★ *Complete Fantasy Board Game*
★ *Scratch Building — SF Models*
★ *Australian Play By Mail Scene*

PANDORA
MAGAZINE

Issue 1
Vol 1 No. 1

COVER
*SX35 INTER-GALACTIC Freighter.
by IAN RICHARDS. Read Ian's article
on designing and building the SX35 on
page 10.*

CONTENTS

COMPETITIONS

EDITORIAL
M E R V Y N   B E A M I S H
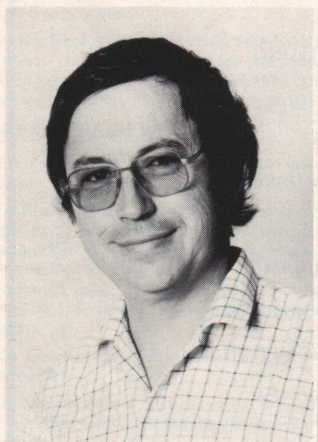
Mervyn Beamish

No matter what research, no matter who you've talked to and no amount of advice can really predict the real-time reader response to Volume 1 Number 1 of a magazine. I wait in trepidation for reader response – the accountant waits for the sales figures.

PANDORA has been in the boiling pot for some 12 months – in actual fact this is not really volume 1 number 1 but number 5. The original PANDORA commenced life as a newsletter for the KIM BOOKS ADVENTURE CLUB. The club was for adventure gamers who use Commodore computers. It is my intension to recommence this club within the pages of the new format PANDORA encompassing the whole range home computers. Our regular column DO SOMETHING! will keep you informed of this.

The enthusiasm towards PANDORA within the market place, by contributors and future readers has been very refreshing. Support has been coming in daily.

Thankyou to all those people who encouraged us to 'have a go' and backed us in our efforts. Thanks to Steve Jackson and Allen Varney of the SPACE GAMER magazine who accepted us, a totally unknown quantity, encouraged and assisted us.

NITTO of Japan and their Australian agents DAWN TRADING have been involved since the very beginning of the project and I thank them for there patience and encouragement.

The real credit for actually pressing the 'go' button must go to the Australian Play By Mail industry group who I met at the CANBERRA WARGAMES CONVENTION. It is hoped that PANDORA will become the mouth piece of the PBM industry in Australia and New Zealand.

This editorial comment is written in the first person but the real work is done by contributors, editorial and production staff and the advertising sales team. Thanks a lot people . . . "May the golden beaked emu forever peck in your galactic chook yard."

Next issue there are more games reviews, another complete game, Ian Richards will look at photographing his SX35 model, Cameron Thomas (if he hasn't been vaporized) will be back with more on PBM and we'll start looking at artificial intellegence on a home computer plus much more.

Editor
Mervyn Beamish

Pandora is printed in limited quantities so be sure of your next issue.
Refer Page 5

Halley's Comet, 1985-86

Compiled by Peter Taylor
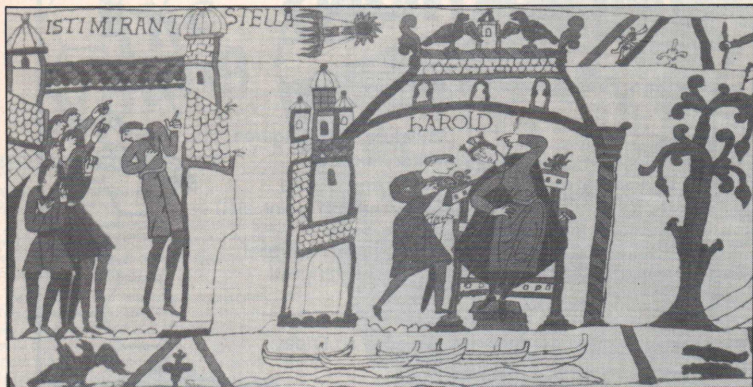
Fig. 1. A panel from the Bayeux Tapestry, showing the appearance of a strange star in the sky, a comet with a fiery tail. As the people on the left gaze at it in bewilderment, an astrologer tells King Harold that this is an omen of misfortune.

What is a comet?

Astronomers believe that a comet is a fluffy snowball measuring up to 10 km (6 miles) across. The snow combines water frost with such impurities as frozen methane, ammonia and cyanogen, together with myriads of microscopic grains of dirt and dust.

More than 250 years ago Johannes Kepler argued that comets "are as numerous as the fishes in the ocean". He was nearly right: it is thought that upwards of 100,000 million comets accompany the Sun on its journey through the Galaxy. Occasionally some of these plummet towards the Sun, perform a sharp U turn about it and then head back to remote regions.

When the comet approaches the Sun the frozen material begins to warm and sublimate (that is change directly from solid to gas without melting first). The gas and dust from the comet forms a huge cloud which can swell to a million kilometres (600,000 miles) across, sometimes larger than the Sun itself. This is the "head" of the comet known as the coma and is visible because it reflects sunlight. As the comet gets nearer the Sun the intensity of the solar radiation increases so that the material around the comet is swept out into a flowing tail which may extend to 100 million kilometres. The tail always points away from the Sun; on its approach the tail trails the comet but when the comet recedes from the Sun it has to chase its own tail.

When and where to look for Halley's Comet

Disappointingly the 1986 visit of Halley's comet will be the least spectacular in more than 2000 years. For this reason Halley's comet will almost certainly not be visible from built-up areas with street lights. If you want to see it you will have to go into the country, to clear skies, away from all lights.

According to the best predictions (which can be out by a large factor) the comet will be visible through small telescopes in October 1985. It will brighten slowly reaching binocular brightness about late November. The comet will then be in the constellation of Pisces. It reaches peak brightness at perihelion (its closest approach to the Sun) on February 9, 1986, but by then it will be on the opposite side of the Sun to the Earth and hence not visible. The comet gets closest to the Earth before perihelion on November 27th, 1985 (92 million kilometres) and after perihelion on April 1986 (63 million kilometres).

When do comets appear?

Most comets are unpredictable: we have no warning of their arrival. They are discovered by amatuer or professional astronomers usually a month or two before they reach their greatest brilliance. Comets just visible to the unaided eye appear almost yearly but spectacularly bright comets are rare. In this century we can count only those of 1910 and 1965. Both could be seen in full daylight, though the latter was rather close to the Sun for easy viewing.

The first high quality photographs of a comet were obtained in 1881. The comet was called Tebbutt's comet after its discoverer, John Tebbutt, who ran a private observatory at Windsor, N.S.W. Tebbutt's comet was also among the first to be studied in detail spectroscopically. John Tebbutt and his Observatory are now remembered on the Australian $100 banknote.

Sometimes a comet passes rather too near a large planet on its journey round the Sun. It may then have its path perturbed into one which returns frequently. Most comets like this spend so much of their time near the Sun that they dissipate to insignificance in less than 100,000 years. At present a single comet is known to return frequently whilst being sufficiently young to appear fairly bright at each approach to the Sun. That comet, due to pass round the Sun in 1986 is Halley's comet.

Edmond Halley (1656 – 1743)

Halley (usually prounounced to rhyme with "Sally") was born in London in 1656. He was a gifted scientist with wide interests. His studies in astronomy started as a schoolboy when he began his careful observations of the heavens. He was incidentally one of the first astronomers to observe the stars of the southern hemisphere. He became a fellow of the Royal Society at the early age of 22 and was appointed the second Astronomer Royal in 1721.

Halley did not discover the comet but was the first to realize that comets could make frequent return visits and to discover

that this comet had been seen in 1456, 1532, 1607 and 1682. He predicted its return late in 1758 or early 1759. Sixteen years after his death Halley's predicted comet was indeed observed, by an amatuer astronomer, at Christmas 1758. From then on it has been known as Halley's comet.

Halley's comet

Returning approximately every 76, Halley's comet is a once-in-a-lifetime visitor. Records of its sighting have been found for every appearance since 87 B.C. Prior to that time, records of comets are scarce and imprecise. In 827 A.D. Halley's comet passed very close to the Earth and was bright enough to cast shadows. Another close approach in 1066 was treated by the

15th March

8th March

East   South – East
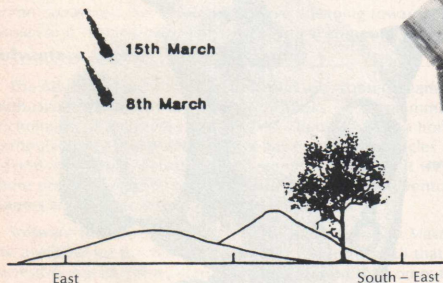
Halley's Comet in March 1986 an hour and a half before sunrise.

12th April

COMETS NIGHTLY MOTION

5th April

South – East   South   South – West
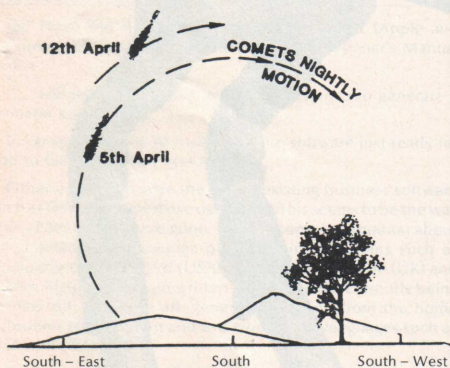
Halley's Comet in April. Each night the Comet moves across the sky east to west. The position shown is for midnight on the dates indicated.

Normans as a favourable omen for their assault on Britain: the comet is pictured in the Bayeux tapestry (Figure 1). The 1910 appearance was not so spectacular, but has often been confused with the much brighter comet seen earlier in the same year.

In ancient times Halley's and other comets were often thought evil omens, harbingers of "disaster or drought" as **continued on page 28**

An Introduction to S.F. Modelling

Casting an insectoid shadow across the proceedings, the 1/72nd, Tactical Pod Regult, bristling with weapons, from Imai.

by Alex Wood

Two prolific writers Jules Verne and H.G. Wells wrote much that wasn't science fiction they are, however, remembered best for their SF stories, some of which were subsequently used for the new medium of the 20th century – the moving picture.

Film presented a whole new challenge to science fiction. Suddenly film makers had to actually produce things which had previously only been conjured up in the imagination and so a whole new world opened up – the world of SF modelling.

First Examples

One of the first examples of a science fiction film was *A Trip To The Moon* made in 1902 by Georges Melies and although the models employed in this film were crude, they were the forerunners of greater things to come.

Science fiction movies became more and more ambitious and so therefore did the models that they engendered. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* made in the 1920's was a highly acclaimed movie and had a lot of high quality model work in it. Another movie which produced some high quality models was *Things To Come* made by Alexander Korda and was based on an H.G. Wells book and later on came films like *Conquest Of Space, Destination Moon,* and *Forbidden Planet* which continued the trend of producing interesting SF models.

Then the 1960's brought us *2001 – A Space Odyssey* still acclaimed by many as the best SF movie ever made and whether or not you agree with that opinion it is certain that it introduced a new style of science fiction models to the big screen.

In the last ten years science fiction films have proliferated with the *Star Wars* series, *Alien, Close Encounters, Altered States, Saturn 3, E.T.,* the *Star Trek* and *Superman* series, *Blade Runner, Blue Thunder* and most recently *Dune* and *2010* to name but a few of them.
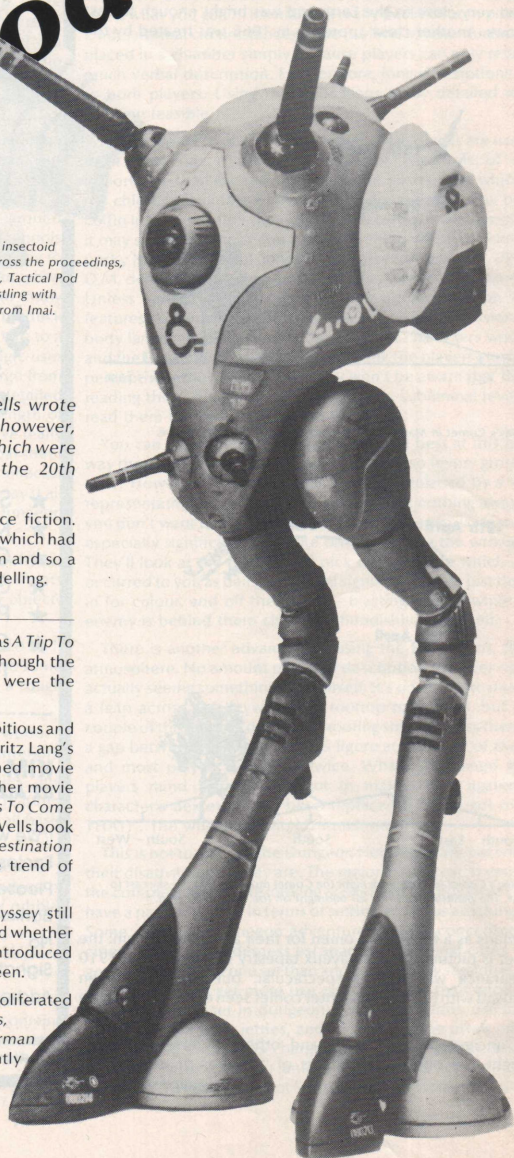
Television

As television came into our lives it too gave us a fair share of SF works and although they were never quite on the same scale as the offerings from the movies it certainly presented us with some thought provoking series like *The Twilight Zone*, *Quatermass*, and of course the wonderful *Dr Who* series. There were also the numerous puppet series from Gerry and Sylvia Anderson like *Captain Scarlett* and *Thunderbirds*. Then in recent years we have seen *Blake's 7*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers* and *V*.

This blossoming of science fiction works created a whole new industry, that of SF modelling and people were now employed full time in the business of producing science fiction models. Not only was the amount of models proliferating but so to was the complexity of the models. As reality started to catch up with fiction the early sleek looking machines were replaced with intricate bitsy designs which presented the challenge of how best to produce this new look. For many the answer was already being produced in plastic model kits of boats and planes etc. The huge variety of model pieces available from all these kits could be used out of context to produce some excellent details for the new look SF models.

This trend was not exclusive to the professionals, many amateur modellers employed the same techniques especially since in the early days there were not many SF models being produced for the commercial market.

Slow at starting

The hobby of modelling had a fairly slow start back in the '60's some of the earlier kits being from *Lost In Space* and *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea*. Then there were the kits generated by *2001*. The main manufacturers of SF models were the Japanese and for a long time they did not export many of their models to the USA or UK and still today the limited market in Australia means we only see a small percentage of what is made over there.

When the *Star Wars* saga became part of our lives so to did the SF kits generated by these films. *Star Wars* was accompanied by almost unprecedented merchandising and amongst it happily for SF hobbyists came the kits from MPC. The first models to be produced were the X-wing and Tie-wing fighters and R2-D2 and C.3PO and of these the X-wing fighter is still available in Australia. Many kits were put out after the two subsequent movies – *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* and of the glue together range the following are still available:

The Millenium Falcon which to many is the ultimate *Star Wars* kit, Boba Fett's Slave 1 (which does not feature heavily in the film), The Imperial Shuttle, the Speeder Bike, the AT-At (which for the uninitiated is the AU Terrain Armoured Transport) and there are also the dioramas of the Rebel Base, Battle on the Ice Planet Hoth and Jabba the Hutt's Throne Room. There were other kits and dioramas which were released some in only limited numbers and are no longer generally available – this is where collectibility comes in, if you have them look after them, they may be worth some money one day.

Snap together

With the snap together trend came six new kits – the X-wing fighter, the Tie Interceptor, the A-wing and B-wing fighters, the Y-wing fighter and the ATST scout Walker.

The *Star Trek* movies generated a few models. AMT put out the Enterprise Mk I and II and some of their enemy vessels. Meanwhile models from the new SF extravaganza *Dune* are on
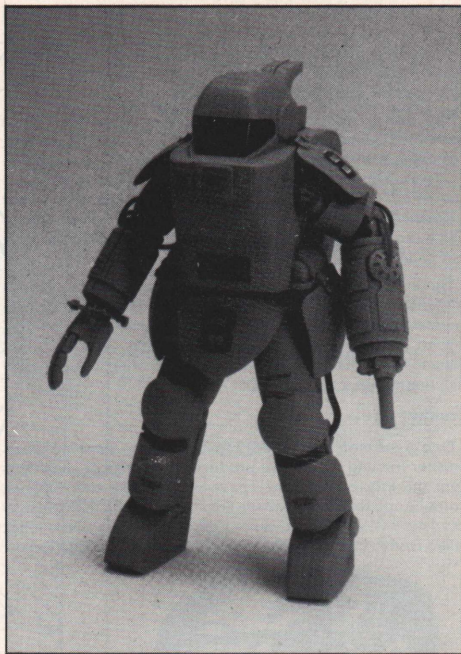
the way and we doubt *2010* will eventually spawn some models.

There are still kits available from the Japanese fantasy movies which were produced some years ago. Bandai still have listed models of Godzilla, Hothera and King Gidera – definitely ones for the older modeller.

Television science fiction shows have produced a fairly steady trickle of kits over the years. One of the oldest kits still available is an Airfix kit of the Angel Interceptor from *Captain Scarlett* and another popular Anderson series *Thunderbirds* also has a few kits on the market. There were the early *Star Trek* models inspired by the TV series before it had a movie incarnation.

From Airfix again came the kits from *Space 1999*, the Hawk Spaceship and the Eagle Transporter. Interestingly although this was not a puppet series it too was an Anderson production. Of the more recent TV series *Battlestar Galactica* and *Blue Thunder* have inspired some model kits brought out by Monogram.

Airfix have also produced some kits which do not pertain to any particular TV show or film but seem to come instead from the collective science fiction memory, these are the Starcruiser which is a fairly simple kit more for play value and the Flying Saucer.

Robots

The newest comer to the kit market is the Robot. Although most of us have never seen the Japanese cartoons that originally spawned them they still sell amazingly well and it seems that especially among the younger collector the robot variables are

continued overleaf

the most popular.

The variables are robots which with a few movements and adjustments turn from something vaguely humanoid into a car or plane or some such vehicle. An example of this would be the Space Robots from Nitto who probably have the largest catalogue for these kind of kits in Australia.

The Space Robots are snap together kits which once assembled can be transformed into vehicles by folding, jointing, extending, turning and removing components, these are known as the Transformers and there is another collection of Space Robots which are known as infifiables whic means that your original snap together produces a number of space vehicles which can be united into a single Robot. It's all the kind of thing that children grasp far quicker than adults do.

There are also a series of Robot characters from the various television cartoon series made in Japan – of which I believe there are dozens. These characters carry names like Acro Blue, Psycho Armour "Gorarian", Powered Suit, Waruder Suit "Bagmos" and Genocider "Dogurus" and other equally awe-inspiring things.

Crusher Joe

One of the more populara SF movie figures in the same vein is Crusher Joe and Nitto have produced 6 models of characters from the movie. There are space vehicles like the Minerva, Cordoba and the Pirates Missile Frigate, road vehicles like a very futuristic BMW-A795 and various others including a little robot called Donyo that looks like a cross between R2-D2 and Twikki.

From the same catalogue come three SF vehicles: Jet Raiser, Saturn and Delta 3 and we also have a series called Laser Warriors whose members have names like Cyberhawk, Laserfox, Dredge and Phantom Intruder.

This it seems is only the beginning, the robot invasion continues.

WW IV

An interesting range which Nitto have brought out is SF 3D, these kits are certainly aimed more at the adult hobbyist and are of the glue-together variety. Thentoe created around the premise that World War IV is being fought in the 29th century, God forbid we should still be fighting at that stage but it certainly makes for some very interestingly designed fighting suits and combat vehicles.

The kits which seem to be heavily influenced by German military terminology are beautifully detailed and quite complex, they have names like P.K.A. Panzer Kampf Anzug, S.A.F.S. Super Armoured Fighting Suit, Hornisse and Fleder Maus. It seems that the continuing story of World War IV is serialised in a Japanese hobby magazine and it allows for more kits which will follow the current models onto the market.

And so from its chequered beginnings science fiction has come to be a part of many peoples lives, whether they watch *Star Wars* or *Battlestar Galactica* or spend time building SF kits. Happily for those who enjoy SF models there are more coming onto the market all the time and a constant flow of good science fiction films are being made to provide further inspiration for us all.
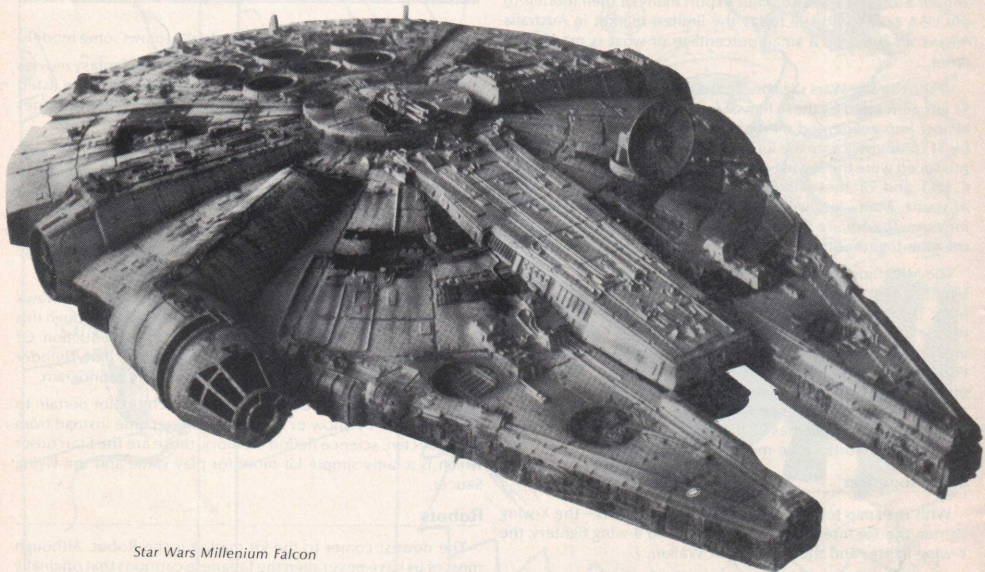
Star Wars Millenium Falcon

Games Reviews

KNIGHT HAWKES

Reviewed by Jon Elson-Green.
Designed by Douglas Niles
Published by TSR
Price $32.95
Available from most D&D outlets

Knight Hawks is a stand alone expansion for the *Star Frontiers* role playing game introduces starships and stellar battles. The game box contains a 21cm x 28cm 16-page boardgame Rules Book, a 16-page adventure module *Warriors of White Light*, a 64-page Campaign Book, a 56cm x 88cm full colour map, 300 colour counters and two 10-sided dice. With the review copy I also got a separate 32 page adventure module *Dramune Run*.

Star Frontiers obvious failing was the lack of just such a set of rules. The gap has been more than filled with this expansion, incorporating a boardgame to introduce ship to ship combat and a campaign book which has guidlines for player interaction with space ships.

The boardgame is easy to learn and relatively simple which suits the straightforward *Star Frontiers* system. It is further divided into basic and advanced games, a division which doesn't seem warranted as the advanced game does not greatly increase in complexity. One obscure point is the ability of the non-moving player to fire on the moving player at any point in his opponents move but not so for the mover. The ships of the boardgame are those of the United Planetary Federation (the good guys) and the Sathar (the evil aliens), typical ships being space stations, heavy and light cruisers, minelayers and assault scouts. There are two basic and two advanced scenarios as well as a campaign in the Campaign Book.

The Campaign Book has been very well designed giving guidlines for starship construction, modification and repair; spaceship skills for players (requiring a lot of qualifications); character interaction with spacebattles (including how to avoid being blown into tiny bits when your starship goes boom); and economic guidlines for players wanting starship loans and planning to control freight lines, passenger lines and mining operations. The rules for spaceship construction are not very flexible and can become complicated by all the added starship equipment and the need to draw deckplans (some are provided but don't encompass much). Characters now have more skills to learn, more equipment to buy and new rules for zero-g and outer

space melee. The economic guidelines are very good for characters out to make money. A couple of points of note are the cost of torpedoes and seeker missiles which are rather exhorbitant for one shot weapons and the starships deck plans which are unfortunately cramped when used with counters.

The module, *Dramune Run*, is a typical high quality TSR production and *The Warriors of White Light*, providing 5 mini scenarios, makes a good base for space adventures even though in one of the scenarios you have to put boxes of cargo in the corner of a round cargo hold!

A few problems exist, one being that there is nothing new as far as space role-playing games go; all of the weapons, defences and equipment have been seen in some form or other alread in SF games. Characters wanting to learn spaceship skills must have levpoints toels 4 to 6 in the *Star Frontiers* skills needed or join the Academy and spend two game years out of play. Once the character has spaceship skills they cost even more experience to increase. Thus character improvement is slow. Imagine saving 150 points to become a level 6 pilot when, instead, you could be a level 6 Roboticist and a level 4 Martial Artist.

Knight Hawks contains a vast amount of material for the price and expands the *Star Frontiers* game tremendously. It is a must for any *Star Frontiers* player or GM. It also can be considered as a stand alone game of interest to tactical space gamers.

SEXUAL TRIVIA

Available from most D&D outlets.

In December 1984 the hottest game on the U.S. market was SEXUAL TRIVIA. It way outsold TRIVIAL PURSUIT, the Canadian game that spawned a whole generation of TRIVIA type games. SEXUAL TRIVIA is now produced and distributed in Australia by VENTURA GAMES, SYDNEY at a Recommended Retail Price of $19.95.
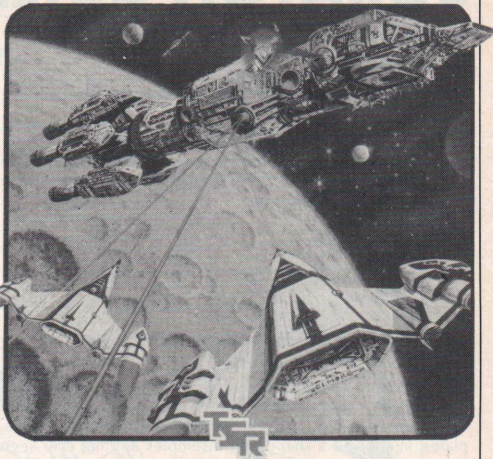
This new TRIVIA BOARD GAME contains some 1,440 questions about facts and myths of human sexuality.

Some sample questions:
● *A Lapp girl in Finland shows her interest in a suitor by unharnessing his reindeer.*
● *Lee Harvey Oswald slept in the same bed with his mother until he was 11 years old.*
● *Australian abalone divers father twice as many girls as boys.*
● *Athletic supporters temporarily inhibit sperm production.*
● *A husband in Bourbon, France, had the legal right to have his unfaithful wife consigned to a convent.*

The board game tests the players' acrumen. Sources for the questions include Psychology Today, Developmental Psychology, The American Medical Association, Redbook and (of course) Playboy.

The multi-choice questions fall into four categories: *General; Health and Sexual Deviations; History; Statistics and People;* and *Other Cultures.*

The almost plain covered box contains a two colour games board, four 'sex manuals', a pad of orgasms(!), die and four coloured counters subtley shaped not to resemble any part of the human body.

SEXUAL TRIVIA is "Not for all ages" however its design and layout is presentable, functional and in good taste (not a naked body to be seen).

SCRATCH BUILDING The SX35

By Ian Richards

Over the coming issues Pandora will be presenting articles on various aspects of modelling building, photographing, finishing and other related subjects.

We begin with our cover illustration, the *SX35 Intergalatic Freighter* and discuss what's involved scratch building a model similar to this illustration. Ian has utilised scrap items that he could easily lay his hands on.

General Concepts

A few common denominators of SF models in vogue at the current time:

Size – huge
Look – complex (almost overdone), totally hi-tech and very busy but believeable.

How is this done? One way is to include anything and everything possible on the model. Many ships are covered with a veritable forest of antennae, pipes, portholes, wings, jets, plates, lights, and a shape that resembles nothing ever seen before. All these details add to the size and hi-tech feel. The viewer cannot possibly take it all in, and the mind fills the proportions itself. This is a forced realism, currently used to great effect.

When we come to modelling, it translates down to lots of detail, and more. The technique relies very much on breaking the model surface up into small shapes confusing the viewer, creating the necessary feel.

Scale and detail are very important to create the wanted image.

For the beginning modeller, try a size of 40 cm or more – tiny little models become too difficult to handle – the result would not warrant the work involved. So basically, give yourself plenty of room to expand your design.

Design and Materials

Design is totally up to the modeller, but assuming most people are familiar with the current trends in SF movies, the modeller would be thinking along the same lines.

Start with a rough sketch, put down a few ideas or even copy a few bits from pictures you already have. Planning is a gradual process, patience comes in handy too! Since this model is scratch built, a wide range of materials can be used. Initially we look at material that is readily available leaving aside specialised pieces that may not be available to all.

Plastic is the best starting point. We all use the varieties of plastic every day, its availability is a good factor, not to mention ease of shaping and cutting. Combine with this light cardboard, wood etc. Metal and glass are too difficult to work and will be overlooked here.

Plastic comes in a huge range of shapes, thicknesses, size and textures, all useful for modelling. By adapting plastic packaging products we have our model.
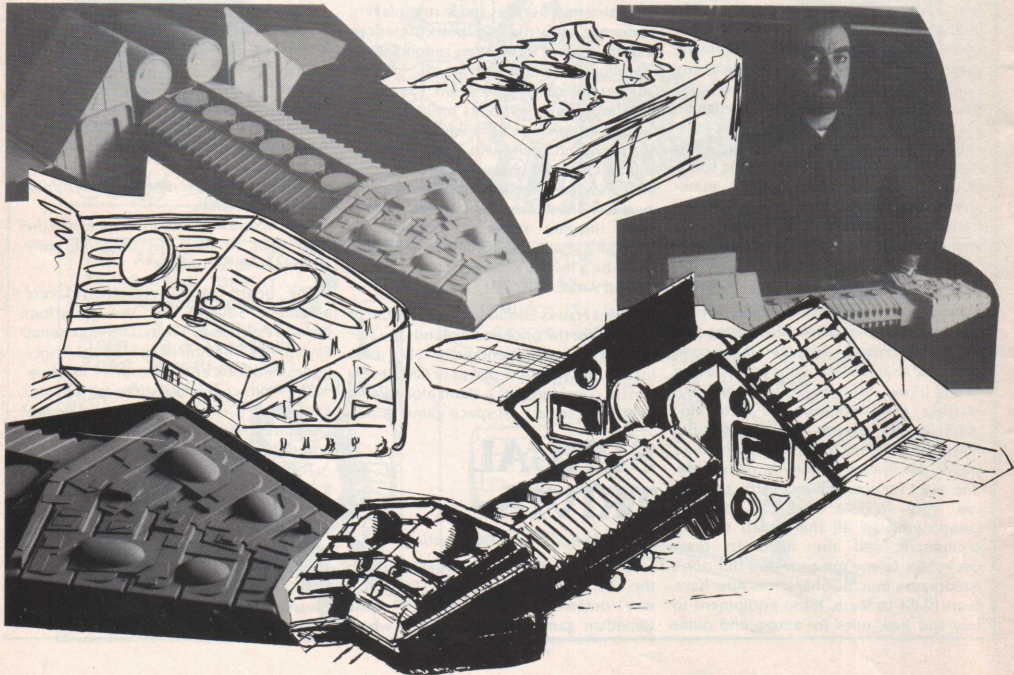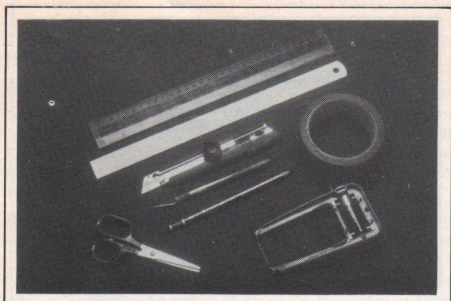
Photo 1 – Selection of tools needed for construction
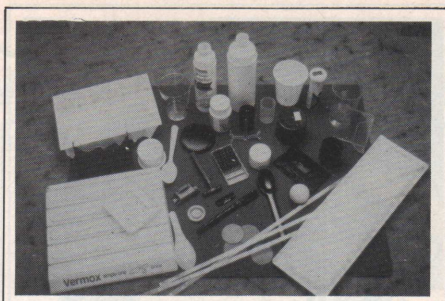
Photo 2 – Selection of plastic items and materials used in the model.
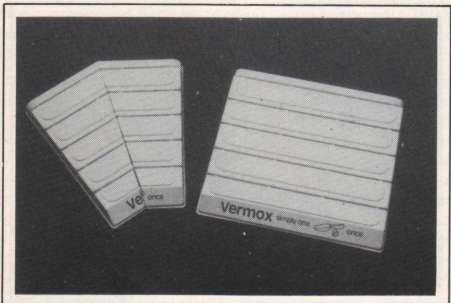
Photo 3 – Casting used for nose of ship showing before and cut to make new shape.
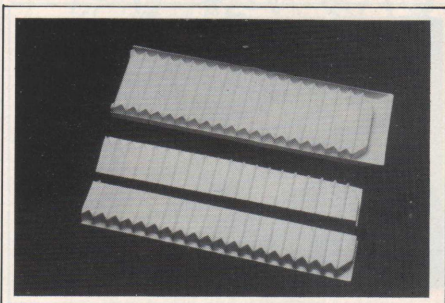
Photo 4 – Casting used for centre side panels, before and after cutting.
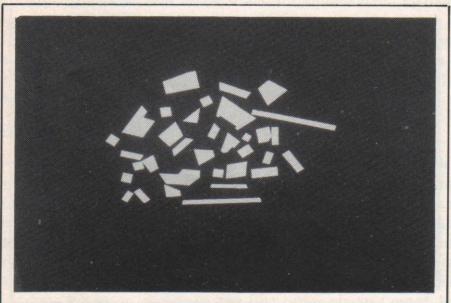
Photo 5 – Example of small random cut pieces used for exterior detail (refer Painting).
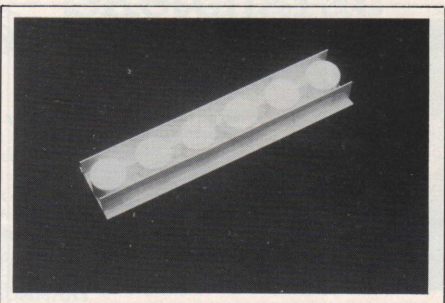
Photo 6 – Top centre section ready for mounting.
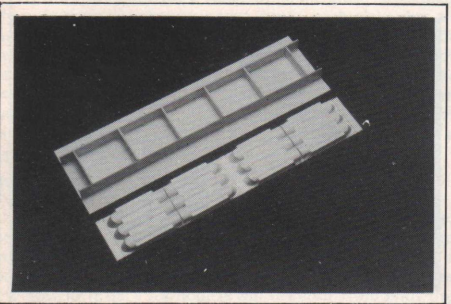
Photo 7 – Bottom section showing internal bracing and top plastic casting.
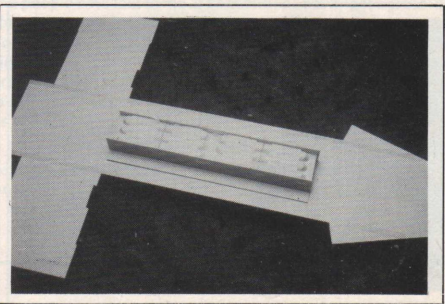
Photo 8 –Bottom section of ship fixed to base cut from illustration board. Note perspex strips along long edges for extra strength.
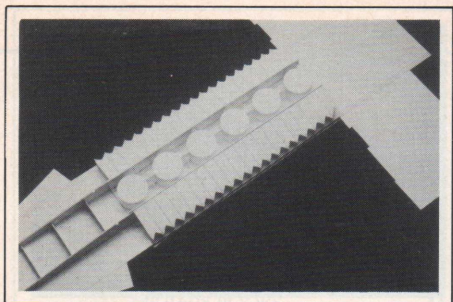
Photo 9 – *top centre section on base board showing bracing for nose.*
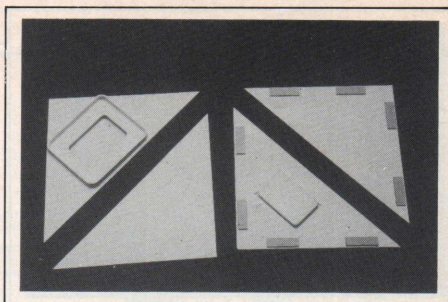
Photo 10 – *Detail engine (rear) sections showing bracing.*
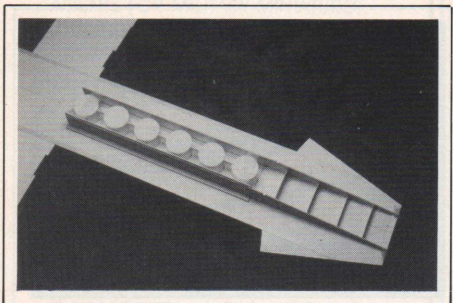
Photo 11 – *Centre section with side panels attached.*
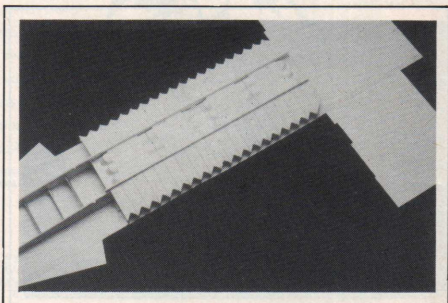
Photo 12 – *Same as 11 bottom view.*
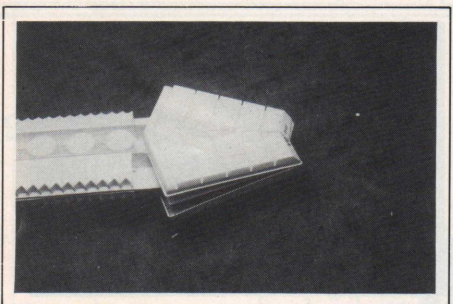
Photo 13 – *Front nose panels attached to bracing on base board.*
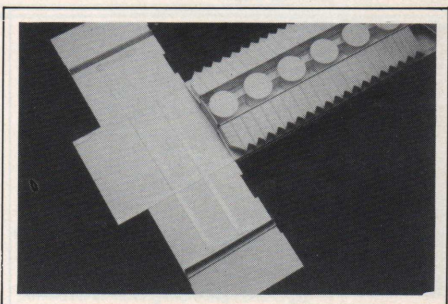
Photo 14 – *Rear section showing perspex strips bracing.*
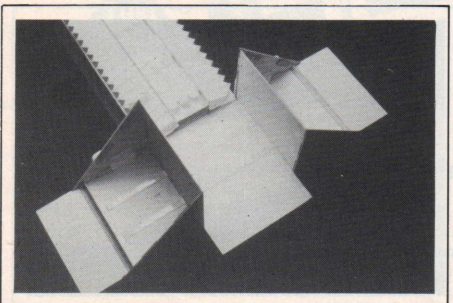
Photo 15 – *Start of rear engine blocks.*
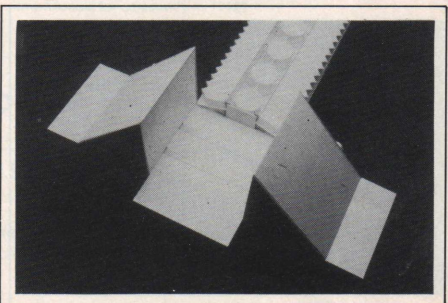
Photo 16 – *Finished rear engine blocks.*

Sources of material can come from your household, supermarket, hardware, electrical and garage. Always keep a look-out for that interesting new shape. Another good source is industrial waste. Many plastic manufacturers throw away pieces that would provide very good material. A specific case is a community group, in Sydney area, called Reverse Garbage. They collect waste and recycle it to craft groups. From there I collected the best material for the cover picture model.

Variety

When building your collection of material try to get a good variety and quantity of pieces, tend to over-collect if possible. From these shapes you can generate new forms by cutting and re-combining them into further configurations. This line of thinking greatly expands your possibilities from any number of materials. Like the initial design you can try a bit of trial and error to get started, hence collect lots of material for experiments and mistakes.

The ability to see new shapes from existing forms, or unusual combinations is a skill that requires some practice and time to develop. A lot of "the spark of creativity" lies here, so do it! Getting back to ideas. Constantly keep some reference or notes handy to back up creativity. This is a good practice to maintain no matter what stage of modelling you reach.

Taking a look at the materials you have assembled, try to include a selection of plain sheet strips, rod and tube plastic. A variety of plain material can be used for construction and detail work, it also provides a contrast to the more exotic shapes and cast material you have collected.

I found in building the cover model that the cast material gave me a basis and scale to begin with. Working further along the plain pieces could be used to provide fill for gaps, strengthening, and, by cutting into small sections for the busy detail mentioned earlier.

Construction

Actual construction of the SX35 began with a large sheet of illustration board (available from artist suppliers). When drawing the shapes use a light pencil – definitly not a felt tip pen as these can sometimes bleed through your finished paint work. The board was then cut size and shape. Keep any off cuts they can be used for additional reinforcing if required. Plan for a strong and rigid core to the model. Even at this early stage it is worth considering how the model is to be displayed. A socket hole for a rod is possibly the most convenient stand, it depends on weight and size.

Weight and Size

A little side issue regarding weight and size. A good potter is careful that the design of his/her pot to look its weight. In other word a lightweight item looks fragile and thin walled; a heavy item chunky and thick. It is the same with designing a model with a well designed model the viewer will know its weight it will look the part.

Having planned a solid base you can work up the construction, bearing in mind some strengthening may be needed. If you observe the photos, on constructing the SX35, you will observe that the central body shape forms a structural boxed section that adds strength and rigidity to the model addition reinforcing strips assist.

Tools

The tools needed are few **Photo 1**: a good sharp hobby knife, metal ruler, soft pencil, glue and a cutting board (to save the work bench). I found a small handheld hot wire cutter in a junk box. This cutter ran off a A battery an was ideal for cutting some plastics especially foam.

I found that cutting the moulded plastic required some care, it tended to tear and split randomly. Gradual slow cuts proved more successful than one hard cut. Very hard plastic was shaped by scored a line with a knife and then snapping it apart. This makes sharp, accurate, straight lines. For small score and snap breaks you can use pliers to hold the pieces. When marking up shapes keep all lines clean and accurate (use a sharp pencil), rub out unwanted lines to stop confusion and miss-cuts. When using perspex or similar plastics it is possible to bend and twist then over the heat of a kitchen element. It will take a little practice to get the right heat so that the plastic does not blister.

An additional tool to have about is a small coping saw, using the fine tooth saw blade. This is a good tool to cut through thick casting, or any irregular shape that cannot be scored and snapped. I used it to cut the handles from disposable razors (see back of model for there use) and taking handles from plastic spoons (see canopies on nose of ship). This saw will work best on hard plastic only. Use some discretion in using it, and cut very carefully as the friction of the blade can melt the plastic making it tacky which creates a new set of problems. Finish off the cuts by sanding with finest wet and dry. Always sand on a flat surface to get as even a finish as possible.

A variety of glues may be needed to bond different plastics. Tape all pieces together while the glue sets. Most usual modelling techniques apply, and, common sense.

Painting

Last but not least is the painting of the model.

This final process really finishes off your efforts, it can also cover up a few less than perfect parts. The best idea is to follow the manufacturer's instructions unless you've had experience. Generally it calls for a primer, undercoat and surface finish.

A hint with plastic moulded items is to was them in household detergent before you start building to get rid of any grease or silicon that might still be on the surface from the moulding process. Some paints, especially water base ones, will not take to a greasy surface.

The primer will have to cover a number of different materials, so test the paint on scraps of material for any unwanted results. The major problem will be the illustration board which can warp if it gets too wet.

An interesting idea which will give a nice textural result is to cover your illustrator's board parts by sticking thin acetate (from packaging) pieces like a geometrical jigsaw puzzle. The result gives a finish similar to sheets of metal riveted or welded to the surface of the model. The surface can then be painted as plastic and avoid the warping problem and relegates the board to construction use only.

I used a spray can enamel primer by TESTORS No 1219 $3.50 and also tried TAMIYA ACRYLIC flat base X-21.

The Tamiya is water soluble and costs $1.50 per 23cc. Both worked well and are available from larger hobby stores. A water base paint seems the easiest to clean up and most convenient if
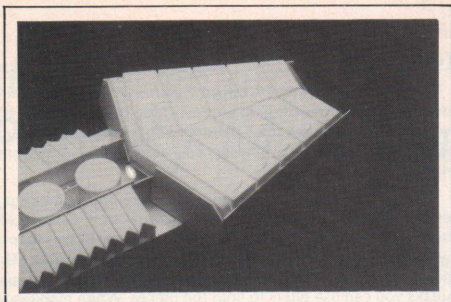
Photo 17 – *Finished nose with side panels.*
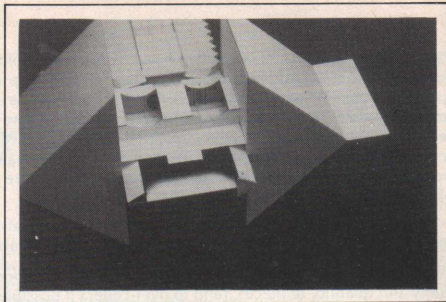
Photo 18 – *construction detail for fuel tank mounts and tail assembly detail.*
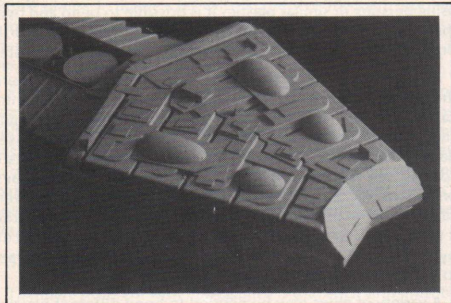
Photo 19 – *Finished nose detail*
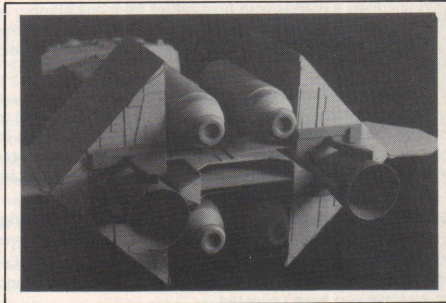
Photo 20 – *Finished tail section detail*

**SX35 Spaceship
Length 86 cm.**

using in a fine air brush and spray equipment. Getting into spray work can be expensive so shop around for the best deal before committing your money. On the other hand, if you are serious, spraying does provide the best results. It does come down to the individual.

Finish the model to your own liking using decals, rub-off letters or just straight montage.

The Future

The future for SF art, modelling films etc., looks very good indeed. At present there seems very little to stop more and more new stories and of course visuals from reaching the public. The treatment of this is ever changing, compare the almost old-world style of the recent film Dune to the outrageous organic space craaft of *Buckeroo Banzai* (a good cult film left to obscurity sadly – but available on video). These movies plus the *Star Wars* trilogy all exhibit quite different style, but contain the magic ingredient of vast imagination, the name of the game, so to speak.

On the printed page there is no lack of material, on techniques and design ideas I suggest that you look out for these books:

CHRIS FOSS *21st Century* published Dragon's Dream

PETER JONES Solarwind published Paper Tiger

The Science Fiction and Fantasy World of TIM WHITE published New English Library

You should find them a great source of ideas and inspiration. These are only a small number of books available, so keep a good lookout for the current books and keep modelling.

Building Stages

The stage by stage photographs will demonstrate how the SX35 went together take careful note of how the model was reinforced. Some of the smaller details such as cowlings made from plastic spoons and other fittings can be seen on the finished model.

COMPETITION 1

We have, compliments DAWN TRADING, six SF3D ORIGINAL Armour Fighting Suit plastic model kits to award to the first six modeller submissions we publish. These submissions can be:

(1) A scratch built model – photographs with 300-500 word description. The model need not be large but should demonstrate some aspect of scratch building.

(2) SF Kit Model – photographs with 300-500 word description. Should demonstrate some building or finishing technique.

(3) Dream Model – Sketches plus suitable description of the unique SF model that you'd like to design and build.

The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Submissions will only be returned if SAE is enclosed. Paid contributions are not eligible.

KIT REVIEW:

by Alex Wood

SF3D ORIGINALS

It is the 29th century and World War IV has been in full swing since 2804. The Earth has been left in a state of devastation and what was left of the inhabitants fled to colonies on other planets. The only people who are left on Earth now are the troops who are part of this never ending war which seems to be raging out of control and which has moved out to become a wide scale space war.

This, very briefly, is the basic story around which the new S.F.3.D. ORIGINAL series of models from Nitto have been created. The models are a collection of futuristic military suits and combat vehicles which would be of interest to the military modeller as well as the science fiction and animation modellers.

They are loosely divided into the two sides fighting this endless war, the Mercenary troops and the Shutoral troops and one can't help noticing how they seem to echo the two sides of World War II with the Shutoral troops sounding very Germanic and the Mercenary troops having a more English flavour.

The first series of kits to come on the market had seven armoured fighting suits, with names like *A.F.S. mk II* (Armoured Fighting Suit Mark II), *PKA Ausf HO* (Panzer Kanipf Anzug Ausf HO), *Fireball* and *Racoon*, two armoured land based vehicles which are somewhat reminiscent of the scout Walker from *Return of the Jedi* called *Krote* and *Jerry*, two aircraft *Hormisse* and *Fledermaus* and one unmanned reconnaissance vehicle, which has a fascinating insect-like appearance, called *Neuspotter*. You can see the German military influence in some of these names.

The kits come in fawn coloured, matt finished boxes with a single small colour shot of the particular model contained within. This is very different from the high gloss, high colour kind of packaging that the Japanese usually come up with but it certainly does give ot the correct military flavour making it noticeable by virtue of being different and it probably won't attract younger children as I feel these kits are definitely aimed at the adult modeller.

Taking one of the armoured suits *Gustav – Panzer Kampf Anzug Ausf G* as an example we can go into some more detail of kit presentation.

Inside the box there are five mouldings of pieces on the spine, four in high quality beige plastic and one in a smokey coloured translucent plastic and they really are of high quality with no faults and no extraneous flash that's bothersome to remove. There are also three plastic bags, one with lead weights for the feet, one with wires and piping and another with decals and soft plastic sleeves, giving us a total of something like 100 pieces. Then last but certainly not least there is an instruction sheet of the exploded diagram variety with instructions in English, German, French and Japanese, and something that looks like a file card giving details of paintwork choices and placement of decals. Collection of the series would result in a very handsome card file system to go with it.

The number of pieces makes the detailing superb and each of the joints moves, with the hip joints being actual ball and socket joints. All of these moving joints employ the soft plastic sleeves around which to move and it stands to reason that these parts are not glued but snap together, the rest of the suit however requires glueing. The finishing touches of copper wires and coil springs add to the authentic appearance of these models.

The finished model is a 1/20th scale humanoid figure which in actual size stands around 100mm high and while it lends itself to

continued overleaf

GUSTAV – Typical of the SF3D ORIGINAL kits distributed in Australia by Dawn Trading Pty Ltd.

different poses for different battle scenes it is certainly not a toy and would probably come apart quite quickly in a childs hands. It does however conjure up whole new dimensions in wargaming.

For people whose interests lie in this area Nitto have certainly come up with a highly compelling series of models.

The background story which first gave rise to these kits is now being serialised in a Japanese hobby magazine and as the story develops new kits will be created. We already have wind of the new series on the way and they promise to be as interesting as the first, so watch out for the continuing saga of *SF3D ORIGINAL*.....

"The war is now completely out of man's control. It has become a monster, savagely seeking destruction and carnage. Nothing can justify the war. The war is an act of brutal violence. It is nothing but beastly butchery where one must kill ot be killed. How many times must mankind repeat such destruction and slaughter?........"

Distributor: Dawn Trading Pty Ltd (02) 666 4999
Available from most model outlets throughout Australia.
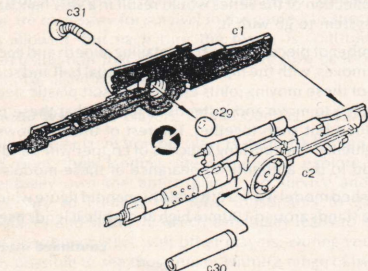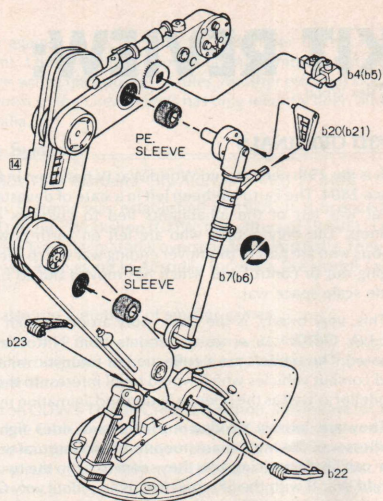
An example of the detailed instructions given with the Kits.
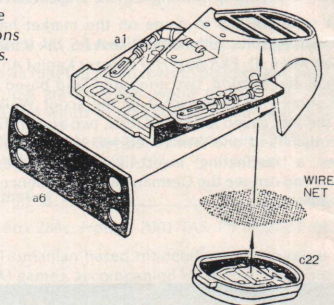
COMPETITION 2

We have, thanks to VENTURA GAMES, six boxed games (Role and board) to award to the first six games/art submissions we publish. These submissions can be:

(1) Starship/Character design along with 300-500 word description, relevant charts and if possible sketches. The aim is to demonstrate the reasons behind the design. Any commercially available game system may be used including PBM GAMES.
(2) Scenario Introduction: Write the first 300-500 words of a SF/Fantasy game introduction or short story along with sufficient outline notes to visualise the story line.
(3) SF/Fantasy art – computer art, comic strip character – the field is open.
The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
Submissions will only be returned if SAE is enclosed. Paid contributions are not eligible.

PRIZES INCLUDE:
DR WHO, BATTLECARS, GOLDEN HEROES, TALISMAN,
From GAMES WORKSHOP
CHAMPIONS – from HERO GAMES
STAR FLEET BATTLES – from T.F.G.

Completed Model
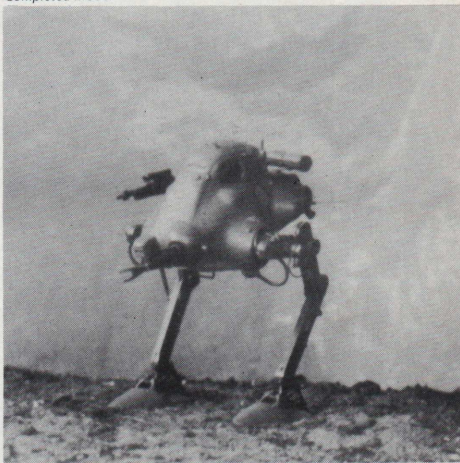
Dragon Run
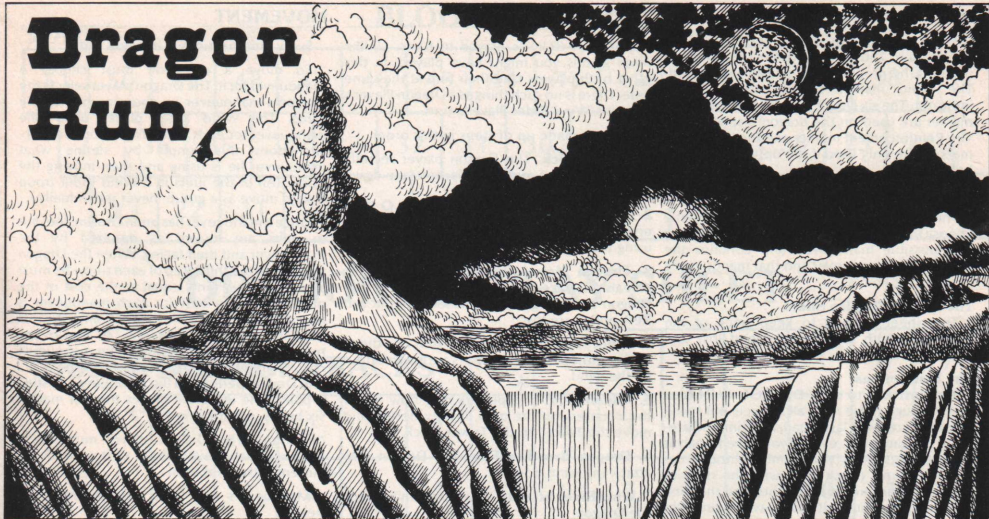
DRAGON RUN
a fantasy boardgame

Designer

W.G. ARMINTROUT

Playtesters

Rich Davis
Alex Orton
Paul Potter

Original Art

Winifred Beamish
Ian Richards

GAME RULES

"Uncle!" shrieked the girl as the black-hooded men dragged her out onto the open roof of the sea tower.

Ethamon ignored her, letting the cool breeze shake out his robes and clear his mind. He heard the cry of a seagull among the rocks, and watched the waves crest against the cliffs.

"Uncle!" He ignored her again, refusing to listen as the priests tied her down to the old wooden yoke. Then, winching her out with groaning ropes until she hung suspended in the air like a spider's prey, tight in a web of ropes.

Ethamon gave the signal, and the coverings were taken from the ancient funnel carved into the cliff. Now the wind swept into it, setting the rock alive until it cried out with a shuddering, primeval tone that carried for miles along the coast.

Eyes closed, Ethamon thrilled in the note that had been stilled for so long. "Let HIM come," he half-prayed, half-whispered. "Let HIM come again!"

Dragon, come . . .

**DRAGON RUN** is a game of desperate combat and flying manoeuver. One player takes the part of the Dragon summoned by Lord Ethamon, the dragon priest. He must reach Dragon's Tower and devour the fair maiden. The other player commands the troops loyal to King Corvallis, daring soldiers who ride upon the backs of swift, flying steeds. This player must slay the Dragon before Princess Tanis is consumed.

The heart of the game is manoeuver. Each turn the Dragon secretly selects a manoeuver, then watches as the wind riders cchoose theirs. The player who wins is often the one who can most often out-guess his opponent. Wind riders inflict damage by hurling spears and lances at their foe while archers and crossbowmen wear down the great beast's strength. The Dragon responds by breathing fire -- a potent defense! Wind riders who venture close enough to the monster may engage the Dragon in sword-and-claw combat, or "melee".

GAME COMPONENTS

DRAGON RUN includes the following:
One gameboard, a sheet of 77 counters, 19 cards, a dragon display sheet, these instructions, and requires two dice.

The Gameboard

The gameboard serves a number of functions:

THE MAP is the six-sided region with the hexagonal grid. It represents the portion of sky around the Dragon. The grid is used to add order to movement and counter placement -- counters are placed inside a hexagon ("hex"), just as chessmen are placed inside the squares of a chessboard.

THE TROOP BOXES are the nine boxes along one edge of the board. Each box is one of the wind rider troops. These boxes are used as a convenient place to put surplus wind rider

counters, rather than trying to jam them all in on the map.

THE TOWER TRACK, REST TRACK and the WIND INDICATOR are used to keep track of facts during the game, and will be explained in detail later.

The Counters

The counters can be separated into three groups.

THE DRAGON COUNTER is used to represent the Dragon.

WIND RIDER COUNTERS each stand for one "wing" of wind riders, approximately fifty warriors and their steeds. Each wind rider counter has the information contained in Figure 1.
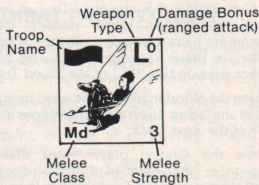
Weapons		Melee Classes		
A^{-3}	archer	VLt	1	very light
C^{-1}	crossbow	Lt	2	light
L^{0}	lancer	Md	3	medium
S^{+2}	spearman	Hv	4	heavy

Figure 1

Collectively, the Dragon and wind rider counters are known as "units". They represent a real combat force. The third type of counter

stands for nothing at all, and is called a marker.

MARKERS are used to keep track of information. The Tower and Rest markers are used on the proper tracks on the gameboard. The Wind marker belongs to the wind indicator. The six Death markers and the Blood marker are used on the dragon display sheet. The Reinforcement marker and the two Rating markers are only used if the optional rules are being used.

The Cards

The Dragon player uses the cards to secretly choose his manouever. Each card stands for one possible manouever, and contains the name of the manouever and that manouever's cost in Rest Points.

The Dragon Display Sheet

This sheet is used to keep track of the Dragon's health in terms of blood loss and tissue damage.

The Instructions

The best way to learn DRAGON RUN is to read through these rules all at once, not trying to memorize avery last detail. Then immediately try the game out, even if you have to paly it against yourself. As you stumble through the first few turns, check back with the rules to clear up your questions. By the time that first game is under your belt you'll have no problem playing the game.

The Dice

The singular form of dice is "die". Therefore, when these rules call for you to roll one die you should roll one of the dice.

SET-UP

When you're ready to play the game this is what you'll need to do.

First, cut out the counters and display sheet and unfold the gameboard. Clip out or photostat the Dragon Display Sheet. (You may want to use tape to make sure the gameboard lies flat.) The Wind Rider should sit at the Troop Boxes end of the board. The Dragon player sits opposite him.

The Wind Rider player now sorts out his units, placing each in its proper Troop box. Troop counters are kept face-down until called into the game. The Dragon is placed in the hex marked with the silhouette of the Dragon, in any facing the Dragon player desires. Death markers are palced face-down in the "0" boxes of the six Tissue Damage Tracks. The Blood marker goes on box "51" of the Blood Track.

Place the Wind marker in the wind indicator hex, in any facing. The Rest markker goes to box "10" of the Rest Track.

Now the Dragon player must make a decision -- what level of difficulty does he want? He may start the Tower marker in any box of the Tower Track. Starting it in box "20" will provide a tough game for the Dragon, while placing it in box "10" makes for an easier game.

Six hexes on the map contain numbers. The Wind Rider player rolls two dice on the Reinforcement Table -- explained later -- and keeps rolling until he has received three troops of wind riders. He then rolls one die for each troop, and places one counter from the troop in the hex that matches the die roll. If the die roll indicates that a troop starts in a hex that already contains a troop, the die is instead rolled over. Facing is up to the Wind Rider player.

The game is now set for play.

TURN PROCEDURE

DRAGON RUN is played in turns. Unlike other games you might have played, in this game both players take their turn at the same time. There is no such thing as a Dragon Player's turn or a Wind Rider Player's turn.

A turn is made up of steps in this order:

1. **Dragon Pick.** The Dragon player secretly selects one of the cards and places it face-down at the side of the gameboard.

2. **Wind Riders Move.** The Wind Riders player now must move each of his troops on the map, using the allowed sky riders manouevers.

3. **Dragon Move.** The Dragon player now reveals his face-down card and moves the Dragon according to the chosen manouever. Rest points are lost.

4. **Wind.** The Wind Rider player rolls one die. If wind is indicated, the counters are blown about by the wind.

5. **Adjustment.** The players may now adjust the counters on the map, if they desire, and move the Tower on the Tower Track.

6. **Dragon Breathes Fire.** The Dragon may attack the wind riders.

7. **Wind Rider Attacks.** Wind riders may attack the Dragon.

8. **Melee.** If troops are close enough to the Dragon, melee may occur.

9. **Rest and Reinforcements.** The Dragon receives Rest Points, while the Wind Rider player checks to see if any of his reinforcements arrive.

When one turn is finished, a new turn is begun. Turn continues to follow turn until either the Dragon is slain or the young lady is devoured.

FACING

In this game it's not only important what hex a counter is in, but you have to pay attention to which direction the counter faces. This is known as facing.

The top of a counter must **always** be pointed at one of the six sides of the hex it is in. (Refer Figure 2).

Figure 2

EXAMPLES OF FACING

Correct

Not Correct

If a Dragon and a Wind rider share the same hex, or if the wind blows two troops into the same hex, be sure to keep track of each unit's individual facing.

Facing affects where a unit can move, and whom it can attack.

MOVEMENT

Every unit must move in every turn.

To move a unit you must choose a Manouever for it. The Dragon player selects the Dragon's manouever by choosing one of the cards. The Wind Rider player picks one manouever for each of his Troops on the map, and does this simply by stating what manouever he is using and then moving the troop. (All of the units in a Wind Rider troop always move as a group, never individually.)

Once a manouever has been chosen, the unit or units are moved as required by the manouever and their facing. When the Dragon moves -- in the third step of each turn -- he must also lose Rest Points equal to the cost of the manouever. The cost for each manouever is noted on the cards. To lose Rest Points, the rest marker is moved towards the "0" end of the track by the number of points the manouever cost. Example: The rest marker is in box "8". The Dragon performs a flip manouever, costing 6 points. He therefore moves the rest marker six boxes, placing it in the "2" box.

Important: The Dragon player must never choose a manouever whose cost exceeds his current Rest Point total.

Manouevers and their effects are listed below.

Common Manouevers

These manouevers may be used by both Wind riders and the Dragon.

STRAIGHT When using a straight manouever, the unit moves forward in a straight line for four hexes. Facing remains the same.

SLOW STRAIGHT Same as above, but movement is only two hexes.

RIGHT TURN and *LEFT TURN* In these manouevers, the unit moves two hexes forward and then two hexes to the right or left (depending on the manouever).

RIGHT BANK and *LEFT BANK* Same as above, except that at the end of the manouever the unit faces even further towards the right or left.

SLOW RIGHT TURN and *SLOW LEFT TURN* In these manouevers, the unit moves two hexes to the right or left without doing any motion straight foward.

SLOW RIGHT BANK and *SLOW LEFT BANK* Units performing this manouever make a U-turn towards the right or the left.

Dragon Manouevers

These manouevers may only be used by the Dragon.

LEFT SLIDE and *RIGHT SLIDE* These manouevers are identical to a slow right or left turn, except that the units end up in their original facing.

LEFT WINGOVER and *RIGHT WNINGOVER* These manouevers are very abrupt, tight turns.

RIGHT WEAVE and *LEFT WEAVE* When performing a weave, a Dragon begins with a turn in one direction and ends by turning in the other direction. Thus the Dragon ends up moving one way but facing another.

FLIP A flip is a mid-air somersault, ending with the Dragon facing in the direction from which he just came.

RIGHT BARREL ROLL and *LEFT BARREL ROLL* A barrel roll is the only manouever which allows a Dragon to move backwards.

Wind Rider Manouevers

These manouevers may only be used by Wind Rider troops.

FAST STRAIGHT As with all of the "fast" manouevers, the only difference between Fast Straight and regular Straight are two extra hexes of forward motion.

FAST RIGHT TURN and *FAST LEFT TURN*

FAST RIGHT BANK and *FAST LEFT BANK*

Stacking

At the end of the Wind Rider's movement portion of their turn, there may be only one troop in each map hex.

The Dragon may move into or leave any hex, whether or not it contains other units.

About Troops: When a wind rider troop enters the game, only one of its several counters is actually placed on the map. The other counters for that troop remain in the troop box. This is for convenience - placing all of a troop's counters on the map would create an unmanageable tall tower of cardboard pieces. As far as play is concerned, however, every unit in a troop box is considered to be in the exact same place and facing as the one unit on the map.

WIND

During the Wind portion of the turn, the Wind Rider player rolls one die. If the die roll is 1, 2, 3, or 4, nothing happens -- go on to next step. If the die roll is 5 or 6, however, the wind blows.

If the wind does blow, the Dragon player rolls twice and adds them together to form a total. (For instance, rolling a "3" and a "5" would make a total of "8".) the total matches one of the numbers on the sides of the Wind Indicator. Point the Wind marker to the indicated hexside.

Every unit on the map will now be moved because of the wind. Each unit will be moved one or two hexes in the direction of the wind, depending on its facing. A unit facing directly into or away from the wind is only moved one hex. All other units are moved two hexes. Markers -- including the Tower marker -- are not affected by the wind.

ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment serves one purpose -- to keep the Dragon on the map.

In the beginning, the Dragon is on the Dragon hex. He is heading for the Tower. The Tower could be as far as 35 hexes away, off the map in the direction of the map hex marked "1". If the map were never adjusted, the Dragon would simply fly towards map hex 1 and run off the map as early as the fourth turn. To prevent this, the map is adjusted.

Adjustment works like this:

First, the Dragon is moved parallel to the Tower Track. This can only happen if the Dragon is somewhere on the map-hex-1-side of the "★" hex, and movement must be in the direction of the "★" hex. The Dragon may be moved any distance so long as it isn't moved further back than the "★" hex. Dragon movement is decided by the Dragon player.

Second, the Tower marker is moved on the Tower Track. For every hex moved by the Dragon, the Tower moves one box on its track towards box #1. If the Tower marker reaches the #1 box and still has movement left, it is moved to map hex #1 and movement then continues on the map itself towards hex "★".

Third, all of the other units on the map are moved in the exact same way as the Dragon was moved. If, because of this or any other reason, a Wind rider unit is forced off the map, it may return to the map in the hex it left from during the reinforcement portion of the next turn.

Fourth, the Dragon may be moved sideways -- that is, 90 degrees (vertical to the Tower Track) -- only if further movement by the Dragon might take it off the map. It is moved by the smallest amount which will keep the Dragon on the map in the upcoming turn.

Fifth, all other units are moved in the exact same way that the Dragon was moved. If the Tower is on the map, it too is moved sideways (but it may not be moved so far sideways that it must leave the map).

Note that steps four and five do not normally occur in every adjustment.

DRAGON BREATH

The Dragon may breathe fire at the Wind riders once per turn.

First the Dragon must select one troop as its target. It is limited by the fact that it can't breathe fire through its own wings. Take a look at the *Combat Facing Chart*. If the Dragon were the unit in the chart it could attack any Wind riders in front, to the sides or to the rear -- that is, anywhere except the flanks. Dragons have no range limit.

The Dragon player now rolls two dice for the troop under attack. The die roll is matched on the Dragon Fire Table against the distance the troop is from the Dragon to produce a "to hit" number. When counting distance, the Dragon's hex is "0", the next hex is "1", and so on.

After determining the "to hit" number for an attack on a troop, the Dragon player rolls two dice for each wind rider unit in that troop. This includes both units on the map and in the troop box. If the total of the dice is less than or equal to the "to hit" number, the unit being rolled for is eliminated -- remove the counter from the game. (If the eliminated counter is on the map, it is taken from the map and a new counter from

the troop box is placed in the eliminated unit's former hex and facing.)

WIND RIDER ATTACKS

Each wind rider unit whose troop has a unit on the map may make one attack per turn.

First, take a look at the *Combat Facing Chart*. If a wind rider unit were the unit on the chart, it could attack the Dragon only if it were in front or to the sides -- NOT to the flanks or the rear.

Second, range must be considered. Depending on the weapon a wind rider unit is armed with, it can attack at different ranges. A unit may attack anything within that distance, counting the wind riders unit's own hex as "0" and the next hex as "1".

WIND RIDERS RANGE TABLE

weapon	range
A (archers)	4
C (crossbowmen)	4
L (lancers)	2
S (spearmen)	2

If the Dragon is in the right facing with respect to the wind rider unit, and if it is in range, an attack may be made. For units in the troop boxes, they are assumed to have the exact position and facing as the unit from their troop which is on the map. Because units within the same troop can be armed with different weapons, sometimes only a few of the units in a troop will be eligible to attack.

Now the Wind rider player must discover the unit's "to hit" number. By checking the type of weapon and the range on the Wind Rider Attack Table, the player finds the "to hit" number. Two dice are rolled for each attack by a Wind rider unit -- if the total is less than or equal to the "to hit" number, the attack is successful.

If the attack is successful, the Dragon will take damage. The Dragon loses one Blood point for every successful attack -- he Dragon player must move the Blood marker to the next lowest box on the Blood Track for every attack that makes its "to hit" die roll.

In addition, the Dragon may take tissue damage. This depends on how much damage the weapon does, where the weapon hit the Dragon, and how much armour the Dragon had at that location. Weapon damage is determined by rolling one die, and adding or subtracting the penalty listed in the Weapon Damage Table.

If the damage result is zero or negative, there is no need to go on to the next step . . . finding out where the weapon hit the Dragon.

To find out where the weapon hit, take another look at the Combat Facing Chart. Imagine the Dragon at the centre of the chart, and the attacking wind rider wherever it would be in reference to the Dragon. The Wind Rider player now rolls two dice and checks the Dragon Location Table. By matching the die roll total with the facing zone the wind rider is in with respect to the Dragon, the wind rider discovers what his attack hit.

Each part of the Dragon is rated for armour thickness (Dragon Armour Table) -- that is, how many of the damage points are ignored because of the Dragon's armour.

To discover the tissue damage done, subtract the armour rating from the damage total already determined. If the result is positive, the Death marker on that Tissue Track must be

Continued overleaf

moved a number of boxes to the right equal to the tissue damage done.

SHORT RANGE If the wind rider attack is made at a range of 1 or less, a bonus of "2" must be added to the die roll on the Dragon Location Table. If an attack is made at range 0, the wind rider player uses the column for facing zone "Front" on the Dragon Location Table.

MELEE

If, when this portion of the turn rolls around, a Dragon and a wind rider troop already share the same hex, melee combat occurs. Otherwise, melee movement may occur.

Wind Rider player gets the first chance at movement. He may move any one troop one hex, but only if the movement will place the troop in the Dragon's hex AND only if the movement is forward (that is, into the Front or Side facing zones, but not the Flank or Rear facing zones).

If no wind rider troop performs melee movement, then the Dragon may move. He may move one hex, but only if the move will place him in a wind rider's troop hex, and only if the movement is forward (to the front or the side, but not to the flanks or the rear).

Facing is unaffected by melee movement -- it remains the same as before.

Combat may now occur if a Dragon and a wind rider troop occupy the same hex. (If, due to wind, two wind rider troops occupy the hex, only one of them -- wind rider player's choice -- may participate in melee combat.)

The Wind Rider player now figures out the troop's melee strength. This is done by adding up each unit's melee strength, which depends on its "class".

MELEE STRENGTH TABLE

class	strength
HEAVY	20
MEDIUM	15
LIGHT	10
VERY LIGHT	5

Thus if a troop consisted of a Heavy Spearman, a Medium Crossbowman, and two Medium Lancers, the melee strength would be $20 + 15 + 15 + 15 = 65$ total strength.

Refer to the Melee Table once you've found the troop's strength. In the column for your troop's strength you will find two "to hit" numbers -- the one the wind riders will use, and the one for the Dragon.

Melee combat now works like this. The Wind Rider indicates one of his units. The Dragon rolls two dice -- if his total is equal to or less than his "to hit" number, that wind rider unit is eliminated. IF the wind rider unit survives, the wind rider player may now roll two dice for it. If that total is less than or equal to the wind rider "to hit" number, a hit is scored on the Dragon.

The Dragon loses one Blood point for every "to hit" roll the Wind Rider player makes in melee combat. Tissue damage is figured the same as in normal combat, except that all weapons have a damage bonus of +1 in melee combat instead of their usual die roll bonuses and penalties. Spearmen, however, remain at +2. All location rolls in melee combat are made as if the wind rider troop were in facing zone "Front". Because of the close range, the wind rider units receive a bonus of 2 to their die roll on the Location Table.

The Dragon gets one chance to kill each unit in the troop. Each troop unit that survives makes one attack on the Dragon. (Note that if a unit made a regular wind rider attack on the Dragon, it may also make a melee attack in the same turn. However, it may only make one of each kind of attack.)

REST AND REINFORCEMENTS

In this portion of the turn, the Dragon regains rest points lost during manouevers and the Wind Riders gain reinforcements.

Rest Points

Find the Blood marker on the Dragon's Blood Track. The number of the box in which the marker is found determines the number of rest points gained. The Dragon may move the Rest marker a number of boxes towards "10" equal to the tens' column of the Blood box. The marker cannot be placed higher than box 10.

Example: the Blood marker is in box 23 on the blood track. The Dragon gets 2 rest points. If the rest marker is in box 4, it would thus be moved to box 6.

Reinforsements

The Wind Rider player rolls two dice, and checks the die roll total against the Reinforcement Table. The Reinforcement Table indicates that either the first, second, or third or no reinforcements artre available.

Numbers refer to the order of the troop boxes on the gameboard. "First" would mean the leftmost troop, closest to the King's own box, which hasn't yet appeared on the map. "Second" is the troop second from the left, and "third" means third from the left.

Example: Let's say that King's Own, Wind, Grape and Trident troops are already on the map. First reinforcement would thus be Gull troop, second reinforcement would be Woodlands troop, and third reinforcement is Salmon troop.

If any reinforcements are received, the Wind Rider player rolls one die. The number indicates one of the numbered hexes on the map. One unit from the new troop is placed in that hex, in any facing.

Only one troop may be received as reinforcement in any turn.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The object of the game is to win. For the Dragon, this means reaching the Tower (and devouring the maiden). For the Wind Riders, this means slaying the Dragon.

Slaying the Dragon

A Dragon may die from two causes -- exhaustion, and wounds.

EXHAUSTION The Blood Track controls how many rest points the Dragon receives each turn. These points are used to power the Dragon's manouevers. When the Blood marker reaches the 10 box, any further blood loss will cause it to run off the end of the Blood Track entirely. If this happens, the Dragon no longer gets any rest points. Further blood loss has no effect on the Dragon.

This alone will not kill the Dragon. The Dragon does not die from exhaustion until he can no longer pay the rest points for its manouevers -- that is, when the Rest marker is in box 0 during the Dragon Selection portion of

the turn. When this happens, the Dragon faints and plunges to its death in the sea below.

WOUNDS Accumulated tissue damage will also do in the Dragon.

If a tissue damage marker reaches the end of its track, and more tissue damage is received, the marker is instead turned face-up.

The Dragon dies in the exact instant when three Death markers are face-up on the Tissue Damage tracks.

Reaching The Tower

If at the end of the Melee portion of the turn, the Dragon is in the same hex as the Tower marker, no power on earth can prevent him from dining on the princess. The game ends in a Dragon victory.

If, at the end of the Melee portion of the turn, the Dragon is in a hex next to the Tower marker's hex, the Dragon may move into the Tower hex and win the game. There are two restrictions: the Tower hex must be empty of Wind riders OR the Dragon must have fought in melee that turn, and the Tower hex must be in front of the Dragon (facing zones Front or Side).

DESIGNER'S NOTES

In some ways *DRAGON RUN* is more of an adventure than a game.

Take level of difficulty, for instance. When the Dragon player chooses where to set that Tower marker he is setting up his challenge. If he takes a good look at his opponent and then sets the marker in box 15, he thinks that he is an expert compared to his foe.

However, level of difficulty is not a sure guide to how the game will play. Consider the reinforcement die rolls. The fact that reinforcements are rolled for keeps the game from repeating itself -- the flow of troops is always a little bit different from game to game. Thus the game is kept fresh. But there's a price to be paid for this variety. Ever so often the dice will go crazy.

So the die rolls can warp the level of difficulty. If the dice want, they can convert a level 10 game into something more like a level 15 or 20 game. The Wind Riders might get reinforcements for six straight turns, or they might get only the cream of the troops. Does that happen often? No. But you can never be exactly sure what to expect.

That's why *DRAGON RUN* is as much an adventure as a game.

The Solitaire Game

If need be, DRAGON RUN can be played by just one person. He takes the part of the Wind Riders, while the Dragon is controlled by the dice.

This version is the "Crazed Dragon" scenario. A Dragon, evidently gone mad, is terrorizing the countryside. The Wind Riders must deal with him.

Rules changes:

TOWER TRACK The Tower does not appear in this scenario. Instead, turn the Tower marker, advancing it one box at the end of each turn. Adjustment does not affect the Tower marker.

REINFORCEMENTS The Wind Rider receives reinforcements every turn. To discover which troop it is, he rolls two dice and checks the Tournament Reinforcements Table.

DRAGON SELECTION The Dragon Selection portion of the turn is skipped. The player now rolls two dice during the Dragon Movement portion, and checks the table below to discover the Dragon's manouever. Roll one die at a time.

DRAGON SELECTION

1st die	2nd die	Manouever
1	1, 2, 3, 4	Straight
1	5, 6	Left Bank
2	1, 2	Right Bank
2	3, 4, 5	Left Turn
2	6	Right Barrel Roll
3	1, 2, 3	Right Turn
3	4, 5	Slow Left Turn
3	6	Left Barrel Roll
4	1, 2	Slow Right Turn
4	3, 4	Left Wingover
4	5, 6	Right Wingover
5	1, 2	Left Slide
5	3, 4	Right Slide
5	5, 6	Slow Left Bank
6	1, 2	Slow Right Bank
6	3	Left Weave
6	4	Right Weave
6	5	Slow Straight
6	6	Flip

(If a manouever is not allowed due to sufficient rest points, roll over.)

DRAGON ATTACKS The Wind rider player must try to look at the game objectively and choose the best attacks for the Dragon. If there are several attacks which look equally good, he can roll the dice to decide a target.

VICTORY The object of the game is not just to kill the Dragon, but to do it as quickly as possible. Players compete against their Solitaire Ratings. The turn in which the solitaire player kills his first Dragon becomes his Rating. In future games, the Rating is adjusted by success or failure. For every game in which the Dragon is killed in fewer turns than the Rating, the Rating is reduced by one. If a game does not kill the Dragon in the same or fewer turns than the Rating, the Rating is increased by one. (Note that a low Rating is a good Rating when playing solitaire.)

(As an optional rule, Rating can also be based on the number of wind riders killed before the Dragon dies -- the fewer the losses, the better the Rating.)

MELEE TABLE

melee strength	"To Hit"	
	Dragon	Wind Riders
1-21	7	3
22 – 29	6	4
30 – 42	5	5
43 – 63	4	5
64 – 88	4	6
89 – 125	3	6
125 +	3	7

LOCATION TABLE

die roll	Facing Zone					
	FRONT	RIGHT SIDE	RIGHT FLANK	REAR	LEFT FLANK	LEFT SIDE
2	R-SH	BACK	R-SH	R-SH	`L-SH	BACK
3	TAIL	BACK	BACK	R-SH	BACK	BACK
4	BACK	L-SH	L-SH	L-SH	R-SH	R-SH
5	R-SH	R-SH	R-SH	HEAD	L-SH	L-SH
6	L-SH	BACK	BACK	BACK	BACK	BACK
7	HEAD	R-SH	BACK	BACK	BACK	L-SH
8	BELLY	HEAD	HEAD	TAIL	HEAD	HEAD
9	HEAD	BELLY	TAIL	TAIL	TAIL	BELLY
10	BELLY	TAIL	BELLY	BELLY	BELLY	TAIL
11	BELLY	BELLY	TAIL	HEAD	TAIL	BELLY
12	TAIL	BACK	TAIL	TAIL	TAIL	BACK
13	TAIL	TAIL	TAIL	BACK	TAIL	TAIL
14	R-SH	R-SH	BELLY	R-SH	BELLY	L-SH

DRAGON FIRE TABLE

die roll	Range					
	0	1	2	3,4	5,6,7	8+
2	5	7	5	4	4	7
3	4	5	7	5	7	5
4	6	5	7	5	5	5
5	3	7	5	5	5	4
6	5	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	6	6	6	6	4
8	6	6	6	6	6	6
9	4	7	5	4	4	5
10	6	7	5	5	5	5
11	3	6	6	6	6	3
12	6	5	7	5	3	6

WIND RIDER ATTACK TABLE

range	weapons			
	A	C	L	S
0	10	10	8	7
1	9	9	7	5
2	8	7	6	5
3	7	5		
4	6	5		

WEAPON DAMAGE TABLE

weapon	bonus
A (Archers)	-3
C (Crossbowmen)	-1
L (Lancers)	none
S (Spearmen)	+2
Melee (all)	+1

MELEE STRENGTH TABLE

class	strength
Heavy	20
Medium	15
Light	10
Very Light	5

REINFORCEMENT TABLE

die roll	results
2 – 6	no reinforcement
7, 8	first reinforcement
9, 10	second reinforcement
11, 12	third reinforcement

DRAGON ARMOUR TABLE

location	rating
Head	3
Right Shoulder	1
Left Shoulder	1
Belly	0
Back	2
Tail	2

BLOOD TRACK

START													
51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38

	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24

	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10

DRAGON DISPLAY SHEET

TISSUE DAMAGE TRACKS

	HEAD ○ *	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

R-SH ○	1	2 *	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

L-SH ○	1	2 *	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

			BELLY ○ *	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

BACK ○	1	2	3	4 *	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

TAIL ○	1	2	3	4 *	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

FRONT

LEFT SIDE — 6 — 1 — RIGHT SIDE

2

5 — ↑ — 3

LEFT FLANK — 4 — RIGHT FLANK
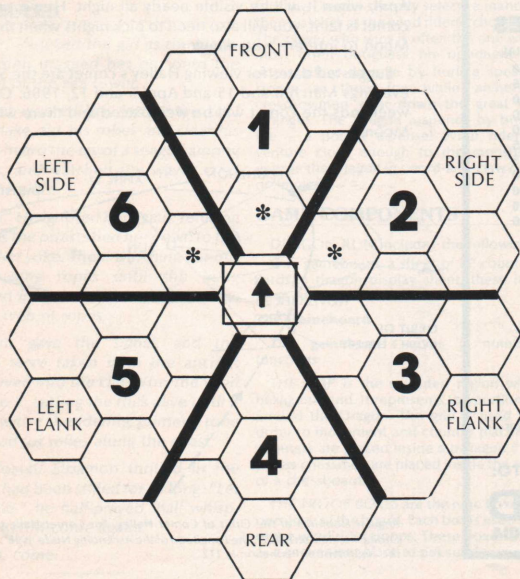
REAR

COMBAT FACING CHART

Wind Riders Wind Rider troops may attack any enemy in facing zones Front, Right Side or Left Side -- that is, anything in front of them.

Dragons Dragons may attack anything in zones Front, Right Side, Left Side, or Rear -- that is, anything in front of or directly behind the Dragon.

Some hexes fall into two zones. The attacker may consider that unit to be in either of the two zones.

Melee Movement During melee movement, a unit could move into any of the hexes marked "★" above.
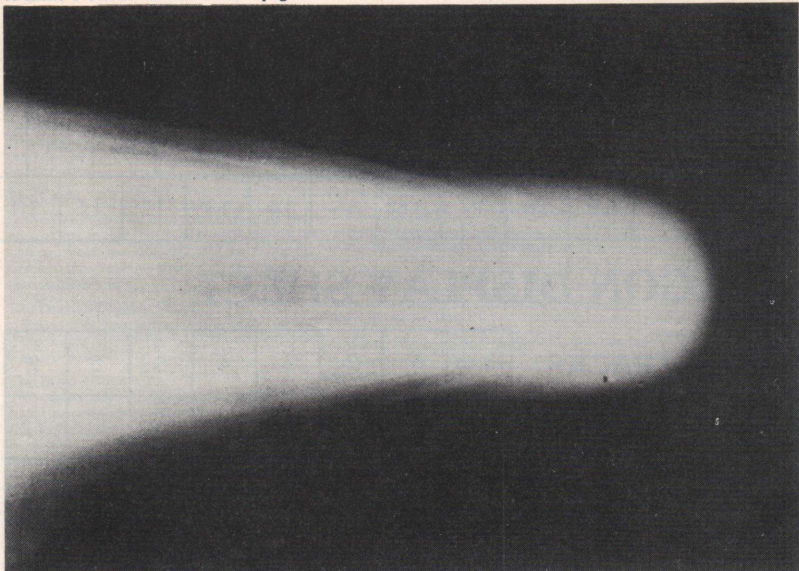
Halley's Comet on its last visit in 1910, showing the coma and the beginning of the tail.

Aristotle put it. "From its horried hair shakes pestilence and war", wrote Milton. Today we know them to be harmless, things of beauty not of fear. Despite recent claims, there is no strong evidence that comets beget epidemics.

Probably the first chance to see Halley's comet with naked eye will be the evening of 13 January 1986, when the comet, the crescent Moon and Jupiter will all be visible in the west at the end of twilight. A pair of field glasses would be useful to locate the comet.

For us in Australia, the best views of Halley's comet will be in March 1986, when it will be visible in the morning sky, and in April, when it will be visible nearly all night. However, as the comet is faint, you will also need to pick nights when their is no Moon to intefere with viewing.

Suggested dates for viewing Halley's comet are the Saturday evenings March 8 and 15 and April 5 and 12, 1986. On these weekends the comet will be well placed and there will be no Moon.
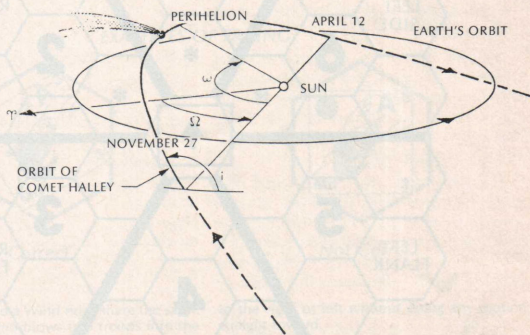
Angular Elements of the Orbit of Comet Halley. For Comet Halley, the Orbital Inclination is 162°, the Longitude of the Ascending Node is 58°, and the Argument of Perihelion is 112°.

Play By Mail

...An overview of the Australian Commercial PBM scene

Cameron Thomas

Hi, welcome to Play By Mail (PBM) gaming. For many readers this may be the first time they have actually heard of PBM games so I will star by reviewing the currently running games and companies operating in Australia. In future issues, this section will deal with a wide cross-section of the hobby, including company news, game reviews and updates, and possibly designer notes from our growing number of Australian based PBM designers.

Currently several companies in Australia are offering PBM games for an increasingly interested market. The majority are imports from overseas, but increasingly, games are being designed and released in Australia. Some have even managed to break into the international scene.

For your consumption, a listing of the Australian companies, and the games they have available follows:

The Australian Wizard

GPO Box 356, Brisbane 4001 QLD. Ph (07) 356 2212

The AustWiz is the newest PBM company in Australia, run by Graham Rawlins and Kevin Flynn. Using their own games, along with a few well known overseas games, they are able to offer faster turnarounds than most. Although not very large at present they are competing favourably and have a selection of new games coming on line that should prove interesting. Launched at the Canberra Convention this year AustWiz offer a standard move fee around $3.50, with bulk move discounts, usually 10 moves for $30.00. This varies from game to game however. They are presently working on a house magazine, to be called the 'Wizard's Grimoire'.

They currently offer the following games:

Midgard – *21 players, Ancients Campaign, 4wk T/A, $5.00 setup – $3.50/move.*

Each player controls a country and its forces, with this he must attempt to conquer his neighbour's to win the game. A historical recreation drawing from 21 different armies of the ancient period. Midgard is fully human moderated and game one has been running for nearly two years. Currently has three games in progress with more planned for release in August. New games will have a selection of 21 new ancient nations.

Midgard has been released in the UK under the title 'Warlords of Kaos' through Spellbinder Games (re Keys of Bled).

Midgard will especially appeal to the Ancient Figurines and history buffs.

Spiral Arm – *50 players, SF Conflict, 2wk T/A, $4.00 setup – $3.50/move.*

Strategic level galactic conquest and colonisation game. Each player begins on single word and spreads out (ho hum!). Fully computer moderated with well set-out move sheets. Slow starting but becomes increasingly exciting and involved as the game progresses. A unique system of alliances adds ample opportunity for diplomacy. There are plans for a one week turnaround game with 12 players. 3 Spiral Arm 1 is to be released in the UK shortly.

Keys of Bled – *unlimited players, Adventure, 3-4wk T/A, Free setup – $3.50/move.*

A semi-role playing adventure game set on the mysterious world of Bled. Unlike other tribal games, 3 Keys of Bled1 is harshly realistic and poses many challenges. The nature of Bled, being hostile, requires the player to fight for both survival and domination amongst strange peoples, animals and happenings. Much of Bled remains unknown, which can lead to an engrossing search for knowledge. The game is post-boxed from England, and is human-moderated. 3 Keys of Bled1 should appeal to a large range of gamers.

Lords of Aquilonia – *playtest, RPG/Medieval Campaign, 2-3wk T/A, $2.00 for rules.*

Lords of Aquilon is undergoing playtesting at the moment with a set of rules that are extremely comprehensive, being some 50 pages. It attempts to recreate the High Chivalric period and places emphasis on character development and interaction. The real game will have unlimited players and will not have deadlines for turns.

Earthwood – *25 players, Fantasy Conflict, 2wk T/A, $4.00 setup – $4.00/move.*

To be released soon. Fantasy game where players run fantasy races and creatures in an attempt to control the 'world'. Very successful overseas and should prove so here.

Chameleon Games

GPO Box 2302, Sydney 2001

Being the largest and most successful PBM company in Australia, Chameleon has available a range of games that cover most aspects of the PBM scene. Tim Hyde and John Masterton, and their ever growing staff have serviced the Australian market with overseas games for nearly two years. To date they have been limited to post-boxing games from overseas, but are venturing into locally run games via *Saga of the Ravin's Nest* (presently under play-test). Chameleon continues to expand their range, and will possibly be introducing further successful overseas games (*StarWeb* and *Crassimoff's World*) in the near future. Currently all games have a set-up fee of $8.00 (rules and first 2 turns), further turns being $4.00 each. Chameleon also produce a magazine covering all their games, as well as being agents for the English PBM magazine *Flagship*.

NOTE: at the time of writing Chameleon are in the process of

continued overleaf

adjusting their price structure – US$ and all that. These prices are their old ones.

The games Chameleon presently offer are:

Universe II – *unlimited players, Space/Exploration game, 3-4wk T/A.*

One of the original successes in the PBM scene, *Universe II* remains an extremely popular game. Players start with a ship in unknown space, and through their travels encounter obstacles, alien races and other players. The game has allowance for a specific action each turn, giving players the opportunity to attempt nearly anything. By trading with civilised systems the player can purchase equipment, allowing further development in the game. Those interested can start colonies on planets or pursue any role they wish. Post-boxed from America, non deadline game.

Terra II – *unlimited players, Tribal Adventure game, 3-4wk T/A.*

For number of people involved and currently playing, *Terra II* would have to be the most popular game in Australia at this stage. Each player is the leader of a tribe on a world entering an ice age, who is forced to lead his people to warmer climates to survive. Players are allowed to design their tribe, and each turn have the opportunity to increase their level in a number of skills that are necessary for survival in the game. No specific actions are allowed, but each turn the player is confronted with a threat/situation that must be resolved. Also post-boxed from America, again non-deadline.

Vorcon Wars – *15 players, Global Conflict, 4wk T/A.*

Set on the planet Vorcon, players start with limited resources, and from their landing site set out to explore, map and eventually own the entire planet. To survive and win, it is necessary to combat the local inhabitants to gain further resources and strength, which eventually leads to encounters and possible conflict with other players. During your turn it is only possible to see those hexes within a range of two hexes of your commander. This range is also the limit for most game options that are available, and thus as players empires become larger not all of your hexes can be seen. It is this factor combined with the simple and ingenious operation of the game that attracts many gamers to play. Post-boxed from England. An extremely addictive game.

Feudal Lords – *12 players, Medieval conflict, 4-5wk T/A.*

Set on an 'area system' map of England players compete for control of half the available 'fiefs'. Starting with a home fief you must conquer player and non-player fiefs, forcing the owning Lords to swear 'fealty'. Fully computer moderated with moves executed by selection of specific actions. Player diplomacy is essential for victory, and interaction and co-operation is well covered within the game system. Post-boxed from America.

ZorphWar – *8 players, Tactical Space Conflict, 4wk T/A.*

A fast action game of fleet combat, that involves no diplomacy and is entirely computer-moderated. Players command a mobile base ship, and a fleet of warships selected within a points and ship-type limit. Most ship-types have a special weapon available making the initial choice important. The game is action-packed, with points being scored by destroying ships. The game is run over a short period of time, with vitory going to the highest scorer in the time available.

Quest of the Great Jewels – *12 players, Fantasy Wargame, 4wk T/A.*

You assume the role of one of the 4 types of being, in a struggle against all to become the sole ruler of the Zorplia continent. Quest is again a fully computer-moderated game, complete with a hilarious set of rules. Another overseas success story, *Quest of the Great Jewels* has only recently been offered in Australia.

Games Systems

G.P.O. Box 1733 Canberra City A.C.T. Ph (062) 27 5446

Games Systems was established in 1978. It is licenced by Games Designer Workshop (GDW: the writers of TRAVELLER™) to produce Traveller material overseas and in Australia. They run the largest single game in Australia (possibly the world) called *Cluster-III.*

They also run a number of smaller games.

Cluster-III – *2,000 players world wide. $5.00 setup – $2.50/period of play – unlimited moves (7 cents per move after first 36 per turn).*

Based on GDW's Trillion Credit Squadron, players are located in either the Core area, Spiral arm area or Globular cluster zones of the spiral galaxy, as either planet controllers, merchant traders, pirates or simply role players. Action is fast and extensive, (including plenty of scope for conquest, negotiation and colonisation) in this game which emphasises player–player contact.

Sea–Prince – *25 players, $15.00 setup – $5.00/turn.*

Setup includes detailed rules to build steam, air and sail ships on the low gravity water world of Veterval. Negotiate the currents and winds to plan strategic conquest of the world.

Also planned for release in September 1985 *"En Guarde" and "Cave – In"*

The Missing Tiger

GPO Box 286c, Hobart 7001 TAS. Ph (002) 23 3926.

This Tasmanian based moderating service offers at present two PBM games, accompanied by an extremely high degree of customer service. Under the guidance of Rick Snell and John Campbell, *Missing Tiger* continue to expand their services to the Australian Public. To date the *Diplomacy* fraternity owes them much gratitude, for taking on and printing the zine *The Go-Between* (covering PBM games of *Diplomacy, Machiavelli, Kingmaker, Origins WWII* – $12 for 8 issues). They also have available their own company magazine, *The Hunted Star.*

The games Missing Tiger presently offer are:

Return from Sirius – *9 players, Space/Exploration conflict, 2wk T/A.*

As a ruler of an industrialised planet far from Earth, players are required to build cargo vessels and expand out to explore and find ore types, which are used in trade. Eventually conflict with other players may occur, but due to a choice of 3 conditions for victory, it is possible to win without fighting, as the emphasis on logistics is heavy. Set-up fee is $5.00 plus a $5.00 deposit (returned at the end of the game), further turns being $2.50 each. Different variants of the game are available.

Demonsland – *Solo, Fantasy Adventure, Set-up $10.00, $5.00/move.*

A Role-playing game where you direct your character to adventure in the fantasy world of *Demonsland.* The nature of the game requires a high degree of interaction, input and freedom of action for both the player and the gamemaster. Should prove popular with Australia's role-players.

PBM Games

360 Winona Rd, Mt Eliza 3930 VIC.

Formed by PBM veteran Lex Young, PBM Games exists solely at this stage to market the game *Ringquest*. The game is now run commercially, but Lex continues to run a large playtest game, and has been very receptive to player suggestions and responses. As *Ringquest* continues to cater for players ideas, undoubtedly the games appeal will grow.

Ringquest – *40 players, Role-playing Adventure, 2-3 wk T/A, Set-up $10.00.*

A unique PBM game that succeeds extremely well in replacing the normal role-playing GM with a computer. Players start by designing their own party of up to 7 characters, and choosing from a list of available secret Quests. Interaction between player and non-player characters is high, and with the vastness of the Ringworld, player diplomacy becomes a must. Fully computer-moderated, *Ringquest* is a superbly designed game that must appeal to all role-players.

Snedco

310 Herman St, Lawnton 4501 QLD.

Originally started as a service for players, *Snedco* have since become commercial due to popularity of their game *Centre-Earth* which has, over a long period, passed through a number of stages of development. Undoubtedly the game will continue to change in the future.

Centre-Earth Campaign – *limited players, Medieval Campaign, 3wk T/A.*

Based on a mythical continent with four major empires and many smaller kingdoms. Players can choose from a large array of roles within these nations. An extremely flexible campaign that caters well for a player's imagination within the scope of the rules. Players can choose between being Active (setup and 2 turns $10, each additional turn $4, 10 turns for $35), smaller roles that keep the active player wary.

Snedco are expanding the game with a parallel continent in the near future (room for approx. 30 new players).

Centre-Earth has a fanzine that is issued to all players every second turn.

Telebraille

Mills Ave, Sassafras 3787 VIC. Ph (03) 755 1341.

Most likely the first commercially run PBM company in Australia, *Telebraille* covers not only the PBM scene, but caters for those able to Play-by-Modem. Run by Jim Eadie, both of these services have applied to the company's games of *Space Empires*. Those interested in games that can be played via electronic mail should contact *Telebraille*.

In recent months *Space Empires* has been effected by the fact that The Australian Beginning (the electronic mail service that *Telebraile* uses) has been off the air but the system is now back up and running and the games are returning to normal again.

Space Empires – *13 players, Strategic Space Conflict, $10.00 set-up.*

Each player starts with a home-world and exploration fleets, from which to develop an Empire. With other players obviously doing the same, conflict and diplomacy become an integral part of the game. Scattered about the galaxy are artifacts, some of worth, some cursed. Victory is won on a score basis, with points awarded for ownership of artifacts, worlds and fleets. Space Empires has proven to be an extremely popular game.

That about covers it. If I have managed to miss anybody, or any game, then contact me via *Pandora*, and I will attempt to rectify ommissions in the next issue. The range is vast, but in no means complete. Many more overseas games are being introduced directly to the Australian market in the near future. It is also possible to play through overseas companies for games not available here. The Australian market is relatively small, but growing as the industry grows. The best advice I can give is to choose carefully, as not all games will be to your liking. But remember, once you start to play,

Watch out... It's addictive

(ED – Cameron would like to make contact with PBM and other gamers in New Zealand. Readers can contact him through the following address:
Pandora Magazine, Kim Books, 82 Alexander St., Crows Nest NSW 2065).

Sorry Cameron, we just couldn't resist.
Reprinted from The Wizard's Grimore - Australian Wizard PBM Games' magazine.

The Design of
Play By Mail Games

by John Campbell of *The Missing Tiger*.

A good game should have almost no rules, and almost infinite complexity i.e. it should be very easy to learn and almost impossible to master.

There are several problems with designing Play-By-Mail (PBM) games. In this article I will comment on the main problem – the "size" of each turn – and the advantages of the mail as a medium, using *Return From Sirius*, a game I have designed, as the main example of a PBM game.

Return From Sirius is an empire-building, space-exploration game. Each of the nine players starts the game with almost nothing and ends the game with a large empire to run. The game basically involves moving raw materials from your outer planets to your industrial planets in order to supply your industry and make more spaceships, industry, mines, planetary defence units etc. Of course, your interests conflict with those of other players...

TURN SIZE

The main problem with PBM games is that each turn must be "large": it must take several hours to complete. A recent survey of *Return From Sirius* players showed that each turn took them between one and six hours to complete. One player took 12 hours. If each turn doesn't take a long time the players will feel that they aren't getting value for money. It should also be simple enough for a player to do an adequate turn in 30 minutes if no more time can be found. It's here that the design of a PBM game becomes difficult. Several different aspects of games must be considered:

RESOLUTION

Fantasy games tend to have high resolution. By that, I mean that the smallest object a player can see is likely to be very small indeed – sword size for example – and it's usually manipulated by a roughly human-sized object. The problem starts here. If there are objects as small as swords, the player will need to manipulate them: and when a player swings a sword he makes another decision, seconds later, about where to swing next. But the next decision in real time is two weeks away, or whatever the turnaround time is. So two weeks of real time becomes two seconds of game time.

One solution of this resolution problem is to allow the player to list alternatives for example:

3"I swing high then if he ducks I swing low but if he steps back I lunge followed by either a running attack or another lunge depending on whether he..."

A more usual solution is to allow the player to select the weapon after which the rules dictate how it is used. At that high resolution there is no justification for letting the rules control the use of the weapon other than that the game could not be played without such control.

This problem of high resolution can be avoided by designing a low-resolution game. In such a game, only huge objects such as armies can be seen in any detail. Then, when the designer has to take the freedom to make decisions away from the player so that those decisions are subject only to the rules, there is a realistic and believable justification: delegation of duty. You tell your generals (non-existent outside the rules) the basic formation and components of your army and delegate smaller details such as the tactics to be used to take advantage of the terrain.

Return From Sirius has low resolution. The smallest object visible to a player is a spaceship, and not even it can be seen in detail. Exactly how a spaceship handles itself in battle is none of its owners concern. The owner isn't on that ship. The responsibility of handling the battle has been delegated to the captain (nonexistent outside the rules).

TIMING

In PBM games, as opposed to face-to-face games, a player does not get to see and consider the effect of one phase before having to decide the orders for the next phase. This makes a PBM version of a normally face-to-face game (if it has more than one phase per turn) much more difficult because the uncertainty a player faces is greater. Imagine playing a game of chess where each player plays a move and then writes down his next move before seeing his opponent's reply. After the reply the move which was written down is played, and another is written down. That multi-phase game of chess is similar to multi-phase PBM games. Even worse: in PBM games each player usually has allies with whom he must co-operate.

Here's an example from *Return From Sirius*: if two players want to trade ore with each other, each of them must take his ore in a spaceship to a planet and unload the ore. Only the owner of a planet can load ore from that planet on to a ship. Therefore, the traders must arrange with each other for the ownership of that planet to alternate. The timing is important because the schedule for the good use of spaceships requires that they not be wasted by staying on one planet for more than one turn. Many players have miscalculated or mistimed such operations because the operations take several phases to complete.

So what does multi-phased games mean from the point of view of the designer? It makes easier the creation of a complex game because play often involves simultaneous moves, or at least moves made while the player is ignorant of the other player's moves, and therefore it increases uncertainty. But care must be taken to make sure the ignorance of the other player's moves is not so great as to forbid planning, otherwise players will simply get annoyed at unrealistic restrictions.

PROCESSING OF TURNS

There is a choice open to the designer: the moves may be processed simultaneously or as they come in from each player, with the idea of a set turn-time thrown away. The financial temptation to choose the second path is hard to resist – I estimate that about 30% more turns would get processed that way – but the game becomes unfair on those who live a long way away so the post is slow, and on those who wish to spend less time or money than other players. And the game suffers. For instance, if a player must trade with another player it should be possible for both players to give orders which will work provided that the other player does what he said he was going to do. It should not happen that an operation involving two or more players fails because one of the players' moves arrived and was processed a day before the other's. That only frustrates a player.

HIDDEN INFORMATION

This is where the design of PBM games is exciting. The rules themselves are often hidden – part of the game is discovering the rules. Players may be told that only say 20% of the total rule book is given to them at the start of the game. Imagine playing chess and not being told how a rook moves until you try to move one – very realistic for games less symbolic than chess.

The area of play is almost always hidden at the start of play; and the other player's spaceships, armies, tribes etc are often seen in incomplete detail. For example, in *Return From Sirius*, a player sees another player's spaceship only in terms of the general class it falls into, not in terms of the firepower or cargo capacity and no information of what is being transported is available. In PBM this is done elegantly – there are no bundles of upturned cards and no tables to generate random events. This is why trading information is so important in most PBM games and especially so in games with hidden rules.

The designer is faced with a choice of complete rules or growing rules, and I think the choice is a matter of taste. Each has its advantages. Growing rules can be very exciting or very frustrating, depending on the temperament of the player. The glaring disadvantage of growing rules is that players with experience have an enormous advantage over newcomers, not because the experienced players better understand the strategy needed in the game but because they know more rules. With fixed rules, a player knows he is getting all he can out of the game. I chose fixed rules for *Return From Sirius* largely because growing-rules annoy me, and I naturally designed a game I would like to play.

From the point of view of proper moderation, answering the inevitable questions that result from incomplete rules takes a long time. A decent answer takes much longer to write than a question, because the answer should include information the player would have sought had he been more familiar with the game. It should also answer questions which follow naturally from the answer to the first one.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

An almost unlimited number of players, perhaps thousands, with new players being put into a quiet corner to build up before meeting the older and established ones? Or should there be a fairly small number of players say between one and 50 who all start at the same time? *Return From Sirius* falls into the second class, a choice I made because of the horrible thought of taking my brand new little spaceship into someone's PBM universe and being blown to pieces by the first other player I meet. In *Return From Sirius* and some other games, al players start equal and by the end of the game some are much more equal than others. In these simultaneous start games, each player has an equal chance to win, rather than the one who started first or stayed longest having a greater chance to win. One advantage of continuous games is that a player who is eager enough can enter several times and ally with himself. Another advantage is the quality and scale of the diplomacy which results from such games. It's majestic. Alliances with scores of players and a regular newsletter abound.

UNITY

No aspect of the game should be able to be considered alone: each decision should need to be taken with the situation of the player's whole playing area in mind. This is why chess is such a complex game – you cannot look at just one piece and make the best move for it, not if you hope to win. In *Return From Sirius*, the movement of each of about 10 spaceships, all different, and the
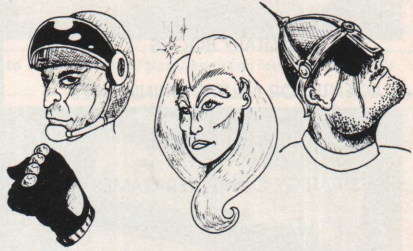
supply condition of several dozen planets, must be considered at the same time. The average human brain is incapable of both keeping that amount of information available and doing anything with it, so a player must somehow summarise higher needs on a planet and remember only that summary. I doubt if, after the first few moves, a "correct" move could be made without weeks of consideration – and that is how a game should be.

SUMMARY

Designing PBM games is great fun! I think that about half of the people who talk to me at conventions have "got a great idea for a PBM game – I'll moderate it sometime". I'm not suprised. You have immense freedom – any number of players all moving simultaneously, rules as complex as you like and strange playing areas – doughnuts are popular. You can attempt to design a "realistic" science fiction or fantasy game and the ability to hide as much information as you want.

There is one very large restriction. Not only do you have to be willing to run it now, but also next year when you would rather be lying in the sun in the south of France. A pity – maybe I'll write a game about the south of France.

NOW FROM THE PEN OF MAD MARK DEWIS, COMES A HERO TO END ALL HEROES! WITH A WHOOSH OF JETS AND A HEART OF GOLD, ADVENTURE COMICS IS PROUD TO PRESENT: THE ORIGIN OF...
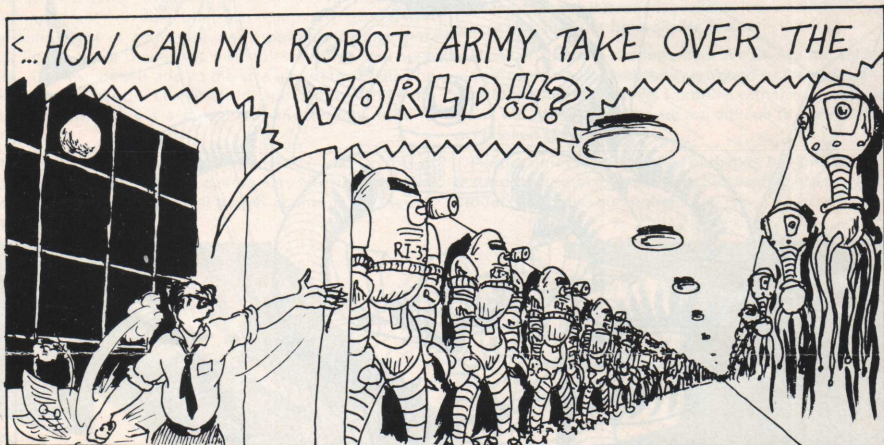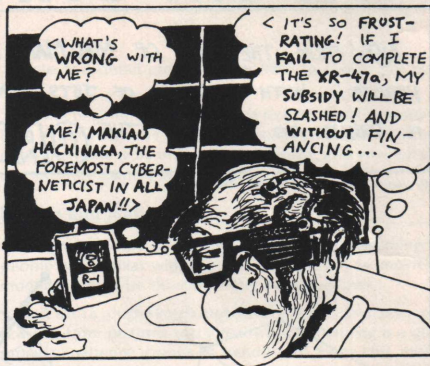

THE MIGHTY
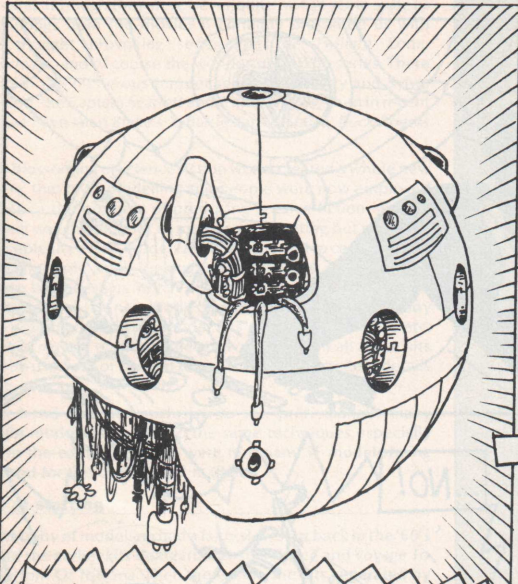ROBO BUSH!
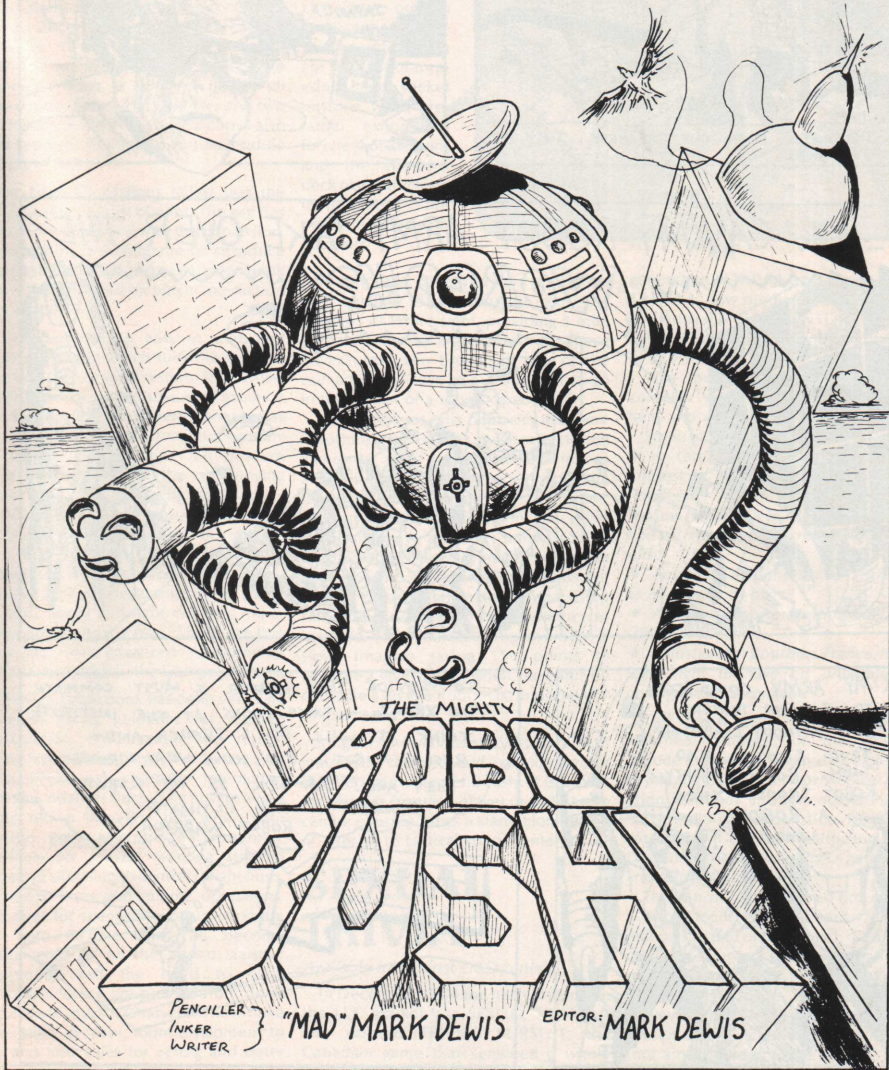
PENCILLER
INKER
WRITER } "MAD" MARK DEWIS   EDITOR: MARK DEWIS
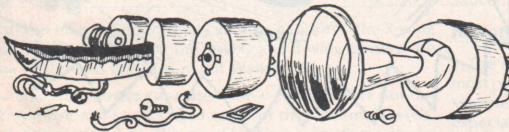
< HIS BODY IS INVULNERABLE! NO BULLET CAN PIERCE HIS ULTRALLOY SKIN; HE CAN WITHSTAND THE HOTTEST FIRE OR THE COLDEST SNOW! HE CAN FLY INTO SPACE OR TO THE GREATEST DEPTH! HIS RADAR SENSORS DETECT ANY FOE, REGARDLESS OF DIRECTION! HE HAS SIX EXTENSIBLE TENTACLES — ALL OF WHICH MAY ACCEPT A HUGE VARIETY OF MANIPULATORS, WEAPONS OR TOOLS... >
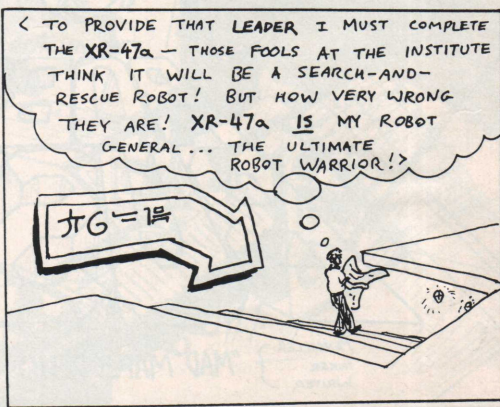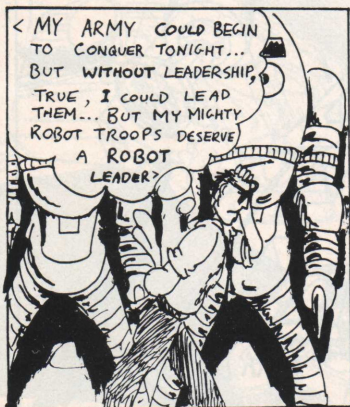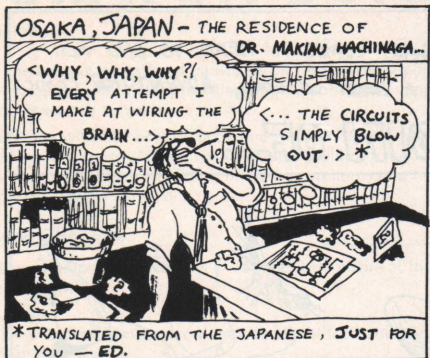
MY ROBO-BUSHI!

<... BUT ALL WILL GO TO NAUGHT IF I CANNOT ACTIVATE THE BRAIN! >

DOCTOR HACHINAGA TOILED HARD THAT NIGHT. TIME AND TIME AGAIN, HE TRIED TO ACTIVATE THE COOL, CALCULATING SUPERMIND. TIME AND TIME AGAIN, HE FAILED. THE COMPLEX MICROCHIP CIRCUITRY REMAINED INERT.

UNTIL...
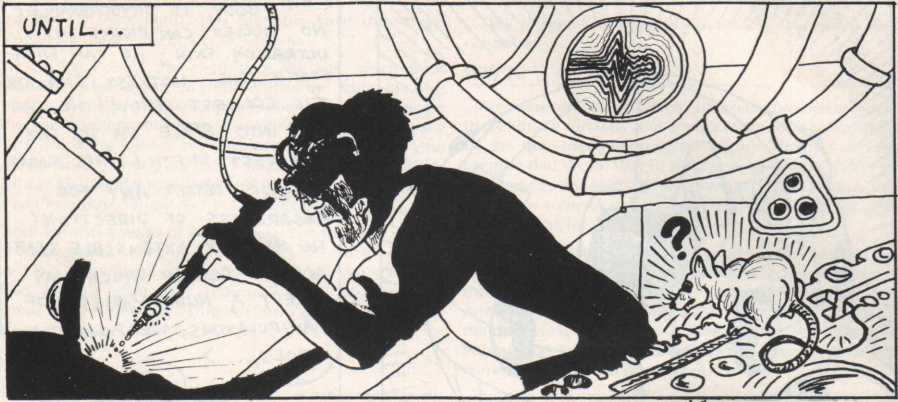
THE TINY MOUSE SMELT SOMETHING... IT SMELT **GOOD!**

SNIFF SNIFF

DID IT TASTE GOOD AS WELL ...?

NIBBLE NIBBLE NIBBLE NIBBLE

SNAP!

...NO!

KA BOOM!

Don't just sit there....
Do Something!
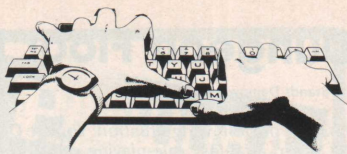
By Mervyn Beamish

This is a regular computer column. The aim is to make it a forum for game designers, programmers and players. All contributions welcome. Address is:

Pandora Magazine
KIM BOOKS 82 Alexander St.,Crows Nest N.S.W. 2065

For a home computer to play strategic games it needs to be able to think for itself...or at least give that impression. The aim of this column is to explore various programming concepts and techniques for obtaining AI (Artificial Intelligence) with your home computer. The column will have a leaning towards the design and running of strategic and tactical computer games.

Adventure Games

The Adventure game (not to confused with strategic games) enthusiast has been supported with books on programming techniques, playing hints and reviews. There is hardly a home computer magazine published that has not printed articles on adventure gaming. Because of this demistification, as it were, there are many games writers heavily involved in Adventure Games and openly researching new techniques.

Software packages such as *The Quill* and *Adventure Master* are available for the home computerist. With these all that is necessary is a storyline, map and treasures and the computer will then generate the completed adventure. No need to know what's going on under the bonnet. Oh! if only we had this type of thing for wargamers. Well we do but nowhere to the extent of the adventuring fraternity.

Carriers At War

Ian Trout and Roger Keating's *Carriers at War* (Apple and Commodore) has as part of the package a Designer's Manual which

". . . will provide you with enough experience to generate a scenario of your own."

In other words the AI is sitting in the software just ready for you to feed it a WWII scenario.

Other options include the use of existing business software such as *DBII* and *Superbase* databases. This seems to be the way many PBM writers have gone. There is some information about AI or Strategic techniques published in magazines such as *Computer Gaming Word* (USA) and *The War Machine* (UK) and others. Books have been written and research is currently being carried out but these are generally removed from the home computer environment and use more exotic languages such as LISP and PROLOG.

There is a sprinkling of books being released such as *Artificial Intelligence on the Commodore 64* by Keith and Steven Brain and *Writing Strategic Games on your Atari Computer* by John White (both Sunshine Books).

What do we expect

So what do we expect our computer to do?

Writing in *Computer Gaming World* Bruce Webster listed the following areas of AI that could be used in a strategic game.

Making decisions	Talking with the player
Defining and seeking goals	Learning
Representing the "world"	Recognising patterns

Let us look through this list in a little more detail.

Making decisions: In the article accompanying this column we start growing a games tree. This is a traditional (if there is any traditions) method of computer decision making. The computer will be called upon to evaluate each position, each possible game move against a table of legal moves, material gains and strategic values. Based on this evaluation it then has to decide on the best move available.

Defining and seeking goals: Goal seeking is the life blood of most strategic games. Finding the right goals, arranging them in priority order, breaking them into sub-goals (tactics), determining at what stage they are lost or gained, at what stage they are not worth achieving, setting alternatives etc.

This is the cut and thrust of the strategic game – the adrenalin.

Representing the "world": within the computer is housed the 'world' the 'universe' in which the game scenario is played out. The computer has to communicate the form of this 'world' to other players be it a simple chess board, a wargame map with player pieces or tabulated planetary resources report.

In this area we may draw some techniques from our Adventure gaming brethren and modify them to suit our needs.

Talking to players: Two way communication. A speaking computer is here and now but a listening one is a little further down the line. Keyboard, lightpen and other peripherals are the devices used to 'talk'; to make moves, to arrange diplomatic deals and alliances, to carry out fleet manouvers and glean intelligence information, or just say 'bang bang you're dead!'.

Here again the Adventure gamer has developed a number of excellent techniques for 'talking' with the computer.

Learning: The more practice you have by playing a game the better you get at it and the more likely that the game becomes boring. Arcade games attempt to get over this problem using difficulty levels but this tends to be only superficial – more spaceships shoot at you at a faster rate.

If the computer can also learn in the same way it then becomes a more worthy adversary. It should also be possible, through passwords or other identifiers, to play at different levels against a number of different players with varying ability or experience.

From the designer's point of view consider the situation of setting up a basic game scenario then set the computer to work playing against itself. In theory the learning process should allow it to modify, expand and play test game to the 'n'th degree or the limit of its memory – in theory!

Recognition of patterns: It is essential for the computer to recognise both physical and abstract patterns to make the evaluations necessary for its decision phase. In chess it is not sufficient to do a material count of your men and subtract a material count of the opposition. You must consider the positions of all players and weigh the effects of each move.

Pattern recognition is the essence of strategic and tactical planning it is the heart of most chess playing software and the basis on which many commercial strategic games are based.

Dungeon Floor Plans: A Review

by Brandt Dainow

Imagine the following situation: You are Dungeon Master (D.M.) in a fantasy role-playing game. The players have been called upon to enter into a graveyard at night to kill a vampire that's using it as a base from which to terrorize the surrounding countryside.

The vampire you've generated is a particularly powerful one, and he's taken upon to control of a large section of the graveyard. There are traps at odd locations, and he's got large numbers of minions scattered around the graveyard to protect him. But you want the players to be on their guard, to realise that this is no ordinary vampire. This way they'll have (maybe) a fighting chance, and you'll get a good dose of tension going right from the start. You've got a couple of options at this point. You could have the local villagers inform the players that this is no ordinary vampire, but what would villagers know about vampires, and how many player characters listen to advice from peasants anyway. Alternatively, you could describe the graveyard to them when they arrive – drifts of mist washing around gravestones, scuttling noises behind tombs, rank pools inhabited by large and hideous toads, glowing moss clinging to rocks, bones crunching underfoot, that sort of thing. But when the combat is actually joined the players will want to know boring details like where's the nearest headstone to duck behind (when the zombies let loose with bows), how fare to a climbable tomb offering a good field of vision (so the magic-user can let off a good area zap spell as the skeletons emerge from the open graves), and so on. To really give the players a detailed idea of layout (distances, obstructions, size of pits, length of wall, distances from one area of cover to another), you've really got to let them see it. If you happen to have a vinyl combat sheet you can draw it up on that. If you're a fanatical figures collector you've probably got models of everything and can just lay it all out. Alternatively (and much cheaper) – you use the Dungeon Floor Plan pieces from Games Workshop.

Dungeon Floor Plans is a series of four boxed sets of objects and terrain. Each set contains 12 printed cardboard sheets marked off in one inch squares with terrain features or objects printed on them. The sheets are cut up as desired.

One sheet for example, contains mine features. Printed on it are sections of rail, in curves, junctions, and straights, also some wagons, winches, hand carts and so on. Each set has a rough theme to it.

Set One contains stone stairs, flagstone, dirt, and wooden floorings, doors, chests, and tables – all basic building interiors.

Set Two contains boats, rafts, battlements, jetties and quaysides, tiled rooves (broken and whole), and timber features (such as stockade walls, stairs, and wooden bridges) – all basic building exteriors.

Set three contains wilderness features and catacomb / graveyard pieces. There are lots of trees, shrubs, and hedges, of a variety of sizes. there are also statues, coffins, piles of rubble, alters, fountains,and pits.

Set Four is exclusively cavern walls and floors, abysses, rockfalls, and the mine features mentioned earlier.

A great deal of effort ahas gone into creating pieces that will fit together in different ways. The cavern set not only contains lengths of relatively straight tunnel, but also junction and corner sections that will fit next to these to create utterly confusing mazes. In a similar fashion, the interior of a building can be put together with pieces from Set One, and then covered by roofing

from Set Two so that the players don't know what's in there until they enter, when the roof sheet can be quickly removed.

The most immediate impact I found using these sheets had was a great increase to speed of play. By using these sheets you eliminate the need for description of a particular setting. You simply lay it all down before the players and let them see for themselves. There's no need to go into the details of lengths, widths, and arrangements. The heights of important features must be mentioned, but other than that it's a case of "what you see is what you get". This makes a really packed room possible. Under normal circumstances there is a limit to how much can be placed in a chamber simply because players can only retain so much verbal description. Furthermore, long descriptions tend to bore players. Using the Floor Plans really detailed rooms become feasible.

A new aspect of play emerges when these pieces are used. In most situations a particular piece of terrain is of more importance than the rest. It may be the bush under which the orc chieftain is hiding while he gives directions, it may be the coffin in the tomb-full-of-coffins which contains the vampire, or it may simply be the section of wall behind which is hiding the pesky NPC that's been annoying the players for weeks. When a D.M. describes a scene items of significance tend to stand out. Unless special care is taken to give equal attention to all features, to control the tone of voice, the facial expressions and body language, players notice things their characters wouldn't and the D.M. never intended. Don't think the players aren't that perceptive – they are. Usually they won't be aware that they're reading these details, it's occurring on an subliminal level, but read them they will, and act on them.

You can usually spot the players that are best at this by the way they can be reasonably expected to do so (every group has one). However, if a verbal description is replaced by a visual representation, you – as a D.M. – are giving nothing away that you don't want to. Players will still pick on a particular feature as especially significant, but quite often it will be the wrong one. They'll look at the display and pick out a feature which never occurred to you as being of special significance, you just threw it in for colour, and off they'll trot – blasting away – while their enemy is behind them chuckling fiendishly to himself.

There is another advantage in using the Floor Plans, that of atmosphere. No amount of verbal description can ever replace actually seeing something for yourself. It's one thing to describe a leap across an alleyway from rooftop to rooftop, but put a couple of thick books down with roofing sheets across them and a gap between, stick the player's figure at the edge of the gap, and most players will think twice. What's happened in the players mind is that "I've got to make a roll against my character's dexterity" has been replaced by "I've got to leap THAT!". The whole situation is much more real.

This is not to say that the Dungeon Floor Plans are not without their disadvantages, they are. The major one is cost. If you want the complete set, you're looking at over $40.00. But most D.M.'s have a particular style in terms of setting as well as anything else. Some do mainly dungeon adventures, others concentrate on cities, others on wilderness escapades. So in most cases you'll get more use out of one set than another. If every session is set in dungeons, you'll get more use out of one set than another. If every session is set in dungeons, you'll have little use for Set Three, full of boats, jetties, and rooves. On the other hand, if your players are always charging around the wilderness, and wouldn't enter a cavern unless hogtied and screaming, you won't need anything except Set Two. So in most cases you won't

need all four sets, just a selection that suits you.

The other disadvantage is storage. Once a sheet has been cut up into its respective features, you're left with a jumble of little pieces of cardboard. Searching through 30 or 40 of these to find the right altar or shrub can take some time if they're not stored in some sort of order. As the individual pieces can range in size from one inch square ot twelve inches long, ordered storage is almost impossible. The solution to this is really quite simple however. Don't use all the pieces all the time. Reserve using them for situations in which they're going to make a significant difference. these will be situations in which placement of

DUNGEON FLOOR PLANS 3
Role-Playing Aid for Dungeon Adventures

individual features is important to play, or when you want the setting to have impact – cluttered scenes where it's almost impossible to move for junk (such as a warehouse or store room), or scenes with great atmosphere (such as the innermost shrine of a crazed cult). Not only will this prevent the players becoming blase about the D.M.'s new toy, it will serve to keep play moving.

Of course, the ultimate test of items like these is the quality of the artwork, which is happily, pretty high. The cavern flooring is a little bland, but there's not really that much you can do with bare flat rock at the best of times, and it certainly captures the atmosphere. This is perhaps the most notable feature of these floor plans – instant atmosphere. Besides a combat display set up with the Dungeon Floor Plans, and ordinary display, or even one drawn up on a vinyl mat, pales into uninspiring mediocrity.

As an adjunct to the Dungeon Floor Plans series, Games Workshop have also released a Dungeon Planner series. These consist of two sets (retailing at $15.95), the first titled "Caverns of the Dead", and the second "Nightmare at Blackmarsh". Both consist of a 3 foot by 2 foot multi-colour map of a location (a village in "Nightmare at Blackmarsh" and a tomb complex in

"Caverns of the Dead". The maps are again marked off in one-inch squares at a scale of one inch to every five feet, perfect for figures. The maps use the same representations as are found in the Dungeon Floor Plans series, and could easily have been put together out of them.

In addition to the maps are very pretty maps of the surrounding terrain done in a semi-medieval style, a series of scenario suggestions, and random encounter tables. In the case of "Caverns of the Dead" the random encounter tables are linked to the scenario suggestions, while in "Nightmare at Blackmarsh" they're linked to particular areas of the village and time of day. In both cases they are easily the best random encounter tables around, full of variety, surprises, and incredibly believable situations. Both sets also contain a description of each room or passageway, with space left for insertion of personalised details. This enables the same map to be used for several different locations.

"Nightmare at Blackmarsh" contains the most data, providing lots of great NPC's (which can be located by the D.M.), a greater variety of scenario suggestions, much more extensive random encounter tables, and also includes random event tables. I found "Caverns of the Dead" a little pointless, after all, a dungeon's a dungeon, and this one is pretty small. But "Nightmare at Blackmarsh" is guaranteed to turn just going to the shops into a full-scale epic, while also providing the opportunity for stacks of comedy. It really is an excellent multi-purpose module and supplement rolled into one.

Title: *Dungeon Floor Planner Series*
Producer: *Games Workshop*
Price: *R.R.P. $10.95*
Availability: *Available at most good games stores.*

Contributions

Writing Reviews

PANDORA is always interested in reader reviews of kits, games, PBM, software and publications. To cover the field as widely as possible it is our intention to publish as many capsule reviews, approximately 400 words in length, as possible along with a smaller number of feature reviews.

We will pay $10 for each capsule review accepted unless we supply the item to be reviewed in which case the item MAY be offered as payment.

At this stage reviews may cover either a new item or one that has been on the market for some time. However older items should be the most recent 'update'. Why not submit a capsule review at the same time as a feature review.

CAPSULE REVIEWS

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic Information – Present these facts in order: NAME of item being reviewed, Medium/Type (i.e. board game, Commodore C64 adventure disk, Scale model kit etc), Designer/Author/Programmer, Publisher/Manufacturer/Distributor, Price, Availability (i.e. Gaming outlets, computer stores etc.), Reviewer and any other obvious detail we've not listed.

(2) General description of the item – (i.e. Theme and concept).

(3) Strong Points – Discuss what is good about the game; bring out its worth while features. Be specific – 'Fun' is a useless adjective.

(4) Weak points – Discuss its problems even if they are minor ones. If there is a fatal flaw come out and say so. If you can phrase your criticism as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation – Your overall opinion. Who should and should not buy it, and why. Is the game worth its price etc..

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name WILL be printed. No item must be reviewed by its designer and/or author, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher or distributor. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!)

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him/her decide whether to buy the item. Keep in mind when you write. This is a short review not a complete analysis.

FEATURE REVIEWS

These will be reviews of 1,000 to 1,500 words long. They should contain all information listed above, plus whateverelse the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. Achievable illustrations may be suggested.

COMPLETE GAMES

We intend to publish, fairly frequently, complete board and role play games (and computer listings) within PANDORA. Already some Australian authors are submitting work to us. We would welcome serious game design submissions for future publications.

The more thoroughly prepared a submission is the more consideration it will gain. Mr Armintrout's submission of 'DRAGON RUN' came playtested with suggested graphics, mock-up gamesboard, counters and Instructions were neatly typed with advance game rules for future issues. Publisher reserves the right to make editorial adjustment to any submission accepted.

GENERAL

PBM rumours, contacts, threats and other mischief are welcome. Along with requests for players, model parts etc.

Clubs – 'You show us yours and we'll show you ours'. Register with PANDORA. Let us have your office bearers names, contact address and all relevant information – meetings, activities – put PANDORA on you newsletter mailing list because when you register we'll be sending you a free club copy each issue.
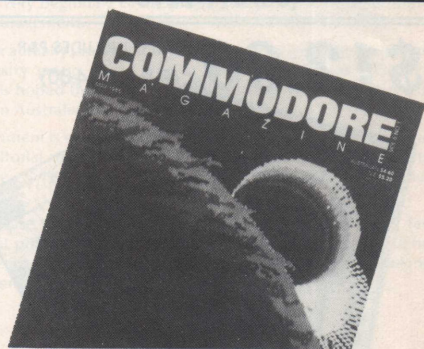
We are open to constructive criticism, suggestions and article submissions not covered above.

Send submissions to KIM BOOKS 82 Alexander Street Crows Nest N.S.W. 2065.

SF Models

SF writers and film makers have given us a romantic (or horrific) glance at the world of intelligent computers. The most famous must be *HAL* of *2001* and *2010* fame. We have *ORIC* and *SLAVE* in *Blake's 7*, *JOSHUA* in *War Games*, the horror of *The Forbin Project* and *Demon Seed*. In *Startrek*, *Dr Who* and other SF television series we have visited whole planets controlled by so called intelligent computers. It seems unlikely that our Apples, Commodores and MicroBees will ever achieve world dominance...or will they!?........