

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



And so it ends. Not the magazine; merely the first complete year of our publication. We'll be continuing into the new year without a break, and we anticipate bringing new capabilities to our website to go along with the continued publication. We've started laying the groundwork for some of those capabilities, and that's why this month's issue may seem a bit slim.

First, we'll be bringing back the Freelance Traveller Forums, with a new look, more like what users have come to expect from forum systems, like phpBB or vBulletin. Initially, the new forums won't support access via email, news/nnntp, or RSS, but we eventually expect to bring all of those capabilities back as well. Discussion of virtually every aspect of Freelance Traveller will be welcome there, and certain departments—most notably, Essay Question—will be primarily on the Forums, with excerpts being printed in the magazine itself. Members will also be able to submit articles

to the magazine through the Forums, and to critique proposed articles before they get published.

We're also going to resume updating the Published Product list—as a searchable database, based on selectable criteria. Returned results will also include links to any reviews of the product on Freelance Traveller.

We'd like to reinvigorate live chat in the coming year; Freelance Traveller officially sponsors the #Traveller channel on Undernet (to the extent that any channel on Undernet is officially sponsored), and *de facto* sponsors #LoneStar on Otherworlders (the network was formerly known as Psionics, and the channel was originally sponsored by QLI). We'll be trying to bring back topical chats, possibly with featured guests, and you're welcome to use either channel as a meeting place for IRC-based roleplaying sessions. If you have ideas for chat topics, or other ideas for reinvigorating live Traveller chat, do please let us know.

Mongoose Traveller Book 8: Dilettante

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Mongoose Traveller Book 8: Dilettante. Pete Nash.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
94pp, softcover
US\$24.99/UK£16.99

The eighth generic career book for Traveller focusses on the independently wealthy Traveller.

On the Shelf

As with any generic career book, the word *Traveller* and the arrow are green, on an unillustrated black background. The subtitle on the first printing is “Honesty’s a Fool”, the same as for *Scoundrel*, but this is clearly both inappropriate for this book, and an oversight on the part of the editorial staff at Mongoose.

Initial Impression

The book follows the standard form for Mongoose *Traveller* career books. A variety of relevant careers is followed by information, rules, guidelines, equipment, and campaign material to go with characters developed using the book. As has become standard, the material is well-organized and easily read.

On Closer Inspection

Unlike previous versions of *Traveller*, the handling of the wealthy Mongoose Traveller is fairly comprehensive—if you’ve seen it done by someone with oodles of money in real life, chances are that it’s accommodated in this book. Twenty-one career paths in seven careers cover everything from the sports star to the talk-show host to the court sycophant to the adventurer to the collector to...

Social Standing becomes more than just an indication of noble rank and/or a simple reaction roll modifier; it is expanded to affect the character’s recognition and influence, and that in turn is affected by the character’s area of influence (both in terms of geography and what the character does). Rules for modifying your Social Standing—and what happens if you fail to maintain it—bring an additional dimension to in-character play.

Wealth is more than just cash—and when mus-



TRAVELLER

Book 8: Dilettante

tering out, a character doesn’t roll on a simple Cash table for some number of liquid credits; instead, an income-generating portfolio is built (and the rules for doing so encourage the possibility of portions of the portfolio becoming adventure hooks).

Fame can be used by the character—or used against the character. The famous entertainer character might be able to talk the grav bike dealer into just giving him a bike in exchange for an endorsement of the dealership—but when he trashes a bar in a bit of overdone carousing and is arrested, his face will be all over the papers, and (if the local social climate is chilly enough) he may not be able to talk his way out of criminal charges or get off scot-free. All of the good stuff—media access, bypassing authority, freebies-for-endorsements, preferential treatment, contacts in high places, etc.—are balanced by the bad—kidnap and extortion attempts, the chance of addiction, mental breakdown, unwanted media or fan attention, public embarrassment at every faux-pas, and so on.

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Critics' Corner

(Continued from page 2)

Entertainment is part of the lifestyle of the characters generated in these rules, and this book outlines how to include it—both throwing parties, and attending them. Dinner and dancing at Cr500 per person just barely shows up on the radar; thousands of credits per day at a resort is more like it, and tens of thousands of credits per day isn't out of the question.

You can also spend some of those credits on Stuff. Expensive Stuff. High-quality Stuff that you want to be seen in. You can afford the best, so get

the best. This book list some of the best, and the kind of prices you'll pay for it. Stuff isn't just the little things; it's the big things, too—like the 100-ton J2 yacht. And the 2500m² home on a couple of dozen hectares of land. And the staff to maintain the home and crew the starship. And so on...

Summary

Money may not be able to buy happiness, but an awful lot of it can buy an awful lot. It doesn't take much, however, to buy this book, and doing so isn't a bad idea if you want to add the wealthy Traveller to your campaign.

Doing It My Way

High-Tech Melee Weapons

By Ken Murphy

For several years I had wanted to include Superdense weapons as something of a “magic weapon” analog in my *Traveller* game.

If the character had done something remarkable during character generation, like receiving the SEH, or retiring after 7 or more terms of exemplary service, I'd usually decide that one of the things received when a weapon benefit reared its head, would be a Superdense melee weapon; most often in the form of a cutlass for the marines, or a hanger (essentially a cutlass under a different name) for the other military services. In addition, both veterans and non-military types that managed to have their SOC increased to 11+ during character generation would also be eligible for one of these.

So SD weapons were in. I just needed to decide on their differences from the book-standard melee weapons, so I broke out *Striker* and checked the values for assorted materials.

Looking at the table, I was reminded that there were other high tech materials besides Superdense, and I suddenly remembered reading where the Body Pistol was usually constructed of ceramics and the like to act as a sort of “stealth” gun to escape standard detection. Hmmm, constructing weapons out of ceramics and other composites to avoid detection

makes a lot of sense to me—certainly one that could easily be applied to melee weapons. Okay, so now it seemed both SD and Composites would be included along with the book-standard stuff.

But if you're including those, I can hear *someone* ask, what about Crystaliron then? Okay, I guess Crystaliron would logically be another option, unless of course, you're working under the assumption that the TL 10 material is already the book standard.

So looking at the *Striker* table, using hard steel as a reference point, things seemed to break down like so:

Striker Materials Table

Material and TL	Relative Weight	Relative Cost
Hard Steel—5	1.0	1.0
Lightweight Composite—9	0.875	3.5
Crystaliron—10	1.25	4.5
Superdense—12	1.875	7.0
Bonded Superdense—14	1.875	14.0

Out of curiosity, I decided to look at the *Mega-Traveller* armor material table to see what that yielded. Serves me right for looking in the first place, as, aside from me being able to reliably set values of 1 for both the weight and price of Hard Steel, it held nothing in common with *Striker*'s table.

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Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 3)

MegaTraveller Materials Table

Material and TL	Relative Weight	Relative Cost
Hard Steel—5	1.0	1.0
Lightweight Composite—9	0.39	1.6
Crystaliron—10	0.31	1.1
Superdense—12	0.26	1.0
Bonded Superdense—14	0.14	1.0

I was in a pickle, I'll tell you, but then I remembered having a copy of *Fire, Fusion, and Steel* on disc, so I decided to check that to see if its information would lean one way or another toward either of the above-listed tables (or whether I'd have yet another set of conclusions).

Fire, Fusion, and Steel Materials Table

Material and TL	Relative Weight	Relative Cost
Hard Steel—5	1.0	1.0
Lightweight Composite—9	0.75	4.5
Crystaliron—10	1.25	4.5
Superdense—12	1.875	7.0
Bonded Superdense—14	1.875	14.0

It seemed *FF&S* matched *Striker* pretty closely, so I dumped the *MegaTraveller* info as the most

unlike of the three (even though it would have given lighter weights for things), and ended up going with the *Striker* values, as the TL 9 and 10 materials actually had different prices according to *Striker*.

Working from the assumption that book-standard gear is essentially some form of unremarkable, though durable TL 9 (or below) Hard Steel, I figured, along with the weight and price adjustments for the different materials, there ought to be some cool, rulesy stuff attached to the use of each, so here goes:

Light Weight Composites are durable and can keep an edge.

Besides weight and price differences, Composite weapons have the same performance as standard weapons in most cases, however, because of their lack of weight when used in bludgeoning weapons, they have 1 less Pen and do 1pt less Damage than standard.

Besides weight and price differences, Crystaliron weapons have 1 better Pen than standard. Some of the better-quality Crystaliron weapons also have 1 better Block than standard.

Besides weight and price differences, Super Dense weapons have 1 1/2x Pen, have 1 better Block, and deliver 1 better Damage than standard. Some of the better quality SD weapons have 2 better Block than standard.

Of course, better quality means higher prices, with real quality items being out of the ball park.

Active Measures

The Umbra Retribution

By Michael Brown

Synopsis: A disgruntled former employee of a mining firm hatches a revenge plot targeting its most profitable product.

Equipment required: a starship.

Setting: A vacuum world with UWP POP 1 or 2.

Players' Information

The group is approached by Harlan Li, a former employee of a large mining corporation who claims to have been let go through no fault of his own. He is

Getting Off The Ground

extremely bitter about this turn of events and has decided to exact revenge on his former employer. To enlist the PCs' help, he divulges a top company secret: the manufacturing process behind a popular and expensive type of synthetic gemstone.

The jewels are the processed remnants of a biological coolant secreted by the planet's only native life form, a small silicoid creature resembling an oversized louse. The coolant keeps the creatures from succumbing to the primary's blistering heat as they cross exposed areas to reach distant shadows, their natural habitat. Once in shadow, the creature

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excretes the coolant, where it hardens and crystallizes in the cold vacuum into pearlescent precursor crystals. These crystals are then harvested using a system of small “gem farms” set up on a vacuum world devoted to their fabrication and refined using small fusion ovens into the precious gems. Proper cultivation and refinement of the gems processes them to a fiery iridescent finish, increasing their value by a factor of hundreds. The entire process is somewhat similar to the harvesting and processing of Terran pearls. After creation and refining, the corporation sells the gems through company-owned retail arms. This allows it to control exports and prices. Profits from the jewels make up a large part of the corporation’s finances.

The exact locations of the farms and the world on which they are based are corporate secrets, but Li is willing to reveal these, too. He proposes that the PCs travel to the world, sneak onto one of the farms, load up on precursor—the processing-ready raw minerals of the valuable gemstones—and get them offworld, where Li can complete the refinement process using equipment aboard the ship. In return for the information and the refined jewels (which could amount to a lot of money), Li asks for a share of the booty and passage offworld.

Li warns the team that the corporation is zealous in protecting its assets; company patrols have orders to kill intruders caught attempting to steal precursors or gems.

Referee’s Information

Although it’s not necessary to the adventure, the GM can prepare a map of the world’s surface; which is extensively marked with craters, ridges, and plain-like maria similar Earth’s moon. In fact, a map of the Moon, easily obtained from a number of sources, can substitute in a pinch.

The company’s six gem farms are scattered about the globe, in areas brightly lit by the primary, such as atop ridges, or on maria. The mining corporation’s headquarters is situated on the world’s south pole. Li will suggest the group hit the farm closest to the

spaceport, but of course the final decision is theirs.

Each farm is several acres in size and consists of a large pressurized shelter, or “farmhouse”, a number of shallow pits bordered by low walls and movable sunshades within the pits. Each shade is large enough to shade large areas of the pits, which hold thousands of the tiny silicoids. In response to production demands, the pits can be alternately exposed to the sun and then shaded off, causing the creatures within to produce and then excrete their coolant. The Company “farmers” then collect the resulting precursors, sending most of them for security reasons to offworld refineries, where the finished gems are produced. A pound of precursor is required to produce one gram of processed jewels.

5D “farmers” and 1d+1 guards staff each site. The guards all have company-issued vacc suits and carry vacuum-sealed laser rifles. They move around the planet a lot, so they may not number the same each time a site is visited. On each farm, the guards patrol the perimeter and the farm buildings in shifts, so one-half to one-third of the guards are on duty at any given time. The others can easily be radioed for backup if necessary. If a guard spots an intruder, he or she will immediately open fire while calling for backup. The company-provided vacc suits all have a distinctive color and equipment pattern that helps distinguish friend from foe.

The precursors are stored in sealed containers inside the farmhouse. Bins accompanying farmers to the “fields” are kept out and uncovered for convenience. Each bin holds at any given time 5D kilograms of precursor (capacity 30 kilograms). Each PC can obtain one bin every 15 minutes.

The farms do not use electronic security, depending on the secrecy of their location as a defense against electronic intrusion. Depending on their efforts to remain unobserved and stealthy, the group may or may not be detected; every 30 minutes, throw 9+ for the PCs to encounter at least one farm worker. A further throw of 1 or 2 on 1D results in a run in with a guard. Farmers will immediately summon the guards while trying to escape; guards will immedi-

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ately open fire while summoning backup, which arrives in 6D combat rounds. Guards will only refrain from opening fire if they have some reason to suspect they are attacking company personnel or if vital equipment may be damaged.

Typical Farm Guard 878677; Vacc Suit; Laser Rifle-2, Recon-1, Vacc Suit-2, Zero-G Cbt-2

The adventurers' pay will be directly impacted by the amount of precursor they gather. One kilogram of precursor refines into one gram of gem, which subsequently sells for Cr1000 per gram.

As always, there is the possibility things don't go exactly as planned. The GM is encouraged to impose one or more of the following complications:

1. Li is lying. His firing was justified; the result of a report by a former coworker who works at the very farm Li has supplied the location for. While the adventurers are busy collecting their ill-gotten gains, Li plans to find and kill the coworker, fleeing the planet on the team's ship.

2. Unknown to Li, he is being watched; the company is expecting him to carry out this sort of plan. As soon as the company knows for sure which farm the group is headed for, the guards in that location will be alerted and will be waiting for Li and the

team upon their arrival. Li will be arrested for corporate espionage, and the team will be killed.

3. Li's coworker (mentioned in 1, above) is actually casting attention on Li to cover up misdeeds of his own. He knew Li would be bitter at his dismissal and would concoct this sort of revenge plan. The coworker will see to it that Li is killed "trying to rob Company assets along with a band of hooligans". During the excitement, of course, the traitor will be using the farmhouse's computer to transfer ill-gotten gains and sensitive documents to his personal account.

4. Li is actually a company security agent who is using the group to test new procedures designed to stop this sort of plot. He will intervene to prevent the team from being killed and pay them handsomely for their unwitting involvement.

5. As 4, except Li will not intervene, and will allow the team to be killed.

6. The targeted farm has for some reason not been meeting its production quotas lately, and there are little precursor to be gained. Throw 1D, multiply by ten and subtract the result as a percentage from the amounts stated above. Otherwise the scenario runs as outlined above.

The GM must 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, nobody replied to previous questions, so we just add two new questions.

New questions for this month:

When creating adventures or campaigns, do you prefer having an extensive and highly detailed universe as background, just a few broad strokes for concepts, or minimal or no background at all? Why?

How do you react to a game background when it assumes or imposes a political, social, or economic premise that you know, because of your area of expertise, is completely and utterly wrong/impossible?

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Essay Question

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Previous questions, not yet answered:

What books—or series of books—that you’ve read would you consider “Travelleresque”? Why? Would you recommend them to someone who wanted to know what Traveller is like, but couldn’t play at the time she asked?

It is widely held that there are three overall styles of gaming: Gamism, Narrativism, and Simulationism (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNS_Theory). Which do you think is best supported by Traveller, and which do you prefer?

Why? (Your answer to this may be a reasoned refutation of the validity of the GNS model.)

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.

In A Store Near You

The Gun Shop

ST Arms P-12

by Colin Campbell

Though mostly forgotten now, Survivor Tech LIC released a series of sealed, non-reusable firearms intended to supply new colonies or corporations in harsh conditions with reliable means of protection with minimal maintenance required. For the most part the carbine and rifle style weapons were declared too inaccurate for hunting and too low powered for protection from dangerous predators at close ranges. Additional concerns raised about the quality of production and risks to firers caused by chamber explosions caused the product line and the company to collapse and almost completely vanish - one portion of the product line was purchased and continued.

ST Arms (a wholly owned subsidiary of Blackhawk Industries, LIC of Rhylanor) now produces the ST Arms P-12 - a small, disposable autopistol marketed as a reliable, maintenance free weapon designed for use in hostile environments.

After purchase, the user need merely tear open the vacuum sealed package, remove the one-time trigger lock, and the weapon is ready to be fired. It comes fully loaded with an 11 round, 8mm magazine sealed in the pistol grip, and a single round chambered (for a total of 12 shots). The trigger is double action, there is no external slide to cock and there is

no safety to release. The weapon itself is a polymer and aluminum frame - extremely lightweight but not suitable for extended service (or reloading), and the shells are caseless so there is no ejection port. The whole weapon is designed to be fired and then disposed of in a manufacturer approved facility. A sealable carrier envelope is included in the packaging, allowing the weapon to be safely wrapped and bulk shipped to a proper facility.

The P-12 is a small, flat, black plastic pistol, with no external ports or catches, save the trigger and the muzzle (a bonus could should be applied for attempts to conceal this weapon). All seams on the weapon have been sealed during manufacturing. The production quality has been variable; better-quality runs have been used as air-dropped weapons for resistance fighters. The poorest-quality production runs—sadly, this appears to be the majority of them, recently—somehow manage to find their way into the ‘grey’ market, where they are often popular among gangs looking for cheap firepower, criminals looking for a disposable weapon, and transients or people of limited means looking for any weapon at all. The grey-market weapons are somewhat unsafe for the firer; there is no way to clear jams or misfires as the weapon is not strippable (at least not in a way that will allow it to be used again). The rate of fire is

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In A Store Near You

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slightly slower than an average autopistol, due to the harsh trigger pull, and range penalties are increased because of the substandard barrel. ST Arms does not advertise in exploration or speculative type venues, instead focussing on low-income areas and other “grey” media sources that might spread information about this weapon’s less savory uses. This weapon could be reloaded by a sufficiently skilled gunsmith, but most gunsmiths would have nothing to do with this firearm.

Mongoose Trav stats:

TL: 8, Pistol skill, Dmg: 3d6-3, Auto: 3, Recoil: 0, Mass: .2 kg, Magazine: 12, Cost 110 Cr

Ranges: Personal -1, Close +0, Short -2, Medium -4, Long -6

As the weapon is poorly made with minimal safety features, an optional malfunction table may be used for it:

On a natural 2 while firing, roll 2d6

2 - Gun explodes while firing, user take 2d6 damage, gun is destroyed

3-4 - Firing chamber cracks, no damage to user but the gun is destroyed.

5 - Rifling damaged by stress fracture or shoddy bullet - all future shots at -1

6-7 - Round jams in chamber, gun is unfireable (an out-of-combat Mechanic check may free the jam, or may cause a cook-off)

8+ No malfunction

Information Center

Free Trader

By Neil D. Parker

In Free Trader you take on the role of the captain of a trading starship, travelling from system to system, you must try to accumulate as much wealth as possible before your merchant contract expires.

You can customize your starship and improve your trade-related skills in order to maximize your profits.

The trading area is a randomly-generated subsector so the game is different each time you play.

The program uses mechanics from CT and MT, and has been authorized for release by kind permission of Marc Miller.

Computer Connection

Download Free Trader from

http://www.vantour.org/products/free_trader/free_trader.htm

NAME: Free Trader

VERSION: 1.0.1

AUTHOR: Neil D. Parker

SYSTEM: Any Java capable (requires Java SE Runtime Environment 1.6.0 or better)

COST: Free (program has been released into the public domain - except the portions that are copyrighted by FFE)

SIZE: 224 Kbytes

Fifth Imperium

At the time this issue of Freelance Traveller “went to press”, Shannon Appelcline had not posted a new Fifth Imperium column at RPG.Net. Fifth Imperium will return to Freelance Traveller for the month following the next posted column at RPG.Net.

Multimedia Gallery

The Burrowwolf

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

Pawel-class Modular Cutter

by Ewan Quibell (based on a design by Alan Spik)

The *Pawel*-class 50 ton Modular Cutter was designed by Walisak Yards to be a direct replacement for the *Cumin*-class Cutter with the ability to carry different 30 ton modules. Its utility as a starport spacecraft has been shown in its current 10 year production run, and while demand for the *Pawel* is not strong it is consistent. The class is currently operating at all starports on Home and New Home and sporadically throughout the County. The County Navy is currently evaluating the class for possible use. Manoeuvre over 1.5G without a module installed will cause buckling to the cutter's spine.

What has seen some demand is different types of modules for the cutter to carry. The standard module supplied is the basic cargo module.

The module draws 0.828 Mw from the Cutter to provide for basic environment and life-support. The six connections for reefer cargo containers increase the draw to 1.152 Mw allowing the remaining 0.268 Mw from the Cutter to recharge their batteries as needed. This allows all batteries to be recharged to full capacity in 38.7 hours or less.

Specifications: Basic Cargo Module for Pawel-class Modular Cutter

CraftID: Modular Cutter Standard Cargo Module, TL10, MCr 2.608758
Hull: 27/68, Disp=30, Conf=3SL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=169.956 tons, Loaded=570.546 tons
Power: 0.828 Mw draw
Loco: -
Comm: -
Sensors: -
Off: Hardpoints=1
Def: -
Control: Control=Dynamic Link x18
Accom: Environ=basic env, basic ls
Other: Cargo=400.59 klitres, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint
Comment: Construction Time=24 weeks single, 20 weeks multiple
6 standard "Reefer" Cargo container connection points

Specifications: Pawel-class Modular Cutter

CraftID: Modular Cutter, TL10, MCr 35.702
Hull: 43/113, Disp=50, Config=3SL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=753.14 tons, Loaded=763.34 tons
Power: 5/10, Fusion=414 Mw, Duration=12/36
Loco: 5/10, Maneuver=4, NOE=140kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1,000kph, Agility=0
Comm: Radio=System, Laser=System
Sensors: Active EMS=FarOrbit, Passive EMS=Interstellar, ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout, PasEngScan=Rout
Off: Hardpoints=1
Def: DefDM=+3
Control: Computer=1 bis x3, Panel=Dynamic Linked x158, Special=HeadsUp display, Electronic Circuit Protection, Environ=basic env, basic ls, extend ls, grav plates, inertial compensators
Accom: Crew=2, (Pilot=1, Commander=1), Seats=Roomy x2, Small Stateroom, Airlock
Other: Cargo=6 klitres, Module=405 klitres, Fuel=60 klitres
ObjSize=Average, Fuel Scoops (fills tanks in ½ hour, fills module in 3 hours), No Fuel Purification Plant, EmLevel=Faint, Flotation Bubbles
Comment: Construction Time=24 weeks single, 20 weeks multiple
1.42 Mw spare power for module
Grav plates and inertial compensators cover all 50 tons
Computer multiplier for module=15
Loaded weight does not include the weight of the module

Editor's note: The cargo module specifications were placed before the cutter specifications to improve the layout of the article in this issue of the magazine.

An Analysis of Tech Levels

by Ken Pick

This article was originally written approximately eleven years ago, and added to Freelance Traveller's website well before the beginning of PDF publication. It is reprinted here now because of recent relevant discussions on a Traveller forum.

The standard “Miller Scale” of technological development (the familiar Tech Levels) is a hexadecimal scale of zero to 15, covering the spectrum from no technology to the most advanced generally found in the Third Imperium. These sixteen Tech Levels break down into four main “ages”, divided by “plateaus”.

A “plateau” is a stopping point of technological development, where a civilization can hold at a “steady-state” for an extended period of time with little or no advancement.

In addition, Tech Levels 0-9 have common names from Terran history; these are given in parentheses. (It says something about human motivation in technological progress that many of these tech levels are named after wars.)

Pre-industrial: TLs 0-3

TL 0 Stone Age

TL 1 Bronze Age or Ancient

TL 2 Iron Age or Medieval

TL 3 Renaissance to Napoleonic

The Tech 3 Plateau

Over nine out of ten civilizations never progress beyond TL 3 on their own. By the time a civilization reaches this plateau, the nobles have everything pretty much the way they like it, and view any change as a threat. (The classic illustration from Terran history is Imperial China, where TL4 technological innovations always got lost in the immense bureaucracy.)

The slow pace of technology up to this point leads to static paradigms such as the “Great Chain of Being”, where everything in existence has its proper (and permanent) place—“the serf in his hovel and the lord in his castle”. A society at the Tech 3 Plateau literally cannot think in terms of technology or progress—the vast bulk of the population is too busy

surviving each day subsistence-farming and the nobles (and other educated classes) have more important things to think about (like who has the most toys, who’s court favorite this week, struggle for the throne with dagger and poison, or proper calligraphy in triplicate on all forms).

Introducing higher tech from outside often causes major problems. The civilization usually attempts to graft on the high-tech goodies (with priority to toys for the nobles and weapons to take over the neighboring nobles’ holdings) without changing anything else (especially trying to keep their social system completely intact—for example, “The Enlightenment of Pagett, M.P.”, by Rudyard Kipling, late 19th Century C.E.). The resulting strain usually cracks the society completely, after a period of “gravs, fusion, and peasants in mud huts plowing behind draft animals” familiar to all Travellers to low-tech worlds.

A textbook example of a world/culture stuck at the Tech 3 Plateau with outside high-tech coming in after contact is Gennare during and after the Long Night.

Industrial Age: TLs 4-7

The dividing line between TL 3 and 4 is an “Industrial Revolution”, a technological breakthrough and paradigm shift where:

- Large-scale manufacturing replaces hand-crafting.
- The measure of wealth and noble status shifts from landowning to money.
- Industry becomes the measure of the economy instead of agriculture.

At this point, technological progress becomes synergistic, leading to a rapid advance in Tech Levels:

TL 4 Victorian

TL 5 World War 1

TL 6 World War 2

TL 7 Early Cold War/Vietnam War

The Tech 7 Plateau

The dividing line between TL 7 and 8 is the development of solid-state electronics. Without this,

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only the simplest automation is possible; a live pilot remains the best all-around control system; and limited/bulky/expensive compute power generally slows development. One effect of the latter is that TL 7 effectively forbids Jump Drive, owing to the massive compute power required for controlled Jump entry and navigation.

This does not mean that spaceflight is impossible; a civilization stuck at TL7 can have quite an extensive in-system presence, especially if they have been at this plateau for some time. Space travel at the TL7 Plateau is best described as “Gernsbackian”, a word of unknown origin. Spacecraft would be reaction-propelled “rocket ships” (including nuclear-fission and nuclear or solar-powered ion drives) with “hands-on” pilots and navigation calculations done by specialized electromechanical or vacuum-tube computers or the ubiquitous “slide rule”. Space stations (usually spinning “ring” or “doughnut” configurations) would be small by Third Imperium standards, and serve as way stations instead of permanent settlements (“sky-cities”). Permanent off-world settlements would be in the form of domed colonies on other in-system worlds, more like outposts instead of true colonies. Space weaponry would be primarily missiles, with kinetic-kill guns for short ranges. Maintaining such a TL7 space presence is expensive; those few who venture off-world (“astronauts” or “cosmonauts”) often have heroic, almost mythic status.

Time spent at the Tech 7 Plateau allows the society time to absorb the advances up to this point, giving them a stable foundation for the next age’s even-more-rapid advances. A common paradigm of the time is the exact opposite of that of the Tech 3 Plateau—that technology will continue to advance at an ever-increasing pace unto infinity; stalling against the limits of TL 7 restores some perspective. The Solomani of Terra (Sol)—the original humans—lucked out discovering semiconductors early on, missing the Tech 7 Plateau completely. Unfortunately, they later discovered the Scout Service proverb—“The less time you spend at the Tech 7 Plateau,

the harder you hit the one at Tech 11!”—the hard way.

Information Age: Tls 8-11

Tech Level 8 is defined as the paradigm shift caused by the development of solid-state electronics, where:

- Compute power is vastly increased, allowing for complex automated systems.
- Electronics rapidly become smaller and cheaper, to the point where computers become portable and generally available, leading to an explosion in their applications. Software becomes the limiting factor, not hardware.
- Communication technology allows for large-scale datanets, synergistically increasing the amount of information in circulation (and the synergistic pace of technological change) far beyond the individual’s ability to comprehend—a state called “information overload”.
- Technological progress becomes defined as electronic (especially computers), rather than mechanical.
- Managing this vast flow of information becomes the new key to wealth and status.

TL 8 Late Cold War/ Desert Storm

TL 9 Y2K

TL 10

TL 11

The Tech 11 Plateau

This Tech plateau is more subtle and arbitrary than the previous plateaus. The dividing line between TL11 and TL12 is purely a paradigm shift, where the civilization starts thinking in terms of the interstellar community rather than the homeworld and secondary outposts/colonies—outward-looking to the planets and stars instead of always limited to the homeworld.

A common symptom of this plateau is the “Cyberpunk Syndrome”, where the specialization of and dependence on information technologists/specialists turns them into a secret society of magicians and priests in all but name, too involved in Cy-

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berspace to even acknowledge the existence of physical reality; neo-nobles attempt to control the information flow (by manipulating the information specialists) and use surveillance technology to block any threats to their status quo (i.e. “Who dies with the most toys wins”) in a repeat of the Tech 3 Plateau, while the society at large flees “information overload” into entertainment, amusing itself into inward-looking stasis using virtual reality technology (“Holodeck Syndrome”). It normally takes a violent external cause to shake a civilization out of this trap.

Interstellar Age: Tls 12-15

This are the ruling Tech Levels of the Imperium familiar to all Travellers—a network of worlds connected by Jumpspace.

TL12

TL13

TL14

TL15

The Tech 15 Plateau

Few civilizations advance beyond TL 15. At this point the “information overload” reaches the saturation point for organic brains, regardless of the amount of cybernetic assist. (The “Firehose Into the Teacup” limit.) Advances beyond this point are usually minor, piecemeal, and fragile, dropping back to

TL 15 on a regular basis.

Size also matters. To keep a civilization the size of the Third Imperium from shattering, interstellar society must become extremely stable, leading to a damping effect on innovation similar but not so extreme as the Tech 3 and 11 Plateaus. In combination with the above “information saturation”, this seems to have braked Imperial civilization at TL 15; presumably, an alternate civilization of smaller “pocket empires” would be more dynamic.

“Tech 16”

The best-known TL 16 civilizations (such as the Darrians, an archetypal “pocket empire”) incorporate only minor detail improvements over TL 15. Beyond this, there is only speculation and the Ancients. Further confusing the issue is the common use of “Tech 16” as a generic term for anything higher tech than the Imperium, from Darrians to Ancients.

Estimates of such ultra-technology (the theoretical Tls of 17-20) postulate faster and more controllable starship drives, improved artificial intelligence (to the point of full sentience), widespread antimatter power, massive use of nanotechnology and geneering, practical technological teleportation, and cheap and easy “replication” of any inanimate object from raw energy (using applications of the teleportation technology). Any civilization incorporating these advances would probably be so different as to be unrecognizable—“evolved beyond” anything compre-

Up Close and Personal

Edwina Dennis

profiled by Ken Murphy

Inspector (Ret.) Edwina Dennis (UPP 877986)

Human Female 5 terms Age 38

Former Police Inspector

Handgun-2; Grav Vehicle-1; Small Watercraft-0; Vacc Suit-0; Computer-1; Brawling-2; Persuasion-3; Intimidate-1; Forensics-1; Legal-2; Admin-1; Tactics-1; Streetwise-2; Linguistics-2 (Arabic) (Chinese); Climbing-3; Geology-1; Spelunking-2

Edwina was raised in Fujian, a busy, overcrowded, pollution-choked industrial city-state on the Southwest side of the massive Hafh as-Skyn mountains, with its 8 km high cliff face that stretched some 40 km of the mountains’ length, and which ran down the length of the northern continent almost to the equator on Najd (A676A44-C). Najd in general, and Fujian in particular, are renowned for producing some of the finest blades found in human space.

One day while helping out at the family Gyro stand after school, Edwina was shocked to find thugs harassing her father. It somehow had to do with money. The argument escalated, and suddenly her father had been smashed in the face.

Up Close and Personal

And just as suddenly a trio of “Fujian’s finest” were there in their streetworn armor and scuffed helmets, tackling and handcuffing the criminals in a flash, then reading them the cursory Act of Arrest before none-to-gently hustling them into a nearby Police grav wagon (‘Careful you lot, don’t bump your heads!’ THUMP!THUMP!).

As two of the officers wrestled the last of the thugs toward the hatch to the Police sled, the third officer, a Sergeant, rifled through the criminals’ pockets before pulling out an enormous wad of credits. Peeling off a good cm’s-worth of large bills, the grim sergeant put them into her dad’s hand, telling him “Not to worry sir. I doubt if these *gentlemen* will be bothering you again.” Then, with a wink to Edwina, “Why, it shouldn’t surprise me one bit if all four of these louts were sent to a Penal Battalion.”

Edwina never noticed what ever happened to the rest of the wad of bills. But one thing she did know was she wanted to help.

Ten years later, she was walking a beat in her neighborhood as a new Patrol Officer—her heavy Police grav bike, a Henry 349, parked a block or two away, ready if she should call.

Edwina (“Ed” to her friends) could recall having drawn her service weapon on only three occasions in ten years; attributing it to basically reasonable people wanting to come to a doable resolution. Of course, her powers of persuasion should not be dismissed.

On the fourth occasion, Patrol Officer Dennis was herself shot; a gauss pistol ripping up her right leg while responding to an attempted armed robbery. The wound was successfully treated, but the perpetrator was never caught.

On becoming a Patrol Sergeant several years later, Edwina was assigned to a wagon, supervising two Patrolmen.

One day, with an armful of lunch wrangled for her crew, waiting in line in the Mercado and making small talk with other customers, Edwina was on-scene when a pair of junkies came in, wielding shotguns and demanding everyone’s money, mad-dogging and threatening them.

Dennis tried reasoning with the dope-fiends, only to be hammered by a blast from a heavy, homemade

shotgun which blew through her greave to shatter her leg. Knocked to the ground in agony, Ed pulled her service weapon and fired from the floor. A heavy gauss round entered a cm above the shotgun-wielding thief’s right eyebrow, and blew gore all over a pair of terrified customers.

The other thief dropped his weapon as he ran, but Edwina’s crew, leap-frogging forward until inside the Mercado; quickly dropped the runner with a butt stroke to his stomach from the driver’s heavy SAW.

A month or so later, as Edwina got used to her new, enameled, robotic right calf and foot, and did deskwork while waiting to be cleared in the Mercado shooting, Internal Affairs finally came back with their verdict—a “good shoot”, meaning that Sgt. Dennis acted within department guidelines and with good reason for her actions. ‘Neighborhood Girl Makes Good’ makes for an excellent public interest story, and Fujian’s Ruling Council would be foolish to miss such an opportunity. Patrol Sergeant Edwina Dennis was awarded a Citation for Meritorious Conduct and promoted to Inspector. An image of Edwina in her dress uniform receiving the citation is sitting in a place of honor at her father’s Gyro stand.

Edwina has since retired on disability. She now works part-time in a gunshop, and spends some of her downtime socializing at one of several police bars. She drinks sparingly, and will sometimes be chided for nursing her drinks. She also loves playing darts, but has absolutely no aptitude for it.

While she enjoys Gyros well enough, having grown up with them, she is really a fan of pattymelts.

Although she can no longer participate actively as she used to, Edwina has always found caves and geology fascinating, and enjoyed climbing since being introduced to it in middle school.

Inspector Edwina Dennis (Retired) is a big woman, 1.9m and some 120 kg, with wide shoulders. Her dark hair is kept in a simple pageboy. On cold nights she’ll still wear her heavy, uniform jacket (the “Police” panel across the back having been removed). She carries her old service weapon in a shoulder rig, and a telescoping truncheon in a pocket.

She is currently waiting to hear back from the SPA on a possible job.

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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

Effective November 1, the Freelance Traveller Forums will be taken off-line, with the intent of returning, completely revamped, at the beginning of 2011. Although the revamped forums will have areas for general Traveller discussion, and for general off-topic discussion, the new forums will be more focused on the magazine (and website), with areas specifically for feedback and discussion of published articles, and for ‘slushing’ (and discussing) possible future submissions. We will be using new software to support them, so expect a different experience when we return.

The Freelance Traveller Forums

Because of the changes, we will not be able to reload the old system's message or user databases. However, we expect to be more feature-rich in the new version, and hope that you'll be willing to join us anew and make the Freelance Traveller reader community as vibrant and active as the Traveller community as a whole.

Thanks for your patience!

