



Gateways

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LONE WOLF & CUB

GARY GYGAX

GHOSTBUSTERS

THE JAPANESE INVASION!
LONE WOLF & CUB
AREA 88, KAMUI,
MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL
GODZILLA

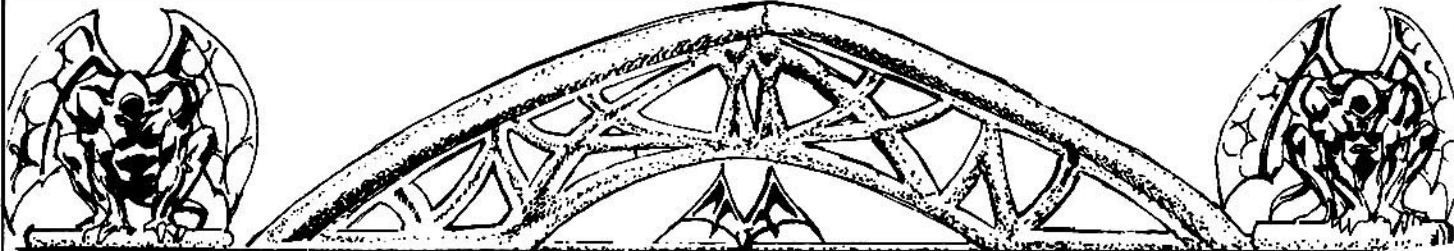
GARY GYGAX!
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WITH THE CREATOR OF
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™

GHOSTBUSTERS!
A SUPPLEMENT APPROVED
BY WEST END GAMES

STEPHEN KING!
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DARKEST FANTASY WORLDS

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Gateways

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Howling At The Moon

GATEWAYS Magazine always welcomes your comments and suggestions. *Howling At The Moon* is your regular forum for opinions, debates, discussions, cries and whispers. If you have something to tell us or to tell your fellow gamers, write to: *Howling At The Moon*, Gateways Publications Inc. JAF Box 965, New York, N.Y. 10116

Dear Gateways,

I really enjoyed your Star Trek issue a great deal. I would like to know if you plan to do any follow-up articles of the various Star Trek media in the future. Also, do you guys ever plan to arrange some sort of questions and answers column for your readers?

Sincerely,
Michael Sertan
St. Louis, MO

Ed Reply: All in good time, Mike. Just keep those questions coming...

To the People At Gateways Magazine;

Since this is the first time ever that I am writing to a magazine of any sort, let me just go over the basic points in issue #4 of Gateways that merited my attention enough to write to you.

First: From The Tower's "A Different Kind Of Reality" was a concise and direct editorial to a problem that is often *perceived* but never really *discussed* between gamers and non-gamers (usually parents, friends, etc.); the distinction between reality and fantasy, and where that distinction belongs while role-playing. This column is consistently addressing the issues dealing with the most important aspect of role-playing; social interaction. I like it.

Second: "Finer Art, Part One". Very nice, although it may be too soon to tell. I'll be looking for more.

Third: "GURPS". A very eye-catching introduction. Good review, in that it basically laid everything out on the table for the reader.

Fourth: Jonathan Frater ("Robotechnology Lives On!") has a very conversational, easy-going and humorous style that in my mind is a very good example of the open-arms representation of Gateways. The article itself was excellently done as well, and I would like more reviews from Mr. Frater in the future in keeping with the spirit of the magazine.

Fifth: The ELFQUEST interview was okay, but I think Gateways should go on to newer trends instead of treading water with passé literature. "How's Your Reptile" was singularly uninteresting in that no one needed to know what the technical data for Recognition was! To me, this spoiled the magic of the World of Two Moons because of its heretofore spontaneous representation. As I remember Treestump saying in one issue of ELFQUEST, "Recognition is Recognition!" Elf-Games? Eh!



Sixth: "Royal Entertainment". In this article, D. Quartermain seemed to have gotten carried away with the appeal of the system he (or she) was reviewing. At first, it made me wonder how objective he (or she) was being, even though he was as informative as he could be in his text. I probably would have tossed it off as another hack writer sucking up so that he can see print if I hadn't borrowed the system from a friend and taken a look at it. I rapidly changed my opinion about Quartermain and resolved to give him more credit from now on about whatever he reviews for Gateways.

Seventh: "Hearts in Armor." *Grreat piece! More! More! More!*

The other articles were pretty much standard for Gateways, ranging from good to excellently written. One question in reference to the Cosmic Streetcorner: Does it really have to appear every issue? I mean, the quality is superb, and the ideas it tries to put across are inspiring...but there is the adage of getting too much of a good thing. "Cosmic" is just that---too cosmic to keep exposing to the public as if it were an ordinary column. Let's go to perhaps every other issue, and maybe we might appreciate a little more.

Stephen Goldberg
San Diego, CA

Ed. reply: Thank you for your thoughtful comments, Stephen. I'm sorry that you didn't like everything in issue 4, but that is one of the aspects of a true multi-media magazine. There may be issues in the future wherein you may not be interested in one particular article or another...but I'll bet that you'll find twice as many fascinating articles, stories, overviews and reviews. As for the Cosmic Streetcorner...well, he's kinda hard to evict, being all the way out there. Bear with it! Maybe you'll "get cosmic" too!

Dear Gateways:

I loved the Elfquest interview...I've been a fan for years and years! More, more!

Lisa Meris
Albany, New York

Ed. reply: We can but do our best.

From The Tower

I'd like to take this time and space to get away from the many varied problems and solutions that my gaming friends have brought me, and share with you an experience that I had the very first time I went to a very large gaming convention. Oh, what does it matter, no one's going to sue me...it was GenCon. I had preregistered as a Game Master for a role-play session, and it was to be the first time I had ever run a game for complete strangers.

I was nervous, frightened, and totally unaware of the sheer size of the convention. When I actually got to the University and stood on line to pick up my badge and assorted papers, I thought that I had fallen through a time machine and was registering for my Freshman year all over again. Hundreds, no, thousands of gamers, not just from the Midwest, as I had been forewarned, but from All Over The World! They were wearing barbarian costumes, and tee-shirts which read "89 HP". They were carrying portable radios and plastic maces. Dr. Strange, cape and all, passed me in the hallway, where I had to ask directions from a pair of very young GMs who were comparing the merits of their critical charts. By that time, I had noticed several things. 1) This convention was the largest gathering of gamers I had ever seen or imagined in my life. 2) Most of the gamers there seemed to be far more experienced or knowledgeable than I. and 3) I was the only female person there who was wearing a GM badge. The only one.

Late that first night, I was close to tears. I had a game to run the next day, and I was sure that no one would show up. The name of the game was "Good Guys Wear Leather", and it was an adventure for first level characters who had little or no experience. Who, I asked myself, would possibly want to play such a sissy game? Everyone at this con had been playing since they could read. Everyone was bigger, tougher, more, uh, well, they were all boys and men. Who would want to be in a (gasp) girls' game? I didn't want to go. I didn't want to have to face a table full of pros who would instantly know that I really hadn't read the entire *Dungeon Master's Guide*. This was it, I was lost, I would never GM again. But I wasn't alone, and my friends would have been curious as to why I didn't go, so packing my 40 lb. bag of books, my lucky screen (Thanks, Carlos), and my big bag of dice, I walked into the room where I was expected to set up.

And found 25 people there, clutching tickets to the game, and those little generic tickets they used to give out in case an odd player or two didn't show up. There were about five or six female persons in this crowd, two very young people and about seven or eight folks who had at least six or seven years on me. It was the most fascinating cluster of gamers I had seen at the entire convention. Well,



I took a deep breath and walked over to the table to meet the GM who had obviously run over time and was just releasing his wonderful gamers. I had it in my mind to ask him to please continue playing, because no one was going to show up for my silly game.

Well, you should know the rest. They were all there for "Good Guys", dice in hand, and eager to play the lowest level possible. And I just couldn't send any of them away. Contrary to convention rules, (which means that you really shouldn't do this), I let everyone who wanted to stay do so. And crowded around a long, narrow, wooden table, we shared a truly fun and challenging episode of play, with blink dog puppies, kobolds who barked and whined, pirates who resembled former presidents, and assorted shenanigans. And after the game ended, I asked them as we were deciding on the "Best Player", why this game? Why low level characters?

The answers I got astonished me. For the challenge, someone said. No, for the opportunity to pull off a truly wonderful adventure, said someone else. After all, no one expects first level characters to be able to do anything. A woman told me that after years of playing in her friends' high level games, she had forgotten what it was like to play a character who actually had to worry about who was hit first in combat. Another woman told me that the adventures and accomplishments of low level characters had more meaning for her, since she didn't consider herself very high level "in real life". They all said that on the whole, low level characters were just more fun to play.

So, am I telling you to throw out your grand old characters of high level and great personal meaning? Never! But maybe just once, before this summer is out, you'll consider joining a low level game, and giving that young and frightened GM a chance. We all have to start somewhere.

Laurie Antoniou
Executive Editor

The Tome



The Finer Art of Character Generation - Part 2

In most fantasy role-playing games, "class" means the profession or classification a character belongs to. In the case of *The Tome*, and for my purpose, "class" means style, finesse, distinction. To play a classy character is to play a character that is memorable, understandable, and most of all, enjoyable. If you remember that the character you create will become a major part of a fantasy world, that the GM will be designing all sorts of encounters, battles, moral and physical tests and great rewards all for this character (and the others in the game, of course), you'll begin to realize the power you hold when you sit down to play. When you are facing a GM who cares about their game, you will be guaranteed a fantastic gaming experience if you give to your character just a fraction of the time the GM will be giving the world. The logical aspect of character design is a basic and solid beginning. (See *Gateways #4* for Part I of this series.) Now, you can go a step further and give your logical character some class. And what aspect of your character combines style, finesse and distinction? Why, personality, of course!

When I've tried to talk about personality in the past, there have always been a few players who would say that all this character building stuff was a waste of time. That 1) their GM would kill them off just as easily whether their characters had personalities or not, or 2) they really didn't have enough time to work on something that would not help them become more efficient players. To those who are ready to turn the page because of either of those reasons, stop! I'll not only show you how to set up a personality for your character in 10-30 minutes, I'll let you know just why such a character will be an asset to the game, why this will allow for better usage of character

abilities, and why the GM might just let you hang on. For those unfortunate enough to be caught in an old-fashioned hack-n-slash game in which characters enter and exit through a revolving door, well, who knows? Maybe you can find out what you might like to do when you run a game of your own!

A very quick method of determining a character's personality is to find a group of adjectives that conjure up a mental image. "Boorish, rude, vengeful and intelligent" provide a rough base for a player to work with, or maybe something like "innocent, helpful, bright, energetic and brave". (Although I wouldn't want to be in the same party with them.) If the proper words don't seem to come, try pages 100-101 of TSR's *Dungeon Masters Guide*, a much ignored section called the Non-Player Character Trait Charts. The first thing you should do is ignore the caution that they shouldn't be used for player characters. Then, skipping the Possessions chart, wander through the remaining charts and *choose at will*. It's not necessary for you to roll because you have the power to choose your characters personality in every aspect. Be as thorough as possible, and then read your list out loud. At this time, you should be able to picture this character in your mind, already establishing a set of values and traits that will be the center of this new personality. Just be careful with possible contradictions...amoral altruists and somber practical jokers cannot work. If you don't have a DMG handy, or you find the lists offered there to be too restricting, any decent thesaurus will offer you new ways of looking at old traits.

Or, instead of a list of words, perhaps you can create a character with a personalized set of lists of your own. Set up a sheet with spaces for several short lists, and head them with terms like: Loves, Hates, Fears, Admires, Wants, Aspires to, Likes, Avoids, and similar phrases. Under each heading, list a few things or situations that would fit the description. Knowing what your character feels about things can be a great aid in role-playing *and* combat. If your new character hates blue dragons, admires pirates and fears witches, there will be three different reactions to combat if conflict should arise between these three possible foes. Try to imagine why your character feels this way about these things, and leave gaps to expand upon later. When your character gains a new ally or enemy or "feeling", add it to the list.

While you should never plagiarize a name from other works of fantasy, there's no reason why you can't borrow facets of a fictional character's personality. You can (and should) even mix and match by taking part of one character that you might admire and part from another. You can cross genres and themes and come up with great new characters without any one else in the game realizing it. Sure, your sheet reads Alfonso de Narconi, but in your mind, you're playing John Carter, Warlord of Mars. Who cares if you can't play him *exactly*? After all, your own modifications and personal touches will make the character truly

yours and no one will ever know the difference.

Some game systems are created with character personality in mind. **Pendragon**, for example, has a list of character traits that are rolled and matched in pairs, giving players an idea of how their character stands in terms of morality and values. Character background sheets can be found commercially printed and within game systems, and the smallest amount of adjusting will suit them to any game type. Highly recommended is the Character Background sheet found in the **Champions III** supplement. The introductory section in Steve Jackson's **GURPS** contains valuable hints on character generation and development. In fact, many games include a basic introduction to role-playing in general, usually in some sort of "If you don't know what a role-playing game is...read this" introduction. Don't ignore this... a new look at role-playing can only help you to better understand your part as a player or GM. (Besides...if you think that the manufacturer is wrong, you can then write to them and set them straight.)

Personality and character profession can compliment each other and make your gaming experience more enjoyable. When choosing the character profession (or type, or class, or whatever your gaming system calls it), try to choose according to how you feel you can play in the group you're playing in. If the GM has told you that the game will be a quest for a holy artifact led by a paladin, don't ask to play an amoral character out for killing monsters and taking the treasure. (Unless you usually join games just to start trouble. If that's the way you play, you should know that the GM has the full right to do whatever is necessary to tell his/her story, up to and including showing your obnoxious character the back door. You have been warned.) If you happen to be set on playing an assassin, thief or any other character type that might have trouble interacting in a group, talk it over with the GM and work out why you are doing this. (Who knows, maybe the GM could use a character like that in the party.) Try to see how you are going to mix with the others in your group, and find a place for yourself that would be both unique in skills

and personality and fun for you to play.

Never limit yourself to one class or one type of class when there are so many to choose from! Some systems come with lists of up to thirty character professions you can play, others invite you to make up your own. (eg. **GURPS**). If the system you use has only a few "official" classes and professions, (eg. **Advanced Dungeons and Dragons**), be sure to check out the dozens of "unofficial" classes published in magazines, supplements and fan-produced newsletters. Remember that in a non-tournament game, the GM is the only one who can say what is official and what's not! Be daring. Some classes

designated "For NPC's only" make fine PC classes, some without even minor adjustments. Players - if you really want to play a "new" class of "forbidden" profession, sell the idea to your GM. Let him/her alter the class if they feel it might unbalance the game, and remind them how the inclusion of this character will make the game even more original and exciting. GM's - add a favorite NPC class or two to your list of choices for PC's. Take the time to explain how the character class functions, and let the players try. Keep the character class consistent, and try to make sure the player knows how to use any special abilities or powers you might have included. The worst that could happen is that you find it doesn't work and you remove it from your list of PC options before your next campaign. I've done that myself, and have never re-



gretted having, even for a short time, a PC with amazing powers within my game setting. It added such a note of mystery and excitement *for me* (by my never knowing when he was going to unleash this mighty power and ruin my plotline by solving a problem with the obvious solution of blasting anyone he disagreed with to atoms), that it made the game much more interesting.

One of the final touches which go into the creation of a truly classy character is a personal history. By personal, I mean a history which includes (but is not limited to), an indication of where this character was born, how much organized schooling they had, their status in regard to the

family they were raised in, the profession in which they were trained, and their lifelong or immediate goal. This should give the GM an idea of the characters' background, and if that GM is any good, they will jump in and help the player design and form that personal history into something which can serve to enrich the game. These pre-game bull sessions can establish areas of the plot which will draw the player character in at the start of the first session of the game. It's also a great time for the GM to see if anyone in that PC's history should be fleshed out into an NPC. Believe me, there's nothing like seeing an NPC you created come to life and affect the game. It adds such a feel of player/GM interaction to the game. And to any hesitant GMs out there, I can recall several times when the NPCs created by players turned out to become some of the more interesting personalities in my files. Some players I've met like to give me detailed past histories, some long enough to count as short stories. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that. In fact, I'd say that most players who like to do that are really GMs under the skin.

So: personality, profession, history. The meshing of these three will develop into the best expression of a gamer's art...a truly classy character. In the next and last part of this series, we'll take a look at alignment, morality, purpose, and sex.

Laura Antoniou

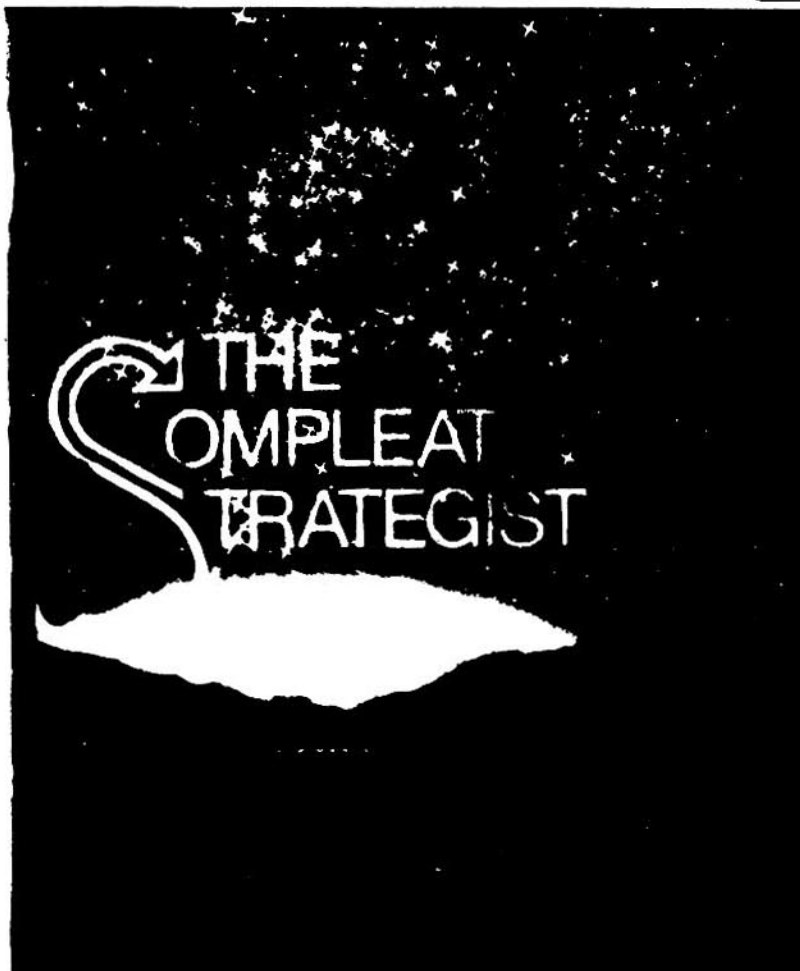
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SAMURAI RISING: LONE WOLF & CUB ARRIVE IN AMERICA

Jeffrey Gomez

"Those eyes...like life-death eyes. As though he'd witnessed countless scenes of carnage...it's chilling! These pure, flawless eyes fill me with such fear...they look straight into my soul."

Gritting his teeth and clenching his fists the Master "nobleman" continues to stare into the little boy's bruised, solemn face. The boy is tied up, and has been severely beaten by the house's servants. Now they are sweating, afraid. Now the horrific truth dawns upon the Master.

"Hurry! Lock the child in the warehouse. Allow him no food or water. If this child is who I think he is, I'm sure his father must be nearby. As death comes closer, step by step, he will call for help."

"But who can he do that if we lock him up?" stammers a servant, gripping his katana tightly by the hilt.

"This is no ordinary child...I think he is a Wolf's child--and when at last he howls, then his father will come to claim him..."

And, sure enough, somewhere in the distance, filthy, feverish and certain as death itself, the renegade Samurai rises as if storming through the fiery mists of Hell. Thundering forward, propelled by pure vengeance, his blade flashing in the twilight, the Lone Wolf is indeed approaching...

The story of the Lone Wolf and his Cub spans 28 volumes running more than 8,400 pages. It is without a doubt one of Japan's most vivid and spectacular Samurai stories. Written by Kazuo Koike, and drawn by Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf & Cub* was in fact a serial, a titanic comic strip produced for a total of ten



years in *Manga Action*, a weekly comic book anthology aimed specifically at young Japanese men. Quickly, it became hugely popular and sparked a phenomenon that would take nearly 17 years to sweep across the Pacific to American shores.

Their martial arts, their industry, their keen intelligence and popular art; Japan has held America fascinated for the past 40 years. The figure of the Samurai, the honored warrior who lives to serve his master *Daimyo*, is an ancient incarnation of the

American cowboy. But our vision of even the most notorious or noble cowboys must shy in comparison to the Samurai. Samurai lived with the spectre of death and were prepared to die for their cause at any time, even if the death must come by their own hands. A Samurai who has dishonored himself may volunteer--or be asked by his *Daimyo*--to commit *Seppuku*, the act of disemboweling himself with his short sword. Itto Ogami, the Lone Wolf, was in fact a *Kaishaku-Nin*, the Shogun's executioner, the Samurai who would wield his "blessed sword" to behead the dishonored and complete the ritual of *Seppuku*. Few cowboys would have ever considered suicide as a sign of honor, and even fewer would have been crazy or disciplined enough to accept it!

The universe of *Lone Wolf & Cub* is one of elemental forces. As the original *Godzilla* was a modern,



GAARGH!



unstoppable incarnation of the destructive power of the atom, the Lone Wolf is an ancient incarnation of vengeful violence. Neither creature is evil, they both exist to remind mankind of his potential for greed and cruelty. And therein lay the origin and story of Itto Ogami and his son, Daigoro.

In a province of feudal Japan (between the 17th and 19th centuries), the Yagyu clan, who are sanctioned assassins under the Shogun, greedily conspired to take the position of *Kaishaku-Nin* from Itto Ogami. The assassins proceed to set up Ogami and dishonor him in the eyes of his Master--then they violently slaughter Ogami's entire family, including the Samurai's pregnant wife. In a stunning scene mysteriously missing from the American premiere of *Lone Wolf & Cub*, Ogami actually finds Daigoro hidden amid the carnage, still attached to his fallen mother by umbilical cord, and must use his sword to pull his son into life! Later, in yet another of the many timeless images from the series, Ogami places Daigoro on the floor and bids the infant to choose between a toy ball and a sword. After only a brief hesitation, Daigoro crawls to the blade, sealing his own destiny and bringing tears to his father's eyes. "You would have been happier at your mother's

side," murmurs Ogami.

Soon, the Yagyu arrive with a writ declaring that both Ogami and Daigoro commit *seppuku* before the Shogun for their alleged crimes. His *katana* whipping around his body like lightning in a bottle, Ogami cuts them down. Thus begins the odyssey of the Lone Wolf and his Cub, as Ogami leaves the province to roam the countryside, becoming himself an assassin for hire, killing mercilessly, seeking vengeance against those who lashed out at him, "descending into hell" while carrying his child in a baby carriage rigged with a dozen deadly weapons.

Until May 1987, the only way to have experienced the horror and beauty of *Lone Wolf & Cub* was either to have somehow gotten hold of one or more of the lavishly jacketed volumes of the Japanese *manga*, *Kozure Okami*, or to have seen the dubbed American version of a combination of *Lone Wolf* movies called

Shogun Assassin. Rick Obadiah and the people at First Publications aimed to change all that, and went directly to Japan to do so. But the comic book publisher's choice of *Kozure Okami manga* for being the first major Japanese production to be carefully and lovingly translated for an American audience was not made randomly.

Frank Miller was a young comic book writer/artist who, while certainly maintaining a clear vision of what he wanted to say with his work, was always looking for better, more dynamic ways of communicating his words and images. His breakthrough in the comics field occurred during his run on the Marvel Comics' super hero series about a blind lawyer who would often mete out justice as *Daredevil*, the Man Without Fear. Miller introduced a bizarre foe/love-interest into the series, an assassin called *Elektra*, creating a classic run of dark and gritty stories of bloody passion that can now be seen as being clearly inspired by Koike's and Kojima's work. The *Elektra Saga*, along with much of Miller's subsequent efforts, almost certainly played a hand in the avalanche of ninja and other martial arts related books that parodied or imitated themselves into a comic book glut that has yet to see an end.

Miller went on to further develop *manga* inspired story telling techniques with the nightmarish sword and technology drama *Ronin* (currently available in a single volume in direct sales comic book stores). Even more successful was what he did in visually fashioning the popular *X-Man*, *Wolverine*, into a





kind of Samurai in a mini-series set in Japan (also now bound into one volume and available at comic shops). Miller is still extremely popular, and it is small wonder that he is among the first American graphic artists to have his comics bound into graphic albums, as has been done regularly with Japanese *manga* for many years!). The layout, the visual stances of the characters, even the dynamism in the swordplay of the *Wolverine* stories can be directly linked to Kojima's images. Even the triumphantly successful *Darknight* series is not without the distinct, bone-cracking influence of *Lone Wolf's* sudden, often final, violence.

Frank Miller has not hidden his love or praise of *manga*, and specifically *Lone Wolf & Cub*, from anyone curious enough to ask about his favorite comics. First Publishing was simply astute enough to investigate the possibility of bringing such a rich source of creativity to American shores. But dealing with the Japanese is no simple feat. Publisher Rick Obadiah explains:

"Basically, the Japanese will only

make serious business deals face to face—and they treat many aspects of business as important. Certainly *Lone Wolf & Cub*, whose creators are exalted in Japan, is a property that had to be handled with care and dignity. Unlike the American attitude toward comic books, the majority Japanese feel that *manga* is an integral part of their culture. Comics are a respected business. Our job was to convince the people who owned the rights to *Kozure Okami* [Global Communications in Tokyo] to trust us to respect and honor the property."

First Publications certainly had a track record that indicated they were not simply after big money. Titles such as *American Flag*, *Nexus*, and *Shatter* indicate the company's desire for mature, powerful and often controversial material with attention paid to quality on all levels. Such a diligent adherence to high standards will not go unrewarded anywhere in business:

"Koike and Kojima, Global President Akira Okada and Vice-President Masa Makige put their faith in us. They trusted us to pull it off. I can't tell you how nervous I was during the few minutes when, after flying 8000 miles to hand present the first issue of *Lone Wolf & Cub*, I had to wait for their reaction," related Obadiah. "Well, when they smiled, I felt great! They were exquisitely gratified! I can only describe our relationship with Global as good karma all around--it's been hassle free all the way!"

The intense devotion the Japanese have toward the series would certainly be curious were it not for the one basic factor that sets this Samurai story apart from all others. Although Ja-

pan has celebrated more than its share of excellent manga artists and writers few have approached the bleak sensitivity and hopeless beauty of *Kozure Okami*. Why would there be such fanaticism for a story of a man's descent into his own personal hell? How is so much mayhem and blood-spurting violence honored? Why is an assassin who seems to kill anyone for gold called a hero? And why is it that, more than all Samurai manga put together, *Lone Wolf & Cub* has a huge female following?

The answer is largely, Daigoro.

In the Cub's shining eyes, the reader is forced to acknowledge the humanity of the Lone Wolf. Ogami's love for Daigoro, while never stated, can never be doubted. Scenes in which the killing machine Ogami watches his son, teaches his son proper etiquette, tells him where to go to the bathroom, carries him protectively at his side, are each telling and poetic. Daigoro witnesses the carnage his father wreaks passively from his carriage or upon his father's back, but his very presence makes each act of violence harsh and disturbing. Though far from being an Achilles Heel for Ogami, the Cub keeps the reader sensitive to the threat of death which constantly pur-



MANGA? MANGA!

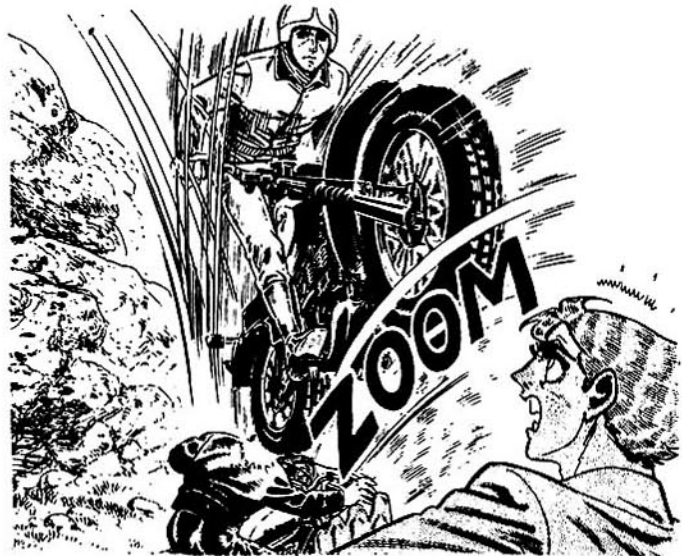
The Universe of Japanese Comics

"During my trip to Tokyo, I took a walk through the Ropungi District. It's an area that they have sectioned off from the rest of the city, like a mall, and the kids can just go wild there," related First publisher Rick Obadiah to Gateways. "Kids dressed like greasers, punks, full heavy metal costume--you name it. They seem fascinated with rock music and American pop-culture. Anyway, there's this store there, it's four stories tall, thousands of feet square--a comic book store. They sold nothing but comics, all in print. The third floor was devoted to women's comics!"

Imagine yourself an artist or writer, a good one. Think of all your ideas, every story you've dreamed of telling, every aspect of a world you'd always wanted to realize. Then muse about being paid big bucks to put it all down on paper--start to finish. Your fantasy, science fiction, historical drama, laid out for millions to read and experience every week for as long as it takes for you to tell it properly! Welcome to the world of Japanese *manga*!

"But wait a minute!" you say. "You're talking about comics. I want my creative work to be taken seriously--not ground out on pulp every week to be trashed when everybody's done!"

Keiji Nakazawa might have to argue that point. In 1973 he began serializing *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima), the 300 page first volume of which is available in English through New Society Publishers, 4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, PA, 19143 for \$9.95). The story of a boy who's family lives and suffers through to the end of World War II, the ten volume work is stunning in its mixture of comic strip characters and the pure horror of a family under siege by the mindlessness of war. Blaming no one and everyone for what happened, the ten beautifully color bound volumes of *Barefoot Gen* has sold more than 10 million copies around the world. An animated film of the story is being translated for American release as of this printing. *Manga*



is taken very seriously in Japan, and only is its American counterpart (in the guise of *Mage*, *Darknight* and *Watchmen*, for example) beginning to catch up.

Indeed, manga artists, targeting particular audiences such as sports fans or older men, are freer to express their creativity than their western counterparts. The stories that comprise such familiar (and, unfortunately watered down) American animated TV fare as *Robotech*, *Captain Harlock*, and *Starblazers* all had their roots in Japanese *manga*. In fact, in their original form, these epic stories contained violence, passion and mature themes which have yet to be experienced by fans here. Perhaps with Nippon's new export of powerful (and hopefully uncensored) *manga*, the comic industry and audience stateside will grow that much more....

The *manga* catch? Well, to get the fancy life-style with its slick motorcycles and state-of-the-art media center apartments, you've got to train your craft for years. (*Lone Wolf* artist Goseki Kojima worked under *Kamui* creator Sanpei Shirato for nearly a decade.) Once you are attained by one of the major publishing houses in Tokyo, you will be expected to produce your "universe" at up to thirty pages a week! "Telephone book" sized black and white publications such as *Shonen Jump!* require amazing amounts of material every seven days! (Established artists such as super assassin *Golgo 13's* Takao Saito use teams of assistants who help with everything from background drawings to photo-modeling to geo-political research!) Can you take it? Perhaps someday soon, you'll get the chance! -- J.G.





veys the series. Also, Daigoro is the last ounce of innocence that the Lone Wolf possesses.

As is illustrated in the third issue of the American series, called "Gateless Barrier", this is why they are rarely parted: Ogami spends months disciplining himself so that he radiates no challenge to hungry wolves, who finally ignore him. Upon his return to Daigoro, he finds his son playing happily with a wolf cub--the embodiment of a child innocent of the danger around him. The Cub is what makes the Lone Wolf accessible. Without him, there would be little to care about despite the majesty of Kojima's artwork. Indeed, it will be Daigoro and no one else who will be able to walk away from the story of the Lone Wolf and his certainly fatal quest for vengeance.

At a cover price of \$1.95 and running 64 to 96 pages monthly in a square bound cardboard cover boasting artwork by Frank Miller and colorist Lynn Varley, painstakingly translated and "panel-flipped" from Japanese originals, First Publishing sales director Kurt Goldzung happily reports consistent sell-out of *Lone Wolf & Cub's* print runs. This does not mean, however, that new readers will never get the chance to enjoy earlier issues: "We will be reprinting our the first few issues until the demand is met, and book-

store chains across the country have expressed a strong interest in getting editions of *Lone Wolf*," said Goldzung. "Hopefully, by the end of the year, there will be a collection of the first several issues into a 'telephone book' sized volume, just as they do in Japan."

Even with the presence of young Daigoro, *Lone Wolf & Cub* is not always sharp and clear to modern American readers. Often, Ogami will do something that can be construed as horrifying even by glazed standards. His killing of a Buddhist priest in "Gateless Barrier" may seem abominable at first glance, but Frank Miller's introduction concerning the reading of the series with care and curiosity should be taken seriously by anyone

interested in the universe of *manga* and the Samurai. Koike and Kojima have provided all the clues necessary to comprehend what is happening. A second or third reading can only deepen the enjoyment for anyone who wishes to understand!

Bulletin: It has come to Gateways' attention that First Publications has commissioned Mayfair Games to create a role-playing game based on *Lone Wolf & Cub!* "Our respect for the abilities of Mayfair President Darwin Bromley and Bob Garcia has led us to our decision for Mayfair to get the game rights," First Publisher Obadiah told Gateways. "We're going to cooperate 100% with First to produce a game-system and premise that lives up to the *Lone Wolf & Cub* name," replied Bromley. "It will have the sweep and the scope of the series. Fans will not be disappointed." A system for involving two or more players in a storyline organic to the universe depicted in the graphic novel has not yet been devised. A release some time before Christmas should be a fair goal for the game company, and for all those bold or mad enough to walk along side the Samurai with a Baby Carriage.

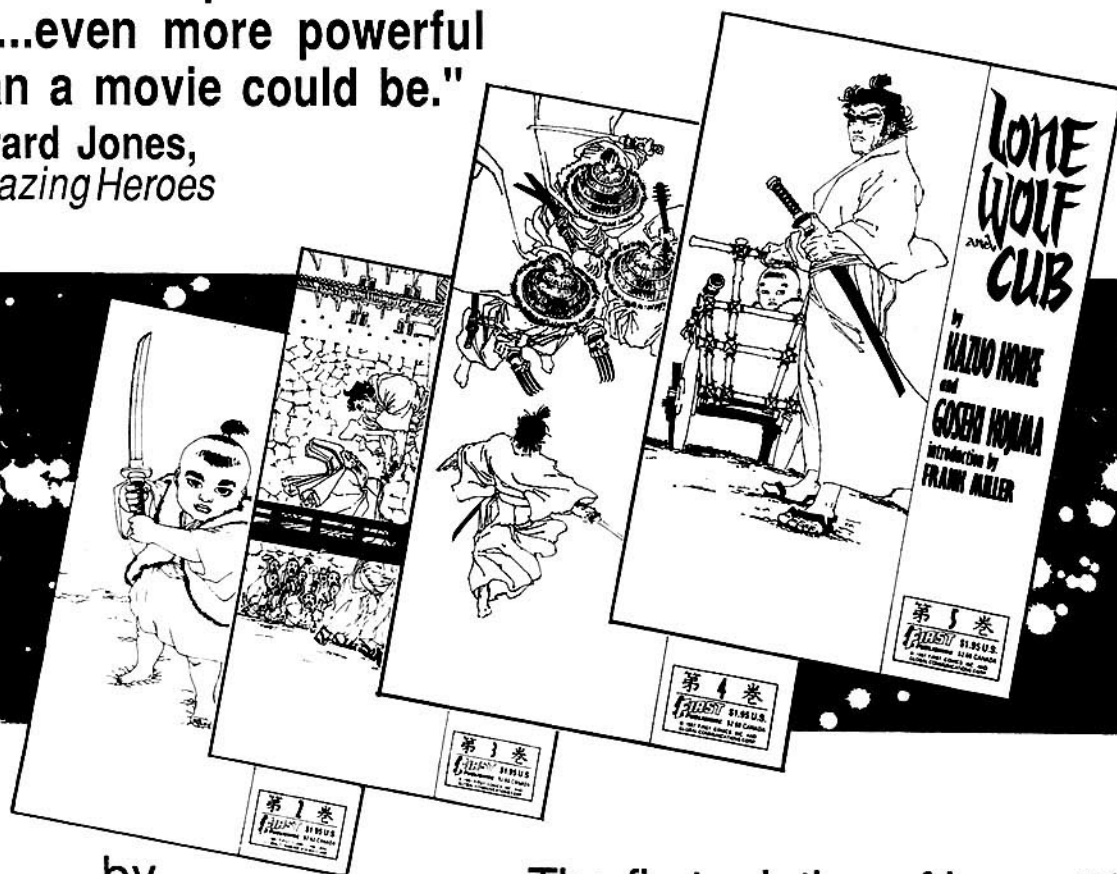


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An Eclipse Over the Orient

Three More Manga Epics Arrive!

Jeffrey Gomez

In a gambit that will almost certainly signify the triumph or failure of Japanese *manga* in America, Eclipse International has teamed up with Viz Communications to release three biweekly comic book serials. With negotiations occurring at nearly the same time as First Publishing's for *Lone Wolf & Cub*, Eclipse has called the appearance of four *manga* titles on comic retail store's shelves "a happy coincidence", carefully adding that besides high quality there is quite a difference in each of their products.

Beginning their runs this past May, all three books are adventure epics with distinctly Japanese motifs. Aerial combat in North Africa, a coming of age saga for a young girl gifted with psychic powers, and period ninja action, each title is a serious and holistic work extremely well-received in their native country. Unlike *Lone Wolf*, they will be packaged and marketed in a manner similar in style and presentation to their original Japa-

nese productions.

General Manager Seiji Horibuchi, the editorial liason between Tokyo and Eclipse Comics, explained to Gateways that Viz is a subsidiary of Shogakukan, one of the hugest publishing houses in Japan.

"We have chosen the comic book medium to support a cultural exchange with the United States because the graphic design and visual impact of *manga* runs quite well for an audience that has accepted the graphic novel as a new and exciting device," said Horibuchi. "*Manga* would be much more easily comprehended by young Americans than would translations of Japanese prose novels.

Eclipse is the third largest comic company and they have done a pretty good job so far. They are aggressive, innovative, and have allowed the original cover art onto the magazines. We are new at this and are working with Eclipse as a guide in gauging the comic reading audience." Laughing, the editor concluded, "We hope western readers can keep up with the pace!"

THE LEGEND OF KAMUI

The first of Eclipse's trio to be released, *The Legend of Kamui* depicts a side of life in feudal Japan that can often slip past the myth and grandeur of *Lone Wolf & Cub*. Kamui is a young outcast, a renegade fleeing the unscrupulous lifestyle of



his birth training as an Iga ninja.

Set outside most of the familiar trappings of ninja tales, Kamui takes us on a journey through the forests and villages of 17th century Nippon. The pace, however, is swift, as the Iga cannot accept Kamui's rebellious departure, and make every effort to stalk and slay him. With each issue, the society in which Kamui lived is revealed to be brutal and overbearing, forcing the ninja to take a stand, and ultimately to champion the "commoners" who have unquestioningly helped him to survive.

Said to be the life work of writer/artist Sanpei Shirato, Kamui is an incredibly long tale, well into which the American version picks up. For this reason, things may seem a bit confusing, but Eclipse does its best to clarify with monthly information pages called *Ninja Secrets*.

Visually, *The Legend of Kamui* is a feast for *manga* lovers. Its style often hints at the dynamism with which artists like Shirato can evoke with the many other subjects the Japanese enjoy in their comics, such as cooking, hunting and fishing.



Sharp eyed readers may note, however, that while First Publishing resolves the problem of the right to left design of traditional *manga* by "flipping" panels twice (expensively, once to reverse the action having it make sense to western readers, and once more to preserve Lone Wolf's stances and detail), Eclipse only reverses them once, leaving almost every character in the series turn out to be left-handed!

AREA 88

"When I am gone, when I leave this place...all the things I hated in life will disappear, too...I am getting tired of the killing...I am getting worn out...letting the sand embrace me like this...I was going to die eventually, so let me sleep now...let me rest..."

Soaring at last into the modern age, Kaoru Shintani's *Area 88* is perhaps the most immediately striking of the *manga* currently available. The series began its run in Japan in 1978 and still has a strong following there (spawning an amazing

23 volumes and three spectacular animated feature films for Shogakukan).

A prime example of the Japanese fascination with the balance between life and death, *Area 88* is actually a region, a map location within the mythical North African Kingdom of Asran. Shin Kazama is a jet fighter pilot who, we soon find, has been duped into becoming a mercenary, impressed into the Middle Eastern conflict which blazes all around the besieged country. He is an expert, though, and will do almost anything, including his job, to survive. ("I'm sorry--but it was either you or me," he will often mutter as an enemy fighter plummets under his high calibre onslaught.)

Unlike any other comic book depiction of mercenaries and hired guns, Shintani portrays the pilots of *Area 88* as workers under contract. Despite any moral convictions they may have about murder and war off the battlefield, they are there to do their jobs, make enormous sums of money and get out of there alive. Kazama was torn from



his lover back in Japan by the treachery of a former friend. Now he is tormented by the fact that he has become a killer who may never return to the innocence of that romance.

Using breathtaking black and



white visuals which combine cartoon art with super-realistic drawings of high tech bombers, Shintani clearly shows us that there is little choice for any of his characters.

"The sound of their burners went by overhead, fading into the glittering, velvet sky...The taxiway lights shone in blue, accusing eyes of burning turquoise, while the runway light illuminated this asphalt hell...In the darkness of the night, the devil said, "Live!"

MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL

Although originally released in Japan as a "girl's" *manga*, Kazuya Kudo's and Ryoichi Ikegami's production of *Mai, the Psychic Girl* most certainly stands as a shining example of the art. A science-fiction story at first glance, the series concerns the fierce attempts of an international organization called the Wisdom Alliance to capture and

utilize the extraordinary psionic powers of a Japanese schoolgirl. But simply another "teenaged mutant ninja" book this is not!

Mai is a combination of everything that makes *manga* a definite interest for anyone involved with comics, science fantasy, and solid, exciting story-telling. Unlike the bulk of what is released from month to month in America, a plot synopsis of any given issue of *Mai* will differ greatly from the one given the issue before. Monstrous creatures, sword fights, martial arts, chase scenes and psychic duels are all woven brilliantly, and surprisingly smoothly, into an international conspiracy to control the world. But, as with all fine *manga*, there is a personal, introspective side to the story which often takes the spotlight.

A true test in story-telling technique, especially in the genres of science fiction and fantasy, is to take a look at what you have left when you have stripped away all of the "special effects", the magic and super-



technology which provides the razzle-dazzle to each chapter. What is revealed when this is done to *Mai*, is a story of the mystery and passion a child experiences as she becomes a young adult. The quiet scenes of the 14 year-old girl exuberantly exploring the extent of her power could easily be substituted for scenes where any teen explores the novelty of what is happening to him. (Wonderfully touching scenes which, in fact, take this to its logical conclusion have been cut from the Eclipse translations, but may, according to Seiji Horibuchi, be shown for the first time here in a graphic novel collection of the *Mai* series by the end of the year.)

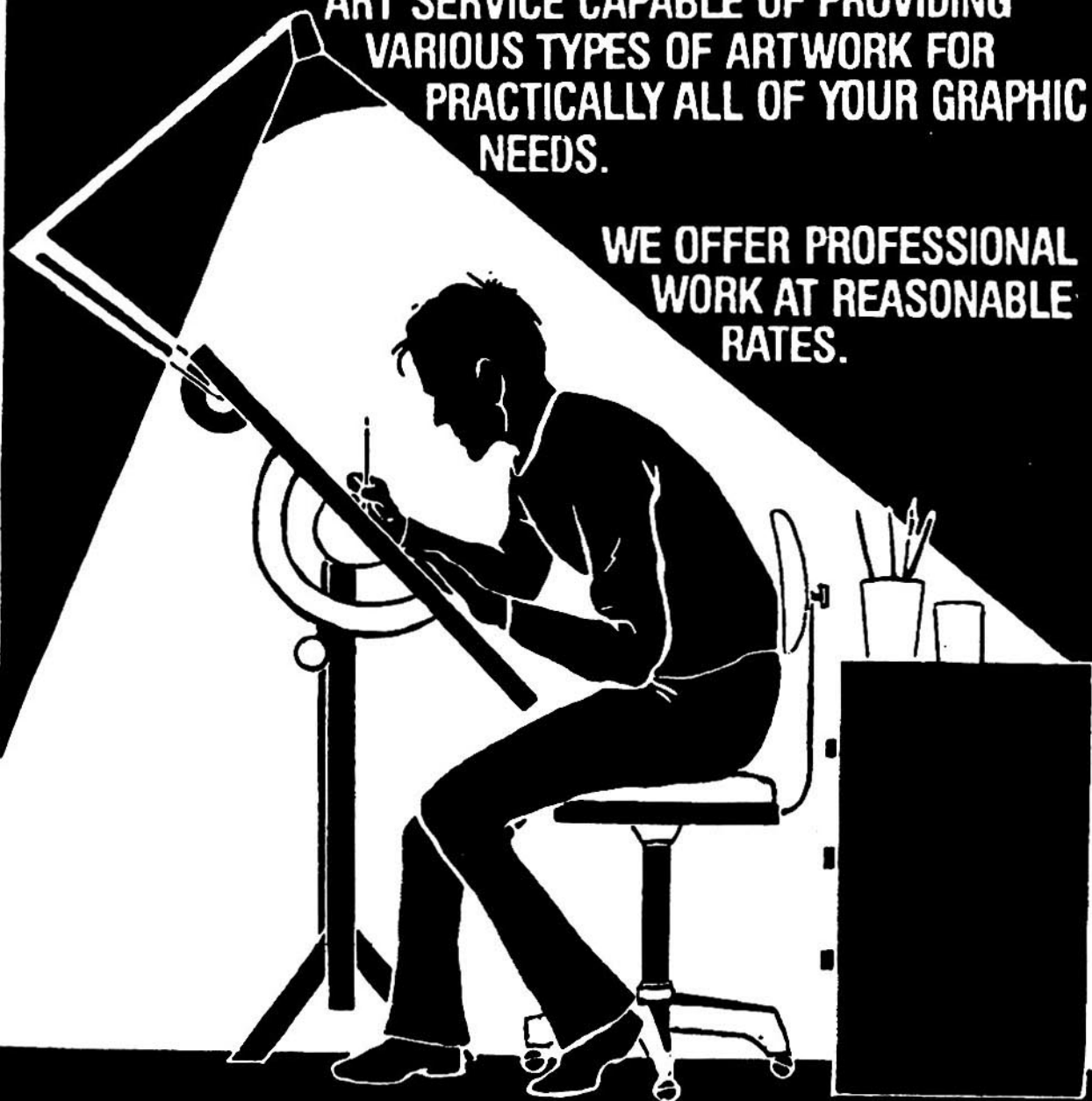
As with all of the *manga* now appearing stateside, *Mai* has a definite ending to occur several years down the line, at its current biweekly publication rate. While it may be uncomfortable for Americans to accept a series that will not only conclude, but close all of its storylines--often with the deaths of some of its main characters--once and for all in the final issues, the Japanese have been doing this for many years. (Osamu Tezuka's *Kimba, the White Lion*, the popular and adorable cartoon character of the 1960s, grew up to be King, and gave his life nobly and triumphantly in the last issue of his *manga* series!) Now, along with Kamui, Mai, and Kazami, perhaps it will be our turn to grow a little, explore and mature.



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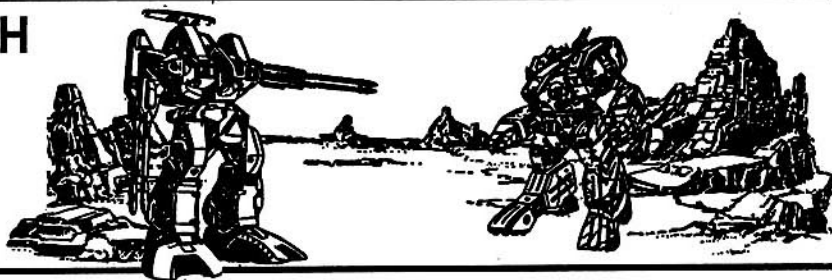


EVOLUTION AT ITS BEST

DATELINE: BATTLETECH

First Came the Battle: Now Comes The War!

M. Brenshaw



They've finally done it. After fascinating us board gamers with **BATTLETECH** and then keeping us interested with **AEROTECH**, and finally with **CITYTECH**, not to mention more than a few books on the subject and supplements that have given us many notable 'Mech companies and personalities to deal with, FASA has finally outdone itself by presenting us with **BATTLEFORCE**, the board game that takes Battletech one step further by dealing primarily with large scale maneuvering instead of trying to deal solely with one-on-one combat between 'Mechs as was the case with it's predecessors.

Fans of the original game will instantly recognize much of the game's structure and rules; in fact many of these have been expanded to include tactics that are not available in Battletech, such as overburn, where you intentionally overheat your 'Mech to produce greater power (well, it is in there, but it has to do with a lot of book-keeping on the player's part) and overrun, where a big 'Mech goes through a little one without stopping. The real beauty of the game however, is the fact that there is no book-keeping, note taking, or pencil pushing of any kind (Those who went through hell in **BATTLETECH**, etc., because they hated taking care of all those damage sheets will especially appreciate this.) You see, each counter (nicely marked and ingeniously designed) represents four 'Mechs, one platoon of infantry (around 25 men), or two aerospace fighters, and as that lance or whatever is attacked by enemy units, it loses strength and becomes comparatively weaker. It's that simple, and I love this system because of that.

That is just the tip of the iceberg, however. **BATTLEFORCE**, remember, concerns itself with large-scale warfare, which gives players the opportunity to use all kinds of new units and tactics, like air lances that make strafing attacks and drop bombs, dropships that drop 'Mechs, artillery that blows the stuffing out of your enemies, heavy and light vehicles, and even mines, which can strike any unit, anytime and anywhere.

But the fun doesn't stop there, because the rules also provide for transferring your favorite 'Mechs, both home-made and otherwise into **BATTLEFORCE** terms. There is also a Quick Lance Generation Method, for those players who immediately want to get right into the mainstream of things by forming thier own companies without too much trouble. These are followed by quite a few pointers on how a regimental commander goes about forming his regiment. And finally, what **BATTLEMECH** game or

supplement would be complete without a few sample scenarios to get you going (there are 5 in the rule booklet).

In short, for those serious wargamers out there who have been anxiously awaiting the game that would make it easier for them to conduct a real war with their favorite BattleMechs without the tedious but necessary hassles of recording the heat buildup and damage taken for each individual 'Mech, **BATTLEFORCE** is nothing less than exactly what you have been needing in your life, and I strongly approve of it's playability and design.

MERC WORK IN THE INNER SPHERE

Playing a MechWarrior in Battletech is not easy, especially when your unit is *not* on the warpath, causing mayhem and destruction every which way one looks. Many talented GMs and players manage to find their ways around such obstacle but take one small ideal of the RPG into account -- the side that your unit is loyal to almost always determines who your friends and enemies are. Stieners always hate Kuritas, Davions always hate Liaos, and Mariks don't seem to like anyone in particular. The same choices seem to arise time and time again. Wouldn't you like a chance to do something different, a chance to work for anyone you wanted? A chance to make as much money as time, resources, and equipment would allow? I thought you might, so I am pleased to announce that FASA has released another great new supplement for MechWarrior, entitled **The BattleTech Mercenary's Handbook**, and for anyone out there who would like to run a merc campaign but couldn't decide how to go about setting one up, this book is an absolute must.

This beautifully illustrated, 140-page book is sectioned off into several chapters, each one telling a part of the tale of the "average" mercenaries life and the methods used in making his living. The first one, entitled *Mercenary Units*, tells about the different types of units that can be found selling their respective talents to the highest bidder. These include a decent history of the modern "MercWarrior" as well as descriptions of every type of troop unit from infantry, to armor and artillery, to 'Mechs, to aircraft, to jumpships, and how these units work together to form proper fighting force. There is also a very helpful section on unit organization.

Next is the *Business of War* chapter, which describes how mercenary units are run, how they go about

finding work, and how they survive from one mission to the next. This includes such things as profit and loss, salaries, shares, overhead and expenses, and so on. Helpful, if not particularly exciting unless your PC happens to be a part- or full-time businessman (I think I should note that such things are possible, provided that you want that kind of detail in your game). The *Contracts* chapter deals exclusively with the ideas behind merc-employer agreements, including such niceties as betrayals, reputation, campaign types and risks, and contract negotiations. The *Art of War*, the chapter after that, is a generalized guide to the dos and don'ts of mercenary life and warfare. It takes into account the universe in which the game takes place and tries to give the players and GM alike an idea of how a merc should think, at least in military terms (personal characteristics are the players' responsibility, as always). This section ends with *Mercenary Concerns*, a chapter which deals primarily with the problems that merc units might conceivably find plaguing them at a very inopportune moment. You know, those hassles like which Successor houses you can't trust, how the various bandit kings and ComStar might react to you, and other occupational hazards.

The next section deals with the actual construction and deployment of a mercenary unit, and the book provides more than enough options to make this interesting for even the most particular would-be mercs. Complete rules are given for financing unit operations, creating contracts, the various types of campaigns that can be undertaken including an advanced campaign system. The final section gives complete details of three "real life" mercenary units, right down to personality descriptions of the more important officers found in them. You can either use this information as background for your own unit, or you can play actual members of these organizations, whatever you like. Each includes a short history of it's respective unit.

Well, there you have it, all the information that an aspiring mercenary could hope for right in one small package. I hope that fans of the MechWarrior RPG won't overlook the endless possibilities of playing MercWarriors, and if you're a merc already, then here is something that was designed especially for you.

A FINE PAIR OF BLADES

We've all had to deal with those times that the GM wouldn't let us mimic our favorite literary heroes, and I for one get really disappointed if and when I can't get away with it. In any case, these factors made me all the more appreciative when I read *The Sword and the Dagger*, by Ardath Mayhar, and published by FASA.

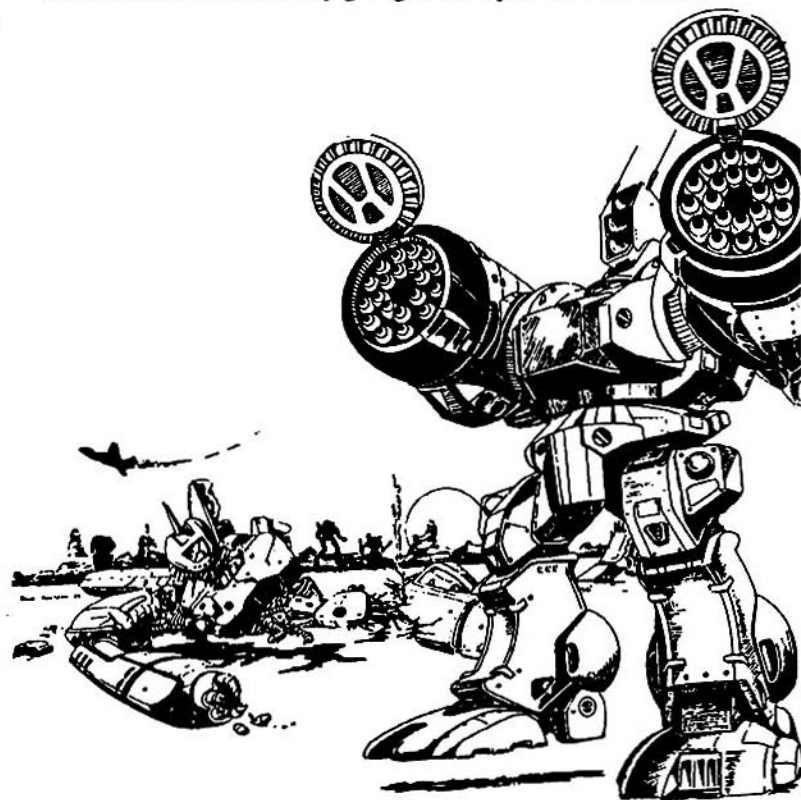
The book takes place in the war-torn universe of the Successor Wars, which is well known to the BattleTech players out there as the 31st century civilization where giant BattleMechs are used as tools of destruction as warring empires vie for power, both political and technological. The book deals with a lone MechWarrior named Ardan

Sortek, who accidentally stumbles on a plot by Maximilian Liao, ruler of the Capellan Confederation, to seriously alter the balance of power in the Inner Sphere. I don't want to give too much of the plot away, but I will say that Ardan happens to be a close personal friend of Hanse Davion, ruler of the Federated Suns, and the Confederation's number one adversary. The plot is a lot more complicated, and things can (and do) become pretty hairy as Ardan struggles to both save his friend and ruin Liao's plans. In my opinion, Mayhar has done an excellent job of capturing the flavor of FASA's board game and RPG, while simultaneously subjecting the reader to an interesting and exciting story. Highly recommended to both fans of BattleTech and to those who just plain enjoy a good sci-fi novel.

'TECH TOCKS

All in all, FASA has done an excellent job in capturing our attention with more and more material as the BATTLETECH universe rolls along. In fact, Ral Partha has done it's job of designing a group of startlingly accurate and beautifully detailed miniatures that are suitable for framing, playing the game with, or just admiring. Once you've started pushing these beauties across your table, cardboard cut-outs will never be the same!

Also, HOT comics has expressed plans to release a BATTLETECH comic book series, which they claim will be incredibly drawn and written. Starting this summer, the storyline concerns each of the Successor Houses and the people who run them, as well as the feared and respected MechWarriors. I'm certainly looking forward to all of this, and I hope that every other fan of the BATTLETECH universe is as well. It's really going to be a year to remember.



GW: What purpose do you think magazines, (gaming and hobby magazines in particular) should serve?

Gygax: Information, I believe, is the most vital thing in our field. If you're a real fan, a real player, information should be important to you. That's what makes the game fun, what makes you want to know everything about the hobby. It's a constant search for information of all kinds.

GW: Just so you are aware of who you're talking to, Gateways delivers information concerning current gaming trends, older neglected systems, and throws in a dose of encouragement toward individual and group achievement through our hobby. Yet Gateways also tries to impart a feeling of responsibility and an idea of the uses of role-playing games as educational tools.

Gygax: That's good. I never felt comfortable with the *Dragon* addressing the educational as-

pects of RPGs. As a game publisher, I always felt that it would have been tooting our own horn. In our role as game publishers, all we had to do was produce quality games that were fun to play.

GW: That's what is so good about being independent. Gateways can watch and re-

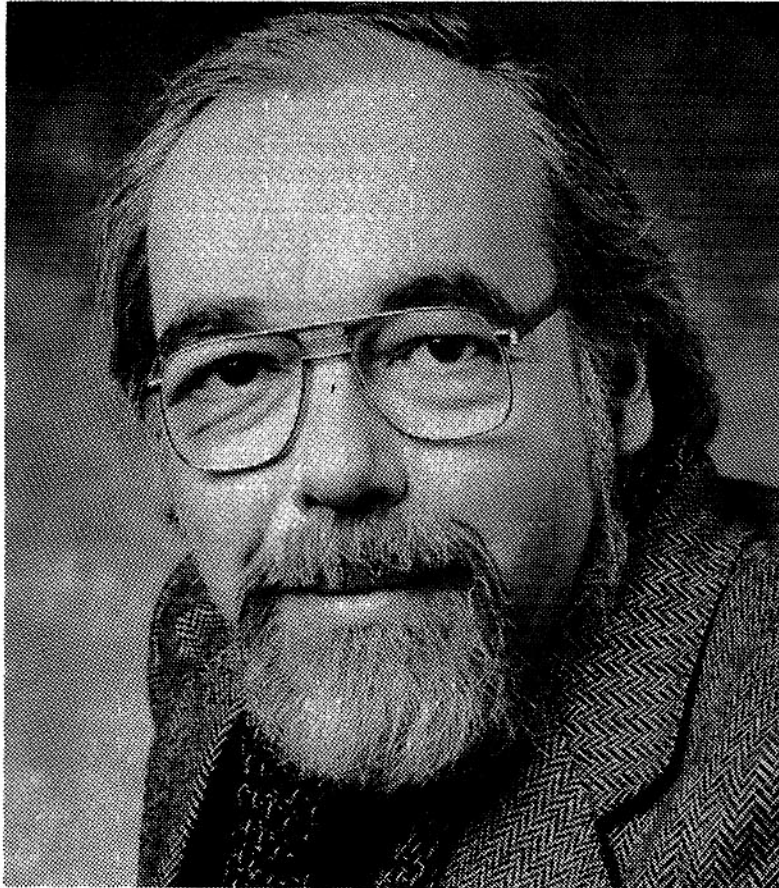
spond to the media image of role-playing. But can RPG's teach anything? What is the purpose of RPG's?

Gygax: Well, I have a lot of ideas on that topic, and I put them down, for the most part, in a book that Putnam is publishing later this year. It's called *Role Playing Mastery*, and

it discusses most of the concepts I've created and discovered about role-playing games. I talk about the purpose of a role playing game, and in my opinion, the purpose is to provide a peer group with an entertaining activity that begins and runs along a timeline that is endless...and I do feel that the adventures should be endless.

GW: What do you feel about some of the newer games which seem to require that you play a particular character in a particular setting with a particular ending in mind?

Gygax: I call those role-assumption games, and I don't feel



GARY SPEAKS!

Jeffrey Gomez

Laura Antoniou

Gary Gygax is a mythic name in the fantasy role-playing game (RPGs) industry. Who indeed would not recognize the man whose name appears as the author of TSR's *Players Handbook*, *Dungeon Masters Guide*, and both *Monster Manuals*? This is the man who, along with Dave Arneson, created *Dungeons & Dragons*™. Anyone who started playing RPGs in the 70's will be familiar with adventures like *Vault of the Drow*, *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, and *Tomb of Horrors*. Not enough? Team-ups with Rob Kuntz, Dave Cook and Dave Sutherland gave gamers the world of *Grayhawk*, the Eastern-flavored *Oriental Adventures*, and the well-known adventure *Queen of the Demonweb Pits*. And for those of you who pay attention to mast-heads and company titles, E.Gary Gygax was, until recently, the Chairman and President of TSR, the original fantasy role-playing game company. Now, Gary Gygax is the President of a new company, New Infinities Productions. Familiar names appear with his in company literature: module and supplement creator-Frank Mentzer, former *Dragon*™ editor Kim Mohan, and former *RPGA*™ Network Coordinator Penny Petticord. As a new company is formed, and new goals set, Gary Gygax took time out during the 1987 Game Manufacturer's Association trade show, to tell *Gateways* magazine all about what he calls his *new campaign*.

they can be played for a long time. Playing an established character, like the ones in the *Dragonlance* series, for example, can allow a player to learn about role-playing. But I think they would be missing out on the challenge and excitement of creating their own characters and watching them develop. Sometimes, playing an established character can lead to the player going off on his own, saying, hey, I don't think this is the right way to do this, and then suddenly, hey, look...I'm role-playing! But on the whole, I think that playing an established character takes a master player who can break away from the written word. And then only if the scenario allows for independent action, and the DM isn't saying, "Well, you've done this and this..." all the way through the game.

In a role-assumption game, winning is usually everything...but it shouldn't be. There should always be something more, some new goal to strive for. Not necessarily more treasures or monsters, but always the idea that there is more for the asking.

GW: So you recognize that so-called "hack'n'slash" games are not the ultimate expression of fantasy role playing?

Gygax: I didn't exactly say that. If your group wants just that, well then yes, to you that is fantasy role-playing. But I think that role-playing is a combination of things, theatrics, problem solving, character development, further goals...there is nothing wrong with "hack'n'slash" itself if that is what your gaming group enjoys. That's what is most important about that this particular controversy. Remember that one of the functions of a fantasy role-playing game is to bring together a peer group...not necessarily one of age, but a group of people who have the same interests in common.

One of the best things a good tournament has is solid AD&D, without a lot of variant rules. Let's not divide our hobby; let's have our hobby in common. Let's run big tournaments with role-playing, problem solving,

and sure, some hack n' slash.

GW: So tell us some more about **Role Playing Mastery**. What else is in the book?

Gygax: I discuss what role-playing games are, how they are played, how to be a better player, what a grandmaster is...a grandmaster of the hobby is someone who has learned about the field, studied it, has accumulated knowledge and understanding, and has then gone on to help people learn for themselves, to create, guide, and teach. I also discuss why different groups choose to play a type of game rather than designing one of their own.

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GW: Gary, about those kids who've played the game over the years, speaking *as* people who were first introduced to role-playing through D&D, we have to tell you that you have initiated a vast amount of creativity. Gamers have developed episodic story-telling, epic fantasies, political dramas, and all sorts of incredible tales of adventure through their games. As gamers and publishers, we have both seen and are relating to our readers a vision of life in regards to heroism and noble challenges.

What does it feel like to know that you have influences so many young people through your game system and your own visions and dreams?

Gygax: Well, some of the people who've gotten back to me over the years aren't so young any more! But, yes, I understand, and it's a great feeling. I can remember so many letters...once, I got a letter from a crayon DM. This young man wrote

me a letter in crayon, saying that he was the youngest in his family, and that his older brothers had made him the DM. He asked me, well, what do I do now? I wrote back and said, "Anything you want to! You're the DM!"

I used to read letters from those people who just enjoyed the game so much they had to tell me. One of the best things I ever got was an award from this school in Florida...it was a "Hero of the Year" award, and they sent it to me saying that I was their hero of that year. It has long since expired, of course, but what the hell. For one year of my life, I was a hero.

Another part of how I feel about my influence is my ability to get young people who role-play to see that there are choices involved in life. That there is not always one rigid answer to any given problem. You can't always be right, and sometimes, you just have to try other ways of handling things. I see that learning this makes these young people into more successful adults because they have been trained to always look at all of their options.

GW: If you were given the opportunity, what would you say to the newer players of role-playing games, the younger players who might be new to the hobby? What would you want them to learn from role-playing?

Gygax: First and foremost, I would want them to learn how to think for themselves, and not let any one else make their decisions for them. That's so important...and I'd tell them to never stop trying to learn more. And I don't mean just games and playing...Look, in my field, I'm an

...there's no frustration in starting over, no. It's like a new campaign, starting all over again. Sure, you might have to learn new facts about the environment, but the skills and tools are still there...Gary Gygax, 1987

expert. And right now, there may be 50-100 people working on new role-playing games out there, and I know that I just can't keep up. But I try to keep an eye on what's happening, what's new, what will last. And on top of that, I still read constantly. I've read thousands of science fiction and fantasy novels. But I don't stop there, either. I've just finished reading a great non-fiction book about Town Government in the 17th Century. And people ask me, oh, do you really read that stuff, and I say, Yeah, it's great! It's interesting, and if you design, run, play in or in any way enjoy fantasy role-playing games, it becomes fascinating to discover and learn these things.

GW: Well, here it comes, the question everyone has been asking...what happened over at TSR? What caused your departure from the company you formed, and how were the game creation responsibilities divided? What can you tell us about the gradual changes which occurred before you left?

Gygax: Actually, quite some time back I realized that I couldn't keep up with D&D and AD&D. I gave D&D to Frank Mentzer, who created the Immortals set. You see, I was responsible for AD&D, a much more demanding system, and at first I was rather uncertain about the division of time and energy between the games. I wasn't sure that I wanted to give up my opportunity for input. But it turned out that I didn't have to worry about D&D because it's so flexible. Frank took care of it, and D&D is all right. But AD&D has so much more structure. I was trying to change it slowly - with great resistance from lawyers, I might add! I made a sug-

gestion that we add a rule option which made it possible to roll more dice in the initial creation of a character, and you should have heard the uproar! I said, Hey, look, everybody does it! We know that! Let's make it legitimate! We were fighting over every little point...

GW: Why were you trying to change AD&D?

Gygax: I had spoken about doing a general revision of AD&D for some time. I said that we should do a new Players Handbook, a new Dungeon Masters Guide, a new Monster Manual...and I wanted to put it all in one book. From that point, we could see what could be done with the game, and figure out what we'd do next. I wanted the game to evolve.

I mentioned at England's Games Fair that I could make a better game now.

And, I got back answers like "Hey, that sounds like braggadacio." But it's not. I came out with AD&D, and that's what the majority of mature players all play. I'm using the same principles with the projects I'm working on now. **Cyborg Commando** has an easy entry level version, but can and will be expanded to allow for more serious and long-time players. And at the same time, I'm working on two parts of a larger gaming system...actually two games with a common system of play between them. I'm always interested in designing games with unlimited expansion potential.

GW: There must be thousands of people who consider you the world's leading expert on AD&D, yet you're now involved in the creation of entirely new game systems and new adventuring worlds. How do you keep it all straight? How do you handle it?

Gygax: It's confusing, I must admit. I get dozens of letters a week from people, and I try to answer them as best as I can, but I just can't get to them all.

GW: We watched as you stood up before the owners, presidents and creators of most of the largest gaming companies in America, including the new officers and representatives of TSR, and you announced the latest news of your new company, you enthused about the projects you were working on, and they watched your every move. How does it feel to be the new kid on the block again?

Gygax: Great! When you put things in perspective, TSR is a very big company in a very small industry.

I'd say that TSR is worth, well, 20 million dollars. But it's just a fat fish in a tiny pond...I don't intend to stay in that same pond in everything I do. I have new lines of distribution open, I'm looking at the comic industry, I'm looking at novels...I just don't feel that we're competing with them. We are simply bringing games to the market, and we hope to bring newer, younger gamers into the hobby. We don't have an elitist attitude, like some miniatures developers, that we have to keep catering to the older, more sophisticated and already sold public. We feel that we have to keep bringing new people in, because 10 years from now, they'll be the "old boys". We'll bring them in, produce a good game, and we'll satisfy both those who want complexities and those who want a simple, beer and pretzel game.

GW: What will you be developing other than the new gaming line? You mentioned

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some angles that sound interesting.

Gygax: Well, first of all, we're going to be heavily involved in publishing. We'll be doing novels, and not just my own. We expect to put out twelve books in twelve months...I believe that I am doing four, and the other eight will be by some fine authors who are working with us.

GW: Will the content be straight fantasy?

Gygax: No, actually there should be a mix, both fantasy and science fiction. In fact, Cyborg Commandos will introduce us as a science fiction house.

GW: Isn't it hard to think of yourself and your new company as something that has to be introduced? You would never think that Gary Gygax, *the* Gary Gygax of D&D fame, would have to go around introducing himself to the industry he helped to create. Don't you feel a little frustrated?

Gygax: There's no frustration in starting over, no. It's like a new campaign, starting all over again. Sure, you might have to learn new facts about the environment, but the skills and tools are still there. I don't have to learn anything over again. Now, I do have an advantage. My name is well known, and I can walk in and present a new line and be credible. But it had better be good! I do have a standard to maintain, and the ultimate critic will be the buyer. Retailers right now can't know about everything in the field, what's going to sell and what's not, simply because the field has grown so large. I feel that our new products will make a strong

mark on the industry.

GW: And you mentioned comics, a neglected aspect of the gaming industry which Gateways has a great interest in. Will you be starting a comic book line, and if so, will it tie in with the games you produce?

Gygax: We are right now talking about the possibility of an illustrated novel featuring the Cyborg Commandos...

GW: You mean the oversized, square bound, color format of a graphic novel?

Gygax: Yes, that's it. And if that looks good, and we seem to have a market, we would then consider a steady comic line. You know, I'm a comic book fan from way back, and I'd love to be a part of that field...

GW: D&D made it on the air with a cartoon. Is that a possibility as well?

Gygax: On the D&D cartoon...well, it was good, but not really what the game was like. We were going to make it better. We were actually revising the show, we were going to de-emphasize the weapons so that the individuals would grow and show some skills of their own. Then, hopefully, the children would watch the show, remember how much they liked it, and maybe pick up the game one day. Of course, the show was cancelled, and we never got to see how far we could have gone, but that's why I'd be interested in a cartoon show based on Cyborg Commandos, which I see as having a great potential audience.

GW: Getting away from the market for one last question, we would like to ask you how

you feel role-playing games in general and D&D and AD&D in particular are best used. Not in terms of the enjoyment of the game, but as a hobby, as a pastime which has millions of people sitting around tables every week, pretending, play-acting, adventuring...all in their minds. What is the best aspect of these gaming experiences. And what do you see is the best way of achieving this aspect and having the most enjoyable and rewarding gaming experience that you can?

Gygax: It never ceases to amaze me, the sheer amount of work necessary in the creation and continuing play of an entire gaming world, a system, a universe in some cases. I can't think of a hobby that requires such an active imagination and such a thirst for knowledge. But you don't have to be a DM to get the most out of a gaming experience. Just learning and playing the game has its rewards. You can get up from the gaming table on Sunday afternoon, go to school on Monday, and tell the class all about random curves and percentages.

But creating a world...oh, that's a truly monumental task, and one that I have great respect for. And there's only one thing that could help, both to make it easier and to make it more enjoyable, and that's to read. Everything. Fiction, fantasy, science textbooks, history...everything you can get your hands on. And if some kid picks up a book on political structures in Florence, Italy, well more power to him, and that's why the games are here.

When free-floating vapors, pesky poltergeists, ghouls, ghosts, haunts and various occupants of the spirit world show their creepy, freaky, slimey and funky faces, you can trust that any Ghostbuster who knows their stuff will step boldly and blindly into the embrace of danger. But what happens when the frightening visage before them is (gasp!) their all-powerful *landlord*? What do their neighbors think of those strains of ghostly music and all that horrible screaming coming from their Ghostbuster HQ last night? What does a new Ghostbusting business need to operate at its peak?

The answers to these questions and more, as approved by West End Games (although not exactly *Officially*, since Columbia pictures hasn't said so. Let's not bring lawyers into this, OK?), the following charts may help to establish a feeling of 20th Century stability, add a certain note of (dare we say it?) realism, (yes, *realism!*), to your Ghostbusters Role-Playing Game. "Why?" you ask. Richard Tucholka says, "because they will add that touch of responsibility and civic awareness to the game!?" Well, we don't know. We just think they're fun! Read them, add them to the game, enjoy!

GH**OST**BUSTERS APPROVED!

Richard Tucholka

A long running Ghostbusters campaign needs a base for the players and a few guidelines that the rules do not cover. While the game is simple in design, a good GM may want to add a bit more to round out the gray areas.

The following gives you a better start for the game and makes the players work together to expand their business.

- Send them out with little more than a franchise, the clothes on their backs, and \$100,000 for expenses. (Or perhaps \$100,000 worth of bank loans they need to pay off...)

- Make them buy everything from their food to the equipment they own. Getting a new *Ghostbusters* franchise doesn't mean they're fully equipped to start. Use the equipment price list that follows.

- Make them rent or buy a building. Create a colorful neighborhood or roll a d6 on the tables below. The rent for an average building may run between \$600-\$3000 per month or a buying price of \$20, 000-\$90, 000, pretty low for the N.Y. area, but then...

- Make players keep, financial records, a bank balance, and spread sheets. This teaches them tolerance and hatred when the bills start rolling in each month. Bank errors can also be fun. This also teaches young players what a business is all about; real world costs and responsibilities.

- Make them purchase new equipment or take time out to get needed supplies (like gas). If the players don't have it on their equipment list, make them go to a K-Mart during that emergency and buy it!. There's nothing like a fully equipped *Ghostbuster* with a Proton Pack waiting in the express line.

- Roll daily to see whether the business gets a call from a customer. On the roll of a Ghost die, the ghost gives them a call. Several customers may call in on a single day and backlog the "exhausted" team you run.

BUSINESS MODIFIERS	NUMBER OF DICE ROLLED
No advertising, New Franchise.....	1
Established Franchise.....	2
Light Advertising.....	2
Heavy Advertising.....	3
After a BIG case(For 1 week).....	4
After World Saving Case.....	5

- How do you exhaust a team? Keep them at work and give them a -5 on dice totals when staying awake for over 24 hours. This is cumulative per every 24 hours.

- Give them competition. A second group of *Ghostbusters* in the same town can create fun, good cooperation or creative mayhem. (Not to mention a possible lawsuit. Make sure that the players have purchased proper franchise rights from GBI!)

- Make them pay for damages. The client will sue when they burn down a house to get rid of a pesky Class I Vapor. Make them actually fill out a waiver sheet when they take a case.

- For creative 'Ghost Generation' use the easy table in the **GH**OST**BUSTERS OPERATIONS MANUAL** (pg. 49) or the 'Haunt Generation' charts in TriTac's **HAUNTS** (TTS #3020/\$5.95). This is actually a module for the *Stalking the Night Fantastic* rule system. The fun part is it's a universal table that can generate good information about a ghost and its background using a d100.



Ghostbusters, the Ghostbusters Roleplaying Game, its components and all associated names and likenesses thereof, are TM and c. 1987 West End Games through Columbia Pictures, Inc.



GENERAL EQUIPMENT

CONTAINMENT UNIT/PROTECTION GRID \$10,000
PROTON PACKS W/GUN \$ 5000
PROTON PACK GUN (SEPARATE) \$ 1000
ECTO/IR VISORS \$ 2000
GHOST TRAPS \$ 2000
PKE METER \$ 1000
AURA ANALYZER \$ 7000
JUMPSUITS \$ 40
MICROWAVE DETECTOR \$ 30
IR CAMERA \$ 1500
-TRIPOD \$ 75
VIDEO CAMERA \$ 700
-TRIPOD \$ 100

BASE STATION CB \$ 500
-MOBILE STATION CB \$ 200
-TOWER \$ 600
-ANTENNA(VEHICLE) \$ 50
-MOBILE STATION HAM \$ 600
WALKIE-TALKIE \$ 350
-RECHARGER \$ 200
-BASE STATION \$ 750

COMPUTER(S) \$ 4000
-DISK DRIVES \$ 250
-HARD DRIVES (20 MEGABYTES) \$ 1000
-PRINTER \$ 1500
-MODEM \$ 250
-COMP-U-SERV ACCESS \$ 100
(MONTHLY USE D100X2)

REFERENCE BOOKS
-OCCULT BOOKS (GOOD SELECTION) \$ 2000
-PSYCHOLOGY BOOKS \$ 1000
-PARAPSYCHOLOGY BOOKS \$ 2000
-FICTION \$ 250
-REFERENCE/TECHNICAL \$ 1000
-SUBSCRIPTIONS \$ 250
-NEWSPAPERS (YEAR) \$ 200

UTILITIES



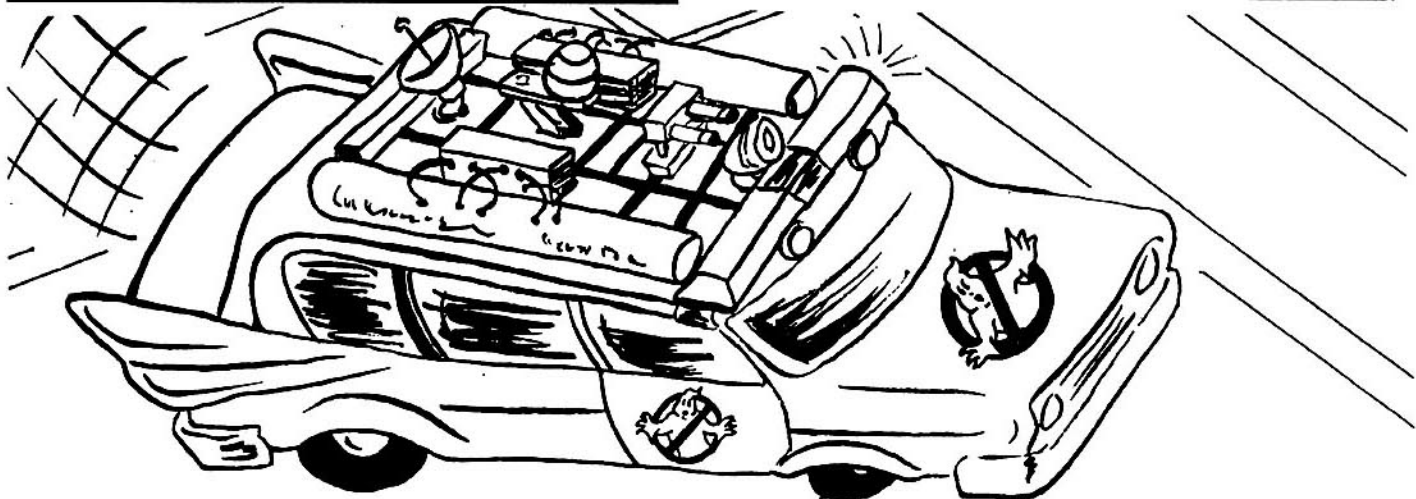
TELEPHONE LINES (3)
-INSTALLATION \$ 200
-PHONE COST \$ 500
-MONTHLY SERVICE \$ 100
-PRIVATE LINE
-INSTALLATION \$ 40
-PHONE COST \$ 60
-MONTHLY SERVICE \$ 25

GAS SERVICE
-MONTHLY SERVICE \$ 30
CITY WATER
-MONTHLY SERVICE \$ 20
ELECTRICITY
-PROTECTION GRID MONTHLY \$ 1000
-GENERAL MONTHLY USE \$ 100
TRASH REMOVAL
-DEPOSIT \$ 500
-MONTHLY SERVICE \$ 30

BUILDING
-DEPOSIT \$ VARIED
-RENT \$ VARIED
-MORTGAGE \$ VARIED

INSURANCE
-BUILDING \$ 200
-EQUIPMENT \$ 500
-MEDICAL (PER STAFF) \$ 150
-VEHICLE (PER 6 MONTHS) \$ 650
-LIABILITY \$ 600
-LAWYERS FEE \$ 100
-FRANCHISE FEE (15% NET PROFIT)
-BUILDING INSPECTION (YEARLY) \$ 75
-EPA LICENSING (YEARLY) \$ 200
-CITY PERMIT (YEARLY) \$ 100

• Don't forget to get a few department store catalogues to let them furnish their office and new home!



SCREEEE

LEANO '87

YOUR NEIGHBORS

Then there are always neighborhood views on your ghost-busting business:

(Roll d6 or determine according to your plot requirements.)

- 01 They love you and support your business until you burn half the block down.
- 02 Suspicious at first, they will come around and begin to like you before your presence disrupts the neighborhood.
- 03 They stay suspicious and really couldn't care less.
- 04 They don't like you but they only grumble a bit.
- 05 They don't like you and they let you know it. A petition is started to have your business declared a hazard to the community.
- 06 They hate your guts and will do just about everything to prove it(i.e. egging your vehicle, gluing your door locks shut, etc.).

Of course, there's always the condition of the neighborhood:

- 01 Quiet, peaceful area. No crime rate.
- 02 Mostly peaceful with an occasional crime.
- 03 Low crime area. Check every two months on ghost die, ghost gives you problem from next table.
- 04 Median crime area. Check die once/month.
- 05 High crime area. Check die once/week, for breaking and entering.
- 06 Demilitarized Zone. Roll die twice/week, for burglary and robbery.

A landlord of outstanding character is an excellent addition to the campaign that may create more problems than the players want to face.

GHOSTBUSTER LANDLORD TABLE

- 01 Nobody ever sees him
- 02 A reasonable person whose post office box receives communications from his tenants and most answers them in word and deed.
- 03 Fair landlord who collects rent with the most minimal of upkeep on his property.
- 04 Absentee Slumlord who collects rent and has not seen the building in 8 years.
- 05 A busybody Slumlord, who raises the rent every so often and causes trouble for his new tenants.
- 06 A good landlord but an abysmal busybody who advises all tenants on all phases of upkeep on HIS property. A real jerk.

What your clients pay is mostly up to the GM and what the players can milk him for. A poor neighborhood may not have the resources of a single upper-class family. Abandoning a case because the clients are dirt poor is a sure way to get bad publicity for the franchise - subtract 1d6 from 'Number of Calls' modifier. The following is a general guide to ghost removal prices, including containment. Players should learn any case is worth tackling if they can at least make beer money from it.



BGBS=Big Business
 RICH=Wealthy Client
 WORK=Working Class Client
 POOR=Poor

GHOST	BGBS	RICH	WORK	POOR
Class I	\$2000	\$1000	\$250	\$100
Class II	\$3000	\$1500	\$400	\$200
Class III	\$4000	\$2200	\$750	\$400
Class IV	\$4500	\$3000	\$1000	\$750
Class V	\$6000	\$4000	\$1500	\$950
Class VI	\$7500	\$5500	\$1900	\$975
Class VII	\$9000	\$7500	\$2100	\$995

YOUR FRIENDLY CLIENTS

Clients also have personalities. Generally, they are pretty normal, but there are a few odd ones out there. Roll a d6 to index the column, then a second to find your client's quirks.

PERSONALITY TABLE

- 01 COOL
- 02 CALM
- 03 WORRIED
- 04 UPSET
- 05 TERRIFIED
- 06 HYSTERICAL

CLIENT PROBLEMS TABLE

- 01-05 NONE
- 06 ROLL ON QUIRKS CHART

QUIRKS TABLE

- 01 CHECK BOUNCER
- 02 WON'T PAY NOW THAT PROBLEM HAS BEEN TAKEN AWAY
- 03 ARGUES PRICE DOWN
- 04 LIED ABOUT AVAILABLE CASH
- 05 THREATENS TO SUE IF DAMAGES WERE INCURRED DURING BUSINESS
- 06 REAL SPECIAL QUIRK

REAL SPECIAL QUIRKS TABLE

- 01 ADOPTS GHOSTBUSTERS AS 'PERSONAL FRIENDS'
- 02 KEEPS CALLING BACK TO THANK THEM
- 03 GETS IN THE WAY DURING ACTION
- 04 IS A CRIMINAL OR A CON-MAN
- 05 IS COVERING SOMETHING UP
- 06 IS REALLY A GHOST

While the comedy of the game is retained, role-playing adds character to the game and teaches the characters that the operation of a business is not as easy as they thought.

A second set of Talents awarded by the GM will add to the humor as players learn new, specialized, and almost useless skills like:

- USE DUCT TAPE
- BAR-B-Q SPARE RIBS
- FAST FOOD AVOIDANCE

Ghostbusters isn't Call of Cthulhu, or Stalking the Night Fantastic, or Chill, but it is a whole lot of fun, and that's what gaming is all about.

If There's Something Strange in Your Hobby Shop...

Two of West Ends' Ghostbusters Modules

Barbara Makransky

So you wanna be a Ghostbuster, huh? There are too many of those pesky poltergeists for your taste, is that it? Or, have you seen the movie a hundred times too often, and feel that you could have done the job better? Or, is it just that you've run out of patience with all those sword and sorcery epics you've been playing? Well, for whatever reason you've chosen to play West End Games' **GHOSTBUSTERS-THE ROLEPLAYING GAME™**, there are two new modules out that you should take a look at. The first of these modules is called *Hot Rods of the Gods*. It's written by Daniel Greenberg (see Gateways 4 for the scoop on Dan's incredible *Watchmen* module), and is, according to the blurb, "a 48 page mondo blowout adventure". And it is. In fact, it's downright out of this world.

This module is sort of what the television show **HAPPY DAYS** would look like if it had been set in outer space. In the module, a group of alien teenagers known as the Fuggs have come down to earth to wreak general havoc. They also like to drink beer, party down, and "pick up earth chicks". Sure; they sound like normal, everyday adolescents; except that you've got to remember that these are not mere teenagers, but are immensely powerful Space-Gods who ride through space in immensely powerful hotrod spaceships (yes, they do look like cars). Your job, in case you haven't figured it out by now, is to save the Earth from the Alien Menace.

It's a fun module; fun to read and fun to play. Non-player characters include a 'Door-to-Door Exorcist', an 'Attack Attorney', the prerequisite 'Super-genius Alien Nerd', and a UFO researcher named Donath Von Dunkin.

Talents of NPCs range from the ordinary to the bizarre; from being able to run well to being able to hover gracefully. The Security Guards, Policemen, and Soldiers have a very handy talent; it is called 'Suppress Self-preservation Instinct'; this is a talent which these persons seem to use to good advantage in this module.

The module is divided into episodes, which, in turn, are divided into scenes. Everything is well planned out and most contingencies are taken into consideration just in case your players take it into their heads to do something silly; like go somewhere totally different from where they are *supposed* to be going. There are maps of the city and the other places you will be visiting. Something else you'll find in the module is the sections entitled "Helpful Hints". These sections will, among other things, teach you the proper way to gurgle so that you will be all but incomprehensible.

But seriously; *Hot Rods of the Gods*, from its 'uplifting' beginning to its demolition derby ending is humorous, action-packed and just plain fun.

The second module, written by John M. Ford and Bill Slavicsek, is entitled *Scared Stiffs*. Although the Ghostbusting characters from the movie cannot be used as player-characters in this module, create your own and play it anyway.

This trip, the Ghostbusters are actually taking one--to Wrath, Vermont where they are attending the "First Annual Convention And Ski Party Weekend of the Quasi-Unearthly Association of Clairvoyants, Kismetologists, and Spiritologists, Inc." or, QUACKS for short. They are staying at the Wrath Hotel (owned by Newhart Baits), where they meet a handyman named George, and a maid named Stephanie. Among other NPCs you will meet are Toodles and Panes, makers of New England Vinegar Coolers, the Ghostbusters from the movie, a werewolf, and zombies. Oh, and before I forget, the Aliens.

Yes, once again, we are dealing with Aliens. This time, however, the aliens are not fun-loving teenagers with four arms and telescoping eye-stalks. *These* aliens are serious. They can make themselves look like anyone, and quite frequently have. We have something they want, you see--Psychokinetic Energy. As it happens, the Earth has an abundant supply of

this, but there is a hitch: without PKE, there are no ghosts. But what is more, not only is PKE important for ghosts' survival, it's also important for the survival of living things as well. It is up to you, Ghostbusters, to stop the Aliens and to save Earth's supply of PKE (not to mention the ghosts). All in a day's work, right?

Scared Stiffs like *Hot Rods of the Gods* is well thought out and planned. It is, like the first module, a mystery, because the players must figure out who is human and who is Alien, as well as how to defeat the Aliens and save the PKE. The Module also contains maps, a guide to the QUACKS Convention, and a Who's Who of Wrath. *Scared Stiffs* is full of deliciously bad puns--including some inevitable grape puns in the first episode. It's also a wonderful satire on television, wine coolers, and the whole laid-back New England scene.

For gaming modules, they are remarkably intelligent; as a rule, the plots are well thought out, and realized, the action is there, and they are *fun*--which is probably the most important thing a module could possibly be. Retailing at \$7.95 each, *Scared Stiffs* and *Hot Rods of the Gods* promise to provide many hours of satisfying gaming.

So, who ya gonna call?





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THE FANTASY WORLDS OF STEPHEN KING

Serge F. Clermont

In the realm of fiction, the creation of a proper world is absolutely necessary to establish a reference point for the characters, the plot and the reader. This is also true for the interactive, improvisational style of role-playing which is encouraged here at Gateways. It is essential for a good story to be able to take the reader or player into the world of the author's or Game Masters's creation so that he may experience just what the characters are feeling/doing/thinking for maximum enjoyment in what I call identification in escapism.

There have been many worlds created for the sake of setting that are so rich in detail and luxuriously described that they immediately capture the reader's fascination. Every GM would like to be able to do the same for his campaign world, but not every GM is a best-selling author. But the opportunity should not be denied to them because of this. The following information is presented not only as possible aids for the delivery style and creation of a campaign, but actual campaign worlds as well.

Stephen King is one of the nation's foremost and prolific horror writers today. His stories all possess, in some degree, that ability I described earlier in this article -- to take the reader out of this reality and into Kings written one. His success in doing so has prompted me to attempt analyzing, summarizing and describing the worlds that have appeared in his books for the benefit of role-players everywhere, the criteria being that, due to King's detailed creation of the functioning rules he established in the story, they could be potential campaign worlds unto themselves. There are four major settings or land-worlds: The Territories, from King and Peter Straub's joint effort, *The Talisman*; Delain, from King's best-selling fairy tale, *Eyes of the Dragon*; the Wastes of the *Dark Tower* books, *The Gunslinger* and *The Drawing of the Three*; and post-apocalyptic, plague-ravaged America in the epic novel, *The Stand*.

Strangely enough, though King may have never mentioned it anywhere in his books or otherwise, each of these worlds have similarities with each other in that one (or more) could be an aspect of the other. It may be that enterprising GMs could attempt to confirm these links during their own King-Campaigns to create a "King Universe", thus providing for themselves many avenues for adventure and plot development. Because King's novels should be "easy" enough to understand, this is not an impossibility...

The Land Of the Talisman

A twelve-year-old boy goes on a quest to save his mother from the cancer that is killing her. Impossible? Not when the boy named Jack Sawyer sets his mind upon finding -- **The Talisman**.

Jack happens to be a Twinner, you see, and must make his way across the United States, slipsliding across the fabric of reality; facing either the threats that lie beneath the veneer of civilization in our world, awaiting unwary twelve-year-old boys on their own -- or the hideous mutated monsters out of legendary nightmare, and their master on *both* sides; Morgan Sloat, known in the other world as Morgan of Orris. What "other

world" spurs the existence and goals of these menaces on, yet holds the salvation Jack Sawyer seeks? What is on the "other side" of our reality, just around the corner of imagination?

The Territories...

It is a world that is a reflection of our own. And while we say it is a reflection of Earth, it is more than that: Magic exists there as a natural energy, as much as the physical laws in our "real world" say that we have gravity; heat, etc. Because of the magic, the laws which exist to give form to what our perceptions can see are *changed* to accommodate that factor. Magic is a part of everything one does/sees/tastes/smells/feels and knows in the Territories. Senses come alive, exposed to this wonder-

ful, magical radiation. Everything has *more* to its substance here; although its structure and/or appearance might be different in its existence in this world. The grass is grassier, the steaks are steakier, the sun is sunnier.

One might say that our dreams give power to this place...or vice versa. And, just as the plants, natural forces and inanimate objects are *more* here, so are the people.

The Territories are shaped much like the eastern United States, except that relative distances are much shorter between points than our world. For instance, Jack Sawyer had traveled over half a mile "here" because he had traveled within the Territories thirty feet. West of the Territories lie the Outposts, akin to the midwestern and northern parts of the U.S., and the

Blasted Lands, which is the equivalent of the western coast (see below). As if by some cosmic law of balance, there are correspondingly less people *there* than over *here*. (By this comparison, you might consider the Territories condensed milk, while our United States is plain homogenized) Yet, because of this, there is a similarity between the two worlds that makes it possible to travel between them.

There are a number of people in our world that discover the Territories by accident by the phenomenon known as "flipping". This usually happens during some unusual circum-

stances, where the person might be under some type of extreme stress, and was exposed to some kind of catalyst or the "dimensional walls" between the worlds are very weak where this particular person is. But one factor remains constant during a "flip"; the person involved always has a Twinner, a person or persona existing in the Territories that is much like him, only, like the rest of everything found in this place, more intense. What takes place then is a sort of benign possession -- in normal circumstances (more on that later). The psyches of both are individual -- though if they are both cooperative ones, they can compromise and allow

one to experience the world of the other after the "flip", sharing their knowledge and experiences along the way of their union. At worst, insanity may result from the violent reaction of a psyche encountering an unfamiliar world, i.e. culture shock, or the knowledge that one has a doppelganger. At best, the traveler might have not even gotten an awareness of someone else being in the picture. This can be a problem, when you now have no chance at all of knowing anything about where you are, but at least you don't have to go through the annoyance of reconciling yourself with your Twinner. You just have to worry about surviving an almost totally different culture.

Once contact between the two Twinners has been established, it will seem to the dominating consciousness that the body will assume a possibly new form, clothes and possessions proper to the setting it travels to. The reason is the fact that Twinners are so intertwined that they will have comparative items in their inventory. Entered into the equation of a given object's make-up is magic; it might change nothing -- or everything -- about the object in question. For example, someone might have an ordinary guitar pick in his pocket when in our world but when brought into the Territories (as the main character in *The Talisman* did), it could change into an artifact of considerable power.

Given the reverse point of view, someone could possess a powerful magical weapon in the Territories, but in our world, it turns into a toothbrush or something equally innocuous. It's like the value of money; its power and strength changes depending on what country you're in. "Flip" changes don't have to be so dramatic -- but it does happen. Of course these minor things might have been predetermined by what your ideal self was doing in the history of the Territories. For instance, one of the characters in our world was called the



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"Queen of the B's" (B-rated movies) at one point in her life. In the Territories, her Twinner was a real Queen. Traveling in the Territories is not limited to Twinners. Those who can "flip" can bring others along with them, although they themselves might not have Twinners. Proper names are almost always variants along the same line with respect to "flippers", i.e. Speedy Parker becomes Parkus, Richard becomes Rushton, in keeping with the medieval air of the place.

The magic of the Territories itself is not something that is usually manipulated in the fashion associated with the concept of wizards and witches, even though their existence is quite possible. Being that emotions are the most intense abstracts that a person can experience on a very deep level, they are the key to unlocking the magic inherent in a thing or perhaps a person. At the same time, one has to be a passionate personality in order to have the magic work for you on a regular basis, and the magic might not take the form one expects it to.

The Territories' fate and those of its inhabitants are closely intertwined with our world. The idea of the Territories being a reflection of our own may fade in favor of its reverse when one compares the history of the Territories and the United States. In each instance where there was an event of importance in the Territories, something of import happened in our world. However, its importance was magnified by ratio. Being that our world is on a larger scale, whatever happened in the Territories had a greater effect here. A minor three-week political upheaval in the Territories became World War Two in the "real world". And it was caused, according to the text, by a person, who was a traveler from our world, who eventually assassinated the King, starting this upheaval.

The moral of this story; our

Michael Whelan, c. 1987 Glass Onion Graphics, 23 Old Hayrake Rd., Danbury, CT 06811.



world's history is affected by the Territories' history -- in a big way. The Blasted Lands are another example. They exist in the Territories because of the many nuclear tests in the United States that had taken place before and after the bombing of Hiroshima. True, it would take a lot for anything happening in our world to make a dent in the Territories, but nuclear testing in California, Utah and Nevada qualifies rather nicely for the Blasted Lands. It can happen on a smaller and more equal scale, too, with respect to a Twinner. Using the Queen example, the Queen was ill as her Twinner in the real world was dying of cancer.

Being that the Territories is a magical place, there are magical creatures there that might have given rise to the legends we have about them here. Wolves are a good example. For the most part, Wolves are kind, good-natured, simply religious...*wolf-like* people, as Jack Sawyer found out. They are the "Keepers of the Herd", all in service to the Queen of the Territories, whose only fault is that they suffer from the condition of going insane for blood and the hunt every full moon (it's called by the Wolves "going with the moon"). They always attempt to find prey that is "not of the Herd"---that usually means not of the

flocks that the Wolfs tend as part of their culture (They're what we'd call shepherders, although that doesn't necessarily mean that they tend sheep as we know them. It sometimes is expanded to include humans). "Bad" (Evil) Wolfs eat anything they catch, without discrimination, and once a Wolf eats "of the Herd", they are damned and become "bad" Wolfs.

The Territories don't seem to have established churches. However, God is a concept common to both worlds, and in the Territories he is referred to in the guise of the Carpenter -- "He who pound His nails", which is a way of signifying His inexorability. The image of Jesus Christ is that of the Shepherd of His Flock (Man), and is worshipped by the Wolfs in that capacity.

The basic society of the Territories is primarily feudal, sans the things that made life so unpleasant in our world's Middle Ages (plague, unsanitary conditions, etc.). The culture is a hodgepodge of all medieval cultures that appeared on our world, but it is not an unpleasant one, not should it be, connected with the negative connotation of "generic". It is a fantasy world that holds much potential for any project such as a role-playing campaign -- and its borders do not stop there; as is mentioned in *The Talisman*, there are worlds beyond it as the Territories are beyond our own...

The Eyes Of the Dragon

The kingdom called Delain is a kingdom which has changed little in its existence, for all the passage of hundreds of years. It is a small country, part of the Four Kingdoms (a neighbor of Andua), and made up of various baronies and holdings. Within its borders are such geographical landmarks as the Church of the Great Gods, the Plaza of the Needle, the Dungeon Gate, the Peddler's Gate, and the Near Towns. There is no dirt or disease rampant in the villages, as in

the "real" Middle-Ages -- but neither are the people always perfect in taste and manners with intrigue abounding at court and the peasants as happy as contented people could be. One does not go out to seek great and glorious adventures in this quiet little country.

They come to you, rather than you going to them.

Peter, the son of King Roland the Good, discovered this when he came of age to be crowned. His mother, Queen Sasha, had died giving birth to his younger brother, Thomas.

It was not an accident. Flagg, the Magician to the King, was a *poisonous* man. His greatest power lay in his malevolence, not in his magic, as one might suspect. Being that Queen Sasha had been a good woman, Flagg wanted to be rid of her. In the end, he was successful. Yet Peter had inherited the goodness and strength of his mother and still posed a threat to Flagg's plans of chaos and mayhem. What follows next in the story of the *Eyes of the Dragon* is a magnificent tale of Good versus Evil, and also the story of the people behind the figures of heroism. In short, it shows that everyone has a Peter in them...or a Thomas...or a King Roland...or even a Flagg.

Delain is a feudal society, with a hereditary monarchy. The lands are plentiful, and mythical creatures, mostly dragons and unicorns, products of the people's spirit. As such, the greatest magic lies in man, whether it be for good or ill. It can heal the soul with the light of love, or strike down men with angry, evil, hateful thought. It is specifically delineated as not being "careless" magic -- like being able to turn lead into gold, changing one's shape and becoming invisible at the wink of an eye. Magic is mysterious, its power culled through rituals that ordinary men would not understand, paths that no mortal should tread. Magic is drawn from the spirit, and, in Flagg's example, it reflects the personality of the wielder.

The Way to Delain is that of constant symbolism -- nothing is just what's on its surface. For example, Flagg, the Evil Magician, seems to befriend Peter's sulky, nerdy brother, showing him things that no one outside of sorcery sees. In actuality, he was manipulating Thomas in a fashion that can only be described by the following excerpt from the text of *Eyes of the Dragon*:

"People's minds...are like wells---wells of sweet water...When a particular thought is too unpleasant to bear, the person who has this thought will lock into a heavy box and throw it into that well. And Flagg knew that even the deepest well has a bottom, and just because a thing is out of sight doesn't mean that it is gone. It is still there, resting at the bottom...and he knew that the caskets those evil, frightening ideas are buried in may rot, and the nastiness inside may leak it out after awhile and poison the water...and we call the result insanity..."

Peter is imprisoned by Flagg's machinations, subject to the desolation of his tower dungeon and the petty evils that Flagg surround him with to guard him. It is cause for despair when it seems even the good people that loved him are blinded to the truth. But Peter shows that he is indeed "like unto a rock"-- and he never once loses faith in the power of Good. In the end, he escapes the grip of evil and injustice through the power of the Light within him, and eventually defeats Flagg. Even then, we know that there can be no Light without Darkness, and that night will always be on the fringe of dawn. So will Flagg and the evil he represents return in yet another form.

Still, things end as they must; for our hero, his story is over. For others, there is always the opportunity to travel the length and breadth of Delain, seeking out the evil destined to return or appear. The stuff of fairy



tales. The things we always know deep in our hearts, and no one can take away from us.

The Stand

The time is 1985. By the end of that year, the United States will lie devastated by a plague accidentally unleashed from one of its secret military installations. It is the superflu, Captain Tripps, which is 99.5% communicable, and 100% fatal. It spreads across the country like wildfire. New York, Albuquerque, San Francisco, St. Louis become cities of death and decay. Society collapses as the people panic and, one by one, succumb to the deadly disease until there is only an handful of survivors left to confront the Last Enemy...

It is in the wake of chaos and death that the Walkin' Dude will appear in the West, the Dark Man. Possessing awesome psychic powers such as clairvoyance, astral projection, pre-

cognition and telepathic ability, he will bring the Final Darkness down across America, and later on, the world. His name, as you should already know, is Flagg.

But he will not go unopposed. The Forces of Good still exist amongst the tattered survivors of the plague. The minds of men are opened to newer vision, even as the Dark Man is blind and short-sighted for all his power. The dreams of the remnants of humanity will lead them either to the Dark Man...or his enemy, a 108-year-old black woman from the South, a visionary of God.

There is much to do. The corpses left behind by the plague must be burned. Machines have to start running again, new governments and laws formed -- in short, America must be rebuilt. But camps are being set up on both sides; the Dark Man opposes them, already rallying his armies in Las Vegas with the tools of war he has collected to destroy Moth-

er Abigail and her brood. His power is strong -- he lives in the raven and the wolf. He is the Key to damnation and the Eye of Sauron. His magic of Evil is fantastic and flashy, enticing those of kindred spirit to him, and inspiring fear in his enemies. Meanwhile, the last remnants of Good gather together in Boulder, Colorado to bring about his downfall, overcoming the loss of their number in their quest for a new America. It is a magic time, fraught with spiritual danger. Some in their innocence will be touched by the finger of destiny to be its Voice, such as Tom Cullen and Leo Rockaway. Some will be touched another way -- by the hand of the Dark Man, implanted with the seeds of corruption and insanity, only to have evil turn upon itself (as in the case of Nadine Cross) or be dispelled by truth, as with Ralph Emery Lauder. And finally, some will pass on from life to help their comrades

Continued on page 46

GODZILLA APPROACHES!

Jeffrey Gomez

For many, he is undoubtedly the King of the Monsters. The biggest and most powerful of them all. First as villain, then as Earth's champion, Japan's celebrated dinosaur stands out as one of the few great dragons of modern myth. Toho Productions unleashed him in 1956, calling him *Gojira* (an amalgam of the Japanese for gorilla and whale made up by technicians as a nickname for one of the larger and more menacing of the studio's custodians!). Hollywood footage intercut with the original version of the movie dubbed him--Godzilla!

Using miniatures and exquisitely detailed models combined with intricate camera angles and atmospheric black and white photography, director Ishiro Honda, with special effects expert Eiji Tsuburua, created not so much a monster movie as a film about the horrors of what man himself has created. It is interesting that *Gojira* sparked the radioactive giant monster craze that swept American movie houses throughout the late fifties and early sixties. As a product of Japan, the only nation to have experienced nuclear devastation firsthand, Godzilla stands as a symbol of atomic force for all the world to see.

For the bulk of his film career, Godzilla was heroic, a defender of mankind against such alien threats as the frigid women from the planet Kilaak (*Destroy All Monsters*), and the evil New Wavers from Planet X (*Monster Zero*). He wrestled with pollution (Hedorah, the Smog Monster), vermin (Gigan, the Space Cockroach),

and even took the time to raise a son (Minya). Godzilla played the super hero to a generation of children on both sides of the Pacific, finding his way into the heart of the world's popular culture. But times have changed, and so must Godzilla...

The promise of an Earth run on benevolent nuclear energy, in the eyes of many, has been broken. Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, the unstoppable arms race between America and the Soviet Union, radioactive waste--these factors and more have darkened our times and caused fear in the very children who would have loved Japan's towering radioactive champion. Indeed, for the 1980s Toho decided it was time to remember, it was time for Godzilla to become angry again!

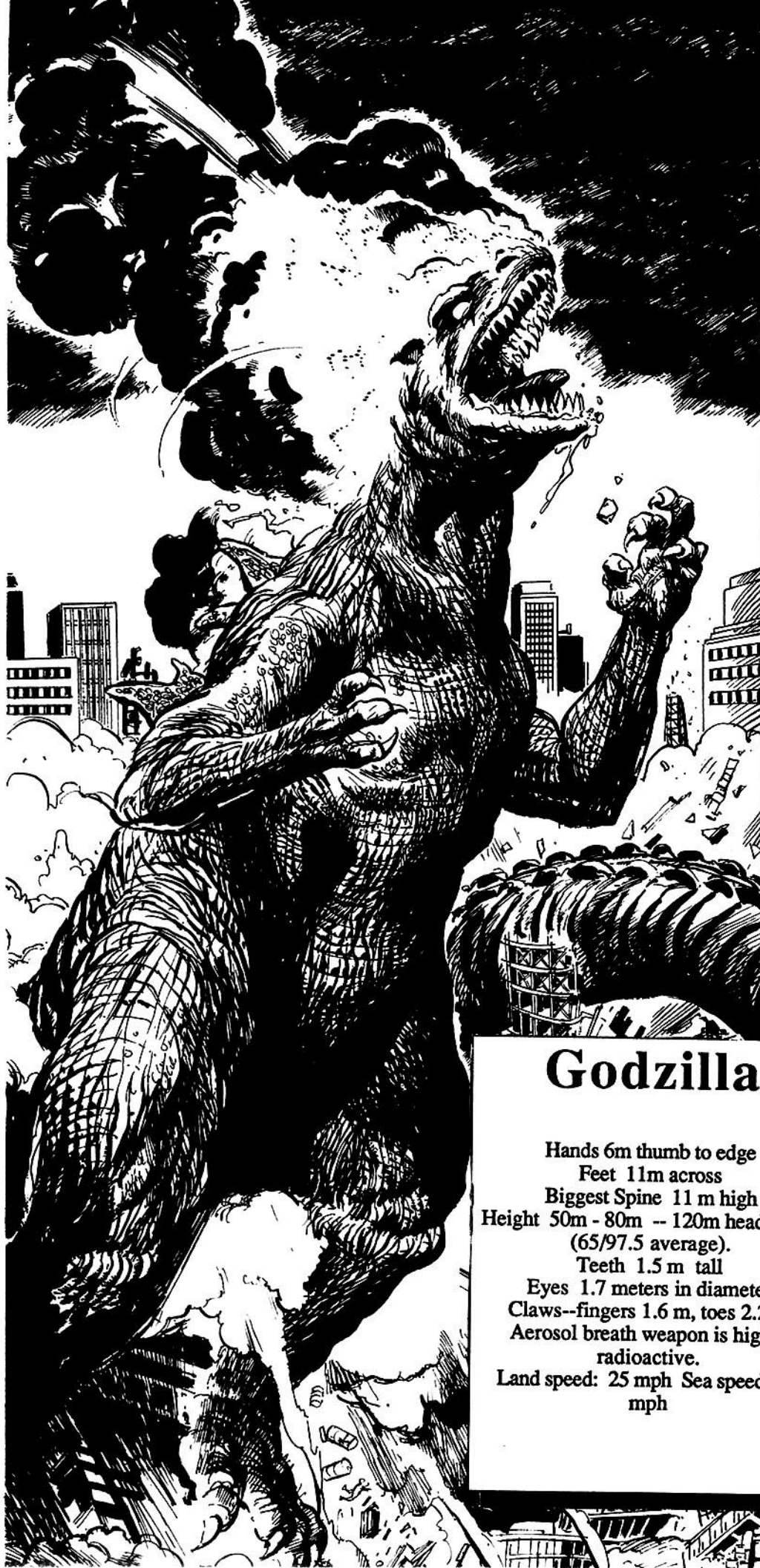
"The people at Toho now see Godzilla the way they did during the first few pictures made about him," said Randy Stradley, Executive Editor at Dark Horse Comics. "He is neither good, nor evil, but a force of nature--like a hurricane or a tsunami. The Earth's way of protesting atomic weapons by unleashing pure, indestructible nuclear force."

It is the creature who storms, lashes and incinerates the glittering mecca of Tokyo in *Gojira 1984* who now returns to America in the form of Steven Bissette's artwork in Dark Horse's *Godzilla Special*. In the Special, Bissette establishes a look and feel for the monster not seen before in any comic book adaptation. "We won't be doing Godzilla versus the Fantastic Four, we won't be doing Godzooky, you'll never see thought balloons coming out of Godzilla's head! This will be serious, kickass stuff!"

As First Publications and Eclipse International have learned, dealing with the Japanese in attaining the rights to Godzilla was not simple for Stradley and Dark Horse: "We had to gain the trust and good will of Toho before they would agree to granting us the license," said Stradley. "But I'd always wanted to do Godzilla, and doing him the way Toho desired was no problem for us. Our next steps will be to establish a Godzilla series and expand upon his universe by incorporating elements such as some of the other monsters from the movies into the books." It would seem the Japanese hold Rodan and Mothra in nearly as high esteem as Godzilla, and are careful to release the characters.

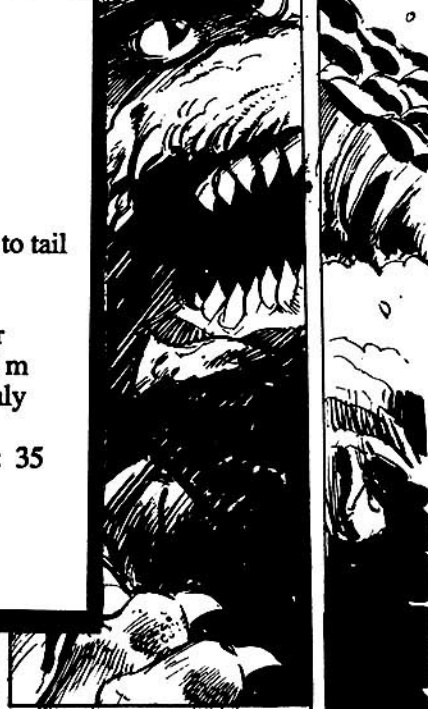
With new Dark Horse recruit Art Nichols now overseeing the *Godzilla* project, initial scheduling problems on getting the book into comic retail stores have been resolved. The series should be underway this fall. Along with *Mecha*, a Japanese influenced giant robot adventure series, Dark Horse has been eyeing the adventure gaming industry for role-playing possibilities in the green goliath's future. Watch these pages for updates!





Godzilla

Hands 6m thumb to edge
Feet 11m across
Biggest Spine 11 m high
Height 50m - 80m -- 120m head to tail
(65/97.5 average).
Teeth 1.5 m tall
Eyes 1.7 meters in diameter
Claws--fingers 1.6 m, toes 2.2 m
Aerosol breath weapon is highly
radioactive.
Land speed: 25 mph Sea speed: 35
mph



The Hobbit: A Golden Anniversary

Alan Berkson

Fifty years ago, a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University published what would become a monument in the history of Twentieth Century epic fantasy.

The Professor (always with the definitive capital "P"), was J.R.R. Tolkien; the book, *The Hobbit*. *The Hobbit*, and the *Lord of the Rings* after it, related a significant era in the history of Tolkien's "Middle-earth", a world to which he dedicated most of his life.

It is often said that *The Hobbit* is a children's story, which is usually more of an accusation than a classification. To a certain extent, it is a children's story. But Tolkien was a master story teller, and his creation could not be mistaken for simple amusement. He created a world, a world in which *The Hobbit* was just a breath of time in a fantastic history which could be read on many levels. Yes, *The Hobbit* may be a children's story, but it is also an epic fantasy in the tradition of *Beowulf*, *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*, and a philosophical essay on mankind.

Tolkien was a philologist, a student of written language, and he had worked at one time on the *Oxford New English Dictionary*. He was also a student of classical literature and mythology. These talents and skills led him to create a complete and fascinatingly beautiful language, the *Elvish* of Middle-Earth. And to create a showcase for his new language, the world and history of *The Lord of the Rings* was born. *The Hobbit* rose as the gentle entry into the fantasy universe of the century.

Epic fantasy is literature dealing with heroic actions and achievements told in a narrative fashion. On the surface, hobbits don't seem to be the hero type, but therein lies the beginning of a grand story...

Middle-earth is a world where man shares the planet with elves, dwarves goblins and hobbits, among others. In the time of the story, Middle-earth is already very old. Sauron, an ancient evil sorcerer, threatens the world, and it is up to Gandalf the Gray to marshal the forces of good to fight this evil being. And although he gathers the heroes of elves and men, the hobbits are his secret weapon. Through the meek, the mighty shall fall.

And so *The Hobbit* is the story of Bilbo Baggins, a simple hobbit who gets caught up in an adventure which brings him out of the peaceful Shire to steal some stolen dwarven treasure back from a dragon. There is nothing

sinister about this quest, save for the involvement of Gandalf and the discovery of a certain ring by a certain hobbit. This is a prelude, of course, to the *Lord of the Rings*.

The Lord of the Rings will certainly not be mistaken for a children's story. It is within these three books that the reader may see a great chunk of the iceberg of which *The Hobbit* is only the tip. These books tell much more about Middle-earth as a fellowship of heroes struggles against the forces of Sauron. Among this fellowship is Frodo, Bilbo's nephew, and his best friend Samwise. There is Strider the ranger, dark and inscrutable, Legolas of the elves, Gimli the dwarf, and brave Boromir of Gondor, all heroes, all joined for one purpose: to safeguard the Ring-bearer's journey to destroy the One Ring.

Tolkien's dedication to his creation was meticulous and thorough. *The Silmarillion*, commonly known as the Middle-earth bible, was a source-book/history of the entire world, left unfinished at his death.

His son, Christopher Tolkien, edited and published the *Silmarillion* as the ultimate reference book for Middle-earth. It truly begins, in biblical fashion, with the creation of the world, and should not be read casually.

Through his writings, Tolkien brought life to Middle-earth and its inhabitants. Never has one man's imagination spurred the dreams of so many millions of fantasy readers around the world. Fifty years after its release, *The Hobbit* has not lessened in its popularity, withstanding a true test of time. Enter Middle-earth and see for yourself. Again.



Suggested reading:

The Hobbit Ballantine paperback, 1965.

The Lord of The Rings 3vols. Vol. 1 *The Fellowship of The Ring*, Vol. 2 *The Two Towers*, Vol. 3 *The Return of the King*. Ballantine paperback, 1965.

The Silmarillion, edited by Christopher Tolkien Ballantine paperback, 1979.

Foster, Robert. *The Complete Guide to Middle-Earth*. Ballantine paperback, 1979.

Rogers, D. and Rogers I. *J.R.R. Tolkien G.K. Hall & Co.* 1980.

Tyler, J.E.A. *The New Tolkien Companion*. St. Martins 1979.

M E R P

A review of ICE's Middle Earth Role Playing System

D. Quartermain

J.R.R. Tolkien might have known what was going to happen when his *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* saga was published. Regardless of what he might have expected, Iron Crown Enterprises was to later on attempt to live up and do honor to his memory and his great work many years after the first edition of his masterpiece by releasing the **Middle-Earth Role-Playing Game**. This was only to be expected, as the entire Middle Earth saga was the inspiration for thousands of fantasy role-players anyway, and there was so much to these acknowledged classics to play around with. But was a new game necessary to wander through Middle Earth? What do all these modules, game accessories and assorted screens and additions have that the books don't?

The Boxed Set of the Middle Earth Role-Playing game contains the following: a 128-page Rulebook, a 32-page Introduction To Role-Playing and Adventure Book, a 16-page Display Book, a set of cardboard characters complete with plastic stands, a pair of twenty-sided dice. The Box itself is very eye-catching, with Angus McBride's painting of the Fellowship of the Ring depicted on its cover. Mr. McBride's work is scattered throughout the Rulebook in the breathtaking form of illustrations of the characters found in the *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, as well as on the cover of the Rulebook itself. Major credit for interior art should be allotted to Charles Peale, Rick Britton, Pete Fellon (who also provided the Map found inside), Dennis Loubet, and Jim Holloway.

The first thing in the rulebook is the Introduction. In the text, it is recommended that the Gamemaster skim the rules first, then go back and thoroughly read through everything contained in those pages. Trouble is, the Rulebook reads like a textbook, and is not quite as clear. Like any school textbook, one cannot understand the rules and charts unless someone that is familiar with the system can sit down with you and go over it, step by step. It is *not* a system where you can just skim through and sit down and play in a few minutes. That is not to say that *no one* can understand it...obviously thousands have. But it should not be assumed that everyone will immediately absorb all the information contained in the MERP system. A game's attraction partly lies in its convenience. One would like to know how long it took the playtesters to get all the *basic* rules straight, and, even more importantly, if they were just people they pulled off the street or science whizzes and math majors. Hopefully, there won't be *advanced* rules additions in the future for MERP...you would have to throw in a PhD to help.

All right, lets take a look at the basic rules. In creating a character, the player first rolls percentile dice to determine the values of the primary stats (Strength, Agility, Constitution, Intelligence, Presence and Intuition). Many bonuses (or penalties) can be accrued for many fields in the character's makeup if his stats are unusually high (or low). More on that later. The player next determines his character's race. Now, here's a problem in the function of the layout. The text obligingly lists a couple dozen races the player may choose from, but the Appendix that contains a description of the races in question is located about eighty pages later! In the back of the Rulebook, no less! Why is it an Appendix? Shouldn't the information be *here* instead of *over there* so that the process of character creation is not interrupted? It wouldn't be such a problem if only the majority of the book wasn't like that!

There are layout errors in the text...minor ones, perhaps, but annoying nonetheless. For example, following the Race List, is the paragraph on Physical Appearance. "Limitations and guidelines for these factors are given for each race in section 2.21" Section 2.21 is the list of races, and nowhere near it was a list of limitations. The reader has to back track through two references to find these limitations, and that is certainly not a good use of playing time. Not only that, it compounds the error by repeating it two paragraphs later---and again in the next section, "Racial/Cultural Interaction". (Someone at I.C.E. should get out a dictionary to define the difference between "detailed description" and

"listing".) Now comes this example of where a typical character should be at this point in his creation. In following the procedure, taking into account all the specific references to other charts in the book, I had to turn and flip pages back and forth 5 or 6 times in order to get everything down. If it is necessary to group all the charts together, they should at least be placed on cards, or in a tear-out booklet which would let the GM read the rules and use the charts at the same time.

Skills are listed and described in the same section. It is a pretty extensive list of primary and secondary skills, but it doesn't end with mere description. Most skills have more referrals to sections elsewhere in the book. Need we say more?

Professions are as follows for a character in the MERP System. There is the Scout, whose specialty is basically stealth, ambush, and observation, with minor combat ability; the Warrior, which is really self-explanatory, your basic fighter-type; the Ranger, trained in outdoor skills and combat; the Bard, a jack-of-all trades, not necessarily a minstrel; the Mage, who draws his power from Middle-Earth's equivalent of the Force (the Essence); and the Animist, who obtains his magic from beings known as the Valar, through the process of Channeling. All these classes seem very simple to understand but these are where the skills you obtain come in to make the character different from any other.

Background plays a major part in developing the character's skills. There is a chart (of course) for determining what background options the character is allowed to choose from, whether it be a special magical token picked up from the past, or having a special ability that very few have, and so on. These are purchased with background points that your character gets based on his race. After purchasing them, the player creates a fuller, more detailed history around what he obtained.

Which brings us to the experience system. One can gain experience from being hit in combat, or inflicting a critical upon the enemy as well as just for killing him. Experience can also be given for spell use, noncombat maneuvers, great ideas, even travel. Any other award is completely subjective. Levels are accumulated in the normal manner, but every class has the same chart for advancement. And, considering that the example given in the Rulebook hints that the most that one could get from a typical adventure ("dungeon") would be no greater than 1000 EP, it seems to me that it would take a really long time to go up in levels where the charts say that you usually need increments of 10000 to go up *one* level.

Closing this particular chapter of the Rulebook, we find a large section dealing with how to keep track of your character's status with respect to skills, bonuses and powers during play.

Now we get to character creation...

That's right; the next chapter is the *real* chapter on character creation. The previous one was just an introduc-

tion. if you thought *that* had a lot of referral points, this section gives you charts for stat bonuses, languages, racial modifications, adolescence skills, background options, development points, encumbrance penalties...and you will still need to travel to another part of the Rulebook in order to get a clear handle of what you were doing.

Magic in Middle-Earth is as diverse as any other topic within this system, because each class has its own spell listing, too. There are some classes that one wouldn't expect to have spell lists, such as Scout, though these would be more akin to the special abilities that no other class should have. However, it is possible for player-characters to obtain more than one spell list if they so desire.

The combat system is interesting when you disregard the requisite charts and complications that come along with it. Spell casting in combat has a twist that perhaps should be considered for other systems. The more time a character spends in preparing a spell, the more bonuses to its effect he could gain. The pros and cons are obvious; he could take an increasing chance of getting hit in exchange for increased damage or chances to strike. Conversely, he could get off a spell almost immediately, losing potential damage in exchange for speed. The section on combat itself deals mainly with types of maneuvers and their ratings of difficulty as well as determining chances to hit and bonuses applicable. (One particularly wicked set of charts are



the critical success/fumble charts, located in or near the center of the Rulebook. These effects have been applied to every possible cause occurring in the game; either from spell, blunt weapon, slashing weapon, puncturing weapon, or natural types of forces, results of spells or not---like ice, heat, cold, etc. Sometimes, the descriptions of percentile rolls to find out the effect of a fumble or critical roll can be morbidly humorous. For instance, the effect of a high-power exposure to lightning: "Nervous system acts as superconductor. Sad instant death provides all witnesses with a fine light show.")

In all the excellently done role-playing systems I have seen, the creators carefully delineated what information was necessary to be a player and what information was necessary to be a Gamemaster. MERP's text is geared toward establishing that the player should know everything the GM knows. A campaign is usually started by someone who is at least knowledgeable about the system they are using. The players could be novices, for all the GM cares, because he can usually teach them things about the system along the way, even during actual play. However, you couldn't do that during MERP play; all action would have to be halted in order to explain a particular rule because of everything it could possibly affect in the game. Younger role-players would be turned off, and more experienced role-players might resent having to give up role-playing for numbers.



The Campaign Reference Screen and the Guide to Middle Earth are acceptable accessories. At least they put most of the charts in one place, and the information the GM needs about Middle-Earth in the other. Jumping back and forth between heavy numbers and heavy text is a strain and headache for the reader. But the game itself is only one small part of the gaming system, so I went on to the modules and supplements.

The stars in the firmament! *Supplements* usually include information not found in detail in the modules, like local Technology, War-Craft, Trade and Economics, Philosophy, Politics, and Family Life. The campaign supplements available for the MERP System are as follows:

LORIEN and the Halls of the Elven Smiths captures the flavor of the Wood of the Golden Lady Galadriel. The world of Tolkien's Elves in Lothlorien takes life in the text, and no magic is lost in its translation into a gaming aid.

THE RIDERS OF ROHAN is presented in such a fashion as to convey the feel of the Horsemen's culture and tradition, which was never fully explored during the War of the Ring in the Tolkien books. After reading through this book, the role of the Riders in Middle-Earth will no longer be a mystery. An excellent source book, especially for players who are cast as Riders.

MORIA, the Dwarven City, brings to life the dark histories of the Dwarves, touched with gold and the strength of stone. As is typical of all the supplements, a good GM can use the material within to bring his campaign to life---in this case, using the legacy of "Durin's Folk" as a vehicle for many adventures.

HAVENS OF GONDOR and SEA-LORDS OF GONDOR allows us a glimpse into the Men of the West from which Aragorn (a important figure in the Lord of the Ring Trilogy) is descended from and hails as his kinsmen. Whether at land or sea, it is shown that these Men were a major force in shaping Middle-Earth to what it was before, during, and after the War. Mostly a history, but decent reference material.

LORDS OF MIDDLE-EARTH, Vol. I- The Immortals. This supplement further defines the larger-than-life characters found in the Tolkien Trilogy, ranging from Gandalf to Elrond to Gollum and Sauron. Extensive backgrounds are provided along with a definition of the character's abilities and powers, so that a GM may indeed play out the Saga of the One Ring should he wish to. This is the book to get if that is your campaign goal. It would also be a good resource book for guest appearances by famous (or infamous) Tolkien characters.

Modules available for play but not necessarily campaign development are:

THE PIRATES OF PELGATIR; this sea adventure I adapted for my own campaign with fantastic results. The GM is not bogged down with the necessity to outline ocean encounters; they are already found within the story's text. What helps with the adaptation of these mo-

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dules to other campaigns (and their inherent systems) are the contingencies provided for the GM should the players deviate from the established goal of the adventure. This is indicative of a superior creative team willing to provide the GM with all the help he can get during a "dry spell" for an unexpected occurrence during play.

THIEVES OF THARBAD is another module worthy of note. Where **PIRATES** leaves off, **THIEVES OF THARBAD** could easily take over. The adventures and plotlines crammed into these modules guarantees a large amount of playing time, and **THIEVES'** footnotes give us a Lankmarish and exciting view of the port city of **THARBAD**, filled with deepest mystery. Other modules include **Goblin's Gate** and **Eagles' Eyrie**, **The Gates of Mordor**, both excellent stories in their own right.

These **MERP** aids are easily adaptable to any other role-playing system, courtesy of the conversion essays listed in each and every one of them. The supplements usually follow the same format: Guidelines for adapting the module/supplement to your campaign, helping you to convert statistics. Then, an Introduction of the setting, which gives the rundown on climate and ecology---indigenous animal and plant life of special interest to the DM and Players. A Brief History of the area---its founding, periods and events that were pivotal and relevant to the world's history, plus a Timeline for those events which are deliberate-

ly left sketchy and open-ended for the DM's use. If there are races that are prominently important in the area of the setting, a Racial History and Description is provided, so that the DM can trace the roots back to its creation, and accurately present the race in question during game play. If the race has any of these things, no stone is left unturned. The focus then turns to the major cities involved in the adventure; more detailed history in an overview, plus beautifully detailed and uncomplicated maps to aid the DM. Speaking of illustration, **I.C.E.** does not spare any expense for beautiful art. In not one instance did I find a representation or piece of work that was unappealing in any of the materials I reviewed. The supplements for general areas of importance are not without suggestions on adventures, though the most of the space is taken up in establishing material for the DM to use. And finally, the charts for NPC's, monsters, treasure and encounters, found in both modules and supplements, are all in the back of each book, *where they belong*.

A recommendation to **I.C.E.** would be to revamp the **Boxed Set Rulebook** into the format of its supplements and modules. Otherwise, what'll end up happening (if it isn't already) will be that people will buy the modules, and adapt them to whatever rule system they're using for their campaigns. Forget getting the **MERP Boxed Edition**; the adventure and campaign aids are what count and is worth the money---*not* the confusion of the Rule System.

Red Dagger Inn

A Software Review Column

Thomas and Cynthia Than

The Red Dagger Inn reviews and discusses software of interest to adventure gamers, puzzle solvers, and anyone who owns a home computer. Each column will feature a special product or company, and manufacturers are welcome to contact Gateways magazine with any news about and copies of their latest! Readers are encouraged to let us know what they think about the newest wave in the PC business, to rave about a little noticed game, or tell us about the glitches in that overrated, over priced waste of disk space. In these pages, gamers will find a place to tell the manufacturers and programmers what they *really* want to see.

This Issue: Focus on the Infocom line of games, featuring *Zork* and *Enchanter* and three of the games from SSI

Playing an Infocom game is (pardon the pun) a novel experience. There are no pictures to capture the eye, no sound effects to capture the ear. What Infocom does intend to capture is your imagination. Aside from *Fooblitzky*, their only graphics intensive game, all Infocom games are text adventures. The computer screen will scroll down descriptions of your surroundings, after which you may type in short responses and instructions, such as : Go East, Take All, Drop Sword, etc. The computer will then respond and take you to the next stage. Playing tends to give you the feeling that you are role-playing with a book.

If you like horrible puns and/or difficult mental challenges, Infocom games are designed for you. There is a code on the lower right corner of each box indicating the difficulty level of the game, and clue books are available for most of them. We found that a few hints from these Invis-clue books make the games a little easier to get through.

ZORK

For almost as long as there have been home computers, there have been fantasy adventure games. One of the first, created on a mainframe by a "Midnight Programmer", was simply called *Adventure*. Today, *Adventure* lives on in various forms, the most intriguing of which is *Zork*. Of course, computer games have come a long way since then. *Zork* understands plain sentences in English, and will usually understand the player if he keeps the com-

mands simple.

The story: *Zork* starts you outside a small seemingly deserted white house, all alone in the middle of the woods. From there, you must find your way into the "Secret Underground Empire" which is the actual world of *Zork*. Within moments, you are fighting deranged monsters, stealing pieces of artwork, and avoiding the terrible, slaving Grue. The actually solving of *Zork* takes good instincts, sharp timing and a few hints from veteran players. (Or all of the above plus the hint book.)

The best part of *Zork* is that the Empire is larger than one floppy disk. *Zork II* and *Zork III* are on the market, and each version has a slightly more capable command interpreter than its predecessor, so the quality of play improves. Note that you do not have to play the individual games in sequence, but we found it more pleasant that way.

ENCHANTER

If you have played *Zork* all the way through to *Zork III* and you were disappointed to find that there is no *Zork IV* (yet), cheer up. The *Enchanter Trilogy* (*Enchanter*, *Spellbreaker* and *Wishbringer*) is a worthy sequel to the *Zork* saga. This time, instead of playing the hapless warrior of *Zork*, you become a hapless magician. The feel of the games and their strained humor are reasonably consistent with *Zork*, but the games themselves are a little more sophisticated.

Since it is a trilogy, the three games are all related in plot, and each chapter picks up where the previous one left off. As with *Zork*, playing the *Enchanter Trilogy* in sequence is not necessary to the enjoyment of the player. Unlike the *Zork* series however, spell use is an important aspect of these games, and new spells are contained in each version. Spells can be found by several means, but they might be activated accidentally, or used intentionally by the player.

All the games in this trilogy come with another Infocom tradition: props. Infocom loves to provide the purchaser physical copies of some of the items you will encounter in the game. Studying them can often become useful (or even critical) in the process of keeping your character alive.

Strategic Simulations is a solid war-game/roleplaying game company. They carry a wide range of titles, four of which we will review here. Although we've only played a few of the over 40 titles SSI has out, we can say that we haven't run into a game of theirs we wouldn't recommend. The games appear to be well thought out and absorbing.

PHANTASIE

Phantasie is a classic graphics-oriented computer game for role-players. It draws heavily from the ideas that D&D was originally based on and it provides a good quality game in doing so. While *Phantasie* is not as plot intensive as the Infocom games, it does have a story.

The story's plot is discovered in play by your party of adventurers (there may be up to 6 characters running at a time) in the form of twenty scrolls that are scattered throughout the playing area. The setting is a small island kingdom that has been overrun by Nicodemus and his evil horde. If you can learn the history and solve the mysteries, your party might free the island from this awful situation.

The game itself is well designed for role-playing purposes. There are several character classes and races, over forty spells, several qualities of weapons and armor, and over eighty different creature types. Play included both wilderness and dungeon combat as well as towns and inns to rest and shop in.

Phantasie II is more of the same, although when you transfer your characters from *Phantasie*, most of their equipment, weapons and experience levels are lost. The story seems to be very similar to its predecessor. *Phantasie II* is mostly a second helping of *Phantasie*; a companion more than a sequel. SSI has just announced that *Phantasie III*, called "The Wrath of Nicodemus" has been released.

SHARD OF SPRING

An evil sorceress has stolen the Shard of Spring, a talisman that keeps your small island beautiful and idyllic. If she were to destroy it, the island would lose its perfection forever, and with this in mind, you and a party of five other characters journey into the wilds in order to retrieve the amulet. While this is not a drastically new idea, it is well executed and the graphics are both interesting to look at and easy on the eyes. The best feature of its design is the multiple attack feature, which lets the faster characters (and monsters) divide their attack allowance into multiple actions.

The only complaint we have is on the use of the keyboard in combat. Due to the multi-attack ability, you are often hitting many buttons per character per round in a

relatively tedious pattern. We should stress that this was our only complaint. The game is paced, planned and has a smooth feel to it. Playing it was a challenge.

ROAD WAR 2000

Read the manual carefully! We say this first because *RoadWar 2000* is a complex game that requires your full attention and a great deal of planning. This is a product for people who like their game software detailed and highly interactive. Long range planning and crisis management are absolutely tied into the player's actions in the game.

The premise is simple and largely similar to the plots of the three "Mad Max" movies. You are the leader of a roadwar gang somewhere in the devastated land of North America. Your ultimate goal is to raise your followers up from a group of mindless looters to national political powers. You do this by scrounging for supplies and battling other would-be politicians, then moving on to challenge for control for the remaining cities.

The play is violent and relentless; the art of staying alive often requires less-than-heroic acts like gunning down the needy or looting supermarkets. All in all, it succeeds in portraying a grim and hopeless future that can only be salvaged by far-from-perfect heroes.

The Zork Trilogy is available for Commodore, Apple, IBM and Atari computers. Prices range from \$34.95 to \$44.95.

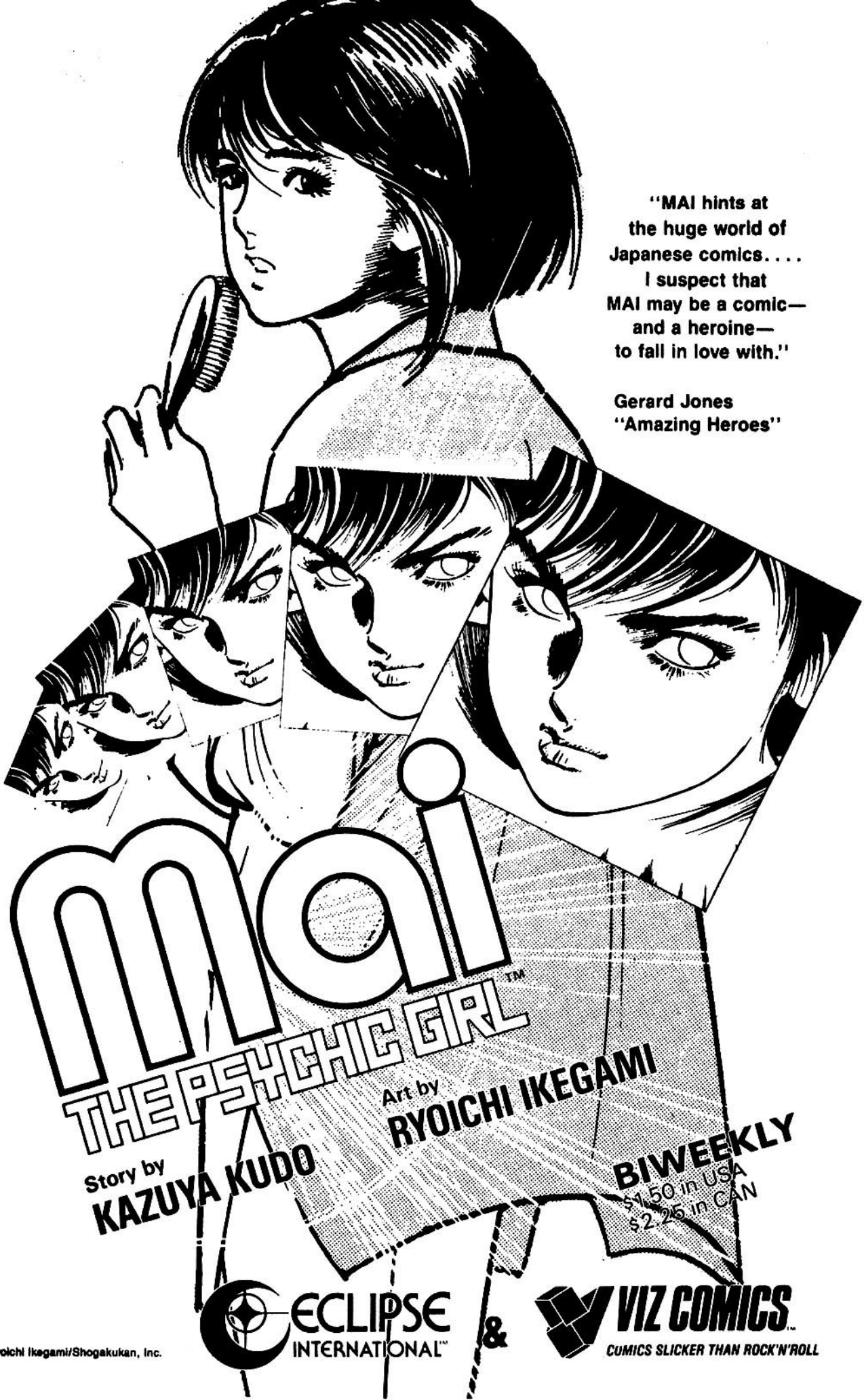
The Enchanter Trilogy is also available for those systems, and prices range from \$24.95-\$44.95.

Phantasie I is available for those systems (except the Commodore Amiga), at \$39.95. *Phantasie II* is not yet available for the Amiga, Apple Macintosh or IBM computers.

Shard of Spring and *RoadWar 2000* are available for the Commodore 64&128, the Apple IIe and IIc, and the IBM PC. They retail for about \$39.95.

Next issue: The computer games from Lucasfilm!





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from the Other Side...Nick Andros, the deaf-mute -- and Mother Abigail herself, after facing the Balrog of her pride. There must be confrontation. It cannot be open warfare, because he has grown too powerful by this time.

Too many people would die, when there has been enough death.

The defenders infiltrate the ranks of the Enemy, to discover his plans for conquest and corruption. With such unlikely types as a former rock star (Larry Underwood), a sociologist (Glen Bateman), and two good ol' boys (Stu Redman and Ralph Brenter), they must travel from their last sanctuary to his city, and if possible, destroy him. But such a journey is not without its personal trials, and they cleanse themselves of any doubt of their holy mission, or the Walkin' Dude's evil will destroy them with the darkness in their own souls. It is the capacity and power for self-sacrifice that drove away the sins of Man once before, and it will destroy Randall Flagg the same way. But even when the Dark Man is destroyed, his forces still live on after him, and the defenders will not be safe until his Evil is removed from the hearts of men forever...

The Land of the Gunslinger

Here, in the *Dark Tower* epic, the Territories have become just one big desert, where the magic has not fled, but simply changed with the land it existed in. Fewer people live here. It is the Old West, where violence is the one true law -- in the hands of the gunslinger.

There is the hint of a once beautiful world, but the tale is that it was destroyed by man's potential for destruction come to fruit. The gun has become the only weapon, its proper use a type of religious and mystical art, which requires harsh discipline and much soul-searching. In this dusty world, one must find purpose, or become dried and weathered out...useless. As a result, the pursuit

of personal vendettas are common, not grand and glorious quests, although they can be regarded as such. Evil And Good are not so clearly defined up close. The magic is here, as in the Territories, but it is not the same. It is a magic of the spirit still, but born out of desolation and despair, of hopes and dreams turned to dust. So men have turned to demons, to satisfy the emptiness in their lives.

There is no plenty here. One can wander for miles across the desert and see only the devil-grass.

It is Purgatory.

The Gunslinger is the warrior of this world. He is born of noble family and is trained from birth from the green areas of land for the aristocracy. He is taught not only the use of the gun, but all the arts of armed and unarmed combat, and must surpass his teacher to become a Gunslinger, or die trying. An ordinary man could become dependent on a gun, and become crippled without it. A Gunslinger must know how to deal death with or without his weapon, much like a samurai with respect to his sword. The code of the Gunslinger is not that of Bushido, however. One does what one must in order to accomplish your end, true, but anything goes to survive as well. This philosophy requires learning how to survive in the desert that the Gunslinger will be sent into; skills such as conserving your water, hunting and so on. It also means that the Gunslinger, like Roland from *The Dark Tower* with regards to his companions (Jake, Odetta, and Eddie, for example), must be ready to sacrifice everything in order to win -- the sacrifice being on his terms, dealing from a position of strength and possibly including his friends and allies in the bargain.

A Gunslinger's Training unlocks the powers of his mind, to deal with the threats of this harsh world. Hypnosis, telepathy, the control of mind over body, etc., some of which can be enhanced by the devil-grass, the little life the earth could give

now. It can bestow second-vision...and it can also expose you to the creatures of Hell. But a Gunslinger is always ready to confront and destroy such evil wherever it may be found. His skill is unsurpassed, and his spirit is that of a warrior born.

The desert may be dusty, but it sometimes brings up from its bowels remnants of old technology. Glass, plastic, sugar, pharmaceutical drugs -- all these things that we in the "real world" take for granted are treasures here.

The Gunslinger knows the High Speech of those days (our modern English), a privilege of his noble birth so that he can read the ancient hieroglyphics of the past. It is during travel into the bowels of subways left behind that one might encounter the Slow Mutants; phospherent, monstrous legacies of the age that passed.

Magic is simple. There is power in ideographic symbols, and black magic of sacrifice. There is the Tarot as the method of prophecy, although what it may be revealed may not always be the untarnished truth...and it can be the key in traveling from the Gunslinger World to ours: the world that will be/is to the world is/will be. In the story of the Gunslinger, Roland the protagonist astrally travels from his plane through gates formed by these cards to inhabit the bodies of people living in our world. The possession was not total, unless Roland exerted his will upon his host. It could be assumed that it was his mental discipline that enabled him to do this.

The Tower is the lynchpin of Eternity, the elusive goal which may or may not be all the reason for the Gunslinger and his fellowship to exist. And while evil may not always be visible, it may sometimes incarnate on their world in the form of the succubus known as the Oracle, who lives in a circle of stones. Or in the guise of man in black. He who is the sorcerer, the magician lost to the Darkness, and is known by another name...in another place...leading the way to an even greater adversary.

Gateways Classifieds

Gateways introduces a regular feature for fantasy role-players, Game Masters and all fans of the Genre...Gateways Classifieds! Every issue, on this page, you may insert or peruse messages which will reach gamers throughout the known world. It's very simple! Find the category your message belongs in, write your words down, mail them to us, and we'll print them! And remember--to help gamers keep in touch, **Player/Game Master Wanted Ads** are free!

The categories are: **Merchandise for Sale** -- please include your telephone number with your ad. No dealers, please. **Merchandise Wanted** -- be specific. Don't say "old Dragons wanted", say "Dragons 35 through 58 wanted". **Events** -- you can advertise conventions, tournaments, concerts, special screenings, etc. **Personals** -- have fun! Anything goes under personals: secret messages, congratulations, gloating, fave raves, announcements, even challenges! **Services Offered/Needed** -- Model painting, mapping, drawing, arts and crafts, module design, any service of use to gamers. And finally, those free ads, **Player/Game Master Wanted** -- please be specific! Mention 1) Type of game 2) the location at which it will be played or how far you can travel, and 3) age/level of experience required.

And remember, Gateways Classifieds are cheap! At one dollar per twenty words, this will be an offer limited to our earliest issues. Take advantage of it while it lasts Write to: Gateways Classifieds, JAF Box 065, New York, N.Y. 10116.

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PERSONALS:

Let it be known throughout the ten kingdoms that Fyodor de Rochefot, Master of the Bountiful Hunt, has claimed the bounty placed upon Geldor Mun by the surviving daughter of Lord Duffin, Knight of the First Realm. Thus is vengeance satisfied.

I miss it. I said that I wouldn't, and I thought that I'd never want to do it again, but damn it, I miss it. Now what, wise guy, Mr. "All-things-must-have-an-end-trouble-making-know-it-all"? Huh? Well?

ZOWSOS +: One can never truly forget. My soul will always be with you.-- T.

Just to catch you up on the news, Shana had triplets, Marlon became the Guildmaster, and lots of people lived happily ever after. But it's not the end.

Dominion is not a Monty Hall campaign.

Congratulations Gateways! One year old and heading for glory! Love, your biggest fan.

I don't hate TSR...I love TSR. I play AD&D all the time. Really. P. Travis

Gabriel - Prepare good friend, sharpen thy blade, a quest is upon us - Voltroy

Here's ink in your face Ozzy! We won! Rorschach lives!--Ted.

Harley Davidson rides the best--The Outrider.

Look, Lynne! All my dreams in one package! Guess it's all worth it in the end--S.C.

Louise--U2, The Joshua Tree, I mean it--George from Fort Dix.

To Corwin, Spacey, Charly, Aragorn, Windchill and the late, great "Jake"--your performances were excellent! Next stop, USSR!--Nick, C. Alaska.

To the Sherwoods, Patrick and Patricia, the warmest of thanks for all you have done so far--Gen Con would have been tougher for us without you!--GAS.

Regards to Gateways from the island trio: Manhattan, Oahu and Puerto Rico Let's meet in Kansas City, okay?!

Ludicrous Speed!!!

Hey Rick - Hydrans aren't just for breakfast anymore!

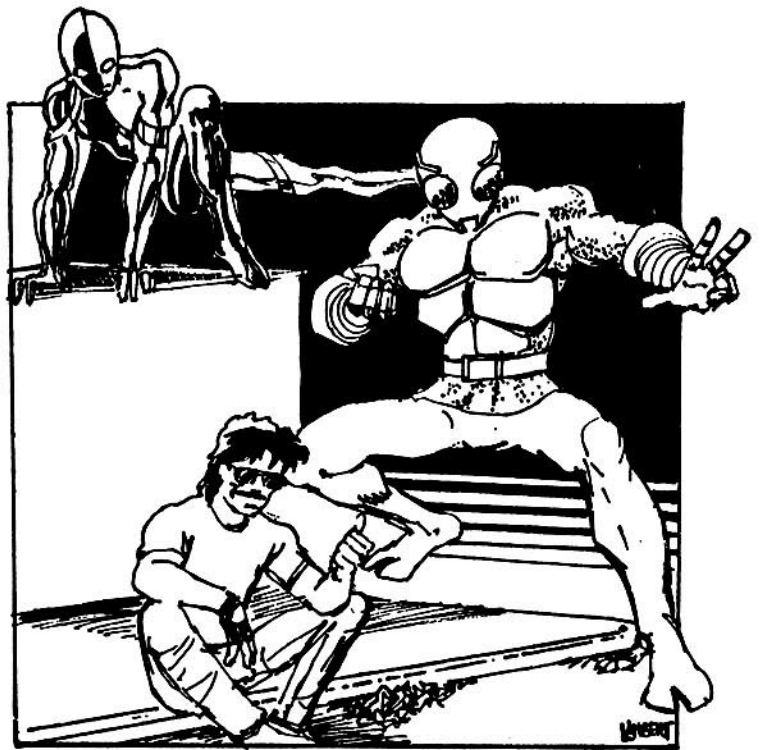
The Cosmic Streetcorner

Like anyone who can stand to read through a session at the Cosmic Streetcorner, I've always been a dreamer. My dreams were big and marvelous, I'd stuff the whole world into any given fantasy, get everybody involved with my vision. Huge, glowing disks would hover over the Williamsburg Bridge, near my projects; dinosaurs would rise from the trees at 10th Street Park to stomp on muggers and gang fights. I wrote stories about these things, and, luckily, my grade school teachers encouraged me to write some more.

As a teen on the streets of Honolulu, Hawaii, I was introduced to a type of science fantasy that changed my life--Japanese television! On KIKU-TV the righteous android fighters Kikaida and Kikaida 0-1 battled the dark forces and evil robots of Professor Gill and his hissing black helmeted creation, Hakaida (years before Lucas took his Vader riff in *Star Wars*). What was so incredible about this kid-vid was that they were serials, the plots continued to develop throughout each series and actually had titanic, slam-bang final episodes filled with both great triumphs and tearful, tragic loses on both sides. The hugely popular Kamen Rider V-3 series actually had two prequel series, and several sequels, movies, cartoons and *manga* crossovers! Hey, these weren't cartoons, either, and they could run hundreds of episodes, depending on how wild we were for them. Their scope was sweeping, their stories were always...epics.

Epic. That was the key word. The heck with half hour 'toons that had the bad guys licked after the third commercial break! It takes time to wipe out evil, and every Tolkien lover will tell you that you can't do that and get away scot free! Those shows made my imagination run like the wind through the palm trees--life could never be boring again. I wouldn't let it. In fact, I began to see every aspect of my life as part of an epic. My mind played out my wins and losses, my loneliness and desires, upon a huge mythic canvas for me too get a kick out of when there seemed to be nothing better to do. MAGIC, DESTINY, HOPES, DREAMS, living my life with those words always spelled in capital letters became the only way I knew how to deal with the rough times in growing up. And, hey look, there could have been worse ways of handling hard knocks. But lemme tell you something: it can have a pretty tough down side, too.

When you surround yourself with fantasy, when you put those four big words all in capital letters and place all your faith in them, well, there's no other way of saying it. You may be in for a big letdown. Don't get me wrong!



People liked me and I had some great friends. But the movies I saw, the comics I read, the stories I told--trying to live them out set me more apart and eventually made me more alone than ever!

Nah, she's not **MAGICAL** enough for me! It's just not my **DESTINY** to go with them! I **HOPE** they remember my birthday! My **DREAM** is to make the world a better place!

All the time?!? Not good. Those lines became barriers, shields against taking chances and doing things that might have counted for real experience points! When you spell 'em big, see, those four words become mythic. The stuff of faerie tale epics and good role-playing games. But in life-playing, I've since learned, they simply become tools to get us where we really want to go! Destiny is the good you do for yourself and the world in the long run. Hopes and dreams fuel the engines of a new big word that becomes at least as important as the others--**ACTION!** Just going out, doing it, and working hard at it--whatever it is. Magic is what happens, what it feels like when it finally, really gets done.

Think about this! True, your life is an epic in the making. But it's an epic of subtle beauty, tenderness, tragedy and boredom, of striving, failing and achieving. Whether as a writer, artist, Dungeon Master, or film maker, when you tell your stories you are telling people about yourselves no matter how hard you try to disguise it.

But you'll only be truly successful and original at it by making an effort to filter those time worn science fantasy themes through your own personal experience. Experience that you get by breaking down the barricades, not being alone anymore, and taking a risk on living. The hurt and heartbreak may feel crummy, but the prize will be the greatest feelings you've ever known. Underneath all the glitz and sweeping grandeur, that's the real stuff of epics... .

Jeffrey Gomez
Publisher



GOOD EVENING...
...I AM YOUR
GATEKEEPER!

...I'M HERE TO
OFFER YOU A KEY
TO THE
MULTIVERSE!
COME, PASS
THROUGH...

...LET ME BE
YOUR GUIDE!



"...WE'LL TRAVEL TO WONDEROUS WORLDS
WHERE WARRIORS AND WIZARDS ARMED WITH
ANCIENT STRENGTHS AND MAGIKS BECOME
THE STUFF OF LEGENDS..."



"...TO MYSTIC REALMS, TIME-LOST LANDS...
WHERE CREATURES ROAM AND MYTHICAL BEASTS
DWELL..."

"...WE'LL GLIDE THROUGH THE DEPTHS
OF OUTER SPACE; WHERE INTERGALACTIC
CONFLICTS MAY RASE..."



"...OR EVEN TREAD PATHS THROUGH THE
RADIOACTIVE RUINS OF AN APOCALYPTIC EARTH..."

"...WHERE MEN, MUTANTS AND MACHINES STRUGGLE
FOR SURVIVAL AS FRIENDS OR FOES..."



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