space opera, radiation has bizarre effects unlike the real world’). There is a

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good deal of detail on explosives, but it basically boils down to the fact that a character who gets caught in an explosion has to find some cover or suffer critical-to-deadly injury. “Choose very carefully before allowing free and easy use of explosives in your game.”

Chapter Twelve, Character Advancement, shows how to change or advance a PC's abilities. After every game session the Story Teller awards each PC a Skill point. Each bonus in a skill costs 1 point, so you can either buy a +1/Average skill or save to buy up an existing skill, although you are still required to maintain a “skill pyramid” where you must have at least one more skill at the lower rank, which means you have to rearrange as you buy up lower ranks. Each player may then do *one* of the following in addition to getting a Skill point: Replace an Aspect that's not working out, modify an Aspect based on play (so that ‘Hounded by Space Monkeys’ becomes ‘Space Monkey King’), swap two adjacent Skills in the skill pyramid or change one Stunt. At the end of an adventure arc, the character gets to do one of the following *instead* of the other options: Add an Aspect, add a Stunt, or add one to his refresh rate. Remember, the character refreshes Fate Points at a rate equal to ten minus the number of Stunts he has, and he can have a maximum number of Aspects equal to his refresh rate plus Stunts—thus Heroic characters who start with five Stunts also start with ten Aspects, and once you increase either refresh rate or Stunts by one you can later get a new Aspect.

Chapter Thirteen, Basic Scaling, addresses the concept that “Size Matters!”. To address the galactic size factors of space opera, *Starblazer Adventures* creates the Scale mechanic which is not dissimilar from the scale idea in the d6 version of *Star Wars*. The Scale scale resembles the adjective ladder, starting with Tiny (1) being anything smaller than a human, and Galactic (10) being anything larger than a solar system. Generally “combat-capable” equipment and characters can attack anything within two size scales of their own, such that a Small (2) human could attack something Tiny up to Large (4). Other-

wise the attacker in question has to have a special stunt, like an Enormous (6) capital ship having special targeting support allowing it to attack things on a building or character scale from orbit.

Chapter Fourteen gives us Alien Races & Mutations. Again, coming up with a “package deal” for such simply means creating the right Aspect or set of Aspects, (like ‘Veteran of Psychic Wars’). Chapter 32 gives a sample list of races. Here there are guidelines for exotic powers. These usually require taking both a Skill for the special ability (like ‘Fly’) and a Stunt that uses the Skill. Each special ability also requires a “weakness Aspect” as a drawback over and above his quota; examples of such are having no manipulative limbs or double stress damage from a certain source like cold attacks. A character may also take certain racial background Aspects like “Hated by the Centaurans”. It's also mentioned that PCs could be mutated by radiation in the course of the game (Yay!) and gain Mutant Skills starting at Average/+1 level.

This leads to Chapter Fifteen, Star Monsters & War Machines. These are sorta like aliens. But a lot larger. A great example would be “The Doomsday Machine” from classic *Star Trek* or similar Ancient device gone amok. *Starblazer Adventures* describes these entities as Threats. Mechanical threats like automated war relics would use Starship Aspects and Stunts (see below). All Threats can take character special abilities from Chapter 14 in addition to special “Monstrous” special abilities in this chapter. These traits can become truly exotic and varied, mechanically speaking: For instance a sufficiently large monster could basically have a character sheet for each limb (much like how certain video games require you to take out each tentacle of the sea monster before taking out the main body) and have a weakness Aspect of a “Weak Spot” where the creature can be attacked directly.

Then you have the similarly epic-scale Chapter Sixteen, Star Empires & Battle Fleets, which details not only getting characters involved in organization-level scenarios (e.g. characters in the military) but possibly running organizations *as* characters. For

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such, you start with the Scale rules (where Tiny is a village or organization up to 100 people and Scale 9 is a 'Star Empire'). An organization gets Aspects times Scale rating and Skill points equal to four times Scale (so an 'Enormous' continent-level nation would have six Aspects and twenty-four Skill points). There is also a factor called Scope: the 'reach' or sphere of influence of the organization, which is independent of standard Scale, such that a small-Scale organization of assassins could have a Scope of 6 reflecting a range across the galaxy. Aspects include the likes of "Don't Turn Your Back On Them" and "Technopriesthood" while Skills are those appropriate to operations, like Arms (armed forces), Unity (internal discipline) and Trade (trade skills). Some organizations have special skills that cannot be used at default level and must be bought, like "Assassination". Skill points can also be used to buy the organization's property as Holdings, with invested points going towards special qualities like fortification or size.

Just as organizations have character-like Aspects and Skills, they also have stress levels, equal to 5 plus the relevant Skill (physical Stress being equal to 5+ Security or Arms). It's just that the consequences of conflict are on an appropriate scale. Physical consequences would be things like losing a war or armed revolts, while Composure/social stresses could cause riots or internal coups. Likewise conflicts themselves are resolved with organization skills like Assassination or Arms (or Diplomacy). These options are also extrapolated for mass combat rules, with further options for players using their Leadership skills on an organizational level, or even helping to create conspiracies between organizations the way they help devise each other's PCs.

Hover Cars, Robots and Droids is Chapter Seventeen. "What space opera game would be complete without a bunch of anti-gravity patrol cars, lumbering war machines, killer robots or android replacement parts for your heroes?" As in designing an alien character, becoming a "Mandroid" is basically a matter of picking the right Aspects. Like "Shiny

body parts make me look sexy!" These can be added to an existing character (akin to a mutation or 'radiation accident') and each body part replaced with cyborg/Mandroid units gives a "free" Mandroid Stunt, but each extra Stunt reduces the PC's refresh rate. If this causes the refresh rate to go to 0 the PC becomes an emotionless "Extra" (NPC). You can also use character rules to create actual Robots (although robots with a Scale over 2 are built with Starship rules). This leads to the description of Vehicles, which again work somewhat like limited characters, having speed ratings on a ladder (which is on a higher scale than character speed) and the potential for vehicle skills, skills in this case including traits like Armour and Manoeuvre.

There are no less than *five* chapters devoted to starships. Chapter Eighteen, Starship Creation, starts with the ship being created with the same collaborative process as a PC, with players designing their ship's Aspects over the course of its history, which may even lead to PC Aspects, like "My Girlfriend Married a Bad Guy Because of This Damn Ship". Page 310 lists a range of starship types, each with a Scale ranging from 3 to 7, stress levels (3 to 5 in each category), a skill pyramid, and Aspects. Chapter Nineteen, Starship Systems, Skills & Stunts, parallels the next phases of character creation. Much like regular characters, starships use Skills to simulate innate traits like Manoeuvre (turn mode, etc.) and fighter bays. Some of these "skills", like Shields or Ablative Armor, can take consequences in battle in order to avoid stress to ship systems or structure. Unlike most character Skills, if a ship does not have a Starship Skill, it does not default to Mediocre; either it has a specific system or it doesn't. (Likewise, character skills used for ships, like Starship Piloting, are highly technical and do not default; however these skills assume a certain amount of 'cross-training' such that a character who has one of these skills can roll another Starship use skill with -2 to the roll.) In this context, Stunts are variations applied to ship systems (Skills). For instance, Cargo Hold is considered a Skill for this purpose, and its Stunts include Cargo Jettison Plates, Stasis Pods, etc. Chapter

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Twenty, *Starship Aspects*, is self-explanatory. Examples include “Cantankerous Old Git” and “Who in God’s Name Painted it Pink?”. Chapter Twenty-One, *How To Do Things With Starships*, of course parallels Chapter Ten. Ships require crews (usually Extras) or they take a penalty of -1 for “autopilot” actions. Actions take place in zones, but these zones can have a potentially intergalactic scale. Examples are given with little hand-drawn maps. In conflict resolution for space battles, the normal sequence starts with framing the scene, as usual, but also requires a detection phase before initiative is determined (any ships still undetected by this point automatically win initiative if they take action on the first exchange). Actions during an exchange include special options like boarding parties, damage control, etc. Electronic warfare (EWS) attacks can be used against ship systems rather than structure (akin to using a social skill to attack another character’s Composure). Ranged attacks use a ship’s weapon as an opposed roll against the defender’s *Starship Piloting* or manoeuvring. Damage is usually taken to a ship’s stress but will be absorbed by defensive Skills as mentioned above. A PC also has the option of spending a FATE Point to take a consequence for the ship, reflecting some shipboard event like an explosion that injures the character. Losing all Ship System stress renders the vessel an inoperative hulk. Losing all Structure Stress means the ship actually breaks up or explodes. There are of course rules for disengaging, and evacuating a doomed ship. Or if the ship survives engagement, there are rules for repairs. Thankfully, there is an extended example for how ship combat (a PC ship against pirates) actually works. Finally, *Starship Templates*, Chapter Twenty-Two, gives detailed examples of starcraft of various sizes and purposes.

Chapter Twenty-Three, *Collaborative Campaign Creation*, is a natural extension of the FATE games’ concept of collaborative character building. It includes both the idea of players “brainstorming” on a sheet of paper to create new elements on a campaign map (thus showing what setting elements the players

want to see) and creating a campaign area like characters, where the galaxy or a particular star empire can be given its own Aspects under the phased process like PCs.

Chapter Twenty-Four is *Plot Stress*, as in plot actions that affect the campaign, group or certain characters. For example, a game based on “Spacestation Theta 9” has a set of stress levels, and when each layer of stress is exhausted, it creates a level of consequence (Minor consequence being the shield generators go out, Extreme consequence being that pirates take advantage, board the station, and set its reactor to explode). Stress boxes are taken out for player actions like tagging setting Aspects, investigating the saboteur on the station, etc. The players are not actually aware of these stress levels; they serve as a guide to the Story Teller/Referee for how to run the plot. The book says that the simplest way to design such a chart is to add up all the encounters the Story Teller/Referee has planned for the campaign and equate that to campaign stress, so that if there are going to be seven pivotal encounters, that’s 7 boxes on the plot stress track.

Chapter Twenty-Five, *Plot Generator & the Adventure Funnel*, starts with a series of tables for plot elements, not dissimilar to the random plot generators used in some 5th Edition HERO sourcebooks, but considerably more extensive, including NPC types, locations, “Space Hazzards” and escaping asteroid fields. The *Adventure Funnel* (credited to Dr. Rotwang!) is another brainstorming tool, where you write down the adventure goal and then think of ways to complicate it. The example is where the goal is to deliver a rock band’s album to a buyer on a distant planet, and the complications include a government coup that banned rock music, and the little fact that the copies turn out to be counterfeits.

Chapter Twenty-Six is the *Planet Generator*. Self-explanatory.

Chapter Twenty-Seven, *Twisted Tips*, is simply the Story Teller advice chapter. One interesting example is, “Don’t read the rule book during a session. I’m serious. ... Remember this is an adventure game, not a maths lesson”. As in *SotC*, there is a basic plot

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formula given and explained, including elements like the Certain Doom, surprise Twist (your kid brother is the villain) or Breakneck Escape. As in some TV series, the formula is a base to start with and can be moved away from once you've become familiar with things.

Chapter Twenty-Eight, *Starblazer* Settings, actually goes over the comic series setting used by the game system, which is not terribly consistent, but the stories are supposed to take place over a vast period of galactic time, such that several eras and forms of government come and go. The book breaks the period down into three eras, The Trailblazer Era of Earth's first explorations, the Empire Era of Human-led government clashing with aliens, and the Cosmopolitan Era, or "Who Elected the Guy With Two Heads?", where humans are just one race in the main galactic civilization.

Chapter Twenty-Nine, *Starblazer* Worlds, is basically a "galactic gazetter". Planets named in the comics are described along with the issue(s) where they appeared.

Chapter Thirty, *Starblazer* Legends, gives summaries of plots from the *Starblazer* comics for use as campaign ideas, such as "Deathwheel", taken from a *Starblazer* issue involving a sort of Cold War infiltration mission to investigate the advanced starfighter design of an enemy empire.

Chapter Thirty-One, *Starblazer* Heroes, gives basic histories (no stats) on actual characters from the *Starblazer* comics (including a Space Marine commander named Steven Martin).

Chapter Thirty-Two, Alien Races, gives templates for alien races, including major examples from the comics. This includes suggested Aspects and examples of how they work. For instance, the Laama are a race that actually exist in a faster-than-light dimension, accessing our universe through advanced technology. Their "Super Tech" Aspect can be invoked to figure out any other technology, while it can be compelled to make the character reject using 'something as primitive as this'.

Chapter Thirty-Three, Monsters, Minions & Mad Scientists, gives rules for various threats, including creating traps as characters (remember, 'In *Starblazer* you can treat everything as a character') using either physical stress to disable them or investigative skills to overcome their "Secrets" (as opposed to Composure). There are also writeups for threats from the comics like Arcturan Killer Robot, the Megaloi race, the Drifter of Darga and the "Really Bad Guy" Algol the Terrible.

Chapter Thirty-Four, Adventure Seeds and Campaign Starters, goes over advice for starting a *Starblazer* campaign, creating starting PCs, and running a sample scenario. Then there's a long list of various adventure ideas.

Then there are the appendices: Appendix One, *Starblazer* Issues, reviews the comic series as it started in 1979, giving a list of story/issue titles per year. Appendix Two is the Rules Summary, with a very useful list of references including the basic rules with "the ladder", the time chart, and shifts rules in sidebars. Appendix Three, Useful Tables, is sort of an appendix to the last appendix, including extensive lists of the various Skills, career types, etc. Appendix Four is a copy set of Sheets for a character, a vehicle, an organization, and a much-needed sample organization sheet for the Star Patrol. Appendix Five is Maps. Maps going to what, I'm not totally sure. But they're maps. Then Appendix Six is the Design Notes, or "what the hell was I thinking when I said yes to writing this!". Finally you have an Index which includes a "How Do I..." reference list before the more conventional index reference.

Summary

Is *Starblazer Adventures* worth the \$49.95 price tag, other than bullet stopping bludgeoning device (I have no complaints regarding the binding). For it contains an RPG, making it a fine bargain much like the main rulebook of *Traveller*, it a vast toolkit filled with many useful ideas. Is it a replacement for *Traveller*? Sadly, unless you are younger (which includes young-at-heart aspect) than me then no. However, it's fantastically well done, from the inspiring artwork to the helpful presentation, and I wish all of my RPGs were as expertly crafted.

In A Store Near You

Kwil

by Jeff Zeitlin

Some material based on ideas from Zed Potts.

Kwil (*neroquilanserine*) is an experimental drug used for treating emotional or psychological disorders believed to have neurological components. It is refined from a substance derived from certain marsh plants on the frontier world of Porstan, where it is used for hunting the native unicorn sea-snake, prized for its iridescent skin. As the Porstani deliberately limit their technology to pre-industrial levels, the substance is applied as a paste to the harpoons used for the hunt; it serves as a low-grade neurotoxin to the sea-snakes.

The sap of the marsh plants is mixed with local seawater and the result poured into bowls carved out of local sedimentary rock. This is then heated both by placing the bowl over a heat source and by putting hot pebbles into the mixture. As it is heated, it thickens, and changes color from clear through yellow and amber to brown; when it turns brown and has thickened enough that it no longer readily pours, it is considered ready for application.

This paste may then be refined using any of several methods to produce the drug. The unrefined substance can be synthesized at TL8 (and then refined); the refined drug can be directly synthesized at TL12. The refined drug is a clear liquid which may be administered either by injection or orally.

Effects of Kwil

Refined drug: In most patients, the refined drug reduces the intensity of experienced emotions; there is also evidence of increased cognitive ability. Negative effects observed include reduced ability to correctly judge spatial relationships and a subjective belief in the enhancement of reflexes or other physical abilities (demonstrated false). The effects last for 2D hours. In approximately 8% of patients (*roll 3– on 2D*), the drug appears only to act as a hypnotic, with the patient being placed into a state of extreme suggestibility lasting 1D hours. Evidence of addictivity is not as yet confirmed, but the data are suggestive of psychological addiction. The refined drug is sold to medical facilities at approximately Cr50/dose.

Unrefined precursor: The unrefined product may also be dried (usually in vacuum) and the resulting solid crushed under mild pressure, producing small brown flakes. It has no medical use in this form, but is sold “on the street”. It is, naturally, known as “flake” as well as “Kwil”. If a flake is crushed to powder and inhaled, or dissolved in ethyl alcohol and ingested, the user will, depending on the actual dose, experience lethargy, stupor, or unconsciousness for 1D-3 hours, followed by 1D hours of full-sensory and synesthetic hallucination. Users of “flake” have also reported feeling “detached” and some users of artistic inclinations claim that their creativity is “released”. No long-term studies of “street” users have as yet been undertaken, but some long-term users have turned up with neurological damage. The “street” price is generally around Cr10/dose where easily available and not illegal; where supply is restricted or illegal, prices easily rise above Cr250/dose.

Kwil in Adventures

- If “flake” is illegal (even if the medical form is legal), the PCs may be letting themselves in for encounters with either police or the underworld – or both – if they attempt to import unrefined product, or are otherwise found in possession of it.
- Powdered “flake” introduced into the air systems of a starship just before breaking out of Jump can leave the ship vulnerable to pirates on breakout. “Flaked” crew and passengers may not be able to react effectively against pirates boarding the ship, even if not unconscious (“flaked out”), and the subsequent hallucinations may leave them unable to recall any useful details about the attack. It doesn’t take much in the way of precautions to defeat such an attack, though...
- The PCs may find “flaking” unprepared opposition to be an effective and nonlethal way to temporarily avert a threat, possibly long enough to accomplish their objective. Of course, if done outdoors, the attempt could backfire if they’ve neglected to take precautions...

Feedback

We'd like to hear what you think of Freelance Traveller, both the magazine and the website!

We want to know what you think of the basic idea of Freelance Traveller as a magazine, not just a website; what you think of the articles we publish, and how we can make our magazine better and how we can make our website better.

We want to know what kind of articles you want to see, and what you *don't* want to see.

We want to know what you think of our look, and how we can make it better.

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:

You can send e-mail to us at feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

You can use the feedback form on our website, at

<http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.

If you're a member of the SFRPG Forums, we monitor them, so you can post comments in the **Traveller Fanzines** section, at <http://www.sfrpg.org.uk/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>. Please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

If you're a member of the Citizens of the Imperium forums, we monitor them as well, so you can post comments in the **Lone Star** section, at <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>. As with the SFRPG forums, please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

Traveller on the Internet

Freelance Traveller sponsors a channel for Traveller fans on the Undernet IRC network, and RPGRealms sponsors one on the Otherworlders IRC network—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

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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. It's generally quiet in both channels—but you can change that, and make both channels “jumping” places to hang out!

Traveller on the Internet

After a long absence due to technical problems that turned out to be somewhat expensive and time-consuming to fix, the Freelance Traveller forums have returned! Because of the way they were implemented originally, no messages or user profiles were lost, and you can pick up where you left off when we had to take them off-line to identify and address the problems. They're at the same address, <http://forums.freelancetraveller.com>, and there is no change whatsoever in the ways you can access them—or, sadly, in the admitted deficiencies in the

The Freelance Traveller Forums

software—that's another long-term project that we're working on as we have the time. If you're visiting the forums for the first time, please see our FAQ at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/forums.html>, and our Acceptable Use Policy at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/ftforumsaup.html>.

We're currently looking into an alternative web interfaces, but don't let the current one stop you from participating—we also support email and usenet-style (nntp) access.

