

Flagship

POSTAL AND INTERACTIVE GAMING

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Beyond Green Sun

Beyond the Stellar Empire

Company Commander

Dark Age of Camelot

Godfather

Haunted Manor

Lords of the Earth

SFSL, S/F & Star Empires

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Report from the Bridge

Bigger and Brighter

WE'VE AN extra four pages this issue, so you've plenty of summer reading here. When I go on my hols I take two books: a serious one that'll do me good and something much lighter that I can skim through. No prizes for guessing which I actually read, but I hope that this issue will offer you something of the same variety in its articles.

The extra four pages are being used to extend our coverage. You'll see that not everything in the issue falls exactly into our PBM/PBeM remit, but with the extra space I think you'll find that we haven't needed to cut down on our standard material. I'm not a lover of change for the sake of change, but the chance of including more stuff always appeals to me. I hope you'll like this new material: it seems exciting to me, so, as ever, let us know what you think.

Mainly, we're hoping to appeal to non-pbmers who find *Flagship* in games shops. We're also hopeful of attracting a wider range of advertising, which will obviously help guarantee our future.

This issue has articles about games old and new, with all our regular columnists putting in an informative and/or quirky appearance. We also have some new features and columnists, which we hope you'll enjoy.

One big feature this issue is an overview of open-ended s-f games, built up from their players' descriptions. I have an especial fondness for space operas, having run one myself for many years: it's fun to see the variations on starflight, future societies, technology and politics that these games encompass. One thing that is clear from the overview is the importance of player feedback to the atmosphere and evolution of each game. Games aren't fixed entities, but dynamic ones, and I hope that *Flagship* has something of the same adaptable spirit.

There are joys in being an editor which are even greater than the power to tidy up punctuation and remove plural pronouns after singular nouns (just as well, since I'd never catch everything). The main joy of editing *Flagship* is the constant reminder of how bright games-players are: there are always well-reasoned, if contradictory, viewpoints in our pages, and that's without taking into account all those brilliant in-game strategies! Of course, I don't expect you to agree with each other or (heaven forbid) with me, but I do know that you all actually enjoy thinking. And that is so inspiring ...

Carol

Flagship

Issue N° 97

June / July 2002

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NEWSDESK

REGULAR readers will notice a change of title for this section. For nearly twenty years we called our news section *The Spokesmen Speak*, because when *Flagship* first took off to zoom upwards into the PBM sky, the plan was to use this news section for moderators' press releases. It was a neat name for that purpose, but one that soon became askew as our first editor decided to edit what he'd received. There's always a mild reluctance here to make changes, but at long last the decision has been taken: these pages are now simply *Newsdesk*.

FANTASY WARGAMES



Harlequin report that they're seeing an upsurge in new players joining **Middle Earth PBM** - some 100 players over the last month, wow. *News from Bree*, the in-game newsletter, is coming out more regularly as contributions increase. One

penalty of success, however, is that the game has become subject to VAT, with the sad effect that turn charges must rise to £4.50.

There are now a number of new scenarios available. In addition to the established Third Age 1650, Third Age 2950 and Fourth Age 1000 scenarios, Harlequin are offering games set around the Last Alliance, the War of the Ring, Battle of the Five Armies and a Gunboat variant where players are not allowed to communicate - this latter is only recommended for veteran players.

Serim Ral is a fairly complex fantasy wargame run by three separate firms, which means that you shouldn't have to wait long for a start-up if you want to play it. Each firm offers a different take on the game system, though, and we've just heard from Harlequin Games that they're increasing the roleplaying aspects of their own version. They've already established a regular newsletter where players can 'offer up their literary gifts, poems and good old-fashioned rants', and are now introducing hand-moderated plots, so that each turn you'll find your wits as well as your calculators challenged. The game still has a few positions available, so if you wish to join up, just get in touch with Harlequin at the address in *Galactic View*.

ADVENTURE GAMES



Madhouse have a new storyline running behind the scenes throughout all the **DungeonWorld** modules and games this summer. It's called *Eclipse* and while you can play your own part of the game without your character being involved, you'll still notice that there are big events taking place in the background. The 'Grand Plots' of **DungeonWorld** are introduced to give shape to the game history: a clever idea to add atmosphere and excitement to the game.

DungeonWorld has recently had six new areas added for exploration. Madhouse believe that **DungeonWorld** already has more explorable squares than any other PBM game, but intend to increase and add to it as often as ever. These intriguing new areas include ...

Dead End Drop, a complete multi-level dungeon which is the infamous 'bottomless' cavern area beneath the waterfall on the Eastern edge of Bereny. It has been visited before, when it was the location of the cure for the Ghorst Plague, but it's now been expanded to multiple levels and much more action and detail. Peasant superstition names it as the resting place of a dead god from before the modern age of Myriad. *Ice Palace Of Salintha*, once a dismal retreat for a Sorceress of some renown, but it has lain dormant for hundreds of years. North-west of White Citadel, the Ice Palace was previously almost impossible to reach due to harsh conditions, but a mild thaw this year has opened up some passes for would-be adventurers.

The Jade Crystal Tunnels, running beneath the Ville ice flow. The Tunnels were used by pirates in times gone by, to move contraband goods quickly without using roads. What lies down there now is unknown, but rumours of huge Pirate stashes, hideaways for miscreants, and an entrance to the Underworld, abound.

Meldora Castle, an abandoned, reputedly-haunted, castle to the North-West of Hasjan, near the edge of the Spirit Mountains. Meldora was once a profitable estate, but legend claims it was cursed by a powerful witch and fell into ruin. Official records show only that fines were levied and the Baroness was eventually declared bankrupt. But it's odd that a new land-baron was never given the area and it remains unpopulated and wild. The Castle has been expanded into a multi-level 'indoor' map, with explorable rooms and locations.

Creeping Mildew Tower, an abandoned tower in the middle of Swinderlog Swamp, which was set up by a group of sages, druids and alchemists called The Society Of Life, who planned to research the many unusual herbs and plants that grow in Swinderlogs strange area. Some 120 years ago, the Society stopped communicating with the outside world. When adventurers were sent to investigate, the tower was found abandoned and still, no sign of any inhabitants.

It is still in very much the same state as it was back then, save for any looting, and the ravages of time.

The Old Observatory, to the East of Jobollah, near the Kyrian Border, North of Poltoon Pass. The Old Observatory was the life's work of an elf called Harsen Moonwatcher. Harsen, more so even than normal elven men, was weak and somewhat sickly. He had a love of the stars and the moon, and chose to study them in detail. He had powerful lenses built with which to stare into space. Upon his death few showed any interest in continuing his strange pursuit and the Observatory stands there still, only occasionally visited by folk who are intrigued by Harsen's ideas.

Madhouse are also planning to add another batch of playable character classes to this ever-expanding **DungeonWorld**. They asked players for suggestions and report having a massive amount of very interesting new classes proposed. They will certainly be adding at least six completely new classes to the game in the next month. Steve Tierney reports that 'The ideas range from whole new types of magic, to feral bird-men, to hybrid fox-people, and all sorts of other enjoyable strangeness! We've enjoyed reading the ideas as much as we're going to enjoy adding these exciting new positions to the game.'

Details of **DungeonWorld** can be obtained by post (at the address in *Galactic View*) or by email from:

www.madcentral.com/dungeonworld

We're thinking of running an Overview piece on Adventure games in a future issue, and would welcome mini-reviews or extended Rumours type comments from players of this sort of game. Are there any you know of that we don't list in *Galactic View*?

TRIBAL GAMES

Having said we don't print moderators' press releases verbatim, here's one that seems too good to re-word. Only goes to show, eh? It's from John Davis of Harlequin Games about the game he's been moderating: **Crack of Doom**.

'The big news about **Crack of Doom** is that after several years of elves hiding in the woods, dwarves uncovering ancient terrors in their mines and goblins goblin', I have passed over its running to Caroline Heywood. Yes, you did hear right, a female referee. After a couple of weeks spent reading through hundreds - nay, thousands - of turns, and being subjected to my vague and barely coherent rambling about plots, game mechanics and mysterious strangers, she is now settling down to writing turns. And, to judge from comments from the players, they are enjoying the feminine touch. Also, last issue it was mentioned that **Crack of Doom** is full. I am now pleased to announce that the game is taking on new players again, so if you want to find out if Caroline's innuendoes about goblins are as crude as mine were, now is your chance.'



POWER GAMES

Agema Publications have just opened a waiting list for a new game of **La Gloire du Roi**. This won't be starting for several months, but they've had a lot of requests to run another game so decided to get the list started in good time.

La Gloire has topped our ratings regularly. Although it could be regarded primarily as a wargame, military action doesn't have to be the essential part of your activities in it. La Gloire is also a power-game, where you can build up your position by other means than fighting, with plenty of scope for roleplaying. The game is long-playing rather than one where victory comes swiftly and diplomacy plays a vital part.

There are over fifty powers to choose from when you start. They range from major nations like Russia and Moghul India to smaller nations like Venice and Abyssinia, and include powers like various groups of buccaneers and pirates. The area for playing stretches from buccaneers in the West Indies, eastwards across Europe, Africa and Asia to China and Japan.

La Gloire's moderator, Richard Watts, aims at providing a convincing historical background, in tune with the game's 18th century setting: 'This is not just a game - it apes reality, but with the magnifying glass on interesting events.' He also stresses that it's a game that is easy to learn to play.

To join the waiting list, send the cost of your first turn, £6, to Agema at the address in *Galactic View*, along with a list of the nation that you'd most like to play plus your second and third choices in case it's already been taken. You'll also need La Gloire's 5th Edition rulebook, so if you don't already possess this send Agema a £5 cheque if you live in Britain or £7 if you live abroad.

Harlequin are closing their latest game of **Legends, NIC 26**, now that it's reached a large but manageable limit of 100 players. They plan to discuss with players which module should follow, at their pubmeet in Reading on June 8th. Opinions have been divided between starting another game of NIC or trying an improved variant of the older modules, Crown of Chaos. LPE, the Windows-based point and click order writer for Legends, has caused some problems in that it's not that simple to install and has a few 'design features' (ie bugs). With their players' help, Harlequin have now compiled a help list of FAQs for LPE, which is now up on the website and should relieve the frustration that new players were suffering in having to learn a new piece of software as well as a new game.

FLAGSHIP ONLINE

Check out our website ...

www.pbmgames.com

What is Play By Mail?

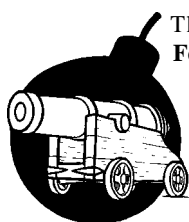
THE PROCESS is simple. Players send their orders for each turn in the game to a central moderator (or GM), who works out the results and sends them back. This simple process allows hundreds of players to enter game worlds of great depth, to contact each other between turns for discussion and negotiation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

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

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

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

NON-FANTASY WARGAMING



The mediaeval wargame **Feudal Lords** first appeared in 1982 and gained a steady following, but it hasn't been available in Britain for some time. Its fans - and new players who'd like to try it - will be glad to hear

that this game is now being offered in an updated pbem version called **Right of Kings**. Turns are twice weekly, and the cost is low, at \$1 per turn.

In Feudal Lords, you play the lord of a fiefdom after the death of King Arthur. There's no legitimate heir to the throne, so now's your chance to make a bid for the kingship. Unfortunately, the other players have the same idea, while the non-player positions aren't going to make your bid an easy one, either.

Right of Kings follows Feudal Lords pretty closely as far as its rules are concerned: to succeed, you'll need to consider the administrative, economic, military and diplomatic activities of your position. The changes aim to make the game more involved and interactive, with a larger number of players - up to 100 players, according to which map is used: yes, there are several new maps. There's a client program to help you compose your orders.

Right of Kings is run by Last World Games: <http://www.lastworldgames.com>

Doug Greening of EMG Games has been running strategic wargames by email since 1995, and reports that they currently complete over 100 games a year. The games are free, 'but donations are welcomed'.

Global Diplomacy is a low complexity, introductory game where you play one of the Great Powers of the late nineteenth century: Austria, China, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Ottoman Empire, Russia, Spain or the USA. You'll need diplomatic skills and cunning to win, though Doug thinks that the orders would only take you 15-20 minutes to write.

Age of Discovery has the same basic rules, but with a new map for each game, which you

can only discover fully by exploration. Startup positions are all the same size in this game.

Doug's **Sengoku** is set in 16th century Japan, a period of constant war and turmoil. You lead a clan, and seek to become Shogun of Japan through diplomacy and conquest. The game's military units include tashio, bowmen, gunner, cavalry, samurai, ronin and ashigari. You have emissary units for diplomacy with minor clans, shinobi to spy on enemies and ninjas to use for any timely assassinations. We don't know of another PBM/PBeM wargame with an historical Japanese setting, so we're sure that there will be some of you interested in the chance of playing Sengoku.

Doug also offers **World at War**, a modern wargame which is set on another planet but assumes that a global war similar to WWII is about to break out there. Naturally, you are in charge of one of the countries involved. Doug reports that this is a strategic level game of high complexity, with a map consisting of irregularly shaped areas. Your land units are mostly divisions, air units are squadrons and naval units are groups of ships.

This is a game of greater complexity than the others, and will take more of your time to play. Doug also runs a couple of science fiction games, which we describe in the relevant section of Newsdesk ...

There's plenty of information on the EMG Games website:

www.islandnet.com/~dgreenin/emg.htm

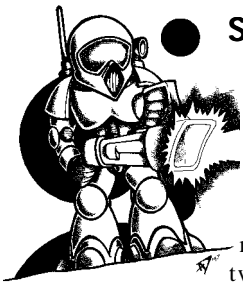
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www.pbmgames.com



SCI-FI GAMES

We have already mentioned the pbem wargames run by Doug Greening of EMG Games, but let's add here the news that he also runs two science fiction games. Play in them is free, 'but donations are welcomed'.

In **Imperium** you seek to become the new Galactic Emperor, as head of one of the Empire's ruling Major Houses. You can use starships, armies, leaders and undercover agents, along with treachery and guile, to increase the standing of your House in the Imperium until you're chosen as the next Emperor. Doug describes this as moderately complex game.

In **Imperial Expansion**, the people of your world have discovered intergalactic travel with the chance to use the raw materials and resources of other planets. Unfortunately, so too have the people of other worlds, so you must lead your planet's society in a race to seize other solar systems, mine and colonise them, build more starships, research new technologies and thus eventually establish yourself as ruler of the galaxy.

Details are on Doug's website at:

<http://www.islandnet.com/~dgreenin/emg.htm>

KJC Games have sent us news about **Phoenix**, the new open-ended game which started off as an update of their **Beyond the Stellar Empire** but is expanding to become a new pbem game in its own right. They've been running the playtest for some time now, and have covered ships and starbases: they are now into testing the combat program.

In the new game, standard ships can be run completely free of charge. This gives you a chance to try the game and see if you like it, as well as allowing you to control as many ships as you have time to run - that's assuming you can get your hands on them and can afford the wages of the crew. Sounds good? It's possible because of a front-end program that allows for automatic processing. The starbases will need to be paid for, but you can run one Political, two Starbases and at least 10 ships for a £5 package.

Work has also been done on a layered approach, to make the game easy to pick up for new players, who may otherwise feel overwhelmed by all the background information. The ships are simple to control and can be obtained either by contacting a faction or by starting with your own (rather dilapidated) ship as an independent trader.

We're still describing BSE itself in an article this issue, because if you take up a position in BSE now, you'll get all the benefits of the changeover.

Madhouse's game of battling mechanoids, **Steel Fury**, was in playtest for some time but didn't make a full commercial release. After being held back for redesign, the game has now been revived under a slightly different design team: Madhouse announce that it has become a very different game and are in the process of beta-testing the new version.

The old team game scenario has gone, together with all the old mechanoids. Instead, there's a sci-fi approach, with infantry and pilots in place of the self-controlled mechanoids. The game will be email-only, with HTML turnsheets.

Also from Madhouse, **Magnitude** puts you in control of a remote space empire, with growth as your principal objective. Madhouse describe it as 'Part power-game, part war-game', which makes it sound just the cup of tea for a whole lot of you. Like **Steel Fury**, this game will be email-only, with HTML turnsheets.

Madhouse's new big game, however, is their space opera, **Destiny**. We've a player's report on **Destiny** further on in this issue, and here's some news that you can benefit from directly!

Madhouse have done such a lot of work on **Destiny** that they've decided to extend the playtest into a second phase. Consequently, you should find the startup booklet enclosed in this issue. The price in the booklet shows the playtest as being £30.00 for rules, setup, and 20 turns. This includes four main characters and one starship. *But as a special offer for the second phase of the playtest they are offering two possible extras:*

1 - A £5 discount to *everybody* who applies and mentions the Flagship offer on the setup form (so it'll be £25 instead of £30).

2 - A special price of £15 (*half price*) for playtest players who choose to play entirely by email, and also download the rules from the website instead of receiving a hard copy.

These are useful offers, and we're glad to see them made available for you, our readers.

www.madcentral.com/destiny

Design news on **Destiny** is that two new alien races have been introduced to play alongside the human characters, though to preserve the balance of the game you can only have one alien per three human starfarers.

The new races are the Xen and the Crabbs. The Xen are physically very similar to humans, with very tall, well-muscled human-looking bodies but a monstrous elongated head: perhaps there is some distant link in the origins of the two species? They have warred with humans in the past, but are presently very close allies. They have a fondness for cybernetic enhancement and call themselves 'The Race'.

The Crabbs, on the other hand (or should that be claw?), differ greatly from human beings. They resemble giant walking crustaceans and come from a world where Earth-like sealife can be found. Their exoskeletal structure is somewhat slow and ponderous, but very tough and durable. However, despite their frightening

appearance, Crabbs are a friendly, likeable folk, slow to anger, thoughtful and pleasant. In their own language, Crabbs refer to their race as Ioximetaceans.

The normal position in **Destiny** is that of Starfarer, but Madhouse also have the **Star Marines** module. Star Marines form a team of marines aiming to clear hostile alien forces out of a massive space station. Madhouse promise you a mixture of alien shootups and tense claustrophobic horror, ooh er. Survive, and you'll be able to take your team on to new high risk missions or even buy a marine out of the forces to join the full **Destiny** universe ready to serve whichever merchant or pirate offers the best terms. You have two options with this module: playing for free, forever, (by email only) as a single Marine, or playing commercially (by email or post) as a team of four marines, one of whom is a sergeant. Free players need to attach themselves to a sergeant from a commercial position.

Madhouse report that Star Marines is doing well: 'it has taken over 80 signups in the first four turns and is still bringing in new players at a phenomenal rate, both free and commercial.' New missions start regularly. Why not use one of the free slots to try it out?

www.madcentral.com/destiny/starmarines.htm

Destiny's Colony positions will soon become available: possibly before the next issue of **Flagship**. 'Player anticipation,' says Steve Tierney, 'seems to be very high, with dozens of people asking us regularly when... when... when... the answer, my friends, is soon... soon... soon.'

Destiny is playable both by post and by email. Contact Madhouse by post or through their website for details:

www.madcentral.com

Harlequin Games are now promoting the new module of **Star Quest**. Mentioned last issue, this features a new world, and software allowing the game to be played entirely by email, though of course you can still play the old-fashioned way as well. They hope to get several games running in the next month or so, so should be able to offer a choice of deadlines and versions of the module. If anyone is interested in playing, check with Harlequin by post or at their website:

www.harlequingames.com

Star Kingdoms is a free, closed ended, web-based Sci-Fi game which is pretty friendly to newcomers, a good start if you've never played a web game before. You control a small space empire in a sector of 19 other kingdoms, each galaxy containing a total of 40 sectors and there are nearly 40 galaxies, so that's a lot of players! Every kingdom in your sector is your ally and you will fight with them against other kingdoms or sectors to expand your size. The game seems fairly easy to pick up, though be warned, you'll need to log on at least once a day!

www.starkingdoms.com



FIRMS

A new surgery in the offing! *Madhouse UK* are planning to move their address on 7th June 2002, to Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. Yes, the move should be completed by the time this issue lands on your doorstep, but at the stage of writing *Madhouse* are reluctant to tempt fate by actually announcing their new address - anyone who's moved house will sympathise, as you'll know how tricky moves can be!

For the time being, they ask anybody who needs to write to them, to either do so by email (madcentral@aol.com) or to write to the old address. Mail will be being forwarded for a few months, so all should be well for communications.

The move represents a big step forwards, providing *Madhouse* with a new much-larger office, a shop (which they are converting into a games centre and internet cafe, as well as a PBM office) 'and a lovely house'! So it's a major development for them. If anyone can make a success of this, Steve Tierney can: we wish him good fortune.

Madhouse are developing an interesting way of dealing with players' accounts specifically for online gaming. Their 'Passport to Adventure' will be available from July onwards. It will cost a small regular fee of £2.50 per week and will allow unlimited play in **Chaos & Disorder**, **Magnitude**, **Steel Fury** and **Spiders**, and a ten-character position in the forthcoming **DungeonWorld: The Time Of Thunder**. It seems a tasty idea. *Madhouse* point out that 'Since every game is a fun and detailed PBEM in its own right, any one position in one of the games would normally be worth that turn fee! So even

if you only play one position in one game you'll still be getting value for money. But, if like most PBMs you like more bang for your buck, why stop there? With *Passport*, you can play in *five* different games, and have multiple positions in each!'

Chaos & Disorder is a futuristic arena combat game, with team and solo games both available. **Magnitude** is a game of expansion and war in outer space. **Steel Fury** we describe under Science Fiction games. **Spiders** consists of skirmish battles between arachnid clans (shudder). **DungeonWorld: The Time Of Thunder** is set in the darkest period of Berenian history.

www.madcentral.com/chaosanddisorder

www.madcentral.com/magnitude

www.madcentral.com/steelfury

www.madcentral.com/spiders

News of progress on *Passport To Adventure* can be obtained from:

adventure@madcentral.com

Here's the first news of *Madhouse's* forthcoming project: **Abnormals**. This will be a superhero game built from the neXus engine, which will allow 'open-ended adventure, combat and character building in a world full of costumed adventurers.' Players will be able to play heroes, villains, or any strange combination you can imagine. November 2002 is its expected release date. More information from: www.madcentral.com/abnormals

Sad news is the recent unexpected death of Zan Erskine, the US moderator of **Midgard**. Our commiserations to Zak's family and friends.

Congratulations to *Harlequin Games'* Clint Oldridge and his wife on the arrival on their new baby: Taliesin Joseff Paul Oldridge. Despite

the havoc baby Tal is wreaking Clint's 'already strange sleeping patterns' he reckons that 'life is good'. How true! We wish Clint and his new family well.

Harlequin Games report that they are discussing plans for two new games. They can't reveal much yet, but one plan springs from dialogue with a US RPG publisher to consider a licence for their game. *Harlequin* want to create a new mixed-mod game (like *Crack of Doom*) in a more modern scenario. If all goes well, they'll unveil the PBM at the same time as the RPG firm release a new edition of their rules, so that both products can advertise the other. More news on this will follow.

Harlequin also have plans to create an uber-game. At the moment they're just playing with concepts, trying out mechanics and ideas, some of which they think have never been used in any game before. They're also opening discussion with some media companies that own famous licences to see if they can create a game with the same appeal to the non-PBMer as *Middle-Earth PBM*. It's very early days still, so don't expect to see anything for a couple of years; *Harlequin* say they're 'all too aware how often larger PBM firms have promised a new supergame and let down the PBM hobby with a flawed, or unfinished game.

There's been long delay in the start of *WORG PBM Production's Bakufu*. GM Kain regrets that this has been caused by the trauma of a move to Northern Ireland and starting a new job. Now, alas, he's just had a disaster with his printer; he asks for his players to remain patient, and is confident of sending out game turns before much longer. There is some restlessness because *WORG* charged £36 for the start-up, loing ago.

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ZINES

We've received a report on what games are now available on the pages of the webzine *psychopath*. There's chat and articles as well as the actual games, of course, but the games are: **Diplomacy**, with weekly, two-weekly and three-weekly turnaround; various Diplomacy variants of which only **Crowded Diplomacy** currently has a list open, but check for updates; **Machiavelli**; **Sopwith**, the game of WWI aerial combat; a race game, **Hare & Tortoise**; the exciting cycling game **Breaking Away**; the fun game **Snowball Fighting**; a game that's in playtest called **Swashbuckler**, where musketeers and pirates brawl in a tavern; *psychopath*'s own football game called **Psychos(h)occer**, using MSWL software; **Republic of Rome**; **En Garde!** will start soon and just to round things off are two easy-to-play word games called **By Popular Demand** and **Where Is My Mind?**

That's a whole lot of games: ten GMs work on them. Find out more at:

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

There's more Zine coverage in John Harrington's regular column on page 40. Zine editors should note that we will mention all Zines received at the Flagship offices.

THE HOBBY IN PRINT

The cover blurb of a recent crime paperback (**Ian Rankin**, *The Falls*, published by Orion) says that: *'...Two leads emerge: a carved wooden doll in a tiny coffin and an Internet role-playing game. Rebus concentrates on the coffin... Leaving DC Siobhan Clarke to deal with the cyberspace Quizmaster. She's young enough to navigate the net, but she may not have the experience to spot the pitfalls in a game where lives depend on split second timing...'*

Sound good, eh? Yummy words like 'role-playing game', 'cyberspace Quizmaster' and 'split second timing', oh yes! Better still, a special offer reduction from 6.99 to 4.99.

You may have read previous Ian Rankins, and rather enjoyed his vision of a decaying, corpse-packed Edinburgh. Oh dear, what a let-down this one is. However young DC Clarke may be, she doesn't navigate the net at all, but relies on a male side-kick in helpless-female fashion to help her to play by email. All the gamers she meets in her investigation are spotty juveniles apart from a shuffling 'beardie-weirdie' who calls himself Gandalf.

Is the mysterious Quizmaster an interesting contrast to these anoraks? Alas, here's the book's major flaw: the game he creates seems excessively dull, with cross-word puzzle clues, no roleplaying and no other players. So for DC Clarke to be tempted to possible doom by it, 'she felt bound by the game, tied to it and to identifying its creator... she felt almost smothered by it,' is wildly implausible.

Sad stuff. [CAM]

PLAYTESTS

We've heard from Andrew Makinson, an experienced player who is now working on his own design: a modern wargame called **NationsPBM**. It's set in the year 2010, and you take control of real world nations, real world cities and real military units over convincing maps, to steer your nation to victory. The start-up positions will, however, be equal both militarily and financially. There are over 100 nations to choose from.

The game will include orders for military, political, trade and research options, but won't contain nuclear or chemical weapons: 'this will be a fight to the death, with no mass destruction options available.'

The NationsPBM team invite potential players and other game designers who are interested, to help them to develop the game. 'I have lost count the number of times I've tried a game that does not include what I wanted,' says Andrew, 'That is why this game will be open to the public from the beginning. Hopefully getting people involved in the design process will make the game better for the players to actually play in the outcome.'

This finished game will be playable either by post or pbem, but this discussion stage will work best by email. Your involvement could be useful, and fun as well. If you wish to get involved, check the games website:

www.NationsPBM.netfirms.com

You can contact Andrew by email with further queries:

Domestos@rahrandelfsnet.co.uk

MEETS



GAMES GAMES GAMES DAYS:

Held on the second Saturday of each month, a day of games hosted by SFC

Press at *The Duke of York*, 35 New Cavendish St, London W1 from 12.30 onwards. Admission is free. Contact SFC Press Old Dover Road, London SE3 8SJ; email events@sfc.co.uk

HARLEQUIN GAMES: A roleplaying weekend on 13-15th September, in Yorkshire. Although primarily intended for players in Harlequin's hand-moderated games, **Exile** and **Crack of Doom**, anyone else who is interested in coming along will be welcome: just get in touch with Harlequin at the address in *Galactic View*. Plans are to combine a pubmeet, a face to face role-playing session, boardgames and 'well, more meeting in the pub.'

HARLEQUIN GAMES are holding a pubmeet in *Reading* on June 8th at the Flyer and Firkin pub, opposite the railway station from 2pm. This is mostly aimed at Legends players, though all are welcome.

CONVENTIONS



MANORCON: 19th-22nd July 2002 at Birmingham University: The biggest UK annual

convention for the amateur games hobby. Tournaments include (among others) Diplomacy, Settlers and Acquire. Events include a second-hand games sale run by Alan Parr, whose address is in GV if you've anything to sell there yourself. Amateur gamers are a friendly and lively group, so this'll be an enjoyable weekend. More information from:

<http://www.games-web.co.uk>

FLYING BUFFALO's 30th ANNUAL CONVENTION: July 26-28th 2002 in Scottsdale, Arizona. Congratulations to FBI for their long and honourable record in PBM. This weekend is an opportunity to play the FBI games face to face, with help offered for novices. More details from: www.flyingbuffalo.com

MIND SPORTS OLYMPIAD 6 will run from Wednesday 14th August to Sunday 18th August. The venue isn't fixed yet: it will be in the UK but not in London, and there will be accommodation on site. www.msoworld.com/Press/Releases/MSO6pre.html

DICECON: A boardgames convention, to be held on 25th August 2002 in the *Central Hotel*, Glasgow. Tournaments with prizes for Settlers of Catan and Ivanhoe, along with lots of games that you can play and leave as you wish, including United, Grand Slam and Grand National. There's plenty of free space for boardgaming at the venue.

The organisers emphasise that they're going to make sure that 'novices (including family groups) get a gentle introduction and have something to do rather than wander round looking at lots of other people enjoying themselves.' Check their website for the latest details: www.dicecon.com

GENCON USA

August 8-11, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
The big US gaming convention, celebrating its 35th year. Madhouse will be staking a stand here, and look forward to meeting their US players. www.wizards.com/gencon/

DRAGON*CON 2002: August 30 - September 2, 2002 at the *Hyatt Regency Atlanta* and the *Atlanta Marriott Marquis*, Atlanta USA. A big fan convention featuring comics, artwork, videos and seminars as well as plenty of games. Information from: dragoncon@dragoncon.org

DRAGONMEET: November 30th in *Kensington Town Hall*, London. A friendly convention for all gamers. There will be a PBM presence here. Details from: www.dragonmeet.com

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this is the only
official play
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set in the
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The best play by mail wargame just got
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This highly detailed and
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for control

As King you will order
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The set-up fee for each game
is just £10, which includes the
rulebook and a number of turns.

Discovering Sci-Fi Games

Open Ended Games

Keen players with some mini reviews ...

IN THE VERY first *Flagship*, only ten games were listed in *Galactic View* - early days, eh? - but of these ten, six were science fiction games. Science fiction is a tempting category for a game designer: players can start off with equal resources, the game map can be huge, dangers and rewards can abound, nifty vehicles and weaponry are possible, while discovering and conquering the universe makes a pretty tasty game objective.

We asked GMs who run an sf game to nominate a player to describe it for you, and were pleased to receive material from all over the world.

Every game is different, of course, so we've simply divided them into the open-ended ones and those which can be won, and then - just for a change - used *reverse alphabetical order*. Contact details are in *Galactic View* ...

Next time we'll take a look at winnable Sci-Fi games, but we blast off this issue with open-ended games. Plenty of opportunities for exploration and taking power here, as well as a single-character roleplaying game in *S/F*. We'll include Rebus Games' *Galaxy* under *winnable games* next issue but it also has a variant which may interest those of you who prefer open-ended games. Several of these games haven't been previously described in *Flagship*: we're delighted to include *S/F*, **Star Troopers** and **Destiny** for the first time.

S/F (Received Wisdom) - Steve Pike

When I first became interested in PBM it wasn't long before I applied to join Received Wisdom's game *S/F*. I received a letter with plenty of information and a list of character classes. Not that these formed a definitive list, but they gave you somewhere to start to help set the scene. I was brought up with *Star Wars* and comics like *2000AD*, with their rich source of heroes and anti-heroes to choose from, so I chose a Rogue Trooper, a character out of *2000AD* who is a genetically engineered soldier.

You don't create your character by allocating points yourself, you just provide a brief like mine with as much detail as you wish on background history, abilities, etc. Before long a draft copy of my character sheet arrived, based upon a mercenary soldier class. This contained details on twelve characteristics which represented physical and mental capabilities, all well explained where their effect was not obvious. This character sheet also listed and explained the skills base and any other abilities that were possessed by my fledgling character as well as his equipment. Finally, this set of statistics was filled out with a bit of history: who he was, where he'd come from, what he'd done and other such details that would contain plot hooks in the years to come.

The game itself is pre-dominantly a roleplaying game, set in a galaxy of worlds more advanced than those we live in now. That in itself is too general a comment: some of the worlds you visit can be very advanced, others of a comparable level to present day and others less so. The level of detail you get depends in part upon what your character is doing and the circles he or she moves in to acquire this knowledge.

The game is set up to cater for your own tastes: there would be no point in my character going to a peaceful world of commerce or enquiring about trade, as he simply wouldn't be interested. This leads to the question of what I and my character want to achieve. Initially, this was to avoid recapture, but has progressed in time to trying to find a way to destroy the company that created the slave-like genetic infantry men and to release them from bondage. For those whose character is a merchant starship captain plying the starlanes of commerce it would be a must to go to the above mentioned worlds of commerce. Those who play these sorts of

characters would experience more worlds and maybe even battles in space with pirates or officials of some sort and their aims may be profit or revenge on attacking pirates. The game's options are limitless.

You write what you choose for orders and the turn reports, whether you receive them by post or email, are written in a story form. Turnaround is 10-14 days but can vary to suit the player. The turn you are on at present is written in large bold script, with the results of any actions you have taken easy for you to see; the history of past turns is laid out on the previous pages in gradually smaller print, eventually to disappear all together. This is very handy as you don't have to keep searching through past turns to find out what you did or said to someone four turns back. It also allows the use of 'backtracking', which is where a game can proceed without you having to wait many turns for an action or conversation to be resolved. This stops a tedious wait as you ask questions in more detail and follow up on the answers provided. Of course, any action you have taken that doesn't turn out as you may have wished in game terms cannot be casually ignored: I'm afraid you have to live with those mistakes.

Another element of the turn is the Advice/Comments section, which is used to answer any questions you have or clarify things that as a player you may not be aware of but that your character would know: this helps keep the flow of the main narrative smooth without it breaking off to explain various things.

You also have the pleasure of maps, some computer generated, others taken from the real world. The residents of Mallorca would be surprised to know that for nearly eighteen months their holiday paradise has been in the midst of a military coup. One of my more spectacular failures.

Lastly, it is possible that you will interact with other players. In general you will have no idea if the people you interact with are controlled by Stewart or a player; I've only suspected the former once in my seven years of play, which to my mind is a good thing.

In summary, the turns are tailored to your needs, based on a solid framework and pitched at a level of detail that you are comfortable with. Most of all they're fun, and you can't find fault with that.

[Note that Received Wisdom is run as a club so it's possible to play more than one of their games for the basic charge, though GM Stewart Leary reserves the right to limit the number played. Postal players aren't currently accepted, but may apply to join a waiting list.]

STAR EMPIRES (Geoff Squibb) - Bryan Vakos

The pipes in the palace leak, the air outside smells oddly like chicken, and the citizenry's getting crankier by the day. Your advisors tell you this is 'normal', but if that's the case then there's only one thing to do - you have to get off this miserable rock.

You're playing **Star Empires 3** and the 'armada' is ready to roll. Scouts hop from star to star searching for alien life, relics of antiquity, and somewhere more pleasant to call home. Your freighters ply their way from your home world to colonies light years away while emigrants drag luggage onto colonial transports. And this is just the beginning.

If peaceful expansion is your bag, the galaxy is littered with 'lost colonies': brother humans' who haven't quite made the leap to space-faring. Bribe or threaten them, cajole and promise a nice spot of tea and a foot massage. Maybe they'll join your growing empire.

If you want to discover the secrets of the universe, they're there, buried in sands of long lost alien (and human?) empires. All it takes is patience to ferret out the answers. Sure the Sphinx you've just found keeps asking silly riddles and the talking robot two stars over has all the wit and wisdom of Tinky Winky. But with the right question, the right

way, there's no telling what'll pop out.

What if you just want to break something? There's forty different weapons, several shields and hull materials, and dozens of combinations of tactics. Whether you go with expensive missiles and try to pound your enemies from a distance or gear up with cheap, short-range plasma cannons and dive down his throat is up to you. You may win. If you didn't bring enough fighter aircraft and were swamped before you could get the first shot off, you may not.

Or try something new. The GM writes the game code so if you can convince him it's feasible, the game expands even further. After the basic structure of the game, the majority of the technology, devices, ships and tactics are player inspired. So when you see a completely improbable starship drifting by, it's because your neighbour is stark raving mad.

In this classic space opera you'll know the joys of miscalculating your food supply, watching half your population starve, and seeing your factories shut down from the labour shortage. You'll learn what sausage feels like when your shiny, expensive warships dive into the grinder of the enemy's planetary defences.

But it's not all bad. There's the satisfaction of seeing a happy, contented people toiling diligently - all for you. There's that warm, fuzzy feeling that comes from raking in great piles of cash. And stepping on that obnoxious twit who really should have seen it coming is always nice.

You design the ships. You pick the strategy. Expand across scores of worlds or hunker down in one overdeveloped uber-planet. Sure, it's classic space opera. But it's flexible. There's always a new catastrophe on the horizon.

DESTINY (Madhouse) - Dave Senior

When Madhouse UK advertised **Destiny's** playtest, I was eager to be involved. As a DungeonWorld veteran, I know how well Steve Tierney and his team run their games. But this was something new and as I would quickly find out, Destiny is definitely not DungeonWorld in space. Why? Read on and all will be revealed.

Madhouse describe Destiny as an open ended pulp space opera set in a time after the fall of man. The human race has relocated itself since Earth was destroyed thousands of years ago in some long forgotten war. Now High Earth is their home and they are beginning to explore the cosmos once more. This is where the game begins.

The playtest start-up is a basic Starfarer position. This consists of a spacecraft, known as a Junker, and four characters. Destiny employs a unique method of character generation: race and class are not major factors, but instead characters each have a starting age and this defines how many years of experience they have. These years of experience can

be spent at a variety of schools, ranging from pilot and naval college to the good old university of life. You are also the proud owner of a Junker, the spot-welded skoda of the space lanes. This can be configured in a myriad of different ways depending on how you want to play: a heavily armed pirate gunship, a research vessel capable of travelling to the edges of the omniverse, a trade vessel with large cargo bays or a passenger ship with luxury cabins, VR suite and beer fridge? All and more are possible in Destiny.

The game is built using the successful Nexus engine and the order entry is the usual alphanumeric order code combination with the majority of characters getting 15 orders per turn. Orders and turns can be accepted by post or email/web.

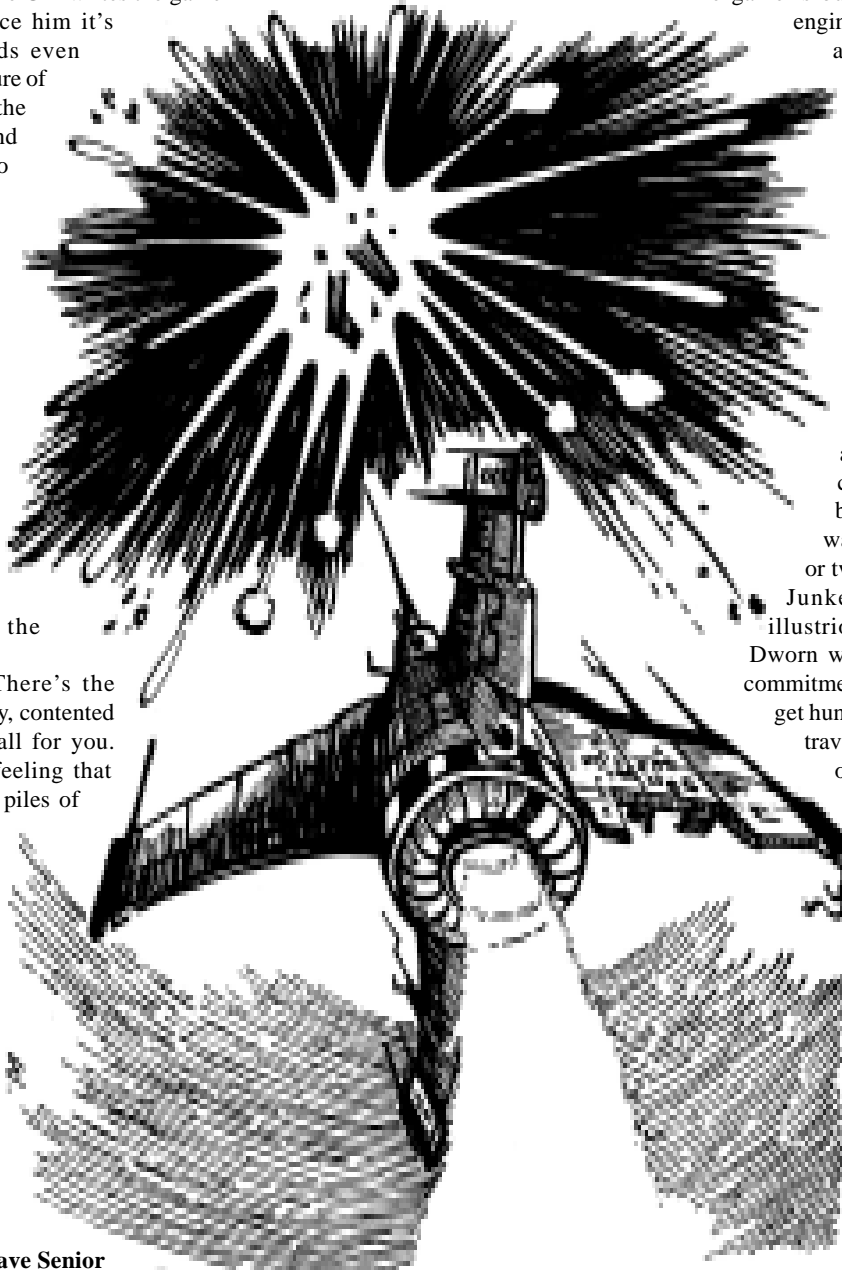
That's a brief summary of the game but what is it actually like to play? Well so far Destiny has been highly enjoyable, which has been a welcome surprise as sci-fi pbms aren't usually my thing. You learn the game as you play and although at times you feel the learning curve holds you back you soon begin to appreciate that Rome wasn't built in day. If it takes a turn or two to figure out how to get your Junker to take off, creating the illustrious trade route from Dusk to Dworn will take a little more time and commitment. Thankfully Destiny doesn't get hung up on the real physics of space travel which is of great relief to those of us without a subspace navigation degree.

The most exciting part of Destiny for me is that it grows all the time. Each turn so far has presented a subtle tweak or even a big blob of new functionality. For example, you can now have Xen and Crabb races in addition to the standard human characters. Of course, as the play-test continues these changes may be somewhat less dramatic and less frequent. However, it does give a clear indication that the Destiny world is a living entity driven by its committed

GMs and heavily influenced by player feedback. If something doesn't appear to be working, tell them and they fix it. If you have a great new idea and it fits, it may well appear during the next upgrade.

Another major positive is that Destiny is huge. This means that there is room for the power gamer, the roleplayer and people like me who are rubbish at both.

With the character and Junker configurations available there are many different ways to play the Spacefarer position, but there is also a Star Marine position where you command a squad of marines trying to rid a military outpost of an infestation of aliens. Also in the pipeline are colony, boundary and deep space team positions. My only niggle to date is that it can be quite easy to spend a lot of time doing nothing. Eating and sleeping play a major part due to accelerated in-game time scales, as do the mechanical and electrical maintenance of your Junker. You have to spend



time controlling these factors otherwise your Junker falls to bits and your characters die of malnutrition. But this is only a minor irritation that may evolve during the period of playtest.

At the start of this article I stated that Destiny is not Dungeon World in space. Of course it's not and Madhouse don't intend it to be. It will be similar in many ways though. Firstly, it will have a solid base of friendly interactive players. Secondly, it will have the usual high standard of Madhouse GM support. More importantly it will just as much fun and just as successful.

I highly recommend you get a copy of the rules and join in the fun. You too could be a man (or woman) of Destiny!

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE (KJC Games) - Pedro Martins

Beyond the Stellar Empire is set at the edge of the Human Empire torn by a destructive civil war. In this new frontier the Empire's Mega Corporations have attempted to create new markets; with them came Imperial Navy representatives to make sure the coffer would still be filled and to expand the Empire domains.

Here too came other humans. Some, followers of losing claimants to the throne, had long made their home here. Fighting resumed on sight as both sides still held true to their claimants. Many battles have pitched the Imperial Navy against the Confederate forces, led by their military the CNF. While the Imperials are supported by the economic powers of their Mega Corporations, the Confederates are supported by the CIA organization, dedicated to espionage and sabotage, but also by zealot monks long driven away from the core systems.

Some other humans came in hope of forging successful companies where the Mega Corporations' grip wasn't so strong. AFT, or Association of Free Traders, managed to prosper, while some have failed as the grip proved to be not as weak as expected. Other humans came with different ideas on how to make a profit. Privateers also came to this region and have for long terrorized the space lanes: RIP pirates are the most notable and despite being branded as enemies by most, their unique abilities have made sure no merchant ship crew feels safe. Some others had made this area of space for longer. Detinus Republic or DTR had fled here at the time of the creation of the Empire. Descendants of political prisoners (or so they claim) they forged a republic upholding democratic traditions: in time these traditions have fallen to the ground, leaving only a land-hungry style of republic reminiscent of ancient Rome. Others were found to have been here for much longer. Humans from the Dominion are the descendants of prisoners sent away long ago when space travel was just starting. Somehow one of those prison ships made it to this area and they managed to prosper. Dominion has a society where the strong preys on the weaker.

However, this area of space isn't just colonized by humans. Many alien races can be found here as well. Natives exploited and displaced by human incursions have formed a Native Alliance. They're not very advanced, but their zeal has turned them into force to be considered. They seem the underdog, but their teeth are sharp enough. The Flagritz are the most advanced race around. Their spaceships are not only much bigger and faster, but are also equipped with the most destructive weapons. Their dominance is also felt in robotics. Near FGZ space, their allies the Hive can found. These are oldest race around. They were bred for war and colonization, as the ancient race the Architects made their drive to conquer the Galaxy. The Hive warriors are fearsome, and the training they're subjected to makes them even more so. Their ships are the organic version of the titanic FGZ ships. Other aliens remind humans of large bipedal Felines or Wolves. The first are in fact related to felines. They breed very fast and are born hunters. The second are an ancient race rediscovering their technology after the Architect assaults a millennia ago; even without their full tech they're still far more advanced than humans.

All these races are trying to achieve dominance, whether by force or diplomacy. While factories make colonies more profitable and attractive to new colonists, the construction of weapons isn't neglected, for only a strong military can make sure that all they've struggled for can be kept under their dominance.

BEYOND GREEN SUN (Sevenstar Games) - Mike E Hornsby

Beyond the Green Sun is a galactic level game of empire building, evolved from the earlier PBM game Green Sun. It combines economic, military and research aspects to form a believable environment for young races to prosper, or to perish beneath the boots of their neighbors. This is not a game for the faint of heart, nor for someone who is scared off by details or a little math, but anyone willing to take the effort for a realistic gaming experience should find it a pleasant diversion. Much like real life, the game develops slowly, so players have time to learn the mechanics before they are likely to encounter potential enemies, as well as an opportunity to build their position to reflect their own unique playing styles.

All players start with several choices to make, beginning with racial design. Unlike some games of this sort, you do not build a body type per se but instead select racial characteristics including aggression level, technological aptitude and a variety of environmental tolerances. Each of these choices is critical and will have consequences for your race that will last throughout the game. For example, a race which has too low tolerances for different environments will be at a disadvantage when trying to find suitable worlds to colonize, whereas a race whose aggression is too high may have difficulty dealing with alien races. You should take the time to think on how you wish to play your new race, what style you wish to employ, and then design your race to make the most advantage of that style. The system is fluid enough so that most any thing a player can envision is possible to create.

Once the race is designed, you start with a homeworld and a set number of resource-producing plants. These plants are the backbones of the early economy and produce the energy, metals and other resources that a young empire needs to begin the great exodus into space. In the beginning resources are exceedingly limited and you are faced with the choice of many needs but have too little to address them adequately, much like empire building would be in real life. Technology is too limited as of yet to do any serious exploration or building, and you have no real military to speak of. With skill and hard work, though, your infrastructure can be built up and as production increases, more and more energy can be generated for research, exploration and of course a stronger military. You also have to design your own ships from components developed through research.

If all goes well, the young empire will slowly begin to explore space around its home system. Players are presented with a choice of mapping systems - either operating on 'a distance to the star you can see' basis, or plotting co-ordinates of stars and other locations in space based on the ship's declared home system.

The galaxy is truly vast, comprising hundreds of thousands of square light years per sector. Each square light year has the potential to be home to one or more stars or perhaps some even more exotic stellar type like black holes or wormholes. There is even the possibility, with higher tech levels or uncovered ancient technology, to travel across dimensions, further broadening the playing area.

Assuming all goes well thus far for you, you should find some planets nearby suitable for colonization. If you have kept research going by the time you find suitable worlds, your technology will be up to the task of sending the first few colonists into space. By slowly building up your home world economy and then building up colony worlds, you will strengthen your position by producing more resources for research, better warships and of course expansion of colonies. With skill and a little luck you can be in a reasonably good position for that most important of events in space games, the first contact with an alien race.

Once contact does occur, however, you must decide which stance to take and how to deal with the new beings. Depending on the race, they may be friendly, neutral or downright hostile and given the many variables such as racial characteristics or technological differences, any contact has the possibility to bring a new alliance or all out war. It is all up to the players and of course the few non-player races thrown in to spice things up sometimes. But this is part of what makes the game so enjoyable.

There are no real absolutes and most anything is possible. Any new young species today could be the elder race of tomorrow.

Designing a Computer-Moderated Game

CHRIS WILLIAMS offers a simple introduction to PBM order processing ...

WHEN TALKING to people who are just beginning to design or program their own computer moderated PBM game, the question I am most often asked is: 'How do you handle processing all the orders for a turn at the same time?' Well, the short answer is: 'You don't.' If that answer didn't satisfy you, and it shouldn't, then keep reading as I start from the beginning...

What comes first?

Once all the orders for a given turn have been received and entered, by whatever means you allow, you can begin to process the turn. One of the first decisions you are going to need to make is how to prioritize the orders. You'll need to compile a list of all the active characters in the game, and their respective locations. Then you will want to sort them based on some criteria such as speed. (We'll use speed from here on out.)

Next you will need to decide how to handle your non-players such as monsters or game-controlled characters. You can handle their actions in one of two ways. The first way is to use some basic AI (artificial intelligence) and generate a full set of orders, just like a player would, before turn processing begins. These orders would then be injected into the system just like a regular player's. This effectively treats the monster as just another character. Let's call these 'predictive orders'.

The second method is to generate orders 'on the fly' as each round of orders is processed. Essentially, you would analyze the environment prior to each round of orders (instead of only before the whole turn) and then make a determination on how to act. Motivating factors to consider would be: anger, fear, hunger, health, intelligence and speed (there are others, but you get the idea). The hidden benefit is that this AI method could make your monsters seem pretty smart, since they would be reacting to the characters moves each round. We'll call this style 'reactive orders'.

There's really nothing stopping you from using both methods in your game. You could use the first method for average monsters and the second method for the really smart or fast monsters. I'll discuss monster motivation and AI in a future article. [*Sidenote:* assuming that your dungeons are as large as some of mine are, you might have monsters lurking about without a single hero in sight. You probably wouldn't want to bother trying to process orders for each and every one of these if they won't be affecting anyone. It's up to you, but I wouldn't add any creatures to the list if there are no player characters within a given radius.]

You should now have a list of all the relevant player and monster locations within the dungeon (essentially an X,Y,Z grid), sorted by speed. Then you simply process the *first* order of each character or monster, working your way down the list until everyone has been processed.

Let's say the first entry on the list is character 3 (located at 11,4), who happens to be staring down an orc (the x located at 13,5) just a few feet away from his current position. If he issues an order to attack, the first thing we should do is check to see if the orc is within attack range. If so, he attacks and the appropriate combat routines would be run, otherwise the order would fail.

[*Sidenote:* you might offer an 'advance and attack' order which would move the character one step closer to the target creature if it is not within attack range. You might also consider allowing return attacks by the defending monster. Just make sure that the characters get one too when it's the monsters turn to attack.]

Character 2 may have intended to attack the orc as well, and if character 3 didn't finish it off then he'll get his chance, but if it's dead

then character 2 will be hacking at thin air... and the order would fail.

Now take a look at this from an orcish perspective. If predictive orders were used, then our little green pal might be dead before he even knew the heroes were there. Oh sure, he would get his return attacks, but with reactive orders he'd get a chance to run away or charge into melee based on his round by round analysis of the situation.

Essentially the fastest player goes first, regardless of his situation - the fastest player's orders are not affected by other's orders. I think this gives you a nice way of handling the turn engine: iterate through the players (and monsters) in descending order of speed (initiative, whatever). As you process each player you know that all faster players (and monsters) have already had their turn, so any effect they've had on the universe has already been taken care of. You only process each player once and need store only information about one player at a time.

Character 1 would like to kill the troll to the north, but since she is pretty badly wounded from a previous encounter she decides to move away. The predictive troll might retreat at the sight of a player character, where the reactive troll would possibly pursue the wounded character and get a tasty snack.

Next up are characters 4 and 5. Let's say these two friendly rivals have exactly the same speed. We could handle this a few ways. We could compare a secondary characteristic in order to determine who actually goes first. Another way is to simulate simultaneous actions. You could do this by ignoring anything resulting in death or dismemberment until after both orders have been resolved, then applying the final results. In other words, had character 4 hit the goblin first he might have delivered the killing blow, causing character 5's order to simply fail, with no experience earned. However, since they both attacked the creature at the same time, both orders would be successful, and experience would be awarded to both characters. A third option would be to randomly determine who went first, in the event that speed and other secondary characteristics were all identical.

Next up are characters 6 and 7. Between them is a small pile of gold. If they don't go at the same time, whoever gets there first gets the gold... plain and simple. If they do go at the same time then you would resolve it as in the previous example. Of course, character 7 could decide to pull out his trusty bow and take care of the problem another way. Player 6 would keep advancing toward the gold until he either picks it up or dies on the way. That's one of the unfortunate downsides to predictive orders.

Yes, poor character 8 is practically doomed... let's just hope the kobolds surrounding him aren't using reactive orders.

Once everyone's first order has been processed, you would rebuild the list of characters and monsters since new monsters may have become active, or some may have died, or become wounded (which may equal slower), or maybe someone drank a potion of speed, bumping them up a few spots in the list. Start the process over with everyone's *second* order, rebuilding after each set of orders is processed... until all orders for the turn have run for all relevant players and monsters.

Finally, I hope this helps some of you who were interested in creating your own game but just didn't know how to begin. Admittedly, the examples are slanted towards fantasy RPG style since that's where my interests are, but the concepts could be easily applied to any genre.

I'll just add a disclaimer: I'm not saying this is the only way to do it, or even the best way. It's just the way I did it.

[Next issue: Artificial Intelligence - for Monsters ...]

SFLSL

World-Wide Football Management

DAVID BLAIR gears up for the World Cup ...

PEOPLE WHO know me, know I love playing PBMs/PBeMs and especially sports games. So when I get a chance to do a full article on one of my current ones, my arm does not need to be twisted too hard.

Sanctuary Football League Super League (SFLSL) rates very highly in my estimation as a football game played exclusively by email which encompasses virtually everything I would want or need to be a club manager/coach. Note I did not say a successful manager or coach. This will be down to your tactics, your squad's abilities, some good trading, and avoiding some of the referees who appear to have been arguing (unsuccessfully) with their better halves just before they got to the ground, and somebody is now going to pay for it!

SFLSL is another game using the Olmec system, but which uses a different set of parameters for certain aspects of its set-up. It is free to play and boasts managers from South America, USA and Europe, giving it a real world-wide flavour.

... presented with a choice of three teams ...

I joined at the start of season 2004 (the League's fifth year) and was presented with a choice of three teams. One had just been promoted and had good money in the bank, but its players were getting old, and at this point I should add that the first division is a tough one to win. The other two clubs in the second had differing good points but the clincher was that Red Star Belgrade had a name I could use. I do not like taking teams with silly names as, surprisingly enough, I take my games seriously! Names can be changed during the close season but I had missed that. So it was Red Star, and although they had little money they did have a fair enough squad. The League set-up is two divisions with 16 teams in each - promotion and relegation is on a 3 up - 3 down basis. The real clincher was that because they had finished in the top seven (actually fourth), Red Star now qualified for an additional two Cup competitions in addition to the League's official SFLSL Cup. They were the McBride Cup (for teams that finish in first-eighth place in both divisions) and the Risers Cup (for second division teams finishing fourth to seventh), which is played for by teams from other Olmec-run Leagues - a sort of European Cup if you will. In both Cups there are sections of four teams, thereby guaranteeing three matches in each at least. This can generate an income of around \$2 million, not to be sneezed at, and there is more if you qualify for the knockout rounds.

Realistically, the McBride is not an option for the second division teams finishing 4th to 8th, as when the start of next season arrives three of the top eight second division teams are now in the first division, leaving an imbalance of 11-5, and along with a draw which is partly seeded (or seems to be) it is more a case of damage limitation whilst counting the cash earned as a worthwhile compensation for not qualifying from the sections. Mind you, is there any difference here from real life, where teams outside the Premiership don't really believe they will win the FA Cup, just go as far as they can and pick up as much money as possible along the way?

SFLSL at a glance

A free football management game played by email and run by Mike Morton. The website is: www.sflsl.com
The GM's contact email address is: mikemorton_98@yahoo.com

I went into the first set of league games full of hope and expectations, and when I pulled two goals back for a draw in my opener against a team run by Olli from Finland, and then won by the odd goal in three away to Dinamo Moscow, I probably felt the title was mine. Even four more games down the line I had won two and drawn two, so was very much in contention at the top. The Cup ties start to infiltrate around this point.

What I do like is the spacing out of the Cup ties along with the league matches. You retain a flavour and an interest in all the Cups up till almost halfway through a season - a lot longer if a result or two goes your way - and variety is the spice of life. In addition, because the ELs (endurance levels) are so important to juggle in order to have fully fit players on the park at all times, there are opportunities to 'save' some better players for the league match to come and play weaker players in Cup ties that realistically you feel you cannot compete. Then choose Counter attack or just plain Stall (kick the ball anywhere and place everybody back in defence and hope they don't hit you for six). The choice is yours and this element of decision-making I find in real life: don't Premiership teams use up reserves in the League Cup to preserve the stars in order to win league points? Even better is when the opposition assumes you will lie down, and play small fry themselves, only to find you have given up on the league title and have just placed your full squad on the pitch. Makes for a more even game and carries the chance of an improbable upset.

Anyhow, the season progressed with me finding even better ways of snatching defeat and draws from the jaws of victory, usually by selecting the wrong tactic for the players I wanted to use. It really does make a difference when you select your team and then a tactic to suit it, or when you have spotted the set-up an opponent likes to use and then you select one of your own to counter it along with a team that can play it. Me, I pick the best team I can and then usually inexplicably choose a bad tactic. Makes for interesting games, if not successful ones. I can also say one or two substitutions have been questionable - so nobody is perfect! And do check on your upcoming referees - they all have personality traits and will affect matches.

... Makes for a more even game and carries the chance of an improbable upset ...

There is a Yahoo group page for chatting or leaving messages, and on occasions you can go live for a player auction or to see the games being played - I usually miss them, as I have a low pain threshold!

There is quite a bit of interaction, and the day I finally gave up on promotion was the day a Club going for the first division title offered me an tremendous price for ten of my coaching points. I only had 13 of them at the time, but the money was too much to refuse. At that point I decided to amass as much as possible till the end of the season, and ensure a top seven finish (for next season's two extra Cup competitions).

This I duly did, and during the close season the money earned was enough to raise my stadium capacity (in anticipation of higher crowds to match my expected better performances) from 10,000 to 16,000. Clubs keep all their home gate money for League matches, and full houses should net Red Star about \$1.5 million extra income. I also bought up three players from a couple of the Youth teams. They are good value and come aged 18 and with a five-year contract. Purchasing a Sweeper, Goalkeeper and a Defender to add to the Forward I promoted during the season (who up till now still hadn't opened his account, but I am persistent!), allowed me to release six players who were going out of

contract and would have cost quite a bit to hire again. In addition each team can pay 500k and receive three draft pick players, based on the American system that the lowest rated team gets the first choice pick in each round. I paid 300k, chose a Midfield/Defender (a good utility man), and sold the other two picks to clubs for 325k and 300k respectively.

The remaining money is the most crucial of all. It is used to purchase Coaching Points and at this point is the only time you can buy from the League - you want more later on, you buy from other clubs who all may have a differing view on their worth. Coaching points are used at around 4-6 per two-game session (if you have them) to raise skill levels of player(s) and this is one of the only two ways you can raise them. The other way only affects your Captain, who can have a skill increase in a session if your team wins both their matches and he plays for at least 45 minutes in each game. As your captain has to be aged over 28 or your oldest player if none qualifies, there is every chance he will not be highly rated. Bearing in mind that at the season end all players will age and lose some of their skill levels, using Coaching Points is an attempt to maintain and improve the skills of players in your employ for as long as their contracts at least. I bought 30 of them and along with ten earned for placing some Press articles on at least 90% of the available times, plus adding the three I finished the season with, they give me a healthy balance to start the new campaign. I will earn at least 20 more during the season, so a figure in excess of 60 will be more than enough to train my lot up to a decent standard.

... a very good innovation I have not seen anywhere else ...

I mentioned Youth teams earlier. This is a very good innovation I have not seen anywhere else. A Youth League is operated at the same time as the main leagues and there are a couple of aims behind it. The Clubs themselves are run by the managers of the teams who finished in the bottom eight positions in the second division in the previous season. The players are all 17 years old and start equal. The managers train them up while playing matches and the idea is for some of the players to be promoted to senior clubs as and when they appear ready. The differences are that a player has a value when another team comes for him: a quarter of this value goes to the club that trained him, plus if the player is promoted to his own senior team there is a discount on the price to the club concerned. This is a way to help the finances of the weaker clubs and in addition to provide a cheaper method of gaining youngsters on five-year contracts for all. There is a real incentive for these managers to do well as while they are playing each other four times each they will receive gate money: moral, be training up players for parading in the shop window, so to speak, and at all times they can be earning a little cash for their main team coffers. (When a player is so bought, a replacement youth is then put into the squad, but he goes back to the basic skill level and we start all over again.) It is the way Red Star is going, with the intention of lowering the ages of the squad and placing as many on long-term contracts as possible.

A major change happened this season as the League was becoming a two horse race, with Sporting Fans and Santa Cruz holding massive stadia, oodles of money and coaching points. There was no skulduggery, all that happened was until the rules were finalised after the first couple of seasons, it was easier in those days to afford everything. The two lads concerned realised it was becoming more and more like the Scottish Premier League, and voluntarily agreed to some 'adjustments' in their set-ups, which will result in a more even first division and they will likely be more involved in the other end of the table.

Anyhow, Red Star Belgrade has just started Season 2005, and the week brought two no-score draws - a big disappointment as I had hoped for a good start. The following weekend saw a last minute 1-0 loss to my Finnish friend, whose team is a sure bet for promotion, but a bounce back 4-0 home win to counter it. Last weekend saw a very bad 0-2 home loss to a team that played counter attack and hit me on the only shots they had on target. Little consolation in the following match to win 5-1 and out-shoot the opposition by 18 shots to 4. What I lack is consistency, but

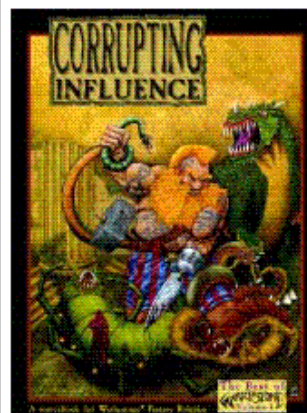
at least if I don't achieve promotion, as long as I safeguard the fourth to seventh spot, I should again make money and be even better off come next season. Now where did I hear that before? I have a home game in the SFLSL Cup first round, but my three matches in the McBride Cup are against first division clubs, so a day out for the boys then.

Other ways you earn money in SFLSL is for your final placing in the League, earning your sponsorship by completing the task a sponsor has set you, and selling players to other Clubs.

The cosmopolitan flavour in the League makes for some very colourful Press stories that are sent in weekly by around 50% of the managers. The Press is well organised as it goes from the Commissioner's starting notes on the last week's activities, the Youth League Commissioner's de-briefing and league tables, the respective Cup competitions, the sponsorships, the weekly Lotto, and then starts the Clubs' submissions. From start to finish it could take you around 10 minutes or so to read. Of course the addition of one coaching point to your club's kitty for placing such Press is a fair rate of pay for taking time to concoct an article. Bearing in mind a CP is worth around 100k and can be used to train one of your lads up one skill level, in a full season you can earn around 20 of them to add to the ones you can barely afford to purchase at the beginning. The Lotto is where five matches are selected from the following week's list of games on their competitiveness, and you can make a guess on their outcome (home, away or draw). A full five correct will net you 600k, while four from five will get a lesser figure - just a little extra something to take your mind of why your overpaid bunch of clowns managed to squander a two-goal lead in the last three minutes.

The game is well run by Mike Morton (who has help in running the Press magazine and the Youth League), who conducts an attractive web site for the game - well worth a look. The website is on: www.sflsl.com and Mike is on mikemorton_98@yahoo.com - there are usually spaces for interested parties and if Red Star don't have a better season than last, there will be at least one team up for grabs!

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Lords of the Earth

Campaign One, part 1

An Age of Air and Steam by MARTIN HELSDON ...

Ice-shrouded grey rock tumbled through darkness. The surface of the flying mountain swarmed with uncounted numbers of winged, crustacean-like creatures. They laboured in the darkness, drilling and shaping with their machines. The vast stone tumbled slowly, end over end, though the mob of creatures burrowing within its mantle was so great even the light of the distant sun failed to reflect from their carapaces and velvet wings.

Near the northern pole of the asteroid, a lean black shape drifted on the solar wind, engaged in the rudimentary communications which prevailed between the denizens of Yuggoth and other creatures.

Empress-Regent Claudia took the last of the narrow steps three at a time, her skirts gathered up around her thighs. She burst onto the rooftop observatory, two of her guardsmen panting at her back. A crowd of astronomers and scientists turned towards her and Claudia felt a chill drape across her shoulders. The faces were pale and taut, as if they had looked into an abyss of fire.

'Tell me,' she snapped. Time was ever short for the ruler of a vast empire, and no less for her, as she laboured to keep her sister's military expedition in the Middle East supplied. There was no answer, but old Cassini raised his hand, pointing to the northeastern sky. Claudia produced a pair of spectacles and turned - then grew still. There was no need for spectacles. A pair of enormous lights hung in the sky, drowning the moon, washing out the stars.

'How long?' Claudia felt her heart seize up, her breath grow short.

'A day, perhaps.' Cassini turned to his assistant, Calvaire. The Frenchman shook his head sadly. 'One is already shining red - we think friction heats such objects as they enter the ocean of air around our world.'

'Damn!' Claudia looked back to the sky. 'You old fools should have informed me days ago!' She bolted back down the stairs. 'Get my son aboard an airship, right now!'

Sixteen hours later the sky over Venice convulsed, a pressure wave thrown aside by the plunging asteroid shrieking down upon the city and the Veronan countryside. Zeppelins in flight - and there were many fleeing the doomed city - were slammed to earth, shredded beyond recognition. An enormous scream of distorted air roared out. The Adriatic flattened, then heaved, smashing ships like kindling. Nearly every building, church, warehouse and factory in Verona province was smashed to the ground by the supersonic blast.

Then the rock slammed into the Lagoon, and Venice and a hundred mile radius vanished in a titanic explosion. The shallow waters vaporised, joining a mammoth blast of pulverised stone, rock, buildings, sea, docks and farmland. A secondary blast - this one heated to incinerating temperatures - roared out, annihilating everything in Verona, Lombardy, Savoy, Romagna, Illyria, Slovenia and Carinthia. The bulwark of the Italian Alps blocked some of the raging inferno from Tyrol, but the surge of superheated air lapping over the mountains melted every glacier, snowpack and peak in the Alps.

Enormous floods roared down the valleys, inundating towns and drowning cities, carrying away hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. The lower mountains of the Italian Alps also blocked some of the ravaging blast from Liguria and Tuscany, but vast and widespread devastation afflicted those provinces as well. To the east, most of Croatia, Bakony and Slovakia were destroyed. Even the railroad - so newly finished! - into Slovakia was not spared, the bridges, trestles and way-bed smashed, buried or incinerated.

Worst, the impact threw up a vast cloud of dust and ash into the upper air. While a rain of burning stones would fall across Europe for the next three months, the spreading stain in the sky soon blocked out the sun. A dreadful cloud joined the faint brown smudge already clogging the higher reaches of the sky - the detritus of the Olathöe explosion.

Claudia, her scientists and her family - attempting to flee across the barrier of the Alps by zeppelin - were killed when the stormfront rolled across their aerial convoy and tore them all to bits. Not one airship survived, even the Grand Baklovakian which had been carrying the Imperial family to safety.

THE TIME IS the middle of the eighteenth century. This is no Age of Enlightenment, but an Age of Air and Steam, and war against the minions of extra-mundane forces.

The place is an Earth where history diverged from our own at the beginning of the first millennium. The Japanese fled the Mongols to North America; the Aztecs were converted to Christianity; Europe is dominated by the Danish Empire and its long rivalry with the Swedish Empire of Russia; the dynasty of Cromwell rules from the Catholic throne of the United Kingdoms of Britain. Many other changes have occurred. The age of steam has already started; hydrogen filled airships sail the skies, steam cruisers sail the seas, and the mania for railways is well under way. Large portions of the northern hemisphere are encompassed by an ice sheet. Asteroids have fallen from the sky and the sunlight is dim from all the dust in the upper atmosphere. The constant threat of famine stalks the nations of the world.

A game of many levels

As a game, Campaign One, usually identified as LOTE01 is perhaps the longest continuously running PBM, striving towards turn two hundred and twelve after more than twenty years of strategy, intrigue and game development. Starting in the game year 1000 AD it has now reached 1752. As time passes and technological change accelerates, the number of years per turn reduces. At present we are at two years a turn.

The game boasts a web site with archives and maps, an online encyclopaedia, and links to impressive player nation web sites. At one time it included a recommended reading list, the most telling volume being Arkon Daraul's *Secret Societies - A History*.

The newsfaxes, in which the events of each turn are recorded for the nations, religious orders, primacies and merchant houses, form a long narrative, describing the events of this long-lived game, charting the rise and fall of countries and organisations. Players also receive a turn sheet, with all the status information for their position. In the background, mostly behind the scenes lies the secretive and dangerous twilight world of the secret societies and cults, the dreaded Secret Empires.

At some time in the past, the activities of the Secret Empires took a sinister turn. Due to the actions of certain nations the 'anchors' that guard the Earth were diminished, allowing the return of the influence of certain

Lords of the Earth at a glance

A commercial PBEM powergame that exists in several separate games covering different historical periods. Contact details:

<http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01>

dire and inimical forces. Now these creatures from outside are striving to return, and their followers have grown enormously in power. Only a titanic struggle by the Sunlander Alliance defeated (perhaps) the Ice tribes, worshippers of Ithaqua, the Walker on the Wind. More recently an Avatar of Nyarlathotep, the Hidden Imam of the Assassins, gained control of an empire in the Middle East, during which his minions the extraterrestrial Mi-Go dropped asteroids on the capital of the Danish Empire and on China.

The game therefore runs in several related dimensions. There is the 'surface' world of the nation states and other public organisations. Beneath them is the almost invisible substrata of the secret empires. Sometimes a secret empire can so infiltrate another position that it can perform an assumption - effectively take over all or much of its unwilling host. Most of these inhabitants of the shadows rarely reveal themselves too openly, for once discovered they are usually destroyed. Some of these cults are good, while others have aims ranging from the criminal to the intent to open the portals that will permit the Old Gods to retake the Earth, at which point the game probably ends.

Wide-ranging rules

LOTE01 is a world-wide strategy game, with considerable leeway for roleplaying (albeit as a nation or some other body.) It has aspects of the Cthulhu Mythos of HP Lovecraft (though Brian Lumley seems an especial influence) and other literary and historical sources.

The game employs the standard Lords of the Earth rulebook, supplemented with the Renaissance rules and now the first Industrial supplement. The rules mount up to almost two hundred pages. To a newcomer this is daunting, but not all of the rules apply to every type of position, and after a few turns I began to understand some if not all of the nuances. Other players, mostly in allied positions were also helpful, and the GM, Thomas Harlan, has thus far been patient of my questions.

It is not my intent in this review diary to explore the game mechanics, but to provide an overview of the campaign. It suffices to say that the game rules cover everything from military actions, economic development, Leader activities (subject to certain ratings you have a number of Leaders to move around), intelligence and assassin capabilities, technological projects and social and cultural change, trade routes, national projects and special actions depending on the type of position. Players found universities, build cities, create trade routes, massacre populations, enforce religious conversions, engage in both overt and covert warfare, forge alliances, break treaties, and sometimes suffer the dread dynastic failure, when their nation implodes.

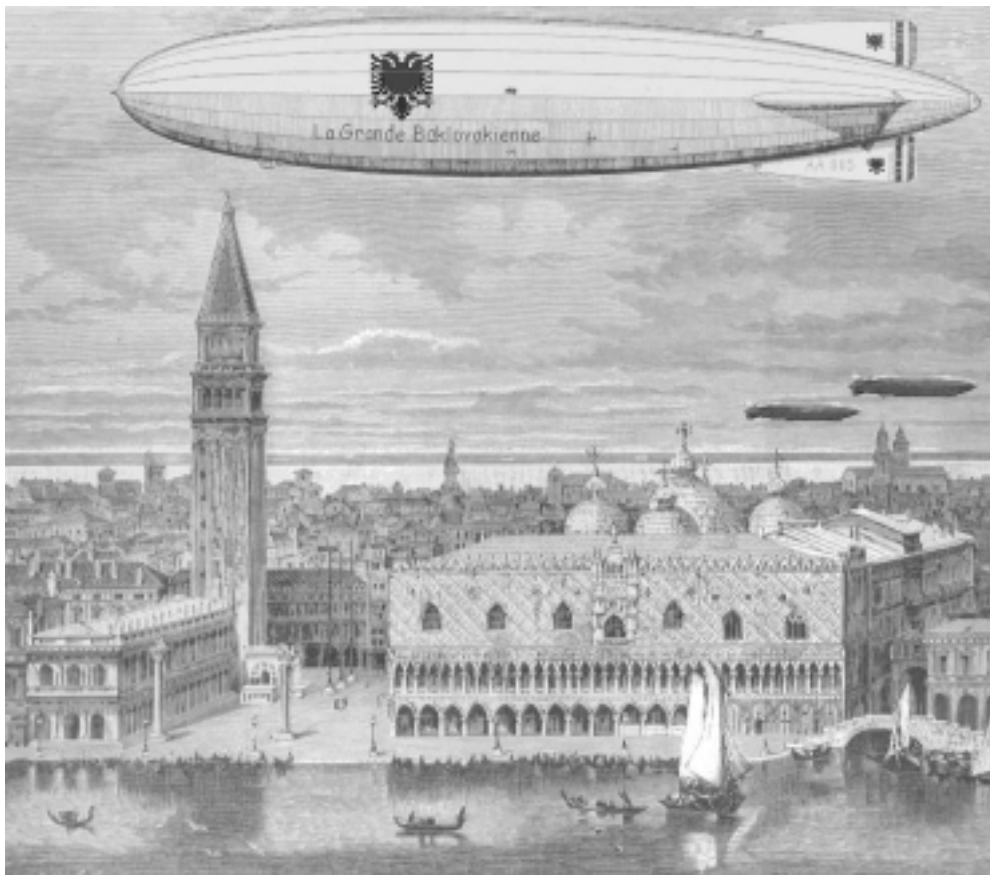
While 01 is the oldest of the LOTE universes (there are tens more, some active, some not) it is not entirely representative.

The GM's hand

LOTE01 acts as the testbed for many rules amendments. It can be frustrating to be hit by a sudden and unexpected rules change, ranging from a reduction in the rate of movement of airships, to modification in food consumption. Whilst strange things do happen in other campaigns, LOTE01 is a Fortian nightmare. Almost every turn something terrible happens on the world stage, and local disasters are not uncommon. Secret Empires appear to have a much greater influence on events than normal; where an ordinary LOTE game may include a few cults, LOTE01 boasts dozens.

The GM is a published author, with the fourth in his popular *Oath of Empire* series about to be published in the United States. The transition from newsfax to novel is not surprising. Taken as a whole, the last twenty or so newsfaxes, all available on the website, form a many-stranded epic story. The plot ranges from the struggle against the Ice and the other powers, to national wars, politics and technological development.

A few characters (Leaders of player positions) rise to prominence; their stories can be traced through the newsfax. There has been Oniko, Empress of the



Danes, who continued the war of her father against the Ice and ultimately defeated the Daemon Sultan of Georgia, paying a terrible price for her victory. Recently the Three Blossoms, Nimma, sister of the Emperor of the Ming and her two friends have conspired to take the throne of heaven away from her venal and incompetent brother. My own Johannes Teugen, Maklarevalde of the Norskrad, a merchant house, has battled to maintain the Company and protect it from communists and cultists, at last to die in the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1752. And many others.

Thomas has begun work on the *Sixth Sun* novels which are set in the projected future of LOTE01. *Wasteland of Flint* will be published in 2003.

LOTE01 is an incredibly difficult game to classify. It is bewildering, confusing, frustrating, conducive to paranoia, and thoroughly addictive. Although often deadly serious, it is not without humour.

Next time I start to trace the successes and failures, the victories and disasters of the Norskrad, the Norse Trading Company. We begin in Lisbon, threatened by riots and a student uprising. The Empire of Occitania has collapsed - the Imperial House of Cortez has fallen. In northern Spain the nobility swarm to the banner of the self-proclaimed King of Navarre; in the cities the communists of the Students Revolutionary Committee plot the overthrow of the new Republic. And what of the secret cabal of the Golden Dawn lurking in the shadows?

Dangerous times are ahead for a Merchant House ...

Sports News

DAVID BLAIR plays Rugby Union, Baseball, Horse Racing and Soccer ...

WELL, AT LEAST you have got this far, so I take it you read last issue's column. Thanks for that, and I hope there is something for you this time too!

I know the month is June and bats are striking balls (and bails) on village greens but I am afraid there is no cricket game review this issue. I will do my best to get at least one for the next magazine due out in August, and it would help if some kind GM out there with a cricket game would get in touch requesting a review. Of course I will have to play a little, but hey! It is a small price to pay for exposure, isn't it?

I have to thank Chris Dempsey, Dave Scriven and Danny McConnell for letting me into their games at minimal cost (actually for free!) - it really is a big help to my pocket and I do believe reviews are better coming from within games, but I could be wrong.

Amongst other games over the next few issues I plan to cover Ab Initio's games, as I noticed some have not been covered, some were reviewed when I was still in short trousers, and the nice GM is allowing me to sample each one in turn. I offer this to all GMs, and the lads in the previous paragraph have already taken me up on it.

First one up is **Rugby League Stats**, which along with its counterpart **Rugby Union Stats** is a novel way of running a game using real players and teams to achieve the results. On this occasion the computer cannot be held to blame for providing weird results and unexplainable happenings.

Rugby League Stats is a game of rugby management, with the idea to win a league against nine other teams all of whom will be using real life RL players' stats to decide the scores. Teams are up to 24 players each, and there is always a pool of players to augment your player list, depending upon your ability to purchase them, and that the maximum of 24 slots on your roster has not yet been filled. For example a team's roster could contain two backs from Wakefield, one back from London, two forwards from Castleton, one forward each from Leeds and Salford, etc. The idea is to place the players most likely to score in the following weekend's games into your squad for a fixture against one of the other nine teams. Real life scorers' points are then credited to your team to produce a realistic score, for which the winners receive two points and one for a draw. In turn this creates a league table that is updated every turn.

When a turn is completed each player will receive the next week's fixtures, along with results and scorers for the games just past, plus full financial details of the week's transactions. That is not the finish by any means - this game has quite a few extras in it - including income gained from your crowd, along with sales from merchandising, sales of players who haven't quite cut it; expenditure includes wages, as these lads, whilst not in the obscenely paid bracket of the pampered round ball prima donnas, do require to be paid a wage. In addition there is trading of players, the transfers between clubs, the ability to approach underpaid players on other squads and - a beauty - the opportunity to try to poach a player from another team by offering at least 50% more than his current salary. This forces the player's team either to match it or, should they decide not to break the bank for him, they will lose the player although they will

gain some compensation to try to find a replacement.

With some money in the bank, teams can 'buy' fans to support them, which in turn will produce extra cash at the gate, purchase some merchandise to sell at home games and invest in a larger capacity stadium which also has the effect of increasing income. Interaction between players is kept to messages that can be sent via the GM through the turn sheet but in this game that is fine. There is very little you would not be able to place on the turn sheet as, for example, any bid for a free agent is viewed by all, with opportunities for increased bids to be placed. As an extra to this game, Danny (McConnell) runs a tipster league where he provides the real life

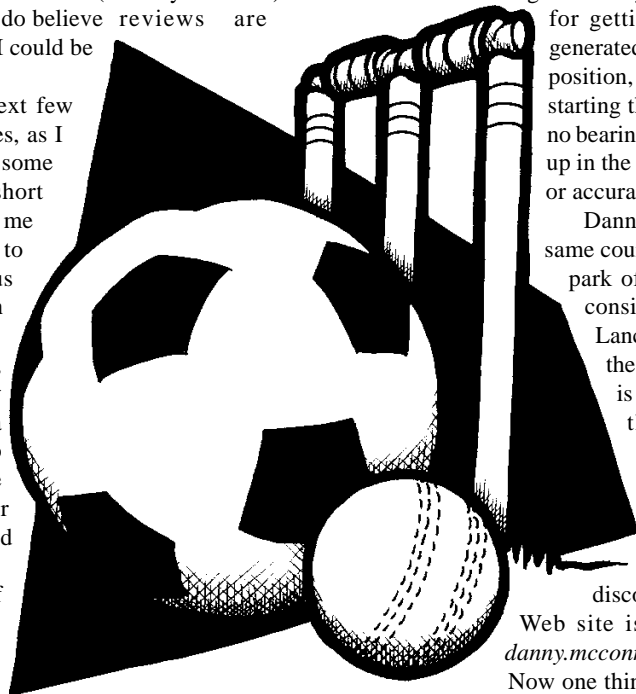
games and you predict the winners. Points are awarded for getting results correct and a league table is generated throughout the season. Based on your final position, your team will receive an income bonus for starting the following year. A nice touch, as this has no bearing on where your useless lot actually finished up in the order, but is more down to your knowledge or accurate guessing.

Danny's Rugby Union Stats follows much the same course, although with different numbers on the park of course. This may appeal to more people considering League has primarily a Yorkshire/Lancashire stronghold, whereas Union embraces the whole country. But the principle of the game is the same for both here. The League follows the real season of March through to September, just in time for Gridstats to start, but that is for another day. Payment is £5 for rule book, team setup and first three turns. After that it is £8 for four turns, £18 for ten, and £32 for 20, with further discounts for playing in more than one game.

Web site is: www.softsim.co.uk, email address is danny.mcconnell@virgin.net

Now one thing which you do not have coming out your ears in Rugby League is a pile of stats, and that is a blessing if you just wish a straightforward game to mull over. And then there is baseball, a game that thrives on facts and figures so thick your head spins. But then again, doesn't our national game now churn out irrelevances such as percentages of good tackles versus bad, successful passes, shots on and off target etc? It seems the Americans don't have it all their own way with over the top facts we all need to know.

Gameplan Baseball is also from Danny's stable and I admit I have played this in the past - it was my introduction to the sport many moons ago. At that time I had to seek assistance on some of the terms used in the rulebook from the GM (and a couple of the other players), but they stuck with me. So much so that anytime I view a game on the box I appear very knowledgeable to all and sundry. Positions such as Platoon Batters, Pinch Hitters and Pinch Runners seem like a different world, but they are part and parcel of the game. Don't feel intimidated by the fact baseball is American and should be avoided. So are Coca Cola, McDonalds, baseball caps, and most of us don't avoid them. This game encompasses all that the real game can offer. There are 24 of the real US teams in six divisions of four teams. Each team plays 162 games in the season at the rate of nine games a session. That is really three games against three teams per turn - still with me? Your squad consists of a range of pitchers and a range of batters (the latter players all have a fielding position as well). The 'bullpen' is where the pitchers practise in and you have to make decisions on who pitches in which game and for how long. Batters have to be selected and placed into their best positions whilst fielding. Who to



pick? That is where the stats come in - you get numbers for each player as to how many times he has stepped up to either bat or pitch, along with the results of these hits, whether they allowed him to get to which base, score a Home Run, allowed other batters to get home to score, or whether he was struck out or allowed to walk to first base usually due to the pitcher not pitching to him properly. The simple part here is to pick the lads with the highest success rates, but wait. Looking further along we see how high his natural ability is, then his experience, his major contribution to the team be it hitting, speed, his fielding or, in the case of the pitchers, whether they are accurate, quick, consistent, or can last the pace (stamina). Players' potential is a major factor as you can train any of four attributes for any player as long as you have the money and he has some potential. Should his potential be zero then he has hit his highest spot and will not get any better, although he may well be good enough to play out a couple of seasons for you before the drop in form begins. Opportunities are there to select the aforementioned Pinch runners, hitters, and Platoon batters - all are reserves who come in to replace starters who are not performing, basically substitutes. See, I told you not to worry. A turn consists of results from every match played, next turn's fixtures, income from fans, merchandise sales and any trades (a bit like Rugby League, so at least you will see some similarities there). In addition you get the stats updated for your squad, and with nine games a session, they do change quite a bit. Around 12 pages per turn is pretty good value for money. Your goal - to win the World Series and be crowned World Champions, whilst keeping one eye on the money to make sure you can pay the wages and expenses. If you go into the red, major players may holdout - ie not play until they are paid. So the management factor is very much alive and kicking here, more so as you have to think long term development, with players being acquired through a pre season draft replacing some who have seen better days. The worst teams get the best draft picks, a common feature in nearly all American sports. It tends to level up the playing field over a couple of seasons, so it is worth hanging in even if you feel your lot should all be pensioned off now! The turn sheet is pretty explanatory and should you make an error the GM will inform you on the sheet just why it did not or could not work. I was given a team (Cincinnati Reds) that can only be described as being the equivalent of Halifax Town of the Nationwide League. It needed money, new players, and had three players out with long term injuries. Know what? - it didn't matter! I trained up a few lads in some places they needed it, got rid of a couple to free up money for buying fans and merchandise and basically put the club on an more even keel. No way can the Reds win the Series for a good few seasons but there is enjoyment here, and a sense of achievement when you see the playing stats improve, and they will, with prudent training and spending. As for the 162 games, as long as you put out what appears to be the best team you can, believe me, you will win some games, which gives you some confidence. I am sure it was George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees who was quoted as saying 'Every team will win about 54 games every season, and every team will lose around 54 games every season. It is what you do in the other 54 games that will determine how successful your season becomes.' Of course, it could have been somebody else! Costs are £3 for one turn, £12 for four, £27 for ten, and £48 for 20. If you have not tried baseball before, give it a whirl and be immersed. Web site at: www.pbmsports.com and email is: danny@pbmsports.com

Epsom (formerly **Horses for Courses**) now run by Dave Scriven is going well and will be coming to the end of its first season shortly. Dave kindly let me into the fray and overnight I became a trainer, stable owner, gambler, jockey picker, accountant, etc. Another genre I had never tried but I find it challenging and fun at the same time. A full review will be coming up in a future issue, as Dave has a few changes he wishes to make meantime. All I am saying is there are lots to do, and it will certainly be worth a look when it is fully ready.

Mike Dean runs his own firm called *Psychozine*, which carries in amongst all his email games a new football one called **Psychos(h)occer**. He has a lad named Tel Stupple running it for him, and it uses the Olmec system, commented on before in these pages. There are two divisions, North and South, with ten teams in each, playing 18 games a season along with a Cup competition which will result in clubs playing between

21 and 24 matches in total. This game is played weekly and is free (as are all Olmec run games). This is their first season, but it will be progressing into more seasons. All but one of the clubs is taken, but the waiting list is open. By the time you read this they will be well on with their season and will be looking for more managers to join. Being flexible, it can sometimes be easier creating extra leagues or expand the number of clubs in a division if you have enough people willing to play. So why not give Tel that problem to solve?

All clubs were given a fairly standard set of parameters - positions, S(kill) L(evels) etc from which they could set up the team of their choosing. My only gripe is one or two people give silly names to teams, so that when they depart at some stage, they leave them to their successors till at least the end of the season. At that point they can, mercifully, be changed. Every team has a couple of players rated SL0 (as opposed to 1 in most other Olmec games) but they still contribute and once they have been playing for a fixed length of time (in this case 360 minutes) they get a couple of SLs from which point a manager can train them to great heights. Judging by some of the scores I noticed whilst browsing (4-5, 7-1 but a couple of no score draws as well), all kinds of games are catered for here. Tactics and the purchasing of T(raining) P(oints) and C(oaching) P(oints) to hone the various players' skills are all pretty much in line with the set up as invented by Allan Sellers who created the Olmec system. It is free, weekly, and Mike or Tel would like to welcome anyone willing to participate. Web page is on www.psychozine.co.uk and the email is mike.dean@psychozine.co.uk

Next issue should involve basketball, football and American Football for starters. I would like to do some tennis, wrestling, boxing and cricket, so will be looking around for some of those, or of course if any nice GM can offer me a position to view their game from the inside ...?

davidblair@btinternet.com



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Dark Age of Camelot

GLOBETROTTER on the *Once and Future Massive** Multiplayer Online RPG (MMORPG) ...

Arthur: 'Are you just a dream, Merlin?'

Merlin: 'A dream, to some; a nightmare to others!'

Excalibur (1981)

Dark Age of Camelot is a Massive Multi-player Online Roleplaying Game (a MMORPG) conceived and developed by Mythic Entertainment. Set in the Kingdom of Albion in the years immediately following the death of King Arthur, players of the game enter a world in chaos, where Arthur's peace has been shattered and dark forces threaten the Kingdom. Unlike traditional roleplaying games in which a player's greatest challenge is fighting computer-controlled monsters, players in Camelot will come face-to-face with their greatest challenge yet, other players.

If you're familiar with online gaming, Mythic Entertainment's debut game **Dark Age of Camelot (DAoC)** may not offer much that is spectacularly new or different but, when all is said and done, it's an addictively entertaining game. DAoC doesn't aim for the fence by tampering with many well-established formulae of the multiplayer online-roleplaying genre, but it does deliver the goods with visual flair to spare and offers credible assurances of bells and whistles to come. How will it fare against the likes of *Star Wars Galaxies*? Only time will tell, but galloping out of the gate with over 14,000 players at the last count, **Dark Age of Camelot** is most certainly the online role-playing game of the hour and quite possibly the year.

Three games in one

Despite the title, the deceased King Arthur's realm of Albion is only one of three continents in the game. You can also choose to fight for the Vikings of harsh, rainy Midgard or for the willowy fairy folk of verdant Hibernia, a land inspired by Celtic myths that are not far removed from the Arthurian ones. Though the names vary from realm to realm, the four basic classes to choose from are the familiar staples of all fantasy games: fighter, cleric, mage and thief. As your character progresses, further specializations are possible. Albion fighters, for example, can choose to follow the path of the clerical-chanting paladin or the roguish mercenary while Midgardian mystics (mages) can become either spiritmasters (who summon transparent warrior pets) or the nuke-happy runemasters (and the nuke spells here are actual mushroom clouds). Each realm also features several races to choose from. Albion's denizens are chiefly human, while Hibernia is home to both the hulking firbolg and the diminutive lurikeen, and Midgard is inhabited by trolls, dwarves, and kobolds.

Your character's appearance is more exhaustively customizable than in any other online game to date, although much of the tweaking occurs after you've entered the game. Everything you wear, including shields,

can be dyed in a variety of colours. Some hues (royal purple, for instance) are incredibly pricey, which creates a sort of a visual system of rank ('he's wearing purple? he must be powerful'). Additionally, if you belong to a guild that manages to scrape together three hundred gold (which can be rough going in **Dark Age of Camelot's** squirrely economy), everyone in your guild of twentieth level or higher can bedeck their cap or hooded cloak with one of thirty different guild emblems in various different colour schemes.

You can also acquire trade skills through rigorous (and expensive) practice, which enable you to make your own weapons, armor, and clothing to sell to other players. By these means, you and other artisans can eventually construct siege weapons with which to attack the keeps of other realms.

Realms at war

In theory, it all boils down to this. Making stuff and running around doing quests (horseback is as fast as intra-realm transport currently gets) is all well and good, but the realm vs realm combat is the supposed creamy centre of **Dark Age of Camelot**, and getting there takes some serious effort - maybe too much. The motivation for doing so is substantial: each of the three realms has two heavily guarded relics that grant blanket boons to every member of the continent that manages to capture one or both (strangely, they don't seem to do anything for their legal owners).

Getting to another realm is simple: you can either strike out into the unmapped frontier lands on your own, or at fifteenth level you automatically gain the ability to travel between one land and the next by purchasing a necklace and waiting on a pedestal in your largest keep for a circle of NPC acolytes to zap you there (departures are ten minutes apart, apparently because of all the intricate thaumaturgy involved). Once there, though, you're not really there. Each realm is guarded from willy-nilly invasions by a dangerous frontier area swarming with high-level monsters and a series of seven well-fortified forts.

You have to mount a highly coordinated attack with siege weapons if you want even a chance at taking these (let alone either of the realm's 'relic keeps'), since each fort is manned by an efficient squad of non-player characters and their long-range cannon artillery, and by any of that realm's player characters that happen to be in the vicinity. Once a keep is taken, however, you own it in more than name - your realm's banner actually flies from the parapets and you receive your own staff of non-player character guards that remain there as defence while you and your forces scurry off to fry even bigger fish.

It all sounds terribly exciting and glamorous, but the battles tend to be strangely anti-climactic in nature, whether storming enemy parapets or ambushing an enemy party in the snow-swept woods. Furthermore, the coordination necessary for competent siege work is difficult to assemble. At this stage, you're either a member of the hardcore (and sometimes snooty) clans that tested the beta to death and are now having all the fun, or you read about their exploits in the newspapers (by typing '/realm') while you thoughtfully resume your tailoring efforts. You don't get experience for kills in enemy realms, either, instead earning cryptic 'realm points', which don't seem to do much as of this writing (one player racked up nine hundred without even knowing what they were for). Nor can you duel members of your own realm for fun, which seems to go against the very spirit of Norse and Arthurian philosophy.

It's all in the details

It's not flawless, but **Dark Age of Camelot** sucks you into its time-annihilating clutches anyway. Each of the three huge realms distinctively manages to inspire your jingoistic loyalty (even if the Round Table seems

Dark Age of Camelot at a glance

Published by Abandon Entertainment, priced £19.99. Approx £6 / month thereafter. Online play only.

**[For those of you not already familiar with the terminology, 'Massive' means that player numbers aren't limited, as they are in some Multiplayer Online Games. Online gaming is not based on regular turns like PBM, of course. So how often do you need to play this game? Our reviewer replies, 'Well, it's up to you really. As it's a roleplaying game you're not competing against others in the true sense, though this does play a part. I play spasmodically, loads over a few days then little or nothing for another few days. It seems to work.']*

disproportionately small), and if it's little more than a standard online role-playing game, at least it's a better standard online role-playing game. The improvements hide in all the little details. Spawn times and mana recycles are much faster than EverQuest's molasses pacing, which means less downtime and more adventuring. Death carries much less of a penalty, and below fifth level it carries none at all (which, oddly enough, doesn't seem to affect game balance much). Combat classes are more interesting to play (thanks to the spell-like fighting Styles). Solo adventuring is easier.

Developer Mythic Entertainment obviously knows the formula, and gets most of the spices right. The number of EverQuest subscribers that have successfully completed 'epic quests' has always been low, mostly because these quests require large groups of players to sit around multiple godforsaken planes for weeks while they wait for a demigod to spawn and possibly drop some incredibly rare item that would then be destroyed in the process of forging an even rarer one. Dark Age of Camelot costs a few extra dimes a month but gives far better bang per buck on this score; the early quests are fairly simple and rewarding, and even the epic quests dole out impressive treats along the way. The dialogue, though hardly Shakespearean, is also head and shoulders above EverQuest's third-grade syntax and spelling, which definitely helps in the immersion department.

Dark Age of Camelot openly bills itself as a work in progress and as such, it's a remarkably sleek, addictive game from the launch pad upward, especially compared to other recent debacles such as Anarchy Online. There are no horned helmets or dragon-prowed ships in Midgard yet, no crystal caves or Morgan le Fays in Albion, no horses or housing to call your own anywhere (yes, there are horses, but you can't own them). If early sales figures, not to mention the fourteen thousand players currently playing the game online are any indication of the game's ongoing popularity, however, there will be soon enough.

What does Camelot have that other online games don't?

Camelot has an immediately identifiable background that will be familiar to anyone with even the most cursory knowledge of mythical history. The Arthurian legends, the Norse Sagas and, to a lesser extent, Celtic folklore, are all represented in the game. The gods in the game come from the pages of well-known mythology - gods like Odin and Thor, heroes like Cuchulain, Lancelot and Galahad are all part of the game's background (and maybe foreground!). Camelot also has a built in PvP system, which strongly guides the player into conflict against members of opposing Realms.

PvP is shorthand for 'Player vs Player'. Some online RPGs do not allow player vs player combat at all; instead characters fight with NPC monsters - this is the model that EverQuest follows, with the exception of a few EQ PvP servers. Others, like Ultima Online, allow everyone to fight everyone else, which can sometimes be chaotic. Camelot will be team-based PvP (based on Realm), where characters will be able to rise up to medium level without having to worry about being marauded by high-level enemies. As the players grow in stature, they will be expected to protect their realm from enemy incursions, as well as occasionally go on raiding parties against other realms.

In order to allow new players some time to gain experience in the

game, each Realm will have its own unique protected adventuring areas that are designed for new players. These areas will allow the new player an opportunity to gain experience without worrying at all about an invasion from across the seas. Player levels will be based on experience vs. monsters, not vs. other players. At higher levels, players will have to adventure out into regions between the realms, which could bring them into conflict with enemies, but not necessarily so. The true PvP comes into play when actively going out on raids, or protecting your Relics from enemy invasions. Each player accumulates "Realm Points" while either defending their Realm against enemy invasions or going out on raiding parties. As the player gains Realm Points, they gain special titles, objects, and status. For example, a player with a high number of Realm Points will be able to use a horse; a player of the same level who has not participated in PvP will not. The game will not force players into PvP, but if you choose to do so, you will become more powerful.

The PvP system for Camelot has been strongly thought out and is an integral part of the game itself, unlike the other large commercial online RPGs. Instead of having every player be able to fight any other player, as in Ultima Online, in Camelot, PvP is team based, where you can only fight characters in opposing Realms. This will encourage teamwork and cooperation among the members of a Realm as they must band together to fend off attacks, raids, etc. from the other Realms. At high levels, where other games tend to grow stale, players in Dark Age of Camelot can participate in PvP struggles, territorial conquest, and protecting their Realm's Relics (objects of power)

from enemy invasion, as well as attempting to pilfer enemy Relics themselves.

Conclusion

If you have never tried an online roleplaying game before and like swords and sorcery, then this might be the game for you. Dark Age of Camelot is rich with atmosphere and features dozens of improvements over other games in the genre including homemade siege weapons and the best-looking spell effects on the market. On the downside, there are times when the game gets stuck in the "find things, kill them, take their stuff" formula, whilst actual realm vs. realm conflicts are usually perfunctory at best, which is a shame. The biggest pitfall is of course that you have to shell out a load of money to buy the game before you try it out. But that's what reviews are for, isn't it! Once you've got the game of course, the only costs you have is your internet connection. Give online gaming a try - if not Dark Age of Camelot, then you'll find plenty of other games out there which might be more to your taste!

Technical details

Dark Age of Camelot, Published by Abandon Entertainment. System requirements: Pentium II 450, 256MB RAM, Internet connection. Online play only - see <http://www.camelot-europe.com/en/home.php>

Sold for 19.99 at www.amazon.co.uk, the box includes the game itself, plus one free month gaming online, the game manual, and a beautiful map of the realms. Thereafter you will have to subscribe at www.camelot-europe.com. It's pretty cheap really, 6 for 1 months play, 17 for 3 months or 30 for 6 months.



Austerlitz

Down Portugal Way (part 2)

DOMINIC COOK's diary for the Kingdom of Portugal in game 134

March 1808

A quiet move - the only bonus was that Holland won't get to the zinc mine at 31/97 first, he will get there the same time as me! The bonus is that it will be luck of the draw. I thought he had a brigade capturing two squares a turn when actually he has two capturing just one square each.

Also Naples didn't do anything which is good for me in North Africa. On the negative - Italy has a fleet visible at 50/58 and looks to be dropping troops into North Africa also, so I won't get it all my own way.

Turn Planning

I will unload my brigade and commander to 45/64. My two colonial fleets have loaded on them the two new colonial brigades, I also split what Ect Points I have left between them and order them out to the colonies again. Also loaded is my commander who I plan to send out to India to help the colonial grab - screwed up the order though and tried to send his ship in 3 direction instead of 7 - pillock!

Military

Train up everything - that is, the five new brigades I built, plus the other brigades build previously. I also will transfer the 3 La out of the militia brigade to leave just 2 Mi.

This turn I will build five more brigades: two of 2 Cz, two Ln and one La for colonial duties; one of 2 Mi, three Cz; and two of 5 Cz. Again the extra battalions in the militia brigade will be transferred out to other brigades leaving the militia.

Production

The economy is OK. I will build four sheep farms, two horse-breeding farms, and two lumbercamps, one in each colony. That uses up virtually all my Portuguese European squares, except for the squares for estates.

Trade

No trade this turn, just the baggage trains continuing their march: one to Munich, one to Paris and the third to Madrid. All are loaded with money and I am hoping to find trade rates at 2 when I get there!

Diplomacy

The big news was that France dropped after all. Shame. He sent me an email the day before the deadline suggesting that since everyone expected him to drop, he could not secure alliances and felt he was only going to be invaded. I think he is right, I heard from Rhineland that he was talking with Holland for an anti-French alliance, and I know Spain and GB were looking for the opportunity to exploit a French drop.

I have heard from Prussia about his fleet. He says he is thinking of giving it to Sweden in exchange for military aid. There is nothing more than money I can offer him, so I say that if Sweden doesn't take it I'll have it.

Rhineland also plans to hold onto his fleet for the time being, but says when he doesn't need it he will offer it to me.

I get another note from Warsaw who says he has disbanded his fleet -

shame - but also trying to suggest that he is not necessarily going to work with his brother, Russia - yeah, right, Jeff!

I get an email back from Sweden too, which is all together more helpful. He is a beginner, but knows the importance of trade. He will swap me his island for a co-ordinate in the Caribbean. Great. I will load a two militia battalion brigade onto a medium merchantman this turn ready for the trip to Sweden.

April 1808

Everything goes according to plan. No new France yet; may not have a chance now as I guess Holland is sharpening his sword! Italy missed a turn this time. So if he did drop troops in North Africa, I don't know about it yet. Mine landed OK, and my commander and two brigades are in the colonies.

France's failure to move gives me two possibilities. My new Kt brigade onboard ship was going into my colony in south America, the three Kt brigades to join with the two already out there to allow me to take two squares a turn with the five Kt brigade that results. However, the 'French' neutral ore mine at 30/82 is free, as is the 'British' zinc mine at 29/77 (They are the nations who 'usually' secure these mines). I decide to go for the ore mine. Zinc is nice for trade, but I would like to start Ect Pts production in the Caribbean and have no other opportunity of getting any ore, while I have a fighting chance of getting the zinc mine at 31/97 if I move before Holland. Also, I don't expect France to be around for long, while GB most certainly will be!

Naples started moving again, but towards Tunis which is well and truly secured by Morocco now. My spy in Rabat tells me Morocco has allied with me, which is good.

Turn Planning

My first move will be to move my federation to take the zinc mine in South America. If Holland puts it as a first order it will be the luck of the dice who gets it. Fingers crossed it is me!

As discussed above, my new Kt brigade will offload ship onto the ore mine at 30/82. My other new Kt brigade in India will land at 53/72 to link up with the KT brigade already out there. My commander will land at 56/76 to be met by a Ca brigade which will mark out the southern and eastern boundaries of my colonies agreed with GB in India.

In Europe, my commander and brigade will capture 45/65, 45/64 and 46/63. Having sealed that off from Naples, they will move eastwards along the coast as long as they can.

My two battalions militia brigade is already loaded on a merchantman, and along with a small merchantman I will leave there for trade, they begin their way towards the Baltic to take over a Swedish island.

Military

Train up everything and transfer battalions out of the militia brigade.

This turn I will build four more brigades: I think I will need some more troops in the colonies, particularly the Caribbean, so I am building some Line brigades for duties there. I would prefer them to be Cz, but I don't have the Ect Pts available. So the builds are: one brigade of 5 ID (good light cavalry those), two of 5 Ln for colonial duties; and one of 2 Mi, one ID, two Ln.

A word on cavalry. They are vital for simulated battles. I know in the early years most battles are mathematical, but I still like to build a few as I can afford them so they are fully trained when you need them. Obviously the best cavalry are the heaviest - but I can't afford cuirassiers yet so will have to make do with light dragoons.

Austerlitz at a glance

Long-running historical wargame from Supersonic Games, previously TBA Games. Startup is £10 and subsequent turns are £3.75-£4.50, depending on the size of the country played.

Production

The economy is pretty well there. I should have built another textile mill last turn in Europe, but forgot so I have no textiles and 235 wool! I have 4,597 Ect Pts, but then only then factories running. This turn I will put in the textile mill, another estate in the Caribbean where my population is growing well, and then eight European estates. I know this is early - April - but I believe for smaller countries it is worth getting them producing what little food they can, as early as they can. This will mean I will have produced virtually all my European homeland production sites.

Trade

No trade this turn. Nothing seems to be in my favour except Lisbon still on a 6, but I have already sold everything I can spare.

Diplomacy

Quiet, nothing much to report, except Spain is tossing up going to colonial war with Holland for landing in 'his' central Americas, and Rhineland because he has landed up around Haiphong.

May 1808

The May turn is usually exciting as it is the first chance anyone has of declaring war on anyone, and this one is no exception! My spy reports Holland has declared on the previously non-played France, but they are in for a shock because it has been taken over by Roland Langrick. Don't know Roland, but he is a treble elite game winner. I expect Holland will back down, but maybe not, he is obviously no mug.

What is more interesting for me is that GB has declared colonial war on France and has allied to Russia and Ottoman. The latter is not so much of a shock as he is buying their fleet (well part of the Ottoman's) and needs to be allied to do so. Spain decided to go to 2 with both Holland and Rhineland which is also interesting.

Annoyingly for me, Holland got to the zinc mine at 31/97 before me - rats! And there is a British fleet off 29/81. I have landed a KT brigade on the ore mine at 30/82, so I must talk with him about his intentions.

In Europe, nothing much happening. Ottoman player has secured the Suez canal and presumably will be heading down to the ore mine in the Red Sea soon. I seem to be the only player to have landed in North Africa after all, so I have my first three squares of desert land! Naples seems to have landed more men in the area south of Tunis which could be interesting with my ally Morocco.

Turn Planning

OK, what to do? Pretty straightforward really. My first order is to grab the ore mine at 30/82 with a 9/1. Hopefully the Brit hasn't landed anything and we won't come to loggerheads over it! There are two nice arable areas to the west of the now Dutch zinc mine at 31/97. Arable land is at a premium in South America so I want those.

In India my newly arrived commander federates with a Ca brigade at 56/76 and will move east to start marking out the boundaries of the agreed split of land with GB here. In the north, my new Kt brigade and my

existing Kt will finish up together to exchange battalions to leave one 5 Kt brigade and a garrison brigade.

In Europe, nothing too exciting. Grab three more squares in North Africa and in the process seal off anyone else landing there. Continue my militia brigade and merchantmen to the Baltic, they should get in the area next turn in time for the handover with Sweden the turn after.

Military

Train, train, train.

I am having a colonial focus this turn. I think the colonies are going to be more active than Europe for the time being so I am building two more brigades targeted for the colonies, plus another composite militia brigade and a Cz brigade which may also go overseas.



Production

In Europe I am using up my last three Portuguese co-ordinates by building my third factory, a barracks and another estate. Until I get more land in North Africa, or elsewhere, that is it for now.

In the Caribbean I also have a bit of a blitz, building a gold mine, sheep farm and lumbercamp. I also up population on 40/99 to bring it to a 3 for building a textile mill in a couple of turns. That leaves the 4 pop 39/95 square for the factory if I manage to hold the ore mine at 30/82.

I have only 4000 citizens in India, so I only put in another

estate. I may need food from here to feed Portugal or Caribbean.

In Europe I am only using 16000 men in the army and 4500 for building, so I can put out 16000 into my home population which all helps with taxes.

Trade

I am attempting to buy ore or wine from Paris (good tip, if you are not sure you will manage to beat someone else to buying from a trade city, order several buys so that if you don't get your first choice, you might get something else instead). The baggage train will move to Amsterdam, which is completely empty of goods and heading up in trade value. Another baggage train is to buy ore or wood in Munich before heading for Vienna for possible selling next turn. Lisbon is still at a 5, but I cannot spare any produce for selling at this time.

Diplomacy

I think I will go to 2 with France and Holland. France because he is unlikely to have a spy on me and if GB and Holland back down, I can do so too, but if they continue their war I can be ready to benefit too. Holland because I want him out of South America and Spain is unlikely to stop his war with him so I can get closer with my ally and gain some land and that zinc mine!

Next time ... Holland and Italy attack France - war in the Americas - a lack of funds - last minute diplomacy - and much more!

Godfather

Waxy Gordon and Al Capone fight it out in the head-to-head version ...

[This game is still being played as we go to press. The players don't know each other's names yet, so we're keeping shh about who they are for the time being ...]

Turn 0: Opening plans

Waxy Gordon - The first few turns in this game are all about building up the economic strength of your gang. Setting up Protection rackets is the quickest way to generate cash, but building boozers is more secure, because they are less likely to be closed down by the police or attacked by rivals. Later on, I need to acquire some of the other rackets to generate cash in new ways. For now, I have a very small empire and \$10,000 (\$6,000 of which is a loan from the underground organisation known as Murder Inc), and I have to spend it wisely.

The big difference about this head-to-head game is that war is likely to break out much sooner than usual. In a regular game, the best strategy early on is to try to avoid wasting time and resources on fighting your neighbours and let them fight each other. In a two-player game there should be a real advantage in attacking much sooner.

I am strictly limited in the number of orders I can carry out each turn by the number of enforcers I control. In the first turn I have only my boss and two other enforcers. Complicated orders, such as setting up a new business or attacking another gang, take an enforcer all week. Simpler orders, such as buying equipment, take only a day: so one enforcer could do five such commands in a week.

To generate some cash, I will set up two more Protection rackets (to go with my initial one) and I will order all the Protection bagmen to extract as much money as possible. Meanwhile my boss has to spend three days recruiting another enforcer (I am allowed one more until advancing to the next level). With his remaining time, he is going to try to buy some choppers (Godfather-speak for sub-machine guns) and a couple of armoured cars. I am trying to buy some heavy armaments much sooner than I would in a regular game: I want to have a couple of enforcers capable of going into battle as soon as I can afford it.

I have one more trick up my sleeve. I am going to set up my two new Protection rackets in the opposite corner of the city from my starting position. Assuming that the map is symmetrical this will be the starting position of my opponent. If I am lucky I will supplant his initial Protection racket (his bagman will simply withdraw rather than fighting). This could cost him as much as \$3,000, which is a significant blow at such an early stage.

Al Capone - I looked down at Johnny's lifeless body. Poor schmuck. Now he was out of the way, control of Chicago was down to me and one other guy. I told Vince and Guiseppe to dump the body in the lake and meet me back at the warehouse later. I had eleven big ones and I needed more. I would have to recruit another enforcer and set up some businesses to generate revenue. The locals are both thirsty for booze and ripe for the plucking ...

I'm playing Al Capone against an experienced and unknown player in a head-to-head contest to control Chicago's underworld. And all of Flagship's readers will see every move, every mistake ... The stakes are high.

The first couple of turns in Godfather are all about generating as much money as possible and grabbing territory. You have two choices: concentrate on your own ward or spread yourself around. I'll start off being conservative and see where that takes me. So, the first orders of business are to recruit some muscle, set up Protection rackets and get the booze flowing. I can reimburse Murder Inc later.

Turn 1: Early expansion

Waxy Gordon - Although there are only two players in this game, there are quite a few inactive positions scattered about the city. My attempt to remove the other player's Protection racket only succeeded in taking out one of the inactive players' rackets. In other respects things went to plan and next turn my income will rise quite a bit when the new Protection rackets get underway.

My active rival, Al Capone, has taken a small lead in the economic rankings - he must have squeezed slightly more from his Protection racket. However, his lead is tiny so there is no cause for concern.

Next turn I will set up one more Protection racket, probably the last one I will establish. In two or three turns time the police will start arresting Protection bagmen, especially those who are asking for too much money from local businesses, but it is still the quickest way to generate cash early in the game. Again I will try setting it up near where I think Al Capone's starting position may be.

I now need to diversify into setting up some booze-selling establishments. I plan to build two nightclubs, which are a relatively cheap way to sell lots of booze. Nightclubs only cost \$1,800 to establish and bring in \$2,300 of sales each turn, which is a good return on investment for anyone's business. You can spend extra to establish 'fronts' which reduce the risk of a police raid, but I have too little spare cash at the moment for that.

I have one more spare order for this turn. I plan to use it to send my boss on a 'cruise area' command. These orders are one of the biggest gambles in the game and it is always difficult to know how much time to spend cruising. My boss will spend the week in a 3x3 area of the city (that is just over 1% of the total area) looking for anything interesting. That could include some of Al Capone's rackets that I could then choose to attack, but I am more interested in finding one of the advanced rackets run by an NPC gangster. The more experienced the enforcer, the more he is likely to discover so this is definitely a job for the boss, despite the small risk of leaving him on his own in the middle of the city. It is only by cruising for these rackets that I can find new ways to generate cash other than building boozers and Protection rackets.

Al Capone - All my orders went through without a hitch, as you might expect on the first turn. I now have a new enforcer and two more Protection rackets. Since hiring an enforcer only takes three days I'd also hired three gunmolls and bought six choppers: get the strength while you can is my motto. A quick look at the Street Talk tables shows I'm trailing slightly on the military side (so, he also bought some hardware, did he?) but I'm ahead on the cash front. Well, at this stage I'd rather have a little extra income: in this game, cash gets cash.

Like any well-designed game, you never have quite enough resources to do all the things you want to do on a turn. Godfather is no exception! I have a full complement of enforcers and have to decide what to do with them. I want to set up a couple of extra Protection rackets, hire more muscle, buy equipment, open a nightclub and cruise for new rackets. Some of those will have to wait...

I'll assign one of the gunmolls to the speakeasy. She'll generate extra takings as well as providing protection in a fight. The second will go in the warehouse and the third will act as a personal bodyguard.

Godfather at a glance

A game of rival gangsters, set in 1920s Chicago. Available in this two-player version but also in a multi-player version. From Pagoda Games, at £10 + 2 turns for startup, then £2.50 per turn.

The bagmen running Protection rackets will increase the amount they ask for. Let's aim for 350 and see how deep the locals' pockets really are. I can reduce this later if the cops show too much interest in my activities. I've decided to wait a week before buying equipment and hiring muscle. I have just enough for my immediate needs and a cruise might just turn up something useful. I hope. Therefore, this turn I'll set up more Protection and establish a nice, new nightclub. I'm sure there's someone willing to sell on my terms...

Turn 2: Booze and new rackets

Waxy Gordon - So what did my boss discover in his week hanging round street corners? I'll tell you what he found - nothing. How can you spend a whole week and turn up nothing? If it was one of my junior enforcers I would be tempted to sack him. As I said last turn, cruising is a gamble and enforcer orders early in the game are a scarce resource so it is irritating to waste them. On the plus side, with only two active gangs, there is quite a lot of territory to expand into: I can continue to grow my gang for a while without picking up new rackets.

My emphasis for the next few turns will be setting up lots more nightclubs. These don't generate cash quite as quickly as Protection rackets, but will continue to earn revenue well into the game. I would like to set up as many nightclubs as I can spare enforcers, but first I have to establish a supply of booze for them. At the start of the game I had one small warehouse, a producer bagmen, one vat (to produce beer), one still (to produce whiskey) and a distributor bagmen with a van to transport the finished product. Last turn I added another vat and a still to the warehouse so that it is now full. To supply any more nightclubs I will have to build another, much bigger warehouse to produce more bootleg alcohol.

The third type of booze you can sell in the game is liquor. This is the high quality stuff that cannot be produced by upstarts like me but instead is smuggled in, generally across the Canadian border. Until I can track down the much prized 'Rumrunner' racket, the only way I can acquire liquor is to buy it from NPC Rumrunners in the city. This can take a big chunk out of your cashflow, because each case costs \$100 and a single nightclub sells three cases every turn. But the retail price is \$250 so it is well worth the effort. I am about to run out of my initial stock of liquor, so my boss will have to try to buy some more this week.

That leaves me with two enforcers to set up new nightclubs and one to find a warehouse. As well as buying liquor, my boss will have some spare time to buy some more equipment. The priorities now are: a couple of heavy trucks so that my distributor can continue to cope with the increasing booze production, some hoodlums (the basic muscle for menial jobs) and more choppers (who knows when I'll get to use them?). I am also going to hire some gunmolls, or female hoodlums: they can fight as well as regular hoods, but by posting them to my nightclubs I can slightly increase the takings in each boozer each week - this is one of the hidden tricks in Godfather.

Al Capone - Lady Luck smiles on Italians. My cruise revealed two new rackets: Opium and Numbers. Numbers costs quite a bit to set up and get running due to all the runners that need to be hired, but it is a nice little earner. Opium, on the other hand, has a very nice rate of return indeed ...

The two new Protection rackets are ready to start squeezing 'insurance premiums' from local businesses and the Northside Bridge Club is now open to discerning patrons. Don't forget to ask for 'strong tea' if you're in the upstairs rooms.

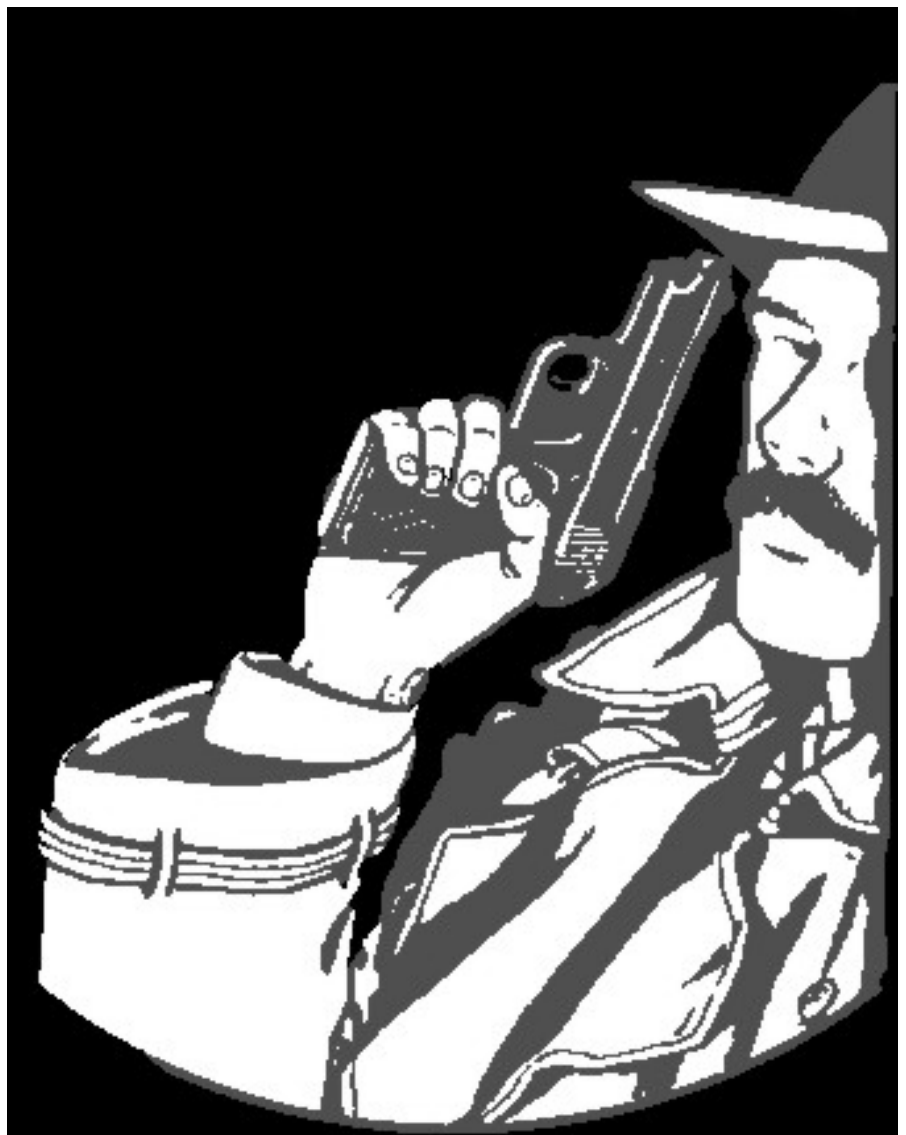
So far, things are working out quite nicely. I've moved ahead on the economics table and I've

opened up a slight lead on the Winners Table. I mustn't become complacent, though, because there's still the question of the debt to Murder Inc to be dealt with. They're charging 6% on the principal and 8% on the interest. That can build up very quickly into a problem. So, this week I'm going to pay off a couple of grand to keep them happy. Since that takes a whole day, I'll use the other four days to hire some hoods and buy equipment. And I'll need to order some liquor before I run out. The Protection rackets are bringing in about three grand each and the boozers will bring in about five thou between them. (That makes 18,000 or so total. I wonder if I'll make Mob Boss next week...?) I'll get my enforcers to set up an Opium racket, add another Protection racket and open a second Nightclub. Aah, the sound of cash rolling in ...

(It's as I'm filling out my orders that I realise I'm short one hood and a car. Bother! That's an oversight that may come back to haunt me.)

Turn 3: Elbowing room

Waxy Gordon - Scoring in Godfather is in a series of categories: your public image, territory controlled, military strength and economics. This last category being the most important in calculating your overall score. Al Capone and I have been increasing our scores steadily without yet coming into conflict. He is now fractionally ahead on both measures: he must have bought some weaponry last turn because I had been ahead of him there. On overall scores he is just 20 points ahead, less than a 1% difference. The message is that there is nothing to choose between us. That is hardly surprising: we both know the basics of how to set up new businesses and will probably be neck and neck until one of us discovers a lucrative new racket or we get into combat.



The difficult choice for me now is balancing three ways to develop. I could concentrate exclusively on economic development for a few more turns in the hope of getting a significant advantage in cash terms which I could then turn into weaponry. I could buy more weapons now and look to an early war. Or I could spend more time cruising in order to acquire new rackets or some information on Capone's empire.

As ever with these choices I am going to have to compromise. I always prefer to cruise only with my more experienced enforcers (at the moment just my boss). I can use junior enforcers for this job but they are likely to miss things. So I think I have use my boss for that this turn.

Despite the fact that Capone has overtaken me on overall military strength I am going to hold off buying more weapons for one more turn at least - my other three enforcers are all going to set up new boozers.

It is fair to say that half of Godfather is a combat game and half is a business game. To do well you have to manage your cashflow. I have now spent all my initial \$10,000. With the rackets I have set up I am now earning fair sums of cash: \$18,000 last turn with a profit of about \$12,000. Unfortunately I could eat up all of that profit in an instant on new investments (setting up a large hotel costs \$12,000). I only have \$1,500 in the bank, so the key to rapid expansion is knowing how much I expect to rake in from my rackets next turn (including the ones I just set up) and investing nearly all of it in new business. Most of next turn's income I will sink straight back into more boozers (two nightclubs and a large hotel): I want a virtuous circle of more cash and more investment - while making sure that I spend enough on weapons to match Capone.

Next turn should see both of our incomes rise enough to meet the next rank in the game: Mob Boss. This will give us both a little more power to wield.

Al Capone - We were in the backroom of the Bridge Club. Everybody was there except Dommi. The place was bedlam. Everybody was shouting at everybody else. I slammed the table and got their attention. 'Hey, hey, hey! Keep it down, boys! Now, tell me what happened.'

Between Vince and Alfonso I got the picture. Seems the locals had

been whining to the cops about our little insurance scheme and Dommi had got busted, along with his boys. Three months in Joliet! I was furious. I mean, just why do we contribute to the cops' retirement funds each week? I told the rest of them to loosen the squeeze a little. At least until the heat wore off.

The second little matter was the unwelcome discovery that Waxey Gordon had already moved in on my turf. OK, my boys saw his lot off but that wasn't the point. The agreement was, I got the northside and lakeshore and he got the south. We'd deal with the other minor bosses later. Looks like we may just have to pay him a visit...

My first reaction upon seeing the turn is that my opponent is a weasel. My second is that the cops are busting things up early in this game. I've never seen them move in so early on a racket. And I didn't even get a friendly warning the previous turn. I wonder if Keith has decided to toughen this game up a little to help the diary?

When I put down the new Protection racket, my enforcer discovered that Waxey already had one in place. Given the game set-up, it's very surprising to see such an incursion so early. If this game wasn't anonymous, Waxey would be getting a right earful by now. It's considered bad form to wander into someone else's ward so early.

Of course, the loss of Dommi's racket hurt and I was lucky that all the purchases went through. I now have an extra 12 hoods, four sedans and six choppers in stores which should ease some of the problems I created for myself. Income was a little over 17,000 so if the cops hadn't busted Dommi or if I'd had that extra hood with a car, I would have made Mob Boss easily. Them's the breaks. It's also lesson one: don't forget to check your orders before sending them in!

I continue to be ahead on all the important tables, so perhaps my opponent is also having problems. Maybe it's time to add to them.

This turn I'll concentrate on building strength and increasing income. I'll also take a quick look around in ward 4 to see what they're up to.

[To be continued ...]



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VALKYRIE

Book of Beelzebob

The One and Only BOB McLAIN, with all the Fun of the unFair ...

AROUND here, summer means the Montana Brothers carnival, a rusty, seedy clutch of games and rides that criss-cross the region like a stomach virus. My son still sees magic in the cigarette-smoking transients who run the games and yell at 'Dad' to throw darts at the balloons or toss a too-small ring over the neck of an empty beer bottle. I see a rig. I've gotten pretty good at figuring out how the games are fixed and winning the big stuffed animals.

Last night, for instance, we stopped at the lovely rat-in-the-hole game. In this game, a big white rat is released in the middle of a round platform and it immediately dives into one of 24 colored holes drilled into the platform. For \$1.00, you can put a token on the color that matches the hole you think the rat will choose.

I bought two tokens. I put one of them on brown. The rat went into the brown hole. Much to the rat-man's disgust, I chose as my prize the big Scooby-Doo stuffed animal that he had tied above the game as a crowd-tempter.

What was the rig? I watched other people play the game and noticed that the rat didn't run into a hole; it slid. Then I saw that the platform itself was tilted. Before each game, the rat-man gave it a little spin to put a different colored hole at the bottom of the tilt, depending on what colors the players had chosen. I bought two tokens but I only put one of them down immediately. I kept the second in my fist and put it down right after the rat-man spun the platform and I saw which hole the rat, with its slippery wax-covered paws, would likely slide into.

Why didn't everyone notice? It was a clever rig, well-hidden and well-executed, and you don't want to think about these things when you take the family for a fun night with the Montana Brothers. But I have a mind for rigs. I see them everywhere.

Now let's talk about cheating in play-by-mail games.

Spotting the Rig by Mail

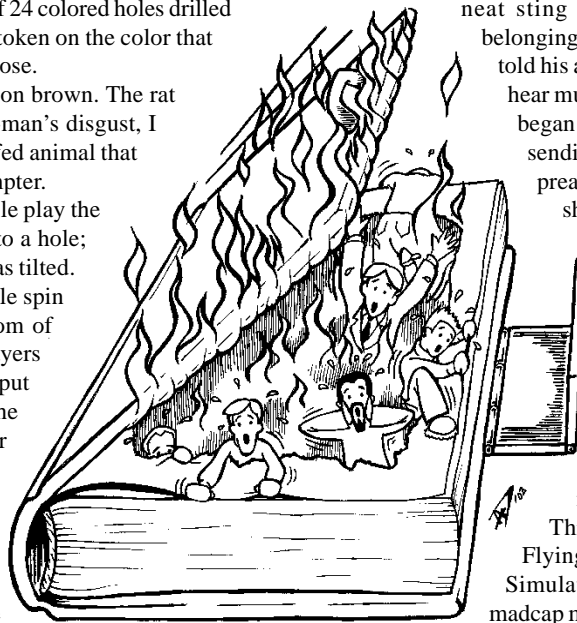
Over the years, PBM players have resorted to every rig, every dirty trick, to gain an advantage in a game. Even moderators will sometimes cheat to punish players they don't like or to influence the evolution of their games. Most of the cheating moderators are no longer around because you can't run a business that way; quite a few of the cheating players, however, are still quite active, and they may be right next to you. In the next several columns, I'm going to expose some of the best rigs ever pulled. You'll laugh, you'll cry; you might even find inspiration.

Real men don't use e-mail: they type letters, fold them, seal them in envelopes, stamp them, and mail them. That's how we did things years ago. (We also walked five miles to school barefoot on winter mornings.) It's easy to have multiple e-mail addresses, but hard to have multiple postal addresses, especially if you didn't want to use your real name. Of course, people did it. PBM players did it so they could run extra positions in the same game.

Once, in Beyond the Stellar Empire (circa 1984, I think), we noticed something fishy about this player (call him Luke) who always seemed to have the inside track on what our group was doing. I noticed that one of our members (call him Ebenezer) had a mailing address close to Luke's mailing address. More telling, Ebenezer's address was a PO box. We fed Ebenezer some information and, sure enough, Luke acted upon it. Rather than set him up for an ambush, we decided to have some fun with clever Luke.

To appreciate this story, you have to understand that Luke was a Lutheran minister in Nebraska. We decided to send Ebenezer some dirty magazines. We started with Playboy and went down the food chain. Someone faked a letter from the 'Adult Film School' offering Ebenezer a scholarship if he entered their 'butt shot' competition. I figure it must have been embarrassing for a minister to walk out of a small town Post Office with envelopes that had 'Adult Sex Magazine' written in big black letters on the envelopes.

Of course, being serious game players, we also set up a neat sting that drew Luke's ships (and some ships belonging to his allies) into a meat grinder. Then we told his allies that Ebenezer had set them up. We didn't hear much from Luke afterward. When our envelopes began coming back 'no such boxholder', we stopped sending the dirty magazines. I'm sure Luke is still preaching in Nebraska (and perhaps taking butt shots after the sermons).



US PBM: The Titanic Trio

Most industries, even PBM, have their Big Three. In England, I'd say the Big Three are Madhouse, KJC, and Harlequin, in no particular order. In Australia, I'd go with WOW Games, Peter Read's old 286 PC, and the dingo that howls outside Kevin Flynn's bedroom window every Saturday night. As for America, we don't have a Big Three, but rather a Titanic Trio consisting of Flying Buffalo, Adventures by Mail, and Reality Simulations, a regular merry marching society of madcap moderators (sorry, I've been reading Stan Lee's biography). These companies probably service around

80% of US PBM gamers. Enough to fill a phone booth? Maybe...

In my next three colossal columns, I'm going to look at each marvelous member of America's Titanic Trio in devastating detail. You'll be given my perilous perspective on each captivating company, starting with a breathtakingly brief history and finishing with a fearless forecast of their future. Excelsior!

Now maybe the bums who complain I don't actually write about US PBM will shaddup.

Beelzebols

Mo Holkar! You have an ad for your new game Conclave on page 11 of last issue. Did you pay for that ad? Did you write that ad copy ('Don't dream it. Be it.')? Be what? A piece of clip-art like the one you use in the ad? Oh, wait. I'm supposed to rush over to your Web site and take my time to figure it out. Conclave my ass.

David Ames! I guess you rushed over to Mo's Web site. There's your definitive review of Conclave on page 20. You're tough. You claim that the game's only weakness is that the turns are too infrequent. Yowsa. Carol must have loosened up the reviewer's guidelines. A comment like that in Flagship about an advertiser's game used to get you blackballed. I'm glad we're entering an era of hard-hitting journalism.

Sam ('Dirt') Roads! Your music 'focuses on driving jazz rhythms in an electric rock sound-world'. Good Lord, Elton, don't you feel bad when the birds start falling from the sky during your rehearsals? Put away the damn oboe, pick up a guitar, and do something bloody useful. Play me Mannish Boy. I'm a man. How's that spelled?

Company Commander

DEN TEMPESTA, with some useful tips ...

Company Commander is a modern wargame where you play the part of a faction in a fictional south American country. It's a long-playing game, but it's not open-ended. It will take some time to build up your faction and get some combat experience, so it's not a game for someone who wants to fight after half a dozen turns or so. It's realistic in the sense of its logistics for loads of cargo or men in vehicles: you won't be able to get thirty men in a lorry that holds twenty, for example.

Company Commander comes with a rulebook which is fairly bulky, but a large part of it is a catalogue of the troops and equipment you can get. The rules themselves are fairly simple: you need to know how to fill in the movement sheet first, then the convoy move. The GM is Jason Oates, who is very helpful and will always answer any questions. All turns are sent out regularly; the only deadline is the monthly adjustment on the 28th; you play two-three turns a month. The map is big, on 15 A4 pages (3 deep, 5 wide).

First decisions

Starting at turn 1, it may sound obvious to say 'with no industry you will not be able to do anything'; however, I found that one of the keys to the game is how you spend your start-up money. With 1000 Money Points (MPs) and a loan of 2500 MPs, it's too easy to buy all sorts of weapons. You feel like a child in a toyshop with the birthday money: you see a howitzer that's information box says 'Kills all living things within a 20-mile radius' and you think, 'Cool - I'll have a dozen of those!' However, if instead you spend around three quarters of your money on industry and investment, these will pay for themselves after six to eight weeks.

It's well worth spending as much on trucks as you can and buying them as often as you can. Last issue's review mentioned being patriotic and buying British: however, the key here is to buy the Man8X8. It's expensive, but worth it. It carries four squads of troops or 20000lbs of cargo. This means you need four trucks for the convoy moves in the first six months (or so) of play. ZiLs are cheaper (or Stalwarts), however they carry less and are more prone to break down. You do get what you pay for. Set some trucks aside for convoy moves, some for general movement: you have convoy moves which allow you to move industry or recruits around and which count as an extra move.

Industry is expensive: a bauxite mine will cost 125 MPs, but that will soon pay for itself. Hospitals at about 100 MPs are *very* useful. They require combat supplies to function, but generate 100 Political Points (PFPs) and replacements. Eight replacements are converted into a militia unit, so you'll have extra troops every few months.

You will find an air-field and a contraband centre nearby. Contraband sells for around 80 MPs per unit, so buying a second one for 500 MPs is well worth while. Although it's expensive and reduces your PFPs, contraband is profitable and adds to your income, especially if you've increased the contraband efficiency via special actions. So buy a second contraband centre. Investing in villages causes growth in village size (you need a size 10 to support logistic centres) and generates recruits. An investment of 10 MPs to a size 1-6 village has a positive effect. You should aim at doubling the investment over the village level: size 10 therefore requires 20 MPs.

Set up the training camps. You only have a few recruits at this stage, so level 2 (recruit to militia) is OK. Next month you can do level 3 (militia to regular infantry). Consider training your first lot of recruits as pioneers: they generate defence stores, which allow you to build defensive structures. You can't buy many defence stores and you only start with four squads of pioneers, which limits how much you can build or increase fortifications.

I'd suggest using your three special actions along these lines, to get the loan, recruit spies and improve an industry rating like contraband or

population support. You must allocate resources for them to work, of course.

Making progress

Once you've moved to the next village you should order a resource recon (a commander must be present), so you know how much industry to build. Industry comes in the form of sugar plantations, oil wells, lumber yards and bauxite mines. The produce is sold at the border warehouse, (which can be upgraded at a cost, 1 level per turn) and generates political points (PFPs) or minus PFPs.

Don't neglect technical training. It's worth spending PFPs on training for a tank. You'll have to buy a level 1 tank before buying level 2. Like I said, it's a long term game. Helicopters are important: get training for S-S5 Whirlwind and buy one, then train for Westland Wessex and buy that, and soon you'll be airlifting your troops around in a Chinook!

Ammo, fuel, rations, medical kits etc are called combat supplies. Each unit is 100lb, so five combat supplies equals 500lb in weight. It's well worth buying a few extra logistic centres in each village and not using all of them, because later on, when you meet your neighbours, 2-300 extra combat supplies will really help.

Processing

The only deadline is the 28th of each month. You get a blackmarket report, where you can buy and sell equipment, plus you can smuggle contraband, which is then worth more, although there's a risk of being caught. And you get a newsletter, which I think adds a bit more depth to the game.

Jason has made changes to game 8, notably the removal of the training tree. Before, you had to get the training and buy the basic tank, then train before you could buy the next one, and so on. Now, however, you only need to get the training for what you want (or can afford), which makes the game better. Villages have to be a level 10 to support logistics centres, which means you need to invest a lot more or you will be short of ammo, fuel and troops.

Overall planning

Get a plan drawn up of your objectives, short term and long term. The player who does the most with investments will do better overall.

- * You can't do everything at once, because you have set amounts of order spaces and low amounts of money.
- * Invest in villages and training camps every month to get recruits, leave men at junctions on roads, be wary of expanding so far that you can't defend yourself, but do get a lot of villages.
- * Buy logistics centres and repair trucks, and leave repair trucks at the start and end of convoy routes. Trucks do break down, but are automatically repaired if repair trucks and enough combat supplies are present at that location.
- * Do resource recon on the same turn. This saves time.
- * Build up your airstrip: even if you don't plan on buying aircraft, you may get one, and bigger aircraft need bigger air-strips.
- * Recruit, train and use spies.
- * Finally, note the important point that special actions can be used for things not covered in the rules. There are special actions to increase just about anything, whether it's industry production (at 50% a sugar plantation produces two units of sugar, at 100% it could be eight units) or the training of recruits, to raise your infantry to a higher standard.

Company Commander is designed to be a long-term and realistic experience: I recommend that you try it out if you are into wargames.

A Brief Guide to Wargame Design

RICHARD WATTS of AGEA PUBLICATIONS ...

WHEN OUR illustrious editor asked me to write a few lines of this subject, I have to admit my first reaction was, 'gulp, how do I do that?' Strange as it seems, despite designing and running historical play-by-mail games full-time since 1989, I couldn't think clearly how I went about this particular topic. Embarrassing to admit, but true!

Gradually the fog lifted, and now, in the cool light of the first days, nay hours, of spring, a light bulb has illuminated above my head! So, for what it is worth, here are my ramblings on how to go about researching a PBM.

First step. It is no good running a game if your heart isn't really in it. When Agea was established in 1989, we launched a range of games which we thought would sell. The only one which was done for 'love' was La Gloire du Roi. I knew I'd like to play in such a game, but somehow doubted many others would, but it was included simply because I wanted to do it. Ironically La Gloire du Roi is now our flagship game, is in its 5th edition, and just happens to be the only game from our early range which was popular enough to be a commercial success! So, lesson one. Choose an era of history or a topic you're personally passionate about. If you don't, it will show, and eventually you'll get bored and/or fed up.

Right. Having decided to run a PBM based on the life on an ant, or whatever topic has stolen your heart, start reading. Get as many books as possible on the subject and immerse yourself. Read anything vaguely related, and don't worry too much if much of it is indecipherable to start with. Given time things will become clearer, but if you aren't well grounded in your subject so some clever clogs will come along and tell you 'this isn't right' and 'that should be like that.' They'll do that anyway, but at least you will have the proverbial ammunition to argue back!

I know, I've done it myself. I once saw a Napoleonic PBM set in the 1800's which had the Russian capital as Moscow, with no mention of the real capital Saint Petersburg. That was because - cough, splutter - the maps were a direct rip-off from La Gloire du Roi, the maps for which are dated 1700, and in 1700 Saint Petersburg hadn't been built yet! The chap designing the game, had he done his homework, could have avoided that basic mistake. If you don't notice, you can be sure your players will!

After giving that cautionary tale, it is equally true that you shouldn't shrink back too much: if you wait until your baby is 'perfect', it'll probably never get played or see the light of day. There will be things which need changing over time. La Gloire du Roi is a very different beast these days than the 1989 version. Evolution is inevitable if the game has depth.

So, we know the period or topic inside out, how do we translate this into a game? Not making matters too complex can be extremely difficult. I find it best to bash out a first rendition, then leave it alone and do something else for a few weeks. Come back to the game, and take a fresh look - or even better, get a interested third party to do the same.

Don't be afraid to whittle down a clumsy system and try again. I have filing cabinets full of half-baked projects, parts of which are sometimes affiliated into other project. Try not to throw them away, the ideas can be of use in later years.

Be careful to balance the time it will take to run the game per turn with a quality result. You may think that you'll run it for fun on a regular basis and not mind how much work is thrown at you, but believe me you will after a few years of it! Procedures and batch processing are essential

or you'll get worn down and give up. Again, if you end up not enjoying running the game the players, who are not stupid (stop laughing), will notice.

It is a fact of life that when you stare at a rulesbook for hours, you can read it addictively, and still not see a grammatical error until you've printed a 100 or so copies off! One other tip at this stage - don't rely on reading the rules on a computer screen alone. Print a draft copy off, and read that at leisure. It puts less strain on your eyes and, at least with my creaky brain, makes spotting errors easier. It also allows you to take a red pen and cross out parts and change the wording or layout as necessary. I've recently done this with a Science-Fiction PBM we've been working on (coming soon - watch press for details!), and consider it utterly essential to do this several times.

I've deliberately avoided the thorny subject of actual game mechanisms, because that in itself is a very complex and varied topic. This is simply my 'crib sheet' for getting a project going. Well, dear reader, if you are a GM how do you go about it? How about writing to Flagship to let us all know?

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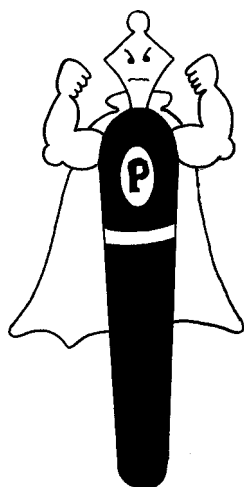
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THE MIGHTY PEN



New to PBM

I'm fairly new to PBM, having only played a couple of games so far, but I would very much like to run my own game. What advice could Flagship readers give? Perhaps someone could write an article for people like me with enthusiasm and ideas, but not much in the way of PBM know-how. Are there games out there which I could buy the licence to? If so, how do I find out about them? Developing my own game is my pet project of course, but it strikes me this may take a considerable amount of time.

Chris Brown

[I think the best advice is to make a lot of PBM friends - it's a social hobby and players are always keen to discuss new games and ideas. There was a series of articles on GMing a while back: perhaps it's time for an update?]

Robbed

After exchanging heated emails with your editor in the last few days, she has invited me to comment on what I feel about the recent review of my game Company Commander and the decision to run the article.

Firstly, I have an open door policy to players. If they want to talk to me then they pick up a phone. I answer it and we deal with problems, suggestions complaints etc. If I was sensitive to criticism of my role as GM, I would have given up doing that long ago. Indeed I encourage players to make their points in the belief that a game can be improved by such interaction.

Company Commander 7 has been a large leap forward for the game in terms of playability and in game structure. I felt that these changes justified a review from Flagship.

For those of you who don't know how this process works, it is very simple. Flagship nominates a player and the GM sends a start up. The reviewer then plays the game free of charge and writes the review over a period of months. Regular updates are supposed to be sent to 'Rumours' to keep the readers up to date with events.

My particular reviewer requested extended time to make sure he experienced the full impact of the game.

As you can probably guess from reading the review, it fell short of being even an average review.

I felt that the reviewer failed to pass on to others the scope, atmosphere, and general feel of the game, and instead focused on some very trivial matters about game presentation that bear only passing relevance to the quality of the game.

I feel strongly that the review was written in haste to meet the deadline with no structure and very little reference to the game materials, newsletters, results, GM help and the many other areas that could have been covered. The whole article lacked the 'Depth' that many months of play should have given the piece.

I have told Carol that I hold her responsible for the poor quality of the article. I have also suggested that the deadline had to be made, regardless of the quality of the submitted article, and that it was run in the hope that I would read it and put it down to experience.

Since the publication of the last edition of Flagship I have had a number of calls offering the opinion that the article was of such poor

quality that it has done untold damage to the reputation of a long established and successful game.

I have asked Carol if the role of Flagship is still to promote PBM?

If the answer is yes, then I would suggest that fairness and quality should be used. This would involve editing poorly written articles and rejecting them if they are not up to standard. It might mean that reviewers are forced to submit their articles some weeks earlier but it would mean that the editor was not forced to print regardless of content.

If Flagship is not to promote PBM, then what is its purpose?

As I said at the start of this piece, I am not unwilling to listen to and act on criticism. However, when a reviewer apparently writes a review in such a hurry that its quality is so low, and submits it, and it is then printed no matter the relevance or accuracy or quality, it will make a game look bad no matter what its quality, longevity or playability.

In the end there have been three losers here:

1 - Flagship has printed a very poor article, lowering the otherwise high quality of the magazine.

2 - I have lost potential players for the new game.

3 - Existing players already keen to sign up for the new game have lost new players to pit their wits against.

This has been a sorry episode.

I am very reluctant to offer any other game up for review because of the risk that a good game could be the subject of another exercise in negativity. Why would I risk a review in Flagship that will damage the game for many months, when I can simply advertise in war games magazines and risk nothing?

J P Oates, GM

[The review in question appeared last issue. I didn't find the review negative, myself, but reviewers do generally approach a game as new players. We'll happily consider in depth articles from experienced players of any game.]

Seeking a game

Following the demise of You Rule, which was the best PBM games since Starweb, I have searched for something as good - in vain. Help me please.

Roger Trethewey

[You Rule seems to have gone, though Starweb is playable by email with FBI. Can readers help with further suggestions?]

Email: blessing or curse?

I'd like to see an article about email communications between players and the effect on games, costs of playing and time expended vs snailmail.

Personally I find it actually interferes with planning in some ways.

Charles Miller

[Right, we'll see what we can put together on this for a future issue: there's some vigorous discussion in this issue's Rumours and Feedback.]

Room for improvement

[We're always happy to receive constructive ideas about improving Flagship. Here are some of the suggestions we've had this issue. Feel free to write in and comment on these, or add to them!]

I'd rate Flagship more highly if there were some reviews of games like *Ultima Online*. Not strictly speaking PBM I know, but similar-ish. Interactive anyway. And Carol, why don't you write a column from time to time? Thoughts on PBM in general? I seem to recall you wrote a How to be a GM piece a long while back. Could this be re-visited and updated perhaps?

Jason Brown

I'd like to see Bob McLain doing a review of a game. That would be fun! Especially if he didn't like it! Bob's easily the best columnist you've got.

Kevin O'Keefe

Cover web games? Yes, yes, yes! I'd suggest covering some that aren't necessarily turn-based too, so long as you don't need to be online more than, let's say, twice a day, or for too long at a time.

Ben Williams

Your Feedback on Issue 96

LAST ISSUE was rated at 8.37, with Beer Mogul as your favourite feature ('amusing theme' - **Philip Howard**), followed by the En Garde! roundup ('excellent! Let's have more articles of this sort!' - **Jason Brown**), the Middle-Earth beginners' guide ('entertaining, informative' - **Carlos Staffiero**), the Harlequin overview ('interesting, although I don't play their games' - **Bruce Edwards**), David Blair's sports column ('even though I'm not that interested in PBM sports games, I'm almost tempted to give them a whirl' - **Kevin O'Keefe**), Tough at the Top, Austerlitz, Company Commander, Rumours, Conclave, Karadon, the Zine Scene and Paul Evans' column. Many of you praised the cover map (from Harlequin's game *Legends*).

45% found nothing boring, but 35% dislike all sports coverage and there were objections to various articles, among them the Harlequin overview (see below), the Karadon diary ('a bit silly without the context' - **Philip Howard**), Middle Earth ('a slight moan - more Middle Earth?' - **Ben Williams**) and En Garde! ('never been a fan of free flow games' - **David Blair**). **Jason Brown** thinks it 'A shame there was no Bob McLain or Steve Tierney.' **Ben Williams** warns that some recent reviews have lacked structure 'and don't really give a good impression of what the game is like to play. An example of this was the Company Commander review. I read it, I noted that the reviewer didn't really like it, but I'm left rather unsure as to how the game plays. There was perhaps a bit too much opinion and not enough fact.'

Question 4 asked whether we should continue the system used as an experiment in the Harlequin overview last issue and if so, what type of game and/or which firm we should cover next. Mixed feelings, here. Several of you felt that it was a mistake to quote GMs' comments directly. 'The writing was ok, the subject material interesting (I'd like to see more overviews like this, in fact), but I don't like the concept of letting GMs write stuff on their own games, at least not mixed in with player comments' says **Ben Williams**. Other suggestions for an over-view were 'Updates on good, old games,' **Roger Trethewey**; 'Pagoda's games,' **Stephen Gee**; 'exploration games,' **Thomas Lancaster** and 'sci-fi games,' **Jason Brown**. Some, like **Jon Martin**, dislike the format, 'I prefer longer articles.'

Question 5 explained that we're planning to cover more web-based games, as long as they're based on turns. But what sort of deadlines do you favour in these games? 10.6% are happy with daily turns for simple games ('otherwise longer deadlines are preferable' - **Jason Brown**). 9.2% would go for 2-4 days. A 48% majority prefer weekly turns, or longer ('Although I like the speed of a weekly game by email, I find that daily or similar puts me at a disadvantage because there are days when I just don't have time' - **Mike Lay**). 5% pick 10 days and 17% 2 weeks or longer ('I already have something called "work" and "children" that take a fair bit of time!' - **Bruce Edwards**). Generally you favour covering web-based games ('Yes, yes, yes! I'd suggest covering some that aren't necessarily turn based too, so long as you don't need to be online more than, let's say, twice a day, or for too long at a time' - **Ben Williams**). But let's not forget those who don't play such games: 'I doubt if I will have email or a computer for a long time' - **Brian Hooker**.

Question 6 asked about following an email chat-site when playing a game. 26% don't have enough time ('most use an email group and I use that, but very seldom go on to chat - usually a lot of the time is wasted' - **David Blair**). 42% think that it's the best way to keep in touch, but 32% are concerned that chat-sites aren't fair if a game is played by post as well: 'It's important that the GM follows what's going on and summarises,

and that the game is set up so that postal players don't suffer (Dungeonworld does this well)' - **Philip Howard**; 'I do think GMs might like to consider running the odd postal only game, but I wonder whether there's the market for this these days?' - **Ben Williams**; 'I'd like to say that email mailing lists aren't fair if a game is also played by post - I really would. However, you can only go on making allowances of this sort for so long. Surely email is now more or less ubiquitous in the UK (even more so in the USA). I don't think it would make commercial sense for GMs to run postal only games. The answer, tough though it may seem, is "get with the times and get online" - **Jason Brown**; 'Before I had the computer, I used to avoid writing to players with email addresses as I expected that they'd be in touch with each other. Now I find out that they definitely are - lots! I do try to reply to letters too. I still remember life Before Computer' - **Bruce Edwards**. **Andrew Kendall** feels strongly: 'There seem to be two types of email forum. I'll read them if they are background stuff which doesn't turn into repetitive and long savaging of one position, helped if they do not affect gameplay significantly. It's nice to know what's going on in the other parts of the game. But I keep away if they start getting insulting, something too easy to do by email, or are being unbalanced between access. In these cases, the forum becomes unfair if some do not have access, or like me, limited access. When the regulars are weighted heavily to one side of a dispute, the volume of mail will become unmanageable (say 5 people mailing every day vs 1 replying once a week) and the effect destructive. I find that those doing this deny any such effect, despite obvious results.'

Question 7 asked if we should subtitle ourselves 'the Magazine of Interactive Gaming'. 76% don't care what we call ourselves, it's the content that counts ('but if changing it boosts sales then it's acceptable' - **Simon Fillies**). 10% oppose any change ('since Flagship's subscription-based, there's little need to worry about marketing to those who are completely unaware of its subject matter' - **Philip Howard**). 14% fancy a change that would sound prestigious, but think that 'Interactive' is incorrect or misleading. Don't worry, we'll keep *Flagship* itself - I like editing something that could be a ship or a starship!

Feedback questions on #97

[Choose more than one answer if you wish, and feel free to comment.]

- 1 Please rate this issue from 1 (vapid) to 10 (voluptuous).
- 2 Which articles/sections did you most enjoy, and why?
- 3 Which bored you, and why?
- 4 Design articles:
 - (a) I don't usually read these,
 - (b) I like to know how GMs think,
 - (c) I like inside info on what's coming up,
 - (d) I'll design a game of my own one day.
- 4 Contacting fellow players by email:
 - (a) I love its immediacy,
 - (b) I prefer a letter/phone,
 - (c) frequent communication is too demanding.
- 5 Short of time to play, do you give up:
 - (a) your most demanding game,
 - (b) your most expensive game,
 - (c) your minor game(s),
 - (d) all your games,
 - (e) the day job?
- 6 If you've enjoyed a game first time, do you:
 - (a) play it again,
 - (b) look for something similar from another firm,
 - (c) try something different from the same firm,
 - (d) just move on because there are plenty more games out there?
- 7 What sort of games in general do you enjoy playing?
 - (a) PBM / PBEM
 - (b) Boardgames
 - (c) Tabletop Roleplaying
 - (d) Computer games
 - (e) On-line gaming
 - (f) Other ...

[Replies welcomed by surface mail to the UK office, or by email to carol@flagship-pbm.co.uk. By July 18th, please.]

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Which Roleplaying System?

GARY FORBIS, our new RPG columnist, rolls the dice ...

On the shelves of game stores the world over, sit a bewildering array of roleplaying games, all catering to different types of players. It can be very difficult to choose which game to get if you are thinking about trying a new one, and with that in mind I want to discuss a couple of the major systems out there. Before I start that however, I want to explain why some great games aren't on the list.

First of all, I chose the biggest games because they are easy to find everywhere. This leads to the second reason - it is easier to find players that are familiar with the game. Even if you already have a group, people who have played the game can give you some helpful tips or house rules. The biggest reason, though, is simply space. There are a lot of great, widely-available games that may appeal to you that I just can't fit onto the page (or can't fit into my bookshelf). So, before I waste any more of it, let's get started.

First up is the new d20 system introduced in *Dungeons & Dragons* 3rd edition. While you may think this is strictly a fantasy system, Wizards of the Coast have also put out *Star Wars* and *Call of Cthulhu*, and there is also another excellent title: *Spycraft*. This gives you one simple system that can cover a wide range of games. You can even do cross-genre games if you want, but each game has so many tweaks to make it fit the setting that this will require a bit of work.

In the simplest words possible, d20 is a heavily mechanics-based system. While it is much more flexible than earlier incarnations of D&D, the play is still focussed heavily on character level. This is great if you are a game master trying to balance an encounter, and it provides incentive to continue playing - to get that extra feat or to reach a new spell level. However it's not so good for developing characters with personality or diversity. Good roleplayers can overcome this (face it, a good player can have fun with any system), and even we non-theater majors can achieve some more unique characters if we buy enough books with new classes and feats in them.

Next is the *Storyteller* system by White Wolf. These are games of modern-day horror, casting the players in the rolls of the monsters. You can play Vampires, Werewolves, Mages, Fairies, Ghosts, and the everyday people who hunt them. These are all very dark games with the basic theme that the world is on the brink of destruction and maybe, if they are lucky, skilled and wise, the characters can make a difference. Of course, that's just the default setting. If you want to, you can play a group of vampires as superheroes that drink blood, but if you do you will not get as much value out of the books as someone who runs a game steeped in the myths and themes of the game.

In many ways, *Storyteller* is the opposite of D&D. Most of the mechanics would fit on a gamemaster's screen. The rest of the books are taken up with descriptions of skills, abilities, and a lot of background and roleplaying information. If you are someone who like buying expansion books filled with rules, this may not be your cup of tea. Most of the books have maybe four pages of new skills or powers tucked into the back, the rest being roleplaying material to enrich the characters or the campaign.

If you enjoy play-acting and getting into character more than you enjoy waving swords at the other players to see whose is bigger, then this is an excellent system for you to look into. Also of note if you prefer fantasy games to modern day, most of the game lines have books set in the Dark Ages for running such games. If that sort of fantasy is too gritty for you, then you could look into *Exalted*. This is a relatively new game line using a modified version of the regular *Storyteller* system, and so far it is top-notch. The characters are practically gods among men, and it plays something like a combination of D&D and a kung fu movie.

Another excellent game system is *GURPS*, by Steve Jackson Games.

This is an old system that has been around seemingly forever. The mechanics are somewhat rudimentary compared to more recent games, but the strength of the game lies in the expansions for it. There is a book covering almost anything you can imagine. Pirates, spies, time-travellers, spaceships, superheroes, martial artists, military special forces, fantasy races, sorcery, and the list goes on forever.

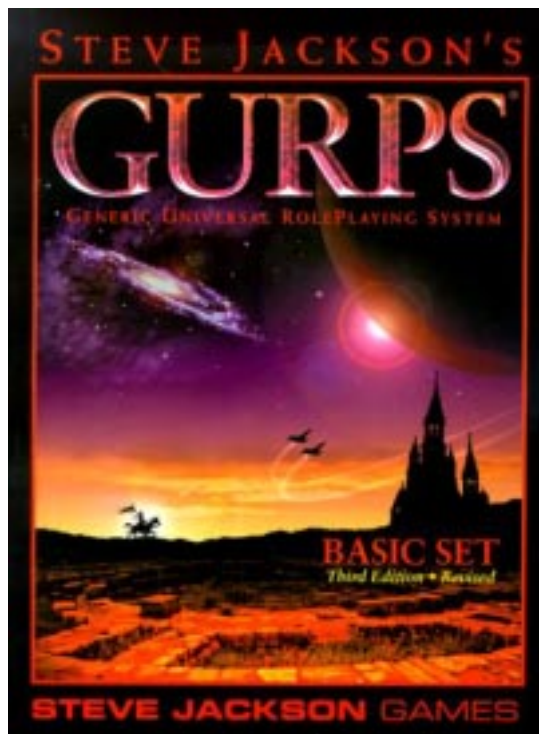
If you like having rules for doing lots of things, this is a great game for it. Every book seems to be loaded with new skills, advantages, or systems for doing new things. My only complaint about the system is that everything is based on having just a couple 6-sided dice. This is great if it's your first game and all you have is some dice out of a Monopoly box or something, but unfortunately I think that the skill system breaks down a bit at extremely high levels. Two dueling characters of very high skill will find it nearly impossible to hurt each other.

The redeeming part of the game is the fact that you can easily cross genre lines with no trouble or rule changes at all. Want to make a game of Dwarven Kung Fu Cyberpunks vs. Psychic Alien Invaders, or Wizards and

War Machines - a WWII game involving magic? You can even run a game that jumps through the settings of your favorite movies, where the players face down Sauron before lunch and deal with Darth Vader after supper. *GURPS* handles it easily. Pick up a couple books at the store if you don't already own them and start playing.

Even if you don't plan to play *GURPS*, the settings books are well worth picking up to add flavor to another game. The Medieval or Fantasy setting could be a nice addition to *Dungeons & Dragons*. *GURPS* even does adaptations of other game systems, including some lines from White Wolf (although these are all out of print now). So if you prefer a more rules-intense game than White Wolf provides, or if you just want to give your Werewolf telekinesis, this is another excellent option.

Well, that is about all I can say for now. I wish I had room to cover many more of the excellent games out there, but I think these there are all excellent systems that will tend to appeal to different tastes. Hopefully, at least one of these sounds interesting enough that you might look into it further. In future issues I hope to discuss things that apply to roleplaying in general, and are not tied to a specific system. So even if none of these games excites you, or you are offended that I didn't mention your favorite, I hope you will continue to read and that I can tell you something that will benefit your game, whatever it is.



d20 and Dark Ages

GARY FORBIS describes new advances in table-top roleplaying systems ...



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collect dust until they finally meet their fate in a dumpster out back. Sometimes I flip through them just to see what kernels of wisdom the author felt merited publishing. Surprisingly, in these neglected, misfit systems, I more often than not find hints of sheer genius. Unfortunately, because the rest of the setting and system is dull or poorly thought out, this shard of brilliance is lost to mainstream gamers. This is where the *d20* system really comes into its own. There are a lot of games out there being published by companies large and small. In fact at the time of this writing there have been over 700 products released under the *d20* license, according to Wizards of the Coast's website. Obviously, these are not all mainstream or profitable products, but they can still be mined for the genius they contain, and it will be fairly compatible with any other *d20* product you care to use.

This is why the *d20 Modern* book due on the shelves in early November excites me so much. From what I have read, the book is fairly generic, but is set up to be a modern-day fantasy game replete with arcane and divine spells and monsters from dragons to cave trolls. It sounds to me like *Shadowrun* without the implants and cyberspace, but the important part is that all these pieces are there and you can use only the parts that are appropriate for your game world. They are also releasing *Urban Arcana*, a setting book that will hopefully dispel that stereotype, and make for a truly interesting setting. I'm hoping that *d20 Modern* becomes like an updated *GURPS* - a basic system to which all kinds of people can add their own spark of genius.

The basic system still relies on classes and levels, but rather than being so tightly tied to your character concept as they are in *Dungeons & Dragons*, they are more generic. There is a hero class for each basic attribute, and you can mix and match these however you like. So your fighter-type can be a brawny warrior, a tough scrapper, or a wise tactician. Once the character has gained a couple of levels, the Advanced classes become available. These are classes like Soldier, Martial Artist, Scientist, and Negotiator. These are more specialized and tied to character concepts, but if none of them fit what you want to be, you can just keep gaining levels in Smart Hero or Charismatic hero and remain more of a generalist. Eventually, Prestige classes will become available in supplementary releases. These are even more specialized than the Advanced classes and will require even higher levels.

The system uses Hit Points, and while I personally might have preferred using the Vitality/Wound system introduced in *d20 Star Wars*, I don't think this will be a major sticking-point. Non-lethal damage either

knocks you unconscious or it doesn't - there is no tracking of subdual damage. Personally, I really enjoy this change as I felt subdual added a lot of complication for little gain, although this is something that opinions differ greatly on. Of course all the rules for modern weapons that you might expect are there - automatic fire, burst fire, spraying an area, etc. If that isn't enough for you, one of the designers who worked on the book is also writing a book called *Ultramodern Firearms* that will cover hundreds of additional weapons, and different ammunition types.

Also worth noting is the money system. You don't have to track bank accounts and credit cards - it is all built into the wealth system, which is essentially a measure of your buying power. If your purchasing power is sufficient, you can buy any number of inexpensive items without really impacting on this, but larger expenses like a car or a house will tighten your wallet a bit. Conversely, if you rob a Qwiky-mart or find a stash of gold in a basement, your wealth increases. This is another nice touch that really helps with record keeping.

Dungeons & Dragons is making the jump to modern day, and on the other side of the table White Wolf Game Studios is in the process of revamping (no pun intended) their *Dark Ages* line. Already out are *DA: Vampire* and *DA: Europe*, and coming soon are *DA: Mage* and *DA: Inquisitor*. What I have seen so far has really impressed me, and I can't wait to see what they do with the history and system of the Mage line in particular. In many ways, the *World of Darkness* is a polar opposite to *d20*. Where *d20* excels in, but is not limited to, combat heavy games, *Storyteller* specializes in atmosphere and character development. Logically then, where the DA line distinguishes itself is in the atmosphere and the setting, since the rules are pretty much the same as in any other *Storyteller* game.

DA: Vampire is set during the War of Princes, when vampire lords waged Braveheart-style war on each other. Naturally religion plays a large role, as does the established history of the various sects of vampires. Other than that, this book is basically for Vampire fans who are looking for some diversity. It does the job admirably, but there is little to recommend it to someone who doesn't already enjoy the *World of Darkness*.

The other line from White Wolf that I follow very closely is *Exalted*. The main lines that have been released so far are for the Solar Exalted and the Dragon-Blooded. These two groups represent the extremes of the power curve, but even the weakest Elemental Dragon stands comfortably above mortals. Also coming down the pipes are the Lunar Exalted, the Sidereal Exalted, and the Abyssals - corrupted Solars who are the living embodiment of death and destruction.

The history of this world begins when the Gods enlisted the aid of mankind to help them overthrow the Primordials, who preceded the Gods similarly to how the Titans came before the Olympian Gods. Like those Greek Gods, the divinities in *Exalted* are flawed and worried more about their own petty games and intrigues than in the state of the mortal realm. The realm was left in the capable hands of those mortals they had given great power to, and the Gods turned their backs. Everything was going fairly well, with the Solars ruling creation, when the Sidereal Exalted had a prophecy that indicated that the world was going down the wrong path and they must take drastic steps to change things. They used the Dragon-Blooded, or Terrestrial Exalted, to overthrow and kill all the Solars. Now, many hundreds of years later, the Solars are beginning to return to the world.

If I could recommend only one game for someone to try, *Exalted* would be it. It is very exciting and adventurous with plenty of combat potential for people who like that, but also with lots of character interaction and development for people who like to get a little more out of their games.

Haunted Manor

Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid

Especially if it's BOB McLAIN that you encounter ...

WHEN I PLAY a game, it has to fit in my head. That doesn't give it a lot of room. There's no space for complex rules, especially mathematical formulae. Real conquerors don't calculate. They think about their next conquest. In a game, the complexity should come from the players, not the rules. Most rules just get in my way.

I don't play many games these days. Each year, I typically start five or six games, and finish one, maybe two of them. I know my limits. I joined Madhouse's new game, **Haunted Manor**, because it has simple rules, an on-line order entry form (mostly point-and-click), and daily due dates. It fit in my head. I could plan my turn while waiting at a red light. And I could use the discussion forum on their website to annoy the other players.

In Haunted Manor, one of the first free, web-based games put out by a commercial PBM company, you're a brave American (or Briton, I suppose, but then you wouldn't be very brave, would you?) seeking treasure. Other players are seeking the same treasure. Monsters dwell in the mansion, waiting for the foolhardy to blunder into their rooms. Some monsters, such as Zombies, pose little threat, but others should be avoided. The aptly named Horror, in particular, cannot be killed by a single player.

There are three ways to grab treasure: find it in a room, kill a monster, or kill another player. If the monster or player had any treasure, you get some of it. The player with the most treasure when the game ends is the winner.

Third Place? I Win!

I can win a game without winning it, if you know what I mean. I decided that I would win Haunted Manor by killing the most players. I wanted to set a record for the ages. If, in the course of killing other players, I picked up some treasure, great - but my goal was to be the worst monster in the mansion.

I started in room 20, at the bottom right corner of the mansion, with three other players and some furniture that I could search for treasure. The name of one of the players was Squirrel. I didn't like his name, so I attacked him. I knocked his health down to 6 (from 10). On the next turn, I attacked him again, knocking his health down to 1, and then on the following turn I killed him. I also killed the other two players in the room. In doing so, I gained no treasure, because these players were inactive and didn't even bother to fight back, but I notched up three kills. When the game ended, I had killed seven players and captured enough treasure to take third place. The top two players spent the second half of the game running away from me. There was one other player-killer in the game, not as successful as me, but we did work together, until he tried to ambush me during the final turns.

If Haunted Manor consisted of nothing but moving from room to room, attacking other players and monsters, and picking up treasure, I'd tell you not to bother. But the game has two features that make it worth your time: tactics and trash talk.

Tactics: Which Way Will He Go, George?

Each turn has ten phases. For each phase, you give an order, such as the lowly *MOVE* order. But, in fact, it's the *MOVE* order that gives the game much of its tactical interest.

Let's say I want to kill you. You know it. You're in one room, I'm in the next room. How do you elude me? Do you move into another room, perhaps even my room, thinking I will come after you? Do you stay in your room, hoping that I will expect you to move into mine? Do you take the time to look for a secret door and escape through it?

And what should I do? Move into your room and attack you? Stay where I am and attack you, thinking that you will cleverly move into my room? We can both see the entire map, so it's possible to set up ambushes with the cooperation of other players. And, since some rooms contain monsters that will attack players on sight, you can try to maneuver an opponent into a room bracketed by monster rooms, and from which there is no easy escape.

A smart player can elude his nemesis. The thrill of the kill often becomes the thrill of the hunt. In the final phase of the game, when I was hunting a player called Garlic, I waited impatiently for each daily turn result, hoping that I had outwitted my reeking foe. But he was always one step ahead of me. Had I been able to catch him, I would have easily killed him. You know a game design is good when a strong player can be thwarted by a weaker, quick-witted opponent, even if just for a little while.

Trash Talk: Squirrel the Nut Humper

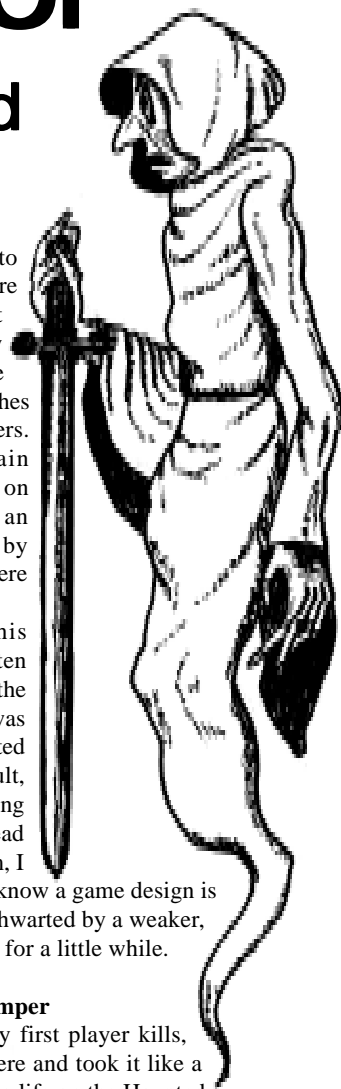
You remember Squirrel, one of my first player kills, who didn't fight back but stood there and took it like a small rodent? Well, Squirrel came to life on the Haunted Manor discussion forum, where players can post short messages for everyone in the game to see. It seems Squirrel had missed the first couple of turns because he had been at a Madhouse convention. He didn't like being attacked and having no chance to fight back. To make him feel better, I wrote on the forum that I had been using a secret order called *GATHER ACORNS* to counter the effect of all the orders he had given. I loved the imagery of Squirrel busily gathering acorns while I hacked him up. As usual, a few dull people believed there were secret orders such as *GATHER ACORNS* in the game. My success in generating meaningful dialogue made me a regular contributor to the Haunted Manor forum, usually to taunt opponents, threaten to do things in the game that I had no intention of doing, and branding my friend Squirrel a nut humper (another lovely bit of imagery).

The discussion forum adds an element to Haunted Manor missing from many PBM games: it simulates tabletop chatter, and it does so more effectively than the ubiquitous e-mail list. I've seen replies posted on the forum within minutes. For me, a turn wasn't complete until I had made a few posts. If anyone wants proof that PBM is going to the Web, it's right here.

In terms of creative energy, original designs, and plain ol' vision, Madhouse is the best PBM company in the world. Just look at their Web site, if you don't believe me: someone took a great deal of care to make that Web site distinctively Madhouse, a selling proposition as well as a mood-setter. Haunted Manor isn't the best PBM game in the world, but it's fun, it's fast, and it'll fit in your head.

If you see a squirrel carcass while you're in there, please say a prayer.

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Read the rest at:

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

WESTPOINT

AD

Steve Tierney's Retroscope

Revelations

Let There Be Light

In the beginning there was nothing. Well, actually, there were quite a lot of things. Roleplaying games. Board Games. Correspondence Chess, for gawds sakes. Along came **Flying Buffalo** and made the first PBM game as we know them today, and the rest was history.

But it's not *much* of a history is it? How many times have the boundaries been stretched in our little niche of the gaming universe? **Saturnalia**. It was the first really big roleplaying PBM, so it's got to count. **It's A Crime**. It showed everybody what could be done with computer-moderation and excellent promotion. **Tribes Of Crane**. It demonstrated the possibilities of clan-based games. **Absolute Power** redefined the way power games were run. **VGA Planets** demonstrated a professional front end and automated order entry. **Night Of The Things** (ahem) showed a new way to approach PBM RPGs that might actually make money. **Adventurer Kings** gave us computer moderation with colour and flair. **Middle Earth** brought us mass-marketing and successful licensing. There are others, of course, everybody has their own list.

But for every successful, clever, enterprising and inventive new game there are a score of badly-considered, poorly-designed (where there was any design at all), pieces of (excuse my colloquialism) old *tosh*.

Noah's Ark

There's this thing called a bandwagon, see. It's very big, and it's very soft, which has the obvious consequence that it's very easy to jump upon. Remember **Magic the Gathering**? There was a path of knowledge that each new MtG player followed back in the old days. It went something like this: 'Play the game, like the game, buy loads of cards, see somebody selling singles, buy even more cards, set self up as singles trader.' In the height of its popularity, Magic discovered a unique form of self-promotion. It somehow tricked its players into creating a free market, where they were all trying to sell to one another, yet still (briefly) able to charge high prices on single cards. It was a simple matter - buy a couple of boxes of boosters and a display album and you were in business.

Now you don't need to be a big businessman to see the problems with this economic model. When something takes no skill and little investment, yet seems to have high potential rewards, everybody and their second cousin notices at the same time. Suddenly, there are more traders than buyers, and the only thing keeping it all afloat is the initial momentum of the thing. Perhaps if we were in a vacuum that would be enough, but we aren't, and it's not. Sooner or later, a big storm was going to come and wash it all away. All of the little boats, and a fair few of the bigger boats that weren't designed with any thought, were going to get busted up on the rocks.

The Shadow Of Death

PBM wasn't a whole lot different to those heady early Magic the Gathering days. The path was similar: 'play the game, like the game, think you can make a fortune, make a game, fail dismally and leave the hobby bitterly.' Of course, it always *seems* like GMs *must* be making a fortune, while game design itself as a skill doesn't get the credit it deserves. Like so many wannabee novelists are sure they can write just as well as any

published fantasy author, so many wannabee game designers are sure that their idea must be a workable and profitable potential business enterprise.

The problem is that PBM wasn't a huge hobby to begin with. Every player who made a godawful game and then fell off the edge of the Earth with it, took with them a handful of disgruntled players, disappointed by a dirty fold or a poorly-realised dream. This, in turn, weakened the player base for companies who were making good games. The smaller the player base got, the more of the genuinely skilled designers realised they could make more money using their talents in other types of business.

Worse than the loss of designers was the loss of moderators. There's a difference you know! Not every person capable of designing (and programming, where applicable) a PBM game has the skills needed to run it as a business. There have always been companies which only design, which only moderate, or which do both equally well. In many ways, the loss of moderators is even worse than the loss of designers, as moderators were responsible for promotion, which is vital for the growth of a hobby.

The Number Of The Beast

Now this may, or may not be, very interesting,

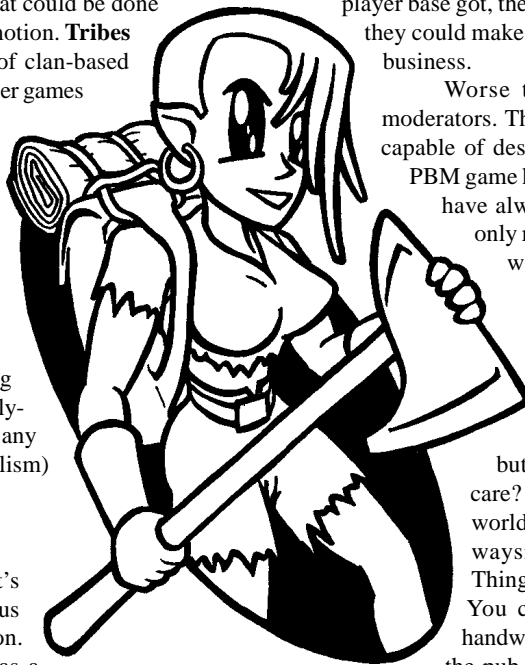
but the point is, do we actually care? Should we care? I don't think so. It's a dog eat much smaller dog world, and those who can't take the heat fall by the wayside (and other such bastardised metaphors). Things have changed. New standards have been set. You can no longer enter the PBM market with a handwritten rulebook and a game you knocked up down the pub over a couple of pints. You can't send turns in crayon. You can't get a hundred signups by simply offering

400 free turns for a fiver. You can't coast along safely on games you designed over a decade ago. People just don't go for that sort of nonsense anymore. If you're not innovating, you're dissolving.

So here we are. It's a brave new world and a handful of much stronger companies survive. Those that remain are tougher, surlier, meaner and generally more able to stand the pace of the modern gaming world. By which I don't mean that they aren't nice guys and girls. Only that they won't fall over every time a strong breeze blows. We have forged a new hobby with a different face and it's still changing. But it's certainly not dying. It's just taking new forms as it meets and melds with other gaming standards. Nobody likes change, but change is coming. The firms which recognise that and work towards it are the ones who will come out of the other side. Other forms of gaming are already challenging us for players, their gaming budgets and most importantly their time.

Nobody likes every game, which is why there are still so many different types of game. But these days you can be far more assured that when you sign up for a game it won't be badly-designed, or badly-run, because many of those designers and moderators have fallen by the wayside. You might not like a game's style, but look on the bright side, that leaves a far less bitter taste in the mouth than a page of handwritten dross that folds after two turns.

So what am I trying to say? Don't be afraid of change, basically. It will be painless. You might not even notice it. Things have already changed and not everybody has even seen it happen. Support your favourite GMs, keep enjoying the games, have fun... and watch the fireworks. It's a real life adventure the hobby is on. Enjoy it.



Puerto Rico

Sugar Cane and Tobacco Plants

PEVANS reviews the boardgame ...

I ALREADY have a strong candidate for my favourite game of 2002 - and I'm not alone in this opinion. **Puerto Rico** is the main 2002 title from German publisher *alea*, with *Rio Grande Games* producing an English language edition. The game was first seen - as a final prototype - at last year's *Spiel* games fair. *Alea*'s track record meant that there was a long queue to play the two copies that were available and I missed out. However it's now out and I have finally got my chance to play it.

The game comes in *alea*'s standard, A4-sized box and has plenty of bits. Small wooden discs represent colonists and everything else (money, victory point chips, the various 'characters', ships and so on) is in chunky cardboard. The game is for three-five players and the number of pieces used is carefully regulated according to the number playing. This should mean that the game plays much the same regardless of the number of participants. The official playing time of the game shown on the box is 90-150 minutes - half an hour per player. This is clearly a deep game.

The theme is colonising a Caribbean island and players each have their own board with spaces for plantations and buildings. The plantations produce raw materials, most of which need to be processed in the appropriate building (eg sugar cane plus a mill to produce sugar). Both plantations and buildings have to be 'manned' by a colonist piece in order to do anything. The resulting goods can be sold for doubloons or shipped back to Europe for victory points. Points are also scored for the buildings in your town: the more expensive the building, the more points it is worth. Some buildings produce goods, others give players some sort of advantage. There are also several large buildings, which provide bonus victory points at the end. The player with the most points wins.

There is quite clearly a process in what players need to do: establish plantations; erect buildings; assign colonists to these; produce goods; sell them for cash; or trade them for victory points. Of course it's not that simple. Each of the six actions I outlined is the remit of a specific 'character'. Each turn, players choose which character they want to be (out of those not taken by preceding players). Everybody gets to carry out the actions, but the player who chose the card gets some form of bonus. For example, if I choose the Trader, everybody gets to sell one of their goods, but I get one more doubloon for mine.

One challenge is getting the best out of this process. I may want to have some colonists for my empty buildings and plantations, so that I can produce goods and then sell them to raise cash. If I'm lucky, I will be able to pick the Mayor and add colonists. The next player will choose the Craftsman and let me produce goods. And the third will go for the Trader and I'll be able to sell. However, if the player before me chooses the Craftsman, I lose out as I have not yet got the colonists I need. So while you have some control over what happens, you are still at the mercy of what the other players want to do. And they won't do you any favours!

One of the clever mechanisms in the game is a way of handicapping the characters. At the end of each turn one doubloon is placed on those characters that were not used. This means that even if you don't need to use that character's ability, it soon becomes worth having just for the money. The game is full of carefully thought-out rules like this.

Now I have to backtrack a bit, as the game certainly has more than one strategy to it. I outlined the production process in the game, the ultimate goal of which is victory points towards winning. However, the other way of gaining points is through buildings. So my first strategy was to concentrate on the production process, moving through the steps needed to gain points by shipping goods to the Old World. The second is to put up lots of buildings, including a couple of the bonus points-scoring buildings. Doing this can certainly win the game. But you can't ignore the production cycle - you need doubloons to buy those buildings and you need to pick up some points from shipping goods.

In fact, the key to the game is probably careful selection of the right buildings to use. The production buildings are an easy decision, depending on what commodities you want to produce. (Coffee is the obvious preference, given its relative rarity and high value.) But the decision on which other buildings to take will influence what you do from then on. Personally, I like the Construction Hut, which allows you to take quarries rather plantations when putting new ones on your board. The advantage of this is that the quarries give you a discount off the cost of buildings. Then there are the Markets. These give extra doubloons to the owner when you sell something - and you always need money. The problem is that have to decide what you're going for and grab it before someone else does. As always, there are too many things you want to do and not enough time or resources to do it all.

This is a game that allows players to have a strategy, but requires them to adjust their tactics to take account of what the others do. And there are plenty of tactical nuances for players to exploit. Each of the characters has specific rules on how they are used - for example the Trader only allows one of each good to be sold and a maximum of four. This means that careful use of the Trader may actually prevent other players from selling anything. Then the special abilities of the buildings come into play. For example, with the right building, you can sell the same good as someone else when the Trader is played.

This is a game with a lot of depth and many different ways of achieving your goals. Despite the playing times suggested, I find that with four experienced players the game can be played in under 90 minutes. A definite 10/10 from me.

Illustration of Puerto Rico board - see opposite page

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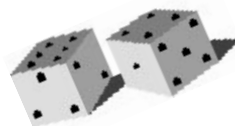
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New Board & Card Games

PEVANS with the latest news on boardgames ...



SINCE MY last column I have been playing some of this year's new games and so far they're turning out pretty good. My favourite to date is *Puerto Rico*, and you're getting a separate review of that. So here I shall look at some of the other new arrivals.

Clippers is a new board game from French publisher

Eurogames, who nowadays produce English language editions of their games from the start. It is an Alan Moon design and fans of his games will recognise it as a development of *Santa Fe* (interestingly, American company GMT Games has just produced another version of the game, *Santa Fe Rails*). The original game was about building rail networks across the USA. This is about sailing routes across Polynesia.

The various clipper lines start their routes in the eastern Pacific and players can extend any of them along the links shown on the board. You gain money for placing the first route to an island and money adds to your points at the end of the game. Points are scored for those islands at which you have a base: the value of the island multiplied by the number of different clipper lines that reach it. You will not be surprised to learn that the islands increase in value from east to west across the board. Players start with a couple of bases on the western edge, giving them a target to aim for.

At the start of each turn, players choose an option and then get two turns of adding links to the clipper routes. This is done by placing a couple of wooden sticks (about matchstick size - not unlike the roads in *Settlers*) on the board. The option a player has chosen can change this. S/he might be laying lots of links, but not scoring, adding a new base or starting a branch from one of the lines, for example. Each option costs money, so you have to weigh up what is worth paying for. I found that the 'lay twice as many pieces and gain double bonuses' option was well worth doing early on as a way of building up cash reserves. However the other options all have their tactical value.

As the game progresses you need to get your bases down, and deciding when to do this is important. Too early and people will steer the clipper lines away from your bases; too late and the best spots will have gone. As there is a set number of pieces for each line, you also need to keep track of how far the lines can go. Once a few branches have opened up, the pieces can get used up very quickly.

This is a clever strategy game with plenty of tactical subtleties. The one problem is some aspects of the production. While everything is high quality, the cardboard dots that are the bases are fiddly to use - and very easy to lose. The lines on the board are drawn close together, making it difficult to see whether a particular route is single or double once a piece has been laid. So players need to take a bit of care with the game, but it repays the investment. A good 8/10.

Since *Clippers* has its roots in a game about railways across America, how about *Transamerica*, a game about railways across America? This is published by the German arm of Winning Moves, which produces much more interesting games than its US or UK equivalents (Rio Grande Games is negotiating to produce an English language edition of *Transamerica*). The game's board is a map of the USA, showing a number of cities across the country, set into a triangular grid. The cities are colour coded into five groups. At the start of the game, you are dealt a card in each of the colours, giving you a set of cities that you need to connect.

Each turn you play a couple of pieces (those matchsticks again) onto the board along the grid. From your chosen starting point you extend your network, joining up with cities and lines that other people have laid. Once you are linked to other people's networks, you can extend anything you're connected to. This usually means that things build gradually until the interconnections are made and then expand rapidly. As soon as somebody connects their set of cities (which can be on someone else's turn!), play stops. The other players score penalty points for each additional piece they still need to play to link up their cities. If nobody's reached the critical number, another round is played. The critical number is reduced after the second round, so a game usually lasts two-three rounds. Of course, it's the player with the least points who wins.

The game is not too demanding, plays quickly and is fun. There's clearly a luck element in the cities you get dealt (some are closer than others), but it doesn't overwhelm the game. Another 8/10.

Other News

The Spiel des Jahres (Game of the Year) prize is always of interest to gamers, even though it is specifically a German award. The jury's decision is always hotly debated - lots of people have a favourite game that they think should have won - but the winner is almost always an excellent game. (The importance to the publisher is the huge increase in sales the prize brings.) The jury tends to prefer family-orientated games to deep strategy, so its choices are not necessarily in line with gamers' preferences. However, the list of nominations is usually a good guide to the best games of the year.

The reason for bringing this up is that the jury has just announced the nominations for this year. They are as follows. *Alles im Eimer* by Stefan Dorra (published by Kosmos): a fun card game - see above. *Atlantic Star* by Dirk Henn (Queen Games): I'm a little surprised to see this on the list as it's a re-working of Henn's earlier *Showmanager* from producing musicals to ocean liners. *Blokus* by Bernard Tavitian (Sekkoia/Heidelberger): a mathematically-based game, this is all about the four colour theory. Players have to lay the pentominoes of their colour on the board with only their corners touching. *Der Herr der Ringe - Das Kartenspiel* (Lord of the Rings - the card game) by Reiner Knizia (Ravensburger): a film tie-in card game. The theme is the journey of the Fellowship. *Dschunke* (Junk) by Michael Schacht (Queen Games): an interesting game that involves bidding and planning ahead. It works well, but it's a bit too dry for my tastes. *Dvonn* by Kris Burm (Don & Co/Heidelberger): latest in the Gipf series, a two-player abstract strategy game. *Kupferkessel Co* by Günter Burkhardt (Goldsieber): a 30-45 minute two-player memory game with a quirky scoring system. I haven't played it, but it's getting good reports from those who have. *Magellan* by Tom Lehmann (Hans im Glück): a clever game of intensive bidding. You are bidding to get a share in the success of various explorers over three rounds. *Puerto Rico* by Andreas Seyfarth (alea/Ravensburger): my favourite so far this year - see the review. *San Gimignano* by Duilio Carpitella (Piatnik): an intriguing-looking game of building towers in the eponymous town. Players play tiles, aiming to get control of an area and build a tower. *Transamerica* by Franz-Benno Delonge (Winning Moves): clever tactical game - see above. *Villa Paletti* by Bill Payne (Zoch): the latest from the dexterity game specialists. Players build up the villa from wooden columns and plates. And then take the pillars away...

The top three are due to be announced at the beginning of June and the winner on 24th June. Looking at the ten games chosen, I think *Puerto Rico* has an excellent chance of winning. My other suggestions for the top three are *Dschunke* and *Transamerica*. There, that should make sure none of them wins!

In Off the Post

JOHN HARRINGTON's look at the zines focuses on football games ...

AAH, FOOTBALL. Isn't it? Hmm? Small boys over the park, jumpers for goal posts? It's an enduring image, isn't it? Except these days, likely as not, the small boys would be at home playing *Championship Manager* on the computer. We never had computers when I was a small boy so we had to make do with a board game called *Soccerboss*, quite possibly the first ever football management game. I can't remember much about the game except that you and your rivals sought to acquire footballers of varying abilities to complete your team. The footballers were represented by small plastic figures, colour coded to indicate their skill level, which you placed into peg-holes on a football pitch board in a 2-3-5 formation which, even back in the sixties, was a formation which had not been seen in the professional game for 30 years.

Match resolution was performed using special dice. You totted up the abilities of the players in each area of the field (defence, midfield and attack) and this indicated which die you would throw to determine how many goals this area of your team yielded. Although the game had 'nice bits' it was about as exciting as Sunderland FC, but it did spawn an entire genre of gaming, first popularised in the amateur postal gaming world, then in semi-pro PBM games and finally in computer games - how many of us have a copy of the Sinclair Spectrum game *Football Manager* in the attic? The first zine to run *Soccerboss* by post was *Chimaera*, back in the mid-seventies. This was a ground-breaking zine because whilst every other gaming zine in the world was running **Diplomacy** and nothing else but, Clive decided to convert several other boardgames to a postal format. A quarter of a century later not many zines are running **Kingmaker** by post, but a whole slew of zines are running football management games. Very broadly speaking they can be divided into two camps: The **Soccerleague** zines/The **United** zines.

Soccerleague

The shortcomings of *Soccerboss* meant it was not long before GMs started adding bits to it or designing their own footie games from scratch. Over the last quarter of a century these games have become quite complex, with club management (stadium, wages) often as important as team management (tactics, player development). For instance, one of the longest running Soccerleague zines, *Astradyne*, seems to rival computer games for complexity and flexibility if this snippet of Peter Stanton's review in *Mission From God* is anything to go by:

'Players have different potentials (which can be discovered by scouting), skills (close marking, man marking in defence, ball control in midfield, offside trap, anti-offside trap) plus plenty of special characteristics. Coaching in all skills/levels, scouting of all players, etc. Formations of XI (named in zine) also listed, plus occasional divisional summaries. Oh, and tactics: various formations bring various bonuses - unless countered by opposing formations, e.g. 3-5-2 adds % of midfield to forwards, plus % extra to defence, unless countered by 5-3-2. Conditional half time changes are possible.'

The game systems I have lumped under the Soccerleague heading are by no means uniform so it is unfair to generalise but I am going to anyway. Soccerleague games tend towards the complex end of the spectrum. These zines concentrate purely on running the game and have a minimum of 'chat' in them. Soccerleague players tend to keep to themselves and are not really part of the broader zine hobby. The players are a dedicated bunch but in my limited experience seem to be drawn to the games as much for the administration aspect as the football theme.

United

United is a game system developed back in the late seventies by Alan Parr. Although not as popular as it once was (there used to be scores of leagues in operation all round the world and a United world cup) it is still going strong to this day and has even been converted into a board game (called *Total Football*) by Britain's premier independent boardgame company, Gibsons: <http://www.gibsonsgames.co.uk/sportsgames.htm>

The mechanics might be familiar to many of you who have played PBM footie management games because they have been, shall we say, 'borrowed' by at least one PBM company who did not even have the wit to rewrite the phrasing of the rules when they cloned the game. Needless to say it is a lot cheaper to play the game via a zine than a commercial PBM company. In comparison with the Soccerleague games, United is at the simpler/elegant end of the complexity spectrum. It concentrates on tactics and squad development and generally eschews the business side of the game. At its core is a mechanism which has changed little from its origins as a card game played using cards numbered from 1 to 10.

Footballers, who are either purchased in auctions or developed through the club's youth system, have a numerical skill value (which may be boosted through the expenditure of 'coaching points' but which also

declines as the player gets older), and a position (usually goalkeeper, sweeper, defender, midfielder, attacker). The manager (that's you) gets to choose what formation to use and who to pick, plus possibly some tactics (eg offside trap, long ball). Match resolution is performed by comparing opposing team areas: forwards versus defenders, midfield versus midfield. Superiority in a team area will generate a certain number of scoring opportunities which may well be snuffed out by the sweeper or saved by the keeper. As one might expect, the higher the skill level of the sweeper and keeper, the more likely they are to prevent a goal. It's a simple but flexible system. Players may be played out of position at a small cost to their skill level so the option to flood the midfield or pack the defence is available. It is also possible to scout the opposition to find out their areas of strength. Although generally a simpler game than Soccerleague its adherents are no less dedicated but it is a game which can also be enjoyed by the less obsessive player. Furthermore ... And some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over. It is now!

For details of the football management zines available, see the online version of *Mission From God*, at:

www.fbgames.co.uk/words/mfg/mfgtoc.htm

Mission From God

Issue 22, November 2001
Price £1.00

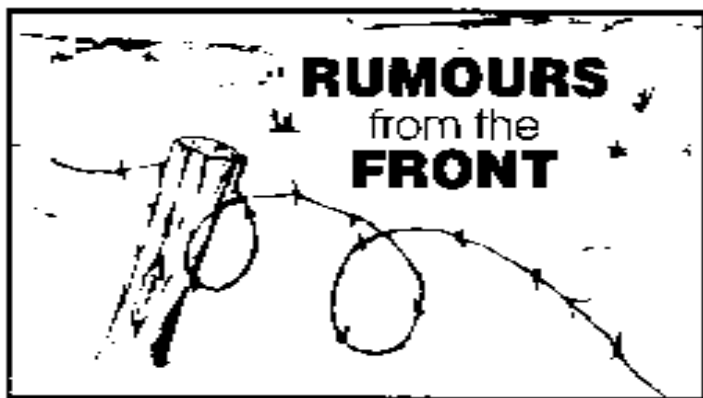
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[This column attempts to simulate a crowded bar full of PBMs swapping experiences. It contains readers' uncensored comments, with no attempt to maintain fairness and balance; editing is only done for grammar, clarity, brevity and (occasionally) libel 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 since April 18th from ...

David Blair, Gary Bowskill, Jason Brown, Bruce Edwards, Stuart Fieldhouse, Simon Fillies, Colin Forbes, Martin Helsdon, Philip Howard, Andy Kendall, John Kuo, Niels Lademark, Mike Lay, Richard Loutzenheiser, Charles Miller, Carol Mulholland, Kevin O'Keefe, Robin Orman, Allan Stagg, Jon Steer, Edgar Webley, Ben Williams, Wayne Yeadon.

GAMES FEATURED THIS ISSUE

Austerlitz (*Supersonic Games*)

David Blair - 'In game 150 with Holland, Italy, Ottoman Empire and Sweden controlling all Central Europe except Spain and Portugal; the good guys (Morocco, Spain, Russia and myself as Gt. Britain) are busy plotting the invasion which will turn the tide for us. Game has been going for over two years and everybody that is left has taken sides. With Dutch fleets patrolling round Britain to stop troops being ferried to the mainland, and the war in the Caribbean and India going now in our favour, I feel we are just starting to edge towards the big push. Lots of fighting to be done but from where will we start the invasion? That would be telling, wouldn't it?'

Company Commander (*Jason Oates*)

Gary Bowskill - 'This is the first time I have played Company Commander and I think that the game is good. The rules are fairly straightforward. The times I have not been sure of anything the rules have cleared it up. Having to raise the money that you spend on the armed forces adds to the enjoyment of the game and being restricted on what is available to buy each month affects the tactics you can use. Personally I have had no trouble reading the newsletter title. I am glad that I did not read the review beforehand as this may have put me off playing this enjoyable game.'

Haunted Manor (*Madhouse*)

David Blair - 'Was doing well in Haunted Manor until recently, which was a pity as when I rose from about eleventh in the table to second, not by my inordinate skill, but due to others being killed off one way or another. I had stumbled over treasure rather than winning it or fighting too many monsters, zombies or humans. Unfortunately a couple of the other zombies - sorry humans - ganged up on me and I was "deaded" as Peter Sellers would have said. A quick daily turnaround game, which can take you 1 to 10 minutes to put your turn in: more than that, you should get out more.'

Colin Forbes - 'Played several games of this fun little web game, and

have even won a game! Since my first game there have been a number of improvements both to the game itself and the website. I'm agog to get my first item (a relatively new feature). Watch out at the beginning of the game - if you're in a room full of tough monsters, run away! Keep clear of Horrors and Tentacle Beasts. Initially you'll be tempted to go after the visible treasure chests, but remember - treasure can be found anywhere, even in otherwise empty squares! The game can get a little repetitive sometimes, but new features are always being added so you won't get bored. Besides, it's free and has the usual Madhouse dark humour.'

Lords of the Earth (*various GMs*)

Edgar Webley - 'Having to choose a particular Lords Of The Earth game is pretty hard. I am currently involved in four games and I am always looking for another one to pick up. I have been playing for about seven months now and in that time I have been completely entranced by what is LOTE. Before LOTE, I was a RPG'er for many years and when I graduated high school and moved away I was always looking for that game that would remind me of the old days.'

Like I said having to choose a "favorite" would be all but impossible but there is one game that I am involved in that stands out as a diamond in the rough. The game I am speaking of is *Campaign 42, Historia Calamitatum*. The game is set in the 12th century world and I am at the helm of the Abyssinian Empire. Leslie Dodd, the talented GM of this rich and detailed game goes above and beyond the call of duty for a GM. When you write news faxes that range into several Megabytes then I would say she either has too much time on her hands or she is obsessive-compulsive. Also she has a great desire to keep her game serious and true to history. I understand that players sometimes crave freedom but a strong willed, and fair GM is always welcome.

Through the four games I am involved in, and I'm sure in all the other many games that take place, I have found one thing to be true. No matter how long you have been playing there is always someone around that is more than willing to answer any questions you may have. That is probably the thing that sticks in my mind first and foremost about the whole LOTE system. Even if you are fresh meat you don't get treated like it.'

John Kuo - '*LordsOne* ~ Run by the master himself, with great write-ups, and good mix of quasi-historical occurrences mixed with the supernatural and apocalyptic. Probably the least rule-bound of the GMs. Events are on an epic scale, but there is a wealth of humor, and clues to all the important events (that don't necessarily seem important) in the write-ups. Has some of the most intensive player interactions. There are also many enjoyable player web sites.'

Lords42 ~ One of the newest campaigns, but with the most extensive and well-written newsfaxes. One to enjoy if you're into strong historical simulations.

Lords2 ~ Has recently become one of my personal favorites, as it's run by Colin Dunnigan aka the Daemon Sultan of Lords One. I play the Fijians, who have spread throughout greater Polynesia, conducted raids into Southeast Asia, and even discovered South America! I also maintain a website for Lords2 Fiji: <http://suczek.home.mindspring.com/Misc/Fiji/>

Middle Earth (*Harlequin Games*)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'I'm currently on the losing side of both games I'm in at the moment. Nuff said, really! I'm starting to find the game a bit stale now after four years and will probably restrict myself to one position from now on. This has nothing to do with the price rise announced recently! Honest! However, Harly do have a Face to Face meet arranged for July which might spark my enthusiasm again.'

David Blair - 'The second article on starting up in Middle Earth, again has brought the game to life for me. Very interesting read.'

Colin Forbes - 'It is to be hoped that a recent price rise will not put players off this game - one of the true greats of PBM. The price rise is clearly justified - it's still only gone up by one pound a turn in the last ten years! If you think you know Middle Earth, try it again - there are many interesting scenarios to try and the GMs are a shining example of their craft. I would strongly recommend that beginners or younger players try the Battle of the Five armies scenario.'

Star Fleet Warlord (*Pagoda Games*)

Robin Orman - 'The *historical game* has just started, with each player taking on a single race (or two in my case, as I'm handling two positions) and being divided into opposing teams. It's the UK as the Alliance (yay!) versus the USA as the Coalition (boo, hiss!) as turn one approaches and the first ships leave dry-dock...

Meanwhile in *game E16*, things are steadily getting more complicated. Although I seem to lose a couple of sites every turn, my income is still steadily increasing; a couple of (irritating) ships from the Hamsters of Doom corporation are flitting about my home sector, raiding sites and trying to deprive me of my sector bonus (exactly what I'm trying to do with another player) and the resource-rich Graveyard of Ships has opened up for prospecting. All in a day's work...

Mike Lay - 'After a bit of a break it's good to be back in this excellent space combat game. Set in the "Star Fleet Battles" universe, I'm really looking forward to watching my Southern Federation leading the Alliance to a victory over the Klingons and their lackeys ...'

ADVENTURE GAMES

Dungeonworld (*Madhouse*)

Philip Howard - '*Main module*: This game continues to enthrall after over three years. The game balance is set just right so that characters will alternate between taking risks and making easy gains, discovering new things and consolidating their position.

The ability to choose whether to get involved in the "big plot" or just keep monster-bashing is also welcome - while I tend to prefer the latter, several of my characters are participating in Guild missions. The plot has kept the roleplaying side of the game interesting for those who enjoy that sort of thing, and has guided players into positions of increasing power in the game. As well as overseeing all the above, Steve is a firm and fair GM and listens to players (even if he doesn't seem to like your suggestion, it might turn up in the game eventually!). Turn presentation has improved gradually, too. And as I write this, the latest digest from the email list has turned up...

Estates positions: didn't grab me in the same way that the main game does, but that's probably because there's an element of resource management. Microeconomics isn't my cup of tea, but I really should have figured that out before I started. I defer to Andy London's recent diary for a more objective judgement!

Robin Orman - 'Alamar has now acquired the Psionics skill (although he's still learning how to use it), after the party charged through a throng of Chelonian Horrors (think bipedal turtles with tentacles - and you wondered why they're called Madhouse...) to reach the Temple of the Mind. The poor monsters didn't stand a chance against our combined might, and the dungeon floor is now slick with green goo (ick...). Next it's back to the trader, then either off exploring Level 2, back to Level 1 for some "easy" monster-bashing, or out into the wide blue yonder of the Overland.

Broken Lands: All is going well, with Gaelan (my rogue) teaming up with about a dozen other adventurers (for safety) as we proceed through the Hall of Doors. Gaelan has just cracked the lock on a door barring our progress, and a handful of treasure chests have just come into view of our greedy thie-, er, "scout". Just got to deal with those oversized hamsters - sorry, "giant rats" - in our way, before some more lovely loot will be min- <cough> "ours". If only I could find somewhere to spend it...

Mike Lay - 'Expansion continues with the GMs announcing a number of new areas to explore. Very entertaining. Along with Lord "Deathstrike" Alamar, my character and a few others have descended to the second level of the Pits of Poltoon. Vampires and other horrors abound ...

Broken Lands: This email-only, weekly freebie, set in the Dungeonworld universe, is proving to be challenging. After the demise of my first character, my second has teamed up with a number of other adventurers and is doing rather better. If you want to try Dungeonworld, this is a good place to start - if you've got email.'

Bruce Edwards - '*Land of the Dead*: starting to get busy now, as a few groups of adventurers have joined forces against the creatures in this

strange land. Still no sign of the King though.'

Colin Forbes - *Broken Lands*: This is an excellent introduction to the DungeonWorld game. You only have one character, but this is enough to get to grips with the game and have some fun. Remember to pick up items when you see them! I'm not playing in this any more, but will be signing up for the main DungeonWorld game as soon as finances allow.'

Monster Island (*US - Adventures by Mail; UK - KJC Games*)

Bruce Edwards - '*US*: playing by e-mail and enjoying myself with some advanced monsters that I have adopted. The monster running in the "Challenge" is doing well too, and 9 of us have just formed a Group. Plenty of chat between the players, and cooperation too!

UK: revived my old monsters - still alive after all this time - and started trekking around the Island again. KJC are looking for a new Newsletter editor, which will make a major difference, so here's hoping. There are a heap of new upgrades on the Island now, so even the older monsters have some tough creatures to fight.'

Quest GME (*KJC Games*)

Wayne Yeadon - '*General*: More improvements to the game engine have been welcomed, especially the kill tallies for characters and a breakdown of what happened during a fight. Armour has been tweaked for speed which should help stop players adopting the same tactics like a flock of sheep! Rumours of a certain party setup working really well, seems to encourage lots of other players to adopt the same setups, rather than experiment and keep to a role-playing theme. This is more evident for party versus party fights rather than monster fights.

G31 Naralia: After the events in the city Sallatane, where the majority of the game's alliances banded together against a global threat, things seem to be settling down again. One alliance has gained the mistrust of most of the others as the city they are housed in ended up taking over Sallatane when it was weakened by the attack. The GITS are aptly named it seems.

G32 Twilight Isles: A more subjective viewpoint here. My alliance in this game feels frustrated by the quests it is being given as they seem feeble in comparison to what others are getting. Maybe the GM does not like the idea of Fleyshur dominating this world! Either that or he is making us work harder to achieve any semblance of success.

G30 Draconaelis: Again a subjective view, as this world does not have the global turmoil which is present in the other game worlds. Here I am part of another Fleyshur alliance, but the experience is one of total contrast to G32. There seems to be more of a comedic element here, though: evil with a wicked sense of humour!'

ECONOMIC GAMES

Beer Mogul (*RedMohawk Games*)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'Is fun, but the game is suffering because of its success. The server it's on can't handle the amount of traffic the game is generating. I can never get logged on to make any changes to my pub.'

[But see the following comments ...]

Jason Brown - 'Started up in this free web game after the review last issue. Found it hard work as a brewery, so gave up and signed on again to run a pub. This proved much easier, though no sooner had I got going than the whole game went down for three or four days. It turns out this was to allow the site to change servers, and a good thing too. The new server is much faster and makes the game much less of a chore to play. Good fun and free too!'

Ben Williams - 'Probably my favourite game at the moment, though a recent re-jig of the way beer prices work has us all a bit flummoxed at the moment. Pub profits are down, but it does make the game fairer for people running breweries. Turns are daily, but it's easy enough to set things up so you don't have to look at the site for a few days. Interaction is low to non-existent, which suits me at the moment.'

Colin Forbes - 'Following a change of server, the game now runs much faster and more reliably. That said I'm a little bored of it at present following a game re-set just when I was starting to do very well. Annoying

- but this is still a fun concept for a game and I'd recommend having a go. Maybe I'll have a go at running a Brewery position, though these have always seemed unfairly discriminated against by the game system in the past.'

POWER GAMES

Gunboat Diplomacy (*Agema Publications*)

Stuart Fieldhouse - 'This game of corporate exploitation in colonial China continues apace. Like other Agema games of this type, the longer you stay in it, the less reluctant you are to leave. Having spent over 50 on this game, my company has yet to lay a single railroad sleeper in Manchuria, although we do seem to have taken over responsibility for dealing with German interlopers. Reading the copious newsletter that arrives every fortnight gives a somewhat fragmentary idea of what is going on: few of the foreign companies seem to be able to get their act together, and a war seems to be brewing between Britain and the USA following the assassination of President Garfield and some insensitive remarks by the British Foreign Office. As for the Chinese players, they seem to be focused on banditry and opium smuggling, and assassinating each other in ever more imaginative fashion. I am reminded of the now defunct Corporate War PBM in which players had to invest a lot of money and time in the game before starting to get any results.'

Empires of Corinium (*Viking Games*)

Charles Miller - 'Turn arrived, but post delay had me rush turn - shame, but GM did allow me a few days. Still an exciting game.'

Kings of Karadon (*Timewyrm*)

Charles Miller - 'Due to commitments, am rushing turns - on this game one needs time to think and communicate. Post delays to me don't help.'

Kevin O'Keefe - '*Game 1, The Great Winter*: Continues to be very slow in turnaround. Tom has closed all places in this game, sadly I have a feeling that the game isn't going to be around for much longer. Tom is spending most of his time on his other games that actually make him some money! I suppose one can't blame him really. However, this game is easily the best PBM I've played and it would be sad to see it go.

Game 2, The Return of the Ancients: Given the long turnaround in game 1, I decided to join game 2, this time run by Colin Forbes of Timewyrm. I've taken over the small kingdom of Rimnos in the SW. The nation is currently at war with the Ancient-worshipping nation of Krakonis on the other side of the channel. Krakonis is run by the head of the Ancients, Droviah himself. A nice easy position then! Cheers Colin!'

Ben Williams - 'With much regret I've given up my position on game 2 (*The Ancient's Return*). I love the game and will definitely return, but my life is just too busy at the moment to continue such an intensive game. Diplomacy can be totally manic at times whilst orders can go on forever. They don't have to, but there's such a temptation to do all those things you've been meaning to do for ages. The free-form special actions add tremendous value to an already excellent game. I'd like to encourage the GMs to work on a computer mod game for those of us who like the game system so much we'd like to have a shot at sending in turns every week or two. But not till I've got more time myself, you understand! I'd hate to miss out. In fact, please put this game on hold while I sort my life out, get a promotion and can return to intensive PBM playing. Please?'

Jason Brown - '*Game 2: The Ancients Return*: 'Now run by Timewyrm (though with no change of GM), the most recent turn featured chaotic diplomacy in which I, sadly, was unable to participate being out of the country for a time. I hope my allies will forgive me. As for my enemies, well who cares frankly? As usual there's loads to do in the game, you're never once left with the feeling that the game is getting stale or boring. In fact, I'd advise even giving this impression, since the GM will more than likely invent something just to keep you busy. Avoid this at all costs, the GM's imagination is far too fertile to risk provoking into full flood. Changes to the way Guilds and Conclaves work are interesting, if a little controversial. The additional special action to leaders of these organisations will add to the competition to be Guild head, however the

ruling that Conclave members are character specific rather than mere representatives of a nation may need a little tweaking. On balance the changes are for the good though and I'm confident that the experienced GM knows what he's doing.'

Robin Orman - 'Still hopeful that *Game 1* will resume in the near future - no doubt signalling another few long nights as I try to remember exactly what my forces were doing spread out around the island, puzzle out what my next step should be in the minefield that is the economic system, and recall precisely why I issued *that* freeform special action last turn...'

Andy Kendall - '*Game 2*: Up and running again, and there's too much to do. Denying accusations made in the newsletter, sorting out odd goings on, beating up the bad guys, saving the world in general. The game has recently voted, albeit it with a very small vote, that the game should come to a close at some point of the GM's choosing. While there are no victory conditions in place, it can only go on for some time. Probably many turns away yet though.'

Primus Inter Pares (*Interesting Times*)

Richard Loutzenheiser - 'In your last issue Andrew Kendall was quoted negatively on this game. He complained that in order to play the game fully one had to join its email forum. There are players from Sweden, Switzerland, America and Australia as well as the UK. Being as it is, an international PBEM, email is essential to play. With regards to Mr Kendall's complaints about the nature of the yahoogroups forum, it is important to note that he has never been member of that forum.'

Primus exists on many levels. It is an economic game, a military simulation and a political game. Often players work together for a common goal such as when a Roman legion is fighting; at other times the political manoeuvring and backstabbing is quite literal. That is the beauty of the game. One can play it as an ancient war game whilst another plays to be an economic power and a third is a pure politician. Just like life!

The service I have received is superior. Turns are processed Sunday through Thursday evenings and emailed out. Few errors occur and serious ones are addressed directly.

I would highly recommend this game.'

Andy Kendall - 'Continues to need more players, and my paper turns are still misprinted. Currently there are about seven strong positions, but these could be diluted by five or six new players reasonably quickly. Neither side has an absolute majority, although one is using dirty tricks to try to arrange it. A few of the players, unfortunately mostly on the cleaner side of the field, are busy in real-life and have far less time to devote to this game. The GM denies that there is an advantage to email players - but I think he's wrong. The lack of fixed deadlines heightens the effect of this, as the instant turnaround of email allows multiple actions before I have even seen the trigger event, and it is possible that the game is distorted as a result. If there are any postal Luddites out there, you can always band together and fight back! I suspect and hope that another effect of real-life is that the email forum is now rather irrelevant as regular messages only come from one side (inevitable as it became used solely to harangue others).

I wonder if there is a belief among non-players that the big positions are fixed in place and untouchable among newcomers, and that this puts them off joining? It's not especially true, but neither is this a game which will allow a swift rise to the top - rise yes, but not immediate. If so, is this a common view to an open-ended game, and if so, what would change people's mind and attract them?'

ROLEPLAYING

Einstein's Lot (*Ulaidh*)

Carol Mulholland - 'So will my character's efforts to shake off the sinister snake-spirit that's following her, succeed? She's taking refuge in a pub in Watchet at the moment, but the damned thing seems horribly persistent.'

Heroes of Olynthus (*Timewyrm*)

Jason Brown - 'Just got my latest turn back and will need to go and re-read in a while just to take in what has happened to Akhenotep, my

character. On the face of it I've had an amazing piece of good luck which has led to a significant increase in my financial resources and possibly my influence with certain notables. However, as usual this success is a two edged sword. I'm fairly certain that other, darker forces were also after the same thing - and now they'll probably be after me! I'm seriously considering jumping ship for another part of the world, with every confidence that, wherever I go, the game will remain as beautifully detailed and written as ever.'

The Sun King (*RIP*)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'No turns now for 6+ months. The game looks like it won't be back and it's a dirty fold. Time to look for another 'En Garde' game I think.'

[We've removed this from GV, sigh.]

SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

Star Marines (*Madhouse*)

Mike Lay - 'Madhouse also now have a similar Destiny "companion product" called "Star Marines", which is in the style of "Starship Troopers" or "Aliens". There are full positions available, or you can give it a swing with an email only, free, single character position. Only a couple of turns old so far, but looks good.'

Starweb (*Flying Buffalo*)

Bruce Edwards - 'Emailed for the sample game advertised in Flagship, and just recently received details for start-up; as it's US-based, turns are all by email. This will be only the second time I've played Starweb, but I'm really looking forward to it.'

SPORTS GAMES

MiSL (*chiavuzzo@knickerbockers.ch*)

David Blair - 'I reported on this last issue, and my team is still doing well. With a spell of 16 games in 16 days and only three defeats, I now top the third division after 21 matches but have progressed in around four Cups. Although only 30 league games are played I have already played over 60 games so far (always a Cup competition on the go at any time) at an average of 3-5 a week. Great fun, with minimal involvement in selecting your team/tactics. Forget it for a day or two, that's alright, it will play for you. Details are in GV and the league will be starting its 12th season in late June.'

Scottish Email Soccer League (*SESL*)

David Blair - 'Reviewed two issues ago, and I was head hunted to take over Hibs in Division 1. They were second bottom and well off the pace but as the players were there although not being used properly, the potential was there to do something. I began the fightback which has resulted in the club being saved from relegation with one match left. It has left my local rivals Hearts to go down (four are relegated out of 16) after a narrow 1-0 win against them. With pressure off we are playing the Cup last 8 as I write. Quite draining sometimes!'

ABPW (*Alex Boothroyd*)

Wayne Yeadon - 'Another whopper of a turn arrives via email, as the tournament to crown this game's first champions rolls on. The gap between turns does not help momentum, but most players seem to be coping well with keeping interest alive in this game. The turns are always well worth the wait, however long they take. If only it was a little quicker.'

Touchdown (*RIP*)

Philip Howard - 'Alas, this excellent American Football game has completed its final season and my Packers got knocked out of the playoffs again! A great shame, as it was friendly and well-run, and from a game mechanics perspective the complexity level was just right. You could

design your own plays (at the start of each season) then select freely from them for individual games, while player attributes and the draft were also well-done. Some other games I've played (including Gameplan Advanced) allow you to specify your gameplan with such precision that it's difficult to make more than minor changes without dismantling your entire strategy at the price of spending days rebuilding it, while others simplify too much and deprive the game of tactical depth. The latter problem has put me off trying Neutral Zone and PAFL, judging them by recent articles, but if my TD withdrawal gets too bad I'll give them a go!'

TRIBAL GAMES

TribeNet (*Peter Rzechorzek*)

Kevin O'Keefe - 'I dropped out of this game after a game year. It was "interesting" more than exciting and I did feel it was one big accountancy exercise at times. That said, I never got more involved in some of the deeper aspects of the game, like forming alliances and taking up a religion. Perhaps players who have the patience to work towards this will get more reward? The game certainly has its share of enthusiasts.'

WAR GAMES

Crisis! (*Time Patterns*)

Simon Fillies - 'Good to see this back. As far as I can tell, all the active players in both my games have resumed play, which says enough.'

Colin Forbes - 'Excellent game, though it's becoming more and more apparent that I totally messed up my first position. Doing much better in the second game and am considering starting a new one. The game itself is basic enough, but there's a fair amount of diplomacy and it's easy enough to play. Sort of *Diplomacy* with nuclear weapons.'

Great Game: 1820 (*Horriifique*)

David Blair - 'Sent off to join this one (request for players in the last issue) and even printed off the rules. All ready, but still waiting for a turn to come back. Looks interesting, though.'

Overlord (*State of Mind Games*)

Bruce Edwards - 'Game 14 came to an end with a win for me, but my thanks to John Wilson for agreeing to ally with me and bring the game to a close. Thanks also to Thomas Crane for being my ally for most of the game.'

Allan Stagg - 'This game has been around for some time, and having taken a break from it for a couple of years, I have joined a new game. The first game-year has passed, and over half the second-rank positions have been filled. The mechanics of the game encourage you to interact with other players, by exchanging fragments of the words that make up the 20 spells that are available for use in the game. Once the spells are learned, the game becomes more of a fantasy wargame, with some intriguing features to prevent the strongest player running away with the game.'

State of Mind Games give a good, efficient service, and Rob Harper is a communicative GM who provides good value to his players and to the hobby. Recommended if you are looking for an involving but not too taxing game.'

Prometheus (*Hunky Monkey Games*)

Allan Stagg - 'Five turns into game 2, and my empire - which consists of a capital city and a hamlet - is expanding quite nicely. We may not be the biggest, the boldest or the most warlike empire, but we are probably the most cultured, as we know both Script and Mathematics! After four turns of splendid isolation, I have encountered one of my neighbours, so things are bound to become very interesting.'

In its early stages the game is very much about how you manage your resources, and choose how you wish your empire to grow. Advancement comes through Researching different technologies. This Research is undertaken by your population - but if they are researching, they cannot grow the food that will enable your population to grow, or gather the wood and stone that will enable you to build the schools and hospitals

which will boost your empire. There are a lot of fine choices to be made here, and the initial turns, while they may lack player interaction, are essential to enable newcomers to the game to get used to the timing system of the orders. As a bonus, each turn you are given your position compared with other players in eight different areas, such as military strength, developments researched, total population etc. This provides a useful measure of where you are compared to other players, and probably provides hours of enjoyment for analytically-minded players to work out what other players are doing.

I am enjoying the game, and I await each turn with great anticipation. It is one of those games where you find yourself thinking about your position at odd moments, debating whether to use your men to gather more resources or to research something like the Wheel, which will make things easier for you later in the game. In short, this is an addictive game for civilisation builders.'

David Blair - 'Have played ten turns now in game 2 and still to meet somebody. Not too unhappy with that, as the ever helpful Tom has pointed out a few glaring errors I have made. None critical except in development, and fortunately I seem surrounded by water. Even if my workers/construction gangs can't progress due to meeting the tide coming in, at least only those with ships will get near me. Have slipped down the table a bit and it may take a different set up for me to make my mark on this game. Come and get me!!'

Ben Williams - 'I can't get enough of this little wargame and have signed up for a weekly turnaround game. I have no time at the moment, so that's a foolish thing to do, but I need my fix you see. Turns are well-presented and although the game can seem a little slow, it's not long before you're pondering which orders to leave out. Diplomacy is manageable since you only find out the names and contact details of players as you meet them in game. I'm no expert, but there seems to be a variety of strategies to employ, each of which could prove rewarding. I like some of the cunning pieces of game design (such as the ability to define your own orders to replace boring strings of repetitive orders used on a regular basis) and the way you can set strategies for some units - they go around and do stuff without the need to specifically order them to do so. Good game and cheap at the price too.'

Jason Brown - 'Fun game. Competent GM. Regular turnaround. Stuff to think about and plan. All you want in a budget price wargame really!'

Andy Kendall - 'Going along fine. Decisions are now needed as to priorities due to lack of orders available. I shot someone's unit for sitting next to a town of mine, and am now irreversibly at war with him (automatic program effect I assume) which wasn't quite the intention. Beyond that, choices of which technology to pursue might have a long term effect, but I can't see what it will be for now. Would be nice if paper maps showed roads though. Deceptively simple.'

Colin Forbes - 'The advent of my nice new ships has solved many of the logistical problems moving units around my rather spread-out empire. The game is developing nicely as research continues to open up new possibilities.'

War of the Dark God (Morten Larsen)

Jon Steer - 'I'd forgotten just how many differences there were between the two versions! I've just been looking back at one of the advanced games where I played the High Elves: got severely beaten by the Trolls, wonder who was playing them ...

The tactics of the advanced version add a lot to the battles and provide a lot more possibilities, didn't really get time to get used to them as new tactics were being introduced throughout the alpha test. Don't think I had that many mass units left when the last round of tactics updates came into play ...

The economy controls, taxes and villeinage, also allowed nations to be more diverse and opened up more ways of playing a particular nation. Being able to over-tax your population mercilessly so you could afford a few more troops (as long as you didn't mind some of your population running off and leaving ...) was a great help.

Sub-positions definitely added a lot too, great for maximising the range of strike spells and required a lot more thought when planning forays into enemy territory ...

Like I said I'd forgotten how big the difference was, especially after thoroughly enjoying all the basic games I've been involved in. Oh well, I'm hoping for a return of the advanced game at some point ...'

Niels Lademark - 'I notice that Morten Larsen had updated his site at <http://www.pbem.dk> in response to my comments on *rec.games.pbm* and in *Flagship*. He opens for the possibility for reintroducing the ability to hiding due to popular demand. Actually he vouch for a "sneak" order. As I understand it, it is basically a move order except your trolls/high elven archers/black snakemen move hidden and hence slower. This should prevent players from forgetting to "unhide".

I for one applaud both the initiative and the speedy reaction.'

GAMES IN PLAYTEST

Kingdoms of Atlantis (Mike Parsons)

Charles Miller - 'Such joy playing - but wonder if GM able to keep up his excellence due to sheer amount of material and info he sends out. Await each turn with great anticipation.'

Martin Helsdon - 'Mike Parson's game continues to provide a reasonable turnaround. The game has now been running for six turns and plot lines (player and GM driven) are starting to grow in complexity. Sadly the game is now subject to a waiting list, although the introduction of player opportunities other than nations allowed a few more openings. Several players are now running mercenary companies, and another is running a merchant. There are rumours of monster or cultic positions as well.'

Destiny (Madhouse)

Robin Orman - 'I'm now committed to this game for quite a while, as a hefty cheque has been sent to Madhouse to bolster my account (and to take advantage of a generous playtest credit offer). It's surely a good sign that I can be persuaded to fork out a large amount of cash for this game on my meagre student budget!'

ZINES

Psychopath web-zine (Mike Dean)

Bruce Edwards - 'A good site for Diplomacy and variants, but I've been bamboozled into GM-ing two word games on the site, *Where is My Mind* and *By Popular Demand*. I suppose it's my own fault for winning the previous game of WiMM... and I only joined up in round 3 (of 10!).'

*Contributions welcomed for Flagship 98,
by July 13th please!*

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Galactic View

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

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

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

UK & WEB-BASED GMS

Next issue we hope to be merging the UK and European listings. If European GM's could contact us with their latest details, we'd be grateful.

Additions: Professional Backball League, Milsi, Sandro Chivavuzzo, Thomas Hadlan, Colin Dunningan, David Adams, Dean Patterson, Eddie Hartwell, Phil Flinton, Phil Baird, Chris Cornuelle, Steve Olson, Eddie Elsie, Michael Helmings, Lesley Nielsen, David Mattingly, JJ Marrel (+16)

Deletions: Dunsdin Games, Matthew Skidmore, Lorne Colmar, Tiam PBM, Touchdown (+5)

Total: 158 active UK & Web-based GMS (+12)

A&D Entertainment, PO Box 108, Bacton, Stowmarket IP14 4RX
WEB: Webmaster@actxw2.demon.co.uk
EM: actxw2.demon.co.uk

FAX: 01449 781916

Absolom, Mike, 96 Bishopswood Road, Taldley, Hants RG26 4HG

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WEB: <http://members.ntl.com/SusSouthGM>

Adams, David

WEB: www.droneworld.com/lorde/lorde04/index.html

WEB: www.droneworld.com/lorde/lorde04/index.html

EM: davester@oz.net

Adrian Aramato

WEB: www.geocities.com/orc_engarde/

EM: adrian@aramato.freemove.co.uk

Adventures by Mail, 100 Fuller Road, Albany NY 12203

WEB: www.adventuresbymail.com

EM: keith@adventuresbymail.com

TEL: 518-489-2605 (8:30am to 4:00pm ET)

FAX: 518-489-9151 (24 hours)

WEB: www.sjastystems.co.uk/

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

Arnott, Steven

EM: g13@noirally.co.uk

Apex Games, POB 56, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9LT

Baird, Phil

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lorde/lorde1/index.html

EM: philphair14@springmail.com

Bartram, Giles

WEB: www.penalva.net/~serge/centre_earth/ardacountries.html

EM: centreearth@yahoo.co.uk

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

Blarpo

WEB: www.geocities.com/homthecanadianblarpo/

EM: engarde_gm@hotmail.com

Boothroyd, Alex, 30 Sawyer Drive, Biddulph, Staffordshire, ST8 6SU

EM: alex.boothroyd@virgin.net

Brambley, Francis

WEB: freespace.virgin.net/francis.brambley/ArkhamAdvertise.htm

EM: francis.brambley@virgin.net

Burd, Richard, 83 Sandcroft, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4AD

EM: 106553.2107.compuserve.com

TEL: 01952 415655

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WEB: www.burzackpbm.freemove.co.uk

EM: pete@burzackpbm.freemove.co.uk

TEL/FAX: 0115 9224001 (pre 10pm)

Burrows, Martin, 47 Greenfield Terrace, Newbridge, Gwent NP1 4QY

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

Callan, David

EM: gorlas@netcom.co.uk

Camlot Games, 6 Llys-Y-Foel, Caernarvon, Gwynedd LL55 2LU

Carter, Dave, **Scorpiogames**, 13 Liverpool Rd South, Burscough, Lanes L40 7SU

EM: dr@clara.net or highrock@aol.com

WEB: www.scorpiogames.co.uk

Cassey, Ashley, 16 Willow Grove, Harrigate, North Yorkshire, HG1 4HP

WEB: www.ashcassey.co.uk

EM: serpen@atksceasy.co.uk

Cleopatra Computer Games, 82 Faringdon Avenue, Bromley, Kent BR2 8BU

Clvenshield

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

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EM: andy@crashworld.com

Crofts, Richard

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EM: claudedelon@yahoo.com

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

WEB: www.darcdevil.jp.co.uk

EM: darcdevil@darkorders.jp.co.uk

Dodd, Leslie

WEB: www.lordssoftheearth.co.uk/lorde2/index.htm

EM: lorde42gm@throneworld.com

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

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EM: derik@draesgames.co.uk

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

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EFIFA

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Elsie, Eddie

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lorde/lorde20/index.html

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Entertainment Plus More Games

WEB: www.epmgames.com

EM: ag@epmgames.com

Evans, Paul, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge UB10 8UF

EM: paul@pevans.co.uk

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

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

Flinton, Paul

WEB: www.gamymeda.com/

EM: lords8gm@throneworld.com

Flying Buffalo

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EM: rick@flyingbuffalo.com

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Fryer, Richard, 6 Flamingo Close, Wooshehill, Wokingham, Berks, HP11 1SL

Fuel PBM, 48 Crest Gardens, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 9HD

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Galactic Society Four, 1 Peter Coats, 31 Calside, Puseley, Scotland, PA2 6DB

WEB: www.gsfgames.co.uk

EM: graham@gsfgames.co.uk

Games by Mail, Bridge Street, Neston, S Wirral CH64 9UJ

WEB: GamesbyMail.co.uk

EM: colin@gamechymail.co.uk

TEL: (Colin, Yvonne, Treg): 0151 3361412

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Gillard, Trevor

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

Great Game

WEB: www.geocities.com/epcchelpse/

EM: horzifque@hotmail.com

Guild of Blades

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

Paul Green, 11 Belgravia Mews, Shaw, Oldham OL2 7TB

EM: clans@varriongames.co.uk

TEL: (Paul Green): 01706 881344

Harbinger Enterprises, 3 Nelson Square, Norton Green, Stockton/Tees, Cleveland TS20 1EH

Harian, Thomas

WEB: www.throneworld.com/lorde/lorde01/index.html

EM: thomash@throneworld.com

Harlequin Games, 340 North Road, Cardiff CF14 3BP

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

EM: pbn@harlequingames.com

TEL: 029 2091 3559 (9-6.30 weekdays) - Middle Earth only

TEL: (Sam Roads): 029 2062 5665 (9-6.30 weekdays)

FAX: 029 2062 5532 any time

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EM: psych-art@mailcity.com

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

WEB: www.hunkmonkey.co.uk AND www.sjastystems.co.uk/karadad/

EM: ape@hunkmonkey.co.uk

IB Postal Games, 90 Queen Elizabeth Way, Kirk Hallam, Ilkerton, Derbys DE7 4NT

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

EM: pbn@ioip.co.uk

Incubus Designs, POB 263, Loughborough LE11 1ZG

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FAX: 01509 558788

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Jenkins, Brian

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

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WEB: www.pbm.dk

EM: info@pbm.dk

MIND	MINDLESS GAMES, 217A Ilkerton Road, Nottingham NG7 3FX WEB: www.mindlessworld.net TEL: 0115 979 0797 (9.30-18.30 weekdays only)	MIN	SPENCER, JERRY, 51 Elm Vale, Liverpool L6 8NY EM: jerry.spencer@liverpool.gov.uk SPORTING DREAMS, PO Box 5423, Derby, DE21 2ZB WEB: www.sportingdreams.com TEL: 01532 226376
MMJ	MMJ Enterprises WEB: www.mmj-ent.com/ge/ EM: jester@mmj-ent.com	MMJ	SQUIBB, Geoff, 108 Teddington Park Rd, Teddington, Middx TW11 8NE EM: crasder@tinogier.co.uk TEL: 020 5257 2592
MUR	Murdoch, Neil WEB: www.geocities.com/floodsoccer/home.html EM: darbi@btinternet.co.uk	MUR	STATE OF MIND GAMES, 37 Balliol Drive, Didcot OX11 9RH WEB: www.stateofmindgames.co.uk/ EM: rob@stateofmindgames.co.uk TEL: 01235 211696
MYS	Mystic Axiom WEB: www.mysticaxiom.com	MYS	STONSON, LEI, EM: lei@plmadm@lyator.liu.se SUMMIT Soccer League WEB: www.summitsoccer.co.uk/ EM: summitsoccer@attworld.com
NIE	Nieland, Lesley WEB: www.throneworld.com/lands/lor24/index.html EM: lor24@throneworld.com	NIE	SUPERSONIC GAMES, PO Box 1812, Galston, KA4 8WA EM: son@asterite.co.uk TEL: (Scott, Sam, Chris): 01563 821022; fax: 01563 821006
NTL	Ninth Legion, The, 40 Hylkeham Road, Lincoln LN6 8AB EM: the9thleg@btinternet.com	NTL	TIME PATTERNS, 14 The Hollows, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1QT WEB: www.timepatterns.co.uk EM: carol@timepatterns.co.uk TEL/FAX: 01395 276652
OAT	Oates, Jason, 651 Georges Rd, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1PA WEB: http://fforce.virgin.net/jason.oates TEL/FAX: 01305 251451	OAT	TIMEWYRN, 2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1BS WEB: www.timewynm.co.uk EM: colin@timewynm.co.uk TEL: (Colin Forbes): 01392 420582
OLS	Olson, Steve WEB: http://thometown.aol.com/solstoneof/lands/lor6/lands/lor6.htm WEB: http://thometown.aol.com/solstoneof/lands/lor6/lands/lor6.htm EM: solstone6@aol.com	OLS	TRIDENT GAMES (Glyn Cary), 9 Trent Drive, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 6GR EM: jerry@tridentgames.co.uk TEL: 01549 544869 (8pm-3pm, weekdays or weekends)
OLY	Olympia Games, 6 Sandy Ln, Brancote, Nottingham NG9 3GS EM: rhndexter@tulf21.com TEL/FAX: (Travis Daxter): 0115 9436197	OLY	TURNER, Daniel, 5 Saltouse Road, Milbom, Cumbria, LA18 5AD TEL: 01229 774664
PAG	Pagoda Games, PO Box 5155, Tamworth, Staffs B77 4QQ EM: orders@pagodagames.co.uk TEL/FAX: (Keith Burnham): 01827 703251	PAG	ULIDH GAMES, 62 Beechgrove Avenue, Belfast BT6 0NF EM: christian.morris@virgin.net
PAR	Par, Alan, 6 Longfield Gals, Tring, Herts HP23 4DN Patterson, Dean WEB: www.throneworld.com/lands/lor6/lands/lor6.htm EM: dpatterson@computertech.com	PAR	ULTRA Sports EM: ultra-sports.com/ EM: tim@ultra-sports.com
PAT	Pinder, Mark, 130 Nelson Way, Laseby Acres, Grimsby, S Humberside DN34 5UJ WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/chvoria EM: Markpinder@aol.com TEL: 01472 753430	PAT	UNDYING KING GAMES, 31 Littlemore Road, Oxford, OX4 3SS EM: undyingking@btinternet.com EM: flagus@btinternet.com WEB: http://members.tripod.co.uk/Flagus/
PEG	Play-by-Electron Games EM: moderator@phbgames.com EM: modtrator@phbgames.com	PEG	VAREHA, Tim WEB: http://people.mediawire.net/jovan/intro.htm EM: jovan@mediawire.net
PRE	Premier Management WEB: http://pml-engnating.com	PRE	VAREIN, DO, FOUDE WEB: www.varein.de EM: The.Warrior@gnm.de
PTG	Professional Basketball League WEB: www.geocities.com/tonytr EM: tonytr@yahoo.com	PTG	VIKING GAMES, 38 Park Avenue, Hounslow, London TW3 2LX EM: flagus@btinternet.com WEB: http://members.tripod.co.uk/Flagus/
PUR	Pure Fantasy Games, Portland House, Boksolver Business Park, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 6BH REALITY RACING, PO Box 100, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 TEL: 01380 81819	PUR	VILKING SAGA WEB: http://imgmatr.tripod.com/vikingaga.html EM: vikingaga@compuser.com
RCB	Rebus Games, 70 Greenfield Crescent, Brighton, BN1 8HJ EM: dominien@zoom.co.uk EM: help@realtyracing.com	RCB	WAYNE (Shambhala), 59 Kilm Court, Newell Street, Poplar, London E14 7JP WHITE, Stephen, PO Box 137, Burnley, Lancs, BB10 2UG WILKINSON, Mark, 31 Churchill Avenue, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1PX WILLIAMS, Mark, WEB: www.geocities.com/4real5/station/5676/real.html
RCV	Received Wisdom, 9 Oundle Road, Alwalton, Peterborough PE7 3UP WEB: www.receivedwisdom.org EM: bexja@btinternet.com	RCV	WILLIAMS, Simon, 8 Osier Close, Ely, Cambs CB7 4AY WEB: www.chessrail.co.uk AND www.ultimatefreecervers.com
RED	Red Mohawk, WEB: www.becrmogul.com	RED	WORG PHM Productions, 23 Beadigo Street, Belfast, BT6 8GD WEB: phm@worg.ie
RICH	Richardson, Stephen, Guardian Games, 51 Amersham Rise, Apsley, Nottingham NG8 5QN RICK, Gregory WEB: http://www.planetunreal.com/kb/engarde/ EM: Gregory.Rick.Chadbourne@tatus.com	RICH	WRIGHT, Chris, 10 Fosse Way, Wulby Way, Wellingborough, NNS 2LQ EM: chris@strikeforce.chriswest.co.uk
ROH	Robey, Chris, 27 Bowness Avenue, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 8NF RZCHORZAK, Peter WEB: www.geocities.com/TimeSquare/Alley/2187/tribenet.htm	ROH	ZUN GAMES, 25 Cromwell Road, Paksstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 2NW EM: zengames@qpsia.net
SAB	Sabre Games, Mill Farm, West Lydford, Somerset TA11 7DA EM: telchurn@btinternet.com	SAB	
SDD	Seadogs & Darlings WEB: http://communities.msn.co.uk/seadogsundardlings EM: seadogsundardlings@hotmail.com	SDD	
SEA	Seamer, Robin, Houseboat Tamara, Windsor Road, Datchet, Berks SL3 9BS SESL, Mark, Cressy WEB: www.silverdreamer.com	SEA	CSS Fritz Berger, The Vienna Wizard, Hergersgasse 13 113, 1030 EM: Fritz.Berger@120a0122.Hinet.org
SEV	Sevensar Games, 57 Olympia Gardens, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1JQ EM: greensun@nickel.globalnet.co.uk WEB: www.silverdreamer.com	SEV	BUCHER, Thomas, In der Auepflanz 13, 40401 Linn Stala, Wolfgang, Kottenbuscher 12/9/1, A-1190 Wien (Mags) SSV Knipf-Buchser OEG, Postfach 1206, A-8021 Graz/Legends, Holdenwelt, World Conquest, Asterizeit, SSV Fussball-Liga) WEB: http://members.snam.at/pastripad EM: ssv-graz@am.at
SHO	Shore, Justin, 2 Langport Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1YR SILVER DREAMER, 174 Charles St, Greenhithe, Dartford, Kent DA9 9AJ WEB: www.silverdreamer.com	SHO	ART PHM Games, Kasselstrasse 11, 2930 Kapellen (Quest) Sara, Zach PFC, 152 Rue Irma Teyver, 7021 Hareve (Football Champions, also licensed for France)
SIL	Smith, Russell, Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL EM: russell@btinternet.com	SIL	BELGHIM DENMARK Martin Bilgram, Studsvogel 1 stv, Hermin, 9600 Aars (Ashes of Emptire, CSS, WaG) Tina A., 10414-34-2006.computer.com EM: 10414-34-2006.computer.com
SML	Smith, Russell, Middleton Cottage, 7 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1SL SOFTWARE SIMULATIONS, Georgian House, Trinity St, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UB SPINBLINDER GAMES, 51 Abelskan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE TEL: (Chris Dempsey): 0843 291558	SML	FLP, Bhaabherhavan 7-1th, 2980 Kokkadal (Pollux) Jyoti Sundaram, Peruvankulam 8, 65230 Vanaa
SOF	Software Simulations, Georgian House, Trinity St, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UB	SOF	
SPE	Spinblinder Games, 51 Abelskan Rd, Cliftonville, Margate, Kent CT9 2BE TEL: (Chris Dempsey): 0843 291558	SPE	

Divide! Tactica , Limingkan™ 24 B x A, 90120 Oulu (Austelitz, Olympia) <i>WEB: www.stepp.fr/~coring</i> <i>EH: wing@netpf.fr</i>	FRANCE Abysse-PC, 1 avenue Briangon, 76240 Bomescourt (Fradal Lend, Continental Railw., World War IV, Blitzkrieg) AMM, 124 rue de la Seine, 87200 Montmoréau (Melchise, Warlord) Cécile Games (Fabien Leroy), 7 route de la draisine, 77420 Champs sur Marne (Les Seigneurs Chroniques) Corbett Pierre, 30 Rue de Rougemont, 79000 Niort (War m Up 2)	DANMARK , 1 skovvej Elbertsen, 9100Eryv Hypostix, Prohibition Chicayork 1920, Adventurer Kings, Empires Seillaine 2, Orichelous (Vio Teled) (World conquest, Conquest 2000) Pandinasters, SFO PH70X705 Fory, 37200 Amilly-sous-bois Cordex Pandinasters Games (Irene Jule Mery), 37200 Amilly-sous-bois Cordex (Alliances Royales, El Mythico, Grail, Project Armageddon, War m Up) Rousselle, 10 rue de l'Église, 35000 Rennes (The Last Days of Pompeii) JESA, BP3, 22540 Versailles, Villiers-le-Bacq 91190Gaulx-Yvette (Necrowave) Kerun, 14 allée de châte Rousseau, 91330 Yerres (Legende Viking, Nemak, Alnery) Loren, Yann, 73 rue du Col Fabien, 94460 Valenton (B-Soccer) Korner, 4 allée de châte Coisel, 91330 Yerres (Legende Viking, Nemak, Alnery) Maison pour le monde, 6 rue Pierre et Marie Curie, BP 551, 15744 Virmales Cedex (Caudanir One) Mikael, centre MBE 333, 208 rue de la Convention, 75015 Paris (Quest, Survivor One) Laurent Millard, 11 rue Voltaire-le-Duc, 54710 Luddes (Odysee Galactique) Polletier-Renaud, 14 square Beaudouin, 87500 Jouars-Pouchérigues, Toléid (1) 34908542 Two-Ft eyes (Shaddam) Terra de Feu, 88 avenue de l'Industrie, 91600 Savigny-sur-Ogny (Kour Ezo, Kour Solar, Tanaka, Echocok Mago) <i>WEB: www.citib-internet.fr</i>	FINLAND Arto Penttilä kinkki Ltd., Helsinki-Seinä, 5, Fin 65200 Vaasa (Timeplots) GERMANY ABAS, Alfred Bucher Str. 63, 53112 Bonn (Grand Slam, ABAS Soccer, Billy wood, Jewelentrab am Alexandroplatz, Aufstand in Tortuga, Abenteuer im Karthaus, Sherrick Holmes Criminal Cabinet, Die Irrfahrt des Odyseus, Der sichere Schilweg) Schnitzler, 10000 Berlin (The Last Days of Pompeii) CSPP, Alfred Bucher-Str. 63, 53115 Bonn (Ashes of Empire) <i>WEB: http://homes.online.de/home/ashes_of_empire</i> Dahlmann, Peter, World War IV, Adventurer Kings, Godfather Dahlmann, Peter, World War IV, Adventurer Kings, Godfather Hörsing, 10000 Berlin (The Last Days of Pompeii) Jacko, Andrus, Im Wiesengrund 118, 27356 Rensenberg (Sydney Wars) Thurn, 10000 Berlin (The Last Days of Pompeii) Meckler, 10000 Berlin (The Last Days of Pompeii) Neumann, Jens (WWII), JWA Abt III, c/o Iren Neumann, Brunnensstr. 24, Bollinger 71032 <i>WEB: www.le.uni-stuttgart.de/~www_jfjfrans/vw2/bw2.htm</i> PRIM Studio, Stollenberg 33, 76227 Karlsruhe (Spiral Arm, El Mythico, The Weapon) Quint Games, Postfach 1584, 47584 Westdorf (Gladien of Phum, Asterizur) Schubert, 10000 Berlin (The Last Days of Pompeii) Stange, Timm, Alstet Kirchgasse 2, 34369 Hedges unar (Scenatio) <i>WEB: www.stange.net</i> <i>EH: Szenario@t-online.de</i> <i>EH: Szenario@t-online.de</i> WIKI Strategische Simulationen, Nelsonstr. 17, 31848 Bad Meiner (Tingral) WIKI Strategische Simulationen, Nelsonstr. 17, 31848 Bad Meiner (Tingral) Ylthon, J. Dreßler & Axel Starkfeldt, Postfach 900306, 60413 Frankfurt/Main <i>WEB: http://ysharp.de</i>	GREECE Kakao, Kalitromion 8, 11472, Athens (Warlords) <i>EH: Kakao@compulgr.gr</i> Sphynx O.E., P.O. Box 25020, GR 10026, Athens (Asseritz, Godfather, Tour Conquest) <i>EH: teppas@sphynx.oce.nat.gr</i>	ITALY BAMBO'S Production, via Giusti 15 sh, 50121 Firenze (Quest, Top o'bel League) Repetti, Christiano, MEFA spa, via Gallelli 19-Ganga, 29100 Podenzano (PG) (United) The PRIM Loconotivie, C.Via Pisacane, 00152 Roma (Adventurer Kings, Godfather, Medievo, World War IV) <i>WEB: www.melcio.com/guest/daphn/covert.htm</i> <i>EH: r.juliano@melcio.it</i>	NETHERLANDS Pegeuss Games, Postbox 33, 5420 AA Gemert, Netherlands (Legends) <i>EH: pegeuss.games@planet.nl</i>	NORWAY Arctic Circle Games, Box 6142, N-8018 Markved (Dark Age, Isle of Crowns, Secret Stars) PORTUGAL Associação Portuguesa de Jogos Por Correspondência, R. Diogo de Silveira, 142-3E-Tr, 4400 V.N. Gaia	SOUTH AFRICA D-Imp-Adams, 7 Conti stownay, Pretoria, 7405, Cape Town (African Simulation)	SPAIN Contra de Joes, C/Nimancia 12-116, 08029 Barcelona (Middle-Earth PRM) <i>WEB: www.contra08.com</i> <i>EH: conje@intercom.es</i> Dragomantis, San Telmo 45, Bajos, 28016 Madrid (Quest) <i>WEB: www.dragomantis.com</i> <i>EH: mail@dragomantis.com</i>	SWEDEN Maquis Cassegrain, ADMP, Georg Luckigssvä 22209, 352 35, vaxpe (Daemnkam, Fantasy Blitzball League, Orzel, Svartfolk) <i>EH: jprlo@900.se</i> <i>EH: jprlo@900.se</i> R-Rystrom, Box 294, 731 26 Keeping (Trold, Botom, Hepicard, Conducting Chaos)	TURKEY MB-O, Bestek SK, 11/15, Besiktas Istanbul 80700 (Football 2000, Soldiers of Stars)
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Process shows if the game is run by computer (C), human (H) or mixed (M). The **Duration** of the game is shown by O (Open-ended) or F (Finite).

GM is the GM's code shown in our listing of UK & Web-based titles.

Medium shows whether a game is available via email (e), paper (p) or web-based play (w).

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

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

Other Fees - how much each turn costs. * means that return postage is paid by the GM each turn. **S** means you need to send an SSAE or at least pay for the GM's postage. **Turn Fee** - 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.

Flagship Ref shows the issue of Flagship where you can find the best description so far: a=article, s=Spokenmen Speak, d=diary. Thus, 4s means 'Spokenmen Speak issue #4'. Indicates a 'Euro-friendly' game: deadlines at least two weeks apart and prices for Continental players not more than 30% above those listed here.

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

New Entries: Professional Basketball League, MsSL1, Haunted Manor, Lords of the Earth 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 25 & 51 (+18)
Deletions: Conquest of the Stars, Games Guru, Tribal Kingdom Soccer, Touchdown, Lords of the Earth 17, 34 & 92 (-7)
Changes: Lords of the Earth 42, Exile, War of the Dark God, Throne of Corfan, Pop Turns, S/F, Wild World Web
Total: 275 games (+11) Note that all prices are for the UK and are given in £'s except where noted. Non-UK European rates are usually about 25% higher, and overseas rates can be up to double.

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
1483 Online	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	GOB	e	Free	No	Free	-	94s
523 Sweet FA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£7.60 per season	0	£4.00	(a)	41a
A Day at the Races	M-O	Sport: Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	42s
AKD Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	A&D	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	81s
ABPW	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	BOO	p	£1.00	0	£1.00	-	92a
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Absolute Fantasy	M-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£15.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Absolute Heroes	M-O	RPG: Superhero	JAD	p	£15.00	2	£4.50	(b)	91a
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£5.00	0	£2.50	-	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Adventurer Kings	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	LOC	e	£60 per game	0	£2.50	-	35a, 72-74d, 88a
Aeroball	M-O	Sport: Fictional	WIG	p	£2.00	1	£1.25	-	62-63a
Agamemnon II	M-F	Wargame: Fantasy	KEL	p	£12.00	5	£2.00	-	76a
Alamaze	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	PAG	p	£15.00	1	£3.50	-	71a, 80a
American Civil War Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	60s
American War of Ind. Battles	M-F	Power: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
Ancient Empires	M-F	Power: Historical	OAT	e, p	£4.00	2	£3.25	£1 month	58a
Apex PBM Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	APE	p	£1.50	0	£3.00 for 2 games	35a	-
Aspects of Might	M-O	Adventure	SIL	e	£2.50	0	£2.50	(c)	94s
Assyria's End	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	90a
Atlantis	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	VAR	e, p	Free	0	Free	-	-
Austerlitz	C-F	Wargame: Historical	SUP	e, p	£10.00*	0	£3.75	(a)	34s, 96a
Away the Lads	M-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.40	(a)	42s
Bakufu	H-F	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£36 per game	-	-	-	-
Barbarians at the Gate	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	£5.00	?	£2.50	-	-
Barony of the Rivers	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HIL	p	£10.00	3	£2.50	-	-
Basketball	C-O	Sport: Basketball	CAM	p	£10 per season	-	-	-	-
Battle Plan	C-O	Wargame	FBI	e	£5	0	£3.50	(a)	19a
Battle Robots	C-F	Misc: Robots	GSF	e	Free	0	Free	-	85a
Beer Mogul	C-O	Economic	RED	w	Free	0	Free	-	96a
Beyond	M-O	Adventure	CRA	e, p	49.95	3	£2.95	(a)	87a
Beyond Green Sun	M-O	Sci Fi	SEV	e, p	Free	0	£4.00 - £6.00	-	86a
Beyond the Stellar Empire	M-O	K/C	K/C	p	Free	1	£2.50 - £6.00	-	87a
Blackdial Diary: A	M-O	Tribal	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25 - £3.25	-	22a, 83a
British Wrestling Association	H-O	Sport: Wrestling	TUR	p	£7.00	6	£1.00	-	80a, 81-84d
Centre Earth	H-O	Power: Fantasy	BAR	e	Free	0	Free	-	57a, 92a
Championship Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	HEM	p	Free	5	£2.00	(d)	41s
Championship League	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SUP	p	Free	0	£1.95	-	53s
Chaos Trail	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WIL	p	Free	0	£1.25 \$	(d)	47a, 86a
Chicken Run	C-O	Sport: Motor Racing	RCW	e, p	£0.50	0	£0.50	-	-
Clans II	H-O	Tribal	GRE	p	£10.00	2	£2.00	-	38a, 84a
Clovenshield	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	CLO	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Clovenish Postal Football League	M-O	Sport: Soccer	COE	p	Free	0	£1.50	(d)	70s
Come On You Reds	M-O	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	£1.00	1	£1.00	-	34a, 41a
Company Commander	M-F	Wargame	OAT	e, p	£12.00	2	£3.50 + £1.50/month	-	96a, 97a
Conclave	M-F	Power: Fantasy	UKG	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.50	-	91s, 96a
Continental Rails	C-F	Misc: Railway	FUE	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.25	-	21a
Covert Operations	C-F	Economic	FBI	e	\$25 per game	0	n/a	-	-
Crack of Doom II	M-O	Tribal	HAQ	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	(d)	96a
Casimoff's Quest World Crisis!	M-O	Tribal	CRA	p	£9.95	2	£2.50	-	7a
Dark Age II	C-F	Wargame	TIM	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.20*	-	7a, 85a
Diadochi	C-F	Power: Historical	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 3	-	51a
Diplomacy	H-F	Wargame: Historical	CYC	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	78a, 79d, 81d
Directive 32	M-F	Sci Fi	COZ	p	£10.00	1	?	-	-
Dragonhelm	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	ULA	e, p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	73s
DungonWorld	C-O	Adventure	MAD	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.00	(d)	77-80d, 92-94d
Eagle	H-F	Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£10	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
EFIFA	C-O	Sport: Soccer	EFI	w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
EG1: Banana	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	BAN	e	Free	0	Free	-	96a
EG1: Blurple	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	BLA	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
EG1: Dangerous Liaisons	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	SPN	e, w	£5.00	5	£0.80	-	84s, 93a
EG1: Delon	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	CRO	p	Free	-	Free	-	93a
EG1: Horseguards	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	GIL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	93a, 96a
EG1: King & Cardinal	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	COL	e, w	Free	-	Free	-	94s
EG1: LPBS	M-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	EVA	p	£10.00	4	£2.00	-	34a, 93a

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
EG1: Orcs	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	AKA	e, w	Free	-	-	-	93a
EG1: Orkens	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	JEN	e	Free	-	-	-	93a
EG1: Slumbers	H-O	RPG: Historical (EG1)	BRM	e, w	Free	-	-	-	93a, 96a
EG1: Time of Honor	H-O	RPG: Modern	COP	p	£4.50	1	£3.50	-	91a
Einstein's Lot	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	ULA	e	Free	2	\$2	-	74s, 91s
Eldritch	C-F	Misc: Political	FBI	e	Free	0	£25 per game	-	-
Election Year	C-O	Wargame: Historical	SOF	e, p	£5.00	?	£2.00	-	-
Empires of Corinnum	M-O	Sci Fi	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	-	63s
Endless Time and Space	H-F	Power: Fantasy	SAB	p	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	-
English Civil War Battles	M-F	Wargame: Historical	AGE	p	£6.40	0	£2.80	-	78s
Epoch of Might	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.00	-	63a
Evolution of the Stars	C-F	Sci-Fi	VUF	e	TBA	0	£0.5	(e)	-
Extra Time-Chairman	C-O	Sport: Soccer	K/C	p	Free	1	£2.25	-	53a
Extra Time-original	C-O	Sport: Soccer	K/C/CRA	e, p	Free	1	£1.90	-	53a
Falcon	M-F	Wargame: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Fall of the Roman Empire	M-F	Wargame: Historical	OAT	e, p	£3.00	0	£1.50 + 50p per month	-	-78s

Fallen at the First Fantasy Cycling 2001	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	DRC	e, p	Free	0	£2.00	(a)	-
Fallen at the First Fantasy Soccer	C-O	Sport: Cycling	ULT	e	Free	0	Free	-	-
Fallen at the First Fantasy Soccer	C-O	Sport: Soccer	K/C	p	Free	0	Free	-	53a
Feudal Lords	C-F	Wargame: Historical	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	-	3a
First Crusade	C-F	Wargame: Historical	KEL	p	£10.00	5	£2.00	-	38a
Floodlit Soccer	M-O	Sport: Soccer	FLO	w, e	Free	-	Free	-	93s
Food Chain	C-O	Misc	LIN	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Football Maestro	C-O	Sport: Soccer	MAE	p	Free	0	£2.00	-	84a
Football Predictions	C-O	Sport: Soccer	DRC	w	Free	0	Free	-	-
For God, King & Country	H-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£0.80	0	£5.00	-	46s
Galactic Conflict	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$5	0	£3.50	-	-
Galactic Empires	C-O	Sci-Fi	MMI	e	Free	5	\$2.25	-	-
Galactic Invasion 2	C-F	Sci-Fi	WRG	e, p	Free	3	£2.00	-	29a
Galactic Invasion 3	C-F	Sci-Fi	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
Galaxy	C-F	Sci-Fi	REB	e, p	Free	6	£1.50	-	94s
Ganeuplan	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/MCC	p	£5.00	0	£11.00 for 4	-	20a
Ganeuplan Baseball	C-O	Sport: Baseball	MCC	p	£5.00	0	£3.00	-	-
Ganeuplan Boxing	C-O	Sport: Boxing	MCC	p	£5.00	5	£9.00 for 4	-	-
Ganeuplan: Advanced	C-O	Sport: American Football	SOF/MCC	p	£5.00	0	£13.00 for 4	-	-
Gobball	C-O	Sport: Fictional	SYN	p	£7.70	2	£3.00	-	79s
Godfather	C-F	Misc: Crime	PAG	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	(a)	73a, 83d
Gordos	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	LOC	e	Free	0	Free	-	73a, 83d
Grand National	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAL	e	Free	0	£1.75	-	65a
Great Game: 1820	H-F	Wargame: Historical	GAM	p	Free	0	Free	-	38a
Great White Hunter	C-F	Misc	ARN	e	Free	-	Free	-	96s
Gridiron Stats	C-O	Sport: American Football	McG	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	94s
Gryphon	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Gunboat Diplomacy	M-O	RPG: Fantasy	RIC	p	£10.00	2	£2.00	(c)	53s
Haunted Manor	C-F	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	-	-
Heavens Above	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	FUE	e	Free	0	Free	-	97a
Heroes of Olympus	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	TIW	e, p	£10.00	2	£2.25	-	48a, 61a
Heroic Fantasy	C-O	Adventure	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$3	-	88s
Hooplaan	C-O	Sport/Basketball	MeM	p	£5.00	2	£3.25	-	40a
Horse Racing	C-O	Sport: Horse Racing	REA	p	Choice	0	£1.25	(d)	-
In Off the Post	H-F	Misc: Politics	SAB	p	Free	1	£1.25	(d)	71s
In The House Today	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	PEG	e	Free	0	£10.00 for 2	-	33a
Isle of Crowns	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	ABM	p	Free	-	Free	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	K/C	p	TBA	-	TBA	-	-
It's a Crime!	C-F	Misc: Crime	ABM	e	Free	-	Free	-	-
It's in the Net	C-O	Sport: Soccer	WRI	p	Free	2	£1.50	-	-
JWA Wrestling	M-O	Sport: Wrestling	SPY	p	£1.50	1	£1.00	-	65a
Kickabout	C-F	Power: Fantasy	TIW	e, p	Free	0	£1.50	-	-
Kings of Karndon	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SPE	e, p	£7.50	2	£2.25	-	18a, 34a, 89a
Kings of Steel	H-F	Wargame: Fantasy	WHS	e, p	Free	0	£5.00	-	83a, 87a, 93-94a, 96a
KLIP	C-O	Economic	LYP	e	?	?	?	-	13a, 77a
Knights of Christendom	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 2	-	?
La Glire du Roi	M-O	Power: Historical	AGM	e, p	£5.00	0	£5.00	(d)	47a, 76a, 86-
La Ultima Cruzada	H-F	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	2	£10.00 for 3	-	80d
Lands of Elveria	C-F	RPG: Fantasy	PN	e, p	£10.00	3	£3.50	(c)	59a, 93a
Legends	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£20.00	1	£3.50	(a)	84a, 90a, 93a, 96a
Legends of Iken	C-O	Adventure	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£1.00	-	-
Legends of Iken	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	TNL	p	£5.00	2	£2.50	-	-
LoE: 10	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	-	54a, 90a
LoE: 11	M-O	Power: Historical	BAT	e	?	?	?	-	(84a), 97a
LoE: 13	M-O	Power: Historical	COR	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 16	M-O	Power: Historical	OLS	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 19	M-O	Power: Historical	DGN	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 2	M-O	Power: Historical	EFS	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 20	M-O	Power: Historical	HEL	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 23	M-O	Power: Historical	NIE	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 24	M-O	Power: Historical	MAT	e	?	?	?	-	(84a), 94a
LoE: 25	M-O	Power: Historical	ADA	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 4	M-O	Power: Historical	DOD	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)
LoE: 42	M-O	Power: Historical	DOD	e	?	?	?	-	(84a)

Game	Process	Type	GM	Medium	Start-up	Free Turns	Turn Fee	Xtra £	Flagref.
Loie: 5	M-O	Power: Historical	PAT	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
Loie: 51	M-O	Power: Historical	MAR	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
Loie: 7	M-O	Power: Historical	HTW	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
Loie: 8	M-O	Power: Historical	FLI	e	?	?	?	?	(84a)
LT Wars	C-F	Wargame: Future	SPE	e, p	Free	2	£1.90	-	76a
Middle Earth PBM	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£3.90	-	76a, 80a, 88a, 94a, 96a
Mighty Heroes	H-O	RPG: Superhero	RCW	e, p	£9.50 a year	0	n/a	-	-
MiSL	C-F	Sport: Soccer	MIS	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	-
Mobius I	C-F	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	\$8	0	\$8	(a)	47a
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	KJC	p	Free	0	£2.10	-	-
Monster Island	C-O	Adventure	ABM	p	Free	0	\$6.50	-	-
Monstr Maximus	C-F	Adventure	PEG	e	Free	0	Free	-	91s
Mundis	C-O	Sport: Fictional	MAD	p	£10.00	2	£2.50	-	81s
Mystic Arena	C-O	Power: Historical	SAB	p	£10.00	1	£10.00 for 3	-	-
Napoleonic Battles	M-F	Misc: Arena	MYS	e	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Necromancer	C-F	Power: Historical	AGM	p	£6.00	0	£2.80	-	71-73d
Neural Zone	C-O	Wargame: Fantasy	MAD	e, w	Free	2	£1.25	-	63a, 70-71d
No Holds Barred	C-O	Sport: American Football	SAT	p	Free	2	£2.00	-	92a
Nuclear Destruction	C-F	Sport: Fictional	LAU	p	Free	2	£2.00	-	69a
Offside Ref!	M-O	Wargame	FBI	e	\$5	0	\$2.50	-	-
Overlord	C-F	Sport: Soccer	CAR	p	Free	0	£1.40	-	43s
Palmer League, The	H-O	Wargame: Fantasy	STM	p	£10.00	4	£2.50	-	57a
Palmer League II	M-F	Sport: Soccer	SHO	p	£5.00	0	£10.00 for 6	-	43s
Penalty!	M-O	Wargame	AGM	p	£4.00	0	£3.00	-	82s
Phantasmenech	C-O	Sport: Soccer	CAR	e, p	Free	0	£1.25	-	65s
Planet Soccer	C-O	Adventure	SCR	p	£9.95	3	£1.95	-	30a
Planetary Wrestling Syndicate	H-O	Sport: Soccer	LAN	p	£5.00	1	£3.75	-	77s
Play On	C-O	Sport: Wrestling	SCR	p	Free	0	£3.50	-	-
Pro Torts	H-F	Sport: Aussie Rules	LAN	p	Free	0	AUS\$5.50	(a)	76s
Potlaka & Palaces	H-O	Economic	RCW	e, p	£10.00	?	£1.30	-	91a
Postal American Football League	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	HOL	e, p	£5.00	1	£1.30	(c)	23s
Premier League	M-O	Sport: American Football	CLE	p	£54 a season	0	-	-	29a, 88a, 88d, 93d
Premier Management Football	C-O	Sport: Soccer	BOU	p	£8.00 per season	0	Free	-	63s
Primus Inter Pares	M-O	Sport: Soccer	PRE	w	Free	0	£6.00/month	-	94s
Pro Soccer	C-F	Sport: Soccer	OLY	p	Free	1	£1.60	(c)	57a, 75d, 84a, 85a, 92a
Prometheus	C-O	Sport: Basketball	TZR	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	32s
Psyche	C-F	Wargame	HKM	e, p	£10.00	0	£2.50	-	91a
Pub Kickin'	H-O	RPG: Future	COO	p	£20.00	1	£3.50	-	41s
Puma	C-O	Sport: Soccer	BUR	e, p	£4.00	5	£1.00	-	-
Pure Fantasy Ftbl	C-O	Sport: Soccer	PIG	p	Free	1	£1.75	(d)	57a
Quest	C-O	Adventure	KJC	p	Free	0	£2.10	-	36a, 47a, 94a
Quest Online	C-O	Adventure	ABM	e	Free	0	£1.75	-	36a, 47a, 94a
Raeplan Grand Prix	C-O	Adventure	KJC	w	Free	0	£2 for 10	-	36a, 47a
Reality Racing	M-O	Sport: Motor Racing	McC	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	60a, 90s
Realms of Israa	M-O	Sport: Horse Racing	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.75	-	89s
Riddle of the Sands	M-O	Power: Fantasy	VIK	e, p	Free	0	£4.00	(d)	62s
Riftlords	C-O	Power: Fantasy	SIL	p	£20.00	10	£2.50	(a)	89a
Rugby League Breakout	C-O	Sci-Fi	FBI	e	No	3	\$4	(a)	-
Rugby League Challenge	M-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	3	£5.00 for 4	-	96s
Rugby League Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.10	-	41a
Rugby Union Stats	C-O	Sport: Rugby	McC	e, p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	96s
Run Chase	C-O	Sport: Cricket	SOF	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	96s
S/F	H-O	Sport: Soccer	RCW	e, p	Free	0	£11.00 for 4	-	62s
Saurnalia VI Adventures	H-O	Sci-Fi	WRG	p	£40.00 for 12	2	£9.99 per year	-	-
Saurnalia: Exile	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£4.00	2	£4.00	-	53a
Saurnalia: NW	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	HAQ	e, p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurnalia: S	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	WLL	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurnalia: Serpent Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	ABS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Saurnalia: Viridian Isles	H-O	RPG: Fantasy	CAS	p	£5.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Scottish Email Soccer League	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	WRG	p	£10.00	2	£4.00	-	-
Scodogs and Darlings	H-O	Sport: Soccer	SES	e, w	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Serim Bal	C-F	RPG: Historical	SDD	p	Free	3	£1.50	-	94s
Serim Bal	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	HAR	p	£10.00	1	£4.50	-	50a, 92a, 96a
Serim Bal	C-F	Wargame: Fantasy	INC	p	Free	0	£3.50	(c)	50a
Shambhala	H-O	Wargame: Fantasy	MIN	p	£5.00	3	£2.00	-	50a, 78a
Shambhala	C-O	RPG: Fantasy	WAY	p	£5.00	1	£3.00	-	-
Shipshot	C-O	Sport: Basketball	McG	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	53s
Snuggler's Run	C-O	Sport: Ice Hockey	SPO	p	£5.00	5	£20.00 for 9 wks	-	90s
Soccer Manager	C-F	Sport: Motor Racing	ABM	e	Free	0	\$0.50	-	-
Soccer Manager	M-O	Sci-Fi	ABM	e, p	£12.50 per season	0	Free	-	87a, 89a
Soccer Stars	C-O	Sport: Soccer	BBY	p	£3.00	2	Free	-	32s
Soccer Stars	C-O	Sport: Soccer	TRI	p	Free	2	£1.60	-	32s
Soccer Strategy	C-O	Sport: Soccer	OAT	e, p	£5.00	2	£2.00	-	51a, 85a
Soccer-Six	M-O	Sport: Soccer	SOF	p	£5.00	5	£8.00 for 4	-	40s
Space Troopers	C-F	Sport: Soccer	CAM	p	Free	0	£1.00	-	35a, 41a
Speculaplan	C-F	Sci Fi	KJC	e	Free	0	Free	-	94s
Speculate	C-F	Economic	SOF	p	£5.00	3	£9.00 for 4	-	57a
Squad Leader	H-F	Wargame	SOV	p	£5.00	3	£2.25	-	-
SSFA	M-O	Sport: Soccer	BAY	p	Free	0	£1.50	-	82s
Star Empires IV	C-O	Sport: Soccer	SQU	e, p	£5.00	0	£15.00/season	-	40s
StarCluster	M-F	Sci Fi	STE	e	Free	0	£3.00	-	64a, 74-75a
StarFleet Warlord	C-F	Sci-Fi	PAG	p	£5.00	0	Free	-	96s

Zine Listings

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

Abyssinian Prince , Jim Burgess, 664 Smith Sreet, Providence, RI 02908-4327, USA (Email: burgess@world.std.com)
Armistice Day , Stephen Agar, 47 Preston Drive, Brighton, BN1 6LA (Email: stephen@armisticeday.com)
Boris the Spider (Email: pboulduc@aol.com)
Cut & Thrust , Derek Wilson, 1 Juniper Road, Horndean, Waterlooville, Hants, PO8 0DY (Email: derek.a.wilson@amsjv.com)
Devolution , Tony Robbins, Lincoln House, Creaton Rd, Hollowell, Northants, NN8 8RP (Email: tony@hollowell.plus.com)
Fights of Fancy , Philip Honeybone, 11 Norfolk Square, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6PG (Email: phil@melly98.freeserve.co.uk)
For Whom The Die Rolls , 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Nr Tring, Herts., HP23 4NQ (Email: Keith@Thomasson.com)
Infinite Threads , (EMail: shaun@infinite-threads.co.uk)
Ode , John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS (Email: John@ode_online.net)
off-the-shelf , Tom Howell, 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363, USA (Email: off-the-shelfolympus.net)
Psychopath , www.psychozine.co.uk (Web publication only.)
Rhein-Neckar-Zine , (German language), Lukas Kautzsch, An der Rossweid 18a, 76229 Karlsruhe, Germany, (Email: lukas@oberfoul.de)
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To Win Just Once , Paul Evans, 180 Aylsham Drive, Uxbridge, UB10 8UP (Email: twijo@pevans.co.uk)
Underneath The Mango Tree , Alex Bardy, 29 Harrier Way, Evelyn Mews, Beckton, London E6 5YP (Email: alex@mangozine.com)
Variable Pig , Jim Reader, Vredelanstraat 20, 3633 EC, Vreeland, NETHERLANDS (Email: cj.reader@wanadoo.nl)

The Lost Gold of Stronnmark

The adventure continues ...

WE CONTINUE the adventures of Ragnar the Vikjarl, set in the lands of **Midhír** (winner of the *Flagship Game of the Millenium* award) After each instalment of the story, you'll have the chance to decide what happens next, much like the old *Fighting Fantasy* books. GM Colin Forbes will try to fit in as many of your suggestions as possible, though obviously may have to pick and choose at times.

Beaching the *Sleipnir*, Ragnar found evidence to support his fears. A man lay slain at the gates of the farmyard, a rusty sword in one hand and an empty hole gaping through his chest. Clearly he had given his life in defence of his farm and whatever family he may have had. Ragnar grimaced, no doubt they had either been slain too, or worse, been carried off to a life of slavery in the northern wastes. Just then, there was a sound from a large barn to his left. Springing up, Ragnar mentally cursed himself. What did he expect? Raiders knew better than to leave one of their own behind (unless he was unmistakeably dead). Those incapable to make it back to the boats (either wounded in the fight or merely stinking drunk) would have been carried off, slung over the shoulders of a comrade, just like a wench or a pair of brats destined for the great Slave Markets in the South. And they burned everything they didn't take. Raiders never left anything behind. So what had caused the noise?

As if in reply to Ragnar's thoughts, the barn door began to creak open. Peering round the corner of the door was a boy, perhaps eight years of age, far too young to be considered for the rites of manhood undergone in Egilsheim when a boy reached his fourteenth birthday. Well-clad in woollen garments, but looking decidedly starved and white with fear, the boy stood still, beyond tears and looking for all the world like a frightened rabbit as Ragnar lay down his sword, and slowly crossed the farmyard towards the barn. Stuttering a little, the boy spoke.

'I'm Haakon Svensson and in my veins runs the blood of Kings. That's what Papa always said. He is the one you just buried. He killed four bad men. I hid in the secret place where he put Mama's necklace and his ring and our money when he saw them coming.'

Haakon had not eaten for nearly two days, so Ragnar took him back to the *'Sleipnir'* and gave him some dried meat to chew on whilst he boiled up a fish broth. What was to be done? Clearly he could not leave the boy here, but then again, how could he take him into the unknown dangers ahead? Ragnar sighed, it seemed that the business of vengeance was not going to be as simple as he might have dreamed. If harm came to the boy, the father's ghost would come to haunt him. Ragnar remembered Sven well from his trading trips to the south - not much to look at, but one damned fine trader, and the best storyteller Ragnar had ever heard. He'd be up in Valhalla now, drinking mead and telling his favourite story, the one about his grandfather being really the son of King Erik and true heir to the Kingdom of Stronnmark. For King Erik (whom people now called Erik the Dotard), had married again in his old age, and unwisely, so that Sven's grandfather found himself out of favour with the old king, and with three stepbrothers for rivals (plus a scheming stepmother). Fearing for his life, he had fled Highraven Hall (where the Kings of Stronnmark had always held court) and come to the Northlands, where Tharl Ore Ingarrsson (greatfather of Ragnar himself) became his friend, and gave him land to settle down. Come to think of it, Ragnar was sure he had seen the boy Haakon before, when he was last down this way. A fact Haakon confirmed by edging forwards, his mouth full of dried meat

'You're cousin Ragnar aren't you? Father told me that your father should have his ring.'

With this, the boy brought out a pouch and pressed it into Ragnar's unresisting hand. Ragnar sat down and lifted his ice-blue eyes to the high

mountains. With his own father dead, the ring meant he was Haakon's guardian. Which in turn meant that he'd have to go chasing old rumours instead of chasing raiders.

To begin with, the problem was obviously more serious than just the burning of Egilsheim. All along the coasts settlements of peaceful fisherfolk and hunters had been burnt to the ground, looted and left in ruins, the men left dead and the women and children taken northwards once more in the great longships of the northern barbarians. Perhaps he would be able to find help from the Ramdallian Empire, whose coasts he would soon sight, for even now he had entered the great inlet of the River Ramman. In the meantime, Ragnar supposed he had no option but to take Haakon with him, perhaps he would prove to have some skill with a spear - certainly in Egilsheim boys of his age had been practising their spear-throwing for several years by the time they reached Haakon's age.

So in fact it proved to be, for Haakon, though not strong enough to throw one of Ragnar's fathers war-spears, could handle a lighter fishing-spear well-enough that Ragnar's fears about the boy's safety were somewhat assuaged. As spring passed into early summer and the rains gave way to warmer days, the *'Sleipnir'* passed into the waters of the River Ramman. Finally they were into more civilised waters where men were not slain for the sake of their cattle or grain.

But all was not well with the Empire it seemed. Everywhere they passed through seemed in a state of chaos, even though Ragnar had heard the Empire had been at peace for many years now, ever since Toric VI had put down the Wars of Succession and made peace with the Sarathosian Faction in the south of the Empire. Everywhere armed gangs of mercenaries roamed the countryside raping and pillaging. Ragnar kept the *'Sleipnir'* in the centre of the stream, landing only under cover of darkness to find food and water. In this Haakon was a great help, for, his father had taught him how to hunt and he knew how to move silently and swiftly. Many was the time that they ate well on board the *'Sleipnir'* thanks to Haakon's 'appropriation' of a stray chicken or rabbit.

After a while the river began to broaden, and lake Ramman came into view spread out like a glittering blue jewel in the summer sun. And there, on the large island in its centre was the greatest jewel of all, the city of Ramdalmire, ancient seat of the Ramdallian Emperors since time immemorial. Drawing the *'Sleipnir'* up a deserted slipway, Ragnar and Haakon found that the streets were not paved with gold, instead they were stained with the blood of many hundreds of people, slain in whatever conflict had boiled up in this turbulent city. Warbands could be seen roaming the city and in some alleyways corpses could be seen just left to rot. More than once the great sword Mjolnir bit flesh as Ragnar beat off the roving brigands that roamed the streets in search of booty. Breathing hard, having just despatched a man who had thrown a dagger at Haakon, Ragnar was dismayed to hear the clatter of hooves behind him, and Haakon's cry of warning. Whirling round, Mjolnir flashing in the late afternoon sun, Ragnar prepared to fight again ...

*You can have your say on what happens next: the story will take whatever course **you** choose.*

- 1) Who has arrived on the scene and what do they want?
- 2) What is going on in the Ramdalian Empire?
- 3) Something or someone already mentioned has a secret, what is it?

Please email the GM colin_pbmgames.com or send your thoughts to Carol with other feedback on this issue.

AUSTERLITZ

The Rise of the Eagle

The no 1 naPOLeOnIC Wargame

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