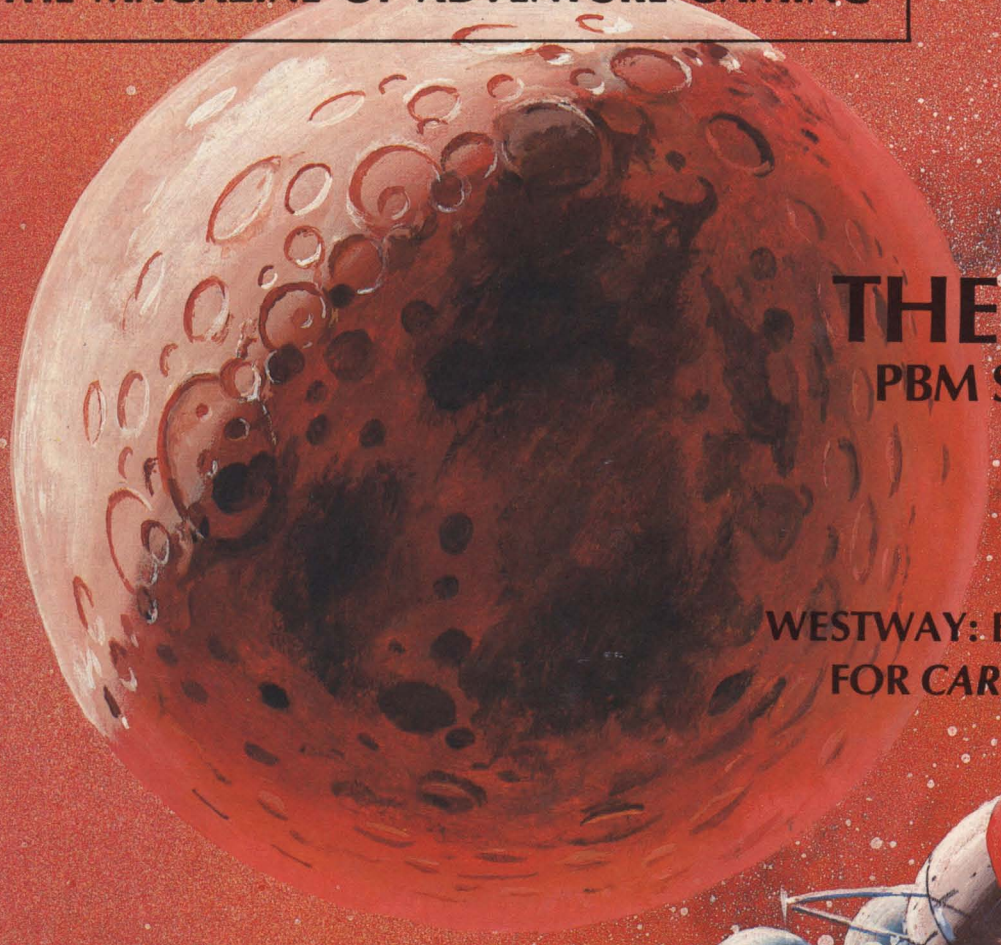
NOVEMBER 1982 NUMBER 57

THE SPACE GAMER

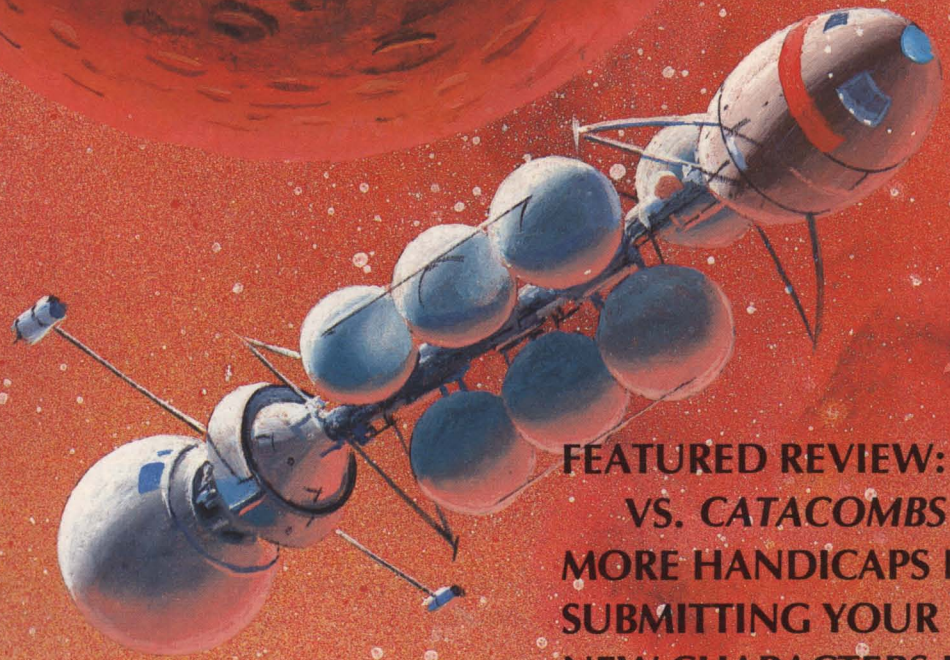
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Cover: "Inside a Nebula" by Dexter A. Dickinson

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THE SPACE GAMER (ISSN 0194-9977, USPS 434-250) is published monthly by Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957. Second class postage paid at Austin, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.

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Printed in USA by Best Printing, Austin.

Subscription rates, as of 4-7-81:

In the United States – one year (12 issues) $21.00; two years (24 issues) $39.00. A lifetime subscription is $250. Outside the U.S., please add $5 per year for surface mail. International rates subject to change as postal rates change. NOTE: All payments MUST be in U.S. dollars, made by International Money Order, or checks drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank.

THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 57 – NOVEMBER, 1982

The simplest, quickest, and least imaginative way to write the In This Issue box each month is to play "throw the sops" – in other words, "for *Traveller* players, we have . . . for SF boardgamers, we have . . ." You're tired of that approach, right? Right. So, without further ado:

For *Car Wars* players, we're presenting *Westway,* a campaign setting based in London; it can serve as anything from a glorified arena to a full-fledged role-playing campaign. TFT players may find some use for the sequel to issue 51's "Handicaps" article. PBMers should enjoy both this issue's fiction ("The Worm," and interesting study in tactics) and the featured review (an overview of two PBM role-playing games, *Catacombs of Chaos* and *Heroic Fantasy*). Sops for potential game designers, *Cosmic Encounter* players, and those interested in the hobby overseas round out the issue.

—Aaron Allston

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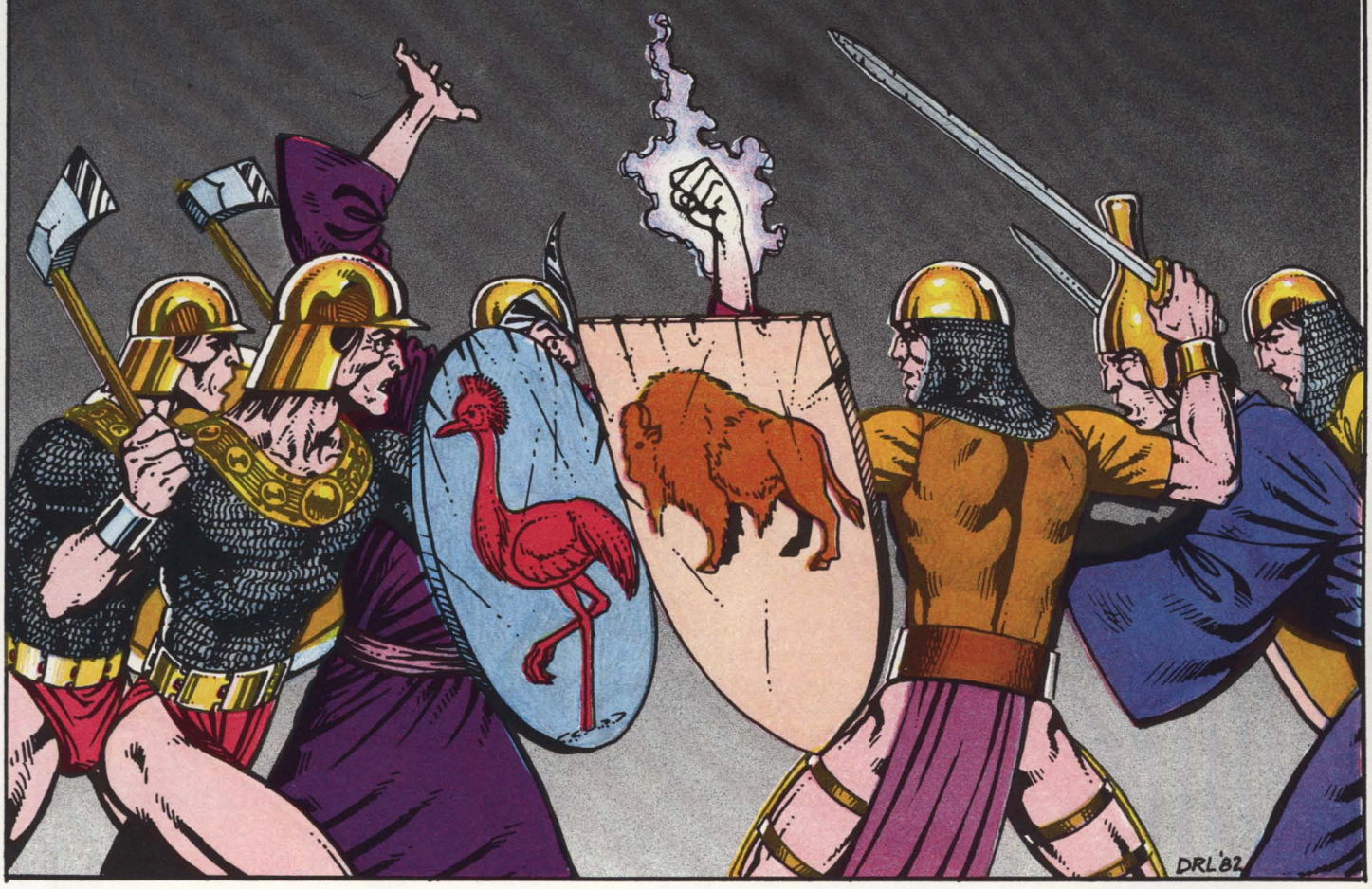
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The Great Buffalo Hunt:

Heroic Fantasy *vs.* Catacombs of Chaos

Featured Review by W. G. Armintrout



The long-awaited showdown is at hand.

In one corner . . . Flying Buffalo, the hoary old pioneer of play-by-mail gaming, the creator of ***StarWeb, Nuclear Destruction,*** and ***Battle Plan***, the only company where the deadlines don't waffle when the wind blows . . . but what have they done *lately*? Is there life left in the old giant?

In the other corner . . . Schubel & Son, the upstart newcomer, the source of such famous games as ***StarMaster*** and ***The Tribes of Crane,*** a company full of new ideas, the self-proclaimed leader in second-generation play-by-mail games . . . the company that dares to call its products superior to Flying Buffalo's!

The war has been fought in advertising right here in the pages of this magazine. "Schubel & Son has gone buffalo hunting," read the advertisements for one side. In response, Flying Buffalo dedicated an entire page of its house magazine to print letters from gamers disagreeing with Schubel & Son's claims.

But now the rivalry has come to more than a war of words. Within a few weeks of each other, the two companies have released rival fantasy role-playing PBM games: ***Catacombs of Chaos*** from Schubel & Son, and ***Heroic Fantasy*** from Flying Buffalo. This clash of games has led to seldom-seen excitement. Will Schubel & Son beat the Buffalo? After Flying Buffalo's debacle with ***Space Battle,*** are they still capable of putting out a decent game?

Catacombs of Chaos

Let's start with the product from Schubel & Son, ***Catacombs of Chaos.*** The premise is simple: Each player is in command of a team of characters entering the catacombs of a dead wizard.

To start, a player must choose a Quest and design his characters. There are seven quests – Cleric, Undead, Plunderer, Seeker, Consumer, Terror, and Hunter – differing primarily by the type of treasure each is after. Some also get points for killing specific beings; Consumers just want to eat people.

As for characters, the player has 100 points to build his team. He can choose how many characters he wants (maximum of ten), and then use the points to make up those characters' attributes. There are seven attributes: strength, endurance, intelligence, agility, precision, magic ability, and protection level. Each attribute must have a value between one and nine. The original 100 points are also used to buy spells (costing 1-3 points each, maximum of five per character) and weapons (longsword, shortsword, dagger, and bare fists at one point each, maximum of one of each type for any character).

Lastly, characters are given classes. There seem to be three classes (although they are given different names depending on the player's quest): magic-users, fighters, and thieves. If you are a Seeker, these are known respectively as Elves, Dwarves, and Bearnes; for Consumers, the same classes are Succubi, Trolls, and Goblins.

Once the player has his team designed, he fills out bubble cards with the information and sends them in to Schubel & Son. ***Catacombs*** uses specifically-printed bubble cards with guidelines on each card indicating where to fill in what. Just fill in the circles with your soft lead pencil and send it in.

Schubel will reply by sending you your first turn. The printout lists each room you have characters in, plus a status report on your characters. The room listings come in two parts: a detailed description of each room, broken into the north, south, east, west, floor, and ceiling portions; and a list of the characters present and their actions.

The amazing thing is the detail provided, right down to "painted stucco facade" walls and cotton underdrawers lying around. Flesh is also added to some character reports: "A bright flash of golden light as Cleon (73) the Acolyte casts a Forget Spell at Ugluk."

As for the character status report, it includes a rating of each character's condition and a list of spells known and items carried. Also in this final section are your total Victory Points and the Victory Points for the leading player. Players do not know how the computer awards these points, except that it has something to do with how well your Quest is going.

With his first printout in hand, a prospective player is ready to send in his first orders. One order may be given for each character per turn. There are 19 possible orders, including searching, combat, magic, movement, handling objects, and resting. Each order uses one bubble card with the character's code number, the action number for that order, and a variable amount of data blocks known as "conditions," "quantities," and "B-numbers."

Combat is simple. Players indicate who is attacking whom with what weapons. Orders allow for characters to cast a spell or throw something before jumping into melee. A magic weapon may make two attacks per turn – one magical and one physical.

Catacombs characters may also cast one spell per turn. There are 20 spells – fireballs, lightning, teleportation, frost, destruction of inanimate objects, healing, disease (of the brain, joints or muscles!), revealing and dispelling traps, clairvoyance (to get a report on a neighboring room), shield, forget (magic-users lose one spell), bless (increases a random attribute permanently by one point), lose item, and teleport item to the safe room where each team begins. Spells may be used over and over again, unless lost because of a Forget Spell, and characters seem capable of casting spells forever without any loss of strength.

Movement is unusual. Rooms are connected by magic portals. One character leads the way into a portal, taking the magical strain, while other characters may tag along with a "follow" order. Portals are deliberately left unexplained except for a mysterious clue that weakened characters may be incapable of making it through one . . .

As for plunder, it comes in a bewildering variety – knit felt caps, magic weapons, marble fountains, huge wicker chairs – some of it useful, most of it seemingly useless, much of it colorful.

Players may communicate in order to coordinate their explorations. The second edition rulebook claims that players receive the names and addresses of players they encounter during play. That part of the game isn't working yet. Instead, players may send 3 x 5 cards addressed from one of their own characters to any other character; the game masters route the card to the right player.

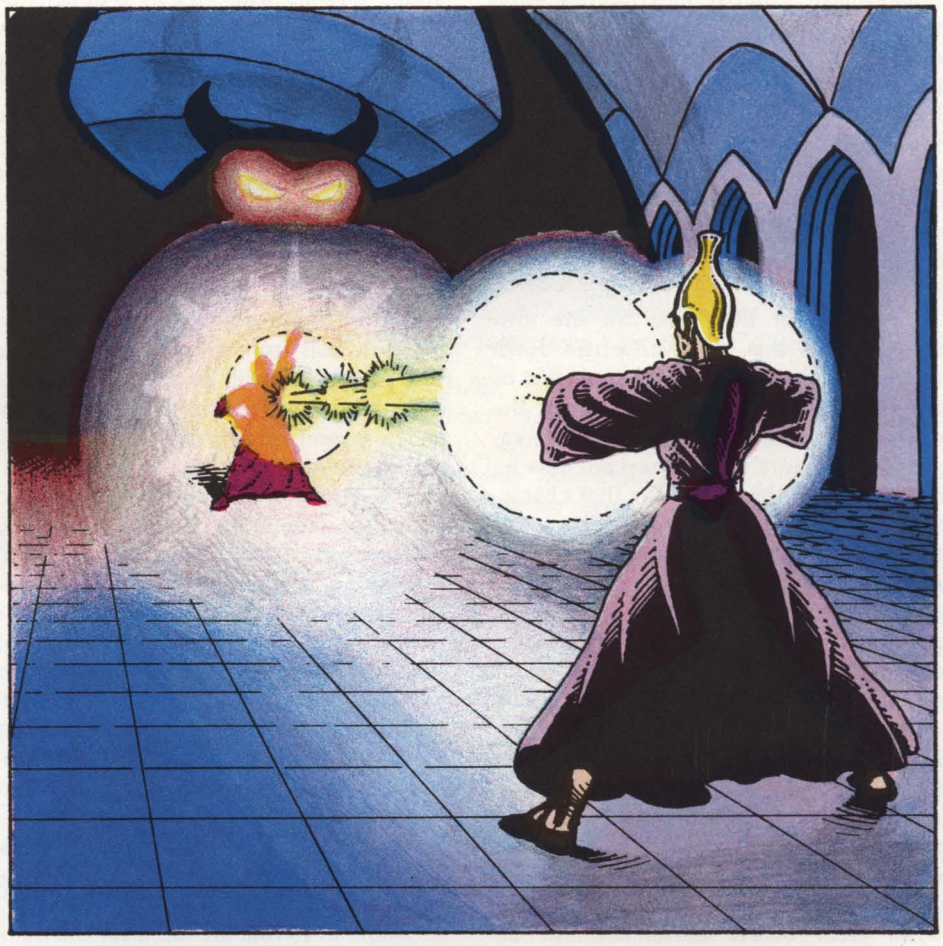
Set-up costs $5. The turn fee is $1.75, *plus* 25 cents for each character. The cost remains the same even if characters are killed during play. A special $1 charge is made if bubble cards are smudged, mutilated or not filled out with a soft lead pencil – that charge is per each card that must be redone.

Heroic Fantasy

The subject of Flying Buffalo's ***Heroic Fantasy*** is basically identical to that in ***Catacombs of Chaos.*** The players command a team of characters entering a nine-story Maze in search of treasure. The amazing thing is that the two games are so dissimilar.

As in ***Catacombs,*** each player has 100 points with which to put together a team. Characters are picked from a list which indicates the possible types by kindred (human, dwarf, elf, hobbit, troll, giant, ogre, goblin, leprechaun, gremlin, fairy), class (fighter or magic-user), and point cost. Each type of character begins with a specified set of attributes. For instance, all giants have a strength of 60 and a constitution 60, while all elf magic-users come with strength 20 and constitution 25.

When he has his team decided, the player fills out the turn sheet provided. After listing each character, he gets to



name it, choose its sex, and decide whether it starts with a healing or strength potion. The player also chooses the time between turns: twice a week, weekly, every other week, or monthly.

FBI will then send him his first printout. After covering the usual basics (account number, money in your account, code number of this game, etc.), it provides a status report on each room where the player has characters.

Each room report begins with the name of the room ("Damp Room"), what doors are present, and monsters and treasures (if any). Then comes the list of characters in the room. The player's characters are marked with an asterisk; other players' characters are marked with a dash. For each character, the printout lists his name, code number, sex and kindred, what he did, and what he said this turn. If it is a player's own character, or if it was "spied" this turn, the printout also provides the character's class, normal and current strength and constitution, experience points, and items carried. Lastly, each room report lists characters who entered or exited the room this turn, and actions taken by exiting characters before they exited.

The player is now ready to send in his first orders. Each character may receive several orders each turn: one major order (major magic, combat, movement, jimmying a door), one minor order (minor magic or use of a potion), one take order (picking up treasure), any number of release orders (dropping treasure), and one speak order (putting a speech on the next printout). Thus, in one turn a character could fight, drink a strength potion, pick up a magic coin, drop a healing potion so his buddy can pick it up, and yell, "I'm tough!"

Orders must be coded for the turn sheet. To do this, a player writes down his character's code number of one line of the sheet. He may also write down the character's name, even though the computer will ignore it. On the same line he also writes all the orders for that character. Most orders consist of a single letter followed by another letter, digit, or code number. For example, all prepare spell orders start with the letter "Y": "YF" is prepare fireball, "YB" is prepare blast, and "YZ" is prepare sleep spell. After all other orders have been filled in, speech orders are added by placing a colon followed by the speech in quotes – :"I am here!"

One essential thing about ***Heroic*** is the sequence of play. Orders do not take place all at the same time, but rather are processed in a certain order. Combat takes place before movement, for instance, while fireballs go off after both.

Characters in ***Heroic*** have neither armor nor weapons. Combat is handled abstractly. Strength points are used for attacking (as well as for movement and minor magic). When giving his orders, a player would indicate that his character was attacking some other character with so many strength points. All strength points not used that turn (for picking up a potion, for instance) are allocated to defense. The computer then looks at all of the strength points attacking that character and subtracts his defending strength points. The difference, if positive, is taken out of his constitution. When constitution is used up, the character is dead.

Let's say we had a troll (strength 50) attacking a human fighter (strength 15, constitution 30). We'll say the troll attacks with 30 strength points. The human defends with 15 strength points *minus* whatever he used this turn. In this case, he made an 8-point attack on someone else and used 1 point to pick up a Healing Potion, so he defends with 6 points. The troll's 30 attack against his 6 defense means that the human loses 24 constitution points . . . he's going to need that healing potion.

Special orders add some flexibility. Characters may loan strength points to another character's defense ("guarding"), attack anyone who attacks a designated character ("counter-punching"), or attack anyone who comes through a specified door ("ambushing").

Magic is fairly limited. There are three major spells: fireball, blast, and sleep. Sleep has a 75% chance of putting one character out for three turns, blast puts hits on one character equal to the caster's strength, and fireball places ten hits on everyone in the room where it goes off. (However, there is a chance when throwing a fireball from one room to another that the fireball will go off in the caster's room.) It takes one turn to prepare a spell and a second turn to throw it. Preparing and throwing a spell take up all of a character's strength, leaving him with zero points for defense if attacked.

There are also minor magic spells: lock door, reveal hidden doors, unlock door, and spy. Lock and reveal spells can be powered by a variable amount of strength, determining how long the spells remain in effect. Unlock can also be powered for a variable amount, cancelling out that much of a lock spell. Spy spells provide information on other players' characters.

Magic can only be used by magic-users. Spells can be used over and over again, never being used up.

Doors in ***Heroic*** are rated for the number of people that can use them at one time. There are, however, two movement phases in a turn – allowing two waves of people through a narrow door, or letting people move two rooms per turn. If too many people try to go through a door, the computer allows through those who put the most strength points into moving. Doors may be magically locked. (Unlocking requires an unlock spell, jimmying the door, or waiting for the lock spell to wear off.) Doors may also be hidden, in which case a reveal spell wil reveal them.

Plunder varies by the level. Although such treasures as coins and jewels are very nice, the essential plunder is the healing and strength potions which allow characters to regain constitution points or temporarily increase strength points.

The only way to directly contact another player is to place your name and address in one of your character's speeches: "Hello, I am George Young and I live at 425 South Coleman," says the goblin.

Two final details about ***Heroic.*** Experience points are granted to each character for staying alive, killing, and for carrying treasures when moving from one level to the next. These may be cashed in when a character moves from one maze level to another, receiving additional strength and constitution.

Also, if a player's party falls below 40 cost points (in other words, if more than 60 points of characters have been killed), the player may start a rescue party back at the safe room on the first level. The rescue party is built by the number of cost points lost by the original party.

The set-up costs $5. Turn fee is $2, or 10 cents per order, whichever is greater. (Unless you have a lot of characters, you can get by fine with fewer than 20 orders per turn.) Special charges: $1-$2 for phoned-in turns, 50 cents for sending in turns via The Source computer network (but no charge for receiving turns on The Source, which is the only way those twice weekly or weekly deadlines are possible).

And the Winner Is . . .

There's just no doubt that ***Heroic Fantasy*** is the better game.

For one thing, ***Heroic*** has the better game system. Things move faster – a party can pick up treasure and leave a room in one turn, something that takes two turns in ***Catacombs. Heroic***'s other advantage is the speech orders. Because of the play-by-mail lag between turns, a player has forgotten the speech orders he wrote by the time the printout arrives. Reading the printout and finding your characters talking ("I'm hungry!" "Let's kill something!") comes almost as a sur-

prise, and adds a tangible role-playing feeling.

At the same time, ***Catacombs*** is crippled by incomplete rules. Some of this was intentional, to provide players with a "learn as you play" experience. But there are just too many rules left out! Designing a character is an exercise in intuition because attributes aren't explained in game terms: Does a magic-user need precision to throw a fireball? Does a fighter need magic ability in order to use any magical weapons he finds? Nor are weapons defined: Is a longsword more powerful than a shortsword? Does it require extra strength to use? Nor are the benefits of classes explained: Can fighters and thieves make good use of spells if given any? Can magic-users swing weapons?

Combat is similarly confused. How much damage can a character take? All I know is that one of my fellows has seen constant action, including a hit by a sword, yet his condition remains "good." The printout can also be too literary. After one battle I was told that there was a "dying knoll" on the floor. What is "dying" – is he bleeding out his guts, do I have to hit him again to get my victory points, or can he *still attack*?

As for magic, my experience indicates that a magic-user can cast spells turn after turn, forever, without penalty. I pity the poor players who are mistakenly hoarding their spells – they should have brought along a bless spell to cast whenever their magic-user has nothing better to do! Surely the use of magic should have been already known to the characters, and not something learned as the game goes by.

There's one last point about ***Catacombs*** that gripes me. Schubel & Son has made it a point in its advertising that its printouts don't have to be decoded because they are printed in easy-to-read English. Well, that's mostly true. What they don't mention is that the printout is printed with sentences that look out of control – some use the whole page, some go three-quarters of the way across, others only halfway. The effect is less than easy-to-read. As for not having to decode the printout, the flip side of all that is having to encode the orders onto the bubble cards. The order codes for ***Catacombs*** are not easy to learn (***Heroic***'s order codes are much easier). Besides that, it was my understanding that use of optical-mark sorting equipment and bubble cards would reduce the cost of processing a game . . . but ***Catacombs*** costs more, not less, than ***Heroic.***

Heroic Fantasy is a fun game of dungeon delving, and I can recommend it to anyone who enjoys the insides of underground mazes. There are a lot of options, and a lot of player-vs.-player interaction. The speech orders add a distinct role-playing dimension.

Catacombs of Chaos is an ill-explained and confusing game. The worst problem lies with the lack of information given to the players about such basics as character design, magic, and combat. If the rulebook were overhauled again to provide this information, the game would then be a good, if slow-paced dungeon adventure.

Both games are significant advances in computer-moderated fantasy role-playing play-by-mail games. I have little doubt that ***Heroic Fantasy*** is the more important of the two, although the detail of ***Catacombs of Chaos*** (stucco walls, knit caps, golden flashes of light) is enjoyable. What I am looking forward to is the next clash between these two game companies, when the games will have grown and developed even more. What can the next steps be? Can the games expand beyond a dungeon setting into a complete fantasy world? Is there a way to handle *non-violent* interaction in a computer-moderated game?

I'm really looking forward to tomorrow!

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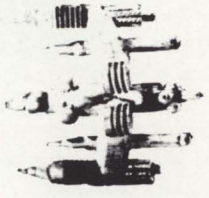
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New Characters for Cosmic Encounter



by Steve Jackson

I've enjoyed Eon's ***Cosmic Encounter*** ever since it appeared; its multi-player backstabbing confusion was one of the chief influences on ***Illuminati.*** Over the years, I've come up with quite a few ideas for new races . . . and kept notes. Here are the best dozen. Try them; you might like them.

Apostle: You have the power to *convert.* Once each challenge, you may convert one token (of any player) to your own color. You do this by taking one of your tokens out of the warp and replacing it with one of his. If you have no tokens in the warp, you cannot convert. You may only convert on a planet where you already have at least one token.

Diplomat: You have the power to *shift.* When you join an alliance and your side loses, you benefit as though you had entered with one token and your side had won. That is, if you help an attack, and the defender wins, you lose all your tokens but you still get one card. If you help to defend, and the attacker wins, you lose your defending tokens except for one – which goes onto the planet.

Swarm: You have the power of *synergy.* In attack or defense, one token is worth 1, two tokens are worth 4, three tokens are worth 9, and four are worth 16. If more tokens are allowed for some reason, their value is the *square* of their number.

Twit: You have the power to *annoy.* You may only use your power during a challenge you are *not* involved in as a principal or ally. You may annoy either the attacker or the defender by giving him one card from your hand and accepting in trade one card from his. He chooses the card that he will give you, but he must give you a card if you give him one – *unless* you wish to annoy him by giving him a card and specifying that you will accept no return "gift."

Angel: You have the power of *love.* You may always choose to compromise in a challenge, even if you have no compromise cards left. Play any card you like – but when the opponent turns his up, take yours back, without revealing it, and state that you will compromise. You do not have to decide whether or not to compromise until he reveals his card, but if you choose not to compromise, you must use the card you had placed on the table.

Fog: You have the power to *conceal.* When you are the defender in a challenge, your enemies cannot see how many tokens you or your allies are placing for defense – they must decide blind. Your power also operates if you ally with the defender in a challenge.

Berserker: You have the power of *fear.* Whenever you attack a world, one defending token goes to the warp before any allies or reinforcements can come into play. If there was only one token on that world, you win without a fight!

Wizard: You have the power of *illusion.* In any challenge, you play *two* cards down instead of one. After the enemy card is revealed, you choose which of your two cards will operate; the other is returned to your hand. (Against the Laser, pick your two cards blind, but choose between them normally after you see the Laser's card.)

Teleport: You have the power to *evade.* You never have to accept a challenge. Instead, you can declare that you are "evading," and your opponent must turn over another disk. The price for this evasion, though, is the loss of one token to the warp. This token comes from the planet that was attacked.

Stone: You have the power to *endure.* Whenever your tokens are successfully attacked, one half of them (round up) go to the warp; the others remain on the planet beside the tokens of the attacker(s). Thus you can never be wiped off a planet entirely unless you had only one token there to start with. However, players that remove tokens in other ways (i.e., the Assassin and the Berserker) affect you normally.

Blade: You have the power to *divide.* No one can ally with you against your will. If you are attacked, no one can ally with your attacker against your will. (Do not use in a game with the Crystal.)

Blivit: You have the power to *confuse.* When you are attacked, you may pick any unused power from the deck. That power, and not his own, is your attacker's power for that challenge. (You do not have to use your power if you don't want to.) However, you may not use the same "substitute power" more than once in a game until you have run through all the unused powers available. (Do not use in any game where the combination of powers causes the Blivit player to become more confused than his opponents.)



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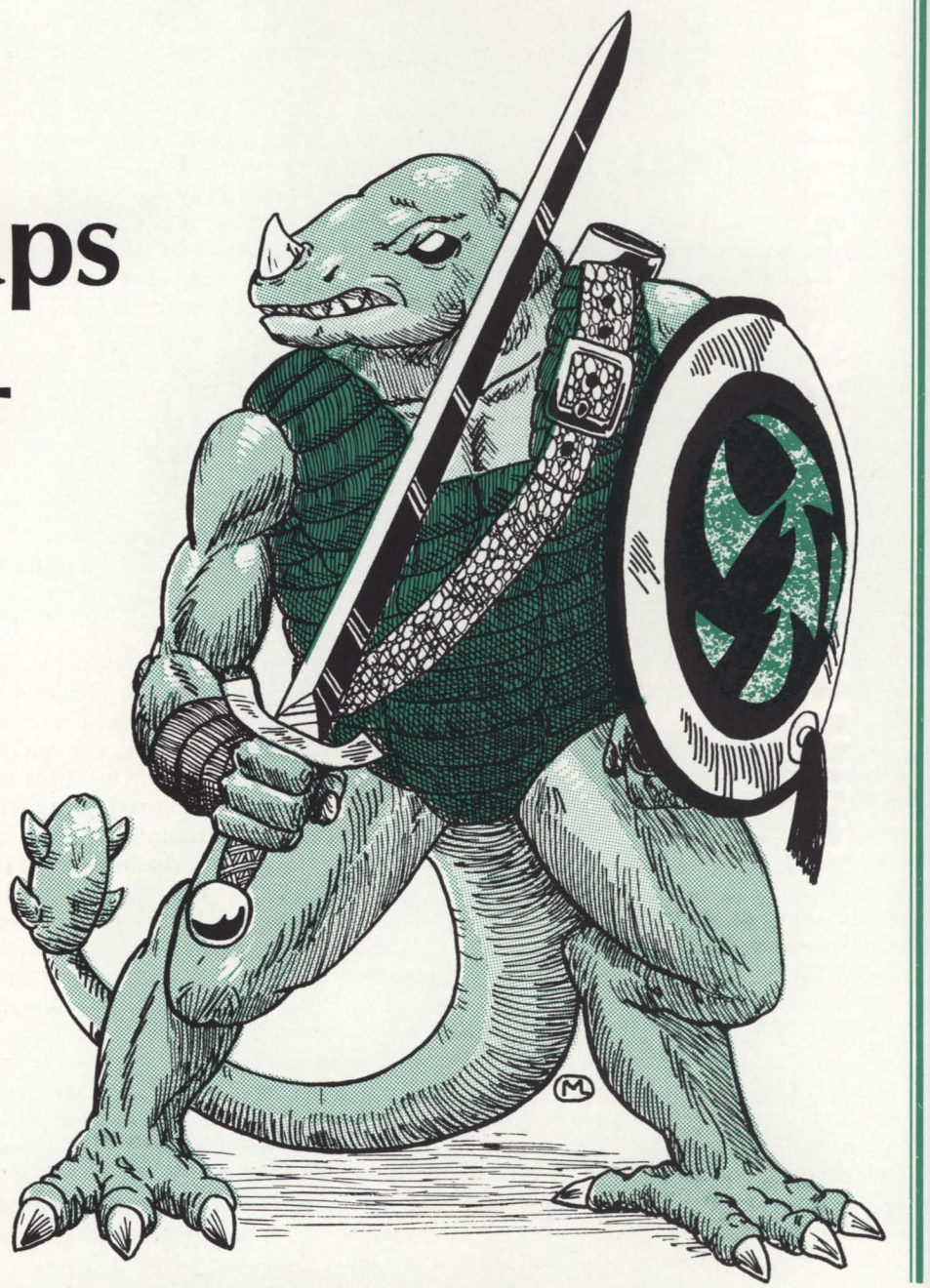
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More Handicaps in TFT

by Ralph Sizer



In issue 51, **Forrest Johnson** *presented an article on handicapped characters in* ***The Fantasy Trip****; it proposed a number of handicaps with which characters could define their personalities further and also start off with more initial attribute points. Physical and personal defects such as alcoholism, myopia, satyriasis, kleptomania, cowardice, and blindness were presented; for each disability a character took, he was awarded a certian number of starting attribute points.*

Reader **Ralph Sizer,** *following in the grand tradition, has given us several more appropriate disabilities. We won't be presenting TFT handicaps as a regular series, but we felt these were useful enough to warrant a few more pages.*

–AA

1-Point Handicap

Dyslexia: ("What does that say?") This is the lack of the basic eye-to-brain coordination needed for reading; a character with dyslexia can never learn Literacy, or even basic map-reading. He also can't learn to read music, but *can* become a Bard or even Master Bard.

2-Point Handicaps

Acrophobia (Fear of Heights): ("Get back from the edge!") It goes without saying that a character with this affliction can never learn Climbing. He must add one die to any roll against climbing a long way (a cliff, into a deep hole, or out of a tree), since even being near an edge makes him a bit dizzy. Subtract 2 from DX any time he's doing anything within one clear MH of such a long fall. He can never try to climb anything steeper than a flight of stairs unless he's being chased by something nasty, or unless it's the *only* way out. (Even so, he'd much prefer to look some more for another exit.)

Cuteness: ("You're a nice kid.") This affliction can strike people of either sex and any species. Physically, victims are no more than 9/10 of the average size for their species, sex, and age, and have cheerful, round faces and soft-looking bodies. They have an automatic Charisma talent. They can *learn* Tactics or even Strategist and use them, but nobody else will ever take a cute person seriously enough to let him command in battle. In strategy conferences, anyone wanting to take his advice must first make a 4-die roll against IQ (only very wise people will consider advice from someone who reminds them so strongly of a teddy bear).

At some time between ages 35 and 50 (say, 32 +3d6), this handicap changes its name to Grandmotherliness or Grand-

fatherliness, but all its effects remain unchanged.

Eunuch: ("Let Joe guard the women.") People who are sexually normal are usually contemptuous of those who are not, so a eunuch gets an automatic -1 on all reaction rolls. They also tend to underestimate his fighting ability, so will usually assign him to place in the battle order suitable for someone with four less attribute points. (If he's also afflicted with Cowardice, though, he'll like this!) He *can* learn Charisma, but it will be more "likeability" than leadership. He has the same restrictions on Tactics and Strategist as cute people.

Laziness: ("You don't need me for that.") Someone with this handicap will never *want* to learn Alertness, Running, or anything else that requires sustained effort (unlike the narcoleptic, who may honestly want to learn Alertness, but just keeps falling asleep anyhow). Lazy people *lose* experience points for unneeded actions.

Migraines: ("Whadda ya mean, you can't fight in the afternoon?") Roll one die. If it comes up 1, the migraines usually strike in the morning; if 2-4, in the afternoon; and if 5 or 6, in the evening. Each day the GM rolls one die. For afternoon migraines, this gives the hour the headache strikes that day. For morning migraines, add 6 to get the hour, and for evening migraines divide by 2, round up and add 6. The migraine will go away if the character lies down and rests for two hours; it will go away after four hours even if he doesn't rest. (Time spent resting with a migraine headache does *not* also restore ST lost due to fatigue or spell-casting – he can only rest up from one thing at a time.) During a migraine attack, characters operate at DX -3, movement allowance is reduced by 2, and any Alertness or related ability he may have (Detect Traps, the Naturalist's ability to spot ambushes, etc. – anything requiring careful concentration) are lost for the duration.

Narcolepsy: ("Z-z-z-z . . .") This is the tendency to fall asleep unintentionally, even when well-rested. Nowadays there are drugs that greatly alleviate the problem, but there are none such in a primitive fantasy world. A character rolls two dice against IQ for each minute to avoid falling asleep if left standing around with nothing interesting to do, three dice if sitting, and four if lying down. Falling asleep is automatic if left on sentry duty or if listening to a boring discussion for over five minutes. Someone with this handicap can never learn Alertness, and must spend twice the normal amount of time learning anything that requires a lot of reading.

Reputation: ("Hey! Aren't you the one who . . .") Back in his teens, this character did something very remarkable, and will *never* live it down. It may have been something glorious, like killing a large dragon or demon with one extremely lucky shot. (In this case, every young punk for leagues around will be eager to challenge him, to be able to say, "I'm the one who killed ———"; also, anyone drawing up an order of battle will go by his reputation and give him a position suitable for a fighter or wizard with half a dozen more attribute points than he has.)

Or it may have been a disgraceful event – the character got drunk one night and made love to half a platoon of orcs, or tried a practical joke that backfired, making him the only person known to have tarred and feathered himself. (In this case, everyone will always expect him to act the same – promiscuous, stupid, or whatever – and they'll always underestimate his IQ by 3 points and treat *all* suggestions accordingly.) Also, reaction rolls should be adjusted up or down, depending on what others think of his reputation.

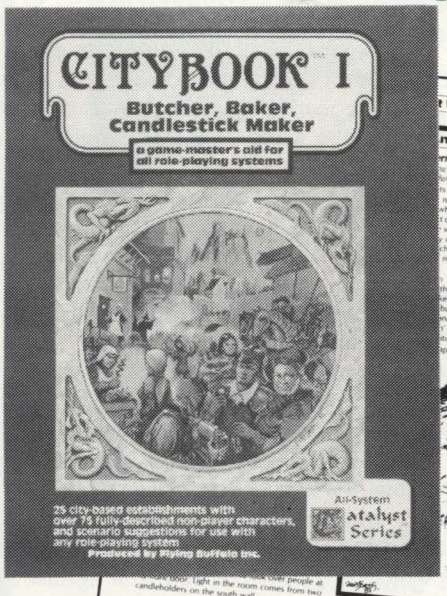
3-Point Handicaps

Asthma: ("Gasp, gasp . . .") The victim runs out of breath after about one minute (12 rounds) of fighting, climbing,

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or other strenuous exercise, and must rest for five minutes to recover. If the victim has to fight for over a minute, reduce DX by three points per full minute. Someone with athsma can never learn Running, and can only spend one hour a day trying anything strenuous; since so much resting must go with the exercise, this hour cannot be combined with any other learning, no matter how sedentary. An athsmatic *can* learn Swimming.

One-Track Mind: ("Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!") For a fighter, this means "Charge!" If the other players insist on talking it over for too long (more than a minute), he charges anyhow and lets them follow or keep talking, as they prefer. For a wizard, it means "I'll cast an illusion" (hawk or owl for scouting, an octopus with three bastard swords for fighting – no other choices) followed by a succession of the wizard's most powerful attack spells if in combat. A character with this affliction can never learn Tactics or Diplomacy. If a talent has a naturally-related talent, the character *must* learn the related talent(s) as soon as possible – a character with a one-track mind who knows one thieving talent will either know or be studying them all; a Bard will get Master Bard as soon as he/she reaches IQ 14, etc.

Rube Goldberg Mind: ("That's too simple – it'll never work.") A character with this affliction will always support the most complicated proposal for action in any situation, and will usually add a few (or a lot) of his or her own suggestions to make it even more complex. If he's in a strategy discussion, it may last several hours.

Squeamishness: ("Eeek!") This character just can't stand the sight of blood. Every time he sees freshly-spilled blood, he must roll against IQ to avoid fainting: two dice if it's just a scratch (1 point damage), three if it's a minor wound (2-5 points), and four if it's a major wound. Add one die if it's his own blood. If some fool revives him from the faint in a position where he can still see the gore, he must immediately roll again – and add one more die because he's already feeling woozy from the first faint. A squeamish character can never learn Physicker or Vet.

4-Point Handicaps

Butterfingers: ("Oops!") This is self-descriptive. DX can never get above species starting level or DX 8, whichever is *lower* (he can't avoid most of the harmful effects by making the character a halfling). A butterfinger must roll two dice against DX to avoid dropping anything he's picked up or just been handed.

Claustrophobia: ("I can't breathe in here!") Anyone with claustrophobia should keep out of dungeons in the first place. However, if he does want to go in, he must first make a four-die roll against IQ to enter. Once in, anytime he enters a long (over 4 MH) or crooked (end not in sight) corridor, he must roll one die against the width of the corridor in hexes (one MH = three hexes – measure at the widest point); failure to make the roll means he runs back out of the tunnel. Finally, no claustrophobic can sleep or even relax underground, so wizards cannot recover ST. (A Sleep spell will solve this problem.)

Rheumatic Fever: ("My chest . . .") The character had a severe case in childhood. This means a permanent lack of strength – this character can never get above his species starting strength, or ST 12, whichever is lower. Prolonged exercise is likely to be fatal. After any fight in which he's taken action, roll against ST, one die for each full minute the character participated in the fight. If the roll is missed, he has a heart attack and can be saved only by a Master Physicker rolling four dice against IQ. The same goes for running fast or swimming.

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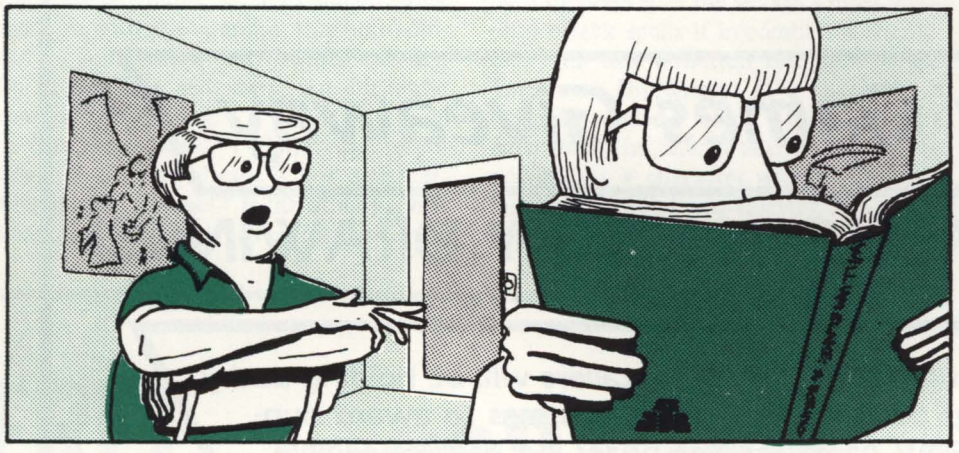
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THE WORM

Or, Why Do I Doubt It? Because I Never Keep My Own Promises . . .

by David Myers



Here's my problem: I'm getting mashed in my favorite play-by-mail game, ***Star Battle Forever***. It's not like I haven't gotten mashed before, but this time it's serious. Every one of my colonies is being besieged by several classes of psionic warriors from The Flaming Skull Empire – which I've never even heard of before. Two of my *Enterprise* class deathships disappeared last week without a trace. And this week's scouting report shows two enemy battle fleets circling my home planet, armed to the teeth with all the appropriate missiles and rays and germs and propaganda of destruction.

Bad news. It looks like some of the toes I've stepped on in the past are stepping back.

In short, it's time for desperate action. What I need is a ruse, a sham, a bluff, something to buy me time while I round up some gullible allies and sharpen a couple of knives for the right back-stabbing moment.

I decide on my roommate.

I *said* it was a desperate situation, didn't I?

My roommate, let's admit it, is dull. Name of Bob. Dull name, dull person. Writes a lot of papers on William Blake and similar old and dead people. But he's a cousin of a friend of mine and he pays his portion of the rent on time and doesn't complain when I crank up the stereo.

Besides, he's new – just moved in last month – and doesn't know me very well yet.

So my roommate it is.

"What I need," I try to explain to him, "is sort of a puppet empire nearby, you know? The gamemasters won't let me have two empires close to each other, but we can get by that little rule if we work together, you and I."

My roommate has his nose stuck in a book. He gives me no sign of life.

"Hey, you hear me? I'm asking a favor."

He nods and I continue as fast as I can, before he can get second thoughts.

"All you have to do is sign up for the game and send in a letter saying you'd like to be set up in the northwest quadrant. That's *my* quadrant, see? Then, once you get the empire, I'll run it. I'll pay for the turns and everything, okay?"

My roommate nods again. "Can we do this really quickly?" he asks me. "I've got a test tomorrow. I need to read."

Right. Really quickly it is. I type up this *great* letter. It says how much I've heard about ***Star Battle Forever*** and how wonderful it is and how very, very much I would like to play this tremendous new game and please set me up in the northwest quad and here is my money and here is some extra money too just in case and oh, oh, what do I do now?

Bob only glances at it briefly – but does want me to make one slight change. I had asked for an empire named "Worm." He wants to call it "*Conquering* Worm." Okey-dokey with me. The change is made. I show him the dotted line. The letter is in the mail the next morning.

I stall a couple of days before taking my own turn by the post office – wherein I offer to negotiate with my enemies and hope they're out of town on vacation.

Two weeks later. I'm holding on to my last remaining colony and frantically shuffling troops across the galaxies and postcards across the states to try and keep the alien battle fleets surrounding my home planet from zooming down and finding out the true state of my planetary defenses.

And my roommate's turn arrives in the mail. Great news. SBF has set him up less than a full turn's travel away from me. True, Conquering Worm doesn't have many forces at present, but there's plenty for a diversionary attack. And I have just located the homeworld of one of my besiegers.

Plan Desperado may just work.

I'm working out the details of exactly how to save my skin when my roommate arrives back from class. He is curious as to how the Empire of the Conquering Worm turned out.

He studies the info sheets carefully. Glad he's showing an interest. (Maybe he'll start paying for the turns.) I show him mine, telling him what I'm up against and how I plan to get out of it.

He listens attentively.

"Diversion is a good idea," he says, "in general. But it takes time. You may not be able to hold out. Particularly if they go kamikaze on you."

"They won't kamikaze," I say.

"No need to chance it. Why don't I attack them from the rear while they're engaged with you?"

"They're not engaged with me," I tell him slowly, trying not to sound annoyed. "Nor do I *want* them to be engaged with me. Plus, your forces aren't very strong, as you can see. Here." I point to the

figures. He refuses to look at the figures.

"But *they* don't know I'm weak. And, according to the rules, if they're engaged with you and I surprise them with my species' special illusionary powers . . ."

My roommate, good ol' Bob, explains it to me. And the way he explains it to me, it really doesn't sound half bad. It *would* take a couple of turns to reach my opponent's home planet for a diversionary attack – and that might translate into almost a month of realtime. And I *had* heard that one of my opponents was *very* upset at a couple of raw deals he and I had happened to be involved in together in the distant past. So a kamikaze attack might indeed be something to consider – and fear.

So, all in all, my roommate's plan isn't bad. A little rough at the edges, of course. I have to modify it extensively, since I know best how to make it look like Conquering Worm is an established empire instead of the fledgling it really is. But my roommate has some good tactical points to make. I'm able to incorporate most of them into the overall plan and I feel pretty good about it when I seal the last envelope – the bulky one with all our special actions in it, along with my accompanying bulky check.

Bob has already gone into his room and shut the door before I am able to bring up the matter of who is paying for these turns. I figure it can wait until next time.

Two weeks later and the final results are in: Victory!

Evidently, my opponents were indeed serious about the destruction they had intended to wreak upon me. They threw everything they had at me *head-on*. The Conquering Worm forces caught them from behind and wiped out half their combined fleet before it was able to turn and re-engage.

By that time, the Conquering Worm marauders were safely retreating back into ultra-space. And I was able to mop up the would-be attackers with my own small (but well-trained) planetary reserves.

Success is sweet.

I decide to let my roommate do his own turn this time as a reward for his help. After all, he is no longer crucial to me, and such kindness should help nudge him toward paying for his own empire's turns.

I leave his turn envelope on his desk and write him a note explaining the circumstances of our victory. Sort of a thank-you note. I also remind him that we need to set up trade routes between our homeworlds as soon as possible.

Then I leave for class.

When I get back from my night class there is a note on *my* desk: "Trade routes acceptable. I suggest we pursue and destroy. What do you say?"

I have to laugh. The rookie becomes an expert overnight. He's got a lot to learn.

The next morning, over breakfast, I make things clear.

"We have to *rebuild*," I tell him. "We can't go traipsing all over the sky, blowing up things."

"But we get production points for their industry, don't we?" he says. "That will give us more to build with."

"Rule me no rules, okay? We have to *capture* their industry to get the points and how do we know we *can* capture their industry?"

"It's a chance we have to take."

"Why?" I ask him.

"Because there are a lot of people after you. More than you think."

I look at him carefully. He is eating cereal and reading a book simultaneously, as usual.

"Like who?"

"Like Mr. Hate-Dynamo and Steelex and The Red Lion and the Amorphous Corporation," he says.

These are names I know. They are player empires – *unfriendly* empires. But how does *he* know them?

He explains it to me before I ask.

"I've been in touch with your attackers. They told me what you'd done to them in the past. Actually, they tried to get me to come over to their side, saying it's only a matter of time before you're ashes. But I told them I had an agreement with you. I understood their position, so they understood mine.

"Still, we're up against tremendous odds. We have to attack immediately and continuously. And we have to win. Otherwise, we're dog food."

I am stunned.

"How did you get in touch with my enemies?"

"Some called me. I called some."

"But why? You could have blown our whole plan. If they knew –"

He looks up from his book and cuts me off. "We *have* to attack," he says again, with emphasis. Then he continues reading, talking between mouthfuls of Rice Krispies. "I've already finished my turn. I'm driving forward to cut them off before they reach their refueling platforms. See you later – got a class."

I yell at him to come back but he walks out on me anyway.

I search the house for his turn envelope. Not here. Probably took it with him. Great.

So let the egomaniac get himself blown to bits. He's already served his purpose.

I send in a normal rebuilding turn and sit and wait. And when Bob brings up the subject of the game, I change the subject. Let him sweat.

On the next go-round, we happen to get our turns on the same day. I hand Bob his envelope with a smile – and relish the moment. As soon as he opens his turn he'll find out that pursuing and destroying takes more skill than novices can muster.

He opens his turn. Looks at it. Looks at me.

"You didn't attack with me," he says.

I smile at him.

"I didn't think you would," he says. He shrugs. "You missed out."

I what?

"They were evidently on their last legs. I busted through and took their homeworlds. With salvage operations I triple my production this turn."

I look at his turn. Beginner's luck, pure and simple.

But he's right. Conquering Worm is now as strong as I am. Maybe stronger. And I've been playing ***Star Battle Forever*** for almost a year. Hard to believe.

I look at his turn a little more closely.

I hate to admit it, but the guy is good. A real tactical genius. And our homeworlds are *very* close. I'll have to be on my toes.

"Oh, by the way," he says, as I hand him back his turn results, "there are a number of us who think SBF should be a game of mutual cooperation and discovery – not war."

"Like who?"

"The White Lords, for instance."

I've heard of the White Lords. A bunch of namby pambies who have a "code" and all that nonsense. They always attack *en masse* against the nearest wrong-doer. A very effective alliance, but a rather unwieldy one – and slow on the trigger. Most of my friends stay far away from their territory. We prefer more idiosyncratic ways of doing business.



Bob continues: "I've been asked to tell you any further transgressions from the Code will be dealt with by force."

The *Code?* What is this? "You want to give me an example of a transgression?" I say.

"Like the double dealing that caused your present predicament."

"That has nothing to do with the White Lords – or with you. You weren't even in the game then!"

"That's what I've been told to tell you. That's all."

I've had it. "You're going to be paying for your own turns from now on, pal!"

Bob smiles. "I've got a big account balance."

Okay. That's it. I've had it.

I smile sweetly while Bob's in the room. Good ol' Bob. My roommate.

I smile.

Sure, no more naughtiness. I'll be a good boy.

I smile.

And when good ol' Bob, my roommate, leaves the room, I start things moving.

I didn't get to be hated all over the SBF universe for nothing. My roommate scores a couple of lucky punches on the battlefield and starts talking big on my money. Unfortunately, tactical geniuses only win the battles, not the wars. Politicians win the wars. And devious politicians win the most wars.

And who's the most devious?

You guessed it. *Me.*

Sure, I've got enemies. I've earned them. I've also got pull. And there are a lot of empires out there who owe me. So I'm calling in my debts. If my roommate wants a lesson – he'll get one.

It takes a lot of work. And it doesn't happen overnight. But it happens.

While my roommate is asleep, or away at class, or locked in his room spending my money on his SBF turns, I manage to piece together the greatest armada of cutthroats and turncoats ***Star Battle Forever*** has ever seen. Oh, I have to promise and I have to wheel and deal and I have to lie. But, by the time I'm through talking, all of my self-serving friends have their sights set on permanently mashing one empire and one empire only: Conquering Worm.

Now, none of these people like each other. Most of these people won't even talk to each other. So it has to be a coalition without anyone actually *knowing* it's a coalition.

By a combination of guile and deceit (and skill) I have managed to convince a wide variety of player empires to attack the same point in space at exactly the same time. But few of them expect anybody other than Conquering Worm to be there when they arrive. They'll find out the truth, of course – in Conquering Worm's airspace. And what they do, after that . . . well, it won't be my problem any longer. It'll be good ol' Bob's.

Of course, I sort of forget to tell Bob any of this. And I continue trading with his homeworld as though everything were hunky-dory. After all, why not milk the cow before it's sent to slaughter?

The appointed day draws nigh. The plan has developed without a hitch. And now it's too late for anyone – even me – to prevent the destruction of the Empire of the Conquering Worm.

So there's no longer any need for secrecy.

I get the results of my latest SBF turn and begin to pull my traders out of the way of the coming juggernaut. But there's a problem. Everything's in order on my homeworld – the re-building is coming along nicely – but something funny has happened on my trade sheets. All my traders arrived on the Conquering Worm homeworld last turn as planned. And now they should be loading trade goods as fast as possible in order to take their booty and get out of there. But they aren't. Because the Conquering Worm homeworld is not there.

I check inside my turn envelope for some sort of explanation.

There is none.

Did I make a mistake on last turn's travel orders?

No.

Did the attack come early? Has the Conquering Worm homeworld been completely obliterated? No – if so, then my traders would have been obliterated as well.

But then *what?*

My spine begins to tingle.

Bob chooses that moment to walk in the door. He sees my turn in my lap and the expression on my face.

"Got your trade turn back?" he asks. Not even waiting for my answer, he goes into the kitchen. I hear him pouring himself some milk.

"Where's your homeworld?" I call out.

"I moved it. Sorry."

He comes back into the room, sits on the couch across from me, and drinks his milk.

"You moved it? How? Why?"

"It wasn't easy. And I think you know why."

The conversation hangs for a few moments. Should I come clean or not? I figure I don't have much choice.

"You evidently know about my little joke."

"Yep," says Bob. "I heard rumors."

"Looks like the joke's on me," I say.

"Yep," says Bob. He goes back into the kitchen.

I follow him.

"Look, I'm impressed with you moving your planet. But what am *I* supposed to do now? A lot of people are going to be very mad with me when they arrive at your homeworld and find that it's not where I told them it would be. They're going to think I lied to them."

"Probably so." Bob throws me a peanut butter cookie.

"I know what's going to happen," I say. "They'll arrive where you used to be, fight among themselves for one turn or so, then get smart and come looking for me. And they know where to find me."

"We hope so," says Bob.

I can't finish the rest of my cookie. I throw it away and stand to face my roommate.

"Why don't you tell me about that 'we' part."



"Sure," says Bob. "There's a very large White Lord force waiting near your home planet. We're waiting for all your buddies to mass attack you – which they will. After they finish you off – which they will – they'll be relatively weak from battle, all in one place, and under no central leadership. One sudden attack – and ***Star Battle Forever*** is cleaned up."

I think it over. Sounds like a good plan to me. My neck and I don't have too many options.

"Why not spare me?"

Bob smiles. "Why?"

I talk fast. Very fast.

"Because there are new players joining the game every day. Not all of them with your sentiments, Bob. Some of them are like me. They might even *lie* to you."

Bob is listening. "Do you have a point?"

he says.

"What chance would you have had to round up all the villains in SBF, like I've done? They may not trust me to tell them the absolute truth, but they trust me to lie to them in a predictable manner. They don't trust you at all, Bob – or anybody like you. You couldn't have ever gotten them together in one spot."

"Get to your point."

"You need me."

Okay, so it sounds shaky. But Bob looks like he's buying it.

He furrows his brow and stares at me for a moment. "I don't think so," he says. "But let me discuss it with my allies. Mind if I use your phone?"

"Whatever," I say.

"They'll be long distance calls," he warns me.

"Whatever," I say. I leave to ponder the grim reality of my coming SBF turn. There's no hope. I could start over with another empire, maybe. Or enroll in another game. But I've been a whole year in ***Star Battle Forever*** . . .

Bob comes into the room. Like a beggar in the presence of a rich man, I spring up to meet him.

"They left it up to me," says Bob. He pauses.

I wait.

"Moving a planet takes a lot of special actions," he says.

I get the hint. I get out my checkbook.

"How many special actions?"

"Three turns worth ought to do it."

I write out the check. *For the last time,* I promise myself.

Bob makes sure everything is in order and then takes my check and turn envelope into his room. When he brings it back, it's sealed.

"I'd like to look at it," I say.

"I'd rather you didn't. I'll mail it myself."

I agree reluctantly. After all, once I find out how to move planets to and fro, I won't be paying him for the information. Still, I need assurances.

"If anybody finds me, the deal is off."

"Agreed," says Bob.

"That includes the White Lords."

"Okay," says Bob. "You have my word. I promise not to tell anyone where I've moved you."

I nod. Bob has kept his promises in the past. I agree to trust him. Do I have any other choice?

As it turns out, I bet the right horse.

Two weeks later everything happens just as Bob said it would. My friends attack vacuum and then they attack each other. Gradually they become more angry at me than each other; they race as a group to where my homeworld used to be. The White Lords ambush them there and massacre them.

Too bad. But I don't lose any sleep over it. Numero Uno is the name of the game and I'm a survivor. There'll be death threats aplenty in the months ahead but I'll manage. I always have before.

The only real worry I have at present is Bob. Will he keep his promise? If so, then I plan to take a long, extended rebuilding vacation in the land of terra incognita.

I get my turn back and Bob has met his side of the bargain. My homeworld is moving through space at a steady clip.

I check my SBF galactic map and plot my new location, anxious to see if there are any trading possibilities nearby – or maybe an easy target or two. There's nothing. That is, there's no*body*. There is some*thing*. A very well-known SBF landmark: the northwest quadrant's single black hole. Dead ahead; collision course.

I wait for Bob to come home.

I don't have to ask.

"Want to know how to stop your planet from moving?" he asks.

I get out my checkbook. *For the last time,* I promise myself.

But I doubt it.

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Where to Submit:



A Thumbnail Guide



by W. G. Armintrout

"It is finished," you sigh, sitting back from your typewriter. Your very first game design is finally typed and ready to be submitted. Now . . . where do you send it?

Many months ago, I suggested to Forrest Johnson, former editor of this magazine, that TSG ought to do a survey of the game companies to find out just who accepts designs from freelancers. To my dismay, he put the ball back in my court by suggesting that *I* write the article.

Since then, I've been baffled. The original idea was to send a query letter to each game company and see which ones bothered to reply. The letter would be done so that it looked just like a real letter from an unknown game designer trying to sell his first design. The problem was in writing the letter. Making it too vague – "I have a game design I'd like to show you" – was so lackluster that I thought too many companies would ignore the query entirely, while getting specific – "My game is about moon tanks / flying buffaloes / Godzilla / galactic conquest" – would make the idea interesting to some companies but boring to others. (For instance, GDW might indeed like a galactic conquest game, but would Chaosium?)

Unable to come up with a valid "scientific" test for the game companies, I thought that the next best thing might be to present my own experiences. I've been designing and peddling games since 1979, with some minor success (***Hot Spot*** and ***OneWorld*** for Metagaming), and I've dealt with most of the major companies at one time or another.

Therefore, the rest of this article consists of my opinions on whether or not a game company is interested in working with freelancers. The companies in question have been hit with everything from a general-purpose "I'm a game designer and are you interested in looking at some of my work?" letter to specific proposals for such games as rescue-the-princess fantasy, star tanks science fiction and run-around-the-board adventure games.

The results?

Archive – no reply at all.

Avalon Hill – again, no reply. I have queried them with respect to both full-size and their mini-size line.

Chaosium – the good people at Chaosium are hard to sell, but they'll listen to what you have to say. The trick is that these folks have a very definite sense of just what a Chaosium game is . . . which I have obviously failed to understand, since all of my queries have been returned with penciled notes from Lynn Willis explaining they weren't Chaosium's kind of game, or that no one at the company liked the idea well enough to want to do the development work. But Chaosium *will* listen to a freelance query!

GDW – the first thing I have to admit is that I've *never* submitted anything to GDW that was in their preferred formats – that is, the map size and number of counters they prefer. I submit wrong game formats to GDW simply because I'd like to do a game with them, and – who knows? – maybe someone will have a heart attack and do a strange game format. Then, after GDW rejects it, I send the design to the people I intended it for in the first place. However, the one thing I can say about GDW is that they always reply to my queries, they always say nice things about what I do, and they always sound sorry when they turn me down. Someday, I'll have to do something in the right size and see what they say . . .

Heritage – my experience with their Dwarfstar line has been wonderful. It just so happened that I hit them with a query letter before I knew they had started the new line of games. They rejected that game – it was way too large for the Dwarfstar format – but they treated me with immense respect, praised my past work, and asked me sincerely if I'd like to try something along the lines of a Dwarfstar game. So I did. In fact, they are evaluating it as I write this. So I can say two things about Heritage and Dwarfstar: they welcomed my freelance work with open arms (though I don't know if my past work influenced them), and they prefer that designs be based on ideas from their approved list of game topics.

Metagaming – I stopped working with Metagaming when I discovered that I could get better money everywhere else. I was also dismayed by the production standards of turkeys like ***Dimension Demons,*** plus the fact that they once told me that they were interested in my galley warfare game design, only to reveal in the next issue of TSG (before my design was submitted) that they were coming out with something called ***Ramspeed*** by some other fellow. Despite my irritations at Metagaming, they do accept almost anything for evaluation. (And their production standards may be turning around, as evidenced by ***The Air-Eaters Strike Back.***)

Ral Partha – their mail room is so confused that the best reply I've ever received to a query was a postcard instructing me that their catalogue now costs two dollars.

Steve Jackson Games – what can I say? They've evaluated everything I've queried them with, bless their hearts. However (and I hope he wasn't saying it just to spare my feelings), Steve tells me they're up to their gunwales with game designs awaiting publication and don't feel good about accepting new ones just now.

Task Force Games – last I heard from them, Task Force was preparing a set of



illustration by Chris Carlson

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guidelines for freelancers and wasn't looking at queries. That was over a year ago, and they haven't replied to anything I've sent since then.

TSR – it is popular to kick the Biggest Game Company around, but I really do have reservations about the way they handle freelancers. It is true that they have accepted every game I've ever queried them about, and assigned them to an editor for evaluation. It is also true that in every case the original editor was fired or reassigned (TSR has a regular turnover in staff), which has always resulted in immense confusion: In one case, the new editor decided the old editor was wrong to accept the design for evaluation in the first place, because it wasn't TSR's kind of game; in another case the new editor rejected a game for reasons that made me suspect that she didn't know what she was doing. Once I even went to the trouble to design a game based on what one of the TSR editors told me TSR most wanted to see in a game, only to have "official" policy change within the next four weeks until TSR didn't want a game along those lines any more. *Perhaps* my opinion of TSR is flavored by the rejections they've given me. At any rate, TSR does accept design work from freelancers.

Yaquinto – they don't reply to my mail.



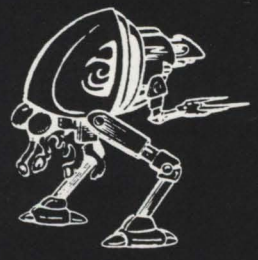
Of course, this article is not a scientific study. It is based solely on my own experience. If I am as good a designer as I think I am, then it is, of course, criminal for so many outfits to refuse to even reply to my mail. On the other hand, if I am as crass a designer as some critics of ***OneWorld*** seem to have thought, perhaps the companies that don't reply to my queries are to be congratulated for maintaining high standards.

And I can't say what has happened at the companies that never replied. Did they throw the queries in the garbage can? Did they seriously consider them, only to reject the idea, but were too softhearted to write and tell me?

There are also companies which I've never written to, such as Fantasy Games Unlimited or Nova. (And I've also dealt with defunct companies such as SPI and OSG – neither of which ever answered me, which perhaps helps explain why they went the way of the dinosaur . . .)

What I want to say to freelance designers is this: Some companies only accept work from staff members or freelancers who already have connections with the company. Other companies don't bother to read queries, or the mail room loses them (the results of hiring minimum-wage schoolgirls), or the company only gives you an answer if they really like the game. Then there are companies with very strict standards for submissions, or with a very disciplined notion of just what fits their "line." You can *expect* to be rejected, and to be ignored.

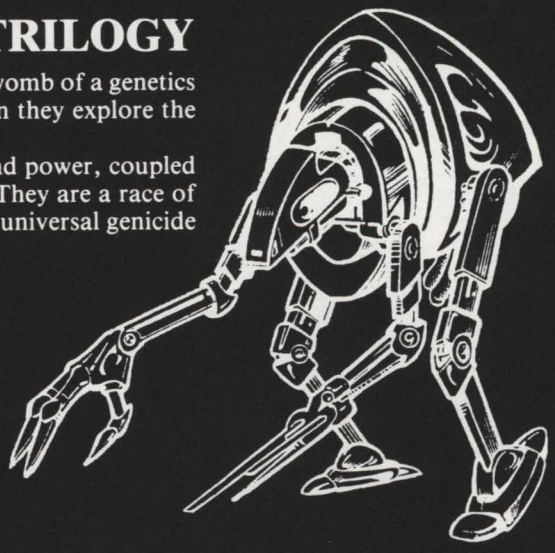
But, on the other hand, if you persevere despite a rejection or two, and if your game is really good or even great, eventually you should find a publisher. At least I hope so. That's what keeps me going.



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WESTWAY

Campaigning Car Wars in England

by Marcus L. Rowland

Introduction

Westway is a ***Car Wars*** campaign set in Britain at the same time as the conventional game. Referees will need no more than the original game to use this campaign setting; however, the ***Sunday Drivers*** supplement may be used to enhance the role-playing aspect of the campaign, and the Expansion Set will be useful for setting up odd terrain. In addition, those wishing to expand the campaign outside the area discussed below may find it helpful to obtain a good large-scale map of London. Suitable maps are the 'AA Motorists Map of Central London' and the 'Geographers AZ London Street Atlas,' both of which are priced at approximately £1 at the time of writing. Players outside the U.K. should be able to obtain suitable maps from British Tourist Board offices.

Referees wishing to use this simply as a glorified arena need only have enough game components to set up Westway's complex terrain; however, the primary thrust of this setting is for a role-playing type campaign, with continuing characters and a specific theme. Several themes are suggested throughout the scenario. To fully flesh out any one of these campaign approaches would require the space of the entire supplement, so instead are given basic notes on some forces of combatants, adventures, and settings. The referee will have to decide on the scope of the campaign and then flesh out the details appropriate to that scope.

The material presented below includes the campaign's historical background, details of character generation for the British environment, and a detailed map of the campaign area, plus additional information for the referee's use only. Exactly how much information is revealed is left to the referee's discretion.

Historical Background

When the food riots began in America, Britain had adopted an emergency coalition government as the last North Sea oil ran out. By imposing strict fuel and food rationing, the government maintained order and prevented the disruptions seen in the U.S.

By the time America had legalised manslaughter in arena games, Britain's 'emergency' government was confiscating the last privately-owned firearms, later imposing a total ban on any form of weapon.

At approximately the same time that autoduellists began to spread to American highways, there were a few brief reports of American arena combats on British T.V., and British car manufacturers later produced armed vehicles for the U.S. market.

Within the last year, Britain's police forces began to notice an alarming trend. Cars and weapons built for the U.S. market were being stolen, and despite police opposition, armed clashes were occurring on British roads. An idea had begun to spread . . .

Local News Broadcast, London, Now: '. . . The Metropolitan Police Commissioner has announced that several armed police cars will be assigned to patrol London's roads. Under recent legislation, these vehicles may fire on suspects

Tables

TABLE ONE: VEHICULAR WEAPONS

Weapon	Availability	Price	Ammo CPS
Machine gun	4+	£2,000	£ 40
Flamethrower	5+	750	35
Rocket launcher	6 (4+)	1,750	80
Recoilless rifle	6	1,900	75
Anti-tank gun	6	3,200	120
Laser		not available	
Minedropper	4+ (2+)	900	110 (85)
Spikedropper	3+ (2+)	175	27
Smokescreen	4+ (3+)	350	15 (8)
Paint spray	2+ (automatic)	450	12
Oil jet	2+ (automatic)	310	10
Heavy rocket		not available	

TABLE TWO: HAND WEAPONS

Weapon	Availability	Price	Ammo CPS
Submachine gun	4+	£750	£30.00
Rifle	3+	270	1.00
Shotgun	2+	190	1.00
Heavy pistol	4+	210	1.50
Light pistol	3+	150	1.00
Grenade	4+	63	–
LAW	7+	1,200	–
VLAW	6+	450	–

The tripod-mount recoilless and machine gun are not available.

TABLE THREE: HOME-MADE WEAPONS

Weapon	G	Dam.	Roll to hit	Cost	Shots	CPS	Malfunction
Crossbow	3	2 hits	8	£90	1	£2	2
Molotov cocktail*	2	1 die	9	16	–	–	3 or less
Y-catapult	4	**	10	95	4 (2)		see below
Spear gun†	2	3 hits	9	50	1	4	2
Satchel charge††	2	1d+2	9	30	–	–	3 or less

The "G" column indicates how many grenades' worth of encumbrance the item replaces on an individual's 6-grenade allowance.

* Molotov cocktails are made from a mixture of synthetic chemical fuels, acid, and oxidising agents, with 2-second acid fuses fitted; hence their cost.

** The Y-catapult uses powerful springs to fire grenades to the bearer's right or left. It is worn as a normal knapsack and can be used on foot or while riding a bike. Two models are available, one firing two grenades to each side (singly or as a group of four), the other firing one Molotov cocktail to either side (as a pair only). Both types malfunction on a roll of 2, the Molotov variant on 2-4. It carries four grenades or two Molotovs at a time; this does not add to the encumbrance value.

† Maximum range 20', taking two rounds to reload.

†† A combination of a Molotov cocktail and additional explosives in a shoulder bag. The charge has the same explosive force as a mine.

TABLE FOUR: STOCK CARS

Vehicle	Price
Killer Kart	£ 7,000
Mini-Sherman	12,000
Stinger	8,100
Shogun 100	5,125

The stripped Shogun 100 is available legally for £2,100.

TABLE FIVE: MISCELLANY

Accessory	Availability	Cost
Extra magazines	as weapon	£ 72
Targeting computers	not available	
Gun turret	3+	1,800
Small turret	2+	1,100
Body armour	2+	400

without warning. Unofficial reports suggest that the first patrols will be assigned to the elevated section of A40 Westway motorway, linking Central London to the Western suburbs. This three-mile stretch has been the scene of several violent incidents recently, including a running battle between two duellists that led to the death of nearly a dozen motorists and three policemen.

Today's weather will be fine with occasional short showers . . .'

Standards and Assumptions

Westway uses standard ***Car Wars*** combat techniques. However, some details of vehicle design and armament procedures are varied, in response to the unusual conditions found in Britain at this time. A few details of character generation are also varied for the British environment.

(1) **Money.** It is assumed that all beginning British characters have an initial sum of money; it is suggested that this sum be approximately £7,500 to £10,000.

Since autoduelling began in Britain, an unknown source has been sending sums of money to the victors of combats witnessed by at least one other autoduellist. This money, generally £500 in used notes, is believed to be distributed by representatives of the American Autoduel Association, and is doubled for Aces and tripled for characters who are double Aces or better. There is no sponsorship of characters, and no reduction in prices for those with high prestige.

(2) **Prestige.** There is no TV coverage of autoduellists, and prestige is only applicable to the character's status amongst his or her peers. Combat will affect prestige provided that it is witnessed by at least one autoduellist apart from the victor. Once sufficient prestige is established, characters will find it easier (though no cheaper) to obtain illegal weapons and vehicles:

Ace (or prestige 20+): add 1 to availability roll

Double Ace or better (or prestige 40+): add 2 to availability roll.

(3) **Equipment.** When applied to standard legal vehicle components (tyres, power plant, etc.), the pound has the same purchasing power as the dollar. However, the availability and price of all illegal equipment should be found on Tables One through Five.

Availability should be rolled with a single die, with modifiers for prestige as above. Availability and prices in brackets refer to home-made versions of normal weapons or ammunition, which will jam

or malfunction on a to-hit roll of 2.

Similar difficulties are experienced in obtaining hand weapons and ammunition, again listed by availability, price, and ammunition price on Table Two.

A few home-made weapons are also availabile, their sources being so widespread that there is no availability problem. All these weapons have a possibility of malfunctioning when used, rolled on two dice. See Table Three.

Stock vehicles are not legally available. A few models have reached the black market, all available on a roll of 6; see Table Four.

With the following exceptions, vehicle and weapon accessories have an equivalent price (in pounds) to their dollar price. Items which are not listed are either freely available or automatically become available if the weapon system concerned is available. All items are listed by cost and availability on Table Five.

(4) **Camouflage.** With the exception of turrets, the prices listed above for all vehicle-mounted weapons systems include some sort of camouflage (false spotlights, hatch covers, dummy exhausts, etc.) designed to avoid attracting police attention. Weapons controls are also disguised. Turrets must be covered in some way, the most common method being the use of a dummy roof rack and luggage which must be jettisoned before combat. The 'jettison' action counts as firing a weapon for driver or gunner. These dummy racks are secured by four electrically-operated bolts, and thrown back and clear by powerful springs. These units can be obtained from the suppliers of turrets, at a cost of £275, which includes appropriate switches. The unit will malfunction on a roll of 2 (two dice), requiring manual removal before turret weapons can be used. A more expensive unit (at £550) is a luggage rack which rotates on the turret and allows for unimpeded firing; it does not malfunction.

(5) **Visitors.** The referee may choose to allow established American player-characters to enter this campaign. American duellists visiting Britain with their vehicles are forced to disable all weapons systems. Lasers, computers, and all hand weapons will be impounded by customs. It costs 15-90% (one die x 15%) of the British cost of a weapon to illegally restore it to full working order, with parts available on the same roll as the complete weapon; legal restoration of weapons when a vehicle leaves the country costs d6 x 5% of the British cost. American visitors' prestige may be applied to the purchase of weapons in Britain, but prestige earned in Britain will only count 1/3 towards the character's status on returning to America. American drivers suffer a die modifier of -1 on their reflex roll in their first British combat only, due to the novel conditions encountered (driving on the left, etc.). One benefit to American visitors is the fact that the British government is maintaining an artifically-inflated exchange rate of £1.22 to the dollar.

Minimum transatlantic ferry fees are:

$700 for a motorcycle
$900 for a motorcycle with sidecar,
$1,100 for a car or small van,
$1,300 for larger vehicles.

The fare includes the vehicle, driver, and one passenger for a one-way trip. The round-trip price for each vehicle class is 1½ times the above price.

American visitors may also opt to have their weapons disguised in the manners described in the section above on camouflage. The cost is 1d6 x 10% of each weapon disguised; for the turret concealments described, convert pounds to dollars if the camouflage is done in the U.S. (Camouflage jobs done in the U.S. will not enable someone to sneak a fully-armed vehicle into England; it will merely alert the British authorities that something odd is going on unless the duellist tells them in advance that this has been done for security reasons stateside.)

The Westway

Referees may optionally reveal all data in this section to players. Additional notes are contained in the referee's section, but should only be revealed to players as the situations they cover arise.

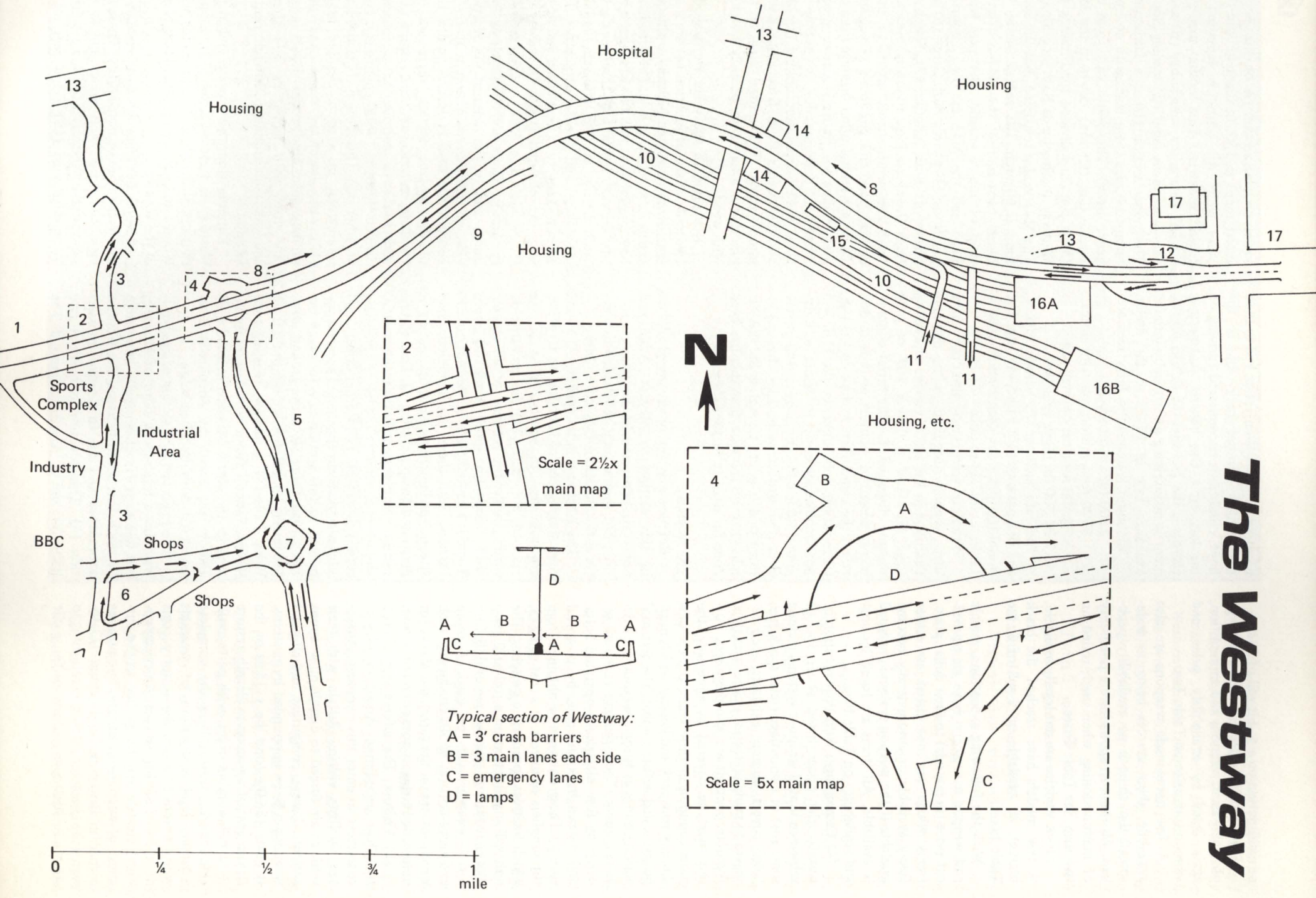
The Westway, in its entirety, is a long road linking central London to its Western suburbs. All sections West of the mapped are (page 22) are unrestricted roads usable by vehicles of all classes, with maximum speed limit 40 mph. There is a central crash barrier but no side barriers, and there are numerous side streets and junctions. A short section is illustrated (map notation 1). East of this section the elevated Westway begins (2), and certain vehicles (pedal cycles, some classes of car, etc.) all learner drivers, and all pedestrians are banned. The main approach to this section is a four-lane elevated road rising 30' above ground level. Secondary approaches are ramps up from Wood Lane (3), a narrow, twisting road linking various minor roads, and terminated to the North by Harrow Road (13) and to the South by Shepherds Bush Green (6), both described below.

The main elevated section of the Westway has a legal speed limit of 80 mph, but due to traffic it is usually impossible to reach this speed between the Western approaches and the first major intersection (4). This junction is built at two levels 30' and 60' above the ground. The lower circular section (A on the second insert map) is 120' in diameter and two lanes wide. All traffic is supposed to travel clockwise. This section incorporates an emergency vehicle bay (B) and a four-lane down ramp (C) leading South. The upper section (D) is a fairly steep humped bridge (four lanes with no emergency lanes). The South exit from this intersection (C) runs down to the M41 (5), a four-lane divided road linking the Westway to Shepherds Bush junction (7). The M41 is also restricted, but the speed limit is 60 mph. The central barrier between each half of the M41 is a raised strip of rough ground. Between Wood Lane and the M41 are two important junctions, Shepherds Bush Green (6) and Shepherds Bush junction (7). Shepherds Bush Green is a large triangular area with three-lane wide streets around a small central park and children's playground. There are several other turnings from this area leading to relatively narrow streets. Shepherds Bush junction is another circular road intersection, linking the M41 and Shepherds Bush Green and several minor roads. The central area of this junction is a flat lawn, liberally sprinkled with weeds.

Returning to the main Westway, the two miles East of junction (4) are a six-lane divided elevated highway with emergency lanes to either side. The road has 3' high central and crash barriers, high intensity mercury lights rising from the central crash barrier at 100' intervals, and 25' high signal and directional gantrys. This section is marked (8) at either end on the map. An elevated section of railway line (9) parallels this section for approximately ¾ mile. There are other railway lines under and to the sides of the Westway (10), so that there is a drop of nearly 70' beneath the road at several points. East of the six-lane section there are two two-lane entrance and exit ramps (11), and the road narrows to a four-lane divided highway with emergency lanes at either side. This section continues East, terminating in a short elevated bridge (12) over Edgeware Road, and then running into Morlyebone Road, a six-lane road with numerous side streets and junctions running through central London.

Running from this Eastern end of the Westway is Harrow Road (13), a busy, twisting road which has junctions with Wood Lane and several other roads North of the Westway.

Several buildings are close enough to the Westway to be noteworthy. There is a large bus depot built under and to the sides of the Westway (14) and a railway locomotive shed (15) a few feet to its



Typical section of Westway:
A = 3′ crash barriers
B = 3 main lanes each side
C = emergency lanes
D = lamps

The Westway

side. The railway terminates at Paddington Station freight terminal (16A) and passenger terminal (16B).

Another important building in this area is Paddington Green Police Station (17), rumoured to be the headquarters of a new elite anti-duellist unit.

Referee Information

(1) **Traffic density.** At any given time there will be a normal traffic density on all main roads of one vehicle per 50' of road surface. This traffic is approximately 60% private cars and bikes and 40% other traffic. This density doubles at peak hours.

(2) **Laws.** Ignoring police intervention in combat, the other main laws governing the Westway and M41 are their maximum speed limits and vehicle prohibitions already mentioned. Speed limits are nearly always ignored, and any vehicle exceeding them will only be intercepted on a roll of 2 (die modifier -1 per 20 mph over limit) or less, provided they are not breaking other laws. Vehicles are not supposed to stop at any point on these roads, and any halted vehicle may attract police interest – roll of 2 or less, die modifier -1 per minute stopped. Stopped vehicles interest the police since they are often a sign of impending combat. Police intervention is rolled with two dice. See below for police intervention in combat.

(3) **Weather.** Summer conditions are variable, with sporadic outbreaks of moderately heavy rain. The referee should check weather conditions for every half mile the combatants' vehicles travel. On a roll of 3 or less (two dice), it will start raining. Heavy rain acts as a +D1 hazard and as a -1 modifier on rolls to hit at all ranges. Once rain starts it will typically last 5-10 minutes (much longer than most normal combats) and roads will remain slippery (D1) for another 30 minutes.

(4) **Road Repairs.** The Westway was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and is usable because of frequent repair work. For each week of the campaign, the referee should roll two dice. On a roll of 3 or 4 one crew is at work, on a roll of 2 two crews are at work. Additional crews may be posted to repair damage caused by combat.

Approximate locations for routine maintenance crews should be rolled on the following table, with one die:

1-2 Elevated section of Westway, Eastbound
3-4 Elevated section of Westway, Westbound
5 Other main roads
6 Slip roads or intersections of main Westway (e.g., ramps)

The referee may use any preferred method to determine the exact location.

On the Westway itself or the M41, a repair crew will consist of several dump trucks and vans, at least two bulldozers, and 4d workers. A minimum of 100' of road will be affected, with the crew occupying one or two lanes. The work area will be bordered by wooden crash barriers, which can be broken by a blow or cumulative blows inflicting 8 points of damage to a single point. Barriers are not fireproofed and will eventually (several minutes) burn to the ground if ignited by flamethrowers or Molotov cocktails.

If emergency lanes are not closed, traffic may be diverted into them.

Repair crews on other main roads in the area will be much smaller and will block one-third to one-half the road for a maximum length of 50'.

Repair crews on slip roads and intersections will be of medium size, consisting of one heavy vehicle, a truck, and 2d workers. However, such work may mean that the entire section is closed off (e.g., a repair crew on down ramp 13 would probably mean that it was closed entirely), with wooden crash barriers and warning signs across each end of the section.



(5) **The Police.** Despite the recent upsurge of violence, the police are still relatively inexperienced in the control of autoduellists. They have purchased the following vehicles and weapons: two Piranhas (stock models), one Security Six (stock), two Mini-Shermans (one stock, one modified with R.L.), and two Shogun 100s (stock).

All of these vehicles are in civilian colours and camouflaged to hide their weapons. The Security Six has been modified to look like a mobile ice-cream trader, with the turret disguised as a giant ice-cream cone. This camouflage need not be jettisoned before combat. The van also has passenger accomodation for four armoured police, all armed with submachine guns and grenades. All other drivers and crew are armed with heavy pistols and are armoured.

There are two other police vehicles in the area, unmodified double-decker buses used as mobile road blocks. They are not armed or armoured, move at a maximum 45 mph, accelerate at 5, and can block three lanes of road. Each bus carries six officers armed with rifles, all unarmoured.

All police vehicles are linked to a central control room in Paddington Green police station by scrambled radio.

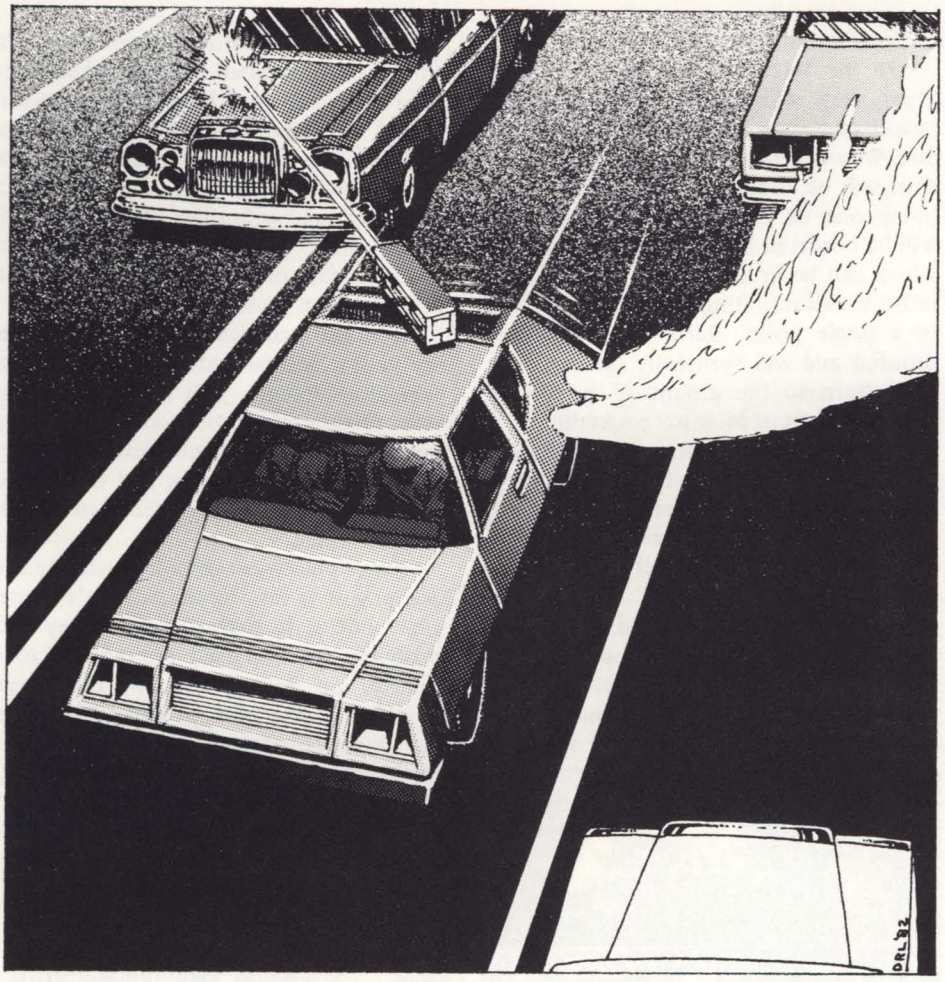
If police vehicles are damaged or destroyed, it will take at least a week to obtain replacements. This is partly because of normal bureaucratic red tape and partly because the government does not entirely trust the police, believing that they might form the nucleus of an attempted coup if heavily armed.

Exact placement of police vehicles and equipment is left to the referee's discretion, but it is suggested that they will probably be dispersed around the road system on mobile patrol. The buses would normally be kept parked at strategic points (one near the East end of the Westway, the other to the West) in side streets with access to the main system.

One additional vehicle may be added at the referee's discretion: a spotting helicopter linked to the scrambled radio system. This craft would not be able to land on any of the main roads in the area because street lamps would obstruct it, but it could land on the central area of Shepherds Bush junction, on the railway lines South of the Westway, or on the roof of the bus garage (see below). Such a helicopter would be based at Paddington Green Police Station, and could carry three men in addition to the pilot. The government would not let the police arm a helicopter, but its passengers might well be armed.

(6) **Westway.** Referee's information. Unless otherwise stated below, all data previously presented is accurate. However, the following additional notes may be helpful.

Wood Lane (3) has numerous curved sections and crosses several railway and



canal bridges. Visibility is thus usually limited to a maximum of 100'. Despite these conditions, it is usually possible to maintain speeds of 40-60 mph.

The circular junction (4) is two lanes wide. Cars entering it cannot see the opposite side, since there is a large directional sign fixed to the inner crash barrier facing each approach. The emergency vehicle bay (B) is not used by the police, since its rear wall has been destroyed and the entire bay greatly weakened. It is thus possible that a car could drive directly into a 30' drop. It is also possible that the entire bay could collapse under the weight of a heavy vehicle. Roll three dice, subtracting 1 for each 1,000 lbs of vehicle weight. On a roll of 2 or less the bay will collapse. A section of the inner crash barrier opposite the up ramp from the M41 has also been destroyed, and is replaced by a sheet of corrugated iron that can only withstand five points of impact damage. A group of gypsies happen to operate a scrapyard under this junction and will strip any vehicle falling through these gaps. These breaches have not yet been repaired because of the difficulty of closing this important junction for a suitable period.

The central section of the M41 (5) is at least 3' higher than the Northbound road surface, but at the same height as the Southbound lane. The central area has a brick facing on the Northbound side and a crash barrier on the Southbound side. The area is very rough ground, with bushes concealing several concrete posts and large rocks.

The elevated railway line (9) is an electrified local line (London Transport Metropolitan Line) running parallel and 5' below the Westway. Trains use this line every ten minutes.

The ramps (11) crossing the railway line near Paddington Station are both very steep two-lane constructions. Both involve 90-degree turns, and maximum speed limit is 30 mph. The layout of secondary roads South of these ramps means that it takes a minimum of two minutes to travel from one to the other – the shortest route involves a hairpin bend against oncoming traffic and four other turns. Both have five-ton weight limits and might collapse under heavier vehicles – roll three dice, subtracting 1 for every ton over the limit. On a roll of 1 the ramp will collapse.

There is no central crash barrier on the short bridge over Edgeware Road (12) although there is a 6" high central strip.

Harrow Road (13) is often obstructed, and vehicles using it are subject to numerous delays. The Westway was built primarily to bypass this road.

The bus garage (14) uses the Westway as its main roof, although it extends to either side. The administrative section to the North rises 20' above the Westway, and has a flat roof reinforced for use as an emergency helipad. There are no windows in the building wall facing the Westway. The Southern part of the garage has a glass roof 5' below the Westway surface. This roof will not support any form of vehicle, but has a catwalk that will support pedestrians.

The locomotive shed (15) also has a glass roof with catwalk, and is the same height.

Paddington Green Police Station (17) is a 20-storey building incorporating garages, cells (on the 4th and 5th floors), administrative offices, police housing, and the main anti-duellist control room (18th floor). The building was built in the 1970s, at the height of an IRA bombing campaign, and the walls of the lowest five floors are made of extremely thick ferro-concrete. The building's roof has a helipad.

Throughout the elevated Westway system and the M41, central crash barriers can withstand single blows of eight points or less and cumulative blows to a total of 12 DP. Side barriers are slightly weaker, withstanding six points in single blows and ten points in cumulative blows.

The lamps used on all sections of the M41 and the Westway can withstand five points of damage in single impacts or eight points in cumulative impacts, and will block up to four lanes if they fall. Fallen lampposts are a +D3 hazard, but are not impassable.

At several points, the road surfaces of all elevated sections are crossed by expansion plates, 3' wide metal sheets running the width of the section. Any manoeuvre carried out on these plates is at +D1 hazard for cars and vans, +D2 hazard for bikes. The plates are found one road section before each junction and at 1000' intervals elsewhere.

The signal gantrys found at approaches to intersections are steel structures rising 25' above the road surface, supported on heavy girders running through the crash barriers into the main concrete structure of the road. Each gantry support can take up to 15 points of damage (singly or in cumulative blows), but if one support is destroyed, the entire gantry will collapse, blocking all lanes. The gantrys are fitted with electrical directional and warning signals, ladders on each support, and servicing catwalks. The central spans will collapse if they receive ten or more DP.

Running the Campaign

Depending on the number of players available, the campaign can either be run as a simple duellist situation, with all

NPCs (police, innocent bystanders, etc.) played by the referee, or as a two-sided campaign with some players autoduellists and others police.

If the first of these options is chosen, the referee should start with minimal police intervention, to let the players get used to the unusual play conditions, then escalate police intervention in subsequent clashes. No victory conditions are specified, and any car leaving the map is assumed to have evaded pursuit – it will not be chased by police. It must be emphasised that characters gain no extra prestige by killing police in this situation, since police are all assumed to be relatively inexperienced drivers.

If police player-characters are used, they have no difficulty in obtaining weapons (apart from red tape) and will gain prestige and skills from combat as outlined previously. However, police player-characters will gain double prestige if they succeed in arresting autoduellists without killing them. If this option is used, autoduellists leaving the map evade pursuit provided they are at least 150' ahead of the nearest police vehicle and travelling at the same speed or faster, and vice versus. Combat would otherwise continue until these conditions are met.

It is possible to develop several other themes from this campaign with the aid of the ***Car Wars*** role-playing scenario ***Sunday Drivers*** (*The Space Gamer* 50 and separate publication).

(1) *Assault on Paddington Green.* If sufficient numbers of autoduellists are arrested or killed, the survivors might mount a raid on the headquarters of the anti-duellist squad, at Paddington Green Police Station. The referee will need to design a suitable building, which must include all the facilities described above. Apart from anti-duellist squad members, any police encountered will only be armed on a single die roll of 1 initially, but there is a die modifier of -1 on this roll for each five minutes the autoduellists are in the building.

(2) *Vigilantes.* Local citizens may decide that they do not like autoduellists *or* the police, and decide to end both problems by force. They will be armed with conventional and improvised hand weapons only, but may improvise with the aid of local resources such as bulldozers, drums of tar, and other repair crew equipment.

(3) *Gypsy Raid.* If insufficient wrecks occur, the gypsy scrap merchants may decide to alter the odds by arranging a few accidents. Methods could include traps, hijacking, or conventional autoduelling techniques. If the latter are used, the gypsies will either utilise two or three stock or modified vehicles of conventional design, or one very unorthodox vehicle (e.g., a heavily armed truck). Their prime aim will always be to loot their victims, and they will not use flamethrowers or rockets.

(4) *Civil War.* The government have been slow to arm the police since they fear a heavily-armed force might stage a coup. The referee may decide that these fears are justified and allow the police and autoduellists to ally against the government. This is best played as a continuing campaign; referees will need a full map of London and a lot of counters, sufficient to represent a full-scale civil war. Primary targets of a coup would be the Houses of Parliament, Downing Street, and the BBC Television Centre off Wood Lane. The exact details are left to the referee's imagination.

(5) *Arena.* If there's no referee, the Westway area can still be used as an arena for conventional combats (played under normal ***Car Wars*** rules) – a deserted road system in the heart of a devastated city. If this method is chosen, each player should add a few areas of heavily damaged road (e.g., collapsed ramp, holes in crash barriers, etc.), and all NPC vehicles and repair crews are omitted.

(6) *Hired Guns.* The London police, having lost too many officers operating against the autoduellists, could hire American autoduellists to come and do the dirty work for them. Imported duellists would receive free passage for them and their vehicles, free camouflage treatments, temporary rank with the police, free repairs and replacements for spent ammo, and a minimum salary of £500 a week. The referee would have to put together the best means of generating random encounters with specific crusades against the autoduellists and gypsies.

Afterword

Residents of London will know that my description of the Westway is more or less accurate, although I have simplified a few details to improve playability. In particular, Wood Lane and the M41 are somewhat longer than indicated, parts of Harrow Road run under the Westway itself, and several minor roads have been omitted. All buildings shown exist in 1982 – I have assumed that the crises described will prevent any major changes in the future – and there really is a colony of gypsies living under the Westway (despite an incredibly high lead level), although there has never been any suggestion that they are engaged in the activities described above.

All governments and police forces mentioned above are purely imaginary.

The Gypsy Vehicle

Here are basic notes on the gypsy vehicle, enough to improvise around it if it's encountered on the road. This vehicle was constructed entirely from scrap parts; an accurate price is not readily available.

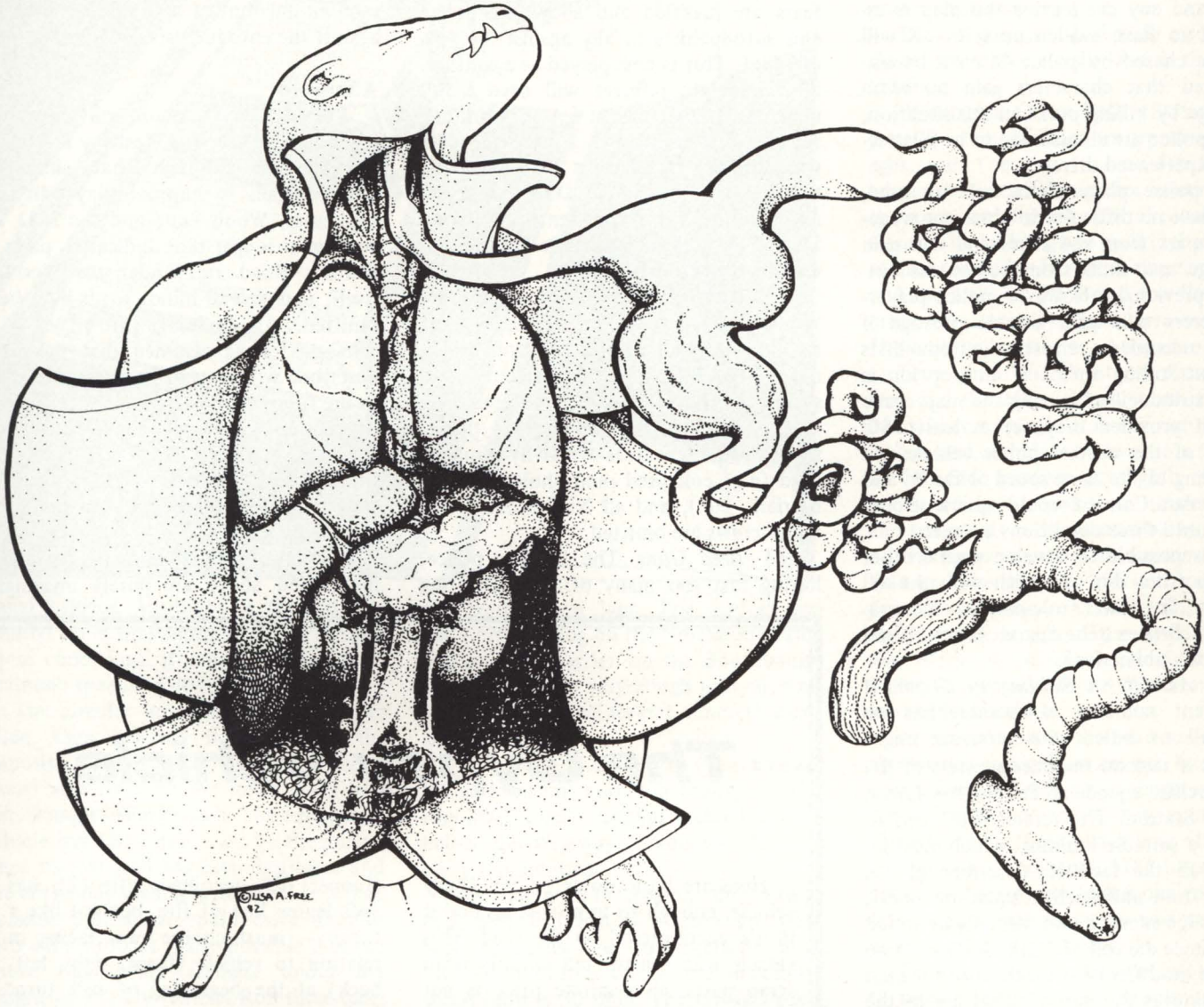
Body size: Maintenance truck chassis, 30-space cab plus 45-space cargo capacity.

Normal equipment: 4x machine guns, forward in two linked pairs, each gun with an extra magazine; 2x machine guns in cab turret; 2x super power plant; 12x puncture-resistant tyres, 90 pts armour on cab.

Unusual equipment: *Crane jib,* a utility maintenance cupola with crane attachment, capable of rising 25' over road surface (observe height-targeting rules from ***Sunday Drivers***); has 5-space capacity, in this case loaded with Gunner (2), recoilless rifle (2), has 360-degree line of fire, but not like a turret – must choose new facing in relation to vehicle (front, right, left, back) at the beginning of each turn, and may not rotate more than 90^{O} in a turn. *Rear ramp:* As per ***Sunday Drivers***; however, in addition, a gunner may release eight drums of oil (one at a time or collectively) rolling down the rear ramp. These drums, when hit, act as D3 hazards. *Ramming bumper:* extra 40 points of front armour which only intercepts damage to the vheicle's front on a roll of 1 on 1d6; used primarily for crashing into things. Full set of car stripping gear; camouflage tarpaulin (dropped for combat).

Other pertinents: Acceleration: 5 mph. Weight: 16,000 lbs. Additional cargo capacity: 4,000 lbs. HC: 0.

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Foreign Report:

Gaming Up Over — The Hobby in Australia

by A. D. Young

In response to popular request, I hereby tender a report on the SF/F gaming scene in our fair land. Actually, it's more a case of the fantasy gaming scene, since SF gaming is by no means as widespread; PBM, which is mostly SF, is only slowly becoming recognised.

The difficulty Australian gamers face is that the wide brown land is just that: wide, with a population 1/14 that of the continental U.S.A. spread over an area of the same size. In the U.S., there seems to be a new gaming magazine appearing each week; you have a tremendous variety of specialist publications to choose from. In Australia, despite many previous attempts, there has only been one successful adventure gaming magazine (*Breakout,* Conflict Simulations of Australia) which began publication in 1981. Needless to say, it must cover the whole gaming field to survive, but with well over 2,000 readers after only five issues, it seems to be thriving.

All of this may lead you to believe that the gaming scene is rather subdued, but that is not the case. I began playing original ***D&D*** in '74, and it was not long after that when the first university and college ***D&D*** societies were formed. There are scores of gaming clubs across the country, many devoted to FRP, and all colleges would have such a club these days. Above, I laid emphasis on *Breakout* because it is not easy to appreciate just how difficult it was to organise clubs, meets, and conventions before the appearance of that publication. There was no medium in which to advertise widely.

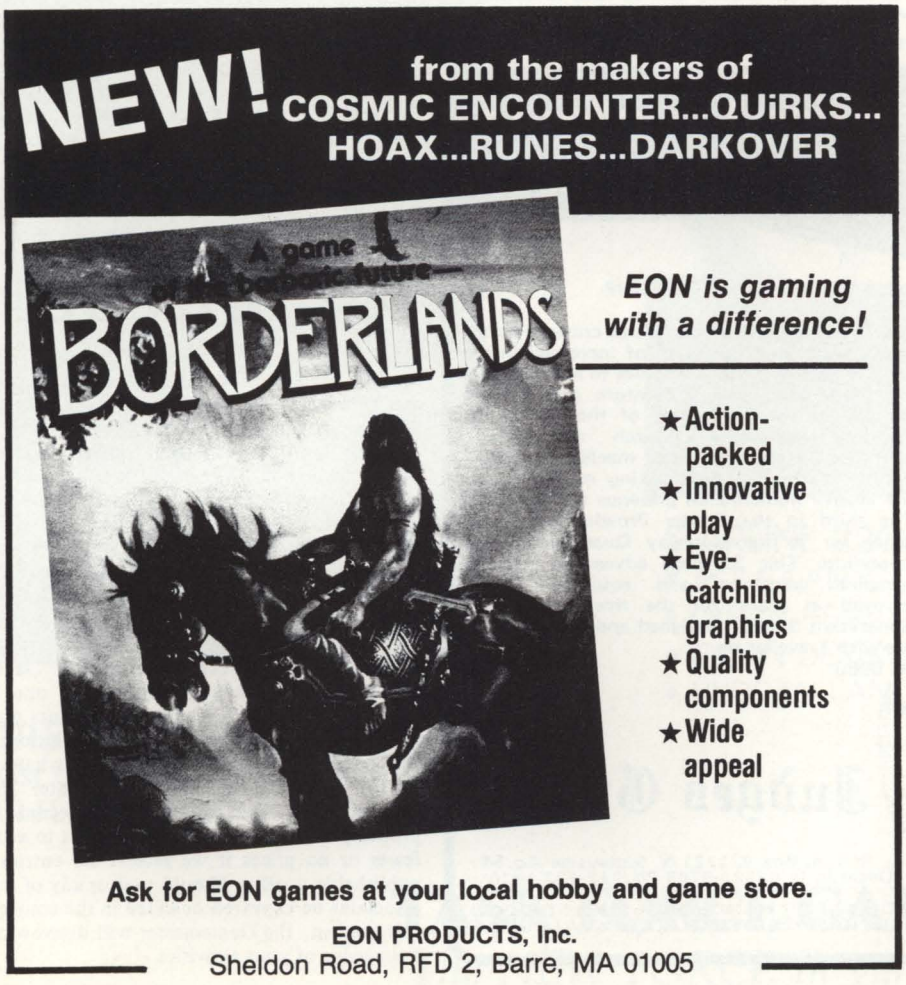
It is, therefore, not surprising to see the emergence of a number of successful and growing annual conventions in recent years. The largest and best-organised of these is PhantasmaCon, which is held in Melbourne during August each year. There are a number of tournaments, including one for ***D&D*** with A$1,000 in prizes. Other, smaller, events are for boardgames such as ***G.E.V., StarForce, The Creature That Ate Sheboygan, Time Tripper, Freedom in the Galaxy, Kung Fu 2100,*** and ***Barbarian Kings.*** Miniatures and computer competitions are also available.

Mention gaming to the general populace here and they think that you are into gambling. However, for the growing number who understand the hobby, the full range of new overseas releases is available almost as soon as they are published. After ***D&D***, the next most popular role-playing system is T&T, mostly because of its early promotion here. However, it is not difficult to find ***RuneQuest*** campaigns, TFT, or any of the other FRP systems if you are interested. As far as I am aware, there are no indigenous SF/F games publishers, but Jedko Games has designed several historical games such as ***The Russian Campaign,*** which have been released in the U.S.A.

The SF role-players are chiefly concerned with ***Traveller,*** and there are several campaigns on most campuses, with the odd tournament here and there. Apart from in-club activities, the remainder of the SF gaming takes place amongst a small but growing and highly-active group of PBM gamers. There are two struggling PBM companies (Relmorian and CM Games) offering a variety of SF/F-type games, which are mostly original, with a few on franchise. Most PBM gaming is, however, conducted with overseas companies.

In some respects, we are ahead of many countries in that there are organisations such as ASPA (Australian ***StarWeb*** Players Association), which is dedicated to promoting the game and improving the level of skill amongst local players. Its other major function is to choose and support a team for the international ***StarWeb*** competitions which are currently being organised.

Adventure gaming has really come into its own in Australia during the last few years. With a viable magazine to provide a focus for communication, it seems set to continue or even surpass its current 40% annual growth rate (I kid you not). Fantasy is well-entrenched, with SF and PBM gaming in particular becoming progressively more popular. There is even talk of another magazine similar to TSG, but I suspect that we are not quite ready for that as yet.



Trivial Spell Contest Results

Our contest from issue 52 was one of our more unusual ones. As an exercise in creativity, our readers were asked to make up a spell for an FRPG; it was to be a trivial spell, one with a very limited range of applications. The more trivial the spell, and the more valuable within its range of applications, the better.

Winner, for general obnoxiousness, is Ralph Sizer (who seems to be all over this issue), who gives us:

Summon Brass Dragon (IQ 12). If you think summoning a dragon can't possibly be trivial, please reread the ***D&D Monster Manual*** description of the Brass Dragon. "Brass Dragons are quite forward and officious, and they love to converse." That's putting it very politely. *Draco Impudentus Gallus* will bore your ears off in world-record time. If Beethoven had had a brass dragon for a neighbor, he'd have *wanted* to go deaf.

It costs 4 ST to summon a brass dragon, but once it arrives, there is *no* ST cost to keep it. In fact, it's hard to get rid of it. A brass dragon with an audience will promptly start talking, and will ramble on for d6 half-hours. Anyone trying to leave or otherwise ignore it will be pounced upon and *made* to listen (if you want to fight it, see the ***Monster Manual*** for the relevant details). Only after that time will it vanish (but if the audience is even half-appreciative it will do an encore – roll another d6).

This means that summoning a brass dragon is an ideal solution when you desperately need a rest in the middle of a fight. If your foes try to keep fighting, they'll have to fight it, too. And the dragon doesn't object to quiet activities like physickering, provided physicker and patient pay it at least nominal attention (this means the physicker needs ten minutes instead of five per patient). Wizards can rest if they keep an interested expression on their faces. Of course, your foes will be resting, too.

In second place, winning a $20 goods certificate, is the recurrent Allen Varney, with:

Turn Blue (S). This IQ-8 spell turns the wizard's flesh and hair a vivid shade of blue. It will not work on anyone but the spellcaster himself. It can be cast very quietly and inconspicuously; in fact, the wizard need only make a few tiny gestures while holding his breath. Cost: 1 ST, plus 1 per turn to maintain.

The *Turn Blue* spell can be very useful in dangerous situations, if the wizard's comrades are well-rehearsed. For instance, say the party is surrounded by brigands. The others stall for a turn while the wizard unobtrusively gestures. Then, when he changes color, they all scream in terror, shouting "Aieee! The Azurian Plague! Get away!" *Guaranteed* to clear the immediate vicinity, regardless of language or species barriers.

The highest runner-up (who wins no prizes but earns the admiration or mockery of his peers) is Erol Bayburt's

Ingold's Instant Insanity. When cast, this spell makes the target go briefly but totally insane. The target may not move under his or her own power, nor take any actions other than gibbering, laughing maniacally, chanting nonsense rhymes, and the like. This lasts ten combat turns. At the end of this time, the target will recover completely and be back to normal. The target will not be able to remember anything that happened while he or she was under the spell.

Why this spell is trivial: It cannot be cast on anyone but the caster. The caster is always the target.

Why this spell is useful: If one is insane, one cannot be driven insane.

In terms of ***RuneQuest*** and its derivatives, the spell is a one-point battle-magic, passive, temporal, and unfocused.

In ***Call of Cthulhu***, it can be very useful, since one cannot lose sanity points while under its influence. However, one may be eaten while under the spell, and never notice.

In terms of ***D&D*** and its derivatives, the spell is a first-level spell usable by any class of spellcaster. In ***AD&D***, the spell protects against psionics as well as insanity.

In terms of TFT: Wizard, the spell is IQ 8, ST cost 2.

Honorable mentions (er . . . well, for this contest, *mentions*) include:

Summon Mime (C). IQ 10, 2 ST to cast, 1 ST per turn to maintain. Brings a mime (ususally ST 8, DX 12, IQ 12; no other applicable talents) to serve the wizard. If DX roll to cast is 4, spell summons Shields or Yarnell; on a 3, Marcel Marceau. This spell would be most commonly used by entertainer wizards, but could be useful in an attempt to communicate with a character when lacking a common language.

Ben V. Kloepper

Summon Barmaid. This is a limited charm spell which affects the nearest serving wench/waitress/barmaid with an almost uncontrollable urge to wait on you. She will not be conscious of the compulsion, and will believe it to be her own idea.

The same spell works on valets, butlers, cabbies, and other "service"-type workers. The caster must have in his mind a clear picture of the *type* of servant desired. The nearest such will show up within moments.

Kenneth Mitchell

Contest

Well, you've now had some time to get used to our contests. Two and a half years, as a matter of fact. So, now it's your turn. What do you want to see in our contests?

This month's challenge: Create a contest. Believe it or not. The best of the ideas sent to us will indeed be used as contests over the next several months. (In other words, we've run out of ideas, and it's not a topic we get much feedback on. Do you want to see more RPG-oriented contests? Boardgame-oriented? Crosswords? Cryptograms? Field stratagems?)

The first-place winner of the contests contest will win a $50 certificate from SJ Games; the second-place winner will receive one for $20. These may be used for any product made by SJ Games, including games, subscriptions to TSG and F&M, bumper stickers, whatever. Entries must be postmarked no later than December 15, 1982. All entries will become the property of TSG; we reserve the right to award fewer or no prizes if we receive no entries of publishable quality. Should you or any of your associates be captured or killed in the course of this contest, the Gamemaster will disavow any knowledge of your activities.

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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.

We will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which reviews have been assigned or received include ***Alma Mater, Berserker, By the Sword!,*** revised ***Champions, Defender, Dragon Rage, Earthwood, Encounters, Frogger, Goblin, Man, Myth & Magic, Merc, Rescue on Galatea, Shootout at the Saloon, Star Frontiers, Starleader: Assault, TFT Character Record Sheets, The Traveller Book,*** and revised ***Villains & Vigilantes.***

Games and game items for which we are currently seeking reviews include ***Behind Enemy Lines, Daredevils, Galaxy, Gangster, Helltank Destroyer, Kamakura, Runes, Solo-Quest II, Star Smuggler, Trollpack, Voyager I,*** and ***Warrior.***

BIFROST (Skytrex Ltd.); c. £12. Multiple designers. Four booklets, typeset, mimeo, and offset, 8" by 10" to 11¾", c. 285 pages. Fantasy role-playing game. Published 1977-1982.

BIFROST is the older of the two FRP games indigenous to the British Isles. The variety of formats for each volume and lengthy publishing period have contributed to the obscurity of the game, despite many good qualities and original rule-systems.

In outline, BIFROST is similar to other FRPGs, with character generation of warriors and wizards (20 abilities with 1D10 each, and throw in the towel if you roll low), combat, magic, monsters, etc. The rules suffer from lack of continuity, with promised parts (such as miniatures battle rules) yet to appear, and lack of clarity again attributable to the publishing problems. (None of the authors of the first two volumes is mentioned in the credits for the fourth!) There is much that is unique – a fairly simple but still fairly realistic combat system (there are no hit points or levels as such, and there are wounds to specific locations), complex rules for mounted and aerial combat (including two pages about diseases of horses!), an extensive demonology, a fine essay on the nature of the planes and dimensions and travel between them, and a detailed system for prayer and divine intervention. The magic system, devoid of saving throws or "klutz" rolls, is also quite original though related to spell points.

Few readers of BIFROST will decide to convert to it from their current FRPG, nor is it for novices. But there are many aspects which can be adapted to cover holes in other FRPGs. It must be virtually impossible to buy BIFROST in the USA, nor can I recommend mail order to Britain. But if you do run across it in a shop, take a look.

– Lewis Pulsipher

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ENCOUNTERS (Mayfair Games); $9.00. No designer listed. One 8½" x 11" 4-page rulebook, one 56-card Monster and Magic Deck, one 28-card Hero deck, two dice, boxed. For two to four players; playing time approximately 1-2 hours. Published 1982.

Mayfair Games continues its tradition of simple, easy-to-play games with ENCOUNTERS, a fantasy card game of heroes and monsters. As in previous Mayfair games, the rules are sparse and easy to understand; after a few minutes of reading time, you ought to be able to play the game. The cards in the two decks represent Heroes (paladins, knights, men-at-arms, elves, dwarves, wizards, and clerics), or Monsters (dragons, vampires, trolls, rocs, even Death itself) and Magic (weapons, spell scrolls, etc.). Players are initially dealt seven cards from the Hero deck, which they place in two lines of defense, and seven cards from the Monster and Magic deck, which they hold. Magic items may be given to their Heroes to help defend themselves (or treasure cards hoarded) and Monsters may be played against the other players' Heroes. The object is simple: You try to bump off all your opponents' Heroes with your Monsters while protecting your own with their abilities and magic items. When you kill an opponent's Hero, you get any magic item or treasure he has; ditto any hoarded treasure if you eliminate all his Heroes. Play continues for three hands (a hand lasting until only one player has any Heroes left); the winner is the player with the highest value of treasure points at the end of the three hands. A hand may last anywhere from a few minutes to more than a half hour, depending on how many people are playing and what the initial deal of Heroes is.

For a simple card game, ENCOUNTERS has a lot of variety. Games can be radically different in flavor, just depending on what sort of Heroes, Monsters, and Magic Items are dealt or drawn. Magic scrolls vary from the near-useless lightning (have to roll 1 or 2 for it to work) to the very handy Air Elemental, which flies, and may join the players' ranks as a Hero if it survives its first battle. Various Monsters have special abilities, such as the dragon's flame breath, the demon's immunity to magic, and the undead monsters' ability to win a duel on a tie. Heroes have various abilities, too – the elves' bow attacks, clerics' ability to dispell undead, etc.

ENCOUNTERS, unfortunately, suffers from a few ambiguities that rules lawyers will be able to twist beyond the designers' intentions. It's never stated whether dragon breath can reach the second rank or is confined to the first, or if a wizard using an Air Elemental can be automatically killed by an attack by Death without any die roll. These and other such gray areas can easily be covered by an agreement between players before play, but they could cause some confusion during play. The only other possible flaw is that a poor deal of Heroes in any hand almost assures that player's loss in that hand, if not the entire game.

Altogether, though, ENCOUNTERS is a very playable little game. If you like card games at all and fantasy games in general and don't think $9.00 too steep for one, you'll probably find ENCOUNTERS an enjoyable investment.

– William A. Barton

PHASE VII (Cheshire Games); $7.95. Designed by Dennis Drew II. 16 page rulebook, six page solo adventure, map, cardboard die, three 6-sided dice, and iron-on T-shirt transfer in a plastic pouch. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

Reminiscent of TSR's ***Metamorphosis Alpha,*** PHASE VII is a science fiction and fantasy role-playing game set on a damaged space station. On board, characters bop around amassing loot and slaying monsters in the various sections of the ship. The goal of any character is, of course, to reach Phase VII, at which point the character has become so powerful that further improvement is impossible.

In a capsule review, this paragraph is used to describe a product's strengths. PHASE VII has two. First, the nifty plastic cover the game comes in can be used to hold a character sheet or other important document during play, protecting the page from spilled soda. Second, the game looks every bit as bad as it is, so few gamers will be tempted to buy it because of classy packaging. Thus end PHASE VII's strengths.

Now for its weaknesses. Imagine a game that is less coherent and less playable than the very first edition of ***D&D***. PHASE VII's rules include liberal doses of ambiguity, disorganization, omission, and faulty logic. For some reason, the standard unit of currency on board the space station is the gold piece. Aside from the obvious occurrence of gold as treasure, characters receive gold

for killing monsters, being harmed by their own defects, and catching the Computer (referee) in an error. No source for these gold pieces is given; they just appear. Similarly, when a player character dies, he and all his equipment suddenly disappear. It is recommended in the rules that the computer have a character, so that when another player takes over as computer, he can begin play. This character, although not in play, can gain gold pieces and experience points while its player acts as computer. Experience points, incidentally, are determined by multiplying gold pieces earned during an adventure by hours of playing time. Thus begin the weaknesses . . . .

PHASE VII is one of the weakest efforts on the role-playing market today. From a complete lack of playtesting to shoddy production, the game and its $8.00 pricetag can only be considered a very bad joke.

– J. David George

SUPPLEMENTS

ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS (FASA); $12.50. Designed by Jordan Weisman, L. Ross Babcock III, and J. Andrew Keith; artwork by William J. Keith, Jr. Three double-sided 21½" x 33" deck plan sheets, two 16-page booklets, 112 die-cut counters, boxed. Published 1982.

Of the six major races of the ***Traveller*** universe, undoubtedly one of the more interesting is the leonine Aslan. While some information on the Aslan has appeared in the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society,* specific data has been sparse. Now, with their second set of boxed ship plans, FASA has enlarged on the pool of information available to Aslan aficionados. ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS includes complete deck plans and descriptions of two 3,000-ton vessels in use by Aslan mercenary companies in the Reaver's Deep sector between the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate. These are the *Warlord* class battle leader, employed as a headquarters vessel to coordinate the activities of ground forces and ships of a small squadron, and the *Hero* class Intruder Transport, designed to transport and support a full mercenary company on ground actions. Deck plans are also provided for an Aslan 20-ton launch and the *Thunderer* indirect fire support and *Lightning* direct fire support vehicles carried by the intruder transport, along with ***Striker*** stats for the latter two. Plans are nicely detailed in the FASA manner, showing such areas as sick bay, messes, and the typically Aslan "Shrine of Heroes." Book 1 gives ***High Guard*** stats and deck-by-deck descriptions of the two ships (plus the battle leader's recon and medivac pinnaces), and two scenarios, "Kaiheiar Down" and "Rescue Mission," both set on the planet Ildrissar. Book 2, subtitled "The Aslan at War," outlines the Aslan philosophy of warfare and defines the makeup and organization of a typical Aslan mercenary company, the Teahleikhoi regiment. The counters depict quite recognizable Aslan soldiers and crew members.

ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS is quite well conceived and executed. The new information on the Aslan is almost worth the price of the package alone, even discounting the excellent plans – the first views ever of any Aslan vessels. And the two scenarios, designed to be played with ***Azhanti High Lightning*** rules (though ***Snapshot*** or ***Striker*** could also be used), are a bonus for players of that game as well.

Other than an excess of typos and the too-easily-crushable box (problems it shares with ***Merchant Class Ships***) I find little to complain about with the set.

I recommend ASLAN MERCENARY SHIPS even more than its companion set, especially for those ***Traveller*** players and refs who hunger for more info on the Aslan corner of the universe.

– William A. Barton

MIDDLE EARTH (Iron Crown Enterprises); $9.00. Peter C. Fenlon and Terry K. Amthor. One 8½" x 11" 16-page guidebook, 24" x 36" full-color map. Published 1982.

The works of J.R.R. Tolkien can rightfully be said to be one of the prime foundation blocks of the entire fantasy role-playing field. Tolkien's influence can be seen in almost every FRPG currently on the market. Until now, however, no company has ever been able to publish any official material based on Tolkien's epic fantasies – and several who tried to do so unofficially have heard from Tolkien Enterprises' lawyers. Yet, somehow, little Iron Crown Enterprises has managed the coup of becoming the authorized publishers of gaming aids based on *Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit,* etc. The first release in ICE's series of play aids for adventuring in Middle Earth is, appropriately enough, MIDDLE EARTH (*"A Campaign and Adventure Guidebook for . . . Including the Wild Lands – East, South & North"* to quote the whole title). The first offering is a general look at Middle Earth. The guidebook provides an overview of the geography, topography, history, languages, cultures, and characteristics of Middle Earth and its inhabitants, along with essays on the use of power (i.e. magic) in Middle Earth and on integrating Middle Earth into a fantasy role-playing campaign using any FRP system desired (though one surmises that ICE would prefer the use of their own Rolemaster series, whether they say so or not). The map included with the guidebook features the entire continent of Middle Earth, including those areas to the South and East never shown in the books. The map is beautifully painted, the colors depicting the various terrain types, and, as the book suggests, is suitable to be hung as a poster.

In fact, the Middle Earth map is probably the nicest feature of the package. Tolkien fans who don't even care to use the set as a RPG aid may want to pick up the set for this alone (provided the $9.00 price isn't sufficient deterrent). The guidebook, while brief in its coverage of various aspects of Tolkien's land, is fairly comprehensive in its role as a guide to summarize and recall to memory important features of Middle Earth.

The problem, of course, is that such a guide *must* be limited in what it covers. So unless you've read LOTR or the other books recently, you'll probably still need to reread them at least in part to mount an effective Middle Earth campaign even with this aid. And of course, except for the map and the info on the wild lands of Middle Earth, any of the reference works currently available on Middle Earth could provide the same background as this aid if the works of Tolkien is where you wish to set your FRP campaign. It would be different if the section on integrating ME into a FRPG campaign were all that useful; the best advice in it is to upgrade dragons and balrogs, as most systems make them too weak for portraying their ME counterparts. Another complaint is the lack of cities, citadels, etc. on the large map and the dullness of the interior maps that contain these details.

Overall, the real usefulness of MIDDLE EARTH as a campaign aid will have to wait for subsequent modules in the series to be proven.

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Unless you're an absolute Tolkien fanatic and don't mind paying $9 for a playaid with about $6 worth of material tops (and, yes, I understand the high price is probably due to the licensing of the Tolkien name), you may want to hold off purchasing this one until others in the series are available for evaluation.

– William A. Barton

COMPUTER GAMES

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR (TSR); $25.00. Designed by Bruce Nesmith with Keith Enge. 48K disk for Apple II or Apple II+ with DOS 3.3. One player; playing time 30 to 90 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1982.

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR is a hi-res, 3-D maze game. The object is to find the princess Ariadne and lead her to the maze entrance. In the process, you must try to defeat minor monsters (with your bare hands) in order to get their weapons. This is in preparation for the nearly inevitable meeting with the minotaur. The program allows for the options of secret doors and halls of mirrors to make the game more difficult. A hall of mirrors, upon being entered, throws the character out in a random direction, thus confusing the player's mapping attempts.

This game is similar to other 3-D maze programs, but there are some differences which I feel improve the basic idea. The creatures inhabiting the maze, for instance, have both a front and a back side. They may be found facing the other direction, thus giving you a free attack or the chance to run away unnoticed. Also, when you are attacked, the direction from which the attack came is indicated so that you don't have to waste time and hit points trying to locate the source (*a la Akalabeth*).

My main complaint about this game is its lack of excitement. After several games, you know which creature (of which there are very few) may be killed with which weapon. The only interesting factor becomes attempting to keep accurate maps of the three ten-by-ten levels. The game also regresses to silliness on occasion. The minotaur's wife, for example, wears a dress and wields a rolling pin. The rolling pin, by the way, is one of the better weapons in the game! The other major problem is the program's execution time. It is slow. Not painfully so, but very noticeable. One minor thing: I wish that the dead bodies would stay put after being searched, rather than just disappearing. This would simplify mapping without taking the challenge out of it.

Overall, this is a good game. The maze is different every time, though I can find no real difference between a complexity 1 and a complexity 100 game (they give you a choice at the beginning of each game). If the mental challenge of finding the secret doors and mapping out the labyrinth despite the halls of mirrors appeals to you, then I recommend this game.

– Chris Smith

ARCADE GAMES

DEFENDER (Atari); $29.95. Cartridge for the VCS, with instruction and comic book. One or two players (taking turns); playing time usually under five minutes. Released 1982.

Atari's DEFENDER is the home version of the popular space shootout. Players control a spacecraft armed with forward-firing laser cannons and "smart bombs" (which destroy everything on the screen); it's powered by rear engines that can reverse instantly, and is able to "hyperspace" to another (random) part of the screen. The player only sees a small portion of the horizontally-scrolling battlefield at one time; the rest is on radar. The defender is up against many alien spacecraft who wish to destroy it and kidnap all the humans on your planet. If it sounds complex, it is. That's what made it so popular in the arcades.

The VCS isn't known for complex games, or great graphics. Atari pulled it off, though. Compromises have been made, but the essence of the game comes through quite well. The arcade version became infamous for its controls: one joystick and five buttons. To reproduce DEFENDER on the Atari, all controls have been worked into the joystick. To release a smart bomb, fly under the city you patrol. To Hyperspace, send the ship to the very top of your screen. The fire button then activates both of these functions. This makes the game easier to play. The aliens came through intact. They're not as smart, but are still tough cousins of their arcade versions. The graphics are first rate. When you lose a ship, the explosion effect is impressive. The radar is another feature that works just as well at home.

The game suffers from the familiar Atari VCS problem: It's tough to reproduce the color and detail of '80s arcade games on the technology of '77. The humans are tiny sticks. DEFENDER purists will miss all the buttons.

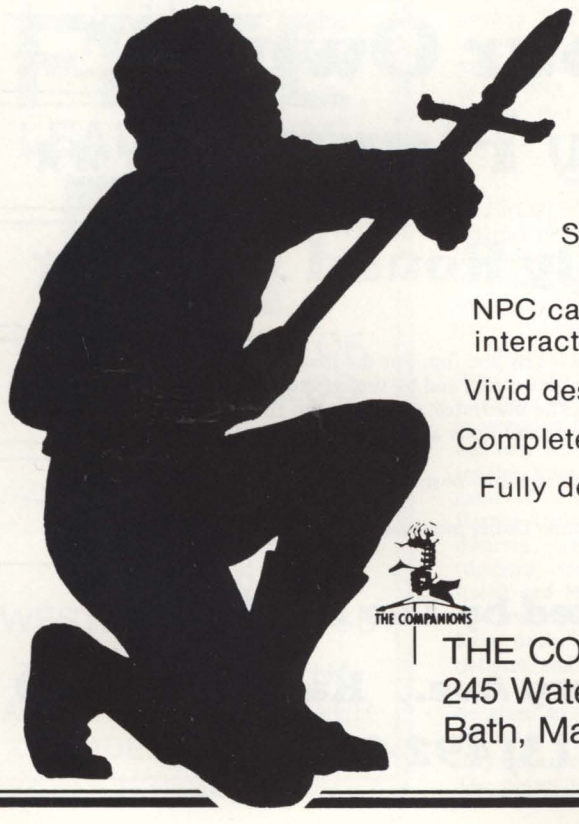
All in all, if you want a good game for your Atari, this qualifies. DEFENDER lovers have a few gripes, but I would recommend this one to any VCS owner.

–Ed Driscoll

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with self-stick backing, shrink-wrapped in an 11" by 17" folded card cover. Published 1982.

The black-on-white sheets in this set are designed to be pressed on cardboard bought by the buyer, then to be cut out by him – not an exacting task but a long one requiring some care. (The adhesive backing makes each sheet the equivalent of a giant bumper-sticker. With prolonged handling, the drawings might begin to come unstuck unless you use a suitable cardstock, but no advice in this regard is given.) The view from above is depicted. Among the items are beds, barrels, trapdoors, sacks, cauldrons, benches, stools, thrones, pews, candelabra, and so on. A numbered reduced view on the inside cover identifies each type of furniture, quite useful since many items tend to look alike.

At first look the furniture seems terribly small compared to miniature figures. Aside from the tendency to manufacture normal 25s at 28-30mm scale, the lead figures seem disproportionately large because of their third dimension, height. The furnishings will seem much more natural if you use flat cardboard markers for characters instead of miniatures. They are, of course, better than nothing for adding precision and a visual aspect to your descriptions and battle set-ups; but, on the other hand, a decent amateur artist could produce usable drawings nearly as aesthetically pleasing as these. (Also available is a similar set for 15mm scale, and a complementary 25mm set, which I have not seen. "Medieval Masonry" sets are also planned.)

This kind of thing is certainly not necessary to fantasy gaming, but it is competently produced for those who value the idea.

– *Lewis Pulsipher*

MINIATURES

K'KREE MILITARY IN VACC SUITS, MILITARY IN CLOTH ARMOR, and CITIZENS (Martian Metals); $3.50/set. Approved for use with ***Traveller.*** Three 15mm figures per set. Released 1982.

Martian Metals continues its line of 15mm ***Traveller*** miniatures with three more sets of K'kree (Centaur) figures. One set has K'kree warriors wearing cloth armor and carrying centaur-sized weapons. The second set features the hexapedal aliens in vacc suits, and the third set features unarmed citizens of various castes, including one short-maned figure, obviously representing a servant, carrying a bowl of something that looks like fruit. Most of the figures in the three sets are relatively clean, though a couple evidence excessive flash (mold marks on the bottoms of the bases, etc.) that will have to be filed away.

For those who have an interest in them, these K'kree figures will be well received. The vacc suited figures are especially interesting in appearance, and an encounter with one in a game could provide an unusual moment or two of play.

On the other hand, unless you're running a campaign in one of the Judges Guild Gateway Quadrant sectors or in a sector of your own to trailing of the Imperium, you may not have much use for K'kree. Their tendency to stick close to the "herd" and not strike out on their own for adventuring purposes makes encounters with centaurs highly unlikely in the spinward

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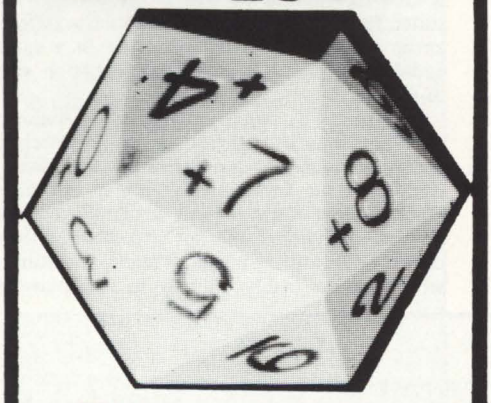
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If you're a completeness buff, you'll probably want to pick up these new sets regardless (though they probably won't be fast movers, so you can take your time to decide). With the K'kree now come into their own in 15mm, the only major race of the ***Traveller*** universe unrepresented in lead is the Hivers. And can they be far behind?

– William A. Barton

RUNEQUEST (Martian Metals); $1.70, $1.95, $4.95. 25mm scale miniatures designed by Paul Jaquays and others. Released 1982.

This line currently comprises nine bubble-packed sets of the most distinctive denizens of Glorantha. More should follow soon as the Martians finally get into high gear on this long-awaited project.

For $1.70 one gets three "Armored Ducks," two "Unarmored Broos," or one "Big Bad Broo" or "Jack-o-Bear." These figures feature excellent surface detail, well-defined personalities, and are nicely animated. The ducks are a bit cartoonish for my taste, but considering the subject matter I suppose this was inevitable.

Three figures come packed singly at $1.95 per pack. The two-piece "Walktapus" fits together perfectly and is one of the high points of the line, both in detailing and overall effect. The three piece "Scorpion Queen" and "Scorpion Man" are not so good. Sculpting on the human parts of anatomy was not particularly impressive. Furthermore, the sense of proportion and movement needed to give a figure that lifelike feel was sadly lacking on both of these.

The two-headed "Dragon Snail" at $4.95 is a mixed blessing. Superb detailing, facial expressions, and animation make this one of the finest figurines the Martians have ever done. Unfortunately, assembly of this creature leaves small gaps where the two head-neck pieces attach to the body. To do justice to the finished model, putty and file work will be needed. Many hobbyists, myself included, have neither the time nor inclination for such work. Assembly problems are common with the larger figures in many miniatures lines and it's always been a mystery why more attention isn't paid to this during the design stage.

Finally, also priced at $4.95, is the "Composite Adventurers" set. Actually a kit of many small parts, this set includes three different lower bodies, upper torsos, heads, weapons, shields, and pairs of arms . . . enough to build three complete figures. The beauty of this system is that by mixing and matching parts and varying poses, one can construct a myriad of highly personalized characters. While body parts are not all that different from one another, they do conform to illustrations of typical ***Runequest*** adventurers. Patience, tweezers, and some filing and fitting will be required for assembly, but no putty work. This sort of create-your-own-custom-figure set will undoubtedly become very widespread in the near future. The Martians are to be commended for taking the lead.

Overall, the RUNEQUEST line is a very imaginative and well done offering. Considering how long ***Runequest*** players have waited for these figures, the line should enjoy considerable success. Given that, the redesign work needed to correct the few minor problems could, and hopefully will, be carried out in the near future.

– John Rankin

THE WAR MACHINE (Ral Partha); $20.00. Sculpted by Tom Meier. 25mm scale lead miniature; 13 parts, plus nine orc figures. Released 1982.

"Designed with intricate detail, this armored battle wagon features a moving catapult." Advertising hype? Yes, but true and descriptive. It's a siege engine with crew, better than 5" long when fully assembled. The beast-skull prow makes it a beautiful addition to any fantasy combat.

This is the first pure fantasy war machine I've seen – a fit companion to the *Dragontooth* series of giant howdah-bearing dinosaurs – and I like it. As usual with Ral Partha, the design is imaginative, the detail is excellent, and the sculpting quality is very good. The catapult arm does, indeed, move, and could be made to fire with a little work and a rubber band. The orc figures are appropriate, and the finished piece makes a good display all by itself.

I had a little trouble with assembly; some of the pieces required bending and filing to fit, though nothing very serious. Neither the exploded drawing in the box nor the photo on the cover is a clear guide to assembly of the catapult arm, but if you study them both together, you'll figure it out. The wheels are flat-bottomed; no doubt they are supposed to be sunk partly into the ground, but this annoyed me. Had they been complete, I could have easily mounted them so that the whole machine would roll. Round wheels can be flattened easily, Ral Partha, but we can't round out the flat ones again!

On the whole, though, it's a lovely piece of work, and the finished catapult is an ornament to my collection. Recommended. (If you see the box in a store, ask to look inside; the dingy photograph on the front does *not* do this piece justice.)

–Steve Jackson



In the Pre-dawn hours, teams of daredevil British commandos slip ashore to destroy enemy supply dumps. With the sun comes the Harriers and Vulcans, pulverizing the vital airfields. At sea, Scots, Welshmen and Gurkhas prepare for amphibious assaults. The unlikely foe is Argentina, for this is

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Where We're Going



There comes a time in the life of every writer when a column deadline is upon him – and he has nothing to report. That time is right now. The transition to slick paper was uneventful – the last issue looked beautiful, just like it was supposed to, and that was that. Nothing unexpected has happened around here, and everything that was supposed to happen came off right on schedule. Things are busy, but (for the first time in many months) not hectic. All the new projects are coming along well. So where do I get a column?

Traditionally, there are two choices in a situation like this. The first and most common is to pick some entirely irrelevant subject and beat it to death with a stick, thus ensuring the proper number of column inches. It may be totally worthless, but the page is full. The second solution is to write a very short column and use the space for something else.

Of the two, the second idea seems better. See you next month.

– Steve Jackson

(Well, at least it was on time.

– Aaron Allston)

NEXT ISSUE

December's TSG will be our special CAR WARS issue, including:

"Massacre at Midville" (or, Our Circulation Manager Goes Mad), an adventure of duellists against a rolling juggernaut;

"Street Legal," entertaining fiction for the autoduelling set, and accompanying descriptions of new, um . . . equipment;

And non-CAR WARS items such as:

"Lair of the Fat Man," a challenging (if peculiar) TOP SECRET adventure;

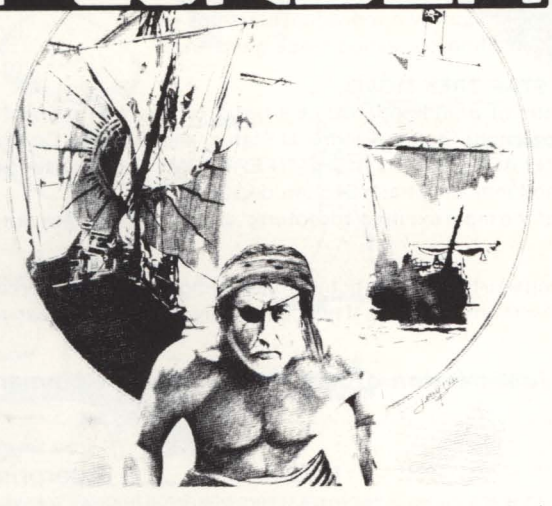
A featured review of Mayfair's ROLEAIDS;

and a lotta fairies.

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UNNIGHT

No less than (grumble) three proofreading errors crept into last issue's "Unnight" scenario for ***Space Opera.*** Two are minor, one is significant; all were on page 18. The minor errors: At the last section of normal text on the page, the references to the "boxes on pages 19 and 22" refer to the way the pages were arranged before they were altered to accomodate the new issue format, and should say "boxes on this page and the next." In the chart on Astronomic Data, Orb's surface gravity should be 1.24 x 10^{-3}. The more irritating error also occurs in the same box: Eclipses do not occur every 2½ days, but rather every day, as noted in the Meteorological Data box on the next page. Bah. Humbug!

–Aaron Allston

OGRE/G.E.V.

If the black units in ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.*** are for the Combine, and the white ones are Paneuropean, what are the gray ones supposed to be?

–Jeff Walker, Jr.

*The gray ones are extra units which can be used by either side so that several Ogres owned by the same player (or by different players on a side) can be more easily distinguished. When we get our **G.E.V.** expansion set out, it'll probably include some red and blue Ogre counters (not armor units, just Ogres) for similar reasons.*

–Steve Jackson

Out of the ashes of **High Passage** rises a new and better magazine devoted to the serious **Traveller** player, **FAR TRAVELLER.**



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PHASE VII

I wanted to write to let you know of recent revisions in the game ***Phase VII.***

The revisions are simple, and intended mainly to add challenge for the more advanced players. Typos and missing info (such as how much a horse costs: 30 gp) have been corrected. Here is a basic rundown of the revisions:

(a) A mule can carry 20,000 gp. A horse can carry 15,000. A gold piece weighs three ounces. A normal man can carry up to 500 gp without losing a great deal of speed, and a maximum of 1,000.

(b) Fighting rules for a group of people attacking a single monster a now supported. The "computer" adds to the monster's ability, and *Double Die Damage Throws* are used, with damage being split equally among the characters.

(c) An introductory full-page *Note From the Author* is now included, giving a brief history of the game and a note on how scenarios should be set up.

(d) The most important revisions are to spells and powers. Phases IV and above (experienced players at the computer's discretion) have limitations. These are as follows:

Warrior

1-1. *Flight:* Now has a maximum lift factor. It requires two fliers to lift an additional weight of one man.

3-1. *Sonar:* Has a maximum range of 100 ft + 20 ft per Phase over I; has a maximum damage of 20 points + 5 per Phase over I.

3-5. *Hearing:* Will work even through closed doors.

3-6. *Smell:* 50% chance of identifying an unseen item by its smell.

4-1. *Mechanical:* MP drops 1 point whenever this is used.

5-2. *Odor:* When this is used, your companions will avoid you for ten minutes.

5-3. *Gas:* Maximum defeat points 200 + 10 per Phase over I.

6-1. *Intuition:* Computer has a right to limit use to once every 15-20 minutes.

6-2. *Heat:* Has a skin temperature of 2,500 degrees.

6-3. *Ice:* Covers a maximum area of 9,000 cu. ft. Temperature may range from -50 to +31 degrees.

Magic

1-1. *Force Field:* Maximum area: 4,000 cu ft.

1-3. *Sleep:* Maximum damage 100 points + 10 per Phase over I.

4-3. *Teleport:* You must have already seen the area to teleport to, or a distance may be specified in a direction. If a character teleports into an object, there is a 50% chance of dying. If no death, ST and IV will be damaged 1 die each.

5-2. *Fire:* Effective 9,000 cu ft at a temperature of 1,500 degrees.

5-3. *Water:* Maximum amount 16,000 cu ft.

5-4. *New Spell: Take That!* You can cause any life form to become diseased once per seq. 3-9 kills, 10-18 damages five. Maximum damage per use 180 points.

5-5. *Death:* Will not work on non-alive things such as robots.

6-3. *Lightning:* Maximum damage 100 + 10 points per Phase over I.

–Dennis Drew

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SCANNER: — NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ADVENTURE GAMING

FASA Lands Rights to *Star Trek* RPG

FASA, publisher of ***Traveller*** supplements and the ***Behind Enemy Lines*** RPG, has acquired the rights to produce a *Star Trek* role-playing game.

The Basic Set of ***Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game*** is scheduled for late January of 1983. In addition to the rulebook and two or three introductory adventures, the Basic Set will contain a book of background material (including information on the history of the Federation and the origins of the Star Fleet, as well as dimensions and drawings of *Star Trek* equipment such as hand phasers); and a book of deck plans for the *Enterprise,* a Klingon ship, a Starbase, and other ships.

The ship-to-ship combat system in ST:RPG will differ from those employed in other games such as Task Force's ***Star Fleet Battles,*** inasmuch as it is designed for role-playing combat rather than boardgame combat. During ship-to-ship battles, player-characters are bridge personnel in charge of the various bridge consoles (Engineering, Science, etc.), while the referee plays the opposing ship. The only playing boards used are "console sheets" for each bridge station, and counters are used to keep track of information on each console.

ST:RPG was designed by Guy McLimore, Jr., Greg Poehlein, and David Tepool. The game was extensively researched, and is intended to be as true as possible to the *Star Trek* universe. However, FASA hopes the game will appeal to science fiction gamers in general as well as to hardcore Trekkers. "It should be understandable and enjoyable even to people who don't know much about *Star Trek,*" said Jordan Weisman, president of FASA.

Jake Jaquet Leaves Dragon Publishing

Jake Jaquet, publisher of *Dragon* magazine, has resigned his position at TSR. According to Dieter Sturm, Public Relations Director at TSR, the move was a friendly one, and Jake will continue as a *Dragon* consultant. TSR has not yet announced who will fill Jaquet's position.

Jaquet has formed a new company, Crystal Publications, Inc., based in Crystal Lake, Illinois. Tentative plans are for a new magazine covering role-playing and adventure gaming, with other projects a strong possibility.

Gygax Addresses GAMA Issue

Industry observers fear that increased friction between TSR Hobbies, Inc., and the rest of the gaming industry may result from the October issue of *Dragon* magazine, which featured a guest editorial by company president E. Gary Gygax. Gygax, for the second month in a row, used the magazine's editorial space to condemn GAMA, the Game Manufacturer's Association, and Origins, the GAMA-sponsored national gaming convention. TSR was once a GAMA member, but dropped out several months ago.

In his editorial, Gygax suggested that the smaller game companies were "dupes" and "tools" of Avalon Hill and the now-defunct SPI in "a market struggle with TSR," with the national conventions Origins and GenCon® as the battleground.

Sources inside TSR have suggested that the recent resignation of Jake Jaquet, head of Dragon Publishing (see story, above) may have been prompted by the editorials.

Convention Calendar

November 5-7: WARGAMERS WEEKEND. Contact Chris' Game and Hobby, 83 Lafayette Road, Salisbury, MA 01950, or call 617/462-8241.

November 12-14: MDG WINTER GAMEFEST. Boardgames, miniatures, RPGs. Contact MDG, W-11 Info, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

November 12-14: WESTERN RECON '82. SF &F, fantasy gaming. Contact Karl Miller, 837 North University Village, Salt Lake City, UT, 84108, 801-582-6076.

January 22-23, 1983: WINTER CAMPAIGN II. RPGs, boardgames, Napoleonics. Contact Winter Campaign, P.O. Box 14630, University Station, Minneapolis, MN 55414-0630.

February 26-27, 1983: GAME FAIRE. RPGs, micro-armor, chess, arcade games, etc. For information, contact Shannon Ahern, Book and Game Company, West 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201 or 509/325-3358.

*March 4-6, 1983: MICRO-CON '83. SF and gaming convention. Contact Micro-Con '83, 601 River Road No. 604, San Marcos, TX 78666.

March 5-6, 1983: CENTCON I: ***Squad Leader, D&D, Backgammon, Risk, Kingmaker, Top Secret,*** etc. Contact Ron Vincent, Treasurer – CentCon I, 471 Commonwealth Avenue, New Britain, CT 06053.

*July 14-17, 1983: ORIGINS '83. Adventure gaming con. Contact MDG, Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

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News Briefs

Air Force Libraries Discover Wargames

The Air Force Library system has added wargames to each base library. Each library will have seven titles available to be checked out, including ***Next War, Terrible Swift Sword, Hof Gap,*** and ***A House Divided.*** The libraries will also subscribe to three magazines: *The Wargamer, Fire & Movement,* and *Adventure Gaming.*

GDW Opens GameSoft Division

Game Designers' Workshop has announced the formation of GameSoft, a new division which will produce games for the Apple II and other computers.

PBM Update

Big City, Inc.

Ganglord:

Game News: At a noon press conference, District Commissioner Ellison confirmed reports that over the past month there has been a resurgence of the youth gangs that once plagued the slums of The Big City before the riot. He said that there were only a few "robbing pawnshops – that kind of thing." So far, there is no evidence that the gangs are fighting among themselves, but several have been killed by residents and police. "It ain't safe for *anybody* down there," he said.

Darrel A. Plant

Flying Buffalo, Inc.

Heroic Fantasy

Game News: ***Heroic Fantasy*** now has over 400 players wandering the labyrinth.

Company News: Flying Buffalo announces the availability of a new game: ***Galactic Conflict***, by Chuck Gaydos. Moves for this simple, yet interesting space game can be submitted and received electronically (via The Source). Anyone interested in reading the rules should send $1 to Flying Buffalo.

Rick Loomis

Clemens & Associates

Company News: We are finally coming out with our new PBM game. It will be called ***Terra II***, and is a tribal adventure complete with combat, economics, exploration, fortifications, and much more. Playtesting is in progress and should be completed soon.

Universe II:

Quadrant I: Diadem has been lost to the Terran forces allied with the Regajian Empire. Etuel systems are known to be considering what action should be taken to stop the flow of ships and equipment to Terrans who then use them against their benefactors.

Quadrant II: More fighting has broken out in the space above the Xonu colony. At least one starship has been destroyed.

Quadrant III: Major recruiting efforts by two of the larger alliances have brought many new starships into the quadrant. Will the old boundaries established to curtail expansionist tendencies hold up?

Quadrant IV: A period of relative peace has settled over the quadrant. No faction is making incursions into neighboring areas.

Regajian Empire: Diadem has been liberated. The battle was bloody as the UFO and ICP were joined by Ixtli ships in senseless suicide attacks. The Regajian commanders fought skillfully and achieved the final victory. The Etuel in Vindemiatrix and Auva have been offered safe conduct to Izar so that further bloodshed can be avoided.

Ixtli Empire: The flagship of the Ixtli Empire, IXV *Whiteheart*, led the counterattack against the Regajians at Diadem, but the strike force available in that area was too small to save Diadem.

Muar: Terran starships are again probing our boundaries. All Muar task forces are on alert and patrolling the area near our minefields.

Jon Clemens

Adventures by Mail

Company News: We recently experienced our first anniversary in business, and would like to thank our customers for the faith they have shown in our abilities. During the past year we processed over 15,000 turns and expect to at least double this in our second year. To facilitate expansion, we have acquired a 20 megabyte hard disk drive, and have placed all BSE data files (11 megabytes worth) on it.

By the time you read this, we will have begun our second game, ***Warboid World.*** This will be a completely computer-moderated PBM game and will have many original features, including no diplomacy whatever. It will be a true test of skill between players. During the initial start-up we will be providing copies of the rulebooks to our customers free of charge. In addition, turns which contain errors will not only be corrected, but the turn fee will also be returned to the player.

Over the next year, we have scheduled the release of three more PBM games, two of which will be completely computer-moderated.

Finally, we'd like to thank *The Space Gamer* readership, who in the most recent survey, voted us the number-one PBM game publisher.

R.S. Hansen

Central Texas Computing, Inc.

Universe III:

Quadrant V: Rumor has it that one of the larger Terran alliances is in the progress of making some kind of accomodation with the Muar Empire, in exchange for trading rights. This may end the battle currently being fought for possession of one of the Muar planets.

Quadrant VI: The Terrans appear to be getting solidly established here, with colonies springing up across the Quadrant. Little is known of the progress of the Alar-Muar war, except that neither side has asked for Terran assistance.

Quadrant VII: Several Terran alliances have gotten trade concessions from the Etuel, while others appear to be exploring the outer boundaries of the Alar Empire. Strong rumors persist of hidden Etuel planets near the Quadrant boundaries.

Quadrant VIII: Terran ships report several new devices available from the Etuel, who are rumored to be developing a beacon net. Colonization has just begun in this quadrant, but seems to be getting off to a strong start.

Company News: It looks like we will definitely be producing ***Starcluster*** in the near future. Work on ***Nomads*** is currently on hold until we can get a look at the new Record Processing System from Apple, and make sure the color graphics work correctly.

We're also looking at two more hardware items for ***Nomads*** – a card reader that will accept 8½ x 14-inch paper and a 40 megabyte hard disk system from Corvus (about $15,000 together, for those of you who think PBM games are cheap to run). We also should have acquired another 256K Apple II by the time you read this.

David Bolduc

Schubel & Son

The Tribes of Crane:

Crane I: Fighting has erupted in the Silent Forest area as the Grand Alliance attempts to crush this hotbed of Dark Union support. Twice before, the Grand Alliance has crushed the Dark Union and their Barbarian allies in the area, but never have they completely destroyed Dark Union support in the Silent Forest. The first phase of "Operation Stiletto" resulted in the destruction of the D.U. Navy VII and their Pirate Allies. Phase Two has resulted in the isolation of the main barbarian forces from their Homeland to the east. The barbarians have responded by attacking and destroying one of the city of Cabo's string of defensive forts. Heavy fighting is expected in the coming weeks!

Crane II: The Celtani Federation/Halton Factor wars continue to escalate! The Halton Factor has won the first round of fighting with the fall of the city of Rawan. Rawan was well known for its complex series of defenses, but several key defending tribes failed to arrive in time to join the defense. Despite a valiant defense by city leader Rhus the undermanned city was eventually captured. Fighting has begin in earnest at the C.F. city of Ura as the H.F. forces push their attack. The C.F. position appears hopeless, but city leader Equinox has vowed to fight to the death!

Star Venture:

We are pleased to announce that we have expanded the number of actions now available in ***Star Venture.*** The increased number of actions allows greater versatility for all positions, but are primarily designed to aid colony positions. The new actions include: market price changes, trade discounts, ship escort, and an immediate message delivery system; seven new actions in all.

Several players and player organizations have begun to purchase additional ship types. Already several Scouts, Surveyors, and Heavy Freighters have been purchased. One group has even managed to acquire a Super Freighter which is currently under heavy escort by a well-armed Destroyer.

StarMaster:

Central Galaxy: The Vekkan Lizards' home world recently came under savage assault by the Lyranians' 34th Imperial Star Fleet. The Lyranians' 7th generation fleet contained 14 War Sphere "2N"s against the Vekkan Home World defenses of 816 6th generation Forts, 30 War Sphere "H"s, and 60 probes (30 armed with Anti-Life Generators). For several days the mighty Vekkan defenses parried the Lyranian assaults. The relentless Lyranians continued to press the attacks depending on their superior weapon to defeat the numerically superior defenders. In climactic final clash, both space fleets were virtually destroyed save for several Vekkan probes that were untouched by enemy fire. Both sides are now recalling their deep-space fleets to continue the fighting.

Duane Wilcoxson



Your Turn

One thing that consistently does very well in TSG reader feedback is the annual survey. It gives you a chance to voice opinions, gives us and the manufacturers a lot of solid information, and makes this particular column the easiest one to do yet.

We've also found that the possibility of a reward makes for much better responses to contests. Carrying this one step further, I'm going to offer a prize for one lucky respondent to this survey. All responses will be dumped in a hat and a winner will be drawn at random. The winner will receive his choice of a $50.00 SJ Games gift certificate or five pounds of metal. That's right: If you win and prefer miniatures, I'll dig through the box of reviewed samples and send you five pounds of assorted figures. So much for the greed angle . . . but specify which prize you would like if you win.

Just fill out the reply card bound into this magazine, slap a stamp on it, and mail it in for your chance at the gift certificate or lead.

Miniatures Survey

Questions one through eleven are yes/no, so just write a Y or an N to indicate your answer.

1. Do you use miniatures in your gaming? If no, go straight to the comments section and tell why.

Do you regularly play
2. 25mm fantasy?
3. 15mm fantasy?
4. 25mm science fiction?
5. 15mm science fiction?
6. Space ships (any scale)?
7. Science fiction micro-armor?
8. Cardboard miniatures?

Do you game with miniatures in the following historical periods?
9. Pre-20th century
10. World War II
11. Modern era

Questions 12 and 13 use the following scale: 1: Under $10, 2: $10-$25, 3: $25-$50, 4: $50-$75, 5: $75-$100, 6: $100-$150, 7: $150-$200, 8: $200-$300, 9: $300-$500, 0: Over $500.

12. How much do you spend in a year on miniatures?
13. How much do you spend in a year on miniature accessories, terrain, paints, brushes, magazines, etc.?
14. How old are you? (Just write in the number.)

On questions 15 through 19, use a 1 to represent 10%, a 2 for 20%, etc., up to 0, which indicates 100%.

What percentage of your miniatures are purchased through
15. Direct mail order?
16. Hobby shops which specialize in gaming?
17. General interest hobby shops or toy stores?
18. Department stores or military base exchanges?
19. Convention exhibitors?

All of the remaining questions should be answered using a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being the lowest rating, 9 the highest. A zero indicates you're not familiar with the object of the question, or it doesn't apply to you for some reason.

On questions 20 through 24, rate the amount of influence each of the following has on your miniatures purchases.

20. Personal examination
21. Friends' recommendations
22. Retailers' recommendations
23. Magazine reviews
24. Magazine advertising

Rate the following miniatures manufacturers, again on a 1 to 9 scale. Include in your rating your own opinion regarding sculpting, animation, quality control, packaging, availability, price, and anything else you consider important to the overall reputation of the company. If the company also publishes games, rate *only* the miniatures side of the business.

25. Adina
26. Archive
27. Asgard
28. Broadsword
29. Castle Creations
30. Citadel
31. CnC
32. Dragon Tooth (Tom Loback)
33. Dunken Co.
34. Eisenwerk
35. Enola Games (Navwar - Ros/Heroics)
36. Fantasy Games Unlimited
37. Garrison
38. GHQ
39. Grenadier
40. Heritage U.S.A.
41. Hinchliffe
42. Martian Metals
43. Masterpiece
44. Mike's Models
45. Miniature Figurines, Ltd. (Minifigs)
46. RAFM
47. Ral Partha
48. Saxon
49. Stan Johansen
50. Steve Jackson Games
51. Superior
52. Ta-Hr
53. Task Force Games
54. T-Rex
55. Valiant
56. Zocchi (Gamescience)

Now rate these specific lines:
57. Citadel: *Fantasy Tribes* / *Fiend Factory*
58. Grenadier: *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*
59. Heritage U.S.A.: *Dungeon Dwellers* / *Knights and Magick*
60. Martian Metals: 15mm *Traveller* / *Dragonslayers*
61. Minifigs: *World of Greyhawk*
62. Ral Partha: *Fantasy Collector Series* / *Personalities*
63. SJ Games: *Cardboard Heroes*
64. Superior: *Wizards and Lizards*

Finally:
65. Rate this column (*Metal*)

Next month I'll return to the regular column format for a look at the "British Invasion" in general, and one of the advance guard companies in particular: Citadel U.S.

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Letters

You've got a great magazine here. I can see only one problem with your "game-or-supplement in every issue" policy, namely that it is going to be (and I'm sorry to say, has been) very difficult to get something worthwhile in every issue. In the past, you've had "Adventures on Tschai" and "Sunday Drivers," which were great, and the Marischal Adventures "Storm" series, which wasn't even worth the effort to pull these exceedingly dull scenarios from the magazine. If you can't give us something *good* in every issue, I for one don't see any reason to have a game/supplement in every issue.

Also – keep up the capsule reviews! They're about 60% of the magazine's value, as far as I'm concerned.

Heavens – is that a Naked Elf Woman peering from behind a tree on page 2 of this issue (55)? As if we didn't have problems enough already . . .

D.B. Howard

This letter is typical of the responses we've gotten to the new "game or supplement in every issue" policy; the normal reply from our readers is "Do it if it won't strain your resources." I did a little homework just lately and discovered an interesting fact: Since issue 40, we've been publishing two scenarios for every three issues anyway, so the only thing we're adding is the quarterly game.

As for naked elf women in TSG: Don't be ridiculous. Not in our pages. That illo was an . . . um . . . er . . .

–AA

Your game-in-an-issue *format* looks good; I haven't had a chance to play yet. The counter sheet insert is a nifty idea. If your budget goes up some, perhaps you can put a heavy stock (like the mailer) map insert in, to improve durability.

"Advanced Campaigning: SF" was *great.* I hope players and GMs can make the jump and see the *really* exciting part of SF gaming: the sense of wonder one gets from meeting the unknown, and the thrill of subtle maneuverings and stratagems. I'd add Jack Vance's "Demon Prince" series to the recommended book list; these five books are set in a universe/background that really resembles an SF campaign – with loads of weird cultures to boot. "Fantasy Campaigning" was good too, but why didn't you make a two-parter out of 'em? (one per issue). Both articles boil down to two good points: be imaginative and use the GM's power to *entertain* rather than as a mere referee, or opponent as in a wargame.

Please try to put a world-SF tactical or strategic game in your ideas-for-the-future-file.

Where's "Murphy's Rules"? Run out of room, or entries?

Is there any truth to the rumor that Iron Crown Enterprises will produce a fossil-fuels role supplement called Coal's Law?

Stefan Jones
Locust Valley, NY

Be careful with remarks like the last one, Stefan – it might end up as a rumor in DW's "Letter from Gigi" in six months.

The primary reason the two "Advanced Campaigning" articles were together is because they belonged together. We're not making a series of the topic, and we want our readers who aren't interested in the subject to be able to ignore both at the same time rather than across several months.

"Murphy's Rules" is taking a temporary vacation. It'll be back, hopefully within a couple of issues.

–AA

First, let me say that I enjoy the magazine in all respects. I would suggest that some summaries of the play-by-mail games be written for those not familiar with the particular games, and for those not familiar with PBM procedures (including me). It sounds as though I'm missing some worthwhile games through sheer ignorance.

Secondly, I would ask that each acronym be spelled in full at least once per article (for example, it took me two issues to equate PBM with Play-By-Mail). I do, however, realize that you are short of space.

I address this next remark to *all* boardgame publishers (including Steve Jackson Games). It would be useful if you would make available extra counter sheets/sets (even if only by mail). For example, I am currently covering a 3-foot-by-6-foot folding table entirely with hex paper, thus making it possible to re-enact ***Kursk*** or plan some large-scale ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** operations. However, buying duplicate copies of the same game can be expensive (I already had the table).

Chris Steinhice
Nashville, TN

We agree. Unfortunately, we didn't agree in time to print extra ***Ogre*** *or* ***G.E.V.*** *counters, but we* do *have* ***Car Wars*** *and* ***Sunday Drivers*** *counters for sale. Each sheet costs $1.00; add 50¢ per* order *(not per sheet) for postage, and Texas residents please add 5% sales tax.*

–AA

I have just received my TSG #55, and after viewing it I had to write you a letter. First off, good job with ***Necromancer.*** That Conversion Point angle really adds something to play not found in other games of fantasy dealing with rather large battles.

Second, I would like to thank you for accepting my spell in the Car Wars Spell Contest. I can't tell you what a high it is to see one's name in print for an accomplishment. But you misspelled my city – I live in Rosemead, Calif., not Rosehead. Please try to clarify this in the future if possible.

Other than that, it was another great issue of TSG. Keep up the good work.

Tom Gordon
Rosemead, CA

The Space Gamer continues to improve steadily. I note that game and computer reviews pull no punches. That's great! I also note that the reviews tend to be accurate, as though somebody had actually tried to play the game. These reviews usually reflect my own opinions if I have already tried the game, so I don't hesitate to trust TSG reviews to help me make buying decisions. Very refreshing. In addition, Steve Jackson Games continues to put out top-drawer games and accessories. Keep up the good work.

I do have one suggestion, though. I have noticed in such games as ***Superhero: 2044, Villains & Vigilantes,*** and ***Champions*** that innocent bystanders, hostages, and what are called "spear-carriers" in dramatic circles are needed with great regularity. This is not the problem. The problem is that there aren't any figures that are really suitable for use in this capacity. I mean a figure that looks like Conan, Sir Launcelot, Gandalf, or even one of the X-Men is not quite what one has in mind as a bank teller, small child, or helpless hostage. You have already given the gaming world Cardboard Heroes, so how about a set or two of "Cardboard Wimps" to assist in the reality of our own particular brand of unreality?

Thanks again for all the good goodies so far, especially ***Car Wars, Killer,*** and the ***Cardboard Heroes.***

Jack Bowers
Fort Collins, CO

*We were able to release a set of cardboard normals – **Cops, Crooks & Civilians** – at Origins. Bug your game store about them; you can also get them for $3.50 from us by direct mail.*

–AA

RIDER'S

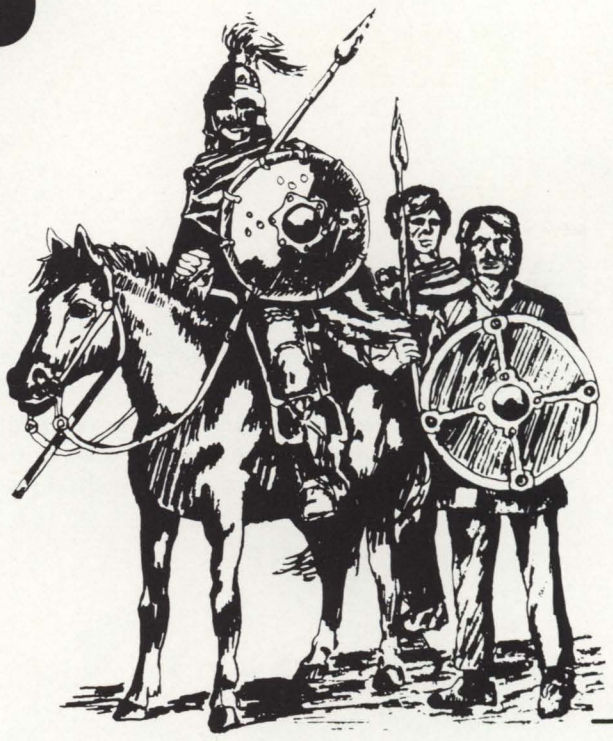
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THE TRIBES OF CRANE



You, task chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of Crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before; will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of the ***TRIBES OF CRANE....***

The **Tribes of Crane** is a unique correspondence game, allowing for interaction between players and the fantasy world of Crane and each other through a continuous game that may be entered at any time.

As a new player you will start as the chief of one of the many wandering tribes of Crane. Perhaps your tribe will be of the Sea people or Caravan merchants.

As chief you will know many secrets of your people and their lands, but there will be much you have still to learn of the lost secrets of Crane. It will be you who decide if your people will remain in their familiar homeland or begin a journey to new lands as you strive to increase your herds, train warriors, and learn of the ancient lost secrets that can move your people toward prosperity and dominance.

The land of Crane is a complete fantasy world with a full range of geography from the permanent ice of the polar regions, to the deserts, and tropical forests of the equator.

Cities dot the continents of Crane providing centers of trade and homes for the powerful Shamans and King Lords.

The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle goats and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a hugh bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

Interaction between players is very common. Alliance, trade, and combat are always possible. Combat is determined in part by a comparison of tactics used by the antagonists, the relative number of warriors, and the geography.

The games objective is to increase the relative strength and prosperity of your tribe which is measured by different criteria, depending upon the type of tribe, and thus obtain points. Players try to obtain high average points per turn thus placing new players on a par with those who have been playing longer.

The **Tribes of Crane** may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased for $3.50.

In Europe, contact Mitre Wargames, 29 High Street, Maidstone Kent, England.

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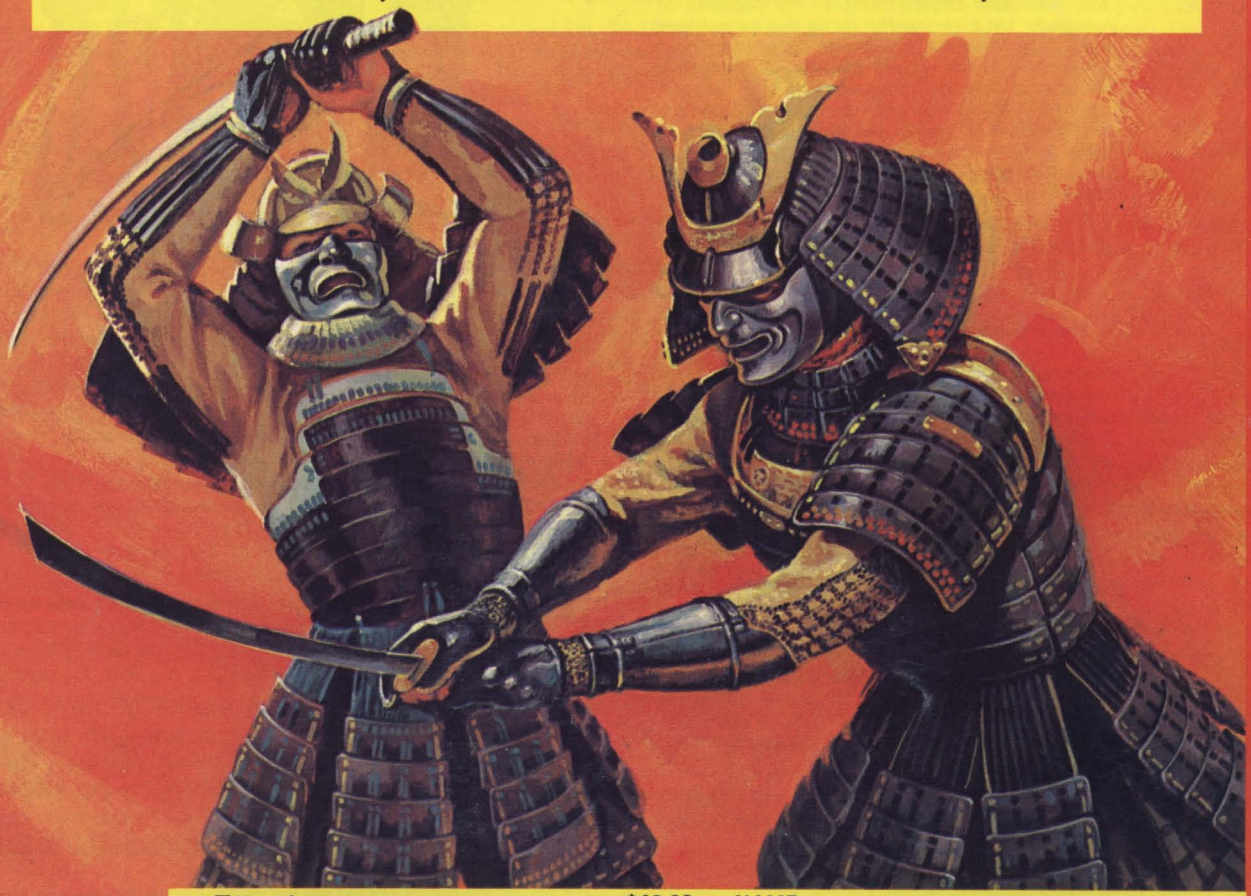
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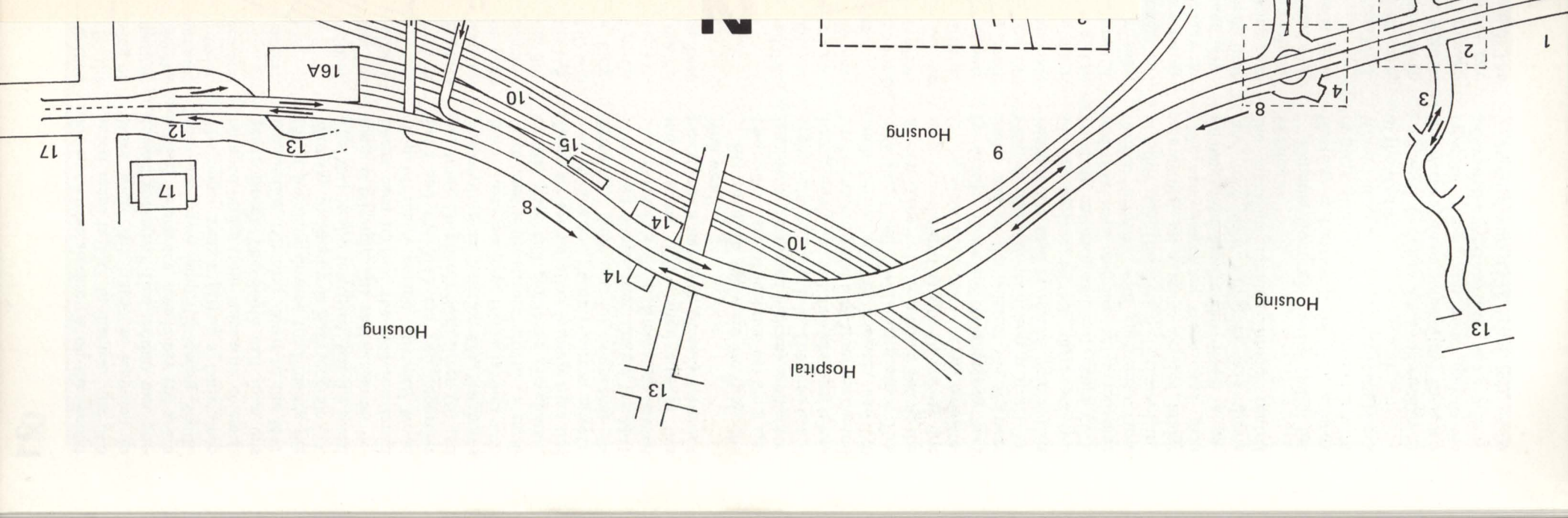
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Simply fill out this card with your responses to the survey questions in the "Metal" column, plus any additional comments you wish to make. Attach postage, and mail. We look forward to hearing from you.

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3___ 13___ 23___ 33___ 43___ 53___ 63___

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work. For each week of the campaign, the referee should roll two dice. On a roll of 3 or 4 one crew is at work, on a roll of 2 two crews are at work. Additional crews may be posted to repair damage caused by combat.

Approximate locations for routine maintenance crews should be rolled on the following table, with one die:

1-2 Elevated section of Westway, Eastbound
3-4 Elevated section of Westway, Westbound
5 Other main roads
6 Slip roads or intersections of main Westway (e.g., ramps)

The referee may use any preferred method to determine the exact location of the crew. Crews will be assigned to the nearest section of road in the appropriate category.

Each crew will consist of the following vehicles and weapons: two Piranhas (stock models), one Security Six (stock), two Mini-Shermans (one stock, one modified with R.L.), and two Shogun 100s (stock).

All of these vehicles are in civilian colours and camouflaged to hide their weapons. The Security Six has been modified to look like a mobile ice-cream trader, with the turret disguised as a giant ice-cream cone. This camouflage need not be jettisoned before combat. The van also has passenger accomodation for four armoured police, all armed with submachine guns and grenades. All other drivers and crew are armed with heavy pistols and are armoured.

There are two other police vehicles in the area, unmodified double-decker buses used as mobile road blocks. They are not armed or armoured, move at a maximum 45 mph, accelerate at 5, and can block three lanes of road. Each bus carries six officers armed with rifles, all unarmoured.

All police vehicles are linked to a central control room in Paddington Green police station by scrambled radio.

If police vehicles are damaged or destroyed, it will take at least a week to obtain replacements. This is partly because of normal bureaucratic red tape and partly because the government does not entirely trust the police, believing that they might form the nucleus of an attempted coup if heavily armed.

Exact placement of police vehicles and equipment is left to the referee's discretion, but it is suggested that they will probably be dispersed around the road system on mobile patrol. The buses would normally be kept parked at strategic points (one near the East end of the Westway, the other to the West) in side streets with access to the main system.



One additional vehicle may be added at the referee's discretion: a spotting helicopter linked to the scrambled radio system. This craft would not be able to land on any of the main roads in the area because street lamps would obstruct it, but it could land on the central area of Shepherds Bush junction, on the railway lines South of the Westway, or on the roof of the bus garage (see below). Such a helicopter would be based at Paddington Green Police Station, and could carry three men in addition to the pilot. The government would not let the police arm a helicopter, but its passengers might well be armed.

(6) **Westway.** Referee's information. Unless otherwise stated below, all data previously presented is accurate. However, the following additional notes may be helpful.

Wood Lane (3) has numerous curved sections and crosses several railway and