FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource

Contents

From the Editor

With this month's issue, we open up a new section in Critics' Corner: Off the Table, covering reviews of fiction considered from a *Traveller* viewpoint. Shannon Appelcline, our Fifth Imperium columnist, has been writing these reviews for RPG.Net for approximately two years, and has given us permission to reprint them here. However, we wish to emphasize that Off the Table is *not* a Shannon exclusive; anyone can contribute a fiction review to this section—the only requirement is that the relevance to *Traveller* be a major part of the review. Since there's so much good fiction that can inspire Traveller players and referees, there should be no lack of reviews from the community. Don't wait for Shannon; join the fun! (And that goes for regular reviews, too!)

Although none of this issue's items from In A Store Near You are by Ewan Quibell, Ewan has been quite prolific in creating low-tech vehicles for The Showroom, and this issue sees Richard Perks contribute efforts to that sec-

tion as well. We encourage other members of the community to look around at their day-to-day lives and contribute other TL9-or-below items to In A Store Near You—anything from the latest tablet computers to that old beat-up Schwinn 3-speed in the back of your garage, all cast into *Traveller* terms. Not everybody lives in starships or flies air/rafts, after all…

With the new Animal Encounters supplement having been released, Mongoose *Traveller* now has rules for creating animals of all kinds. *Freelance Traveller* has a section for animals of all kinds. Doesn't that sound like a good match? We think so, and so we're asking you to grab that book, fire up your imaginations, and start adding to the zoo in Less Dangerous Game.

Finally, I'd like to extend my continued thanks to the entire Traveller community, without whom *Freelance Traveller* would be merely an exercise in irrelevance. Your imaginations and efforts are absolutely vital—in both senses of the word—to our success.

Flynn's Guide to Alien Creation

Reviewed by "kafka"

Flynn's Guide to Alien Creation. Jason Kemp.
Samardan Press: http://www.lulu.com/samardanpress
32pp, softcover
US$9.99/US$4.99(PDF)

Despite some funky illustrations (save the cover, which one can see is gorgeous), this is an excellent first start to alien creation for any Space Opera type game. *Traveller*, however, is an odd game, best described as "Hard Space Opera", which means that it takes elements from known reality but still has all the familiar handwaves from the Space Opera tradition—FTL, portable fusion power, et cetera. This guide veers toward the softer side in several ways, such as having more aliens than the "stock" *Traveller* setting would suggest.

Countless examples drawn from his soon-to-be-published Ari Drakara Campaign Setting round out the supplement.

It takes the basic Mongoose *Traveller* rules and applies them to the creation of sentients/sophonts. Where I found it lacking was that while it really does have a "Hard SF" grounding to even how it approaches the creation of species, the rules outlined are more associated with the territory of *Star Wars* than of *Traveller*. Where this was evident was in the fact that aliens could be found on vacuum worlds or zero-g worlds. So, "it might be life but not life as we know it" would have been my throwaway line. But, this supplement does not go there; it rather describes them as having "Vacuum Survival" or "Zero-Gravity Adaptation" alien traits. To redeem it, partially, it does give the suggestion that these not be the home-world of said alien species. The Referee takes the UWP as their starting point and uses a building block approach and 2d6 to determine characteristics. Fortunately, it does tend to avoid the appearance-only approach of certain high-fantasy RPG sourcebooks—determining appearance is left to the Referee. From the basic environment, our alien begins to acquire traits grounded in the particular ecological niche that their forbearers occupied. Sounds all very Hard SF, I know. But, unfortunately such traits include Electric-

ity Resistance, Organic Radio Communication, Resistant to Fear, Xeno-Empathy, etc.

Having said that, the good thing is most of the traits are convincing and believable even if they veer toward the fantastic (or fantasy). "Flynn" has done a great job in helping us to think through the process of creating believable alien sophonts and avoiding "bumpy head syndrome" (a la *Star Trek*) or taking Terran analogues and making them bipeds (*Star Wars* and much of TV Science Fiction), but it just does not go far enough for me—what I wanted to see was something grounded more firmly in the Hard SF tradition which would allow me to play in such universes as Ian Banks' Culture or Poul Anderson's worlds. Therefore, this is not the supplement that I had hoped for. However, if you like your SF soft then this supplement is for you.

Jason "Flynn" Kemp brings alien sophont creation to life with a set of rules that are grounded more in soft SF or Space Opera traditions and in spite of the quirky art, it is recommended to all Referees who venture to softer side of Traveller.

Diplomatic Heavyweights

By J.E. Geoffrey

This assumes the characters have their own spaceship: When visiting a planet, the local authorities approach the characters and ask for a small favor: there is a team of diplomats from this world who have to be transported to one of the neighbouring star-systems for some urgent crisis management. And they need to be there by yesterday. An quick start is necessary and within hours the characters should be on the way out of system, even though the jumpwill, of course, take at least a week. But the characters are getting paid handsomly for this little transport.

Possible directions for the adventure:

1. The diplomatic team is really just a diplomatic team which is sent to one of the neighbouring systems to take care of some minor fracas with sensitive tradegoods. Everybody's happy and the characters get invited for a drink afterwards. It might even seem the only reason to get there at all was to have a few nice parties with the colleagues from the next system.

2. As 1. but it is a rather major fracas: the sensitive tradegoods were biological/nuclear exports that spilled and created a small scale catastrophe in the other star system. A lot of damage management is needed, promises of support and reparations have to be made.

3. As 2. but the major fracas in the meantime developed into something barely short of a war. Only imperial policy keeps the planet from launching their own fleet against its neighbour. The characters and their passengers are highly unwelcome.

4. As 3. but the other system, Imperial policy be damned, already sent a small attack fleet to system A as a response to what the news feeds now call a "terrorist attack" on the natural biosphere of the planet.

5. The diplomats are not the most usual of diplomats, highly specialized they nevertheless are a bit unusual, maybe some aquatic tentacled beings (Githiasko) or a small school of dolphins in their tanks...

6. ... or a whole uplifted whale! With a bad sense of humour too: he finds wet bipeds hilarious! And the that diplomatic business? Ah, that's just killing him.

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.

#19: Genre-ic Plot Seeds, Part Five: The Fantastic SF Genres

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 June 2011.

In previous articles in this series, I've talked about using other genres to seed your *Traveller* adventures. I'd planned to finish up the topic this month by covering some of the far-flung science-fiction subgenres that you could incorporate into your *Traveller* game. However, I found more to talk about than I had space for, so I've decided to cover the more fantastic SF subgenres this month, with some more scientific options next time.

The Space Opera SubGenre

The SF subgenre most suited for *Traveller* is probably the space opera genre. The definition of the phrase varies, but most use it to refer to "the good 'ole" stuff: the SF of the '40s and '50s which tended

to focus on over-the-top melodrama set almost entirely in outer space.

In *Traveller* the varied governments across Charted Space offer the best possibilities for Space Opera adventures. PCs could be leading negotiations between these interstellar governments or they could be having desperate adventures amidst a war. They could be dealing with a huge exodus of Vargr from the Vargr Extents into the Imperium (for reasons unknown) or tears in the fabric of time and space itself.

To a certain extent, any other genre can be made Space Opera by increasing the scale. If you have a sun about to go nova that puts a planet at risk, which could result in a science story (which I'll talk about next month). However, if there's an Ancient Psychic Bomb that's going to destroy an entire sector at Jump-1 speed, that's Space Opera. So to create an adventure within the genre, take an existing plot hook and crank it up five notches.

Traveller **References**. The Fifth Frontier War of the original Traveller and the Civil War of Mega-Traveller both offered the opportunity for Space Opera stories. FASA's *Ordeal by Eshaar* was one of the adventures that took advantage of this: it gave PCs the ability to affect the Fifth Frontier War as a whole. However, it was *Traveller: The New Era* which really pushed Space Opera ideas into the universe through its backstory mysteries. The Vampire Highway which cut across the Imperium, the mystery of the Black Curtain around the Core sectors, and (most notably) The Empress Wave—which was moving toward the Imperium, destroying the Zhodani Consulate in its wake—all offered up large-scale and potentially melodramatic plots.

Other References. E.E. "Doc" Smith's Lensman and Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* are often offered up as examples of classic Space Opera. David Brin's Uplift Universe, Alastair Reynolds' *Revelation Space*, *A Fire Upon the Deep* by Vernor Vinge, and Charles Stross' Eschaton books are suggested as more modern Space Opera writings.

The Planetary Romance SubGenre

The Planetary Romance subgenre of SF is a mirror image to Space Opera. Whereas Space Opera is melodramatic SF adventure that happens in space, Planetary Romance is melodramatic SF adventure that happens on a romanticized planetary surface (and which may include romance too, for that matter).

To get your *Traveller* PCs involved in Planetary Romance stories, you need to set them down on a planet with a generally low-tech level, give them swords, shields, and the very occasional ray gun, and watch what happens. Giving them princesses to woo and monsters to battle would also go a long way.

How would you do so? An ancient artifact could teleport the PCs to a planet without their tech or it could take them to another universe where technology works differently. Simple law level restrictions could keep the PCs' high-tech weapons off a planet. Cultural restrictions could also cause planetary leaders to insist that players take on tasks using only low-tech items. As with many subgenres, you'll be able to pull off the genre (or not) based on how well you support its theming: pulpish adventure and romance.

Traveller **References**. *Traveller* skirts around Planetary Romance every time it features a primitive society: *Nomads of the World-Ocean* may be the most successful, as it offers a society that mixes low-tech with the occasional technological wonder, generally pushes the players to integrate into that society, and has some opportunity for romance. FASA's *Uragyad'n of the Seven Pillars* offered another cultural immersion.

Other References. Edgar Rice Burrough's Barsoom is usually considered the definitive Planetary Romance series. Leigh Brackett and many others followed. A lot of the SF books that Paizo is publishing under their Planet Stories brand are Planetary Romance.

The Science Fantasy SubGenre

At various times, the Space Opera and Planetary Romance subgenres have both been considered Sci-

ence Fantasy—which is most simply a mixture of science fiction and fantasy. I mention it here to cover the whole spectrum, but you could probably classify most "Science Fantasy" stories instead using one of the other two subgenres covered in this article.

Other References. *Star Wars* is likely the best-known Science Fantasy out there. But it's really Space Opera with the "fantasy" tuner turned really high.

Conclusion

By looking at subgenres of SF you should discover plenty of ideas for Traveller adventure hooks. This article offered some concrete ideas for how to do so by covering the more fantastic SF subgenres, including Science Fantasy itself and its two twinned children: Space Opera and Planetary Romances. Next month I'm going to finish off the topic (honestly, this time!) with a look at scientific SF subgenres, like the Science genre itself, the Cyberpunk genre, and the Transhuman genre.

Space Viking

reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

Space Viking. H.Beam Piper.
Originally serialized in *Analog* magazine, 1962-1963
Original book publication, 1963
Current Availability: Print and E-Book

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

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

Marc Miller hasn't been shy about listing the books that influenced his Traveller universe. In various interviews (*Far Traveller* #2, *Valkyrie* #13, *White Dwarf* #23), he's credited Poul Anderson's Polesotechnic League books (and the connected Dominic Flandry books), Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, Gordon R. Dickson's Childe cycle, Harry Harrison's *Deathworld* and Stainless Steel Rat books, Robert Heinlein's juveniles, Keith Laumer's Retief stories, E.C. Tubb's Dumarest of Terra, and Jack Vance's Demon Princes series.

I may review some of these in future entries in this series, but right now I'm more struck by a book that Miller hasn't listed, but which appears to have been absorbed pretty directly into the Traveller universe.

This first review discusses *Space Viking*, a 1963 book by H. Beam Piper and a part of his Terro-Human history. Perhaps accidentally, the setting of this book was dropped directly into the *Traveller* Universe. Both the book and *Traveller* include a cluster of planets known as the Sword Worlds, one of the most important of which is Gram. In both universes, it's a place of space vikings, as evidenced by this book's title ...

About the Story

Space Viking is set in a far future where the mighty Terran Federation has fallen, causing a great Dark Age to fall across its planets. One of the few points of light (TM) among these lost systems are the Sword-Worlds, a cluster of planets named after mighty weapons of lore, such as Gram, Excalibur, Morglay, Flamberge, and Durendal.

On Gram we meet Lucas Trask of Traskon. When his newly-wed wife is slain by a man who then steals his Duke's new ship, *Enterprise*, Trask decides to become a Star Viking, pillaging and looting across the universe. However, when he sets up a base on a planet, to set a trap for his foe, he finds that uplifting civilization from the darkness might be a goal in its own.

Genre & Style

Space Viking is a classic space opera of the sort that you can find in many of the other influential books that Miller has listed. A Federation has risen

and fallen, and now space is full of fallen planets that are trying to climb back up to the stars—often after having reverted to feudal systems. Against this backdrop, individual people, like Lucas Trask of Traskon, can make a difference.

I generally find that science-fiction novels of the 1950s and 1960s tend to be pretty heavy on the plot and pretty light on the characterization. Piper's *Space Viking* certainly tends in that direction, sufficiently so that I found much of the book pretty dry—mainly because I couldn't emotionally connect with the protagonist.

However, at times Piper manages to rise above his contemporaries in this area. Though *Space Viking* could have been a very simple intergalactic tale of revenge (such as Jack Vance's first Demon Princes books were), Piper instead lets his character evolve and grow as he moves beyond his initial anger and instead begins to look toward what a life without his Elaine might be.

Space Viking also has one other particular strength: its space battles. Piper writes of a world of missiles and slugs. There are no magical shields, no beams of concentrated light. Instead warfare is real and gritty, fast and deadly. Thus, Piper's scenes of warfare amidst the stars become some of the best parts of the book.

Overall, I think that *Space Viking* is a nicely evocative book, between its space battles and its visions of humanity slowly reclaiming itself. The actual mechanics and plots of the books are somewhat more mundane. Thus I've given it a "4" for Style and a "3" for Substance.

Applicability to Mongoose *Traveller*

There are two very obvious and direct links between *Space Viking* and the *Traveller* universe.

The first is the Sword-Worlds (or Sword Worlds, as they're called in the Traveller universe). I'm not quite sure that the culture of the worlds in the Spinward Marches is the same as the culture of Piper's worlds (because we don't see the Sword-Worlds proper that much), but the feudal structure, the bal-

kanization, and the militant attitude are all pretty similar. You might do better to read something like *GURPS Traveller: Sword Worlds* to understand the culture of the *Traveller* cluster, but *Space Viking* could nonetheless give you some interesting nuances to consider.

The second obvious connection probably won't be of interest to Mongoose *Traveller* GMs, because it relates to *Traveller: The New Era*, GDW's third *Traveller* game, set 95 years after the Golden Age depicted in Mongoose *Traveller*. In that era a group of people are trying to bring the lost Third Imperium back from its ashes. I never understood why these people were called Vikings, because they didn't seem to be either Nordic or pillagers (except when they were forced to take technology from non-helpful people), but the answer can be found in this book: just as Lucas Trask ends up uplifting a planet to set a trap for his enemy, so the Space Vikings of The New Era are uplifting worlds from the darkness. (I'm still not convinced it's a good connection, but I do think that reading *Space Viking* might give you some insights into the RCES of The New Era).

However, more so than these direct borrowing, I think that *Space Viking* offers some good looks at a universe which has some larger-scale similarities to the *Traveller* universe—and that's the sort of immersion that I think can be useful for a *Traveller* GM.

I've already talked about the feudalism of the Sword-Worlds. Piper actually uses it as a major plot point, contrasting it with true democracy, which (according to Piper's viewpoint character) doesn't work because stupid people are too easily fooled into following charismatic demagogues. That certainly offers a nice reasoning for the feudalism of the *Traveller* universe.

I also talked about the space battles, which I think could give a *Traveller* GM great training in describing space battles of their own.

Beyond that, all of the space travel in *Space Viking* feels a lot like that of the *Traveller* universe.

Most travel is done by hyperdrive (aka Jump Space) which allows relatively fast (but not instantaneous) travel from one place to another. However,

due to the lack of FTL radio of any sort, these hyper-drives are the only way info gets transmitted across the galaxy. In *Space Viking* you thus see the importance of rumors brought by individual spacers and how hard it is to find an individual in a universe that's not truly connected—both fine lessons for the *Traveller* universe.

In contrast, local system travel takes a lot of time and as a result the outer planets of systems can be largely ignored—a point which has consequences in the book and which might have consequences (though not quite to the same degree) in the *Traveller* universe as well.

Finally, though the idea of rebuilding civilization doesn't have much point in the *Traveller* Golden Age (and thus not generally in Mongoose *Traveller*), it certainly would be insightful to you if you were running a campaign set in Milieu 0 (home of *T4*) or The New Era (home of *Traveller: The New Era*).

Conclusion

Overall, I think the universe of *Space Viking* shares a lot in common with the universe of *Traveller* and thus can be a great book to show you what it could be like—especially if you're fond of science-fiction writing of the 1960s, of which this is an above-average specimen.

Arisia Boston

Profiled by Ken Murphy

Arisia Boston 7B8985 Age 38
Human Female
5 Terms Musician and Poet

Rifle-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Brawling-2, Computer-0, Electronics-2, Stealth-1, Intrusion-1, Streetwise-2, Linguistics-2(Polish)(Russian), Persuade-3, Vacc Suit-1, Carousing-4, Dance-3, Sing-5, Play Guitar-4, Write Poetry-4, Make Fudge-3

Arisia grew up on the large, blue world of Thurston, some 200 kilometers down the Big Island's southern coast from picturesque New Kingston Bay, with its pristine beaches. Here such beaches had long since given way to rocky, reed-choked sands.

One of the local delicacies dug from amongst the rocks was the decidedly unappetizing-looking Jeffries Sand Lizard, which, belying its heavily armored appearance, was, following some variation on the usual drumpan preparation, quite delicious. A neccessity during lean times, the Boston family sold innumerable scores of the things from her father's food stand during observance of the Lunar Holiday Festival, as people from the larger cities, like Quinan and Old King Andrew flocked to the beach in a Bacchanalian rush.

When not caught up in helping at her father's, or doing schoolwork, Arisia could usually be found pretty much sticking to herself and writing poetry in her journal.

Getting together with like-minded friends in her early teens, Arisia acted as writer and front-woman for their garage band "Wedge". Her soulful, bluesy voice, showing a maturity far beyond her years, made the band popular with locals and visitors alike.

Within a few years "Wedge" had just about conquered Thurston, and, following several more years of touring offworld, are now known within a large part of the Imperium.

"Wedge" has a total of nine members. Ten if you count BaRT-65, the band's Robotic Drummer; who joined the band initially because drummers tend to be the most temperamental members. The band is currently touring, performing songs from their new album *Big Head Might Break My Jaw*.

Arisia doesn't smoke, nor does she drink to excess, though she is known to have some brandy now and then.

Arisia loves old Atomic and Industrial Era Blues tunes, and often does covers of things most people aren't familiar with. She also enjoys reading trashy romance novels.

Arisia is curvy, with auburn hair, and tall for a woman. She considers all the members of the band to be equals, and when photographers and reporters focus on her, rather than the band, she occasionally gets perturbed.

Riptide-class Attack Submarine

by Richard Perks

The *Riptide*-class Attack Submarine is a standard design from Enrii's Maritime Industries LIC of Keplo/Core. The design is licensed to Instellarms, which manufactures and sells the submarine through the rest of the Imperium.

The *Riptide* is a purely military vessel designed to attack and destroy other Wet Navy vessels via torpedoes, anti-submarine missiles and anti-ship missiles. It carries two remote beam laser turrets for close-in point defense against torpedoes. An anti-aircraft/grav vehicle missile battery allows the submarine to intercept attacking air-craft at extreme ranges or interdict an area. Finally, the anti-ship missiles can also be used to strike at ground targets over a considerable area.

Advanced sensors, secure communications, jammers and EM masking ensure the *Riptide* detects its targets whilst preventing detection in return.

The crew are given generous accommodation to support the maximum three month cruise duration and spare space is available for future expansions (currently designated as cargo space).

There are compromises in the design. The anti-submarine and anti-aircraft missile launchers only have one autoloader each, limiting reloading to one missile tube at a time. The torpedo tubes are still manually reloaded, and the anti-ship/surface missiles are not provided with any reloading equipment or crew. This shortfall was due to the sheer size of the autoloading machinery. The anti-ship missiles can be reloaded outside of combat operations by diverting crew from other tasks – this assumes that the submarine is carrying reloads within its cargo hold.

The submarine's specialist nature results in a limited market. The vessel is overpriced for customs and rescue missions and is not capable of working in a planetary defense role as it can not engage orbiting vessels). It tends to be sold to balkanized worlds where on-planet hostilities are possible. Occasionally a rich high population world will by a handful to round out its military (the ability to hide in the oceans, undetected by orbiting sensors, and to strike against surface and airborne targets from such a hidden location is a useful military capability).

Several vessels have been sold to the Free Commerce government of the nation Morovic on Porozlo (0305 Rhylanor / Spinward Marches).

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Craft ID:   Riptide Attack Submarine, TL11, MCr177.87
Hull:       270/675, Disp=300, Config=Submarine,
            Armor=52E,SurfUnload=3829.7tons,
            SurfLoad=3884.8tons, SubmLoad=4084.5tons
Power:      2/4, Fusion=150Mw, Dur=90/270,
            Cons=0.07Kl/h
Loco:       2/4, Std A/G Thrust=930tn, SurfSpd=104kph,
            SubmSpd=140kph, MaxAccel=20kph, MaxDe-
            cel=40kph, MaxDirChange = 180 degrees,
            MaxDiveDepth=780m
Commo:      LaserComm x 2 (Plan), MaserComm x 2
            (Plan), Radio x 2 (Plan), radio mast.
Sensors:    AEMS x 2 (Reg), ActSonar (VDist), PEMS x 2
            (Cont), PasSonar (Cont), 1GW Neutrino Sen-
            sor, LowPen Densiometer, EMSJam (Reg), EM
            Masking, night, attack periscopes, sensor
            mast;
            ActObjScan: Diff; ActObjPin: Diff;
            PasEngScan: Form; PassEngPin: Form;
            PasObjScan: Form; PasObjPin: Imp
Off/Def:    6 forward swimout torpedo tubes for super
            heavyweight torpedoes (manual reloadable),
            Two 0.5MW Beam lasers with TL11 weapon
            stabilization, and point defense target-
            ing, in remote turrets, Quad Submarine
            Launched anti-submarine missiles in verti-
            cal launch racks with a single autoloader,
            Quad submarine launched heavy long range
            surface to air missiles in vertical launch
            ranks with a single autoloader, Eight cell
            vertical launch system for heavy submarine
            launched surface attack missiles.
Control:    Computer/5Fib x 2, Panel=DynLink x 54, HUD
            x 8, Environ=basic env, basic LS, extended
            LS, airlocks x 3
Accomm:     Crew=130 (Bridge=8, Deck=21, Sensors=18,
            Gunnery=29 (Lasers x 2, Anti Sub missiles
            x 1, Surface to Air Missiles x 1, Surface
            Attack x 1, Torpedoes x 24), Engrg=50,
            Med=1, Stewards=3), Stateroom=Large x 1,
            Small x 80, Bunks x 49.
Other:      SuperHvy Torpedoes x 30, AntiSubm Missiles
            x 28, Hvy Surf-to-Air Missiles x 28, Hvy
            Under-to-Surf Missiles x 8, Fuel
            (hydrogen) = 162Kliters, ExtDur Food &
            Water Supplies = 23.4Kl, Cargo=20Kl, Lead
            Ballast = 20Kl, Ballast Tanks=200Kl, 3 x
            100Kl/hr pumps (for ballast tanks), Spare
            CP = 0.67, Spare MW = 31.513, Obj Size =
            Avg, EM Level = None.
Weapons:    Beam Laser 0.5MW, Range=Dist (2.5km), Pen
            5/2, Dmg 4, Sig=High, ROF=40; Anti-Subm
            Missiles, Speed=2880kph, Range=Reg
            (960km), Pen 32, Dmg 16; Hvy Surf-to-Air
            Missiles, Spd=880kph, Ceil=30,000m,
            Range=Reg (200km), Pen 26, Dmg 32; Hvy
            Under-to-Surf Missiles, Spd=2880kph,
            Range=Cont (600km), Pen 48, Dmg 60; Su-
            perHvy Torpedo, Range=High Speed 50km, Low
            Speed 100km, HE Pen 48, HE Dmg 60, HEAP
            Pen 60, HEAP Dmg 34.
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Dumarest of Terra

Reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

Dumarest of Terra. Series by E.C. Tubb
Originally published various years beginning in 1967
Current Availability: Print (Used)

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

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

Marc Miller has listed a number of different novels that have influenced *Traveller*, and they don't tend to be the same from one interview to another. However, there is one constant that's mentioned just about every time Miller talks about *Traveller*'s foundations ...

This second review discusses Dumarest of Terra, currently a 33-book series about a man searching for his home—a planet called Earth. As we'll see, the whole feel of a *Traveller* adventure seems to have come straight from Dumarest.

About the Story

I did not read the entire Dumarest saga in order to write this review. Instead, I worked my way through the first two books I happened to find at local book stores, *The Jester at Scar* (#5) and *Technos* (#7). I've been told that overall the Dumarest stories are somewhat formulaic, particularly toward the middle of the series, and so I feel confident that the two books I happened across offered a pretty good insight into the series as a whole.

Both books are, as already noted, about a man, Earl Dumarest, who is trying to find his way home. He left Earth as a boy, traveled toward the core of the universe, and didn't realize how far he'd come until he tried to retrace his steps. Now, he's looking for word of Earth, but as the adventures go on he begins to discover both that there's a force working against him and that Earth might have been purposefully hidden.

The Jester at Scar is a story about Dumarest's time on a fungus planet where he's trying to collect a batch of "golden spore", a growth that could make a man rich. It's also a story about a noble who believes in destiny and about an attempt upon Dumarest's life which might hint at largest forces on the move.

Technos is the story of Dumarest's infiltration of Technos, a planet with a fascist government, where state officials are slowly moving against each other. Though Dumarest just wants to talk with one woman on Technos who might know something of Earth, he inevitably becomes tangled in matters of state.

Genre & Style

I've sometimes seen Dumarest classified as a "space opera", and that's not entirely unjust, as the scope of the stories is very large, with Dumarest's galaxy being so big that he's literally become lost in it.

However, I think that "planetary romance" might an even more apt term for Dumarest's adventures. Though traveling among the stars is a frequent topic of discussion, we don't actually see it on-screen in either book I read. Instead, everything happens planetside, where a larger than life hero depends as much on his wits and primitive weaponry as on anything scientific to win the day.

Tubb does an excellent job of writing within these genres. I find a lot of science-fiction from the 1950s and 1960s stolid and dry, even the supposedly exciting planetary-romance stories. The Dumarest books, however, remain quick, exciting, and constantly interesting.

The books are also quite well characterized, something that I find generally absent from books of this era. Here, instead, Earl Dumarest feels like a real person who makes real moral choices. Likewise adversaries and allies alike are quite well fleshed out.

Tubb actually surprised me by spending considerable time away from Dumarest's point of view in both of these books, giving the reader knowledge what those aforementioned allies and adversaries are doing, and thus giving us some insight into their inner nature. This is very well done, and makes the

Dumarest books considerably more complex than I'd expected given the genre.

Finally, I think that Tubb does an admirable job of imagining and describing alien worlds, a topic that I'll return to momentarily. Both Scar and Technos feel very well-realized. I think I could write a gaming supplement on either (and, as you'll see, I think someone already beat me to one of them).

Overall, the Dumarest of Terra books are excellent adventure science-fiction that entirely holds up to the 35-40 years that have passed since the writing of these early books. They're colorful, interesting, and have a remarkable amount of depth given the genre. I've thus given them a "5" out of "5" for Style and a "4" out of "5" for Substance.

Applicability to Mongoose Traveller

When you start reading the Dumarest books, two terms will immediately leap out at you as probable borrowings for the *Traveller* game. Dumarest frequently talks about the two ways that one can travel between the stars: in the frozen cryoberths of low passage or in the drug-induced "quick time" of high passage. Those terms appear in *Traveller* books today.

Even more striking is the word that Dumarest sometimes uses to describe himself, as one that moves constantly among the stars. He is a traveler. (And, this wasn't an accident of language: Dumarest specifically and intentionally uses the word in both of the books I read.)

Overall, I suspect that *Traveller* inherited its entire conception of people moving among planets—which are all quite different from each other—and having adventures on them from the Dumarest saga.

These two books that I read feel like nothing more than two adventures in a *Traveller* campaign.

I've already noted that the planets are quite distinct, and this is another thing that gives them a *Traveller* feel. Technos could well be a high-law-level planet with a charismatic dictator. Loame, which appears in the same book, is an agricultural client-state with insidious plant life. Scar is, as previously explained, a fungus planet filled with adventurers, each trying to hit it big.

I also suspect that Scar was the basis of the planet Enaaka, described by William H. Keith Jr. in *The MegaTraveller Journal* #1. Keith even talks about the very valuable Enaakan Gold spores, some of which are used in anagathic drugs (which is also the case with Scar's golden spore).

There are certainly differences between the universe of Dumarest and that of *Traveller*. For example, the two Dumarest books I read don't suggest any sort of hyper drive; I get the impression that space travel is pretty slow, hence the need for the quick-time drugs (or the low berths). There's also some really quirky technology, like a comment in *The Jester at Scar* that trade shipments are sent off by flinging cargo through space!

However, any *Traveller* GM will find enough similarities in Dumarest's universe to not only get him in the right state of mind to run *Traveller*, but also to provide him with great ideas for worlds and for adventures.

Conclusion

The Dumarest of Terra books seem to have birthed the whole idea of a traveler who goes from planet to planet having adventures. Today, they remain as exciting and enjoyable as when they were written, and are thus highly recommended to GMs who want some reading to inspire their own games.

Books of *The Dumarest Saga*

1. The Winds of Gath
2. Derai
3. Toyman
4. Kalin
5. The Jester at Scar
6. Lallia
7. Technos
8. Veruchia
9. Mayenne
10. Jondelle
11. Zenya
12. Eloise
13. Eye of the Zodiac
14. Jack of Swords
15. Spectrum of a Forgotten Sun
16. Haven of Darkness
17. Prison of Night
18. Incident on Ath
19. The Quillian Sector
20. Web of Sand
21. Iduna's Universe
22. The Terra Data
23. World of Promise
24. Nectar of Heaven
25. The Terridae
26. The Coming Event
27. Earth is Heaven
28. Melome
29. Angado
30. Symbol of Terra
31. The Temple of Truth
32. The Return
33. Child of Earth

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 6

The medical facilities aboard the *Chicken and Waffles* was a tiny sickbay designed for two, maybe three patients once the cryobays had been filled. Within a half hour or so it overflowed with now-sedated passengers, to the point where both the Purser's staff and orderlies were escorting the excess to the comfortable furniture to be found in the passenger lounge.

Now in control of himself, Doctor Billings left Orderly Fahad, a one-time Navy Corpsman, to oversee the patients' exodus.

The prospect of bodies aboard his ship made Doctor Billings uneasy. Sure, he'd assumed he'd be doing the usual fixing of cuts, scrapes and contusions associated with an overly-exuberant crew on leave, but bodies, now, that was different. Billings hadn't seen a body-proper since Med School some twenty five years ago.

The ashen little Doctor grabbed his medical kit, sure of all it contained. Then, second-guessing himself, he opened the kit and took a quick inventory to be sure. Once sure, he closed up the case again and a couple steps later stopped to check again, just to be on the safe side. A few minutes later, that task out of the way, he continued on, only to be struck by those nagging pangs of doubt. He'd just looked, true, but was everything he needed really in the bag or had he imagined it was all there? So he stopped a few meters later to check again. By the fifth check Billings was certain the medkit contained everything he'd need, and he rushed down the hall to the Boat Deck access ladder.

Climbing down the ladder, the drab medico saw Purser Isaacs sitting, propped against the bulkhead opposite. He looked as though he'd been mauled; Isaac's once-clean uniform now a shambles. A needler was cradled in his arms. Bodies lay everywhere.

Doctor Billings got Quentin to lay the needler aside while he dug the proper diagnostic tool from his bag—the same tool he'd been sure to account for each and every time he'd had to stop to check the contents of the bag. He felt vindicated that it was here now, because of his determination. As the diagnostic emitted its low, soothing hum, Quentin grimaced, "Sorry the kids had to see me do that." gesturing in the direction of the bodies with a nod of his head.

"Things were done." the Doctor agreed coolly as he read the machine's prognosis.

"Aside from the various…" the Doctor pointed vaguely toward his own face, "The box here tells me you've broken four ribs, your right hand, and bruised your sternum." The Doctor gave him a mixture of something for the pain mixed with a powerful stimulant.

"I can't carry you, Isaacs, and we're short some crew, so I'm told. So you've got to make it to Medbay on your own, my unfortunate fellow." the Doctor decided as he put on gloves. "Now to the bodies…"

Crouched down over the woman, Billings turned her over, expecting to find a corpse. "Why, this woman isn't dead."

"No Doc, she isn't. None of them are, unless they've managed to knock themselves brainless while hitting the deck. The weapon here," Quentin said of the needler back in his hand "was loaded with Brick."

Originated for military contract, Brick was an incredibly fast-acting agent that stopped all voluntary muscle movement in an exposed individual for a few hours while rendering them unconscious. When it had first reached the civilian market it had been touted as the latest in effective, non-lethal technology. A small percentage of subjects experienced dreadful nightmares while unconscious, but the more common effect was having no memory of the events immediately preceding the dosing.

By this time Quentin had used the bulkhead he'd been propped against as a lever to stagger to a standing position. "I doped 'em all. Some of 'em a couple of times, in fact."

As the Doctor went from body to body checking vital signs, Quentin continued "Each of those cursed

Raconteurs' Rest

bastards attacked me, Doc," he winced, "They're lucky it was just Brick."

As Isaccs managed a painful ascent of the Boat Deck ladder, a last call echoed down to the Doctor, "And all of them belong in irons!"

"So they're dangerous." Billing muttered to himself, looking at the bodies. Quentin's last comment was in no way an order, but it did get the Doc to thinking. Coming to the conclusion that he was too frail to maneuver seven bodies to god-only-knows-where, Doctor Billings pulled something from his medkit. It was a sturdy looking ampoule with dual green and white rings near the tip—the hallmark of military grade pharmaceuticals. Putting the cone to a large vein running across the back of his hand, he pushed the feed. Within a few minutes he suddenly felt queasy and vomited violently right there on the deck. By the time he'd wiped his mouth, the Doctor's heart was pounding and his face had a ghastly, teeth-chattering smile. He felt like he could fly, or burn his way right through a bulkhead

In what seemed like a blur, Billings dragged each of the unconscious passengers to the empty vehicle bay that formerly housed *Waffles*' portside boat. After sealing the access panel and locking them all in, everything started to seem detached and distant, and his newfound strength and vitality ebbed away, leaving him a rubbery, exhausted old man.

Doc Billings lay down on deck, the side of his face pressed against the soothing, cool metal. "Goodness!" he muttered. Within a couple of minutes he was fast asleep.

Feedback

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  Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: *http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13*
  Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.

The Traveller Product Catalog

Freelance Traveller is trying to put together a comprehensive, searchable, on-line catalog of all known commercially-published *Traveller* products, any era, any system, any setting, both in and out of print. If you are a publisher, or if you have a listing from a publisher, please send the information to us at *editor@freelancetraveller.com*. Your list should contain the publisher name, publisher website if any, product name, the type of product, and whether it's in or out of print.

The Freelance Traveller Forums

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

Gatekeeper-class Armed Trader

designed by Peter Bradley

Many of the minor planetary navies and client states along the frontiers lack the industrial ability to build their own starships. However, they do have the ability to extensively modify and repurpose existing hulls. A classic example of this is the *Gatekeeper*-class Armed Trader, built by Sassanid Heavy Industry, mostly from their secondary shipyards.

Sassanid faced a growing demand from planetary navies and independent systems for a small, jump-capable ship that could be maintained using their local resources, and for conversions to "acquired" merchant ships. Sassanid designers settled on a series of designs that could be retrofitted to existing Far Trader hulls at any class C starport, or built as new construction at any class A or B starport. A *Gatekeeper* conversion kit, along with some advisors, allows those customers seeking to convert existing ships to do so in about 16 weeks, though some conversions have been completed in as few as 12 weeks.

The *Gatekeeper*-class Armed Trader is based on a heavily remodeled jump-2 Far Trader hull. The "Trader" element of the name is a holdover indicating the civilian origin of the hull; the ship actually has limited cargo room due to extensive repurposing. About 60% of the *Gatekeeper*'s parts are those of the original far trader, and merchant crewmen with experience with far traders find it easy to adapt to the *Gatekeeper*. The ship's armor is doubled, and the maneuver drives and power plants are expanded, giving the ship a respectable 4G acceleration. A 15-man barracks block is fitted in front of the old cargo bay, with a breaching tube fitted for boarding and customs work (something many customers find very useful). Fuel storage is increased slightly, to extend the operational lifetime of the vessel, allowing for a patrol into a neighboring system without refueling (jump 1 in, one week in-system, jump 1 out, back to base with a week's fuel in the tank).

The ship is armed with four pulse lasers, a missile launcher and a sandcaster, mounted in triple turrets. The pulse lasers are a modularized design requiring reduced maintenance hours and allowing easier repair; almost 90% of the weapons system can be removed without dismounting the turret. The modifications also increase the accuracy of the lasers.

The *Gatekeeper* has proven to be a moderately popular choice for cash-strapped systems seeking a cheap vessel for customs and anti-piracy work. At less than 100MCr new, the ship is less half the price of a *Gazelle*-class Close Escort, and has proven to be perfectly capable of policing merchant traders and driving off light pirate vessels. While most early *Gatekeeper* sales were for conversion kits, recent orders have seen a rise in new construction, as the series has proven to be a good and inexpensive way to get new light warships into service, while taking advantage of crew familiarity with far traders.

The "Stat Sheet" for the Gatekeeper appears on the next page.

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller Announcements and Findings

June, 2011

- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Spinward Encounters*, *Supplement 11: Animal Encounters,* and episode 8 of *Secret of the Ancients* for *Traveller*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has signed an agreement with **ADB** allowing Mongoose to publish *Prime Directive* as a *Traveller* setting.
- **Gypsy Knight Games** has released *Quick Worlds 10: Campbell*. They have announced that all profit from the sale of this product is to be donated to the Brain Aneurysm Foundation in the name of Vincent Campbell. Also released is *21 Plots* for *Traveller*.

Class	Gatekeeper-class Armed Trader			Tonnage	Cost (MCr)
				199	94.56
Hull		200 hull 4			8
	streamlined	structure 4		TL 12 hull	0.8
armour	Crystaliron	8 pts		20	3.2
J-drive B	jump 2			15	20
M-drive D	4 G accel			7	16
P-Plant D				13	32
bridge	hardened			10	1.25
computer	model 2	rating 10			0.16
electronics	Advanced	DM +1		3	0.4
weapoms					
hardpoint 1	triple turret	2 x Pulse Laser, 1 x Missile Rack		1	2.75
Hardpoint 2	triple turret	2 x Pulse Laser, 1 x Sandcaster		1	2.25
NOTE		Lasers TL10, Accurate, Easy To Repair			
missle storage		24 standard missles		2	
sandcaster storage		10 pebbles/30 barrels		2	
fuel	1 x jump 2, 4 wks			56	
cargo				17	
crew	7	pilot, nav, 2 gunner, med, capt, engr			
5 statrooms				20	2.5
barracks (10 marines)				20	1
software	jump control/ 2				0.2
	Manoeuvre 0				
	libary/ 0				
extras	fuel scoop				
	fuel processors				0.05
	repair drones			2	1
	breeching tube			10	3
Life support				20,000/month	
monthly maintenance				9,656/month	

Porfiria-class Steam Train (TL6)

designed by Richard Perks

The *Porfiria* is an old Ling Standard Products design, developed in the 500's for worlds entering the industrial age. The design was initially introduced in the Rimward edge of the Third Imperium and suspicions were raised that the time that LSP had copied an old Terran design after Terra was absorbed into the Third Imperium.

Several LSP plants were built in the Solomani Autonomus Region to support low tech colonisation efforts by the Solomani on the Rimward frontier. At the start of the Solomani Rim war, these plants were seized and nationalized by the Solomani and given to local manufacturing firms. The Solomani renamed the train the *Victory* class.

LSP (or their Solomani "affiliate") is still engaged in legal claims against the Solomani govern-ment over these actions, and Solomani-produced trains cannot be legally shipped into the Third Imperium. LSP maintains a handful of plants on low tech industrial worlds to supply the limited demand within the Imperium.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria Steam Locomotive, TL6, Cr468,011
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=
          215 tons, Load=325 tons
Power:    1/2, Steam Turbine=36Mw, Dur=0.33/1
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=134, OffRoad=N/A, P/W=74
Commo:    None
Sensors:  Headlights x 4
Off/Def:  None
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 22, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=4 (Driver, co-driver, 2 firemen),
          Seats=Roomy x 4
Other:    Fuel(coal)=44.8Kl, Water=20Kl,
          ObjSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

The *Porfiria* is a basic utility coal powered steam locomotive. Navigation is by forced following of trackage, dead reckoning, and the driver's knowl-

14

edge of his route, and communicating with the train whilst it is moving is managed via a limited set of fixed-meaning signals (governing the train's movements only) from structures placed adjacent to the tracks. Two firemen are required to shovel coal into the firebox. Environmental controls are limited to lights, and the heat from the engine. Experienced drivers have realized that they can cook their meals using the heat of the firebox.

24Mw is designated to the transmission system and 11.1Mw is available to power attached passenger coaches and freight cars.

Coach Configurations

Note: None of the coaches described here have any Commo, Sensors, or Offensive/Defensive capability.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria First Class Passenger Coach, TL6,
          Cr40,696
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=31
          tons, Load=32 tons
Power:    None (Requires 0.93Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 11, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=1 (steward), Passengers=45,
          Seats=Roomy x 46, One Toilet
Other:    Fuel=None, ObjSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

A luxurious first class passenger coach with a dedicated steward. The passenger coach lacks modern passenger entertainment facilities, communication and air conditioning. The passengers have little choice but to enjoy the view and the services of the steward.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria First Class Dining Car, TL6,
          Cr107,146
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=44
          tons, Load=46 tons
Power:    None (Requires 1.15Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 31, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=8 (3 cooks, 5 waiters), Passengers=34,
          Seats=Roomy x 42
Other:    Fuel=None, Cargo=2Kl (kitchen stores), 3-
          man kitchen (modelled as basic life sup-
          port), ObjSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

A luxurious first class dining car with an onboard kitchen, chefs and waiters. It normally provided a full lunch or dinner service, with several dinner sittings. The kitchen also provides a range of freshly prepared snacks for first class passengers when the dining car is closed. As with the rest of the train, it lacks facilities that more modern Travellers would consider normal.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria Second Class Passenger Coach, TL6,
          Cr41,496
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=31
          tons, Load=40 tons
Power:    None (Requires 0.93Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 11, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=0, Passengers=60, Seats=Adequate x 60,
          One Toilet.
Other:    Fuel=None, Cargo=9Kl (baggage), Ob-
          jSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

A second class passenger coach with less roomy seats and no steward facilities.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria Second Class Passenger Combine,
          TL6, Cr40,096
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=31
          tons, Load=81 tons
Power:    None (Requires 0.93Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 11, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=1 (Guard), Passengers=44, Seats=Roomy
          x 1, Adequate x 44, One Toilet.
Other:    Fuel=None, Cargo=50Kl (baggage),
          ObjSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

A second class passenger coach with a large secure baggage area replacing several passenger seats. A single guard ensures that the baggage area is not interfered with during travel. The baggage area is connected to the passenger area via a single locked door, and is used to carry miscellaneous small cargo, bicycles, mail and additional first-class passenger baggage. The guard also performs emergency duties to protect the rear of an inoperative train from trains approaching from the rear.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria Second Class Buffet Car, TL6,
          Cr44,896
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=31
          tons, Load=56 tons
Power:    None (Requires 0.95Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 11, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm: Crew=2 (Stewards), Passengers=51, Seats=Roomy
          x 2, Adequate x 51, One Toilet.
Other:    Fuel=None, Cargo=4Kl (baggage), Buffet
          Area=20K, ObjSize=small, EMLevel=faint.
```

A second class passenger coach with a buffet area crewed by two stewards replacing several pas-

senger seats. At this tech level the buffet area is limited to providing newspapers, cold snacks, sandwiches, and hot drinks. Cooking facilities are limited to a small stove. Due to crew limitations, second class passengers have to go to the buffet area, or wait for the trolley service to pass through the second class area.

```
Craft ID: Porfiria Freight Car, TL6, Cr44,896
Hull:     2/3, Disp=17, Config=4USL, Armor=4B, Unl=29
          tons, Load=220 tons
Power:    None (Requires 0.69Mw from the locomotive)
Loco:     1/2, Wheels Road=Special, OffRoad=N/A
Control:  Panel=BasicMech x 10, Environ=BasicEnv
Accomm:   Crew=0, Passengers=0, Seats=None.
Other:    Fuel=None, Cargo=191Kl, ObjSize=small,
          EMLevel=faint.
```

An enclosed freight car used for the general shipment of freight.

Train Configurations

In freight service the locomotive can pull 15 freights cars carrying 2865 Kliters of cargo. The total loaded train weight is 3,617 tons. The power to weight ratio drops to 6.6 and the train can has a top speed of 42kph. The cost of this train configuration is Cr 1,141,451.

A typical passenger service consists of four first class passenger coaches, a first class dining car, four second class passenger coaches, a second class buffet car, and a second class combine. This arrangement carries 214 first class passengers, 331 second class passengers and 97.3Kliters of cargo (usually baggage). The train has 19 crew, including 15 cooks and stewards.

This passenger train weighs 798 tons and has a power to weight ratio of 30, with a top speed of 94kph. This train configuration costs Cr988,917.

The Third Imperium: Starports

Reviewed by "kafka"

Mongoose Traveller: The Third Imperium: Starports. Carl Warmsley. Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
118pp, softcover
US$24.99/UK£16.99

I had great expectations for this product and for the most part Mongoose delivered most of my expectations and in some cases exceeded them. Starports are staples of Science Fiction whether they are the drydocks of *Star Trek* or Mos Eisley of the *Star Wars* universe. They are centres of trade and commerce yet catering to some of the foulest scum and treacherous villainy of Charted Space. Traditionally, starports of the Third Imperium are no different. And, given the amount that has been produced for them over the years – in fact, almost every version of *Traveller* has produced some sort of rulebook for starports – it is only appropriate that Mongoose produce one of their own.
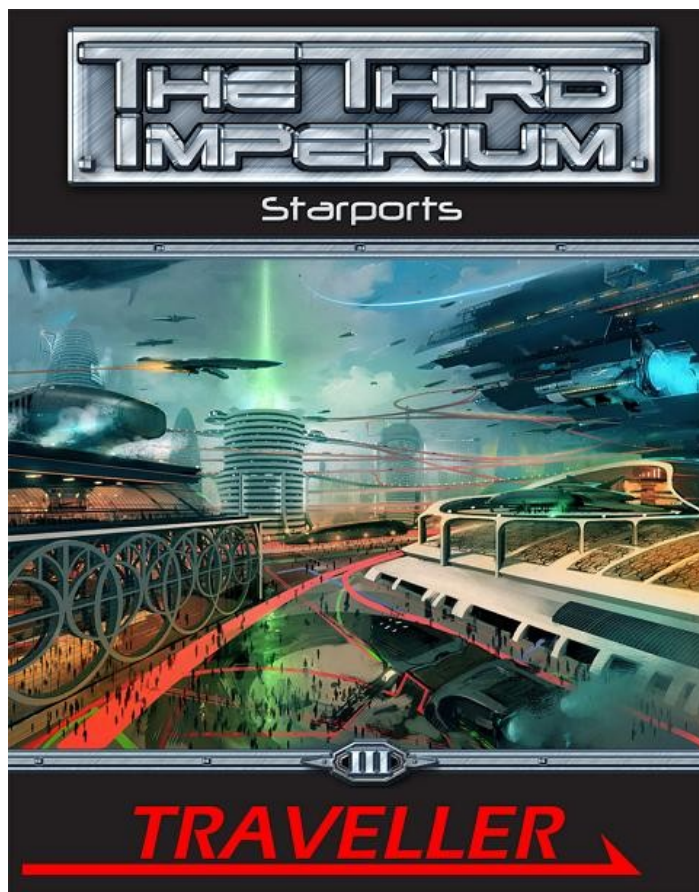
Let me say at the onset, I do recognize wading through all those versions of *Traveller* sourcebooks, consolidating, purging and creating a new vibe is daunting task. Nevertheless, surely all writers that write under the tagline "Third Imperium" must really do so to reflect back to the what has been written for

the Official/Original Traveller Universe. Don't get me wrong; this Mongoose supplement does not stray very far from what has been written before—but the tone it imparts is different. Where previous products left you in a state of confusion – just what is a starport? Is it an airport? A port city akin to what one visits on a cruise? A loading area? Or just a big berthing station?—Mongoose settles this question once and for (or at least until their license expires or the next version comes along).

Therefore, it is only logical that the book begins with a short discussion of the Starport Classification Codes that have been a part of *Traveller* since its early days in the 1970s and 1980s. These helped the referee a little but left much to the imagination and the discretion of the individual referee. This supplement seeks to redefine starports in their essence: starports are akin to the commercial City-States of the Renaissance – an archipelago of trading locales that weave the Imperium together. This places the starport as the pre-eminent Imperial institution on the planetary surface (or in orbit above it, or both) of the worlds of the Imperium. It should be noted here that in spite of "canonical" statements that "the Imperium merely rules the space between the worlds", starports were always assumed to be Imperial territory. All this supplement does is change the scale, from a small outpost or airport to a city-sized urban conglomeration (which does not include the "startown"). It then proceeds to introduce lots of new and interesting rules such as salvaging for scrap from a scrap yard to defining costs for different repair jobs.

Next up are Starport Encounters, a section which is a venerable mixed bag whose tropes range from the routine to the illicit (even going so far as providing a nice excuse for those referees of a more prudish nature citing that some encounters may be excellent sources of information, even if the players do not avail of themselves of the offered services). Bravo to Mongoose, for keeping the game clean yet revealing that there can be a dark underbelly to *Traveller*. These encounters are far from comprehensive; rather, they just give the referee a flavour in which to popu-

late their own starports. I was really impressed by this chapter and while most of the tropes are quite familiar, it was nice to see them all in one place. So, these encounters are best viewed either as seeds for adventures or as red herrings; they're basically sketches that help the referee populate the starports.

Next is a Starport Construction unit, which provides all the costs and assembly components for the most avid of builders. I tended to use this chapter as a checklist for the different components of a starport. Scattered throughout are interesting rules/scenario ideas to make the text less dry and more interesting to read, even, if you are not building starports.

Lastly, there are sample starports which combine a description of the starport along with adventure seeds and seedlings. None of these amount to a full-fledged adventure but they do help flesh out some of the drier parts of what went before it. The adventure seeds are firmly planted in the OTU which is a welcome change (and an expectation as this is marketed under the Third Imperium line) from many of the previous Mongoose books which are nominally Third Imperium. The seeds vary but they do definitely have a soft Space-Opera-like feel to them, but I would have no problem adapting them to meet the harder SF feel of my *Traveller* universe. This section could really benefit from some art but sadly none was commissioned.

Although the examples of starports are drawn from the Third Imperium, they do not really jive with what has previously been written about the Third Imperium (including the mood set up by the supplement) – take for instance, the starport that is essentially a huge mobile harvester or a starport that serves as a "hunting lodge": these are very much staples of Science Fiction but fairly radical ideas for *Traveller*. Good ideas are littered throughout, but may need some modification by the referee to adjust it to their *Traveller* universe—or perhaps they represent a possibly long-needed shake-up of the Official Traveller Universe (This ain't your granddaddy's *Traveller*). Also problematic is that the locations of the starports are not clearly indicated in all cases, nor are their classification codes. The latter would be

listed in the world code, but why look that information up in another book, instead of keeping it all in one place?

We do have some new ships along with their deck plans. The ships look nice and are functional but I would have thought more search-and-recovery ships or loading/unloading vehicles would be more in order. Or, since the product was released shortly after *Robot*, sample starport robots would be in order, from simple observational drones to massive robotic stevedores—but all this is left to the referee's imagination.

Drawbacks

There are a few, but they are glaring. First, as part of their Third Imperium line, it implies that that it is part of the OTU yet there are scant references to starports outside of the Imperium proper. We have already had three Alien Modules and Sector Guides that include non-Imperial polities; some discussion of starports in these alien societies is needed. This could also have been an opportunity to lay the foundation for future alien supplements by highlighting some of the differences, but that has apparently been deferred to *Signs & Portents*.

The omission of the Starport Authority (SPA) as a Career path is not a terrible thing, as one could use the standard template for Bureaucrat; but as all other versions of Traveller highlighted this as a separate career, I was surprised at its omission, as the text implied a discussion of a SPA career path. One never knows when a player will wish to run a career SPA bureaucrat as a character, after all.

There was some discussion of Startown (those areas outside the starport's Extraterritoriality line) but no real rules…hopefully these interesting and colourful places will get a supplement of their own. Classic *Traveller* did, after all, have "Startown Liberty", and an update for the real hives of scum and villainy would be a welcome addition to my RPG collection even if as an Appendix.

As it stands now, these issues will have to be addressed in a *Signs & Portents* article—not a bad thing, but when I buy a supplement, I expect it to be complete or nearly complete. So, it is yet another sign of haste and poor editing prior to publication that should have should have spelled out these expectations.

Speaking of deficient editing, the text was scattered: rules that should have be logically paired together were often found in radically different sections. This might sound like nitpicking, but it does makes it sometimes difficult to read and comprehend, forcing the reader to reread the whole book to put it all together—not to mention that it makes it hard to find rules later. There are also some glaring typos—for example, in one of the starport descriptions, it first states the name of the world is Mewey then a few paragraphs later, it states it as Dewey then reverts back to Mewey. I realize that this may result from reliance on a spellchecker but the author—or the proofreaders—should have seen and corrected this prior to printing. In defense of Mongoose, however, there seem to be fewer errors than in some of the other books that I have seen out there—but with the name of *Traveller* comes certain expectations and not meeting them damages the reputation of the brand.

Sadly, the product is almost entirely bereft of art. Art not only makes text easier to read but also serves to inspire. So, in addition to being surprising and disappointing, the lack of art also gives the book an almost dry flavor, quite at odds with its promise. Now, this is not an argument for art for art's sake but RPG supplements that need to inspire ought to have a healthy dose of art, and I can think of few better place to inspire a sense of wonder than a starport. So, its omission is a strange thing, begging the question: "why did Mongoose do it?". More art should not be a frill but part of the execution of a Traveller product.

I came to this product with great expectations. While they weren't fully met, I would say that it is well worth its price if you own none of the *Traveller* products dealing with starports (especially, Cargonaut Press's Lost Supplement on starports or the article for MegaTraveller in *Far and Away*, both by J. Andrew Keith) – this is a solid product that does break some new ground for *Traveller*. If you are a completist, as many *Traveller* players are, you will find gems amidst the rough in this supplement.

Major Strong's Iron Rations

by Ken Murphy

Major Strong's Iron Rations is a line of canned foods produced by the Welles-LeHatte corporation.

The boiler plate, riveted, early Industrial Age appearance of the cans harkens back to the halcyon days of yesteryear, when Major Strong apparently served with the Imperial Quartermaster's Corps.

Each can is produced with images in bas-relief all round, with the gruff face of Major Strong himself smiling the way only a drill instructor can when addressing a recruit; the brand prominently above him in heavy Gothic splendor, with the name of the meal beneath.

Depending on where you go, Strong's seems to have only three or four different meals. Near Sol, it's *Noodles with Chicken*, *Delicious Barbeque*, *Spaghetti*, and *Beef Stew*. In other areas, the choices would be different, matching favorites of the region. Near Ilelish, for example, one of the popular choices is simply five pickled and spiced eggs in a can.

Each can has an entry from an endless series of military trivia printed on them, from Zhodani Officer Uniforms of the 3rd Frontier War, to the top 10 SAWs used by Imperial Ground Forces, to the tactics used in clearing a room. Often prominent battles or personages are featured.

It all seems quite frivolous, but the fact-checking behind the information used on Strong's cans is top-notch. The prestigious *Journal of Imperial Defense Technologies*, popular with both professional defense industry insiders and interested civilians, has, on more than a dozen occasions, explicitly verified the facts on a can of Strong's.

Generations of impressionable, militarily-bent youngsters have consumed Major Strong's Iron Rations dutifully, to, as the commercials on the Tri-V insinuate, "Be a Proper Citizen!", or the more visceral "Fight Like a Tiger!"

Each can is packed with more than 4,000 calories, and eating more than about a third of a can will drive the hunger from the eater for an entire day. Eating an entire can oneself will curb any hunger for 1D+3 days, and make it very unlikely the eater will pass anything within that same time period.

A single 0.5 liter can of Strong's weighs about 1 kg, and costs only Cr3.

Medical Intervention

by Richard Perks

The PCs' vessel is delayed on orbit around Moughas (CA5A588-B: 0806/Regina). A hurricane is passing over the capital city and starport, and all flights have been cancelled. High winds and rain are lashing the port and electrical storms are disrupting communications between traffic control and the orbiting ships.

Whilst waiting for the storm to pass, the PCs will pick up a tight-beam communication from the surface below. A *Lisse*-class cargo submarine on the outskirts of the hurricane zone has declared a medical emergency. The communications are broken by the electrical storms within the hurricane, but the PCs will eventually gather that a crew member has a ruptured appendix and needs emergency treatment. The submarine only carries a steward qualified in first-aid rather than a proper medic. No rescue vehicles can be dispatched from the port due to the weather.

Can the Travellers help?

Referee's Information

In the event that the PCs do not have a trained doctor or adequate medical facilities, a large orbital freighter can provide a doctor and a full equipped medical bay. Unfortunately the freighter is not streamlined, and its shuttle is down on the planet and trapped by the storm.

The crewman needs immediate evacuation. The PCs' ship is the only streamlined vessel available. They can drop through the atmosphere at the edge of the storm or request the submarine rendezvous with

In A Store Near You

them outside the storm (taking 1 hour at full speed) but endangering the crewman further. Travel through the storm will require skilful piloting.

Once the PCs arrive over the submarine, they will encounter their second problem, the submarine has no place suitable for landing a grav vehicle. The *Lisse* submarine has minimal freeboard and only a small conning tower holding a single airlock and the radio/sensor masts and periscopes. There is a small area on the top of the conning tower for two crewmen on watch. If a PC falls into the sea, he is likely to be swept away. Two more airlocks allow access to the submarines interior, located fore and aft.

Moughas has a thin atmosphere and a higher than normal gravity (1.25G) which will hinder the PCs as they attempt to board the submarine and later transfer the patient to their ship.

Once onboard the doctor can confirm the diagnosis and that the crewmember is in need of urgent medical treatment. The doctor could attempt to perform surgery onboard with inadequate facilities or somehow transfer the incapacitated patient to their vessel and hence to the orbiting freighter.

To complicate matters, a small swarm of twelve Oia are swimming around the submarine. The Oia is a small reducer that has learnt to feast on garbage discharged by passing submarines. It resembles a fish with a dolphin like snout filled with small but sharp teeth. The Oia is not a mammal and is a water breathing species. They are as intelligent as a terrestrial cat.

Normally they cannot keep up with the submarine and pose no danger (sonic emitters keep them away from habitats). The Oia have caught up as the submarine has been holding position. They will attack anyone falling in the water and will even surge a short distance up a beach (or, in this case, the submarine's hull) in an attempt to snatch prey. If fired upon and wounded by the PCs, they will release a pheromone which will cause the rest of the swarm to flee. As they are rather slow swimmers, they have developed a unique method of evading predators. They can instinctively leap out of the water to evade and confuse predators. Each leap can be 3m in length and 2m high. A swarm of terrified leaping Oia are likely to knock any Travellers on the submarine's hull into the water.

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Oia:  Reducer 12kg No Armor, Teeth, 6/6 Hits, A5/F8/S1
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Traveller on the Internet   IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

We also occasionally run "Topical Talks" in the IRC channels; we'd like to know what topics you're interested in, and when are the best times for us to run them so that you can participate. We have participants from all over the world, so we'll want to try to accommodate the most people when scheduling a chat. Please write to us at our usual feedback address, *feedback@freelancetraveller.com* and let us know what will make the chats work best for you!
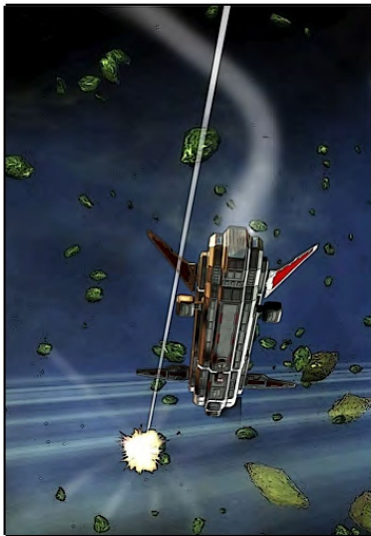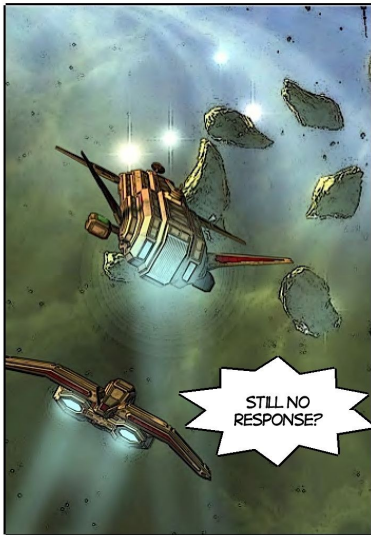
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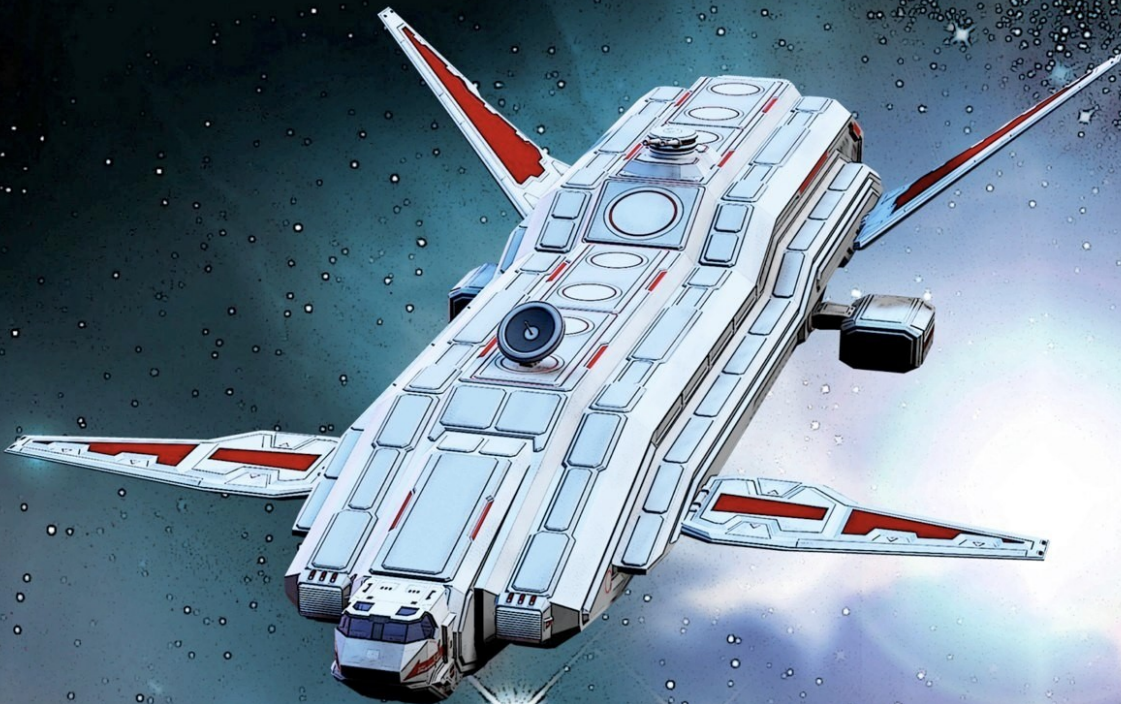
A Traveller webcomic. Story by David Billinghurst. Art by Dave Redington
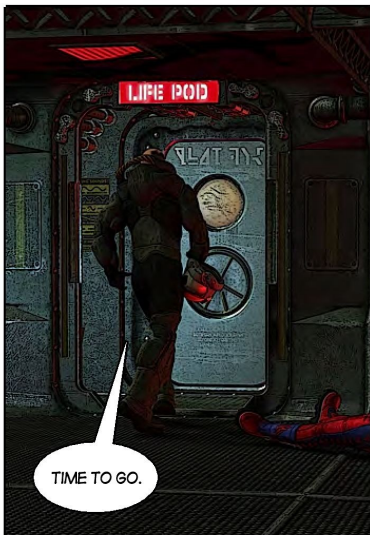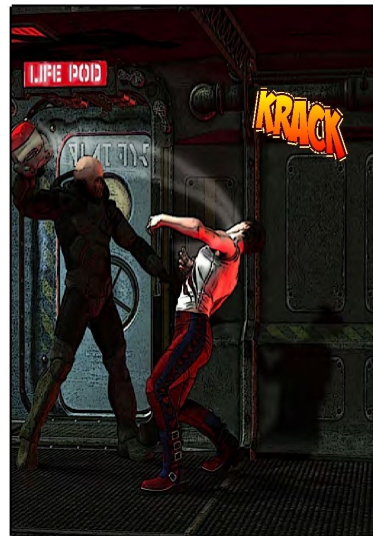
… to be continued …

Submission Guidelines

What is *Freelance Traveller* looking for?

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

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

What about …

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

…Hyperlite?

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

… Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

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

How should I submit my article?

What needs to be in the submission?

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

What format should I submit it in?

That depends, in part, on what you're submitting. In general:

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

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

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

How do I get it to you?

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