

# FLAGSHIP

THE MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS

*IN THIS ISSUE ...*

*World of Warcraft  
Diplomacy ~ The Trojan War  
Warhammer ~ Middle Earth*



*Turn Based Games, Boardgames, Roleplaying,  
Online & Computer Games, Conventions,  
Live Action Roleplaying and more ...*





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# FLAGSHIP

#112, February / March '05



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## REPORT FROM THE BRIDGE

WELCOME to the first *Flagship* of 2005.

Thanks to all those of you who sent us greetings for the festive season.

There's plenty in these pages to fulfil our mission of showing you what fun it is to play a wide variety of games. We hope that this issue and those that'll follow will be of help in choosing and enjoying your games throughout the year.

So what do we offer you here, in these pages? If we cared to lapse into management-speak we'd call all of it, 'A Gaming

Environment'. In plain English, we always aim to cover established games and new games, in the form of news, articles, reviews or players' comments.

We've articles in this issue about horror games, family games, live action roleplaying, players' expectations, a new soccer play-by-mail game, boardgames, advice on making your own fanzine and plenty more. Of course, we can never include everything that's out there though we'd love to. So if you'd like to read more about your own favourite games, do contact us with your ideas. We'll always welcome constructive criticism from you and your contributions.

We're introducing a new feature this issue, which we'd very much like to extend to other games. Our article about *Middle-Earth PBM* is based on a particular game in which

the two teams competed for a virtual cup, the Flagship Challenge Cup, with certificates, badges and copies of Flagship for the winning team. This was an experimental idea, which seems to have worked well. We now offer all GMs (including those running convention games) the chance to present such a virtual cup to their victorious players: contact us if you like the idea. And if you play in a winnable game, suggest to your GM or game organiser that he contacts us, too. The more the merrier!

Finally, don't forget to check out our new website. We want to use this to show what fun games are and what lively people play them:

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

*Carol*



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

THOSE OF you who take *Flagship* regularly will notice that we've reduced the space on our *Contents* page that we normally use for the Editorial. Don't breathe your universal sigh of relief just yet, though - the change simply gives your Editor more space to comment on gaming-as-I-see-it here.

But let's start with a note about our striking cover. Puzzled by it? I was! Kosumi's designer, *James Acres*, explains: 'The crow-man on the left is a Tengu. They are half-man half-crow Buddhist monks who are also master swordsmen. The woman on the right is a Geisha - a supreme magician in *Kosumi*. Geisha and Tengu are two of the clans that can be played in *Kosumi*. The two figures are Samurai leading the Armies flanking either side. They are about to meet in battle, and are handling the pre-battle formalities. Since this is mythical Japan the formalities are mostly about insuring the proper care and display of any heads that might be captured during the fight.'

It's not been especially easy to gather news for this issue: we've had to make an even bigger effort than usual. Perhaps some firms are taking a well-earned break after working flat out to capture the holiday market? Or perhaps they've been nursing post-holiday hangovers? Not to worry: it's clear that most have made a new year resolution to develop more games, in response to what seems to be an ever-increasing demand. Look out for a big choice of games to play throughout the coming year. We'll do our best to cover as many as possible. We'd love to include everything, but there's so much that we simply can't do this! It's good that there's such a huge variety of games and game firms, of course: we're working in an area that's expanding healthily. If you discover anything that we've not covered, share your enjoyment with our readers by letting us know. And don't forget you can always post comments on any sort of game on our website forum.

There's room here to explain how we treat the games that are our material. When we first hear about a game, we'll mention it here in *Newsdesk*, with contact details. This first mention isn't intended to be an indication of quality: indeed, it's fun to see what a huge variety of themes can jostle together. However, if you're especially keen on a particular theme, you can pursue the game from this first mention.

It's our reviewers and columnists who then proceed give a more detailed account of some of these games. We aim to publish articles from people who know their stuff and can recognise quality when they play it, though of course games are always affected by a reviewer's subjective response, and we all know that our enjoyment of a game can depend a great deal on our fellow players. So we're glad to hear further views!

You'll learn about a game from the comments that its players send in to *Rumours from the Front*. These are short remarks which are spontaneous rather than measured, but give a good impression of players' varied reactions. We don't censor these, though we do offer game moderators and designers a right of reply if the comment rebukes them rather than the game itself.

Altogether, we try to offer an accurate picture of games and their players. We'll always welcome constructive criticism about what we're doing, so feel free to offer this. Oh, and you can always contact us through our new website:

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

Carol

## NEWSDESK TURN BASED



### FANTASY WARGAMES

*Entertainment Plus More Inc* are making a special

offer for their medieval fantasy game called **Deathsgate PBM**. This is based on character-based gladiatorial combat in a pbem game system which has been running since 1990. *Flagship* readers are invited to try *Deathsgate* at no cost. Subsequent turns are \$4.75. For more information, go to:

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

EPM are celebrating the 15th anniversary of **Adventurers Guild**, and marking this event with a giveaway of fifteen free turns to some lucky (and interested) subscriber. We'll run a prize draw to pick the winner! Just send your name and address to us by email:

[editor@flagshipmagazine.com](mailto:editor@flagshipmagazine.com)

*Harlequin Games* report of their **Legends** that *Immortals' Realm 3* has nearly filled, with only half a dozen places left out of the one hundred and four starting positions.

'That means,' reports Sam Roads, 'that it's time to think about the game after this, almost certainly a return to the players' favourite: *North Island Campaign 29*, including the new 'neutral' *Dragonrider* rules.'

Sam adds that 'IR3 proved that it's possible to squeeze out some extra tertiary characters for influencers to go for and the experiment in IR3 will become the normality in all games following. We're also likely to see changes to the awkward Magic Shells on module city owners' dilemma (it's less aquatic than it sounds... you'll just have to take my word on that).'

'Awkward Magic Shells'? How strange! Still, strangely-named objects with bizarre effects have their place in a fantasy wargame...

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

It's interesting to hear from *ME Games Ltd* that they are considering reworking the map of **Middle-Earth PBM** for the future, 'making certain changes to align the map more closely with Tolkien's originals instead of the Middle-Earth Roleplaying design which inspired the original Middle-Earth PBM.'

But if you're familiar with the current map, don't panic. 'It's unlikely that this new

map would be used for the standard games of ME, as players know and love the map in its current form, but it might add a little variety into future modules and scenarios.'

ME Games add that 'we're opening the gap on the west of the White Mountains, which will create the option for military assaults in an otherwise quiet part of the map; we're adding in the mountains Southwest of the Sea of Rhun, which will have the opposite effect in that usually contentious region. Mordor is getting a facelift in order to separate Barad Dur and Mount Doom and present more military options around the Sea of Nurnen.'

Their new Fourth Age setup rules have 'provoked a rush of interest in this scenario. The new costings appear to balance the game more evenly, removing the prevalence of agent-only nations and encouraging previously inefficient tactics. We've started two games in two weeks and expect another to fill shortly.'

There is also news that the in-house newsletter, *News from Bree*, may soon appear as an online version. The name is of course taken from chapter nine of the *Lord of the Rings*, referring to the saying 'Strange as News from Bree'.

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

# NEWSDESK TURN BASED



## ROLEPLAYING



In September, *Mark Pinder's Lands of Elvaria* had 'the major game shift when the ice age hit and player positions had to escape to another world which is inhabited by the enemy who caused the Ice Age in the first place. The interlinked second island/region which was started up for new positions was merged into the main game world at this time. This region was under occupation by enemy forces: a concerted player effort has started the fight back, with a senior player acquiring himself a senior commission of General and put in charge of the liberation campaign. Other players are linking in with the campaign, acting as captains in the army, spies and cleaning the latrines with a pink toothbrush leading to a unified campaign at all levels bringing in the vast majority of the player base. This campaign is hotting up quite nicely.'

Mark adds that after consulting with the players, he made some changes to the game 'adding to playability and focus, which has helped in pushing the game forward. For a well-established game, it is continually evolving year by year and is unrecognisable from its humble origins.'

If you're interested, Mark does have space for players to join in the fun. 'Fresh blood is always appreciated, as they can make an impact in so many ways, putting a fresh pair of eyes over the game and game world.'

<http://groups.msn.com/elvaria>

After an absence of five years, *Colin Andrews* is recommencing his West Coast **Saturnalia** campaign and will welcome players to this. Colin is a well-experienced GM, and knows the system well. Send an SSAE to him at: 26 Brown Edge Road, Holts, Oldham OL4 5QG.

## SPORTS



We've heard from a would-be player of **PAFL** (ie **Postal American Football League**) that having seen a report in these pages that the game was being relaunched, he applied to rejoin it some time ago.

He hasn't heard back. Can any reader tell us what's happening?

A reader has reminded us about **Hattrick**, an online football management game, which has been running for eight years. We ran a short

review of this game in issue #99, and we're pleased to see that the game is flourishing, with healthy number of players.

[www.hattrick.org/common/default.asp](http://www.hattrick.org/common/default.asp)



## FIRMS

*Flying Buffalo Inc* announce that they will be running the

**Illuminati PBM** game again. We don't have specific details from them yet, but it'll be coming 'very soon'. Derived from Steve Jackson's card game **Illuminati**, it's a game where you play a covert organization that is intent on taking over the world, with the temporary disadvantage that other such organizations are planning the same thing. Fancy playing **Atlantis**, **Headwaiters**, the **Boy Sprouts** or the **Bermuda Triangle**? The game was praised in the past for its fast action, and we welcome news of its return.

FBI also announce a special 40th Anniversary **Nuclear War** set, and two **Lost Worlds** books. Gosh, 40 years now since the first commercial pbm game arrived.

In April, FBI will be re-releasing the classic WWI air combat game between the German Fokker EIII and the British Airco DH2: **Ace of Aces, Flying Machines**. These will be the original books from the old *Nova* warehouse, with new outer wrappers, and will cost \$19.95. [www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com)

*Mark Pinder* will be making his annual pilgrimage to Manorcon this year. 'There may not be a dedicated Manorcon to PBM any

more, but we test our mettle against the hardened board gamers, like at the very first Manorcon which was a joint event.'

<http://groups.msn.com/elvaria>

A player in *Madhouse's Dungeonworld* reports a jubilant announcement from their Steve Tierney:

*'Little Surgeon Enters The World. On Tuesday 4th January, at 2.20 PM, a tiny little Madhouse surgeon named Joseph Tierney entered the world. He weighed 8 pounds and avoided all the usual hassle by entering the world via C-Section, no doubt role-playing the chestbuster from Alien.'*

*'He is entirely well and healthy, as is his tired mother. His father, on the other hand, has never been well. But that's another story entirely...'*

Congratulations to little Joseph's proud parents! But it seems slightly selfish of our reporter to add, 'Hope it doesn't affect turnaround...' Especially since we've now had news of something that really would have affected turnaround. Steve tells us, *'The day after the baby was born the back wheel of my car came off on a dual-carriageway at 70 MPH. With only three wheels I had little control and span across the inside lane and off the road. I destroyed a large double-posted road sign then about six lengths of heavy wooden farmer's fence as I span along it. Nothing left of my lovely BMW at all, all its hit points scattered to the four winds. I walked out of the crash completely unscathed other than rattled nerves. No idea how. The car looks like something off a Bond set.'*

An unlucky accident - but what a lucky escape!

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

## Turn-Based Gaming

Play by mail games are often called turn-based games now that most of them are played via the internet. It's normal to play these turn-based games with international firms and a global player base. Games have been designed that can involve large numbers of players - much larger than can gather for face-to-face gaming.

With multi-player games, it is usual for all the players' orders for one turn to be processed simultaneously to a deadline, by a central moderator. Because a player normally sees only his own position and must use information gained by espionage and allies to gather a full picture, this process offers players hidden intelligence of the sort that suits wargaming.

It's advantageous for players to contact each other between deadlines, to agree (or to disagree about) mutual borders and mutual support. This need to contact fellow-players can be fun, too, in adventure games, and it's essential in team games.

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 complex, but they all need skill and planning for success. The game worlds are often of great depth, with much to find out and explore.

If you've never tried Turn-Based Games, give them a go. It will be unlike any other kind of gaming that you've played.

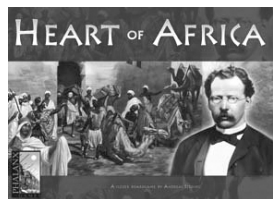


# NEWSDESK BOARDGAMES



Let's start by taking a look at some games with vaguely historical settings.

As well as **Revolution**, which we mentioned in #110, **Phalanx Games** are issuing **Heart of Africa**, which is a game about colonial



expansion in the mid 19th century. It's for two-five players, and involves managing resources,

trading, choosing actions and - of course - conflict. Oh, and you'll need to keep an eye on your reputation and influence, which need to be advanced.

They're also issuing **Naval Battles**, which is a two-six player card game of naval combat in World War II.

You command a fleet of ships which includes both surface vessels and submarines, and must launch attacks from them in hopes of sinking the enemy fleet.



Turning to ancient history, **Zama** from **BSO Games** deals with the conflict between Hannibal and his Carthaginians and the Roman army of Scipio Africanus in 202 BC. Zama has no dice, so no 'luck', but lots of cards and counters.

Making the big leap from history to sci-fi, **DG Associates** offer **Escape Velocity Nova**, which is based on the sci-fi computer game from **Ambrosia Software** and is already outselling **DG Associates'** previous games. Described as a 'card-driven boardgame', it involves interstellar



trade and conflict with 'political intrigue, pirate-filled trade routes, or just plain ship-to-ship combat.' There are booster packs with which the game can be expanded and the website has background pdfs with more information about the **Escape Velocity Nova** universe.

In March, **Mayfair Games** will be releasing **Amazonas**, which they're co-producing with their German publishing partner, **Kosmos**. Designed by **Stefan Dorra**, Amazonas involves exploring tropical jungles in the 19th century, to find rare plants and animals. Twisting paths and waterways lead from one village to another, but there are dangerous creatures to beware of

in the jungle, too, and every player has a secret mission to fulfil. This game will cost \$49.99.

**Rio Grande Games** report that they've sold out of **Carcassonne**, because their sales before Christmas were higher than they'd foreseen. While it's sad that they've sold out, it's good news that sales of such a good game were so numerous. Be patient if you're looking for it: a reprint will be available from late February.

We've an article that describes **Munchkin** in this issue, so let's mention **Munchkin Fu 2 - Monkey Business** at \$16.95 from **Steve Jackson Games**.

This game expands **Munchkin Fu**, 'with more mooks, more mayhem, more monsters, more munchkins, more monks - especially more monks...' Fully compatible with the original game **Munchkin** game and all its variants, there are 110 evil and overpowered cards, plus two blanks to create your own.

**Munchkin Dice** at \$45 also come from **Steve Jackson Games**, as the ideal way to keep track of your level in **Munchkin**. There are six ten-sided dice, all different colours. Also included are 14 brand-new **Munchkin** cards, plus a set of rules.



As many of you will know, **Avalon Hill** is now owned by **Hasbro**, who publish it through their subsidiary **Wizards of the Coast**. **Avalon Hill** has been running for an impressive 45 years, and in 2005 it will be issuing seven games. Of these, four are new or revamped games and three are reprints.

The reprints include **Guillotine**, a card game which will come out in the late spring, and another card game, **The Great Dalmati**, at some point in the early summer. Both these will be published under the **Wizards of the Coast** label. **Robo Rally** will be released in July. **Robo Rally** was first designed in 1994 by **Dr Richard Garfield**, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**, who will help to launch its reprint, and is clearly described by **Avalon Hill** as a 'fast and fun game of battling robots.'

The four new (or revamped) games start with **Sword and Skull**, in March. This is a new pirate game, swashbuckling of course,



and designed for three-four players aged ten or older. It's described as a 'track-style game (think **Talisman** more than **Monopoly**), designed by **Mike Elliot**, which 'melds strategic play with family entertainment in an easy-to-learn, but challenging, package sure to be enjoyed by young and old alike.' Each player controls two characters, a 'hero' and a 'scoundrel' type, and the goal is to retrieve the



Queen's flagship from the **Pirate King**. Of course, each character has different ways to do that, either by derring-do and combat or by more underhand methods (if you have enough gold, you could even bribe the **Pirate King** to get the ship back!).

Following in April comes a revamped version of **Avalon Hill's** 1998 title **Monsters Ravage America**, now repackaged as **Monsters Menace America**. As you can tell, the theme resembles a B-movie, with players controlling both the menacing monsters and the military units that have to stop them destroying North American cities.

In June, **Nexus Ops** will be released. This is a wargame with a sci-fi storyline, in which rival corporations compete to gain the resources of a distant planet. Described as 'an aggressively competitive



game in which strategic play is integral, **Nexus Ops** features stunning art, beautiful game pieces and a fantastical 'otherworld' scenario.'

Then in the autumn, **Avalon Hill** plan to release **Vegas Showdown**, a game in which players to manage their limited resources to build the most splendid casino in Las Vegas.

It's a varied range, which seems to include games for both adult strategists and youngsters. **Avalon Hill** are certainly well experienced game producers. We'll bring you more news on the new releases as they appear.



Please visit the new  
Flagship website!  
[www.flagshipmagazine.com](http://www.flagshipmagazine.com)

# NEWSDESK ROLEPLAYING



## RPG GAMES

You'll find an article about **Warhammer** in this issue, and we're delighted to be able to bring you here the very latest news from *Black Industries*, the system's new publishers.

So what can we expect from them? They'll be releasing material for the second edition of Warhammer throughout 2005.

In March comes a brand new hardback edition of the core rulebook, **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay: A Grim World of Perilous Adventure**, with 256 full colour pages, at £25/\$39.99. This'll contain all you need to play, with sections on character generation, careers, combat, magic (both divine and sorcerous) and religion, as well as background information on Warhammer's dark world. There will be details on how to run a game, a complete introductory adventure, new character sheets, maps and plenty of artwork. Also in March will come the **Character Record Pack** at £10/\$14.99, with 50 character sheets, a 16-page booklet and plenty of in-depth background information to help Warhammer players create convincing adventuring characters. What about scenarios? Six will be issued in March as a 96-page hardback called **Plundered Vaults**. At £15/\$24.99, this includes 'three all time classic WFRP adventures, updated and converted to second edition rules. It also contains three brand new scenarios that will challenge beginners and veterans alike.' The titles alone of these scenarios should give a taste of the game, if you add a strong dash of the sinister to them all: *Rough Night at the Three Feathers*; *Grapes of Wrath*; *The Haunting Horror*; *For Love or Money*; *Carrion Call*; *Sing for your Supper*.

In April follows the **Games Master Pack** at £10/\$14.99. This will contain a full colour GM's screen, a 16-page information booklet, a specially written scenario and all the essential charts and tables to provide immediate reference for running a campaign. The **Old World Bestiary, Volume 1** will be issued in the same month. It's a full colour hardback of 128 pages, costing £18/\$29.99, which Black Industries describe as 'Breaking the mould of the standard A-Z list of monsters found in most Role Playing Games... Packed with lavish artwork and detailed background material, this book contains more than dry game statistics. Old Hob, Captain Schultz, Albrecht of Nuln and a whole host of other characters explain the perils that await adventurers of the Old World...' Interestingly, players can read

what are described as the 'common knowledge', while the GM can consult 'the scholar's view, and sometimes even the words of the creatures themselves.'

**Paths of the Damned: Ashes of Middenheim** is scheduled for a May release. A 96-page hardback, it'll cost £15/\$24.99 as the first instalment of the Epic campaign trilogy. The setting is 'the semi-ruined of City of Middenheim', and Black Industries promise a 'dark and twisted plot, which... will place the players upon a path they cannot ignore!'

Altogether, this sounds like a wealth of challenging material for Warhammer fans old and new.

[www.blackindustries.com/home.htm](http://www.blackindustries.com/home.htm)

*Flying Buffalo Inc* have some fun releases lined up for April. They've compiled a new rulebook for what they proudly proclaim to be 'the second-oldest (and easiest) fantasy role playing game', **Tunnels and Trolls 5.5**. As well as including complete rules for playing, the rulebook also contains 'the very first solo adventure for an RPG', *Buffalo Castle*, and costs \$19.95.

Back in print to coincide with the new rulebook, comes a T&T boxed set at \$24.95, including the rulebook, the *City of Terrors* solo adventure, dice and character sheets. On its way, come a T&T Summer Special at \$39.95 of the boxed set plus two gamemaster adventures, an additional solo adventure, and a copy of *Mage's Blood & Old Bones*, a book of short stories about the T&T world.

In May FBI will issue reprints for two popular **Lost Worlds** characters by *Graysea*, both at \$7.50 each. Felina the Tiger Lady and Eilee the Sprite have been out of print for several years, and are the most asked for of the out-of-print characters.

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

From *Bad Axe Games* comes **Slavelords of Cydonia**, at £18.49. This is the first adventure sourcebook for their **Grim Tales**, in which the player characters must struggle against tentacled horrors from beyond the stars, to avert a second cataclysmic war. The book features a complete campaign for adventurers level 1-20, as well as supplementary material presenting new monsters, spells, technology, races, feats and talents suitable for any Grim Tales campaign. It's compatible with the latest edition of Grim Tales, and can be played with or without the Grim Tales campaign rulebook.

**Star Thugs** from *GhazPork Industrial*, at £10.49, presents a sci-fi game universe with a highly strategic combat system. Each player can command an entire starship and crew, and tactical decisions matter more than dice rolls.

There are rules for conducting combat through email, 'that doesn't require ten thousand messages, doesn't bog down when one player in the battle stops posting, and doesn't require piles of work by the GM. (In fact, PvP combat doesn't even require a GM be present.)'

*Troll Lord Games* offer the **Castles & Crusades(tm) Players' Handbook** for £10.49. They describe the system as 'rules lite', which has its attractions. Using the Open Game License from *Wizards of the Coast*, the handbook includes rules for character generation, character advancement, a fast paced combat and rules system, spells and instruction for the GM.

**Midnight D20: Forge of Shadow** costs £8.49 from *Fantasy Flight Games*, and is a sourcebook describing where, at the heart of the dark lord's army is this forge on a Steel Hill, where slaves and sorcerers work on weapons, armour and equipment for his orcish hordes. Player characters have a chance to sneak behind enemy lines to reach the forge and sabotage products.

**Aquilonia**, at \$34.95 from *Mongoose Games*, is a 200-page sourcebook for **Conan the Roleplaying Game**. Aquilonia is the greatest kingdom of Hyboria: is it really destined to be ruled over by Conan himself, or will players have ambitions of their own?

**Babylon 5 Galactic Guide** describes the Babylon 5 universe. Interstellar travel has been happening for millions of years, so numerous sentient races have walked between the stars, while 'more simply stare up at the lights in the sky and wonder if they are alone.' There are many habitable worlds and many systems containing them that are entirely unexplored. The book describes space travel, details the known worlds and discusses unknown worlds along with mysterious and dangerous locations.

**GURPS Infinite Worlds**, from *Steve Jackson Games* at \$34.95 describes a universe with countless parallel Earths. Infinity Unlimited has the technology to jump between these worlds, but the bad news is that a parallel sentence called Centrum has also developed this technology - and wants to rule the universe. The Infinity Patrol has to counter Centrum as well as dealing with other dangers like criminals and the prospect of other baddies learning how to travel between dimensions. It's described as 'the complete genre book on both alternative-world gaming and time travel.'

The **Jeremiah RPG** from *Mongoose Games* for \$4.95 uses the Open Gaming License for a game based on the television series of that name. The setting is a world where all the adults were wiped out by disease, and the young people must make their way in a harsh post-apocalyptic world: 'players will take on

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## The Magazine for Gamers



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# FLAGSHIP



# NEWSDESK MISC



the roles of tough and nasty Jocks, brilliant Brainboys or ever-restless Wanderers. Without the comforts and conveniences of civilisation, players will adventure through a dangerous world populated by feral children, vicious marauders and enigmatic factions, all vying for the few scraps that are left of the Old World.' The rulebook has 256 pages and will be supported by future sourcebooks covering the first three seasons of the television series. Apparently Jeremiah is 'the first-ever European comic book to become a live-action US television series.'

Moving on to specific scenarios, **Eberron: Grasp of the Emerald Claw** is a D&D adventure in the Eberron setting. For £6.49 from *Wizards of the Coast*, it is designed either to be an immediate sequel to the first and second Eberron adventures, or to be a stand-alone adventure.

**Fireborn: The Fire Within** costs £8.49 from *Fantasy Flight Games*, and is the official introductory adventure for the Fireborn world. The system is an all-new and not d20. The player characters are not human beings, but dragons in a mythic age, where they reign supreme. Dangerously, however, 'sorcerers make pacts with dark beings and threaten the world in their mad schemes for power.'

## MURDER MYSTERY

Our Consultant Editor, Mo Holkar, has sent us an update about his firm *Freeform Games*, which sells downloadable murder mystery party games.



Freeform currently have nine different games, for player numbers from 6 up to 33, on themes ranging from Shakespearean England to Victorian Egyptology, to 1980s Texas oil folk, to the world of motor racing. Their games are rather different from the ones that you buy in boxes (How to Host a Murder etc) in that they are more like a role-playing freeform. 'Rather than being given a script, clue envelopes and all that kind of boring thing, in our games you are just given a character sheet and a summary of goals, and it's up to you to play the game more or less however you like.' Freeform have now started work now on expanded versions of some of the smaller games. The first is for **Curse of the Pharaoh**, one of the best-selling games but also the smallest in terms of numbers. With the expansion pack, it can now be played by up to 19 players. Files for all the games can be downloaded from the Freeform site:

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

## MAGAZINES



The third issue of the board games magazine, **Games International**, has now reached us. December's issue described the new games at Essen, and also started a series on strategic options in **War of the Ring: Struggle of Empires** was its Game of the Month. January's issue picks **7 Ages** as its Game of the Month, and reviews the boardgame based on **Doom**, as well as **Revolution**, **Heart of Africa** and much, much more. It's good to feel that boardgaming has revived enough to support a good-looking monthly magazine, and we wish Brian every success. Plenty of enthusiasm goes into its production!

[www.gamesinternational.biz](http://www.gamesinternational.biz)

Two of the magazines from *Piazo Publishing*, **Undeclared** and **Amazing Stories**, have been suspended temporarily. The January issues will come out, but Piazo announce that, 'Despite respectable sales and increasing circulation, both periodicals face substantial market pressures and competition. Piazo intends to use the break to explore unique opportunities to revamp and reposition each magazine.'

Piazo also produce the two AD&D magazines, **Dragon** and **Dungeon**. If you play AD&D, it's worth consulting them both!

Among plenty of other material, this month's *Dragon* has articles about Dwarves at War, Paragons of the Kindred, Generating Character and one called Nobody's Perfect, which looks at ways for all races to use their flaws for their own advantage.

This month's *Dungeon* concentrates on providing maps and other necessary tools for *Dungeon Masters*, along with three complete adventures suitable for various levels of experience.

<http://piazo.com>

The January issue of *Games Workshop's* **White Dwarf** concentrates on **The Lord of The Rings** strategy game. There's a follow-up article on coastal raids, an article about The Rise of the Serpent Lord which includes two new scenarios, rules for Dwarves and Moria Goblins and the Mûmak Showcase. For **Warhammer**, there's an article about the game's Ogres, and a conclusion to the **Storm of Chaos** campaign.

**Harbinger** #14 is out now, after some shipping delays with issue 13. *Harbinger* specialises in miniatures, but includes other game material

as well. January's issue contains an official **Nin-Gonost** scenario, a scenario presenting a train robbery for **Legends of the Old West**, articles about **Confrontation** and **Urban War** and advice about converting existing miniatures and creating terrain for *Wizkids' Pirates of the Spanish Main*:

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

Of considerable interest to roleplayers comes **IRM**, which stands for Independent Roleplaying Magazine. We picked up the first issue at Dragonmeet, and chatted about gaming throughout the day. Put together by a friendly editorial team, issue #1 contains fantasy, horror, cyber-punk, vampire and science fiction scenarios along with a range of players' artwork. We look forward to February's issue!

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



## FINANCIAL NEWS

*News Corporation* is a media group led by the controversial tycoon **Rupert Murdoch**. Its holdings include the Fox and Sky television networks (including the *Fox News* and *Sky News* channels), along with British newspapers *The Sun* and *The Times* and the book publisher *Harper Collins*.

It's been reported in the *Financial Times* that Murdoch may be taking an acquisitive interest in the videogames industry. The COO of his News Corporation group, Peter Chernin, confirmed that the company is looking at this sector, saying that it was 'kicking the tires of pretty much all video games companies... We see [games] as a big business and would like to get into it. We are struggling with the gap between companies like *Electronic Arts*, which come with a high price tag, and the next tier of companies...'

It would cost a staggering \$19 billion to obtain *Electronic Arts*, but the Californian company *Activision* may be considered for purchase, at under \$3 billion. Chernin did not say how much News Corporation would consider investing in the games industry, but did comment that other media companies are now interested in moving into gaming. In 2004 *Viacom's* chairman, Sumner Redstone, acquired a majority shareholding in publisher *Midway*, indicating that *Viacom* will either buy out *Midway* or establish a closer working relationship with it.

Whatever we may think of Rupert Murdoch, at least there's a chance that video games will stand a better chance of favourable coverage in the media ...

# The Triumph of Sauron

*RICHARD DEVEREUX competes for Flagship's Middle Earth PBM Challenge Cup ...*

FOR THOSE of you who are not familiar with **Middle-Earth PBM** (ME), it is a strategy game set in JRR Tolkien's Middle-Earth. It is said to be of middling complexity, but I've been playing it for over a dozen years and I still discover new aspects every game! The fact that ME is still thriving after all this time speaks volumes for the high quality of the game design and how well it is run by *ME Games*.

Very briefly, Middle-Earth is a character-driven game with commanders who lead armies and do political stuff; emissaries who influence the loyalty of your population centres upwards and those of other nations downwards and build new ones; agents who do the fun stuff like stealing, sabotaging, assassinating and kidnapping; and mages who (surprise!) learn and cast spells. In addition you may meet Non-Player-Characters like dragons, giant spiders, balrogs, Gandalf, Saruman or even the Dark Lord himself! There are also artifacts which can boost the owner's power. As if that wasn't enough, you have to manage your economy, otherwise you could go bankrupt! There are 25 nations with widely-differing strengths and weaknesses: ten good, ten evil and five neutral.

Not least, ME is a team game and if you want to win against decent opposition you absolutely *must* play as a team rather than a collection of individuals.

ME 33 was the first game for the **Flagship Challenge Cup** and was played in the 1650 scenario of Middle-Earth PBM. My team included Laurence Tilley, Mike Sankey and David Clemmensen, veterans of many games together, plus Kenneth Weed and Mark Stuckey, who were newcomers to the rest of us. We played the Dark Servants. Looking for a team name which oozed power and confidence, and could be used for either allegiance, we settled on *The Sarumen*, considering ourselves both wise and cunning! Whether we lived up to the name, you may judge after reading this report.

**Neutrals:** As Rhudaur inevitably gets trashed, I suggested that we took Easterlings instead, on the basis that their remote location gave them a good chance to build up a strong economic base, and that this outweighed leaving the Witch-King even more heavily outnumbered than usual. This suggestion was adopted by the team, the lone dissenter being Laurence. Nothing to do with him playing Witch-King, of course!

The Free Peoples (FP) surprised us by taking Rhudaur instead of Dunlendings. Laurence's protests rose to a crescendo but we couldn't change back at that point even if we'd wanted to. Personally I felt that the opposition team (calling themselves the *Filthy Little Hobbitses*) made a mistake in opting for the immediate military power of Rhudaur, rather than the long-term benefit of the Dunlendings' ability to name agents at 40. We Dark Siders ended up with Harad and Easterlings whilst the Free People took Corsairs and Rhudaur. The Dunlendings were dropped.

**Strategy:** We had plans in place to develop agents, to co-ordinate camping (with special emphasis on dragon recruitment), and to collect the important spirit and agent artifacts. We knew we would have to soak up the military punishment the FP would dish out whilst waiting for these plans to bear fruit, but I don't think anybody on our team was prepared for quite how much punishment we were in for!

## Middle Earth PBM at a glance

A team-based fantasy wargame from *ME Games* set in Tolkien's world, which is played by email. There are several scenarios, with 'Battle of the Five Armies' recommended for beginners, where a full 10-turn game is offered for £10. Otherwise, the standard charge is £10 for startup + 2 turns, with subsequent turns at £4.50.

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



## The Free People's offensive

The opening turns were dominated by a frighteningly swift, powerful and efficient FP military offensive. We made a major effort to help Witch-King, shipping him gold to improve his major towns and timber to fortify them, and giving him first option on recruitable dragons. Nothing we did halted the march of the FP armies more than momentarily. In over a dozen years of playing ME, I have never seen a military campaign conducted with such deadly efficiency. By turn 7 all Witch-King and Dragon Lord holdings in the Misty Mountains and Mirkwood had fallen, with the solitary exception of Kala Dulukurth, a remote town in the polar wastes of Northern Middle Earth.

Things went the same way in the south. Corsairs and South Gondor attacked Harad and Quiet Avenger by land and sea, and even a Cardolan navy joined in, so that by turn 7 Harad had lost seven towns. In addition to their major offensives, the FP launched two very successful deep raids by small cavalry armies, one burning a Harad and Quiet Avenger town, the other burning three Easterling towns and a Long Rider camp. The FP successfully targeted our unfortified populations, thus whittling down our economic base for minimal cost.

It was not quite all one-way traffic: Fire King took Minas Ithil whilst Easterling and Long Rider armies captured most of the population centres around the southern shores of the Sea of Rhun. However, these successes were insignificant compared with our losses elsewhere.

**Economy:** The losses to the Dark Side team revenue from all these population losses were so heavy that we very quickly realized that the only way to stay economically viable was to play the market. I took responsibility



for this and I am happy to say that by following my plan the DS team made money *every* turn. If only I could do that on the real stock market I'd be a millionaire by now! It is no exaggeration to say that this economic plan saved some nations from bankruptcy and kept the DS team in the game. We were even able to ride out a double foul-up when on the same turn, Witch-King and Fire King both messed up their economic orders and incurred heavy tax rises!

**Agents:** As if we hadn't enough to contend with in FP armies, we lost Din Ohtar to an enemy assassin (Gildor, I think), after Din had made only one kill himself. Gildor and his mates were a right pain for the rest of the game, dropping in at our major towns and popping the inhabitants. They didn't get it all their own way though - sometimes the dice rolled our way and on at least three occasions Gildor and his mates left our populations with nothing to show for their visit but wounds.

**Artifacts:** We got most of the agent artifacts, and all but one of the spirit artifacts, which Sinda got to first. We chased him all over the map and finally succeeded in stealing it from him, putting it on a Blind Sorcerer navy and dropping it in the Sea of Nurn. The FP did manage to put together a sickness squad (presumably Meriot started with sickness), but this inflicted less damage than Gildor, and on the final turn we killed everyone in it! We DS had three full curse squads operating. We could have formed at least one more but preferred to use the rest of our magics to gather intelligence.

### The mid-game

Having eliminated us from the north (except for remote Kala Dulukurth!) the Free People armies swung their full might against Mordor. The strategic settlement of Thuringwathost fell on turn 9. By now we had dragons joining our armies, and army-killing assassins were coming on stream. Nonetheless, the enemy numbers were such that they stormed Morannon on turn 15 and Minas Ithil on turn 16.

The high point of Free People success was turn 19, when their armies stormed both Durthang and Barad Ungol and burst into the Mordor lowlands.

Any other time, any other game, I would have said that was the time for the Dark Side to concede. Not in this game! Our assassins and cursers slaughtered the FP commanders and that was as far as the FP ever got. **Dragons:** The camping plan was a roaring (sorry!) success, recruiting more dragons for us than in any other game I have seen. At one point the Witch-King had no less than four dragons in his army at Kala Dulukurth, which by the way fought off at least three Free Peoples attacks and stayed in Witch-King hands till game end. We got pretty good not only at recruiting dragons but also in getting them into the armies which most needed them.

Small FP armies kept burning our Misty Mountain camps, but we kept on recamping them, and got the best of the exchange in the end.

**Biggest Unintentional Laugh** was caused by the Elven character Thranduil, who having been appointed dragonslayer by the Free People, duly slew two dragons (to our knowledge), but then got killed by the normally inoffensive Ruingurth!

### The turning point

We lost first Mark and then David to real-world issues. We filled the gaps seamlessly till each of the remaining four players had three nations apiece. Then Laurence suggested that we had had enough of devoting all our resources to defending Mordor. We needed to attack and regain the

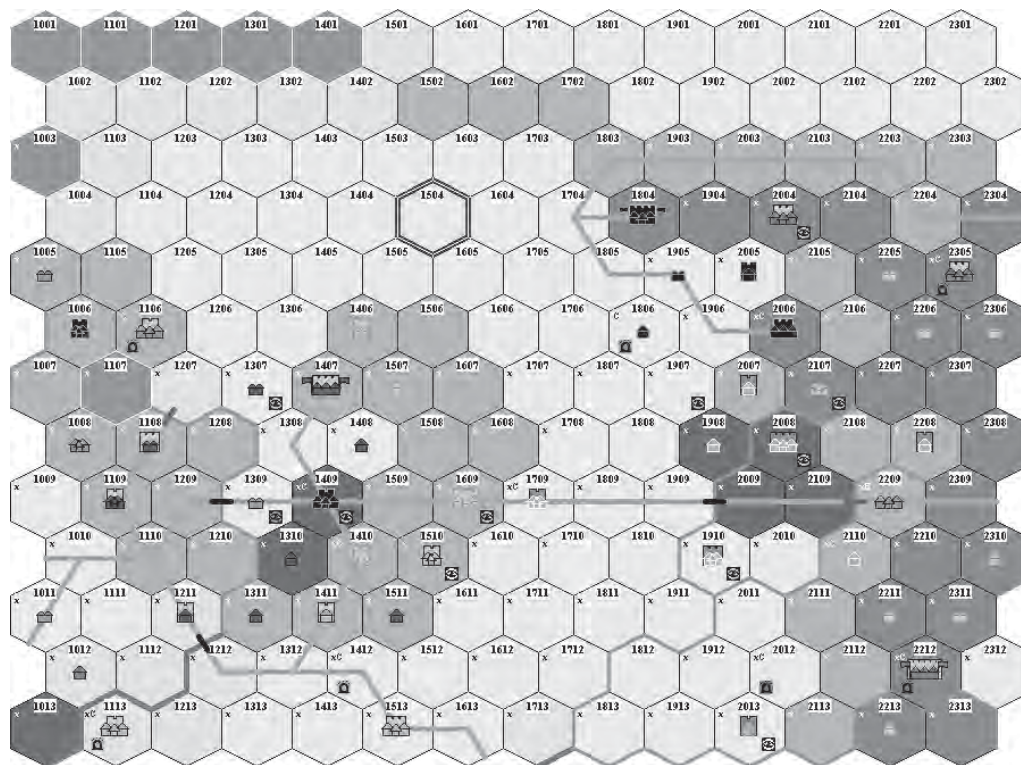
initiative if we were ever going to turn this game around. His plan was to attack Corsairs with all three of our curse squads plus all the agents that could be spared from the defence of Mordor. Harad and Quiet Avenger armies could mop up after we had wiped out all the Corsair characters.

With a few refinements, that was how it worked out. Cursers and assassins wiped out most of the Corsair characters within a couple of turns. On turn 15, Harad/Quiet Avenger armies destroyed the last Corsair armies in a suitably big battle. This was only topped by a climactic storming of the Havens of Umbar by

Quiet Avenger/Harad armies. Meanwhile Haruth, loaded with command artifacts at Ken's suggestion, had threatened three Corsair towns and our emissaries had influenced the rest over to the Dark Side. Corsair-land was in our hands!

It was downhill from there on. Our agents and cursers paralysed first North then South Gondor with bloody slaughter and were about to deliver the same to Eothraim when on turn 22 the FP conceded.

I thank not only my three surviving team-mates for sticking with a game when we were, several times, within a hair's breadth of disaster, but also the Free Peoples who gave us such a close and hard-fought game. Good game!



*Black and white version of a map from the essential Palantir mapping utility (free to download from the ME Games website)*

## The Flagship Challenge!

This article is based on a particular game in which the two teams competed for a virtual cup, the **Flagship Challenge Cup**. This was an experimental idea, which seems to have worked well. We now offer all GMs (including those running convention games) the chance to present such a virtual cup to their victorious players: contact us if you like the idea. And if you play in a winnable game, suggest to your GM or game organiser that he contacts us, too. The more the merrier! Winners will receive a special certificate, a free six month subscription to Flagship and a highly sought-after *Flagship Challenge Cup badge*!

# The Trojan War and GURPS 4th Edition

*LISA FORDHAM reviews these two roleplaying systems ...*

## The Trojan War (*Green Ronin*)

I am not a huge fan of the d20 system, and it would not be my system of choice for a Trojan War setting. Nevertheless, Aaron Rosenberg did an excellent job of convincing me that a d20 **Trojan War** campaign is not only possible, but also fun.

## An epic event

I have always enjoyed the Iliad and the Odyssey, and I'm happy to say that this book captures the flavour of those works perfectly, and I have found myself wanting to run a Trojan War campaign. The setting has far more potential than I would have guessed. A large part of this is because the Trojan War was an epic event in which not one, but many, heroes took part. In his introduction, Rosenberg stresses that the war is about heroes, not ordinary people. This jogged my memory and (after a quick dash to the bookshelf) I can confirm that the one ordinary soldier mentioned by name in the Iliad, is captured by two Greek heroes and killed after he quite understandably tells them everything he knows. All of the other named characters have their moment in the sun, whether Homer chronicled it or not. Better still, from a roleplaying perspective, the Trojan War was not a brief event, lasting as it did for ten years. Its duration provides plenty of space for a well-developed campaign and the events before and after the war also present opportunities for campaigns. Two different cultures, each with a history behind them, clash in an epic battle involving dozens of famous people.

## Does it feel right?

Does the world of the Trojan War fit into the d20 system? While I find the fit odd and awkward in some places, the new classes do seem to fit the world I remember reading about. Want to be a charioteer, mercilessly driving down your enemies? An orator swaying crowds with rhetoric? A seer filled with the power of the gods? All of these and more can be created with the rules in Trojan War. And they feel right. Yes, it can seem a little odd to talk about how often someone in the ancient world can perform a spell within a 24 hour period. However the rules for the magician class, from charging wine and gifts with magic to using amulets and wands, make the setting feel more magical than mechanical, which I heartily approve of. As an aside, if I ever decided to run a Harry Potter game, I would borrow heavily from Trojan War's rules about wands. Player characters in Trojan War should not be the elves, dwarves and other stock fantasy races appropriate to different settings. Trojan War allows two races, humans and children of the gods. These latter are blessed with great physical prowess and charisma, but not with extreme intelligence. I found myself nodding as I read the section on Divine Offspring, for here again, the material reflects its sources. Religion

is also treated appropriately. There is a system for determining a character's Piety. Characters with high piety are more likely to get favourable responses to prayers, while characters with low piety may get destroyed outright by the gods. The gods, like the heroes, are creatures of extremes,

showing one mortal with great favour, while devastating the life of another, often for the pettiest of reasons. During the Trojan War, the gods walked beside mortals on the battlefield, each with his or her own divine agenda. Trojan War discusses the political agenda of the various gods, as well as several options for using (or not using) the gods in play.

## Making the world come to life

So, Trojan War describes the background of the period it covers, the gods and heroes involved in the war, and new character classes, skills, feats, and magic. It also has rules for battle tactics, which cover single warriors, a heroic captain and his unit, chariots, and other aspects of a massive battle that lasted for ten years, but covered only a small physical space. It has statistics for monstrous and wonderful creatures, and for magical and mundane treasures. Characters from this setting were definitely as interested in loot as the stereotypical party of dungeon crawlers, and a well-wrought suit of ordinary armour was a rich treasure indeed. The book provides advice on running various types of campaigns, from those sticking strictly to the events

chronicles by Homer and others to those where the PCs can change the course of history. There are thoughts on epic conventions and omens, plot ideas, and any number of little things which will help a GM make the world of Trojan War come to life.

It helps that the art of Trojan War is beautiful. Men and women are both dressed appropriately for the climate, the period, and their activities. There are a couple of maps, which while not highly detailed, show enough to give readers a handle on the geography of the world. The layout is mercifully clean.

Trojan War is not perfect, but it succeeds in bringing its setting to life within the parameters of the d20 system. It should satisfy both those interested in exploring the world and characters of the period and those who simply want a new setting in which their characters run around looting and pillaging. I recommend Trojan War for anyone who wants to use the setting, whether as a quick change of pace or for a long-term campaign.

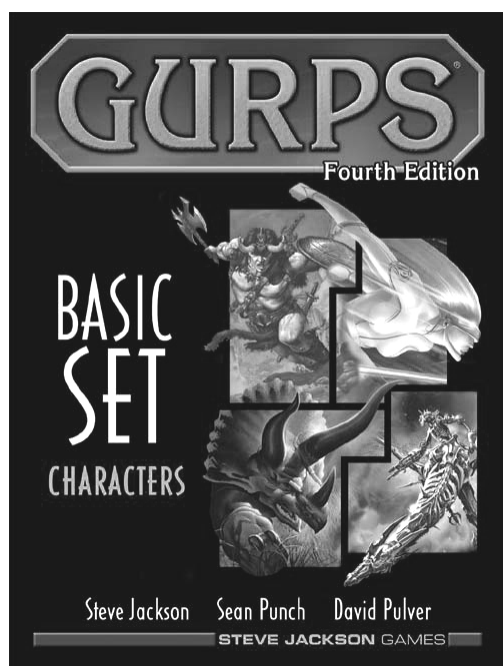
## GURPS 4th Edition (*Steve Jackson Games*)

One of the first thing you may notice when you walk into your friendly local gaming store, is two shiny new additions to the GURPS shelf. They look different from the rest of the works on the shelf, being hard cover and lacking the usual 'Steve Jackson Games' running vertically down the spine.





Yes! That's the ones! You have just found **GURPS Basic Set Characters** and **GURPS Basic Set Campaigns**.



### 'Great! But what is GURPS?'

GURPS is short for Generic Universal Roleplaying System, and is a pre-d20 attempt to create a system of rules that apply to any genre players wish to explore.

### The Characters book

The first new entry in the world of GURPS Fourth Edition is the Characters book. Physically it is a hardcover volume

filled with 336 glossy, full colour pages. The volume seems sturdy and should stand up to the rigors of weekly gaming sessions with aplomb, however it will take some time to see if these perceptions ring true. The price tag for this book was a hefty \$39.95, but I must say it seems to be well within the standard price range for roleplaying materials these days. The overall layout of artwork and text is good (indeed above the industry average). The book contains an accurate and useful table of contents as well as a comprehensive index. The index covers both books in the Basic Set and is found at the back of both books; it is included in my page counts for both volumes; while this is redundant information, the usefulness of having these indexes in both volumes forbids me from railing against this. Chapter headings are clear and do not take up excessive amounts of page space. In addition, each chapter is colour coded, making quick reference easier once you have familiarised yourself with the contents of the book. Artwork is plentiful enough without being intrusive and is of decent quality. Text density is not as great as in past GURPS publications, but still remains above the industry average.

GURPS Basic Set Characters is a clean and shiny new addition to the GURPS line. It does however, fail (much in the same way as the Dungeons and Dragons Players Handbook fails) to be the only book necessary for playing a game using the system. Most of the rules are contained in a separate volume (keep reading, folks). While this book does give the basics for combat and the basic ways in which skills work it fails to address the types of actions the heroic characters enjoyed by gamers everywhere will eventually attempt (or be subjected to). As a guide to creating a character for GURPS, GURPS Basic Set Characters succeeds marvellously. The entire process is well explained and easy to follow. One of the biggest drawbacks seems to be that of too many choices. Character generation can take a long time, especially in group situations when one copy of the book floats around the table, as players browse the lengthy lists of advantages, disadvantages and skills. These drawbacks can be alleviated by a bit of preparation by the Gamemaster: if you're not willing to put in this sort of work, then you probably shouldn't be a GM.

### The Campaigns book

The second volume for GURPS Fourth Edition is titled Campaigns. This book is written primarily for those of us out there interested in running a GURPS adventure or campaign. Physically this book resembles its companion volume in all but page count: at 237 pages it is a considerably smaller piece of work. Steve Jackson Games seems to have acknowledged this as Campaigns is priced five dollars cheaper (\$34.95) than its partner

(all prices are using the manufacturer's suggested retail price). Further enforcing the idea that GURPS Basic Set Fourth Edition was originally intended to be one volume, the layout and design elements are consistent with Characters, and page and chapter numbers pick up where they left off in Characters. The introduction of this book contains an explanation by Steve Jackson as to why the Fourth Edition Basic Set of GURPS has been split into two books and his explanation makes sense (to me at least). I add to his reasoning that the lesson of D20 is that it's often handy to have the player's information in a separate volume. While they are looking up some obscure bonus granted their character by some esoteric skill, I can be flipping through to see exactly what the incubation period is for that nasty disease they picked up while on that 'pleasure planet'.

### Superior to previous editions

Overall, GURPS Fourth Edition is a solid product. As a new edition of an existing game system it does the job of being better than its predecessors. The presentation and organisation of the information given meet or exceed the industry standard. For people unfamiliar with GURPS this product is far superior to previous editions. I feel that this Fourth edition makes the GURPS system more accessible. Certain gamers will undoubtedly dislike the GURPS system: those who favour rules light systems are advised to look at GURPS as a guideline. I've had great success running a series of rules-light sessions using the most basic pieces of the GURPS system. If you didn't understand the GURPS system after reading previous versions, I suggest you give this one a skim: the system is much easier to absorb in its new presentation. If you absolutely hated GURPS in its previous versions, Fourth Edition will probably not change your mind. Speaking as an advocate for the GURPS combat system, I have found that having the players take an active part in the defence of their characters makes them more accepting of receiving damage in combat. This is compared with those systems that roll the character's defensive abilities into a total target number.

GURPS requires supplements only for those gamemasters who are too lazy or time deprived to work up their game worlds from scratch: even the Infinite Worlds campaign setting provided is too minimal to get a gamemaster out of doing a lot of work. If you are one of those game masters who like designing unique game worlds, and don't like game books full of meta-plot then you will definitely enjoy the GURPS system.

Best of all, it's not d20...

## GURPS Supplements

*The Editorial team are particularly fond of the GURPS Supplements. They are generally well researched and written, containing a wealth of material useful for a variety of gaming purposes. So far over 250 different GURPS books have been published, including ...*

**POWERED BY GURPS** Collections of special abilities for characters, ranging from spells (GURPS Grimoire and GURPS Magic), to cinematic kung fu (GURPS Martial Arts), to psychic powers (GURPS Psionics), to divine miracles (GURPS Religion), to super-powers (GURPS Supers).

**POWERED BY GURPS** Detailed design systems for those who prefer to build their own anime fighting machines (GURPS Mecha), robots and cyborgs (GURPS Robots), and vehicles and weapons (GURPS Vehicles).

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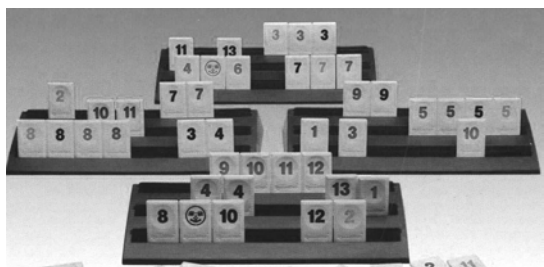
# Holiday Games

*COLIN FORBES played Rummikub, Trivial Pursuit and Munchkin ...*

YOU'VE OPENED the presents, you're stuffed with turkey and the TV is showing *The Sound of Music* for the 999th time ..... There's only one thing to do: rouse Aunt Jane from her gin-induced stupor and drag out the family board games. There's a certain sense of dreaded inevitability about games at Christmas, and yet surely we should be celebrating the one time of year when we can actually get non-gamers to join in our hobby? With that in mind, I present the games I played after the turkey.

## Rummikub

Rummikub is a wonderful game for thinking and strategy. It's not hard to pick up and is very suitable as a family game, but it's a lot of fun, and it potentially challenges a few brain cells.



As the name suggests, this tile game is related to the card game Rummy. The rules are simple: each player takes 14 tiles, and tries

to arrange them into sets of at least three tiles: runs (such as 4-5-6) in a single colour, or groups (eg three 7s) in different colours. These are put down on the table, and the object of the game is to get rid of all the tiles in one's hand. However in order to 'start', each player must have valid sets within his or her hand which total at least 30 (such as three 10s, or - say - three 2s, a 3-4-5 run in one colour, and a 4-5-6 run in another colour). While some players may have such a set or combination initially, it's likely that most won't.

Each player takes it in turn either to put something on the table, or - if you cannot yet start with at least 30, or are unable to put anything down after starting - you pick up a piece from the spare tiles instead. If nobody can start, the game can seem a bit boring at first, as each player simply picks up another piece in turn, but eventually two or three players will be able to put down their starting tiles, and this is where the fun begins!

Once a set of tiles is on the table, they can be used by anyone else, if possible, to help them get rid of their own tiles. So, for instance, if player A has put down a run of black 5-6-7, and player B, who goes next, has in his hand a black 4 and a black 8, he can add these to the 5-6-7 to make a run of five tiles. If player C, who follows, has in her hand a red 8 and a yellow 8, she can then *remove* the black 8 from the run, and put it with her own pair to put down a set of three 8s. So long as there are at least three remaining in each set of tiles on the table, they can be moved around and manipulated as much as the players want.

In addition, there are two 'wild tiles' (or Jokers) which can be substituted for any other tile - so if a player has an 11 and a 13 in the same colour, the wild tile can be put down between them, as the 12. Another player who has the 12 can swap this in when his turn comes, and must then use the wild tile himself in some other way.

The first person to get rid of his tiles has won the round; each other player sums the tiles left in his or her hand, and counts that as a negative

score against themselves. The person who won then adds the total of tiles left in all the other players' hands to his own score. So if, for instance, player A manages to win, while player B is left with a 12 and a 3 in his hand, and player C is left with a 6, a 9 and an 11 in her hand, then player B scores minus 15, player C scores minus 26, and player A scores plus 41 (ie 26 + 15). If several rounds are played, a negative score can easily be wiped out by one player winning early in the game, leaving the other players with high scoring hands that count against them, but are added to the winner's current score.

This game is ideal for four players, and works quite well with three or five players; however for more than five it's best to combine two sets, or it's likely that the spare tiles will run out. With two players it is possible, but not very interesting! Mathematical skill is not really needed, so fairly young children can play this game - however they may need some help, since the potential manipulation of pieces around the table can be fairly complicated. It depends how confident the child is, and what kind of games they play already. A competent chess player would probably have no problems!

While there is obviously some luck in the drawing of the tiles, there is significant skill which increases with practice. I played the game for the first time at the in-laws this Christmas. I'm ashamed to say that I won the first game with a huge slice of luck, but order was restored when I lost the next one hopelessly. However, by the third and fourth games I was beginning to have enough confidence to plan strategies and prospered accordingly.

If you enjoy a relaxing evening with time to chat and something to focus on which requires some concentration, I can highly recommend Rummikub. If it's new to you, or to anyone else, it's best to play an 'open' round first, where everyone can see everyone else's hands, and help or explanations can be given while playing.

I've would suggest that this game is good value for money, because it's certainly a game that can be played over and over again, for many years. However I do think the commercial version is over-priced for what it is; I haven't seen it at less than £19.99 in any shops, and after all you could play the same game with nothing but two packs of cards. However, there is also a travel version which is usually around £7.99 new, and perfectly playable. If you have a full-sized version and a travel version, this is ideal for playing with more than five players as it's easy to sort the pieces out by size afterwards.

## Trivial Pursuit

**Trivial Pursuit** is one of those rarest of games. Not just a boardgame, but a cultural icon. A product of its time (the 80s) when entrepreneurial spirit could get you everything. It must have had something to it, because it launched a thousand, generally inferior, imitators.

The game is played with a board with tracks shaped like the spokes and rim of a wheel. Each player (or team) has one carrier which moves around the board with the roll of the dice, and tries to fill the carrier with coloured wedges of 'pie', each representing a successful answer to a particular category of question corresponding to the 'pie' colour. In order to earn the 'pie' you must answer the question when on the specially marked space on the board. All other squares on the board also have a colour



## Holiday Games at a glance

**Rummikub:** Tomy Games, £14.99 from [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

**Trivial Pursuit:** Hasbro, priced about £30, check locally!

**Munchkin:** Steve Jackson Games, £11.75 from [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



corresponding to a particular category. On landing on a square, you must answer a question in that category in order to continue your turn. Failure to answer correctly means your turn is over.

The game has several strengths. Firstly, it is easy to play and learn (although not always easy to answer the questions). Secondly, given the number of question cards that come with the game it is unlikely that you'll come across repeat questions without very extensive playing. Thirdly, it is a great party game and lends itself well to be played in teams.

The main downside of the game is that the questions are quite date and region specific. An Australian playing with Americans and an 'American' version of Trivial Pursuit will have great difficulty (and vice versa) because of the cultural bias of the questions. Similarly, players born in the eighties or later would struggle with the original question set, since it takes for granted knowledge from before they were born. This is obviated somewhat by the constant new editions being brought out, but that means buying the new editions. Another minor flaw is that one team will often have a good run, getting lots of 'easy' questions (ie any that they can answer) and getting a lot of play, while one or more other teams will get lots of 'difficult' questions and only get short turns. This can get a bit frustrating, especially when you know all the other team's answers. Other niggles include just how strict to be with the answers. How close is good enough? Some questions are ambiguous, vague or downright wrong. One unexpected problem we had at Christmas was that we were playing with a brand new set. For years we've been playing a much older version, and of course we've got used to many of the questions. As a result, there were times when our ignorance was painfully exposed - we couldn't rely on recollecting the answers from previous games to make us look intelligent.

In the scheme of things, though, these are minor quibbles to a very approachable and generally fun game. If you haven't had a dinner party and had some Trivial Pursuits after, well, where have you been for the last twenty years?

### Munchkin

**Munchkin** is a Must Have for anyone who enjoys tabletop roleplaying games for their fun value and doesn't take them too seriously. Munchkin's a card game that pokes fun at RPGs like D&D - the hack 'n slash dungeon

crawl variety. Hell, the tagline says it all:

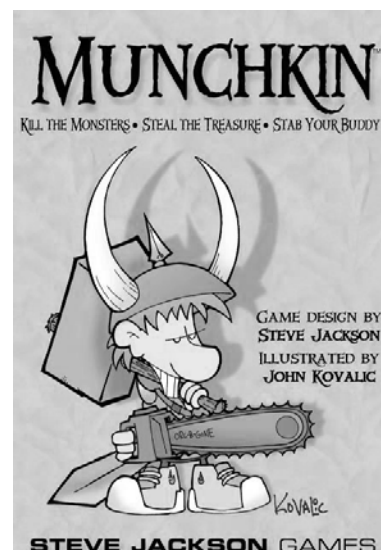
*'Kill The Monsters \* Steal The Treasure \* Stab Your Buddy'*

In Munchkin, you kill monsters and gain levels to get to level 10 and win. As you play and kill, you gain treasure that you can use for bonuses, trade with other players, or sell to buy more levels. You can change your race (human to start, also elf, dwarf or halfling) and class (wizard, thief, warrior or cleric) all through play, and cause general chaos and mayhem. The other players can play cards to screw you over left and right, which is where the big fun in this game is.

The rules are even munchkiny. There are lines in the rules like *'start the game by rolling dice and arguing over this sentence and if a word is missing any meaning'*. They even say you can cheat, as long as you're not caught! And the cards are just hilariously drawn and worded. You'll have so much fun stabbing your friends!

Some of the inspiration for the game came from the book also by Steve Jackson Games titled *The Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming*. There's a lot of gags in this game, such as the monster 'Gazebo' (you must face the gazebo alone!). I feel that it is worth the somewhat steep recommended price of £14.99.

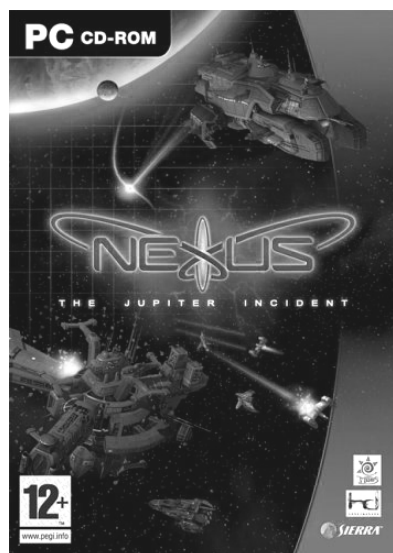
All sorts of expansions are available: Unnatural Axe, Clerical Errors, Munchkin Bites (a vampire version), Star Munchkin - and the list keeps on growing. This is a great party game with loads of laughs. You'll almost certainly end up making new in-jokes and references in your group when you play this game, but isn't that partly what we all love about gaming?



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# Space and Vampires

*GLOBETROTTER reviews two PC Games - Nexus: The Jupiter Incident and Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines*



## Nexus: The Jupiter Incident

SPACE IS so much more interesting now: gone are the little white dots on a black background, now it's stunning nebulae and galaxies swirling in the vast distances. Which brings us to **Nexus: The Jupiter Incident**, a space based action/strategy title from *Sierra (Vivendi Universal)* and *Mithis*.

The storyline for Nexus is detailed, and when you start the game you are treated to an FMV sequence explaining the story so far. You also get short FMV shorts at various other parts of the game moving the story along. For the mission

briefing you get a fly-by type view of the area of space you are dealing with, along with an audio explanation of what needs to be done.

The game itself will almost certainly bring about thoughts of the similarities with **Homeworld 2** and it's definitely got aspects there: the main one of course is that it's all space based strategy. While there are those match-ups, the games are different. Nexus takes the strategy genre into space in a slightly better way than Homeworld, with great gameplay and the sound effects that work a lot better.

The meat of Nexus: The Jupiter Incident is your command of either a single ship or of a fleet. From arming the ship to giving orders, the controls are simple (in their most basic) but for some missions you need to figure on using the more complicated orders. For most of the time you are commander: you tell which unit to attack and the target, then the AI captains carry this out. If you want to take a more indepth role in the action, you can add more detailed instructions. You can give orders to target individual sub-systems in the enemy ship, like weapons or engines.

Your weapons, and indeed those of your enemies, have varying accuracy and type. As a rule the AI captains will assign a weapons platform to attack, but in this game you also are able to choose a weapon manually and assign an individual target. The fact is that the ships in this game are less specialist than in other titles, so care has to be taken when fitting out the ships. Prior to the missions starting you can access the equipment screen for your ship/fleet: here you can upgrade, or swap about using 'resource points' to purchase weapons or equipment. Depending on the difficulty level chosen, repairs can also be requested, of either the hull or the ship's devices. This adds another angle which adds to the all-round feel of Nexus.

## Technical Stuff

The graphics for this title are about what you come to expect from the space-based strategy titles now: the backgrounds look impressive and really do try to show the vastness of space. Other rather nice aspects are noticeable when you get close to the engines on any large ship: instead of the usual thruster jets out of the back, Mithis have really tried to give the impression of the size of these ships. With this also, the power that the power engines would need to have to shift this mass: the screen shakes and the rather impressive rumble from the engines when fired, along with the smaller manoeuvring thrusters. Not only all that, but for the first time that I've noticed at least, the huge stencilled ship name is plastered on the side of the hull. Sounds are, for a strategy title like Nexus, rather good: as should befit the graphical nature, the engines sound meaty and show the power very well; the other effects, laser blasts and other weaponry, all sound just like you think they should. The most impressive part of the game, though, is in the voice acting. Now this is usually the point where I harangue the production group for either hiring half-assed voice actors or script writers or, in more than a few cases, both! Not with Nexus: The Jupiter Incident though, for the most part the voice acting is very good, scripting too, amazing!

## Missing that 'little something'

So what about the gripes? Well, there are a few. Because you start out with a single ship and you are just the commander, things can feel rather, simple, and mostly you feel like you should be doing more for the game. Later in the game you can feel frustrated when you try to issue orders just to have your captain acknowledge and then apparently ignore the orders (usually when ordering attacks, rather than move orders). So while Nexus is a pretty good title, all told there are a few problems.

Are there enough problems to avoid this title, though? Well, that depends on whether or not this is really the type of game you enjoy. If you liked the Homeworld series then you should like Nexus too, not so much of the fleet building involved, but along similar lines. If however you are just out to find something new, perhaps trying out the genre then, well, maybe you would be better off renting if possible, maybe making sure returns are an option. Nexus: The Jupiter Incident isn't for everybody, since there is just that 'little something' missing that would have made this a *great* game, but so long as you have the system specs to do the game justice it's certainly one for the Space-Based Strategy fan.

## Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines

Since it was first announced, fans of the first Vampire: The Masquerade game, Redemption, and players of the table top rpg Vampire: The Masquerade have been awaiting the release of **Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines**. Having played Redemption, I had high hopes for Bloodlines. There were several flaws I found in the first game, and hoped that they would be fixed in the sequel. For the most part my concerns were answered, though.

Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines is set in the Vampire universe, a world filled with gothic culture, and political intrigue. For those who aren't familiar with the game, Vampire the Masquerade is not about going out into the night and sucking the blood of victims. Sure, vampires need blood to survive, but there is much, much more depth to all of the stereotypes of the vampire world. It is about taking the role of a vampire, in most cases, who has just been embraced, or been made a vampire, and learning the ways of the kindred. You have to learn how to control the beast, uphold the masquerade, interact with other kindred, and live by the rules set forth by your clan.

## Game details at a glance

### Nexus: The Jupiter Incident

from Sierra Games, available for £26.99 at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

### Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines

from Activision, available for £19.99 at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)



Before you are able to play the game, you first have to generate your character. There are a couple ways that you can do this. The first way, which inexperienced players are encouraged to use, is to answer a series of questions about how you would like to play the game, and the computer selects a clan for you, assigns you your disciplines and stats. After they have generated your character, you are free to make as many changes as you see fit. The other option that you have, is to start from scratch and generate a character on your own, first picking whether you want to be a male or female, then choosing a clan. You are only able to choose clans that belong to the Camarilla, a society of 'good vampires'. This is one aspect of the game that I like better than *Redemption*. In *Redemption*, you only have the option of being embraced by your Brujah sire. In *Bloodlines*, you have the option of being a Brujah, a clan comprised mainly of rebels, Gangrel, who pride themselves as being 'animal like', Malkavian, who are, to put it blunt, insane, Nosferatu, whose facial features have been distorted by their embrace, Toreador, the artists of the vampire world, the Tremere (who I chose to play as): they are what you would call the 'mages' of the vampire world, and the Ventrue. These latter are the political masterminds of the Camarilla.

### Gameplay

After you have chosen your clan, you have to assign points to your stats and traits. There are several ways to make a character. You can make them good at melee fighting, or good with firearms. You can also make them a stealthy computer hacker, or a Rambo-like gunner who breaks the door down, shoots first, and asks questions later. Based on what clan you chose, you will have certain disciplines you can pick from. Being a Tremere, I can't think of how many times the Purge spell has saved me in a situation where I am up against a number of enemies. This skill causes all those in a given radius to become deadly ill, and begin to vomit blood. This gives you enough time to gun down several of them at a time.

After you have created your character, the game finally begins. The game starts in a bedroom, where you hear the sounds of a woman embracing you. In vampire law, it is illegal for one vampire to embrace a human without approval of the prince of the city, which is the situation you are faced with. After the embrace, the scene switches to what appears to be some sort of auditorium. There is a man in a suit talking to a group of vampires about you and your sire. You are both tied up, and things aren't looking very good. The first decision they make is to execute your sire. Prince La Croix is trying to decide what to do with you, when another vampire speaks up and stands up for you. The prince decides to let you live, and gives you orders to go to Santa Monica. Before you are able to leave, you are ambushed by what is believed to be a Sabbat raid. The Sabbat are the 'evil' sect of vampires. They do not follow the masquerade, and make every effort to expose who they are.

To make a long story short, you meet up with a Brujah named Jack who helps you out of the situation, and shows you the ropes. The tutorial is optional, but by doing it, you get two experience points and a free set of lock picks. The story has several comical elements to it, especially when you deal with Malkavians. I won't spoil the fun, but believe me, it's sure entertaining to watch that aspect of the story unfold. Some of the characters you encounter along the way are very memorable. You come in contact with a seductive school girl vampire, a rebellious Brujah named Jack, and an Ed Gein wannabe, just to name a few. Another fun moment in the game is when you're in a club and you have the option to dance. To say the least, it's funny. Also, some of the conversations are down right hilarious.

The game itself plays fairly smoothly. Happily you are not restricted to playing the game in any set way. You can go through all of the missions,

and shoot everyone that you have to get rid of, you can sneak around and avoid killing to achieve your objectives, or you could try to talk your way out of various conflicts that you encounter. Although these different options exist, they aren't done to the extent that they could have been. You are pretty much encouraged to shoot every enemy that you encounter. In fact, it is a big mistake if you don't invest a good amount of experience in firearms, as later on in the game, melee weapons don't cut it. Which brings me to one flaw I found early on in the game. Firearms don't do as much damage as you would think they would. I've found myself in situations where I am up against three or four men, all armed with guns, and I shoot them in the head, and they don't die. It takes two sometimes three head shots to kill your enemy, which when you're up against a lot of enemies, can really be a drag. I've even shot someone in the head with a shotgun and had them stay alive.

The first person shooter/role playing game aspect of the game is very appealing to some players, but others don't like it as much. Personally, I enjoy being able to switch from third to first person view. When you are wielding a firearm it's best to stay in first person; however, you are forced to be in third person when using a melee weapon. Chances are, if you like the way *Morrowind* or *Deus Ex: Invisible War* plays, you will like this game.

One thing I've noticed, is that the game plays a lot like *Deus Ex: Invisible War* - no bad thing, in my view. Get used to the fact that you may not always have enough money to buy ammunition. This is by no means a flaw in the game, it just takes a bit of getting used to. A possible glitch is that you cannot hide in dumpsters. I had accidentally fired my gun after saving my game, which attracted the attention of the police. I was running and saw a dumpster in an alley, ran and tried to jump in, but instead I ended up standing on top of it. Not good ... not good at all!

### Technical stuff

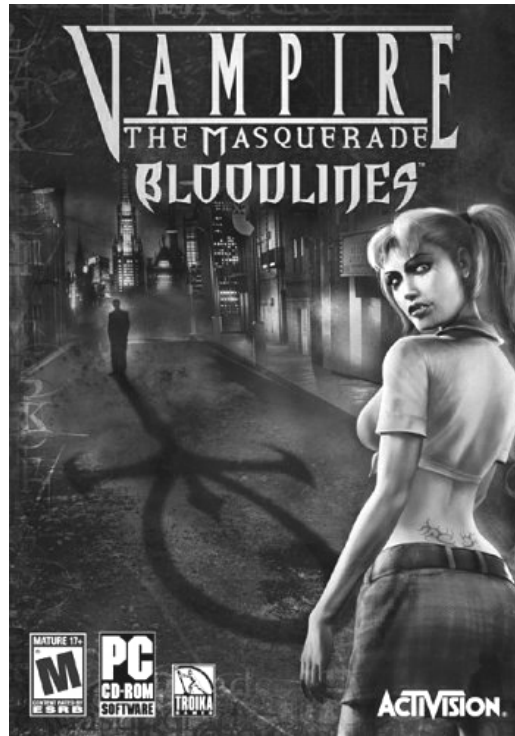
This game utilises the *Half-Life 2* engine, which I believe to be the best engine on the market. Although the graphics pale in comparison to *Half*

*Life 2*, they are still very good. The eyes of the characters look extremely life-like. Although the lip movements do not sync up with the actual speaking, it is pretty close. The textures are somewhat rough at times, but they could be worse. The sound is one aspect of the game that I absolutely love. The music is completely fitting during the different levels, especially the little piano songs you hear while in the ocean house. All in all, the sound adds a lot of atmosphere to the game. I do have one complaint about the music. When you go into clubs, the music at first seems really cool, but there just isn't enough of it, and you get the same short loop over and over again. Madness ensues soon afterwards.

### Rewarding

I find *Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines* to be a fitting sequel to *Redemption*. Although the story may not as good, in fact, not even close to as good as *Redemption*, the game play is much better, and in fact is a fine example of what *Vampire: The Masquerade* is all about, providing an in-depth look to White Wolf's *World of Darkness*. There is a lot more strategy involved than simply running in and shooting everything in sight. This is very much a game which rewards careful planning. Oh, and don't be afraid to learn through trial and error. I must hold my hand up here and say that I made more liberal use of the 'Save Game' feature than usual.

This sort of game often runs foul of labelling and game genre likes and dislikes. I'm a fan of a wide range of game types, but I've also found that friends who like first person shooters rather enjoyed *Vampire*. Fans of run and gun shooters like *Battlefield 1942* seem less likely to get into this, but I'd suggest giving it a shot anyway: you never know!



# Master of the Dugout

*DAVID BLAIR tries this new football game ...*

IT IS A LITTLE while since I had the pleasure of reviewing a football PBeM, so I was delighted when Carol asked me to join this little number and report back.

The shortened title of **Master of the Dugout**, MOTD, is instantly recognisable, to British fans at least, as Match Of The Day - seems to me to be a shrewd piece of planning.

MOTD spawns from Freedom Soccer (whose owner and writer is Steve Delaney), which ran as a PBM from 1990-93, and in another form as a PBeM up till 1997. It then underwent a major rewrite and surfaced in October last year in its present form. Currently run by Andy and Cara under their *Mindless Games* banner, it is not completely finished, but it shouldn't be long till it is resplendent in all its undoubted glory. The game can be played by email, post or by disc - I chose the first named route.

Once the software is downloaded into a Word folder, something that takes no time at all if you have Broadband, you are ready to go. Doing a turn only requires opening the folder, taking time to write up your tactics etc and then emailing the saved turn off to the GMs. Then once a week you will download the two files needed to update your game and off you go again. Yes, it is that simple.

MOTD's flagship League is the English Premiership, where entrance is gained only through competition and promotion - you need to prove yourself in a lower division. A nice concept in that you don't get to start at the top with all the best facilities and players, but work towards achieving them. Having said that, there are chances to join in a Scottish, French, Italian or German Championship, as long as you are also looking after an English team, so the variety of teams and set ups is huge. My thinking is that as the team names are fictitious it really doesn't matter what the division is called. A total of 180 teams are currently available to manage in MOTD at it stands, although the options are there to increase the number and/or the size of each league should there be a need to.

## Information - and decisions

So what do you get for your money in this game? Quite a bit is the answer.

Having selected a non-managed team in a lower division, I began by re-naming it after my local town. What I did notice right away is that most teams are not swamped with 30-something players to win those important fixtures - this is not Chelsea or Arsenal, you know. I started with three Goalkeepers, four Defenders, three Midfielders, and five Forwards. When your squad totals only 15 players, it does not allow a manager too many choices of formations to play with. Another option is to create a team from scratch, and include player names selected by yourself, using a system of awarding values for each member's skills in their allocated position. In addition you have a number of points to award to your coaches, merchandising, facilities etc and as long as the totals in both tasks does not exceed the limits shown, you can adjust to your heart's content. I never pick the Zidanes and Ronaldos of this world in a fantasy team set up - I personalise it with my friends, relations and work colleagues etc. That way

they seem more real to you and you tend to take more care with their development.

Once you have received your team and unzipped it to the folder, you can open up the Main page and survey your Club details. There are opportunities for managers to customise their Shirt and Club badge graphics - nice personal touch to bring in your family coat of arms, along with your real club's colours.

Down the left-hand side are your coaches' ability ratings - eg a midfield coach of say an 8 rating can coach any midfielder in any part of his game up to the 8 (but no more). Each team has four coaches to cover Goalkeepers, Defence, Midfield and Attack. In addition every team is equipped with a Physio, Scout, Groundsman and a Marketing person (Equal Opportunities here), all given a maximum rating which will have a bearing on your team's progress. Completing that side is the stadium name, ground maximum capacity, number of facilities, progress on extending the stadium capacity, and a record of games played, average gates with potential crowd, and number of season ticket holders. There is even a crowd rating which indicates your level of support, in my case a low one of 3 which needs to be addressed quickly if I aim to bring in better crowds, which in turn helps to increase gate receipts.

Basically these are fixed items, whilst the right side items tend to be the action ones. For example actions that can be done include changing the gate money, sponsorship, merchandising items (to increase the club turnover), facility and/or capacity increasing, and even having a little bet to try to increase the funds to get that elusive striker.

Now, down the middle are the eight boxes most used in this game: well they were with me! There is a Load Turn icon that spurts everything that's happened from the previous week, and a News button that gives you the results of all your projected actions from the last turn. Preferences are basically how much and in which way you wish to get your various news items, and Last Week goes through all the previous week's games, crowds, transfers etc. The Scouting icon is an important one in that it gives you access to every team's players and especially a squad known affectionately as CRAP (Care and Rehabilitation of Average Players). Not so much a team, as they don't play matches, but a very approachable bunch that you can scout with a view to securing a bargain and consequently boosting your average team's results. Conversely you can sell off some of your own 'has-beens' or 'never-will-be' players to CRAP, to generate some cash for improving your team's position.

Not a problem to me: I started with a balance of around 19 million, so I could afford to spend some money - just as well, as the game takes a cut of any team's cash if they have a balance over five million. So much for thrift in this game! Under pain of a large fine you do not put in a transfer bid for a player in a managed team - better to talk to the owner first in these cases. I actually bought a defender and a midfielder from the CRAP squad - there are dozens to go for, and so far they have got me two league wins, two draws and fourth place. If only Bertie Vogts had asked me to help him, Scotland might well be in the low 20s instead of today's 86th place. Did I mention that 35 year olds taken from CRAP are free and will remain till the end of the season? Very nice when you find you have no money for a youngster and you can pad out the team till you can afford the next Rooney.

Scouting takes the form of assessing any player's details, amongst which is a rating telling you how 'easy' or otherwise it should be to persuade him to join you. Players are rated in normal attributes such as passing, tackling, heading and some other skills important to bring the right blend to the team such as creativity, flair, strength, dribble, shooting, control. Contracts are arranged in months with an option to provide a 'sweetener' to help him make the correct decision.

An interesting icon is the Match Viewer, which allows you to watch

## Master of the Dugout at a glance

A football management game from *Mindless Games* with weekly turns, playable by email (£1.50 per turn), disc (£2) or post (£2.50). There's an introductory offer of four weeks free play. Contact Mindless Games at the address in *Galactic View*, or by web or email at:

[www.motd.mindlessworld.net](http://www.motd.mindlessworld.net)  
[motd@mindlessworld.net](mailto:motd@mindlessworld.net)



a text version of your game (or any others of your choosing) which can be regulated to run as fast or as slow as you want. A little extra here is that when a shot comes in, the text seems to slow down, adding a couple of lines of dots and then (in what sometimes feels like minutes, but in fact is only a large pause) comes up with the result. All the time you do tend to hold your breath wondering if you have made the breakthrough or conversely lost a possible three points. The viewer also adds in extra information alongside the play by play, such as a new weighting of strength due to substitutions or injuries, and changes of formations for both teams. Of course it might be simpler just to view your score in the Last Week box, but this way the excitement and tension builds up as the minutes tick by. One thing I have noticed is that there are not a lot of goals in the game, so should you ever go two goals in front, my money is on that at least a draw is safe and most probably a win is on the cards. It's worked for me with 2-0, 2-1, 1-1, 1-0, and 0-0 scorelines to date - the 1-0 was a pre-season friendly.

The penultimate icon is the Squad Actions which brings up the players' screen. Here you can train any player up to the level of your coach, so with four coaches it ensures that one player in each of the four positions (GK, Def, Mid, Att) can receive some form of coaching. In addition your Physio can treat players up to his level: a good idea this as if he is rated 7 and the player's injury is 11, it lets you know he will take two weeks to recover. Now if only your Physio had had a 12...

#### Players with personality

Players in MOTD have personalities and all have an aggression rating (the higher the rating, the more likely to be in trouble with the lad in the middle with the guide dog). One player a week can have a 1-to-1 chat with the coach who can raise or lower his aggression factor, or perhaps give a 'bonus' to make him play better. The same coach can work out why a player is unhappy, drop him to the reserves if he is under performing, spot potential in a player, learn about a possible positional change the player may be suitable for and ask a player to learn to blend with others in the same position. All players in this game have obvious talents but also some hidden ones - a coach's chat will bring out any player's best hidden one. This same coach can attempt to get a suspended player off by appealing to the powers that be, but there is a risk here. If you win, he is declared free from the suspension and you get compensation, but if you lose the appeal it will cost the club £1m and the miscreant gets a further week.

The Fixtures icon is used to prepare for the upcoming match and has two screens to itself to ensure that your lot take the field with the correct tactics and in the right formation and lineup.

#### Choosing tactics

I go to the pitch first (Pitch Grid is the official terminology), where my squad is on the left, and I simply pick up a player with the mouse and 'lay' him on the field of play just where I think he should be for the upcoming fixture. When selected, the player's skills, goals to date and personal details - along with a cartoon picture to bring him to life - are displayed on screen. You place a couple of substitutes as well - only two at the moment but future plans will expand that number. All done, and it is back to the Fixtures page where the tactics are placed and matches won or lost. With drop down menus you choose the formation to start with, along with changes to the formation assuming you are leading, drawing or slipping behind. Aggression is chosen - how hard you wish your lads to go into the opposition - and that can be different for defence, midfield or attack. Let's put a 1 for each: can't afford suspensions with the few players at my disposal. Substitutions are based on times and events, as in many games, but the drop down menu makes the whole operation that much easier and faster.

The tactics options are many and varied: suffice to say that almost any situation you could imagine is catered for here. A couple of examples include Sardines - this is a balanced formation of 442 or 352 leaning towards the defensive but from a midfield angle, which requires good tackling midfielders and will smother the opposition's midfield. Then there is the Waiting Game tactic which requires a 433 or 442 formation with no key players, because the principle is that for 60 minutes the team will play amongst themselves, conserving energy, with most of the team behind the ball; then for the remaining 30 minutes the team steps up into an attacking

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mode, with overlapping full backs, and runs from the midfield; the idea being to wear out a tired opponent, and usually this is worth a goal at least - excellent when looking for an away goal in a Cup tie. These are two tactics out of a total of 22, so devotees of purely defensive set ups, or alternatively those who subscribe to 'up and at 'em' football need have no fear, as all situations are covered.

At any time during your turn you can save your current work, and when you come back it re-opens at the last piece you did. So no need to complete the whole turn in one go. Andy was telling me that soon to be added to the game will be an Honours list for the Club, complete historical stats on a team's players by analysis of match reports, an opportunity for each player to buy and sell shares as each club will have a shares listing - this has been done in other games I have played and does allow for some managers to buy up shares in their own and opponents' clubs and make money should they become successful. Of course, share prices can go down as well as up...

In addition to the League matches, each league has its own League Cup, with an Elite Cup for each country. Then there is the European dream with a 32 team European Cup, a Cup Winners' Cup (32 teams), a UEFA Cup (64 teams) and a World Club Cup (512 teams) - all one leg knockout ties. A World Cup with group qualification and straight knockout in the Finals is run every year in MOTD, all of which provides some light relief from the bread and butter of league matches.

#### Summing up

The game is addictive, of that there is no doubt, and with the variety in tactics, players' unseen skills, and the vast array of on-screen information and choices to make, you must have a look at this one. Turns are £1-50 (email), £2-00 (play by disc), and £2-50 (postal). Games are played weekly on a Tuesday with an option to play a friendly at the weekend for half price.

Still not convinced enough to try it? Okay then, Andy and Cara are offering four weeks free play, which will includes any friendly matches played during that time. Contact them on [www.motd.mindlessworld.net](http://www.motd.mindlessworld.net) or by email to [motd@mindlessworld.net](mailto:motd@mindlessworld.net)

# Warhammer FRP

*JOHN FOODY describes this grim world of perilous adventure ...*

**Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (WFRP)** is, to my mind, the greatest fantasy roleplaying game - certainly the best British one. It is so good that I have spent many years producing *Warpstone*, a fanzine dedicated to the game. Rightly placed in the sub-genre Dark Fantasy, to many it can appear to be simply a poor man's D&D. Which oddly enough, is sort of where it started...

## 1986 and all that

WFRP has been in and out of print for nearly twenty years, but as I write a second edition is in the works. First released in 1986 by *Games Workshop*, based in the world of its tabletop fantasy battle game, Warhammer, it had all the elements you would expect to see from a fantasy RPG of the time. Indeed, Games Workshop had commissioned the game as a competitor to D&D. Although it was strongly supported the game was eventually dropped, surviving for a while under the *Flame Publications* imprint. After the first of the game's two fallow periods, *Hogshead Publishing* took up the mantle. Hogshead produced some good books but struggled to get new material out and in 2002, after eight years, the rights reverted to Games Workshop. Then in 2004, after months of speculation, *Black Industries*, part of Games Workshop, in partnership with renowned D20 company *Green Ronin*, announced they were working on a new version for Spring 2005.

What was it about WFRP that has allowed it to survive through so much turmoil? Simply, it is the background - a renaissance setting with fantasy edges. The rules firmly set the groundwork. Instead of character classes, PCs follow careers. These immediately set the atmosphere, telling us the world is populated with rat-catchers, bodyguards, beggars and servants alongside Wizards and Templars. Combat is dangerous; a stray arrow can kill the most heroic of knights, and characters can, in homage to Call of Cthulhu, go insane from the horrors of the world. Fate Points, a blessing of the Gods that allows characters to escape certain death, balanced the game's lethal edge a little.

Still, the rules are flawed in many places. The magic system, firmly based in the wargame, is often derided and many other rules don't quite work. Nevertheless, it does all hang together. What the rules do is invoke the dangers of the world; whether through combat, the corruption of dealing with forbidden magic or dying painfully from infected wounds.

One of the strongest aspects of the main rulebook was that it contained everything needed to play the game including background on the gods, the world and the creatures inhabiting it. WFRP's main setting is the European-



*Map of the Forest of Lorens from the WFRP game world*

like Old World, and more specifically The Empire, a large Germanic-style country of dark forests and city states ruled by a feeble Emperor. It is threatened from without by Goblins and the forces of Chaos, and from within by worshippers of the forbidden gods.

## Shadows

From the beginning the game felt different but it was the first parts of the famous *The Enemy Within* campaign that really developed the background, especially The Empire. Warhammer was always a hotchpotch of ideas stolen from various sources (Tolkein, Moorcock, Glorantha etc.) and mixed into something new. *Shadows over Bögenhafen* was a Call of Cthulhu-inspired investigative scenario. *Death on the Reik*, opened up the world and really brought it to life, while *Power Behind the Throne*, brought us a political scenario where socialising would get you further than fighting. Although the campaign was brought to a conclusion with *Something Rotten in Kislev* and *Empire in Flames*, it never really reached the earlier heights.

What *The Enemy Within* really showed was that the WFRP wasn't constrained by the setting or rules. WFRP excels in background and scenarios of depth. Little is black and white, and players often had to make the best of bad choices. The world hated the PCs and soon it would be mutual. WFRP's world felt like it wasn't just there for the PCs, it lived on without them.

## Warhammer FRP at a glance

### John Foody lists his Magnificent Seven

Now out of print, and likely to remain so for some time, here are the essential first edition books if you can't wait a few months until the second edition.

*WFRP*: The main rulebook. Everything needed to play the game.

*The Enemy Within / Shadows over Bögenhafen*: The start of the classic campaign and background on The Empire, the main WFRP setting.

*Death on the Reik*: Travelling through the heartland of The Empire.

*Power behind the Throne*: Classic city-based investigation scenario.

*Apocrypha Now*: Reprints the best of the White Dwarf material and throws in some new articles.

*Marienburg: Sold Down the River*: Narrowly beating *Middenheim*:

*City of Chaos* to the title of best WFRP city sourcebook.

*Warpstone*: The long running WFRP fanzine



Much of the game's atmosphere is based on the sense of corruption that pervades the setting. This often takes the form of Chaos, the game's great enemy. Fear and paranoia of Chaos is everywhere. At its crudest Chaos is Beastmen rampaging through the forests but there is a more subtle edge. Those that worship Chaos sell their souls for power, wealth or pleasure but it comes with a price. More often that not, their bodies and minds become warped and mutated. Even the innocent can suffer - a baby may be born mutated, a target for priests and witch-hunters. On whose side will the PCs stand when authorities come for the baby and its mother?

Still, it isn't all grim. A broad streak of, often schoolboy and very '80s, humour, runs through WFRP from Empress Magritta taking power in 1979 (Imperial Calendar) to the Barony of Saponatheim to the Dwarf language Khazalid. It would be true to say that this side of the game has diminished over the years.

Many of the smaller details are among the strongest parts of the game. Firearms, unreliable ones at that, add an atmospheric edge to the choice of weapons. Cod-German is everywhere; annoying some but enhancing the atmosphere of the setting. Then there are the Skaven, WFRP's favourite creature; ratmen who plot and scheme to rule the world.

To my mind, and many will disagree, classic WFRP is a very low fantasy game. The world is mean and horrible, the people oppressed by the nobility and the churches, trying to scrape a living. The fantasy elements are strongly present but they gnaw at the edges. Magic is scarce but feared and deadly. Chaos is a threat, but mostly from its human followers formed into secret societies and cults.

#### Doomstones and other misadventures

The other WFRP campaign is *Doomstones*, largely converted (as was *Power Behind the Throne*) from D&D scenarios. Many loathe it, but it has its defenders. Certainly it is different in tone to other WFRP scenarios. Nevertheless, it has strong parts, also true for other all-WFRP scenarios.

*White Dwarf* supported WFRP for many years and much of the better material was gathered together by Hogshead Publishing in two collections: *Apocrypha Now* and *Apocrypha 2: Chart of Darkness*. Hogshead has also expanded on the *White Dwarf* material to produce the Marienburg city sourcebook, perhaps their finest moment.

Hogshead also released the long awaited *Realms of Sorcery* ('Coming Soon' in 1986 and finally arriving in 2001). It could never live up to the hype and despite many strong elements it was a mixed bag, suffering for association with the Warhammer Battle background. It was also a problem with the otherwise excellent *Dwarfs: Stone and Steel*.



### STOP PRESS

#### Warhammer Online Not Dead?

We recently printed the sad news that the Warhammer Online project had been unceremoniously dropped by Games Workshop. It now appears that there may be some hope of the game seeing the light of day after all. Despite being cancelled as a joint venture (between Games Workshop and developer Climax) by Games Workshop, we now hear that that Climax have apparently never actually stopped working on Warhammer Online, and have been continuing to develop it, self-funded, even since the widely reported cancellation of the venture. As such, it appears news of Warhammer Online's demise was widely exaggerated, an impression not exactly dispelled by Games Workshop and Climax themselves before now.

David Nicholson from Climax says that they are still in contact and collaboration with Games Workshop, and that the game will retain its dark Warhammer imagery and feel. Climax are reported to be seeking partners & publishers for the game. The full text of an interview with Nicholson can be found at:

<http://rpgvault.ign.com/articles/558/558312p1.html>

#### A world of conflict

With little official material, WFRP fans developed the game for themselves. They expanded the background, rather than the rules, and much can be found on the many dedicated WFRP websites. This development was often fed by Games Workshop's own expansion of the Warhammer world. However this also has caused problems such as the arbitrary removal of towns or complete background change for a country.

#### The future

With Games Workshop directly behind the game and a promised eight releases a year, second edition WFRP looks as if it will come to a new generation of fans. Lead writer, Green Ronin's Chris Pramas, has declared that he is looking to appeal to D20 players looking for a simpler, more elegant game.

A new version of WFRP was widely welcomed by fans although with reservations. It is possible that a new version of the game, now more closely tied to the Battle background; simply Warhammer Fantasy Battle: The Roleplaying Game and therefore a different game. At best, we hope for improved rules attached to a well-supported background containing the favourite elements from the older material.

#### Survival in a grim world

WFRP has survived for so long thanks to the loyalty of the fans and the strength of the game. Players keep finding themselves coming back to the dark and dangerous world. The Black Industries and Green Ronin-produced second edition has a rich legacy on which to build. We await with bated breath...

#### Suggested links

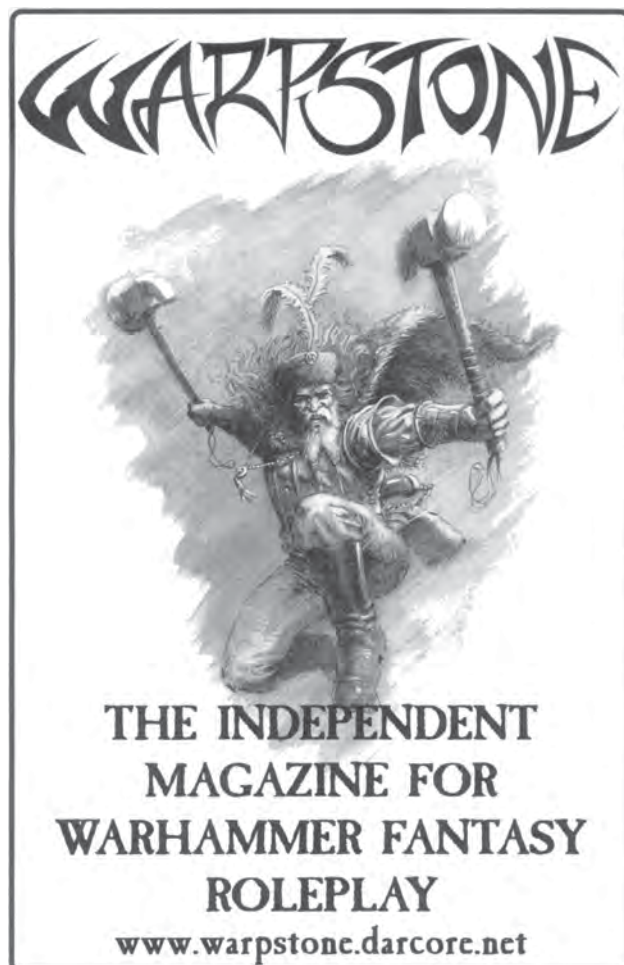
Black Industries (new WFRP publishers): [www.blackindustries.com](http://www.blackindustries.com)

Critical Hit (popular WFRP website): [www.criticalhit.co.uk](http://www.criticalhit.co.uk)

Strike-To-Stun (WFRP e-zine): [www.strike-to-stun.com](http://www.strike-to-stun.com)

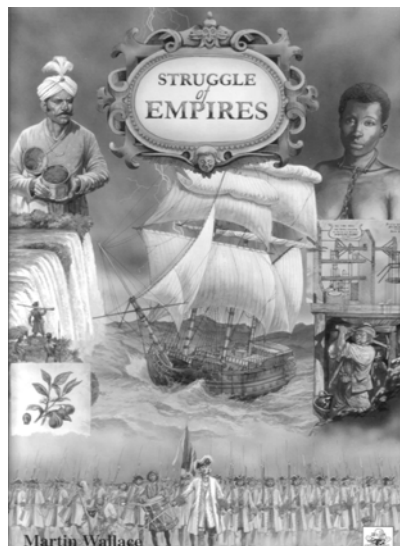
The Bergsburg Project (WFRP town): [bergsburg.darcocore.net](http://bergsburg.darcocore.net)

Warpstone (the WFRP Fanzine): [www.warpstone.darcocore.net](http://www.warpstone.darcocore.net)



# Struggle of Empires

*PEVANS enjoys attempting to gain control over the world ...*



IT SEEMS to have become a tradition for me to review the new game from *Warfrog* each year. And I wouldn't want to break with tradition - particularly when the game is as good as **Struggle of Empires**.

The game's theme is the rivalry of the major European nations of the 18th century. In particular, it's about their competition to establish control over other parts of the world - both within Europe and on other continents. Instead of a map of the world, however, the board just shows the parts we're interested in. The

largest section is Europe, emphasising the areas that aren't themselves nation states - such as the German States and Italy. Other sections of the board show the East Indies, India, West Africa and the Americas. Alongside the map are a number of tracks and tables used to keep track of the game - and the score.

The players are, of course, the major powers. Their objective is to gain influence in the various European and colonial areas. It isn't necessary to dominate. Points are awarded for the players with the most influence markers in a region. Points are scored at the end of each of the three 'Wars' into which the game is divided. The player with the most points at the end of the third War wins the game. Unless a revolution has overtaken his/her nation. This is one of the game's ingenious mechanisms. Throughout the game, players need money. They are allowed to take as much as they like, but they also get 'Unrest' points. Unrest points are also handed out when a player loses a military unit. Too many Unrest points at the end, and your country revolts. This means a score of zero - not a game-winning position!

Otherwise, players lose points according to who has the most Unrest. So you are pulled in two directions during the game. You need gold to build up your position, but the more gold, the more points you need simply to offset what you may lose from Unrest. And take too much gold and Unrest could knock you out of the game entirely. Clever stuff.

But back to those Wars. The significant things that happen at the start of each War are deciding the order of play and whose side the players are on. Each country is part of one or other grand alliance. The two alliances oppose each other: players can't attack (or be attacked by) members of the same alliance. A series of auctions determines which countries will oppose each other (and the order in which they will move). These auctions can be crucial - particularly as the game goes on. You really want the players who can gain most from attacking you to be in the same alliance so that they can't! One other thing happens at the start of each War. A number of

counters are drawn at random and placed in the areas they refer to. Most of these represent the natives of that region. Defeating each of these gives players an influence marker in that area. The other way to gain influence is, of course, to defeat another player who has a marker there. In either case, you need to have some military units. Ideally you want several more than the opposition, as players' combat score is the number of units plus the difference between two dice. Apart from natives, the other markers placed at the beginning of a War also allow players to gain influence, providing they meet the appropriate conditions.

Once the alliances and order of play have been established, the War is played out across a number of rounds. In each round, players carry out two actions - they have six to choose from. One of these is to attack somebody. Other actions include building a new military unit, which costs a point of Population and can then be shipped around the world. Or moving a couple of units. Given that you need several units to make a successful attack, it takes a few rounds to build up to an assault. So it's usually obvious what players are up to - though there may not be anything you can do about it! The final action available to players is to buy a tile - though only once a round.

There are a lot of these available to players. Each does something special, such as providing extra armies or navies, improving combat strength, moving an extra unit, enabling a player to get three gold for each Unrest point and so on. The tiles add to the complexity of the game and give players plenty of options. However, the tiles do not drive the game. Instead, players pick tiles to support their strategy. Probably the most important tile is 'Government Reform'. Take one of these and you immediately discard two points of Unrest. Sooner or later, somebody will buy a Government Reform tile and this usually starts a rush - nobody wants to get left behind. Other important tiles include those that provide additional income. These are for a particular region and players gain gold for the influence markers they have in that region - 'Tobacco', for example, produces income in North America. If you want to keep down your Unrest total, this income is very useful - especially if you have a lot of influence in an area. Then there are the Alliance tiles, which gain the player extra military strength in a particular region. These bolster your force without having to move units around. Finally, 'Army Training' gives the player +1 in combat - provided they have more Army Training than their opponent. This is always an advantage against natives, but other players can negate it - you can even get an arms race effect as opposed players buy up the tiles available.

At the end of each War players get income in gold, based on their current population and influence markers on the board. However, they then have to pay for the upkeep of their military units. Any shortfall means taking more gold - and more Unrest - from the bank. Finally, players boost their Population, ready for the next War. Three Wars of six rounds with two actions means a total of 36 actions in a game (30 with 5+ players). And you can always do with more.

Struggle of Empires is a complex game that provides players with lots of decisions and plenty of strategic options and tactical niceties. The best way to learn the game is to play it. In fact, I'd say that you need to play it once to learn how to play, as it's the interaction between the players that makes the game what it is. I suggest that your first game involves no more than four players to keep things simpler. There are also some very useful tips on play at the end of the rules, which I recommend beginners take note of. The game seems to play well with any number of players, though I've not tried it two-player.

This is a subtle, challenging and highly rewarding game. I cannot recommend Struggle of Empires highly enough. Though anyone who thinks three hours is too long for a game will not be impressed.

## *Struggle of Empires at a glance*

Published by *Warfrog* and designed by Martin Wallace, this is a strategy board game for 2-7 players aged 13+ and takes 3-4 hours to play. It is readily available in the shops at around £25 or \$60.



# The Ridley Files

*ERIC RIDLEY writes about exploring horror games ...*

BOARD AND card games come in many forms, and even more themes. Traditional classics include space settings, themes based around animals and the ever-present 15th to 18th century traders. Game mechanics are rarely influenced specifically by the theme. It is fair to say that the majority of games seem to have a theme tacked on rather superficially.

Many board games can be stripped bare to their mechanics and placed in any setting. **Traders of Genoa** would work just as well if it were called **Traders of Sigma 7** (set in space) or **Traders of the Lily Pad** (set around a small colony of frogs on a pond); however, it would lose some of its charm. Strategy games, especially German strategy games are often set in a specific environment in order to add an air of realism to them. Basing a game on real, or near real historical events conveys more meaning to the players through use of both imagination and half recalled history lessons; it allows you to connect with the game more easily.

One genre, though, is particularly intriguing. Horror games have never been huge; they have often been on the fringe of what is a fringe hobby to start with. But look closer and you will find a wealth of interesting and engaging games.

It has often been remarked that the reason horror films work so well is because we all love to be scared, and we are all capable of being scared. Terror is one of our most base and uncontrollable instincts. Games are somewhat the same. While I would be surprised if a board or card game would ever make you actually jump out of your seat, they are very capable of engaging you on a number of levels and providing you with a great gaming experience.



My first entry into horror games was when I was eight years old and on a holiday in Norway. I had purchased a packet of **Horror Top Trumps** in a service station in Britain and played many an hour away with my brother in the back of our big green van. Perhaps I was too young, but the images on the cards alarmed me. Pictures of jailers setting fire to prisoner's hair, and of dark shadows dripping blood from unseen wounds. It was not the visceral content of cards that shocked me, but rather the intent hinted at in the cards. That of real evil. Although I felt uneasy playing the game I was clearly fascinated for as soon as 'Horror 2' was available, I jumped at the chance to own it. While disgusted and scared, I was also hooked.

*Twilight Creations* is one of many companies jumping on the horror bandwagon, in fact it may be fair to say that they started the modern resurgence of horror board games. Originally they picked up the licence for the excellent **Zombies!!!** game from *Journeyman Press* after that company folded. They released numerous expansion sets for it and eventually made their own horror themed game **When Darkness Comes**. While **Zombies!!!** was undoubtedly a horror game, it was also a game of frivolity and comic book violence. Though this was fun (and it was a lot of fun) the game never tried to scare you.

**When Darkness Comes** (WDC) was a very big idea, *Twilight* tried to

fuse board game, RPG and miniatures game together in one package. The idea was that each player would control a character and that a GM would guide them through map-based horror adventures. The game was a success and several expansions were created. If you own a complete set of the game it takes you on a massive arcing story that will take many sessions to play out. While the game itself was a novel idea, it was the setting that really hooked players. WDC had a brooding, maverick sort of feel to the game that allowed players to connect with their characters and, often, fear for their safety. It is fair to say that players often feel tension around the mortality of the characters they play in games; it isn't all that often you feel a shudder as something is described to you. It is this very fact that sets the horror genre apart from the numerous others on the market.

Many other games have been produced that use a horror theme, **The Hills Rise Wild**, **The Testimony of Jacob Hollow** (by *Third World Games*) and the classic **Fury of Dracula** (by *Games Workshop*), to name but a few. Each one has its strengths and weaknesses. The **Call of Cthulhu Trading Card Game** is an excellent example of a horror card game. While *Cthulhu* is not a new basis for a card game the current version of the game by far captures the terror of the setting the most completely. I

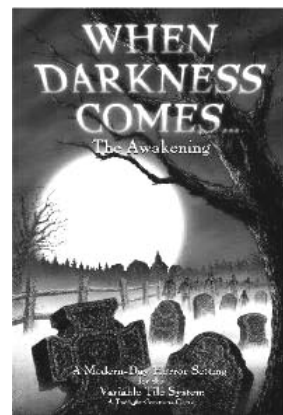


have never read any of H.P. Lovecraft's work (upon which the game is based) but the evocative art and well-measured flavour text inspire a quiet feeling of unease in the back of my mind during the game. Every time I play I fear for the sanity of the characters whom I control. I am made uneasy by the powers that the Great Ones possess. In some respects I feel there is something more at stake than simply losing the game, as a result of which I am connected to the game on a level which is more than just the desire to win. I am drawn into the story, and the twists, and the grisly deaths of the hapless characters.

While the mechanics of a game are undoubtedly important, the setting is almost equally so. The horror theme, if used evocatively can draw players into a game in a way that no other theme can. Also, if you are in a pinch, the horror genre can plaster over the cracks of a creaking game system and make a good game where before stood a crappy one. A company doesn't need a truck load of cash to hire great artists, although it certainly helps: carefully used text can terrify players even more so. There is nothing scarier than what you see in your mind's eye.

Horror games are a great outlet for your imagination and for your anxieties; recently there are more horror games in print than for a long time. Take advantage of this fact and go out and try some, you might be surprised; fun is almost always guaranteed.

The secret, however, to a successful night of horror gaming is that you have to want to be scared. Place yourself on that dark moor or in the mental hospital where all you can hear are the disjointed screams of souls in the electro-therapy room. Engage with the most primal part of your psyche, let your mind's eye open in the darkness, just don't run from the gaming table.



# World of Warcraft

*HANS JØRGEN ECK has been playing in the European playtest ...*

FIRST I WOULD like to write a few words about my previous experience with online games. I started playing MUDs (multi-user dungeons) around 1994 and I still hang out on the MUD where I started out to this day although I'm not playing actively any more. Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, or MMORPGs as they are called, originate from MUDs as they are basically graphical MUDs.

My first experience with a MMORPG was with **Ultima Online** just after it was released. I didn't quite catch on to it, though, and I quickly stopped playing it. After that I tried **Everquest** for a short while, which I found a major disappointment. **Asheron's Call** was next on my menu and I quite liked it. I went back to mudding for a while after Asheron's Call before I got into **Anarchy Online's** beta test. Anarchy Online was interesting since it introduced a new theme in the MMORPG world with its sci-fi theme.

Sadly, the game was plagued with horrible lag and tons of bugs and I regret buying it. My longest relationship with a MMORPG was with **Dark Age of Camelot**, which I played on and off for one and a half years or so. It is a great game and I had a lot of fun playing it. I had a brief run-in with **City of Heroes** which lasted for about two weeks. It looks nice and has the best character generation *ever*, but is boring after a week or two. My last subscription to a MMORPG was **Star Wars Galaxies**, but alas it was riddled with bugs and lag in the same way as Anarchy Online after launch, so it didn't keep my attention for long.

I have now been playing **World of Warcraft** for a couple of months in the European beta test. I was first accepted into closed beta a few weeks before final beta started and we are now about three weeks into final beta, with phase 2 starting very shortly.

## Character generation

Character generation in World of Warcraft is fairly simple and straight forward. You choose a race, class and gender. You can change your appearance somewhat, but compared to Star Wars Galaxies and City of Heroes you don't have too many options. It's still uncomplicated and gets you into the game very quickly. The classes you get to choose from in World



of Warcraft are varied and seem fairly balanced. One of the things I noticed was that you don't really see a class that is useless when in a group or playing alone. In some other games there is usually that one class that when you group with them you think, 'Oh man, why did they have to bring him/her?' Every class in WoW has something to contribute to a group and all classes can more or less do quite well when playing alone.

## The interface

One of the first things you notice when you start playing World of Warcraft is how intuitive the interface is. You have a shortcut bar at the bottom of the screen where you can shortcut your skills, spells, objects or macros. You have buttons that open up the different information windows you have access to. A social window where you can search for players, add friends to a friends list, show a list of guild members if you are member of a guild and info about your raid group if you are participating in a raid.

You can control almost everything with your mouse: moving, attacking, using skills and accessing all the information. Using the keyboard will make you do things faster in many cases, though.

One of the greatest features in World of Warcraft is the mini map and the area map. It shows the areas you have discovered and it shows your group members' positions on the map. It is very hard to get lost in World of Warcraft, although you always have the few 'special' people who can get lost in a three-room apartment.

Blizzard has released tools for changing and improving the user interface and some of the interface modifications people have made are truly great.

## Gameplay

Once you are done with the character generation, you can log in and you will start in a newbie area that varies for each race. One of the first things you see when you enter the world are NPCs (non-player characters), that have yellow question marks over their heads, indicating that they have quests available for you. You will also see silver and gold exclamation marks over some NPCs. The silver mark tells you that the NPC will be able to give you a quest when you reach a higher level, and the gold exclamation

## World of Warcraft at a glance

Persistent Online Game (or MMORPG) from Blizzard Ent. Currently testing on European servers, but fully released commercially in the USA. Price \$49.99 for the software, plus \$14.99 per month (various payment options are available). European prices are yet to be announced.

As we go to press, the European servers are in the second phase of free-to-play beta testing. Just download the files from the website and start playing!

[www.worldofwarcraft.com](http://www.worldofwarcraft.com) (USA)

<http://en.wow-europe.com> (Europe)



mark tells you that the NPC can give you several quests: you can collect more than one quest or a variation of the two. There are many different types of quests available, but they do not differ too much from what other games offer. The only difference as I see it is that there are so many more quests available in WoW than any other game: they are incredibly polished and fit the game. In other games I didn't pay much attention to quests. In WoW I do quests all the time and I have fun doing them.

Combat in WoW is fairly straightforward and fast-paced. It works just like any other game in the same genre but the main difference is that you have very little downtime in WoW. You are fully healed within half a minute after a fight and you often fight more than one monster around your level. The talent system Blizzard has added (similar to the skill tree in **Diablo 2**) is very interesting as it makes the characters with the same class unique.

There are several professions (tradeskills) that players can learn and use in the game. You get to choose two primary professions from a list of nine and you can learn all three of the secondary professions if you like. Professions are well implemented and easy to use. You have to explore the world to be able to gather the resources you need to make new items and get better in your profession. You can sell the things you make in the auction houses that are located in some of the biggest towns in the world. The auction houses work very well and are one of my favourite features in WoW. They are rumoured to get even better at some point and I can hardly wait for that.

Player versus Player (PvP) is possible in WoW. There are servers dedicated to PvP, but I have yet to try these. I have on the other hand tried PvP on the normal servers and although there are no rewards involved with



this at the moment besides personal satisfaction, it seems to work just fine. Battlegrounds are in the works though, and from reading about the plans from Blizzard, they should be a blast.

### Graphics and sound

I have overheard a few discussions about the graphics in WoW and I have participated in a few myself. The game has a cartoony look to it and in my opinion it looks great, with each area having a unique look and feel to it. The background music changes for each area you are in, and I simply love

it. There are voice emotes added to the game that put a smile on my face every time, and you'll notice the little features like the character actually laughing when you write 'hehe' or 'lol' in the chat windows. It gives a nice flavour and added humour that you will notice all throughout the game.

### Conclusion

Comparing games in this genre is no easy task as each game is huge and complex. What I can and will say about World of Warcraft though, is that it is a fun, balanced and very complete game compared to any other game I have seen at this stage of development. The game should be considered 'done' even though we are in beta testing, as it has been released already in North America and Korea. As far as you can call a MMORPG complete, WoW is by far the closest I've seen with any of the games in the genre today and I would recommend it to anyone. I haven't thought about another game for two months now, and I don't see myself playing another one for a good time either.

See you in the world of Azeroth.







# The Glory of Kings V

The Glory of Kings is a game, but it is more than that; it is an immersing recreation of the wars and times of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, allowing players to play the role of such luminaries such as Frederick the Great, the Ottoman Sultan and a cast of princes from across the globe. If you are interested in military affairs, or just in history, there is a part available in one of these games to suit your needs!

## Selection of game positions:

- Pirates, from the West Indies, English Channel, Madagascar, and the far east.
- Princes, including those ruling states in the Holy Roman Empire, right through to Indian lords and Chinese mandarins.
- Heads of republics, for example the Doge's of Venice and Genoa, or the Grand Pensionary of the United Provinces.
- Royalty ruling a major power, such as France, Russia or Austria.



In the game you can get to run a kingdom, carry out an intelligence service operation, marry a beautiful princess, fight a campaign on land and sea, chase pirates, duel a cad, or just learn about the period ('learn as you lose!') - the variety is immense!



## Some salient game features:

- Extensive maps
- Internal diplomacy (no extra postage to pay)
- In-period newspaper sent with every game turn
- Warfare, historical research & development
- Great contingent of existing players!
- Immediate game start

To buy The Glory of Kings rules for £5, please write with payment to: AGEMA, 3 Worksoop Road, Sneinton, Nottingham NG3 2BA.

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





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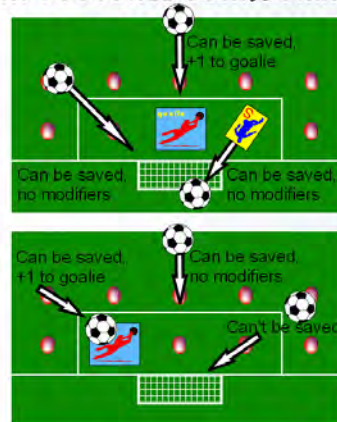
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Before deciding whether to take part in **The Glory of Kings** you'll need to see the rules, obviously. For this reason we've kept their price down to a minimum - they cost just £5, and we'll send them out post free. You can order them without committing to take part in the game.

## Practical information:

- One game turn is played per 3 weeks
- Pirates are quick to run, Kingdoms need more of your time in real life.
- Players retain their anonymity and play in-game as their historical counterpart.
- Games using this system have been running non-stop since 1989. It has won awards!
- Cost is £6 per turn (equating to £2 a week - not a big commitment).





# On Screen

## Doomed to Piracy?

*GLOBETROTTER considers this thorny issue ...*

IT NEVER seems to take long for the latest PC games to appear on file-sharing networks, where they become available to anyone with the time to download them and the desire to steal them. Despite the fact that PC games have become cheaper over the last few years, and are noticeably less expensive than their console counterparts, pirated copies of big titles like **Doom 3** reach the Internet even before many retail outlets have the box set for sale. Of course, a game like **Doom 3** will still make money, but it wouldn't be surprising to see a trend away from PC games in favour of (more difficult to copy) console games for precisely this reason.

### The Doom 3 case

Well aware that their game would be pirated at some point, *id Software* made every effort to keep the game from being leaked onto the Net before its release. Even the media was denied the early evaluation copies, which often give them a chance to have a review prepared for when the game ships. There is an interesting article on GameSpot (<http://www.gamespot.com/features/6104258/index.html>), which chronicles one employee's flight from San Francisco to Los Angeles in order to get **Doom 3** slightly ahead of the official release.

Nevertheless, according to a BBC article (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/3527332.stm>), some 50,000 copies (or about \$3 million worth) of the game were being downloaded at one point on Sunday, August 1st, two days before it was scheduled to appear on store shelves.

While a questionable shipping policy may have contributed to this problem, it's clear that piracy could make or break a game of less stature than **Doom 3**.

### Anti-piracy efforts

Many of us are familiar with the long history of efforts that have been made to prevent rampant copying of software. Forms of disk copy protection were in use way back in the days of the 5 1/4 inch floppy. Most of the PC games on the store shelf today require a play disk in your CD drive to run the game. While this does make it a little more difficult to copy the game, it is still possible, and 'No CD' cracks, which will allow you to run a game without the play CD, are readily available on the Net for most games.

CD keys (that long code on the jewel case or the back of the manual) are a common way to discourage copying, although there is nothing to keep people from sharing CD keys for single-player games. Like the pirated software itself, CD keys and even CD key generators are frequently circulated on the Net.

As well as not being particularly effective, copy protection also tends to create problems for those who do the right thing and purchase the game. They won't always be able to make backups of their game disks, meaning that a damaged or lost play CD will render the game unplayable. While publishers will typically replace CDs under such circumstances, they want ample proof that you actually bought the game, including a receipt. Even then, you are almost always charged for shipping and handling, which can exceed the cost of buying another copy of the game. Stolen CD keys also frequently cause conflicts for legitimate players, as the game will refuse their login request if their CD key is already in use. Some publishers have more or less abandoned copy protection for these reasons.

### The online advantage

When it comes to fighting piracy, online games have a clear advantage over single-player games. Because you are playing over the Internet, it is quite easy for the game's developers to have the game check in with their server each time the player logs in, to ensure that a legitimate CD key is being used.

### Globetrotter's Game of the Month ROLLER COASTER TYCOON 3

OK, so it's a sequel, but what a sequel! **RCT 3** takes the series to new heights with brand new features including 3-D graphics, giving players complete control of views around the park, and a front seat to the action with a new Coaster Cam feature that allows players to ride the roller coasters. For fans of previous incarnations of this game, game-play elements that we have been asking for - including diversity of guests, added group behaviour and improved guest AI - and many other new features all build upon the fun and addictive nature of the original game. Most games will come and go, but this game is going to hold my attention for at least a year (a lifetime in game terms). Even if this sort of thing isn't your cup of tea, I'd really recommend a change of scene - you can go back to tank warfare and battling wizards later.

**RCT3** is a brilliant reworking of the classic management strategy game. An unlimited combination of roller coaster designs and landscapes are available to help you build the coolest park imaginable. Choose from dozens of coaster styles to configure and construct the type of roller coaster you've only dreamed about. You can build all kinds of rides, shops, decorations, landscape and theme options. Being something of a geek at heart, I'm a fan of the way that **RCT** features accurate physics and motion dynamics. On a less cerebral level, the Excitement/Nausea ratings let you design the right kind of attractions for your guests. Overall the graphics are top notch and game play is breathtaking. I'm speechless. In short, this game is astounding.



See a free demo at: <http://www.pcgameworld.com/details.php/id/5523>

Genre: Management/Sim

From: Atari

Platform: PC

Price: £34.99 (but on sale at

Amazon for £21.99)



The games with the least piracy concerns are persistent world titles like **EverQuest**. Since the world exists on the company's servers, and they require you to maintain an account to access those servers, a copy of the game is really of little value. This hasn't stopped hackers from figuring out how to emulate the game server accurately enough to start their own worlds. However this is a formidable task, and it's undermined by the fact that the overwhelming majority of players are in the official world, which is, after all, what makes them massively multiplayer.

#### The road ahead

One of the things that makes games like **Doom 3** a relatively easy target for thieves is that the main attraction is the single-player campaign. Online play generally involves some sort of CD key authentication. I fully expect single-player games to be subject to a similar form of authentication in the future, as it has so far proven to be one of the most effective ways to combat piracy. The release of **Half-Life 2**, coupled with Valve's Steam content delivery system, could well be a sign of things to come.

### What do you think?

We re-print the following from [www.playitcybersafe.com](http://www.playitcybersafe.com), a site dedicated to informing children, parents and teachers about the illegality and dangers of cybercrime, including software piracy.

But what do you think? Should it be legal to copy a piece of software if it is for your own use?

"The software industry plays a leading role in creating products that have vastly improved our lives and work environment. Unfortunately, software theft, or piracy, has had a negative impact on the global marketplace and the ability to create new products. Copying in the workplace, counterfeiting and various forms of illegal distribution costs nearly \$12 billion each year. Furthermore, the unauthorized electronic distribution and sale of copyrighted works over the Internet threatens to make these problems seem almost quaint by comparison. Legal and cultural frameworks to protect creative works online, including computer software, must be identified and built to encourage creativity and growth.

The software industry has deployed the latest high-tech weapon in its fight against the billion-dollar scourge of software piracy - a cartoon ferret. Decked in baggy jeans and a tight T-shirt, the grinning mustelid is the mascot of Playitcybersafe.com, a new website aimed at stopping kids before they make their first forays into software theft.



The website is the centerpiece of a campaign by the Business Software Alliance to teach kids as young as 8 years old "safe and responsible" computing practices, like avoiding the rampant software piracy that member companies like Microsoft and Adobe blame for eroding their profits.

"It's never too early to start teaching kids about good behavior, the right thing to do is to reach out to them while they're very young," said BSA spokeswoman Diane Smiroldo, noting that some children get their first taste of Web surfing in preschool."

For further reading on this subject, your editor suggests consulting the Cyberlaw Research Unit at the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, University of Leeds. Handily they have a detailed web site at:

<http://www.cyber-rights.org/>

The European Union is the legislative body dealing with this matter for most of our readers - the Commission's eEurope website is also informative.

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/eeurope/2005/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/index_en.htm)

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## EINSTEIN'S LOT

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# Introducing ....

## Live Action Role-Playing

By *AIMEE YERMISH, MIKE HORRILL, MARCUS HILL and DANIEL UTECHT ...*

### What is Live Role Playing?

As in any roleplaying game each player takes on the role of a fictional character. You play your character much as you would in any role playing setting, but even more so. Instead of saying what actions your character takes, you actually make most those actions for real. Game mechanics are in place for handling difficult situations, but for the duration of the game you act as if are the person you are portraying. The border where physical portrayal stops and abstract rules start is a matter of safety. If what is happening can affect a player physically (combat, running, climbing, etc), most LARP games accomplish this by using a set of rules known as Mind's Eye Theatre (MET).

The basic idea is somewhat like improvising a play with nothing but a knowledge of the background and motivations of your character. Sometimes these will be decided by you, sometimes by others, depending on the style of game you play. Each of the other players will have a character he or she is playing, and the interaction of the characters creates a story. For some styles of MET games, this is the entirety of the game. For others, there is an adventure gaming element, where your character may have some specific goals to achieve, either alone or with the help of others. This might range from 'Rescue the kidnapped Toreador Elder' to 'Hunt down the evil Fomori', again depending on the style of game.

Most MET games involve a large number of players (from twenty to over a hundred at a time) who walk around and talk with each other, acting out as much of their characters' actions as are allowed within the rules. Unlike many tabletop role-playing games, most live role-playing games have a strong emphasis on player-player interaction as well as interaction with the world which is controlled by the Storyteller: in fact in some games, the STs have no input into the events of the game beyond interpreting the rules after the game has started, making the games very social events as well as intellectual and creative challenges.

### Why do it? Is it dangerous?

Because it's fun! People enjoy live action role-playing for a whole number of reasons. Some for escapism because it's lots of fun to be someone else for a few hours or a few days at a time, for the social aspects of the game and the opportunity to meet new people and for the pure exhilaration of letting your mind run wild in a world of complete fantasy. Some players of The Apocalypse like the opportunity to get away from their desks and do something physical in the fresh air.

All groups who run any kind of MET games consider safety very important. There is no running around in sewers, no swinging of even fake weapons, and no real demon-summoning. Storytellers and players alike stress that these are games, not substitute realities. The Mind's Eye Theatre uses 'abstract' systems based largely on scissors-paper-rock, rendering the whole event little more dangerous than a walk in the park. There is more description of these systems later in this document; rest assured that these are not dangerous or satanic games.

### Do I need experience to play and win?

'Winning' isn't the point of live role playing games, it's the taking part that is the fun. (Yes I know you can say that about any game but MET games are probably one of the few where it is true.) Sometimes you'll come away from an adventure having accomplished your goals, sometimes you won't. Most games are set up so that it isn't possible for everyone to 'win' all the time. If there's no chance of failure, success doesn't have much sweetness. Dramatic role-playing and creative interaction are what's really

important, and what's really fun. Some of the most legendary scenes happen when people are 'losing'. More so than in any other form of gaming, how you play your character and how much fun you have are far more important than who does better or worse than you.

Don't worry if you have not taken part in a Live Action game before. Many people who play these games have played tabletop role-playing games, but many others have not. Lots of other real-life activities are excellent preparation for live role-playing. If you've ever daydreamed about being someone else, or about being in a different world, you've got what you need. Besides, most game designers set things up to give experienced players incentive to help new players along. You'll probably have knowledge or abilities that other people need. Other people will help you out, not just because they're nice, but because they need your help. And they are nice, too. These aren't wild-eyed lunatics or immature geeks, they're ordinary people from all walks of life, who happen to like using their imaginations and sharing the experience with other people. All live role-playing games are very social, it's a great way to meet new friends. Of course, you can also team with existing friends. Just let the Storytellers or Co-ordinators know ahead of time. Really big teams often get broken up into smaller ones, just to keep things balanced, but you'll practically always get to stay with at least a few of your friends. In some games, this will mean that you will have characters who share goals and beliefs, and who would have reasons to work together. In others, the whole ethos is on your character as part of a group of adventurers who rely upon each other to survive. You might just find your character at odds with the characters of your friends. This can lead to some interesting plot lines, and can further increase the amount of fun you have.

### How do I get involved?

Rules are designed to be as simple as possible, and to require little or no real physical action on the part of the players. About the most violent thing you'll do is hit your own hand while making hand gestures. Games are usually run indoors for vampires, or outdoors for werewolves, or in hotels at gaming conventions. There are a huge number of games throughout the world. You can find most of them by going to the Yahoo search page and looking forLARPs. The Camarilla ([www.camarilla.org.uk](http://www.camarilla.org.uk)) is one organisation that spans the globe with MET games, though there are many others.

Some games prefer you to make at least a token effort at costuming, but don't have the 'costume police' associated with some re-enactment societies. In Vampire-related games regular attire is common, since the Vampires and Garou have long established laws to prevent normal humans from knowing of their existence. In Fantasy and Historical games, costume may be more of a requirement.

Most groups leave costuming to your taste, but require certain makeup and prosthetics to be worn by those playing certain roles, for instance 'all players playing Bone Gnawers must dress like street bums'. This allows others to identify your character's race at a glance. Many vampire players own false fangs that range in price from 50 cents at novelty shops to over 50 dollars done at dentists. Wraiths are not required to die and come back from the dead, as that would violate the safety rule, and would cause the player to be excluded from further play.

Most groups have a strong emphasis on making everything in the game look and feel as real as possible, which allows a strong atmosphere to be created. You may be provided with props, or you may need to provide them yourself, depending on the situation. However in most MET games, under



no circumstances are any prop weapons to be brought to the game. If your character has a weapon, get an item card from a Storyteller or narrator for it. No exceptions.

Most props are index cards with descriptions of the items, although most Storytellers like to include as many 'real' props as they can afford. Because of the many different genres, and the frequency of 'one shot' events, many groups often do not maintain props, but print cards symbolising items. Most groups that run the same event over and over try to accumulate real props, or at least realistic props.

#### **How do magic and skills work?**

Each paranormal ability a character possesses has will have a rule for it. You don't have to remember all the rules, just the ones for the few abilities you have. All games have one Storyteller who should know all the rules, but there should also be assistants and narrators who will help you. Experienced players are expected to help out new players with the rules, so if you have a question, just ask.

Your character will have a brief list of abilities that can be accomplished. Most actions like lock picking, first aid, and speaking foreign languages that require training to learn must be listed on your sheet. Actions like driving, climbing, and brawling that are really easy can be accomplished without them being listed, but they are more difficult. A narrator or Storyteller will determine the difficulty of most of the things you will do. Then, the two of you will play the game of scissors-paper-rock (SPR). If you win, you're successful: if you lose, your attempt fails. Ties are a little tricky, but you'll get the hang of what will happen fairly soon.

#### **How do I choose and play a character?**

In many MET games, the characters are Vampires, some Garou, and some games are a mix in contact with the Storyteller or narrator before the game, and make one ahead of time. Characters improve over time, and can learn new abilities and gain powers. The amount you can improve is up to the Storyteller. At the end of the night (or when they feel like it) you will be given a number of points to record. You can use these experience points to improve your character.

Most people would consider Vampires and Werewolves the bad guys. If you wanted to play an antagonist like a Sabbat Vampire, Black Spiral Dancer, Fomori, or a human hunter, ask your Storyteller. Just don't get too attached to your character. You'll be the target de jour and you may well die. Yes, die! LARP characters don't live forever, so please remember that this is just a game. If your character dies, see your Storyteller about being an NPC for the rest of the evening, or spend the time making up a new character. It is considered bad form to hold a grudge against the characters that caused your downfall, as the new character you come into the game with knows nothing of what has transpired.

Frequency of play varies widely from event to event. Most major colleges and universities have games attached to them. For instance, the Camarilla has its own central web site, and many chapters have their own sites. You should contact the regional or district co-ordinator closest to you for more information.



*An Elf is brought back to life by the Dark Elf Queen*

#### **How much does it cost?**

The Camarilla can cost as much as \$18 per year, but a group of up to five people can join at one time for an additional fee, bringing the price per person down to about half that. If the game is run at a convention, players are usually required to join the convention, and a fee range for the game can run from free (rare) to five to ten dollars a night. Sometimes, the Storytellers are able to arrange discounted convention memberships for game players. You are on your own for food and sleeping arrangements in most games, although some Storytellers provide munchies (as do many conventions). More commonly, a collection is taken up for refreshments. Occasionally, a game will be offered as a package deal, but prices are highly variable. You do not need to bring or buy any other costuming, equipment, or supplies - everything you need to play the games is usually included in your registration fee. Please note that it is usual practice not to permit alcohol or drugs in games. This is in the interest of safety, and to insure that everyone has fun.

#### **A social form of gaming**

Live Action Role-Playing games are a very good way to make friends. Most societies, clubs and chapters have social functions on a regular basis where nothing is discussed between characters. Some will organise movie nights, costume workshops, dinner parties, and other events not related to the game. While some games are written for as few as eight people or as many as two hundred, most are written for twenty to ninety players. Rather than forming a small clique, you spend the weekend interacting with anyone you come across in order to advance your goals, so you really do play with all those other people, and it's to your advantage to deal with everyone else in the game. Most of them have some knowledge or abilities you can benefit from, if you can convince them to help you. Commonly, games are organised into factions of three-eight people, so you have allies - but traitors and multiple loyalties are common. Just like any other form of gaming really!

*[This article was originally written as part of the FAQ for The Camarilla. In the next issue of FLAGSHIP we will be taking a look at the various LARP clubs and organisations in the UK and elsewhere.]*

# Pevans' Perspective

*PEVANS looks back on his favourite games of 2004 ...*

AS WE ARRIVE in 2005, I thought I'd just recap on last year and pick out my favourite games of last year. But what about all those games I haven't played yet? Aagh! Anyway, here is the list of the games from 2004 that I've played and really liked. They're in alphabetical order to prevent my brain melting as I try to choose between them.

**Carcassonne - die Stadt** (*Hans im Glück* - Carcassonne - the City is the English-language version from *Rio Grande*) is the latest in the series and I reckon it's even better than the original. The key thing is that the tile placement rules are less stringent. This means you can place tiles to truncate other players' scoring opportunities. Ah yes, stuffing our opponents - that's what we like! There is less complexity on the tiles, but extra scoring opportunities provided by the walls and towers compensate for this. Lots of tactics and nice wooden pieces make it a winner.

**Hansa** (*Überplay*) is another cracker from Michael Schacht. It's set in the medieval network of trading cities around the Baltic Sea. Again, the game is full of tactical niceties that give lots of chances to mess up your opponents. Well, whoever's next to play, anyway. Players buy goods to build shops in order to buy more goods to turn into victory points. All of which costs cash, so gaining a bit of money is useful. The game is cleverly balanced as players need to do several things, only one of which scores them points directly. But there are different ways of scoring points and hence always options for what you do. As I said, a cracker.

And then I discovered **Maharaja** (*Phalanx*). Kiesling and Kramer do it again. This is a wonderfully subtle strategy game. Yes, it's pretty complex. The first player to build seven palaces wins. But this costs money. Money comes from having a large presence in the city that the Maharajah visits this turn. But that costs money, too! The designers provide us with so many options of what to do each turn, that the simple way out often seems the best. But the way to take advantage of this is to do the unexpected and throw everybody else off balance. Brilliant stuff.

I've long been a fan of Richard Borg's **Battle Cry**. Then he came up with **Memoir '44** (*Days of Wonder*). This transfers the same basic idea from the American Civil War to the Second World War. The board is laid out for different battlefields using tiles that represent different terrain. Onto this players manoeuvre their model soldiers, tanks and artillery pieces, according to the cards they play. It's a bit more complex than Battle Cry, but is none the worse for that. Memoir '44 is still a simple wargame that provides plenty of different scenarios for continued play. An instant winner and a wargame that's fun.

There's an argument that **Power Grid** (*Rio Grande*) shouldn't be in this list as it's a revamp of the older Funkenschlag. But it's too good to ignore. The main change to the game is using a board with established networks of cities that players buy into, rather than the draw-your-own approach of the original game. This slight simplification makes a huge difference as the game moves significantly faster and is much more accessible. Power Grid is a rather different and even better game than Funkenschlag. There's a lot to think about, there are decisions to make and it has plenty of tactical options. This is Friedemann Friese on top form.

It's a shame **Reef Encounter** (*R&D Games*) is a limited edition as it's another great game that deserves wide recognition. It's a bit of a departure by designer Richard Breese, but he has not lost his touch. The game has players gathering larvae and polyps from the ocean to expand coral colonies across reefs and protecting them with their shrimps until they're big enough for their parrotfish to eat. The mechanics are a touch complex, but this is



*Memoir '44 in play*

what makes the game. Confused? You will be! It's by understanding how the bits fit together (umm, almost literally!) that players comprehend how to manipulate the game and, hopefully, win. Great stuff.

So, too, is Martin Wallace's latest, **Struggle of Empires** (*Warfrog*), about 18th century empire-building and colonisation across the world. Unlike many strategy games, this just gets better the more people that are playing. This gives full scope to the various strategies that can be followed and makes it tough to get any of them to work. A meaty game that half a dozen people can relish playing for an afternoon and reviewed in full in this issue.

Let me declare an interest: I'm UK rep for *Hangman Games*, who publish **Tahuantinsuyu**. But one of the reasons I am is that this is a great game. The theme is the growth of the Inca Empire. Players are regional governors bringing the benefits of imperial rule to the local tribes. And building roads, cities, temples and garrisons to expand the Empire further. Players have decisions, tactical ploys and opportunities to stitch up their opponents as they compete. These make it a closely-fought game right up to the final scoring. My kind of game.

**Viking Fury** is a return by the *Ragnar Brothers* to the historical games they do so well. And this one's no exception. Players are Vikings trading, raiding and colonising wherever their ships can reach. Plenty of history, clever mechanics and a game that's in the balance until the end. And who can pass up the opportunity to leap into a longship and go pillaging around Europe or exploring North America? My review of the game was in *Flagship 110*.

Honourable Mentions: to round off, here are the games that didn't quite make it into my top tier. **Employee of the Month** (designed by Alan R Moon and Aaron Weissblum, published by *Dancing Eggplant*) is a neat card game that's a bit more challenging than appears at first. **Goa** (Rüdiger Dorn, *Rio Grande*) is another good strategy game. **Keythedral** (Richard Breese, *Pro-Ludo*) is a re-print, but it's still an excellent game. High quality production and a few tweaks to the rules make the new edition even better than the original. **Oltre Mare** (Emanuele Ornella, *Mind the Move*) is a very clever game of Venetian trading and quite a challenge. **Razzia!** (Reiner Knizia, *Amigo*) is simply a card game version of Ra, but that is still one of Knizia's best. I have to include **Revolution** (Francis Tresham, *Phalanx*), even though I haven't played it yet, as it's been anticipated for so long. And **Ticket to Ride** (Alan R Moon, *Days of Wonder*), which is a good Spiel des Jahres, but I prefer something more challenging. (And something I can win!)

All in all, there was a lot of good stuff around in 2004. In fact, there was an awful lot of good stuff. I look forward to even more in 2005.



# Austerlitz Nations: Prussia

**NORMAN FURLONG** provides notes from the field ...

SO YOU PAID your money, crowned yourself king and you can't wait to make the world safe for Prussians. Prussia's historic role in the Napoleonic wars, combined with a good starting position and army, make it an excellent choice for the beginning player. What follows is a bit of advice for the first-time Kaiser. You can find splendid advice on the chat site

*AusterlitzPBM@yahoo.com*

Take what I have to say, mix this with your own intuition about strategy and tactics, and you will derive much joy and satisfaction playing **Austerlitz** for years to come.

If you do the math (and do well in the game), you're going to be playing for a few years. A few Austerlitz games have lasted until 1818; the median in game duration for the first 120 Au games is victory by late 1813. At a turn every two weeks, you're playing at roughly double real-time, so look forward to two to three years of rewarding effort steering Prussia to victory!

## Ruling Prussia

*'I am the first servant of the state'*

OK, so Frederick lived in a different century, but he's easily the most famous Prussian leader and I can't resist quoting him. The strategy and tactics may have drawn you into playing. But Austerlitz strikes a fine balance between the three pillars of imperial rule: diplomacy, economics and military might. They all play an important part; don't let anyone tell you otherwise. We'll explore each of these areas briefly and their particular implications for success with Prussia.

## Powerful neighbours

*'I begin by taking. I shall find scholars later to demonstrate my perfect right.'*

Easily the most important aspect of the game, it has nothing to do with the rules or battles, or anything else you paid for. However, if you fail on this front, you can count on an early exit from the game. You are surrounded by powerful neighbors. An immediate alliance with one or more of them is therefore a necessity. Fortunately, many of the veteran players are willing to bend over backwards to help you, giving you much needed, honest advice.

However, caution is advised. Even the most celebrated veteran player is capable of turning on you and breaking an alliance when you least expect it. I had to learn this the hard way in my first game. My observation is this: veterans are most helpful in answering questions, but other newbies make the most stable allies.

## Planning for growth

*'I have no fault to find with those who teach geometry. That science is the*

*only one which has not produced sects; it is founded on analysis and on synthesis and on the calculus; it does not occupy itself with probable truth; moreover it has the same method in every country.'*

While you and your allies are plotting world conquest, you need to keep your house in order. The economics of Au are sufficiently rich to provide a good measure of realism, so you need to take a crash course in Au logistics. In short, you need to build the right mix of production sites in order to achieve equilibrium of raw materials consumption with finished goods production. A longer text is required to give the matter justice, but your two ore mines will support three factories, which will in turn require four lumber camps, two weaving mills and sixteen sheep farms to feed them.

You start with a surplus of wood and textiles. The ore you start with will feed two factories, so you might just go ahead and build the two mines and two factories on the first turn. You will immediately run out of textiles if you don't build sheep farms. Take advantage of the higher-producing special squares ('v' and 'p' on the Regional map), to build your first sheep and horse farms on.

Here's the catch. Production sites cost money and citizens, and you can only build ten of them a turn. What game would be fun without the element of scarcity? You'll quickly have to make critical decisions about how much money and citizenry to put into production sites vs your armies. The faster you build your army, the sooner you'll have them fully-trained, ready to fight and the sooner you'll reach your full complement of ten commanders. Eight brigades of five battalions each cost 32,000 citizens. Ten production sites cost 15,000 citizens to build. Since a million population will generate 30,000 citizens a turn, on turn 2 you'll have to decide whether to generate more EC points or go for a larger army. Raise population, you say? Excellent choice, but that costs citizens as well. Don't forget that the larger your army, the bigger the payroll and training fees.

## Your troops

*'I speak French to my ambassadors, English to my accountant, Italian to my mistress, Latin to my God and German to my horse.'*

Forget about speaking German to your horses. They won't win your battles for you. Your military strength rests squarely on the shoulders of your two-legged troops. Sure, you need to create a balanced, combined-arms force, but when the chips are down, it's your infantry that will tip the battle in your favor and you have the best foot soldiers on the planet! Build the units with a higher EF early on, including your Avant Garde, since they take longer to train to full effectiveness.

In the beginning, you'll be fighting mostly Math battles where you'll need high numbers of men to soak up casualties. Your VR are great in this role. You need some of each troop type, but since your Fu and artillery are effective for both Math and Sim battles, I'd concentrate on building them to start out with. VR are also useful in forming roaming columns of ten brigades each, to conquer enemy territory.

## The joys of playing

I have just barely scratched the surface in these pages, and no words can come close to describing the nervous anticipation of submitting your turn, the eagerness at opening your mail from Supersonic, the frustration of entering an order wrong, or the pure joy in out-foxing your opponent or winning your first Sim battle. Take pride in your gamesmanship and Prussia will reward you with victories on and off the battlefield.

## 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)

# The Fordham Folio

## Shouldn't I Be the Hero Here?

*LISA FORDHAM considers what we should expect from tabletop RPGs, and fromLARPs...*



A LONG TIME ago, in a galaxy far, far, away... there was a roleplaying game of heroic rebels fighting an evil galactic empire. The good guys were good, the bad guys were bad and the action was always over the top.

That's what caught my eye about **Star Wars: the Roleplaying Game**. It's a game designed for heroic actions and larger than life player characters. This article is inspired by a Star Wars tournament game I once took part in at a convention. I signed up for this game expecting what Star Wars is

famous for - classic space opera action, like the films. What actually happened was closer to **Shadowrun** - the PCs weren't good guys (we were Imperial bounty hunters); there was no room for heroics; and the PCs couldn't trust each other. Seeing as I was expecting a 'normal' game of Star Wars, I was disappointed. I also felt a bit cheated as I'd paid to take part in the game and had received no warning that it would be so different to what I was expecting.

What I'm trying to say is that there is often an unspoken agreement between gamers about the style of a game. If you say 'I'm running a Star Wars game', players will be expecting something very different from you in style as well as setting than if you said 'I'm running a Vampire game'. The strength of preconceived notions about games differs from game to game.

For example, **Toon** is a game based solely around one style - cartoon capers, while **AD&D** has over the years been associated with high fantasy, low fantasy, horror and several other styles. Games using licensed settings often carry the strongest style associations. After all, everyone knows what Star Wars is like because there are three famous films to take as inspiration.

I'm not advocating strict adherence to the 'clichés' of a game, just acknowledgement that players carry preconceptions of a game's style. If, as a GM you are going to run an atypical game, let potential players know about the differences. If someone gets stuck in a game they don't enjoy, everyone will suffer and it's not in anyone's interest to let this happen. Players note: this cuts both ways. Action movie over the top heroics will just look out of place in a typical **Call of Cthulhu** game. Will the other players and the GM appreciate it if you play a character that is totally at odds with the game you are all playing in? If you're unsure whether a character will fit well in a game, talk to the game's GM about it.

To sum up, be aware that there are certain assumptions about the styles of most RPGs. You don't necessarily have to be bound by them, but if you want to shake things up a bit, make sure the other people involved are on board.

### When live action games fail to live up to their names

In my years of gaming, live roleplaying has been a source of curiosity and occasional entertainment rather than a consuming passion. I have played in a handful of LARP events at conventions, rather than attending conventions dedicated to LARPs or 'freeforms', a kind of LARP that involves mass character interaction rather than small groups. While one of the players in the first Vampire game I ever ran became a leading figure in a local live Vampire game, I never so much as visited it. In 1997 I ran a live one-off for a local university society's Games Day at the beginning of an academic year, and never again. As I have had a play produced and a short film made from my writing (don't ask, it was appalling), have acted on stage and have been involved in live theatre among several other media, my lack of enthusiasm for the more theatrical style of gaming surprises some people. However, this is the very reason I have not become a LARP fan.

To be blunt, the live action games in which I have played, have had one major flaw: an excess of ambition. A live action game should be just that. Combat and other rules should be handled by some system, but as much as possible, what the players see, hear and feel should be authentic. While tabletop games demand that imagination be used, in live games this just makes the organisers appear lazy, with over-stretched resources. In short, by their very definition live games should be live as far as possible. This rarely happens.

As an example, one event I attended was based on Star Wars. The players were passengers on a space liner headed for the capital of the evil Galactic Empire. Rebel agents, Imperial assassins, merchants and criminals all went about their business, trying not to be caught by their enemies or ship's security. It filled its three-hour slot and was quite entertaining, generating quite a few laughs. However, it did not feel like Star Wars at all.

As I mentioned in the first section of this article, Star Wars is a setting full of special effects - blaster fights, lightsabre duels, aliens, droids, spaceships, the Force, squads of Stormtroopers in uniform, diverse planets and settings, and constant explosive action. The game had none of this. It was set in two lecture rooms of the university with the tables moved. The organisers hadn't even chosen the best rooms for the purpose (there were much better rooms lying empty elsewhere in the building). The action highlight of the game was a poorly staged lightsabre battle with toy sabres, which lasted under a minute. My personal lowlight though, was the ship's security: three gamers in white T-shirts with one official toy blaster rifle and some tiny purple and green laser pistols that broadcast 'Fire, Fire!' 'Drop the gun!' and 'Don't move!' along with strange synthesizer beeps and whoops ... which I later realised was meant to be shooting.

Apart from the white T-shirts and a Dark Side warrior who was one of those players who has nothing but black in his wardrobe anyway, costuming consisted of nametags. If we are asked to imagine our surroundings, our circumstances, the actions we take and the look of everyone around us, why are we playing live action at all rather than tabletop?

The game I had run the year before was based on *The X-Files*. While I am a fan of this series, I chose to use it as a basis because I had honestly looked at what we could and could not do, and decided it was a good basis for a zero-budget live action game. It was easy to organise a handful of people running around the woods at night with torches, and unreliable witnesses describing supernatural events while the players themselves see nothing. The forces of the conspiracy were represented by two men in black clothing. It was not a resounding success, but it did what I had intended it to do.

The most successful LARP system for the past several years is an official live version of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Its success is simple.



It can be played anywhere, without props or special effects, costumes or fake weapons, can even be played in public, and still accurately reflect its source material. Vampire is set in a version of the modern world with the addition of supernatural races hiding from mankind, fighting behind the scenes, and always taking care to preserve humanity's belief that they do not exist.

Therefore, live Vampire is about characters who appear human in a modern setting, whose powers are subtle and should not be obvious to those around them. While props, effects, staged combats and costuming for the less normal-looking vampires can add to the games' atmosphere, they aren't needed to provide the sense of being there. All you need is reasonably good acting from the players, a light rules system, and it not to be bright daylight.

Conversely, the live event on the first of two nights of *Compulsion 2001*, a games convention staged annually by Edinburgh University gamers, was organised by the local branch of a national live gaming society, and based on **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, set 1000 years ago. While the society's rules system was reasonably fast and unobtrusive (I've seen much worse) the atmosphere was non-existent. The players were in a modern room, largely in modern dress apart from three members of the society, two of whom were in costumes too late for the historical period and two of whom spoiled the effect by wearing glasses. A small box of costume parts was available, enough for everyone to have a tabard or jerkin, but these were unimpressive and did not have nearly enough black for Vampire. The token Nosferatu (a type of vampire known for their inhuman appearance) character looked no different from any other player. Why make him a Nosferatu at all?

I am hard on live games because, with effort, they can be remarkable events. I know first-hand that they can be as entertaining to a receptive audience as a grandiose special effects showcase. If LARP organisers are aware of their limitations, they can work wonders.

One of the firstLARPs I took part in was a Vampire live game where forty invited players arrived in groups based on their vampire 'clan' allegiance. All were in costume as modern members of undead society, and we took over a well-appointed flat that had been prepared for the event several days in advance. Furniture and props, such as a grand chair which acted as the throne of the city's vampire Princes, had been arranged. The we had some 'special effects', such as the city's sole Nosferatu being a creature with ashen grey skin dressed in a ragged tailcoat and bent top hat, and the Prince's will being delivered to the characters on video.

The amount of effort put in by the organisers has permanently affected my view of live games. They can and in my view should be events: theatrical, grand and impressive. They can be spectacular with some thought and effort, even with no real budget. I judge otherLARPs and freeforms harshly because of this, but this is because I enjoyed this game immensely - here I am writing about it nearly a decade later - and more gamers should have the chance to experience events like this.

[There are some interesting d20 compatible rules for a Star Wars based LARP to be found at <http://www.geocities.com/nuelow/swlarp.html>. Designed by Andrew Lepperd with art by Joe Corroney and LFL Archives.]



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# How to Make Your Own Zine

*Extracts from the booklet by ROBERT REES ...*

**Carol Mulholland** provides the linking text ...

*Robert produces an RPG magazine ('zine', pronounced 'zeen') called carnel in England. We think that the advice and information that he has put together as a small booklet will help anyone who wants to edit a hobby zine of his/her own, whatever the subject. However, we haven't room to include the whole text here. So we've selected some extracts, and can advise those of you who are really intrigued by the possibility of running a zine of your own to consult his full text on his website at:*

<http://carnel.sdf-eu.org/metazine/index.html>

*We're always happy to publicise zines in Flagship. They show how strong the effects of a game or genre can be, and they may often include material that we don't normally publish, like new stats, new scenarios and game-based fiction. It's always inspiring to encounter enthusiasm, and a good zine can produce an equally enthusiastic response from its readers!*

## Starting your zine

So you want to create your own zine - congratulations! This is an attempt to make your first issue a lot easier by providing a path past the pitfalls that have caught all of us out at one time or another. I hope you find it useful.

If you want to start your own zine then you probably have some ideas about what you are going to put in it. There are no hard and fast rules as to what kind of content makes a great zine (or even a good one) however whatever you choose to put in your zine you had better enjoy writing about it, illustrating it, checking through it and generally spending all your free time with it.

Some people say that you should make sure you put at least one D&D article in or give some attention to other 'big systems'. This, however, misses the fact that if you find yourself bored you are never going to finish your first issue. If you love D&D then write about it, if you love Vampire, Exalted, GURPS or any other system then write about them as well. Don't write about

something you are not interested in even if you think that it might help sell your zine to other people.

My advice for the kind of articles to include is to go with pieces that relate to your game, whether that be character write ups, scenarios you have played through, villains the party have faced, places they have visited. Making your zine an extension of your game makes it more interesting to do and you can get the other players in your group to help out.

Try to avoid reviews unless you have something special to say about a product. There are lots of reviews available on the Internet already and the art of writing a really good review is a difficult one to master.

Have fun and keep at it.

*Robert proceeds to give vital advice about creating a zine both with a computer and without one, but we'll pick him up again where he talks about layout...*

## Layout

Layout is a bit of a broad term in zines but essentially it means the way things look on the page: whether your zine name is at the top of the page, whether you use sidebars, how pictures are put next to the text and where the page numbers are (at the bottom, at the corners...).

An easy technique to liven up text in a scenario or article is to 'box' some of the text, say the statistics of a monster or a piece of the article that is at a bit of tangent. Simply select the text and then select Format|Paragraph

from the menu. Go to the Borders tab and select the open box in the Line Arrangement section and the 2.5 width line in the Line section. The line may seem a little thick but remember that it will be smaller when printed. Select the Background tab, click on the Light Gray colour square. This will fill the text with a highlight.

Wrapping text around pictures is a little more complex but essentially you can just right-click on the picture and select Format|Wrap|Edit.

Page numbers and headers and footers are slightly more complex and for your first zine you should probably just cheat and write the page numbers in with a felt tip after you have printed it.

If you decide to produce zines regularly you will find it a lot of help to have a template for your zine that has a number of text styles that you use again and again. Unfortunately, creating a template tends to be quite different between different word processors. Most have a decent amount of documentation on the topic though.

If your zine has A4 sized pages then try to avoid having a big page of undifferentiated text. Instead use a two-column layout or break up the text with sub-headings. You may want to do both.

*Attractive layout helps to make your magazine look well-thought-out and worth buying, of course. Is it worth registering its name? In the UK, this is how to do it ...*

## ISSN numbers

If you are really serious about your zine then you might want to get hold of an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). These are free and are obtained by sending a copy of your zine to the British Library at ISSN UK Centre, The British Library, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ. Once you have your number then all you have to do is send copies of your zine to the British Library when you publish them.

An ISSN is only moderately useful if you are just producing an irregular fanzine but extremely useful if you want to produce a magazine that is stocked by distributors. It also protects your rights to produce a magazine under the name you are using, handy if you have a really good name for your zine. Don't worry about an ISSN for your first issue; if things take off, think about it.

*And now for the important stage of ...*

## Having your zine printed

For your first zine it is sensible to stick to photocopying your zine and finishing it by hand. Unless you are selling hundreds of copies it is likely that this will be the cheapest and easiest option. You can try to use a self-service photocopier to make your zine but it is often a lot more convenient to take it to a copy shop instead and let the staff battle with the photocopier instead. In general the price will also be the same. For your first issue you probably want to print thirty to fifty copies depending on how many you are going to give away and how many you want to try and sell.

The cheapest photocopying is usually offered by community centres, colleges, universities and student unions. If you have any of these where you live it is worth giving them a ring (ask for the Print Room or Print Services if ringing reception) and seeing if they take 'private' jobs. If you are member of any of these organisations they will normally charge you at reduced rate. Assuming that you cannot find anywhere like this in your area it might be worth going to a commercial copy shop. These do tend to



be quite expensive though and you have to be prepared to visit a few of them for quotes and then go back and see if they can beat your lowest quote. Photocopying can be quite a competitive business so you can often find some good deals, once you do stick with the same shop until you want to print more or they try to raise the price and then repeat the whole process again. You can use the website [www.printpricer.co.uk](http://www.printpricer.co.uk) to get printing quotes from all over the UK. As with most printers the more copies you print in one go (called 'the print run'), the cheaper the price for each individual copy will be.

*Then follows practical advice about collating and stapling copies, then ideas for promoting and selling your zine. There's advice about getting into shops and using the web, and let's mention here that Robert himself runs a website called Metazine*

[carnel.sdf-eu.org/metazine](http://carnel.sdf-eu.org/metazine)

*which will help with publicity. I'll add a note that it's worth contacting a game's producers if you're writing about their game: send them a sample copy ...*

### What next? Or the Second Issue

Okay, so you have written your first zine, had it reviewed, maybe sold a few copies and perhaps your zine is now in a few game stores. What next? Well the first important thing to say is 'don't worry'! That may seem a bit negative, but many people find it hard to get going on their second issue. If you're raring to go then feel free to skip onto the next section.

Maybe you have had a bad review or you haven't sold as many copies as you had hoped. Perhaps despite giving away all your zines you have had no feedback at all. Starting a zine can be the most difficult time in the whole business of creating and writing a zine but the important thing to do is stick with it.

Learn from the first issue and put that experience into your next issue.

*Robert proceeds to advise about keeping careful records of subscribers. What if they write to you? Here's his advice about ...*

### Readers' letters

If you receive any letters from people who have read your zine (and don't worry if you don't), you should try to respond. You may also want to print the letter, or parts of it, in your zine. Publishing and responding to letters helps build a sense of community in the readers of your zine and encourages others to write in with their views. Generally, readers feel more involved with a zine if they are able to have their say within the zine itself. Letters pages are also a useful place for discussions about the articles you print and to put any general information about the zine that does not seem to fit in anywhere else.

*Robert moves on to consider the necessity of gathering material for future issues ...*

### Contributors

Hopefully once your zine gets beyond its early issues, you will get people who want to contribute articles and other pieces to the zine. Having contributors certainly makes the task of producing a zine a lot easier than it would otherwise be, but does bring some problems as well.

Most zine creators are also editors in that they read through, correct and work with contributors to make the contribution as good as it can possibly be. Good editors should never try to rewrite an article they are editing. Instead, they look for any weak areas in an article, things like incorrect book titles, unattributed quotes or more specifically to roleplaying incorrect stats, rules or plot holes in scenarios. Whenever the editor spots a mistake or potential problem they should generally not change it but note it down and then give the author a list of all the things they have noticed. The editor should always give the author the chance to correct their own work.

What do you do if the article is simply not all that good? Or on a topic that is not suitable for your zine? Remember that you are in charge of your zine and you choose what does or doesn't get in to it. Always be polite but if something is not right for you then say so. Try and suggest another zine where it might be more suited rather than just turning someone down flat. You might also want to explain what kind of material you are interested in so that if the contributor has a different idea in future they will know

you are interested and bring it to you before anyone else.

*Robert discusses whether contributors should be paid (not usually!), John Foody of **Warpstone** adds notes about artists and Spike R. Jones argues that there's still a place for paper zines in this electronic age. All essential information, but you'll need to look up the whole text on Robert's website, as listed at the start. There's only room for a taste here. Let's just end with ...*

### The Ten Zine Commandments

And so we come to the last little piece of this booklet of advice and here are collected ten pithy points of advice from several zine editors. You can listen to them now or you can make all the mistakes first and then recognise what good advice this is.

1. Always credit contributors. This is true on all things.
2. Treat your artists well, especially the good ones.
3. Get your zine proof-read by someone other than you.
4. Be regular: even if this means just once each year.
5. Do not just stop. It is not good to stop without warning but it is worse to disappear when readers have paid you subscriptions.
6. Always respond to submissions.
7. Listen to your critics but don't always do what they say.
8. Go for the best writing, art and layout you can afford but go no further than that.
9. Don't expect to make any money!
10. Enjoy what you do; please yourself first and everyone else second.

*Flagship itself is a paper production, of course, but is the web the way forward for zines? We'll be running an article about developing a zine/game website soon ...*

## THE LANDS OF ELVARIA



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Website: [Http://groups.msn.com/elvaria](http://groups.msn.com/elvaria)

# Fall of Rome

## The Authenticity Aspect

**RICK MCDOWELL** on the designer's conundrum in creating an historical game ...

LAST ISSUE in *The Mighty Pen*, Chris Morris raised some questions about the review in Flagship issue #110 that referred to **Fall of Rome** as being extensively researched and stated that, 'The names of regions, cities, towns and characters are authentic and the kingdoms are equipped with the appropriate troops for the kingdom.' The remainder of the excellent review dealt with game play, strategic depth, the GUI, and does also mention artifacts like the Holy Grail or the Spear of Mars. Chris takes exception to these in a historical game. He also makes the argument that 'generic' game systems should 'not pass them(selves) off as a game based on a specific situation.'

While it appears many of our players would actually have preferred less of an historical emphasis, being generally not overly concerned about the specifics or the more difficult pronunciations the old names require (the Roman 'Lugdunum' instead of modern Lyon, for example), I am happy to have occasion to discuss the historical elements! The bibliography for the game is extensive and includes classic sources such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire* as well as lesser known scholarly works like *The Goths* by Heather, *The Barbarian Invasions* by Delbruck, and many historical atlases as well as online sources. Why? Because no one, or even four, works contains the body of work necessary to create Fall of Rome. For example, while Gibbon's work is one of the best in all of literature, it was not his aim to explore the characteristics of the various Barbarian tribes, and while a few maps are included, they are not extensive nor specifically suited to the specific 70 year period from AD410 to 480 that is the subject of the Fall of Rome.

### The Map

The map began as a topographical map of much of Western Europe. We turned the continent about 40 degrees to provide a suitable rectangular map



that provides coastline but minimizes water area. We drew boundaries for twelve historical regions, each of which would be the home for one of the twelve positions in the game. The names of the major cities and towns are those of the time. Then we needed to take some liberties to create an exciting game, rather than simply an historical reference map. For example, we reduced the 'volume' of the Alps, we moved cities some miles

from where they were historically in the interest of play balance and to have a distribution of these across the various terrain types. The regions also were made roughly the same size, although they were not so historically, again in the interest of making a good competitive game for twelve players. See the historical map at <http://fallofromegame.com/maps.asp>.

### The Tribes

Tracing the history of the barbarian tribes of Europe is again a scholarly work. There is no one source that traces them all. Our design places twelve historic tribes on our map in a region in which they existed at some point in their migration. The Huns begin in the east, the Celts in the north west. Even choosing the Celts was not a simple choice – this tribe was initially

to be called the Britons. But research indicated the Celts still has a presence in modern Brittany at our time period. As if finding the twelve most suitable tribes of the time and placing them accurately on the map was not enough, to get an historically accurate picture of how their warriors fought was even more difficult. Yet we were able to differentiate the kingdoms as to their military composition. Some were easy, such as the Huns featuring steppe pony mounted horse archers using unique recurved bows, or the Franks featuring heavy infantry and their special weapon, the Fransisca. We had to dig for some of the rest. For example, the Celts feature light infantry for the most part, but also some elite cavalry, representing the knights of Arthur and other warlords. To illustrate how the warriors and the styles play out in the game, I have attached this portion of a battle report: the full report would be about three times as long and lay out the force composition, leaders, artifacts and tactics used prior to beginning the account of the battle (see facing page).

### The Artifacts

Some might argue that mythical artifacts such as Excalibur, The Holy Grail, The Sword of Mars, or Gungnir Lance of Odin (referenced in the battle report) don't belong in an historical strategy / RPG. Then there are others among us who are instead awed as to the persistence of ancient mythology in our daily lives today, and how the legends of those old times survive today, well beyond in many cases the historical characters that surrounded them. Why would we include 'Gungnir, Lance of Odin', and a tale of its mythology rather than come up with a generic 'Lance of Slaying'? Because the myth of Gungnir was important to the Norse and Teuton peoples of the age, and told stories about it to their children that survive today. The Sword of Mars was supposedly found by Attila and his people's belief in this was key to his ascension to power among the Huns. Stories of the Holy Grail persist today, and scholars devote their life to its study, as revealed most currently in the colossal best seller *'The Da Vinci Code'* by Dan Brown. Where do the days of the week come from? The names of Norse Gods. The months of the year? Roman Gods. Planets? Roman Gods. Christmas traditions like holley, red and green ribbons, decorated trees, feasts? Nature worshippers.

### The Kings and their Court

Having identified the tribes themselves, now the task arose of choosing the most influential leader of that people who can be placed (even if at a bit of a stretch) in our milieu. This turned out to be one of the moments of serendipity in the design. I was really tickled that so many well known (in the Dark Ages, this is a relative term) leaders were contemporaries. Ten of our twelve kings fit in our 70 year period, and we cheated a bit for a couple others, but not by much. How many would have expected that King Arthur and Attila the Hun lived at the same time? Of course, it is not a certainty that Arthur existed at all, but I was quite pleased that when the 2004 movie "King Arthur" came out after Fall of Rome was already in beta testing, that the producers placed Arthur *exactly* as I had: living as King of the Celts in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and not as some less serious works of the legends did, as late as in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Not only is the King historic, but his supporting characters, in every instance possible, are the names of his heirs, rivals, or important generals. Again, finding history on these fellows was no easy task. Something on each king and his people can be found on our site at <http://fallofromegame.com/kingdoms.asp>. Rest assured, assembling just this page took weeks of work to get it right.

*Attila commanded an empire greater even than the Romans, stretching from China in the east, to Gaul in the west and Italy in the south. Leaving*



### Battle between Visigoth Legion Scorn and Vandal Legion Armageddon in the plains of Gaul

<b>Kingdom</b>	Visigoth	Vandals
<b>Legion</b>	<b>Scorn</b>	<b>Armageddon</b>
<b>Commanders</b>	Warlord Alaric, wielding The Spear of Longinus The Shield of Nuodung Captain Hapsdrua	Warlord Gaiseric, wielding Gungnir, Lance of Odin The Helm of Awe Commander Ganior Centurion Odrus
<b>Troops</b>	1664 Light Infantry 1556 Medium Infantry 927 Heavy Infantry 464 Guards Infantry 2373 Medium Cavalry 927 Heavy Cavalry 464 Elite Cavalry 1502 Missilers 217 Light Cavalry 54 Bowmen 54 Horse Archers	3116 Light Infantry 2619 Medium Infantry 3335 Light Cavalry 1185 Medium Cavalry 1433 Missilers 248 Bowmen 1185 Horse Archers 468 Elite Cavalry
<b>Kingdom-named brigades</b>	5	5
<b>Other brigades</b>	1 Burgundians	3 Burgundians
<b>Tactical Selection</b>	Standard Battle Plan	Organized Withdrawal
<b>Notes</b>	High attrition Very high morale Fast speed Daunting defense Mostly elite troops	Some attrition Very fast speed Good defense Mostly experienced troops

At the first light of dawn, Alaric surveyed the defensive position that Gaiseric instructed his troops to hold. With a startling blast of bone horns, Scorn began the attack upon Armageddon.

At long range the Visigoths raced to engage, hoping to shorten the effect of missiles which they regarded as cowardly. Yet some had spears they then let fly. The Vandals had horse archers among them which loosed their arrows. They inflicted minor damage to the ranks of their enemy. As the two sides neared each other, the archers of the Vandals force imposed substantial damage to the position of the Scorn, as missiles from the Visigoth force caused noticeable losses in a tenacious display.

The outcome of the battle was still very much in doubt. Quickly Alaric led the renowned and sinister helmed horsemen of the Visigoth on their fine stallions charging towards the position of Armageddon. Quickly all in the engagement could see the damage Gungnir, the Lance of Odin wielded by King Gaiseric had dealt in the fight. The Visigoth riders imposed substantial losses in the cavalry charge. In response, the Vandals horsemen claimed noticeable casualties to their opponent.

With higher than expected losses, Gaiseric had no choice but to order Armageddon to withdraw. Gaiseric's plan for an organized withdrawal succeeded. Armageddon suffered few losses in retreat. However, losses to the more experienced brigades of Armageddon were somewhat higher than normal as these brigades provided the holding action necessary

'Huns – kill and plunder, Germans – look for land and towns.' I whole-heartedly agree that a long dormant aspect in game design is the creation of unique and interesting victory conditions. For many years, we seemed stuck with games that require conquering the entire world or eliminating every foe (or nearly so) as the condition by which all must win. This not only is completely unimaginative, it is boring to the players where the eventual victor is usually clear long before that condition is met, and the condition itself is implausible in nearly any serious game. To the best of my knowledge, my mid 1980s game **Alamaze** was the first game to introduce the idea of Secret Victory Conditions. In **Alamaze**, this was something like Chris mentions, ie, the victory condition was set for the position by the designer. But in **Fall of Rome**, we allow each player to choose his victory condition from a roster of possibilities, and he has until the third turn of the game to make his choice. So while the Teutons might choose our 'Visionary' victory condition, he might also choose 'The Mastermind' or 'The Conquering Hero', each of which emphasizes a different aspect of the game system and provides for great role playing opportunities, and very distinctly affects the player's strategic choices throughout the game. Meanwhile, all players can win by 'The Rex' (sole Ruler), but in our case this means having control of *three* of the twelve regions on the map, rather than the expected twelve. All victory conditions have won games, including 'The Lion's Share', which awards victory to the top point scorer after turn 24 if no player has won the game by that point.



*in his wake a hundred burning towns with countless dead, he was viewed by the Church in Rome as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelations: the coming of the Apocalypse, and was named "The Scourge of God". More feared and vividly recalled than any other people of the Age, the Huns precipitated the Roman decline by driving other terrified peoples into Roman lands, and directly threatened both Constantinople and Rome. His presence was said to be so terrible that even the strongest of his many vassals were unable to look him in the eye.*

*The Huns begin the game with Pannonia as their primary base. Now at their power apogee under Attila, they begin the campaign with one brigade more than nearly all their opponents. Their brigades feature horse archers and light cavalry moving at exceptional speed, and packing awesome archery capability. However, they are ill-equipped to efficiently capture strong population centers, so a successful Hun player will not overlook the abilities of his Court. Clever use of tactics and an awareness of terrain will be important to optimize Attila's chance for victory in the battlefield.*

#### Victory

Chris Morris also laments the lack of different objectives for different positions in most games, and mentions he found them in a game he tried,

#### Historical vs Generic

It can be argued that various game systems can be mutated into different periods or even genres. Some would argue that this means a weaker presentation of any specific setting. Hmm. Let's look at a few franchises: Sid Meier's **Civilization** series, the first of which won the *Origins* award for best game of its type two years after **Alamaze** won its best game award has seen a number of mutations, including the futuristic **Alpha Centauri** and the more limited scope and genre-crossing **The Conquests**. The award winning **Age of Empires** has reinvented its engine as the **Age of Kings** and the **Age of Mythology**. Best selling **Warcraft** has been reinvented in space as **Starcraft**. The public speaks with its pocketbooks: all of these are colossal best sellers and widely regarded as among the best games of all-time. The argument might be taken to a battle simulation game more successfully than it is applied to a strategy game encompassing many elements of play, such as military, political, covert, economic, diplomatic, as well as thematic, as is the case in **Fall of Rome**.

In the late 1980's I wrote an article addressing game design (it might have been in *Flagship*!) that held to certain precepts:

- Create abundant interesting and difficult choices for the players
- Strive for verisimilitude without compromising game play
- Achieve play balance without resorting to generic positions
- A game should have a winner (be close-ended) while supplying tension to the end.

I hope you find we have held to these precepts in the design and implementation of **Fall of Rome** ([www.fallofrome.com](http://www.fallofrome.com)). Hope to see you on its battlefields!

# Diplomacy

*MANUS HAND runs the Diplomatic Pouch, an online zine and website, which is dedicated to Diplomacy and all its legion of Variants ...*

THE GAME of **Diplomacy** was invented by Allan Calhamer over a period of years, taking its final form in the mid- to late 1950s. Mr Calhamer marketed the game privately for a time, and then through various game companies. *Hasbro Inc* now holds the rights to the game.

While Hasbro forbids the publication of the rules of Diplomacy (an understandable protection of their copyright), players of the game are of course free to instruct you as to play using their own words. The rules are so simple that it is very possible to learn the game this way. I will not attempt here to tell you how the game is played, instead offering only a brief description of the game. I encourage you to purchase the Rules to Diplomacy from Hasbro, if not a complete gameset. Diplomacy is available in all respected game stores.

## So what is Diplomacy?

The standard game of Diplomacy is set in the Europe of the early 20th century, and is played by seven players, each taking the part of one of the Great European Powers of that age. Players order two types of units (armies and fleets) into combat against each other in a war for control of Europe. This control is symbolized by ownership of 'supply centers' (or SCs), of which there are 34 on the Diplomacy board. Control of a majority of supply centers will bring a player victory.

Diplomacy has been called 'the chameleon game', because from the basic ruleset any number of new variant games have been and can be invented.

Diplomacy has been played person-to-person over a gameboard since its invention, and a number of tournaments (including annually-scheduled national and world championships) are held regularly for face-to-face players. Long ago, Diplomacy was adapted for through-the-mail play by John Boardman, and many postal games have been played ever since, with the moves made in each game published issue by issue in a great number of postal magazines ('zines') which are produced by hobbyists worldwide. With the development of electronic mail, Ken Lowe wrote an automated Diplomacy move adjudicator, which also routes diplomatic mail messages to the various players and enforces deadlines for the reception of orders. This system is used by a growing multitude of play-by-e-mail hobbyists.

The beauty of the game of Diplomacy lies not in the tactics of the movement of the pieces on the board, but in the fact that these movements are simultaneous, meaning that the orders of all players are executed at the same time on each turn. Whose moves succeed and whose fail are easily determined by the simple rules of the game which permit and govern the combination of multiple units to strengthen (or weaken) any single move or other action.

Crowning all this, however, is the fact that any player of the game is lost without allies. To play the game without receiving assistance from the

pieces owned by other players and without lending assistance to other players' pieces is to set yourself up for failure. Indeed, the most important part of the game is the wide-open, free-for-all, promise-the-moon negotiations which occur before each move; negotiations which establish alliances, elaborate war plans, and backstabs.

Backstabs? Yes, because regardless of what a player promises to do before the turn, what he actually does is wholly determined by the secret orders he submits for his pieces.

Combining with other players to defeat a common foe, secretly arranging peace with the enemy, and suddenly turning on your ally, who has trusted you and worked with you since the first move, is all part of the game. All's fair in love and war, so the saying goes, and in Diplomacy, one is often simply a mask for the other.

The final outcome of a game of Diplomacy is always the responsibility -- for better or worse -- of each player. Diplomacy offers a totally chanceless (there are no dice to roll, no tables to consult, no random events to deal with) competition of wits and wiles.

## The Diplomatic Pouch?

This is one of the main home pages for Diplomacy on the Internet. It exists in part to invite, welcome, and escort new players into the Hobby. <http://www.diplom.org/>

The majority of The Pouch, however, exists for the education, entertainment, and edification of the players of the game, amongst whom we hope to be able to count you soon. Though the rules of the game are astonishingly simple, the game is tremendously complex, and is an unending subject of widely disparate discussions. The Diplomatic Pouch offers the Diplomacy player a fountain of information on all aspects of the hobby.

The Pouch provides players of the game in all its forms - face-to-face, postal, and e-mail - a location where their hobby is discussed and where events are announced. Additionally, The Pouch regularly publishes a 'zine' which contains articles generally of interest to a player involved in any forum of gameplay, discussing everything from the strategy and tactics of Diplomacy to the personalities of the hobby. Beyond this, The Pouch provides an area where individual games are publicly played or reviewed, giving observers of the game the benefit of first-hand knowledge and experience. Finally, The Pouch houses a plethora of links to other Diplomacy-related sites on the Net, and maintains a library of reference documents useful to the player.

## How can I get started?

As mentioned above, The Diplomatic Pouch contains an Online Resources section, where links to the various sources of information on the hobby are categorised for your ease. You should make the Getting Started page in the Online Resources section your first stop on your journey into the Diplomacy hobby. There you will find information, which is slanted a bit toward assistance in entering the play-by-e-mail (PBEM) hobby, but you will also find some useful information for every new player.

If you have any questions about the game, feel free to ask anyone on the DP Council (the maintainers of The Diplomatic Pouch), or to make proper use of the newsgroup *rec.games.diplomacy*, which serves the hobby.

If I haven't convinced you by now to join the Diplomacy community, then the failing is mine alone. I cannot do the game justice in this short article, and you are urged to overlook my shortcomings and to investigate the game of Diplomacy further. I can guarantee that you will be hooked on the game if you do.

## Diplomacy at a glance

Manus Hand writes ... 'The premise is simple: conquer Europe through diplomacy, negotiation, and strategy. It is the turn of the century and seven Great Powers of Europe are gathered around the negotiation table. Whom do you trust? What do you promise? When do you strike out on your own? Do you stab your ally before you are stabbed first?

In Diplomacy, there is a period of negotiation, followed by a order-writing phase and only the written orders matter. There is no luck in Diplomacy. No dice. No randomness. Only the ability to manipulate friends, outguess enemies, and persuade neutrals.'





# THE MIGHTY PEN

## Distasteful games?

I'm not sure that I agree completely with Globetrotter's rejection of disaster scenarios for games, last issue. Yes, the press might - and probably would - accuse gamers of being zombies for choosing to play, but I think that an interest in experiencing some ghastly disaster from a safe distance isn't entirely ghoulish.

Even though most of us see games-playing as a form of relaxation, I have played some games to be scared.

I wonder whether maybe the problem is with the words 'play' and 'game' rather than with the actual subject matter? Perhaps we're wrong to think that turning something into a game trivialises it?

**Lewis Summers**

*[I think that making a game out of a real disaster in which helpless people were killed really would trivialise their suffering. I prefer some distance of time for the setting of a game, myself, or complete fiction. But then, I'm not too keen on movies or books about real disasters, either. What do other readers think?]*

## Political campaigners

Paul Appleby's plea for sympathy made me realise that it can't be much fun to wander from doorstep to doorstep as a political hobbyist.

Good for you, Paul! Someone's gotta do it! So feel free to leave me a leaflet. Just don't ring the doorbell while I'm watching TV.

**Trevor Marshall**

## Suggestions for the website

A thought: How about a section for general gaming, not the specifics? Just about any old thing related to gaming?

**Terry Crook**

*[Good idea! We'll add in a section on the forum where people can discuss general gaming issues. We're always happy to hear your suggestions and, where possible, will be happy to implement them.]*

Apart from the articles, themselves, have you guys given any consideration to having current magazine ads published on the magazine's website?

**'Hoar of Hell'**

*[Yes, we are negotiating with advertisers with a view to having gaming adverts on the website. In fact we already have one advertising button. Of course Website advertising works slightly differently to the paper version, but we will certainly be hoping to cover the cost of the website through advertising.]*

## Writing for Flagship

I found the stuff you wrote in #110 about becoming a reviewer interesting. Thing is, I've not written anything longer than game orders and an occasional short email for years now.

So I'll daydream that I've polished off three pages of profound and witty insights for the next issue - but I'll stick to supplying an occasional comment for *Rumours from the Front*. Sorry!

**Name supplied to editor**

*[Aw, c'mon, fulfil your daydreams! But of course Rumours' comments are very much welcomed, too - we can always do with these!]*

## Feedback on Issue #111

YOU RATED last issue at 7.8, a fairly high average which includes some very different opinions about it. 'Nothing wrong with it really, except that a lot of it just happened to be on games I'm not really interested in,' sighs **Bill Moore**; 'Enjoyed issue 111 very much indeed. Certainly plenty of diversity covered all aspects of gaming,' cheers **Michael Grant**. Several of you praise its appearance as much as its contents.

There's still a strong feeling for *Rumours from the Front* as your favourite section in the magazine: 'This is the best place to find out people's true impressions, all in handy bite-sized pieces,' says **J Thompson**. *Newsdesk* is also a favourite, and you seem to have been favourably impressed by the weightier-than-usual discussions in last issue's *Mighty Pen*. It's cheering to note that our usual features give satisfaction! Our regular columnists, too, were all praised: 'Lisa Fordham, Globetrotter, Eric Ridley and Pevans (that's in no particular order) - I always turn to them first. They're great. Don't lose them!' says **Pete Moore**.

Your choice of favourite article varies, but several of you reckon that the piece by Peter Burley describing his efforts to launch his own boardgame was a good one: 'Both inspiring and discouraging, because without going into it, I've always thought that this must be an easy thing to do,' reckons **Barry Tate**, 'He's got lots of determination! I'd never get half as far!'

Bob McLain's article introducing trading card games meets a mixed reception. **J Thompson** enjoys its 'lively style. I hesitated when I saw the title, because it's a sort of game that I've never played and only heard about in a negative sort of way. But now all is clear and if I were twenty years younger...' **Bill Moore**, on the other hand, sighs, 'Fraid not even the mighty Bob can interest me in card games (OK, I admit it, I have no friends - I live in Aberystwyth!).' But at least none of you rejects the article altogether.

We wondered whether you'd approve of as many as three articles on three separate game conventions, after a busy autumn for these, but there were no objections. 'Having small children, I never seem to be able to make it to a convention,' explains **Jack Bryson**, 'but it's interesting to hear what goes on.'

For question 4, we asked what sort of games you'd like to see more coverage of in *Flagship*. 'Be nice to have a bit more on the online stuff (turn-based and real-time),' suggests **Bill Moore**, 'You seem to have plenty on "traditional" PBM/PBeM games and MMORPGs but there seem to be a lot of games out there "in-between" these that aren't covered as much.' **Jack Gibbs** is 'sad to see Colin Forbes' series finish. Will he come back with more? We'll do our best! And if any of you readers know about games we've not covered or only mentioned briefly, then do get in touch.

For question 5 we asked whether you'd use *Flagship* coverage to buy a game for Christmas. 45.7% of you don't buy games for Christmas, which seems a shame when it's so easy, though **Ed Goodman** points out that 'it's hard to pick a specific new game when my family's ages range from seven to seventy; so we tend to dig out the old favourites.' 20.4% buy games for yourself ('to play them with my brothers and friends, of course,' says **Barry Tate**) and a fairly substantial 34.8% of you buy games to give away as presents.

For question 6, we asked if you pick a new game mainly because (a) it's favourably reviewed, (b) there are favourable comments in *Rumours*, (c) if there's an attractive ad, (d) only if you're already looking for a new game. But oh dear, we left out the option of picking a game on the recommendation of the players you're friends with, which must be a pretty influential element. Option (d) was by far the favourite of those that we did list. **Bill Moore**, for instance, reports that, 'I usually trawl the last few issues of *Flagship* when I'm looking for a new game. That's how I ended up with Serim Ral this time - I thought Legends, Eldritch and SR looked interesting from 'Rumours' and the like, printed out the rules from their GM's websites and selected SR on the basis it had the least intimidating rulebook.'

Finally, question 7 picked up the matter of historical authenticity, as discussed in issue 111's *Mighty Pen*. 'I like history well enough, but

playability's the main thing,' says **Ed Goodman**. 'I dislike magical elements in historical games. Give me purely military decisions! Magic is for elves and the like - I see myself as a general rather than some pointy-hatted wizard,' says **Barry Tate**. 'I'm not fussy myself, never was much of a purist,' says **Bill Moore**, 'Magic can add something to an otherwise fairly staid game, but it can also make things more confusing. Depends how it's done.'

It's good to see such a multitude of conflicting opinions. I'm someone who tends to agree indecisively with whoever speaks last in serious matters, but with games-playing it's good to hear different voices. Many thanks to all who replied, even if there's not been room to quote you.

#### Feedback on issue 112

1 - Please rate this issue from 1 (queasy) to 10 (quintessential).

2 - Which articles/sections did you most enjoy, and why?

3 - Which bored you, and why?

4 - Do you look at our website?

(a) No, I'm happy to stay a paper and ink person,

(b) I don't have broadband, so avoid websites,

(c) Yes, it seems a useful way to present so much material,

(d) I want it to bring new people into the games I play,

(e) I check it when I'm looking for a new game.

5 - We've reported on various types of web-based games for some time now. Should we

(a) Add them permanently to *Galactic View*,

(b) List them from time to time, like we did with many types of game in issue #110,

(c) Be sure to include the types of information about subject-matter that we do in *GV*,

(d) Just list the website addresses, and leave readers to look them up?

[Replies welcomed by surface mail to the UK office, or by email to [carol@pbmgames.com](mailto:carol@pbmgames.com). By March 9th, please.]

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## RUMOURS FROM THE FRONT

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

**Comments received from December 10th**

Liselle Awwal, Terry Crook, Neil Edge, Janine Garrison, Mike Garrison, Michael Grant, Damon Howard, Jim Kemeny, Ian Miles, Kerry Miles, Bill Moore, Carol Mulholland, Chris Petersen, John Richards, Sam Roads, Robert Treadwell, Wayne Yeadon.

### TURN BASED GAMES

#### Absolute Heroes (Jade Enterprises)

**Robert Treadwell** - 'Have joined Absolute Heroes and created a supervillain team - just finding my feet in the game at the mo, but help has been offered from other players and the GM John Davies helps when you need a question asking. The Cyber Rats (my team) are hosting a media event to celebrate the clothing deal with a well known sweatshop company - we are villains after all. Will forward the report to you so you can see what fun and games happen.'

#### Aspects Of Might (Silver Dreamer)

**Michael Grant** - 'With Malachai Sicklemoon's trusty old backpack finally de-cluttered, it was time for him to do some exploring. Wolves have constantly dogged his course on the way to investigate ruins in the Daggle Woods at the northwestern corner of the Lakham Peninsula. Ever they seek and snap at him! Why do they come so relentlessly? Does our mutual moon-worship bait them? Must he eternally slay them with slingshot and spear in an effort to be free?'

#### Campaign of Nyctea (Gemynd online)

**Bill Moore** - 'Anyone out there playing this? It got recommended to me by someone I met in another game, and I notice that Colin Forbes mentions Campaign of Nyctea in #108, in his excellent little series on on-line games available. Just from looking at the rules, it seems fairly a 'Quest'-like fantasy game for up to six characters. Available from

<http://www.gemynd.com>

Might be interesting to hear from someone else who's tried it.'

*[More comments will be welcomed, of course!]*

#### Destiny (Madhouse)

**Robert Treadwell** - 'The alien mother ship has been stopped, and marines and other characters are now landing on the ship to do battle with the aliens. However, reports show that the aliens are counteracting at the moment.'

#### Dragonwars (Extreme Web Games)

**Bill Moore** - 'I decided to try Dragonwars from k00l.net from the description in Newsdesk #110. Though I play mostly by e-mail these days, I haven't tried a purely web-based game before and it sounded interesting.

*First impressions?* Well, it does look like a fairly basic type of game at the start - it seems you need to do a lot of levelling up by tackling low level monsters to get anywhere (Very 'Final Fantasy'-ish). There are also some annoying quirks with the play, although since I'm new to them, some of the problems may just be inherent to on-line games (the need to hit refresh all the time is a pain). Stuff like being able to list items by level, except for level 0, which are obviously what you need when you start. Then there's the map movement keys, which just don't quite fit on my screen, so I need to keep scrolling down first every time I move. Perhaps it should really be considered a "semi-play test" really - but it's mostly free, so what do you expect? I'm not sure how much long term appeal it will have, as a fairly simple hack'n'slash game with little detail of fights. I suspect that will depend on how

the more advanced parts like Dungeons, Strongholds and Trade Routes work out and I just haven't got that far into it yet. A work-in-progress at the moment, I'd say, but with some promise...

*Later:* Maybe it was a little rude of me to describe the game as a "semi play-test" last time, as some of the quirks seem to be newbie mistakes by myself. For instance, I was under the impression that the battle system just gave out results (ie "you killed monster X, your health is now Y") rather than giving the usual blow-by-blow account.

Actually, it turns out the description of the battle is further down the screen, and I was missing it because I wasn't scrolling down. Duh! On the other hand, monsters are still rather politely waiting around for my characters to attack them, rather than charging straight at them bent on blood.'

#### Dungeonworld (Madhouse)

**Bill Moore** - 'Back in the main module, my Dryad Tartrazine is heading for "The Dungeon in the Clouds", one of the new areas described in the last issue. Of course, she has to find it first, which isn't so easy when the area is full of troops from nearby Derwent. Not to mention their Giant Metal Men. Scary!'

**Robert Treadwell** - 'At Christmas the GO offered a deal of pay so much into the turn and get a free new character and a new item - a hot air balloon. Fifteen players took up the offer, as we will have a race from the capital (Crownheart) to the nearest city, Lionel. The first three to arrive there get to keep the balloons.

In the estate positions, new sub characters are starting to appear to be offered to estates with such ones as wrynn trainers and a hound master. One that was offered to me this turn was a town planner so you can upgrade your hamlet on your estate. Also, the GM has changed the programming so it shows on the end turn what type of land your character is standing on by the name - a small touch but useful.'

**Michael Grant** - 'I don't think the Giant Ants like adventurers clumsily traipsing through their carefully constructed tunnels. They've been aggressive ever since my Dwarven Warrior first became entangled within the maze of Hell's Deep. It's a good job he's wearing plenty of decent armour for protection or else they'd have sliced and diced him well before now and fed him to their Queen! Not a pleasant death and most certainly not the one I'd ever envisioned upon leaving the Axehand clan!

Stat training is going quite well with Dexterity increasing by 2 points, but Strength looks destined to always remain a wimpy 11. How I dream of high Strength and the bonuses it confers!'

#### DungeonWorld: BrokenLands (Madhouse)

**Michael Grant** - 'Well, we found the Water Elemental we were seeking in the Halls of Stone & Iron! And as was to be expected the critter is proving quite troublesome, to say the very least. It hits hard and fast while being incredibly adept at avoiding our blows. My monk has managed to hit it only once in two turns! And that with the incredibly risky Gung-ho option set! This gives a bonus to attack and damage while reducing all your Defences. Unfortunately, it seems an attack score of 37 is just not good enough. The only good part is that it hasn't focused its attention on a single character, instead sharing it attacks amongst the many adventurers working together against it.'

#### DungeonWorld: Frontier (Madhouse)

**Michael Grant** - 'My heart is filled with joy even within this place of horror and death, for Chunthalaka is alive and has returned to share the warmth of my campfire! And yet my head tells me that all is most definitely not well with him. Health and vitality no longer shine in his eyes, his wounds smell of decay despite our best healing aids and his skin hangs slack and grey. I long for us to walk in the lush jungle once more and feel the wind in our hair and the sun upon our faces. We've been down here in this haunted ruin far too long. Spirit and health sapped in the dank stale air. My Ranger's heart screams to get out! This day despair has wormed its way into my heart... Nature Girl.'

#### Dungeonworld: Kyr (Madhouse)

**Bill Moore** - 'This module seems to be dividing players down the middle. Some like the "Arabian Knights" theme and the fact that all the terrain is relatively unexplored. Others hate that goods have to be purchased from individual shops, rather than a single market, thus whole turns can be required just to purchase one or two items. Then there's the fact that it's a far more lethal environment than the main "Bereny" module and characters get killed regularly. My least favourite niggle is that healing ointments are far more expensive than in Bereny so lots of time has to be spent on scavenging for rations in order to survive. It is - different, though.'

**Michael Grant** - 'The all-powerful RA'IS of Rasiaid has announced his displeasure at a threat to all Kyr from a Dune Raider Warlord known simply

as The Deathbringer! Already his infamy spreads after several adventurers were slain west of the city. The Empire's appointed Necromancer, Bedin Morkas Ah, marches upon the threat, calling for aid from any with the spirit for battle. It is time for us to repay our debt for the generous healing performed many moons ago. We are marching to the west as I speak, but whether we shall return victorious remains to be seen... Al-Qatil the Dervish.'

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

**Carol Mulholland** - 'I posted a set of orders in December, but they went astray in the Christmas post, sigh. So I was eagerly awaiting a response to the replacement orders that I sent last week and yes, they arrived promptly!

My character was at a dangerous point in the game - not that this is particularly unusual. She was poised over the case that holds the ankh that she needs to steal, in Birmingham City Museum. While she hopes to use this to free herself from the invisible but menacing serpent that pursues her, it's not at all clear why her vampire friend Maria needs her aid to obtain the artifact. Maybe because it's too holy for a vampire to touch?

I specified that it seems unwise to trust Maria, and that Alison is nervous of ruining her career prospects by setting off any alarm. So she'll use her scarf to protect her hand when lifting it.

Phew, the results show that Alison and her vampire friend have managed to grab the ankh and escape. There was a problem, though (surprise, surprise): Alison's scarf tipped over a statuette of the cat goddess, Bast, who seemed none-too-pleased at the disrespect. And as they make their way to a chemist for painkillers to ease Alison's wrenched shoulder, three potential muggers approach them...'

### Lands of Elvaria (*Mark Pinder*)

**Damon Howard** - 'I have been playing this game for the last 15 or so years. During that time the game has evolved from a hand-written reply game that had regular turnaround of one to two weeks to an e-mail driven game (although snail mail is still supported) with a rich history and an almost soap opera-like relationship between the characters.

The game has evolved through groups going on related random quests to missions linked to the fate of worlds and a godly revolution. It is now a mature game with rich descriptive overtones, enhanced by the GM's fertile (if devious) imagination and the players' extremely innovative play style. The rules evolve with the characters and there is always an edginess surrounding survival.

It is a game both for hardened RPGers and those who are new to the genre - the players would help and support newbies, they are old enough hands to appreciate new ideas and blood.

All in all, a good replacement for actually having people in your living room - it even stands up against the online games like Everquest, and Final Fantasy XI.

Give it a go: it's fun!'

### Quest (*KJC Games*)

**Wayne Yeadon** - 'G32: Having been forced to close down the Corpus Mundi alliance, mainly due to a lack of interest from players in the game, I was given the option to join with another alliance. Our two remaining Corpus players (myself included) now find ourselves in leading positions in the Union of Shadows alliance, such was the respect given to us. Many thanks to the guys of Union of Shadows for allowing us the chance to live again.

I have taken on the role of alliance Recruiter, a job I have been familiar with in the long distant past. I hope I can still do the job justice and bring in more players for our alliance. This year looks like a more promising one and I thought I was going to be able to take things easy after the fall of Corpus Mundi!

*G31:* Activities within this game have seemingly slowed down for our alliance whilst we piece together various bits of information and follow up leads obtained from alliance quests. It could all kick off big time, though, if we are not careful, so we are at least making suitable preparations for a possible war. There are hints of major happenings with other alliances acting below the surface, steering things to their own objectives.

I'm going to keep a low profile where I am able to, until I can longer keep out of the action, if any befalls our alliance. Another big year ahead possibly.'

**Michael Grant** - 'KJC have shared their plans for the new Mage and Priest system. It certainly looks impressive and well thought out, opening up a host of new possibilities for groups. Mages will have the four spheres of Air, Earth, Fire and Water from which they can choose. Priests' miracles will vary in power point costs depending upon the ethos of the gods they currently worship. Everything is still under consideration, so I'll not say too much at this point. And I'm sure there'll be lots of play-testing when the changes do eventually come into effect.

*G31 (Naralia):* A new tournament is currently under way with 90 competitors

taking part. Excellent prizes have drawn out even the shyest of competitors. I've entered my five most combative groups into the competition and eagerly wait to find out how they get on.'

### Saturnalia: Exile (*Harlequin*)

**Jim Kemeny** - 'I believe this is the oldest pbm roleplaying game still in existence. The game is single-character free-form and you can design the character you want. There are several providers, but the one I have recently joined is run on franchise from Harlequin Games and is called Exile (being the name of the archipelago where its located). I have created and run other characters in the past, the last being a few years ago in the N.E. of Erythria.

This is a particularly friendly GM and group of players, most of whom keep in regular email contact via a yahoo group and who have meets periodically (not surprisingly there is a waiting list to join). The game has its own seedwiki website that all players become members of (this is a website that anyone can input into in a user-friendly way: i.e. you don't need to know programme-babble) <http://www.seedwiki.com/>

**Terry Crook** - 'Ahhh my first RPG PBM back in the hazy past of 1985. I used to play a character called Zollmann der Tuefel many an adventure I had in the game. I used to publish a book called the Mercenary & Bounty Hunters Incorporated I think we had quite a few members then. Dunno if any one remembers it? Maybe a theme for a new forum old charaters see if any one recognises them and chat about tut old days.'

### Serim Ral (*Incubus*)

**Bill Moore** - 'Game SR26: *Ancient Empires*: Hasn't quite started yet, but only a few positions to go now, so I imagine it will be going before Flagship #112 is out. Looks like an attempt at a more "historical" version of a game that usually falls squarely in the fantasy wargame category, played on a map of ancient Europe. Will be an interesting to see if the setting detracts or adds to the usual fracas and how the game compares to more serious versions of the same scenario (Fall of Rome?).'

## ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

### GURPS 4th edition (*Steve Jackson*)

**Kerry Miles** - 'I was anti-GURPS. I picked up 4th last Friday when I had some extra money to burn just to see if it was any better. I was pleasantly surprised.'

**Mike Garrison** - 'I'm finding it more flexible than 3rd Edition, but the same game at heart. Lack of flexibility was one of the sticking points that kept me from running GURPS 3rd. The only thing I could complain about is the lack of a "bare bones" construction system for vehicles/items. It won't be too hard to make up stats on the fly given the examples in the campaigns book, but that doesn't mean that a basic construction system wouldn't have been nice.'

**Janine Garrison** - 'The new colour art is no big deal, I preferred the old B&W art myself. Also, the artist can't seem to do facial expressions very well as one female character drawn quite frequently seems to have fewer facial expressions than certain well talent-challenged actresses. There were some missing things, though. I'd have liked more critical hit tables, like a separate one for melee criticals and shooting criticals. Also core examples of the effects of critical hits on certain attacks would have been nice. Asides from that, it's still GURPS, and still lives up to SJG's usual high standards of quality.'

### Trojan War (*Green Ronin*)

**Mike Garrison** - 'Being a classical archaeologist, this was right up my alley. There are a few niggling things, though: Aias/Ajax: Pick and use one version of the name, not both. And why only Telamonian Aias, and not "Little" Aias? Much more annoying: the translations from Greek works are not credited (if they are by the Mr Rosenberg, this should have been noted on the credits page), nor are the passages properly cited. An especially troublesome passage is on p70: simply citing, "The Iliad, Book II" isn't much help, as it's the "catalogue of armies" book! The passages are also in prose, which is annoying and removes a lot of the flavour of the original.

**Janine Garrison** - 'The alignment of the various gods is funny in some places. Zeus CG? Not in the Iliad! Alignment is dumb, anyway, and the author might have been better serviced by making use of the allegiance rules in d20 Modern (I'm not sure of the legality of that, though). Those minor caveats aside, this is another great historical book from Green Ronin. I can only hope that they continue to put out more!'

### OGL Ancients, d20

**Kerry Miles** - 'I've read OGL Ancients (a mix of Greek and Egyptian





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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
Fire protection	20	20
Water protection	20	20
Air protection	41	41
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stuff), and Trojan War is much better. On a simple new-material-per-dollar equation, OGL Ancients is a d20/OGL book (not a "D&D" book), and so it has to regurgitate all the information from D&D like character creation, skills, etc. The combat/hit points system and magic system are all very different from D&D, different enough to make it hard to convert things like spells and weapons. Apart from this, I just wasn't impressed with the quality of the writing and art in OGL Ancients. It's certainly lacking in the area of well-written "how the world works" articles like the chapter on monsters in Trojan War. I went away from OGL Ancients totally uncertain how to mix the Greek and Egyptian settings, which coexist in the book sort of like tuna fish and peanut butter on the same sandwich.'

## ONLINE GAMES

### Adventure Quest RPG (*Artix Entertainment*)

**Wayne Yeadon** - 'Having progressed in this game to level 50, I have succumbed to the lure of Guardianship and I must say that I don't regret the decision one jot. If the game keeps developing as promised, then it is worth supporting the people behind the game by paying a one off fee.

Guardian status grants your character various goodies that may at first seem to unbalance the game. Some parts are a little easier I admit, but as you level up, so the monsters get a bit tougher, as you would rightly expect.

Whatever happens, I'm having fun and exploring all the different quests and strategy options. Reading the player forums can be quite revealing too, as you discover the weapons, armour, spells and pets people prefer. There is so much choice available and you can only carry so much, you need to think carefully what you might be best using. I have dropped some of the other online games I spoke of before in favour of this one, I enjoy it that much.'

### Ultima Online (*Electronic Arts*)

**Jim Kemeny** - 'Searching for a MMORPG suited to peaceful roleplaying I chose Ultima Online. Its an older game with unimpressive graphics but well-suited to peaceful rp as all servers (or "shards" as they are called) have several versions (or "facets"). Of these, there is one dedicated to player-killers (Felluca) and another to peaceful interaction or mutually-agreed player vs player activities (Trammel).

Some shards are known for having many roleplayers, often getting together to create associations of guilds dedicated to rp (in the US Pacific and Catskills, to name just two). I chose Europa/Trammel as I live in Europe. There, groups of guilds have got together and created their own associations of guilds dedicated to peaceful and mutually-agreed player vs player interaction based on regions and cities.

The largest and best known are ERPA (European Role Player's Association), CORE (Community of Role-players, Europa), and CoY (Crossroads of Yew), each with their own meta-rules of conduct.

Violence is not banned on Trammel, just regulated, with rules for guilds specialising in stealing, assassinations, mercenaries, warfare, punishment etc, and with scenarios created for more general mayhem - raids, wars, etc. Felluca also has rp of course, but more free-form.'

### World of Warcraft (*Blizzard*)

**Liselle Awwal** - 'As a seasoned MMPORG player I find World of Warcraft (WoW) more rewarding than any similar game I've tried previously. The quests seem meaningful, the interface looks like pure Blizzard genius, and you can enjoy yourself simply by exploring the expansive and beautiful world. Whether you're in for half an hour of gaming or an all-nighter, you'll find excitement wherever you go. It also seems that Blizzard has gotten rid of the frustrating and meaningless elements you'll find in other MMORPGs in favor of a thrilling and fun experience for their players.'

## BOARD & CARD GAMES

### Take It Easy (*Burley Games*)

**Ian Miles** - 'Rarely can such an original game have had such an uninspiring title. Images are conjured up of a heist movie set to an incongruous Jackson Browne soundtrack.

What you actually get is something that looks like a topographer's jigsaw puzzle - or one of those games from German companies like "Settlers of Catan". (Hmmm - though a different publisher from "Settlers", this is published in Ravensburg by Ravensburger Spieleverlag.)

Each player - one to four can play - gets a board with nineteen hexagon shapes on it, articulated together to make a large jagged-sided hexagon with each of its sides composed of three of the little hexagons. (Still with me? It's

a lot harder to describe than to learn!) This means that you can "draw" lines through three, four, or five hexagons.

But instead of drawing lines, you put hexagon tiles down on the board. These tiles each have three lines crossing them. If you can form continuous lines of the same colour, by putting down tiles in the appropriate places, you complete the line and get a score from it.

The score depends on the length of the line, and the numbers that happen to be on the line - you have to form a line in which not only the colours, but also the numerical values are the same. (For a picture of a perfectly completed board - supposedly there are sixteen ways to achieve the top score - see:

<http://www.boardgamegeek.com/image/59819>)

Play happens through a series of turns in which one player ("the starter") draws a tile randomly; each player has to draw a similar tile. You're free to put it in any available spot on your own board.

It begins as a very easy-looking game, with tiles readily falling into spots where two or even three lines look set to be completed. Suddenly it begins to look devilishly difficult, and you realise that there are layers of strategy to master. Decisions are made and instantly regretted, and you wonder at how a simple design could work so effectively.

This game was instantly a success among everyone who tried it in our group. There's some addition and multiplication necessary to establish winning scores, but otherwise it's not really a mathematical game. It's a mixture of puzzle and strategy. Scores increased rapidly over the first few games, but interest remained high even when everyone was playing at a reasonable level.

There are a couple of minor variants for playing the game. The one-player version simply involves trying to beat your own earlier score.

The game was first published in 1994 and won several awards. An international version was launched in 2001, and it is this that I have been playing. Incidentally, a google search revealed that there is a computer version of the game, available at

<http://www.loiseleur.com/patrick/take-it.en.html>

You'll have to install some arcane computer language to run it, though.'

### Doom (*Fantasy Flight Games*)

**John Richards** - 'Fantastic Game! Captures the tense atmosphere of the computer version expertly. With familiar locations and enemies, and familiar weapons to hurt them with, this is a must for any fan.'

### Ticket to Ride (*Days of Wonder*)

**Neil Edge** - 'Leaving only a pretty large deck of cards as the luck factor, Ticket To Ride is a definitely a fun strategy based game. Yes, you shuffle the deck, but let's face it, you know how many of each card there is and you get to see some of the other players' choices in taking cards. The game is played by making various length connections across the United States (and on the Days of Wonder website you can already download an alternate printable map and destination cards. I'm sure more will come from fans of the game.) Points are scored for connection made, the longer connections are worth more points. Destination cards are drawn at the beginning of the game and if you make those connections more points are awarded. This may seem odd, but I actually had most fun with this as a three- and four-player game. We played with five players once but the board got over crowded quickly at that point. This game has been pretty much non-stop played since it arrived. Definitely one to look into. If you can get your hands on the "Mystery Train" expansion those extra cards are definitely worth having, but not necessary to the basic elements of the game.'

### Rummikub (*Tomy*)

**Neil Edge** - 'One of my favourite Aunts introduced this game to me about two years ago. Now, my other favourite Aunt who lives in the same town as I do plays cut-throat rounds just about every Sunday afternoon. It has become one of the highlights of my week. We don't keep a cumulative record of who has won the most five-round games, but we have decided that we're both pretty well-matched players. Of course, name calling (in jest) is the order of the day! Having taught gifted children for nine years, I would highly recommend this game for kids. There are opportunities for planning great strategies, as well as just run-of-the-mill learning how to follow rules of a game.'

### Munchkin (*Steve Jackson Games*)

**Chris Petersen** - 'Think of Munchkin as the Monty Python of card games. Is it the most polished card game out there? No. Does it layout everything in clear detail for you? Definitely not. Is it an incredibly amusing experience that has garnered a cult following? Yes. I happen to be a member of this cult. In order to truly appreciate Munchkin, you really need to understand the genre of game that it is trying to mock - Dungeons and Dragons-style role-playing



going horribly awry. Much like Monty Python, if you get the joke, it is great. If not, you're left wondering what all the fuss is about. I have no doubt that the "incomplete" rules are a part of the joke. The slightly inflated price tag and poor differentiation between the two sets of cards are the only things that keep this game from getting a four in my book. If you think you might enjoy this game, find a friend with a copy and play it before you buy it. If you get the joke, you'll find yourself buying a copy before the end of the night.'

### Diplomacy (Hasbro)

**John Richards** - 'I played this with seven players in college and after six hours it was clear the game would be won by the players who were willing to stick it out (no one had been eliminated yet). Maybe the rules have changed in newer editions, but length was a serious flaw in the edition I played. More players means more secret conversations, revising your written move, etc. If you're stuck in a snowstorm, this could be a great way to pass the time - unless you get eliminated in the first three hours.'

**Neil Edge** - 'This truly is one of the best games of all time... not only is there no rolling of the dice there is also backstabbing, teaming up with other players and alliances broken and kept. This is a game which when played with six or seven people takes at least half a day, so get a group of friends together and play it for yourself!'

## COMPUTER GAMES

### Half Life 2 (Valve)

**Sam Roads** - 'Its everything its hyped to be. Wonderful world, good plot, stand and look scenes, great weapons, funny situations, scary zombies. Max Payne 2 probably edges it for style, Doom 3 probably edges it for graphics, but HL2 is the total package.'

**Terry Crook** - 'My only complaint was the ending, but I wont say more as I dont want to give too much away. By the way CS source looks good as well, still waiting for the Day of Defeat Source comes out soon!'

[Deadline for next issue: March 9th]

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Colin Forbes, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, EX1 1BS  
EM: colin@flagshipmagazine.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

**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  
www.leisuregames.com

**Orcs Nest**, 6 Earlham Street, London,  
WC2H 9RY  
0207-379-4254  
www.orcsnest.com

**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  
Web address: 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

**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  
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  
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**, Unit 2 Fletchers Walk  
Paradise Circus, Birmingham B3 3HJ  
0121-687-0105  
games@waylandsforge.co.uk  
www.waylandsforge.co.uk

**Westgate Games**, 20 The Borough, Canterbury, Kent,  
CT1 2DR  
01227-457257  
andrew@westgategames.fsnet.co.uk

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

# Meets & Conventions

## CONVENTION NEWS & GAMES MEETS

We realise that many of you like to book in advance, so please visit the Flagship website for a more complete listing of conventions throughout the coming year. If you have news of any convention or games-related meeting, please post details on our website or email us! The website also contains details of many regular games meetings around the country.

[www.flagshipmagazine.org](http://www.flagshipmagazine.org)  
[carol@flagshipmagazine.com](mailto:carol@flagshipmagazine.com)

## FEBRUARY

**4th MADHOUSE GREAT NORTHERN PUBMEET:** 25th-27th February at the *Sutton Park Hotel, Blackpool*. Run by players, with GMs visiting. Hotel rooms cost £17 Friday, £19 Saturday (with buffet), £17 Sunday. Friday evening will be a social one, with drink and games; Saturday has the start of a pit fighter tournament, tabletop *DungeonWorld* and a quiz; Sunday concludes the pit fighter tournament. Oh, and there's 'loads of other stuff'! Day visitors will be welcome, but book accommodation with:

[M.C.Adams@salford.ac.uk](mailto:M.C.Adams@salford.ac.uk)

## MARCH

**THE OLD CONTENTIBLES' 50th:** 11th-13th March at *The West Retford Hotel, 24 North Road, East Retford, Notts DN22 7XG*. You are cordially invited to join Jerry Elsmore in celebrating his 50th birthday for a weekend of playing games. All sorts of games: Boardgames, Cardboardbox Simulation games, Fluffy games, Free-form games, Lawn games, Matrix games, Roleplay games and Silly games. There will even be a dollop of Wargames thrown in for good measure... For further details and booking forms, check:

[Consummation@yahoogroups.co.uk](mailto:Consummation@yahoogroups.co.uk)

**CTHONICON:** 11th-13th March at *Honicombe Holiday Village*. Scary Cthulhu roleplaying event. Places are limited to 60 people, so book now to avoid disappointment.

[www.horsemenevents.com/cthonicon/index.php](http://www.horsemenevents.com/cthonicon/index.php)  
[cthonicon@horsemenevents.com](mailto:cthonicon@horsemenevents.com)

**DECIKON - The 10th AKFT Konvention:** 11th-13th March at the *Fircroft Hotel, Bournemouth*. Registration is £25 in January, £30 thereafter and room rates at the hotel are £33 per person per night, which includes breakfast and evening meal. A number of artists will be attending, and the organisers promise 'lots of silly games, video program and a 24-hour bar (for residents)'. Dave Pratt, 12 Greenfield Road, London N15 5EP.

[David.pratt@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:David.pratt@blueyonder.co.uk)

**DOMINICON:** 11th-13th March at the *John Hulme Building, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Kildare, Ireland*. Annual games convention run by the Game Society of the National University of Ireland. Throughout most of its ten years of existence it has had a reputation for primarily focussing on roleplaying games. However, over the past two years it has expanded rapidly to add strong support for wargames, TCGs and boardgames. Contact Sorcha Nic Amhali at:

[saoili@gmail.com](mailto:saoili@gmail.com)

**ITZACON:** 11th-13th March, at the *National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland*. Presented by NUI Galway's FanSci Society, ItzaCon is Ireland's newest Fantasy and Science Fiction Games Convention. Set in the University's beautiful Aula Maxima, it is also Galway's first gaming convention and will feature RPGs, CCGs, Wargames, LARPs and Boardgames. Promised are: a Table Quiz, Club ItzaCon, various other events, and the odd surprise! Contact Charlotte Dunne at [eowyn\\_one@yahoo.com](mailto:eowyn_one@yahoo.com), or write to ItzaCon Éire, c/o FanSci Society, Students' Union, NUI Galway.

**TOWERCON:** 18th-20th March at the *Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool*. A full weekend of roleplay, card and boardgame events. Membership is £110. This covers entry to the convention and twin room accommodation (with four-course dinner and breakfast) on Friday and Saturday nights. TowerCon, 13 Wembley Road, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 4JN.

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

**CONPULSION:** 26th-27th March, at the *Teviot Student Union, Bristol Square, Edinburgh*. Compulsion is a yearly convention hosted by GEAS -- The University of Edinburgh Roleplaying Society. This will be the 10th year of Compulsion: should be the most Action-Packed ever! ... the largest conglomeration of gaming events in Scotland ... a collection of live-action and tabletop role-playing events, card gaming and board gaming Tournaments - both conventional and unconventional - and large-scale special events.

[www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/geas/convention/](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/geas/convention/)

**BAYCON:** Thursday 31st March to 3.00pm Sunday 3rd April, at the *Exeter Court Hotel, Kennford*. The main event of the weekend is the *Victor Ludorum* tournament to find the UK National Board Games Champion. An account is kept of all games played throughout the convention and the player with the best overall score receives the Victor Ludorum Trophy. See website for details of cost etc.

[www.robchapman.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/baycon.html](http://www.robchapman.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/baycon.html)  
[glen@baycon.co.uk](mailto:glen@baycon.co.uk)

## APRIL

**BATTLECON:** 9th-10th April at *Leicester University*, with D&D City of Sokal, Call of Cthulhu, Crimson Empire 'and more'. Contact: Old Vine House, Ecton, Northants NN6 0QB.

[battlemasters@eurolog.org](mailto:battlemasters@eurolog.org)  
[www.eurolog.org](http://www.eurolog.org)

**SALUTE ZERO FIVE:** 23rd April at *Olympia 2, London*. A family show for miniatures gamers, with many model manufacturers present. Run by the South London Warlords, who plan to have over 90 displays for the audience to play in or watch, including games and historical re-enactment societies in colourful costumes: the theme this year is St George. Admission to the show costs £8, and advance entry tickets may be purchased from the website.

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

**MAYCON:** 29th April-2nd May, at the *Rutland Square Hotel, St. James Street, Nottingham*. Running from 18:00 Friday night to 14:00 Monday, this is a general games convention with a focus on boardgames and the like, but the flyers do mention RPGs. Membership costs £10/day or £30 for the weekend up to March 30th, £12/day or £35 for the weekend if booked in advance after that, or £15/day on the door; hotel rooms are £35 per night (B&B) for two sharing, or £45/night for single occupancy.

[www.maycon.org](http://www.maycon.org),  
[maycon2005@gmail.com](mailto:maycon2005@gmail.com)

## JULY

**MANORCON XXIII:** Friday 15th - Monday 18th July, at *Shackleton Hall, Birmingham University*. ManorCon is a large board games convention that has been running since 1983. The 200-250 attendees each year stay and play in a large, modern University Hall of Residence with bar and canteen facilities and ample room for both tournament and open gaming. There is free car parking available and the site is also within easy reach of public transport and the city centre of Birmingham with its pubs, restaurants and nightlife.



# Galactic View

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

## UK, EUROPEAN & WEB-BASED GMS

**AD Intio Games**, PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent BR2 0YQ  
WEB: [www.pbm4sports.com](http://www.pbm4sports.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)  
EM: [davster@aol.net](mailto:davster@aol.net)

**Advanced Gaming Enterprises**, POB 214949, Sacramento, CA 95821, USA

**Agema Publications**, 3 Workshop Rd., Off Carlton Rd, Sneinton, Nottingham NG3 2BA

WEB: [www.ageofjoyn.com](http://www.ageofjoyn.com)

WEB: [go.to/agency](http://go.to/agency)

**Ancient Guardian Enterprises**, EM: [agemat@lincone.net](mailto:agemat@lincone.net)

EM: [gn@aegames.com](mailto:gn@aegames.com)

WEB: [www.aegames.com](http://www.aegames.com)

**Andrews, Colin**, 26 Brown Edge Road, Holts, Oldham, OL4 5QG

EM: [st3@notrally.co.uk](mailto:st3@notrally.co.uk)

WEB: [www.sjaysystems.co.uk/](http://www.sjaysystems.co.uk/)

**Austerlitz PBM**

WEB: [www.austerlitz.biz](http://www.austerlitz.biz)

EM: [gm@austerlitz.biz](mailto:gm@austerlitz.biz)

**Baird, Phil**, 930 NE 63d 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 PBM**, 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG

WEB: [www.buzzwackpbm/freeserve.co.uk](http://www.buzzwackpbm/freeserve.co.uk)

EM: [pete@buzzwackpbm/freeserve.co.uk](mailto:pete@buzzwackpbm/freeserve.co.uk)

TEL/FAX: 0115 9224901 (pre 10pm)

**Central de Jocs SL**, C/Numancia no. 112-116, 08029 - Barcelona, Spain

WEB: [www.centraldejocs.com](http://www.centraldejocs.com)

EM: [tornstijpe@menia.net](mailto:tornstijpe@menia.net)

**Chaos Trail**, 8 Osier Close, Ely, Cambs., CB7 4AY

WEB: [www.chaostrail.com](http://www.chaostrail.com)

EM: [Simon.Williams.c1@chaostrail.com](mailto:Simon.Williams.c1@chaostrail.com)

**Clay, David**, 20 Malden Close, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6AY

WEB: [www.witopenwar.co.uk](http://www.witopenwar.co.uk)

EM: [dave@witopenwar.co.uk](mailto:dave@witopenwar.co.uk)

**Crastworld**, 4 Bartleyfield, Clayton-le-Woods, Preston, Lancs., PR5 8JQ

WEB: [www.crasworld.com](http://www.crasworld.com)

EM: [andy@crasworld.com](mailto:andy@crasworld.com)

TEL: (Andy Smith) 01772 334878

**CSPP**, Alfred-Bucherstr. 63, 53115 Bonn, Germany

WEB: [http://home.looline.de/home/ashes\\_of\\_empire/ashes2.htm](http://home.looline.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm) (English)

EM: [h.topp@cpp.com](mailto:h.topp@cpp.com)

**Dark Wolf Games**, BCM Darkwolf, London, WC1N 3XX

WEB: [www.darkwolf.ie](http://www.darkwolf.ie)

EM: [pbm@darkwolf.ie](mailto:pbm@darkwolf.ie)

TEL: (Karin) 070 2099 WORG (0674), FAX: 0870 052 7521

**Dracs Games**, 21 Chipperfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP

WEB: [www.dracsgames.co.uk](http://www.dracsgames.co.uk)

EM: [derk@dracsgames.co.uk](mailto:derk@dracsgames.co.uk)

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

**Dreamworld Games**

WEB: [www.logicalsoccer.com/](http://www.logicalsoccer.com/) [www.reallyracing.com](http://www.reallyracing.com)

TEL: 01380 81522

**Dunks, Antony**, Far Horizon, Sark, Guernsey, GY9 0SE

WEB: [www.sark.net/~sarl](http://www.sark.net/~sarl)

EM: [sarl@sark.net](mailto:sarl@sark.net)

**EMG EMG**

WEB: [www.islandnet.com/~dgreenin/emg.htm](http://www.islandnet.com/~dgreenin/emg.htm)

**Enlightened Age Entertainment**

WEB: [www.falltofragments.com](http://www.falltofragments.com)

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

WEB: [www.epmgames.com](http://www.epmgames.com)

EM: [de@epmgames.com](mailto:de@epmgames.com)

**Evans, Paul**, 150 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF

EM: [two@pevans.co.uk](mailto:two@pevans.co.uk)

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

EM: [jgibbons@faraway.co.uk](mailto:jgibbons@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)

TEL: (Colin, Yvonne, Trog) 0151 3361412

FAX: 0151 3361009

**Glover, Adrian**, 4 Stevane Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG

WEB: [www.throneworld.com/lords](http://www.throneworld.com/lords)

EM: [thomash@throneworld.com](mailto:thomash@throneworld.com)

**Harlin, Thomas**, 3210 East 23rd Street, Tuscon, AR 85713, USA

WEB: [www.harlequingames.com](http://www.harlequingames.com)

EM: [pbn@harlequingames.com](mailto:pbn@harlequingames.com)

TEL: 029 2091 3359 (9-6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only

FAX: 029 2092 5532 any time

**Haynes, Nic**, 33 Chatsworth Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 7XD

EM: [info@nicbusdesigns.co.uk](mailto:info@nicbusdesigns.co.uk)

WEB: [www.inchbusdesigns.co.uk](http://www.inchbusdesigns.co.uk)

TEL: 01509 217957

FAX: 01509 558788

**Jade Enterprises**, 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London, SE20 7EB

EM: [jade.ent@ntworld.com](mailto:jade.ent@ntworld.com)

TEL: 020 83256507

**Kamikaze Games**

WEB: [www.kamikazegames.com](http://www.kamikazegames.com)

**KJC Games**, FREEPOST, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3UL

WEB: [www.kjc-games.com](http://www.kjc-games.com)

EM: [enquiry@kjc-games.com](mailto:enquiry@kjc-games.com)

TEL: 01253 866345

**Lloyd, Rich**, 79 Farmersville Road, Califon, NJ 07830, USA

EM: [lords4@throneworld.com](mailto:lords4@throneworld.com)

TEL: (908) 832-5176

**Madhouse**, 6 Alexandra Road, Wisbech, PE13 1HQ

WEB: [www.madcentral.com](http://www.madcentral.com)

EM: [madcentral@aol.com](mailto:madcentral@aol.com)

TEL: 01945 583811

**Mindless Games**, 5 Basford Road, Nottingham, NG6 0JP

WEB: [www.mindlessnotworld.net](http://www.mindlessnotworld.net)

EM: [andy.mindless@ntworld.net](mailto:andy.mindless@ntworld.net)

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-pbm.co.uk](http://www.neutral-zone-football-pbm.co.uk)

EM: [info@neutral-zone-football-pbm.co.uk](mailto:info@neutral-zone-football-pbm.co.uk)

TEL: 01440 713124 (7pm - 9pm)

**Oates, Jason**, 6 St Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA

WEB: <http://freespace.virgin.net/jason.oates>

EM: [jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com](mailto:jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com)

TEL/FAX: 01305 251451

**Olympia Games**, 6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3GS

WEB: [www.olympiagbm.co.uk](http://www.olympiagbm.co.uk)

EM: [pbm.dexter@alk21.com](mailto:pbm.dexter@alk21.com)

TEL/FAX: (Trevor Dexter) 0115 9436197

**Pagoda Games**, PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ

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

**Mark Palin**, Claassen, 5 Burford, Brookside, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 1LQ

EM: [mp004f8903@btuicyonder.co.uk](mailto:mp004f8903@btuicyonder.co.uk)

**Pinder, Mark**, 139 Nelson Way, Lacey Acres, Gimsby, S Humberside DN34 5UJ

WEB: <http://groups.msn.com/elbaria>

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

TEL: 01472 753430

**Play-by-Electron Games**

WEB: [www.pbegames.com](http://www.pbegames.com)

EM: [moderator@pbegames.com](mailto:moderator@pbegames.com)

**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: [dominic@rebus.co.uk](mailto:dominic@rebus.co.uk)

**Received Wisdom**, 9 Oundle Road, Aylsham, Peterborough PE7 3UP

WEB: [www.receivewisdom.org](http://www.receivewisdom.org)

EM: [stu@receivewisdom.org](mailto:stu@receivewisdom.org)

**Rolling Thunder Games Inc.**, PO Box 310, Eastlake, CO 80614-0310, USA

WEB: [www.rollingthunder.com](http://www.rollingthunder.com)

EM: [rus@rollingthunder.com](mailto:rus@rollingthunder.com)

FORUM: [www.rollingthunderforums.com](http://www.rollingthunderforums.com)

**Rzechorzak, Peter**

WEB: [www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm](http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm)

EM: [tribenet@timespace.net.au](mailto:tribenet@timespace.net.au)

**SSV Klapp-Bachelor OEG**, Postfach 1205, A-8021, Gmz, Austria

WEB: [www.heldenwelt.com](http://www.heldenwelt.com)

EM: [svs-gmz@aon.at](mailto:svs-gmz@aon.at)

**Scriven, David**, 15 Alandale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25 1DJ

**Sevensar Games**, 57 Olympia Gardens, Morphett, Northumberland NE61 1JQ

WEB: [www.sark.net/~sarl/greensun.html](http://www.sark.net/~sarl/greensun.html)

EM: [greensun@nickelglobalnet.co.uk](mailto:greensun@nickelglobalnet.co.uk)

**Silver Dreamer**, 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ

WEB: [www.silverdreamer.com](http://www.silverdreamer.com)

EM: [silverdred@aol.com](mailto:silverdred@aol.com)

TEL: (Justin Parley) 01322 387195 (Mon-Fri, 11-6)

**Software Simulations**, PO Box 2758, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH

WEB: [www.pbm4sports.com](http://www.pbm4sports.com)

EM: [peter@pbm4sports.com](mailto:peter@pbm4sports.com)

**Spellbinder Games**, 51 Abelsan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE

EM: [Chris.spbinder@btinternet.com](mailto:Chris.spbinder@btinternet.com)

TEL: (Chris Dempsey) 01843 291558

**Spencer, Jerry**, 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY

EM: [jerry.spencer@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:jerry.spencer@liverpool.gov.uk)

**Sporting Dreams**, PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB

WEB: [www.sportingdreams.com](http://www.sportingdreams.com)

EM: [info@sportingdreams.com](mailto:info@sportingdreams.com)

and [info@greyhoundtrainer.com](mailto:info@greyhoundtrainer.com)

TEL: 01332 726376

**Supersonic Games**, PO Box 1812, Galston, KA4 8WA

WEB: [www.austerlitzpbm.com](http://www.austerlitzpbm.com)

EM: [sam@austerlitz.co.uk](mailto:sam@austerlitz.co.uk)

TEL: (Scott, Sam, Chris) 01563 821022; fax 01563 821006

**Tempus Fugit PBM Productions**, 96 Bishopswood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG

WEB: <http://tempusfugitpbm.co.uk>

EM: [enquiries@tempusfugitpbm.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@tempusfugitpbm.co.uk)

**Terre de Jeux**, 88 Avenue de Jussieu, 91600 Savigny sur Orge, France

EM: [issolo@club-internet.fr](mailto:issolo@club-internet.fr)

**Total Conquest**

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

EM: [support@total-conquest.com](mailto:support@total-conquest.com)

**Unidid Games**, 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF

EM: [christijn.morris@virgin.net](mailto:christijn.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

EM: [info@ukg.co.uk](mailto:info@ukg.co.uk)

**WOW Games**

WEB: <http://www.wow.pbemgame.com/>

**Xanthus, Constantine**, 7080 NW 75th Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33067, USA

EM: [cxen@lycos.com](mailto:cxen@lycos.com)

# 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))

**Carnel Robert Rees**, 10a Eldon Grove, London, NW3 5PT EM: [carne@talk21.com](mailto:carne@talk21.com) ([www.geocities.com/shudder/fix/camel](http://www.geocities.com/shudder/fix/camel))

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

**Diplomacy 2000**, [www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/](http://www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/)

**Fights of Fancy**, Philip Honeybone, Email: [phil@melly98.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:phil@melly98.freeserve.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))

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

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 firms.  
**Medium** shows the 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 of free turns at the game. \* indicates deposit returnable if you play to the end of the game, or prepayment discounts available (see moderator for details).

**Free Turns** - many GMs will give you a number of free turns at the start of the game  
**Turn Fee** - how much each turn costs. \* means that return postage is paid by the GM each turn. S means you need to send an SSAE or at least pay for the GM's postage.

**Other Fees** - the following footnotes apply:(a) more for larger positions or later turns in the game, (b) more for battle reports, (c) more for extended orders/longer reports, (d) more for several possible extras, (e) lower cost if you join the club. \$ 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 judged fees for email play.  
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 often about 25% higher than for UK players. If in doubt, contact the GMs.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
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	Adventure	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	AGM	p	£6.00	0	£3.50	-	-
Ancient Empires	MF	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	£1 month	58
Asbes of Empire	CF	Sci-Fi	CSP	e, p	Free	• 1.53	-	-	-
Aspects of Might	MO	Power: Historical	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(c)	-
Assyria's End II	MO	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£6.00	(d)	90
Austerlitz	CF	Wargame: Historical	QBR	G only	?	?	?	?	(96)
Austerlitz	CF	Wargame: Historical	SLIP	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	?	£4.00	-	(96)
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	£2.50	-	19
Beyond	MO	Adventure	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£2.95	(a)	86
Bleddin Diary, A	MO	Tribal	SFE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	\$	80a, 81-84d
Championship League	MO	Sport: Soccer	WFL	p	£2.50	0	£1.75	S	86
Champion's Run	HO	Sport: Fantasy	RCW	e, p	£6.50	0	£0.50	-	104
Chesman	MO	Tribal	PAL	e, p	£10.00	2	£5.00	-	96, 97
Company Commander	CF	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	-
Covert Operations	CF	Wargame	FBI	e, p	£25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Crack of Doom II	MO	Tribal	AGE	?	?	?	?	?	96
Crusades, The	MF	Wargame: Historical	ACE	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	£5.95	-	-
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: Fantasy	TIV	p, e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Dominion	MO	RPG: Fantasy	KAM	w	Free	-	Free	-	79
Dragonchdm	MO	RPG: Sci-Fi	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	-
Dragonlords	CF	Wargame: Fantasy	AGG	e, p	£25.00	5	£5.95	-	-
DungeonsWorld	CO	Adventure	MAD	e, p	Free	-	Free	-	92-94, 100
EG1: Briny	HO	RPG: Historical (EG1)	BRI	e	Free	-	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
Einstein's Lot	HO	RPG: Modern	ULA	p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	91, 107
Eldritch	CO	Wargame: Fantasy	PRG	e	Free	2	\$2	-	748, 918
Empires	CF	Misc: Political	BFI	e, p	\$25 per game	0	?	-	-
Empires of Might	CF	Wargame: Historical	DAG	e, p	£10.00	?	£2.00	-	-
Empires of the East	HO	RPG: Fantasy	DMG	e, p	£5.00	2	£3.00	-	63
Extra Time-Chairman	CF	Wargame: Historical	SCF	e, p	£10.00	2	£2.00	-	-
Extra Time-original	CO	Sport: Soccer	KJC	e, p	Free	1	£2.25	-	53
Extra Time-original	CO	Sport: Soccer	KJC/CRA	e, p	Free	1	£2.00	-	53
Fall of Rome	CF	War: Historical	EAE	e, p	£6.47	?	?	-	110a, 111a
Fallen at the First	MF	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	£3.00	0	£1.50 + 50p/month	-	-
Fantasy/Soccer	MO	Sport: Horse Racing	DRG	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	-
Fellowship	CO	Sport: Soccer	KJC	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	53
Futurism	MO	RPG: Fantasy	CRA	e, p	£25.00	5	£5.95	-	-
Futurism	CF	Wargame: Historical	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	-	3
Futurism	CF	Wargame: Historical	LWG	e	\$5	0	\$1	-	108
Futurism	CF	Sport: Soccer	SSV	G only	?	?	0.75 Euro	-	-
Futurism	CF	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	Free	0	£3.50	-	-
Futurism	CF	Sci-Fi	ARN	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Futurism	CF	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94
Futurism	CF	Sport: American Football	SOF/Mec	p	£5.00	0	£11.00 for 4	-	20
Futurism	CO	Sport: Baseball	Mec	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	-
Futurism	CO	Sport: Boxing	Mec	p	£5.00	5	£9.00 for 4	-	-
Futurism	CO	Sport: American Football	SOF/Mec	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	-
Futurism	CF	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	(a)	73, 83, 100, 101
Futurism	CF	Power	UKG	w	Free	-	Free	-	-
Futurism	CF	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
Futurism	CF	Sport	ARN	w	£5.00	5	£5.00	-	-
Futurism	CF	Sport: American Football	Mec	p	£5.00	0	£6.00	(d)	-
Futurism	MO	Power: Sci-Fi	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£6.00	(d)	-
Futurism	MO	Power: Historical	AGM	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Futurism	CF	Adventure	MAD	w	Free	0	Free	-	97
Futurism	CO	Adventure	SSV	G only	?	?	6.9 Euro/month	-	103



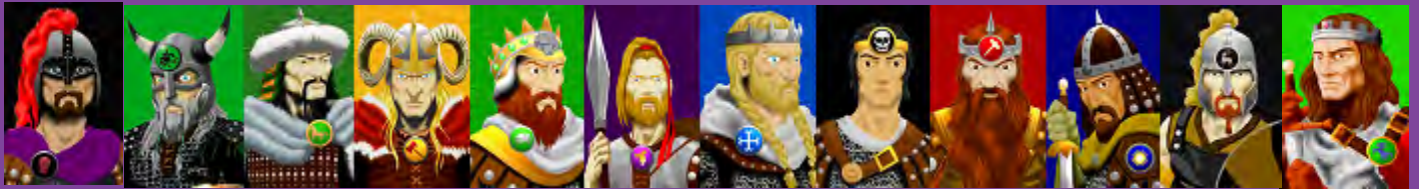


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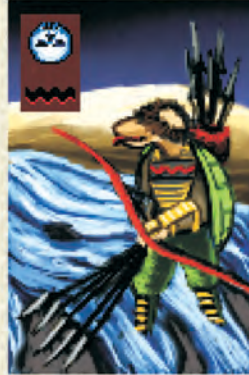
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