

# FLAGSHIP

THE MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS



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Conventions, MMORPGs and more ...*



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# REPORT FROM THE BRIDGE

## Welcome to Flagship

THERE'S A thrill in my editorial heart to be putting the 110th issue of *Flagship* together: it's such a nice big issue number, and you'll find plenty of good stuff here in its pages.

With this issue we have had more than half an eye on *European GenCon* from October 14th-17th, so I'm typing this with my fingers crossed that we'll make our production deadline. With that in mind, I'm happy to greet anyone who picks up a copy of *Flagship* for the first time.

Regular readers will know that we have always been an independent magazine and that we always try to be both accurate and fair. Anyone who's new to us may be interested to hear that *Flagship* has been running since 1983: we started with turn-based games, but now extend our coverage to include all types of gaming. We've always relied on our readers to tell us about the games they play. So if we don't feature the games that you're interested in, it's not a deliberate omission: tell us about 'em or, better still, write them up for us yourself!

Since issue #104 we've been listing games shops in our pages, putting a box round those which stock *Flagship* (thank you, stockists). However, although we'll continue this effort to get copies into shops, we know that it would ruin us to aim for a more general newsagents distribution, because we write for a specialised group. So we don't plan to change from relying on subscribers for our readership base. If you subscribe, you keep us going and you keep me keen, so please don't be tempted to fall away: we need your enthusiasm to maintain our own. Oh, and it's worth mentioning that we can start a *Flagship* subscription as a present for a gaming friend of yours, along with an appropriate card in your name: we'll even add an extra issue to your existing subscription if you take up this suggestion.

The great pleasure for me in editing a games magazine is that players have happy memories of what they've already enjoyed playing, while at the same time there's always something new to cover. Maybe at a time when elections are looming acrimoniously in the USA and will follow, later, in Britain, the joy of real life seems diminished by political campaigning. I'm a political myself, and find real life too tawdry for these pages. This is why I'm a great believer in games as a civilised, creative form of entertainment: it's healthier by far to become a monarch in a game than to aim for power in real life.

Keep it imaginary, that's what I say.

*Carol*



# FLAGSHIP

#110, October / November '04

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Contributions welcomed for Flagship 111. By November 8th, please.

# NEWSDESK ROLEPLAYING



## RPG GAMES

A couple of books from *West End Games* serve to show how different from each other the settings for RPGs can be. **D6 Spaceships** at \$12.95 offers guidelines for advanced ship design, rules for ship-to-ship combat, sample ships, and other information that's useful for any Dungeon Master working up a starflight campaign. On the other hand, in their **D6 Bloodshadows**, 'The sorcerer upstairs conjures too loud; tough detectives swap biting comments with vampires in evening gowns'. Also at \$12.95, this book offers a setting of 'pulp adventure and dark fantasy', where the original **MasterBook** series has been updated for use with D6 Adventure.



There's also a pulp element in *Bad Axe Games'* sourcebook **Grim Tales**, which costs \$34.95 and is based on d20 Modern. *Bad Axe* describe this as a 'high adventure, low magic campaign sourcebook for fantastic roleplaying in your favorite pulp genres, from the dawn of Atlantis to the apocalyptic future of a dying planet.' It's divided into one section for players and one for game masters, with the Players' Section dealing with character creation, all 'arranged by genre and/or time period', while the GMs' Section presents 'a wide variety of campaign trappings - Spellcasting, Horror, Technology, Vehicles, Firearms, Cyberware, and more.' Oh, and there's also 'a collection of evil overlords and their minions.'

*Wizards of the Coast* present several useful D&D sourcebooks, all at \$29.95 each. There's **Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead**, which looks at the undead in the D&D world. There's plenty about both the traditional undead creatures and some new monsters, as well as information about how to play them or fight them. 'Extensive story and campaign elements and flavor information add interest and dimension to playing or fighting undead. The book itself is designed in prestige format, with heavy use of



art throughout, a full-painted cover, and construction from premium materials.' Surely the Latin of its title is dodgy, though?

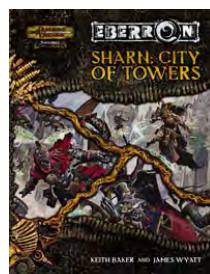
Their **Complete Arcane** details the use of arcane magic by any D&D character. There's also 'a wealth of material for traditionally non-magical characters, so the tips and data provided will assist all class types. In addition to new feats, spells, prestige



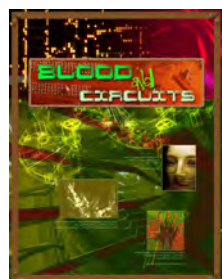
classes, and magic items, this title adds new and revised core classes. There are also new arcane-related monsters and information on how to fight, join, or summon each one.'

**Shining South**, also from Wizards of the Coast, deals with a little-explored region of the **Forgotten Realms** setting. Its geography is described, along with its races, regions and differing cultural elements. Three short adventures are included.

Their **Sharn: City of Towers (Eberron)** deals with the most important city in the **Eberron** setting, Sharn, which is the starting point for most campaigns and adventures. This sourcebook covers 'how Sharn looks and works, from power and politics to trade and commerce, and with four-color illustrations throughout. There are detailed geographical descriptions of every part of the city, with a complement of maps for visual reference...'



*RPG Objects* present several interesting titles. **Blood and Circuits** at \$14.95 (print) or \$6.95 (ebook) is a sourcebook for gear and equipment creation in modern and future d20 settings. This should be useful for players, while for a GM it's 'a window



into weird and super scientific achievements found in literature and comics, allowing for the creation of all sorts of wonders and terrors to fill his campaign with.' **Darwin's World** at \$19.95 (print) or \$10.00 (ebook) is a d20 Fantasy sourcebook, set in a dystopian, irradiated future. **Legends of Excalibur: Arthurian Adventures** (core rules) is part of their d20 fantasy series and includes the

**Knights Handbook** and the **Arthurian Campaign Guide**. Their **Blood and Space (core rules)**, however, at \$19.95 (print) or \$8.95 (ebook) is a starship adventure sourcebook 'designed to supplement or extend any of the popular d20 space based role-playing games.'

[www.rpgobjects.com](http://www.rpgobjects.com)

*Gold Rush Games* offer **Sengoku: Revised Edition** at \$29.95 in paperback or \$7.95 to download. **Sengoku** is an RPG set in C16th Japan, a time of civil war and samurai. [www.rpgnow.com](http://www.rpgnow.com).



*Mongoose Publishing* have produced the **Mongoose Pocket GM's Handbook (core rules)** for \$19.95, to correspond with their **Pocket Player's Handbook** and **The Quintessential Barbarian II** for \$21.95, which contains all the essential information about this fantasy archetype. They also offer **Across Thunder River (Conan)** at \$34.95, dealing with one of the most dangerous forces of the Hyborian Age, the Picts, who are its 'darkest and most sinister villains.'

And for something completely different, *nbos Software* have constructed **The Fractal Mapper 7.0**, which is 'a high-powered mapping system that lets gamers create a wide variety of maps - dungeons, continents, cities, and more! With its easy to use interface, powerful features, and unique capabilities, making high quality maps with Fractal Mapper is a breeze!' You can download the program for \$34.95, with a reduced rate available if you have an earlier version.

[www.rpgnow.com](http://www.rpgnow.com)



Rick Loomis of *Flying Buffalo Inc* reports that their RPG **Tunnels & Trolls** is going to appear in a movie, due out some time next summer.

The film is to be called '*Bickford Schmecker's Cool Ideas*', and its characters will be playing a game of T&T in one scene. Pretty cool itself, eh?

*Flying Buffalo* are also reprinting their **Lost Worlds** combat picture-books, all at \$7.50 each plus shipping. These are grouped as the **Dinosaur** books and then the **Feminine** books.

[www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com)

# NEWSDESK PBM



## WARGAMES

We're delighted to be able to feature a playtester's report on the new game **Fall of Rome** this issue.

Its designer is Rick McDowell, whom some of you will remember from the days when he used to run **Alamaze**. **Fall of Rome** is an online turn-based strategy game, and Rick's *Enlightened Age Entertainment* (EAE) first launched it on September 3rd.

The game is for twelve players and ends after 24 turns. As its title indicates, it's an historical wargame, set in the 5th century, at the dawn of the Dark Ages. Players take the role of the kings of that period, struggling for dominance across Europe. The firm stresses that the game 'involves not only intense battles, but political maneuvering, economic development, espionage, spying, and plenty of intrigue in the negotiations and deal-making between players'. Just the sort of thing that wargaming players enjoy, in fact!

EAE's press release is aimed at players who may not have tried turn-based gaming before: we reckon that experienced turn-based gamers will also be interested in what it says a new player can expect from the game: 'In any one turn each player issues more than a dozen commands to his varied forces. These include ordering the movement and specific battle tactics of armies across a map of ancient Europe, commanding the noble court, attempting assassinations, sabotage or other espionage, gleaning divinations from the high priestess, and issuing commands to improve defense and economic output of their civilization. Each player chooses a time at his convenience within the 72 hour period between turns to plan his strategy and issue his commands using the intuitive graphic user interface. The game is browser-based so there is nothing to buy at a store and no large files to download.'

There's a slight touch of fantasy, in that the game also contains powerful artifacts such as Excalibur or the Sword of Mars ('legend has that it was possessed by Atilla'), which your heroes must seek to recover from their mythical guardians.

The charges are \$12.95 for a monthly subscription, with the first month of play at half price (\$6.47). Take a look at EAE's impressive website: it's beautifully presented, with full colour and music:

[www.fallofromegame.com](http://www.fallofromegame.com)

In issue 107 we mentioned David Clay's website wargame, **WWII Open Warfare**.

## What is Play By Mail?

THE PROCESS is simple. Using email, an interactive website (or sometimes the post), players send their orders for each turn in the game to a central moderator (or GM), who works out the results and sends them back. This simple process allows hundreds of players to enter game worlds of great depth, to contact each other between turns for discussion and negotiation and to play at a time that suits them.

In most games everybody's orders are processed together for each turn, simultaneously, but the results that are sent

back are the individual ones for your own position. The other players won't know what you're planning unless you choose to tell them, which offers many possibilities for joint and covert action. There are all sorts of games, with all sorts of settings: roleplaying, wargaming, adventuring, empire-building, sports games and plenty more! Some are simple, some are complex, but they will all take skill and planning to play them well.

If you've never tried Play By Mail, give it a go. It will be unlike any other kind of gaming that you've played.

He's now emailed a game newsletter to us, 'The Dublin Chronicle', and very well-produced this looks. News items include 'Disaster in Le Havre', 'Russians hold German advance in South', 'Sydney shelled' and 'Singapore bites back'. At the time of production there were 16 active players, with two key positions vacant. Check the website if you're interested in taking one of them:

[www.wwiopenwar.co.uk](http://www.wwiopenwar.co.uk)

We reviewed Red Emperor's **Empires: The Ancients** last issue, and have now added it to *Galactic View*. Here's a reminder that the turn charge of £13.50/quarter or £39.50/year allows you to hold three game positions during the period of your membership, but because different games run at a choice of rates from daily to two-weekly, this doesn't easily translate to a turn fee.

When you first sign up you can play a trial game lasting six turns, for free.

[www.redemperor.com](http://www.redemperor.com)



## FANTASY WARGAMES

Hot news from Clint Oldridge of *Harlequin Games* and *ME Games*! 'We're very pleased to announce that we're now the proud owners of the **Middle Earth PBM** licence for the entire world. This is another big step for us, but one that we've been looking to take for a long time.

'What will this mean to our players? Lots of things, more updates to software and improvements, but most likely we'll be fixing some minor bugbears and bringing the game in the 21st Century. We'll be able to do face to

face events all over the World (planning the next one in March in Denmark) and hopefully bring out some new modules, *Kin Strife* is our next planned game.

'Face to face events - this is where we get players turn up from the Middle Earth community to play Middle Earth for a weekend. Fast and furious are probably the best words to describe, along with intense fun.'

Congratulations from all at *Flagship!*  
[www.middleearthgames.com](http://www.middleearthgames.com)

*Harlequin's* latest **Legends** game, *C23* is now at 90 players and will become closed to new setups once they hit 100. 'There's a small window of opportunity for people to join this game, but that window is closing fast!'

*Crown 23* is an older and much loved module. It's by far the largest *Legends* module, weighing in at 144 pages - longer than most games' rulebooks. This game sees a tightening of the sometimes woolly victory condition descriptions, along with adventure to promote Overlord and Mercenary positions, especially to encourage them to fortify and improve their starting locations into truly famous cities for other players to visit.

Small tweaks to the Empathic Self Cure and Teleport spells will make it harder for players to use the Character Rolling Thunder technique without removing it as a path to power.

The next module will be *Immortals' Realm*, the most modern module, designed by long-time *Legends* moderator Klaus Bachler (of *SSV Graz*, Austria's leading PBM firm). It's a reworking of the classic *Realm of the Immortals*, with several hundred extra adventure paths, guild structures and victory choices. The thirteen factions are set close to each other in a crucible of violent conflict that tends to make the game short and sweet. Fast wheeler dealing is required to make sure that

# NEWSDESK PBM



your faction is not crushed in all the politicking. Often the winning faction is not the strongest, but the most diplomatic...

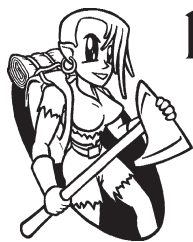
The game will have a nine-day turnaround, something Harlequin have never tried before. 'While seven and fourteen-day turnarounds are easy, the popular ten-day turnaround format leads to turns "pooling" on Mondays and Thursdays, due to weekend turns getting delayed to Mondays. The nine-day format should lead to turns pooling on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This will change the game dynamic, as well as providing relief for the overworked Legends GMs!'

The player aid 'LPE' has been recoded as LPE2, for 32bit Windows systems, with a variety of bugs fixed and improved design. This is now in a public beta test, and the players testing it are reported to be enthusiastic.

[pbm@harlequingames.com](mailto:pbm@harlequingames.com)

Mindless Games report that they're awaiting the completion of a re-write to allow play-by-email for the version of **Serim Ral** that they run. There is still one game that's actively accepting players. After running Serim Ral for some years now, Mindless are also poised to launch two new games - see below for further details of these.

[mindless.games@ntlworld.com](mailto:mindless.games@ntlworld.com)



## RPG AND ADVENTURE GAMES

KJC Games are updating their adventure game **Monster Island**, and welcome comments from the players on any remaining bugs or incomplete items and spells. We can't resist recounting the names of these items - vivid, or what? So, for Bug-fixing there's the Weapon Satchel and the Magic Voodoo Cauldron Spell. For Completion, there's the Magic Rope Spell, Certain Direction Spell, Charm Foe Spell, Silver Lotus Elixir, Stinky Lotus Elixir and Knowledge Statue Carving. For Towers, there's Adding more Wizards, allowing the Tower Owner to grant access to everyone and Other Monsters getting expensive access if without Owner's permission. There are also 'databased descriptions and actions so that new dark places can be added by a GM rather than programming separately every time.'

Monster Island has always been a game that's fun to play, so it's good to hear that this old favourite being improved.

KJC are also about to start work on updating **Quest**, with an overhaul of the magic system. More news on this at it progresses.

[www.kjcgames.com](http://www.kjcgames.com)

New from *k00l.net* comes an open-ended web-based game called **DragonWars**. Its designer is Roland Gilhespy, who used to run the world of Ryn, and who explains that its game engine is one that 'lets you create multiple characters in diverse and amazing worlds. Using online tools, the game moderators can modify the game worlds on the fly, creating interesting new content, and expand the realms in which online characters can explore. There is no limit to the size and types of worlds that can be created, ranging from magical roleplaying kingdoms, to hi-tech sci-fi realms.'

DragonWorld itself is computer-moderated, and is described as combining 'the best traditions of fantasy online gaming and roleplaying, with its own, unique flavours, delivering a truly amazing adventure.' The game world is based on the Ryn setting, where 'there are numerous realms to explore, from great wildernesses, to the darkest dungeons.'

What's more, it's free to play! You start with two different characters, who can adventure separately or together and gather other characters as a group. Your characters can be warriors, wizards, rogues or monks and you develop them according to the game's skills and experience system. You get a map of your surroundings, where you can build a stronghold, and buy and sell equipment. There are Guilds to join and yes, there's a full magic system in which it's possible to develop new spells and magical items.

Player killing is allowed, but only in certain realms. There's plenty of information about the game on the website at

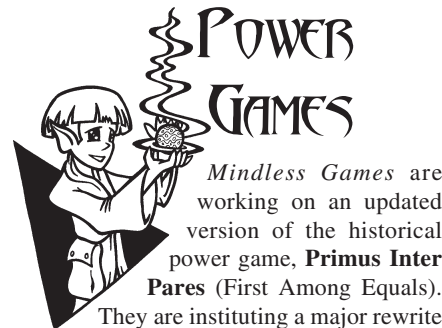
[www.k00l.net](http://www.k00l.net)

Mark Pinder reports that he's changed the game world of his **Lands of Elvaria**. 'A cold snap has hit Elvaria .. well not so much a cold snap as a fully blown ice age rendering the main game world practically uninhabitable ... those who survived the big chill have settled in a new city in another dimension ...'

He's done this to achieve a more compact playing area, allowing for greater player character interaction and says that initial reports from players on the change is favourable.

Mark adds that Elvaria is keeping a steady player base: 'the odd player leaves for personal commitments and another one seems to rejoin. What has been heartening over the past year has been some fresh blood with fresh ideas.' He says that he can always find room for a few extra players to add some diversity.

[Markpinder@aol.com](mailto:Markpinder@aol.com)



Each player is the head of a powerful family, in one of the city states of Greece - 'either in Athens, which was a democracy and therefore slightly more heavy on the politics, or in one of the other Greek Cities where ultimate power is up for grabs...'

Mindless say their new version of the game 'is heavier on the warfare side of things, although wherever you are, all aspects of the game are available to you to a certain extent, including gaining power by commercial greatness, or indeed by nefarious means.' There will be Italian positions later in the game, but 'if you wanna play a Roman, Etruscan, or Samnite, etc... you'll have to wait a bit longer.'

It's good to hear that PiP is being revamped: the original game was popular and offered something different to players: we hope this new version will be able to do the same.

[www.mindlessworld.net](http://www.mindlessworld.net)

Flying Buffalo Inc are running a game called **Election Year**, to coincide with the US presidential elections.

'Guess what?' says FBI's Rick Loomis, 'It's an election year, and I don't like either presidential candidate very much. So let's elect one of you good folks as president of the USA...'

The game is only six turns long (with three turns for the primary and three turns for the general election).

FBI allow you to give them your preference for political party (Democrat or Republican), 'but if you do, you have to give both your first and second choice, and we don't guarantee you'll get your first choice!'

They're currently making a special offer of \$15 for the entire game, including the setup fee. Find the rules at

[www.flyingbuffalo.com/eyrules.htm](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/eyrules.htm)

# NEWSDESK MISC



## SPORTS GAMES

*Mindless Games* announce a new football management game, called **Master of the Dugout**. They'll be running it with the options of PBeM/PBM/Play-By-Disc. Startup is free, and the turn cost varies according to which option you choose: £1.50 email, £2.00 (probably) play-by-disc or £2.50 postal.

They're starting playoffs for entrance into the English Premier Division now, at the beginning of October, with the Season starting proper at the beginning of November. Turns are weekly, with an evening kick-off each week at 7pm on a Tuesday. Playing by email, you'll receive your results later that same evening. 'Don't worry if you don't get straight into the Premiership - there are four English Leagues, Scottish Prem, Italian, French, Spanish and German Leagues, and more cup competitions than you can throw a muddy boot at!

'We also have the option for you to take over a National Team! (Can you win the World Cup with lowly Liechtenstein???)' 'We're very excited,' they report, 'as we think the game has the best/most realistic match engine (which has been running quietly for 12 years so is bug-free) on the market, and the new front end is really nice looking and easy to use.'

Andy and Cara are well-experienced GMs, so we're sure that their optimism is justified.  
[mindless.games@ntlworld.com](mailto:mindless.games@ntlworld.com)

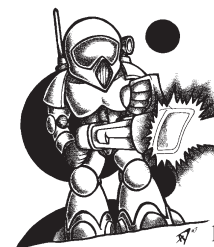
## CRIME GAMES

Last issue, we mentioned that *KJC Games* were working on an updated version of their long-running game of gang warfare, **It's a Crime**.

This is now out of playtest and will be starting soon, as Game 43, which will have new programs containing all the improvements: 'A run down of all the changes will be clarified at the bottom of the turn one results for this game and also on the KJC message board before the start of the game.'

Game 44 will be the older version of the game for players who want to continue playing in the old style. It's worth mentioning that if you buy turns in advance at the beginning of either game, you can get them for £1.50 for a double order turn (normally £2.10).

[www.kjcgames.com/crsetup.htm](http://www.kjcgames.com/crsetup.htm)



## SCI FI GAMES

*Flying Bufffalo Inc* are looking for two more players in their free trial game of **Starweb**: one to play the apostle position and one to play the berserker.

This beginners' version of the game has only six players, with one of them being an experienced player acting as a mentor for the others. Also, it has only 100 worlds, and the game only lasts 12 turns.

If you've never played *Starweb* before, do try a trial game. It's a classic PBM game.

For experienced players, FBI are now filling their new variant, which we described last issue, where you can change character types. They'll make this a three-week game instead of the usual two weeks, because there's more to think about every turn, like deciding which character type to change to.

[www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com)

## CONVENTIONS



**Martin Burroughs** reports on this year's **Mind Sports Olympiad**:

'The eighth Mind Sports Olympiad (MSO) took place in Manchester at the end of August: I think it's the first time it's stayed twice in the same place, and UMIST (soon to be University of Manchester) provides a good venue, close to the centre of Manchester and with plenty of gaming space.

'MSO is made up of several bits. Before it even starts, back in July, there's the schools event, which attracted awesome numbers of people. I can't quite define awesome, but at one point I struggled to fight my way down a wide corridor, because of the sheer mass of kids. The first weekend of MSO proper saw another bit, Britcon, which is some sort of wargamers competition that goes on for the whole of the first weekend. I was slightly jealous, because Britcon got the best hall (MSO spreads over four halls), with the best food, and even-gasp-carpet! Not many cons get carpet, let's be honest.

'MSO proper spreads over about ten days, with competitions in everything from Chess to Creative Thinking. While there is a slightly geeky feel to some of the less socialised

chess players, in general there's a very friendly crowd, and notably this is one of the few cons where there are decent numbers of kids, and whereas at some cons kids just stay with their parents, here they just mill around freely, playing whatever they like.

'Anyway, the big bit of MSO for me was the Hobby Games Festival (there seems to be general consensus that that's a crappy name, so next year it'll probably be MSOcon.) With this year's reduced prices (£15 for the four days), we actually started to attract in some local gamers, and familiar faces from other conventions, and there was more casual gaming going on than in the past, including the Diplomacy game from hell (whose idea was it to start that with four beginners, including a team of two small children, late on a Saturday night?). It all started off a little embarrassingly as the Lost Cities tournament attracted twice as many people as we had been expecting, and had sets for! But we got through that thanks to some ingenuity and a good-spirited bunch of players. Age Of Steam got a creditable 12 players, with a very competitive tournament, and most other tournaments came in at about 20 players, although the Puerto Rico got slightly less.

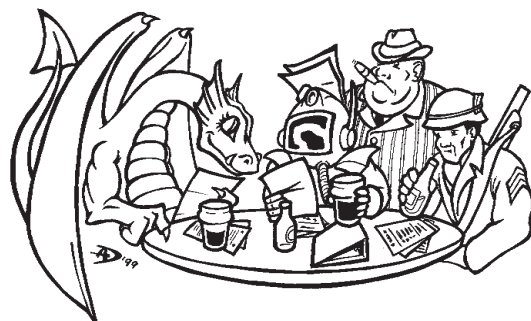
'The highlight though was the Settlers, with 28 players, and some great competition, won by Markus Welbourne, with five wins out of six (he could only manage second place in his other game, what a disappointment!) Bronze medallist Alan Farrell takes up one of two UK places at the Settlers world championships in Germany: lets hope he bring another medal back.

'I think we all came out with a very positive feel about HGF/MSOcon. I've figured out how to run tournaments now (try it some time, it's not easy!). It'll certainly be on next year, and maybe we'll get some lighter tournaments to add to the Settlers, Lost Cities, Acquire, Puerto, Carcassonne, Age Of Steam. We're also investigating the possibility of getting some PBM/PbeM type companies in on the Saturday for some sort of mini-meet. That should be do-able quite cheaply, and sounds like fun. So, August bank holiday 2005, Manchester, MSOcon 1 and a bit. See you there!'

Here in the *Flagship* office, we were impressed to see MSO mentioned favourably in so many newspapers and on TV. It's good to see publicity efforts achieving worthwhile results.

*Harlequin Games* will be at **GenCon** in October. They announce that 'We'll probably have a mini-meet on one evening - come talk to us and we'll try and get all the PBmers in one place at the same time to chat about all PBM. Everyone is welcome!'

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# NEWSDESK BOARDGAMES



## BOARDGAMES

Rio Grande report that they're offering **Master Thieves**, 'a beautiful game delivered in a wooden box and based on a lovely wooden jewelry box', but because of its high cost, the small size of its print run and its collectability, it will only be available directly from them.

They now have the English version of the highly regarded German game **Dicke Luft in der Gruft**, which they're calling **Dawn Under** at \$44.95. Players are vampires who need to find a suitably dark resting place before daybreak, and Rio Grande describe it as 'a fun game of searching and memory. It requires some thought, a lot of memory, and, perhaps, a bit of bluff,' and say that it's 'a fun game for children, but a challenging game for adults.'

**Bohnaparte**, at \$12.95 and produced in conjunction with *Amigo*, is an expansion of the game of bean-collecting, **Bohnanza**. As the title indicates, it's a game of conquest, with players as princes who use their bean profits to finance attacks on foreign villages and cities. The winner is the prince who rules most land, to be crowned Bohnaparte of Beanland. On a similar theme, **High Bohn Plus** at \$12.95 has two new types of bean and you can spend your thalers on buildings which'll give you new tactics for winning.

**Goldbröu** is a new game of investment from Franz-Benno Delonge and costs \$37.95. It's set during the annual summer festival at the village of Seehausen am See; you play a businessman investing in the local businesses at this time, aiming to make a larger profit than your fellow players.

We've mentioned Reiner Knizia's **Circus Flohcati** previously, but here's a reminder that the circus is a flea circus: you have to collect the best fleas, and if you collect all ten you may be the winner.

However, there are other ways to score, so victory by this most obvious route isn't

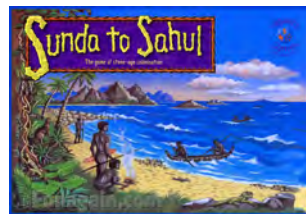
guaranteed. The game costs \$11.95.  
[www.riograndegames.com](http://www.riograndegames.com)

As a fun project, *Undying King Games* have put the pdf of a simple card game, **Nice One Squirrel**, up on their site for people to download and print out. It's free of charge. They've playtested themselves, but would very much welcome other people's thoughts and suggestions for improvements.

The download link is on the UKG free games page,  
<http://www.ukg.co.uk/freegames.htm>

Our thanks to **Pevans**, who adds: 'With Spiel coming up, most of the news is the new games that will be on show there. However, there are a few other things going on. For example, *Games International* is being re-launched. After a long gap, editor Brian Walker has re-assembled his team to re-start the magazine. The first new issue, issue 17, will be available at Spiel (of course) and then after that in the UK. You will be able to subscribe to a paper version of the magazine or to an electronic PDF version. This will all work through the website ([www.gamesinternational.biz](http://www.gamesinternational.biz)) once this has been set up. If you want to register an interest, visit the website and let the team know.'

'Blowing my own trumpet, I know, but *Games from Pevans* is now UK reseller for Australia's *Sagacity Games*. Their first title,



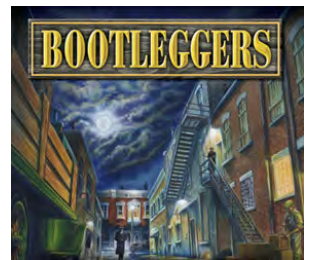
**Sunda to Sahul**, is a about competing tribes across the islands of Indonesia.

The board is assembled by the players as the game progresses - it uses laser-cut jigsaw pieces. With some brightly coloured and very sharp graphics, the visual effect is terrific. The game's pretty good, too. (Though I would say that!)

'Atlas Games has a new card game, **Gloom**, coming out. 'The world of Gloom is a sad and benighted place,' says Atlas's heart-warming publicity. 'The sky is gray, the tea is cold, and a new tragedy lies around every corner. Debt, disease, heartache, and packs of rabid flesh-eating mice - just when it seems like things

can't get any worse, they do.' The aim of the game is 'sad, but simple: you want your characters to suffer the greatest tragedies possible before passing on to the well-deserved respite of death.' The game is designed by RPG author Keith Baker and features transparent cards. Played on top of each other, the cards thus build up a tale of woe, depending on what is visible or obscured by the layers. It doesn't sound like fun, but it could be an interesting game.

'Another interesting title from an American company is **Bootleggers** from *Eagle Games*. This is a deliberate attempt to marry the 'European' and

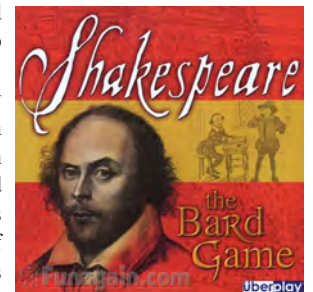


'American' styles of games design. Eagle Games is best known for board game versions of computer games with lots of pieces, so this is something of a departure for them. The game is set in the Prohibition era, with players as rival mob bosses. They compete to produce and sell illicit booze (in a context where sending in the heavies is normal business practice) and avoiding the attentions of the police. I look forward to seeing what Eagle make of this.

'Out soon from *Mayfair Games* is **Valley of the Kings**, designed by Jean 'Shark' Vanaise. The players place tiles representing the terrain of Ancient Egypt - desert, river, desert, hills, desert and fields, I expect - and take control of regions with their 'people'. The aim is to control the most territory. Another one that's worth a look.

[www.mayfairgames.com](http://www.mayfairgames.com)

'I'm astounded to see that I haven't found out about **Shakespeare: the Bard Game** before *Uberplay* published it! It's designed by Richard Heffer (who was apparently involved with **Escape from Colditz**) and Mike Siggins (doyen of UK games magazines)



and is a mixture of trivia, performance and tactics. Players are competing impresarios, trying to get the best scripts, actors, props and patrons for their theatres. It sounds like a family/party game - probably one that my family, with its theatrical bent, would enjoy!'

[www.uberplay.com](http://www.uberplay.com)

# Thirty Years of Dungeons & Dragons™

*LISA FORDHAM celebrates the famous RPG system, which first appeared in 1974 ...*

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (abbreviated as D&D or DnD) is a fantasy role-playing game (RPG) published by Gary Gygax and David Arneson in January 1974. It was first published by Gygax's company, *Tactical Studies Rules* (TSR) and subsequently spawned the RPG industry. D&D is by far the most well-known and best selling RPG game, with an estimated 20 million players and over \$1 billion in book and equipment sales as of 2004. The rights to D&D were sold to *Wizards of the Coast* in 1997, a company later bought by *Hasbro*. But it wasn't always this corporate, oh no ...

## In the Beginning ...

Dungeons & Dragons evolved in the early 1970s from the Chainmail system of wargaming rules by Gary Gygax and Jeff Perren; Gygax and Arneson designed D&D to take place in a fantasy setting based upon popular fiction and mythology. It was influenced by *The Lord of the Rings*, popular Greek and Norse mythology, the pulp fiction stories of Robert E Howard, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and many of the more contemporary fantasy authors of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Jack Vance, Fritz Leiber and Michael Moorcock. The game developed the RPG concept of a referee (the Dungeon Master) who creates the fictional setting of the game, plays antagonists and supporting characters, and moderates the action of the adventures.

The game evolved from wargames with soldiers, in which onlookers were given characters to play during the battle. Gygax and Arneson were playing an Arthurian Knights version when someone decided they wanted to play Merlin. Later, they decided to hide in a cave and they decided that if Merlin existed, then a monster might be in the cave.

The original D&D game allowed players to play characters in three classes: fighters, magic-users (wizards), and clerics (priests). Players could choose to have their characters be Hobbits, Dwarves, or Elves; later versions termed these three 'races' as 'demi-humans'. The players would embark upon imaginary adventures, where they would battle many kinds of fictional monsters from goblins to dragons to ten foot gelatinous cubes, while gathering treasure and experience points as the game progressed. These character classes, monsters, and fantasy world settings were greatly expanded and improved with further editions of the game.

## And then there was more ...

D&D has gone through several revisions. The first edition (1974) featured just a few character classes and monsters. Supplements published in the next two years (*Greyhawk*, *Blackmoor*, and *Eldritch Wizardry*) greatly expanded the character classes, monsters and spells. *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (AD&D) was published between 1977 and 1979, collecting rules from the original version and the supplements into three volumes, and extensively revising the system. In 1980, the *Dungeons & Dragons* name was used for a simplified version of the game that was incompatible with the more mainstream AD&D.

In 1989, AD&D Second Edition was published, which revised the rules again, consolidating some character classes, disposing of some fan favorites, and revising the combat system slightly. It was during this time that the current owners of TSR (Gygax and Arneson had earlier left) angered many fans with several extreme practices intended to make up for declining sales, such as inflating prices, excessive split pricing of individual game products, and relentless copyright infringement lawsuits. A long decline in popularity followed into the 1990s, resulting in TSR filing for bankruptcy in 1998; TSR never emerged from bankruptcy, and was in the end purchased by former competitor *Wizards of the Coast*.

In 2000, a third revision, called *Dungeons & Dragons Third Edition* (or 3E for short), was published by *Wizards of the Coast*. It is the basis of a broader role-playing system designed around 20-sided dice, called the d20 system. The edition removed old arbitrary restrictions on class and race combinations, and included skills and feats to allow players to customize their characters. It also rationalized movement and combat, though some thought these latter changes complicated matters by adding tortuous rules regarding "attacks of opportunity" and putting all movement on a square grid.

The introduction of the d20 system made it possible for authors to write new games and game supplements without the need to develop a unique rules system and, more importantly, without the need for approval from *Wizards of the Coast*. The d20 system is an open source version of the D&D core rules that was made available under the open gaming licence. This makes it easier to market D&D-compatible content under a broadly recognizable commercial licence. Many other companies have produced content for the d20 system, such as *White Wolf*, *AEG*, and *Malhavoc Press*.

In July 2003, a revised version of the 3rd edition D&D rules (termed version 3.5) was released that incorporated numerous minor rule changes. Officially, the new version of the game is simply a 'revision' and not a new edition of the game, but with the release of 3.5, *Wizards of the Coast* abandoned the open source format.

## A proud legacy

D&D took the world of wargaming by storm, creating its own niche and giving birth to a multitude of role-playing games, based on every genre imaginable. Science fiction, horror, superheroes, cartoons, westerns, spies and espionage, and many other fictional settings were adapted to role-playing games. With the birth of the d20 system, the settings available to play multiplied beyond all count, with the result that there is now an unparalleled variety of roleplaying backgrounds out there. However, 'fantasy role-playing' inspired by the example of D&D, continues to dominate the field of role-playing games. The best roleplaying game ever? Maybe not ... but D&D definitely changed the world.



**Mo Holkar (of Undying King Games) reminisces ...**

*'You are in a ten-foot-wide corridor, fifty feet long. At the far end there are two doors facing each other. About halfway down on the left-hand side is a curious-looking patch of greenish lichen...'*

I first came across D&D in 1978, when my mum got a Basic Set for me and my sister for Christmas. It was fairly new in mainstream shops in the UK then, and she'd read something saying it was great for developing kids' imagination and creativity. Little did she know what she was starting... I was just at the right age to have my mind set on fire by the worlds of possibilities contained in that red cardboard box, and within days I had the squared paper out and was plotting out my first mega-dungeon.

Gaming moves on and kids grow up (in some ways), and before too long I'd discovered Runequest, Call of Cthulhu, Empire of the Petal Throne and a bunch of other games that fitted better with what I and my friends wanted to do. But D&D, or AD&D by then, was always there in the background, and always got yanked out when we wanted some light-hearted regressive fun.

I guess D&D itself, and traditional role-playing in general, doesn't have as much of a hook into today's kids as it did into my generation. But if they'll happily sit through nine hours of Lord of the Rings films, who knows where that might lead?

It's slightly worrying to think how much of my brain is still stuffed full of things like what magic items you can make out of the various body parts of a tarrasque, but I suppose if it wasn't that, it would only be something else equally useless. And there's a clear line that leads from that slightly obsessive ten-year-old through to the creation of games like Ixion's Wheel, UNEXPLAINED, Inferno, Mammon Inc and Conclave —and the reasons why, despite having spent nearly ten years now earning my daily bread from it, I still think writing games is much more fun than having a proper job.

My sister, on the other hand, turned out relatively normal and is now a doctor. Which probably goes to prove something or other...

**Dissent in the depths of Harlequin Games!****Sam Roads puts the argument against ...**

The 30th anniversary of D&D? Seems as good a time as any to spark the revolution. Bring me my torch and let's have a bonfire!

I hate D&D. Yes I know that 3rd edition is really cool: 'y'know, like, they've swapped the 1 and the 20 round on Armour Class dude'. But that doesn't make up for decades of malevolent, Microsoftian, hegemonic control of the RPG market, based on what is surely the worst system that there has ever been. And so I say to you, rise up! Rise up my minions, and strike it down!

But what is it that so awakens my anger, and incites my ire?

Is it the wonderful class system? 'I'm sorry Frodo, you can't wear that mithril armour as a thief. Now stop moaning about being ring-bearer, and for Eru's sake try and stab some people from behind, eh?'

Or maybe it's the clever levelling system? Ever wonder what level boxer Muhammed Ali was? Well, if only he'd boxed on for a few more years, he'd have become even better!

Perhaps it could be the realism of a system where more blows miss you the heavier the armour you're wearing? (Well, all right, so I know they say that heavy armour means you are being hit but it just doesn't hurt. But explanation or justification? I'll let you be the judge.) Or maybe the pleasure of starting your adventuring career with 2 hit points so that a kobold sneezing will have you pushing daisies, but finally retiring with enough of

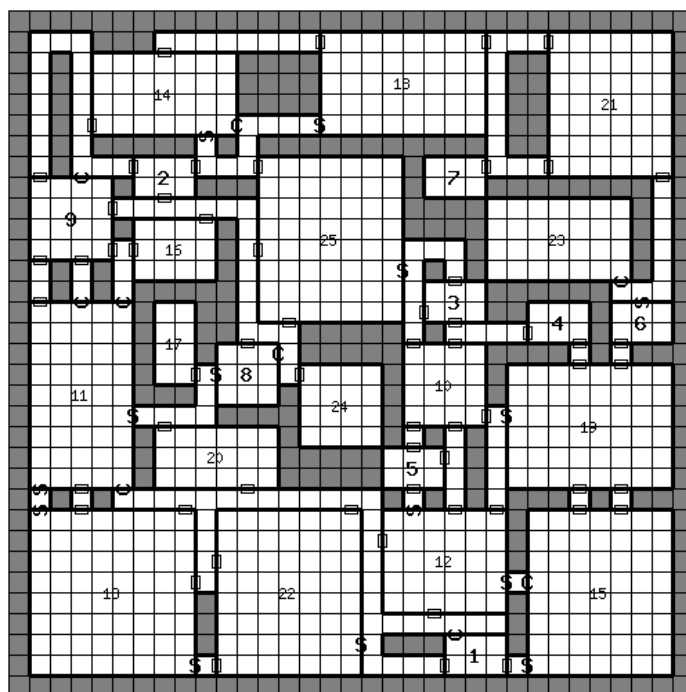
them to survive several ninjas sawing at your neck for hours.

And I won't even plumb the rich depths of awfulness which is the television cartoon, or shoot at the soft underbelly of a system which needs 'player guides'.

No. The thing which really gets my molars grinding is the collateral damage of the alignment system. Aaarrgh! Imagine building a system which actually gives demerits for role-playing? Allow me to provide example.

Me: OK, my face is red, tears are seeping out from the corners of my eyes. I shout out that 'You, sir, have murdered the only one true thing of beauty in the world. I damn thee and swear I will take a terrible vengeance on you and your House!'

Referee: Oh ho ho! Stop there a moment Sam. Your character is... um... Lawful Good. You wouldn't say something like that, because you're Lawful Good. I'm afraid you'll be getting less experience points this session. Never mind, watch how the others play and you'll learn more about proper role-playing.



I mean... what is good? Churchill defeated Hitler, but whilst doing so endorsed firebombing and furthered his own political career. So he's a good/evil/neutral character then, eh?

Thankfully, these days there are legions of rival systems which, perhaps surprisingly, have elected not to use D&D's alignment system. If you like a system, White Wolf have something that gives a little structure if you're learning how to role-play. But I don't suppose there's any chance of D&D learning from its rival. Why does it need to? Since licensing the D20 system is proving so successful, pretty soon there may not be any more rivals.

So if you like a system that promotes role-playing, try White Wolf. If it's game balance you want, perhaps the Hero System can provide. Maybe you're looking for cinematic moments? Try Feng Shui.

Or, if you want a history lesson into what role-playing was like 30 years ago, try D&D.

**While John Davis disagrees ...**

Find any group of gamers, age fourteen to forty, ask how many of them were introduced to gaming through Dungeons & Dragons, and I'll bet my last platinum piece that a fair number of them will own up. A rare few - those same few, doubtless, who prefer Pepsi to Coca Cola, or the original Buffy film to the series - might cite Tunnels & Trolls. A handful might even wax lyrical about Steve Jackson's Sword and Sorcery Books. But most, I feel safe in assuming, lost their gaming virginity to D&D.

I, myself, am proud to be counted amongst their number. And the memories of those first campaigns are still, after more years and characters than you could shake a D20 at, among my fondest. I remember those little blue dice from the old Basic box set (for levels 1 to 3 - and what wonderful hope did even that title conjure, that one day I might progress to Expert, or Advanced, and the higher levels therein?), and which came with a bit of white crayon so that you could colour in the numbers. I remember where I was on the day I first opened an Advanced Player Guide, with its myriad options and possibilities that surely it would take one a lifetime to explore. Books that were not just pages of charts and rules, but were, really were, portals to another world.

But most of all I remember the adventures. I remember watching with fascination as the Dungeon Master carefully drew the map... a corridor, a bend, a door. And I remember the fear - the real, delicious, spine-tingling fear - of wondering if I dared open it, knowing that from behind it I could hear 'a soft, snuffling sound, punctuated by the padding of large feet'.

Later came more complex campaigns. Military strategies, diplomacy, and of course a finger-twitching magic-user at your side were required. Then forays into other game systems, some more complex, some more realistic, some horrific and some just plain strange. And each had something to offer, and each brought its own memories to cherish. But none would ever come close to matching the sense of wonder and excitement of D&D. Well, you never forget your first time, do you?

This alone, surely, would be enough to enthrone D&D in its rightful place as the King of all RGS. But not only was it responsible for setting so many of us on the path towards a life-time of gaming, influencing, as it did so, not only most other games that have come since, but also the perception style of generations of gamers; but it is also, I believe, still, after all these years, one of the finest RPGs one can play.

In terms of sheer scope and vision, it is simply unparalleled. Some games describe a land, some even a world; but D&D covers scores of worlds, universes, and realities. Hundreds of sourcebooks, modules and guides depict and describe worlds of variety and wonder enough to suit even the most jaded of gamer. In recent years, it is true, White Wolf, through their systematic rape of the horror genre, have created a detailed environment of their own. But neither in terms of detail or of scope does it even begin to compare, and the fact that it is held up today as an example of a detailed game world to compete with D&D just shows how little competition for D&D's throne there is.

Some people object that the game mechanics of D&D are not realistic. They complain that simply killing kobolds, exploring and doing great deeds should not transform your character from one who fears a blow from a giant badger (to a family of which I once carelessly lost an entire adventuring party) to one who could cheerfully plough through an army of berserking giants without breaking a sweat. And yes, it is true, in real life that probably wouldn't happen. But - and I know that this might come as a shock to some people - D&D is a fantasy game. It was designed to emulate the fantasy genre, where - gasp and shudder at the lack of realism, even a hobbit might slay an immortal servant of darkness, or chance to save the world. The mechanics of D&D are there to support a fantasy world, not the real one. And whilst, yes, it is true, the journey from first to thirtieth level is sometimes an unrealistic one, it is none the worse for it; and I, for one, took more pleasure and satisfaction, nay, sense of achievement, from guiding my thief up through the years and levels, than in any other gaming accomplishment.

Others reflect that the game mechanics of D&D are combat-orientated, and therefore do not encourage role-playing. Well, yes, the game mechanics are largely combat-orientated, though less so than many systems. And that is because combat is the element of a role-playing game where the greatest level of moderation is required, to ensure that it does not appear merely arbitrary. But if a campaign lacks role-playing, that is the fault of the players and the referee, not the system. True, I have played in D&D adventures that were little more than a monster-bash, characters battling in search of experience and gold. (And a great deal of fun they were too.) But equally I have played in campaigns where, for weeks on end, not even a single die was rolled. If a campaign is orientated towards combat, that is a fault of the group, not the system. And if orientation towards combat is a criticism to be levelled at game systems, it is one that most are guilty of. At least a battle in D&D doesn't take upwards of twelve hours, naming no names, Feng Shui, or require one to purchase several dozen D6 to make your attack roll, unlike some games which wear their underpants on the outside.

But I have saved addressing the biggest source of complaint against D&D until last. And that is, of course, alignments. They have been called the bane of role-playing, objected to and criticised and railed against. Yet I would argue that to do so is not only plain wrong, but damnably ungrateful; the actions of a teenager who thinks they know it all thinking to criticise the parent who has helped and guided them in the very freedom of thought that they now use to complain.

We take it for granted, now, we veterans of role-playing campaigns, how to role-play. What it means to sit down and take on the role of someone else; how to interact, how to respond. But think back, if you will, to those first heady days of gaming. When, with character sheet gripped in sweaty hands, you opened a door to see a knight and an orc fighting over a bag of

gold, ignored by both of them for the moment. What should you do? Or rather, and this was the point of distinction it was important to make, what would your character do?

This was where the concept of alignments came to your rescue. Because, in broad strokes, they painted your character's moral world. They gave you an indication of how to respond. Were you good? Then go to it, help the knight. Evil? Well, there you had a choice - steal the gold, or help the orc. But whatever the case, the point was, you had a point of reference for your actions. You could begin to role play.

Later on, of course, you began to learn that not all decisions were that simple. Not everything is black and white. You might be told that you had walked into a hut where an armoured knight was about to kill a starving peasant for stealing his loaf of bread. The lawful thing here might not be the same as the right thing. What should you do? And so here, again, alignments came to your aid, their scope and nature growing more complex even as you developed. Characters were not just good and evil, but lawful and chaotic as well, with all the wealth of subtlety this paradoxically connected dichotomy allowed. Then, later still, if this too became too limiting? Still failed to properly describe the gamut of human - and, of course, let us not forget dwarven, elven and non-human - nature? Well, then, there were Tendencies, allowing for greater variety, and possibilities for change, so that even as characters grew and developed, their alignments would also shift and alter.

And, what if, at the end of all this, one still felt that alignments were too restricting, and now stifled rather than encouraged role-playing? Well, the answer was simple. Don't use them. It has always been a central tenet of the D&D system that the rules are there as a guide and an aid to adventuring. They are to be employed in service to the exploration of a world in as enjoyable and fair a fashion as possible. And if a certain portion of the mechanics or rules do not suit a referee or group, then one is not only invited but actively encouraged not to use them.

So, then, not only is the alignment system not the enemy of role-playing that it is made out to be, it is instead, for many, the underlying cause of role-playing. It was our guide, our teacher, our mentor, and it taught us not only good from evil, but also that those distinctions are never as clear as they first appear. And if, now, some of us feel that we have out-grown the need for its guidance, then surely that is the very measure of its success. Does the wise pupil, having surpassed his teacher, criticise that teacher for his lack of knowledge? No. And so, similarly, it is time that the alignment system is acknowledged for the truly inspired piece of game mechanic that it is - a mechanic that not only encouraged, but actually taught good role-playing.

I should like, then, to propose a toast. To the greatest role-playing game. Unparalleled in its vision, scope, depth, influence, and - perhaps most importantly of all - its capacity for inspiring a sense of wonder. I hope that I am in such good shape thirty years into my gaming life.

### D&D changed my life! Confesses Carol Mulholland

I clearly remember the day when we first bought a **Dungeons & Dragons** box: at a games shop in Penn State, USA, in the summer of 1978. I'd read about it and been intrigued, but this was the first time that we'd actually seen the set for sale.

So we bought it, and it changed my life. It was the first game I'd ever encountered which didn't end with one player as the winner and everyone else as losers, and - better yet - where you could make up your own scenario. Ken took up the idea with his usual enthusiasm and idiosyncrasy. When we returned to England he started designing dungeon-crawls of his own, full of strange surprises: I still remember the suspense and awe with which I played. The only problem was finding enough friends who'd be prepared to spend their evenings in this new obsession. And well, that was what led on to other types of gaming.

But it was D&D that showed me what games could offer. Oddly, though, I've not enjoyed later sessions with some GMs half as much: they were often too fixed on ratings and skills (urgh, boring) and had lost that entrancing sense of mystery which I think is essential for a really enjoyable session. Whatever, I wouldn't be editing *Flagship* today if we hadn't bought that box in Penn State. I'd still be thinking that a family card game of Sevens was cutting edge ...

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# Turning Digital

*COLIN FORBES concludes his check through turn-based games on the net ...*

WHEN I BEGAN this series of articles, I was fully expecting to find only a small number of games – and equally, I expected that most of them would turn out to be of poor quality. Well, so much for my pre-conceptions! My trawls through the net have unearthed a number of excellent games, some complex (my type of game) while others would suit someone with less time but who is still seeking a test of skill, or maybe just some good old-fashioned gaming fun!

So to those prophets of doom who have once again declared turn-based gaming to be dead or dying, I say - a plague on you! Broaden your horizons and take a look on the web: you'll be pleasantly surprised ... I was.

## Gladiator Duels

[www.gladiatorduels.com](http://www.gladiatorduels.com)

A turn-based strategy game played through a browser. Create your own gladiator and battle others. Gain experience and gold and train your gladiator to new heights... join tougher arenas, use exotic weaponry. A Roman Arena clone. Cost: Free software and thereafter \$5 for two months, \$10 for six months, or \$15 for a year. There is a free 10-day trial available, so give it a go before you part with hard-earned cash. Not the most informative website by the way.

## Gladiatorial Combat

[www.gladiatorialcombat.com](http://www.gladiatorialcombat.com)

This seems rather similar to Gladiator Duels (above), in fact I wasn't sure whether to include it or not. However the difference in price means this one gets a listing. I'd be interested to know if they actually are the same game or not. Cost: Free

## International Politics

[www.14.brinkster.com/rushyo/](http://www.14.brinkster.com/rushyo/)

International Politics is an online game that uses a mixture of turn-based and real-time action to create a unique game where you run a nation and try to become one of the world's superpowers through economic, political and military dominance. The welcome screen isn't very welcoming, but click on the FAQ button and you'll have access to the tutorial and game manual. Cost: Free.

## Legend of the Green Dragon

<http://lotgd.net/home.php?>

This is a remake of the classic BBS Door game, Legend of the Red Dragon (aka LoRD). However content is new (presumably so as not to annoy Gameport, the owners of the LoRD game ([www.gameport.com](http://www.gameport.com))). It's basically a text game, but nicer to look at than the older versions of these games. Cost: Free.

## Majesty: Heroes of Arдания

[www.heroesofardania.com](http://www.heroesofardania.com)



Ardania is a medieval fantasy world - filled with heroes from noble paladins to backstabbing rogues, from magic-

wielding wizards to rage-filled barbarians. This world is based on a widely popular computer game called 'Majesty'. There is a whole Majesty

community out there and, to be honest, the Majesty webbing page ([www.strategyplanet.com/majesty/webbing.shtml](http://www.strategyplanet.com/majesty/webbing.shtml)) is a good deal more informative than the Heroes of Arдания site. Cost: Free.

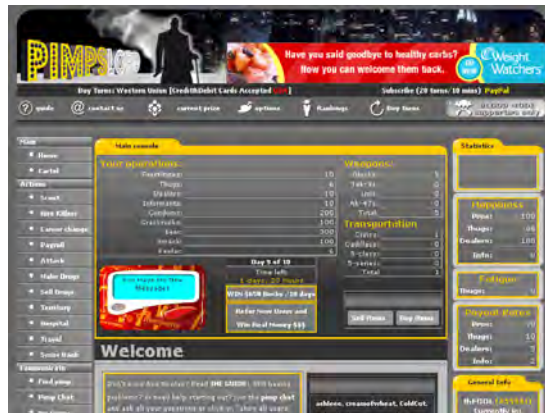
## Mob-Style

[www.mob-style.com](http://www.mob-style.com)

A Mobster game with the slogan 'Take the Gun. Drop the Cannoli'. Irritatingly there's next to no information about the game until you actually register to play. Although doing so is free, it's the sort of thing that is hardly designed to attract people to the game. Once you're in, the tutorial is very helpful and the game seems to have plenty of atmosphere. Cost: Free but you can buy more turns with donations (and get rid of annoying banner ads as well).

## PimpsLord

[www.pimpslord.com](http://www.pimpslord.com)



yourself. A colourful website with a lot of bling, though I'm (as ever) dubious about games that offers real money as a prize. There is really quite a lot to do in the game, at first glance anyway. Cost: Free, although you can buy extra turns.

## PurePimps

[www.purepimps.com](http://www.purepimps.com)

Well what can I say, remarkably similar to the last game, only with a different website. Slightly better laid out with rules that make a bit more sense, but otherwise there's not a lot of difference as far as I can see. If anyone wants to give both games a shot and explain the difference, please do! Cost: Free.

## Pirate Wars II

[www.piratewars2.com](http://www.piratewars2.com)

Hire and train your own bunch of scoundrel sea-dogs into scurvy-lovin' pirates - can you make the most notorious crew? An online turn-based pirate game, but alas, try as I may I have been unable to activate my account. So I'll content myself with recommending [www.bilgemunky.com](http://www.bilgemunky.com) to all you pirates out there. No games but lots of pirates ... oh and have a look at [www.pyracy.com](http://www.pyracy.com) as well. As to Pirate Wars II, well let me know if you can actually logon and play the damn game. Cost: Free.

## Quest for Yap

[www.yapquest.com](http://www.yapquest.com)

Quest for Yap is a space strategy game involving trading, diplomacy and warfare. Features include a quest for the near-mythical planet Yap and an Evil Galaxy where the slave trade flourishes. One problem ... I couldn't find any information on how to play the game. Cost: Free.

### Rise of Empires

<http://riseofempires.com/>

This is one for those of you who like to be involved in the development of a game. There's not too much there yet, but there's a nice friendly forum. Cost: Free.

### Shadowops

[www.shadowops.net](http://www.shadowops.net)

An Online Multiplayer War Game. The aim of this game is to build up your account and be the best kingdom in the game. ShadowOps has many ways to be played, with a large range of options ranging from: who to join (you pick your system, so you can play with your friends/clan) to research tree, and most important, who to attack. ShadowOps Command is in the final stage of testing at the moment but is due to be properly released in December. Cost: Free.

### Shark Wars

[www.sharkwars.net](http://www.sharkwars.net)



SharkWars is an online map based game where you ally, make enemies, and go around attacking the enemies. Based on an old game called CashWars.

SharkWars is an online game played in your browser where you ally with friends and crush your enemies to become number one. Call me picky, but I like a game that at least attempts to give you some rules to play by. Cost: Free

### Smugglers Online

[www.smugglersonline.com](http://www.smugglersonline.com)

An online roleplaying game based on fictional smuggling. The game developers are currently in the late stages of development, and as such, there still remains a certain amount of tweaking

and game balancing to do - fair enough since the game is still in beta test. I was particularly glad to see a nice firmly button entitled 'How to Play'. Cost: Free.

### Torn City

[www.torncity.com](http://www.torncity.com)

As you walk down the street you look around cautiously, scouting for a mugger, a thief or just your everyday killer. You open the front door to your condo, step in, and deactivate your burglar alarm. You lay your new Glock 18 on the table, hopefully it should keep you alive a little longer! What's next on the list, Rob a bank? Bomb your enemy's home just for the hell of it? Sign up to the army? Or maybe even start your own terrorist faction!

Nice promotional blurb, but I'm afraid this is another one of those games where the initial screen tells you nothing. Cost: Free

### World Dom

[www.worlddomonline.com](http://www.worlddomonline.com)

Run a country, choose your form of government and beat everyone else up. Nothing fancy, nothing new to even a modestly experienced gamer, but what the heck - it's free.

### World Empire V

[www.worldempiregame.com](http://www.worldempiregame.com)

The latest version in the World Empire series, going strong since the release of the original MS-DOS version in 1991. World Empire is similar to strategy board games like RISK(TM) - but better! You begin the game with 56 Armies (actually divisions) in normal mode or 30 Armies in expert mode, all placed in a randomly selected country. Because each player is given countries that strongly support his/her "ideology", strategy will likely be heavily influenced by this initial positioning. A player must also must occupy each unfriendly country that is conquered with a sufficient amount of armies or there could



be a revolution.

It's definitely based at least in part on the whole Risk family of games, but it's attractively presented and, with a free 30 day trial available, it's worth a go if you ask me. (The full software costs \$29.95 but free 30-day trial is available for download.)

I must make it clear that I have not played most of the games featured in this series, in fact I've only tried three: Beer Tycoon ([www.beertycoon.net](http://www.beertycoon.net)), Evil Pets ([www.evilmets.com](http://www.evilmets.com)) and the Bounced Diplomacy portal ([www.dipbounced.com](http://www.dipbounced.com)). Diplomacy players should note that this latter site seems very

active, with new games starting in a matter of days, if not hours.

It would be very good to see some reviews of these games appearing in future issues of Flagship - indeed that has been part of the purpose behind this series of articles. So my recommendation would be - pick a game you like and give it a go. Write down your first impressions and send them to Flagship for publication in Rumours from the Front. Then think about writing a review.

I can't guarantee that all of the games I've covered are good: some of them are probably awful, while others may well be outstanding. However, the number and diversity of these games has been enough to convince me that turn-based gaming is far from dead. I hope this series has convinced you as well - now go out there and play them!

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# Roleplaying in a Menacing World

*MARTIN HELSDON finds Chaos Trail difficult to enjoy ...*

WHEN CAROL asked me to review **Chaos Trail** she warned me that people either seem to love or hate the game.

As part of my preparation for commencing the review, Carol sent me the previous two reviews in *Flagship* and they were certainly very positive. Whilst I did not hate it, by about the sixth turn I found myself not liking it very much. As a reviewer, leaving the game at that point was not an option, so I persevered and things, from my perspective, started to improve. By the time the usual ten turns were complete, I decided to see if a few more turns would negate the earlier impression and so paid for a few more. Sadly, the resulting turns reinforced my original opinion. Others may well enjoy *Chaos Trail*.

How do you write a review if you find you do not particularly like the game under review?

In the past I have heard criticisms that the reviews in *Flagship* are often too positive or too bland. However, a review has to be both subjective (it can only reflect my views and impressions) but sufficiently objective that it allows that others may enjoy the game (there are presently about fourteen regular players). By warning the reader that I did not like *Chaos Trail* and would not pay to play the game, perhaps sufficient warning has been given. It may come down to a matter of taste in the sort of fantasy that you read; my preferences run to the works of George R R Martin, Thomas Harlan and the late Karl Wagner - I like gritty 'real' fantasy. From my first reading of the *Complete Guide to Harn* book, the setting started to give me problems.

*Chaos Trail* has many positive aspects. Turns are cheap (£1.75 a turn compared with the £5.00 or \$5 most other games charge per turn, and with no starting fee) and sent out very regularly - often within a week, with the exceptions being due to the Games Master being ill, when the delay was duly notified, or when my email collapsed. I chose to play by email, though there is the option of postal turns, when the player has to pay for the postage or provide a stamped addressed envelope.

There are numerous source books including *Creatures of Aphenhast*, the *Land of Aphenhast*, the *Symposium of Miracles* and the *Complete Guide to Harn* at various prices. The turn material is competently written and on starting the game the player is sent several different potential starting scenarios - this is an excellent means of ensuring that players start off on the path they prefer. Purchase of the source books is not mandatory. You can probably play without buying any of them, though the one provided to me did include spell definitions and would be necessary for anyone intending to set out as a mage of any sort.

Character creation is quick and painless - a number of points to be allocated to attributes and skills. But it was the setting that initially gave me qualms. The *Complete Guide to Harn* is a moderately large introduction to the land of Harn, in comparison to the older and neighbouring setting of Aphenhast, full of wide open spaces, forests and mountains with only Luudhoq as its major city. Its history is divided to Ages and its population

consists of all the usual assortment of fantasy races plus a few new ones. The city Luudhoq is described in some detail, including various trades that might appeal to player characters, and its ruling Inner Circle, as Harn is ruled by a shadowy magiocracy. A number of legends are recounted, reinforcing the subtle atmosphere of pervading corruption.

Harn is becoming the major location in the game world, and is likely to be where players begin their adventures.

Whilst I have played many games in which evil is both manifest and powerful, the sense of an underlying malevolence suffusing the human culture was troubling. It may be an intentional dimension of the game world, and if so is rendered very successfully. In the past I have played evil characters in games, but never felt such a sense of moral decay. This is very judgmental on my part but certain aspects of the city of Luudhoq felt... wrong. This is probably intentional. The other factor was the presence of the usual batch of fantasy races, and again this is personal taste. Too many generic novels and games simply trundle out the same creatures, as if elves and orcs are essential for a fantasy setting. *Chaos Trail* certainly adds some new creatures to the mix, but not, to my tastes, enough.

Given that the setting has a lot of history behind it (both as a long-lived game and as background) I decided to create a barbarian character out in the wilds. This allowed me to avoid any misconceptions regarding the culture of Luudhoq and to create a new character with limited equipment and skills. The Games Master, Simon, duly invented an isolated village out in the wilderness for me and a specific plot thread for such a location amidst all the other available scenarios.

The specific thread was well suited to the location, the isolated village, and immediately gave a sense of the beliefs and nature of this small human community. My character, Bron, a young hunter, returned to his village to witness a ceremony taking place on the narrow bridge with his sister apparently playing a starring role. It looked as though she was about to be drowned, perhaps for witchcraft. Fortunately I chose not to feather the assembled elders with arrows, and discovered that Bron's sister Lona was being banished for learning magic from a half-elf magic user in the forest.

In the subsequent turn Bron escorted his sister to Almier's cottage in the wood, and given that it was winter had to endure the hospitality of the minor mage for the night, learning that he intended to leave for a distant settlement in a few days. Returning home through the forest, Bron witnessed a mysterious figure by a stream emitting an intense feeling of evil, such that he knew it would be death to confront the stranger. On winning home through the snow, there was the news that other hunters had gone missing up towards the nearby mountains of ill repute.

So far the game had proceeded moderately well. The writing was good, the plotline suited to the character I had created. However, already a feeling of having few options was beginning to grow, and the turns I was sending in were relatively short, as it seemed as if I could only really follow one course of action. One of the things I always did on receipt of a turn was change the font and page definition to bring the turn down to two pages. A large font, wide borders and top and bottom made a turn look as if it was composed of four or more pages, complete with a small fantasy picture tagged on the end. Sometimes the picture illustrated or hinted at something in the turn; at other times it did not.

*Chaos Trail* is a very cheap game to play, and the turn length was more than acceptable - the actual word count always being over a thousand and usually about twelve hundred words. I did wonder if a higher price to provide a longer turn to provide more information to offer the player a

## *Chaos Trail at a glance*

A hand-moderated roleplaying game from Simon Williams, previously reviewed in issues 47 and 86. Startup is free and subsequent turns cost only £1.75. Available by email or post, in which case include an SAE.

greater choice of action might have been preferable.

Reading most turns, there seemed little chance for freedom of action and a few left me pondering what precisely I was supposed to do. When I queried this late on in the review - in fact when I had started to pay for turns - the GM seemed moderately surprised and replied that characters would be drawn into situations that might appear beyond their control as part and parcel of Chaos Trail, and added that he did not want a review that stated that turns that were impossible to understand. In response to this I started asking additional questions and received satisfactory answers.

The moral to this is that perhaps I should have started firing questions at the GM sooner rather than later. However, when playing in a roleplaying game, it has always been my experience that the turns should stand on their own. Part at least of my problems with the game was my gaming playing background and experience. Prior to the advent of email it was rarely practical to send questions in between turns - telephone calls should always be few and far between as even GMs have lives outside their creations... Unfortunately these questions are now perceived by the GM as complaints.

One thing that did grate was receiving back small chunks of my turn material as the inner thoughts of my character. Doubtless this practice does provide a context for the situation facing the character, but I would rather have been told more about what my character was doing and witnessing. Personal taste again, and dropping a note to the GM during the review might have resolved this.

Given the news of mysterious disappearances, an expedition was organised to find out what had happened to the missing hunters. The winter snow was already deep, and the loss of anyone able to find substance for the village was a threat to the community. (It was a surprise to find that the isolated village had a meeting hall and glass in the windows - but this was a case of my preconceptions of a barbarian village conflicting with those of the GM.) Several characters in the village were well drawn including an ally in the person of a female hunter Hailissa. The expedition climbed up into the fells, to witness a mysterious sight:

*'You press on across the snow, moving close to the clusters of trees and behind rocks where they present themselves, the only sounds the sigh of the breeze and the quiet crunch of snow under your boots.'*

Neither Artur nor his two companions are speaking, though they make occasional, bizarre gestures with their arms. One of the men almost has his back to you, and as you stare at him, it occurs to you that the shape of his back is somehow not quite right. The bones seem to jut out at odd angles, as if they have been broken and put back together in a chaotic mess. When he raises his arms, his back seems to ripple as if something - or some things - are moving under his cloak.

At one point, the three of them each place their left hands into the fire. None of them utter any cry of pain. They watch in silence as the flames crackle around their hands, blistering and blackening the skin, and causing the dread stench of burned meat to drift towards you on the breeze. Artur is as calm as his companions, watching without expression as his left hand burns.

If indeed that is Artur, you think to yourself, and the thought makes your skin crawl.

*You return to where your companions wait, and quietly describe what you have seen as they gather round. Jarro's eyes grow round with horror,*

*and he seems certain to exclaim something further about choragh being abroad in the hills, before Hailissa throws him a warning scowl. "Who knows what they are?" she says with a shrug, though you can tell how uneasy she is. "For all we know, they might simply have gone mad. We should return nearer to Kallin, and then split into groups of two and hunt for what we can. No doubt we will find little, but a little can go a long way when you know there may be nothing more for weeks".'*

Given that the villagers were hostile to magic in all its forms, there was obviously no defence to the choragh. A message from Bron's sister made

it apparent that the only viable course of action was to seek out her half-elven teacher. Imagine my surprise to discover that the evil figure glimpsed in the woods was also present at the meeting, Gihyra Davvin, a Watcher from Luudhoq and a servant of the Inner Circle. It is apparent that the mages of Harn are far from united, and their aims and activities at odds. Coming from a village where all magic users are seen as evil, it seems there are degrees of evil...

Thus it seems Chaos Trail was not the generic fantasy setting I had started to assume it to be, albeit with a widespread sense of foreboding and decay.

In the company of Almier, his sister, the ominous Watcher and Hailissa, Bron returned to the mountains to seek out the Caves of Arn-Morath, the home of the choragh and iakuru. The caves themselves were capable of causing anyone traversing them who wandered 'in mind' to become lost in reality. The mysterious Watcher disappeared, possibly intentionally. A suitably horrific location was encountered.

*'Upon the small stone table that occupies the centre of the room, there lie the bodies of ulathal - small and vicious humanoid beings slightly akin to Dwarfven folk but more primitive - ripped to pieces as if with savage and lustful glee and then distributed as far as possible, leaving a*

*bloody trail upon the cold rock.'*

And a number of prisoners...

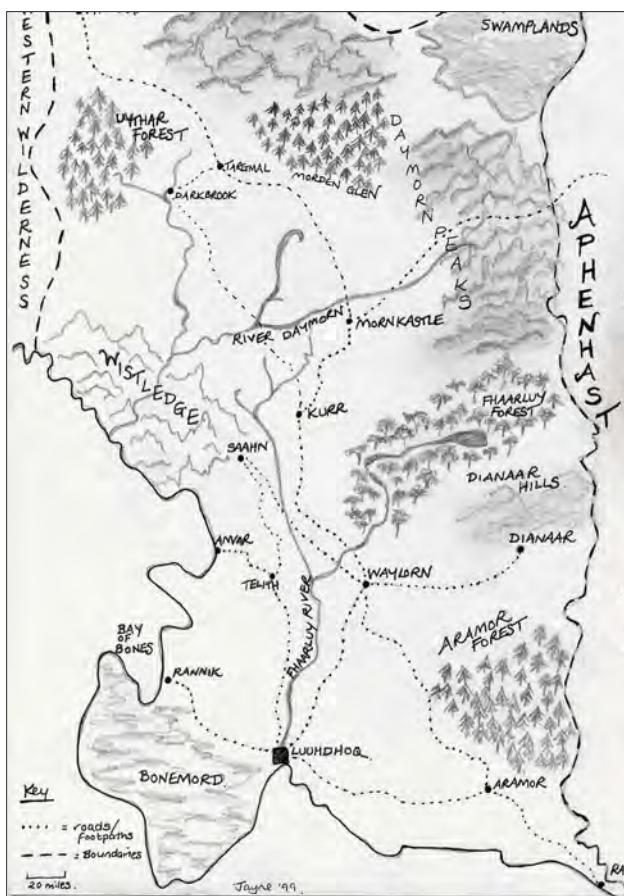
*'Within one of these rooms, chained and shackled by all their limbs to a doorless wall, are three prisoners; two of them are kobold males, unclothed and dreadfully emaciated, and these two are presently asleep, though one of them twitches often as if caught up in the web of an unpleasant dream; you wonder if it remains preferable to the grim reality of capture and starvation from which he has temporarily escaped.'*

*Their fur has been burned, and in many places bare, pink skin shows; their skin hugs their bones tightly, giving them the appearance almost of wasted corpses; no food or water is evident in this place. There is a stench of excrement, and you note with disgust the fact that all these creatures are squatting or lying in their own faeces.'*

*The third prisoner is a female orc, also naked and looking starved, though at first glance she is in somewhat better condition than her sleeping companions; but it is this prisoner that transfixes you the most. In utter silence, she stares straight ahead, and mouths words to herself; there is a look of abject terror in her wide and glazed eyes, and her paws reach out, imploringly one moment, and as if to ward away some invisible predator the next. What does she see? you wonder, gazing transfixed at these movements so meaningless to you. Something that exists only in her mind? Something that no-one else can see, or sense, or even believe in?*

The following turn, the last I was to play was something of a disappointment, but that may be because my disinclination to continue playing was apparent.

So in conclusion: Chaos Trail, a proficiently run and written game, but not my cup of tea.



# Gunboat: Rivalry in the Far East

*ALEX McLELLAN plays a Japanese Admiral at a time of international tensions ...*

BEFORE I started the review and game diary, I thought that I'd write a few words about myself to give an idea what my biases are. I have played a vast variety of games over the last 20+ years: wargames, figures, roleplaying, Larp and PBM. So I do have a good range of experience on which to base my views and opinions. Now, after all these years, my PBM preferences have settled on *Power: Historical* type games. Ideally, ones that are open ended, have interesting character or flavour, high diplomacy and, if possible, a strong player input. Since **Gunboat** matches my criteria I am naturally predisposed to like it.

## About the game

Gunboat is one of *Agema Publications'* newest games and it is set in a slightly surreal or Flashman-esque 1880s China with squabbling colonial powers seeking advantage, territory and gain while the troubled Chinese follow a vast array of conflicting agenda. The greater world is loosely historical, with the odd mild anachronism such as automatic pistols and flying machines.

The game is open-ended, with the goal of achieving success by whatever measures you or your chosen position dictates. A merchant player will want to make money and build a trading empire, a railway magnate will want to build a successful rail network and a military commander will have instructions from his government to carry out.

Players can take a variety of nationalities and positions. The European positions range from command of a military expedition through railway magnate to trader or missionary. The players taking Chinese positions can be governors, imperial officers, rebel leaders of several different types or even bandits. As the game proceeds, players can change or even recreate their roles, moving from rebel to loyal governor or missionary to merchant adventurer.

All the positions have their advantages and disadvantages. Some have great freedom of action but no income beyond what the players can grab themselves. Others, mainly government positions and corporate positions, have a regular income but the powers that be send them orders occasionally. The big disadvantages, so it would seem, of being a Chinese player is that your officers cost £5,000 not the European's £1,000 to raise, and you don't get access to modern weapons and equipment. I suspect that Chinese positions are not well funded, but this is just a guess.

Each turn covers one month of game time, during which battles can be fought, troops can march from one town to another or a modern steamer can cross the Pacific. Building railways, forts or ships takes many months but fortunes can rise or fall on the events of a single turn.

## *Gunboat at a glance*

A mixed-moderated historical powergame from Agema Publications. It was originally entitled 'Gunboat Diplomacy', but this has been altered to avoid confusion with the Diplomacy variant. The startup is £5 and further turns are £6, with the option of paying more for some extras. The game is open-ended, and can be played by post or email.

[go.to/agema](http://go.to/agema)

[agema@lineone.net](mailto:agema@lineone.net)

## The Rules

The reasonably clear rulebook takes you through the process of choosing your position and background. Despite a few typos and glitches it contains all the basics you need to know. There are sections you will need during play on constructing infrastructure (eg railways, telegraphs) and bases (eg forts, temples, banks or stations) as well as more military matters.

A simple example of how to build a warship illustrates a couple of the many pitfalls. The rules also contain some useful advice on a range of items, including how not to write your turn orders, and an easily overlooked advisory of the game's main 'gotcha'. The line in the rules which reads: 'Incompetence of those around you is a theme of the game, reflecting the chaotic nature of the times' is not to be underestimated!

For military expeditions the construction of a ship or ships and the equipping of troops becomes an immediate issue. Since you will certainly lack the funds to buy all the nice weapons that you would like, then some thought is required. Here the rules offer little advice but careful reading should highlight the following: ships built during play take a year to build and new naval ordnance will take a year to deliver. The obvious conclusion is that, if you need ships, your starting funds should be put more heavily into them than into arming your soldiers. You can always leave recruits unarmed or inadequately armed and equip them as the game proceeds.

This approach may also save you from rushing into action before you realise that you haven't purchased any ammunition or carried out any training.

In typical Agema style we have no clear view of the combat system and suggestions of what may influence success. Clearly a Lazzeplot breech-loading rifle with range 900 yards and Rate of Fire 15 rounds a minute is better than a Percussion musket with range 200 yards and ROF2, but how much? Is the Lazzeplot better than a Needle Rifle with its ROF of 20 but 600 yard range and lower price tag? How important is training to success in battle? For nautical armaments a particularly tricky question is reliability. In our choice of extra-heavy naval guns we could buy *poor* rated Vickers Mk IIs at £50,000 per battery (two guns), *average* rated Krupp Mk IIs at £90,000 or the monstrously expensive *good* rated Elswick Mk Is at £190,000. Can the *good* rating be worth the money? I suspect the uncertainty is deliberate, leaving players to choose their odds and gamble, which seems fair enough to me. Only experience will tell you how battles work.

My only quibble with the rulebook is a minor thing which I have contributed to. After several years of game play, technology has advanced and players (including myself) have suggested new things. So there is now a range of extra weapons, a new type of ship, new things to build and new equipment. These are not mentioned in the rules, but information about them is generally published intermittently in the game turns. Perhaps this information should be sent out with the rules as an extra addenda sheet?

## The game turn

Game turns are on a roughly two-week cycle and can be via PBM or PBEM. However, the email side of things is not perfect as I have missed a turn due to over-enthusiastic anti-spam software and letters from PBM players will still be sent to you by post. For those playing by mail I would presume that Agema's usual high reliability applies.

The exact content of a turn will vary depending on position but I'll describe mine and since the game orders are free-form I'll give a quick

overview of how I submit things.

The first item in my turn are my instructions from the government: a paragraph directing me towards certain, secret, long and mid-term goals. Then we have the information about my position: budget, available recruits, standing orders I've issued (#1 reads *officers must always be armed on duty*), a description of various uniforms and a list of what and where my forces are.

As an example of a unit description consider the following from an old turn: Nagasaki;

*1st Marine Arty Bty.*

*x2 officers (SU), x1 French officer (SU), x2 sergeants, x48 troops (OU).*

*Excellent gunners & small arms shots, limbering x4. Morale C.*

*x4 20pdr Normington guns, 140 rounds solid shot, 200 rounds shell, 80 rounds canister*

*43 Colt's, 3 swords, 10 Needle rifles, 2,150 rounds*

*20 pickaxes, 20 spades, 10 wheelbarrows, 2 wagons, 24 horses)*

What does this all mean?

The first item is the overall unit name *1st Marine Artillery Battery*. This is followed by what makes up the unit, with SU and OU denoting superior or ordinary uniform. Next is the unit's training state and morale, by default a unit has D morale and no training. So our artillerymen are well above average. The rest of the entry indicates the unit's equipment: a single battery (4) of Normington guns, an array of 20-pdr ammunition, a range of personal weapons and ammunition, then finally the equipment the battery needs to dig field fortifications and transport everything.

The unit information is followed by the results of any actions or any information that is secret or not generally known. Finally, there are letters from other players (if emailed, otherwise they will arrive separately by post) and the game newspaper *The Shanghai Times*.

The bulk of player information comes from the newspaper, which contains information about events around the region and beyond. As illustration, a section from an old edition is below:

**KOWLOON**

*Roland Travers and 100 armed English men have been taken by eleven hired sampans across from Hong Kong to the mainland. The sampan operators insisted on making landfall over the bay at Kowloon. However, as they punted past a powerful Imperial Chinese ironclad, the Evening Star, they were hailed by the crew and, after a long and tortuous argument, the sampans turned back for Hong Kong without having landed at Kowloon. It appears that the sailors had told them foreigners are outlawed in Kowloon for being too ugly.*

**WEI-HAI-WEI**

*Mister Archibald Forbes, a news correspondent with the London Illustrated News, has taken it upon himself to depart from the SS Nemesis and go haring off to try and find Sir Harry Flashman, VC, for whom he has some rather important news.*

## Orders

Players can submit articles for the newspaper as part of their turn and I usually try to submit something, even if it's just a silly advert. Diplomatic mail is sent via Agema, so there is a significant delay and letters may be intercepted by hostile players. There is no limit, that I know of, on the amount of diplomatic mail you can send.

The main body of my orders normally comprises:

A list of purchases and expenditures, eg 4 Lazio Rapide Machine guns @ £7,500 each = £30,000.

Changes to unit's orders creating new units or reorganising them.

Training schedule: when they have the spare time, our troops are trained.

Free form orders: anything else. These might be orders for a unit to move from A to B, for an attack to be launched or for a meeting with important businessmen in an effort to obtain investment.

## Playing the game

My game position is Admiral Yoshida Razan (Razan Yoshida in European format), head of the Japanese Naval presence. The Admiral is a believer in the old Japanese government policy of *Pan-Asian brotherhood* (ie mostly anti-colonial) which is slowly being overtaken by an attitude mimicking the European powers (ie military colonialism). He is also a

supporter of law, order and correct conduct.

As I suggested earlier, I favoured a slow build up so that my naval force would be at least respectable. Most of my start budget, or about £600,000, went into the purchase of His Imperial Japanese Majesty's Ship Hiriyuu, the details of which will have to remain secret. Suffice to say that Hiriyuu was loosely based on the historical Japanese warship Naniwa, but with better armour. To put this budget in perspective, a basic ship's hull costs £100,000, modern engines £100,000 and a single battery of *Simington Naval* medium rifled breech loaders costs £35,000. My annual budget, subsequently paid out in monthly instalments was equal to my starting funds.

I made a special request for a Japanese position because Japan is not on the list provided at start-up and I felt that there should be a Japanese presence. So, I wasn't sure what restrictions would apply to me. As it turned out, Japan had access to all modern arms and equipment (with a few quirks) but unfortunately officers were raised at the Chinese cost. This problem was offset by the presence of five British officers for the navy and five French officers for the marines. Still, when you consider I now have about 40 Japanese officers at a cost of £200,000 which would only have cost £40,000 for a Western nation, it's a big difference in the long run.

Once I entered the game I immediately began building up the *Imperial Marine Landing Force*, supplying them with officers, modern rifles (*Needle Rifles*, the cheapest modern rifle at £400 each) and uniforms. Ammunition for training followed, along with more troops and a battery of 20-pounder Normington guns as support. A special operations force, the Special Services Group, was created and trained in a range of skills.

Since my force is supposed to be made up of regular troops I decided that we should have a regular scale of monthly pay and stick to it. I also felt that my forces should have a good level of training, but this raised the question of how good is good?

Careful reading of the news indicated that the typical soldier, with a few exceptions, seemed unable to hit the 'broad side of a barn' despite their being controlled by long-running players. Then a leak about two of the LaForce trading company's (run by a very long-running player) armed merchant ships revealed that they were only trained in gunnery and that at a mere x5! Clearly training wasn't high on most people's priorities.

Of course, training without any enhancement takes one month in return for about a training level of x1 and sometimes less. So, perhaps players are dissuaded from trying to train at all as x6 (aka *Good*) is needed for any serious benefit and to reach the top level of x12 (aka *Excellent*) would seem to take a year. However, during play I discovered that training can be done two to three times faster than the rules suggest and in certain fields of endeavour up to twelve times faster if you know the right methodology! As I said earlier, the rules cover the basics but there are lots of hidden 'tricks of the trade' to uncover.

Now, Gunboat has plenty of opportunities for diplomacy and I indulged actively in trying to befriend the European powers, except the evil Russians, and the Chinese. Eventually, I found myself on friendly-ish terms with one of the Russian players, supporting one of the Chinese players who actively opposed British colonialism and being friendly with the Americans who also opposed the British. This wasn't where I had planned on being but the British mostly didn't want to talk or to be friendly and the Americans did.

## Conclusion

With a basic turn fee of £6 per turn, Gunboat seems reasonably priced for a human-moderated game. If you are particularly enthusiastic or in a hurry to get things done, then you can pay more to have more orders processed but a respectable amount can be done without this.

The game plays well but due to player input being important action can ebb and flow with things going quiet for a few months in your area. Obviously, if you build up a wide-ranging position or travel around there will always be something going on and anyway a quiet period can be useful for regrouping after a bout of chaotic action.

To give a better feel for the game I have written a game diary covering my more recent exploits, this will be published next issue.

# Style vs Substance

## Is DOOM 3 up to the Hype?

*GLOBETROTTER fights his way through to the answer ...*



EXTREMELY impressive from a technical standpoint yet behind the times from a first-person-shooter design standpoint: this is the dichotomy that is **Doom 3**, the long-awaited sequel from well-known Texas-based developer *id Software*. Doom 3 is quite possibly the best-looking game ever, thanks to the brand-new 3D graphics engine used to generate its convincingly lifelike, densely atmospheric, and surprisingly expansive environments. At the same time, when you look past the spectacular appearance,

you'll find a conventional, derivative shooter. In fact, if you played the original Doom or its sequel back in the mid '90s (or any popular '90s-era shooter, for that matter), you may be shocked by how similarly Doom 3 plays to those games. The legions of *id Software*'s true believers will celebrate this straightforwardness as being deliberately 'old school', especially since Doom 3 is packed with direct references to its classic predecessors. However, the truth of the matter is that Doom 3's gameplay structure and level design are behind the times and very much at odds with the game's cutting-edge, ultra-realistic looks. The quality of the presentation truly is remarkable, but is it enough to overwhelm Doom 3's occasional problems?

### Predictable rather than scary

Doom 3 is essentially a remake of the original Doom, though series fans will find re-imagined versions of almost every monster from both Doom and Doom II in the new sequel. You play as a nameless, voiceless 22nd century space marine called by the Union Aerospace Corporation to its Mars research facility beset with mysterious problems: the forces of hell, to be exact. You'll end up single-handedly fighting back legions of hellspawn using weapons like shotguns, machine guns and rocket launchers. As in the classic Doom games, your foes here are liable to strike at any time, often just as you round a corner, grab a much-needed power-up, or set foot into a new area. So, while your enemies will materialise without notice, and may occasionally startle you as they leap out of the darkness, Doom 3 cannot easily be described as scary or suspenseful. On the contrary, it's very predictable, and more or less it just goes through the same types of

paces that you've probably gone through before in any number of other similar games.

Over the course of the game, you'll fight your way through a series of linear levels filled with locked doors, and you'll gradually find new weapons and occasionally meet new types of monsters. Early on, your apparent goal is to meet up with your squad, but as you might expect, you'll never actually get to fight alongside any human forces (no thanks to the omission of a co-op mode for multiple players, which was a signature element of past Doom games). Despite the game's cinematic trappings, it follows a formula that generally lacks drama or tension. Occasionally, the game presents to you a shocking or surprising scene, a hallucination or some hellish, otherworldly image. These moments are effective, but are too few and far between in the context of a single-player shooter that's of above-average length (somewhere between 15 to 20 hours). Fortunately, the campaign definitely picks up during the last several hours, once you finally reach (and keep going past) the point when you confront the enemy on its own turf. Getting to that point may be your primary motivation for trudging through some of the repetitive middle portions of the game, though.

### Plausability problems

Part of the issue is that Doom 3's storyline and narrative technique are ineffectual. Since the main character has no identity whatsoever (for whatever reason), the game tries to get you interested in everyone else on the base. You'll frequently find voice recordings and e-mail from various characters, but not only is a lot of this stuff bone dry, having to stop and read or stand around and listen to a rambling monologue jarringly disrupts the flow of the action. Unfortunately, if you choose to focus on the action by ignoring the seemingly extraneous story elements, you'll find that some of them aren't optional, you'll need to sift through those e-mails and listen to some of those voice recordings to get passcodes for locked doors and storage chests.

For what it's worth, the game's premise seems very fleshed out, and the game gives an amazing first impression. As you explore the UAC base, eavesdropping on various conversations and observing great, little details here and there, you'll get the impression that Doom 3 takes place in a fully realized world. Of course, all hell quickly breaks loose, and from that point onward you'll encounter scarce few creatures that you won't want to instantly shoot. The premise of the game will continue to unfold through occasional cut-scenes and the aforementioned e-mails and recordings.

Since Doom 3 purports to have a plausible premise, suddenly, aspects of the game that you might not normally question will start to stick out as being annoyingly inconsistent. You'll undoubtedly find time to wonder about these logic gaps as you fight throughout the UAC base, especially if you've played other recent first-person shooters that do a better job of justifying their plots. Why would a 22nd-century space marine be sent into action in a darkly lit area without night vision goggles of some sort, or even a helmet? Why wouldn't any of his weapons have light-amplification modules built into them when even today's weapons frequently do? Why, instead, is he stuck carrying around a very weak flashlight with unlimited battery life? Why is he unable to hold a gun and the flashlight at the same time? Why are the UAC's small, spider-like sentry drones so incredibly powerful? You'll see these helpful little guys rip through droves of hellspawn even faster than you can. If the base's defences are so tough, then why is everyone so worried, and why is everyone getting killed? Doom 3's central gameplay conceit simply doesn't fit in with the premise of the game,

### *Doom 3 at a glance*

Computer 'Shoot'em up' game from *id Software*. £26.99 from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk), but check your local games shop first.

[www.doom3.com](http://www.doom3.com)

[www.idsoftware.com](http://www.idsoftware.com)

and this is a problem only because Doom 3 chooses to try to make you feel like you're in a believable, fully realised world. Doom-inspired shooters, such as *Serious Sam* and *Painkiller*, wisely followed the classic game's arcade-like nature by never even purporting to be plausible and simply focusing on run-and-gun action. So it's ironic that Doom 3's ambitions to be a story-driven game mostly just end up getting in the way and weakening the overall experience.

#### Dark and creepy?

As mentioned, Doom 3 is pervasively dark; there's rarely a moment when your entire field of vision isn't predominantly shrouded in thick, black shadow. This contributes heavily to Doom 3's creepy, claustrophobic feel and it does indeed give the gameplay a distinctive quality. However, the constant extremely dark settings conspire with the frequently repetitive level design to contribute to gameplay that can often feel monotonous, especially since the action itself is very straightforward. What's more, the game's levels will occasionally require you to backtrack through dark hallways without clear markings, so rather than constantly blasting monsters, you may end up spending an undue amount of time just trying to get your bearings. There's a sizeable arsenal of weapons to be found here, but none of them are completely satisfying to use. Pretty much all the guns are direct-fire, point-and-shoot weapons with no alternate firing modes and no close-range melee attacks; they do look impressive onscreen, but they all sound surprisingly tinny and subdued, rather than loud and powerful.

Meanwhile, the game's few melee weapons are mostly useless (though the chainsaw is at least fun to use). The grenades and the rocket launcher are liable to damage you just as much as they will damage your foes, since most of the game's battles occur at close range. Most modern shooters now seek to balance their weapons such that different tactical circumstances call for different measures, but Doom 3 takes the old 'bigger is better' approach, for the most part. The main consideration in deciding which weapon to use at any given moment will be how much ammunition you have remaining, and to its credit, Doom 3 forces you to be pretty conservative with your ammo: you'll often feel the need to make every shot count. Furthermore, your marine has no special abilities to speak of. He can move about fairly quickly, he can jump about two feet high, he can crouch, he can sprint, and he can carry every weapon at once, but that's it; don't expect him to be able to lie prone or lean around corners or anything like that. This isn't that kind of game.

This also isn't the kind of game in which you should expect to be fighting against ruthlessly intelligent foes. Some of the former human marines you'll face will use rudimentary tactics against you, and other foes at least do a fairly good job of giving chase if you try to flee from them. But, in general, your enemies follow the same sorts of predictable patterns that you may remember from previous Doom games. By the halfway point of the game, you'll have little trouble avoiding your enemies' attacks when directly confronting them, so you'll instead be concentrating on predicting the expected ambushes around every corner. Also, one of the drawbacks of Doom 3's richly detailed graphics is that you'll rarely face more than a few foes at a time. As you kill them, their bodies instantly disintegrate into ash, which is a nice effect, but also the same effect for just about every foe you kill. It's disappointing that the colourful death animations and seas of monster corpses from past Doom games are nowhere to be found here (though, in exchange, you'll pass through countless corridors chock-full of smeared blood and human remains).

#### Is it a challenge?

As a result of all of the above, the predictable level design and enemies, and



the simple-but-effective weapons arsenal, Doom 3 does not turn out to be particularly challenging, at least at the normal difficulty setting. Actually, the main reason for this is because, as in many other shooters, you can quick-save your progress virtually instantly and at any time. The creepy atmosphere and frequent ambushes will likely cause you to use this option more often than you need it, and as a result, the game's suspense and tension is further mitigated. Limited save systems in shooters often meet with great resistance from certain players, but Doom 3 is a game that probably would have benefited from one. As it stands, shooter veterans shouldn't have any problem blasting their way through the game at the middle difficulty setting (at least up until near the end, anyway), and they should therefore consider the hardest available setting for their first attempt. 'Nightmare' difficulty is unlocked after you finish the game, and in it, your health constantly dwindles down toward a danger zone, which means most players aren't going to find it much fun.

So what makes Doom 3 special if it's just a basic corridor crawl in which you shoot anything that moves? For one thing, the foes you'll face, while not terribly smart, are a decidedly impressive and wonderfully animated lot. Doom die-hards will recognise most all their old nightmarish favourites, and will spot a number of vicious-looking new ones. Sometimes your only tip-off to the presence of enemies will be their gleaming orange eyes peering at you through the darkness, which is another great touch. Most enemies have both ranged and melee attacks, and when they hit you, your perspective will often shake violently as blood fills your field of vision, disorienting you and making you feel like, well, some demon from hell just hit you in the face. Interestingly, this effect is more pronounced the less health you have, which makes for some nerve-racking firefights.

Also, the stifling darkness of the game does work to good effect during most of the battles. As you explore with your flashlight in hand, you'll suddenly hear the chilling groans and growls of nearby foes, so you'll switch to your weapon of choice and whirl about trying to find signs of movement. The action unfolds quickly and violently. Enemies will often lurch right at you, giving you a clear shot of (and a clear shot at) their ghastly physiques. That is to say, what battles in Doom 3 lack in complexity, they make up for in visceral thrills. Even after you've fought countless imps and other demons, you'll still be impressed by some of your close encounters with them.

#### Great details

Doom 3 has some other great details. You'll frequently be able to manipulate computers and other terminals, and you'll do so just by walking right up to them and using your mouse to click on them. It's a subtle yet

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impressive touch. The text on these terminals is clearly legible when you're standing near them, whereas other games in the past have required you to switch to a separate screen (and thus get taken out of the main experience of the game) to read these types of messages. Doom 3 also sports some realistic physics, though many other action games have already done this in the past year or so. Even so, Doom 3's physics are handled well, resulting in some excellent moments when enemies get sent flying from the blasts of your weapons, simultaneously bursting into ashes. You'll also happen upon some grisly or creepy scenes that are certain to stick in your mind long after you've fought your way past them.

In the end, Doom 3's single-player portion is well worth the exertion necessary to get through it from start to finish. At this point, there's no clear-cut reason to revisit the campaign, since the action itself will have practically outlived its welcome by the bitter end of your first time through.

This leaves you with Doom 3's threadbare multiplayer features to consider. Out of the box, the game supports only up to four players on a handful of maps and in a small number of different deathmatch-style modes. Doom's biggest fans could probably make excuses for how this is a throwback to the good old days, and the game's player community will do more with it (they've already circumvented the four-player limit, for instance), but it's simply not a competitive multiplayer game compared to current standards. The in-game server browser at least is functional, but the four-player limit on most servers means that most multiplayer sessions are going to be full at all times, making the absence of some sort of "quick match" option sorely apparent here, whereas most online shooters get by without one.

While actually playing, the action is just OK; you run around and shoot other players who are running around with the same basic weapons you'll find in the single-player game, all while trying to keep your health, armour, and ammo levels optimal by nabbing power-ups. Unfortunately, most of the multiplayer matches that we tried were quite prone to lag, making the game's projectile-based weapons frustrating to use. The multiplayer maps themselves are dimly lit much like the rest of the game, but the lack of lighting isn't really conducive to the relatively faster-paced deathmatch modes; the maps themselves are interesting enough otherwise, and are basically well suited to four-player close-quarters bloodbaths. Nevertheless, the multiplayer action generally lacks much of the visceral and even the visual thrills of the single-player mode, since players are limited to choosing from four colours of just one generic marine player model.

### Graphics and Audio

Again, though, in spite of its shortcomings, Doom 3 certainly is a beautiful-looking game, so much so that simply running around in the environments becomes a pleasurable experience in and of itself. The environments offer little interactivity; you can knock over certain boxes and, as mentioned, use certain computers, but you can't damage most objects you see and you can't manipulate them in any way. But they're all really, really pretty. The game's character models look about as outstanding as everything else, though the awesome monsters really out-do the human characters. Impressively enough, the game runs well, even on systems closer to the minimum system requirements, as long as you set it to low detail. The downside to this is that the colours appear more washed out, but the dynamic lighting effects and incredibly crisp textures still manage to shine through, and at a surprisingly brisk frame rate, no less. There actually isn't much genuine

creativity to be found in Doom 3's visual design, which resembles any number of other sci-fi, horror-themed games or movies. But the execution of the visuals here is absolutely unmatched, and it truly needs to be seen in action to be fully appreciated. Also of note, the game's loading times are quite brief overall, even on relatively slower systems (there's a noticeable loading time when first entering one of the game's good-sized levels, but that's it). For that matter, despite reports from some players that the game is prone to crashing, I did not experience any technical issues of that sort.

As for Doom 3's audio, it's also quite impressive overall, but not nearly like the graphics. For one thing, Doom 3 has no soundtrack, apart from a heavy metal tune that plays at the title screen and a few rhythmic ambient tracks. This questionable design choice certainly does amplify the game's effective, believable, and often truly creepy ambient sounds, but it also contributes to the game's dearth of true drama and suspense. You can probably think of many games whose musical compositions and actual musical cues contributed heavily to the atmosphere of the experience; but Doom 3 balked at this opportunity. Some of the actual sound effects in the game also aren't that great. Your marine's footsteps sound bland and rather loud, and as mentioned, most of the weapons sound disappointingly underpowered. On the other hand, most of the monsters' shrieks and roars are just as menacing as their graphics, and the voice acting that can be heard throughout the game is of generally high quality. For good measure, if you happen to have a 5.1 surround sound speaker system for your computer, you'll enjoy the audio that much more while gaining a tactical advantage against all those imps spawning behind you.

### Spectacular ... with shortcomings

Some game players will tell you that graphics aren't everything. And others will tell you that, on the contrary, graphics are truly important for a game. Doom 3 makes a compelling case for both sides of the argument. On one hand, its gameplay has noticeable shortcomings, and its multiplayer mode, which is the focus of most of today's shooters, thanks in large part to id Software's own contributions in the past, seems like an afterthought. On the other hand, Doom 3 is a spectacular game in the purest sense, and it is therefore by all means worth experiencing by those with an interest in witnessing just how far the technology of gaming has come along. Fortunately, the actual game itself, while not as remarkable as the technology that fuels it, is put together well enough to make Doom 3 legitimately great, all things considered.



# Great Britain

**MARK HYGATE** continues our Austerlitz series with a position where diplomacy is advisable but not essential ...

AS AN ISLAND, Great Britain can get away with no diplomacy at all and just put effort into any direction in the colonies. Getting a toehold in Europe will be difficult, however, and everyone will try to keep you out. As described in the Strategy section, Great Britain (GB) in Europe is essential for a successful endgame. To play a 'classic' GB, diplomacy is essential. Played competently, GB can generate a fair amount of Louisdore, which can be used to support allies and/or sow dissent. Thus one can engage with all the other countries, without actually having to provide direct support, if that's not what you want. At a minimum, GB should engage with France, Spain and Portugal and, to a lesser extent, Holland. These are the other players in the colonies and early de-conflicting can be of great benefit.

## Economy

It is possible to take a longer and slower route to maximising your economy with GB. One reason for this is that you will want to consider laying down as much population as possible, in order to generate more Louisdore per head than any other country. With the cost of GB's navy, you will probably be building troops slower (and perhaps expensive troops) and thus the Economic Points requirement can be lower (and all the facilities that go into producing them). Eventually, however, you will end up with all of the British isles, less a few mountains, full of production sites. As the islands are reasonably secure from attack, this is where you will want to concentrate your sites.

However, do not forget the essentials; once April 1808 is upon you (the turn labelled March 1808), start thinking about Food and Estates. Make sure you have enough food for the first, and then second, winter! Assuming your navy remains large, you will also need enough Vineyards, which is the only site you cannot have in GB itself.

Don't forget Trade when playing GB. With a domination of the sea it is possible to trade anywhere for a fair amount of profit. Think of even 'giving' trade cities (in the colonies you dominate) to other countries in order to generate trade differences. Sea-borne trade will mostly concentrate on the Ores and Ec Pts, plus Wine, if it's spare.

## Brigades

Most of the GB troops are useful. Even the Militia can be used for defending the homeland, as they are likely to outnumber the opposition just landed, before the navy then destroys their troopships. They can also be used to drop sacrificial land-grabbers anywhere in the world! Brigade size can be an interesting choice. Do you go for smaller brigades that can more easily fit on ships (pretty useful in the colonies)? Or larger ones, because you can only load/unload so many per turn? Personally I have always remained with a mix of forces, which are fairly historical, and more useful in tactical battles. However, GB will do most of its fighting in the early years as mathematical, so this must be borne in mind.

## Ships

GB's navy is essential and should not be traded away for short-term gain. It ensures the defence of the country from any early interloper and very few mainland powers will try to land early. Even if they gang up, they risk losing their navies and a lot of men. Other mainland powers will be quick to exploit this - sow that dissent!

In the early turns you are likely to spend a fair amount of time getting your navy together and organising it. My current favourite is to organise by speed (MP), rather than 'historical' as this allows more efficient troop carrying. One tactic is to buy another navy - Russia's if you can get it (or half of it). This is expensive, though, and the effect on the economy is significant. The navy will spend most of its time ferrying troops to the colonies at first, but don't forget to leave enough to defend and/or strike opportunistically - more later...



*Nelson briefs his officers before the Battle of Trafalgar 21st October 1805*

## Colonies

GB cannot ignore the colonies! On the other side of the coin, however, it can dominate them entirely. While it is worth maintaining a reasonable presence in the Caribbean, it is in the Far East that most of the map can belong to GB. Over time, the colonies can generate a lot of income for GB, which can then fund a future in mainland Europe. Early on, it is quite possible, if not desirable, to knock some players out of the colonies entirely. Ownership of mines seems to dominate, as these generate the most trade and some will eventually support a full military economy. One limitation to bear in mind is that you can only build two brigades in the colonies every turn. Thus, early and continuous building is the way to go to generate large forces.

## Strategy

GB can choose to go all 'colonies' and ignore Europe entirely. This will not make you popular with those countries once they're organised and you will have to fend off attacks. GB, however, is probably the only country where complete isolation can work, with only Morocco a lesser second. You could aim to dominate the colonies entirely; have a navy that could not be beaten; and plan to be one of the last three standing; all without talking to anyone!

If you want to play as part of the whole, however, a route into Europe must be found. Once GB is ensconced on the continent you will have a fairly secure base from which to operate: thus, most other countries will try to prevent this. GB can make a great ally to another power, or two (three can share the win, don't forget), and so they may well let you land in secret. Do not underestimate the time it takes to ship an army to the continent. At an average of eight brigades per turn, it will take nearly a game year to get a reasonable army across. Building brigades in Europe may be possible later in the game, but the cost is prohibitive. Given that you can indeed ship as many as you can build, this is probably not necessary. Remember to keep at least some troops at home (even while they train) and at least one general, otherwise you could possibly suffer some losses as someone goes for a sea-borne invasion, even against the odds.

## *Austerlitz at a glance*

Detailed PBM Napoleonic wargame from Supersonic Games Ltd in the UK, Quirxel games (the designers) in Germany, SSV in Austria and Austerlitz-Pbem on the web. UK charges are £10 for startup, £3.75 per turn. This series of beginners' guides is based on the Supersonic version of the game ([www.austerlitzpbem.com](http://www.austerlitzpbem.com)). Contact details of all the other companies running Austerlitz are listed in Galactic View on pages 49-50.

# Austerlitz

## The Rise of the Eagle

*Austerlitz of the future is here!*  
*The Premier Napoleonic Wargame is now available for play-by-email*  
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# Fall of Rome

*Lord Thanatos, aka RICK GHAN, cheers his opportunity to be crowned Emperor ...*

OUR SPIRITS soar upon learning of the valiant deeds of King Arthur and his mighty knights. Our imagination takes flight contemplating the heroism of Beowulf. And, ah, the possibilities we consider when remembering the power and brutality of Attila the Hun. Each of us yearns for such exciting, consequential lives!

In the secret depths of our being we believe that the glorious legends would echo our own names through eternity if we had just been born in more exciting, fearful times. While some consider history mundane, all of humanity thrills at the daring exploits of its legendary figures. 'Ah, to be king!' We have all dreamed of the possibilities - may as well admit it.

The opportunity to become the persona of some of history's greatest commanders, leading their subjects in both prosperity and conflict while subjugating neighboring countries after crushing their armies and toppling their towns is now upon us.

**Fall of Rome** is a brand new turn-based, computer-moderated, highly detailed strategy game from the fertile mind of Rick McDowell, the creator of the multiple award winning **Alamaze** PBM game.

Fall of Rome has just completed its Alpha and Beta testing phase. Flagship customers will be among the first to play this exciting, highly interactive, turn-based strategy game online. (After you finish reading this article rush online and check out the wonderful gaming features and stunning artwork.) The intuitive graphical user interface combined with artwork by both Brom and Frazetta allow one to enjoy the gaming experience offered from the first moment the web site loads. Truly a fantasy gamer's dream made reality!

Fall of Rome is set just after the majestic Roman Empire tears itself apart. This is a time of great political upheaval that gave rise to legendary actors and heroic deeds. The game setting has been extensively researched and surpasses the most stringent historian's expectations. The names of regions, cities, towns and characters are authentic for the era and the kingdoms are equipped with the appropriate troops with which the various tribes and heroes historically conquered their enemies. Will we be as successful? Have we dreamed of commanding armies in the pursuit of wealth, power, or peace? Fall of Rome combines exacting historical detail with an intuitive interface designed by our fellow gamers. History awaits:



will we measure up?

Multiple award-winning game designer Rick McDowell (who made his mark as Senior Vice President at Blockbuster before leaving the corporate arena to focus his efforts full-time on game design) has attracted a talented team to bring us Fall of Rome, including Fletcher Dunn, author of the book *3D Math Primer for Games and Graphic Development* and lead software engineer for titles on all major gaming platforms (PC, Mac, Playstation II, Xbox, and GameCube). This technical expertise has seamlessly melded historical accuracy, the inherent complexity of turn-based strategy, with a easy-to-use computer interface and brilliant artwork to provide a level of gaming that will exceed every expectation.

Logging on to [www.fallofromegame.com](http://www.fallofromegame.com), we feel welcome from the first moment our web browser loads the opening video and soul-stirring music, which bring us to a crescendo of delight and fuels our expectations. Fall of Rome will more than meet those high expectations. Customers of *Flagship* are accustomed to the best in gaming and Fall of Rome will not disappoint.

## First decisions

Each kingdom has an advantage built into the gaming format that is based on an historically accurate faucet formerly enjoyed by the tribe in real life. Armed with this advantage, and the appropriate fear our neighbors will have of us, we will issue orders to agents, nobles, military commanders, high priestesses, and peasants in our cities, towns, and villages to carry out our will. Competing against eleven other players on a regional map containing population centers of various sizes and unexplored areas containing fearsome guardians of legendary artifacts, imposing our will beyond the borders of our own kingdom is the most challenging aspect of Fall of Rome. Fail in this and our names will never be remembered: succeed and our names will be written in the Halls of Valhalla forevermore! There are status points to be garnered from victory that will be kept track of so that the Hall of Valhalla shall become a bragging-rights area that will make

## Fall of Rome at a glance

A turnbased fantasy wargame with an historical setting, played online from Enlightened Age Entertainment, Inc. Price \$6.47 for the first month of play.

[www.fallofromegame.com](http://www.fallofromegame.com)

our own names famous within the gaming community!

Covert operations are quite important and agents can eventually become the most feared of all character classes. That is provided we don't needlessly waste these resources for early-game goals that are all too fleeting. How one balances the desire to use a low- or mid-level agent to prevent a neighbor from attaining an objective against the necessity and required expense of training agents to a fearsome high-level can easily determine one's fate. Miscalculate here and we can be crushed late in the contest, or eliminated early on. Only by skillfully walking the strategic tightrope will our kingdom rise to the pinnacle of success and claim our rightful victory!

Nobles wield great influence on behalf of their king. Keep the noble court happy and they will spread word of our daring exploits throughout all the realms. Skimp on the expensive nobles and face a deaf-ear from the rabble in cities. We must adequately fund the noble court, from the Crown Prince to the lowly ambassador, if we desire foreign kings and their hard-working peasants to learn of our grand accomplishments. After all, what value is there in great deeds without an adoring public to sing our praises?

Military leaders throughout our kingdom demand more recruits, mercenary units, and greater training every turn. This all requires great sums of gold and supplies. Woe to the king who dares risk the wrath of his generals should the military not be paid commensurate with its skill and loyalty! Our armies will subjugate our enemies and conquer rich lands in our name, provided we don't spend our wealth in frivolous pursuits. But what fun is that? Ah, the weight of responsibility. Are we truly meant to be a legendary king? One of the twelve players is: will it be us?

Once we own the land and command the love (or fear) of the peasants, we must build temples to the gods, taverns for the populace, markets for the merchants, storage silos for the winter, and monuments to our own enlightened rule. Future historians will not learn of our legendary deeds unless there are great monuments built to outlast the petty memory of mortal men. Where will these funds come from? Our enemies, of course! Thus we must conquer those around us.

## War

Battle is, therefore, inevitable. Fall of Rome provides a great range of tactical choices when enemy armies meet in a clash of arms. The morale of our troops, the skill of our commanders, the quality of our arms/armor/mounts, the attrition remaining from previous battles, the composition of our units, the experience of our troops, and the orders we issue all impact

the results of battle. This aspect of Fall of Rome is not being overstated. Each one of these items is taken into account by the detailed simulation system. There is a depth to military conflict that is unequalled in any other strategic game presently available. A range of defensive orders such as hold at all costs, strategic withdrawal, or counter-assault each have particular requirements in the way of command level, morale, troop skill and terrain before the order can be issued. So too are there requirements for offensive orders such as hunt, flank, oblique, frontal assault and others. A skilled player can lure an enemy into unfavorable terrain and crush a much larger force. Alternatively, a less thoughtful tactical decision can result in ruin for the lives of our soldiers. We must rise to the challenge or fall in anonymity: such a fate is worse than death. The bards must eternally sing our names!

The battle reports generated when our legions crush those raised by the pretenders to our throne are marvelous in both detail and spirit. Our leaders' actions are described, the impact our unique troops or equipment have on the battle field are related to us, the terrain and its affect upon the battle are written in the report, and the offensive and defensive effect of artifacts are made clear. The battle reports are almost like short stories made from eye-witness accounts. Just short of achieving the historical significance found within the ballads to be sung by the King's Bards these written reports are majestic in scope and truly convey a sense of victorious elation - or devastating defeat.

Artifacts, thought lost to the world forever, impact many aspects of the game and are avidly sought by every king. The Holy Grail, the Spear of Odin, and the Bow of Heracles are just a few of the kingly artifacts contained in Fall of Rome. One must discover these powerful items, or steal them from pretenders to the throne, if for no other reason than to keep them away from one's enemies. Artifacts are few and difficult to retrieve, but generate great power to the king who controls them. Yet, be careful not to seek them with too much avarice or the rest of the kingdom will fail because of inattentiveness. We can certainly balance all the complexities of rulership and can make certain that the other players fail in their goals: remember that the victors write the histories!

## Submitting orders

Although we have always wanted to be mighty leaders and warriors of great renown, we assume these that titles imply lackeys, servants, craftsmen, etc to carry out our wishes (orders, actually). In Fall of Rome we will be able to submit an average of about fifteen to twenty-five orders every turn - depending upon how skillfully we act upon the sage advice we receive.

The player interface program which accepts our orders has been thoroughly debugged and tailored to eliminate over 90% of potential errors. Those orders which are apparently 'errors' but 'might' be proper depending upon events early in the turn are allowed to be entered, but a warning message is provided. Great effort has gone into making as certain as possible that we kings are saved from any embarrassment that might result from failed orders. This also means the royal executioner remains available to fulfill our commands, instead of having to work daily to eliminate those who failed in their duties to their king.

All turns are processed via computer every 72 hours. This allows you to select the most convenient time to review your turn results and enter your next orders. Midnight, noon, 6:03 am, etc are all accommodated equally via the web browser. No having to worry about scrambling to enter orders when one's allies are online. Every kingdom's



orders are processed simultaneously and the results are available for viewing within minutes of when the turn is processed. No lengthy delays (the bane of all avid PBM gamers) makes this contest truly inspiring. There is also quite detailed information available online regarding the turn sequence and other formulas (in descriptive text) that explain how various orders interact so that the first-time player will not find himself at a technical disadvantage.

Understanding the turn sequence is an essential element of success. By the time our noble court performs its duties the realm may have changed, even changed significantly, due to military actions, agent activities and economic matters. As a general example, battles occur before movement and agent actions occur before political activities. Thus, we must gather information carefully and make wise determinations as to likely occurrences that will affect our desired strategy. This element enables the skilled player to rise to the top of the contest. The advanced contests held between players who have all played in previous games are truly competitive and require a great deal of brilliant decrees. Of course, we kings-to-be would want it no other way!

### Strategy

No single strategy dominates the game. Diverse play styles all have an opportunity for success. There is a standard victory available for a king to be declared The Rex by conquering and defending for a few turns three complete regions. This is a difficult accomplishment among skilled players and when achieved entitles the victor to lord over his fallen foes for quite a while. The Halls of Valhalla shall sing of these mighty deeds forever! Additionally, there are three secret victory conditions available which stress military, covert, or political emphasis. Any one of these three victory conditions can be chosen by the twelve players in each contest (before turn three). Therefore, whether our kingdom is to become a shadowy realm filled with sharp-eyed, clever assassins living in fear of our wrath, or a light-filled airy realm consisting of happy, enthusiastic politicians and avid scholars is determined by the decrees we issue - and the unequalled might of our legions, of course.

The game lasts a set number of turns (24 enjoyable, complex, strategic turns) and requires no lengthy build-up period. Each player begins the contest with the tools to immediately rise to rulership, become a Kingmaker, or simply protect what we begin with. However we elect to play it, the contest will end upon the completion of turn 24 if nobody has claimed victory before then. At this point the victor is determined via 'The Lion's Share' calculation. Status points are accumulated every six turns and are worth double on the final turn of the contest. Whoever gains the most, 'The Lion's Share', will be declared the victor. Victory, however achieved, is indeed a sweet, sweet wine!

Fall of Rome is a fast-paced contest where every turn, nay every order actually, is an intensely important and exciting brick in building the road to our throne. Every turn we must react to the edicts and accomplishments of our neighbors. They, of course, must react to ours as well. While it is true that the foolish bumbling of our neighbors is not ever going to be a threat to us, it is equally true that one can hardly wait each turn to observe how much closer we have come to realizing our dream of absolute power!

This is a game to be savored for its attention to detail in the minutiae of each turn as well as for its sweeping simplicity in portraying the strategic advances we have made over the course of the contest. There are three levels of maps available to us, which display the global expansions of the kingdoms, the strategic/tactical level upon which our armies and characters move, and the operational level describing the construction of defenses, markets, storehouses, etc of each of our individual population centers. We also have the ability to access all of our previous turns so that information is never lost and we can share with all of our real life friends the obviously inspired decisions that have led to our present triumphs. Ah, the adulation of the multitudes is truly our right!

Fall of Rome is a thrilling and complex strategy game sure to challenge the most avid gamer. We need only a web browser and a desire to crush our competition. Look for the avatar of Lord Thanatos on the message boards and within the game to test one's mettle. Which of us will have our names ring throughout history in awe and envy?

**FALL of ROME**  
Conquering Hero of the Visigoth  
Ry Yor  
Game 62 Turn 17

**Legions**  
A Scorn  
Furious  
Contempt  
Dispair  
Horror  
Terror  
Wolf  
Buck  
Fox  
Bear  
Hell Hounds  
War  
The Beast

**Scorn**  
Visigoth Army legion  
Located near the city of Tolosa, in the Viennensis plains of 1805

**Troops**

Name	Morale	Experience	Speed	Defense	Str	In Terrain	Vs. PC	Name	City
Legion Scorn totals	138	Elite	Fast	Daunting	87%	36424	28494	Light Infantry	1664
1st Visigoth brigade	154	Renowned	Very fast	Daunting	95%	4920	3853	Medium Infantry	1556
2nd Visigoth brigade	153	Renowned	Very fast	Daunting	95%	4874	3817	Heavy Infantry	927
8th Visigoth brigade	146	Elite	Fast	Formidable	94%	4618	3616	Guards Infantry	464
4th Visigoth brigade	124	Veteran	Fast	Stout	91%	3803	2979	Medium Cavalry	2373
6th Visigoth brigade	116	Veteran	Fast	Stout	89%	3479	2725	Heavy Cavalry	927
1st Burgundians brig...	128	Experienced	Fast	Meager	54%	1270	1159	Elite Cavalry	464
								Missilers	1502
								Light Cavalry	217
								Bowmen	54

**Characters**

Name	Rank	Health
Alaric	King and Warlord	Good
Spear of Longinus		
Shield of Nuodung		
Hapsdrual	Captain	Good
Talon	Agent (Level 11)	Good

**Orders**  
Intercept legion

1610 Visigoth Citadel Lugdunum 22558 gold / 24952 supplies / 6 orders remaining

# Viking Fury: Good Lord, deliver us!

*PEVANS tries a game of trading, trading and settlement by longship ...*

**Viking Fury** is the latest game from UK designers the *Ragnar Brothers* - best known for **History of the World**, which was picked up by *Gibson's* and then *Avalon Hill*. However, they have self-published plenty of other games, notably *Backpacks & Blisters*, a fun game of hiking around the Lake District. Given their name, it is perhaps surprising that they've taken so long to produce a Viking game. But here it is.

The first thing to note is that **Viking Fury** has the *Ragnars'* trademark printed 'tea towel' as a board. Tea towel is rather understating things as what we have here is a substantial cotton cloth that is A1 in size. Printed on it is a map of Europe. It looks a bit strange at first. This is because the important bits are not the land, but the seas and waterways across which the players travel on their expeditions. Like the Vikings themselves, the players are looking to trade, raid and settle across Europe. You do this by moving your longship marker from the Viking bases in Denmark, Norway and Sweden across the map. You each have a card that shows what you have on board your longship: men and goods. When you get to a coastal town, you can sell some of your cargo to gain victory points - marked on a track round the board. Trading is also something of a Trojan horse. Each town has a value, which is the number of points you score for trading with it. It's also the town's resistance to being raided or settled. However, once a town has been traded with - by any player - its resistance is reduced by one.

So you follow Viking tradition. Turn up as a peaceful trader with a load of furs, case the joint and come back later for a spot of looting. However, you can only raid towns that have treasures, like Lindisfarne and Lincoln. If you're successful, treasures score victory points, too - more than trading with a town, on average. Though you don't know just how many until you get your hands on it. There are three big treasures - in Paris, Rome and Constantinople. These are the three toughest towns to take on. And Rome and Constantinople are difficult to get to when you're based in Scandinavia. There's also a hefty bonus for whoever has the most treasures at the end.

The mechanics of raiding mean that you have to risk men from your longship and may lose them. The same is true of settling. Here you will also have to use one of your pieces to establish the settlement, if successful. Unlike raiding and trading, settling only scores points at the end of the game. What's more, the more towns in a region (groups of three towns in the same area, such as Norwich, Lincoln and York on the east coast of Britain) that are settled, the more points each of them is worth. The way this works out is that raiding and trading are preliminaries. Both activities score points, but the big points come from colonies. The rules mean that players raid and trade before they settle, neatly reproducing history. The higher value towns are the most attractive, too, which focuses attention.

What really drives the game, though, is carrying out the Sagas. Sagas are represented by a deck of cards, with each Saga allocated to Denmark, Norway or Sweden. Cards are awarded for raiding particular towns, trading with a region or settling in a region. Some Sagas award extra victory points - usually for the more difficult challenges, such as settling Newfoundland. At the end of the game, there is a substantial bonus for the players who hold the most Sagas for each of the three Viking nations. As a result, players tend to go for carrying out the Sagas. You can go and trade with the French towns if you want to, but you're better off doing this when there's a Saga to be collected. However, only two-thirds of the Saga cards are used in each game, so you can't be certain just what Sagas are going to come out. You also have to be the player who completes the Saga. It's worth looking out for opportunities to complete Sagas that others have started. The corollary is to beware of starting things you can't finish and leaving opportunities for others. So there's a premium on planning your expeditions. You have a limited number of 'actions' each turn. And you can only do one thing in each port. So look at what you can achieve in your turn to score points without leaving openings for others.

The other element in the game is the deck of Rune cards. Players have up to three of these and can only gain more in home ports (Denmark, Norway and Sweden). Playing one lets you do something outside the normal rules. For example, moving somebody else's longship out of the way. Or trying to take over someone else's settlement - the only way players can directly 'fight' each other. As you can see, these can be very useful for getting a tactical advantage. I haven't gone into the way ships move about the board. The seas and waterways are divided into four regions: north, south, east and west. Each region allows a different number of sailing 'days', restricting how far players can move in one turn (unless you throw things overboard). Thus the standard in the balmy Mediterranean is six, while the inclement Arctic Ocean only allows three. This is modified by the wind dial, which can be changed when you play a Rune card. Sometimes it's worth playing a Rune card just to modify the wind. Getting home is much easier. If you lose all your men, your turn ends and your longship is immediately returned to Scandinavia ('Wintering'). You can also choose to use this 'teleport' facility - though you'll lose anything more than one crewman from your longship. Obviously, this ends your current expedition, but it sets you up to re-stock your longship and embark on the next. Okay, it's not particularly realistic, but it does make sure the game moves along. And it means you can plan expeditions tactically: put just what you need on board and go for it!

So what we've got here is a very tactical game. The broad shape is obvious: trade first, then raid and finally settle. Given the bonuses available, it makes sense to take advantage of the Saga cards. So where you trade, raid or settle will be guided by the Sagas. And what the other players are up to. The Rune cards can give you ways of pulling a fast one and gaining an advantage over your opponents. Some of these can be quite powerful, especially towards the end of the game when there's limited time for your opponents to come back at you. While everybody will be picking up points during the game, the points for settlements at the end of the game are crucial. So you need to keep an eye on who's got what settlements to have an idea of who's doing well. However, there are also the bonuses for the Saga cards. Because these are scored separately for each nation, they're rather more difficult to work out. So you may have an idea how everybody else is doing, but you can't be certain. The result is an entertaining and highly competitive game. I recommend it.

## *Viking Fury at a glance*

Designed and published by the *Ragnar Brothers*, **Viking Fury** is a tactical board game for 3-5 players, aged 12+ and takes about two hours to play.

It is available in most specialist shops in the UK (at around £30) and some in the US (around \$50). Alternatively, it can be ordered direct from the *Ragnar Brothers* at

[www.ragnarbrothers.co.uk](http://www.ragnarbrothers.co.uk)

# How to become a FLAGSHIP Reviewer

*CAROL MULHOLLAND describes what we're looking for ...*

WE'VE HAD our set of reviewer's guidelines for many years. Because these were, of course, drafted specifically for turn-based games, it seems time for a more general update now. Yep, it's not easy to write guidelines that can apply to any genre of game, so feel free to mix and match these points, as appropriate.

Of course, the first rule for reviewers is that no rules apply: our guidelines are intended to help you, not to force you into a straight-jacket. After all, we're looking for articles that will tell our readers what a game is like to play, and you may be able to do this perfectly well according to your own inclinations rather than our rules. Just remember that I'm not too keen on fiction in these pages, though, so while it's fine to include the reactions of your game character, it's also important to give us some idea of what choices you've faced as a player during the game.

We need around 1200 words to fill a single page and 2500 words for two pages. More than two pages-worth of material is difficult for us to fit in, though we may make an exception if your article features a really significant game. If you've illos of your own choice for what you're writing about, do tell us about them, although we can usually find something ourselves if needed.

You'll probably want to write about a game that's grabbed you, though a negative review can be equally interesting to read if it's a thoughtful one. Don't rush to a favourable or an unfavourable judgment: play the game several times, perhaps with different people or a different number of players. For instance, I was put off **Cluedo** for life by playing it with cousins who cheated, but I know that this experience would serve as a short story about my cousins' sibling rivalry rather than a review of the game.

Never written for a magazine before? Don't be put off by this: you're all qualified. Some of our writers have played everything and its piebald terrier, and write from long experience. We value hearing from those of you who can do this, because you can speak with authority if you know about other, similar games. It can be just as interesting, though, to read the experiences of a comparative newcomer: was the game easy to get into if you didn't quite know what to expect from it? Were you disappointed or pleasantly surprised? Will you play it again?

## What to say?

So you know the game and feel that you can write about it. A conversational style is better than dry-as-dust, but if you've simply got vital game tips to impart, then pernickety is a perfectly suitable style. Don't worry too much about spelling and grammar - that's what I'm here for.

Please don't start by re-writing the game's rules at length: like I've said, readers want to know what the game is like to play, so it's your reaction that matters most. Give a brief general description of the game. You know it well, but other readers won't. For instance, what's it about? What are its main objectives? Do you interact with other players, or not? Is it an open-ended game, or does it end at a particular moment? Keep this brief - you can expand on these points later on if necessary. They needn't take up more than a couple of introductory sentences.

What's worth mentioning next is any range of options before the game starts: do you have a choice of roles or positions? are there different ways to progress in the game? how obvious is the road to victory? If there's a choice, is the game well-balanced or do you start at a disadvantage by playing, say, the fishes rather than the amphibians? You may cover how far your expectations have been fulfilled and how far you've been surprised by what's happened. Is there anything to go for or avoid here?

Then, for the main part of your article, move on to write about what the game is like to play - go on, you know that's what you want to do! What sort of things have you done playing it, and how well did they succeed? You could select one memorable battle or adventure or moment of suspense to describe. There's no need to recount *everything* that you've done, but feel free to give your own feelings about what you enjoyed and what you didn't enjoy. How far is it possible to adapt during play? Can mistakes be recovered from? Does the game stay exciting and/or surprising?

If the other players are an important part of the game, mention this, or simply say that they're not a significant element. Give some detail if the game is a highly interactive one: readers will want to know what to expect. Are other players likely to be welcoming, or should you guard against them from the start? Are they belligerent, co-operative or crafty? It's really helpful to include advice on good (and bad!) tactics to use in the game. Have you yourself made any clever decisions which led to success, or bad mistakes which ended in failure?

Few games are totally good or totally lousy, so it's OK to describe the good and the bad sides that struck you as a player. I think it's a more positive approach to mention the bad points before moving on to the good ones, but that's up to you. If the bad points are outweighed by the good points, say so. Not everyone likes the same qualities, so you can mention what sort of player you think would most enjoy this particular game. Oh, and give your reasons - 'because' is a vital word!

We're always interested in articles comparing games on the same theme, so we'll gladly consider publishing articles along these lines. While it's fine to compare the treatment of similar ideas in other games when you're reviewing one game, don't make passing mini-assessments of them: a review of one game isn't really the place to comment on others.

It's fine to include some real-world details about yourself and your tastes and experience in playing games. If you can't work this into your review, we could feature an 'At a glance' box for yourself (with a photo, even?). Stuck? Can't get started? Think of a significant moment and start from this.

## Beginners' guides

We're also keen to publish articles aimed at helping new players to get started in well-established games. If there's a particular game which you've played again and again, could you write one of these? Imagine that you're aiming your article at someone who's likely to try the game but may not have heard much about it, or may suspect that it'll be full of experienced players who know all the ropes so he won't stand a chance.

The article should be helpful, but not a substitute for actually playing the game! If a lot of the fun comes from discovering secrets, don't give all these away - it's enough to say there are things to discover during play. Hey, maybe one of you could coax me back to Cluedo ...

Finally, note that we're currently offering subscription extensions rather than money for articles, because of *Flagship's* need to economise. But think of the fame and glory of seeing your name in print in these pages! Email your article to me at the address below. Oh, and remember that I need to know who produces the game and what it costs, for our 'At a glance' box.

It's fine to send me a draft to consider. Yes, I do sometimes turn an article down: but I'll always tell you why and suggest ways to knock it into shape. It's the many different voices in *Flagship* that make it worth reading.

*carol@pbmgames.com*

# Total Conquest

## TC30, the Flagship game, part 2 ...

*Two more players report on the game that was offered to our readers ...*

[We invited those playing in this game of **Total Conquest** to report back to us, and are pleased to continue their comments this issue ...]

### Patrician (*Kingdom 13*)

*The Good:* Excellent game interface, easily installed and utilized on any reasonable PC. Lots of politics.

*The Challenging:* You really have to love detailed games, player and strategy development and understanding. You don't just pick this one up and play immediately.

*Details:* I really enjoyed the fun of facing off against a mass of on-line enemies, friends and allies in this turn-based strategy/adventure game. I was fortunate enough to have a couple of friends involved in the game, who introduced me to the Total Conquest site. Installation through a Java interface was easy and painless on my home desktop.

In game TC0030 I inherited a reasonable realm of orcs called Kardakai lead by the mighty Gadak Karos from a player who had to drop the game. I was faced off against a vast array of races, with dwarves and elves to the south, east and southeast, so there was no shortage of skirmishes to be run, scouting to do and fortifications to build.

The game includes an Economic, Military and Quest areas of concentration:

*Economy:* Total Conquest (TC) has a relatively complex economy which allows you to trade, build improvements in your conquered lands, trade with neutrals, friends and allies, build improved trade houses and buy and sell into the local economy from your stores. This activity is the way in which you gain gold coins to spend recruiting the local population into an Orc Horde with which to invade those pesky dwarves next door.

*Military:* The TC military engine is quite complex and I never really did completely figure out the magic formula for military success in TC0030. Each troop type within the races located in your realm can be recruited into hordes and armies. There are many troop types, including such things as scouts (to spy out the neighbours), archers, siege engines, cavalry, wolf riders and infantry. Each has its own cost in cash and resources gathered from your provincial improvements and has a complex group of warring attributes. Needless to say, my gambit was get a really really big horde and go trample the dwarves.

*Hero:* Every horde and army needs a leader, and Heros are the TC equivalent. They come in various shapes and sizes, ranging from halfling warriors to human merchants, giant clerics, elf nobles and orc warlocks. They have a variety of attributes which make areas of your realm better, depending upon how they are deployed. For instance, nobles are very good army leaders and merchants are great provincial leaders because they boost the economy. My strategy was to attract as many heroes to my realm as possible and then - hire them all - since I was looking for a large leadership contingent for my hordes. Each turn, a small stipend of cash kept them in my employ.

*Extras:* Some nice little treats like being able to rename almost everything

made the game easy to 'make your own'. I had such notables as 'Glogg the Stocky' and 'Peter the Knife' in my leadership contingent.

Additionally, being able to review, and possibly change, your orders at any time during the four days between turns allowed one to respond appropriately to the political wrangling of the other players through 'instant messaging'. Alliances made and broken, war declared! and so on. *So how did it go?* I was quick to discover that orcs are cheap to recruit, and so gathered together several hundred thousand troops of various stripes and abilities. The good news was that they were a nasty bunch that scared the neighbours to death. The bad news was that you get what you pay for. My strategy was: get big, march next door, then trash the neighbour's house. In reality, when I arrived the Legion of Iron and the Legion of Diamond were awaiting and I was dealt a lesson on tactics. My original Horde of some 130,000 troops was reduced to some 25,000 over the course of three turns by the Dwarf Legions.

Given this abject lesson, my next gambit was a little more politically astute. I still had the largest military on the island, so I made friends with the dwarves and marched off to thump some of the other game players not so close to my own borders. Alas, we were unable to overcome their superior tactics and they ultimately won the game by amassing a critical mass of 'value points' (used for ranking - and winning - purposes).

Overall, I am certainly continuing to play TC and have struck up a number of friendships with my fellow players. Some of them have even explained to me why my Hordes got thumped by the Dwarves... Some day I'll figure it all out, but until then this is one long - fun - learning curve.

See you all in the next game.

Rating overall: 9 of a possible 10 diamonds.

### Rarp (*Kingdom 11*)

This is the story of a 'dead' civilized realm called Wolvenhame in a game where most players were fresh to the game: 'dead', as you will see from this text, is a relative term. When the Total Conquest GMs gave me this realm they thought to do a favour to the players of game 30. Anyway, even if I was 'supposed' to be more experienced, there is only a certain degree of what experience can do in order to save's one behind in a wargame...

Fortunately for the character created for this occasion, that is Baldwin of the Bauldry Remarks, Emperor Extraordinaire, womaniser, convicted brothel creator and user, competitive drunkard with all dwarven folk, the gods were grateful for the laugh... The creation of the 'Wicked' version of the Lady Fortune, Lacy Luck, was only one of the quirks.

Wolvenhame was a realm close to dying because it was facing a rampaging orc, with not many forces still available, lack of resources and only one province. The main army was besieging an old province of Wolvenhame. It was nested in the south part of the map between The Spired Kingdom and the Realm of Shadow Peak, a dwarven theocracy, and future ally as well, and to the west by the invading Derk Thrane. Further west was Jarlsburggh, a future enemy and one of the realms of the Sacred Grove, the alliance that took the game home.

Note that against all perspectives, Wolvenhame survived until the end of the game. As far as I was concerned, that was more than a real game victory! To be completely honest, the help of two newbie players Elmo and Brunhild had something to do with that survival. (What is unfortunate, is that the GMs didn't reward me appropriately! Maybe because one of them suffered the effects of the Hammer (headache) of Baldwin?)

[The Sacred Grove alliance won game 30, congratulations to them!]

### *Total Conquest at a glance*

A fantasy wargame played online using a java client. This game has now been purchased by an American firm, BA Ventures, which plans some upgrades before starting new games:

[www.total-conquest.com](http://www.total-conquest.com)

# GenCon USA, 2004

*GLOBETROTTER was there ... of course!*

I LIKE going to games conventions. They are generally full of people just like me, with their fantasy t-shirts and nerdy topics of conversation. It makes me feel good to be surrounded by what I consider to be My Kind of People, even though I'm obviously a shade superior, after all I write for *Flagship* and they don't. So, off I went to the latest GenCon in the good 'ole US of A.

Judging by the trade stands and the popularity of games I saw being played, the gaming market seems to be changing. RPGs are flat and in some cases declining steadily, while Board Games are in the top spot with Card Games right behind them. I heard several people say this the year of the Board and Family Game, and from the response in the exhibition hall this looks to be a correct assessment. GenCon USA is often a reflection of the direction Gamers are wanting to move, while the GAMA Trade Show represents where Publishers and Manufacturers want to steer them. From the look of it Gamers seem to want to follow the recent market trends - are we really just sheep?

The show had a lot of great Family and Board Games and they were being gobbled up by attendees. With 'Giant' versions of several fan favourites, like **ATTACK!**, **Settlers of Catan**, and **Pirate's Cove** being played throughout the convention centre, attendees were easily drawn to the board game mystique of this year's show. With the myriad of manufacturers currently working on new Board and Family Games, look for all sorts of new games in the coming months. I would hazard a guess that 25% of these will be good, while the rest will be poorer efforts brought out merely to cash in on a perceived trend. When I first started going to GenCon it was all unkempt beards, pizza-bellies and tie-died t-shirts. This year it was noticeable how many corporate suits there were. Clearly there's money to be made! Also, there were a lot of families this year, more so than ever before I reckon. It's interesting to see that the industry is reaching young kids and not just the college age and up people that it used to.

The **Marvel VS** Tournament from Upper Deck was a huge success. This is a collectable card game which revolves around building decks representing teams of heroes and villains from the Marvel Superhero stable. This lot dominated the card room and the tournament was packed with players. In fact, during the taxi ride to the airport this morning the first thing the driver asked was about the \$40,000 dollars someone won at the show. Confused about how someone could win that kind of money and it not be a classic casino style game he asked what he had to do to get in on the action.



*People... thousands and thousands of them*

Laughing I told the driver to get practising at his local game store and he could be the winner next year. Putting serious money on the line for the Collectable Card Game tournaments does seem to have had a significant effect on increasing player interest. Odd, though: I always saw gaming as being about fun, not money. After this year's GenCon, I must admit I'm not so sure any more. Speaking of card games, I tell you to ignore the next person that reports the imminent death of **Magic: the Gathering**. It just isn't true. There were vast numbers of players, a stupid number of tournaments and the *Wizards of the Coast* booth resembled a Wildebeest carcass surrounded by more vultures than David Attenborough could shake a stick at. I'm not a massive fan of 'Tragic: The Saddening', but at least they don't have to offer money to attract people to play the game.

Not to be outdone, the miniatures games also had a great show. *Bandai's* new **Navia Drapt** was released at the show and was sold out by the end. Not only was the game a sell out at GenCon, the game is also a sell out in distribution. Bandai no longer has any copies left and a few distributors are now reporting sell outs. New orders for the game have been made but due to manufacturing it could take up to six weeks for more stock to become available in the channel. *WizKids* had a great showing with everyone searching for their own Galactus and buried treasure. *WizKids*

was having daily lottery style drawings to purchase the Galactus HeroClix, which were the only time I saw substantial queues past the first day. **Get your Pirate Booty**, *WizKids'* already sold out *Pirates of the Spanish Main* game, was a hit and there were a lot of demos of the game - odd when its print run has sold out. Several major manufacturers were missing this year, which allowed other miniatures companies (*Crocodile Games*, *Rackham*, and others) to grab more of the attention and, presumably, the money). *Wizards of the Coast* had more **Star Wars Miniatures** on hand than you could melt with a light sabre and I can report that the game is being met with praise from both Gamer and Star Wars Fan alike. The **D&D** miniatures were also a hot item at the show. The majority of retail exhibitors selling D&D figures were sold out of expansions by the end of the show and available 'Giants' singles were limited to a select few.

RPGs had a good show as well, but not as good as previous years. *White Wolf* releasing the new **Vampire and World of Darkness** RPG was the obvious highlight, with a loyal following begging for more. *Mongoose* sold out of their **Paranoia XP** by



*Magic: the Gathering .... very much alive*

Friday afternoon, but I managed to grab a copy, much to the delight of my gaming group back home. The biggest queue was for copy of AEG's **World's Largest Dungeon**, with half the world and his goat seemingly after a copy. **RIFTS** seem to capture the excitement of players, with more details on the upcoming video game adaptation. *Fantasy Flight's* **Fireborn** and **Midnight: Fury of the Shadow** box set were hot items, whilst **GURPS 4th Edition** created serious interest. *Green Ronin's* news on snatching the **Thieves' World** licence was one of the few new official RPG announcements made at the show while a few others were hidden amongst seminar information. I found it a bit odd to find what RPG players of the various game systems were eager to purchase when I talked to several in attendance. The **D20** players were looking at **GURPS 4th Edition** with intrigue, as if they had just realised there was another system in existence that could look as cool as their unending supply of D20 sourcebooks. Old school players were eager to follow any order the Computer gave them as they bought out *Paranoia XP* as well as *Paranoia* t-shirts, in assorted clearance level colours. What colour do I have? Well, let me just say, citizen, that you are not cleared for that colour. Gamers who didn't play d20 planned on converting the book to whatever system they did play regardless of how long it took them, the only question was if they could afford it. By the end of Sunday at times it looked like the first day of college as many attendees were carrying around copies of *World's Largest Dungeon*, **GURPS 4th Edition Deluxe**, and other monstrous books as if they just received their text books for the coming year.

The final numbers have yet to be announced by Peter Adkison and his team, but the show looked to be a success in terms of numbers. I would estimate 12,000 people came through the door, but official figures will, as usual, be about double that. Last year's computer problems and first year jitters were happily things of the past. One of the few things that may have had a negative effect on the show's numbers was the necessity to move the date to later in August. With some already back at their education facilities, the attendance by college and younger aged gamers was somewhat lower than usual. It was one of those things that GenCon couldn't do anything about and they made the best of it. There are plans for future events to contain educational events and to offer transport to schools who want to take part. GenCon should be commended for being so innovative.

My award for worst disappointment goes to the Playstation booth. Don't get me wrong, I own a Playstation and twiddle my thumbs with the best of them, but they didn't show anything new. You are going to have more than 10,000 people in the exhibit hall throughout the weekend. Why not have new games to show? The Playstation booth was highly unimpressive, there was very little room to sample games - and even then I could only find a couple to test-drive. It's also worth saying that one of the guys working for them kept mentioning the Sega Playstation. If you work for a million dollar corporation like Sony, it's surely good to know who you work for.

On the flip side, I'd like to give an Honourable Mention to *Z-Man Games*. You may not have heard of this bunch before, but they recently picked up the license to the **Shadowfist CCG** and have re-released it, given the game a better look, and were selling it hard. As a result there were a lot of people playing the game all weekend. Oh, and the best part? They've made the new compatible with the old cards. However, my own personal award goes *Steve Jackson Games*. They had a huge crowd around their booth most of the weekend. Why? One word: **Munchkin**. It's a game that parodies roleplaying, where the whole objective is to adventure and backstab your friends. I have heard through my overly connected grapevine that Steve Jackson are having some money trouble. I hope this latest set of games helps get them back on their feet some, they deserve it. They have been with the industry for a long time now and they showed why. Most importantly of all, in a GenCon increasingly dominated by sharp suits spouting stuff about market analysis and sales trends, Steve Jackson seems to employ people who genuinely enjoy games.

*GenCon UK, from Thursday October 14th to Sunday October 17th at Butlin's Holiday Centre, Minehead, Somerset. Flagship will be there.*

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# The Ridley Files

*ERIC RIDLEY enjoys two very different games, Tension and Tongiaki ...*

I HAVE A very understanding girlfriend, and to make matters better, her parents are pretty cool too. On my recent birthday (I have to note that I was not deluged by cards from loyal readers) I received a game as a present from them. How kind, I thought.

## Tension

Upon first opening the box I was presented with one of the smallest game boards I have ever seen. It is tiny. It's less than 10 inches square, but it's oh so cute. The game is a trivia based affair with a bit of a difference. A topic is read out by the opposition and you then have 45 seconds to guess as many things as possible. There are 10 answers on the card and you get one point for each one you get correct. Sample topics might be 'Things that are poisonous' or 'Human powered means of transport'. Things are not always as they seem however. Lateral thinking is often the name of the game, so a topic like 'Things that are bought' won't just be cars, cheeseburgers and stationery, more like votes, seats, time and so on.

The object of the game, I suppose it's time I got round to this part, is to be the first team / player to reach the finish square and answer a topic card getting at least six of the ten answers. Do that and you are the winner.

It's a fun game. It's lighthearted and can be learned within about four minutes of opening the box. The discussions that come from the answers can often be the best part of the game and the questions are diverse enough to keep you on your toes. As a bonus to all this, the game also comes with a CD which is used when players land on a 'globe' space on the board. Pick a track at random from the 96 available and a voice will read out 10 clues about a person or place. The first team to guess what they point to earns a bonus. The CD sections of the game are especially tense. You only have one guess, if you get it wrong you are out until the question is over.

The game is brightly packaged and nicely produced. Unfortunately I don't know the price (it being a birthday present and all) so I can't tell you whether it is good value for money, it looks about £15 worth, in which case I have no complaints. A big gripe that my girlfriend has with this game is that sometimes the answers the game is looking for can be obscure lateral-think ones and at others it can just be obvious answers. If you go the wrong route you often end up wasting a turn. But then again I am reviewing this game, not 'ma bird'. I suppose you could overcome the problem by going in both directions at the same time and shouting out hundreds of answers. In fact that's probably why it's called Tension. The game is good, but anyone who has the pleasure of owning **Planet Hollywood** will have a better version of this game.

## Tongiaki

Another game from *Uber Play* to review, eh? Can't be a bad job, I suppose. Set in 300AD, **Tongiaki** is a game of testosterone-fuelled Polynesian sailors who set off looking for other islands to colonize. This tile-laying game sees players explore the board as each turn they set off on a journey into the unknown. The expedition could be doomed from the outset or they could make landfall on a beautiful new paradise.

Each turn you place a certain number of your boats on an island. If there



*Tongiaki in play*

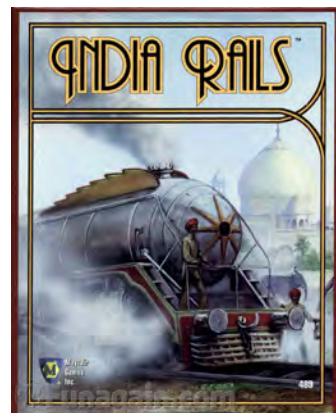
are enough boats you party hardy into the ocean. Turn over the top tile and place it to create your new path.

The tiles come in two sorts, land and sea. Land tiles show a number of beaches, each with a certain amount of moorings. When a beach's moorings are all filled with boats, they all set off to explore. Sea tiles all have four paths marked across them, each of which has a number on it. This number is the backbone of the game. It indicates how many different colours of ships are needed to cross that stretch of ocean. If you don't have enough colours (different players' boats) then the expedition is lost at sea / sunk / chundered everywhere and had to turn back. If you do have enough then you continue onward until you make landfall or one of the above happens. Each land tile has a number of points marked upon its surface. At the end of the game you get points for every island you have a boat on.

The crux of the game is to try and manoeuvre your opponent's boats, by forcing launches where you want them, and to keep your own boats on the high scoring islands. An initial cause for worry was that the sea tiles often needed three and four different colours of boats to cross them; a real problem in two-player, as it meant that a lot of the waterways were cut off. In reality, however, this rule is a bit of a masterstroke, balancing the game well no matter how many players there are.

I like the game with fewer participants. With the maximum six it is all a bit random. Your boats are placed on your turn to maximise their effectiveness on the following shot, only by the time you get round to it they are scattered all over the bloody place by the five other players. Ideally three, or maybe four, are best.

It's a game of deceptive strategy but is also coupled with a lot of luck. The chance element may turn some people off and I sometimes feel that this game would not go amiss if it were aimed at a lower age group. Still, it is enjoyable but quite a light one (not a fully trousered beardy affair), best played at the end of the gaming night, or as a quick warm up before the three-hour session of **India Rails**.



## *Tension & Tongiaki at a glance*

### TENSION

Players: 2 or more / teams  
Age: 14+  
Playing time: 30 - 60 mins  
Publisher: Cheatwell Games

### TONGIAKI

Players: 2 - 6  
Playing Time: 45 mins  
Publisher: Uber Play  
Price: £17

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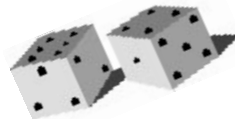
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# Introducing ...

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LISA FORDHAM continues our series ...

TO ALL INTENTS and purposes, this is the most common question roleplayers get asked by non-roleplayers, and roleplayers, alike: What is it all about? The problem is, it's not easy to explain the concept of roleplaying to someone who has never tried it. However, if you're looking for a brief description, how about: Have you ever read a book or seen a film, where a character did something really silly, really stupid, and you thought, 'No! Don't do that! You do *this* and...' or 'If it were me, this is what I'd be doing in that situation...' In a roleplaying game, it *is* you. In many ways, roleplaying is very much like improvisational acting, but it's also a game where you have fun with your friends, and interact with them in a social setting. It is very much ideal for everyone who would like to try your hand at acting as a hobby, but can't be bothered with learning scripts and all the other tools that go along with acting. But this is getting a bit ahead of ourselves...

If you're new to this hobby, and some of you reading these pages may well be, the idea and the nature of roleplaying may seem strange to you. Don't worry; it will make more sense as you read this section and this page, in particular. The short and simple of it is: Roleplaying games are a highly imaginative activity that can provide hours of fun, and a means of creative expression.

The roleplaying hobby, although most didn't think of it as such, began in the early 1970s, and grew out of miniature wargaming. People got somewhat bored with sending historical armies up against each other's forces; they had a desire to mix it up with elves, orcs and wizards. Fantasy gaming was born. After that, some people stretched the boundaries even farther, by playing individual heroes rather than whole armies. Wargaming turned into roleplaying, where players not only fought enemies, but acted out the roles of their characters, creating dialogue for them and histories detailing the character's birthplace, upbringing and what his or her goals in life were.

The players of roleplaying games collaborated in the creation of whole worlds, environments for their characters to adventure in, and were usually inspired by the works of J R R Tolkien and Robert E Howard. Roleplaying game publishers provided pre-made worlds for gamers to use, and new supplements for the most popular of these worlds were eagerly awaited by avid gamers. Eventually, gamers began experimenting with new genres,

such as science fiction, post-apocalypse, superheroes, horror and even Westerns as the settings for the RPGs, as roleplaying games were called for short.

The hobby has grown over the years to encompass a wide variety of gaming methods, from hack-and-slash combat with detailed rules for combat resolution, to intensive storytelling with much broader rules designed to help move a story forward rather than slow it down with dice rolling. Different people prefer

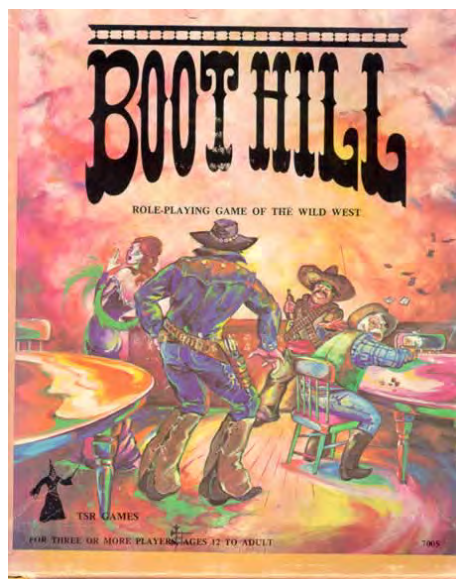
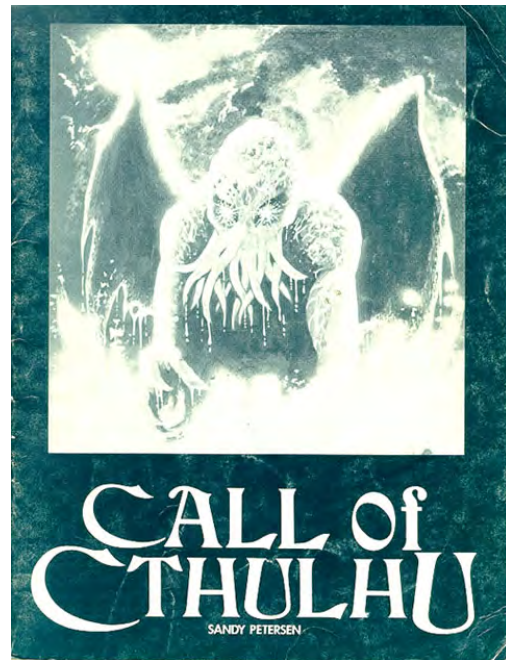
different methods.

'But how do you go about it?' you ask. 'How do you create the character and know what's going on?' Well, in nearly every roleplaying game, you create a fictional character who is placed in given situations appropriate for the roleplaying game. You play the role of that character, just like an actor does, but unlike acting, there is no script. Everything that you say and do is

done in an ad-lib fashion according to the situation and the personality and background that you've established for the character. As a general rule, how much you actually perform of the character's actions is dependent on the game, personal preference, and the style of the person running the game (we'll call him or her the GamesMaster, or GM for short). Usually, you just describe actions, and only conversations are played out. In some gaming groups, however, the roleplaying is much more intensive and the GamesMaster is more of a referee, judging the results of your actions inside the framework of the story (or script) that he or she has created.

Each player character will have traits (usually, these are a series of numbers) that tell you how good he or she is at doing a variety of things. For example, in a fantasy roleplaying game, a player's character might have Characteristics of Strength, Agility, Endurance and Dexterity, and will have Skills such as 1-handed Sword, Lockpicking and Spellcasting (to use a simplistic example). While there are a group of players, one of the number of the group (called the GamesMaster, DungeonMaster, Storyteller, Referee, or whatever) plays the part of the director. This person sets up the adventures, the encounters, and the rewards for the players, and plays all of the other people and/or creatures that they will meet during the course of the adventure - villains, princesses, alien, creatures, whatever - and keeps the game running smoothly. It is this person who interprets the rules when the player characters take an action, and thus determines the results of actions taken by the player characters and the non-player characters (NPCs, for short).

'So why,' some people ask, 'is this RPG thing all about weird things like dragons, vampires, monsters and stuff?' The answer to that is remarkably simple - roleplaying games are firmly grounded in the fiction and the elements of the fantastic. Roleplaying games are very much inspired by fantasy, science fiction, or horror literature. Sometimes all three at the same time... I can't really say why this is true, but I suspect that it may have to do with the fact that roleplaying games are inherently an escapist pastime. The players forget about themselves for a while and play a heroic (sometimes tragic) character with abilities far beyond their own. Many



players play someone or something that they themselves are not... It's the idea of escaping from real life and indulging in a flight of fantasy. After all, if the player were playing a perfectly normal person, what would be the point? - that's very much along the lines of being a normal person in everyday life. While it's true that there are some roleplaying games that deal with such things, for example **Boot Hill** which sets characters up in the Wild West, or **Call of Cthulhu**, which is a horror roleplaying game in which the players play normal human beings caught up in very strange, and terrifying, events, for the most part roleplaying games involve characters who are special in some way, even if it means that they are adventuresome and heroic.

I guess I should point out here that originally, roleplaying games were based on the 'Conan'-like fantasy, where the macho hero beat up the minions of evil. In many cases, playing the role of the hero and actual roleplaying took a back seat to acquiring treasure after defeating all kinds of evil minions, creatures, and the like. The rules were of prime importance and the loads of dice that came with the games were used to create a random element. (One could even go so far as to say, 'Okay, so you want to screw in the light bulb? Fine... roll three six-sided dice, and I'll look up the result on the Task Table.') Not bright, but still a start in the right direction...

The emphasis on rules and dice gradually changed, as sophistication began to infiltrate the roleplaying game hobby. There are currently RPGs that do not use dice at all... Some use playing cards, instead. In other games, the GamesMaster just decides on whether you succeed at a task or not. Other RPGs keep dice-rolling to a minimum, and concentrate on the roleplaying element. Many times in the current crop of RPGs, we hear that roleplaying is an 'art form' - this has led to accusations of pretentiousness on the part of many roleplayers. Too many people seem to believe that RPGs are or must be either hack-and-slash oriented bloodbaths or fine expressions of the inner torment of the soul. Whatever the case may be, a lot of times the perceptions of how the roleplaying game should be tends to be influenced by the person who is running the game - the GamesMaster or Referee. It is this person who literally creates the illusion of what the game should be simply by the way he or she designs the adventures, by the way he or she encourages players in hack-and-slash or spiritual actions, and a myriad of other ways.

One of the key elements for players, and their GamesMasters, to remember is that you should never play in a group where the others don't have the same basic moral outlook and sense of ethics that you have, and you should never play in a group that differs totally in the 'rpg outlook' that you may have. Most GamesMasters are quite flexible, and take the needs of their players into account. Most GamesMasters, and players for that matter, want their games to be enjoyable for everyone, not just the players, and that means the GamesMaster should be having fun as well. It isn't easy for players and GamesMasters to balance out all these different emotions, sense of fair play, ethical behaviour and the like, and that is where the social element of the game comes into play. Social intercourse is the central element to any roleplaying game and to any group of gamers.

Roleplaying games have been accused of being 'evil': people who play roleplaying games go out and hurt or kill other people, or commit acts that are socially unacceptable. Please don't be put off roleplaying by this. I have dealt with many of the issues in a previous article for *Flagship*, but the nature of RPGs being evil should be dealt with here. While you may think that there is no smoke without fire and all, it's equally true that people are ready to condemn what they don't understand - and roleplaying is definitely misunderstood. Sure, roleplayers, like most people, have problems, and problems manifest themselves in a lot of different ways. The actual evidence suggests that roleplaying is a positive, life-affirming experience because social interaction surrounds these games. Most of the roleplaying games that are on the market expect the players' characters to be good, heroic and fight evil. They stress the triumph of good vs evil. Yet, players are usually given the option of playing an evil character if that is what they wish, and this should not be seen as wrong. Most actors love playing evil characters - it is cathartic, of course, but it prevents them from being typecast. It can keep the roleplaying experience fresh for the players, especially if one plays a character with a taint of evil, something that one normally doesn't do with one's character for the most part.

And when all is said and done, ultimately roleplaying games are escapist and fun... and I have never met a gamer who didn't understand *that*.

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## EINSTEIN'S LOT

"Things are not only queerer than we imagine, they are queerer than we can imagine"



The past is the darkest influence on the present, even in modern day Britain

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# You Sexy Wargamer, You!

DAVE PANCHYK *ponders the allure of the anorak vs. the Armani suit ...*

WITH ALL the recent discussion in *Flagship's* pages about whether we should simulate wars whose participants are still living, I began to wonder why we simulate wars at all. If we're driven to revisit even relatively recent battles, then perhaps there's something essentially human about the desire to simulate warfare. Whenever human behaviour is motivated by biology, there's usually one underlying reason:

Sex.

It could be argued that sexual competition inspires every non-survival-based activity in which we engage - with the possible exception of trainspotting. When attracting a mate, we try to convince members of the opposite sex that we will provide good genetic material and be able to support offspring. The first cues are physical, what are called secondary sexual characteristics; these are indicators of health. These work on us subconsciously: when I look at a picture of Angelina Jolie, for instance, my first thought isn't, 'Mmm... I'll bet she's parasite-free'.

It seems biology and culture work in a kind of push-me pull-you relationship as human societies get more complex. Those biological impulses create social behaviour that creates a cultural 'code' for mate selection. The most obvious vehicle for this (pardon the pun) is the automobile. Many women are attracted to guys with nice cars. Is the car necessary for the mating process? No (at least, not after you're 17). It's an indicator of that man's suitability as a long-term provider for offspring. When an H2 drives by, the inner cavewoman thinks, 'If that man can afford to purchase and maintain an SUV the size of a house, why then, he must also be able to provide a house to shelter the wee ones!' And so our culture valorizes the earth-destroying monstrosity that hogs the motorways.

The earliest social behaviour is warfare. Originally, it wasn't engaged in for silly things like the gooey black stuff that lets our behemoths keep roaming the motorways; it was for resources essential for survival. The two biggies are food and potential mates. Big, buff fellows did very well for themselves in war, ensuring muscular physiques would be prized male secondary sexual characteristics. But warfare required other traits, as Charles Darwin points out: 'to avoid enemies or to attack them with success, to capture wild animals, and to fashion weapons, requires the aid of the higher mental faculties, namely, observation, reason, invention, or imagination.'

Ah-ha. Now we're getting to traits that more describe the strengths of wargamers, yes? While these are prized among any warrior, surely the leaders, the tacticians and strategists, of war bands required these most. As human civilization became more structured - and grew in size, necessitating more and more conflicts - those mental qualities got passed on by successful leaders.

Time has brought us along to life in the industrialized English-speaking world of the twenty-first century. Warfare is not a certainty for each generation, and far from everyone is called upon to fight: the last time that happened was 60 years ago. When wars are fought, they are almost never over such basic things as food and mates. According to Darwin, 'with civilised people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased'. (Perhaps it's been a long while since Mr Darwin has been outside a dance club around closing time.)

Consider this thought: when we're not in a war, a part of us wants to prepare for the eventuality of war. The best way to do this is to simulate it, and thus 'keep in shape' by exercising the mental traits Darwin mentioned. That such simulations are derided by many as games (with the

associations of frivolity games have taken on) indicates more about our society's distance from warfare than our need for numerous individuals to acquire strategic acumen. We gamers know that many of the world's games were invented as martial simulations. The game of **Go** has deep roots in China and Japan, and is still played there. And picture two Indians playing a game of **Chess** while sitting around waiting for someone to invent the concept of zero.

Re-fighting in our minds battles within living memory is not ghoulishness: it's a comparison of one's own skills to those of the people who were there. We ask ourselves, 'In the same situation, given the same conditions and resources, would I have done as well?' Our practice of warfare, distanced from its origins as competition for resources, is further abstracted by simulations in which we are the armchair quarterbacks. (An apt metaphor, as American football is more clearly a simulation of battle lines than chess is.)

Remember this when somebody asks, 'Why on earth do you play with little soldiers [cardboard counters, turn sheets, etc]?' Just smile a secretive little smile and know that one of these days, Angelina Jolie may call upon you to protect her.

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Orders

Margo

Attribute	Base	Advancements	Total	Overall modifier from attribute, race & gender
Strength	78	0	-2	-15
Dexterity	80	0	0	15
Stamina	76	2	-2	-15
Intelligence	86	0	6	11

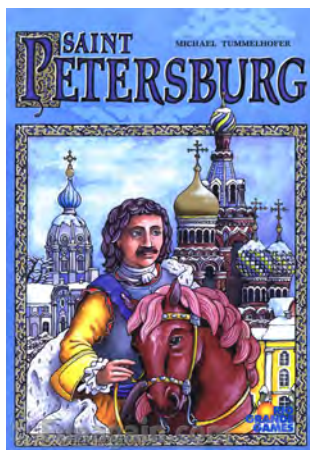
	Current	of current max
Health	20	20
Mana	48	71
Recovery	3	55
Total max	7	183

	Current	of current max
Fire protection	20	20
Water protection	20	20
Air protection	41	41
Earth protection	0	0
Acid protection	30	30
Stamina	4	4
With shield	26	26
Without shield	15	15
Stamina	-6	-6
Stamina	1	1

Fantasy Adventure PBeM

# Pevans's Perspective

*PEVANS with the latest in current and awaited boardgames ...*



THE WINNERS of the *International Gamers' Awards* for strategy games of the year were announced a few days ago. The Award for the best multi-player game went to **Saint Petersburg**, designed by Bernd Brunnhofer and published by *Hans im Glück* (in Germany as Sankt Petersburg) and *Rio Grande Games* (in the USA). The Award for best two-player game went to **Memoir '44**, designed by Richard Borg and published by *Days of Wonder* (in the US). Congratulations to both the designers and all three publishers. You can find out more about the Awards at [www.internationalgamersawards.net](http://www.internationalgamersawards.net)

and I wrote a bit about Memoir '44 in Flagship 108.

**Saint Petersburg** has also won this year's *Deutsche Spiele Preis*. This is the second of Germany's major games prizes and is voted on by players and journalists. The winner thus tends to be more of a 'gamer's game' than the *Spiel des Jahres* winner. So, further congratulations to Bernd Brunnhofer and Hans im Glück.

It's almost time for this year's Spiel, so I thought I'd have a look at some of the new games coming up at the show.

*Alea* will, as usual, be showing a prototype of a game for next year. **Louis XIV** is by Rüdiger Dorn and about intrigue at the Sun King's court. *Alea* claim it's a rich strategy game, so I'm certainly looking forward to seeing it.

There seems to be an interesting selection of games from *Amigo*. **Pompeji** is a strategy game from Klaus-Jürgen Wrede. Players start by moving citizens around the town. When Vesuvius erupts, they have to get the citizens out before they are overwhelmed. Hmm, perhaps an English version could be re-themed around the Titanic? Maybe not... **Razzia** is a re-working of Reiner Knizia's **Ra** into a card game with a cops and robbers theme. **Die Weinhändler** by Claudia Hely and Roman Pelek (the designers of **Santiago**) is a tactical card game of competing wine merchants. The idea is to build up the best portfolio of wines in your cellar.

*Eggertspiele* is not a publisher that has provoked much attention, but their new strategy game, **Neuland**, looks very interesting. Designed by Tobias Stapelfeldt and Peter Eggert, the game is about developing a nation, with the players both co-operating and competing. It sounds rather like a cross between **Settlers of Catan** and **Industria**, which certainly makes it attractive to me, though it looks pretty abstract. Their other new game is by Fritz Behrens and called **Power-Soccer** - which was enough for me to switch off!

Apart from their prizes-winner, Hans im Glück will have another Carcassonne game from the original game's designer, Klaus-Jürgen Wrede. **Carcassonne - die Stadt** is about the development of the city of Carcassonne using the tile placement and scoring mechanisms of this series of games. It is being published in English by Rio Grande Games as **Carcassonne: the City**. There is another Carcassonne expansion and an expansion for **Ohne Furcht & Adel** (**Citadels** is the English-language version). Plus a strategy game from Ralf Burkert: **Im Schatten des Kaisers**. This is a power struggle game in which players ascend the ranks of the aristocracy with the aim of becoming Emperor (Kaiser). There's a dynastic element to the game, too and it sounds very intriguing.

*Kosmos* will have a new game from Klaus 'Settlers of Catan' Teuber. **Candamir** is a stand-alone game, but the story is about the first settler on the island of Catan. The players are working together to build up a village,

while exploring the unknown areas around it. It sounds like it may well incorporate ideas from some of Teuber's earlier games (such as exploration game **Entdecker**). Definitely one to take a look at.

*Phalanx Games* will be one of my first stops to see (finally!) Francis Tresham's **Revolution**. Sub-titled The Dutch Revolt 1568-1648, the game is about ... well, work it out. This is the struggle of what is now the Netherlands to break free of Spanish rule and the players represent various factions in what was also a religious war. Francis has produced some brilliant games in the past (**Civilization, 1829**) and we've been waiting a long time for this one. *Phalanx* will have another seven new games for us at Spiel.

*Pro Ludo*, who are producing the new edition of Richard Breese's **Keythedral**, also have a new game from Michael Schacht, **Hispanola** (presumably the German name for Hispaniola). This is a trick-taking card game to gain positions on pirate ships and thus gain treasure. I shall be interested to take a closer look at it.

*R&D Games* is Richard Breese's imprint for the games he designs (notably the series that started with **Keyword**). His new game will be released at Spiel and here's his own description of **Reef Encounter**:

'Reef Encounter is a gamer's game for two to four players lasting approximately 90 minutes. All components, including the rules (which are in both English and German), are in full colour. The original artwork is again by Juliet Breese. The game is just a little (not much) more complex than the earlier 'Key' games, the most recent of which, **Keythedral**, has just been re-released by Pro Ludo.

Production will be limited to a maximum 1,068 copies. I will wait until after Essen to decide whether to sell any remaining copies by post. This is partly because I do not yet have packing boxes of the correct size, but also because the game is quite heavy, making postage expensive. The games are being produced in Germany by Ludofact, so the components will be top quality and the boxes rigid! The large number of components has resulted in a deeper 70 mm box (than the Key games) and a corresponding price tag of 40 Euros.

The aim of the Reef Encounter is to grow the largest and strongest corals on the reef and to feed the parrotfish. Points are awarded at the end of the game for the number and type of polyps that your parrotfish has consumed.

Each turn players play larva cubes, allowing polyp tiles to be placed onto the boards to create new and larger corals. Corals that are two or more polyps in size may attack other weaker types of coral. Polyps from a defeated coral can then be recycled as new polyps or used to obtain alga cylinders or larva cubes. Shrimps can also be played to protect the corals from attack. Alga cylinders strengthen some types of corals relative to the other types and can fix the hierarchy between two particular types of coral (and increase their value) for the remainder of the game.'

Sounds fascinating. As a fan of Richard's earlier games, I'm looking forward to getting my hands on a copy of this one. One point to note from the above is that the game may well not be available after Spiel. If you're not going yourself and want a copy, I suggest you beg someone to get one for you.

We are, of course, expecting **Struggle of Empires** (see my notes in Flagship 109) from *Warfrog*. In addition, they will have some new boards for **Age of Steam**: Germany/Western USA and Scandinavia/Korea. There may even be a re-print of **Age of Steam**.

*Zoch* is best known - as far as I'm concerned, anyway - for its great dexterity and children's games. The company has begun to produce some more demanding fare of late and this year has **Goldbräu** by Franz-Benno 'Trans America' Delonge. This is a business game about brewing and looks rather interesting.

# On Screen

## Orbz 2, One Must Fall: Battlegrounds, Savage: The Battle For Newerth

*GLOBETROTTER advocates imagination and innovation ...*

I HAVE A question: Whatever happened to good old-fashioned imagination in gaming? I don't mean innovation, there's plenty of that, I mean whatever happened to fresh new ideas? Everywhere I look these days it's all the same formulaic re-re-hash of the same old-same old: elves, dwarves, paladin knights, goblins, orcs, terrorists, counter-terrorists, Vietcong, and Nazis. Are we doomed to repeat the same cloned recipes over and over with nary more than a glossy new technological upgrade, or is there any hope of originality left for us hapless escapist? I think there may be, but bear with me as I contemplate the current state of the gaming buffet before us.

To make sure certain issues are perfectly clear, it's not that I have problems with any of these settings as such. True, I'm not a particularly big fan of the modern urban-combat scenario, but I've been a pen-and-paper **Dungeons & Dragons** player since the tender age of twelve; I am no stranger to extended flights of sword-and-sorcery fancy. I am susceptible to overkill however, and I think at this point we can safely say that the current market is well past that unpleasant point. Just for once I'd like to see an elf come from somewhere other than the woods.

The problem goes further than role-playing releases. Take the frighteningly popular 3D shooter genre. Almost every single release falls into **World War II**, **Vietnam**, or **Counter-Strike** cloning. There must be something more out there than simply blowing away yet more racial stereotypes.

Finally we have the most unpleasant offenders of the lot: movie adaptations. While a great idea in theory, only one actually comes to mind that has tapped that potential with any degree of viable success. *The Chronicles of Riddick* got it right, but what a shameful list of contemporary disasters: Dare I mention the *Matrix* sequels? Of course the most recent affront to our palette is *Catwoman*, a release that is as plagued by technical flaws as it is by frustrating controls and a complete disregard for DC Comics canon. The bad news for gamers is that all these dire movies lead to spin-off games that are usually even worse.

From up here on my soapbox, it appears to me that there's a common link between all of these lacklustre releases I've been raving about. That thread is corporate ownership. Every one of us needs to be more proactive in searching out the little guy. We need to get into gold-panning mode and search out gems from smaller games companies and make them a success in their own right. The end result will be a much richer field of ideas. If a new development crew sits down and looks at what's popular, and all they see are clones, of course they're going to produce another generic re-hash and go with the status quo for success. What happens if the status quo defies commonality?

Take a look at some of the biggest success stories of the past and their genesis. The first and best example is **Doom**. When it was first put to code, *id Software* was just a small group of role-playing buddies putting together a common vision. Look at how far they went with just a love of darkly surreal escapism. **Counter-Strike** is another good specimen. There weren't too many modern urban combat shooters before this tiny mod from out of nowhere hit the scene, and now look at how many are sitting on retailers' shelves.

These two games were both produced by relative nobodies at the time, yet were so successful that they re-wrote the industry. Diamonds in the rough, and there are more out there. All we have to do is find them and give them the accolades they deserve to foster stronger design habits in all developers.

Perhaps if the general public would widen their support to include smaller independent companies, and not just shell out their lunch money to the slick and glossy advertising pumped out by the big boys, we might see a rise in fresh ideas. Perhaps, we may just have to continue staying the course, suffering 100 mouth-breather clones for every lone instance of inspiration. That doesn't mean we shouldn't strive for a better tomorrow. How does that old saying go? 'Don't believe the hype.' This is indeed true, so go and do yourself a 'solid'. Load up Google and abuse it for a while, look into the struggling underdogs. You might just be surprised at what interesting, and above all else, original ideas are being produced by the little guys. With that in mind I am ignoring the usual crop of glossy releases this month, and instead taking a look at some less hyped games.

### Orbz 2

Recipe for an enjoyably frustrating experience: Take one part vast outdoor environment. Add two parts glittering stars. Stir together with a dash of flashy particle effects to taste. And balls. Oh yes, a myriad of balls, for flavour. Wisely appealing to no one specific niche, the game has been structured with everyone in mind, from the hardcore 3D shooter fan to the solitaire-playing computer user. Candy-like in its presentation, Orbz is drenched in bright lights, funny special abilities, wide-open spaces and cartoon sound effects. Sometimes it plays a bit like mini-golf. Yes, mini-golf. That's the sort of enjoyably frustrating experience I'm talking about.

Orbz 2 doesn't have a story line as such. It's not a 'story' sort of game. But then, Tetris doesn't have a story, either, and that never seemed to hurt it much. Sporting both single- and multi-player modes, its goals are fairly basic: Get as high a score as possible. Sometimes there are time limit restrictions; sometimes you'll be working to best your opponents. In the end, it always comes down to the getting the highest score. The rest is in how you achieve that score.

Orbz may initially seem childish to the gaming elite, but the last laugh belongs to 21-6, as the sneering über-Quake fan gets hooked and spends hours desperately trying to nail just one last star! I myself went into Orbz with low expectations. My first impression was that it would be, at best, a 15-minute distraction I spent many hours slugging through to piece together a fair review. Good thing I've learned to ignore first impressions as needed.

What I got was an immediately engaging experience; a package of graphical candy that mixed challenge and fun in equal parts, has more pros than cons, and achieved the almost unthinkable: it got my wife hooked. Orbz is simplistic in the extreme without sacrificing a single ounce of fun, dripping in laugh-out-loud moments and resplendent in its staggeringly wide appeal. It delivers the goods. 21-6 has produced a little winner, and with the right developer support, Orbz could blossom into a true classic.

### One Must Fall: Battlegrounds

As far as the fantastic is concerned, two things will automatically grab the attention of any little boy: The first is swords and sorcery. The second is robots. Any size, any shape, robots have always gripped the imagination; from Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em to the Transformers, all it takes is skin made of metal and a synthesised voice. *Diversions Entertainment* is banking on the timelessness of that love with the mechanised slug-fest for the PC called **One Must Fall: Battlegrounds**.

Long time gamers will recognise the title from its predecessor, the DOS

classic, *One Must Fall: 2097*. In the original, Human Assisted Robots (HARs) fought in a vicious tournament sponsored by the globally dominant mega-corporation known as W.A.R. The grand prize of this original contest was control of Ganymede, one of Jupiter's moons that W.A.R. had recently colonised. The overwhelming popularity of those brutal matches and the rock star-like status of the HAR pilots made robotic combat the hottest entertainment commodity ever known. It's now 2117, and tournament combat has evolved into a massive series of sponsored free-for-all brawls. Technology has accelerated the mechanised destruction to whole new dimensions, while any sense of Bushido duelling ethics has diminished to an anachronism. All that matters now is the howl of the crowds and the ruptured hulls of crushed HARs lying at the feet of the victorious.

In the most general terms, *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds* puts players in a third-person perspective 3D pit fight, controlling one of eight robots and fighting as many as 15 others. This deceptive veneer of simplicity is a recurring theme, as looking past the surface shows an almost startling degree of depth. When I think about how much fun I had playing *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds*, I want to score it much higher. Objectivity then slaps me in the face, and I can't, as I'm restricted by a laundry-list of bugs that would be unforgivable if not for the saving grace of pure fun.

There's an auto-patcher built in, so fixes will be applied as fast as they come, but this shouldn't be a requirement. I empathise with the need for an independent development team to keep itself fiscally viable; however, it's a double-edged sword, as many people won't want to wait for fixes. (To their credit, DE has simply told the truth about the early release rather than trying to spin-doctor reasons for the flaws.)

For those of us with excess patience, though, the rewards could be great. *Battlegrounds* looks fantastic and sports a startling degree of re-playable fun. Best of all, in establishing a wide beta tester program early on, Diversions Entertainment set the groundwork for a fanatically loyal player base that will be the key to success in the long run.

People speak of the future of PC gaming in terms of technological innovations and big name franchises; I feel it lies in smaller titles like *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds* - hidden diamonds in the rough that treat players like family. Give this title a chance, as there's more to it than appears on the surface. If you want to treat your inner child to some good old-fashioned robotic beatings, you won't be disappointed.

### Savage: The Battle For Newerth

*Savage* is an online game, set on a far future version of Earth known as Newerth, in which the human race has just emerged from a post-apocalyptic dark age and is beginning to reassert its dominance over the planet. A brilliant and ruthless general named Jaraziah has united the hapless nomadic bands into a single army known as the Legion; however, the humans are no longer the only organised force on the planet. Over the millennia, mundane animals have evolved into intelligent killing machines who don't intend to give up control of the planet. In the midst of the brewing conflict, Jaraziah's sister, Ophelia, discovers she can telepathically communicate with the creatures. She leaves her people to command their forces, known as the Beast Horde. An all-out war ensues in which each race is determined to eliminate the other.

*Savage* is played online exclusively and works in much the same way as the multiplayer modes of many real time strategy games: Two commanders take the roles of embittered opposing generals and give orders to their forces via a fairly standard RTS interface. The difference is that, with the exception of computer-controlled worker units, the armies are comprised entirely of other players. Sixty-four players can populate each server, and there's no monthly fee.

Each side's goal is to destroy the enemy's central stronghold while defending their own. Defensive buildings and technological upgrades are built using gold and a mineral known as 'Red Stone'. Gold can be obtained either through mining or by killing opposing units and computer-controlled prey animals, while Red Stone must be harvested from finite sites on the map.

Apart from a few flaws likely to be addressed in the evolutionary patching process common to most multiplayer titles, *Savage* edges close to perfection. It accomplishes its extremely ambitious mission of being the first game to truly combine two completely different genres. The visuals are excellent, but kind to low-end machines, and I was surprised to note *Savage* is easily modifiable. The map editor is powerful and intuitive, and employs a technology that allows users to create levels and plug them into the program instantly without having to compile anything. A few well-made custom maps are out already, and I foresee some truly excellent mods coming in the near future. There's also an almost impeccable balance between thoughtful strategy and rigorous action, which makes it nearly impossible to leave Newerth and come back to reality.

### Globetrotter's Game of the Month: Rome: Total War

Not all big releases are bad of course! Far from it. My game of the month is the third *Total War* game from England's *Creative Assembly*. In short, this is the best one yet. It was naturally expected to build on its illustrious predecessors, which featured epic-scale real-time battles and impressive attention to historical realism and detail. With *Rome: Total War*, *Creative Assembly* takes the next step, and it's as much a revolutionary step as it is an evolutionary one, thanks to a beautiful new 3D graphics engine that makes the series' tactical battles-featuring thousands of soldiers-better than ever. The results are nothing short of spectacular, helping make *Rome: Total War* the very definition of an epic strategy game.

This is a deeply satisfying strategy game that can appeal to game players of all types. If you're looking for a complex, addictive, conquer-the-world campaign, you can look forward to the imperial campaign, which is good for countless hours of gameplay all on its own. Meanwhile, if what you want are realistic, cinematic-style battles, you can dive into the historical battles or the skirmish or multiplayer modes, or have the computer manage all the details in the campaign and just join the battles. And if you're looking for both, then you'll probably find *Rome: Total War* to be perfectly sublime blend of the two.

*Rome: Total War*™ shipped to retailers in North America on September 22, which is when I last ate, slept or spoke to my partner. The game will be shipping to retailers in the United Kingdom on Wednesday, September 29 and should be on sale around the 1st of October.

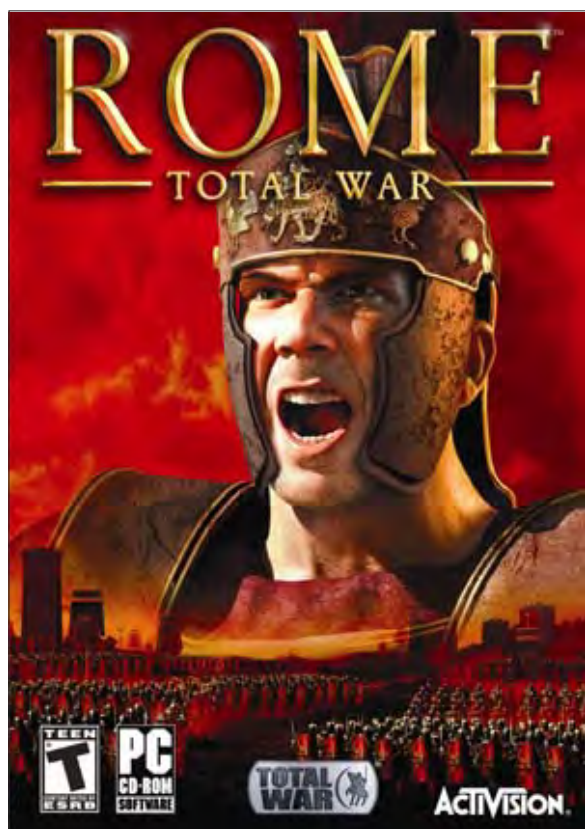
Genre: Historical Strategy

From: *Creative Assembly*

Platform: PC

[www.totalwar.com](http://www.totalwar.com)

(free demo scenario available from <http://pc.ign.com/articles/541/541272p1.html>)



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# THE MIGHTY PEN

## Religion in Roleplaying Games

Robert Rees raises an interesting point with his letters last few issues about the use of holy water (by vampires against vampires). I think from what he is saying that he would allow the use of sunlight, stakes and garlic, if that could be contrived without injury to the user. His concern is that holy water (and, I suppose, holy symbols generally) is so imbued with divine essence that the would-be vampire user couldn't and wouldn't have anything to do with it.

There, he touches on something which has bothered religion down the ages - does holiness come from doing the right thing (ritual) or being the right sort of person (nature)? It's quite important, because the public can check that the right ritual has been followed, but they can't really check that the person carrying out the ritual is really the right sort of person - that priest blessing the holy water might be a hypocrite of the worse kind, in which case the 'holy' water isn't holy at all. Unfortunately, there is a more subtle trap in the opposite direction. If it's the ritual that counts, the ritual works for anyone, whatever their intention might be and whatever sort of person they are, and one is immediately drawn into a very mechanical model, one intended to tame the divine and make it safe for use.

Under the mechanical model, a vampire might indeed use holy water. Just as plutonium is exceedingly lethal to humans, but we find ways to manipulate it safely, so a vampire could find ways to manipulate holy water within whatever rules govern its behaviour. Rules can always be exploited, and cynics might also say that since humans spend much time trying to manipulate the divine safely, vampires should not be excluded from the attempt.

Most roleplaying games seem to have a comparably mechanistic approach to religion and clerics, to facilitate devising of rules and tables. To me, it has never seemed very plausible to suggest that an archbishop has (say) three times the chance of resurrecting the dead that a curate has - the cynics might suggest that it's the other way round - but most game systems commit themselves to that line of thought.

Personally, I vote against the mechanistic approach and with CS Lewis, who said of his Christ-figure, 'Aslan is not a tame lion'. The difficulty is that to depict such a situation in gaming (as in fiction generally) requires a free-form game where rules are minimal and the GM can prevent self-serving manipulation of the holy by the unholy as required. Of course, in such a game, there would be a possibility that the 'holy' water wasn't holy after all.

**Chris Morris** (*Ulaidh Games*)

## Exalted

As a comment on the **Exalted** review: I'd suggest the author, and anyone having similar doubts about the background of the world, take a look at the Dragon-Blooded supplement. It deals with not only the DBs themselves, but also the Realm - the literal and metaphorical centre of the Exalted world. It has a lot of information on society, upbringing, day-to-day life, and other setting information. Plus the DBs make great enemies for Solars - way more powerful than mortals, but not on the level of the Solars - and also very good PCs, thanks to their emphasis on teamwork.

**Greg Wilson**

## Kosumi - Game Design

[Last issue, we ran a design article about James Acres' forthcoming game **Kosumi**, and asked readers if you had any comments. Sam Roads sent his comments to us as well as to James. We thought you'd all be interested, and we invited James to reply...]

I've two comments to the designer of Kosumi:

When I saw the mention of cash prizes I winced. Good luck with your chats to the government about the relevant gambling by-laws! Also expect to be turned down when dealing with all kinds of bodies who have a no-gambling policy.

I've seen many PBM firms attempt to bring PBM to a mass market through low prices but I've not yet seen a success. The demographic of players of extremely slow, complex games tends to mean that time, not money, is the most significant factor affecting the number of games that they play.

Not only is this important, but it's crucial for the moderator of the game to receive enough money that it's worth continuing with a game. Hobby enthusiasm always runs out and at that point if there's not enough financial encouragement, the game will suffer one way or another. Sometimes the GM will be unmotivated, more often they'll be offered another non-PBM job which will be too good to pass up. If the GM isn't getting paid enough to be happy, the game will fail (eventually).

**Sam Roads** (*Harlequin Games*)

I know the cash-prize thing can sound kind of out there. My parents ran a company that made equipment for casinos - so I've a pretty reasonable understanding of gambling laws in America. At least, I hope!

My understanding is that it is not gambling so long as it is primarily a contest of skill. I think **Kosumi** (and **Middle-Earth**) are definitely contests of skill, not luck. My theory is that a Kosumi or Middle-Earth prize tournament would be no different than say, a Chess or Scrabble or Tennis tournament in which entry fees are placed into a pot that is distributed to winners.

Of course, you can always think you're right until the State's Attorney General calls you ... And we've 50 of them here!

Still - as long as I keep the entry fees modest, and pay out everything, and make an effort for cheater detection (which I am! I can't wait for my first cheater! I doubt any AG would get excited enough about it to care, even if it is technically illegal. Which - I stress - I think it is clearly legal! For Europe - I really haven't a clue.

I'm very alive to the problem of needing to make money. One of the things I really respect about Harlequin is that you guys treat it as a business. In the end, I think that's the only thing that treats players fairly - to say nothing of the moderators!

I've designed my game (I hope!) so that my marginal costs scale per player and not per game. So my business questions are: 'How much do I need per player? What do I need to offer to make a good value for the player?' My hope is that I can offer folks three simultaneous games for \$20/month.

If I can get 500 players I can keep my staff indefinitely and finance our next game. If I get 1000 then I can keep the staff, finance our next game, and move to Hawaii! I remember making a guess from Flagship 107 that you guys probably have about 700 people playing Middle-Earth. If I can get near that, I'll be doing great.

Here's hoping we all get rich (or at least make a comfortable living) running great turn-based strategy games!

**James Acres** (*Kosumi*)

## Games in books

Too late for your competition in #107, I know, but in *The Player of Games* by Iain M Banks the lead character travels to the Empire of Azad to try a game so complex that the winner becomes emperor.

**Mike Lay**

[Thanks, it's a fine suggestion. Further titles welcomed ...]

**The competition in Issue #109 was won by Simon White. A year's free subscription to Simon .... congratulations!**



## RUMOURS FROM THE FRONT

### Comments received from August 10th

Jose Andres, Jim Detry, Christine Biancheria, Bill Eldard, Colin Forbes, Michael Grant, Globetrotter, Mike Lay, Chris McCarthy, Carol Mulholland, Robert Treadwell, John Weston, Simon White, Tony White.

### PLAYBYMAIL/PLAYBYEMAIL

#### Absolute Heroes (*Jade Enterprises*)

**Simon White** - 'White Noise, purveyors of super heroics and power pop music continue their exploits in Neon City, home of many a super powered being. Team leader Glitterball and her guitarist Swift Nick have just released their second album to much critical acclaim; the more traditional heroes in the team have fought super villains (player and GM-run) and a super assassin, all while organising a WWE (WWF) style Royal Rumble for the supers of Neon to participate in and trying to set up a charity (along with other heroes of the city) to help the homeless get housing so they can rejoin society. There is always so much to do in Neon city and just never enough time to do it all!'

#### Aspects Of Might (*Silver Dreamer*)

**Michael Grant** - 'Malachai Sicklemoon's knowledge has improved greatly, thanks to studying a Scholars Primer tome. Lore+2 in a single day is not to be sniffed at. Several items and buildings have been suggested which can be used to improve various abilities. I just need to find someone capable of creating them all! Not just for me you understand, but for the good of the Lakham Peninsular community. Speaking of community spirit, a friendly character called Arran Bloodstar kindly gave me 400 ducats. Time to get back to the Lions Field for some intensive training. Oh the fun of building character through lugging rocks around all day. What joy! :-)'

#### Dungeonworld (*Madhouse*)

**Mike Lay** - 'Playing in various of the modules. The game continues to grow, and the large player base means that there's a lot of things going on outside of what the GMs introduce.'

**Robert Treadwell** praises the appearance of the turns that Madhouse send out for both Dungeonworld and Destiny - 'at the end of the turns is a page of icons so that you can see what the things within view are - the Madhouse guys decided on this as it allow the players to get a better idea of what the character can see, and we can issue orders to see what the various things are.'

This is why Madhouse has a growing following for Dungeonworld, as instead of a paper hand-written turn you get an email contain your full turn and it is so open-ended that you can do anything with your character you want to do.'

**Michael Grant** - 'And finally did grizzled Grishnak Axehand the Dwarven Warrior hold aloft a mighty battle axe+5, shield+5 and a helmet+5 and call the battle cry of his forefathers "Let the Goblin scum beware!" Now just saving for plate mail+5 to make an impressive armament set! Resulting in a formidable host of defensive scores. He's fast becoming a formidable monster basher! Adventuring, Berserking and Real Grit skills have just gone active yielding some excellent bonuses including a mighty fine Health boost. Running skill has just been learnt after many attempts but will take at least a few turns to go active. This will raise the meagre plate mail inducing sluggish 7 movement points to a speedy 8!'

#### Dungeonworld: BrokenLands (*Madhouse*)

**Michael Grant** - 'Several of us managed to engage the Elemental in melee and missile despite the wily monster's best attempts to foil our tactical plans by wandering far and wide. Individually it seems we barely scratched it but combined over several turns the damage was enough to see the beast finally keel over. Several characters were badly injured but on the whole things went very well considering many of us expected certain death. Generously shared mana soon had everyone back to full combat strength. And now we move down to the Halls of Iron and Stone, where it is rumoured two Elementals have made their home. *Gulp!* I suppose my Monk should be feeling more confident this time round as at least he's upgraded the weedy dagger+5 to an axe+5.'

#### Dungeonworld: Frontier (*Madhouse*)

**Michael Grant** - 'All other news and thoughts of joy are forgotten, for we bid farewell to Chunthalaka, my oldest and dearest friends. At one stage there were many of working together to survive and explore the old imperial palace, but we foolishly broke the cardinal rule and drifted apart. The undead down here are without mercy or pity and so targeted the stragglers. My last sight of him was with a skeleton's sword biting deep into his chest. Woe for the fallen... Anakine Oakhart (Nature Girl)'

#### Dungeonworld: Kyr (*Madhouse*)

**Michael Grant** - 'Between four of us we managed to slay a formidable Twisted Scorpallus. Sadly, two of us became cursed with Mortification sickness and it doesn't sound pleasant at all! A hasty journey was made back to the nearby city of Rasaia via a Waypoint, where a royally appointed Necromancer kindly healed the vicious injuries. Fortunately he was sympathetic to our poverty and plight and accepted token payment for his cures. If we discover something wonderful in the deep desert, it shall be his. Thank you, Bedin Morkas Ah.'

Sadly, since then my Aslani Monk was cruelly slain by a Giant so I'm trying a Djinn-summoning character Fakir called Abd Al-Misbah. Looking forward to learning about this unusual profession.'

#### Einstein's Lot (*Ulaidh Games*)

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Yes, the mysterious dark girl who approached my character, Alison, certainly shows the adverse reaction to garlic that's characteristic of a vampire. She avoids the daylight, too. However, she seems helpful rather than hostile, so Alison has been keen to listen to her. Apparently the snake-like enchantment that's hexing Alison can be averted by a very ancient Egyptian amulet that's in the Birmingham City Museum. We got into the Museum for a public lecture on the next evening, but I rather suspect that locating and using the amulet will pose difficulties.'

There aren't many games now that don't have deadlines. Because deadlines panic me, I can recommend Einstein's Lot for this reason alone. But also because Chris Morris can skilfully create a sense of lurking danger, and his prose style is excellent.'

#### Heldenwelt (*SSV Klapf-Bachler*)

**Chris McCarthy** - 'Just a note to let you know that I have started playing Heldenwelt. Because I mentioned that I heard about the game in Flagship the GM gave me an extra training quest which resulted in me getting some useful goodies for my adventurers. Apparently I'll get more if I can get the game mentioned in Flagship. So..'

I have a small problem with the game. There are web forums and on-line articles about the game on the web site and a lot of them are in written German. From what I've seen so far, many of the players will be German. Unfortunately, my O-Level German wasn't too good and it was many years ago. There are English forums and articles, so that does help. I have found something which can help me read the German stuff -

<http://babelfish.altavista.com/>

is a website that lets you translate words, phrases and even web pages between a variety of languages.

I've not been much of an RPGer in the past but I am enjoying this game. At the moment I am playing for free as I have just three characters. I suspect that I'll actually increase my number of characters and start paying to play soon.'

**Michael Grant** - 'After reading about this particular Fantasy Adventure game in Flagship and visiting the website I decided to download the Editor to discover more. The help files built into the editor are extremely thorough and so after some experimentation I signed up for play. Now my group is on turn 14 but already I'm getting a strong feel for this game and enjoying it immensely. Throughout the learning process advisory emails were sent from the games creators clearly explaining any problems with your turn orders. Great to be able to try it for free on a specially created island just for Newbies. Other games companies could learn a lot from this approach.'

#### Middle Earth (*ME Games*)

**Colin Forbes** - 'Excellent news from ME Games, who now have the actual rights to the game instead of just the license. They have done wonders coping without the code, but there are so many things which could be done (having the game run on a modern computer system for instance). I look forward to the future of this game with renewed interest. If anyone can bring Middle Earth into the 21st Century, it's the guys at Harlequin and ME Games.'

### Monster Island (KJC Games)

**Michael Grant** - 'Young Haliok was finally dragged kicking and screaming from the fun of graveyard looting and on towards a Hillock teaming with Knolltir. Many experienced players see clearing one of these as a rights-of-passage for young RUKs...'

### Quest (KJC Games)

**Michael Grant** - 'KJC have once again offered their extremely generous 100 turns for £100 deal. Players would have to be mad not to take advantage of it even if it does mean coming up with a lump sum!'

Word on the street from the shoeshine guy is that the games magic system may be in for a complete overhaul.

*Quest Game 31 (Naralia):* My group is sadly out of the quarterfinals of the Naralia Tournament. Despite drawing the battles 1-1 they lost on kills by 7-4. I've also been hastily promoted to all the GITS Leadership positions. Time to feel the power of my authority!'

### Star Fleet Warlord (Pagoda Games)

**Mike Lay** - 'The historical game (EH8 - another of the UK-US matches) is reaching that critical point where players will start to go out quite soon. My feeling is that the UK team has the advantage, but this could just be propaganda! E18 is also coming to a head with one player appearing on the 'almost won' list, which prompted an immediate realignment of other alliances!'

## ONLINE GAMES

### Anarchy Online: Alien Invasion ([www.funcom.com](http://www.funcom.com))

**Globetrotter** - 'The Alien Invasion expansion pack for Anarchy Online adds what seems like a lot of intriguing new content, but in practice, it's mostly for advanced players who have already spent lots of time with the original game. Yes, Anarchy Online is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, which means that you create a character and then go off on adventures in search of better weapons, better armor, and advancement for your character by gaining experience levels. And, yes, Anarchy Online takes place in a persistent online world inhabited by thousands of other players. But unlike other such games, this one takes place in a futuristic world that consists of both hardcore science fiction and Star Wars-like mysticism. And the new expansion does add all-new features to the game in the form of player cities and armies of invading aliens that can attack those cities. But since player cities are hugely expensive, and because these attacks scale with character strength, you won't be able to get much out of these features if you're not already a veteran.'

### Fantasy Master Online

**Simon White** - 'Thanks to Colin, who mentioned Fantasy Master Online (FMO) in the last issue, I've become caught up in this simple, but absorbing, little game. It mixes the single player fun of role playing and building up a character with experience points with the potential for playing tough dungeons with mates online at the same time (or any other player online who accepts an invitation to join you in a battle against the denizens of the dungeons). My fighter, Ailran, and scout/thief, Shailac, are slowly exploring the dungeons of Vield, beating off all that they come across. Okay, maybe fighting off a lot of what they come across and running away from everything that seems to be too tough! Unfortunately Ailran has taken a liking to the games of chance that are available to play and Shailac has had to partake in the games of thought to counteract his losses.'

Anyone out there playing who wants to help out look us up and give us a call. We are always willing to help out if it involves a bit of a brawl!'

### World of Warcraft - beta test

**Globetrotter** - 'Perhaps the most striking thing about the WoW beta test is how much the gameplay resembles that of its predecessors. *Blizzard* is not rewriting the book on MMORPGs. Create a character, kill monsters, do quests, level up, rinse and repeat, optionally going off to battle other factions when you're tough enough to land a blow. In short, if you've played EQ, or Dark Age of Camelot, or any number of other MMORPGs, you know the drill.'

So why bother abandoning your high level Everquest or Dark Age of Camelot character? Well, for one thing, it's Warcraft. Millions of gamers are already engaged in the franchise through their highly-esteemed series of real-time strategy games. For another thing, it's being developed by *Blizzard*, a company which enjoys a stellar reputation in the game industry. The artistry in WoW is unique. You will either love it or hate it. Personally I can watch cartoons on Cartoon Network, so Warcraft's graphics just irritate me. A

shame really as it's a gorgeous game. The animations are extremely fluid, the spell effects are great and there's not much lag. Character creation could be better. There isn't much more to it than selecting a race, class and gender at the moment, with a handful of options for hair colour and whatnot. Unlike EQ 2, which seems to be shying away from player vs player combat, WoW intends to offer special Horde vs Alliance servers right from launch. Obviously, there are still a lot of details to flesh out in this regard, and I've yet to see how territorial control will work on PvP servers, but it does look promising. It remains to be seen whether anything vaguely resembling 'balance' can be achieved in this kind of game. Dark Age of Camelot players should probably stick to their current game until we know more about WoW's PvP play.

What it all amounts to is a quality MMORPG experience, even though the finishing touches are still being made. That applies whether you've been on the treadmill for years, or you're completely new to online roleplaying games. Judging from the current state of the beta, it's not a question of whether or not WoW will succeed, it's a question of how many other MMORPGs will go down trying to compete with it. Shame about the graphics though.'

## COMPUTER GAMES

### Port Royale

**Globetrotter** - 'In two months time, Sid Meier's Pirates! will be returning to the high seas after a decade long exile. This is bad news for the developer of Port Royale 2, because while *Ascaron* has done a consistent job of creating trading games set during the golden age of sail (through games like *The Patrician*), over the past ten years it hasn't so much mounted a challenge to the captain's chair as kept it warm for Sid's eventual return. Effectively then, Port Royale is a Pirates! tribute, with the focus shifted away from adventure and excitement. However, as solid as Port Royale 2 is, few people can afford to have more than one seafaring adventure in their collection. With Sid Meier's Pirates! due in port very soon, we reckon you should hold fire on this one. While Sid's new game certainly won't be as deep, we'll wager it will be more action-packed. If you've been waiting patiently for ten years, we're sure you can hold out a little longer...'

### Shadows Ops: Red Mercury ([www.zombie.com](http://www.zombie.com))

**Globetrotter** - 'Unlike most modern-day military-themed first-person shooters, Shadows Ops: Red Mercury is more about pure run-and-gun action than about relatively realistic squad tactics. It seems like a fully featured game on paper, boasting a single-player campaign of more than two dozen missions, as well as several multiplayer modes that are playable online by up to 32 players. As well, Shadow Ops features some impressive audio, and its campaign offers a ton of targets to shoot at and a high level of challenge even on the default difficulty setting (which is an easier setting, and there are two even tougher settings available, as well). The campaign missions can indeed be pretty intense at times, but the underlying action itself lacks the sort of visceral punch that shooters ought to have. This isn't as big of an issue in the heavily scripted single-player levels, but Shadow Ops' clunky multiplayer gameplay significantly suffers for it. The result is a first-person shooter that does little to distinguish itself from many other, similar games. The sound is good though, very good in fact. If only everything about Shadow Ops was as good as its audio. The game initially seems to offer everything you'd want out of an action-packed military-themed shooter. However, online multiplayer features are of little value when the action itself isn't good. Luckily, Shadow Ops' campaign isn't a total wash if you're not easily frustrated and aren't expecting anything out of the ordinary. And this game is about as ordinary as it gets.'

### Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War (*Games Workshop*)

**Globetrotter** - 'Considering the weaponry that humankind has already invented during the past couple of thousand years, it's difficult to even begin to imagine what kinds of implements of destruction will exist in the 41st millennium. However, *Games Workshop* has done an excellent job of imagining what will come with its unique Warhammer 40,000 universe, which originated as a tabletop wargame but over the years has spun off into a variety of computer and video games. Dawn of War is the latest (and in my opinion the best) of these. Dawn of War is a testament to what can be so great about this style of gaming, and it captures the grim and brutal world of Warhammer 40,000 extremely well. Fans of the source materials will especially appreciate this game, however even if you're not a fan, give this a go. It's a step in the right direction for the highly evolved real-time strategy genre, because it takes what's great about this style of game - the process of outmaneuvering and outsmarting opponents to defeat them through military might - and puts pretty much all the emphasis on the parts of the gameplay that inherently

seem exciting and satisfying. While I'd be tempted to say that the skirmish and online multiplayer modes are the main attractions in Dawn of War, that's actually not quite the case. Instead, it's the game's four different sides, each brimming with personality and intriguing tactical potential, that steal the show.'

## CARD GAMES

### Guillotine

**Simon White** - 'Guillotine has become the end of night favourite whenever I have a games night with friends. After an evening playing more in-depth and strategic games, a few rounds of a fast paced, simple, stitch-up-the-other-players card game. The basic idea is to execute three days worth (three lines) of French nobles, worth various points based on their status, who are queuing in front of the Guillotine.

As with all these types of card in hand games there are various ways of effecting the line, whether it be to help yourself get a better noble or to stop an opponent getting what they want. The skill is in gauging the perfect time to play that card in your hand. Too soon and everyone will be after you, too late and you will have missed that noble you really wanted. Experience seems to show that it is the quiet player, the one who just sits there not seeming to do much, who wins Guillotine, all the others are too busy stitching each other up!

An excellently designed game that is just the perfect end to a game-playing night.'

## BOARDGAMES

### Ticket to Ride

**John Weston** - 'I played Ticket to Ride six or seven times with two players and I found it quite boring because each player can follow his strategy without problem and so it's only a matter of luck and ability to draw the right cards. Playing with four players the game is more intriguing and fun, there is much more struggle for claiming route and you really try to stop other players. Ticket to Ride may be a good game for three or more players, however it's not a masterpiece.'

**Jose Andres** - 'I've been playing boardgames for ten years, and play on a regular basis great games like Puerto Rico, Acquire, Machiavelli, Tigris&Euphrates, ... I'll now be adding a newcomer to my top-ten list: Ticket to Ride. This game is very simple, so simple that newcomers will enjoy it. But also it needs some strategy to win, so hard gamers (like our group) will like it. I like the 'Yes or No' policy the game has with train tickets. If you achieve to connect the cities in the card, you'll get the points. But if not, those points will be subtracted from your final score! Probably hard gamers will enjoy this feature more, because as newcomers will play to collect their own points, hard gamers can enjoy doing the others *not* achieving their goals, and see how they lose lots of points. Examining other features, the game box and components are *very good*. Nice components, nice map. And some details, like little plastic bags containing each player's tokens, so you can keep your game perfect after each game.

So, to cut a long story short, I'll play this game again, and put it into my favourite games list.'

**Bill Eldard** - 'I own quite a few railroad-themed games spanning the complexity spectrum, from TransAmerica all the way to 1870, and including games like Rail Baron, the 'crayon-rails' (eg Empire Builder, British Rails, India Rails), Stephensons Rocket, and Age of Steam. So naturally, I did a little homework before acquiring Ticket To Ride. At first, it looked like a compromise between TransAmerica and another fine Alan Moon title, Union Pacific, but it's proven to be different enough from those tow games to stand up on its own merit.

In terms of complexity, Ticket To Ride is at the low-medium side. It is simple enough to use as an introductory game for those new to gaming, yet challenging enough to remain popular with regular gamers and families - a great combination of playability and strategy, and one that earned the coveted Spiel des Jahres award for 2004. It's not Puerto Rico, but it doesn't try to be. I think for what the design is trying to achieve and the audience it is appealing to, it ranks with Through The Desert as a classic.

Our group still enjoys this great game, and we've played over 120 different games over the past four years. Whether you're a veteran gamer or just starting your interest in the hobby, I strongly recommend adding Ticket To Ride to your collection.'

### Cloud 9

**John Weston** - 'First of all, I am blown away by the components in the Out of the Box edition. On opening the compact box you find a thick board that

folds out to over two feet in length, a sturdy folded card containing well-written rules, six wooden pawns and scoring markers, four large custom dice, and a pack of good-quality cards. Perhaps most impressive is the molded plastic balloon basket into which players put their pawns; it stands above the game board on clear plastic legs, giving a charming impression of the theme, which is a journey up into the clouds. This is a remake of the original edition, with only one substantial change that I know of - the elimination of the 'pass the barn' card. I'll just summarize the game play here; more complete descriptions are available on the page for the original game.

Players are dealt cards in four different colors. In each turn, one player is the pilot, who is responsible for making the balloon rise a level. The pilot throws two to four dice (the number increases at higher levels) which indicate what combination of cards he or she must play to make the balloon rise. All other players then have an opportunity to bail out of the balloon, winning the points for the current level. The pilot then plays the necessary cards, if able; otherwise the balloon crashes and all remaining passengers get no points.

So it is a simple risk-taking game where you evaluate the likelihood of the pilot's being able to play the necessary cards to get you to a higher-scoring level. This is largely guesswork, of course, but card-counters will have some advantage. A nice twist is that if you're sitting to the pilot's left you have to look ahead to the next turn. If you don't bail out now, you'll become pilot next turn whether you like it or not, and you don't have the opportunity to bail out then unless you're the last person in the basket.

This is no brain-burner but a quick, fun, colorful game suitable for families. I have a soft spot for the original game because it was one of the first German-style games I was introduced to. It's very pleasing to see it reissued in such an attractive format.'

### Tongiaki

**Christine Biancheria** - 'I tried this game this weekend with four players, having read that it was best for four or five and that it was actually horrible for two or three. But quickly, the luck of the draw separated the ships into two separate parts of the board, creating almost two, two-player mini-games. Needless to say, no one could do much of anything except hope to draw an island tile all the time because no one could succeed on any lengthy voyages. Someone also had told me that the game seemed to play itself, and that was my impression, too. The only reason I'm not giving this one star is because I think there's probably some potential as a six-player game, but I'm not going to go find out for myself. I'd spend my money elsewhere.'

**Tony White** - 'My real enjoyment from games these days is when simple rules combine in unsuspected ways, to yield a game that takes multiple plays before you really begin to formulate strategies. And Tongiakai is certainly one of those games. At first it looks like it's all luck, but after a game or two you start seeing the strategies, and that's what I really enjoy. Finally, you might call this abstract, but the theme is just close enough to the rules that it does indeed distantly capture the aspects of ancient transatlantic ocean faring (reminds me of Samurai in that respect). It's also not deeply competitive, though there is certainly interaction (though requiring cooperation).

The only caveat is that this plays far better as a three or four player game, as there are less possibilities to cross to a new island with only two players. In the end, this is a cute, accessible game that's easy to understand yet shows some deeper strategies.'

### St Petersburg

**Jim Detry** - 'I've only played once so far. There are four decks of cards. A turn is basically, flip and buy cards from a deck, score any in-play cards from that deck, repeat until you do all four decks. There are markers distributed to the players indicating who goes first for each deck (then clockwise). After a turn the markers are passed to the left, so you know in advance turn order for each deck and can plan ahead.

There seem to be various strategies - you need cash from workers, but they don't produce VP. You can get discounts if you concentrate on one kind of worker. Buildings are good for victory points during the game, Aristocrats are good if you can get many kinds. Upgrades are the most efficient producers of both cash and VP but they don't score immediately.'

## MINIATURES

### Heroclix

**Simon White** - 'As a lover of superheroes and of gaming, this would seem to be the ideal game for me. As such I have done my best to introduce it to as many of my friends as possible, to a pretty good degree of success. I always think the strength of a game is shown by how many people want to play it again at some time or other, if that is the case then Heroclix is a success.

Heroclix is wonderfully designed so that it can be played at a very simple level, charging in and standing toe to toe beating each other up (which kids love to do), or at a higher more strategy based level, where terrain, formations and the more complicated rules are used. I have to admit that our games are somewhere in between those two levels, strategy based but without the complicated team and object rules.

The idea of the game is to pick a team of heroes and villains up to a certain point value (all pieces have a point value based on experience and power) decided before the game starts. Then it is a case of moving on a set battleground, supplied with the base sets of pieces, using the terrain to your advantage and engaging in battle with your enemies. Heroclix is an ever evolving game, a team that beats everything in sight one week can be undone the next by judicious choices and experience. Knowing how your enemy works makes it easier to choose characters that should be able to combat them. Even the choosing of your team is part of the tactics. Do you go for a small team with a high power character and a number of minor ones to fill the team out? Do you go for a team of mid-level characters that mean you have more in your team but less powerful, or do you try to go for a mix of the both? It is not easy to decide, even more so when you start factoring in all the different powers and abilities that they all have! You need to have a team that can work well together and complement each other.

My team tends to include a good immovable object (often Lobster Johnson from Hellboy) with good ranged combat experts (typically Arwyn from Crossgen + Bullseye or Hawkeye), a good fighter and The Flash for speed and picking off wounded opponents.

Heroclix is also the game that Ebay is a godsend for. No picking up pack after pack trying to find your favourite characters. Go to ebay and you'll find them all there, normally at very reasonable prices. I've saved myself a fortune getting some of my favourites from that wonderful auction site!

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*Colin Forbes, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, EX1 1BS  
colin@pbmgames.com  
Tel: 01392 420582*

# Games Shops

**Bishop Games Ltd**, 32 City Arcade,  
Coventry, Warwickshire, CV1 3HW.

**Cardiff Games**, Duke Street Arcade,  
Cardiff, CV1  
029 2034 3818

**Funagain Games**  
[www.funagain.com](http://www.funagain.com)

**Gamezone Models**, 32 Rolle Street,  
Exmouth, Devon  
01395-267733

**Krackers Games Shop**, 1-5 The Fore  
Street Centre, Fore Street, Exeter, Devon

**Leisure Games**, 100 Ballards Lane,  
Finchley, London, N3 2DN  
020-8346-2327  
[shop@leisuregames.com](mailto:shop@leisuregames.com)  
[www.leisuregames.com](http://www.leisuregames.com)

**Orcs Nest**, 6 Earlham Street, London,  
WC2H 9RY  
0207-379-4254  
[www.orcsnest.com](http://www.orcsnest.com)

*If you know of any games shop we don't list, please contact us and we'll be delighted to include them.*

**Spirit Games** 98+114 Station Street,  
Burton on Trent, Staffs, DE14 1BT  
Opening Hours:  
10-6 Tuesday - Friday, 10-5 Saturday  
... or email at any time.  
*Tel/Fax/Ansaphone: +44 (0)1283 511293*  
*email: [salnphil@spiritgames.co.uk](mailto:salnphil@spiritgames.co.uk)*  
*Web address: [www.spiritgames.co.uk](http://www.spiritgames.co.uk)*

**White Knight Games**, 8 Cheapside,  
Reading, RG1 7AG  
0118 950 7337

**2nd Games Galore**, 23 Reynes Drive, Oakley,  
Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK43 7SD

**Bookstop**, Mail-Order Secondhand Games &  
RPGs, 11A Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, North  
Yorkshire, HG1 5HD.  
[bookstopuk@aol.com](mailto:bookstopuk@aol.com)

**Dream Dealers**, 94b Barker Butts Lane,  
Coventry, Warwickshire.

**Games & Puzzles**, 6 Green Street, Cambridge,  
Cambridgeshire, CB2 3JU

**Gameskeeper**, 105 Cowley Road, Oxford,  
OX4 1HU  
01865-721348  
[shop@gameskeeper.co.uk](mailto:shop@gameskeeper.co.uk)  
[www.gameskeeper.co.uk](http://www.gameskeeper.co.uk)

**Games Legion**, Ashlar House, 15 Mason  
Close, Great Sutton, Cheshire, L66 2GU

**The Games Store**, The Manor House, Eagle,  
Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN6 9DG

**Gaming Crypt**, 50 Castleton Road, Great  
Barr, Birmingham, B42 2RR

**The Hidden Fortress**, 51 East Street,  
Southampton, SO14 3HX  
02380-710550  
[enquiries@hidden-fortress.com](mailto:enquiries@hidden-fortress.com)  
[www.hidden-fortress.com](http://www.hidden-fortress.com)

**Krackers Games Shop**, 5 Bath Place,  
Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4ER

**Not Just Stamps**, 17 Crendon Street, High  
Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP13 6LJ

**Ottakar's**, 102 Curzon Mall, Queensmere  
Centre, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1DQ

**Playin' Games**, 33 Museum Street, London,  
WC1A 1LH

**Roaring Ogre Games**, 53 Staple Hill Road,  
Fishponds, Bristol, Avon, BS16 5AB

**Wayland's Forge**, 37 Auchinlek Square,  
Fiveways Shopping Centre, Edgebaston, B15  
1DV  
0121-687-0105  
[games@waylandsforge.co.uk](mailto:games@waylandsforge.co.uk)  
[www.waylandsforge.co.uk](http://www.waylandsforge.co.uk)

**Westgate Games**, 20 The Borough,  
Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2DR  
01227-457257  
[andrew@westgategames.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:andrew@westgategames.fsnet.co.uk)

# Meets & Conventions

## OCTOBER

**GENCON:** Thursday October 14th-Sunday October 17th at *Butlin's Holiday Centre, Minehead, Somerset*.

The extensive programme includes industry guests, roleplay games, cardgame tournaments, boardgames, computer games, an art show and a huge trade hall. Celebrations will be held to mark the 30th Anniversary of Dungeons and Dragons. With the majority of Butlin's Holiday Centre's facilities being available for use, this seems an ideal games convention for families. Attendees will have a range of accommodation options, including self-catering and half-board, and free carparking.

GenCon has been scheduled in the week prior to the Essen Spiel games fair, to help US and other non-EU manufacturers combine both events in a single trip. To pre-register for an information pack, contact Horsemen Events:

[contact@horsemenevents.com](mailto:contact@horsemenevents.com)  
[www.horsemenevents.com](http://www.horsemenevents.com)

**SPIEL with COMIC ACTION:** 21st-24th October, *Messe Essen, Germany*. With 150,000 visitors and 621 exhibitors from 21 nations, showing all kinds of games - from family, adult, children and parlour games to strategy, mail, adventure, fantasy and science fiction games, an increasing number of CD-ROMs and electronic games and a wide range of traditional boardgames - this is an important event in the gaming calendar.

[www.merle-verlag.com/spiel](http://www.merle-verlag.com/spiel)

**GAELCON:** 23rd-25th October, at the *Gresham Hotel, O'Connell Street, Dublin, Ireland*. Gaelcon is the annual convention organised by The Irish Games Association (IGA). Over the last 16 years Gaelcon has grown to be the largest independent games convention in Ireland and one of the largest independent games conventions in Europe. Adult entrance is 25 Euros for the weekend, or 10 Euros for a day ticket. Children under 12: Weekend 15 Euros, Day Ticket 7 Euros.

[www.gaelcon.com](http://www.gaelcon.com)

## NOVEMBER

**MIDCON: 12th-14th November at the Thistle Hotel, Birmingham City.** A general boardgames convention held annually since 1980. Attendance around 120-160 people, mostly boardgamers. The convention hosts the National Diplomacy Championships. The convention fee for the whole weekend is £15 (which goes up to £18 on November 1st) and accommodation is available at the hotel 'at reasonable rates'. Details from Jeremy Tullett, MidCon, 7 Midland Place, Derby, DE1 2RR.

[bookings@MidCon.org.uk](mailto:bookings@MidCon.org.uk)  
[www.variantbank.com/midcon/](http://www.variantbank.com/midcon/)

**WARFARE 2004:** 20th-21st November at the *Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading, Berkshire*. Traders, demonstration/participation games, competition games and a 'massive' bring & buy.

## DECEMBER

**DRAGONMEET:** 4th December at *Kensington Town Hall, London*. Dragonmeet covers all aspects of hobby-gaming, from boardgames and collectible card-games to roleplaying, miniatures, play-by-mail games and live-action. Dragonmeet is fun for new players and serious gamers alike. There'll be hundreds of games to play, two trade-halls, guests, signings, seminars and special events all day. Doors open at 10am, entrance is £7.00 for adults, £5.50 for concessions (students, OAPs, unemployed) and £3.00 for Under 16s.

[www.dragonmeet.com](http://www.dragonmeet.com)

### FLAGSHIP AT CONVENTIONS

We will be attending GenCon UK in October and Dragonmeet in December. We hope we'll see many of our readers there!

Speaking of GenCon, this looks as though it will be a lot of fun. Their press release promises a wide range of events and activities as well as games. There's going to be an art show for leading fantasy artists, demonstrations of the skills of mediaeval life, a competition to make the scariest monster from edible materials, the chance to enter a series of gaming challenges, a character competition, a version of the TV show *Room 101* with the chance to praise or condemn games, an auction, discussion panels, a game of Live Pictionary and an opening night masked ball. Oh, and there will be artists and people from the gaming industry.

That's GenCon, from Thursday October 14th to Sunday October 17th at *Butlin's Holiday Centre, Minehead, Somerset*. The Butlins' facilities will be open during the convention and there's a range of options for accommodation.

For information, contact Horsemen Events:

[contact@horsemenevents.com](mailto:contact@horsemenevents.com)  
[www.horsemenevents.com](http://www.horsemenevents.com)

*Flagship welcomes news of any games-related convention, pubmeet etc.*

## JANUARY

**WINTERSTABCON:** 7th-9th January, at the *Britannia Hotel, Stockport*. The latest in a very long-running series of friendly, small-scale general games conventions, always featuring a good number of RPGs.

Registration is £12.50 before November 30th, or £15 thereafter. (Single days are £6.25 or £7.50 respectively.) Accommodation is of course available in the hotel, £30/night for a single room or £39/night for a twin/double; the convention will provide a booking number to use.

Stabcon, 17 Davenport Park Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 6JU,

Tel: 0161 483 9131.

[bookings@stabcon.org.uk](mailto:bookings@stabcon.org.uk)

**OXCON:** 22nd - 23rd January 2005 at *The Mitre, The High Street, Oxford*. A boardgames convention organised by the Oxford University Diplomacy Society.

Featuring huge Settlers tournament (qualifier for Southern England representative to World Championships), Diplomacy tournament, Lost Cities championships, 15-1 Quiz, Gamesweb games retailer stall, bar, restaurant, and lots of informal gaming.

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~diplo/oxcon/>

## MARCH

**TOWERCON:** 18th-20th March, at the *Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool*. A full weekend of role-play, card, and board game events. Details (including prices) still seem to be subject to final agreement with the hotel, so keep an eye on their website or sign up to their email newsletter.

TowerCon, 13 Wembly Road, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancs., FY5 4JN.

[www.towercon.co.uk](http://www.towercon.co.uk)

[enquiries@towercon.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@towercon.co.uk)

# Galactic View

WE'VE BEEN busy checking all the games and firms that we list in *Galactic View*, so we're fairly confident that all the firms listed were active at time of going to press. If we've dropped a firm or game that you know exists, ask the GM to get in touch with us.

GV is a list of (mostly) European PMB/PhM firms known by FLAGSHIP to be operating at the time this issue was published. There is no cost to 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.

**UK, EUROPEAN & WEB-BASED GMS**  
**AD Infio Games**, PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent BR2 0YQ  
WEB: [www.plm4sports.com](http://www.plm4sports.com)  
EM: [danny.mcconnell@virgin.net](mailto:danny.mcconnell@virgin.net)  
TEL: 020 8325 2448

**Adams, David**  
WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords/loie04/index.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/loie04/index.html)  
WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords/loie10/index.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/loie10/index.html)  
EM: [davster@aol.net](mailto:davster@aol.net)

**Advanced Gaming Enterprises**, POB 214949, Sacramento, CA 95821, USA  
WEB: [www.ageforfun.com](http://www.ageforfun.com)

**Agema Publications**, 3 Worktop Rd, Off Carlton Rd, Snettmon, Nottingham NG3 2BA  
WEB: [go.to/agema](http://go.to/agema)  
EM: [agema@lineone.net](mailto:agema@lineone.net)

**Ancient Guardian Enterprises**,  
WEB: [www.agegames.com](http://www.agegames.com)  
EM: [gm@agegames.com](mailto:gm@agegames.com)

**Andrews, Colin**, 26 Brown Edge Road, Holts, Oldham, OL4 5QG  
Arnot, Steven,  
WEB: [www.sjaysystems.co.uk/](http://www.sjaysystems.co.uk/)  
EM: [gl3@ansterlitz.co.uk](mailto:gl3@ansterlitz.co.uk)

**Ansterlitz PhEM**  
WEB: [www.ansterlitz.biz](http://www.ansterlitz.biz)  
EM: [gm@ansterlitz.biz](mailto:gm@ansterlitz.biz)

**Baird, Phil**, 930 NE 63rd Ave, Portland, OR 97213, USA  
WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords/loie11/index.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/loie11/index.html)  
EM: [philphaird@sprintmail.com](mailto:philphaird@sprintmail.com)

**Briny En Gardel (Terry Crook)**, 11 Laurel Close, Burniston, Scarborough, N.Yorks, YO13 0JQ  
WEB: [www.brinyengarde.co.uk](http://www.brinyengarde.co.uk)  
EM: [horseguards@brinyengarde.co.uk](mailto:horseguards@brinyengarde.co.uk)

**Burrows, Pete, Buzzwack PhM**, 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG  
WEB: [www.buzzwackphm.freemove.co.uk](http://www.buzzwackphm.freemove.co.uk)  
EM: [pete@buzzwackphm.freemove.co.uk](mailto:pete@buzzwackphm.freemove.co.uk)  
TELFAX: 0115 9224901 (pr. 10pm)

**Central de Jocs SL**, C/Númancia no. 112-116, 08029 - Barcelona, Spain  
WEB: [www.centraldejocs.com](http://www.centraldejocs.com)  
EM: [torntslips@mentia.net](mailto:torntslips@mentia.net)

**Chaos Trail**, 8 Osier Close, Ely, Cambs., CB7 4AY  
WEB: [www.chaostrail.com](http://www.chaostrail.com)  
EM: [\(Simon.Williams\)@chaostrail.com](mailto:(Simon.Williams)@chaostrail.com)

**Clay, David**, 20 Malden Close, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6AY  
WEB: [www.witloppwar.co.uk](http://www.witloppwar.co.uk)  
EM: [dave@witloppwar.co.uk](mailto:dave@witloppwar.co.uk)

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WEB: [www.crastrworld.com](http://www.crastrworld.com)  
EM: [andy@crastrworld.com](mailto:andy@crastrworld.com)

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WEB: [http://home-ecoline.de/home/ashes\\_of\\_empire/ashes2.htm](http://home-ecoline.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm) (English)  
EM: [h.torff@cpp.com](mailto:h.torff@cpp.com)

**Dark Wolf Games**, BCM Darkwolf, London, WC1N 3XX  
WEB: [www.darkwolf.ie](http://www.darkwolf.ie)  
EM: [phm@darkwolf.ie](mailto:phm@darkwolf.ie)

**Dracs Games**, 21 Chipperfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP  
WEB: [http://home-ecoline.de/home/ashes\\_of\\_empire/ashes2.htm](http://home-ecoline.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm) (English)  
EM: [derick@dracs.games.co.uk](mailto:derick@dracs.games.co.uk)

**Dreamworld Games**  
TEL: [Derek.Rauey@1772.334878](mailto:Derek.Rauey@1772.334878)  
WEB: [www.lovelandsoccer.com](http://www.lovelandsoccer.com) / [www.realityracing.com](http://www.realityracing.com)  
TEL: 01380 81522

**Dunks, Antony**, Fir Horizon, Sark, Guernsey, GY9 0SE  
WEB: [www.sark.net/~sarl](http://www.sark.net/~sarl)  
EM: [sarl@ark.net](mailto:sarl@ark.net)

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WEB: [www.epingames.com](http://www.epingames.com)  
EM: [de@epingames.com](mailto:de@epingames.com)

**Entertainment Plus More Games**, PO Box 2578, Appleton, WI 54912, USA  
WEB: [www.epingames.com](http://www.epingames.com)  
EM: [de@epingames.com](mailto:de@epingames.com)

**Evans, Paul**, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF  
EM: [paul@pevans.co.uk](mailto:paul@pevans.co.uk)

**Farway Games**, 3 Mastem Rd, St Albans, Herts AL4 0GS  
EM: [tgibbons@faraway.co.uk](mailto:tgibbons@faraway.co.uk)  
WEB: <http://www.faraway.co.uk/>

**Flying Buffalo**  
WEB: <http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/>  
EM: [rick@flyingbuffalo.com](mailto:rick@flyingbuffalo.com)

**Games by Mail**, Bridge Street, Neston, S Wirral CH64 9UJ  
WEB: [GamesByMail.co.uk](mailto:GamesByMail.co.uk)  
EM: [colin@gamesbymail.co.uk](mailto:colin@gamesbymail.co.uk)

**Glover, Adrian**, 4 Stevanec Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG  
FAX: 0157 3361009  
TEL: (Colin, Yvonne, Trog): 0151 3361412

**Harlan, Thomas**, 3210 East 23rd Street, Tucson, AR 85713, USA  
WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords](http://www.throneworld.com/lords)  
EM: [thomash@throneworld.com](mailto:thomash@throneworld.com)

**Harlequin Games**, 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP  
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EM: [phm@harlequin.games.com](mailto:phm@harlequin.games.com)  
TEL: 029 2091 3359 (9-6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only  
FAX: (Sam Rods): 029 2062 5665 (9-6.30 weekdays)

**Haynes, Nic**, 33 Chatsworth Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 7XD  
EM: [nic@jatytyig@hotmail.com](mailto:nic@jatytyig@hotmail.com)  
WEB: [www.incabusdesigns.co.uk](http://www.incabusdesigns.co.uk)  
EM: [inbus@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:inbus@globalnet.co.uk)  
TEL: 01509 217957

**Incube Designs**, POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG  
WEB: [www.incabusdesigns.co.uk](http://www.incabusdesigns.co.uk)  
EM: [inbus@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:inbus@globalnet.co.uk)  
TEL: 01509 217957

**Interesting Times**, 10 Belmont Avenue, Barnet, London, EN4 9LJ  
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FAX: 07050 658383

**Jade Enterprises**, 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London, SE20 7EB  
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TEL: 020 83256507

**Kamikaze Games**  
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EM: [gm@kfgames.com](mailto:gm@kfgames.com)  
WEB: [www.kfgames.com](http://www.kfgames.com)  
EM: [enquiry@kfgames.com](mailto:enquiry@kfgames.com)  
TEL: 01253 866345

**Lloyd, Rich**, 79 Farmersville Road, Callion, NJ 07830, USA  
EM: [lord4@throneworld.com](mailto:lord4@throneworld.com)  
TEL: (908) 832-5176

**Madhouse**, 6 Alexandra Road, Wibech, PE13 1HQ  
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EM: [madcentral@wibem.com](mailto:madcentral@wibem.com)  
TEL: 01945 583811

**Mindless Games**, 5 Basford Road, Nottingham, NG6 0JP  
WEB: [www.mindlessworld.net](http://www.mindlessworld.net)  
EM: [andy.mindless@ntlworld.com](mailto:andy.mindless@ntlworld.com)  
TEL: (Andy, Simmonds): 0115 979 0797 (9.30 -6.30 weekdays only)

**Neutral Zone**, 33 Rockall Close, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LU  
WEB: [www.neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk](http://www.neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk)  
EM: [info@neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk](mailto:info@neutral-zone-football-phem.co.uk)  
TEL: 01440 713124 (7pm - 9pm)

**Oates, Jason**, 6 St. Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA  
EM: <http://freespace.virgin.net/jason.oates>  
TEL/FAX: 01305 251451

**Olympia Games**, 6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3GS  
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TEL/FAX: (Trevor Dexter) 0115 9436197

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WEB: [www.pagodagames.co.uk](http://www.pagodagames.co.uk)  
EM: [orders@pagodagames.co.uk](mailto:orders@pagodagames.co.uk)  
TEL/FAX: (Keith Burnham): 01827 703251

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WEB: <http://groups.msn.com/elbaria>  
EM: [Markpalin@aol.com](mailto:Markpalin@aol.com)  
TEL: 01472 753430

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**Quixel Games**, Quixel Games Ghr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany  
EM: [quixelgames@online.de](mailto:quixelgames@online.de)

**Rebus Games**, 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ  
EM: [dontin@zcom.co.uk](mailto:dontin@zcom.co.uk)  
WEB: [www.receivewisdom.org](http://www.receivewisdom.org)

**Received Wisdom**, 9 Oundle Road, Aylsham, Peterborough PE7 3UP  
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EM: [sun@receivewisdom.org](mailto:sun@receivewisdom.org)

**Rolling Thunder Games Inc.**, PO Box 310, Eastlake, CO 80614-0310, USA  
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EM: [tribenet@nospacenet.au](mailto:tribenet@nospacenet.au)

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WEB: [www.heldenwelt.com](http://www.heldenwelt.com)  
EM: [ssv-graz@aon.at](mailto:ssv-graz@aon.at)

**Scriven, David**, 15 Aundale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25, IDJ  
**Sevensar Games**, 57 Olympia Gardens, Morpheth, Northumberland NE61 1JQ  
WEB: [www.sark.net/~sarl/greensun.html](http://www.sark.net/~sarl/greensun.html)  
EM: [greensun@nickel.globalnet.co.uk](mailto:greensun@nickel.globalnet.co.uk)

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WEB: [www.silverdreamer.com](http://www.silverdreamer.com)  
EM: [silverdrea@aol.com](mailto:silverdrea@aol.com)  
TEL: (Justin Parlier): 01332 387195 (Mon-Fri, 11-6)

**Software Simulations**, PO Box 27328, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH  
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EM: [peter@plm4sports.com](mailto:peter@plm4sports.com)

**Spellbinder Games**, 51 Abelsan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE  
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TEL: (Chris Dempsey): 01843 291558

**Spencer, Jerry**, 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY  
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WEB: [www.sportingdreams.com](http://www.sportingdreams.com)  
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TEL: 01332 726376

**Tempus Fugit PBM Productions**, 96 Bishopwood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG  
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**Total Conquest**,  
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EM: [support@total-conquest.com](mailto:support@total-conquest.com)

**Unaidh Games**, 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF  
EM: [christian.morris@virgin.net](mailto:christian.morris@virgin.net)

**Undying King Games**, 35 Kings Avenue, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 1NT  
Web: [www.ukg.co.uk](http://www.ukg.co.uk)

**White, Stephen**, 14 Wiltshire Avenue, Burnley, Lancs., BB12 6AD  
**WOW Games**,  
WEB: <http://www.wow.pbemgame.com/>

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## 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](mailto:burgess@world.std.com))

**Camel Robert Rees**, Top Floor Flat, 22 Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4ES. EM: [camel@talk21.com](mailto:camel@talk21.com) ([www.geocities.com/studierfrj/camel](http://www.geocities.com/studierfrj/camel))

**Devolution**, Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creeting Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN6 8RP (Email: [tony@hollowell.plus.com](mailto:tony@hollowell.plus.com))

**Flight of Fancy**, Philip Honeybone, Email: [phl@melly98.freemove.co.uk](mailto:phl@melly98.freemove.co.uk)  
**For Whom The Die Rolls**, 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Herts., HP23 4NQ (Email: [Keith@Thomasson.com](mailto:Keith@Thomasson.com))

**Mission From God**, John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3UW ([www.fbgames.co.uk](http://www.fbgames.co.uk))  
mfg@fbgames.co.uk

**Ode**, John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: [John@ode\\_online.net](mailto:John@ode_online.net))  
**off-the-shelf**, Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: [off-the-shelf@olympus.net](mailto:off-the-shelf@olympus.net))

**Psychoputh**, [www.psychozine.co.uk](http://www.psychozine.co.uk) (Web publication only.)  
**Rhein-Neckar-Zine**, (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Karlsruhe, Germany, Email: [lukas@oberful.de](mailto:lukas@oberful.de)

**S.O.B.**, Chris Hassler, 2000 S. Armour Ct., La Habra, CA 90631 USA (Email: [chassler@adelphia.net](mailto:chassler@adelphia.net))  
**Serendipity**, John Wobley, Topferrheide 4, 38259 Salzgitter, Germany (Email: [jwobley@aol.com](mailto:jwobley@aol.com))

**Strangitude**, Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Rd, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1YJ (Email: [strangezine@income.net](mailto:strangezine@income.net))  
**To Win Just Once**, Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UF (Email: [twjo@pevans.co.uk](mailto:twjo@pevans.co.uk))

**Variable Pig**, Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: [cj.reader@wanadoo.nl](mailto: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 European & Web-based fms.  
**Medium** shows how much 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) German,  
**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, (b) more for battle reports, (c) more for extended orders/onger reports, (d) more for several possible extras, (e) lower cost if you join the club \$ indicates no credit refunds available. (f) higher start-up fee for paper rules, (g) free but, donations welcome  
**Flagship Ref.** shows the issue of Flagship where you can find an article describing the game. • 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.

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 UK players. If in doubt, contact the GMs.

		Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
Absolute Fantasy	MO	Power/Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	
Absolute Heroes	MO	RPG: Superhero	IAD	p	£15.00	2	£4.50	(b)	91
Absolute Power 2	MO	Power/Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	2	£5.00	-	98
Adventurer Kings	CF	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	0	£2.50	-	35, 72-74, 88
Adventurers Guild	CO	Adventure	EPM	e	Free	1	\$10	-	103
Alamaze	CF	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£15.00	1	£3.50	-	71, 80
Ancient Battles	MF	Wargame: Historical	ACM	p	£6.00	0	£3.50	-	
Ancient Empires	CF	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	-	
Ashes of Empire	MF	Power: Historical	CSP	e, p	Free	•1.53	-	£1 month	58
Aspects of Might	MO	Adventure	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(c)	
Assyria's End II	MO	Power: Historical	ACM	p	£5.00	0	£6.00	(d)	90
Austerlitz	CF	Wargame: Historical	QRP	G only	?	?	?	?	(96)
Austerlitz	CF	Wargame: Historical	SLP	e, p	£10.00*	?	£3.75	(a)	96, 103-105
Austerlitz	CF	Wargame: Historical	SSV	e, p, G	?	?	£6 Euro	(b)	(96)
Australian Empires	CF	Wargame: Historical	ALS	e	Free	0	\$4.00	-	
Barbarians at the Gate	CF	Wargame: Futuristic	SCF	e, p	£5.00	3	£2.00	-	
Battle Plan	CO	Wargame	FBI	e, p	£5.00	0	£3.50	(a)	19
Beyond	MO	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£2.50	-	86
Bleddin Diary, A	MO	Tribal	SFE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	\$	80a, 81-84d
Championship League	MO	Sport: Soccer	WIL	p	£2.50	0	£1.25	S	86
Championship League	HO	Sport: Motor Racing	RCW	e, p	£6.50	0	£4.00	-	
Chickadee	HO	Tribal	PAL	e, p	£10.00	2	£5.00	-	104
Company Commander	MF	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	96, 97
Covert Operations	CF	Economic	FBI	e, p	\$25 per game	0	n/a	-	
Crack of Doom II	MO	Tribal	ACE	?	£5.00	?	\$	?	96
Crusades, The	MF	Wargame: Historical	AGE	p, e	£5.00	0	£6.00	-	
Dark Age II	CF	Power: Historical	SCF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 3	-	51
Dark Lands	MO	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£25.00	-	
Deathgate Arena	CO	Adventure: Arena	EPM	e	Free	1	\$6.00	-	
Destiny	HO	Sci Fi	MAD	e, p	£10.00	4	£3.50	(a)	100, 101
Diplomacy	CF	Wargame: Historical	TIW	p, e	Free	0	Free	-	
Domination	MO	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	79
Dragonhelm	MO	RPG: Sci-Fi	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£5.95	-	
Dragonlords	CF	Wargame: Fantasy	ACG	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.00	(d)	92-94, 100
Dungeons World	CO	Adventure	MAD	e, p	Free	0	Free	-	
EG1: Briny	HO	RPG: Historical (EG1)	BRI	e	Free	0	Free	-	
EG1: Dangerous Liaisons	MO	RPG: Historical (EG1)	SPN	p	£5.00	5	£0.80	-	93
EG1: LPBS	MO	RPG: Historical (EG1)	EVA	p	£10.00	4	£2.00	-	34, 93
Enstein's Lot	HO	RPG: Modern	ULA	p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	91, 107
Eldritch	CO	Wargame: Fantasy	PEG	e	Free	2	\$2	-	748, 918
Election Year	CF	Misc: Political	BRI	e	\$25 per game	0	£2.00	-	
Empires	CF	Wargame: Historical	DNG	e, p	£10.00	?	£2.00	-	
Epoch of Empires	HO	RPG: Fantasy	DNG	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.00	-	63
Extra Time-Original	CF	Wargame: Historical	DMG	e, p	£5.00	3	£2.00	-	
Extra Time-Original	CO	Sport: Soccer	KIC	e, p	Free	1	£2.25	-	53
Fall of the Roman Empire	CF	Sport: Soccer	KIC/CRA	e, p	Free	1	£1.90	-	
Fallen at the First	MF	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	£3.00	0	£1.50 + 50p/month	-	
Fantasy Soccer	CO	Sport: Horse Racing	DRG	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	
Fellowship	CO	Sport: Soccer	KIC	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	53
Federal Lords	MO	RPG: Fantasy	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£5.95	-	
Federal Lords: Right of Kings	CF	Wargame: Historical	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	-	3
Federal Lords	CF	Wargame: Historical	LWG	e	\$5	0	\$1	-	108
Fushball-Liga	CO	Sport: Soccer	SSV	G only	?	?	0.75 Euro	-	
Galactic Conflict	CF	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	-	
Galactic Invasion 3	CF	Sci-Fi	ARN	e	Free	0	Free	-	
Galaxy	CF	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94
Gameplan	CO	Sport: American Football	SOFF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£11.00 for 4	-	20
Gameplan Baseball	CO	Sport: Baseball	McC	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	
Gameplan Boxing	CO	Sport: Boxing	McC	p	£5.00	5	£9.00 for 4	-	
Gameplan: Advanced	CO	Sport: American Football	SOFF/McC	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	
Godfather	CF	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.80	-	(a) 73, 83, 100, 101
Gods Decide, The	CO	Power	UKG	w	Free	0	Free	-	
Great White Hunter	CF	Misc	ARN	e	Free	0	£1.00	-	
Greyhound Trainer	CO	Sport: American Football	SFO	w	£5.00	5	£5.00	-	
Gridiron Suits	MO	Power: Sci-Fi	McC	p	£5.00	0	£6.00	(d)	
Grounds	MO	Power: Historical	ACM	e, p	£5.00	0	£6.00	-	
Handel Manor	CF	Adventure	MAD	e, p	Free	0	Free	-	97
Handwell	CO	Adventure	SSV	?	?	?	£3 Euro/month	-	103
Horse Fantasy	CO	Adventure	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3	-	40

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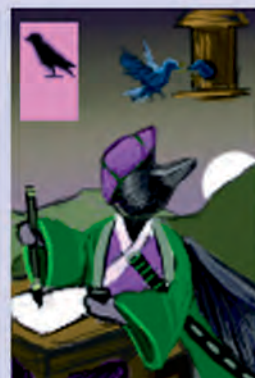
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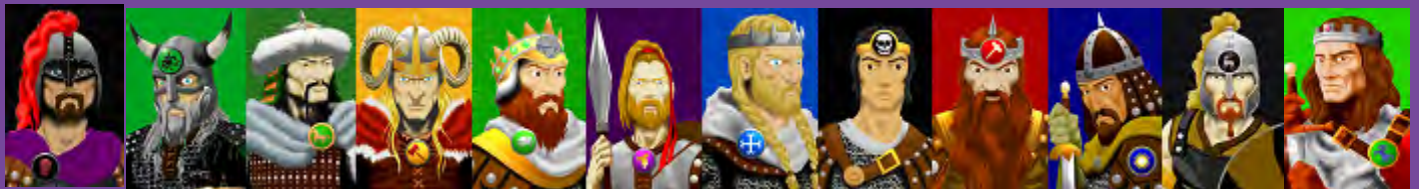
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