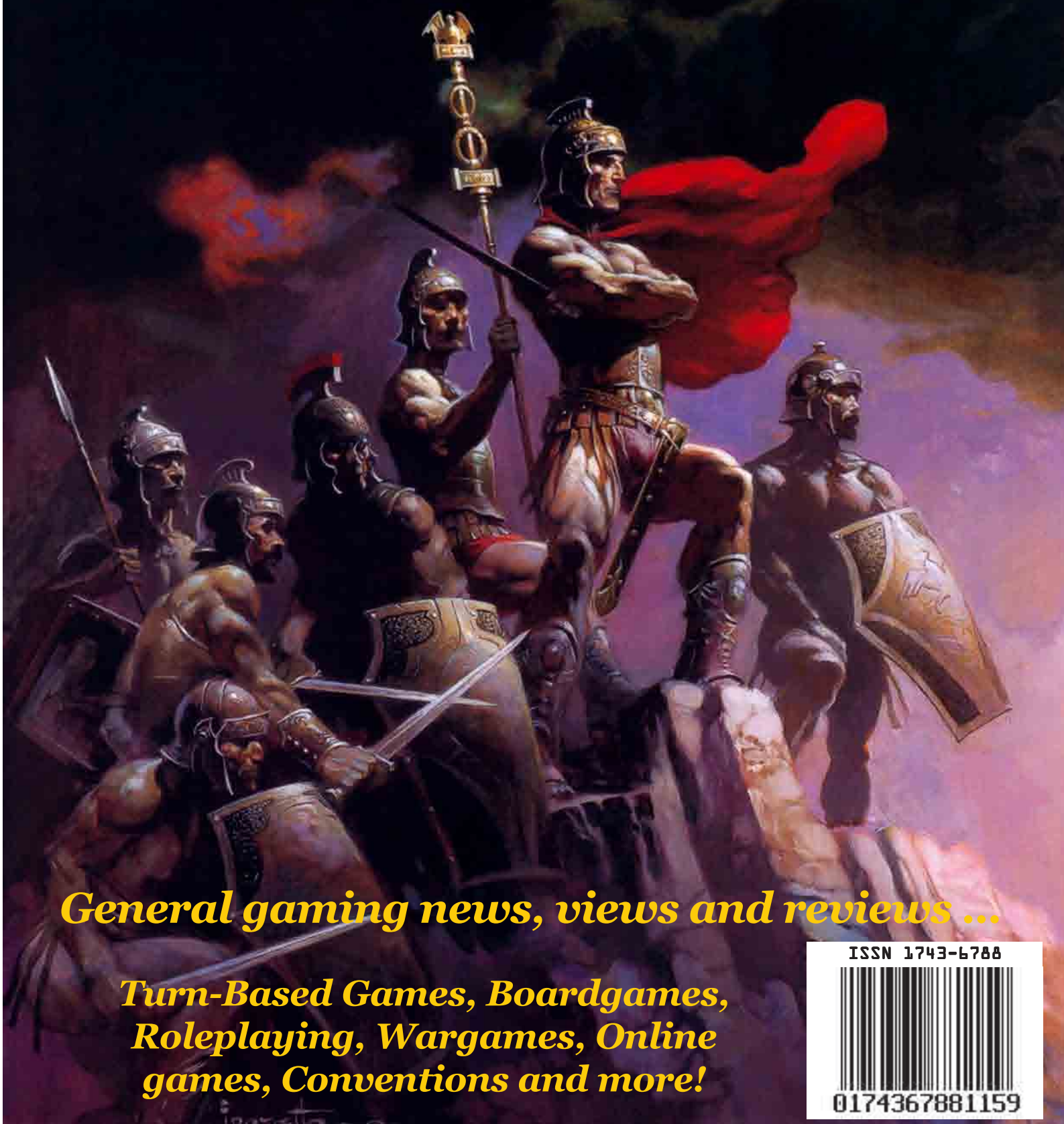


Issue 115, September / October '05

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# FLAGSHIP

THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS



*General gaming news, views and reviews ...*

*Turn-Based Games, Boardgames,  
Roleplaying, Wargames, Online  
games, Conventions and more!*

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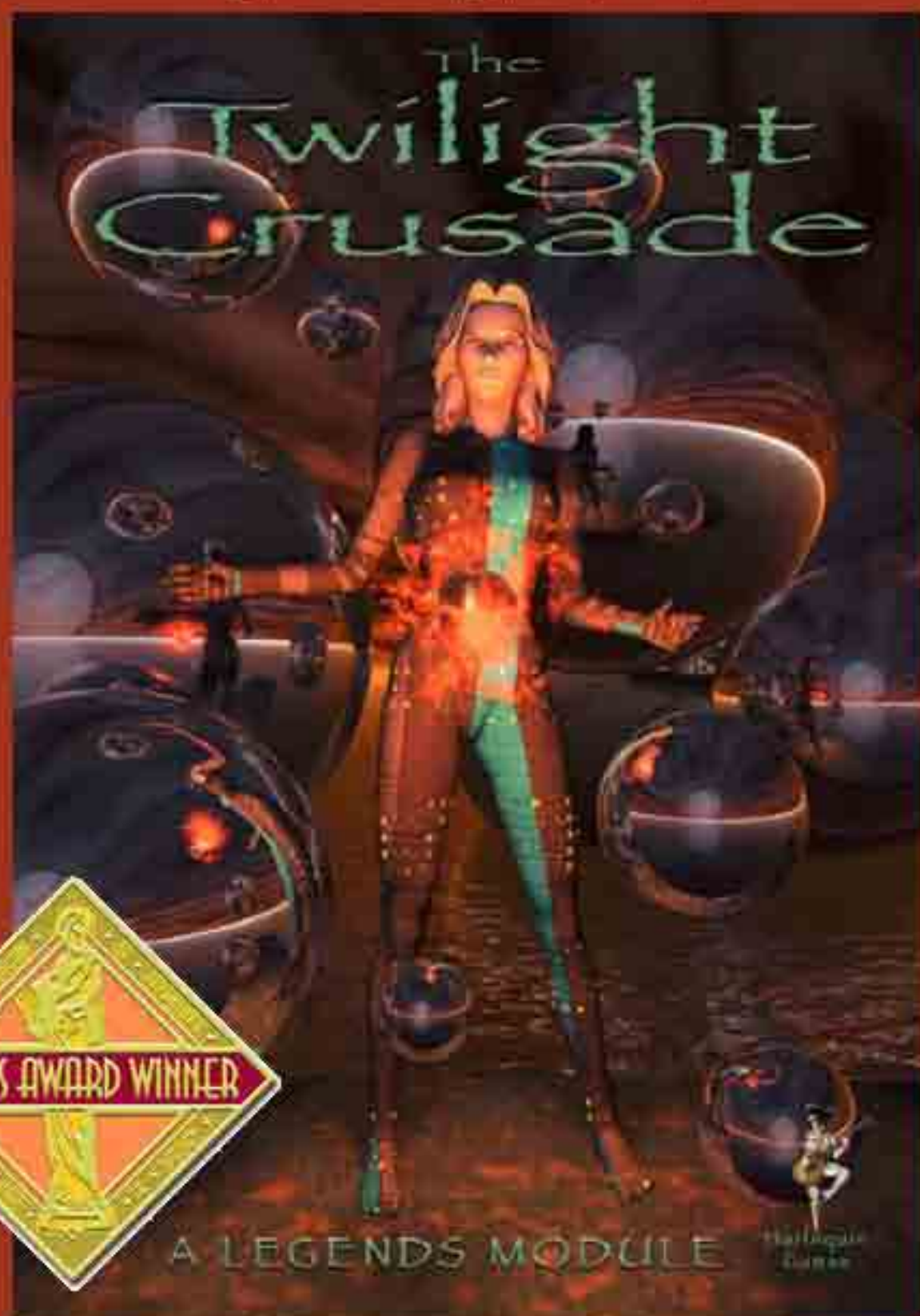


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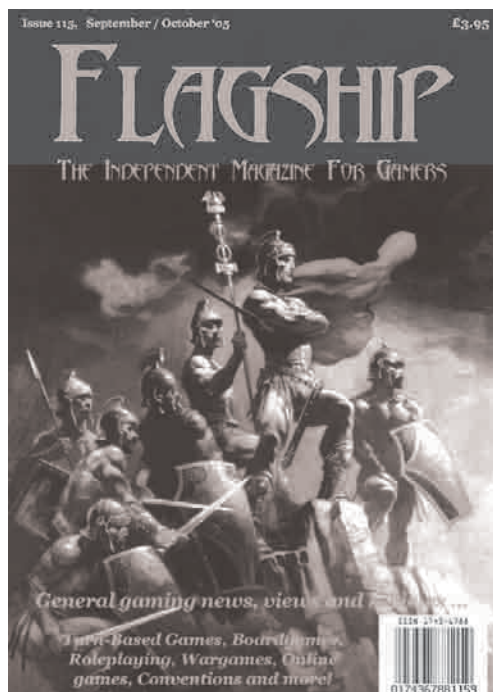
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## Report from the Bridge ...

WE HOPE THAT you'll have had a good time this summer. Perhaps while you were on vacation you were even playing some of the games that you've seen featured in these pages? We all know how well a game can fill holiday evenings with fun.

Once again, we've some *Special Offers* for you: £20-worth of credit in *KJC*'s science fiction game **Phoenix**, the chance of a place in Incubus Designs' **Serim Ral**, £21-worth of credit in *Jason Oates*' **Ancient Empires** and a saving on *Agema Publications*' new football boardgame, **FFG**. These offers are described in Newsdesk: enjoy them!

As usual, we're presenting a fair range of many different types of game: turn-based games, boardgames and cardgames. Game diaries are particularly strong in this issue, with lively articles on long-running games, **Serim Ral**, **Feudal Lords** and **Glory of Kings**. We're continuing last issue's theme of how it's possible for a long-running game to stay popular, with an article about the transformation of *Beyond the Stellar Empire* into **Phoenix**. Newer games are featured here, too, with articles on **Kosumi**, **Shadow over Camelot**, **Amber**, **Gloom**, **The Haunting House** and, um, **Spank the Monkey**. We include an article about collectible cardgames. Also, we interview Rick McDowell, whose **Fall of Rome** won a significant prize this June at the great US games festival, *Origins*. As usual, there's plenty of news and comment: you may well disagree with some of the opinions featured here, so by all means feel free to get back to us with your own views. One joy of editing *Flagship* is the variety of approaches that you all show towards playing games.

Despite our best efforts, due to technical difficulties we're late with this issue. Apologies, if you've been waiting anxiously for #115 to fall on your doormats: we're sure that you'll find that it's been worth the wait. We'll aim to be on time with #116, but before that we hope we'll see many of you at UK GenCon!

*Carol*

**www.flagshipmagazine.com**

SUBS, QUERIES & CONTRIBUTIONS: Flagship, 14 The Hollows, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 1QT (01395) 276632 (9am-6pm) *carol@flagshipmagazine.com*

I'M WRITING this at a time when the real world has suddenly grown a harsher place. It's depressing that a tiny group of fanatics chose to murder their fellow British citizens, indiscriminately. Let's hope that such madness isn't repeated. It's the mark of civilisation to be tolerant. Our commiserations, too, to all who've been caught by the hurricane Katrina: one of this issue's reviewers has lost his job and his home though not, mercifully, his life.

Moving to games, things aren't particularly rosy in the realm of MMOGs, either. A 41-years-old player of *Legend of Mir III* has been given a suspended sentence for murder by a court in Shanghai for stabbing another player to death for selling the dragon sabre which he'd only been lent in the game. For once, however, there's been some perceptive comment in the British press about this latter case. In the *Daily Telegraph* of June 18th, the journalist Sam Leith comments that 'The world of an MMOG is, surely, a consensual hallucination... These game worlds are communities - and they are economies. Big ones...' After describing the way in which the standards of a virtual world can overlap into the real world, Leith concludes - 'The worlds of the MMOGs are man-made, rather than waiting to be discovered, but they do telescope into our own. And as in Pullman, or Jeff Noon, you can escape from one world into another. But you run the risk of being followed by the not-so-subtle knife.' We're not being told anything that's new to us, as games players, but it's good to see this subject being treated with an intelligent understanding.

Personally, I take a simple delight in the sheer quantity of games that exist. Plenty of them are created to appeal to the commercial market, and there's nothing wrong with that, while many others exist as an expression of the creative joy of their designers, and there's nothing wrong with that, either: both types of game can learn profitably from each other.

Of course, in a general games magazine there's the problem of finding the best way to assemble so much varied material. Although we know that you all have your favourite themes, and favourite ways to explore them, we usually group the games according to the way in which they're played, even though these general categories always include a range of different subject matter. Oh, and even though few of you stick to only one way to play games.

Occasionally there are problems with this, of course. No-one has objected to us renaming the old PBM category 'turn-based gaming', though we usually avoid grouping boardgames and cardgames together as 'tabletop games'. But should 'Wargames' also include fantasy wargaming and crime games? And as for 'Roleplaying', that's always been its own kettle of fish!

Whatever type of game you enjoy yourself, I hope that you'll look through all the material here: there may be games that will appeal to you even though they've been given some unfamiliar categorization or appear beside something that you know you don't want to play.

One thing that has startled me this issue is to read of a boardgame that's based on a simple white equals good, black equals evil division: am I being too scrupulous to find this both old-fashioned and unpleasant?

Not all games are of equal quality, of course, but I'm sure that from these pages you'll gain some idea of what you'd most enjoy playing yourselves. Altogether, games prove the resourcefulness of human creativity. It's the ingenuity of you, their players, which gives life to a game design.

Carol

## HISTORICAL WARGAMES



Our congratulations to Rick McDowell for his **Fall of Rome** being chosen as Game of the Year for Multiplayer Online Games (PBM) at the great annual US games expo, *Origins*. Reviewing *Fall of Rome* in *Flagship 113*, Bob McLain praised 'immersive and addictive gameplay at its finest', and Bob's

not an easy reviewer to impress.

Rick attributes his game's success to its combination of 'RPG, war game and strategy game qualities in one multiplayer online game. It's got something for most gaming tastes.' For those of you trying to guess how much work it takes to win at *Origins*, Rick pays tribute to his lead software engineer, Felcher Dunn, and his senior programmer, Matt Butler. For those of you wanting to take a look at *Fall of Rome*, it's possible to play it for free for a month, with a charge of \$12.95 per month afterwards.

But hey, we're also running an interview with Rick, this issue. So you'll find out a lot more by turning these pages!

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

## FANTASY WARGAMES



Our congratulations don't stop with the preceding section! *Harlequin Games* proudly announce that **Legends** has won the *Origins* 2005 Gamers' Choice Award for PBM: 'We're delighted to have had *Legends*

recognised as the player's choice of best PBM, and also offer congratulations to *Fall of Rome*, the jury's choice as best PBM.'

'Technology changes,' they point out, 'and only the very great games remain year after year. *Legends* has nearly been around for 20 years - a much longer franchise than mainstream heavyweights like *Warcraft*, *Settlers of Catan* or even *Civilization*. That it can win this award in its 19th year speaks of its continuing appeal for hardcore strategy gamers, a quality of play which is not based on the number of polygons on a computer screen!'

*Harlequin* are still accepting setups for the factional *Legends* game *North Island Campaign* 29, though this has nearly filled, so don't delay if you want to join in.

This month, they'll start the next *Legends* game, *Twilight Crusade* 3, and they're going to

try a number of unusual things in this one. Their intention is to create a completely open-ended game, giving you more time to explore the world and the game than is normally possible. 'Without the constant threat of aggression from neighbours, you will be able to grow your empire, develop long term diplomatic positions, investigate lengthy quests and enjoy the rich world of the *Lands of Twilight*. You will also be allowed to run two positions at once if you chose, so you will have at least one person you can trust!' This'll give this variant a completely different flavour. It will probably fill to 40 or 50 players, and game materials can be downloaded from the website. These include the new 316-page edition of the Rulebook and the free to download *Legends* Position Editor:

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

*ME Games Ltd* (who run from the same postal address as *Harlequin Games*) have sent us an update about their progress with **Middle-Earth PBM**. They say that they've had excellent feedback from the new Fourth Age rules, with each playtest game filling very quickly. The idea was to change the balance by reworking the points cost of the nation abilities and also to reward players who chose those starting locations which are normally less popular.

The new system, they say, 'has resulted in a varied and well spread selection of nations and nation types, and that means a delicately poised conflict with no dominance for one specific type eg military, diplomatic, covert or magical.'



Their second set of playtests are just about to begin, 'reducing the impact of Agents and Emissaries and promoting Mages (up to now an under utilised resource).'

They've also done a similar, but more gentle, series of tweaks to the popular 'Gunboat' variant (where players may not communicate, mimicking the older days of PBM before email). 'A switching of nation pairings has proven to be a change for the better and some small boosts to the less preferred nations are keeping the format fresh.'

Players who want to start the French language version of Middle-Earth PBM should note that this version has changed hands, with previous moderators *Terre de Millieu* deciding to pass the baton to the well-established French language PBM firm *Colyseo*. ([www.colyseo.com](http://www.colyseo.com)). *Terre de Millieu* will still remain involved with MEPBM, and Middle-Earth PBM Ltd thank Eric-Axel Zimmer for his dedication to the game over the last couple of years.

You'll see that we're publishing an article about *Incubus Designs'* **Serim Ral** this issue. It says something for the popularity of Serim Ral that three firms have been able to run separate versions for years, with Incubus as the game's originator. Here, we can also supply some information from one of the other firms, *Harlequin Games* and *Mindless Games*, who both run the game with earlier versions of the software. Anyway, *Mindless Games* have reported that their games 25 and 26 are 'chugging along nicely. A massive "Arena of Lost Souls" combat was called in by the gods to test a Victory applicant in MSR25, but they proved unworthy, and the game has been reborn and is again accepting new Empires into the fray.'

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

## WARGAMES

*KJC Games* are offering a variant of **Warlord** where each player starts off with two Empires rather than the standard one Empire. The game will be played on the normal full-sized map, and it'll cost the same to play two Empires as it does to play one. To reduce the chance of dropouts, however, KJC ask for a joining fee of £12, which will cover the setup of your two Empires and the first ten turns. This variant should offer an interesting twist on the usual game:

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

KJC have several variants available for players of their game of gang warfare, **It's a Crime**. For

details of these, check:

<http://cgi.kjcgames.com/crime.php>

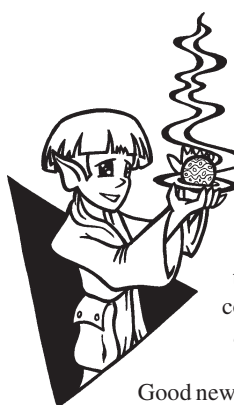
*Jason Oates* has been running wargames for years now, and knows his stuff. He reports that his new game of **Ancient Empires** has reached the point of being into two years of game time, where it can now take competitive players.

Jason offers the *Special Deal* of a *Free Start* and £21.00 of game credit to *Flagship* subscribers.

<http://uk.geocities.com/>

[jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com](mailto:jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com)

## POWER GAMES

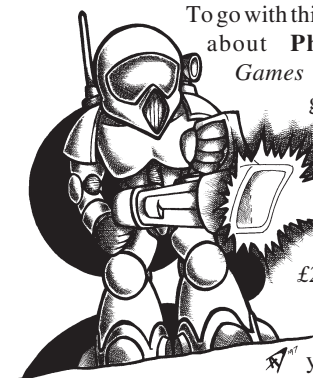


*Agema Publications* are launching a new game of **The Glory of Kings V** (previously, *La Gloire du Roi*), and assure readers that there is still time to join it. If your interest has been aroused by this issue's article, contact Agema at: [agema2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:agema2@tiscali.co.uk)

Good news from *Mindless Games* is that the playtest of **Carpe Diem** (based on *Primvs Inter Pares*) is progressing well, with boosted order numbers for added value and interest. Longterm readers will remember that *Primvs Inter Pares* was set in the Roman Republic, so will be interested to hear that *Carpe Diem* is set, despite its Latin name, in Ancient Greece. *Mindless* say that 'we're virtually ready to start beta-testing now', so check their website for more information:

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

## SCIENCE FICTION



To go with this issue's article about **Phoenix**, *KJC Games* are making a generous *Special Offer* of 10 free political reports (10 weeks, worth £20) in the game. Please mention that you're taking up the *Flagship Special*

*Offer* if you wish to claim this, and KJC reserve the right to check with us that you're a genuine *Flagship* subscriber. *Phoenix* has plenty in it to interest science fiction players, with the advantage of the depth that has come from its earlier form as the long-running *Beyond the Stellar Empire*. You can, of course, play ships

for free until you wish to take up a political position: you'll still get your free ten weeks:

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

## ADVENTURE GAMES

*KJC Games'* **Monster Island** now has a dedicated Games Moderator, who's aiming to make the game both more fun and more interactive. [www.kjcgames.com](http://www.kjcgames.com)



As you'll see from some players' comments in this issue's *Rumours from the Front*, there have been changes to the games of **Quest** run by *KJC*. If you check the message board in KJC's *Quest* section, you'll find a full account of what's happened by Jack Diamond, the moderator. Briefly, it's Game 31 of *Quest* that still has a human moderator, and has 15 interactive alliances. Game 32 has no alliances and no human moderator, but it still exists as a straightforward computer-moderated game, without the political element that alliances bring: this approach still suits enough players to keep Game 32 viable.

So Game 31 has the politics, but it's possible to join Game 32 for a simpler hack&slash style. *Quest* players are invited to transfer to the style of game which better suits them. Indeed, KJC offer the first three turns in Game 32 for free:

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

## SPORTS

*Mindless Games* report that work is continuing on improving their new football management game, **Master of the Dugout**, and that the first season is 'trotting along swimmingly'. The game was favourably reviewed in *Flagship* #112, and since then there have been marked improvements. They now have active managers in the Scottish Premier and English 3rd Divisions, as well as in the English Premier and 1st Divisions, and the French Premier:

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



*OlympiaPBM* report that they've no new games of their **ProSoccer** starting till early 2006, but there are plenty of spaces in the existing games. These include games that are only a few months old:

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

## FIRMS



*Flying Buffalo Inc* report that reprints of two popular **Lost Worlds** books, for the characters Eilee the Sprite and

Felina the Tiger Lady, are now available after having been out of print for several years. They're \$7.50 each.

Their release of **Tunnels&Trolls 5.5** was delayed but has now been carried out. Watch out for a film that'll be released this summer called *Bickford Shmeckler's Cool Ideas*, because the characters will be playing T&T:

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

*Agema Publications* hasten to warn readers that the website and email addresses for them which we published last issue no longer work. It's possible to get onto their mailing list for their catalogue: send them a letter or e-mail, giving with your name and address. Here's the correct email address:

[agema2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:agema2@tiscali.co.uk)

*Agema* also announce the publication of a football board game. It is a two-player dice-based game, and uses counters representing players and the ball on a football pitch.

*Agema* are making a *Special Offer* for it to *Flagship* readers. The retail price is £12, but they're offering you a special edition at the reduced price of £9, a 25% saving. You must, of course, mention *Flagship* when sending in your order. *Agema* describe the game as 'fast to play, taking up to 20 minutes per match (but you can change the time it takes to suit you, depending on how long you have). It boasts full colour components and plenty of examples in the relatively simple rules.'

And its name? *Agema* have called it **FFG**, which stands for 'fast football game':

[agema2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:agema2@tiscali.co.uk)

## MISC GAMES

*Freeform Games* has just released a new downloadable murder mystery, suitable for playing as a party game. Their twelfth title, it's called **Dead Man's Chest** and is suitable for 12-16 players, plus a moderator. As the title indicates, it involves the rivalry between two pirate crews on the 18th-century Spanish Main. The way the game works is that you know

everything about your own character, including whether you're playing the actual murderer, and then have to play in character until the mystery reaches its conclusion.

One of the partners in *Freeform Games*, *Mo Holkar*, will be known to regular readers as an experienced RPG reviewer and a Consultant Editor for *Flagship*. 'We started this business,' *Mo* says, 'because we'd played plenty of the conventional murder mystery games and found them boring and predictable. Our murder mysteries are developed from our experience in writing role-playing games and freeforms, and we aim to provide a stimulating challenge for experienced gamers while still being approachable and fun for newcomers to the hobby.'

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

*Matrix Games* send us news of their computer game **Tin Soldiers: Julius Caesar**, the sequel to their **Tin Soldiers: Alexander the Great**. Interestingly, this is a computer war-game that replicates miniatures, with over 200 'hand painted' miniatures in the game as you play Caesar and conquer the world. It sounds the sort of game that would appeal to the wargamers among you. More details from:

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

**Paul Evans** has passed on an interesting message from *Shannon Board Games*, rejoicing to announce that they were chosen by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide boardgames for delegates attending July's G8 Summit at Gleneagles and saying, 'Hopefully this will promote boardgames not only in our own country but on a global scale as they will reach all corners of the globe.'

It's good to hear that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has some sensible priorities:

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

*VGSmart Press* is a company which helps independent game developers to market their games online, which sounds an excellent idea. They've sent us news about various independent releases that may be of interest to you. We've passed on the list of games to our Computer Games correspondent, 'Globetrotter' and we hope to feature a full report in a future issue.

*VGSmart Press* have also sent us contact details for *Game Savant*, a new system for finding and downloading independent titles. It puts the games into categories and also includes players' feedback:

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

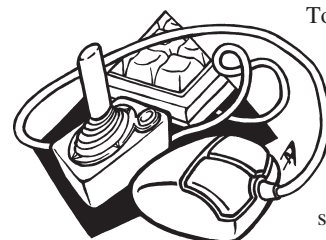
Here's an interesting idea from the US boardgames firm *GMT Games*. They've introduced the 'GMT Project 500' to help them to anticipate which boardgames they should produce and offer for sale. The way it works is that players can order a game in advance at a discount of around 30%. Once enough orders have been received for the game, then GMT will

start the production process. This idea saves them from the heavy expense of producing a game that is unlikely to sell an adequate quantity to cover the production cost, while players benefit by paying less for a game that they want to play.

GMT have found that the idea works well, and they've been able to increase their print runs. Initially, 500 advance orders was the number required to put a game into production, but they've now increased this to a more realistic 700, depending on how quickly the number of orders is rising over the 500 mark. It's possible to track how well the various games are doing from their listing:

[www.gmtgames.com/p500/gmtp50.asp](http://www.gmtgames.com/p500/gmtp50.asp)

## MMOGs



To start off with news about existing games, **Everquest** is now celebrating its sixth year. To mark this

anniversary, *Sony Online Entertainment* are granting special rewards to EQ players for every year that they've been active in the game, in a system of character upgrades. A neat touch is that these rewards will also be effective for anyone who rejoins the game after taking a break from playing. Gosh, six years, already!

<http://everquest2.station.sony.com/>

Good news for players in **Anarchy Online** is that *Funcom* are now issuing the original game totally free of charge. The software can be downloaded for free and there's no subscription to be paid to play. *Funcom* say that 'It's currently the long-term goal for *Funcom* to make sure that the removal of subscription fees, client costs and the need to have a credit card when registering for *Anarchy Online* will become a permanent offering...' The expansions, *Shadowlands*, *Alien Invasion* and *Notum Wars*, aren't included in this offer, which is nevertheless a very generous one:

[http://anarchy-online.com/free/ad\\_campaigns/freecampaign](http://anarchy-online.com/free/ad_campaigns/freecampaign)

A new and free expansion for **Dark Age of Camelot** (*Mythic*, *GOA*) is expected shortly, in the form of an island called Agramon, which will rise from the sea equidistant from the three realms of Albion, Midgard and Hibernia. Agramon is intended to serve as a zone for combat and will have terrain that's suitable for this purpose: small hills and vast plains. American servers should have the expansion this month, with European servers following later in the year:

[www.camelot-europe.com](http://www.camelot-europe.com)

Also due out imminently is the new game, **Irth Online**, from *Magic Hat Software*. The game world in this initially consists of a continent containing three main civilisations: the Frei in the snowy north, the Tian Zhen in the swamps of the south and Necron in deserts to the east. These three have recently established a truce, and you can either choose to join one these races or to play independently as a nomad. The designers promise plenty of opportunities for combat, but with the chance to travel, create items and run a business as well. We'll be interested to hear how this develops:

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

**Roma Victor** from *RedBedlam* is due for release at the end of this month. Set in the Roman Empire at around 180AD, this sounds of considerable interest to players looking for a game world that's based on history rather than fantasy. There'll be plenty of choice in play, too: 'We have order and civility within the confines of Rome, chaos and lawlessness in the hinterlands of the unoccupied territories.' We hope to bring you more news about this game soon after its arrival:

[www.roma-victor.com](http://www.roma-victor.com)

**Gods and Heroes: Rome Rising** from *Perpetual Entertainment* is due out in early October. Set in the early days of Rome's growth, around 300BC, the designers promise 'a huge range of terrain types including cities, towns, farmland, forests, mountains, high-alpine arctic regions, marshes, seashores, northern frontiers, islands, and Mythological Realms,' along with plenty of opportunities for combat. There's a strong fantasy element in the game, with 'The Gods, Creatures, and Monsters of mythology' to encounter:

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

**Tactica Online** from *Imaginary Numbers* is described 'as a turn-based strategy RPG focusing on tactical squad combat'. Its release is planned for early November, and in it you control a team of characters against a 17th century background where rival secret societies favour either magic or science:

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

And, of course, *Turbine Entertainment's* eagerly-awaited **Dungeons & Dragons Online** is expected in mid-November. It'll be interesting and no doubt exciting to see how this well-loved system adapts to online play. Many of us must still remember how it felt to meet roleplaying for the first time, by experiencing D&D:

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

To end on a cautionary note, it's been reported that in South Korea, where online gaming is easy and very popular, a 28-year-old player collapsed and died after playing *Starcraft* for 50 hours with few breaks. An excessive session, clearly, though there's the incentive that it's possible to make really big money in South

Korea as a professional online player.

Online play can become all-absorbing, even without the prospect of earning big bucks: take care not to over-do it, guys!

## MAGAZINES

Last issue, we briefly mentioned that we'd received a copy of **Worlds of Cthulhu**, the biannual magazine for **Call of Cthulhu**, and we promised to take a closer look at it. With 132 pages, this is a tribute to the strength of support for the Cthulhu system. *Worlds of Cthulhu* contains two detailed articles about playing the game with a Wild West background; an article about the important element of madness; a scenario called 'The Singer from Dhol' which is set in Maine, on Oyster Island, with full character backgrounds; a scenario set in France, 'Dark Ages: Averogne'; 'Super 8', which is set in New York; 'The Icarus Project', an adventure set in the far future; an article about the flappers of the 1920s; also columns about Delta Green and using the d20 system.

Printed in Germany by *Pegasus Press*, it's worth noting that the magazine is an international effort:

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

Issue #21 of the boardgame magazine **Games International** is out now: it's good to see that its revival is continuing. This issue contains a large number of game reviews, along with some general articles about boardgaming. Among the games mentioned are *Dungeon Twister*, *Himalaya*, *Primordial Soup* and the European setting for *Ticket to Ride*. It's now possible to read back issues on the website:

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

**Stealth Brothers' Independent Roleplaying Magazine (IRM)** announce that their October/November issue will be a Horror Special and that there's time to send them material for this up until September 5th. Indeed, there's a list of possible titles for articles up on their website, though you're welcome to contact them with suggestions of your own:

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

The miniatures magazine **Harbinger** reaches its 20th edition, with articles about Kelts, Warmachine, Wargods, Rezolution, Arena of Death and Martian Empires, among others. They're also offering the first of a set of tokens that'll run up until issue 25, with a large number of miniatures-related prizes going to one lucky reader:

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

We've also received advance notice of a new general magazine of games and puzzles that'll start coming out this September. Called **Knucklebones**, it looks as if it'll be fun to read, so stand by for more news about it in the next *Flagship*:

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

Last issue we mentioned the **Canterbury Gamers News** website, and among the games we listed was one called **Inferno**. We've been asked to add that this is a version of the *Undying King Games'* game *Inferno*, and runs under licence from UKG:

[www.canterburygamersnews.tk](http://www.canterburygamersnews.tk)

## Briny En Garde



*The year is 1791, and there's trouble afoot...! Not in England, where Good King George III of the House of Hanover-Pumpnickel is apt to deal sternly with troublemakers, be they Whigs, Irish, Quakers, or just Furry ...er, Foreigners. But it's a different kettle of fish in France, on the other side of the Channel, where the political situation has deteriorated into a public free-for-all, no holds barred! "La*

*Revolution mange ses enfants!" Nobody is safe any more. Emigrants arrive in London in ever increasing numbers, stating that declarations of war are expected monthly from Berlin, Vienna, Madrid, Moscow, and Lisbon. They also complain that taxes are higher than ever and the cost of nearly everything has doubled. And they shake their grizzled heads (powder being very expensive nowadays) at the unheard-of idea of raising armies by conscription, the brainchild of a certain young Corsican artillery officer about to enter French politics. Nevertheless, they all agree that the great shipyards of Toulon, Brest, and Cherbourg have never been busier - beehives ain't in it, they say. France is obviously marshalling its forces. And the French Navy seems to have plans of its own...!*

To play *Briny en Garde* simply visit our website at <http://www.brinyengarde.co.uk/> and get the rules and then contact us to play and receive your character. The game is free and is played by email only. As usual, silly names are a must!



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# Origins Convention

*GREG COSTIKYAN takes a sharp look at this major gaming event ...*

ORIGINS, the 'national adventure game convention' (meaning the Midwestern-regional hobby games convention), was founded in 1975 by the *Avalon Hill Game Company*. The name, suggested by Don Greenwood, reflected the fact that the hobby games industry had been founded in 1958 by Charles Roberts, founder of Avalon Hill, with the publication of *Tactics*. Thus, by attending the Baltimore-based convention, gamers were returning to their 'Origins.' In 1977, the third 'Origins' was hosted by SPI, at Wagner College in Staten Island.

These days, it's permanently located in Columbus, Ohio, and run by the Game Manufacturers' Association, an institution created in the 80s when hobby game publishers got sick of being marginalized at the Hobby Industry of America tradeshow. The GAMA show is now the main (non-consumer, trade-oriented) show for the hobby game industry.

Origins was predated, by some years, by GenCon, originally named for Lake Geneva, where it was located, and originally a fan-run convention. In the early days, Origins was larger than GenCon, which was still a small regional; once D&D boomed, however, *TSR* took over GenCon, made it their house convention, and turned it into the largest such thing in the game industry.

## The Traders

I spent some time stalking about the dealers' room, largely to get a better sense of who the major players are at present, at least under the assumption that booth size is a proxy for industry prominence. *WOTC*, of course. *Decipher* and *Upper Deck*, but I hardly consider them real game publishers; essentially, they're publishers of collectible cards who also happen to publish some mediocre and extraordinarily unimaginative CCGs, battenning onto licensed properties to which they have access. *Nintendo*, *Konami*, and *Bandai* all had presences here, pushing CCGs based on their properties - sometimes also published by the same company, but sometimes licensed to others (*Pokemon* to *WOTC*). Interestingly, none were really pushing electronic product - but all do well with CCGs in Japan, and any promotion they do at Origins comes out of the petty cash drawer, as far as these operations are concerned.

Then we come to *Alderac Entertainment Group*, publisher of *Legend of Five Rings*, one of the very few CCGs that isn't, in essence, a thinly veiled *Magic* rip-off. Although they do some D20 RPG product, they're almost exclusively a CCG publisher, and at least they're game geeks, not card publishing drones battenning onto a secondary market.

And there's *White Wolf*, still doing elegant-looking product, and still unable to find something other than *World of Darkness* to flog. The creative spark has left the building.

After that, we're onto the second tier, where the creative spark is likeliest to be found. *Green Ronin*, some tasty looking RPG supplements and an interesting boardgame concept. *Fantasy Flight*, striking off in a lot of different directions, very stylishly; their *Game of Thrones* boardgame, based on the George RR Martin series I can't stand (though I adore some of Martin's other work, and think highly of him as an essentially decent human being, not to mention a lad made good from dear old Hudson County), wins an Origins Award later that evening. I think about buying it, but at \$50 a pop... well, I can pass.

*Looney Labs* has a larger booth than I would have expected, and *Cheapass Games* a smaller one, but I suspect this says more about corporate ego than industry prominence. Looney has a new version of *Chrononauts*, based on American history - but while I'd be happy with a version of *Chrononauts* with different events, my main complaint with the original one was its US-centric nature. Please, give me vast Aztec interstellar empires, Hellenistic Greeks with the steam engine before Christ, and a global Qin dominion fated never to develop modern technology. Cheapass has nothing new that tempts me, but I do buy full-color editions of *Give Me the Brain* and *Lord of the Fries*.

Steve Jackson himself is not at the show. A coupla *Munchkin* titles are Origins Award nominated; never understood the enthusiasm for them. Although they're vaguely humorous, only vaguely so. To be sure, they're solid, in terms of game design, but Steve is a professional - and the design is not as original as I'd hope from him. *SJ Games* does seem to be republishing virtually the complete oeuvre of Tom Wham, for which they are to be commended, of course. And when do we get a new edition of *The Great Khan Game*?

Zev Shlasinger's *Z-Man Games*, which I'd thought a highly marginal operation, looks a lot more professional and on the ball than I'd expected, and they garner four Origins Award nominations... I definitely have to take Zev more seriously.

I also run into the *9th Level Games* guys, who give me freebies of *Kobolds Ate My Baby* and the *Ninjaburger* RPG. I really like *Kobolds Ate My Baby*; I can certainly imagine running this to general amusement. Whatever happened to the market for cheapo, quick and funny games, anyway?

## Someone's Idea of Ceremony

But it's time to move away from the show floor and onto the Origins Awards, which are as little attended as they were, lo, these 17 years ago. That is to say, there are a hundred something attendees, rather than a few dozen, but then, the convention has 13,000 attendees instead of a couple thousand. My guess is that the only people in attendance are company employees... and we geezers, crammed off on the sides as 'hall of fame' members.

There are 26, count-em, 26 categories. The Origins awards launched with five. And we were proud. I fought this fight long ago, and I'm not going to fight it any longer: the more categories you have, the more you devalue the award. Prune it to ten. Preferably, say, five. They've instituted a 'game of the year' award, and no wonder: with 26 categories, none of them means a damn.

It's not a bad ceremony - except for the fact that at no time is the name of a game designer, miniatures sculptor, graphic artist, illustrator - or, god help me, author - ever mentioned. Everything is ascribed to the publisher. I'm sure this is extremely just. *Gone With the Wind*, product of MGM, right? (Selznick who?) Viking Publishing, *Grapes of Wrath*, what a great novel. (Steinbeck? Who dat?) *Dungeons & Dragons* by - Hasbro, yes, that's the ticket.

Nothing has changed. *Nothing* has changed. I stay away for nearly twenty years, and nothing changes. The gods of gaming give me strength! Even when they come to the crap-licensed game 'novel', they announce the name of the publisher - but not the person who actually did the work. Haven't we ascribed novels to writers for three hundred years and more?

They have some folks say a few words about Don Turnbull (Hall of Famer, recently deceased), who used to run *TSR/UK* (and I remember as an old-school postal *Diplomacy* player). And then they yank the Hall of Famers up on stage - I guess this is our big moment... And to a degree it is, given that the audience consists largely of current professionals who might have a prayer of knowing who these guys are, and might actually aspire to be among them. Meanwhile, 13,000 gamers are playing out on the floor. I think perhaps there's a fundamental disconnect here.

More awards, down to the end... *Indy Clicks* as 'Game of the Year'. Okeydoke. *Hero Clicks*, a great concept when it was launched, but... Really? Game of the Year? Now?

A full list of award winners is available at:  
[www.aagad.originsgames.com](http://www.aagad.originsgames.com)

# Serim Ral: Ancient Realms

*Playing the Persians in Serim Ral 26, MIKE NASH starts a game diary of this new scenario ...*

A COUPLE of years ago, I returned to the world of *Incubus Designs'* **Serim Ral** game after a break of several years. I did so with some trepidation, because it was a bit like going back to watch an old TV series that you loved as a kid, when you never know if it's going to be rubbish to an adult (Buck Rogers has been forever ruined for me, even if Wilma still wears that same skin-tight, blue Spandex catsuit)!

Fortunately, Serim Ral was still the same game (albeit with some swanky improvements) and I hadn't changed much either, other than the odd premature grey hair in my stubble (as in I'm-not-yet-30-and-my-beard's-going-grey kind of premature!). However, Serim Ral had undergone a makeover (think implants, Botox & all, but with more favourable results). It had been updated from a PBM game, printed on an ageing dot-matrix printer and delivered if the British postal service felt like it, and evolved into a PbeM game, delivered direct to my desktop in an impressive-looking html turnsheet. The full-colour, interactive age had arrived, and we were only a couple of years into the 21st Century! (That said, postal and plain text turnsheets are still available.)



So I set about re-learning old tricks, and had fun doing it. After several games filled full of dead leaders and crumbling empires (all of them mine), I finally felt I (sort of) knew what I was doing.

Then the game's developers, Incubus Designs (ID), announced that they were taking start-up details for a new game with an entirely original theme. Perfect timing. My epiphany about how to play the game had coincided with a new game designed around many of the most evocative civilizations in human history. Crawling out of the mists of time was *Serim Ral: Ancient Realms*. Images of Roman legions, scythed chariots, screaming berserkers in silly kilts, phalanxes of Greek hoplites, exotic Persian warriors, and more scythed chariots filled my fevered brain. Hitting ID's website at about 2am, I signed up there and then, frantically geeing the computer along in case other people filled the places before me! The game would be working on a 10-day turnaround - personally, I prefer the faster pace of 7-day games, while ID also run some on 14 days - but I wasn't complaining.

## *Serim Ral at a glance ...*

This long-running, turn- based, fantasy wargame is run in different versions by three firms: this diary describes the game from Incubus Designs (also run by Harlequin Games and Mindless Games - details in Galactic View). Startup is free, with subsequent turns at £3.50.

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

	Level	Health	Train Pts
	2	1400 (1400)	10

### Hammanu The Persian Knight

Walls	Troops	Tot Health	Tot Attack
0 (0)	0 (1000)	2200	90

Hammanu stands on hills in Persia at ( ). This is in his own dominion. He has stockpiles of 9 Food. Hammanu controls no army. He has decided to fight until he has suffered 0% casualties. A surplus of 8 food is held within the stockpiles.

Terrain crossing times are 50 hours through forest, 50 hours over hills, 50 hours over mountains, 50 hours across plains and sea cannot be crossed. In hills Hammanu is carrying everything and has space for 114 more encumbrance. Hammanu seeks shelter within the strong walls of The City Of Ticinum.

Hammanu has been instructing he troops in the way of the warrior.



Hammanu had some time to spare so decided to sample the local night life.

On the first night Hammanu took a trip to 'The Dancing Unicorn' in search of rumours and liquid refreshment. After knocking back a couple-too-many flagons of 'Old Mother Smith's Cure-all' Hammanu managed to crawl his way back to his quarters

Surfing ID's website, my eyes drank in some very cool artwork, while my brain was already planning world domination! The promo for the game pointed to some interesting developments to spice things up and give even old hands something new to think about. As part of the start-up process, I had to select one of 12 races, each with its own webpage describing their background and special troop types that would help me achieve my dreams of world domination (cue: evil laughter). ID had introduced another unique element that has proved successful and is likely to be used in future games - namely, players could only sign up for certain races if there was a fairly even spread of players across the game map. This limits the possibility of starting next to empty positions, meaning that the action would be urgent right from the beginning. Initially, my choice of races was limited to Germanics (big, hairy German barbarians, presumably fresh from massacring Romans in the Teutoberg Forest), Scandians (Vikings under another name), Celtiberians (Spanish goat-herders) or Romans (does what it says on the tin). Frankly, none of these was to my liking, but I signed up as Romans to guarantee my place in the game. I determined to come back later, when some more intriguing options opened up. Egyptians and Persians were the leading contenders.

When I woke up after a night of fairly poor sleep, due to my fevered brain pondering moves in a game that hadn't even started yet(!), I logged on and found that both Egyptians and Persians were available. Decision time. Having recently returned from a brilliant holiday in Egypt, the Force was strong in that one! But, ignoring the call of the mediclorians, I opted for the Persians and their god, Zurvan. Why? After all, these were the people who got pummelled by Alexander. Also, with the game map covering Europe and northern Africa, I would be starting in the Southeast corner. Maybe I'd be hemmed in. But I figured that everyone would want Romans, Carthaginians (think War Elephants!) or Egyptians, and I wanted to be different. So in that moment was born Hammanu, my main



leader and the man I deemed destined to rule Persia and beyond!

I would begin with five leaders, each of which needed a name and character class, and three cities named after historical settlements. With this being a historically themed game, I wanted to think of a concept for my empire and generate some convincing names. Overnight, I decided to name all my leaders (other than Hammanu) after angels, demons or spirits - after all, most of the angels and demons of Judeo-Christian mythology were inherited from societies that lived and died in and around Persia. So it was that Hammanu was joined by his comrades: Belial, Dagon, Shedim and Berith. (Note that a couple of leader names - but not Hammanu's - and the cities have been changed because this game is still ongoing and I don't want to give away strategic info to spies!)

Next, I selected my character classes, a choice vital in shaping my game strategy. I needed to decide what were my aims and key challenges. With changes to the game format, I (probably rightly) decided that Wizards and Priests would be slightly less influential in this game than previously. Pre-game banter suggested this was the general consensus among other players too. Even so, I decided to start with one Wizard (Shedim) and two Priests (Dagon and Belial). Hammanu was going to be my main battering ram in whatever I did, so he became a Fighter, the best starting combat class; as the empire's main leader, he would also gain another combat bonus to make his troops fight more effectively. My last choice was a Thief (Berith). A new rule was that each city would have a set number of delivery routes to other specific cities. Therefore, in contrast with previous games, I would not necessarily be able to deliver an army from my capital to a threatened border city at short notice. The Thief would help to offset this through her ability to smuggle once she reached 4th level. Also, unlike deliveries, smuggling costs nothing. That was my five leaders selected, but I planned to recruit three more on the very first turn. Now it was just a case of waiting with bated breath for Turn 1 to arrive.

### Turn 1: The time for decision-making

There followed the frustration of waiting for the other 99 players to sign up! I didn't know if exactly 100 players signed up, but assuming so, my maths (a modest GCSE grade C) told me that, with players placed evenly among the 12 races, there would be either eight or nine players for each race. So Persia was going to be pretty well populated from the off.

Finally, the first turnsheet arrived amid feverish expectation. The turnsheet is an html document, spruced up with some nice graphics and comprising a list of each leader and city under my command, a description of what troops and stockpiles each leader has with him, where he is, what he can do and has done. Each of my leaders - led by Hammanu the Persian Knight - was standing round twiddling their thumbs in the local taverns of the cities under my control. Birds twittered in the trees, apparently reminding everyone of better times past and ahead. Somehow, they always seem to do that on Turn 1...

I had also been sent a large map (20 squares by 20) of the local vicinity - the full game map is 100 squares by 100 - as well as a short list of spells for my Wizard, and another for my Priests. Numerous profiles detailed the strengths and weaknesses of various items and troop types present in my realm. There were also helpful notes naming some of the empires near to Hammanu and fellow worshippers of Zurvan, plus scouting reports with the location of a couple of independent cities ripe for conquest!

With all this information just waiting to be devoured, I cancelled all other plans for the evening and set about plotting my empire's expansion. First off, I emailed my turnsheet to several other players with whom I had allied. For me, the social aspect of this game is one of the things that makes it most enjoyable - the chance to have rather bizarre conversations with your mates about issues that have nothing to do with the mundanity of everyday life, usually to the perpetual bemusement of partners! This process is made even easier by the chat-board and email messenger service that ID has introduced in recent years. It's now possible to make a proclamation to your enemies or potential allies, or to email an opponent with a diplomatic suggestion (or threat!) even if you know nothing more about them than the name of their main leader. I took the opportunity to send diplomatic messages to all of the Persians that I had yet to speak with.

Now I needed to decide what I was trying to achieve: both long-term and more immediately. Ultimately, the aim of any Serim Ral game is to call down the gods to seal the destruction of one's foes! But that was a long way off. Firstly, I needed to garner wealth and power. Standing still in this game is not an option! I needed to immediately begin improving the production capabilities of my cities, get my leaders some experience and conquer some more cities! Also, I needed my capital city - my citadel - up and running from Turn 11 (the earliest possible), as this would increase tribute from subordinate provinces.

With these things in mind, I looked at the map. As I had guessed might be a possibility, I had been placed at the very eastern edge of the board while to my west lay the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Two of my three cities lay on the coast, with the other being far inland. Although recognisable as a map of Europe, the continent had been morphed slightly in certain places to fit it into the dimensions of a 100 x 100 map. As a consequence, my starting position ran north to south from what today would be Southeast Turkey down into Israel, while Cyprus lay a few map squares across the sea to my west. My location was of benefit insofar as I could not be attacked from the east, or by land from the west, but it also meant that any rival empires hemmed in to my south or north were more likely to head in my direction. I would need to maintain a careful vigil while enacting my own plans.

Already, Cyprus was looking like a tempting target for invasion. Indeed, one of my scouting missions had identified the location and vital details for city of Paphos. As an independent city, that meant no player controlled it. Theoretically, that meant (a) it would be relatively easy to capture and (b) I would not be starting an ongoing war by attacking it. If I could capture it early in the game, I could then build it up into an extremely well-defended position. Each of my cities contained 5,000 Citizens, a population that would increase by 5% every turn, and around 2,200 troops - mostly infantry types, but also 500 assorted cavalry and 62 precious Persian Immortals (my elite troop) - while Paphos contained just 2,500 Citizens and 300 troops. All my efforts were going into building a fleet of ships to get an army onto Cyprus as quickly as possible. However, the relative scarcity of wood in this arid region was going to hamper shipbuilding, so this plan was going to require patience and good planning. I hoped to be able to sail a landing party to Cyprus by Turn 5 and then reinforce in time to attack on Turn 8 or 9 (depending on the weather).

But I wanted to capture another city before then. Every other player also had two scouting reports, so I knew for certain that some players would have five cities well before Turn 8. Once a city has been captured, its surviving Citizens become part of your empire - with some cultures taking longer to assimilate than others and Citizens are the lifeblood of your empire: under some neat new rules, they are the raw materials for building the troops you want. They also pay taxes. Run out of Citizens and you can't fight or pay for anything. Not good! Incidentally, these new rules are a masterstroke, and an idea that I know that many experienced players really like. Hopefully, the powers at ID will use this system in future games! Serim Ral is an evolving game, with changes to rules and gameplay altered according to feedback from players. It may occasionally take time to implement changes (thief updates spring to mind!), but we as players have a real say in how the game is run. But I digress...

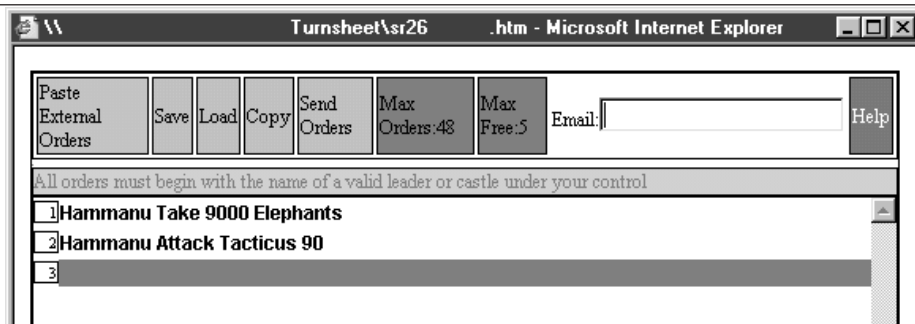
The second city reported by my scouts was very difficult to reach, being eight squares from my closest city away over a mountain range. I needed a target for quick assimilation and minimal collateral damage (ho ho). Also, I needed an alliance with one of the players to my north or south, so that I wasn't invaded simultaneously. Having looked at my turnsheet, which told me about nearby players, I had already sent a goodwill message to the player to my north. Several email conversations later I had a new ally, a new friend with whom to chat about silly things, and my desired 'target for quick assimilation and minimal collateral damage'. Agreeing a deal with the player, we decided to cooperate on capturing two independent cities that were located equidistant between us, keeping one each. Share and share alike! This was great news: I now had three of my four borders secure, was allied to half of Persia and I had a target that I could attack on Turn 3 with an overwhelming force that would minimise casualties.

My plans had pretty much decided themselves. In a moment of hitherto undiscovered psychic foresight (because I had yet to be asked to write this diary!), I decided to write up my ideas with some quick notes. Hopefully, that would make notoriously forgetful me stick to my guns (to use an anachronism). After several games learning the ropes, I've learnt how essential it is to think long-term. Otherwise, you end up producing troops and material that you won't use, or you waste leaders - a precious resource - on fool's errands.

Plans for Turn 1 basically involved the following: build as many ships (Triremes or the smaller Liburnian Galleys) as possible at my two coastal cities, deliver ships from my inland city to the coast (yes, I know, but all starting cities got some ships, so sometimes they came from up a mountainside!), march troops towards the enemy city of Alalakh, find three new leaders and construct buildings.

It is essential to find new leaders as soon as you are able because only leaders can command your armies. Meanwhile, Wizards, Priest, Thieves and Rangers can all perform other useful functions. Rules dictate that you can only have a maximum of five leaders plus one extra for every city that you possess. Consequently, I could immediately find three new leaders. As I had no Ranger yet, the first choice was easy: thus was born Lamia. When she became available next turn, I planned to send her to map the terrain to my south. The other two choices were almost as easy: with a lot of combat coming up, I wanted two Fighters to join Hammanu. With each leader having a limit to the number of troops they can command, having extra fighters meant I could take more troops to battle. Priests can actually command more troops than Fighters (something about the power of prayer and persuasion), as well being able to cast spells before combat. As such, many players use priests as battle leaders. But they don't fight as well as Fighters do and so I prefer to put my troops' lives in the hands of the guys who know what they're doing! Who knows, maybe it's a flaw in my game plan, but, right now, it seems sensible. I order Dagon to find one new Fighter, whom I name Moloch. This way, Moloch will pop onto the map on Turn 2 at the same location as Dagon, and both will be halfway to Alalakh. My Wizard is detailed to find a second Fighter: Astaroth.

Alalakh lies to the north of my empire and so most of the troops at my two northernmost cities are pressed into service and sent north under the command of Hammanu and Dagon. Dagon is a Priest, so I intend to have him ferry troops this turn and then pass command of them to Moloch. I



choose to leave a handful of heavy cavalry behind, in case some evil menace of a rival Thief decides to sabotage my cities during the army's absence. Anyway, they would slow me down in the hills through which I had to pass. I also set my cities to making Triremes for my new fleet, and some Persian Immortals and Elephants to bolster the fighting prowess of my armies. Immortals are by far my most powerful troop choice, but they each use a lot of armour, weapons and bows, so to pad out my battle lines I also make a good number of slingers. Elephants can be thrown into battle to cause panic among opposing ranks, but it takes a lot of food to breed them up, so I decide to limit the amount I'm making until I have more farms. I know that some players immediately began making as many Elephants as they could - consequently, some managed to starve their garrisons! (I think it was Sun Tzu who said something about being a quartermaster first, and a general second. Whatever; it's good advice.)


Each turn, a city or leader has a set amount of time with which to do certain activities. Hammanu and Dagon were in for a fun time marching. Berith went down the tavern to rob its inebriated patrons of their hard-earned wages. Belial boarded a ship and sailed north to Ugarit - which I had identified as my prospective capital - from where he would spend future turns recruiting new priests and generally casting a lot of spells. Only time would tell whether he got there in one piece and how seasick he would feel. Shedim the Wizard was supplied with gold and iron, which he would use as casting components to power his arcane spells. But with no such components available on Turn 1, all he could do for now was sit in the Library studying his little backside off in search of spells of immense power!

With all that done, I looked to erect some new buildings. There are many types available, but I had a fair idea of what I needed to prioritise.

Time constraints would limit each city to four new buildings and so I constructed timberyards at Byblos (a coastal city, mercifully blessed with a copse of fast-growing trees) in order to produce more wood for the fleet. Ugarit got some forges to make weapons, armour and bows for my armies. Situated in hills, where iron was plentiful, this city would be central to my arms trade. Heliopolis, situated inland on open plains, built farms. The idea here was that Heliopolis would become my main farming community, supplying the rest of the empire with surplus grain. Home to a famous horse trainer, Heliopolis could also produce more horses than elsewhere. And, as everyone knows, horses like their grain.

And that was my turn completed. At this point, I should say that I used ID's in-built html order writer, which will check the syntax and spelling of your orders for you. However, I'm a bit of a pen-&-paper man, and I opted to ignore this sensible and useful function! After a careful manual check over to make sure that everything was correct, I emailed my orders off to ID and sat down with withdrawal symptoms, counting the days until Turn 2 arrived.


[Mike's quest for world domination continues next issue.]

	Room Left	Extensions	Train Pts
	997,288	15	8930

### The City Of Tictim

Walls	Troops	Tot Health	Tot Attack
10000 (25)	7712		

The City Of Tictim is situated on hills in Persia at ( ). It has stockpiles of 30620 Food, 20775 Gold, 15445 Iron, 12420 Wood, 12420 Stone, 2000 Weapons, 2000 Armour and 2000 Bows. The City Of Tictim is garrisoned with 700 Light Infantrymen, 5250 Citizens, 500 Heavy Infantrymen, 62 Persian Immortals, 400 Light Cavalrymen, 100 Heavy Cavalrymen and 700 Skirmishers. It has assorted equipment and mounts consisting of a Longship, a Liburnian Galley and a Trireme. The citizens are beginning to show some promise, have insignificant armour, are armed with improvised weapons, slings and The defenders are poorly trained in siege warfare. When attacking or defending the garrison have been ordered to fight until 100% of them have been slain. A surplus of 21908 food is held within the stockpiles. The City Of Tictim is protected by some strong walls. Camped within the city is Hammanu The Persian Knight.

 Production for this week was 9020 Food, 5775 Gold, 5445 Iron, 2420 Wood and 2420 Stone. The City Of Tictim has 1 tavern, 1 stable, 1 shipyard, 1 forge, 1 library, 1 training centre, 1 farm, 1 quarry, 1 mine, 1 timber yard, 1 dungeon, 1 temple, 1 trading post, 1 barrack and 1 guard post. After a lifetime of auspicious encounters the legendary hero Amufy Runeseeker has settled near here. His fame attracts a great many aspiring warriors to the area, doubling the output of barracks.

This week The City Of Tictim can make the following items: 200 Weapons, 200 Armour, 300 Light Infantrymen, 285 Heavy Infantrymen, 200 Horses, a Trireme, a Ballistae, 300 Persian Immortals, 200 Bows, 300 Skirmishers, 300 Balearic Slingers, 250 Archers and 8 Elephants. These are the maximums based on the present stockpile levels. Note that barracks have a maximum output of 100 + 100 per extension, farms 1000 each, forges 200 items each and shipyards 1 item each.



# Introducing ...

## Customizable Card Games

*CHIP ROCZNIAK offers a beginners' guide to duelling with snappy artwork ...*

HELLO ALL, I have been asked to introduce all of you to the world of the Customizable Card Game or CCG. There are many forms of CCGs: if there's a hot or popular property, then there's a good chance that there's a CCG based on that property. The CCGs **InuYasha**, **Dragonball**, and **Vs** are examples of CCGs that have been created due to the popularity of their properties. Of course, just because the property is popular, that doesn't mean that the CCG will do well. An example is the CCG based on the video game **Hack**, the video game did well but the card game did not.

The odds of a CCG surviving long are slim: few last longer than one or two years. Long lasting CCGs are **Magic**, **YuGiOh**, **Pokemon**, and to a lesser extent **Dragonball**. The reason behind their success is that they are constantly adding new rules or changes. Those CCGs are continually reinventing themselves, such as the way that the **Dragonball** CCG changes its name every so often to reflect the different cards in play (eg **Dragonball Z**, **Dragonball GT**). It remains to be seen whether the new brood of CCGs will have any staying power.

The most promising of the newer CCGs are *Upperdeck's* Vs system which uses the Marvel and DC comic properties and *Score's* InuYasha CCG which uses the popular Japanese manga and anime. The InuYasha CCG has some of the best artwork on its cards, using stills directly from the anime: in addition the cards have no borders, which makes them very nice to look at as well as to play. The Vs system also has a professional circuit much like Magic's circuit: it is a one million dollar professional circuit, with many tournaments of smaller prizes and a large championship.

The big three in CCGs are Magic, Pokemon, and YuGiOh. Magic is an excellent card game: it was the first and is still the best. However, I failed to master it. I recommend finding an already established Magic player and studying his or her technique. Casual play in Magic does not suffice. If you do decide that Magic is the game for you there is an excellent Pro Player Circuit: currently it is the most profitable professional circuit.

Pokemon is still a popular game, though it has declined since its first release. This CCG is a companion to the Pokemon games of *Nintendo*. In this CCG you field a team of Pocket Monsters or Pokemon and challenge another duelist and his/her team of Pokemon. During the battle both duelists/trainers can use items or ability cards either to help their own Pokemon or hinder their opponent's. You win when you have accomplished one of three things: won all the prize cards, ensured that your opponent has no more Pokemon, or left your opponent with no cards remaining in his/her draw pile. Prize cards (six cards from the top of a player's deck) are put aside at the beginning of the duel and are not seen until the battle is decided. You win a prize card by knocking out an opponent's Pokemon with one of your own Pokemon: the prize card may then be used in the current battle. Pokemon is fairly easy to learn, simply by purchasing a theme deck you can quickly learn the rules and start challenging opponents. The theme decks provide the essentials needed to duel: since little strategy is needed, even a novice duelist can win. One can assemble a variety of decks depending upon tactic. A personal favorite is a version of a stall deck using Mr. Mime to prevent accumulating any damage until the

opponent runs out of cards from their draw pile. It is up to the creator what type they want to have: one can specialize in a specific type of Pokemon, or decks can be created capitalizing on one of the ways of winning. The Pokemon CCG is a rather good starter CCG, because the rules are not complicated and playing can prepare you for more engaging CCGs.

The CCG I am most familiar with is YuGiOh. This CCG, based on the Japanese manga, is a huge success. The basis of the game is simple, duelists battle each other until one runs out of life points or one wins by use of one of the special conditions for winning. YuGiOh is not a CCG in which you can just acquire a premade deck and expect to win: it requires strategy, and also the rules are more complicated than those in Pokemon rules.

For anybody wanting to start dueling YuGiOh, I offer the advice I wish I had when I started (I just blundered in and started dueling... I was beaten badly). First, log onto *Upperdeck's* official YuGiOh web page, to read the detailed rules for the game including a synopsis of playing the game. The site also features the most up to date ban list and restricted list. The ban list denotes which cards have been banned from use in sanctioned tournament play: they are deemed too powerful or they gave too great an

advantage to one player with few drawbacks. A duelist may choose to not follow the ban list if it is not an officially sanctioned tournament and all duelists agree to do so. The restricted list show which cards the duelist has a set limit of stacking in his/her deck. Normally duelists are allowed up to three copies of any card in their deck and side deck combined: cards on the restricted list are limited to only one or two.

Now that you know the rules and background, get yourself a deck. There are premade decks available and all have their pluses and minuses, so any is suitable to buy (a note however: the first four starter decks contain cards that are on the ban list). Once a duelist acquires a deck, it is time to customize. As in Pokemon there is more than one way to win: duelists must decide how they want to win. The various types of decks will be the topic of another article.

Here are Chip's never-fail rules for deck building:

- 1 - Keep the number of cards in your deck as close to the minimum (40 cards) as possible - this enables you to get to the card you need faster.
- 2 - Have the ratio of monsters to magic and trap cards 1:1. I recommend twenty monsters and twenty magic and trap cards - a duel cannot be won without magic or trap cards, and to be honest some of those cards are just essential to any duel.
- 3 - Keep the number of five star and higher monsters in your deck low. I recommend no more than four - high star monsters require tribute and if you don't have the tribute ready you are wasting the card and opening yourself for attack.
- 4 - Be creative with your deck. Too often people get in the mind set of only one particular type of deck: a new type always shakes up the opponent and makes things interesting.

Next time I'll go into explaining the various types of decks duelists use and how they are played. I'll also go over the requirements needed to build the different types of decks. If anybody has any questions, send me an email at [RoczniakC@aol.com](mailto:RoczniakC@aol.com). Until next time, happy shuffling.



# Amber

## Diceless Roleplaying

*An innovative system: LISA FORDHAM looks at its advantages and disadvantages ...*

WHEN IT first appeared, **Amber: Diceless Roleplaying** virtually created a new genre of table-top roleplaying. The innovation was that the system should be deterministic rather than random, and it's a feature that still seems unique to this game.

### What is it?

The game setting is that of Roger Zelazny's Amber universe (primarily the first five books: *Nine Princes In Amber*, *The Guns Of Avalon*, *Sign Of The Unicorn*, *The Hand Of Oberon* and *The Courts Of Chaos*; the majority of extensions from the second series are in the supplement **Shadow Knight**). For those not familiar with the series, the rundown is that there's one real place - Amber - and that all other places are 'Shadows' of this one true reality. The Amber royal family have the ability to travel through Shadow and find anything they desire; they also have some nifty powers such as rapid healing and regeneration, immortality (or at least vastly extended lifespans), superhuman strength and other powers. The catch is that they all hate each other and constantly scheme against each other. It's a great series - certainly the first five books - and I heartily recommend it... but this is not a review of Zelazny's world, but rather *Phage Press's* adaptation of the same.

### Characters

Character generation immediately captures the scheming competitiveness of the Amberites. By the time your characters are generated, you'll have (at the very least) rivals if not actual enemies among the other Player Characters. The way this is accomplished is by using a points-based NPC system - but with a twist. Rather than simply selecting the number of points to assign to attributes, the players bid against each other. So let's say that player A wants to be the best swordsman, but so does player B. Those two will bid against each other for the highest value of Warfare, and no matter which one wins you can bet the one who came second holds a grudge.

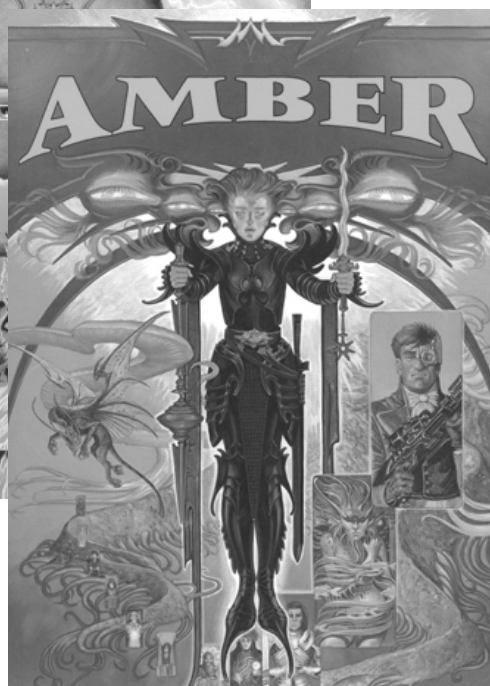
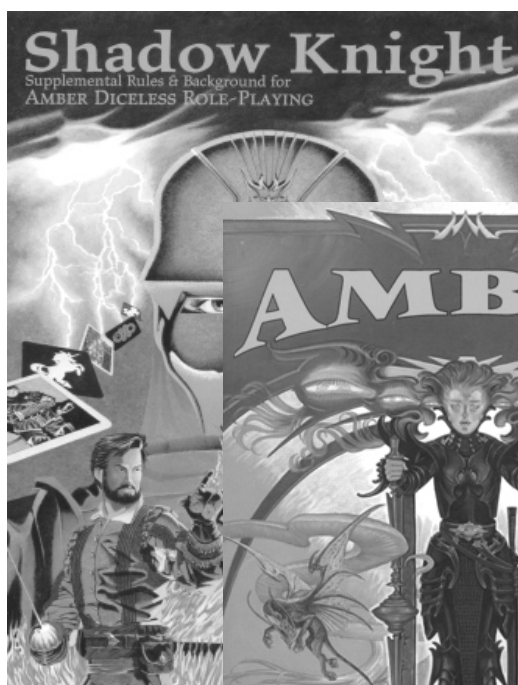
As I've said, this system captures the rivalry of the books well, but it is not without its faults. The main problem is that in actual play the attributes (there are four) are not of equal value. Psyche and Warfare get

a lot of use, Strength and Endurance do not. Various house rules on the web address this by bidding on other things (such as Powers - I'll get to those in a moment). Of course, a GM can set things up such that Strength and Endurance assume greater importance, but the setting of the game makes it extremely difficult to impose any serious limits on PCs (they can usually just escape an unpleasant situation pretty much at will).

The rest of character generation is concerned with choosing Powers. These include Pattern (the ability of all royal Amberites, which allows them to walk through Shadow), Logrus (something from the second series, which is basically the Amberites' enemies' way of travelling in Shadow), Shapeshifting, Trump (the ability to create magical playing cards that allow communication and travel through

Shadow) and three kinds of Magic. It's here that some of the most controversial elements of the game appear. The major powers - Pattern, Logrus and Trump - are fairly well represented at the Basic levels, but not at the Advanced levels. Advanced Pattern Imprint is something that appears at first to be loosely based on some of the character Brand's powers, but later it becomes obvious that it can't completely explain Brand. So we're left with a power that nobody in the source material has exhibited. While you can argue that the characters in the novels just concealed their powers, it does give the game an unpleasantly different feel to the source material. Similar problems occur with advanced Logrus

and Trump. Shapeshifting is perhaps the worst example of this. Essentially, most of the power appears to have been invented rather than adapted. Shapeshifters in the game are limited by mass, can do funky things like close wounds, and have various 'super forms'. In the novels, you could argue the mass limitation (when Dworkin shifts to Corwin, he's slightly slimmer) but you could argue against it, too (the demon form that Merlin assumes to fight the Dweller doesn't sound as if it's the same mass as he is). Certainly nobody closes wounds in the novels (and Merlin is wounded often) or assumes anything that resembles what the game describes as 'Primal Form'. The text is also unclear as to some requirements: for example, it says that Advanced Shapeshifting allows you to create creatures of blood, but it also says that simply Shapeshifting + Conjuring can accomplish this.



### Amber at a glance ...

Diceless roleplaying system based on Roger Zelazny's books, and published by *Phage Press*. Sadly this system went out of print in Summer 2004, though you can download electronic copies of the two source books for a bargain \$12 from:

[www.drivethrurpg.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=28\\_156](http://www.drivethrurpg.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=28_156)



### Magic and contests

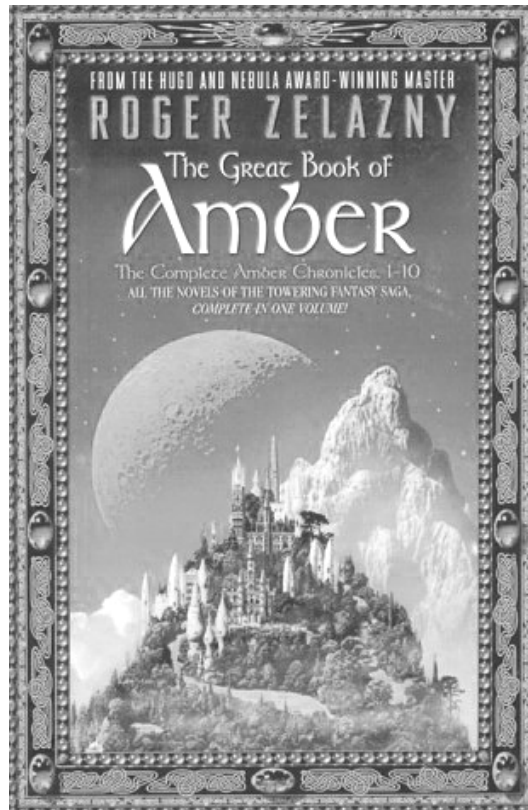
The three types of magic are Power Words, Sorcery and Conjuring. Power Words - while questionable in authenticity (I think Corwin was using some sort of Sorcery against the demon in Lorraine) - are well balanced and 'feel' appropriate. Sorcery does allow duplication of most of the feats performed in the source material, but I find the explanation of Lynchpins to be very unclear. The situation is that spells are very specific in nature: if you don't know exactly what the conditions are going to be when you cast the spell (for example, where you will be, or who the target will be), you can provide the software equivalent of 'configuration parameters' to make the spell more flexible. We are told what Lynchpins are appropriate to each spell, and how long they take. There are two main problems - does this time refer to preparing ('hanging') the spell, or to casting it? (I've always assumed the former, since the alternative makes Sorcery virtually useless - but that begs the question: how long does it take when casting the spell?) The second problem is that some Lynchpins are marked as 'optional' - which presumably means that the others are *not* optional. Which contradicts the principle of Lynchpins - you ought to be able to 'hard code' parameters if you wish. I've gone on at length here to demonstrate a problem that is likely to occur in most games, since Sorcery tends to be a common power chosen by players.

Conjuring is the third of the Magic powers, and I'm not at all convinced it's necessary. There are no examples of it in the series that could not be explained by some other power - Oberon creating the creature of blood could quite easily be explained with an advanced Shapeshifting ability (and indeed the game supports this idea), while Merlin always fetches things from Shadow using Logrus even when 'in the Shadow boonies' where one would imagine he would use Conjuring if it existed. Conjuring is a lot cheaper than Logrus, and it can be used for much the same effects. I suspect the power gamers among players will seize upon it as the power most open to abuse. It's possible to create an entire army of nasty critters with a few hours of Conjuring, and even to make that army extend over multiple Shadows. While Pattern, Logrus, or even Trump can accomplish this, it takes a lot longer and there's more that could go wrong.

After character generation, the book goes on to explain how to resolve contests. Remember, it's diceless, so the simple mechanic is that you compare the values of the appropriate attributes of the contestants, and the highest one wins. So if I've got Warfare 99, and you've got Warfare 100, then you'll always beat me in a fight. It's a little more complicated than this (situation comes into it; if, for example, I'm stronger than you then I might be able to use that to my advantage, or I could ambush you), but that's the basic mechanic. The catch is that nobody knows exactly what the others are capable of. You know who is the best, but not necessarily who is second best. This is very much in keeping with the novels. Everyone knows Benedict is the best swordsman, but Corwin doesn't know if he can beat Eric or not.

### GM determinism

There are those who object to pure GM determinism on many grounds - the GM won't be surprised, the GM can screw over his players, it's fun to roll dice. In order, my answers to these objections are: if the GM isn't surprised, he's playing with very strange players (mine surprise me regularly); the GM can screw over players in any system, it's a common use for GM screens; and sure, it's fun to roll dice (another favourite system of mine is **Champions**, after all). In the end, I think determinism



works in Amber because there's very little in the source material that can be ascribed to 'bad luck' (it usually turns out to be manipulation by a sibling). It may not be the second coming of roleplaying, but it works here. Which is not to say that you couldn't just plug in a dice system instead, of course - there are house rules on the Web that do just this.

The rest of the book is devoted to a GM section and a couple of adventures. The GM section is really redundant; it has very little to add to what was in the previous section, and in many cases simply repeats the previous information. The best part of the GM section is the advice on running an Amber campaign. Using a simple example-response format, it addresses many common problems that happen in RPG sessions, although there's nothing particularly specific to Amber here nor anything that hasn't been said before. The section on the Elder Amberites - the characters from the novels - is interesting; there are multiple versions provided for each, and you can select which to use (or create your own, of course). The versions vary from reasonably accurate as far as the novels are concerned to quite outlandish.

### Adventures

The adventures, though, leave a bit to be desired. They suffer from two main problems. Firstly, none of them are particularly typical adventures for a new group: Throne War is specifically mentioned as an off the wall variant adventure and the others are of the apocalyptic 'only the PCs can help us' type that I believe is inappropriate for beginning adventures. The second problem is that they are little more than frameworks. Any Amber adventure will suffer from this problem to an extent - after all, the PCs can go off to entirely new universes at a moment's notice - but a little more help for the (presumably novice) GM would have been appreciated. At the very least the important events could have been more detailed, if not the more important locations. I found I had to adlib furiously, and while I accept that this is going to be a staple of many Amber sessions, I would have appreciated being hand-held a little more the first time out.

### To play or not to play?

I'm a huge fan of the setting, and I've run some memorable Amber games in the past. All the flaws I've mentioned are annoying rather than critical, and there's a wealth of house rules on the Web if you ever find yourself running out of ideas. However I would leave you with three cautionary warnings: First of all, be aware that Amber works best with a medium-to-large group (six players and up). This sounds surprising, when you consider that the PCs can occupy different universes with different time streams and be involved in completely different plots, but in reality I've found that the players are more than happy to entertain each other while waiting for the GM's attention. Perhaps not the best game for new gamers, however. Secondly, you will soon find that Amber is open to many abuses by a power gamer. My advice is to suppress the usual GM urge to squash them and go with it. Let the PCs be powerful; anything they can do, others can do as well.

Finally, and this is more of a recommendation than a warning, be prepared to adlib a lot when running a game. I've never found it useful to detail locations so much as characters in Amber; it's far more important to know a Non-Player-Character's motives and powers than it is to know where they are, or what they're doing. You also want a list of minor characters to throw in whenever a PC jaunts off to a new Shadow and decides to make friends or enemies. You can prepare for an Amber game, but you need to do it a little differently to (say) a dungeon crawl.

# Shadows over Camelot

*PAUL EVANS goes in search of the Holy Grail ..*

THERE HAS long been a strand within games-publishing of games - often aimed at children - that are co-operative. That is, the players work together against the game mechanics or to complete some task. The best known example of this in recent years is the **Lord of the Rings** board game designed by Reiner Knizia and published by *Sophisticated Games* (and licensed to *Hasbro* and *Kosmos* amongst others). (Personally, I'm not convinced this is really a game, but it's certainly a great experience.) The latest in this line is the new game from *Days of Wonder*, **Shadows over Camelot**, which looks set to be another winner for this young company. Designed by Bruno Cathala and Serge Laget, the game is set in the world of Arthurian legend. King Arthur, the Round Table and the quest for the Holy Grail all play their part in the game. And the biggest challenge for players is to refrain from 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail' references. Or not, if they prefer.

As you'd expect the players are all Knights of the Round Table. The names are familiar: Gawain, Kay, Percival and so on - including Arthur himself (but not, of course, Sir Not-appearing-in-this-game. Sorry, I'll try to refrain). Each Knight has his own special ability, summary card (the illustration opposite shows King Arthur as an example), a die in his colour and a playing piece. One of the attractions of the game is that the playing pieces are nice model figures and there are also models for the enemy Picts and Saxons and the objects of Quests.

The Knights start in Camelot at their seats around the Round Table. This is the largest of the several boards in the game, showing Camelot, the tourney field where the Black Knight awaits and the gathering forces of Picts and Saxons. The other boards show the other quests, but Camelot is the heart of the game. As quests are resolved, the Round Table fills with swords - chunky cardboard pieces. If the Knights succeed in a quest, the swords are white side up; the black side is face up if they failed. The game ends when there are at least 12 swords on the table and the good guys triumph if white swords are in the majority.

Of course, it ain't that simple. To start with, succeeding in a quest is a real challenge. The quests are resolved through card play. There are two decks of cards in the game: white cards for the Knights and black ones for the forces of darkness. Knights on a quest play the White cards, while Black cards are drawn at random and added to the quest they apply to. The quests work differently, but essentially there have to be more White cards (in number or value) than Black. What makes winning a quest really difficult is that players generate Black cards as well as playing White ones! The first thing a player does each turn has to be something to 'progress Evil' and is usually drawing a Black card. Only then does the Knight get to play a White card towards completing the



*Shadows of Camelot in play*

quest. As you can see, this doesn't give the good guys much of an edge. Strategy for the Knights, as a group, is thus about concentrating on quests they can win.

Most of the quests allow several Knights to work together. This gives them a much better chance of success, but the Knights need to decide what to go for and what to leave. In the first place, the choice will depend on the cards the Knights have available. If they hold lots of Grail cards, the quest for the Holy Grail is the obvious target. However, the Black cards drawn will change things. For example, if a sequence of Black cards is drawn for the Excalibur quest when no Knights are there, the quest is in danger of failing. Should Knights stop what they're doing and rush to try to save Excalibur? Decisions, decisions...

As individuals, the Knights can choose to do something other than drawing a Black card each turn. One option is to place a catapult (more nice models) outside the walls of Camelot. There is room for a dozen of these - if all the spaces are filled, the game ends immediately and the Knights lose. Knights can choose to do battle against the catapults to stave off defeat. Another option is for a Knight to lose a life point. Of course running out of life points takes the Knight out of the game.

## *Shadows over Camelot at a glance ...*

A co-operative strategy board game for 3-7 players which takes around 90 minutes to play (though it can be longer if the Knights bicker!). Designed by Bruno Cathala and Serge Laget, it's published by *Days of Wonder* and is readily available from specialist games shops at around £35.



Individual turns are very short. A Knight first does something to advance the dark side. Then he moves or plays a card (if on a quest) or picks up cards (if in Camelot). He also gets to use his special ability. But that's it. This means that the game zips along and your next turn comes round quickly. The rules suggest that any negotiation and co-operation between the Knights is done in character. The intent is clearly to limit the extent the players work together - though co-operation is vital if they are to win the game. It also adds an explicit role-playing element to the game, which players can play up to or not as they see fit.

This brings us to the biggest twist in the game: one of the Knights may be a traitor! At the start of the game, each player takes a loyalty card, which s/he keeps hidden. All but one of the cards show that the Knight is true and loyal. As there are always more cards than players (though you can change this if you want to), there is a chance that nobody is a traitor. Naturally, everybody assumes there is a traitor. The traitor wins, of course, if Camelot falls or the game ends without a majority of white swords on the Round Table. And if the traitor is undetected at the end of the game, s/he switches two swords from white to black - potentially reversing the whole result! This gives a whole new dimension to the game (think *Werewolf/Mafia*). Not only do the Knights have to win, they have to win by a big margin or unmask the traitor. Wrongly accusing someone turns a sword black, though, so the good guys need to be pretty sure. And all the time the traitor is working against them. Which may give the traitor away or may be so subtle that no-one notices. The suspicion (paranoia?) between the players, knowing that one of them may be a traitor, puts a brake on the extent of the co-operation. There's a competitive element in the game after all and this is what makes it so good - and very different from Lord of the Rings. It's not simply a case of maximising the usefulness of the set of cards held between all the players. It is about individuals deciding the extent to which they will co-operate and with whom. Cracking stuff - and the best evidence of this is what happens if half a dozen people sit down and play the game for the first time. When they've finished, what's the first thing they'll do? Play it again! What better recommendation could you have?

[Pevans adds: This review was first published in my 'zine, *To Win Just Once*, which is available online at [www.pevans.co.uk/TWJO](http://www.pevans.co.uk/TWJO)]



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# Turning Turtle

*DAVE PANCHYK tries the military options in KOSUMI ...*

I MEANT TO supplement my initial report on **Kosumi** with a description of a paid game, but such a game hasn't started yet. Perhaps my and Colin Forbes' descriptions of the game last issue will sway a few of *Flagship's* discerning and strategically brilliant readers to join...?

What James Acres, the Kosumi GM, has done is to create a free game 51 populated by the 'cream' of other free games - the players who actually submitted turns in the past. This has helped the dropout rate a great deal, although there are a couple of clans who have been noticeably... quiet.

Game 51 saw me randomly assigned the Kappa as my clan. The Kappa are turtle-people from Japanese mythology, smaller than a human, with bowl-shaped depressions in the tops of their heads. These depressions are filled with water, and if the water is spilled, the Kappa loses its strength. It is said that if you carve your name into a cucumber and offer it to a Kappa, it will not attack you. The hobbies of the river-dwelling Kappa are sumo wrestling and drowning children.

This would be an opportunity for me to see the game from the military side. Kappa diplomats are no great shakes, and compared to the Fujiwara or even the cursed Jesuits, their mages were pretty poor. Kappa armies, being of moderate strength, outshine the military might of those other two clans. Advised by my Alamaze-playing ally to combine armies, a strategy common to that game, I created the second-strongest fighting force in the region. Second strongest? Well, yes. My benefactor was the Oni, the powerful, vicious demons of legend. What would you think of having a four-foot-tall turtle with a dent in his head show up at the walls of your town demanding surrender? Now imagine a ten-foot-tall, red-skinned demon wielding a massive iron-shod club standing at the turtle's back. Sort of changes things, doesn't it?

## Feudal monstrous ninja turtles

Regardless of the strength and number of your diplomatic emissaries, using them to control PCs is critical. PCs? A PC is a Population Center, the generic term for the villages, towns, and cities in the game.

Each clan has only four armies, and generally a greater number of emissaries. More bodies on the ground means more PCs controlled: PCs are the key not just to resource gains but to victory. It's worth noting that playing Mao doesn't really work, because taking villages means you don't get the big population gains; however, you can't ignore villages because they produce the most food, which counterbalances the drain on food represented by cities. Those greedy city-slickers make up for it, though, by producing more gold than other PCs.

The first objective is to find out where to go. We knew where the major cities in my province were, and so I sent my strongest emissary to one of them, and sent all four armies on the march with the intent to combine at the one city I intended to control. (The other city was left as an offering for the Oni.) I then used my Seer (in Alamaze this is the High Priest, and no doubt has an analogue in other games) to divine the location of the towns in my starting territory of Heian province. The seer didn't die, thankfully; the strain of gaining intelligence through occult means can be

too much even for mythological creatures. Knowing of their frailty and my need for yet more information, I hired another Seer (a rather expensive unit) and another emissary for good measure.

The second tried-and-true method of finding PCs is to have your armies stumble on them. I sent my armies on routes that would cover terra incognita, as long as it was terrain that wouldn't slow them down. Regular army movement (or search movement, at which they stop at the first PC they encounter) can be boosted by a mage spell. Terrain, for me, became especially important, because part of the Kappa clan's unique edge as river creatures is incredibly fast movement in water and swamps. This changed the way I saw the map, seeing future expansion channeled not just by provincial boundaries but by the presence of water or of hated mountains. The game map is another manifestation of Kosumi's wonderful art: every coordinate is rendered with beautiful colour and the expressionistic feel of a Japanese woodblock print, yet is easy to identify even without clicking it.

My bumbling around paid off, as I located a village planted in the middle of a swamp. (Remember: location, location, location.) Better yet, it was occupied by one of the hapless human clans, whose outmatched army were frantically carving cucumbers. Their efforts were for naught: the next turn, I was upon them in an attack that conveniently demonstrates both the other side of the Kappa clan's unique advantage and the other feature of Kosumi I find counter-intuitive.

Orders in Kosumi are numbered, and this reflects the chronological order in which they occur: for instance, an attack will always come before certain mage spells and after others. What I had trouble wrapping my head around at first was that this means *armies can act more than once in the same turn*. (Making it more confusing is the fact that Actors cannot.) In one majestic swoop, I was able to attack the human army and crush them - the army as a container for brigades continued to exist, but had been 'destroyed as a fighting force' - then activate the Kappa's special ability of being able to heal completely in swamps, and finally move the army. In this way, I was able to have a battle in the village and show up at the city with my army at full strength in the same turn, with time enough to spare to submerge some of the village tots.

Slow, steady, and militarily unstoppable wins the race... or does it?

Although I hardly feel like a juggernaut, having a powerful army does seem to create the overbalancing effect I saw in earlier games. A strong army can storm into a PC and take it in one turn, regardless of the provincial reaction of the people toward your faction (a complicating factor for emissaries who try to control PCs). In addition, it can outright destroy some or all of the non-allied Actors in the PC - seers, diplomatic emissaries, even the Shogun that leads that clan. If the army stays at that PC, all Actors from non-allied clans are denied entrance to the PC, and no surviving Actors can leave without danger of being killed.

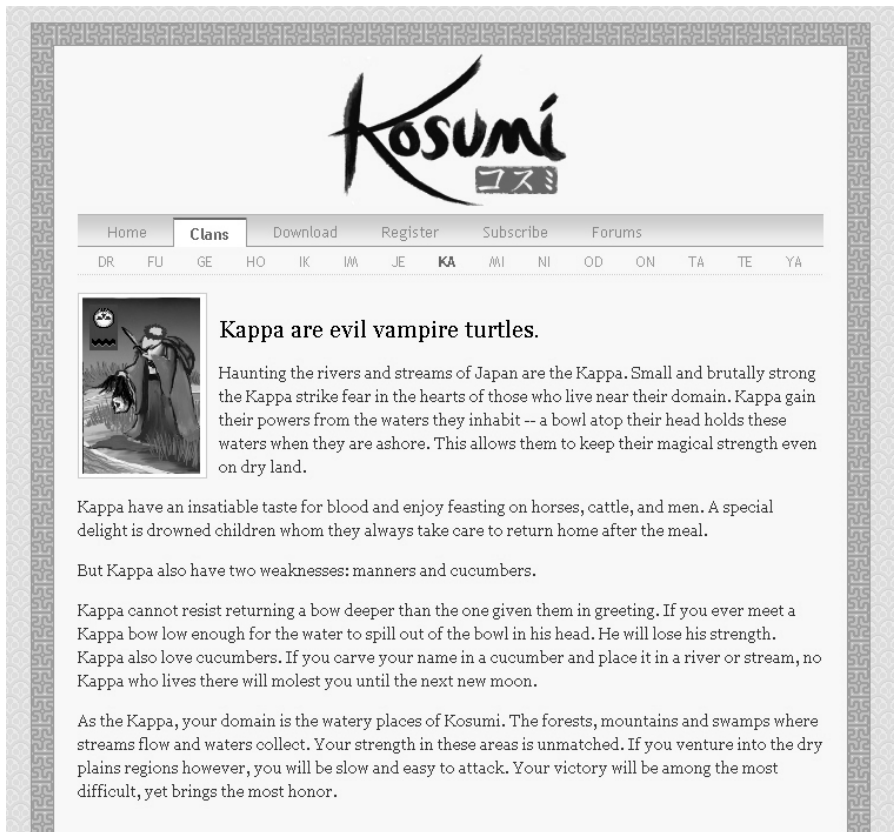
Combining armies for greater strength means there are fewer of them, thus fewer PCs that can be taken militarily. In time, you could grind out the opposition, but in the free games at least, time is not a luxury you have. The games are limited to 24 turns, unless someone can take over three provinces before then. You take a province when you control PCs that make up at least 50% of the province's population. As that often translates to around eight PCs, you can see that emissaries are indispensable for every clan. Being on the receiving end of a crushing military defeat that kills several Actors can be enough, with the attending loss of resources of losing a PC, to start your clan on a slippery slope that leads to defeat. There's nothing more aggravating, to me, than seeing an inevitable loss coming from quite a few turns off. James takes the optimistic view that a subscriber involved in two or three games will be doing much better in at

## Kosumi at a glance ...

This new fantasy wargame with a mythical Japanese setting has been free to play while in playtest. You can now play in up to three games for \$19.95 per month.

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





**Kappa are evil vampire turtles.**

Haunting the rivers and streams of Japan are the Kappa. Small and brutally strong the Kappa strike fear in the hearts of those who live near their domain. Kappa gain their powers from the waters they inhabit -- a bowl atop their head holds these waters when they are ashore. This allows them to keep their magical strength even on dry land.

Kappa have an insatiable taste for blood and enjoy feasting on horses, cattle, and men. A special delight is drowned children whom they always take care to return home after the meal.

But Kappa also have two weaknesses: manners and cucumbers.

Kappa cannot resist returning a bow deeper than the one given them in greeting. If you ever meet a Kappa bow low enough for the water to spill out of the bowl in his head. He will lose his strength. Kappa also love cucumbers. If you carve your name in a cucumber and place it in a river or stream, no Kappa who lives there will molest you until the next new moon.

As the Kappa, your domain is the watery places of Kosumi. The forests, mountains and swamps where streams flow and waters collect. Your strength in these areas is unmatched. If you venture into the dry plains regions however, you will be slow and easy to attack. Your victory will be among the most difficult, yet brings the most honor.

least one of them.

Still, as a military power I can see the difficulty that diplomatic and magical clans can create: a look at the map of a neighbouring province reveals a sea of pink. The Geisha seem to have spread out and conquered more quickly than I thought possible. The only way for an army to be useful against that is to make one or more decisive strikes, such as against the other clan's capitol, and hope that you catch Actors under your bootheel. Intelligence from ninjas (who even when trained are rather ineffectual at other tasks) or from a mage's View spell can tell you who is at a PC that turn.

Time will tell if military might can strike to the heart of such a clan and weaken it sufficiently. While the Geisha bat their eyelashes and sway towns and villages, I will click shut my nictitating membranes and swim toward their base to crush them. Perhaps there will be children there...

#### Medieval Japan's future in the 21st century

I'm looking forward to a fully-populated, full-on game with intelligent, active opponents. I think that the pitting of one's abilities against another's is what drives the joys and frustrations we get from turn-based games. For me, that would mean returning to the helm of the devious cursed Jesuits. It's only fair I share with you the 'freakin cool quote' moment I had during game 2 that cemented my love for Kosumi.

I had sent one of my Missionaries (the Jesuits' special unit) to an outlying province; at a PC there, he chanced across a Geisha diplomat obviously doing the same sort of exploration. Clicking the Actor's name in the PC box got me a picture of her, a demure, willowy thing standing indoors, with a tall, graceful plant standing in the background. The next turn, I tried to Convert her, and succeeding in bringing her over to the Jesuits. Now the graphic representing her was of a huddled, green-skinned thing crouched in front of a dying plant; the plant in the background was now a sickly-looking creeping vine.

I'd like more people to experience this sort of thing. I also hope for James's sake that Kosumi attracts more people willing to be subscribers; it'd be awful for all this effort to go into a snazzy client and decent game and have it all be wasted. The changes made to Kosumi from the start lend me hope that any balance issues might get sorted out, and the gameplay will reach the same high level of polish that the client computer programme

enjoys. The documentation has grown steadily, with more tutorials in the offing: these are necessary for players who have had little experience playing turn-based games. With some players not understanding basic concepts like fog of war, this will no doubt be an uphill battle. For those who want the programme to 'do stuff' and do it *now*, it's possible to run solitaire turns; this will also be cherished by those players who like to tease out the rules of a game by playing with the various widgets within it.

All of these client improvements, graphical and computational, have led to Kosumi's system requirements creeping upward as the code begins to bloat. It still isn't terribly demanding on many systems around today, but who knows what improvements will be tacked on in future? I think it'd be very wise to integrate diplomatic messaging into the client, because the crowd approaching the game from the Internet doesn't quite 'get' diplomacy, I think, and are unused to in-game messaging being used for much beyond hurling abuse at others.

I for one am hopeful for Kosumi's future. It's a distraction without being a time-sink, and offers a moderately deep strategic experience without binding up the player in reams of raw data. The computer client doesn't just vet turns; it provides information at a glance, with different graphics denoting the presence of an Actor, the casting of a spell, a diplomatic action, or the movement path of a ninja, diplomat or army.

Everyone's welcome to go to [www.kosumi.com](http://www.kosumi.com) and come to this magical land - although I must caution you, do watch your footing in the swamps.

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

# Glory of Kings

**ALEX McLELLAN** *plays Switzerland with a dramatic flourish ...*

AS PROMISED last issue, here is a short account of some of the events during my time playing the Swiss Cantons (sometimes known as the Swiss Confederation) in game 5 of **La Gloire du Roi**. The tale is as given by my game persona, Herr Gerhardt von Erlach, Speaker of the Swiss Confederation.

Welcome, I understand you have an interest in government so allow me to enlighten you a little on my own time as head of the Swiss Confederation. I suggest you attend closely for what knowledge you garner here may be of good use.

When I came to power the Cantons were a disparate group of loosely connected lands with little commonality of purpose. Unity, many Cantons closely bonded, has been my aim. However, to help give me the following that the fulfilment of my vision required, a campaign of action was begun immediately. I funded a grand ceremony for the gathering of the Confederation government, made fine speeches and spoke of important matters. As the months passed I instituted tax cuts, held fairs and shooting contests and spoke of a brighter future for all. These endeavours and their like gained me a place high in the nations esteem as the year pressed on, but more needed done. *[These various efforts increased Swiss honour up to 10 - high honour seems a vital requirement for getting agreement on tricky decisions in 'democratic' type states.]*

Then providence brought a windfall. France, Sweden and Hanover all displayed a blatant disregard for established International Law and diplomatic practice. I immediately wrote an open letter to the rulers of Europe and arranged for the news sellers supporting me with pamphlets and articles. In my letter I castigated the guilty and, in a single step, made moral and law-abiding ways our own. More than this I stood up to great powers and made them reconsider their acts. My standing grew apace.

The King of Sweden warred against Denmark, which granted further chances to strengthen my role as the moral and enlightened voice of Europe. By the end of the year I had surpassed all my expectations. King Louis, the King of France, himself came to Berne with his court. A new Swiss regiment was added to the French army and a French funded hospital in Berne was founded. The praise of the most powerful monarch in Europe was of high value. *[Lots of diplomatic effort brought the friendship of France and of other major nations: their opening of Embassies and Frances public gifts brought yet more honour to the previously mostly ignored Swiss Cantons.]*

As my second year in office dawned I set to strengthening the Federal government, building a new bureaucracy and expanding the universal education system I had set in motion the year before. This is the age of enlightenment after all and it seems only right that even the peasants should have some share in it, don't you think? Anyway, I have plans for our future and they need a more educated populace... but that is of no import here and now. *[Since the basic government in 1700 is truly pathetic by modern standards there is a large amount of work to bring your nation up to a reasonable grade - most players seem unaware of this. Education, professional civil service, tax administrators, improved tax systems and a mass of other improvements.]*

By the end of spring, my position in the cantons was unsurpassed and many in Europe held me in the highest esteem. It seemed that we could do no wrong, trade seemed to be growing and the Solothurn Arms Syndicate was producing the most marvellous arms, including the Kalhoff repeating rifle whose fame, if not use, is widespread indeed. But pride comes before a fall and we were overly proud as all seemed so bright before us.

The first trouble seemed slight, a downturn in the economy and a complaint by some traders about poor markets. But efforts to assist the traders failed and the complaints became a flood of pleas for aid. Investigation revealed that England had unleashed a huge trade war upon unsuspecting Europe, discounting their goods by up to nine tenths of their value and crushing our trade in the process. Our once strong Mediterranean trade all but collapsed and in other places we were being hard pressed. *[The English player was applying period trade war theory: massive subsidy and discount of your trade to destroy the opposition followed by expanding your own trade once this is complete. Sadly it doesn't work unless the opposition are very weak or fail to take action in defence of their own trade. It's also really expensive.]*

It took advice from the Trade and Commerce committee to spark a great plan on my part. We fought back by buying English goods where they were at their cheapest and freighting them by sea back to England. This, a diplomatic onslaught and French threats of war brought the English government to their senses, but not before damaging the trade of much of Europe and even beyond. The only benefit of this year-long trade disaster was our acquisition of a seaborne freight trade, operated out of the ports of others with whom we have free trade treaties. A peculiar state of affairs and one which will become more so very soon when we get our first shipyard. Based in foreign territory, of course. It is strange where the fates lead us sometimes.

In late July the Council of Twenty Five, the de facto, but not de jure, government of Geneva abrogated their agreements with the other Cantons and said they were now independent and without ties to anyone. We had been ignoring the fact that they were not the legitimate government but this was too much. We, or perhaps it may have been I, decided to allow the actual legal government a chance to speak and to do this would require the removal of the usurpers. *[With their announcement time seemed to be of the essence and the army - being set up for the defence of the nation and not expeditionary work - was slow to get going. Having my 'character' personally lead a small band of hand-picked troops to swiftly handle the situation seemed like a good idea at the time.]*

I rode out from Berne accompanied by two dozen soldiers picked from the Berne Defenders. We travelled day and night reaching Geneva on September 22nd with but a single purpose on our minds: to restore the General Council and the Premier Syndic to power. When we arrived I tried to meet with them but they were too scared and would not see us, meanwhile a large crowd had gathered to see what we were about. This was unfortunate as news reached the Council of Twenty Five about our presence and something of our mission, as informers in the crowd sent runners to keep them informed.

So it was when we burst into their meeting room we found them with many cocked pistols and blunderbusses lying ready upon the tables at which they sat. One had a very large blunderbuss in hand.

'Don't you believe in knocking?' an imperious-looking noble in a black cape and sporting a snow white goatee demanded. 'You are all under arrest on charges of insurrection and secession!' I somewhat hastily replied. 'Lords, gentlemen. Sovereignty here rests with the citizenry who no longer accept your usurpation of their power. They do not accept your decision, they refuse your legitimacy and have asked their fellows within the brotherhood of the Confederation to cast you out! I order you to

## Glory of Kings at a glance ...

Historical simulation from Agema Publications, playable by mail or email. Rules are £5, turns are £6 and a new game of LGdR V is about to start.

[agema2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:agema2@tiscali.co.uk)



dissolve your illegal clique and accept the due legal authority of the Premier Syndic and the General Council of Geneva. If you do not then you will be defeated and treated as rebels!’

Some might question how I knew the General Council’s wishes when we had failed to meet, but later events vindicated my words.

We were now drawn up on one side of the room armed with Solothurn rifles and on the other the council members presented pistols and blunderbusses. The goateed nobleman spoke up again. ‘Gentlemen, we seem to have check. I suggest you leave Geneva before it becomes check mate!’

I urged their surrender in the hopes of avoiding violence one last time and warned them that the penalty for rebellion was death. Then a corpulent and balding Council member took an hourglass from the pocket of his frock coat and placed it upon the table. As the sand ran away he said, ‘You should be on the stage, Herr Erlach. If you shoot us you will be hung as common murderers. If you remain here by the time the sands run down we will be forced to crush you.’

I have to note at this point that ostentatiously placing an hourglass before you during a confrontation is far more theatrical than anything I had done, but I digress. The rebels, blue blooded nobles to a man, looked stonily resolute. In response, my soldiers started to back away towards the door slowly as the sands ran down. A few muttered to one another and asked if they shouldn’t leave as the situation was dangerous, deadlocked and pointless.

Clearly their courage was failing and only bold action could rally them, so I would have none of it. ‘Steady, men: make every shot count. Remember we are Swiss and the honour of our nation is at stake!’ I cried. They seemed fair words to go down in history as one’s last words and death’s shadow was looming at this time.

I raised my rifle, a Kalhoff repeater capable of firing twenty shots without reloading, a weapon I had been personally practising with for months, and pulled the trigger. To my absolute horror the mechanism jammed. It was the first time it had ever done this!

Before my troops had persuaded themselves to follow my lead and shoot, the pistols and blunderbuss of the Council of Twenty Five were discharged in a great flurry of smoke, sulphur, hot orange-red sparks and flashes.

In the relatively confined space all of us were hit, many from blunderbuss pellets rather than a more serious pistol shot. Six lay dead, the rest were clutching wounds. As the smoke cleared I still stood straight, facing them, then I was going to say something of great import but all I apparently managed was ‘Hummph!’ or some such before the floor struck me and things went black. Or perhaps it was the other way round. I had been hit several times in the leg. While I was unconscious we were placed under arrest and confined under guard.

On October 3rd October, the rebel Council of 25 called on the United Provinces, the Dutch Republic, for support. Fortunately, previous diplomatic efforts had secured a treaty with them which prevented any intervention on their part, had they been inclined to help.

Letters were received by the government from several states offering support and King Louis advised that no effort would be spared in securing my safety. All very flattering if not for the embarrassing failure which precipitated it.

On the last Day of October, after a forced march, Swiss infantry under General Burkli stormed Geneva from the North, moving through the districts of Les Delices and St Gervais without meeting any resistance. They pushed on up the narrow winding alleys to the city hall on the hill. Here they found the survivors of my gambit. All were still alive, albeit wounded. We had already been rescued by my friend that grizzled old veteran Christoph Lehr, Inspector-General of the Army. He had arrived ahead of the troops with a few companions, who had come along on horseback to help rescue us. This had been accomplished without a shot being fired. Backed up by his friends, Lehr had caned a few nervous guards with his riding stick and seen them off with a swift kick up the backside from his riding boot!

Realising all was lost, the rebels had fled on horseback along with a few of their closest supporters and Geneva was now in Confederation hands. The matter seemed to be settled: but it was not.

On the 19th November I met the General Council of Geneva, headed by the Premier Syndic Jacques Pictet. The Council were assured they were not under duress, although the French observers we had hope to have present to show this was true had not arrived. Much discussion had already occurred in small huddled groups before I arrived leaning on a stout stick and assisted by my cousin, Colonel Hieronymous von Erlach of the Berne Defenders. I made a short speech, ‘Gentlemen, I come to ask you, as the sovereign representatives of Geneva, to make some very important decisions. Now that the usurpers have been chased off, it is up to you to decide if you will tie yourselves more strongly to the Swiss Confederation or choose another path. Stronger ties would bring greater security, lower taxes, a fairer tax system, investment, education and the improvement of trade opportunities. Whatever your choice, we will respect it.’

Again there may have been a few more words but I believe I have captured the spirit of what I said.

The Premier Syndic proposed a vote on the motion that the Canton of Geneva become a full member of the Confederation. The vote, shockingly, was heavily defeated. As surprised as anyone, the Premier Syndic now suggested a vote on simply joining the Swiss Confederation, but this too went against him. ‘This will be the end of us,’ he muttered.

Amidst this debacle, the next day, the Cuckoo Clock was invented near Basel. *[A positive point amidst the problems.]*

On 1st December and despite Jacques Pictets protests the General Council of Geneva called on the Swiss Confederation to confirm that Geneva was independent, the idea that Geneva was an associate of the other Cantons having been heavily defeated in a vote earlier in the day. They then voted to call on Swiss troops to depart immediately.

I had been present for this further rebuff but had to race to Berne where the Canton government had called me on a vital matter. A very serious matter indeed.

By January, General Burkli’s troops remained in Geneva with the intent of wintering there. The General had received secret instructions from Berne on a delicate and complex matter.

Meanwhile in Berne, I was asked by the Bernese government if the annexation of Geneva by Berne would be acceptable to the Confederation government. I suggested carefully that it would meet with our disapproval. Our complex form of governance was beginning to be a nightmare. If Geneva left the Confederation then Berne would annex it retroactively, if it was forced to remain then we broke our word that they could be independent!

As the Confederation government convened early in 1703 and began discussion about Geneva, we somehow managed by muddled confusion to reach the best of all possible worlds: a non-decision. Geneva’s treaty with the other Cantons was not considered dissolved by the others, but was by Geneva. Geneva was independent in its own eyes but not by the other Cantons. So, Geneva was protected by the same agreements that protected the other Cantons; their peculiar status also forestalled an annexation.

This peculiar legal and diplomatic tangled has continued ever since and has allowed relations to settle and improve between the other Cantons and Geneva. A vote held on the matter today would be very close, some years hence they may yet agree to become full members of the Confederation and this strange episode will be laid to rest.

Well, sadly time presses and other business needs my attention, so you will have to go. I have a new improved legal system to put in place, further improvement of the education system and a plan for putting signs and milestones on the roads to deal with, so do excuse me. I hope you’ve found my account of use.

[The details, dialogue and other items in the tale above were all drawn from the game newspaper accounts of the events described. So, although it isn’t really a roleplaying game, LGDR can sometimes be exactly that: although I can’t imagine the King of France do anything so stupid.]

# Lordly Designs

*MICHAEL D NEAL builds a realm in FEUDAL LORDS, but crucially misreads a rule ...*

CREATED BY John Van De Graaf and computer-moderated by Flying Buffalo, Inc., **Feudal Lords** is a play-by-mail game of eight to seventeen players who conspire, bribe, and battle against each other in an attempt to succeed the late King Arthur of England.

In the year 801, I was the Baron of the fief, Glamorgan, which was located on England's western coast. Fourteen other players each controlled one fief and were spread evenly across a map of 46 fiefs of Britain. This was the first turn of the Feudal Lords game, FL-161.

I started with 1,400 gold, 1,400 food, 200 knights, 800 peasants, and 200 townsmen, and from these humble beginnings, I would contest for the crown.

All multi-player games allow alliances, but Feudal Lords virtually demands them. So, with the understanding that cooperation was the name of the game, I contacted several players and eventually allied with two, the Baroness of Cardigan and the Baron of Kent. I also had cordial relations with the Barons of Avalon and Stafford, at least for a while.

For my first turn, I sent Flying Buffalo orders to sell 200 excess food, and purchased 200 livestock, two markets, two fishing villages, and two lumber mills. I also ordered my knights to raid an adjacent, non-player fief.

You should never let excess food spoil; either sell it to the market or feed the excess to your peasants to accelerate the increase in peasant population growth. (Editors note: I don't agree with never letting food spoil. If it's really cheap you can buy a lot and still sell at a profit next turn even after some spoils. That's risky, of course, since it might be cheap again.)

Purchase livestock when the price of food is ten gold or less. Livestock is like food that never spoils and always grows. Later in the game when famine strikes and food is selling above 30 gold, you can slaughter and sell your livestock to reap a king's ransom in gold. By the third or fourth turn you should have already built the maximum allowable markets, fishing villages, and lumber mills. These small ventures really help in the early stage of the game, but in later years, you hardly notice them because you'll be concentrating on higher risk/higher return investments such as mines, agriculture research, and foreign trade.

My knights returned from their raid with 1,393 gold. Not bad considering the alternative: that they sit around the castle, eating my food, spending my gold in the taverns, and generally being a nuisance. In the later stages of the game, you might want to keep your knights close, to repel any attackers with designs upon your fief, but early on, make your



knights earn their room and board.

My first two turns went better than planned, so on my third, I built three ships and set sail for foreign lands for trade. Glamorgan is a coastal fief, as are the large majority of fiefs in Feudal Lords, but if you're landlocked, you are both at a disadvantage and at a huge advantage. The disadvantage is that you can't build ships with which to engage in foreign trade, though you might buy ships from a coastal player—unlikely, because lords will want to keep their ships. Bide a moment and I'll come to the "huge advantage" later, but one small advantage is that landlocked fiefs have much more room for farming and grazing. As a landlocked lord, you should continuously buy livestock, invest in agriculture research, and feed your peasants extra rations. When the famine hits, you should be sitting on a mountain of gold.

I continued on in this fashion, building a few ships, raiding non-player fiefs, making various other investments, but it was the year of 805 that several players began to make their move. What they did, and what makes alliances so very vital, is that they bribed their ally's siege target. For example, suppose you want to attack and siege an adjacent, non-player fief that we'll call 'Fief A'. Your ally bribes Fief A, while you bribe a fief next to him, 'Fief B'. Then you use the bribe of Fief B for campaign support, which gets you up to half of Fief B's knights (and also reduces its defense). Fief A's defense is likewise reduced because half of them are on a quest with your ally to attack Fief B. So instead of attacking with 200 knights against a non-player fief of 200 defenders, both you and your ally are now attacking with 200 knights, plus an additional 100 from a bribed fief, against only 100 defenders, which yields a much better chance of success.

If you swear fealty to a vassal, the fief becomes your overlord, and you become its vassal, so you cannot be both overlord and vassal to the same fief at the same time. However, a technique that alliances used was that they swore to a subvassal or a sub-subvassal, so in effect, a multi-player

## Feudal Lords at a glance ...

Long running strategy wargame from Flying Buffalo. \$5 setup fee. \$3.50 per turn. View an online version of the rules at: [www.flyingbuffalo.com/flrules.htm](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/flrules.htm)

Flying Buffalo publish a range of gaming materials: [www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com)



alliance would set up a circular chain of vassals which exploited the increased powers of higher ranks for each member of the alliance.

By the year 806, the Lord of Lancaster was almost an Earl. I, and the Lady of Cardigan, were still at the lowest rank: Baron(-ess). In 807, I swore fealty to Stafford. The team of Lancaster and his vassal Cheshire was driving their conquests toward me, and, since Stafford was Cheshire's vassal, I thought I might buy myself some time by swearing into their alliance, and it worked (but I would betray them soon after).

Crawling at a snail's pace, I finally won a siege and acquired my very first vassal, the non-player fief Cairleon, in 809. You no doubt will be doing much better by 809, having several vassals by now, but there were several bright spots in my position. I had amassed over 40,000 gold which was possibly the largest gold total in the game at that time, my livestock had grown to 1,448 head of cattle, and I had built a twenty-ship fleet for foreign trade. My real ally, Kent, was an Earl, but Lancaster was higher yet, a Marquis, while my own royal aspirations languished. The huge advantage that landlocked fiefs have is that they are hard to sneak up on. An overland attack must first beat a path through intervening fiefs before reaching its target, whereas a naval attack transports 50 knights and/or mercenaries per ship and can reach any coastal fief in one move.

Knocking over fiefs at will, Lancaster-Cheshire-Stafford were becoming too strong to stop. And so in 810, I led 500 of my own knights, plus 257 knights from two non-player fiefs, against Cheshire in a successful naval-borne siege, which forced the player-lord to flee Cheshire and to take refuge in Northumber, which was one of his vassal fiefs. Consequently, the Lancaster-Cheshire-Stafford siege train came to a screeching halt. I renounced fealty to Stafford and swore fealty to Cardigan, who was a vassal of Kent, and I invested mightily in defensive castle fortifications to gird my fief for a counterattack that never came.

In the year of 811, famine hit, and the price of food tripled. So the very

next year, I ordered a herd of over 2,500 livestock to the slaughterhouse, ready to claim my fortune, and this was when I screwed up. In any game, a player should have a strong understanding of the rules. Before submitting orders, a player should check, double-check, then triple-check his work which I didn't do. I attempted to sell all 2,500 units of fresh meat to the market with one Sell Food order, whereas the rulebook specifically states that although you can submit more than one Sell Food order per turn, each order is limited to a maximum of 1,000 food.

The Feudal Lords rulebook describes in detail 31 different order types. Study the rules. The maggots ate well in Glamorgan that year.

Alas, that was not my only mistake in 812. The player-lord of Norfolk had just resigned, leaving his fief and his three vassals unclaimed. I, flushed with victory from the naval attack in Cheshire, decided to lead an attack against Norfolk. The siege was successful, but I should have pressed my attack against Lancaster's alliance (indeed, against Lancaster himself). The Duke of Northumber regained his old fief, Cheshire, and with their alliance fully recovered, Lancaster talked the Viscount of Avalon and the Baron of Cornwall into swearing fealty.

The Lord of Lancaster had now accumulated 24 fiefs of vassals and subvassals, one fief more than the necessary 23 that wins the game, and he was crowned King of England in the year of 813, the same year I unsuccessfully laid siege to his castle with over 1,300 knights. I finished the game as a Viscount, but was in open defiance of the coronation. You might predict that, as an unsuccessful attacker of the King during his ascendancy, the King's first order of business was to hunt me down and introduce me to the executioner's axe like I was some common criminal. I prefer to believe that the new King met with an 'unfortunate hunting accident' before he could establish an Heir, and thus launched a new race for succession!

The King is dead! Long live the King!

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# Pevans's Perspective

**PAUL EVANS** *harvests a tasty new crop of games...*

MORE NEW games are arriving - though this isn't really the season for playing board games. Unless, of course, you're on the traditional British holiday I remember from my childhood: cooped up somewhere while the rain pours down! **Totopoly** and other games were very necessary distractions.

From *Kosmos* (and *Mayfair Games*) comes **Amazonas**, designed by Stefan Dorra. This bright and colourful game has players visiting villages on both sides of the Amazon river to collect specimens of flora and fauna. Players have to get at least three of a kind to score any points, but there is also a bonus for getting one of each different type. Apart from collecting points to win the game, players are also looking to earn money each turn. This is done through a bidding system that also decides the order of players' turns. Money is spent on acquiring the next specimen/s, but you may need to accumulate it for a couple of turns to be able to afford the next specimen. There is also a hazard or a bonus each turn, which affects all players. But how well or badly it affects you depends on which bidding cards you've already played. Finally, each player has a number of villages to connect, Ticket to Ride-style, and will lose points if s/he fails to do so. So this is a clever, tactical game, but is not too deep. Like a lot of Stefan Dorra's designs, I find that Amazonas is just on the cusp between family games and gamers' games. It is more complex than most family games, but most gamers will find it a pleasant, light game of tactics with some intriguing features. (I'm writing a more



*Amazonas in play*

complete review for *Games International* by the way.)

**Buy Low, Sell High** - or, more completely, *The Motley Fool's Buy Low, Sell High* - is a clever little Knizia-designed share trading game. In

fact, it's **Palmyra** (Editrice Giochi, 1996) without the ancient trade routes and amphorae. Published by *Überplay*, the Motley Fool connection will no doubt get the game into places no game has gone before. Players can influence the prices of three stocks by playing cards from their hand and must then work out when to invest and when to cash up. The more players involved, the more of a gamble this is. It's fun to play once, but I don't want to play it again.

**Manila** is another *Rio Grande/Zoch* combination, this one designed by Franz-Benno Delonge. It is, essentially, a gambling game. Each round, barges carrying various commodities will arrive at the port of Manila. Or not. This is decided by rolling dice. Players bet on the outcome in various ways and can try to influence it - but all of these cost money. They also have investments in the commodities, which increase in value the more of that commodity that makes it safely into port. At the end of the game, it's the most money that wins, so it's a game of playing the odds. However, the heart of the game is rolling dice and you can't predict that. Not my cup of tea.

As well as **Shadows over Camelot** (reviewed this issue), *Days of Wonder* have issued the promised follow up to last year's big hit. **Ticket to Ride Europe** transposes the train game to a map of Europe rather than the USA. The game has been tweaked by designer Alan Moon and has several

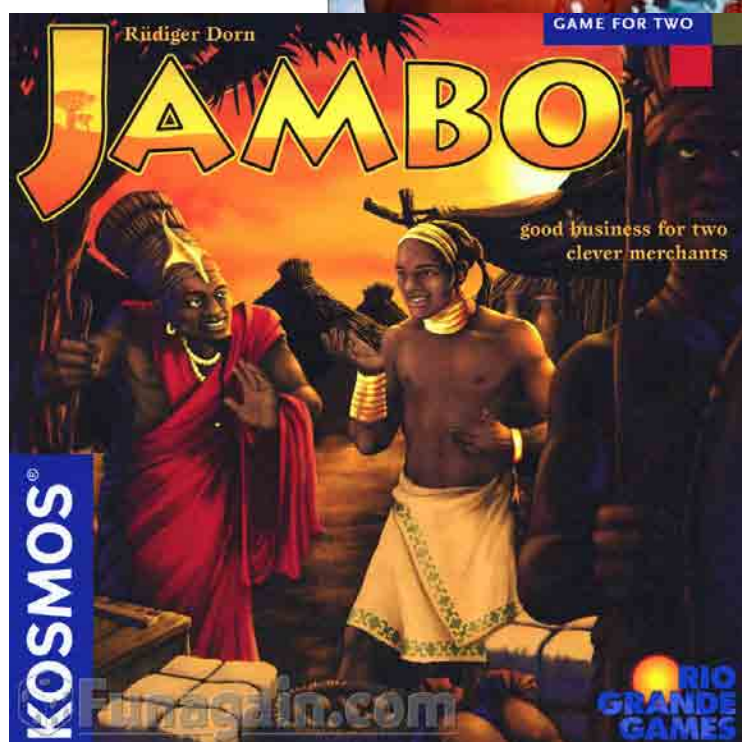
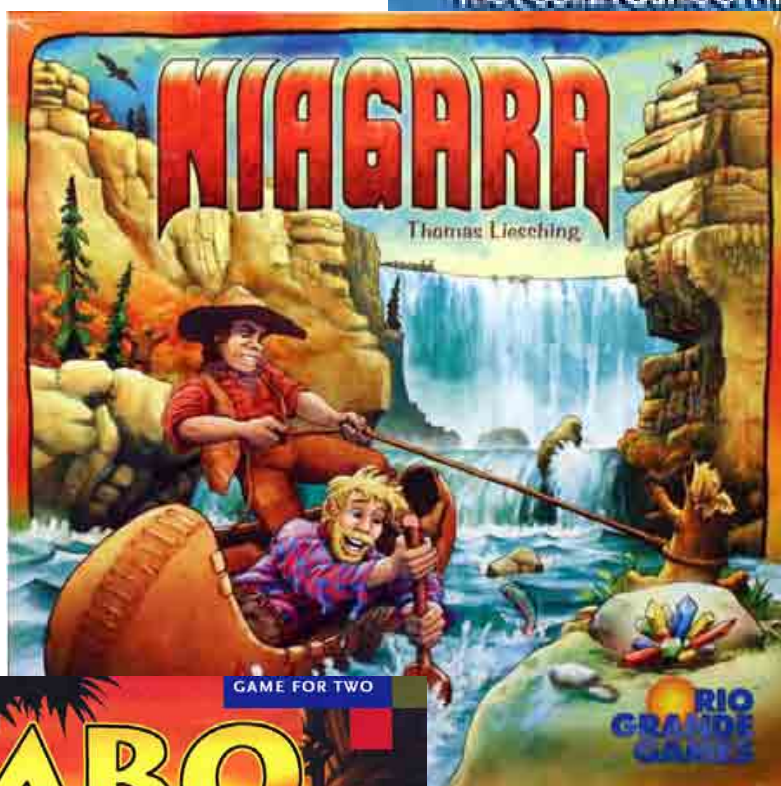
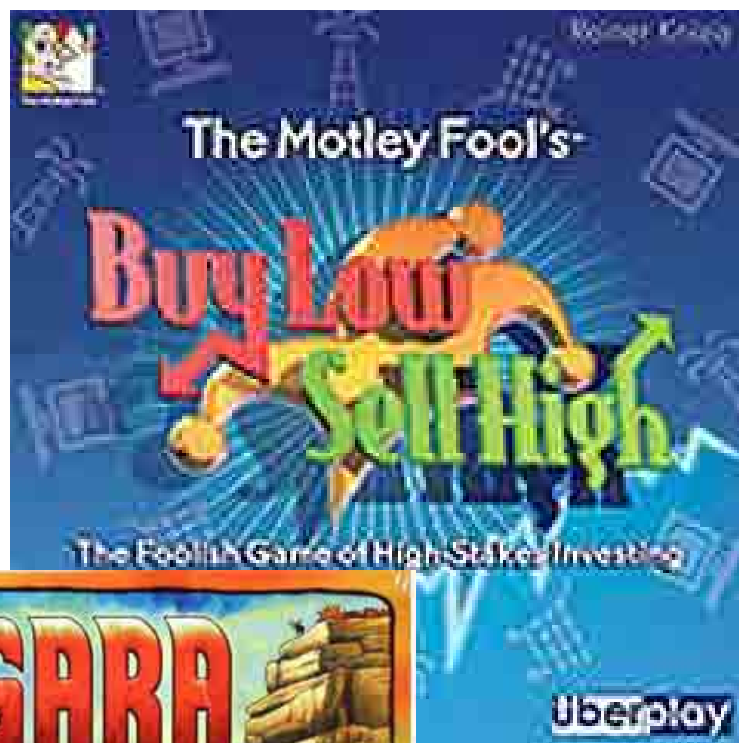


*Manila in play*



new features (ferries, tunnels) and new options for play (stations). It works well, but I'm not convinced that the improvements are worth the extra complexity.

Meanwhile the Spiel des Jahres (Game of the Year) jury has been deliberating away in Germany. And the winner is ... **Niagara** by Thomas Liesching and published by Zoch (in Germany) and Rio Grande (in the USA). So much for me tipping **Around the World in Eighty Days** in last issue. Anyway, congratulations to the designer and publishers - this is Zoch's second Spiel des Jahres (the first being for Bill Payne's dexterity game **Villa Paletti** in 2002). As the aim of the prize is to promote family games, Niagara is a good choice. Rather like Amazonas (above), it's got a bit more to it than most games aimed at families, is very well produced and has an attractive theme. It also has an ingenious construction. A river channel is set into the board, which is laid on top of the game box. At one end the river divides into two and then 'falls' off the edge of the box to form the eponymous waterfall. Clear plastic discs go into the river and, each turn, more discs are added, causing a flow along the river. And over the falls, of course. Players have a couple of nice wooden 'canoes' which start at the head of the river. The aim is to collect different coloured gems from various points along the river - or pinch them from another player's canoe! Then you have to get your gems back to base. The difficulty is that the canoes, naturally, move down the river on the discs. So getting downstream is easy. But you have to paddle hard to get upstream. How fast you move depends on which of your set of numbers you selected at the start of your turn - not knowing what other players were choosing. The choices also determine how slowly - or quickly - the river flows that turn. So, apart



from the usual options of working out where you want to go to, it is perfectly possible to pick an unexpected number and watch other players canoes slide gracefully over the waterfall. Or plummet to their doom, if you prefer. As always, every player starts with the same set of numbers available and nobody gets theirs back until they've used them all. Despite my first impressions of Niagara at Spiel '04, there is a clever tactical game here as well as a good-looking gimmick. It is intended for ages 8 and above, which I think includes most gamers. And I think this game still offers a challenge to gamers, which makes it a worthy Spiel des

Jahres.

Of the other games recommended by the jury (see *Flagship 114*), the only other one I can report on is **Jambo**. Designed by Rüdiger Dorn (who seems to be having a good couple of years with **Goa**, **Louis XIV** and others), this is another in Kosmos's series of first-rate two-player games (inevitably, the English language edition comes from *Rio Grande*). Jambo is, surprisingly, a two-player trading game. The players are African market traders ('Jambo' is a Swahili greeting to foreigners) and aim to make money buying and selling various goods. Players have five actions in each turn to draw and use cards. Cards allow players to buy or sell a specific collection of goods - adding them to or taking them from the player's 'market stall' card, which limits how many goods held. Other cards allow players to do other things, including discarding, swapping and taking goods and cards from the bank or their opponent. The key to the game is understanding the tactical opportunities your cards provide and taking advantage of them. This makes it a more complicated game than you might think. Jambo is a clever, tactical game, but I didn't find it particularly appealing.



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# On Screen

## The Competitive Element in MMORPGs

*GLOBETROTTER takes a controversial look at the genre ...*

I PLAY PC Games. A lot. While I play other sorts of games (board wargames and open-ended turn-based power games), PC Gaming is where it's at for me. So imagine my horror to discover that my partner has abandoned the True Path this summer, and has become a devotee of Massive Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games (MMORPGs). Other considerations aside, do I really have to struggle with such an appalling acronym? Surely there *has* to be a generic name for these games? At any rate, in the spirit of togetherness, I have spent an hour or fifty playing these games with the Apostate Partner, so I may as well write about the genre.

'Oh come on, try this game, it's really a big social club.' This is often quoted as being the primary reason why people play MMORPGs. But is it really? And do you actually want to socialise with the people you will find online? My own experience suggests that you could, more or less, achieve the same level of socialization by just trolling a specific forum community for a certain period of time. Then, there is the aspect of uber-loot - trying to get that epic sword that very few other people have, and why? While there are never any general rules here, it often boils down to human vanity. Many play video games because they want to feel special, and rise above the rest of the crop. In many cases, games give you that false sense of accomplishment that people lack more of in real life. This leads to a rather contradictory situation in MMORPGs though - in really popular MMORPGs, it becomes very hard for the casual player to 'stand out'. Although this is not impossible, being special and having the best gear almost certainly implies that you have to play the game to such an extent that it would be a crime to call yourself a casual gamer. Often, in MMORPGs, the most vocal and vibrant online personalities (for all we know, they could be quiet loners in real life) will garner most of the attention, and hence myths



*Screenshot from D&D Online*

will be created around their supposed skills. There is, of course, the other side of this coin too, where certain people will be labelled skill-less, and often this general impression of them will be based around even more myths.

In fact, while MMORPGs promote socialization, they promote it, to a degree, in a wrong way. They impose new values on this closed online society where people without a life are rewarded the game's highest accolades, and their skills are praised where no true skills are to be found.

I couldn't tell you the exact definition of skill, but the way I see it, possessing skill means that you've taken your natural abilities and



**Guild Wars** is the type of MMORPG that gamers have been eagerly anticipating for years. What is so special about this game? Guild Wars has been seen as the 'Holy Grail' of MMORPGs because it is the first major MMORPG to offer completely free online play instead of the usual £10 or \$15 monthly fee. Without a doubt, a monthly fee is the biggest turnoff to the average gamer. Who wants to pay £10 a month when online shooters like Half-Life 2 and the Unreal Tournament series offer free online play? Enter a MMORPG that should shake up the industry.

That said, Guild Wars will attract some gamers simply because most MMORPGers are sick of paying monthly fees. Thankfully though, Guild Wars is not a one-trick-pony since it is also a very solid game. Any fan of Diablo 1 or 2 will feel right at home here since this is basically the same development team of that vaunted action RPG franchise from Blizzard. The simple yet addictive game play is here like those two games, but this time with substantially larger worlds and superior graphics. Dark dungeons are replaced with brighter and more life-like visuals such as lakes, grass and beautiful skies.

The lack of a completely interactive world means that this game will not drive all the pay-to-play MMORPGs out of business, but look for Guild Wars still to have a huge impact on the industry. Although all MMORPGs could eventually feel the effect of this new MMORPG model, Guild Wars will more likely have the biggest impact on smaller MMORPGs that either rely on low or no monthly fees to attract gamers. My own recommendation? If you've not tried a MMORPG before, then give this one a shot - why scour the Internet for free games when there is a great high profile one right in front of you?





perfected them with so much hard work that you've become better at something than a great majority of other people. For instance, a great ball player has skill - he has talent backed up by hard work. So if for instance, you were to play a 1-on-1 game against one such person, there is a *very* good chance you would lose ten out of ten times. You simply don't have the skill that he does. Your natural abilities backed up by whatever amount of hard work you put into them do not surmount to the same level of skill that he has.

Conversely, there are gamers that possess true skill. Naturally, their skills are only apparent in video games that actually promote skill. At this year's E3 Convention, I had the privilege of watching the reigning UT 2004 champion, Johnathan 'Fatal1ty' Wendel, play a number of promo matches with random people from the crowd. Now you may think you have a chance against this guy, but seeing how fairly good players from the audience fared, and the level at which Johnathan plays the game, it becomes apparent that you'd lose... badly... ten out of ten times. (Seriously, I never once saw Fatal1ty get killed.)

This takes me back to the problem of MMORPGs. It is in the competitive nature of our race to glorify people with skills and humble the people without them. The way this happens in MMORPGs is horribly wrong, however. Again, this has somewhat to do with human vanity and that desire to stand out at all costs. In MMORPGs, this gets to the point where people start justifying the blatantly obvious deficiencies of MMORPGs in terms of skill-based playing just so that they could artificially categorize players by skill (because it's in their human nature to categorize other humans by skill). So myths are created about good players and bad players.

In reality, the very nature of RPGs goes against the idea that the most skilful players are the ones receiving the most accolades. For one, there is no level playing field. One guy may be decked out with epic armour because he plays the game all day long, and the other may have very ordinary equipment, as he has a job, a family, etc. If we suppose that both of these players have the same amount of knowledge about their class and the class they are facing, and sufficient level of motor skills (nothing out of the ordinary, mind you), then there is a strong chance that the guy with the better stats will win. His advantage is based on calculations by the game of the inputted stats, rather than his skills. And even if the other guy wins, it just could be that the random factor in these calculations (a number of critical hits, or resists per match), may tip in his favour, giving him an edge. All the while, however, an unordinary level of skill is not a factor in this Player vs Player conflict. And even if it is a factor, it's far from being the factor.

In simpler terms, being an ordinary MMORPG player, I could certainly win at least a number of matches against the supposedly best player in all the land, and that is certainly not something I could hope to do against Fatal1ty, being an ordinary player.

MMORPG Player vs Player (PvP) conflicts are missing the crucial element that helps Johnathan 'Fatal1ty' Wendel win ten out of ten matches against you - they are missing true skill. Tactics may play a certain part in MMORPG battles, yes, and you could even call that a skill

- quick thinking - but skill in its quintessential form won't be the deciding factor. The very thing that helps 'Fat' beat you in all ten of the matches.

So what is the problem here? Why write this article at all?

The answer is simple, I consider myself a competitive person, and I like the idea of the sporting spirit. I like to see players with skill (in sports or competitive games) being given the recognition they deserve for being really skilful at what they do. What I don't like to see is myths being created around players that compete in an environment that doesn't promote genuine skill. There is something fundamentally wrong about this. It's like glorifying a crappy painter just because ten people who are supposedly authorities on the matter say he's good. Companies will promote PvP gameplay in their MMO games to simply ensure that there is enough content for players to keep paying the monthly fee. What this promotes, however, is not true values that define our competitive nature, but myths and vanity, just perpetuating the rather unhealthy attitude that is already abundant in MMO games.

Would the introduction of skill-based gameplay solve this problem? Possibly, yes, but then people who spend the most time on the game, wouldn't be rewarded as the naturally gifted people who might play less, but achieve far better results than them. That would sort of break the system of MMORPGs, which is based around people with no life (or genuine skills) getting a false sense of accomplishment and recognition in an online world.

You must've wondered at least a couple of times why FPS/MMORPG hybrids haven't worked yet, or why 'true' MMORPG gamers steer clear from such games. What I have just written could possibly give you an answer to that question - they like make-believe competition instead of the real one.

## Top 5 rated current games

Ratings courtesy of [www.mmorpg.com](http://www.mmorpg.com)

Guild Wars	8.4
EVE Online	8.3
World of Warcraft	8.2
City of Heroes	8.0
Dark Age Of Camelot	8.0

## Top 5 most anticipated new games

Editorial choice

### Dungeons & Dragons Online ([www.ddo.com](http://www.ddo.com))

Will the obvious expectation prove deadly? Or will the name attract a huge player base regardless of the game quality? We can't wait to see!

### Roma Victor ([www.roma-victor.com/](http://www.roma-victor.com/))

It's not the most graphically advanced game, but it doesn't have to be, because it fits in a different niche for people who want to do something different.

### Dark and Light ([www.darkandlight.net](http://www.darkandlight.net))

The announced pay-for-beta scheme and lack of information available only months before its release, means that we don't rate this as highly as the internet hype.

### Pirates of the Burning Sea ([www.piratesoftheburningsea.com](http://www.piratesoftheburningsea.com))

Pirates? Definitely a good idea for a MMO. Will they pull it off? Only time will tell.

### City of Villains ([www.cityofvillains.com](http://www.cityofvillains.com))

Sequel to City of Heroes, so there's a fan base waiting. But will the problems with CoH have been fixed?

# The Ridley Files

## The Haunting House, Gloom, Spank the Monkey

*ERIC RIDLEY shuffles some new games and deals out his thoughts ...*



REGULARLY turning out either humorous or serious games based in creepy environments, to the exclusion of almost all else, *Twilight Creations* has etched out quite a niche for itself in the horror board games genre. **The Haunting House** marks their latest big attempt at making a game as expandable as both **Zombies!!!** and **When Darkness Comes**, both of

in the random round. The phase plays a lot like the classic Robo Rally board game from Wizards of the Coast. The idea is fine, but the random phase of the game really lets it down: just as you think you have a plan sorted, the random part comes along and takes a whiz all over your last turns work. It is *very* annoying and not much fun.

And that is where I would leave the review were it not for the Second Story expansion. This is the first (and only, so far) expansion for the game and it goes about setting right many of the mistakes of its father. Unpredictability was the downfall of the original, but now with the addition of marker disks that are placed on tiles such as 'cancel card' and 'no rotation' (both doing pretty much what you would expect), the game gets a lot better. A whole new floor is introduced, as subtly hinted at by the title, and is quite a nice surprise.

The second floor is 5 x 5 grid which is linked to the first by a set of stairs. The new disk tokens are placed on certain tiles and can be picked up by walking over them, but beware, now *ghosts* are in the haunted mansion (whatever next?) and are masquerading as disks. Ghosts make you go back to where you started; normal disks give you the ability to stop something happening later in the game.

There are also a few other differences, all of which are pleasant. It is nice to see a company that really takes on board the failings of their products and attempts to fix them. However, it would not have taken a genius, or even my friend Neil, to work out that the original was flawed. There is no point getting the first game with out the expansion. It is just not fun. With the Second Story however, the game is enjoyable and exciting. It's still not the best in the world and especially considering the price there are better games out there, but this one (in its entirety) is not bad.

*The Haunting House is published by Twilight Creations, priced £18.99. For 1-6 players, playing time 45 mins. The Second Story is priced at £8.99.*

which sold well for the company. This review combines the basic set and the first expansion (**The Second Story**) so to be honest we should really be charging you double for this review. I think in all good conscience it's best if you pop down to the game shop where you bought this mag and hand over another 14 pence (how much this article is worth if you divide it all up). I digress: what's the game like?

The Haunting House is, when you boil it down, a tile-based race game. Twilight Creations love tile games. It's more or less all they do. It has the veneer of creepiness laid over it, a bit like a clown, they are terrifying on the outside, but inside you know they are all nasty and twisted: no, wait, that didn't illustrate my point at all. The idea of the game is that you are a group of friends who are bored and decide to run through the haunted mansion atop the old hill. You all enter through the front door then rush to the rear exit: the first person out of the back wins the game. Similar to a curry, really.

The game board (in the original edition) is a 6 x 6 grid of tiles, which make up the crazily disjointed floor plan of a house. The tiles picture passages of a straight corridor, a T-junction or a crossroads. When laid out to form the board, none of these tiles will match up particularly. Players each control a well-sculpted plastic figure and have an identical hand of ten cards, three of which are the game-breaking white border cards. Turns divide into two phases, the 'random phase' and the 'chosen card phase'. In the random phase each player shuffles up all their cards and places four of them face down on the table. All players turn over their first card at once and, in turn order, carry out the action on the card. Actions can vary from the straight forward 'move two spaces' to the disorientating 'rotate a tile 180 degrees' and also the extremely annoying 'move exit'. Each of these random actions is carried out by the appropriate player, then the next card is turned over by everyone. This continues until all four cards are resolved.

Next is the Chosen Card phase, which is exactly the same as the random phase but you don't have access to the more powerful (irritating) white cards and obviously, you can choose which cards you use. This phase is usually taken up with trying to undo the disasters that befell you

Think of your worst day ever: it was probably that time that your trousers fell off (dramatically) during a job interview, or perhaps the time that your favourite dog ate your watch, which you had just cleaned using cyanide. As bad as those things are, you will probably be happy to hear that - according to the idea behind **Gloom** - the more you suffer in life, the greater your reward in the afterlife.

It is perhaps appropriate then that I am writing this review the day my car was broken into. While it is extremely annoying in this life, I am putting my faith in *Atlas Games'* philosophy and hoping that I will be rewarded in heaven for my misery with a naked pygmy belly dancer, or something cool like that.

This is the first ever card game to use see-through cards. Generally, in many card based activities, see-through ones would really suck. A lot of tension would be lost from spaghetti westerns, Magic the Gathering tournaments would be a farce and you wouldn't even have anything with which to hide your shame while losing at strip poker. The cards in **Gloom** are made out of thin clear plastic. They look great and they feel great, but they smell like a scalextric track that is overheating, strange but true. The idea is that you lay your cards over the top of your characters, so that any modifiers can be constantly seen throughout the game until covered by another modifier that is on the same space on the card. It is a nice touch, but not 100% necessary. None the less, it makes playing the game a lot easier, and quicker.

The premise is this: you play the part of a family of misfits and try to



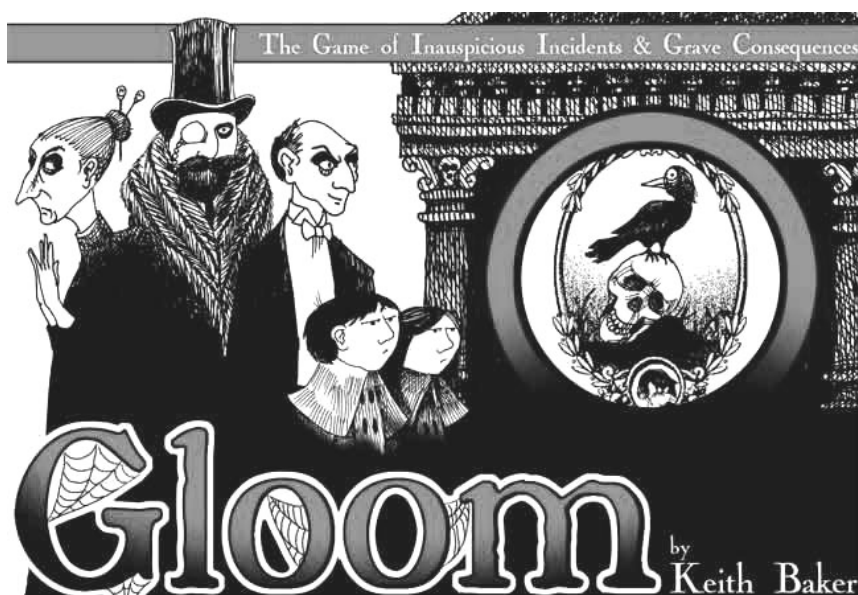
make them suffer the most miserable lives, until you finally kill them with an Untimely Death. Macabre, but satisfying. Each family consists of five members, on whom you can play horrible mishaps to make their lives unbearable. Instead of making your family's lives a living hell by pebble-dashing the bathroom, or loo-papering the house, or spreading cling film tightly over the toilet seat (yeah, a lot of funny things can happen in the smallest room), you instead subject them to somewhat stranger events. No one I've ever met likes to be mocked by midgets, nor to be perturbed by the pudding and that includes the people in this game. Each misfortune has a negative 'Pathos' score, the idea being to accumulate the highest negative score (ie lowest score) possible before choosing to kill your family members in one of the dozens of dark ways in which they can die. Once everyone is dead the most miserable family wins: morbid!

There are other things thrown into the mix such as cards that make you happy (mainly to be played on your opponent's family), and Event cards. These cards have a one shot game-altering effect: they are usually quite powerful, but also fairly rare. All the cards have an amusing bit of flavour text at the bottom and most capture the feel of the game perfectly. You are encouraged to story-tell during the game about how one of your characters was one minute the Toast of the Town, but now, is being Chastised by the Church. It is one of the best aspects of the game, and can lead to a lot of laughs.

The whole experience feels very Roald Dahl; it's horrible and grim, but very amusing and compelling. If you were to strip away many of the cosmetic elements, the game itself could be a bit boring. It's not a deep strategy game, but it's a fun game, one of those games where no one cares who wins or loses: you just play to have a good time with your friends. For the price I can't argue that two - four people could have a better time for the same amount of money, and with the promise of expansions to come Gloom looks to have a contrastingly bright future.

*Gloom is published by Atlas Games, priced £12.99. For 1-4 players, playing time 40 mins.*

Any game that proclaims itself to be 'A game of monkey-spanking junkyard fun' tends to capture my interest. And since this is the only game



to ever claim that, I went and bought it. Spank the Monkey is a non-collectable card game for two to six players. The premise is that you all work in a junkyard, when along comes a pesky primate and ruins the day. The simian causes major hassle until your boss claims that there is a reward for the first person to get rid of said chimp. Of course, rather than using some kind of projectile weapon, or even a class 1 incendiary device to rid the world of the monkey, the employees elect to build towering piles of junk in order to get close enough to spank the monkey. I guess they're not rocket scientists either.

The game is actually quite simple to play, but upon first reading of the rules, can look a little complex. First, the monkey is placed at a certain height on the appropriately named 'monkey height card': the height is 14 minus the number of players. After the hands have been dealt, your basic actions are building your junk pile higher or attacking your opponent's junk piles. Each junk card has a defence number on it and a height number. The height numbers range from two to six, and indicate how high your tower is (add all the numbers of your junk cards together). The defence number is how tough the piece of junk is. The junk itself ranges from pedal boats to toxic waste barrels, and many of them have their own special text. Attacking your opponent's towers is the main area of interaction in the game and can cause a lot of havoc. Cards are required before you may attack; things like boomerangs and blowtorches are used to topple your opponent's constructions. In fact there is such an array of weapons available it makes you wonder why they merely wish to spank the monkey with such an arsenal at hand: the cynical side of me thinks that it's just so the publishers can have a slightly blue title.

After all the messing about and attacking each other, and playing events, and reinforcing your own piles of junk with things like sticky tape and barbed wire, you may eventually get to the monkey. The actual process of spanking it is fairly easy. Just roll a dice and check on the chart as to whether you hit it. It almost happens too quickly for all you have been through to get to this point. Ah well, a quick spank is all we need, I guess.

The game plays well; there are no major flaws or glaring problems. The card art is fantastic, really capturing the tongue-in-cheek nature of the game. The card stock is great, along with the rules clarity and box design. The trouble is, it's nothing new. It's funny, but not hilarious; it's good, but not great; and it's fun but not storming. This is a nice game and enjoyment can be gleaned from it, but there are other card games out there that offer more fun per pound (Gloom for example). It's a competent game, and I would like to see more from Gigantoskop in the future, but this one never truly inspires.

*Spank the Monkey is published by Gigantoskop, priced \$9.99. For 2-6 players, playing time 15-45 mins.*



# Game World Wikis

*MARTIN HELSDON describes a database system that can help present game worlds ...*

ANY GAME world that endures for a length of time is going to amass a wealth of history and information. Much of this endures in the heads of the GM and the players, in a wealth of notes and scribbles, in old turn sheets and newsletters. The obvious step in recording this wealth of information is a set of files or even pages in a database or on a website, something with hyperlinks and search facilities... Now, that's a lot of work, but there are various tools available, and my experience has been in contributing to a Wiki.

A Wiki is effectively a database system, and the first appeared ten years ago. The name comes from Hawaiian Pidgin and means 'quick' and certainly it is easy to quickly put together an ever growing database - an encyclopaedia - for virtually anything. It is a piece of server software that permits pages to be created and edited using any browser, complete with crosslinks and hyperlinks. Once you open a page to edit, you can use the edit buttons to create links to other pages or websites, create italics, show a picture that has been uploaded, format text - or you can use the basic syntax to do this by hand. It is incredibly easy to use, and incredibly easy to expand. Once a Wiki page exists, anything on it can be turned into a new

crosslink, and clicking on that then allows a new page to be created.

The ancestor of all Wikis is at [http://en.Wikipedia.org/Wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.Wikipedia.org/Wiki/Main_Page) and there are now thousands of pages of encyclopaedia and countless equivalent sites in various languages. The very first, the Portland Pattern Repository, was created by Ward Cunningham in 1995.

Independent Wikis based on the same engine are littered across the web. The venerable **Empire of the Petal Throne** game setting has a site at:

[www.tekumel.org/tekupedia/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.tekumel.org/tekupedia/index.php/Main_Page)

(though it is not yet very large). The application is ideal for games: doing a search on the web, there are hundreds of different Wikis covering all manner of topics.

My own experience with Wikis started with putting together a Concordance of Thomas Harlan's *Sixth Sun* books as a simple Word document. This was easily converted into a Wiki and has grown considerably since then. As a parallel effort, the existing **Lords of the Earth** Campaign One Encyclopaedia was transferred from its old website into the Wiki format, updated and extended to capture a lot of game

history and background, along with player articles. A Wiki is actually a collaborative tool, as multiple users can contribute material once they are allocated accounts. Whilst some Wikis are open to anyone editing entries, there are dangers of malicious edits or misuse. The prime danger is the adding of link spam (also known as blog spam or comment spam), so user accounts are necessary. When the Wiki I work on briefly became open, a spammer added numerous links to his own site because links that point to the spammer's web site increase the page rankings for the site in Google, leading those sites to be prioritised in the listing.

The Lords of the Earth Wiki address is [http://test.throneworld.com/Wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://test.throneworld.com/Wiki/index.php/Main_Page), linking to three subsidiary pages. <http://test.throneworld.com/Wiki/index.php/LivingRules> will ultimately provide the various rule books; <http://test.throneworld.com/>

## Templar



The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon was founded in 1118 after the First Crusade, to help maintain the Kingdom of Jerusalem against its hostile neighbors and to ensure the safety of pilgrims.

**The Eastern Temple:** After the division of the Church Spiritual and the Church Militant in 1615, the Knights Templar became the primary military wing of the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Templar Kingdom of Morroco remained in existence until destroyed by the Marôcain in 1667. However, in 1671 the Marôcain ruler, Thorvald Heyerdahl was given the title of Vizier of the Templars securing his claim to Morroco, only to be excommunicated in 1673.

In 1767 the eastern temple of the Knights Templar was reformed in Europe.

**The Western Temple:** The western temple had remained in continuous existence in the Amerikas. Until the late 16th century the Master of the Western Temple was a hereditary title of the king of the Iroquois.

---

Warrior Monks. The Knights of the Order based on New Malta.

**SS:HOR**

Retrieved from "<http://test.throneworld.com/wiki/index.php/Templar>"

**Categories:** Concordance | CampaignOne | Terminology | Military Terminology



[Wiki/index.php/CampaignOne](#) leads to the index for the Campaign One database; <http://test.throneworld.com/Wiki/index.php/Category:Concordance> leads into the Sixth Sun Concordance.

It is easiest to show the power of a Wiki by an example page (below, left).

This page is split between Lords One material at the top and Sixth Sun material below it. On the right, we look at what we would see if this page were opened for editing. You can see the crosslinks and the means of hiding the actual crosslink page name, where necessary, to insert it into the text. The page also includes a picture, previously uploaded into the Wiki (a simple process), and the page categories that this entry belongs to. Clicking on a crosslink takes you to that page, and clicking on a category shows you all other entries that belong to that category. If a crosslink or category does not exist when you click on it (indicated by the link being in dull red), then it opens to be edited. Examples of bold text and a section break are also present.

Over the last few months the combined Lords One/Sixth Sun Wiki has grown to over seventeen hundred pages and shows no sign of stopping. The one trial is when a new entry is made and has to be retrospectively linked into all other pages that could link to it. The Wiki includes a search facility, so this is a simple if time-consuming.

Since the Wiki started it has proven very useful for understanding threads in the game and now receives a thousand hits or so a day. There's a PBeM wiki at:

[www.whiterose.org/twiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome](http://www.whiterose.org/twiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome) which covers a number of games. A number of RPG sites also exists.

[http://wiki.rpg.net/index.php/Major\\_Projects](http://wiki.rpg.net/index.php/Major_Projects) includes projects ranging from Conan to Warhammer wikis.

```
[[Image:Templar_seal.JPG]]<br />
```

The Order of the [[Knights of the Order|Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon]] was founded in 1118 after the First Crusade, to help maintain the Kingdom of Jerusalem against its hostile neighbors and to ensure the safety of pilgrims.

'''The Eastern Temple''' : After the division of the [[Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church|Church Spiritual]] and the [[New Granada, Teutonic Kingdom of|Church Militant]] in 1615, the [[Knight]]s Templar became the primary military wing of the [[Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church]]. The [[Morroco, Templar Kingdom of|Templar Kingdom of Morroco]] remained in existence until destroyed by the [[Marôc, Sultanate of|Marôcain]] in 1667. However, in 1671 the [[Marôc, Sultanate of|Marôcain]] ruler, Thorvald Heyerdahl was given the title of [[Vizier]] of the Templars securing his claim to Morroco, only to be excommunicated in 1673.

In 1767 the eastern temple of the [[Knights of the Temple|Knights Templar]] was reformed in Europe.

'''The Western Temple''' : The western temple had remained in continuous existence in the Amerikas. Until the late 16th century the [[Grand Master|Master]] of the Western Temple was a hereditary title of the king of the [[Shawnee Empire|Iroquois]].

----

Warrior Monks. The [[Knights of the Order]] based on [[New Malta]].

```
[[SS:HOR]]
[[Category:Concordance]]
[[Category:CampaignOne]]
[[Category:Terminology]]
[[Category:Military Terminology]]
```

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# The Fordham Folio

## Finding your Niche

*LISA FORDHAM considers how to play a character who's also a convincing individual ...*

ROLEPLAYING groups are often like the A-Team, or maybe in some cases like a manufactured pop band. There's the clever character, the charismatic character, the mad one, and the tough one. Sometimes there's the sporty one or the sensitive one.

It's a matter of niche protection really. Everybody who plays wants a certain amount of 'screentime', and the easiest way to get it is to fill a particular niche. The key to fun in games is often balancing the amount of time a particular character (and by extension, their player) is influencing events. If a character gets too little screentime, the player feels hard done by. If one player character gets too much, then you have the opposite problem, everybody feels like they're in that player's shadow. Both states are frustrating.

Lots of games come with a way of making sure that everybody gets a chance to shine. Games with classes work well for balancing screentime. If you can easily tell a character's specialisation, then giving them screen-time becomes easier. In D&D you can build lots of traps and locked rooms into dungeons so that a player with a thief gets lots to do. Of course classes also lead to problems when two players go for the same choice: they inevitably end up having to redefine their character to find a new niche. In general, though, when your roleplaying environment is the Dungeon, and everybody has a clearly defined role, everybody can shine.

With more modern games, where players get free reign in character creation, it's actually more difficult to balance things. That free reign can give you a handful of characters whose defining stats are practically identical: how's the GM supposed to guess when you want the spotlight? Ironically, the distaste of many modern games for min-maxing actually stops grabbing of niches. Such games will claim that min-maxing breaks 'game balance', but what other balance is there than equal screentime? If you condemn your character to mediocrity, you'll never get that screentime. If everybody is anonymous, the GM has to work harder to discover the thing that will force each character into the limelight. As if they didn't have enough to do anyway.

Fortunately many games come to the rescue with splats: broad archetypes like the Vampire clans, which can help define niches. Such constructs are no different to classes on a basic level, they give you an obvious place to start when thinking about the

character, making it easier for the GM to work out when to give you the spotlight. Particular genres - modern action being a good example - thrive on such archetypes. That's why the A-Team is a good model for such circumstances: each character has a well defined role within the story. Thus every player gets an opportunity to be the one who's doing something cool.

However, if you conform too much to an archetype you end up having a cardboard cut-out character, and if the game is trying to produce original and thought provoking stories, such characters can jar. The problem in this case is that the tools you are using to define your character's uniqueness don't work with the aim of the game. Using skills as unique points will only take you so far. I remember a game where one character was often referred to as 'The investigation device', because that's all they were in game terms. They were only ever wheeled out when something needed investigating. The player had defined his niche, but not in a way that suited the game, and the character's screentime, and his enjoyment, suffered for it. What the character needed was personality.

When the story is the thing, the best way to define your niche is no longer through abilities, but through motivation and beliefs. The key is finding the drive behind the character, and making it shine through to the GM. Sure, anybody can have the same stats and skills as your character, but only your character is seeking the murderer of his dead brother. Motivators like this tell the GM when it is you want to have the limelight and what story you want to tell. Games like **The Riddle of Steel**, **Sorcerer** and **Lost Gods** actually give you tools to state, on the character sheet, what it is that will drag your character into centre stage. Even if no such system features are present, then a well-worded character concept can aid you here. Know what defines the character's attitude and desires. That way you can get that great scene where you confront your brother's murderer, and get that protagonising choice of how to deal with them.

So, depending on the game, how you define your niche will vary. The important thing is to think about it before the game, and make sure you communicate it to other players (especially the GM), so that players don't end up treading on each other's toes. Choose if you're going to be the strong one, the diplomatic one or the proud aloof guy driven by rage and advertise it. Just be careful that your character isn't the anonymous one, or your fun will suffer.



# Rising from the Ashes

*From BSE to Phoenix, MICA GOLDSTONE describes the lessons learnt ...*

TO ME, IT'S awesome; **Phoenix** is the most complex piece of PBeM software in the industry - end of story. Anyone thinking otherwise is free to come up to our offices with their code and compare.

Despite being the best there is though, it is flawed. Sure it can process a thousand positions in a few minutes, sure it can strip important information from emails, sure it can open direct connections with servers and upload data to the internet and create emails and yes it regularly run battles with hundreds and potentially thousands of unique positions all at once: it is however only a poor forerunner to what will come. The flaws are now obvious to us, but it is often the case that you cannot see the wood for the trees.

## In the beginning

So, let's look at its roots and how we progressed. In the old days we ran **Beyond the Stellar Empire** (BSE). This was a modest game that successfully ran for nearly a decade. While never as popular as **Quest**, once the bottom started to fall out of the industry, having a Game Master meant that it weathered much better than completely computer-moderated games. A couple of years ago, we signed an exclusive contract with *Skeletal Software* to write a new game and import the accumulated data from BSE. While the code was created by Skeletal Software, the design was shared between them and us.

## The basics

Unlike standard commercial games, one of the primary features of PBeM is the need for continuous improvements within the game. For this reason we decided that all data should be stored in unique text files. This meant that every position, world and item in the game could in theory have unlimited data. Another benefit of this method was that looking at the source data did not require any special programs or tools. This is an example of some of the data you would see if you looked at a position's text file.

```
Type=Ship;
Name=Hero;
Number=3338;
Location=4,3103;
Turn=47;
LastAdjust=890;
Item=108,5,5,0;
Item=160,5,5,0;
DesignName="Rogue Fighter";
DesignNumber=151;
```

As you can see, it is very straightforward and due to the sophistication of the program hundreds of positions can be loaded per second. As well as being able to see the data and understand it, there is also the added advantage that search programs can also look through all positions in the game for specific lines of text. This makes macro-control on the fly possible without the sorry need to write complicated code.

This was fine to begin with, but towards the launch of the game, we found that running speeds were a little slow. While they were still faster than any of our other games, we knew that the potential for growth in the game meant that this would eventually become a problem. To this end the whole system was overhauled and a spine of MySQL was implanted. This held all the special action data and many of the frequently required data fields from positions. Together these two systems are awesome both for speed and versatility.

## Processing

Each player has an editor. This lists all their positions and details about their positions. They can use this to create orders for each of their positions. Submission is either through direct link to the net and uploading the orders to an online turn database or the creation of a file that they can send as an attachment. For various reasons some prefer one method over the other.

At the start of the day, these orders are all collected and formed into a processing stack. The program then interprets each and every order - no hand-inputting. If a position, due to available time units, is incapable of processing all the orders issued, it is automatically stacked for processing at a later date. On a typical day there are in excess of a thousand turns run and on some it can be closer to two thousand. In the days of BSE, we would be lucky to run more than a hundred per day and each had to be put in by hand.

Labour-saving orders have been added to the game. These macro-movement orders such as 'move to starbase' allow a player to issue an order and the computer A.I. will plot the route. Squadron orders take this one step further, allowing a single set of orders to be used for all positions assigned to the squadron. This is perfect for a warfleet, where setting up tactical options for each ship in the whole fleet would be time intensive.

## Value for money

When designing a game, the primary importance is that all players should feel that they can participate. One of the benefits of auto turn processing is that we could jiggle the turn fees. Whereas before each ship cost £2.50 to run, now they could be run for free! Obviously revenue had to be maintained, so the bulk of the charges were moved into starbases. As ships required maintaining and the only way to do this was at starbases, the whole economy of the game was stabilised.

Wallet-wars, the term used to describe the event where those with the most money could afford to move a greater proportion of their fleet, was finally put to bed. Sure, in Phoenix, more money means more starbases, but as these can be of any size, one large starbase may well be ten times the size of another.

## Moderation

The role of a Game Master is what we feel is another of the most important aspects of PBeM. Sure, certain competitive games such as fantasy football and war games do not need them as the action is provided by the players, but for most games, the element of a human moderator who can manipulate game events, add features and otherwise modify the game adds something that cannot be effectively created in any other type of large player-base game. To this end, when designing Phoenix a great deal of attention was given to the abilities of the GM. Hundreds of creation routines, search routines, listings and data manipulation functions were added.

Many of these can be accessed from the special action editor, just one of the many interfaces for game manipulation. The value of these is that the GM can spend more time actually involved with improving the game than inputting and processing.

## Extras

As well as the order editor used by the players we have given them many more features and tools:

1 - *The ship design editor*: As players can add new ship styles and designs to the game, the editor is necessary to work out the various strengths and weaknesses of each design.

2 - *The online editor*: For those who want to look at their data and use a web interface for their positions, an online editor has been created.



Players can log into this and it will display the information accurate to the day. This lists all their positions and has all the orders in drop-downs. No need to remember codes. Even items and secret data are shown so that they do not need to remember item numbers.

3 - *The parser*: As we send out turns via email, there is a parser incorporated into their order editor. This will check their turn emails and extract all new information and add this to the editor's database. It will even import system and planetary data, allowing them to view the results as image maps rather than text.

4 - *Markets and systems online*: Everyday market reports for public starbases are uploaded allowing players to see what is available for trade. They can even see various systems, a must for new players in the game.

## So why is it flawed?

It does all this but this is not enough. Skeletal Software will tell you about 'string functions', HTML interfaces, external connections through MySQL and server technology, but we agree on four fundamental things: Learning Curve, Library Structure, Unique Data and Tree-mapping.

## Learning Curve

Phoenix evolved almost by itself. An idea seemed too good to leave out, so virtually everything we could conceive was added to the game. Many new players are simply overwhelmed by the amount of data that they have to understand even in the opening days.

Just look at a basic ship. This is before looking at the orders, starbases and even the ship's inventory. This doesn't even have any of the myriad weapons, troops and advanced technology that is available. On top of this any serious player will need to understand starbases, political positions, exploration, exploitation, merchandising and research. Even then there is the whole issue of combat and a small book could be written on that subject alone. The average PBeM player is relatively bright, but many that are new to the hobby are put off right at the start. That initial plunge needs to be shallower. It is a harsh lesson to learn. The only silver lining is that most of game-wreckers fall into the category of 'can't be arsed learning', though we do feel that we loose a good few potential players.

In future we will be looking at having not only a game with enough meat for the veteran PBeM players, but one with a faster and easier learning curve. Essentially there needs to be less data thrown at the player to start with and more hand-rails, but also allowing a player to delve into the game if they want and progress as fast as they want.

## Library structure and external orders

Even though the data was stored in text files, all the functions that dealt with these had to be hard coded. The amount of hard code is staggering. While new features can be and are regularly added, they need a lot of hard coding. Also, many new orders use the same functions, but as they are used in a different way, they still have to be hard coded. This means that writing a new game using the same engine as Phoenix is simply not possible. Too much of the hard code is designed for Phoenix.

What are needed are custom orders. Essentially, every order can be broken down into many small specific hard-coded routines. The principle of the custom order is that a GM can write external code to call these library functions with the various outputs also having some text. This allows for a GM to modify orders and create new orders based on modifications of old ones. Therefore we can write and simply add new functions to the game engine and each GM of their own specific game can then use the functions in their games as they want. So the same functions for transactions can be applied to a sci-fi game as to a fantasy game. This means that the game can continue to be developed by the GM.

To achieve this, Skeletal Software have developed their own compiler language so that a GM can actually understand what they are doing. On top of this, every new order has a number of test cases that will be automatically run each time the game code has been modified so that any bugs caused by the change can be immediately caught. It's the lowest level of automated testing and while it's not clever, it is professional. We will be adding this module to Phoenix in a few months time: however, this is really only to perfect the model for the future game engine.

## Unique data

It has become clear to us that everything is a unit, whether this unit is an in-game item or position. These should also be unique within a basic function. To achieve this, each and every unit must have the ability to store unique data. This data is passed along with the unit but can be manipulated by external tools or ignored as necessary. This circumvents the need for many items that are essentially the same and many data stores for different types of position. Armies can be formed from unique troops, while a unique troop is simply a standard troop but with a specific piece of information attached to it. This might be a disease label or some experience or even the equipment he is carrying: hell, he may even have a name. The squadron unit may have some specific data relating to its tactics. Then all the printouts do is display the level of data that is required depending on the label given to the unit. We do not differentiate in terms of data between a spear, a cowboy, a spaceship and the roman century on a basic code level, it is the custom orders that define what each unit with a specific title can do, ie what orders they can process and what standing orders are processed on them each period.

This, though, is only possible due to the pioneering work Skeletal Software has done in the compiler and data processing fields (I lost the plot when it was explained to me that the array feature is used to store the binary length of the widget thereby converting an 8-bit chunk of data into a 4-bit memory array and therefore storing a 2M planetary body as a 200k or something like that - apparently it is the clever use of unions, binary flags, templates and over loading).

## Tree Mapping

In a fixed world with a grid map, the whole game needs to be seeded at the time of inception. This is problematic as players will investigate each and every location on the map and adding new locations defies logic.

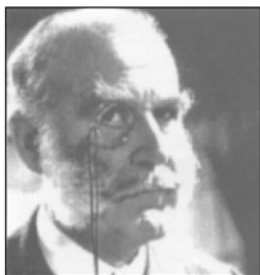
The novel approach we came up with was from the point of view that if you do not know it exists, you will not visit it and in fact it does not exist until such times as you know about it. So instead of a grid map, players are given a map with known locations, or in fact locations of interest that their position would be willing to visit. As they discover more locations, the locations are added to their map. For one of our proposed games, there is even a time line involved that is interacted with at multiple points in history so some locations exist only in specific time frames.

This avoids the trail of positions not in contact in the game but owned by co-operating players from marching to a specific sector in order to gain X, Y and Z. GM custom orders can even be created to spawn new regions in the game for the purpose of adding new players - such as the little village they came from - giving them the chance to learn in relative safety prior to moving to the big city. They will not be stomped by bullies as bullies will not know or care about this poxy little village. Once the player leaves the village it can be deleted, ie their position will not want to return to the village of Little Pickings.

## The future

We have been working with Skeletal Software for a few years now and the progress that has been made in this direction is quite astounding but there is still some way to go. First and foremost we will be launching the Vampire game. This will give us the opportunity to create many custom orders that can easily be adapted to other games. After this we will be launching various other games as and when they can be completed. While each game uses the same engine, the custom order functions, unique data and the tree-mapping facilities will mean that they will both feel and play very differently.

Once we are closer to our goal, we will even encourage would-be game designers to use the engine with their own custom orders, logging into to KJC to run their game (for a modest percentage of the profits to Skeletal Software and KJC, naturally). We hope that by taking the hard work out of game creation (processing, order editor, email, printout formatting, GM tools, de-bugging, website-data to mention just a few aspects) better quality products will be on offer and the industry will benefit as a result.



# GUNBOAT



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## HOW TO TAKE PART

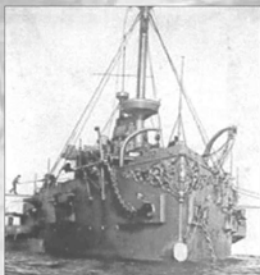


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# The Flagship Interview

*RICK McDOWELL talks about his gaming life, and creating FALL OF ROME ...*

## *What were your early gaming experiences?*

I bought *Avalon Hill* wargames starting when I was maybe nine. I read the rules to their early games like *Tactics II*, *Gettysburg* and *Bismarck* just to see the game ideas. I know it sounds incredibly nerdy. My Dad was a career USAF officer, so I had an interest in military history and we moved frequently. He also taught me chess, and I was good enough to represent my school in tournaments. I began playing D&D when it first came out in my freshman year of college at the University of Florida. At the time, it was in those three softback booklets, and it was truly groundbreaking: revolutionary. We take it for granted of course now, but back then it was incredible to have a game played almost entirely in your mind. I ran a campaign all through college called 'Alamaze', which later was what I loosely based that PBM game on. Another game that stole countless hours of my time and was nearly as earthshaking as D&D was *Magic the Gathering*. I haven't played it much in the last few years, but I still have all those cards, including the rarest of all, an Alpha Black Lotus. I am, of course, an avid strategy game player, although almost all my play these days is on the PC, except the occasional family game of *Settlers of Catan*. Lately it has been *Knights of Honor* and *World at War* spinning in my cd drive. However, over the last five years, the PC game I have spent more time playing than any other has been *Championship Manager*. I like challenges like taking management of Rushden and Diamonds and getting them to the Premiership and qualifying for the Champions League!

## *Gamer designers often draw inspiration from other games of various genres, as well as books, films etc. Is this true of you - and if so, what have been your greatest influences?*

I have been influenced, of course, sometimes subconsciously. My two labrador retrievers are named Maximus and Caesar. I like the big epic movies like *Gladiator*, *Braveheart*, and of course *Lord of the Rings*.

Novels that have influenced me other than *Lord of the Rings*, include *Julian* (Gore Vidal), *Gates of Fire* (Steven Pressfield), *Caesar* (Colleen McCullough), *A Distant Mirror* (Barbara Tuchman), maybe the *Dune* series. I've read a little of Conan and some other high fantasy. I read mainly non-fiction, and have a fairly extensive collection of military history. First and foremost is the unparalleled work of literature, *Decline and Fall* by Edward Gibbon. *History of the Later Roman Empire* (JB Bury), *Alexander the Great* (Robin Lane Fox) and a host of others including several by John Keegan all have prominent places on my bookshelves.

Earthwood was my first exposure to PBM, but honestly I have no idea how I even found out about it. I thought it had good 'roots' (pardon the pun) but could have been so much better. So I started to create **Alamaze** at the dawn of the PC in 1984 or so, and it couldn't be completed due to PC memory and other technology related issues until 1987. Then I discovered *Flagship*, *Paper Mayhem*, *White Wolf*, and others that covered PBM.

On the other hand, it has been flattering to also have *Alamaze* be the inspiration for other games. GSI's *Middle Earth* (perhaps your readership has heard of it?), is 'strikingly' similar to *Alamaze* fundamentals, even using the exact same order numbers and order names. *Legends* designer Jim Landis stated explicitly in an article in *Flagship* that he was inspired by *Alamaze* and that was the caliber of game he was looking to achieve. *Adventurer Kings* was heavily *Alamaze* influenced. Interesting that most of these games, including *Alamaze* itself ([www.pegasusprod.com](http://www.pegasusprod.com)), are still being run today, in the case of *Alamaze*, eighteen years after first debuting. Oh, and I confess my own guilt, as clearly *Fall of Rome* takes its core from *Alamaze*.

## *What game (of any genre) do you most wish that you had designed yourself?*

I am something of a Sid Meier fan. He won at *Origins* in 1988 for *Pirates* when I won for *Alamaze*. I consider the *Civilization* series (the first of which came out in 1989) to be the best single player turn based strategy games. Other than that, I had thought about making a card-based game after playing a WWII game called *Upfront*. That's when *Magic the Gathering* was just going from Alpha to Beta version. Oops! Missed the bus on that one. I have several other games in mind that I hope to have the chance to design. Of games that have already been done that I think we could have done a much better job on, the old *Company Commander* game seemed to offer a lot to players, but was, ah, flawed in execution.

## *You designed Alamaze, but then seemed to disappear from the scene. What were your experiences with Alamaze, and what did you do in the intervening years?*

*Alamaze* I wrote and programmed while in the 'real world', which meant I couldn't give it full-time attention. I had a friend manage it, who wasn't quite up to the task, and then turned it over to my older brother Phil who has become something of a legend for his personal attention and great customer service. We are all pleased that *Alamaze* is still entertaining its players after nearly 20 years.

What did I do in the intervening years? First, I married my wife Susan and my pride and joy are my two daughters, Caitlin (16) and Carly (14). They are both very promising soccer players and I hope they land big college scholarships from their football! Work-wise, my first fulltime job was with that incredibly exciting accounting firm (smile) *Coopers & Lybrand* after graduating from the University of Florida. I earned my CPA, what the English would call a Chartered Accountant, and meanwhile couldn't get out of accounting fast enough! My corporate career quickly changed to finance, which may not sound that different to some, but to me isn't nearly as boring. I was now in healthcare finance, earned my MBA from the University of Miami while working, then changed to work for *Blockbuster*, the movie rental company, and left there in 2003 after cashing in my chips (stock options, et al) as Senior Vice President and Treasurer. Anyway, that's all boring compared to developing games!

## *What inspired you to come back to game design? Why did you choose a mixture of historical and fantasy elements? Did you have an existing interest in all things Roman and Dark Age?*

On reflecting on my career a couple years ago, I realized I had much more satisfaction knowing I had given lots of people years of enjoyment with *Alamaze* than from any particular thing in my corporate life. So I cashed in my chips (stock options, et al) and have tried to make a serious run at adding to the best offerings in our hobby with *Fall of Rome*, taking advantage of the internet, and introducing our GUI, discounted turn fees, and above all what we hope is unrivaled game play.

We initially set out to create *Kingdoms of Arcania*. After nearly two years and a development cost already that would rival a mid-level retail PC game release, it became apparent we needed a release sometime soon, so I created new kingdoms, map, and deferred other development like the *Alamaze*-like magic system. *Fall of Rome* is largely historically accurate, and took more than a year of research before we ever started game design and coding. I know a *Flagship* reader here or there has taken a nit to a specific historical point, but if you want to create an absorbing 12-player game like *Fall of Rome*, the liberties taken are minor.

On the fantasy aspects, the debate centers primarily around the presence in the game of weapon artifacts like Arthur's *Excalibur* and the *Sword of Mars*, wielded by Attila. Heck, we don't even know with certainty if Arthur existed (or if Shakespeare did, for that matter [- Ed]).



We also have the high priestess character class, who can divine and heal, so that is also a nod in the direction of flavor rather than history. Each of the kings in the game is an intriguing, historical figure who carved a kingdom for himself through his courage, willpower, guile, and strength. I think they are all compelling characters.

**To what extent is a game such as 'Fall of Rome' a collaborative effort between people with various skills?**

The variety of technologies required to bring Fall of Rome to our players is fairly incredible. We have very talented people, but none comes close to individually possessing the gamut of skills needed to produce the quality game we believe we have together. It has been quite a collaboration! While based here in Dallas, Texas, we have had our web site designed by a Florida company, our cartographer lives in Germany, our artists are in California, Minnesota, and elsewhere. Probably half our player base is international as well. While the UK is the largest source, we have players in New Zealand, Poland, and Finland, among others.

**What advice would you offer other game designers?**

Don't quit your day job. Although we have our second game that has been recognized as Game of the Year, it is incredibly difficult to get players to try your game - even if virtually all of them love it subsequently. The marketing has been quite challenging and obviously takes away plenty of time from game creation.

Business issues aside, on design itself, I would say make sure it is fun - put in the things the players want. While some grognards love things like lines of supply, most players don't. They want to have fun, not a second job. I also truly believe the game needs to have substance and depth, not a superficial aura about it. For example, players new to Fall of Rome usually don't realize the number of variables that go into battle resolution. They don't have to understand them, or even be aware of them. Over time, though, they come to appreciate the complexity in the code that provides for millions of possibilities while they themselves are not burdened with counting wagons or tending to the harvest.

**At Flagship we have found that fewer people seem interested in traditional play-by-mail games. What do you think the future holds for turn-based gaming?**

I don't believe there is a bright future for old-style PBEM games. They have shown they can hold onto their long established players, but significant growth seems quite unlikely. But turn-based games beyond that, like Fall of Rome or Imperial Wars are another thing entirely! Turn-based games offer by far the best game play of all games, in particular if they are strategy. For one, we appreciate that our audience is older than most would think - and that's not a bad thing. Teenagers and young adults gravitate to Grand Theft Auto or World of Warcraft, but Fall of Rome players tend to be 35 or older, and are more interested in the strategy and personal RPG elements than in pretty graphics and exploding pixels.

**With the success of 'Fall of Rome', what are your plans for the future?**

By the time this is in print we hope to have held our first Centurion (our introduction to Fall of Rome) tournament and to have announced the release of Campaigns of Centurion: a game set in Fall of Rome, but where each game is concluded in about two hours and players create and keep their customized setups with them from game to game, and improve the characteristics with their success and the passage of time.

Next will be the development of the Veterans Game of Fall of Rome, kind of like the Second Cycle was to Alamaze. We'll introduce some magic here as well as plenty of other new features, four new kingdoms, and an active Roman presence (in Fall of Rome, all players play a barbarian king such as Attila the Hun or Arthur of the Celts).

The furthest our telescope goes is to launch Kingdoms of Arcania. We still hope that will happen by Christmas, but I can't make any promises. Meanwhile, Fall of Rome and Centurion are there and waiting for you to Rule Your World!

For more information about Fall of Rome, visit the website at:  
[www.fallofromegame.com](http://www.fallofromegame.com)



# - Serim Ral -



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The City Of Tictimum is situated on hills in Persia at ( ). It has stockpiles of 30620 Food, 20775 Gold, 15445 Iron, 12420 Wood, 12420 Stone, 2000 Weapons, 2000 Armour and 2000 Bows. The City Of Tictimum is garrisoned with 700 Light Infantrymen, 5250 Citizens, 500 Heavy Infantrymen, 62 Persian Immortals, 400 Light Cavalrymen, 100 Heavy Cavalrymen and 700 Skirmishers. It has assorted equipment and mounts consisting of a Longship, a Liburnian Galley and a Trireme. The citizens are beginning to show some promise, have insignificant armour, are armed with improvised weapons, slings and The defenders are poorly trained in siege warfare. When attacking or defending the garrison have been ordered to fight until 100% of them have been slain. A surplus of 21908 food is held within the stockpiles. The City Of Tictimum is protected by some strong walls. Camped within the city is Hammanu The Persian Knight.



Production for this week was 9020 Food, 5775 Gold, 5445 Iron, 2420 Wood and 2420 Stone. The City Of Tictimum has 1 tavern, 1 stable, 1 shipyard, 1 forge, 1 library, 1 training centre, 1 farm, 1 quarry, 1 mine, 1 timber yard, 1 dungeon, 1 temple, 1 trading post, 1 barrack and 1 guard post. After a lifetime of auspicious encounters the legendary hero Amufy Runeseeker has settled near here. His fame attracts a great many aspiring warriors to the area, doubling the output of barracks.

This week The City Of Tictimum can make the following items: 200 Weapons, 200 Armour, 300 Light Infantrymen, 285 Heavy Infantrymen, 200 Horses, a Trireme, a Ballistae, 300 Persian Immortals, 200 Bows, 300 Skirmishers, 300 Balearic Slingers, 250 Archers and 8 Elephants. These are the maximums based on the present stockpile levels. Note that barracks have a maximum output of 100 + 100 per extension, farms 1000 each, forges 200 items each and shipyards 1 item each.



# THE MIGHTY PEN

## Are games evil?

An article appeared on the BBC news site recently, effectively saying how evil online games are. A man and a woman have been sent to prison for seriously neglecting their children whilst playing online games. I've come to the conclusion that the UK media don't like online gamers very much and are sensationalising extremely rare incidents involving totally extreme cases where a gamer has met his demise, committed a real life crime in response to a cyber crime etc.

How many cases go through the world's courts each year relating to serious child neglect, and in how many of those cases is it because the parents have been playing online games? How many people get killed each year for a trivial reason, like calling someone a name, spilling their pint, their dog making a mess on your lawn etc, versus someone having stolen your property in an MMORPG? How many people die each year whilst having been on a drinking session for 24 hours straight, or spending 16 hours in front of the TV versus people who have died while playing an MMORPG for 48 hours?

The answer of course is that nobody knows, as the media choose not to report on the ordinary everyday stuff like child neglect due to drug/alcohol addiction, a killing in some far flung part of the world that was for a totally trivial reason, or that someone has died after a marathon session working in a clothing sweatshop. What I am saying is that in most other contexts these articles would not constitute news, but because it involves the evil of online gaming it suddenly becomes news, whereas in fact these are very isolated incidents.

You're statistically more likely to die from a cow dropping out of an unsecured door on a Boeing 747 and landing on your head, than a gamer stabbing you for stealing his virtual property. It used to be that roleplayers were all evil axe-wielding murders - looks like there's another evil youth culture to demonise to draw people's attention away from the news that really matters.

**Alan White**

PS: I should point out that the BBC recently created and aired a series called Fightbox, where people downloaded some software, created various robots and played them against each other online in order to win a place in the BBC TV series. So, if online games are so bad, why did the BBC create one?

## Gaming as a political issue

During the UK election campaign, I happened to be driving to work listening to Radio 5 live. On the Midday programme the announcer was talking about politics in the Midlands and was enthusing about politicians going 'on the knocker'. The announcer said they had followed a certain Dr Nick Palmer, a Labour MP for a Nottingham constituency, and would report on how his 'knocker' technique was being implemented.

After hearing Dr Palmer's opening knock on the door of some poor unsuspecting member of the Notts public, I listened intently to what he had to say and quite frankly I was very disappointed in his choice of

content. I'm afraid I had to sit through five minutes of him waffling about such unimportant issues as resolving long term unemployment, the pros and cons of a more united Europe and lowering the rates of income tax! Piffle!

Where was his mention of the real 'meat and gristle' content which addresses the problems that are really affecting this nation? Why was there no mention of the decline of PBM games in this country and what Labour was going to do about it? What was his stance on the increase of on-line gaming? Why no mention of the cancellation of Games Day?

I'm afraid Dr Palmer showed himself to be a typical politician - avoiding the *real* issues that face this nation, and concentrating on peripheral problems that don't really affect us. If I lived in Nottingham, he certainly wouldn't have got my vote!

**Wayne** (with his tongue firmly in his cheek!)

*[Nick says: We are still rethinking our policy on PBM following the decision not to nationalise all production turns and impose a wealth tax on planets and kingdoms...]*

## Games Workshop at 30

The exchange between Colin Wheeler and Eric Ridley in the last Flagship didn't resolve the several issues I have with Mr Ridley's original article. My first issue is Mr Ridley's inability to spell Ian Livingstone's name correctly. As highlighted by the use of the cover of 'The Warlock of Firetop Mountain' to illustrate the article. At one point he even transposes Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson's first names while spelling both Ian and Livingstone incorrectly (for this Ian Livingstone at any rate).

Next is the idea that Games Workshop had anything to do with the Fighting Fantasy books. They were published by Puffin (and Ian and Steve came in for some stick from gamers for commercialising this format of fantasy adventure). Fighting Fantasy was clearly Mr Ridley's introduction to the hobby and hence, as Colin puts it, he views them 'through rose-tinted spectacles'.

In his reply to Colin, Mr Ridley brushes over what he says in his article: 'After the success of the books Ian and Steve ... set up Games Workshop.' Rather different from 'I am also aware of the fact that [Games Workshop] was already started before the Fighting Fantasy books came out.' The issue is getting the facts right. Games Workshop was formed in 1975 by Ian, Steve and John Peake (flatmates together in Shepherds Bush) as Mr Ridley notes in his reply, but they initially made traditional wooden games and published a magazine. Then Ian and Steve gained a three-year exclusive licence from TSR to import and sell Dungeons and Dragons in the UK and John dropped out of the business. By 1978 Games Workshop had diversified into all sorts of games, the magazine had become White Dwarf and the company opened its first real shop (Dalling Road in Hammersmith - I lived a few hundred yards away for several years). The first Fighting Fantasy book was published in 1982, a year after it was written and rather later than the formation of Games Workshop. (Citadel Miniatures was set up to manufacture figures to go with Games Workshop's fantasy games. Its boss, Bryan Ansell, eventually took over from Ian and Steve and made Games Workshop what it is today.)

Finally we have Mr Ridley's assertion that 'almost all current games can be traced back to four men'. I'm sorry?! Only if he has a very limited idea of what constitutes a game. None of the four men he mentions has more than a peripheral influence on the hundreds of new games published each year. Yes, Richard Garfield originated Magic: the Gathering. But CCGs are just a small fraction of the games industry. Gary Gygax was half of the originators of one of the seminal role-playing games (the others being Traveller, Call of Cthulhu and, I would argue, En Garde!). I make that one-eighth of a founding father of one branch of gaming. Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson are huge figures in the history of games in the UK, but much of that is by being in the right place at the right time (and having the bottle to take advantage of that - for which I admire them hugely).

Finally, finally, let me answer Mr Ridley's final point: 'what you would be like now if it were not for Games Workshop.' I would be exactly the same. If not Ian and Steve, somebody would have brought fantasy



role-playing to the UK, somebody would have commercialised solo dungeons and somebody would have seen the advantage of a vertically-integrated fantasy games business.

**Paul Evans**

*[I've always been enchanted the way that, between them, Flagship readers know just about everything! But I must take responsibility as editor for any mis-spelling of names: that was something that I should have spotted and corrected myself. In keeping with our long-standing policy, we offered Eric a right of reply ...]*

It does make me think that, if my critics were such lovers and historians of Games Workshop, why didn't they write the article instead? On top of that, no amount of arguing about other games, which while big in the gaming community never made it into the mainstream consciousness, will change my view that these four men were the most influential the games industry (certainly in this country) has seen - unless you want to include the guy that invented Chess or the person who came up with the idea for a deck of 52 playing cards.

Reiner Knizia is incredibly important, Klaus Teuber as well, but not many people know their names or, in the grand scheme of things, have played their games. Everyone knows what Dungeons and Dragons is, but try asking your mum if she has heard of Amber the diceless roleplaying game.

**Eric Ridley**

*[By an amazing co-incidence, if your mum reads this issue of Flagship, she will indeed have heard of Amber (reviewed on p14).]*

#### Info from the past?

I am seeking information on **The Keys of Medokh** and would love to hear from anyone who has any old turn sheets, rule books etc. Contact me at: [rzholland@hotmail.com](mailto:rzholland@hotmail.com)

Also from anyone who has any memories of the game: Tribe & Region names, anything really, I do not mind if I get the same information several times. Now what was the name of that sneaky lot that attacked your cities all the time, and the name of the race that you paid with jewels and which did really cool things for you?

**Robin Holland**

*[Robin says that he wrote to the old address of TKoM's designer, Bob Middleton, but hadn't heard back by the time we went to press.]*

#### Bogart and PBM

For years the PBM market has been looking for a really famous person who we could use as an example of how anyone, rich or poor, famous or unknown, can participate in it. I think I have found that person.

Whilst on holiday recently, I took a mass of books with me to keep me mentally active. I read one, and these words, which I quote verbatim, leapt off the page at me: 'When World War II came along he... would Play By Mail with troops overseas,' (page 124). The book: *In Search of my Father* (1996, Pan Books); the author: Stephen Bogart.

It would appear that his father - the legendary Humphrey Bogart - was an ardent PBMer, playing chess by post throughout his life on a regular basis. Maybe he's the icon we can hold up to everyone as our famous PBMer?

Apart from that quotation, I would highly recommend the book to anyone interested in 'Bogie', as it is a real eye-opener.

Here's looking at you kid!

**Wayne**

#### Ratings

As a new reader of your magazine, I'd like to ask why you don't give a rating score at the end of each review. Flagship must be the only gaming magazine that does not do this!

**Neil Bolton**

## Feedback - Have YOUR say!

- 1 - Please rate this issue from 1 (rheumy) to 10 (rip-roaring).
- 2 - Which articles/sections did you most enjoy, and why?
- 3 - Which bored you, and why?
- 4 - Are there any changes that you'd like us to make in future?
- 5 - We always try to promote discussion of gaming issues. Should we
  - (a) aim to balance anything controversial with an opposite opinion in the same issue,
  - (b) always point out when we disagree with a correspondent,
  - (c) only print opinions that we ourselves agree with,
  - (d) conclude a given discussion after three or four issues?
- 6 - We try to feature both new games and old. Do you think that
  - (a) new games are best kept for Newsdesk,
  - (b) new games should only be reviewed by an experienced gamer,
  - (c) game diaries are the best way to discover what a game is like to play,
  - (d) older games are best described by someone giving hints and tips?
- 7 - We plan to continue the Turning Digital series soon with some more detailed reviews. We'll be starting with Atlantis, but after that would you like to see a review of:
  - (a) Murania  
(Fantasy game - [www.pbem.at/muranien/english/index2.htm](http://www.pbem.at/muranien/english/index2.htm))
  - (b) Imperial Wars  
(Space game - [www.intelgames.com](http://www.intelgames.com))
  - (d) any other game you nominate?
- 8 - As a new reader suggests, should we develop a ratings system and ask our reviewers to give a Flagship Rating (as a mark out of ten or percentage score)?

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



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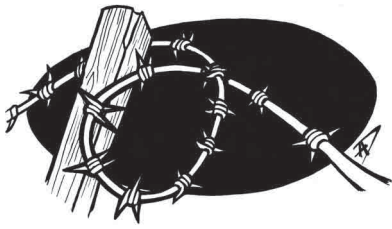
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## RUMOURS FROM THE FRONT

*[This column attempts to simulate a crowded bar full of PBMs 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 June 15th

John Barnard, Rick Barnes, Neil Edge, Darren Evans, Colin Forbes, Patrick Gleeson, Mike Grant, Mo Holkar, Jim Lake, Carol Mulholland, Wayne Yeadon.

### TURN-BASED GAMES

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

**Mike Grant** - 'For two full days I exchanged sling-shot fire with the witch's wand of poisonous thorns and yet she was barely scratched while my wounds worsened and vile poison coursed through my veins once more! A drastic change of tactics was called for. I would confront the withered hag at close range with my more damaging wooden spear. It proved much more effective and so finally my vengeance was complete! Several items were looted from the battlefield and they should sell well at the local market place. However I shall keep the sturdier iron spear to replace my old one... Malachai Sicklemoon, the Male Wodemis of the Moon.'

#### Chaos Trail (*Simon Williams*)

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Early days yet, but I'm impressed by the evident depth of the game world, by Simon's writing and by the game's pace. Within the first two turns, my character found a possible ally, but between them they've attracted the attention of the Watchers, who are rather like a serious version of Monty Python's Spanish Inquisition. Ulp. So it's been necessary to escape at speed from Luudhoq. Somehow, I suspect that the Chaos Trail countryside will be just as menacing...'

#### Dungeonworld (*Madhouse*)

**Mike Grant** - 'Don't you just hate it when a long series of passageways leads to a complete dead-end? Just as well I had the foresight to buy a Teleport Home scroll all those months ago! I've now returned to the courtyard, cleared out the trusty backpack and stocked up on a few useful supplies like healing ointments and a new Teleport scroll. There are so many different corridors to choose from here. Just hope for more luck this time round. Oh yes, and for those paying attention, my Strength is still locked at an Elf'ish 11! By all the Gods of Battle, one day it must surely improve... Grishnak Axehand, the Male Dwarven Warrior.'

**Mike Grant** - '*BrokenLands*: Many members of the Slythian Fellowship have descended the stairs to the Keldassi Flow, a dungeon level dominated by a deep dark lake at its centre. We are faced with the choice of wading across or solving the puzzling boat-summoning riddle. I guess we shall be here for quite some time either way, but at least there are some local monsters like the Bufo Warriors and Giant Snails for us to spar with while we consider, debate and decide! Jai of the Dragon, the Male Human Monk.'

**Mike Grant** - '*Frontier*: After many savage battles I have finally joined Chunthalaka and other old friends within one of the treasure rooms. The

Master of these eternally rising hoards of undead may dwell within the large Sarcophagus, so we feel compelled to open it and face our nightmares! With his death a more natural order should return to this ruin and we can finally leave to see the sunlight and breath the fresh air, as my heart yearns to do. A cunning plan has been suggested which should lessen the immediate risks of this action. We shall all withdraw into the corridor whilst a creature summoned by Enchantress Dame Sila Milenko attempts the hazardous opening of the crypt. An air of nervousness surrounds the company this night... Anakine Oakhart (Nature Girl), the Female Human Ranger.'

**Mike Grant** - 'Kyr: Long and in vain has been my search for brother Tigris. Hope dwindles and I must face the fact that I am alone and unaided amidst the sand dunes. A dusty track has led far north from Rasiaid city to the comparative safety of a Waypoint where supplies and healing are available for a price. Many formidable creatures hunt this region seeking the flesh of unwary travellers. Already a Desert Giant has made its unearthly might felt! I shall rest here a while to recover my strength and tend my wounds... Panthera, the Dark Aslani Warrior.'

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

**Carol Mulholland** - 'Alison has managed to regain the missing ank, by offering the alcoholic pickpocket a bottle of perfume to drink in exchange. That's when her vampire friend recognises the drunkard as a troublemaker from long ago - from centuries ago, in fact. (Yes, I thought he must have had some sort of supernatural protection to have survived for so long!) Over-confident, Alison makes a possibly fatal mistake. She responds to the wino's terror about the Queen of Elfland by saying that such a creature can't possibly exist: pish, she'd like to see her, if so! Not good, especially since she's clasping the ank as she says this - and suddenly it glows hot in her hand. Oh dear...'

#### Fall of Rome (*Enlightened Age Entertainment*)

**Mo Holkar** - 'I was on the "PBM College" jury this year, and was pleased to see Fall of Rome win - well deserved. The other contenders are good games too, but I think FoR is the closest we've yet come to a "PBM" that plays like a conventional computer game.'

#### Kosumi ([www.kosumi.com](http://www.kosumi.com))

**Wayne Yeadon** - 'I have just started playing in one of the free games being offered, after a shaky start. I was hoping to play a particular clan that appealed to me, but due to a lack of player activity, I was relocated to a more active game, controlling a different clan. Having played three turns thus far, it appears that the early stages are a case of grabbing as many settlements as you can, to form a good base to work from. Other clans may have experienced more conflict, but I'm quite happy to have only just begun to encounter enemy clans. Finding out what to do initially was quite tricky, so I think most players are likely to follow the advice given in the clan help files. Once you have played a few games though, you can develop your own recipes for success, I guess. The client the game uses to play with is fine, although I find the graphics a little on the small side, making it tricky to see where things are. Once the map fills up, it may be harder to figure out what is going on, so I will have to wait and see, really. So far so good and I'm enjoying myself playing blind, but it looks like I'm going to see some action over the next few turns. I just hope I can survive!'

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

**Colin Forbes** - 'After two consecutive defeats, Team Andraste () looks like heading for victory against the evils forces of Sauron in game 85. The service from ME Games continues to be superb, and the GMs commitment to the game is unsurpassed.'

#### Quest (*KJC Games*)

**Mike Grant** - '*Game 31*: My last remaining group has just been knocked out of the Nalaria arena tournament! Battle results were 1-1 but my opponent won on deaths by a narrow 6 to 5. Gutting news indeed, as I had hoped to at least make it to the final four and earn some prize money. Oh well, I have several improvements planned for my groups and will be



much better prepared for next years fierce competition...

A couple of the alliances mentioned in last issues *Rumours* now have websites up and running: Snake Eyes ([www.slyriser.com](http://www.slyriser.com)), Union of Shadows (<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/lindsay.stokes/>)

Moderation has been going very well. The GM is always willing to discuss suggestions and ideas with the players. And some of the plot lines are proving quite intricate, not to mention downright dangerous!

**Wayne Yeadon** - 'G31-Naralia: All hell has broken loose, resulting in the takeover of two of our settlements by a combined force of alliances, resulting in a number of deaths among our alliance members. My alliance is in the process of attempting to avoid a fullscale war by using diplomacy and negotiation to gain our settlements back. The attackers came up with a clever ploy though in the first place, by making claims of corruption within our city state, so I congratulate them for that. We are now having to disprove such claims, whilst not giving in to what we consider to be terrorist actions. This state of affairs is likely to keep us busy for a while at least.

**G32-Twilight Isles:** 'This game has ceased moderation so most alliances have transferred to game 31, the only game to receive moderation now. Before it ended, the games tournament had kicked off, but I soon get eliminated by one of my own alliance members! I wasn't too disappointed, as I knew they were much better to begin with and reckoned that my alliance overall was likely to do quite well in the competition. My alliance was implementing measures that we expected to bear fruit in the distant future, allowing us to be able to call upon a few favours when we require them. We were looking forward to rapid expansion and ultimately domination of the Twilight Isles...'

## ONLINE GAMES

### Online Poker

**Wayne Yeadon** - 'At the moment I'm spending quite a bit of spare time playing online poker, but not for real money of course! I use two sites mainly, but I'm sure there are countless others out there.

*Betfairpoker.com* seems to contain plenty of UK players and is not as flashy as some, but the user interface is easy enough to use. Betfair has the advantage for novices in letting you know what your best hand is from the cards you are dealt. With only a limited number of tables to choose from, you sometimes have to wait a while before you can join in a game. Frustrating if you only have limited time to play.

*Fulltiltpoker.com* seems to have more of a mixed (worldwide/us) clientele and has a more graphical interface. You even get to choose an avatar to represent yourself at the table and it also allows you to change expressions depending on whether you are winning or losing. This seems to be faster-paced than Betfair and requires more skill as it does not reveal your best hand. I prefer this game myself as it has a more fun element to it and more tables to pick from.

Both games require a brief download to allow you to play.'

### EVE Online (CCP Games)

**John Barnard** - 'Eve continues to be the only MMORPG that I have been able to enjoy! Not only can I actually keep up with friends that have been playing for much longer than me and be part of major battles, but there is no such thing as "level grinding": all skills are actually trained real time even if offline! Unlike other MMORPGs that I have played, where if a friend out "levels" you, he/she will either have to wait for you to catch up or simply re-roll a new lower level toon till you catch up to their main. This is the part I love most about Eve, the moment you step into the game you can jump right into the action with friends since there are no group restrictions! My only suggestion to anyone who tries Eve-Online for the first time is to give the game some time: the game has a huge complexity curve. However, once you get used to it you will really enjoy the game without actually having to spend crazy amounts of hours to keep up with anyone. I love this game!'

**Rick Barnes** - 'I'm back to this game after six months of World of Warcraft. If you liked Elite on the Amiga you will love this game, though

Eve has a lot more content. The universe is huge, so you can spend eternity exploring. The Player vs Player combat system is amazing, the best I've come across. The only real downside is that the monthly cost is a bit higher than the other MMORPGs I have played (Warcraft and Star Wars Galaxies). I should say that I had some problems with a recent patch, but I got a fast and excellent response from the support team.'

### Guild Wars (ArenaNet)

**Darren Evans** - 'This game is for those who want an intelligent and tactical battle Player vs Player system. This isn't a game like World of Warcraft where you just click on one skill, and one class has a severe advantage over another. This game is for those who enjoy balanced Player vs Player combat. If you enjoy the fact that your victory depends on you being able to make better decisions than your opponent, rather than the victory being chosen by class and gear, then you should try this game out. If you are tired of feeling ignored by the company, or feel that the company doesn't care, then ArenaNet is a company you can trust. No monthly fee and the developers manage to be more active with the community than games that charge an arm and a leg.'

**Jim Lake** - 'This is Diablo 2 reincarnated, except it sucks. Hardly an MMORPG at all--the only thing that makes it an "MMO" is the 3D chat room in it, which really is no different from the lobby in Battle.net. The Player vs Player is superficial, and the leveling/item system is even worse than Diablo 2, even though this game is six years newer. The graphics are pretty good, but graphics don't make a game; gameplay does. And this game has no real gameplay after the first couple hours. If you're looking for a clickfest without any intelligence that is full of idiots, this is it. As for the no subscription policy, I'm highly suspicious of what this means to the long-term future of the game. Where is the incentive for updates and improvements?'

[Wow, some fierce disagreement here. More comments welcomed!]

### Dark Age of Camelot (Mythic)

**Nils Jonsen** - 'I played Dark Age of Camelot from the very day it was released and like many others, with Trials of Atlantis and a lot of frustration I quit. I tried a number of other games, but none really cut the mustard for various reasons. So I recently came back to DaoC to give it one more try and I have to admit that the game seems to have improved. Yes the graphics aren't really up to par but they are ok. What DaoC gives me that no other game seems to be offering is the feeling, the aura and the commitment about what you are doing. I have been exploring the new Catacombs regions and I am impressed. The game has also been improved since I quit, with many small but nice features like: faster movement speed, in-game maps, quest offerers being clearly marked, instanced dungeons and tasks, new very good quests, new classes and a lot of nice items that have also been improved graphically... and probably a lot more which I haven't figured out yet.

Reading about the new and upcoming expansion and that there will be some new type of improved weapons and combining it with the fact that Mythic has reinforced their DAoC staff gives me the impression that they have decided to push the development of DAoC forward to meet today's standards, because even though other games may look better, for me there is nothing like the feel of fighting for your realm in DAoC. I have also been reading about complaints that PvE is a bore and honestly I disagree. PvE in DAoC is great. Not too easy and not too hard. Not too fast and not too slow! It takes time to get to level 50 and beyond but it's worth it and it feels wonderful to one day say...'Ding 50!' For all who have spelled out that DAoC is dead (me included)...open your mind, go back, have a look and give it your honest try. You may be surprised!'

## BOARDGAMES

### Shadows over Camelot (Days of Wonder)

**Neil Edge** - 'A well-produced game with very good components. While a little more involved to learn than, say, Ticket to Ride, it is picked up

quickly and plays quickly. A game can last from one to two hours depending on the number of players. This is one of the most interesting, unique and fun games that I've ever played. I think that Days of Wonder have another hit on their hands.'

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'Players must cooperate to save Camelot which is under siege from without and can be corrupted with within. Each player is a knight of the Round Table and takes on quests to help save Camelot. Some quests can only be done by a single knight, others can be undertaken by groups of knights. But there may be a traitor among the knights who is secretly working to destroy Camelot! It is the possibility of there being a traitor that adds tension to the game. In the second game that I played this became quite intense. We realized that when the Grail Quest was finished, which we knew would be done shortly, there would be enough swords on the Round Table to end the game. But since we had not identified the traitor, the flipping of two of them from white to black would cause six white swords and six black swords, which meant we would lose. The discussion about who was the likely traitor went on for a while. In the end we guessed wrong and lost the game. But we had a great time getting there.'

### Amazonas (*Kosmos, Mayfair Games*)

**Neil Edge** - 'A very fun and beautifully illustrated game. I have played this game several times now and the outcome changes every time, but the score always seems to remain close and competitive. It seems that two of the most important factors in the game is when to use your native indian card to avoid the dangers of the jungle and the importance of trying to remember what bonus exploration cards have been revealed so that you can try to capitalize on your income. Even if you get pushed out of completing your mission card, the score remains close and you can still win! If I were to compare this to other games, Ticket to Ride would come to mind, another very fun transitional gateway game. I would, however, place Amazonas above Ticket to Ride in the lineup as it has more "meat on the bones". There is more strategy, choices and player interaction in this well-balanced game. This game has quality written all over it, it's pleasing to look at, has well written rules and the components are well made. This one belongs in everyone's collection!'

### Jambo (*Kosmos*)

**Neil Edge** - 'The Kosmos two-player line has reached near legendary status. So many of the games in that line have proved to be winners that people just expect great games from it. But Jambo has even more going for it in my book, with an African theme, and rich, lush illustrations. Jambo also happens to be designed by one of my favorites, Rudiger Dorn, designer of Traders of Genoa, Goa, and Emerald. I've heard some people make the claim that Jambo provides a CCG-like experience: that may or may not prove a positive recommendation!'

### Traders of Genoa

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'We first played this with five of us and we had a blast. It was chaotic, it was exciting, and it was fun. The tower player was constantly being pulled in four different directions. The haggling and wheeling and dealing was non-stop. None of us even really knew if we were getting the best deal: we all just enjoyed being part of the action. Every tower movement and action came at a steep price, and the multiple offers given were often so varied, it was nearly impossible to gauge what the better deal would be. Also, there was really no down time between turns because everyone played such an integral part of every turn. I would literally jog into the kitchen to get another beer because I didn't want to miss out on a good deal. The game took about two and a half hours and we were all sorry to see it end. What a perfect game night!'

With that said - the very next day, three of the five of us got together again to play because we enjoyed it so much the night before. The three-player experience was not nearly as fun. I think it's because the chaos factor was gone. Everything became more predictable and mechanical. There was a surplus of actions so they went cheap. As a result, the haggling and wheeling and dealing aspect of the game was greatly diminished. Five ducats for an action was quite common simply because

there were no other offers on the table. That never happened the night before. The game still had strategy but it was no longer exciting. I guess the best comparison I could give is Pit (the card game). Pit is a great game with eight players and a lousy one with three players because it requires the constant chaos of deals flying left and right to be stimulating. That, of course, is the extent of the similarities between Traders of Genoa and Pit.

So, in conclusion, this game can be a lot of fun but it comes with requirements: 1) You need four or five (preferably five) people to make it work. 2) Every player needs to be ready and willing to negotiate their butts off for two hours straight. If you have those two ingredients then this game will not disappoint.'

### Gloom (*Atlas Games*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'I sat down yesterday evening and played a two-player game of Gloom. I love the art and the see-through cards. It is an integral part of the mechanics, which are pretty straightforward. The theme is fabulously dark and amusing. I think it would play better with three or four players, rather than two. It is light enough that it would make a good beer & pretzels game. Less staid individuals will have the most fun with this one - I liked it a lot, but you need to have other people as excited about tormenting their families as I am to make it fun.'

### Louis XIV (*Rio Grande Games*)

**Patrick Gleeson** - 'Well, I bought this game for two reasons, firstly because I love Rudiger Dorn's other games, and secondly because of the review in the last issue of *Flagship*. My girlfriend and I played Louis as a two player game, and left the table thinking it was okay but not stellar. Add two more players to the table and everyone was ready to play it again immediately. This is definitely a heavy game using strategic placement of pieces to out-manoeuvre your opponents. The rewards for your efforts are different each game, and you have to adjust your strategy as you go. One of our players found the theme "too dry", but most "influence" games are. I rather enjoy the different special abilities that add up throughout the game. (Special abilities are bought with power tokens won by out-influencing others.) In fact, I always feel like the game ends too soon. Give it a try: it gets better and better the more you play it.'

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# Galactic View

GV is a list of firms known by FLAGSHIP to be running turn-based games 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

<b>Ab Initio Games</b> , PO Box 605, Bromley, Kent BR2 0YQ WEB: <a href="http://www.pbmsports.com">www.pbmsports.com</a>	McC
<b>Advanced Gaming Enterprises</b> , POB 214949, Sacramento, CA 95821, USA WEB: <a href="http://www.ageforfun.com">www.ageforfun.com</a>	AGE
<b>Agema Publications</b> , 120 Carmel Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 6LZ EM: <a href="mailto:agema2@tiscali.co.uk">agema2@tiscali.co.uk</a>	AGM
<b>Ancient Guardian Enterprises</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.agegames.com">www.agegames.com</a>	AGG
<b>Andrews, Colin</b> , 26 Brown Edge Road, Holts, Oldham, OL4 5QG	AND
<b>Arnott, Steven</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.sjasystems.co.uk/">www.sjasystems.co.uk/</a>	ARN
<b>Austerlitz PBeM</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.austerlitz.biz">www.austerlitz.biz</a>	AUS
<b>Baird, Phil</b> , 930 NE 63rd Ave, Portland, OR 97213, USA WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lote11/index.html">www.throneworld.com/lords/lote11/index.html</a>	BAI
<b>Briny En Gardel (Terry Crook)</b> , 11 Laurel Close, Burniston, Scarborough YO13 0JQ WEB: <a href="http://www.brinyengarde.co.uk">www.brinyengarde.co.uk</a>	BRI
<b>Burrows, Pete, Buzzwack PBM</b> , 8 Magnolia Court, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 3LG WEB: <a href="http://www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk">www.buzzwackpbm.freemove.co.uk</a>	BUR
<b>Chaos Trail</b> , 22 Christopher Tye Close, Ely, Cambs., CB6 3DB WEB: <a href="http://www.chaostail.com">www.chaostail.com</a>	CHA
<b>Clay, David</b> , 20 Malden Close, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 6AY WEB: <a href="http://www.wiilopenwar.co.uk">www.wiilopenwar.co.uk</a>	CLA
<b>CraSiworld</b> , 4 Barleyfield, Clayton-le-Woods, Preston, Lancs., PR5 8JQ WEB: <a href="http://www.crasworld.com">www.crasworld.com</a>	CRA
<b>CSPP</b> , Alfred-Bucherstr. 63, 53115 Bonn, Germany WEB: <a href="http://www.the-ashes-of-empire.de">www.the-ashes-of-empire.de</a> (German) WEB: <a href="http://home.t-online.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm">http://home.t-online.de/home/ashes_of_empire/ashes2.htm</a> (English)	CSP
<b>Dark Wolf Games</b> , BCM Darkwolf, London, WC1N 3XX WEB: <a href="http://www.darkwolf.ie">www.darkwolf.ie</a>	DWG
<b>Dracs Games</b> , 21 Chipperfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4DP WEB: <a href="http://www.dracsgames.co.uk">www.dracsgames.co.uk</a>	DRC
<b>Dreamworld Games</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.dreamworldgames.co.uk">www.dreamworldgames.co.uk</a>	DRE
<b>Dunks, Antony</b> , Far Horizon, Sark, Guernsey, GY9 0SE WEB: <a href="http://www.sark.net/~xott">www.sark.net/~xott</a>	DUN
<b>EMG</b> EMG WEB: <a href="http://members.shaw.ca/emg-pbm/emg.htm">http://members.shaw.ca/emg-pbm/emg.htm</a>	EAE
<b>Enlightened Age Entertainment</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.fallofromegame.com">www.fallofromegame.com</a>	EPM
<b>Entertainment Plus More Games</b> , PO Box 2578, Appleton, WI 54912, USA WEB: <a href="http://www.epmgames.com">www.epmgames.com</a>	EVA
<b>Evans, Paul</b> , 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF WEB: <a href="http://www.pevans.co.uk">www.pevans.co.uk</a>	EXT
<b>Extreme Web Games</b> , WEB: <a href="http://extremewebgames.com/">http://extremewebgames.com/</a>	FAR
<b>Faraway Games</b> , 3 Maslem Rd, St Albans, Herts AL4 0GS WEB: <a href="http://www.faraway.co.uk/">www.faraway.co.uk/</a>	FBI
<b>Flying Buffalo</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/">www.flyingbuffalo.com/</a>	GBM
<b>Games by Mail</b> , Bridge Street, Neston, S Wirral CH64 9UJ WEB: <a href="http://GamesByMail.co.uk">GamesByMail.co.uk</a>	GLO
<b>Glover, Adrian</b> , 4 Stevanne Court, Lessness Park, Belvedere, Kent, DA17 5BG	HAR
<b>Harlan, Thomas</b> , 3210 East 23rd Street, Tuscon, AR 85713, USA WEB: <a href="http://www.throneworld.com/lords">www.throneworld.com/lords</a>	HAQ
<b>Harlequin Games</b> , 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP WEB: <a href="http://www.harlequingames.com">www.harlequingames.com</a> AND <a href="http://www.middleearthgames.com">www.middleearthgames.com</a>	HAY
<b>Haynes, Nic</b> , 33 Chatsworth Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 7XD EM: <a href="mailto:oinkyfatty@pig@hotmail.com">oinkyfatty@pig@hotmail.com</a>	INC
<b>Incubus Designs</b> , POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG WEB: <a href="http://www.incubusdesigns.co.uk">www.incubusdesigns.co.uk</a>	JAD
<b>Jade Enterprises</b> , 127 Queen Adelaide Court, Penge, London, SE20 7EB EM: <a href="mailto:jade.ent@ntlworld.com">jade.ent@ntlworld.com</a>	KJC
<b>KJC Games</b> , FREEPOST, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3UL WEB: <a href="http://www.kjcgames.com">www.kjcgames.com</a>	KOS
<b>Kosumi</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.kosumi.com">www.kosumi.com</a>	LLO
<b>Lloyd, Rich</b> , 79 Farmersville Road, Califon, NJ 07830, USA EM: <a href="mailto:lords4@throneworld.com">lords4@throneworld.com</a>	MAD
<b>Madhouse</b> , 6 Alexandra Road, Wisbech, PE13 1HQ WEB: <a href="http://www.madcentral.com">www.madcentral.com</a>	MIN
<b>Mindless Games</b> , 5 Basford Road, Nottingham, NG6 0JP WEB: <a href="http://www.mindlessworld.net">www.mindlessworld.net</a>	NEU
<b>Neutral Zone</b> , 33 Rockall Close, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LU WEB: <a href="http://www.neutral-zone-football-pbem.co.uk">www.neutral-zone-football-pbem.co.uk</a>	OAT
<b>Oates, Jason</b> , 6 St Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA WEB: <a href="http://uk.geocities.com/jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com">http://uk.geocities.com/jasonpaul.oates@btinternet.com</a>	OLY
<b>Olympia Games</b> , 6 Sandy Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3GS WEB: <a href="http://www.olympiapbm.co.uk">www.olympiapbm.co.uk</a>	PAG
<b>Pagoda Games</b> , PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ WEB: <a href="http://www.pagodagames.co.uk">www.pagodagames.co.uk</a>	PAL
<b>Mark Palin</b> , Clansmen, 5 Burford, Brookside, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 1LQ EM: <a href="mailto:mp004f8903@blueyonder.co.uk">mp004f8903@blueyonder.co.uk</a>	PIN
<b>Pinder, Mark</b> , 139 Nelson Way, Lacey Acres, Grimsby, S.Humberside DN34 5UJ WEB: <a href="http://groups.msn.com/elvaria">http://groups.msn.com/elvaria</a>	PEG
<b>Play-by-Electron Games</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.pbegames.com">www.pbegames.com</a>	QIR
<b>Quirxel Games</b> , Quirxel Games Gbr, Am Pannofen 7, 47608 Geldern, Germany WEB: <a href="http://www.quirxelgames.de">www.quirxelgames.de</a>	REB
<b>Rebus Games</b> , 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ EM: <a href="mailto:domin@icm.zoom.co.uk">domin@icm.zoom.co.uk</a>	RCW
<b>Received Wisdom</b> , 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP WEB: <a href="http://www.receivedwisdom.org">www.receivedwisdom.org</a>	ROL
<b>Rolling Thunder Games Inc.</b> , PO Box 310, Eastlake, CO 80614-0310, USA WEB: <a href="http://www.rollingthunder.com">www.rollingthunder.com</a>	RZE
<b>Rzechorzek, Pete</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm">www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm</a>	SSV
<b>SSV Klapp-Bachler OEG</b> , Josefigasse 41, A-8020, Graz, Austria WEB: <a href="http://www.heldenwelt.com">www.heldenwelt.com</a>	SCR
<b>Scriven, David</b> , 15 Alandale Grove, Garforth, Leeds, LS25, 1DJ	SIL
<b>Silver Dreamer</b> , 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ WEB: <a href="http://www.silverdreamer.com">www.silverdreamer.com</a>	SOF
<b>Software Simulations</b> , PO Box 2758, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2XH WEB: <a href="http://www.pbmsports.com">www.pbmsports.com</a>	SPE
<b>Spellbinder Games</b> , 51 Athelstan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE EM: <a href="mailto:Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com">Chris.spelbinder@btinternet.com</a>	SPN
<b>Spencer, Jerry</b> , 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY EM: <a href="mailto:italia@gryphon33.fsnet.co.uk">italia@gryphon33.fsnet.co.uk</a>	

<b>Sporting Dreams</b> , PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB WEB: <a href="http://www.sportingdreams.com">www.sportingdreams.com</a>	SPO
<b>Supersonic Games</b> , PO Box 1812, Galston, KA4 8WA WEB: <a href="http://www.austerlitzpbem.com">www.austerlitzpbem.com</a>	SUP
<b>Tempus Fugit PBM Productions</b> , 96 Bishopswood Road, Tadley, Hants RG26 4HG WEB: <a href="http://tempusfugitpbm.co.uk">http://tempusfugitpbm.co.uk</a>	TFT
<b>Terre de Jeux</b> , 2 rue Pierre Valençon, 18520 Avord, France EM: <a href="mailto:isasol@club-internet.fr">isasol@club-internet.fr</a>	TDJ
<b>Total Conquest</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.total-conquest.com">www.total-conquest.com</a>	TOT
<b>Ulaigh Games</b> , 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF EM: <a href="mailto:chrisjan.morris@virgin.net">chrisjan.morris@virgin.net</a>	ULA
<b>Undying King Games</b> , 35 Kings Avenue, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 1NT Web: <a href="http://www.ukg.co.uk">www.ukg.co.uk</a>	UKG
<b>White, Stephen</b> , 67 Milton Street, Padiham, Burnley, Lancs., BB12 8RJ	WHS
<b>WOW Games</b> , WEB: <a href="http://www.wow.pbemgame.com">www.wow.pbemgame.com</a>	WWG
<b>Xanthis, Constantine</b> , 7080 NW 75th Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33067, USA EM: <a href="mailto:cjxren@yahoo.com">cjxren@yahoo.com</a>	XAN

## Zine Listings

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

<b>Abyssinian Prince</b> , Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA (Email: <a href="mailto:burgess@world.std.com">burgess@world.std.com</a> )	
<b>Carnel</b> Robert Rees, 10a Eldon Grove, London, NW3 5PT EM: <a href="mailto:carnel@talk21.com">carnel@talk21.com</a> ( <a href="http://www.geocities.com/shudderlix/carnel">www.geocities.com/shudderlix/carnel</a> )	
<b>Devolution</b> , Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creaton Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN6 8RP (Email: <a href="mailto:tony@hollowell.plus.com">tony@hollowell.plus.com</a> )	
<b>Diplomacy 2000</b> , <a href="http://www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/">www.lancedal.demon.co.uk/dip2000/</a>	
<b>Flights of Fancy</b> , Philip Honeybone, Email: <a href="mailto:phil@melly98.freemove.co.uk">phil@melly98.freemove.co.uk</a>	
<b>For Whom The Die Rolls</b> , 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Herts., HP23 4NQ (Email: <a href="mailto:Keith@Thomasson.com">Keith@Thomasson.com</a> )	
<b>Mission From God</b> , John Harrington, 1 Churchbury Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3UW ( <a href="http://www.fbgames.co.uk">www.fbgames.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:mfg@fbgames.co.uk">mfg@fbgames.co.uk</a> )	
<b>Ode</b> , John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: <a href="mailto:John@ode_online.net">John@ode_online.net</a> )	
<b>off-the-shelf</b> , Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: <a href="mailto:off-the-shelf@olympus.net">off-the-shelf@olympus.net</a> )	
<b>Psychopath</b> , <a href="http://www.psychazine.co.uk">www.psychazine.co.uk</a> (Web publication only.)	
<b>Rhein-Neckar-Zine</b> , (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Karlsruhe, Germany, (Email: <a href="mailto:lukas@oberfoul.de">lukas@oberfoul.de</a> )	
<b>S.O.B.</b> , Chris Hassler, 2000 S. Armour Ct., La Habra, CA90631 USA (Email: <a href="mailto:chassler@adelphia.net">chassler@adelphia.net</a> )	
<b>Serendipity</b> , John Webley, Topferreihe 4, 38259 Salzgitter, Germany (Email: <a href="mailto:jjwebley@aol.com">jjwebley@aol.com</a> )	
<b>Strangitude</b> , Paul Sands, Flat 2, 432 Birmingham Rd, Wyde Green, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1YJ (Email: <a href="mailto:strangitude@lineone.net">strangitude@lineone.net</a> )	
<b>To Win Just Once</b> , Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UF (Email: <a href="mailto:twjo@pevans.co.uk">twjo@pevans.co.uk</a> )	
<b>Variable Pig</b> , Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: <a href="mailto:cj.reader@wanadoo.nl">cj.reader@wanadoo.nl</a> )	



**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

**Free Turns** - many GMs will give you a number of free turns at the start of the game

**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.

**Note** - occasional optional extras like a newsletter are not included in the prices unless we judge that they are fairly frequent and essential for enjoyment of the game. Some GMs give discounts if you pay for a batch of turns in advance. Some offer reduced fees for email play.

Game	Prequel	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Time Fee	Xtra £	Player£
Abolish Fantasy	M-O	Power Fantasy	SIL		£10.00				
Absolute Hero 2	M-O	RPG: Superhero	AG		£25.00	2	£4.00	(b)	
Adventures of a Knight	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	2	£10.00		
Adventures of a Knight 2	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	2	£2.50		3.5, 7.2-7.8, 8
Adventures of a Knight 3	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	2	£2.50		71, 81, 82
Ancient Battles	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£11.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 2	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 3	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 4	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 5	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 6	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 7	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 8	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 9	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 10	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 11	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 12	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 13	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 14	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 15	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 16	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 17	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 18	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 19	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 20	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 21	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 22	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 23	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 24	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 25	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 26	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 27	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 28	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 29	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 30	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 31	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 32	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 33	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 34	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 35	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 36	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 37	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 38	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 39	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 40	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 41	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 42	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 43	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 44	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 45	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 46	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 47	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 48	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 49	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 50	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 51	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 52	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 53	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 54	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 55	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 56	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 57	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 58	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 59	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 60	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 61	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 62	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 63	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 64	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 65	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 66	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 67	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 68	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 69	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 70	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 71	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 72	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 73	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 74	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 75	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 76	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 77	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 78	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 79	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
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Ancient Battles 143	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
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Ancient Battles 145	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 146	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
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Ancient Battles 151	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 152	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 153	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 154	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 155	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 156	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£6.00	1	£3.50		
Ancient Battles 157									

Category	Game	Platform	Genre	Year	Score	Reviews	Metacritic	ESRB	Age	Price	Availability	Notes
Action	Call of Duty: Warzone	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2020	92	100	88	M	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free Battle Pass
	Overwatch	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2016	86	95	85	E	13+	\$19.99	Available	Free
	League of Legends	PC	Moba	2009	82	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Dota 2	PC	Moba	2013	80	88	75	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Halo Infinite	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Fortnite	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, Mobile	Battle royale	2017	85	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Apex Legends	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2019	83	88	75	E	13+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Destiny 2	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2017	81	86	72	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Warframe	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Action	2013	79	84	70	M	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Diablo Immortal	Mobile	Action	2022	75	80	65	M	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
Adventure	The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild	Switch, Wii U	Action-adventure	2017	94	100	92	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Red Dead Redemption 2	PC, PS4, Xbox One	Action-adventure	2018	93	98	90	M	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Uncharted: The Last of Us Part II	PS4	Action-adventure	2020	91	96	88	M	17+	\$39.99	Available	Free
	God of War	PS4	Action-adventure	2018	90	95	85	M	17+	\$39.99	Available	Free
	Horizon Zero Dawn	PS4	Action-adventure	2017	89	94	82	E	13+	\$39.99	Available	Free
	Gran Turismo Sport	PS4	Racing	2017	87	92	80	E	13+	\$39.99	Available	Free
	Final Fantasy VII Remake	PS4	Role-playing	2020	86	91	85	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Assassin's Creed Valhalla	PC, PS4, Xbox One	Action-adventure	2021	84	89	78	M	17+	\$49.99	Available	Free
	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2019	83	88	75	M	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Far Cry 5	PC, PS4, Xbox One	Action-adventure	2018	82	87	72	M	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
Sports	NBA 2K22	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Sports	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	EA Sports FC 23	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Sports	2022	86	90	80	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Call of Duty: Warzone	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2020	85	90	78	T	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Overwatch	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2016	86	95	85	E	13+	\$19.99	Available	Free
	League of Legends	PC	Moba	2009	82	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Dota 2	PC	Moba	2013	80	88	75	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Halo Infinite	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Fortnite	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, Mobile	Battle royale	2017	85	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Apex Legends	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2019	83	88	75	E	13+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Destiny 2	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2017	81	86	72	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
Strategy	StarCraft II	PC	Real-time strategy	2010	92	100	90	E	13+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Age of Empires IV	PC	Real-time strategy	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Call of Duty: Warzone	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2020	85	90	78	T	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Overwatch	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2016	86	95	85	E	13+	\$19.99	Available	Free
	League of Legends	PC	Moba	2009	82	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Dota 2	PC	Moba	2013	80	88	75	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Halo Infinite	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Fortnite	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, Mobile	Battle royale	2017	85	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Apex Legends	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2019	83	88	75	E	13+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Destiny 2	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2017	81	86	72	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
Simulation	Microsoft Flight Simulator	PC	Simulation	2020	90	95	85	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Call of Duty: Warzone	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2020	85	90	78	T	17+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Overwatch	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Hero shooter	2016	86	95	85	E	13+	\$19.99	Available	Free
	League of Legends	PC	Moba	2009	82	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Dota 2	PC	Moba	2013	80	88	75	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Halo Infinite	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2021	88	92	82	E	13+	\$59.99	Available	Free
	Fortnite	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, Mobile	Battle royale	2017	85	90	78	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
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	Destiny 2	PC, PS4, Xbox One	First-person shooter	2017	81	86	72	T	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free
	Warframe	PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch	Action	2013	79	84	70	M	17+	\$0.00	Available	Free

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# Games Shops

*We provide these listings as a service to readers - highlighted entries stock copies of Flagship!  
If you know of any games shop we don't list, please contact us and we'll be delighted to include them.*

## BERKSHIRE

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

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

## BIRMINGHAM

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

**Wayland's Forge, Unit 2, Fletchers Walk, Paradise Circus, Birmingham, B3 3HJ,**  
**0121-6830075, games@waylandsforge.co.uk www.waylandsforge.co.uk**

## BRISTOL

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

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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

## CHESHIRE

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

## CORNWALL

The Games Player, 7 Plough Court, Roskrow, Cornwall, TR10 9AP  
01326 379329 www.thegamesplayer.com

## DEVON

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

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

## EAST ANGLIA

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

**Gamers, 34 St. Mary's Street, Eynesbury, St. Neots, PE19 2TA**  
**01480 217443 www.gamers.uk.net**

## HAMPSHIRE

The Hidden Fortress, 51 East Street, Southampton, SO14 3HX  
02380-710550 www.hidden-fortress.com

## KENT

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

## MANCHESTER

FanBoy3, 17 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1FZ,  
0161 2477735 enquiries@fanboy3.co.uk www.fanboy3.co.uk

## NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumbria Games, 10 Houndgate Mews, Blackwellgate Arcade, Darlington  
01325 366250 www.northumbriagames.co.uk

## OXFORD

Gameskeeper, 105 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1HU  
01865-721348 shop@gameskeeper.co.uk www.gameskeeper.co.uk

## LINCOLNSHIRE

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

## LONDON

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

**Leisure Games, 100 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London, N3 2DN**  
**0208-346-2327 shop@leisuregames.com www.leisuregames.com**

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

## STAFFORDSHIRE

**Spirit Games, 98+114 Station Street, Burton on Trent, DE14 1BT**  
**01283 511293 salnphil@spiritgames.co.uk www.spiritgames.co.uk**

## SOMERSET

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

Wassail Games, 27 Catherine Hill, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1BY  
01373 469946 www.wassailgames.com

## WALES

**Cardiff Games, Duke Street Arcade, Cardiff, CF10 1AZ**  
**www.cardiffgames.co.uk**

## WARWICKSHIRE

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

**Bishop Games, 32 City Arcade, Coventry, Warwickshire, CV1 3HW.**  
**024 76634999 sales@bishopgames.co.uk www.bishopgames.co.uk**

## YORKSHIRE

Bookstop, Mail-Order Secondhand Games & RPGs, 11A Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 5HD.  
bookstopuk@aol.com

## OVERSEAS

Play Me, Bismarckring 7, D-65183 Wiesbaden, Germany  
www.PlayMe.de



# Meets & Conventions

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. As a rule we do not cover North American conventions in the magazine, but we will list them on the website.

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

## SEPTEMBER

**CASTLECON:** 23rd-30th September and 30th September-7th October. at *Roch Castle, Roch, Pembrokeshire*. Castlecon is 'a self-catering gaming holiday for up to 16 games-players per week. There will be plenty of chances to play your favourite games, and there will also be opportunities to get out and see the surrounding countryside in a very pleasant part of Wales. The approximate cost per person per week will be in the region of £130.' For more information, contact Steve Jones at 59 Sudeley Walk, Putnoe, Bedford, MK41 8JH, or on 01234-405878.

## OCTOBER

**AGSCON:** 1st October, at the *University of Kent campus, Canterbury, Kent*. A one-day convention of Roleplaying, Wargames & Collectible Card Games. Doors open 9:30, games start 10 am, closes 7 pm. Entry £2 in advance, £3 on the door - free to AGS members. For more details, go to [www.canterburygamersnews.tk](http://www.canterburygamersnews.tk) and follow the link on the top right to AGSCON, or e-mail [agscon@aol.com](mailto:agscon@aol.com) for more info, maps, and to book your place.

**WALLYCON:** 7th-9th October at the *Duke's Head Hotel, Wallington Green, Surrey*. Whilst intended for members of AHIKS, it is open to anyone who may want to drop in for a look or play a game. A strictly gaming weekend, with no sales or other add-ons. Contact Chris Geggus: [chris@geggus99.freemove.co.uk](mailto:chris@geggus99.freemove.co.uk)

**CONVERZION 2.0:** 8th-9th October, at the *Aberdeen City Hotel, Aberdeen*. Cost is £10 for a weekend pass purchased online (£15 on the door). For more information visit:

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

**ESSEN SPIEL FAIR:** October 13-18, 2005 in *Essen, Germany*. With 150,000 visitors and 612 exhibitors from 21 nations, showing all kind of games - from family, adult, children and parlour games to strategy, mail, adventure, fantasy and science fiction games, an increasing number of CD-ROMs and electronic games and a wide range of classic board games.

**PSYCHOCON 2005:** Friday 21st October (starts 2pm) to Sunday 23rd October. *The Crown Hotel, Harrogate*. A boardgaming convention, with several tournaments including a FLAGSHIP-sponsored *Acquire* tournament. Details and a downloadable booking form available from:

[www.psychozine.co.uk/psychocon/](http://www.psychozine.co.uk/psychocon/)

**iCON3:** 29th October, at the *St Peter's Social Centre, Black Dog Way, Gloucester*. iCON is a one-day Living Environments convention run for charitable purposes. The event will include up to 7 tables of Living Greyhawk and 1-2 tables of Living Spycraft in the morning, with up to 7 tables of Sarbreenar and 1-2 tables of Living Spycraft in the afternoon and evening.

<http://icon.iwarpuk.org>

**GAELCON:** 29th-31st October, at the *Clontarf Castle Hotel, Dublin*. Gaelcon is the annual convention organised by The Irish Games Association (IGA). Over the last 16 years Gaelcon has grown to be the largest independent games convention in Ireland and one of the largest independent games conventions in Europe. Adult entrance is 25 Euros for the weekend, or 10 Euros for a day ticket. Children under 12: Weekend 15 Euros, Day Ticket 7 Euros.

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

## NOVEMBER

**UK GENCON:** Thursday November 3rd through to Sunday 6th at *Butlins Holiday Camp, Bognor Regis, West Sussex*.

The extensive programme includes industry guests, roleplay games, cardgame tournaments, boardgames, computer games, an art show and a huge trade hall. With the majority of Butlin's Holiday Centre's facilities being available for use, this seems an ideal games convention for families. Attendees will have a range of accommodation options, including self-catering and half-board, and free carparking. For further information, contact Horsemen Events:

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

**MIDCON:** 11th-13th November at the *Thistle Hotel, Birmingham City*. A general boardgames convention held annually since 1980. Attendance around 120-160 people, mostly boardgamers. The convention hosts the National Diplomacy Championships. The convention fee for the whole weekend is £15 (which goes up to £18 on November 1st) and accommodation is available at the hotel 'at reasonable rates'. Details from Jeremy Tullett, MidCon, 7 Midland Place, Derby, DE1 2RR.

[www.midcon.org.uk](http://www.midcon.org.uk)

**WARFARE 2005:** 19th-20th November at the *Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading, Berkshire*. Traders, demonstration/participation games, competition games and a 'massive' bring & buy.

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/drive/gdo75/gdo75/>

## DECEMBER

**DRAGONMEET:** 3rd December at *Kensington Town Hall, London*. Dragonmeet covers all aspects of hobby-gaming, from boardgames and collectible card-games to roleplaying, miniatures, play-by-mail games and live-action. Dragonmeet is fun for new players and serious gamers alike. There'll be hundreds of games to play, two trade-halls, guests, signings, seminars and special events all day

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

## JANUARY 2006

**STABCON:** 6th - 8th January at the *Britannia Hotel, Stockport*. Another in a very long-running series of friendly, small-scale general games conventions, always featuring a good number of RPGs. Membership was £12.50 for the weekend at one point, but may have since increased; check with the organisers. One-day rates will also doubtless be available. The con has a minimum age limit of 18 in general, but enquire about babes-in-arms, accompanied 16-year-olds, etc. Accommodation is of course available in the hotel, at £30 a night for a single room, or £39 a night for a twin/double. Breakfast is £5 if pre-booked, £9.95 otherwise. Questions can be addressed to [bookings@stabcon.org.uk](mailto:bookings@stabcon.org.uk), STABCON, 17 Davenport Park Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 6JU, or 0161 483 9131.





**GENCON UK '05**

**3- 6 November 2005**

**BUTLINS, BOGNOR REGIS**

**For the latest information and to book,  
please visit [www.genconuk.com](http://www.genconuk.com)**



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