ISSUE 37 ♦ NOV/DEC 1984

Different Worlds

THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURE ROLE PLAYERS

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Different Views

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WITCHBUSTERS

I was not satisfied with the review of *Witch Hunt* in *DW 35*. I have not seen the game myself, but from what the reviewer said, his comments appeared to reaffirm the old saying, "You can learn more about a reviewer than the subject he or she is reviewing."

I do not know if the game succeeds, but I think Mr. Petersen based his review mostly upon the game mechanics (as important as they can be) and less on the flavor and fun of playing in that time and place. He almost seems to deride it for its application to only one particular place and time.

It's the theme that makes a game terrific and memorable—not its mechanics.

Martin Wixted
Danbury CT

BEER DRINKING CHRISTIANS

I really enjoyed *DW 35*. Being a *Call Of Cthulhu* fanatic, I appreciated the three articles dealing with the various aspects of the game. . . Congratulations are especially due to Larry DiTillio for his well-written article dealing with the finer points of creating *Call Of Cthulhu* scenarios. And having recently purchased *Champions*, I really got a kick out of the Special Superhero Module—"Star Devourer," indeed!

Another *Call Of Cthulhu* article I enjoyed was "Death Scenes," but I think Designer Sandy Petersen needs a vacation. No offense, but all the people in our gaming group thought that the description of the demise caused by Shub-Niggurath was a tad extreme. I mean, ". . . a single suppurating sore, red and blue with glistening serum."! It's not that the other descriptions were less graphic or anything, it's just that this one sort of leapt up off the page at us. Did Mr. Petersen make these up all by himself or did he use original scenes from the books as a primary source for his inspirations?

Spiros Skouros
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Sandy says "Both." —*Editor*

HIGH TECH, ANYONE?

"Magic & Social Structure" in *DW 36* was a mighty fine article, and I hope many gamemasters will read it and take it to heart.

In my own (now abandoned) *AD&D* campaign, clerics were common, but high-level magic-users few and far between. The rationale was that magic-users would be unpopular with the common people and subject to mob violence. When a cleric's spell doesn't work and some disaster befalls the village the cleric can always fall back on divine wrath, "The will of the gods." When a magic-user's spell fails, what can he do except admit that he screwed up? So while virtually every ruler had a court magic-user, the higher level independents tend to live at least a full day's hard ride from the closest habitation; usually in a swamp, desert, or other inhospitable neighborhood. In my current campaign, based on *RuneQuest*, the opposite view has been taken, that magic is commonplace and this has affected the progression of technology. For example, there is no known method of making fire without magic; fire drills, flint and steel, etc., are totally unknown. Many men and virtually all women know the Ignite spell, or the related spells of Firearrow or Flameblade (a bit costly, having to cast a 4-point spell to start a campfire, but better than a tinderbox that might be lost).

The local dwarves have a substance equivalent to gunpowder, and within the past centuries have started carrying what a person of our society would reconize as pistols. However, these pistols have no moving parts. They are brass tubes, open on one end and closed on the other, with an attached bone or ivory grip. The user charges the tube with powder, shot, and wading; points it at his target; and cast an Ignite spell on the powder. No misfires, no "flash in the pan," and no messy intrusion of hard-to-find materials such as spring steel.

I hope that this example will provide a starting point to anyone who wants to design a high-magic society. Remember also that technology is not just our modern widgets, again for example, the latest technological advance in my campaign is wheat. "Growing food where you want it to be, instead of gathering it where the goddess wills it to grow? Stupid idea, and probably blasphemous as well." I'm afraid that range wars are just a few generations away.

Thank you again for a thought-provoking magazine. □

Anthony Breaux
Tucson AZ

The Gamer

Editor's Views

STAR RATINGS

Starting this issue, the "Game Reviews" column will have star ratings. The ratings are based 50% on what I thought of the product and 50% on what the reviewer thought. The star ratings are given by me, the editor, and not by the reviewers, for the sake of consistency. The ratings are based on the four-star system used by movie and theater reviewers:

☆☆☆☆ **Superb**
☆☆☆ **Mighty Fine**
☆☆ **Good**
☆ **Flop**

We are proud of our "Game Reviews" column. The feature has steadily grown in size from issue 3's one review of ***Bushido*** to this issue's critique of 13 products. Over the years ***DW*** has reviewed over 200 adventure-gaming products. Issue 35 has an index of all game products reviewed up to and including that issue.

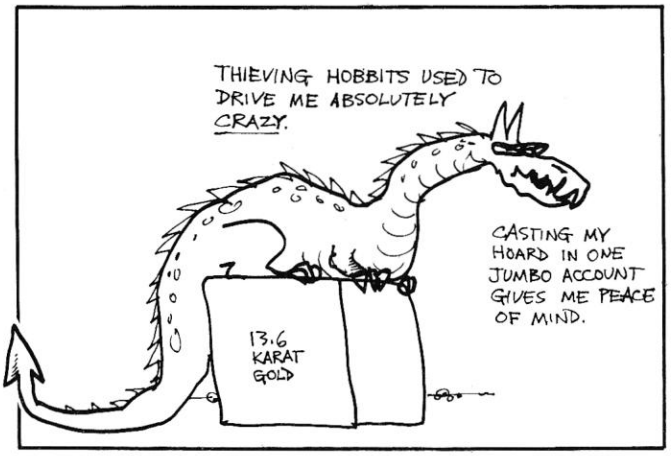
The reviews are one of the many fine features that have made ***DW*** a favorite among adventure-gaming devotees. The reviews are concise, but not merely a listing of the parts and contest, and are designed to help the gamer make informed judgments on their game purchases. It is a service no other magazine does better.

In the next few issues expect to see reviews of The Avalon Hill Game Company's ***RuneQuest*** and ***Powers & Perils***, TSR's ***Marvel Super Heroes*** and ***Indiana Jones***, FGU's ***Other Suns***, Chaosium's ***Elfquest*** and ***Stormbringer***, and Steve Jackson Games' ***Toon***.

Happy gaming,

Tadashi Ehara

□



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Staff: Tadashi Ehara editor. Lynn Willis, Greg Stafford, Steve Perrin, Sandy Petersen, John T. Sapienza, Jr., associate editors. Charlie Krank, Sherman Kahn, Gigi D'Arn contributing editors.

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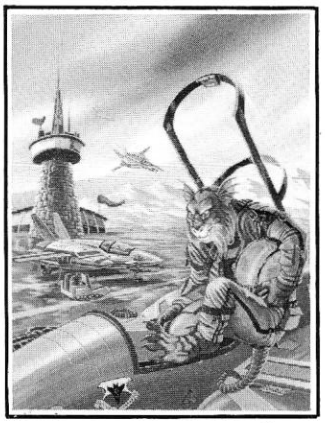
"Scramble!"

Kzin squadron "Ruthless Pursuers of Foes" in a secret expedition near a Ringworld rim wall.

by Steve Purcell



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Sword Of Hollywood

It has been said,
The pen is mightier than the sword.
How about celluloid?

By Larry DiTillio

Hallelujah and ya-hoo, oh raving fans of 24 frames per second. Things are zipping right along here in good old Lost Angels, as the masters of both the big and small screens cook up more treats, thrills, and turkeys for your kind delectation. Ye Ol' Sword has plenty of inside scoops for you this month, so hold onto your helmets and let's plunge right in.

KEEP ON TREKKING: *Star Trek III* is history and already the wheels are in motion on *Star Trek IV*. Harve Bennet will again produce and write, Leonard Nimoy will again direct. As to subject matter, well it's much too early to tell, but let me give you a clue, the tentative title is *The Trial of Admiral Kirk*. And in fact, the film will open on that event with our favorite Admiral up before Starfleet on a whole passel of serious charges, stemming from his adventures in *Star Trek III*. I know you can't wait, but I'm afraid you'll have to for at least a year, probably more like two. However, take heart Trekkies, for while the picture is in progress, Paramount is sending a whole bevy of new prints of the old television series to syndicated stations all over the country. The television episodes will be our old favorites but with a new look. The color in particular will be much more vibrant and alive (remember how all the colors on *Star Trek* seemed kind of washed-out and pastel?). Watch your local TV listings for when these episodes will air and sit back and enjoy the saga all over again.

STILL HOWLING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS: *The Howling II* is currently underway in Prague. It's a sequel to the crazed werewolf film of a few years back, but this time heading the cast is none other than horror headliner Christopher Lee. Chris will be joined by none other than the Queen of Action, the luscious Sybil Danning. That's quite a lot to sink your teeth into, eh?

LAND OF THE RISING MONSTERS: Speaking of sequels and remakes, catch this bit of news. Currently lensing in Japan is none other than a new version of *Godzilla*. Naturally, given the current technology, this rendition should be ten times more spectacular than the original film. On the other hand, *King Kong* didn't fare so well the second time around, so let's all keep our fingers crossed for the success of our giant lizard friend. By the way, if you haven't ever seen the original *Godzilla*, do so. Unlike the flood of terrible sequels with actors in lizard suits, the original *Godzilla* has a true horrific feel and is very, very well done.

UNDEAD VERSUS UNDEAD: Less Angles is about as famous for lawsuits involving the making of movies as it is for making movies. And there's a nifty one in the news right now. Director George Romero, who gave us the creeps in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*, is creating a third picture in the cannibal zombie series to be called *Day of the Dead*. However, at the same time, producer-writer Dan O'Bannon (*Alien*) is shooting a film called *Return of the Living Dead* that follows *Night of the Living Dead* in inspiration. What happened was that George Romero never copyrighted the *Night of the Living Dead*, therefore, its material is usable by anyone who wants to use it. In an attempt to correct the mistake, Mr. Romero is threatening to sue Mr. O'Bannon, hoping to prevent him from using the "Living Dead" title. Since the wheels of civil law turn rather slowly, the likely outcome is that in about a year, we will see the simultaneous release of both Living Dead pictures, which should make for some neat confusion as to who's got the real living dead. Of course, one can't have too many zombie pictures, can one?

TERROR TO STALK THE TINY SCREEN: Though we have had plenty of horror and fantasy and science fiction in movies the last few years, television seems to be lagging behind in this area. However, that is about to change in a big, big way. No less than three fantasy-horror anthology series are currently underway, and wait till you hear what they are. Wait, wait, okay, you're tired of waiting, I'll tell you. First up is *Amazing Stories*, created by none other than Steven Spielberg. *Amazing Stories* will be a half-hour show dedicated to fantastic tales of all sorts. It will be very close to *Twilight Zone* in that its stories will center on quite ordinary people dropped into amazing circumstances. In fact, Mr. Spielberg wanted to do another *Twilight Zone* series, but he couldn't. Wanna guess why? Right, because producer Philip De Guere already has bought the rights to do a new *Twilight Zone* series, and that is our second treat for the future. The makers of the new *Twilight Zone* are currently trying to decide whether to make it an hour or a half-hour series. As for the third entry in this sudden interst in fantasy, I once again invoke the name George Romero. Mr. Romero is putting together a show called *Tales from the Dark Side*, but unlike the two previous shows, this one will be strictly devoted to horror stories. More good news is that the King of Horror Authors Stephen King is hard at work on a teleplay for the series. Given the people behind these shows, we fans should find ourselves with plenty of good stuff to gawk at come 1985. I'll stay on top of all three efforts and fill you in as I know more.

DRAGONRIDERS, TO YOUR MOUNTS: Well fans, it looks as if *Dragonriders Of Pern* is about to hit your theaters (well, in a year or so anyway). Diane Duane, author of two *Star Trek* novels and the popular science-fiction novel *A Door into Fire*, spent several weeks with Anne McCaffrey in her Irish household (known as Dragon Hold) working up a plot line for a big budget animated feature on the Dragonriders. It's obvious why Ms. McCaffrey and the producers opted for animation, since working models of three hundred or so dragons can only be done in that format (unless, of course, you have a budget of $1 billion). Pre-production on the film should be in progress just about as you are reading this.

MORE DUNE: *Dune* will be hitting your theaters this Christmas, and word is that producer Dino De Laurentis has already made commitments for two sequels. Oh, goodie. I hope.

GREMLIN SPAWN: In the *Gremlins* vein, director Richard Donner (*Superman*) is shooting a flick called *The Goonies*. It will have the same comedy-horror emphasis as *Gremlins*, though with a different band of little guy nasties. Look for it toward the beginning of the new year.

ANIMATION BLUES: Over a year ago, I reported on a dandy animated feature from Nelvana called *Rock & Rule*. Well, *Rock & Rule* is complete, but don't count on seeing it too soon. Nelvana, a Canadian-based animation company, is having one heckuva time trying to find somebody willing to distribute the film. The final straw in this matter was that the producers of an animation festival in Canada refused to allow the inclusion of *Rock & Rule*, stating that the festival was limited to films under thirty minutes. *Rock & Rule* has been screened at other animation festivals in Canada, and if we're lucky, someone will take a gamble and make it available to the general public.

DISCO BOND: *From a View to Kill*, the next Bond epic, is now shooting. Joining Mr. Bond will be none other than the ultra savage disco queen Grace Jones, who knocked 'em out left and right in *Conan the Destroyer*. Bond may have a rough time with Grace. Also in the cast are Tanya Roberts (*Sheena*) and Patrick Macnee (*The Avengers'* John Steed).

RED SONJA SURE LOOKS FAMILIAR: Catch this one, gang. After an exhaustive talent search to find some unknown to play the flame-tressed she-devil, the producers came up with none other than Sandahl Bergman, who played Valeria in *Conan I*. Of course, after watching Sandahl's swordplay in *Conan*, I can't argue with the choice. Still, I think they could have saved themselves a lot of time and money.

STAR WARS RETURNS: And you thought the saga was over. Silly you. The fact is that shooting has already begun on the next installment. Title will tentatively be either *The Old Republic* or *Clone Wars*. This time around, special effects will include the computer-animated starships such as were viewed in *The Last Starfighter*. Yes folks, there were no models in that flick, every ship was a collection of expertly-programmed computer graphics. Of course, Lucasfilm will put their own touch on this. This again is a long wait, but gee, isn't it worth it?

RAY HARRYHAUSEN'S BACK TOO: Yes, the old master of stop-motion animation will be tackling another film, this one entitled *Voyage of the Trojans*. It's a follow-up to *Clash of the Titans* based on the classic Roman epic *The Aeneid*. By the way, Mr. Harryhausen is working with

Continued page 39

New for Fall-Xmas '84

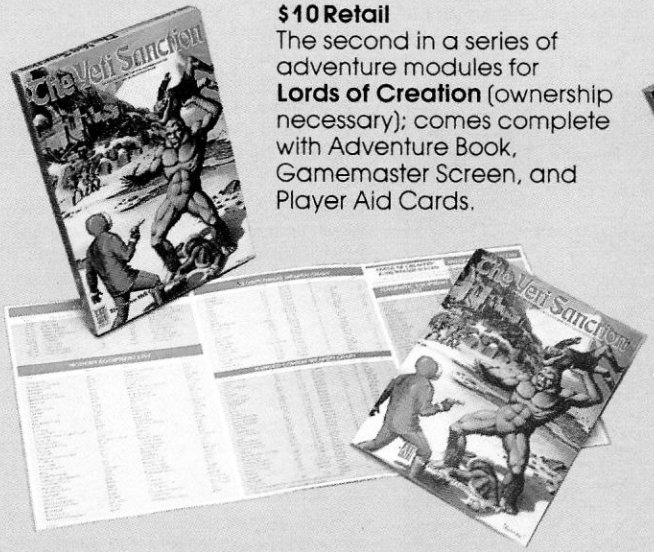
Role-Playing Games and Modules

#857 RUNEQUEST (Deluxe Version)
$38 Retail
A new and expanded version of the 4-year old game that is #1 in Great Britain; adds sorcery to a time-tested system that includes Players Book, Magic Book, Creatures Book, Gamemasters Book, Introduction to Glorantha Book, two Players Notes Booklets, full-color Map plus polyhedral Dice.

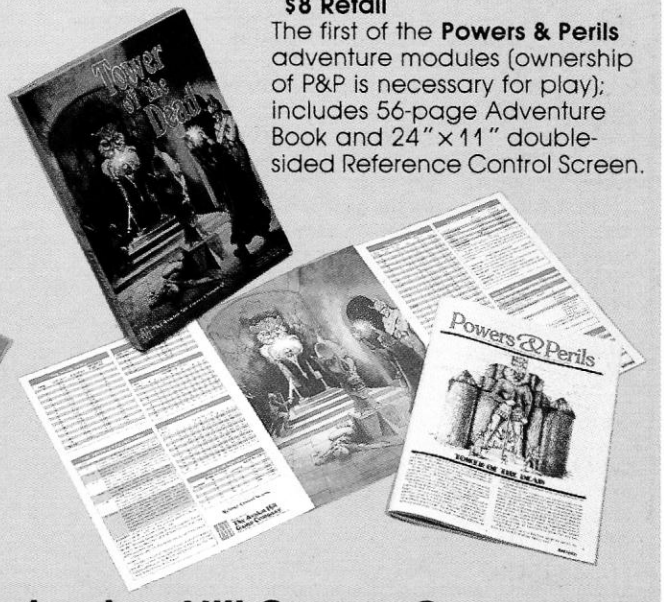
#8571 RUNEQUEST (Players Box) **$20 Retail**
The "cut-down" version of the deluxe game; includes Players Book, Magic Book, Players Notes Booklets, Dice . . . all one needs to get into play quickly.

#8572 RUNEQUEST (Gamemasters Box) **$25 Retail**
Specially designed for gamemasters; includes those components of the deluxe version not found in the Players Box. Comes with Gamemasters Book, Creatures Book, Introduction to Glorantha Book, Game Aids and full-color Map.

#8582 YETI SANCTION
$10 Retail
The second in a series of adventure modules for **Lords of Creation** (ownership necessary); comes complete with Adventure Book, Gamemaster Screen, and Player Aid Cards.



#8521 TOWER OF THE DEAD
$8 Retail
The first of the **Powers & Perils** adventure modules (ownership of P&P is necessary for play); includes 56-page Adventure Book and 24"×11" double-sided Reference Control Screen.



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What Happened to RuneQuest®

CHAOSIUM INC.

AH GAMES OF STRATEGY

An Explanation of the Improvements to *RuneQuest*®

By The Chaosium Staff

The Avalon Hill Game Company version of *RuneQuest* is a complete rewrite of the Chaosium edition. Staff and playtesters contributed hundreds of hours of work to make the new edition better than the original.

The new *RuneQuest* is the same game that you have come to know. Over the six years since we first published *RuneQuest* we have collected your comments and suggestions and made many revisions. You sent rules changes and additions to the fondly remembered *Wyrm's Footnotes* magazine and to the respected *Different Worlds*. We studied fanzine contributions. At conventions we hosted dozens of games and took note of what went right and what went wrong. We argued endlessly among ourselves.

We signed the deal with AH for the chance to improve upon our best-selling fantasy roleplaying game and to craft the game that we wanted. We approach every product that way: if we like it, if we have fun playing it, experience shows that you will like it too.

What Is the Avalon Hill Deal?

The Avalon Hill Game Company prints and distributes ***RuneQuest***. We do all the writing, editing, and production work. We do what we do best, then plug into AH's facilities and immense distribution network. Thus a better ***RuneQuest*** appears in many more stores than before and is available to thousands more players.

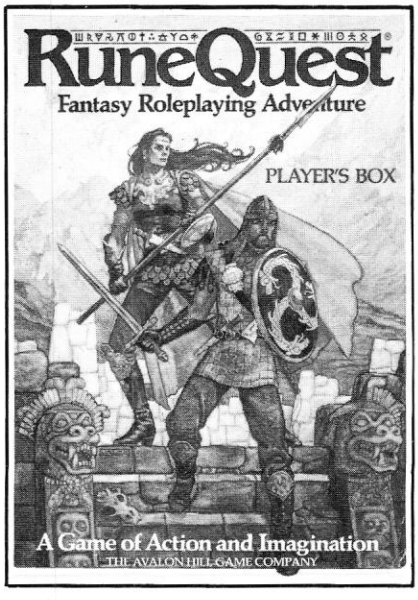
When our authors complete a manuscript, our production people edit and mark it with typesetter notes. Then it is sent to AH. There it is typeset, and the galleys are mailed back to us. We at Chaosium assign the interior art, the cover art, and do all the paste-up work. We read the galleys again, marking final corrections on them, and mail those corrections back to AH. They typeset the corrections, and return them to us. We send the camera-ready material to AH. They photograph it, and then send us proof copies. We review the proofs, indicate the final, final corrections, then rush the proofs back to AH. They make the printing plates, print, collate, box, and shrink-wrap the product. At last it is sent to the distributors who sell to the stores.

How Will RuneQuest Be Available?

RuneQuest will appear in three forms: the Player's Box, the Gamemaster's Box, and the Deluxe Edition.

PLAYER'S BOX: This one-inch box contains the 88-page Players Book, and 60-page Magic Book, 16-page Players Notes, and all dice needed to play (2D20, 1D8, 3D6).

GAMEMASTER'S BOX: This one-inch box contains the 48-page Gamemaster Book, the 48-page Creatures Book, and 32-page Glorantha Book, a full-color map of Alternate Earth, and the 16-page Game Aids.



DELUXE EDITION: This two-inch box contains everything provided in the other two boxes.

What Did You Do To RuneQuest?

The following is a detailed, book-by-book look at some of the improvements to ***RuneQuest***. There are five books.

1: Players Book

The ***RuneQuest*** Players Book contains all of the basic rules needed to play the game. This is the only essential book. All of the other books add to or expand these rules.

INTRODUCTION: We collected all Gloranthan information into a separate book (described later), and we added an alternate earth where future ***RuneQuest*** supplements will be based. ***RuneQuest*** was rewritten with a broader perspective and can now be played in many universes. Our old friend Ruric has been replaced by Cormac the Pict, a red-headed lout who learns much of the world and the ways of magic in the many adventures that lace the ***RuneQuest*** rules. Cormac is aided by Nikolos, a tubby sorcerer from Byzantium, and by the independent-minded woman, Signy, of the northern Germanic tribes.

CREATING AN ADVENTURER: The seven characteristics (STR, CON, SIZ, INT, POW, DEX, and APP) have been slightly changed. CHA is now APP (appearance). Charisma is not quantified by any single number. It is a function of an adventurer's accomplishments, social position, and personality (the player). SIZ and INT have been revalued somewhat, to provide a broader range of numbers at the low end of the scale. The value of an adventurer's INT and SIZ will increase. The adventurer does not actually grow or get smarter.

There is now only one form of POW. That term refers exclusively to one of the seven characteristics that define all creatures. POW is never used temporarily. It can be permanently sacrificed (lowered) to gain some spells.

That quantity used to power spells and

which is lost temporarily is now called magic points. An adventurer's maximum number of magic points is equal to his or her POW. When the magic point tally falls to zero the adventurer falls unconscious.

The skills list has been revised: Communication and Agility skill categories are added. Bonuses for each category were retained, and are much easier to determine. There are two previous experience systems. One is much quicker (5 minutes to complete), but generates much less detail. The other takes longer (20 minutes), but includes four cultures and 60 occupations.

GAME SYSTEM: We kept the resistance table and the use of skills system. Gaining experience remains roughly the same, though adventurers gain 1D6 percentiles rather than a flat 5.

Skills training has been thoroughly modified. Anyone can teach a less-skilled person. The time required to qualify for a skills increase is equal to the student's current skill percentile expressed in hours. Once this amount of time has been spent in training, the student add 1D6-2 percentiles to his trained skill.

Research has been added. This is self-help or self-tutoring, requires time as does training (above), requires an experience gain roll, and provides a 1D6-2 percentile increase.

The effects of damage have been examined and modified, the formula used to determine the number of hit points per location has been changed to work better for bigger creatures, a spell/missile hit location table has been added.

Simple fatigue rules have been added. This measures tactical fatigue during a melee. An adventurer's maximum fatigue points equals STR+CON. Each melee round, 1 point of fatigue is subtracted. Each negative fatigue point subtracts 1 percentile from every skill roll, resistance roll, or characteristic roll. This reduction also decreases the chance for special and critical rolls.

Encumbrance has been changed. An adventurer can carry as much as he or she wants. Each point of ENC carried subtracts one point from the adventurer's fatigue point tally. Encumbered adventurers get tired faster.

COMBAT: Nothing happens on strike rank zero any more. A melee round still equals 12 seconds, but it now contains 10 strike ranks. This eases play, especially when sorcerers, who can cast 20 point (or bigger) spells, are in use.

Various maneuvers and other rules have been added to combat: Knockback, Stunning, Mounted Combat, Run Around, Disarm, and other fine points.

The expanded weapons list includes Asian weapons (***naginata***, ***shuriken***), primitive weapons (***atlatl***, ***bolas***), exotic weapons (whips, ***kukri***), and missile-firing or stone-firing engines (including a ***trebuchet*** doing 12D6 damage).

You can now buy suits of armor, based on your adventurer's SIZ. You can still buy armor by the piece. Armor prices have risen. The penny is the standard currency, and is equivalent to the Gloranthan Lunar. An average person earns 4 pennies per day. A small suit of plate armor (SIZ 6-10) costs 5400 pennies in a city. A large suit of plate armor (SIZ 16-20) costs 8100 pennies in a city. A knight walks about with a fortune on his back!

SKILLS: Some skills have been renamed: Move Quietly becomes Sneak; Pick Pockets becomes Sleight; and the old Defense skill is replaced by Dodge. Some skills are redefined: Spot Hidden and Spot Traps disappear, replaced by Scan and Search. Some skills are added: Boat, Martial Arts, five Lore skills, Shiphandling.

THE WORLD: Aging rules are added. An objective game system is introduced to measure heat damage (melted silver does 9D6 damage) and wind strength (STR 8 wind equals a breeze) for use in magic spell effects and in sailing.

2: Magic Book

RuneQuest now has four complete magic systems, compatible yet separate, to provide great flexibility for your personal campaign. There are over 150 spells in the game.

One of the best features in this book is a section in the Introduction called The Three Perspectives. A practitioner of each of the three main magic systems (spirit, divine, and sorcery) answers these eight fundamental questions:

Where did the world come from?
Where did we come from?
Why do we die?
What happens after we die?
Why am I here?
How do I do magic?
How do we explain the existence of the other cultures? (usually 2 questions).

Players creating magician adventurers should read and understand the answers to these questions.

Spirit magic replaces Battle Magic. Spirit spells come from spirits, not from vague teachings. All spirit magic spells have a 50-meter range and a duration of 5 minutes. A spirit magican has a chance equal to his POWx5% of successfully casting a spirit spell. Some of the old battle magic spells are dropped (Invisibility), some are added (Control [Species], Endurance, Second Sight, Visibility).

Divine Magic replaces old Rune Magic. The role of the priest in the community is clarified. Rune Lords no longer exist in the basic ***RuneQuest*** Divine Magic rules, but they still exist in Glorantha. Temples are extensively treated, and now include automatic spell defenses. Twelve generic religions include the Agricultural Goddess, the Ruling Deity, the Sea God, the Trickster, etc. Divine spells work as before, but the different religions use different mixes of the divine spells. Certain spirit spells are available to the religions.

Sorcery is a skill-based magic system, new to ***RuneQuest***. All sorcery spells cost 1 magic point to cast, have a range of 10 meters, and have a duration of 10 minutes. Through the use of magical skills, a sorcerer manipulates the intensity, duration, and range of a spell (also increasing the magic point cost). He can also combine the effects of several spells. A sorcerer is limited in manipulating and combining spells by his Free INT—that quantity of characteristic INT which is not used to remember spells. All of the sorcery spells are new, including Tap (permanently drains characteristics from a victim and turns them into magic points), Create Familiar, Protective Circle, Teleport, Smother, and other sorcerous magics.

Ritual Magic is also new to ***RuneQuest***, but is not an independent system. Rituals are available to practitioners of the other three magic systems. One ritual provides a method of increasing the chance of spell-casting success in exchange for time spent casting the spell. Other rituals allow a magician to summon and control creatures, or to enchant people, places, or things.

3: Gamemaster Book

The AH edition of ***RuneQuest*** provides comprehensive help for the gamemaster, especially novice gamemasters, in making campaign decisions including how to run a game, how to design a scenario, and how to plan a campaign.

One section covers languages in roleplaying. Another includes encounter tables for five terrain types in the Physical Plane, plus three tabels for the Spirit Planes.

The Civilization chapter assembles background data for a medieval society, and includes functional definitions for group sizes (town, city, clan, tribe, etc) and social classes (slave, commoner, rich citizen, noble, etc.). The price lists contain entries for common treasures, weapons and armor, and various services (mercenary troops, spell-casting services, freight costs, boats and ships).

Eleven types of ships, plus simple and effective rules for using ships in a roleplaying game occur in the Ships and Sailing chapter.

The Money Tree is a complete scenario, ready-to-play. Novice adventurers are asked to trek to a secret cave, wherein grows a fabulous coin-sprouting bush.

4: Creatures Book

Creatures that rely on instinct have Fixed INT (not to be confused with the sorcerer's Free INT). Humans, who can reason, have normal INT. Creatures are also classified as being Complete or Incomplete. Incomplete creatures lack one or more characteristics (a wraith is an incomplete creature).

About a hundred animal species are described and quantified, ranging from the ordinary and common (horse, deer, dogs) to wild animals (bears, lions, crocodiles) to monsters (dragons, dinosaurs, werewolves, giant ant) and otherworld creatures (disease spirits, pain spirits, hellions, elementals, ghosts, nymphs).

5: Glorantha Book

All previous ***RuneQuest*** information has been collected and expanded upon. The Glorantha Book contains approximately ten times the information available in old ***RuneQuest***. For the first time a map and notes on the whole world are given, including the southern continent, inhuman races, pantheons, and details on the long-awaited Cult of Ernalda. Rune Lords are explained. Statistics are provided for dragonewts and creatures of chaos.

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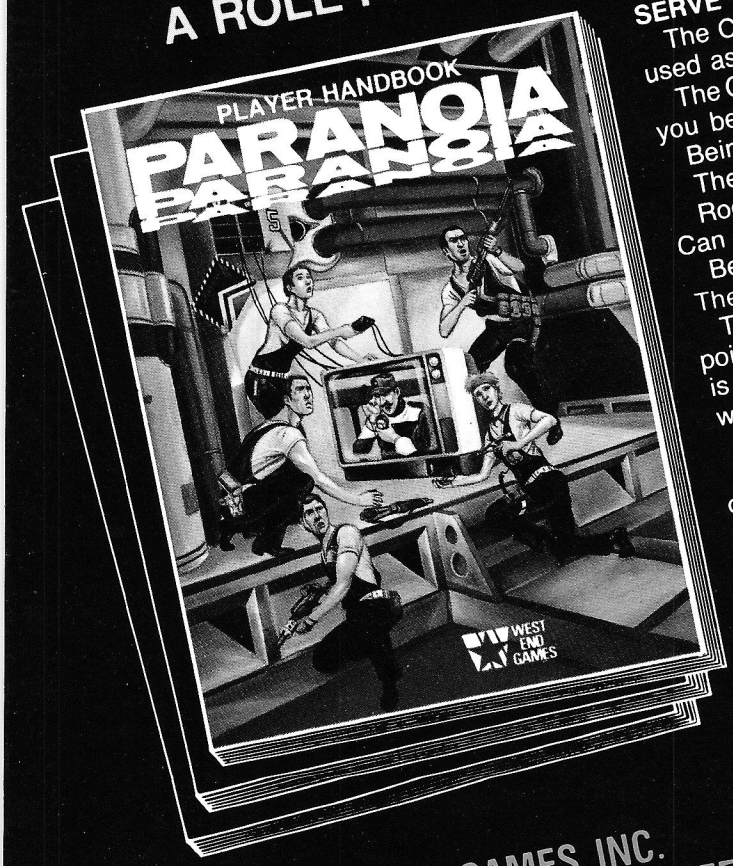

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Books & Gaming

Reviews of books with interesting world settings useful for creating imaginative role-playing campaigns.

CASTLES

(Bantam Books, $29.95) By Alan Lee, text by David Day, designed by David Larkin

Reviewed by John Nubbin

As a subject in general, castles hold a magic fascination for most of us. As the latest hardback release from Bantam Books, they become a staggering wonderment as the pens and brushes of artist Alan Lee give them a shape and power unknown in modern illustration. For anyone interested in fantasy art, this book will be a must.

Castles starts with the picture of a once great fortress now in ruins. Alan Lee feels this is important. His theory is that ruins force one to create the missing parts anew. He feels no one can look at a field of tumbled classical masonry and not wonder what shape it originally took.

The ruins quickly leave the scene, though, turning the reader over to a feast of words and pictures which continually intertwine, complimenting each other endlessly and effortlessly. The text, added by author David Day, was not begun until Lee was nearly finished with his numerous paintings and pen & ink, and pencil drawings, but the book flows as if the text had actually come first. The book is an amazing achievement, and one that many adventure gamers will be wanting to add to their collections.

Most gamers already have a book on fortifications. They know how and when to use moats, the proper placement of murder holes, where the stables should be, etc. If that was the subject area of *Castles*, there would be little point in going on about it here. The book is not an historical look at castles, however, but a study of the myths and legends which surround them.

Castles were the magnificent realizations of the best minds of their time—generated in a burst of extraordinary engineering principles and architectural creativity at least as great as the imaginative splendor of those towering structures. The stories surrounding castles, both real and imaginary, have stayed with us since their first tellings. What *Castles* offers the adventure gamer is a chance to explore the best of the thousands of tales which have centered around castles since their very beginning.

The book is broken into three sections, The Age of Myth, The Age of Romance, and The Age of Fantasy. In The Age of Myths, such subjects are explored as the castle of the Valkyrie, Odin's Hall, the Rainbow Bridge, and the Floating Tower. A number of Faerie structures are discussed and shown, as well as those from the very beginning of forts, the caers and halls of the early Celts and the Romans.

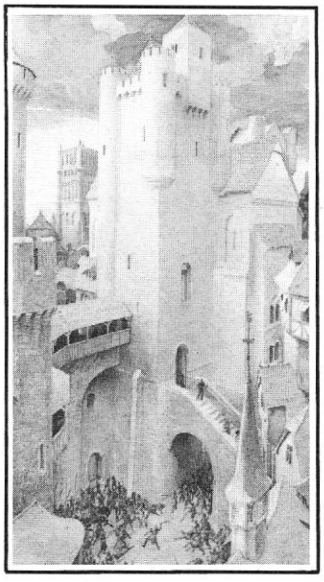
In The Age of Romance, a large portion of the section is naturally given over to the castles of such figures as Arthur, Lancelot, and Morgan Le Fay. But, even though the Arthurian legends dominate this part of the book, it still makes room to cover other important figures like Seigfried and Charlemagne.

Saving the catch-all chapter for last, The Age of Fantasy gives us everyone from Atlas and Oberon, to Sleeping Beauty and Jack-the-Giant-Killer. Here can be found Castle Dracula, the castle of the Red Death, and such wildly divergent buildings as Kafka's castle, and the castles of Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Of course, every castle ever mentioned is not present; they do not have to be. What has been presented in this new volume is the feel of castles. What makes them awesome, and the stuff of their greatness, is what is being explored. The effort is being made to make the intensity and power castles a tangible thing to the book's readers. And, there may be no better artist for the job than the one who was used here.

Alan Lee has had a life-long love affair with castles. As a child, he pasted together towering edifices of cardboard, burnt them, and then rebuilt them from their ruined ashes. Later, he avidly read the great romances and myths in which castles always figured so prominently. When he began to draw, they began cropping up in every third or fourth scene.

When he took his sketches and watercolors to designer/editor David Larkin, Larkin was instantly impressed. As he tells it, "One afternoon, a slim, unassuming chap came into my office carrying a small, black sketchbook filled with the most beautiful drawings and watercolors. All displayed an enormous talent for drawing and draftsmanship combined with a love of storytelling and history. I



was so impressed that I wanted to encourage this man (then working as a park-keeper) and immediately found a cover for him to illustrate."

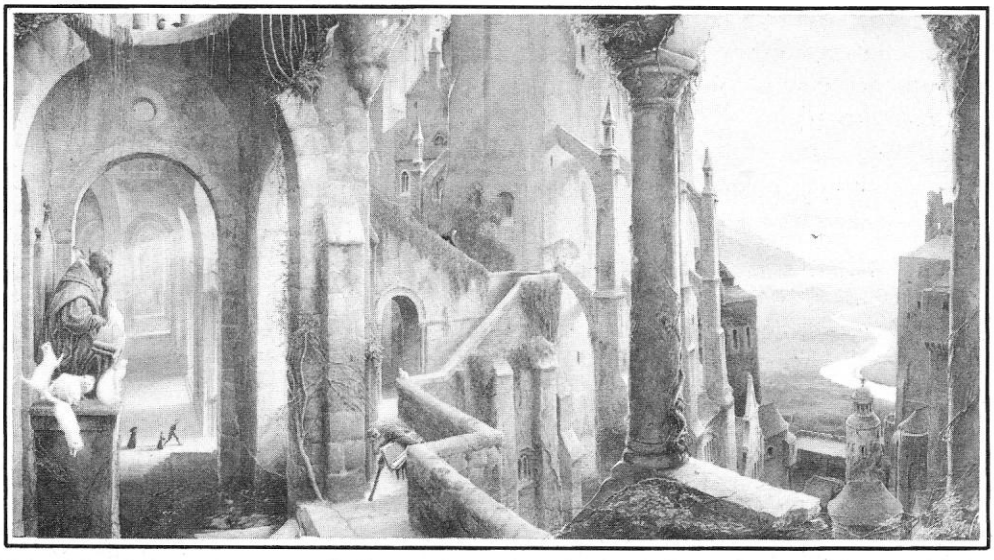
That was in 1969. For the next ten years, Lee turned out a steady stream of paperback covers. Toward the end of his paperback days, though, he began to branch out. His work appeared in the Peacock Press title, *Once Upon a Time*, along with that of other top contemporary illustrators. In 1978, he collaborated with artist Brian Froud to produce the internationally acclaimed bestseller *Faeries*. After that, he went on to *The Mabinogion* (a Dragon's Dream volume which is hard to find, but worth anyone's money).

Then came *Castles*. A project which took three years to complete, it is a breathtaking collection of Lee's finest work. The legends within are told in a classic, fantasy manner. Day's text is warm and flowing, always moving at just the correct pace. And, hardly any more can be said of Lee's work. It is as dynamic, as vibrant, as anyone could hope for. The fact that the book was printed in Italy, using the Pizzi Offset Company's special five-color press, only makes it more of a wonder in this age of shoddy, second-hand bookmaking. It is almost as if Bantam set out to make a book as beautiful and yet long-lasting as its subject matter.

Perhaps the last paragraph of the book holds the answer:

So, well into the twentieth century, the creators of dreams are

Continued page 35



Secret Societies Part 1

FIRST IN A SERIES

Assassin a murderer or killer, esp. a fanatic who kills a prominent person.
—The Random House College Dictionary

"I name the Assassins, who are to be cursed and fled."
—A medieval priest

"The Strangest Sect in History"

The Assassins

By E. S. Erkes

With this article, I'm beginning a series on famous secret societies. I'll be writing the series for the general reader, but with the prospective gamemaster in mind. With a little imagination, a gamemaster can fit any or all of these societies into any modern real-world role-playing game: *Call Of Cthulhu*, *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*, *Chill*, *Illuminati*, and so on. Even the superhero games might benefit from the intrigue that these organizations can provide. Some of the older societies, like the Assassins, could even be maneuvered into *Chivalry & Sorcery*.

These will not be encyclopedic examinations of the various societies. They will, I hope, be informative overviews. Nor will I be examining all the well-known groups. I have generally avoided the strictly political in favor of the esoteric and the occult. And, though much of this material will be new to many readers, all of it comes from research at an ordinary college library. One of the paradoxes of the modern secret societies is that so much information on them is readily available.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ASSASSINS? They arose at the end of the eleventh century, in Persia. They spread to other parts of the Middle East, most notably Syria. They kept their headquarters in large, nearly impregnable castles. They performed selective assassinations—hence the name—of local nobles and military officers. They used the dagger exclusively for their killings; they abhorred poison, rope, and other methods, even though the practice of knifing increased the chances of being caught. In fact, the Assassin was almost always caught after the killing; most observers believed that the sect considered survival of a mission dishonorable. In any case, no captured Assassin ever revealed the secrets of the order. By the time the movement came to an official end—overwhelmed by the Mongol invasions of the 13th century—almost all knowledge of them had come from second- and third-hand sources. Most of what passed for the truth about them was the product of wild speculation.

The Assassins captured the imagination of the West almost immediately. Within a hundred and fifty years of their founding, the name "assassin" had acquired the same general meaning it has today.

Probably the most influential report on the Assassins was that of Marco Polo, who journeyed through Persia in the 13th century. In that jouney, he came upon the Assassin stronghold and longtime headquarters at Alamut. According to the famous traveler, the Assassins had enclosed a valley between two mountains for their specific purposes: Within this enclosure they had created the world's most wonderful garden, with every kind of fruit imaginable growing in it. Spaced throughout the verdant splendor were beautiful palaces and pavilions, and running through it were streams of "wine and milk and honey." Beautiful women were constantly in evidence, and danced and played musical instruments. Meanwhile, at a nearby fortress, potential recruits to the order were being informed of the delights of Paradise by the resident Assassin leader. Then the recruits would be drugged with a mysterious potion that made them fall into a deep sleep. When they awoke in the Assassins' garden, they naturally assumed that they had somehow entered Paradise—and for all they were concerned, they were correct. The recruits were allowed to stay within the valley (according to the chronicler, none of them ever wanted to leave) until the chief Assassin wanted someone killed. He would then have one of the men drugged again and brought before him. He would promise the new Assassin that he would be returned to Paradise if he performed one simple act—a murder. According to Marco Polo, this method worked to perfection.

Modern historians universally regard the preceding story as pure fantasy. Contradictions fairly leap out at the reader, most notably, why would the highly secretive Assassins divulge their deepest secrets to a casual traveler, and a Christian at that? Almost certainly the Polo story was a local legend or combination of legends which he transcribed as fact. This serves to point out how little we truly know about the Assassins—even today.

Virtually all our knowledge of the Assassins and their customs comes to us, as with the Polo story, from outside—and usually hostile—sources. One

contemporary story about them said that any Assassin who revealed the secrets of the order to his mother would be killed without mercy. Another story claimed tha they traveled always in disguise, and were able to perfectly mimic the customs of other peoples. They would sell themselves to anyone for a price, said another tale, and had no compunctions about killing anyone, however innocent. Several travelers through Persia recorded incidents where the local leader, while entertaining guests, would nod and induce one of his followers to leap from a high wall to his death. (This is the basis for the similar scene in John Milius's *Conan The Barbarian* film.) There is certainly more truth in most of these tales than in the Polo account, but we will most likely never know how much.

Many of the most vociferously anti-Assassin accounts came from Islamic writers. Most of them depicted the Assassins as heretics from Islam, as eaters of pork, and occasionally as even worse. The Spanish Arab Ibn-Djubair wrote in 1183 that "in the mountains behind Lebanon are the castles of the impious [Assassins], a sect who have seceded from Islam, and claimed divinity for a certain mandevil, who has deceived them by vanities and false appearances, so that they have taken him as a god and worship him, and give their lives for him."

The charge of idolatry is almost certainly untrue, at least for the early Assassins, but it underscores their real purpose. The Assassins, like nearly all the serious secret societies, were at heart a political movement. Their only real goal was to disrupt and depose the Sunni Moslem hegemony in the region. They were a subsect of the Ismaili sect of Islam, which itself was an offshoot of the Shiite movement. Very much like today's Iranians, they hated the dominant Sunni Moslem faction, and were willing to go to any lengths to rid the Middle East of the Sunnis.

Almost all their victims were Sunni Moslems. Thost most likely to be killed were Sunni authorities who tried too strenuously to exert Sunni influence. One story has it that the great Arab chieftain Saladin, a Sunni, awoke one morning with a poisoned Assassin dagger on the pillow next to his, as a warning. The sect had been in existence for over fifty years before it killed its first Christian Crusader victim, Raymond I, Prince of Tripoli.

In general the Assassins left the Crusaders alone as much as possible. Their argument was not with the Christians, and they reasoned that for every Crusader they killed, another would take his place; the loss of an Assassin in the attempt would therefore be useless. Indeed, the Assassins are known to have paid tribute to the Templars and Hospitallers who occupied the Holy Land. That the Assassins' targets were almost always Moslems did not stop Western speculations about them. Soon after their appearance, every murder in every Western court was credited to them. Every court in Europe grew suspicious of visitors. Every king assumed that his political enemies had hired the Assassins to do him in. Even their murder of Conrad, Christian king of Jerusalem, was said to have been on a contract from Richard the Lion-Hearted. The origin of these stories lies in Christian ignorance of the differences between Moslem sects, who were all generally lumped together as "Saracens." In summary, the Assassins did not target Christians, and completely avoided Jews and non-Sunni Moslems.

The Assassins, for the first half of their known existence, were definitely not hired killers. All their murders were committed out of political idealism, and carried out in an intensity that can only be described as religious. The almost sacramental quality of the assassinations suggests that there may have been a ritual, with consecrations and invocations. In the absence of hard evidence, we can only speculate on this. Whatever the background, all accounts agree that they were remarkably successful at their specialty: murder.

Actually, the Assassins' work usually benefited Christian Europe. With most of the victims being Sunni Moslems, the sect was furthering Christian ambitions in the area. In many cases the Christians and the Assassins shared the same common Sunni enemy—but this was only circumstance; the Assassins collaborated with no one. A typical "common enemy" was Nizem al-Mulk, Grand Vizier of the Seljuk Turk sultanate in Asia Minor. At age 75, he finally wrote down all the wisdom he had learned in his years of statesmanship. The result was the *Sisyasat-nama*, or *The Book of the Art of Rule*, a work which is still read serious today. Unfortunately for Nizam, the work also contained a passage deploring the presence of Christians, Jews, and Shiites in the government, and particularly castigating the Ismailis as a divisive force. Shortly after, an Assassin posing as a disciple stabbed him to death.

The sect was founded by one Hasan ibn-Sabbah in 1090. Hasan, a Persian Shiite who converted to Ismailism in his adulthood, established himself and his movement in the strategic fortress of Alamut ("Eagle's Nest") in northern Persia. From this stronghold, he gathered recruits and watched his movement grow in power. The prime educational tool here was absolute obedience. The Assassin, according to one 19th-century source, taught that there was little difference between right and wrong or even heaven and hell—the only thing that mattered was complete allegiance to the will of Imam, or spiritual leader.

Hasan proved to be the most committed kind of master. He is said to have lived continuously within Alamut for thirty years, going outside only twice in all that time. He enforced an

The Assassination of the Nizam al-Mulk. (From a Persian manuscript of the *Jami al-tavarikh* of Rashid al-Din, in the library of the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul. Early 14th century.)

iron code of conduct, going so far as killing his only two sons.

He established ranks within the sect. Lowest on the scale were the *Lasiq*, or laymen: Those not fully admitted to the order. Above them were the *Fidai* ("devotees")—the murderers. Next came the *Rafik*, or Fellows of the order, followed by the *Dais*, the sect's religious and political representatives. Above them were the senior Dais, or recruiters. The top rank was reserved for Hasan: The Old Man of the Mountain. This ominous title captured European imagination right away, but for the Assassins it was simply the equivalent of the Arabic *sheik* ("old man").

In 1094, the Assassins began seizing other castles in the region; eventually they firmly established themselves in Persia and Syria, and reached as far East as India. The other castles had the same heirarchy as at Alamut, with each having its own Old Man—though all acknowledged Hasan's leadership.

As they expanded, the Assassins began performing political murders, so much so that they came quite quickly to the attentions of the Sunni leadership. By 1102—when the Syrian prince of Emessa was murdered on his way to a major battle with the Crusaders—the Sunnis realized they had to act. The Seljuk sultanate launched an offensive, and by 1105, the Assassins no longer existed as a mainstream political force. They now remained isolated in their castles, and their open proselytizing ended. The Assassins had now entered the phase in which they became world-famous: As utterly secretive killers. We can assume that their open defeat by the sultanate made the Assassins more covert than ever. Where they had once sought to sway whole areas of the countryside, they now began secretly approaching local Sunni leaders, threatening them one by one with assassination if their policies became too pro-Sunni. This "protection racket," as it has been called by historians, lasted for the rest of the Assassins' known history.

Soon after, the legends began to circulate about the order. How one *fidai*'s mother rejoiced when hearing that her son had died in the successful commission of a murder. When the report proved false and the *fidai* was found to have survived, the mother put on clothes of mourning. Several stories allude to "a certain hidden law" which no Assassin could speak of to anyone except to their children when they reached adulthood. What this law pertained to remained unknown.

The mystery about the order even includes its name. The word *assassin* is derived from the Arabic *hashishi*, meaning "user of hashish," and most historians have assumed that drug usage was common, or even ritual, among them. But other historians have noted that the word *hashish* is an ancient Arabic word that only in later centuries came to connote Indian hemp; originally it meant any sort of herbage, and the sect may have gotten the name "Assassins" as a term of contempt from the Sunni population. The Assassins, for their part, called themselves *Nizaris*, after an early Egyptian patron. The question of drug usage among the order will never be resolved, but it should be noted that virtually all the drug usage stories come from Western writers like Marco Polo.

The next great turning point for the order came in 1124, with the death of Hasan at Alamut. After the passing of their founder, the Assassins lost all claim to a unified orthodoxy. In the late twelfth century, Rashid Ad-Din Sinan, a Syrian Old Man, is known to have begun selling his *fidai* for hired killings, something which Western opinion had believed in all along and which Hasan would never have permitted. Several Mountains of Assassins actually rejected Islam and turned to paganism in various forms. The only constants were secrecy and killing, only now the killings were not restricted to outsiders. Hasan's chosen successor was murdered by his brother-in-law in a religious argument.

Here is where a gamemaster can easily work the Assassins into a scenario. After Hasan, they splintered into entirely different groups in their separate castles; an imaginative gamemaster has the freedom to use these different groups of Assassins in virtually any setting, supporting any belief. Getting them into modern times is only a slight problem.

The Assassins pass from history in the mid-13th century. The rampaging Mongols of Hulagu, grandson of Genghis Khan, overran Persia in 1257. The Persian Assassins surrendered their castles, even Alamut, to Hulagu after brief negotiations. The Mongols are said to have slaughtered every human being in the castles. The Syrian Assassins survived only a short while longer; the Egyptian Sultan Beybars, whose victories over Hulagu may have saved both Islam and Christendom, slaughtered the Syrian order in 1272.

The easy destruction of this ferocious sect seems more than a little curious, even to the casual observer. A gamemaster would not be stretching reality too much to theorize that the Assassins chose that moment to go completely underground, as it were. This is not an illogical conclusion; the order tended to grow more secretive as it grew older. In this way a gamemaster could create 20th-century Assassins—a sect surviving unknown and unnoticed by history since the 13th century.

At the beginning of the piece I said that I would be concentrating on the occult rather than the political secret societies. So why have I begun with the Assassins, who are almost a textbook example of the secret political movement? Because of the influence they have exerted on history. That the word "assassin" has existed in most of the European languages with the exact same meaning it had since it entered those languages in the 13th century is only part of the story. The idea of the Assassins is what is truly important about them: The idea that they could strike at anyone they wanted, anywhere, anytime; the idea that they could secrete themselves in their castles to practice their secret rituals; the idea that they could live and travel in virtual invisibility. For the 13th-century man, this was awe-inspiring. It would have been more surprising if the word had not entered the language at that point. For the generations that followed, the idea of the Assassins was a continuing fascination. Books and manuscripts continued to appear on them. The order—the idea of the order—influenced some Western thinking of the Rennaissance and the Enlightenment, and led in part to the creation of the famous Western secret societies. Though the direction and outlook of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons were entirely different from those of the Assassins, they would not have been the same without the Assassin example.

Beyond that, let me justify this article by saying that some of the splinter Assassin groups must have experimented with the occult, at least. This is likely, I believe, because of the very ancient traditions of mysticism in the area, and the likelihood that heretics from Islam would have encountered them sooner or later. And, of course, occult Assassins would be more interesting for role-playing-game purposes. "The strangest sect in history," as the historian Will Durant has called the Assassins, could add depth and intrigue to any role-playing game.

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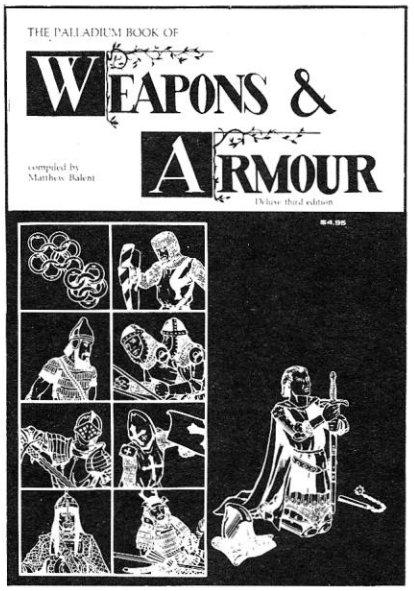

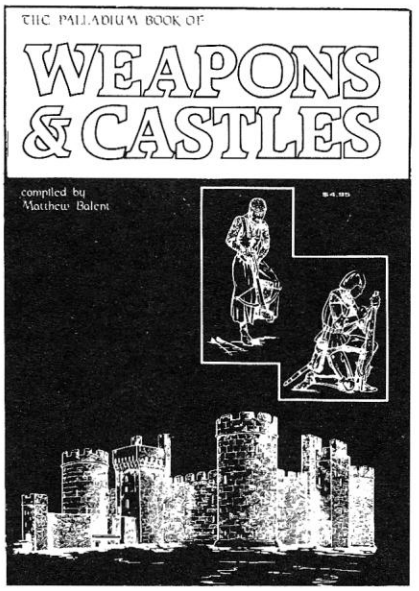

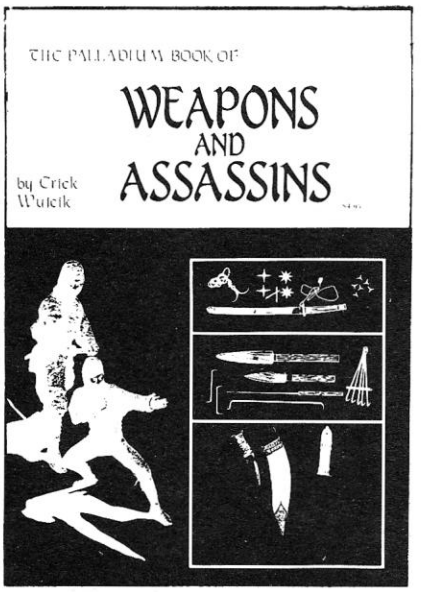

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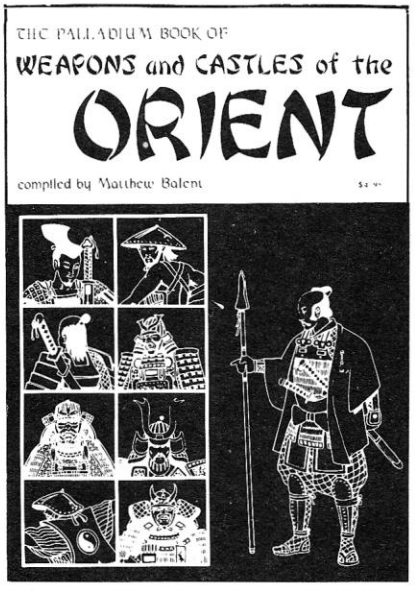

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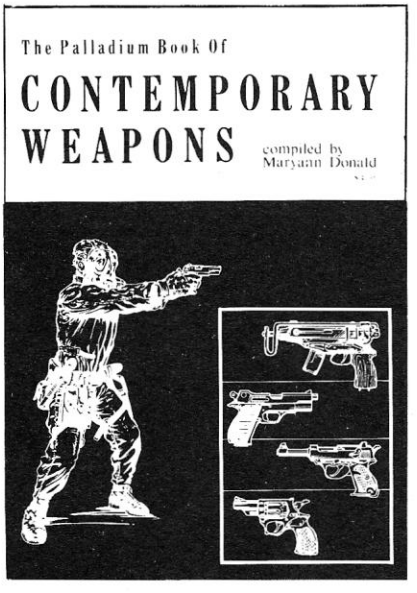

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Amazon Artuams Part Two

Guardians of EL DORADO

"I always feel that beneath this green umbrella must lie something like a second Angkor (the ancient ruined city which lies buried in the jungle of Cambodia)" the artist H.R. Giger said of forests he played in as a child, far from the Amazon, but then a jungle is a jungle is a jungle, and it describes the way outsiders tend to view jungles—wild and fantastically exotic places that totally overload all the senses of those not familiar with it, you can't see the forest for the trees, no matter how hard you look, and it seems to be hiding something. Entire cities can be lost in a jungle. Surely there's something in there, something fabulous: treasures, strange animals, utopian societies that have never contacted the outside world, some Holy Grail or Maltese Falcon . . . the stuff that dreams are made of. The stuff that enflames the imagination and desires and sends you searching. Dreams that make the real-life nightmare labyrinth of the jungle irresistable. What Charles Waterton in his *Wanderings in South America* called, "Ludicrous extravagances! Pleasing to those fond of the marvelous, and excellent matter for a distempered brain."

And beware, that distempered brain can develop into what French colonials call *le coup de bambou*, tropical madness—for which the treatment was often exorcism.

By Ernest Hogan

Of course, even natives can catch this madness, in F. Bruce Lamb's *Wizard of the Upper Amazon*, Xumu, chief of the Huni Kui, told of how he saw a grayish-white howler monkey twice as big as normal, "I had a sudden impulse to have his white robe as a trophy," but the tribe of brown and black howlers would always create diversions to let their leader—the "white ghost"—escape. Xumu would dream of the white ghost, and go to the places he dreamed of, but was never to find him. Finally he would only see the white ghost in those dreams, where his deep-throated roar echoed.

So when the Europeans came to the jungles of the Amazon, they searched for the stuff that dreams are made of. And why not? Reports of the New World by early explorers were full of such things: Columbus mentioned mermaids; others described *gens beatissima*, a race of extremely happy pigmies; people who lived hundreds of years; snakes greater than crocodiles; ox-bodied beasts with noses like elephants; ox-headed, four-legged fish with warts and tortoise shells; giant fish that could eat men whole; Carib tribes with ears like elephants, or armed with poisoned arrows so deadly that the victim's flesh dropped off the bones within 24 hours if the remedy wasn't applied. All ancestors of tales of apparitions, ghosts, the *lobishomen* (werewolf), the headless horse and the old woman with a death's head that are still told around Amazonian camp fires.

It was such dreams that drove the conquistadors, for the Americas were as strange as another planet, or the sort of places they read about in their favorite books, *Amadis of Gual* by Garci-Rodriguez de Montalvo and *Sergas de Esplandian*, its sequel by another author. These books were tales of fantastic adventures in far-off lands, similar to today's sword & sorcery, the sort of popular reading material that drove Don Quixote mad and sent him tilting with windmills—officials considered them to be a corrupting influence on young minds, the Spanish queen banned them for export to Mexico in 1531 and curiously banned them again five years later.

These factors caused the conquistadors to come to the Amazon with minds containing, according to Walker Chapman in *The Golden Dream: Seekers of El Dorado*, "a cauldron of dreams . . . lifted from the printed page to the receptive mind and then into a sort of potential reality that was ever on the brink of being fulfilled." They were playing an ultimately dangerous sort of fantasy role-playing game.

They scoured the jungle for a prize greater than mere adventure, or the discovery of wonders, or *guaic*, a drug

made from the great oak-like tree and used to treat syphilis (that the crew of the *Pinta* brought to Europe in 1493), or the hallucinogenic *yage* vine that others would search for in the 20th century, or even the glory of being the first white men in an unknown land. They were after gold, riches that they believed to be waiting in the jungle to be snatched up by whomever had the nerve to find and take it.

It had to be there. After all, Cortes found his Aztec Empire, and Pizarro his Incas, both laden with gold that they didn't even consider valuable! Surely, in the greatest jungle on Earth, in the vastness of the New World, there could be another treasure-kingdom waiting to be looted, maybe over the next hill, in the next valley, something worth all the pain and suffering of trudging through Green Hell, something incredible . . . something like El Dorado.

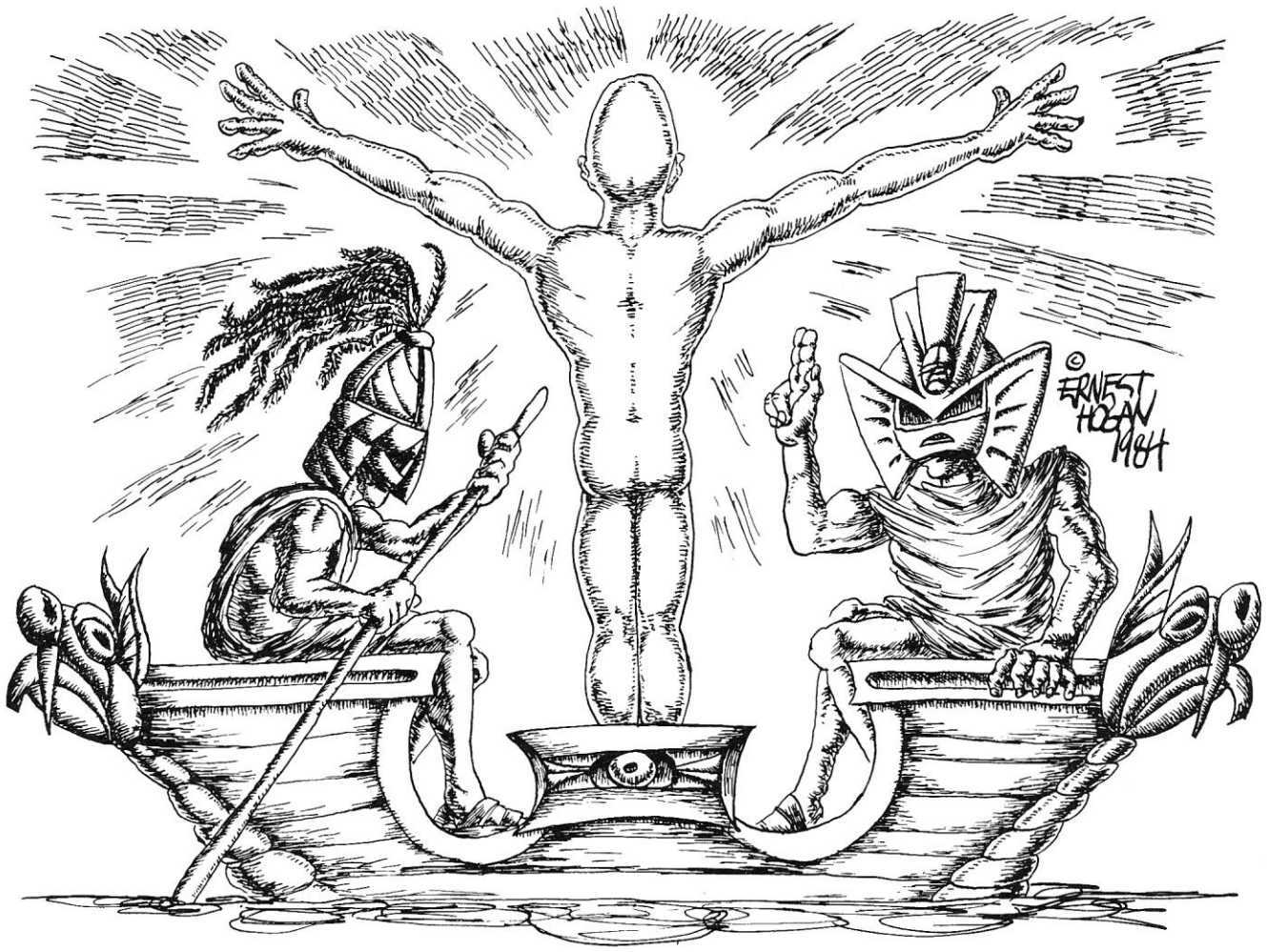
In a land called Cundinamarco, in a kingdom beside Lake Guatavita, on the Bogata plateau, on a special day, each year a fabulous ritual would take place. The king would take off all his clothes and annoint his body with turpentine, then roll in gold dust until he was completely covered and looked like a living, gleaming statue of gold. He would then march to the edge of the lake, followed by all his subjects who played music and filled the air with song. The king and his nobles would then get into a canoe and paddle to the lake's middle where the golden man would throw offerings of emeralds and gold to sink to the bottom, then he would get up and hurl himself into the lake, causing a bright flash that would cause his people to cheer. When the king returned to the shore, with all the gold dust washed off his body, a festival would start, and all would drink, dance, and sing. This is the true story of El Dorado.

That's right, true. It really happened, every year, carried out by a people known as the Chibhas (or Musicas).

Long before the Spaniards came near to that plateau, they heard of *el dorado*, the golden king. But of course, the story was never heard first hand, and some embellishments were added, a legend grew, and underwent a process of exaggeration and mutation. *El dorado* the man became El Dorado the kingdom of gold, a city so rich that they threw away gold, richer than anything found in Mexico or Peru, perhaps the richest city in the world. Maps drawn in the 17th century would show a huge lake on the equator, between the Amazon River and Guiana, and on its shore would be the city of Manoa, or El Dorado, even though no one had ever been there. Rumor soon had the ritual being performed every day.

Surprisingly, the real El Dorado was discovered early on, only the seekers' expectations had grown so large that they couldn't recognize it. The Chibhas/Musicas were more advanced than the Indians of the lowlands, but they were not the equivalent of the Aztecs or Incas. Undaunted, the conquistadors went to look elsewhere, and El Dorado began to move further and further to the east, from Columbia to the Amazon basin to the Guianese jungle, and failing that, it went south. The Indians aided and abetted in this migration, when armed strangers would show up at their villages, demanding their gold, they would say, "Sorry, we do not have the gold that you speak of, but we do know of this city—El Dorado—where they have much of it. We have visited it often. It's that way. . ." and send them away.

This defensive myth-making spawned a number of fantasies and started quite



a few quests and strange beliefs. An excellent example is a tale told to Lt. Lawrence Keymis by an Indian guide who, while aiding in a search for El Dorado offered to take Keymis to a mountain of precious stones 15 miles away overland. He didn't take the Indian up on it, but wanted to check it out on a future trip, so the Indian said he would start a rumor of a dragon that eats all who come near the mountain, and offer to, in exchange for some strong wine, charm the dragon so it would let them pass.

Another myth told of Amazons in the New World. Men looked for them in western Mexico, Central America, and, of course, the Amazon basin that was named for them.

The first New World Amazons were mentioned in fiction, the then popular *Sergas de Esplandian*. They had black skin and wielded weapons of gold. Their ruler was Queen Calafia, and their home the mythical island of California—my 1626 map of the western hemisphere shows California as a huge island off the coasts of Newe Spain and Newe Granada.

Rumors of Amazons were sparked by the tendency of Indian women to fight alongside their men, a fact that made later Spanish historians consider explorer Francisco de Orrellana's claim to have found the Amazons to be treacherous, feverish imaginings due to the adventurer's tendency to hyperbolize. Since Amazon literally means "without breasts" in Greek, most reports were careful to point out that the Amazons of the New World did not burn or cut off their breasts to make using the bow easier.

The most detailed descriptions of Amazons was made by Friar Gaspar de Carjal, who was with Orrellana when he discovered the Amazons, or more correctly, they discovered him, since the encounter was in the form of an attack: "These women are very white and tall, and have hair very long and braided and wound about the head, and they are very robust and go about naked, with their privy parts covered, with their bows and arrows in their hands," which could be a description of Indian women, except the Indians of South America are neither white nor tall. De Carjal has his Amazons fighting as much as ten Indian men, and being able to shoot arrows hard enough to make boats look like porcupines.

In 1533, an Amazon rumor swept through Spain: It seemed that the Amazons had heard of the valor and virility of Spanish men, and decided they would make excellent mates. So, many told of seventy large vessels docked in the ports of Santander and Laredo, that had brought ten thousand Amazons seeking ensemination. The deal was that each Amazon would pay

a man 15 ducats for making her pregnant, she would stay in Spain to give birth, if the child was male she would leave him with the father, the girls would be taken away to be raised as Amazons. Sadly, eager Spaniards never found the ships of the Amazons.

And the Amazons weren't the only strange things you could run into on your way to El Dorado, the jungle spawned tales of other strange peoples, monstrous lost races, the pre-Space Age equivalent of Martians. . .

In the first century, Pliny the Elder had written of the Blemmayae of Africa, a people with no heads, and eyes and mouths on their chests. In the 14th century a collection of medieval myths published as the supposed travels of a Sir John Mandeville described, "foul men of a figure without heads, and have eyes in either shoulder one, and their mouth round shaped like a horseshoe, y-mist their breasts." In the 16th century the existence of such beings with "eyes in their shoulders and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and a long trail of hair groweth backward between their shoulders" in South America was reported by none other than Sir Walter Raleigh.

Raleigh never saw any headless men himself, but he had heard so many reports of them from Spaniards and Indians that he felt confident that these people, who's nation according to Lt. Lawrence Keymis was called Chiparemai by the Caribs and Ewipanomo by the Guianians, were real enough to include in his own report.

Keymis also wrote Raleigh of "a sort of people more monstrous, I omit to mention, because it is not matter of difficulty to get one of them, and the report otherwise will appear fabulous." But, apparently catching one was more difficult than Keymis thought, so there is no way of telling just what he was talking about.

It might have been the much noted big-eared people, or perhaps what Charles Waterton said was widely believed in the Demerara part of Guiana: A nation of Indians with long tails. Described as "malicious, cruel, and ill-natured," it was told that the Portuguese had to keep them penned up in a certain river to keep them from running amok and spreading terror throughout the land.

After a while, with the import of slaves from Africa, superstitions developed that even pitted the goat-sucker bird against white outsiders. Blacks and Indians refused to kill these birds, for they were under the command of both Jumbo, the African demon and the Yabahon, the Demerara Indian devil. They were inhabited by the

souls of evil-doers, sent by the devils to haunt cruel masters. If one was to cry near a white man's door he was expected to waste away with a long, slow illness.

But not all the guardians of El Dorado were imaginary. Many tribes had fierce warriors, who, painted for battle, with heads sporting either feathered headdresses, falcon's down, or hair slicked down with red *achiote* paste, armed with bows and blowguns, their darts and arrows dipped in the deadly curare, attacking with a blood-freezing roar could strike fear in the hearts of most foolhardy jungle explorers. Many sets of 16th century prints depicted Amazonian cannibalistic practices—the capture, killing, and butchering of the prisoners, women dancing with severed limbs, the boiling of the bodies in a characteristic cauldron, and the final consumption in such detail that they probably weren't far from the thoughts of those who braved the jungle.

The peoples of the jungle were superstitious, but sometimes supernatural beliefs can make for powerful warriors, like the Tupi-Kawahib who play shooting games that are supposed to bring a magical death to those who hit the supporting post rather than the dummy target, or like the Jivaros, who have never been conquered. When a Spanish viceroy demanded gold, they gathered all they could find, tied the Spaniard up, melted the gold down—and poured it down his throat!

Besides the belief in the tsentask, or magic darts of their shamans (that are supposed to be inferior to the "white man's" tsentsak of the Canelos shamans, that give the power to become possessed of the souls of the dead and act as a medium, and send demons to possess others and manipulate their behavior, and of course, the owners of these darts can't be killed by ordinary means), the Jivaros believe in three kinds of souls, *wakani*. Besides the *nekas wakani*, the "true," "real," or ordinary soul, there is the *artuam wakani*, or acquired soul, and *muisak wakani*, or avenging soul that is generated under special circumstances.

An artuam soul is acquired by witnessing an artuam, a particular kind of apparition or vision. An artuam can come in a variety of forms—a pair of giant jaguars fighting and rolling over each other towards the observer, or two anacondas doing the same, or a single huge bodiless head, or a ball of fire coming through the jungle toward the artuam seeker—and appear only occasionally and exist for less than a minute, but the soul it creates exists forever. To possess one artuam soul is to be immune to death, except from contagious disease. Acquire two artuam souls and you can't die from any cause.

The problem is that the artuam soul makes it owner want to kill, and when he gives in to the urge, he loses the soul and all its protection. He must seek another artuam, another apparition. The cycle starts all over again.

When a person who has seen an artuam sometime in his life is killed, a muisak is formed. It leaves the corpse through the mouth, which is why a victim is usually turned face-down, the head cut off and made into a *tsanlsu*, a shrunken head trophy, with its lips sewn shut, imprisoning the muisak inside. If the muisak is not trapped in a tsanlsu, it can travel as far as it likes and will change into one of three kinds of *iwanci*, or demons whose purpose it is to avenge the victim's death.

The three forms an avenging demon can take are that of the *mankunci*, a poisonous snake, the anacondaor boa constrictor, and a large tree that falls on the murderer and crushes him.

Sometimes the iwanci will appear to the murderer in his sleep, as a man or jaguar. If the sleeper doesn't grab a gun or lance and kill the apparition, it will eventually succeed in its mission. If the demon only wounds the murderer, he will become a permanent invalid.

When the demon finally avenges its master's death, it appears in a dream to one of the victim's relatives, in human form, with a shrunken head trophy hanging from its neck, and says, "I have killed an enemy. Now I am going away, where my relatives are. I am going far away to have a feast

with them," then disappears . . . forever.

Did any loved ones of El Dorado seekers have such dreams?

Such are the ways the jungle deals with those who don't treat it with the proper amount of respect, but how does it deal with such disrespectful outsiders in this age of chainsaws, napalm, defoliants, nuclear weapons, and planet-wide pollution?

Solar eclipses scare the Kraho, because it may be a sign of the return of the "long night," an ancient time when humans had to feed on bark and leaves and were attacked and killed by all kinds of animals, including mosquitoes and grasshoppers. Many committed suicide during this time.

In Guiana, the Lolaca and Atabaca fear lunar eclipses, because if the moon dies, all domestic fires will go out, so they hide burning sticks, just in case.

The Chiriguana believe that a prolonged eclipse of the sun will cause half buried logs to become green again, there would be no more dead wood, gourds would have to be burned, and the "long night" would be starting.

Pretty far-out, huh? But wait. There has been a lot of talk about the Greenhouse Effect lately, increased carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere trapping the sun's rays, raising temperatures (the same process makes the surface temperature on Venus about 800 degrees Fahrenheit) and causing other changes in climate. The polar ice caps would melt, playing hell with coastlines and beach front properties, and evaporating a lot of water, throwing more moisture into the air, making it a lot more humid in a lot more places. Tropical humidity will spread, Southern California, where I live, will go from a reclaimed desert to a tropical rain forest, a jungle.

If Mohammed can't come to the mountain. . .

Plants would grow in places that were recently too dry, like moss making dry logs green again, which would make starting fires harders, and there would be more animals roaming around, more insects—like mosquitoes and grasshoppers. A thick, jungle-like canopy, like the one that hides most buildings and telephone lines as I look out my window, would form. That and more clouds, rain, and mist would make things darker, like we were experiencing the beginning of a long night.

Hm . . . wasn't California described by early explorers as being greener, more tropical, more like the island of Queen Califia and her Amazons that it was named for? What if a "long day" is ending, and things were just getting back to normal again? What if this is just the jungle's way of reclaiming what belonged to it all along?

Meanwhile, as you search for your own personal El Dorado, remember, it's a jungle out there.

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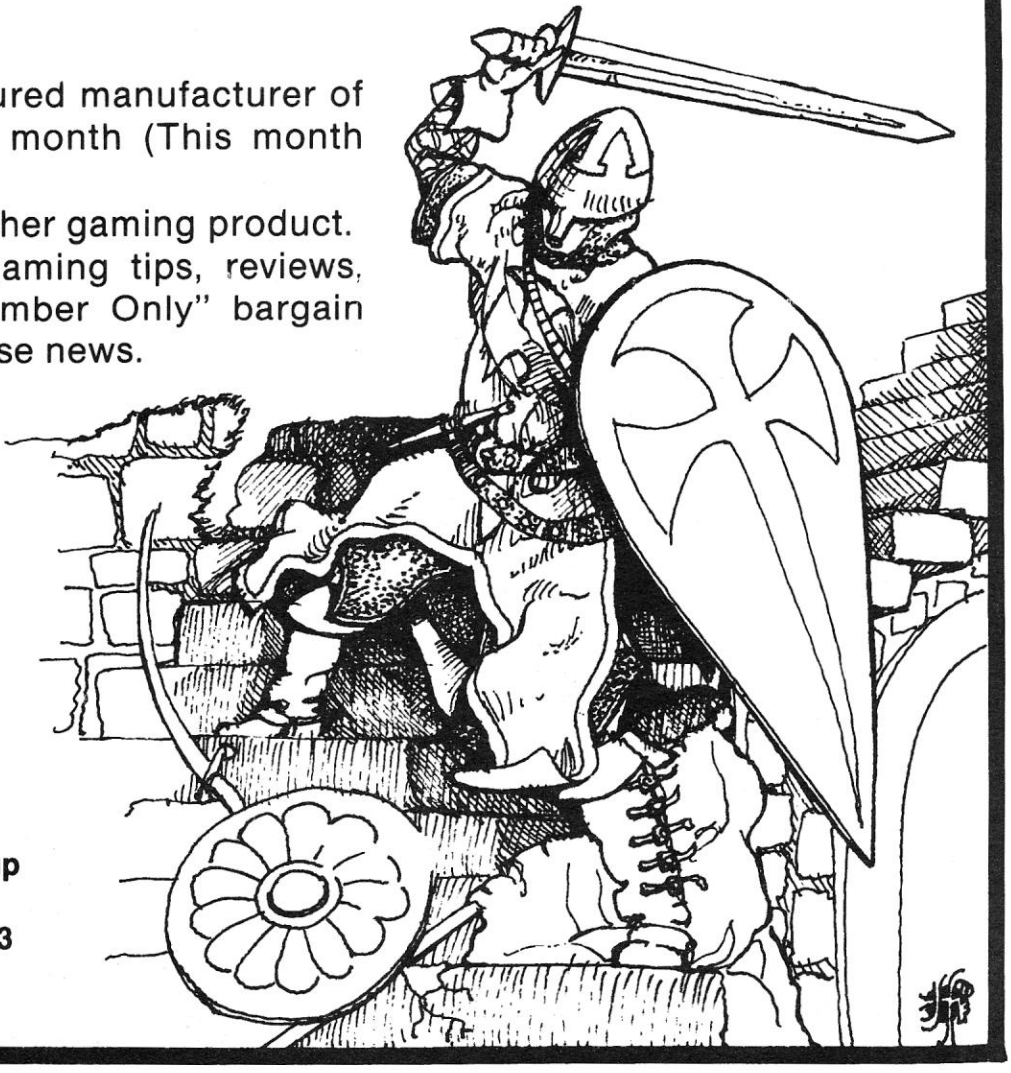

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V.W.P.B.N.L.

The abbreviation stands for
"Void Where Prohibited By Natural Law."
A discussion of superpowers in superhero role-playing games.

Hello. My name is Quentin Long, and I've been writing for Alarums & Excursions *for three years or so. One regularly recurring section in my column (titled "The Other True Way") is Void Where Prohibited By Natural Law, in which I do unspeakable things to poor defenseless superhero game systems, mostly* Champions. *I was surprised when Tadashi wrote to me that he'd like me to do something similar for* Different Worlds, *but what the hey, I'm chaotic. . .*

THE JOY OF AUTOFIRE

By Quentin Long

Autofire is a strapping young Power Advantage in the *Champions* game system which gets far less use and attention than it deserves, poor thing. This lack of attention is caused largely by the injunction that one normally should not use it for building characters (*Revised Champions*, p. 64). But if you look at it, you begin to see how delightful it truly is, and normalcy be damned--

Autofire is +40CV versus one target. . . A standard burst of Autofire is 10 shots. For every 2 pts. the Attack Roll is made by, the target will take one hit.
Revised Champions, *p. 53*

Alright, let's see what we can do with Autofire, eh?

How about Autofire Find Weakness? Oh, sure the book says you shouldn't put Advantages on skills, but it also says that if the gamemaster lets it through it's perfectly alright, so get off my back. Anyway, the clause about "for every 2 pts. the Attack Roll is made by" doesn't apply, since a FW roll is not an attack roll, so you get one level of weakness on your target for every pair of pips you made your roll by, and who cares if he had PD of 79 when you're dividing it by 32 or something? Autofire Find Weakness is how to write up Karnak of the Inhumans. He's got a FW roll of about 97 or less on 3D6, so he doesn't care. . .

Autofire Missile Deflection is great when some clown is tossing Autofire attacks in your face; you avoid the irritating -2 off your roll for each separate missile you deflect--at least for the first 10 deflections, anyway.

Autofire Force Field is useful for those times when you absolutely must be protected from the outside world. Since laying down a Force Field is not significantly more difficult than, say, picking up a salt shaker, it is clearly a trivial matter to be able to put up all 10 FFs at once, -2 OCV per "shot" or no. How you cope with the 10-times-normal END cost is your business. . .

Autofire Growth or Shrink is interesting. Try Usable on Others with the Shrink; it does wonders to your opponents, particularly the non-flying ones. . .

How about Autofire Running, Flight, Teleport, Superleap, or Tunneling? "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight. . ."

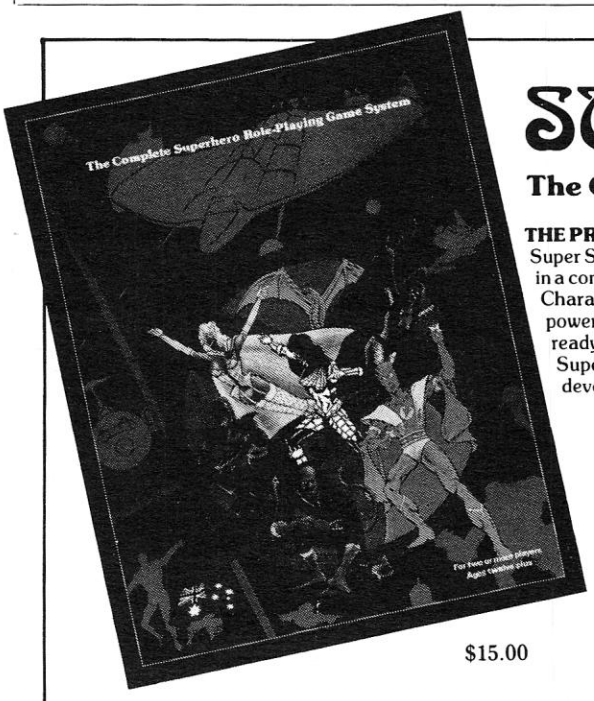
Autofire Regeneration is wonderful for bringing characters back from the dead, particularly if you plug Usable on Others into it . . . and since Regeneration does not burn END in the first place, who cares about decuple END cost?

I recommend Autofire Area Effect Endurance Transfer. It's practically impossible to avoid ending up with more END than you started with, particularly if your targets are all bunched up. . .

And what do you do about those pesky bricks who keep on demolishing your strongest Entangles with a mere shrug of their hypermuscular shoulders? Why, you Autofire your Entangle, of course! Let's see how strong he is against 10 layers of webbing. . .

By now you're probably getting the idea, but let me leave you with one last item, the Octopus Attack.

This is nothing less than Autofire Extra Limb with Usable On Others At Range, and one "zap" turns your target into an octopus. □



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Profiles From The Four-Fold Way

The Power Gamer
The Wargamer
The Role-Player
The Storyteller

By Greg Costikyan (with apologies to Glenn Blacow)

For those who might otherwise be mystified by the following, this article describes four characters. Glenn Blacow's seminal article, printed in *Different Worlds 10*, describes four basic role-playing styles. These were the power gamer, the wargamer, the role-player, and the storyteller. All adventure gamers are a little of all of them, of course, but many campaigns concentrate on one aspect to the near-exclusion of others. These characters are meant to be archetypes—or, perhaps, each of the role-playing styles taken to illogical logical extremes.

THE POWER GAMER

Name: Fred Mighty-Thews

Home: His Castle (built in the shape of a geodesic dome to resist aerial attack); automated fire-ball throwers installed; seventeen magic detector alarms operating in a one-mile radius surrounding; contains a garrison of 10,000 5th-level fighting men; impregnated with magical protection against all elements, magic, clerical magic, scrying, and nuclear explosions; area one-mile around castle is posted with signs reading: "DANGER: Minefield. Keep to Marked Paths. Keep Your Hands in the Air."

Profession: Lord, adventurer, conconqueror.

Hobbies: Acquiring new magical items; killing local upstarts.

Last Book Read: *How to Become a Minor Dark Lord in 17 Easy Lessons.*

Latest Accomplishment: The mass destruction of 23 orc villages. "Even at 5 experience points per orc, that really adds up!"

Why I Do What I Do: "I like to win."

Profile: Do something for him, he'll do something to you. People who go on expeditions with him tend to die: "Is it my fault I can take a 142-die fireball and you can't?"

His Drink: Whatever he wants.

STATS

(After *Dungeons & Dragons*. "You don't play *D&D*? Huh! Let me tell you about my 78th-level fighter-magic-user-cleric-thief-assassin-druid!")

Strength: 18/00

Intelligence: 16

Wisdom: 16

Dexterity: 17

Constitution: 18/00

Charisma: 4 ("Who cares?"

Level: 78

Class: Fighter/magic-user/cleric/thief/assassin/monk/druid

Alignment: Neutral

Equipment: 42 assorted magical weapons; 14-die fireball projector; armored flying carpet; ring of invulnerability to fires; ring of invulnerability to cold; ring of invulnerability to water; ring of invulnerability to air; ring of invulnerability to earth; ring of invulnerability to normal damage; ring of invulnerability to good; ring of invulnerability to evil; ring of invulnerability to magic; 142 "cure-all" potions; force-screen projector; Imperial Warrant ("Assist the bearer as he desires regardless of the cost in treasure or lives"); membership card in the Minor Deities Association; one of each of the book magic items.

Bank Balance: The Bank at Haven no longer bothers to keep accounts; they simply present a bill at the end of each quarter, in the full knowledge that it will either be honored, or the bank will be destroyed (again).

COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERS

The Wargamer: "Smart guy—but I can beat him."

The Role-Player: "Pain in the neck—wastes time on expeditions."

The Storyteller: "Real pain in the neck. Always wants to talk to them. Shoot first, then use Speak with Dead so they can't lie, and Raise them if you shouldn't have killed them in the first place, that's my motto. Anyway, I can beat him."

THE WARGAMER

Name: Character G7 ("I'll think of a name, just give me time!")

Home: Horseback

Profession: Mercenary, freelance adventurer, tactician.

Hobbies: Learning to use new weapons, killing things.

Last Book Read: Clausewitz's *Strategy*

Latest Accomplishment: Slew the King of the Dragons with nothing but a fire-hardened pointed stick and a hastily-improvised poison made from the sap of a yew tree.

Why I Do This: "The proper occupation of members of my class is fighting. The only legitimate goal is the attainment of desired objectives through absolute economy of force."

Profile: A lead of men, a superb tactician. Incapable of small talk.

His Drink: "I don't drink. One has to maintain concentration."

STATS

(After *Chivalry & Sorcery*. "*C&S* contains much of this medieval frippery, but it also has the most sophisticated and realistic combat system, capable

of the greatest range of strategic detail and tactical finesse.")

Strength: 17

Dexterity: 16

Constitution: 20

Personal Appearance: 14

Bardic Voice: 14

Intelligence: 19

Wisdom: 16

Charisma: 17

Alignment: 6

Size: 15

Body: 39

Fatigue: 39

PCF: 34

Class: Nobility

Equipment: Minor barony containing several thousand assorted serfs; Great Horse; innumerable weapons, generally carried by a serf hireling in a "golf bag" ("Harold, the Number Seven Sword, please."); *Palladium Book of Arms and Armor*; *Practical Siegecraft*; *A Handbook of Monsters and Demons*; *The Boy Scout Manual*.

Bank Balance: Enough to equip a small army.

COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERS

The Power Gamer: "No finesse."

The Role-Player: "Head in the clouds; no sense of the real world."

The Storyteller: "Nothing wrong with him a few years in the infantry with cold showers and a good drill sergeant wouldn't cure."

THE ROLE-PLAYER

Name: Timmy Trollkin

Home: A large, well-upholstered hovel outside Boldhome.

Profession: Dilletante and packrat.

Hobbies: Collecting shiny things, babbling.

Last Book Read: Morgenstern's *Color Selection in Galactic Pantography*

Latest Accomplishment: Acquired a complete set of wisdom teeth from each of the major herdbeasts of the Plaines of Prax.

Why I Do This: "I like to go on adventures because you meet all sorts of interesting people and there are always loose bits of string to pick up and you never know what interesting things you will find in the most unlikely places and anyway the mules need to get out every once in a while and anyway my friends need me, they'd always be without the right tool for the job if I weren't around, so I really enjoy . . ., etc., etc."

Profile: Foolish; eager to please; great fun or a major nuisance, depending on your disposition and the weather.

His Drink: Absinthe. "It has the most interesting effects. . ."

STATS

(After *RuneQuest*. "Skill-driven systems are the only way that anything other than combat becomes important to the game.")

Strength: 4 ("I like to play extreme characters.")

Constitution: 10

Intelligence: 14

Power: 16

Dexterity: 8

Charisma: 7

Skills: Climbing 25%; Hide Item 92%; Jumping 20%; Lock Picking 5%; Map Making 0% ("Can I map? Huh? Why don't you ever let me map?"); Riding 40%; Swimming 0%; Trap Set/Disarm 78%; Listen 25%; Spot Hidden Item 105%; Tracking 10%; Camouflage 10%; Hide in Cover 75%; Move Silently 5%; Pick Pockets 95%; Oratory 10%; Pluglunk 50%; Sling 25%; Hat Pin 105%; Evaluate Treasure 0%; Read Own Language 10%.

Equipment: 10,048 assorted pieces of string; 1 set complete automotive repair tools; 1 blacksmith's hammer, with anvil; complete set silverware; 14 assorted pots and pans; mosquito netting; shark repellent; 1000 paper bags of various sizes; butterfly collection; 873 pebbles, sorted by size and color; 1 Groaci nose-flute; 1 copy *De Mysteriis Vermiis*, by Ludwig Prinn; 1 copy *Victorious German Arms*, by E. Gary Gygax; 1 copy *Why Magic Cannot Possibly Work*, by Grumpen Mostal III; 142 icons, idols and religious symbols (just to be safe); various items far too numerous to mention; 10 pack mules to carry it all. All of it. On every expedition.

Bank Balance: "Bank? You mean like a river?"

COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERS

The Power Gamer: "He's no fun."

The Wargamer: "I told him the one about the twelve Mostali and the naked elf women, and he didn't get it."

The Storyteller: "He's okay when you get a couple of beers into him."

THE STORYTELLER

Name: Gronfel mar de yap Frandek of the House Stolwin, Seventeenth of that Line.

Home: "Home? I suppose my home is far on the distant shore of the Shining Sea, in the little keep of Frandek. Ah! There the crimson flyers flock in the springtime, when snow recedes and the petals of the snowgleam break from winter's fastness. There, there, my heart yearns in the spring, when the clean whiff of nascent life wafts over Farom's battlements. But of late, I make my domicile in this fair city, far from my beloved land, but the place to which my destiny has called me. My flat leans over Fenster Street, above the Soaring Guppy Tavern. It is a modest place, perhaps not fully befitting a scion of House Stolwin, but one makes do with one needst must."

Profession: Dandy, poet, philanderer.

Lastest Book Read: F. Gwynplain McIntyre's *Bestiary of Absurd and Fantastic Creatures*

Latest Accomplishment: The conquest of Damselle Melliflue, flower of Farom's court and wife of Baron Sark, a man known for brutality and a habit of killing younger men in duels.

Why I Do This: "Why? Why, man, ask why the wind blows, or why the stars their stately circuits make. 'Tis life!"

Profile: Not to be relied on over the long term, short attention span, unable to hold onto money.

His Drink: Glenfiddich, when he can afford it, which is rarely.

STATS

(After *Tunnels & Trolls*. "I like simple systems. That way, numbers and dice don't get in the way of the game.")

ST: 15

IQ: 15

LK: 16

CON: 14

DEX: 10

CHR: 13

Kindred: Human

Class: Warrior

Personal Adds: 7

Height: 5' 11"

Weight: 150 lbs

Level: 5

Equipment: Broadsword, 2 dirks, leather, buckler, elaborate wardrobe, 6 bottles of excellent Gistonian wine, patent of nobility.

Bank Balance: None, 75 gold pieces on hand. ("Something will turn up.")

COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERS

The Power Gamer: "A monster of greed and arrogance. Were I king, he'd soon know his place."

The Wargamer: "An utter bore, fit only for the guardhouse."

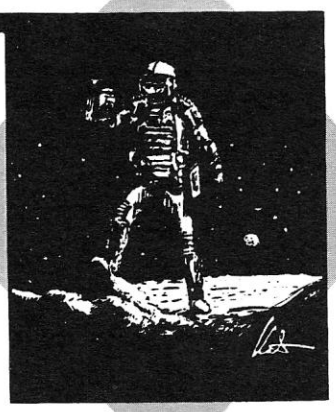
The Role-Player: "A fool, but an amusing one."

Art Feature:

"Turn Right At the Next Oasis..."

By Brad W. Foster

Alien Worlds



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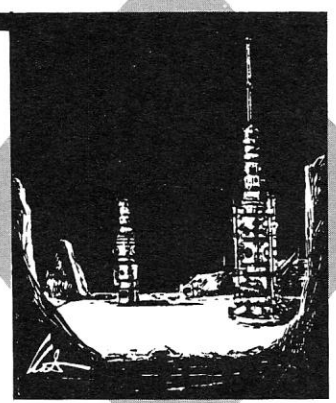
Alien Mystery



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Who were the mysterious Ancients? They appeared suddenly 300,000 years ago possessed of unguessably high technology, ruled the known universe for a few thousand years, and then destroyed themselves in a great war which left behind the shattered remains of worlds. They carried humans to the stars, created the Vargr, and left behind a few puzzling artifacts. Each known Ancient site is different, as if there were hundreds of independent super-races, each with its distinctive technology, but everything fits the hands and bodies of the Droyne, an unassuming race inhabiting a few worlds in the Spinward Marches. Who were they? Why did they disappear? A band of adventurers has the chance to find out as they discover a functioning Ancient base. *The Secret of the Ancients:* an adventure for **Traveller**. $5.

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Game Reviews

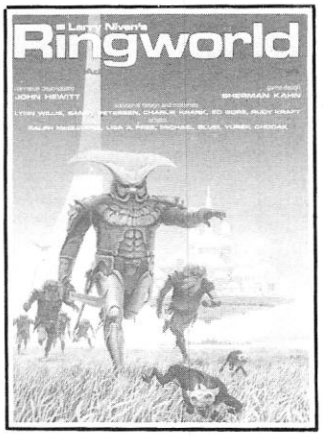
Ringworld/Chill/Village Of Twilight/Lords Of Creation/
Rolemaster/Stormhaven/Aslan/The Klingon Empire/
The Federation/Bad Medicine For Dr. Drugs/Blizzard Pass/
Startown Liberty/The Island of Doctor Apocalypse

☆☆☆☆

RINGWORLD

By John Hewitt, et al
(Chaosium, $25)

Reviewed by Jeff Seiken



Picture an immense ring almost one million miles wide and 597 million miles in circumference spinning around a sun slightly smaller than our own. The total surface area of the ring would encompass approximately three million earths. Now populate the ring with 30 trillion inhabitants, plus innumerable types and varieties of flora and fauna. Disrupt the ring's delicate ecosystem with at least one calamity known to have struck over a thousand years ago and the possibility of others that may have occurred further back in the dim history of the ring, causing mutations and bizarre evolutionary developments among the ring's lifeforms. Finally, add clues and perhaps answers to some of the most compelling mysteries of the universe. It would be difficult to imagine a better setting for a role-playing game. Such is the world of *Ringworld.*

Ringworld is based on the Larry Niven novel of the same name, its sequel *The Ringworld Engineers*, and his collection of "Known Space" stories. The two novels take place about 900 years in the future and chronicle the adventures and discoveries of the first two expeditions to Ringworld. *Ringworld* the game comes boxed with a striking cover painting by artist Ralph McQuarrie. Its components include four rulebooks totaling over 180 pages, character and reference sheets, cut-out figures, and assorted dice.

In *Ringworld*, players assume the roles of Known Space scientists and explorers journeying to Ringworld in pursuit of knowledge, glory, wealth, power, or for some more individual sense of purpose. Like most of the other Chaosium role-playing games which owe their heritage to *RuneQuest*, the mechanics of *Ringworld* combine a comfortable mix of the familiar and the innovative. The rulebooks also contain considerable amounts of background information to help gamemasters in their construction of a campaign milieu.

The Explorer Book covers all aspects of character generation, skill use, and combat. Explorers roll dice to figure their starting characteristics in eight categories ranging from strength to education; age, defects, and the explorer's home world are also determined randomly. Due to the existance of boosterspice which has eliminated the effects of aging, beginning explorers may be well over 100 years old, although still quite young in physiological terms. An explorer's age, as well as his intelligence and education, affect the number of occupation points which the explorer initially receives. Occupation points translate into percentage points which may be applied to specific skills. The rules allow considerable freedom in the selection of skills and explorers can conceivably spread their occupation points over a wide range of areas, but the system for skill use encourages concentration in a selected number of skills; otherwise, explorers will often find themselves frustrated when performing even rudimentary tasks. The Explorer Book details over fifty different types of skills. In addition, when a certain level of expertise is reached in some skills, a branch of study must then be chosen and skill increases subsequently affect only that selected branch. For example, an explorer may have a general skill of 30% in chemistry; when the explorer's skill level reaches 35%, a specific branch, such as industrial chemistry, must be chosen. Thereafter, the explorer will have a 35% skill in industrial chemistry and 30% in all other types of chemistry. Thus, the actual number of skills which a character may choose from in *Ringworld* is much larger than fifty, permitting a correspondingly greater degree of specialization and individuality among explorers. Provisions are also included for the creation of Kzinti and Puppeteer explorers.

Combat is handled in a moderately complex, though detailed, manner. The basic unit of action is the impulse, which equals about one second. Explorers possess an action ranking based on their dexterity: the action ranking determines the number of impulses required to perform a major action, such as aiming a ranged weapon or attacking with a melee weapon. Minor actions, like firing a ranged weapon, can be performed in a single impulse. Hit chances are based on the explorer's skill percentage with the particular weapon being used. Modifiers for range, movement, and aiming can also influence the die roll. In actual play, this system works smoothly, provided that players clearly state and keep track of their actions. As a playing aid, the gamemaster may want to draw up several impulse charts numbered 1 to 50 or 100 so that the impulse when actions will be completed can be recorded and each elapsed impulse marked off. A summary of combat rules and modifiers on the reference sheets would also have been helpful (only modifiers for ranged weapons and moving vehicles are given) and certainly could have been included at the expense of some of the less relevant items like the cold exposure and protection tables. Fortunately, the rules for combat cover less than two pages of rules and can be quickly assimilated after a few battles.

One potential glitch does exist in the combat system, but this problem can be eliminated through a careful reading of the rules and the application of a little common sense. A melee attack takes a full action ranking —usually four impulses—to carry out, yet the target of the attack (i.e., the defender) is in no way limited from moving during this period. Thus, the defender can simply move away from the attack before the action is completed. However, the rules under the subsection Human Speed state that a character, while moving not more than three meter per impulse, may also perform one other action. A logical extension of this rule to the mechanics of combat, then, should allow an explorer to conduct a melee attack as well as move up to three meters per impulse. This resolves the dilemma of the defender freely skipping out of the way of a melee assault, since the attacker can now advance and keep his target within reach, provided that the defender does not actually run away (move farther than three meters in an impulse). An even more logical extension of this rule would be to allow an attacker to make a melee attack while moving up to his base movement rate. In this way, extremely swift hominids like the Herders (base movement rate of 6 meters) could attack even running humans, thus reflecting the advantage possessed by an attacker with superior speed in a battle or pursuit situation.

The second rulebook details the technology of the 29th century. Generators, computers, medical equipment, tools, vehicles, weapons, and protective devices all receive ample and comprehensive coverage. The section on vehicles, for example, ranges from descriptions of one-man lift belts to interstellar starships. Full information, including mass, volume, energy used, energy supply, and any other pertinent stats, is given for each piece of technology. The Technology Book also provides hit location charts for all listed vehicles, a nice example reflective of the thoroughness and attention to detail exhibited in almost every aspect of the *Ringworld* package.

The titling of the third manual in the *Ringworld* quartet, Creatures Book, is somewhat misleading, although creatures may be the best term to encompass the broad variety of lifeforms found in Known Space and on Ringworld. This rulebook supplies descriptions and stats on the prominent alien races of Known Space and the various types of hominids, animals, and flora which populate Ringworld. Again, thoroughness is the catchword here; a listing of the skill base chances for every alien and hominid race is even given to help gamemasters and players create gamemaster characters and non-human explorers, respectively. The Creatures Book, however, also contains one of the few discordant notes in an otherwise remarkably consistent design. The text states that, in some cases, it was necessary to add details in order to flesh out the basic material in Niven's novels and in the section on animals, this clearly shows. Although the animals themselves are fairly standard and not too exotic, their names—like flob,

hueti, and zongo—sound closer to leftover from TSR's *Fiend Folio*. Additionally, the table of rumored animals includes not a single line of information concerning the nature of these reputed beasts, nor can anything be garnered from such nonsensical names as anxaoma, munil, and varmot, which makes this listing superfluous.

The Gamemaster Book consists chiefly of essays on various aspects of Ringworld, plus "The Journey of the Catseye," an introductory scenario. "Catseye" is a good starting adventure and sets the tone of role-playing in the world of Ringworld—the search for information or materials, encounters with new races and cultures, and the need to coexist and cooperate with the Ringworld natives. *Ringworld* is a difficult game to run in that it requires a skillful gamemaster to keep play (and the explorers) under control. The demands of running a campaign world roughly the size of three million earths compressed into such a small area are enough to tax the abilities of even the most experienced gamemasters. True, the settings of some science-fiction role-playing games may encompass multiple galaxies, but most travel takes place in the featureless void of space. In *Ringworld*, with explorers routinely traveling at speeds of 7000 km per hour across an ever-changing landscape, the gamemaster needs to be flexible and able to improvise quickly. Moreover, although the rules claim otherwise, gamemastering a *Ringworld* campaign requires at least some scientific background on the gamemaster's behalf. Many of the skills are scientifically oriented and the use of these skills in the course of gamemaster-directed research projects will form a significant part of play. When a gamemaster must handle explorers with skills like embryology and petrochemistry, a little more than high school chem will prove helpful. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine *Ringworld* adventures with themes less lofty than the advancement of scientific boundaries. For example, a scenario in the spirit of Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Man Who Would Be King" in which a team of Known Space mercenaries set out to conquer a primitive part of Ringworld is merely one of the many possibilities. A single piece of advice to any potential gamemaster: read the two Ringworld novels first before attempting to run a scenario. While the rulebooks provide all that is needed to conduct an adventure, it is the novels which show how each separate feature of Ringworld fits together to form one complete, complex, and interacting world picture.

As mentioned previously, the rulebooks contain numerous essays devoted to specific facets of Ringworld to assist the gamemaster in constructing a suitable (and viable) campaign. These essays are both well-written and invaluable. In fact, as befitting a product which owes its origins to a literary source, *Ringworld* stands out as an extremely literate role-playing game. Digesting the extensive amounts of factual information presented in the essays may demand a significant commitment of time and energy on the part of the gamemaster, but then the rewards of role-playing in the world of *Ringworld* will far outstrip the effort. □

☆☆☆

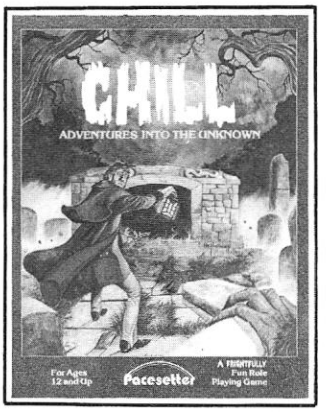
CHILL

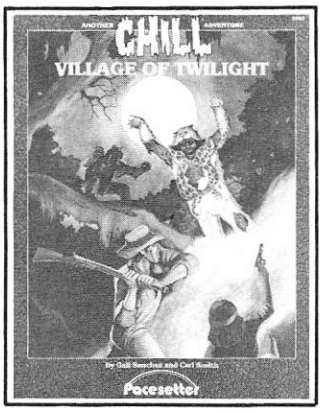
By Gali Sanchez and Garry Spiegle (Pacesetter, $12)

VILLAGE OF TWILIGHT

By Gali Sanchez and Carl Smith ($6)

Reviewed by Keith Herber





One of two initial releases from Pacesetter, the game of ***Chill*** allows its players the opportunity to explore the worlds of gothic horror first described in such novels as ***Dracula*** and ***Frankenstein*** and later exemplified in the Hollywood monster movies of the 30's and 40's. As members of S.A.V.E.—a secretive, international organization—the characters are asked to investigate (and usually destroy) manifestations from the mysterious "Unknown." Using skills ranging from Modeling to Explosives to the psychic-based "Art," the characters will face an array of lycanthropes, vampires, ghosts, and ghouls, all who seem to draw their evil power from the same mysterious source.

Inside the box are three ten-sided dice, two books, two smaller booklets, a multi-colored world map that reverses to provide a battle board, and a sheet of 140 colored counters depicting various characters and creatures. These counters are also printed on the reverse side with black & white depictions of furniture, automobiles, and other objects of use in a ***Chill*** adventure. The two larger books are titled "Campaign Book" and "Horrors from the Unknown," but one of the smaller booklets is clearly marked "Read Me First." This four-page booklet provides an introduction to role-playing in general and ***Chill*** in particular, while the second, "Terror in Warwick House," is a 16-page introductory adventure into a haunted house. For ease of use, this scenario offers a set of pre-generated player-characters that can be used and the adventure itself provides but limited choices for the players—the results of these choices being clearly spelled out for the benefit of the novice gamemaster. While this does lead to a more or less predictable conclusion, the purpose of the adventure is to demonstrate the rules of the game and this it does admirably. It also proved to be one of the best introductions to role-playing games I have yet seen. While I might question the saleman's claim that a group of beginning gamers can be playing within fifteen minutes of opening the box, it is certain they could enjoy an exciting first time with role-playing on the same evening that they purchased the game.

One of the more unique aspects of the game is the Chill Chart—a single reference used for resolving nearly all aspects of the game including armed and unarmed combat, poison and disease, human and animal reactions to players, along with nearly everything else. By cross-referencing the results of the attacker's (or active character's) dice roll against a specific defensive column, a code letter is found. Referring to the proper table, this code letter indicates the amount and type of damage caused. Everything from light damage to critical wounds and knockdowns are listed on the combat charts and the system also allows for "called shots" with which a player can try to accurately place a bullet or strike a blow. Research and knowledge rolls, pertaining to professional skills such as Archaeology/Anthropology and Police Forensic Pathology, are also handled by the Chill Chart, with the results indicating different degrees of success. Using straight percentile rolls, simpler, general checks can also be made.

Combat and professional skills are chosen by the player to suit his or her character's taste and may be increased by garnering insight points, awarded to players for the successful completion of ***Chill*** adventures. Characters begin at Student level in each skill category and progress through the ranks to Teacher and finally Master. These ranks represent bonuses that are added to a base skill chance derived from the average of one or more of the player's abilities. Players may choose to spend their insight points as they wish, to increase existing skills or to purchase new ones, although some skills, such as Legend/Lore, are only available to players who have achieved specific levels in other, related skill categories. Ability scores, which number eight and range from 26-80, can also be increased by spending insight points.

Combinations of other ability scores produce figures for Unskilled Melee and Sensing Unknown. The former allows for characters to pick up and use any weapon regardless if they are skilled with it or not, while the second allows them to detect the presence of, or the work of some being from the Unknown. Additionally, characters possessing certain minimum scores in Perception and Willpower gain the ability to use "The Art," a form of psychic power available to the players of ***Chill***. The character's version is limited to restorative, healing, and communication forms while the type available to the beings of the Unknown is called "The Evil Way" and consists of many terrible powers that can be used against the emissaries of S.A.V.E.

Descriptions of the various disciplines of the Evil Way are contained in the Horrors from the Unknown book which also gives descriptions and stats for some of the animals and monsters encountered in ***Chill***. Only ten monsters

are outlined and considering the play style of the game, this does not seem adequate. One of the central points of *Chill* is the Fear check, a dice roll made by characters when first encountering some terrifying being. The results of this roll can cause a character to temporarily lose large amounts of Willpower while being forced to flee or hide for the space of one five-second round. After this, provided the character's Willpower has not dropped below 20, he may rejoin the action. Once a certain type of monster has been destroyed or overcome by a character however, this individual need not roll a Fear check when he faces the same type of monster in a future encounter. While perhaps realistic, this does reduce some of the initial advantage the monsters may have, causing the gamemaster to continually devise new types of "frightening" monsters for the players to deal with. For example: If the players successfully complete the introductory adventure, "Terror in Warwick House," they will have met and defeated two different types of monsters making them impervious to the Fear caused by 20% of the monsters listed in the book. Certainly horror movies and books can provide a lot of material for gamemasters to draw new ideas from, but expanding the list contained with the game to cover maybe fifteen or twenty different monsters might be an aid to newcomers.

Aside from this minor complaint, the authors should be complimented on their general thoroughness and attention to detail. The 64-page Campaign Book contains much information regarding such things as visibility in different types of terrain and weather, along with their effects on movement, either on foot or by other device. Transportation, as well as weapons, is covered from a modern standpoint, but stats for items used in a Victorian period setting are also supplied. These two time periods are especially recommended for conducting a *Chill* campaign.

Combat moves fairly quickly with character who possess firearms skills allowed multiple shots. Damage from guns can be devastating and characters would be well-advised to avoid shootouts with gun-toting gamemaster-characters. A note on damage is in order here—*Chill* contains two different kinds, wound and non-wound. Non-wound damage is generally caused by unarmed combat and characters can regenerate lost Stamina points fairly quickly. Wound damage, however, is much more serious and requires lengthy rehabilitation time. This type of damage is most often received as a result of gunfire or armed melee and this factor keeps players from assuming that combat is always the most effective approach to the situation. Another point somewhat unique to *Chill* is the lack of damage listings for different firearms, or for that matter, any of the weapons. The amount and type of damage sustained is dictated by the *Chill* Chart and the difference between the weapons is based more on how effectively they hit, maximum ranges, and so forth. The final result is that almost any weapon has the potential to kill in a single blow.

Reviewed in conjunction with *Chill* was *Village of Twilight*, the first *Chill* scenario to be released by Pacesetter. This 28-page book takes the players to Mexico City where they will meet Dr. Jose S. Guevara, a long-time member of S.A.V.E. In 1959, Guevara led an expedition into the Mexican jungle where he discovered evidence of a strange race of were-jaguars. Recent reports from the jungle indicate that these beasts have been lately seen again and the players have been asked to investigate. After meeting with Guevara in Mexico City and being given the chance to research the issue in the doctor's library, the players travel by jeep to Veracruz. Here they will meet with their guide, eventually to plunge into the jungle. If all goes well, the party will emerge a few weeks later, intact and with the mystery solved.

I found the adventure to be well laid-out and little time was spent flipping through the pages in search of a particular fact or character. The authors also made liberal use of "boxed descriptions" that can be read word-for-word to the players by the gamemaster. This, along with a thorough introduction, greatly eased the load of the gamemaster.

Considering the size of this scenario however, it played rather quickly. This was due, in part, to the limited number of player choices within the adventure. Most events led very pointedly to the next and little time was spent in players discussing possibilities or exploring different avenues. Most like the game but felt that the adventure was a little static. On the other hand, a group of slightly younger players roundly applauded the scenario and felt that it provided just the right amount of mystery and suspense mixed with the opportunity to slug it out with the various evils that confronted them.

While *Village Of Twilight* offered a lot of action and adventure, it is hoped that future scenarios will also exploit the many opportunities for investigation and research which the rules allow for. In the game's defense, it seems that a gamemaster/designer can carefully emphasize either aspect of *Chill* to find a balance that suits his particular group of players. An example of this would be the organization S.A.V.E. This covert group provides an easy way to introduce the players to each adventure and is there to provide them with funds, equipment, and other aid that they may require. This is meant to facilitate getting quickly down to play without a lot of fuss and bother. On the other hand, this could grow repetitious and prove "too convenient" for some gamemasters. S.A.V.E.'s role can be reduced or left out of the campaign entirely, leaving the gamemaster to devise his own introduction to adventures. You can have it either way.

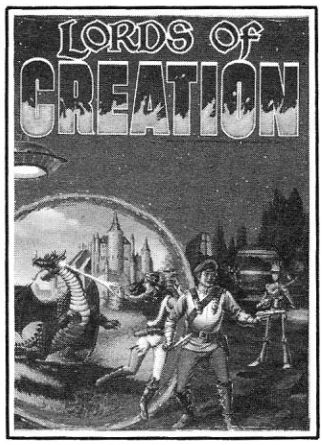
I found *Chill* to be a well-thought-out, well-presented game that simulates the world of horror as represented in (particularly) the movies. The rules are flexible enough and complete enough to allow a gamemaster to set whatever tone or mood he desires his campaign to have and there is a large amount of written and filmed material from which to draw adventure designs. □

☆☆½

LORDS OF CREATION

By Tom Moldvay
(The Avalon Hill Game Company, $12)

Reviewed by Jeff Seiken



With the role-playing market in such a crowded state, it would seem logical that new entries would purposefully address themselves to specific subjects or themes in the hopes of appealing to a gamer's particular interests and thus capturing an audience. For this reason, upon superficial examination, The Avalon Hill Game Company's new role-playing game *Lords Of Creation* appears to be a step in the wrong direction. *Lords Of Creation* has no specific subject, or, more accurately, it attempts to encompass virtually every subject under the sun (and beyond, too). However, *Lords Of Creation* is not a generic role-playing game; rather, players take the part of some very unique individuals in a multiverse quest to become one of the Lords of Creation.

For so broadly a based role-playing game, *Lords Of Creation* has been rather compactly distilled into two 64-page books packaged in the standard AH bookcase format. The first manual is the rulebook and contains all necessary rules of play. The second is the Book of Foes in which can be found stats for over 450 different types of foes for use in scenarios and campaigns.

Players start off as Neophytes, generating their basic ability scores for Muscle, Speed, Stamina, Mental, and Luck by rolling 2D10. The sum of these scores also determines a player's Personal Force points, which play a crucial role in the game. As a player earns experience, he may increase his ability scores which, in turn, will affect his Personal Force. As Personal Force rises, the player gains new levels or titles. Eleven possible titles are included and when a player reaches the eleventh plateau, he becomes a Lord of Creation. Each title carries with it an innate special ability (Neophytes have Dimensional Sight); additionally, for every title attained above the first, the players may select one special power. More about this will be said later.

When creating a character, players also purchase skills equal to their number of Personal Force points. Twenty-one different skill categories consisting of five skill levels apiece are listed, with each level conferring a greater range of capabilities and expertise in that particular category. Players face only minimal restrictions in regards to the initial selection of skill categories and levels, except for one important limitation. The fifth level of most skills allow the use of the skill in a futuristic or magical setting. For example, a character with skill level five in the category of Street Criminal would be able to defuse a magical alarm system, avoid or disarm magical traps, and so on. These skill levels, however, can only be gained after a player actually participates in an adventure set in a futuristic or magical world.

The combat system in *Lords Of Creation* emphasizes simplicity,

although the rules include a number of optional provisions which add a layer of detail to the procedures for resolving combat. The basic sequence breaks down into three main phases: the parties roll for initiative, movement is performed in order according to initiative, and attacks are conducted again as per initiative. A turn of combat represents six seconds and individuals can both move and fight in a single turn. Realism takes a back seat (but then, admittedly, how much realism can you expect—or even desire—in a game like this?), but the system allows battles to be resolved quickly and easily. Unfortunately, the non-integration of movement and combat (i.e., everyone moves and then everyone attacks) can create situations that defy not only realism but that which is of far greater significance to any role-playing game—logic. Consider the following: Hans Solitaire, equipped with a Proton Beamer, encounters a laser armed Starnomad at a distance of one hundred feet. The Starnomad wins the initiative and runs ninety feet toward Solitaire, who decides not to move. During the ensuing attack phase, the Starnomad, still possessing the initiative, blasts Solitaire at point-blank range before he can respond. Presumably, Solitaire was distracted by the sun glinting off of the Starnomad's armor, which explains why he allowed the Starnomad to dash ninety feet and then fire without shooting first. The rules already permit a combatant to fire upon a charging foe intent on engaging him in close combat, so no reason exists not to devise a similar rule covering ranged combat. When a combatant moves farther than his base movement rate and then conducts a ranged attack, simply allow the target of his attack, if he has not moved himself, to fire once at the attacker first. As an added bonus for remaining stationary, you may not want to assess the penalty for firing at a moving target if the target moves directly towards the firing individual. In the above example, then, not only would Solitaire get in the first shot, but he would also not suffer any adverse modifiers for firing at a moving target. The Starnomad, in contrast, would be affected by the modifier for firer movement. Neither of these suggestions will unduly complicate the basic combat sequence, but they will encourage a little more realistic behavior on the part of characters and foes alike.

A character's chance to hit in combat depends on the average of his Muscle, Speed, and Stamina, which is termed the Physical Score. As a player's Physical Score increases due to the benefits of experience, he gains the ability to make multiple attacks in a single combat turn. Some role-playing games try to discourage weapon-play by making combat particularly swift and deadly. This is not so in *Lords Of Creation*. The average first level character has about sixteen Life Points; when you consider that a rifle does only 2-12 damage points (and in the course of a six second turn, this actually represents firing the weapon multiple times), then it becomes obvious that characters can survive more than a slug or two in the arm. Of course, some of the futuristic devices like the Gamma Raygun, which hits for 6-36 damage points, can be quite deadly in combat, but higher level characters should be able to survive even a couple of blasts from weapons such as these.

Once a player reaches the level of Apprentice, and for every title thereafter gained, he may choose one special power. Powers are similar to skills, but, as the name implies, considerably more useful and destructive. Like skills, powers come in twelve different categories with five levels of progression each. Powers are also classified according to type—magical, futuristic, and psychic. Depending on the setting, certain powers may operate at reduced effectiveness or not work at all. For instance, in a 20th century setting, futuristic and psychic skills would function at half effectiveness and magical powers would be completely impotent. Choosing a power is great fun because of the tremendous range of capabilities they bestow upon the player, from the invoker's ability to summon elementals to the cyborg's surgical implantation of a weapon in his arm.

Advice and tips on gamemastering fill a full eight pages of the rules. This includes an extensive example of play and guidelines for designing adventures in any of the eight possible types of settings—fantasy, science-fiction, science-fantasy, time-travel, parallel worlds, pocket universes, alternate dimensions, and terrestrial (i.e., present day). Each setting provides a list of appropriate inhabitants taken from the Book of Foes. Reading through this section brings to mind an article I saw several years ago criticizing the way many gamemasters were running their *Dungeons & Dragons* games. The writer complained that the boundaries of fantasy were frequently allowed to blur and all manners of creatures and items, like Martians and Panther tanks, which had no business being in a fantasy setting were popping up in campaigns. However, not only does *Lords Of Creation* permit this sort of blending, but, in fact, even encourages it. For example, the rules describe a gamemaster constructing a scenario set in an enchanted forest, complete with grizzly bears, gremlins, and the possibility of an encounter with Davy Crockett! The final portion of the *Lords Of Creation* rulebook consists of seven sample lands of wonder which can be used as adventure settings. The Land of Ulro, a science-fantasy world based on the works of the 18th century English poet William Blake, is particularly fascinating and demonstrative of the manifold sources which an ingenious gamemaster can draw on for inspiration.

The second book, the Book of Foes, is just that—a compendium of monsters, aliens, mythical creatures, historical characters, and whatever else seems to have struck the designer's mind as suitable for inclusion. Each entry supplies an illustration, narrative description, and stats. Providing an illustration alongside every type of foe is a nice feature, but they do take up room and force the text to be necessarily brief. In some cases, due to insufficient detail, confusion may arise over a foe's exact method of attack (melee or ranged) and any applicable restrictions (range limit, ammo, etc.).

Lords Of Creation would appear to be the ideal role-playing game for gaming groups that meet infrequently or on an irregular basis. Since adventures will most likely take place in a wide variety of settings, *Lords Of Creation* lends itself perfectly to the adaptation of a modular approach. Adventures can be designed so as to be playable to conclusion in a single session and only a bare thread of continuity need connect the different adventures from week to week. AH has already published an adventure supplement *The Horn of Roland* (originally intended for inclusion with *Lords Of Creation*) and announced plans for two more: *The Yeti Sanction* and *Omegakron*. In addition, the premiere issue of AH's role-playing magazine featured a survival-in-the-maze-type adventure for *Lords Of Creation* written by Tom Moldvay.

Interestingly enough, when a player reaches the title of Lords of Creation, he gains the ability to create worlds; in other words, he can gamemaster adventures in settings of his own devising. There is a peculiar, though somehow appealing, logic in the idea of a role-playing game in which the players' ultimate goal is to become gamemasters themselves. The rulebook, however, fails to address one central question—just who or what are these would-be Lords of Creation? They obviously do not qualify as your run-of-the-mill humans, but the two books attempt to provide no rationale, no *raison d'etre* for these individuals, and gamemasters will have to supply their own explanations. In the absence of this very basic element, *Lords Of Creation* stands as a game without a conscience, seeming to advocate in its place a simple message of adventuring for adventure's sake. Nonetheless, I can think of far worse reasons to spend an evening role-playing. □

☆☆

ROLEMASTER

By S. Colman Charlton, et al (ICE, $38)

Reviewed by Troy Christensen

ICE's fantasy role-playing game is an attempt to recreate and vitalize the fantasy genre. Although the idea was to revive the exciting Tolkien mythology and adventure found in the *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, ICE's game rates too low for the price tag. *Rolemaster* is another fantasy role-playing game trying to find the magic which brought role-playing out of the darkness. Like most of the systems present today, the game lacks the special spark that separates it from the crowded basement of games.

Rolemaster can either be played as a separate game or used in conjunction with the more popular, well known games. The game

retails for $38 though each book of *Rolemaster* can be purchased separately. *Rolemaster* contains the following material: one 52-page "Character Law" book, one 23-page "Claw Law" book, one 44-page "Arms Law" book, four 23-page "Spell Law" books, and an assortment of reference sheets and a pair of 20-sided dice.

The problem with *Rolemaster* involves both presentation and development. Although the rules for creating characters, fighting in combat, and casting spells are included, they lack continuity and originality. The game contains far too many tables, and far too little examples and rules. To be used with other games, many systems presented in *Rolemaster* would have to be drastically changed to fit any particular system. Playing *Rolemaster* also proved to be difficult as combat and character generation is agonizingly slow and requires many charts with tiny print.

"Character Law," which is the book which brings the game into a complete system, can be bought separately for $10. The book contains all the information needed to create characters for the game. In *Rolemaster*, characters have ten attributes to define their abilities. I found many of the attributes to be so closely related that I wondered why they were differentiated. For example, the game includes intuition, memory, reasoning, and presence for attributes. This all could be reduced to one score. I also found that although there are many character classes, all contained little helpful information for play. There are eighteen skills which proves too small for completely detailing characters and all their possible actions. In *Rolemaster*, ICE presents players with five races to play. All of these creatures have been used in other role-playing games and add nothing new to character generation. "Character Law" is rather disappointing to those who hoped for some new ideas and rules.

"Spell Law" is the largest part of *Rolemaster* and this system can be brought separately for $17. Out of the entire game of *Rolemaster* I found "Spell Law" the only set of rules which could be beneficial in other games or as part of the *Rolemaster* series. "Spell Law" is composed of a 23-page main book and three spell books, each containing hundreds of spells. The only problem I found with the system was that many of the spells performed the same function as other spells. Many of the spells were mere extensions of another (Disarm I, Disarm II, Disarm III, etc. . . .).

The rules presented in "Spell Law" are concise and helpful. The three spell books each cover a certain field of magic. The first book covers the magic art of channeling. Wizards using these spells are known as clerics, healers, and anamists. The second book covers spells dealing with "Of The Essense," the spell users of these spells are called magicians and alchemists. The last book contains spells for the mentalists and the seers, magic spells that draw energy from the mind.

"Spell Law" can be a welcomed addition to most fantasy role-playing games if the system is used with careful guidance and application.

"Arms Law" is the thickest book in the series and it can be bought separately for $10. "Arms Law" contains nine pages of rules, four critical hit charts with each chart covering a specific types of attack, 26 pages of to hit charts for each different type of weapon presented in the game, one fumble chart, and two charts detailing dragon critical hits. "Arms Law" is a set of rules detailing melee and missile combat with critical hits and fumbles.

The largest problem with "Arms Law" is that many of the charts in the book are set in incredibly small print. To compound this, each chart contains one hundred rows and twenty columns. This is sure to cause blindness to anyone who uses the charts for very long.

The second flaw in the game is that all the critical hit charts are printed on yellow parchment paper with hand-printed entries. Although the designer has legible writing, it is so small that gamemasters will have to squint to read them. I found some of the entires in the charts to be harsh, and sometimes downright gruesome. The fumble chart is also printed like the critical charts and contains the same eye-blurring faults. In both cases, the entries and rules concerning the charts are very simple and probably took less time to design than it did to write this review. I considered the combat slow and sluggish, and although ICE advertises that only one roll is required to resolve an attack, the eye strain of the charts makes up for any number of extra rolls required in other games. Most of the charts in the game had to be modified for use with other systems, sometimes these modifications were extensive.

"Claw Law" is the smallest of the books presented in *Rolemaster* and can be bought separately for $6. "Claw Law" is the companion to "Arms Law" and gives rules and charts for attacking monsters, hand-to-hand combat, critical strikes for grappling and martial arts, and charts for little insect-like monsters. Also found in the book is one hundred creatures with little information on behavior or functions.

Critical hit charts are presented in "Arms Law" fashion with small print and hand-written entries. Each attack table presented covers a certain type of attack. Attacks range from beak/pincher to trampling. Also presented in the book are two martial arts attack tables. In all, the book contains two pages of rules, one page of abbreviations, and eighteen charts.

The attack procedure in *Rolemaster* is a complex system involving percentiles and modifiers. Combat is resolved in a series of steps which begin with who or what attacks first. If missile weapons are present, they automatically gain the initiative and are permitted fire. Once all missile weapons have fired, a table is consulted to find the highest initiative score in the participating attackers. Each person has a chart which will differ depending on the weapon being used, by rolling percentile dice, the person inspects his chart and finds his score. Many of the tables have abbreviated keys which must be remembered or translated. Once the persons finds his score on the chart, he will be able to determine if he missed, hit, or done some type of critical hit. Overall, I found both combat books useless in other games, and boring to use with *Rolemaster*.

I found ICE's game lacking the special magic which distinguishes a good game from the bad. I found it just to be another high-priced game with tiring, over-used rules. I cannot recommend this game to any serious role-player, I can suggest that it might be worth your while to purchase "Spell Law" if you are interested in gaining new spells for your present role-playing game. □

☆☆☆½

STORMHAVEN

By Michael A. Stackpole
(Blade, $9.95)

Reviewed by William A. Barton

Stormhaven is Blade's first gamemastered scenario for its excellent *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* modern role-playing game. And it is designed so as to be equally playable with any of *MS&PE*'s three main character divisions. In fact, it would be difficult for any modern player-character types not to be able to fit somewhere in in the multi-scenario possibilities of *Stormhaven*—from sophisticated secret agent to wacked-out occult investigator. All game stats are given both in terms of *MS&PE* and in Hero Games' *Espionage* system, thanks to a cooperative agreement between Blade and Hero, making it possible for characters of either system to play the scenarios included. Plus all descriptions of the settings and characters of *Stormhaven* are written generically enough, the game stats being in a separate section, that the scenarios can be used with almost any other modern role-playing game, from *James Bond 007* to *Call Of Cthulhu*, from FGU's *Merc* to Tri Tac's *Stalking the Night Fantastic*, as long as the gamemaster doesn't mind a bit of extra work translating stats into his own system.

Stormhaven involves the people and locations of Savage Island in Lake Champlain, the site of Stormhaven Manor, home of Kenneth Allard, president of Allard Technologies, a multi-national corporation rivaling IBM in size. Stormhaven and Savage Island hide a number of secrets, not the least of which is the AT secret laboratory beneath the manor grounds. The scenario pack describes and includes layouts of the island and all its major structures, from the manor itself to the security center and command post of the Tigers, AT's elite security force, to the hidden smuggler's cave beneath the island and the ancient altar of a forgotten god on a hill of stunted trees. Various inhabitants and guests on the island who figure into the several scenario possibilities are outlined sufficiently to allow the gamemaster to easily portray such characters as Allard himself, Tiger Security Chief Benjamin Warde, head chef (and treasure hunter) Pierre de Lyons, Irish folklorist Seamus Cromwell, socialite Lady Victoria Burke-Jones, and several others—few of whom are what they really seem to be. There is even a character who may—or may not, depending on gamemaster preference—be the prince of darkness himself, Dracula. And of course there's Friday, Allard's robot guardian/lab assistant, whose presence should please the science-fiction/high-tech gamers who give *Stormhaven* a try.

The scenario is packaged quite nicely. Its two books—a 56-page one containing all personalities, descriptions, and scnarios and an eight-page book of maps and floor plans—and two sheets of cardboard heroes that depict the gamemaster characters, personalities, security troops, and others, of Stormhaven are held in an open-pocketed folder that includes additional maps on its interior sides. The cardboard heroes, used by permission of Steve Jackson Games, are an especially nice touch, providing colorful miniatures of the chief participants in the pack's scenarios for those who like to use such in their gaming. The folder itself, unfortunately, is a bit flimsy and may not stand up to the repeated uses that the myriad gaming possibilities of ***Stormhaven*** offer. The scenario book is quite well conceived and executed, with some nice illustrations that include most of the major personalities of the manor and island. The maps in that book are all nicely detailed with actual furniture, appliances, lab equipment, plants, etc., all depicted in miniature, and includes a key to all such fixtures and objects so there's no question as to what is where. (A welcome relief to some games in which one has to puzzle out just what the heck that square little thing with the squiggles in the basement really is anyway.) My only complaint here is that the blue ink everything is printed causes my eyes to ache after a while. I'd have much preferred good ol' easy-to-read black.

The wealth of detail concerning Stormhaven and its environs and inhabitants makes this scenario quite a valuable package for the gamemaster who's looking for a well-fleshed-out background for running scenarios of his own devise, or who can maximize the potential adventure in the scenario outlines included with the pack. Three main scenarios are thus outlined, from a mercenary strike or infiltration mission (depending on how players and gamemaster handle it) to a confrontation with ancient evil with definite Cthulhoid overtones (in fact, with a change of name, the Celtic Crom could easily become Cthulhu and the situation a modern-day ***Call Of Cthulhu*** scenario with little alteration). Notes are included on devising several other scenario possibilities based on the locations and personalities of Savage Island—and even on combining the above two mentioned main scenarios for the more daring of gamemasters. I did find a couple of the scenarios a bit sketchy in places, but with all the background provided and a group of enterprising players, a sharp gamemaster should have little trouble filling in what gaps are left.

There are a lot of other points about ***Stormhaven*** that I really like, but to reveal more of these would spoil too many surprises for those who will have the pleasant opportunity of adventuring in and around Stormhaven Manor. Even should the gamemaster not wish to use the backgrounds and data of the package as a whole, he could easily find any number of goodies to borrow for his own scenarios for ***MS&PE***, ***Espionage*** or any other modern role-playing game. And the book is quite a bit of fun just to read in itself. Author Mike Stackpole displays a keen sense of humor in his writing, of which I, for one, never tire (especially after struggling through some of the humorless—except unintentionally—writing some companies insist on in their scenarios and games). Fans of the pulps and movies of the 30's will pick up on a number of in-jokes in some of the names, etc., in the package—***Savage*** Island, Jennifer ***Renwick***, and so on—but those who aren't needn't worry, such tributes are not intrusive on the scenario at all.

In short, I give my highest recommendations to ***Stormhaven*** for all who enjoy modern role-playing—with potential twists—and especially ***MS&PE*** fans. □

☆☆☆

ASLAN

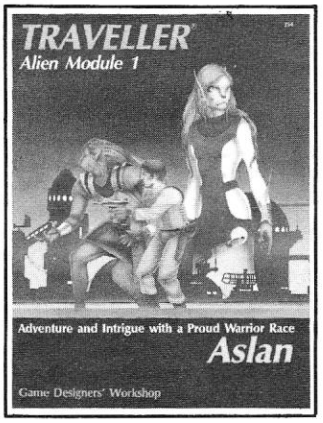
By J. Andrew Keith, et al
(GDW, $6)

Reviewed by Terry McInnes

When ***Traveller*** first appeared in 1977, this new role-playing game system appeared to have everything a science-fiction fan could want—except for one thing: the aliens that are the key components to many a science-fiction adventure or novel plot.

Over time, GDW worked to fill this void. The first hints of a non-human culture appeared in Supplement 3, ***The Spinward Marches***, when GDW mentioned the Vargr in passing. GDW then slowly unfolded their alien concepts—first in seminars at game conventions—then in "Contact!" features in ***The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society***, in more detail in Supplement 8, ***Library Data A-M***, which included virtual reprints of ***The Journal*** features on Aslans, the Hivers, and the K'kree; next in Supplement 11, ***Library Data N-Z***, with its treatment of Vegans, Vargr, Vilnani, and Zhodani; and finally in ***The Traveller Adventure*** with its detailed look at the genetically altered Vargr canines.

There have also been repeated hints of a separate publication to come totally devoted to aliens in the ***Traveller*** universe. Book 6 was originally planned to be devoted to this subject. Next, a volume in the now apparently defunct ***Traveller*** hardcover series was to have been an encyclopedia of the alien



races. But apparently neither format would have enough room for the detailed treatment of the six major alien races, not to mention the thousands of minor ones.

Finally, however, GDW has come through. Alien Module 1, ***Aslan***, is the first of a series of game modules covering the major and some minor alien races GDW will producing at regular intervals over the next few years.

Aslan was worth the wait. It is an exquisitely detailed look at Aslan life, customs, psychology, government, society, and much more. It enables players to generate and play Aslan characters in any ***Traveller*** character generation system. And it includes an Aslan campaign that enables human characters to interact with the aliens for an extended series of adventures.

Aslan comes packaged in a new module format with a 40-page book wrapped within a full-color detached cover. It is divided into three elements: a detailed discussion of all aspects of the Aslan; the charts needed to generate Aslan characters, deal with Aslan encounters, generate Aslan words and names, and conduct combat with Aslan weapons; and finally the Aslan adventure.

The inside front cover includes anatomical drawings of a typical male Aslan compared with a human male, while the inside back cover contains a chart of the Aslan Hierate and nearby sectors.

The module begins with a look at how the Aslan evolved on the planet Kuysu (previously named Kuzu by Terrans) as intelligent carnivore/pouncers into the youngest of the Major Races. A look a their racial psychology then follows, with emphasis on the mental and physical differences between Aslan males and females. The first section concludes with a description of Aslan social structure and their equivalent of government. Duelling, feuds, and clan wars are a major part of this discussion.

If you want to speak Aslan, the next major section will tell you how. It allows you to create Aslan names and words for your campaigns using strict rules governing the frequency of consonant and vowel patterns. Spoken Aslan is a gutteral, breathy speech that is difficult to create, and difficult to both read and pronounce. Although the Aslan language was included to aid play, it may ironically turn out to be the only stumbling block of this module.

The module's middle section consists of every table and chart you could possibly need to generate Aslan characters and manage them during their adventures. Included here are character generation systems found in basic ***Traveller***, Supplement 4 ***Citizens***, Book 4 ***Mercenary***, and Book 5 ***High Guard***, all adapted to the Aslan services and culture.

All of the previous ***Traveller*** skills are recapped, and new ones added. Many are restricted to members of a specific sex, following Aslan social and psychological practices. "Pilot," for example, is a male skill. "Navigator" is a skill for females who are generally more cerebrally and technically oriented than the males. Therefore, in the Aslan ground forces, the action-oriented males are the infantrymen, while the female technicians make up the artillery crews.

Also in this section are weapons and range matrix tables for personal weapons unique to the Aslan ranging from the combat boomerang to the multiple-magazine Aslan autorifle. Human developed weapons modified for Aslan physiology such as the laser carbine and laser rifle are dealt with on the standard ***Traveller*** weapons and range matrix.

The charts and tables section closes with new encounter and reaction tables to be used with Aslan characters and gamemaster-characters. The reaction tables are tailored to include challenges and duels, which happen often in Aslan society.

Before moving to the included adventure, the module describes key Aslan ship classes, and dis-

cusses world generation in the Hierate and elsewhere in Aslan space. A detailed description of Kusyu is also here, as is a discussion of both Aslan living and working in the Imperium, and humans living on Aslan worlds.

The adventure "Syareahtaorl," meaning "Quest," opens in the Spinward Marches where an Aslan ship with a depleted crew hires human adventurers to help them in their pursuit of a male relative whom they wish to pursuade to return to his family.

This adventure is extremely complex and should be administered over at least ten sessions by a highly skilled and dedicated gamemaster. "Syareahtaorl" is no beer and pretzels "Amber Zone." It is nearly the equivalent of a full *Traveller* adventure booklet. It will lead human characters into close and prolonged contact with Aslan characters and society as they range into Aslan colonies spinward of the Imperium and ultimately across the Great Rift into the Hierate. Battles will be fought, assassins dodged, trade deals made with Aslan merchants; and surely humans will duel with Aslans before the "Quest" is fulfilled.

As a rules supplement, the adventure includes a new navigation system used by ship's crew to find their way through uncharted space. "Navigation" skill comes into vital play as adventurers attempt to locate star systems in the six sectors of a giant hex surrounding their present position—be it at a star system they wish to leave or in a deep-space hex. This system can be used by any party of adventurers who leave the known starlanes to venture into the unknown void during a campaign. It would be an excellent addition to an adventure using a Leviathan-class merchant cruiser out to open new trade routes beyond human civilization.

This reviewer could only find two minor faults beyond the language problem discussed above. First, the cover should be stapled to the pages. Nothing is gained with a loose cover, because the anatomical drawings and the Hierate sector charts are each on one page. A loose cover is awkward to handle and easy to lose. Without a cover, the inside pages could be easily soiled and damaged.

Future modules should also include a table of contents. There is a mass of information in the module about many diverse subjects that a gamemaster might need to locate in a hurry during a campaign. A table of contents or index would be a great help.

Otherwise *Aslan* is an outstanding achievement and a must-buy for the serious *Traveller* player. □

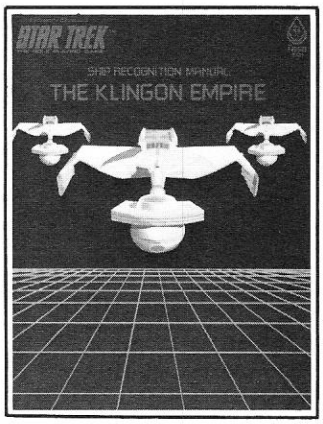
☆☆½

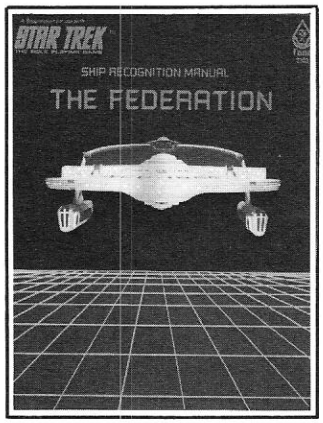
Ship Recognition Manuals:

THE KLINGON EMPIRE
THE FEDERATION

Both by David F. Tepool
(FASA, $6 each)

Reviewed by William A. Barton





Of all the recent supplements FASA has released for its *Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game*, the most colorful and visually attractive are its Ship Recognition Manuals. Two have been published so far—*The Klingon Empire* and *The Federation*—with a third, *The Romulan Confederation*, in the works. Each of the two now available feature illustrations and data on 14 different ships of the respective states, printed on slick-stock paper with about half the pages in full-color. The cover of each features a beautiful painting of a head-on view of, for the Federation, the U.S.S. Reliant from *The Wrath of Kahn*, and for the Klingons, three D-7 battlecruisers in formation. The first interior page, after the credits, contains the various damage charts for the ships in each manual, keyed to a letter with each ship description, for use in ship-to-ship combat. This is followed by a two-page color spread, each page covering one ship type, then a two-page black & white spread listing more information on the two ships, this being more game-oriented than that on the color spread. This alternating color/black & white format, each spread featuring two ships, is followed throughout the rest of each manual.

The color page for each ship is laid out as though the ship and pertinent information were being called up on a computer screen, visually a clever idea. A top screen shows the ship in outline from various angles, in red for the Klingons and blue for the Federation. A lower screen reads off the data on the ship in question. For the Klingons, this is crew composition, weight, range, cruising and emergency speeds, weaponry, length, breadth, and height. The Federation data, oddly, omits the crew composition data, but adds hull number, vessel type, contractor, cost, deck ceiling height, and cargo units to the rest of the information provided. A small inset screen between the two main screens lists the ship's name (class name or type), and the screens are surrounded by multicolored lights, buttons, dials, and a computer keyboard, all in color.

The black & white dossier page for the various ships concentrates more on information of use to players in actual ship-to-ship combat during play of *Star Trek*. Here, the two manuals differ quite a bit. Each has a paragraph or two about the ship being covered—notes on how the ship is used by its fleet, variants, history, etc. —with the Federation ships receiving a somewhat more extensive treatment here. In the Klingon manual, the data from the color page is repeated, but to this is added game information of use to the various players in engineering, helm, navigation, science and communications for the ship-to-ship combat phase of play. The Klingon manual also prints the charts, taken from the *Ship Construction Manual*, for engine and superstructure damage due to stress and the firing charts for the various weapons, showing range, to-hit rolls, and damage adds.

In the Federation manual, information from the color page is repeated only for two ships, the Karekh-class Vulcan exploration vessel and Laweya-class freighter. For the rest of the ships depicted, the data is restricted primarily to gaming information and other items such as the number of shuttlecraft carried, transporter capacity, and passenger facilities. The game data for the Federation ships is broken down mainly into mobility data on the engines and weaponry data on the deflectors and ships weapons. There are also notations on damage to the ship. Rather than including the charts for weapons fire and stress damage right here, however, the Federation manual instead refers one to charts contained in the *Ship Construction Manual*—a bit unhandy if one doesn't own that book, or at least does not have it at hand. I assume the reason for the different treatments is that the Klingon and Construction manuals were released at about the same time, while the Federation manual came a couple of months later. So while it was possible that players might have purchased the Klingon book and not the Construction manual at the time of release, the designer and FASA obviously believed that by the time the Federation manual came out most players would have the Construction manual already. Not an unreasonable assumption. However, it does require a bit of extra page turning from book to book in play. Ah well. It should be noted that even here there is no breakdown of the Federation crew roster into officers, enlisted men, etc., as there is for the Klingons. A curious and somewhat annoying omission.

The ships chosen for inclusion in the two manuals offer a wide range of types for use in a number of possible situations. The Klingon vessels are mostly warships, as is typical of that race's martial nature. Featured are the old familiar D-7 (called a light cruiser here rather than a battlecruiser), the D-18 destroyer, a K-3 gunboat, L-9 frigate, D-10 heavy cruiser, K-5 patrol craft, S-8 mobile dry dock, K-23 escort, K-26 escort, W-2 warp shuttle, D-11 destroyer, K-6 gunboat, S-4 fleet service ship, and L-13 battleship. Most of the ships here show the old boom neck configuration from the series, though several don't—mainly the smaller ships—and the manual states that the boom configuration is going out of style in the Empire. Since the addition of the photon torpedoes to the D-7 is mentioned, it can be assumed that the phasing out of the boom neck takes place at a later date than both the series and the first movie, for those running games in that period.

As befits the peaceful nature of the Federation, a number of non-warships are mixed in with Star Fleet's ships of the line in the Federation manual. Ships included are the Bader-class scout, Karekh-class Vulcan exploration vessel, Brenton-class cruiser, Sunshine-class liner, C'laih-class long-range shuttle (a Caitian design),

Derf-class exploration ship, Baker-class destroyer, Chandley-class frigate, Loknar-class frigate, Ranger-class scout, Overfield-class freighter, Laweya-class freighter, Enterprise-class heavy cruiser (the redesigned ship from the movies), and Reliant-class research cruiser. Of interest here is a note concerning the Reliant being destroyed in the "infamous Wrath of Kahn incident." The freighters provided should especially come in handy to players who have created merchant characters from the *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes* rules supplement, but who wish to use ships larger than those generally provided in that book, yet don't want to design their own.

All the ships covered in both manuals are quite well-conceived and could conceivably be of use in some aspect of a *Star Trek* campaign. There were a few glitches evident in the books, though most are minor. In the notes describing the Klingon L-13 battleship, it states that most Federation reports on the vessel come from intercepted Gorn reports concerning clashes between Gorn and Klingon forces. Yet most maps of the *Star Trek* universe, including that in *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes*, show the Gorns on the other side of Romulan space from the Klingon Empire. The most notable error in the Federation manual is that the ship's data on the Derf-class exploration ship and the Loknar-class frigate, a much more heavily armed ship than the Derf, have been exchanged on the color pages of their sections, making the Derf seem much more formidable a ship than it actually is on a casual glance of the information there. Also, although it is listed on the back cover as being included, the Larson-class destroyer from the basic game is missing from the Federation manual, as is, too, the Nelson-class scout—though these are the only basic game ships omitted.

Overall, the Ship Recognition Manual series should prove quite useful for *Star Trek* players and gamemasters if future offerings follow the pattern established for *The Klingon Empire* and *The Federation* volumes. They are welcome additions to the *Star Trek* universe, and I feel confident in recommending them as such. □

☆☆

BAD MEDICINE FOR DR. DRUGS

By Ken Rolston
(Chaosium, $6)

Reviewed by Russell Grant Collins

Bad Medicine for Dr. Drugs is the first supplement Chaosium has released for *Superworld*. Due to a marketing agreement with Hero Games, it also gives *Champions* stats for everyone, making it playable in that system as well.

The idea of the adventure is that Warren G. Harding High School has a drug problem. Our heroes are students there who first become aware of the problem when an old friend of theirs dies from an overdose of heroin. They must trace back the source of the drugs and stop it. This will bring them into conflict with Dr. Drugs, who discovered his superpowers and those of his girlfriend through taking drugs, and now feels that he should help others in the same way. And he's backed by the Syndicate, who, of course, have supervillains of their own.

This isn't your typical superhero adventure, although it has precedents in the comics. The heroes are doing something on a more personal level. There's no earth-shaking menace that they have to defeat. If they fail today, they'll get to try again tomorrow, because this kind of menace is always there to be battled. It's important, but in a different way.

The adventure comes complete with six sample heroes, detailed for both systems, but obviously written primarily for *Superworld* and translated into *Champions*. Furthermore, the translator apparently didn't have access to the text descriptions and other material in the module, because he had to resort to a "Conversion Bonus" to balance the *Champions* versions when other disadvantages occured to me from reading the text material that weren't reflected in the *Superworld* stats. For one thing, the "Unwritten Code"

that all teenagers are assumed to adhere to, especially the heroes, prohibits revealing one's superpowers to an adult or anyone you cannot trust completely amongst your peers. This would seem to me to be a good definition of a Secret Identity in *Champions*, but only heroes who have Non-Super IDs in *Superworld* are listed as having Secret IDs in *Champions*.

The other problems with the conversion system used include that no mention is made of Breaking Things in *Champions* terms, although with the charts in that game, this isn't too big a problem since there aren't any particularly strange items in this adventure. Also, the sidebar on designing teenage superheroes is completely system specific, with no mention of how to design such heroes in *Champions*. Indeed, the heroes provided range from 173 to 268 total points in *Champions*, which lessens their usefulness in that system where starting heroes are often held to a certain number of points to try and keep them balanced. Still, this is a *Superworld* module usable with *Champions*, so all this is understandable. Perhaps now that *Champions III* is out, conversion of certain powers will be easier and some of *Superworld*'s more unusual powers can be used in modules which are usable with both systems.

This adventure can be used as the basis of a campaign set in a high school environment. In fact, the designer recommends that if the players are of high school age, they substitute their own school for the one in the scenario, which would indeed give the players a better feel for what the characters know about their hometown and their school. The only difference would be that our heroes have superpowers. If the current campaign doesn't have such a background, though, it might be hard to work this material in, although the heroes in such a case might come into conflict with the villains in this adventure if they try tackling the drug problem from another direction. In most cases, it would make more sense to start a new mini-campaign, perhaps with a different gamemaster, to play this adventure.

This adventure plays well, although only if you get into more than combat. The heroes have to figure out who's supplying the drugs to the school and how to stop them. This leads to combat, of course, but it is possible to play an entire session using this adventure without once having any combat. This is a plus, in my opinion, but some people prefer punching out anybody who gets in their way. This will stop that person from distributing drugs, at least until he gets out of the hospital, but his source will just find a replacement for him and the problem continues.

There are many small touches that I like in this adventure, particularly the aforementioned Unwritten Code section and the fact that in the first showdown between the heroes and the gang distributing the drugs at the high school takes place in a situation where the heroes must avoid displaying their powers openly, but still stop the thugs.

All in all, I would recommend this scenario to people who play *Superworld* or *Champions*, especially those in high school. It's quite a good change of pace from the usual superhero slugfest. □

☆☆½

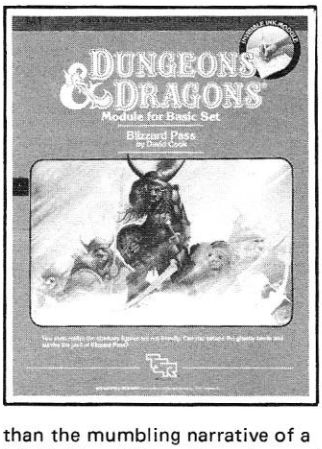
BLIZZARD PASS

By David Cook (TSR, $?)

Reviewed by Anders Swenson

Solo adventures have always had a place on the fringes of our hobby. The most successful solo adventures, of course, are the celebrated series published by Flying Buffalo, now Blade, for use with the *Tunnels & Trolls* rules. Solo adventures have also been published for *Traveller* and for *RuneQuest*, and other publishers have released solo adventures compatible with the *Dungeons & Dragons* systems.

Solo gaming appeals to those who can find some enjoyment in the non-role-playing aspects of adventure gaming. There is a chance to enjoy a dip into a fantasy situation, to win glory or go down from a rashly chosen wrong move. Often, the text of a solo adventure is better considered



than the mumbling narrative of a late Friday-night gamemaster, and the scenarios better constructed. And, of course, you don't have to wait for the other players to finish their business before you go on. Finally, solo adventures provide an opportunity for a player to play a character between live games to obtain experience needed to keep up with other players'

characters who may well see more play than one's own. While some gamemasters may equate solo game experience with merely rewriting the character sheet to reflect a higher level, solo play is seen by many players as a valid activity.

Blizzard Pass is the first entry into *D&D* solo adventuring by TSR. There have been *D&D* solos by Judges Guild and by Balboa, but this is the first of its type from the originating publisher. The book takes the by-now famous form of a 32-page book slipped into a cover folder with adventure maps printed on the inside cover. The whole is shrink-wrapped inside a clear plastic wrapper with a marker pen.

The reason for the marker pen is that half of the programmed text paragraphs have been printed in an invisible ink which is developed by chemicals in the marker pen. My initial reaction to this feature was extremely negative, but more about that later. The adventure itself is set on the *Expert D&D* campaign map printed in Module X2, in the Cruith Mountains, north of the Five Shires. The solo adventure character is a low-level thief who accepts employment with a caravan. While crossing the mountains, the caravan is ambushed by some bandit monsters, and the player-character thief and some gamemaster-character companions are abducted and incarcerated in a cave in the mountains. The bulk of the adventure is involved with the escape of the characters from the mountain.

The adventure itself is well-constructed. While I have not been able to explore every paragraph in the adventure, due to the limited patience I have for filling in endless numbers of invisible ink paragraphs, those branches of the adventure I have played through are well thought-out and interestingly-written—certainly up there with any solo adventures by other publishers.

Now, back to the invisible ink. I suppose that the idea is to discourage would-be players from 'peeking' and avoiding bad decisions for their characters by reading ahead. I find this whole idea to be entirely childish and the apparently blank pages in the adventure irritating, to say the least. However, it is not entirely bad—I decided to start my playtesting of *Blizzard Pass* with my older children—an eight-year-old boy and a girl of six. They went through the adventure by deciding together what the player-character thief would do, and they just loved the invisible ink paragraphs. This adventure provided a pleasant introduction to adventure gaming for them (of course, I acted as gamemaster for them, reading and moderating the game). I suppose that there are older gamers in the hobby who would like the invisible ink, too.

Blizzard Pass ends with a pleasant surprise—after the solo text ends, there is a short adventure which is the same situation set up for regular group-play. It is short enough for an evening's enjoyment. I played it using *RuneQuest* game mechanics, improvising as I went along.

This is an unnecessarily expensive item because of the funny pen and ink. If you are fanatical about solo adventures, or have small children, or if you like invisible ink, it will be worth the price as it is a well-constructed and complete adventure. □

☆☆½

STARTOWN LIBERTY

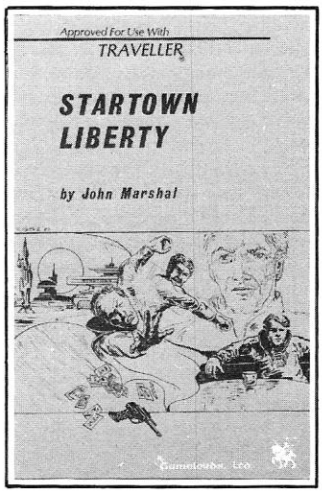
By John Marshal
(Gamelords, $5.95)

Reviewed by Tony Watson

Gamelords of Gaithersburg MD is fast becoming a major source of playaid materials for GDW's science-fiction role-playing game, *Traveller*. Like FASA, to whom Gamelords and their line of products bears some resemblance, the company seems intent on offering a diverse and quality array of adventures and supplements. (Also like FASA, Gamelords items are a bit overpriced.)

One of the interesting things that the company has been doing is producing some different sorts of playaids. Their line of environment guides are innovative and useful. Related to these are their "encounter" series, which concentrate on the perils and possibilities of inhabited locales.

Startown Liberty presents the *Traveller* gamemaster with a number of encounter tables and descriptions that take place in that most interesting of places, Startown. The bars, warehouses, hotels, and other establishments around starports serve a similar function in most *Traveller* campaigns as the docks and wharves in pulp adventure fiction—a dangerous, somewhat exotic area where the heroes pick up clues or items or meet individuals that initiate or advance the course of the scenario.



Aptly dedicating this volume to "Greedo and the whole cantina gang," the designer turns his attention to describing some of the encounters possible in Startown. He divides the book into three main sections: "the Streets of Startown," which describes possible street encounters during both the day and night; "Entertainment Tonight," centering on the various sorts of nightclubs, dives, and casinos, as well as their clientel, that characters are likely to frequent; and "Criminal Encounters," a listing of the shady denizens of Startown.

Each section has one or more encounter tables for the random determination of events. The table indicates the number of individuals encountered, their general reaction number and the die-roll necessary for the characters to pick up on the situation. These are followed by descriptions of the encounters. Each gives some general information about the encounter and most offer a list of randomly determined possible events and outcomes of the encounters in manner similar to that used in *76 Patrons*. For example, the victim of an attack that the characters run across in an alley may be truly grateful, mistake the player-characters for his assailants or serve as a lure for the real attack, depending on the die roll.

Especially interesting are the descriptions of the classes of drinking establishments found in Startown. Each lists the cost and availability of intoxicants of increasing potency. and has a separate encounter table. There is even a short set of drinking rules, which allows the gamemaster to simulate the effects of too much imbibing.

Given the ubiquitous presence of Startowns around starports, the fascination they hold for player-character, and their utility as a place to start or continue an adventure, *Startown Liberty* is a useful supplement indeed. As the designer suggests, the encounters listed in the book can be used as red herrings, a means to interject an important bit of information into the course of a scenario, or as the starting point of a new adventure. Just as important, *Startown Liberty* serves as a tool to provide a little "local color" to a playing session, giving the players a true feel for a "wretched hive of scum and villainy." □

☆☆½

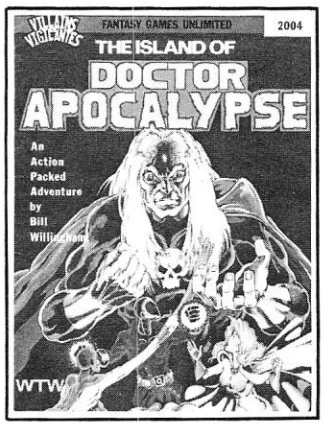
THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR APOCALYPSE

By Bill Willingham (FGU, $6)

Reviewed by Paul Ryan O'Connor

Why do all the great bad guys hang out on islands? Dr. No, King Kong, Fu Manchu, Blofeld, Dr. Moreau, Godzilla, Mr. Big, The Yellow Claw, Han, Mordillo, and Gilligan have all operated on an island at some time in their infamous careers. How many seemingly-innocent islands laying just off the shipping lanes can there be in the world?

Apparently at least one more than we know about. *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* is a 20-page *Villains And Vigilantes* scenario detailing the island fortress of the evil Doctor Apocalypse, best known for being the mastermind behind the nastiness in an earlier FGU adventure, *Death Duel with the Destroyers*. This scenario is intended to pick up where the previous one left off, but it's easy enough to use this product on its own.



The Island of Doctor Apocalypse provides all the details you need to know (and several you don't need to know, as well) to run a superpowered assault on Doctor Apocalypse's lair. The book provides separate maps of the island for gamemaster reference and player use, as well as several smaller maps detailing instal-

lations on the island. Stats are given for Doctor Apocalypse and a pile of robots for both the new and the original *V&V* (of which the latter is now nearly forgotten). The product is text-heavy, and lacks the abundant artwork common to other *V&V* adventures. The comic book art that is provided greatly adds to the product, and I would like to have seen more.

The text is free of the usual pack of FGU editorial errors. I didn't have any trouble finding where things were, and the book is laid out well enough that page-turning in the midst of an adventure is kept to a minimum. Less study is required to run *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* than is needed to run most canned scenarios. The gamemaster must familiarize himself with how the island's defense system operates, but from there on in the gamemaster need do little more than react to what his characters try.

I have mixed feelings about this product. As a role-playing adventure, *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* is pretty much flawless. A great deal of space is given over to detailing the island, its history, the natives that live there, and the means by which superheroes can attack the place. Doctor Apocalypse's plot is as detailed as any comic book masterplan, and the Doctor's powers and methods are about what you'd expect. There are no major flaws or contradictions in the text, and Bill Willingham provides lots of loose ends for enterprising gamemasters to expand upon (such as a supernatural cult located on the island that really has only a passing connection with the adventure).

So what is missing? *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* lacks the good natured sense of humor that is so refreshing in other *V&V* products. It's not that *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* takes itself too seriously—it's just that the author does not seem to have enjoyed writing this product. It looks more like a chore than a labor of love. This adventure just doesn't read like a comic book—it feels more like a James Bond adventure or, strangely enough, a *Traveller* scenario.

I think this is due to the space the designer had to devote to the "technical" details of the island. As it is hard to anticipate how characters will go about attacking this place, the author had to provide details on how every little bit of the island works. In a comic book adventure, we can assume the bad guy was behind it all when missiles are launched at incoming superheroes. In an adventure of this sort, the author has to detail where the missiles came from, how many there are, and how the characters can deal with them.

I realize this is more a criticism of the genre than of the product, but stay with me. What all this needed detail does is monopolize the page count and crush the character descriptions into the last few pages of the book. This is the reason the product feels dry—how much humor and umph can you put into the description of a shuttle system? To compound the problem, there isn't room left to describe more than Doctor Apocalypse and his robots. This place really needs a team of superbaddies to patrol it and add needed color.

There is a lesson to be learned here, and I think it applies to any role-playing game. The interesting thing about any scenario is the characters you encounter. You can be exploring the most original and fantastically detailed location a gamemaster can come up with, but the adventure is going to lack something if there aren't some interesting people around to interact with. The addition of just a few more characters would elevate *The Island of Dr. Apocalypse* from being an average product to being an outstanding one.

I recommend that you purchase *The Island of Doctor Apocalypse* if you're interested in seeing the way an island fortress could be layed out. If you intend to use this product for a *V&V* adventure, be prepared to inject a little more of your own gamemastering personality than usual to add to the flavor of the adventure. If you are looking for a free-wheeling adventure in the mold of previous FGU *V&V* efforts, then pass this one by. . . or better yet, write your own! *V&V* could use a few more good support products. □

BOOKS & GAMING

Continued from page 9

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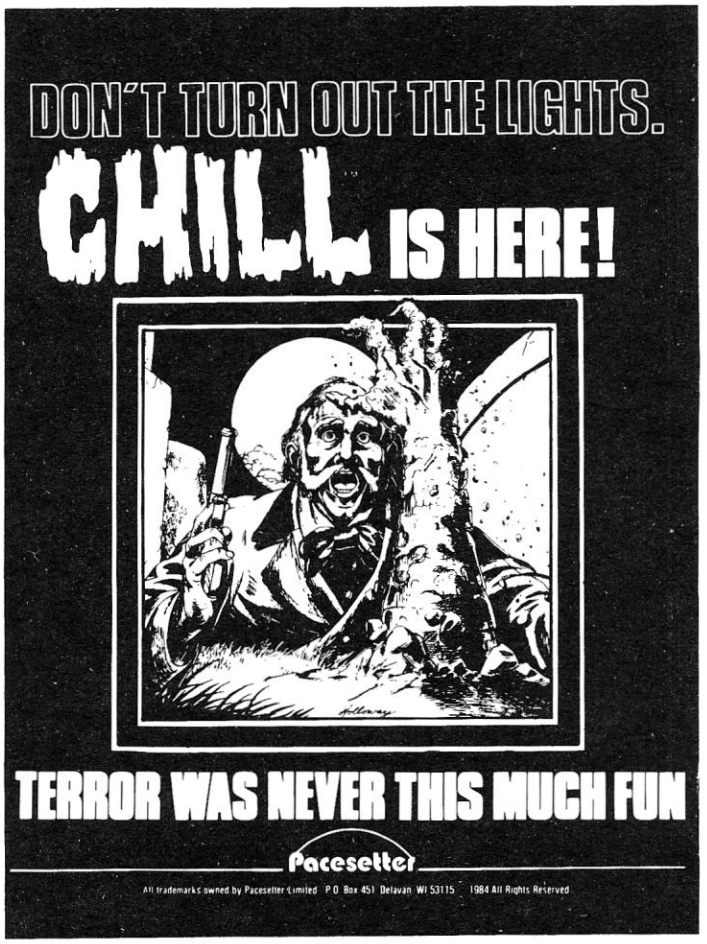


DELTANS for STAR TREK

By Paul Montgomery Crabaugh

Deltans are a seldom-seen but greatly respected race of the Federation, and it seems logical to include them in FASA's ***Star Trek: The Role-Playing Game***.

Physically, Deltans follow the standard humanoid pattern, except that they are entirely devoid of facial, cranial, or body hair.

Deltan culture is extremely sophisticated, on a par with Vulcan culture. However, where the Vulcans have made a sect out of logic and do everything in their power to eradicate emotion, Deltans have gone in the opposite direction, venerating sensation and emotion above almost anything else. These two otherwise-similar races are thus somewhat suspicious of each other.

Deltan characteristic modifiers are: Strength -5, Charisma +10, Luck -30, Psi -10.

Physiologically, Deltans differ from human-normal in one major, key factor: they can manufacture sex-attractant pheromones, causing sexual arousal in members of the opposite sex across a broad range of species. This ability is under semi-conscious control; Deltans will not normally release the pheromones in the presence of other species, out of politeness and consideration for their (to the Deltans) inexplicable discomfort with sex, but under conditions of stress, especially when surrounded by strange members of the opposite sex, Deltans tend to release the pheromones in large quantities, equivalent to a human sweating from nervousness, but with somewhat more serious consequences.

Deltans have limited telepathic powers. The only telepathic ability (actually a combination telepathic and telekinetic ability) which Deltans universally possess is a form of empathic healing, absorbing and dealing with the pain of another. The Deltan must be in contact with the sufferer (and cannot heal himself/herself in this manner). A roll is made, unmodified except by special decree of the gamemaster. (For example, attempting to heal a Vulcan might well present particular difficulties, especially if the Vulcan is a stranger to the Deltan, because of the Vulcan psychological resistance to empathy.) Success allows the Deltan to heal up to one-third of the damage inflicted on the sufferer. Note that this is mitigating the effects of shock; the ability may only be used on persons in a state of shock, who have passed their unconsciousness threshhold, or who are in obvious agony. Thus, phaser/stun damage and most diseases connot be healed. The Deltan absorbs non-permanent damage equal to the amount of damage healed, and permanent damage equal to one-tenth the amount of damage healed.

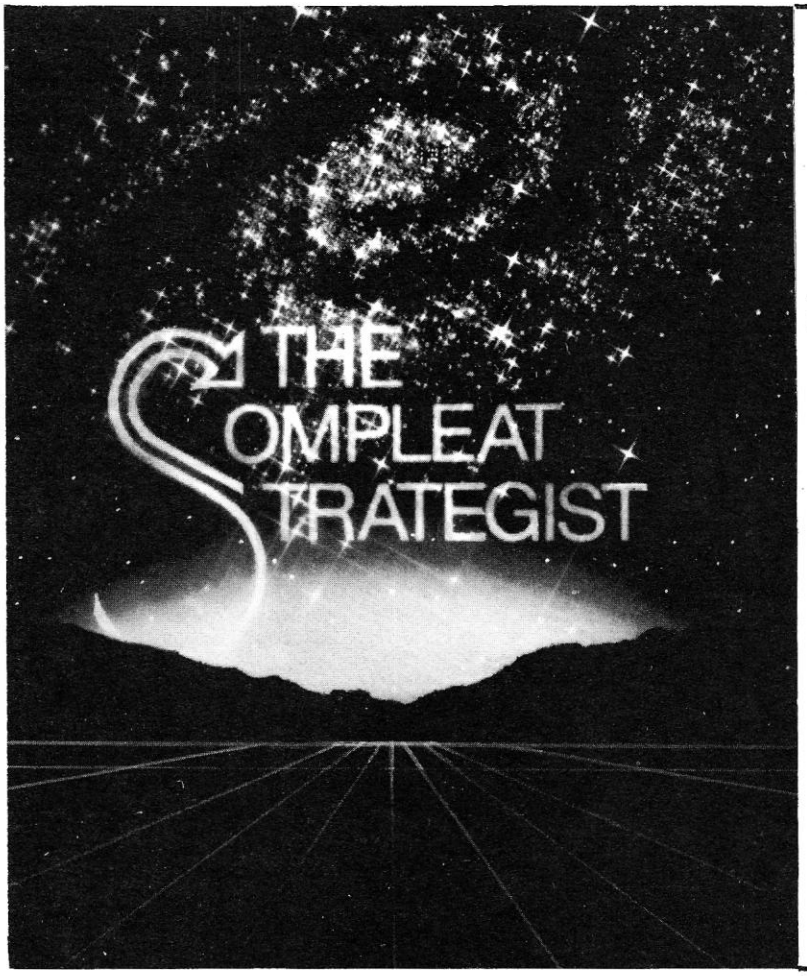
The Deltans have additional telepathic powers not available under normal Starfleet conditions. (In Deltan culture, they are available almost any time, anywhere.) Specifically, during sexual congress, Deltans achieve a form of mind-meld. Any time a Deltan engages in sex, he must roll as if attempting to mind-meld. (If two Deltans mate, both roll, and the highest state of mind-meld achieved is used.) Consult the chart of telepathic modifiers; the most potent form of mind-touch that could have been successful with the roll made (excluding mind alteration) is the state of mind-meld achieved. In further matings with the same person, this is the minimum state attained and further rolls can only increase the state attained. In addition, a permanent bond is forged, a constant low-level tele-empathic bond at a state one less than the highest state of mind-touch attained during sexual congress.

Needless to say, sex with and between Deltans is one of the most intense emotional experiences known. Because of the permanence and depth of the attachments formed, and the fact that Deltan sexual partners cannot act with much reason and dispassion when it comes to their paramours, Deltans serving with Starfleet must take an oath of celibacy—which is quite a sacrifice, about like requiring a human to keep his eyes shut during his entire term of service. However, Deltans, like Vulcans, have a strong sense of honor and invariably abide by the oath. (For those running non-Starfleet campaigns, no such oath is exacted of Deltan civilians. . .) Needless to say, the gamemaster may well set up situations where a Deltan player-character is required by some greater priority of honor to break the oath. Because of requirement of the oath, most Deltans have no desire to serve in Starfleet. As with many races, Starfleet therefore becomes, for the Deltans, a refuge for those unable to deal with the restrictions of their society—in the case of Deltans, this probably means those unlucky at love, which for a Deltan is equivalent to a human who is unlucky at breathing.

Despite the difficulties implicit in Deltans serving with Starfleet, they are highly regarded for their powerful intellects and considerable technical skills. In addition, they are regarded by some planners, notably Vulcans, as a useful stabilizing influence, almost as efficient at pointing out non-violent alternatives as the Vulcans themselves.

From the point of view of role-playing, Deltans present some challenges, mostly in things not to do—jump the bones of anything that moves, for example. Deltans with Starfleet will tend to be restrained, and may well seem cold and unresponsive to those who do not know them—such behavior is a form of defense. They will tend to be more interested in the emotional, sensual, or psychological aspects of a situation than in the physics or political angle. Deltans will tend towards the medical or scientific branches of Starfleet, but can be found almost anywhere. (They will, however, tend strongly away from Security.) They tend to be somewhat patronizing towards other species, regarding them as emotionally immature—especially Vulcans. However, they are extremely polite and friendly about it, which takes the sting out of their presumed superiority.

What a Deltan male (or female, for that matter) would think of an Orion slave-girl is an interesting question. And when it comes to breaking the ice at parties, Deltans are even better than Finite Improbability Generators. . . □



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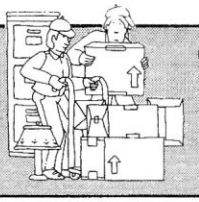

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WHAT'S NEW

Continued from page 43

renegade Gorn ships . . . threatens to jeopardize the peace. The Gorn have told Star Fleet the location of the planet where the renegades have their base. Your destroyer . . . has been dispatched to carry a Gorn Ambassador to meet with the renegades." A 48-page book.

Orion Ruse (FASA, $7) by Patrick Larkin. "The Captain of TransSolar's *Eridani Star* was not a happy man. . . A Federation merchant ship had disappeared near the Daros system, and someone in Intelligence was convinced that the *Eridani Star* would make an excellent spy ship." A 48-page book.

Sourcebook Update (FASA, $7) by Guy W. McLimore, Jr. and Greg K. Poehlein. This 48-page book contains a timeline of Star Trek history, descriptions of governments and Star Fleet Command, a starship recognition file, a Star Fleet personnel file, and the adventure "Lost and Presumed Dead."

Game Master's Screen (FASA, $6). A 25½"x11" playaid printed with charts and tables, comes with a 16-page book of playaids and character sheets.

FOR SUPERWORLD (also Champions and V&V)

Havoc (Chaosium, $10) by Yurek Chodak, et al. "Defeat Diabolical Villains in 3 Action-Packed Adventures." This 80-page book features "three complete adventures, rules questions answered, rules revisions discussed, fascinating new powers, and full *Superworld*, *Champions*, and *V&V* translations."

FOR THIEVES' GUILD

Thieves' Guild 10: Bandit Gangs and Caravans (Gamelords, $5.95) by Kerry Lloyd, et al. This 36-page book provides rules on bandit gangs and caravans and a cat burglary scenario.

Haven: The Free City (Gamelords, $20) by Richard Meyer, et al. Formerly titled *The Free City of Haven*, this boxed edition contains a 12-page An Overview book, seven books describing the boroughs of the city, each from 4-32 pages, a 16-page Random Street Encounters and Character Descriptions book, a 34"x22" city map, and ten 8½"x11" district maps.

FOR TIMEMASTER

Timemaster Screen (Pacesetter, $6). A 25"x11" playaid printed with charts and tables. Comes with 4 character sheets and an 8-page Missing: PT 109 adventure by Carl Smith.

FOR TO CHALLENGE TOMORROW

London By Night (Ragnarok, 1402 21st St NW, Washington DC 20036, $6) by David F. Nalle and Eric Olson. Comes boxed with a 20-page Adventure in a Victorian City booklet, a 12-page A Gamer's Guide: London in the 1890's, and a 17"x22" map. Includes four scenarios, two dealing with the supernatural.

FOR TUNNELS & TROLLS

Solo 19: Captif d'Yvoire (Blade, Box 1210, Scottsdale AZ 85252-1210, $5.95) by Steven Estvanik. ". . . you were made prisoner . . ., chained by the evil Duc de Binaire. Left to rot in a filthy cell, you have only your wits to help you escape the strange Castle d'Yvoire. Eluding the guards and servants will be difficult, but worse yet may be the dark forces rallied by the Duc. . .!" A 36-page book.

The Isle of Darksmoke (Blade, $9.95) by Larry DiTillio. "Journey to the fabled land of Zind, to the enchanted isle of the mighty warrior-wizard Darksmoke, an ancient and subtle master of arcane arts and fell toxins. . . Only the clever, the stout of heart, and the strong-willed ones pass the Swirling Forest to reach the Dome of Darksmoke. And fewer yet return. . ." A 56-page book.

FOR WILD WEST

Trouble on Widow's Peak (FGU, $4) by Patrick Stevens and Timothy Johnson. This 16-page book describes adventures which takes place in Widow's Peak and its surrounding area which includes a small town, a lumber company, a gold mine, and a cattle ranch.

FOR YSGARTH

The following are all published by Ragnarok.

Supplement 3: Expanding Worlds ($3) by David F. Nalle. This 28-page booklet covers Ysgarth and its two nearest regions, Jahannam and Arojika. It also contains the mini-scenario "The Gardens of Alferai Kantiss."

Supplement 4: The Old Powers ($3) by David F. Nalle. This 20-page booklet covers history, the Wrathlords, demons of the abyss, runists, bards, cryomancy, etc.

Adventure 1: Uchelglan—The Blood Tribute ($2) by Jon Schuller. This 12-page adventure involves the party being chosen as human sacrifices to "an ancient mage of great age, a master of Necromancy, Sorcery, and Dark Enchantment." For character levels 1-3.

Adventure 2: Ynisare—The Lost Colony ($2) by ?. This 12-page adventure involves a search for a lost colony. For character levels 2-4.

Adventure 3: Baelnok—Holy City of Arberth ($2) by Jan Mierik. This 16-page adventure puts the adventurers in "a world of politics and intrigue in a major city." For character levels 3-5.

Adventure 4: Cynfelyn—Prince of Prydein ($2) by Dave Nalle. This 12-page adventure involves the adventurers "in the world of international intrigue and espionage between neighboring countries. For character levels 4-6.

Adventure 5: Ptolemeias—Street Shadows ($2) by David F. Nalle. This 16-page adventure is "An introduction to the largest city of Ysgarth and some of the dangers and challenges to be found there." For character levels 1-4.

Jahannam 9: Hills of Binazmia ($2) by David F. Nalle. In this 12-page adventure, the adventurers "have the choice to join or betray a group of fanatical rebels." For character levels 5-8.

FOR ANY SYSTEM

Pieges de Grimtooth (Jeux Actuels, $?) edited by Paul O'Connor. "Une aide pour tous le meneurs de jeux de role." This is the French edition of Flying Buffalo's *Grimtooth's Traps*. A 68-page book.

PLAY-BY-MAIL GAMES

Company Commander (Schubel & Son, Box 214848, Sacramento CA 95821, $5 for rules) by Russel D. Norris and Peter A. Dorman. ". . . a Squad-level . . . war game of diplomacy, production, economics and conquest, allowing for both tactical and strategic decision-making." Comes with two booklets: a 52-page Rules of Play and an 80-page Unit Listing Booklet.

Starmaster II (Schubel & Son, $8.50 for set-up and 52-page rules booklet) by Duane C. Wilcoxson. "A . . . game of galactic exploration, diplomacy and conquest allowing for interaction not only between each player and the worlds of the galaxy, but also between the players themselves."

MAGAZINES

The Chronicles of Chaos 2 (Mike Jarrell, 8721 McNair Dr, Alexandria VA 22309, $1.50). New address of a fanzine for Chaosium's *Stormbringer* game.

The Game Trader 3 (The Game Exchange, 61 Midland Ave, Stamford CT 06906, $1.50) edited by John Farewell. This 8-page issue contains articles on collecting wargames and 3M games, and features mail bid sales of wargames.

Gaming Universal 2 (Imagascape Industries, Box 437, Howley PA 18428, $3) edited by Bob McLain. "The Magazine of Play by Mail Adventure." Bi-monthly, this 48-page issue contains reviews of *Moneylender* and *Silverdawn*, an interview with the president of ECI, an article on mapping *Starweb*, etc.

Omniverse 1 (QuartzLords, 5 Roylencroft Ln, Rose Vly PA 19065, $1) edited by Daniel Gessel. This 20-page premier issue features a new game system that will be published in pieces in the magazine. Other articles include a *Traveller* subsector, a *Call Of Cthulhu* scenario, and a *Dark Cults* game review.

The R'Lyeh Text 3 (probably from Sean Stidd, 22570 Neston Wy, Los Altos CA 94022, $?). This 16-page issue of a club-zine has, among other things, tips on building *Champions* heroes, a science-fiction story, and a *James Bond 007* game review.

BOARD GAMES

Star Trek III: Starship Combat Game (FASA, $12) by David F. Tepool, et al. Same as *Star Trek II: Starship Combat Simulator* with an additional 8-page Introduction to Starship Combat book.

The Last Starfighter: Combat Game (FASA, $12) by Jordan Weisman. Based on the movie of the same name, this tactical space game comes boxed with a 24-page rulebook, 78 counters, a 17"x22" map, a pad of plotting sheets, and dice.

Star Trek III: The Search for Spock Game (FASA, $6) by David F. Tepool and William Cardwell. Based on the movie of the same name, it comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 7 playing board pieces, dice, 76 event cards, 88 triangular markers, and 25 square markers. For 1-4 players.

Star Trek III: Struggle for the Throne (FASA, $6) by David F. Tepool and Jordan Weisman. Comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 7 playing board pieces, 76 action cards, 88 triangular markers, 24 square markers, and dice. For 3-6 players, each vying for control of the Klingon Empire.

Star Trek III: Starship Duel I (FASA, $6) by Jordan Weisman. For 1-2 players, this tactical space game comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 4 navigation wheels, 3 ship stat cards, 75 markers, and dice. Simulates an engagement between the *Enterprise* and a Romulan *Bird of Prey*.

Star Trek III: Starship Duel II (FASA, $6) by Jordan Weisman. For 1-2 players, this tactical space game comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 4 navigation wheels,

2 ship stat cards, 75 markers, and dice. Simulates an engagement between the *USS Reliant* and a Klingon *L-9 Sivista* class frigate.

The Last Starfighter: Duel In Space (FASA, $6) by Jordan Weisman. For 1-2 players, this tactical space combat game comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 2 navigation wheels, 2 starfighter stat cards, 25 markers, and dice. Simulates an engagement between a Star League *Gun Star* space fighter and a Ko-Dan *Deck Fighter*.

The Last Starfighter: Tunnel Chase (FASA, $6) by Jordan Weisman. For 2-25 players, this tactical space combat game takes place inside a tunnel asteroid. Comes boxed with a 32-page rule booklet, 7 asteroid map pieces, dice, 25 starfighter markers, and 64 record sheets.

COMPUTER GAMES

Wizardry (Sir-Tech, 6 Main St, Ogdensburg NY 13669, $?) by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead. "Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord." For IBM PC & PCjr. Comes boxed with a disk, map sheets, playaids, and two booklets: a 12-page guide for IBM machines and a 48-page rulebook. "Starting in the safety of the castle, you . . . explore the magic and mystery of the ten-level 3-D maze."

OTHER GAMES

Muggerhunt! (Firebird Ltd, Ann Arbor MI, $?) by Kevin Dockery. ". . . a solitary game you can play alone or with a group. You are playing the part of a hunter who has decided to go after muggers. The results can range from receiving a hunting license, . . . to enforced retirement from receiving too many muggings or being caught and put away by the police." A 10-page book.

ENDLESS QUEST BOOKS

Collectors Set 3 (TSR, $8). A boxed set of volumes 9-12.

Collectors Set 4 (TSR, $8.50). A boxed set of volumes 13-16.

Each of the following pocketbooks are 160 pages long (TSR, $2.25 each). "Pick a Path to Adventure."

Book 17: Captive Planet by Morris Simon. "A *Star Frontiers* Adventure Book." "Because of your computer skills . . . you have been selected to accompany Brim Darkstar and his . . . team of troubleshooters to the planet New Pale . . . to discover why all communication has been cut off with the Frontier's most important supplier of food."

Book 18: King's Quest by Tom McGowen. "A *Dungeons & Dragons* Adventure Book." "The map given to you by the dying stranger may lead to treasure, but not before you encounter many dreaded creatures. But you gave your word to fulfill your quest. . ."

Book 19: Conan the Undaunted by James M. Ward. ". . . you must deliver the dead knight's map to Aquilonia. The March Riders . . . know you have the map and have vowed your death! You might be able to escape them by going through the evil Black City of Wizards—but do you have the courage to face the dreadful magic creatures rumored to haunt the city?"

Book 20: Conan and the Prophecy by Roger E. Moore. ". . . you . . . are rewarded with a strange prophecy that predicts adventure and danger . . . for you tonight! But where will the prophecy lead you to—a slaver's keep? One of the forbidden temples? The tower of a powerful sorcerer? And will you have the courage to face whatever befalls you in this city of thieves?"

Book 21: Duel of the Masters by Chris Martindale. "A *Dungeons & Dragons* Adventure Book." "You have chosen to help the mysterious stranger whose city has been taken over by the evil Kashkar, a master of the martial arts. Armed with only your staff and your skill, can you—a master of the martial arts yourself—hope to defeat the powerful Kashkar?"

Book 22: The Endless Catacombs by Margaret Baldwin Weis. "A *Dungeons & Dragons* Adventure Book." "You are . . . aware of the wizard's curse placed on the dreaded Endless Catacombs. Now the curse is beginning to spread its evil throughout the land. Do you dare accompany the strange band of adventurers into the catacombs to attempt to remove the curse?"

FANTASY FOREST BOOKS

Collector's Set (TSR, $11.70). A boxed set of volumes 1-6. "Pick a Path to Adventure."

FIGHTING FANTASY GAMEBOOKS

Deathtrap Dungeon (Dell, 1 Dag Hammarskjold Plz, New York NY 10017, $2.25) by Ian Livingstone. "Unknown horrors await you down in the twisting labyrinth of Fang. . . Devised by the devilish mind Baron Sukumvit, the labyrinth is riddled with fiendish traps and hideous creatures of darkness to trick and test you almost beyond the limits of endurance!" A 200-page pocketbook.

STAR CHALLENGE BOOKS

Each of the following pocketbooks are 128 pages long (Dell, $2.50) and are all by Christopher Black. "Do you have the right stuff to be a Space Ace?"

Book 1: Planets In Peril. "Your Mission: Space pirates are after the Gravitron—a world-killing weapon! Can you and your robot companion, 2-Tor, save the universe from this ultimate terrorism?"

Book 2: The Android Invasion. "Your Mission: Armies of androids are on the attack. Can you and your robot companion, 2-Tor, stop them before they conquer the universe?"

Book 3: The Cosmic Funhouse. "Your Mission: The Cosmic Funhouse is no fun for visitors! Some space crews disappear, and others go mad. Can you and your robot companion, 2-Tor, detect the danger—and stop it?"

Book 4: The Exploding Suns. "Your Mission: Suns are disappearing in Space Sector X-7793A! Can you and your robot companion, 2-Tor, end this mysterious menace?"

SOURCEBOOKS

Weapons and Assassins (Palladium, $4.95) by Erick Wujcik. This 48-page booklet contains information on the Order of Assassins, the Thugs, the Ninja, poisons, etc. □

HOLLYWOOD

Continued from page 4

Industrial Light and Magic on this one (the same folks who did the effects for *Star Wars*) and has redubbed the process Go-Motion.

SUPERGIRL, WHERE ARE YOU?: I don't know, but it must be something, because Warner Brothers backed out of a deal to release *Supergirl*, starring Helen Slater, this summer. Tri-Star picked up the option, and so the Girl of Steel will fly anyway, come this Christmas.

And since Ye Ol' Sword has hacked his way to this final page, it's time to bid you a fond good-bye. Keep those dice rolling, and hey, if you got nothin' better to do, go see a movie! □

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Game conventions are the best place to meet new gamers. Organizers should send details of the convention at least six months prior to the event for announcement in this column.

If you wish to see your convention announced in Different Worlds, *simply provide us with the event name, dates, location, where to contact for more information, the number of attendees expected, and the number of attendees you had last year. There is no charge for this service, but please, game cons only.*

WinterCon Gamefest 84
November 3-4, 1984
Dearborn Civic Center, Dearborn MI
Metro Detroit Gamers
PO Box 787
Troy MI 48099

UTHERCON IV **November 9-11, 1984**
University of Texas at Austin
UTHERCON
3212 Red River (109)
Austin TX 78705

U-Mass Con **December 1-2, 1984**
U-Mass Campus Center
PO Box 117
Amherst MA 01002

Son Of Pandemonium **January 19, 1985**
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Dungeon Parties Inc.
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Oakland Airport Hyatt, Oakland CA
DunDraCon Inc.
386 Alcatraz Ave
Oakland CA 94618

ORCCON 1985 **February 16-18, 1985**
Pasadena Hilton Hotel at Grosvenor Plz, Pasadena CA
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CoastCon VIII **March 8-10, 1985**
Royal d'Iberville, Biloxi MS
CoastCon
PO Box 1423
Biloxi MS 39533

NEOCON IV **March 24-26, 1985**
University of Akron, Akron OH
NEOCON IV
PO Box 4045
Akron OH 44321

CONTEST II **March 29-31, 1985**
Tulsa OK
CONTEST II (send SASE)
Tactical Simulation Society
PO Box 4726
Tulsa OK 74159

CAPCON '85 **April 5-7, 1985**
East Ballroom, Ohio Union, Ohio State University, Columbus OH
Paul T. Riegal
c/o War Game Designs
PO Box 629
Reynoldsburg OH 43068

GOLD CON III **April 27-28, 1985**
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Hatcon 3 **June 7-9, 1985**
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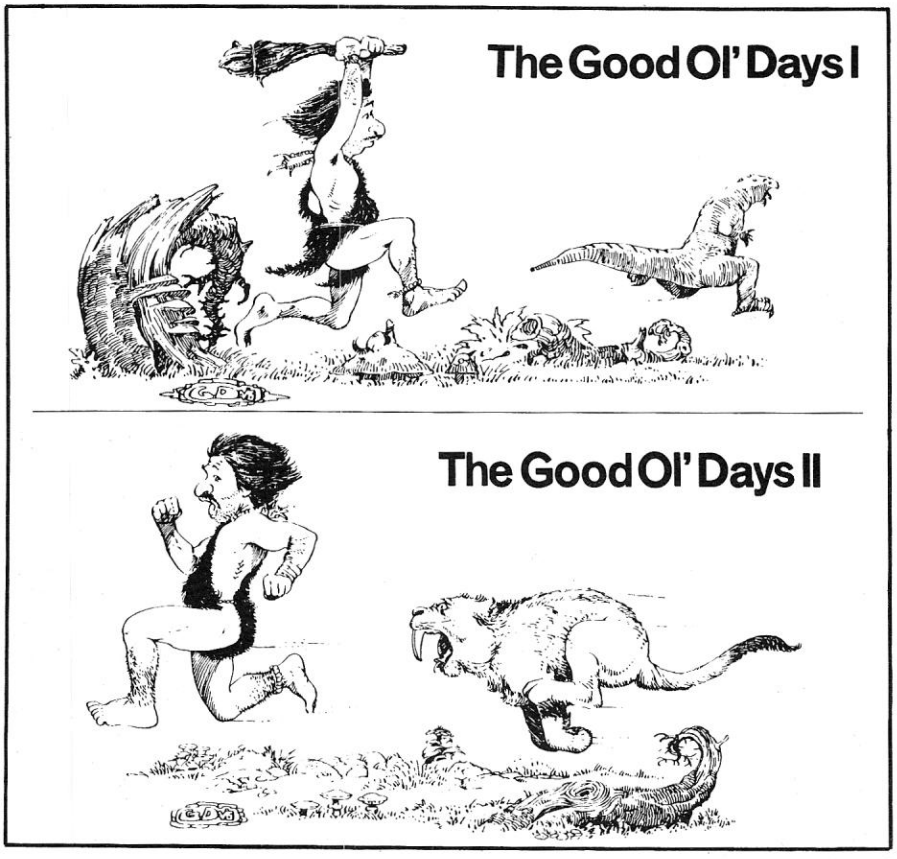

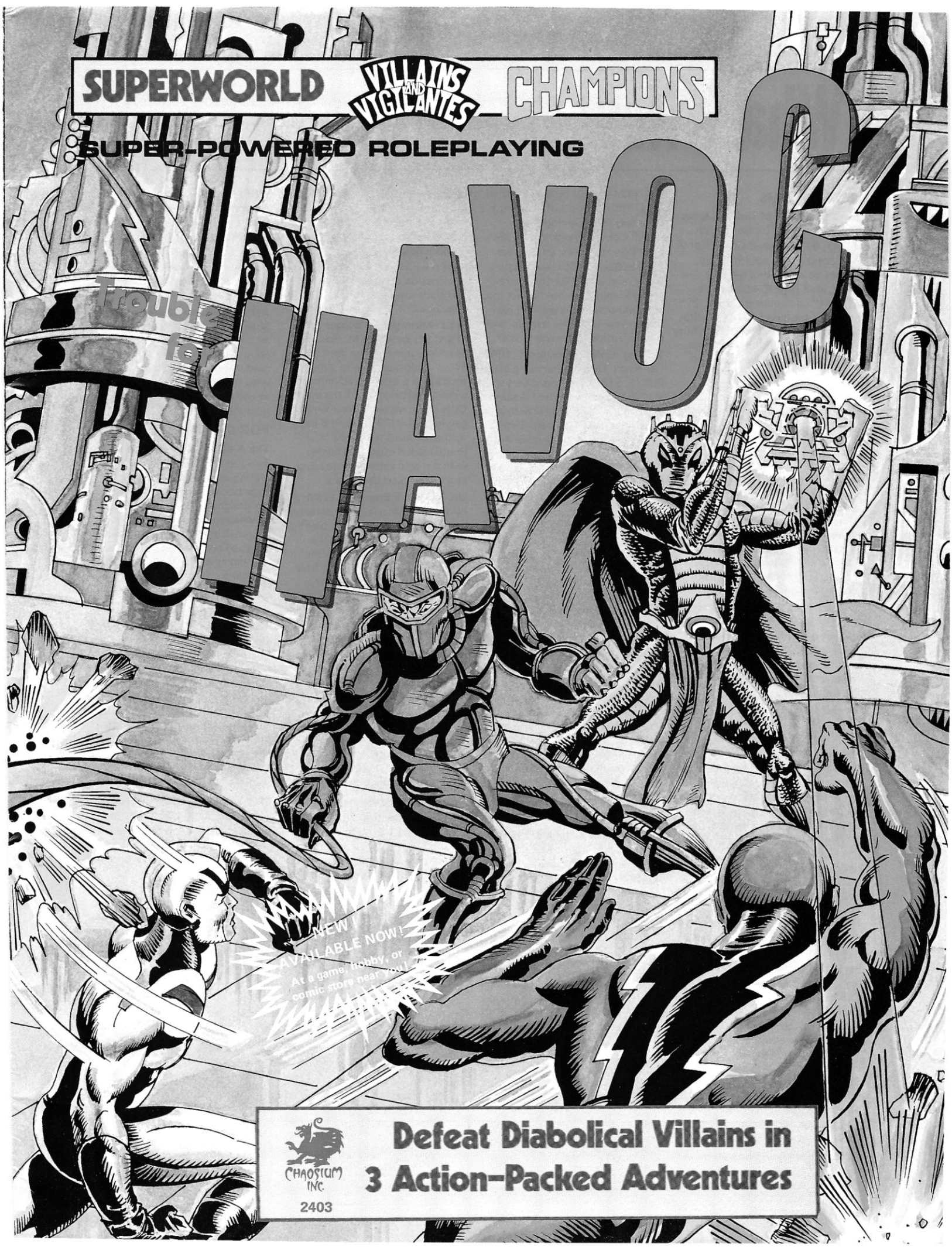
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What's New

New products and publications for the adventure role-player. Game companies are encouraged to send samples of their new releases for announcement in this column.

NEW SYSTEMS

The Adventures of Indiana Jones (TSR, Box 756, Lk Geneva WI 53147, $?) by David Cook. For 2 or more players, ages 10 & up. Comes boxed with a 64-page rulebook, an 8-page Evidence File, 24"x11" gamemaster screen, 22" x11" double-sided map, playaids, and dice. "You could be searching lost ruins for fabulous treasures, recovering stolen artifacts from foul Nazis, or racing through jungles to escape from hostile natives."

Boot Hill (TSR, $?) by Brian Blume & Gary Gygax. New cover art.

Heroes Unlimited (Palladium, 5669 Casper Ave, Detroit MI 48210, $14.95) by Kevin Siembieda. A 160-page book, this superhero role-playing game includes rules on robotics, bionics, mutants, psionics, aliens, insanity, and the adventure "Betrayal."

Jorune (Sky Realms, 796 19th Ave, San Francisco CA 94121, $14) by Andrew Leker. "Leave Your World Behind." This 176-page book describes a fantasy role-playing game based on an Earth-like planet reminiscent of those dreamed-up by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

The Morrow Project (Timeline, $?) by Kevin Dockery, et al. Third edition.

Paranoia (West End, 251 W 30th St, New York NY 10001, $?) by Daniel Seth Gerber. "Terminal Insanity." Comes boxed with a 24-page Player Handbook, a 64-page Gamemaster Handbook, a 52-page Adventure Handbook, and dice. The game is "set in a darkly humorous future. A well-meaning but deranged computer desperately protects the citizens of an underground warren from all sorts of real and imagined traitors and enemies." For 2-9 players.

Psi World (FGU, Box 182, Roslyn NY 11576, $?) by Del Carr & Cheron. "Role Playing Game of Psionic Powers." Comes boxed with a 32-page rulebook, a 20-page adventure book, a 25½"x 11" gamemaster screen, a character sheet, and dice. Takes place in the near future where psionic powers have appeared in a small portion of the human race. Players play the role of either Psis or government security personnel.

RuneQuest Player's Box (Avalon Hill, 4517 Harford Rd, Baltimore MD 21214, $20) by Steve Perrin, et al. Third edition of Chaosium's "Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure." Comes boxed with a 16-page Players Notes, an 88-page Players Book, a 60-page Magic Book, and dice. "Be the courageous knight on a bold quest into the unknown. Be a wolvish barbarian exploring the strange realm of civilization. Be a wiley thief..."

Thieves' Guild (Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter, Gaithersburg MD 20879, $15) by Richard Meyer, et al. "Completely Revised Second Edition." Comes boxed with a 40-page rulebook, a 32-page Bandit Scenarios and Highwaymen Adventures book, a 32-page Basic Character Creation book, 4 pages of scenario maps, and a character sheet.

Toon (Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760, $7.95) by Greg Costikyan. "The Cartoon Roleplaying Game." A 64-page book. "Toon brings you a world where crazy animals talk, fight, carouse, and always act silly. Been punched? Blown up? Steamrollered? Don't worry—you'll bounce back in the next scene, ready for more!"

Tunnels & Trolls (Jeux Actuels, BP 534, 27005 Evreux Cedex, France, $?) par Ken St. Andre. "Jeu de Role et D'Epopee Fantastique." This is the French edition of the Flying Buffalo game. A 100-page book. Comes with an 8-page Castle Ward adventure and a 16-page Chateau du Buffle solo adventure.

FOR AD&D

CB1: Conan Unchained! (TSR, $?) by David Cook. For character levels 10-14. "The greatest hero of the Hyborian world leads his companions against danger and death among the outlaw bands of the Vilayet Sea!" A 32-page book.

DL2: Dragons of Flame (TSR, $?) by Douglas Niles. For character levels 5-7. Second in the DragonLance series, this campaign module describes the world of Krynn which is threatened by the domination of the Dragonlords and their inhuman minions. A 32-page book.

MV1: Midnight on Dagger Alley (TSR, $?) by Merle M. Rasmussen. "Welcome to the dark alleys of . . . Goldstar. You're about to set out on a thrilling adventure in a dangerous section of the city. Only your wits and your weapons can help you." This is an 8-page solo adventure with a 32"x21" double-sided map, and comes with a magic viewer for reading entries blocked by red ink.

UK4: When a Star Falls (TSR, $?) by Graeme Morris. For character levels 3-5. "Hurled like a blazing spear from the night sky, the shooting-star would shape the fates of many—so it was written. Yours is the chance to reforge destiny. There is everything to gain . . . or to lose. . ." A 32-page book with a 17"x11" double-sided map.

UK5: Eye of the Serpent (TSR, $?) by Graeme Morris. For 1st level characters. "The adventurers are captured by a pair of rocs and deposited at the top of a mountain. Left alone for a while, they must escape and survive the harsh journey to the plain below, drawn on by the lure of the 'Serpent's Eye.'" A 32-page book.

UK6: All That Glitters. . . (TSR, $?) by Jim Bambra. For 5-8 characters, levels 3-5. "The lure of gold has drawn many adventurers through the ages. Now a cryptic treasure map has come into your possession. Are you a match for the jungle and the unknown lands beyond?" A 32-page book.

WG5: Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure (TSR, $?) by Robert J. Kuntz and Gary Gygax. A 32-page *World Of Greyhawk* campaign module, it describes the three dungeon levels of Maure Castle, four magic items, and five new creatures.

AD&D2: Player Character Record Sheets (TSR, $?). "Keep track of all the important information about your character, including gold, hit points and magical items with these (16) comvenient, easy-to-use record sheets." Comes with instructions.

FOR CAR WARS

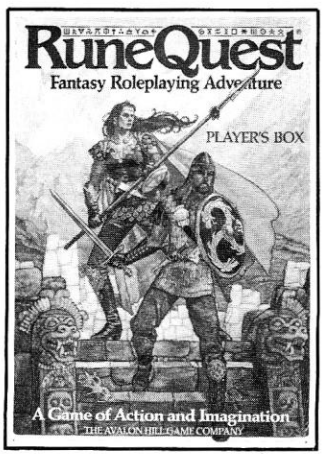
The AADA Vehicle Guide (Steve Jackson Games, $?) by Scott Haring and Jim Gould. This 64-page booklet includes: 129 vehicle designs, 133 options, an index of weapons and gadgets, hints on customizing vehicles, new rules of off-road combat, and design and combat rules for the killer three-wheelers.

FOR CHILL

Highland Terror (Pacesetter, Box 451, Delavan WI 53115, $6) by Garry Spiegle. "Through the years, the legend of Noch Ness has faded into child's tale: now tourists buy postcards near the banks of a lake which once held an ancient civilization in terror. . . But soon the power will be unleashed, as the shores of the loch, the land of Scotland itself, fall victim to the Highland Terror." A 32-page book.

Chill Master's Screen (Pacesetter, $6). A 25"x11" playaid printed with charts and tables. Comes with 4 character sheets and an 8-page Castle Dracula adventure by Gali Sanchez.

Things (Pacesetter, $8) by Carl Smith. In this 64-page book



"you'll find a dozen new Evil Way disciplines, 15 new animals. . ., and more than 50 new creatures from the Unknown to liven up (so to speak) your *Chill* adventures."

FOR C&S

The Dragon Lord (FGU, $?) by J. Andrew Keith. This 20-page book comes with two 8½"x11" maps. The adventure involves "a quest to rescue a kidnapped princess and to end the depradations of a dragon that has the region at its mercy."

FOR DAREDEVILS

Daredevil Adventures 3: Supernatural Thrillers (FGU, $6) by T. A. Dowd, et al. This 24-page volume features three scenarios: "The Body Vanishes," a murder mystery; "The Forgotten Manuscript," a search for missing pages from a manuscript by an occult novelist; and "The Case of Miss Brookmeyer's Murderer," an investigation into the death threats directed at a young woman.

FOR D&D/AD&D

3-D Dragon Tiles (TSR, $?). "This package includes 51 3-D figures, featuring characters, walls, and doors. Two sheets of 84 two-sided feature tiles, showing traps, treasures, furniture, and special surprises, are also included." Comes with an 8-page The Kidnapping of Princess Arelina adventure by Garry Spiegle.

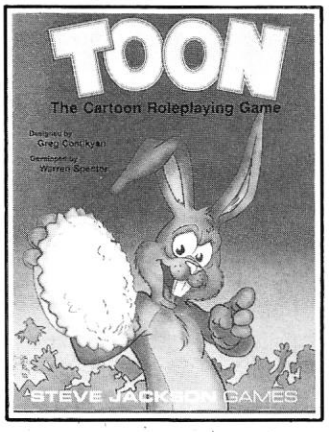
FOR D&D BASIC SET

B7: Rahasia (TSR, $?) by Tracy and Laura Hickman. For character levels 1-3, the adventurers must protect an elven maiden by destroying an evil human cleric and three witches hiding in a secret cavern under a temple. A 32-page book.

BSOLO: Ghost of Lion Castle (TSR, $?) by Merle M. Rasmussen. A 32-page solo adventure, one adventurer journeys to Lion Castle, reputed to be haunted by the specter of its dead owner, Sargon, the greatest magic-user of all time.

FOR D&D EXPERT SET

X6: Quagmire! (TSR, $?) by Merle M. Rasmussen. For character levels 4-10. "To the rescue! The murkey sea is swallowing an exotic spiral city, and you are its only hope! But who are these creatures that want you to fail?" A 32-page book.



FOR D&D BASIC AND EXPERT SETS

Set 3: Companion Rules (TSR, $?) by Frank Mentzer. "Ideal for 3 or more advanced players, ages 10 and up." These companion rules comes boxed in two books: a 32-page Players Companion and a 64-page Dungeon Masters Companion. For character levels 15-25.

CM1: Test of the Warlords (TSR, $?) by Douglas Niles. For character levels 15 and above. "The king requests your presence in the honorable kingdom of Norwold. If you're worthy, you may be appointed lord of a dominion filled with friendly villages, sturdy fortresses, and raging band of monsters . . . Raging band of monsters?" A 32-page book.

FOR INDIANA JONES

IJ1: Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (TSR, $?) by Tracy Hickman and Michael Dobson. An adventure pack based on the film of the same name, it comes with a 24-page book and a 34"x22" double-sided map.

IJ2: Raiders of the Lost Ark (TSR, $?) by Doug Niles. An adventure pack based on the film of the same name, it comes with a 32-page book and a 17"x22" map.

FOR JAMES BOND 007

You Only Live Twice (Victory Games, 43 W 33rd St, New York NY 10001, $?) by Neil Randall. Based on the film of the same name. "Where is the missing space lab and its cargo of death?" Comes boxed with a 56-page Gamesmaster's Guide, a 16"x11" map, and an Agent's Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Sheets. For 1-4 players.

Live and Let Die (Victory Games, $?) by Gerard Christopher Klug. Based on the film of the same name. "Is death in the cards for more M.I.6 agents?" Comes boxed with a 64-page Gamesmaster's Guide, an 8-page Map Booklet, an Agent's Briefing Dossier with 8 Mission Sheets, and a 16"x11" map. For 1-3 players.

FOR JORUNE

Maustin Caji (Sky Realms, $4.50) by Andrew Leker. "Hundreds strong, they would have continued to destroy Burdoth if not for the intervention of Salrough Gomo, Thriddle Seer of the North-West Woodlands. Thirty years later, a man missing and presumed to be their last victim reappears, unaged—join him in his journey to the lair of the Maustin Caji." A 56-page booklet.

FOR JUSTICE INC. (also Call Of Cthulhu, Daredevils, and MS&PE)

Trail of the Gold Spike (Hero Games, 92A 21st Ave, San Mateo CA 94403, $?) by Aaron Allston. "Death Stalks the Lost Mine!" A 32-page book. "Battle the insidious Condor from the bowels of the earth to the skies over Colorado! Can you end his reign of midnight terror and rescue the beauteous Beth from his clutches?"

FOR LOST WORLDS

Halfling with Sword and Shield (Nova, Box 1178, Manchester CT 06040, $?) by Alfred Leonardi. This "Fantasy Combat Book Game" is 32-pages long and comes with a playaid.

FOR MARVEL SUPER HEROES

MH-1: The Breeder Bombs (TSR, $?) by Jolly Jeff Grubb. "Magneto's back in town and deadlier than ever! Can even the X-men stop . . . the Breeder Bombs!" A 16-page book with a 17"x22" double-sided map.

MH-2: Time Trap (TSR, $?) by Bruce Nesmith. "Can a planet be saved after it's destroyed? The Avengers travel through time to save the Earth." A 16-page book with a 17"x22" double-sided map.

MH-3: Murderworld! (TSR, $?) by Jeff Grubb. "Someone wants the (Fantastic Four) gone, permanently! Will Murderworld be their last stop?" A 16-page book with a 17"x22" double-sided map.

MHAC-1: Judge's Screen (TSR, $?). "A full-color Judge's screen with important game tables! A short tour-guide to the stomping ground of the world's mightiest heroes! All this and a map of Mighty Marvel Manhattan, too! 'Nuff Said!" A 24"x11" playaid printed with charts and tables and an 8-page A Hero's Guide to New York by Jeff Grubb.

MH AC 2: Avengers Assembled! (TSR, $?) by Loose Bruce Nesmith. "Now, all the Avengers and their most dangerous enemies have been collected into one exhaustive, official encyclopedia. This book features complete information on 30 past and present Avengers, 22 of their fearsome enemies, the Avengers Mansion, and S.H.I.E.L.D." A 32-page book.

FOR MIDDLE EARTH (also Rolemaster)

Hillmen of the Trollshaws (ICE, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, $6) by Jeff McKeage. This 40-page book details the lands of western Rhudaur. "Adventure in the rocky highlands near Cameth Brin, where Trolls and the ghosts of Petty-Dwarves haunt ancient caverns."

FOR PRIVATEERS AND GENTLEMEN

Decision at Djerba (FGU, $?) by J. Andrew Keith. This 20-page campaign module describes the area around the Barbary city of Djerba on the North African Coast. "At stake is the British blockade of Egypt, the recapture of Malta from the French, the protection of Sicily, and even British control of the Mediterranean."

FOR RINGWORLD

Ringworld Companion (Chaosium, Box 6302, Albany CA 94706-0302, $10) by John Hewitt, et al. "New Hominids, Adventures, Artifacts, and Aliens." An 80-page book. "In this book are two full-length scenarios, 11 new hominids, 6 new aliens, 21 new animals, a page of plant descriptions, new Human Space and Ringworld technical items, game errata, and more."

FOR STAR FRONTIERS

SF4: Mission to Alcazzar (TSR, $?) by Douglas Niles. "The mining operation on Alcazzar was one of the Frontier's best-kept secrets, worth millions of credits—until somebody wiped it out. Now you're here, to set things right." A 32-page book.

2010: Odyssey Two Adventure (TSR, $?) by Bruce Nesmith and Curtis Smith. "In 2001, the Discovery mission to Jupiter ended in disaster. Now, 9 years later, you must recover the Discovery and solve the mysteries behind the monolith." Based on the movie of the same name, it comes with a 32-page book and a 32"x 21" deck plans.

FOR STAR TREK

Demand of Honor (FASA, Box 6930, Chicago IL 60680, $7) by J. Andrew Keith. ". . . a band of

Continued page 38

Film Reviews

Reviews of outstanding feature films of interest to adventure gamers. Good movies are indispensable inspirators of gaming ideas.

By John Nubbin

This column is a little different; with so many movies out this year, it is just impossible for us to keep up on all of them without a shortcut once in a while. We chose 20 films, and ranked them as best we could (a competition resulting in only one tie). So, here you have the Official Different Worlds *Top 20 Films of 1984 (excepting of course all the holiday pictures which are just getting ready to come out). If the film was previously covered in* DW, *it will only get its ranking below. As always, we encourage your comments.*

19: The bottom of the barrel was reserved by MGM for its worst attempt in the last twenty years, *Electric Dreams*. This film was totally useless, unable to decide if it was a comedy, a drama, or just a bad idea. The hero and the heroine were a complete loss; when a villainous machine which is unable to decide if it is a baby, a demon, or just a bad idea is the most interesting character in a film, it is time to throw it out and go see something else. Just what the public did.

18: The same thing they did with *Sheena*. Bad dialogue, bad plot, silly characters, and terrible acting on the part of the main star. Tanya Roberts is worse here than she was in *Beastmaster*, and that's saying a lot. At least the photography here was nice, but nothing else.

17: *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*. In preview we thought this one might be pretty good. We were pretty wrong. It wasn't.

16: *Gremlins*. Last issue said it all. Nicely filmed, great effects, no substance.

15: And, extremely unfortunate as it might be, *Buckaroo Banzai*, modern film's cross between Doc Savage and the Cthulhu Mythos was not much better.

Buckaroo's main problem is that no one seems to have taken the film seriously. In the first hour, one gets a sense of shakiness; it looks as if the film will pull together, but it never does. By the end, it is just another "let's laugh at the heroics" free-for-all, put together by a movie-making system too far removed from such concepts as honor or responsibility to give them any credence.

Good designs throughout the film, great special effects (does anyone ever make movies with bad special effects anymore?), excellent acting—but—no story, no real character development, no respect for the people in the movie, or sadly, in the movie theaters, either.

14: *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Two issues ago we gave Spielberg credit for trying something different. It didn't mean we thought it worked.

13: 20th Century Fox did not present much in the way of science fiction, etc., but it made a nice attempt in the form of *Dreamscape*. Not going into its politics (which have made people curse it or rave about it, depending on their own), it was not a bad little film.

Excellent cast (Eddie Albert, Max von Sydow, Christopher Plummer, Kate Capshaw, and Dennis Quaid), strong photography, imaginative, as well as great special effects, and a good soundtrack. The only problem: a muddled transition as the politics switch from right-wing to left-wing in the middle of the film, and then back again. The change in emphasis on who are the good guys and who are the bad guys mucks this one up.

12: Tied for twelfth place, *Conan The Destroyer* and *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock*. These two were equally entertaining, but to fans only. Good, average fare, but nothing to rave about.

11: Some may be surprised by *DW*'s inclusion of this one, *The Karate Kid*. The film is worth noting for its clear portrayal of what is needed in the martial arts. More than speed, strength, or endurance, it is attitude which counts the most. This film, besides being top-notch on all the usual levels, tells a story we have seen before in a surprisingly refreshing new way. It avoided cliches, and tricked its audiences over and over, merely by substituting reality for what those watching have come to expect. A simple story, but an assured good time.

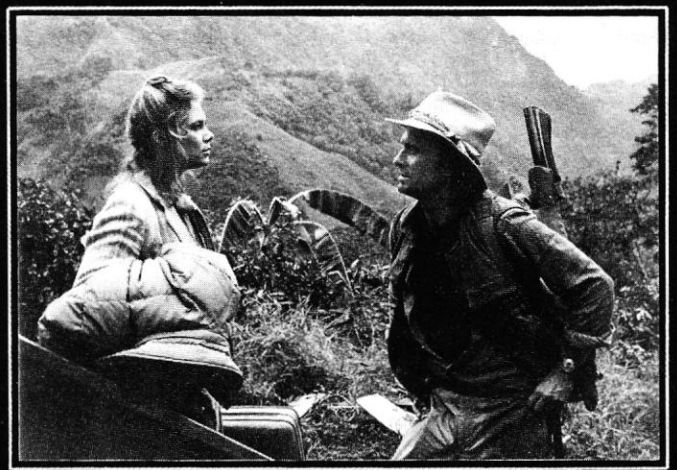
10: *Romancing The Stone* was accused of being an Indiana Jones rip-off by a lot of people. It wasn't. Michael Douglas's character was a mercenary from beginning to end. Just because he fell in love, he didn't lose sight of what was important to him.

The film was done tongue-in-cheek, to be sure, but somehow, it did not come across as the kind of insult to one's intelligence that has been seen so much lately. It was a nice, romping romance/adventure which told its story, refused to set itself up for a sequel, and entertained a lot of people. No innovations, but nothing to complain about either.

9: Any game player who missed *Cloak & Dagger* should try to rectify the situation immediately. It was a movie about gaming, and gamesters, but also, it was about the whole gaming mentality. More correctly, it was about what is perceived as the whole gaming mentality.

A little boy's mother dies, and he is left alone with his dad to face the world. He retreats into his role-playing games, hallucinating all day long. He constantly sees his hero, Jack Flack, in corners, sidewalk cafes, telephone booths, etc., ready to give him handy advice. Jack looks and sounds amazingly like the boy's father (both played to a 'T' by Dabney Coleman); when the day-dreaming hero ends in a real-life espionage situation, Jack is there to help him through it time and time again.

The important thing about *Cloak & Dagger*, though, is that by the end, the audience is allowed to see that this kind of make-believe, imaginary-playing around, is not something psychotic or abnormal. The story lets us see that it is a normal part of everyone's life. If anything, the film tells adults that if they want their children to grow up correctly, they had better be interested in



Kathleen Turner strikes a bargain with Michael Douglas to lead her back to civilization in *Romancing The Stone*, set in South America. Copyright © 1984 Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp.

Ectoplasmic exterminators Bill Murray and Dan Ackroyd have just removed some uninvited guests, rather, ghosts from a fancy hotel in *Ghostbusters*. Copyright © 1984, Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

what their children are doing, and participate in and try to understand it, rather than just delivering an ultimatum now and then (something most gamers, no matter what age, already know).

8: *The Never-Ending Story*. A totally new kind of fantasy film, this one confused as many people as it enthralled. Another strong favorite of adventure gaming audiences, it switched back and forth from fantasy to reality, finally proving what most *DW* readers already know, that fantasy is not something separate from reality, but a part of it.

Terrific special effects, terrific because they were not only well done, but of a new type. The characters and settings and special situations the SFX wizards cooked-up for *The Never-Ending Story* were highly reminiscent of the kinds found in turn-of-the-century storybook illustrations no one wants to make anymore.

This was one which took some thought. It may take it a while to become a 'classic,' but then, we must remember that *The Wizard of Oz* was a financial failure for the first twenty years after it was made.

7: *The Last Starfighter*. We said it looked good. It was better. If it had come before *Star Wars*, it would have been *Star Wars*. The only thing which keeps it down on the list is that it does nothing new. The story, the effects, the music, everything can be traced back to somewhere else.

Borrowing the best bits and pieces of the best films by the best filmmakers currently working, the producers of *The Last Starfighter* turned out a great little film. They were careful, clever, and respectful of their material and their audiences. Nothing wrong here at all—a must see for all genre fans.

6: *The Brother From Another Planet*. This one, as a total entertainment would have certainly been knocked down the list a few pegs if not for the strength of two men, writer/director/editor John Sayles and star Joe Morton. The film has its pacing problems; often the flow seems a bit jerky—the pacing is not what audiences expected. But this is its only problem.

This allegorical film about interplanetary slavery is a sharp study of our present society and what it does to those who attempt to exist within it. It is not so much a tale of slavery, as it is the humiliations and temptations which await people coming to this country, or even those going from the rural to the urban areas within it.

Sayles put together a fine film; somehow, though, the editing seems to fall apart, in some ways flawing the brilliant performance of Joe Morton as 'the Brother.' Between the dictates of the camera, and Morton's riveting screen presence, the Brother holds the audience's attention through everything, confusing or not. Made on a shoe-string budget, *The Brother From Another Planet* is the most ambitious film of the year, not making it as far as it wanted, but stretching far further than it should have been able to.

Scientist-adventurer Buckaroo Banzai (Peter Weller) radios Mission Control after a death-defying trip through the 8th Dimension in his fabulous Jet Car in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*.
Copyright © 1984 Sherwood Productions, Inc.

5: *Streets Of Fire* was ignored, down-cried, and run out of most towns by bad box office. It shouldn't have. *Streets* was an ambitious project—an hour-and-a-half-long rock video, filled with violence where no one gets hurt, fast-paced, galloping music, good stars, great action, basically everything people keep saying they want in a film. It told a story, and told it well. It was simply, direct, and greatly underrated. Catch it if you can.

4: *Splash*. Little needs to be said here. Everyone knows about it. Everyone went to see it. Everyone had a good time. We did as well. Three cheers for director Ron Howard and everyone else involved. Our personal favorite: John Candy.

3: *Le Dernier Combat* ("The Last Battle"). This French, black & white, science-fiction film did not receive great play, but it should have. Shot in a heavy-metal style, it had no dialogue, but a lot to say.

In a world which has faced some terrible disaster, man has lost the ability to speak. He locks himself behind ancient doors and tries to stay alive, scrounging food from warehouses and trashpiles. It is a quiet, foreboding film, one with a number of disturbing messages. A foreign film for all serious students of the science-fiction film, and the third best released (so far) in 1984.

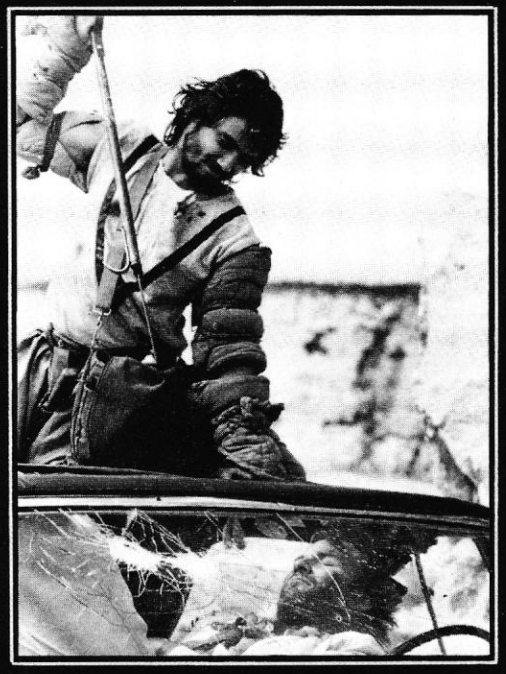
2: Second best is *Ghostbusters*. Another one that everybody saw. Hit of the year. Funny, frightening, well-told, well-filmed, well-acted, perfect for everyone. It has no detractors, and it's the finest film of its type, ever. What more can be said?

1: The best picture of the year. The strongest flim. The most intense. The one with the best story, the best performances, the best of everything. There is no such thing.

The best picture of the year is the one that speaks to the most people—the one that rings the truest. It may not have the best of anything, and yet, it will be the one that everyone knows is telling the truth. This year, that film was *Red Dawn*.

Non-political (those who say it was are grasping at straws to avoid the film's main issues), it tells the story of humanity; what we do to each other, and how we survive the worst of it, and fight back. Like *Le Dernier Combat*, it is a harsh, no nonsense, gritty film, one which reaches to the core of its story and pins down each element naked for everyone in the audience to view totally.

And that's all. □



Joe Morton plays the "Brother," an extraterrestrial who makes his way through Harlem, in a scene from *The Brother From Another Planet*.
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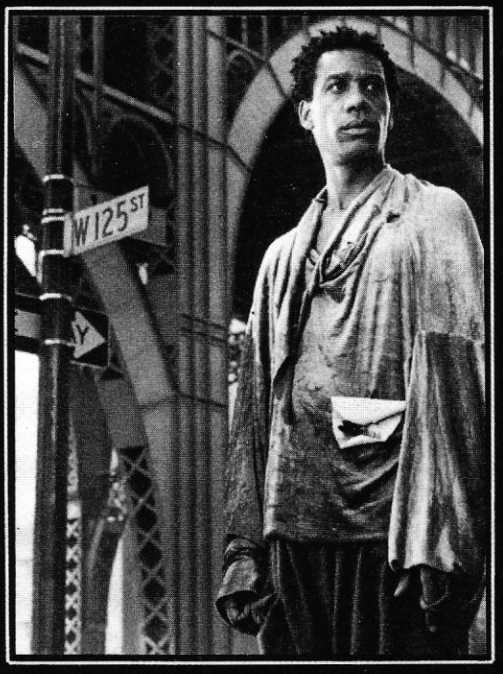

Pierre Jolivet (left) stars as a survivor of the apocalypse and Fritz Wepper is one of his chief adversaries in *Le Dernier Combat*.
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A Letter from Gigi

Adventure gaming news and gossip from the nosiest gamer-reporter in the world, Gigi D'Arn.

Dear Tadashi,

The winners of this year's Strategists Club Awards presented during the GEN CON Game Fair at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside are: Mayfair's *Dragonriders Of Pern* for Outstanding Boardgame; Victory Games' *James Bond 007* for Outstanding Role-Playing Game; Nova's *Lost Worlds* for Outstanding Game, Open Category; TSR's *AD&D* module, *Ravenloft*, for Outstanding Game Play-Aid; Grenadier's *Fantasy Lords* for Outstanding Miniature Figure Line; and TSR's *The Dragon* for Outstanding Gaming Magazine. Congratulations to all the winners. . . Better luck next time, Tadashi.

Now for the gossip: Ads are out for Mayfair's *DC Heroes* role-playing game, but where's the game? The mid-level superhero role-playing game was designed by BILL FAWCETT but Rumour tells me Developer GREG GORDEN did most of the work. Mayfair has lined up several prominent freelancers to work on modules for the game, notably MIKE STACKPOLE (working on a *Batman* module), RAY GREER (*Atom*), and DAVE ARNESON.

TSR seems to be sinking fast. Latest rumor has it that their bank has placed an operations man right under President KEVIN BLUME, effectively cutting Kevin off any important corporate decision-making. No reports of purges yet. . . Another source reports that in the future TSR will not be supporting their slower selling games like *Boot Hill* and *Gangbusters* unless a sudden influx of gamer-interest develops. Start sending articles on your favorite role-playing games to *The Dragon*, gang.

Another rumor tells that Games Workshop will publish a role-playing version of their *Doctor Who* boardgame.

GDW will have their second role-playing game out soon. Titled *Twilight 2000*, it will be a WW III /post-holocaust game.

Congratulations to Steve Jackson Games for their shipment of their hundred-thousandth copy of the *Car Wars* game. Inside that landmark copy will be a certificate, for one lucky customer, good for every product in the SJG line—a retail value of $525.00. . . Winner to be liable for any taxes due, etc.

Schubel & Son announces that boxed editions of their play-by-mail games *Tribes Of Crane* and *StarMaster* will be published by Games Workshop of England. Look for it late this year.

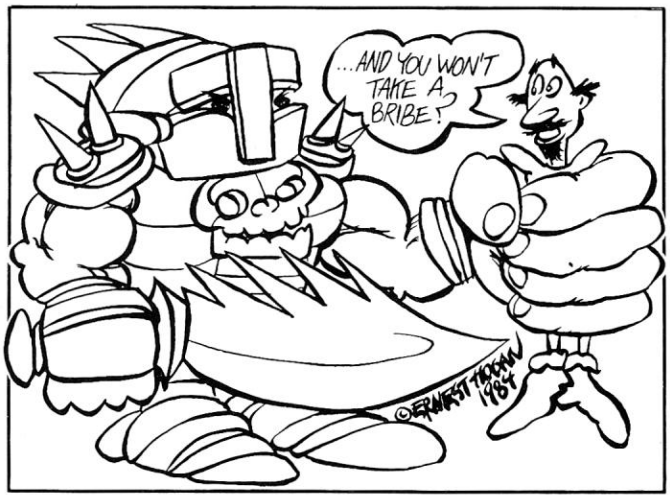
Sleuth Publications has a $10,000 reward for the first person to solve the mystery of *The Queen's Park Affair*, their second set of cases for their *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* game. The contest ends January 15, 1985.

Is Chaosium designing a *Sherlock Holmes* role-playing game for Sleuth Publications?

The Avalon Hill Game Company reports that sales of *RuneQuest* is the highest they ever had since *Squad Leader* came out years ago. Any numbers yet?

Mayfair reports that their dispute with TSR over the use of the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* tradename on Mayfair's Role Aids modules is over. Mayfair's press release announces that, in a meeting attended by the presidents of both companies, an agreement was reached that will allow Mayfair to continue the use of the tradename with certain placement and color restrictions. TSR has yet to release their statement on this matter.

Some Chaosium news: The Geocultists should have a *Superworld Companion* out late this year. Their latest project is an *Elfquest Companion*. They will also be working on a *Stormbringer*-based role-playing game about Author Michael Moorcock's *Runestaff* series.



Is West End negotiating for the game rights to GEORGE MacDONALD FRASER's *Flashman* series?

AARON ALLSTON has been designated the full-time editor of Hero Games' *Adventurers Club* magazine. Probably why the next issue is late. Hero Games, meanwhile, is working on several projects: *Enemies III*, due any month now; a new edition of *Champions* with a new cover; a new edition of *Espionage!*, retitled *Danger International*; and the *Champions IV* supplement, due out next year.

Now that *RuneQuest 3* is finally out, is Chaosium going to design a Thomas Covenant role-playing game for West End?

Rumour reports that publishing rights to Eon's games are up for sale. West End seems interested in *Cosmic Encounter* and *Quirks*, but Eon feels *Borderlands*, a diplomacy game, is their best design. Eon may be right, but *Borderlands* needs a better map and a better title.

KEN ROLSTON reports that he will be going to work for West End as role-playing games editor at the end of the year as soon as he finishes a couple of TSR projects and the two-part *Stormbringer* module, *Trail of the Black Sword*, for Chaosium that he's been working on for two years now.

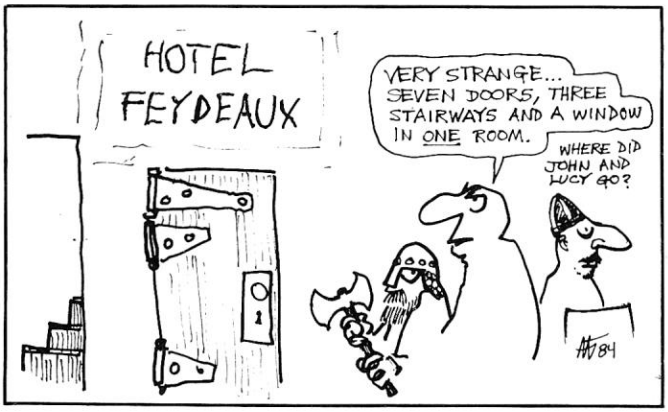
French Editions of *Tunnels & Trolls* and *Grimtooth's Traps* are out (see "What's New" this issue). Should be a shot in the arm for financially-troubled Blade—their LIZ DANFORTH and MIKE STACKPOLE have been freelancing quite a bit lately.

Release of French edition of Chaosium's *Call Of Cthulhu* by Jeux Descartes is imminent. Is there a German edition in the works?

My favorite song this year: Rockwell's "I Always Feel Like Somebody's Watching Me" (background vocals by Michael Jackson).

Love,

Gigi



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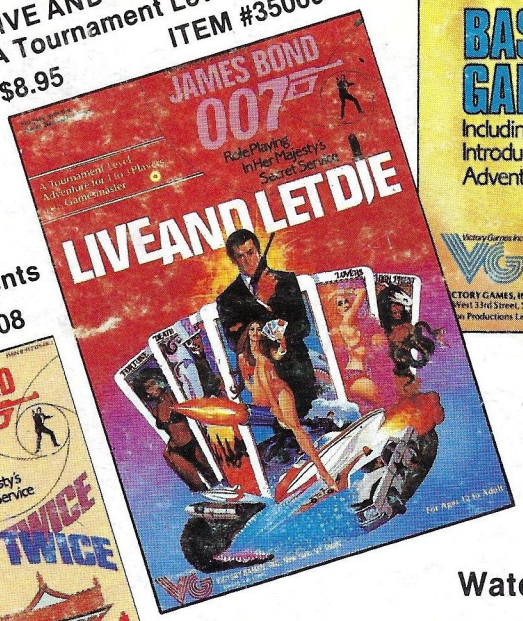

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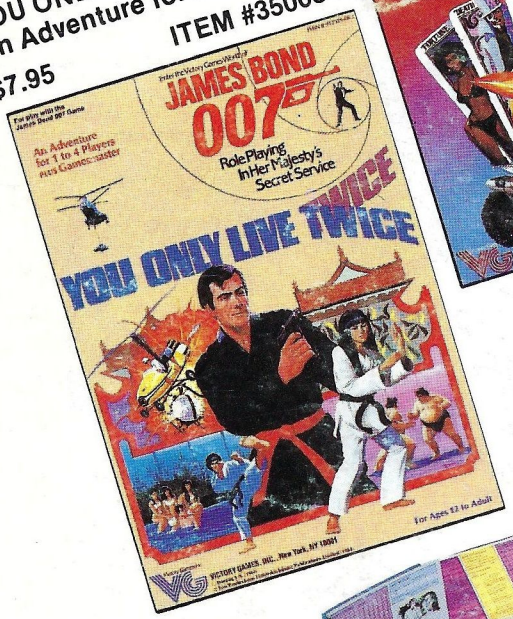

WARNING: Assuming these adventures are exactly like the movies can be dangerous to your character!

Watch for additional supplements, adventure modules and other new products in The World of JAMES BOND 007

Victory Games Inc.

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