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# Howling At The Moon

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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

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Dear Gateways:

My co-workers have long extolled the virtues of your magazine, but I had not managed to see a copy until yesterday, when I bought a copy of Issue #7 at a local hobby shop.

Bravo!

Gateways does an excellent job of capturing the wonder that drew us all to adventure gaming in the first place. I hardly know where to start – excellent cover, wonderful artwork, and articles that actually made me want to go out and try the game. That hasn't happened to me in ages.

Anyway, I'm hooked.

Thanks!

Scott D. Haring

Delavan, Wisconsin

Editor's reply: *You're very welcome, Scott, and it's nice to know that we are gaining readers in your fine workplace. Any compliments from the man whose name has graced the Marvel Superheroes RPG, various AD&D projects, and the wonderful GURPS Horror supplement, are truly appreciated. Keep in touch.*

Dear Ms. Antoniou:

Finally, the magazine on gaming that I've been looking for! Thanks for producing a publication which isn't weighted down by a strong company allegiance. It's nice to see an article on **Dragonlance** with views of those who feel it is not role-playing (like Gary Gygax). The review by Patricia Travis of **Dragonlance Adventures** is also very welcome and shows that you can take a needed critical stance on this material.

Some suggestions, however. An expansion of the Countdown section would really be useful. As you cover many different companies, this would seem to be a great spot to publish upcoming games and accessories news.

I was rather disappointed with the article on **The Eternal Champion**, because it seems that Berkson's piece is mainly concerned with the comic book manifestations of Moorcock's multi-hero. I was also surprised to see the newest Moorcock **Eternal Champion** book, **The Dragon in the Sword** missing from the bibliography. There was also a graphic novel done by Moorcock and Howard Chaykin some time back called **Swords of Heaven**.

Finally, I might be interested in submitting some work to you. Please use the enclosed SASE to return your



submissions guidelines and any comments you might think helpful.

Thanks for listening and good luck with Gateways to come.

Regards,

Jim Lowder

Greenfield, Wisconsin

*It has been the policy of Gateways to review games and supplements in depth, to allow the readers to make buying judgements based on as much information as they could get. Using the "Countdown" style, individual reviews would not be able to do good products justice, or explain what was wrong or objectionable with bad ones. We will continue to do "Countdown" articles twice a year, but their purpose will be to take a look at what's new, what's hot, and what's coming.*

Dear Gateways:

I received the package from Gateways yesterday and was very pleased. Why did I order all of them? All I can say is "why not?"; they're great! As a gamer/comics reader, I get two books full of info in one for about half of what Dragon Magazine costs. I got all the back issues because the price was right and the value seemed high (and after looking them over, I see that I was right)—they're as good, if not better than I thought they would be. Keep up the high quality you have so far and I'll be a life-long subscriber.

Also, I'd like to compliment you on your Public Service messages (*No Drugs, Don't Touch*, etc.). I think this is a great idea for the kids. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

James Curry

Rochester, New York

*con't on page 4*

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# From The Tower

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The year 1967 was a remarkable year, full of the contrasts, contradictions, and pure color of the era we so loosely call "The Sixties". One of the most popular songs on the radio was "Eleanor Rigby", but "Strangers In the Night" was also considered a very hot tune. Mickey Mantle, of the New York Yankees, hit his 500th career home run, but Boston still won the Pennant. Martin Luther King led marches in New York and San Francisco while race riots erupted in Detroit and Newark. Rosemary's Baby was the shocking horror movie in the theaters, while 50,000 protesters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC to cry out against the continuing war in Vietnam. Barbra Streisand sang in Central Park, and the Six-Day War focused world attention on the Middle East. And where was I in the midst of all of this drama, these world shaping events, future memories and the seeds of philosophy to come?

I was in Oz.

Every year that I enjoy my existence, I find that there are any number of small, mostly unimportant things which free themselves from my memories. My Kindergarten teachers' names, for example, or why exactly I always associate the color of sky blue with the number seven. But held strongly in my mind are the recollections of myself, comfortable in my mother's lap or next to her on a couch, listening to her read Frank L. Baum's *Wizard of Oz*.

I even remember the way the book looked. It had a green cover, slightly frayed at the edges, made of cheap cardboard, but wonderfully illustrated. It smelled slightly of white paste, and when I was very young, I would marvel at the glossy sheen of the cover compared to the rough finish of the interior pages, obviously printed on inexpensive paper, and already yellowing. But this was my first introduction to the world of fantasy literature, and the world of what was already developing into a vivid imagination. Before I had started Kindergarten, I could have told you the story of Dorothy, Toto, Scarecrow, Lion, and Tin Man, and I wouldn't have left out the parts that just couldn't make it into the magnificent film version. My hunger to enter the world of Oz was so great that before I was in the first grade, I was reading. Not just picking out words and struggling through, but reading, at last within the Emerald City on my own.

Through the next 10 years of my reading life, fantasy and science fiction faded into the background as formal education introduced me to non-fiction books, stories from other cultures and societies, mysteries, historical romances, adventure novels, dog and horse stories, and the thousands of pages that took me to other places in my imagination. Images from them still reside in my mind, and I can sometimes call on them to make a description of a style of clothing, a mannerism, a building or an event so that my players can appreciate the memories with me. (But don't tell them I do that. They seem to

think that I make it all up.) But every once in a while, I would find a book that went beyond the others, and get a form of satisfaction that was very much like the feeling I had when Oz was finally mine. Some that I remember well? Lewis' *Narnia* Books. Christopher's *Tripods* Trilogy. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

When High School came around, my demands were harsher. Compelled by the adult dramas I read by dozens of "mainstream" authors, I wanted my fantasies to grow up. I wanted complex plots, satisfying heroes, villains I could respect. Stephen R. Donaldson's *Thomas Covenant* series, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, Stephen King's *The Stand*, all come to mind. I began to drift away from the science fiction shelves in the bookstores, looking for drama, challenge, books that would make me think, books that I would remember 10 or 12 years later, the way I remembered the books of my childhood. College found me lost almost entirely in the theatre, with Shakespeare, Euripides, Ibsen and Shepard on my shelves, and then a brief but satisfying plunge into the world of *Star Trek*, reading every novel, story, fanzine and folk song I could get my hands on. I thought of it as a vacation, a kind of Pepsi break between the heady brandy drinking parties I would have with the masters.

Yet through all of these evolutions, these changes and alterations in my reading habits, my thoughts will still go back and remember the feel of rough pages under my hands, and the color green still flashes in front of my eyes when I think of good books that I have read. No one book can be responsible for the shaping of a life, but I often wonder...what if it had not been that particular book? Would I have still held every thing I read up to that first, fantastic feeling, that understanding of language, of style, of fantasy, that edge of wonder? Would I have looked for it, waited for it, quested for it, burned for it? Could I have brought worlds to life in tribute to the world that held such fascination for me as a child? Perhaps. I have no magical potion or machine that could test alternate universe theories.

But just as I still find that wonder, horror, excitement and thrilling anticipation in the position I hold here at Gateways, it is a relief to see that there are many other people out there who remember the joys of a child's first discovery of fantasy. In a world of alternating tragedy and drama, death and heroism, war and endless talking, there is a special place for those who can appreciate what they have enjoyed and then pass it on so that other people can also enjoy it. Whether you read a book of fabulous mystery and adventure to your child, craft a game world of complex beauty, entertain with style and grace, play a character with a soul, write novels, or comic books, or even make multi-million dollar films bringing entire fantasy universes to life, you are creating wonder.

And there will be people who will appreciate, respect, and perhaps, someday, love you for it.

Laura Antoniou  
Executive Editor



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(con't from page 2)

Dear Gateways:

We have read the issue #6 of Gateways with great interest, because of the Star Wars role-playing game related content.

Please note that your Star Wars cover was flopped! The Millennium Falcon space-ship in the center should have the cockpit on the right/starboard side always.

May the Force be with you!

Frank Thomas Bitterhof  
Publisher, Star Wars Fan Connection  
Berlin, West Germany

Well, it finally caught up with us! We have been waiting for someone to write in and let us know, and after all these months, it has to be a reader in West Germany.

Dear Gateways:

Thanks so much for sending me issues #7 and #8 of Gateways. I've always been a bit of a dreamer, but I never really understood the mentality of role-playing gamers before. While I can't see becoming one, Gateways has opened my eyes to a fascinating sub-culture.

But I must remind your readers (in reference to the Tome in issue #8), that great music was written not for role-playing

games, but for hands on activities, like reading a book, eating a great meal, or making love. Let's not forget there's a real life out there, and it's the most exciting game that there is.

Yours from the real side,

Bob George

P.S. Enclosed is my check for a subscription to Gateways. Hey - maybe I'm wrong.

*If Gateways could open the eyes of a non-gamer so much that he subscribes, we must be doing something new. Thank you for your thoughtful words, and here's a thought back. It was never the intention of any article in Gateways to suggest that the wonderful things we can discover in life are designed for use in gaming, or should only be enjoyed while gaming. But just as two friends may play an album or two while playing chess, or listen to the radio while enjoying a great conversation, using great music to enhance a role-playing game is only one way to bring the beauty and variety of art into what can be viewed as "only a hobby". We can only hope that some gamers out there have investigated music they might have never been interested in before, and actually enjoyed listening to it.*

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# The Tome

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## *Decisions, Decisions giving your players real choices*

Jonathan Tweet  
&  
Mark Rein-Hagen

Player decisions are the crux and center of role-playing, that which makes the experience entirely unlike reading or watching a movie, yet opportunities for important decisions are often neglected by Game Masters designing their stories. All too often the choices presented to players during an adventure are limited or unimportant. Many players are led through the world, guided all the while by the omnipotent GM. Designing a story that is open enough to allow significant decisions is difficult, and most players seem relatively satisfied just to take what the Game Master presents, react to it according to habit, and reap the rewards.

The most common decisions made in a typical gaming session are tactical: which spell to use, what marching order to form, how to deal with a trap, and so on. More basic and important decisions are guided so strongly that they are hardly decisions at all. For instance, should the party try to thwart the machinations of the king's evil sage? If that is the adventure the Game Master has in mind, the players have no reasonable alternative but to make the attempt. Wandering off into the Haunted Woods instead would leave the GM at a loss and would probably result in a less satisfying story.

This dearth of decision itself is not a fatal weakness of adventures because decisions that require thought and debate slow down the game. Many times players just want to roll dice, conquer their enemies, and have a good time. Frequent important decisions would make the game less enjoyable; players would get stressed out. A few carefully crafted situations, however, can face players with interesting decisions. By making these decisions according to their characters' motivations and beliefs, they develop a deeper personality for their characters and

involve themselves more in role-playing. As a Game Master, one way to encourage better role-playing and to challenge the players is to give them a few decisions that count.

The important thing about a decision is that it must be hard to make. A common mistake is to set up a "decision" in which only one of the possible actions is feasible. For instance, one of us was game mastering and had a demon cast illusions to fool the party into thinking that their friends were being held hostage. The illusionary "captives" would be set free if the party gave up the important mission they were on. It was a tense face-off, but since the players simply could not betray the mission, there never was a true decision involved. The players held firm (naturally) and the hostages were eventually exposed as illusions. As a Game Master, you must set up the decisions such that they are not easy to make and engender more than one possible solution.

Another factor that is required for decisions is that they make a difference. For example, a pivotal decision might depend on whether the characters are willing to risk their lives in pursuit of some goal. If the goal is not the main goal of the mission itself, the characters are free to decide whether to take the chance or play it safe. But if, as Game Master, you only let the characters die under extreme circumstances, the players will know that they can "risk their lives" without worry. As long as they know you will fudge the dice and manipulate the outcome, there is no true risk. The decision to risk their lives in pursuit of a goal is reduced to idle talk. If you are not willing to kill characters, give them the opportunity to risk a blow that you will deliver. Let them risk their social status or their wealth, if not their lives. That way, they are actually risking losing something that you are willing to take away.

It is also important not to always penalize the party for making the "wrong" decision. If you make a habit of rewarding "correct" decisions and punishing "incorrect" ones, your players will pick up on this and simply learn to choose the path of behavior that you favor, regardless of how much sense it makes in the game world. This pattern reduces the decision to a mere test of the player's familiarity with your gaming style and it's rather boring. For tactical decisions, reward and punishment are useful, but for moral decisions, you should let the player choose freely. This might mean that characters will sometimes suffer for being honest, faithful or brave, and that sometimes they will benefit from being selfish and cruel, but that is how the world works. Again, many players will enjoy the possibility of risking and even losing something for the sake of higher goals and virtues. If they always gain from being virtuous, then virtue can become a selfish thing. Players will think, "Let's help those people because the GM will reward us if we do", instead of the more virtuous alternative of "Let's help those people even though it means we might suffer for it". That's not to say you should always make the characters suffer when they do good, but virtue should remain a goal in itself, not merely a means to a material reward.

If a decision in your adventure makes a big difference and is hard to come to, you will have to be ready for all possible responses to that decision. That means some extra work in preparing the story. If the party must decide between fighting some evil monsters or joining with them to raid a castle, and if this is a true decision (it could go either way) then you will have to prepare for both eventualities. The players, however, will enjoy the adventure more knowing that they can choose either one

and you will be prepared to run the adventure, regardless.

So what new kinds of choices can you face your players with? Moral decisions are interesting. Routine tactical decisions offer little new ground for role-playing; it's the moral decision that calls into play your characters' beliefs and personalities and not just their skills, spells, and weapons. Some players will always make the best selfish decision, but most revel in the opportunity to make important decisions based on their characters' personalities.

Here are some concrete suggestions for moral decisions that you can place in front of players:

**Fantasy:** The adventurers find a magic ring—the heirloom of a noble family that has fallen in stature since the ring's loss. Do they keep it or do they return it for gold or favors?

**Fantasy:** They come to a village where the inhabitants are under the spell of an evil witch. Since the people do not realize that they are under a spell, they spurn the party that claims to have come to save them. They don't understand why they would need to be saved. Will the party help them even though they are not asked to, or will they help only when their egos are flattered by grateful masses?

**Science Fiction:** The party is hired to kill an interstellar criminal and prove that they have slain him by bringing back his corpse. As they are looking for him, they find that he had tried unsuccessfully to have a clone of himself made, and they find the dead clone. Do they return with the clone, which will pass for his corpse and win them their bounty, or do they still seek out and kill the convict?

Another way to let players make important decisions about the outcome of the adventure is to provide two possible conclusions: a satisfactory result and a superior one. Usually a Game Master will have a certain goal for the characters in mind, and if they do not accomplish it, they fail. With this system, the characters must pursue the goal despite the risks; and inevitably, they risk whatever it takes to reach that goal. For instance, if they have to find the Crystal of Seven Eyes, they do not stop until they find it. If you warn them that they must travel through the dread Mountains of Despair to find it, they will unthinkingly risk it because they assume that you have set up the adventure for them to succeed and find the Crystal no matter what it takes.

But if you provide two goals, one more difficult than the other, the players will be able to decide not to pursue the tougher one. As long as they accomplish the first, they succeed so they do not have to feel pressured to pursue the second and more demanding task. If they do, they know they may gain more, but they also know they are risking something. (It is important that your world be consistent enough that the characters can judge the relative danger of different options. If they do not know ahead of time that a certain course of action is especially risky, then they do not get the thrill of consciously choosing a risky venture.)

For example, if the goal is to get the Crystal of Seven Eyes, set up the adventure such that, if the players find it, they have "won". In addition, however, they are able to find and slay the vampire who had stolen the Crystal. Since killing the vampire is not expected of them, the players will be free to turn back once they have found the Crystal, if they wish. If they are daring enough to track down the vampire, however, they have the chance of gaining a greater reward as well as becoming bloodless corpses.

Here are examples of other "two-layered" adventures:

**Modern:** The characters hunt down a murderer and discover her connection with a small band of criminals. They can capture their original target and simply report their findings, or they can pursue that band on their own.

**Science Fiction:** The characters are travelling on their starship with a paying passenger. As an aside to the adventure, he asks them to stop at a dangerous planet to conduct illegal activities and asks for PC bodyguards. They can accept for some cash and excitement, but they are well within their rights to refuse and get on with their own plans.

**Fantasy:** The party is hired to eliminate the beasties in some ruins. In the ruins they find a portal to a more dangerous spot, perhaps with a clue as to what is to be found there. Do they go beyond their duty and venture into the unknown, or do they play it safe and turn back, mission accomplished? The other place could have as few as one encounter, but one tougher than any in the ruins proper.

**Fantasy:** The characters are out to get a powerful high priestess of an evil cult. They know that capturing her would give them valuable information about the cult and would be better than killing her, but do they risk a capture attempt, which is more tricky than simply an assassination?

One possible problem with "two-layered" adventures is that players will have to come to terms with their mortal limits. In most adventures, characters seem to be omnipotent because they tackle every problem the GM puts in front of them. While this pattern is unrealistic, some players enjoy the power trip. Bringing reality into fantasy and including obstacles in the adventure that the players might not be able to handle will not be appreciated by some. You will have to be the judge of your playing group. You might want to make it clear to the group what your intent is by including secondary, risky ventures, so they will not charge off after every goal secure in the mistaken notion that you would not give the opportunity to get into trouble over their heads.

Most of the decisions in role-playing adventures are superficial based on habitual tactics or on the demands of the circumstances. By setting up opportunities for players to make decisions based on morals or personality and that let characters take risks above and beyond those required could add new possibilities to your campaign. It could add a bit of thought, a bit of deliberation, a bit of nervous sweat.





## GATEWAYS GOES BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE MAKING OF

# THE WILLOW GAME

An Interview with Professional Game Designers Greg Costikyan & Eric Goldberg

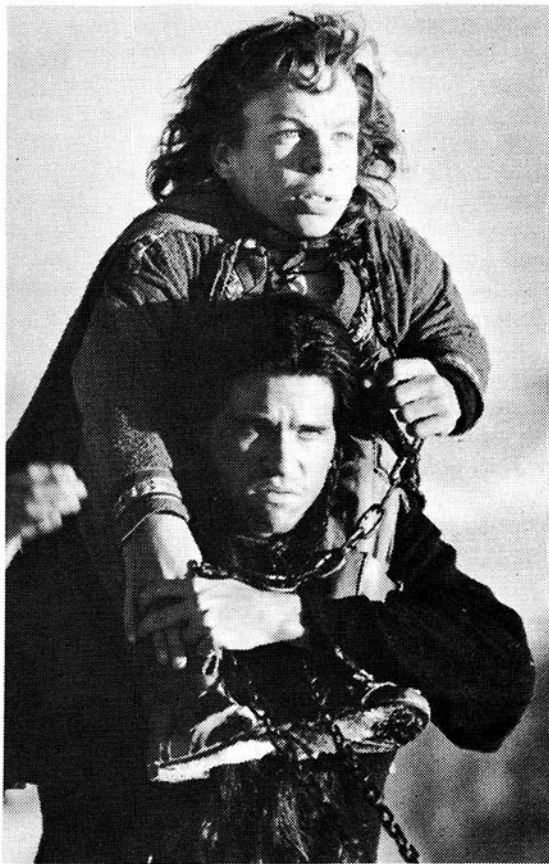
Jonathan Frater

Jeffrey Gamez

For the first time in the history of motion pictures, a major effort to bring epic fantasy to the screen has been mounted. Premiering on May 20, 1988, George Lucas' production of Ron Howard's *Willow* will almost certainly decide the immediate fate of the fantasy genre in all of its media incarnations. *Willow* features battles inspired by Akira Kurosawa's grand confrontations in films such as *The Seven Samurai* and *Ran*, transformation special effects on a scale never before attempted onscreen, and a duel of magical combat that promises to be the first and perhaps greatest feats of celluloid sorcery ever to be achieved by Lucas' own Industrial Light & Magic.

However the film is received by the milling throngs, one thing is for certain: adventure gamers, people who are not satisfied with walking out of the theater and forgetting the picture; people who will want to relive this spectacular quest fantasy again and again, will certainly strike a mithril mine in learning of the making of the *Willow Game*.

In this exclusive *Gateways* interview (conducted in New York City's famous wedge-shaped Flatiron Building just after the game went to press), Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan discuss their experiences in dealing with a corporation as huge and discerning as Lucasfilm, Ltd., their efforts to design and construct a game that attempts to capture the excitement and spirit of a movie that was still being made at the time. Also



found herein are fascinating tidbits on what has not shown up in the final print of the film—and what may yet appear in possible sequels...

If ever there were a duo ordained by the fates in the adventure game industry, it was Greg Costikyan and Eric Goldberg. After several initial meetings during earlier days at the headquarters of the military simulation games publisher SPI, the pair of teenaged playtesters went on to design several award-winning games for the company. Of these games, a healthy handful (including Costikyan's *Creature that Ate Sheboygan* and Goldberg's *Dragonquest*) are still fondly remembered by gaming enthusiasts.

Having been separated for several years (Costikyan freelancing such successes as *Toon* while attending college, and Goldberg working as a software consultant for such corporations as AT&T and CBS, Inc.), a certain calling overtook

them. They were reunited at West End Games in 1985, where Goldberg had begun a campaign to turn around the company's ailing product line. In the next two years, such role-playing games as *Paranoia* and *Ghostbusters* scored major successes, and, in 1986, the pair's recommendation that West End acquire a license from Lucasfilm resulted in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, the company's current runaway best seller.

**Gateways** (to Eric Goldberg): In the late 1970s and early 80s the two of you were separated, Greg attending college out of state and yourself in software consulting. You've often been heard saying things like "I did a dumb thing, I stayed with gaming", and you could have gone on to lucrative 9-5 jobs. Why are you still in the adventure gaming field?

**Eric Goldberg:** Well, one of the very depressing things for Greg was that after having been in this field for twelve years and basically being at the top of his profession—any company in the field knows who Greg Costikyan is and would be happy to have him design for them—he was not really able to make a living as a freelance game designer.

**Greg Costikyan:** Basically adventure gaming is a lousy industry. There is no pay, and there is no ego boost either. For example, even though authors may often be paid very poorly, still, their names are on the covers of books and they have fans who know who they are. That's really not yet the case in the gaming industry. It's a darn good thing that we really like games, because there's really no other justification for why we do what we do.

**Gateways:** After some heavy bidding and stiff competition from several other major gaming companies, you got the rights to do the *Star Wars* adventure games. How did the "little guys", as opposed to TSR, Inc., (the largest company in the industry and owners of the *Dungeons & Dragons* line), score with Lucasfilm twice?

**Costikyan:** Scoring twice is not very difficult to explain because Lucasfilm believes in relationships, and they were happy with what we had done on *Star Wars*. Going with us on *Willow* was a logical choice for them. One reason we wound up with the *Star Wars* rights rather than TSR in the first place is because TSR and Lucasfilm both had bad experiences on the *Indiana Jones Role-playing Game*. There were any number of companies that wanted the *Star Wars* license, and I think that the reason Lucasfilm wound up going with us was because they are a company that believes in quality and they had reason to believe that we could do a good job. They have a games division (specializing in computer games), and several people there were already familiar with our work. In this industry it's very rare that quality makes a bit of difference. It's very gratifying to know that in this case it did.

**Goldberg:** After having left West End Games, Greg and I decided we needed something to do with our time, so we made a deal with St. Martin's Press subsidiary, Tor Books, and Lucasfilm to do the *Willow* line.

Lucasfilm mostly works with licensees for the juvenile market, so the licensees' sensibilities had been geared for a younger audience. With the *Willow Game*, Lucasfilm made a strong effort to understand and adjust to the level of adventure gaming and did eventually study the rules on that basis. Our stuff emphasizes magic and violence, while you don't have a lot of that for the 6-to-10 year old product. They immediately understood that we were portraying *Willow* in a different light here, a more mature one, and fortunately that was less of a difficulty than it could have been.

**Gateways:** Having formed Eric Goldberg Associates, and enlisting St. Martins Press and West End Games for the production and distribution of the *Willow Game* to both the hobby and book trade, it seems you're taking quite a gamble in something as new, unusual and expensive fantasy movie. Why run so big a risk?

**Costikyan:** Well, you're right. We're not on salary. What we make will depend on the success of the game, which depends upon the success of the movie. If the movie bombs, let's just say we'll be eating lots of spaghetti.

**Goldberg:** Before we decided to commit to this we wanted to read the *Willow* script. After clearing it with George Lucas and having us sign a confidentiality agreement, Lucasfilm gave it to us. We wanted to make sure it had a strong plot, something we would be able to work with. We were very pleased to learn that Ron Howard would be directing the film, and the screenwriter did a good job. There were a lot of off-hand notes in the script, such as "Titanic Battle Ensues Here", which we didn't know what to make of, but when we went out to Skywalker Ranch and saw 96 slides of the war at the end of the film, I agreed that it was indeed, a titanic battle—but we couldn't know that at the time.

We then wrote back to Lucasfilm and gave them some comments about some of what we were concerned about, the issues we had in mind about how this would make a good game, and what the problems would be. For example, they very much wanted us to do a role-playing game, and we said that *Willow's* world was not well enough explained in what source material we had to do one.

**Costikyan:** Not only is the world not explored enough in a single movie to provide the background for a role-playing game, but there are lots of things necessary to the making of an RPG that we couldn't do. You have to have a very clear idea how magic works, for example, but Lucasfilm is planning on sequels and we couldn't make magic work in a way that might contradict what they plan to do in the future. With *Star Wars* I came up with an interesting, bogus rationale for how interstellar travel works, which doesn't contradict anything in the three movies and was sufficiently general so that it would be very tough for Lucasfilm to do anything to contradict it in the future. Coming up with a similar kind of magic system, I think, would be extremely difficult.

**Goldberg:** The other problem was time. One thing we insisted on during the *Star Wars* negotiations was that we have enough time to put out the RPG.

**Costikyan:** I would want at least nine months, and preferably a year or more to develop a complete role-playing system. We had seven months from the signing of the contract to the publication of the *Willow* board game, and that was barely enough time for a board game.

**Gateways:** What's the dynamic between the two of you that keeps things? How do you function both business-wise and creatively under this kind of pressure?

**Costikyan:** Our relationship is, in many ways, like a marriage. We scream at each other a lot, but we keep working. One of the things that became very clear after the first couple of projects we worked on is that we need to have a very clear division of responsibility. I am happy to work as a subordinate, a developer on Eric's designs, and am happy to have him do the same on my own. We do disagree quite a lot, mostly on minor issues, but we will both defend our position on minor issues to the death. Someone has to have the ability to have the final say.

**Goldberg:** We have large egos and we have the contempt that's bred with familiarity. Greg and I have no problem with telling each other that he's an idiot. In fact, on the *Willow Game* I think one of the severest arguments we had was on

how to word a note to the players that novices should not play the two-player game because there were so many hands of cards. Since Greg was the designer and pulled designer's prerogative, we went with his way, which is of course, wrong.

**Costikyan:** --since my name's on the box--

**Goldberg:** --but that was the point. My job was more on the business end of things. I deal with Lucasfilm, for example, but we bounce all of our ideas off of each other. Getting the game itself done was most important, and Greg stayed home for two months to complete the initial design.

**Gateways:** Greg, you stayed home for all that time while Eric built the business and set up the production and went about training a book publisher to be a game publisher. What was it like staring at all that blank paper? What kind of procedure did you follow to get the game underway?

**Costikyan:** I had very clear objective. I wanted a relatively simple game with about 4000 words of rules, (we actually wound up with about 8000). I think it turned out to be a bit more complex than would be ideal, but works. I wanted a multi-player game with something of the feel of *Talisman*, because it was a simple fantasy game with which I was very impressed. *Talisman* appeals to adventure gamers as well as the general public because it has a relatively limited set of rules.

The other thing is that I generally take a simulationist approach to any game I design and I wanted it to have the feel and basic plot of the movie so that you really are on this heroic quest. The story may not be the same as in the movie, but it will follow the same kind of structure. I junked my first design for being too *Talisman*-esque. As the game stands now, everyone has a hand of cards and you can play them, and there is a lot of interaction between the players in dealing them. My first design did not have a lot of card interaction between players.

**Goldberg:** Marketing constraints were very important.

**Costikyan:** We knew that we weren't doing a Parker

Brothers game where you roll the dice and run around on a track. We wanted to do a game that had something to do with the movie. We knew we would be reaching an audience far wider than with a typical adventure game.

**Gateways:** There was some controversy among fans as to whether the *Star Wars* RPG captured the spirit of the movies. What goes into bringing the thrill and flavor of a work such as *Star Wars* or *Willow* (which you will not have seen for a month after the release of the board game), and bringing it into the play?

**Costikyan:** Role-playing and, to a lesser extent a board game, allows the players to create their own stories, but *they* are creating the stories. A comic book or novel has a plot, but a successful adventure game has to allow players to create a narrative that would be completely at home in the universe as depicted in the movie. The whole objective in the design of the *Star Wars* RPG was to direct players and Game Masters towards stories that would make sense in the context of the *Star Wars* universe, and to create an atmosphere and provide system support that would allow them to do the same kinds of things that the characters do in the movies. Of course, there may be people who think that I failed to create that atmosphere, but it was my perception of *Star Wars* that I was working with.

**Goldberg:** We rigorously playtested the game until we got to the point where people said yes, this feels like *Star Wars*. More playtest groups were involved with *Star Wars* than any other project we've been involved with. People in the field, such as Kevin Siembieda and Allen Varney, risked both their personal and professional relationships with us to level some strong criticism of the earlier drafts and the r.p.g. is better for that.

**Costikyan:** With *Willow* it was much more difficult. We haven't seen the finished movie, and there are still lots of things we're insecure about. A lot of the game's illustrations are based on slides, but who knew what it would actually look like in the real movie. I really didn't know how the climactic battle was going to look--

**Goldberg:** In fact the filming on the battle scenes are being completed even now, as we speak!

**Costikyan:**--and one of the things we've been dealing with in the sourcebook is in what the tone of the movie will be. We're trying to envision it. In actuality, neither the script or the novelization is all that useful. The novelization is very different in tone from the script. For one thing, there's very little humor in the book, but there is quite a fair amount in the script. The script is very sketchy, leaving plenty of room for George Lucas and Ron Howard to do a lot, and for a lot of the dialogue to be ad-libbed and changed. We hope that we've done something that's appropriate in terms of the plot and feel of the movie.

**Goldberg:** We'd go back to Lucasfilm with questions and they would do their best to answer them. Sometimes they'll just say that they don't know. They certainly couldn't bother George Lucas, he had a film to finish. However, Lucas did have two screen tests, each with 50 or 60 people, to get a sense of how the film flowed in front of an audience. Our Lucasfilm contacts have tried to let us know what had been showing up in the latest print, and that was a great help.

One of the things that caused problems with the design was when scenes were cut out of the movie that we had already



worked into the game. One of the big problems was that (and this is in the novelization) there was a monster in the lake guarding the sorceress *Fin Raziel*, who Willow had to meet up with, and that scene was taken out because it didn't seem to work visually. Getting by that monster to get to *Fin Raziel* was a major thing in the game.

**Costikyan:** Lucasfilm actually gave us the option of keeping the monster, but we wanted to remain faithful to the movie, so we cut it. Actually I'm happy with that because it meant striking a special rule, and eliminating the *Fin Raziel* player character from the game. (She was replaced by *Airk Thaghbaer*, incidentally.)

Also the *King of Tir Asleen*, who, in the novelization is the key element in bringing *Sorsha* over to the side of good, was cut from the movie, again because Lucas didn't think it worked in the film. We changed the rules to accommodate this.

One of the problems with translating the movie into a game is that throughout the movie the main characters are trying to get the baby to *Tir Asleen* where *Cherlindrea* tells them it will be safe. They get to *Tir Asleen* and it's not safe. We had to change that slightly because if players had seen the movie they would know it's not safe there and would never make such an effort to get there in the first place. We talked to Lucasfilm and made arrangements to throw in a magic device called the *Sceptre of Tir Asleen*, which could be used to awaken the people there who were ensorcelled in the past by *Bavmorda*, and thereby making it a safe haven. It also provides an alternate victory scenario. So, in the game *Tir Asleen* is the goal, with the confrontation and slaying of Queen *Bavmorda* an alternate way of winning for the good guys. It's kind of paradoxical in that we're introducing an element that was not in the movie to make the game more like the movie.

**Gateways:** We understand that there are elements featured in the game that either did not make it to the final cut of the movie, or were made up and approved specifically for the board game. The bear, for example.

**Costikyan:** Actually, in the script there is a sequence in which the *Nelwyn* party is attacked by a bear. But there are a lot of cards that refer to or describe things that don't appear in the movie. The game has 144 cards that can be played and there are only so many events or characters in the movie. We needed some more to fill it out. A lot of the things we drew from were in the novel, for example the elves. There are no elves in the picture.

**Goldberg:** The book has a fairly detailed section on the elves. Also, in the script one of the characters referred to a cyclops, and while none appear in the movie, we have an excellent cyclops illustration so we're very happy about this. *Pegasi*, as well. (Ron Miller did the cover art, Janet Kramer did the card illustrations, and Romas Kukalis did the board illustration. All three artists, we feel are superb and their work makes the game a real collector's item.)

**Costikyan:** We drew the extras from what we perceived as George Lucas' source material in forming the world of Willow. There's not a lot that's Japanese about this movie, there's not a lot that's African. It's clearly based firmly in the realm of a kind of medieval European myth, as interpreted by Twentieth Century attitudes.

**Goldberg:** Lucasfilm says that they feel the look of the movie is 4th to 6th Century, perhaps not as we know it, but as Arthurian legend would have it. For instance the *Dust of*

*Broken Heart* is from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and I'm sure Lucas was influenced by that, at least subconsciously, for the *Dust* was used with *Sorsha*.

What Lucas has done a very good job at is in exploring fantasy archetypes and bringing out an original story. He's doing things that everyone's hindbrain will say "God, I recognize this from fairy tales, or from that source or this source." His characters will look familiar and yet they're always fresh. What George Lucas has figured out, we believe, is how to make the first successful epic fantasy film of all time. If this film works, by the way, Lucas has given thought to a number of sequels. If I had to reduce Willow to its most basic level, I would describe it as *Lord of the Rings Meets Star Wars*. It definitely has the George Lucas touch and it definitely has high fantasy.

**Gateways:** Will you be involved with Willow any further after the release of Allen Varney's *Sourcebook*?

**Costikyan:** We will be doing at least one other and possibly up to four other Willow-related projects. The first would be a card game designed by Sid Sackson which would definitely be out by Christmas. We do have a kind of role-playing game in the works for Willow. It will be designed on a limited scope, like a party mystery game, where people would play out characters (not necessarily the main ones) who get involved in some of the situations in the movie.

**Goldberg:** Basically it will be "Willow has been captured. He is in the dungeons of *Nockmaar*. *Franjean* and *Rool* have the baby and are having a nervous breakdown. Your job will be to keep the baby away from *Bavmorda* and resolve the situation from episode to episode." The rules will be simple, and we think we've got something new and exciting here.

Finally, we've planned a board game based upon the Battle of *Tir Asleen*, and will be designed very much as a miniatures representation of the castle.

**Costikyan:** I'm hoping that one will satisfy the players of *Axis and Allies*. I'm not sure it will do the same for the players of *Pacific War*!

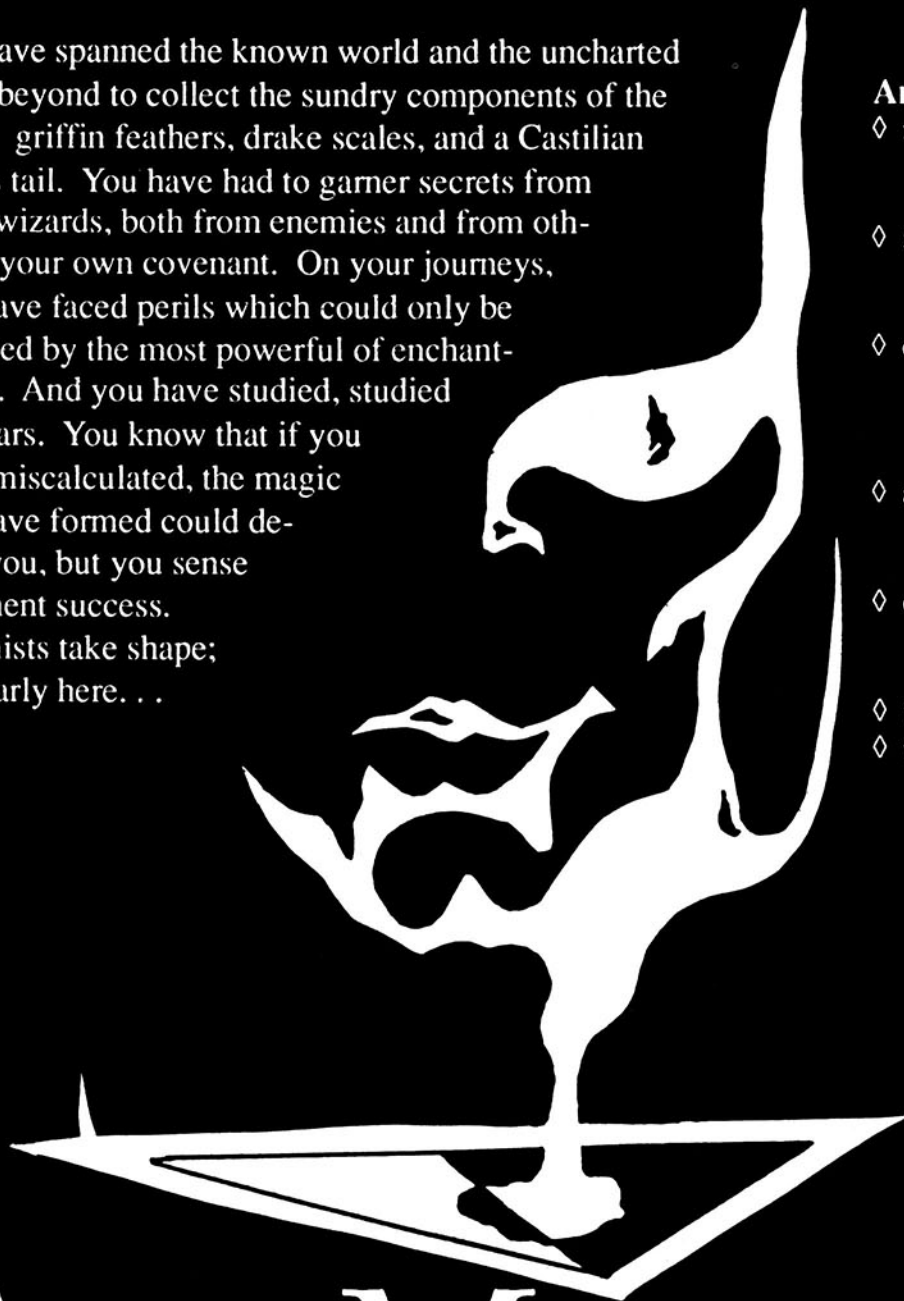
The Willow Game was released on April 28, 1988, and will be run by Bob Robinson of the Monmouth County Gamers at Atlanticon this Fourth of July, and by Jim Burnette of the Knoxville Gaming Board at the Gen Con/Origins megaconvention this August. Watch for further Willow game tie-in coverage in Gateways #10.



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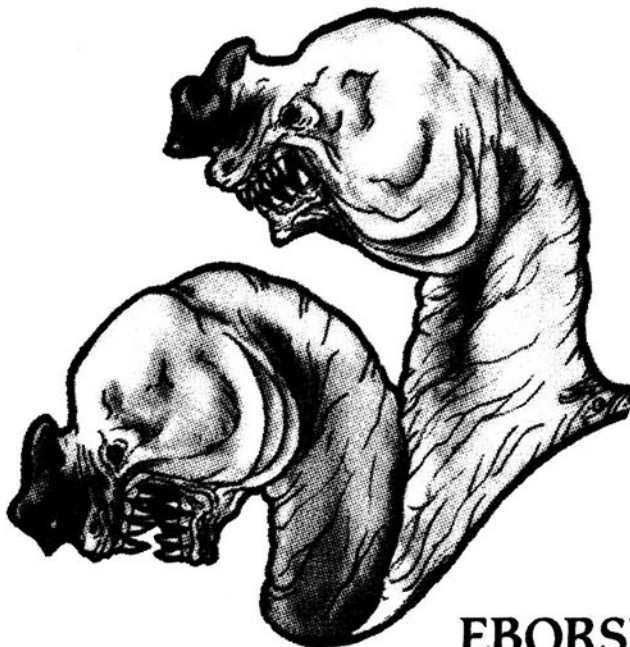
# From Galladoorn to Nockmaar: A Review of the Willow Game

Jonathan Frater

Designing a game after a movie that becomes a huge media splash is not a new idea. In fact, anyone can design a boardgame that looks like the movie that it was meant to take after. But not everyone can do it before the movie comes out, and still do it well. With this in mind, I will say the following: **The Willow Game** is worth every penny, because it is the movie in every respect that one could reasonably ask for, yet retains the solid feel of a very good board/strategy game.

**Willow**, as we all know by now, is George Lucas' epic fantasy set in an imaginary world during an unknown time. As such it involves everything that epic fantasy normally encompasses, including (but hardly limited to) really good heroes (**Willow** and **Madmartigan**), really evil villains (**Kael** and **Bavmorda**), real people caught in weird situations (**Fin Raziel** starts the movie as a 'possum), real people who are caught in decision-making positions (**Sorsha**), weird people who remain weird (are you listening **Franjeen** and **Rool**?), noble warriors (like **Airk Thaughbaer**), a frighteningly literal

## AIRK THAUGHBAER



## EBORSISK

cast of thousands, and lots and lots of magic and monsters that we would thankfully never have to deal with outside the theater. In a word, **Willow** is all of the things that go into a great fantasy movie combined with the incredible production background that we've come to expect from Lucasfilm along with Industrial Light & Magic's utterly amazing special effects. Again, these are all of the things that make the movie industry great and that give fantasy a good name (for a change).

On the whole the game mimics the movie almost word for word — until the players realize that they don't have to do what the characters in the film did. Or at least not in the way that they did them. You see, the game hands out the major characters of the film, one per player if you have enough people; sometimes if the group is smaller than average, players might have to double up on character assignment, but any combination is all right as long as good takes one side and evil takes the other. These characters are all of the principal

ones from the film; **Willow Ufgood**, **Madmartigan**, **Airk Thaughbaer**, **Franjeen & Rool**, **Genaral Kael**, and **Princess Sorsha**, all of whom see the most action and around whom the movie's plot revolves. Each character is represented by a plastic-coated playing card which keep track of the character's Health and Prowess (for the fighters) or Magic (for the magic users) throughout the game. And each card has a full color portrait of the character that it represents printed right in the middle, so there can be no confusing

who's who.

Fine; now that characters are playable, what can the players do with them? Well, that much is already laid out from the film. The bad guys (**Kael** and **Sorsha**) have to capture the baby, **Elora Danan**, and bring her back to **Nockmaar Castle**, where **Bavmorda** has rather fiendish plans for the kid. If you have seen the film, then you know just how fiendish, and if you haven't then I am sure that you can probably guess. The good guys have two goals: first, to

## MADMARTIGAN



keep the child as far away from Bavmorda's cronies as possible, and second, to either free the people of Tir Asleen with a magic Scepter, OR to make their way to Nockmaar Castle and do away with Bavmorda. Neither is particularly easy, but no matter which direction the good guys choose to go in, they are going to have lots of problems of their own.

"The secret of the game is the cards," says the rule book. And they are correct, for the cards used in play are small (and beautifully drawn) but powerful; they can literally make or break any character at any point in the game, which happened to me a few times during the playtests I attended. (Look in the rulebook's masthead — there I am. Hi, mom!) At any rate, there are different types of cards that do different things; there are Encounter cards, which are divided into the following groups:



FRANJEAN

ROOL

red Keep cards, which represent items of extreme usefulness to the holder, like the Armor card or the Sword card. Then you have the blue Discard cards, which can be a help or a hindrance to either side. Played at the right moment, the proper cards can have devastating effects, which also happened numerous times during playtesting. Some examples of the Discards are "An Old Man Points the Way," giving your side an extra chance to avoid your opponent's searches, or "Time is of the Essence," which gives your side an extra turn.

And as if that weren't enough, there are also red cards representing both good and evil Friends, which give help to the good guys or the bad guys as appropriate, and blue cards representing Foes, which consistently make trouble for the good guys. There are also Treasure cards which represent the most powerful items in the game/movie, and which can help only the person to find

them first, which means that bad guys can use them against the good guys. And since magic is part of some characters' defenses, there are black cards for spells as well. Normally, this is no big deal, but the game is designed after the spirit of the movie, remember. And at the beginning of the film, the bad guys start out with a kind of "stacked deck," right? You guessed it! Evil characters begin the game with full hands of cards, which the good characters are going to have to get the old-fashioned way — by earning them. However, if players meet, they can exchange cards, any cards, including the baby, which is what the bad guys are after.

Now, even this would not normally be a problem for those who have seen the movie, but in the game it doesn't remain quite that simple for very long. In fact, things get downright complex very quickly for both sides, with each side constantly trying to outwit and outmaneuver the other into a confrontation or an escape. I promise that one or the other will happen at least once during the game. But don't assume that just because the bad guys start out with a whole mess of advantages that they must win. They can win very easily, but only so long as they keep their cards handy, and the cards they get won't always be ones that they can use; remember, they are playing by the same rules as the good characters, and both sides are limited in their choices of what can be kept and what must be discarded. Besides, the good guys simply need to buy enough time to accumulate cards of their own, which won't take that long. So, if the evil characters go into the game intending to blitzkrieg their way to victory, they had better do it within the first few turns or it will be just as tough for them to win as for the good guys.

I have only mentioned a few of the more obvious characteristics of The Willow Game; there are many more that I simply don't have the room to write about. But the game depends

## GENERAL KAEEL



mostly on the players themselves, not on the game's rules and/or structure, which is one major thing that I liked about it and that I hardly see any more in boardgames. The rules are short and complete enough to give younger kids a chance to play without any major problems, and adults will have their hands full with dozens of different strategies that can be considered. You don't believe me? Well, how about this: there are two ways for the good guys to win, as I said above. Do the good players stick together to give each other strength, or do they split up in order to cover as much territory and gain the



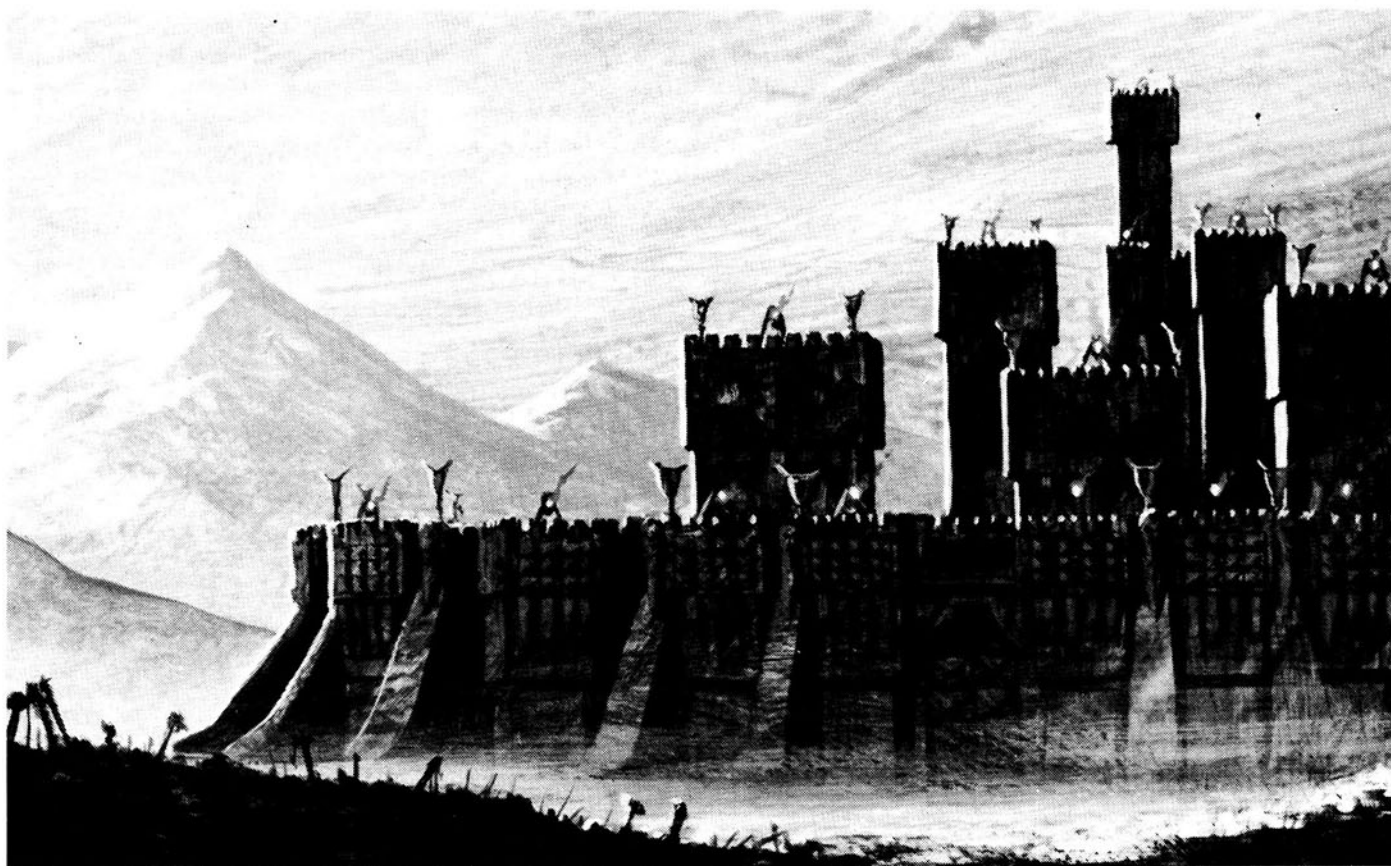


thirty dollars)? I mean that. The playing board was nothing less than a shock for me when I first saw the final product, probably because I was still used to the makeshift construction paper and Pentel pen sort of thing that we were using during the playtests. Each Place of Power as they are called in the game (the home base of each major character) is a tiny matte painting of the scene used in the film, which means that you get Nockmaar Castle and Tir Asleen in all of the glory that the movie gives them, not to mention a very well done multi-terrain playing board (also in color) which, I understand is laid out in the same way as the imaginary world of the movie. This is a board game that should please almost everyone: role-players because of the character representations, wargamers because the game does include the armies of Galadoorn and Nockmaar (and Kael is a General, too, so nyah, nyah), and board gamers because of the strategies. Above all, it's just plain fun to play.

much needed magic items that will help keep the bad guys off of their backs? If the former, do the bad guys immediately try to sock it to the good guys and steal the child? If the latter, do the bad guys split up or stick together? Remember, the bad guys will never be completely sure who has the baby, especially if the good players keep switching cards every now and then. It makes for an exciting game that never gets boring.

And remember what I said about the game being worth the money that you will have to shell out for it (a good

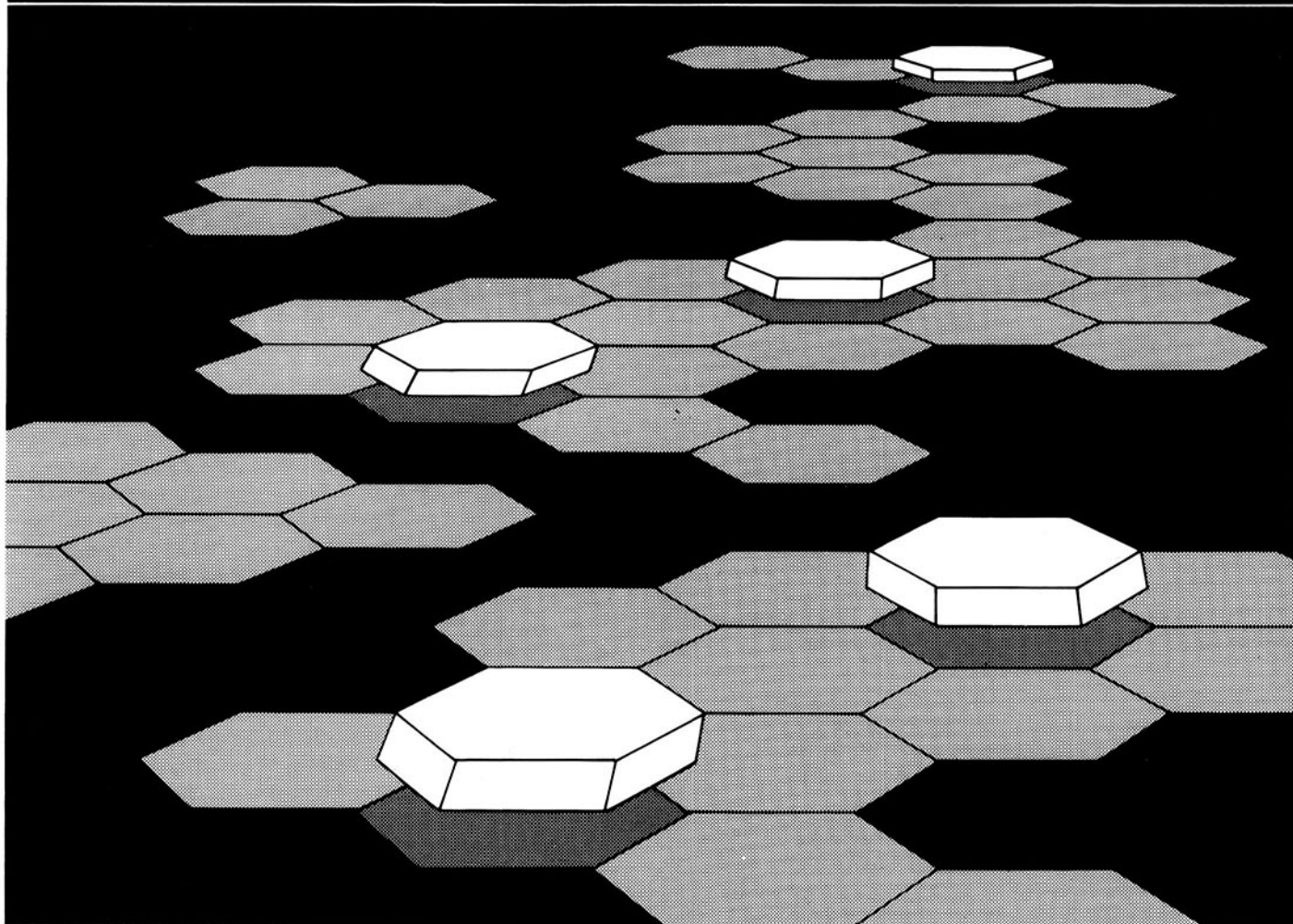
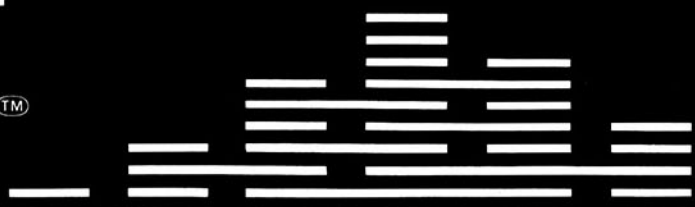
## Sorsha





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# WEEPING WILLOW

## The Bane of Prophecy

James Petrassi

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*Warning: this book review reveals several pivotal plot details from the movie Willow. Readers may want to read the book or see the movie before reading this piece.*

### Willow

A novel by Wayland Drew,  
based on a screenplay by Bob Dolman,  
from a story by George Lucas.

I've never been a great fan of corporate creativity or fiction by committee, and *Willow*, sad to say, suffers from both. I define corporate creativity as a body of work that was designed to fit a particular mold. Since every major motion picture today also requires a novelization, *Willow* the book fits this definition. The case for it being a piece of fiction by committee is shown by the fact that the novel was based on a screenplay written by a different person; from an original story by another.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, Wayland Drew did another movie novelization in 1981. This was for the film *Dragonslayer*, and that book was able to stand on its own as a minor but solid work of fantasy, as well as filled in some details and background information that the film was unable to cover. Since this review has been written before the May 20th release date of the movie version of *Willow*, I can't comment on how well the book serves to compliment the film. I can only review it as a novel.

As a novel only one word can serve to describe the plot of *Willow*. Predictable. The book covers 276 pages and I had the basic plot and characters figured out by page thirty. This may help the film since such shorthand will help speed up the action and keep the plot flowing, but the book held no interest for me. When we meet the character *Madmartigan* I knew he was going to be a rogue who would, in the end, become a hero. *Sorsha*, the evil *Queen Bavmorda's* daughter, would of course turn against her mother and help break her malignant spell upon the land. The central character, *Willow Ufgood*, a hobbit-like being possessing none of Tolkien's richness of history and background, could be figured out by the second paragraph.

The reason for this essential plot weakness in all probability came from Lucas' original story. It contains that most deadly word and plot contrivance: prophecy. Once you realize that the story concerns a prophecy of how an evil sorceress-queen was to be defeated, all suspense was lost.

The novel begins with *Bavmorda* reviewing yet another caravan of pregnant women being brought to her lair. Each new child was to be inspected from birth. It had been foretold that a child would be born with a particular birth sign, and that the baby would spell doom for the dark queen. So, like Herod

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and Arthur, she took no chances.

A girl child is then born at the queen's *Nockmaar* castle, her mid-wife escaping with her, only to be tracked down in short order and killed. Before being found, however, the mid-wife had constructed and placed the child in a floating basket and sent her *Moses-like* down river. Originality isn't one of this book's strong points.

The child floats away, helped at points by forest animals under magical direction, until it reaches the land of the *Nelwyn*. There it is found by the children of *Willow*, a local farmer who hopes to become a sorcerer some day. During a local fair the *Nelwyn* village is attacked by death dogs, and the existence of the enchanted girl is revealed.

*Willow* is sent out on a quest along with several companions to return the child to those of her own kind to be raised to fulfill the prophecy. Along the way they meet up with the usual assortment of good and evil, and while this all may look workable and great on the big screen, in prose it simply conjures up a big yawn.

I expected much more from Wayland Drew. In addition to his *Dragonslayer* novelization, he also wrote the *Erthring* cycle so is well versed in both fantasy writing and the requirements of adapting a screenplay into a readable piece of fiction. What was most lacking here was background. A rich enough history would have added a great deal of enjoyment, off-setting the predictable storyline with the creation of a believable fantasy environment.

As it stands, *Willow* does not provide anything more than a bare outline for the film.

Incidentally, Marvel Comics has promoted its *Willow* graphic novels and comic book limited series more strongly than it has any licensed project in recent memory. Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Bob Hall and inked by fan favorite *Romeo Tanghal*, the four color version of *Willow* only suffers as much as any adaptation of such a seven color creation does. Drawn and written by means of script and slide consultation, character likenesses are about as good as Marvel's original *Star Wars* adaptations. You be the judge....

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# "Willow" by the Truckload

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One of the earlier licensees to recognize Willow's incredible marketing potential was Tonka toys, the company perhaps best known for its indestructible cadre of die-cast metal cars, trucks and motorcycles. Recently revitalized and taking the toy industry by storm, Tonka now approaches Willow with a strange mixture of hesitancy and enthusiasm. By not imitating Kenner's Star Wars action figure line, Tonka risks alienating players who like larger, more versatile toy versions to imitate what they saw on the screen, yet brings a more sophisticated audience a classy line of collectibles to commemorate the release of a potential classic.

Creating miniature figurines of several of the main characters of the epic fantasy, as well as many of the monsters, horses and armaments, it would seem that Tonka is acknowledging both collectors and gamers as well as young children. Made of high-impact plastic set on die-cast metal stands, the miniatures are not what are commonly accepted as action figures (they're not poseable, and their hand-held weapons are not removable). Rendered in full color, the figures are lavishly detailed, many of them appearing to be strong likenesses of the

actors who portrayed them in the movie. Though it should be noted that the pieces are available both separately and in various playsets, the following is a listing of all Tonka Willow releases as of the debut of the Lucasfilm on May 20, 1988: Good—*Willow, Airk Thaughaer, Madmartigan, Rebel Trooper, Sorsha, High Aldwin*. Evil—*Queen Bavmorda, Death Dog, General Kael, Troll, Nockmaar Lieutenant, Nockmaar Warrior*. Trio Horse Sets—*Willow, Sorsha, Madmartigan; Madmartigan, Rebel Trooper, Airk Thaughaer; Nockmaar Lt., Death Dog, General Kael*. Individual Figures with Horses—*Sorsha, Madmartigan, Airk Thaughaer, General Kael and Nockmaar Warrior*. Accessories with Figure (with some moving parts)—*Castle Catapult, Nockmaar Magonel, and a Chase Chariot*. Finally, a lavish *Nockmaar Castle Playset* will be released shortly.

The potential for Willow's overwhelming success should have Tonka poised to supply endless varieties of toy tie-ins throughout the summer. Who knows? An *Eborsisk* may find its way into your stocking this Christmas after all!



Willow, and all characters, names and likenesses associated therewith, is © & ™ 1988 Lucasfilm Ltd. (LFL). All rights reserved.

# Managing a Menagerie with GURPS Bestiary

Ian Harac

Reviewing a work of this nature is somewhat difficult. It is, after all, a collection of monsters/animals, of the sort every game is going to get sooner or later. As such, it serves its purpose very nicely; there are a lot of animals here, with all the necessary GURPS statistics, and a few illustrations. I would not classify some of the creatures as 'animals'; the **Medusa**, for example, but that is nitpicking. The question with a supplement such as this, however, is not whether it does its job, but whether it does anything else. If it adds nothing to the game but a list of monsters, it is usable but unspectacular. If it enhances the game, then it becomes much more useful.

*GURPS Bestiary* falls into the second category.

First, though, a word about the main body of the book, the animals. On the negative side, there is very little here that is original. All the creatures, as far as I can tell, are drawn from reality, legend, or role-playing tradition. On the positive side, the creators of the supplement have drawn on legends that most role-players are likely to be unfamiliar with, such as African and American (Bet you didn't know that America, in its brief two centuries, had developed quite a bit of folklore, both picked up from the Indians, and developed by the settlers). **Shagamaws**, **Gumberoos**, and **Konobas** are among the creatures that players are not likely to have faced before. Few, if any, of the creatures have a 'Role-playing game' feel...that of a creature which exists solely to guard treasure it doesn't



need, and to be hacked and mangled by players with enough armament to overthrow any Central American nation. This is good, as there are far too many of those sort of creatures running around. There are, however, a number of 'standards', such as **Dragons**, **Basilisks**, and **Slimes**.

The book is produced in typical GURPS fashion, 112 pages, and squarebound. The artwork is somewhat sparse, at least compared to **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**' 'illustrate everything' policy. The art is about average, about normal for the GURPS line, which has never featured particularly outstand-

ing artwork.

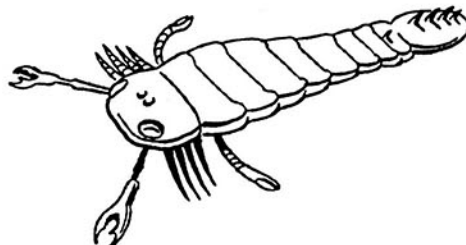
One very noteworthy feature of the book is its extensive cross-indexing and referencing. If a monster or animal might appear in a number of environments, it is listed in all of them, with the beast's main description in the environment it is most likely to be found in. The index, in the back, is also complete, and seems error free.

As mentioned above, the *GURPS Bestiary* adds quite a bit to the GURPS system. There are rules for hordes, swarm attacks, and (very good) animal companions and familiars! Now your GURPS wizard can have a raccoon, frog, or minor demon to help him out. There is also a nice list of special powers for otherwise normal familiars. For example, you can have a cat with nearly the intellect of a human, which is a common feature in fantasy stories.

So then. Is it worth it, or not? If you play GURPS, it is almost certainly essential. If you do not play GURPS, the *Bestiary* might be worth it simply for the idea value of some of its' more exotic creations. Conversion of the creatures of other systems should not be difficult, as GURPS, by its nature, keeps statistics to a minimum. At \$11.95 it is a worthwhile collection of beasts and rules; not spectacular or revolutionary, but useful and well produced.



c. 1983 Steve Jackson Games.



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# Life After Atlantis

## Travelling Through Talislanta

Jonathan Frater

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*Once upon a time, somewhere in the middle of what we now call the Atlantic Ocean, there was a continent of supposedly greater beings. We don't know what they called themselves, but we like to romanticize and think that they named their home Atlantis. They were supposedly a fairly advanced people, possessed of a broad technology base, a highly advanced culture, and an insatiable desire to learn more about themselves and the world in which they lived. Well, they did learn, but not in the way that they had probably intended.*

*You see, a thousand or so years after they created all of these wonderful things, the Atlantians decided that they didn't know enough about the mysterious world of magic to suit their curiosity. Science could not solve all of their problems, and they had to know whether or not magic existed; if it did, they thought, then maybe they could harness its energy to solve some of the more complex and interesting dilemmas of their planet. Well, they did. But what they did is a different story. Somewhere, a rogue magician named Rodinn, a.k.a. "The Mad Wizard," got a good idea and tried to make it work without taking any kind of safety measures. The result...*

*You guessed it. A continent-wide catastrophe known today as the Great Disaster leveled Atlantis. The sky darkened, five very prosperous civilizations were destroyed, millions of people were killed and millions more were scattered over thousands of square miles of land, and the event was not unlike a fantasy scaled version of the modern idea of a nuclear war. In short, everything stopped, and nothing got back up.*

*But, like any disaster, things did eventually get better; nobody knows how long it took in years, but people did learn to cope. Peoples banded together for the common good, and slowly but surely, the continent of Talislanta was born.*

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Drawing its influence from the various myths of Atlantis, **Talislanta**, written by Stephan Sechi and illustrated by Pat Breeding, is relatively new in the fantasy role-playing game market, appearing on store shelves in late 1987. The game was immediately supported by a full line of metal miniatures (produced by the now defunct Goldring), and according to Bard Games, more products are in the works for release by the second quarter of 1988. But more on that later. First, a look at the game itself.

**Format:** Talislanta comes in three sections, self-contained books all. The three are: **The Chronicles of Talislanta**, which is a source book/history textbook written from the point of view of one of Talislanta's inhabitants; the **Naturalist's Guide to Talislanta**, which is a collection of characters, monsters, and plant life (nasty and otherwise) describing in detail the continent's "population reducers;" and the **Talislantan Handbook**, which is the basic rulebook for the game. We'll look at that one first.

**Rules and Regs:** The rules for Talislanta are perhaps the easiest that I have ever seen in a fantasy role-playing game, consisting of little more than 1) how to create a character, 2) how to conduct combat, 3) how to conduct the use of magic, and 4) how to give player characters and non-player characters a decent background and skill base. The center of all of the character's success in these rules have to do with a device known as the Action Table, which determines a character's success or failure (and degree of such) whenever a PC tries to attack an enemy, cast a spell, or use a skill or special ability, according to the result of a d20 roll. All of the character's attributes (i.e., stats) and skills reflect this. No numbers



are used; instead, there is something called a plus-rating, which determines how much more likely to succeed you are when using that particular ability than the average man on the street. For instance, if a fighter has a strength (STR) rating of +5, it means that when he attacks someone, he rolls his d20 on the action table, and adds 5 to the result, because of his STR. Simple, right? The whole game works in just that way. It might take a little getting used to at first, but a little is all that it takes, which I was very pleased with.

Skills are handled in exactly the same way, and there are over one hundred different skills to use for each character type covering the following areas: Backgrounds and Common Abilities, Combat Skills, Magical/Alchemical Skills, Performing Talents, Scholarly Pursuits, Thieving Talents, Trades and Crafts, Wilderness Skills, and Special Abilities. Note that some of the Special Abilities are available only to specific races or classes. The character's level (called Level of Ability in the rules) determines how rapidly each skill improves as far as plus-rating is concerned, and the game uses a severely abbreviated experience point system, which completely threw me off, since I was used to the standard *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* experience point system. But it does work in the game.

Perhaps the most extensive rules for Talislanta have to do with the use and operation of magic in the game. The game draws clear lines between the types of magic used, who can use it, why they can and cannot do certain things with it. There is the magic of spell casting, the use of magical spells and such; thaumaturgy, which covers the manipulation of the physical nature of different materials; alchemy, which uses the concoction of potions, powders, and elixirs; and a few that aren't usually addressed in fantasy games, like cult rituals, and primitive magic. There is a short list of Minor Spells (cantrips) and Basic Spells, along with rules for the creation of magical documents and magic items. I should warn anyone out there who is magic-happy, though; these lists are complete, but not nearly as extensive as say, AD&D, so keep that in mind.

As far as character classes go, the new role-player will



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have no problems whatsoever with the Talislanta character types. But if you are well used to the typical Og the Fighter, Presto the Magic-User, and Sneaky the Thief sort of deal with fantasy role-playing games, then you should forget anything you might have learned and come to expect from your experiences. Ditto to anyone out there who constantly insists on playing the human, elf, or halfling time after time without fail. None of them exist in any way in Talislanta, a decision which I support wholeheartedly. You just can't have those things on this world, and I'm going to tell you why.

**The Chronicles of Tamerlin:** Tamerlin is the central character behind the Chronicles of Talislanta. Apparently, he one day decided to pack up his belongings (few in number) and made his way across the sea (he doesn't ever mention just where he came from, by the way) to the continent of Talislanta, where he immediately gets into trouble with one of the local theocratic governments, and runs like hell from one end of the continent to the other, spending the better part of fourteen years of his life exploring, cataloguing, comparing, and recording the discoveries that he comes across. He made comprehensive notes on the various people, races, and nationalities, mentioning in detail where possible, the cultures, and habits of them.

I can't go into much detail here about the notes of this notable (?) sage; there is just too much. I can tell you about a few of the more interesting things that the average reader of Tamerlin can find, however; for example:

The Seven Kingdoms are the ruling governments on Talislanta. Each kingdom is made up of its own people, namely Cymril, the country known for its magicians, which are



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supposed to be among the most powerful on the continent; Astar, home of the Muses, a race resembling nothing so much as nymph-like, butterfly-winged, multi-hued teenagers; Vardune, birthplace of the Ardua, a race of bird-like beings who live in trees; Durne, the home of the race of Gnomekin, who grow amber crystals, which are incredibly valuable to magicians of all races; Kasmir, home of a folk who give misers of all types bad names, typically being extremely wealthy, and very paranoid about it; Taz, home of the Thralls, a warrior people who all look exactly alike (men and women excepted, of course), so they cover their bodies in fantastic tattoos to tell each other apart; and Sindar, which spawned the race of Sindarans, who are the most intelligent beings in the world because they each have two brains in their head instead of just one with two halves.

The kingdom of Carantheum however, while not quite as colorful is infinitely more powerful, since their people have access to perhaps the largest deposits of red iron on the continent. Red iron is about ten times as strong as black iron, which is what everyone else has to use, but it's a thousand times more rare, so their capital city of Dracarta is notably much stronger and wealthier than most others. The Dracartans are desert dwellers, and are known from one end of Talislanta to the other for their Thaumaturges, a class of men and women who are able to manipulate the very structure of matter as we know it. They can turn metal into liquid, smoke into a solid substance, and can even drain the essence of materials from the very air itself. The Dracartans are also famous for their desert-riding Dune Ships, which are powered by sails, and move along on huge runners which are coated with liquid red iron. And since the thaumaturges can distill a month's supply of wind and take it along with them, it's a small wonder that these guys control the Red Desert.

The Quan Empire is another matter. These guys control most of the eastern coast of Talislanta, and they do it through every nasty, mean, and devious trick in the book. The Quan showed up around two thousand years ago, and managed to bribe, coerce, threaten, and enslave every race useful to themselves, while ruthlessly destroying anyone who tried to stop them.

There are many, many more empires, races, and cultures, like the northern realm of L'Haan, home of the blue-skinned Mirin; the northwestern reaches of Werewood, the home of the vampiric Banes, sinister (and hungry) Werebeasts, and the treacherous plant race of Mandragores; the southern island of Neferatus, home of the Black Savants, a race of spirit-serving black magicians; not to mention the Imrians, a sea-roving race of humanoids who deal exclusively with slaves, caring not what nor whom they find, just so long as they can be sold for a profit to somebody; and there is still more. In fact, there are thirty-seven different nations and geographic areas, all of which are detailed in some way in Tamerlin's works.

**Characters:** This is why the standard character classes and races of so many fantasy RPG's don't mean anything on this continent. It is hardly what I would call a drawback, because you can literally play anything that the Chronicles of Talislanta mentions. Literally. If you see something that you might like to play, anything, then you can just go into the Talislantan Handbook, leaf through a few pages, and pick out a race, nationality, and profession, and then spend perhaps ten minutes customizing the template that is presented. That's it.

No pain, no strain, you don't even have to roll any dice. For instance, I had the idea that I might want to play a Jaka Manhunter, one of the inhabitants of Yrmania, a country all the way to the northeast of the Lost Sea. Jaka are humanoids, have black fur, white manes, and resemble something of a cross between a man and a black panther. Wild, huh? You bet, that's why I wanted to play one in the first place. Anyway, I open up the handbook, turn to page 16, and I instantly find everything I need, like, physical descriptions, attributes, hit points, special abilities, initial skills, a list of all my beginning possessions, how much cash I start out with, and a few basic facts about my character. If I want, I can customize this guy to suit any special considerations I might want to have, but that's all there is to it!

**Overview:** Talislanta is advertised as a completely new fantasy setting, which is compatible with most fantasy role-playing games. For once, the game is all that the ads say it is. You have an entire continent for both Game Masters and players to work with, complete with weapons, spells, the whole shebang. And since it's one continent, Talislanta can



be integrated into an existing campaign as well. It has a great deal of potential as an alternate world for those who are in love with inter-dimensional plane hopping. In short, never before has one game universe been so accessible to so many with so little trouble. I recommend Talislanta immensely, I think that Sechi and Breeding have done an excellent job in their presentation, and if you are looking for something that is completely different, pick it up. The books are sold separately, by the way, so all that you really have to do is pick up the Chronicles of Talislanta to get the full effect. However, I would advise that you buy the complete set, since it places all of the information in one place.



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# It's a Kind of Magic

## Lion Rampant Conjures its First System

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Ian Harac

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*Ars Magica* is a game from Lion Rampant, a company previously known for its *Whimsey Cards* universal supplement; their very first entry into the already overcrowded fantasy role-playing field. To succeed against such odds, a game must truly break new ground, cover concepts that are entirely new, or cover old concepts in an entirely new way. *Ars Magica*, written by Jonathan Tweet and Mark Rein-Hagen, is not perfect, but comes close to meeting these goals.

The first, and most important, difference between *Ars Magica* and the scores of *Noun&Noun* (D&D, T&T, etc.&etc.) games out there is its emphasis—wizards! If all your characters were named “Grond the Mighty” and swung broadswords, AM will not be to your taste. But if you always preferred sorcery to slaughter, and especially sorcery with an authentic, truly medieval feel to it, you may find it just perfect.

The concept of a game devoted almost exclusively to one class is not new. Many out there will remember *Thieves Guild*, a game system devoted exclusively to Thieves. It was supposed to be followed with supplements for each of the other major character classes, but never was. Nonetheless, it is still very popular in some quarters, and is well supported. *Ars Magica* is also supposed to be followed by a series of other-class supplements, and it remains to be seen whether they will succeed in this goal.

Physically, the game is fairly good, though there are some quirks. It is squarebound, with clear typesetting (apparently done on a Macintosh, showing the designers' good taste in computers) and profusely illustrated. The illustrations clipped in from renaissance woodcuts and drawings are excellent, and add much flavor. The original artwork is, unfortunately, not up to par, and in fact detracts from the rules at some points. The cover, though, is impressive.

The game systems are playable, and reasonably original. There are three 'classes': *Grogs*, *Companions*, and *Magi*. *Grogs* are dumb warri-

ors—basic cannon fodder. *Companions* are what most role-players are familiar with: Priests, Thieves, etc., all with some exceptional talents and personality traits. *Magi* are the focus of the game; all the rules are centered around them, and they are unquestionably the most interesting and powerful characters. The game is blatantly and deliberately unbalanced. Why would anyone play a *grog*, or even a *companion*? Because each player is supposed to have multiple characters, and switch off with each 'story' or gaming session. Thus, Joe might be a wizard one week, a thief the next, and Grond the Mighty the week after that. This also answers the age-old question of what players do when their wizard is spending six months making a magic sword. They play someone else's cannon fodder. Not necessarily the best solution, but better than nothing.

Character creation is a mix of random rolls and choices, owing a little bit to *Hero Games' The Hero System*, though many times less complex. Advantages and disadvantages are chosen, and they must end up balancing. Personality traits, such as Cowardly/Brave, Loyal/Disloyal are also chosen, (a la *Chaosium Games' King Arthur* adventure game, *Pendragon*) and thus role-playing and game mechanics are integrated.

Obviously, a game of this nature requires a lot of magic material, and that it provides. While the spell lists are not as extensive as those in *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (thank the gods) or *Rolemaster*, they are better thought out and more 'realistic'. When referring to Magic, the word "realistic" does not necessarily mean that the rules reflect 'real' magic, whatever that is, but rather that it feels real, and is not contrived to fit some designer's idea of how a game system should work. Furthermore, deciphering some of the spell lists is a crash course in Latin. (*Muto Aquam* spells, for example, refer to the transformation of water into other things, such as wine or ice. Who says role-playing games aren't educational?) Finally, the spell names are romantic and flowery, which appeals to me, but not necessarily to all Game Masters; it's a matter of taste. For me, *Ball of Abysmal Flame* beats *Fireball* any day of the week.

Probably the most useful section of the book for GMs looking for ideas is the section on society. The rules go into





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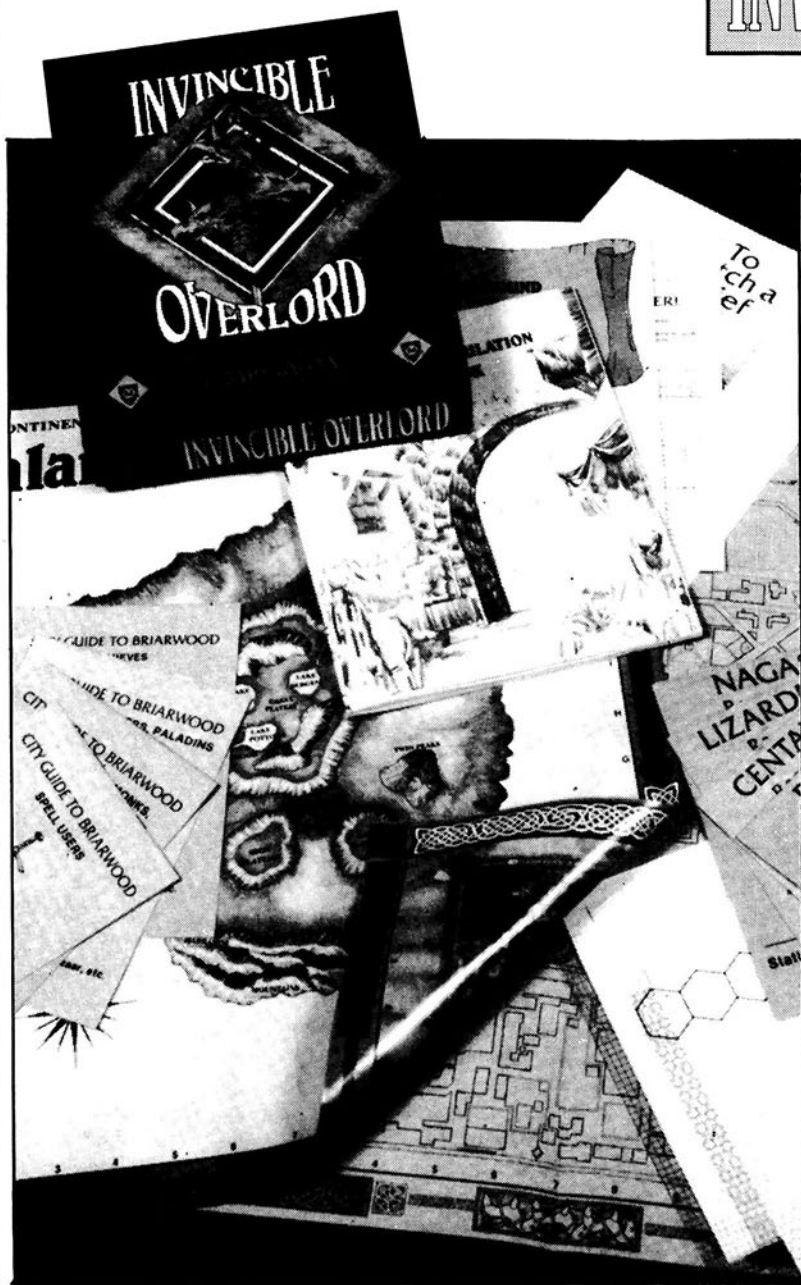
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some detail on the Middle Ages, in just the right degree of depth. It also goes into detail on the Order of Hermes, the mysterious worldwide guild to which all player-mages belong. Here is where the world of *Ars Magica* veers away from reality, as all fantasy games must. In this world, the wizards are organized into communities called covens, which exist in the same way that communities of farmers, merchants and so on do. Covens often set themselves as feudal states, often overthrowing the previous Lords. (Baron: "I've got two hundred knights on horseback." Magus: "I've got twenty demons on dragonback." Baron: "I'll be leaving, thank you.") Covens may or may not get along with the local church. If they avoid

the Black Arts, they find the priests allies, or at least neutral; too much dalliance in things better left untouched may call down the wrath of Rome (or wherever the seat of the Church is in your world). Just as Magic works in this world, so do prayers, and player-character Priests may be able to call down Miracles, if the cause is just.

So, is the game worth buying? I can't see myself running a full campaign in it, using only the rules here; they would require a little tinkering and expanding before they were really useful for full-scale play. I've already decided to use a lot of the concepts contained herein in some of my existing world; they are original and entertaining. Like a lot of new games, *Ars Magica* is best bought as a sourcebook of information on wizards, with many great ideas, but not quite complete enough to be a full system. If and when the other books come out, my opinion may alter quite a bit; two or three more books with the same degree of depth and presentation will form a very interesting role-playing environment.





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# Speed Racer: Then, NOW, and Beyond

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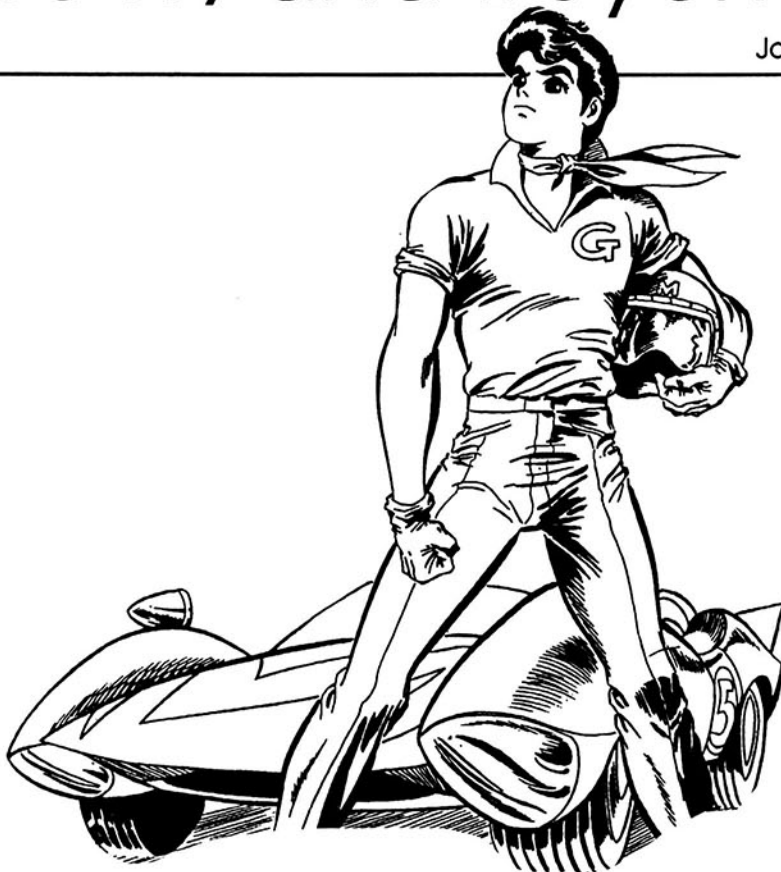
Jape Trostle

"Here he comes/Here comes Speed racer/He's a demon on wheels..."

If you know the rest of the words to the above, and can hum the theme music which they accompany, then chances are you used to run home after school—or feigned illness and just stayed home—to watch the animated adventures of Speed, Trixie, Spridle, Chim-chim, Pops, and Racer X, as they raced their way around the world through exotic locales and dangerous situations. For many kids growing up in the 1960s and '70s, the *Speed Racer* cartoon was as much a part of the wonder years as those Mr. Wiggle jello snacks, the *large-sized* G.I. Joe, and the Apollo moon shots. It, along with other half-hour animated shows like *Astro Boy*, *Marine Boy*, and *Kimba the White Lion*, made up the first wave of the Japanese animation invasion which has continued virtually unabated through today with a vast horde of giant robot and space opera shows.

*Speed Racer*, however, seems to be most fondly remembered over all of the other cartoons that have come since in the genre that is now referred to as "Japanimation". Ask anyone who is currently above the legal drinking age if they remember *Speed* and you'll get an enthusiastic response. Even today, the adventures of the *Mach 5* and its famous driver generates interest as shown by the success of the *Speed Racer* comic book from NOW Comics, and the persistent rumors of all-new productions of the old cartoon.

For those just tuning in, *Speed Racer* told the continuing adventures of World Champion automotive driver Speed Racer in a series of exciting episodes. Speed's edge on the race track was provided by the state-of-the-art *Mach 5*, a car filled with all sorts of keen gadgets, controlled from a set of buttons on the hub of the steering wheel. Speed's entourage included his girlfriend, the tough, sassy Trixie;



Sparky, his mechanic; Pops Racer, his father, designer of the *Mach 5*; his younger, meddling brother, Spridle, and Spridle's pet monkey, Chim-chim; and, off in the shadows, sometimes racing against Speed, sometimes helping him, was Speed's older brother Rex, who was better known as the mysterious, masked Racer X.

Originally created in the mid-sixties by Tatsuo Yoshida and Tatsunoko Studios, *Speed Racer* was full of action and adventure. Each episode, Speed and the *Mach 5* would enter in various races across the world. He would inevitably become involved in intrigue and espionage against all varieties of shady, villainous characters—sometimes before or after a race, sometimes during—which gave him all sorts of opportunities to utilize the unusual properties of the *Mach 5*.

Although Speed was the main character of the show, the car was the actual

star attraction. The *Mach 5*, in addition to having an incredibly powerful engine, could jump over obstacles with its special booster jacks, drive through wooded areas with buzz saws clearing the way, and even operate underwater like a submarine. With special gripper tires, it could drive up walls, and with special attachments, it could even fly for short distances. Virtually bullet-proof, it could take almost any beating with nary a dent. Let's face it, the *Mach 5* was the *original* "driving machine", a delightfully impossible auto we all wished we would have when we got old enough to drive.

It wasn't just the characters and the hardware that made the show entertaining, it was the stories and the look of the art. Although the animation was often shoddy and of assembly line quality, it was one of the first cartoons that had the distinctive "Japanimation" look that was to have an incredible impact on

the present-day look of all animation. As directed by Ipeei Kuri and Hiroshi Sasagawa, the art of *Speed Racer* had a look all its own that was at once simple and overstated. In keeping with the Oriental fascination with anything Western, all of the "good" characters had disproportionately large eyes—large blue eyes, in Speed's case—and all of the autos were heavily influenced by the European designs of Ferrari and Porsche.

The stories were part James Bond spy movie, part American He-Man Sports and Adventure Fiction that was popular in the '50's, part Japanese with their Western fascination with technology and lifestyle, and all that is *kitsch*. They were tales of good vs. evil, with exaggerated villains and stereotyped situations, vast obstacles for Speed to overcome, defeat, or turn to good, and bigger-than-life antagonists. The Car Acrobatic Team, Snake Oiler, Kabala (the driver so evil he kept trophies of the drivers he had killed), and the memorable Mammoth Car all stick in our minds, even today.

Originally, there were fifty-two half-hour episodes and one 90-minute special entitled, *The Most Dangerous Race*. Later, when it was exported to North America, that special was broken down into three separate shows, bringing the total number of episodes to 55. The show gathered quite a gathering in Japan, where it is still popular today. In 1966, Yumiko Television Ltd. and Trans-Lux Productions began offering *Speed Racer* in English to American TV stations. The English scripts were adapted from the Japanese by Peter Fernandez, and the voice of Speed Racer was provided by Jack Grimes (who also

did the voice for *Marine Boy*).

*Speed Racer* enjoyed a long and prosperous run in syndication, broadcast on many stations through to the mid-seventies. It, along with *Astro Boy*, still enjoy a following in Canada, and can sometimes be seen on broadcasts along the border. For the most part, however, the adventures of *Speed Racer* disappeared from the airways after its initial success.

The rights for the show were bought and re-bought by different companies for several years. CBS picked up an option to produce new episodes of the show, and once made a pilot, but eventually shelved the project and the work that had been done up to that point. While interest in the show faded in America, it continued to pick up back in Japan. Speed was given his own *manga*—the Japanese comic book—which is still being put out by Books Nippon. Models of the *Mach 5* were marketed, and the show continued to be aired.

Then, a few years ago, interest in *Speed* was rekindled in America, by the resurgence of nostalgia for the show, by the success of Japanese shows such as the *Transformers*, and by the introduction of translated *manga* to the American comic book market. Tony Caputo, publisher of NOW Comics, saw the demand for these old cartoon characters growing and acquired the publishing rights for such products as *Speed Racer* and *Astro Boy*, in addition to getting permission to translate some of the *Speed Racer manga* into English.

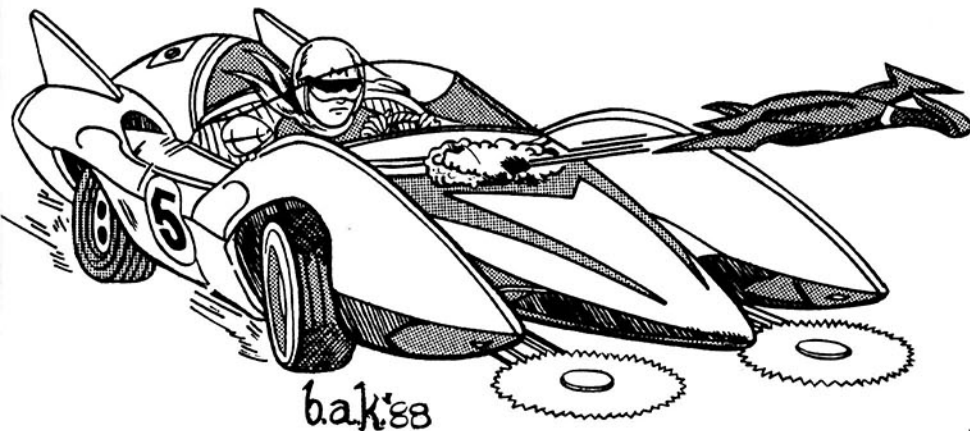
Caputo and Now saw the opportunity to revive these dormant licensed properties—dormant at least in the U.S.—and the chance to add to the lega-

cy which had been growing for the last twenty years. NOW currently produces a monthly release *Speed Racer* title with all new stories and art, and they have just begun a *Racer X* monthly release that delves into many of the mysteries surrounding Speed's older brother Rex. Fred Schiller, Executive Editor of NOW Comics, and writer for *Racer X*, says that their goal is to capture the "sense of excitement you remember getting from the show. It was fun, goofy entertainment."

"Our aim is to keep the elements of the original that made it memorable—the adventure, the characters, the devices—and polish up some of the illogical aspects of the cartoon. We took what was there and built on it, and, at the same time, we attempted to explain some unanswered questions." Questions like what Speed's real name is (Greg), what the "G" on his shirt stands for (it could stand for his real name, the initial for the "Go" team, the *Mach 5*'s pit crew; or, Genelite Motors Corp., one of the sponsors of *Speed Racer*, take your pick.)

Concerning the *Mach 5*, Schiller had this to say: "We wanted to explain how such a car could possibly function. Realistically, it couldn't. The jacks under the car would not enable it to jump through the air while driving; at those speeds, they would shear off and cause the car to crash. Another point is the engine. If a car that size had an engine powerful enough to race at the speeds it does, it couldn't possibly be used on the street. Most racing cars are designed to operate *above* certain speeds. Any less, and idling in traffic would cause the engine to burn up."

This past winter, Schiller wrote the *Speed Racer Special #1*. It contained the story of how the *Mach 5* came about, and an explanation of all its gadgets. In addition, it contained schematic drawings and technical specifications by Jim Bauer and Brenda Erwin, and an airbrushed cutaway of the 5 by Ken Steacy and Andrew Pratt. "Some of that [information] we took from the show, [and] some we made up ourselves in an effort to explain things in a plausible and orderly way." As is the case with creations that have multiple contributors, there are often contradictory versions of the same thing. Even the Japanese didn't keep things consistent. In the cartoon, the engine is sometimes



under the hood, other times, behind the driver. Even the *manga* sometimes took artistic license with the animation. Schiller recalls one issue where one of the wheels was shot off the car, and another rotated out of the body of the car into its place.

NOW's *Speed Racer*, with its current creative team of Lamar Waldron, Tom Morgan, Brian Thomas, and Ken Holewczynski, are not redoing any of the old episodes, instead doing new stories that have the same feel as the original, that same sense of Speed as the white knight charging to the rescue on his blazing white steed. They also hope to improve on some of the dialogue which was often stilted and bombastic. (With such lines as "This secret film was filmed secretly", and "He'll realize the errors of his ways when he comes out of the hospital", it shouldn't be too hard.) Schiller added, "We wanted to maintain the same stylish appearance of the cartoon in the comic book. It had a distinctive look that people recognized, and we're trying to carry that over and improve upon it." *Speed Racer* has done well this past year, and NOW Comics is quite pleased with the book's success.

## RACER X

Another title NOW and Schiller are both excited about is the *Racer X* comic title that Schiller himself is writing. "We aren't exactly following the story of Speed's older brother as it was presented in the original cartoon." (That version had Rex running away from home to become a professional race car driver against Pops' wishes, and later showing up as a member of the International Secret Police that used auto racing as a cover for its agents' activities.) "We're trying to take a more sophisticated, more adult approach for *Racer X*. This is not to say that we've been talking down to the readers and fans of *Speed Racer*. We're just trying to present *Racer X* with a different feel to it, more like the old Sean Connery/James Bond films than the *Speed Racer* cartoon." In the new series, Rex Racer is an agent of the G.A.S. (Global Arms Security) Company, an international "watchdog group". "And he left home to join the Navy, not because he had an argument with Pops," Schiller added. "After leaving the Navy, he joined the G.A.S. Company, and then

left that after a particularly distasteful adventure where he was captured and tortured." Soon after, Rex felt obliged to rejoin the Company, and took on the masked persona of *Racer X* to protect his identity and the safety of the whole Racer family. The Racers, however, will still be unaware that *Racer X* is Rex, as in the cartoon.

This summer, NOW Comics will be trying an experimental storyline that Schiller hopes will establish the two different flavors and directions of the titles. The same storyline will run through both *Speed Racer* and *Racer X* for three issues, but it will be seen from Speed's viewpoint in his own title,



and from *Racer X*'s in his title.

As for Speed's future, according to Schiller, "he will be finding himself getting into more trouble. He's been getting by far too easily lately, both on the track and off. Lamar Waldron (the writer on *Speed Racer*) will be trying to define Speed's relationship with Trixie a bit more." Although that does not necessarily brook well for Speed.

"Trixie. Hey, she's rich, she can fly a helicopter, she can go anywhere and do anything she wants—so why is she still hanging around with Speed all these years? There will be a story coming soon where Sparky really opens her eyes as what is going on and where she stands with Speed. Things are going to change."

As to the future of the NOW titles, it appears promising. The sales of *Speed Racer* have been good and there has been much anticipation about the *Racer X* series. In addition, NOW

has released a 48-page special translation of the *Speed Racer manga*, along with a flexi-disc that has the theme music from the original show for those who want to sing along while reading. All in all, the new adventures of Speed and the *Mach 5* are gathering a following of both older fans of the cartoon and younger readers had never seen it.

For those that missed the first invasion of Japanimation, they may soon get their chance to catch upon those old episodes. Two years ago, Continental Video released three of the original episodes on video cassette, accompanied by a number of the animated *Hercules* cartoons, also from the late sixties. The response was so great that several companies showed interest in releasing all 55 episodes on cassette. Although at this time there is no definite planned release date from Continental or any other video firm, word is the *Speed Racer* cartoon will see light again in 1988.

And there might must be more adventures waiting ahead for Speed. With the recent trend of re-doing old TV shows into feature films, and the success of such ventures as *The Untouchables*, and *Dragnet*, the popularity of the old cartoon has not escaped the notice of the Hollywood movie machine. At least three producers are looking at the possibility of a *live-action* *Speed Racer*, and rumor has it that one of the interested parties is a production company under Steven Spielberg's guidance. (Then again, what project *isn't* Spielberg interested in these days?) Although these companies are just vying for the movie option, and most options never make it into production, there is the small chance that in a few years, you may see the *Mach 5* racing across the big screen.

So, here's to another twenty years of action and excitement. Go, *Speed Racer*, Go!



*Final Nominations for the*  
**Origins Awards 1987**  
*Presented by the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design*

- 1. Best Historical Figure Series, 1987**  
 American Civil War, 15mm, Stone Mountain Miniatures  
 American Plains Line, Rafm  
 Shogun Hard Guys: The New Samurai, Ral Partha Enterprises
- 2. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Figure Series, 1987**  
 BattleTech Mech Warriors, Ral Partha Enterprises  
 Dungeons and Dragons, Citadel Miniatures  
 Groo the Wanderer, Dark Horse Miniatures  
 Julie Guthrie's Fantasy Line, Grenadier Models  
 Renegade Legion Interceptor Line, FASA Corp
- 3. Best Vehicular or Accessory Series, 1987**  
 BattleTech Mech, Ral Partha Enterprises  
 Civil War Artillery, RAFM  
 Hovels and Buildings, 15 & 25mm, Stone Mountain Miniatures  
 Machineries of Destruction, Citadel Miniatures  
 Star Trek Miniatures, FASA Corp
- 4. Best Miniatures Rules, 1987**  
 Chaos Wars, Rules according to Ral for Fantasy Battles, Ral Partha Enterprises  
 Harpoon, Game Designers' Workshop  
 Warhammer 40,000, Games Workshop
- 5. Best Role-Playing Rules, 1987**  
 Mega Traveller, Game Designer's Workshop  
 Paranoia 2nd Edition, West End Games, Inc  
 Star Wars, West End Games, Inc  
 Teenagers From Outer Space, R. Talsorian Games  
 Top Secret S.I., TSR, Inc
- 6. Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1987**  
 Blood of the Yakuza, AD&D, TSR, Inc  
 Future in Flames Series, Marvel Super Heroes, TSR, Inc  
 Ochimio, the Spirit Warrior, TSR, Inc  
 Scared Stiffs, Ghostbusters, West End Games, Inc  
 Tournament of Dreams, Pendragon, Chaosium, Inc  
 Who Watches the Watchmen? Mayfair Games, Inc
- 7. Best Role-Playing Supplement, 1987**  
 GURPS Horror, GURPS, Steve Jackson Games  
 Manual of the Planes, AD&D, TSR, Inc  
 Miskatonic University Kit, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium Inc  
 Star Wars Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc  
 The Forgotten Realms, AD&D, TSR, Inc
- 8. Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure or Supplement, 1987**  
 The Gazetteer Series, AD&D, TSR, Inc  
 Miskatonic University Kit, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium Inc  
 The Forgotten Realms, AD&D, TSR, Inc  
 Star Wars, West End Games, Inc  
 Star Wars Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc
- 9. Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1987**  
 Blood Royale, Games Workshop  
 Britannia, The Avalon Hill Game Company  
 D' Espanol-Talavera, Clash of Arms Games  
 La Granda Armee, SPI/TSR, Inc  
 Shogun, Milton Bradley Company
- 10. Best Boardgame Covering the Period 1900-1946 for 1987**  
 Battle for Moscow, Game Designer's Workshop  
 Moscow 1941, SPI/TSR, Inc  
 Onslaught, SPI/TSR, Inc  
 Scorched Earth, Game Designer's Workshop  
 Patton's Best, The Avalon Hill Game Company
- 11. Best Boardgame Covering the Period 1947-modern day for 1987**  
 Air Superiority, Game Designer's Workshop  
 Central America, Victory Games, Inc  
 Fire Team, West End Games  
 Seventh Fleet, Victory Games, Inc  
 Team Yankee, Game Designers' Workshop
- 12. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame, 1987**  
 Arkham Horror, Chaosium, Inc  
 Gammaraiders, TSR, Inc  
 Isaac Asimov Presents Star Traders, Steve Jackson Games  
 Renegade Legion, Interceptor, FASA Corp  
 Star Warriors, West End Games, Inc
- 13. Best Graphic Presentation of a Boardgame, 1987**  
 Chase, TSR, Inc  
 Gammaraiders, TSR, Inc  
 Onslaught, SPI/TSR, Inc  
 Shogun, Milton Bradley Company  
 Star Warriors, West End Games, Inc
- 14. Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1987**  
 Alamaze, Pegasus Productions  
 Heroic Fantasy, Flying Buffalo, Inc  
 Nuclear Destruction, Flying Buffalo, Inc  
 World Wide Battle Plan, Flying Buffalo, Inc
- 15. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Computer Game, 1987**  
 Eternal Dagger, Strategic Simulations, Inc  
 Phantasie III, Strategic Simulations, Inc  
 Pirates, MicroProse, Inc  
 Realms of Darkness, Strategic Simulations, Inc
- 16. Best Military or Strategy Computer Game, 1987**  
 Airborne Ranger, MicroProse, Inc  
 Panzer Strike!, Strategic Simulations, Inc  
 Project: Stealth Fighter, MicroProse, Inc  
 Shiloh: Grant's Trial in the West, Strategic Simulations, Inc  
 Sons of Liberty, Strategic Simulations, Inc
- 17. Best Screen Graphics in a Home Computer Game, 1987**  
 Airborne Ranger, MicroProse, Inc  
 Pirates, MicroProse, Inc  
 Project: Stealth Fighter, MicroProse, Inc
- 18. Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1987**  
 Autoduel Quarterly, Steve Jackson Games  
 Computer Gaming World, Russell Sipe  
 Dungeon, TSR, Inc  
 Fire & Movement, DTI, Inc  
 Gateways, Gateways Publications, Inc  
 Strategy & Tactics, World Wide Wargames  
 White Dwarf, Games Workshop
- 19. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1987**  
 Alarums & Excursions, Lee Gold  
 Polyhedron, TSR, Inc  
 Volunteers  
 Wild Hunt

These are the final nominees for the Origins Awards for 1987. The awards are presented annually for outstanding achievement in Adventure Gaming. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design nominate products for the awards. The most nominated products in each category appear on the final ballot. The final ballot is open to the public. To obtain a final ballot, write: Origins '88, c/o TSR, Inc., P O Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Please enclose \$2.00 to cover

postage and handling. A final ballot will be mailed to you.

Deadline for return of the ballot is July 15, 1988. The Origins Awards will be presented at Origins-GenCon in Milwaukee, WI, August 18-21, 1988. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design will receive a final ballot in the mail. If you have any questions concerning the ballot or the Academy, please write: Awards, PO Box 2712, Fairfax, VA 22031

## Your Vote Counts in the 1988 GAMER'S CHOICE AWARDS

The RPGA™ Network, a worldwide organization of gamers known for its continuing support of excellence in gaming, takes pride in sponsoring the 1988 GAMER'S CHOICE™ Awards.

If you are a fan of any type of game here is your chance to make a difference. Participate in this year's voting for the best games of 1988. This is **your opportunity** to let the game and toy manufacturers hear what you think of their product efforts. These awards are the voice of you, the consumer.

The RPGA™ Network reserves the right to disqualify any ballot that fails to meet balloting rules. The RPGA Network will present the awards during its national meeting to be held in August, 1988, at the GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ Game Fair, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

You may vote for only one product in each category. Only **NEW** products or **MAJOR REVISIONS** of existing products published during 1987 are eligible for the 1988 GAMER'S CHOICE™ Awards. Reprints and re-releases **do not** qualify unless the product has undergone a major revision. If you are not sure whether a product qualifies, check the copyright date printed on the product. A 1987 copyright date is not a guarantee of eligibility, but it is a good indication.

Products that were awarded 1987 GAMER'S CHOICE™ Awards are not eligible for election to the 1988 Awards, with the exception of magazines. These include:

- Best Family Game:** CHASE™ Game, TSR, Inc.
- Best Fantasy Role-Playing Game:** GURPS® Fantasy, Steve Jackson Games.
- Best Science Fiction Role-Playing Game:** GAMMA WORLD® Game, TSR, Inc.
- Best Other Category Role-Playing Game:** Teenagers From Outer Space®, R. Talsorian Games.
- Best Role-Playing Adventure:** (tie) Azathoth®, Chaosium and SWORD OF THE DAIMYO, TSR, Inc.
- Best Role-Playing Accessory:** Cthulhu®, Chaosium.
- Best Historical Strategy Game:** SNIPER™, TSR, Inc.
- Best Science Fiction Strategy Game:** Battletech®, FASA.
- Best Miniature Line:** Dr. Who®, FASA.
- Best Computer Game:** Bard's Tale®, Electronic Arts.
- Best Play-By-Mail Game:** Starweb®, Flying Buffalo.
- Best Professional Gaming Magazine:** DRAGON® Magazine, TSR, Inc.

### BALLOTING RULES: Please read carefully

1. If a ballot violates any of these rules, it will be disqualified.
2. You must use this ballot, or a photocopy of this ballot.
3. Your name and address must appear on the ballot.
4. You may vote only once! If you send more than one ballot, all of your ballots will be disqualified.
5. VOTE for ONE (1) product in each category. You may not add new categories, but your comments will be considered for next year's balloting.

### CATEGORIES:

1. **Best Family Game:** This may include any mass market boardgame, dice, card, video or abstract strategy game.
2. **Best Role-Playing Games & Accessories:** This category has been subdivided by genre: (Solitaire gaming books may also be considered in their appropriate theme).
  - a) **Fantasy:** This includes games in which magical or mythological creatures and worlds predominate. Awards in this genre have been further subdivided into game rules, playing aids & rules supplements, and role-playing adventures.
  - b) **Science Fiction:** This includes science fiction futuristic themes, including time travel, outer space, future worlds, aliens & mutants, etc.
  - c) **Others:** This includes games that do not fall under the above categories including high adventure, espionage, pulp heroes, superheroes, and humorous themes.
3. **Hobby Games:** This category includes strategic battle diplomacy games. This may include wargames, card games and other types of games not included in any other category. A subcategory of hobby games includes Miniatures Figures used by strategy gaming enthusiasts or by role-playing gamers.
4. **Computer Games:** This includes gaming software specifically designed for home computers. There are two awards, one for adventure games (role-playing and strategy) and simulation programs (such as airplane flight). The second award is for play-by-mail computer assisted games in which turns are processed through the mail.
5. **Gaming Magazines:** To qualify, a gaming magazine must have a subscription base in excess of 1000 copies.

Please indicate on your ballot the name of the manufacturer of each product for which you vote. The manufacturer's name is not required to validate the ballot, but it will prove helpful in the tallying. The code "Mfr." within the ballot denotes the manufacturer.

**Official Ballot: GAMER'S CHOICE AWARDS of 1988**  
**Mail ballot by July 15, 1988 to :GAMER'S CHOICE AWARDS**  
**RPGA Headquarters, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147**  
**BEST GAMES OF 1988 (Please Print Your Vote)**

- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Best Family Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____                       | 4. Best Other Category Role-Playing Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____  | 7. Best Historical Strategy Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____              | 10. Best Computer Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____                |
| 2. Best Fantasy Role-Playing Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____         | 5. Best Role-Playing Adventure of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____            | 8. Best Science Fiction/Fantasy Strategy Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____ | 11. Best Play-By-Mail Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____            |
| 3. Best Science Fiction Role-Playing Game of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____ | 6. Best Role-Playing Accessory/Suppliment of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____ | 9. Best Miniature Line, 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____                          | 12. Best Professional Gaming Magazine of 1988<br>Product: _____<br>Mfr.: _____ |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: You must fill out the entire ballot to validate your votes.**

# Role-playing Speed Racer and the Fabulous *Mach 5*

Jape Trestle

Have you ever been driving down a crowded highway, bumper to bumper with people who obviously should not have been given a license in the first place? There you were, choking on exhaust fumes, looking for an opening to break from the pack, when you gaze longingly at the hub of your steering wheel, wishing there were a circle of buttons marked "A" through "G" that you could punch that would allow you to leap over the mere mortals boxing you in. And have you ever jabbed futilely at the empty hub in the hope that your car could be just like—admit it—the *Mach 5*?

Well, would you settle for using Speed Racer and his fabulous car in a role-playing game? Would you want to meet or even play the famous driver? How about a chance to get behind the wheel of the *Mach 5*—even if it's only in your imagination? Here's your chance.

Of the vast plethora of games currently available on the market, only those set in present-day or near-future milieus will work well with Speed and his Go team, although that doesn't mean by any means that Speed couldn't show up in a fantasy, medieval, or science fiction setting. Hey, we play these games for our own enjoyment, so why not? Speed's always having weird things happen to him, so a little dimension/time/space travel shouldn't elicit more than the standard "ooooooooaaaaaaah!" response from him.

This article will provide an overview of the *Mach 5* and the major characters of both the original Japanimation cartoon and the current NOW comic book, and provide some basic stats for games such as *Car Wars* and *GURPS Auto-duel*, both from Steve Jackson Games, and *Mekton*, the Japanimation of role-playing games, by R. Talsorian Games.

## The *Mach 5*

The *Mach 5* is an extraordinary vehicle which represents the cutting edge in both automotive design and certain technologies. A large number of the car's components are unique and cannot be removed and used on other vehicles, as they are integrated into one large holistic system designed specifically to work together. Both the engine and the body are custom-designed and built, and provide a performance that other cars cannot deliver, including Porsches and Ferraris (although Lamborghinis come close).

The body and certain components are composed of a special nickel/titanium alloy known as *Memorite 9000*, which can "remember" the shape to which it was originally cast. This enables the body to be easily repaired when damaged by simply heat-ing or cooling the surface of the metal plus or minus seven degrees quickly. The body is both fire-proof, and, because of its highly reflective surface, laser-resistant.

The engine is also of unique design, providing more power and efficiency for the amount of space it takes up than any other engine available. It is a forged alloy aluminum/titanium turbine engine that provides up to 5000 horsepower to all four wheels. Built within the frame of the car is a system known as the G. Force Compensator. It includes a computer-assisted gyro, and four energy stabilizer pads that act like the airdam and spoiler on high-speed racing cars, and increases the handling of the 5, allowing it to hug the road better. In addition, and more importantly, it works in tandem with the four booster jacks under the car via an on-board computer. When the car is moving, and the jacks are used to "jump", the Compensator coordinates the speed of the vehicle with the action of the jacks to keep the jacks from shearing off, and to keep the *Mach*

5 straight as it takes off and lands.

On the hub of the steering wheel are a series of seven buttons that activate one of the following mechanisms:

(A) *Hydraulic Booster Jacks*. These are composed of segmented *Memorite 9000* and are located under the car. They can be used to raise the car quickly to make repairs or change a tire, and, when the car is moving, they can be used to "jump" the car over obstacles. The car can "jump" 10 feet for every 20 MPH it is traveling, with a maximum "safe" speed limit of 140 MPH (it is not recommended that jumps be made while the car is traveling over that speed) from a level surface. If the angle of the surface is from 20° to 40°, then the car will travel 20 feet for every 20 MPH of speed, and if the angle is steeper than 45°, then the distance shortens to 5 feet per 20MPH. It goes without saying that the farther one attempts to jump, the harder it will be to control the landing, although the Compensator helps out.

(B) *Off-Road Tires*. This deploys a series of "gripper plates" from behind the wheel onto the road surface of the tire that increases handling and traction on slippery surfaces.

(C) *Twin Rotary Blades*. Two titanium carbon-steel blades are deployed from the front of the car when this button is pushed. They cut down all trees and obstacles in the car's path, at up to travel speeds of 55 MPH in wooded areas, 40 MPH for other obstacles whose difficulty rating is equivalent to steel 1 inch thick. Stronger or thicker materials can be cut, but the car must proceed forward slowly, or stop.

(D) *Canopy*. A bulletproof, airtight canopy is placed over the open driver/passenger area of the *Mach 5* when it is deployed. The windshield it connects with when deployed is also bulletproof. There are two oxygen tanks which can







supply four hours' worth of air to the driver. If there is a passenger along with the driver, only 2 hours of air is available before the supply runs out.

(E) *Headlights/Infrared Light System*. When this button is hit, the headlights are linked to the driver's helmet, allowing him to direct where the lights point. The headlights switch to infrared frequencies, giving the driver the equivalent of normal headlight viewing in near-total darkness, without giving away his position.

(F) *Turbothrusters/Periscope*. Pushing this button turns the car into a submarine, activating the canopy function as well. The *Mach 5* can travel to depths of up to 350 feet at a maximum speed of 30 MPH. The car can travel underwater as long as it has fuel and air. The turbothrusters act like aqua jets, propelling the car forward through the water.



Hey, Racer Fans! Here are do-it-yourself *Speed Racer* gadget buttons! Drive Carefully!

(G) *"Homing Pigeon" Airborne Probe*. A mechanical, bird-shaped probe is launched, having a range of up to 50 miles. The probe can be either controlled by the driver up to a 35 mile ranger, or it can be set to fly to a certain, preprogrammed location up to 50 miles away. It also carries a videocam that broadcasts pictures back to the viewscreen located in the *Mach 5*.

The *Mach 5* is also equipped with radar (100 mile range, varying with terrain), a two-way radio (range, 35 miles), an on-board computer (the equivalent of an IBM PC) with satellite hook-up (allowing the driver to locate the car's position on a computer-generated map on the viewscreen), and, of course, an alpine stereo system.

## THE RACER CLAN

*Speed Racer*. Speed is a young, idealistic often naïve, race car driver. He is average in the areas of strength, constitution, intelligence and health, but possesses an above-average appearance and charisma, plus exceptional reflexes. While he is not the best driver in the

world (contrary to popular belief), he is very good, mostly because of his car, and his reflexes.

*Trixie*. This is Speed's girlfriend. She comes from a rich family, has above-average looks, and intelligence. She also knows judo and karate, can pilot helicopters, and has some knowledge of auto mechanics. She is not your average deb.

*Sparky*. Sparky is an extremely talented mechanic and can jury-rig just about anything. Other than that, he's a pretty average guy.

*Pops Racer*. Pops is a mechanical genius. He can be hot-headed at times, though. Pops has an above-average strength and constitution, and although he has a below-average dexterity, he is quite a fighter.

*Spridle and Chim-Chim*. A boy and his monkey, both are extremely bright and intelligent, but also can be extremely aggravating.

*Racer X (Rex Racer)*. Racer X is talented, skilled, and dangerous. He has a phenomenally high reaction speed, has a high intelligence and is basically very tough. He has military training, knows how to handle most conventional firearms, knows judo and karate, and is one of the best drivers in the world. He is also an expert in electronics, computers and explosives. As a member of a worldwide spy organization, he can be expected to have any number of unusual devices to help him out on his missions.

## Scenarios for

### Car Wars/GURPS Autoduel

1. *Speed Racer Today*. This situation would utilize the rules from *Car Wars*, but would have the action set in the present day. After all, both the cartoon and the comic book had vehicles that used special devices and weapons. A general rule to follow would only allow the Bad Guys, spies, cheating racers, or other otherwise important NPCs or player-characters to have devices or weapons. The same would go for handheld weapons. Not all items available in *Car Wars* should be accessible in this scenario, specifically some lasers (rare at best), flaming cloud ejectors, and all "heavy" dropped weapons. This is at the GM's discretion entirely. The "classic" auto devices should be considered (i.e., machine guns, oil slicks,

spikes, etc.), and only secret agents should have the exotic items. All cars should be gas-powered, and be considered to have 3 or 4 points of metal armor on each side (see rules in *Duel-track* supplement).

2. *Speed Racer Tomorrow*. This scenario would transplant the *Mach 5* and the whole Racer clan kit and kaboodle into the future world established in *CW/AD*. Pops, in a fit of nostalgia for the good old days, builds the *Mach 5* with the help of one of the big car companies wishing to promote gas-powered racing and dueling now that it is no longer condemned in the eyes of the AADA. Speed would, in all likelihood, be an already successful AADA autoduelist, and would take the *Mach 5* all over the country (and world) as an exhibition racer. (He could also participate in non-gas duels.) This would give him the chance to both participate in duels and have run-ins with various antagonistic groups (i.e. EDSEL, BLUD, etc.) Note: As the *Car Wars* future is a tad more violent than our own time, it would be a good idea to spend some points on getting the Racers some skills with weapons.

3. *Last of the Red-Hot Racers*. A la *Road Warrior*, a now-old (well over 80) Speed Racer travels the blasted remains of Autoduel America 2038 as a lone wolf (sometimes seen with a small wild-looking boy reminiscent of Spridle), fighting cycle gangs, and helping out strangers with the jury-rigged *Mach 5*. This is not the impulsive, naive Speed of old, but a world-weary, battle-hardened survivor who knows the battle goes to the one with the most firepower. So expect him to be packing punch. As this would make a better encounter for the players, rather than a continuing scenario, you could have the players either be rescued by Speed racer during a tight jam, or have them hired by someone to find the legendary hero. (Expect the *Mach 5* to be different than the stats given, modified along the lines of the *Mach 5-0*. See below.)

The Older Speed will have the following changes: ST 9, DX12, IQ11, HT 9; ADV: Reputation +4 (cycle gangs will begin to flee if he is spotted); DISADV: Aging, -15; SKILLS: (*Car Wars*: Driver Lvl 5, Mechanic Lvl 2) Driving 17, Mechanic 14

4. *The Mach 5 Heirloom*. Set in the *Car Wars* Future, the *Mach 5* has been

handed down from Speed and Trixie's children to their grandchildren (hey, did you ever have *any* doubt?). This would allow the *Mach 5* in an existing campaign without introducing the Racer Clan.

5. *The Long-Lost Mach 5*. The premise here is that the *Mach 5* was lost sometime during the food riots. In fact, it had been carefully stored away in an underground bunker, the location of which had been forgotten or known to one or two people. (Here, the *Mach 5* is no longer state-of-the-art, it's a *lost* art!) The GM can either have the PCs accidentally stumble cross the hiding place of the *Mach 5*, and then let the fireworks start, with everyone else after the *Mach 5* for their own mercenary reasons, and the PCs trying to keep it out of the Bad Guys' hands. Or, the players are hired by someone to find the missing car, having to track down the existing remnants (if any) of the Racer Clan, follow up leads, chase down red herrings, and generally doing things that send them across the globe and into a dozen adventures. And of course, once they find it, see the previous option above!

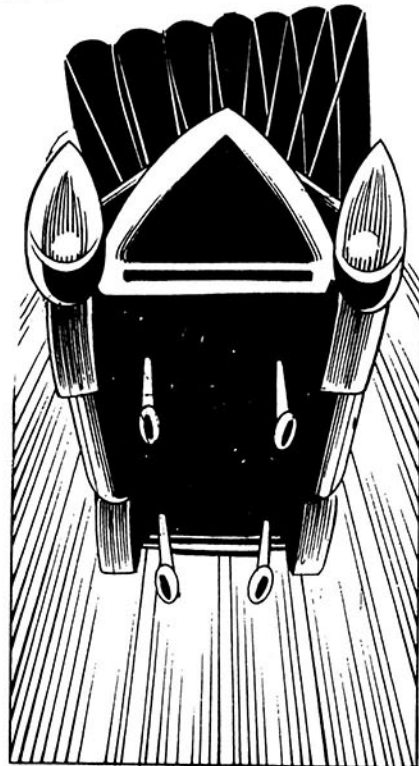
6. *The Mock Mach 5*. Here is a world where Speed Racer and the *Mach 5* never existed except on TV as cartoons. However, in Autoduel America, these cartoons are very popular (considered very tame, but likable nonetheless), and the current fad is to have a car that *looks* like the *Mach 5*. The problem is, without the special equipment the *Mach 5* supposedly had, the *Mock 5* will be as dangerous to its driver as it is to others. It will not work "just like on the show", especially where the jacks are concerned. If the driver attempts any of the difficult stunts that the *Mach 5* was capable of performing with the *Mock 5*, well, better get out the dice to roll up a new character! The *Mock 5* can be modified with standard weapons, like any other *CW* vehicle.

(A variation on this scenario might have *Mock 5*'s in a world where the real *Mach 5* does exist. Players never know whether they're facing the real thing or a copy until they hit it or until it jumps over them.)

7. *The Mach 5-0 (0 for Offense)*. While the original *Mach 5* is indeed an impressive car, it is designed primarily for racing and defense. But in the future world of Autoduel, the best defense is a

good offense. With this in mind, here are the items that may be removed from the automobile to make room for more "effective" deterrents. All other items are considered to be integrated into the vehicle's body, chassis, and frame, and thus cannot be removed as easily.  
Front: Rotary Blades (2 spaces)  
Back: Periscope (1 space)  
Homing Pigeon (1 space)  
Trunk (1 space)  
Right: Passenger side (1 space)  
Sorry, that's it. The *Mach 5* cannot have turrets mounted on it, though it *can* have external weapons pods mounted on the side. Of course, you could stick Spridle and Chim-chim in the trunk with a LAW or Portable Rocket Launcher!

One note on using *Speed Racer* in a role-playing game: It will be up to the players and GMs in question whether they use the *Mach 5* and the Racer Clan as challenging NPCs (see how the players deal with Spridle and Chim-chim!) or allow the players themselves to control the actions of these characters. Either way, they should be used in the spirit of the show—that is, silly fun and adventure—and to liven up an evening of role-playing. Play up the characters, the drama, the adventure—and go for it.



**The Mach 5 (Car Wars/GURPSAutoduel)**

Since the Car Wars/Autoduel systems are compatible, they are presented together, with the Autoduel system stats present in parenthesis ( ). An Asterisk (\*) indicates which items are available from Uncle Al's Auto Shops (the Autoduelist's pal) for use on regular CW vehicles (see below). Alas, everything else is unique to the *Mach 5*.

Item	Name	Cost	Weight	Spaces (Cu. Ft)	Damage Points	Damage Done	Notes
BODY SIZE	MACH	20,000	100	21 (120)	— see armor —		
CHASSIS	X-HVY	20,000	—	—	—	—	—
SUSPENSION*	RACING	—	—	—	—	—	BASE HC 5
TIRES*	PUNCT. PROOF	200	200	—	9DP (24)	—	—
ACCESSORY	GRIPPER UNIT	4,000	100	—	2DP (S) EA.	—	TIRE MUST GO BEFORE UNIT IS DAMAGED SEE BELOW
ENGINE	POPS' PRIDE	13,000	650	7 (40)	19DP (48)	—	—
GAS TANK*	RACING	210	105	2 (10)	4DP (10)	—	—
ACCESSORY	BOOSTER JACKS	8,000	400	1 (6)	6DP (15) EACH	—	JACKS CONSIDERED OUTSIDE BODY SEE BELOW
ACCESSORY*	ROTARY BLADES	2,000	250	2 (10)	6DP (15) EA	1DP EA	—
ACCESSORY*	O <sub>2</sub> TANKS	800	200	1 (6)	1DP (3) EA	—	—
ACCESSORY*	PERISCOPE	2,000	50	1 (6)	4DP (10)	—	—
ARMOR*	CANOPY	1,000	120	—	10DP (5/25)	ARMOEPLAST	—
CARGO*	TRUNK	—	—	1 (6)	—	—	—
ACCESSORY*	HOMING	4,000	50	1 (6)	2DP (5)	1D2	BIRD
CARGO*	PIGEON	—	—	—	1DP (3)	—	HOUSING
ACCESSORY*	IR SYSTEM	4,000	100	1 (6)	—	—	—
ACCESSORY*	FIRE EXT.	150	—	—	—	—	—
ARMOR*	ENGINE COMPONENT	350	140	1 (6)	10DP (25)	—	—
BRAKES*	ANTI-LOCK	1,000	—	—	—	—	-D1 ON HAZARDS
BRAKES*	HVY-DUTY	400	—	—	—	—	+5 MPH DECELERATION
ACCESSORY*	RADAR	2,500	—	—	—	—	—
ACCESSORY*	RADIO	600	—	—	—	—	—
ACCESSORY*	STEREO	450	—	—	—	—	—
DRIVER**	—	—	150	2 (10)	VARIABLE	VARIABLE	—
PASSENGER*	—	—	100	1 (6)	VARIABLE	VARIABLE	—
SPECIAL	g. FORCE COMPENSATOR	6,000	50	—	—	—	+2 HC
ARMOR	MEMORITE	SEE BODY	600	—	60DP (30/150)	—	—
ACCESSORY*	HEAVY DUTY SHOCKS	300 EA.	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	MACH 5	91,260+	3965	21 (120)	—	—	—

NOTES: Engine 12,000 Power Factors Acceleration: 20 MPH/turn to 40 mph  
25 mph/turn to 210 mph maximum  
Armor F: 15 B: 15 L:12 R:12 U: 6 T:(plastic)10 (only when canopy is deployed  
Armor is Fireproof and Laser-Resistant  
Handling Class: Base HC 7 (Suspnsion 5, g. Force Compensator +2)  
With bonuses from driver. HC could get up to 9 or above!  
Manuever Bonuses: Anti-Lock Brakes -D1 on hazards; Gripper Tires -d2 on hazards and obstacles  
It also would be a good idea to provide the drivers and passengers with body armor, and fireproof suits.  
Remember: Safety First!

**Pops Racer** 100 Pt Character, Attributes: ST: 13 DX: 9 HT: 11 IQ:11

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	Pts.	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	Pts.	<b>QUIRKS</b>
Reputation +1	+5	Hot-headed	-10	GM should pick 3 Pts of quirks

<b>SKILLS</b>	Cost	Lvl	<b>Mechanic</b>
Driver (TL7)	3	13	Cars 6 16
Driver (TL6)	3	13	Gas Cars 6 16
Trucker(TL 7)	4	14	36 points remain to buy needed weapon skills

**Sparky** 100 Pt Character  
Not much is known about Sparky's Attributes and skills save for the most important:

<b>Mechanic</b>		
Cars	6	16
Gas Cars	6	16
Helicopters	2	14

**Spridle** 50 Pt Character, ST:9 DX: 13 HT: 10 IQ 13  
Have fun with this one! Spridle should have at least the following:

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	Pts.	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	Pts.
Luck	+15	Obnoxious	-10

<b>SKILLS</b>	COST	LVL	<b>QUIRKS</b>
Slingshot	2	13	GM should pick 10 to 20 points worth of quirks. The rest of the points should be spent on skills that are annoying to everyone else!

**Rex Racer (Racer X)** 190 Pt character, Attributes: ST: 11 DX: 14 HT: 13 IQ: 10

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	Pts	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	Pts	<b>QUIRKS</b>
Patrons (G.A.S. Company)	+15	Honesty	-10	Odd sense of humor -1
Intuition	+15	Sense of Duty to Speed	-10	Pontificates -1
Luck	+15	Enemies	-30	Smug -1
Combat Reflexes	+10			
Charisma	+5			

<b>SKILLS</b>	Cost	Lvl	
Driver (TL7)	6	16	Electronics
Gas Cars	6	16	(computers) 4 14
Mechanic	3	13	
Gas cars	3	13	

The 32 points remaining should be used to buy the following, plus whatever else the GM feels that the character needs, such as weapons skills or other advantages to fit into an Autoduel campaign. NOTE: Bonuses for high Attribute scores have not been added to the skills.

More skills: Karate, Judo, Stealth, Explosives, Fast Draw, Guns (Pistol, Machine Gun, LAW), Gunner (Rocket Launcher, Machine Gun, Auto Cannon); also, Sex Appeal

Acknowledgements and Apologies

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Memorite 9000 and g. Force Compensator are used with permission 1988 NOW Comics, a division of Caputo Publishing, Inc.

I want to thank Fred Schiller of NOW Comics, and the people who were responsible for the Speed Racer Special #1, without which writing the role-playing article and the Car Wars statistics would have been much more difficult. I would also like to thank Ace Conner, who gave me access to a slew of Speed Racer information, including a good number of old episodes on videocassette.

Unfortunately, I was not able to give more information on such requested favorites as the Car Acrobatic Team, Inspector Detector, Kabala, and what seems to be the all-time favorite, the Mammoth Car...(Hey, it was made out of solid gold, and was almost a 1/4 mile long...that's a lot of horsepower needed, bub!) Maybe another time.

### Additional Information on the Mach 5

**Engine.** Pops Racer's overall design of the car was unique, and this shows in the design of the car's engine. It is the equivalent of a gas-powered engine with a Turbo-supercharger adaptation, but much more compact and efficient, providing an amazing 12,000 Power Factors! This engine can be removed and used in other cars, but it will perform at only 50%-75% normal efficiency, due to its unique design. In addition, parts will be hard to come by.

**Armor.** Memorite 9000 acts the same as metal armor (see rules covering this in *Dueltrack*), but only weighs as much as the normal Armorplast armor. Memorite 9000 is non-ablative. It is both fireproof and laser-resistant. It is not available for use by other players or non-player characters, and the Mach 5 body cannot be placed over any Car Wars-designed frame.

**Tires (Button B).** When the gripper plates are deployed, it reduces all hazards and obstacles by D2.

**Booster Jacks (Button A).** These are on the outside of the armor and can be targeted while extended. While the car is jumping, they are exposed for only 3 phases so gunners will have to look sharp (-6 "to hit"). If damage is done by mines or grenades, on a die roll of 1 to 4, it goes to one of the jacks, 5-6, to the armored bottom. Jacks are also made of Memorite 9000.

**Rotary Blades (C).** These do 2 dice worth of damage to tires and peds; half damage to armor. Add 1 die of damage per 10 MPH over 30, up to 55 MPH maximum, rounding down.

**Submarine (F).** This is automatically activated if the on-board computer detects that the car is about to hit a large body of water.

### Character Stats in Car Wars

<b>Speed Racer</b>	<b>Trixie</b>	<b>Pops Racer</b>	<b>Rex Racer (Racer X)</b>
Driver, Lvl 3	Driver, Lvl 0	Driver, Lvl 1	Driver, Lvl 4
Cyclist, Lvl 1	Pilot, Lvl 2	Mechanic, Lvl 3	Gunner, Lvl 3
Mechanic, Lvl 0	Mechanic, Lvl 0	Trucker, Lvl 1	Mechanic, Lvl 1
Martial Arts, Lvl 2	Martial Arts, Lvl 2	Martial Arts, Lvl 1	Hand Gunner, Lvl 3
Prestige, 60 pts	Prestige, 20 pts	Prestige, 15 pts	Martial Arts, Lvl 3
			Prestige, 10 pts
<b>Sparky</b>			
Mechanic, Lvl 3			

### Character Stats for GURPS Autoduel

**Speed Racer** 140 Pt character, Attributes: ST: 11 DX: 14 HT: 13 IQ: 10

ADVANTAGES	Pts	DISADVANTAGES	Pts	QUIRKS
Patrons (Genelite Motors)	+15	Honesty	-10	Attachment to Red Scarf -1
Reputation	+15	Sense of Duty to help those in need	-10	Yells Whenever he Spins out -1
Luck	+15	Impulsive	-10	Pontificates -1
Combat Reflexes	+10	Dependents (Sprindle and Chim-Chim)	-18	Gullible-1
Charisma	+5			
Appearance	+1			
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Lvl</b>	<b>Electronics (computers)</b>	<b>3</b>
Driver (TL7)	5	15	Knife Throwing	2
Driver (TL6)	5	15	Knife	2
Cyclist (TL7)	3	13	Brawling	1/2
Mechanic (gas cars)	2	12	Climbing	1
Judo	2	12	Jumping	1

There are 15 points remaining; it is suggested that they be used for weapons skills or other advantages to fit into an Autoduel campaign.

**Trixie** 120 Pt Character, Attributes: ST: 10 DX: 11 HT: 10 IQ: 13

ADVANTAGES	Pts.	DISADVANTAGES	Pts.	QUIRKS
Very Wealthy	+30	Jealousy	-10	Compulsive Shopper -1
Status (Level 6)	+30	Stubborn	-5	Smug -1
Attractive +2	+10	Impulsive	-10	
Reputation +1	+5			
<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Lvl</b>	<b>Karate</b>	<b>1</b>
Driver (TL7)	2	12	Judo	4
Pilot (TL 7)	4	14	15 points remain to buy needed weapon skills	
Helicopters, Med				
Mechanic	2	12		
Electronics	2	12		
(TL 7) Communications				

OFFICIAL MACH 5 STATS FOR:  
MEKTON  
R. TALSORIAN GAMES

Since Speed Racer is a product of Japanese animation, it seems only natural to adapt the Mach 5 to Mekton, the game of Japanese robot combat (originally reviewed way back in GW issue #1!) However, since the Mach 5 isn't exactly a robot, the folks at R. Talsorian games took the super car one step further, designing the Mach 5-Road Striker!

### THE MACH 5 IN MEKTON II™

#### CLASS TWO MEDIUM CAR

(base cost 20) MV= -2

Armor: 14cp (Medium)  
Silent Running: 10cp  
Radio: 1cp  
Blades: 3cp

Laser: 3cp  
Night Driving: 6cp  
Sensors: 8cp  
Gripper Tires: 6ea.x4= 20cp

Camouflage: 10cp  
Submersible: 4+1 special= 5cp  
Jumpjets/jacks: 6+2 special= 8cp  
Computer: 10cp

Maneuver Point cost= 20, adds +2 to piloting

TOTAL: 124cp.

#### BACKGROUND DATA

The MEKTON II Variant of the MACH 5 is a Roadstriker Class design. In addition to the normal accessories on the MACH 5, the MACH 5-RS is able to transform into an alternate "humanoid" Road-Fighter form similar to that of the Roadcar from a post-Mach Go Go Go Japanimation show called *Galvion*.

In the Roadcar form, the MACH 5-RS closely resembles the original MACH 5 prototype. In Road-Fighter form, the cockpit is sealed by the protective canopy, and polarizing lenses make it opaque. The seats recline, and the controls extend back and rotate 30 degrees, so that, in effect, Speed is now standing straight up with his feet on the pedals, and the controls at about chest-level. Rear fenders and wheel wells extend and rotate to become arms, while the front fenders and wheel wells rotate to become articulated legs (the knees are coincidental with the front wheels). The periscope rotates and extends through a shaft below the license plates, where it is locked into a "skull-shaped" protective helmet. A 200 megawatt laser extends from under the chassis, where it can be held in the Road-Fighter's hands. The shell of the MACH 5-RS is also a memorite design, plated thinly with a beryllium/plastic armor. Following are the MEKTON II/ROADSTRIKER modifications to the MACH 5-RS design:

#### SYSTEMS SPECIFICATIONS

1) **Ion Drive Jacks:** These have been replaced with a modified two step design. When the car is stationary, the jacks extend from below the wheel wells and lift it 2 feet off the pavement. When the car is moving, motion sensors in the wheel hubs signal an override. Pushing button A will now activate a jumpjet option. As described in Roadstriker, jumpjets allow the vehicle to "jump" 200 meters (640 feet) along the axis of travel, to an altitude of about 50 feet. This is not actual flight, but rather an extended "leap". The MACH 5-RS cannot hover.

2) **Gripper Tires:** These are rated as armored wheels (7 hits). The cost of the basic armored wheel is tripled (6 ea.) to allow for the gripper options. The gripper option gives the MACH 5-RS the equivalent of 2 Maneuver Points when employed. It also negates the effects of Hydroslick jets on the MACH 5-RS's handling. The addition of a G-Force compensator system adds an additional 2MP to handling.

3) **Rotary Blades:** These are a special modification costing 3cp with a range of 1 and a WA of +1. The cutters cause damage as follows:

Organic materials: 10H  
Light metals, plastics, trees: 8H  
Rock, heavy metals: 2H

4) The MACH 5-RS is equipped with a modified **Red-eye Tracking System** linked to the pilot's left eye. The system monitors eye position to align headlights. It also monitors relative background light, dimming or brightening the headlights automatically.

5) The MACH 5-RS also integrates the **silent running, the night driving system, radio, extended sensor and modified submersible options** (the modified submersible option extends a periscope and has air for 1 hour). The camouflage option allows the MACH 5-RS to resemble the original MACH 5 up to 100%.

6) The MACH 5-RS has one of the most sophisticated computer systems to date. There are ten on-line programs operating at any time, monitoring pilot status, engine status, and external conditions. Emergency overrides will automatically revert the MACH 5-RS to its automobile form, or slow it to a stop as in the original MACH 5 design.

#### SPEED RACER IN MEKTON II STATS

INT: 8	REF: 10
TECH: 8	COOL: 10
LUCK: 9	ATT: 9
SKILLS: 8	BODY TYPE: 6 (Average)
MA: 7	

Total: 75

Skills: Hand to Hand +3, Athletics +2, Awareness +3, Dodge+3, Driving +8, MACH 5 Technician +2

# ONE RPG Rules System Links A Universe of Adventures!



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# A Trio of Powerhouses

## A Dynamic Look at Champions, Heroes Unlimited and Villains & Vigilantes

Serge F. Clermont

### CHAMPIONS

Just mention superhero gaming to a group of older gamers, and you will find one game that nearly everyone there will have played at one time or another. **Champions**, by Hero Games, can be considered one of the earliest and best distributed superhero games in the role-playing game world. And with the many variations on that particular theme, many of which have come and gone, **Champions** remains one of the better recognized and most played.

#### Character Creation

There are usually three basic methods used in determining the statistics of a character within a campaign, depending on which system the Game Master is using. One is allowing the character to be rolled up solely on the results of whatever dice he rolls for a particular primary characteristic used for the system in question, like the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** RPG. Another is to give the player an established amount of points to distribute anywhere he likes (within the parameters of the system) in order to create the character he wants. The third method is a hybrid of the two, involving some randomizing elements and some limited control on the part of the player creating the character. The **Champions** superhero role-playing game from Hero Games is an example of a system using the second method mentioned above.

A typical **Champions** character will always start out at the

beginning of its creation with a base value of 10 in the following eight primary characteristics: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Body Pips, Intelligence, Ego, Presence, and Comeliness. The figured characteristics (Physical Defense, Energy Defense, Speed, Recovery, Endurance Pips, and Stun Pips) are derived from the primary, but can also be altered without changing the Values of the primary characteristics, if so desired. The player is then given 100 of what are called Power Points in order to increase the base value of these stats, or alternately, to purchase the twelve various Skills and/or forty-four Powers listed and described in detail in their own respective chapters later on.

A player can obtain more Power Points by taking on Character Disadvantages, which can be anything from a Secret Identity to a tendency for going berserk in combat, to taking increased damage from certain types of attacks. A player may also try to add Power Limitations or Power Modifiers to the paranormal abilities, cutting down the cost of having those abilities, and adding a new flavor to the way the Powers work in the game during play. An example of a Limitation could be something like "only able to use during daylight", while a Modifier could be to categorize certain Powers with a related source under a specific heading, like "Earth-Manipulating Elemental Control". Of course, if the player has Power Points to burn, he could also tack on some Power Advantages as well, giving his Energy Blast, let's say, the ability to affect everything within a wider area than normally assumed for that Power under its description.

Limitations, Modifiers, and Advantages can be applied to almost anything to specialize the character even further; a player could make a character's Strength Armor-Piercing, reflecting his diamond-hard fists. This kind of point system will almost always result in the character created being uniquely the player's. The character can later improve through the acquisition of Experience Points, gained during campaign play.

The character creation mechanics, like the rest of the rulebook, involve a lot of arithmetic, but they also require that the player know every single facet of his character's makeup, so as to avoid cheating himself. Once most of the math is done, the player can forget about it, and will only have to come back to the character sheet to develop his superhero a little more through the Experience he accumulates during play. But it is the same arithmetic that encourages such in-depth character creation that also hinders an important part of any superhero game system: Combat.

#### Combat

The **Champions** combat system is very comprehensive, as its creators (Steve Peterson and George MacDonald) had intended to catch all the flavor and ambience of the comic books



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within the rule system. However, the number of dice and calculations needed to be made before, during, and after combat slow down the immediate excitement expected in a super-powered brouhaha. I was able to work through it quite adequately, but I did notice that for those new players who either didn't have an aptitude of numbers and calculations, or those who didn't want to care for them, the arithmetic was left all up to me as the GM. They gave me the character outline they wanted, and I did my best to satisfy. It was the same with the combat system. Though special maneuvers were thoughtfully supplied, explained and categorized in the Combat section, it was I as the GM who had to decide what category the maneuver the player in question wanted to perform fell into, such as a "Move Through" or a "Martial Throw". It sometimes can be very hard to maintain the right mindset for a superhero game when you have to stop everything to calculate the variables of damage, movement, range, and various modifiers every segment of a combat turn. One combat turn with six active players can last up to an hour with Champions, while it should only take about ten minutes with a good GM in any other type of game.

### World Building

The rest of the Champions Rulebook gives a brief chapter on creating the setting for your campaign with respect to depicting it as they do in most of the mainstream comics; a big slugfest, with very few hints on how to conduct the role-playing aspect beyond developing the setting for these slugfests. The chapters on Weapons, Weapon Advantages, and Breaking Things, unlike the World Building chapter, did not give the impression of being added on as an afterthought, but are as detailed in arithmetic as the rest of the book. Perhaps that is why the text in "World Building" seemed so out of place amongst the numbers.

### Champions II & III

Champions II is indeed the "Super-Supplement!" to the *Champions Rulebook*, in that it is an extension of what is found in the original book. It contains new Powers, Skills, Advantages, Limitations, Disadvantages, and Combat Maneuvers, but an extraordinarily large amount of text is primari-

ly devoted to the inanimate objects, not the heroes. Yes, there is a section devoted to "*Campaigning Champions*" — four pages — but it is only four pages worth of text when compared to ten pages' worth of material for building a vehicle, and ten pages of building a headquarters. What makes it somewhat unique are the "*David Goodman School of Cost Effectiveness*" sidebars located on almost every third page or so, giving hints on how get the most out of the amount of Power Points a player has to spend in creating a character.

*Champions III* is another supplement for the system, but its presentation is noticeably different from that of the first two books. Again, more material is added to the nuts and bolts of the game: still more new Powers, Skills, etc. But in addition, there are actually references to campaign development through role-playing and characterization. These references don't ignore the rules, either — they simply try to explain how to keep within the integrity of the rules while keeping to the integrity of the character and the genre of the game. The essay located in *Champions III*, "*The Evil That Lurks In The Hearts*", is a more personable approach to role-playing Champions and superheroes in general. The author uses personal examples to illustrate the following point: that a "character is not the ungodly points that indicates that your playing piece can lift a car...but the personality that motivates that collection of Powers, gaudy cloth, and Disadvantages." It is emphasized that *Champions* does encourage role-playing from the very start, presenting the Disadvantages option that is made available in character creation from the first book as an example, and a very strong one as that. It also has a great deal to say about the motivations of being a superhero in the first place. I would recommend this essay (and the parts of the book relevant to such matters, such as the chapter on Campaigning) to anyone who runs or plays in superhero campaigns. It is more material on the subject that I have read in most other systems of any genre that came out about the same time.

*Wrath of the Seven Horsemen* is a module designed by Andrew Robinson for the Champions Role-Playing Game System. It is a gaming aid for those Champions campaigns whose characters have either a) accumulated a lot of experience and are now too powerful for most other modules or b) just too



much power. It is what would be called a high-level module because there is some pretty tough opposition that the player-characters must face in order to reach the end of this set of possible scenarios. The main thrust of the plotline is:

A spaceship full of *Cthulhu*-type yecchoids fell to Earth "eons ago", all frozen up in suspended animation. They are waiting to come back and make life miserable for everyone. They had visited Earth before, and had been scattering artifacts of great power all over the world to corrupt mankind wherever he should appear to find them. One of these artifacts was called the *Worm Sceptre*, and was found by the pivotal villain who used its malignant, quasi-magical energies to transform himself and some others into the **Seven Horsemen** (Fear, Death, Plague, Destruction, Famine, War, and Dread). The Horsemen are subtly influenced by the *Worm Sceptre* through their leader to search and find more artifacts like it, incidentally leaving behind scenes of mayhem and chaos in their wake. In come the player-characters, the heroes, presumably to stop them, but they find that the task is more difficult than they knew, because their foes are not wimps! The heroes must track down the Horsemen, doing some investigative work along the way as well as fighting their arch-enemies, and finding out what exactly is going on. The possible encounters are detailed in the book by a clear and concise text and good illustrations, providing a lot of background on the Horsemen's attitudes and personal goals as well as those of other Non-PC's. One of the suggestions listed in the text to make the game more intriguing includes a radical physical and mental transformation of one or some of the player-characters caught up against the Horsemen. The elements that lend to the possibility of this happening has the most potential for good role-playing. The options presented for play of this module, if exploited correctly by the GM, will provide those characters who have grown too big for other modules with enough excitement to last them quite a while.

**V.O.I.C.E. Of Doom** is a module for **Champions** specifically geared towards detective work as much as rock-'em-sock-'em action. Like **WRATH**, there are a number of scenarios centered around a main plotline, but, unlike **WRATH**, players are not expected to save the world in any of them. They are up against serious competition, however; the villains are killers, pure and simple. They are not the types to sit around and gloat over a trapped hero — they simply rid themselves of him as quickly as possible, with as little damage as possible to their side. The story is that an organization called **V.O.I.C.E.** (the Vanguard Organization for International Crime and Espionage) has set out to destroy the superhero group known as the **Freedom Squad**. The player-characters have to discover who is the agency behind the killings of three **Freedom Squad** members and stop them.

This module is extremely well done in its layout of objectives, the quality of the art therein by Davey Jones, and the excellently created super-villains.

### HEROES UNLIMITED

Palladium Books is known for using the same rule system throughout such varied games as **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**, **Ninjas and Superspies**, and **Beyond the Supernatural**. Their offering to the superhero gamer is **Heroes Unlimited**, created and compiled by Kevin Siembieda. He-

roes Unlimited is a 248-page book bound by glossy softcover.

The cover art, drawn by Steranko, is extremely eye-catching, and the inside illustrations are from such artists as Mike Gustovich and Jeff Dee, as well as from Siembieda himself. This is the second, expanded version of the system.

To create your **Heroes Unlimited** character, eight attributes must be determined by a roll of three six-sided dice. (If the resulting score is 16 or higher, an additional six-sider is rolled and the result added on to the original.) These eight attributes are as follows—I.Q., Mental Endurance, Mental Affinity, Physical Strength, Physical Endurance, Physical Beauty, Physical Prowess, and Speed. In order to determine the bonuses and/or penalties that are accrued from high and low scores respectively, an **Attribute Bonus Chart** is provided in the text, and further such modifiers crop up according to what section



they are most pertinent to.

**Hit Points** are taken first from your **Physical Endurance** score, to which is added a d6. As the character grows in maturity and experience levels, he (or she) gets another d6 per level attained. An important factor related to the concept of **Hit Points** is the existence of **Structural Damage Capacity**, or **S.D.C.** While **Hit Points** might be considered a gauge for aches, pains, and other depletions of the life-force, **S.D.C.** is the value used for the amount of actual physical damage done to both living and non-living targets before their structure falls apart. Like **Hit Points**, the **S.D.C.** can be increased over time, but only through the training of various physical skills found later on in the book. When the character is hurt, damage is first taken from the **S.D.C.**, then from the **Hit Points**, once this has been exhausted. When it comes to some other factors like **Natural** and **Artificial Body Armor**, things can get a little complicated. You see, **Armor** of any type has its own **S.D.C.**, so damage taken by a character having either or both toughened

skin and plate mail, for example, is subtracted by these values (in the order of Artificial, Natural, and the character's own S.D.C.). Normal S.D.C.'s are recovered at a rate of 5 points/hour of game rest. Natural Body Armor S.D.C.'s have their own specific recovery rate depending on what superpower is the basis for its origin. Hit Point recovery time is dependent on whether or not the character is receiving professional treatment, or anything else that accelerates his recuperative powers.

In the chapter "Creating Characters", there is a set of tables to be used as an option for outlining the character's basic personality makeup. There is even a section labeled "The Crazy Hero", which details the creation of any character whose thinking is outside the normal realms dictated by society, like DC's *Ambush Bug*, or Marvel's *Madcap*. It is a psychological treatise on the possible complexes found amongst the long underwear set, and it is possibly the most interesting chapter in the book. It also contains pieces on "Insanity" and rules on how to handle substance abuse. Following this is a description of what alignments are used for characters played in the system. The Alignment Categories of "Good", "Evil", and "Selfish" are broken down into sub-categories ("Principled", and "Scrupulous" are found under Good, for example), and underneath each sub-category is a brief description of what each particular alignment's codes would tend to.

Experience Points are totaled up on a chart specifically tailored to the Power Category the hero belongs to. A rise in experience levels also results in a rise in skill levels possessed by the character, which brings us to our next topic. The various skills found in *Heroes Unlimited* are divided into three categories; scholastic, physical and secondary. Some skills found within are restricted to certain Power Categories, to prevent overt overlapping between characters. Others are closed to those who have not achieved an educational level sufficient enough to qualify for them (Astrophysics cannot be taken by a character who has only completed a high school education), though guidelines are provided for sources of training and education. The chance for skill success varies from skill to skill, and is usually dependent on the character's overall experience level, but never exceeds 98%, leaving a margin of error at all times. The original *Gamebook* also provided a section for the employment of the character as a working member of society, complete with careers, starting salaries and scholastic requirements, but it has been done away with in the revised edition, for some reason.

(A major difference between the Original and the Revised HU *Gamebook* is the section on Magic that they have included in the new version for mystically-oriented superheroes. A comprehensive spell list with a random generator for magic items makes this a well-rounded addition to the system.)

Once creating the character has been accomplished, the majority of the *Gamebook* is devoted to a chapter containing specialized information for each Power Category, after which specific Superpower descriptions are listed. There are approximately 80 powers available for use, in addition to all the weapons and gadgets that the character can create or purchase (cost is listed next to each entry of this type). At the end of the rulebook are two introductory adventures for novice superhero role-players, *The Mall of Terror* and *One Dam Thing...*, plus a quick roll-up system for villains.

In similar format to the *Gamebook*, *The Justice*

*Machine Sourcebook* is an item to be looked into by all comic-influenced role-players. As artist/creator Michael Gustovich has said, the *Sourcebook* is "...a mutual and spontaneous collaboration" between Kevin Siembieda and himself; a compilation of all the material concerning *The Justice Machine* and their world. The *Justice Machine*, having appeared under various independent company titles before stabilizing in Comico, is made up of the following characters: Challenger, the oldest and leader of this team, Diviner, his ex-wife, whose extraordinary heightened senses stem from the web that drapes her body, Titan, who can grow to giant size, and possesses commensurate strength and stamina, Demon, an expert acrobat/martial artist whose speed is only matched by his ego, Blazer, a teenager with the ability to generate and manipulate large amounts of flame, and Talisman ("...who's like me, except I'm less annoying," chuckled Mr. Gustovich), an obnoxious individual afflicted with supernatural good or bad luck, depending on how good or bad he's been recently. The *Justice Machine* is a group that served as a law force under a totalitarian government on an other-world named Georwell. As their story begins, they are betrayed by their superiors because their ideals are being rapidly contaminated by thoughts of free speech and other sundry constitutional freedoms. They escape to Earth as exiles, and must deal with the problems of their new home as well as those that have followed them from Georwell.

I recommend the *Heroes Unlimited Gamebook*, and its companion, the *Justice Machine Sourcebook* to all superhero role-players. The system is complete unto itself and fleshes out a character for play so well that it is a blessing for those who want to set up a quick game world. Of course, as all Palladium products, it is compatible with any other game in the series.

## VILLAINS & VIGILANTES

As a superhero GM, I first started out my gaming career with picking up the *Villains & Vigilantes* role-playing system. This Fantasy Games Unlimited Product had a colorful cover (drawn by the co-creator and illustrator of the game, Jeff Dee), yet, as is the case with any product published for this system by this company, I found that the lettering was so small that it gave me a headache. Still, once I got over that minor difficulty, I found the V&V system to be remarkably complete for a one-volume rulebook. But it is not the rules themselves which make the game remarkable.

### Character Creation

The first interesting thing about the character creation process is that it is recommended that the would-be player evaluate himself using the Five Basic characteristics (Strength, Endurance, Agility, Intelligence, and Charisma), and assign himself a number ranging from 3-18 according to that evaluation. It is with the agreement of the GM that the scores are established and accepted, so that may mean a lot of debate on what values should be assigned to what characteristics. Unless you're Arnold Schwarzenegger, there's no way you gonna start out the campaign with a Strength of 17! Of course, there's nothing stopping anyone from just rolling up characters on dice the ordinary way—it's just that I believe what the creators (Jeff Dee and Jack Herman) wanted to do was ensure that people would stay true to character (basically themselves) during a play.

The next step is to determine how many superpowers the new character will have. The player rolls 1d6, adds 2, and proceeds to randomly roll their superpowers on one of the five categories: innate super Powers, powers gained from Devices, or Magical talismans or Psionic Items, or superpowers that are supernatural in origin and innate (Magic/Psionics), and finally, powers that aren't really powers at all (Skills). The Creation process is not all a bed of roses, because the first thorn you run into is having to roll your character's Weakness. This is his vulnerability, his Achilles' Heel, his *Kryptonite*, if you prefer. Once this has been determined, one of the superpowers must be discarded (sorry!) You are allowed to drop your determined Weakness, but only if you drop a second power as well.

Now, stats at this time might have been radically changed, due to the fact that some of the superpowers listed can add 2d10 to 3d10 worth of extra points to them. After they've been re-totaled, one divides the character's weight by 50 lbs in order to get the character's Basic Hits. These Hits are how much damage the character can take before dying. They are multiplied by the Modifiers exceptional Strength, Endurance, Agility and Intelligence give you. Rounded up, the result of all these four factors is the Hit Point total.

Every character has the following: a Healing Rate (derived from multiplying the base value by the Base Hit Points the character has), a Damage Modifier (found on the Intelligence and Agility charts and cumulative), an Accuracy rating (found under Agility), a "% to Detect Hidden Objects" (Intelligence), a "% to Detect Danger" (Intelligence), Reaction Modifiers (Charisma), and other Strength and Endurance related factors, like carrying Capacity (which is used to determine your Base Hand to Hand Damage, so it's very important) and your Movement Rate (Strength+Endurance+ Agility=# of inches one may move in a single game turn, inches equaling five feet each).

Yet, the most important calculation for a character is his Power score. This is the sum of his Strength, Intelligence, Agility and Endurance scores, modified and settled, and it is used to gauge how long a character can operate or how often he can perform feats which cost Power. Physical actions cost Power; the expenditure of active attacks and certain defenses cost Power; and movement costs Power. Every super-ability listed has some type of Power expenditure. If you run out of Power Points, you are fatigued, and that severely hampers your effectiveness until the character is rested once more.

Characters go up in level through the accumulation of experience points. V&V characters mainly get experience by defeating and capturing major bad guys, though they can also get it by donating earned money to their favorite charity. Charisma Points may be raised or lowered depending on a character's actions during the game session. If he saves the world, it goes up by an arbitrary amount set by the GM. If he beats up an old lady, it goes down. You get the picture.

For each level of experience that the character gains, he is assumed to be 'in training' in between levels. When he reaches the next level, he gains whatever bonus that his chosen field of training earns him. For example, he can add +1 to a Characteristic score, or increase his Accuracy or damage in combat using a specific weapon or attack.

### Combat

It may be my imagination, but I seriously wonder about the playability of combat in V&V. Looking at the charts and

all the modifiers needed to figure out if you hit or not kind-a makes my head spin. In play, it is the only system even more time consuming than Champions.

The Combat Turn follows this procedure. First, Surprise is determined by finding out if the defender(s) have failed to Detect Danger. If they haven't, then the bushwhackers get their chance to attack without fear of retaliation that combat turn. After which, both sides roll for Initiative by rolling a d10 and adding the result to their Agility. The one with the highest score goes first that combat Turn.

Turns are broken up in phases. Phases are the time periods in a Turn when an action actually takes place (or can take place)—a Turn is the entire time period in which all Phases occur. You are allowed to take another action in that Turn on the phase marked by your initial Initiative score minus fifteen. In other words, if your Initiative is less than 15, don't bother, you can't do it. If it is higher, say an Initiative of 22-15 (7), you can take a second action on phase 7. Every action that takes place after your first in that Turn cost an additional 2 points of Power. However, he must act before the end of phase number one. (By the by, an action can be anything from opening a door to attacking).

Positions in combat are determined with the use of small tiles with the symbol or face of the characters they are supposed to represent drawn on the tops. Sets of these tiles can be found in every V&V module available.

There is a chart that cross-indexes certain types of attacks versus certain kinds of defenses to determine the chance to hit. (A "To hit" roll is rolled on a d20, lower than the score required.) For example, Electrical Generation is most effective against a character with a Robotic Body, requiring a roll of 17 or less. In the case where there is no number that can be cross-indexed, there is a base "to hit" number in parentheses next to the attack. On the next page, there is another chart for bonuses and penalties for the compared experience levels of the combatants, and a paragraph on how facing affects attacks.

### Campaign Creation

The rest of the V&V rulebook covers the rest of the material necessary to establish the game as a campaign. There are suggestions for the setting of the campaign, like Roaring '20's Gangbuster Middle America to Outer Space Contemporary Future Earth. Two large organizations are mentioned and detailed, that crop up again and again in the module series for V&V; C.H.E.S.S. (the Central Headquarters of Espionage for the Secret Service) and *Intercrime*, a criminal empire that, according to the text, has swallowed up "small outfits" like the Mafia. A Random Non-Player Character Generation Chart is included which could, in my opinion, serve just as well for Player Characters too. Ditto for the Random Adventure Chart—a GM could get really lazy with the simplicity and versatility of this table, and wonderfully so. The adventures are broken down into the classic plotlines of most comic books out today. ( In fact, I approve of it so much that I'm gonna use it for my superhero campaign!)

The chapter on "Government" is an essential one for any superhero RPG system, and it is not ignored here. This section seriously deals with the concept of superheroes as being outside the law by their very existence. The advice to the GM given here is invaluable for the realism that must be introduced during play in order to make the game more interesting,

even if the rest of the stuff is supposed to be pure fun. Being that the players are supposed to be playing themselves in their superhero character templates, this is a credit to the creators. In this section also are the actual New York Laws that superheroes should be arresting their arch-foes for. This is something I have never seen in any other rule system of this genre—at least, not in as much depth.

Finally, (and thankfully), an example of Game Mastering V&V is provided, placing two pre-rolled superheroes in different circumstances, along with appendices on handling Falling, Catching, Structural Points (etc.), Animals and Equipment.

There seem to be more modules and supplements for V&V than for any other superhero RPG and that is a lot. At last count, there are about twenty-five different scenarios on the stands right now, and more coming out every month or so. I have selected three of what I consider the most interesting and challenging and three of the least so for brief review to give you an idea of their quality.

*For The Greater Good* (written by Jeff O'Hare) gets two thumbs up for its startling and frighteningly frank use of religious fanaticism, racism, censorship, and other such sensitive political issues as the enemies that the heroes should fight, though their representative villains are not to be ignored. What with the poorly disguised pseudo-Ku Klux Klan found within the text and the use of the word "nigger" by some of the NPCs' speeches to the players, it's a wonder we all haven't heard a big uproar about it from a certain, ahem, "Conscientious Plurality", who already has it in for role-players and their demonic pastimes.

*Enter the Dragon's Claw: HONOR* and *Search for the Sensei* (written by Ken Cliffe and Joseph W. Liotta, respectively), work on their own as modules, but work best and are more enjoyable when used as a two-part adventure. Both authors evidently have a very good feel for the Oriental genre in general, and the use of the Tong and Ninja in the plotlines is not trite or over-used. The Eastern Underworld is opened up in all its infamous glory, a new vista of challenges for any superhero character. Other recommendations: *FORCE* and *ASSASSIN* by Thomas Dowd, and *Pre-emptive Strike* by Stephen Dedman, for political intrigue and *mondo* government involvement, plus *Battle Above the Earth* and *From the Depths of Space* for good

ol' fashioned outer space adventure.

Troy Christensen's *Devil's Domain* and *Dawn of the Devil* are both examples of how ridiculous superhero game themes can get. If one is expecting to battle demonic forces in these scenarios, one is going to be sadly disappointed when one learns that the author couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted this to be a science fiction adventure or a supernatural quest against evil. It takes a lot of skill to balance the two as to make it acceptable, much less believable, and unfortunately, Mr. Christiansen didn't have it. It's a nice idea, but a stab at Lovecraft mixed with "the Boogers from Outer Space" leaves me cold.

For the same reasoning, Steve Crow's *Terror By Night* fails because the archetypal vampire image is made stereotypical by his presence in a superhero game. As a necessity, his mystique is lost, as his motives are constructed to bring him into conflict with foes he would normally want to avoid, and brings him down. A vampire who is initially presented as resembling Dracula would not be futzing around in a sideshow circus building robots that look like monsters, know what I mean? Musts to avoid: the only one I have a little problem with is *Alone Into the Night*, which is a set of three mini-adventures written by Ken Cliffe and Kent Paling. I think that the writers could have made each plot a full-fledged adventure, but took the easy way instead.

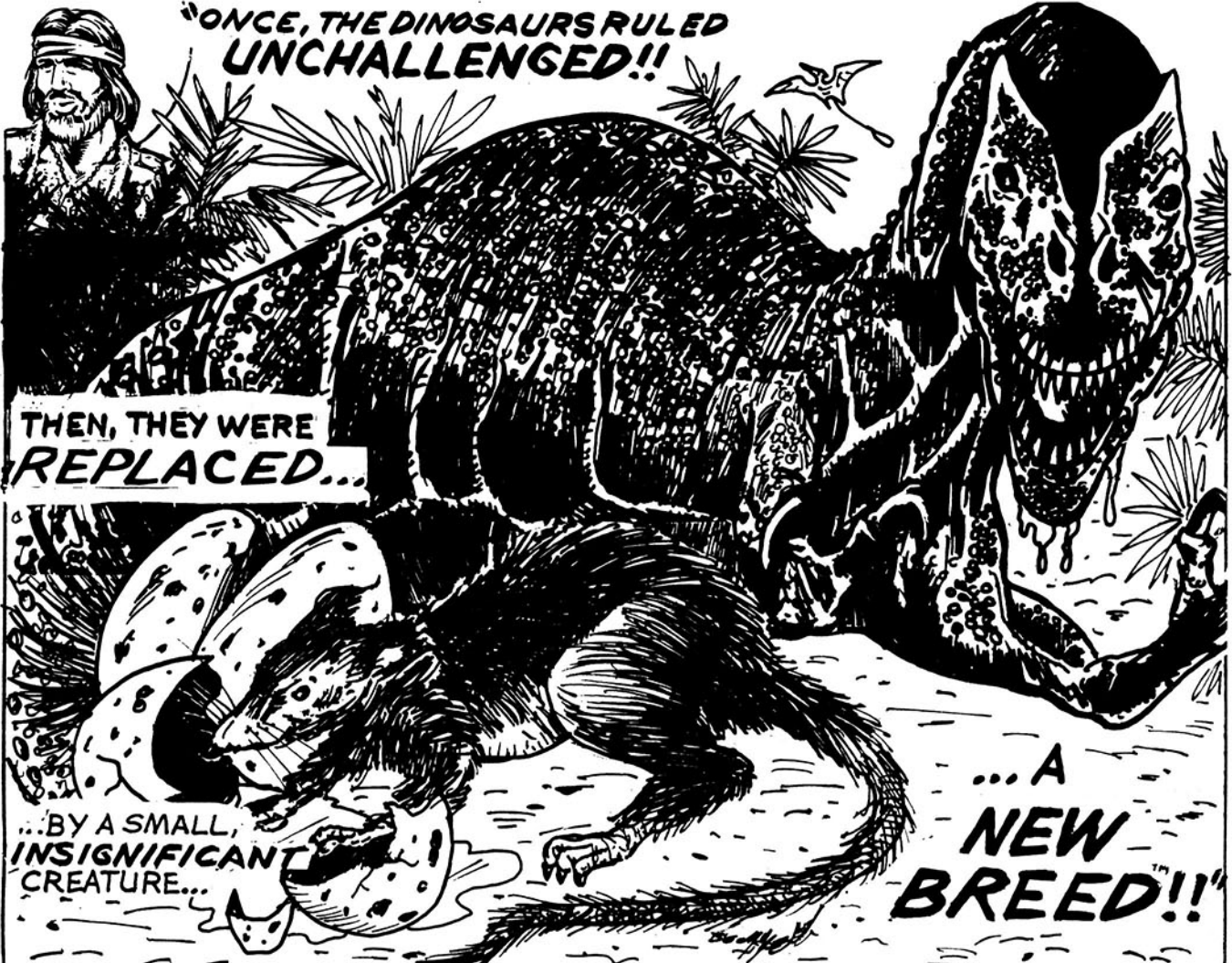
A note about the modules: In most of them, NPC stats are given in both V&V and Champions form, encouraging the use of them in either, a very nice and friendly touch not often seen in this dog-eat-dog industry.

All in all, the Villains and Vigilantes rule system is adequate for the cost and the playability. Its physical presentation could be improved through the use of larger letter fonts and better layout design. Its learning time is really not difficult, once you get over being overwhelmed by all the numbers that have to be computed and written down. It has a few bright points, and the illustrations are usually of high quality. Perhaps among the three discussed here, V&V is the one most suited to be a back-up or supplemental game, rich in adventuring detail and scenarios. Creators continue to be drawn to the series, and it has earned a solid place in the market.

*Next Issue: Five Grandmasters of Role-playing Games gather around the Gateways Roundtable to discuss comic books, superheroes and their place in some of the finest campaigns in the nation. A Grandmaster, according to D&D co-creator Gary Gygax, "is someone who has learned about the field, understands it and has gone on to help people learn to create and guide for themselves." If you are a Grandmaster or think you know one, and would like to participate in a future Roundtable topic discussion, write to Gateways Magazine and tell us about yourself and your games. Address your letters c/o Grandmasters, JAF Box 965, New York, NY 10116.*



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# A Walk Down Elm Street

Alan J. Berkson with Vincent N. Cecollini

*One, two, Freddy's coming for you.  
Three, four, better lock your door.  
Five, six, grab your crucifix.  
Seven, eight, better stay up late.  
Nine, ten, never sleep again.*

You walk down the stainless, gray, school corridor, books in your arms, headed for the dark wooden door at the end. Your footsteps echo throughout the hall, and your eye catches the colorful posters announcing that **SPRING BREAK!!!** and **BLOOD BANK!!!** are two major events coming up any day now. No other students around, you reach for the door handle, only to have the door swing open violently, revealing not the genial guidance counselor you expected but the horribly disfigured, twisted, snarling face of a creature out of your deepest horrors, reaching for you with claws designed to strip the flesh from your bones, and, as his talons tear into your chest, you awaken, dripping in sweat, in your own bed. Whew, only a dream, only a nightmare. You head for the bathroom, grabbing a towel to wipe the moisture from your face. As you lower the towel into the wash basin to wet it with cool water, the tap spews forth blood! You back away in terror, and raise your eyes to the mirror, where that specter of fear and pain looms toward your face, smiling and growling in a harsh, deadly voice, "Wake up Tommy! Time to go to school!"

## WHY IS THIS NIGHTMARE DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER NIGHTMARES?

What if your nightmares could hurt you? What if there was a man chasing you, a man clad in a tattered red and green sweater and floppy felt hat, wearing a rotten-toothed grin on his hideously burned face and a blade-fingered glove on his hand? What if he cut your hand in your dream and you woke to find blood oozing from a fresh cut on your hand?

With this idea in mind, writer/director Wes Craven created *A Nightmare On Elm Street*. The movies revolve around **Freddy Krueger**, a convicted child-murderer who manages to escape a jail sentence because of an error in processing his case. The neighborhood parents are outraged so they track Freddy down to the boiler room of a factory where Freddy works, the same place Freddy brings his young victims for slaughter. They set fire to the building and Freddy is burned alive. The parents then hide his bones to cover up the murder.

It takes more than death to keep Freddy from his child-murdering ways. He has come back to haunt the Elm Street



children. As long as they stay awake, they're safe, but as soon as they fall asleep Freddy takes control.

Anything can happen in a dream, so Freddy can do anything, almost. He's not omnipotent or omniscient (so far) but he sure does cover a lot of ground. He can mold and shape his surroundings at will, playing with the children's innermost fears and toying with the children until he finally kills them. He's a master of illusion. When Freddy's in charge, your best friend can turn into your worst nightmare. Worst of all, and most important, whatever happens in the dream is real. If you die, you're really dead.

As powerful as he is, Freddy is not invincible. He is vulnerable to physical blows, though he heals quickly. You have to resort to unconventional methods to have any lasting effect. We know that he doesn't like it if turn your back on him and ignore his attempts to torment you, nor does he care much for love. And he certainly is allergic to crosses and holy water.

## THE BOGEYMAN?

Nobody is sure what Freddy is. The one certainty is that he is no longer among the living. He has become some ghost or un-dead creature, living in dream-land (or nightmare-land). The only clue we have comes from Sister Mary Helena, a.k.a. Amanda Krueger—Freddy's mother. As a nurse in a mental institution, she was accidentally locked in the maximum security wing of the facility where they kept the most dangerous, criminally insane patients. The patients hid her and brutally raped her hundreds of times. A baby was born, "the bastard son of a hundred maniacs." She called the baby Freddy.



Sister Mary Helena had few good words to say about Freddy Krueger. She called him "an abomination to God and Man," which leads us to believe that there was something unnatural about Freddy right from the beginning.

In life, Freddy stalked Elm Street looking for children to kidnap and murder. In death, he still stalks Elm Street looking for victims, but now he catches them in their sleep.

#### A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

In the first movie, Tina dreams that she is wrestling with Freddy. Meanwhile, Rod, her boyfriend, watches helplessly as Tina's body is flung around the room by some unseen force. In Tina's dream, Freddy finally pins her down and slices her chest and stomach with his blade-fingered glove. Rod, wide awake, watches as the cuts magically appear on Tina's body and blood starts to pour out.

The children's problem is that nobody will believe them. Rod is framed for Tina's murder. Then Freddy kills Rod and makes it look like suicide. Meanwhile, Nancy hasn't slept for days and her parents think she's crazy. Her mother takes her to a sleep clinic where they monitor her while she sleeps. When she starts to dream about Freddy, the needle on the monitoring machine goes wild. In her dream, she is wrestling with Freddy.

She is wakes, but not before she has a chance to grab Freddy's hat which she brings out of the dream with her. Even then, they still don't believe her.

So Nancy plots to catch Freddy. She'll try to hold on to him while her neighbor Glen wakes her and bring him back with her like she did with his hat. "Whatever you do, don't fall asleep," she warns Glen. Glen falls asleep anyway and Freddy kills him. Now Nancy must try to get Freddy herself. She sets her alarm to wake her up in ten minutes. In preparation, she has laid traps around the house for Freddy to get caught in if he chases her. Again she wrestles with Freddy in her dream, only this time she wakes up and brings him with her. He chases Nancy and sets off the traps she laid but they don't stop him.

Finally, in desperation, Nancy remembers something Glen had told her. If you turn your back on a dream, you dissipate it's energy and destroy it. She does this and Freddy fizzles out. Nancy wins the battle, but the war goes on...

## FREDDY SCORES A VICTORY!

Victory Games has recently released *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, a board game for 2 to 6 players, based on the popular horror movie series from New Line Cinema, featuring Freddy Krueger, the dream-demon who stalks the Elm Street children in their sleep. The game starts with the players being drawn into Freddy's Nightmare world. The object: make your way through the maze to the Awake end of the board.

The game is played on two 16-inch by 22-inch game board panels, which lay side by side. The boards are well constructed and attractive. There are two types of playing pieces, 6 plastic pawns for the players and 6 die-cut Freddy markers. There is also an illustrated, brief rule-book and two hundred cards to be used in the game. The play consists of the manipulation of the game cards which fall into three categories: players movement, Freddy movement, and defensive action cards. As the players move through the maze, Freddy markers appear on the gameboard and move around the maze with them. If Freddy moves into a square occupied by a pawn or a pawn moves into a square occupied by Freddy, the pawn must take defensive action or be sent to the Boiler room or the House. Getting out of either of these places puts you back at the beginning of the maze (although there is a special movement card to help you escape).

The game is won when one player reaches the Awake side of the gameboard. An interesting twist here is that there are actually two winners. At the beginning of the game, each player is dealt one of the six Player cards which he places face up in front of him. Then each player is dealt one of the six Partner cards which he looks at and places face down in front of him. The twist here is that when a player reaches the Awake side of the gameboard, the player holding the Partner card with the winning player's number on it also wins. (Note: There are special rules for 2,3, and 5 player scenarios.)

The play of the game involves many elements of the movie. Sometimes you may be able to walk through walls (Freddy can always walk through walls) and if you go off one end of the board you end up at the other end. The defense cards are similar to the defenses used against Freddy in the movies. The Boobytrap cards allows you to catch Freddy in a boobytrap like Nancy did in the first movie, thereby allowing you to incapacitate Freddy long enough for you to get by. The Bones card allows you to banish Freddy off the gameboard like Dr. Gordon did in *A Nightmare On Elm Street Part 3: Dream Warriors*.

The strategy here is not only to get yourself to the Awake side of the gameboard but to aid your Partner and hinder the other players from getting there. The only part that isn't clear is what happens if you draw yourself as a partner. I guess then you must face Freddy on your own. Just don't fall asleep...

—Berkson



## A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE

Five years later Jesse moves into 1428 Elm Street, the house where Nancy used to live. Only now it's haunted. Freddy Krueger hasn't given up yet. Now he's trying to possess Jesse and have Jesse kill for him. As usual, nobody believes Jesse as he suffers from Freddy-ridden nightmares, and wakes up screaming every morning. Jesse finds Nancy's diary in a closet in his room and reads about her experiences with Freddy. He tries to fight Freddy, but Freddy relentlessly batters down his will. He is about to give in when Lisa, his girlfriend, saves the day. Love triumphs and defeats Freddy. Jesse and Lisa win the battle, but the war goes on...

## A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 3: DREAM WARRIORS

Another year has passed. The remaining Elm Street children have been committed to a mental institution because their parents think they have gone crazy. It's not insanity but Freddy that is responsible for their unusual behavior. Each one of these children have something special about them that has allowed them to fight Freddy for this long. They are the Dream Warriors: Will is paralyzed but in his dreams he can walk and he can perform magic; Kincaid can bend steel with his bare hands; Kristin is an acrobat; Taryn is a beautiful street fighter; Jennifer brings them together with her power to bring other people into her dreams.

Dr. Gordon runs group therapy sessions, trying to help the children resolve their problems. It's only when he is brought into dream-land by Jennifer that he realizes what their "problem" is. Nancy is back from the first movie, with a degree in psychology specializing in, what else, group dream

phenomenon. She understands what the children are going through and convinces Dr. Gordon to help. She urges the children to band together to fight Freddy. They do this, but it isn't enough.

Dr. Gordon is the key. He meets with the mysterious nun, Sister Mary Helena. She tells him of Freddy's origin, and of the method that must be used to defeat him. "The unquiet spirit must be laid to rest," she says. "Find his remains and bury him in hallowed ground." So Dr. Gordon sets out, with the help of Nancy's father (who helped hide the remains), to find Freddy's bones and bury them. He borrows some holy water and a cross from a church and goes to the junk yard where Freddy's remains are hidden. As he is burying the bones, Freddy tries to stop him but gets destroyed as Dr. Gordon recites last rites over the grave, and Nancy struggles, fatally, with Freddy in his dream world. Dr. Gordon wins the battle, ...but the war goes on?

Can Freddy ultimately be destroyed? Well, two things tell us that Freddy wasn't destroyed in the last movie: the light that magically went on in the replica of 1428 Elm Street at the end of that movie and the scheduled late August release of the fourth and latest *Nightmare On Elm Street* movie. New Line Cinema has contracted Renny Harlin (Prison) to direct the latest chapter in the Freddy Krueger epic. Will Freddy be back? We'll just have to wait and see. But whatever you do, don't fall asleep...



# Claws for IV

Yannick Clermont

Robert Englund will be returning to portray madman Freddy Krueger a fourth time this summer, in the as yet unsubtitled *A Nightmare on Elm Street, Part IV*. In discussing the success of these terrifying movies, Englund has said their foundation rests on the idea of the alternate reality: "I think that Freddy III is a success because the first two movies drew a lot of attention from moviegoers everywhere. It had a snowball effect. *A Nightmare On Elm Street* attracted the punks, the rockers, the horror fans who identified themselves with Freddy's non-subversive anarchy. The name 'Elm Street' is the symbol of middle-class living, and Freddy is attacking it."

"I love Freddy," Englund continues. "I'm proud of him. I hope that I can grow old to watch the movies on the late show. I don't think anyone could do him better. Besides, we know now nothing can stop Freddy, and the same goes for *NIGHTMARE IV!* I think we should do a 'prequel' film where the action would take place before the events in Freddy I. We should go back in time and witness Freddy's first crimes before he was burned. I could cut my hair, and make-up my skull; and we could see Freddy in front of his judges, Freddy breaking jail, and the Elm Street parents, who would burn him alive with their torches, like in *Frankenstein*. And then we could see him, alone, somewhere, plotting his vengeance. He would

come prowling back, terrorizing the kids, and we would be scared, already knowing what's in store for them. I hope that would be the prequel, but nothing has been decided yet. Those are my suppositions on what I would love. Maybe they'll have Freddy meet *Superman!*"

Finally, Englund gleefully describes his Krueger characterizations: "At first, I conceived of him as being a man, and then I think he's also the symbol of what's evil in our world and in our society. He's really Evil Personified. I play Freddy as a man who refused the rules and rejected society, as someone who hates youth, beauty, children. He wants to destroy them, because, by doing so, he kills the future. In the first *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, what he was doing was very concrete against the youth and beauty represented by the young and talented actors Johnny Dep and Heather Langenkamp. Here I am, wearing this horrible mask, and I wanted to be beautiful, so I used my natural envy and jealousy to oppose their youthful beauty. I'm used to Freddy now, and I know his reactions well. I've added some of the dialogue to the pictures and tried to bring a certain poise and body language to the character, which is sometimes almost erotic. Freddy is a vain man—that's where the hat comes in—he likes to pose."

## The Call of Krueger

Official Freddy Stats for Chaosium's  
*Call of Cthulhu* Game System

John B. Monroe

Before trying to use Fred Krueger in your *Call of Cthulhu* game, there are a few things you need to familiarize yourself with. First of all, you must watch at least one of the movies he appears in. If you have limited time see only the first movie.

Additionally, you may want to pick up the book *The Nightmares On Elm Street* (Jeffrey Cooper, St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010), which not only includes adaptations of all three movies, but has an additional chapter, "The Life and Times Of Freddy Krueger", which goes into Freddy's personal life.

Finally, you should review the *Call Of Cthulhu* rules, the supplement *Cthulhu Now* (particularly the sections dealing with modern Investigators and equipment, and the supplement *H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands* (specifically "Evoking the Atmosphere of A Dream", the "Nightmare Effects Table", "Waking from Dreams", and the new skill, "Dreaming").

NOTES: Freddy Krueger is a ghost who haunts the dreams of children in the Elm Street area of Springwood (California?). While in those dreams, he has many special abilities. Some of these abilities include: the power to change size, proportions, and appearance (he must spend magic points and make a Dreaming skill roll); he cannot take damage from an attack that he is aware of (except for when he is attacked with

religious relics, which do 1d8 damage per hit to him).

He can possess a Dreamer by attacking the dreamer once each night in a POW vs. POW struggle. The victim loses 1d3 POW each time Freddy beats him, and Freddy loses one point either way.

For each person Freddy kills, he gets to add half their POW to his own. He can use these points to create permanent dream objects and locations as per the Dreaming Skill rules from *H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands*, pg. 6 The most notable use he has made of this ability is the Dream Boiler Room which seems to get bigger in each movie.

Krueger is basically a coward—he never attacks more than one person at a time, unless he has a big advantage, and will never attack adults except in self-defense.

### FREDDY KRUEGER

Str: 11 Con: 16 Siz: 9 Int: 12 Pow: 17 Dex: 11

App: 5 Edu: 5 San: 0 HP: 13 Move: 7

weapon attack % damage

Claw Glove 85% 1d10

Armor: None, but Freddy can regenerate 3 hit points per round unless he is reduced to 0 hit points, at which time he will be dispelled for an undefined period of time.

Skills: Camouflage 37%, Climb 60%, Fast Talk 45%, Hide 70%, Jump 60%, Mechanical Repair 60%, Operate Heavy Machinery 35%, Oratory 15%, Dreaming 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 7%

SAN Loss: 1d8/1

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# BEYOND FREDDY KRUEGER

## An Official Palladium Books Supplement to *Beyond the Supernatural*

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Kevin Siembieda

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Wes Craven, the creator and co-writer of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* one through three, and the movie's director, has created a truly unique and frightening supernatural being known as Freddy Krueger.

In the third *Nightmare on Elm Street* film, it is implied that Freddy is both insane and evil incarnate. His mother, an aid at an asylum for the criminally insane, is secretly captured by the inmates and raped hundreds of times over a week-end before she is found near death. Amanda Krueger lives; but is with child, the child of "a hundred maniacs", Freddy. The ensuing scandal results in the permanent closure of that wing of the institution (circa 1940). Years later, (*Elm Street 3*), Freddy stalks the Elm Street teens at the asylum. His mother, a ghostly nun, haunts the sealed wing (she's a Haunting Entity).

The question remains, what is Freddy? Is he an avenging, evil spirit from hell? A demon? Or a primeval force of supernatural evil and power? Presented here, for the first time, are the official stats and description of a creature that can be known as Elm Streets' Freddy, but in the world of *Beyond the Supernatural*, is known as a Nightmare.

### NIGHTMARES

#### (a.k.a. MARES or THE BOOGY-MAN)

*For Beyond the Supernatural ©1983 and 1988.*

Throughout the history of humankind there is a reoccurring myth of a demonic being that attacks people through their dreams. Those beings, mares, are consistently described as a hideous, skeletal human with blistered flesh, bald or semi-bald, having a distinctive mouth and tongue, and is murderous and depraved. In ancient times, mares were said to be responsible for mysterious deaths, missing children and insanity. This being may also be the mythical, modern day boogy-man, said to stalk children.

Mares, or whatever you may call them, are diabolically evil beings from another plane of existence. Some psychics insist that they are the evil force sometimes encountered in the astral plane and may be indigenous to that realm.

Occasionally, a mare enters our world as an invisible, energy-like entity (astral body). It is mostly harmless in this form, able to use only a handful of its limited psychic abilities (specifically telepathy, empathy, sense evil, and object read, all equal to a 1D4 level psychic). In this form it can do little to harm creatures of flesh and blood. The other-worldly traveller will usually return from whence it came within a few hours (2D6 hours). However, the astral monster is extremely empathic and instinctively drawn to intense emotions of hate, anger and fear. Like the Haunting Entity, it is allured by the seductive, embracing emotions and becomes engulfed by them. The mare absorbs the psychic impressions imbued in the area

and revels in its sweet sorrows. Unlike the lesser entity, this foul creature is able to piece together a more complete history of the past life experiences of the recently deceased. The more evil, traumatic, frightful, hate-filled and depraved the better. It absorbs it all but embellishes the worst. When a truly horrific psychic memory is found, the creature can use that delectable memory to anchor itself to our world.

Like the Haunting Entity, it becomes so completely a part of the memory that it believes it *is* that person. Unlike the entity, the mare is not limited to one specific place, nor the re-enactment of one or two past events. In a strange sense, the person is reborn. A hideous psychic clone in the form of a supernatural being, even more evil and powerful than before. A creature that has assumed the role and twisted persona of a person once alive. For the mare to do this, the pain and psychic impression must be incredibly strong and *recent* (psychic impressions do fade after a time). Thus, a nightmare astral being cannot become a monstrous Adolph Hitler, but, for example, could be drawn to a building set on fire and become a twisted nightmare version of the psycho-killer who has just died in the inferno. That is, of course, just an example...

As a supernatural *recreation* of a once living person, the creature is emotionally tied to physical items and places that held great significance to the deceased. These will include the physical remains of the body, a favorite weapon or possession, secret hiding place/lair/home, secret grave of victims, place or object that may have played a traumatic or important part in the creation of the evil aspect of the person.

*Note:* We can see all of this with the Freddy Krueger nightmare creature. First there is the home of Nancy Thompson, where the mother has hidden the deceased human Freddy's claw-glove (first movie). The creature is drawn to the house because its physical weapon is there, as well as one of his murderers (the mom). In the third movie we see Freddy linked to his physical remains in the junk yard (we see the car in a dream sequence in the first movie). We also see Freddy stalking the mental institution where he was conceived during the brutal, multiple-rape of his innocent, young mother. It is a place of trauma and significance. In the creature's mind, the attack by a hundred insane criminals is a dramatic part of its history and the reason it is insanely evil (of course, insanity is not really hereditary).

Nightmare creatures are fairly uncommon, which is good, because they are extremely powerful and difficult to destroy. This is partly because they do not completely exist in our world. The mare straddles two entirely different dimensions, co-existing in both simultaneously. Because it is not part of the physical world it has no physical body. Yet because it straddles two dimensions it can psychically pull its victim into its astral world through dreams (a combination of telepa-

thy, empathy and astral projection that pulls the psychic essence of the victim into its dimension). This strange bridging of two worlds, on two different levels of existence, accounts for the phenomenon in which the victim is physically hurt or even killed through what appears to be a dream.

**Murder by nightmare** is a bizarre power possessed by the mare. The nightmare is much more than some sort of hypnotic illusion. The damned creature pulls its victim's astral body (unknown by the person) into the astral plane and directly into its astral kingdom. The astral kingdom is an area within the astral plane that has been created by the creature to reflect its own perceptions and evil essence. It can mold, shape, and alter its kingdom in any way it desires. Usually, the creature's astral kingdom will be temporarily designed to create an atmosphere of horror that is *familiar* to the victim. Telepathy and empathy are used to probe the intended victim's mind so that the mare can create recognizable people, places and situations that will play on the victim's emotions. The alternative is the mare will draw on the twisted memories of the evil human whose identity it has stolen. Thus, it will select the memory of a scary or significant location (such as Freddy in the boiler room). Or some environment it perceives to be universally frightening to humans.

A psychic vampire, the mare will prolong the horror so that it can empathically feel its victims anguish and terror. As the emotions reach a peak, it attacks to kill (usually a slow painful kill) and absorbs the victim's potential psychic energy (P.P.E.) as he/she dies. The sleeping body will show all signs of the physical attack. Awakening before the moment of the kill will temporarily spare the person. Any physical damage suffered in the dream will be apparent on the awake victim (actually returned from the astral plane) including scratches, cuts, bruises, burns and exhaustion. The physical damage resulting from an astral combat is *unique* to the mare and has to do with its dual existence in both the physical plane (where it is an intangible spirit), and the astral plane (where it "seems" to be a real flesh and blood creature).

**Combat in a dream** usually occurs as it would in real life with hand-to-hand combat (no guns). Consequently, the victim and the nightmare creature can seemingly exchange punches, kicks, parry, dodge and grapple as they might in the real world. However, this type of battle cannot kill the astral being, only temporarily hold it at bay. The creature is also more powerful than it would be in a true human form, exhibiting superhuman strength and abilities. However, its greatest ability is to constantly manipulate its nightmare kingdom. Because it mentally controls its world and everything in it, the creature can change its form into anything or anybody, distort its body and change the environment at will. It always does so to create an atmosphere of horror. Apparent weakness on its part, such as being momentarily stunned or knocked down, arises from two things; one, its perceived humanity (it reacts as a flesh and blood human might have reacted), and two, to further create a feeling of terror and inescapable doom (i.e., you hit it with everything you have and it staggers and falls, then it slowly gets up, laughing, and you realize that your best can't stop the thing. Horror!).

For most people, the only defense is to wake up before they are killed. Unfortunately, this is usually a temporary solution, because the mare will return and return in their dreams until it can kill its targeted victim. The longer it takes, the

more fun it is. Psychics, on the other hand, have a better chance against the fiend because they can use their psi-power against it (psychic abilities function on the astral plane). If the psychic is familiar with astral travel, there is a 50% chance he will realize that he has been pulled into the astral plane and can flee, returning to his body in the usual astral projection way (of course, the creature may give pursuit). Likewise, an arcanist who realizes what is going on, can cast magic in the astral plane against his attacker (Note: magic can be used in the astral plane against other astral bodies, but magic cannot be cast from the astral plane into the physical. See *Beyond the Supernatural* pp. 83-85 for details regarding astral projection).

**Dispelling or avoiding** a nightmare astral monster is far easier than destroying it. The creature can be avoided or temporarily dispelled by a few different means:

1) The most effective but very short term way is an *exorcism*. any type of successful exorcism will prevent the being from haunting one's dreams for 6D8 hours. The process can be repeated as often as necessary, but is hardly a solution. Fur-



thermore, it is only safe to dream/sleep with a mile radius of the exorcism.

2) Sleeping within a *Superior Circle of Protection* will also prevent a murderous nightmare encounter, but does not dispel or remove the mare, only blocks its influence. Falling asleep outside the circle is certain doom.

3) *Travel into another dimension* will provide trouble free sleep while in that other dimension (the mare is not linked to that world). The move into another dimension will confuse the thing because it cannot find its victim. If the person stays away for three months to a year and does not return to the area known to be haunted by the astral monster, there is a 72% chance that it will *not* be able to track the person down. Staying in another dimension for two years or longer increases those odds to 88%.

4) *Not sleeping* for days on end is another short term solution. The creature can only attack when its victim is in a dream state. The record for staying awake is 11 consecutive days and nights.

5) All forms of *dispelling* the monster are dangerous. Because the mare's strange, simultaneous, dual existence in two dimensions, it can be pulled out of the astral plane and into the physical world. To do this, the dream victim must grab hold of the astral creature during a dream, desire to bring it back into

the physical world, and (the hard part) wake up. This pulls the astral being into the physical plane and gives it a physical human-like form. In physical form, the creature lacks its superhuman strength and shape altering abilities and can be destroyed. Normal weapons do half damage, while fire, explosives, magic and psychic powers do full damage. When the physical body is destroyed, it will vanish and an astral illusion will leap out to attack the person. If the individual denies its existence and offers no resistance to its mock attack/threats, the astral being's energy is temporarily drained and dispelled. The dispelled being cannot renew its link to the physical world for 4D4 years. When it does return, there is a 90% likelihood that the mare will not be able to find the person who dispelled it (in fact, there is a 60% chance that it will forget about that person entirely until it may encounter him/her again). However, if that person does not deny the creature and acknowledges its existence, that acknowledgement will reassert its connection to the physical world and the nightmare continues.

6) Another way to dispel the fiend is to *stab* it with its own weapon on the astral plane (in the dream). All nightmare creatures have a favorite weapon, usually a blade or sharp implement. To be killed by its own weapon is traumatic, sending its intended victim(s) instantly back to the physical plane and will send the creature into shock and cause it to disappear. The fiend will remain in the astral plane for 1D6 years before renewing its link with both worlds and continuing its murder in dreams. There is a 72% chance that it will not be able to locate the person who dispelled it.

7) Completely destroying its human, physical remains (reducing it to ash or atoms) is also traumatic and will dispel it from the physical world for 4D6 months.

8) Destroying the weapon used when human is also traumatic and dispels it from the physical world for 4D6 months.

*Note: Summon Greater Being* magic invocation can summon the astral being for the purpose of communication.

There is only one way to *permanently* to remove the creature from our world, and that's to completely destroy it on the *astral plane*. This usually requires the expertise and power of a psychic astral master.

#### **NIGHTMARE (a.k.a. MARE OR BOOGY-MAN)**

**Horror Factor:** 14 in physical form, 16 in dream/ astral form.

**Alignment:** Diabolic or Miscreant

**Size:** Man-size, but can alter size and shape in the dream-like astral kingdom.

**Weight:** 150-200 lbs (68kg) in physical form.

**Armor Rating:** None

**Astral S.D.C.**(Includes Hit Points): 3D6x10

**Astral Cord:** No Cord **Physical S.D.C.:** 2D6x10

**Hit Points:** 1D6x10

**The Eight Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6+2, M.E. 5D6, M.A. 4D6, P.S. 16+1D6 in the astral plane (8 +1D6 in physical plane), P.P. 14+1D6 in the astral plane (6 +1D6 in the physical plane), P.E. 16+1D6 in the astral plane (8 +1D6 in the physical plane), P.B. 1D6, Spd. 6+2D6 in the astral plane (4 +1D6 in the physical plane)

**Natural Abilities:** In *physical form* in our dimension, the hideous fiend is locked in its deformed human guise and cannot shape change nor alter the environment around it. It is impervious to cold and poison; guns, knives, clubs, acid, and

other conventional weapons do half damage. Fire, explosives, magic and psychic powers do full damage (have full effect). *Special abilities in physical form include:* Prowl-50%, night vision-60ft, telepathy, empathy, sense evil, object read and telekinesis; all are equal to a 1D4 level psychic.

*Natural abilities in the Astral/Dream dimension* (astral form in its astral kingdom) are incredible. Can instantly *shape change* into anything; human, animal, or monstrous. One physical change per melee is possible. Can *alter/transform/manipulate* any portion of its nightmare kingdom up to once every two melees (30 seconds). The transformation is always horrific and never deadly in and of itself. *Other powers as the astral fiend include:* **Astral regeneration:** Can regenerate 2D6 astral S.D.C. every melee (15 seconds). **Prowl-80%**, **turn invisible** (but must turn visible two melees/30 seconds before an attack and remain visible during all combat), **walk through walls** or any objects in its astral kingdom (they are the creature's own mental creations after all), **teleport** at will from one location to another in its astral kingdom as often as once every 4 melees. **Hide/disappear completely** (cannot be found) anyway in its astral kingdom, but can be detected by presence sense, sense evil or object read of any object in the nightmare kingdom.

**Psychic Abilities in the Astral Plane:** Telepathy, empathy, empathic transmission (limited to despair and fear only), sense evil, sense magic, sixth sense, object read, telekinesis, and astral projection. All abilities are equal to a 2D4 level psychic, except astral travel/projection which is equal to a 10+1D4 level psychic (the nightmare creature is indigenous to the astral plane).

**Magic Abilities:** None.

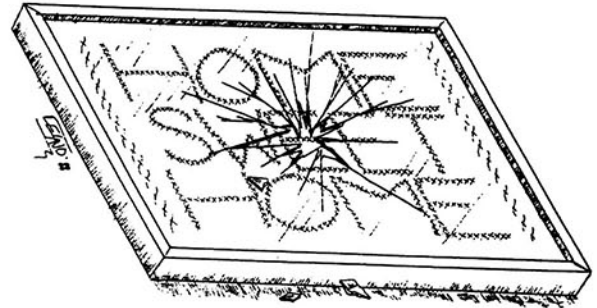
**Attacks per Melee:** 2 hand-to-hand type attacks or 1 psychic attack per melee. Must use favorite weapon (obsessed with it) to kill or inflict physical damage. The weapon is almost always a *common* hand held blade or pointed object such as razors, knives, meat cleaver, hatchet, ice pick, pitch fork, etc. *Note:* Guns, explosives, poisons, acids, bows and arrows, and similar weapons are *never* used.

Small hand held items like knives inflict 3D6 damage, large items like pitchforks, 4D6 damage. Punches, bites or kicks do 1D6 damage.

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +6 to damage, +2 to save vs. magic, +1 to save vs. psychic attack (needs 10 or higher to save), +10 to save vs. possession, +10 to save vs. horror factor.

**I.S.P.:** 2D4 x 10. **P.P.E.:** 1D4 x 10.

*Notes: Nightmares are considered to be a "greater" supernatural being. Elm Street is near a ley line. Freddy's boiler room, lair and place of death is near a small nexus point.*



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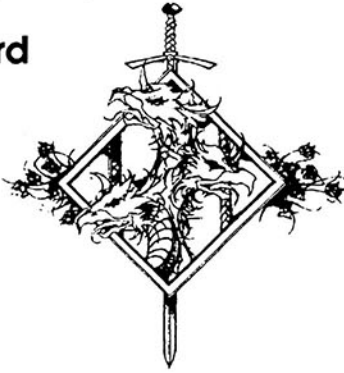
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# Life in the Big City-State

## a review of Mayfair's **Overlord**

Patricia Travis



Many years ago, when the role-playing industry was just a baby, there were very few decent companies which supplied pre-packaged adventures. (We called them modules in those days.) Back then, it was barely possible to conduct a campaign that did not rely heavily on a Game Master's ability to make things up or do a lot of pre-game designing and mapping. Although I collected what few "official" modules there were at the time, it became apparent to me that I really wanted an adventure in the city. After all, what did I know about the wilderness? And how could I expect my pals to want to go snooping around caves when we all agreed that it seemed a silly way to get ahead in the world, no matter what kind of a world you lived in. Random monsters guarding random treasures that they had no use for never seemed to catch my players' attention, and always seemed to wither my patience. After a few horrible attempts at creating a city map of my own, I realized that there would be a problem. First of all, I hated to do detail mapping. Second, maps of contemporary cities were just too huge, not to mention that I would have felt a little silly putting down a map of Baltimore or Queens in front of my players.

So, money in hand, I went to the east coast gaming Mecca, a certain well-known hobby store near me, and inquired there about the availability of a pre-packaged city. A large, beige package sealed in a zip-loc bag was given to me. The exterior mentioned that it was an "approved" gaming aid for **Dungeons & Dragons**. The maps that were included were enormous, but they detailed each building in the precise manner I wanted. And the reference books that came with it had the personal histories of every inhabitant, every beast, every political faction, and the prices at every tavern. I paid my \$6.00 (yes, those were good days), and went home to study it. But I dumped the name. There were no invincible overlords in my campaign, and I had my own ideas about what kind of a government I wanted. But the players loved it. Finally, they had a city to call their own, and over the years, through many varied gaming groups, those heavy beige maps have been trotted out in campaign after campaign. The last remaining map of the set is still being used as a major city in my favorite gaming universe. So when I was shown the lovely brown box from Mayfair Games, and saw the name of my favorite all time gaming supplement on it, I nearly wiped out the other people who wanted to review it. This was mine. It was my history. It was my baby. I couldn't wait to get brand new copies of my most used map.

I'm still waiting.

Don't get me wrong! The maps included in Mayfair's release of the new version of Judges Guild's **City-State of the Invincible Overlord** are very pretty to look at. But one thing bothered me from the moment I opened the box to the minute I sat down at the computer to review it. However colorful, well constructed, well designed (for a re-print), or well edited, this was not the City-State we older gamers remember, used, loved, and wanted back. This was an imposter, polished, beautiful, and wonderful on its own terms, but an imposter nonetheless. Keeping this in mind, on to the review.

The **City-State of the Invincible Overlord**, (or, Overlord) is a large, self-contained urban area designed for use with the most popular fantasy role-playing systems using common sense and judgement calls to adjust things like personal statistics for player characters and level. That much has remained the same, although the original set blatantly advertised that it was "approved" by TSR for use with **D&D/Advanced D&D**. Now, the methods used to describe level, class and general magic ability are a little more vague. Curiously, the spells and magical items mentioned do happen to match the ones offered in AD&D, but who's kidding who. People will probably not buy this set for a **Battletech** game. Assume that whichever fantasy rules you use will accept the descriptions mentioned in the game with only a little work.

The components of the box are as follows: Three well constructed and illustrated maps, a background and encounter book, a map and population book, two nice mapping overlays, one in hexes, the other on a square grid, 8 little 8-page booklets of use to individual races and classes in the city, a very brief introductory module called *To Catch a Thief*, and a 4-page introduction to the city including an essay by Gary Gygax, giving readers the history of the entire project and his opinions on what can be done with it.

The maps are nice. The GM's map is two sided and full color, one side showing the city itself (Briarwood), and the other side showing the continent of Calandia. The player's map is on moderately heavy beige parchment like paper. Like the original, the player's map only shows the streets, not the individual buildings. This was a cute aspect about the original that soon lost its charm with early GM's. The lack of those individual buildings made describing them to the players a nightmare, causing many copies of the detailed map to find their way onto the gaming table after one or two frustrating sessions. (In mine, bored to tears after describing the exact location of the third tavern in a row, I mentioned to the players that they found a street vendor selling copies of a map of the city. They caught the hint, I tossed my map on the table, and we got back to the story.) When will game designers get the hint that mapping is not the most exciting or challenging aspect of organizing and playing a role-playing game? If a GM or a group of players lived to map out huge cities, why would they bother to spend money on a pre-packaged one? Another gripe: GM's will have to be prepared to name the streets, since nary a hint of such useful things exists in the city. One imagines that the residents all refer to locations in the city by the numbers used to describe them in the Map and Population book, or that they all see their city on a huge grid. ("Dorf the Wanderer's house? Sure, it's at K3, right next to Tavern #28. You can't miss it...")

Also, sadly, the city seems to have shrunk since I first took a team through it. When I purchased the original, it seemed to me that one could house a million people within and

immediately beyond the walls. It lent me the right to fashion a metropolis that reflected my inner-city upbringing, full of thousands and thousands of people of every background, caused the entire economy of a nation to take into consideration the need to feed so many people in so small a place. Now, Briarwood (even the name sounds like such a suburb), is so small that an estimation of the length of the city from north to south is only 1360 feet. Entire neighborhoods have been wiped out, including the old temple district. The twisted and strange layout of the hundreds of streets in the old edition have given way to an orderly arrangement of attractive buildings, with coloring that suggests that grass grows in vacant lots throughout the city. The "new" City-State is less than one half the size of the old one, and that loss is what makes it difficult to accept it as a revision. One cannot take a team of adventurers through this new city and try to tell them that it is the same as the old one, as the game's introduction suggests. The players would search in vain for the buildings that are no longer there, and marvel at the fact that a palace that used to be at the outer edge of the city walls has leapt into mid-town, towers and all. Just as an example: in the old version, a small block of buildings in the lower left hand corner of the map contained 37 separate structures. The new version shows 18. Try explaining to that veteran group what happened there.

The original book describing the inhabitants of the City-State was 90 pages of tightly printed minutiae, and a few extra maps. The new version is 80 pages long, sporting large print, elongated stat lists, and a more detailed map of each section of the city on every left hand page. The detailing makes it easier for the GM to reference things without folding the maps back and forth. Strangely, this city must have serious pooperscooper laws, because it seems that nearly every fifth person, shop, or legal establishment has trained animals on the premises. Everything from war dogs, dire wolves, pseudo-dragons, and assorted other creatures. Very strange.

The background and encounter book is next to useless unless a GM wants to run this city as it stands, making it take the place of an original game world, or adding the entire continent to a pre-existing one. The entire history of the city and assorted rulers therein is given, and it is a dull one. There are mentions of various mysterious circumstances which brave adventurers would be compelled to investigate, reports of "Monsters within the city walls", etc, setting up a series of rather predictable adventures. The encounter tables are very vague. A talking cat invites low level characters to save her kittens from three wild dogs, and gives the saviors a ring of mammal control. What??? Talking cats are common? Where is the cat from? Why would a mammal give a ring of mammal control (and how was it carrying it anyway) to the first good person who came along? No explanations, just give out the experience and go on to the next encounter. Random encounters with Non player character's who present you with a gift for showing them the way to a tavern or relaying gossip harkens back to what was wrong with those "good old days". Mayfair could have dropped the cliché's like thieves' guilds that have the members dress alike so that blame for several persons activities falls on one mythical person, and unique lawful good creatures disguised as beggars.

The eight guidebooks for the players are small pamphlets dedicated to four "new" races and four types of character classes. Within the city/class guides is such useful information as

portraits of the Overlord, his consort and the senate, a listing of taverns, bathhouses, taxi services and other places of interest, a small map of the continent, a calendar, and some classified ads. Another reminder that the city is much smaller than it used to be is that all four guides suggest the same club, the imaginatively named "Adventurers' Guild" as the place to be when you're in the city. One imagines that my old map seller ten years ago is now hawking these little booklets. ("Sir! Sir! Need a guide to the city? What class are you? Thief? I've got one right here...!") The guides for the new races of Centaur, Naga, Lizardman and Pixie, are brief, which is to their benefit.

Last of all is the adventure included in the box. It comes with six player characters, which include one of each of the "new" races, and consequently don't seem as though they could agree on how to split up a check at a diner, let alone adventure together. A particularly strange way to start off the adventure has the party witness two "good" individuals robbed of a book bound in Naga-hide (I hope the pun was unintentional), after which the party aids them! The book was bound in Naga-hide. There is a Naga in the party. Well, one must assume that seeing books bound in the skin of a fellow being just isn't one of those things residents get upset about in the City-State. Also, the PCs are supposed to investigate this crime as though the object stolen was their own, or was of some meaning to them. Once again, the City-State becomes the repository of all of the illogical and loosely scripted clichés still left in the industry. The mystery itself is not bad, and with a little work from a GM, it can be very enjoyable, but some attempt should have been made to make it personal or meaningful to the party members. The ending of the adventure offers two situations where the party will become official scouts for the Overlord, presumably getting permission to explore all of those mysterious places mentioned in the background. But the City-State deserved better than that.

In conclusion, the remaking of the **City-State of the Invincible Overlord** can be looked at on two levels. If purchased by someone who has never seen the original, it is a small, colorful, generic D&D style city, suitable for most campaigns. It has nice maps, good overlay sheets, and various details and histories which can be used if you do not have the time or inclination to integrate the city into a pre-existing world. If you once had the original, forget that this box holds anything to do with it, and use it as a town or other small urban place. Your players will never recognize it. Mayfair has taken a huge and complex gaming city and edited it down to a manageable, somewhat bland town. It is neater, cleaner, graphically pleasing, and easier to negotiate. But it has lost the mystery, the sheer impressiveness, and the magic of the old.



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# Gateways Classifieds

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By popular demand, Gateways brings back 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, rave 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.

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Have pity on me. I need a copy of the directions for building Dwarven Stone-Cutter's Wizard's Tower; otherwise I won't ever be able to build the thing. If you can help, I'd be glad to pay for postage, photocopying, etc. Send inquiries to Raina 139-42 231 St. Laurelton, NY 11413. Thanks!

## Personals

Hail, Gary Gygax! — From Egghead.

Erryse! Give me some smack!

Stefan — In heroic tradition, I have been falsely accused. Barring a daring escape, I could use a good character witness. — D

Happy Birthday to my Lifemate! You know who you are :-> — She Elf  
[[[:\* :\* :\*]]]

Tasha Yar lives!

Pour some sugar on me...

Happy Birthday DragonFyre!! We hope you enjoy GATEWAYS! (Didya get your cookies yet?) :->) — She Elf, IC, & Chicklett

From the Knights of St. Michael on Zemindar to Ronin Silverwolf and his Elvarin Alliance: Get—OUT!

Hey Katsanakos! Tell your room mate it's time to get out of here!

May 4th: Fang has his first meal.

G-d from the seven skies  
listen to my voice  
and see my prayers should be  
accepted and my hopes  
and wishes should come true.  
This is the way the cloakmakers'  
years pass by.  
—Max Sokatch, 1954

To the memory of Morris Makransky and Grandpa Max...GPI

Tami, I keep asking J. to say hello. Are any of them getting to you? Jerry S.

I dinna ha'an accent, lass, ye do!

One day, I'll leave work in a limo...

Okay, so who left the air *inside* the Godzilla?

Congrats to Laws, Lady Rain, Darry, Stardong, and Cap'n Papa on gripping the great Waldo—A Nasty O.

Bored? Visit Downtown Beirut on any Saturday night. Tell 'em I sent ya.

To my Linnear Equation—may there be many more tramps like us to run where we leave off—no surrender—Donrick

Beware...beware...the Dancer in the Dark...

To Annorath & the Lady Magri. May the Divine shine down upon you on Midsummer's Eve, and may you live happily ever after—ZOWSOS & Co.

Baby Girl—meet me in Bridgeton, KS on December 25. Bring your bass!

To Caryn Shiel in Plantation, FL: we got in! It's Miller time! BHM

To Helen, Patricia, Kelly, Phyllis, Yannick, and Mrs. F. Those dumb games are going to make someone rich someday!—The Gang.

Little Stevie Van Zant, they can't change us!—the Native Americans

Can we go now??

To the DM who knows who he is. When do I get to play? No BS!

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# The Cosmic Streetcorner

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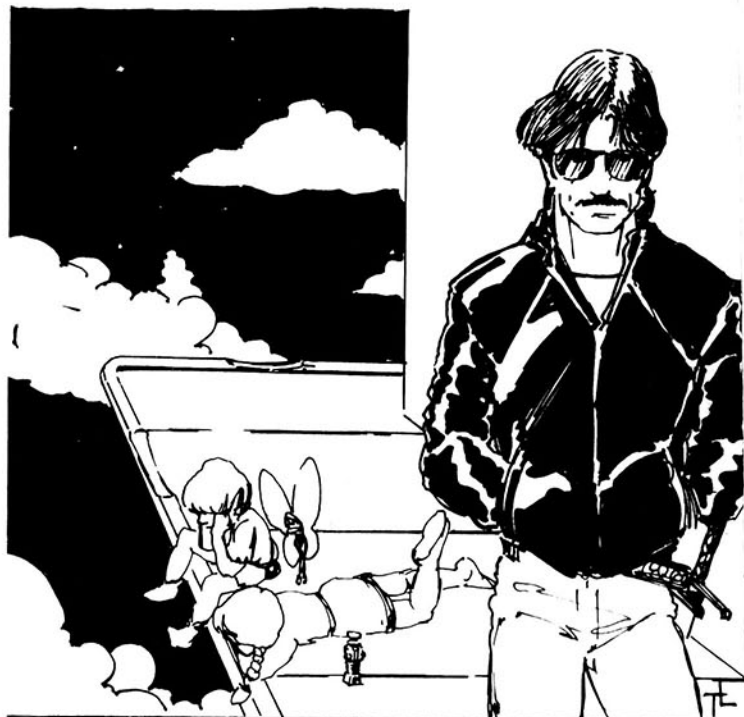
Every once in a while I'll bet you come across a person who sees the world, sees life in a way that can make you stop and think about things a little differently. I'm talking about the kinds of people who get a big kick out of their car odometers flipping over the 99,999 mile mark. I'm also talking about people like my friend Chrys, who sees the color of rain in the misty white and blue glow of the highest tiers on the Empire State Building near midnight. You see, there are not many terribly original ideas and concepts left to be created; but there is still so much that can be drawn from what we take for granted as time honored truth. When I first joined Gateways, I envisioned a magazine that would finally celebrate the lives, careers and creations of the kinds of people who took these truths and used their visions to make them special once more.

Gateways focuses its attention upon adventure games. These are a type of game where a small group of people, organized and refereed by a Game Master, will sit down to use their imaginations to form a story. *Dungeons & Dragons* is said to have started it all, creating a thriving industry of hundreds of different kinds of role-playing game rule systems and accessories, but when you think about it, we've all been sharing visions since we've lived in caves. Requiring only your bodies, some pencils and paper, and dice, adventure games challenge you by cutting off outside media and forcing you to improvise, communicate, and pay attention to a tradition as old as literature—heroism.

George Lucas did not fabricate Willow in a vacuum. He read books, drove cars, went to college, dated women, and worked very hard to learn the technical craft of making movies. Lucas drew on all that he learned and then mixed them, changed them a bit and sifted them through his own experience. He took the time-worn story of a tiny man who took on overwhelming odds, and added his own personal vision to it. A fantasy world was created there, just as these worlds are envisioned by the hundreds of thousands of people who play adventure games.

These fantasies, as exemplified by Willow's quest, help to remind us that the world does not have to be a hopeless place; that the tenacity to learn and the sheer desire to succeed on the best of terms (without resorting to the tactics of the "evil" that opposes us) can all but guarantee triumph. Adventure gamers want to win, but they want to do it heroically. Never let one of them fool you into thinking he does not want to be the hero. Heroism is what these games, these comic books, these books and movies are all about. Any true delinquent, abuser or believer in the "forces of darkness" will quickly become bored with such fare and leave it behind (as do, unfortunately, all too many adults).

Now, although we agree that it's fine and great fun to spend some time in another person's fantasy world—



especially if that person is as gifted as George Lucas or as talented as the people who designed and created the Willow adventure games—we feel strongly that gamers must try to cultivate their own fiery, often fantastic imaginations. Encouraging our readers to do things as simple as create original names for their fantasy characters by putting together root words from the dictionary, or as complex as researching ancient mythology to come up with the archetypes for which their heroes symbolize, originality through education is our goal. Finally, Gateways believes that gamers (and anyone inspired by fantasy, science fiction and the great works of imagination, for that matter) must do whatever is required in making their own true visions, their life goals, real. Having grown up in this place at this time, it is easy for me to see how dreams and fantasies can be lost in the tumult and shuffle of living.

Is this all naive? From where I stand, here upon my streetcorner perch, looking out at a multiverse of dreams-come-true, all I can say is no, it is not! Gateways is not backed by some large corporation. The people on the masthead are the owners of the company and those who help keep that company going 24 hours a day. The magazine was started because we shared a common belief that adventure games, role-playing games can entertain, can teach, and can help to focus young and exuberant visions into realities that may just one day save us all.

Now we have taken another step. After two years of diligent production, of gaining the trust of the gaming industry and carefully establishing a forum from which we can be taken seriously, Gateways has been picked up by a major international magazine distributor. Some people have told us that "we've made it"; however, I know that we're just beginning. Dreams and visions only really come true one step at a time, and each phase has its own unique set of problems to overcome and antagonists to deal with. But, most of all, we got at least this far because we absolutely refused to surrender our vision.

Jeffrey Gomez  
Publisher

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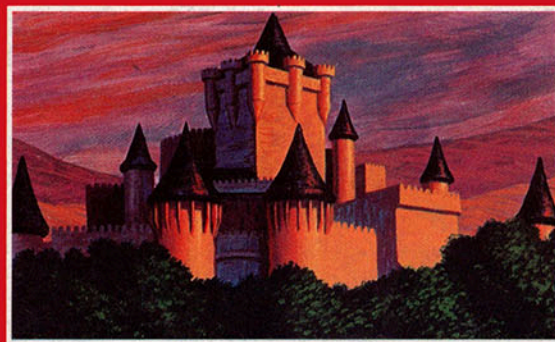
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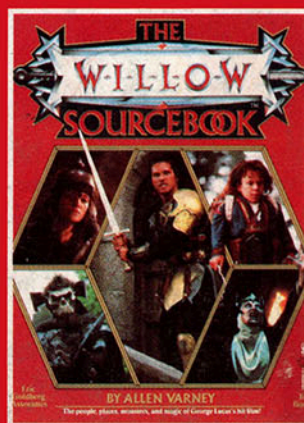
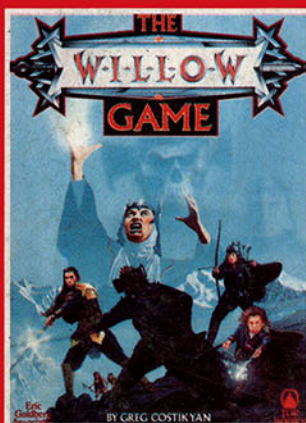
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and struggle for the life of  
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one day will destroy Queen  
Bavmorda and all her  
works of evil.



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