MAY/JUNE 1980
NUMBER 28
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THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 28 – MAY - JUNE, 1980

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GAME MASTER

There have been a number of questions about the "missing your friends" rule in *Melee/Wizard* – specifically "Why is it HARDER to miss a friend as distance increases?" One simple test, which I hope no one will actually try, should convince you that this rule makes sense. Put an apple on your head, and let a friend take a missile weapon (ANY missile weapon) and shoot it off from five feet away. Now, are you willing to let him try it at 30 feet? 30 yards? Why not?

–SJ

SWORDQUEST ERRATUM: Steve Cole (Task Force Games) writes to tell us about a less-than-trivial rules error in *Swordquest*. "Rule 6.42 contains a 'not' that shouldn't be there. Most players I have talked with have figured it out, since the sentence is not grammatically correct with the 'not', and the Capian combat manual (quoted in the rules) contradicts it rather specifically." SO: When playing *Swordquest*, if a withdrawal leaves you with a vacant spot in the Telshir, you *may* fill it from your reserves.

"In *G.E.V.*, does a D result on the CRT eliminate a command post?"

–Stephen Bensley

Treat it as disabled, just like an armor unit. This will keep a mobile CP from moving for a turn, but will have no effect on other CPs. Thank you for noting this omission. I will try to have it corrected in the next edition.

–SJ

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will first be referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Where We're Going

We're now monthly. This issue was mailed around May 10. The next one (No. 29) will be dated July, and will be mailed about June 10. And so on. The number of pages will not decrease; if we get more ads, there'll be *more* pages. And I don't intend to let quality drop, either.

Now the bad news. As I warned last issue, subscription prices have gone up. Same old villain – inflation. The only thing I know to do is to charge what it costs to put out a good magazine, and then give you what you paid for.

If you look at the subscription blank (p. 3) you'll also notice that, for the first time, TSG is accepting overseas subscriptions. You'll also notice that there's a terrible surcharge. Explanation: When Metagaming owned TSG, overseas subs simply weren't accepted because of the tremendous cost and hassle involved. I think that if somebody in (for instance) Great Britain wants TSG badly enough, they ought to be able to get it. But it *costs* . . . Sorry about that.

Retail and Distribution Info

We have given Kalmbach Publishing, Inc., the exclusive right to distribute TSG to craft and hobby shops in the U.S. and Canada. They are also willing to distribute TSG to overseas accounts (one way to lick the subscription surcharge if you live overseas: get your shop to carry TSG!) Craft and hobby stores wishing to sell TSG should contact Kalmbach at 1027 N. 7th St., Milwaukee, WI 53233; 414-272-2060.

Bookstores, newsstands, etc., may deal with Kalmbach or order directly from TSG; write us for details. We'd like to see TSG available in more places.

A Note On †+$&%(†† Zip Codes

Subscribers: Please check your address label and make sure that all of it – ESPECIALLY the zip code – is correct. If it's wrong, please send us the correct information. After this issue, we cannot be responsible if your TSG doesn't reach you because the label is wrong. The post office will reject, return, or destroy second-class mail at the drop of a regulation book.

And a note on address changes: If you move, TELL US. If you move to a new address the post office will destroy all second-class mail sent to the old address, UNLESS you agree to pay forwarding postage. Sometimes even then . . . They throw away your magazine, return the cover to us, and charge us 25 cents. If your magazine is lost and it's our fault (or if it just vanishes) we'll replace it. But we WON'T send you a free copy if you lose yours because you didn't tell us about an address change.

Wrappers

I'm working on some kind of wrapper to protect TSG in the mails. As of this writing, I don't know what, if anything, will come of it – but if I can get a decent bid on a good protective cover, I'll start using one.

* * *

That pretty well wraps up my part of this page. I'll turn you over now to the new TSG editor – Forrest Johnson. I've known Forrest for a long time. He has an extensive background in both publication and wargaming. He also writes. Very well. He's going to do a good job.

I'm turning over day-to-day TSG operations to Forrest, effective already. I'll still keep in constant touch with things; I expect I'll see every word several times before it gets to press. But there's no way that a good monthly magazine can be a one-man operation. I've hired the best help I could – and the rest of the page is his.

–Steve Jackson

New Editorial Policy:
No More Mickey Mouse

I'm sorry, Mickey, but you've got to go. Yes, I know you helped us get started back is 1975, when TSG was just another worm crawling around in Howard Thompson's brain. Yes, I know you've kept us going many a time when copy was short. But no more.

We've outgrown you, Mickey. We have better writers, better artists, and a better idea of what the readers want. We can't afford to keep you on the payroll.

People want better articles and more reviews. They'll get them, even if I have to write every single one myself.

They want *good* art and fiction, or no art and fiction at all. Right! We've set a new standard with this issue, a standard I hope to maintain . . . and raise.

We have a good issue this month, Mickey, and you didn't contribute *anything*. You just don't fit in anymore.

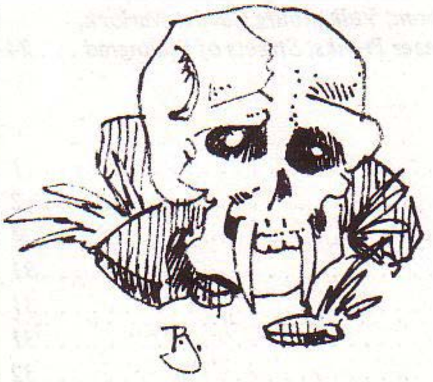
No, you can't hang around the mail room. You've caused us enough trouble in that department already. When I came onboard in April, we had unacknowledged submissions *years old* sitting in the files. Most of that mess is cleared up now, and it won't happen again while I'm editor.

I'm going to try something new – treating contributors like human beings. I'm going to acknowledge all submissions, and when I reject something, I'll give a reason. No more pitiful letters: "What happened to that artwork I sent you four years ago?"

TSG will be a better magazine – for the readers, for the artists, for the writers, and, hopefully, for me. Now, about my salary, Steve . . .

–Forrest Johnson

Next Issue



"The Fantasy Trip." We didn't have room for it this issue – so sorry! Designer article and errata for "In The Labyrinth," "Advanced Melee," "Advanced Wizard," and "Tollenkar's Lair."

Results of last month's contest. Computer kung fu, anyone?

Fiction by Lawrence Watt-Evans.

And reviews of ALL the fantasy and science fiction game magazines.

If your subscription label says "28," this is your last issue. If it says "29" or "30," your subscription is about to expire. See p. 3.

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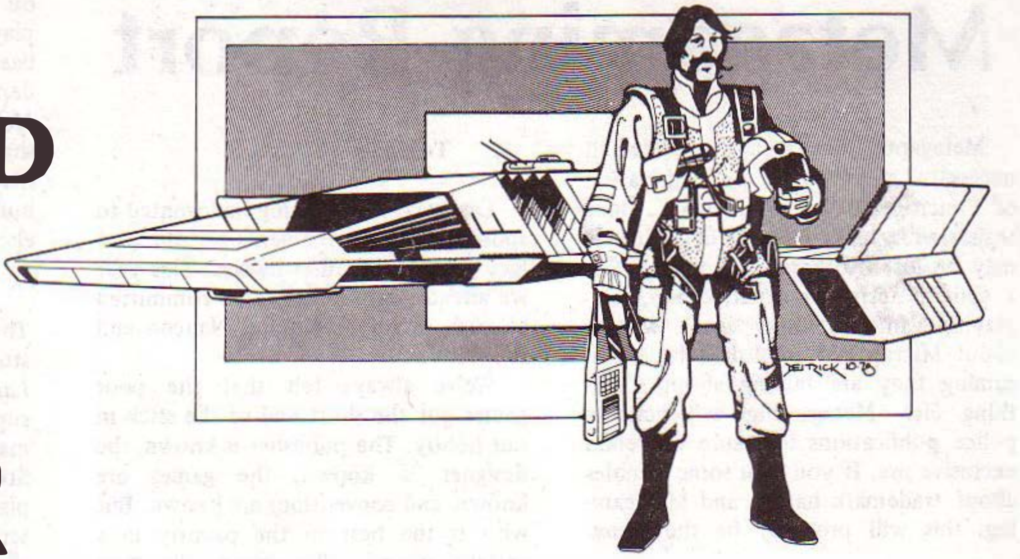

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ALL THE GAMES! TSG will review EVERY game, game supplement, or gaming product it receives . . . and as many historical and modern games as possible! No other magazine even tries to do this. We're committed to it.

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A note on lifetime subscriptions: It's just what it sounds like. In exchange for one $250 payment, you get *The Space Gamer* as long as it and you are both operational. We hope that will be a LONG time.

All subscriptions start with the next issue published.

The Space Gamer / Box 18805-T / Austin, TX 78760

Metagaming Report

Metagaming has finally completed all necessary steps to secure registration of "microgame" as a trademark. Once registered, a mark must be defended. It may be lost if others come to use it as a generic term for small, cheap, fast-playing games. If they aren't writing about Microgames published by Metagaming they are talking about something else. Metagaming will actively police publications to insure we retain exclusive use. If you hear some rumbles about trademark hassles and Metagaming, this will probably be the cause.

Working for Metagaming

Metagaming has broadened its publications program and reorganized the effort. Now, it is easier for those not in Austin to perform publication-related tasks. Aside from game design, two tasks can be performed by mail. The first is play-test/evaluation. This consists of developing a critique and written commentary about a game design. The goal of the written evaluation is to screen out games that aren't suitable for publication and provide those designers with a basis for revision.

The second task is final play-test/editing. This is for games that have been accepted for publication. The goal is for the editor to play-test the game again and develop a final rules draft, corresponding with the designer as needed. This is a harder task and pays more than the more limited evaluations.

If you have a desire to participate in this kind of work then send us a sample of what you can do. One way is to take one of our already-published games and do an evaluation of it. Or, for editing, take one of our games and edit/organize one of its sections the way you feel it should have been done originally. This is a way to put dissatisfaction with a game into writing productively.

Tournament Prizes

Last year Metagaming had wanted to sponsor some tournaments but the project got lost in other hassles. This year we already have over $2,000 committed to cash prizes at Origins, Nancon and Pacificon.

We've always felt that the poor gamer got the short end of the stick in our hobby. The publisher is known, the designer is known, the games are known, and conventions are known. But who is the best in the country in a certain game? Who plays the best *Ogre* or *Stellar Conquest* or whatever?

Metagaming thinks that the gamer should be the hero of gaming. Until a gamer is better known than anyone else in gaming our hobby isn't doing things right. Cash prizes for tournament play is one way to focus attention on gamers and the play of games as the hub of our hobby.

This is one reason Metagaming doesn't feel that game covers should be cluttered with the names of designers, developers, and whatnot like movie credits. That encourages the "author" cultism that plagues and hinders science fiction fandom. There is more to gaming than adulation for the producers. The gamer is the guy who pays the bill and plays the games. He or she should be the one to get the credit and attention.

The day will come when more people in gaming know the leading gamer than know the president of a company or a designer. That is a day we should all be willing to work toward. That is the day our hobby will have grown up and done something more for our customers than count the dollars.

Next for Fantasy Trip

TFT is developing as a comprehensive series of products. The goal is a continuing mixture of materials that enhance player enjoyment at a low price. Metagaming is accepting design submissions in the following areas:

MICROQUESTS – These are programmed solitaire adventures similar in concept to DEATH TEST. They should all be solitaire-playable, yet usable by Game Masters as ready-made mini-labyrinths. Microquests should be no more than 9,000 words long and use no more than one map. They may depend on the *Melee* and *Wizard* rules, maps and play counters; these should serve as the basis for most areas. Labyrinth areas depending on material in *Advanced Melee, Advanced Wizard,* or TFT:ITL should be so identified. Microquests may be set underground, outdoors, in a building, on an island, or anywhere else that fits into the TFT framework.

ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENTS – These are supplementary materials or stocked adventure areas like *Tollenkar's Lair*. The purpose of an adventure supplement is to provide a GM with material he can use in his campaign. Stocked labyrinths are one type of supplement. Another type could be a description of a historical period with charts, details and values necessary for conducting a campaign with TFT rules in that time period. Or a supplement could describe a mythical or fantasy world of your creation.

CONSTRAINTS: Adventure Supplements will be published in 8½x11 book form. Nothing should be included that can't go onto the pages of a booklet. Microquests will have components of the standard 4x7 size. A map could be 4 or 6 panels that size. A 4x7 sheet of counters could also be included. An important point: CHANGE NO RULES that are already established in TFT, and be careful about creating new rules that don't fit well into the system.

No new character actions or options should be added. You may develop new races, monsters, artifacts, treasures, social structures, economies, traps, talents, spells and such as long as they aren't over-powerful or inconsistent with TFT.

Those making submissions to Metagaming must do so on the proper submission forms. These may be obtained on request by mail from Metagaming. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will speed our response. Submissions not accompanied by a form cannot be considered due to policy and time constraints.

Important Notice

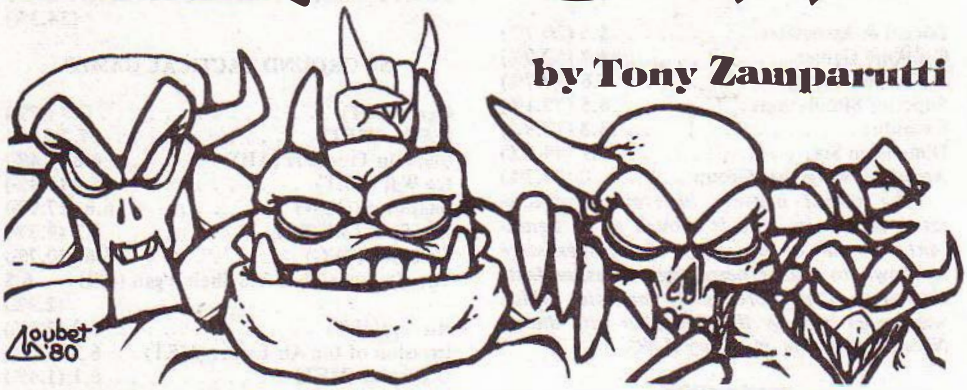
Metagaming and *The Space Gamer* are no longer connected in any way. If you have a change of address or complaint about one or the other, it MUST go to the proper address. If you have a magazine question send it to TSG. If you have a question about Metagaming service or products then write to the Metagaming address.

– Howard Thompson

Featured Review

DEMONS

by Tony Zamparutti



DEMONS, the first in a new SPI series of fantasy mini-games, is an interesting little game set in medieval Armenia. Armenia? Well, there seems to be treasure there. So, in 1091, all these magicians tromp into the Armenian countryside searching for riches and fame. Each of up to four players controls one magician, while various and sundry Armenian armies (controlled by no one but the rules) try to capture these intruding sorcerors. The main talent of a magician is his or her ability to conjure and control demons who have various powers and abilities.

The physical quality of the game is up to SPI's high standards. It has a color cover-sheet with a rather good painting of a demon with cat-like yellow eyes. The map is somewhat small, taking half of an 11" x 17" sheet (the rest is reserved for displays and grids). The map contains the traditional woods, mountain, town, river, and open terrain types, along with forts and the occasional abbey. No surprises here. I don't know if the map is really a faithful representation of 11th-century Armenia, which might or might not have contained such romantic towns as Otlag and Mgub, as well as a Greater and a Lessure Pasture.

The rulebook is 12 pages long, with about 7500 words of rules. It is easy to read and understand, with major points in boldface type and the rules divided into sixteen major sections. Charts and tables are on two separate sheets for easy reference.

The counters are well-produced, in several different colors. The majority are demon counters of various types, each with the faint outline of the demon's symbol printed on it. The symbols are hard to see, but add an interesting effect. Also available by mail (free) is a small sheet listing the different incantations used to summon a demon. It isn't used in the game, but adds a nice bit of "historical" background. A losing player can always give up and start chanting: "I invoke and move thee, O thou Spirit, and being exalted above ye in the power of the Most High . . . " No results guaranteed.

DEMONS moves fairly quickly, although it is shot through with dice rolling and other random events. Each turn starts with the movement and combat of "mortal" units. These are the various local armies that try to stop the plague of magicians infesting their native Armenia. The mortal units are not controlled by the players, but instead move automatically in the direction of a magician, if one is close. Once adjacent to a magician, they must first discover him; if successful, they may attack him, hoping for a capture. All these actions are controlled chiefly by the roll of the dice. The goal of each player's magician is to avoid these mortal units and find treasure.

Magicians have only two real abilities: movement and conjuration of demons. Everything else, from combat to the finding of treasure, they must do via the demons that they have conjured. Of course, conjuration is no sure thing. Before the game, each magician chooses one of six types of shields (from gold to tin), thus determining his relative conjuring ability. There are also six types of demons, from dukes to kings. To conjure demons, a player must roll a die and consult the old Conjuration Table to find out how many of the spirits have been brought forth. Unfortunately, some demons are Unfriendly and can only be controlled by the Ring of Solomon, but that's another story.

After conjuring a demon, a magician can use that demon's powers. These can range from "Cause Storms" to "Procure Love," a fearsome ability. One ubiquitous and necessary power is "Discover Treasure," whose use is almost self-explanatory. Demons can also engage in combat with mortal units.

Random die-rolls and other elements of luck permeate the magical side of the game. Conjured demons are picked randomly, as is the treasure that can be discovered. Before the wizard can control a treasure, another die roll is needed. The abundance of luck is not a fatal flaw in DEMONS, and after a time seems more of a necessary evil. Play can be very enjoyable as wizards battle mortal units and each other for control of treasure. The game continues until all wizards have left the mapboard or died. Death comes to a mage either from the backfiring of demon conjurations, or by torture at the hands of a mortal unit. Winning is based on the amount of treasure retrieved, adjusted for the cost of the player's shield.

DEMONS can also be played solitaire. Solitaire play lacks one important aspect of the game – fighting between the players for treasure – but it is still fun, and is an important asset of the game if you can't find any opponents.

The short rules do have an unfortunate problem in that they leave several areas hazy and unexplained. For example, the exact effects of some of the Demon Powers are not fully defined. The actions of mortal units after the capture of a magician could also be better described. Does a mortal unit still follow a wizard after he/she has been captured by another unit? However, these oversights are not major ones, and can easily be resolved by the players.

While DEMONS isn't a masterpiece of game design, it is an interesting and innovative little game. The abundance of luck and the glitches in the rules are problems, but not major ones. Play flows well, generally moves quickly, and can be exciting. If you're looking for a slightly different small game, or just want to know the names of 72 different demons, this one might be for you.

DEMONS

Publisher: Simulations Publications, Inc.
Designer: James Dunnigan
Published: 1979
Players: 1-4
Playing time: 1-4 hours
Components: 11" x 17" mapsheet, 12-page 8½" x 5½" rulebook, 100 die-cut counters, 2 8½" x 5" combat tables.
Price: $3.95

1979 GAME SURVEY RESULTS

by Steve Jackson

The 1979 Game Survey questionnaire appeared in the Jan-Feb 1980 issue of TSG. 396 replies were received. In the first part of the survey readers were asked to rate game companies, game magazines, and games on a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 being highest. Only games they had played were to be rated. If a reader had not even heard of a certain game (magazine, publisher, etc.), he was asked to put down an "X".

As an experiment, a few "red herrings" were included in the survey. An imaginary game company, the American Wargame Group, was listed. A game allegedly by this company was also listed. Gratifyingly, absolutely no one sent in a rating of either of these imaginary entities – and most readers said they had never heard of them. This tends to demonstrate that games are not being rated by those who have not played them.

GAME TYPE RATINGS

Microgames and small games in general	7.7
Fantasy Role-Playing Games	7.3
SF Space Strategic Games	6.9
SF Space Tactical Games	6.8
SF Ground Tactical Games	6.7
SF Computer Games	6.6
SF Role-Playing Games	6.4
Fantasy Tactical Games	6.4
Fantasy Role-Playing Supplements	6.4
SF Board Games	6.3
Fantasy Board Games	5.9
SF Ground Strategic Games	5.8
Historical wargames	5.9
Modern period wargames	5.6
SF Role-Playing Supplements	5.5
Extremely large ("monster") games	4.5

No significant changes from last year.

COMPANIES

Average rating on the 1-9 scale. The percentage following the rating represents "X" results – people who never heard of the company.

Metagaming	7.99 (.7%)
Game Designers' Workshop	7.1 (5.0%)
Avalon Hill	6.8 (0%)
SPI	6.7 (2.1%)
Task Force Games	6.6 (35.0%)
Yaquinto	6.5 (32.9%)
Schubel & Son	6.4 (48.6%)
Operational Studies Group	6.4 (42.9%)
Chaosium	6.4 (8.6%)
Tactical Studies Rules (TSR)	6.3 (14.3%)
Judges Guild	6.2 (15.7%)
Mishler Company	6.0 (78.6%)
Fantasy Games Unlimited	6.0 (25.7%)
Flying Buffalo, Inc.	6.0 (8.6%)
Battleline	5.8 (15.7%)
Conflict Interaction Associates	5.7 (75.7%)
Creative Wargames Workshop	5.7 (60.0%)
Eon Products	5.7 (44.3%)
Phoenix Games	5.6 (53.6%)
Conflict Games	5.6 (35.0%)
Zocchi & Associates	5.5 (20.7%)
Grimoire Games	4.7 (52.9%)
Gametime Games	4.6 (40.7%)
Superior Simulations	4.5 (72.1%)
Excalibre	4.3 (17.9%)
Dimension Six	3.1 (44.3%)
American Wargames Group	0 (79.3%)

The spread between high-rated and low-rated companies here is enough to be significant. Several of the newer companies were unknown to a large percentage of respondents (including Task Force and Yaquinto, which were rated high by those familiar with them). Nobody rated the imaginary AWG.

MAGAZINES

Rated on the 1-9 scale. The first percentage given is the number of respondents reading the magazine regularly. The second is the number of respondents who never heard of it.

The Space Gamer	7.8 (97.1%; .7%)
Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society	6.9 (18.1%; 33.6%)
Analog	6.7 (36.2%; 7.1%)
Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine	6.7 (26.7%; 7.1%)
Strategy & Tactics	6.6 (40.0%; .7%)
Fire & Movement	6.5 (16.2%; 14.3%)
Omni	6.3 (44.8%; .7%)
Different Worlds	6.3 (20.9%; 41.4%)
The Dragon	6.2 (44.8%; 2.1%)
The General	6.1 (27.6%; 4.3%)
Galileo	5.9 (15.2%; 25.9%)
MOVES	5.8 (21.9%; 8.6%)
White Dwarf	5.8 (18.1%; 17.9%)
Sorceror's Apprentice	5.5 (11.4%; 35.7%)
Locus	5.4 (3.8%; 52.9%)
Wargamer's Digest	4.7 (8.6%; 23.6%)
Starship	4.4 (3.8%; 61.4%)
American Wargamer	4.4 (.95%; 60.7%)
Wargame Design	4.2 (4.8%; 51.4%)

In general, the more-highly-rated magazines were better read. However, "Journal of the Travelers' Aid Society," though known to very few, rates second only to TSG. Several magazines were regularly read by very few and unknown to a great many. And "American Wargamer," which I thought was another made-up name, turns out to be a real magazine, published by the small (but genuine!) American Wargaming Association. My apologies.

SF SPACE TACTICAL GAMES

Rated on the 1-9 scale. The percentage is the number of respondents who never heard of the game.

Nebula 19 (MSH)	7.0 (67.1%)
Starfire (TFG)	6.7 (37.1%)
Starfleet Battles (TFG)	6.6 (23.6%)
WarpWar (MET)	6.4 (2.9%)
Mayday	6.3 (16.4%)
Black Hole (MET)	6.1 (1.4%)
Holy War (MET)	6.0 (3.6%)
Annihilator (MET)	5.8 (7.9%)
Asteroid Zero-Four (TFG)	5.8 (42.1%)
Star Quest (OSG)	5.5 (44.3%)
Alpha Omega (BTL)	5.2 (21.4%)
Vector 3 (SPI)	5.2 (18.6%)
Stargate (SPI)	5.1 (15.0%)
Titan Strike (SPI)	5.0 (19.3%)
The Ythri (MET)	4.8 (7.1%)
Star Fighter (GTM)	4.3 (41.4%)
Alien Space (ZOC)	4.2 (36.4%)
Quazar (EX)	2.7 (32.1%)
Direct Conflict in Dimension Six (DIM)	2.3 (54.3%)

SF GROUND TACTICAL GAMES

Ogre (MET)	7.7 (.7%)
G.E.V. (MET)	7.7 (.7%)
Starship Troopers (AH)	6.8 (1.4%)
Ice War (MET)	6.8 (1.4%)
Snapshot (GDW)	6.8 (27.9%)
Hot Spot (MET)	6.7 (9.3%)
Cerberus (TFG)	6.6 (40.7%)
The Creature That Ate Sheboygan (SPI)	6.5 (2.9%)
Rivets (MET)	6.2 (2.1%)
Invasion of the Air Eaters (MET)	6.2 (2.9%)
Olympica (MET)	6.1 (1.4%)
Chitin:I (MET)	5.9 (.7%)
Star Soldier (SPI)	5.7 (13.6%)
UFO (AH)	4.0 (22.9%)
Colony Delta (FGU)	4.0 (22.9%)
Atlantis (EX)	2.2 (41.4%)

SF SPACE STRATEGIC GAMES

Stellar Conquest (MET)	7.7 (5.7%)
Imperium (GDW)	7.3 (8.6%)
Godsfire (MET)	6.6 (3.6%)
Double Star (GDW)	6.6 (32.1%)
Freedom in the Galaxy (SPI)	5.9 (19.3%)
Outreach (SPI)	5.9 (14.3%)
Battlefleet Mars (SPI)	5.7 (9.3%)
Starforce (SPI)	5.6 (5.0%)
Starfall (YAQ)	5.6 (45.7%)
Belter (GDW)	5.5 (27.9%)
Star Empires (TSR)	5.1 (27.1%)
Second Empire (DIM)	5.0 (54.3%)
Star Probe (TSR)	4.5 (23.6%)

SF GROUND STRATEGIC GAMES

Bloodtree Rebellion (GDW)	6.6 (46.4%)
After the Holocaust (SPI)	6.3 (19.3%)
Invasion: America (SPI)	5.8 (7.1%)
Objective: Moscow (SPI)	4.6 (17.1%)

SF COMPUTER/PBM GAMES

Tribes of Crane (SCH)	6.4 (36.4%)
StarWeb (FBI)	6.3 (29.3%)
Empyrean Challenge (SS)	6.3 (64.3%
Pellic Quest (CIA)	5.6 (57.1%)

SF BOARD GAMES

Dune (AH)	6.3 (5.7%)
Cosmic Encounter (EON)	6.2 (20.0%)
Strange New World (GTM)	5.8 (42.1%)
Time War (YAQ)	5.6 (45.7%)
Second Empire (DIM)	5.0 (57.1%)
Darkover (EON)	4.8 (49.3%)

FANTASY TACTICAL GAMES

TFT: Melee (MET)	8.0 (1.4%)
TFT: Wizard (MET)	7.6 (1.4%)
Sticks & Stones (MET)	5.6 (3.6%)
Stomp (CSM)	5.4 (20.0%)
OneWorld (MET	5.3 (7.9%)
Snits' Revenge (TSR)	4.7 (15.7%)
War of Wizards (TSR)	4.4 (23.6%)
Citadel (FGU)	4.3 (37.9%)

FANTASY BOARD GAMES

Nomad Gods (CSM)	7.0 (30.7%)
White Bear, Red Moon (CSM)	6.8 (14.3%)
The Dragonlords (FGU)	6.8 (42.9%)
Divine Right (TSR)	6.6 (25.0%)
The Ring Trilogy (SPI)	6.4 (2.9%)
Lords & Wizards (FGU)	6.4 (40.7%)
Beast Lord (YAQ)	6.3 (35.7%)
Wizard's Quest (AH)	6.0 (12.1%)
Lords of the Middle Sea (CSM)	5.9 (30.0%)
Dungeon! (TSR)	5.8 (5.0%)
Spellmaker (GTM)	5.7 (37.9%)
Swords & Sorcery (SPI)	5.6 (6.4%)
Magic Realm (AH)	5.1 (11.4%)
Sorceror (SPI)	5.0 (12.9%)
Battle of Five Armies (TSR)	4.9 (25.0%)
Lankhmar (TSR)	4.8 (22.1%)
Elric (CSM)	4.7 (29.3%)
Cyborg (EX)	3.7 (36.4%)
Quest (GTM)	3.7 (37.1%)
Warlocks & Warriors (TSR)	3.5 (14.3%)
Enchanted Land (AWG)	0 (65.7%)

Enough really low ratings here to indicate that either (a) fantasy fans are pretty picky, or (b) a number of attempts at exploitation have produced truly bad games. Maybe both.

SF ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Traveller (GDW)	6.9 (5.7%)
Gamma World (TSR)	5.8 (10.7%)
Metamorphosis Alpha (TSR)	5.5 (12.9%)
John Carter of Mars (SPI)	5.5 (12.9%)
Starships & Spacemen (FGU)	4.8 (27.9%)
Starfaring (FBI)	4.3 (48.6%)
Superhero 44 (Z●C)	4.3 (35.7%)
Flash Gordon (FGU)	2.0 (37.1%)

"Traveller" leads the pack – after that, we have a few which are rated mediocre, and a few more that no one seems to care for at all. This is the only game-type where one game shows such a clear dominance.

SF ROLE-PLAYING SUPPLEMENTS

Mercenary (GDW)	7.2 (20.0%)
High Guard (GDW)	6.9 (34.3%)
The Spinward Marches (GDW)	6.7 (43.6%)
The Kinunir (GDW)	6.4 (35.7%)
Spacefarer's Guide to Planets, Sector 2 (PHN)	6.1 (56.4%)
Citizens of the Imperium (GDW)	6.1 (37.1%)
Animal Encounters (GDW)	5.8 (29.3%)
Spacefarer's Guide to Planets, Sector 1 (PHN)	5.4 (55.7%)
Spacefarer's Guide to Alien Races (PHN)	5.4 (56.4%)
Spacefarer's Guide to Alien Planets (PHN)	4.9 (58.6)

FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

RuneQuest (CSM)	6.9 (15.7%)
Dungeons & Dragons - advanced (TSR)	6.5 (.7%)
Chivalry & Sorcery (FGU)	6.3 (23.6%)
Empire of the Petal Throne (TSR)	6.1 (10.7%)
D&D - old (TSR)	6.0 (2.1%)
Tunnels & Trolls (FBI)	5.8 (9.3%)
Bunnies & Burrows (FGU)	5.0 (19.3%)

FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING SUPPLEMENTS

Snake Pipe Hollow (CSM)	7.7 (50.7%)
Saurians (FGU)	7.4 (57.1%)
Cults of Prax (CSM)	7.3 (51.4%)
Death Test (MET)	7.2 (2.1%)
Apple Lane (CSM)	7.0 (50%)
City of Terrors (FBI)	7.0 (50.0%)
D&D Monster Manual (TSR)	6.9 (2.1%)
Swords & Sorcerors (FGU)	6.9 (37.1%)
Descent into the Depths of the Earth (TSR)	6.6 (45.7%)
City-State of the Invincible Overlord (JG)	6.6 (30.7%)
Steading of the Hill Giant Chief (TSR)	6.5 (35.0%)
Sorceror's Solitaire (FBI)	6.5 (49.3%)
Balastor's Barracks (CSM)	6.4 (54.3%)
Trolls & Trollkin (CSM)	6.3 (45.0%)
C&S Sourcebook (FGU)	6.2 (41.4%)
In Search of the Unknown (TSR)	6.2 (45.7%)
Deathtrap Equalizer Dungeon (FBI)	6.2 (38.6%)
Scorpion Men & Broos (CSM)	6.1 (57.9%)
Welcome to Skull Tower (Grimoire Games)	5.9 (41.4%)
The Runes of Doom (GRM)	5.8 (47.1%)
Arduin Grimoire (GRM)	5.7 (39.3%)
The Mines of Keridav (PHN)	5.6 (65.0%)
The Lost Abbey of Calthonwey (PHN)	5.4 (58.6%)
All the World's Monsters I (CSM)	5.3 (33.6%)
Buffalo Castle (FBI)	5.3 (35.0%)
All the World's Monsters II (CSM)	5.2 (33.6%)

Nowhere near a complete listing, but indicative. As a rule, the better-liked a game is, the better-liked its supplements are. Small publishers do not seem to get good ratings when they publish material trying to "cash in" on systems originated by other companies.

SPACE GAMER READER QUESTIONS

The second part of the survey dealt with our readers . . . what they want to see in TSG, general information about their interests, and demographic data.

Monthly publication: 63.6% were in favor of TSG going monthly. 15.2% opposed monthly publication. 21.2% didn't care. Most of those who opposed monthly publication cited reasons such as "I doubt you can keep up the quality" rather than actual dislike of monthly magazines.

CONTENTS

Rated on the 1-9 scale. The exact question: "Rate the following KINDS OF MATERIAL as contents for TSG. Give something a 9 if you love it and think it's vitally important. Give it a 5 if you don't like or dislike it, and a 1 if you NEVER want to see it in TSG. Intermediate numbers mean intermediate opinions."

Annual game survey	8.15
Complete game adventure/scenarios	7.70
Game reviews in general	7.68
Game variant articles	7.55
News & Plugs	7.42
News about Metagaming	7.38
Artwork	7.34
Strategy hints for specific games	7.17
Short reviews of games	7.09
Letters to the Editor	7.00
Designers' articles on their new games	6.84
News about gaming companies	6.81
Color artwork	6.76
News about tournaments, etc.	6.57
Advertising	6.41
Long reviews of games	6.27
Editorials	6.25
Game-related fiction	6.21
Humorous articles	6.16
Complete games in some issues	6.14
Historical fact articles related to FRP gaming	5.92
Cartoons	5.87
Science fiction	5.82
Science fact articles related to SF gaming	5.80
Heroic-fantasy fiction	5.76
Articles on computer gaming	5.75
Articles on how to design games	5.74
Convention news	5.72
Reviews of new miniature figures	5.68
Contests	5.57
Computer programs for games	5.57
Articles on miniature gaming	5.41
Interviews with designers and publishers	5.37
Convention reports	5.37
Fantasy book reviews	5.18
SF book reviews	5.04
Accounts of game sessions	5.00
Fantasy movie reviews	4.96
Articles on miniatures construction/painting	4.77
Eldon Tannish	4.74
SF movie reviews	4.74
Continuing comic strips	4.74
Science fact articles in general	4.14
Articles on wargames other than fantasy/sf	3.88
Historical fact articles on specific battles	3.63
SF fandom coverage	3.40
Articles on board games (Stratego, Risk, etc.)	3.06
SF movie fandom coverage	2.90
Military history book reviews	2.86

Obviously, these results will have a strong effect on what we print. There were a few surprises. Advertising is more popular than we expected. Complete games and cartoons rated lower than we thought they might. The rating for computers was driven down because some people are totally uninterested in them.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

Readers were asked to fill in their own "most want to see" and "most do not want to see" types of material. Responses were varied. The "most want to see" answers largely reflected the "Contents" answers: the most common reply was "more sf/fantasy." Readers' pet hates were more varied: typical replies were "anything not sf/fantasy," "psychology articles," "historical junk." Many readers mentioned fiction and humor, but the stress seemed to be on the QUALITY of the fiction and humor – readers felt that past offerings in TSG had been very poor examples. The most common fear was that TSG would turn into "another S&T," with a preponderance of historical articles. Don't worry. We won't.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

87.9% of the respondents subscribe to TSG. On the average, these readers have subscribed for two years each.

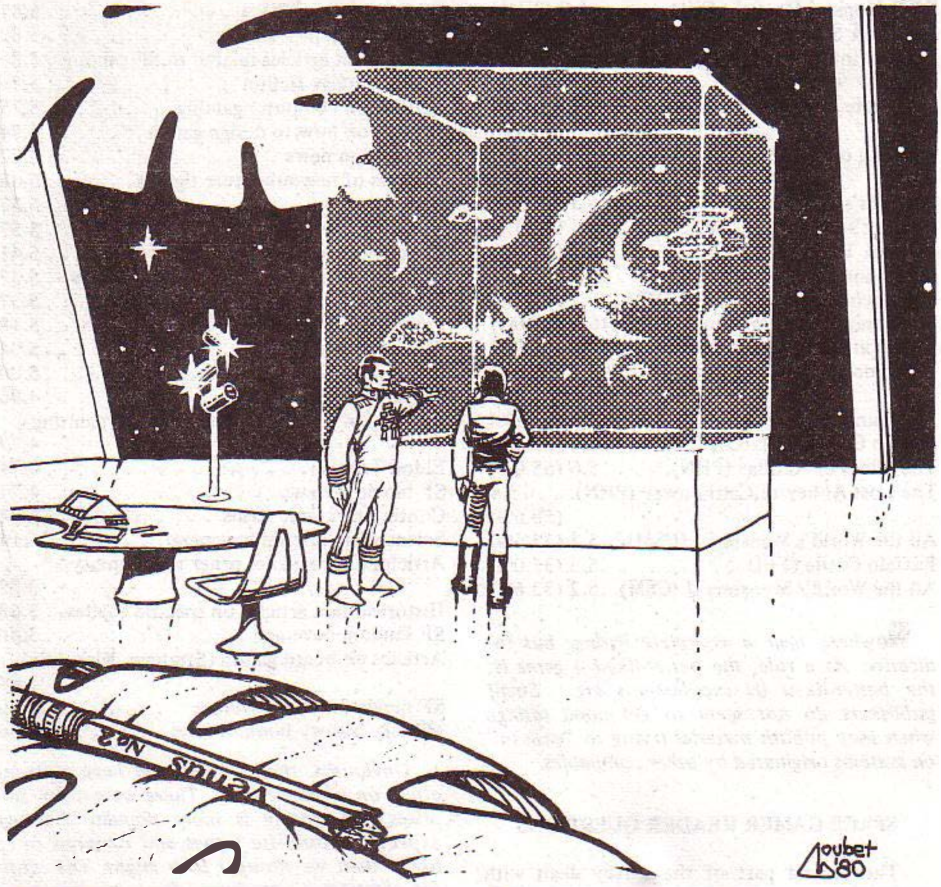
Average age: 20.

Average income: $13,000. (Many make more – but many are students, with little or no private income.)

Average number of readers per copy: 2.6.

Years of formal education: 0-8 - 3.3%. 9-12 - 34.5%. 13-14 - 18.0%. 15-16 - 22.1%. 17+ - 22.1%.

THE SPACE GAMER



DISTRACTION TACTIC

by Austin Bay

The holocube flickered with the gray patterns of nospace. Ed Dejonnette bit his lip impatiently.

A rocky planetoid formed within the vision cube. Then, like metal knives, three Demulian cruisers sliced the screen. Instantly two hid behind shimmering violet shields while the third, in the crazy rainbow of counter-weapon and counter-counter-weapon fire, filled the cube with an awesome glare. In the violet, orange, and red blaze the Star Force cruiser and the Demulians hid, each trying to guess, within a hundred klicks or so, where the enemy had gone.

The rainbow faded, grew, gave one final limp pulse, then disappeared, leaving the pocked planetorid suspended in the vision cube. The Demulians had run.

Duke pushed a button and the holotape rewound. Scratching underneath his arm, Ed gestured toward the cube. "Yep, Duke – same song, second verse. Months of meticulous staff planning over 11,000 cups of bad coffee, billions of dollars worth of technology, and all you get is another Mexican standoff. Do you log that as a skirmish or as a waste of time?"

Duke Hansen didn't reply. His pencil snapped between his fingers. Disgusted, he threw one end across the room. The stub bounced off the wall and hit Hollis' mulched pot. Hollis the Giant Philodendron rocked in the humidifiers' pleasant breeze, unfazed, undistracted.

Ed Dejonnette remained philosophical. "You can't make bricks without straw. Cursed be he that tries." He kicked his cowboy boots up onto the Chief of Staff's desk. "Tried to tell you that, ol' buddy, even back on Cyrus X. You can only go so far with mass probes and grav-focal bombs. Too expensive anyway."

"They're necessary, you pseudo-cowjockey!" the desk's owner shot back. As a Fleet Colonel, Duke combined the proper rude vocabulary with a Latinate patina of education. His favorite verbal contraption was "Bitchin' modicum of sense."

Ed pulled a licorice stick from his empty communicator pocket, hanging it from the edge of his mouth. It looked like a dark Mexican cigarillo. "Like all power-mongers, your bosses and even your highness have neglected the simple."

"Simple is a relative term."

"So is space," Ed winked, "which is why I understand it. Look, Duker. You can go with an expensive array of neutronium penetrators and focused grav waves at three million new dollars a zap. You can build a ship crammed with optic weaponry, you can . . ."

"We can and do," Duke interrupted. "Get to the point." He pinned his eyes on Dejonnette's face. Ed was too valuable to shrug off – if he hadn't been so damned abrasive, he'd still be in the service. High ranked, too. Damn shame. "Do you want a job?"

Ed blushed. *Maybe that's what I want*, he thought, *something where I won't feel so damned irrelevant*. "Just let me finish. You've got megatons of expensive hardware designed for planet-sized genocide and star fleet combat, but can you really use it? Perception, Duker, that's what politics and war are all about. What your enemy thinks is happening to him is often more important than what really is. We can scare the Demulians right out of space, and do it so cheap no congress'll bitch."

"Even a phony Texan can't frighten a Demulian gravity wave."

"And they can't frighten ours."

"Get to the point, Ed. What do you want? Does this idea of yours have to do with small-unit light weaponry or something equally suicidal?"

"Not necessarily."

"Then you're talking junk."

A smile broke across Dejonnette's face. "You know, pard, in a way I am."

"We already have small units of hyper-active jocks ready to die on a moment's notice. They're called Rangers."

"Yeah, and they're armed like dinosaurs with electronic weaponry." Ed stopped as the command module trembled slightly. "There goes another patrol cruiser, probably the *Hephaestus*. Yep, another expensive mistake."

"Mistake? That's a damned fine ship!" Duke broke another pencil and hurled the remnants at the philodendron. Hollis never flinched.

"Most pestered plant within five thousand light-years," Ed said. "Yeah, Duke, another mistake. So many counter-counter-counter-weapons and anti-antis that nothing works. We're heading toward the catastrophe of the 20th century navies." Ed let the reference hang for a second. "Does that sink in?"

Duke threw a magnecord spindle at Hollis, but missed. Ed continued. "If you recall, ol' buddy, when World War III broke in the Mediterranean, there was so much ECM and ECCM that *nothing* worked. Nothing except eyeballed guns throwing dead lead. Missiles flopped, ten million phony targets popped onto screens, sensors heard whistles and screeches. Heat sensors were confused, and storms blocked satellite coverage.

There were a couple of scores – and a lot of confusion. Beam riders and even wire-guides went "poof."

"Remember what won the whole show? One ancient U.S. heavy cruiser. Fresh out of mothballs, with prehistoric 8-inch guns. Sailed blindly into a squall, broke out the other side, and sank 14 Sov ships. Impossible, they all said. It happened. Sure, they sank her, too – but the Sov electronic wall was breached. Every rocket and laser-guided bomb the U.S had went into that hole. That stopped the war. Not one nuke flew."

"I think I just might be able to swing you a teaching position at the War College on Gamma Gamma One," said Duke. He pushed a button and his chair molded about his body, turning him slowly away. The circular massager went to work on his forehead. "O.K., Ed," he went on quietly. "Where does this lead us? So space is a sea. Unless you hide behind a planet or star, warp or energy fields are your only passive defense. You can block light with light or mass with mass, but that takes big ships and huge energy tanks. What are you going to do? Be a starship trooper? Be a thousand Ahabs on Moby Dick's back? Launch a mini-rocket at a hundred meters and blow yourself and the Demulians to hell together? You'll never get that close. Ships kill ships across 25 million klicks."

"Ships fight at 25 million klicks, sure. If they can close in real space-time. How often is that? What really happens? A fleet leaves warp in battle array. They launched sensors and none returned, so they suspect the worst. They warp in and sure enough, they're a million klicks from the enemy? Mutual destruction? Not likely. Stand-off. One side advances, one retreats. Can't negotiate with the bastards – can't even see them, because you're countering all freqs. Then it's over. Warp-out. Somebody ducks and runs."

"Now, you know damned well it's not always like that."

"No, just 84.5% of the time. Tack on another 15 points when neither side uses advance sensors, no one reacts, and the warp-in ship warps out one sec after he gets there. Only five times out of a thousand do you engage! All you can do is publicize hell out of those piddling few. Telenews is where politicians fight, not combat soldiers. And your solution is worse. You fire mass probes, hoping to snake one in and chip a system defense. Of course, your target is planet-sized. Or larger. Thirty million sentients die. It's not necessary!"

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"Balance of terror, Ed. That's why no one fires one. But everybody's ready. We can't sneak one in on the Demulians, or they on us."

"So it's a stalemate. Like Earth – WWI." Duke's forehead wrinkled at the historical reference. "No one advances, no one retreats, no one takes too many casualties. But they add up."

"OK, Ed, what do you want me to do?" He got up and walked over to the big plant, picking up the pencil fragments he had aimed at it. "I always recover my ammunition."

Ed smiled. "Good idea. Then no one knows what you might be throwing."

"What are *you* throwing, Ed? Give."

Suddenly Ed was serious. "I want the old *Atlantis*, Duke. I want two months and two million new dollars. You tell Fleet if they give me that, I'll give them a peace treaty and a fat slice of the Free Zone."

✱

Edward D. Dejonnette, Lieutenant-Colonel (retired, semi-forcibly), formerly of Star Force Combined Command's Special Operations Section, scanned his war board. The displays bore very little relationship to the ship's original gear – but then, the heavy transport *Atlantis* had never been meant for battle. He had changed that. In a manner of speaking...

The old ship quivered as her sensors dropped from nospace to real space-time. They should return shortly.

No one really understood how 3D craft (and people) could beat light and cross dimensions. It was sort of like language, Ed mused. Sentient speech just happened. Linguists could spend years looking for a base structure, but every new sentient race simply added more un-explanations. You got the tools, someone hit on the right combination of flint, bone, angle, and speed of strike, and presto, out comes a manned arrowhead ripping through a warp in realspace. *But screw the specificity*, Ed thought. *Science is an art. Which is why I've stepped on so many toes.* He returned his attention to the war board.

Of the three sensors the *Atlantis* had launched, only one returned. Apparently a Demulian had thought it worth his while to have a little target practice.

Officers differed on the correct tactic. Sensors sometimes failed to warp out properly. Or they did warp out, but caught a different bend and missed the mother ship. If they didn't return, you either aborted the mission, sent in more sensors, or went in blind with all fields out – blowing the chance for a quick kill. You hung your life out if you were alone and more than one ship was waiting for you. If at least one sensor got back, though, you knew what you were up against.

Ed checked the surviving sensor's report. He cursed. It had been burned just as it got out. The information cells were damaged. There was at least one Demulian cruiser. Another image was imperfectly recorded. He prayed there were no more than two.

Some commanders would have gone in blind, weapons free and blazing. They either killed or were killed, by running into a star, planet, or a starship, enemy, friendly, or neutral, take your pick. One smart guy had tried to turn sensors into torpedoes. They couldn't be directed from no-space, though, so all you had

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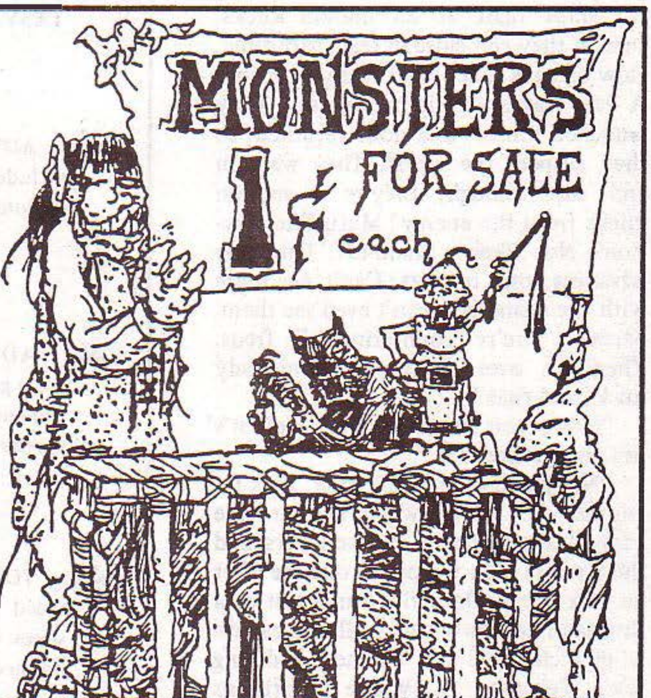

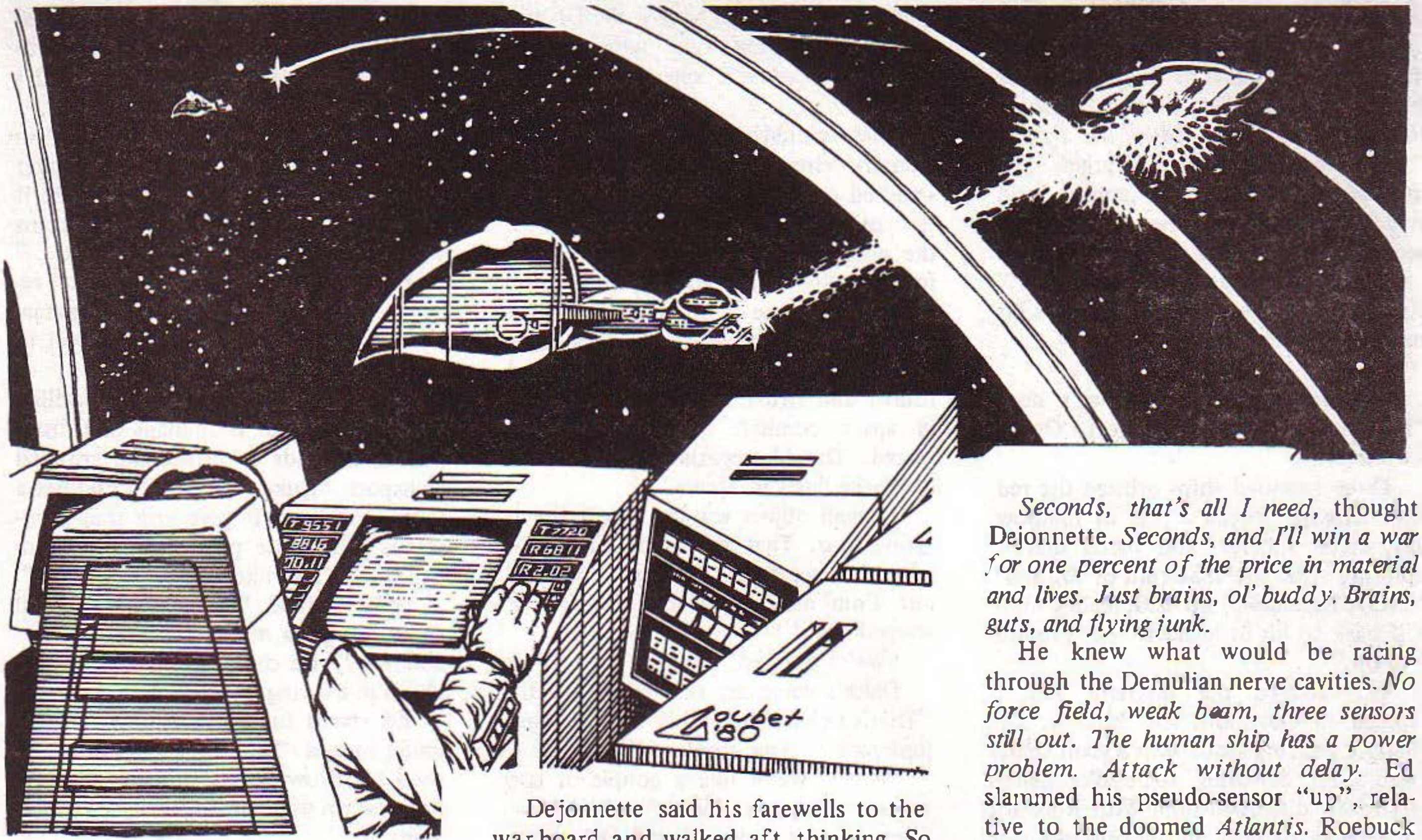

was a dumb bomb. And robot ships weren't much better, especially if you programmed them to accept surrender. And by every universal agreement ever drafted, every war-machine built had to be programmed to accept surrender from any sentient.

That was the only treaty that had never been violated through the galaxy. Sentients could waste sentients, and sentients directing machines could waste sentients – but undirected machines couldn't. So when robot ships were constructed with all the necessary programming, their effectiveness went to zero. The ship under attack sends a subspace signal to the robot, to say he wants to surrender. The robot stops his attack, and the manned ship bugs out.

The final blow to the robot ship had come when a telenewscaster had described a theoretical way to make a robot ship think an enemy robot ship was manned. It worked. The attacker, thinking its foe was manned and surrendering, would cease fire. The enemy, knowing its attacker was only a robot, would then blow it to bits. From then on it was a circle no one wanted to be on. And no one was.

So – back to the sensors. A Demulian could pop an incoming sensor and then warp out. Standard tactic. You warp in – no contact. You do the same to him when he pops back to try to surprise you. And so on.

Dejonnette said his farewells to the war board and walked aft, thinking. So the returning sensor showed two Demulian cruisers waiting off Texas-9, a Free Zone red giant with no planets. Good. They wanted a fight. One would forcefield and the other would shoot, hoping for one or two good licks. *Tough match,* Ed thought. *This first triumph could turn into one very final defeat.*

He entered *Atlantis'* number two hold. Two scoutboats – one already occupied – occupied the little space not crowded with her "cargo." From the pilot's seat of the other scoutboat, Lieutenant Roebuck threw an ironic salute as Ed climbed into his own craft.

"Prepare for programmed countdown," Ed spoke to Roebuck and the ships' computers. "Begin – now."

Ten. The bay doors opened with surprising suddenness. Nine. Eight. His own ship shot out and away. Seven. Six. He curved to take up station behind *Atlantis.* Five. The display showed Roebuck following, above and to port. Four. Three. The image of his lone sensor winked out, gone into realspace – one more variable for the Demulians to consider. Two. One. Zero.

In a brief second the *Atlantis* and her two small outriders burst into real space-time. The beautiful shock of helium red and hard white stars startled the eyes.

Atlantis drove for the center of the Demulian kill zone, firing one meek beam into a Demulian forcefield.

Seconds, that's all I need, thought Dejonnette. *Seconds, and I'll win a war for one percent of the price in material and lives. Just brains, ol' buddy. Brains, guts, and flying junk.*

He knew what would be racing through the Demulian nerve cavities. *No force field, weak beam, three sensors still out. The human ship has a power problem. Attack without delay.* Ed slammed his pseudo-sensor "up", relative to the doomed *Atlantis.* Roebuck went "down." One Demulian fired; a gout of energy rent *Atlantis'* midsection. *Nice shot, insect head,* Ed nodded. *Now let your power build while number two shoots.*

Ed set an arc for Demulian 2's vicinity, hoping Roebuck was still around for Number 1. D2 fired a beam that cracked *Atlantis* in half. Thousands of metal globes began to pour from her bay, streaming into limitless space. *Come on,* Ed thought, *yeah, it's a transport, shake that bait.* Both D1 and D2 lowered their screens and fired, not at the strangely jinking little sensors, but at the wounded giant in front of them.

And Dejonnette, in his "sensor" craft, took his one shot at the Demulian.

The blue photon wave sank into the Demulian's side. The cruiser began to bend and implode. One faint tentacle of phasing light crossed Dejonnette's bow and then faded. *Just as well,* Ed thought. *No screens here. No crew, no nothing. Just one beam, and one hell of a big battery.* Even so, the megabev pulse had nearly drained his ship. He used what he had left to drift toward the stricken Demulian.

Within a few seconds, he was back within 25 klicks – spitting distance. He vacuumed the command capsule, grabbed the manpack Atomrok, and put his suit in internal mode. Unreeling on a long tether toward the dying enemy, Ed fired the Atomrok at the Demulian's drive section. *What a way to finish her off,* he thought. *But better this than waiting for that battery to recover. This is like the guerrillas machine-gunning the train after they blow the tracks.*

The Atomrok saw its target. The multiple warheads split, spread, and struck, demolishing the delicate aft section. The Demulian was finished.

"Took you long enough, ol' buddy." Roebuck's mimicry cut static across his mind. "Any survivors?"

"No."

Ed could imagine Roebuck's nod. "Likewise. No time to eject. Or to surrender."

Three smashed ships orbited the red sun. *Atlantis* spread a ring of rainbow gas, metal spheres, and metal shards, coloring with the spectrum of the star. "Okay, Roebuck," Ed said, reeling himself back to his little craft. "Let's round 'em up."

He released the magnetic net; it spread in enormous soft billows. The idea of policing space with a giant spider web after defeating spider-like beings somehow disturbed him. With Roebuck moving in to pick up the opposite side of the ten-klick net, they begain to collect the trailing debris from the *Atlantis.* In 1200 earth seconds they had bundled transport, net, and fragments into a single ball and boosted it toward the red sun.

When their patrol arrived the Demulian scouts would find two floating cruiser wrecks and one dead human sensor.

What would they conclude? No memory circuits would survive in the smashed cruisers. With no hard information other than the wrecks themselves, the enemy would have to decide that four or five big human cruisers were loose in the Free Zone and had jumped their ships. One occasion, just luck. Two times? Still luck. But the third and fourth and fifth? Nobody's that lucky in space combat. Demulians weren't stupid. They'd negotiate, just to discover the "new weapons."

A small object warped in off the z-prime axis. That would be Fleet, for sure. In four esecs the sensor warped out. Four more esecs, and *Omnibus V* warped in.

"We're finished, Duker."

Duke's voice cut through the static. "That's one hell of a way to clean up a junkyard . . . any problems?"

"None. We're like a couple of lazy turkey buzzards lookin' whichaway. They bought it in a bag." Dejonnette slipped his craft into the belly hangar of *Omnibus V.* Ten minutes later he entered the starship's main corridor and tubed to Level Six. Duke was waiting in his office, along with Hollis the Giant Philodendron.

Ed set his cowboy hat on one of Hollis' leaves. Duke didn't attempt to mask his smiles as a slight shudder indicated *Omnibus V* had warped out.

"Well, ol' buddy. Now we let 'em find those split eggs and let 'em ponder on who did it and how. Then we do it again, send out a few more Atlanteans with outriders like me and Roebuck . . ."

Duke harrumphed, beginning to recover his testy Chief of Staff persona. He eyed Ed. "Do you really expect to pull this off again?"

Ed leaned further back, recalling how quickly the Demulians had dropped their fields to attack the crippled transport. "Duke, we've been buddies a long time. I even gave you that monstrous plant." He pointed at the philodendron. "You like Hollis, don't you?"

Duke nodded. "Sure. Who else in all space has got a mobile two-meter philodendron?" He chucked a pencil stub at Hollis in a loving high lob.

Ed stared the most serious stare he could muster. "You remember how you used to throw pencils at me and everyone else on your staff whenever you got angry?"

Duke's stone face fell as Ed erupted into a long laugh. "Like I told you, ol' buddy. You've got to create a distraction."

Another pencil slammed into Hollis' defenseliss fronds.

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OVERMEN Do It Better

By Forrest Johnson

There is one problem with the *Fantasy Trip* solo adventures, like *Death Test* and *Death Test II.* Characters of less than 36 points are unlikely to survive. One solution is to include a couple of gargoyles or reptile men (from *In The Labyrinth*) in the party. But some people will become impatient with characters whose IQ never exceeds 10 or who lissssp all the time.

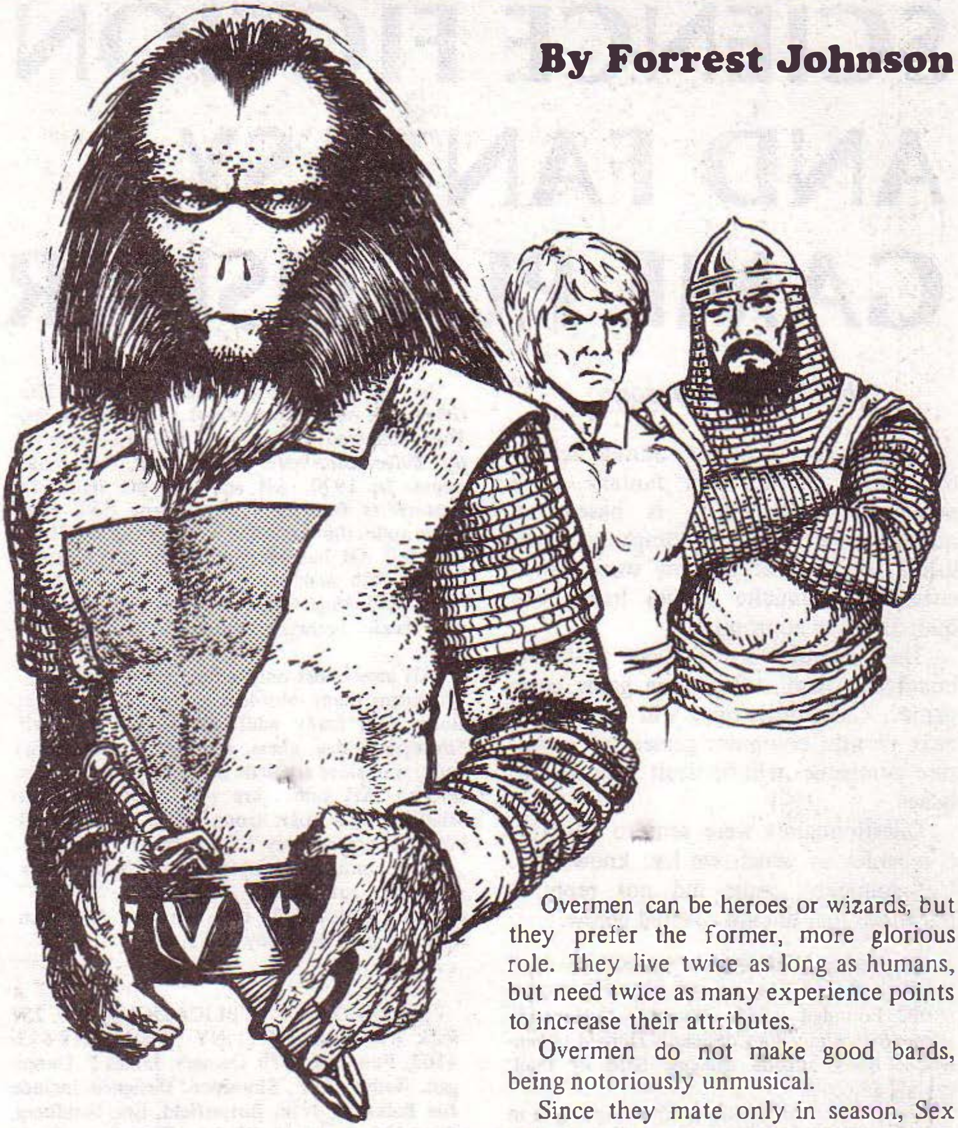
In his novel *The Lure of the Basilisk,* Lawrence Watt-Evans has invented a species called *overman.* According to the book, overmen were first created hundreds of years ago from human stock by the wizard Llarimuir the Great. Apart from a war or two, they have been doing fine since then.

An overman (or overwoman) stands over two meters tall. He starts his career with ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10, and 10 points to distribute. His leathery skin stops two hits – and, of course, he can wear armor. His basic MA is 12. In any armor, his MA remains 2 higher than that of a human of the same ST wearing the same armor.

Great, huh? If you don't mind associating with a noseless, lipless, black-furred creature with a skull-like face and baleful red eyes. Overmen get a -1 reaction from every other humanoid species except humans. Because of long-standing racial conflict, they get -2 from humans. Most people don't bother being polite to overmen. Some flee. Some throw stones.

Overmen do not really merit their reputation. They are generally honest, diligent and considerate. But PROUD. Overmen are greater than other people, but they think they are at least twice as good as that.

Overmen do not go back on their word, if they can reasonably avoid it. If an overman says "Betray me and I will track you down and kill you," he will try to do it, even if it takes weeks. But keeping their word is only a matter of pride with them. They are neither as devious nor as inflexible as goblins.



An overman in your party can be worth two or three humans. But he also causes two or three times as many hassles. He will want to be leader, or at least to burden the leader with all sorts of advice. And he may sometimes forget that the rest of the party is not as hardy as he. Overmen do not think highly of other races, especially humans (-1 reaction to humans). However, a bad reaction is likely to take the form of a contemptuous snub, rather than an attack.

Overmen can be heroes or wizards, but they prefer the former, more glorious role. They live twice as long as humans, but need twice as many experience points to increase their attributes.

Overmen do not make good bards, being notoriously unmusical.

Since they mate only in season, Sex Appeal is of little use with them. Some naturalists say overmen could breed with humans and kindred races, but the experiment has not been tried. All agree the progeny would be grotesque and most probably sterile.

Overmen must always roll two extra dice to get any kind of humanoid follower outside their own species. They must also roll one extra die when looking for a job that does not involve fighting. Overman warriors are always in demand.

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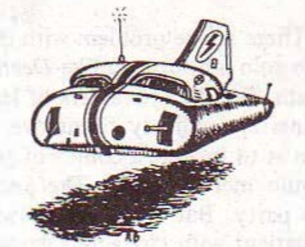
a guide to the

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY GAME PUBLISHERS



by Forrest Johnson

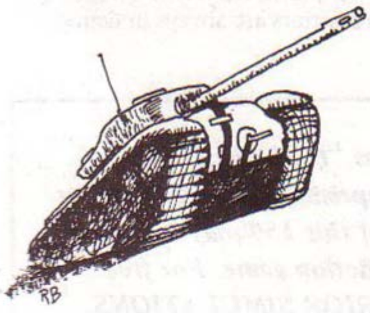
This is the first TSG annual review of science fiction and fantasy game publishers. Information is based on questionnaires sent to companies, published information, and my own experience. Questionnaire replies have been quoted where appropriate.

This month's article deals with the boardgame and role-playing game companies. Game magazines will be covered next month; computer games and miniature companies will be dealt with in later issues.

Questionnaires were sent to all game companies of which we had knowledge. Unfortunately, some did not reply – but those that did are covered below.

THE AVALON HILL COMPANY, 4517 Hartford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214; 301-254-5300. Founded 1953. Owners: Nationwide Diversified, Inc. Chief designer: Donald Greenwood. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog 50 cents.

The history of civilian wargaming began in 1953, in the garage of Charles S. Roberts. For five years it was a part-time business, producing just one game – *Tactics*. In 1958, Roberts founded Avalon Hill and over the next five years produced *Gettysburg, Tactics II, D-Day, Waterloo, Stalingrad*, and 13 other games, many still in print. In 1963 the company experienced financial collapse and became the property of its creditors. Roberts, then in his thirties, moved on to other things.



In 1964, the new owners founded *The General*, a magazine devoted to AH products. There followed *Afrika Corps, Midway, Battle of the Bulge, Blitzkrieg, Guadalcanal*, and other games. In 1970, AH acquired the rights to *PanzerBlitz* from a new company, SPI. This game rode the bestseller list for years. More recently, AH has gotten heavily into fantasy and sf, with such games as *Starship Troopers, Dune*, and *Magic Realm*. It has also acquired the classic betray-thy-neighbor game, *Diplomacy*.

AH announces only a few new titles a year, and keeps many obsolete games in its catalog, along with many adult games like *Football Strategy*, bridge, chess, and Go. For this company, wargames are little more than a profitable sideline. AH games are sold chiefly through retailers; each costs around $13. They are all boxed and have very high component quality.

The company's conservatism is balanced by a history of buying innovative "outside" designs. Avalon Hill will continue to be an industry giant for many years.

SIMULATIONS PUBLICATIONS, INC, 257 Park Ave. South, NY, NY 10010; 212-673-4103. Founded 1970. Owners: James F. Dunnigan, Redmond F. Simonsen. Designers include Joe Balkoski, John Butterfield, Eric Goldberg, Brad Hessel, David Ritchie, Rich Berg, David Isby, Tom Hudson. Buys outside designs; contact Brad Hessel. Sells by mail; catalog free.

In 1970, Dunnigan and Simonsen took over the failing game magazine *Strategy and Tactics*. Over the next ten years, they published an average of about 20 games a year. In 1972, they founded *MOVES* Magazine. In 1973, their games *Red Star/White Star* and *Sniper* challenged *Panzerblitz* at the top of the charts. In 1974, WWII fanatics snapped up the mammoth *War in the East* (followed by the even-more-mammoth *War in the West* and *War in the Pacific*). In 1976, SPI created *Fire Fight* as a tactical training aid for the U.S. Army.

In the last few years SPI has devoted considerable interest to the fantasy/sf field, with such games as *War of the Ring, Swords & Sorcery, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan* (which had been rejected by Metagaming), and *Demons*. This year saw the first issue of *Ares*.

SPI has gone from $40,000 in sales in 1970 to about $2,000,000 now. It has done a game on almost every likely subject. Prices range from $4 to $50, depending on size and packaging.

Unfortunately, SPI is dominated by the "simulation" mentality, which shows up even in their SF&F games. The company's devotion to military/historical gaming has resulted in many excellent simulations that are mediocre as games. Consequently, SPI's sales have reached an apparent plateau, barely keeping up with inflation. Still, it has considerable resources – a large staff, an excellent research library, a loyal following and a reputation for integrity (rare in this business!). For many, SPI remains THE game company.

TSR HOBBIES, INC., POB 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53417; 414-248-3838. Founded 1974. Owners: "Closed corporation." Designers: "Many". (Ranking high both among TSR's owners and designers would be E. Gary Gygax.) Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog free.

TSR (originally Tactical Studies Rules) started in 1975 with *Dungeons & Dragons* and some miniatures rules inherited from Guidon Games. In 1975 *The Strategic Review* appeared, with E. Gary Gygax as editor. *Dungeon!* and *Empire of the Petal Throne* were published the same year. In 1976, SR was replaced with *The Dragon* and *Little Wars* (a historical gaming magazine, now defunct). Also in 1976, D&D co-designer Dave Arneson left the company; he has since been fighting with TSR over his royalties. Recent TSR games include *Gamma World, Divine Right* and *The Awful Green Things from Outer Space*.

TSR publishes a number of games besides the immensely-popular D&D. Prices range from $5 to $15. Quality varies.

A lot of people have tried their hand at fantasy role-playing games, but none have come close to succeeding like TSR. Principally thanks to D&D, TSR has become a business on the same scale as SPI. One might wonder why. The original D&D was amateurish, sloppily edited and incoherent. But the demand was there, and D&D was the only thing on the market. TSR still prints the "Original D&D," along with "Basic" and "Advanced" – three mutually-contradictory sets of rules for the same game. So many D&D rules have been published, it is doubtful that any two dungeon-masters use exactly the same set. But, despite all the confusion, D&D is so well established that no challenger is likely to surpass it in the near future.

GAME DESIGNERS' WORKSHOP, 203 North St., Normal IL 61761; 309-452-3632. Founded 1973. Owners: P. R. Banner, M. W. Miller, F. A. Chadwick, W. A. Stone. Designers: Frank Chadwick, Marc Miller. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog free.

GDW made a quick hit in 1973 with *Drang Nach Osten*, its expansion *Unentschieden*, and the classic SF game *Triplanetary*. Before long it acquired the Conflict Games Company, including the popular *Bar Lev*. In 1976 the *Europa*

Newsletter appeared, becoming *The Grenadier* magazine in 1978. 1977 had been a red-letter year for GDW, seeing two Miller games published: *Imperium* and *Traveller*. The *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society* published its first issue in 1979.

Though GDW carries a large historical game line, it is becoming more and more an SF game company. Recent titles include *Belter, Bloodtree Rebellion, Dark Nebula* and *Double Star*.

GDW has always boasted high component quality. Prices range from $4 for the booklet *En Garde* to $29.95 for the boxed *Operation Crusader* game.

GDW has produced some disappointments (does anyone remember *Eagles*?) but it remains one of the most promising companies in the field.

METAGAMING, POB 15346, Austin, TX 78761. Founded 1974. Owner: Howard Thompson. No in-house designers. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog free.

In 1974, Howard Thompson got tired of looking for someone to buy his game *Stellar Conquest*, and decided to publish it himself. It was a success. In 1975, he published the first issue of *The Space Gamer*. In 1977 the first "microgames" (*Ogre*, *Melee*, and others) appeared. In 1980, the long-awaited RPG, *TFT: In The Labyrinth*, appeared, and *The Space Gamer* (which had not been profitable) was sold to *Ogre/Melee/The Fantasy Trip* designer Steve Jackson.

Metagaming now has a considerable line of SF&F games, and is starting to offer historical wargames as well. Prices very from $2.95 for a microgame to $15.95 for the boxed game *Godsfire*. Quality varies.

Metagaming's *The Fantasy Trip* is one of the best role-playing systems on the market, though very sloppily presented, lacking an index and even a complete contents page. The "microgame" idea was brilliant in its time, but now other companies are producing small games, and Metagaming is having a hard time maintaining quality in its own line.

FLYING BUFFALO INC., POB 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252; 602-966-4727. Founded 1970. Owner: Richard F. Loomis. Designers include Loomis, Mike Stackpole, Ken St. Andre, Liz Danforth, and Ugly John Carver. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

Loomis started running the PBM game *Nuclear Destruction* while in the Army. It was also while in the Army that he first met Steve MacGregor, who was interested in computer-moderated games. In 1972, the pair went to Loomis' home town and started a series of PBM games, including the much-imitated *StarWeb* (1976). In 1975, FBI began to distribute Ken St. Andre's RPG, *Tunnels & Trolls*. A subsequent string of solo-dungeon booklets (an FBI innovation) have helped to popularize the game. *Flying Buffalo Quarterly* was founded in 1972, *Sorceror's Apprentice* in 1978.

FBI prices range from $2 for the solo dungeon *Goblin Lake* to $9 for the card game *Nuclear War*. Quality varies. Sloppy production was once an FBI hallmark, but its newer games are of unsurpassed physical quality.

Loomis says, "We aren't afraid to compare our FRP game to ANY other FRP game on the market." However, in its five years, T&T has never approached D&D in popularity, perhaps because its combat system is entirely too simplistic for meaningful play. The solo dungeons are fun, but the game itself is no competition for other systems.

FBI has always had cash-flow problems, and by its own admission is chronically in the red. Now that other companies are moving into the computer-moderated-game and solo-dungeon fields (FBI's traditional strong points) the Buffalo may have to work even harder to survive.

CHAOSIUM, INC., POB 6302, Albany, CA 94706. Founded 1975. Owners: Greg and Cam Stafford, Tadashi Ehara, Lynn Willis. Designers: Stafford and Willis. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog free.

Stafford won favorable comment for his first game, *White Bear & Red Moon*, in 1975. *Nomad Gods* and *All the World's Monsters, Vol. I* appeared in 1977. *Runequest*, an FRP, followed in 1978. The first issue of *Different Worlds* was mailed in 1979.

The Chaosium sells bag games and booklets. Their early attempts were a little clumsy, but editorial quality has improved. Prices range from $2 for a *Runequest* supplement to $12.50 for the game *Elric!*

Chaosium in-house games tend to center on the highly-detailed fantasy world Glorantha. The RQ system is a little too involved for some players, but the Chaosium is unequalled in the creation of a game mythos.

YAQUINTO PUBLICATIONS, POB 24767, Dallas, TX 75224; 214-330-7761. Founded 1979. Owner: Yaquinto Publishing Co. Designers: Steve Peek, Craig Taylor, Mike Matheny. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail. Catalog free.

History: Underpaid Heritage employee

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In its short history, Yaquinto has produced a rash of games. SF&F titles include *Marine: 2002, Beastlord, Time War*; military/historical games include *"88," Panzer*, and *C.V.*

Yaquinto sells high-quality boxed games. Prices range from $6 for *The Sword and the Flame* miniatures rulebook to $18.00 for *The Great Redoubt*.

In one year, Yaquinto has captured more sales than some companies that have been around several times as long. It is probably too early to say how well it will ride this meteor.

EXCALIBRE GAMES, INC., POB 29171, Minneapolis, MN 55430; 612-561-0403. Founded 1975. Owners: R. J. Hlavnicka, Dennis P. O'Leary. Designers: O'Leary, Michael Troan, Hlavnicka. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

Over the years, Excalibre has turned out some forgettable games like *Quazar* and *Atlantis*. However, their generous royalties have attracted Dave Arneson to freelance *Adventures in Fantasy* for them.

Prices range from $3.49 for *Atlantis* (bag) to $25.00 for *Adventures in Fantasy* (three books, dice, boxed).

HERITAGE USA, INC., 9840 Monroe Dr. No. 116, Dallas, TX 75220. Founded 1973. Owners: R. J. Stockman and Duke Seifried. Designer: Alfred Hendrick. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

Asking about company history, we received the honest if unhelpful reply "Few of us really know."

Heritage sells some SF&F games like *Starfighter* and *Spellmaker* (each $11.95), but is better known for its line of miniatures.

TSG BACK ISSUES

Back issues of THE SPACE GAMER are available at $1.50 each. Still in stock are:

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and Their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, Runequest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming's frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a Microgame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules; putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion Of The Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre"; variants for Chitin: I, The Creature That Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios. Also – strategy in Rivets, benefit-cost analysis for Ice War, and "Everyday Life in *The Fantasy Trip*."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; Tactics in G.E.V.; Variations on Wizard; Computers in Wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

Send $1.50 per copy, plus 50 cents per order for postage, to The Space Gamer, Box 18805, Austin, TX 78760. Please include second choices if you can. DON'T order these from Metagaming; they don't have them any more . . .

ZOCCHI DISTRIBUTORS, 01956B Pass Rd., Gulfport, MS 39501; 601-896-8600. Founded 1973. Owner: Lou Zocchi. Designers: Zocchi, Michael Scott Kurtick, Don Saxman. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog $1.

Zocchi started his career as a designer for Avalon Hill. In 1973, he published *Alien Space* on his own, and included some ads from other companies. The response was good, so he printed up a catalog and went into business as an independent distributor.

Over the years, Zocchi has managed to irritate, annoy and exasperate a number of people. FBI even made him a monster in a couple of their solo dungeons. However, he continues to distribute for almost every game company there is, and has earned a reputation for reliability. His catalog is unquestionably the most complete single game source available. If you are looking for an obscure or out-of-print game, check Zocchi.

Zocchi Distributors also sells its own line of Star Trek miniature ships, miniatures for its *Superhero 2044* game, polyhedra dice, and a line of computer games.

(Incidentally, Lou bitterly complains about being harassed by novice game designers, and wishes all to know that he is opposed to family games, sports games and beer-and-pretzels games, and does NOT run a free design consultation service.)

EON PRODUCTS, INC., 96 Stockton St., Dorchester, MA 02124. Founded 1977. Owners and designers: Bill Eberle, Ned Horn, Jack Kittredge, Peter Olotka. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail. Flyers available.

Eon originally tried to peddle *Cosmic Encounters* to Parker Prothers – which produced a prototype, then cancelled the contract. Eon then shamed PB by producing the game itself, scoring a considerable success. Four supplements followed, and in 1979 came the board game *Darkover*. AH's new *Dune* was designed for them by the Eon group.

Both of Eon's games (that's right, all two of them) are boxed and of high quality. *Cosmic Encounter* costs $12 and $4 per supplement. *Darkover* runs $12.

INTERNATIONAL GAMERS ASS'N, 5465 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90805; 213-422-2369. Founded 1974. Owner and designer: Russell F. Powell. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail. Flyers available.

"The International Gamers Association (IGA) was originally organized to provide a competitional (sic) system for professional strategy simulation gamers. The representation of independent game designers was taken up as a secondary venture for the IGA although it now makes up approximately 65% of the IGA's income."

The IGA offers a system for setting up chapters, holding tournaments, and ranking players. It prints a monthly *Wargamers Tabloid*.

A number of games are sold; probably the best-known is *The Arduin Grimoire* by David Hargrave. There are also some other D&D-type playing aids, and a couple of miscellaneous games. Prices range from $3.50 for a play-aid package to $12 for the family game *International Airlines*. IGA also advertises a number of PBM games.

ATTACK INTERNATIONAL WARGAMING ASS'N, 314 Edgley Ave., Glenside, AP 19038; 215-887-3876. Founded 1975. Owner: Centinal Limited. Designers: Ed Tilton, Dave Casciano, John Morrison, C. Mangene. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

"Founded in 1974 as an association of wargame clubs. Published first game as a lark in 1975. Games purchased 1976 by club members. Purchased in 1978 by Centinal Limited..."

Attack International (also doing business as the Dave Casciano Company) publishes a variety of obscure games. Perhaps the best known are *Fomalhaut II, Rift Trooper,* and *The War of the Star Slavers* (memorable for the broads on the cover). Prices range from 99 cents for the fantasy dungeon *Quirp Quarp* to $11.95 for the one with the broads on the cover. There is also a line of spaceship and fantasy miniatures.

CREATIVE WARGAMES WORKSHIP, INC., 330 E. 6th St., No. 1E, NY, NY 10003. Founded 1976. No owner reported. Designers: Jay Facciolo, Jon Rettich. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

"Creative Wargames Workship, Inc., started out producing rules books for miniatures. Today we are expanding into boardgames. We are most interested in developing games that will be played more than once and are not merely history texts in disguise."

The only CWWI product we have heard of to date is *The Emerald Tablet* ($6.95), a fantasy miniatures rulebook.

TWINN-K INC., POB 31288, Indianapolis, IN 46231; 317-839-6579. Founded 1964. Owner: Maurice E. Winn. Designer: Jeffrey Dillow. Does not buy outside designs or sell by mail.

Twinn-K has for years produced tires and spark plugs for model cars, boats, and planes. In 1978, they produced the D&D take-off *High Fantasy* (to be reviewed more fully in TSG 29).

TASK FORCE GAMES, 405 S. Crockett, Amarillo, TX 79106; 806-376-6229. Founded 1979. Owners: Allen D. Eldridge, Stephen V. Cole, Standard Printing of Amarillo, Inc. Designers: Cole, R. Vance Buck, Perry Moore, B. Dennis Sustare. Buys outside designs. Does not sell by mail. Free catalog.

"The concept of TFG was born in the summer of 1978. Initial design of our first four pocket games began in late '78 and continued until their debut at Origins '79. Designed to be a low-overhead, wholesale-only game company, initial response from wholesalers and the gaming public was outstanding. Our *Star Fleet Battles* pocket game soon became a best seller and was expanded and re-released as a boxed game in November of '79. Our current line of 8 pocket games and one boxed game will double by Origins '80 with the release of 6 new pocket games and 3 new boxed games."

Most TFG pocket games are fantasy or sf oriented. Component quality is good, considering the price ($3.95 - $4.95); game quality varies. For more about TFG, see page 20.

SIMULATIONS CANADA, POB 221, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, Canada B0N 1M0. Founded 1976. Owners: S. Newberg and C. J. Wong. Designer: Newberg. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail. Flyers available.

"Put out 3 games a year for our first three years. Now putting out four, two in spring and two in fall. Mainly historic games. Our first hard-core SF game will be released in October 1980."

Simulations Canada has published such games as *Quebec Libre* and *Raketny Kreyser,* both $11.99.

WEST END GAMES, POB 156, Cedarhurst, NY 11516; 516-295-5855. Founded 1978. Owners: Helena Gail Rubinstein, Daniel Scott Palter. Designers: Palter, R. J. Seiden, Al Nofi, John Prados. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

"West End started as a deal that fell through. I had been doing design and development as a sideline elsewhere. One of the other people there wanted to do a venture with me and we formed West End as a vehicle. The other party lost interest. Helena, one of my oldest and best friends, was looking for a venture to turn her hand at and came in. She basically made the company. All I do is design and development. . . "

West End plans to publish *Panzer Group Luna* and *Planet of Doom* this year, both at $10.

PEOPLES WAR GAMES, 3972 Gardenia Place, Oakland, CA 94605. Founded 1979. Owner and designer: Jack Radey. Buys outside designs. Sells by mail; catalog available.

Peoples Wargames published *Korsun Pocket* in 1979. *Odessa '41* is planned for late 1980. It is not known whether any F&SF games are planned.

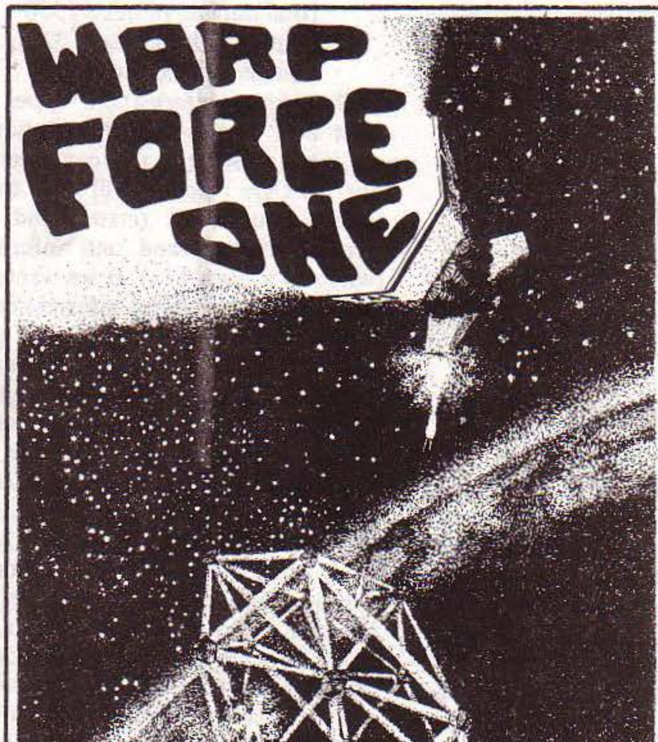
* * *

AFTERTHOUGHT: A Note On Submitting Game Designs

Most of these companies are willing to buy games from an 'outside' designer. That does NOT mean you should bundle up your notes and send them off. At best, you'll annoy the company (and get rejected). At worst, you could get ripped off.

The subject of selling game designs warrants a whole article. One day we'll print it. In the meantime: If you have a design you want to sell to a given company, write that company a short letter, outlining what you have to offer. Ask what their policies are regarding outside designs – what they expect, and what they pay. Most companies will want to see a game in fairly final form before they commit themselves. And remember: Getting legal advice before you sign something is not always necessary – but *it can't hurt.*

–Steve Jackson



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DEUS EX MACHINA

by Bruce F. Webster

* * *

COMPUTERIZING HEX-MAPS

Before I dive into this month's column, I'd like to make a few comments. First, I'd like to thank all of you who have written so far — I'll try to respond (either here or personally) soon. Steve and I need to know what you want to see here and how badly you want to see it. That's what determines how much I can get in here each month. I've changed jobs since I started this column; anyone wishing to write me may do so at:

Bruce F. Webster
Lunar and Planetary Institute
3303 NASA Road 1
Houston, TX 77058

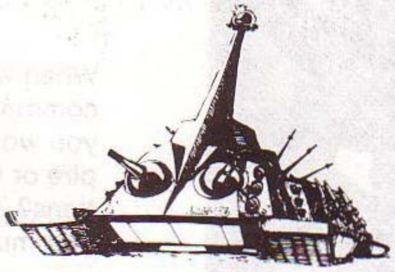
Second, I'd like to define the thrust of this column for 1980. The two major themes will be an exploration of the use of computers in gaming, and the development of some specific techniques for putting wargames and role-playing games on computers. I will completely avoid *Star Trek* and *Adventure/Quest* type games; these are heavily written up in many computer magazines, and the space here is too limited to use duplicating what is done better elsewhere. Complete program listings will be rare (again because of space), though excerpts may be used to show certain techniques. Instead, I will try to use a "Forum" — a letter column — as a software exchange for selling or swapping programs. If enough of you are interested, I may even start some sort of software library, but you've got to write and really encourage me; I've got enough to do as it is.

Errata

Finally, I'd like to apologize for the sloppiness of my last two columns. Both were written very hastily and could have used much rewriting. For example, there were two errors in last month's column that were both my fault. First, a table giving values for D2, D3, and D4 showed D4 equal to 1 for the (LL,RH) combination; it should be zero there and should be 1 for (LH,RL). Second, the first algorithm for distance for the MG style should have read "if SX*SY is greater than or equal to zero" and not "if SX = SY". Be patient; this column will improve.

Implementation

After seeing last month's column in print, I decided not to go on to hex geometry but rather to follow up on actually implementing a hex-map on a computer. (If you are sorely disappointed, write me and I'll send you all my info on hex geometry). Basically, I'll give a step-by-step approach that should help clarify last month's column. I'll use the map from *Ogre* as an example.



There are five steps in the following method, which assumes that you are going to represent a hex-map in computer memory using the MG style of numbering (see last column) and using at least one memory location for each hex. They are: decide orientation, fill in map, determine information type, determine information format, and define data structure. You should go through this process early in your program design, since it will have a great impact on how you write the rest of your program.

Decide orientation. This asks the question, "Which way is up?" For a map that is already numbered (such as the *Ogre* map), the question is already answered. However, if you are using an unnumbered map, you must decide which side of the map will be the top. The map must be positioned so there are vertical columns of hexes, at least until you are finished filling it in and have numbered it. You can then rotate it any way you like.

Fill in map. You must now add sufficient hexes to make a rectangular map with N columns of M hexes each (unless, of course, you are starting with such a map). Once you are done with this, you must examine the upper leftmost and upper rightmost hexes to see if they are low or high compared to the topmost hex of the next column in. With the *Ogre* map, both are low, and so we have a left low - right low (or LL-RL) map. You can now use this information to look up the values for D2, D3, and D4 (see last issue) and calculate D1 using N [D1=INT(N/2) + 1]. The upper left hex will be 01yy and the upper right will be yy01 where yy = D1. You can then fill in the rest of your map on paper if you find it necessary to design your program; otherwise, the software should handle everything. The relevant parameters for *Ogre* are:

Map type: LL-RL N=15 M=22
D1=8 D2=1 D3=0 D4=0
UL=0108 UR=0801
LL=2229 LR=2922
Total number of hexes: 330
Number of hexes used: 322
Number of hexes unused: 8

Determine information type. You must now decide what information you are going to store in this computer map. For the *Ogre* map, we will want to store terrain information (craters and rough terrain hexsides) and unit information (who's in a given hex). If we wanted, we could also store useful information such as the distance from that hex to the command post. Now we get into the fundamental tradeoff in information management on a computer: computational time vs. memory storage. The more information you explicitly store, the faster (usually) your program will run; the less information you explicitly store (and thus require your program to derive from other information), the slower it will run. You will run into this tradeoff again and again, and you alone can decide where the balance lies. You can store complete information on each unit within the hex-map array, or you can merely store an ID code which lets you look up the unit type in another table, which in turn can determine the characteristics of the unit. For our example, we will assume that memory size is more critical than speed and try to minimize our use; we will merely store terrain type and a unit ID.

Determine information format. The tradeoff mentioned above is very important here. If memory is critical, you may want to "pack" several types of information into a single memory location. This, of course, will mean additional computation needed to store or retrieve a particular piece of information. If memory is not so critical, you might store just one type of information in a given location, or even spread it out over several locations. Be careful, though – those words of memory can add up awfully quickly.

Continuing to assume that memory is in short supply, we will pack both our terrain information and our unit IDs into a single memory location for each hex (assuming each memory location is a 16-bit word). This is not as hard as it seems. Since nothing can occupy a hex with a crater, we can set all hex locations with craters equal to some arbitrary value (say -999), prohibit movement into these locations, and forget them. For the remaining hexes, we will divide up the 16-bit word into an ID-field (the upper 10 bits) and a terrain-field (the lower 6 bits). The six terrain bits simply represent the 6 sides of a given hex, and a given bit is set equal to 1 if the corresponding side of that hex is rubble. Whenever a unit affected by rubble wants to move from one hex to another, it must first check the appropriate bit to see if it can. The upper 10 bits are used as an index into another table where unit type and status are maintained; there are a number of ways this could be done, none of which I will go into here. I *will* comment that unless you want to do a *lot* of computation, all infantry units within a single hex will probably have to be combined into a single unit at the end of movement. Since the Ogre can overrun other units, and may even end up sitting on top of them, its position must be maintained separately. This could be done by using a single bit out of the 10-bit unit ID field (say, the rightmost bit) to represent the Ogre's presence and using the remaining 9 bits for the defender, or you could store the Ogre's location somewhere and just do a lookup into the map. As before, it all depends on how you want to set up your program.

Define data structures. Now that you've decided what information you want to store in your map and what format it will be in, you can define the data structure necessary to hold it all. Our minimum size will be (based on our previous assumption of one word/hex) N*M words; if we need P words per hex for information, then our final size will be N*M*P words. Note how quickly the size can grow; for the *Ogre* map, N=15 and M=22, so our minimum size is 15*22=330 words or 660 bytes of memory. If we had decided that we needed 5 words per hex to store all our information, we would need over 3K bytes of memory *just for the map!*

The easiest structure to use would be a multi-dimensioned array, MAP(N,M) (or MAP(N,M,P) if multiple words/hex are needed), where the formulae for matching up a particular location MAP(n,m) with a given hex number were given last issue. If the language you are using allows only singly-dimensioned arrays, or you are doing a direct table look-up into memory, (as in an assembly language program), you can translate MAP(n,m) into MAP(i) by the formula

```
    i = n + N*(m-1)
      or i = n + N*[m-1 + M*(p-1)]
         if MAP(N,M,P).
```

If you are working in PASCAL or assembly language, you might try defining a specific data structure for hex maps, with such features as pointers to adjacent hexes – but keep the space vs. time tradeoff in mind.

For the *Ogre* map, we will use an array MAP(15,22). The program will need to initialize the terrain information in MAP. This could be done either automatically or interactively and could allow either an exact duplicate of the game map or randomly generated terrain. Placement of the defender's units will need to be done interactively, while placement of the Ogre can be done either interactively or by calculation, depending on whether or not the computer is playing the Ogre.

Parting Comments

As you can now see, a lot of time and thought go into implementing a hex map. This is not the only way to simulate a hex map; for example, for a large, mostly empty map, such as the 3-D star map from *Starforce*, you would probably want to simply keep track of the position of all important objects. But the method you choose must be well worked out, because it will influence how you design the rest of your program.

No predictions about next month's subject; it will depend largely on what feedback I get from you. Keep those cards and letters coming in and let me know how you like the column, what you'd like me to do differently, and if you'd like it to be longer.

Dragonslayer

Coming from SPI this June!

SPI 257 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10010

COMPANY REPORT:

TASK FORCE GAMES

This is an experiment – an article about a game company, by one of the people who runs that company. We thought it was interesting. If you like it, let us know; we'll give other game companies their turns. –*SJ*

Allen Eldridge and I had previously run J P Publications, which went out of business at the end of 1976. During those four years we had learned much about printing and more than a little about designing, testing and publishing games. In the fall of 1978 we began seriously looking for a way to get back into the game industry and finally decided to start a new company. Many early pitfalls were avoided because of our earlier experience. We made some very basic decisions in those first days which have proven to be right. Since these form the basis of our company philosophy, I will list them.

1. No magazine. Even though *JagdPanther/Battlefield* had earned the respect of the industry, it was too much work for something that provided no tangible profit. While not having a magazine has kept us from having a "voice" in the industry, we have managed to live without it.

2. No direct mail sales. This decision was a sleeper. We didn't believe that a company could survive without direct mail, but wanted to avoid it because of the tremendous man-hour requirements. Our marketing expert (David Crump) pointed out to us that it could work, and that wholesalers wanted it that way. It was a tough decision to make, and it slowed down the cash flow to the point that it hurt, but we survived and are stronger for it. Task Force Games remains the only company that is specifically structured (financially) for this type of business, and the only company to publicly renounce direct mail sales. This has, interestingly, made our games MORE available because more stores will carry a line of games when they don't have to compete with the manufacturer. It gets tough when we have to send checks back to old friends who are sure that we will make an exception "just for them," but we have made our decision.

3. We would print good games on popular subjects instead of good games on subjects no one had ever heard of. This has had a very positive effect on our business. Our worst-selling games would be considered successful by most other companies.

4. The company would be operated for a profit. This is not as mercenary as it sounds. For us to put good games into print, keep them in print, seek out and encourage new designers, treat those designers fairly on their royalties, and stay in business, we were going to have to make a profit. I don't think that anyone can complain that our products are overpriced compared to those of other companies.

The Wind Also Blows in Amarillo

I have always found it interesting that Howard Thompson (who is a long-standing personal friend) manages to avoid mentioning Task Force when talking about the industry. While the reason is probably that we are still in our first year, I have to point out that our first year must be considered impressive. To date we have printed 9 titles and by Origins '80 we will have 19. Our sales easily put us in the top ten (based on last year's sales figures in S&T). We have managed to acquire some forty wholesalers (which is a record for a new company).

We have done this by two basic means; treating distributors right and mass-marketing games. Both of these policies give us decisive edges in the race to become one of the "top five or six."

For the time being we are the only game company that is refusing direct mail and sales to the stores. Perhaps in time others will start to do this, but for now we are the only one.

As far as a "mass market" game being "so watered down you wouldn't want to waste your time on it," I say "horsefeathers." D&D has become a mass market game, and *Star Fleet Battles* has to be the mass market game of all time, but no one would believe that either is watered down.

Just because a game has mass market appeal does not mean that it is watered down. It DOES mean that the game has to be on a popular subject, well explained and tested, and without a lot of unimportant clutter. To be sure, the hardest of the hard core can't be interested in anything less than individual ammunition records in battalion-level tank games, but they are only a tiny part of the market, and growing smaller both in percentages and numbers.

This approach can backfire, though. The mass market, which is so huge and so profitable, has virtually no voice within the industry itself. These people do not send in feedback cards, vote for awards (which will affect the chances for SFB winning "best release by a new company"), write fan mail, or attend conventions. The company that can correctly guess what this silent market wants will be the one that reaches the top of the heap.

New Product Info

Probably the most exciting new product is the *Star Fleet Expansion Module*. About half of the new ships in it came as unsolicited ideas from gamers.

Problems, Problems!

Now and then, we do get some mail, most of it complaining because someone can't win playing one side or the other.

Intruder is a good example. Some people can't kill the alien, and some can't avoid killing it. The simple solution is to increase or decrease the number of powers it has to suit your particular style of play and level of skill. A similar situation exists with *Valkenburg Castle*. It should be self-evident that increasing or decreasing the number of Orcs will compensate for any game balance problems. Another alternative is to forbid Hobart from making his grand assault until he has made five or six raids.

–*Steve Cole*
Task Force Games

GAME DESIGN: Theory and Practice

by Nick Schuessler and Steve Jackson

Part II: Early History

When I talk to my friends about “new technology” in wargaming, I am met with an incredulous look. Even those who have some passing acquaintance with the hobby seem quizzical if I mention “state of the art.” After all, we’re just shoving cardboard counters on a map, just like we were back in the early ‘60s. Aren’t we? I mean, it’s not like microprocessors or bubble memory, is it?

Well, (I stutter), it is, sort of. Wargaming is dynamic. Each new design adds to the body of knowledge. We might speak of the “first” wargame, but it would be impossible to speak of the “last” or “ultimate” wargame. Now and then we hear talk of the “last word” in such-and-such, but the hobby has a way of turning these announcements into boiled crow, often in the most unexpected way. For example, I remember hearing that SPI had refined its WWII divisional-level ground combat system until there simply wasn’t anything left to do. Then somebody discovered the back of the counter (left blank up to that point), and the whole thing started over.

An available body of knowledge is a time-saving device. The Detroit engineer doesn’t have to decide if next year’s model will have three wheels or four. He builds on previous designs, beginning where they stopped. Repetition is waste.

Our body of knowledge in wargaming is both positive and negative. It tells us what works and what doesn’t (or hasn’t yet – an important distinction). The pitfalls here is to see the body of knowledge as an ending point. It’s not – it’s a point of departure. It’s not necessary that every wargame use a hex grid or that combat be resolved on a matrix. It is true that current technology recognizes these techniques as sound. I see two related problems in our wargaming “body of knowledge.” Some designers use it as a safe retreat, avoiding innovation. The game may be cramped and stodgy, but it can’t be that severely criticized because it does conform to the “conventions.”

The fraternal twin to stodgy design is “change for the sake of change.” Here, the designer discards everything (he thinks), and refuses to be bound by “old fashioned ideas. However, he has nothing better to offer – just a different (and usually more complicated) variety of stodginess.

True genius in game design comes in two varieties. The first is that of the designer who creates something brilliant within the existing framework, e.g., the quantification of leadership value in *Squad Leader*. The second is that of the designer who pushes beyond the framework to inaugurate a whole new system of gaming – not in reaction to existing systems, but because the theme itself requires something beyond existing technique. Richard Berg’s *Terrible Swift Sword* meets this test, spawning an original gaming system to satisfy the need.

Once Upon a Time . . .

Modern wargame design begins in the early ‘60s with the big three: *Tactics II*, *Gettysburg*, and *D-Day*, all published by Avalon Hill. Each of these games had a profound influence on design over the next twenty years, and in some small way, every designer must deal with their legacies – both good and bad.

Certainly *Tactics II*, being the first, set the tone. It is a hypothetical conflict between “Red” and “Blue” using a WWII pattern of units: infantry, armor, airborne, etc. This game gave us the ½-inch cardboard counter as the basic marker. The game used a square grid, and another significant milestone was the subordination of terrain to that grid. The forests, towns, etc., used whole squares, while rivers ran between the squares. This simplified play, since no complicated resolution was required to determine what the terrain was for a given square. This is a persistent problem for historical designers, who must force their maps into a pre-existing pattern, causing distortions.

In *Tactics II*, each player moves all counters each turn and resolved counters; his opponent then did the same. This system, with minor modifications, is still used in nearly every divisional-level game. Each counter extended a zone of control (ZOC) into adjacent squares. If the moving player ended his move with a counter in his opponent’s ZOC, combat was mandatory. This forced combat has since been termed a “rigid” ZOC.

Combat was resolved by comparing the combat strength of the attacking and defending counters in terms of a proportion (1-1, 2-1, etc.) A combat results table (CRT) indexed the proportion to the result of one die roll, giving a result.

In looking at *Tactics II*, we can see dozens of major and minor design motifs that continue nearly unchanged for the next two decades. Combat and movement are quantified in terms of the grid; terrain affects both movement and combat; the matrix “probability table” system is used with a single die; a move-then-fire sequence is used; there are rules for weather, supply, rebuilding and replacement, etc. In short, it would be hard to underestimate the importance of this game. One would be hard-pressed to examine any divisional-level game (for any historical period) now on the market and not find most or all of these features.

Gettysburg, the next of the “big three,” was largely negative in its impact. It moved wargaming into the realm of historical simulation, which at least gave gamers some reference point to test the validity of the game. However, it was much closer to an attempt to transform miniatures play into a boardgame format. In the advanced version, for instance, the large (1”) square grid is ignored, and movement is given in inches, as for miniature play. Thus, the terrain rather than the grid was the deciding factor. Counters were rectangular rather than square, approximating the size of the unit represented and its “frontage.” The “facing” of the unit (the way it pointed) had an effect on combat, although the *Tactics II* CRT was used again in *Gettysburg*.

I suppose it is necessary to note here (as SPI never tires of doing) that Avalon Hill used the same CRT in nearly all its games during the ‘60s. I’ll add these comments: (a) it was a good CRT; (b) there is nothing chiseled in stone that says a CRT must change with every game; (c) real design work was in its infancy (still awaiting Jim Dunnigan); (d) the ‘tailored’ CRTs in some of SPI’s later offerings looked suspiciously similar, seeming to change for change’s sake, and (e) it really is time to quit dwelling on AH’s CRT.

Gettysburg decided that for the next twenty years historical wargaming would follow a boardgame format, and not a miniatures format. The grid beat out “open” terrain, for better or worse.

Hence, counters would be half-inch squares. *Gettysburg* represents the choice of a critical path in gaming. It would be twenty years before concepts from miniatures play would be re-introduced.

The third of the "big three" reflects my personal bias. *Chancellorsville* has been cited as the first game to use the hex (as opposed to square) grid. It appeared in 1961, just before *D-Day*; it also used a "secondary" ZOC, letting artillery units fire two hexes instead of attacking only adjacent units.

However, *D-Day* is the more significant entry. The hex-grid and secondary ZOC of *Chancellorsville* were important, but AH failed to tie the concept to a scale for the grid. Further, the rules for the secondary ZOC were somewhat lacking in clarity. In short, AH stumbled onto an innovation and didn't know what to do with it.

With *D-Day*, on the other hand, a number of strands come together neatly. The historical reference of *Gettysburg*, the theater-wide divisional level system of *Tactics II*, the hex grid from *Chancellorsville* – all combined into a WWII game. From a design standpoint, the game was strictly derivative; from a thematic viewpoint, its influence was profound. The huge interest in World War II was tapped with *D-Day*, and from 1961 until today this fascination with WWII has shaped every facet of the hobby.

This thematic impact had other effects as well. In many cases, the design systems for WWII games would be lifted for use in other historical periods. This was poor in design terms, but it happened – some games give the feeling of playing WWII in 1815, 1066, and other odd dates. And many themes were left undeveloped because the WWII designs took priority. Certainly the Civil War and Napoleonic buffs must be smiling wryly today as they hear WWII gamers agonize about being "neglected" for the fantasy/sf crowd.

In any case, these three games influenced the industry for two decades. The basic game would be a World War II title; it would employ a hex grid and terrain would be subordinated to that grid; movement would come before combat; terrain would affect both movement and combat; combat strengths and movement allowances would be quantified; combat resolution would come from a single die roll; the basic marker would be the half-inch cardboard square.

We really haven't come all that far since 1961.

The Stagnant Sixties

Certainly after leaving our "big three," we find little new in game design until the emergence of Simulations Publications, Inc. (SPI) in the 70s. But perhaps we should give this "wasteland" a little perspective.

First, we should note that AH kept the hobby alive for those years. In the early 60s, to list "wargaming" as a hobby on a job application was to risk raised eyebrows. There wasn't much around; a bad game was better than none at all, and we knew it. And AH's basic design problems can be attributed to a lack of competition. As a monopoly, AH had no incentive to innovate. The best thing that ever happened to AH was SPI.

Certainly, by the end of the '60s, the WWII games were well established. In addition to the ground games, there were several naval ones – *U-Boat, Bismarck, Midway.* In some respects, these rehashed old ground; in other ways, they were early signals of design problems to come.

The naval games were drawn from a miniature format once again. However, just as it was impossible to lift ground combat from miniatures in *Gettysburg*, it proved impossible with naval miniatures.

These naval games deepened the cleavage between miniatures and boardgaming, providing wargaming with its first big controversy: What is the real difference between miniatures and boardgames? Later we would see some specific design factors, such as morale, adopted from miniatures. And we would see miniatures used instead of counters on the hex-grid. But, curiously, the two formats would remain largely separate.

Another interesting development, first surfacing in the naval series, was the problem of 100% intelligence for both players. All three games recognized that half the problem of naval combat was finding the foe. The full-display style that worked passably in ground combat was not at all realistic on the ocean. Of course it didn't truly wash in ground-combat games, either, but there were two mitigating factors. In land combat (especially divisional level) the distortion was slight; the real intelligence problems in ground combat didn't become apparent until *PanzerBlitz* moved ground combat to the tactical level. And there was NO way to solve the problem of 100% intelligence. Over the years, designers and players went through every gyration imaginable to limit what the other guy saw. Substitute counters, plotting, screens, umpires–nothing worked. In fact, the frantic move to the computer for wargaming might be explained exclusively in terms of the intelligence problem. For every other area, the cardboard map and counters are still perfectly adequate.

Another group of games that bears attention is the hypothetical set. *Tactics II* leads the pack – a fight between two mythical countries over non-existent terrain. In this sub-genre followed *Blitzkrieg, Kriegspiel*, and *Strategy I.* In terms of design innovation, little new emerged here. *Kriegspiel* eliminated the die roll by substituting a "scissors-paper-rock" system. It was badly flawed, and suffered more by being associated with *Kriegspiel*, the all-time loser of the wargame hobby.

The real impact of this series was not in design but in theme. While WWII was dominating the industry, these games showed that gaming need not be literal and historically based. Here we have the seeds of today's fantasy and s-f games.

Transition

By the end of the '60s, wargaming had matured to the point where gamers could have real "conceptual" problems. In the early days we were too anxious about finding opponents and wondering when and if another AH game was coming. Prosperity brought us to the point where we could be concerned about issues like "realism," "quality," etc.

The main problem was that AH had reached the end of its tether. The lack of competition was finally taking its toll, and most AH entries in the late '60s and early '70s might charitably be described as tired junk. *Kriegspiel* was the nadir. Prices had been going up (yes, even back then), and *Kriegspiel* punched in at $8 – an enormous sum at the time. For this, we got two tiny mapboards and gigantic hexes and counters, which further reduced the playing area. The much-advertised "no dice combat resolution" didn't work. After that, gamers got very selective with their dollars. No more was there a guaranteed purchase just because a new game was released.

As Avalon Hill was bottoming out, a new little company called SPI was getting started. Their main vehicle was *Strategy & Tactics* magazine, and it turned out that using a magazine to sell games was a good and profitable idea. In terms of game design, the torch had definitely passed to SPI, and changes in the approach to game design – rather than the new marketing techniques – were what finally made SPI the industry premier.

By 1970, wargaming was hanging onto a lot of unchallenged assumptions: the "standard" CRT, rigid ZOC, disregard for map scale, simple-minded rules, etc. There seemed to be a general fear of innovation at Avalon Hill.

In short, 1970 was a good year to cause some upheavals in the market, and

SPI was there to do it. Jim Dunnigan and Redmond Simonsen were talented in some ways, lucky in others. In any case, the '70s belong to them. AH didn't really begin the long road to recovery until 1974, with *Rise and Decline of the Third Reich*.

The 70s begin with *PanzerBlitz*, designed by Dunnigan at SPI and then sold to AH. In some ways *PanzerBlitz* is as significant as *Tactics II*. We might say that it marked a "rebirth" of wargaming. In terms of design, its departure was so radical that AH put a warning at the beginning of the rules: Don't treat this like our other games.

PanzerBlitz was tactical level combat on the Russian front in WWII. Some of its appeal derived from rising interest in the *ostfront*. But here, thematic appeal was only part of the story. For *PanzerBlitz* was an entirely new game system. There were no zones of control; each counter had an attack range expressed in hexes. This detailed differentiation of weapons – tanks, small arms, artillery, assault guns, etc. – was of radical significance. The AH approach had been to force the theme into the system: you took *Tactics II* and made the Italian Campaign "fit." With *PanzerBlitz*, the game system derived from the theme; you looked at tactical combat on the Russian front and asked what game system would best simulate it. Form followed function.

After *PanzerBlitz*, the number of game "systems" was seen to be limited only by the number of possible themes. In historical games, the only rule was fidelity to the historical limitations; in non-historical games, the only rule was that it "work."

PanzerBlitz had its flaws. The 100% intelligence problem was still there, more pronounced because of the tactical scale. Terrain differentiation was poor. It wasn't until late in the decade that someone decided that trees could grow on slopes – amazing!

However, *PanzerBlitz* was the new beginning. Since SPI had the in-house staff, they could and did continue to work with tactical-level combat: *Combat Command, Panzer Kampf, Red Star/White Star, Panzer '44, Mech War '77*. All used the same basic system: attack, defense, movement, range, and weapon type on the counter; fire before movement; special rules for indirect artillery fire; close assault, etc. Each time, SPI tried to deal with the problems of the original *PanzerBlitz* – with varying degrees of success.

Dunnigan tried to use a plotting system (plotting, not plodding) to solve the intelligence problem. It didn't work. Attempts were made to introduce command and control systems, i.e., random "panic" rules, wherein the roll of the die forces you to do dumb things. These worked moderately well. The best of the innovations in this series, however, was simultaneous fire. The other guy gets to shoot back *before* the results are applied.

While SPI was fine-tuning the system, AH was issuing new titles based on *Panzer Blitz* with only the most minor modifications. *PanzerLeader* cleaned up some of the worst problems. *The Arab-Israeli War* did little more. *Tobruk* was a departure, but in the wrong direction. A highly mechanistic game, it dealt strictly with weaponry, divorced from the people who were using the weapons.

With *Squad Leader*, Avalon Hill brought the *PanzerBlitz* cycle to a close. *Squad Leader* took the tactical game system to new limits by a heavy emphasis on morale, command and control, leadership, terrain differentiation, and detailed weapons differentiation. Leadership and morale are quantified and have a pronounced impact on play. The rules are detailed to an extent that would have been totally unthinkable ten years earlier.

Two other major developments marked the seventies: the emergence of the "big" game, and the arrival of fantasy and science fiction as serious (and very commercial) game themes.

The "big" game evolved naturally. SPI offered a series of WWII divisional level games, each built around a major campagn. True believers kept trying to patch them together to make one big European Theater game. The message finally got through; SPI's *War In The East* and Game Designers' Workshop's *Drang Nacht Osten* arrived at about the same time. Each of these monsters sported three or four mapsheets and handfuls of counters.

These games demonstrated that gamers would now tolerate long, complex rules, and would deal with lots of counters over a large play area. This testing of the limits in length and complexity of rules was quite important. *Squad Leader*, for example, is a "small" game, but the rules are voluminous. There might have been no *Squad Leader* had not the "big" games first expanded the limits.

The "big" games have established a fairly permanent place in the market. *War in the East* was followed by *War in Europe* (nine mapsheets), *War in the Pacific* (seven mapsheets), *Terrible Swift Sword, Wacht Am Rhein, Atlantic Wall*, etc. The big game is here to stay – a small but profitable section of the market.

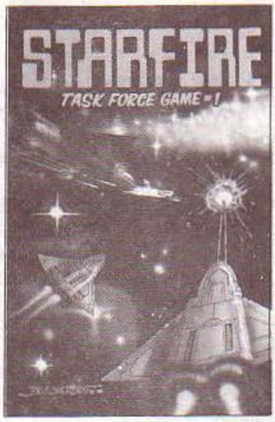
Next month: Fantasy, science fiction, and other new design developments.

THEY'RE OUT OF THIS WORLD!

INTRUDER
TASK FORCE GAME #6

INTRUDER is a "monster hunt" aboard a Deep Space Station. But, not only is the alien being hunted by the crew members, he is also the hunter! His powers continually grow and if he gains the cloning power . . . !

The game includes 54 die-cut counters representing the crew, their weapons, lab animals, and the Intruder. The map details the interior of the space station *PROMETHEUS*. INTRUDER sells for only $3.95.



STARFIRE is a game of battles between fleets of space warships, from massive Battleships and Superdreadnoughts to swift Frigates and Corvettes. Victory is dependent on your skill in deploying and maneuvering your fleet.

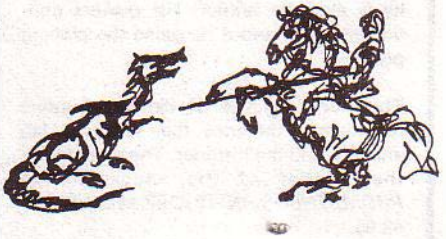
STARFIRE includes over 100 die-cut counters, a map, and rules for a wide variety of weapons including rules to build your own ships. STARFIRE sells for only $3.95.

TASK FORCE games are available wherever fine games are sold. If your dealer does not carry TASK FORCE games, ask him to check into our full line of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Historical games.

Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent – IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine. For information on writing reviews for TSG, see the "Writers' and Artists' Guide" in this issue.



ARENA OF KHAZAN (Flying Buffalo); $3.00. Designed by Ken St. Andre; supplement to *Tunnels & Trolls.* 38-page 8½" x 11" booklet. One player; 15-20 minutes per round. Published 1979.

Short and brutal arena combat in the City of Death. Open to all classes of characters.

The designer calls it "an adventure for those who love to fight, not a puzzlebox as are some other solitaires." If you have a rich, experienced character, this arena is probably a good way to get rid of him. Here he may meet, for instance, the 6th-level sorceress with no characteristics lower than 20, who carries a 21-die weapon.

Still, one can have a brief and glorious career taking out the lesser fry. This adventure can be fun, but is not recommended for highly-valued characters.

–Lorin Rivers

ARES, a new magazine of science fiction and fantasy simulation, published by SPI. $3/issue or $14 for 6-issue subscription. Edited by Redmond A. Simonsen. 8½" x 11", 40-page magazine with fiction, articles, and a complete capsule game in each issue. Issue number 1 published March 1980.

ARES is SPI's entry in the fantasy and s-f magazine field, with the game-in-every-issue gimmick. It is similar to S&T (their historical simulation game magazine) in layout and quality (excluding the game). Average article length is about 2,000 words, with illustrations, charts, and graphs included for visual enjoyment.

ARES has one major strong point: that of a wider audience selection. SPI has the best circulation in the hobby; with the promotion given in S&T, ARES should hit the big time early. Of course, this is all fine and dandy, but ARES is not living up to the hype in S&T. The art is superior to most magazines', the writing is well-founded and shows a lot of thought (especially *Dragon . . . Ghost* and *No, You're Not Going to the Stars*) but I fear ARES is going to hit the same rut S&T has been in: that of printing a half-baked game in every issue.

ARES would come highly recommended if not for the dog of a game and the high price. If SPI would really look at the market, they'd see that cheap s-f games are a dime a dozen, but excellently produced game magazines will always have readers. A science fiction *Moves* magazine would have done better. Perhaps it's not too late for a change.

WorldKiller is the game in the first issue of ARES. It includes a 4-page 8½" x 11" rule sheet, an 11" x 16" map, and 100 die-cut counters. The map itself is printed red on black and is very tiring to look at (it has only boxes and numbers on it). The rules are extremely sketchy with a simplistic game rationale, like any cheap s-f game on the market. Play is very simple; this could (with a little modification) be a good introductory game for beginners.

ARES/*WorldKiller* was a disappointment. It's uneven. Expect nothing but the best in serious science fiction writing here, and nothing but the worst from the games. To quote Pink Floyd . . . "It's just another brick in the wall."

–Jerry Epperson

DUNGEON OF THE BEAR, LEVELS 1-3 (sold separately) by Flying Buffalo; $3 per level. Designed by Bear Peters. Supplement to *Tunnels and Trolls.* Each is an 8½" x 11" booklet – 26 pages total. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1978.

Make-your-saving-roll-or-die . . . fight . . . make-your-saving-roll-or-die . . . fight . . . Standard T&T dungeon, except that it requires the services of a DM. (Like an elevator which requires an elevator operator. Some prefer that sort of thing.) Open to all classes and levels.

This is a well-organized dungeon, but full of the usual T&T monsters and predictable "surprises." Delvers are likely to end up watching for the DM's gleeful grin, wondering whether it means the ceiling is going to fall in (again) or that one of them is now a vampire (again) or that they are about to stumble on a hot red herring (again).

Dungeoneers are advised to start with a large party and expect heavy attrition. It helps if you have a strong 2nd-level mage who can devote *all* his strength to "Oh There It Is" and "Omnipotent Eye" spells. Otherwise, you are likely to enter with a large party of standard characters and emerge (if at all) with a small group of strange, assorted monsters.

This is a hard dungeon to map, but why bother? You may even want to let experienced parties finesse the first level or two completely.

THE DUNGEON OF THE BEAR is a cut or two above the average – highly recommended for puerile, masochistic fans of T&T.

–Forrest Johnson

FOES (Chaosium); $11.95. By David Forthoffer. Play aid for *RuneQuest.* 112-page 8½" x 11" book. Published 1980.

This is another "monster book" for FRP referees. However, it does not give generalized descriptions of new monsters. The foes in FOES are standard *RuneQuest* types – but each one is an individual character, with complete statistics, talents, spells, and sometimes the beginning of a personality. There are over 1200 characters here.

A book like this is certainly a time-saver for the ref who suddenly needs four guardsmen, six lycanthropes, or whatever. This is the best of its type I've seen – large, detailed, well-organized.

The price is high, though, considering all you get is page after page of computer printouts (at least they're legible) and a few uninspired sketches. And FOES won't be much use if your campaign doesn't use *RuneQuest* rules. It would be easier to make up new characters than to convert these into another system.

Any *RuneQuest* referee ought to look this book over. If you can spare $11.95, you will probably want it. Just don't let it become a crutch. A book like this should supplement your imagination, not replace it.

–Steve Jackson

GOBLIN LAKE (Flying Buffalo); $2.00. Designed by Ken St. Andre; supplement to *Tunnels & Trolls.* 12-page 5" x 7" booklet. One player; ½ hour. Published 1979.

This is the first of FBI's "pocket adventures." You are a goblin looking for your roots, and you find a little lake (a pond, really) in a cave. What a great adventure.

The cover is attractive – a color painting shows the goblin and the lake. Unfortunately, that's the best part.

I had absolutely no fun. This "adventure" is brief and not very exciting. It's a bad start for the new format. I don't recommend it.

–Lorin Rivers

INTRUDER, (Task Force Games); $3.95. Designed by B. Dennis Sustare. 14-page 5½" x 8½" booklet, 16" x 20" mapsheet, and 54 die-cut counters. For 1-3 players; plays in under an hour. Published 1980.

INTRUDER is a solitaire game (with scenarios allowing more than one players) of hide-and-seek on the research station *Prometheus.* Sound familiar? It is. This game simulates the action in the movie *Alien,* and does a good job of it. The alien wanders around killing things; as the game progresses, it gains new powers, each of which comes as a surprise to the humans, and gets tougher and harder to kill.

This is basically a solitaire game; players who have opponents available will want it only when it gets hot in Siberia. If you do have some fellow-gamers around, you might try collaborating instead of competing.

Unfortunately, INTRUDER is not as well written as the other Task Force games I have seen. I had the distinct feeling that some of the rules were missing. For instance, where do you set up the cages? (I put them in the lab.) I had problems with the sleep-dart rules; they let the Intruder wake up so quickly that my officers had to fire repeatedly. Very irritating.

I was somewhat disappointed. This one is for solitaire gamers, or others who are really hard up for new sci-fi games.

–Jerry Epperson

MAGIC REALM (Avalon Hill); $15.00. Boxed, with 20 full-color double-sided hex tiles, 497 color counters (die-cut, double-sided), 121 spell and treasure cards, 16 full-color character cards, a personal history/combat pad, a treasure set-up card, 2 dice, and 8½" x 11" rulebook. For 2-16 players; playing time from 2 hours up. Published 1979.

MAGIC REALM is a large and complex game of fantasy adventure. Each player moves his/her character about, looting treasure troves, searching for secret pathways, and slaying the various monsters, natives, and occasional fellow players that cross his path. Combat involves an unusual diceless system that takes into account such factors as reaction time, armor and its weight, fatigue, and length of weapon. The game rules are divided into several "encounters." Each encounter details an added facet of the game system; movement, combat, monsters, treasure, magic. Each builds upon the last until a full game system is created.

The components are of the highest quality. The heavy cardboard counters are printed on both sides, the character cards include a color portrait of the character with his/her special abilities and statistics. The playing board is a versatile set of heavy cardboard hexes printed with mundane terrain on one side and magical forest on the other. Some of the rules are very interesting, covering details like hiring cannon-fodder, setting up your own victory conditions, and gaining "fame points."

The serious problem we ran into during play was that most of our time was spent vainly searching through the rulebook for certain special-case rules. The writing is unclear and horribly redundant. The lack of indexing makes trying to find a given rule all but impossible. The exceptions to every rule get to be tiresome, and many of the terms are confusing.

All things considered, though, if you can wade through the rules, MAGIC REALM is worth buying. The components alone justify the price. If you can play the game, so much the better. If you can't figure out the rules, then make up your own, so you can still use the playing pieces.

–Denis Loubet

ONEWORLD / ANNIHILATOR (Metagaming); $2.95. Designed by W.G. Armintrout / James E. Tucker. Two games in one package. ONEWORLD: 1 8½" x 14" map, 86 counters, 16 4" x 7" pages of rules. ANNIHILATOR: 14" x 12½" map, 45 counters, 7 pages of rules. Each is for 2 players; playing time 1 hour each. Published 1979.

ONEWORLD is rather abstract. At first glance, it appears to be a thinly-disguised version of "paper-rock-scissors." Fog takes the place of paper and blade takes that of scissors: rock stays rock. When you read the rules, you find you were right. Despite that, it is actually a lot of fun if you take it lightly.

ANNIHILATOR is more a standard-issue wargame. One player sends a small force of space soldiers inside a huge, Saberhagenish robot planetkiller. The invasion force sets off demolition charges, battles robot security drones, and tries to reach the central computer core to kill the thing.

ONEWORLD is fun and simple. That's about all once can say on it. The diceless combat system, though unoriginal, is very fast and several rounds can be played in less than a minute. The board is nicely laid out with some give-and-take terrain, and the whole flavor of the game is relaxed.

ANNIHILATOR plays pretty fast, too. The demolition charge system is neat and easy to use. The small number of pieces keeps the game pretty desperate.

ONEWORLD seems to take itself seriously, and I don't know whether to believe the introduction or not. The counter mix is sort of unbalanced; the fog counters are of little worth, while the blades are the main attacking force.

ANNIHILATOR is just too small a game; there's not enough there. If there were more and different counters and a more complex and varied map, it might have the popularity of *Ogre*, but as it stands, it's too small. It has possibilities, and might have been better as a full micro.

If you like small, rushed games, with little to offer, then this is the package to get. As the rules state, they were meant as "beer and pretzle" games. But beer and pretzel games are not going to sell as well as *G.E.V.* or *Sticks and Stones*. Half-micros don't make it.

–Denis Loubet

SIGMA OMEGA (not to be confused with Battleline's *Alpha Omega*), published by Game Technology (POB 375, Carmichael, CA 95608); $9.00. Designed by Marshall Rose. 24-page 8½" x 11" rulebook, 100 sloppily-cut counters, 4 plastic cut-out "horizon sighting templates," 8 cardboard cut-out "base ships." Two or more players; playing time ½-hour up. Published 1979.

(Not included but necessary for play: percentile dice, paper and pencils, ruler, protractor, and patience.)

Remember how Luke Skywalker tooled around in his X-wing, having a blast with some Tie fighters? Here it is again, except you are Luke (or Darth Vader, if you prefer), and the fighters are called Bogies, Vandals, Whirlwinds and so on. It is a *very* realistic simulation of tactical space combat. Players plot the movement of individual ships, feverishly calculating things like thrust, ship orientation and angle to target. Novice players may enjoy the game if they stick to two dimensions and omit bombs, missiles, turrets and optional rules of any sort. Warning: Use a *big* playing surface, preferably one you can mark on.

There is also a campaign game, with some interesting rules of imperialism and ship design but no strategic combat except by the same tactical rules. It might work if you organized ships by squadrons, but who wants to maneuver a formation the size of a squadron? For most players base ships will remain those funny-looking-cardboard-things.

SIGMA OMEGA was first designed as a computer game. It should have stayed a computer game. Human beings do not usually function well as replacements for computers. Game Technology does sell, at nominal prices, some programs for the TI58 and TI59 calculators which might make the game more playable.

Obi-Wan Kenobi would find this game a challenge. The rules read like instructions for a nuclear reactor, and contain some confusing errors. However, some people will find the play exciting. SIGMA OMEGA will probably have a cult following for some years to come.

Stay in attack formation (hissss) . . .

–Forrest Johnson

SORCEROR SOLITAIRE (Flying Buffalo); $3.00. Designed by Walker Vaning; supplement to *Tunnels & Trolls*. 30-page 8½" x 11" booklet. One player; one hour. Published 1978.

You are a magic-user exploring a haunted house by night. You can use only first-level magic.

This is an amusing adventure – more than just a series of "Take That, You Fiend" spells.

As with other T&T adventures, a little bad luck can kill you. Some of the treasure is out of proportion to the prowess of the monsters guarding it. Also, there is one encounter which is likely to crop up half a dozen times, and is no fun even the first time.

With its good points and bad, this remains a unique and fairly pleasant adventure.

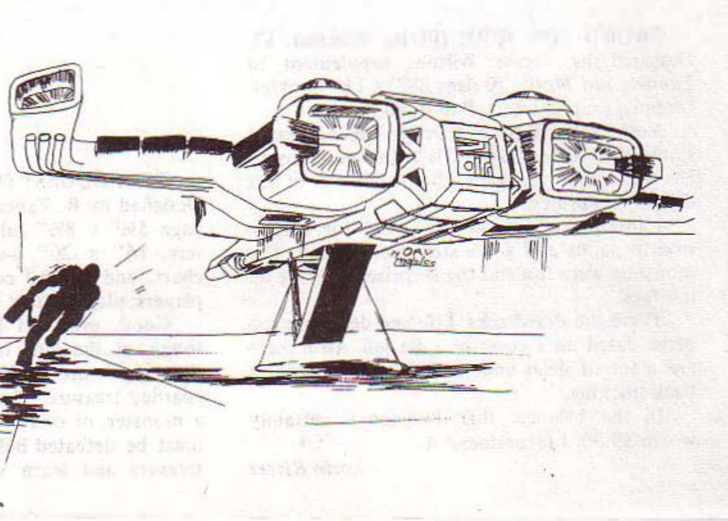
–Lorin Rivers

SPACE BATTLES by Level IV. $14.95 (tape) or $19.95 (disk). For the TRS-80 16K Level II microcomputer. One player only; three levels of difficulty. Minimal typing dexterity required. Plays in less than an hour.

Standard fare of one powerful *Enterprise* engaged in mortal combat with hordes of weaker Klingons. The galaxy to be defended is a two-dimensional grid divided into a hundred boxes. Each box contains one Klingon or one Starbase – nothing else. To win you must kill every Klingon.

Excellent graphics, with Starbases that tractor-beam you in for repair, clever phaser/torpedo fire, excellent ship silhouettes, and an interesting financial tote sheet which encourages minimal expenditures (and allows comparisons between games) are this program's strong points. Phasers always hit but don't always kill, while torpedoes can kill with proximity detonation but must be aimed. Torpedoes may be fired in spreads.

Unfortunately, the mobile Klingons are trapped individually in their starting boxes.



There is no exploration theme. Tactics rapidly devolve into using rocket power to cross sector lines (thus trying to maximize range for the Klingon's first shots) and finding optimum ranges for phaser vs. torpedo fire. The game is not in real time and cannot be saved. There are no sound effects.

Although the third level of difficulty does present real problems in terms of survival (because of the number of Klingons), I believe most gamers will set this aside – a nice try, but not really a challenge. The tactics are just too easily optimized.

–J. Mishcon

STARMASTER (Schubel & Son). Play-by-mail game; $10.00 to enter and $2.50 and up per turn. 64-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook. Started 1980.

This is a new, hand- (not computer-) run society-level SF game, including exploration, diplomacy, colonization, and combat. For ten dollars, starting players get the rulebook, registration for one race/empire, and three paid-up turns. Each player designs his home planet, species, and society. The gamemaster evaluates the player's race and provides information describing its military, spaceflight, and industrial capabilities. Each turn, players send in sheets listing their purchases of military and space hardware, and movement orders for 6 "forces" of any number of ships. The GM sends back results of exploration, money tokens, and small sheets describing any unusual artifacts or phenomena the player may have found. A basic turn costs $2.50. If the player has any combat, colonization, or trade, $2.50 is charged per special activity.

STARMASTER is an extremely thorough game. There is careful attention to known scientific fact, and unknowns are presented in a realistic manner. Players have a choice of societies: individual, caste, or hive. There are different types and levels of technology for space, war, and industry. Technology can be improved with money, experience, and the discovery of ancient artifacts.

The game is not perfect. The limit of 6 "moves" is unrealistic. This can be partially remedied by spending $2.50 for 6 more moves, which brings up a second problem: expense. A "busy" turn can cost a player $10. But the game is worth the money; it is entertaining and well run. For many, however, money is better spent elsewhere. I recommend STARMASTER to anyone who enjoys SF gaming and play-by-mail games.

–Stefan Jones

SWORD FOR HIRE (Flying Buffalo); $3. Designed by James Wilson; supplement to *Tunnels and Trolls*. 30-page 8½" x 11" booklet. One player; two hours. Published 1979.

You, a low-level fighter or rogue, hear a rumor that a local wizard is hiring mercenaries. He tells you he needs the sub-levels of his dungeon explored.

I loved this one. It was good for laughs, sweaty palms and some strong cogitation. The monsters were fun and the surprises kept me on my toes.

There are drawbacks. Life and death are too often based on a guess or a die roll. Also, there are a lot of dead ends and too much tedious back-tracking.

In the balance, this dungeon is certainly worth $3.00. I recommend it.

–Lorin Rivers

SWORD OF HOPE (Judges' Guild); $3.00. Designed by Dave Emigh. Supplement to D&D; sequel to *The Tower of Ulission*. 32-page 8½" x 11" booklet. 4-8 characters; playing time 4-6 hours. Published 1980.

The background information in *Tower of Ulission* is not essential to SWORD OF HOPE, but makes some of its events a little more clear. The sword Myrlani was lost in battle; it is the quest of the characters to search the Caverns of Gar for the Dwarven Forge, find the sword, and return it to the world.

SWORD OF HOPE assumes a reasonable amount of intelligence and wit on the part of both the characters and the Dungeon Master. Cryptic clues and warnings give the characters a challenging and interesting trip. If they misunderstand or disregard the warnings, wel.... All the maps are clear and without unnecessary clutter; almost all odd possibilities are accounted for.

Unless the DM is the bloodthirsty type, he should warn the players to use very few low-level characters, as some of the creatures are fairly nasty. Some of the cryptic clues are a bit too cryptic; as a result, much time may be lost in aimlessly wandering around or trying to puzzle out the solutions.

Everything considered, Dave Emigh presents the fantasy game world with a very good piece of work. SWORD OF HOPE is organized; nothing essential is left out, yet there is room for any changes or modifications the DM wishes to make. This supplement is recommended for experienced DMs and players, as no small familiarity with the D&D system is needed.

Elisabeth Barrington

SWORDQUEST (Task Force Games); $4.95. Designed by R. Vance Buck. Softpack, with 14-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook, 108 die-cut counters, 16" x 20" 6-color map, damage point chart, and tactical combat display. 1, 2, or 3 players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1979.

Good, evil, and Druidic forces search the towns of the land of Tirrane, hoping to find the lost Sword of Lumina. In each town is a guarded treasure. The guard may be an enemy, a monster, or one of your men. Hostile guards must be defeated before you can acquire their treasure and learn what it is – magic spell, weapon, armor, or sword. Once you find a sword, you must evade enemy forces and return it to your home citadel to find out if it is the true Sword of Lumina or a worthless copy.

The background for SWORDQUEST is better than average for a small game, because the designer has previously written a novel with the same setting. I was also pleased by the components. The map and counters are vividly colored. Game design stresses playability. Combat, movement and other rules are quickly learned, and you can be playing in a very short time.

However, once you begin play, you may find some situations where the rules are not specific enough. When entering sanctuary, does healing take place immediately, or must the full turn be spent there stationary? I also dislike the unique "Telshir" combat system, which is designed to give a smaller force an "equal" chance. The designer weakly cites a code of fairness that requires the larger force to use only as many fighters as the smaller force has available. Further detracting from realism is the weakness of the monsters. Fire giants can take only 2/3 the damage of most humans.

SWORDQUEST has enough good points that I don't feel my money was wasted. However, better games are available for less money, so I don't recommend it for any category of gamer.

–Bruce Campbell

TEMPLE OF RA, ACCURSED BY SET (Judges' Guild); $2.00. Designed by Thomas and Edward McCloud. Supplement to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. 16-page 8½" x 11" booklet. For 2-8 characters; playing time 4 to 8 hours. Published 1979.

Characters travel through a magically-built temple of the god Ra, searching for the Princess Rukmini of Hindustan, who was spirited thence by Set. Some of the encounters are with Set's guardians (including the dreaded Gorgriff-spidrascorp). Others are with Hindustani creatures who are also searching for the princess.

TEMPLE OF RA is well-organized and fairly complete. The rooms are all described in almost minute detail. Less experienced DMs will have little to worry about except playing the game. Almost all possible contingencies have been planned for.

Drawbacks include the scale of the map, high levels of the monsters compared to the characters, and extra materials needed for play. The scale (on graph) is one mater per square. This may work for some DMs, but is very awkward for most. The levels of the monsters (10th-level guards, and three Type V Demons) seem a bit high for the suggested second-level characters to handle. And to fully understand the intricacies of the creatures in the temple, the DM needs 3 to 5 of the AD&D supplements.

For the skilled DM, the TEMPLE OF RA is a decent dungeon. However, the problems listed above and the fact that there is little room left for the DM's imagination make it less than amusing to play.

–Elisabeth Barrington

TIME TREK, by Joshua Levinsky; $14.95. Program tape for the TRS-80 16K Level II microcomputer. One player only; ten levels of difficulty. Requires extraordinary typing dexterity. Plays in less than an hour.

The *Enterprise* tries to destroy all the Klingons before they can wipe out the starbases. The galaxy is the usual two-dimensional surface divided into rectangles. Each rectangle may contain up to six Klingons, a starbase, a black hole (sensors say it exists, but not where), a magnetic storm, and many stars.

This is truly a real-time game. The dastardly Klingons may well attack your vessel, the starbase in your sector, *and* another starbase elsewhere – all at once. Intra-sector movement is done with the keyboard arrows, and you really can move and shoot simultaneously. Phaser and torpedo fire both give one shot per typed command; both must be aimed. Phaser effectiveness decreases as shield effectiveness increases. Torpedoes have no effect if they miss, but kill if they hit. Sound effects vibrate the cassette motor control relay to "buzz" on the destruction of a vessel or starbase (no mention is made that this will markedly diminish the life of your control relay), and it's possible to hook in an amplifier for true "thunder" in your passing. A point score is given at the end of the game.

Generally different tactics are required at different play levels, but phasers are relatively ineffective and are hardly ever used. Furthermore, one soon learns that if no fire angle is typed, the computer assumes it is zero degrees. This little time-saver means a lot of zero-degree fire. There is no exploration theme. There are other irritating problems. The command entry sequence sometimes requires the use of the Enter key, and sometimes doesn't. In combat these variations are confusing. Only Conan the Barbarian can spread his left-hand fingers to reach both the up-down and left-right movement arrows, thus freeing his right hand for combat commands. There is no inter-sector movement under rocket power. Games cannot be saved.

Barring these caveats, the real-time aspect of the game and the aggressive tactics of the damn Klingons make this game quite exciting. For those into hand-eye coordination and fast action, TIME TREK will be enjoyable.

–*J. Mishcon*

THE TOWER OF ULISSION (Judges' Guild); $3.00. Designed by Dave Emigh. Supplement to *Dungeons & Dragons*. 32-page 8½" x 11" booklet. For 6 characters; playing time 6-8 hours. Published 1979.

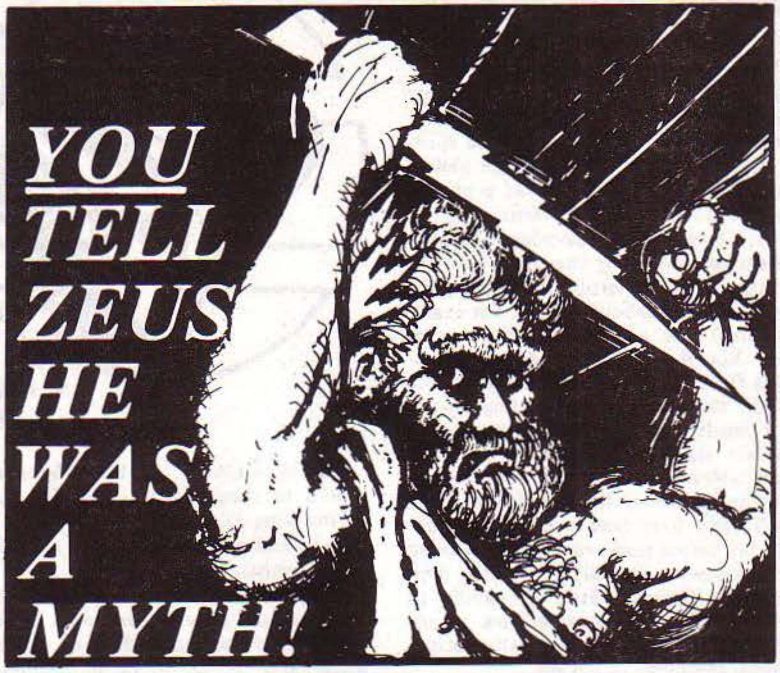
THE TOWER OF ULISSION gives the players a chance to travel a wilderness and small city inhabited by creatures of various types, from undead to minotaurs. The title is a bit misleading, in that the travellers never go into the tower; they are only trying to reach it.

The lands are well mapped out, and the positions and contents of the buildings are already established. Scrolls, riddles and clues are provided, as are blank hex-sheets for the players to map their journey upon. There are random encounters as well, leaving a good amount of play to the DM's imagination. Descriptions are complete; anything highly unusual is explained in full to the DM.

It is the more mundane occurrences, however, which can be more than a bit confusing to both the players and the DM. THE TOWER OF ULISSION is put together in such a way that the person reading through it for the first, or even the fourth time finds himself turning back and forth to various pages to clarify matters.

Even so, DMs of all levels of skill should find TOWER OF ULISSION relatively simple, whether to adapt to their own tastes or to play as it stands. The game flows well and requires little more from the DM than reading the booklet.

–*Elisabeth Barrington*



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TRAVELLER (Game Designers' Workshop); $11.98. Designed by Marc Miller. Three 44-page 6" x 9" booklets, boxed. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1977.

TRAVELLER is probably the most popular science fiction role-playing game on the market. It is also a very demanding game. The game master needs basic knowledge in a wide spectrum of scientific fields, and the rare ability to create a "game map" the size of a planet, sometimes on the spur of the moment.

Book 1, *Characters and Combat*, defines a 2-die system for generating characters with six characteristics. These characteristics influence play in a rather roundabout fashion. For example, you don't roll against dexterity to hit something. You don't even get an across-the-board plus for high dexterity. You DO select weapons on the basis of DX, getting an advantage or penalty for each sort of weapon.

Characters start at age 18 with no skills. There are tables governing their drafting or enlistment into one of the military services. Character's early lives (and perhaps their untimely deaths before play even starts) are ruled by a quick series of die rolls. After their military experience, they have little or no ability to improve their skills and characteristics. At age 34, they start *losing* points, eventually becoming enfeebled and dying of old age.

The combat tables are a feast for gun nuts. A couple of dozen weapons are listed – everything from cudgels to laser rifles. The combat system is messy. "The basic throw of 8+ is subject to a variety of applicable die modifiers, including armor/weapon relation, range, strength of attack (combat or weakened blows), movement status, attacking and defending expertise and other aspects." Ugh.

Book 2, *Starships*, tells how you can design a space ship, with lots of details on hulls, engines, weapons, computers and so forth. You need at least a high-school knowledge of physics to master the ship combat system.

Book 3, *Worlds and Adventures*, outlines the creation of a world, including such things as size, atmosphere, population, technology, and government type. The GM has the task of filling in the details. There is also an equipment list, a set of encounter tables, and a section on psionics.

TRAVELLER is the best game of its type, recommended for the sophisticated science fiction gamer.

–Forrest Johnson

TRAVELLER Supplements

MERCENARY, *Traveller* Book 4 (GDW); $5.98. Designed by Frank Chadwick. One 52-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1978.

This book papers over some of the basic flaws of *Traveller*. There is an elaborate system for characters who wish to get more and better skills by becoming mercenaries. For example, the Combat Rifleman skill allows one to use rifles, carbines, or similar weapons to advantage without learning a separate skill for each.

Panzer-lovers may enjoy the sections on employing an army, including recruiting, contracts, battles and heavy weapons. However, the "Battles" section is only 4½ pages – rather sketchy.

If you would like to spend an evening rolling up some rather interesting characters, you will like this book.

HIGH GUARD, *Traveller* Book 5 (GDW); $5.98. Designed by Marc Miller. One 52-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1979.

HIGH GUARD is like *Mercenary*, but applies to characters who join the Navy (i.e., go mucking about on space ships). There are also advanced rules on military experience and space combat.

Marc Miller is also the designer of the excellent board game *Imperium*. A lot of HIGH GUARD combat rules which do not otherwise make sense appear to be an attempt to integrate *Imperium* and *Traveller*. Unfortunately, the new rules do violence to the system from Book 2 and the laws of physics.

1001 CHARACTERS, *Traveller* Supplement 1 (GDW); $3.98. One 44-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1978.

This booklet is just what the title offers: a list of pre-rolled characters in six major categories for players who do not want to take the time to create their own. It also gives the characteristics of nine famous characters from SF stories, without naming them.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS, *Traveller* Supplement 2 (GDW); $3.98. One 44-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1979.

This booklet tells you everything you might want to know about the fauna of various types of worlds. There are grazers, intimidators, reducers, gatherers, etc., etc., appropriate to worlds of varied size and atmosphere. This is the "monster book" for *Traveller*.

THE SPINWARD MARCHES, *Traveller* Supplement 3 (GDW); $3.98. One 44-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1979.

Description and maps of a region of space, with basic (mostly very sketchy) data on some hundreds of worlds. A game master with Book 3 could create a similar region, but this is a time-saver.

CITIZENS OF THE IMPERIUM, *Traveller* Supplement 4 (GDW); $3.98. One 44-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1979.

Here are creation tables for 12 new kinds of character: Belter, Scientist, Barbarian, and so on. There are also 40 pre-generated individuals of each type, and eight more fictional heroes, with their names and the names of the nine described in Supplement 1.

You will need all of Books 1-5 to fully appreciate this supplement.

THE KINUNIR, *Traveller* Adventure 1 (For Referees Only) (GDW); $4.98. One 44-page 6" x 9" booklet. Published 1979.

The *Kinunir* is a small Imperial warship, now missing under mysterious circumstances. This book gives complete deck layouts, specifications, history, etc. for the *Kinunir* class ships. So you will have something to do with these plans, there are also a number of facts, half-truths and rumors leading to several military/political situations in which characters may involve themselves.

Anyone can buy, but only referees are supposed to read, this collection of related scenarios. I am not supposed to tell you about the *** ****** or the *******, which I rather liked. Could be fun. A prize for referees – but only a very imaginative and painstaking referee will be able to make full use of it. A challenge for any group of players.

–Forrest Johnson

UNCLE UGLY'S UNDERGROUND DOOM (Flying Buffalo); $3.00. Designed by Ugly John Carver; supplement to *Tunnels & Trolls*. 8-page 8½" x 11 booklet; cover by Liz Danforth, but little interior art. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1979.

This is a dungeon-dungeon, not a solo dungeon. Here we have a series of strange rooms provided for the T&T dungeonmaster. Only one level is described; FBI evidently is waiting to publish another 8 pages later for another $3.

Some quotes: "roll 20 dice in combat", "crushed", "no saving roll allowed", "30 dice worth of hits", "Never To Be Seen Again", "reduced to tomato paste", "M.R. 3,000", "Hellbomb Burst", "L5-SR", "immune to all direct forms of attack."

You get the idea. This dungeon will in short order chew up a party of the usual invincible solo-dungeon grads. Mostly traps and trickery, some fiendishly clever, some merely fiendish. But look out for the trolls with the zoot suits and violin cases.

–Forrest Johnson

VALKENBURG CASTLE (Task Force Games); $3.95. Designed by Stephen V. Cole. 26-page 5½" x 8½" booklet, 16" x 20" map, and 54 die-cut counters, packaged in zip-lock bag. For one or two players; playing time depends on scenario used. Published 1980.

VALKENBURG CASTLE is another fantasy game about a dungeon that needs clearing. Unlike *Dungeon, Sorceror's Cave, Death Test*, etc., it pits the players against each other with armies instead of single men. The Valkenburg player attempts to clean out his family castle (taken by treachery years before), while the Evil player attempts to block him. There is a campaign game, equivalent to about 52 normal games, for those wishing more complexity.

VC is graphically excellent. The rules are clear, but necessarily lengthy. The length of the rules might cause a novice to shy away, but once learned, VC plays quickly. Another minor help is that all of the tables are given in one area, rather than scattered through the book.

The rule section on modern weapons will give the player using them too much power; it is recommended that players weaken these rules slightly before using them. VC also involves an exorbitant amount of bookkeeping. Players must keep track of nearly everything on paper. A solitaire version of VC is given, but no rules are supplied for random enemy action; this is up to the player.

VALKENBURG CASTLE would be worth the money to a "hard-core" fantasy gamer; others might do better elsewhere. A lot of good ideas went into this game, but some of them got lost.

Jerry Epperson

WARLOCK (Future & Fantasy Games, 430 Sluyter SE, Kentwood, MI 49508); $1.95. Designed by Richard Slabbekoorn. 8-page 5" x 6" rulebook, 5" x 6" counter sheet (uncut), 10" x 6" spell sheet, 8½" x 11" map, ziplock bag. Two players; plays in 30 minutes or less. Published 1980.

A new game, from a new designer interested in forming his own company. He sent TSG this game with a request that I review it myself – so I shall. Unfortunately, all I can say is that it looks very much like *Wizard*. Two wizards create beings and cast spells, each trying to slay the other; a fictionalized account of a duel precedes the rules. Sound familiar?

This game is much shorter and simpler than *Wizard*. All warlocks are identical; the spell list is short; combat is very simple indeed. Tactics are important in movement, impossible in combat. Luck is vital. The one innovation is an adaptation of Larry Niven's "Warlock" stories. Wizards receive three strength points ("mana") per turn. They can use them immediately on small spells, or save them for a bigger effect later. The rules are well-organized and can be picked up in one or two quick readings.

The game components are very primitively produced; the simplicity of the rules borders on triviality. There is no realism of scale at all; bats, men, and dragons are all one-hex creatures. Movement allowances are similarly unrealistic. Combat is by a single die-roll for each hex; all counters on the losing side are dead.

I honestly feel that this is a simplified *Wizard* variant, with one good gimmick. Ah, well; imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Taken on its own merits, WARLOCK would be a good introductory game for younger folk. More experienced gamers will exhaust its possibilities very quickly indeed.

–Steve Jackson

HISTORICAL GAMES

THE JOURNAL OF WORLD WAR II WARGAMING, published by Nick Schuessler and Wes McCoy (1002 Warrington Dr., Austin, TX 78753). Sold by subscription only; you may subscribe for as many issues you like at $1/issue. 6 issues are planned per year. 24 8½" x 7" pages, offset printed. Issue No. 1 published March 1980.

WWII gaming always generates controversy among fantasy/sf gamers. Most role-playing gamers seem to dislike WWII games; most boardgamers seem to enjoy them. Since most future-history or SF board games use game philosophies and mechanics derived from the WWII games, a knowledge of these historical games can be of use. Nick Schuessler and Wes McCoy have begun a project that has great potential value to all boardgamers. The worst thing that can be said about their first effort is that, essentially, the first issue is one long article. The best thing about that issue is that article: "Combining *War in Europe* with *War in the Pacific*." The article provides a rational basis for picking rules from the two games to produce a workable hybrid...by adding a third game, *Global War*. Basic details for meshing the maps are given, along with playtest results and commentary on historical realities disregarded in some games.

This magazine will have a limited appeal; as its title indicates, it will limit itself to WWII subjects. It is intended as a "cheap, critical journal" for the WWII wargamer who feels neglected by the larger magazines. No SF here! The production – offset on folded legal-size paper – is cleanly done and legible – far better than (for instance) the first few issues of TSG, but by no means slick.

This magazine has a lot of future potential. If you are a "hardcore" WWII gamer, it's highly recommended. Others might consider it for the theory and analysis it will provide. It may be a little presumptious of this reviewer to recommend a publication that has had only one issue, but TSG readers have seen what Nick Schuessler can do. Based on that, we should expect nothing less from a good writer than good work.

–Elton Fewell

PANZER PRANKS (Chaosium); $3.98. Designed by Kurt and Steve Lortz. 16-page 5½" x 8¼" rulebook, 8½" x 11" bound-in map, 100 die-cut counters. 2 players; playing time 20-30 minutes. Published 1980.

PANZER PRANKS is not the ideal birthday gift for a simulation fanatic. It would be roughly equivalent to giving an autographed copy of the Ninety-Five Theses to the Pope. From its cover illustration of panzers in the South Pacific to the stunningly logical rule 9.8 (for faster games, double all the movement rates), this game might well be described as Avalon Hill meets Monty Python.

The game is playable, and even entertaining in a gruesome sort of way. All the mobile counters except one represent AFVs. The exception, an infantry counter, moves and fights just like the others most of the time, avoiding an unnecessary complicating factor. After all, legs are just funny tracks. Armor values are divided between front and flank, with the rear counting as a third flank. (This almost leads me to a digression on fantastic biology.) The armor value of the target unit is subtracted from the gun value of the firing unit and the resulting differential, modified for range and obstacles, is used to enter the CRT. Movement may be either sequential or simultaneous; the latter leads to use of the Two-Fisted Combat Resolution System. Do not forget to remember to remove the little brathing from the main gun muzzle.

This game is a lot more fun to read than to play. It is a satire on simulation mania, and uses both rapier and bludgeon freely and sometimes simultaneously.

Too thorough a description would give away all the punch lines, but one of the eleven scenarios should either whet the appetite or raise the gorge enough for an informed decision. The Polish Corridor Strategic Level Simulation is, by a narrow margin, the most obnoxious. The Polish Lancer must defeat the Panzer and prevent his exit through the French Doors before the Stuffed Bear awakes, and all sides must take proper tactical notice of the obstructing Windsor Chair and Broken Love Seat. Yes, it's that kind of corridor.

Unfortunately, this game was published without a Surgeon-General's warning.

–Joseph M. Hurst

STREETS OF STALINGRAD (Phoenix Games; $39.95. Designed by Dana Lombardy; research by David Parham. Boxed, with one 25" x 38" map and one 25" x 31" map; 2,160 die-cut counters; twelve Russian and twelve German scenario sheets; six map set-up sheets; one time record sheet; one terrain effects chart; one German and one Russian unit ID/rules summary sheet; two 16-page 8½" x 11" basic rules booklets; one 26-page advanced rules booklet; one 32-page historical commentary booklet; and 48 zip-lock bags and labels for counter storage.

STREETS OF STALINGRAD (SOS) is a company/platoon level game of the street fighting that took place in the late autumn of 1942. In the end, the Russians encircled the German Sixth Army in a classic pincer movement. Hitler refused permission for the Germans to break out, and the army was destroyed. The twelve scenarios recreate the major phases of the battle; certain scenarios can be linked for a campaign game. Rules are divided into "basic" and "advanced." Optional rules deal with German commandos, the "Thor" and "Dora" siege guns (which were not used at Stalingrad, but could have been brought up), and (no fooling) Russian mine dogs. Each 5/8" map hex represents 300 meters; each turn is one day.

Physically, the game is quite impressive. The graphics are clean, and there are enough charts to wallpaper your bedroom. The order of battle research is extensive and looks very accurate. Play mechanics are quite simplified: move, attack, exploit movement, exploit attack. The defender gets defensive fire before the attack is resolved. The CRT gives only two results: no effect and eliminated. Movement is deliberately skewed. One-day turns and 300 m/ hex should allow units a wide range of operations. In his design notes, though, Lombardy explains that he has factored in set-up times for artillery and engagement time for infantry – even if it doesn't happen.

The counters use the Russian and German military symbols of WWII, and are printed in the color shades of the respective uniforms. Reference sheets are supplied for the unfamiliar symbols – but only one per country. Thus, the Russian knows what his own counters are, but not necessarily what the Germans' are. The combat system is much too simplified to capture the flavor of street-fighting. A more elaborate play sequence, more complex CRT, and back-printed counters would have helped. There should have been some provision for melee, where units get locked into close action. Instead, the designer selected a very complex topic and imposed simplified systems in the name of "playability."

However, city fighting has never been done that well. SOS is no worse than previous efforts, and should get marks for a good try. In light of the price, I offer a conditional "buy" recommendation for WWII buffs who (a) rate Stalingrad as their "favorite" battle, or (b) want a big, overly-simplified game with a lot of playing time in it, or (c) want to tinker with combat mechanics to make a fairly good game even better.

–Nick Schuessler

* * *

Reviews of the following games have been assigned or received for upcoming issues: *All The World's Monsters III, Book of Treasure Maps, Broken Tree Inn, The Caverns of Thracia, City State of the World Emperor, Dark Nebula, Deathmaze, Divine Right, Duck Tower, Escape from Astigar's Lair, Fortress Ellendar, The Hellpits of Nightfang, High Fantasy, Hot Spot, King Arthur, Modron, Moorguard, SQWURM, Starfall, The Temple to Athena, Top Secret, Treasure Vaults of Lindoran, Ultimatum, Vector 3,* and *Villians and Vigilantes.*

If you would like to review a game we have not yet reviewed and which is not listed above, by all means do so (see page 30). Specific games for which we are seeking reviewers include *Advanced Melee, Advanced Wizard, Beast Lord, Bushido, Double Star, In The Labyrinth, MAATAC, Marine 2002, Mythology, Starfleet Wars, Time War* and *Tollenkar's Lair.*

WRITER'S GUIDE

THE SPACE GAMER solicits articles, art, reviews, and fiction from its readers. All material should be oriented toward science fiction, fantasy, and/or gaming. Here are some guidelines on what we expect from contributors, and what contributors may expect from us.

Payment: TSG pays on publication, at a rate of one cent a word for written material (a minimum of $5 per submission). For certain material (i.e., fiction from professional writers) we pay up to three cents a word. Story length is not actually calculated by counting every word; we measure the length of the story, in column inches, and figure each inch at 40 words.

Subject Matter: If you look at back issues of TSG, and submit material on similar subjects, you can't go too far wrong. Material we would especially like to see includes:

Reviews – see below for full details on reviewing games.

Scenarios and variants – An article about a new way to play a popular game (rule changes or expansions), or a whole new scenario, will always be carefully considered. The better-known the game, the more likely we are to print a scenario or variant. NOTE: Play-test your submissions before you send them. We WILL test new rules or scenarios. If they don't work, we won't print them.

Fiction – TSG is not primarily a fiction magazine, and never will be – but we will print one or two short stories per issue if we can get GOOD ones.

Strategy and play hints – If you think you can win consistently at a given game or type of game, and you're willing to share your secret, go ahead . . .

Role-playing game material – Supplementary material for RPGs is always popular. Be creative. Don't re-hash Tolkien yet again. *Original* new creatures, short programmed adventures, hints for better play, new rule sections . . . these are the things our readers want to see. Again, material on the better-known games will have an edge over less popular systems. We would prefer to see material adaptable to several different RPGs. An article that could be used with (for instance) *D&D, Fantasy Trip,* AND *Traveller* would be better than one for only a single game.

Humor – but keep it short.

Other things that we'd like to see include articles on computers and computer games; articles by game designers; well-done science fact material related to s-f gaming; cartoons (one-panel, not six-page!) and general commentary on s-f and fantasy games and design.

Things that we really *don't* want to see include songs and poetry, any more articles on psychology, lengthy charts and tables, and material related solely to historical wargaming. This is not to say we would *never* print such material – but there is a heavy editorial bias against it, based largely on the results of our survey.

Rights: TSG reserves all rights to material accepted for publication unless initially specified and agreed otherwise.

Specifications: All written submissions should be typed, double-spaced (60-space line) in black. Please use white paper, letter-sized (8½" x 11"), and type on one side only. The first page of the material (not just the cover letter) should inclde your name, address, and the word count. Please number the pages and put your name on each. These precautions make it less likely that part of your material will be mislaid. *Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with each submission.* Rejected material received without an SASE will be discarded.

Graphics: If your article requires specific figures or illustrations, draw them in the cleanest form you can. If you or any of your friends can execute them as per other interior art (see Artist's Guide), do so. Otherwise, we will re-draw them from your sketch. Note that re-drawing complicated diagrams or figures presents difficulties when we put an issue together. Avoid them where possible.

Acknowledgement: We try to acknowledge each submission within two weeks of receipt. This acknowledgement may be an acceptance, a rejection, or a notice that we are holding it for further study. This applies to all contributions – art as well as written material. However, we do not normally acknowledge News & Plugs or calendar submissions, or letters to the editor. There are just too many of them.

WRITING REVIEWS FOR THE SPACE GAMER

Capsule Reviews

Most of the reviews we print will be "capsule" reviews – 400 words or less. We pay $5 for each capsule review accepted. We want to run a review for EVERY new sf or fantasy game or supplement. During 1980, we'll also accept reviews of older games.

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long, and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: Name of the game; publisher; price; designer. (If applicable: "supplement to –––," "companion to –––," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time; publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game; there IS something worthwhile. Don't try to be Pollyanna – just point out the game's successes.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and SAY SO. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation: your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it, and why.

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name WILL be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him decide whether he wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, NOT a complete analysis. For those who want to write longer reviews, each issue will have one or two –

Featured Reviews

These will be game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information*, plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If TSG has not already published a capsule review, write one, separately, and submit it at the same time. We may even use both.

ARTIST'S GUIDE

Payment: TSG pays on publication. Payment for cover art starts at $60 and goes up, depending on quality of the work. Interior (b&w) art earns the artist a flat $1 per column inch – thus, a half-page illustration would pay $15. If your check would come to less than $5, we will round it up to $5.

Subjects: Again – all art should be oriented toward fantasy, science fiction, and/or gaming. Either a serious or humorous approach is acceptable – whtever fits your style. Certain subjects have been overdone. Don't send us a barbarian hero with a clinging maiden at his feet; we have lots already.

Cover art – Must be full-color, finely detailed paintings. Artists must use a vertical format, leaving room for the TSG logo and list of contents.

Interior art – At present we need black-and-white material only for interior illos. Line art reproduces much better than water-color or other material requiring screening. Work to exact size where possible: 1, 2, or 3-column width. NOTE: We use many more small pictures than we do large ones If you keep your subject general, you increase the odds that it will fit an article or review. We will not run art unrelated to the material it accompanies.

Rights: TSG purchases the original artwork and all rights unless initially specified and agreed otherwise.

Specifications: Cover art may be executed in oils, acrylics, water color – whatever you like. Work on a light, flexible board if at all possible. Try not to send originals larger than 17" x 22". Actual size is quite acceptable.

Interior art must be executed in black ink (preferably India ink) on white paper. Again – work to actual size where possible. We prefer to paste up the original if we can; reproduction is better that way. DO NOT send originals larger than 8½" x 14". Art should always be mailed flat – never rolled.

Return of unused material: We will return all art we reject, or any piece we do not print within a year – IF the artist sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope with his original submission. If we do not receive an SASE, we will hold the rejected art for a month or so and then discard it.

NEWS & PLUGS

T/A Creations (156 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010) accepts mail orders for three lines of F&SF greeting cards: Fantasy Series by Boris (12 cards – $5.40); Masks by Tomm Huffman (8 cards – $3.60), and the Dracula series by Christopher Moser (8 cards – $3.60). Minimum order $7.20 – postage and handling $2.00. Master Charge and Visa accepted.

Emprise Game Systems offers *Warp Force One*, a computer-moderated correspondence game of moderate complexity. See ad in this issue.

Educational Design, Inc. (47 W. 13 St., NY, NY 10011) will have *Le Game* ready for shipment by mid-June. This is a simple, programmable, electronic board game for ages 8 up. Price is $10.

GDW has "limited copies" of the classic *Triplanetary* left. Price: $10. Get them while they last.

Robert P. Goldman (200 Old Army Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583) publishes *Moravian Dynasty*, a 12-page xeroxed game fanzine. Irregular publication. Three issues for $1.

Orisek Industries (POB 52, Hinsdale, IL 60521) has developed plastic stands to hold counters vertical, facilitating hidden movement. Available June 1. Suggested retail price: $9.00 for a box of 100.

Judges Guild has published a gamemaster shield for *Runequest*. Price: $2.50.

Dimension Six (4625 S. Sherman St., Englewood, Col. 80110) has produced four glossy SF posters, retailing at $3 each.

Keith Gross, designer of *Ice War* and *Invasion of the Air Eaters*, has left Metagaming. He is now working for a non-game-related computer firm in Pennsylvania.

Task Force Games' *Star Fleet Battles* tournament was omitted from the Origins 80 promotional material which appeared in many places. The tournament will be 3-round single elimination and will cost $1 to enter. There will be $70 in cash prizes. Those planning to attend Origins should send in their entry fees for this tournament immediately if they wish to enter.

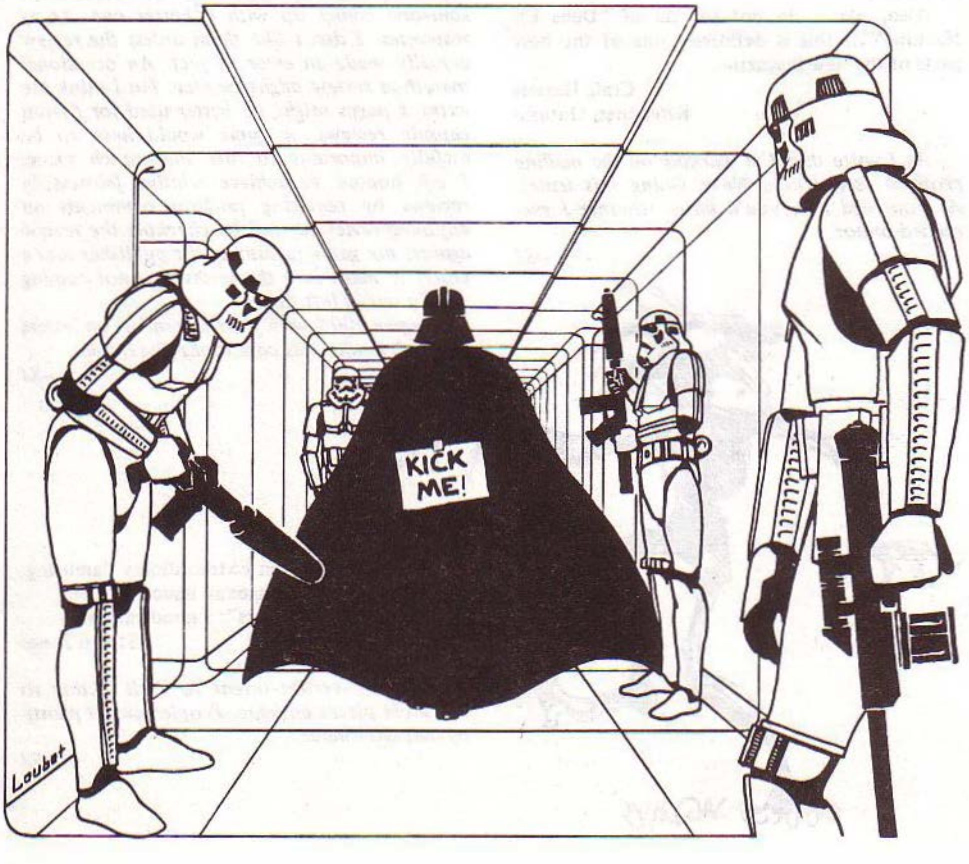
A reliable rumor: Yaquinto Publications is said to have closed a deal to do a game based on the TV show "Dallas."

Another reliable rumor: TSR is reported to be very unhappy with Heritage because Heritage is putting a note on the back of some of its miniatures, saying, in effect, "this product is for use with D&D . . . but is not a licensed product." Very interesting.

Zocchi Distributors has a new address: 01956 Pass Road, Gulfport, MS 39501. Zocchi offers a line of glow-in-the-dark and "cloaked" (transparent) Star Trek miniatures, as well as regular white-plastic ships. Prices range from $2.25 for a cloaked cruiser to $3.50 for a glow-in-the-dark tug.

Simulations Canada is working on *Dark Stars*, their first SF game; it is planned for October 1 release. Price will be $11.99.

Late flash from Lou Zocchi: "we now own the world supply of *Empire of the Petal Throne* . . ." It is now selling for $30.



Strategic Simulations, a new computer game company, has announced *Computer Bismarck*, a one- or two-player program for the Apple II with Applesoft or Apple II Plus. Program disk, rulebook, and charts can be purchased for $59.95 (that is not a typo) from Strategic Simulations, POB 5161, Stanford, CA 94305.

Calendar

May 23-26: PHANTASMICON '80. SF & game con; Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles. Contact Phantasmicon, 439 S. La Cienega No. 112, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

June 6-8: MICHICON IX. Wargame con; Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. Contact Metro Detroit Gamers, POB 787, Troy, MI 48099. Please enclose SASE.

June 27-29: ORIGINS 80. Wargame con; Widener University, Chester, PA. Contact Origins 80, POB 139, Middletown, NJ 07748.

July 11-13: ARCHON IV. SF con; St. Louis, MO. Contact POB 15852, Overland, MO 63114.

July 11-13: MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN IV. Wargame con; Nicollet Hotel, Minneapolis, MN. Contact Jeff Berry, 343 E. 19th, Minneapolis, MN 55409; 612-871-6144.

July 12-13: WARGY XII. Wargame con; Platte College, Columbus, NE. Contact Rick Plankinton, RR 6 Box 43, Columbus, NE 68601.

July 26-27: MASSCON 80. Wargame con, Campus Center, UMASS, Amherst, MA. Contact Dennis Wang, 11 Dickinson St., Amherst, MA 01002.

August 1-2-3: CWA-CON 80. Wargame con; College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL. Contact Chicago Wargamers' Assn., 3605 Bobolink, Rollingmeadows, IL 60008; 312-394-5618.

August 2-3: BANGOR MAINE AREA WARGAMERS' ANNUAL CONVENTION. Contact Edward F. Stevens Jr., 13 South St., Rockland, ME 04841; 207-594-2642.

August 21-24: GENCON XIII. Wargame con; University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI. Contact POB 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147; 414-248-9099.

August 29 to Sept. 1: NOREASCON 2. The 38th World SF Convention, Boston. Contact POB 46, MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02139.

August 30-Sept. 1: PACIFICON. Wargame con, San Mateo, CA. Contact David G. Hinkley, POB 5833, San Jose, CA 95150; 408-374-9770 or 371-4229.

READER ADS

Reader ads are available to individuals (not to companies). $5 per insertion; limit 20 words or four lines.

$6 each: *Dixie, Freedom/Galaxy, Infinity, Godsfire, Outreach, StarForce, Stellar Conquest, Ythri.* $3: *Alien Space, Empire I, Ogre.* Reese, 924 Elizabeth, Eugene, OR 97402.

Wanted (to complete our files here): TSG No. 1 in good condition. Will trade a year's subscription. /s/ Steve Jackson.

AUSTIN AREA WARGAMERS are invited to the TSG playtest sessions. Want to play, discuss and review new games from various mfrs? Call 447-7866 for information.

LETTERS

Congratulations on your first issue of TSG: you seem to be keeping up the same high quality . . . the variant articles and the game design article are just the sort of writing I like to see . . .

The capsule reviews are fine, although I prefer the long ones. Next time remember to put the prices on the long reviews.

As for the letter column, I would like to comment on the letter from Task Force Games. They say in their game the speed of light is 10,000 km/turn. This means each turn is roughly 1/30 of a second . . . Also, try not to edit the letters you print. It gives the impression that you are editing out the bad things . . .

Keep up the good work.

Myron Arnowitt
126 Kendall Rd.
Lexington, MA 02173

SNAPSHOT runs $7.98. Sorry about that.

Wish we could run all the letters we received in full, but it just isn't possible. We can do a lot more by picking out the important points, good AND bad, of as many letters as possible.

–FJ

. . . Concerning the future of TSG, I would like to say that the ONLY reason I currently subscribe to TSG is to read the new product announcements and reviews. People who live in a small town such as Ithaca are lucky if there is a store that carries SF&F games. Even if there is such a store, they often won't let you open a game up and look at it before buying it. Ads and reviews in magazines like TSG are the only ways we can become aware of the existence of some games, and our only source of hints as to whether they are worth the usual 15+ dollars charged in this inflation-ridden economy. If you can make good on your promise about comprehensive new-product reviews, there is no doubt I will keep buying TSG.

. . . The "new editorial policies" you mention in No. 26 sound pretty good. Maybe once you start printing all this good stuff, you can cut out a lot of the crap you have been printing. High-school humor like "Some Variations on Wizard" leaves me cold. And could you stop the flow of link-game articles, adding Ogres to *Rivets*, adding *Wizards* to *Starship Troopers, The Dreadnought Group that Ate Sheboygan*, etc., etc. Given N games on the market, N(N-1)/2 such articles are possible, and I don't want to read any of them.

And for God's sake, quit with the psychology articles. Look, it's probably true that I play wargames as a substitute for sex. Just because something is true doesn't mean I like getting my nose rubbed in it! You and I are about the same age, so maybe you can relate to a problem I have about gaming . . . I am currently trying to reconcile the hobby of "gamer" with the role-model of "adult." This task is not made any easier when I open TSG 26 to page 42 and find four pre-pubescent faces grinning at me, all of which are too young even to have acne!

Scott D. Johnson
241 Linden Ave. Apt. 8
Ithaca, NY 14850

. . . about TSG 26 . . . I have to admit the D&D system is confusing and extremely limited, but did you ever use the AD&D combat system? Even if someone thinks that it is confusing, that is where the DM comes in. He's not just some jerk reading out of a book written by someone else. I myself have made over five dungeons, including the "Steading of Tiamat" (anyone who plays AD&D knows what I'm talking about), worlds, five new monsters, and two new character classes. I'm sure other DMs have fixed up their combat systems and all around added to the game.

If you want clarity and total completeness write your own game system, but if you haven't I don't feel you should knock it . . .

About Mark Brady's review of AH's *Wizard's Quest* – this game is a bore, utterly ridiculous . . . "A Variety of Hobbits" – anyone familiar with Middle Earth should know that information without some half-baked guy flipping through "The Return of the King," copying it down, and sending it in for a few bucks . . . I hope you don't have any of that in future issues of TSG, you're too classy for that. Why don't you have useful information on weapons, people and other things instead of stuff people who read LOTR should know and people who didn't probably don't care about . . . More art! Especially that conforms to the article . . .

Kevin Erskine
35 B Cooper Place
Bronx, NY 10475

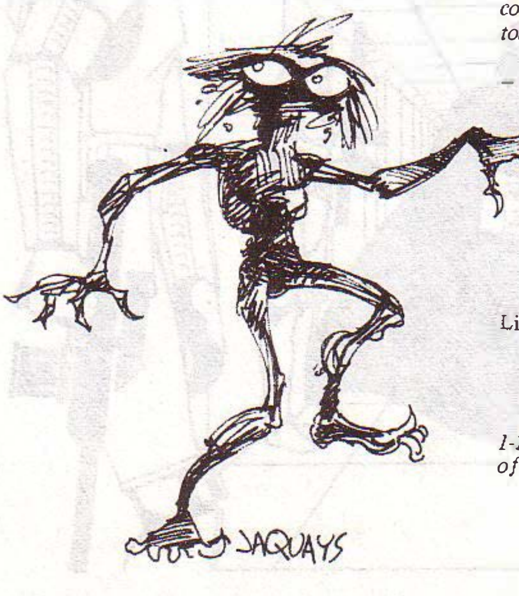
I felt I had to write you about your manner of mailing . . . The magazine arrived in poor condition. Perhaps you could go back to the Metagaming technique of mailing them flat, in an envelope . . .

Also, please do not get rid of "Deus Ex Machina" as this is definitely one of the best parts of the new magazine.

Craig Herteis
Kitchener, Ontario

As I write this, I'm working on the mailing problem (see Where We're Going this issue). As you read this, you'll know whether I succeeded or not.

–SJ



I read with interest your ascension to power over TSG, and your admirable dedication to regular, frequent, and swift game reviews. Herewith I am about to throw in my two cents:

(A) Someone desperately needs to begin a dialogue on what a sf/fantasy review ought to be. It certainly is distinct from a historical game review, as F&SF games are often much more literary. To my mind, this dialogue could very well begin with a mild, brief "lecture" by the editor.

(B) I would like to see some response to reviews by game publishers and/or designers on a regular basis, as is done in *Fire & Movement*. Better yet, I'd like to see a format of a Description, "pro" review, "anti" review, and Designer Comments, all within 3-6 TSG pages. Any possibilities?

(C) My interest in TSG could be easily compartmentalized: 1. the game reviews (I would subscribe to TSG if it were ALL reviews), 2. detailed commentary on Metagaming and other products, with the associated charts and artwork that make the magazine look appealing and 3. GOOD articles on basic game strategy, especially such articles as the GODSFIRE session way back in TSG 11. Book reviews and FRP/SFRP material I can generally get better elsewhere. As for other material . . . your fiction has been terrible, with "Ya Wanna Buy a Used World?" a pleasurable exception; humor has been overdone; I like interviews, but have never seen one well-done in any gaming magazine; TSG has acquired more of a "them" and less of an "us" feeling, so I hope to see more, smaller Letters to the Editor (ever see old sci-fi pulps with their letter departments? Letters can also be printed in compressed type) and well-written "insights" into the gaming world . . .

W. G. Armintrout
Eight North Second West
Tooele, UT 84074

I suppose the review format on p. 30 begins the dialogue well enough. It'll stand until someone comes up with a better one. As to responses: I don't like them unless the review actually made an error of fact. An occasional marathon review might be nice, but I think the extra 3 pages might be better used for fifteen capsule reviews. A game would have to be awfully important to rate that much space. I am hoping to achieve relative fairness in reviews by requiring pro/con comments on anything reviewed, and by checking the review against the game (assuming the publisher sent a copy) to make sure the reviewer is not coming totally out of left field.

I agree 100% with your comments on letters – which is why this page looks like it does.

–SJ

. . . "Game Design Extraordinary" amusing. Limit fiction to 1-2 pages an issue . . .

"Nuke the Air Eaters": a good variant. . .

Stefan Jones

It is my veriest intent to limit fiction to 1-2 short pieces an issue. People can get plenty of that elsewhere.

–FJ

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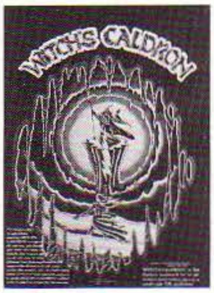

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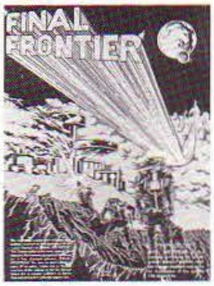

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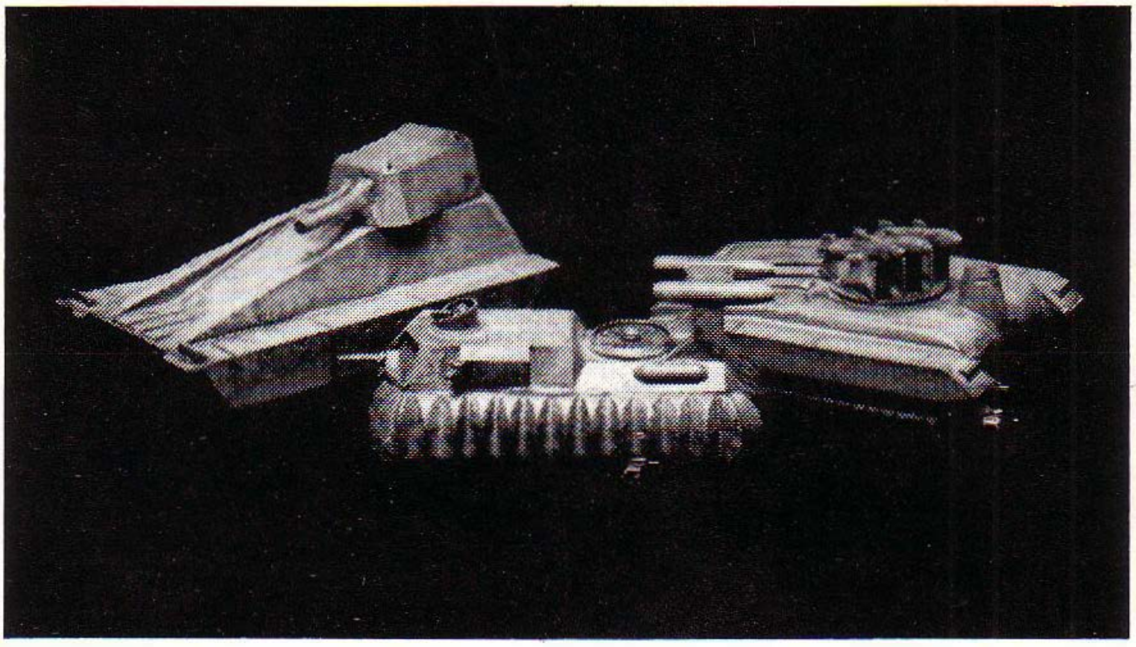

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