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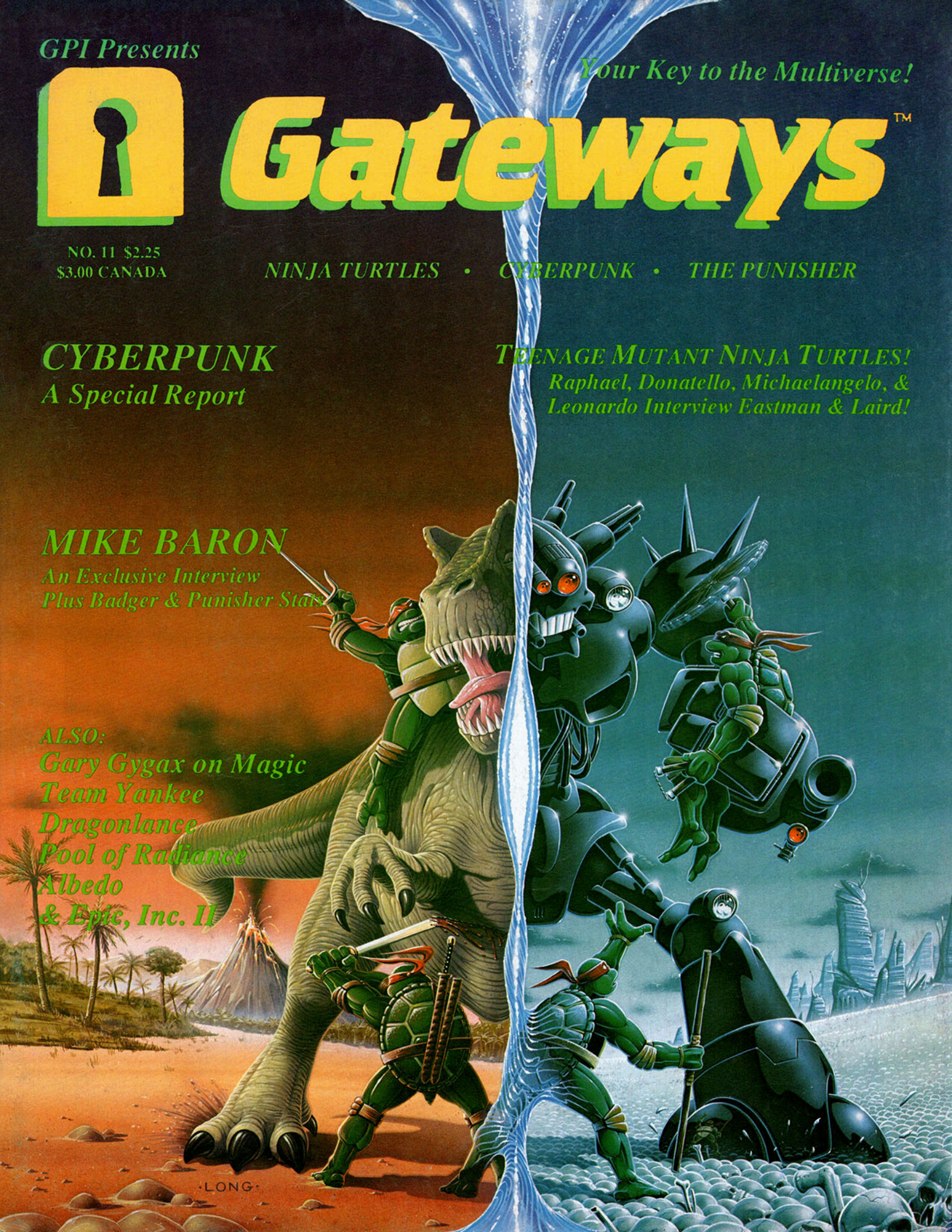
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Kowabunga!

Welcome to issue 11 of *Gateways Magazine*, our heroic Fall Spectacular. Once again, we weave through the multiverse to bring you the hottest and latest among the realms of science fiction and fantasy in adventure gaming. Comics, novels, computer games — our multi-media outlook provides you with comprehensive coverage to guide you along your paths of adventure.

Donatello, Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo! The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® are back in the pages of *Gateways*. This time, in a rare and hilarious interview, those half-shell heroes chat with their own creators, Eastman and Laird, pose for original artwork, and sound off on Palladium's latest hardback romp, *Trans-Dimensional Turtles!*

You want controversy? We'll give it to you! Mike Baron talks to *Gateways* on the universe of *Badger* and *Nexus*. Also included: stats for that martial arts madman, the Badger in three hero game systems, and a full career dossier on — the *Punisher!*

Pushing the limits in role-playing games comes *Cyberpunk!* We cornered designer Mike Pondsmith and others to get the lowdown on the grim depiction of futuristic society only hinted at in *Bladerunner* and *Max Headroom*. Will this be our future? A special feature explores this dark genre phenomenon.

Team Yankee, this year's explosive World War III novel by Harold Coyle is analyzed, along with GDW's boardgame and the First Comics' limited series and graphic novel.

Krynn! Forgotten Realms! The DC Universe has expanded to include the TSR Worlds, and editor Barbara Kesel levels the lance on this thrilling collaboration. *Gateways* debuts artwork from the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* comic series.

Finally, we present the first in a long-awaited series by Gary Gygax on magic and its place in the fantasy role-playing environment. In part one, Gygax corrects what he sees as an essential flaw in his original creation...

Join us on an odyssey through a dozen strange and wondrous lands. Let *Gateways* be your guide!

Alan Berkson
Assistant Publisher

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Howling At The Moon

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



Dear Gateways:

I'm writing to you in reply to the letter from Bob George in *Howling at the Moon* from Gateways #9. I would like to take issue with some of his statements.

First of all, he says that he lacks understanding of the mentality of role-playing gamers. To that I say: What's there to understand? What is the difference between a role-player and any one else?

Then came his comment on the *Tome* in issue #8, which recommended the use of mood music in gaming. Now I've never been a fan of "great music", but what's wrong with using it as a backdrop for RPG's? Who would be harmed?

Lastly, I found his closing remarks to be rather snide. Speaking for myself, I've never forgotten that there is a real life out there, and I feel that I'm on the "real" side myself, along with most of the gamers I know. To imply that we aren't carries with it an implication of mental problems, a stereotype of RPGers that I can do without.

Sincerely,
Craig Stallone
Flushing, NY

Dear Gateways:

I have recently purchased issue 9 of your magazine and found it greatly exhilarating. The articles were quite impressive. In the past, I have purchased Dragon magazine, but it was getting boring. Gateways has brought me new hope for role-playing magazines. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
James R. Cunningham
Alfred, NY

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GPI Presents:

 **Gateways**

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COVER ARTIST: Kevin Long
"Trans-Dimensional Turtles" Courtesy Palladium Books

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From The Tower

I often get the chance to travel across the United States and meet with gamers at conventions. It gives me the wonderful opportunity to sit down and talk to some of you face to face, listening to your ideas, dreams and hopes. Gamers and comic book readers are usually fantastic at getting their feelings understood — they're so used to reading, hearing and sharing their ideas that saying what they mean is almost second nature.

So, naturally, along with the praise I sometimes receive, a reader will come up with a complaint or a criticism. Sometimes, rarely, it is directed toward me. Well, not toward me as a person, but toward my attitudes and opinions which make up these Towers. This summer, a reader cornered me and expressed his opinions about some of the topics I had covered in the past year or so on these pages. He took me to task, rather firmly, for telling readers that their dreams had value and were worth fighting and working for. He accused me of giving people "false hope" by suggesting that they could have what they wanted, be what they dreamed of and create what they envisioned. His points were strong, because it was clear that he had experienced some set backs of his own, both in the creative industries and in his personal life. He managed to control his bitterness until a very telling line came out. Unable to shake my belief in the individual's right and ability to forge their own destiny, he finally said, "It's easy for you to say all that! You've never failed!"

Well, we finished our discussion by swapping some "failure stories" and by my (I hope) convincing him that I and every other living person on this earth had experienced failure as often and as deeply as the next living person. He laughed at his accusation, knowing that what he said was a wild exaggeration, but he admitted to me that most of the professionals he admired in the industry never seemed to make mistakes. His logical mind told him that they, too, were human, but when faced with his own failures, he couldn't imagine that anyone else had or even could ever fail that way.

After thinking long and hard about this problem, I wondered how cheerful advice might sound to someone who is facing what they see as their own personal failure. It may be very difficult to imagine other people, especially people you respect, having the same problems. The optimistic words of someone who can't understand what you're feeling can fall rather hard on the ear. So rather than addressing the way we sometimes react to failure, let's take a hard look at the root of the problem here: the actual spectre of FAILURE.

Failure comes in two varieties. The first, and the one we shouldn't be too worried about is accidental failure. This is the familiar "luck of the dice" style of failing, and once it's identified, there's little one can do about it but accept it with dignity and go on. When dealing with luck, there is no way to avoid failure other than avoiding taking a chance. Here, it's up to the individual to judge how much they are willing to leave to fate, and that's another topic.

The other type of failure is the kind that comes after an attempt to do or create something. This is usually the varie-



ty that hits closer to home, since it involves the fact that you had tried to do something and it didn't work out. This is personal. But if you really consider what failing at something means, it's easy to understand why it's so important to fail.

In school, we find out early that if you are right 90% of the time, you get an A, but if you are right 60% of the time, you fail. We then go out into the world thinking that making mistakes and errors is wrong. We learn that in order to look smart, we should avoid being wrong, avoid failure at all costs. To do that, some people just avoid putting themselves into any situations where they might fail. But if everyone were to feel and act that way, the generation of new ideas would stop.

Stop thinking of failure as the opposite of success. Failure and success are both products of the same creative process. A baseball player who hits three thousand times will have missed about six or seven thousand times. Columbus was looking for India — think of how wrong he was! Thomas Edison, before getting it right, knew 1800 ways not to make a light bulb.

Errors and failures also point the way to what we need. They tell us when it's time to change direction. There are usually two benefits to every failure. First, it will tell you what doesn't work. Second, it will give you the opportunity to try something new. Remember that the more creative you are, the more mistakes you will make. Thomas J. Watson, IBM's founder, once said: "The way to succeed is to double your failure rate." And finally remember that our entire evolutionary journey is based on a series of colossal failures of genetic material to behave the way it was supposed to.

No amount of cheery words can take away the pain of a personal failure. But if we know that failing is an indicator of our willingness to try, our spirit of creativity and the sheer resilience of the individual human being to accept and move on, we can get on with our lives just a little faster. Our lives are worth too much to squander away on worries and mistakes.

Laura Antoniou
Executive Editor

PS: This column is dedicated to Greg Louganis, who failed in front of the whole world but took the gold anyway, and to Roger von Oech, founder and president of Creative Think.

continued from pg. 2

Dear Gateways:

This magazine of yours is great! I walked into a Waldenbooks to check out the recent issues of *Dragon*. Next to my traditional gaming magazine I saw a copy of *Gateways*. Curious, I picked it up. Noticed the wide variety of topics, the price, and the article the *Tome*. I took it home, and was very happy with my investment in a new publisher.

I would subscribe, but I prefer to purchase my magazines from book and hobby shops to avoid damage and reprints. In fact, I presently subscribe only to *Autoduel Quarterly*. I am talking to my local hobby shops and Waldenbooks, and I hope that they will continue to carry *Gateways*. If not, I'm sure to subscribe. Thanks again, for a great magazine.

Thanks,
Thomas Comstock
LaRue, OH

Dear Gateways,

At the prompting of a friend, I finally picked up a copy of your magazine last month. I've read through it a couple of times, and here are my thoughts:

The *Tome* column was particularly nice. The point Mr. Tweet and Mr. Rein•Hagen were making is one of the keys of good games mastering. It is something that every good GM I know knows instinctively. I have rarely seen it expressed as well. Congradulations on the column. I hope

future columns will be as insightful.

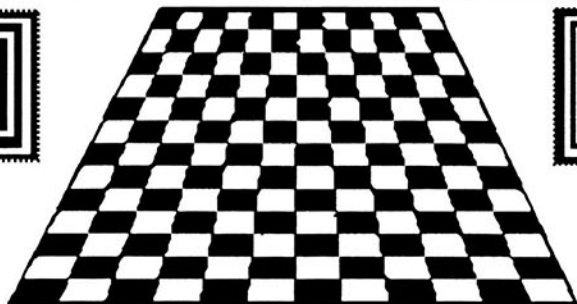
I found the various reviews on games material well-written. They cogently covered the main strengths and weakness of the work in question. Again, my congradulations. The only thing I didn't care for was the coverage of *Willow*. Specifically, I cannot understand why it was given such extensive coverage. I was disappointed that the editors had had the poor judgement to make it the centerpiece of the issue. It wasn't worth nine pages of coverage.

I think I'll pick up another issue or two. If the columns and reviews prove to be as good in future issues, I might even subscribe. I look forward to issue #10.

Sincerely,
Patrick McCormack
Hyde Park, MA

Ed. reply: Thank you for your kind comments, and I hope issue #10 met with your approval. Just for your information, however, understand that the Willow coverage in issue #9 was planned back in February '88. With no story, no pictures, and no idea what the actual film would be like, we judged coverage on the fact that it was a Lucasfilm release that had great significance to fantasy fans. The cover had been contracted months before the publication date, because that's the way magazines work. We feel that our coverage was balanced, focusing on the gaming potential inherent in the subject matter more than upon the actual film. Stick with us for a few more issues, and then tell us what you think.

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The Tome



Creating The Figure of Modern Myth: *legend making in superhero campaigns*

Serge Clermont

I began to run superhero campaigns when I was a freshman in college. The players in my games were talented and eager to play, making it easy for me to concentrate on aspects of a superhero campaign that no one had ever spoken about before. As the players created (literally) a dozen characters overnight, I had the pleasurable task of sitting down with these people and honestly talking about their characters before the game began.

It was then that I realized that when beginning a superhero campaign, the characters should naturally come first, sometimes even before establishing where all the action is going to take place. The "Never-mind-about-the-world-let's-worry-about-the-characters-first" type of attitude only works for this type of game. In other genres, like medieval fantasy games and science fiction adventures, the characters are not initially expected to stand out from the crowd the way superheroes do against the backdrop of a "normal" world. Superheroes far surpass any other type of character in sheer power; knowing that your character can knock down a building with one blow, or can power blast the villain into the next century is what charges such a campaign. A medieval mage or knight-character can't (or shouldn't be able to) duplicate those feats — if they can, the Game Master and players of such a campaign in which these characters could just as easily play a superhero campaign instead, where such levels of power are expected and are part of the modern mythology of the superhero.

When we think of mythology, we usually think of the Olympians from classic Greek mythology; Zeus, Hermes, Aphrodite, and all the rest. The reason they are so easy to remember in our Western society is because of the myths that make them out to be powerful beings whose strengths and weaknesses mimicked that of the concepts and natural forces they symbolized. But though they were powerful, they were not all-powerful — and not all-knowing, either.

They could be deceived, they could be tricked, they could fall in love with a mortal one moment and take a ruthless vengeance upon him the next. The Olympians were unpredictable, fallible, gullible, and subject to the power of Fate and thus, all too human. It is the human element in the gods of Mount Olympus that allowed those who read classic Greek epic literature and poetry to identify with the plights and adventures of the gods and heroes. After all, if the Olympians were themselves so human, what was to say that we couldn't reach their lofty heights and perform their mighty deeds if we had been born with their power? GMs of any type of superhero campaign can (and should) give their players the guidance and encouragement to create and play heroic characters who can easily take up the mantle of modern mythology. Doing this will result in a campaign where the actions of the player characters come across much larger than life, full of the drama and sheer excitement of true comic book action and adventure.

What makes character creation so easy for superhero games is that you personify a *force of being* in the character, like the ancient Greeks did with for their Olympians — whether it be a force of *nature* (like anyone who manipulates energy of some sort, or whose powers resemble an animal from the wild), a force of *will* (psychics fit into this category), a force of *strength*, or a force of *belief* or *philosophy* (martial artists, soldiers and mystics). All these categories of force can walk some pretty fine lines of comparison and contrast. Players should be able to create a character whose force of being brings across his or her particular power in a positive and constructive way. In creating a character, it is also important that the character's force of being is presented in a way that makes it uniquely their own. Anyone can say that their character follows a samurai code of honor, but it's the way the character feels and interprets that code that makes him special from the rest of the crowd who swears that they follow it.

The power level of the character all depends on 1) the GM, and 2) how much emphasis the player places on which word: "super" or "hero." Inevitably you're going to encounter the player who prefers the "super" part. I had one. I consider myself fortunate that I had only one. The "super" or *Urbemensch* (German for "superman") player doesn't create a character with a force of being — he creates the Big Bang Theory in humanoid form. Maybe this character can't do everything, but he can give a reasonable facsimile of doing so within the context of the game. His power levels in affecting the physical reality of the game structure are so high that pitting him against a villain powerful enough to take him on can result in the incidental destruction of the other superheroes in the group simply because they weren't created to match that kind of power.

Look, if you have one player who likes to play *Urbemensch*-type characters in your superhero team, it's okay. You'll always need a powerhouse there to take the brunt of whatever's thrown against your team anyway. Every superhero team in the comic books has one, like **Thor** for the Avengers or **Superman** for the Justice League of America. Besides, adhering to the classic commandment of comic book scripting "with great power comes great responsibility" while plotting the course of your game with respect to this character will help you maintain game balance. If you

pile on enough personal challenges to equal the amount of power (responsibility) the *Urbemensch* player has, well, he'll either ask to play a less powerful and possibly more manageable character, or he'll stick to it, and he will truly earn the term "hero". Suffering through trials and tribulations bravely is one part of being a "hero".

On the other hand, a player who brings you a godling (such as Marvel's Hercules) on paper is not necessarily going to be a typical *Urbemensch* player if he is prepared to shoulder greater burdens because of his greater power. Godling-level super hero characters are fun because they come complete with spectacular special effects that you can use to describe the battle in heroic proportions. (They usually will also supply some great dialogue.) However, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. A godling character unchecked is the death knell of any campaign as his existence in the game steals the merit of the other characters' heroism. The key here is to know your players. A big ego wandering around with bigger powers does not necessarily make a good hero.

Who is a more likely "hero"? An example: the acrobatic martial artist superhero goes up against the big bad powerhouse brick after he's seen this guy pound the rest of his comrades into the dirt, including the group's powerhouse godling. Why? There are innocent people in the building directly in the monster's path. That's a hero.

When a character places himself at risk for others that he owes nothing to, against odds that are surely against him, he is truly being a hero. GMs should both give players free rein in creating their superhero characters, and still encourage the kind of heroism (on the part of the players) to create characters who are not all at a galactic level of power. The powers and abilities a player has are armor against the whims of Fate in the campaign, incarnate in the form of the GM. Being hungry for power is a sign of wanting a lot of control over what happens to the character. The more power that is accumulated, the more players are making the character invulnerable to danger, thus robbing that character of the ability to really act like a hero, because there is no heroism when there is no danger.

Going back to power generation, versatility (or the possibility of developing it) should always be stressed over raw power (though that's okay, too). I will grant that there's not much versatility visible in a strongman at first glance. But if you read the right team-oriented comic books, there's a lot of special tricks that a strongman can perform that can take an opponent who's expecting just the usual application of brute force off guard. This rule can apply to any character whose set of powers look pretty straightforward. Encourage players to develop their own styles of combat behavior and style. You'll find that with enough variety in motivation, offensive/defensive tactics, team-ups and loner acts, even a team full of bricks can seem like a team of uniquely styled individuals with different powers.

After the powers, of course, comes the personality and secret identity of the character. The personality is influenced by the addition of powers into the equation of the character's life. The origin of the powers will almost certainly severely affect the development of the character's history. It is a pivotal point that must be taken into account. Without the powers or special abilities, no matter how good

and upstanding a citizen this character is, he is not a superhero as opposed to a hero. Make sure all of the players know about their origins.

You may think that I've forgotten the point of giving the character his codename. I haven't. I just feel that establishing the personality of the character first might lend a clue as to how to name the character. A hero who is a scholarly type in his secret identity would be prone to taking a name that is literary in origin, but still giving an idea of the nature of the character's powers, abilities and/or his personal philosophy. Or, if the change in personality between the superhero persona and his secret ID is a drastic one, the codename might indicate that. In any case, the powers/personality relationship can be as simple as a hot-tempered, flame-throwing superhero, or as complex as a crackshot sharpshooter who refuses to kill or even injure another living being. The player should also play up how suitable having his particular powers are — or aren't — for the character's personality.

The character doesn't have personality only in his superhero guise. A good GM can change the pace of a campaign simply by introducing what I call the "Day in the Life" scenario. This is where the usual non-stop brawling in a superhero campaign is brought to a halt in favor of centering most of the action on the characters in their secret identities. Normal human beings can have interesting lives too, filled with problems and goals, achievements and failures. Role-playing should be high among the players when this type of scenario occurs, because in every superhero campaign I have ever seen, there has been a time where the constant battling against super-powered menaces has dehumanized the characters as warring would to any human being. The "Day in the Life" theme gives the characters a chance to rest from the fighting and build up their personalities in less potentially destructive ways. Anyone who works a long day can tell how great it feels to have somewhere to get away from it all, and the "Day in the Life" theme provides it. It also gives not-so-powerful characters a chance to strut their role-playing stuff in a non-combat situation.

On a final note, try to avoid absolute stereotypes. The concept of the superhero, is, in itself, a stereotype. All typical superheroes wear strange long underwear. They go out and fight injustice and crime, sometimes battling foes that are as super-powered as they, and nobody asks them or pays them to do it. There's nothing wrong with this — but it should stop right there. It's the stereotypes within the realm of the superhero that I'm warning against. You know the ones — the Tough, Mean, and Animalistic Loner; the Grim Avenging Vigilante; the Super Strong Female Who Hates All Men; the Super Strong Male Who Can't Speak English Because of His Quaint and Often Annoying Habit of Mangling the Language Into Slang, etc. If one of your players *must* play one of these templates, at least vary the histories a little, if nothing else! I, as a GM, don't mind if a player uses a known comic book superhero to model a character after. But I always try to convince the player to create their own history, a own unique personality. Because that player is creating the stuff of today's legends — the Superhero. The Modern Myth.

[For those of you who haven't heard of *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*® yet, don't worry: you will. By Christmas time, and for the next few years, they will be competing with the California Raisins, Garfield, Mickey Mouse, and dozens of other licensed products for space at the beach, in the bedroom, in the bathroom, on people's wrists, on TV, in print, and for the public's attention in general. Originally a self-produced, black-and-white, single-issue comic book parody done by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird through their fledgling Mirage Studios, TMNT (as it is known by those tired of typing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*®) was instrumental in causing what is commonly known as the Black and White Comic Boom back in '85-'86. Its popularity was such that it came through what is popularly known as the Black-and-White Comic Glut-and-Bust which immediately followed the boom relatively unscathed. While this itself gave TMNT a spot in the non-existent comic book hall of fame, it only laid the ground work for what came next. The Turtles were soon to generate a rare and oft-sought after interest from the general mainstream public-at-large which would give them national — and soon to be international — attention. In the midst of all this, my editor decided that yet another interview of the Turtle boys — as Eastman and Laird are sometimes called — was needed, (especially since we had this neat cover for this issue already) and who better to talk with them than their own creations, *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*®: Leonardo™, Donatello™, Raphael™, and Michaelangelo™. The following interview took place in part — and in pieces — in Kevin Eastman's kitchen when the turtles invited themselves over for dinner under the pretense of doing this interview.]

Turtles du Jour:

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Interview Eastman and Laird, Who Interview the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

as reported by Jape Trostle

Michaelangelo: Nice digs, Kevin.

Kevin Eastman: Thanks. Make yourself at home, boys.

Raphael: Don't mind if we do...

Donatello: Hey, do you have that last episode of *Magnum P.I.* on video somewhere?

Eastman: Probably.

Raphael (looking in the refrigerator): What? No

Pepsi? Catch guys! (He fires three ginger ales over his shoulder without looking; the other three catch the cans without looking.)

Leonardo: So tell us, just how did you get TMNT mentioned on that particular episode of *Magnum*?

Peter Laird: Actually, they approached us. Tom Selleck is a Turtle fan. His executive producer called us and asked if

it was possible to get the comic book on the show. It was hard to believe at first, but we sent them a bunch of books anyway. They gave us the barest idea of how they were going to use it on the show...

Leonardo: You mean the scenes with *Magnum's* nephew?

Laird: Yes. So we gave them permission to do pretty much what they wanted because we knew it would be in good taste if Selleck was a fan. We didn't know until we saw the episodes ourselves how they were going to handle it.

Eastman: Yeah, it really took a lot of people by surprise. We couldn't go around and tell people about it because there was a clause in the contract which said we couldn't advertise [the Turtles' appearance] for our own purposes.

Laird: But we did mention to some to the effect that they should *not* watch the last show because the turtles *wouldn't* be on it.

Michaelangelo (elbowing Donatello): wink, wink, nudge, nudge..

Leonardo: How did that episode do?

Laird: It captured a 48% share of the



Nielsen ratings that night, so you figure half the country with TV sets was watching.

Raphael: Yo, did you guys pick up our video game yet?

Leonardo: Yes, tell us about the video games.

Eastman: There's a home game coming out from Konami for the Nintendo system — in fact, it might be out already. They definitely want to have it in the stores for the holiday season.

Laird: And they're currently working on versions for software.

Raphael: Software?

Michaelangelo: You know, like your head.

Raphael: Ha, Ha. See if you find it soft *now*, SUCKER!

(He rams Mike's stomach with his head)

Mike: *Woophhhh!* (Mike and Raphael go tumbling off into the dining room)

Eastman: Hey, just watch the—

(A crunching sound emerges from the other room)

Eastman: —Never mind.

Donatello: So there will be versions for Apple and IBM compatibles?

Laird: Yes, very likely.

Leonardo: Did you two have direct input into the game?

Laird: In the most important sense, yes.

Leonardo: Meaning?

Eastman: We have creative control over every license we own. From the initial idea to the final approved product, we oversee it every bit of the way. It gets sent here, there are official approval forms signed; if we don't like something, it gets changed.

Laird: So while we did not actually work on the game itself, we approved what went in to it.

Donatello: I understand we're on quite a few products these days...

Leonardo: Yes, just how extensive is the licensing of *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*®?

(Kevin and Peter chuckle)

Eastman: Cheryl [Cheryl Prindle, Executive Director for Mirage Studios] has them all down on a rolodex somewhere.

There are quite a few now.

Laird: Halloween costumes, sleeping bags...

Eastman: ...Towels, sunglasses, stickers, calendars...

Laird: ...Watches — for both kids and adults — alarm clocks...

Donatello: Ugh. Imagine waking up next to us!

Eastman: ...posters, T-shirts, lunch pails, thermoses...

Laird: ...Toothbrushes!

Eastman: ...actionwear, sleepwear..

Donatello: Uh, wait...do you mean Underoos?!

Eastman (laughing): ...ummm, could be?!

Laird: ...sheets, pillow cases, pushed animals...

Donatello: How embarrassing!

Eastman: ...and, of course, the toy line.

(As if on cue, Raphael and Mike come back in the kitchen at that moment, each playing with a poseable action figure of one of the turtles.)

Mike: Guys, look what we found!

Kevin: Oh, you found them.

Raphael: Well, you only had a box of them next to the TV.

Eastman: Samples from the company.

Leonardo: Who is producing them?

Laird: Playmate Toys, Inc. Right now there are 10 figurines in the series. More are being planned, as well as accessories for the figurines. And there should be some vehicles coming out soon, the *Cheap Skate* [a souped-up skateboard] and the *Turtle Trooper*.

Raphael: Isn't our old buddy Cerebus supposed to be in this line-up?

Eastman: Unfortunately, no. We had planned it that way originally, but the toy company wasn't able to cut a deal with Dave Sim on the use of his Aardvark.

Laird: So why don't you guys tell us what you've been up to. I hear you've been real busy making cartoons.

Leonardo: Yes. After the success of our "mini-series" last year, we were offered more episodes.

Donatello: As a matter of fact, if you're interested, the five episodes we did last year are now out on video. The first two are on one cassette entitled *Heroes in a Halfshell*™ and numbers 3 through 5, collectively called "The Epic Begins™", will be out in November. They're all being put out by International Video Entertainment.

Laird: So how successful was your initial run?

Leonardo: We placed second overall in our time slot for animated shows.

Eastman: Not bad. How many episodes did they offer you for this second series?

Mike: 65.

(Eastman and Laird whistle.)

Donatello: Yeah, we'll have almost as many as *Star Trek*!

Mike: Right now we have thirteen in the can, and if that goes great, we'll shoot up to that sixty-five. There'll be a whole string of them.

Eastman: Who's doing the animation?

Leonardo: Its a firm out of Hollywood, Maurakami/Wolf/Swenson, but all of the actual work is being done in Japan.

Eastman: So how do you like shooting in the Orient?

Mike: Its great! Tokyo is fantastic — I could live there permanently if it wasn't so expensive.

Laird: So you don't mind the early morning make-up calls?





Raphael: Naw, besides, the babes make it all worthwhile. There's always a crowd of them following us around.

Donatello: Plus, we have complete creative control, from scripts to final cut. If we don't like something, out it goes. And they let us do all our own stunts.

Leonardo: Our new series is starting soon, October 1, in fact. [This interview was done in September, so the TMNT cartoon is already out and about the country.] Its been picked up by 131 markets, mostly independent stations. We've also gotten wind that CBS is interested in us for their Saturday morning line-up.

Eastman: Any chance of a feature film?

Leonardo: Well, since you asked...

Mike, Donatello, Raphael: YES!

Leonardo: Now, hold up. Its only *substantiated* rumors, but there *are* several companies who are looking at the possibility. There is no one company signed yet, though there is one that has put in a bid and whom we are working with at this point to decide what it is we want to do, whether it be a live action film, animated, or a combination of both.

Eastman: A la Roger Rabbit?

Leonardo: Something like that. At this point, however, nothing is defined as of yet.

Mike: Midst of negotiations, you might call it.

Eastman: Who is that one company?

Leonardo: Oh, we'd rather not say at this time.

Raphael: Hey, I thought we came over to eat.

(Raphael is bombarded with TMNT Poseable Action Figures)

Laird: Actually, that's not a bad idea, I'm getting hungry myself.

(A break is taken while pizza is ordered, and the whole crew moves into the living room.)

Mike: So how is the TMNT Role-Playing Game doing?

Eastman: Very well, from what I hear. Its been good for us, too. In fact, Mark Freedman, the guy who licenses all the Turtle material, and who first sparked interest in the mass-marketing of TMNT, was introduced to the Turtles through the role-playing game. He was working with Palladium Books on *Robotech* when he saw it [the game] and just became enthralled with it. So he contacted us..

Mike: And the rest, they say, is history.

Eastman: Yes. Have you guys played the game?

Raphael: Naw, don't have to; we live it.

Donatello: We were out at Palladium the other day; we had to pose for the cover of their next TMNT release.

Mike: Yeah, its pretty keen. Its a supplement called *Transdimensional Turtles* and has all sorts of stuff on other dimensions and time travel and all the other things we do when we're bored with everyday life. The cover's really cool, too! We're shown chopping up some big bad Dincyborg beastie.

Leonardo: There will be other interesting items in it also. Information on *Lord Simultaneous* and *Renet* [from the *Cerebus* team-up in issue 8 of TMNT] and stats for dinosaurs and mutant dinosaurs, and other sub-creatures. Release date is for November, so it'll be out for Christmas.

Laird: How many supplements is that now?

Leonardo: Six. The game itself is doing quite well. Kevin Siembieda [founder of Palladium Books] is very pleased with its success. In fact, it has been out only since October of 1986 and it is going into its eighth printing already. TMNT and Robotech are currently neck and neck with each other for which title is Palladium's best seller, though our sales shot up since the debut of the cartoon.

Mike: Yeah, in the first week of last month, they sold almost 1200 copies of just the basic game. For role-playing games that's fantastic!

Donatello: The post-holocaust "spin-off" supplements have been doing incredible also. *Mutants Down Under's*™ sales have been amazingly good. Palladium Books is surprised with how well they've done.

Leonardo: Palladium Books and Mirage Studio have had a good symbiotic relationship, haven't they?

Eastman: Oh yes. Kevin Siembieda is a big fan of comics and had been following TMNT since issue one. He thought it would make a great game, and we had a deal by the time issue three of TMNT came out.

Donatello: So you sort of grew up along side of each other?

Eastman: Very much so.

[Note: The success of TMNT and the fine job Palladium Books did in presenting the Turtle's game was instrumental in Palladium acquiring the licensing for Robotech. With those two games, and with their solid line of other role-playing games developed over the years, Palladium Books is now considered one of the top companies in that field after TSR and GDW. As for how Mirage Studio is doing, read on.]

Laird: So, did you guys happen to see the gallery show when it was up?

Mike: I dunno, did we. We've been so busy lately, what with the toy fairs, the Toys R Us tour, and the cartoon — all on top of fighting bad guys.

Eastman: It was at the Wistiahurst Gallery in Holyoke, Mass. from June 4th to August 14th. They featured a whole lot of material from Mirage Studios, a good part of which was about you four.

Mike: Guessed we missed it then.

Eastman: Too bad, it was very well received. Its not often a comic book studio gets to put on a show of its art in a gallery.

Leonardo: Speaking of your art, where is the original TMNT comic book going these days? What has happened to the original title during all the recent media and licensing blitz?

Laird: Well, we've promised — promise! — to keep to our bi-monthly schedule this next year. Our involvement with Mirage Studios, overseeing all the licensing going out, and all the traveling we've done lately has cut down on the actual time we spend on the book. We've been trying to cut



down on our personal appearances which we've had to fly to get to, except for some of the mainstream shows, though we still try to keep one appearance a month that is in driving distance. We feel bad about cutting down our appearances, but its just something we've had to do after a while. As far as the various titles go, in addition to TMNT there is also our "fill-in book", *Tales of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*®, which is also bi-monthly. So, if all goes well and right in the world, we get twelve out a year. We intend to keep that schedule next year.

Eastman: In addition, there are the colorized reprints of the original black-and-whites from First Comics, and the color comics from the Archie Comics Group. Starting soon, [December, as of this interview] they'll be doing comic book versions of the animated shows.

Donatello: So how much of the work are you two still doing?

Eastman: We do about a third of all the publications, plus we do some artwork for some of the licensed products and the Palladium games.

Leonardo: Have you been doing any other work outside of chroniclizing our adventures?

Laird: This year, for the first time in a while, we've started working on other projects, to get a little "creative freedom".

Eastman: Not that we don't want to stick with the Turtles...

Laird: Yeah, it's nothing personal, guys. We just need to express ourselves in other ways. I'm currently working with Steve Bisette on *Commandosaurs*™, which is basically dinosaurs with a G.I. Joe slant, and Kevin is working with Eric Talbot on *Melting Pot*.

Leonardo: What is that about?

Eastman: It's definitely not Turtles. Its has more of an adult theme.

Raphael: All right! Babes and Blood! My kind of comic!

Eastman: Not exactly. Call it a more "mature" theme. You'll have to wait and see.

Laird: By the way, when are you guys going to stop by the studio to pick up your mail? You get about 50 or 60 pieces a day, and its getting too high to use for furniture anymore.

Donatello: 50 or 60?

Eastman: Yeah. We respond to as many as possible, but just opening them keeps three people busy.

Leonardo: Tell us, when you did the first issue of TMNT, it was a one shot joke, a takeoff on Frank Miller's work, and a parody of "super-everything" comics. Yet it almost single-handedly spawned the recent Black and White Comic Boom and has lately created an "industry" which is keeping many people clothed and fed. What do you people think our appeal is now? Something could not be carried that far on just a simple one issue joke. The black and white comic parody bust was proof of that. What do you think is the appeal these days?

Eastman: Hmm...

Laird: Well, for one thing you're cute. You guys have a cute, catchy name — people almost always laugh the first time they hear Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® — and you look good. Face it, for the time being, you guys are hip.

Mike: Sort of like the California Raisins, eh?

Eastman: Sort of.

Mike, Raphael, Donatello (snapping fingers): dooooo, doo, do, dooooo, do, do, da, daaaaa, dooooo, doo, do, doooooo.....

Leonardo: Oh no.

Eastman: Another thing. You're popular with kids. You're ninjas first off, which are big for whatever strange reason. And secondly, you're turtles; turtles have always had an appealing nature, especially with kids.

Donatello (jumping up and holding an air-microphone): "Bet you wonder how I knewww..."

Laird: And older people see the irony in your name: Ninjas are supposed to be fast; turtle are not. Its funny. Its an oxymoron.

Raphael: Hey! Watch who yer calling a moron!

Mike: "...ooOOOO Yeah, I heard it thru the grape vine..."

Donatello: "Honey, honey, yeahhhhhh."

(All three turtles weave and dance in step about and on the furniture. Leonardo just covers his eyes and shakes his head.)

Eastman: Beyond that, parents see you as a positive influence — you're superheroes, do-gooders. Kids look up to that.

Raphael: And chicks dig us!

Donatello: "Yeah, I heard it thru the grapevine...."

Leonardo: The first issue of TMNT came out in May 1984, and it was starting to become popular by the end of that year. When did this "second wave" of mainstream popularity begin?

Eastman: Uhh, that would be sometime after January of '87, after the licensing began to pick up and we signed a deal with Playmate Toys, Inc.

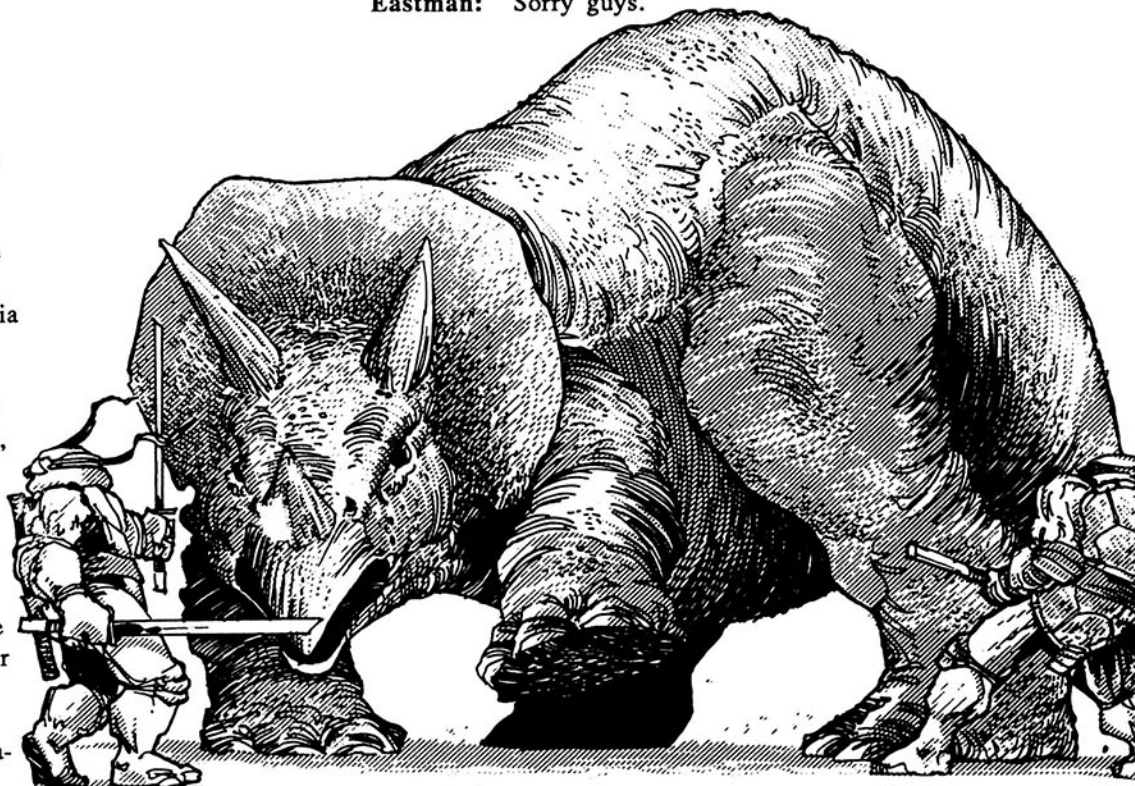
Laird: Let's not forget our signing with Random House earlier this year. They're doing the coloring books, the puzzles, and the board game, *Pizza Power!*.

Mike: Speaking of pizza, they have 16 minutes and 47 seconds to get here. (By this time, the three have stopped dancing and have taken a seat on the floor.)

Leonardo: Well, Peter and Kevin, what happens now? Now that you have broken into the mainstream and are "hot property"? What's in store for the long run?

Laird: Well, we realize that no matter how popular the Turtles get, eventually things will start to wane....

Eastman: Sorry guys.

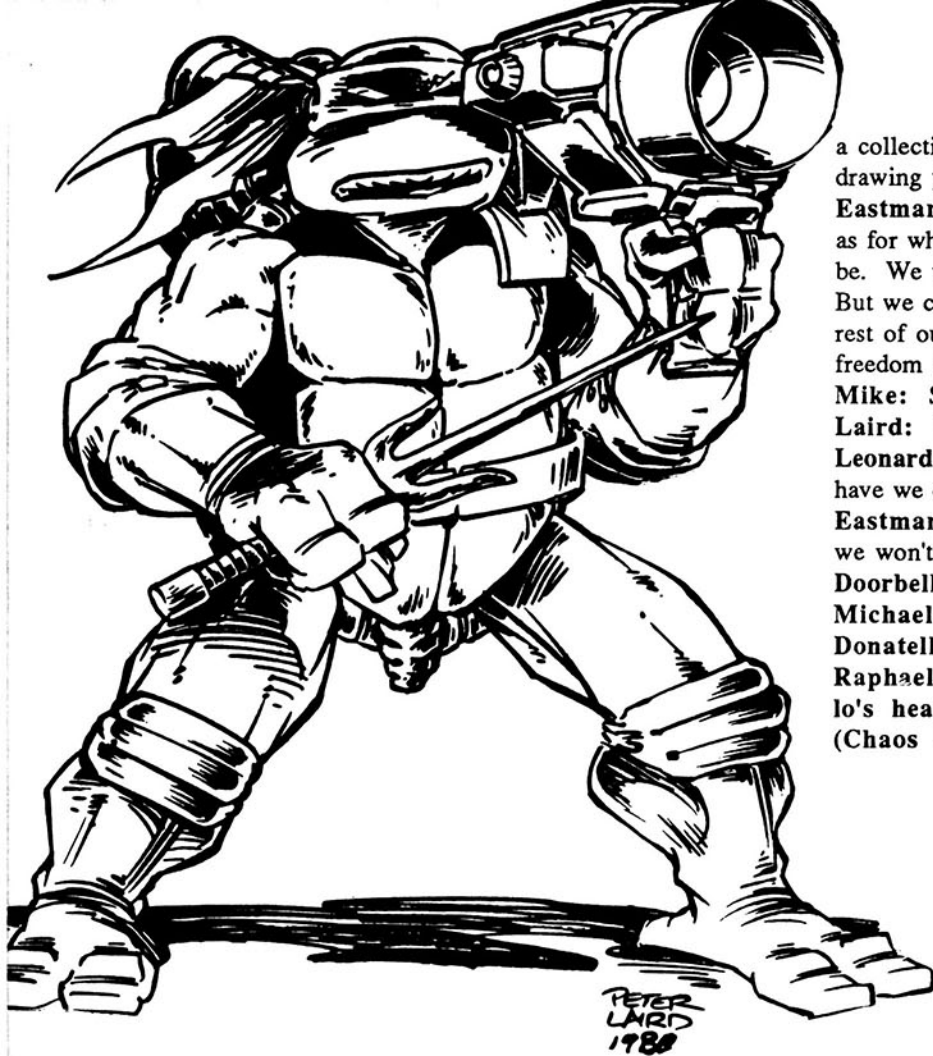


Laird: ...so we're planning on playing things out for as long as possible. In a marketing sense, the commercial viability of anything like this is, on the average, 3 to 5 years.

We have enough ideas for the comic books to last at least that long, and some of our licenses don't take effect until 1991, so the regular Turtle title will be supported at least that far because we know we have a market that's captured. We're hoping that those kids who see the animation, who have the coloring books, eventually discover the original comic book, so that even after the flurry of licensing dies down, people will follow the original title. The animation has generated a lot of new interest in the comic. People have seen and liked the cartoon, and then they discover that there's a comic book, too. We've even had to order another printing [the 5th] of the first issue to keep up with the demand.

Donatello: That's very rare in the comics field. Do you plan on continuing doing TMNT?

Laird: Oh, yes! While on occasion we have guest artists and writers, and we have released Turtle Soup™ which was



a collection of other peoples' Turtle stories, we plan to keep drawing you for some time to come.

Eastman: Though we are working on some long-term ideas for when the "Turtledom" dies down — whenever that may be. We were lucky with you guys; we hit and we hit big. But we can't see ourselves doing TMNT exclusively for the rest of our lives. You turtles have given us the economic freedom to work on what we want to from now on.

Mike: So you two are set for life?

Laird: Uh, well, we'll see what happens.

Leonardo: Without revealing any numbers, how much have we earned for you?

Eastman: Enough to buy this house. And enough so that we won't have to worry about money again.

Doorbell: *DING-DONG*

Michaelangelo: Good! Then you can pay for the pizza!

Donatello (racing for the door): I got it!

Raphael (bouncing off the couch over Donatello's head): HA! I got it!

(Chaos and pizza ensue.)

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Cats In Space: Albedo, the RPG

Elizabeth Bieler

The success of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* has shown that role-playing games featuring funny animals can work. But before these hard-shelled fellows began leaping across comic book and media tie-ins came another sort of "funny animal" which has an older and larger audience of fans. Anthropomorphic mammals, sometimes called "furries", have always appealed to illustrators and viewers alike, from the arrival of Mickey Mouse in *Steamboat Willy*, up to today's "adults only" *Omaha the Cat Dancer*. Writers and artists can utilize the unique body language and species characteristics of particular animals to deliver the nuances of character not immediately understood through action or dialogue. Animals can be used to tell a frightening or graphic story in a way that a reader can accept without feeling embarrassed, guilty, or even educated. The simple attractiveness of a furry individual with large eyes, erect ears and (often) a beautiful, expressive tail, will allow a reader to accept almost anything, just so they can continue looking at the pictures.

One of the less regular yet popular anthropomorphic comics available is *Albedo*. For most of *Albedo's* run, the feature story has been *Erma Felna, EDF*, a tale of intergalactic war and intrigue, seen through the eyes of an officer on the side of the good guys. Erma is a female feline and a member of an elite fighting force called the Extra-Planetary Defense Force, or EDF. The creator of *Erma Felna, EDF* is Steven A. Gallacci. The following that *Albedo* has gained is mainly because of his pleasing graphics. The way he explains it, the idea for a role-playing game based on his tale came from an Australian fan of the series, Paul Kidd. Through a series of discussions with Gallacci and a long correspondence, Kidd was able to create a compact sourcebook of the world with a very compact RPG thrown in for good measure. Although it is called *Albedo: The Game*, it is really a guide to the world and cultures of that universe. As such, it is a valuable and entertaining book for any fan of the series.

You can tell that Kidd had the world in mind more than the game because the gaming aspects of the book don't even appear until late in the volume. Instead of the usual "introduction, brief background, character generation" order that most games adopt, almost the entire first half of the book is background information, history, and the cultural aspects of the world. If you include the description of character species, because there is little there that will enable a player to make up a character that can be played in a game, then this information takes up more than half of the book.

The detail and organization of this material allows the reader to become very familiar with the world, and readers of the comics will read things here that they might not have



known before. Everything is covered, from social attitudes between sexes and races, traditions, languages (it even has a copy of the *Albedo* alphabet), entertainment, technology...everything. The illustrations are, of course, lovely, marred only occasionally by a poor reproduction. It is an excellent sourcebook for the world, and if you already know how to play another RPG that you like better, those sections will enable you to run a campaign based on the *Albedo* universe.

However, if you are looking for a complete RPG, this is not the place. The "task difficulty" method of action resolution is vague, and leaves the game master the task of independently judging the difficulty rating of every movement, every action, every attempt to do something. The character generation method will tend to make "average" characters well over 70% of the time. The skill list is very brief, which will cause skill overlapping in larger gaming groups.

But what can be expected? The game book is only 44 pages long, and very few complete gaming systems can fit the rules alone in 44 pages. However, don't despair! This book is labeled (inside) as *Book 1: Player's Manual*. (They really should have labeled it so on the outside as well, to avoid confusion.) According to Kidd, there are two books to follow, a more detailed combat/GM guide, and an adventure/encounter book with more details on the spaceships, the technology, and the enemy culture. The complete game should be a three-book boxed set, complete with separate charts and character sheets. This will undoubtedly solve some of the first volume's problems. It is expected to be in the stores in October or November.

The universe is entertaining to play in: the fact that the characters are bears, penguins and mice hardly takes away from the high-tech outer space adventures or the military scenarios that the comic book details. *Albedo* characters might be cute, but their world is absolutely hard science fiction with interesting cultural ideas and the opportunity to set up some complex scenarios which go beyond spacey shoot-em-ups or standard scouting adventures. Serious SF fans might consider *Albedo* as a change-of-pace, and should absolutely take a look at the comics. I would encourage fans of *Albedo* or of furry animal tales in general to run out and get a copy of the entire game.

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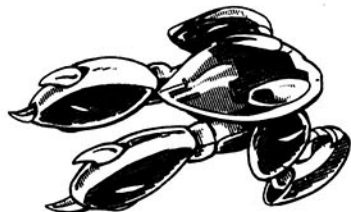
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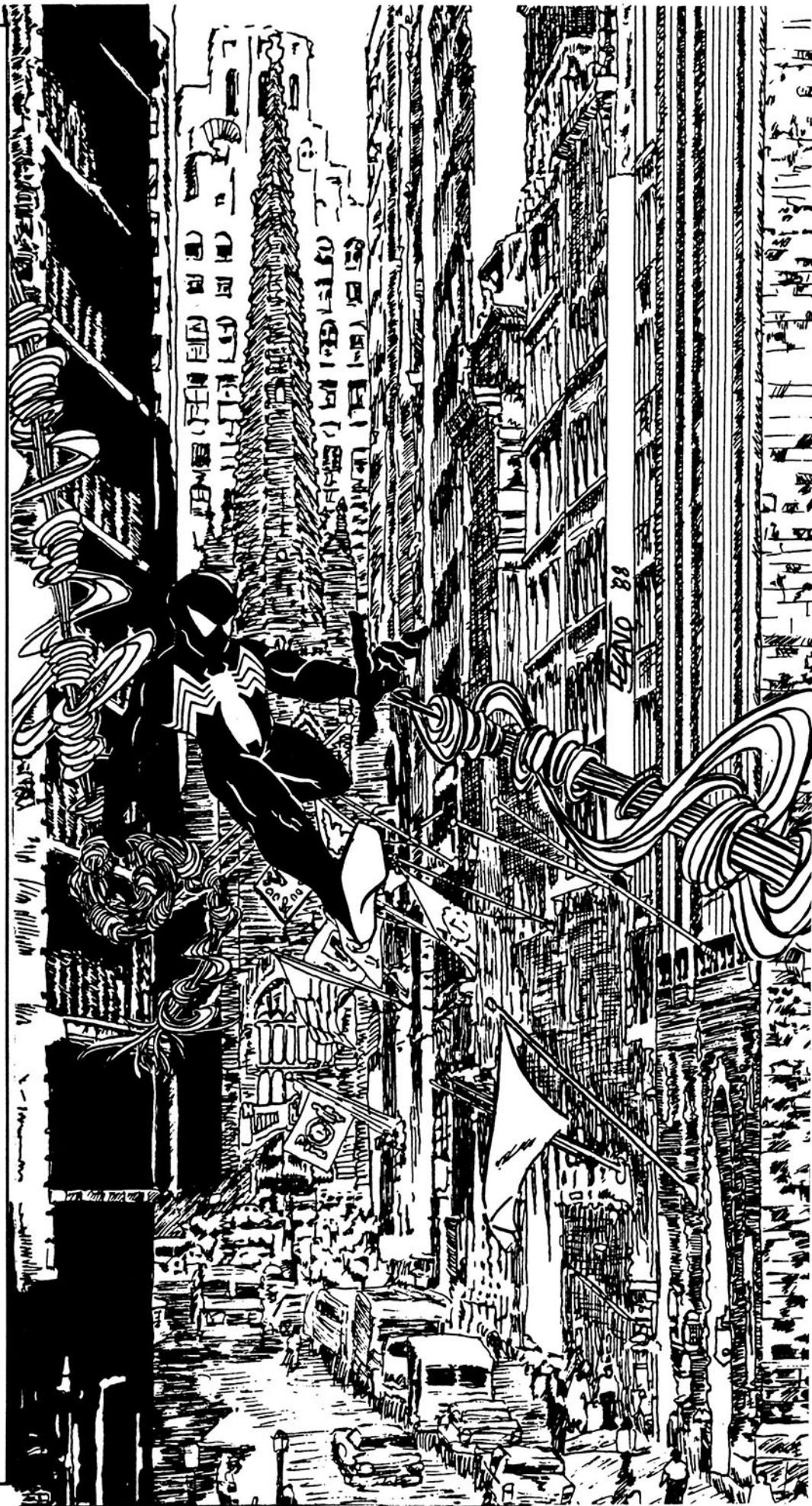
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Generating an Urban
Landscape for Any
Superhero Campaign

James Lowder



In his contributions to the shared world project, *Medea: Harlan's World*, Poul Anderson notes, "I've always found that there is no such thing as too much background information when constructing an imaginary system."

This philosophy should be applied to the creation of original background worlds, for *Villains & Vigilantes* or *Champions* superhero gaming campaigns or the customization of campaign worlds for the Marvel or DC role-playing games. A successfully developed campaign world allows creative character development to become the game's focus for the game master and the players. With the campaign world and its inhabitants clearly defined before play begins, the game master is able to play non-player characters more as a player and less as the game's referee and the players can concentrate on establishing their character's relationship to the world around them. Instead of a series of tests set up by the game master for the players to overcome, the game becomes more like an arena for group storytelling, with all players adding significantly to the tale's progression.

The development of a background world with sufficient depth to allow for this type of play requires a huge amount of work. One solution to this problem is for all players involved in the campaign to contribute equally to the world's growth. Creating the world as a group not only makes the job easier, but it also fosters interactive play by breaking down the standard game master vs. player relationship. However, generating a campaign world this way will create more problems than it solves unless it is approached the right way.

To keep the development of this world under control, a *civic personality* should be adopted before any maps or drawn or non-player characters created. All players involved in the campaign should meet and decide what this personality will be.

It seems obvious that characters should have clearly defined personalities and goals to be interesting and successful. Even before you give your character a name, you must set up its basic characteristics, like strength or intelligence, as well as its special powers. These traits, along with a

character's long term goals, help a player to decide what actions are logical for his or her character in any given situation and have a strong influence on the overall identity eventually given to that character.

Gamers can carry this concept to the creation of their worlds. Cities, the most common backdrop for superhero gaming, have individual civic personalities and goals as unique as their skylines. Instead of strength, intelligence or superpowers, things like a city's major industries, social and artistic life, population, and geographic location affect the metropolis' personality. Whether you are creating a completely original city or modifying an existing one, these building blocks of the city's personality must be identified before more detailed work can be done on your gaming world.

Before your gaming group gets together to brainstorm about your campaign world, prepare a list of civic personality traits which need to be identified. This will make the session run smoothly. Everyone should be encouraged to participate and take notes. Topics not covered in this article should certainly be considered and dealt with.

Note the city's location and size first. Often, it's best to place your city in an area of the country you're familiar with. In any case, you'll want to have an atlas handy to check for cities similar to the one you're creating.

The city's economic condition should be outlined next. This is composed of two aspects: the city's major industries, and the economic state of those industries. The major industries will be linked strongly to the city's geographic location. For example, the upper Midwestern United States is heavily industrialized because it has easy access to the Great Lakes for transportation. Keeping in mind the industries established in real cities near yours, list the top two or three, as well as a few minor ones. The industries a city fosters will have a major impact on the crime a hero is likely to deal with there. A high tech area like California's Silicon Valley will attract different criminals than the steel mills of Pennsylvania.

The status of these industries, whether they are successes or failures, also affects the amount and type of

crime a hero will encounter. Generally, if the city's industries are failing, unemployment and poverty will be on the rise, causing more violence and street crime. A city with very successful industries will attract crime too, but often this will be in the form of corruption, not violence.

The general state of the background world's economy, in fact, will affect the entire tone of the game. Simply compare the world inhabited by *Batman*, the run-down slums of Gotham City, to the steel and glass towers of Metropolis protected by *Superman*. The places are as different as the heroes who reside in them. As a city's economic outlook will affect the type of crime it attracts, so too will it affect the heroes it attracts to protect it. Keep this in mind if new characters are being generated for this campaign.

The level of crime and general economic standing contribute to the city's social condition. Often this will be referred to as a city's *quality of life*.

Also under this quality rating, you should consider such things as whether the population is generally friendly or unfriendly; the presence or lack of, museums, symphonies, and parks; number and quality of schools and colleges. For the game, these probably don't need to be explored in great detail, but should be considered and discussed.

Finally, you'll want to decide on the political outlook of your city. Specifically, this means deciding how stable and honest the city's government is. You'll also want to decide if the city is liberal or conservative. Both of these will seriously affect the way the city and its government view the actions of the player's heroes.

For example, if your citizenry is very conservative, the exploits of brightly garbed freelance heroes may be seen as a threat to local law and order. In a very liberal city, superpowered government agents may be looked upon with suspicion as representatives of "The System". In either case, a seriously corrupt city hall or police department would be sure to hinder player heroes in any way possible.

Once this civic personality has been formulated, your group should decide on how the city is to be mapped. If you are using a modified real city, a

simplified atlas map should be sufficient for the campaign. If you are creating your own world, there are two ways to go about creating a map. You can either let one person draw the map or each player can take a turn mapping out a small section of the city. The former is quicker, but the latter is preferable. Allowing everyone to create part of the map is yet another way to foster interactive input into the game world.

If you create your map as a group, a few things should be decided before anyone begins mapping. Standard symbols should be adopted. The starting and ending points of rivers and freeways should be noted and major parks or bodies of water should be located. The player mapping any specific area will have control over the exact detailing of a park or a lake, but noting these things before the map is passed around prevents being duplicated or left off the map completely.

Each person should then take the map in turn, filling in streets and developing their chosen area. To keep the map moving along in development, each player should be given an equal number of days to complete a section. To keep track of the map, a schedule should be made of who has the map and when they have it, along with their phone number. Copies should be made of the map at each stage. If the map gets lost, a copy can be substituted for the original and the process can continue.

When the map has completed its circuit, another brainstorming session is in order. Any inconsistencies in the map, like streets that don't quite connect, can be corrected at this time.

A list should be then made of all major cities which need to be located on the map. These will generally fall into three categories: government and other public buildings, economic centers, and media centers. Once a general consensus has been reached as to where major business districts are located, each player should be given a number of buildings to locate and, if deemed necessary, map out in detail.

Civic buildings, like courthouses, police stations, and city halls, should be created and located prominently in your metropolis. As player heroes will undoubtedly spend time in these locations, detailed maps should cer-

tainly be considered. Other important public buildings like schools, museums, and hospitals should be noted only if important to general play.

Business districts, banks, and warehouses should be located next. These areas will certainly be the scene of many crimes and thus deserve some detailed attention. Note specific locations for crime-prone liquor, jewelry, or convenience stores. High poverty or high crime areas are likely to attract few thriving businesses.

Media centers, including at least one newspaper, three or more television stations, and a few local radio stations, should be created next. The number of media outlets in your city will depend on its size, but as heroes tend to congregate where the criminals do, you're most likely working with a large metropolitan area. Incidentally, setting up rivalries between various papers or television news teams can make for interesting coverage of your heroes' exploits. Broadcast and print news sources have their own ideologies, so one media company may favor the heroes while another crusades to see them outlawed.

Each player should receive a copy of the finished map. However, remember that this map does not have to cover every possible important site. Any player should feel free to make reasonable additions to the map when developing a game as game master. When this occurs, the addition should be noted by all players, thus keeping the background world consistent.

During an actual game, the conspicuous aspect of a superhero game's background is its non-player characters. These supporting characters play a vitally important in the development of any superhero adventure. NPCs are the source of important clues, victims and perpetrators, and occasionally the rescuers of imperiled player heroes. As such, these characters demand personalities which allow them to stand as more than cardboard extras in the game. The mayor, police chief, local media personalities, and many other high profile NPCs should be drawn up in detail after the city has been mapped.

Using the standard character sheet from your game, create an NPC character sheet which can be used for important citizens of your gaming world.

This sheet should allow space for standard characteristics like strength and hit points. It should also provide space for a detailed description of the character's personality and physical appearance. Finally, leave room for notes on the reaction to the players' heroes and other NPCs.

Such specificity in drawing up your NPCs is very important. Any game master who leads an adventure in the city will have the luxury of clearly established characters ready for use. As the NPCs' personalities will be generally outlined, the game master can play them more as player characters.

Your gaming group should make a list of all important NPCs who will be identified in detail. As in the creation of your map, each player should be given the opportunity to establish an equal number of supporting characters for your background world.

Local government and media representatives should be drawn up first. Characters like the mayor and local reporters play important parts in many superhero adventures and deserve to be given detailed personalities. The same is true of corporate leaders who have a strong influence on your community.

Of course law enforcement personnel will demand some attention as well. The police chief, district attorney, and even a few prominent police officers, detectives, and judges should be described in detail for your game. These characters are often the source of important game information and should be given the depth of personality to make gaining this information interesting and entertaining.

Your city is likely to have federal offices and that means creating important contacts in agencies such as the FBI. As superheroes should be rare in almost any gaming world, the players' heroes will certainly have interaction with national law enforcement agencies and probably have contacts in them as well.

NPCs can have super powers. These super-NPCs can be representatives of government agencies or other super teams. They can be also mysterious freelancers who occasionally cross paths with the player heroes. In any case, NPC heroes can be a great outlet for game information and a logical means for the game master to help

players out of tight spots.

One simple way to provide heroes with a reliable information source is to keep an NPC hero as a member of their supergroup. As not all players band their heroes together, individuals should be given their own contacts. These contacts, whether superpowered or not, should be given stats and jobs which logically give them access to unique bits of information. These NPCs can be some of the most functional in the game if created with care.

Of course, it need not be clear that super-NPCs are heroes. Most games make room for these mysterious characters. In the *Villains & Vigilantes* game system, heroes with the weakness "prejudice" are misunderstood and mistrusted enough by some to be considered criminals. Examples of these characters abound in comics, with *Marvel's X-Men* being the most popular incarnation.

These mysterious NPCs are useful because they provide excellent springboards for further adventures. For example, *Dark Scream*, a hero with a sonic scream and darkness control,

saves the player heroes from certain death. The NPC, however, is being hunted by the police as a villain in the campaign world. Is he really a hero or a villain? Later the heroes may wish to seek out *Dark Scream* and get to the bottom of the mystery.

Finally, your detailed NPCs don't even need to be heroic or good. Villains deserve as much attention as heroes, especially if they are to play a continuing role in a campaign. Certainly villains like *Doctor Doom* or *The Joker* prove that a well-developed bad guy can be as rewarding a character as any hero. As with the rest of these NPCs, attention spent before a game on villains will make it easier for the game master to get involved in the role-playing aspects of your campaign.

As with your campaign map, the NPCs your group creates individually will probably need some polish before they are functional. Get the group together when the NPCs have all been finished and pass around copies of the character sheets and let each player introduce their creations. Characters

should fit logically into the world you've created. If, for example, someone has created a mayor who could not possibly have been elected in your city, this is the time to deal with such a problem.

When your group has completed this process and organized all of the notes, maps, and character sheets, you will have a functional world for your superhero gaming campaign. Of course, this seems like a lot of work. The rewards certainly make up for it.

With a solidly established campaign world, game masters are given the opportunity to concentrate on creating interest and challenging adventures for the player heroes. With the task of creating most prominent NPCs or mapping important buildings already completed, the game master can spend more time focusing on the interaction of player heroes and NPCs.

In fact, because NPCs are already established, the game master can become involved in the role-playing more frequently.

Players benefit from being able to react without restraint to the problems presented by the game master. With a clearly mapped and populated city, the players don't have to worry about a game master being unprepared for their sudden visit to the police station or mayor's office. Those places are already occupied by familiar supporting characters. The heroes can turn down a street and know that it actually leads somewhere.

As is implied in Poul Anderson's comment on imaginary worlds, the job is never finished. The city expands as each game master adds a building or NPC, or each player creates new relationships with NPCs and institutions in the campaign world. As long as you use the world for your adventures it will continue to grow.

The fact that the world is the product of your gaming group's cooperative creative effort is the biggest reward for establishing a campaign city in this fashion. Each time your group campaigns in the city, you'll all know your characters belong there. When you look at the folder full of maps and characters you'll know you've set the groundwork for many exciting, creative adventures.



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"Nexus dreams of mass murderers. And when he wakes, he is compelled to seek them out and assassinate them. His fusion powers, derived from the stars, are almost limitless. But there is a price: he must kill victims chosen by the mysterious "Merk," and the Merk is an alien being with an alien sense of justice...Even though all those on Merk's list may deserve the death sentence for their crimes, Nexus would stop if he could; but then the Merk would cut off his power, and Ylum, home to thousands of refugees, would fall prey to Nexus' enemies. And an assassin has many enemies..."

— Nexus, First Comics



"The Badger is Norbert Sykes, a Vietnam veteran suffering from an extremely rare multiple personality disorder: seven great personalities in one. The personality most frequently inhabiting Norbert, indeed almost exclusively preferred, is the Badger, a self-styled crime fighter who rides the highways and by-ways of America, meting out bloody justice to jaywalkers, ticket scalpers, indifferent teenaged fast food clerks, in fact, any damn body he feels like, because he's crazy! A master of dozens of forms of martial arts, he can also talk to the animals, just like Doctor Doolittle or Lorne Greene..."

— Badger, First Comics

Mike Baron has been burning down the story telling road for nearly ten years now, and he shows no sign of slowing his mad dash. At 39, he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin, and has recently moved into his own home in Madison. Baron stands as the guiding force behind at least four major ongoing comic book works at any one time, including Nexus, Badger, Action Comics Weekly's *Deadman* serial, and the new *Ginger Fox* mini-series from Comico.

Incredibly prolific, Baron is often thought of as outspoken, enthusiastic, and not someone you would want to get into a scrap with. A rabid following has built behind each of his titles, making them best sellers at First Comics, and driving Marvel's *Punisher* character into top ten status. Well, to put it bluntly, what gives? How does a college boy from middle America grow into one of the hottest talents in a competitive industry?

To understand what goes into the ongoing process of comic book plotting and scripting (one of the most difficult aspects of adventure gaming, or any other medium for that matter), as well as to figure out how one state can produce several major game companies and a time honored comic book team (Nexus artist Steve "the Dude" Rude met Baron in college) Gateways gave Mike Baron a buzz. And this is what happened...

Since he was a kid, Mike Baron had always wanted to write. Writing

was his pleasure preference, and he ravenously sought any material that could possibly help him learn his craft. Though fiction was his specialty, Baron pulled a stint as a journalist for such papers as the **Boston Globe** before settling into comics as a full time occupation.

"I launched my first serious assault on comic book writing back in 1979, when I met Steve Rude and saw that he could work closely with me, panel for panel, in creating a story for this science fiction idea I had," related Baron. "I had gotten to know some guys at Capital City [one of the country's largest comic book distributors] who wanted to do comics. Nexus, Badger, and a book by Steve Grant called *Whisper* were three of the results."

Baron, who had not particularly thought of comics as a medium for his writing, took the plunge. Although his plotting and sense of layout and timing all came naturally, the Capital City deal began to collapse around the time of each book's fourth issue. But not before the first of several of what fans now look forward to as crossovers made in heaven (or at the very least, in a lunatic asylum...) blew a lot of dust off comic book store shelves:

"Badger and Nexus started out in two very separate, very distinct universes," said Baron. "The Nexus universe was one that I extrapolated 500 years into the future. I did a little research for back-drop, but most of it was pure invention and my and the Dude's knowing the characters.



Badger was more of a mood book — whatever mood I was in was the mood that wound up in the book. Those early issues were darker; more insane in a dark, violent way. First's collected them. It just seemed like fun to put Badger and Nexus together!"

It must have also seemed like fun to the folks at First Comics, because in 1982 *Badger* and *Nexus* were included in a package of rights sold to First by Capital City. Continuing their respective stories without a hitch (Baron does not believe in the business oriented and fan targeted policy of starting a book with ISSUE ONE splashed across the cover at the drop of a hat), *Nexus* has gone on to win several Kirby and Eisner awards, while *Badger* has become First's most notorious costumed hero.

Being one of the premiere companies to allow creators rights and authority over their characters and stories, Baron was immediately granted a free hand in guiding his heroes' destinies, often to spectacular effect. *Nexus* was allowed to grapple with the ambiguity of his bizarre situation among the cosmos; *Badger* could butcher as many wolf poachers as he liked, and then go home join his room mate, Ham the Druid, in battle against blood-lusting demons from another dimension.

"Humor is an integral part of any story," said Baron on his own style. "While the Dude tends do more good natured humor and slapstick at times in *Nexus*, my own humor, which shows up a lot in *Badger*, is more verbal, more cynical. But I think the first rule of story telling is to simply write the story. Write it down the way you want it told and worry about little things like physics and logic later, if at all.

"Comic book writing is like wearing this huge exoskeleton. You have to form this sort of shorthand that the artist fills in with sweeping strokes. There has to be an immediacy to the action, but I try to lay in at least one and often several subtexts. Prose is much more demanding. Expectations change and things get much more serious, realistic.

"*Nexus* is my generational saga. It will span enormous amounts of time and space in its telling. It's about the consequences of actions and what will follow through as a result. It's my *Shogun*.

"*Badger*, on the other hand will often feature what I call a *Zen Pop* story. That's where I'll sit down to write a *Badger* story with nothing in mind, and out will pop a story, like, from nowhere!"

Strangely, a recent *Badger* issue which was not a *Zen Pop* story was the one in which Norbert's buffalo, Lamont, goes berserk to wreak side-splitting havoc through a high-tech shopping mall: "Steve Rude, Brad Elliot and I were walking through the huge Galleria mall in Texas earlier this year, and there was all this glass and all these china shops, when it suddenly struck me, 'wouldn't it be great for a bull to...' Everything was photo referenced, which is also what I do with my *Badger* artists for every martial arts move the *Badger* pulls off."

A long-time student of Tae Kwon Do, Baron is fanatical about getting the combat right in his books. With a very few flourishes, most of what *Badger* does in his comic can actually be done. In fact, most of what occurs combatwise in Baron's megahit, *The Punisher*, is also within the realm of possibility.

When asked why he took on a character and series with which he would have far less freedom, Baron responded frankly: "It was the money. Absolutely the bucks. The *First Comics* can sell around 30,000 copies, while *Punisher* can sell more like a hundred thousand. But I liked the character and wanted to tackle him. I wanted to show — not tell, but show — the reader what this guy was about. The character is extremely cynical. He started out as a silly foil for Spider-Man, shooting jaywalkers and crap, but I've taken him out of there. The book is very downbeat, it's about an obsessive-compulsive man, and though I get a lot of mail that asks me to lighten him up, I won't do it."

Upon the unlikely possibility that the *Punisher* would ever chance upon the *Badger*, Baron's frown could be felt across thousands of miles of telephone line: "As opposed to Norbert Sykes and the *Badger*, Frank Castle *is* the *Punisher*, they're one in the same. He has a complete lack of empathy, and he's not interested in the insanity defense. If he weren't allowed to walk away from the *Badger*, there'd be quite a mess."

The future is packed for Mike Baron. While *Nexus* himself is presently unemployed, and the *Badger's* wife, Mavis Davis, prepares to make a surprise return, *The Next Nexus* and *Ginger Fox* mini-series are both currently in full swing. By year's end Baron's dream of publishing a novel will loom on the horizon, as First has given him the go ahead on a prose version of *Badger* to be serialized in the *Badger* comic book. Finally, the summer of 1989 should see the debut of the *Deadman Graphic Novel* by Baron with Kelly Jones for DC Comics. It promises to do for Boston Brand what Alan Moore did with *Swamp Thing*.

Editor's Note: For more on the Punisher, and all the stats on the Badger you may ever want, keep turning these pages!



Character Dossier: Marvel's Punisher™

Hero For the 80s?

Vincent Cecolini

Ask a comic book reader who his or her favorite character and you may be in for a surprise. Readers are turning away from the caped super-men with inhuman powers and following a new, realistic kind of hero. One of these heroes, a Vietnam veteran in his late thirties, is armed only with his military intellect and an array of weaponry usually exclusive to the Armed Forces. Unlike his comic book peers who battle monsters and the usual collection of costumed villains, he wages a lonely war against the negative elements that are predominant in our society.

Fighting drug dealers and organized crime, he is the hero we would become if our yearning to do something about the plague of injustice ever drove us over the edge. Dressed in a black spandex suit with a large white skull embossed across his chest, he is the hero who is now challenging top selling comic titles such as the X-Men, Silver Surfer, and the assorted Spider-Man spinoffs at the newsstands. He is a vigilante walking the razor's edge between sanity and madness. His name is **The Punisher**.

To readers the Punisher is a blessing in the Ramboesque '80's, but his first appearance in Marvel Comics was back in 1974. Introduced to readers by his creator Gerry Conway in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #129, the Punisher, loosely based on novelist Don Pendleton's *Executioner*, is a one-dimensional impulsive hero. In the issue, he is tricked by Spider-Man's archvillain of that time, the **Jackal**, into believing that the webslinger is a murderer (responsible for the death of Norman Osbourne, a.k.a. the *Green Goblin*, who died by his own hand while battling the



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Spider-Man). After fighting the Spider-Man and being framed for murder by the Jackal, the Punisher realizes that he's been had and befriends the webslinger.

The Punisher would appear with Spider-Man again (*The Amazing Spider-Man* issues 134 and 135 battling the *Tarantula* and *Giant-Sized Spider-Man* #4 battling super-terrorist *Moses Magnum*), but his character would remain vague and a mystery.

The many questions that were posed by the Punisher's early appearances were answered in two mid-seventies magazines, *Marvel Preview* #2 and *Marvel Super Action* #1. Although these black and white magazines would fail at the newsstands, they would shed light on the Punisher's origin and motivation, and open the way to further appearances in the Spider-Man titles, and others, like **Captain America**,

Daredevil, **Cloak & Dagger**, and his own series. It is during these issues that the Punisher begins to fully utilize his *War Journals*, the tape-recorded diary of his conquests which lets the reader get into his mind.

A Tragic Origin

It was a fateful ending to the near perfect life of Frank Castle, a decorated Marine Captain on leave to spend time with his family. His choice to have a picnic in Central Park with his wife, son, and daughter was costly. While running to get a kite up in the air, they stumbled upon the scene of a gangland execution, and viewed as potential witnesses, were fired upon. Only Frank Castle survives, sustaining a slight head wound.

He is informed by police that it would be almost impossible to bring those responsible to justice, so, distraught, he decides to take the law into his own hands. He deserts the military just when he was about to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom and goes underground. When he would rise a short time later, he would be a different person, a man hell-bent on avenging the death of his family, dedicating himself to a war on crime. Dressed in an intimidating uniform, he calls himself the Punisher, and begins to wreak havoc on organized crime, quickly weeding out those who murdered his family

Although Archie Goodwin wrote the initial solo adventures of the Punisher, other writers would handle the character, adding dimension to him that would lay the groundwork for Mike Baron.

The Punisher Makes His Mark

The Punisher would team-up with the Spider-Man on many occasions throughout the years, usually when their paths would cross while battling organized crime and the Kingpin of Crime, Wilson Fisk. The storyline that stands out from these meetings is **The Spectacular Spider-Man**, issues 81 through 83. Written by Bill Mantlo, the story details the Punisher's darkest period. Involuntarily drugged by enemy inmates while in jail, his return to the streets is less than auspicious. Irrational and losing sight of what he is battling, he begins to attack people guilty of minor crimes (littering, jaywalking, etc.). It takes a losing battle against the Kingpin (who the Punisher fights with the help of the Spider-Man and Cloak & Dagger), his arrest, trial, and imprisonment to bring him back to reality.

When confronted about this period by Cloak & Dagger and the **Power Pack** in **Strange Tales** issue 13 the Punisher tells them that he has little recollection of what occurred, and that the drugs he involuntarily ingested turned him into something he hates. All of the Punisher's team-ups with the Spider-Man are currently being reprinted in chronological order in **Marvel Tales**.

Child's Play

Of all the special appearances the Punisher has made, the one he has become best known for is his meeting with the famed blind super-hero in **Daredevil**, **Man Without Fear** issues 182 through 184. Recently collected and reprinted in a graphic novel entitled "Child's Play", the story was written by Frank Miller of "Dark Knight" fame with the finished art supplied by Klaus Janson (who would be later be the artist on the first five issues of The Punisher's unlimited series), and has become a landmark due to its unconventional use of a drug abuse theme. A topic down-played up until that time (1982) in comic books, the story was originally set aside, only to be dusted off after a year on a shelf and released.

From Mary Elizabeth O'Koren's tragic death at the hands of drugs to the climactic battle, comic readers are graphically shown an all too realistic problem that plagues our society. What makes the story special is how it shows the problem being handled from two points of view — the Punisher's shoot first, ask questions later/wipe out the criminals to stop the spread of the social cancer way of doing things,

and the due process/trial by a jury of peers/rehabilitation way of the Daredevil. In this particular case, the law-abiding Daredevil wins out by capturing the drug dealers and after a fierce battle, places the fugitive Punisher back behind bars.

The Punisher Gets A Miniseries

No matter how tight the security is at the institution that houses him, the Punisher will find a way to escape, so that he can continue to make special appearances and, when his popularity would grow to the point of warranting it, his own limited series.

The five issue series, the first of which depicts the events leading up to his final escape from prison, is the story of the Punisher's battle with The Trust, an organization of vigilantes that try unsuccessfully to enlist him for their death squads. Although the Trust believe that they are operating in the same fashion as the Punisher, he does not, see-



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ing them not only as a threat to criminals, but also to innocent people. They kill anyone that stands in their way, while the Punisher has stated that if harm ever came to the wrong person due to his actions, he would give up and surrender to the authorities. He battles them head on and is easily victorious.

It is during this series, written by Steven Grant and edited by Carl Potts (a major influence on the character) that the Punisher begins to express himself more openly, where

as in the past he had remain cold and hard. Soon after its release, the five-issue miniseries became a hot collector's item and presently, issue one is fetching a price upwards of twenty dollars. As the Punisher's popularity continued to grow, the demand for an "unlimited series" became apparent.

The Unlimited Series

In the April 1987 issue of **Amazing Heroes**, Mike Baron promised action-packed stories. Despite having to tone down the violence to receive the "Approved by the Comics Code" seal, Mike Baron has kept his word, delivering well-written stories filled with suspense and fast-paced action. He gives the Punisher just enough dialogue, while adding depth and polish to his personality to make the character more appealing. Mike Baron's hard work has paid off and the Punisher has been a top selling comic since its March 1987 debut.

From the beginning of the first Baron-authored issue, when the Punisher destroyed a crack house with an armor-piercing rocket, it was easy to see that the series would not be filled with the usual type of super-hero stories. Thirteen issues into the series, the Punisher has confronted villains that, unlike most of the other heroes in the Marvel Universe, actually exist. Readers have followed the Punisher as he battled drug lords in South America, white supremacists down south, a cult leader in the mold of the infamous Reverend Jim Jones, toxic waste dumpers, terrorists over Times Square, inside traders, a food tamperer (a cross-over with the Daredevil), and a gang of Manson Family-like fanatics.

The Punisher War Journal

When talking about the Punisher, one name that cannot be left out is Carl Potts. As editor of the Punisher miniseries, unlimited series, and other Marvel titles, he has had a major influence on the Punisher. It's because of him that we have the unlimited Mike Baron series. With one Punisher title selling like hotcakes, there was no choice but to put another title on the market, so now we have the Carl Potts-authored **The Punisher War Journal**.

The first issue of War Journal retells the origin graphically (with no dialogue and inked in a way that makes it hauntingly surreal) while at the same time telling a new story that loosely ties in. The fashion in which the two stories are represented is pure genius and it is clear that the two Punisher titles will compliment each other as they continue to show two sides to this character in the future.

Villain Or Hero

In a day when vigilantism is still a hot topic of debate, the Punisher remains controversial. Despite his popularity, some people still believe that the Punisher is a criminal. Critics say that he's not the type of character to be branded a "super-hero", since his methods are hard to distinguish from the criminals he hunts.

While the violence may be a little harsh for some of the younger readers, the Punisher acts as a catharsis for readers who are frustrated by crime and a sometimes inefficient judicial system. The Punisher is a character you don't have to agree with: he's meant to be entertaining.

As the Punisher becomes a household word, the predict-

able slew of merchandise has begun to hit the market. At comic shops and hobby stores you can now find Punisher posters, T-shirts, trading cards, and action figures. Rock groups are seen wearing Punisher T-shirts and some have had his portrait painted on their instruments. It was also announced this past spring that a major motion picture about the Punisher is in the works with Dolf (Masters of the Universe, Rocky IV) Lundgren starring in the title role.

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(Originally published in **Daredevil** numbers 182, 183, and 184) © 1982

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The Amazing Spider-Man number 129, 134

© 1974 Marvel Comics.

GIANT-SIZED Spider-Man # 4 © 1975

The Spectacular Spider-Man numbers 81-83

© 1983

Strange Tales numbers 13 and 14 © 1988

The Punisher (limited series) 1 thru 5 © 1986

The Punisher (unlimited series) 1 thru 13 © 1987-1988

The Punisher War Journal # 1 © 1988



Breakdown on the Punisher

Revised Stats for the Marvel Superhero RPG

The Punisher

Frank Castle
Vigilante

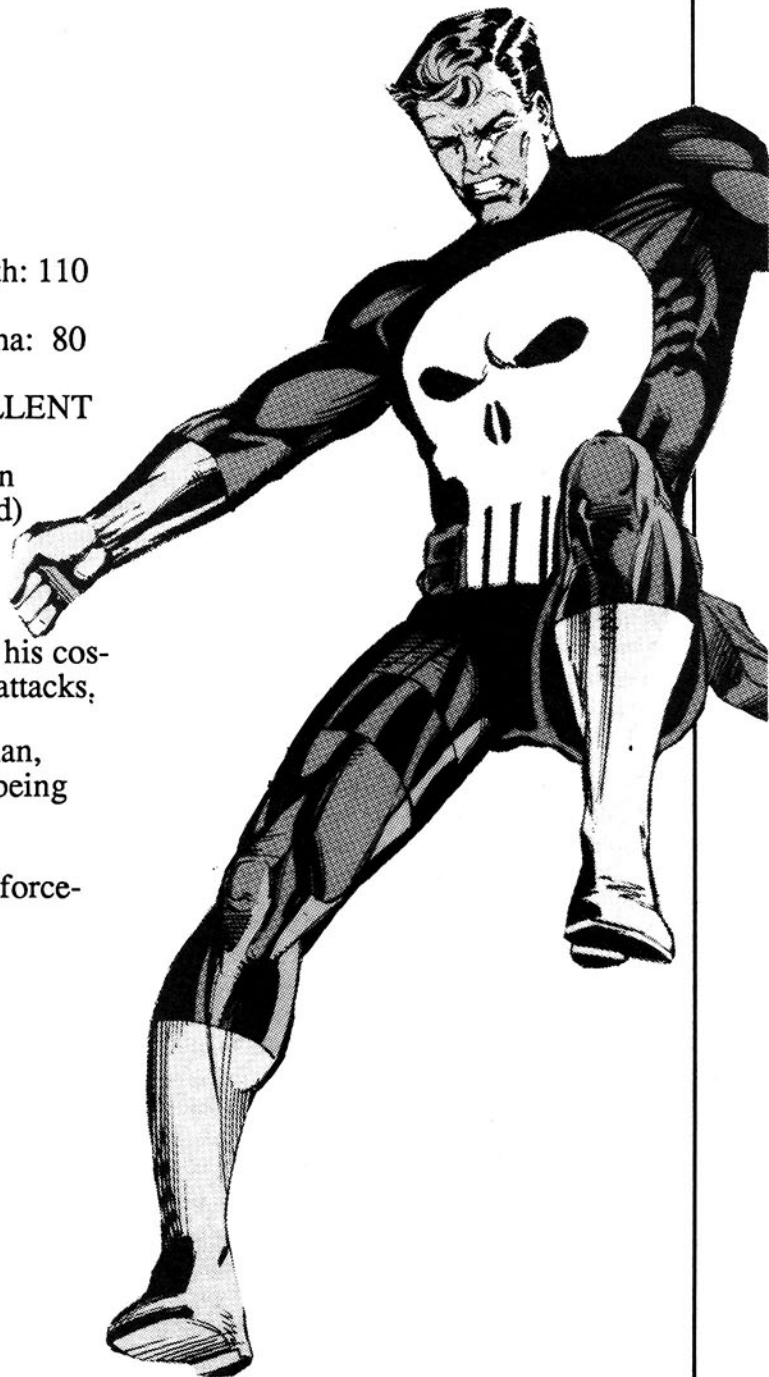
| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Fighting: AMAZING | Health: 110 |
| Agility: EXCELLENT | Karma: 80 |
| Strength: GOOD | Resources: EXCELLENT |
| Endurance: REMARKABLE | Popularity: 25 (80 in criminal underworld) |
| Reason: GOOD | |
| Intuition: REMARKABLE | |
| Psyche: INCREDIBLE | |

POWERS:

Body Armor. The Punisher wears body armor under his costume that gives him Typical protection from physical attacks.

TALENTS: The Punisher has the Military, Marksman, Sharp Weapons, and Criminology Talents as well as being versed in Martial Arts A, C, and E.

CONTACTS: The Punisher has contacts in Law Enforcement, and sometimes uses informants off the street.



The Marvel-ous Norbert Sykes

Badger™ Stats in Three Game Systems

FOR THE MARVEL SUPERHEROES ROLE-PLAYING GAME

Norbert Sykes aka The Badger Adventurer

| | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|---------|
| Fighting: | REMARKABLE | Health: | 100 |
| Agility: | REMARKABLE | Karma: | 46 |
| Strength: | GOOD | Resources: | TYPICAL |
| Endurance: | REMARKABLE | Popularity: | 25 |
| Reason: | TYPICAL | | |
| Intuition: | GOOD | | |
| Psyche: | REMARKABLE | | |



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POWERS:

Animal Communication. Badger has the Tarzan-like ability to communicate with normal Terran animals at Remarkable rank. Since he has a certain type of, ahem, *animal magnetism*, animals will pretty much do as he asks them to, though he loses Karma equivalent to the animal's base Karma score if any animal dies as a result of following his directions, since that rapport is based on mutual trust and friendship. Communication with animals or beings with animal-like intelligences would be considered Power Stunts.

Controlled Berserker. Badger may at will induce in himself a berserker rage of Excellent Intensity when entering combat. This effectively gives him Excellent-ranked Iron Will as in the Power, while his Fighting and Strength increase by one rank. Unlike normal berserkers, Badger still retains his knowledge of his surroundings but just gets more psychotic. He can go berserk at will if he makes a Psyche FEAT roll at the beginning of the combat round in which he wishes to do so.

Limitation — Insanity. Norbert Sykes is a Vietnam veteran suffering from multiple personality disorders. Badger is the dominant personality, though occasionally another personality will surface and take control for a brief period of time (Roll Psyche FEAT roll at the beginning of each adventure or at GM's choice, failure indicates different personality for 1-10 hours). Examples include his normal identity as Norbert Sykes, or Pierre, a psychopathic mass murderer from northern Canada. However, the appearance of these personalities should not result in the injuring of innocents, regardless of each personality's temperament, although they should be as unsettling, hysterical, comical and sometimes shocking as Badger can be. Note that several of these personalities still possess the martial arts ability of the Badger. A curious side-effect of his condition is that Badger suffers no effects usually incurred by moving through Sanity-Threatening or Sanity-Destroying Dimensions.

Lamont (Buffalo). Badger is currently traveling across the United States with a buffalo sidekick named Lamont. Lamont is a buffalo with a personality, a "party animal" yet at times irascible and bull-headed (Ouch!) Lamont is extraordinarily agile and graceful for his kind. Lamont has Acrobatics and Tumbling as well as the Fashion and Ice Skating Talents. He can move at Excellent Ground Speed, and his stats are as follows below:

F: Gd A: Ex S: Rm E: Rm R: Gd I: Gd P: Gd Health: 90 Karma: 30

TALENTS: Badger is an Overall Weapons Master...he can wield any Terran weapon of modern, medieval or Oriental origin with equivalent skill. His unique hodgepodge martial arts skill gives him Martial Arts Supremacy of Good rank. In addition, his fervor in battle and unexpected, unorthodox attacks give anyone a -2CS in hand-to-hand combat against him. He also has the Acrobatics, Tumbling, First Aid, Military and Universal Trivia/Jack-Of-All Trades skills [this last skill enables him to apply a bonus of one color shift up in difficulty (red to yellow, yellow to green) when applied to attempts in skills and areas of knowledge that he does not possess as Talents].

CONTACTS. Badger is currently employed by and lives with Ham the Weather Wizard, a mystic whom he met while they were inmates at a state mental hospital. Ham is primarily a necromancer, despite the appellation Weather Wizard (though he can cast spells that affect the weather) — he can best perform feats of magic after ritual sacrifice. He usually restricts himself to animals, though villains are not excluded from his list of possible sacrifices. For game purposes, consider Ham to have a reservoir of 100 mystic energy points which is depleted point for point of Intensity of whatever spell he casts. In order to replenish this store of energy, he must sacrifice a warmblooded being, after which he absorbs their Psyche rank into his mystic battery. All spells that he casts are of Incredible rank, except for the following: *Dimension Travel* (Monstrous), *Biophysical Control — Healing/Biophysical Control — Revival/Biophysical Control — Regeneration* (Amazing-can perform on self as well except in the case of Revival), *Free Spirit* (only when physical body is killed). He gets a bonus of +1CS if he performs the spell as a ritual. Ham's stats are: F: Ex A: Ex S: Ty E: Gd R: Ex I: Ex P: Am Health: 56 Karma: 90 Ham also has, of course, the talent of Occult Lore.

...IN PALLADIUM BOOKS' HEROES UNLIMITED™:

Code Name: Badger True Name: Norbert Sykes
 Occupation: Drifter, Wizard's Companion, Adventurer
 Alignment: Scrupulous/Unprincipled
 Hit Points: 85 S.D.C. (Physical): 255
 Experience Level: 12th
 I.Q.: 12 Age: 28-40 Chi: 70
 M.E.: 16 Sex: Male
 M.A.: 14 Weight: 175 lbs
 P.S.: 15 Height: 5'11"
 P.P.: 20 Land Of Origin: U.S.A.
 P.E.: 15 Birth Order: Unknown
 P.B.: 14 Disposition: Badger is extremely protective of wildlife and animals, and loves to fight. He is a
 Spd: 17 product of modern pop culture a media wild child and is remarkably literate and hip in his anarchy.



Insanity: Norbert Sykes suffers from a multiple personality disorder, of which Badger is the dominant personality out five or six other possibles when he is encountered. The personality of Badger is classified under the category of "wildman" on the chart found in the Insanity tables in the Revised HEROES UNLIMITED rule system.

Education: Military Specialist (+20% to scholastic skills)
 Martial Arts Powers Super Powers And Abilities Scholastic Skills Secondary Skills
 Stone Ox Control (other animals) Concealment Prowl
 Zanshin Detect Ambush Climbing
 Karumi-Jutsu Wildemess Survival
 Itsutsu-No-Kata Detect Concealment
 Iron Hand Tracking
 Chagi All W.P.
 Iai-jutsu Acrobatics
 One Life, One Shot... Gymnastics
 Warrior Spirit Kata Boxing
 Tamashiwara
 Martial Arts Forms: *Kyokushinkai Karate (Primary), Tae Kwon Do, Fu-Chiao Pai, Zanji Shinjinken*
SEE PALLADIUM'S NINJAS & SUPERSPIES FOR MORE DETAILS



...IN FANTASY GAMES UNLIMITED'S VILLAINS & VIGILANTES™:

IDENTITY: Badger SIDE: Good
 NAME: Norbert Sykes SEX: Male
 EXPERIENCE: 23,753 LEVEL: 6 AGE: 28-40 yrs
 POWERS: TRAINING: Animal Training



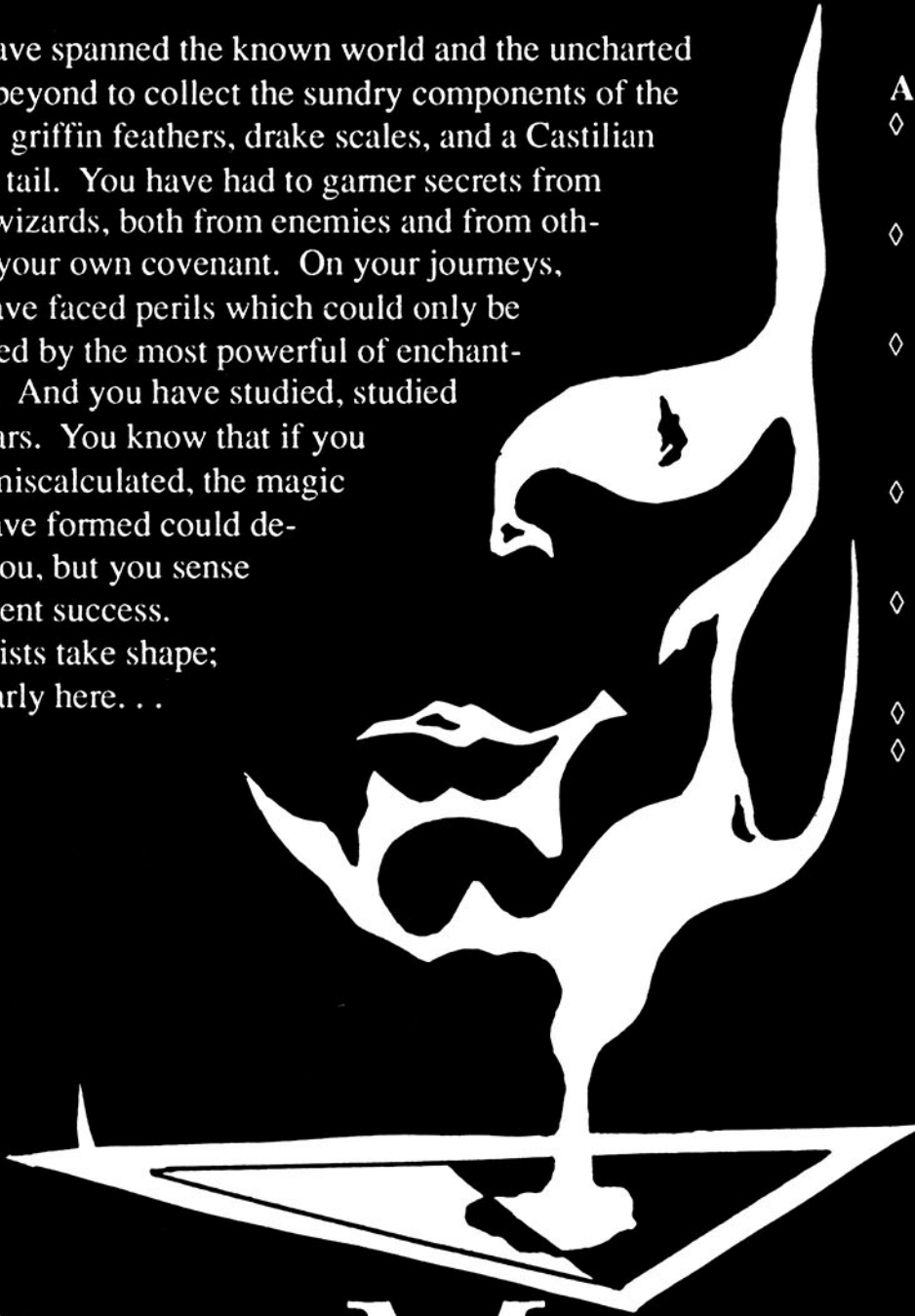
Heightened Agility A (+16)
 Heightened Attack: +6 on damage on any attack
 Heightened Defense: -4 on all rolls against him to hit
 Heightened Expertise: +4 to hit using all weapons, including HTH combat
 Heightened Senses: 'Sixth Sense' - Detect Danger/Detect Hidden Objects % x3
 Mutant Power: Animal Communication/Control, no power cost, affects all types of animals within range of his voice.
 Note that animals affected by this power have distinct, individual personalities similar to human beings.
 Pet: Buffalo named Lamont
 Wt: 1500 Agility: 15 Ferocity: 12 Hits: 20 Accuracy:+3 Damage: 1d10 Power: 45 Movement:130
 Psychosis: Multiple Personality Disorder; see description of possible personalities under Marvel Stats.

WEIGHT: 175 lbs. BASIC HITS: 4 AGILITY MOD.: -
 STRENGTH: 16 ENDURANCE: 15
 AGILITY: 33 INTELLIGENCE: 12
 CHARISMA: 16 REACTIONS FROM GOOD: +2 EVIL: -2
 HIT MOD.: (1.4)(1.8)(1.1)(3.4)=9.4248 HIT POINTS: 38
 DAMAGE MOD.: +4 HEALING RATE: .4/DAY
 ACCURACY: +6 POWER: 76
 CARRYING CAPACITY: 490 LBS BASIC HTH DAMAGE: 1D8
 MOVEMENT RATES: 64 inches ground
 DET. HIDDEN: 30% DET. DANGER: 52%
 INVENTING POINTS: 2 CASH: \$ N/A; lives off of Ham the Weather Wizard
 LEGAL STATUS: Unknown SECURITY CLEARANCE: None



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You have spanned the known world and the uncharted lands beyond to collect the sundry components of the ritual: griffin feathers, drake scales, and a Castilian newt's tail. You have had to garner secrets from other wizards, both from enemies and from others in your own covenant. On your journeys, you have faced perils which could only be defeated by the most powerful of enchantments. And you have studied, studied for years. You know that if you have miscalculated, the magic you have formed could devour you, but you sense imminent success. The mists take shape; it's nearly here. . .



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When Giants Join Forces

TSR Worlds Premiere in New DC Comic Series

Barbara Makransky

It is a rare gamer who is not, in some way, familiar with the legend of **Dragonlance**. Comprising two trilogies of best selling novels, companion anthologies, fifteen gaming modules, an atlas, a sourcebook, yearly calendars, and a volume of art drawn by some of the best and brightest artists in the genre, **Dragonlance** is a phenomenon to be reckoned with. In **Dragonlance**, TSR has built itself an unqualified success.

As there is no gamer who has not heard of **Dragonlance**, there is not a comic book reader anywhere who has not heard of DC Comics. With titles such as **Batman**, **Superman** and the **Justice League of America**, and many years of experience under its corporate belt, DC has forged itself an enormous and loyal following. With a

new line of comics, DC and TSR have banded together to introduce a brand new concept in mainstream comic books.

Bruce Bristow, marketing director at DC, was the man who spearheaded the movement on DC's end to do comic books based on familiar role-playing games and board games. Barbara Kesel is the woman who was given the job of putting it all together. Kesel, who recently married inker Karl Kesel, is an intelligent and vibrant woman who is more than happy to discuss her work. She began her career at DC Comics back in 1981 when a chance encounter in the letter column in *Detective* brought her to the attention of then-editor, Dick Giordano. A letter she read there had echoed her sentiments regarding the virtual

absence of women writers at DC, as well as giving her the incentive to express her own views on the matter. Having written several fan letters already, Kesel was now inspired to issue some complaints. The questions put forth by this reader asked simply, "Why are all your women characters so bad?" and "Why aren't there more women writers?"; Giordano's answer was just as simple — he didn't think women scriptors would make much of a difference, but he was open to debate. Prompted to answer, Kesel wrote: "I think you don't have enough women working at your company and based on what I'm seeing, you have a real dearth of characterization of women across the board — I think someone needs to work on that. You have lots of male characters but you have women *stereotypes*. And I think it needs to be equalled." She sums it up in one wry sentence: "Gee, you could tell great stories, but you're leaving out the girls, guys!"

This response caused Giordano to arrange a meeting with Kesel in San Diego. Kesel was asked to put her money where her pen was, and was given a **Batgirl** writing assignment, an opportunity for her to give **Batgirl** more depth as a character; more depth as a *woman* character. Upon her graduation from California State Polytechnical University, Giordano hired Kesel on as an associate editor. The rest, as they say, is history.

What makes Barbara Kesel uniquely qualified to helm the DC/TSR projects is the fact that she was, herself, both a gamer and a Game Master. Introduced to gaming at the very end of High School, she didn't become actively involved until college where she became acquainted with many different types of games, **Champions** being among them. A Theatre Arts major, Kesel found that what she enjoyed most about gaming was the acting in-



volved and not the dice rolling. And she is "probably the only person at DC right now who had any kind of interest in, or background in gaming at all." She approaches her work at DC with the same kind of enthusiasm with which she seems to approach everything else.

Of the four comics planned by DC and TSR, Kesel will be editing three. The first is **Dragonlance**, followed closely by **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Gammaraiders**. The fourth, **Buck Rogers**, edited by Ira Gustin, is a bit more tenuous at this point, with an anticipated release date in early 1989. What is important to remember at this point is that these are comic books: "The one thing I insisted on from up front was that we were telling comic book stories," Kesel explains. "We were not going to do gaming aids; this wouldn't be two panels of people moving around and one panel of great stats."

While there will be some sort of gaming support material — in the form of maps or character statistics, perhaps — in the back of the books, the main thrust of all of these titles will be the stories each book has to tell. Each title will be written in such a way that every four issues will begin a new story. When one story is completed, the four issues will be repackaged into bagged four-packs so you need never have to worry about finding missing issues. A series of miniseries, if you will. "What I wanted, is if someone picked up these four-packs in a gaming store years later, it wouldn't be necessary for them to get any of the collected editions in order. And, if they find just one, they have a complete story that doesn't depend on any of the others."

The titles in the DC/TSR lineup appear to be well worth waiting for. Planned for release first in comics shops, with the repackaged editions earmarked for the gaming trade, DC and TSR plan to make the titles accessible to gamers and comics readers alike. **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**, for example, will feature characters almost any role-playing gamer will be familiar with. There is an amazon, a warrior, an elf magic-user, a dwarf, and departing from standard AD&D practice, a centaur who will also figure prominently in the story.



But it is with good story lines that DC hopes to lure the comic book readers. The characters in these stories are purposely given room in which to grow: "In each case, we've done a little bit of a take on the character; these are not cardboard characters — I am a much better editor than that! But they're not completely developed, either." It is a rare comic where characters are allowed to progress and develop naturally along with the story; for the most part, it has been noted that comic book characters are all action and no growth. Fortunately, DC seems to have made this trend rather less the norm.

AD&D, the comic book, takes place on a world that is becoming more and more familiar to gamers, the *Forgotten Realms*. The action originates, takes place or winds up at an inn called *Selune's Smile* (which, according to Barbara Kesel, TSR will obligingly add to the game world in future module releases). "It's a play on a crescent moon," Kesel grins, "so we named it after the goddess of the moon."

The integral seriousness of AD&D and **Dragonlance** comics will be balanced with the humorous tone of **Gammaraiders**. **Gammaraiders** is based on TSR's boardgame of the same name. The fact that the comic is based on a board game rather than a role-playing game does not seem to worry Barbara. Peter Gillis, who is currently writing DC's **Tailgunner Jo**, is doing the writing chores on **Gammaraiders** as well. "We're mostly playing off the **Gammaraiders** idea of giant funny critters with strange fifties gunports, and the little human operators (upon which the book is truly based) and their gargantuan bio-borgs. We'll be getting into the whole world and mythology. But don't expect a serious book," she warns. "This is going to be all sorts of strange weirdness!"

Dragonlance is the only one of the four titles to have seen print at press-time. It will, therefore, be held up to the public eye for criticism and may well emerge as the standard by which to judge the other three. Fans of the series may be disappointed at

the absence of favorite characters, but need only be patient; there is a purpose in DC's choice to leave them, for the most part, out of the picture. Kesel maintains that she wanted to work within the established timeline, but did not want to simply retell the story as depicted in the DL series of modules or the Hickman/Weis series of novels.

TSR also publishes a series of graphic novels which, though commonly thought of as unattractive, is a faithful adaptation of the whole *Dragonlance* story. With the comic, Kesel wanted to explore the stories in *Dragonlance* no one had ever done before using new characters which must, necessarily, populate the world of Krynn: "Dragonlance has one of the best collections of characters for gaming I've ever seen," says Kesel, "but it also has a very rich mythology built into it. The new series takes place in a different setting with some new characters, but I did want to have some familiar characters in there. On page one you'll see Sturm Brightblade — anyone who is familiar with the *Dragonlance* material will recognize him — and, then, on page two, there's our girl, and she's new, but you'll get to know a whole lot about her background; she's the daughter of a Solamnic Knight."

Written along the same lines as the *Dragonlance Tales* anthologies, the comic follows the adventures

of Riva Silvercrown through the first four issue story. Along the way, readers will learn something about her and see her grow and develop much in the same way as the characters in the book did. DC is hoping that the storylines will appeal to everyone, and it seems as if they might just succeed.

Dragonlance is printed in what DC calls its 'New Format', which is, simply, offset printing on Mando paper. Because Mando paper is whiter than standard newsprint, it imparts a particular vibrancy to the colors which makes them almost seem to come alive for the reader. Ron Randall, the artist on *Dragonlance*, has done a fine job in portraying the characters; their emotions are clearly visible and the art is clean and crisp and unmarred by anything which could confuse the eye.

Thus far, Kesel's word has held. The emphasis here is on storyline. What Kesel is striving for in the comic books is "something where any gamer can pick up any four issue story and rerun it as a game adventure by using a little imagination. We don't give all the facts, and we won't be giving all the stats. What we are giving you is an imaginative tool; a story to play off of; new monsters and new traps



that players will be able to adapt any way they like. But mostly, what we're doing is creating characters to go with the games. Hopefully, they'll enjoy reading their adventures. What we want to do, is make good comic books."

The DC/TSR union promises to be a fruitful one, one that will engender even more titles if the first four do well enough, threatening to make role-playing games bigger than ever in the public eye. It can safely be said that if good art, involving storylines and excitement on the part of everyone involved counts for anything, then Barbara Kesel and the folks at DC should have four more successes on their hands.

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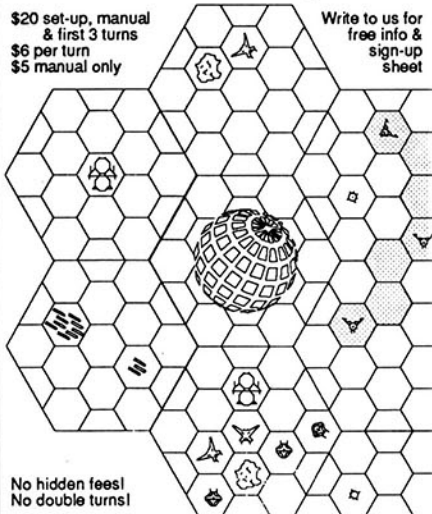
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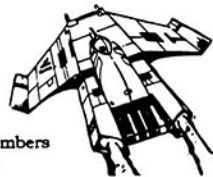
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Team Yankee Hits a Grand Slam!

Coyle's World War III as a Novel, a Game, and a Mini-Series

Jonathan Frater

Nuclear weapons have changed the way we live; no invention has caused as much controversy, debate, and anger in the United States (or anywhere else for that matter) as the A-bomb. The experts say that World War Three won't last more than thirty or forty minutes from start to finish, the time required for the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to nuke each other silly, probably taking a good chunk of the world with them. But a conventional war in Europe would not last all that much longer. Such is the premise of Team Yankee.

On Chariots of Fire, They Rode...

Team Yankee started out as a novel about a hypothetical situation that starts a conventional war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Written by Harold Coyle and published last year, it deals primarily with one tank-heavy company team which is attached to a mechanized infantry battalion, and dubbed *Team Yankee* on the table of organization charts. The unit is commanded by Captain Sean Bannon, a regular army tanker who started out in ROTC and worked his way up through the ranks to command a platoon, then a company, and now a team of tanks and mechanized infantry.

The book is not the usual kill-the-commies type of plot that we sometimes see. It deals with Bannon and his men, introducing them through the first few hours of the war, and staying with them through attacks by the Russians, counterattacks by the Americans, and back again, ultimately traveling with them through an invasion of East Germany by American forces. The war lasts for fourteen days and although strategic nuclear weapons are used by both sides, the world does not end.

Coyle states in his prologue, "It is not the purpose of this book to debate the great issues, nor to predict how the confrontation will end. My goal is simple, to tell a story. This story is of the men who would be called upon by the United States to decide the issue if the United States and the Soviet Union sought resolution of their difference by force of arms." And he does, in a way which was both realistic and interesting. Unlike Tom Clancy's *Red Storm Rising*, which also deals with a possible scenario for WWII, and also a best-seller, Coyle forgets about the outside world completely, opening up a grand view only if the reader absolutely needs to know something. By doing this he manages to convincingly simulate a "situation at the front" report. If the Team doesn't know about it, then neither does the reader. Also unlike *Red Storm*, which is filled to the brim with details about everything you could possibly want to know about both sides, **Team Yankee** ignores many details unless they are required, leaving more space to be devoted to the hearts, minds, and thoughts of Bannon and his men.

The Game: Don't Drop Your Guard

There is one other aspect of **Team Yankee** that other

authors tend to ignore completely: the importance of tactics and strategic thinking under combat conditions. The book even includes tactical maps so that readers can follow the action a bit more easily. (For me it was a necessity, not an option.) Game Designers' Workshop was quick to notice this, and once they did, they were quicker to capitalize on the success of the best-selling novel.

The game version of **Team Yankee**, now the first in the **First Battle** series of wargames by GDW, plays almost as well as the book reads. The game itself is rather typical of GDW's wargames, which means that it is easy to learn, fun to play, and based as closely as possible on real-life vehicles and conditions without sacrificing playability (in fact, it won a 1987 Origins Award for the Best Wargame Covering the Period 1947 to Present.)

The game was designed by Frank Chadwick and Marc Miller with the novice wargamer in mind, and thus is relatively simple. It uses only a few basic rules to give the players the feel of the way things should work, and then adds more rules as the scenarios get tougher. Eight scenarios are adapted straight from the novel, from the team's first battle with Soviet forces, right down to a full scale drive by the battalion on the bridge at the Salle river in East Germany.

In fact, everything in the game comes straight out of the novel; full information is given to the players about American and Soviet task force organization, equipment statistics and limitations, and exactly what could and could not be done to give one player or the other an extra challenge or punch during play of the game. Many helpful hints and articles of advice are given to aid beginning players, and the four large hexagonal maps are both detailed and realistic, and mimic perfectly those taken from the pages of the book. There is even a scenario guide in the rules to find where a particular scenario is described (the guide gives page counts for the Presidio Press hardcover version of the novel only, as the paperback was unavailable at the time. But the page counts are never off by more than a few pages, so don't worry if you have the paperback.)

Now, let me tell you something about modern combat, especially armored combat: forget most of the rules that they teach you, forget the theories, the axioms, forget everything. Remember this, though: use it before you lose it. That's the one thing that characterizes modern tank warfare. If you do not use every advantage that your side has

on a consistent basis, you are going to be squashed by an opponent who does. During playtests, it was discovered that it's not what you do, as much as it is how you do it. A few hints:

First of all, there are two experts you can trust: everything that Rommel and Patton said about tank warfare is true. Infantry slows them down. Don't spearhead an attack with your Fire Support Team APCs. Remember, your APCs move more slowly than your tanks, so don't let the tanks get too far ahead of the rest of the forces. Bannon did that in the book, and almost paid dearly for it in terms of men and equipment. Don't butt heads with a mountain if you are not a mountain yourself. Also, pay attention to the advice given by Miller and Chadwick. If you keep it in mind, you will be better at winning the best way, through intelligent strategy.

The Comic Series: A Third Dimension in Storytelling

Team Yankee has also been adapted for comic book readers. Berkeley (who published the paperback version of the novel) approached First Publishing (known for their own line of monthly comics, including such titles as *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Nexus*, and *Badger*) and told First that they were interested in marketing a graphic novel that was based on, or adapted from the novel. First was enthusiastic, and the project was a go, with work having started as early as last December.

"It's a very different type of war story," said Kurt Goldzang of First Publishing. "It deals with the people inside the machines, not the machines themselves. And more

than that, it deals with the strategies that the American and Soviet commanders have to use against each other."

Rick Oliver, the editor of the series and the graphic novel, was certain that he and his team of artists and writers (including David Drake and Rod Whigham) would be able to provide comic book fans with a detailed and exciting storyline with art to match.

"David seemed like a natural for this project," said Oliver. "Any conventional war in Europe is certainly going to be a tank war, there's no doubt about that. He was attached to the only active tank division in Vietnam, and although he wasn't a tank commander himself, he pretty much knows the ins and outs of the field. Also, his science fiction works deal very heavily with armored combat in the future. And, he's great to work with." (As a reminder, Drake wrote the multi-volume *Hammer's Slammers* series of novels, including *Cross the Stars* and *The Forlorn Hope*, as well as many other science fiction books.)

Oliver also decided early on in the project that Rod Whigham (of *G.I. Joe* fame) was the one to do the art for the Team Yankee comic book. "Rod has worked with us before quite a bit (he did *Crossroads* and one issue of *Badger*.) He was a natural, like David; the guys at *G.I. Joe* have to do a great deal of technical drawing, and they are real sticklers for detail. Since we wanted art that was as realistic and precise as possible, we asked for him and he said, yes."

According to Oliver, the storyline survived the adaptation relatively intact. "When you're adapting a novel to a comic format, you are really dealing with a small portion of the novel itself, the dialogue and action. The panels and art



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take the place of the descriptions and background material," he said. Several scenes of the wives and families of Bannon and his men had of necessity to be cut out for lack of available space. But, there is also one addition that the book hints at yet never truly investigates. The situation involves a power struggle in the Soviet Union leadership between the old generals who want to completely nuke the NATO forces and the younger generals who want the war to stop.

The **Team Yankee** series will be released in two parts; the first as a six-issue weekly series, the second as a full graphic novel. "We shouldn't have any problems keeping our week-by-week schedule up," said Goldzung. "But it's certainly not the type of thing that we would want to deal with on an ongoing basis, there's too much work to do." By the time you read this, the series should already be near its completion. The graphic novel however, won't be ready for shipping until February of 1989; it will be distributed by Berkeley as well, so look for it in book stores and comic shops alike.

Rarely do we see an event so universal and entertaining in its proportions and implications that it takes three fully separate industries to make the crossover complete. The fact that such a crossover happened and that it happened fairly quickly (projects were begun within weeks of the hardcover's release), means that somewhere out there in the multiverse, someone must be doing something right. The inter-industry barrier (movies, books, comics, and finally games) is starting to dissolve at a faster rate. That means that a greater number of people are recognizing games, novels, comics,

and the rest, are all representations of the ideas that bind all creative talent together.

Team Yankee is such an idea. The novel was written by a soldier who simply wanted to tell a story about the way it was for him, and the way it might be for someone else. The wargame was created by veteran game designers who wanted to show others what that situation might be like if they themselves had to make similar decisions on the battlefield. Finally, the comic book was created so that a completely new audience could appreciate the story for themselves. And that's what **Team Yankee** is really — just a story that can be told in countless different ways. Whatever your pleasure, there is something for you to enjoy, and a choice of ways to enjoy it.



Jacking in to

CYBERPUNK

Ian Harac

Tales Of a Grim Future

One of the hottest trends in literature, and hence in role-playing games, is the relatively new science fiction sub-genre of Cyberpunk. This genre, while somewhat difficult to define exactly, is rapidly becoming the eighties' major contribution to the field of science fiction literature. The chief qualifiers of the genre are:

- An unrelentingly depressing, cynical world view
- A near-future or post apocalyptic setting
- Major increases in computer science and cyborging, especially in direct computer-brain linking.
- A general decrease of the influence of the western powers, and the dominance of far eastern cultures.
- A lack of traditional, 'heroic' heroes.

While the genre has its roots in a number of books, movies, and stories, the quintessential Cyberpunk book is *Neuromancer*, by William Gibson. This book, which is one of the best novels I've read, certainly meets all of the above qualifications, and has spawned numerous imitators; some original works based on similar concepts, some derivative rip offs.

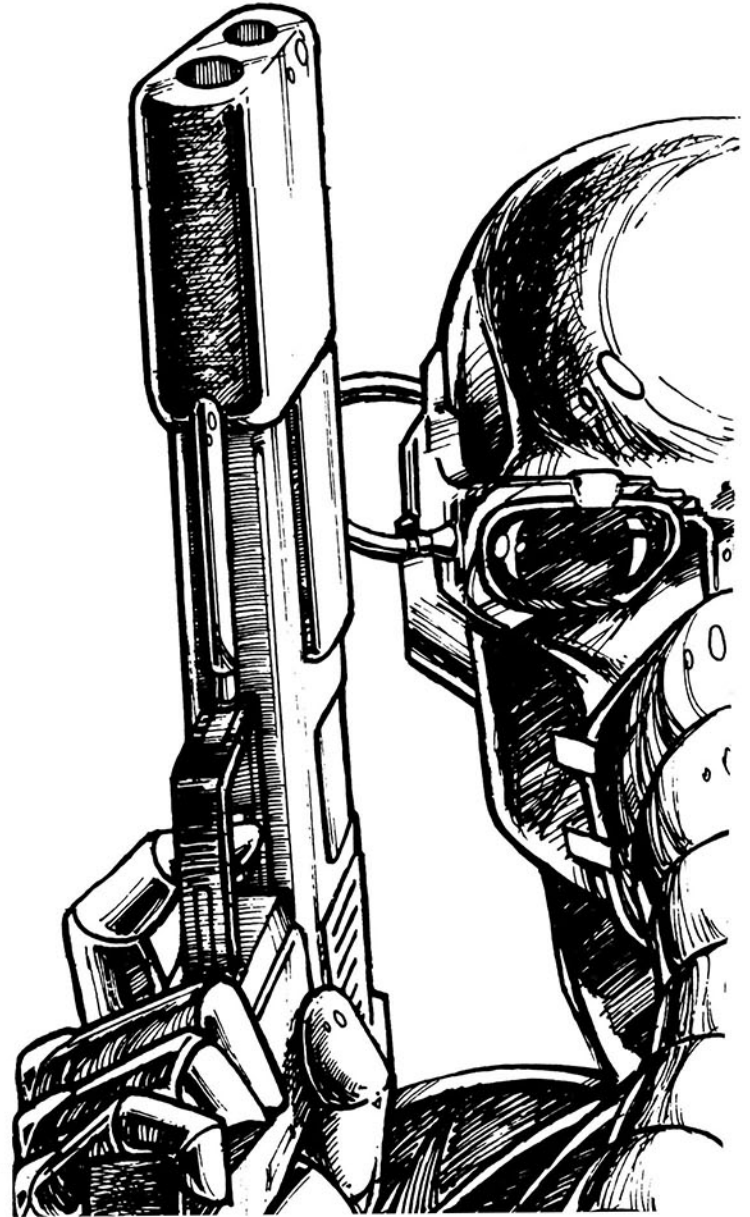
Furthermore, the genre epitomized by this work has spawned at least two role-playing games: *Cyberpunk*, by R. Talsorian Games (creators of *Mekton* and *Teenagers from Outer Space*, both somewhat lighter than this) and *Spacetime*, by Blacksburg Tactical Research Center. The games must thus be judged on two levels: How do they succeed as role-playing games, and how close are they to the 'feel' of the genre they are set in?

To answer the second question, we must first examine the genre more closely, going through the points mentioned above.

Depressing world view: This is major. Don't expect to feel like standing up and cheering at the end of *Neuromancer* like you did at the end of *Star Wars*. The book, like all 'good' cyberpunk novels, is grim, grim, grim. The so-called heroes are slime; the bad guys merely slightly slimier. Sometimes. Morality is not something even so simple as grey; it simply doesn't exist. The world is a collection of unrelated, random events, in which love, trust, and honor are merely tools, or concepts as irrelevant to day to day life as is the nature of quarks. Government, and all figures of authority, are corrupt to the core; so are many who wish to overthrow the government. The media is a puppet of the government, or perhaps vice-versa; organized crime usually wields the most power. The atmosphere is bad, the water worse. Starvation is everywhere. Don't dream of escaping

to space; sure, there are colonies in orbit and on the moon, but they are industrial cesspools where the quality of life is just as bad as it is on Earth. To quote the Cyberpunk game: "The sun never shines. There are no singing birds, laughing children." If you don't enjoy being depressed, avoid this genre. (If, like me, you do enjoy being depressed, stay tuned. This genre is great)

A near future setting: Technology is advanced, but not so far that we can't understand it or envision it. Faster than light travel may be around, but not often. Most of the major advances are in computers and cybernetics. Technology may be improved, but the quality of life usually stinks. See above.



Direct human-brain linkage: This is the crux of the cyberpunk genre. Instead of using such clumsy devices as keyboards or mice, computer jocks of the Cyberpunk era directly plug into computers, using implanted jacks in their head, arm or wherever. The days of writing programs and deciphering code are as dead as vacuum tubes. The 'world' of the computer is a three dimensional space of images, sounds, and people. Programs appear as objects or forces which can be manipulated; one moves from computer to computer by 'flying' through this pseudo-reality. Furthermore, computers can 'reach out' and attack intruders physically through the connection, causing death by brain seizure. This is, to my mind, what cyberpunk is all about.



Weakening of the West/Strengthening of the East: Japan is all through the genre. Japanese slang predominates; it is the Yakuza, not the Mafia, that players worry about. Ninja and Samurai, reincarnated in a modern era, act much as their ancestors did five centuries before, with appropriate, shall we say, modifications? Cross a typical Ninja with Steve Austin, and that is what you will likely find in a Cyberpunk universe. Japanese businesses seem to dominate the 'legitimate' sector of things, as the underworld dominates the 'illegitimate' sector, as if there's any difference.

Lack of traditional heroes: This is also important. The 'heroes' of cyberpunk are rude, amoral, selfish, and nasty. They are also generally neurotic, drug addicted, or sexually perverse. Instead of the stereotypical "nasty person with nice core", such as *Swamp Thing's* John Constantine, you generally get a nasty person with a nastier core, or sometimes just an empty shell.

Consider the above for a moment. Unrelentingly dismal, isn't it? And yet, not only are books and games in this genre popular, their popularity continues to expand. I like

them, and apparently a large percentage of science fiction fans and gamers do also. What does this mean?

It seems to reflect a rather depressing trend in our society, and in gaming in general, a trend in which I must admit I participate. We seem to have grown weary of heroes, at least as the term was originally used. We laugh at the John Wayne-styled, honest, noble and true types that our parents cheered at. We have also grown far more depressed about the future. Early science fiction was notable for its hopefulness, for the idea that technology would end poverty, war, and starvation, and that the world would be a better place a hundred or a thousand years from now. Try writing a novel showing life getting better, instead of worse, nowadays, and see who reads it.

It is impossible to say this cynicism is entirely ungrounded. The world does seem to be growing progressively worse, and there seems no way to stop it, or even slow it significantly. But why should this trend extend to our worlds of fantasy? Role playing games are supposed to be vehicles for our dreams to take flight; are even our self-made dreams to be dark? Granted, to actually expect the real world to improve dramatically overnight or be perpetually happy is illogical and somewhat foolish, but have we grown so cynical that we cannot even allow ourselves to imagine a world of true heroes, evil villains, and hope for the future? It seems not, at least within the realm of cyberpunk.

Role-playing games allow us to take the genre beyond its definitions, and the choice is left to the Game Masters and players as to what kind of stories they want to create and play. With the following two cyberpunk games, the choice is: 1) To remain true to the genre and play out the cynicism, hopelessness and the fall of humanity, or, 2) To explore what happens when humanity wins.

CYBERPUNK:

The Roleplaying Game of the Dark Future

This game is good. The world, concepts, and style of it made me immediately begin planning a campaign. Like most of R. Talsorian's games, it is style that counts, not slick packaging or fancy gimmicks, and style is one thing a Cyberpunk universe has in abundance.

The game itself is a boxed set of three booklets, with sharp, well delineated black and white graphics and typesetting obviously done on a computer. Rather than looking cheap, in this game it greatly enhances the feel of the rules. They are divided into the standard holy trinity of gaming rules: Characters, Combat, and Background. All three are reasonably well produced, though there is no index or cross reference.

The key to the success of a game like this is not the mechanics, which are adequate and even fun; but the feel. Do you want to wash your hands after reading the city life descriptions? Do you feel like buying a new Mac II after reading the section about computers? The answer is yes.

The characters' 'classes' are well described, and varied. The classes in this game are descriptions of the various types of roles a group of players might wish to try, and can be seen also as descriptions of campaign types. Each class has a special ability, one which makes sense in the context



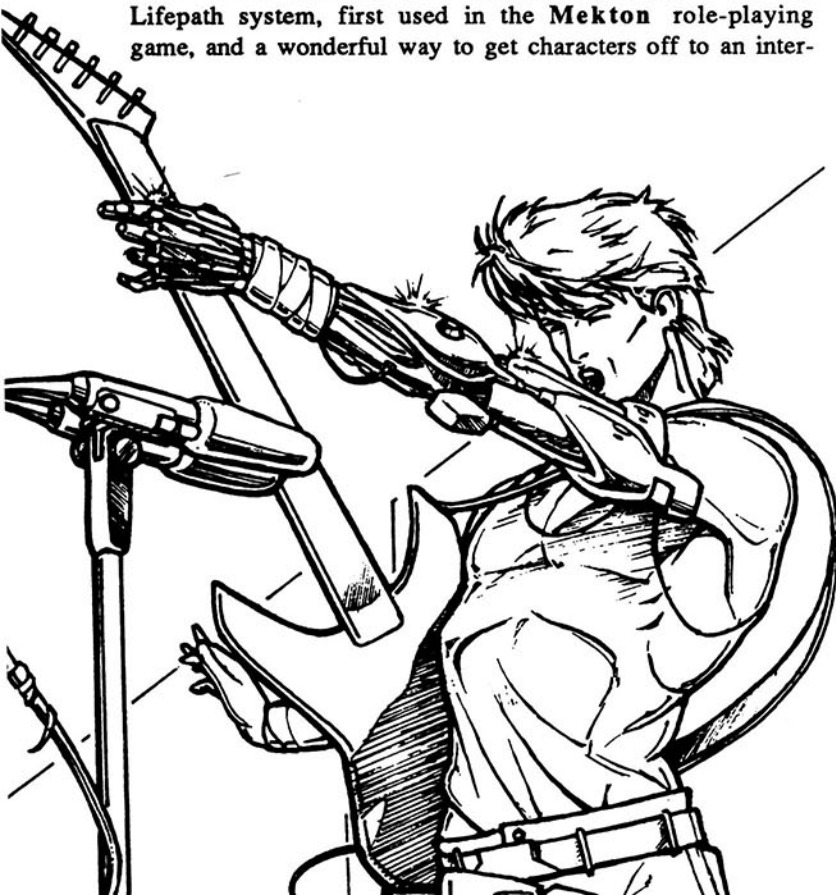
of the game, and which are far more realistic than seeing in the dark or casting spells. (Though with cybernetic enhancements, I suppose anything is possible.) For example, **Rockerboys** (the rebel rock singers of the twenty first century) have the ability of *Charismatic Leadership* -- they can tell their fans what to do. Considering the power of performers today to do just that, this is a quite reasonable power. As with anything in a good roleplaying game, just what you can get away with increases with your experience. Corporate execs have the power of *Resources*: Haven't you ever wanted all the force Exxon could bring to bear on your side? After choosing your basic role, you get to use the *Lifepath* system, first used in the *Mekton* role-playing game, and a wonderful way to get characters off to an inter-

esting start. The lifepath is a series of charts, which can be rolled upon or chosen from, which helps determine the characters previous life, including old freinds, old lovers, old enemies (who might have been old lovers), etc. It is wonderfully soap-opera-ish, and provides players and GM's with a lot of good role playing 'hooks'.

The rules on cybernetics are also complete, with a nice twist to them: The more cybernetics you plug into yourself, the less human you become, emotionally as well as physically. Eventually, you simply become an insane killing machine. This is obviously a game-balance tool, but somehow it feels better than similar balancing tools, such as forgetting spells.

Still, the most important aspect of a cyberpunk game is the human-computer interface. To me, jacking into the net (directly plugging your mind into a worldwide computer network) is what the genre is all about, and Cyberpunk has the rules to cover this. In this game world, the computer world can be represented by a number of interfaces, including a "Dungeon" interface, a "Techie" interface, and a thirties film noir interface. Computer programs appear as objects or people in these 'worlds'. For example, a security system might appear as a barred oaken door in the 'Dungeon' interface, or as an electric fence in the 'City' interface. 'NetRunners', or hackers, destroy these barriers with copy-protection programs, such as a battering ram or a pair of insulated clippers. A selection of programs is given in the books; many more suggest themselves. By the way--certain programs in the net can reach out and kill the physical person tapping into it. Today's crashed hard drives seem mild by comparison.

This game seems to meet most of the requirements for a good role playing game, and is an excellent interpretation of the Cyberpunk genre. As I mentioned before, this particular field is not for everyone. But if you like gritty role-playing that mixes hyperrealism with flights of pure fantasy, this game might be for you. It is well produced, clearly written, and a lot of fun.



SPACETIME:

A Near Future Role-Playing Game

SpaceTime is a game manufactured by Blacksborg Tactical Research Center, manufacturers of **TimeLords**. It is set in a grim, Cyberpunk-styled near future universe, and has rules and characters appropriate to such a setting, although it is missing a few important elements. The rulebook is squarebound, and about 112 pages, with an interesting full color cover. The interior illustrations vary in quality, but some of them are quite good, evoking the mood of the game and genre in a character's smile or a cocked weapon.

The universe of the game is set on an Earth recovering from World War III, and just recently freed from Martian rule. Mankind has discovered *Hyperdrive*, and about fifty worlds are under human control. The main thrust of the game, however, is playing on Earth, and, specifically, in the dark and dismal world of the city streets. All the traditional trappings of the cyberpunk genre are present: Lots of technology, with no subsequent improvement in lifestyle, lots of organized crime, and MegaCorporations running the whole show. Players strive to stay alive, make a profit, and get ahead.

The rules are a little more complicated than is average today, but nothing on the level of something like **Aftermath**. An experienced role-player should be able to master them within a short span of time. They revolve, as so many rules do these days, on a universal modifier tabel, with an assortment of adjustments for skills, attributes, etc. The rules are reasonably balanced and well thought out, and are flexible enough to handle circumstances not covered explicitly, which is a good thing, as **Spacetime** leaves a lot of openings not quite filled.

For example, one of the chief facets of the Cyberpunk genre is the human-computer linkup, and the 'pseudo-real' view of the computer to the 'operator'. **Spacetime** mentions this a number of times, but rules to cover it are incomplete. The GM is left almost entirely on his/her own in efforts to use this aspect of the game to its fullest. Perhaps they just weren't interested in that aspect of the genre, but I hope that Blacksborg produces a supplement to these rules or simply re-releases the game with this information covered. With the high degree of completeness in other aspects of the game, including some that are, to my mind, less important, the role of computer/human interface in Cyberpunk is part of what

makes it work.

Character generation is point based, including a small but effective selection of disadvantages for gaining points. The character attributes are straightforward, and simple to generate. There are no character classes in this game, so players are free to pick amongst the skills to assemble whatever character they choose. The skill list is fairly complete, with skills ranging from Acting to Torture. (Both, curiously, are in the same skill category, Criminal Skills. Maybe a bad rendition of **Hamlet** is all that's needed to pry information out of some poor sap.)

There is a lot of space devoted to combat, and the majority of it is good. Combat also revolves around use of the *Universal Modifier* table, with a lot of modifiers. There are plenty of detailed and specific charts for use in every aspect of combat you might imagine, from thrown objects to the use of high tech weaponry and nukes. The effects of armor, hit location, and healing rates are also covered, with charts for suitable results. Combat sessions can get somewhat long and involved, a problem in a game where violence is supposed to be used to solve problems. The combat system could use a 'simplified' variant, as the character generation system already has.

The back of the book contains some samples of items used in the gaming world with blank description sheets for the GM to create their own. There is also a brief section on psionics, and an introductory adventure. The creators have tried to give the buyer a lot for \$14.95, and have succeeded, both to and against their merit. It's nice to have a game with so many aspects covered, but one wishes that they could be covered in more detail.

Generally, the game is playable, though designed for an older or more rules intensive player. The world is also relatively original, but lacks some of the flavor that a cyberpunk world should have. In a way, it reads like a world designed expressly for a game. This is a game that is best suited for the GM who has a world of their own and needs rules to play in it, or, of course, for the GM who owns and plays **TimeLords**. (All of the games and adventures from this company use essentially the same system.) The company has announced plans to develop adventures for use with their systems, and there is a possibility for a rules expansion in the future.



A Spark in the Darkness

Trading Data with Cyberpunk's Mike Pondsmith

Alan Berkson

Mike Pondsmith is best known in the gaming industry as the driving force behind R. Talsorian Games, the home of Mekton ("The Game of Japanese Robot Combat") and Teenagers From Outer Space, a humorous role-playing game that examines the difficulties of being an adolescent in a world inhabited (or invaded) by strange, whacked out dudes from all corners of the universe. His reputation for producing games with a light or humorous edge will have to change now, with the release of Cyberpunk, The Role-playing Game of the Dark Future. This game takes the players into the stark, ultra-tech, dystopian world of cyberpunk, the science fiction sub-genre that paints a grim landscape of the future of humanity. (See Jacking In to Cyberpunk for a discussion of the genre and a review of the R. Talsorian game.)

In the mean time, what attracted the creator of a totally non-lethal game system to explore a world where a wrong move can lead to a gruesome death, where life without advanced microcircuitry is cheap, drugs are plentiful, and heroes are nearly impossible? Mike Pondsmith recently found the time to sit down and talk about his company's latest release, his impressions of the genre, and his thoughts about the future of role-playing games.

GATEWAYS: *How would you describe cyberpunk as a sub-genre? What is its definition exactly?*

MIKE PONDsmith: Cyberpunk is a very generic term for a kind and style of science fiction that began about three or four years ago. The person it's most associated with is a writer named Gibson who wrote *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*.

The best way of describing cyberpunk is that it's almost film noir meets high-tech. The big problems are the questions of whether technology changes people and how it changes them and how you survive in a world which is dominated by that kind of thing.

GW: *Greg Porter, of Blacksburg Tactical Research has said that "people either love cyberpunk or hate it", suggesting that it's passionate on both ends. Assuming that you love it, what attracted you to that particular genre?*

MP: The first example of cyberpunk I ever came across was about three or four years ago; it was a video for *Max Headroom*. I stumbled across it one day when I was in bed with the flu, and I said "This is great!" I had seen *Blade Runner* a couple of years earlier than that and it's one of my favorite movies. The world it drew was so alien and beautiful in kind of a dark way. It had a quality of sadness but it also had a quality of stark, realistic beauty and the struggle of the people against this really bad situation they

were in. The last scenes in *Blade Runner* when the android is dying... the entire idea of the human condition is wrapped in that beautifully. Cyberpunk strips a lot of the elements of what people are, what civilization is, down to just the rawest minimums.

GW: *So you just read the genre and said "Hey, I like this; I wanna write a game about it?"*

MP: Yeah. I went through the genre when I first discovered it. William Gibson is...he's good. He's like the Roger Daltry of science fiction right now. And, I said I want to do something with this. So, about a year and a half ago I started running the idea past the crew. We threw it around and said well how would we do it and what kind of things would we put in? How would we do the net-running? How could we make a cybernetic game that wasn't going to be hardware, hardware, hardware? We figured we were pretty good at figuring out how to put metal into things in the right places, so we started building it about a year ago.

GW: *Did you enlist any cyberpunk experts in the game development stages?*

MP: Through a long series of strange coincidences, a Mekton player contacted us and said he wanted to playtest. So we asked him who's in your playtest group and we started writing down names. He mentioned Walter Jon Williams and a whole bunch of other people. (*Walter Jon Williams is a well known author whose works include cyberpunk novels. - Ed.*) So we talked to a lot of the people writing this stuff so they could check it out. And they liked it.

GW: *The most frequent criticism of cyberpunk as a genre is it's portrayal of substance abuse. How is this handled in Cyberpunk the RPG?*

MP: There's an interesting thing about that. Anybody who went to college in the seventies knew enough people who were fried out on all kinds of various drugs. So when we looked to put drugs in this game, we said we're trying to write realism here, and people do not eat amphetamines forever and not have bad effects. That part we tried to interject some reality to. We didn't skip it as much as we showed what they were. We said if someone's gonna design drugs, they'll design them to be addictive and they'll design them to be effective, and they won't care about you. Just as a real drug dealer won't care about you. You're just someone buying a commodity. In some ways we thought that people might learn a little more about the realities of that situation by seeing what drugs can do to a character. In our game, for example, drugs will destroy you.

GW: *But the genre itself doesn't say that. Other game designers discovered that one of the problems in a cyberpunk game was that there was no way to portray the rampant drug use suggested in the novels and stories without seeming*

like an invitation to join in. Dave McKenzie of *Leading Edge* had told *Gateways* in a recent interview that, "With drugs, there's an attraction to power -- live fast, die young, leave a good looking corpse...It's hard to make kids understand the longterm side effects of drugs in a short campaign game..." Did you find it so?

MP: That was the biggest bitch that I had about cyberpunk. It's an argument I had with some of the writers about it. They were saying, "Yeah, you need more drugs." But I wanted people to deal more with the interactive aspects of their characters.

GW: *What about the characters? What kind of people are they? Can they be heroes?*

MP: Cyberpunk characters are people who are fighting some almost covert war, either living with the technology in a very inhuman world or, in many cases, winning against that inhuman world. Most of it's really depressing because the idea is that in most cases, if man goes against steel, flesh is going to lose. The heroic thing about cyberpunk is that the people involved do contest against that inhumanizing technology...and sometimes they win. What's most important is that they keep to their own moral codes. Even if they're not necessarily really nice people or people you'd like to know, they have a moral code. They're anti-heroes.

GW: *This is a game that's going out to kids. Won't you be accused of saying, "Hey, drugs are OK?" For some reason, possibly because drugs are a real presence and threat in an adolescent's life, the idea that a game would have an instance of drug use within the story is much more threatening than a game where characters kill or are killed.*

MP: You're always going to have some kind of human conflict...one monkey wants something that another monkey has. What we have to learn is how to get better at controlling that impulse. We have to learn the same kind of restraints about drugs and so forth; we're going to have to learn some maturity about it. What we basically say about drugs [in the game] is that they're dangerous and if you mess

with them, you'll probably kill your character or mess him up beyond repair, like in real life. In this game, you can die real easy. You have to think, you need to know what this stuff'll do. All of these drugs do bad things to your character. Not the sort of things where you get to act it out and it's funny. We're talking you're starting to lose intelligence, you're starting to lose the ability to control yourself, you're starting to lose points in your reflexes. So, you can literally destroy a character.

Drugs are medicine. Any medicine can be really lethal. I felt, when we wrote this section through, that the best way to illustrate that, and I talked to a number of drug counselors and so forth, is don't just tell them that [drugs are] bad and leave it at that. I give them some examples.

GW: *Did you actually talk to professionals involved in substance abuse therapy?*

MP: We basically talked to drug and alcohol counselors. My mother is a psychologist and we talked to her quite a bit about this because she works in drug and alcohol counseling too. I worked for a while at California Youth Authority with adolescents, with juvenile offenders. I use a little of that experience.

We had targeted this to a slightly older age market, anyway. On the box we're saying we recommend you be over 16 for dealing with this game. There's nothing in here that you can't find on [TV] Saturday at 8:00 at night. But, you're playing an adult character and it's not a pure hack and slash game. You're gonna be, hopefully, more interested in political aspects; making contacts, making deals, working through a very dangerous world to finally come out on top and maybe get rid of the people who are making this world a bad place.

GW: *Do you have any educational intent? Or did you just want to handle the drug use problem as delicately as possible?*

MP: I had a minor educational intent. I wanted to have people see what it did to their characters and maybe relate it to themselves. People get real, real intensely involved with their characters. So if they can see their character's reflexes and intelligence go down to where it's a drooling vegetable, they might make the connection. I'm not gonna sit on a soap box and preach at them about it. They're not gonna listen. When their character goes down for the third time -- and all these things are addictive -- they're going to see, I think, an analogy.

GW: *You can learn a lot about dealing with people and situations by getting exposed to unusual situations would you may not run into every day. What can a player learn from the situations in *Cyberpunk the RPG*?*

MP: There's a running joke around the office: "Role dice to avoid necessary role-playing." A lot of times the best role-playing games are ones where instead of saying "oh, I'll use my fast-talk skill to get out of this..." the player has to fast talk or somehow work through it. Teenagers had some of that element. The main thing in this game [*Cyberpunk*] is... is a kind of grim future. It's one thing to role-play. Living it is no fun. In a lot of ways, if we don't do anything about where we're headed, we may end up living in a cyberpunk world.





It's been 250 years since The War, and things are pretty much back to normal. Except for Mexico, which has gone feudal. And South America, which is an international weapons testing ground. And Russia, which is still recovering. And Europe, which is a barely civilized wilderness with a lot of circular lakes.

Aside from that, the world has stayed the same. Well, the megacorps did take over the reins of power when the governments collapsed. Technology is what you would expect for the 24th century. Direct interface with computers, genetic and electronic augmentation, cloned body parts, artificial intelligence, and a global computer network. Hardwired hackers, muscleboys and razorgirls, renegade computer nets, and dozens of Big Brothers who will promise you the world if you'll sell them your soul. Well, maybe things *have* changed a bit...

SpaceTime is the science-fiction RPG of a future that's too close for comfort. The world is not a pretty place, and you start on the bottom. On the plus side, there's nowhere to go but up... The realistic skill and combat systems give results like no other game, and the only way to survive high-tech combat is with high-tech medicine. That is, if you can afford it.

SpaceTime is completely compatible with the TimeLords RPG system, and 3G, the universal gun design system. Get them at your local hobby shop, or order from the BTRC for \$14.95, \$12.95 and \$8.95, respectively. Va. residents add sales tax.

BLACKSBURG TACTICAL RESEARCH CENTER, 1925 AIRY CIRCLE, RICHMOND, VA 23233

WANT MORE CYBERPUNK? Here's a list of some more sources of cyberpunk material, including influences, the beginnings of the genre, and some cyber-flicks & comix:

Gregory Benford, *Timescape* (Pocket Books, 1980)
 John Brunner, *The Sheep Look Up* (Ballantine Books, 1973), *The Shockwave Rider* (Ballantine Books, 1971), *Stand on Zanzibar* (Ballantine Books, 1969)
 Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Ballantine Books, 1977)
 William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (Grove Press, 1978), *The Nova Express*
 Pat Cadigan, *Mindplayers* (Bantam Spectra, 1987), "Pretty Boy Crossover," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, January 1986, "Roadside Rescue," Omni, July 1985.
 Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (DAW Books, 1982)
 William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, *Burning Chrome* (Arbor House, 1986), *Count Zero* (Arbor House, 1986), *Neuromancer* (Ace, 1984)
 Terry Gilliam and Tom Stoppard, *Brazil*
 James Patrick Kelly, "Solstice," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, June 1985.
 Michael Kube-McDowell, *Emprise* (Berkeley, 1985)
 Marc Laidlaw, "Nutrimancer," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, August 1987.
 Jack McDevitt, *The Hercules Text* (Ace, 1986)
 Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind*
 Kevin O'Donnell, *Oracle* (Berkeley, 1984)
 Tom Rainbow, "Immortality!" Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, October 1984, "Superintelligence!" Isaac Asi-

mov's Science Fiction Magazine, January 1985, "The Feasibility of Mind Transfer" Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, June 1987.

Rudy Rucker, *Software* (Avon 1987), *Wetware*
 Norman Spinrad, *Bug Jack Barron* (Doubleday, 1969).
 Bruce Sterling, *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (Arbor House, 1986), *Schismatrix* (Ace, 1986), "Green Days in Brunei," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, October 1985, "The Beautiful and the Sublime," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, June 1986.
 Michael Swanwick, *Vacuum Flowers* (Arbor House, 1987)
 John Varley, *The Ophiuchi Hotline* (The Dial Press, 1977), "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank," Galaxy, May 1976, "Press Enter," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, May 1984.
 Vernor Vinge, *True Names* (Bluejay 1984), *The Peace War*
 Walter Jon Williams, *Hardwired* (TOR, 1986), *Voice of the Whirlwind*, "Side Effects," The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, May 1985, "Video Star," Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, July 1986.

Some movies which have a Cyberpunk tone:

Bladerunner, *Robocop*, *Tron* (first movie to show the workings of a computer translated into human terms!), *The Terminator*, *Alien/Allens*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Max Headroom* (the video of the pilot is now available).

Some recent comic book series can be termed cyberpunk: *Terminator*, *Aliens*, *Scout*, *Akira*, *Slash Maraud*, *Appleseed*, New York: *Year Zero* and *Grey*.

The Red Dagger Inn



Edited by Charles and Sydney Barouch

We have seen a lot of computer games that owe more than a little to **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**. **Pool Of Radiance**, (which is available for Commodore 64 computers with Apple II and MS DOS to follow), is different because it owes everything to AD&D. In fact, TSR's logo appears all over the package and the disks; Jim Ward and other TSR folks designed the storyline.

SSI, whose **Phantasie Series** has more in common with AD&D than most games we have reviewed, has an extremely talented team under Chuck Kroegel. Added to this is Electronic Arts, leaders in quality computer gaming, who will be distributing the game through their extensive sales network.

POOL OF RADIANCE

But enough about the behind-the-scenes stuff; you all want to know how it plays. Well, without giving it away, we *can* tell you that it is one of the most addictive games we have ever encountered. If you value getting to the dinner table on time, or getting any sleep, this game isn't for you. **Pool** is a huge game that covers a full city (New Phlan), its monster-ridden slums, temples, taverns, shops, training grounds, a City Hall, a haunted island (Sokol Keep), a nightmare graveyard, wilderness encounters and much more.

Within the game, you will find a Magic System, Combat System and Clerical System identical to AD&D standards. The Monsters are all from the *Monster Manual* and *Monster Manual II*. In fact, virtually everything we love and hate about AD&D is here.

Combat

Combat is not a speedy process. There is a speed setting when you are in combat, but even the fastest seems laboriously slow, when you have to not only go through the actions of your party, but watch each individual opponent as the computer moves them. This becomes agonizingly slow when battles involve 40 or more enemies.

There is an option to speed up the combat, but this is a mixed blessing. The problem with speeding up combat is that it speeds up all the messages and actions too. Sometimes messages will appear on screen about something you've found, or something you've overheard, or other pertinent information, and it will flash much too fast for you to read.

There is a 'Quick' option during combat which has nothing to do with speed. This option lets the computer decide the characters' moves. We have found that the computer is not as clever as a live player in most cases, but it does play a credible game.

If a party member falls during battle, you will notice a

new option: 'Bandage'. Make sure you have one of your characters choose 'Done', then 'Bandage' for each fallen character, to have the best chance of being able to heal them after the battle.

In this type of combat it sometimes becomes difficult to keep track of who's who. When you have trouble, an easy way to tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys is to look at the lettering on the screen; your allies' names are blue, while your enemies' names are written in yellow. And try not to hurt your allies; you may need their help sometime.

Rest and Healing

True to AD&D, the healing rate is 1 hit point per day of rest. Of course you can try to get your damaged party back to town, and then pay the exorbitant rates of the Temples for healing and spend a few days resting in the Inn. Then again, there are clerical healing spells you can use, but you must keep in mind that once cast, you must memorize them all over again.

In uncivilized areas, monsters will often rudely interrupt your rest. Not only will you have to fight the battle without the aid of the spells you were resting to memorize, but when the battle is over, you have to go through the sometimes tedious job of memorizing the spells all over again. And you will still need to get some uninterrupted rest.

You are not allowed to rest in the civilized area of Phlan (we suspect that the City Council owns a piece of the Inn). The City Guard will roust you and force you to move along.

Party Generation

Filling your party with noble and not-so-noble adventurers is quite simple. You can have six characters per party and two NPCs. You can have up to seven NPCs if you have fewer than six player characters.

The actual player-characters are created via an easy rolling system. You pick a race, then the stats are rolled by computer. It is very easy to just choose "Re-Roll" if you are not happy with the stats. There is also a 'Modify' option that lets you adjust the numbers with racial limits.

You then get a list of available classes and multi-classes to choose. Select one and your character is almost ready. A quick trip to the weapons shop for arms and armor is all that's needed.

One of the big draws of **Pool** comes at this point. You can choose from a supply of different heads and bodies to represent your character. This picture will come up on screen any time you 'View' the character during the game. There are an assortment of both male and female heads, and

bodies, dressed in different sorts of armor, robes, and other adventuring outfits.

Now you get to choose your Icons. An Icon is a graphic marker of some sort that stands for something. In this case it will stand for your character. During combat, you will actually watch your Character Icons battle it out with the Monster Icons. There are many different choices of weapons, heads, and colors to choose from, so you can create an individual look for each of your characters. You get used to these Icons very quickly during the game, and it becomes easy to see at a glance where particular individual party members are in relation to others during combat. This is not only very useful, it also happens to be fun to watch your character actually take a swipe at the enemy with his sword. It is quite helpful to choose an Icon with the type of weapon that the character will be using regularly, so you can see who has hand-to-hand weapons, who has distance weapons, etc. The game allows you to change your Icon during the game, any time you 'Encamp', so if you change your usual weapon, or get tired of your Icon, there's no problem. Just change it.

Additional Notes

The software protection in Pool comes in the form of a Word Wheel, a device we have seen before in other games. This particular one is a bit different in that you may find, during your adventures, Elvish or Dwarvish runes which need translating. The Word Wheel doubles as a language translator.

Party movement is done either by use of a joystick, the keyboard, or both. We have found that it seems easiest to use the keyboard at all times except for combat and outdoor movement. Since most choices are made through a series of Menus, it is usually less complicated to use the keyboard than the joystick to select the function as the joystick is sometimes not accurate enough for this purpose.

We Are Experiencing Technical Difficulties

There is a serious bug in the 'Game Save' option in some copies of Pool Of Radiance. Calls to other players

and to SSI confirmed the bug. Until SSI can fix or solve the problem, here are some ways to protect your save game and minimize your losses.

- 1) Alternate between two Save Disks so that you have a backup disk at all times.
- 2) Return to the Training Ground often and save there. Immediately after you save, remove each character individually to the disk. This will bring up the 'Load Saved Game' option. If the game loads, then you know that game save is good. If it doesn't load, you will have at least saved the current version of your characters.

If something has gone wrong with the game save but you have removed your characters separately, the Slums and all other preset encounters, monsters, and treasures will be reset to new for you to fight all over again, or, in the case of treasure, claim all over again. Hmmm.

Note that the game automatically increases the difficulty of encounters based on the current strength of the party, so this 'cheat' may not gain you anything.

Hints for Pool Safety

1. Always have at least two Clerics or multi-classed Clerics in the party.
2. Always look around twice, using "Look" and "Search"
3. If the XP you get after a battle is excessively high, look for magical items among your treasure. Another way to discover magical items is to try to sell them. The shopkeepers will offer you more money.
4. Be very careful when aiming "Sleep" spells! They work on party members.
5. Try not to let monsters run away. It seems merciful, but you lose experience.
6. Unless you like bar fights, stay away from the taverns. If you do end up in the middle of a brawl, remember that some of the guards and others are actually on your side. Be sure to check the color their name appears in to see who's with you and who's not!
7. Thieves only become useful after 3rd level, unless they're Fighter/Thieves.

Also from SSI are **Heroes of the Lance**, an arcade-style game, and **The Dungeon Master's Assistant**, a utility for game mastering live games. (Reviews of these two games will appear in the next Red Dagger Inn.) Rumor has it that there may be a project in the works to allow you to design your own computer AD&D-type games using the tools created to make Pool Of Radiance.

WASTELAND

Wasteland is a computer game in which you guide up to seven characters through a post-apocalyptic world, that combines the overhead view of the characters, much like the classic Ultima series, with the up close and personal combat that mirrors the Bard's Tale series. You begin Wasteland within Ranger Center, a former penitentiary which is now a haven for the more law-abiding citizens of



the area. You are provided with four pregenerated characters, but are permitted to create your own. I chose the latter option since with enough patience, you can develop characters which far surpass the ones that are pregenerated. The character's abilities range from strength and dexterity to charisma and luck; there are eight abilities in all. You also need to determine the characters' nationalities, sexes, and a (hopefully) decent name. Lastly, the most important selection of all; the characters' skills. Skills range from operating specific weaponry to picking locks; from deciphering codes to healing injuries.

Be patient during character creation. Wait for all scores to be over ten points with an IQ above fifteen. Have each character possess a different strongpoint (strength, charisma, and so on). When selecting skills, give each character a different area of preference (thief, demolitions expert, bureaucrat and medic). And, do include characters of both sexes when creating your party; this is in case you need to explore the restrooms--men can't go *in* the Women's room. Your starting priorities should be the search for more characters and better firepower. Spend whatever experience points you earn initially, on IQ. There are some skills you won't discover until much later in the game and you'll need a much higher IQ to use them.

To spend skill points, you'll need to find a library; there's one in Needles and in the northeast section of Darwin. There is also a black market in southwest Darwin—but be careful; Darwin's street thugs look like middle eastern terrorists and they all carry submachine guns. The robotic police have almost as much respect for you as the street thugs so shoot them on sight. Finally, do yourself and your party a favor and look for Christina in downtown Needles. She'll add a lot of firepower to your team.

The scope of the game is basically confined to the southwestern United States. Unlike most games of this nature, there is no set goal...at least that's how it appears. In reality, Wasteland is a series of small adventures that lead up to a grand plot. The types of scenarios present within the game include freeing a town from the grip of a strongly armed roadgang, killing off irradiated bunny rabbits, seeking out and destroying the source of a blood cult and searching the sewers of Vegas for a disassembled cyborg.

All I can offer you here, is advice, for it is not within this writer's purview to distribute the answers throughout this review. To do so would most certainly spoil the feel of the game. If you feel you absolutely need the answers, don't be so cheap and spend the ten bucks for the cluebook. In fact, you might actually need the book towards the end of the game, and it is, in itself, an interesting read.

I greatly enjoyed playing Wasteland. After playing a great many fantasy games it was a nice change of pace to be using laser cannons instead of bows and arrows and flamethrowers in place of fireballs.

Wasteland is distributed by Electronic Arts, a company known for its excellence. It retails for about forty dollars is available in Apple and Commodore 64 versions, and is well worth the cost.

Good luck and happy Snipe hunting.

—Keith A.D. Post

Heard Around the Inn

Computer industry news: By now, you should be aware that Apple has released a completely new Apple IIC, called the IIC Plus. This computer features a built-in 3.5" drive that will require software designed for it. At press time, there were very few Apple II games which were available for this new system, so if you are considering getting one for the holidays, consider getting an optional 5 1/4" external drive as well. In the future, Red Dagger Inn will provide information about which games will be packaged with the proper disks for the IIC Plus. Apple has also released their new 4.0 system disks, beginning with the IIGS version. At this time, no game manufacturer has experienced any problems with running older games under the new system. If you find any, please write to the Red Dagger Inn, and we'll investigate.

Exciting reviews in our future will take a look at the new lines of games from Infocom and Mindscape, and more games designed for the Macintosh. And, since you asked, reviewers at the Red Dagger Inn use an Amiga 1000 for Amiga games, a Compaq Portable for MS-DOS, a Commodore 128, an Apple IIe, a Macintosh Plus, and a Mac II. Atari machines are being considered, as is some sort of 386 machine with a VGA monitor. If you have any suggestions, or care to tell us about your favorite games and systems, or the problems you've had with the same, you can write to us c/o Gateways, JAF Box 965, New York, NY 10116. We'd love to hear from you.

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EPIC, INC. — PART II:

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 Part I (*Gateways* #10) of *Epic, Inc.* we learned all about the origins of role-playing games, including the first organized wargames and the creation of the first 4 and 12 sided dice. We saw the rise of *Dungeons and Dragons*, the beginning of the fantasy miniatures industry, and the flood of early games such as *Traveler*, *Runequest* and *Gamma World*. However, just as the RPG industry seemed to hit its stride, an event was to occur that would establish an image of RPGs that the industry has been trying to play down since. What happens when a hot fad begins to throw off sparks? Someone gets burned...

The Party's Over

In August 1979, James Egbert, a highly intelligent 16-year-old, disappeared from the Michigan State campus where he was a student. What grabbed the nation's attention, and for all the wrong reasons, were the seemingly weird circumstances surrounding his disappearance. Egbert, whom friends had described as "obsessed with *Dungeons and Dragons*", had officials convinced he had become so absorbed in the game as to be submerged in his game persona, after they found a map of the steam tunnels under the campus drawn out as a dungeon. An extensive search of the tunnels turned up nothing, and even when Egbert showed up a few weeks later in Texas and revealed that he just had to get away from all the pressure he was under from his family and school, the notion that *D&D* was responsible for his behavior remained.

This entire unfortunate incident became the basis for a highly exploitive novel by Rona Jaffe entitled *Mazes and Monsters* (this work of pure fiction, has in itself been misconstrued as a factual account to this day!), which then slid further down the

scale of good taste and became an exploitive TV movie, which of course got good ratings and was seen by more people than played RPGs at the time. While it gave a black eye to role-playing games in general, it also added fuel to the growing fire with which the newly resurrected religious right-wing was preparing to burn all ungodly books, albums and games, of which *D&D* and the RPG ilk figured prominently. The Moral Majority and other religious organizations heavily opposed the many rulebooks which contained descriptions of gods, demons, devils, witches and other icons of good and evil pulled from classical mythology and literature. While their arguments were one-sided, biased, bombastic, dogmatic, and generally annoying rhetoric, they did stir up some trouble for a time.

Controversy swirled around RPGs as parent and teacher groups took sides on whether the games were harmful to kids, absorbing too much of their time, money, and real social interaction, or a boon to their education as it generated increased interest in math, literature, and over-all learning. *D&D* also took the rap for less savory material that was exploiting the current craze, and often things were connected to the largest RPG that were not condoned by TSR.

Trouble was not only outside the doors of the industry, but also within. Although there were some companies and individuals who jumped on the money wagon and exploited the market with cheap products, most of the companies were started by people who knew they wanted to make games, but who didn't know how to run a business. "The running line in this business was that a company had a lifespan of--at most--five years, and then self-destructed," said Kevin Siembieda of Palladium Books. Many small companies such as Hero Games and Judges'

Guild collapsed under mismanagement, unnecessary overhead, and their own excesses. It wasn't just the small companies which were having problems either. Even "old giants" like TSR and SPI were in trouble, and their fates would greatly affect the rest of the industry. For all its strengths and depth, the RPG industry had been riding the wave that the *D&D* fad had started. It is a well-observed occurrence that any large trend in America has peaked and is on its way out when it gets its own Saturday morning TV show. (Witness the *Smurfs*, pro-wrestling, and the *Ghostbusters*. The sole exception to this rule of thumb was the *Star Trek* cartoon.)

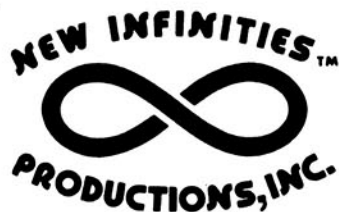
In 1982, it was announced that there was to be an animated *Dungeons & Dragons* for Saturday morning starting the next year.

Playing For Keeps

When TSR began in 1973, it had three employees who drew no salary, and it barely paid its bills. In 1982, TSR employed over 300 people, had just been picked up by Random House for national and international distribution in major book and department stores, and grossed over 25 million in annual sales. The stakes had become very large indeed.

For a number of years, Brian Blume and his brother Kevin had sharply disagreed with Gary Gygax on how the company ought to be run. While Gygax was president of the board, the Blume Brothers held the controlling share of stock, and clashes about policy and direction were frequent. The problem was "solved" in 1981 when the rest of the board elected Gygax head of the new *Dungeons & Dragons* Entertainment division in California, effectively removing him from any direct control of TSR. As Gary put it, "As the money started to flow in, I was eased out."

In other areas, the big companies — Avalon Hill and SPI — had finally gotten into the RPG game with releases of their own. Avalon Hill had the poorly done *Powers & Perils*, and Chaosium's *RuneQuest*, which Greg Stafford was distributing through AH. SPI had one of their better designers (Eric Goldberg) design *DragonQuest*, and while that game did well with winning awards and gathering a following, it wasn't enough to solve SPI's cash flow problems. What happened then would have long term effects on the field.



Looking to TSR for help, SPI took out a short term loan after putting their assets up for collateral. In what was a legal but unethical move, TSR called in the loan in the shortest allowable time, and then took control of SPI's assets when they couldn't pay the entire amount. The seizure effectively wiped out the third largest gaming company, and alienated TSR from most of the industry. TSR offered to rebuild and reestablish SPI as a company, relocating it in Wisconsin. Rather than move, and refusing to work with the Brothers Blume on any further deals, the majority of the SPI staff left and joined up with their old rivals, Avalon Hill, to begin a new role-playing division: Victory Games. In a series of poorly judged moves, TSR killed off SPI's best money makers, including *DragonQuest*, and allowed several important licensed products to revert back to the original owners. It was a decision that would eventually mean the loss of millions in revenue for TSR.

When Gygax returned from the coast in 1983, he found the company he had formed on the verge of collapse. In trying to save it, he discovered that he was no longer able to control the corporate entity known as TSR; Gygax was forced to admit that "It was a many tentacled creature that had too many tentacles out of control." That year, Gygax brought in Lorraine Williams to get the company back on line. In the end, her efforts

were successful, but her methods left Gygax on the outside again. Williams made arrangements to purchase the Blumes' shares of stock, giving her control of the company. Brian and Kevin Blume soon left after that. She sold off a large number of properties and non-gaming assets and, in a series of five "belt-tightening moves" — or purges, depending on how one looked at it — she reduced the number of employees from over 320 to just over 100. Gygax, however, remained dissatisfied, and went to court to regain control of the company, change its name to New Infinities, and take the whole thing public. "Eventually," said Gygax, "all parties settled out of court, with the end result being that I sold all my stock back to TSR, and severed all ties with my company."

And while this lofty battle was fought for control of the biggest game company, some of the smallest companies were about to take everybody in an all new direction.

The Young Turks

Up until the eighties, virtually every role-playing game was set in a generic, archetypical milieu which encompassed the ideas of a particular genre, such as science fiction or fantasy, or was set in a world of the creators' own devising. While the games drew heavily from film and literature, no one game was based on the works of a single already published author, as was sometimes done with board-games and a few war games. When this changed, so did the face of the RPG industry.

When TSR acquired SPI, they also acquired the rights that SPI had owned at the time to create games based on Robert Howard's *Conan*, *Star Trek*, and the jewel in the fantasy lit crown, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Through poor judgement, TSR opted out on using the rights to both *Star Trek* and *Lord of the Rings*, and they were released on the market again for sale. Within almost no time, two small struggling RPG companies picked the licensing to each and soon met with success.

Ross Babcock and Jordan Weisman had been playing wargames and RPGs for several years in Chicago. Their favorite was *Traveller*, and for

some time they had been doing detailed deck plans of spaceships to use in their games. In 1980, they decided to start publishing these charts under the name FASA (which stood for Freedomia Aeronautics Space Administration, the name Weisman had jokingly given a social club he and a few other friends had started). "Within a short time, we had put out several wargames, and more *Traveller* aids, but FASA was not as yet self-sufficient," said Ross Babcock. Then in 1982, they acquired the rights to *Star Trek*. It was an immediate success. The next year they released *Battledroids*, a wargame depicting combat between giant robots, then renamed it *BattleTech* the following year and added elements of role-playing. Through both astute awareness of the market, and good fortune, *BattleTech* was able to capitalize on the most recent toy craze at that time, *The Transformers*, and became one of the biggest selling games in years. Within a short time, FASA had firmly established itself as a quality-minded and successful company.



Meanwhile down south, a large group of game players at the University of Virginia decided to begin publishing their own sets of rules and game modules. Bruce Niedlinger, Pete Fenlon, Rick Britton, Charlton Coleman, Kurt Fischer, and Terry Amthor began Iron Crown Enterprises in May of 1980 after taking several modules around to TSR and other companies without success. The group put out its first set of games rules, *Arms Law*, to solve what they saw as a need for a better gaming system. Coleman has said that their rules and their company came about because of reactions to the state of the industry at that time. "Although TSR dominated the market, they were not doing so in the best way. The number of gamers was growing at an increasing rate, but many discovered TSR's products unsatisfying and had been looking elsewhere. I.C.E. began to fill this desire for a heroic fantasy gaming system which was different than D&D." I.C.E. found

some success with the further releases of **Claw Law**, **Spell Law**, and **Character Law**. They also gathered a reputation for putting out the most meticulous, realistic, detailed, and playable rules on the market. I.C.E.'s big break came in 1982, when they picked up the rights to **Lord of The Rings**. They went after it with the same relish for detail and accuracy that they lavished on their other products. The choice of Iron Crown for **Lord Of The Rings** was fortuitous in light of the pickiness of Tolkien nuts for accuracy, and Tolkien's reputation for being thorough. "And Tolkien," said Coleman, "was nothing but thorough." Doing a licensed product, they discovered, was a lot more challenging than a free and original world. Consistency was needed in a licensed world, whereas a free world could be more loose and irregular. This was a sentiment many other designers of licensed products concurred with. A boxed edition of **Lord of the Rings** was soon out in shops, and volumes of supplements detailing every square inch of *Middle-Earth* followed. I.C.E. found that the Tolkien name opened doors in distribution, and Iron Crown products were soon being marketed internationally. The **Middle-Earth System** found great success in England as well as in America, and I.C.E. found a very comfortable niche with it.

Another company known for producing games of incredible detail was also just beginning to grow during this time. Designer Steve Jackson had worked for a small wargaming company, Metagaming, since the mid-seventies. By the early '80's, Jackson had broken away from the wargaming company, and begun his own firm, SJ Games. While he still produced wargames, they had a role-playing slant to them. In 1981, SJ Games released a small pocket-sized plastic box that held the board game **Car Wars**. This witty game allowed players to arm their cars with a variety of weapons and blast other drivers off the road. The idea was popular and within a short time, there were a host of supplements to the game. The game proved even more popular, and AADA (American AutoDuelist Association) clubs sprang up around the country. SJ Games became Steve Jackson Games, and released a number of the

wargames that Jackson had bought back from Metagaming. One game he could not get back was his fantasy RPG he had developed in the late 70's, **The Fantasy Trip**, so Jackson came up with the **Generic Universal Role-Playing System** (GURPS) that could cover all genres. Although GURPS has been successful, it has been **Car Wars** which put Steve Jackson and his company on the map.

The marketing of games was beginning to change. Not only were licensed products being more prominent, but the packaging was beginning to appear in different forms. Virtually every game released since 1973 had followed Avalon Hill's lead and came out in a box. In 1981, however, Kevin Siembieda released **Mechanoids**, and soon after that, the **Palladium Game** as a softcover, square-bound trade paperback. While distributors told him it wouldn't work — the games didn't have dice with them, and they weren't in a box — the different format found success. "Players," Siembieda said, "didn't need any more dice. They had truckloads of dice."

Siembieda was already somewhat known in the RPG field, for, in the seventies, he had done a large volume of illustration work for Judges' Guild. In 1978, he and a group of friends started the Detroit Gaming Center in a large warehouse that "leaked heat like a sieve", but provided a meeting and playing space for hundreds of gamers in the Detroit area. Kevin began running a D&D campaign, *The Palladium of Desires*, that soon mutated into his own set of rules, different from the TSR product. He found, with the large number of people playing his campaign on any one night, he had to come up with his own system that could allow play by both small groups of players and large mobs. In 1980, he self-produced a game called **Mechanoids**. The next year he and a friend began to produce paperback reference books of actual medieval weapons, armor, and castles for people who had been playing fantasy RPG's and still didn't know what a broadsword looked like and the game-playing public snapped them up. Under the prodding of friends, Siembieda finally published his set of rules out of Palladium Games in 1984. In 1986, Paladium

acquired permission to put out a game based on the wildfire successful comic book **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**, and established themselves as one of the better small companies in the industry.

Still further changes were occurring in the industry during the early 80's. Until this time, the majority of game settings had either been Heroic Fantasy set in a pre-industrial world, or Science Fiction. While there were some games for other genres, such as the wild west (**Boot Hill**), modern-day espionage (**Top Secret; Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes**), and superheroes (**2044, Villians and Vigilantes**), none met with overwhelming success. The mainstay moneymakers of the business were **Sword and Sorcery**, and **Science Fiction**. Around 1981, a small company called Hero Games came out with a set of superhero rules entitled **Champions**. For such a small company, sales went through the roof. For the first time, the other companies saw that an RPG could be set in milieus other than deep space and deep dungeons and make good money. Several designers and game people point out that the field was ready for a change, and with TSR and Avalon Hill unwilling to change at first, and SPI unable to change, it was up to the small companies to bring about this new direction. Since then, dozens of games have been released with different themes in such areas as **Horror** (**Call of Cthulu, Beyond the Supernatural**), **cartoons** (**Toon, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**), **Adventure** (**Indiana Jones, Ninjas and Superspies, James Bond**), **Timetravel** (**Timemasters**), **Postwar Civilization** (**Twilight 2000, Car Wars**), **Comic Books** (**Marvel Superheroes RPG, DC Heroes**) and even **Humor** (**Ghostbusters, Paranoia**). The other big change was the sudden influx of licensed products onto the market which, in the case of I.C.E. and FASA, showed that the right licensed product could make a company. TSR had learned its lesson, and now went after licensed products too. Relations between TSR and the rest of the game companies and distributors had also begun to ease, and the general animosity towards them had begun to evaporate. Much of the arrogance and prob-

lems had disappeared with the change in command, and TSR was no longer perceived as the bully on the block.

As companies and games became more diversified, new blood and breath flowed into the industry and proved that, even though the initial explosion of the 70's was long over, a new type of business had established itself as here to stay. Childhood was over, and other changes were in store as role-playing matured.

Tummy Tucks & Facelifts

In the early days of role-playing, survival naturally took precedent over packaging. Since professional artists could not be hired, illustrations were done by friends of the game designer, or game players who enjoyed drawing. Printing was passed over in favor of Xerox copies or mimeographs. Color was limited, if it was used at all. Distribution was strange and unpredictable, and getting anything out to any one market was almost a crapshoot — roll the games out and see where they showed up. With each new year, each new company, each newly released or re-released edition of a game, adjustments were made, corrections added, and packaging planned. With constant feedback and extensive playtesting by the gamers in the field, rules were revised, expanded, streamlined, or trashed entirely.

Companies began to realize that good art and sharp packaging helped to sell a game, though they didn't follow their own advice completely until well into the 80's. While TSR took a very long time to come about, the younger companies starting up in the first part of the decade tried to come out with good looking work from the very start. When FASA got hold of *Star Trek*, they knew they had to release a sharp package to keep their reputation, and went out and spent the extra money on getting a professional painter to do the cover art. I.C.E. knew they were up against the Brothers Hildebrandt in people's visual idea of what Tolkien's *Middle-Earth* looked like, so as soon as they could afford to they hired an incredible European illustrator, Angus McBride, to do a majority of the covers for their releases.

Change was in the air, and the

larger companies followed suit, re-releasing their products with all new packaging. It wasn't just the look of the games which was changing, either.

The contents between the covers were getting better all the time. Some of the best designers had been in the business for 20 years, and had gotten quite good at what they did. The industry standards were slowly but surely evolving to a professional level with each release.

In many cases, established games were redone with new, improved rules, rules that had over a decade to age and mature. *D&D* had already split into two games, and in 1986 it was announced that the entire *AD&D* system was to be overhauled over the next few years. GDW took all of the things it had learned about *Traveller* and released *Megatraveller*, which took place in an Imperium at civil war, and *Traveller 2300* (since renamed *2300 AD*) which, with a different game system, explored the early days of man's expansion into his galaxy. *RuneQuest* was revised and repackaged when Avalon Hill began to distribute it. Even *White Bear and Red Moon* was revised, changing its name to *Dragon's Pass*.



The very nature of the role-playing game has changed. Games such as Chaosium's *Pendragon*, which takes place in the Arthurian realm of *Camelot*, placed a heavy accent on role-playing and character building, and had very little direct melee and combat. FASA had discovered that the most successful releases were those which were a hybrid of wargaming and role-playing, allowing the accent to be placed where the individual players wanted to place it. This year Chaosium plans to release the *Prince Valiant* game, an RPG which almost completely removes the wargame influence; dice are not even used in the game!

More changes were in store. While *Dungeons & Dragons* had never been set in any one world, TSR decided it now should be. In 1985,

TSR began to work on another world, Krynn, that would be the locale of a multi-novel/ multi-module *AD&D* adventure, and in 1986, began to release *D&D* adventures set in a world now being detailed in a series of modules called *Gazetteers*. *AD&D* became the major system attached to Ed Greenwood's *Forgotten Realms*. Although *D&D* had started out in 'Never-Never Land', by 1987, TSR had announced there were only three "official" worlds where all subsequent releases would be positioned. The circle had closed, and the younger companies who came into existence because of TSR and GDW were now setting the pace and direction the larger firms were following.

The New Whey

Today, the role-playing industry has matured and stabilized, establishing itself as something here to stay. While calling something which relies so much on imagination and open-mindedness an "industry" seems almost contradictory, it is in fact, fairly accurate. The companies which survived, and the designers who went through companies which did not survive, have infinitely more business savvy than when they first began. The games, and the thinking behind the games, have become extremely refined and carefully thought out in the past 15 years. While critics say that much of the spontaneity has evaporated in the corporate atmosphere, others point out that many more mistakes are avoided at the same time. It is all part of the game's natural path of evolution.

The role-playing game itself has evolved into something very different from its roots. While originally very open-ended with rules of a more suggestive nature, playable with "just paper and pencil", it is now carefully planned, though with a flexibility factor built in, based on already proven works of film and literature, and presented in slick, smart looking packages with volumes of support material. While the imagination has never been supplanted as the most important aspect of the game, nothing beats great illustration and good design to stimulate that imagination. Excellent sam

continued on pg.62

The Effects of Magic on the Environment

The Second in a Series of Gaming Essays

by Gary Gygax

Because of the dominance of first the **Chainmail Fantasy Supplement**, then the **Dungeons & Dragons** game, and now the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** game, all approaches to fantasy role-playing games depict a vaguely medieval world setting which is different from that of history principally because of magic and monsters. I believe this to be a serious flaw. Furthermore, this flaw extends to all of the major works of fiction which suggest a milieu which is little more than a personalized view of myth and legend, be it of European nature or more exotic sort such as Arabian, Indian, or Chinese. If magic were very rare or highly uncertain save when practiced by a handful of individuals, then these settings might hold true. However, role-playing games and fiction of this type of fiction both seem to lean towards powerful, active, and widespread magic as part of normal life. Why? I cannot speak for fantasy fiction, but the shape of gaming is most certainly that which I gave to it through the works cited above. Because I based my work on myth, legend and authored fantasy fiction, I fell into the trap which seems now to have its jaws clamped fast upon the whole genre. I propose now to begin the process of releasing the grip of unimaginative and illogical thinking which has held players painfully and mercifully immobile in its twin fangs—the "facts" of fantasy literature and the "laws" of fantasy role-playing game systems.

In order to halt attacks from those who believe the matter to be sacred, and in order to explain it to all others, I admit to my own role in starting the erroneous assumptions and line of reasoning which followed. But in the past ten years, I have devoted much time to the ongoing study of medieval history, magic and the occult, and all the rest which goes into the creation of a fantasy milieu. In fact, I have considered a new FRPG system since the completion of the **Dungeon Masters Guide** in 1979. However, the demands of business and creative production prevented further development of any new game system. In 1986, there occurred a change which enabled me to devote more attention to the matter; the first portions of this are only now forthcoming.

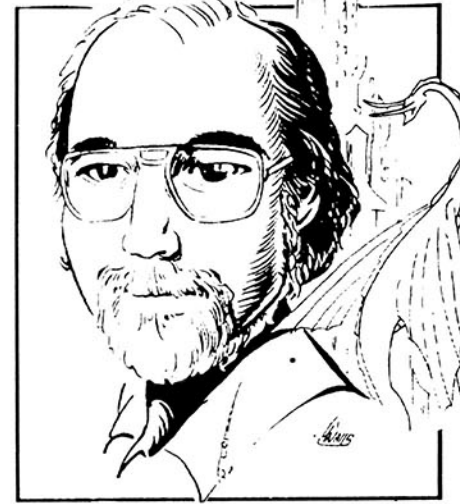
The **Epic Of Yarth Fantasy Milieu** is in the gaming laboratory from which my new creative works grow. The setting is one which combines the old (my original fantasy game campaign which developed in 1972) with the new (those developments made after the more than a decade of experience). It was through the development of Yarth's milieu that all of what had troubled me for so long suddenly sprang forth, starkly apparent. The premise upon which most of FRPG gaming is based, (and thus most of its major milieus), is wrong. Magic works, in FRPGs. Its impact, however, is only allowed to influence those portions of the game which center around and effect the mythic quest, the

heroic characters who are interacting with the game milieu (the players), and their enemies. Otherwise the whole of the setting is a medieval one which differs very little from the historical, or else an interpretation of of some authored myths

based on some general premise. The premise that magic is limited and would effect mankind in so limited a manner as indicated is absolutely wrong.

Working magic, uncommon possibly, but nevertheless powerful and spread throughout society, would effect all things. That is, magic would influence culture, economics, and politics, just as science and technology have an impact on these areas in actual fact. Of secondary importance, is the historical nature of the fantasy milieu. That is, there are forces at work which will move the cosmos and the world setting along a route which continues at a pace which is inexorable; events might be influenced by the mythic heroes of the game, but they will proceed in one way or another. There is no complete vacuum, nor even a partial one, surrounding the player characters. Things move, unfold, and change regardless of existence, and at best the participants can influence the course of future happenings in a favorable manner. Connected with this second consideration is that of developmental thinking and processes. This is the link which connects us to the initial truism that active magic would affect all facets of life.

All major game systems assume that ancient myths and legends were reflections of a reality. They also allow the stream of time to progress relatively unhindered until arriving at a point somewhere between the Ninth Century and the Fifteenth. Suddenly time is halted. This is not illogical, for at about that time scientific thinking began to move mankind towards reason and away from superstition. Of course, there was much enlightened thinking in Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, and China, for example, well before the advent of Charlemagne and the high Middle Ages. Such is generally disregarded, though, because chivalry and feudalism weren't in flower then, nor would the bulk of the myths and legends apply. Similarly, some of the material for gaming draws on the Renaissance, because of its romantic and spectacular appeal. The Seventeenth Century rapier, for instance, a weapon developed only when armor was no longer generally useful because of advances in missile weapon technology, is constantly thrust upon us as one which should have



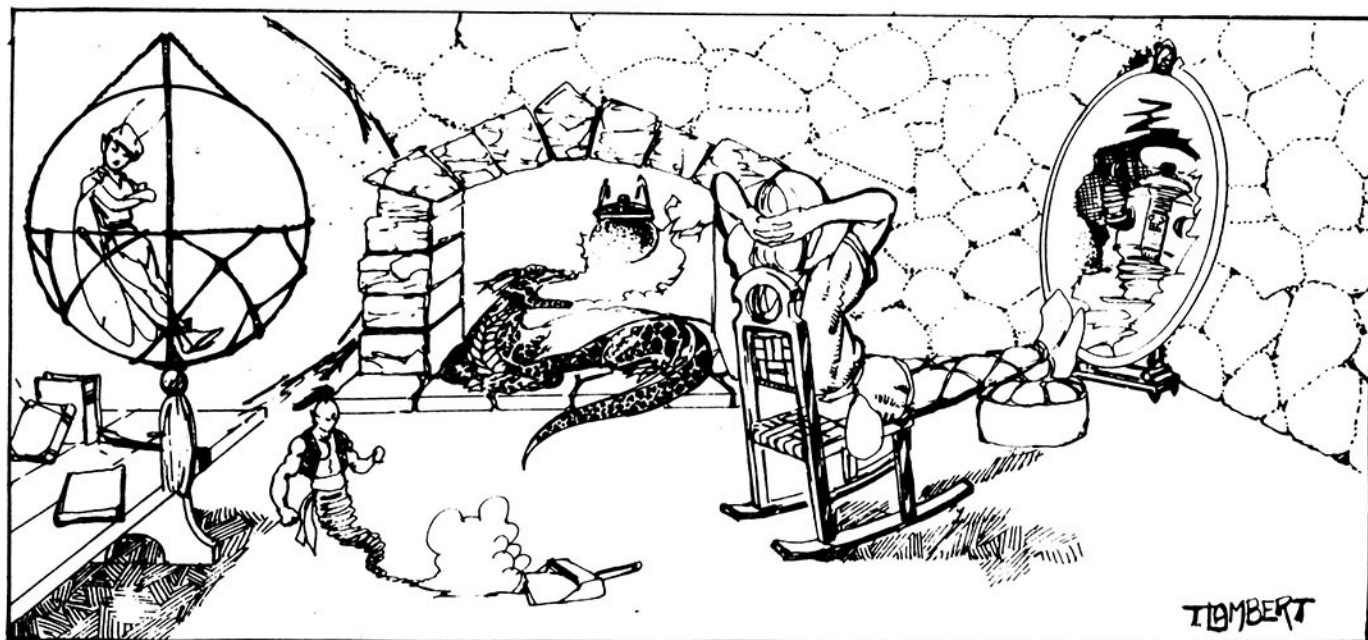
merit in the FRPG milieu. The point is, of course, that the fantasy milieu accepts continuing usage of armor and generally rejects gunpowder. (Yes, I intended both of those puns...sorry.) In fact the whole of all FRPGs and their milieus are riddled with anachronisms.

No one can deny that there was change, (both advancement and decline) over the millenia between mankind's first recording of events and the Medieval period. Setting aside the empirical thinking and scientific growth which began to dominate our history from the Renaissance onwards, it cannot be rationally assumed that mankind would then have remained fixed in a society which unalteringly reflected things as they were in 1525, let us say, even if that particular 1525 was without gunpowder. Creation, invention, and innovation exist in mankind. Change, advancements in many areas, would most certainly occur and remain, regardless of barbarian incursions, religious and cultural differences and wars, and all the rest which beset our world and brought devastation and decline. As each threat spent itself, there was a resurgence in life, and change brought advancement to the fore again. Unless the game milieu postulated mindless inhabitants, then, there must be provision for the structuring of the changes which will occur over time. Finally, when the force of magic is brought into consideration, and magic as a power which must have existed and been employed for millennia, a whole new prospective emerges. This brings us back to the initial point. The flaw, which exists in many role-playing games and campaign milieus, is the overlooking of magic as a general influence on all of the world and its inhabitants. Furthermore, I contend that unless something is done to rectify the error, the whole fantasy role-playing game genre will suffer serious consequences, the worst of which will be eventual disregard as a quaint mode of entertainment popular in a bygone age when childishness, unsophistication, and a desire to pretend for awhile made otherwise intelligent people forget skepticism and reality for a time — sort of like old-fashioned fairy tales, cartoons, and TV sitcoms. Before you scoff at that assertion, consider the intellect of the typical FRPG enthusiast. How long can it be gulled and entertained by fairy tales retold? If one ponders the changes in approach from the initial

Dungeons & Dragons Game approach and the "Disneyland" dungeon to the current quest after more realism and more meaningful role-playing, there can be no denying the evidence of change and questioning and disaffection. The participants are seeking something, and not finding it in the "realisms" of greater complexities and complications or the practices of requiring acting. Therefore, they gravitate away from fantasy towards some other form of role-playing game or seek other forms of entertainment and amusement entirely.

There must be a transition, and it must begin soon. Referring again to my own fantasy milieu, I can say that it is at best a vehicle for transition in that it does not reflect a carefully reasoned world in which the force of magic has actively shaped history for millennia. The **Epic of Yarth Fantasy Milieu** does assume the great impact of magic in some portions, while in others it adheres to the flawed concept of a basically medieval world culture. It is offered as a model for consideration by the Game Master in hopes it will assist others in their restructuring of of any campaign milieu, a revamping which is absolutely necessary if the fantasy role-playing genre is to remain vital and growing. The sheer magnitude of the project can be such that one might devote years of study and effort to its development and still not arrive at a construction of acceptable nature. I have had a few years and little time within them to create the structure which is needed. However, the scope of this undertaking is so vast that it needs many knowledgeable individuals working towards its completion. But we need to air the concept now, to provide not only game participants, but game designers with the opportunity to ponder the matter.

The first part of this monumental task is to provide the campaign milieu with a "past". A careful study of history from the first Pharaohs to the high Middle Ages must be accomplished, contemplating the ongoing effects of magic on the cultural, economic, and political events which are recorded. It is then probable that some added centuries of fantasy "history" will have to be constructed from that work, so as to move the game and campaign milieu into a "when" which is both reasonable and loosely parallel to our own "when". There is perhaps yet another step, a progression along the



stream of time of the FRPG milieu; that is the future "when", the future we predict and postulate for ourselves and Earth in the coming centuries. That presents the task in broad strokes.

I will not deal with the details of impact upon game construction, nor will it be meaningful here to detail all of the magical effects in each facet of life. Instead, I will define the aspects of life which should reflect the presence of magic as an active aspect of a culture.

Culture in this regard means those things which surround life in the society and are not of economic or political sort. What we like to eat, what we wear, the utensils and furnishings of the home, the dwelling itself, how we raise our children, educate them and amuse them and ourselves are all part of the general culture of a society. Ethical, moral, and religious values are part of that culture. Thus we must study both beliefs and things. The same is true of economic considerations. Along with culture and politics, economics forms the whole of human existence in terms of agriculture in its broadest sense, commerce, industry and trade. It means entrepreneurial undertakings, finance, and unions (associations, guilds, societies, etc.). Finally the political must be considered. What classes exist, what rights, laws, governments and states. Whatever divisions are selected within the three general classifications, the impact of magic (as well as the existence of magical creatures and beings) must be determined from the imagined time of the first appearance of magic to the "when" of the game milieu and possibly beyond into a future.

There are absolutes which must be preserved, since they are part of the game reality. As soon as the game sets forth its premises and systems, it determines a degree of reality. For instance, the FRPG states that there are fighting men such as knights, and barbaric raiders to oppose them, in a feudalistic

society. Regardless of what *might* have happened in ancient times due to the existence of working magic and magical monsters, only those events which can logically lead to the eventual emergence of knights, raiders and feudalism *can* be acceptable in the construction of the "history" of the magical cosmos. Because we are constructing role-playing game systems, it is fair to set down such absolute facts first, and then logically support these conclusions through rationalization of the make-believe history. It is therefore necessary to construct the game model with great care and as few facts as possible until the historical model can be worked out.

If the conceptual flaw upon which the structure of fantasy role-playing is based and examined and rejected, then it will be possible to move onto the study of the possible and probable impact of magic on the human condition from ancient to modern "time". Using the world model developed so far, the designer/author will be far better equipped to construct a game system and/or campaign expression of a game system which will reflect the "historical" and "actual" facts and realities of their alternate world, be it singular or one which exists in the infinity of the universe. The sweeping changes and reasonable occurrences should lead to a creation of the new rules, rules systems, and milieu, i.e. new fantasy role-playing games with realism and logic which are "provable" and reflect actual differences in physical laws, society, and life in all of its forms.

Next issue: Gary Gygax takes world designers step by step through the incredible process of building a universe that has always known magic! Where do magic users come from? How many should there be? What kind of power would they have over the world? Find out in issue #12 of *Gateways*.

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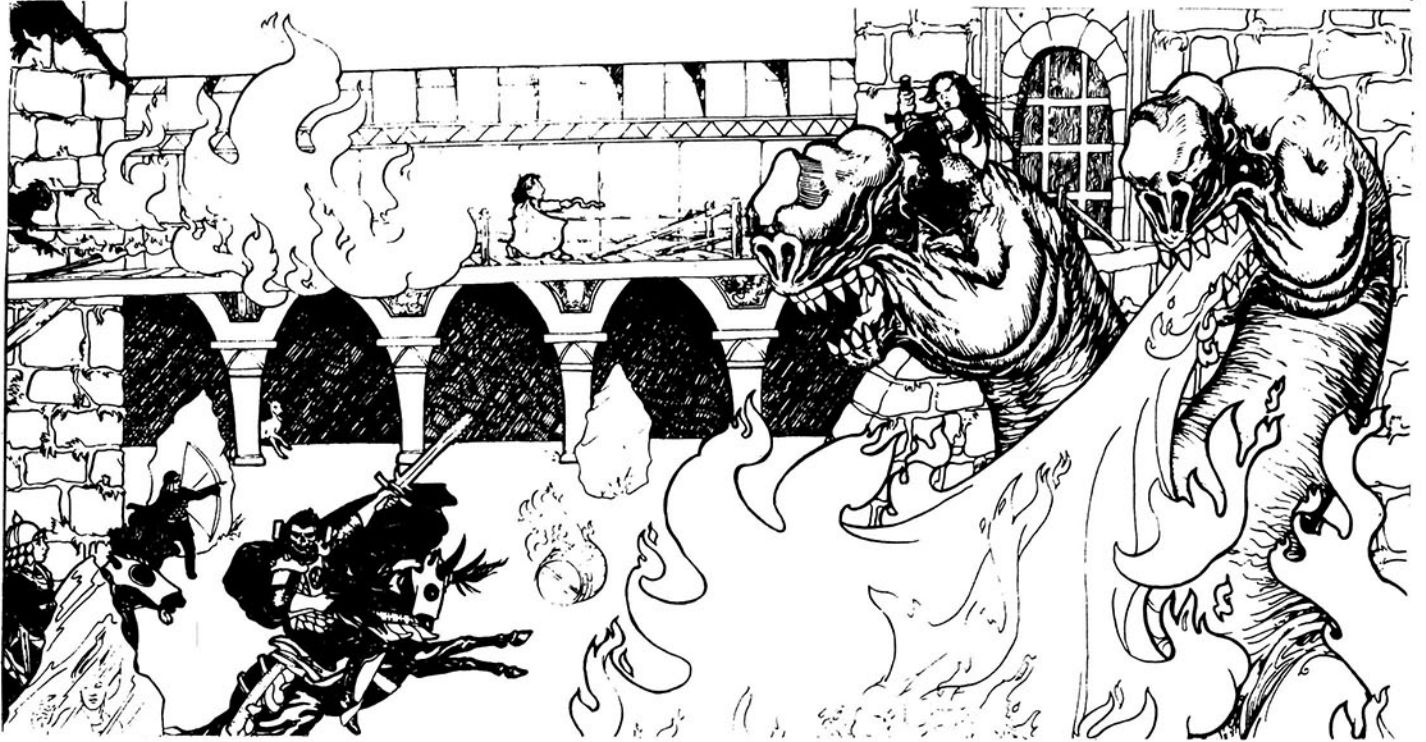
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Madmartigan's Secrets

A Review of the Willow Sourcebook

Barbara Makransky



Willow was a wonderful film whose epic status was truncated in the editing room, and whose success was marred by the particularly meager response of an audience who arrived with mixed expectations. *The Willow Sourcebook* is a truly charming and unexpectedly informative volume which is being marred by the limited success of the movie and the various products it engendered.

Written by Allen Varney, the *Willow Sourcebook* reads very much like a child's story book. Using the lilting tone found in many fairy tales, it tells the stories behind the characters found in the movie. All the featured characters from are in here; everyone from Queen Bavmorda, to the lowliest *Nelwyn* farmer, with at least a few paragraphs detailing such interesting facts as what adventures they've had before the start of the movie, and how they got to that point. Even such seeming trivialities as the time of year that the average *Nelwyn* couple gets married.

It is exactly this kind of trivia that makes this book so worthwhile. It explains nearly everything the movie could not in the short amount of time a movie is allowed to run. For example: *Madmartigan* is, or was at one time, a Knight of Galadoorn; Bavmorda originally intended for Sorsha to follow in her mother's footsteps; and it was only when *Willow* fell out of a tree and into her lap that *Katya* realized that it was *Willow* she'd marry. The book is filled with tidbits of this type and all make for very enlightening reading.

At the end of each chapter is a section called *Gaming Notes*. This is just one of the many nice things about this book. Each of these sections outlines a particular character's stats and particular talents; these can be used to adapt the characters for use in the role-playing game of your choice, and generally helps the reader understand exactly how and why the character can do all those neat things.

Another nice thing about this book can be found at the very beginning. In the introduction you can find a very credible and perfectly understandable explanation of what role-playing really is. It defines the meanings of every statistic as well as other words which are commonly left unexplained — dice being one of those words and 'Game Master' being another. This is definitely a plus for the beginning gamer.

Another thing I found to be interesting was the fact that the use of magic is explained in depth; even down to the inclusion of some basic spells. Varney also tells us how many types of magic there are, as well as who can use it. He also tells of the Druids who worked to help Bavmorda with her spells; it seems that there are actually two types; one a peace-loving forest-dwelling group, the other, led by an evil Druid, which came to be known as the *Brithemain* Druids, performed human sacrifices. The druids have since devolved through the years and are now somewhat inept.

The book is illustrated adequately throughout, with a special color insert of pictures taken from the movie. The

Notes from the Source

Willow Sourcebook Author Allen Varney Speaks...

...On Adapting a Script from Lucasfilm:

"Lucasfilm sent us a copy of the script. Each page of it has a big red serial number stamped across it so that if it ever shows up photocopied in some convention dealers room somewhere they'll know who to go to and pound on.

"We're [Eric Goldberg Associates and Tor Books] essentially writing it generically, making it useful for most any role-playing game system. The articles can be enjoyed even if you don't intend to use them in a game. It can be a general series of features on all of the places, people and things you see in the movie, all the monsters and so forth. We are including the gaming information kind of side-barred or put at the end of each article so that the gamers in the audience can find it easily. A lot of time was required because the source book, of necessity, had to generate a whole lot of original new material and, in fact, the reader is going to find a great amount of material in the sourcebook that isn't available anywhere else. It appears here for the first time. The whole history of *Madmatigan*, for instance. It's what they can't put in a movie, background information...exactly what you need for a role-playing campaign.

...On Story-telling and Campaign Creation:

Adventure games provide valuable instruction in socializing, in acting, and even, to some extent, education. But, by and large, I'm kind'a disappointed with a great many of the role-playing products in the industry because so many of them stress nothing but sheer volume of rules and a mentality that amounts to basically kill anything that moves and loot it for everything it carries. It's not the strength of role-playing in my view.

We're trying to get across a different viewpoint to those who haven't found the real intensity that can come with a role-playing experience...the idea of becoming a character in an actual story, with a plot, with goals, with adversaries that have other functions than just being sets of numbers to be killed, with greater rewards than just piles of magic trash and large numbers of gold pieces...a sense of atmosphere, a sense of setting a scene, providing an interesting situation and interesting non-player characters to interact with. That is the kind of virtue, those are the kinds of values that we like to convey in the products that we do. We think there are a lot of players out there who are missing out on one of the main experiences of a good role-playing campaign. In the *Willow Sourcebook*, we're attempting to emphasize that way of thinking... telling good Willow stories and not just 'here are some interesting Willow monsters to kill.' So, we're going into things like 'what makes a good Willow story,' 'what sort of values does it advance,' 'what are the characters like,' 'what is the setting like,' 'what sort of things are the characters out to accomplish.' We're hoping that this kind of 'what is' thinking can find some wider support.

— Alan J. Berkson



only bad thing about the insert was the fact that in a number of copies, the insert was placed in such a way that when the book is opened to them, those pages buckle somewhat along the binding. Hopefully, this was due to hasty binding and will be improved in future printings.

The art, however, is a different story. The pictures that illustrate each character are lifted directly from *The Willow Game* (*Gateways* #9) and while they aren't new, they have not lost any of their beauty in the translation. The rest of art which is scattered throughout the *Sourcebook* is a curious blend of beauty and homeliness. While most of the drawings are excellent, one or two of them appear to be badly out of proportion.

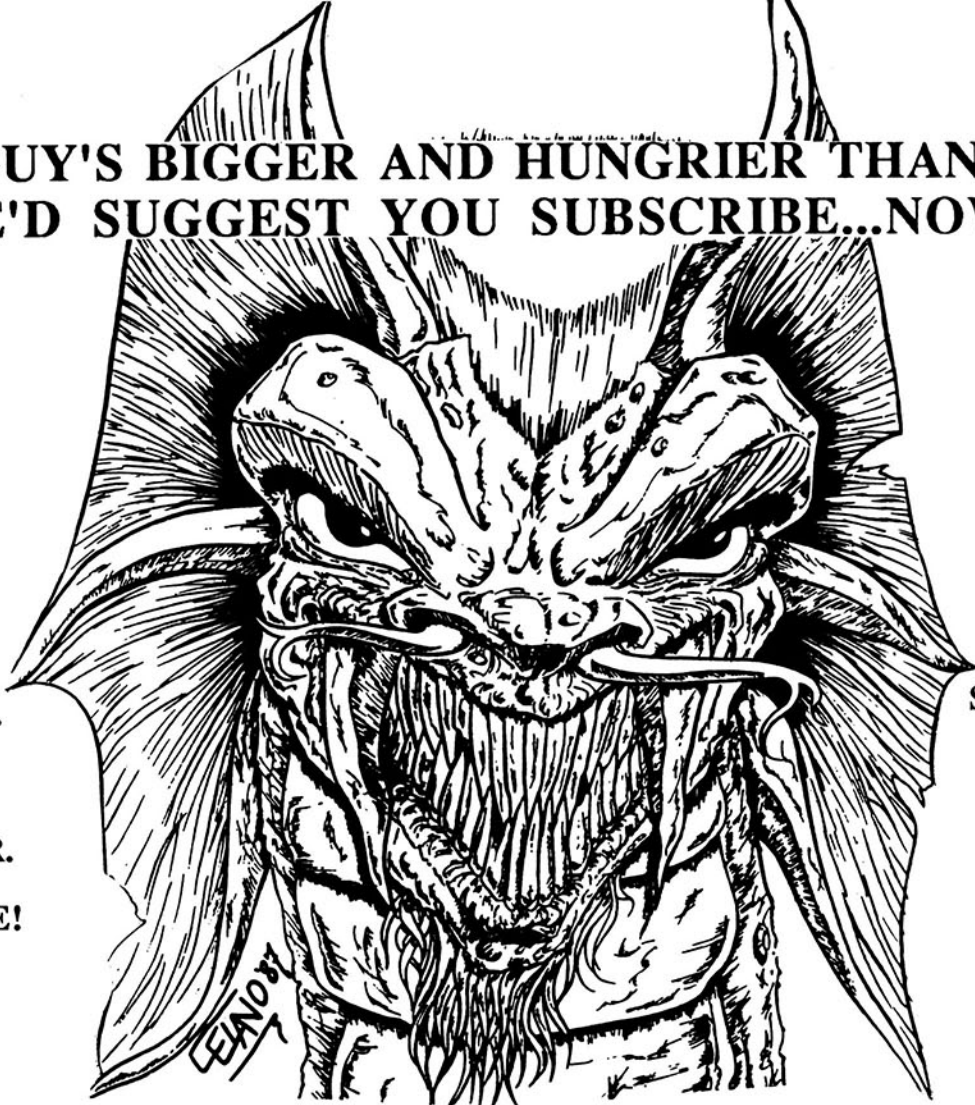
The world of Willow is also dealt with in some depth, and always in an entertaining and informative fashion. Everywhere Willow and his friends went during their adventure is included and in the very front of the book, a large map of *Nockmaar* takes up a full two pages. If you look you will find that there are other places in the world besides *Tir Asleen*. If you had a mind to, you could even visit a wonderful place called *Cashmere* where the inhabitants make fine silk and have a lot of money.

The *Willow Sourcebook* is a glossy, if lean, book. It runs 90 pages, which may not seem like much. However, it is quality here that counts and not quantity. The *Sourcebook* is filled with all the information that people who loved the movie have been curious about for months. While, it can be a valuable game aid and of use to all players of role-playing games, it can also serve as a child's nightly bedtime story. It's the kind of book that is suitable for everyone who was in some way fond of the film or simply fascinated by the world that the film only hinted at. As such, it is a well made and valuable reference.



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Sound-Screen

The Audio Visual Multiverse

Jack Trainman

Welcome to *Sound-Screen*, a new column for *Gateways Magazine* which will focus on the multitude of fictional universes — both new and familiar — now available on vinyl, disc, cassette and videotape. Why an audio-visual column in a magazine which focuses on adventure gaming? Because good Game Mastering, which means good story-telling, requires a curiosity and enthusiasm for all forms of media. *Gateways* will now be increasing its multi-media coverage of both the perennial and rising slivers of the Multiverse....

We Don't Need Another Hero (But They're Nice To Have Around...)

Narrator: Witchcraft Station...an industrial nation in itself and leader in world technology. Its creator, a technical genius, fails in his attempt at political affairs. His plan, to hollow out and colonize a small moon located in the fifth quadrant of the Helios system. No one outside of his uppermost officials of his organization knows of his plans. In order to get supplies there, freighters are sent on long-range missions to the nearest planet in the system, Maggus 4. Making their stops in space, the supplies are unloaded and sent down to Witchworld, for the use of colonists. All of this goes unnoticed by the crews of these ships and the rest of the universe. Things run smoothly for eight years.

Sit back...just close your eyes...and think about...

Space.

You are in a shuttle, orbiting the planet Earth. The year is 2084, and the destination is Witchcraft Station, the only major space station in orbit around the Earth. This thing is huge; a political and corporate entity in its own right.

But now, something has gone

wrong, for two of these freighters have disappeared without a trace while en route to the Helios system. No one at Witchcraft can figure out why, and the only clue to the ships' disappearances is a fragment of a message sent by the more recent of the doomed ships. The message said something about being drawn into a strange void, and that is all. The leaders of Witchcraft are worried that this might be the work of another nation or agency, one not so friendly to Witchcraft Station. But, Witchcraft has its own agency to work with: the Secret Service. Its top operative is a man named James Scott.

James Scott: When the Worlds Need Heroes, a science fiction radio drama produced by Suigeneris Records Inc., is based on ideas and concepts by Mike Sargent and Chris Griffin, and engineered by Russ Barker, Pat McGuire, Dan Finton, and Sarge. The music is composed and performed by Tony Romeo, and The Sophist.

The taped story is really not a new idea — rather, it is a revival of an old one. The era of the radio drama, which went into sharp decline with the advent of television was host to dozens of these things, including the now infamous **War of the Worlds** broadcast. The dramas have not disappeared altogether, however, with genre classics like NPR's *Star Wars* and *Empire Strikes Back* being shining examples of stereo stories with which to burn through many a midnight.

James Scott boasts two forty-five minute episodes, which deal with the voyage of the freighter *Cycavius*, which is sent along with James Scott to find out just what happened to the first two ships that disappeared.

Now, there are pros and cons associated with the tape itself.

The story itself was actually rather good, which was surprising. After all,

how much could possibly be crammed onto one tape? A startling amount, as it turns out. The characters are not dealt with in as much detail as one would like, but they are all either likable or memorable, from Chris Taylor, the super genius who designed Witchcraft Station to Scout Squadron Commander Holdlet, who is in charge of the *Cycavius's* scout ships. The actors take their roles seriously, and do not attempt to overbear the listener. In fact, they are particularly impressive at giving their characters verve and life, such as subtle, nervous quavers in the voice, scaling up the register with notes of urgency, or even incorporating bad Chicago accents.

However, the narration was somewhat lacking in information, leaving the listener to draw his or her own conclusions until ten or twenty minutes of real time had passed and we got a chance to look at other perceptions of the action. Also, the narrator was one who unfortunately tried too hard and succeeded only in giving the impression that he was new at broadcasting drama. It could have been much worse, but since narration is the soul of a good radio drama, it was mildly annoying.

On the whole, **James Scott: When the Worlds Need Heroes** was enjoyable, leading one to look forward to future installments. The tape, along with a free poster, some fascinating background notes and a terminology sheet, can be purchased directly from Suigeneris (pronounced soo-ee-jen-er-iss), 19-21 Warren St., New York, NY 10007. Price is \$10.70, including shipping.

Robot Odyssey

Robot City is another audio-drama based on the first of a series of novels set in the future history of Isaac Asimov's science fictional universe, *Robot City*. Written by Michael P.

Kube-McDowall, the book is the first of a projected dozen, six of which are currently available, approved by the good Doctor himself.

The Plot of the first novel, and hence the audio, *Odyssey*, is relatively simple but interesting nonetheless. A young man (portrayed by **Dragonslayer** Peter MacNicol) wakes up in the interior of a life supporting escape pod in deep space; unfortunately, through some fluke, he can remember nothing about himself; his name, who he is, or why he was on the ship or even what happened to it. Seeing the nameplate *Derec* on his space suit, he adopts it as his name for the time being. From this point, Derec finds himself dealing with robots constantly as he is taken to a base inhabited by robots; only robots, no-one else. We find out that the robots are searching for something called the Key of Perihelion "which is at the center of everywhere and nowhere." Unfortunately, a gang of space pirates is also looking for this key, and the rest of the story deals with Derec's travels, acquaintances, triumphs and tragedies as he makes his way, ultimately, to Robot City.

While, as with **James Scott**, there is only so much that you can cram into ninety minutes of listening (and good novels tend to suffer under any kind of condensation), the audio version of *Robot City* has a number of things going for it. The drama successfully covers many of the novel's strong points, even enhancing the emotional moments of all of the story's set pieces with clever applications of audio effects.

Major and minor characters alike are portrayed in realistic fashions, and the sound effects both develop the story and draw the listener into the futuristic milieu. Unfortunately, some factors that the book covered were passed through only briefly while others were missed entirely, though if you have not read the book, the story itself will seem relatively intact and entertaining. Listen for rock star Chris Stein's memorable cameo amidst the action.

Robot City is a Caedmon Records release, and can be found at all major bookstores for \$9.98.

Next Issue: More on Isaac Asimov's robot universe as Kodak releases an unusual video!



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A message from Gateways Publications, Inc.

Your Own Private Little War

Rules According to Ral for Fantasy Battles

Greg Sherwood

The **Chaos Wars** rules system for miniatures wargaming has brought the gaming industry full circle. The entire industry was built around the miniatures wargaming system **Chainmail** which was the first such system to incorporate fantasy beings.

Previously, wargaming revolved around the Napoleonic Era for scale infantry battles, and World War II for scale armor and infantry battles. Battles ranged from a simple six-sided die roll (with a six being 'bang, you're dead'), to complex rules that took into account weather, line of supply, time of day, morale, chain of command, and whether or not your men had boots in the winter at Stalingrad.

These rules have come after the era of simplicity, and after the era of complexity and realism ushering in a happy medium between the two. This is especially beneficial for the novice gamer and, more importantly, to those who haven't ever seen or played in a miniatures battle.

Chaos Wars comes with a 28-page rules booklet that lays out an easily playable miniatures combat system, reference charts that lay out the basic flow of the game, and the few charts needed to participate in play. The basic rule system also comes with a blister pack of miniatures known as the *Press Gang*; non-player characters who recruit new members to fight in the Chaos Wars.

The rules are laid out in two major parts; the mechanics of the game, and optional rules and scenarios. The introduction deals with a summary of what the game is about and what is required for play (dice, figurines, a ruler). A classification of units and troop types follow:

The troops are broken down into Good and Evil and what comprises either side (humans, elves, and dwarves vs. orcs, skeletons, and creatures). Further details can be found in the section called "Characters And Creatures".

Characters are individual personalities taking part in the Chaos Wars. They are broken up into *Champions* (fighters), *Wizards*, and *Priests* (a fighting magic-user type who also has a special ability vs. undead and demons). Characters are rated in *Vitality* (hit points, or, how much damage the character can take before dying), *Prowess* (attack dice, or, the skill the character has in attacking), *Armor* (which absorbs damage), and the *Magick Level* of each character (this stat is used for purely defensive purposes with regard to Champions and Priests, and for determining the spellcasting ability of Wizards). *Creatures* are individual beings of great strength who are rated much in the same way the Characters are and have other rules that affect them as well. The rules also encompass a table which forms the game's monster list.

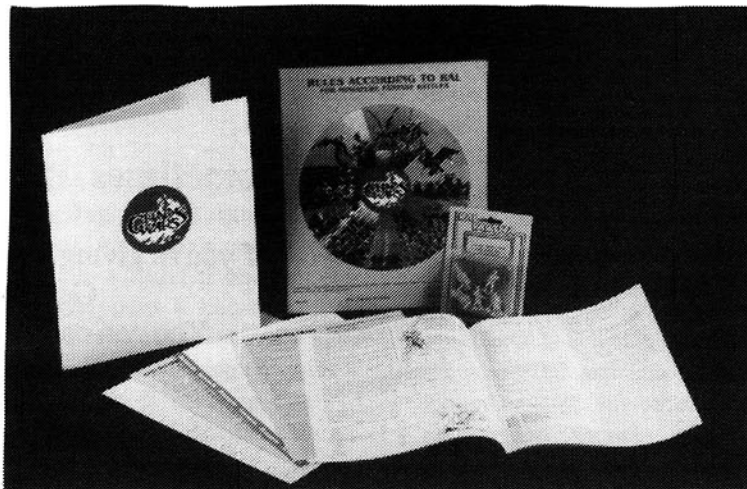
The mechanics of the game consist of a flow chart of *Events* that are followed every turn in a set order. They are:

- EVENT I: Initiative and Personal Challenges
- EVENT II: Spell Casting
- EVENT III: Archery
- EVENT IV: Movement
- EVENT V: Melee Combat
- EVENT VI: Morale and Rally

This may seem staggering but it really isn't. All the rules discussed so far are within 11 concise pages which contain examples and sidebar instructions explaining each step of play.

After the section on mechanics and troop availability is the section dealing with "Building Your Own Armies" and the cost of those armies and how they should be composed (both regular troop and fantastic creatures and characters). The rules end with a chapter on how to convert your characters from role-playing campaigns, tips for survival in the Chaos Wars, and rules for *Aerial Mounts* and the *Gateway Gems* that may shift a character between the planes as often as the Game Master wishes.

These rules are as complete as necessary for all gamers to enjoy. Some advice for getting more out of your game is to set up your terrain on a surface which is at least 4' x 8', or about the size of a ping-pong table. Model train scenery is ideal set dressing if you haven't collected a lot of wargaming scenery, and you'll also need masking tape with which to mark the boundaries. Playing cards can be used as a quick base for your figures as they are easily adjustable. Also, system updates arrive with the new products in Ral Partha's line. Easy to learn, quick to set up, entertaining and a good change of pace, Chaos Wars is a great way to incorporate FRG characters into the world of tabletop wargaming. Pick up the system and a few sets of figurines, and you can start your battles today.





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continued from pg. 51

ples of this are the recent releases of **Star Wars** and **Paranola** (a game which pokes fun at itself and other RPGs) by West End Games. "There is a knack to this role-playing thing, and the companies and designers around today are on to it," says Siembieda.

Greg Stafford, recently voted into the Origins Hall of Fame, has been there since the beginning. He sees the design and playing of RPGs as an art form. "It is a new field of art," he says, "and I like it. Nothing like this has ever happened before; its the golden age of RPGs." That is the consensus of other people in the industry, many of whom have found it impossible — and undesirable — to leave. Both Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson still work in the field, Gygax at New Infinities, the company he started after leaving TSR, and Arneson as a freelancer. Greg Costikyan and Eric Goldberg, who had originally worked for SPI in the 70's, went on to do work for I.C.E., Steve Jackson Games, and West End Games, and still do some of

the most original work today at Eric Goldberg Associates.

Among the companies around today, the competition has become much more good natured than it was in the past, and there is a new unity, a cooperation among the players of the big role-playing game known as business. While this is not to suggest that utopia is just around the corner, or that there are no problems out there, it does show that the game has experienced much professional growth. It is a growth that, though not as wild as it once was, is steady and upward. The overseas markets are now being reached by American companies, and a few of the companies which started in Europe as a result of what was happening here, namely Games Workshop, are invading our hobby shops, giving the circle another spin.

While far too much was glossed over in this article (Play-by Mail, Computer RPG games, conventions, and dozens of newer companies and individuals), it shows what a vibrant and active thing role-playing games were, are, and will be. It's been like stand-

ing on a wind-blown hill and watching a river roll by in the distance, a river which continues to roll by because its well spring is that of the imagination.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the following people for their help and cooperation, without whom this article would be so many ideas floating around in Jeffrey Gomez's and my head: Rick Caldwell, Brent Trostle, E. Gary Gygax, Kevin Siembieda, Greg Costikyan, Eric Goldberg, Kim Mohan, Coleman Charleton, Roger Moore, Robert Carty, Steve Jackson, Marc Miller, Charles Crain, Greg Stafford, Robin Jenkins, Karen at New Infinities, Barb Young, Ross Babcock, and my own personal pack rat, who never throws anything out, including all my old gaming stuff.



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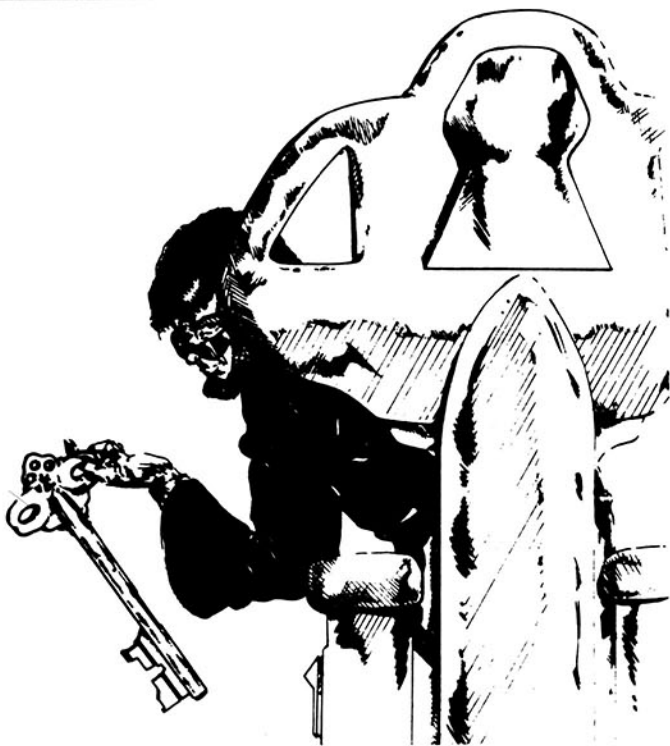
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We play a mean game of Champions and are currently into a long running AD&D game. Heavily into good characterization, but we're into dice, too. Play is at my apartment in Woodhaven (on both the J line and the B56 bus) every other Saturday. Good gamers, ages 20-30 willing to lose themselves in a fun setting are welcome. There is a FEMALE AD&D DM - if this bugs you, don't bother! We start at about a 250 Champions base, or 5th level AD&D. Address all queries to: Anne Staszalek, 87-07 Jamaica Ave., Woodhaven NY 11421.

NIGHTMARES? I have them. I need players for a role-playing AD&D styled PBM campaign. I need to flesh out my gameworld. No cost! No obligation! Be prepared to step away from specific & mundane rules. Some experience required! Send letters to: Karl Stell, 500 Havenwood Dr., Lancaster, SC 29720.

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than two years? Do you have a favorite character? Do you ever wonder why some characters suit you better than others? Participate in a new study of gamers and the way they express themselves through games. Random participants will receive prizes. More importantly, you'll get to tell someone new all about your best adventures and feats. For information, write to: Player Survey #101. 61-26 160th St., Flushing, NY 11365.

Classifieds

Missing: One classified ad given to Gateways by someone at GenCon/Origins. Is that you? If so, please forward another copy!

Midnight Angel, the Secret is about to unfold....

"The national attention span is shrinking...as a result, there is an impatience with complexity, an intolerance of anything that does not immediately divulge its meaning. In the culture of hotness, neurosis passes for talent and self-absorption is mistaken for introspection." — Richard Stengel, 1988

Cats have this knack of making you totally pissed at them and then laying some major cute on you so all you can do is sit there and make "awww" sounds and cuddle them.

In truth, pain. In pain, truth. Survive.

Welcome home, Munchie! We love you one and all!

Moonstrike was only the beginning... One more crack about playtesters, and I'll break your nose, buddy!

If God made man in His own image, then we exist as pale reflections in the mirrors of eternity, and everything is the illusion of a truer reality.

All right, Alfred...let's have some fun.

8/1/88 - A New Journey Begins For The Hangman

Chuckie has a new toy - '82 Harley *Wideglide*

When your enemy has created a corner from which you cannot escape, the only option is to fight. The only choice you have is whether or not to play the game by their rules.

I survived Leading Edge's ALIEN SIEGE — Gen Con/Origins 1988! M.K.

Anyone out there know how to adapt an M16A2 automatic rifle for a one-handed werewolf? I'll pay big bucks, and all the serum you can carry!

LH — congrats ahead of time on your first pro-published work. I've got confidence in ya! — Jag.

An equation to think about:
W. Crusher + Airlock = Good thing.

The Cosmic Streetcorner

This issue I think we're going to have to park the Streetcorner right here on planet Earth and take an all too brief look at one of the darkest enemies you or I will ever be forced to face. A few weeks ago, a friend of mine attended a party with a group of people she'd known and loved since grade school. One of those people, an outgoing, likeable guy in his mid-20s, had been "messaging" with drugs such as pot and cocaine for several years now. After the party was over and my friend had gone home, she discovered that fifty dollars was missing from her purse. Soon enough, it became clear that this guy had taken the money from her, having left the party for another part of town earlier that evening.

Now, my friend had really liked this guy. She was shocked and hurt badly by what he'd done, not so much because of the money itself (unfortunately, she probably would have given it to him had he asked), but because he had betrayed their friendship for some lousy dope. What really burned me was what happened afterwards: quite easily, the incident was forgotten by many of the other partygoers, accepted as a fact of life. This guy would almost certainly go unpunished! ("It wouldn't be good to tick him off," I was told. "he's got connections...")

Having met and talked with any number of role-playing gamers at this year's Atlanticon and Gen Con/Origins mega-conventions, I'm sad to report that my lady friend's dilemma was by no means an isolated one. In fact, as I suspected, nearly everyone I spoke to about dealing with the drug scene had a horror story similar if not worse than my friend's recent experience. I have learned that gamers, science fiction and fantasy fans, people with wonderful imaginations and dreams that just may come true one day, are being targeted by drug users as easy marks, people who may give into coercion or join in with the dopers because they are "different". Mr. Tough Guy or Ms. Cute Blonde, it would seem, will approach a gamer and either ask to "borrow" some cash or promise a "wild time" if they'd join them for a hit or some toot. Well, first and foremost, let me place this here in print: the very idea of this makes me furious and my sitting around here twiddling my thumbs, muttering "just say no, kiddies" is not enough. I'm going to do something.

It should be no secret that drugs — marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroine, mescaline, alcohol, tobacco, whatever — can surely make you feel good...in the beginning. Getting high will often make you feel free spirited, creative, happy, connected with others. Many users can go for years without realizing that this is an illusion that drugs cast upon your mind so that your body will keep taking them. Unlike any role-playing game, drugs, without your knowing it, will slowly pull you away — from friends, family, finally even the group you're doping with. When your body becomes attuned to coke or mesc, it will truly only want some more. Addictions are no longer thought of as chemical dependencies alone, so that old excuse ("you can't really get addicted



to pot or coke, only the bad stuff, like heroine"), can be trashed for good. Your mind can want a drug at least as much as your body can need it. Being upset, wanting to join in, taking the drug; once the cycle starts, sadly, sometimes only death can end it.

The *Gateways* readers I've spoken to, however, have made me proud! It seems a few hours on *Krynn* is far better than ten minutes on crack to a vast majority of adventure gamers. You realize that chemicals are lame when you compare them to the exhilaratingly productive escape a good role-playing game provides. Winners have little tolerance for pills and joints that threaten to fog up and haze out sharp minds and quick wits. Even the rare gamer I've run across who has had a problem with drugs was aware enough to realize that an addiction was controlling his behavior, and that these days that does not have to mean punishment or condemnation. Believe it or not, there are more people prepared to help you fight any kind of addiction than ever before. But, day after day, the threat is always there, and addicts can be the very best secret keepers.

The adventure game industry itself has contributed a bit to the fight against addictions. A significant element in the *cyberpunk* sub-genre of science fiction, drugs are denigrated and certainly not recommended for use in Mike Pondsmith's *Cyberpunk* role-playing game. Eric Wujcik's "Better Living Through Chemistry" in West End Games' *Acute Paranoia* is both funny and cautionary in its ramblings on the deadliness of drugs. Rick Celano's awareness ads, appearing regularly in these pages, are both frightening and informative. But personally, I want to see more.

In an editorial in a recent issue of *Dragon* magazine, Roger Moore cited a letter from a young lady named Betsy Goodrich which appeared in *Gateways* #7. I would personally like to thank Mr. Moore for bringing the situation of the handicapped to the attention of the many enthusiastic and thoughtful gamers who may have missed it. Now I invite *Dragon* (and the rest of the industry, fan and pro alike) to join *Gateways* in making more people than ever aware of the dangers in substance addictions. Resistance to coercion, to the false promises and lure of drugs, can be made so much easier with some strong back-up.

Jeffrey Gomez
Publisher

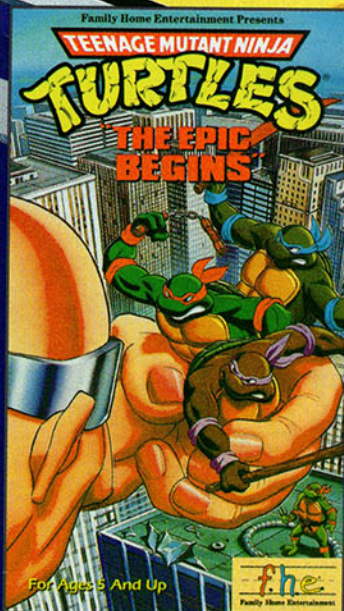
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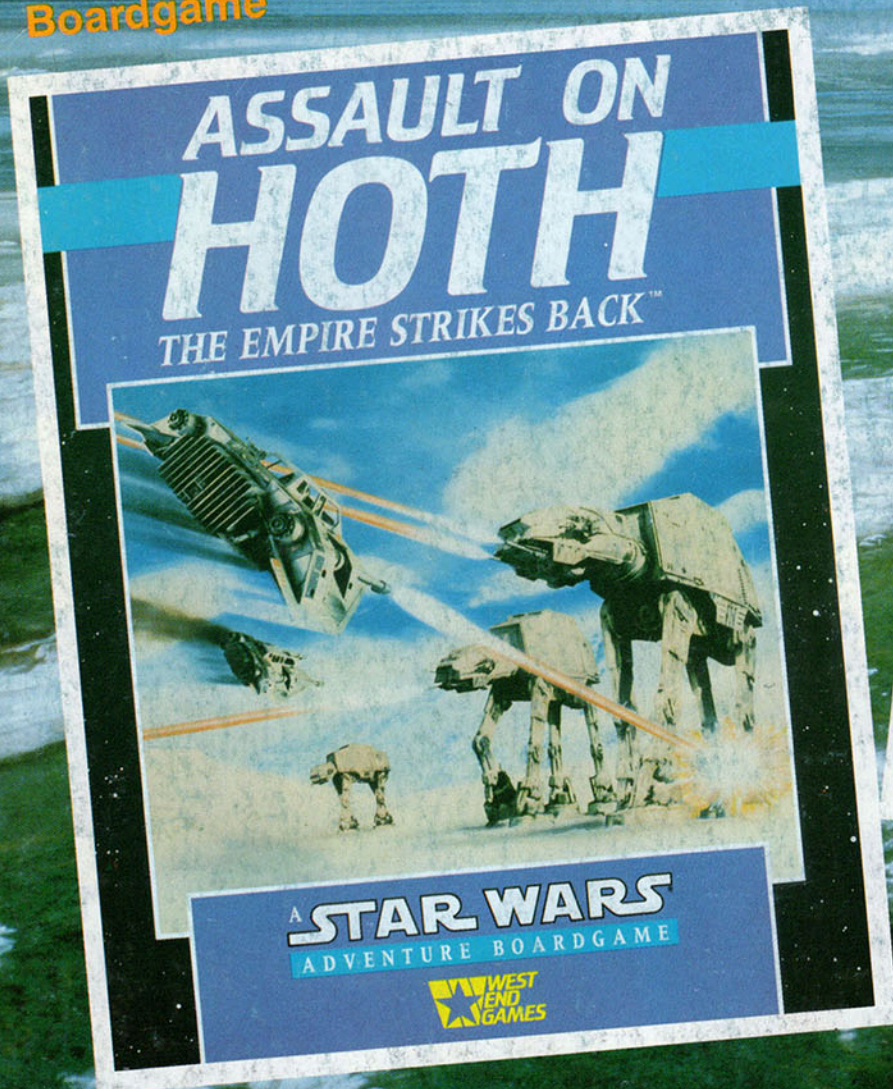
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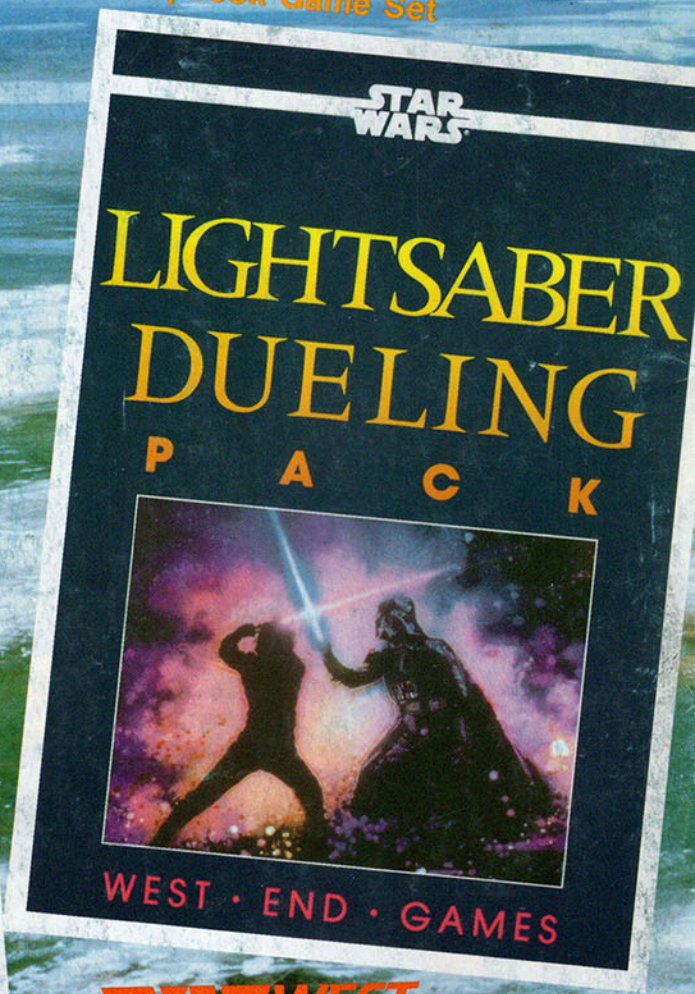
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