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Hailing Frequencies!

We'd like to welcome you to the tenth issue of **Gateways** Magazine! Big things are happening here, and we want to share them with you. **Gateways** has prided itself on bringing to you the very best of what the gaming industry has to offer in the way of role-playing and adventure games, board games and more. Truly a multi-media gaming aid, **Gateways** ties it all in to movies, books, comics and computer games; there's always something interesting happening between our covers.

In this special double-sized issue, you will find articles on **Star Trek: The Next Generation**, including a complete Episode Guide outlining the first season of the hit TV series, blue-prints of the *Enterprise*, and a review of FASA's new **Next Generation Officer's Manual**. Also, *Trek* expert Allan Asherman attempts to explain how those mysterious, often faulty holodecks work!

Coinciding with the release of the **Aliens** and **Terminator** comics, we bring you the exclusive gamers angle, including stats for both in several popular role-play systems, and ways to use these nasties in your game campaigns. Finally, join the Marines and defeat the Aliens in Leading Edge's exciting *Alien Siege* scenario complete in this issue!

Rounding off the menu are computer reviews, plenty of game reviews, our usual array of columns, a laymen's guide to heraldry (sure to add color to your adventures), and last but not least, Gary Gygax himself explains how you can become a Grandmaster gamer.

These are the many worlds of the Multiverse and **Gateways** is your Key. Come explore them with us.

Alan Berkson
Assistant Publisher

Table of Contents

FEATURES

The Universe of Star Trek: The Next Generation

Howling At The Moon

Dear Gateways,

I just got a copy of issue 8, and I'll tell you, I had to search high and low for it, because my comic book shop was sold out. But it was worth it. I especially liked the **Horseclans** article; I never read any of those books, but it looks like I am going to have to change that. Are there really that many out there? I also liked the fact that your writers recognize a quality comic book series like Green Arrow when you see it.

Thanks a lot for keeping your readers happy.

Nathan Sholes
Brooklyn, NY

Ed. reply: You're welcome, Nathan. Just tell that shop owner of yours to keep us in stock, OK?

Dear Gateways,

I am not complaining about your "Horseclans issue," but aren't you a bit top-heavy with boardgames and comics this time? It was all very interesting, but I just never saw you do that before.

In any case, since you did have a pair of articles dealing with Star Trek, when are you going to get around to doing one on the new television series? I'd like a chance to see what that new universe is like in a behind the scenes sort of way.

I am looking forward to issue 9, and please keep the magazines coming!

Walter Parris
Chicago, IL

Ed. reply: Top-heavy on comics and boardgames? What about the Paranoia adventure? The Star Trek RPG articles? Elves and Orcs? Gaming governments? As for more Star Trek, take a look at this issue and let us know what you think.

Dear Gateways,

I finally found an issue of your magazine in my neighborhood. What took you so long? Anyway, I'm glad that someone has finally gotten around to publishing a magazine that deals with GAMES, not RULES, like some other magazine that comes out every month, and is extremely overpriced, but will remain nameless. Who cares how many ogres can dance on a pinhead? Not me, that's for sure. I like to have fun when I play games, and your magazine is definitely fun to read. Thank God for Gateways.

Lisa Hitaru

From The Tower

Titles are wonderfully horrible things, especially great titles. From a simple matter such as my preference for Ms. over Miss, to the "World's Greatest Boxer", who gets creamed in 91 seconds, titles are tricky things. They can cause silly arguments. (Ever hear of the history professor who wanted to be called "Doctor" because of his PhD? It pops up in Ann Landers all the time.) They can cause confusion. (Is Coke the "World's Favorite Soft drink", or is Pepsi?) They can make people feel so good, so proud. But then turn around, and there's one hundred cases of heartache all because of one little title. For every award I have held in my life, 5-10 were lost. For every time a title is granted, even a temporary one, 100 are not attained. Yet life goes on. We survive not being "Prom King", or "MVP", or valedictorian. Or maybe we take the one title that we did win and allow a little bit of glory basking on cloudy days, recalling the time when we were the ones who stood up to be identified by our deeds instead of our names.

So what am I getting at?

Are you a "master" gamer?

There's a place in this issue where you can find an essay that discusses a definition of *master gamer*, and it makes a few good points. But any player worth their dice should also be aware of a different definition of master player, one which has more to do with the so-called average player than anyone else. By "average", I don't mean skill, but actual playing habits. Not all players attend conventions. In fact, fewer than one out of every four of you will attend a convention this year. Not all players compete in tournaments when they do attend conventions; that number is a small fraction of the first. And even fewer of you will actually play in an "official" tournament in your entire gaming career. So forget conventions, forget tournaments, forget trying to gather "points", or impress judges, or win, win, win.

Master Gamer is a title that has nothing to do with standing up at an award banquet. It has nothing to do with a certificate, a plaque, or the numbers that you can list with any other type of "really good gamer". So what is a Master Gamer? How do you know if you are one? And if you're not, how do you get there?

A true "master" of any type of art is someone who desires understanding of their art, yet realizes that the journey to whatever grand goal they have set for themselves is ten times as important as the end result. Ask any great practitioner of a martial art, and they will tell you that there is much for them to learn, even as they tie that black belt on. Ask any artist what their greatest project ever was, and they will tell you about the one that they are working on, or will do next. To apply that to gaming, a master gamer is the one who never stops trying to make the gaming experience around them better. That master will want each new game, new session, new character, new plotline and new campaign to be slightly better than the one before. Slightly different. Slightly new. With each gaming experience, a master gamer will learn something new, either about themselves, their friends, a new style or
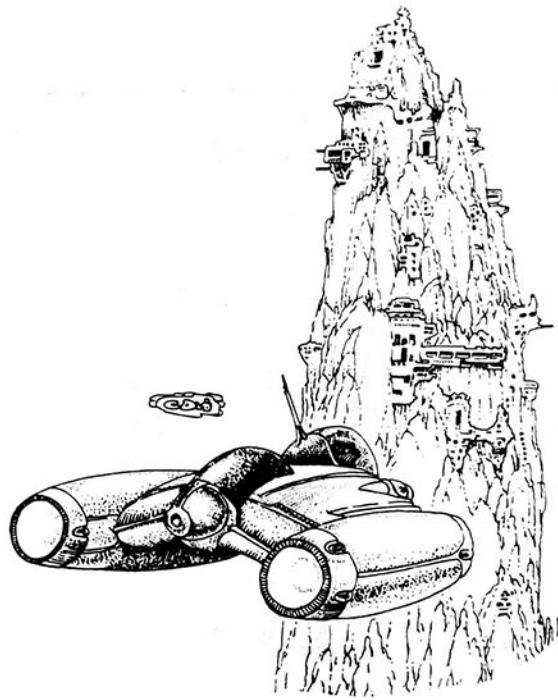
technique, or even the world around them. They may not set out to do this intentionally, but every time, something different will emerge, and something new added to that gamers' knowledge.

Remember that the first principle of a role-playing game is that there is No Single Winner. A master of gaming knows that, and really shouldn't want a title resembling it. A master gamer will want every player in the game to feel like a winner from time to time, and it won't matter whether or not that master is actually running a game. To a master gamer, the enjoyment of the game by the group is the most important goal. Therefore, a master GM will create challenging games that will give a group something to remember, think about, laugh about, or learn from. In the same vein, a master player will try to fully interact in a GM's world, and with the other players, playing a character that goes beyond numerical abilities on a sheet of paper, beyond what's been seen before. They will sometimes put little pieces of themselves in their characters and will therefore play them with just that amount of understanding, just that amount of conviction. Both GM and player will care about the game, whether it's a fast paced, one night adventure or a detailed two year saga.

I don't mean to take anything away from the hundreds of you out there who have certificates and plaques, and whose "points" put you in the "Top Whatever" of gaming. In all honesty, many of you take these points into consideration every time you play, which is as it should be. But to those of you out there who will not be at a large convention this summer, and do not intend to try your gaming skills *against* other players instead of with them, to those of you who like gaming because it's fun, and because you care about the quality that goes into your own personal games, don't be turned off by something as simple and fleeting as a title. Strive for personal mastery and encourage others to take the journey with you.

Laura Antoniou
Executive Editor

The Tome

The Gamemaster's Burden
player characters can help lighten the load

Peter Corless

An often neglected but recently noticeable problem in regular adventure gaming is the Game Master's Burden. This syndrome occurs when the hours, days, even years spent developing adventures and campaigns begin to take their toll. Dozens of spiral notebooks and looseleaf binders full of graph paper maps and sundry adventure preparations suddenly become wearisome to carry. GMs find that they are faced with recording thousands of bits of information and performing dozens of "bean-counting" excercises per game session. As the "Masters" of their game worlds, they are required to be experts on everything from agriculture, monster and alien anthropology, economics, and physics. They are usually responsible for arranging gaming sessions ("Hi, Bob, about this Saturday..."), and sometimes, they even have to provide the players with munchies to keep them happy!

The very economics of role-playing is a burden. In recent years, the price of GMing a game has become phenomenal: a basic "start-up" role-playing game (including a boxed set of rules, GMs' screen and a published adventure for the game) runs around $35 or more! Modularized games with dozens of supplements and hard cover books could run well over $150 to fill a sizeable library. The once-convenient alternative of buying prepackaged products at $8-12 a pop now seems prohibitively expensive to many GMs. Really masochistic GMs (it is rumored) still buy and paint (!) miniatures for their gaming group, to give their adventures the right atmosphere.

How can the GM get out from under this tremendous weight so that he/she can run the game without a massive hernia and without taking a second job?

One way is to change the precepts of role-playing as they are understood today. Normally, players have very little involvement in the running of a campaign. They attend the sessions, of course, but usually after the books are put away, they do very little thinking, and even less work in preparation for the next session. During a game session, it is usually a small percentage of players who are engaged with the GM at one time. Often 50% or more of a player's time in a role-playing session is spent waiting for a chance to "do something."

For some reason this legacy of passive role-playing has been handed down to us from the early days of game formation. The convential role-playing concepts of the "Caller" and the "Mapper" imply that only a few players interact with the GM at any particular time. Although these roles in a gaming group can be necessary, all players should be encouraged to be more active.

Why? Because such passivity is usually infuriating to both the players and game master alike. As a player, how often have you twiddled your thumbs, waiting for an activity that involves your character? As a GM, how often have you felt guilty referencing a rules book while watching your players twiddle? (Saying that a good GM should be a master of the rules, and therefore shouldn't get bogged down while looking things up is ignoring the point, and callously puts even more responsibility upon the already heavily-taxed GM.)

Instead, the first thing to do is to spread the GM's tasks out to the players so that the players have more to do, and the GM has less to worry about. Often the most niggling of accounting problems can be doled out to the players. In many of the games that I have played in, one person is given the task of "Scribe." This player keeps a log of the adventure, recording enemies vanquished, non-player characters encountered, places traveled, and marking the passing of time in the campaign. It is often a big help for the GM to look back through the log, especially after a long break between sessions. ("So as we ended you guys were about to be boarded by the evil Pirates of Brickabrack. Right, now I remember..."). A Scribes' log is also useful at experience time. Another player can be the "Rules Lawyer" (somebody always is anyway, might as well give 'em a title), responsible for checking long-forgotten case references while the GM continues running the adventure.

Another way to unburden the GM is to allow the player-characters to run friendly NPCs. If an NPC is the type that will usually do what the players wish, assign the NPC to a player as sort of a second character. Of course, the GM reserves the right to intervene and take the NPC back under his control at any time he wishes, but this is another kind of bookkeeping that a good GM can shed himself of without much trouble.

The next step is giving players the chance to design parts of the campaign in a limited fashion. Some games, such as Traveller or the Hero Games systems, provide various design-it-yourself rules that can be used by the players without too much GM supervision. Players can then generate new artifacts, spells, starships, worlds, monsters, alien cultures, and more, all with just cursory approval by the GM. Some GMs might even present ideas to the players that they just don't have the time to work out for themselves. For instance, when my Traveller GM didn't have the time, I would help him out by throwing together a new starship or a Striker-designed vehicle that he needed to make an adventure work. Allowing players these bits of creative input often doesn't make it any less the GM's campaign, but players certainly feel it is more "our campaign."

An extension of this is the common-campaign game mastering style. This is where a set of GMs will share a campaign, but each covering a different part of the whole. Often these GMs will run their adventures on alternating weeks or switch off every month or so. Common-campaign game mastering is analogous to the modern fantasy anthologies such as *Theives' World* , where multiple authors will share the same fictional background. Players enjoy the feeling of being in a continuing campaign, but the sharing GMs can then increase the time that they have to prepare for their next run. This type of campaigning is especially effective in rules-heavy role-playing systems or intricately detailed campaigns, where preparation times can be quite long.

A higher rung up on the ladder brings us out of the campaign itself to deal with the real-world finances. Who ever said that the GM has to spring for everything? Although many problems arise when money comes between friends, there are some situations when a group might feel it is only right and natural to chip in a couple of bucks each for the good of the whole. Of course, the details of such financial arrangements are important, and all possible problems should be discussed beforehand: How much is everybody supposed to contribute? Who actually owns the books? What happens to an adventure after you've played through it, etc?

But if everyone is willing, this kind of arrangement often allows your GM to get that extra module, that great new supplement, or that set of new rules needed to keep a campaign growing, or just lets him restock some mundane graph paper, pencils and dice. It can also be an equitable way to spring for an expanding collection of miniatures.

Once players get used to the idea of being more than just passive participants in role-playing, they will start seeing more and more to do. They will assign themselves additional roles, like "Quartermaster" (responsible for keeping track of the pack mules/weapons locker/supplies-in-general) or "Sergeant-at-Arms" (setting up night watches/guarding prisoners/filling out duty rosters/etc.) Maybe someone has a specially good hand at painting miniatures or drawing maps, and will become a sort of group artist. By all means, encourage this! There hasn't been a game master yet who has been killed by the kindness of the players. Games flow especially smoothly when the players work with the GM, rather than against. And who knows, maybe one day they'll even provide the munchies!

The Next Generation of Starfleet

FASA Provides an Officer's Manual

Jonathan Frater

Thus begins the Federation/Klingon alliance, a central part of the universe portrayed in the television show, **Star Trek: The Next Generation**. According to both the networks and the critics, the show is a complete success. But you won't find those stirring words in any of the episodes viewed during the Fall '87 to Spring "88 season. FASA has created the first guide to that universe and the great events which formed it, and has produced the **Star Trek: The Next Generation Star Fleet Officer's Manual**, a collection of the who's, what's and how's of the year 2364. All the tantalizing glimpses of information shown to us throughout this past season is fully explained here at the reader's fingertips. Some of the highlights of this manual include:

The Grand Alliance

Perhaps the most unusual event of the 24th century in terms of Star Trek history is the fact that the United Federation of Planets and the Klingon Empire have banded together in the interests of peaceful coexistence. However, with the recent resurgence of the Romulan threat and the increasing activity of the Ferengi on everyone's borders, it's only a matter of time before the tension explodes into an unpleasant situation. According to the **Officer's Manual**, the Klingon Empire of old underwent a drastic series of changes over the past 50 years or so. Once the Federation/Klingon borders were quiet and both sides were busy tending to their internal matters, the Romulans decided that things needed a bit of stirring up — all along the Klingon border, destroying dozens of thriving colony worlds, and killing millions of people in the process.

Over a period of two or three years following those incidents, the Klingon Empire split into two factions; one was pro-Federation, because an alliance with the Klingons' former rivals would mean better ships, technology, economic power, and one less enemy to worry about. Then there were the conservatives, the factions that wanted to keep things the way they were. Thus, the *Free Worlds of Klinzhai* (the pro-Federation Klingons) and the *Imperial Klingon States* (the traditionally hostile Klingons) were born. The borders and neutral zone dictated by the Organian Peace Treaty was erased, and the border between the Federation and the Free Worlds of Klinzhai is now about as peaceful as the one between Canada and the United States. The Imperial Klingon States see their more liberal brethren as traitors to the Klingon way of life, and are doing everything in their meager power to disrupt Free World/Federation cooperation. Luckily, the Imperial Klingons are too weak and few to do any lasting damage.

Out With The Old Orion Pirates, In With The New

The Orion Colonies no longer exist as such in the 24th century. I know that must come as a shock to die-hard Orion Pirate fans, but consider: the Federation has increased its overall size by about 50% in the last 78 years, the better part of the Klingon race is assisting their allies' expansion efforts for their own benefit, and the Romulans are still keeping a strong hold on what they already have, which is at least as much as the old Klingon Empire had. That means that pirating simply lost any economic appeal that it might have had in the past,
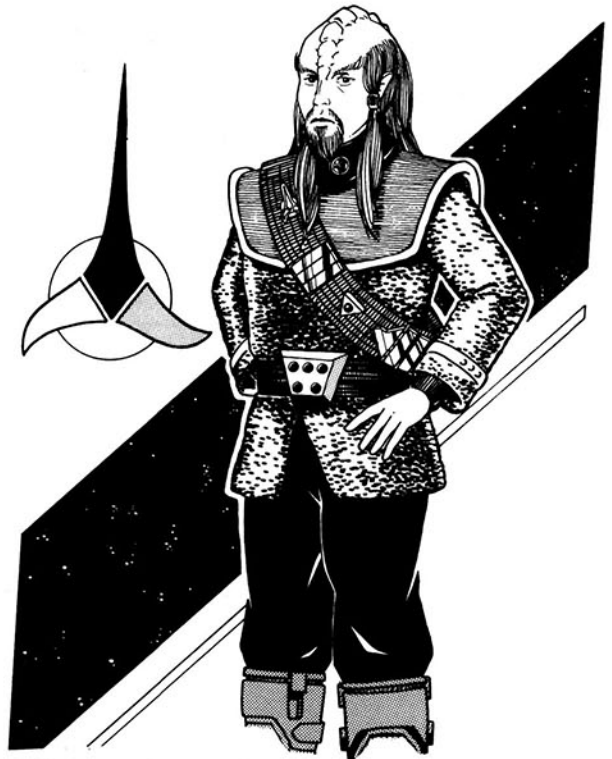
especially now with the new transwarp powered vessels that patrol the space lanes; it just was not worth it.

But, a new threat has shown up of late: the Ferengi Empire. The Ferengi are a race of spacefaring humanoids, who though physically are considered unattractive by human standards, are nonetheless at least equal to humans in terms of cunning, greed, and the art of piracy, in all of its connotations. The Ferengi, so far as Star Fleet Intelligence is able to determine, are interested only in material profit, and it shows in their unprovoked attacks on everyone, Federation, Klingon, and Romulan alike. Ferengi ships are at least as well-armed and shielded as the better Federation cruisers are, but have no transwarp engines, so they can still be outrun and outmaneuvered by Enterprise-class starships. However, to date, the only ship of Ferengi design the we know about it the Marauder class Cruiser. There are undoubtedly more battleworthy ships in their armada, so beware of small men with large ears in a crowd.

To Be A Romulan,
Perchance To Hurt The Federation

About 50 years ago, the Romulans severed all contact with other races, we have that much as fact in the history books of the Federation. There were no border incursions, no threatening subspace messages, nothing at all. But they didn't stay put for long, because they attacked the Klingons 15 years later, the event which sparked the creation of the Grand Alliance. Now, however, "The Romulan Threat" is back, and this time, they are not going away.

Romulans are precisely what they were 78 years ago; sneaky, devious, and extremely sure of themselves, especially when warfare is concerned. They have changed very little in those decades save for one huge and deadly difference; they have kept up with Star Fleet and the Klingon Defence Force in terms of arms and technology. Their ships have transwarp drives, and their weapons are at least as powerful as those on board Galaxy-class U.S.S. Enterprise. After examining all of the ship data the **Officer's Manual** contains on both the *Enterprise* and the Romulan *D'daridex* (Executioner) class Transwarp Battlecruiser (which we saw in the '87-'88 season's last episode), I firmly believe that if one side or the other had provoked hostilities, neither ship would have survived for long, and the Romulan ship would have had a distinct advantage in terms of speed and maneuverability. Besides, now that the Terrans and Klingons are allies, the Romulans have only one enemy to worry about, not two.

Several Grand Enterprises

The politics of the 24th century is only part of what the **Officer's Manual** contains, and the smallest part, at that. The **Officer's Manual** contains everything that a Star Trek role-player could possibly want to know about the 24th century Federation. The Manual itself is divided into four main sections; the first is the introduction to the book, and contains a few basic facts about the Grand Alliance's terms, and results, and discusses briefly the evolution of Star Fleet. The second section deals with the new starship crew classes that have been developed in the past century, since having non-military, i.e., civilian personnel aboard military starships is now common practice, as well as giving full details on the process that recruits must go through in order to become full-fledged members of Star Fleet. The
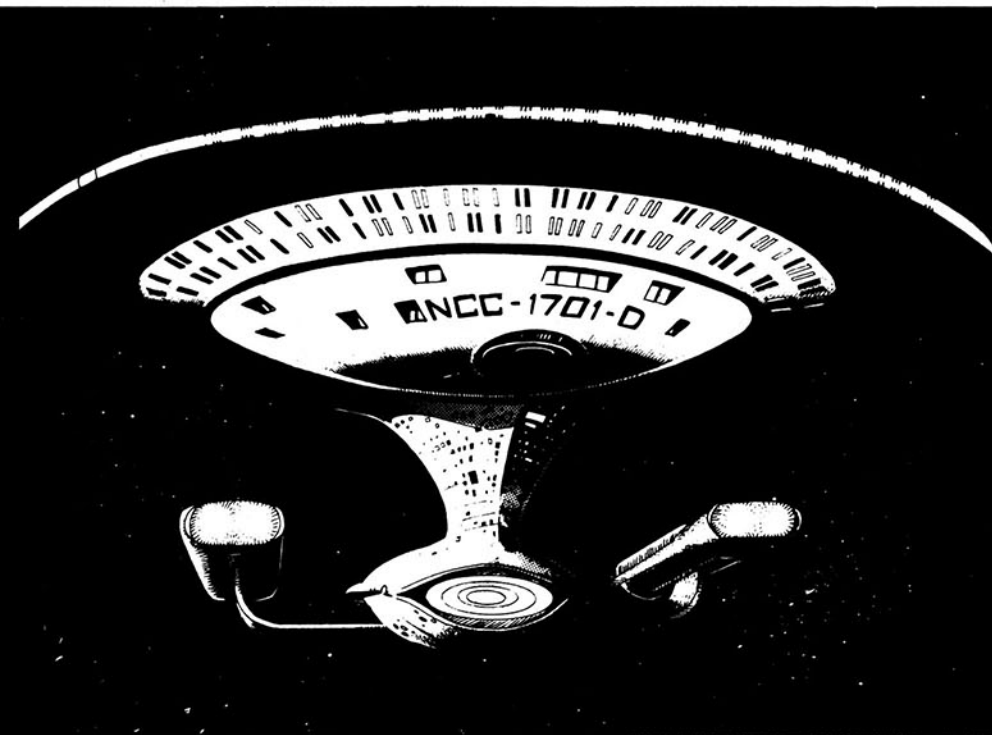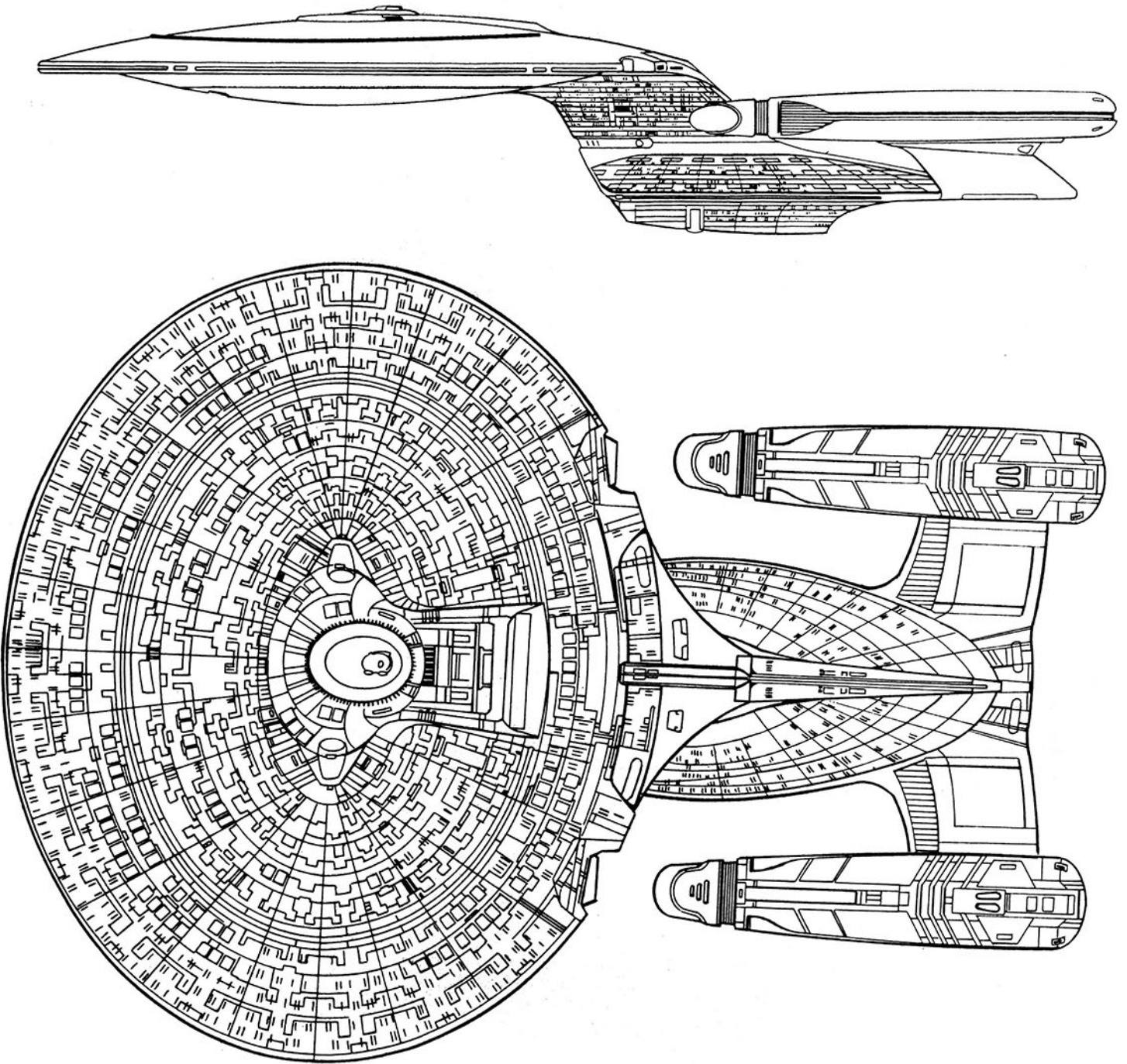
GALAXY CLASS U.S.S. ENTERPRISE, NCC 1701-D

From these blueprint previews of the Galaxy Class U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701D, provided exclusively to **Gateways** from the FASA Corp. **Star Trek: The Next Generation Officer's Manual**, it is easy to see that the series creators were going for majesty as well as size in their new starship designs. The area covered by this ship is roughly equivalent in area to the vast Paramount motion picture studio lots in Hollywood.

third deals specifically with the evolution of "The Transwarp Fleet," the new breed of starships that literally made any other sort of military vessel obsolete long ago. Included here are the statistics for the following starships: the Excelsior Class XIII Transwarp Battleship, the Enterprise Class XII Cruiser, the Constellation Class XII Heavy Cruiser, the Decker Class IX Transwarp Destroyer, the Royal Sovereign Class XV Battlecruiser, the M'Benga Class VII Hospital Ship, the Sagan Class V Science Research Ship, the Wellington Class VII Transwarp Light Cruiser, the Paine Class IV Transwarp Frigate, the Moscow Class V Transwarp Scout, and the Ambassador Transwarp Heavy Cruiser, all of which can be played using the **Star Trek Tactical Combat Simulator** by FASA, if you own it.

But that is just the icing on the cake, for these ships are dealt with only briefly. The real treat is the information on the Galaxy-class Exploration Cruiser, including what it is, why it was built, who recommended that the Federation build it, the various ways in which the ship is run, and how the brains at Star Fleet want to see it used. The Enterprise, being the first of the line, the ship is specifically dealt with. ("Enterprise," is an old name, being held by a grand total of four Federation starships, so far; the Constitution class Heavy Cruiser (NCC-
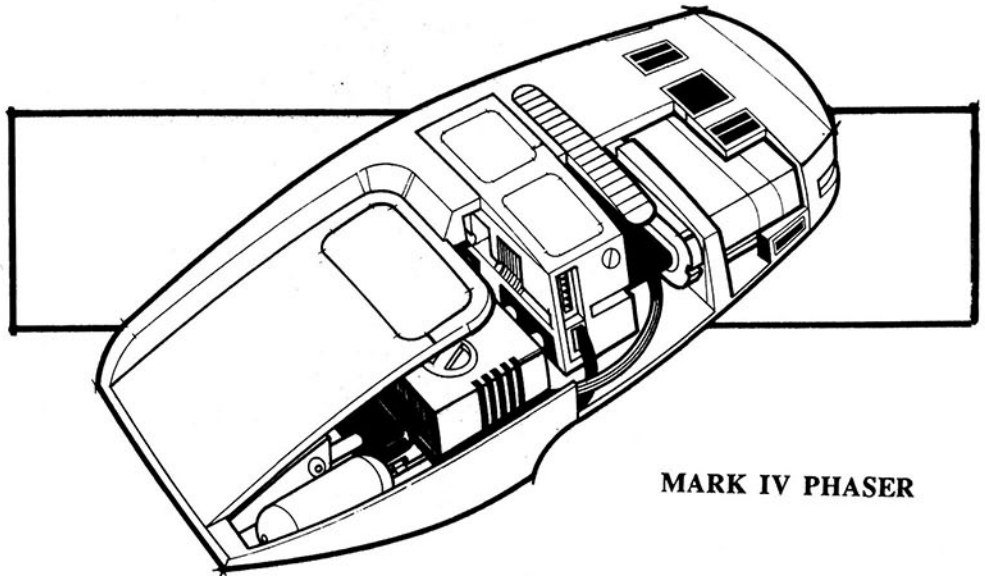
MARK IV PHASER

1701), and the Enterprise class Cruiser (NCC-1701A), both commanded by James Kirk; the Excelsior class Battleship (NCC-1701B); and the Galaxy class Exploration Cruiser, commanded by Captain Jean-Luc Picard (NCC-1701D.)

Scientifically Liquid Assets

Finally, the fourth section of the **Officer's Manual** deals extensively with the various leaps and bounds made by the Federation in terms of technological advances, in terms of medicine, engineering, "beaming" capabilities and weapons. Also, we are finally given the hows and whys of the Holodeck, developed by Dr. Simone Van Gelder (as a psychotheraputic tool, no less) full information on Mr. Data, the only "living" android to have ever been created by mankind, and most of the personal equipment that we see the Enterprise crew carry from one episode to the next. There is also a great deal of information on the other races in the galaxy (including their new and improved starships, weapons, social organizations, and so forth).

Unfortunately, what I saw was a hastily edited prototype manuscript of the product, and there might be a few changes in the format to occur as the supplement goes to press (historic speeches are included by Mr. Data and Dr. McCoy pending Paramount Pictures approval), but aside from those two factors, the book is as I have described. I can only call it a valuable asset to any **Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game** campaign, and even if you don't plan to play in the Next Generation universe, the book does serve to answer a great many questions about the series in terms of general information.

TRICORDER

These Are The Voyages: An Episode Guide to

STAR TREK®

THE NEXT GENERATION

Jerry Schneiderman

Now that the first season of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** has been finished, and a new one in production even as this article is being published, it's time to take a look back on what has gone before in the universe of the new *Enterprise* and her crew:

Encounter At Farpoint

Stardate 41153.7-41174.2 Farpoint Station — Deneb IV. On the way to Farpoint Station to pick up their remaining crew, the Enterprise is pursued and captured by an immensely powerful being named "Q", who accuses the human race of continual barbarism and places them on trial. Captain Jean-Luc Picard convinces Q to allow a test to prove that humans have indeed grown beyond barbarism. After placing Picard and some other present bridge officers (Lt. Worf, a Klingon, Lt. Natasha Yar, Security Chief, and Lt. Commander Data, an android) on a mock trial, Q allows them to proceed on their way to gather the remaining crew members (Commander Riker, Lt. Geordi LaForge, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Beverly Crusher and her son, Wesley). During negotiations with the local authorities on Deneb IV, an unidentified object approaches the planet and begins to blast away at the old city of Farpoint, seemingly oblivious to the presence of the Enterprise. After all attempts to communicate with the object fail, Q appears on the bridge, trying goad Picard into attacking. An Away Team made up of Riker, Data, LaForge, and Deanna Troi, the Ship's Counselor and an empath, follows the trail of a kidnapped official who was teleported against his will up to the attacking ship. They discover that the "ship" is actually a sentient being whose companion crashed on Deneb IV and was enslaved by the present inhabitants because of its ability to transform energy into any form of matter it wished. When aid is lent to the injured creature from the Enterprise, Q is furious, for their compassion enabled them to pass the test Q had set up to prove their innocence of his charge of barbarism. Q informs Picard that though he will hold to his part of the bargain, he will be back.

Interesting Points: It's been 78 years since the last journey of the original Enterprise. It has undergone many changes since then, in form, maintenance and in crew. For example, in this episode, we see that families of crew members are now on board ship, housed in the main hull that also contains the bridge and weapons systems, but transferred to the disk that separates from it during cases of extreme emergency (as determined by the Captain). But what are most important are the little details that are shaping our initial view of the Enterprise and her bridge crew (the main characters) in this episode. (Incidentally, it would seem that none of the bridge crew have any relations aboard.) Beginning with Picard, we note that he is familiar enough with Shakespeare to quote lines from one of the Bard's plays ("kill all the lawyers"). Unmistakably a career Captain, Picard is all business. He doesn't have time for nonsense, and evidently children don't fit into his routine of running the ship. Yet we see that he can be left at a loss for words when he meets Dr. Beverly Crusher for the first time since he brought her husband's dead body back to her many years ago. When at last he does speak, it's to point out her son Wesley's presence on the bridge as being against proper procedure. Dr. Crusher demonstrates her protective maternal instincts when she perceives that he is casting a bad light on her son's reputation. Wesley does come off as a gregarious teenager who can twist his mother around his middle finger. At a recent convention, Paramount Public Relations man remarked that Wesley was meant to represent the proverbial "Everyman"; a common everyday person who is in the middle of everything and comments on it. Maybe so, but apparently everyone at the convention over the age of 10 hated and still hates him.

Picard is not the only officer on the bridge having trouble dealing with past relationships. Commander William Riker, Picard's Number One (second-in-command), encounters the new Ship's Counselor, a Betan empath named Deanna Troi. In their dialogue, it is hinted that they had had a deep and passionate affair; hard to believe that an empath would have an interest in someone whose social claim to fame is knowing Pinnochio and Pop Goes the Weasel (Riker), a far cry from Picard's Renaissance man. But it's too soon to tell.

All that we see of Lt. Tasha Yar's psychological make-up is that she seems fanatically devoted to the Federation, even in the face of certain destruction, as in the case of Q's mock trial. For a Security Chief, she can really be a bit hot-tempered. In that, she finds a kindred spirit in the only Klingon member of the crew, Lt. Worf. Worf, one of the most potentially interesting characters of the show, is unfortunately regulated in this episode, and during the first part of the season, to being the headstrong member of the bridge who is always itching to handle a situation by the use of force.

In contrast to the pair-up of Yar and Worf is the duo of Lt. Commander Data and Lt Geordi LaForge. Data, an android, has become a favorite amongst New Trekkies everywhere, with his

constant attempts at affecting human traits in order to fit into his relationships with the humans around him. In this episode, we are treated to what will be his trademark for the rest of the season; his tendency to rattle off the synonyms and definitions of unfamiliar terms and colloquialisms whenever he is exposed to them during conversations. Geordi is unique in that he wears an special visor in order to see, having been born blind. The pain he mentions as suffering for wearing the visor is heard here, but never referred to again in the course of the show.

The Naked Now

Stardate 4120902   The Enterprise investigates strange transmissions from the S.S. Silkovsky, which is in the vicinity, studying the collapse of a red star. When the Enterprise makes contact with the Silkovsky, they find that everyone aboard dead, airlocks thrown wide open. It is later on discovered, almost too late, that the conditions of space in the area cause symptoms similar to alcoholic intoxication in those who are within it. A reference and connection to the original Star Trek episode "Naked Time" is made when Riker remembers reading something in the historical records about someone who died while taking a shower in his clothes, and when Data discovers through research that a similar situation took place aboard during the five-year journey of the original U.S.S. Enterprise.

Interesting Notes: This episode is illustrative of what will be a running problem for the show; Wesley Crusher, The Genius Whiz Kid, Saving the Day — Again. Wesley starts his climb down into the pit of viewer unpopularity when he not only builds a tractor beam device the size of a breadbox, but later on rewires it (while intoxicated) into a repulsor beam. Then, he duplicates this achievement in 9 minutes using the Enterprise's tractor beam in order to save the ship from an as-

teroid, still under the influence. This notwithstanding the fact that the ships' Chief Engineer said that such a feat couldn't be done in less than a week. The Naked Now gives us further glimpses into the more mature characters's desires and personality. Picard reveals that, at heart, he has the soul of a Frenchman, and consequently harbors deep romantic feelings for Dr. Crusher, which are mutual and bounced back and forth as if between two hot-blooded teenagers. This doesn't stop her later on from showing her maternal side again by telling Wesley to stay in his quarters, and vehemently defending Wesley's rep to Lt. Worf, reinforcing the Captain's words to the effect that the honor of saving the ship belongs to Wesley. Surpassing all of this with respect to character history is Yar's revelation that she was abandoned by her parents on a slave planet at age 5, trying to avoid rape gangs until her rescue by the Federation at 15, explaining her characteristic Federation patriotism and her subsequent character change during the Naked Now.

Code of Honor

Stardate 41235.25   While visiting Legon II to arrange a trade agreement with the planet for a life-saving medicine needed to cure a plague running rampant on another planet, Tasha is kidnapped in a power play for a native woman's wealth and power by her "First One", Lutan. The women on Legon II initially hold all the wealth, while the men hold the active right to do with it as they are bonded to the women. If Natasha loses in the subsequent battle between the native woman, Yareena, and herself, Lutan loses nothing. But if Natasha wins, Lutan gains Yareena's wealth and power. Picard foils Lutan's plan by bringing Yareena to the Enterprise after the battle, where Dr. Crusher uses the advanced medical procedures of this century to void Lutan's claim, much like the scenario organized to save Kirk from Spock's "Amok Time" in the original Star Trek episode of the Same name.

Interesting Notes: The title is indicative not only of the main story, but of the personal codes of most of the main characters. For once, Dr. Crusher shows her fibre as a doctor, not as a mother, when confronted with the seeming cheapening of life when compared to honor. Yar holds firmly to her seriousness about her work and herself throughout the entire affair. Picard upholds the Prime Directive with intent that brooks no deviation from the word and spirit of the ideal. And we finally learn Deanna's purpose as Counselor, an advisor of the sociopsychological consequences of certain actions when dealing with familiar and unfamiliar subjects and situations.

The Last Outpost

Stardate 41386.4   While pursuing a Ferengi ship that stole a "T19 converter", both ships are snagged by a tractor beam from a planet in the nearby star system, Delphi Argule. When Away Teams from both ships are sent down to the surface of the planet, they are confronted and tested in a combat duel against each other by the Portal Guardian of the extinct Tkon Empire, the losers' ship at the mercy of the winners. When Riker's team wins, he shows mercy toward the Ferengi, on the grounds that the Ferengi are like what the Federation was a long time ago and they must be given the chance to change as the Federation was. This episode is most reminiscent of the old Star Trek episode, "Arena", with Riker filling Kirk's pivotal role at the end.

Where No One Has Gone Before

Stardate 41263.1   An engineer named Kazinsky has been contracted to update all of Starfleet ship engines because he has apparently come up with a method of increasing ship engine efficiency tremendously. His assistant is secretly a Traveller, one of a race of beings who have such an understanding of the relationship between time and space that it allows them to slip in and out of reality. It turns out that he has been doing all of the work Kazinsky's taking the credit for. With Wesley's unwitting help (he pointed out an error in the allegedly superior being's formula for the warp drive), the Traveller makes an error in judgement and boosts the engines of the Enterprise so much that it takes the ship and everyone aboard out of the galaxy and into a place where thought becomes reality. Before returning the Enterprise to its original coordinates and vanishing, the Traveller notes in Wesley a mind years ahead of its time, and tells Picard to nurture it. One of the quiet scenes that saves the show is the encounter that Picard has with the image of his dead mother, whom he obviously loved very much.

Lonely Among Us

Stardate 41249.3   After picking up the Antigen (who resemble humanoid mongoose) and Sele (snakelike bipedal beings) ambassadors in the Beta Rela system, the Enterprise heads towards the diplomacy planet of Parliament. With the ambassadors constantly trying to kill each other, things go from bad to worse when the Enterprise passes through a space cloud and accidentally tears an energy creature from its home in the cloud. In an attempt to communicate, it takes over various minds until it reaches Picard. Upon returning to the cloud, Picard voluntarily goes back with the creature, using the transporter to beam himself as energy into space. Not to worry; Picard returns with the help of his bridge crew after being abandoned by the being he left with.

Interesting notes: In this episode, Wesley shows the engineer on duty what's wrong with the engines. Dr. Crusher neglects her duties in not relieving the "possessed" Picard immediately upon she confirms her suspicions. Picard makes a passing remark about requiring the presence of Sherlock Holmes which Data takes him up on, donning a pipe, hat and magnifying glass, and proceeding to solve the mystery of a murdered engineer, and Deanna demonstrates an amazing range to her empathic abilities in order to find the missing Captain.

Justice

Stardate 41255.5   After the Enterprise drops off colonists on a planet in the Stronem system, they discover another planet in the neighboring Rubicon III system, inhabited by a human-like race with an idyllic civilization. When an Away Team is sent down to initiate contact, Wesley, during his stay, accidentally breaks the law of the culture and is sentenced to die. Complicating the problem is the presence of a powerful force orbiting the planet above that protects the natives, calling them its "children". Even though Riker disarms a law enforcement officer to prevent Wesley's death, he doesn't make a decision concerning the application of the Prime Directive to this situation. Here, Picard again tries to uphold the spirit of Prime Directive, trying to reconcile it with the need to see justice done, with the threat of a god's wrath hanging above.

The Battle

Stardate 41723.4   The Enterprise is ordered to rendezvous with a Ferengi vessel, whereupon Captain Picard receives a gift — the vessel he had once commanded and thought lost during a battle with an unidentified ship (totally destroyed) many years ago, the Stargazer. It turns out that the Daimo (Captain) of the Ferengi ship is the father of the Captain who had commanded that then-unidentified ship, and is now back for revenge for the death of his son. He lures Picard on board of the rebuilt and automated Stargazer, and uses a mind-altering device to try and force Picard to re-enact the battle which killed his son, using the Stargazer to destroy the Enterprise.

Interesting Notes: Deanna once more displays an incredible range in her psychic powers, sensing duplicity in the mind of a Ferengi captain across space. And once more, Wesley saves the day by being the only one who discovers that Picard's brainwaves are the same as those being transmitted onto the Enterprise, on top of having been the one who boosted the Enterprise's sensors just in time to find the Stargazer arriving.

Hide and Q

Stardate 41590.5   En route to perform an emergency rescue mission on a planet at the site of a cave-in , the Enterprise is sidetracked by the return of Q. He kidnaps all the bridge crew (except Picard) and forces them to play another one of his deadly games. The result of this game empowers Riker with the power of Q, who refuses it at the brink of his own corruption, and forces Q to be called back to his people in disgrace. Curiously, Shakespeare is often quoted during an episode guest starring the enigmatic being "Q", as in Data's refusal of superpowered Riker's offer to make him human: "To thine own self be true". Picard also uses Shakespeare to spar with Q, and elicit Q's true reason for pursuing his fascination with annoying the Enterprise.

Haven

Stardate 41294.5   While orbiting the planet called Haven for some much needed R&R, (is this beginning to sound familiar?) Deanna receives word of the expectation of her immediate bonding with a man she never met, but was matched with when she was very young. While the controversy over this rages below in private quarters, on the bridge, Haven contacts the Enterprise and informs Picard that an unidentified ship is entering the star system. Upon investigating and making contact with those aboard, it is discovered that the vessel is a plague ship, carrying the last of a race looking for a place to die. Aboard the ship is a woman, the plague ship Captain's daughter, who has been in weak telepathic contact with Deanna's betrothed (Wyatt) all of their lives, and who unconsciously brought this meeting to pass with Wyatt's unwitting aid. Wyatt, a medical doctor, beams over to the plague ship to join his soulmate and to aid her people in finding a cure for their illness. The plague ship leaves the area, and Haven is safe, Deanna unmarried.   Interesting notes: We learn that the Betazoid bonding ritual requires that everyone participate in the nude, and Deanna's mother is played by Majel Barrett Roddenberry.

The Long Goodbye

Stardate 41997.7. On the way to a important meeting with the Arada race, Captain Picard, Dr. Crusher, Lt. Data and Earth Historian Whelan relax on the newly reprogrammed holodeck by taking in a pulp detective adventure set in the 1940's. But it becomes all too real when a sensor probe from the Arada accidentally scrambles the holodeck's computer and places the adventurers in danger of losing their lives. Yet again, it's Wesley to the rescue, with LaForge in tow. Great final scene, where Picard speaks a bizarre alien language to greet the insect-like Aradans.

Datalore

Stardate 41242.4. In this episode, the Enterprise is passing through the Omicron Theta star system, where Lt. Commander Data was originally found 26 years ago, on a slab of rock with a homing beacon in a scientific colony base where the inhabitants had all mysteriously vanished. An Away Team is sent down to investigate, and Lt. LaForge finds a secret entrance into a hidden laboratory. They discover that not only is it the lab where Data was built, but the parts of another body, a duplicate of Data's own are in storage. The Away Team returns with the android pieces, and the duplicate is assembled in the hopes that it will reveal clues about the missing colonists. The android, once activated, calls itself Lore, and reveals that he and Data had been built by Dr. Noonian Soong, the creator of the first Asmovian positronic brain. Lore displays an amazing range of human attributes, such as a sense of humor, a colloquial way of speaking, and a full gamut of human emotions. But Lore turns out to be an evil doppleganger for Data, crippling Data and taking his place, calling the crystalline alien that destroyed the colonists to the Enterprise in·exchange for power and great knowledge.

Angel One

Stardate 41636.9 Tracking the overdue commercial freighter *Odin,* the enterprise finds its lifeless wreck drifting in space. Tracking the escape pods route to Angel One, an Away Team is sent to the surface to investigate, discovering that the planet is one where the women are in the dominant role of society. They also find, to their dismay, that the survivors of the Odin are wanted as outlaws, because they have taken wives and are forming families, a circumstance that threatens the current government structure. Riker is cast as the liaison for the mission because the head of the Council finds him attractive. An entertaining portrayal of role reversal of the sexes.

11001001

Stardate 41365.9. On a stopover at Starbase 74 in the Tarsis III system, for a checkup on and enhancements to the Enterprise computer system, Binar technicians facilitate their theft of the Enterprise by causing a breakdown in the engine's anti-matter containment units on board. This forces an evacuation of everyone on board except for Riker, entertaining himself on the holodeck in the more-that-just-realistic simulation of a New Orleans jazz club. Accidentally taking Picard along with Riker, the Binars head for their homeworld, where it is learned by Riker and Picard that the Binars needed the Enterprise's computer banks to store the computer memories of their entire race and planet before the sun exploded, damaging these records with its radiation. They hadn't been sure that Starfleet would lend them the Enterprise for this purpose, so they stole it. On the starbase, it is indicated that some of the crew members take part in a team sport which involves elaborate uniforms. If the object is not to win, asks Worf, why do they keep score?

Too Short A Season

Stardate 41309.5. The Enterprise picks Admiral Mark Jameson and his wife up from Persephone V to transport them to Mordin IV, where a hostage situation is taking place. Admiral Jameson had negotiated for hostages before on the same planet approximately 45 years ago, and he is being asked for again by those who hold the hostages. En route, Jameson begins to regain his youth, announcing his intention to lead the Away Team down to rescue the hostages without negotiation. 45 years ago, Jameson got the hostages free by giving advanced weaponry to the terrorists involved. To keep the balance, Jameson also gave the same weapons to their enemies, resulting in a civil war that lasted 40 years. Jameson could not bring himself to do this again, and took a drug that reversed the effects of old age to ensure his ability to handle the rescue. However, in his urgency for the drug to take effect quickly, Jameson overdosed, and takes its toll during the rescue, the mission failing as he falls during battle. Knowing that his time has come, Jameson reveals all, and asks Picard to take him down to the rebel leader, Karnas (who believes his father died as a result of Jameson's perceived treachery), to exchange himself for the hostages.

When The Bough Breaks

Stardate 41509.1. The inhabi-

tants of the legendary and hidden planet of Aldea in the Epsilon Minos star system reveal themselves to the Enterprise, anxious to open relations and arrange a visit. While negotiations are under way, a sensor beam scans through the Enterprise, lingering on the children. The Away Team to Aldea is told that the Aldeans have no children. The Aldeans propose that in exchange for the Enterprise children, they will give unto the Enterprise and thus to the Federation all the information in the Galaxy that no known being as ever heard of. When refused, the Aldeans kidnap the children, but Wesley Crusher organizes the kids into a state of civil disobedience through passive resistance, forcing the Aldeans to renegotiate their position.

Home Soil

Stardate 41463.9. While an Away Team is visiting a terraforming colony on Valara III, Pleiades Cluster, a colonist is mysteriously killed by a laser drill. After some investigation, Data and LaForge bring back an inorganic lifeform back from the surface to the Enterprise for study. The lifeform almost takes over the ship before the crew learns how to defeat and communicate with it. It is responsible for the murder of the colonist, and it is learned that it was merely striking back in defense of the collective consciousness being slain down on the planet by the terraforming going on.

Interesting Notes: This plot situation bears a striking resemblance to the original Star Trek episode "The Devil in the Dark".

Coming Of Age

Stardate 41416.2. Wesley takes his exam to enter Starfleet Academy. Meanwhile, Picard receives a visit from an old friend, Admiral Quinn, who is accompanied by Lt. Commander Dexter Remnick, sent by the Inspector General's office to carry out an investigation of the Enterprise. Near the end, Quinn reveals to Picard that he and other officers in Starfleet believe there is a conspiracy afoot to overthrow the Federation. Quinn asks Picard to accept a position as head of the Academy in order to aid Quinn in his investigations. Picard declines, and Quinn admits afterwards that the conspiracy may be an imagined one after all. (Little do they suspect...) Wesley fails his exam, and returns to the Enterprise.

Heart Of Glory

Stardate 41503.7. Investigating the signs of a space battle along the edge of the Neutral Zone, the Enterprise discovers three Klingon warriors on board a battle-scarred cargo ship named the Batress. Picard and Riker are suspicious of their story, and Lt. Worf is assigned to take care of the belligerent Klingons while it's checked out. To Worf, they reveal that they are in fact renegades protesting the existence of the Klingon-Federation Alliance, renegades who stole the Batress

to find a world where they could live like true warriors. They invite Worf to join them. Meanwhile, a Klingon Battle Cruiser has made contact with the Enterprise, and the true story is revealed to Captain Picard, who places the Klingons in detention until arrangements are made between Picard and the Captain of the Klingon Cruiser. The three renegades escape the brig and, at the climax, the last survivor holds the ship hostage by threatening to blow it up . He appeals to Worf's Klingon heritage to convince him to help take over the ship, but instead Worf shoots him, knowing that the warrior would rather die than surrender.

Interesting notes: A brief insight into the fate and social customs of the Klingons as well as Worf's` personality and
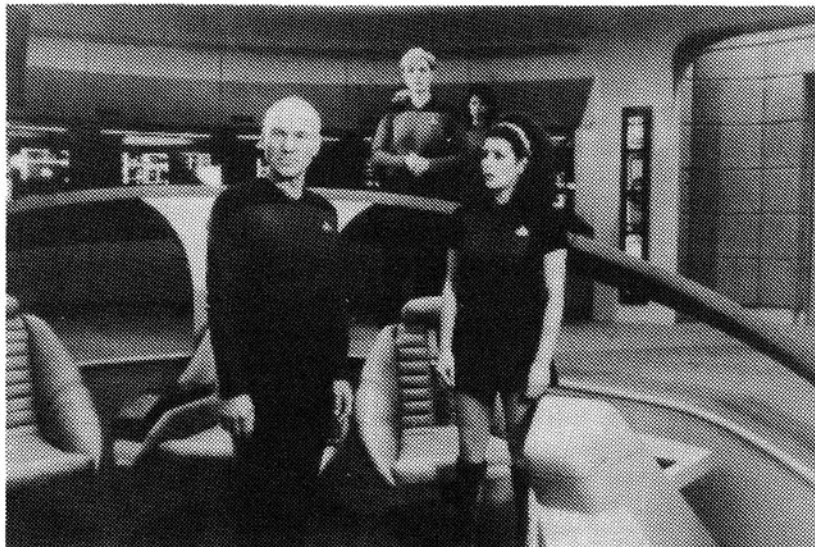
history. In this episode we finally see what Geordi sees through his visor, via a demonstration of the Visual Acuity Transmitter, used to transmit whatever Geordi sees back to the Enterprise. We also see that a surprising number of the bridge crew, including the Captain, don't trust Worf with other Klingons, for fear of testing his loyalties.

The Arsenal Of Freedom

Stardate 41798.2 All life has vanished from the planet Minos. The U.S.S. Drake has vanished while investigating it as well. It is revealed by an automated transmission (sounding like an old century Earth-type used car salesman) to the Enterprise that Minos is an arms-selling planet. Beaming down with an Away Team consisting of Data and Yar, Riker is trapped in a stasis cocoon. Picard and Dr. Crusher beam down as well to help free Riker, and discover that the agency responsible for the attacks taking place against the Away Team and on board the Enterpise is a computer designed to be the ultimate weapon, a weapon that got out of control and exterminated everything in its range, including the Drake. Thanks to Dr. Crusher's timely advice, Picard has the computer shut itself down by informing it that he will buy it. Dr. Crusher is the eye in the fury of the storm, keeping her cool even with a broken leg and a concussion.

Symbiosis

Stardate: None. While doing a survey of an unusually active sun, the Enterprise receives a distress call from a cargo ship carrying desperately needed medicine from one planet to a dying population on another planet. It is learned that one planet supplies the medicine, while the other pays for it with everything else it is able to manufacture and export. Later on, Dr. Crusher discovers that not only is the medicine no longer needed to stave off the plague ravaging the "diseased" planet, but that it is simply an addiction, and that the selling planet knows it. In the end, Picard does not interfere with the Prime Directive, but does come up with a solution that could possibly free the "junkie" population from their fix. The conflict between Picard and Crusher on the addiction situation more than ever clearly illustrates their personal ethics. This is the last episode where Wesley gets any significant lines whatsoever, when discussing the question of why people become addicted with Yar. His appearances are extremely limited from here on out. Unfortunately, we never learn how Yar is able to explain addiction to Wesley. Was she ever addicted to anything, or did she know someone that was? Either story would have been an intriguing plotline, if she had survived past the next episode.

Skin Of Evil

Stardate 41601.3. En route to a rendezvous with a shuttle carrying Deanna Troi back from a conference, the Enterprise receives a distress call from the shuttle, which crashed on Vegra II. When an Away Team is sent down to rescue her, they are balked from reaching the shuttle by a moving black slick of unknown origin. It reveals itself finally to be Armus, a sentient being capable of communication, extremely powerful, evil and sadistic. After toying with the Away Team for awhile, it slays Lt. Yar when she attempts to go around it to reach Deanna. Yar is brought back to the ship for an unsuccessful resuscitation attempt, while Armus tortures Deanna with the knowledge of Yar's death. She is able to entice the creature to revealing its history to her. Meanwhile, Acting Security Chief Worf's discovery that the creature's signal-inhibiting field weakens while over the shuttle helps to establish contact with Deanna, and she and Picard exchange notes. Picard finally confronts Armus, and, by occupying the creature's attention, gives the Enterprise the chance to beam up everyone on Vegra II and destroy the shuttle to prevent it from ever leaving. The shock of Yar's death reverberates amongst those who knew her, and her holographic farewell is a poignant and illuminating testament to the relationships she had been in the course of developing with her fellow officers but never truly explored during her time in the series.

We'll Always Have Paris

Stardate 41697.9. On its way to Cerona VIII for shore leave, the Enterprise experiences a time loop, right after which they receive a distress call from Dr. Paul Mandheim on Vandor IV in the Pegos Minor System. Mandheim, who had disappeared 15 years ago to continue his experiments with time, managed to pierce its dimensional fabric, but the experiment went awry, and now threatens to destroy the universe. Data is sent down to seal the rip, while the Captain struggles with his reunion with Mandheim's wife, an old flame from his past. It is implied here that Picard might have taken off for space to engage in a symbolic marriage with a starship rather than committing himself to a woman because he was afraid of the personal responsibility that entailed.

Conspiracy

Stardate 41775.5 The Enterpise receives a code 47 transmission for Captain's Eyes Only on the way to Pacifica. An old Starfleet friend, Walter Kheel, asks Picard to rush to Ditanis II for a clandestine meeting. Once there, after confirming Picard's identity, Kheel explains his secretive behavior. He and others like him believe that a conspiracy is under way to take control of the Federation. Picard finds it difficult to believe, but agrees to keep an eye out. Soon after leaving Ditanis III, the Enterprise's sensors register the explosion of Kheel's ship, with no bodies left in the wreckage. Picard decides to head back to Earth to question Admiral

Quinn, who had informed him of his own suspicions in "Coming of Age". Picard has Data check for suspicious activity in Starfleet, and the resultant information confirms Kheel's theories. Quinn visits Picard on board ship when the Enterprise arrives at Earth. When Quinn demonstrates definitely uncharacteristic behavior, Picard has Riker keep a close eye on him while he goes down to speak with the other officers down below. Riker is attacked by Quinn when they are alone, who demonstrates amazing physical strength, requiring a full-strength phaser blast to fell him. When Dr. Crusher examines him, she discovers a parasite-like creature symbiotically attached to Quinn's spinal cord, near the brain.

At Starfleet Headquarters, Picard is brought to a dining room, where he discovers that the officers he came to see have all been subverted into this conspiracy. The parasite creatures planned to have Picard return to "infect" him into their plan to take over the Federation and the entire galaxy. Riker beams down, pretending to be "turned", and rescues Picard from the controlled Starfleet officers. Picard and Riker, during their escape, note one of the creatures heading for a room and give chase. They find the mother creature inhabiting Lt. Remik's body — Remik from the Inspector General's office, Quinn's assistant. They destroy it and Remik. but are informed by Data upon return to the Enterprise that "Remik" sent out a homing beacon toward an unknown sector of space.

Interesting Notes: The appearance of a new and totally alien enemy for the Federation characterizes this episode as a turning point for the series, and incidentally is significant in its reference to continuity. It also contains some of the most disgusting creatures ever to be seen on prime time.

The Neutral Zone

Stardate 41986.0. Awaiting the return of Captain Picard from an emergency meeting at Starbase 718, the Enterprise discovers a 20th century Earth space station floating adrift in space. When Data and Worf investigate it, they discover three cryogenically stored humans. They remove the bodies from the derelict and bring them back to the ship, where Dr. Crusher revives them. Picard returns to the Enterprise and orders the ship into the Neutral Zone to investigate the destruction of Starbases and colonies in that area. It is suspected that the Romulans are in some way involved, testing to see if Starfleet's strength has grown over the 50 years that contact with the Romulans was suspended. The mission is to open up communications with the Romulans, and at the same time make a show of strength to get the point across that Starfleet is not weak. The sleepers that were awakened, made up of a housewife (Claire Raymond), a financier (Ralph Oppenhouse), and a country singer (Sonny Clemens) are busily adjusting to the future shock of the 25th century while the Enterprise enters the Neutral Zone. The Romulans make a partial contact, and, after seeing that the Enterprise has no hostile intentions, open communications all the way. The Commander of the Romulan Ship, Tabak, informs Picard that though the Romulans may have neglected the Zone for 50 years in favor of other matters, that situation is about to change, since the Romulans do not want the Federation delving further into Romulan territory. To paraphrase it in the closing lines of the episode:

Tabak: "We — are back." (Viewscreen goes black)
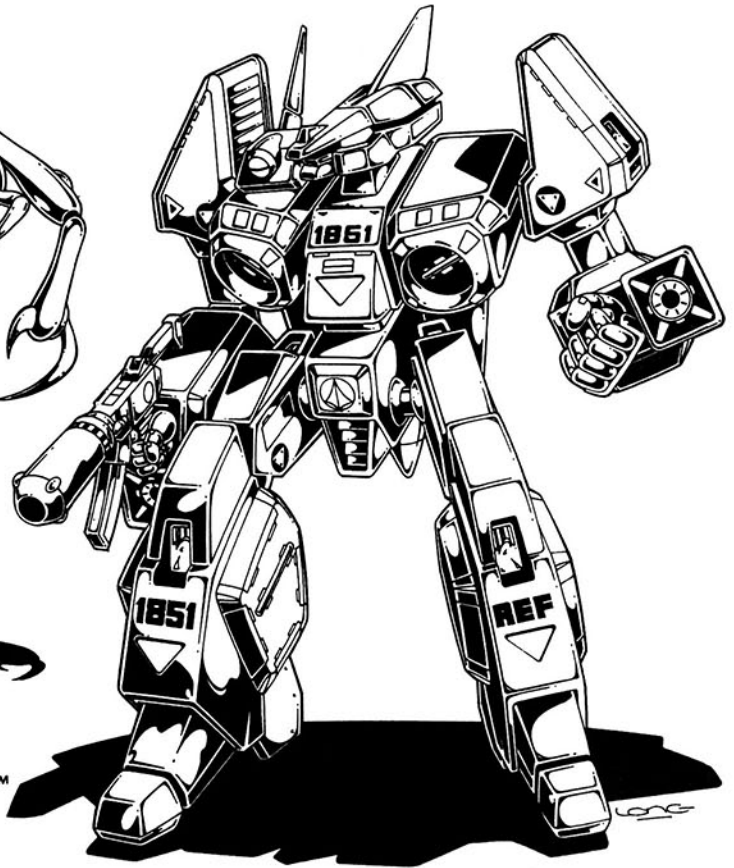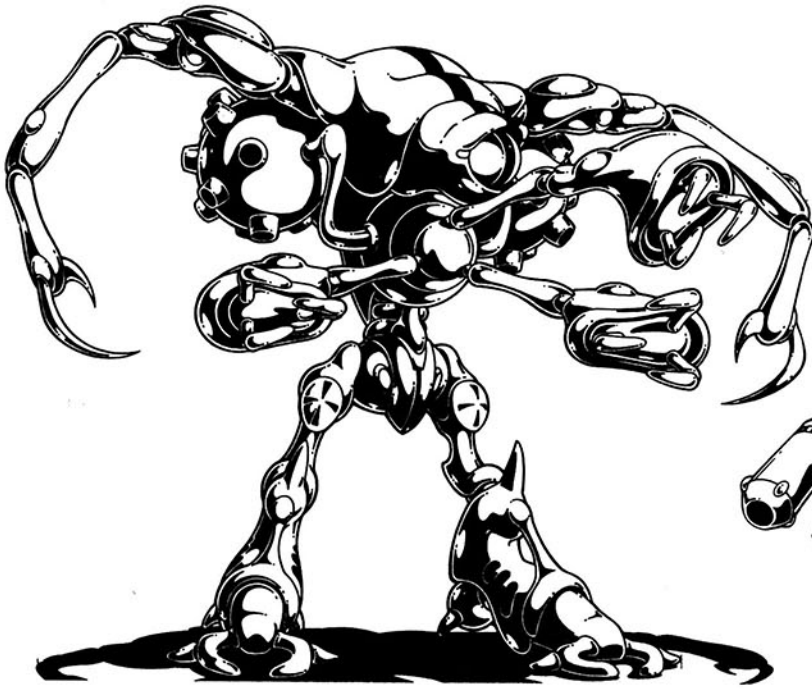
Picard (murmuring): "And things just got more complicated."

Indeed. Mixed feelings about the Klingons were running high during this episode. We learn that Worf's home of origin was devastated by Romulans, and that, of course, he bears no great love for them. Riker seems to have been having a bad day, because he sides with Worf on taking a confrontational stance with the Romulans, even though there are women and children on board and the saucer section hasn't been separated yet. The Twentieth Century sleepers seem a little out of place.

Star Trek: The Next Season

Taking the writer's strike into account, Paramount hopes to produce as many as 20 new episodes for the '88-'89 season. But don't assume that things will continue along just as you left them! At press time, it was already known that Gates McFadden, otherwise known as Dr. Crusher, will leave the show somewhere in the first quarter of the season. This was announced just as the studio indicated that she was to be nominated for an Emmy for her performance in "The Long Goodbye". Also, don't stock up on your Ferengi flags and tee-shirts — sources at the studio have indicated that the entire race will suffer a terrible cataclysm, and we won't see them around much more. The new enemies will of course be the Romulans, so you can expect a few episodes dealing with these old Federation foes. Expect to see more of Geordi's eyes, and less of Wesley. Also, a cryptic note from "official" studio leaks indicates that one major character will undergo significant personality changes, whatever that means.

NCC-1701D — THE RPG
Gaming in the New Galaxy

James Petrassi

The **Star Trek Role-Playing Game** has been around for several years now, and many of those who have played it in the past have had at least the opportunity to use characters, equipment, situations, etc. from the original series of shows and books that are out on the market, as well as an enormous amount of background information that has been published. As with the first series, **Star Trek: The Next Generation** also comes with a unique assortment of personalities, situations, and background data, but can it be incorporated into a role-playing game as easily as the originals?

Let's consider the all new Galaxy-class Enterprise for a moment. Veterans of the Star Fleet Battles boardgame will no doubt recognize this vessel as an X-class Command Cruiser, able to do twice what an ordinary starship could do, faster, more efficiently, and with better special effects. This "new" ship is, according to the writers' guide for the series, is nearly twice as large as the older starship of that name. That's eight times the old living space, filled with a crew of over one thousand people, including officers, crewmen, and their families and children. With a ship that huge, a cunning GM could literally place anything in the path of a group of players, and have a decent chance of pulling it off with little difficulty.

The Federation has changed both a lot and a little in the past century or so, which can be a good or bad thing. Though the Enterprise is still seeking out new life forms and civilizations, the feel of the Next Generation setting is undeniably not one of a military nature. As an example of this, some of the bridge crew seem able to handle several different positions simultaneously. For example, Data is able to deal with the positions of helmsman, engineer, and science officer. Worf, the Klingon bridge officer, is adept at either being a security officer or a communications technician. One big change is the relationship between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. In fact, it was learned in during a particular episode that Worf was orphaned by a Romulan attack on a Klingon colony planet,

and was found by a Star Fleet officer. To honor his foster parents, Worf enlisted in the Academy and is now a member of Star Fleet.

Thus, the Klingons are no longer useful as villains. However, their replacement came easily enough through the introduction of two new alien races: the "Q," and the Ferengi; the former, an annoying super-being (or race thereof), the latter, just plain annoying.

We as viewers of the show have little to go on where the Q are concerned; the only one that we've ever seen seems to be attracted to humans because we don't seem to fit into the scheme of things. We have potential, they say, but we can't use it. Why not, they ask? And then, they try to find out the hard way, i.e., by making the lives of the Enterprise crew miserable.

The Ferengi are, on the other hand, nothing less than capitalism itself flung loose onto the galaxy. Any encounter with them is an excuse for them to get something out of it, and I love them because of this. They're not evil, just greedy beyond belief. As such, the Feregni are perfect encounters where players are concerned. They're not out to conquer the universe; to their way of thinking, it just wouldn't be cost effective.

We didn't get a chance to see the Federation's old enemies, the Romulans until the final episode of the season, but it was worth it. They are exactly the same as the "original" Romulans, meaning, they are out to take over the galaxy, and feel that it's just a matter of time before they do so. Since Romulans look (but don't act) a great deal like Vulcans, they have excellent spy potential in any game situation.

IT'S THE JOFFREY. THEY'RE DOING A PERFORMANCE TONIGHT AND NEED THEIR LEOTARDS BACK.
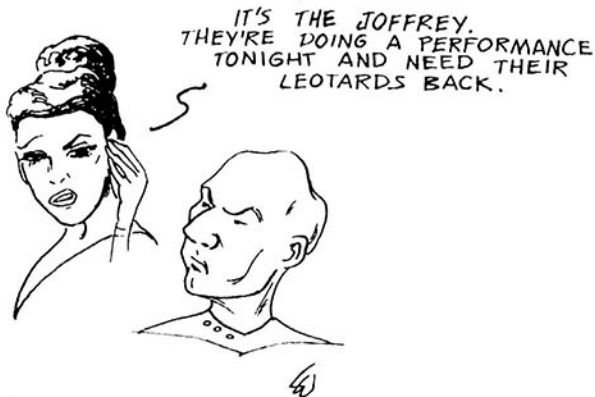
That is the Star Trek: Next Generation universe in a nutshell. How should players deal with it? Well, that is another story, because it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how one should go about role-playing a television show character. One thing is clear, though; the players are best advised to roll up and design their own characters, not using the ones presented on the tube. The characters that we see from week to week are much better used as NPCs, being there during critical moments in a game session to offer advice or guidance, or even to take charge of an event that the players themselves may not be able to handle. The other option is that the players try to take up the mantles of only the "smaller than life," characters, if only because they are easier to role-play. Captain Jean-Luc Picard, for example, makes an excellent NPC because he has a fantastically rich background that the GM can draw upon from time to time. He also has over thirty years of Star Fleet duty under his belt, which few if any gamers would be able to seriously emulate in a game session. Commander William Riker, on the oth-

er hand, presents a much more playable character; he has less experience to deal with, has to keep himself appraised of both what the Captain thinks should be done, and how his orders are implemented. In this manner, Riker makes the perfect away team leader, by providing leadership ability without the player having to memorize tons of information.

Worf should be a delight for any player to take on. His combat skills are nothing less than superb, and he shows great speed and agility. The fact that he is a bridge officer displays that he is intelligent and capable, and yet is very quick to anger, having a strong inclination to initiate violence. On a personal level, he normally acts very reserved, showing great respect to his superiors. Still, you get the idea that all of this is just a cover to hide some very intense emotions buried deep within him, and the mask doesn't always stay up, either.

So there you have it. The newest TV series incarnation of Star Trek has opened up new vistas for role-playing in the Star Trek universe for gamers who remember both the old and the new. With a little work on the part of the GM and the players, a campaign set in such a milieu would provide all involved with much fun and enjoyment, to be shared by all. Until the next time, "live long and prosper", and may things never get "a lot more complicated". Because Star Trek — is back.

Playing in the Holodeck
What Don't We Know About the Enterprise's Ultimate Rec-Room?

Allan Asherman

"The more complex the mind," observed Captain Kirk in Theodore Sturgeon's script for **Shore Leave**, "the greater the need for the simplicity of play ." The crew of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** is surrounded by devices and problems even more advanced than those experienced by Kirk and Company. Their 'toys' are therefore more complex than those available in Kirk's era. Captain Picard's updated *U.S.S. Enterprise* contains a remarkable device called the *Holodeck,* which can be considered the ultimate role-playing game.

Essentially, the Holodeck is a large room equipped with circuitry that can simulate any environment and populate it with people, animals, or any creature that can be imagined. Such a device is convenient for the writers of ST:TNG. Countless situations can be created using the holodeck; and there is always the possibility that adventures conjured up within it will not proceed exactly as planned. Another type of dramatic conflict involving the holodeck results from the device's ability to comprise the series' continuity through frequent or ill use.

In *The Big Goodbye,* resident holodeck expert Wesley Crusher attempts to cancel the holodeck's current program while Captain Picard and others (including Wesley's mother) are inside. "If this isn't done correctly," he announces, "the program could abort, and everyone inside could vanish."

In the story, Picard seeks relaxation by programming the holodeck to recreate the 20th century San Francisco of his favorite fiction detective, a Sam Spade clone who moves in circles resembling the Warner Brothers props department during the filming of **The Maltese Falcon**. Everything goes according to the 'script' until the Enterprise historian is shot by the Peter Lorre-type. The holodeck's program has apparently been rendered deadly by an alien energy probe directed at the Enterprise — but no matter what the explanation, these aspects of the tale raise some interesting questions. First, how does the the holodeck work, and, second, given its complexity and capabilities, what is its full potential?

The function of the holodeck in the series' continuity has been outlined in at least one memo circulated among the series' production crew. The document states that in the era of The Next Generation, Federation scientists have invented a micro-miniature device that influences electromagnetic fields. The holodeck's walls are covered with these incredibly small wonders which are tied in to the starship's computer system. Once the computer has been programmed to create (or recreate) a specific environment, each of these millions of devices is given instructions that result in three-dimensional shapes and textures which humans perceive as anything desired. The result is even more satisfying than the "feelies" mentioned in Aldous Huxley's **Brave New World**, since you're not required to *imagine* that you're moving through your illusion. Using the holodeck, you would actually be walking, but the floor of your environment would be passing beneath you like a treadmill.

How did this remarkable device come about? During the early pre-production of **Star Trek — The Motion Picture**, one staff artist designed a pair of goggles that could be used as a portable recreational facility: it would have replaced reality with whatever surroundings were desired.

The ability to manufacture realistic illusions and project them directly into a person's mind existed within the **Star Trek** continuity as early as *The Cage*, the first **Star Trek** pilot. The *Talosians* had evolved that ability, yet had otherwise vegetated. *The Cage* explored the illusion-casting ability of the Talosians and the potential fate of other races learning the same skills.

When the budget of the original **Star Trek** series made it necessary to use unaired footage of *The Cage*, creator/producer/writer Gene Roddenberry conceived a framing device the resulted in *The Menagerie*. As part of that new story, the Federation High Command and Starfleet declared Talos IV off-limits because of the potential danger to any civilization learning their peculiar talents.

Suppose that as the years passed, this ban was lifted and diplomatic relations were established with the Talosians. Since it was mentioned that their talent *could* be learned, perhaps the principles behind their capabilities were mastered so that their ultra-realistic illusions could be duplicated using scientific devices. This could well have been the source of holodeck technology.

Whatever the inspiration behind the holodeck, there is still the disturbing matter of Wesley's warning that "...the program could abort and everyone inside could vanish." The Next Generation memo concerning the holodeck dismisses the possibility that the technology can harm the people who use it. Since the props and surroundings are manufactured, they can be adjusted instantly to compensate for any emergency, so if someone fell into a lake, for example, the water would disappear before he could drown. If he fell off a cliff, he would find his landing cushioned. It is the user's *surroundings* that are being influenced, rather than the structure of the user himself. There seems to be an inconsistency here, but this might also be explained using another staple of Federation technology: the transporter.

Perhaps the transporter is the principle behind the holodeck. The device would function by converting the user from matter into energy in such a way that he would still be able to perceive himself and his surroundings (or those manufactured by the holodeck). The trouble with *this* bizarre explanation is that it doesn't agree with the official explanation of how the holodeck works. This is too bad: it might have justified Wesley's statement.

The Big Goodbye also raises other disturbing issues. One character synthesized by the holodeck asks Picard, "When you're gone, will this world still exist? Will my wife and kids still be waiting for me at home?" Picard, in all honesty, responds that he does not know. As the unfortunate character watches the Captain return to his own reality of the Enterprise, the 'exit' closes, and we watch as the environment within the holodeck fades to black. What can be the ethics of a culture that uses a holodeck even though ignorant of its workings and internal reality? *Are* there ethical questions here? It would seem so, as the manufactured entities at least have enough awareness to question their fate.

"I think, therefore I am" would seem to apply here, and if it does, then we're talking about an endless variety of animated and intelligent beings, entitled to the same rights humans claim for themselves. Viewed in this perspective, the holodeck appears to be manufacturing, simulating, or otherwise gathering *life* and then uncreating it on demand! It is entirely possible, of course, that what appears to be intelligent life-forms within the holodeck only function as such because of their programming. If this is the case, then we're dealing with little more than marionettes — more sophisticated to be sure, but with life-processes simulated by the machine. **The Big Goodbye** confuses this question even further. When simulacrums of "The Fat Man" and "Joe Cairo" learn that their world is only a pocket of unreality existing within the structure of the U.S.S. Enterprise, they attempt to leave through the holodeck exit. They actually step out into the corridor before they vanish, gradually fading away from the feet up, suggesting Alka-Seltzer tablets disolving in a glass of water. As the disappear they protest, clearly aware of what's happening to them *even though they are no longer inside the holodeck and no one is near who could benefit from the fiction of their existence.*

In the same episode, Captain Picard initially enters old San Francisco while wearing his uniform. He steps out of the illusion back into the Enterprise, determined to wear the proper clothing — which he *is* before he re-enters the old-time environment. This brings up the question of the holodeck's limitations in yet another area. Under ordinary circumstances, without any alien influences or power-sources, it appears that the holodeck would not be capable of influencing one's person — which present inconsistencies. If you can walk on simulated ground, feel simulated objects and interact with simulated

people, why isn't it possible to *seem* to wear simulated clothing? After all, the standard Starfleet uniforms are supposedly manufactured by the Enterprise computers from recycled materials. Why can't the holodeck mechanisms do the same, then return the discarded clothes to nothingness when they're no longer needed — or if they do not really exist, just stop the illusion? In *Shore Leave* we visited a planet-sized equivalent of the holodeck — an entire world functioning as the ultimate Disneyland. The thoughts of visitors were received, recorded, monitored, and evaluated. Vast manufacturing centers within the planet were immediately programmed to construct and animate whatever the 'customer' envisioned.

We were told very little about the principles involved in the amusement park planet, but there was one striking similarity between that environment and the holodeck as it behaved in *The Big Goodbye:* it was possible for someone to be hurt or killed. In *Shore Leave*, we see crew member Angela Martine cut down by bullets from a strafing aircraft. We also apparently see Dr. McCoy bite the big one — run through by the lance of the dread Black Knight. McCoy later reappears none the worse for wear and explains that he was taken below ground and 'repaired' by the same machines that manufactured everything else on the planet. We do not see Angela again when everyone is lined up for the end of the episode, but we assume she has also been 'repaired'. One thing about the amusement park planet is certain: it has better reconstruction facilities than the holodeck (or the Enterprise), since the historian would have died had his injuries been beyond the ability of Dr. Crusher to repair.

Only one thing about the holodeck is clear to me: I can't explain how it works because...I'm a *writer*, dammit, not a physicist!

Book Trek
## To Boldly Split Infinitives

James Petrassi

Ghost Ship, by Diane Carey
Pocket Books: $3.95

The cover of **Ghost Ship**, by Diane Carey, features Data, Riker, and Geordi, which is great. However, why is an upside down picture of *Battlestar Galactica* hanging in space above them? Wrong science fiction show, guys! You would think that the art department at Pocket Books would know better by now.

Ghost Ship is the first in a projected series of novels which will take place in the universe of Star Trek: The Next Generation, using the main characters from that show. Written by the author of **Dreadnought** and **Battlestations**, this is Carey's first attempt at a novel which does not feature her popular lead character, Lt. Piper. Carey is obviously well versed in the lore of Star Trek and her earlier books were entertaining, but the lack of an interesting central character is a weak point in **Ghost Ship**.

The story opens in the year 1995. A Soviet aircraft carrier is attacked by a strange force, and destroyed. Four centuries later, aboard the starship U.S.S. Enterprise, ship's counselor Deanna Troi experiences a nightmare of such a frightening intensity that she is convinced it is something more than a bad dream. The crew of that long-ago destroyed Soviet carrier are aboard a mysterious "Ghost Ship" that is now after the Enterprise. Questions rapidly arise: Is the Ghost Ship an alien weapon that never stopped working? Can Picard and his crew stop the insidious vessel before it captures them as well?

Though the plot sounds exciting, Carey falls into a common failing I call the Roddenberry Trap. Placing the Enterprise itself in jeopardy is no longer a suspense-building tactic — we know the Enterprise isn't going to be destroyed! Without the Enterprise, it isn't Star Trek. Likewise for any main characters like Picard, or any of the bridge crew, for that matter. Eliminating any of these factors wouldn't make sense. Carey's strongest point in her previous Star Trek novels was the introduction of a new character related to that universe, and her adventures involving the characters of Star Trek. With a new character central to the storyline, there was no guarantee, spoken or unspoken, that he/she/it would make it to the end of the novel, as there would be with a character like Kirk or Picard. Carey had demonstrated a talent for fleshing out character in her past works, which **Ghost Ship** badly needed. It would have been better if the personalities of the new Enterprise were explored in greater depth. Instead, we are treated to the literary equivalent of accompanying your "significant other" to a family wedding. You meet everyone there, but in the morning, you can't remember a single face.
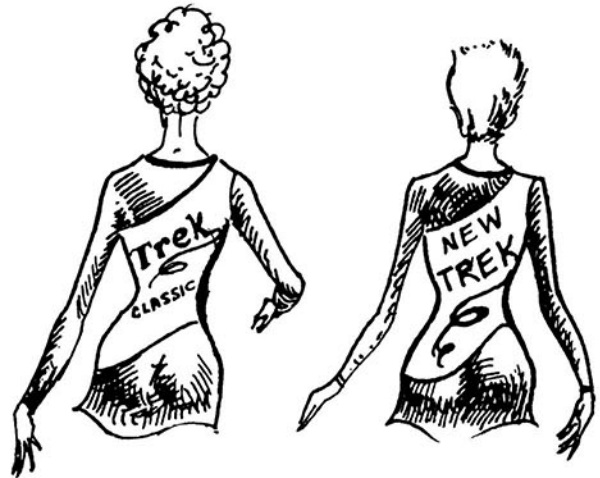
The Star Trek Interview Book, by Allan Asherman
Pocket Books: $7.95

A lot has happened since Gene Roddenberry created **Star Trek** in 1964. Since then, the original series had a run of three years before it was taken off the air and afterwards syndicated for the years following. The 70's brought us the animated cartoon Star Trek. The 80's brought us four feature films uniting the original cast — and **Star Trek: The New Generation** to TV for a first season and is bringing it back to the viewers for a second.

Allan Asherman has captured the essence of Star Trek's success in his new work, **The Star Trek Interview Book**: that Star Trek was the creation of many. Gene Roddenberry had the dream, but the actors, writers and technical staff gave his dream substance, and they are the focus of the Interview Book. It is recommended that this book be read after first reading **The World of Star Trek** by David Gerrold (Bluejay Books) and **The Making of Star Trek** (Ballantine), by Stephen Whitfield & Gene Roddenberry, because Asherman refers to particular episodes or individuals that the newcomer to Star Trek might not know anything about. However, what this book lacks in terms of setting context, it more than makes up for in communicating the passion the interviewees felt about participating in the Star Trek phenomena. Here in one volume you have the vastly differing viewpoints of stars, writers, producers, directors and technical staff on common questions such as "What makes Star Trek so popular?" One is reminded while reading this book that **Star Trek** was molded by people who had worked on television shows like **The Twilight Zone, Outer Limits** and even **Superman**.

Allan Asherman allows his subjects to recount their own experiences with **Star Trek**. He not only interviews Gene Roddenberry, and the stars of the TV show, but he goes behind the scenes to explore the mechanics of getting the show off the ground each episode, as well as the interviewees' opinions on the problems, controversial issues, and anecdotes that affected their experiences. Harve Bennett, James Horner, and Robert Fletcher, who participated in the making of the Star Trek feature films, are just some of the people that Asherman touches upon in this book. **The Star Trek Interview Book** is not for the casual reader, but, as Asherman is also the author of **The Star Trek Compendium** and **The Making Of Star Trek II**, the result of his work may not be a symphony, but neither is a Tower of Babel.

# Their Numbers Are Legion: Grav Tank Action In The Far-Flung Future!

Jonathan Frater

The Terran Overlord Government (TOG) and the Commonwealth are both part of an entire universe at war. The TOG feels that it must control the whole galaxy and it refuses to rest until it does, and its war machine has more than enough power to carry out this goal. But the Commonwealth also has armies and navies and will resist the TOG with all of its might until the bitter end.

This is the universe of **Renegade Legion**, created by FASA Corp. The first boardgame for this universe was Interceptor, which dealt with fighter-to-fighter combat in outer space. Individual battles in space can be very exciting, but that is not the way to win an interstellar campaign (as any competent strategist will probably tell you). Worlds are conquered by eliminating ground-based resistance; ALL resistance. If your enemies won't come to you, then you have little choice but to go after them and make their day as depressing for them as possible. FASA's most recent **Renegade Legion** (RL) release, entitled **Centurion**, tells you all of the more interesting ways to accomplish this.

Renegade Legion Centurion: Blood & Steel is the RL game of armored combat in the sixty-ninth century A.D. Armor means not the typical chainmail-and-helm sort of thing that the word seems to imply, but ARMOR, as in tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs). Armor means that when your enemy is about to kill you, you can usually know about it within two to five seconds, because that's all the time that a real-life tank crew has to get the hell out of their opponent's sights — or to shoot back. **Centurion** manages to capture much of that "tank crew" feeling in play while remaining almost as simple as FASA's first game (Interceptor).

The game's premise is almost too simple; when your Interceptors finally control the skies over a planet, i.e., have destroyed any and all opposing
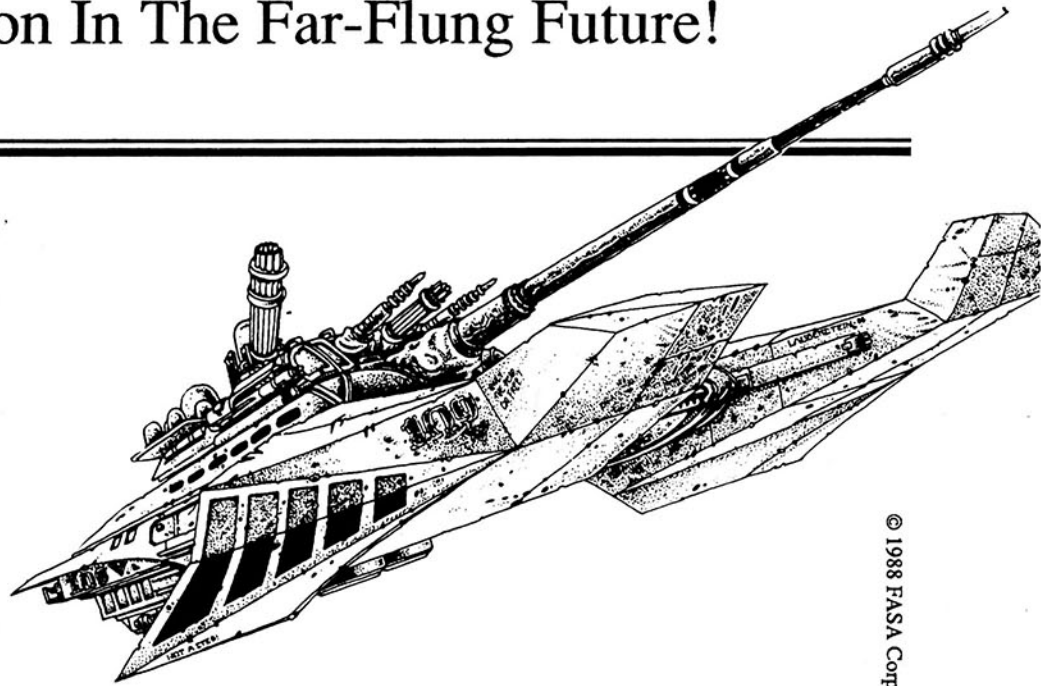
spacecraft, that's where their usefulness ends, since destroying other fighters and orbital gunships is all that they can do. Once that goal is accomplished, a Fleet Admiral must send down his troop transports from their orbital positions and perform as many ground assaults as logistics and intelligence will allow, making extensive use of grav-powered tanks and APCs. When the armored forces make planetfall, the playing action begins.
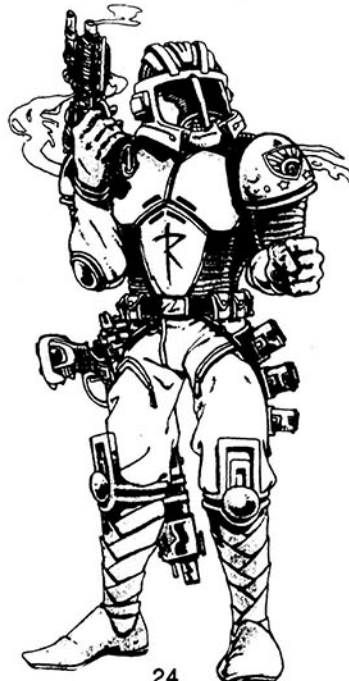
The structure of the game reminds one of **Interceptor** in many ways: the rules governing design, movement, and sequence of play are still easy to learn and the number of charts and die rolls that the game requires for movement and combat situations is kept to a minimum. What we do see in **Centurion** that **Interceptor** does not (and cannot, in fact) give us are rules for vehicle and infantry movement through differing terrain and landscapes. More than a few new weapons are introduced, some of which are perhaps even more advanced and destructive than those found in Interceptor. Included are the hows and whys of both ground and grav (flying) vehicles in terms of movement and use. Also revealed is the place of infantry in this type of scenario (they're pretty tough in this day and age). Combat is (again, as with Interceptor) mostly point-and-shoot, but the rules include many more ways to be killed, usually through the intervention of terrain effects and bizarre weapons. Fully detailed rules are supplied for the use of buildings, planetary defense installations, designing your own vehicles, infantry use, and even some excellent suggestions on how to integrate both boardgames. All of this adds to the fun and challenge of what has long since be-

come a standard in the industry, the war-game. Another thing about Centurion which was in the full spirit of FASA releases was a full book dealing solely with the history, evolution, equipment, and organization of the armies of both the TOG and the Commonwealth/Renegade Legions.

What are tanks like in the future universe of the TOG? Well, tanks fly, for one thing. A typical tank is outfitted with twelve inches of high-density, diamond-hard armor on every side, shields that stop energy weapons, missiles with accuracy and damage potential that you wouldn't have believed possible, and the monstrous twentieth century 120 millimeter-diameter high velocity gun has given way to a whole new breed of gun; namely, the 200mm hyper-velocity gauss cannon. This cannon is capable of shooting a projectile eight inches wide and about a foot long, weighing about fifty pounds, by accelerating it down an electromagnetic field to fantastic speeds. Such a weapon can also fire APDS (Armor Piercing Discarding Sabot), HEAP (High Explosive Armor Piercing), and HH (HammerHead) rounds, any and all of which have a devastating effect to other tanks, or to anything else they hit. The familiar 20mm automatic chain gun (basically, an extremely heavy machine gun which uses a chain-driven action for better rate of fire speeds) has been revitalized in the form of the mass driver cannon, which can shoot up to five thousand 50mm exploding bullets into a moving target in two seconds!

The missiles are even worse! Vehicles have to watch out for the really nasty SMLM (Sub-Munitions Laser-Guided) missile which shears off entire sections of the typical armored hull with frightening regularity. That, and the TVLG (Tube/Vertically launched Laser-Guided) rocket, which can punch straight through a tank's super-armored hull and bring a very quick end to a battle. Your Vulcan anti-missile laser system might stop a few of them, but what if the bad guys have two missiles, or three, or ten? Bear in mind before you answer that the smallest "missile" that we have today is only two and three-quarters of an inch wide, and one of them can destroy a two-story house.

Why are these lasers so important? Because the tactic of using 'painting lasers' has become a near-necessity just to break through the defenses that tanks and APCs have these days. What an infantryman does is to point a laser gun set on low power (which is enough to see by, but useful for little else) at the intended target, be it house, tank, whatever, making sure that his communicator has a direct link to his APC. The battle computer aboard the APC figures out the coding to the target's shields, which effectively lowers the protection on that side of the target vehicle, and leaves it wide open to a missile attack. The projectile in question, be it missile, shell, or whatever, looks for the laser's radiation once it is fired and five seconds later, POW! The target's a goner. Well-placed spotting lasers can completely blow away a perfectly constructed tank column, not even mentioning the other aspects of TOG vs. Commonwealth ground warfare, such as: Thor satellites (which fire explosive-tipped javelins from orbit with pinpoint accuracy), artillery, [which include HAFE (Hypervelocity Airburst Flechette Explosive) rounds] ADM (Artillery-Dispensed Mines) rounds; smoke rounds, crater rounds, or HELL rounds, which are tactical nuclear weapons by any other name.

One reason that Centurion is this good is probably because it's a successful re-emergence of a genre that has not been seen in about seven years. To my knowledge, the last game that effectively depicted super-futuristic armored vehicles was Striker, which came from Game Designer's Workshop back in 1981. Striker was designed for miniatures, but included a hefty amount of background material with it, as does Centurion. Because it had been a miniatures system, it was considered a bit too complex for most gamers who simply played science fiction RPGs, like Traveller. Being that it had been the only such game around until now, it was a sort of default standard that most science fiction miniature systems were judged by. Striker was a complete system and was capable of being fully integrated with the Traveller universe. Centurion is also quite complete, and can be fully integrated into the Renegade Legion universe, but is a lot easier to play and master compared to Striker. Renegade Legion, and its predecessor, Interceptor, both have a current price of $25.00 at your local hobby store, so don't wait, because the Renegade Legion wants — you!

Incidentally: all you Renegade Legion pilots out there should take a look at The Fire Eagles, a "hot" combination scenario pack and character book describing 3021st Interceptor Wing. Eight members of the Fire Eagles are detailed, along with 15 great missions/adventures for them (or any other Fire Eagle members.) And be sure to check out the great cover!

Яun Silent, Яun Deep
Diving For Яed October

Jack Trainman

You're all alone in Soviet-controlled waters. You have a faulty nuclear ballistic missile submarine under you, a frightened crew of Soviet greenhorn seamen, a dead *zampolit* (Soviet Political Officer), a few good officers who understand your problem — and every ship in the Soviet and American navies are looking for you. What do you do?

You write a book about it. Or, that's what Tom Clancy did when he wrote **The Hunt For Red October**, and it basically dealt with just this kind of situation. Captain Marko Ramius, who has spent many years of his life as a loyal Soviet naval officer, has decided that he wants out of the game, permanently; he refuses to deal with the Kremlin's way of thinking anymore, and decides to defect to the West. Admirable, but not easy by a long shot. Ramius also happens to be the commander of the newest ballistic submarine in the Soviet fleet, the Red October, which is fitted with a revolutionary new type of underwater drive unit that makes it nearly undetectable by outside forces, American or Soviet. Once the Russians find out what he's trying to do, the chase is on, with the Americans trying to catch the sub for the same reason the the Russians want her back; the chance to take apart a Soviet nuclear submarine. You know, the sort of thing that makes CIA agents squirm with glee when they think about it.

The novel is a work of art, because it is the one book that I have read that deals exclusively with state-of-the-art military hardware, and does it correctly. WWIII has been a hobby of mine for some years, and so I know about most of the conventional hardware that Clancy mentions. He doesn't use his writing to take sides, nor does he try to give the Americans any distinct advantages. He just tells it like it is, and lets the pages flip where they may. The characters go through a lot of grief, and get extremely lucky in a few places, but I liked it because of its sense of realism. TSR's promise about **The Hunt For Red October** boardgame, just a couple of months old, was no fantasy, either; the game does, in fact, deal with the basic situation outlined in the novel without becoming bogged down in rules or details.

The game does well by not placing dozens of playing pieces on the board simultaneously at any time during play. All that game play requires is: the game board, showing the North Atlantic in impressive detail, complete with ports, and air bases; the battle board, which holds all of the pieces that about to engage each other; and, for each player, a small task force board (one for the Soviet player, one for the NATO) to organize his task forces and air squadrons. This arrangement may sound a bit unwieldy on paper, but it works to everyone's benefit during game play. Order of play, while not especially simple, is especially well ordered; initiative is determined, followed by movement of seacraft by both players, followed by aircraft movement, followed by combat, followed by another turn. The rules are designed to be integrated into as many circumstances as the players can come up with, and don't necessarily rely on what the rule book says must happen on such and such a turn. For example, each side has the right to conduct searches for enemy ships, subs, and aircraft when the player thinks it most appropriate, i.e. when opportunity knocks. You don't have to wait until the "Electronic Search Phase," which doesn't happen until side A completes his moves within ten miles of side B's submarines, whose names begin with the letter L on Tuesday, or anything like that. Once the rules are learned, the game will usually progress smoothly, with the players able to see exactly what they are doing at all times by simply glancing at their organization boards. The fact that players have the option to form large numbers of ships into task forces also cuts down on the number of playing pieces that need to be shifted around from one turn to the next. I will say this though: the game contains eight different scenarios, which deal with various situations ranging from the Hunt For Red October to World War III in the North Atlantic.

All things considered, The Hunt For Red October boardgame by TSR is both a fairly realistic wargame in its own right and an excellent adaptation of an excellent novel. I would highly recommend it to wargamers everywhere, and can only hope that game designer Doug Niles has a chance to work his magic on the Red Storm Rising boardgame as well, which will hopefully be out on time next January.

Look for the review of **The Hunt For Red October** computer game simulation in this issue's Red Dagger Inn.

Soviet
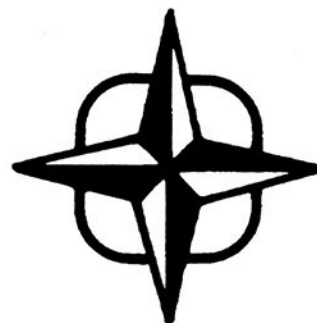
NATO

Kingpin for a Quarter
A Look at the *Baddest* PBM Around

By Craig Stallone

Awright, shaddup, siddown, an' listen hard! What I gotta tell ya just might save your lives out on those streets, 'cruits! As you must know by now, if you've enlisted in the Pond Scum Gang, I'm Craig Stallone, an' you'll be takin' orders from me! We're at war with the Yakamoto Warriors to the southeast of our turf, an' if you ain't on yer toes, you'll end up flat on your back, if ya catch my drift.

Ahem — **It's a Crime!** is a play-by-mail game, one which simulates gang life in the late 1990s. Players run gangs in New York City, and start out with a rules package, a map on which to chart their turf, and assorted illegal weapons/substances, all in a city of nearly 10,000 blocks.

The game has caused quite a bit of controversy, mostly for allowing players to mug, rob, commit arson, and both push and use drugs. Personally, I find these criticisms unfair as the game does treat all of them with the attitude that they are CRIMES. The set-up rules even come with an unnecessary disclaimer at the beginning stating that the publishers do not agree with, support, or encourage these activities on the part of the players. With the understanding that potential players understand the difference between the real world and a game that is played through the mail and moderated by a computer, perhaps I can review the game as what it is -- not an essay on social values, but a fun way to spend a few hours thinking up gang strategy and increasing a player characters' status as a gang leader.

As the game begins, a player is assigned a turf and a small gang, whose name is determined by the player. Later, players can actually meet, (through their gang interactions, through the mail, on the telephone, and sometimes in person!) form alliances, and often, go to war. The game's moderators encourage players to write to one another, supplying the addresses of the players whose gangs have "met", in combat or otherwise. Gang conflicts and turf wars, if properly played, can be the most entertaining part of the game.

It's a Crime! awards *notoriety points* much in the same way as other games award victory points. As the players gain notoriety, they seek to reach the level of mob boss, at which they get to form a crime family. The rank of Godfather is the ultimate goal.

One amusing aspect of the game is the gang names, which are chosen by players either for their fearsomeness (Hell Hounds, Voices of Death) or for comedic affect (The Anti-Goetzian League, Satan's Guacamole). I thought my Pond Scum would stand out; actually, it turned out to be a relatively typical gang name.

All things considered, I find **It's a Crime!** to be a very entertaining game built on a imaginative concept that is followed through very well. To the moralists who may be reading this, and questioning the taste of a game that encourages anti-social behavior, I wouldn't recommend it. But then, I wouldn't recommend any game which allows or encourages the players to kill, sack empty establishment while slaying any guards left to watch the place, ruin property and wage war... which would mean practically every RPG in existence, play-by-mail or not. But for those who like to have a little nasty fun, once in a while, for those who can take the pressure of being the toughest dude in town, write away for your rules right now! Even as you read this, your turf is being eyed by the Savage Chihuahuas...

So wise up, ya dumb 'cruits, 'cause we're hot an' good to go!
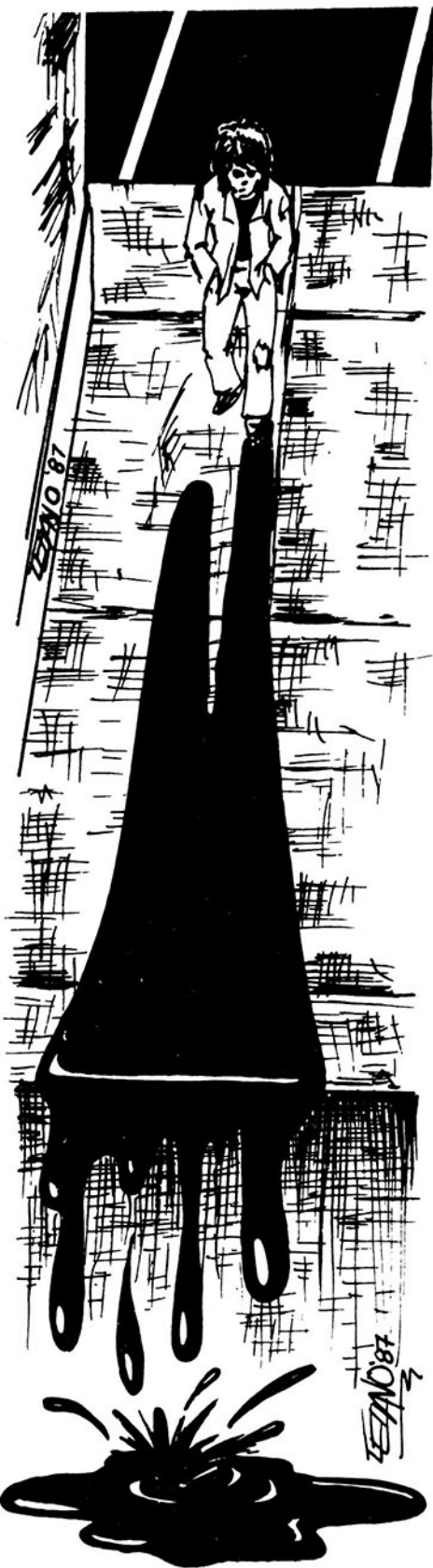
Da, Ve Get Moose and Sqwirrel!
A Review of The Rocky and Bullwinkle Role-Playing Party Game

Serge F. Clermont

Does anyone out there remember the **Rocky And Bullwinkle Show**? No? With cartoon greats like **Boris Badenov, Dudley Do-Right**, and **Mr. Peabody**? Huh? With such scenic landmarks as **Frostbite Falls**? C'mon! Who could forget that great institution of Learning Absolutely Nothing, **Wossamotta U**? Well, if you did, *Phbbt!* to you! For the good ol' days of wacky cartoondom are back, in the **Rocky And Bullwinkle Party Role-Playing Party Game** by TSR, edited and developed by Warren Spector, and designed by Dave "Zeb" Cook.

As the intrepid purchaser of said game opens the colorful orange box with the famous cartoon characters from the TV show all over the lid, he immediately notices that there is something...*different* about this game. Something...*strange*. Something...*absolutely bizarre*. He finds—GASP! Oh *no*! It's—*latex hand puppets*! With the characters available to be played for the game *flattened* up against these plastic mittens, a total of 10 in all! How did they come to such a fate?

Actually, these and the 18 cardboard Character Stand-Ups that come with them make it easier for the players to identify which character is being played by whom. But wait, there's more! There are 6 Two-Dimensional Rotating Randomizers (Spinners for all you Visigoths), 108 Story Cards, one Narrator's Microphone (don't get excited, it's cardboard like the Stand-Ups), and 1 Blank Character Stand-Up (for all of you that like to play Blanks, or, maybe just making up your own wacko character, like the authors recommend). But wait — There's *still* more, you lucky dog! This game comes complete with three booklets: "How to Play the Game", the introduction — "Stories", suggestions for story themes to start off a game session — and "The Guide to Frostbite Falls and Beyond", which is the Who's Who, the What's What and the When's-Dinner-Gonna-Be-Ready to the home of the two stars for which this game was named.

There are several types of game formats that can be played using the materials located therein *(Wherein? There-*

in! Oh.). The easiest format is that of the Narration Game.

A group of escapees—I mean, *players*—get together and decide what kind of story they're going to tell for the game. They use the "Stories" booklet for this purpose (or, in the Graduate Game, come up with one of their own, as long as they stick with the general thrust of one of the cartoon segments they had on the show, maybe a 'Fractured Fairy Tale' or 'Peabody's Improbable History'). The Story always has a Point A, dubbed "The Story So Far", which sets up the scenario, and a Point B, "The Ending". The players choose their characters and the deck of Story Cards is shuffled, with five cards being dealt out to the players if the number of players doesn't exceed four, four cards otherwise. Cards can be discarded and new ones picked up *once* before the Narration Game begins. Then, the player who organized all of this becomes the Narrator, using the ideas suggested by his Story Cards to start the ball rolling from Point A to get to Point B. Each time he uses an idea from a Story Card, he discards it, and continues to Narrate and discard until someone else jumps in from his left and picks up the story using his own Cards. Because the game revolves around humor, any idea used can be as corny and wacky as the players want them to be, as long as they're funny or extremely bad (as in the case of puns). Once everyone is down to one Card, any player can trade for the top card in the deck. [Note *(C-Flat!)*: the Game can be prolonged by the players if they wish, picking up cards at the same rate or faster or slower than the rate that they are discarding them at.] Then, there's the throw-off on the count of three; whomever's card is on the bottom of the pile, gets to end the story, preferably in the traditionally silly way the game has been going all this time. Diplomas are the awards given out at the end of the game, rewards for "Worst Pun" and stuff like that. These become more important in the Everyone Can Do Something Game format, used to get extra spins — wait a minute, I may be jumping the gun here *(I'm just not that kind of .45!)*. The Everyone Can Do Something Game is an advanced version of the Narration Game, with

Well done, Horse.
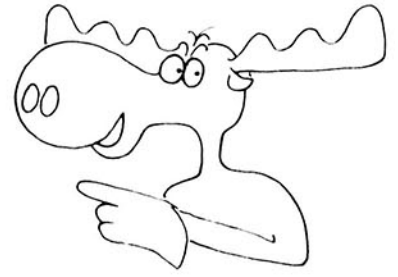
But one thing remains perfectly clear, no matter what version of the Game you're playing, something that most other role-playing games ignore—the Good Guys must always win in the end, and the Bad Guys always lose. It's not as boring as one might think, because who wins or loses is none of the game's concern. It's how you get to the end that matters — and, like the book says, "Bad is Good, the Worse the Better".

Following the text regarding the rules are answers to possible questions and problems that may crop up during play. What makes reading the game rules bearable (or is that *moose*- able?) are the little side-notes from the characters themselves that clarify the paragraph they are in the vicinity of or just add a little color to what's being read. Congratulations to Sue Myers for the terrific depictions of these famous characters. The pictures of Rocky, Bullwinkle and all their friends really give the material the feel of the old show.

So, for those of you who are diehard Bullwinkle fans, get your batteries charged up to buy and enjoy this great new addition to the role-playing game selection in the market today. You don't have to be experienced as a role-player to have fun with it—and the rules are easy to learn, taking no more than 15 minutes to set up and master. Join the gang in Frostbite Falls, Minnesota, and get your Moose and Squirrel, today!

the Spinners *(okay — so — I'm a Visigoth)* being used to determine the success (or spectacular failure) of a character's actions during the game. (Also, whereas any character could be affected by the Story Cards in the Narration Game, this version places the control of a character chosen by a player directly into the player's hands.)

Each character has a particular Power that he can use during play. These are special abilities, skills, and/or qualities that were demonstrated by the specific character within the scope of the cartoons. *(Who do you think you are, Mr. Peabody?)* They are not always beneficial Powers. For example, Rocky can Fly — but he is also Amazingly Trustful. Fearless Leader is Monstrously Cruel, and has the Entire Pottsylvanian Treasury in his back pocket (sometimes). The details of a character's set of special Powers can be found on the back of the Character Stand-Ups, as well as Useful Sayings one can use to remain true to character *("I'll get you yet, DO-RIGHT!")*.

The Narrator changes from player to player, just like in the Narration Game. However, being that Powers have come into play, he has a few of his own detailed on the back of the Narrator's Microphone. He becomes a sort of GM, orchestrating the story, listening to what the players want their characters to do, and letting them know what the results of their actions are through the resolution of their spins. The Graduate Game is basically what happens when the players want to create their own original characters in original cartoon stories.

Get them Badenov!

One of the nicest appeals of fantasy role-playing games, and RPG's in general, is that the rules of the the outside world do not apply to what is going on in the game. (Yes, other than those that written into the rules for a realistic feel.)

So unless one is playing with a referee who is a stickler for ultra-realism, the practical matters that one leaves behind in the real world are of no concern. Reality becomes what the players and referee want it to be.

The problems of cause and effect, ecological balance, and supply and demand are glazed over in a game of the imagination. As well they should be.

But what if that weren't so?

Gary Gygax once pointed out that for a magic-user in Dungeons and Dragons to reach the level of a Wizard he would have to kill the equivalent of 10,000 orcs. He went on to point out that actually doing this would be ludicrous, and that if there were a large number of adventuring types, the orc population would soon be depleted.

An impossibility in a game of the imagination. As well it should be.

But that is the premise of the "Last Orc".

This is the vehicle for the story, though it is really a light look at the games we have enjoyed playing over the years. Enjoy.

The Last Orc

by
Jape

"It was a complete massacre...a bloodbath, even by our standards." These words were spoken to me by D'Agrunt, the very last orc. My name is Swift. Sandar Swift. I'm a reporter for the **Evening Crier**, and I was interviewing the last orc in the world on the day of his death.

I asked him how he felt about this.

"I am rather peeved about it," he replied, "but all of the special attention they are giving me makes up for things somewhat. Guess there is not much you can do when the the Crown Prince of the Realm of Regoria wants to have an Orc Hunt for his eleventh birthday, and you just happen to be the last orc in the world."

We sat in a richly furnished cell located deep under the Royal Citadel of Regoria. The walls were covered with finely woven tapestries depicting an ancient battle, the floor with an abundance of silk pillows stuffed with eagle down.

D'Agrunt himself wore a rich robe of silk and fur ("From the now extinct giant otter, " he told me.) On his feet were slippers sewn with golden thread. As we talked, he sipped a very rare wine from a crystal goblet. "Well," he rationalized, "if I am going to go, at least I'm doing so in style. For the last few years we have been treated like princes. Believe me, it was a welcome change. When people realized that there were so few of us left alive — in other words, when we had ceased to be a threat — they began to help us, take us into their homes. It became very fashionable to have an orc in the household. We were actually in big demand; but, of course, it was too late."

I asked him how all of this came to pass, when only two decades ago the Orcan race was the scourge of the lands, having the run of much of the wilderness and dungeon areas.

"The problem began about thirteen or fourteen years ago, I believe. It was not bad at first, but suddenly there was this large number of adventurers poking about all hot for battle, glory and gold. Most were humans: warriors, magic-users, clerics...*that* sort of crowd. And tagging along with them were the dwarves, the elves, and far too

"I always considered myself a cultured fellow...an Orc-about-town, as it were"

"Hmm..679...a good year for Elvin wine..."

"You should'ave seen the look on the ranger's face when he saw it was a spiked pit!"

many of those little hobbit creatures. We held our own for quite awhile. Then, about six years ago, we were completely overrun. In addition to those other adventuring types was an increasing number of thieves, barbarians, rangers, druids, paladins — all flooding the countryside where we lived. Not only were there more of them, but they had become more powerful and had arsenals that you just would not believe. It got to the point where we were not even a challenge for these self-styled swashbucklers. Fighters refused to whet their blades on us, leaving the dirty work to those pesky magic-users and their damn Fireball spells. And what was really funny — in a sad sort of way — is that they were always screaming for our treasure. Like we really had something they needed. Ha!"

I pointed out that orcs were considered to be evil.

"Evil, smeevil," he replied. "It's all relative. So we were a bit distempered. So we did a little pillaging here and a little sacking there. After a time, we were just fighting to survive. You want to talk about evil? Many of these so-called 'heroes' would often, after wiping out the males of a lair, put the rest of the orcs — females and young! — to the sword."

I agreed that that was a sore issue, but he couldn't deny that orcs and other humanoids could usually be found siding with evil high priests, evil wizards, anti-paladins, and other assorted nasties.

"Okay, you have me there. But let me just set the record straight: we went to the heavies for protection, and it was worse for us that we did. You think being evil is fun? That we all stick together, buddies to the end? It did not work that way, my good fellow. The only reason they took us in was because we were cheap and expendable labor, not because they felt like helping out those less fortunate than themselves. Let me ask you something: when an evil wizard tried out a new spell, who do you think he tried it on first? If a battle was going against an anti-paladin, who do you think covered his butt while he escaped? And who do you suppose led any charge to take an impregnable castle, hmmm? It was a wonder we lasted as long as we did!"

At this point, a guard came in carrying a tray laden with a variety of exquisitely prepared food. "Ah," said

D'Agrunt, "my last meal! You know, I requested the Princess Delphi on a spit, medium rare, lightly sauteed. Umm, it's been so long since I've had a princess I can't remember what they taste like." He gave me a wink and laughed. "Guess I'll have to settle for lobster. Do you mind if we continue while I eat?"

Not at all, I told him. It would be better in fact; if his story was to go out that night I would have to make deadline in an hour.

"That's funny," he chuckled in between bites, "my deadline is in an hour, too. Next question."

I wanted to know what his opinion of the current state of affairs in the world was.

"Oh, I was hoping you would ask that. I'll tell you right now that you humans (oh, and demi-humans, too) have certainly ruined it for the rest of us. Those races that remain, that is. I should point out that you can not now interview the last gnoll or goblin. Even the last ogre is gone. I thought they would have lasted. But no, they're all dead, all slaughtered. And the poor kobolds! Yes, I know we used to kick them around ourselves, but they didn't deserve what happened to them. They just wanted to be liked, really, that's all. Poor slugs never stood a chance. Oh, sure, they could get the drop on a small bunch of Conan-wanna-bees, but up against anyone even remotely strong or organized and they were so much dragon meat."

Speaking of Dragons...

"Yes, they were hit worst of all. You humans really had it out for them, didn't you? Of course, it was their own fault: they made such appealing targets what with all of that treasure they hoarded."

I inquired as to which creatures were still out there.

"Not many. Might be a couple of giants left, but after that horrible purge a couple of years back I wouldn't bet a tin piece on it. I believe the Drow were wiped out then, too. I ran into a troll acquaintance sometime ago who said that they were not doing too bad, but who knows what has happened since. There are a couple of Ogre Magi; those S.O.B.'s are almost indestructible. A few harder-to-get creatures in very remote places (like the bottom of the sea), and those that left this plane of existence are still around, though proba-

bly not for very much longer."

I mentioned that the King's brother was mounting an expedition to find the last Type III demon.

D'Agrunt laughed. "He's a bit late for that one. But please don't quote me on that. Let him look. And look. And look." He laughed again.

He seemed very aware of what was going on around him. I pointed out that a few people — much less an orc — knew about the other planes of existence.

"Well, I have been reading quite a bit up in the royal library, seeing as there wasn't too much to keep me occupied. Besides," he said with a mischievous grin that made me feel like there were some things we humans would never know, "we orcs have our ways of finding out things."

He looked about the room as if checking to make sure that no one could overhear what he was about to say, then leaned forward and whispered, "What I'm about to tell you is true, though if you make any inquiries it will be denied." Again, he glanced around the room before continuing. "Soon, all the extra-dimensional planes of existence will be under the control of these upstart adventurers! Rumours have been bouncing around the monster grapevine for years now. It's believed that almost 100 of the 666 levels of the Abyss are under the influence of humans. No gods, not demons, but puny humans! It's nothing personal, you understand, it's just the audacity of the situation. Supposedly Asmodeus Himself is in exile in Nirvana because Hell has been successfully invaded over seventy times. Seventy! Most of the gods and more powerful creatures of reality won't even travel the astral plane anymore because some wizard started charging a toll for its use. Events have gotten far too far out of hand."

D'Agrunt ate in silence for several minutes, then sat back among the pillows and poured himself a goblet of wine when he was finished. "Did you know," he said with a sigh and a slight smile, "that I am the last orc in all existence? You see, I consulted an oracle. Simply the finest. She told me that among all the varied planes of reality, in all the alternate universe, throughout all time, I. Am. It.

That would be impossible to believe, I told him. It was thought that

there were an infinite number of other realities.

"Oh, sure," he replied, smiling like I had just sprung a trap he had set. "But there were only a FINITE number of orcs in those realities. And wherever orcs resided, a similar explosion in the population of crazy adventuring types took place. We seemed to be the favorite fodder for these fools. We never stood a chance."

Did this bother him much now, here at the end?

His voice was only slightly tinged with bitterness. "Yeah. Right. Well, it's over with now. But what I would like to know now is, what are you humans going to do for an encore? What will..."

He was interrupted by a guard stepping into the room, and saying, "Time to go, D'Agrunt."

I asked the last orc if he had any last words.

He leaned over and whispered them in my ear.

* * *

I just made the deadline for that evening's news. At the sixth watch tower call, when the news is read in the city square, I took a seat on my favorite pub bench to listen. My story was in between an item on the recent harvest and an ad for Marty's Mercenaries. Unfortunately, the piece had to be edited down a bit.

When he reached my story, the crier called out: "And the Last Words of the Last Orc in ALL reality as he was taken out today for a royal hunt in honor of his Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Regoria, were these:

'You'll get yours, Gygax'."

I sat back, satisfied, and sipped my ale. Gods, I love journalism.

No One Will Ever Hear You Scream
Awakening From the **Alien** Nightmare

Serge F. Clermont

Aliens...

In 1977, **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** and **Star Wars** brought a new dimension to the film interpretation of outer space; a new frontier, a wonderful vista of all the wonders, hopes and dreams of man to throw off the shackles of his earthbound existence to explore "out there", amongst the stars. Furthermore, they depicted a benevolent relationship between mankind and any other sentient races he might have made contact with in his foray across the galaxies.

In 1979, a man named Ridley Scott directed a movie called **Alien**, which did not explore any such concepts.

The setting: Future Earth has achieved a high level of technology, and mankind has mastered the secrets of fusion and solar power to run all their machines. Unfortunately, there are no more petrochemicals. With a concentrated effort, certain individuals have depleted those resources needed to produce other materials, like plastics. This is where the Company comes in. From what one can gather, the Company is exactly that; the only corporate entity on Earth. It makes its money through the exploration of space and the discovery of resources that it can turn to its commercial advantage.

The story opens with the crew of the Company interstellar tug *Nostromo* being awakened from hypersleep (suspended animation) by the alarm of the ship's main computer, Mother. Normally, the crew would sleep through the voyage to Earth, with a refinery in tow, in the process of changing its cargo of crude oil into suitable petrochemicals in time for Earth arrival. But Mother has sounded the alarm for a reason; "she" has picked up a distress signal that "she" qualifies as not being of human origin — an Alien! According to Company policy, the crew must answer any distress call it comes across, with pay and bonuses forfeit upon arrival to Earth if they should not. Resigned, the *Nostromo* heads for the source of the signal — an inhospitable planetoid, a world of wind and storms. A search party of three discovers the originator of the distress call, a Alien ship that evidently crashed no one knows how long ago. There is no sign of life within, until...

One of the searchers, Kane, comes across a pod of some sort, which opens to release a creature that heralds a nightmare:

"The thing was basically in the shape of a hand, many-fingered, with the long, bony fingers curled into the palm. It looked very much like the hand of a skeleton, save for the extra fingers. Something protruded from the center of the palm, a short tube of some kind. A muscular tail was coiled beneath the base of the hand. On its back he could just make out a dim, convex shape that looked like a glazed-over eye..."

— **Alien**, by Alan Dean Foster, 1979

The creature bursts through the faceplate of the unfortunate searcher's environment suit, fastening itself to Kane's face with an iron grip, forcing open its victim's jaws and inserting that tube mentioned above into his mouth. The decision made by Captain Dallas to bring him back into the ship is protested by Warrant Officer Ripley because of possible contamination, but is thwarted by Science Officer Ash's override on Ripley's airlock control to let them in. Upon examination in the ship's infirmary, it is discovered that the creature is providing life-support for its victim. The creature also seems to radiate an electromagnetic field that interferes with scanning devices. When physical force doesn't succeed in removing it, a laser is applied to its body. Once its skin is pierced, a fluid spews forth onto and through the floor, eating its way through three decks of alloyed steel — an organic universal acid that corrodes on the molecular level. Being ill-advised to try again if another attempt is made in such a fashion, the crew debates on what to do about the "face-grabber" Alien. Amidst a flurry of heated argument, the crew's problem is solved. The creature dies, and falls off of Kane's face. That taken care of, the *Nostromo* takes off, and resumes its journey to-

Aliens art and story © 1988 20th Century Fox Filmcorp. Courtesy Dark Horse Comics.

wards Earth.

But the nightmare is only beginning. While at the dinner table to celebrate Kane's revival, Kane begins to writhe and convulse in agony. At the climax, his chest explodes with the force of the thing being birthed from his body. It is the second stage of the Alien nightmare, which was a parasite that laid an egg within a host during its symbiotic attachment. The Alien, resembling an albino cross between an eyeless cobra and a miniature tyrannosaurus rex and taking advantage of the crew's stunned horror, escapes into the depths of the ship.

It is decided that the creature must be driven off the ship. But that is easier said than done, especially when they discover that the thing has grown, and grown big enough to become a pure killing machine with razor-sharp talons, a hidden second set of jaws and teeth that can shoot forth from its mouth with the speed of a snake, and a poison sting that paralyzes its prey. You see, it doesn't eat them right away — it stores them for food...or host bodies, like a spider. With heightened senses combined with its instinctive ability to use its surroundings to best advantage and its sheer savagery, it is destruction incarnate. As Mark Verheiden, the writer and scriptor of the new Dark Horse **Aliens** comic title, remarked during an interview: "They (the Aliens) are geared to survive. They're not malevolent extraterrestrials. They can't be reasoned with. They're like great white sharks. You can't say, 'Sorry for bothering you, please don't eat me' because they won't understand anything beyond their need to survive and breed the race. They're like a force of nature, merciless and uncontrollable."

Yet the Alien isn't the only threat that faces the crew. A trap set for the Alien is triggered by a supposedly deactivated klaxon alarm, resulting in total failure. Ripley learns through Mother that Ash had reactivated the alarm system and has been attempting all this time to surreptitiously protect the Alien

When confronted with this, Ash attempts to kill Ripley, but is stopped by the other members of the crew. Ash is discovered to be an android programmed by the Company to ensure the contact of the Nostromo with the distress signal already picked up on Earth and deciphered by Company experts not to be a

distress signal, but a warning about a hostile life force on the planetoid. The Company's plan — to subvert the law about the importation of Alien life forms to Earth by making it seem that a tug crew had accidentally brought it back. The Company would be prepared for its arrival, offering the only services capable of handling it and breezing it through customs in that way. Then, its commercial value would be determined, while the crew would either never have known what was going on and would be sent on its merry way, or, if they did find out, Ash was to kill them during hypersleep in order to protect the Company's interest.

This knowledge of the Company's cold-blooded duplicity does nothing to aid the crew against the Alien itself, however. One by one, the crew is picked off and used as hosts for the Alien's eggs, until only Ripley is left. In a last act of desperation, she sets the *Nostromo's* self-destruct mechanism and boards the escape shuttle before the ship blows up. Thinking she is safe, she is horrified to discover that the Alien is on board the shuttle. She manages to blow it out of the shuttle using the airlock, but it can survive in outer space, also, and begins to climb back in. Ripley, frantic, manuevers the beast behind the engines of the shuttle and charges them to full power, finally destroying the creature.

In the second movie, **Aliens**, Ripley returns to Earth out of spending 57 years in hypersleep, her shuttle discovered adrift in space, and brought back to Gateway Space Station by an exploration ship passing by. After a rough debriefing by Company representatives, she learns that LV-426, the planetoid where they found the first Alien, has been renamed Acheron, and settled by *terraformers* (planetary engineers). A short time later, radio contact with Acheron is lost. Ripley is asked to act as an advisor to a team of Marines sent to Acheron to investigate, along with a Company representative named Carter Burke. The Marines are outfitted with the latest weaponry, such as *smartguns* (computer-enhanced portable heavy artillery) and *pulse-rifles* (automatic machine-gun energy weapons), but one by one, just like the crew of the *Nostromo*, they are cut down, fighting valiantly all the way, taking a lot of the hellish creatures with them. Ripley again manages

to survive the encounters with the Aliens and the ever-present duplicity of the Company in the form of Carter Burke (who, like Ash, attempts to bring Alien specimens back to Earth for bio-weapon research at the cost of those around him). The search party discovers the last survivor of the Acheron colony, a little girl named Newt who has also managed to evade the Aliens and survive in the ducts of the colony settlement. In this film, Ripley fights back, tooth and claw against the Aliens, blowing up the planet, and, in a spectacular battle at the end, destroying the Queen Mother to rescue Newt from the fate of Alien incubation.

The Use of Aliens in Role-Playing Game Campaigns

The Alien is a creature that is both repulsive in its hideousness and attractive in its capacity for destruction. As with all such creations, GMs might be tempted to use the Aliens as a new adversary for the players to combat. However, all such prospective introductions must be conducted with a few hints in mind in order to convey the proper air of the Aliens.

Atmosphere is a very large part of the Aliens legend. In the movies, all encounters with the Aliens took place in very dark and labyrinthine surroundings. The Aliens used cover to their advantage at all times. An Alien in full daylight may look horrifying all by itself, but the human mind has a tendency to magnify danger while in darkness. And the scariest thing about the movies was the use of suspense. Never knowing what was around the next corner and knowing that what was out there was stalking you — brrr! Which is why mazes are ideal places for the Aliens, being full of twists and turns, and consequently lots of corners.

The GM should also remember that predators of any type provide their own demoralization factor, and an Alien is no exception. An Alien will not waste time in an attack. They strike hard and swift. A confrontation with an Alien should last no longer than a few seconds. They always try to attack when their prey is least suspecting, and most likely not to put up a defense. The Aliens are not stupid — their primary instinct is to survive to breed, and the best

STAR TREK
THE NEXT GENERATION
OFFICER'S MANUAL

"STAR TREK

THE NEXT GENERATION" OFFICER'S MANUAL is an introduction to Starfleet of the Next Generation. Includes: changes to ship's operational procedures that reflect the new officer positions, detailed information about new equipment, and extensive sections about the GALAXY CLASS cruiser and artificial persons like LCDR Data.
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defense against an Alien is a good offense. Someone alone who is attacked by an Alien from the shadows usually gets only one chance to offer resistance. Intruders into Alien territory have a better chance of survival if they stick together. A GM must keep in mind at all times that disorientation is the key that works in the Aliens favor. Human beings, upon initial contact, aren't really prepared for the oncoming locomotives that these Aliens can be when stealth is no longer possible. The paranoia level of characters should increase when Aliens are the enemy, because they are dangerous. Magnified by the the effects of the surroundings, the characters should be near hysteria after a prolonged battle with the Aliens if they survive that long.

Aliens are not by any means suicidal; they can pretty much appreciate good and bad odds as much as any other being. One Alien is not going to engage in open confrontation with six or seven potential hosts obviously capable of defending themselves, even with its regeneration power (not aptly depicted in the movies but mentioned in the books). It'll simply pick them off, one by one, if it can. One "good" thing about dealing with Aliens — they don't kill their prey right away, they just paralyze them, giving others a chance to rescue them from the incubation process. The knowledge that Aliens are parasites should arouse a disgust that is as overwhelming in its intensity as the fear such creatures should initially cause in an encounter. When there is more than one Alien set up against a player-character party in a game, it's all-out war. And aside from seeing Aliens itself, one can watch any recent Vietnam-based war movie, like **Platoon**, or **Full Metal Jacket**, to see the effects of this kind of war on the main characters. The capacity in humanity for self-sacrifice, courage and bonding in the face of adversity can be brought forth from the main characters when faced with an enemy out to exterminate each and every one of them. In other words, the presence of Aliens as adversaries in a campaign should elicit these elements of heroism from the characters. The Marines in Aliens regarded it as "just another bug hunt", but never did they shine so clearly from under their coarse veneer as heroes when they fought the

Aliens. Consequently, game characters should not regard it in the same light as slaying orcs, for example, nor should the GM ever give that impression. The attitude of Mr. Verheiden towards his work with the Aliens Universe illustrates and expands this point of not abusing the Aliens and should be considered by GMs everywhere who are themselves scriptors, by virtue of their

> "I STARTED TO GET MAD AT THEM, PICKING ON ME LIKE THAT, ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GO HOME. I DECIDED TO TELL THEM THE SCARIEST STORY I KNEW."

> THERE ARE THESE.. THINGS.. THAT LIVE IN SPACE. THEY LIVE TO FEED.. AND TO HATE.

campaign:

"The Aliens aren't strong enough to carry a book on their own. My style comes from movies, and in a movie — in any type of fiction and in anything I do, as a matter of fact — it's the characters that propel the story. I talk a lot about drawing from current events, but actually it's all totally around the central characters. If you don't have interesting characters there, interesting characters to change (because my characters do change, learn and evolve through their experiences), I haven't got a story. That's true for anything I write. I myself tend to be very character-oriented. Writing through or around character can be a little more difficult than writing through plot, and I have to give a lot of credit to those writers who can manage to do it — that is, have a character evolve during a run in which the plot is the thing to sell. At the same time, I do believe that there are writers out there who believe as I do, turning back to the roots of story-telling, which is telling about people."

Having Aliens as enemies for a party of adventurers requires teamwork from the players of any campaign they should appear in if the players want their characters to survive. The constant presence of Death (or a possible Fate-Worse-Than-) changes the outlook one has on life, and a GM must be prepared to have the characters in his campaign change in personality, ethics, morals and mo-

tives encountering a situation with this magnitude of danger. The Aliens are more than adequate in providing a bad guy to hit, but the other options available to character development through their existence in a campaign should not be ignored. After all, that's what made Ripley, Vasquez and all the other heroes in **Aliens** — heroes!
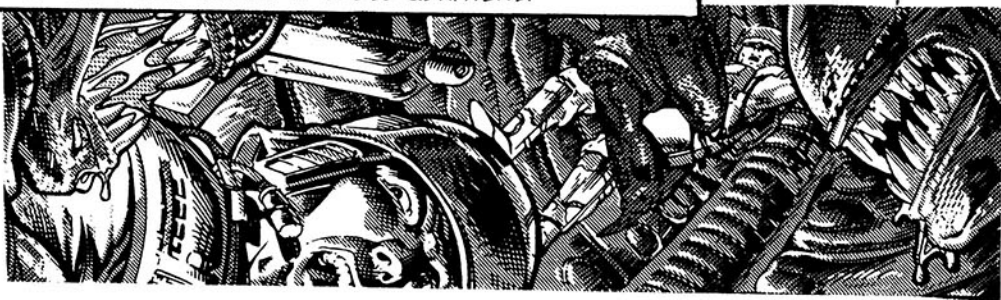
Verheiden Seek
An Interview with the Dark Horse **Aliens** Writer

Serge F. Clermont

--THE *TRUE* MESSIAH--!

We had a chance to speak to Mark Verheiden about his feelings about scripting the **Aliens** comic book for Dark Horse Comics. Mr. Verheiden is best known for his work on **The American** comic book, although he has freelanced for DC Comics on the **Martian Manhunter**, and has also participated in the writing of several movie screenplays. Verheiden said that the comic book format was very conducive to a new presentation of the Aliens and and a different facet on two returning characters from the movies, Newt and Hicks: "One thing that you can do in comics that you can't do in film very well (you can do it in film, but it's glaring), is you can get inside people's heads, and see what they're thinking. In the Aliens comics, I'm using Newt and the character of Hicks from the second movie as focal characters. As the reader, you are basically seeing a lot of the story from their eyes. There are different narrative points of view that are a factor, but a lot of it is from their own viewpoint, their own bias. Basically, they've both had some pretty nightmarish experiences with the Aliens, and because of that, their perceptions, their points of view, will of course be kind of skewed."

Verheiden also refers to the presence of two storylines in the Aliens script, one revolving around Newt and Hicks in outer space, the other taking place on Earth around a third central character: "...One of the focal characters aside from Newt and Hicks in the story is a television evangelist named Salvaje who's been getting visions of the Aliens in his dreams (no one on Earth has really heard of Aliens, much less know they exist), and he's trying to reach other people on the Earth who have been also receiving visions of Aliens. And he is from the Church of the Immaculate Incubation. He wants to be one with the Aliens, because he feels to make himself one with God, he must let an Alien grow inside his body."

With the book now a solid hit, Verheiden is reluctant to impart any information about the series for fear of diminishing their impact. He suffices to say, "In the issues to come, there will be a character who appeared in the first movie that no one will have expected to appear. And that's all I can say."

And all *we* can say is: we can hardly wait!

ALIEN SIEGE
A Combat Scenario by Leading Edge

This game allows you to take part in the Marines' first encounter with the Aliens, in the chamber under the reactor. As you may recall, it is a hard and desperate fight. The Aliens appear suddenly and move with terrifying speed, and the Marines have no ammunition for their Pulse Rifles. The available weaponry includes 2 Smart Guns, 2 Flame Units, and 1 Shotgun; the rest of the Squad have only Pistols.

The game may be played by one or more people. The player (or players) run the squad of 9 Marines; the Aliens pretty much run themselves, following guidelines which are explained below. If you have more than one player, simply divide up the Marines fairly equally among the players. The Marines start out south of the Stairwell, but within 4 hexes of it. The game ends when all the Marines have left the room through the doorway at the north end of the Map, or have been dragged off by the Aliens.

If you get 7 or more of the Marines out the doorway alive, you win. 4 to 6 surviving Marines is a draw, and if less than 4 escape, the Aliens win.

You will need two ten-sided dice of different colors to play; these are available in hobby and gaming stores, and are used in the game to generate numbers from 0 to 9 and from 00 to 99. Whenever a 00 to 99 number is needed, simply roll both dice, selecting one as the tens digit, and the other as the ones. For example, if the tens die rolled a 5 and the ones die was a 7, the number would be 57. 8 and 2 would be 82, and so forth.

The Map

The Map (on page 41) shows the large chamber in which the Marines encounter the Aliens. A hexagonal grid is overlaid onto the map which is used to regulate movement and combat. Each hexagonal space on the board is called a "hex".

Some of the hexes are shaded; these areas represent the strange, encrusted pillars which fill the chamber, blocking vision and movement. No Marine or Alien may ever enter a shaded hex, nor may Marines ever fire through a shaded hex. (Movement and Fire are discussed below.)

Near the center of the map is a large rectangular area. This is a Stairwell leading down, and also cannot be entered. It can, however, be seen over, and Marines can fire across the Stairwell at will.

Many of the hexes are numbered; these numbers run from 00 to 99, and are used to determine where Aliens appear. This is discussed in Step Two.

Playing Pieces

Each Marine or Alien in the game will be represented on the Map with a miniature figure, counter, or other marker. If the players do not have figures or counters, then small pieces of cardstock or paper can be substituted for the Marines, and small coins can be used for the Aliens.

There are 9 Marines in the game. Each of the Marines has specific characteristics, as listed on **Table 1**. These characteristics are discussed below. Because of their varying abilities, it will help if each Marine figure or counter is slightly different from the others.

There is an effectively unlimited number of Aliens in the game. Four appear on the first Turn, and two more every Turn thereafter; a supply of 15 Alien counters should be enough. It is also necessary sometimes to keep track of the damage done to Aliens. This can be done on a piece of scratch paper.

Incidentally, it is quite possible for more than one Marine or Alien to be in a single hex. Up to 3 Marines and any number of Aliens may be in the same hex.

Sequence of Play

During each turn, players go through the following sequence of events.

1. Marines Move and Fire
2. Aliens Appear
3. Aliens Move and Attack

Once all three steps have been completed, players return to Step 1 and begin another turn. This process continues until all the Marines have left the chamber or been Incapacitated.

Step One: Marines Move and Fire

During this Step, the Player may move his Marines and use them to attack any Aliens which are visible. It is suggested that beginning players perform all the activities of each Marine one at a time, moving down **Table 1** in order. Doing this guarantees that no Marines will be forgotten or accidentally moved twice.

The amount that a Marine can do is determined by the number of Actions he or she receives, as noted on Table 1. Actions cannot be saved from Turn to Turn; they must be used during each Turn, or are lost. The only exception to this is Aiming; this is explained below. Actions can be used in the following ways.

For each Action, a Marine may Move 1 hex. The Marine may move in any direction or combination of directions, according to the Player's desires. As mentioned above, Marines can never move into a shaded hex or into the Stairwell. Also, if the Marine is helping an Incapacitated comrade, then it takes 2 Actions to move into each hex.

A Marine can also use Actions to Aim and Fire. The more time that a Marine spends Aiming, the more accurate he will be when he Fires at an Alien. This is represented by the use of the Odds of Hitting Table (2), and is discussed below. Marines may accumulate Aim from one Turn to the next; if the player chooses to continue Aiming, simply make a note on scratch paper to
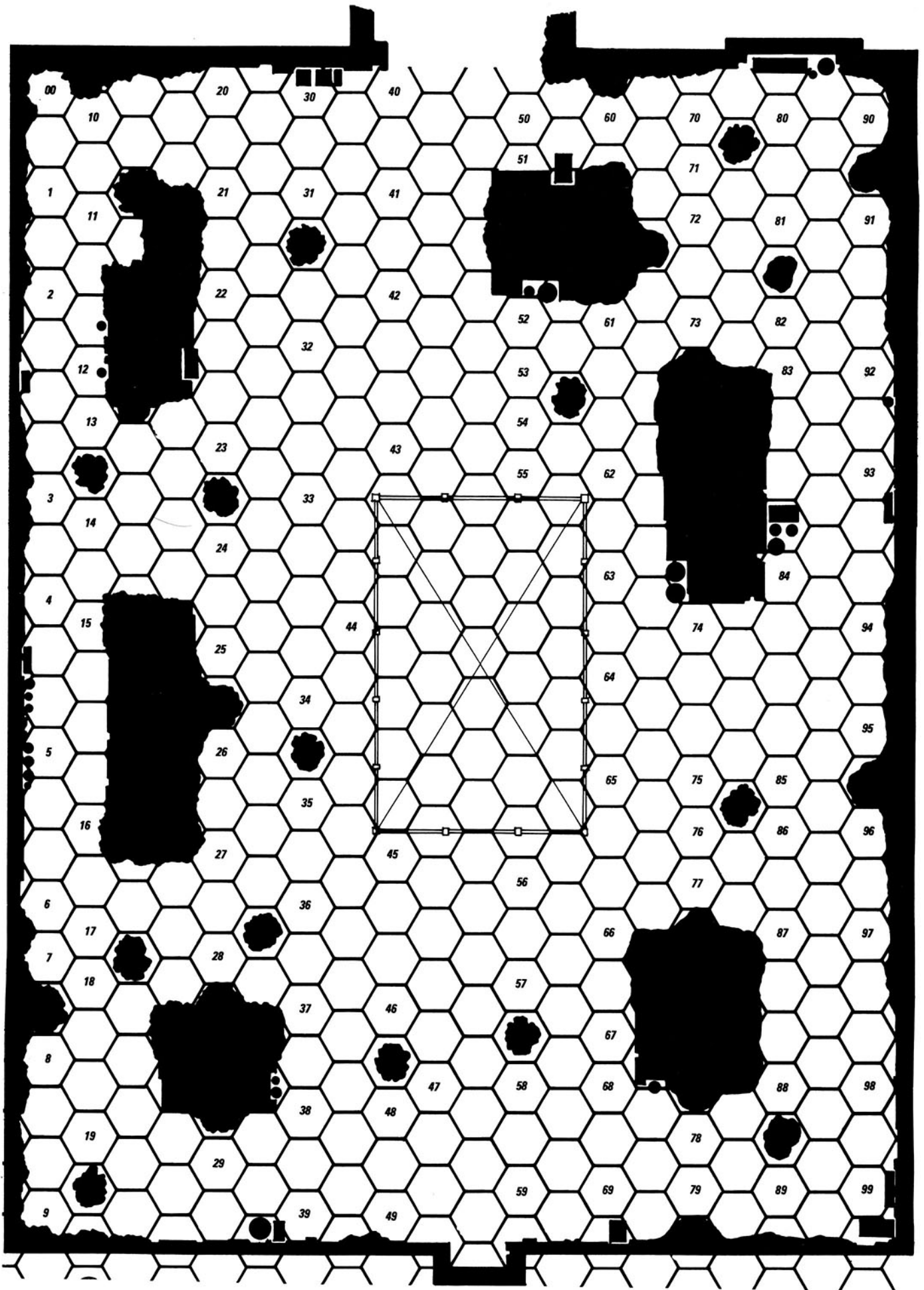
that effect, including how many Actions have been accumulated. The actual act of firing requires no Actions; it is included in the Aim Time. Naturally, as soon as a Marine fires, his or her Aim Time returns to 0. The Marine will have to begin Aiming again for the next shot.

It is certainly possible for a Marine to mix Actions during a Turn. For example, a Marine with 2 Actions could Move 1 hex and Aim for 1 Action. A Marine may not, however, Fire more than once per turn.

The number of Actions of Aim that a Marine has is entered on the Odds of Hitting Table to determine if he has hit an Alien. There are three parts to the Table; one for Smart Guns, one for Pulse Rifles and Shotguns, and one for Pistols.

To find the chance of hitting an Alien, first choose the part of the table for the weapon that the Marine is using. Then count the number of hexes from the Marine to the Alien. When counting, do not count the hex the Marine is in, but do count the hex the Alien is in. This number is the Range. Cross-index it with the Aim Time of the Marine; this gives a number from 00 to 99, and represents the chance of the Marine successfully hitting the Alien with his fire.

Note that some of the Marines have an Accuracy modifier (on Table 1), which changes the Range Column being used. This represents an unusual level of skill with weapons or, in the case of the 2 Marines with Smart Guns, a superior weapon. When calculating the Odds of Hitting for Marines with Accuracy modifiers, simply adjust the Range Column being used by the number indicated. For example, Hicks has a 1 Left Accuracy modifier. Whenever Hicks shoots, determine the Odds of Hitting by using the Range Column which is 1 to the Left of the actual Range. A shot at Range 6, for example, would use the Range 4 Column.

Once the Odds of Hitting have been determined, the Player should roll a 00 to 99 number; if the number rolled is less than or equal to the Odds of Hitting, then the Marine has hit. If the number rolled is greater than the Odds of Hitting, then the shot misses. Some entries on the Table say "Hit"; these are automatic hits, and the Player does not have to roll. Also, the three columns at the left of the Table do not have a Range at the top; they are used only when Marines use their Accuracy modifiers at short Ranges.

Example: During his Turn, Hudson does not Move, and uses both of his Actions to Aim his Pistol at an Alien 5 hexes away. The player should go to the Pistol Odds of Hitting Table. Cross-indexing the Range of 5-6 with 2 Actions of Aim gives an 18% chance of hitting. Hudson chooses to not fire. During his next Turn, the Alien has closed to only 1 hex away. Hudson again uses his 2 Actions to Aim; this gives him a total Aim Time of 4. Now Hudson has a 96% chance of hitting, and takes his shot. He rolls a 74, and hits. We will continue with this example below, under **Damage to Aliens**.

Line of Sight

Naturally, Marines cannot shoot at Aliens which they cannot see. To determine if a Marine can see a particular Alien, run a straight edge from the center of the Marine's hex to the center of the Alien's hex. This is called the Line of Sight. If any part of the straight edge passes through a shaded area, then the Marine cannot see and cannot fire at the Alien. Remember,

Table 1: The Marines

Name	Actions	Weapon	Accuracy	Hand-toHand
Sgt. Apone	3	Flame Unit	1 Left	+1
Cpl. Hicks	3	Shotgun	1 Left	+1
Hudson	2	Pistol	Normal	0
Drake	2	Smart Gun	3 Left	+1
Vasquez	2	Smart Gun	3 Left	0
Frost	2	Pistol	Normal	0
Wiersbowski	2	Pistol	Normal	0
Dietrich	2	Flame Unit	Normal	0
Crowe	2	Pistol	Normal	0

For those who are curious, the values for the other characters from the movie are as follows:
Ripley: 2 Actions, Accuracy 1 Right, Hand-to-Hand 0.
Burke: 2 Actions, Accuracy 3 Right, Hand-to-Hand -1.
Lt. Gorman: 2 Actions, Accuracy Normal, Hand-to-Hand 0.
Farro: 2 Actions, Accuracy Normal, Hand-to-Hand -1.
Spunkmeyer: 2 Actions, Accuracy Normal, Hand-to-Hand 0.
Newt: 2 Actions, Accuracy 3 Right, Hand-to-Hand -3.
Bishop: 3 Actions, Hand-to-Hand +1, does not use weapons.

Marines can fire over the Stairwell without any trouble.

Marines also have to be careful not to accidentally shoot each other. Therefore, if the Line of Sight passes through any hex with an un-Wounded Marine in it, the shot has a 5 Right Accuracy modifier. This means the Player must move 5 Columns to the Right when determining the Odds of Hitting. This represents the trouble and time spent attempting to fire around the other Marine. Fire into a hex containing both an Alien and a Marine, or at an Alien who has Grabbed a Marine, also has a 5 Right modifier.

Firing When Attacked By An Alien

If an Alien is in the same hex as a Marine but does not have him or her Grabbed, the Player should roll a 0-9 number; on a 6 or higher, the Marine may Fire at the Alien. On any other roll, the Marine is assumed to be wrestling with the Alien, and can take no other Actions. (Grabbing is discussed in Step Three.)

Damage to Aliens

Whenever a Marine successfully shoots an Alien, the Alien Damage Table (3) is used. The only exception to this is when a Flame Unit hits an Alien; Flame Units are discussed below.

Some of the weapons have higher rates of fire than the others. To represent this, the following rule is used. If the Marine is firing a Pistol or Shotgun, then the Alien is hit one time; Pulse Rifles score two hits; and Smart Guns score three hits every time the Marine successfully shoots.

For each hit, the Player should roll a 00 to 99 number, and enter it on Table 3. The roll determines where the bullet hit; the Player should then read across to the appropriate Damage Column, depending on the weapon that was being used.

As you look over the Table, you will see that a shot to a given Location is far more deadly with the larger weapons. This is because the Pulse Rifles and Smart Guns are firing high velocity explosive-tipped rounds, and are consequently far more devastating. Notice also that the Shotgun, which Aims like a Pulse Rifle, does damage like a Smart Gun.

Any Alien which takes a total of 50 points of damage is

incapacitated; anything less has no effect on the Alien's activities. A "Dead" result, of course, kills the Alien regardless of how much damage it has taken.

Example: Hudson has just hit the Alien which is 1 hex away from him. He rolls a 00 to 99 number to determine the Hit Location, and gets a 21. This is a Chest hit. Because Hudson is using a Pistol, he uses the first column of the Table to determine the damage which is done; in this case, 1 point. Note that if Hudson had had a Pulse Rifle, he would have used the second column and done 20 points, while a Smart Gun or Shotgun would have actually killed the Alien with the same Hit Location.

Flame Units

There are two Flame Units; one carried by Dietrich, the other by Sgt. Apone. They have a maximum Range of 4 hexes; they have no effect on any target at more than 4 hex range. Within range, however, they can be devastating. The Flame Unit does 120 points of damage every Turn, and may be concentrated against a single Alien, which would take the full 120 points, or split up against multiple Aliens. If it is used against 2 Aliens, then each takes 60 points; if used against 3, each takes 40 points. All the targeted Aliens must be in the same hex or in two adjacent hexes if the Player wishes to spread out the damage. Note that a Flame Unit automatically kills up to 2 Aliens per turn, if they are next to each other. Flame Units do not have to be Aimed; it takes 1 Action to fire them.

A Flame Unit is a very dangerous weapon. If it is fired into or through a hex containing a Marine, then that Marine is automatically Incapacitated.

The last point about Flame Units is a very important one. When an Alien takes damage from a Flame Unit, there is no danger of nearby Marines being injured by the creature's Acid blood. This is discussed in **Step Three**.

Step Two: Aliens Appear

Aliens are concealed throughout the room; blending into the eerie surfaces of the walls and ceiling, and lying coiled in their niches. From moment to moment, more of them become active during the fight, and drop down to attack the Marines.

To represent this, 4 Aliens appear at random on the Map during the first turn, and 2 more appear every turn after the first. To find where each Alien appears, the numbered hexes on the Map are used. Simply roll a 00 to 99 number, and place the Alien in the hex with that number. It is possible for more than 1 Alien to appear in the same hex.

Movement on the Turn of Appearance

During its first turn on the board, each Alien only has 1 Action, and can therefore only move 1 hex. This is because they spend most of that Turn standing up or dropping to the floor, and have little time left for attacking the Marines.

Step Three: Alien Movement and Attacks

The Aliens move just as the Marines do, except that they receive 4 Actions. (Note: as mentioned above, each Alien only receives 1 Action during its first Turn on the board.) Aliens move directly toward the nearest active Marine. If a given Marine already has an Alien in his hex, however, then additional

Aliens will attempt to drag off Incapacitated or dead Marines, or switch their attention to a Marine who is farther away. It costs an Alien 2 Actions to move 1 hex while carrying a Marine, just as when Marines carry other Marines.

Grabbing Marines

Aliens attack by moving into a hex containing a Marine. Their Strength and vicious hand-to-hand abilities are used to grapple and pin the Marine. Anytime an Alien ends the Movement portion of its turn in the hex of a Marine, it rolls a 0 to 9 number. On a roll of 3 or greater, modified by the Hand-to-Hand Skill of the Marine, the Alien has successfully Grabbed and ensnared the Marine. Most of the Marines have Hand-to-Hand Skill of 0; Apone, Hicks, and Drake have Skill of +1. This means that an Alien has to roll a 4 or better when attacking one of them.

Once a Marine is Grabbed, he or she is pinned and immobile. Such a Marine cannot perform any Actions at all until rescued. An Alien that has Grabbed a Marine will move toward the nearest numbered hex. When it reaches the hex, it will spend its next 2 Turns climbing up to the roof. Once it has spent 2 Turns climbing, it is removed from the Map, and the helpless Marine with it. The Alien has entered one of the many access tunnels which the creatures use, and the captive Marine is lost.

If the Alien fails to Grab the Marine, then the Player may roll a 0 to 9 number; on a 9 (modified by the Hand-to-Hand Skill) the Marine may Disengage. This means that the Marine may move 1 hex away, in any direction, and may move or fire normally during the next Turn. If more than one Marine engages in Hand-to-Hand with an Alien, then each Marine may roll. If any of the Marines succeed, then all the Marines are able to Disengage. Any Alien which has one or more Marines successfully Disengage from it cannot move during its next Turn; it is recovering from the battle.

Acid

The potent Acid which the Aliens use for blood is also one of their most devastating weapons. Whenever an Alien is injured, there is a risk that nearby Marines will be sprayed by the Acid.

Any time that an Alien suffers a "Dead" result on the Alien Damage Table, Acid is automatically sprayed into the area around it. If the weapon which hit the Alien was a Pistol, then the Acid only sprays within the Alien's hex. If it is a Pulse Rifle or Shotgun, it also sprays into one adjacent hex. With Smart Guns, a jet of Acid 2 hexes long is created. The direction of the Acid Spray is determined randomly. Roll one die, ignoring any numbers except 1 through 6. A 1 means the spray goes toward the top of the Map, 2 along the hex line leading up and to the right, 3 goes down and to the right, 4 straight toward the bottom of the Map, and so forth.

A particular spray of Acid can only hit 1 Marine. The following guidelines are used to determine who gets hit. If there is a Marine in the same hex as the Alien, then he or she is automatically the one hit; no die need be rolled. Once outside the Alien's hex, then the nearest Marine who is in the correct direction is hit. If there is more than one Marine in a hex which is hit by Acid, then roll randomly to determine which one gets hit.

When an Alien is wounded (takes 1 or more points of

damage, without suffering a "Dead" result), its Acid blood is only dangerous to those in close contact with it. If a wounded Alien is in the same hex as a Marine, there is a chance that the Marine will be damaged by the Acid. Add up the points of damage the Alien has taken, and roll a 00-99 number. If the roll is less than the total damage, then the Marine is splashed by the Acid. If the Alien has Grabbed the Marine, double the odds of being splashed.

Whenever a Marine is splashed by Acid, Table 4 is consulted. The upper part of the Table, labelled Acid Spray, is used if the Alien has suffered a "Dead" result. The lower part, labelled Acid Splash, is used for wounded Aliens.

As mentioned earlier, the Acid rules are not used if the damage is caused by a Flame Unit.

The effects of each of the results on Table 4 are as follows:

"-" means that the Marine has taken no significant damage.

"Wound" means that a fair amount of the Acid has touched the Marine. The Marine may take no Actions for 3 Turns, but then returns to normal functioning. In the meantime, he or she may be carried by another Marine, as usual.

"Incap" means the Marine is Incapacitated by burns. He or she can no longer function normally, and must be carried from the chamber by other Marines or abandoned.

"Killed" means that the Marine has suffered fatal burns from the Acid. Other Marines may attempt to carry the body out of the chamber, but the Marine does not count toward the victory conditions.

Any Marine who is Wounded or Incapacitated in a hex adjacent to the Stairwell must roll a 0 to 9 number; on a roll of 7 or higher, the Marine falls down the Stairwell and is lost.

Example: When we left Hudson, there was a lightly damaged Alien 1 hex away from him. Drake is the next Marine to move after Hudson, and attempts to help him. He fires his Smart Gun at the Alien, and gets a "Dead" result. The Alien is killed, but a 2 hex Acid Spray is created. If there were a Marine in the same hex as the Alien, he or she would automatically be hit. Hudson, however, is the only Marine within 2 hexes, and is directly below the Alien on the Map. The die is rolled, and a 4 comes up; the Acid Spray is in Hudson's direction. This means that Hudson must check for damage on the Acid Spray Table, using the Smart Gun line. Fortunately, he rolls a 0, and takes no damage. If he had rolled a 1 he would have been Wounded; on a 2 through 7 he would have been Incapacitated, and an 8 or 9 would have Killed him.

Table 2: Odds of Hitting

Weapon	Aim Time	-	-	-	0-2	3	Range 4	5-6	7	8-9	10+
Smart Gun	1	67	53	39	27	18	12	07	05	03	02
	2	96	90	80	67	53	39	27	18	12	07
	3	Hit	Hit	Hit	96	90	80	67	53	39	27
	4	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	96	90	80	67	53
	6	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	96	90	80
Pulse Rifle	1			74	60	46	33	22	15	09	06
or	2			98	94	86	74	60	46	33	22
Shotgun	3			Hit	Hit	96	90	80	67	53	39
	4			Hit	Hit	Hit	98	94	86	74	60
	6			Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	Hit	98	94	86
Pistol	1			18	12	07	05	03	02	01	00
	2			67	53	39	27	18	12	07	05
	3			96	90	80	67	53	39	27	18
	4			Hit	96	90	80	67	53	39	27
	5			Hit	98	94	86	74	60	46	33

Table 3: Alien Damage

Roll	Location	Pistol	Pulse Rifle	Smart Gun or Shotgun
00-00	Head - Glance	1	Dead	Dead
01-05	Head	Dead	Dead	Dead
06-08	Arm · Glance	0	1	2
09-10	Arm - Shoulder	1	10	20
11-16	Arm	1	5	5
17-19	Body - Glance	0	1	2
20-23	Body - Chest	1	20	Dead
24-24	Body - Heart	Dead	Dead	Dead
25-30	Body - Spine	Dead	Dead	Dead
31-56	Body - Lower	1	40	Dead
57-60	Leg - Glance	0	1	2
61-99	Leg	1	20	20

Leading Edge Games - An Overview

The following is included for those readers who are unfamiliar with Leading Edge Games.

The **Aliens** game is a simplified form of the standard Leading Edge system. Only streamlined character definitions and a basic combat system are included, for space reasons, but the general flow is the same.

The games use a fast, simple system of simultaneous movement and fire, akin to the Actions used in this game. The Odds of Hitting include the same basic factors; the inherent accuracy of the weapons involved, the skill of the shooter, and the amount of time spent aiming. Damage is handled in a way similar to that used for the Aliens, with a breakdown of Hit Locations and Physical Damage points depending on the location which is hit, as opposed to the simplified Wounded - Incapacitated - Killed method used for the Marines.

The system is intense, with a very tight focus on the battles that take place. This allows the player to feel far more involved in the game, and with the characters he or she plays.

The most popular products from Leading Edge Games are Dragonstar Rising, a high-tech combat game; Living Steel, a role-playing game with the same storyline as Dragonstar Rising; and Phoenix Command, a highly realistic modern combat system.
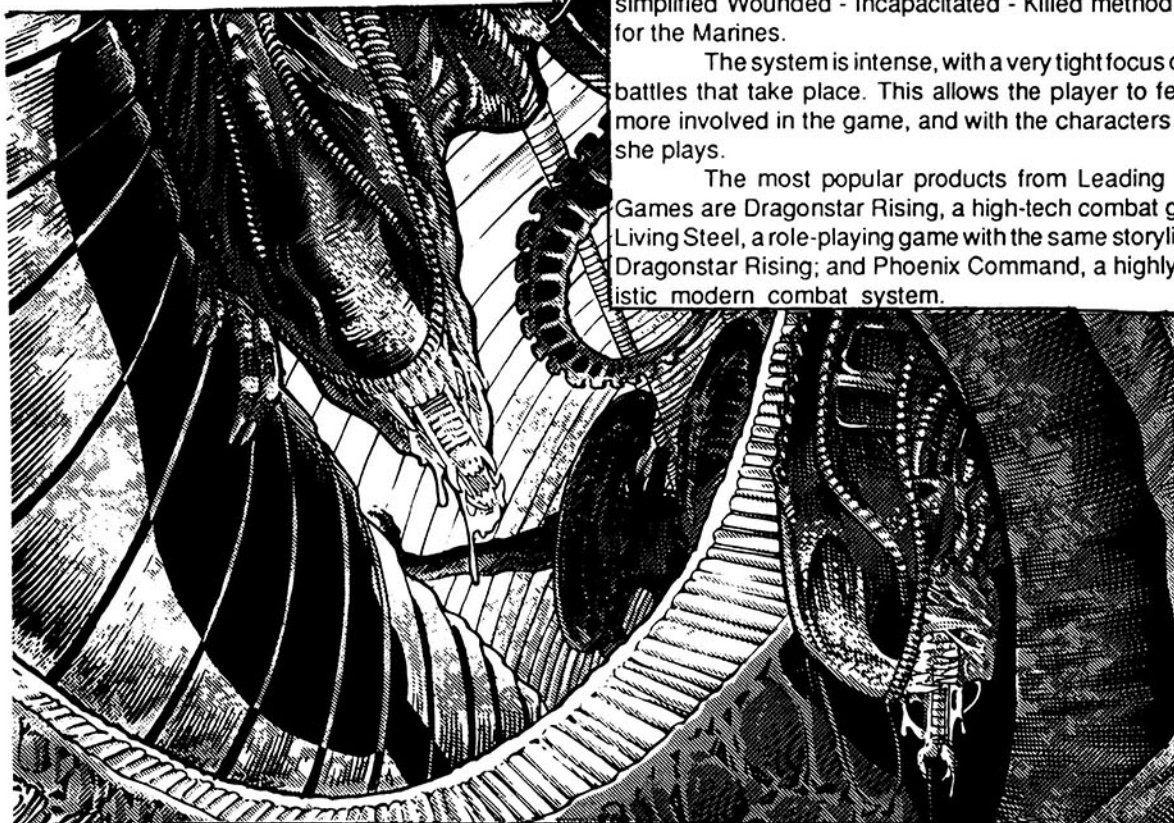
Table 4: Acid Damage

Acid Spray	0	1	2-4	5-7	8	9
Pistol	-	Wound	Wound	Wound	Incap	Incap
Rifle/Shotgun	-	Wound	Wound	Incap	Incap	Killed
Smart Gun	Wound	Incap	Incap	Killed	Killed	

Acid Splash Damage Total	0	1	2-4	5-7	8	9
1-10	-	-	-	Wound	Wound	Incap
11-20	-	-	Wound	Wound	Incap	Incap
21-40	-	-	Wound	Incap	Incap	Killed
40+	-	Wound	Wound	Incap	Incap	Killed

Courtesy Dark Horse Comics.

What is a Grandmaster?

The First in a Series of Gaming Essays
by Gary Gygax

Who familiar with the role-playing industry would not recognize the name E. Gary Gygax? One of the forefathers of this great institution, he is acknowledged as the co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons. Gary Gygax now presents in this column his viewpoints on that elusive achievement level of gaming, and delivers his definition of a "Grandmaster".

What is a Grand Master? I have been asked that question quite frequently lately, principally due to my book **Role-Playing Mastery**, wherein I attempted to describe a level of role-playing achievement that could be labeled by that title. The matter will again be addressed and elaborated upon when the sequel to that book (tentatively entitled **Master of The Game**) is released in 1989. But I'd like to address the question here as well, because it is one which I believe to be of importance to the dedicated enthusiast who desires a greater and more effective involvement in the world of gaming. Before the term "Grand Master" is defined, though, it is really necessary to establish what is meant by the term "Master". Once that is understood, the difference between a Master and a Grand Master can be set forth.

There are two sorts of Masters. There are Master players and Master Game Masters. A player with Master-level skill must be a Game Master too, although not necessarily a Master GM. In order to know what must be known to master play, a gamer must understand the game thoroughly, know its principles and goals, be familiar with its rules systems and tone, and also be fully conversant with the role of the Game Master in providing entertainment. Without that knowledge and understanding, a player participant can at best be one with expertise at role-playing a character within the game system. With experience as a Game Master however, the player becomes more skilled and capable of supporting and respecting the interaction between players, the GM, and the characters and non-player characters being played. These are attributes which set the Master player apart from all others.

Range of experience also brings the the player participant towards the mastery plateau. This means experience in other campaigns, other games within the same genre, and games in other genres as well. Social, casual, and tournament participation all add to complete the player's mastery. Perhaps there are consistent winners of large tournaments who do not fit the description given above for a Master player, but I don't know of any. Master Game Masters know if they have played with a Master player, but otherwise the only clear method of setting masterful players apart from those who play with expertise is to look at the top players in major tournaments. Those sponsored by the RPGA (Role-Playing Game Association) are a good example.

The Master Game Master is a participant who can sit on either side of the screen and do well. As the Master player must be a GM, so too must the Master Game Master be be skillful in play and in mastering the campaign expression of the game system employed to provide entertainment. So much goes into making up a Master Game Master that it is not possible to detail the requirements here. Great knowledge of the game, the game genre, and the player group are specifically and generally the most conspicuous requirements. In addition to providing an exceptional campaign milieu, the Master GM can be recognized as a participant in other forms of activity aimed at providing entertainment and enlightenment to enthusiasts. Activities such as Game Mastering tournaments, giving demonstrations, writing, speaking, publishing periodicals, designing and creating role-playing game materials: all these things are signs of a master in the field. Master Players will always tell you who the Master GMs are.

It is important to point out one fact. Role-playing games and their enthusiasts are a diverse lot. We find different approaches appealing and satisfaction at varying levels of participation. Because of the diversity, there is no method of absolutes possible. A rating system has been created by the RPGA. That is, at best, a limited one for obvious reasons. The organization is owned by a game publisher, and not run by a disinterested body of universally recognized experts in the field. Ratings are broad only in the category of the owner corporation's product line. The player ratings must necessarily deal only with tournament situations. Game Master ratings are also highly subjective. Despite those drawbacks, and others too, there is some validity in what is done, and weight must be given to the rankings. However, no more merit can be allowed there than is given to assertions by the Game Master regarding players, for example, or players regarding their GM. After all, the game is an activity which centers around the social (usually peer) group core. Other evidence comes from enthusiasts outside the group, and in public and/or polished form.

When all is said and done, there is no absolute and totally objective way to rate a Master Game Master, and little more to establish the Master player. Mastery is (to some extent) demonstrable as I mentioned above, it can be subjectively award-

ed in part by the enthusiast audience, and it is also the mind set of the individual in question. So all of this is, of course, my own interpretation. Although I attempt to be as objective as possible, opinion must form part of the whole. This leads to the Grand Master.

In my opinion, Grand Mastery is *exceptional* skill in the RPG hobby, an understanding shown in many areas, and performed so as to provide greater and ongoing benefit to a large segment of the enthusiast audience. Without attribution of motive, it is the results of which are key to the matter. You might consider the status as similar to that gained by receipt of an Oscar. All nominees are masters of their art forms in one way or another, possibly in many ways. Those who receive the Academy Awards are probably "Grand Masters". All nominees are not necessarily so, nor can it be said that no Grand Masters exist beyond those nominated and receiving awards. Games, as are films, happen to be subjectively entertaining. Opinion is inescapable. Hume said educated opinion could successfully measure taste in art, at least more accurately than uneducated opinion, and I agree. The most accurate measures of Master and Grand Master must be the group or groups which are most familiar with the expressions of the gaming activity.

Measurement of Grand Mastery, then, goes beyond the immediate play group and even the larger body which is engaged in the same role-playing game system as the individual in question. If there is recognition from the enthusiast audience in general, and possibly even beyond that, (in the population at large), there is little doubt that the individual is what is termed a Grand Master. Enduring mastery might also bring the status of Grand Master sort to the individual serving a more limited audience. Yet one can never become a Grand Master without expanding so as to bring benefit to a large and varied audience. Otherwise, it would be as if a great artist had composed a brilliant piece and never performed or displayed their work to anyone, or to any save a small number of close associates. Until something is known it is literally nothing at all.

Somehow, I can hear a question which some readers will voice as they reach this point. "Who do *you* consider to be Grand Masters?" No you don't! I'll not become a one-man panel and sit in judgement on the matter. Better to ask yourself and your friends and all the game enthusiasts you know who the Grand Masters are. Although the game form is so young as to hardly be beyond its infancy, perhaps there will be sufficient consensus to actually create a list of Grand Masters. Time would then work to rectify the effort, removing some names, adding others, and thus confirming opinions through the test of endurance. In truth, the status of Grand Master is important in only one way as far as I am concerned. It measures what is contributed to the role-playing game enthusiast audience in the way of things beneficial. When all is said and done, pointing out any individual as a Grand Master is simply acknowledging appreciation of the efforts that person has made to bring us all more fun and enjoyment in our chosen entertainment. Mastery in its more basic forms allows greater personal satisfaction in playing. In successive stages it also can be a tool used to enable the Master to attain vocational excellence in some endeavor connected to role-playing game activity, such as writing modules and adventures, or editing, designing, illustrating or otherwise developing games or books. Grand Mastery, however, steps well beyond even those bounds and considers dedication, achievement, and the enjoyment brought to others through those things.

There is much more which could be said on this subject. Those readers desirous of delving further, as well as any interested in knowing how to achieve Master and Grand Master status by my definition, can look forward to spring '89, when **Master of The Game** should be released. Until then, look around at yourselves, at your fellow players, at conventions and kitchen tables, and try to see the mastery around you.

Next issue: Gary Gygax reconsiders what he has determined to be a grievous flaw in the original **D&D** system — the system he, in part, created. Now, Gary Gygax will revise the use and place of *Magic* in Fantasy Role-playing Games and their game worlds.

GRANDMASTER ROUNDTABLE
Gateways Consults Gaming's Finest on
Superhero Comics and Role-Playing

THE IDEA VS. THE IDEAL

I still remember sitting around a friends' pool years ago during the hot, clear summers that fell in between the murky months of secondary education, vehemently arguing about the ideas — or lack thereof — presented in the many comic books we read. And while I often came away with a warm feeling (never a tan, though!), I would be just as often left with a cold, unsatisfied feeling about many of the comics we read.

Those were the days back before the Direct Market and Speciality Shop Explosion, and we, not living near a major city with such shops, were limited mostly to the mass-market DC and Marvel titles scrounged from local book stores and pharmacies. Personally, I had always leaned towards Marvel, as I had thought at the time that they had the better stable of artists and writers, and they had more 'realistic' stories. That was what I was after; more realism in my fantastic literature. And one of the major problems I had with many of the stories then was their unrealistic portrayal of time. It seemed to me that the writers of these comics went to a lot of trouble to make these characters believable, realistic, and 'relatable' in a real-life-just-look-outside-your-window type of setting, only to run into the the snag of the three "L"s that ruin any such efforts: Licensing, Logic, and Lifespan. (How old should **Lois** and **Clark** really be these days? How many years did **Kitty Pryde** spend being 13 years old? As long as **Spider-Man** continues to rake in money, do you think he'll ever get old, or will he be killed off once his name stops making money? You get the drift...)

If you said that I was taking my comics too seriously if I expected them the obey the laws of reality, you would be right.
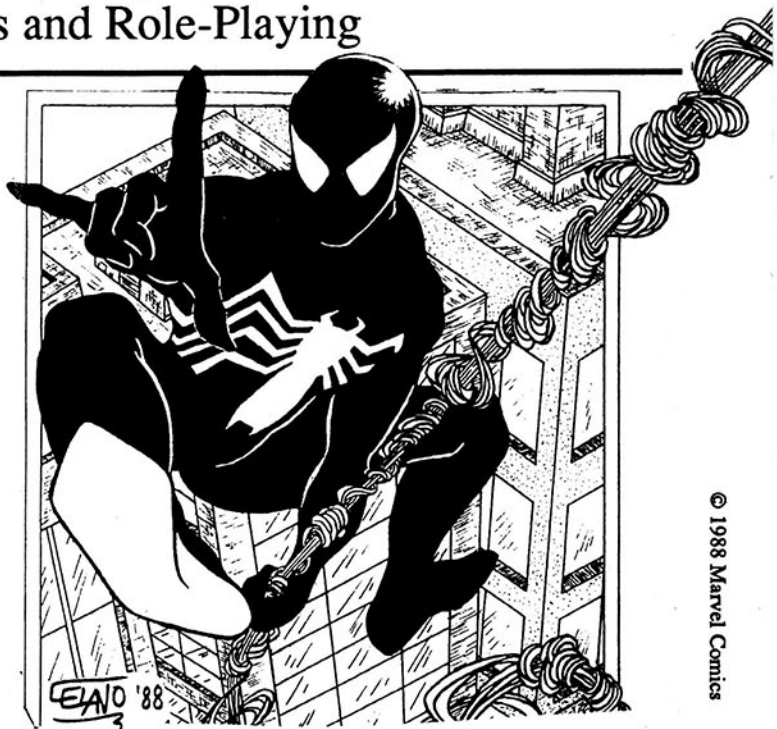
But hey, I was younger then, and I didn't know any better. I was soon to realize that they were just stories, and one of the basic rules of storytelling was (and still is), "Never let anything get in the way of a good story — especially reality." While there is often a lack of reality — not to mention good storytelling — in comic books, there is never a lack of ideas.

However, the comic reader and writer alike should not only look for a good idea that might be entertaining, they should also look for the *ideal* to inspire them. So often have I seen realistic writing, clever ideas, and exciting art that had no substance, no purpose — no striving for an ideal, and I'm left with a bad taste in my mouth afterward.

Characters and stories which reach for the ideal and create archetypes; ideas and thoughts that transcend the medium and sludge pile of stereotypes. The ideal in comics, as should be the case in other mediums as well, should make an impact on our minds and the way we think. Anything of quality should allow us to learn something about ourselves. In no way am I saying that every story should be heavy, brooding, and dripping with meaning and symbolism, nor must they always illustrate something positive about ourselves. But I feel comics should be more than gimmicks and superpowers and massive amounts of property damage. No matter how realistically superheroes are portrayed, no matter how much realism is depicted in the story (and to many publishers nowadays, realism only means showing more skin and death in graphic detail, never the hero or villain doing the dishes) , it is ultimately an empty exercise without striving for the ideal.

Granted, while the old man of the comics (i.e., **Superman**) can do anything he wants, having been *much* abused by

various artists and writers over the decades, he has, in essence, become an archetype. Superman has come to stand for what is ideal in America: Truth, Justice, and the American Way. He has transcended his medium and come to represent a higher ideal. While every writer and artist dreams of creating a character that would have such an impact, representing ideals that are easy to take shots at because they are so lofty, the chances are small that such a thing will happen. Still, that should never be a reason to lower one's sights, and that, in turn, never to be forgotten by the hordes of creators, editors, readers, and merchandisers that rush for the idea of what is most saleable, most profitable at the moment. For the money to be made from a successful idea is no longer seen as the beneficial reward that it is, but as the goal. In such an environment, the Ideal finds itself in danger of being eliminated. A sad thing for the kids sitting around the pool reading comics, and the adults who are looking for something more than a marketing ploy.

—Jape Trostle

MAKING A GOOD GAME BETTER

You know he's around here somewhere, the note said that he would show. Every demand has been met. The rest of the Paladins know nothing of this meeting — you've come alone to his lair, and you're even wearing the Argonian wristbands that completely neutralize your Starblasts! It's the perfect set-up, but with the life of your sister in the balance, what else is there to do?

Ten minutes go by before he confidently strolls into view. You're locked by a paralyzation ray. Sabre has not arrived by himself, but where is your sister? He draws his power-sword and sneers over at your helpless form.

"Fool! There's no woman here! You are lacking in common sense, my dear Orion. The penalty for that is death!"

You wait for his blow, but the room is instead flooded by a bright flash of fire that causes Sabre to leap backwards. "Sorry Sabre, but no can do — the Paladins always have had enough sense to outguess you. The girl's been freed, and now you're caught!"

Fireflight, along with the rest of the Paladins leap to the fight. This time, though, the sides are a lot better matched....

Sound familiar? Maybe like that comic book you've got next to you? Well, it is and it isn't. It's a scene taken from my **Champions** campaign. Comics and superheroes — made for each other — can now be taken successfully into a third medium, the superhero role-playing game. With the proliferation of these games in both hobby shops and comic book stores across the country, it's a wonder more comics fans aren't playing them! The best times can come when you reach inside and let out the ham waiting there. Hams just love to make schlocky speeches before wasting the villain with their 12D6 Energy Blast.

Even more here than in a role-playing game in the fantasy genre, reading the available literature is a virtual necessity. Once read, the knowledge can be used to help "blow away" the villains both verbally and physically. While early attempts at this sort of gaming can be slow and predictable, you might try modifying the rules (role-playing game rules are always flexible for maximum enjoyment) for a more campy attitude. I'm not saying the heroes should always win — as a

matter of fact, the better comics always have a recurring villain that sticks like a thorn in the group's side. Instead, see how battles, even traps are set up in the comics; how characters can be developed over the course of several issues without necessarily increasing their powers to that of gods.

Comics also show the other side of superherodom. The **Teen Titans** and **Avengers** try valiantly to manage their private lives when not in battle. The **X-Men** and other groups even relax together with sports and picnics. A growth in this kind of team spirit and unity will make those battles all the more meaningful.

Other sources besides comics can also be useful. Reference works such as DC's *Who's Who?* series, and the various sourcebooks from TSR, Inc. (for Marvel Comics) and Mayfair Games (for DC). Better still are those comics that have strong ties to role-playing games because they were generated in connection with them. These include Hero Comics' **Champions** and **Marksman**, and Comico's **Justice Machine** (from **Heroes Unlimited** by Palladium Books). If you can't get these books at your neighborhood hobby shop, or you can't get these games at your local comic book store, then do what I do. Demand them!

—Anne Staszalek

GOLDEN AGE, SILVER AGE ...DARK AGE!

I've been a reader of comics for the past 20 of my 25 years. As such I have seen the rise of Marvel comics into a powerful competitor for the crown of comics that DC had worn for so many years. In the past two years, however, I have seen DC commit itself to a path away from the generally acceptable norm in a vain attempt to dislodge Marvel from its present place at the top of the comic ratings war.

Two years ago DC began its so-called **Crisis on Infinite Earths** in an attempt to consolidate the different titles it had acquired from other companies into one mainstream universe. The straw that apparently broke the camel's back in this case seemed to be the company's acquisition of the Charlton characters (**Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, The Question,** etc.), and DC's terminal love affair with title crossovers. The simplest solution to the problem would have been to do what Marvel has done with its own New Universe books (prior to **The Pitt**), which was to have an entirely separate universe which would have nothing to do with the others. Rather than pursue this logical trend of thought, the powers that be over at DC decided to obliterate all that has been, disregarding half of the stories from the Golden Age of Comics (DC's period of comic book universe history between 1939 — the creation of **Batman** and Superman — and 1953 — the dissolution of the **Justice Society Of America**), and throwing the history of the Silver Age (from the 1958 debut of the new **Flash** to the Crisis of '86, approximately) into a frenzy. Suddenly, after the Crisis, there are new heroes on Earth which had no past there previously: a new Justice League which neither Superman nor **Wonder Woman** had never been a part of, leaving a gaping hole in the JLA's history because at least 95% of those stories had one of the two starring in them. Also, the entire run of **World's Finest** comics comes into question. If, in this new universe, Superman and Batman had never been friends, where then does this series lay, along with the multitude of tie-ins

these stories had with other heroes' adventures?

Having faith in DC and the creativity of its writers, I'm sure they would have eventually straightened this mess out. However, it seems strange that now, suddenly Superman and Batman have not aged, remaining in their late 20s, early 30s, and the **Green Arrow** (a character introduced technically after the present incarnations of Superman and Batman) is set in his early 40s. Green Arrow has also apparently become Seattle's later day Vigilante, disdaining his former trick arrows and sunny disposition to become a green version of Miller's **Dark Knight** Batman, using morally questionable methods in his new crimefighting techniques. Fans of Bernie Goetz, I'm sure would hail this as the way to go; however, this seems quite contrary to the perception of the term "hero" as children should be brought up to understand it. This new revitalization of DC's characters (i.e. Green Arrow, Batman, The Question, **The Shadow**, and the various supernatural/metaphysical "heroes" such as **The Spectre, Phantom Stranger** and **Demon**) shows to me a definite trend toward moving superheroes away from the hard line of good versus evil, and closer to a shadowy realm wherein the heroes themselves in some ways can be as bad as the villains they combat.

In an attempt to humanize their characters, DC has shown them more willing to give in to blatant acts of violence unbecoming to an heroic nature. In running a superhero adventure game based on the DC universe, I find myself unable to go along with the senseless and seemingly uncoordinated storylines which DC has put out of late. So that things may remain in perspective, heroes must be presented in a positive light, showing themselves to be the force of good, and in being good, triumphing over evil. DC has seemed to forgotten that this is not real life, and should be presented as a pleasant diversion from the dark and less-than-pleasant news of day to day life. The purpose of a comic book hero is to present younger readers with positive role models that they can look up to and identify with, and that is exactly the type of game that I would run whether I game mastered a young or older crew of players (older ones being granted a slightly freer reign in personal indulgences, however, never straying too far from the accepted).

—Aedan J. McCluskey

TRENDS IN SUPERHERO ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

One of the most outstanding trends in comics is the realism sought by various companies in the industry; the '80's have seen one taboo after another fall by the wayside. Marvel Comics has led the way in this-the killing of three separate heroes (at least), **Iron Man's** bouts with alcoholism, formerly 'good' heroes going bad (**Quicksilver**), and former villains going good (**Magneto**).

The DC line followed suit. The Flash has faced murder charges before his death. The Batman has become less of a crime fighter and more of a vigilante. The Justice League has suffered some previously unthinkable roster changes; occasionally with mixed results.

The question being addressed here is whether or not to include such 'realistic' elements in your superhero campaigns. I say sure. Although it may be difficult to utilize everything that is realistic in the comic books in your campaigns, at least you can use some.

While the Game Master cannot exert control over the personalities of the player characters, and killing off the PCs would put a damper on everyone's enjoyment, there are things the GM can do. One player in a campaign I've run accidentally killed a supervillain and went to trial for this.

Another idea that I've considered using, but never quite put into action as of yet, is to run a non-player hero who becomes part of the player-hero team and ends up turning traitor and selling out his teammates. A mystery concerning how the bad guys always seem to know the PCs' strength and weaknesses, or who are constantly prepared for the strategies used against them, could lead to this conclusion, and present the players with the problem of figuring out what to do about it.

But realistic campaigning can be done in ways much more subtle than those listed above. When the villains or situations are torn from the headlines, it can lend your campaign a certain extra urgency. For instance, terrorist heavies or corrupt politi-

EVANGELINE

cians can easily form the basis for an adventure–the heroes uncovering a scandal involving a wealthy and famous person with supervillain hirelings as muscle, for example. A corrupt politician or tycoon with immense resources to throw into a battle against the superheroes, as he stands on the sidelines, afraid to get his hands dirty, will also make a good enemy; one the players can find easy to hate. Even better, I find, are the terrorists. If they are played with the proper amount of ruthlessness, the player-heroes will be impatient to get their hands on them.

I'll give you an example from my own campaign: The players start out at a ball game. Across the stadium, they see the Brute and Gauntlet, two supervillains the heroes threw in jail a week ago. After recapturing them, the heroes learn of a conspiracy to quietly turn at-large supervillains into the hands of Heritage Technologies, an international scientific research foundation who pays prison officials handsomely for the use of the villains. Some investigation will dig up evidence on Heritage. The villains are recaptured, but Hugh Stone, the chairman of Heritage, disappears. A few weeks later, he is

found dead, killed in a car crash. A long-lost nephew inherits his estate. Hugh Stone is forgotten and the players are in the midst of investigating a crime wave of some sort or another. They encounter surprising resistance but fight their way to the mastermind of the crime wave — Hugh Stone's nephew!

In true comic book fashion, he proceeds to describe his revenge plot. It seems that the body in the car was only a clone of the original Hugh Stone. Stone, himself, had undergone extensive plastic surgery and now stands in front of the players under the assumed identity of his non-existent, long-lost nephew!

As I write this, this scenario has not yet been played, but will be by the time this sees print. This adventure is a perfect example of how corruption of the kind I described earlier can enhance any campaign; where the criminal mastermind behind the plots, while personally powerless, commands financial resources that make him extremely formidable.

The question of realism in superhero role-playing games, is entirely subjective; a decision for every GM to make for himself. However, for the fledgling GM, I offer my experience, and the opinion that the recent trend toward realism in comic books is indeed worthwhile for use in superhero role-playing games.

—Craig Stallone

SUPERHEROES DON'T HAVE TO WEAR TIGHTS

I am the last person in the world most people would expect to run a superhero game. I only read horror and Japanese comic books. I hate cartoons. I love **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**, and giggle at the **Marvel Superheroes Game**. (My character's Strength, dahling? Mahh-velous, dahling, just mahh-velous...) I didn't understand any of the other superhero games, and I'm lousy at math, so I can't be bothered with tallying up Advantages, Disadvantages, Karma, Hero Points, or what have you. The part of a game I hated the most was the necessary Big Combat Scene, when the Players could bash up the Non-Players, and then get what they needed to go on with the story. I would usually have to stand up during combat scenes just so I could stay awake. So what was I doing running a superhero game?

The players wanted me to.

OK! That much settled, I had to devise what kind of Superhero game to play. Wanting to stay away from what my players had seen before (Marvel games, and an occasional **Champions** set-up), I thought about the concept for weeks before deciding that no one ever said that superhero games had to be contemporary, or that they had to be super-hero comic book inspired, or even that the heroes had to wear tights. Taking cues from pulp comics of the 30's and 40's, mystery, espionage and thriller movies, and an occasional glance at an "alternate" game system, I decided to use a home-grown game system based loosely on **Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes**, and created a superhero world in New York, 1942.

Just the idea got creative juices flowing, and from that point, the world began to take shape. It took time to sell the idea to a few players who had doubts about a game I had to describe as "Kind of like the Shadow meets **The Invaders**", but they got caught up in my enthusiasm. I did research, and discovered great books that listed details like standard wages, prices for anything from a Thompson machine gun to a pack of cigarettes. The words and music to current songs I got by ransacking my mother's record collection, photos I obtained from an excellent book called **New York 1945**. (All right, three years off, but the players never knew the difference.) The library yielded a contemporary map, and repeated viewings of films both from and about that era gave me a strong idea about slang, mannerisms, and popular culture.

The backgrounds of the player characters had to be styled for the day, and had to include a reason why they were not over in Europe with the rest of America's young, healthy men. Keeping an eye on medical and scientific achievements of the day, as well as the mystical element of the vaguely supernatural, pulpish heroes, each with a suitably dark or mysterious past emerged from the jaded minds of players who had gotten too used to "Lawful-good", and "weapon of choice", and "Leather armor". Nazis, Federal Agents, corrupt policemen and honest newsmen (and one honest, tough, I-want-to-be-played-by-Hepburn newswoman) surrounded, touched, interacted with and manipulated the players. Their battles were not through buildings, taking walls and cars with them, but on shadowy roof-tops and darkened alleyways, on fog-shrouded waterfront docks and in sleazy gambling dens. Their assailants weren't musclebound criminals bent on taking over the world by using *Outer-Space-Weapon X*, but sharp-eyed, ferret-like men who were taking over the world in the darkest ways possible, using prejudice and hatred. And when the lights went down, and the blinds flickered with the neon signs off Broadway, the men and women in that tale discovered the heat of a New York summer night could lend itself to yet another chapter in the book on male and female relationships. Dangerous friends led to dangerous foes, and the dark (yes, I did borrow the name, but not from where you think) Spider Woman who dropped clues as she abandoned her luckless henchmen became more deadly yet more attractive than any villain I had ever played before.

Would I do it again? I don't know. A lot of effort went into that game, and for 8 weeks, it was the hottest thing we had going. People still talk about meeting famous people of that time, and how their characters might have changed history. But the amount of research, detailing and honest work made my return to my on-going fantasy campaign almost relaxing. But I had to know then what I am sure of now. It's not that type of game you run, (eg: superhero, fantasy, espionage, science fiction), but the style. And when I'm ready to try my hand at a new type, you can bet that it will have my style written all over it, all over again.

—Patricia Travis

He's Back!
The Terminator Returns...With a Vengeance!

Jape Trostle

The last time we saw the Terminator, as embodied by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1984 film of the same name, he had been run over by a truck, incinerated in an explosion, shredded by a pipe-bomb, and turned into stainless-steel souffle by a hydraulic press. But this summer, he'll be back.

Guess you just can't keep a good Cybernized Systems Model 101 with a hyper-alloy-micro-processed-controlled-combat-chassis down for long.

The original movie — directed by James Cameron and produced by Gale Anne Hurd, the same team which did the immensely successful and equally exciting **Aliens** — was intense, white-knuckled entertainment, and proved a hit at both the box office and beyond. The plot was sometimes tricky and full of paradox but it provided an effective vehicle for some relentless, straightforward action. The Terminator, a human-looking killing machine created by the super-intelligent computers that had taken over the world of 2029 AD, is sent back to present-day Los Angeles to kill the mother of the man who would lead a human rebellion against the machines before he is born. Following the cyborg through the time displacement field is Sgt. Kyle Reese, a soldier from that future rebellion, whose assignment is to protect the woman, Sarah Connor, at all costs. In the end, it costs him his life.

In the meantime, the two humans flee from the unrelenting Terminator, stopping along the way to engage in a number of firefights, do some major property damage, and fall in love. The Terminator himself is finally terminated by Sarah Connor in the next-to-last scene. The film closes full circle when it is revealed that Kyle Reese is the father of Sarah's son — the rebellion's leader — and that the machines have caused their own downfall by sending the Terminator back in the first place. From beginning to end, it was good stuff. The script was sharp, full of foreshadowing and wit, as well as some spectacular action which left the audience gasping for more. Plans are being made for a Terminator II, and a script has been approved,

but the movie is still in pre-production and no release date has been set.

But for those who couldn't get enough the first time around, and can't wait for the second film, there is an alternative coming this summer with the release of NOW Comics' **The Terminator**. Granted, while the Terminator (or Terminators — it's plural this time around) in the new comic book is not the same killer cyborg played by Schwarzenegger, the action, excitement and destruction of the film remains. The comic is written by Fred Schiller of **Rust** and **Speed Racer** fame and drawn by Tony Akins and Jim Brozman.

The other main characters from the movie (played by Linda Hamilton and Michael Biehn) will not be seen in the comic either. All of the action takes place in the future, the future which was only shown in dream-like flashbacks in the first film. "It's 2031," says Schiller, "and the battle continues."

NOW's **Terminator** begins three years after Reese and the Schwarzenegger cyborg returned to the past. SKYNET, the collective computer conscience that rules among the ruins of the future, has recouped its loses and, once again, has the rebels on the run. More advanced Terminator models, tougher and fiercer than the model sent into the past, have been released and are close to wiping out the rebels. The descendants of a long-forgotten lunar mining colony returned to earth for some much needed materials unavailable on the moon have been discovered by SKYNET and shot down. Cut off, the miners join up with the rebels, bringing with them some of the unusual, powerful weapons they developed over the years. This tips the scales in favor of the rebels and gives them a fighting chance. And the emphasis here is on the word *fighting*. Schiller says that the story of the rebels and the miners will take up the first twelve issues.

Although it will be the main staple of the storyline, action and property damage won't be the only thing happening in the title. More about SKYNET and its motives will be revealed as the issues progress. "SKYNET doesn't want to wipe

out humanity entirely," Schiller states. "They're just unhappy with the current...strain." Without going into details, he says the machines plan to raise a new breed of humans, ones that are more receptive to orders from the computers. By all signs, this somber and chilling view of the future promises to deliver gripping entertainment for months to come.

Those who enjoy the flick, read the comic, and play any of the many role-playing games which are on the market might be interested in introducing the Terminator to the game of their choice. If Game Masters are seeing their players yawn at superspies, and supervillains aren't enough to crease the players' foreheads (or costumes), then maybe they should liven things up by dropping a Terminator on their players' heads.

Scenarios using Terminators could be introduced into any number of existing campaigns, or entire campaigns could be built around the presence of killer cyborgs. Although role-playing games run the gamut of historical settings, a Terminator encounter would work best in those games set in the present or the near future. Games such as Twilight 2000, Gamma World, 2300 AD, Marvel , Top Secret, Champions, James Bond, Ninjas and Superspies, and other post-war or superhero oriented titles could be considered. The Terminator's statistics for use in several of these systems are listed below, along with some suggestions on how a GM might bring the the characters into contact with a Terminator.

The Terminator

This option is ideal for a small group (2 or 3 players and GM) who only want to play a one or two session game. The players take on the roles of the main characters in the film — Reese, Connor, and possibly the Big T himself — and are run through the storyline established in the movie. This does not mean that the players must adhere to every scene or even to the outcome of the movie. *Au contraire*, the game should progress through the decisions of the players and the fall of the dice. Action should begin right before the first big shootout at the TechNoir disco when Reese, Connor, and Arnold meet for the first time. The set up to this point should be the same as in the movie, but can go in any direction after the first encounter. (Reese should be armed with only a police-issue shotgun; the Terminator should have a .45 caliber pistol with a laser sight and two 9mm Uzis, all fully loaded.)

Dial "PC" for Hero

Any game set in the present day in which the players are members of some recognized and sanctioned group (the police, a government agency, or some sort of trouble-shooting organization) can use this scenario. The set up is the same as the film up until the point where Reese and Connor are caught by the police. As Reese is interrogated by the police, the PCs should be called in as part of the investigation; they should arrive at the stationhouse sometime during — or directly after — the attack by the cyborg. To make things more interesting for the players (and GM), they should have no clue whatsoever that they are about to go up against *the* Terminator. They might figure things out later, either from the invulnerability of the attacker or from the videotape of Reese's interrogation; however, they should enter the scene thinking it is just like any other encounter. The GM should not allow this initial ig-norance to result in the characters' immediate demise. (Then again, most PCs carry enough firepower with them as if they *were* expecting a Terminator around the next corner.)

This Looks Like a Job for a Player Character!

Here again, the set up is the same as the movie. The players are not part of any official organization, but are rogue adventurers. At some point, the PCs should hear of a series of brutal killings in L.A. and, as PCs are wont to do, decide to investigate. Sometime during their search for the killer, they should happen to stumble across one of the many firefights which erupt between the Big T and everyone else. Again, the players should have no idea that they are up against the Terminator until they figure it out for themselves, or someone tells them as much.

Termi-Who?

During the Terminator's transition from the future to the present it becomes badly damaged and is unable to recall its programming. Depending on the whim of the GM, it could do any number of things, none of which would be rational. It could go on a wild killing spree, then turn around and help other people in trouble. It could relentlessly pursue Sarah and Reese, only to suddenly turn and wander aimlessly. Or, it could start killing anyone who looked like Sylvester Stallone. The players should run across the dazed and confused Terminator during one of their adventures.

Oops, Sorry, Wrong Time Line

Here, the Terminator has arrived from the future but, alas, has gotten lost in the time stream and ended up in the 'wrong' present. A present where Sarah Connor never lived, where World War III will not take place in a few years, and where SKYNET will not form. The Terminator, unable to find *the* Sarah Connor, begins to gun down anyone named 'Connor'. An encounter with the heavily armed players can't be far behind.

Big Bad Leroy Terminator

In this version, Arnold — sorry, the Terminator — comes back to the present and *succeeds in eliminating Sarah Connor*. The Terminator, his programming now fulfilled, finds himself with no direction in life. Still a mean killer at heart, he joins up with the criminal element in society and eventually becomes a powerful crime lord; or at least an indestructible bodyguard to one. The PCs can encounter the criminal Terminator in any number of places: running guns in Central America, smuggling drugs from South America, an assassin in a nefarious spy ring, or in a crime syndicate in the Big Apple. Of course, until they open fire on him, the players should only think he is a common thug. A bit larger than normal, but not too unusual...

(In a side note, World War III will not take place on this world. In this particular reality, Sarah Connor is not stood up by her date on Friday night as she is in the film. When she and her date return home, the Terminator is waiting and kills them both. Unfortunately, her date that night is a brilliant computer specialist from Silicon Valley who, if he had lived, would have gone on to develop some of the critical components of the Defense Network Computers that would eventually become SKY-

Right column with copyright notice

NET. Since the components are never created, SKYNET never forms, WW III is never triggered, and 2029 disappears in a puff of logic. Oh well, these things happen...)

The only difficulty in using the Terminator in any present-day game is the implication that bombs are going to drop in a couple of years. Of course the exact date of the war is never mentioned in the movie so the GM could postpone it for a long time. Then again, if missiles *do* fly...

Portrait of Player Character as Rebel

In a storyline similar to the NOW Comics plotline, the players find themselves in a post-holocaust world fighting for survival against SKYNET and a whole slew of Terminators and Hunter-Killers. An entire campaign could be formed around this idea using any of the post-war game systems and adding Terminators and H-Ks to the scene.

The PC as Terminator

While this idea might not work well over a long campaign, it could be fun in the short run. The PCs control the killer cyborgs in encounters set either in the future or in the present. Actual role-playing would be somewhat stilted, although it could be hilarious to have a bunch of players sitting around a table all talking in bad Austrian accents.

Forward to the Past

The situation here is the same as the movie where a Terminator has been sent back to kill Sarah Connor. Instead of sending back just one soldier to stop the cyborg, several are sent. Several of whom just happen to be PCs. Since the time machine is a one way ticket, this could be a useful device for GMs who want to end a current post-war campaign, or switch it to a present day scenario.

And finally...

The Terminator vs. Rocky

SKYNET, in yet another oversight, gets the wrong coordinates for L.A. when sending the cyborg back. Instead, it sends him to Philadelphia. Confused, the Terminator is easily recruited by a boxing promoter and ends up in the ring across from...you can guess the rest. The immovable talent meets the irresistible ego. Have fun.

The Terminator Enters the Marvel Age
Suggested Stats for the Cyborg Supervillain

Rick Caldwell

Fighting: Incredible
Agility: Excellent
Strength: Remarkable
Endurance: Unearthly
Reason: Good
Intuition: Remarkable
Psyche: Feeble
Popularity: 0 (-65 in own alternate future)

Health: 190

Karma: 46

Resources: Shift 0
(In own time, Incredible)

POWERS:

Voice Imitation. A Terminator-class cyborg can perfectly duplicate any voice it hears once. Therefore, this ability is at Unearthly rank.

Self-Repair. The Terminator cyborg is a robot encased in human flesh. It cannot heal, but must repair itself using what tools are available. For game purposes, a Terminator must have at least 50% of its Health in order to repair itself and a Terminator cannot repair itself to better than 75% of its Health away from home base. In addition, it requires an hour to repair 10 Health points.

Learning Program. A Terminator cannot be tricked, trapped or fooled the same way twice. After it has experienced such an occurrence, it receives +2CS to all FEAT rolls to discern similar situations. However, this advantage can be nullified if the sequence of events is altered from what is recorded.

Computer Access. A Terminator can readily access information through computer terminals and their like with Remarkable ability.

Resistances. A Terminator is Invunerable to disease, gases, poisons and toxins. It can be assumed that since it came from a world torn apart by nuclear war, it has Incredible resistance to radiation enabling it to survive "hot zones". Since one Terminator was seen to be able to survive the explosion of a truck (most of the damage caused by the force rather than the flame), it also must have Remarkable resistance to Heat. Being a robot, it would be theoretically capable of surviving in space, though its flesh would freeze and fall off—giving it an Amazing resistance to cold. It is doubtful that ordinary house current would damage this monstrosity, so it would also have Excellent insulation versus electricity.

Metallic Skeleton. As a result of its structure, the Terminator has Excellent Body Armor against physical attacks (though it can be cut and does bleed). It also can do Incredible damage with its fists, and it can Stun or Slam any opponent with a higher Strength than its Endurance.

Scanning Abilities. The Terminator is equipped with infrared and "starlight" optics allowing it to "see" in darkened surroundings. Its hearing capabilities are such that it can use the ambient sounds of its environment as a type of sonar. If it is exposed to high intensity overload during the use of a particular type of scanner, it will be blinded for a round as it switches over to another mode. If bombarded with intense stimuli of Incredible or higher Intensity for 3 consecutive rounds, overloading all its sensors, it will lose all scanning functions and be at -4CS for all actions thereafter.

LIMITATIONS:

Fleshy Exterior. A Terminator's flesh is grown over the robotic skeleton. If the Terminator takes damage from any source, the fleshy covering will be removed 1% per point of damage done, regardless of its actual resistances. This flesh cannot be restored unless the Terminator returns to its home base.

Vulnerability to Magnetic Attacks. A Terminator's Endurance is considered Feeble for the purposes of magnetic-oriented attacks, and all such attacks are at +2CS against a Terminator.

Detection by Heightened Senses. Any Detection Power that reveals information about whether something is natural or not will reveal a Terminator. The Terminator carries an electronic 'mask' to help it pass the testing of electronic devices like metal detectors, but those with animal-keen senses of Excellent rank or better will be able to scent that a Terminator is not human.

TALENTS: Marksman, Weapon Specialist (+2CS with firearms), Driver, Detective/Espionage

IMPORTANT NOTE: A Terminator gains Karma for killing a Target, equal to the Target's highest rank! It is a Killing Machine, and, in killing its Target, it fulfills the purpose for which it was created. However, it gains NO Karma for killing any innocents that get in its way.

Note: These are recommended stats and do not necessarily imply approval or official use with TSR, Inc. products.
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WEAPONRY

An array of powerful weapons was used in the
Terminator movie. Below are a few
examples of the featured firepower.
The Terminator—SPAS12, 12 gauge semi-automatic shotgun with a range of 30 yards; Uzi 9mm Sub-Machine Gun weighing only 9 lbs. with a 32 round carrying capacity.
Kyle Reese—Ithaca Los Angeles Police Department 12 gauge pump action shotgun.
Police—Smith & Wesson Model 19 Revolver (357 Magnum) with a 6 round carrying capacity and 4" barrel.

Provided special to **Gateways** by Leading Edge Games.

Mondo Movie Monster Magic For
Totally Topical Teenagers
For R. Talsorian's **Teenagers From Outer Space**

So, like, the dudes down at Gateways, they like — y'know, asked us to like, write up these stats for these movie monsters for you dudes. So like, maybe they figure, like, since we're out here in California, where the surf is absolutely bitchin', like, maybe we know these guys, right? Sure thing, dude! Everybody in California knows everyone else! So like, we just got on the phone, like, and we called Hollyweird, y'know, and we got you the info on the two gnarliest heavy dudes of Monsterland, right? Not only that, but they gave us two new Teeners powers they said we could use. So go for it! Kowabunga!

NEW POWERS
Fully Regenerate Just in Time to Cause New Plot Twist
This nifty ability allows the Teener to get back all of his bonk at any time when the Audience thinks he's out of the picture for good. Unlike regular Bonk, the Teener with this power doesn't have to announce when he's coming back into the game — he just appears magically in exactly the right place at the right time whenever he wants. Here's an example: The Foreigner is doused in gasoline, hit by a dozen flamethrowers, and crushed in a trash compactor. So much for him, right? However, he can *now* reappear at any time in the game, anywhere — even if the action has moved light-years and is happening in a locked room!
Cause Terror and Fear in the Opposition
This power allows the Teener to inspire incredible fear and terror in any number of opponents. No matter that there are 10,000,000 machine gun totin' terrorists in front of you — with this power, they're all reduced to jelly! The problem with this power is that it's unpredictable. You go into the 17-11 and start riots. You can't go to class without a major uproar. And your dating life? C'mon, get real!

THE FOREIGNER
Real Weirdie
Powers: Fully Regenerate Just in Time to Cause New Plot Twist, Superstrength
Smarts: 2
Bod: 6
Relationship With Hive Mother : 6 (she loves the lil' dickens — all 23, 000 of 'em!)
Luck: 2
Driving: 2
Looks: Ugly
Cool: 5 (The Foreigner is very cool. With refrigerated blood, he can't help it!)
Bonk: 10
Knacks: Hide In Little Bitty Place Until Heroine Has Taken Clothes Off +5,
Drool, Slaver and Slime +6, Terrify Anyone Except the Terminader +6
Traits: Slavering, Creepy, Always has the Munchies

THE TERMINADER
Near Human, sort of
Powers: Fully Regenerate Just In Time to Cause New Plot Twist, Superstrength, Travel Back and Forth to the Future
Smarts: 1 ("Uh...you Sarah Connah? Uhhh...Sorry dude!")
Bod: 10 (This is Arnie Schwartzenegger, after all!)
Relationship with Body Shop Mechanic: 3 (if the parts are in stock)
Luck: 4
Driving: 3
Looks: 3 without a wax job, 5 with
Cool: 6
Bonk: 10
Knacks: Stomp Biker +6, Know Where Heroine is Hiding +5, Replace Artificial Lenses with Exacto Knife +2
Traits: Remorseless. Unstoppable. Boring.

57   Gateways, issue

Charts By Lizard

The First Part of an Occasional Series:
Heraldry Made Simple

Banners whipping about in the breezes, family crests raised on shields, a simple blue cross on the chestplate of a knight, a flag raised over the ramparts of a castle in siege...How was the soldier in the field, the cavalier on horseback, the wandering adventurer to know who was being met, which family owned the land they crossed, why a feud lasted beyond the memory of the common man, where the greatest knight in the land lived? By the use of personal and family heralds, of course!

One major factor of life in the Middle Ages that has been ignored by many role-playing games is heraldry. Rather than give a full series of lessons on the art of heraldry, which could easily take hundreds of pages, here is a series of charts which can be used to create 'quick & dirty' heraldry. It is strongly recommended that any gamer interested in the subject should look through some books on the subject, and appropriate any good ideas found therein. (Three such books are listed at the end of this article. The information contained in this article is a simplification, and I'm sure your local library would be thrilled to have someone take out a book or two on the subject.)

But first, a few brief notes on the subject. While the art of heraldry has been considerably debased today, at one point it was vitally important, not as a means of decoration, but as a means of survival. On a battlefield crammed with men covered up in tin cans, it becomes very difficult to distinguish friend from foe. The only identifying mark was the device blazoned on the shield. Heralds were called upon to identify, at a distance, precisely who it was that was attacking them, based solely on the knowledge of shield devices. This need for ready identification at a distance forms the basis for most of the rules of heraldry.

Heraldry was also not simply a means of putting pretty pictures on a shield. For the illiterate nobility of the time, it was practically a signature. Medieval art work shows many lords who decorated everything including, quite literally, their wife and horse, with their heraldic device. When noble families married, the coats of arms of the husband and wife were combined, or 'dimidiated'. When their children married into other families with combined arms, the arms were dimidiated again. It was at this point in history that heraldry started getting messy. Certain royal families of tiny countries have coats of arms consisting of over a hundred subdivisions, and are aesthetic nightmares. Do not allow players to do this.

A coat of arms can basically be considered to consist of three major components: the field, *ordinaries,* and *charges.* Ordinaries are geometric shapes, such as bends, pales, frets, etc. (See the illustrations.) Charges are what most people think of as 'heraldic': Dragons, mythological creatures, trees, lions, tigers, bears, oh my. The combination of these into

thousands of original designs is what heraldry is all about.

First, the ordinaries. Despite the name, many beautiful and artistic devices are composed of nothing but ordinaries. Fox-Davies (One of the primary references on heraldry) lists many, including a number of variations on the basic cross. (Probably more than you'd really want to know about). Heralds have to have this stuff memorized.

The following ordinaries are not necessarily all of them, or even close. They are, however, the most common, arranged in tabular format for the ease of rolling at random for them. A device will have 0-2 ordinaries upon it.(1d4-2)

Roll		Variation
1.	Bend	Dancette
2.	Baton	Wavy
3.	Pale	Engrailed
4.	Fess	Embattled
5.	Bars (2-4)	Raguly
6.	Chevron	Indented
7.	Pile	Nebuly
8.	Cross	Plain
9.	Chief	Plain
10.	Bordure	Dovetailed

(See accompanying illustrations, or check out Chaosium's **Pendragon** role-playing game, which features some nicely drawn examples.)

Explanations of terms
To go along with the accompanying illustrations, here are some basic descriptions of the various ordinaries mentioned above. Attention heraldry experts: Please do not send me all sorts of nasty letters telling me my descriptions are vague or incomplete. This is a short article, and it is not my intent to reproduce all of the accumulated legalisms of seven hundred years of heraldry.

Bend: A bend is thick bar running from the top right to lower left corner of a shield. A bend going the other way is usually a mark of illegitimacy, and is known as a *bend sinister.*

Baton: A smaller version of a bend that does not actually reach the corners of the shield.

Pale: A rectangular stripe down the middle of the shield.

Fess: A rectangular bar drawn horizontally from left to right across the shield.

Bars: Thin bars, drawn left to right across the shield, placed

parallel to each other. Multiple bars are usually equidistant.

Pile: A triangle drawn from the top of the shield, ending near the bottom.

Chevron: An inverted pile (Drawn bottom to top) It is actually far more common then the pile.

Cross: There are over twenty kinds of crosses, ranging from the standard Christian cross to a fylflot, better known these days as a swastika.

Chief: A rectangular bar going across the top of the shield. A good place to put charges.

Bordure: A border running along the inner edge of the shield. A bordure wavy can be taken as a sign of bastardy.

Line types

All of the above ordinaries may be drawn with various edges. These are detailed below.

Wavy: Rippled, like waves.

Engrailed: Composed of a series of upside-down 'U's

Embattled: Composed of small rectangles, like castle embattlements.

Raguly: Similair to embattled, but composed of rectangles angled to the right.

Indented: Composed of a series of jagged triangles.

Nebuly: Composed of a series of curves that sort of look like the edges of puzzle pieces.

Dovetailed: Also difficult to describe, dovetailed looks sort of like **embattled,** but crushed.

Divisions

Divisions express how the shield is divided. Each division will be a different tincture, metal, or fur. Note that charges and ordinaries may very well cross over divisions, often counterchanged. (The color is the opposite of the color underneath it. Thus, if a shield was divided *per pale* (down the middle) with one side *azure* (blue) and the other *or* (gold), a griffin going across it would be *or* on the side *azure* and *azure* on the side *or*. See the section on heraldic colors for more information.)

The following breakdown of divisions is courtesy of Fox-Davies' **Complete Guide to Heraldry.** There is a 75% chance that the shield will have some form of division.

Roll	Division
1	*Per Fess*
2	*Per Bend*
3	*Per Bend Sinister*
4	*Per Pale*
5	*Per Chevron*
6	*Per Cross/Quarterly*

The divisions are mostly named after ordinaries. However, being divided, say, Per Fess, does not mean that there cannot also be a bend on the device. The Division basically determines the background, upon which another ordinary may be placed, provided there is no color conflict. See Rule 1, below.

Per Fess: Divided by a line across the middle, from the left side to the right side.

Per Bend: Divided by a diagonal line, going right to left.

Per Bend Sinister: Divided by a diagonal line going left to right.

Per Pale: Divided by a line going down the middle, top to bottom.

Per Chevron: D divided by a triangle, growing from the base of a shield and terminating just before the chief (top)

Per Cross/Quarterly: The shield is divided into four equal sections. Two or four colors will be used. Ordinaries may span the whole shield, or may be placed in one quarter only, at the designers choice. Shields such as this tended to be the result of intermarriage, and can grow quite complex and messy.

Heraldic Colors, Metals, and Furs

Rule 1: Never put a color on a color or a metal on a metal. Fur on fur is usually bad, but not always.
Rule 2: See Rule 1.

Heraldry consists of five colors (tinctures) and 2 metals, as well as more furs than really need be considered. *(Vair, Counter Vair, Counter Ermine, etc.* The important ones will be listed)

The *tinctures* are *gules* (red), *vert* (green), *azure* (blue), black *(sable),* and *poupre* (purple). The metals are *argent* (silver) and *or* (gold). Because the second terms are more familiar in heraldry, and add much feeling to it, I will be using heraldic terms throughout the rest of this article.

The *furs* are, with all their attendant variations, too numerous to list in detail. I will stick with the two principle ones: *vair* and *ermine*. *Ermine* consists of ermine tails, drawn *sable* on an *argent* background. *Vair* resembles a pattern of inverted goblets, and is generally *argent* and *azure*. Those interested in the subject can locate many more furs, if they really want to. The following chart makes it all clear.

59

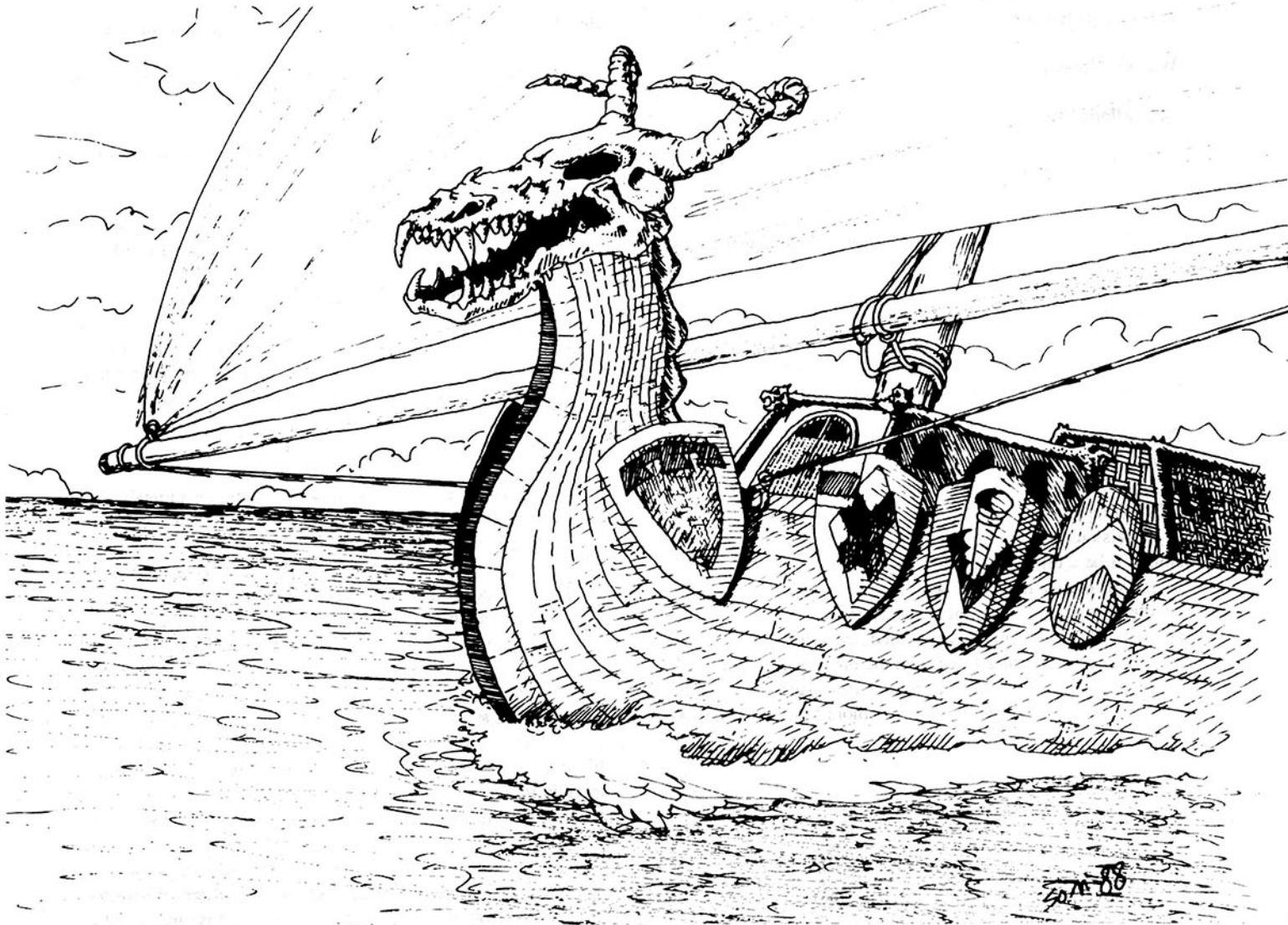Use this chart when a color, tincture, or fur is called for. Re-roll if a conflict is going to occur.

1. Vert
2. Gules
3. Or*
4. Argent
5. Sable
6. Poupre
7. Azure
8. Vair
9. Ermine

*(Ed. Note: When using or in heraldic description, you traditionally place a "d'" in front of the word, which in French means "of")

Charges

Charges are what most people think of when they think of heraldry. Lions, dragons unicorns, sword, glasses, spinning wheels, thumbscrews....Spinning wheels? Yes. Just about anything, living dead, imagined, or created, has been used as a charge in heraldry. The chart on the next page is a tiny sampling of some charges. Each of the major charges, especially the animals, also has a thousand variations on how it is displayed. Only the highlights will be covered.

1. Lion
2. Unicorn
3. Dragon
4. Dog
5. Wolf
6. Eagle
7. Griffon
8. Hippogriff
9. Bee
10. Human
11. Body Part of
    (1-10)
12. Tiger
13. Leopard
14. Cat
15. Boar
16. Horse
17. Pegasus
18. Centaur
19. Bull
20. Fish
21. Raven
22. Blue Jay
23. Scorpion
24. Stag
25. Deer
26. Lamb
27. Bat
28. Sphinx
29. Mermaid
30. Satyr
31. Harpy
32. Phœnix
33. Falcon
34. Hawk
35. Dove
36. Swan
37. Crane
38. Stork
39. Dolphin
40. Serpent
41. Shell
42. Butterfly
43. Oak
44. Pine
45. Beech
46. Ash Tree
47. Cross
48. Holly
49. Mistletoe
50. Rose
51. Grapes
52. Anchor
53. Tower
54. Battle Axe

55. Spearhead
56. Chain Mail
57. Vest
58. Bell
59. Crescent
60. Buckle
61. Staff
62. Sleeve
63. Harp
64. Flute
65. Horn
66. Helmet
67. Gauntlet
68. Star, 5
    points
69. Star, 6
    points
70. Star, 8
    points
71. Flag
72. Quill Pen
73. Skull
74. Rope
74. Knot
75. Ship
76. Rocks
77. Mill
78. Horseshoe
79. Clover
80. Torch
81. Barrel
82. Disc
83. Torch
84. Crown
85. Cap
86. Gate
87. Water
88. Leaf
89. Owl
90. Cockatrice
91. Lantern
92. Scales/
    Balance
93. Keys
94. Cauldron
95. Beacon
96. Wheat
97. Acorn
98. Apple
99. Chameleon
100. Other:
    see above

Anything which exists in your universe, and is not mentioned here, could wind up on a shield. Be creative. The above were culled by flipping through several books on armory at random, and picking some I liked. You can do the same. Send me another hundred, and I'll send you a computer generated list of one hundred exotic-sounding place names.

Putting It All Together

The following are the steps you should take in rolling up a device:

• First, roll for division.
• If it has a division, roll for the color of each section of the division. Separate division may be both colors or both metals...but charges placed upon them can not conflict. See rule one of heraldry, above.
• Roll for ordinaries, and their colors.
• Roll for a charge. There is a 90% chance of a device having a charge.

Now then. There is a 75% chance of a device having a color, as described above. (It must not conflict with the color underneath it) If the charge does not have a color, it is blazoned *'proper'*, or its natural color. Rule 3 of Heraldry: Mythical beasts cannot be blazoned *proper*. They must be assigned a color. In a world where the existence of Dragons, Griffins, etc is taken for granted, this rule may be voided, as the Heralds out there groan in disgust.

Thus: I roll a 4 for division, meaning it is divided *Per Pale*
The colors are *poupre* (left side) and *ermine* (right side). Note that only metals may be placed upon the shield without conflict, though colors could then be placed on the metals.

There is one ordinary, a *bordure* embattled *d'or*.

The charge is a clover, blazoned *argent* (so it won't conflict)

Presto! An instant heraldic device, one which, while of questionable taste, does not truly violate the rules of Heraldry.

SOURCES:The following are the sources I physically consulted while writing this article. Also used, but harder to qualify, were three years experience in the SCA, long talks with heralds, a lot of books I've read but don't own, and many years of role-playing.

Complete Guide to Heraldry, Fox-Davies, 1909
Dictionary of Heraldry, Stephen Friar, 1987
An Heraldic Alphabet, J.P. Brooke-Little, 1973

The Red Dagger Inn

Edited by Charles and Sydney Barouch

High summer means lots of business at the Inn. Tankards of ginger ale and glasses of elven wine cooler have been passed over the counter at an amazing rate, and that has left us little time to explore the games in the game room or the other software we love so dearly. There has been a lull or two, however, that has allowed us peruse these old gem:

OGRE

Ogre is a computer version of the hexboard **Wargame** created by Steve Jackson Games. There is a certain irony in a computer controlling the *Ogre,* a cybernetic tank bent on your destruction. The game is rather bland and frustrating unless you either add more forces than the rules allow (the game warns you of the excess but allows you to override the limit) or spend some time creating a serious strategy.

You see, **Ogre** isn't a game for just anyone. We wouldn't recommend it to the video gamer because the action is too slow and methodic. We wouldn't recommend it to the fantasy gamer because there is no sense of the importance of individuals or heroes. However, if you are a serious tactician, this is a good challenge.

Ogre's strong suit is its manuals. They explain the logic behind the Ogre (when computer controlled) and suggest strategies for the one player and two player versions. These playing notes allow you to enter the combat between the Ogre (Mark III or Mark V) and the human forces.

After playing it for a while, its addictive quality emerges. Unlike **Bard's Tale** or **Ultima**, which captured us immediately, **Ogre** was an acquired taste.

Hints:

1) When playing the Humans, read the Ogre Logic section thoroughly. This will allow you to control the Ogre to some degree by your choice of equipment layout.

2) Play several games with playfields and equipment that exceeds the 'legal' level until you get the feel for the Ogre's weaknesses. Knowing these weaknesses will help you when playing a 'legit' game as the Ogre or as the humans that are up against it.

3) As the manual indicates, attention paid to the treads early on in the game pays off in spades later. Remember that an Ogre has multiple sets of treads and that destroying a full set of treads merely slows it. Only by destroying all the sets of treads will you immobilize the tank.

4) We found it hard to locate the rules for 'legal' deployment, so here they are as found in the Field Editor section:

If the attacker is a Mark III, the defender gets 12 armor units and 20 squads of infantry. If the attacker is a Mark V, the defender gets 20 armor and 30 squads of infantry. All units must be deployed in the OBSTRUCTED areas and, all but 20 attack strength points for the Mark III scenario or 40 for the Mark V, must be deployed on or behind the crater line.

HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

You have committed murder to get this chance. When the Soviet government finds out what you and your senior officers are planning, you will be in for the fight of your life. Your mind fills with potential headlines..."Soviet Sub Wrecked In Treacherous Escape"..."Soviets Sink Their Own Submarine". You see, you are a Soviet defector, and you are in the process of giving the submarine *Red October* over to the United States.

Certainly no video game, this computer simulation requires a mastery of tactical, attack and contour displays (just to name a few) in order to evade the Soviets pursuing you. They aren't going to give you up without a fight — losing you (and the Red October) would mean disgrace or death for them back home. If they catch you, it will mean death for you and your officers.

Your crew doesn't know you are defecting and you must keep them in the dark. This means that you not only have to navigate the treacherous course, evade the Soviets, and reach the U.S. rendezvous point, but you also have to stop the crew from realizing what you are doing.

Hints Provided by DataSoft:

1) The game clock cannot be changed if there is any sonar activity.

2) Don't start in propeller mode. You are too easy to detect in propeller mode.

3) If you detonate a mine, lay flack and *run.*

4) Use ESM detection to make sure your Atlantic projection map is updating when you reach the Atlantic.

5) Use the contour map to evade enemies. Use the sonar map to avoid a painful encounter with the bottom.

6) The game departs from the book in one very critical respect. The Soviets know from the very beginning that you are defecting.

Hints from the Authors:

1) You need to go South at the start of the game (bearing 180 degrees where possible). This will take you to the Atlantic.

2) The main map is only useful for noting enemy positions — you need to be on the sonar screen in order to set your course.

3) There are several methods for seeing your location. Learn how to use them all.

4) Caterpillar drive makes you harder to detect, but it is much slower than your alternatives.

5) Look at a real map before playing. Getting a real sense of

where the simulation is set will help you in playing the game.
—Charles and Sydney Barouch

WILLOW

Willow follows none of the known categories for computer games as it is not truly a role-playing game, and not quite an arcade game, instead, it incorporates aspects from both.

As yet made only for IBMs and compatible systems, you can only play this game if you have at least the four-color Color Graphics Adaptor (CGA) card. Actually, the game looks much nicer in Enhanced Graphics Adaptor (EGA) mode; the CGA graphics are, most of the time, unrecognizable — much of the time, I didn't know what the picture I was looking at was supposed to be. Thankfully, the only real problem is in the digitized pictures that head each part of the game. The cartoon-like graphics which comprise the main portions of the game are infinitely nicer in CGA, although the perspective is way off (out of necessity; if Willow were as small on the computer screen as he is on the movie screen, we'd never see him!).

Willow is one whole made up of seven parts. In other words, you must play through the seven-part scenario of the game in consecutive order, so that you will eventually reach the end and confront Queen Bavmorda. The object of the game is to save the baby, Elora Danan, and to destroy Bavmorda at the end. Along the way, you get to rescue Madmartigan from his cage and transform old Fin Raziel a few times. This isn't as easy as it sounds.

You start the game at a point called the Scroll. It is from here that you can enter the different parts of the game. You do this by clicking on various words or phrases that are scattered throughout. I suggest reading the Scroll before clicking on anything; it contains some very interesting information about various characters. For example, the Scroll explains why Sorsha turned against her mother, and it had nothing to do with Madmartigan. It seems her father was King of Tir Asleen. Whether this is Willow canon or not, it is intriguing, nonetheless.

From the Scroll you can play the different scenarios in order or skip around, which is only possible in the practice mode. The parts of the game include all the familiar places and events from the movie; sometimes with embellishments — computer gaming license. Another interesting thing about Willow; and one that varies the game play considerably, is that you aren't always playing the same character all the time. Depending on which part of the game you're in, you may be playing Willow, Ethna, the midwife, or even Madmartigan.

There are two different modes to **Willow**. One is the practice mode and the other is the Quest. And herein lies the cheat. The game remains the same if you don't reset it — even if you turn off your computer and then reboot it again days later. You can't get to Bavmorda through the Scroll, but you can do all the practicing you like. You can start at the beginning and work your way through, memorizing all the exits and pathways, then click on the word "Willow" in the Scroll and play to win.

The Quest game begins, as it does in the movie, in the Dungeons. Ethna must get the baby out without running into any guards or empty cells. You have to be careful to make quick decisions here, as waiting around too long will cause guards to appear. Mapping may be useful while you're practicing in order to discover the route out.

If you're successful in the Dungeons (as well as in the other parts of the game) the screen changes to a picture and the story continues while you are waiting for the next part of the game to load. Unfortunately, loading takes forever; disk accessing is very slow.

While you're waiting, you're treated to the Willow theme in all its tinkling glory. The music can become obnoxious; what was a beautiful movie soundtrack becomes an annoyance when filtered through monitor speakers. However, there is a way to toggle it off. My favorite parts of the game were the Ice Caves and the Battle. One wrong move in the Ice Caves (a fast shield ride through crystalline caverns) and Willow and Madmartigan become just a hapless pile of broken bones and icicles. And if Madmartigan doesn't duck or jump fast enough while he's fighting General Kael during the Battle, he'll die in a puddle of blood that spreads out from his prone form. All kidding aside, this game has more blood and gore than the movie did.

There are three ways to control the figures in the game, none of them are really very good. The joystick and mouse are just not very responsive; I suggest using the keyboard. Ordinarily, this would not be all that bad. However, when the game needs speed, such as the flight through the Nockmaar Woods, reaction time seems sluggish.

Although the game has its faults (one of which is that they should have programmed it to be played on a more graphic and game-oriented system), it is quite enjoyable. Don't worry; if you do make it through the Nockmaar Woods and actually manage to complete the Quest, the game can be reset. All the maps will randomize, the cages will change, and spells will be different. Try **Willow**; it remains true to the movie while adding just enough spice to be a fairly entertaining game.
—Barbara Makransky

ULTIMA V

Well, a year after it was promised, it's here. Saying the wait was worth it would be an understatement. Lord British, the creator, continues to push back the limits on what can be accomplished with a computer.

The first few seconds of play quickly demonstrate this. When the icon representing your party walks past a mirror, your reflection appears in the mirror. Torches cast light; moving outside their range shrouds you in darkness. When you occupy the same square as a chair, your character sits down; if there is food in front of you, you begin eating. You can take food from tables, or torches from walls. You can move chairs, barrels, and plants around to get you into obscured areas. Clocks tick; fountains make splashing noises. It gets dark at night, and brightens during the day. Perhaps the most radical revision of all, and a first for any computerized RPG: The NPCs in the game have lives. People get up in the morning, have breakfast, go to work, eat lunch, and go home. Each character has his/her own schedule. They don't simply stand around waiting for you to ask them pertinent questions. Some people can only be found in certain places at certain times, making it difficult to track down certain individuals. NPCs also seem to know each other; one may ask about another. If you don't know the answer, don't lie...it reflects badly on your status as an Avatar.

Avatar? Well, if you played **Ultima IV**, you know more

about being an Avatar than you want. If you didn't, here is a quick summary: In **Ultima IV**, you had to prove yourself the living embodiment of the Eight Virtues. It wasn't easy. But you triumphed, and were sent home to teach your own world of the ways of Virtue, leaving the land of Britannia in a new golden age.

Recently, though, you have been summoned back to Britannia. It was not a happy return. Lord British, benevolent ruler of Britannia, is gone, presumed dead on an expedition to the underworld. Blackthorn, a disciple of British, has taken over, and has reinterpreted the Eight Virtues under somewhat more stringent terms. Britannia is suffering under tyranny and oppression. Taxation and inquisitions have replaced the careful search for Virtue that characterized the land of **Ultima IV**. Evil Shadowlords of Hate, Cowardice, and Deceit roam the towns, bringing with them a cloud of evil. The halls of Justice in Yew now feature Stocks, Racks, and Dungeons. Guards accost innocent travelers, demanding payment of tribute to Blackthorn. Secretly, in underground tunnels and hidden passages, a resistance movement has formed, waiting for a hero...for you.

As in **Ultima IV**, figuring out what you must do to win is half the problem. This isn't one of those 'kill the evil wizard' type games. Merely discovering what you must do is a long and arduous process, taking you through towns, castles, fortresses and other places, such as lighthouses and huts in the wilderness. Gathering companions to aid you is also important; sometimes, people you "knew" in **Ultima IV** will greet you, and ask to join your quest. Hint: say yes. (Walking into a town you haven't yet explored, and having one of the inhabitants say, "Hello, old friend" can be somewhat disconcerting, causing some serious reality shifts.)

The more mundane aspects of the game have been improved, too. Combat has been varied and complicated. You can wear different armor on your head and body, as well as having a choice of shields. It is possible to hit your own comrades with misfired missile weapons, or even with spells. Magic items can be found among treasure, and armor and weapons found in battle may be sold back for more cash. Be sure to spend a lot of money on food; starving to death is the greatest danger in this game.

I have invested about fifty hours in the game so far, so this review is of necessity incomplete. Probably one or two hundred hours of playing time remain before I can win. There are many puzzles within puzzles here, even more so than in four, and some nasty changes, too. People in towns may have more than one vital clue to give you; don't say 'bye' as soon as you get one piece of information. Despite the box's claim that this game is suitable for a novice, I would say this requires at least some **Ultima IV** experience. However, having won **Ultima IV** will not make this game easy. A different mindset is required before you can even begin to make progress. In **IV**, you were a hero, the legendary Avatar who would usher in a new age of peace and hope. Here, you are an outlaw, avoiding guards and other figures of authority, freeing condemned prisoners, and so on. No town may be considered a safe haven, as there may always be a Shadowlord there. (There is a way to locate the Shadowlords, but that is one of the mysteries that you must solve on your own.)

Magic has also changed. There are more spells listed, and there are even some unlisted. Questing down one of these can

take you through several people and towns. Buying reagents, the magical materials needed to make spells, is now more difficult, as only some are available in each town. Also, you can no longer cast spells when in close combat, as the monster attacking you might very well disrupt your casting.

Dungeons, too, are changed. The graphics are many times improved (is this sounding familiar?). Stalactites drip water into puddles beneath them, and oncoming monsters are seen in full, high resolution imagery. However, the dungeons themselves are less complex than those in **IV**, and seem to serve primarily as gateways to the Underworld.

Overall, the game is superior in nearly all respects to its predecessors, which is quite an achievement, considering the generally superior quality of all the **Ultima** games. Lord British (a.k.a. Richard Garriott) continues to push back the frontiers of what can be done with a computer. He has created, on a machine that must be considered obsolete by most standards, a game world with more depth than that of some live campaigns I have had the misfortune to play in. If the developers of 'real' (i.e. business) applications showed the same levels of ingenuity that he does, computers might actually have lifespans of longer than a year or two on the market. If you have an Apple II series computer, and enjoy computer role-playing games at all, buy this one. One hundred fifty hours of challenging entertainment for about fifty dollars is quite a bargain.

—Ian Harac

Ogre
Apple II
Origin System
$31.95

Hunt For Red October
IBM, C-64, Amiga
DataSoft
$39.95

Willow — The Computer Game
IBM and Compatibles
Mindscape
$39.99

Ultima V
Apple II Family
Origin System
$59.99

Where No Dice Have Gone Before

EPIC, INC:

A Brief History Of The Role-Playing Game From Its Inception as a Cottage Industry Through Its Growth Into a Corporate Citadel.

Jape Trostle

In the Beginning, there was no "Role-Playing Game". Once upon a time, only four types of games were present amongst the civilizations of man, having existed for thousands of years. These were board games, table games (such as Pool), parlour games (such as Pin-The-Tail), and games of chance. Then, not long ago in a land not so far, far away, several people came up with a fifth type of game; after that, things were never the same. This new type of game found an audience quickly (geographically speaking), and exploded onto the public's awareness. Role-Playing Games entered their "Golden Age" as millions of people discovered a new way to have fun. Yes, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, for the new games and the companies which produced them expanded quickly, and while many prospered, there were growing pains, too. Then, just as the new pastime showed signs of being a quick flash in the gaming pan, the businesses stabilized, and a new industry emerged. So how did all of this come about so suddenly? And who were the individuals behind it?

"Uh, History of Role-Playing for $200, please." DING-DING! *"Small multi-faceted random number generators!"* BONG!*"Uh, what are "High-Impact Polyhedral Dice?"*

Finding the origin of something as complex as the role-playing game is much like searching for the source of a large river: the further one goes up the river towards the fountainhead, the more one discovers there is no one source, but many, many tributaries. The factors that contributed to the RPG were as diverse as the games which would eventually be produced; however, unlike the web which the real world weaves, every story must have a starting point, and this tale's beginning lies far in the past. As an example of this, consider that the

idea behind "High-Impact Polyhedral Dice" comes from ancient Greece, when Euripides, in an attempt to assist Plato in his explanation of the basic forces and elements of nature, gave him several blocks of wood, one shaped as a pyramid, another shaped like a cube, and yet another which had twelve sides (a dodecahedron). The idea worked; each block always landed in the same way, with one side pointing up. Models based on the same principle have been used in mathematics labs since then. Early RPG companies then took these different shaped dice when they discovered that they needed to generate numbers other than 1 to 6. Once the demand had begun, companies in Taiwan and in the U.S. (such as Gamescience) started mass-producing these items.

Origins

Miniature wargaming — that is, the use of small figurines to simulate the moves and actions of warring armies — has been with us since right after the first war was lost and the loser wanted to figure out where he went wrong on the battlefield. For the most part these games were either abstract representations of war — such as Chess or *Kreigspiel* — or parlour games used by generals and gentlemen to replay great historical battles. It was not until 1890 when H.G. Wells — the H.G.Wells — published a book called **Little Wars** that there was a true set of written rules for military simulation using miniatures. While this first set was not terribly "realistic" (although Wells did use real miniature cannons in the game), it was the first comprehensive rules system for a wargame. Over the next few decades, a number of companies attempted to improve and expand on what Wells had started, and produced new rules and miniature armies from various historical periods. For a short time in the twenties, military simulation became quite popular, but the immediate

fad went quickly out of vogue, leaving only a hardcore of miniatures enthusiasts to carry on the activity.

There had always been one very large problem with miniatures; they took up a lot of space. It took a large area to play out a battle, it took up a lot of space to properly store the delicate, painstakingly painting metal figurines, and it took up long stretches of time, both to build the armies and to play out the battles. A desire grew for wargames that were realistic like miniatures, yet portable and inexpensive like chess. In 1959, Avalon Hill met this need by releasing **Gettysburg**, the first boxed wargame/boardgame. The miniatures were replaced with cardboard chits, and the board folded up to fit in the box. The response was incredible. Within a few years, Avalon Hill was distributing dozens of games, on all sorts of subjects.

For the next decade, Avalon Hill dominated the new wargaming field, unchallenged until the late sixties when SPI appeared on the scene. Simulations Publications Inc. was first formed in 1967 under Chris Wagner when he began publishing the wargaming magazine **Strategy & Tactics**. Two years later, SPI was purchased by Jim Dunnigan and Redman Simonsem, who began to produce and distribute games on a regular basis. The subjects covered by the two companies ran the gamut of history, from ancient battles to modern day confrontations to battle in outer space in the far-flung future.

While wargames were a major contributor to what would become the role-playing game, they were not the only influence. In the early 60's, the book publishing industry was changing. Imaginative fiction—both science fiction

and fantasy—was earning a new acceptance with mainstream publishing and the public. Publishing houses began to release more titles by more authors, and began collecting many of the pulp fiction stories published decades before into new anthologies. Most notable among these was Robert Howard's *Conan the Barbarian*. Also, in 1965, Tolkien's **The Hobbit** and his **Lord of the Rings** trilogy were re-released and found a very large and enthusiastic audience.

What is significant as far as RPGs were concerned is that some of the same people who played wargames and miniatures also read many of these books, and most were highly intelligent individuals with very active imaginations. When the 70's rolled around, all of these elements had crossed paths, mixed together, and had been sitting on the back burner for some time.

Genesis

There is a theory known as the "Spontaneous Generation of Ideas" which states that if enough influences are floating around, a number of people in different areas are bound to get the same idea at about the same time. This was what happened around the country in the early 70's in California, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

In California, Greg Stafford was publishing what he termed a Semi-Fantasy Prozine entitled **Wyrd**, in addition to working on short stories which took place in the fantasy world of *Glorantha*. He was also working on a new game called **White Bear and Red Moon**, which was also set in Glorantha. Stafford had been playing Avalon Hill games since 1962, and enjoyed Roman Army miniatures known as **Ancients**. When he created White Bear and Red Moon, he combined his two interests, gaming and writing, into a game that was not quite a novel and not quite a wargame. It fell somewhere in between as a do-it-yourself novel/game. In early 1974, he gathered up all of the directions he was working in — including a woodcarving business — and placed them in one company under the umbrella name of Chaosium.

At about the same time in Illinois, a group of people all returning to finish up college at Illinois State University ended up becoming friends through the ISU Gaming Club. Within a few months they began designing their own games and in the summer of '73, four of the group — Mark Miller, Frank Chadwick, Rich Banner, and Loren Wiseman — formed the partnership known as Games Designer Workshop, and began to make games that did what they wanted them to do. Over the next few years, they would dabble in just about everything, from board games to miniatures rules to combat and political simulations. Some of the simulations they developed were pure role-playing situations used by professors in the classroom. While Academics had been experimenting with the idea of "role-playing" for years, no one had thought of using it recreationally...yet.

In Wisconsin, there were a number of miniatures clubs that had been around since the mid-sixties, and two avid game players involved with these clubs were about to figure very prominently in the RPG history. Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax had been playing games, both miniatures and wargames, for a good number of years when they met. Gygax was involved with the International Federation of Wargaming, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, and a sub-group within the L.G.T.S.A. — the Castles and Crusade Society — which concentrated on medieval miniatures. Medievals were Gygax's specialty, and he had already published a set of medieval miniatures rules in 1968, entitled **Chainmail**, in a publication called **The Domesday Book**. Over the next few years, Gygax expanded and refined the rules, adding a fantasy element to it so that these medieval armies could take on dragons and wizards and other mythical creatures out of the middle ages. The 2nd edition of Chainmail was released in 1971.

Dave Arneson had been playing with his own TwinCities club for years, and had met and gamed with Gygax at various GenCons, the annual wargame convention held in Lake Geneva since 1967. While Arneson sometimes used Chainmail, his specialty was *Napoleonics*. In the fall of 1972, he was finishing up a particularly long Napoleonic campaign [which included Gygax], and decided that he and his players needed a break, something different. After a Saturday of watching a monster movie festival and reading Howard's Conan, Arneson was suddenly struck with the idea of putting his players through a castle populated with monsters that night when they gathered to play. Over the next few months, both Gygax and Arneson began to play along this line, using the Chainmail rules to resolve combat situations. Eventually, play began to work down to a level where combat between individuals could be readily resolved. Since players didn't like to get killed on the roll of one die, the idea of having "hit points" developed.

With each session, further ideas were developed and added to the play, including an armor class for what the individuals wore, and saving throws for making miraculous escapes from tough situations. In the winter of '72, Gygax gathered all of these changes and suggestions into a fifty page manuscript which would become the prototype for the most successful RPG yet.

Gygax's and Arneson's new idea didn't fit any existing mold for a game. While miniatures could be used, it was not a true miniatures game, and while combat and battle were a large part of it, it wasn't a true wargame. It had no board to play with. The most interesting aspect of it was that the players created characters — just as in books or movies — and then took these imagined personas through scenes described by a referee, or *Dungeon Master*.

From the response he was getting while playing with the prototype, Gygax sensed he was onto something. Throughout '72 and '73, he worked on positioning the product so it could appeal to a wide base of gamers and non-gamers alike. He wanted to give it a classical fantasy feel, and borrowed freely (sometimes too freely) from the literature which influenced him the most including Howard's Conan, Leiber's *Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser*, Michael Moorcock's *Elric of Melnibone*, and especially Poul Anderson's **Three Hearts and Three Lions** as well as classical mythology and various fairy tales. And although he did not think as highly of Tolkien's work, he borrowed many elements from **Lord of the Rings** because of its popularity and recognition factor.

Even though Gygax underestimated how popular the game would become, he believed it would make some sort of impact in the game market, and wanted to have all angles covered if other companies tried to get a market share of the

"heroic fantasy" role-playing game. Gygax had also been working on other game systems at the time, and by late 1973 decided he wanted to publish them on a serious basis. He approached several companies — including Avalon Hill — with his ideas, but didn't receive any offers.

TSR, Inc.

So Gygax, along with his friend Don Kaye, formed a partnership under the name of Tactical Studies Rules. By the beginning of 1974, Brian Blume had joined the partnership, and the trio began working out of Gary's basement. By that spring, Tactical Studies Rules released a white-boxed set of three staple-bound books that bore the title **Dungeons & Dragons™**.

The first few streams had come together and begun to rush towards a river.

Babes In Toyland

Although RPGs would eventually be a million dollar industry, they did not start out as such. The early 70's was the heyday of the simulation game, and while both Avalon Hill and SPI were enjoying a prosperous period, GDW, TSR, and Chaosium were just barely meeting their bills, if that. No one from any of the companies drew a salary for several years, and all had to keep other jobs to support themselves, their families and their businesses. The games each put out enjoyed some local and regional success, but distribution remained a very large stumbling block.

However, various local gaming clubs did begin to pick up and play these new games, especially **D&D**, and this already established and somewhat close knit community passed information on to others. Another big factor in the early days was that each company was situated near a university, and the college students embraced these new games. Slowly, word began to get around. By the end of 1974, TSR had sold its first thousand copies of D&D. As Gygax had suspected, D&D's broad approach appealed to more people than just wargamers and miniaturists, and caught on with those who did not usually play games.

Even with increasing success, the early days were hectic going. "Management by Crisis," Gary Gygax

called it, and he and TSR were about to face a very big one. In 1975, Don Kaye died unexpectedly. His death had both immediate and far-reaching implications for the gaming company and the industry in general. Gygax and Blume refiled their blossoming business and incorporated TSR. When the paperwork settled, however, Gary Gygax no longer had controlling interest in the company he had founded, receiving only 40% of the stock in the firm. The other 60% went to Blume. Although this was not as important to them at the time as survival of the company was, it would have a great bearing on events further down the river when the stakes got higher.

Dungeons & Dragons continued to gain attention, and even though Gygax, Blume, and a few others were now working full time to fulfill the new demand, as well as produce other games such as **Metamorphosis Alpha**, they could not get enough out on the market. By the end of 1975, TSR licensed out the right to use the D&D name to Bob Bloodsaw for a line of pre-generated dungeons and adventures released under the name Judges' Guild. A need was growing for pre-generated modules among the many people who were now buying and playing the game, as a lot of time had to be spent by the Dungeon Master in preparing an adventure from scratch. Some of the first items put out by the Guild were clever, well-done "classics" in the genre, the most notable being **The City State of the Invincible Overlord**.

Since role-playing was open ended with few boundaries, players and DMs could bring to it anything they wanted to enrich the game. A great part of the games' appeal, was in that it was so open and flexible, allowing almost anything to happen. Creativity and imagination were the most important elements, and the only thing needed to play were the rules — actually much more like guidelines at first — paper, pencil, and the unusually shaped dice need to generate random numbers.

For all the player interaction in this new kind of game, however, it was still essentially a wargame. The emphasis was on action, adventure and com-

bat, and the idea of actually taking on and acting out the role of a character had only begun to form. Although there were no designated playing pieces, RPGs drew heavily upon their miniatures heritage. All of the games suggested the use of miniatures could be helpful in play, but until this time, there had only been a small, almost non-existent, market for fantasy miniatures. The demand until this point had been mostly for historically accurate figures. By 1975, a big market for fantasy miniatures, especially in 25mm, began to emerge, and the industry standard was quickly set by a small company out of Ohio, Ral Partha. Started in '75 by Richard Meier, Glenn Kidd, Richard Smethurst and Charles Crain — all very big miniaturists — Ral Partha (named for a merchant/wizard in a D&D campaign they had played in once) soon gathered a reputation for having the sharpest, most detailed figurines around. Other companies tooled up, and ones which already made historical figures began to produce fantasy figures, but no one was able to match Ral Partha's quality for a number of years. This was due in part to the dramatic designs of the figures, and in part to a peculiar compound they had found in an auto body shop which allowed the artist to make models with an incredible amount of detail.

GDW

With TSR leading the vanguard, an actual industry began to take form and grow. This surprised some observers, because it was the idea behind the product which was selling and not the actual product itself. The early games, done on penny-from-behind-the-couch budgets (if they had any budgets at all!), had little, if any, planned packaging. Mark Miller of GDW said it was not like it is today, where slick, fancy packaging is a must for a game to succeed. "Back then, only the rules and ideas mattered." Indeed, in contrast to the quality work which Ral Partha was putting out, and the high quality of fantasy illustration that was gaining popularity at the same time, the appearance of the games themselves were almost shoddy. The art in the original boxed set of Dungeons & Dragons is legendary in its badness. Still, the games prospered in spite of their homegrown look.

Dungeons & Dragons was beginning to become very influential and would eventually spawn a number of similar games and imitations. One of the first and most original of these was created by University of Minnesota professor M.A.R. Barker, who had played in the TwinCities club with Arneson. His game was a hefty tome concerning the world of *Tekumel*, and although its gaming system was based on D&D, its themes came more from the far east, and Barker's memories of his travels in India. TSR began distributing Barker's **Empire of the Petal Throne** in 1975.

Others were soon to follow. As the field was relatively new, and basically had only one competitor, other companies put out products that attempted to challenge D&D and ·capitalize on its growing popularity. The most infamous of these was **Tunnels and Trolls**, produced by Flying Buffalo. Its creator had played D&D once and thought he could do better by it. Another was **Chivalry and Sorcery**. The problems with these and other games to follow were not that they were bad games — though some were — but that they were too closely associated with D&D, especially by their choice of names. Although a number of these clones lasted for several years, they were never a serious threat, and were unable to overtake Dungeons & Dragons.

Even as TSR and the other companies grew, they were changing. Gygax and Arneson, who had both been running ever-expanding D&D campaigns with various groups of players, gathered up the new rules and corrections they had added to the original in several supplements to the box edition. By 1976, TSR had moved out of Gary's basement and into an old house. That same year, they opened a hobby and mail order shop in the basement known, appropriately enough, as the Dungeon Hobby Shop. With the new mail order service, TSR finally began to reach people nation wide, something that their continuing problems with distribution prevented them from readily doing.

D&D was now becoming the latest craze on college campuses across the country, and with its loose, open rules, generated a number of different playing "styles". Gygax had heard that at USC alone, there were three separate groups with playing styles so different (one

played "killer dungeon" D&D, one "straight" D&D, and one "Monty Haul" D&D)* they refused to associate with one another. Gygax's own rules used in his *Greyhawk* campaign had changed somewhat from the original, prompting him to change the rules again. But instead of replacing the old game, he decided to make them into two separate ways of using the same game system. In 1977, TSR released the first of a projected series of four hardcover books — the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™ The Monster Manual**.

(Kids, if you don't know what these are, ask someone who has played for a while.)

Also released in 1977 was the first successful non-medieval genre game, and the first game to successfully challenge D&D for a good percentage of the market. **Traveller**, a science fiction RPG which Game Designers Workshop had been developing and refining for several years, was set in a galaxy-spanning "Imperium." Like Gygax and TSR before them, Mark Miller and GDW tried to encompass as many of the classical themes and ideas of the SF genre as could fit within the boundaries of the game. Unlike TSR, GDW quickly discovered that more players than not desired a full-blown and ready-to-play-in universe, especially in the realm of science fiction where the whole universe had to be dealt with. GDW began to produce ream after ream of detailed support material for its new game. Their previous years of game design and experimentation showed through in the quality and quantity of work which came out their door. In no time, Traveller established itself as the science fiction role-playing game by which all others would be measured.

The release of Traveller in 1977 was fortuitous for another reason, one which was to have effects far beyond the gaming industry. That summer, George Lucas released *the* film which made everyone spin on their ears. (You know which one it is.)

What **Star Wars** did, beyond what has been said by hundreds of other writers, is that it legitimized heroic fantasy again, and put it smack in the middle of

mainstream American life. Suddenly, heroes, myths, and grand adventure were back in vogue, and now available on the market were these new games which allowed one to play a hero and live out the adventure.

The floodgates opened.

The Big Time Bang

After the summer of '77, there was no looking back; RPGs just took off. TSR released **The Player's Handbook**, the next of the AD&D books, had already begun to produce the first of what would be dozens and dozens of pre-packaged dungeon "modules", and began to expand their line of other games, such as **Gamma World**. GDW released mounds of books, supplements and adventures for Traveller. More conventions than ever before were starting to spring up every weekend, and the market for support material like dice, miniatures, maps, modules and just about anything else expanded as fast as the demand for the stuff did. Devices and playing aids were so diverse and imaginative, they could command an entire article to themselves. Mail order places filled in where distribution and hobby shops failed to go.

More periodicals concerned just with role-playing began to appear including TSR's **Dragon** magazine, **The Space Gamer**, **The Dungeoneer**, and **Different Worlds**. Already established gaming magazines such as **Strategy & Tactics** and **The General** began to acknowledge that there was something else going on out there other than wargaming.

Chaosium released its first big RPG, **RuneQuest**, While many saw it as another D&D clone, RuneQuest was a bit different, both in design and feel. Like Judges' Guild, Chaosium had been putting out game supplements for RPGs, but, unlike much of the Guild's work (which one designer had described as looking like it was hacked out rather than built), Chaosium had tried to introduce a bit of quality to both the look and content of the package. Stafford had played D&D and didn't feel it fit his notion of how a fantasy game should be. So along with designer Steve Perrin and others, he designed RuneQuest and set it in Glorantha, the same world where White Bear and Red Moon took place. In a short time, RQ gathered a small, loyal following.

Seeing as TSR's flagship game had no "home world" in which it was based (while most players knew about Gygax's world, Greyhawk, and Arneson's creation, *Blackmoor*, these world's would not be available to the public for several years), this left the market open for a large number of small companies to develop and release prepared worlds that were compatible with both D&D and other games. Places such as *Harn* and *Midkemia* were made available for players' exploration. As more clubs appeared, as more hobby shops began to cater to the desires of gamers ravenous for more, as more conventions convened, more and more people were exposed to RPGs, and more often than not for a time, the game in question was D&D. Very soon, the critical mass necessary for the media and the general public to take notice of something was reached, and word went out: Dungeons & Dragons was hot property.   Real hot.

When TSR grossed over a million dollars, the media and big business woke up and took interest. RPGs, specifically D&D, were covered in maga-zine and newspaper articles nation wide.

By 1980, articles on this latest craze had appeared in such diverse periodicals as **Time, Newsweek, Psychology Today, McCalls, Rolling Stone, Christianity Today,** and **Parade**. Gygax and Blume were interviewed in **Forbes**, and Gary became something of a celebrity, appearing in **People**, and other Famous-For-15-Minutes mag-azines.   As word spread, sales of D&D doubled, then tripled, then went right through the roof. The other com-panies were pulled along for a ride on TSR's coattails, and by the end of the decade, several million people were playing one RPG or another. Not too shabby for an industry that had barely existed five years before.

But the problem with hot fads is that fads eventually end, and, where there's heat, someone gets burned. For all the intense attention RPGs were get-ting, they were about to be thrust into the center of attention in a most unde-sirable fashion, one that would fix in J.Q Public's mind's eye an image which role-playing has been trying to play down ever since....

Next Issue: *The thrilling conclu-sion of Epic, Inc, featuring the downfall of RPGs, the rise of the Young Turks, and the changes that rocked and revital-ized the industry!*

The Cosmic Streetcorner

Tony Lambert '88

In doing my bit to complete this issue's cover story, I had the Cosmic Streetcorner take a flight through the universe of Gene Roddenberry's **Star Trek: The Next Generation**. Now I have never really sat down here and talked to you about some prime-time television program, but there are things to discuss here that warrant this "first". The series is still young, I'll give you that. It's had to swing its new cast immediately into production, with Roddenberry recruiting some of Hollywood's (and Science Fiction's) finest to help reshape and project the Star Trek galaxy decades into its own future. One of the most expensive TV shows ever, it's had to perform excellently in the ratings regularly, living up to old expectations while staying accessible to the grown up sons and daughters of the people who first watched (or ignored) it in the sixties. It's also been forced to withstand staff and budget problems, as well as an angry and grueling writer's strike near season's end. Amidst all this, in an episode called "Skin of Evil", I had to endure the death of one of my favorite characters, Chief of Security Lt. Natasha Yar.

Having heard that Denise Crosby was leaving the series, I guess I was prepared to see Tasha go; I even knew her death would be a violent one. What I was not prepared for was the sudden way in which Armus shorted her brain, whipping her into the air, killing her in action as she attempted to aid her friend Deanna Troi. It was one of the swiftest onscreen deaths of a major protagonist I had ever seen, and for a few minutes, this glazed Cosmic Kid was shocked into silence.

Then I got mad.

Boy did I want that Away Team to beam back up and blow that damned oil slick Armus back to the Stone Age! Arm the phasers! Prepare the photon torpedoes! How dare he touch one of ours! Nuke it 'til it glows!! Well, suffice to say that's not what happened. And it took me a long while to realize that this is what makes **Star Trek: The Next Generation** special.

After that night's show I talked to a lot of friends who grumbled their disappointment with it. "There's no action in this series; when are they gonna shoot things?" or "This show is like a bunch of psychologists who fly around the universe gabbing with things that'd just as soon wipe them out", have certainly been common complaints. Indeed, Captain Picard himself went down to try and reason with Armus even after Tasha's death, and when that didn't work, he gathered his away team and its surviving victims, and left it alone, presumably to be isolated forever. While this was probably a pretty horrible punishment, I wondered if Captain Kirk would have let that rotten thing slide.

Now take a moment and go back to read the statement that opens up "The Next Generation of Starfleet" on page 6 of this issue. Some pretty wonderful things have happened in the Star Trek universe in the last 70 years. Civilizations seem to have grown up, joining forces to declare peace and prosperity. Picard will no sooner act rashly or out of anger as Kirk would have stayed out of bed with some green-hued aliena. In fact, the creators of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** have gone out of their way to show us that the crew of the Enterprise will do *anything humanly possible to avoid a violent physical confrontation with another being.* Week after week these characters think, consider and communicate with potential enemies, using reason instead of nerve pinches whenever possible. While this truly hopeful (and maybe naive) depiction of the future may not make for weekly slam-bang laser fests (despite the potential ratings security in weekly fireworks displays), it does make for the best advice I could give anybody who has to deal with the real world.
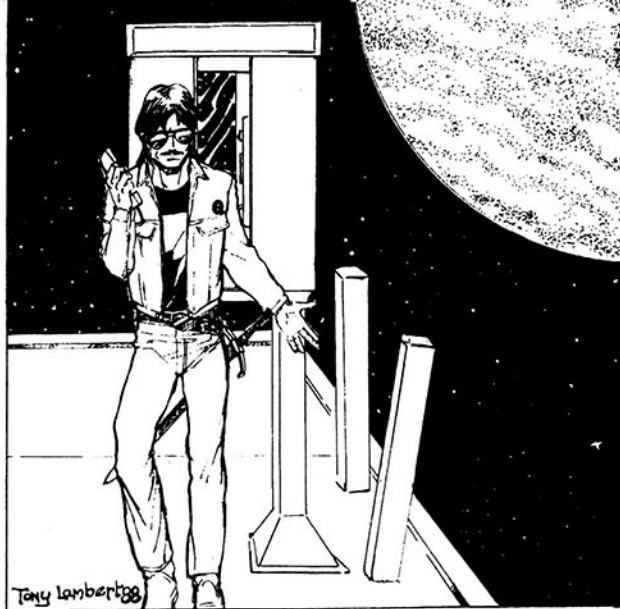
Tasha died suddenly, and that scared me because in real life people occassionally do die with little warning. This time she was looking out for a friend, but there were other times in the series where she placed her life in jeopardy while fighting for the safety and security of the Enterprise. When she did fight, she had all of the force of the Federation's mightiest starship at her disposal, and that's a pretty good thing to have when you really need it. And although Tasha often jumped to conclusions, Picard's crew all essentially hold the same philosphy on matters such as these: talk, think about what is motivating this potential enemy, and try to make it a potential ally; but if it backs you up against a wall and there's simply no other choice, then hit it hard with the forces you command the best. Quite simply, that's what drama and storytelling are all about. Conflicts become more meaningful, action more tense, and violence becomes the ugly, unglorified, remorseful final alternative that it should be.

Ultimately, **Star Trek: The Next Generation** represents a fictional universe that is constantly changing. Unlike the worlds of James Bond or Dr. Who, the universe of Star Trek has spent the last quarter century growing, expanding and developing before our eyes. Currently, stories are being told over nearly 100 years of Federation history in nearly every media available. This is the highest level a story teller can achieve, and Gene Roddenberry and his crew can take a bow for this at the very least.

Jeffrey Gomez
Publisher