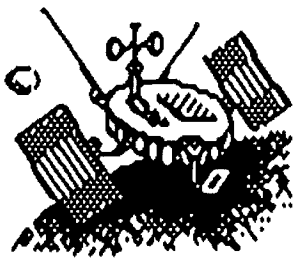
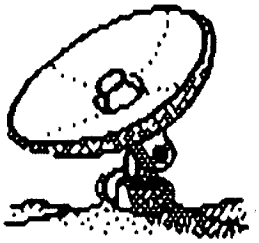
NUMBER 30

"AD ASTRA"

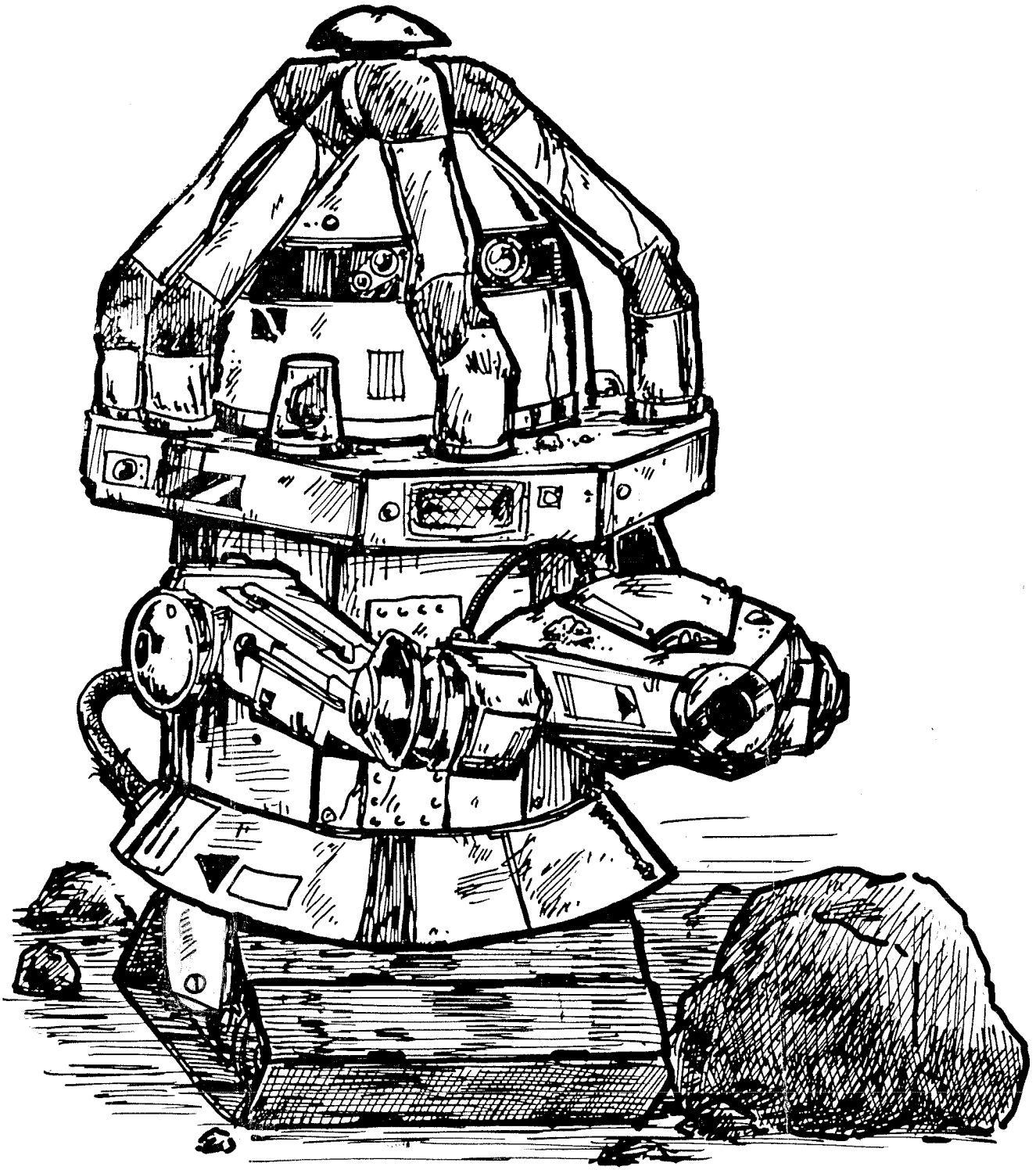
July/August 1990



Terra Traveller TIMES



ORIGINS IN ATLANTA!



LAST TREADS

⊕FORWARD OBSERVER⊕

VIOLENCE IN ROLE PLAYING

A GUEST EDITORIAL BY SCOTT "MAD DOG" MADDOW

Since I began role playing some eight years ago, I have played in very few games where violence was not a major part of the role playing. Whether the double "D" game or any of the ultra high tech games, there always seemed to be surplus of violence.

Violence is not always necessary. However, it must have some level of importance in role playing as I do not know of a role playing game ever designed that did not have some form of combat system.

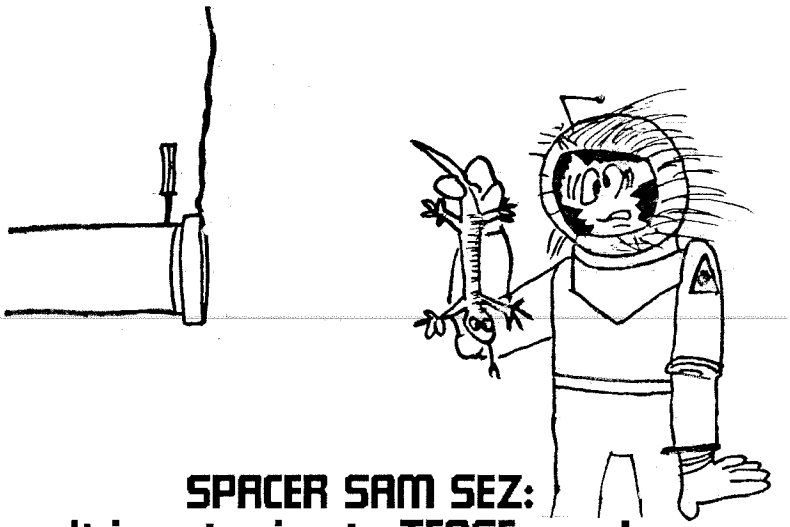
There should be some form of restraint on violence in the game. After all, in real life, one does not commit acts of violence and expect to get away with it entirely. Perhaps one thing that encourages violence in role playing games is the lack of punishment. Even then, if the character paid for his act of violence with his life, the player could easily roll up another character, another excuse for being violent. Very often, for these types of players, one character is pretty much the same as the next, with perhaps a few points and skill levels shifted around. The common thread is the violent personality.

Also, violence is easier than thinking, tactics, and talking, what's more, the player can see the result of his actions a lot quicker. Perhaps this is a carry over from the video games. Have you ever seen the Super Plumber trying to negotiate with his opponent? No! He jumps on their heads and goes on his brick smashing way.

I do not mean to suggest that the characters trade their implements of destruction for marshmallows and a camp fire. There will be times when talking fails. Violence in the game should have a cause. Otherwise, violent acts can quickly break down into a boring "roll the dice and count the falling bad guys" affair. This is not role playing. If a player is just into the violence, then perhaps what he should look into are board or miniature games, where the focus is on the conflict and not personal interactions.

In the final analysis, there will always be violence in role playing games. In fact there will usually be more violence in games than in real life because characters do things that most of us would not do in real life. That is part of the fun of role playing. However, role playing games should not be totally given over to violence. The game should be balance to give some of the characters with non-combat skills a chance to do something. Have fun with the hardware, but don't wear it out. "The pen is mightier than the sword!" is a good motto to live and role play by.

EDITOR'S NOTE: As an aside, if you have a player who carries his violent tendancies beyond the game, it may be wise to exclude that gamer from future games. Such players could damage the reputation of a hobby that already has many unjust charges against it.



SPACER SAM SEZ:
It is not wise to TEASE people who have STANGE phobias.

GNS

BASE within the BORDER?

Aquaria/Aquaria: 123-1112: Emperor Gengarr today entertained the ambassador of the Shadlsanti Enclave, the Zhodani Client state just coreward of the Aquarian Empire. In a news conference which followed their meeting, Ambassador Zhiejotlas announced that he has requested land on several worlds, including Alea and Yram, with which the Enclave could build starports and shipyards to support growing trade concerns between the two states. In return, he is offering similar concessions in the Enclave for Aquarian merchants. Several Praterean reporters were removed from the conference when they became violent. Neither the Emperor, not Admiral Elderac, who also attended the meeting, wore psionic shields, apparently a token of trust toward their guest.

The BATTLE BEGINS?

Kozeo/Treaty: 360-1113: Not satisfied with the Empire's treatment of the BLUE NOVA dissappearance, the Brotherhood of Karl has withdrawn its vessels from the Starship Show on Kozeo. Meanwhile, reports reaching Kozeo from worlds on the Brotherhood side of the Treaty Zone indicate that there is a general fleet build-up all along the border. If the BLUE NOVA is not recovered soon, war may break out between these two states. In a possibly related event, Galaxy Lines has increased the number of ships travelling between Ite, the Tonasean capital, and Boris, the Brotherhood capital.

FIERCE FIGHTING!

Kevlin/Diaspora: 060-1118: Reports reaching Kefin today are saying that Solomani forces from Old Expanses have pushed into Diaspora. There are reports of major fleet actions around Gresham, a heavily populated world in the adjacent subsector. Although there has been a news blackout on Kevlin, word has reached the populace, and many are seeking to head coreward to flee the Solomani. Some merchants were charging up to CR 30,000 for a middle passage until authorities started arresting price gougers.

LEAVE LUCAN!

Kaggushus/Massila: 212-1119: That's the theme of a major propaganda campaign which has begun in this region. It is sponsored by Naval Staff loyal to the "Real" Strephon. While there have been no mass defections, there does seem to be a growing question among the men as to who they should be loyal to. However, those who express this aloud are punished.

KASAKU

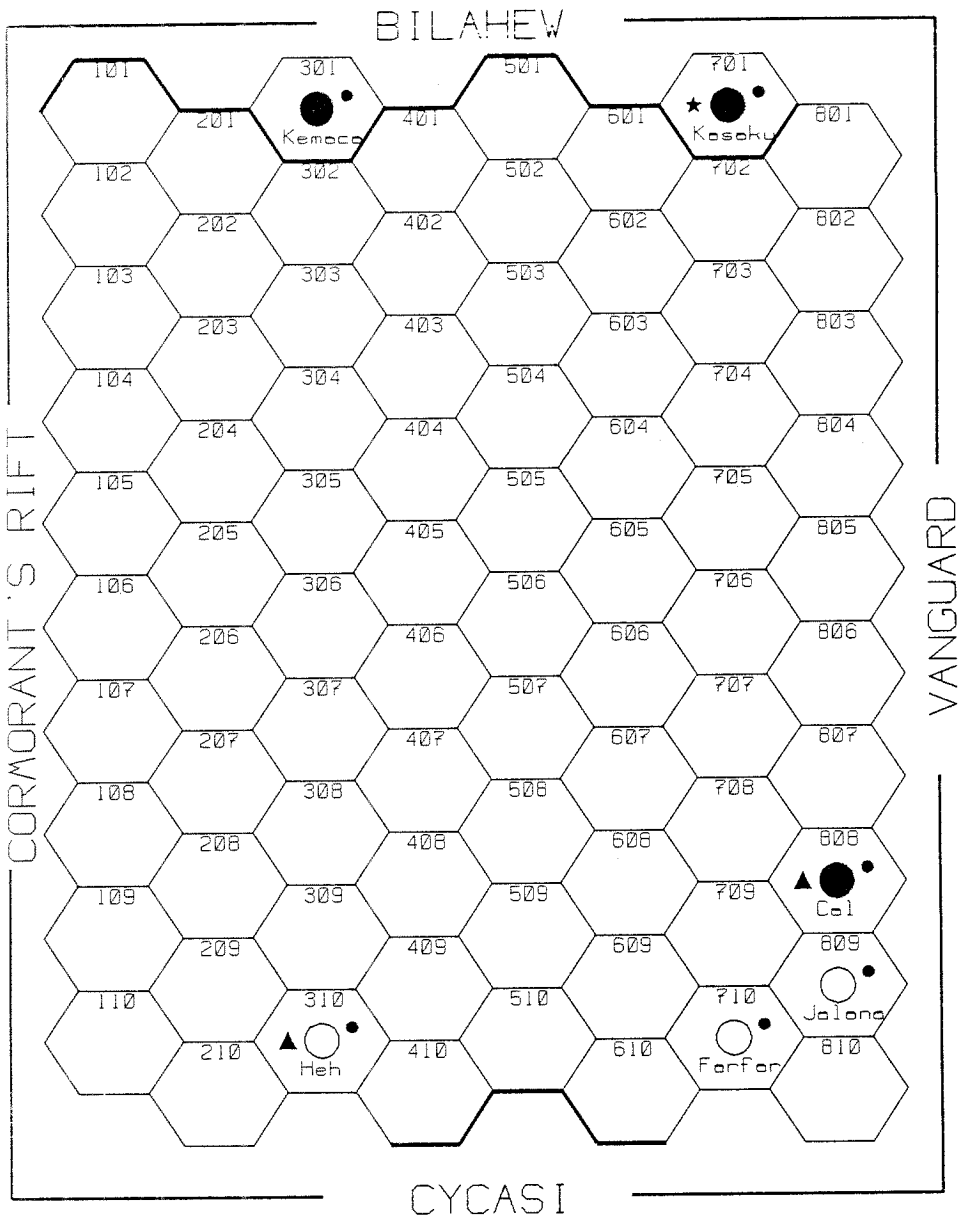
HEX	NAME	UPP	B	REMARKS	Z	DATA	AL	STAR1	STAR2
301	Kemaca	A-553887-9		Ni,Po		501	AQ	K9 V	
310	Heh	E-200325-7	S	Lo,Na,Ni,Po		503	IN	K5 V	
701	Kasaku	A-86765A-H	N	Ni		302	K	G7 V	
710	Farfar	C-10086A-7		Na,Va,O:810		714	IN	K6 V	
808	Cal	C-432321-7	S	Lo,Ni,Po		801	IN	K0 V	M6 D
809	Jalana	C-20089C-8		Na,Va		813	IN	A5 V	

Kasaku is subsector G of Fulani Sector. The highest Tech Level is H on Kasaku, and the highest population is 800 million on Jalana.

The scout bases at Heh and Cal are maintained by the Prateran Empire.

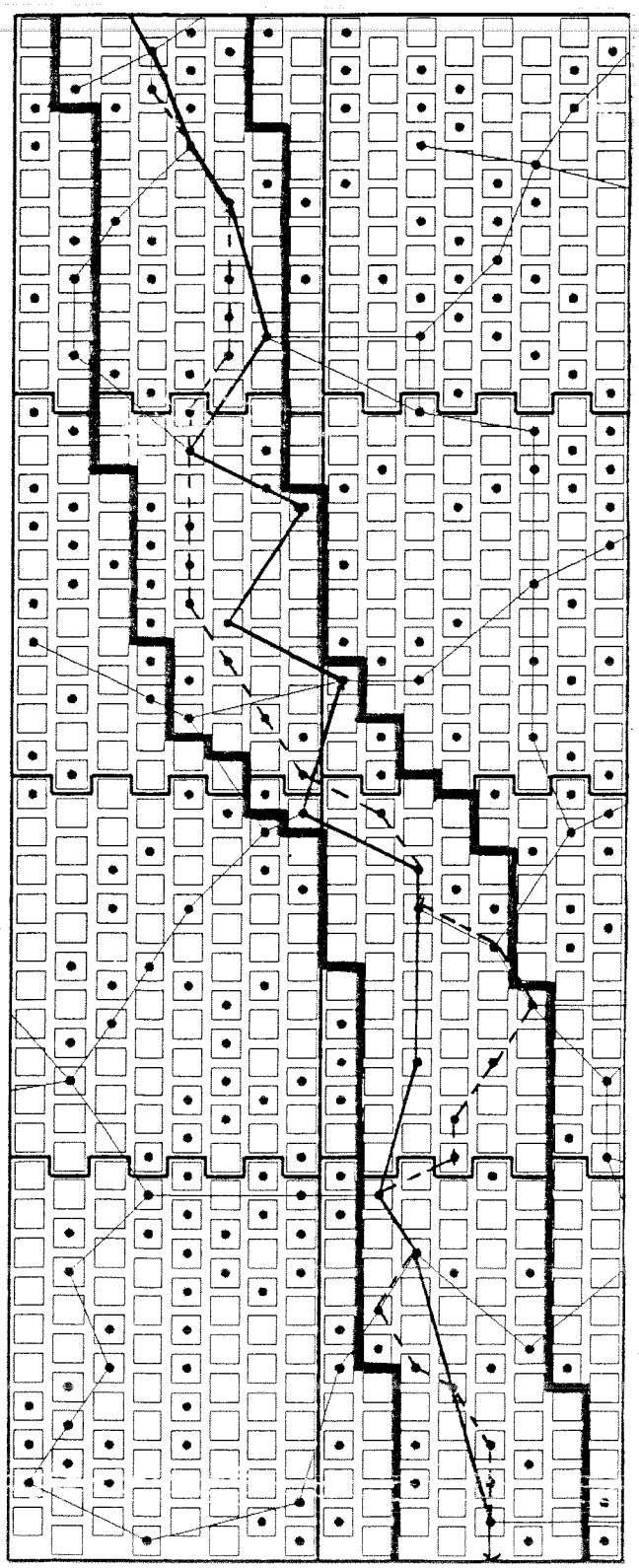
The inhabitants of Kasaku are pseudobiological, self-aware robots. They are descended from an series of experimental ancient robots. Researchers are not sure how the original Kasakans survived the final war. Some believe that the semi-mythical first Kasakan, Alpha, was a supervisory robot at the production plant. When the plant was destroyed, he somehow escaped the destruction, and gradually rebuilt part of the plant to build more of his kind. Others claim that the Kasakans were placed there at a a later time as an experiment, which was later forgotten.

Data: population multiplier, number of planetoid belts, and number of gas giants.
Abbreviations: KS- member of the Kasakan State. AQ- member of the Aquarian Empire. O:- shows which world own a world with a capitve government.



DIASPORA: STARLANE TO THE CORE

THIS ISSUE WE BRING YOU THE STARLANE ITSELF. BOLD LINES SHOW THE X-BOAT LINES OF THE STARLANE. A DASHED LINE SHOWS THE J-2 ROUTE.



DARK RIVER DATA

LIBRARY DATA UPDATE

Diskora Plant- A spore producing plant found only on Onahola/Armor. The spores from this plant produce a highly allergic reaction in most strains of humanity.

Norvalism- The State Religion of Isolan/Armor. They have reasoned that supreme being could be responsible for the general choas in the universe. They feel that the mind is the supreme force in the universe, and seek to expand its power. Every 15 days, followers of Norvalism gather for meditation sessions. Followers are not limited to any geographical location, but can attend any meditation temple. The belief holds that reliance on technology limits the potential of the mind, therefore Isolan has been kept at a TL of 5. Religious Profile- CB99DA8.

Onaholar- This sentient race is native to Onahola/Armor. They are upright bipeds with two arms. This race has adapted to the keep the spores of the Diskora plant out of their system. They have a multi-chambered mouth, the saliva of which binds the spores together. The Onaholar spits this out before passing food to it inner mouth chamber. A filter of cartilage covers their breathing hole, and this is cleared periodically by a strongly exhaled breath, somewhat akin to a sneeze. Many humans cannot sit through an Onaholar meal with their constant "spitting" and "sneezing." Because any cut would allow the spore to enter their circulatory system, the Onaholar have developed armored skin.

Phafate Corporation- A corporation chartered by the Tonasean Empire, but which owns a world beyond the Empire's borders. This company uses largely automated equipment to mine radioactives from the world bearing the companies name. The companies primary product is a series of radioactive isotopes used for medical purposes. They also sell other radioactive substances removed in the refining procedures.

Wyomevak (104 Armor X-558854-1)- Colonized by Tonaseans during the Long Night, this world elected not to join the Empire when it was formed in -1350. As the new Empire turned its attention to organizing and countering he Va'can threat, this world was left to its own devices. Cut off from outside sources, this world regressed to a very low tech level. Sociologists from the Univeristy of Raya are studying the cultural causes for the regression, and some theorize that internal strife was as much a cause for regression as external isolation. The Wyomevak government is a fuedal technocracy; each city is ruled by a group of Shaman who control the worlds limited technology.

Zuzu Gas- A halucinogenic gas produced from the spores of the Diskora plant. Because impure processing can leave traces of the spore in the gas, and consequently its allergenic potential, this drug is illegal in the Empire. Furthermore, if the spores were released in a world with an atmosphere and favorable growing conditions, they could take hold on a world and eventually contamimate that world's atmosphere as well. At least one ship smuggling the spores into the Empire had to be sent into a star because the spores had escaped and contaminated the entire vessel, killing all its crew. Most people regard users of this drug as slighty crazy, giving rise to the popular phrase "doing Zuzu gas" referring to anyone whose actions are erractic, irrational, and/or dangerous to themselves.

CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT

SCENARIOS IN DARK RIVER

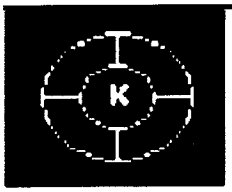
UNSCHEDULED STOP

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The characters are travelling to the Empire from Heetau/Scorpion. After a week in jump they emerge in a system they can tell is not their destination. The captain explains that they had a misjump. However, before he leaves the system, an unmarked container of cargo is loaded on board.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The characters may be able to figure out that the ship did not misjump, and that they are in the Onahola system. The container loaded aboard contains Diskora spores, and the Captain has been careless and left the cargo bay pressurized. With a little work the characters should be able to figure out what is in the containers. What they do about it is up to them.



HASSAN'S HINTS

A SERVICE TO MEGATRAVELLER PLAYERS AND REFS

A WORD FROM HASSAN

This month Hassan brings you a Solomani bomber. *HASSAN*

SOLOMANI BOMBER
HAMBURG CLASS

CRAFT ID: Bomber, Type FS, TL 14, MCr 90.5
HULL: 45/113, Disp=50, Config=1AF, Armor=40G, Unloaded=821 Tons, Loaded=869 Tons
POWER: 8/15, Fusion=990 Mw, Dur=20/60
LOCO: 8/15, Man=6 NOE=180 kph, Cruise=2835kph, Top=3780kph, MaxAccel=6 G's, Agility=2
COMMO: Radio=Sys, Maser=Plan, Laser=Plan
SENSORS: EMMask, Neutrino=10kw ActEMS=Planet, PasEMS=InterPlan. ActObjScan=Diff, ActObjPin=Diff, PasEngScan=Rout, PasEngPin=Rout
OFF: Msl = x03, Batt = 1 Bear = 1 30 ton bay for deadfall ordnance
DEF: DefDm = +10
CONTROL: Comp=6x3, Panel=HoloLinkx3 Special=HeadsUpHolox2, Env = Basic Env, Basic LS, Ext LS, Grav Plates, Inert Comp
ACCOM: Crew=3(Pilot, Gunner, Commander), Seats = Roomy x 3, Stateroom=1
OTHER: Fuel=264 kl, Cargo=2kl, Scoops, Fuel Purification=24 Hours, Missile Magazine= 60 Missiles ObjSize=Ave, EMLevel=None

The Hamburg class bomber was developed by the Solomani to be a high tech, space faring vehicle. Able to operate outside a planet's atmosphere gives this vehicle an advantage over atmosphere bound craft.

TASK LIBRARY

To hit an individual target within a designated target area in open terrain:
Routine, gunnery, aircraft computer level.
REFEREE: DM+1 if aircraft has a HUD, DM+4 if bombing with laser guided bomb. Increase task to difficult if target area is in closed terrain.

Sensor Tasks (Difficulty based on range).

To perform a sensor operation:
[Varies], Sensor Ops, Edu, 6 seconds

PasEngScan (Passive sensor search for sources)
PasEngPin (Passive sensor pinpoint of located sources)

M	L	UL	D	UD	RG	CN	PL	F0	X0	IP+
-	-	S	S	S	R	R	D	F	I	-

ActObjScan (Active sensor search for objects)
ActObjPin (Active sensor pinpoint of located objects)

M	L	UL	D	UD	RG	CN	PL	F0	X0	+
-	S	S	S	R	R	D	F	I	-	

HASSAN'S HINTS LOGO AND DESIGNS ARE COPYRIGHT 1990 BY JOHN S. KOSTOFF.

QUICK REVIEWS

RATING SYSTEM
CATEGORIES
Player Use- How useful is the product to the player.
Referee Use- How useful is the product to the referee.
Artwork- A general evaluation of artwork and graphics.
Content- A general evaluation of overall content which includes layout, ease of use, quality of work, and other factors.
Overall- A summary rating of the other categories.

LEVELS
✓ - Poor quality or of little use.
✓✓ - Fair quality of of some use.
✓✓✓ - Average quality or of average use.
✓✓✓✓ - Above average quality or of above average use.
✓✓✓✓✓- Excellent quality or very useful.

TWILIGHT:2000

TWILIGHT ENCOUNTERS

GAME DESIGNERS' WORKSHOP $20.00
By GDW Staff
Players Use ✓✓✓ Referee Use ✓✓✓✓✓
Artwork ✓✓✓✓1/2 Content ✓✓✓✓
Overall ✓✓✓✓
This boxed supplement expands upon the encounter system of the basic set, and includes some interesting locations. It has a sneak preview of the new TWILIGHT:2000 combat system which will appear in the second edition of TWILIGHT:2000.

SURVIVORS' GUIDE TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

GAME DESIGNERS' WORKSHOP $7.00
By Peter Phillips
Players Use ✓✓✓ Referee Use ✓✓✓✓✓
Artwork ✓✓✓✓ Content ✓✓✓✓
Overall ✓✓✓✓
This supplement details the British Isles after the Twilight War.

MEGATRAVELLER

MTA1: VILANI AND VARGR

DIGEST GROUP PUBLICATIONS $13.00
By J.Holden, J. Fugate, Sr., and T. McInnes
Players Use ✓✓✓✓✓ Referee Use ✓✓✓✓✓
Artwork ✓✓✓ Content ✓✓✓✓✓
Overall ✓✓✓✓
It is only fair to include a note about the artwork. The cover is excellent, and the Vargr artwork is outstanding. The art in the Vilani section looks faded and rushed.

FIGHTING SHIPS OF THE SHATTERED IMPERIUM

GAME DESIGNERS' WORKSHOP $10.00
By Marc Miller
Players Use ✓✓ Referee Use ✓✓✓
Artwork ✓✓✓✓ Content ✓✓✓
Overall ✓✓✓
If you use capital ships in your campaign, get this supplement, it covers them well. The artwork is interesting.

TRAVELLER'S DIGEST #19

DIGEST GROUP PUBLICATIONS $4.95
Players Use ✓✓✓ Referee Use ✓✓✓✓
Artwork ✓✓✓ Content ✓✓✓✓
Overall ✓✓✓1/2
The latest in this excellent line of magazines.

GENERAL

WARSPRITE

TSR BOOKS Written by Jefferson P. Swycaffer $3.95
The latest by Jeff Swycaffer. Although not set in a TRAVELLER setting, it is science fiction. It is a fun, exciting novel to read. Jeff wrote 6 novels of the Concordat based on TRAVELLER. This novel is highly recommended reading.

Dialog

The Idea Exchange

NUMBER 7

Putting the 'V' back into Vland

A RESPONSE BY JOE FUGATE

We here at DGP, with our in-house language expert Gary Thomas (the guy knows at least 12 languages -- he's scary), have always figured the Vilani "V" actually sounds similar to the spanish "bv" sound, and is written by the native Vilani as a "b". The Solomani, however, heard the "v" mostly, and thus write the Vilani "b" as a "v". Thus we get things like the AAB, the Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin, for "the Vilani Repositority of All Knowledge", which breaks down as:

-- Argushiigi: the hidden truths, or, more simply, knowledge
-- Admegulasha: an infinite multitude in one unit, place of all
-- Bilanidin: the native Vilani spelling for the Solomani "Vland"

Thus, when the Solomani first heard "Bilanidin", they thought locals said "Vland", and the term stuck. The original Vilani themselves spelled Vilani as "Bilani". In Bilani, the "b" is pronounced like the spanish "bv" sound, remember. If you spell it like it sounds, you would write: Bvilani, with the b almost silent, and the v sound dominating.

Way back when we grappled with the Vilani in issue #5 of the Traveller's Digest, we proposed this solution to Marc Miller, and he approved it. So this is the official solution to the missing "v" mystery, although little has ever been said about it in the official press.

-- Joe Fugate

To Err is Human -- To Really Foul Things Up Requires a Computer

The Cyborg Connection

On worlds with High Stellar TL's and a pro-Cyborg attitude there exists the possibility of a cellular DataNet which can be accessed through an implant in the brain. This Cyborg Conection, so to speak, makes an incredibly vast amount of data immedeatly available to the average user. Brain Mail (putting it in the B-Box) allows messages to be sent and recieved at will. Everything from Library Data to the local shipping schedules becomes common knowledge. On a world which has adapted this means of daily communication there would be few data terminals. Only those in the Starport would be able to serve Offworlders.

Now consider the effects of the following:

1) Computer Malfunctions and data is not available. Just how much of that knowledge was stored in their own brains?

2) Computer Virus. The possibilities here are endless. From data corruption to rerouting the B-Boxes, the confusion level could cause chaos. In at hand. The death in 1108 of Conrad Webb put his daughter Kaasla in the seat of power. It has been said that while her father was at times merciful and even generous, she is cruel and vindictive. Her operatives deal in anything that is illegal. From smuggling to murder-for- hire The Webb can provide the service desired (just don't forget to pay the bill!)

Recent developments in Corridor have brought about a coalition between a certain Vargr faction and the Network. This new and revitalized Network has begun moving deep into Deneb sparking violent confrontations. The new gang war has recently been brought to the attention of Archduke Norris, but with the Vargr and Aslan invasions taking the lion's share of his concentration, he has been unable to deal effectivley with the situation.

One man's theology is another man's belly laugh

Church of Random Intervention

The Church of Random Intervention was founded in the Year -42 by Prinda Guriim on Sylea (now called Capital). Her new religion taught that the Creator of the Universe often used seemingly random events to spark great happenings. By -30 the group had grown to a few hundred when one of them, following a random path, caused a young businessman to be late to a meeting. The building in which the meeting was being held caught fire. All members of the meeting perished in the blaze except the delayed individual. His name was Cleon Zhunastu. Later as Cleon's new Imperium spread to the stars -- so did the 'Chancers'.

In modern day society the Church has been a constant source of amusment to those who see them as silly interlopers who leave basic decisions to the fates. They create personal tables listing several possible choices and then use what they call Choice Cubes (Dice) to determine their action or direction of travel. Chancers often leave on trips called Random Walks for a period of 2-12 years. Some of the more dedicated individuals leave for 1-36 years (throw 1D Choice Cubes). Often merchants travelling to unusual out of the way places are approached by 1D Chancers to take them to their next destination. Often this can lead to some preposterous situations, and even some danger. A Chancer will only stay in one place as long as he/she feels it is required. A feeling of boredom for a Chancer is a sign from the Creator to Roll Again.

Get a shot off fast. This upsets him long enough to let you make your second shot perfect.

-Lazarus Long

Bio-Hazards on Backwater Worlds

Throughout the remnants of the Third Imperium exist worlds which were once First and Second Imperial centers of culture and

TWILIGHT:2000

THE TEXAN TRAIL

They had a fair idea that they had reached Texas. They had skirted well south of the Ozark mountains, having heard of some troubles there. They knew that Texarkana lay to the southeast of them, and they just crossed a river, probably the Red River. They couldn't be sure, because the destruction and aftermath had removed so many of the roadsigns, that the American public had grown used to. If the Hampton's, Tex's folks, had lived in El Paso, Zeke and his group would have almost as far to go as they had come already. Fortunately, they lived in one of the more easterly towns. Zeke got the group mounted up in the vehicles they had acquired along the way, two pick-up trucks, and an ancient VW bug they had converted into a scout vehicle. Shortly the group was moving west again, hoping that the outward journey would end soon. On the return trip, they would swing north and drop off some of their team mates who had come from the midwest. One member talked about going home to California, but knew he wouldn't leave the group.

Several hours later, after passing through several ghost towns, and having a brief encounter with some scavengers in one of them, they approached a barricade built across the road. Zeke had the driver stop, and he got out. He could feel Frosty watching the guards on the wall for any false move. Since Zeke's group hadn't come with guns blazing, the town folks were willing to talk, but would only let Zeke into the town, and unarmed at that.

Zeke complied leaving the Steyr AUG he had brought from Europe with Frosty. She didn't like the idea of him going in alone, but Zeke let her know that he had come this far and wouldn't let a little paranoia stop him. So, he trudged on into the town. Frosty refused to take a break with the rest, but kept watching the gate until Zeke emerged again. She swore that his eyes were misted when he came out, but he would never admit to it.

She gave him a questioning look, he simply nodded and headed back to the scout. Their mission was complete, it was time to start the long journey home.

REPLICANTS

BY MARK GOODLETT

PART II

TYPES OF REPLICANTS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The attributes for each of these types of replicants is given in general terms. The referee should use the information to create replicants for his particular type of role playing game. He should also adjust the abilities of the replicants to the point where one replicant could challenge an average party of player characters.

LABOR: This is the most commom type of replicant and is used extensively by most orbital corporations for menial labor. Workers can perform either simple or repetative functions with little supervision, but are designed for minimal initiative.
STATISTICS: *Strength:* High, *Agility:* Low, *Intelligence:* Very Low
DISADVANTAGES: About 1 in 4 has some sort of mental problem from simple quirks to major phobias.
SKILLS: Minimal, only as needed to perform function.
LIFESPAN: 8 years.

ENTERTAINEMENT: This is the second most common type, also used extensively in orbital installantions, in planet based corporate compounds, and on military bases. Designed to satisfy the needs of humans, these replicants are fully functional and are designed in both male and female models. Many of these replicants have direct input jacks installed, which are used to program in whatever variant personality the customer prefers. This is the only use of these jacks normally accept, and this fact is a closely guarded secret.
STATISTICS: *Strength:* Average, *Agility:* High Average, *Intelligence:* Very low, but better than the labor model.
DISADVANTAGES: About four out of ten have a mental problem as above.
SKILLS: Seduction, Singing, Acting, Dancing, Poetry, Style, as appropriate.
LIFESPAN: 5 years

SECURITY: These were designed for security and limited combat duty. This model has some initiative and decision making ability. There are two distict types, Security and Combat. Used by orbital corporations in non-critical areas. Used extensively by MAAS. The combat models have only seen limited use and have unknown distribution.
STATISTICS: *Strength:* High, *Agility:* High, *Intelligence:* Low Average
DISADVANTAGES: One half have mental problems as above.
SKILLS: Rifle, Pistol, Auto Weapons, Brawling, Knife, Melee Weapon.
LIFESPAN: 4 years.

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ALIEN?

BY JOHN CRIDER

PART III

ME, TOO! I WANT ONE, TOO!

How many times have you as a referee heard that cry from a desperate player? It is almost as if it's a race for status symbols: "How many Aliens do you run?" It seems so absurd when you stop and look at the quality of players. So how do you keep the players happy, characters realistic, and keep the adventure running smoothly? The answer is simple: plan ahead.

Let's go into depth on how we can plan ahead for running Alien characters. In the last article, we looked at the chances of contacting Alien homeworlds during the lifespan of its civilization and ways to justify modifications to this outcome to suit our (imaginary) universe. This background information, properly determined, documented (parts known and parts unknown to the players), and integrated into the universe will provide a foundation for all adventures in your universe.

Now notice the use of documentation of determined background. As a referee, documentation describing the history, geography, demography, etc. is as important to an ongoing campaign as the basic rules set. Determine this information before it is used and document it as soon as possible.

Am I suggesting that creating a "paper monster" will make an adventure better? The answer is multifaceted.

First, this background information is not necessary for a single adventure or pregenerated adventure.

Second, "the more the better" is not necessarily true. For an ongoing campaign, the amount of background information needed will probably increase as time goes on and the scope of the campaign expands. However, the amount of background information required will ultimately be determined by the referee.

Third, the more information you gather, the more important organization becomes. Separating data into "open" and "closed" files simplifies this somewhat. Open files are common knowledge items for players and referees, while closed files are only for referees. Most pregenerated adventures use this approach, but due to the general availability of the adventure, players may gain "closed" information before you run the adventure. If you generate your own background information specifically tailored to your universe, then you become the only reliable source of information for your campaign (even if you base an adventure off a pregenerated one).

Fourth, dissemination of open information to players before playing is important. For Alien characters, it is critical. This familiarization phase is clumsy at first, but for an extended campaign, it makes play proceed much more smoothly and adds continuity.

Fifth, this background information will take time to maintain. However, the time taken prior to the gaming session may prevent wasted time during the session. A couple of maintenance tips: type your notes, make and keep up indexes to files, generate "quick reference" sheets for commonly used data or charts, and generate data well ahead of the time it will be needed.

Wait a minute! Data management is important, but will it make a game better by itself? The answer is no! Data management is only part of planning. Both players and referee must interact dynamically before and during game sessions. This is true of any adventure to get the feel of the adventure and gain a bit of information to build up characterization of the ships, starports, and cultures. When an Alien character is involved, this interaction becomes paramount for smooth gaming sessions.

Prior to running a specific Alien race in your universe, you must talk in depth about the race, its limitations and advantages; its political, economic, and technological structure; its history; their normal likes and dislikes; and their culture. This discussion can be shortened by having the player read open background information on the Alien race and homeworld, but the discussion must take place. Otherwise, each player will run the Alien his own way without any continuity between them.

The discussion will also give you the chance to hand down the flavor of the Alien race to the player in a way the player can feel, not just understand. If this is done correctly, then when the chips are down, and the going gets tough, the player will react like an Alien, not like a human in a Alien costume.

Now players, let's look at how you can make the adventure more realistic and playable, too. Compared to the referee's job, your task is easy. You just act and react, so isn't this Alien stuff just as easy as playing a human? (Besides, Aliens have all those neat traits that humans don't.)

To be honest, as a referee, I find it tedious to keep reminding novice players who insist on playing Aliens what idiosyncrasies that race has, or that he is reacting like a human. If you insist on playing an Alien, take the time to do it right and not everyone else's time during play. Research the race before generating the character. If you can discuss intelligently the background of the race before committing yourself, the referee will probably help you integrate the character into the campaign. Talk about the race and ask questions of the referee and other players who are running the race in this universe. Remember, the referee is always right!

If you normally play multiple characters (as most people do), you may want to limit yourself to only the one Alien character and one other character. This will allow more time during play to think out responses appropriate to the Alien character. Once you are comfortably relaxed playing the Alien character, then perhaps you can pick up other characters.

Keep within character. This means that each character should have its own personality which must be maintained. If George is afraid of fire, don't have him toasting marshmallows at a bonfire. With an Alien this is more difficult; the character must maintain the racial limitations, yet have its own personality.

One way to maintain individual characteristics of a character is to give each character at least one major trait that is unique. This adds fun and restriction as well as making it easier to relate to that one single trait. For example, Roger might always wear a cowboy hat, even in a bath. Lewis might speak with a slight accent.

When running several characters or Aliens, this trick helps keep the characters separate, unique, and in character. At the gaming table players should ask questions about things that might be common knowledge. The referee should answer the questions from the perspective of the character. If you are running characters of different races, you should state which character is thinking of the question on it's mind so the referee knows which perspective to present.

Also, while playing an Alien character, it may prove helpful to have a picture of your race in view so you and the other players can more readily visualize what your race looks like. Miniatures may also be used, but should not substitute for a picture.

SUMMARY

REFEREES

- Generate your universe's background data before gaming sessions.
- Keep the background information organized and available.
- Discuss with players the aspects of Alien characters you feel are important. Convey and pass on your gut feeling of how an Alien should be.
- Answer common knowledge questions from the perspective of the characters.
-Keep the game interesting.

PLAYERS

- Research the Alien race before generating and playing the character.
- Ask the referee questions about characterizations to get the feel for the Alien's reactions and motivations.
- Limit the number of characters you run to allow for focus on the Alien character.
- Define and maintain the personality of each character, and ensure that the traits are acceptable to the Alien race.
- Ask common knowledge questions while playing.
- Use character or Alien pictures at the gaming table to remind yourself and others what your character looks like. Miniatures may also aid in visualization.

You may notice that these points are mostly common sense and good housekeeping. Running Aliens demands much better control, but the basics are the same as running any other type of character or campaign. Be the player or referee that can maintain control and the game will run smoothly. The dividend will be more fun for everyone.

Next in the series: Alien racial interactions.

MEGATRAVELLER

KOSMO CLASS PROBE

CRAFT ID: Probe, Type SX, TL 15, MCr 4.553
HULL: 1/2, Disp=.019, Config=3SL, Armor=10G, Unloaded=1.312 Tons, Loaded=1.452 Tons
POWER: 1/2, Fusion=.6 Mw, Dur=1.67/5
LOCO: 1/2, StdGrav = 11 Tons Thrust NOE=40 kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1000kph, MaxAccel=6 G's, Agility=0
COMMO: Radio=Sys, Maser=Far Orbit
SENSORS: ActEMS=FarOrbit, Hdlight, Holo Rec ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout
OFF: 1 Hardpoint
DEF: DefDm = +2
CONTROL: Robotic Brain (Int 5, Edu 4) HoloLink
OTHER: Fuel=1.62 kl, Cargo=.007 kl, ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=Moderate

The Kosmo class probe was developed for the Imperial Navy by Dagalar Industries of Diaspora. It is a mid range size probe being too large to launch from a standard missile launcher and smaller than probes with more extensivve sensor suites. Dagalar Industries designed this to be a long range active sensor probe. While active sensors are useful in target aquisition, they also reveal the targeting ship's location. This probe can close with an unkown vessel, and provide active sensor data to its parent vessel. Its maser communicator prevents jamming of this data signal by the enemy.

This probe can also serve as a sensor multiplier, increasing the amount of space a single vessel can search. An optional fuel tank can increase the range of this probe at the expense of acceleration. However, if a ship wishes to deploy an array of sensors to monitor a region of space, then endurance is more important than speed, and the use of the tank is acceptable.

TASK LIBRARY

To establish a maser link with the probe:
Routine, commo , int, 5 seconds.
REFEREE: This task assumes that a maser communicator is available to the operator.

To direct the probe to perform a search:
Routine, Robot Ops, Int, 15 seconds.

Sensor Tasks (Difficulty based on range).

To perform a sensor operation:
[Varies], Sensor Ops, Edu, 6 seconds

ActObjScan (Active sensor search for objects)
ActObjPin (Active sensor pinpoint of located objects)

M	L	UL	D	UD	RG	CN	PL	FO	XO	IP+
-	-	S	S	S	R	R	D	F	I	-

⊕PARTING SHOTS⊕

A COMMENTARY BY
KATE LEBHERZ GELINAS

IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE REFEREE
OR
TO REF OR NOT TO REF, KNOWHATAHMEAN?

Yes, I'm back again to dust off the soapbox and take my stand on yet another gaming subject ....

Have you ever wondered about folks who will gather together, game their little hearts out, harry a ref into a frazzle to find out the time and date of the next game, yet when confronted with the lack of a ref (for whatever reason), disappear like they never were? Or, how about the guy or girl who's gamed since "Marc Miller was in diapers"... "TSR was just a thought"..."Moby Dick was a minnow"...well, you get the picture . . . but then when asked to ref, they come up with the excuse "Oh, I can't possibly do that! I'm not good enough!" ?!?! I raise my eyebrow, especially when many of these same gamers can, and often do, QUOTE rules to their usual referee.

I have been both a player and referee. I've gamed since '78 under many a referee, both good and bad, and under many game systems (even D&D (ach, cough, sputter) note the lack of an "A"). I married a ref. I should have it made, right? Wrong. A ref can burn out just like a light bulb when constantly reffing. It isn't an uncommon thing. I've seen my husband bury his head under a pillow and ask, "Why me? Why can't someone else referee, so I can game once in awhile?" I have seen him dread the next game session because he is running out of ideas. I have even seen the rehashing of a game scenario just so the game would continue. I am not dropping the load on him or anyone. I just wish to make this evident: a good referee is a player who has succeeded in weaving the tapestry of the game to a point where conflicts are balanced, players challenged without making the individuals feel stupid or helpless, where the background, whether castle or starship, is colorful and exciting, the villians are villianous, the heroes are heroic .... Ah, I got carried away. My point is, good ref's aren't born, they usually start as players!

A player becomes a good referee by PRACTICE! Go on, what have you got to lose? Players? Nope, remember how eager you are as a player and have endured under a bad ref just to have a chance to play? Players, they're your sounding board -- they will suggest ways to improve the game. They will also let you know when you are overdoing it. Believe me, players are not a pacifistic lot. Why else would anyone want to go nose to nos . . . ah, mandible with a Kafer, or tease an Ork about his overbite.

If you still feel uncomfortable about it, start with a small group composed of 2 to 4 of your best gaming friends, or maybe just your regular referee. I bet if you asked, he would be glad to play under you, most ref's are glad to teach new ref's, that way they can play once in awhile.

Once you start, you'll be suprized how much fun it is to be a referee. So I put it to all you players out there, "C'mon in, the water's just fine."

ADS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Classified Ads are $.50 for 1 month's printing of 25 words or less.

DARK RIVER: A SECTOR DIVIDED

The first printing of this supplement has sold out. However, MGE is willing to produce more for those who did not have an opportunity to get a copy. Send $5.00 to Mark Gelinas, 102 Akron Ct., Ladson, SC 29456. Orders from England should include an extra $1.50 if they want the supplement mailed Air Mail.

LIBRARY DATA UPDATE, VOLUME I

Now available in one place, all the updates which have appeared in the TIMES since the release of DARK RIVER until Issue 25. Send a legal sized SASE for a copy to LIBRARY DATA UPDATE, C/O Mark Gelinas, 102 Akron Ct. Ladson, SC 29456.

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COMING EVENTS

ORIGINS: June 28-July 1- Held in Atlanta this year. This is one gaming event that all gamers should experience at least once. This is the Southeast's chance.

EVENT HORIZON

CURRENT AND FUTURE RELEASES

The reader is advised that these are tentative dates. Any number of factors could delay a project, or even cause it to be cancelled.

FROM THE WORKSHOP: In the stores now is CHALLENGE 44, IMPERIUM, and the much delayed IRONCLADS AND ETHER FLYERS. Scheduled for a July release is the Second Edition of TWILIGHT:2000 in two forms: a paper bound book with the new rules, and a boxed edition with the new rules and some supplementary material. Another adventure for 2300 AD/EARTH CYBERTECH is also scheduled for release: ROTTEN TO THE CORE. CHALLENGE is still on a bi-monthly schedule, but they have a growing need for articles. They especially need adventures. The more articles for a particular game they have, the better chance that game will have more coverage. I encourage you to write, but send to GDW for a contributer's guideline first.

FROM DIGEST GROUP: MTA 1: VILANI AND VARGR is in the shops now. TRAVELLERS' DIGEST 20 should be out this summer. With the DIGEST'S main characters approaching Deneb, their adventures will soon be over. This means that Digest Group will be looking for even more Shattered Imperium based adventures, but again, write for guidelines. Digest Group has many products in various stages of production, including a trilogy of adventures.

SEEKER: Continuing to expand their line of deck plans, with the SUBSIDIZED MERCHANT coming soon. Seeker now produces deck plans for MEGATRAVELLER and deck plans for 2300 AD ships, the first company to do so. SEEKER is looking for someone who can produce quality artwork, both technical and non-technical in nature, using a MACINTOSH computer. Interested parties should send a letter of query to the address below.
For catalog send SASE to Box 519, Mountain Home, ID 83647.

3W: There have been reports that 3W is getting out of roleplaying games, so they may not release anything else.

HIWG: History of the Imperium Working Group. An association of referees and players discussing the future history of MEGATRAVELLER's Shattered Imperium. Several items produced by members have been used by Game Designers' Workshop or Digest Group Publications. Annual membership is $12.00. Membership includes a subscription to TIFFANY STAR, HIWG'S newsletter. TIFFANY STAR now has increased its rate to 12 issues a year. Send to Ed Edwards, 1410 E. Boyd, Norman, OK 73071. Join HIWG and lend your voice to those discussing the future of the Shattered Imperium.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TERRA TRAVELLER CLUB

The Terra Traveller Club is an association of players and referees dedicated to the playing and promotion of GDW RPG's in general and MEGATRAVELLER in particular. Registration for the club is a one time fee of $1.00 sent to the Spokesman, Mark Gelinas, at 102 Akron Ct., Ladson, SC 29456. You will be sent a membership card and a coupon for $.50 off your next TIMES subscription. To minimize costs, membership does not include a TIMES subscription. Only those members who want the TIMES need to subscribe.

TERRA TRAVELLER TIMES

The TIMES is a newsletter of the Terra Traveller Club. Submissions of artwork or articles are accepted subject to Editorial approval, and cannot be returned without a SASE. Subscriptions are $6.00 for six issues. Membership is NOT a requirement to subscribe.

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BACK ISSUES

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AD RATES

Ad space per issue costs as follows: 1/8 page- $1.00, 1/4 page- $2.00; 1/2 page- $4.00; and full page- $8.00.

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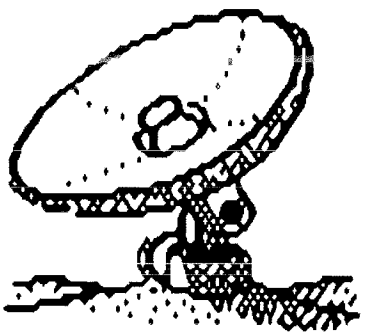
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