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Flagship

THE MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS

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2002 PBM Ratings Awards

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Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty

Battle of the Five Armies

Boardgame Expansions

DungeonWorld

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Issue

100

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Report from the Bridge

100 not out!

HERE WE ARE, with the hundredth issue of *Flagship*. Not a bad anniversary for a hobby magazine, though I say it myself. It's wonderful to be at this point, but I won't try to take the credit: so many of you have helped to keep us going since 1983 by buying the magazine and by filling its pages. My heartfelt thanks to you all.

One exciting special inclusion for issue 100 is the free CD. It's from Harlequin/Middle Earth Games, and contains details for their new Middle Earth variant, *Battle of the Five Armies*. But it also has a special issue of *Flagship*: one we've put together from previous articles. The CD is intended for shops as well, so should introduce newcomers to our hobby. We hope you'll enjoy this - let us know what you think of it.

We start this bumper sixty-page issue with some memories of our early days from the man who founded *Flagship* and kept her going successfully for many years, Nick Palmer. It's been inspiring to have had Nick's example to follow.

I've made some changes since taking control, however, mainly by introducing more general gaming material because we think you'll find this interesting. We continue this trend in this issue, though we'll never abandon our PBM roots. It's been good to have readers supporting these developments. It's also good to see so much proof in this issue that the type of gaming from which we originated is still going strong. Yes, there are many more PBeM games than PBM ones running nowadays, but the actual concept of turn-based gaming remains a powerful one.

Perhaps it's a disadvantage for me as your editor that I've never been a great player of games, unlike Nick. But I soon grew to admire the quick wits of PBM players when I was a moderator myself, and the other members of my family have played every type of game: which makes me a bit like the lady who 'didn't think much of music but just loved musicians'. So I'll try to keep it as my editorial policy to listen to people - just keep talking to me and telling me what you think.

My gran had a notice on the wall in her pub which warned 'No politics, No religion': this seems a pretty good motto for staying tolerant to me. I don't promise to agree with you - hey, I don't even have to agree with everything that gets printed in *Flagship* - but I reckon that listening to game players is a fun way of listening to life.

Next issue includes: Renaissance, Godfather, World's Apart, Harnmaster, and the Lost Gold of Stronnmark returns.

Carol



FLAGSHIP #100

December/ January '02-'03

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Flagship 100

A Founder's Memories

NICK PALMER takes a frank look back ...

ISSUE 100, good grief!

Steve Tierney's Retroscope and Bob McLain's columns have already covered many of the early days, but readers may like to know a bit about how it seemed from the inside. *Flagship* was launched back in 1983, which seems another era altogether, like World War 1 or the Aztecs. I'd worked on magazines called *Games & Puzzles* and *The Gamer*, doing a board wargames column. In both cases, the publishers milked the business as long as it was profitable, spent the sub revenue in advance, and then folded the magazine, owing me and most of the staff money that had been repeatedly promised. G&P had had a long and much-admired history before its final decline; *The Gamer* struggled from the start.

The early days

After two experiences like that I was quite fed up, and decided that next time I wanted to run the thing myself. I noticed that PBM was just beginning to take off, and thought there might be a market for a good mag about it if we got in early. After some initial consultations, I teamed up with Chris Harvey and David Pritchard.

Chris ran ICBM, which with KJC and Mitregames was the early market leader, mainly by virtue of being the UK agents for Flying Buffalo (a US company that is still going strong). I was a left-wing Labour activist; he was a Conservative Party agent. We got on just fine - after all, we were both interested in how the country was run, giving us more in common than people who couldn't give a toss. We rapidly agreed a deal: he'd cover the initial costs and help with regular advertising; I'd run the magazine; we'd share ownership 50-50. Occasionally irascible in non-business matters (I remember a caustic reply to one query about Starweb: 'Read the f***ing rules!'), Chris was a wonderful partner, and we worked happily together till we realised that the enterprise was unlikely ever to pay significant dividends. Fortunately, there hadn't been many initial costs either (the ad and sub money came in before the bills), so he didn't lose out. Eventually he passed on his interest for £0 in exchange for a promise of a permanent place on the masthead.

The concept emerges

David Pritchard was, and is, a leading light in gaming, and a professional editor. His presence guaranteed a properly-laid-out magazine that would be attractive to look at. We devised the basic concept that you still see in *Flagship* today. 'Explorer's Findings' would have news. 'Professional

Secrets' would have strategy. 'The Ghost in the Machine' would cover design issues. 'Galactic View' would list games in one convenient place. And 'The Spokesmen Speak' [now 'Newsdesk'] would corral the boring, self-serving hype of the press releases into one place. The last was virtually unreadable, so we quickly changed it to an edited version, giving the chance to drop hints to readers if some games were clearly better than others.

All that was needed was some vigorous marketing. Chris and I thought we'd rapidly get several thousand readers, but expected to struggle to get advertising. Wrong on both counts. We stuck at a few hundred subscribers at first, but advertising flooded in. *Flagship* had been launched at just the right time. Numerous people had been thinking of starting games, and hey, here was somewhere to advertise them. With, I'm afraid, a certain amount of exaggeration in the sales pitch, it wasn't hard to attract new advertisers each issue. Older advertisers soon cottoned on to the fact that they weren't getting a zillion responses to their ads, but they mostly stayed loyal, partly to keep name recognition going and partly to support the idea of the hobby having a quality magazine. The original *Flagship* cover showed a big spaceship leading a huge flotilla of PBM vessels, and that basic idea was, I think, quite broadly accepted. A big thank you is due to firms like KJC who carried on advertising long after they'd harvested most of the potential response from our regular readers.

A sea of troubles

The snag was that this success rapidly generated competition. I have always believed that PBM has never been large enough to support more than one major magazine for long, so I saw every rival as a deadly threat. In the US, we were in any case stymied by Bob McLain's *Gaming Universal* (later *PBM Universal*), which was launched at the same time as us. Much flashier and infused with Bob's delightful writing, as well as being firmly based in the US, it outpaced us easily, but over-reached itself and folded fairly rapidly. A brief revival burned out just as quickly, and we took over the sub list and turned it into 'Flagship US'. In the UK, competition was mostly more down-market, and magazines came and went fairly rapidly without leaving much trace, though the Shulkinds gave us a long fight with their magazine *PBM Monthly* before finally folding. The circulation and advertising wars were quite rough at times (more on this later) but the outcome was usually that *Flagship* took over the rival.

Throughout this early period, we ran into repeated cashflow and production difficulties. It was particularly hard to make the US edition work, since I never met any of our editors and selected and worked with them entirely by email. Our first one was hard-working and exceptionally nice but rapidly got frustrated with carrying the can for delayed issues and other problems. Another was a pleasant fellow who never really had the time needed for the job. A third was... well... elusive. Our relationship culminated in farce, when I visited his home town for a game convention and agreed to meet him to pick up the copy that he said he'd got ready for us. I met him and his wife at the airport, and we chatted happily. It was all so cordial that his wife asked me back to them for dinner. A look of panic crossed his face. 'I think he'll be too busy, honey,' he said firmly. But we agreed to meet next day so he could give me the material. Next day he phoned my hotel: his company had, alas, insisted that he work through his lunch hour. But he'd bring me the copy to my plane when I was leaving. At the airport he duly appeared. But hey, his wife had stupidly taken the folder in the car to work. Not to worry, a courier firm had been

Nick Palmer - Our Founding Father



Born on 5th February 1950, Nick (or Nicky as he is probably known to most Gamers) was educated in Denmark, before taking his PhD in Topology at Birkbeck College, London in 1975. His professional career has included computing jobs with medical and pharmaceutical organisations. Nick contested East Sussex and South Kent in the 1995 European elections before being elected MP for Broxtowe in the Labour landslide of 1997. He married Fiona Hunter in 2000 and is currently a member of the Treasury Select Committee.

contacted and they were bringing it to the airport. 45 embarrassing minutes passed while he played out the time, calling up from time to time to remonstrate with the alleged couriers, and responding with injured innocence to my polite invitations to own up that he hadn't actually done the damn issue. That US edition never materialised, then or later, and that was the end of that US editor. We carried on for a while with a new US editor, but in the end we were glad to take up Bob McIn's offer to take over US Flagship and run this independently.

We decided to concentrate on a single edition and just include US news when we received it.

One really good decision

More seriously, at the UK end, the complicated production system was causing frequent delays. I was working in Switzerland; David Pritchard was doing the layout; various printers were doing the production; and the dispatch of copies was yet a fourth stage. Email was in those days quite primitive (nothing fancy like attached Word files) so delays and misunderstandings were frequent, while the magazine kept getting bigger and bigger as more articles and ads poured in. The whole project nearly foundered with the huge 72-page issue 18. This got stuck at the printers for months, and bills piled up with no income coming in. Something had to be done, and I made the best strategic decision of the magazine's life. I gave the whole production and distribution job to Ken and Carol Mulholland. This appeared to be a risky idea, since they had their own games, and it would be natural if people suspected that we'd give them favoured treatment. However, we were always careful not to do that, and in the essentially friendly world of UK PBM the other GMs accepted this without being paranoid about it. Ken and Carol were both efficient and wonderfully neurotic about keeping deadlines, working into the wee hours as necessary. All the practical problems magically melted away, and since then Flagship has virtually never been late.

Eventually, as my political work gradually consumed all my free time, Ken and Carol bought out the magazine at a generously exorbitant price that repaid all the money I'd loaned the project in tough moments, and even after Ken's tragic death Carol has been able to keep the magazine going steadily and improving in quality.

Ethical dilemmas and how I failed them

A more subtle challenge was the whole question of ethics. Running a magazine in a competitive market is, I've found, actually a lot like being in politics. You have to believe in what you're doing, or the whole thing rapidly becomes a burden, but you are under constant pressure to cut corners.

The obvious temptation #1 is the favourable article which mysteriously appears in the same issue as a splash advert. We resolved this early on by a simple policy. If we got a favourable review, we'd tell the GM and invite him to take advantage of it with a big ad. But we wouldn't do it the other way around - the fact that we'd got a big ad wouldn't make us print a favourable review. I always felt fairly comfortable with this policy, and it rescued us from one particularly sleazy case in the US, where a new firm wanted full-page adverts in conjunction with a rave review by a 'playtester'. We refused to print the review; a competitor, less cautious, went ahead and ran it. The game turned out not to exist.

On the other hand, I have to say that I was consistently fairly nasty to our competitors, because I felt that it was basically them or us. Every

little mistake and delay in rival magazines' issues was faithfully reported in Flagship, in the polite manner of The Times reporting that a small newspaper in the Orkneys seemed to be struggling - we did hope they'd get better soon. 'You use classy wording to make yourself look good, but you are running us down at every opportunity,' wrote one angry rival privately. I'm afraid that's exactly what I was doing. 50% of magazines fold in their first year, and if you don't fight your corner in a competitive market you eventually go down.

A third temptation, pointed out in Steve Tierney's perceptive series, was to have favourites. Some of the best gaming experiences I've ever had were in games from Rampage, who ran the terrific hand-moderated St Valentine's Day Massacre (all the fun of the current Godfather game plus a rich line of atmospheric moderation by a highly-literate GM) and the fascinating but fatally-flawed Keys of Medokh (terrific scenario, masses of empire-building delights, but combat didn't work!). We kept backing the game editorially because, like most Rampage loyalists, I was sure it could be the best game ever, if only they'd get rid of the bugs. Rampage responded with a feast of huge adverts, and although this hadn't prompted the original favourable coverage, I can't absolutely swear that it didn't encourage me to stay supportive even as hopes for the game became increasingly implausible. I apologise in retrospect to anyone who was encouraged to stay on longer by this. It taught me a lesson, and I don't think we ever gave a failing game so much leeway again. But you know, I still enjoyed Medokh more than many games which actually worked!



Calm waters and happy days

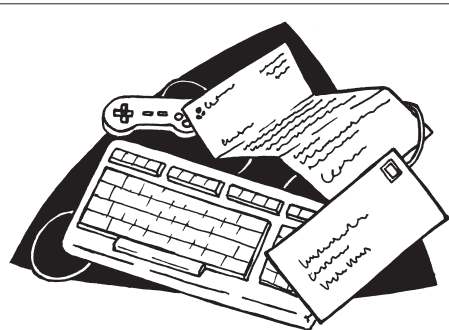
After all the travails of the early years, Flagship emerged into what has been a prolonged Indian summer. The US market has basically disappeared, with a few exceptions, but the UK scene continues, with PBM merging steadily into PBEM and Flagship recognised as the stable centre of the 'fleet', just as we'd hoped back in issue 1.

Readers remain loyal - and it's you, of course, who have kept the whole enterprise going through thick and thin. I wish, too, I could give credit to everyone who deserves it - not least the myriad of hard-working reviewers over the years. As I look back on the last 17 years, two things really stand out.

First, the amazing creativity of the hobby. I've been gaming all my life, and I've seen board games, computer games, role-playing games, collectible card games, and many more genres wax and wane over the years. But I don't think any branch of gaming has achieved quite as much variety as PBM. The combination of efficient computer moderation with human input in mixed-mod games like Absolute Power (oops, quoting a favourite again) has been particularly fruitful, but I've had wonderful experiences in computer-mods and hand-mods too.

Second, despite what I said about magazine competition, the consistent friendliness of the hobby. GMs could be like piranhas fighting ferociously over a quite limited pool of players. They aren't. In fact, I can count on one hand the number of times I've heard a GM bad-mouthing a competitor. GMs generally like each other, they play in each others' games, and they have almost without exception been nice to everyone on Flagship. I enjoyed nearly every minute of my time editing the magazine because of that, and I hope we gave something back in helping the hobby to thrive. It gives me especial pleasure that Carol is carrying on the tradition better than I ever managed.

I look forward to issue 200.



NEWSDESK

FREE POSTER

The creators of **Total Conquest** were disappointed in the quality of their artwork on 99's front cover. We're contacting the printer to find out what went wrong, but meanwhile **Total Conquest** offer a link which you can follow if you wish to see their poster at its highest quality. They also have it there available for free download as a poster, if you like it. The direct link is:

www.total-conquest.com/about.asp?pageView=3

This will take you to the downloads page. The poster is the one that says: 'Total Conquest Desktop Wallpaper'

PBM/PBeM ROLEPLAYING

A new game from Silver Dreamer gives a fascinating twist to their much-praised **Absolute** system. They have launched **Absolute Terror**, which is set in the modern world, but it's the modern world with 'a horror/fantastic feel'. They've room for new players at present, but be quick if you're interested as there's a limited number of places.

The setup is £20 and subsequent turns are £5 each. Mailing list subscription gets you full rules if you send a blank email to:

absoluteterror-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

There's also room in Silver Dreamer's game world, **Aspects of Might**; remember, this was described by one of its players last issue. Signing up to the mailing list gets the full rules sent to you, or you can check out www.silverdreamer.com

astralweb-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Simon Williams, who moderates **Chaos Trail** writes to say that following consultation with his players, the game's turn fee will be increased slightly, from £1.25 to £1.75. This seems to be still a very reasonable charge for a hand-moderated game, but Simon also adds that this increase will be accompanied by a turn length guarantee - 'no turns will be less than 1000 words and many will be considerably longer, depending on the in-game scenario being played out.' Simon has room for new players in his game if you fancy trying it out:

chaostrail@yahoo.co.uk

COMPUTER GAMES



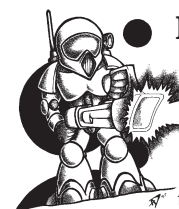
Your editor started her inglorious game-playing career with some of the earliest computer games. Things have come a long way since Atari's **Golf**, but it was oh-so-satisfying in an advanced state of pregnancy to lie back working out the exact way to get round the course in a series of holes-in-ones. If only real life could be so cosy!

Ubi Soft are announcing a new game called **Will Rock**, which will appear for the PC in spring 2003. The intriguing thing about this first-person shoot'emup, given its title, is that it's supposed to be set in ancient Greece. Presumably 'Will Rock' is only the working title? The game's 'innovative weaponry' includes a Medusa Gun, a Flaming Crossbow and an Acid Rifle (eh?). Could be fun, though, if there's plenty to do and a chance for your

editor to shoot down her old school emblem, Pegasus.

Championship Manager 4 is due out from Sports Interactive in February 2003. It is, of course, a sequel to their popular PC football management simulator, and will include more about the players, more management options and leagues. It's the matches that are the main feature of a footie game, of course, and the good news is that these have been thoroughly revamped.

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness was originally planned to be released at the end of 2002, but Eidos have announced that they still have some work to do on perfecting it, so the launch has been postponed until February to be sure of getting things right. The game will be available for the PC and PlayStation2. Of course, what we really want to know is whether there's a film in the new game before Angelina Jolie decides to roll up her webbing ...



● PBM/PBeM SCIENCE FICTION

Some exciting news that reached us just too late for issue 99, but which we're pleased to include here, is the arrival of a new game from Agema Publications. As an interesting departure from their usual historical games, **The Thumping of Ground 8** is a science fiction campaign.

In far-distant star systems on the edge of mankind's explorations, there are signs of serious trouble. A range of varied but frightening reports are coming in. Station 18 has been attacked and destroyed by alien lifeforms; the starship **Valerian** has exploded after its self-destruct sequence was initiated during some kind of attempt to take it over; Nest Prime G8/1 is being raided by pirates and its desalination plant has stopped working; criminal gangs have released **Rachnids** within Nest Secondary G8/2, forcing its evacuation. Last arrives the scariest broadcast of all, announcing that a hostile battle-fleet is landing troopers. Player-character help is obviously needed in all manner of critical situations!

We've not seen the rulebook yet, but can add that the game will run to a three-weekly turnaround. Rules cost £5 and turns will cost £6, or £2 per week.

Agema have established a good reputation with their historical tactical and power games. It'll be fun to see how their designer Richard Watts' imagination carries him into the genre of science fiction, futurewards.

Harlequin report that seventeen empires were knocked out in a month in their **Star Quest**. Is this a record? they ask. Gosh, it seems pretty drastic. Still, at least it leaves room for the remaining empires to play.

KJC Games have announced that the launch date for their eagerly-awaited advanced version of **Beyond the Stellar Empire**, **Phoenix**, is 12th December 2002. This is exciting news for all science fiction players, and if you're currently playing **BSE** or have already signed up for **Phoenix** itself, you may just have received the disc from them in the post.

<http://cgi.kjcgames.com/800/contact/contact.php>

Pagoda Games have exciting news: a new scenario of the popular **Star Fleet Warlord** will become available to UK players for the first time in January 2002. Following a successful playtest in the US, **SFW:Omega** has players controlling a single race, each with their own ship designs and special abilities. The game features 25 players (though a smaller map will be available to speed up game starts if necessary) and will provide a fresh challenge to players both new and old.

Regular games are starting every 3-4 months, with the next planned for around March 2003. The other variant is the team based Historical scenario, again with players controlling a single race. This has been particularly successful in UK vs US games, **EH6** being the latest. Pagoda report that 'the current score is 2-1 to the UK based players, though **EH6** is balanced on a knife-edge and could go either way at this stage.

www.pagodagames.co.uk

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www.pbmgames.com

PBM/PBeM WARGAMES



The designers of the new PBeM fantasy wargame **Total Conquest** have been adjusting

the game to remedy some teething troubles that arose during the early stages of its commercial release.

Various Java applet bugs were discovered and they

also found that the game was not working properly in all different operating systems and computer requirements; maybe the site was too high-tech for the majority of players. So they needed to remake the download mix and 'smooth' the Java Client, to make it work for slower and older computer systems as well. At this point they have managed to get the Java Client working for the majority of PCs (with the exception of very old machines) and they're confident that their players seem content, after these initial troubles.

They comment on one problem which isn't a new one in online games, so they were expecting it. This is that, beyond their standard player base, there are many people who sign on for a game but never return to play it, which could result in games going inactive due to player shortage. They're tackling this with an automatic drop-out system, and a page advertising free dropout positions for players who want to join straight away.

They are now preparing what they call 'custom games' in which you will be able to 'create' and 'book' a game by choosing the scenario, races and cultures you want to be available in that game, and you will be able to 'invite' or 'challenge' players of your choice. This ability to choose the other players you want to play with/against may well reduce dropouts, by giving active players the responsibility of finding a replacement for their own game if positions go inactive. It seems a fun idea as well as a useful one.

Packs for Harlequin/Middle Earth Games' Middle Earth PBM variant **Battle of the Five Armies** have been sent out to gaming shops throughout the country. You can also mail order a pack at www.esdevium.co.uk. Indeed, you'll find the CD included with this issue. Harlequin have had a good response to this and have already started up Apprentice games. If you want to try Battle of the Five Armies yourself, or suggest it to friends, it's ideal for your first game of Middle Earth, and Harlequin are hoping that it will bring a lot more players into the hobby. At only £10 for the entire first game of ten turns, this seems an ideal Christmas gift!

One variant which Harlequin have introduced for more experienced players is the no-diplomacy Gunboat game. As you can see from this issue's Rumours, it's proving a success, and Harlequin are now about to try a new version with very limited diplomacy and with three nations each. Every ten turns you'll get a copy of your team-mates turns, to attempt

to work out what events of import have occurred within that period. It'll be fun to hear how this goes: it sounds an exciting challenge.

We've previously mentioned Harlequin's plans to launch a player rating system for Middle Earth PBM. This is now imminent, and we have further details about it. The six ratings which Harlequin will provide for players on their website are:

- 1: *Valar*, which they say is based on similar ratings found in other games such as chess, where the quality of both teams is taken into account, as is the split of the neutrals. They believe that this rating could have a balancing effect on the neutrals, so that it would be rare to get games which end too quickly because one side is too strong.
- 2: *Maia*, which is designed to be like experience points. This will rate your experience at playing Middle-earth. Not surprisingly, it gives more points for winning than for losing, but it also gives more points if you play with other more experienced players.
- 3: *Istari*, which rates individual success and is based on ability to score well for a particular nation relative to how that nation is normally scored at the end of the game. They'll also have an overall rating.
- 4: *Ainur*, which is a rating for Grudge teams, rewarding those Grudge teams who win without losing too many nations along the way.
- 5: *Council of the Wise*, which is a player voting system, with players voting for their team-mates at the end of the game.
- 6: *Nazgul*, which is a rating of experience combined with winning percentage.

Will players find that the new ratings add to the fun of their games? We'll be keen to find out, so let us know when you've had a chance to try them out.

Harlequin are continuing to work on their Automagic system and are now able to import the character information directly into it. This is the first stage in their bigger project of the Middle-earth mapmaker, which will be able to provide your turnsheet information in colour. It's currently in its second stage of playtesting and Harlequin have big hopes for this improving the quality of the game, and as a step into the bigger world of computer gaming.

Updates have also reached us from Harlequin Games about their various games of **Legends**. Legends is usually seen as a difficult game to play, but here's an example to show that complexity can suit some players: Mark Warren's Eldar Giant 'Zug' has won all five Dragonrider clashes in the North Island Campaign 24. This would be impressive enough, but what makes it particularly notable is that this is also Mark's first ever game of Legends!

Their Legends game Crown of Chaos 22 is nearing an end after more than four years of 'intense, empire-spanning combat'. Of the 100 players who started the game, only six remain, but the warring factions' two titanic armies

are, as one player remarked, 'almost perfectly matched - this fight could go right down to slot tactic choices'.

Swords of Pelarn 24 just had a mighty Knights Clash. The previous champion, insectoid Ta'al Tikeshik, was laid low with foul sorcery on the day before the fight, curing him of his 'Master Werelord' status and turning him to stone! Light champion Britomart nearly made the final for the first time after battling through four tough preliminaries, but finally the Skull Knight Weeping Reaper took the prize. Weeping's player, Jimmy van der Meij, has managed to win Knights' Clashes in every game he has played, so he can probably claim to be the best player of hero positions in Harlequin Legends. (It will be interesting to see how he fares if Mark Warren and he ever go head to head ...)

Pagoda Games' **Adventurer Kings** is an old favourite, which still ranks highly in your Ratings. Keith Burnham of Pagoda Games reports that the majority of new games starting are now *SuperAK* games, with between 15 and 30 players each. Pagoda have found players enjoy these larger games more than the regular eight-player games, with many more characters, artefacts and locations to explore and conquer. Game 215 has just started mid-November, with Game 216 scheduled to start early in February. Standby positions in existing games are normally available for people who want to sample the game, or simply can't wait for the next game to start. www.pagodagames.co.uk

KJC Games are filling a new game of their non-fantasy wargame **Warlord**, but you'll need to hurry if you want to take one of these places up: www.kjcgames.com/warlord.htm

Pagoda Games announce that a new twist has been added to new games of **World War IV**, limiting the effects of alliances and thus preventing large groups of players dominating a single game. Game 110, which is still in its early stages, has players restricted to just three declared allies. Some standby positions should still be available in this game as this issue of Flagship goes to press. The next game (111) will add a further twist, and will be a pairs game. In this variant, players are placed on the map randomly, but can nominate a single player with whom to be based next to. Thus players will still be guaranteed contact with one known friend, but groups of friends will now be scattered around the map. This game should be starting in February. www.pagodagames.co.uk

Harlequin report that the addition of a hand-moderated roleplaying element to **Serim Ral** seems to be going down well, with even the most hardened of Serim Ral players putting pen to paper to smite mysterious foes, treat bearded old men with respect and insult claymen. Meanwhile, the real business of throwing huge armies at the nearest enemy's castles continues apace.

PBM/PBeM PLAYTESTS

A firm called Strategy Guild is running a series of playtest games for a new sci-fi game called **StarCon**. They describe it as 'a strategic, computer-moderated, turn-based, multi-player game that is managed through a web-based interface', though you can also have turns emailed to you. The playtest is free, and Strategy Guild intend to continue to run it as a free game. Try

www.strategyguild.com

to sign up, or info@strategyguild.com for further details.

Any and all gamers are invited to come along and join Madhouse's playtest of the revamped **Steel Fury**. This is the final game of the Passport to Adventure lineup to be tested before the big launch.

www.madcentral.com/steelfury

PBM/PBeM CRIME GAMES

The latest game of Pagoda games' **Godfather** (Game 110) is reaching the mid-stages, with lots of combat now breaking out across the city. No early syndicates have arisen from the masses yet, so it is difficult to tell who the leading players really are. With bounties being placed on several mobsters' heads, and the FBI taking a stronger interest in the illegal activities taking place in Chicago, the coming turns are set to be very exciting. The next regular game is due to start late January, and will feature up to 25 players.

A new scenario is also planned, for email players only. Called **Godfather: The Five Families**, it will feature only five players in a fixed term game. All players start with an advanced 'Godfather' position (it normally takes between 12-20 turns to reach that level) and access to the majority of in-game rackets. Initially the games will only be open to experienced players, but beginner-only games are planned for mid 2003.

www.pagodagames.co.uk

INTERACTIVE WEBSITES

We've heard from KnightNET, with news of interest to roleplaying readers. KnightNET run a family-oriented IRC Network with servers based in South Africa, USA and the UK, and have developed roleplaying taverns for all those who are interested in learning more about roleplaying as well as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDS).

They offer free registration, allowing access to roleplaying resources, network information, and a message board which allows everyone to communicate with each other on an ongoing basis.

KnightNET have been running since 1997, and aim to provide 'a warm, friendly, fun atmosphere' with a mediaeval theme. Sounds good! More information from their website:

www.knightnet.net



PBM/PBeM FIRMS

We're pleased to welcome a new games firm, **Phase12**, who announce that they are 'dedicated to bringing the pleasure of Play By Mail gaming to the world wide web'. Seems an excellent plan of action to us!

Their first game is a futuristic sport management game called **Spike Ball**. People in a totalitarian state of the near future are kept subdued by watching matches of Spike Ball, an ultra violent sport. You play a manager, prepared to stop at nothing to push your team to the top and in the process line your own pockets with cash. This sounds fairly familiar, but Phase12 plan some interesting novel features: 'The game is played through a unique combination of turned based play and real time control. Between matches, usually played weekly, the manager trains, equips and motivates the team. Managers may also buy and sell team members through the online auction system to achieve the perfect mix of stamina, skill and flare. Then it's match time and the player must sit back and wait for the results of their hard work, through email, web or mobile SMS notification.

Open playtesting for Spike Ball is due start in January of 2003, and there's more information at:

www.spikeball.net

This isn't the only game that Phase12 are planning. They are a professionally run online gaming company based in the UK, who will be 'geared towards the needs of modern adult gamers who can spare only brief snatches of time to play, Phase12's first games are turn based strategy and macro-roleplaying games, played through standard web browsers on any operating system.'

Promising news, and we wish them well!

Ian Brumby asked us to take **Fenris Games** out of our listings a few months ago, when a house move and self-build project took up all his spare time.

It's good to hear that he's now able to undertake turn writing again, if any old players are interested. He's planning to contact you to offer refunds or restarts as appropriate. If you've not heard from him yet, make contact at the old PO Box address or email:

info@fenrisgames.com

As of January 2003 **Madhouse** have terminated their licence agreement with **Rolling Thunder Games** and will be handling the US player base directly, themselves. Madhouse have a massive £10,000 advertising campaign beginning in the New Year to promote their games in the USA.

Mike Absolom, who has been running the Southern area of **Saturnalia** for some time, is now trading under the name of **Tempus Fugit PBM Productions**.

His Saturnalia South web site has been reconstructed at:

<http://tempusfugit.co.uk>

An interesting improvement is that much of the previous site has been condensed into a single source document that is available for download - something that Mike had always intended. Oh, and please note that the South area is run for free.

Tempus Fugit have procured the wargame run on a map of the London Underground, **LTWars**, from **Spellbinder Games**. Mike is planning to run a couple of 'proving' play-tests to validate code changes. These 'proving' play-tests are *free* and will be for a full 40+ turn game, but note that these play-tests are to be by email only! Interested? Contact:

enquiries@tempusfugitpbm.co.uk

Once these play-tests are underway, Tempus Fugit will offer LTWars under the aptly named Tempus Fugit PBM 'gamers bond' scheme. This will work in a way that's similar to many fanzines. No turnfees are to be charged for LTWars, but instead a bond of £10 will be levied for the entire game. It's a way to discourage dropouts, of course. Here's the twist - providing that the player either stays to the 'bitter end' or is eliminated by opponent action, then this 'gamers bond' will be returned to the player in full. Yes, that's right: returned in full! Any money made from the game is to be from dropouts (hiss...) and interest gained upon these 'gamers bonds'.

It's good news that **Harlequin's** American moderator, Stuart, has received permission to remain in the country for another five years. Has he managed to learn about cricket, though?

KJC Games are looking for a talented and enthusiastic programmer who can program in Pascal, to take over the upgrading of **Spacetroopers**. The game is already running, and KJC think that it has great potential to be an excellent 'shoot em up' game if more work is done on it. They reckon that the project would be 'very suitable for someone who is currently in full time/part time education'; payment will be a share in the profits of the game. Take a look at the game itself on:

www.kjcgames.com/free.htm

Then email KJC if you're interested in this project: enquiry@kjcgames.com

Madhouse announce that their new Order Entry Wizard has been fully playtested and is now available to all players. The OEW is a piece of software which allows players to log on to the Madhouse server and download their current game details. They can then write orders for any and all of the Madhouse games in a versatile and powerful offline program, and when they are ready they can log on to the internet again and send all the orders with one click of a button. The program talks directly to the Madhouse server, so no messing around or uncertainty with email!

www.HELDENWELT.com

The Council of Kapstadt proclaims:
All volunteers among
the citizens of Kapstadt
may gather in groups of
three. These adventurer
groups are needed to
scout the periphery of
Kapstadt to get
information and open
the way for other
citizens to this outland.
The old Heroes are
willing to teach and
advise them because
the skills and abilities
of the Heroes should
not be lost in time

**Play
party with three
characters
without
charge**

and the adventurers perhaps
get a real chance to survive...

This is a part of the
History of Heldenwelt.

You want to be a part
of its History or write
your own chapter in the
History of Heldenwelt?
The Council of Kapstadt

still needs YOU!
Visit our Webpage for
more information, sign
up and play for FREE
until you decide to play
a party with more than
three characters!

A Fantasy Roleplaying PBEM

The Flagship PBM Ratings 2002

The results of your votes for this year's best PBM/PBeM games...



WELCOME to the annual ratings extravaganza. Details of how the stats work for the annual results are at the end if anyone is insatiably curious.

Please note that full name & postal address are required for email and web votes as well as postal votes.

Once more it's been a whole year since the PBM ratings appeared in these pages: the number of UK votes is down but the number of votes from abroad has increased and for the first time web and email based votes have outnumbered postal votes. Scandinavia and Canada have been especially well represented, with Germany and the USA following behind.

Special note for GMs: remember that if your game gets no votes for the year it doesn't appear in the ratings, no matter how many it got last year. If you want your games in print encourage your players to vote!

This year we've changed the categories to more closely match the GV categories. Let's get on with the stats: last year's winners are not shown as the categories have changed so much.

Wargames

As always, we start with wargames. This year we've amalgamated all wargames into a single category. Middle Earth, last year's winner in Fantasy Wargames, suffers a slight drop in ratings but that's perfectly normal for the game with the highest number of votes. Hunky Monkey grab top spot with **Prometheus** in its first year of release. **Serim Ral** from Incubus is the highest ranking Fantasy Wargame.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
Prometheus	Hunky Monkey	8.83	7.83	7.00	5.50	8.17	6
Serim Ral	Incubus Designs	8.56	7.32	7.20	8.56	7.45	18
Adventurer Kings	Pagoda Games	7.86	8.12	7.08	6.01	7.19	14
Serim Ral	Harlequin Games	7.85	8.22	7.37	6.56	8.00	10
Company Commander	Jason Oates	7.82	6.55	7.70	6.48	6.77	11
Middle Earth	Harlequin Games	7.80	8.18	7.68	7.90	6.80	76
Crisis!	TimePatterns	7.70	7.60	6.20	6.60	6.85	16
Overlord	State of Mind	7.64	8.60	7.53	7.90	8.36	23
Napoleonic Battles	Agema Publications	7.53	7.04	5.76	2.82	6.69	12
CTF 2187	Harlequin Games	6.43	8.29	4.33	7.71	7.57	9
Alamaze	Pagoda Games	5.95	6.95	6.29	5.90	5.71	19

Power & World Games

World Games are almost always mixed or hand moderated (generally the former) while Power Games are more often computer moderated. This difference can obviously have a bearing on the votes. In fact most of these games have some degree of mixed moderation, which is why we've kept them together. This year Zen Games move up a place to win with **Tribes of Crane**, one of the longest-running PBM games. La Gloire du Roi finishes a good second. Last year's winner Absolute Fantasy drops out of the ratings.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
Tribes of Crane	Zen Games	7.95	8.67	9.67	8.33	8.05	10
La Gloire du Roi	Agema Publications	7.58	7.50	8.83	7.08	4.42	5
Crack of Doom II	Harlequin Games	6.93	7.67	6.63	5.00	6.40	8
Primus Inter Pares	Interesting Times	6.67	5.89	6.78	5.67	6.67	15
Bledian Diary	Spellbinder Games	6.36	6.71	7.93	4.71	6.43	8
Realms of Israa	Viking Games	2.33	3.67	6.33	3.67	8.67	5

Roleplaying

A run away winner in Roleplaying although I must admit to a little concern: with four out of five stats showing perfect scores of ten it either means **Guardian** is perfect or that those who voted are extremely enthusiastic. Still, I'm here to comment on the results and I've never played the game, it may be that good. Second and third are fairly close with reasonable results all the way down; roleplaying tends to produce more extremes in the scores as players and GMs have to interact more closely. Good to see Saturnalia (which featured in very early issues of Flagship) still going well.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
Guardian	Stephen Richardson	10.00	10.00	10.00	8.00	10.00	7
Exile	Harlequin Games	8.95	9.33	8.48	5.43	8.10	10
Heroes of Olynthus	Timewyrm	8.79	8.17	8.11	6.00	8.89	12
Cheviann Chronicles	State of Mind Games	7.53	8.78	7.45	7.14	7.97	19
Saturnalia	Colin Andrews	7.43	7.86	7.71	2.57	7.71	9
EG: The Sun King	Nigel Missen	7.25	7.63	6.94	7.13	8.69	6
Chaos Trail	Simon Williams	6.00	6.50	5.50	4.50	7.00	7

Science Fiction

Last year's winner Star Empires III vanishes from the scanners this year, meanwhile Pagoda engage warp engines and move up to win with **Starfleet Warlord**.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
StarFleet Warlord	Pagoda Games	7.89	8.00	6.96	5.80	7.75	23
Galactic Invasion	Worg	7.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	6
BSE II	KJC Games	6.63	8.25	8.31	6.88	6.38	10

Sports

Sports gets amalgamated this year with only three games getting any votes. **Race Plan** takes the race by a nose as a novice (though it's been running a long time) followed by Gameplan. Kickabout comes in last but still increases its rating from last year.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
Race Plan	D McConnell	7.40	8.20	7.00	2.00	6.60	7
Gameplan	D McConnell	7.20	8.20	6.60	4.40	8.20	6
Kick-About	Spellbinder Games	7.10	5.25	6.93	5.62	7.88	10

Adventure

In the second year of an adventure category **Dungeonworld** retains its title with a slight decrease in ratings; as it's still the game with the highest total votes (more even than Middle Earth) it's a good result. KJC's Quest and Monster Island tail but both record a slight increase in their rating.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
DungeonWorld	Madhouse	7.21	7.89	6.71	6.77	7.20	78
Quest	KJC Games	5.34	5.66	4.73	4.12	5.19	32
Monster Island	KJC Games	4.88	6.31	4.92	3.58	5.65	11

Crime

As we have only two games left and they're both crime games we dump the Miscellaneous category and give them their own award. Pagoda get a second win with **Godfather**, ahead of It's a Crime.

Game	GM	Antic	GM	Depth	Int	VfM	#Votes
Godfather	Pagoda Games	7.33	8.08	7.08	6.67	7.08	6
It's a Crime!	KJC Games	5.50	6.30	4.60	4.50	5.20	13

A point about voting patterns: Games with larger numbers of votes and computer-moderated games, both tend to produce lower votes. The most enthusiastic players always vote first and later ones (especially when the GM encourages everyone to vote by sending out papers) include those slightly less enthusiastic. In the case of comp mods and hand mods, you simply can't get the same relationship with a computer! The exception is the occasional game where the disgruntled players get their votes in first, this can result in a very low result until the rest of the votes appear. In other words, the more votes for a game the lower its average would tend to get. A winner who also has a lot of votes is exceptional. Very low or high results with small numbers of votes are usually anomalies which iron out as the sample size increases.

How the stats work

To get into the stats for the year a game must fulfil two conditions, it must have at least 1 vote this year and it must have a total of at least 5 votes. Anything failing either test is filtered out. The ratings for the games are then calculated by taking the average for each year and weighting them, votes for this year are weighted at 100%, 2001 at 75%, 2000 at 50% and 1999 at 25%. Anything older than this is thrown out. The logic here is that the more recent votes should be more relevant while the opinions of players who may not have voted this year (for many reasons) should still be considered. That gives the final rating for the various games, which are finally sorted by Anticipation.

Note for GMS

Winners from previous years may no longer use the term 'Flagship Award Winner' in their adverts (or elsewhere) without qualifying it with the year. If you do use the 'Award Winner' term in your adverts please ensure that you quote the correct category where relevant.

Several congratulations and a Goodbye

Flagship would like to congratulate this year's winners: Jason Oates, Zen Games, Stephen Richardson, Hunky Monkey, Pagoda Games, Danny McConnell and Madhouse. The prize draw winner was **Kevin Johns**, who gets a extension to his Flagship subscription.

Many thanks to Tim Lomas for all his work over the years in maintaining these ratings. With issue 100 Tim has decided it's time to bow out and leave the work to others.

Sending Ratings

You can send your ratings by normal mail or email to the Flagship office. Please make sure the ratings are in the correct order (Anticipation, GM Quality, Depth, Interaction, Value for Money) and that you remember to give us the names of both GM and game! For security purposes please give us your postal address - if you are not a subscriber you can also ask for a free sample copy. You may also vote via the website.

FLAGSHIP BOARD & CARD GAME RATINGS 2003

In keeping with our expanded coverage of games, Flagship is proud to announce a series of awards throughout the year. We'll be starting with Board and Card Games next issue, before covering Computer Games in #102.

Please take time to fill in the enclosed voting form or visit the website to vote there.

What's New at Software Simulations and Ab Initio Games?

www.pbmsports.com & www.sidetracks.co.uk

- New websites with information and development news on all our games.
- Play-by-email options now standard for all games.
- Star Chase – new sci-fi interactive/conquest game launched.
- Variants on Empires launched – Barbarians at the Game, European Empires, Medieval Empires. Coming soon – Australian Empires.
- Many old sports favourites – Gameplan, Slapshot, Gameplan Baseball Soccer Stats, Rugby Stats, Hoopplan, Run Chase, Raceplan and more
- Boardgames stock clearance

So much is happening at the moment from designers with 15 years experience come out and check out our websites for more information, or contact:

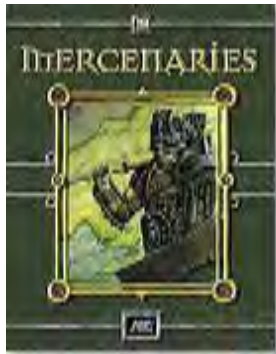
Danny McConnell, Ab Initio Games, PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent, BI

Email: danny@pbmsports.com



New RPG Releases

GARY FORBIS rounds up recent D20 material ...



Mercenaries (\$29.95, 256 pages)

By: Alderac Entertainment Group (www.alderac.com)

Release date: Released

This book sounds interesting in that it deals with characters motivated not by heroics, but by profit and necessity. This could be an interesting twist for your gaming group, or could simply give a wily DM some new toys to use. Perhaps the characters are outclassed in the current game and need to spend some of their hard-earned gold on help.

Maybe their heroics have been noted by a potential rival who spares no expense in hiring a band of thugs to eliminate them. Either way, 9 new races, 10 new classes, and 40 new spells is a lot. On the other hand, the reading I've done indicates that this book heavily references other d20 releases by AEG, spell lists in particular - so unless you already have those books you might want to flip through this one before buying and decide if the remaining 'crunchy bits' are enough.

Denizens of Darkness (\$29.95, 180 pages)

By: Sword & Sorcery (www.swordsorcery.com)

Release date: Released

Sword & Sorcery is one of the companies I have complete faith in. Although I have not thumbed through every release, the ones I've looked at have all been top-notch and well worth purchasing - especially if you are looking to add a little roleplaying to your combat-fest. This is a book of creatures designed specifically for the Ravenloft campaign setting. If you play Ravenloft, then you will get the most mileage out of this release, but even if you've never heard of it this is still a collection of dozens of new monsters your players have never heard of. It's always nice to be able to surprise players who have read the Monster Manuals from cover to cover.



Mutants and Masterminds (\$32.95, 192 pages)

By: Green Ronin Publishing (www.greenronin.com)

Release date: November

Along with Sword & Sorcery, Green Ronin is one of the companies that always produce solid books. They have picked up some of the best talent in the industry, including some former members of Wizards of the Coast's own design team. Mutants and Masterminds is a superhero genre game and from what I've heard it promises to be an

excellent book. Heroes are built using a point-buy system that hopefully should produce relatively balanced characters.

Ultramodern Firearms (\$27.95, 160 pages)

By: Green Ronin Publishing (www.greenronin.com)

Release date: November

Another release from Green Ronin, this one is a supplement for the upcoming d20 Modern. It details over 300 weapons, and includes rules for different types of ammunition. There can be little doubt that this will add a lot of 'bang' to your campaign.

Occult Lore (\$29.95, 240 pages)

By: Atlas Games (www.atlas-games.com)

Release date: Released

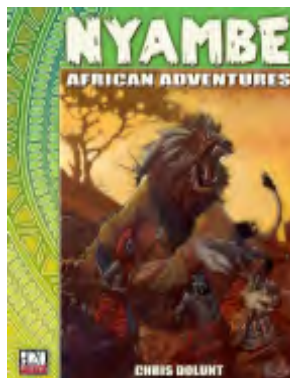
Now this is the type of book that I love seeing. It presents alternate systems of magic for use in d20 campaigns, to expand on the default D&D system. It includes Alchemy, Astrology, Geomancy, and Sympathetic Magic. Naturally it also includes new creatures, spells, magic items, classes, and all the good stuff you've come to expect in a d20 book.

Path of the Magi (\$19.95, 128 pages)

By: Citizen Games (www.citizengames.com)

Release date: December

Being a book about wizards, naturally this release includes all the goodies you would expect - new spells, feats, skills, etc. Yawn. The interesting thing about this particular book is that it details the life of a wizard from apprenticeship to mastery. This could be a very useful book to anyone looking to expand the roleplaying possibilities and the realism of their wizard characters (or NPCs).



Nyambe: African Adventures (\$37.95, 256 pages)

By: Atlas Games

Release date: Released

Dungeons & Dragons is primarily a Euro-centric game. Oriental Adventures helped to expand the game to cover more of the world, but a lot of interesting history and mythology has been missing. This release includes alternate rules, classes, feats, spells and magic systems, armor and equipment - pretty much everything you would need to run a campaign set in an African

location rather than European. This sounds like just the thing for a group looking for a different world to play in, or it could add more culture and diversity to a corner of their existing world. In addition to the publisher's website, you can find more information out at www.nyambe.com

Pulp Cthulhu (addtl information unavailable)

By: Chaosium (www.chaosium.com)

Release date: Released

This is an expansion for Call of Cthulhu, giving you a far more action-oriented setting than the default one from the book. Call of Cthulhu is an excellent horror game that I highly recommend, and this book should help give it broader appeal, although this book is still set in the 20's and 30's. If you are looking for modern-day action Cthulhu, I hear that a d20 revamp of Delta Green is in the works, but I don't have any more information on that yet.

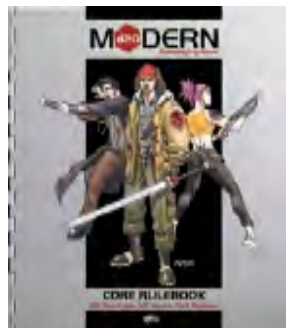
City Guide (\$5.00, 64 pages - PDF file)

By: Dark Quest Games (www.darkquestgames.com)

Release date: Released

City Guide is a very interesting line of materials. There are three books in the series so far, all with the aim to help you flesh out the merchants and inhabitants of the cities in your world. These books are only available as PDF files, which means they are inexpensive, you don't have to pay shipping, and delivery only takes as long as a 3-4 Megabyte download. Unfortunately it means you either have to print it out yourself, or lug around a laptop or PDA with the file on it. While it isn't for everyone, I

think this is an excellent way for companies to produce quality products without having to sell thousands of copies just to break even on the printing costs.



D20 Modern (\$39.95, 384 pages)

By: Wizards of the Coast
(www.wizards.com)

Release date: Released

This is a huge release. This is a new corebook, not a supplement to Dungeons & Dragons or the d20 system, this is d20 designed for modern day campaigns. It includes 6 basic classes, 12 advanced classes, and an additional 6 campaign-specific advanced classes. With new rules, equipment, spells, monsters, and feats - this is a whole game by itself.

Other companies will soon be releasing expansions to this book, and we will have as many choices for d20 Modern as we do for d20 Fantasy. Additionally, the two lines should remain fairly compatible, so if you want to do a bit of world hopping you shouldn't have much trouble. This has the potential to turn into a new GURPS-like system, with all kinds of rules options for those of us that like to have lots of choices on how to handle things.

White Wolf Releases

Dark Ages: Mage (\$26.95, 224 pages)

By: White Wolf Game Studios (www.white-wolf.com)

Release date: Released

This is another game I've been looking forward to for a while. Set in the 12th century, as opposed to the modern one, the magic system has

changed quite a bit in the intervening years. While I am a huge fan of Mage: the Ascension, I realize that the system is just too open for a lot of games to deal with. This new rules system is very sleek and a bit simpler than the modern day version, but it is still very open and still requires a mature group to make it interesting. If your idea of fun is creating very powerful characters and slaughtering your way through each adventure, this game is likely to bore you because that is just too easy to do. If you enjoy making complicated characters that are more interesting than their list of powers, but found Mage inaccessible either due to complexity or a preference for a fantasy setting, then you should probably give this one a look.

I feel somewhat guilty that I could not cover a wider variety of games in this article, but d20 is a very prolific system with several releases every month, while the rest of the industry is chugging along with a couple books per year for each game. If you are aware of any major upcoming releases for a game system that I don't follow (or even d20 releases that you feel absolutely *must* be mentioned), please share with me at gryzon@ameritech.net. I will do my best to get the word out, and squeeze it into my next update if I can.

Until then, good gaming.



EINSTEIN'S LOT

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they are queerer than we can imagine"



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Boardgames: Spiel '02

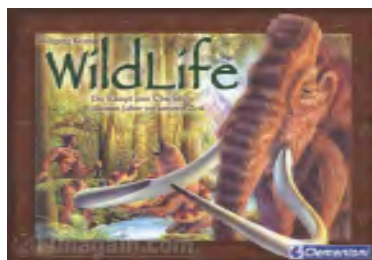
PEVANS reports from the biggest boardgames fair in Europe ...

IF IT'S OCTOBER, it must be Essen. Spiel '02 took place at the Essen Messe (Exhibition halls) on 17th-20th October and, as usual, featured an awful lot of new games. I attended for three days: enough time to play just a small fraction of the games. Here are the highlights (you can find the full version of this piece on my website: www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews/Spiel2002.html).



Friedemann Friese of 2F Spiele did us proud with **Fische, Fluppen, Frikadellen**. Players are trading to collect fetishes (little wooden things from the South Seas). Scattered around the board are a dozen shops and traders - selected from the total available. Players move round the board, seeking to buy and sell or trade goods with the various merchants. The aim is to build themselves up from nothing to having the various sets of goods needed to trade in for a fetish. First to collect three fetishes wins, but getting them is progressively harder. This is a clever, entertaining game that I

thoroughly enjoyed. It was also a very close result. The unique feature of the game is that it can be played by up to 15 people across three boards. There are three 'flavours' of the game, each different in detail, so that they can be put together without confusion. One of the actions available to players then becomes moving to a different board - though without scouting it out first. I can see this creating complete chaos, so I look forward to trying it out.



Clementoni is not a company I have associated with boardgames, let alone good boardgames, but they seem to have a winner this year. The game in question is by Wolfgang Kramer and is called **WildLife**. This bears a superficial resemblance to Evo, as the board features an

island divided into half a dozen different terrain types. Each player is a creature, adapted differently to the terrain. Some areas are inhospitable, some the creature can move through, some it can breed in (and move through) and some it can attack in (and breed in and move through). Players play cards to do things - getting additional pieces on the board, moving around, attacking the others, change their adaptation to the terrain and even evolve (gaining special abilities). There are several ways of scoring points, but essentially each player wants to expand. This is a clever game that requires some thought, some decision-making and taking account of what other players are up to - a typical Kramer game. I liked it.

Cwali is the vehicle for Corné van Moorsel's games and, in Cwali's usual drum-shaped box, brings us **ZooSim**. Like van Moorsel's other games (or at least those I've played), this is a very abstract game, with thinking required. However, it is very accessible: the complexity lies in the options and tactics that the rules make available to you. In the game you are trying to build up the most popular zoo. You do this by laying rectangular tiles (sections of your zoo), carefully linking them by the paths shown. Tiles are auctioned to the players one at a time. After each five, players score the current position (weighting the scores, so

that later rounds are more valuable) and gain more money. The game ends once all 25 tiles have been sold and the player with the most points wins. This is a sophisticated little game with a lot of subtlety in it, but relatively easy to understand.

DaVinci Games is an Italian games company that is distributed by Heidelberger and their game **Bang!** was to be found on the Heidelberger stand. This is a card game themed round a Spaghetti Western. Each player starts with a character, giving them a special ability and a number of 'hits', plus a role. Only the Sheriff reveals his role: his job is to get rid of the outlaws. The Deputies support the Sheriff and win (jointly) if all the bad guys are dead. The Outlaws win if the Sheriff is killed. And the Renegade wins only if he is the last man standing! In turn, players draw cards and then play. As many as they like, but only one 'Bang!' (unless they have a special ability or card that lets them play more), which is a shot at another player within range. Each successful 'Bang!' reduces the targets hits by one, and you're dead if you run out of hits. The game is reminiscent of Family Business, but is its own game and is great fun to play.

Eight Foot Llama (no, really) was another of the American contingent and publisher of Jim Doherty's games. On show were last year's game, **Who Stole Ed's Pants?**, and this year's title, **Monkeys on the Moon**. Who Stole Ed's



Pants? is an entertaining card game of trying to pin the blame for the eponymous crime on other players. This is done by planting evidence on them or changing the facts. When the game ends, the player in the middle of the frame gets the blame. It's good fun, but I found I kept having to think about the mechanics of the game. Monkeys on the Moon is a different kettle of fish (or barrel of monkeys?). The game defies succinct description, so let me just say that it's a game of multiple levels. That is, you do one thing, in order to be able to do another thing in order to get what you need to win. Except that this is also influenced by what you did in the first place. Very clever stuff with intriguing game play and a truly silly theme: what more could you want?



Well, a bit more of a challenge. After the success of **Carcassonne** last year, Hans im Glück had both an expansion set and a new version of the game. The expansion set adds extra features to the original game. The new game is **Carcassonne - Jäger & Sammler** (Hunters and Gatherers). In this game players are laying square tiles to build up a map of a prehistoric landscape, divided between grassland, forests (the equivalent of towns in the original), rivers (roads) and lakes (which divide rivers). As in the original, players gain points by having pieces on completed rivers and forests and in grassland at the end of the game. However, the points for grassland depend on the number of animals shown

on the tiles - except for tigers (sabre-toothed, of course), which eat deer, reducing the score. There are also different pieces to play: huts that go on river and lake complexes. At the end of the game, these score for the fish in the interconnected lakes. The final difference is that incomplete forests and rivers do not score points at the end. So, an intriguing variant of the original game, but not really that different.

There was a lot of new stuff to see on the Kosmos stand, including several **Lord of the Rings** tie-ins. One of these was **Das Duell**, a two-player game by Peter Neugebauer themed around the fight between Gandalf and the Balrog on the bridge in Khazad-Dûm. The game has a little cardboard bridge, which looks good, but doesn't add an awful lot. However gameplay features a more interesting mechanism: players compare the adjacent sides of the cards they've played to see how many hits they score on their opponent. These reduce the characters' strength on a track and thus indicate who wins the round. Unless one player has an overwhelming win, the game is fought over three rounds, followed by a final duel. The luck element is less than you might think as players will get to play just about all their cards. In each of the three rounds, they take a hand of nine cards (of 27), play six and keep three for the final. In the final, they play all nine. With the sudden death ending, players have to balance the risk of losing outright against keeping good cards for the final. Of course, you might risk going for a sudden death win if you think you can pull it off. With special action cards in each deck that are similar, but not identical, for each player, there are some subtleties to this game. I like it.

To me, Schmidt Spiele is best known as distributor for Hans im Glück. But they do publish

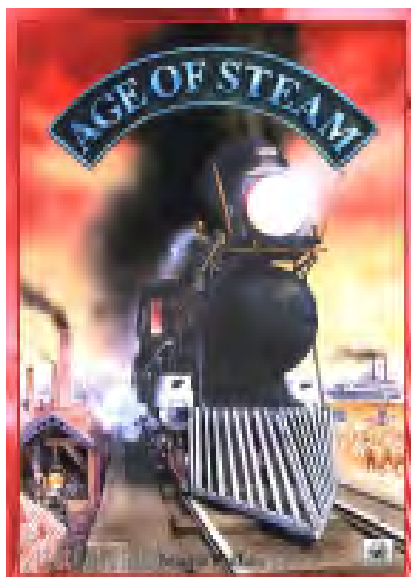
their own games. This year these include **ReAction** by Maureen Hiron. This is a fast and furious, Racing Demon-type game. Players get a hand of cards, each with a number and letter on.

Control cards indicate what players can play. For example, = means same letter or number: so if one player plays D3, others can play Dn or x3.

Alternatively, + means one better: so onto that D3, you can play En or x4. The idea is to play quickly - this usually involves much clashing of hands! The first to get rid of all their cards wins. I think the person who played last has an advantage and can get rid of several cards in sequence before anyone else gets in. However, it's not a game for thinking about, it's a game for doing!

I'm afraid the Warfrog guys have come up with my game of the show for the second year running. This was **Age of Steam**, which is the subject of a separate review, so I'll just say that it gets a resounding 10/10 from me.

I'd like to conclude with my thanks to the organisers, Friedhelm Merz Verlag, for another fine show. The figures show that some 148,555 people attended the fair over its four days. They got to see 578 exhibitors, drawn from 21 countries. I can't speak for the other 148,554, but I'm definitely looking forward to the next Spiel: 23rd-26th October 2003.



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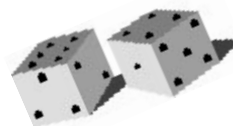
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Battle of the Five Armies

A New MEPBM Scenario based on 'The Hobbit'

JEFFERY A DOBBERPUHL and SCOTT MOYES play head to head in this new variant ...

J R R TOLKIEIN'S *The Hobbit* ends with a climactic battle which this new **Middle Earth PBM** scenario recreates in a brand-new game of ten turns, **Battle of the Five Armies**. For this demo game of Battle of the Five Armies, Jeffery and Scott play against each other with multiple positions, instead of just one each as usual. Scott plays the Free Peoples with the Elves, the Dwarves, the Northmen and Bilbo Baggins. Jeffery plays the Dark Servants with the Warg Riders, the Goblins, the Necromancer and Gollum. But which side is going to win?

First thoughts

Scott Moyes: This is a condensed full battle game with non-stop action from turn 1. With the condensed rulebook, the game is easy to understand, but hard to master. The possibilities are endless: should you attack, defend or manoeuvre? Each and every turn will tax your planning skills and you'll eagerly await the arrival of your next turn report.

Jeffery A Dobberpuhl: Being a big Hobbit fan, I was excited to see what kind of forces were going to be used in this game. The first thing I did was go to the www.middleearthgames.com website and downloaded all five nation sheets. Every game starts with the same turn zero (first turn), so both sides get to see exactly what they are up against. I was going to be the Goblins and the Warg Riders, my opponent was assigned the other three: The Dwarves, The Elves, and the Northmen. These nations start out *tough*! You get great characters, big armies, and lots of resources. I almost fell out of my chair when I saw The Necromancer was going to be one of my characters! This was going to be a very interesting game.

The goal of the game is fairly straight forward: take out your enemy. You have ten turns to do this. This was going to be tough because my opponent gets three nations to my two. I decided to look at the big picture of what was going on so I downloaded the Scenario Map from the website and printed it out. What a great resource! All the nation population centers and armies are clearly marked out. This was a great move for me, because it showed how consolidated my forces were, while my opponents were scattered. A plan began to form!

The Goblins: The Goblin nation is a nifty infantry-army driven nation. Commander after commander is at your disposal. Since the goblins get to hire new armies for free, I decided to use this to my advantage. I decided to send out my initial three armies to do battle, and reserve as many commanders as possible to hire new armies for the next wave.

First, I checked my economy. Despite some great starting gold, my nation was already spending more than I was making. I quickly decided to sell off some extra resources and had two of my characters sell off gold and mounts. That gold would come in handy later.

Second, I looked at the map. There was one enemy town just one hex away, and it looked to be owned by the Northmen. Ha! They would be my first victims! I issued orders to my commanders to move two armies into hex 3105. Next, I saw the Lonely Mountain sitting at hex

3107. One of my special victory conditions is to try and hold this at the end of the game. I can see why. It sits right next to a crossroads. If I can control it, maybe I can control the flow of enemy armies. I issue orders to my other commanders to march on 3107.

Finally, I rechecked my turn. I had hired new armies, made some gold, and marched on two enemy population centers. Good enough. I typed up my turns in the Automagic program (a nifty Excel spread sheet program available from the website) and sent in the turn.

The Warg Riders: I took a look at the Warg Riders startup sheet. This is a nation that focuses on wizards and wolfriders (heavy cavalry). It doesn't get as many commanders as the Goblins, but it really doesn't need them. If the wizards get a chance to use their battle magic in combat, it could get really ugly for the enemy. Also, wolfriders are about as tough an army as you can make in this game. They have speed, strength, and a hardy defense that will make them tough to take down.

First, I checked my economy. Just like the Goblins, this nation starts out with lots of gold, but also operates at a loss. I decided to sell more food to pay for my military operations.

Second, I checked out my wizards. All of them had the ability to conjure mounts out of thin air! This would be useful as a single wolf normally costs 30 gold and I would need hundreds of wolves to be successful against the enemy. I ordered three of the wizards to conjure more wolves. Then I let loose a maniacal laugh. I think it helps to cackle evilly when filling out a turn sheet for a nation of wolf conjuring wizards!

Third, I checked out the map. I found that I could bring more armies to 3107. This would give me a *huge* stack of resources for the next turn. I could strike at the Elves, the Northmen, or the Dwarves, depending on what my enemy threw at me. I issued orders to bring more armies to the Lonely Mountain. Then, I saw that I had one army at Sarn Goriwing, right in the middle of Mirkwood, that would not be able to make it to 3107. However, there was an elf town just three hexes away and it looked undefended! I decided to charge into the pesky elves and see if I could take it next turn. This was a bit of a risk, because the elves have a big army just two moves away from Sarn Goriwing. I decided to laugh at the puny elves and throw caution to the wind.

Fourth, I saw that the Necromancer has the ability to see what an enemy character is doing! I decided to use him to track the movements of Bilbo. After all, Bilbo has the One Ring, an artifact that increases an agent's stealth by 40 points! Since most skills are ranked on a 1-100 basis, 40 points is a healthy increase. I'm hoping to get lucky and find myself in a position to get the ring back from Bilbo.

Finally, I decided to send Gollum out to steal enemy resources. Gollum is a 20 point agent with a 40 stealth. Stealth makes agent actions work better, so I'm hoping he can steal some gold or something from a Northmen camp next turn. I have him guard the population center he is in (to increase his skill) and then move to 2910.

I double check my turns and send them in. What will happen next? I can't wait for my next turn sheets!

Turn 1

Scott Moyes: Tactical maps were neatly spread out over the solid gold table. Neat lines of the advancing armies, both good in blue and evil in red, were already on the maps. The Burglar, Bilbo Baggins, was tasked with making the marks on them and he was darn good at it.

Thorin Oakenshield then said, 'Bilbo, what does all these pretty marks mean?'

Bilbo looked up from the charts and said, 'What all this means is

Middle Earth PBM at a glance

Team-based fantasy wargame from Harlequin Games, with 'Lord of the Rings' setting. £10 for startup + 2 turns, further turns £3.90. Turnaround depends on the game, ranging from 1 to 3 weeks. There's a variety of scenarios available, with Battle of the Five Armies especially recommended for beginners.

Middle Earth Games

presents

The Battle of the Five Armies



that most of the planning you put forth has come to pass. The Elves are hard pressed in a couple of places, but overall, it is as you planned. There are a couple of surprises, though. Would you like a more complete briefing?’

The Dwarves, Elves and Men gathered folded their arms, leaned forward and all nodded.

Bilbo went on, ‘Well, according to the reports, we are hard pressed in a couple of areas. Somehow Captain Krusnak of the Warg Riders slipped by the blocking efforts of the Elven Armies commanded by Regent Thranduil and Lord Ohtar and they have landed at Hen Gwerion. This is not good as Captain Krusnak has 900 Warg Riders and should be able to take the town. According to our plan, the Elven Commander Argaldor has blocked the eastward movement of the Warg Riders on the Northern Road, but - bad news! - this army is commanded by The Necromancer himself. Commander Argaldor will be but a small block in the road for The Necromancer as he has 800 Warg Riders with him. Elven Hero Dorlas also, according to plan, blocked the Goblin armies from moving south. There are two armies there, a small army under Captain Anglach and a large army under Commander Gashbuz. So, for the Elves, the hot spots are at Hen Gwerion and along the Northern Road. There are bright spots for the Elves: Commander Camthalion has a small army at Mithrond, Lord Legolas has a small army at Crug Abarr, Lord Ohtar has an army at the Warg Rider camp of Lag Slif and Regent Thranduil has an army of Heavy Cavalry at the Northmen camp of Amon Gastal.’

The Elves present shook their heads as visions of the massacre of the North Road armies passed through their heads.

Bilbo went on, ‘The Dwarven armies are now in theatre. Commander Bombur has a small army east of the Northmen town of Bur Edhel. Just behind him is the main army of Regent Dain II. Hero Fili and his small army is the only Dwarven army in battle at this time. The Goblin camp of Lag Deras is just east of us. I don’t remember it being there on any maps I’ve ever seen. Anyway, Hero Gloin is back at Iron Hold with a small army and of course, Thorin, you are here with your small army.’

Bilbo picked up some ale, drank the whole mug, and then went on, ‘The Northmen are pressed at Buhr Edhel. There is a small Goblin army under Veteran Angulion. Also, just south of Buhr Edhel, on the north/south road, Commander Girion II and his army ran into a whole bunch of trouble. Well, there is some good news too, Hero Swifthwulf and his Heavy Cavalry army is also there. They are facing a huge Goblin army under Regent Duran, a large Goblin army under Captain Ogrid and an army of Warg Riders under Commander Rashkuk. I know they were supposed to meet them at Buhr Edhel, but they apparently went around it. Hero Koldana and his small army is at Nuath.’

‘How did all those armies get south of Buhr Edhel?’ screamed the Northmen representative.

Bilbo replied, ‘Don’t scream at me, I’m only relaying the news that all your commanders sent in.’

Thorin, staring at the map, then said, ‘Well, allies. We can fight this one of two ways. We can fight a defensive battle, which will never end. Or we can go for it. By fighting a defensive battle, the treasure here is probably safe, but if we go for it, it could fall into their hands. What say you, allies?’

‘Let us hear more of the second choice...’

Jeffery A Dobberpuhl - Wow! My opponent sure is aggressive. I had hoped to camp out on the Lonely Mountain with a bunch of armies and from there intercept his movements at will. He must have had the same



plan. As it is, our armies bumped into each other at a variety of places on the road. Battles will occur at 2805, 3005, 3105, 3106, 2808, 3207 and 3010. Fortunately for me, in most of those battles I have massive army superiority. Because of the way army combat works in Middle Earth Play By Mail, whenever you win a combat, there is a chance you will capture or kill enemy characters. I’m really hoping this will be the result. With both nations, I decided to focus on elven population centers as much as possible. If I can eliminate the Elves, the dwarves should be too far away to really help the northmen.

Goblins: The Goblins seem to have had the best combat placement. From what I can tell, I have a good chance at taking out a number of enemy armies. Further, in a couple of battles, my commanders are better than his commanders. What this means is that I can risk having my commanders issue personal challenges to some of the characters traveling in his armies. Since this comes *before* army combat, there is a chance I will kill off the character commanding his armies, disarming those armies before they even get to fight. We will just have to see how that works out. In the meantime, I purchased some steel at 3104 and then used the steel to armor 400 heavy infantry. I hope these hard-as-nails orcs will help me with the dwarves, with their enormous 3000 heavy infantry, come knocking on my doors!

Warg Riders: Well, last turn, I risked moving out of 2809 (Sarn Goriwing) to kill off an elf town at 3010. I made it to 3010 without enemy interference, but those pesky elves moved next to Sarn Goriwing. Grrrr. This means they might move in next turn and burn the place to the ground. Speaking of burning, I decided to destroy *all* enemy population centers that I can this turn. This is because I don’t believe I’ve seen all the enemy armies yet, and I don’t believe I will be able to hold on to these towns. Since in this basic game, we can’t make new population centers, I’m hoping to deprive the enemy of as many resources permanently as possible.

The Necromancer (insert maniacal laugh here) used his magic to track Bilbo. The li’l hobbit had decided to improve his agent skills and then move. Since the spell I used doesn’t give me where he moved, I decided to switch to Reveal Character. This spell will tell me within one hex of where the thief has moved to - gotta find that ring ...

[To be continued ...]

THE MIGHTY PEN



Flagship 100

I'd like to issue a public congratulations to all those involved in Flagship over the years, who should be very proud of not only reaching 100 issues, but maintaining the quality throughout this time.

Keith Burnham (Pagoda Games)

[Thanks, Keith! And thanks to other readers who've kindly sent in similar comments. We don't usually print compliments, but we always appreciate them!]

Looking for a boardgame

Now you're covering boardgames, may I ask for advice? I'm a keen computer-games player, but I don't have much experience of modern boardgames. I'm looking for one that my wife and I can play together.

Modern two-player boardgames must exist, but I can't find them. Are the various games which claim that any number of players can take part really suitable for just two players? Can anyone help with a personal recommendation?

Frank Edwards

Inspired by players

As the designer of Legends modules for the last decade or so, it has been my pleasure to be able to apply my craft to the entertainment of the Legends hobby community. The players are a rare breed of gamers who operate in a game world where cooperation as well as competition exists and where all different styles and cultures of game play can coexist without always being in conflict to create a dynamic game fabric that can be appreciated by many.

Edi Birsan

[I suspect that this is what many game designers aim for - what do others think?]

A lost game?

I see that Cleopatra Computer Games and their Postal American Football League have been deleted from *Galactic View*. Is this because you have heard something definite that the game is dead, or because you have heard nothing at all (I suspect the latter)?

This really is a 'dirty fold' given that the players undoubtedly have outstanding credit. To be honest, though, for me the money is not the issue. It is the loss of a damn good game. I can't believe that someone, somewhere, can't get hold of the GMs, prise the game out of their grasp and get it up and running again.

Is it worth publishing a plea to this effect in Flagship? I just want it known as widely as possible that there is an excellent game out there that I am sure can be made a very successful game if someone can just get their hands on it. But if you just state that it is a 'dirty fold', people will tend to assume that there is something fundamentally wrong with the game and the chances of its being rescued will diminish.

(Name supplied to editor)

[We dropped the game because we didn't get a reply when we wrote to ask if they're still in business. I wonder whether any players have formally asked the firm for a refund, and if so whether they've been

repaid - can readers let me know, please? I'm also hoping to hear back from the game's designer, Nick Barnett, who no longer owns the game but has agreed to investigate. If the results are negative, we will regretfully declare PAFL a dirty fold, thus enabling other firms to cover players' outstanding credit. So stand by on this one ...]

Feedback on Issue 99

Issue 99 was rated at 8.4. The Lords of the Earth ('very much enjoying this, glad it's an ongoing thing! - **Larry Deyell**) and Godfather diaries were your favourite articles, but all the votes are close. The Middle Earth beginners' guide followed, then the article on Total Conquest ('Wow! A big new game' - **Andy Brent**), then the Prometheus review, then Ten Online Games ('short, sharp, and gave the reader a few web sites to visit' - **David Blair**). Several of you mentioned the zine, boardgame, roleplaying and online game coverage ('I don't have the time to try to play everything, but the columns all look useful and are easy to browse through' - **Mark Avery**). Also praised were the Hattrick review and the Sports News. Of course, not everyone likes the sports coverage, while **David Blair** for his part dislikes 'all fantasy games involving magic spells and beastmen etc (not keen on elves, dwarves etc in games - I realise that's just me!)' **Larry Deyell** didn't care for last issue's Retroscope - 'Anyone interested in electronic games knows that Licensed Games are usually utter excrement' - ah, but they don't have to be...

Question 4 asked whether you prefer *Flagship* to cover a new game by (a) simply announcing it with a brief description, (b) running an article from a player, (c) wait for a formal review, (d) wait for Rumours comments. 73% of you answered 'all the options!', and the remainder stressed the importance of detailed coverage as soon as possible with various comments like 'especially if it looks like my sort of game!' (**Jack Turner**).

Question 5 asked whether you feel that a game may be in bad taste because of its subject matter or because of its tone, and whether you'd accept or reject a game that (a) mirrors current warfare, (b) has a heavy sexual content, (c) rewards anti-social behaviour, (d) involves madness. 87% don't care, agreeing with **Matt Best**: 'it's up to me to decide whether to accept or reject a game. I'd need to look at it and its ads first: an ad will probably show what the GM aims to do.' **Colin Forbes** agrees, 'Flagship's job is to inform us of what games are available, it's up to us to choose whether we want to play them.' 8% don't like modern wargames ('but that's just my personal preference rather than my taste,' **Mark Avery**), 4% would hesitate before trying a game with heavy sexual content, but no-one especially objects to the theme of madness. Hmm, I'll try to bear in mind what readers may find offensive, all the same.

Question 6 asked what you'd like to see in this issue, and of course all sorts of ideas came flooding in. 'An announcement the web site was fully up and running,' suggests **David Blair**. Ouch! We can confirm that we have a highly qualified web designer working on it though. Here's a selection of **Larry Deyell**'s brilliant ideas: '...Every 15th randomly selected envelope will contain a bag of brussel sprouts? A free meal at your local zoo? A box that goes, "Clicky-Clacky" when you shake it? Ooh, or 100 pages? How about a monkey that does impressions of Des Lynam? Or just a monkey? Maybe a cardboard model of a tea-pot? Or a chocolate biscuit and a tea-bag? You could go really ironic and bundle the mag with a christmas cracker? Toe-nail clippings of the rich and famous? An interview with David Icke? Or Cilla Black? (This Bad Taste thing's really gone to my head. Must go and calm down.)' Well, we hope you like issue 100 anyway! - it does have more pages, but the monkeys got away so we hope you'll accept a free CD instead...

[What we'd like to know about this issue is what you think of the CD...]

[Replies welcomed by surface mail to the UK office, or by email to carol@flagship-pbm.co.uk. By November 14th, please.]

Sports News

DAVID BLAIR with Horse-Racing, Rugby League and lots of Football ...

WORKING on the premise that at least three games are reviewed per issue, it is easy to see that a fair number of sports games and firms have featured in these pages. It would be nice to know just how many places in games readers, swayed by the reviews, have taken up over the years. We'll probably never know!

Chris Robey's **Soccer Manager** is now in its 14th season and is Chris's baby. It's played as a PBM, but as most players are on email he employs this media to inform managers of events such as late postings or get-togethers, usually held in London. The TLC he uses is plain to see, and the game is not run as a money making project, more like a hobby with friends. Basically it is one League with four Divisions of 12 teams each, employing a 3 up and 3 down format. Turns are generally a month apart. As the cost of a complete 11-turn season is only £12-50, which basically covers his postage and printer cartridges, you can see why this has to be a labour of love.

Each turn a manager plays two league games (all teams have fictitious names) but along with that may be a FA Cup tie. If knocked out the first time, you get a FA Shield Cup tie as a third game. Some clubs will be in Europe and will find a foreign team against them as their third game. The first two Cups drawing in the first game replay the following turn, so it is possible to be involved in three games nearly every turn. If no third game, a friendly can be arranged with an opponent.

A team has three games a turn, so for example if a player receives an injury value of 10 - a bad one - he will lose two points of this injury per match where he does not play; after one session where he has missed say two league matches, the program will award 6 points on the strength that he could have played three games. His injury level drops to 4 for the start of the next turn. An injured player can be played, but he only 'cures' himself by 1 point per game and his skill level for each game will be reduced by his injury figure.

Players are rated for skills and have ages. The system is simple in that at the end of a season a player's skill will change by deducting his age from his skill. Unless training is used to increase players' skills throughout the season, then a fast turnover of personnel will be needed. You employ coaches who can coach your wannabees *but* only to a coach's own skill ability. There are tables to show how much you can train up a player. If ever a season end revaluing means a player becomes a zero or minus skill, it is goodbye, although he may become a coach in a small number of cases.

The beauty of this game is that the rules are logical and the 16-page A5 booklet you receive - a work of art in itself - is crammed with game results, fixtures, tables to show every kind of statistic (best and worst managers, crowds, players etc).

Having said that, most of the work in this game is down to the manager. The turnsheet has all the places for you to fill in your team lines, coaching, transfers etc, but *you* are responsible for updating your own team details on your master page supplied at the start of the season. If you train a player, you mark his new rating on your sheet, and then use the new rating for the upcoming games - you don't wait for confirmation from the GM. It is the same with apprentices you sign up: you name them and position them and then play and train them, but you keep the details of their progress for your own records. Chris will feed the details into his program so you don't go wrong, but it is down to yourself to keep your own team in order, and it works a treat. Scores are determined by tactics and team picking and they can vary a great deal. There are opportunities (cash permitting) to hire other coaches to be able to influence your morale, help reduce injury levels etc. Team sheets are basically adding up the skill levels in your various parts of the team and adding in some variables. They include morale skills, home

advantage, certain players' special abilities and so on. These extra points are added to the various positions to help influence the outcome. It is a factor that can alter greatly the balance of your team whichever way you want it to (extra attacking bias or defend against a known team's attacking prowess). Soccer Manager is very friendly - some managers have been in for most if not all the 14 played seasons but there are spaces even now for interested parties. Give Chris a call on C.Robey@rl.ac.uk.

Rugby League is one of the toughest sports: 26 men doing battle for the honour of finding out who is the greatest. It is also one of the biggest growing spectator sports in the UK, and it's therefore not surprising that Rugby League competitions are springing up on the Internet. The **European Interactive Rugby League (EIRL)** is just a small part of a bigger network that comprises the world's largest PBEM Rugby League Competition - the International Interactive Rugby League.

EIRL uses five main criteria for assessing a player's possible impact on any game: attacking and defensive ability, strategic and goal kicking and a temperament rating between 1 and 10, with salaries built around these key skills.

Coaches submit orders with a variety of attacking and defensive strategies and styles and the sim does the rest. What can hold a charge up the table though are the in-built Form and Health fields. A player picking up a serious injury could be out of the game for up to six or seven weeks, depending on whether physiotherapy is used, and of course that uses money. Being able to win games and to balance the books tests a good coach, but being able to spot up and coming new talent is just as important.

EIRL started its existence with just ten teams, but it was soon apparent that EIRL President Kevin Brock had tapped into a niche market. Within two weeks the league was up to twenty teams, split over two divisions, and the only competition within the IIRL Community to adopt a promotion and relegation policy between divisions. In that historic first season, one team, Welsh Dragons, swept all before them and then went on to annihilate what was, on paper, a much stronger Sydney City Tigers in the first ever IWC Challenge, by 42 points to 6. EIRL 2002 has never lost its hardcore support from that memorable first season. Some people even say that it's the only thing that matters at the weekend. Indeed receiving a detailed match report and scrolling slowly through it can be almost as exciting as being at the match itself. You wonder, are you playing the right strategies? What would defeat mean? For some it's their life - for others it's far more serious! The game is run on PbeM only and is free - check out the web site - <http://iirl.net/eirl> - and contact Kevin on manckevin@btopenworld.com (My thanks to Kevin for the above - I played in EIRL with no knowledge of the game and found many players keen to give me advice on various aspects of it).

As there are more football games on the market than any other sport, it seems logical to highlight them. **Logical Soccer** comes from Dreamworld Games in Devizes. This game is excellently packaged and the results magazine is a joy to behold, covering all the fixtures and scores from the many Leagues and Divisions the game encompasses. The teams are all fantasy and a new manager will receive a squad of 'loaned' players - just enough to get on with. There is the usual fixture list of two games against each divisional opponent and there are Cups you can enter. There is a twist to this. The cost of playing league matches is only 30p a week, plus £1 for the aforementioned magazine (well worth the money in my book), but to buy transfer listed players or to enter a Cup Competition will cost you money, hard earned cash. The decision is of course up to you, as the Cup entrants basically decide the cash prize the finalists and semi finalists will earn. I saw players moving clubs with transfer fees stretching from £1 to £150 although the latter seemed a one off. The majority settled on single figure amounts, and presumably

these teams were not in direct contention for honours but basically enjoying playing the game.

It is a novel way to work things - play league matches for a very reasonable amount or chance your up and coming allstars in a Cup competition for cash prizes, and at the same time invest in a better player to improve your lot. Each player in a team in Logical Soccer is rated in his best position with subsequent decreases if he has to play out of position. Very basic really, in that the decrease for a forward playing as a winger will be considerably less than if he was asked to play as a goalkeeper (not a brilliant tactical move, it is fair to say). Goals are scored on the basis of a player's skills in direct opposition to his individual opponent. A figure is generated for one team or the other for each position, and they are totalled up to generate a score. Whilst quite a few games were low scoring ones, the majority featured scores totalling around 7-10 goals with 5-2 and 4-3 scorelines seeming commonplace. Great news for me, in that most games I join I seem to produce the lowest scoring teams of all, despite having an attacking bent in my nature. There are also what is known as star players, who can greatly influence matches and of course command high transfer fees. Relegation and promotion are handled here and there are literally hundreds of teams in the setup. The presentation is very well done and the rules are not daunting at all. The apparent simplicity of the score generating should not disguise the fact that taking a real interest in your squad layout and planning for each opponent in turn will reap longterm benefits. Check out the website and you can join online - Logical Soccer offer a free (no obligation) setup and are confident you will stay with them. The game is a PBM although the website is open for members (and guests who sign in). The site is on www.logicalsoccer.com

Now if you fancy playing at being a racehorse owner and making some real hard cash look no further than **Reality Racing**, also from Dreamworld Games. This game has been running since 1994. It gives you the opportunity to make some hard cash, as does their aforementioned soccer game. First, I will say that the 62 pages A5 rulebook is very detailed but extremely easy to pick up and understand. Knowing the front of a nag from its rear end is about all you need to know to get set up and go - the rules don't all need to be fully understood to get moving. I praised Logical Soccer's results magazine for its presentation. *The Reality Observer* is the equivalent vehicle for Reality Racing and is absolutely beautiful, excellently presented in its contents, layout, and amount of facts and figures it displays. Some of the tables it produces could do with a slightly larger print, but I put that down to my advancing years. Its 48-pages show the current 200 top owners with their numbers of races and wins along with the top 200 owners by prize money earned. The issue I received had a gent who'd won £3941.90 from 45 wins with a 15% strike rate - even the 200th person had winnings of £44.25 from one win. Easy to see there could be some good cash to be won here. Horses are also rated - top 100 with the amount of prize money won. The owners do state this is a game for entertainment and should not be treated as an investment.

The more you spend buy your horse, the better qualities it will have, but regardless of whether you get a future Red Rum or a Blackpool donkey, the races run are scheduled to have like on like so even poor horses will be running against mates with fairly even talents. You name the horse (filly or colt) and then it is up to you to select races to compete in. You enter by paying 21p per race, and when you then get the following week's magazine you either withdraw or declare (means you intend going through with the race). This will cost you an entry fee which will be different for each race. The total entry moneys are what you are playing

for. In races under 16 horses it is split with 60% for the winner, 25% for 2nd, and 15% for the 3rd placed. If the field is larger than 15 runners, the percentages become 50, 25, 15, and 10. Your performances in races will affect the horse's ratings which can make it approach higher class races (or not), and along with being able to make a forecast and win money on certain designated races, to breed and to bid for more horses (you are not restricted to one, but start small until you get the hang of it), there is a lot going on in this game. You will probably need around a day to read up all the weekly info you get, so at a price of £1.25 per week this is not an expensive game to be in. Unless you decide to buy a

stable of horses at the beginning before you know what to do with them, that is. Try one for starters and see how it develops. Reality Racing looks interesting even for those who don't have a penchant for this type of game. Contact Mark Robson on 01380 818181 or fax on 01380 813446.

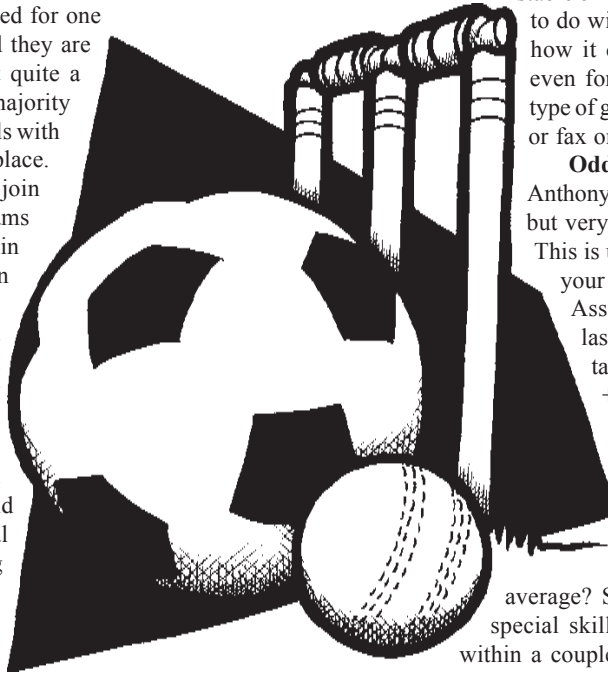
Oddball is a fairly new football PBM game from Anthony Reardon. Along with the rules (19 x A4 pages but very readable) you get an Initial Squad booklet.

This is used to select your starting squad along with your coaches, trainers, and most importantly, your Assistant Manager. The 24 selections feature the last World Cup managers and all have a certain talent. For example Trapattoni would allow a +2 to all Defenders in your team that are 27 years old or older, and a +1 to all other players over 27. Seems best to pick the players and then an assistant who will complement them. But is a great goalkeeper with a bad backup is better than, say, two goalkeepers who are pretty average? Some players are getting on a bit but have special skills: do you pick a couple of them knowing within a couple of seasons they will be gone, or go for a

section where nobody is brilliant but all have a future with good training? A quick fix or a longterm stability and general improvement - your choice. Each player has a wage and contract length, which need scrutiny as well. Players may have two years, one year, or a contract due to expire at the end of the current season. You give names to all players and club names in Oddball are also your choice. Anthony has decided to go for a single League for this season so 14 league matches will be played but there are also FA Cup games, and usually a League Cup, should your team not be playing in Europe. 14 sessions complete a season that is worked on four weeks a session. There are the usual transfer lists and inter-club deals, loans, ability to improve the stadium, etc. Score are based on the playing levels of the players being added together to get each team's area totals. With a few alterations based on the keeper's ability to stop shots and a couple of other factors a score will be generated along with the game's relevant details (scorers, crowds, etc). There are a few players in Oddball with special attributes that can alter a club's chances of scoring or not conceding goals, and a couple of other factors such as aggression and effort make it a slightly more thoughtful game than most. I spent more time setting up my team (along with its assistants and backroom staff) than I did playing a turn, although subsequently I realised spending the little extra time on my lineup and tactics did improve the team's performance. The newsletter with all the previous results, fixtures etc runs to around 16 pages and is a good read. Turns are submitted by email and prices are £36 for a complete season that reduces for seasons after the first two. If interested, drop Anthony an email (oaant@nontri.ku.ac.th).

Well, that's it for this edition and regrettably this is my last edition. Due to personal and business reasons I have to give up this position only a year after taking it on. Thanks to the GMs who allowed me to take part in their games and I wish my successor all the best for the future.

[Many thanks, David! Readers interested in taking over our Sport coverage should contact Carol at the Flagship address.]



Lords of the Earth

Campaign 1: An Age of Air & Steam - part 4

The conclusion of MARTIN HELSDON's popular game diary ...

WE ARE continuing to follow the fortunes of the Norse Trading Company, Norskrtrad in LOTE01. Turn 214 is eagerly awaited as the GM moves to British Columbia, for the strife of this alternate Eighteenth Century continues...

The civil war between the Republic and the rebel Royalists and their communist allies is over. It seems that peace has returned to the troubled lands of the Spanish Republic. No, not quite ...

Peace...

Anno Domini 1749 - 1750

Johannes visited the prisoners obtained from the latest purge in Lisbon. They were being held in solitary confinement in the Company brig, under heavy guard, in irons, and were interviewed separately.

What the unfortunates (and their families) might have revealed is unknown, but some 'friends' of those in chains attacked Teugen's cavalcade, when next he went about in the city. Nearly thirty were killed in the resulting crossfire, but old Johannes survived and won another set of scars in his right leg. Some bodies of the assailants were recovered and the Norsk chairman knew he'd embroiled himself in a duel to the death.

Saddened by the death of Alphonse Gumi, and mindful of the mortality of Man, Johannes had the Board of Directors name Jorge Delgado as Malcom's successor. "Year by year the old faces fade away, one by one. Even the sun was brighter and warmer in my youth."

Malcom ensured the Norskwarden guard the family compound from any attack, be they Golden Dawn cultists, or Communist recidivists. Sadly, Malcom was badly wounded in an assassination attempt made by Espanan recidivists early in '49, fell ill and died in the summer of that year.

As it happened, nearly every Norsk leader was subjected to some kind of attack, no matter where they happened to be. Luckily, only Malcom died as a result, though some of the others were sorely marked by the trial.

Unaware of his ascension to the Bitrande of the House, Jorge Delgado stood on the ruined wharves of Bergen, and surveyed a scene of limitless desolation: warehouses, buildings and houses wrecked by the years of the Ice. He sighed and looked eastwards towards the snow-capped mountains, and then knelt to see a small yellow flower struggling between the cracked slabs of the landing. "A new Spring?" he wondered, and then turned to watch the lines of men unloading supplies from the gleaming metal ships in the frost-rimed harbour. "Hoy, careful there with those crates! Get your backs into it!"

... Assassins ...

Following my purging of the Spanish government of the tendril of the Golden Dawn, a Secret Empire in LOTE parlance, it seemed the cult had taken umbrage at my excising of their infiltration. The turnsheet

also informed me that I had killed one of their Adepts in the Balearic Isles, tidings that surprised me, as I was conducting no actions there. No doubt this was the GM spicing up a natural Leader death. Nearly every Norskrtrad leader in their reach was attacked, as the Golden Dawn sought to destroy Norskrtrad by assassinating all my leaders. Fortunately, my 'King' was defended against such attacks, and all the other attempts fortuitously failed.

Whilst Secret Empires usually have no territory and few if any troops (though a number appear to have shipping to indulge in smuggling and the like to gain trade revenue), they are very strong in intel actions. There is little or no point in a Secret Empire investing in the Quality Ratings of its infantry or artillery, so they have plenty of money to invest in their intelligence and assassination operational capability. This makes them fairly lethal, and when added to the weird and magical abilities many seem to have (for instance contacting the extraterrestrial Mi-go to manoeuvre asteroids into Earth orbit and drop them on offending cities and regions), it sometimes feels as if the game balance is seriously awry.

Leader death happens when leaders reach their 'death date' and succumb from natural causes. Quite often the GM makes this a little more 'lively' to induce additional player paranoia.

With a little communication I made a peace of sorts with the Golden Dawn player, as it was apparent that Spain had no inclination or capability at this time to rid the nation of the insidious presence. This achieved, it seemed that I could settle down to build yards, increase my trade routes and behave as a proper Merchant House. (I had been scolded by one of the Old Guard for behaviour unbecoming a merchant.)

So then: Peace and Prosperity. Who knows, maybe even the dust in the atmosphere would settle soon ...

... and Destruction

Anno Domini 1751 - 1752

The Company offices remained very tense. A queer, waiting air was upon the city, and no one felt at ease. Dogs whined at all hours of the day and flights of birds could be seen over the rooftops winging their way out of the metropolis in all directions... despite this, however, there were no attacks on Company personnel, no assassins in the dark, no sudden blasts of flame on crowded streets. Instead everyone's nerves were stretched to the breaking point. And the weather grew steadily hotter by the day.

Far to the north, as the desolate coast of Ice ravaged Norway receded, Captain Jorge Delgado recalled the lines written on that same shore centuries past, the Sibyl's Prophecy. "A prophecy of the pagan idolaters," he wondered. "Of their future, and our past I hope. Or do more world-killing dragons await us in the Outer Darkness?" Little did Delgado know what horrors awaited him upon his homecoming...

An enormous earthquake began at 9:30am, deep under the Atlantic Ocean, in the abyssal depths 200 kilometres WSW of Cape St. Vincent.

In Lisbon, the convulsion of the earth smashed nearly three-quarters of the buildings in the city to rubble. The streets buckled and shattered, while church-towers toppled into squares jammed with screaming, running citizens. The water mains ruptured, turning the lower districts into a muddy morass and leaving the hilltop districts without a single drop.

Soon after the earthquake, several fires broke out, mostly started by cooking fires and candles. Many inhabitants fled from their homes and left fires burning. Narrow streets full of fallen debris prevented access to the fire sites. The public squares filled with people and their rescued

Lords of the Earth at a glance

A commercial PBEm powergame that exists in several separate games covering different historical periods. Game 1 is run by the game's designer, Thomas Harlan:

www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01

belongings, but as the fire approached, these squares were abandoned, and the fire swelled to catastrophic proportions.

Immediately after the earthquake, many inhabitants of Lisbon looked for safety on the sea by boarding ships moored on the river and in the recently complete Great Harbour. But about thirty minutes after the quake, a huge wave roared up out of the western ocean and swamped the area near Bugie Tower on the mouth of the Tagus..

A total of three waves struck the shore, each dragging people and debris out to sea and leaving exposed large stretches of the river bottom. Boats overcrowded with refugees capsized and sank.

By day's end, between the conflagration of the fires and those crushed under collapsing buildings, nearly thirty thousand people had died. Among them were Johannes Teugen, the Maklarevalde of the Norsktråd, and his lieutenants Goram Thule and Njal Gurni. Among the Spaniards, Prince Jose Tordesillas was the only notable who happened to be in the city - and he was slain in the collapse of the Cathedral of Cathedral. The city itself was nearly levelled, and with it, the vast assemblage of industry which the Spanish and Norsk had been so laboriously constructing.

In the aftermath, the new Norsk Maklarevalde (Delgado) commanded an evacuation of all surviving Company staff, tools, equipment and ships (though the tsunami had wrecked at least two steam cruisers slated for delivery to the Spanish government) to St. Georges in Morocco.

How are the mighty fallen

This was a case of LOTE01 Shock Syndrome.

I scanned my turnsheet and read the newsfax again. The destruction of Lisbon had counted as a destruction of Homeland: my Bureaucracy Level and University were ravaged; numerous Leaders had died due to the fall in the BL and were not replaced; several units in Lisbon had been wiped out; my shipyards and airship yards were destroyed. The position was back to where it was, and more, from what I had started with.

Fortunately, I had grown into the habit of writing conditional orders to cater to the destruction of Lisbon. The Company relocated to the largest Catholic city nearby, St Georges (Casablanca) in North Africa. In addition to the loss of the nearly completed Great Harbour at Lisbon, the city was so devastated it had even lost its port. If I had stayed in Lisbon there would have been an awful shortfall in places for my Merchant Shipping Points (MSP) and the Company would have been crippled.

This event was coupled with one of the periodic rules changes that beset LOTE01 as the testbed for the system in general: my need for agricultural produce (agro) had increased by five times. So in addition to being wrecked, my income was also hit as the Company was now in famine. This was unpleasant - as a Merchant House I held little land, and my fishing fleets provided very little. With the general modifier applied world-wide because of the three asteroid impacts, my limited holdings provided a mere fraction of what I needed. Now I would have to buy in agro.

Spain had been equally badly hit, as Lisbon was the Spanish capital. There was a nasty rumour circulating that the earthquake was punishment for a player's indiscretion, though it proved to be a rolled event, though

maybe made slightly worse ... It seemed possible that the Golden Dawn cabal was equally badly hit. Combined with the public unmasking of his Merchant House front, Wolfden & Cane, that player dropped.

After a day or two of pondering the game and the system, I started to plan the reconstruction.

Time passes

That was all several turns ago. With the death of the old Maklarevalde, Johannes Teugen, it seems an appropriate place to end this game diary.



Inevitably, there has been a continuing series of intrigues and wars, with major conflagrations in India and to the east, where another Merchant House and the Papacy have been aiding the armies of Swedish Russia against a small kingdom dominated by Hastur worshippers. Whilst they seem to have won the final battle, continuing dialogue on the LOTE01 e-group suggests that the war is far from over.

The Yahoo e-group provides a conduit for player messages, propaganda and dialogue

to be exchanged. The main problem with the e-group is that it occasionally descends into a message storm, wildly way off the game topic. Of late there have been a few days when fifty plus messages have been waiting to be downloaded, usually full of vitriol between players who will never agree on what they are arguing about, each wanting to have the last word. Luckily this only rarely occurs, and most storms are shorter in duration and humorous in nature.

The players, mostly North American, are also drawn from Britain, France and Australia. I have only encountered a few times when cultural differences mildly affect any discussion, and the only drawback of playing on this side of the Atlantic is that the opportunity for telephone conversations is limited, and face to face chats impossible. There are several 'knots' of LOTE players in the American South West (where it all began) and the North East.

In conclusion

All in all, I would recommend the LOTE experience, with a few warnings.

On the downside, the rules are over heavy but not too difficult to get into. The complexity of the system often leads to GM burnout. So far this year I have joined two other campaigns, and after many months never received a turn. A number of players own copies of the GM rules, and thus have a hidden advantage. Sadly a very small minority of players take their powergaming to ridiculous levels, using false identities or smear campaigns.

And on the upside, LOTE01 is an intriguing and frustrating game with a depth and a breadth not equalled by any other I have encountered. LOTE01 is justly famous for the perversity of its technological and cultic dimensions; most other campaigns appear to be more historical. It is addictive and the cause of obsession amongst many of its players. It offers the opportunity to make friends in other countries and partake in a game of epic scope and grandeur. Often it feels as though history is being made, with its attendant heroes and villains, dramas and tragedies, glories and defeat.

Even if you have no desire to play it, a visit to its website is worthwhile. But be careful: Thus far no cure has been identified for this game. And now strange flares have been seen on the face of Mars. The Martians are invading...

Star Fleet Warlord

The early years

MIKE LAY with advice to get you started in the game ...

Star Fleet Warlord is a strategic sci-fi game based on the universe of the venerable *Star Fleet Battles* boardgame. *Star Fleet Battles* is itself based on classic *Star Trek*, so if you imagine fleets comprising ships of Federation, Klingon, Romulan and a few other races, you won't be too far out. Not that you need this background - the rules are self-contained.

The game is based around the usual themes: move your ships to capture sites and defeat your enemies. Use the income from the sites to build more ships, build bases or for other things. The economic system has four types of resource (People, Ore, Dilithium and Food) which are used for various purposes. 'People' resources are required to train your crews, whereas ore is used to repair and refit them. Different major sites produce different ratios of the basic resources.

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. In *Star Fleet Warlord* the first few turns are particularly important. One reason is that doing well early on can put you in a good position later in the game. However, the biggest thing about the first five or so turns is that you are very unlikely to run into another player, except diplomatically. This means that you have time to sort your empire out, get a feel for the rules and get to grips with how best to run your position.

The start-up

The first thing to do, though, is run the start-up turn. The important thing about it is that you don't know anything about your home sector when you order the initial build, so it's important to get a good mix of ships with different abilities. If you fail to get a minesweeper, and there's a major site in a minefield, you would have a problem. The default build recommended by the game designers is very good, and I rarely feel the urge to tinker with it.

Once you've got your start-up, look at the map. At this point I usually reach for the coloured pens (well, *Paint Shop Pro* these days) and mark off all the major and minor sites, along with the dangerous terrain types. This helps me to avoid mistakes. Writing the base prospecting values on the interesting terrain types also means you have a good visual aid and don't keep reaching for the rulebook.

During the first five game years, you have several objectives:

1 - Capture all the sites in your home sector. This is important because you get an income from each site that you own at the start of any turn. If you own all the major sites, you get a sector bonus, worth 100 economic points - about the same as two or three major sites. Remember that your varied selection of start-up ships have differing abilities and can cope with various problem terrain types. If you have been unlucky, and have more problem terrain types than specialist ships, take a look at your roster of 'legendary officers'. It may well be that you can assign a suitable officer to one of your other ships to help out. 2 - Get your scouts headed for adjacent sectors. You don't know what's out there until you send a scout for a look, and it's possible that your scouts may have some problems with NPC ships, or annoying terrain. The earlier you get a scan of an adjacent sector, the better.

3 - Somewhere in your home sector is a 'space monster'. It won't be a

nasty one, and is usually about as tough as a destroyer. Its movement is usually predictable - it will move in a straight line unless it encounters terrain it doesn't like or spots a planet or other site to attack. Take it as an opportunity to study the combat system and combat train your crews.

4 - Prospect like crazy. Many of the terrain types have economic resources buried in them. Early in the game, the income that can be generated from prospecting can outstrip your conventional income - in a recent game, my second turn saw a conventional income of about 150 economic points, with a survey income of over 500 points. Remember that any ship can issue the 'prospect' order, and a freighter is as efficient as a dreadnought (and rather cheaper!).

5 - Spend that income! Small, fast ships are usually better early in the game. They prospect just as well as a big ship, are cheaper to train, and the additional movement points mean that they can cover more ground and capture more sites.

6 - Train your crews. Your ships start with crews barely competent to fly the ships. Using a couple of orders to train the crews up can take them to a level where they no longer take damage from a number of terrain types (which, in a small ship can be very important, since the shields are thin). Each additional crew level also adds 10% to attack and defence, as well as 10% to the income from prospecting.

7 - Get your warp gate moving towards one of your home sector borders. You can build ships at your warp gates, so having them near the front lines can save your ships several turns of movement. Since they only move at speed two, it's important to get your initial gate moving. You probably want to send it towards the nearest adjacent sector. You certainly want to send it towards a sector you're going to send a scout into. This will allow you to rapidly exploit the sector when you get the map.

Going to the races...

As warlord, you get to nominate three of the dozen or so races as your 'preferred providers', together with the generic civilian ships. Although you can buy from outside these selections, it can be prohibitively expensive to do so, and most people don't bother. You do get the option to change them, but this only occurs once every ten turns.

Each of the races has its own 'feature', meaning that your choice of race can influence your style of play. The Federation starts with better trained crews than the other races. The Gorn prefer hand-to-hand ground attacks, and their ships get bonuses in attacking sites, as well as having fearsome levels of commandos. The aggressive Klingons prefer attack to defence, a fact that their ship design reflects, whereas the territorial Tholians prefer defence above all else.

Although you can choose random races, there are often good reasons to go for a specific package of races. One excellent reason is that you fancy playing them. Another reason that you might decide to choose is a lack of the 'food' resource in your home sector, or other terrain related problems. If you can't feed them, then having ships with a lot of commandos is not sensible. If your home sector is full of radiation related terrain, then the WYN, whose ships are used to traversing such territory, might be a good selection. Yet another reason for choosing can be to simplify the supply chain. Federation, Klingon, Kzinti and WYN all use guided missiles called drones and, although they have some commando ships and carriers, they are not so prevalent, so you mostly only have to worry about keeping yourself supplied with drones. Some races can be mutually exclusive in terms of combat style - it's difficult to mesh a fleet of units some of which prefer to duck and weave, and others that are optimised to close to point blank range and slug it out.

StarFleet Warlord at a glance

Winnable science fiction PBM of medium complexity from Pagoda Games. Start-up costs £5, and further turns are £3.

A ship for all seasons

You don't get to design your own ships in Star Fleet Warlord, although some 'generic' ships can be customised to various missions, ranging from minesweeping to surveying, heavy combat to commando. However, the various races have ship lists that run to a dozen pages of fairly fine type between them, providing many different ships suited to various missions, ranging from small police corvettes to dreadnoughts and the rare battleship. Most of the races also provide a good complement of support ships such as minesweepers, hospital ships, carriers and the like.

The difference between these, apart from sheer scale and price, is that the smaller ships move faster (speed 5) than the dreadnoughts (speed 3). Conversely, the larger ships have better staying power and usually provide more bang for your buck. Early on in the game, when you are expanding as rapidly as possible, most people tend towards small nippy ships and accept that they won't win a fight. The four police cutters that you can buy for the price of one dreadnought can cover twenty hexes a turn between them as opposed to the three that the dreadnought can. Of course, if the enemy is defending the sites that you are aiming for, the light ships are going to look at the defences and refuse to attack.

'Which button is this?'

Your ships arrive with crews barely competent to fly their ships. This is a slight exaggeration, but not by much. Crew levels are rated from one to nine, with nine being 'legendary'. Most races start with crew-three ships; the common exception is the Federation whose superior training and morale means that they start at level four.

Crew quality comes into various things. Each additional crew level gives a 10% boost to attack, defence and prospecting. Crews that have achieved level five can avoid taking damage from a wide variety of common terrain types such as asteroids and dust clouds. This can be very important early on, because a couple of hexes of asteroids and your smaller ships will have lost all their shields and possibly taken internal damage. At higher crew levels, the crew acquire even more useful abilities such as being able to repair their ship without the aid of a repair ship or space dock. Because of the advantages of level five crew (being able to go through the nasty terrain rather than round can save whole turns of movement), I almost always try to get my new ships to run a couple of training sessions. Economics (training sessions need 'people' resources) or enemy action may prevent this, though.

There are two ways to improve your crews. The easier and more predictable route is to send them on training courses at a convenient base or 'integration' ship (integration ships are support vessels with facilities for training crews and procuring legendary officers). The downside is that, while low level training is relatively cheap, the price rapidly rises as your crews improve and has a ceiling of level six. You also need that base or training ship to be present for the entire time, which may be difficult to arrange.

The other method of improvement is through experience. Win a battle and your crews may learn something from the experience - if they survive. This method is riskier, uncertain, but is free and can exceed level six. There is one other potential problem with 'on the job' training. On a couple of occasions, I have had units fight unexpected battles en route to a training vessel. Since the 'training' order was processed anyway, it was a lot more expensive than I had expected because the crews were better than they should have been!

'Welcome aboard, Mr Scott'

In keeping with the source material, you have access to a limited pool of legendary officers, ranging from doctors and navigators to engineers and science officers. Each, when assigned to a vessel, adds a capability to the ship. Navigators are adept at weaving through perilous terrain, while engineers can fix the ship on the fly with nothing but a ball of string and a pair of old socks. If you are really lucky, or are willing to shell out for the recruitment, you can even acquire the services of a legendary captain, who will enhance your ship's abilities in any number of ways.

You acquire the services of one or more new officers each turn. Normally the officer type is randomly selected, but there are ways of

influencing this.

Astronomical possibilities

Star Fleet Warlord has a wide variety of terrain types, split into 'point' and 'area'. Any hex can have a maximum of one 'point' terrain and one 'area' terrain. Point terrain types are single items like planets, gas giants, Dilithium asteroids, black holes or variable pulsars. Some qualify as 'major sites' (things worth owning because they produce resources each turn), and some are just plain dangerous. 'Area' terrain is anything on a wider scale, such as dust clouds, asteroid fields and the like. None of these produce resources on a regular basis, though most can be prospected for some immediate cash.

Anyone with any knowledge of astrophysics needs to forget it while playing Warlord since the terrain types can co-exist without any physical basis. One of my current maps has a perfectly habitable planet balanced between two super novae. But, then, my ships can go faster than light, so perhaps I shouldn't complain too much!

Some terrain is useful (either because it produces a regular income, or can be prospected for immediate gain, or both), some is dangerous and some terrain qualifies as both. The best prospecting terrain in the game, the variable pulsar, can swat cruisers out of the space lanes. However, most terrain has a key - something that you can use to pacify the terrain. The terrain types are all fully listed in the rule book - this is not a game where there's a great deal of 'secret rules information' to be uncovered. In the case of the variable pulsar, some ships have abilities that will help them 'ride the storm', and a 'legendary navigator' can also assist.

'Your final report, Mr Data...'

I hope this has given you some insight into how to get started in Star Fleet Warlord. It's one of my favourite 'closed' tactical wargames (most games last about twenty turns), and I'm very pleased to be back at the helm of the Federation in the most recently started game.



Destiny

The Pulp Space Opera

LARRY DEYELL launches his starship into Madhouse's big new release ...

HMM, I THOUGHT, 'this looks like fun - it's in space, it's a playtest, and it looks like a complete bargain. But wait a minute, what's this?' Okay, I'll put my hand up now, and own up - it was me who pointed out, to Carol, the request in the startup material that playtesters do not submit their thoughts to any of the gaming media. So, as a result, here I am, reporting on the playtest in *Flagship*. There's a lesson in there somewhere, but I'm not entirely sure what it is ...

Destiny, then, what is it, exactly? Well, for those of you who don't know, it's an (deep breath...) 'Open Ended Pulp Space Opera'. And what does that mean? Well, in a nutshell, it's set in space, and your characters can choose to pursue whatever agenda they desire, taking as long as they want to do so. Oh, and it's from Madhouse, so it's not exactly what you might call a serious simulation. At all. Events all take place in a far-flung future, where mankind has, it would seem, had its day. Humanity is a shadow of its former self, any knowledge about history, and the galaxy itself, is hazy and little more than hearsay at best. So, it's down to the players to drag humanity back up and off its knees, to head out into the vast, black yonder and make a name for their kind. This, of course, provides a setting where exploration, and discovery, are never far away, and it means, of course, that there'll always be at least a few surprises out there, should you be intrepid enough to go looking.

In the beginning

What better place to start than at the startup, then? At the original playtest startup, players were given four characters and a ship, to kit out and name as they saw fit. Unexpectedly, the ship was the easiest of the lot to sort out, since you don't exactly have a choice as to which type you get - it's a generic type, called a 'Junker' and that says it all, they're just about space-worthy, and all your characters can afford to get a loan for. So all it needed was a name (easy enough, really!), a 'General Hailing Message' up to 40 words long (this is the description of your ship that others get when they 'view' it - or you can use it to, well, announce your intentions to all and sundry, whether they be fair or foul! Another use is to put your contact details in there, so that anyone who examines your ship closely will know how to contact you - the only other real opportunities to do this are on the mailing list, or in the Player Messages section of your turn), then you need to decide what to spend your 2000 starting credits on. Coming fresh into the game where nothing had been tried out, and no-one really knew what the various bits'n'bobs did, this was kind of tricky.

I decided to take the dull but safe route, and hope to bolster any inadequacies through play - so, after improving the ship's offensive capabilities, I installed a Beer Fridge, hung up some 'Intelligent Fluffy Dice' on the rear-view, and set about choosing my crew/characters. Interestingly, your characters don't have to crew your ship, and you can leave as many of them on the planet/space-station/barren asteroid as you see fit. But it also seems that the more crew you have to fill positions like Navigation and Engineering, the better your ship will perform. Again I played it safe and tried to cobble together a dedicated crew, figuring

that if any of them decided to go mooch around planet-side, the rest would at least be able to get their ship off the ground! And I have to admit, the character creation really impressed me - obviously someone has put a lot of thought into it. Instead of just choosing a 'Character Class' and having your characters' abilities constrained, you must choose your characters' ages, and then decide what it is they've done with their time in existence, or choose their 'Professional History'. This means that you can 'Specialise' your characters, by having them having spent all their time at, say, Engineering College, or you can spread them around a bit through the many disciplines available, making them a Jack/Jane Of All Trades. The really great thing is that it's entirely possible to have a 31 year-old space-slacker, who's done nothing but attend the, ahem, 'University Of Life' since he left school at the tender age of 16. God alone knows what kind of skills such a character might end up with, and how much use he/she'd be, though. But with roleplay potential like that, you can't complain! So, once I'd managed to get the concept of a Space-Craft crewed by a motley assortment of 'Stellar-Tramps' out of my mind, I had to consider how rounded a crew I really wanted, taking into consideration which 'Posts' they might fill on the bridge of the ship. The rulebook does recommend that you at least have a Navigator and a Pilot, so I duly did so, and bulked out the team with a young combat specialist and an older, wiser medic/merchant character.

First impressions

Then the startup turn and the rulebook arrived through the post. Though you can download the rules, and either have them solely on your computer, in glorious Technicolour, or print them out from there, and, again, have the full-colour rules, I must admit that although I downloaded the rulebook for an initial look-see, I waited for my copy to arrive by post before delving into it in depth. Maybe it's just me, but anything I read on the screen of my PC doesn't really get 'absorbed' in the same way as it would if it'd been on paper. And to print out the (at the time...) 60-page rulebook would've taken longer than I could stand to listen to my printer rumbling away. But what a lovely rulebook it is!

The first third or so is dedicated to describing the universe of *Destiny*, setting the scene, and explaining the state of humanity, and its technology level. As ever, Madhouse really know how to create an atmosphere. It's all about the details, and there are too many to list here, but let's just say that, unlike quite a few other games I've played in the past, once you've read the rules, you feel truly immersed in the *Destiny* Universe - you don't feel bewildered due to too much detail, nor do you feel that there's something missing. It's just absolutely spot-on. Then the rules - everything you need to know to begin with is laid out nice and clear, ensuring that you'll have little difficulty having your characters do exactly what you want them to. In saying that, though, any queries you might have will be dealt with with astounding patience and understanding by the GMs, or fellow players on the mailing list.

Then I turned my attention to the turn - and one thing is immediately obvious. Although the game itself has been said to be, 'Not just



Destiny at a glance

Open-ended PBM/PBeM game of space exploration from Madhouse, just ending its playtest. Starfarer startup plus 4 turns is £10 (subsequent turns £3.50 + 50p per additional character). Other types of position are available.

DungeonWorld in space!', since both games come from the same stable, and are run using the same system, anyone who's ever played DungeonWorld will feel right at home. The turn printout follows the same format - everything is in the same place, from the character details, the map, right through to the terrain descriptions. This, I must stress, can only be a very good thing, as I've always thought that DungeonWorld printouts are some of the clearest, most intuitive information sheets I've come across in PBM. All my characters were there, present and correct, and the ship, too. The characters' skills were listed, but they were all in code, so the only way to find out just which skills the characters had was to 'Investigate' them. This was, I have to say, a bit of a pain, since a few of the older characters had upwards of fifteen skills, and you have but 15 orders per turn. So, I had to investigate the skills in dribs and drabs, and as a result, I never really got to know my characters as well as I feel I should have. In saying this, though, I know for a fact there are folk out there who have archived all the skill-codes, and a complete run-down of what your character can/can't do is now only a few emails away. Another thing I realised about the skills with this first turn is that although there are obviously set skills learned at certain schools, there are also a number of 'Incidental Skills' that your character has a chance of picking up, most of which are mighty useful, and give characters a greater degree of individuality. Although I have to admit to eternal disappointment that none of my characters managed to come by the 'Tattooing' skill - what better way to while away the hours than to scrawl over your willing/unwilling crew-mates? And then, as usual, your characters, although they haven't, one would assume, just materialised out of thin air, and had to get to where they are somehow, are completely un-equipped, with all their worldly goods stored in their back-packs. Not a criticism of this particular game, but more that this seems to always be the case, no matter which game you play. So the bulk of the first turn is spent making sure your characters have their armour on, and their weapons to hand.

Interestingly, your space-craft is also handled as a character, so it also has to be 'equipped' at the start - although I found it easier to rationalise this, supposing all the new gear that had been bought had to be wired-up and switched on - although it appears the ship does all this itself! Maintenance robots? Must be. Then, of course, you have the opportunity to trade-in all the now obsolete items from your ship for cold, hard credits. Credits which you can then use to buy even more bolt-ons for your ship! Of course, this opportunity passed me by entirely, such was my haste to get out and explore. Don't let it happen to you - those credits are hard to come by!

Megiddo

The characters started on the Megiddo Landing Platform. At the time pretty much everyone else was starting there, too, making it look like a jolly busy place, and I have to admit, it felt great to be starting off in the same place as so many others - all of us Destiny Virgins, about to encounter the same obstacles. Pure community. So what did I do? I had one of my male characters march straight on out into the landing bay,

and assault a female PC! Admittedly it was a 'brawl' order, causing no damage - but I was hoping to cause offence and start a bit of trouble in the hangar. Sadly, however, it was all to no avail. With security robots on the prowl, and the seemingly omni-present 'Stellar Patrol' (PC law-keepers, but just whose side are they on?), trouble isn't exactly frequent in the classier places on-planet. There are, however, plenty of places where characters with no respect for the law can cause trouble, but they'd better be ready to cope with any reciprocation! I think it's a bit of a shame that there are now more startup locations, in that the feeling of camaraderie will be lost to a certain extent, but obviously it has to be

done to accommodate ever-increasing numbers of players. Of course, you can still opt to start in Megiddo - but will you be able to resist the draw of a further frontier?

What next?

And from here, well, what you do is pretty much completely up to you.

What did I do? Exactly what I wanted to do - jumped the entire crew into the ship, and blasted off into space without a second thought. Only to find, four turns later, that I didn't have any rations aboard and my crew were slowly starving to death. Humph! Then the Inter-Galactic-Ration-Fairy appeared and deposited a bunch of rations in my crew's backpacks! (It turned out that I wasn't alone in blasting off without thinking about my crew's stomachs, and it appeared that rations were harder to come by than the designers first imagined, so

everyone got rations for now!) That staved off the hunger for a few turns, and gave me a while to find a space-station with a burger-bar. And then what? Well, that'd be the business of my crew, I'm afraid. The on-planet experience is, I have to say, quite a lot like, well, DungeonWorld, but without the monsters lurking around every corner, although I'm informed that once you manage to find the less respectable areas, the chances are you might run across some really unpleasant types who are armed to the teeth. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Locations are, of course, huge and vary from the salubrious to the downright seedy. You could quite happily spend a lot of time exploring every nook and cranny on a planet, and your characters would, no doubt, be kept really, really busy.

Other things you can do...

There are already several 'Affiliations' or 'Alliances' you can join, ranging from the wannabe space-cops, 'Stellar Patrol', through an affiliation of bounty-hunters, the 'GBH', to the out and out nasty 'Pirate Brotherhood'. These cater for any taste, from the seriously righteous to the gleefully un-righteous. There have already been several in-game 'plots' run, one on the back of a pubmeet where attendees were given the chance to run 'Greebly' characters, a weird alien race that have been apparently victimised and experimented on by the good people of High Earth. Some of them, understandably, had a grudge against humanity, so there were a few exciting turns had tracking down and, um, 'detaining' rogue Greeblies. There are still a few out there, but most seem to be benign - so far. More of this kind of thing will undoubtedly happen.



You can, of course, just explore on your own. The playtest has been and gone, though, maps have been traded, and the boundaries of unknown space are a bit further out than they were before. But space is a big place, and you never know what might just crop up out of nowhere. There's always exploration on-planet as well, and there's nothing to stop you leaving one or more characters on the ground to seek fame, fortune, or a messy death in the seedier parts of any space-port. The characters can improve themselves through training, and I expect that the experience points aren't just there for show. Ships can be upgraded and customised as you see fit, as long as you can afford it. And there are plenty of ways to earn a crust - trading's an option you might want to pursue, or how does asteroid mining appeal? With orbital platforms offering an array of different cargo modules, and asteroids flying around in space by the bucket-load, both of these peaceful, law-abiding opportunities can be eminently profitable. Maybe just blatant piracy is more your style? The ship-to-ship combat system is well thought out, works well, and the weapon upgrades you can buy for your ship do make an awful lot of difference - it pays to be choosy about who you attack! All the options are there, you've just got to decide which risk-level you're comfortable with.

The fact that the choice of how to play is left entirely to yourself can seem daunting, but you're not alone, and there are plenty of other players out there with a bit of experience who'll be only too willing to help out. Of course, the promise of Earth Government funded 'Missions' for PCs will give even the most directionless player something to do!

But enough of this, what you want to know is what I thought of the game. The easiest way to convey this, I think, would be in two lists.

What I liked about the game

- * The scenario. I've seldom played in a game that just feels so believable. Even with the rulebook admitting that the whole universe is based around playability rather than any tie to realism, you never get the impression that any aspect of the setting hasn't been thoroughly thought out. This has the result of letting you feel fully immersed in the Destiny Universe, and that, at the end of the day, is what it's all about. And of course, it's all done in the inimitable Madhouse Style, which is guaranteed to make you smirk at least once per turn.

- * The atmosphere. Always pretty good with any Madhouse game, it has to be said. Not only are the GMs friendly and very helpful, there is a real feeling of community among the players. Any queries you have are as likely to be answered by the players at large as the GMs, and any problems are likely to be sorted with minimal fuss by the GMs. It is, as ever with Madhouse, a quality service.

- * The length of time space-travel takes. This'll feature in the next section too, but although it does take seemingly forever to get anywhere, the fact that you can't just rip clean across the galaxy in two or three turns enhances the feeling that space is a very, very big place. The sense of achievement when you get anywhere is, understandably, immense.

- * The turns themselves. Clear printouts, with all the information you need printed out in a way that makes sense, and, more than that, it's attractively laid out.

- * The character-creation process - the first thing you do in the game, and it couldn't be easier. But at the same time, it's a different approach that's flexible enough to let you craft characters in whichever mould you see fit.

- * It's continually evolving, with improvements appearing every now and again, and pretty soon there'll be positions to suit most styles of play. Judging by the constant evolution of its stable-mate DungeonWorld, Destiny is set to go on evolving for as long as it's running. For instance, during the play-test, as a result of moans about PCs having precious little to do whilst in space, other than build up their stats, an array of other possible activities were introduced, giving PCs the chance to, amongst other things - Cook, Compose Poems, Sing, Dabble in Chemistry and try their hand at computer engineering. Along with this, two more alien races were introduced for PCs as well. For most of these changes, the credit has to go to the willingness of the GMs to listen to what the players are saying, and alter things if they see the need. Not every player suggestion that crops up is implemented, but if this is the case the reasons

are usually given.

- * The pricing structure - real-world consideration this, but I suspect it's the deciding factor for many gamers. Towards the end of the play-test it was announced that whilst in space, characters crewing a ship would be charged as 'Sub-Characters' (since, it has to be said, they're not running around interfering with the game-world, as such) at a bargain-tastic 10p a turn (making your average 'in space' turn, with all four of your characters crewing the ship, cost all of £1.90!), and once you land, the ship becomes a 'Sub-Character', and all it costs you to have your four characters running amok on some planet is (if my calculations are right!) £3.10

What I didn't like about the game

- * The length of time it takes to get anywhere/do anything. Although it has its benefits (see above) it can be downright frustrating at the same time. But again, this frustration would turn instantly to immense gratification once you reached your destination/achieved your goal.

- * The amount of orders that have to be spent 'House-Keeping'. Characters need to be told to feed themselves and sleep, and there are no options for 'Standing Orders' so out of a possible 15 orders, you're down to 13, in effect. Your ship also deteriorates every turn you're in space - so it needs a service every now and again. Fair enough, but it does put a crimp in your dreams of just heading out into the blackness, when you realise that your ship's systems are falling apart, and the last service station you know of is three turns back in the direction you came from. Of course, you can, if you've got sufficiently qualified crew, get the crew to tinker with the ship's gubbins - but have you any crew sufficiently qualified?

- * The fact that the ships are dealt with as 'characters'. On the face of it, it's a good enough way to handle ships, and shouldn't pose any problems. But what if you want to hi-jack/steal someone else's ship? Short of some creative role-play, it just isn't possible, because a ship's owner is the only person who can order it to take-off, move etc. Just a small gripe, but the fact that you can't have another player take control of your ship, even if you want them to, is a slight disappointment.

- * I often found myself wondering, with all the activity on the mailing list, just how a postal-only player would cope. Without access to the list there is little chance for any kind of roleplaying at all, but I guess that anyone playing this kind of game isn't in it for the roleplaying possibilities. And of course, now that the first stage of the play-test is over, and the game's gone to commercial release, the 'Player Input' aspect is cut down a great deal, but all the same ...

But wait, there's more to come!

There are, as I mentioned, plenty of forthcoming attractions in the Destiny Universe. Here's a quick run-down of some of what's still to come: Single-person star-ships - hopefully these'll allow stupendously huge space-battles. New trade options - more goods, more trading posts, including smuggler and pirate outposts! Illegal activities! Like to live dangerously? Just the opportunity you need! Power Groups - to provide intrigue, diplomacy and competition all over the galaxy. Like to start a bit of conspiracy? Look no further. More items - upgrades for ships, stuff for your characters to have implanted or just lug around. And probably the most highly anticipated positions of all - the chance to run your own colonies!

The verdict

In closing, I'd just like to say that I enjoyed the play-test immensely. The fact that the GMs listened to what the players were saying and alterations were made accordingly gives a good impression, and shows how keen Madhouse are to deliver a quality product. It's testament to the fevered imaginations of the good folk within the Madhouse that this is one (deep breath!) "Open Ended Pulp Space Opera" that delivers a great atmosphere, a sense of grandeur and gratifying play.

If you're looking for a character-led adventure in space, you'd be right at home with this game! And could someone please tell me what the hell my Intelligent Fluffy Dice were supposed to do?

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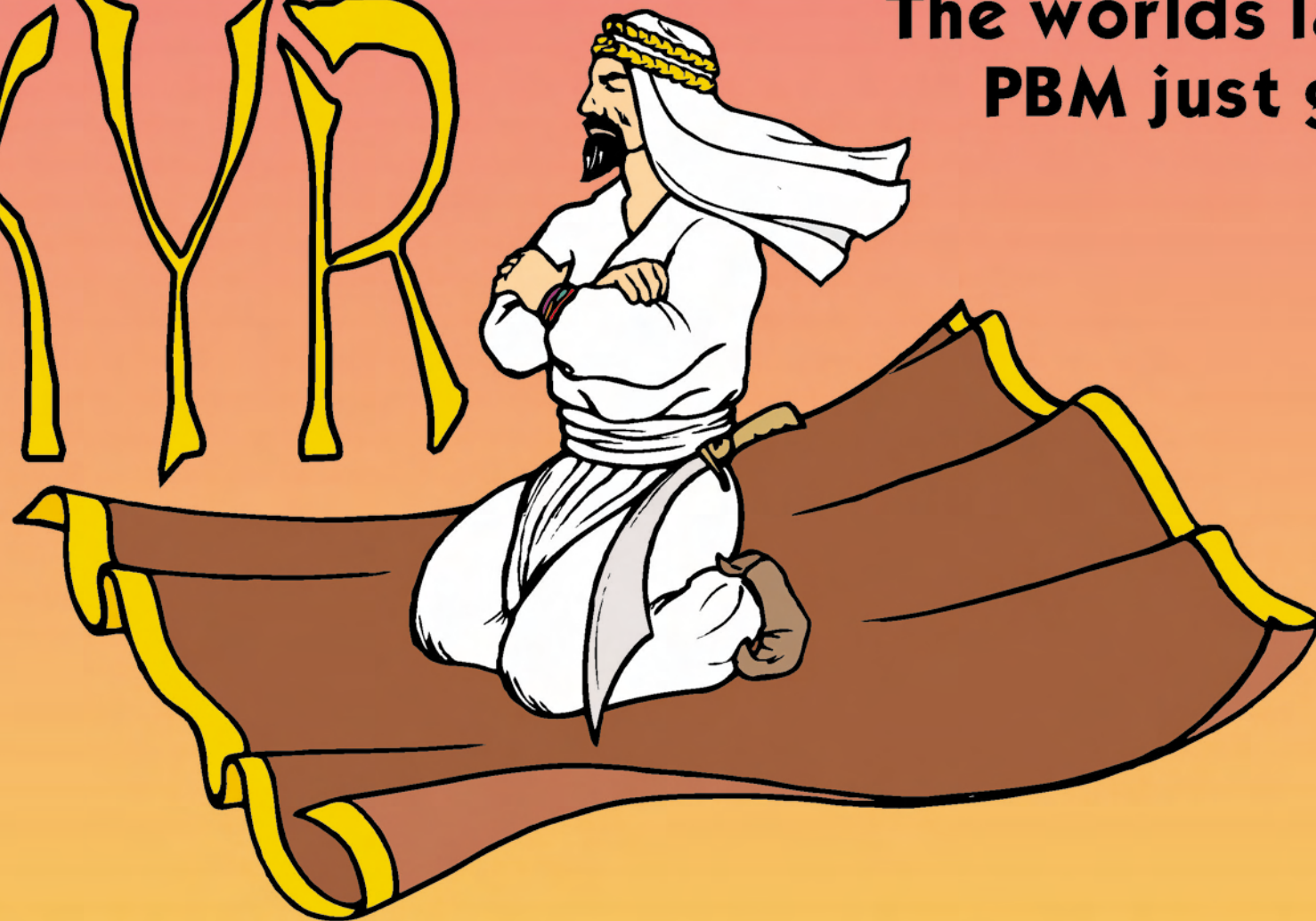
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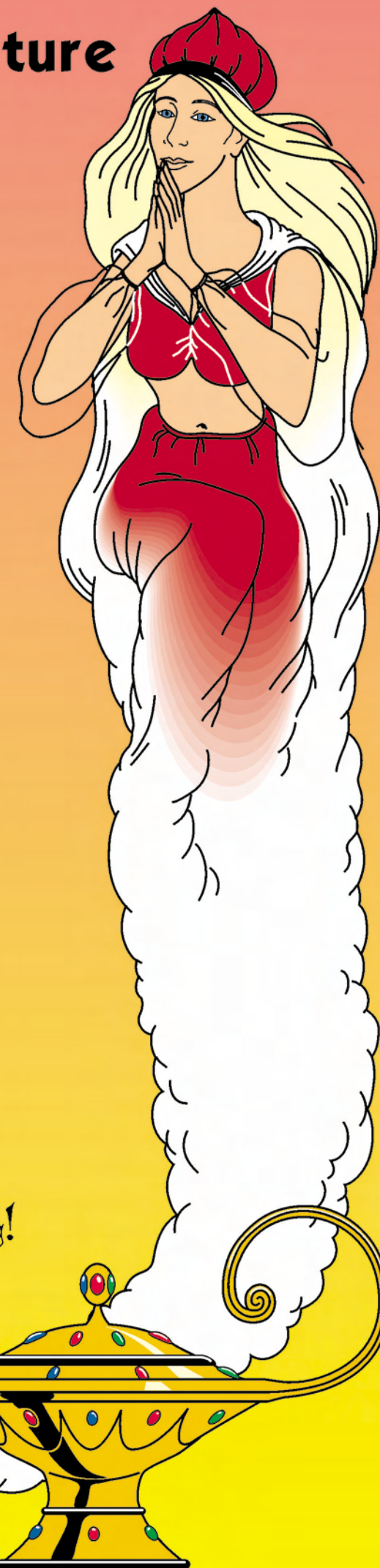
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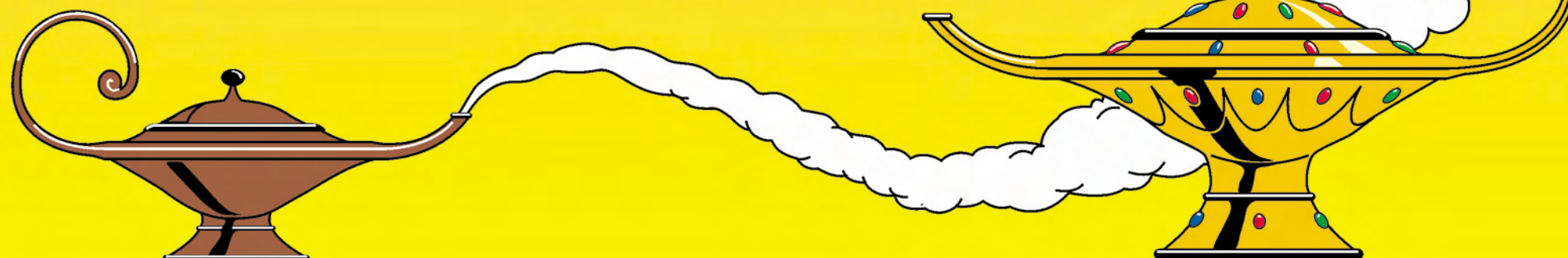
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Asheron's Call

WAYNE is enthralled by this challenging, multi-faceted, online RPG ...

I HAD ALWAYS been a fan of hand-moderated sword and sorcery PBMs like Saturnalia, as well as tactical and strategy computer/mixed moderated games like Quest and Crack of Doom, but what I saw in Asheron's Call eclipsed them all. Surprisingly enough, it wasn't the differences between PBM and **Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty** (ACDM) that appealed to me, it was the similarities - they made me feel right at home from the start ...

Character creation

ACDM is a single-character sword and sorcery RPG, in which you create a fantasy character in a similar vein to most fantasy PBMs. All you have to do is pick a race, gender, appearance and then allocate points to Strength, Endurance, Coordination, Quickness, Focus and Self. The latter two are similar to wisdom and intellect in most table-top RPGs and determine a character's magical ability. You can put as many or as few points in any attribute you like, just like most PBMs.

These main attributes affect your secondary attributes, which determine your character class. For example, Strength and Coordination influence your combat skills, while Focus and Self influence your magic skills. You get points to spend on these secondary skills (which you can specialize in, train or leave untrained - the specialised skills being more effective and more costly).

Creating a character is an art-form in itself and I have deliberately left things a bit vague because there is much debate on what characters are most useful in the game or most enjoyable to play. In reality, there are four types of character you can play - a fighter, a magic user, an archer or a hybrid of any combination of the three aforementioned characters. But there are hundreds of sub groups within these basic three templates and the choices are almost unlimited. Some people aim to create an 'uber' template - characters which can do most things and become very powerful in the quickest amount of time - but on the other hand some people (like me) like to create a 'gimp' character that has certain weaknesses, making it more interesting and challenging to play.

Initially, if you don't want to waste time creating a thought-out character, there are in-game templates that you can select, such as Bow Hunter and Swashbuckler. These create a character instantaneously, so you can get involved in the game straight away. That said, if you are looking for some good templates that do not come with the game, follow some of the links given below for some really good ideas and character classes. It must be said that you can also play character classes such as Cooks, Alchemists, Fletchers and Tinkers (people that apply magic abilities to weapons/amour/clothes and items), but without having these people supported by a Warrior/Archer/Mage of some sort they are somewhat unviable to play.

ACDM is played based on eight worlds (eight different computer servers), each of which is a duplicate of the others. You can create up to five characters per world - that means that you have *forty* actual characters spread over eight worlds. You should note that the world/server on which you create your character will be the place where your character will live for ever - you cannot move your character from one world/server to the other. And whatever you do, *do not* start your first-ever character on the Darktide world - more on this later ...

The game world

Again like most PBMs, the game worlds have a storyline running through them which you can investigate at your leisure or leave well alone. In addition, quests abound, dungeons await, and out in the wilds many a



monster lurks in its territory to slay you. Some quests are linked to the ongoing storyline, whereas others will grant you magical artefacts or furniture for your home. Yes, that's right. In ACDM, you can buy your own home or rent a flat and decorate it how you see fit - but some furniture is only available by completing certain quests. A home gives you a place to store your equipment and is the base of operations for your character.

In common with most PBMs, how you play ACDM is up to you: there is no one right way. Some people live for quests, while others just sit and chat in town; some trade artefacts they have found while adventuring, while others run solo through areas populated with monsters to test out their combat skills. Some people really get into roleplaying their characters and spend hours doing just that. Others explore the wild lands for new challenges, whilst some turn their hand to creating Monarchies....

Monarchies - comrades in arms

Although you can play ACDM without ever interacting with anyone, you can also talk and interact with many of the thousands of players online. If you do, you will probably find some people that you get on with - who may be based anywhere in the world in real life - and that you may want to adventure with on a regular basis. If that is the case, you can swear to them and they will become your patron, while you become their vassal. If your patron has a patron - who also has a patron and so on - your monarch is the person at the top of the 'chain' who does not have a patron. A patron can have up to 12 vassals and each vassal can himself become a patron and have 12 vassals - this way monarchies of thousands of people are formed. The monarchy I am in, Legends, has about 1,500 vassals coming down from our monarch, Altec, as both patrons/vassals.

Monarchies come in all shapes and sizes to suit all tastes:
Legends: A large and helpful clan, with high standards of chivalry set by the monarch who expects all his vassals to do likewise. Run by Altec.
EpiK: Another large monarchy who live honourably with a no-griefing policy (griefing = play that deliberately upsets other players). Run by Hellhawk.
Hisba The Great: A monarchy that concentrates on Experience Points

(XPs). It runs unattended characters whose actions are pre-determined by a computer script called a macro while their owners sleep, go to work or do anything except play the game, which slows the game down but gets them millions of XPs per day. Run by Hisba.

So what are the benefits of being a patron/vassal? Well, every time your vassals go online (especially if they kill monsters) they earn you XPs. As in most RPGs, XPs allow you to progress in levels and develop your skills. As a patron, you are credited with these points when you log in and they depend upon your leadership skill and the loyalty skill of your vassals. In addition, if your character dies and you can't get your body back - more on this later - your patron and members of your monarchy should be able to help you retrieve it. It is often common practice for patrons to reward their vassals by giving them decent equipment and other useful items they have found on their journeys. Needless to say, most of your XPs will be earned by yourself, but out of the 1.5 billion XPs I have accrued, 200 million have come from my vassals, making my progression to level 93 much smoother.

A monarchy can also be helpful if you become a Player Killer. In seven of the worlds you automatically start off as a Non-Player Killer (NPK) and this means that no player can kill you and vice versa. That said, if you do certain quests, you can turn PK and this gives you the opportunity to try kill other characters who have done the same quest and are now PKs. PK'ing, as it is called, is supposed to be fun, but unfortunately due to cheating, big egos and 'ganging' - getting a bunch of PKs to kill one individual PK - PK'ing has acquired a bad reputation.

This brings me back to Darktide: this is a world where everyone starts off as a PK from level 1 and is a terrible place to start your ACDM career. If you start off here I guarantee you that you will be constantly killed as this is the place where the strong rule over the weak, where egos and cheating are at their worst. You have been warned.

PK'ing also links me nicely to death. When you die, various items picked at random are left on your body. You also lose 5% of your skills (per number of times you die, up to a maximum of 40%). You get them back with the new experience you pick up by killing monsters. Remember, though: dying twice on the trot will mean that all of your skills will be functioning at 10% less than they normally would, so certain spells may not be castable and certain armour non-wearable. You have a certain amount of time to get back to your body and your dropped goods, otherwise your body decays and they are left there for all and sundry to pick up. If you are killed as a PK, the person who killed you gets the option to loot your body, and then anyone else can come and loot it, so you may never see some of your items ever again. In both cases, Monarchies can help you get your body back by sending out more powerful players with you to help you kill the monster/PK who may still be hovering over your body.

Another advantage of monarchies is that they can attempt big quests that are not possible to do solo. Some quests need a range of mixed-level people - say one group of level 30-50 and another group of 60-80 - and both groups have to go to different dungeons and solve different problems, before meeting up again for the final thrust to the end of the dungeon and the challenge that contains.

Advantages

So what made me think ACDM was so good? There are many answers: *Immediacy*: ACDM is available almost all the time. You can play any time you like and obtain immediate results. There is always something to do.

Graphics: ACDM has fluid, clear, detailed and colourful computer graphics.

Sounds: The howls of monsters, the dripping of water and the wind through caverns is very eerie, especially with the lights down low and the headphones on.

Communication: You can communicate with players you know instantaneously, and use third party hardware to speak to people over the internet as you play.

Strategy and tactics: ACDM can be played on a solo or team basis. You can watch your tactics fall apart in real time as you attempt to reach your goal, too!

Upgrades: Turbine upgrade the game monthly, free of charge, and add new content including monsters, quests, plot-lines and regions.

Cost: My own outlay to play with 24hour internet access is never more than £22 per month.

Third party software: There are a lot of unofficial 'plug-ins' that can make your gaming experience easier and more enjoyable.

ACDM: the downside

I am a committed ACDM fan, but I can also see its negative aspects. One problem is 'Lag', where the internet traffic slows down and you lose your connection. It means that if you are fighting a group of monsters, your character just stands there, allowing the creatures to hit it. Lag disconnections don't happen as much as they used to but they still occur and are a real pain.

The biggest problem, in my opinion, are certain types of player. As in real life, you can't get along with everyone and there are bound to be people who really annoy you, like:

The Griefer: There you are killing a bunch of monsters and this person's character gets behind them; blows from behind do more damage and make for an easier kill; the Griefer then steals all your XP and loots all your treasure. Griefers live to wind you up - it's best to run off and leave them to their own devices.

The Cultural Bigot: ACDM is a global game and people from all walks of life and culture play it, so tolerance is the key when communicating. The Cultural Bigots will make offensive remarks about race/religion/creed/colour with no regret whatsoever. Solution: use the Squelch option and you'll never hear from them again.

The Spammer: Seeing *SELLING A +9 FIRE SWORD FOR 50K OR NEAREST BEST OFFER!!!!* scroll up your screen 100 times a minute is another pain. Solution: use the Squelch command again.

Furthermore, like a lot of games, ACDM can become repetitive, as it is, put in its simplest terms, a 'Kill the Monsters' game. It's up to you to find the right mix of hunting/trading/questing etc so you don't get bored. If you don't meet someone who is more experienced than you in the game, it can become boring quickly, especially if you don't know what to do or how to do it.

The worst thing about this game, though, is that it is thoroughly addictive. It's so time consuming, it eats away at your life. I have to say that I have had real-life falling outs with friends, relations and loved-ones over this game ('Yes I'd love to go out with you now, but one of my vassals is in trouble and I've just gotta help him out, I owe it to him: he is my vassal after all...' Bang - sound of front door slamming...).

I'll close on that note by saying that if you fancy something different, give ACDM a try. It will definitely keep you entertained and enthralled for many an hour. That said, you can't really plan and scheme in the long term, you can't *really* mislead people and you can't command vast armies and conquer continents and ruin nations. Mmm, where did I put that old Crack of Doom start-up form? - I have some very wicked ideas taking shape....

Getting started in the game

Buy *Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty* and not *Asheron's Call* (the original game) or *Asheron's Call 2: Fallen Kings*. You should be able to pick it up for around £10 - £20. New purchases should come with one free months gameplay.

You need a Hotmail address and a Microsoft Passport to play - both are free of charge: www.hotmail.com - and a credit card for your payments to Microsoft's Gaming Zone. Playing costs about £7 per month. Some hackers try to hack ACDM accounts because certain artefacts can be sold on Ebay for real cash. Never give your password to anyone and make sure you install a good firewall program such as Zone Alarm - it's free! www.zonelabs.com

Monarchies

Legends: <http://aclegends.com/>

EpiK: <http://www.epikac.net/indexa.html>

Official List of Top Ten Monarchies: <http://zone.msn.com/asheroncall/hall.asp/>

Resources

Turbine's ACDM intro page is good introduction:

<http://zone.msn.com/asheroncall/start.asp>

General Info: <http://www.thejackcat.com/AC/> - a good all round guide, with spoilers, great screenshots and lots of info,

AC Vault: <http://acvault.ign.com> - good for everything including templates.

The Zine Goes Ever On

JOHN HARRINGTON looks at the amateur 'zine hobby ...

SO, ISSUE 100, and I don't suppose I'll be the only one to start by congratulating the Flagship editorial team for a magnificent achievement. On milestone issues such as this it is traditional to look back and reflect on times gone by, but frankly 2002 has been a terrible year for the zine based hobby and so I am disinclined to review a year in which the number of new zines starting up has been lower than the number of hobby members who have died. In one zine alone (**The Abyssinian Prince**) there were three issues in succession in which the editor had to announce the death of subscribers, two of whom succumbed to cancer and one to a road accident. It's a bit odd to feel a sense of loss at the death of someone you have never met but such is the sense of community we feel in a tight knit community such as the PBM fraternity, where friendships last for a surprisingly long time considering that many games require back-stabbing and double-dealing.

Anyway, you don't read this column to read my cod-philosophical ramblings, let's talk about zines. By the time you read this the new issue of **Mission From God** should be out, and if it isn't then I'll be the one to blame as I am the editor. **Mission From God** is the directory of UK-based zines - kind of like an expanded Galactic View where you don't require a magnifying glass to read the contents. It provides details of every UK-based zine currently publishing plus many overseas zines too. Details include price, frequency, games being run, games being offered plus a textual review of the zine itself. You can buy a copy for £1 from me (John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3UW) or, if you prefer, you can send 4 first class stamps instead and receive a selection of sample zines from the Zine Bank too.

As mentioned above, there have not been many new zines starting up this year. One relatively recent newcomer is **Jumpers for Goal Posts** from Gareth Beaty, 11 Sandown Close, Kirkham, near Preston, Lancs, PR24 2EE. The zine runs just the one game, which is a postal football simulation based on the *United* system. It is currently halfway through its first season and if the demand is there Gareth is looking to open up a second division next season. The game has a number of innovations on the basic *United* system, including tactical options such as playing for a draw, offside trap, flooding the midfield, long ball game and chasing the game, as well as off field elements such as club reputation, wages and even a Bosman ruling. Next season Gareth is considering further wrinkles such as referee personalities, and he is quite keen to elicit suggestions from the players themselves. It's often only in the early stages of a *United* campaign that players get to influence the style of the game as by season three it is often unfair to change the ground rules as it might affect the long term strategy of the managers, so get in quick. One of the best *United* players I know, Peter Stanton, recommends this league, which is good enough for me. As Ron Manager, who popularised the phrase 'jumpers for goal posts' might say, 'Marvellous. Isn't it?' Email GazBT@gbeaty.freemove.co.uk for more details.

Another of the hobby's bright new hopes is **The Tangerine Terror** from Oldham Athletic fan, Howard Bishop (43 Guinions Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7NT). I am particularly pleased that Howard has started his own zine because he was one of the people recruited to the hobby in a concerted effort to recruit new blood a couple of years ago; some of you may have been exposed to this campaign at the Flagship PBM convention when Alex Bardy, fresh from his victory in the 'Yakking For England' tournament, Allan Stagg and myself ran a stall promoting the zine-based hobby. Despite a lot of effort the recruitment campaign probably lured no more than 20 newcomers to the fold but experience shows that once in the hobby people normally stay for years, or even decades.

There are generally two ways for a new zine to make its way in the world: (i) run a popular game, such as *Diplomacy*,

United or *Railway Rivals*, to a level of efficiency greater than the old lags running such games or (ii) run some new games in order to stand out from the crowd. In the main

Howard has gone for the latter option; not many zines

run two-player war games for instance, as the time and space devoted to a complex two-player game is generally equal to that devoted to a multi-player game, but this has not stopped Howard from running *One Page Bulge*, a game I used to own back in the seventies (the game got its name from the fact that the map and the rules were on a single sheet of double-sided paper). Also coming out of left-

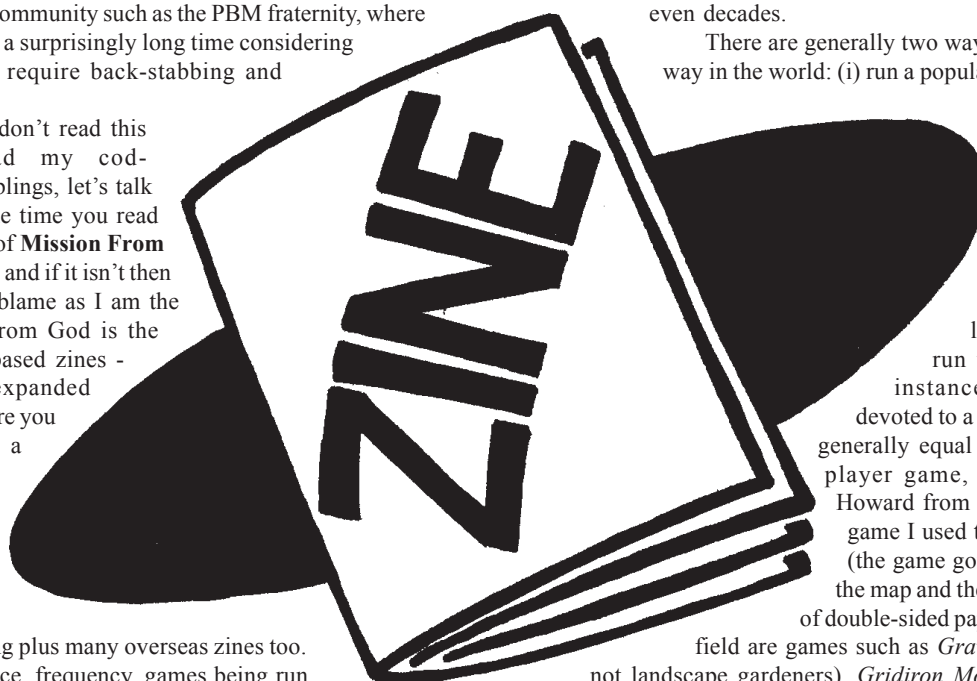
field are games such as *Gravel Kings* (about Speedway, not landscape gardeners), *Gridiron Morons*, *Cube Farm* (battling for the best desk locations in the office!), *Backpacks & Blisters* (yomping in the Lake District) and *Dauntless* (WWII air combat game). Howard also seems interested in a sport called baseball. Not content with supporting a bunch of no-hopers (Oldham) in the Football League he follows the Seattle Mariners in baseball - and more power to him, as there are more than enough ManUre and Yankees fans in the world in my opinion.

The combination of light-hearted chat and the unusual games means this is rapidly becoming one of my favourite zines. Email Howard (laties@globalnet.co.uk) for more details.

Finally, you still have time to vote in the **2002 Amateur Zine Poll**. You can vote for up to 10 zines (list them in order of preference) provided the zines are printed in the UK or edited by Britons, and they have published at least 4 issues this year. Running in parallel to this is the 2002 Web Site Poll, where you can vote for any web site that is involved in the amateur postal gaming hobby. Deadline for votes is midnight on December 31st and you can send the votes to me by post (see my address above) or email them to me at zinepoll@fbgames.co.uk. Further details are available on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ukpbm> and <http://www.fbgames.co.uk/words/wotsnew.htm>.

John Harrington

Fiendish Board Games - makers of games in the German style. *Breaking Away*, *Office Politics* and *Traffic Lights*. <http://www.fbgames.co.uk>



Boardgame Expansions

Starfarers of Catan & Lord of the Rings

PATRICK GLEESON reconsiders these very popular boardgames ...

Starfarers of Catan: 5-6 player expansion



THIS EXPANSION contains everything you need to include two additional players in The Starfarers of Catan, the exciting, fast moving, science fiction game. Here you'll find two mother ships, two sets of playing pieces, additional cards, two reusable game board overlays, and a new alien race ripe for encounter. Now you can play any one of the five or six Starfarers commissioned to explore the galaxy, build new colonies and expand commercial ties with various races of the Galactic Council. Accept the challenge! Careful diplomacy, clever trade, a firm stance against pirates, and the bold colonization of distant planetary systems will win you the support of humanity, and the other races of the galaxy and make you humanity's ambassador to the Galactic Council. Of course you can also use the new planetary systems

and the fifth race of aliens, the Travelers, in games of only three-four players. The shorter flight times will accelerate your exploration, add more action and increase the fun!

Having been a fan of the whole Settlers series, I wasn't going to pass this one up. Especially when I discovered that there were some aspects of the expansion that would work with less than five players! The game contains a mass of extra pieces, led by two more starships. If you are not familiar with the game, these starships are tall, have pointy ends and really are the business. Additionally you can attach a variety of things to them - guns, speed boosters, fame monitors - all of which make them appear even more impressive. The starships also serve a key game purpose, as they are used for random result generators. By shaking the starship a number of coloured balls are displayed in the fuel ejection area. Each player needs one of these and that's why there are two more in the expansion.

The clever designers at Kosmos have also allowed for more bases and planets by providing sticky backed overlays for the board, which can easily be peeled off and placed back in their original packaging. I wasn't sure this would work OK at first, but it is well designed and my fears were groundless. There are also some additional aliens to parley with (gain trade bases). These have some particularly useful technology that allows you to move at great speed across the universe and thereby make the game board somewhat smaller. The final good change to the rules is that whenever someone trades to gain a new game benefit everyone may do so. What this does is dramatically speed up the game so that the down time is reduced and the active time watching the board and other's turns is made productive. It can also be risky - in my last game, I upgraded some technology and this allowed another player to win by upgrading at the same time. Admittedly, he would probably have won anyway, but it was a point I missed in play.

Games with five or six players usually take disproportionately longer, but with this one rule change the game flows along very smoothly.

Congratulations to Kosmos on a fine expansion to a good game!

Lord of the Rings: Friends and Foes

Friends & Foes provides two completely new Scenario boards, Bree and Isengard, as well as 21 new Feature cards to expand your Lord of the Rings game. Find new friends to help you conquer the challenges ahead, including Tom Bombadil, Glorfindel, Treebeard, Strider and many more. In addition, this expansion introduces 30 dark Foes ready to bedevil your journey. Face the evil Spiders of Mirkwood, Orcs of the Red Eye, Cave-trolls, Wolf Riders and Barrow Wights - to name but a few of your new adversaries. Friends & Foes adds a whole new dimension to the gameplay, giving you more choices, but making your task no less difficult or perilous. This review covers only the Friends and Foes expansion and assumes you know about the main game. If you want a review of the Lord of the Rings main game, this was reviewed in issue ????

Friends and Foes is the first add-on to the Lord of the Rings boardgame. It was released late last year and is now widely available in



the shops. Given the hype about the film (which lived up to the hype in my opinion), surely this is an excellent time to cash on the Lords of the Rings? After several plays now, I can say that if you liked the first game, then this is Lord of the Rings+, with some significant additions, but if you bought the game as a family game and found it complex, then avoid the expansion as it adds more rules and provides stiffer opposition. I really enjoyed the original game, so the expansion is right up my street.

So, what do you get for your money? You get two more boards to play and these have the same high standard of graphics as the original. The boards are Bree and Isengard and they follow the same format of previous boards in that in order to complete them you have to proceed down a path and avoid the hazards that the game system throws at you. This makes the journey much more like the book. If this was all there was to the expansion though, you might feel that the game becomes harder just because of the additional boards. However, the designers have allowed you to skip two boards if specific conditions are met, thus

making the game potentially similar in length to the original game. The game is well packaged and fits well with the first game. You might think that it must do, but there have been game expansions in the past that did not gel well with their base.

The biggest change is the addition of Foes. These are depicted through a new deck of cards and are placed in front of the main board (the Foe line) when the company draws certain event tiles. In practice, this can work out to about one every alternate go, as you draw a Foe whenever the Activity tile is drawn as the first tile. You have to be careful with these because when eight are face up, the party is wiped out. Naturally there are several ways to kill these foes. For example, discarding all a person's shields kills the mountain trolls. You can also kill the leftmost Foe by forfeiting your go. In a four or five player game, this sacrifice may mean that you do not acquire sufficient life tokens by the end of the board and move closer to Sauron. On the other hand too many Foes will cause your destruction. Decisions, decisions. The effect of this rule is that every turn now a nasty thing happens to the party. In the earlier game, drawing an activity tile was a benefit as no other adverse effect was bound to take place.

The addition of two new locations means that there are two more places to add on the location track. The game includes two sticky labels that fit neatly in the right sequence. There's even a picture in the rules showing you how to place them.

Further changes come in the form of one-off game benefits that each hobbit has. For example, Merry's bravery allows him to instantly defeat all Foes from the Foe line that require life tokens. As with all these options, the decision is when to play them - too early and you fear that a later board will become impossible, too late and you may not make it to the later board. Also on the positive side there are more good guy cards to collect on some of the paths: there are extra Gandalf cards and you can win by killing all the Foes, which becomes a military victory. (In this case, for people who like to score their position, you get the number of points for your current position, 30 points for killing all the Foes and individual points for the number of shields you have collected, which now includes 1 per despatched Foe.

Overall, the game adds more options and another layer of difficulty. If you like a further challenge then Friends and Foes certainly provides it. In a recent game I played, the Foes overwhelmed our party in 20 minutes. We had some bad luck, but did not pay enough attention to the Foes. Yep, it's more difficult, but still enjoyable!

Coming Soon ...



is a wrestling play-by-mail (WPBM) game run by Russell Smith.

The game is once again accepting new players!!

To find out more, write to this address:

Russell Smith, Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL

E-mail: smith_russell@hotmail.com

Or visit the new and improved WOW website:

<http://www.theaftermaff.com/wow/index.html>

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DungeonWorld

Just a Role-Playing Game?

DAVE HARRIS takes an overview of the possibilities ...

WHEN I FIRST started playing PBM games, nearly 15 years ago, I was playing games like Gameplan, Crisis! and The Keys of Medohk. I think it's fair to say that pretty much places me in the strategy game camp. After a few years away from PBM, I returned a couple of years ago. Now I play Gameplan and **DungeonWorld**, and I'm also in the playtest of Destiny. 'Hang on a minute,' I hear you cry, 'DungeonWorld is the largest PBM roleplaying game ever, or so the adverts say.' And I'd have to agree with you, DungeonWorld is a roleplaying game. So why is a strategy gamer like me playing it? I can tell you I'm not the only stats-fan scratching his head and wondering why.

Well, I've had a think and I think I know the reason why... It's because although DungeonWorld is a roleplaying game, it's not just a roleplaying game. It can suck a strategy player in and before you know it, you are roleplaying with the best of them. A scary thought, I'm sure you agree.

Why do I think that? Well, I'll take you through the various position types that you can play in DungeonWorld and try to explain. DungeonWorld is set on the mythical world of Myriad, in a country called Bereny. You can always rely on something major happening here. Having just slain a demon princess who had twice tried to bring down the kingdom, Bereny is currently panicking as the sun has failed to rise. This, we can assume, is not a good thing...

The adventuring position

This is the core of the DungeonWorld game. You can have up to ten characters on each position, each of which getting 15 orders per turn. The actual list of orders in the rulebook is fairly limited, but by looking around, you'll find lots of things to interact with. These tend to have special orders associated with them that can only be found by investigation.

Characters can be enhanced by learning skills and buying equipment. Again the rulebook gives you a basic set of orders to allow you to do both, but many more are hidden within the game. Your characters can also join Guilds, some of which have restrictions on who they can recruit. These Guilds can be very active, although mainly on the many email lists. I, personally, am on around 50 different lists and it's not unusual to receive over 100 messages in a day. Mail interaction is also common, but understandably is at a much lower volume and misses out on a fair amount of content.

Steve Tierney, the moderator, is trying to redress the balance by, among other things, introducing new Guild rules that ensure that regular postal newsletters are sent out. He has also reintroduced the Madhouse Surgery newsletter, the first of which probably gave a lot of postal players a surprise, given quite how much player-written material was in it.

That is a fairly key aspect to the success of DungeonWorld. There are over 300 people on the main email list with maybe 50 of them being very active posters. That's quite a high proportion for an email list, most of which are usually dominated by 'lurkers'. These players clearly love the game and put a massive amount of effort into making the game enjoyable, not only for them, but for everyone else.

Well, so far, so RolePlay. But even at this level, you do get a fair amount of strategy. If you are forming your own party, you want to make sure you have a good mix of characters. As they progress, you have limited resources of gold: how do you spend it? Do you have your characters specialise in particular skills, or do you make them generalists? Do you stay in the eponymous dungeons, wander Overland or maybe even visit a dungeon inhabited by Player-Character monsters?

Monster positions

Yes, that's right. In an inspired move by Madhouse, you can run your own monster position. These were probably the first 'mainstream' position available in DungeonWorld for the stats-fans. Initially, they were only available for one of six evil races, but recently six good races were added. These are all set underground, in special monster position dungeons.

You start with a leader, a couple of grunts and a research type character. Your leader can hire new minions of various types, including mercenaries, fighters, more grunts, engineers and so on. The grunts provide both a basic defence force and, more importantly, a source of income through mining. The research character is quite ingenious. It means that only a small fraction of the potential orders (recruit, build, train etc) are available at the start of the game, and as time goes by and you research more, new ones are revealed. This allows the moderator to drop in new orders at anytime and have them appear on all appropriate player reports, but not on those who aren't 'ready' for them yet.

Oh, by the way, did I mention the tunnel worms? You are underground, remember. These worms allow you to create new tunnels and explore. This, then, is a classic limited resource game. Do you sit tight, bide your time and build an impregnable fortress or do you go for it, put all of your cash into warriors and attack? Pity the poor guy who has built up his mining force, only for someone to send in a force of tunnel worms and mercenary ogres to break into his lair and wipe him out. But then, hiring ogres isn't cheap and they want wages too...

Positions in DungeonWorld are completely integrated, though. After around ten or more turns, each player dungeon is given an entrance from the Overland. Wandering Player Characters can now enter the dungeon and do battle with the monsters below. Given that a PC is much stronger than virtually all of the monster minions, either guile or sheer force of numbers is required to survive.

Currently, one of the largest Guilds is mounting a concerted attack on a player dungeon and at least one monster position has fallen to them already. Of course, the reverse can happen too. One player-run monster position invaded one of the Non-Player-Character dungeons and claimed it for their own. They were eventually driven off (for now), but only at great cost. You can easily avoid player-player combat, but there is ample opportunity for it and it can be great fun too.

The main downside of the monster position is that they can easily reach a huge size. Even with each minion only costing 10p, some of the larger positions run into hundreds of minions.

Estate positions

Monster positions aren't for everyone, though. Many prefer a slower pace, with a chance to do more than just merely mine to earn cash. This is where the estates come in. Not only do they have a completely different flavour to them but also as the sub-characters such as farmers are all free, they are great value for money. A basic estate consists of a Lord and a Castle along with the associated sub-characters. This comes in at

DungeonWorld at a glance

PBM/PBeM adventure game from Madhouse. Startup plus 2 turns is £5, and subsequent turns are from £2:

www.madcentral.com

What's more, once you've got some cash behind you, your Trader



I still consider myself to be a strategy gamer, it's just now I do some roleplaying too. I could give it up any time I want, honest!

Age of Steam

Railroads across the Mid-West

PEVANS with details of a brand new boardgame ...

AGE OF STEAM is the latest development by designer Martin Wallace of the game system that started with Lancashire Railways and New England Railways (both published by Winsome Games) and progressed through Volldampf (from Kosmos). At heart, the idea is to build railway lines to transport goods between cities and thus gain income. This costs money, which you have to raise from shares until your company becomes profitable. Those of you who are familiar with the earlier games will see the similarities, but this game is definitely more sophisticated.

The game comes in a solid, chunky box that's a bit bigger than A4 and a couple of inches deep - it has a good heft to it, too. Inside are lots of components, well up to German standards (not surprising when the game was manufactured in Germany). The full colour, mounted board shows a section of the American Mid-West, centred roughly on Chicago. Features on the board are the major cities, smaller towns, rivers and mountains, with a hexagonal grid superimposed. Then we have lots of thick cardboard hexagonal tiles. These show sections of railway track: mostly a simple section that comes in on one side and exits from another. However, there are some tiles with tracks crossing each other, some showing towns with railway lines coming in and out and some extra cities. There is a set of round wooden counters for each player (six colours), lots of plastic 'coins' and wooden cubes to represent goods. Plus half a dozen dice, a turn marker pawn and two card displays showing various tracks. And a set of rules, of course. You get plenty for your money. The only thing that lets the game down is an unfortunate printing error on the board. This is easily remedied with a sticker provided with the game.

As a player, you are running a railway company. You start with \$10 (raised by selling shares) and a '1 link' locomotive (it can connect two cities). The rest is up to you! The game is played over a set number of turns: more if fewer people are playing. At the end, a player's score will be the income s/he's built up, less the number of shares issued, plus a point for every three lengths of track on the board owned by the company. Most points wins - and it's often pretty close. It is also possible to go bankrupt and crash out of the game.

Each turn starts with the players deciding whether to issue more shares. Each gains you \$5 cash, but adds to your costs each turn and reduces your score at the end. However, in the first turns you will have to issue shares or you simply won't be able to operate. One of the key decisions is how many to take: a bit of budgeting is needed, but you also have to allow a fudge factor for what other players may get up to during the turn. The first opportunity to spend money comes by bidding for the order of play this turn. The options are either to raise the bid or to drop out and take the lowest position remaining. Depending on what you bid

and where you end up, you may have to pay all (first and second), half or none of your bid.

However, the next thing players do is select which special action they want this turn. Two of these give a player 'First Move' and 'First Build'. So, if you really want to make sure you get the first build, you not only have to bid and pay for first place, you then have to choose 'First Build'. There are a total of seven actions, so there is always a choice available. Apart from the two already mentioned, the others are 'Engineer', which allows the player to build one more piece of track this turn. 'Locomotive' upgrades the player's locomotive by 1, increasing its range. 'Urbanization' allows the player to put one of the extra cities on the board, in place of a town. 'Production' allows two extra goods cubes to be added to the table, from where they may eventually appear on the board. 'Turn Order' allows the player to make one Pass in next turn's bidding for the order of play. This is very useful: it's unlikely to get you first place, but will usually move you to second.

Once everybody's picked their action, it's time to build track. Everybody can place (or upgrade) up to three tiles on the board.

I won't go into detail, but there are several

points to note. First, you can start a line from any city on the board. No 'extending existing track', no 'home base'. Second, tracks can only meet at towns and cities. Third, every track laid or replaced costs at least \$2 - more for crossing rivers, building through mountains and towns and upgrading. Then everybody gets two opportunities to move goods. These move from their starting city and stop in the first city of the same colour as the good that they come to. Each link they pass over increases the owner's income by 1, but the player moving the good can only move it as many links as his locomotive allows him/her to. However, players can forego a move to upgrade their locomotive by 1. Once gained, income remains for the rest of the game and is the major source of victory points. So moving goods is the heart of the game.

Because all the goods are visible, including those that will appear on the board later, players have the opportunity to plan networks that will continue to pay off as they grow. The problem is that the other players will almost certainly get in the way! Hence you have to remain flexible and take opportunities where you can. After building, players



Age of Steam at a glance

Age of Steam is a boardgame for 3-6 players, aged 13+, and takes 2-3 hours to play. Designed by Martin Wallace, it is published by Warfrog (under licence from Winsome Games) and is readily available in games shops at around £28. A longer version of this review is on Pevans' website at www.pevans.co.uk/Reviews/AgeofSteam.html

collect their income and pay their expenses: one for each share they've issued and one for each link their locomotive can travel. If you can't cover your expenses, your income drops by the amount you can't pay. Drop below zero and your company goes bankrupt. You're out!

This underlines the importance of budgeting: at the start of the turn you look ahead to these expenses, how much you're going to spend building track and how much you want available to bid for turn order. If you can run your company on the edge, you have an advantage. But an unexpected expense can ruin you. Finally, new goods are placed on the board. One die is rolled for each player in the game. For each number rolled, one good is placed on the city of that number from the display for that city. The die-rolling element means that, while you can see what goods will appear in which cities, you can't predict when. It could be early on, it could be never. And this adds an element of chance to your strategy.

I feel that I've gone on at some length about the rules of this game, but you have to understand these to see the wealth of tactical opportunities the game provides. In theory, you have almost perfect knowledge at the start of the game and could set up an appropriate strategy from turn one (helped by knowing that the game will last a set number of turns). However, the actions of the other players add chaos to the system and the die-rolling for fresh goods brings further unpredictability. So my view is that this is a tactical game. Each new link of track should allow another good to be moved, so that it pays for itself. This is particularly true at the beginning of the game, when money is very tight. Once you're in profit, you can afford to build extra tracks - remember: track is worth victory points, money isn't. This also brings up the point that you need patience. At the start of the game, you will have to issue more shares to bring in sufficient cash to run the company. This is painful, but it's important to get it right: too many shares and you're incurring extra expense for no reason. Too few and you're in



*Photograph of the Prototype board for Age of Steam.
Please note that the final version is of much higher quality.*

trouble (though losing the odd point of income is something you can come back from). Once you're in profit, it's plain (-ish) sailing. But you have to keep pushing and keep ahead of your opponents - running out of goods to move is bad news.

Overall, this is a terrific game. The development through the various titles has added layers of sophistication to the original game system of Lancashire Railways. The end result is something special: I recommend it highly.

Tartarus - Free Eternal Internet War

<http://www.faraway.co.uk/>

Is yours the superior intellect?

Our global wargame has been running for over three years, and hundreds of Titan Clans fight amid the bio-mass fields. Prove your grasp of strategy and tactics as you plan your unit design and army composition. Then roll your Titans forward to the blood and carnage of combat.

The game is aimed at war and strategy gamers. Two battle spheres are in play, one runs a turn every day, and the other 3 turns a week. Play is free for as long as you like. The wars are eternal, a never ending cycle of conflict and battles, from small to huge sphere spanning conflicts. Your designs and use of terrain will dictate your success or failure.

We have a global community of players, a friendly bunch of war mongers who will warmly greet you and then beat you to a pulp in the field of battle. Prove you have what it takes, prove you are a great commander and join the War Eternal. Everything you need is on the website, all ages are welcome, and you need a computer to play.



Extract from the Revelatiad, a real war between the clans...

"Who was it that started the feud? Was it the clans from the South; the Genesis alliance. They first sparked the enmity between the Hydrans and Revelation, when they were in great peril of suffering defeat and asked for help from the Hydrans. To their help came the six heads of the Hydra, and together they fought the allies of Revelation, from Stomper Ridge to shiny lake Revelation, and all that opposed them fell before them, until the citizens at lake Revelation itself had to flee from the might of the Titans. It was in that war that the empire of the DreemeTygyr fell and the white-armed lady Cassandra was taken by the Hydran lords as a price."

Read the rest at:

http://www.faraway.co.uk/tartarus/gamestories/2002_02_25_revelatiad/book1.html



Chaos rules the battle sphere. Elder clans tearing at each other, Kings rise and fall, and youngsters make war, one upon the other.

It's Free

Women in Roleplaying

LISA FORDHAM offers memories and ideas ...

I REMEMBER the first time I went to a gaming convention. I was very eager, ready to charge to the rescue of threatened villagers or to bravely confront my evil nemesis. I entered the convention hall fully anticipating a momentous occasion. What hit me immediately was that I was a definite minority. Women were not present in large numbers, and I remember feeling slightly uncomfortable.

It has gotten better over the years, but I would still say that for every woman involved in gaming you have at least five men, probably more. It's prevalent throughout the industry: play-by-mail, online games and especially roleplaying. Most of the books sold are marketed towards the male. With rare exceptions, the modules and scenarios offered are very male-oriented. Within most texts and modules you see scantily clad, buxom women leering back at you. If they happen to show someone in a heroic pose saving someone, that hero is most definitely male. Very few games show otherwise.

What can we as women expect to encounter at roleplaying sessions and conventions? What follows are a few of my personal experiences in over 20 years of role playing. I am only including the most common problems I have encountered. It may be that things are better in other forms of gaming, but my personal and secondary (via my play-by-mail gaming partner) suggests otherwise.

Some common experiences

The one issue that stands out most obviously is the tendency for women (of course not all, or I wouldn't be a guide for this topic) to be overshadowed by their male counterparts. I have seen intelligent, very good roleplayers clamp down because of the loud 'discussions' taking place. I will admit that part of this is our own fault. I have put a lot of thought into why this happens.

Many of the women I have met who join games initially do so because another friend (usually male) has talked them into at least giving it a try. So, the gamers already present are already expecting someone who is not really as excited about what is going on as they are. Coming into a new situation where many of the participants already have preconceived notions about you can be daunting. This is where many potential roleplayers lose their way. They are never even given a chance.

I have also noticed that most of the GMs (DMs or storytellers) I associate with are male. And, they are really unsure how to deal with what they term 'female issues'. So therefore the female NPCs come in the same basic models.

- * Helda - The hulking brutish female guard who hates all men
- * Sybill - The innkeeper's daughter who giggles a lot, may be in need of rescue and acts like she hasn't got one brain cell active.
- * Daphne - A general town occupant, mother or caretaker of an establishment. Your typical maternal figure.

Although it would be no stretch for the GM to come up with definite quirks and personalities for the male NPCs the female tend to be pretty stereotyped. I am not just huffing and puffing. I have seen many GMs in action and they all seem to do that. I don't know why it is so hard to ascribe basic characteristics to any character, regardless of gender.

Speaking of gender, I have also noticed that sometimes GMs have problems with cross gender play. When a female plays a male character or vice versa those characters are not usually given the proper amount of respect. I am really not sure why this happens. But part of the problem is that men playing women tend to stereotype a 'female attitude', and that leads to aggressive behavior by the other 'males' in the party. The men tend to take this disrespect for granted as if it's expected. However, women playing men also get the same treatment. But they don't take it with the same disregard. That is when tensions start to build.

What do I mean by disrespect? A female character is more likely to get harassed. I have even had my female character raped, but that is not a common occurrence. It was very upsetting. Not so much that it happened, but the casual way it was regarded as it was discussed. When a male character is accosted by a female character, that woman is displayed as desperately wanting attention. I know this is supposed to be fantasy, but the examples of women are so stereotypical and they are easily exploited and manipulated.

Now, part of the problem, is that it's so prevalent that even some women accept that callous attitude. I find that very disheartening, but that can be some of what lies at the heart of the matter. We need to educate ourselves on what is appropriate and what isn't, learning to express our feelings both in and out of character.

What can we do?

* Learn to speak up! - I cannot tell you how many times I have allowed myself to remain silent because I was intimidated by the much louder cohorts at the table. It doesn't happen as often, but it's still a learned response. We have just as much right to object when something happens, or to have our characters raise hell in certain situations. It's all about breaking through the mental and social barriers.

* Become a more active group member - I have always thought that one of the best ways for everyone to have a say in the way things are run is to have a rotating GM. This way, everyone gets to be 'GOD' and different elements will be seen throughout. This means that having more women as GMs might have us more aware of sexist terminology, treatment, and ideals. This will only work with practice and a willingness to take chances.

* Be considerate - If you expect others to understand your point of view, you have to offer the same. You can't very well insist on equal treatment and then not give the same in return. Treat the other players the way you want to be treated. That is not to say that you can't be assertive, just don't trample over others to be heard.

The point of all games is surely to have fun. But GMs and writers as well as fellow players should remember that that means everyone. It takes an effort to be open to others, but if we want to be heard we also have to be willing to listen.



Yahoo! Online Gaming

MATT MINGUS asks: can Yahoo! succeed where so many have failed?

Yahoo! (<http://www.yahoo.com>), one of the largest online companies in the world, is currently attempting something that no other gaming company has ever succeeded doing: renting out PC games through the internet. That's right. This past October, Yahoo! entered the gaming franchise with its brand new games-on-demand program.

But can a company like Yahoo! become the Blockbuster of gaming? You decide. Here's how to do it:

1 - First off, you have to have a broadband/cable/DSL line. T3 and T1 lines were work also. See, without a fast connection, the games would be reasonably slow, so Yahoo! won't let you sign up without a quick connection. Yahoo! will check for your connection speed, so don't try tricking them! Other requirements include: Windows 98/2000/Me/XP operating system and Direct X 8.0 or above.

2 - Visit Yahoo!'s gaming merchandise at ...

<http://gamesondemand.yahoo.com>. If you don't have one already, sign up for a Yahoo! account. This is the only free part of renting these games. You must have an account to download the free software for 'Games On Demand' (Yahoo!'s game-renting software). It's a pretty fast download with DSL.

3 - Once you've accomplished the previous two steps, you will be given access to (surprisingly) quite a few decent games you can rent. There are currently over fifty games to choose from including: Civilization III, ST: Voyager - Elite Force, Grand Theft Auto II, Hitman, Age of Wonders, and Monopoly Tycoon (for the kids). Yahoo! has also split up all its games into nice little categories like action, adventure, arcade/family, RPGs, sims, sports, and strategy. Unfortunately, each of the games will force you to accept each one's different requirements (the normal ones it would have for your PC).

4 - Once you've paid the rental (via a secure transfer with PayPal or your credit card), your account is activated and you may begin downloading games!

Yahoo! has great security when it comes to email and personal accounts. It has the same great security for their gaming system. Its security includes something called a 'cache download' which has to be downloaded every single time you want to play your rented game. This could get incredibly aggravating after a while, but if you don't want to pay for the whole game, it's worth it. However, since the game isn't hosted on 'your' hard drive, you're at the mercy of Yahoo!'s server. Good luck. If this gets popular, you could be in for some amazingly long downloads.

I attempted to rent a game - **Hitman**. I've always wanted to play the game and I was sort of excited. Well, I finished all the steps and downloaded it. After I'd done everything, I couldn't get any games. I'd click on it, download it, and then try to open it, but all I'd get was some error message. Well, I re-verified the account with Yahoo! and they replied that my account was active and I'd done everything that I needed to. So, I tried it again with a different game - this time **Civilization III**. I still got the same dumb error: 'This game is currently unavailable. Please try again later'. I decided to wait an hour. I got the same message. I waited three more hours for the same game. Tried it. Error. The next day, however, I was able to get on. Some of my friends tried it too, and only a small fraction of them (one out of eight) had the same problem that I had.

Yahoo! has always been successful in areas like this before. However, due to my whole 'error' experience, and the requirements of DSL/cable internet connections, the likelihood of this becoming a nation-sweeping, mass gaming enterprise is very, very low. Try it for yourself. Here are the prices:

3 Day Rental for 1 Game: \$4.95 (US)

30 Day Rental for 3 Games: \$9.95 (US)

30 Day Rental for 5 Games: \$14.95 (US)

30 Day Rental for 10 Games: \$19.95 (US)



At the time of going to press, the ten most popular games were ...

1. Civilization III (screenshot to left)
2. Monopoly Tycoon
3. Tropico
4. Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
5. Age Of Wonders
6. Hitman: Codename 47
7. Grand Theft Auto 2
8. Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force
9. Fast Food Tycoon 2
10. Monopoly

Harlequin Games



moon  earth

LEGENDS

STAR QUEST

Seven Real

EXILE

Crack of Dawn

So, who would you rather play with?

Anytime you play a game, you are
playing with us. We are the
people who make the game
fun. We are the people who
make the game work.

When you play a game, you are
playing with us. We are the
people who make the game
fun. We are the people who
make the game work.

Legends

North Island Campaign 25, A Game of Two Sides

The team Leaders report on the two-team variant ...

THIS GAME of **Legends** was set up on the small island in the NW corner of the map, with two teams: Farport vs Ur'Rah. There were six players per team, with no factions. This campaign has no restrictions: anything goes. The team leaders have chosen to remain anonymous.

The Farport team's report

Moo Shoo's story: My main town (Broo Doo) had 17,000 Dwarves. The default number of public works in the game was set at 99. To take full advantage of this, two Administrators were assigned to Broo Doo to do eight public works per turn between them. To reduce the cost of public works, all unskilled dwarves were transferred to Farport (which I also owned). The cost of each public works was thus reduced to below 1,000 crowns. All remaining characters were moved to Farport.

Two characters were allocated as 'Army Recruiters'. They were given the 'Enchanted' status (+3 Tactics), and transferred to a Knight guild which helped them to improve/train their Tactics. One was a Knight/Warlock, the other an Axemaster. My main character practised her Influence and my thief acted as the chief dogsbody, learning and teaching spells to the other characters.

One of our team, Dak, was accidentally set up in the south of the island. We didn't realise that this was an accident, and assumed it was part of the set-up. The Dak commander spent the first few weeks putting up barriers and recruiting like hell to stop the imminent attack on his isolated position by team Ur'Rah. It was then when all hell break loose, but not how we expected! Whereas team Farport had gone for a character-based strategy, team Ur'Rah had gone for the military option. The superior organisation of team Ur'Rah caught us by surprise.

Fortune smiled on them as their army moved north. By pure chance, their 1,800 strong army overran our adventuring party, killing all characters and knocking out one member of our team in the first few weeks of play. The first we knew of the assault was when their army appeared outside Castle Claw, which had around 300 defenders and Legendary walls. The only offensive action by us at this stage happened when our Dak commander launched an assault against (what he thought) was a poorly defended town and lost around 300 troops. Until now, team Farport had not really talked to each other. All that changed with the assault. With defeat staring us in the face, we started to organise ourselves.

The turning point

With increased co-operation and co-ordination (and some luck), things started to go our way. The assault on Castle Claw was a disaster for team Ur'Rah. Even with a Legendary commander, their morale broke during the assault. The once-proud army of 1,800 lost around 1,500 troops. The remaining troops retreated down south in disorder.

In the meantime, team Ur'Rah started to move their populations around. One thing they forgot to do was to protect the population as they moved from one town to another. A 31st level Ranger spotted these

unescorted population and we managed to capture around 13,000 humans and Maratasens. No real gain for us, but a significant loss to them. Other minor skirmishes resulted in the loss of some of the small 100 troops Ur'Rah forces. It was about this time that team Ur'Rah spotted our Dak player to their south. After much discussion, the Dak player's position was moved to the north.

The mid-game

Whereas team Farport started to integrate, team Ur'Rah started to disintegrate. Team Farport started to share plans, gift each other forces, equipment, crowns, etc. The Hero researched spells and taught them to the rest of the team. Fleets started to move trade goods between ports. The possibility of building fleets for a seaborne invasion discussed and planned. Lairs were plundered and the items distributed.

It was about this time that one of the players of team Ur'Rah dropped. After some discussion, an agreement was reached that the drop-out's position could merge with one of the other Ur'Rah positions. The hero Assassin thus became a follower of a overlord.

In the meantime, my main character had been successful in recruiting seven new followers. The two 'Troops Recruiters' were joined by a third. Castle Broo Doo was producing more plate, dwarven axes and shields than I could use. Crown production was ticking over (although I should have recruited more tradesmen at the start). More importantly, we were keeping an eye on the enemy. And we were waiting ...

We knew that since team Ur'Rah had the Pope, they were going to move their troops to a central location, transfer them to one slot, and the Pope was going to bless them all. We carried on waiting.

Finally, our scouts started to report back that their new armies had started to move. The orders were given. 1,200 Dwarves (Mage/Knights & Axemen) on WarUnicorns, armed with dwarven axes, plate armour and shields launched a spoiling attack. With Charms of Movement and Charms of Tactics, they launched themselves onto the largest of the armies. Reports showed it to be 1,500 strong. The ensuing battle was short and bloody. When the dust clouds of battle settled, the Dwarven army had lost 100, the enemy 1,500. With grim determination, the Dwarves waited for the onslaught from the other gathering enemy armies.

Analysis: The End-game

After a brief discussion between the team captains, team Ur'Rah decided to call it quits. An offer of surrender was made and accepted.

- 1 - Team Ur'Rah was better organised and co-ordinated at the start.
- 2 - Team Ur'Rah tried to overwhelm team Farport quickly with superior numbers, better quality troops and better commanders.
- 3 - Team Farport went for the character based, longer term strategy.
- 4 - Team Farport won because of their tenacity, superior co-operation, and legendary walls (which slowed the game).
- 5 - We also won because we put in orders on a regular basis, scouted for each other, and went out of our way to help to each other. *That's* what counts in a long-term team game.

The Ur'Rah Team's report

Team Ur'Rah lost through boredom and inexperience, although it would be fair to say that carelessness also contributed. The imperial council had a meticulous campaign planned from before the word go, ready for a pre-emptive attack and follow-up. Once the commanders went back to their strongholds, however, winter set in and communications suffered. Orders to troops were delayed, and plans fell out of sync.

Legends at a glance

Fantasy PBeM wargame run in Britain by Harlequin Games. Start-up with 1 turn is £20, subsequent turns are £3.50. Legends is run in the USA by EpicMail; it's owned by the US firm Midnight Games. There are several variants, including the team version played here.

Aggressive scouting & divine favour

Key to the early assault was the principle of aggressive scouting. Success seemed within our grasp in this first battle for knowledge and position, charting three enemy towns in the first three turns. Several enemy agents were found and butchered by the sweeping inquisition but we knew we were going to get 'leakers'.

Team Ur'Rah was pious indeed. Anticipating a quick game, we had concluded that priests gave key advantages - the large list of starting spells, adventures to boost economic or military strength and churches to quickly raise (or lower) SEI.

The superior faith of the Ur'Rah religious leaders even managed to insert a band of zealots into Farport to preach against the heretics therein, causing much internal strife and discord before the forces of the police state martyred the brave band.

The integrated assault - to death or glory

In the meantime, the legions were forming up. Defences were good enough that the massed armies could be combined and despatched to the field without fearing counter-assault. The troops had been planned for compatible races, and weapons had been standardised so that they could engage together. Nonetheless forming the unfamiliar troops up together took longer than expected, with the result that the army did not finally march until the second production.

The most fateful mistake of the early game ensued. Ur'Rah scout troops had identified an army of Maratasen coming south, on the eastern edge of the central lake.

The Ur'Rah legions wheeled to engage it. The mistake was not in the destruction of some several hundred Maratasen (a welcome beginning) but in the decision-making thereafter. We knew that we had to complete our attack swiftly, else find further defences raised against us. We had intended to attack Broo Doo, which we knew to be the lair of the feared (?) overlord Moo Shoo - this would be poorly defended, with a large economic base. A successful pre-emptive strike here would swing the game, depriving the Farporters of men, material, and morale.

The problem was that Broo Doo was to the north-west of the central lake, and Claw Castle to the north-east. Despite knowing that Claw Castle had Legendary walls, we also believed that it had been depleted of men in the destruction of the southern Maratasen army. Broo Doo could wait: the legion marched onwards to Claw Castle. The remnants of this army, coming south after a terrific defeat, were heard to mutter about the unexpectedly potent effects of Legendary walls. The 1,500-strong attacking divisions were repulsed by the 432 defenders, and despite Lancelot's tactics of 44 (pretty good, we thought, for the second production) the walls alone had an effective tactics of 68. We understand that hiding behind a wall and pushing off ladders/pouring boiling oil doesn't take much military genius, but casualties were enormous.

Of course, it didn't help that tactical reserves of some 350 troops were withheld from the battle ('Execute that officer!'), or that the cross-loaded spells largely failed to work.

Character attack

It had been long decided that a short, sharp military campaign would preclude spending resources on mighty heroes to go forth and slay dragons. As a result, we had established a number of ambushes, patrolling the ground around stinking lairs with troops who might surprise, surround and destroy those adventurers who were foolish to be on the battlefields unescorted. By some chance, one such group was found and although the ambush failed to best them, the survivors were able to report their presence to a larger group who swiftly over-ran them.

Money

Team Ur'Rah was not short of dosh. In fact, the effect of a +1280 SEI boost on a town with 6,000 craftsmen was nothing short of ridiculous, yielding over half a million crowns. Convoys of wagons filled to the brim with money were travelling between the Ur'Rah fortresses, often being turned away from already-full treasuries.

This despite the unfortunate death of the Estillion administrator, who reported to the walls upon attack by a visiting minor deity. Intending to jeer at the attacker, the Druid Cameron caught the full blast of Sallahman's magics, and was thrown down lifeless.

There was little doubt that if the game could be bought, team Ur'Rah would be able to find the price.

Hey, where did they come from?

Team Ur'Rah had been forward thinking. Team Ur'Rah's forces had been forward marching. It was therefore with some dismay that Team Ur'Rah found a nest of vipers in its rear.

The last remaining enemy town (whose absence from the north of the island had been very confusing) had been secure behind the line of our scouts. This caused some dismay - we knew that much of our aggressive scouting had been successful, and had tracked a handful of scout forces down from the north, but scouts from the rear echelon were unexpected.

It was fortunate that the Dak-attack, when it came, was fended off by the Saurian (g)army called up by the Voice.

Deadlines, deadlines

Winter arrived, and plans began to decay. Communications became sparser, and orders to the troops were delayed or lost entirely. Development became infrequent, training slowed and, when enemy plans were unearthed, the Ur'Rah response was not fast enough to take advantage of the knowledge.

Performance dropped off, as the average turnaround time slowed to a turn every three weeks ...

The Grand Army

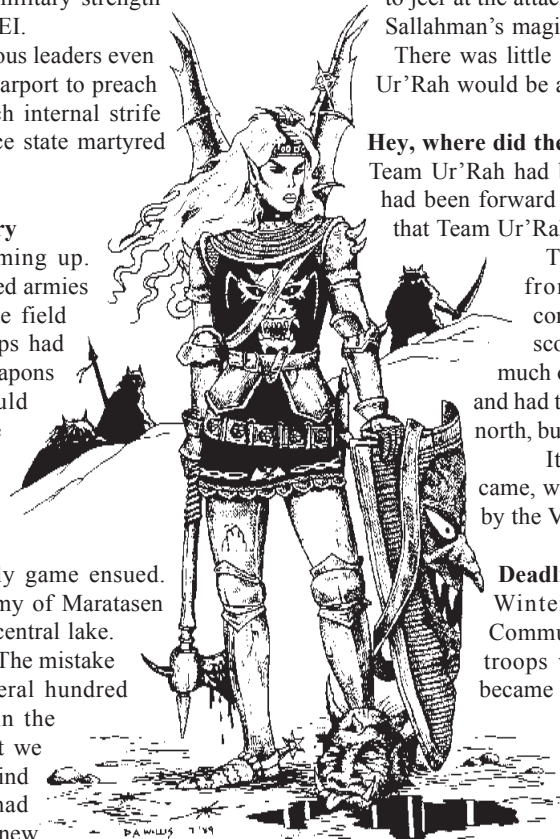
The Ur'Rah response was clear - where cleverness and planning had failed, a very large hammer might succeed. The training began for a final push to topple the towers of Farport city, even at the cost of leaving the border fortresses undefended.

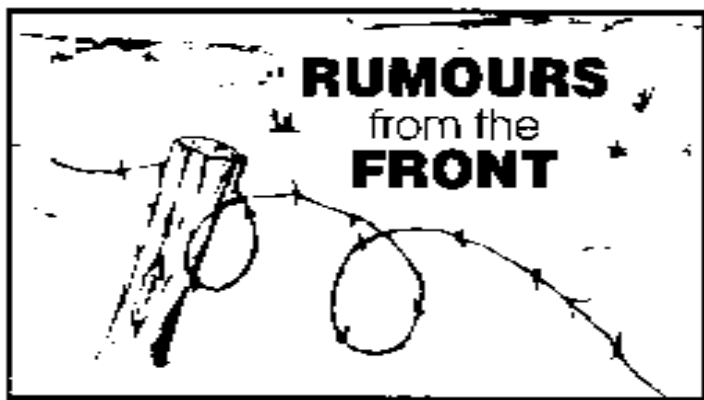
It was calculated that within two productions the Ur'Rah commanders could train, equip and assemble a grand total of 16,000 soldiers, including squadrons of the feared Knights of Shanah, a large slot of powerful blessed Mage-Knights, the veterans of the Saurian (g)army and thousand upon thousand of blessed guards, knights and rangers.

In the meantime, the commanders began to bless each other, prepare battle spells, clap their hands to the rhythm and stamp their feet to the beat. The clans emerged from their strongholds and began to move to Estillion, where the grand army was gathering - this would be total war, bringing the population to the field as well as the troops.

All is chaos: we are undone

Something was rotten in the state of Ur'Rah. In fact, several things stank. Communications between commanders weakened further, just at a time when the greatest possible collaboration was needed to bind the team's final attack together. Princes and potentates began to split from the Ur'Rah banner, as orders went unanswered and the central leadership broke down under its own weight. When population and novice troops were attacked on the way to pick up their weapons and armour, the Ur'Rah leadership heard of it through enemy rumours rather than from its own commander. The growing malaise had never been so clear: the Ur'Rah banner fell, not to conquest but, like many empires, to inertia, carelessness and bureaucracy.





[This column attempts to simulate a crowded bar full of Gamers swapping experiences. It contains readers' uncensored comments, with no attempt to maintain fairness and balance; editing is only done for grammar, clarity, brevity and (occasionally) libel avoidance! In general, it's unwise to put too much weight on a single report, whether rave or curse. Readers are asked only to comment on games of which they have recent personal experience and to mention specifically if they are only giving a first impression. Unattributed comments, usually in [], are by the editor.]

Comments received from October 10th

Mike Absolom, Dan Barnaby, David Blair, Mark Blanco, Dani Brewer, Nick Buol, Dominic Crapuchettes, Marco Dinaro, Jeremy Dixon, Bill Eldard, Colin Forbes, Patrick Gleeson, Martin Helsdon, Martin Higham, Gary Hood, Rush Howell, Colin Hughes, I Klaeu, Bernd Luehrsen, Bryn Lloyd, Mark Mills, Carol Mulholland, Nicc Newton, Kevin O'Keefe, Robin Orman, Eric Paquay, Don Palmer, Andrew Schultz, Troy Sherman, A Stockwell, Adam Waters, Ben Williams

GAMES FEATURED THIS ISSUE

Destiny (Madhouse - in playtest)

Robin Orman - 'This remains my favourite of the Madhouse NeXus games I'm playing at the moment. One of my ships has entered the Crabb system, and is indulging in a little light mining before heading for the more populated regions. Meanwhile, one of my characters in Stansa (the starting solar system), has returned to High Earth City (the capital city) to begin patrolling the streets on behalf of Stellar Patrol (the player run law enforcement agency). Another of my ships in orbit of the planet has sighted a notorious pirate craft and is organising an ambush on the vessel in the next few turns - also on behalf of Stellar Patrol. And our critics say we do nothing... (except steal puppies from six-year-old girls and dress our leaders in chicken costumes - how do these rumours get started?)'

Star Marines: Star Marine "Mad" Max Stone has teamed up with Sgt Emery and squad on the balmy holiday planet Tariah. Pirates and carnivorous trees have been engaged on several vectors from the drop zone, and a few ruined farmhouses have been discovered. Max and a couple of other marines are going through a trapdoor found in one of these farms next turn to do some recon. What nasties are lurking below ground, I wonder?'

DungeonWorld (Madhouse)

Robin Orman - 'My necromancer, Alamar, has spent the last few turns cowering - er, "recovering" - in the Black Tower after being nearly bushwacked by a nasty group of monsters. Plans are underway to rescue him, however... In the meantime, it's back to copying parchments and selling them for a small profit.

Elsewhere in Bereny, the sun has been playing tricks - first disappearing for a day, then reappearing looking rather pale, then rising a few days later blood red. Something tells me all hell's about to break loose - again!'

Broken Lands: In this (free) module of DungeonWorld, things have been quiet for my rogue, Gaelan, who has been sniping away at some monsters in the Halls of Stone and Iron, while he waits for some more adventurers to venture down the stairs to the level below - ie waiting to carefully go when others have cleared the way. No one said bravery was the key to survival...'

Frontier: Poor old Chunthalaka is still sick from a poisoned dart, and has been wandering around in a bit of a haze as of late (due to me messing up my movement orders). Still hunting for a Witch Doctor to cure the poison, and trying to find out where the rest of the group are... At least I've now got plenty of water, after finding a pair of dying dogs and a monkey in the jungle. New water-skin, anyone?'

Legends (Harlequin Games)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'I understand why this game has the highest first turn drop out rate now. It's horribly complicated. Legends prides itself on having the most "stuff" in it, and if you like your games complicated, this is the one for you! I persevered for

about five turns but lost interest I'm afraid. Despite the hugely complicated rules, it was just a hack and slash "move to A and kill, move to B and kill" type game. I'll be the first to admit that I probably only scratched the surface though. I bet that underneath all the rulebooks there's a great game somewhere?'

Marco Dinaro - 'I am a PBM veteran. I've played PBM since 1990 and Legends since 1993. In the last years my games were in US; but a few months ago I started a new Legends game in the UK, and I was surprised how nice the game is with Harlequin: lot of new players, lot of newbie enthusiasm, a competent and customer-oriented GM, everything joined to the depth and charm of Legends.'

Ian Koxvold - 'The new North Island campaign pitches factions against each other even more than previously, while containing a vast depth of initially unknown game history. In *NIC 24* the Saurian Nation has just discovered its space-faring roots, and is beginning work to subvert the Time Lord observers left to keep an eye on our imperial tendencies. In the meantime our leadership is attempting to reset the General Attack Reaction Mode which has been the root of our people's faith for millennia - GARM will shortly be no more, welcome to the reign of the religion of N'DM.'

Phill Austin 'North Island Campaign 26 - Beware the Chaos Lord Tynos Lief. Tho Daks be having such short memory, if ever one be born with natural instinct of Domination, then none else can prevail.'

Middle Earth PBM (Harlequin/MEPBM Games)

Mike Absolom - 'I remain in two *1650* games, one as a member of the Free People and the other as Dark Servant. Contrasting fortunes and experiences so far. Although the game is a delight, and Harlequin's GMing exemplary, my experiences prove the adage of, "who you play with is more important than how or what".'

I am enjoying the Freep game immensely, and this is undoubtedly because of my cohorts. Lots of interaction, chat and wackiness. The same cannot be said of the DS game. And this increasing sense of disaffection raises my only concern. And let me stress, this is my *only* concern! For with turns being on the expensive side, whereas in a cheaper game I would probably "hang on in there" and "work through the issues", I must admit that in MEPBM I am sorely tempted to drop and restart. And this leads me to speculate upon the nature of drops in MEPBM and how many are caused by disaffection with cohorts rather than problems with the game or Harlequin? And it also leads me speculate upon whether this is an issue or not?'

Colin Forbes - '*Third Age: 1650 scenario*: This is still the most played of all the Middle Earth scenarios. It's fast, it's furious and well-balanced (honest, it is!). Team play has become of increasing importance over the past couple of years, to the point where most teams have a dedicated website, mailing list, interactive colour maps prepared each turn by team members and simply hundreds of emails fly about every turn.

Interesting to note that the two most recent games I've started have mostly consisted of new players or players that haven't been in the game for a number of years but have decided to come back. If you're one of the latter, I'd seriously consider giving Middle Earth another go. Harlequin's service is superb and they are putting a lot of work into new scenarios and software to help you write orders and so forth. The existing Automagic software (based on Microsoft's Excel spreadsheet, so not everyone can use it) now imports all the data directly from an emailed data file - though of course you still get the regular turnsheet.

FA: 1000 scenario: I am ashamed to say that I just can't seem to get the hang of this scenario. It's a shame as in many ways it's a really attractive version.

You get to design your own starting position by spending a set number of points in a variety of ways and this really personalises the game. However, in three starts I

FLAGSHIP HALL OF FAME

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And a big thank-you to all our readers, reviewers, columnists and advertisers, who have played such a vital part in our history.

I wish to add a personal tribute to my husband Ken, without whom I wouldn't have discovered gaming. We took over *Flagship* as a team.

Finally, here's a useful tip for both magazine editors and for life itself that I learned from Nick. His policy was to encourage *Flagship's* critics to join the team. I used to write a detailed appraisal of early issues, so this idea certainly works!

just haven't got to grips with the instant death nature of the game. Because positions are not spread about the map in a fair and balanced way (as with the 2950, 1650 and Battle of the Five Armies scenarios) you can easily get jumped on by three nations at once on turn 1. I wouldn't recommend this version of the game for new or even returning players - and if possible, go into one of these games with at least one person who has played it several times before.'

Gunboat scenario: Firstly, there are no Gunboats! Essentially these games are based on either the 1650 or the 2950 map and starting positions. The big difference comes in the gameplay. It is forbidden to have any communication with any of the other players - not that you know who is playing which nation anyway. Those readers who have been involved in the Diplomacy hobby will be familiar with the gunboat concept. In each of these games thus far, each player controls two nations - I don't think this version of the game would work with only one nation. In some of the games the GM informs you at regular intervals which nations have been knocked out, whereas in other games you have to work this out for yourself. The non-communication rules cuts out all the frantic emails and team co-ordination, replacing it with a healthy dose of paranoia and a fascinating new aspect to the game - information gathering. In one game (obviously I can't say which) a player has gained a significant advantage by discovering certain things which appear unknown to some other players. Once the first game comes to an end and the player list is revealed, it's going to be enormous fun swapping stories with the other players. Can't wait! Again, this version is recommended for experienced players only.'

Dan Barnaby - 'I want to talk about MEPBM in the 2950 scenario. Most people will rant and rave about the 1650 scenario, and it is good! Man, have I had fun in playing it, but I have found that as fun as that one is, the 2950 version is *even better!* Here's why I like it.

It's not all about giant armies running around trying to conquer countries and or burn them to the ground. It is so much more intense than that. The economies are much smaller and your armies are smaller, you just can't go striking into someone's homeland and be sure that you can raise another army to follow the first. It takes cunning and skill beyond that of anything else I have ever played. And what fun to talk to someone else around the world trying to figure out the best way for your team to win and do it so you are not destroyed in the process! In this version you have to struggle with gold and food and armies and agents and the list goes on!

All I can say is that I *love* playing this game and will for a long time to come. I recommend this to anyone wishing a challenge and what better place then to do this with this company. They have the best customer support that I have seen in a long time and are more than willing to help, while being totally courteous! Thank you MEPBM, you have given me a new passion!

Adam Waters - 'I first started playing PBMs in 1984 at the age of 14. The game was called Earthwood and was run by a little company in Florida called GSI. Years later they launched MEPBM and I played that too, game after game, starting with the 1650 scenario, then 2950 as it came out, and finally *FA1000*. I loved the combination of character development and traditional wargaming they'd achieved and was of course thrilled by the Middle Earth setting. No other game provided such excellent rules, fantasy, and especially competition in one package.

Now, 16 years after I first started, I'm back playing the game with Harlequin Games and I can only say it's gotten even better over time. Harlie have done a lot towards automating order in-put to reduce errors and increase efficiency, which is a huge help when you've got 21 characters and three pages of popcenters to manage. Also, their ever-friendly and enthusiastic attitude as GMs is just awesome to work with. These guys are true wargamers, love the art form and the way they run their company shows it. Overall I heartily recommend MEPBM and Harlequin Games to any wargamer who's up for a challenging yet accessible experience. Just be sure to strap on your mithril helmet, because MEPBM is a wild ride!

Mark Mills - 'Just wanted to add my two cents to the comments on PBM games. I have been playing MEPBM for 10 years, under GSI, then Deft, and now Harlequin. Harlie have been by far the best moderator of the game, both in terms of responsiveness, customer service, and general quality of play.

I have been particularly pleased with a variant called *Gunboat*, in which players take control of two nations, either Dark Servants or Free people, with the normally neutral nations are prealigned. No diplomacy is allowed with either allied or enemy players, and no actions can be taken against allied nations. The game allows for a lot of freedom of action, with play much looser and more unpredictable than normal because you cannot coordinate with your "teammates". All in all, a great variant, and worth a try, especially for those with limited time for diplomacy.'

Colin Hughes - 'ME 1650 has always been by my favourite PBM. The game has changed considerably since its inception and change from GAD to Allsorts to MEPBM Games. When it was run as a straight postal game it was rarely a team game, merely a selection of individuals. Most games were won by the DS and if you were the last DS against ten Free you could still win if you had agents - just track down all their top characters kill them and they would drop. Games could go on for ages, players would tend to train their characters and sit around.

The influx of the internet has changed this - Middle Earth is much more of a team game and the co-ordination and information available is immense. As a result, 1650 games are hot blooded affairs dripping with tension and blood-letting and many

games end earlier. There is a wide range of people from different countries with different attitudes. Some teams are a joy to play with.

ME 1650 is by far the most personal and alive game I have ever come across. You really think you are there - I don't know why this is, whether it's the "honeycomb maps" or the great characters and portraits. There almost seems a strange psychology in Middle Earth, where each position has a personality which you tend to take up. You can choose different styles of play and customise your position so it's a bit like a RPG.

The Middle Earth staff are friendly and helpful. Turns are regular and hitches are solved promptly. Considering turns were £3.50 in 1992 and they're now £3.90 I wonder how the GMs make a living.'

Andrew Schultz - 'Being an old roleplayer from way back when Cosmic Encounters was the latest craze, I was interested to hear about this Middle Earth PBM game that a few old friends of mine had been playing for years. I was invited to take part in a team game as they were a player down. You start in pre-aligned teams, 12 DS and 12 Free, both roughly even in abilities and strengths. The neutrals get 1 bonus character at the start of the game to ensure your 175 Change Alliance order goes through automatically: this character then retires and you are on your way. The strategies vary and the team play is far more organised in this scenario, as there is no real aim at being the top dog as the only outcome that matters is the end result for the team. Being a newbie I found it a steep but not impossible learning curve and playing against an organised opposition ensures you try to squeeze the maximum out of each set of orders, which is an art in itself!

The game mechanics are simple to master after a short while and the new AutoMagic import makes setting up for the new turn a breeze (no more typing!). It will also let you know when you have messed something up. I don't know how many times this has saved me from making an embarrassing mistake.

We are at turn 13 in our game and it is a real arm wrestle: no side has a clear advantage yet, it will go down to the wire. I can't wait for the return match.'

Gary Hood - 'I've been playing Middle Earth for about 10 years, with various moderators, and I guess with Harlequin Games aka Middle Earth Games for what must be the last 4-5 years. In some ways this speaks for itself - a game that you can play for ten years and not get bored of.

With reference to the game, I have mostly been playing the 1650 variety. I have not yet quite played all of 25 different nations available. The blend of character actions, strategy and tactical army play make this game superior to many of the PBM games that I have played. The game is also a team game, cooperation gives big advantages to your side. However, you can still do your own thing too.

My personal preference is for the 1650 version of the game since it can be all action from turn 1 (some may prefer the more gradual buildup of the 2950 version) and I also like that the 1650 sides are more clear cut at the game start (some may prefer to forge their own alliances and sides as per the free form, user-defined 4th Age version of the game).

With reference to the current moderator. I must say that some very good changes and developments have been made. To give some examples:

- A variety of different game set ups for the 1650 version are available. Middle Earth Games have always been open to new ideas and set-ups. Aside from the standard 10 Free peoples, 10 Dark Servants and 5 Neutrals, there are games where the neutral nations are pre-aligned Free or Dark. There are other games, such as *Gunboat* where you cannot communicate with the other players on your side and have to second guess their movements. You can join the game as a team or with a bunch of strangers. Joining as a neutral and selling your services to the highest bidder can also be fun.

- The company has done a lot of work organising international team games, where you can pit your wits against the world's best players. I have lately been playing the Brazilian team.

- Email submission of turn orders and e-mail turn results have been developed by ME Games. The Automagic order entry tool on Excel has more than halved the time it takes to get my game orders out on email. It also stops me making a lot of idiot order entry mistakes.

To wrap up, I think I will definitely have a few more years enjoyment out of this game.'

Bryn Lloyd - 'I've been playing PBM for 16 years now; and MEPBM for the past eight. It is still a very enjoyable game, with strategies still to be explored and anticipation still flies high. But what makes MEPBM work (for me) is that all the players know almost everything that needs to be known; the game therefore becomes more of a game of chess, with the dynamism of chess. Okay, albeit with 12 v 12 players (pre-aligned team games). So the team with the best well-oiled machine, often comes out on top. This makes for a game of real skill, manoeuvring your nation and characters in sync with other allied nations and characters to the better good of the whole team in selfless determination!

Harlequin Games (aka Middle Earth Games) run the game with precision engineering and a nice personal touch. Any last minute order changes are never a problem. They are also developing the game, at least where their hands are not tied - eg, a program to help process turns - all of which improves the gameplay, and new scenarios: *Five Armies* (I was involved in the play test), *Gunboats* ("silent") and the infamous *Face-to-Face* weekends being very successful. The only downside has

The Thumping of Ground 8

Agema's new game, Ground 8
now taking players!

"Station 18, what is that on your roof?
Station 18 respond! Immediate!!"
MONITORING STATION
4 EPSILON

"ZZZZ ~~~~ It's breaking in! It's
breaking in! Oh my
{static - message ends}
LAST BROADCAST,
STATION 18

A
military campaign
set
in frontier
star systems



courtesy of APDL

on the edge of humanity's reach



HOW TO JOIN

Please write to this address to get
the rules for Ground 8 (price £5):

AGEMA, 3 Worksop Road,
Sneinton, Nottingham NG3 2BA.

Please make cheques and postal
orders payable to AGEMA.

Rules book	Frequency of turns	Price per turn
£5	1 every 3 weeks	£6



Log Comm Link 4XXG8/1 ::: *Inspector Hassan to IRS West Wing Base Command*

- Alien lifeforms scanned at Station 18 prior to last signal. Assumed base destroyed.
- The Messiah-class starship *Valerian* has been subjected to a control takeover, during which its self-destruct sequence was initiated. The warship has erupted into a ball of fire.
- Pirate raids on Nest Prime G8/1 are ongoing. Desalination Plant has ceased functioning; waters levels are critically low.
- Rachnids have been let loose within Nest Secondary G8/2, forcing evacuation. Suspect criminal gangs from underground complex responsible. Chief villain identified as triad leader Kerrek.

+++ IMMEDIATE - SITUATION DEEMED CRITICAL. HOSTILE
BATTLE FLEET IS LANDING SHUTTLE-BORNE DROP TROOPERS. WE
ARE BEING OVERRUN! REPEAT; WE ARE BEING OVERRUN. RE-
QUEST IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE.

OVER. AND PROBABLY OUT.

Ground 8 is a
Science-fiction
Wargames campaign
In which you command
Space fleets and armies
To conquer frontier worlds!

Positions in the game
include fleet admirals; space
pirates; planetary governors
and generals; dirtside gang
bosses; missionary saints;
IRS Inspectors; police
superintendents; company
factors, and a few really nasty
ones like Queen Eschilla of
The Rachnids and Davarakk,
Dread Lord of All Robotics!!!

been the turn fee rise to £4.50 a turn, which (for me and others) has limited the number of games that we now play in'

Bernd Luehrsen - 'Harlequin is offering a new modification of the 1650 and 2950 scenarios called *Gunboat*. The basic idea behind this is that no communication at all is allowed in this game. The GMs very much rely on the fairness of players to assure this, but will also keep a close eye on the game to prevent cheating. Players can choose from six fixed pairs of nations per alliance: it is a 12 vs 12 game with prealigned neutrals. Rhudaur and Corsairs are Dark Servants, Haradwaith and Dunlendings are Free People, while the Easterlings are removed from the game. The prealigned neutrals, the (IMO very balanced) nation combos and the lack of information call for completely new strategies, resulting in a very refreshing approach especially to the old 1650 setup, which is considered a little outworn by some players:

- Established automatisms which bound most nations to certain 'opening moves' for the benefit of the whole alliance are suddenly in question,
- Information and synchronisation with allies is mostly limited to what can be seen on their own turnmaps, which is likely to result in a more local gameplay,
- Artifact search will turn out different, because the distribution from those who find them to those who can use them to maximum effect is very limited,
- The former neutral nations which sometimes tended to build up slowly for some turns are right into the action, too.

While undoubtedly in "normal" ME-PBM the communication and diplomacy adds much flavour to the game, this mod is perfect for those who like to play but are limited in their time and can't afford to read and answer 30 emails a day. In fact, preparing the turns without having to consult anybody goes quite fast, so that Harlequin might think about reducing the two-weekly turnaround to a weekly one.

I very much enjoy this scenario, because there is so much to explore and to try in a world which I thought to have perfectly known already.'

Gary Aswegan - An exciting turn-based adventure set in Tolkien's Middle Earth. Players control an entire nation, its major characters, its armies and its economy. Players provide orders for their characters to follow that are then mailed in to MEPBM for execution and results. MEPBM offers a great strategy game in a fantastic fantasy setting. Whether you are military minded or a player that likes to foster heroes mages or assassins, or both, you will love this game and easily find it more enjoyable than a CCG or board game.

The feeling of facing the random and unknown results is key to the game's success. Will your army reach its target and will the commander find a weak opponent whom he/she can challenge in the streets or is it down to an army vs. army struggle for control of the town providing key resources to outfit more troops? You decide: are you going to be an Agent nation wreaking havoc with thefts and assassinations or a military nation bent on conquering all enemy sites in your reach. Or, perhaps, a mix of both? Even a focus on the arcane arts of casting spells or influencing other nations to join your side is an option open to a player of this great play by mail game. One thing for certain, don't turn a blind eye on your ability to expand your nation and increase your resource production or you may find your nation suffering come winter. Seasonal changes affect your nation and are linked to seasonal changes in the real world so watch your spending and your tax rate.

I am currently playing in *ME FA1000*, a grudge game. My team is facing a heavily dedicated military team. Our team is a group of mixed nations playing agent nations and military nations seeking control and the upper hand through military and agent tactics. The game has had several ups and downs for both sides: I am sure we are all enjoying the strategy and tactics that are being used or counter-acted against in this game. Our assassins have ruthlessly taken out 39 opponent characters with five hostages in only 11 turns: how can they still be mounting armies against us? They must have a fantastic economy as they have even had to move a nation's capital because we had crippled the surrounding area with our agents.

I have played this game since 1994 and have tried many different nations and strategies, one thing has stayed the same, this game is just fantastic. The fact that each and every game is different because of so many unknowns makes this quite an addicting and creative outlet for gamers everywhere.'

Star Fleet Warlord (*Pagoda*)

Robin Orman - 'In *EH6*, the historical team game where the UK team is competing with some US players, large fleets are starting to appear, as the economic machines of the two sides rumble into top gear. Worryingly, the large fleets seem to be appearing rather close to my home sectors - particularly for the Hydran position, where a Klingon fleet is poised to pierce my border defences. I foresee some very big battles ahead ...'

In *E16*, a standard game, Corellis Cleaning is quietly absorbing nearby sites as I clear up what's left of the Hamsters of Doom ships in the area. Elsewhere, the Tribble Trouble corporation is resting happily at the top of the stock table, after wiping out yet another corporation. Can anyone stop their relentless advance towards victory? Not me, since I have a nice border treaty with them at the moment ...'

ROLEPLAYING GAMES

Einstein's Lot (*Ulaidd Games*)

Carol Mulholland - 'I'm always intrigued when turns arrive, and GM Chris Morris returns these within a few days of sending in orders. This time a copy of his newsheet

The Lone Dolmen arrived too - though perhaps it's more of a mystery sheet? I'm a bit startled to see a paragraph in it confirming that my guess about vampire activity has some foundation: eek, I thought all Alison had to worry about was a spectral snake. Let's hope that she can return to university to report on her discoveries without getting bitten by snake or vampire...'

En Garde! (*Various*)

Colin Forbes - '*Psychopath En Garde! (Psychopath Zine)*: Monsieur Vinnie D'Pooh (apologies to Terry Crook for nicking the name) has just arrived in Paris and is looking forward to the start of the social season. This free game is only just getting under way under the watchful and enthusiastic eyes of GM Fraser Hopkins.

Like all Psychopath games, this one is web based: the site being attractive, informative and regularly updated with all sorts of material including loads of other games.'

Les Petites Betes Soyeuses En Garde! (To Win Just Once Zine): 'Guy de Lynes has been spending some time in Paris following a full six months at the front. Sadly, his former sweetheart Thomasina Tancenjin no longer seems quite as attractive (it's more her lower class accent than the infections) and Guy is wondering if the influential Emma Roides would care for some sophisticated company. But none of this is getting Guy anywhere near his goal of a career in politics. Put simply, he isn't important enough. So, off to the front again, I expect, with a view to acquiring as much loot as possible. Money, after all, is the root of all evil and Guy has any number of palms to grease if he is to progress in the wonderful world of Parisian politics.'

Worlds Apart (Colin Andrews)

Martin Helsdon - Colin Andrews' campaign continues to provide an entertaining challenge. Now moving away from its Saturnalia roots, the GM is able to utilise all his skills in writing with complex plots and well drawn backgrounds. It's always a delight to receive a turn and find out what has happened in the latest instalment. Turns are often very long and demonstrate Colin's dedication to his creation. There are rumours of more Worlds than the four described in the rulebook, and as the mysteries are gradually revealed, yet more are hinted. This game deserves more players.'

POWER GAMES

Gunboat Diplomacy (*Agema*)

Nicc Newton - 'Still enjoying this immensely and still rather unsure of what provoked a couple of subtle criticisms in recent issues. The game is well up to Agema's high standard, turnarounds are punctual, well printed and it's good value for money. I think that the freedom available to players to develop their positions probably closely resembles that experienced by real visitors to 1880's China - a vast ancient country with incomprehensible languages, customs and social etiquette and a wide array of international forces all competing to see what they can buy, steal, rob, plunder, rule and profit from.

Maybe that all comes over as a bit intimidating, but the opportunities are endless, certainly my position has been forging ahead. All it takes is some imagination, drive and a will to hack out a presence in your chosen field, be that Military, Commercial, Political, Evangelical or just a gung-ho lust for power and glory.

Richard's flexibility allows players to invent and introduce new equipment, buildings, and units - we've had someone laying under-sea telegraph cables, someone building Edison power stations, protected Merchant Compounds, hotels and bars, armoured trains, fire engines, rugby and cricket pitches and tournaments, not to mention all manner of ships from sail and steam to man-powered paddle-wheelers. All it takes is a little thought to succeed, put yourself in the real-life situation: Fresh off the boat on to Hong Kong dock and wandering around aimlessly with a big bag of money is going to make you an attractive target for the local thugs. Take some simple precautions - hire a few men, equip them with some weapons, keep an eye on your money, find a reputable place to stay until you can build your own base and you'll be fine ... But ignore those kind of everyday issues and don't be surprised if some Triad member runs off with your money!

Gunboat Diplomacy offers the true adventurer a golden opportunity: all depends if you're up to taking it on ...'

Primvs inter Pares (*Interesting Times*)

Mike Absolom - 'The criminal is primvs! All hail the criminal! It would seem that by skilful manipulation of the game mechanic, that a life of crime is not only possible, but hugely attractive. With the ability to act with impunity, to target and weaken political adversaries, and to reap huge profits into the bargain, why wouldn't it be? Murder, arson, thefts - why, Rome is becoming hostage to those of the criminal persuasion. And crime is now the weapon of choice in the bitter feud between the ruling families.

Clever? No doubt! Devious? A grudging respect! But, for me, yet another reason to become increasingly disenchanted with this game.'

WAR GAMES

Austerlitz (*Supersonic Games*)

David Blair - 'I understand some people saying they found the Austerlitz report difficult to follow - obviously it makes a great deal of sense when you have the turn sheet and the turn pages in front of you. I have played in many games of Austerlitz over a six-year spell and I rate it great (even with a few reservations which I believe Supersonic will address with their re-vamp). Possibly the reviews have been done assuming the reader was up to speed with the game, as it is very easy to become immersed in it and describe it from a knowledgeable viewpoint. A map and/or turn sheet copied into the review would have perhaps worked better, although I followed the article fine. I hope it won't stop some readers giving it a try - remember to quote my name to Supersonic when you do, please! I need a rebate from them as I have paid a fortune over the years and am currently in five games.'

Feudal Lords: Right of Kings (*Last World Games*)

Colin Forbes - '*ROK:1 (Vlad Degan of Last World Games)*: It gives me mixed pleasure to report that, as Viscount of Tober, I owe fealty to the Duke of Aberdeen - otherwise known as Bob McLain! Poor Bob really does have a much undeserved reputation in the pages of this magazine. He is in fact a fair and generous overlord - now all you have to do is sign away your soul ... But seriously, this game is approaching crunch time with three factions struggling for power. Of late the Irish contingent have been suffering - and rightly so after their repeated invasions of my territory! The very nature of the game though means that there could well be more swings and roundabouts on the way, so each turn (run twice a week) is eagerly awaited. Turn appearance has improved greatly with the advent of HTML turns and the free order-writing software (Seneshal) is indispensable.'

FLROK:8 (Rob Biggar for Last World Games): 'A fantasy version of Feudal Lords run by Rob Biggar on behalf of Last World Games. Different map, loads of additional troop types and other extra stuff too all give the game a totally different feel. I had a disastrous start to the game, miscalculating the food supply to my peasants, with the result that all bar 150 died. I considered dropping for a while, but somehow began to recover - thanks in part to the wonderful ability of my cattle herd to breed like rabbits. This has enabled me to throw lots of food at the peasants who have responded by breeding like rabbits as well! In the meantime diplomacy and a little military action have left me Lord of two additional fiefdoms, and dreams of regional power are definitely on the cards. World power? Hmmm - give me time ...'

Medieval Diplomacy (*Age Games*)

David Blair - 'Well into it now as the Almohade Empire and have allied with the Ayyubid Empire and Andalucia to sort out Venice and the King of the Two Sicilies. An invasion into Calabria in southern Italy is my introduction into the war, whilst Andalucia is attempting a strike from the North. Our combined fleets are patrolling the Aegean Sea hoping Venice will appear. There is plenty of diplomacy between the weekly turns and on many occasions I have emailed a 2nd, 3rd and once even a 4th change to a turn just before the deadline. Good fun, an excellent map, lots of interaction, and *free*. Come on in if you like the era (www.agegames.com)'

Prometheus (*Hunky Monkey Games*)

Colin Forbes - 'Down to five empires in game 1 and I have a horrible suspicion I'm ranked at five. Happily I've ploughed a lot of resources into technologies and whilst I may not have the troop numbers boasted about by certain empires, at least mine have plenty of muskets, canons and other cutting edge technology. Railways are now being built across my empire, and the search for oil has begun

There's just so much that can be done in this game and so many different ways of playing it, though I think an initial land grab is indispensable. Game 3 is coming soon, so if you haven't joined yet, why not?'

Ben Williams - 'So much for hubris. In Flagship 98 I wrote that game 2 was going much better for me than game 1. Wrong! I have been unceremoniously dumped from the game following a classic volte face by a presumed ally. That will teach me to be trusting, or should that read naive? Ah well, the good news is that game three should be starting around now, so maybe, just maybe, I'll do well this time!'

Total Conquest (*Total Conquest*)

Renato Rodrigues-Pousada - 'Total Conquest is a strategic multiplayer web based game with manifold complexities bundled in a simple and almost intuitive webstart application. In order to understand this you must play it.

The rules are many but the knowledge you must have in hand is mostly easy to come by. The TC team is helpful in respect to bugs and problems that an inexperienced player can face. The many forums are available for comments, role-play and idle questions and the manual is I believe very clear.

This is definitely a game that grips you strongly as it did me after sometime playing other assorted war games of the PBM and PBEM sort. The economy matters, the structural organization of your piece of land is important in order to build stronger and better armies but the whole is pretty logical. And the apparent frightening complexity of the game and its rules rapidly dissolve when you face your first turn.

The existence of the solo game that is basically just there for you to feel your way into the webstart/applet application helps to ease you in.

There are improvements that could be made and we are constantly making memos to the TC team about them and have grand discussions on the matter. Most likely they will, since the TC team that I came to know is a deep well of ideas. So I guess one must say that the Greeks have landed! Watch out for Total Conquest and depart on that adventure. You won't regret it, I believe, and if you do please tell them why. The greatness of a game stands on the sharing of your experiences and your opinions. Be sure that they will listen and that an answer to your suggestions will be presented. Or if they don't agree with you they will strongly substantiate their doubts and explain why it will be difficult or at the moment impossible to change that annoying rule or implement that thing you think will surely make this game a better game.

You will become a leader of an Orc realm on rampage against its neighbours or an elf in search of its inner mystic mysteries, a dwarf that sees in the dark, or a human pope. Be prepared to conquer the world and impose on others - well, most others - the right of your ways.'

Nikola Kasherov - 'Total Conquest is an original and very interesting strategy with rpg elements. I have played on-line based games for more than three years and this is the best fantasy strategy of this type I have ever seen. The number of races (4) combined with the different cultures available (6) allows a great variety of possible kingdom configurations, each with unique units, strong points and disadvantages. Each race has a set number of standard units - represented with nice pictures that really create great atmosphere - which combined with those allowed by the chosen culture gives many opportunities for the player's military style and strategy. The differences between kingdoms are not only in army types but in every possible feature typical for this complex game - gold and resources income, the %age of elite units, maintenance costs, birth rate, tactics and many others dependant on the unique combination the player has chosen. Moreover the creators managed to keep good balance between all options so there is not one way only but many paths to glory and victory. This is not another text-based game just showing ugly statistics and %ages - this is a living world with complicated rules and endless possibilities. The interface is well-organised.

World War IV (*Pagoda Games*)

Makis Xiroyannis - 'The only PBM I had the time to play the last two years, since National Service commitments required that I spend some time all around my country. With a clockwork turnaround, and turns sent by email, I knew the day I would get my turn, and was therefore able to pick it no matter where I was. WW4 is as much fun as always, with quick action and high anticipation between turns. In a 40-player scenario - game 107 - where I play as Russia, almost half the players are still active, but the game is split up in two factions only, and the world war rages all around the globe. My alliance is losing heavily at the moment, and it has been so for some time, but in a WW4 game you can never be sure. I still hold number 2 position in the top 5, but I lack the experience number 1 has, and experience matters a lot in this game. However I am learning, and learning fast. Will it be fast enough I wonder?'

SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

Ground 8 (*Agema Publications*)

Nicc Newton - 'A new SciFi game from Agema - currently waiting for the rule book, but if it's up to their usual standard it must be worth a try!'

Star Kingdoms (*starkingdoms.com*)

Ben Williams - This excellent web game has been sold and is currently off line. An ex player from the past put in a bid to buy the game and I hear (this is not confirmed) that the previous owner accepted an offer around \$6000 for *starkingdoms.com* and the scripts to the game. The player who has bought it is unknown, but he's been said saying "Stark Kingdoms will undergo changes to make it in a better game than before, it will be offline until mid 2003".

SPORTS GAMES

Epsom (*Dave Scrivner*)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'I joined up after reading David Blair's review a few issues back and I'm enjoying it immensely. Being interested in horse racing and gambling (as I am) helps, but isn't that important. A quick, interesting and enjoyable game.'

Reality Racing (*Dreamworld Games*)

Colin Forbes - 'I am really impressed by the service offered by Dreamworld Games. I signed up by email fairly late one afternoon but still received an envelope full of information about my horse (Tropical Lake) and the latest form guide. I had to wait a couple more days for the actual rules package, but this came in the form of a sturdy box. Inside was a glossily produced ringbinder containing loads of information about the game, including the rules of course. New players are set up in special races so they are not disadvantaged by racing against more experienced players (and better horses!).

I should say here and now that this is really not my type of game. I don't play sports PBM and, although I do enjoy the odd sports computer game, horse racing leaves me cold - too many memories of youthful Saturday afternoons waiting to watch the cricket on TV only to find there was racing instead! That said, this appears to be an excellent and probably addictive game run to a very high standard indeed. If the subject attracts you, I can really recommend this game.'

ECONOMIC GAMES

Beer Mogul (*RedMohawk Games*)

Ben Williams - 'I rather lost track of this game while I was on holiday. This seems to be one of the perils of web-based gaming with its fast turnaround. However I can report that after some troubles, the game is still going. It's a simulation game where you control either a brewery or a pub and try to make money by selling beer. The graphics are nice to look at and with a lot of players it's very competitive. The big criticism is that there is a perceived formula which makes playing the game quite mechanical. However the game designers do tweak things occasionally, which livens things up. I am sure I have recently seen some sort of boardgame along these lines as well, but I can't remember what it's called. Can anyone help?'

GAMES IN PLAYTEST

Wars of Magic and Legend (*Dean Day*)

Colin Forbes - 'This is a highly complex world/power game that I have really not been able to do justice to as yet. The GM is very friendly and the players range from equally friendly to, er, competitive. If you're looking for a game of power, economics, warfare and a lot of politics, then this is the one for you. Once I get into things it may fill the void in my gaming life left by Kings of Karadon.'

BOARDGAMES

[A new section, just in time for your Christmas shopping. Many thanks to these boardgame players for their contributions to set our new coverage rolling ...]

Bohnanza

Dani Brewer - 'I don't think you could play this every day of your life, but now and then this sure is fun!

This is the one game I am able to get my entire family to play. And we have the entire spectrum. There's my dad who refused to play Settlers of Catan because it seemed too complex (and I hadn't even talked about the robber yet!) and there's my nephew who's a hard-core D&D buff. And there was the rest of us distributed evenly between, all playing Bohnanza and all having fun! (Come to think of it, there were eight total — the game is only supposed to be for up to seven).

If you knew my family, you would know that for all of us to have fun at the same time is nothing short of a miracle. Anyway, this game is perfect for just about any gaming skill level and seems to work fine for numbers from two (my wife and I play a couple of times a week) all the way up to eight (so far). And given the price, probably the best value out there.'

Jeremy Dixon - 'A highly amusing game which revolves around planting, selling and trading beans. Who would have thought?

The game is fairly fast moving with lots of interaction even when it isn't your turn. It is good for early teens who aren't particularly patient. Our family and friends enjoy this game. The variations for two players make the game enjoyable. The more the merrier though, all the way up to seven.

Buy it and enjoy hours of fun.'

A Stockwell - 'I noticed that one of the reviews mentioned that the age markings (12+) should be observed. I really have to disagree with that. Our kids (ages 6 and 9) have been playing this for a year now and the 6-year old picked this up right away and has no trouble following the rules. What I find most remarkable is that the game has a factor built into it that favours people who play in a cooperative way. The only way to adjust the order in your hand is to trade away your garbage. Adults can't seem to do this (as they are always looking at both sides of the trade and concerning themselves with fairness). Kids don't seem to do this nearly as much and will trade more freely. As a result, they are often able to achieve results that the adults playing the same game cannot duplicate.

Very few games out there have mechanisms built into them which reward cooperative behaviour and yet still offer a pleasantly competitive game. Our kids both win their fair share of Bohnanza and not because they were handed victory by an adult.

One last point, if there is anything funnier to a 6 year old than a "stink bean", I don't know what it is.'

Dominic Crapuchettes - 'This is the game that all of my non-gamer friends love. Plain and simple, they love it. I don't fully understand why but I don't really care. They want to play it and that is all that matters. Best of all, each new game brings me one step closer to my master plan; the conversion of all Christians and other simple folk into irreverent game lovers.'

Troy Sherman - 'I played the game with some friends who play the game all the

time. I loved it! Then, I went out and bought a copy for myself. Fortunately, I already knew the rules, because they can be a little difficult to understand. After playing the game with a couple different groups of people, I came to realize that this game is not for everyone. With the right people, this game is a blast, but with others, it can be a painful waste of time.

In summary, don't be too disappointed if you don't enjoy this one the first time you play it. If you find the right group of people, it will be well worth the money! By the way, I haven't enjoyed a two-player game yet. The game plays much better with three or more.'

Dvonn (*Rio Grande*)

Patrick Gleeson - 'This is a great boardgame for couples after a long day. Dvonn has a great deal of depth to it but the play is relatively fast-paced. The rules are easy to learn. It is not as overwhelming as some other two-player games which take longer to play.

Dvonn is a challenging stacking game with very simple rules. It is played with 3 red Dvonn pieces, 23 white pieces, and 23 black pieces. The players must try to control as many pieces as possible by building stacks, preferably by jumping on top of their opponent's pieces. While doing so, pieces and stacks must remain linked to the red Dvonn pieces. If not, they are out of the game. When no more moves can be made, each player puts their stacks on top of each other. The player with the highest stack wins the game.

Each player takes one set of tiles and one red dvonn tile. White takes an additional dvonn. With White placing first, each player fills the board with pieces. When all of the rings have been played, the players now start moving the rings. Rings must be stacked on other rings (including dvonn) and can only be moved the number of rings in the stack. Furthermore, they must always remain connected to the dvonn through any ring. Disconnected pieces are removed from the board. The player controlling the most rings at the end wins.

Gipf is the first and central game of Project Gipf, a series of six games for two players. Tamsk is the second game, Zrtz the third, and Dvonn the fourth. The Project is a system that makes it possible to combine games—not only the games of the project itself, but any game or challenge. This system is based on the use of potentials. Each game of the project introduces its own new potential into Gipf.

Dvonn is a great game. Strategy varies and the game does not play the same way twice. One can try to control the dvonn and isolate the other player's pieces. Another strategy is to try to build and protect large stacks of rings. This requires the tactical ability to project future moves and rewards a sound positional strategy. I'm sure that as I keep playing this, I will see more nuances that hadn't been apparent before. The pieces are beautiful and well-designed. The spaces on the playing field (which looks like the moon's surface), however, could be highlighted better, but this is a minor flaw in an otherwise great game. Otherwise well produced, this game will be a favourite in the years to come.'

Puerto Rico

Bill Eldard - 'After five playings, I find I am still challenged to develop a winning strategy. This game is about resource management, and in this realm, it has few peers when it comes to strategy and enjoyment. Players must strike a fine balance in their resource management to win, and maintain it throughout the game despite challenges each turn from the opponents. Rarely does a game pose to its players difficult decisions each and every turn, with each decision impacting on the decisions and fortunes of every player.

Puerto Rico is both extremely challenging and fun. The serious gamer's collection is incomplete without it.

Eric Paquay - 'We've bought this game in its original version (German) and received a little translation sheet in our language (French, I'm living in Brussels/Belgium).

Woow, rules were terrible when you've decided to play the first time. It took more than three hours, because at each tour we had to re-read the rules and compare them with the colored and pictures German booklet.

This game is really exciting, no dead time, every player are always playing, that's great. Of course, i've now found a beautiful PDF file with the full French translation. Now everything is perfect, and we're really enjoying this game.

Buy it, it's worth a play!'

Mark Blanco - 'What a great game! The amount of directions you can go in this game seem staggering. The downtime is minimal (if any). Trying to figure out which role to pick (and when to pick it) in order to maximize your return while minimizing your opponents is probably the main focus of this game.

Don't let anyone tell you that there is no player interaction. When I choose the "Captain" and three other players groan because they know they can't ship or store their goods, then I call that interaction! This is *not* five-player solitaire. Puerto Rico also plays well with two players. Head on over to boardgamegeek.com for a twoplayer summary. But before you do that... *Buy Puerto Rico right now!*

Dominic Crapuchettes - 'I was originally not as impressed as I expected because the game was rather complicated (lots of little things to keep track of, many buildings to learn, and special rules for many occurrences). I also thought that winning and losing was often determined by the randomness of the phase orders that others chose.

One game I got 73 points simply because everyone chose the exact phase I would have wanted them to choose. As our gaming group began to understand the subtleties better, the game started to seem less random. I am now thoroughly captivated by the game. Even so, do not *ever* try to teach this game to non-gamers!’

Rush Howell - ‘Puerto Rico is, indeed, a wonderful gaming experience. Rather than rehash a lot of what has been said, I will simply point to a few major points as to why this game is a big favorite of ours...

1 - The level of player interaction is wonderful. Sure, it sets up looking like a candidate for the dreaded “multi-player solitaire” label, but in actuality you are in constant conflict with your opponents over a variety of issues:

- the choices of the roles
- picking your plantation tiles
- the limited number of the buildings
- the loading of the ships

All of this combines to make you feel like you are very much in competition with other settlers.

2 - The lack of downtime is unparalleled in similar, turn-based games. Like another one of my absolute favorites, Traders of Genoa, all the players have plenty to do not only on their turn, but also on each other player’s turn. There is rarely a break of more than fifteen seconds or so where you have nothing to do. This is especially excellent when compared to games like Tikal, Settlers of Catan, or Princes of Florence (all good games) where it can seem like quite a while between turns.

3. The strategy is ever changing. You must adapt in this game if you wish to win. Often your favorite strategies will become unavailable, making you find new ways to gain those precious victory points.

All that said, I do have one complaint that I was wondering if anyone else had run into. That is that in the game (the three-player variant especially) it seems that there are not quite enough colonists...thus, running out of them in the mayor phase seems to end almost all the games. Occasionally, this ending seems rather abrupt as it does not allow for the game to really have a “complete” feeling. My group has actually begun playing 73 rather than the suggested 58 colonists in a three-player game... and upping the four-player game by 15 colonists as well. I’ll readily admit that this whole complication could be specific to my group (perhaps we too often select the mayor), but we were having a few too many games where one person would get a lead and then just exploit the mayor option to end the game quickly.

Anyway, that is a rather small complaint for this rather grand game. I recommend it wholeheartedly.’

Martin Higham - ‘I continue to be in the minority with Puerto Rico. I find the interaction and strategic element very low. For me a game feels short on interaction when my decisions are pre-dominantly driven by playing the game system almost to the exclusion of other factors such as:

- Do my actions adversely affect somebody else?
- Do somebody else’s actions adversely affect me?
- Is everybody else spending my turn trying to influence my decisions because they believe that my actions can/will affect them?

PR scores low on all these. Not as low as say Lift Off. But lower than 18xx, E&T, Daytona 500 etc. As for strategic depth, well it just isn’t there. Like many German games, it is incredibly tactical. You don’t have grand plans, you make the best you can of each turn with little regard for the future. Three of my fellow players thought likewise. The rest of the world doesn’t. C’est la vie. Would I play again if asked? Reluctantly - I’d be bored for most of the next 90 minutes.’

Liberte (reviewed last issue)

Bill Eldard - ‘Our group has played Liberte four times now, with the first three games ending in “counter-revolution”. To be sure, there is a bit of “luck of the draw” element in this game, as there are in most games with cards. However, there is a tremendous amount of strategy in each turn, and a player who is too casual in studying the board might find his/her lead undermined by a counter-revolution or radical insurrection. We have found the latter a real challenge to achieve, but as you can see by our game results, counter-revolution is a real threat on turns 3 and 4.

The counter- and radical-revolutions do open opportunities for players far behind the leader to win the game, but more importantly, they force the leaders to deploy faction blocks in locations and ways so as to stave off these instant victories. The ‘defensive’ (pre-emptive) placement of faction blocks by players in the lead can keep the point gap from widening wildly, and thus keep players in the running to the last turn.

And beware of those action cards! Deploy a general too soon, and you risk losing him - and your hopes for battle victory - to the guillotine’s blade. A timely played Bread Shortage may swing the balance in a critical region. And then there’s the sweeping effect of the Terror card!

All in all, Liberte is one of the better strategy games around, and it does capture the French Revolution theme well without becoming an historical simulation. Highly recommended.’

I Klaeu - ‘Liberte is one of the rare games with an increasing suspense factor, in particular because you do not know - at least in the first rounds - in which way it will end. The three victory possibilities mean that on the one hand you can follow different

strategies, but on the other hand you can only win if you are flexible enough to change your strategy if the actions of the other players require it.

This is the best game I bought in Essen (out of 25).’

Villa Paletti

Nick Buol - ‘Although this game is somewhat entertaining and fun, it is definitely not worthy of the Essen Game of the Year Award. I even won the times that I played it (four players), so it isn’t a matter of a loser’s sour grapes. The game leaves a *lot* of room for people to really mess up other players when a player gets to place a new level. Just place it over the top of as many other players’ pieces, and as few of yours, and you have a big advantage. That can eliminate even the most skilled players.’

FIRMS

Don Palmer - ‘I have played PBM on and off for over 20 years, and I feel the two best companies at the current time are Flying Buffalo, Inc, where I am enjoying World Wide Battleplan, and Harlequin Games’ Middle Earth 1650 scenario.

FB is simply the most consistent, reliable moderator around. While many other flash in the pan companies have come and gone, they remain with a decent stable of games, very fair prices, enough players to fill games, and reliable service - question answering, turnaround, etc. The WW Battleplan game is large (world map, 20-28 players), and has a simple but fair wargame system, combined with lots of diplomacy and player interaction as alliances form and plans formulate.

Middle Earth Games is a relative newcomer, but has stepped in and taken over excellent moderation of the Tolkien fantasy game from various other American companies that have come and gone. Excellent e-mail service, turnaround times, and question answering, forum boards to discuss issues/games with other players. The 1650 scenario is the oldie but goodie, plenty of troops and nearby enemies to start things off hot and heavy right from the get go. Be prepared for lots of team interaction as either a Free or Dark player, and check their library and links to acclimatise yourself to the wealth of background information for all starting positions, forces, opening gambits, etc. Veteran players can both be very helpful and humorous, but also have a large edge on game knowledge and can take advantage of newer players if so inclined. All in all, a very good gaming experience!’

Gary Aswegan - ‘MEPBM has a very responsive team for questions, account information and turn submissions that make this game simple, easy to understand and play. I have personally had nothing short of exceptional service from all MEPBM staff and commend each of them for a job well done and for their exceptional service to the company that they work for.’

John Choules - ‘I have been roleplaying and fantasy gaming for over 20 years now. It’s been a great diversion from “real life” and the pressure that goes along with it. There have been a number of companies and people involved during these years, some good and some bad. I have, however, found one that has been able to meet my gaming and my service needs, Harlequin.

I play two games with them, Middle Earth PBM and Legends. Both games are fun, well-moderated, and consistently strong in customer service. I will continue to use Harlequin for my gaming and probably even explore more of their offerings as time goes by.’

(Contributions welcomed for Flagship 101,
by January 9th.)

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If you are interested in advertising, please contact the Flagship Ad. office (details on page 3) and we will be happy to discuss your requirements.

Galactic View

THIS is a list of (mostly) European PBM/PBM firms thought by FLAGSHIP to be operating at the time this issue was published. There is no govt to GMs for this listing, which we publish as a service to our readers. GMs listed below are cross-indexed by a code to the game register on the following pages. GMs to whom payment should be made by name are listed by name rather than firm.

We ask GMs and our readers to check the listings here and verify their accuracy; please notify the editor if you find an error or omission. Readers are advised to send an SAE rather than money to GMs who aren't obviously operating (by advertising, or a mention in *Spokesmen* or players' comments in *Rumours*).

We also include Websites. Email addresses and GM phone numbers (where the GMs have given permission or they've announced the number as a service to players). However, please play fair: *only* call at reasonable times (or the specified times if they're given) and try not to pin the GM to the phone for hours!

UK, EUROPEAN & WEB-BASED GMS. We have begun to merge the UK and European listings. We have only included those European GMs whom we have heard from recently - if you are not listed then please get in touch!

Additions: Dreamworld Games, Tempus Fugit PBM Productions, (+2)

Deletions: Mike Absolon (-1)

Changes: CSPP, Software Simulations, Simon Williams, Constantine Xanthos.

Total: 174 active European & Web-based GMS (+1)

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EM: www.fishbag2.demon.co.uk

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WEB: go.toadgame

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WEB: www.sjasytems.co.uk/

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Andrews, Colin, 26 Brown Edge Road, Hobbs, Oldham, OL4 5QG

Arnot, Steven,

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/loae11/index.html

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Bartrum, Giles

WEB: [psnathu.net/~serge/centre_eortharidascountries.html](http://www.psnathu.net/~serge/centre_eortharidascountries.html)

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Baylis, Chris, 67 Mythenens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS15 5EG

Blarpo,

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Brambley, Francis

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Briny En Garde! (Terry Crook),

WEB: www.brinyengarde.co.uk

Burroughs, Martin, 15 New Earls St, Oldham OL4 5ES

TEL: 0161 6261580

WEB: www.buzzvackpbm.freeerve.co.uk

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Burrows, Pete, Buzzvack PBM, 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG

TEL: 0161 9224901 (pre 10pm)

TEL/FAX: 0115 9224901 (pre 10pm)

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Bury, Chris, World Fictional Wrestling, 1A Chapel Terrace, Southend, Essex SS1 1EX

Callan, David

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Camelot Games, 6 Llys-Y-Foel, Carmarvon, Gwynedd LL55 2LU

Carter, Dave, Scorpiongames, 13 Liverpool Rd, Burscough, Lanes L40 7SU

EM: dd@clara.net or tyebreck@aol.com

WEB: <http://www.scorpionsgames.co.uk>

Casey, Ashley, 16 Willow Grove, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 4HP

WEB: www.ashcasey.co.uk

EM: serpen@ashcasey.co.uk

Clovenshield

WEB: www.angelfire.com/realmlc/lovenshield/

EM: realmspbm@yahoo.com

Cushaw, Mark, 10 Ellis Close, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8DW

Colman, Ian

WEB: www.thera.org.uk/engarde.htm

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Cooley, Dave, 2 Fernerton Rd, Basingsstoke, Hants RG21 5LW

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Cooney, Pete

WEB: www.cooney.site.com/starengarde

Copper, Quincey

WEB: <http://timeofhonor.com/>

EM: TimeofHonor@aol.com

Cornuelle, Chris

WEB: www.amission.com/~bob/loae13

EM: bobmission.com

Cuzens, Richard, 16 Fox Close, Boston, Lines PE21 8EE

WEB: www.the-ashes-of-empire.de/German

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Crawford, 4 Barleyfield, Clayton-Le-Woods, Preston, Lanes PR5 8JQ

WEB: www.crawfordworld.com

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TEL: (Andy Smith): 01722 334878 (credit card hotline)

Crofts, Richard

WEB: www.chariot.net.au/~duncelin/engarde.html

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Cyclops PBM, 18 Knighton Road, Romford, Essex RM7 9BS

Darceville, 178 Hall Lane, Upminster, Essex RM14 1AT

WEB: www.daredevil.jp.co.uk

EM: daredevil@darkorders.jp.co.uk

Dark Wolf Games, Suite 1, 47 Bounie Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1JJ

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TEL: (Karin): 070 2099 WORG (9674), FAX: 0870 052 7521

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Draes Games, 21 Chippertfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP

WEB: www.draesgames.co.uk

EM: dersk@draesgames.co.uk

TEL: (Derek Rainey): 0117 9607173 (9am-6pm Mon-Fri)

Dreamworld Games

WEB: www.logicalsoccer.com/~www.realtyracing.com

TEL: 01380 811522

Dunks, Antony, Far Horizon, Surf, Guernsey, GY9 0SE

WEB: www.sark.net/~sark

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TEL/FAX: 01481 832926

Dunningan, Colin,

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/loae02/index.html

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WEB: www.geocities.com/emailffai/

Elkie, Eddie

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/loae20/index.html

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Entertainment Plus More Games, PO Box 2578, Appleton, WI 54912, USA

WEB: www.epmgames.com

EM: ae@epmgames.com

EpicMail, PO Box 150721, Kingstown, VA 22315-0721, USA

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Faraway Games, 3 Maslem Rd, St Albans, Herts AL4 0GS

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COL

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DGN

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FLI

FBI

FOS

FRI

FRY

FUE

GSA

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Great Game

WEB: www.geocities.com/epochelipse/

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Guild of Blades

WEB: www.gulldofblades.com/interactive/1483/www1/www1.html

EM: 1483@gulldofblades.com

Halvis, Michael,

WEB: www.phem.at/muranen

Harlan, Thomas,

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Harlequin Games, 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP

WEB: pbn@harlequingames.com AND www.middleearthgames.com

TEL: 029 2091 3359 (9.6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only

TEL: (Sam Roads): 029 2062 3665 (9.6.30 weekdays)

FAX: 029 2062 3552 any time

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Hightreet Internet Ltd., Warrior Games, 11 Belgravia Mews, Shaw, Oldham, Lanes, OL7 7TB

WEB: www.warriorgames.co.uk

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TEL: (Paul Green): 0870 7459297

Holmes, Michael

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Hollidale, Adam, 113 Coronation Rd, Brimington, Chesterfield, Derby S43 1EY

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Hunky Monkey Games, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS

WEB: www.hunkymonkey.co.uk

EM: ape@hunkymonkey.co.uk

TEL: FAX (Tom Fyfe): 01392 420582 (4 - 8pm & weekends)

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In the Post, PO Box 302, Halstead, Essex CO9 2LA

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TEL: 020 83256507

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Kamikaze Games

WEB: www.kamikazegames.com

Kelom Games, 7 Claverton, Hanworth, Bracknell RG12 7YN

WEB: www.kelom-games.com

MAD	SSV Klupp-Bachler OEG Postfach 1205, A-8021, Graz, Austria <i>WEB: www.heldenvell.com</i> <i>EM: ssv-graz@aon.at</i>	SSV	Viking Games , 38 Park Avenue, Hounslow, London TW3 2LX <i>EM: jerg@jergus.fsnet.co.uk</i>	VIK
MAE	Sabre Games , Mill Farm, West Lydford, Somerset TA11 7DA <i>EM: telbournt@hotmail.com</i>	MAE	Viking Saga <i>WEB: http://oghma.tripod.com/vikingosaga.html</i>	VIS
MAR	Serviden, David , 15 Alandale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25, 1DJ	SCR	Wayne (Shambhala), 59 Kilm Court, Newell Street, Poplar, London E14 7JP	WAY
MAT	Seddogs & Darlings <i>WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/seddogsanddarlings</i>	SDD	White, Stephen , PO Box 137, Burnley, Lancs BB10 2UG	WHS
MIS	Seamer, Robin , Houseboat Tamara, Windsor Road, Datchet, Berks SL3 9BS <i>SESL (Mark Cressy)</i> <i>WEB: www.sesl.net</i>	SEA	Wightman, Mark , 31 Churchill Avenue, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1PX	WLL
SOV	Sevenstar Games , 57 Olympia Gardens, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1JQ <i>WEB: www.sark.net/~sat/greensun.html</i>	SES	Williams, Simon , 8 Oster Close, Ely, Cambs CB7 4AY <i>EMill: chaostrail.co.uk AND www.ultimatetest/freeservers.com</i>	WIL
MIN	Shore, Justin , 2 Langport Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1YR	SEV	WOW Games , <i>WEB: http://www.wow.pbemgame.com/</i>	WWG
MMJ	Silver Dreamer , 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ <i>WEB: www.silverdreamer.com</i> <i>EM: silvertree@aol.com</i>	SHO	Wright, Chris , 10 Fosse Way, Wilby Way, Wellingborough, NN8 2LQ	WRI
MUR	Smith, Russell , Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL <i>EM: smith_russell@hotmail.com</i>	SIL	Xanthis, Constantine , 7080 NW 75th Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33067, USA <i>EM: cvenet@vcos.com</i>	XAN
MYS	Software Simulations , PO Box 2758, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH <i>WEB: www.phmsports.com</i>	SOF	Zen Games , 25 Cromwell Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 2NW <i>EM: zengames@qisita.net</i>	ZEN
NEU	Spillbinder Games , 51 Abelsian Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE <i>EM: Chris.spillbinder@btinternet.com</i>	SPE		
NIE	Spencer, Jerry , 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY <i>TEL: (Chris Dempsey): 01843 291558</i> <i>EM: jerry-spencer@liverpool.gov.uk</i>	SPN		
TNL	Sphinx O.E. , PO Box 25020, GR-10026, Athens <i>EM: treppus@softlab.ece.ntua.gr</i>	SPH		
OAT	Sporting Dreams , PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB <i>TEL: 01332 726376</i> <i>EM: crusader@inetnet.co.uk</i>	SPO		
OLS	Squibb, Geoff , 108 Teddington Park Rd, Teddington, Middx TW11 8NE <i>TEL: 020 8287 2592</i> <i>WEB: www.stateofmindgames.co.uk/</i>	SQU		
OLY	Stenson, Left , <i>EM: left-phdmin@lysatrol.lia.se</i>	STM		
PAG	Summit Soccer League <i>WEB: www.summitsoccer.co.uk/</i> <i>EM: summitsoccer@ntlworld.com</i>	STE		
PAR	Supernotic Games , PO Box 1812, Galsion, KA4 8WA <i>EM: sam@gauster.lit.co.uk</i>	STS		
PAT	Tenpus Fugit PBM Productions 96 Bishopswood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG <i>TEL: (Scott, Sam, Chris): 01563 821022; fax: 01563 821006</i> <i>WEB: http://tempusfugit.co.uk</i>	SSL		
PIN	Terre de Joux , 88 avenue de Jusieu, 91600 Savigny sur Orge, France <i>EM: enquiries@tempusfugitpbm.co.uk</i>	SUP		
PEG	Time Patterns , 14 The Hollows, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1QT <i>WEB: www.timepatterns.co.uk</i> <i>EM: carol@timepatterns.co.uk</i>	TFT		
PRE	Timewym , 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS <i>TEL/FAX: 01395 276632</i>	TDJ		
TZR	Total Conquest , <i>WEB: www.taal-conquest.com</i>	TIM		
PFG	Trident Games (Glyn Cary), 9 Trent Drive, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 6GR <i>EM: jerry@tridentpbm.co.uk</i>	TIW		
QIR	Turner, Daniel , 5 Salhouse Road, Milton, Cambrid, LA18 5AD <i>EM: ddiggers@aol.com</i> <i>TEL: 01229 774664</i>	TOT		
REB	Ultath Games , 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF <i>EM: chrisjan.morris@virgin.net</i>	TRI		
RCW	Ultra Sports , <i>WEB: www.ultra-sports.com/</i> <i>EM: im@ultra-sports.com</i>	TUR		
RED	Undying King Games , 31 Littlemore Road, Oxford, OX4 3SS <i>WEB: www.undkg.co.uk</i>	ULA		
RIC	Varela, Juan , <i>TEL: (No Telcar): 01865 452921</i> <i>WEB: http://people.ne.mediaone.net/javar/intro.htm</i>	ULT		
RIC	Verein der Feinde , <i>EM: javar@mediaone.net</i> <i>WEB: www.vds-verein.de</i> <i>EM: The_Feapon@gmx.de</i>	UKG		
RBY		VAR		
RZE		VdF		

Madhouse, 6 Alexandra Road, Wisbech, PE13 1HQ <i>WEB: www.madcentral.com</i> <i>EM: madcentral@aol.com</i> <i>TEL: 01945 383811</i>	MAE	Maestro Games , PO Box 216, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8XA	MAE	Sabre Games , Mill Farm, West Lydford, Somerset TA11 7DA <i>EM: telbournt@hotmail.com</i>	MAE
Martel, JJ <i>WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/lot5/index.html</i> <i>EM: srlg@throneworld.com</i>	MAR	Martel, JJ	MAR	Serviden, David , 15 Alandale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25, 1DJ	MAR
Mattingly, David <i>WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/lot25</i> <i>EM: mattinglyd2@ujs.edu</i>	MAT	Mattingly, David	MAT	Seddogs & Darlings <i>WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/seddogsanddarlings</i>	MAT
MISL, Sandro Chivavzo <i>EM: chivavzo@knickerbockers.ch</i>	MISL	MISL, Sandro Chivavzo	MISL	Seamer, Robin , Houseboat Tamara, Windsor Road, Datchet, Berks SL3 9BS <i>SESL (Mark Cressy)</i> <i>WEB: www.sesl.net</i>	MIS
Miles, Richard, 27 Laytona Avenue, Heath, Cardiff, CF14 3BQ <i>EM: richardmiles@hotmail.com</i>	MIL	Miles, Richard , 27 Laytona Avenue, Heath, Cardiff, CF14 3BQ	MIL	Sevenstar Games , 57 Olympia Gardens, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1JQ <i>WEB: www.sark.net/~sat/greensun.html</i>	SOV
Mindless Games, 217a Ilkeston Road, Nottingham NG7 3FX <i>WEB: www.mindlessworld.net</i> <i>EM: andy.mindless@virgin.net</i>	MIND	Mindless Games , 217a Ilkeston Road, Nottingham NG7 3FX	MIND	Shore, Justin , 2 Langport Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1YR	MIN
MMI Enterprises <i>TEL: (Andy Simmonds): 0115 979 0797 (9.30 - 18.30 weekdays only)</i>	MMI	MMI Enterprises	MMI	Silver Dreamer , 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ <i>WEB: www.silverdreamer.com</i> <i>EM: silvertree@aol.com</i>	MMJ
Murdoch, Neil <i>WEB: www.geocities.com/floodisoccer/home.html</i> <i>EM: murder@nmp-ent.com</i>	MUR	Murdoch, Neil	MUR	Smith, Russell , Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL <i>EM: smith_russell@hotmail.com</i>	MUR
Mystic Arena <i>WEB: www.mysticarena.com</i>	MYS	Mystic Arena	MYS	Software Simulations , PO Box 2758, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH <i>WEB: www.phmsports.com</i>	MYS
Neutral Zone <i>WEB: www.neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk</i> <i>EM: info@neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk</i> <i>TEL: 01440 713124 (7pm - 9pm)</i>	NEU	Neutral Zone	NEU	Spillbinder Games , 51 Abelsian Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE <i>EM: Chris.spillbinder@btinternet.com</i>	NEU
Nelsen, Lesley <i>WEB: www.throneworld.com/lords/lot24/index.html</i> <i>EM: lords24gm@throneworld.com</i>	NEL	Nelsen, Lesley	NEL	Spencer, Jerry , 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY <i>TEL: (Chris Dempsey): 01843 291558</i> <i>EM: jerry-spencer@liverpool.gov.uk</i>	NIE
Ninth Legion, The, 40 Hylkeham Road, Lincoln LN6 8AB <i>EM: ghempsal@hotmail.com</i>	NIN	Ninth Legion, The , 40 Hylkeham Road, Lincoln LN6 8AB	NIN	Sphinx O.E. , PO Box 25020, GR-10026, Athens <i>EM: treppus@softlab.ece.ntua.gr</i>	TNL
Oates, Jason, 6 St Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA <i>WEB: http://freespace.virgin.net/jason/outes</i> <i>EM: jason.outes@virgin.net</i> <i>TEL/FAX: 01305 251451</i>	OAT	Oates, Jason , 6 St Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA	OAT	Sporting Dreams , PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB <i>TEL: 01332 726376</i> <i>EM: crusader@inetnet.co.uk</i>	OAT
Olson, Steve <i>WEB: http://hometown.aol.com/solsone.sq/lords16/lords16.htm</i> <i>WEB: http://hometown.aol.com/solsone.sq/lords19/lords19.htm</i> <i>EM: solsone.sq@aol.com</i>	OLS	Olson, Steve	OLS	State of Mind Games , 13 Balmoral Road, Didcot OX11 8TZ <i>TEL: 020 8287 2592</i> <i>WEB: www.stateofmindgames.co.uk/</i>	OLS
Olympia Games, 6 Sandy Ln, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3GS <i>EM: phm.dexter@talk21.com</i> <i>TEL/FAX: (Trevor Dexter): 0115 9436197</i>	OLY	Olympia Games , 6 Sandy Ln, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3GS	OLY	Stenson, Left , <i>EM: left-phdmin@lysatrol.lia.se</i>	OLY
Pagoda Games, PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ <i>WEB: www.pagodagames.co.uk</i> <i>EM: orders@pagodagames.co.uk</i> <i>TEL/FAX: (Keith Burnham): 01827 708251</i>	PAG	Pagoda Games , PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ	PAG	Summit Soccer League <i>WEB: www.summitsoccer.co.uk/</i> <i>EM: summitsoccer@ntlworld.com</i>	PAG
Parr, Alan, 6 Longfield Gdns, Tring, Herts HP23 4DN <i>WEB: http://throneworld.com/lords/lot5/index.html</i> <i>EM: dpatterson@computertech.com</i>	PAR	Parr, Alan , 6 Longfield Gdns, Tring, Herts HP23 4DN	PAR	Supernotic Games , PO Box 1812, Galsion, KA4 8WA <i>EM: sam@gauster.lit.co.uk</i>	PAR
Patterson, Dean <i>WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/eharia</i> <i>EM: Markpinder@aol.com</i> <i>TEL: 01472 753430</i>	PAT	Patterson, Dean	PAT	Tenpus Fugit PBM Productions 96 Bishopswood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG <i>TEL: (Scott, Sam, Chris): 01563 821022; fax: 01563 821006</i> <i>WEB: http://tempusfugit.co.uk</i>	PAT
Pinder, Mark, 139 Nelson Way, Laceyby Acres, Grimsby, S Humberside DN34 5UJ <i>WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/eharia</i> <i>EM: Markpinder@aol.com</i> <i>TEL: 01472 753430</i>	PIN	Pinder, Mark , 139 Nelson Way, Laceyby Acres, Grimsby, S Humberside DN34 5UJ	PIN	Terre de Joux , 88 avenue de Jusieu, 91600 Savigny sur Orge, France <i>EM: enquiries@tempusfugitpbm.co.uk</i>	TDJ
Play-by-Electron Games <i>WEB: www.pbegames.com/eldrich/</i> <i>EM: moderator@pbegames.com</i>	PEG	Play-by-Electron Games	PEG	Time Patterns , 14 The Hollows, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1QT <i>WEB: www.timepatterns.co.uk</i> <i>EM: carol@timepatterns.co.uk</i>	TIM
Premier Management <i>WEB: http://pml-engaming.com</i>	PRE	Premier Management	PRE	Timewym , 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS <i>TEL/FAX: 01395 276632</i>	TIW
Professional Basketball League <i>WEB: www.geocities.com/lomyzr</i> <i>EM: tomyzr@yahoo.com</i>	PRL	Professional Basketball League	PRL	Total Conquest , <i>WEB: www.taal-conquest.com</i>	TOT
Pure Fantasy Games, Portland House, Bolverse Business Park, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 6BH <i>EM: dominicm@zoom.co.uk</i>	PFG	Pure Fantasy Games , Portland House, Bolverse Business Park, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 6BH	PFG	Trident Games (Glyn Cary), 9 Trent Drive, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 6GR <i>EM: jerry@tridentpbm.co.uk</i>	TRI
Quirrel Games, Quirrel Games Ghr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany <i>EM: quirrelgames@online.de</i>	QIR	Quirrel Games , Quirrel Games Ghr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany	QIR	Turner, Daniel , 5 Salhouse Road, Milton, Cambrid, LA18 5AD <i>EM: ddiggers@aol.com</i> <i>TEL: 01229 774664</i>	TUR
Reality Racing, PO Box 100, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 <i>TEL: 01380 81819</i>	REA	Reality Racing , PO Box 100, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10	REA	Ultath Games , 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF <i>EM: chrisjan.morris@virgin.net</i>	ULA
Rebus Games, 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ <i>EM: dominicm@zoom.co.uk</i>	REB	Rebus Games , 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ	REB	Ultra Sports , <i>WEB: www.ultra-sports.com/</i> <i>EM: im@ultra-sports.com</i>	ULT
Received Wisdom, 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP <i>WEB: www.receivedwisdom.org</i> <i>EM: sw@receivedwisdom.co.uk</i>	RCW	Received Wisdom , 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP	RCW	Undying King Games , 31 Littlemore Road, Oxford, OX4 3SS <i>WEB: www.undkg.co.uk</i>	UKG
Red Mohawk <i>WEB: www.becmagui.com</i>	RED	Red Mohawk	RED	Varela, Juan , <i>TEL: (No Telcar): 01865 452921</i> <i>WEB: http://people.ne.mediaone.net/javar/intro.htm</i>	VAR
Richardson, Stephen, Guardian Games, 51 Amersham Rise, Apsley, Nottingham NG8 5QN <i>EM: stephen@guardians.freeserve.co.uk</i>	RIC	Richardson, Stephen , Guardian Games, 51 Amersham Rise, Apsley, Nottingham NG8 5QN	RIC	Verein der Feinde , <i>EM: javar@mediaone.net</i> <i>WEB: www.vds-verein.de</i> <i>EM: The_Feapon@gmx.de</i>	VdF
Rick, Gregory <i>WEB: http://www.plancturel.com/kh/engade/</i>	RIC	Rick, Gregory	RIC		
Robey Chris, 27 Bowness Avenue, Dileon, Oxon, OX11 8NF <i>EM: gregory@plancturel.com</i>	RBY	Robey Chris , 27 Bowness Avenue, Dileon, Oxon, OX11 8NF	RBY		
Rechorzsk, Peter <i>WEB: www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/116y/2187/rbchorzsk.htm</i> <i>EM: rbchorzsk@netspice.net.au</i>	RZE	Rechorzsk, Peter	RZE		



Zine Listings

This list only contains details of Zines and Zine Editors who have been in contact with Flagship.

Abyssinian Prince, Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA (Email: burgess@world.std.com)

Armistice Day, Stephen Agar, 47 Preston Drive, Brighton, BN1 6LA (Email: stephen@armisticeday.com)

Boris the Spider (Email: pboldue@aol.com)

Devolution, Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creaton Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN6 8RP (Email: tony@hollowell.plus.com)

Diplomacy 2000, www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/

Fights of Fancy, Philip Honeybone, Email: phil@melly98.freeserve.co.uk

For Whom The Die Rolls, www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/

(Email: Keith@Thomasson.com)

Ode, John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: John@ode.online.net)

off-the-shelf, Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: off-the-shelf@olympus.net)

Psychopath, www.psychozine.co.uk (Web publication only.)

Rhein-Neckar-Zine, (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Kadsruhe, Germany. (Email: lukas@oberfoul.de)

S.O.B., Chris Hassler, 2000 S. Armour Ct., La Habra, CA 90631 USA (Email: chassler@adelphia.net)

Serendipity, John Wabley, Töpferreihe 4, 38259 Salzgitter, Germany (Email: jwabley@aol.com)

Strangitude, Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Rd, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1YJ (Email: strangezine@lineone.net)

To Win Just Once, Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UP (Email: twjto@pevans.co.uk)

Underneath The Mango Tree, Alex Bardy (Email: alex@mangozine.com)

Variable Pig, Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: cj.reader@wanadoo.nl)

HOW TO READ THE GALACTIC VIEW TABLES

Process shows if the game is run by computer (C), human (H) or mixed (M). The **Duration** of the game is shown by O (Open-ended) or F (Finite).
GM is the GM's code shown in our listing of UK & Web-based firms.
Medium shows whether a game is available via email (e), paper (p) or web-based play (w). Language is also indicated here where a game is offered other than in English. (G)
Medium

Start-up shows how much you will pay to begin playing the game. * indicates deposit returnable if you play to the end of the game, or prepayment discounts available (see moderator for details).

Free Turns - many GMs will give you a number of free turns at the start of the game
Turn Fee - how much each turn costs. * means that return postage is paid by the GM each turn. S means you need to send an SSAE or at least pay for the GM's postage.
Other Fees - the following footnotes apply:(a) more for larger positions or later turns in the game, (b) more for battle reports, (c) more for extended orders/longer reports, (d) more for several possible extras, (e) lower cost if you join the club S indicates no credit/refunds available. (f) higher start-up fee for paper rules
Flagship Ref shows the issue of Flagship where you can find the best description so far: a=article, s=Spokesmen Speak, d=diary. Thus, 48 means 'Spokesmen Speak issue #4'. * indicates a 'Euro-friendly' game: deadlines at least two weeks apart and prices for Continental players not more than 30% above those listed here.
Note - occasional optional extras like a newsletter are not included in the prices unless we judge that they are fairly frequent and essential for enjoyment of the game. Some GMs give discounts if you pay for a batch of turns in advance. Some offer reduced fees for email play.

New Entries: Destiny (+1)

Deletions: Horse Racing, (-1)

Changes: Adventurers Guild, Ashes of Empire, Chaos Trail, Reality Racing, Renaissance, Satumalia South

Total: 292 games (no change)

Note that all prices are generally for the UK and are given in £s except where noted. Non-UK European players should note that rates are usually about 25% higher than for UK players. If in doubt, contact the GMs.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
1483 Online	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	GOB	e	Free	No	Free	-	94s
523 Sweet FA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£7.60 per season	0	£0.00	(a)	41a
A Day at the Races	M-O	Sport: Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	42s
A&D Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	A&D	p	Free	1	£1.50	(a)	81s
ABPW	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	BOO	p	£1.00	0	£1.00	-	92a
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Absolute Power 2	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	2	£5.00	-	-
Absolute Heroes	M-O	RPG: Superhero	JAD	p	£15.00	2	£4.50	(b)	91a
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	0	£2.50	(b)	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Adventurers Guild	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	LOC	e	*70 per game	0	£2.50	(b)	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Aeroball	M-O	Adventure	EPM	e	Free	1	£1.10	-	-
AqamemnonII	M-O	Sport: Fictional	WIG	p	£2.00	1	£1.25	-	62-63a
Alamaze	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KEL	p	£12.00	5	£2.00	-	76a
American Civil War Battles	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£15.00	1	£3.50	-	71a, 80a
American War of Ind. Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	60s
AncientEmpires	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
ApexPBM Soccer	C-O	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	£1 month	58a
Ashes of Empire	M-O	Sport: Soccer	APE	e	£1.50	0	£3.00 for 2 games	35a	-
Aspects of Might	C-F	Sci-Fi	CSP	e	?	?	?	-	98s
Assyria's End	M-O	Adventure	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(c)	94s
Atlantis	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	90a
Asterlitz	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	VAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Asterlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	QIR	G only	?	?	?	-	-
Asterlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SUP	e, p	£10.00*	0	£3.75	(a)	34s, 96a
Asterlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SPH	e, p	?	?	?	(a)	34s, 96a
Asterlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SSV	e, p, G	?	?	£6 Euro	?	34s, 96a
Away the Lads	M-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.40	(a)	42s
Bakufu	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	DRK	p	£36 per game	?	£2.50	-	-
Barbarians at the Gate	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	SOF	e, p	£5.00	?	£2.50	-	-
Batony of the Rivers	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HIL	p	£10.00	3	£2.50	-	-
Battle Plan	C-O	Sport: Basketball	CAM	p	£5	0	£3.50	(a)	19a
Battle Robots	C-F	Misc: Robots	GSP	e	Free	0	Free	-	85a
Beer Mogul	C-O	Economic	RED	w	Free	0	Free	-	96a
Beyond	M-O	Adventure	SEV	e, p	£9.95	3	£2.95	(a)	86a
Beyond the Stellar Empire	M-O	Sci Fi	KJC	p	Free	1	£2.50 - £3.00	-	87a
Bleddan Diary, A	M-O	Tribal	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	\$	22a, 83a
British Wrestling Association	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	TUR	p	£7.00	6	£1.00	-	80a, 81-84d
Centre-Earth	H-O	Power: Fantasy	BAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	57a, 92a
Championship Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	HEM	p	Free	5	£2.00	(d)	41s
Championship League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SUP	p	Free	0	£1.95	-	53s
Chaos Trail	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WIL	p	Free	0	£1.75 S	(d)	47a, 86a
Chicken Run	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	RCW	e, p	£0.50	0	£0.50	-	-
Clans II	C-O	Tribal	HSI	e, p	Free	4	£3.50	-	38a, 84a
Clovenshield	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	CLO	e	Free	0	Free	-	93a
Coshaw Postal Football League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	COE	p	Free	0	£1.50	(d)	70s
Come On You Reds	M-F	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£1.00	1	£1.00	-	34a, 91a
Company Commander	M-F	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	96a, 97a
Conclave	M-F	Power: Fantasy	UKG	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.50	-	91s, 96a
Continental Rails	C-F	Misc: Railway	FUE	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.25	-	21a
Covert Operations	C-F	Economic	FBI	e	\$25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Crack of Doom II	M-O	Tribal	HAQ	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	(d)	96a
Crimisil's Quest World	M-O	Tribal	CRA	p	£9.95	2	£2.50	-	7a
Dark Age II	C-F	Wargame	TIM	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.20*	-	85a
Destiny	C-O	Power: Historical	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 3	-	51a
Diadochi	C-O	Sci Fi	MAD	e, p	£10.00	4	£3.50	(a)	100a
Diplomacy	H-F	Power: Historical	CYC	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	78a, 79d, 81d
Directive 32	H-F	Wargame: Historical	TIW	p	£10.00	1	?	-	73s
Domination	M-F	Sci Fi	COZ	p	£10.00	0	£6.00	-	-
Dragonhelm	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	w	Free	-	Free	-	-	-
DungeonsWorld	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	79a
Eagle	H-F	Adventure	MAD	p	£5.00	2	£2.00	(d)	77-80d, 92-94d
		Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£1.0	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
EHFA	C-O	Sport: Soccer	EFT	w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
BAN	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BAN	e	Free	0	Free	-	96a
BRI	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BRI	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
BRN	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BRN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
SPN	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	SPN	p	£5.00	5	£0.80	-	84s, 93a
CRO	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	CRO	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a, 96a
GIL	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	GIL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	94s
COL	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	COL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
EVA	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	EVA	p	£10.00	4	£2.00	-	34a, 93a
AKA	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	AKA	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
JEM	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	JEM	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
BRN	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG)	BRN	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a
COO	H-O	RPG: Sci-Fi (EG)	COO	e	Free	0	Free	-	93a, 96a
COP	H-O	RPG: Sci-Fi (EG)	COP	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	91a
ULA	H-O	RPG: Modern	ULA	F only	£4.50	?	£3.50	-	-
El Mythico	C-F	Wargame: Modern	TDG	p	?	?	4 Euro	-	-
PEG	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PEG	e	Free	2	\$2	-	74s, 91s
FBI	C-F	Misc: Political	FBI	e	£5.00	?	£2.00	-	63s
SOF	M-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	-	-
VIK	H-F	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	78s
SAB	M-F	Sci Fi	SAB	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	63a
AGE	H-F	Wargame: Historical	AGE	p	£6.00	2	£3.00	-	98a
DRK	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	DRK	e, p	£10.00	3	£2.10	-	-
SCR	M-O	Sport: Horses-Racing	SCR	p	£6.00	3	£2.10	-	-
VdF	C-F	Sci-Fi	VdF	e	TBA	0	*0.5	(e)	-
KIC/CRA	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC	p	Free	1	£1.90	-	53a
SAB	M-F	Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£1.00 for 3	-	-
OAT	M-F	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	£3.00	0	£1.50 + 50p per month	-	-78s
DRK	M-O	Sport: Horses-Racing	DRK	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	-
ULI	C-O	Sport: Cycling	ULI	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
KIC	C-O	Sport: Soccer	KIC	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	53a
FBI	C-F	Wargame: Historical	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3.50	-	3a
WLG	C-F	Wargame: Historical	WLG	e	\$5	0	\$1	-	-
TIW	C-F	Wargame: Historical	TIW	e, p	£5	0	£2	(f)	-
KEL	C-F	Wargame: Historical	KEL	w, e	£10.00	5	£2.00	-	38a
FLO	M-O	Sport: Soccer	FLO	w	Free	0	Free	-	93s
MAE	C-O	Misc	MAE	p	Free	0	£2.00	-	84a
DRK	C-O	Sport: Soccer	DRK	p	Free	0	Free	-	-
AGM	H-F	Power: Historical	AGM	w	£0.80	0	£5.00	-	46s
SSV	C-F	Sport: Soccer	SSV	G only	?	?	0.75 Euro	-	-
FBI	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3.50	-	-
Sci-Fi	C-F	Sci-Fi	Sci-Fi	e	Free	5	\$2.25	-	-
ARN	C-F	Sci-Fi	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
REB	C-F	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94s
SOE/McC	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOE/McC	p	£5.00	0	£11.00 for 4	-	20a
McC	C-O	Sport: Baseball	McC	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	-
McG	C-O	Sport: Boxing	McG	p	£5.00	5	£9.00 for 4	-	-
SOE/McC	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOE/McC	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	-
SYN	C-O	Sport: Fictional	SYN	p	£7.70	2	£3.00	-	79s
PAG	C-F	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	(a)	73a, 83d
LOC	C-F	Misc: Crime	LOC	e	Free	0	£4 Euro	-	65a
CAL	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	CAL	e	Free	0	£1.75	-	38a
CAM	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAM	p	Free	0	Free	-	96s
GGG	H-F	Wargame: Historical	GGG	e	Free	-	Free	-	94s
ARN	C-F	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
McC	C-O	Sport: American Football	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	-
SAB	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	2	£2.00 for 3	-	-
RIC	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	RIC	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	(c)	53s
AGM	C-F	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	-
MAD	C-F	Adventure	MAD	w	Free	0	Free	-	97a
FUE	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	FUE	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.25	-	48a, 61a
SSV	C-O	Adventure	SSV	G only	?	?	6.9 Euro/month	-	-
TIW	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	TIW	e, p	£10.00	0	£3.00	-	88s
FBI	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3	-	40a
IOP	C-O	Sport: Basketball	IOP	p	£5.00	2	£3.25	-	-
SAB	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SAB	p	Free	1	£2.25	(d)	33a
PEG	C-O	Misc: Politics	PEG	e	Free	0	£2	-	-
ABM	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	ABM	p	TBA	2	\$2	-	-
KIC	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KIC	p	Free	2	£1.85	-	-
ARM	C-F	Misc: Crime	ARM	e	Free	2	£1.50	-	-
WPI	C-O	Misc: Crime	WPI	p	£1.00	1	£1.00	-	65a
FRY	C-O	Sport: Soccer	FRY	p	£1.50	0	£1.50	-	-
SPE	M-O	Sport: Wrestling	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25	-	-
KNG	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KNG	e	Free	-	Free	-	18a, 34a, 89a
WHS	H-F	Wargame: Fantasy	WHS	p	£5.00	1	£2.50	-	-
LVA	C-O	Economic	LVA	e	?	?	?	-	13a, 77a
SAB	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 2	-	89s
TDJ	C-F	Wargame: Robotic	TDJ	e, p	?	?	£2 or 3 Euro	-	73a
AGM	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	(d)	76a, 86-89d
SAB	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	2	£10.00 for 3	-	-
PIN	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	PIN	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.50	(e)	59a, 93a
HAQ	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£20.00	1	£3.70	(e)	90a, 93a, 96a
SSV	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	SSV	e, p, G	?	?	5 Euro+	(a)	90a, 93a, 96a

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
Legends of Israel	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	EPI	e, p	Free	?	£1.00	(a)	90a, 93a, 96a
Lizards	C-F	Adventure	VIK	p	?	?	£2.50	?	54a, 90a
LoTe: 1	M-O	Power: Historical	TNL	e	?	?	£5.00	?	(84a), 97a
LoTe: 10	M-O	Power: Historical	HAR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 11	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 13	M-O	Power: Historical	BAL	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 16	M-O	Power: Historical	COR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 19	M-O	Power: Historical	OLS	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 2	M-O	Power: Historical	OLS	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 20	M-O	Power: Historical	DGN	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 23	M-O	Power: Historical	HEF	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 24	M-O	Power: Historical	HEL	e	?	?	?	?	(84a), 94a
LoTe: 25	M-O	Power: Historical	NIE	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 4	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 42	M-O	Power: Historical	DOD	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 5	M-O	Power: Historical	PAT	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 51	M-O	Power: Historical	MAR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 7	M-O	Power: Historical	HTW	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LoTe: 8	M-O	Power: Historical	FLI	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LT Wars	C-F	Wargame: Future	SPE	e, p	Free	?	£1.90	?	76a
Little Earth PBM	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.90	-6a, 80a, 88a, 94a, 96a	
Mighty Heroes	H-O	RPG: Superhero	RCW	e, p	£9.90 a year	0	n/a	?	
MISL	C-F	Sport: Soccer	MIS	e, w	Free	0	Free	?	96s
Mobius I	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e	£8	0	£8	(a)	47a
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	KIC	p	Free	0	£2.10	?	-
Monsters	C-F	Misc: War	ABM	p	£6	0	£6.50	?	-
Mortis Maximus	C-O	Sport: Fictional	PEG	e	Free	0	Free	?	91s
Mundus	H-F	Power: Historical	MAD	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	?	81s
Murina	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	?	-
Mystic Arena	C-O	Misc: Arena	HVS	e	Free	0	Free	?	-
Napoleonic Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£6.00	0	£2.80	?	94s
Necromancer	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	ADM	p	Free	2	£2.00	-	71, 73d
Neutral Zone	C-O	Sport: American Football	NEU	e, w	£3.5	0	£1.25	-	63a, 70, 71d
No Holds Barred	C-O	Sport: Fictional	LAU	p	Free	2	£2.00	?	92a
Nuclear Destruction	C-F	Wargame	FBI	e	£5	0	£2.50	?	69a
Offside Ref!	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAR	p	Free	0	£1.40	?	43s
Overlord	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	STM	p	£10.00	4	£2.50	?	57a
Paloma League, The	H-O	Sport: Soccer	SHO	p	£5.00	0	£10.00 for 6	?	43s
Panzergruppe II	M-F	Wargame	AGM	p	Free	0	£3.00	?	82s
Penalty!	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAR	p	Free	0	£1.25	?	65s
Phantasmeech	C-O	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£9.95	3	£1.95	?	30a
Planet Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SCR	p	£5.00	1	£3.75	?	77s
Planation	C-O	Sci-Fi	PLA	e	Free	-	?	?	-
Planetary Wrestling Syndicate	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	LAN	p	Free	0	£3.50	(a)	76s
Play On	C-O	Sport: Aussie Rules	McC	e, p	AUS\$10	?	AUS\$5.50	?	91a
Pop Tarts	H-F	Economic	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£9.99 per year	(c)	23s
Portals & Palaces	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HOL	e, p	£5.00	1	£1.30	?	63s
Premier League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	BOU	w	Free	0	£8.00 per season	?	94s
Premier Management Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	PRE	e	£10.00	1	£6.00/month	?	32s
Prims Inter Pares	M-O	Power: Historical	INT	e, p	Free	0	£1.60	(c)	75d, 84a, 85a, 2a
Pro Soccer	C-F	Sport: Soccer	OLY	e, w	Free	1	Free	?	97a
Professional Basketball League	C-O	Sport: Basketball	TZR	e, w	Free	0	£2.50	?	41s
Prometheus	C-F	Wargame	HKM	e, p	£10.00	0	£3.50	?	91s
Psyche	M-O	RPG: Future	COO	p	£20.00	1	£4.00	?	41s
Pub Kickin'	H-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£5.00 per season	5	£1.00	?	57a
Puna	M-O	Sport: Soccer	BUR	e, p	Free	1	£1.75	(d)	36a, 47a, 94a
Pure Fantasy Fbbl	C-O	Sport: Soccer	PTG	p	Free	1	£2.10	?	36a, 47a, 94a
Quest	C-O	Adventure	KIC	e	Free	0	£1.75	?	60a, 90s
Quest Online	C-O	Adventure	ABM	e	Free	0	£2.60 for 10	?	89a
Raceplan Grand Prix	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	KIC	w	Free	0	£3.00	(a)	96s
Reality Racing	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	McC	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	?	41a
Realms of Enna	M-O	Power: Fantasy	DRE	p	Free	0	£1.75	?	89s
Renaissance	M-O	Power: Historical	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	(d)	62s
Riddle of the Sands	M-O	Power: Fantasy	XAN	e	£5	0	£2.90	(d)	51a, 85a, 96s
Riftlords	C-O	Sport: Fantasy	SIL	e	£20.00	10	£2.50	(d)	89a
Rugby League Breakout	C-O	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	No	3	£4	?	62s
Rugby League Challenge	M-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	3	£5.00 for 4	(a)	53a
Rugby League Stats	M-O	Sport: Rugby	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.10	?	96s
Rugby Union Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	?	96s
Ruin Chase	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	?	51a, 85a, 96s
SF	H-O	Sport: Cricket	SOE	p	£5.00	5	£1.00 for 4	?	62s
Starmania: Exile	H-O	Sci-Fi	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£9.99 per year	?	53a
Starmania: NE	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.00	?	96s
Starmania: NW	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	DRK	e, p	£5.00	2	£4.00	?	96s
Starmania: S	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WLL	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	?	96s
Starmania: Serpent Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	TFT	p	Free	0	Free	?	96s
Starmania: Viridian Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	CAS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	?	96s
Scottish Email Soccer League	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	DRK	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	?	96s
Seedogs and Darlings	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SES	e, w	Free	0	Free	?	94s
Serim Rai	H-O	RPG: Historical	SOD	e	Free	3	£1.50	?	50a, 92a, 96a
Serim Rai	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAR	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	?	50a
Serim Rai	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	INC	p	Free	0	£3.50	?	50a, 78a
Shambhala	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	MIN	p	£5.00	3	£2.00	(c)	50a, 78a
Shambhala	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	WAY	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	?	-
Shamduk	C-O	Sport: Basketball	McC	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	?	-

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GBP (Elsewhere)	21.00	30.00	55.00

Meets & Conventions

GAMES GAMES GAMES DAYS: Monthly games days hosted by SFC Press at *The Duke of York, 35 New Cavendish St, London W1* from 12.30 onwards. Admission is free. Contact SFC Press Old Dover Road, London SE3 8SJ; email events@sfcpress.co.uk Upcoming dates: 14th December, 11th January and 8th February.

NOVEMBER

MIDCON: November 22nd-24th 2002, at the *Thistle Hotel, Queensway, Birmingham*. Will include the UK National Diplomacy Championship as well as plenty of other gaming events. Newcomers welcomed! Registration is £10. Please make cheques payable to SFC Press. Bookings and further information from: Midcon, SFC Press Ltd, Not Just Stamps, 17 Crendon Street, High Wycombe HP13 6LJ

www.sfcpress.co.uk/Events/Midcon/Midcon_booking.htm

Re the National Diplomacy Championship itself: Jeremy Tullet, 7 Midland Place, Derby DE1 2RR jeremy.d.tullet@btinternet.com

DRAGONMEET: November 30th in *Kensington Town Hall, London*. A friendly convention for all gamers. Details from:

www.dragonmeet.com

DECEMBER

SETTLERS TOURNAMENT: 1st December 2002, in *Brighton*, run by the Brighton Boardgames Club. Info from:

news@brighton-boardgames.org.uk

HOGMANAY-CON: 2pm December 29th 2002 - 2pm January 2nd 2003 at *16 Blacket Place, Edinburgh EH9 1RL*. Gaming and celebrations. There's room for just 40 players, so register well in advance to be sure of a place and also a ticket to the street party on New Year's Eve. There's a variety of b&b accommodation nearby. Charges: just £1 per day for heating. Contact: Tanya Fox at tanyafoxgal@hotmail.com or write to Tanya Fox, Hogmanay-Con, 16 Blacket Place, Edinburgh EH9 1RL.

JANUARY 2003

WINTER STABCON 2003 3rd-5th January, at *Woolton Hall, on the University of Manchester's Fallowfield campus on Wilmslow Road*. The latest in a long line of relaxed (and enjoyable) general games conventions. Membership is £10 in advance or £12.50 on the door. (Day memberships may be available) Rooms are £17.50 per night + £6 for a full English breakfast. Because games are played in the bar and adjoining areas, there is minimum age limit of 18. For more information, e-mail bookings@stabcon.org.uk.

OXCON 2003: 25th-26th January 2003 at *The Mitre, The High Street, Oxford*. Tournaments include ... The 13th Annual Diplomacy Tournament on Saturday 25th, The 6th Annual Oxford The Settlers of Catan Tournament on Sunday 26th, Lost Cities Tournament on Sunday 26th, Fifteen-To-One on Saturday 25th. Many, many other games played informally over the weekend!

Comprehensive weekend entrance fee, £6. Doors open 10:00am. Open all day for informal gaming. Accommodation is not available directly from Oxcon. However, the organisers are happy for you to contact them for details of local B&B's and hotels. Details from

dipsoc@hotmail.com
richard.huzzey@st-annes.ox.ac.uk
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~diplo/oxcon/index.html>

FEBRUARY 2003

CONCEPTION 2003 5 - 9th February 2003. *Naish Holiday Park, Christchurch, Dorset*. In their words, "Conception is back! ... the fourth annual South Coast gaming convention ... starting on the evening of Wednesday 5th February 2003 and continuing all the way through to Sunday 9th February 2003. Accommodation, which starts from £50, covers all five nights, and is in the form of centrally-heated holiday chalets with showers, microwaves, fridges etc. We will have a full range of both classic, living, LARP and war-gaming events, both scheduled and ad-hoc. Hot food and drink will be available on site (8am to 10pm), and the Site Swimming Pool will be open. There will be trade stands as well. Full details on the Conception 2003 websites at

www.wessexgaming.org
www.valinor.freemove.co.uk/conception/

WORLD DIPCON XIII/ARMADA Regatta 2003 at **GenghisCon XXIV** World Diplomacy Championship (14-16 February 2003). Denver, Colorado, USA

Web: *ARMADA's Regatta/WDC 2003 page*
Email Manus Hand: manus@diplom.org

MARCH 2003

TOWERCON VI 21 - 23 March 2003, *Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, Lancashire*. An independent games convention with accommodation. TowerCon aims to provide a gaming environment that is relaxed and friendly and caters to a variety of gaming types. Board Games, Freeform, RPG's and war gaming are all supported.

www.towercon.co.uk



APRIL 2003

GENCON EUROPE 18th-21st April, at *London Olympia*. The latest version of GenCon on this side of the Atlantic, now under new management and on a radically different date. Although details are still emerging, we are already offered an art programme, an auction, a bring and buy, seminars, and lots of other stuff, including guests of honour Todd Lockwood and Jonathan Tweet. For details, including presumably the housing and travel packages which have also been mentioned:

www.genconuk.com

www.genconeurope.com

E-mail enquiries to evtcustserv@gencom.com.

BAYCON 2003 from 1.00pm Thursday 24th April to 3.00pm Sunday 27th April 2003 (the weekend after Easter) at the *Exeter Court Hotel, Kennford, Devon*. Kennford is situated approximately 5 miles south of Exeter on the main A38 (at the first junction following the end of the M5 motorway, and signposted Kennford Services). There is ample free parking in the hotel's own car park. The main event of the weekend will be the Victor Ludorum tournament to find the UK National Board Games Champion. An account is kept of all games played throughout the convention and the player with the best overall score receives the Victor Ludorum Trophy. In addition, there are prizes for the top ten players.

www.downbeat.demon.co.uk/baycon.html

MAY 2003

MAYCON: 2nd to 5th May 2003 at the *City Inn, Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HW*. Boardgames, Silly drive, Freeforms, Music Quiz, RPG and whatever other games you ask for. Accommodation available in the hotel. Contact address: julia_and_chris@computeability.demon.co.uk

AUGUST 2003

CONJURATION: 1st-3rd August, at *New Hall, Cambridge*. The latest British Roleplaying Society convention (the last two being Barocon and Rococon), with Guest of Honour Ken Hite, author of much remarkable RPG material, not least "Suppressed Transmission", his regular column in Pyramid. The slight shift in dates from previous BRS events permits the con to use less expensive student rooms (with shared facilities) at £33 per night including breakfast; en-suite rooms will also be available. More extensive information should be available very shortly; see www.conjuration.info. Membership currently costs £25; cheques, payable to "Conjuration", should be sent to 48 Bracklyn Road, Cambridge, CB1 3PQ.

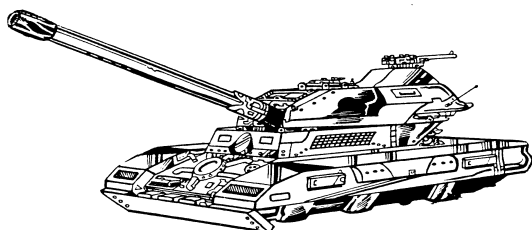
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