FICTIONAL REALITY

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Fictional Reality

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Holiday greetings from the Lone Star State! As I write this column and finish up the December, 2001 issue of Fictional Reality it's a rather mild winter evening. Now, don't get me wrong I don't expect Texas winters to be bone-chilling cold like when I used to live in Chicago many years ago, but a flake of snow here or there might be nice. Before we get into this issue's foray into play-war I'd like to remind anyone reading (like you could forget) to please keep all of the soldiers fighting in the war against terrorism in your thoughts and prayers. Having never fought in a real war myself I can only imagine what these brave souls are having to do.

Ok, now onto this issue of FR. To start off with we have a Warzone battle report from the guys at In addition to being a stand-up fight between Capitol and Imperial forces it gives a bit of a preview to some of the new rules in Warzone 2.5. A continuation of the Inquisitor battle report from last issue is also present as the forces of the Emperor seek to rescue their captures comrades.

To start off our D20 coverage you'll find two new core classes, the Alchemist and Surgeon. Please drop me a line and let me know what other Dungeons and Dragons stuff you'd like to see. In the game review section you'll also find two D20 products reviewed in addition the normal fare of miniature war gaming products.

As you can expect there are a bunch of figure reviews from several different manufacturers. You'll also find Deano C. Ware's regular article, Standing Orders, where he takes a look at two different games with oriental flavor.

Need to paint a ton of figures fast and have them looking good? Check out Keith Suderman's painting article, Black and White and Painted all Over, and you'll have a table full of painted figures slugging it out in no-time.

And to finish things off there are more free toys to be won. Just head on over to page 47, after you've read everything else of course, and drop me an e-mail by the end of January for your chance to win.

Happy Holidays!

Mark Theurer **Fictional Reality**



Saving "Private" Miller

The wind blew bitterly down the dark and deserted streets of Sakura Way. Mercury's most volatile city was under a strict curfew and no one except the unsavory and the vermin dared venture forth past it. Curfew patrols were few and far between. The lords sitting in their alabaster towers rarely locked down the city for any reason unless the Dark Legion was about. It was considered a major event for the city to be put on an alert like this, it had not happened for almost three years since the Purge of the Nepharite Saladine. Yet now there was no mention of the Dark Ones. The bustling streets of the Under city were as quiet as they could get given the lax control the Mega-corporation exerted over this section of the city, known to be rife with the unpleasant and the dangerous.

The waterfront adjoining Sakura Way was also quiet save for the lapping of the water against the docks and the moored Dragonbikes and transports. A few patrons at the Paradosa still reveled behind the safety of the tavern's thick walls while the sewage treatment plant hummed and groaned in its eternal duty. Above it all the Zephyr occasionally screamed to life as it hurtled out of the Mercurian walls to disappear into the sprawling city miles away.

Here, at the corner of Braghdan and Sakura the Capitol forces emerged from hiding and with them their comrade, "Private" Miller. As far as the loyal Capitol troops were concerned, Miller was one of a kind, a hero. His exploits would surely be made into movies for all at which all Capitolians would revel. He alone had managed to infiltrate the Fieldhausen Combine in Fukido and gain access to top-secret records that would apparently threaten the stability of the Clans business interests in the city itself. Being a man possessing a photographic memory, Miller retains literally thousands of documents and plans in his head. A head Capitol desperately means to keep. Once Miller is brought out of the city and sent off-world to Mars, then they would be able to exploit the information he had absorbed; information Bauhaus will also pay dearly for considering their hatred of Fieldhausen."

Saving "Private" Miller is a Warzone battle report that was sent in by the guys at Excelsior. During the game they used many new rules that have been written for Warzone 2.5

This mission is played on the Fukido board we debuted at World Con. The Capitol player has the task of escorting the spy Miller from Sakura Way across the waterfront to a transport docked at pier two. The Imperial player is tasked with killing Miller at all costs.

Capitol begins play with an army of about 850 points and Imperial with 1100 points of troops.

The special rules that applied to this scenario are:

"Take One for the Team". This rule applies to the Capitol forces. In the event ranged weapons target Miller, a model in base-to-base contact with him may attempt to throw itself into the path of the bullet, taking any wounds for Miller. A successful LD test means the model succeeds. Up to two models in base-to-base contact may try this per attack. In the event that a grenade or template weapon is used against Miller, a model in base-to-base contact may throw itself on Miller shielding him from the blast. Again, the LD test applies.



The Zephyr. The Bullet Trains (or Zephyrs as they are referred to by Imperial) are an incredibly fast transportation system that winds through the rock walls surrounding Fukido and through the cities lower levels and industrial areas. They travel at 200 miles per hour and traverse all of Fukido and the surrounding tunneled outlands. The suspended rails over the waterfront make for excellent firing positions and if it wasn't for the fact that the train could come speeding out of that tunnel at any minute we are sure it would be a sought after vantage point.

Each turn, one player rolls a d20. On a roll of 1-3, the train emerges and crashes through any troops on the causeway tracks. Each troop may roll a d20 and on the roll of a 1-3 they managed to hang on to the railing and not fall to their deaths or become paste under the Zephyrs gleaming rails, though they do lose

any activations for the turn. On a 4-20 they must make a damage test. Attack = 17, DAM = 17, and if a hit is scored, 4 wounds are delivered. Surviving the train is nigh impossible. Once the train emerges, another will not emerge the turn immediately following the first.

Capitol may field no vehicles.

The game has a sixteen-turn limit after which the Imperial forces lock down the waterfront and apprehend Miller, dead or alive.

The Forces:

CAPITOL



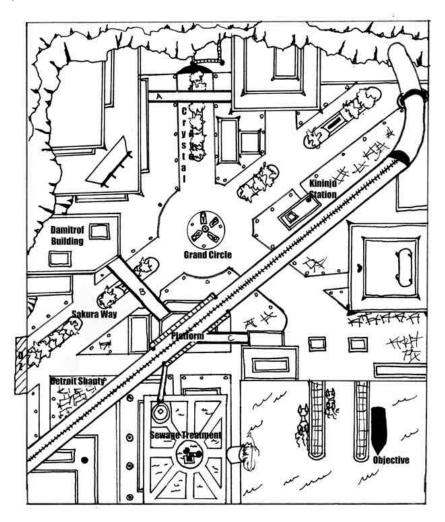
- 1 x Mitch Hunter
- 2 x Light Infantry Squads + Sergeant
- 1 x Light Infantry LMG
- 2 x Heavy Infantry Squads + Sergeant
- 1 x Heavy Infantry HMG
- 1 x Heavy Infantry Captain
- 1 x Free Marine Squad + Sergeant
- 1 x Miller (stats as Covert Ops Specialist)

IMPERIAL



- 2 x Regular Squads + Sergeant
- 1 x Regular HMG Specialist
- 2 x Trencher Squads
- 1 x Trencher Sniper
- 1 x Trencher HMG Specialist
- 1 x Ordnance Officer
- 1 x Blood Beret Squad + Sergeant
- 1 x Rams Air Cavalry

The map below details the layout of Fukido where the battle was fought.





TURN 1:

After rolling initiative, the Capitol player (Bob) who won the roll placed his forces at the far end of Sakura Way. In the lower left-hand corner of the map on page 3, in the area marked 'DZ'. The Heavy Infantry forces moved up the street to provide cover for the rest of the forces as they moved toward the dilapidated housing of the Detroit Shanty Area just west of the Sewage Treatment Plant.

The Imperial player (Dan) deploys his forces into three areas. The first group went into the tunnel entrance at Crystal Avenue towards the northern center of the map (1 Trencher Squad and 1 Regular Squad). The second force was deployed at Kininju Station, just northeast of the center of the board (1 Trencher Squad, 1 Regular Squad and Specials). One squad was also allowed to be placed on Causeway B (Blood Berets) as per preestablished rules. This put the Blood Berets just southwest of the center of the board and in all sorts of close range to much of the Capitol forces.

Dan was determined to cut off Bob's options from the onset and began hustling his troops as fast as they could down towards the Grand Circle of the Golden Lions. The Blood Berets moved down the causeway to the Zephyr platform for a better shot at Bob's Infantry. In the distance the roar of a Twin Barracuda Engine could be heard coming to life as its pilot gunned the engines and eased his fingers over the rocket triggers.



Bob, no fool when it came to tactics, kept his entire force together. The lone squad that went their own way was Free Marines who were making their way to

the Damitrof Building to gain access to the opposite end of Causeway B. The Free Marines would gain an instant pardon by the Capitol Board of Directors if Miller was successfully retrieved so they were exceedingly motivated to succeed at any cost.

A d20 was rolled with a 16 as the result so the train kept a rollin' somewhere else down the line.

TURN 2:

Bob won the Initiative again and began the turn by moving the Free Marines closer to the building and the stairs to the Causeway as the rest of his force, with Miller securely in the middle of them all, made its way into the stalls of Shanty Detroit. They decided against a donation to some local winos drinking fund.

Dan moved his forces straight down the arteries that moved ground vehicles through the city to intercept Bob's troops. The Blood Berets ended by taking up positions across the Zephyr platform and placed some of their weapons on reserve, waiting for Bob's men to appear below and blow the hell out of them. The Rams Air Cav was now flying over the train rail and speeding towards the waterfront with bad intentions on his mind.

A d20 was rolled with a 12 as the result, again no train.

TURN 3:

For the third turn in a row Bob won initiative and started off with the Free Marines ascending the stairs to the causeway. A few of the Blood Berets who were waiting for a clear shot began firing their reserved Ranged Combat shots at the Free Marines. A bunch of lead went flying, but by the time the last Free Marine had scrambled up the stairs just one lay dead (leaving the squad seven members strong). First blood to Imperial! It's what that dirty convict deserved anyway.

The rest of the Blood Berets couldn't get the angle to fire at the other moving Capitol forces so they began to move down the rail track for a clearer shot. Don't touch the third rail! The Rams Air was firmly passing the platform now and was closing in on the enemy.

A d20 was rolled with an 11 as the result. The 3:15 was right on time....ten minutes late!



TURN 4:

The dice again favored Bob (quite possibly a bad omen for Dan) and the Free Marines finished scrambling up the stairs and headed to the causeway entrance. The rest of Dan's forces converged in the Grand Circle and began moving through it, ready to embark on some street sweeping. A squad of Trenchers was very deliberately shifting due South to hit the waterfront.

The rest of Bob's Capitol force had moved through Shanty Detroit and kept their numbers firmly under the rail track overhead. This served to prevent Dan from getting any shot them as well as frustrating him to no end. If initiative had not been with Bob so completely thus far perhaps the causeway would have been more of a threat. Dan concluded his turn by moving the Blood Berets back towards the platform.

A d20 was rolled with a 7 as the result. Hmm, is that a train whistle somewhere in the distance?

TURN 5:

When the initiative die gave Bob a 20, Dan just about lost his control of all bodily functions. The Blood Berets had to move full tilt back to the platform so they had no wait actions to spare on passing shots at enemy troops and the Free Marines were now becoming an issue. Of course the Free Marines were Bob's opening move for the turn and instead of charging across the causeway as had been expected, they took up positions along the wall and rained screaming death down onto the Trenchers and



Regulars crossing the west side of the Grand Circle. Die rolling was fast and furious as the Free Marines scored a whopping five kills. There was frantic gesturing in some kind of sign language as the last Trencher died, a situation that delayed the game for a full 4 minutes. Dan, knowing he had to keep the main force occupied elected the Blood move Berets back again to the strike at Free Marines. He ended his

turn with them across the platform ready to storm it and shoot the Free Marines from the flank next turn, or so he hoped. The Rams Air Cav was now flying parallel to the rail track and was one turn away from engaging the enemy. The main Capitol force was now out of Detroit Shanty and moving down the thoroughfare towards the waterfront.

A d20 was rolled for the train with a 2 as the result! You could almost see tears well up in Dan's eyes as he began checking for casualties as the Zephyr mowed through five of his nine-man squad. O'Halloran was the only lucky one of the bunch who vaulted from

the rail at the last minute and dangled from the platform as it poured down red rain and gore. At point this Dan could be heard muttering, "...If it weren't for bad freakin' luck I'd have no freakin' luck at all." (Ed: naughtv words deleted.) The train



conductor didn't even blink as he mowed them down. "I brake for....nothing." No going home in a pine box for these fellows, more like a ziplock baggie.

TURN 6:

Imperial Wins Initiative! Dan nearly swoons and feels all happy inside. Moving the rest of the Blood Berets together across the causeway, Dan unleashes some fire into the Free Marines. They lose one man whose head exploded as he didn't duck low enough.

The main Capitol force continues its progress only to run into the screeching smoke trails of twin rocket launchers bearing down at Light Infantry in the front of the force. Many die rolls later; one full squad of light infantry lay tattered with only two troops alive, their sergeant dead with the rest. Two heavy infantry troopers also lay dead in the twisted mass of what used to be recognizable bodies. It looked like some twisted surgeon's dream.

The lone Trencher unit began to emerge on the end of the avenue preparing for back-up duties.



Shots were traded between the main force of Imperial in the Grand Circle and the roof-bound Free Marines with more casualties for both sides as lead was bouncing like drops of rain. The surviving Free Marines were now frothing with anticipation, their numbers down to five.

A d20 was rolled for the train with a 19 as the result.

Faced with the possibility of getting another face full of rocket-love the Light Infantry began to rout.

TURN 7:

Again Dan wins, this time leveling the Rams Air Cav for another barrage. The Capitol forces again took many wounds and Miller was counted among the injured as a piece of shrapnel tore into him (one wound left). It would have been two wounds had Peterson not jumped in front of the first explosion.

Bob's Free Marines leapt to their feet and stormed the causeway and the startled Blood Berets. When their Sergeant was knocked off the causeway to his death and another was pitched off the side, a rout of the Blood Berets was looking likely. Dan, not willing to let this happen, moved his Berets into close combat with the Marines and a brawl broke out on Causeway B.

The Heavy Infantry HMG Specialist traced a hail of fire at the Rams Air who was passing the force. Miraculously the Rams Air survived, though the Trenchers were now sending fire down into the force from the end of the street.

Freed from the Free Marines flanking fire, the rest of Imperial began crossing under the rail track.

Hey, isn't it about time for the 3:23...

TURN 8:

Bob started his initiative by finishing off the Blood Berets on the causeway. Their bodies being thrown to the street below in contempt.

The Rams Air Cav circled back and above the rail to be able to fire next turn.

The Imperials pressed on while some soldiers took random, and ineffective, shots at the Free Marines at the causeway.

The Light Infantry LMG paired up with the Heavy Infantry HMG began to whittle away at the Trencher squad at the end of the street. The rest of the force began moving up the fire escape of the processing offices to take to the roofs.



A d20 was rolled for the train with a 1 as the result. Imagine all of our surprise as the Zephyr burst from the darkness and smashed headlong into the Rams Air Cav that was crossing the rail. We

Rams Air Cav that was crossing the rail. We determined that this could be a very bad thing as the Rams Air Cav is essentially a barely stable rocket engine.

We then surmised that an amount of explosive like that in the Rams Air could cause the Zephyr to derail causing untold mayhem. So, first we had to see if the explosion would actually derail the Zephyr. Because of its speed, we established that a derail would occur on a roll of 1-3 on a d20. Otherwise the train would simply speed by trailing flames and flesh.

We rolled another 1 "That's a goocher for sure, man." The train had six sections, each 9" in length. Using the scatter templates and calculating directions, the Zephyr came crashing down all along the waterfront and treatment plant. The resulting rolls revealed fully half of the Capitol force was crushed and burned by the wreckage. Some huge stroke of luck found Miller alive. The Imperial forces just clearing the under rail were completely unprepared for the hell that was now raining down on them. Two full squads of troops and the Ordnance Officer lay dead.

In the distance the Free Marines could be heard cheering and laughing at the Imperials as they attempted pathetically to run for cover only to be pounded into jelly. If they had them, the Free Marines would have held up Olympic scoring cards.



TURN 9:

Dan scored on the initiative and began to regroup what was left of his force, confident he could still block off the waterfront from the treacherous Capitol forces.

Bob daunted and giddy from surviving the carnage continued across the roofs into the Treatment Plant. The Free Marines charged headlong across the flaming rail track to try and get a shot at the Imperials regrouping below.

A d20 would not be rolled again for the remainder of the game, as Imperial Dispatch would reroute traffic because of the accident.

TURN 10:

Dan again won initiative and began by moving his men under the rail track to intercept the Capitol troops as they came off the Treatment Plant roof. The Free Marines could only get a few shots at them before they lost any angle from the rail.

The Capitol forces resumed their movement across the facility.

TURN 11:

Dan moved a few troops to deal with the Marines who were now running across Causeway C and onto the building next to it. Bob in the mean time turned his troops across the treatment plant away from the range of Imperial, south towards the board edge. Clearly he had no way to win. Dan was confident he had pinned Bob into a hopeless situation. He entrenched his troops and prepared for checkmate and the resulting reinforcements.

Rout tests were performed, but everyone held their ground.

TURN 12:

Bob won initiative and we believed he would concede the game here. Instead, Bob moved his forces out along the drainage pipe and began diving into the water. Using the swimming rules in 2.5, Bob had no amphibious troops and would therefore have to roll LD tests to see if anyone drowned. The Covert Ops Specialist Miller made it, as did most of the troopers. Three did sink right to the bottom of the bay. Of course, swimming models cannot fire weapons so Bob's troops were without offensive capability.

As this began to happen Dan realized he had over committed his troop placement and would have only a slim chance at being able to stop the Capitols from getting on that transport. And so the race was on and the Free Marines were all but forgotten by Dan.

TURN 13:

Bob, winning initiative, cleared the first dock and was swimming full force. The rest of Imperial, taking a heavy pounding from the waiting Free Marines attempted to close the gap.

Both sides performed a rout test and some Trenchers and a Heavy Infantry squad became panicked. The Imperial Regulars began to withdraw as fast as they could from the Free Marines while the Heavy Infantry froze in fear (and of course sunk like stones and drowned). A New Rout Test Chart was used.

TURN 14:

Though Imperial won the initiative it became apparent that they could not stop Capitol this time. Miller, unless something happened and he drowned, would escape and Clan Fieldhausen would have Dan's hide. Determined that something had to work to his advantage, the Trenchers charged the four Marines left standing. The remaining force approached the docks as the first of the Capitols climbed aboard the boat.

TURN 15:

Capitol escaped with Miller leaving agape Imperial troops standing along the Fukido docks. The Free Marines, now down to two (and still unrouted) began moving back along the Avenue to escape into the Fukido sewers where they would make their way to another extraction point sometime down the road. Fukido was a Free Marines kind of place, a little distance from this chaos and they could blend in for weeks without worry and once back at HQ, they get their fix, a pardon and a satchel full of Crowns for a job well done.





AFTERTHOUGHTS

A good game tells a story, it recreates an exciting battle rife with strategy and tactics. A great game adds to this the flexibility to handle the unexpected, to allow for many surprises beyond bad dice rolling. This game, set out to tell a story and ended up showing us just how much fun the rules modifications we have been working on for MC: Warzone 2.5 are.

Reactive Terrain Rules sprinkled with some common sense provide players rules to explore things like gas main explosions and derailing trains. Did it change the game, who can say, although I know it can.

Skills and abilities have added a certain realistic flair to the game as models ditched their weapons and took to the water to try and escape the bind they were in. Of course, bad die rolling always hurts, though this time it felt more like a great battle was turning back and forth from the events and tactics as opposed to the whim of the fickle die gods.

We hope you have enjoyed the recounting of this battle and encourage you to try and campaign in a Fukido of your own. Perhaps even save your own Miller.

Happy Hunting,

The Excelsior Staff

MORE AFTERTHOUGHTS

I've played a lot of Warzone in my day, going back to when first edition hit the stores and even dreaming up ways to fight battles using the Mutant Chronicle RPG rules. As much fun as it was to read, I'm sure this game was even more fun to play. On my first look at the report when it was sent to me from the guys at Excelsior I thought to myself, "Geez, how long did it take to play a 15 turn game?". Most of our games of Warzone are 3-4 hour affairs of far fewer turns. I was told by Thom (head Excelsior guy) that the game took only a handful of hours and ran very smoothly. To me, that bodes well for any changes that are being made for Warzone 2.5.

I was glad to see that the game did not degenerate into a wait-fire festival, which is an all too common occurrence. The scenario and terrain setup probably had a lot to do with this, but also WHO you play with can also affect how much fun a game is. Hey, I'll be the first to admit that I like to win, but I also love to have fun. If you recall from last issue I got pasted, twice, but these were the most fun games I've had in a long time. Who I was playing with (and against) made it that way. A good system and good players makes playing great. Looks like Warzone 2.5 is ironing out some wrinkles so all you need to do is find some good people to play with. Shouldn't be too much of a chore.

Mark Theurer





As outlined in the last issue of Fictional Reality you will now start to see some d20 material within these pages. We'll be starting off with two new classes, the Alchemist and the Surgeon. Both of these classes should be considered open source material. A copy of the WOTC d20 Open Game License can be found on page 50 and on their website at www.wizards.com

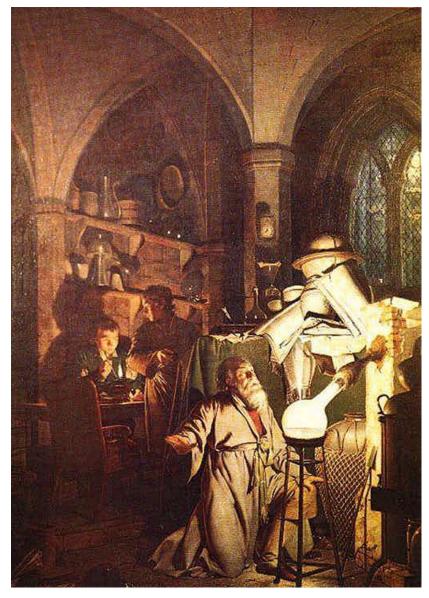


Alchemists are in the profession of mixing chemicals. compounds and other components to create elixirs, salves, potions and alchemical items such as thinderstones, sunrods, tindertwigs, and tanglefoot bags. They are also able to mix potions which have magical-like effects, however they are neither wizards nor sorcerers. They are men and women of science who actually unwind the forces of magic to recreate their powers and effects as part of the natural world. To create the most potent alchemical items an Alchemist often travels to dangerous and far off locations where he can find rare herbs, metals and even animals. Some travel to the ends of the earth to expand their collection of rare, and sometimes legendary, recipes.

REQUIREMENTS

None. There are no racial or alignment restrictions on becoming an Alchemist. While it is most likely that you'll run into a human Alchemist those of other races, including Orcs, are certainly not unheard of. Most Alchemists will tend towards a more lawful existence, following strict laws of science, but there are those that throw all caution to the wind and embark on experiments that could likely rend the very fabric of reality. Most Alchemists are also more neutral in their feelings, just as science is not 'good' or 'evil', it just 'is' and so are they.

HIT DIE D6



CLASS SKILLS

Alchemy, Craft, Heal, Knowledge (Arcana), Knowledge (Chemicals), Knowledge (Plants), Profession, and Wilderness Lore. Cross-Class skills are as a Cleric except for those skills that are already Alchemist class skills.

SKILL POINTS

Level 1 (4 + INT modifier) x 4 Level 2+ 4 + INT modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Alchemist class:

Armor and Weapon

The Alchemist is not proficient with any type of armor or shield. He is proficient with the following weapons: Hand or Light Crossbow, Dagger, Knife, Quarterstaff, Sickle, and Sling.

Brew Potion

At 1st level of experience, the Alchemist gains the Brew Potion feat for free. (See Use Recipes below for details of how Alchemists use this feat.)

Chemist(Expert)

Starting at the 4th level of experience, and every 4 levels thereafter, the Alchemist receives a +1 class bonus to all Alchemy checks. (+1 at 4th level, +2 at 8th level, +3 at 12th level, +4 at 16th level, and +5 at 20th level.)

Create Alchemical Items

At 1st level of experience, the Alchemist gains the ability to create alchemical items. He is the one and only character class with this knowledge. Alchemical items include sunrods, tanglefoot bags, thunderstones, tindertwigs, alchemist's fire, gunpowder, etc... To create such an item use the rules presented in the Dungeons & Dragons 3E Player's Hand Book.

Enhance Potion

The Alchemist can enhance the potency of any potion. This process requires 1 full day per potion and access to a laboratory. After one day of work an Alchemy check is made with the DC equal to (15 + the spell level needed to create the initial potion). If the check is failed the potion is completely ruined and useless, but if successful the potion's number of doses is doubled to two. The enhanced potion still takes up the volume of a regular potion, it's just more powerful and potent. A single Cure Light Wounds potion that is enhanced would yield a Cure Light Wounds potion that could be used twice before being exhausted. Enhance potion can be used on mixed

Forge Gold

At 5th level of experience the Alchemist can turn 1 copper piece into 1 gold piece. At 10th level of experience the Alchemist can turn 1 copper piece into 1d4 gold pieces. At 15th level of experience the Alchemist can turn 1 copper piece into 1d6 gold pieces and at 20th level of experience the Alchemist can turn 1 copper piece into 1d8 gold pieces. Each day the Alchemist can attempt one alchemical process to turn copper into gold. He can attempt to use as many copper pieces as his levels as an Alchemist. At the end of the day make a single Alchemy skill check with the DC being equal to the gold piece total that will be created. If the skill check is failed the copper and gold are ruined and some damage has taken place in the laboratory. Cost of repairs to the lab equal to the difference in the skill check roll and the DC x 10, in gold pieces. This damage must be repaired before further alchemical processes may be attempted.

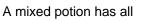
Language

The Alchemist is able to speak Draconic.

Mix Magical Potions

Although the Alchemist cannot actually brew magical potions like typical spell casters, he can mix them. By mixing two or more magical potions he gets one "big" potion. Normally, this is not possible, because of magical inconsistencies, but the Alchemist has discovered way to circumvent negative side effects. Mixing contradictory potions, like enlarge and reduce, cancels out both potions and leaves the Alchemist with a rather nasty tasting concoction that will play havoc on your gastro-intestinal tract. To mix magical potions the Alchemist requires the use of his laboratory and one hour of work time per mixture. At the end of this time the Alchemist must make two skill checks. One for Knowledge (Arcana) and one for Alchemy. The DC for both rolls is equal to 15 plus the sum of the spell levels of all potions that are going into the mix. If either skill check is failed you end up with the nasty mess described above. If either skill check is missed by 5 or more points there is an explosion that damages the lab as described above in Forge Gold. Additionally, the Alchemist must make a Reflex save with a DC of 15 to get

out of the lab before taking damage from the explosion. If he does not get out in time he takes 1d6 points of damage per potion that was going into the mix.





of the effects of the potions that were put into the concoction. Drinking a potion is still a move-equivalent action, that does provoke an AoO. All effects of the mixed potion are granted upon imbibing it. The DM has final authority regarding which potions can be mixed.

Use Recipes

At 1st level of experience can use 'recipes' to brew potions. Use the rules for the Brew Potion feat as found in the Dungeons and Dragons 3E Player's Hand Book.

The Alchemist uses the recipe's instructions to brew the potion, but the result is a scientific potion that perfectly emulates the effects of the same magical potion. It is not magical in nature. The Alchemist must have access to his lab, and of course the correct recipe, to brew a potion. Recipes are not, and cannot be, learned / memorized like spells. To brew a potion the Alchemist must have access to and follow the recipe's instructions each and every time he wishes to brew the potion. The effect of the alchemical potion, however, is the same as the spell's description. There are quite literally hundreds, if not thousands, of alchemical potion recipes to be sought out. An Alchemist is more limited than magical spell casters in brewing potions. The table below illustrates the maximum spell level that can be brewed. The mysteries that make magic beyond 5th level possible have not yet been unraveled by science.

Alchemist Level	Max Recipe/Spell Level
1-4	1
5-8	2
9-12	3
13-16	4
17-20	5

STARTING OUT

Alchemists start play with either 5d4 x 10 gold pieces in starting money or the following trappings; one weapon as allowed by their class, a traveler's outfit, and a backpack containing a full waterskin, a bedroll, flint & steel, and two torches, and 4d4 gold pieces.

MULTI-CLASSING

Most Alchemists pursue this career as a life-long endeavor, but it is not unheard of for alchemists to split time with other classes. Alchemist/Monks (studying spirituality and the nature of the universe around them) and Alchemist/Druids (communing with, and unraveling the secrets of, nature) are the most likely multi-classed Alchemists that will be found out adventuring. Other combinations are certainly possible, but Alchemists multi-classing with Arcane spell caster classes is

almost unheard of as Alchemists are hard at work trying to unravel and disprove magic in favor of science. However, some Alchemists have encountered such frustrations in their scientific experiments that they have turned their backs (sometimes totally) on science and have embraced magic.

ADVENTURING

Alchemists will probably be spending a lot of time in their private laboratories, but recipes will not scribe themselves. They will need to be sought out, either by the Alchemist himself (probably a group of adventurers) or by simply hiring a group to make the journey for him. The former is certainly more conducive to party-based adventures that include an Alchemist character. In combat situations the Alchemist will likely fill the role of a mobile artillery piece (light, medium, or heavy depending on his level), lobbing all sorts of incendiary devices, gas bombs, and other strange concoctions from the back line. If confronted in close combat their best option is probably going to be to run like the wind.

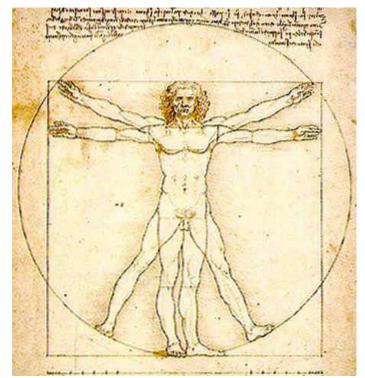
ADVANCEMENT

	Base Attack				
Level	Bonus	FOR	REF	WIL	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+0	Brew Potion,
					Create Alchemical Items, Use Recipe 1
2	+0	+3	+3	+0	·
3	+1	+3	+3	+1	
4	+1	+4	+4	+1	Chemist Expert +1
5	+2	+4	+4	+1	Forge Gold 1, Use Recipe 2
6	+2	+5	+5	+2	
7	+3	+5	+5	+2	
8	+3	+6	+6	+2	Chemist Expert +2
9	+4	+6	+6	+3	Use Recipe 3
10	+4	+7	+7	+3	Forge Gold 2
11	+5	+7	+7	+3	
12	+5	+8	+8	+4	
13	+6	+8	+8	+4	
14	+6	+9	+9	+4	
15	+7	+9	+9	+5	Forge Gold 3
16	+7	+10	+10	+5	Chemist Expert +4
17	+8	+10	+10	+5	Use Recipe 5
18	+8	+11	+11	+6	
19	+9	+11	+11	+6	
20	+9	+12	+12	+6	Chemist Expert +5, Forge Gold 4

This character class was written by Christian Selzam as part of a huge Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay to D&D 3E conversion. Christian can be reached at cselzam@aol.com and you can download loads of WFRP/D&D3E stuff at the Yahoo d20 WFRP group located at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/d20 WFRP

The Surgeon

The Surgeon is a healer of natural means. He is a man of medicine. and science nature. delighting in the wonderment of the human (and non-human) anatomy. It's strength and frailty is studied for hours upon end and tomes are filled with illustrations and text about healing, diseases and cures. He is also a dentist, a barber, and sometimes а rather suspicious cook. Anv large city will surely have the distinctive red and white barber's surgeon's pole (actually made up of bloody bandages) out in front of a shop where occasional screams of pain or sighs



of relief can be heard emanating from a back room. Surgeons will be found in all cultures, possibly even next door to temples where divine healing takes place. Not everyone is welcome in the temples and Surgeons are usually not too concerned with the background of their patrons as long as they can pay for treatment. Of course, surgical healing and treatments are not always as reliable as those provided through divine means. A procedure can be going along just fine and then "Oops" a simple pulled tooth could result in the patient bleeding out.

REQUIREMENTS

None. Surgeons exist in every culture. From tribal doctors to big city physicians to charlatans with just a rudimentary knowledge of healing. A high Intelligence will help the Surgeon the most, but a high Charisma will also be useful especially when trying to talk your way out of a botched procedure. Alignments vary wildly with Surgeons. Many are highly respected, not only because of their skill, but also due to their duty to heal and do good. Others are seen as vile butchers who seem to delight in the agony that their patients suffer and only the need of future patients keeps them from leaving a trail of corpses in their wake.

HIT DIE D4

CLASS SKILLS

Alchemy, Bluff, Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Heal, Knowledge (Medicine), and Profession. Crossclass skills are as a Cleric, except for those skills that are already Surgeon class skills.

SKILL POINTS

Level 1 (6 + INT modifier) x 4 Level 2+ 6 + INT modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Surgeon class:

Armor and Weapon

The Surgeon is not

proficient with any type of armor or shield. He is proficient with the following weapons: Dagger, Handaxe, Light Hammer, and Quarterstaff.

Field Surgery

At 1st level of experience the Surgeon gains the ability to restore hit points to characters who are either above zero hit points or those that are below zero hit points, but have been stabilized. Field Surgery is a Heal skill roll that uses the Surgeon's INT modifier instead of WIS. The base DC is 15 for1d6 of healing, but can be increased by +5 for each additional 1d6 of healing that is attempted, with a maximum DC of 30 for 5d6 of healing. Each 1d6 of healing also requires 1 full round of time spent working on the patient. During this time the patient cannot be doing anything other than casting spells that require just a verbal component. The skill check is also modified for each level of combat medic (See Advancement). If the skill check is failed by 5 or

The 1st rule of Surgery: All bleeding always stops...eventually.

The 2nd rule of Surgery: Count all of your instruments before sewing up the patient.

more points the Surgeon has injured the patient instead of healing him. For every full 5 points that the skill check was failed the medic causes 1d6 points of damage. A Surgeon can intentionally fail the skill check by enough to cause the maximum amount of damage, but he had better have a quick exit route. This ability can also be used in a noncombat setting. In this case the amount of damage that can be healed (damage) is reflected by d12's instead of d6's, the time required is equal to 15 minutes per d12 of attempted healing. The skill check can be reduced by 1 for each Surgeon (maximum reduction of 5) that is assisting the performing Surgeon.

Bedside Manner

Hit points restored per day through Long-term care (See Heal-PHB) effects are increased by your Bedside Manner rating. You also increase the number of patients that you can serve by twice this rating.

Manufacture Tonic/Salve

A Surgeon can crate a healing tonic or salve from natural ingredients and chemicals. These tonics and salves can restore an additional point to lost ability scores and d3+1 points of damage for each day that they are taken. It costs a Surgeon 10 gold pieces in ingredients to prepare a single dose of a healing tonic/salve and they normally sell for 20 gold pieces. A Surgeon can manufacture as many per day of work as his level as a Surgeon.

Torture

A skilled Surgeon knows how to cause the minimum amount of pain to achieve the maximum healing. He also know how to cause the maximum amount of pain to a patient without too much actual damage taking place. A morally bankrupt Surgeon could serve as a remarkable interrogator / torturer in the right circumstances. Given the right setting (your subject suitably restrained at DM's discretion) a Surgeon ads his level to any Gather Information skill checks.

STARTING OUT

A Surgeon can start with 4d4 x 10 gold pieces or the following items; a dagger, several rolls of bandages, Surgeon's Tools and leeches, travelers outfit, a backpack, a full waterskin, and a bedroll and 3d4 gold pieces.



MULTI-CLASSING

Many Surgeons cannot find time to devote to another class, but it does occur. It is not unheard of for a Surgeon to become discredited and have to take up another career or move to another city where his reputation has not yet made an appearance.

ADVENTURING

Most Surgeons aspire to set up their own lucrative practice in a large city. Some, however, see the world in the employ of armies or as hirelings to bands of adventurers. On rare occasions, Surgeons have been found as full members of adventuring parties.

ADVANCEMENT

	Base				
Level	Attack Bonus	FOR	REF	WIL	Special
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Field Surgery 1
2	+0	+0	+1	+1	ricia dargery r
3	+0	+0	+1	+2	Bedside Manner 1
4	+0 +1	+0	+1	+2	Deusiue Mariner i
		_			
5	+1	+1	+2	+2	
6	+1	+1	+2	+3	
7	+1	+1	+2	+3	Bedside Manner 2
8	+1	+1	+2	+3	Field Surgery 2
9	+2	+1	+3	+3	
10	+2	+2	+3	+4	
11	+2	+2	+3	+4	Bedside Manner 3
12	+2	+2	+3	+4	Field Surgery 3
13	+2	+2	+4	+4	
14	+3	+2	+4	+4	
15	+3	+2	+4	+5	Bedside Manner 4
16	+3	+3	+4	+5	Field Surgery 4
17	+3	+3	+5	+5	
18	+3	+3	+5	+5	
19	+3	+3	+5	+5	Bedside Manner 5
20	+4	+3	+5	+5	Field Surgery 5

The 3rd rule of Surgery: Never say, "Oops" in front of witnesses.

MINIATURE REVIEWS

Well, I finally got my hands on a bunch of Celtos figures so the time is right for a review of the batch.

Cormac Red Axe is up first (right). He's immediately identifiable as a barbarian warrior and is wearing little in the way of armor. What I would take for a kilt actually wraps around his legs and makes it look more like he's wearing a pair of shorts. If I had the painting



ability I'd paint him up wearing surfer shorts, but I think that's a stretch of my skills. As I've found with pretty much all of I-Kore's character types his facial features are very well defined. The paws on the front of his cloak remind me of the Chronopia Maidens of the Blade, but his are probably not being used as a Wonderbra ©. The mold line on this figure was visible, but not really a problem, except for one area. The mold line across the top of his hair right under his hands holding up the axe was kind of hard to get to.

Moving on we take a look at Nemain, Sword Maiden. A female barbarian that is in very skimpy attire. She is well endowed, but not freakishly so. A friend of mine looked at the figure and called her more 'hippy' than a lot of other female figures. Not flower-child hippy, but a more realistic female frame. This is not a bad thing at all. She's not Six Mix-A-Lot big butt big or anything. A very faint mold line was easily cleaned up and there was no flash to speak of.



She is carrying one big-ass sword with a design into the blade and a dagger in a scabbard on her right boot. She's in much less of a combat pose than other models. She might be trying to distract you with her cut-off tee shirt before she lops your head off though.

Lugh the Long Arm is next (left). Out of all of the figures presented here he took the longest to clean up. His mold line was more prominent than the other figures and just needed some more attention, no flaws though. He's also another barbarian and is wearing very little armor. In

addition to his kilt and boots he is also protected by some metal leggings that cover his shin area. Along with the long spear above his head he's also armed with a large sword that comes as a separate piece. Facial detail is very nice and muscle definition is good, but not overdone.



Daghda, Warrior Druid (next column, top) comes as a three piece model. Two

of them are the skulls that attach to his shoulders and then the main figure itself. No defects here and clean up was about on par with most of the figs. The skulls fit fine into the slots on his shoulders. As a barbarian he's also running around like it's the middle of summer. His sacrificial dagger and staff are nice, but the best part of this figure is the animal skull that he is wearing as a helmet. He should look pretty imposing when painted.



The next two models come from the elf line of figures. First is Nuada of the Silver Hand (below) and despite having a hairdo that makes him look like a member of Flock of Seagulls (look it up!) he's my favorite figure in this group. He's such a bad man that his breastplate has pierced nipples! Except for a few bare areas and a chain skirt he's wearing plate armor. His long cloak has some nice folds in it that will bring out some depth when painted. He would

make an awesome drow character if not used in a Celtos army (see the I-Kore press release on the next page).

Last up is Faeron, Fire Wizard (below). He comes with his right hand and staff as a separate piece that fit right on to his arm. The staff is topped by an icon of a dragon whose tail snakes its way all the way down to the bottom. Lots of pouches, scroll cases and even his spell book is present. Great spell caster fig.



The figures area all very nice and have lots of cross-over potential to players of other fantasy wargames and role playing games. Price-wise they are all in the area as other character figures, coming in at six to eight dollars each. Not bad for characters, but could get pricey if you take a ton of them in a regular game. A review of the Celtos game should appear in the March 2002 issue of Fictional Reality.



Cormac Red Axe	\$7.95	12301
Nemain, Sword Maiden	\$5.95	12303
Lugh the Long Arm	\$7.95	12302
Daghda, Warrior Druid	\$7.95	12305
Nuada of the Silver Hand	\$5.95	12101
Faeron, Fire Wizard	\$7.95	12102

www.i-kore.com



PRESS RELEASE

The Celtos range of miniatures initially started life as a purely collectable range. The success of the range has even surprised the development team at i-Kore. We now plan to release a full-blown tabletop battle system "Celtos" in April 2002. The book will be 64 pages and will feature colour art from Clint Langley and beautifully painted miniatures from the i-Kore design studio.

The initial release will be the rules system along with background details and artwork for the Gaels (humans), the Fomorians (orcs, goblins, trolls, beast men and demons), the Sidh (elves), the Vanir (dwarves) and the Fir Bolg (undead, skeletons, zombies, wraiths, vampires).

The world will be loosely based on Celtic mythology set on an island continent. The rules will be a mass combat system for 2 or more players, however the mechanics are designed in such a way that players will not get bogged down and game play will remain fast even though there are large numbers of figures involved.

The general premise of army construction is that the players select heroes and champions to lead their forces, these heroes being able to bring along their own warbands of followers depending on their standing within their own societies.

The effect we want to create is that of heroic combat between opposing heroes with the followers slogging it out amongst themselves however the outcome of the heroic struggle will dramatically affect the morale of their relative retainers.

Each army will get a basic army list in the first book. The system will be supported every 2 months with the release of a more comprehensive army book for each individual army. This will include detailed histories, myths, legends and background as well as a complete army listing with painting guides and sample armies. The first army book will be for the Gaels due out in June 2002. There will be monthly releases of new miniatures to support the line.



MINIA'

Dwarf Fighter

She, yup you read that right, comes as a two-part model. The box, yup not a blister, also comes with a round slotta base and a game card. It also comes with a rather large block of foam to keep all of the pieces from moving around too much.



She is in a running pose with her right hand raising a battle axe and her left holding a shield. Her left leg is raised and, while there was a little tab that needed to be cut away there was no annoying bit of flying earth somehow tying her to the ground. Her facial expression is

quite good. She's either yelling a war cry at an enemy or barking an order to some troops. Her long hair is tied in a thick braid that ends in a heavy metal ring. Best of all, no beard! She's wearing heavy plate armor with chain mail underneath. There is a grimacing face for her belt buckle and her shield bears the dwarven rune from the game. No pouches, backpacks or bedrolls to be found. Did I mention that she is clean shaving? There was very little flash on the model. In fact the bulk of cleaning that was needed was on the separate hand holding the axe. It had a few bits of flash that needed to be trimmed. Both had faint mold lines that needed to be cleaned. Total prep time on this model was just a minute or two. At \$3.99 she belongs in any dwarf army, even if you don't play Chainmail. I'm leaning towards a dwarf army in Chainmail, but if I decide to go with something else she will still have a home with my Chronopia dwarves and in my D&D 3E games.

Half-Orc Fighter

Same boxed treatment for him as with the female dwarf fighter. He's a one-piece model that also retailed for \$3.95. I had one of those 'argh' moments when I pulled him out of the box. His left hand, which is supposed to be holding a short blade, was badly misformed. The sword was just a tiny little nub and his hand was a mess of flesh. I decided not to trim it and paint him as a burn victim so I shot off an e-mail to Wizards of the Coast and am waiting for a replacement figure. Other than his Location of stump I do like the figure. He just a little clean up. There was a tiny bit of flash and just little, almost insignificant, mold lines to be His right hand is cleaned up. holding a large sword that is resting over his shoulder and his left hand (stump) is pointing forward. facial detail leaves no room for



doubt as to part of his ancestry. Either that or he got hit in the face with a shovel as a kid and it just stuck that way.

He's sporting some heavy armor with leather underneath and a fashionable animal pelt for a cloak. His hair is tied into something halfway between a ponytail and a top-knot and his pointed orky ears are very noticeable. He's slightly less versatile outside of Chainmail than the dwarf above. While she could fit into just about any fantasy dwarf army out there, he'd have a hard time in Warhammer Fantasy Battle (but you could do it anyway) and could certainly pass in Chronopia as a Black Blood. I don't think that I'll be going the hobgoblin/orc route in Chainmail so he'll need to find a home in my D&D 3E games.

Last up in this initial batch of Chainmail guys is...

Skeletal Orcs

You get two of these bad monkeys, bases, game cards and another large block of foam for \$5.99. They are identical three-piece models with part of an arm and a two-handed axe as pieces that need to be glued onto the body. There was a bit more flash on these guys and they took a bit more sit-down time to get nice and clean. Each piece needed attention though. The axe is easy enough to get into place, but the elbow piece was just murder to get lined up right. The axe is held above their head ready to come down on anyone in front of them. They only clue that these guys are, were, orcs is their skulls. They are very obviously orcs, dead orcs, well undead orcs. There are two large spears entering their ribcage, but only one of them has come out the other side. That would hurt if they were still alive! Shoulder pads and bracers, one leg brace,



and a small bit on one hip is their only armor. All of their bones are nicely defined they and should paint up quickly and look good. I liked the orc skeletons, but absolutely hated that they are а

three-piece model. That elbow piece is a royal pain. Two different models would have been nice too. A weapon swap could be done without too much trouble. You could, or maybe I will, swap out the two-handed

axe for a sword coming in a downward swing from his right hand and maybe a shield in his left hand. None of the figures have been over the top and or cartoony (sometimes that's good, sometimes bad) but they have all been well defined, realistic and proportionate. I don't like the box too much though. They are a lot prettier than a blister, but I'm just going to throw it away. Also the box restricts you from seeing the stats of the creature. This will become pretty much a non-issue once everyone and their brother starts posting all of the stats on the internet, but until then it's just a pain. Also, having a blister instead of a box would have eliminated my problem with a mis-cast miniature. I just would have bought something else.

MINIATURE REVIEWS

Holy super hero miniature combat games! Ok, raise your hands if you spent countless hours of your youth blasting away at villains playing games like Champions and Villains and Vigilantes. Ok, hands down. Four-Color figures has come out with a skirmish game of super hero, and villain, combat (reviewed later in this issue) and plenty of figs to throw down with. We'll take a look at a big handful of figs here.



First up is a brawler named Brute. He has a bit more of a savage look to him, but Brute will do. He's got a huge mane of wild long hair and a pretty form-fitting uniform. He's well muscled, but not busting at the seams. He's in an open combat stance ready to get into a fight. The bottom of

the base had to be trimmed a but, which was expected, and there was a faint mold line that needed to be filed. Facial detail is very good except for one

downside. His ears are little more than ovals that are stuck on the side of his head.

Second up is a brick, gotta love those old-school descriptors, named Tenpin. This guys is built like a fire



hydrant. Short, stout and looks like he would stop a locomotive dead in its tracks if it tried to run him down. Flash and mold lines were very sparse and cleanup was easy. He's in a stance similar to Brute, but he's much more muscular. He's studly enough to go around without a shirt on and he's ripped pro-wrestling style. Facial detail is good, but we've got that oval-ear thing going again. He has long hair, but it's tied in a ponytail instead of blowing in the wind. Tenpin is also wearing these huge honkin' orthopedic shoes that must be part of his character background.

Our cavalcade of supers continues with a bad guy, Dr. Simian. An evil monkey super genius. Oh, he's so close to being Mojo Jojo that I think my heart skipped a beat. If you have kids you'll understand. If not, I worry about you. Flash was, oh hell, unless I say differently assume that there was very little flash or mold lines that needed to be



cleaned. These were all very clean figs coming out of the blister and really needed very little attention. I could say the same thing over and over again, but I think you get the picture. Doc is wearing a headset with microphone, a power bracelet thingy, a belt of gadgets and a cool medallion that would make any lounge lizard proud. He's standing what could be a

Defiant, "I'll get you next time" pose. His fur looks good and he's doing the no-pants-dance. Cool fig.



Emerald Alien, a blaster, is next. He's very crystalline looking, like he's a living, well crystal. Not a bad pose for a blaster. I can see a power ray coming from his extended hand. He's muscular, but in a cut stone kind of way. It was nice to see something other than just a super human.

Two female 'supers' are next to look at. The first is named Grav-Girl and is categorized as a flyer. She's in somewhat of a landing pose with one hand balled up in a fist ready to smack someone. She has shoulder length hair and is pretty thin, without a lot of muscle definition. Her suit is pretty nondescript, but she does have a few pouches around her waist. Facial detail was pretty good and she should paint up well. Unlike



almost all of the other models there was a visible mold line that took just a little while to clean up. Nothing too drastic, but it was there. My one other gripe with this figure is the 'kicked up' bit of ground that attaches to her foot that has not touched the ground yet. I know that it

being there aids in the manufacturing process, but I don't have to like it.

The other female in this group of figures is Ember and she is a blaster. She possesses some kind of fire-based powers which have manifested themselves as a huge head of hair that is on fire and one hand that is aflame. I found it amusing that a plume of flame has shot up to make it look like she's giving someone the finger! This figure also needed a bit more cleanup than the rest. Facial detail was a little less than with some of the other figures. In addition to her form-fitting



bodysuit she is also wearing a pair of sunglasses. No doubt, to protect her from all of the UV rays that she must be giving off. Of the two female figures Ember is the better.

Of the 'regular' sized figs

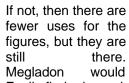


T-Bolt is the last we'll look at this issue. He's a Superman-type of character that is standing in a pose like he just flew down and has delivered some inspirational soliloquy that will surely cause his enemies to lay down their arms. Ok, maybe they

won't but I'm sure he said it. Overall detail is good and you can see good muscle definition under his suit. My only beef with this figure is from the neck up. Facial detail could have been a little better and even though he's painted up on the SuperFigs website to be an African-American his hair just makes me wish they had done something else with it.

Last in this batch is a monster of a figure called Megladon. He's honkin' big! He comes as a four piece model that stands well over two inches tall. He's got a face full of teeth like a piranha and is carrying a jagged sickle. At \$6.95 he's well worth the price even if you don't play a super hero game. For a big guy he balanced well and fits into this type of game nicely.

All of the regular figures retail for \$2.95, except for Dr. Simian who will run you \$4.95. If you are playing in a super hero combat or role-playing game there are tons of possibilities here.





Easily find a home in any Inquisitor game and some of the others could be used with no problem in a modern day espionage setting. With the addition of some guns, a few others could also become very unique command figures in just about any sci-fi game.

Overall, you'll find detail to be a little less than with some of the major manufacturers, but you won't find these kinds of figures from those guys either. All of these figs made me remember the fun I had playing Marvel Super Heroes, Champions and DC Heroes. Definitely worth a look if super hero games are your thing.

www.superfigs.net

MINIATURE REVIEWS

The Dwarven War Cannon comes as a boxed set from Reaper Miniatures and retails for \$19.95. The front of the box has a nice large color photo of an assembled and painted cannon and crew. The back has an assembly guide for the cannon and a paint guide that corresponds to their line of Pro Paints.

The interior of the box is lined with perforated foam so it could pretty easily double as a way to transport your cannon and crew once they are completed. There are four dwarf figures and five pieces that go together to make the cannon.



You get one dwarf to load the cannon, one to pack everything in nice and tight, one to light the fuse and one to supervise all of their shenanigans.



The leader is looking through a spyglass and read to give the signal to fire. The bottom of the base needed some cleaning and there was a small web of metal between his legs, but other than that he was pretty clean. He's wearing chain mail and has a small axe on his belt. The detail on his cloak and beard is really nice.



The loader needed a bit more cleaning as the mold line was a bit more visible. He's wearing chain and has a short sword at his side. An extra cannonball sits next to his right foot. Detail is also very good on this little guy. The boots and clothes have natural folds in them and they hang like they would on a person. Very nice.



The lighter of the fuse is also in chain armor, but other than his torch he's weaponless. A few pouches can be found on his belt and his cleanup was about as quick and painless as the leader. His beard, really all of their beards, is as nicely detailed as the rest of their clothes.

The last dwarf is the one who gets to pack everything in nice and tight and hope that the guy lighting it doesn't screw up and go early. That could make for one heck of a mess. Instead of chain armor he's in leather only except for his helmet. One nice touch is that each guy has a different helmet, and beard, facial features, etc. Not just a bunch of head swaps. He could resort to using a short sword if the enemy got too close and there is also a rather large sack on his belt. His cleanup was also very minimal and took maybe all of a minute.

The cannon went together very easily without a single curse word uttered. Total cleanup and assembly time for the cannon was about five minutes. The carriage is made out of wood and is reinforced with metal bands. There are lots of rivets and rings to paint that will contrast nicely with the wood. The wheels are very nicely detailed and the barrel of the cannon is really the focal point of the whole set. It ends in a large dragon's head and I can imagine dwarf elders telling tales of how their iron dragons belched forth hot death through billowing clouds of smoke. A very nice touch for a model that would have been nice with a regular barrel, but is now awesome.

Dwarven players in any fantasy battle game will find this set a great addition to their troops. My cannon will be pulling double duty as it will see time in my Empire army as well, with a human gun crew though. The crew models are very nice, but lack the easy versatility of the cannon itself. The 'firer' and 'stuffer' can be easily converted into standard dwarf troops or PC's for an RPG, but the other two are more locked into the set. My only gripe has got to be the bases. I am just not a fan of the miniature and base combo. I'll be mounting mine on plastic bases and filling up uneven areas with putty. Like the bases or not, this set is a winner.



www.reapermini.com

MINIATURE REVIEWS

MINIATURES



Combine Set 6: Mech Infantry Company with Escort Squadron contains North American Combine forces that can be played with the Ogre Miniatures rules or to add to the miniatures that came with Deluxe Ogre or Deluxe G.E.V. which use the regular Ogre/G.E.V. rules. This set of miniatures is 1/285-scale and contains 4 "Roadrunner" G.E.V.-PC, 4 "Gremlin" Light G.E.V., and 12 infantry which is 60 points of units to be used with the above rule sets.

This set comes packaged in a plastic VHS tape box with soft foam inserts and tape box labels. After you've finished putting the miniatures together and painting them, they can be stored and transported in the original box. Also included in the box is a Combine unit reference sheet used to identify units from the North American Combine and their game statistics. The Combine units are designed differently than their Paneuropean equivalents, the biggest difference being the Gremlin (Light G.E.V.) units, which look more like a small aircraft than a hovercraft.

Each of the models come in one piece, are well detailed and have little, if any, flash that needed to be cleaned up before priming. It was hard to put much detail on such small minis, but a small amount of ink and dry-

brushing helped bring out the details, so much detail painting wasn't necessary to produce good looking miniatures for the battlefield.

The Roadrunner G.E.V.-PC models have flat beds that easily hold three infantry models. But don't glue the infantry to the G.E.V.-PC, as the infantry models are removed one at a time to represent causalities. Also infantry models are transported into combat by the Roadrunner can dismount and fight on their own. No infantry bases were supplied for this in the box, which is the one thing that really should have been included in this set. Also, the rules for G.E.V.-PCs are not published in either **Ogre** or **G.E.V.** but can be found in **Shockwave**, which is a supplement for **Ogre/G.E.V.**

This boxed set retails for \$19.95 and can be purchased from gaming and hobby shops or from Steve Jackson Game's online store. If you play Ogre Miniatures or the Deluxe versions of Ogre/G.E.V. then this is a valuable addition to your Combine forces. Having a mechanized infantry company with an escort squadron can really come in handy for taking objective hexes or in flanking the enemy.

JOE SCHIRMER



MINIATURE REVIEWS EXCELSION entertainment

More new metal from the guys up in Pennsylvania this issue with the release of stuff for Chronopia and Warzone.



The Swamp Goblin Headhunter Leader starts us off. He's done in the same style as the other recent Swamp Goblins which means more musculature and great detail. There was a little bit of cleaning to be done between the teeth of his blades. His helmet is nicely detailed and it is

pretty much the only armor that he's wearing. Several shrunken heads adorn his belt. He also wears many feathers and other pieces of jewelry made of bone. Other than the blades the only significant cleanup that was needed was around his helmet, but this did not take too long at all. Very nice figure.

What the heck are these!

Well, they are not really part of this issue's review of Excelsior figures, but I thought you'd like to see some of the miniatures that were made for Empire Chronopia. Below you can see an assortment of Firstborn swordsmen and macemen, including standard bearers, great-macemen and swordsmen and even leaders. Bear in mind that the actual figures are a whopping 11-12 mm tall, not including the little 'peg' at the bottom. I've heard of very cool plastic Abyss Crawlers and Soul Flayers, but have yet to get my hot little hands on any. I realize that Excelsior has their hands full with the work that they are doing with Chronopia and Warzone, but here's hoping that Empire Chronopia could be somewhere in the pipeline. Oh yeah, right after a D20 Chronopia book! Now that would really see me grinning from ear to ear like some kind of demented mental patient....in a good way though!



Next on the Swamp Goblin hit parade is a regular Headhunter. The first regular headhunter can be seen in the SEP 2001 issue of Fictional Reality. one is also carrying a Chitin plenty Axe, has decorative feathers, and just few trophy shrunken heads. Muscle definition is aood. but he's not as pumped up as the rest of his mates. You can make out his ribs though and this should add some extra cool

detail when he's painted. No problem with mold lines, but there were a few bits of flash that needed to be cleaned up. My only gripe here is that he's got that little bit of 'magic' earth that connects to his foot. It will need to be snipped off before painting, but will end up adding some 'movement' to the figure.

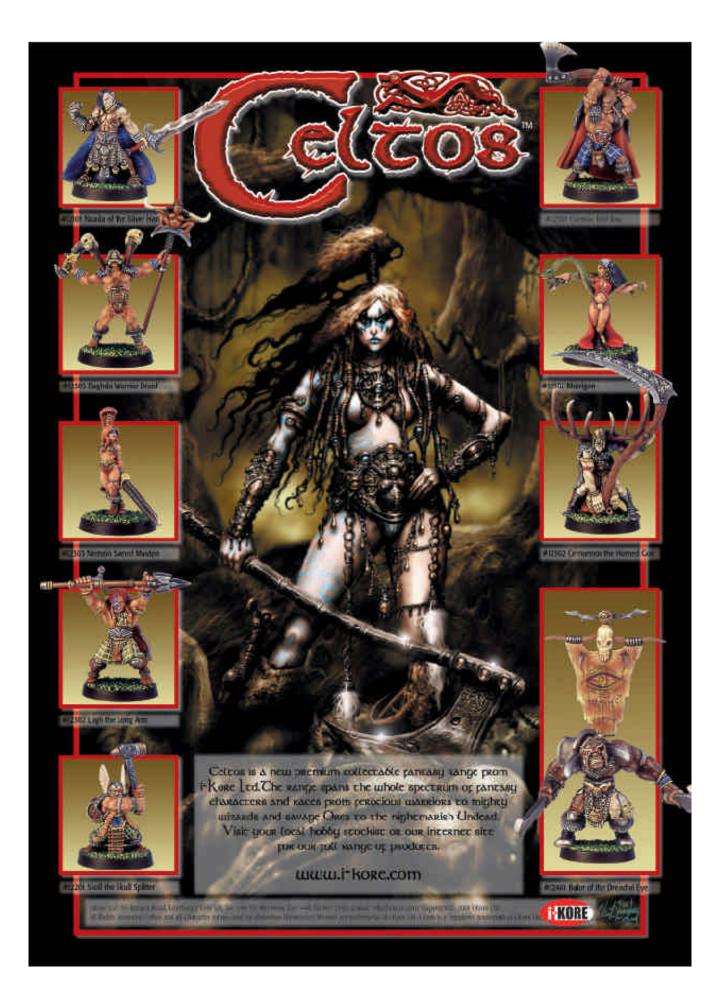


Finishing up the Swamp Goblins is another Webmaster. Like the Headhunter above his counterpart also appeared last issue. Instead of casting his net out to capture an opponent he's drawing it back before the I like his big 'shell' toss.

helmet, but most facial detail is obscured. He required no cleanup at all, but out of the three Swamp Goblins presented this time around he's in the number three spot. It's not a bad figure, but he just doesn't do it for me like the other two. Detail on the arms is not quite as good as the others, but having a second sculpt for the unit is a welcome sight.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48





BLACK AND WHITE AND PAINTED ALL OVER

BY KEITH SUDERMAN

Painted minis fight better. It's true. I'm not sure how to prove it, especially because my freshly painted minis always seem to take a pounding, but it's absolute truth. The problem is finding the time to paint them. Quitting your job and living in your parents' basement seems like a good solution, but it creates its own problems. Painting faster is another solution. This article describes a method I have used to produce attractive, tabletop-quality paint jobs in a short time. If it reads like a scientific protocol, I'm sorry (I'm a scientist, and it's a protocol...).

- 1. Prepare the minis. For some, that means just taking them out of the box. For others, it involves green stuff, bitz, and a pin vise. For me, I file off the mold lines and flash (needle files work great) and wash off the mold-release agents with dish soap and a toothbrush. How much prep is needed is up to you. This painting style is supposed to be fast, though, so don't get bogged down at this stage.
- 2. Prime the minis black. I use Citadel black spray primer, but Krylon sandable primer is rumored to be the same thing at 1/3 the price (if you can find it in black). Use thin coats. Spray from a distance of 6-8 inches and be sure to paint all surfaces of the minis, including the undersides. You can hit the undersides by standing the minis on the edge of a piece of wood and spraying from below or by laying them down and spraying first one side, letting them dry, and then turning them over and spraying the other side. Avoid painting in high humidity or extreme temperatures because

the primer may become fragile or even fuzzy. Always paint in a wellventilated area to avoid inhaling paint fumes.

Drybrush the minis white.
 I use a large make-up brush, but small brushes work well, too. This step provides the highlights and brings out the detail



Your brush should be either dry or slightly damp. Dab a very small amount of paint on the tips of the bristles, and then rub it off on a paper towel until no more paint comes off (about 8-12 strokes). It's better to use too dry a brush than too wet a brush- you can always add



more paint, but removing paint is tough. Brush the mini gently with the tips of the bristles until the edges are sufficiently white. Experiment with the intensity of the drybrushing for different effects.

4. Paint the mini in block colors with transparent paints. Thinning the paints is crucial. The goal is to allow the black-andwhite undercoat to show through. To determine if your paint is paint over enouah. newsprint. You should still be able to read the words. I use Apple Barrel paints (available



at Wal-Mart for 44¢ each) thinned about half and half with a solution of 50% water and 50% Future® floor wax, which I keep pre-mixed. (The Future has an emulsifier in it that prevents the thinned paint from forming a dark ring as it dries. Consider it optional- if you discover dark rings on your minis, you now know the solution.) The paints can be mixed as needed, but if you'll be doing a lot of this style of painting, they can be premixed in small jars and dipped directly from the jar. I recommend starting with the innermost color, usually flesh, brown, or green. Paint quickly and try to make a single, even coat. If the undercoating is too obvious, add a second layer of paint. I sometimes

hit the edges with an extra stroke, just to emphasize the highlights. Proceed to the next color, etc., until the whole mini is painted.

Add details as appropriate. You can use thinned paint for a subtle look (e.g., buttons on a belt pack) or full-



strength paint for a harder, more obvious look (e.g., logos and insignia). Many Warzone minis are wearing gas masks, which eliminates the problem of painting faces. For the ones that aren't, I find that just leaving the eye sockets black is acceptable for tabletop-quality minis. If you want to emphasize the texture of some part of the mini (e.g., scales or armor), a lighter color can be drybrushed over the top of the paint, just as in step 3. If you're not sure what color to paint something or you can't tell what it is, feel free to leave it black. It'll look just fine.

5. Clear coat the minis. Paint is fragile and you want it to stay on, so use a protective coating. I use two or three coats of Krylon Crystal Clear (#1303), which has a gloss finish. Gloss coats are stronger than matte coats. However, I don't like shiny minis (Except when they are being worn by WWF valets. What hero enters battle coated in Vaseline?) so I finish with a coat of Krylon Matte (#1311). (No, I'm not a representative of the Krylon company- but if they're offering a sponsorship...)

Fight the good fight. Hopefully, your freshly painted minis will fare better than mine usually do...

Some Wise Tidbits of Information

Boldly colored minis stand out on the battlefield. Try to use intense colors or high contrast on at least part of each mini so it doesn't become just part of the scenery. The purpose of camouflage is to break up the lines of the object- to make it harder to see. The purpose of highlighting minis is to emphasize the lines- to make it easier for the eye to interpret what it sees. Don't overdo the camouflage or your minis will disappear right into the terrain.

If you're on a tight budget, you can get by without the matte clear coat. Some people actually prefer glossy minis. High-quality brushes are a must for detail work, but for block colors, I've been very happy with cheap brushes from Wal-Mart .

Needle files are nice, but most flash can be removed by careful scraping with a sharp knife. Be careful though.

You just can't get cheaper than Apple Barrel paints. I'd start with black, white, brown, green, flesh, and whatever bright colors caught my eye. Silver metallic is nice for weapons, but optional.

Attractive bases are quick and easy. They can really improve the look of your minis. Just paint the base with white glue and sprinkle on some flocking or sand.

Make each squad look like a unit by using a uniform color scheme for the whole squad. Make the squads look different from each other by varying the color of a single item such as the weapon, the helmet, or the base.

If you really mess up a paint job, move on to the next one, that eccentric infantryman will grow on you with time. If you just can't stand it, soaking the mini in PineSol® overnight will remove the paint. If the mini is plastic, however, it will melt the mini, too. For plastic minis, use brake fluid (and gloves!) and soak it for several days. Brush off the old paint with a toothbrush and start over.

Never criticize another person's paint jobs. Each person has his/her own sense of aesthetics. If you are asked for an honest critique and you can't find anything positive to say, keep looking.

This technique probably won't win any painting contests (let me know if it does, though), but it will get painted minis onto the battlefield, where they belong. If you have any comments or questions about it, please contact me.

Keith Suderman (ksuderma@garnet.acns.fsu.edu or 850-980-3218)

Acknowledgments: I learned this technique from Bob Freeman, but I'm not sure where he learned it. I discovered this use for Future® on Dr. Faust's site http://www.paintingclinic.com/ Most of my painting knowledge comes from the mini-painter mailing list http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mini-painter

Comments by Paige Leitman improved the quality of the article.

The Original "d20" Game Is Back!



War in the Eternal Bealm

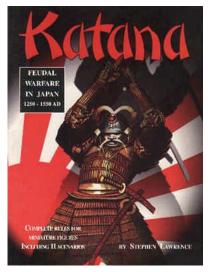
Revised Edition * New Miniatures * Expanded Races

STANDING ORDERS

BY DEANO C. WARE

Welcome to this installment of Standing Orders. This issue I am actually profiling two games at the same time. While at GENCON this year I picked up two oriental wargames, both depict Samurai warfare. These were The Road to Osaka and Katana. While perusing these individually it became apparent that the readers of Fictional Reality would benefit most from a profile of these two sets of rules, if they were profiled side by side. As always, Enjoy!

The Road to Osaka is a skirmish level or one-on-one game, while Katana is intended to be played as a mass combat game, but includes a set of skirmish rules called ArrowCutter toward the back of the book. The Road to Osaka is published by Daisho Publications, Two Dragon Productions and Brookhurst Hobbies. Its authors are Tim Hallam, Martin Jones and Nick Walker. Katana is published by Emperor's Press and its author is Stephen Lawrence.



Both rule books feature quality artwork on the cover and are well laid out generous а amount of charts, illustrations and black and white art -The Road to Osaka probably more so Katana. However, according to the author, a set οf oriental miniatures produced by Old Glory was available at one time for Katana. You can

try and verify this at the Stuff of Legends website at http://www.solegends.com/index.htm

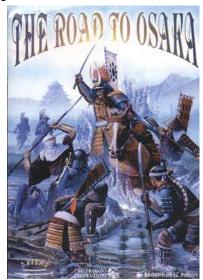
What You Get - The Road to Osaka is a 31 page rulebook which includes one pull out organizational chart. The rulebook also features some very well drawn mounted movement color diagrams featuring moving and engaging at the Trot, Gallop and Canter. The rulebook is very well illustrated with pictures of Japanese Samurai warfare scenes and includes several clean, easy to understand charts. Katana also includes handsome black and white art of Japanese samurai. In addition, Katana includes over eleven (11) scenarios with very detailed maps provided for each. All of the charts used in Katana are in the middle of the rulebook and unfortunately are not properly referenced throughout the rest of the rulebook.

What You Need - Other than miniatures and ruler, you only need a d6 to play The Road to Osaka. On the other hand, for Katana you will a d20, d12, d10, d8, d6 and a lot of terrain if you plan on playing any of the scenarios.

What You Are Told - The author of The Road to Osaka insists that "It is the aim of these rules to capture the excitement of Samurai Warfare in a skirmish wargame format. The Authors have taken great care... in an attempt to make the games as realistic as they can be with as little room for "gamesmanship" as possible. At this level the commander should be concerned with the combat effectiveness of the units under his command...along with an awareness of his troops' potential as individuals to effect the outcome of the action." Katana however is intended to allow you to "recreate the clashes of the Samurai and their retainers in medieval Japan. It features a quick play system that will not bog the gamer down in endless detail, while still retaining much of the flavor of the period."

What You Will Discover - You will discover that you can't ascertain the meaning of either of these rules on a first or second reading. Katana was worse than The

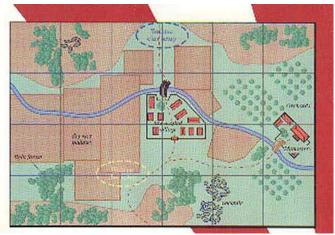
Road to Osaka in this regard and certain sections of the rules mention modifiers and movement rates without providing them at all. I only happened across these later in the middle of the book where all the charts are located. The Road to Osaka is easier to read and understand, however the book is "full" of commentary. At each junction of the rules the author tells



you why other rules don't or haven't worked but his do. This alone probably turned a 20 page set of rules into 31 pages! The actual rules are actually easy to understand and even presented in a logical sequence, the problem is there are few examples of play and you never really learn how to create a unit, set the game up and start playing.

What's Old - I must admit that out of all the games I have profiled in Standing Orders these are the two most unique. Each author honestly tried to do something different in the way the games are played. With The Road to Osaka this even went as far as using Japanese terms extensively so that it is hard to really play the game unless you commit some of them to memory. For example, your weapons include: the yari, naginata, no-dachi, katana, wakizashi, tetsubo, bo staff, tessen and teppo. If any of you know what more than three of these are, these rules are for you. Katana uses a few Japanese terms for weapons also like naginata (a glaive) and yari (a triangle bladed spear) but once you remember what the 'Quality Die" is for each, it doesn't matter anymore.

What's New - Considering the period, both of these sets of rules will be new to most fantasy and historical wargamers. However, The Road to Osaka attempts to handle combat in a rather straightforward but awkward manner. Each 'man' in the game is given a 'Grade' and this is used almost throughout the game for combat and proficiency. However, when a man takes damage instead of being wounded, his 'Grade' is reduced until he is taken out of action. In theory this is a very innovative idea because the more damage a powerful fighter takes the less effective he becomes. In practice however, if you play with the 30-40 figures per side suggested by the authors, you will never make it through a bar fight, let alone a skirmish trying to remember that the 'Grade 5' man to the right is now 'Grade 3' the Grade 6 is now Grade 5 and so on for "30 or 40 figures". Katana is unique in that it unabashedly breaks the cardinal rule of miniature game design by employing no less than five (5) different types of dice throughout the game. I usually like the concept of 'Quality Dice' for different units in a game but the problem arises when modifiers or penalties in the game start calling on the units to roll 'one die down' or roll 'one die up'. Halfway into a combat you can't remember what die your unit was last rolling so you just ignore all the modifiers which drastically changes the game of course. Katana is also interesting in that, unlike many games today, it purposely employs 'super characters' called Legendary Samurai'. I played a skirmish battle with one of these guys versus twelve (12) Ronin and these guys are literally unstoppable, overpowering juggernauts!



Map from Katana

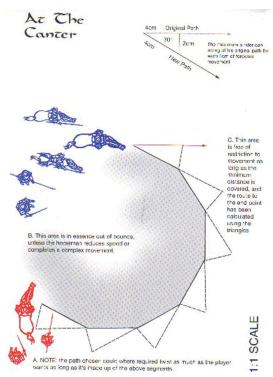
My Legendary Samurai was only wounded once and I wasn't even giving him all of the follow up attacks he was allowed to take after some of his overpowering attacks. Not to mention he fought the entire battle against four Ronin at a time!

What's Familiar - Both The Road to Osaka and Katana feature familiar movement, armor and even weapon rules. Neither really deal with Morale effectively, its mentioned but practically in passing. What's Good - I was really drawn to the mounted movement diagrams in The Road to Osaka and would really like to see how they worked in a game. Essentially, depending on the speed you are riding at, there is a turning radius that limits your ability to engage enemy units inside of or on the edge of that radius. In effect, you MUST move ahead so many inches then angle left or right then ahead again, and so on until you exhaust your movement or come into contact. While the concept isn't new, the presentation is elegant and well diagrammed. As for Katana, believe or not, I really liked playing the Legendary Samurai skirmish. I was afraid that with so many miniatures (a total of thirteen) I would never make it past the first few attacks but it was all quite manageable as only four Ronin could get at the Legendary Samurai at a time and his one roll was applied against all four - so a hit was actually four hits.

What's Bad - Interestingly, both of these rules attempted to advocate a "pairing" system of combat where the Samurai would only fight Samurai and the Ronin only Ronin or Samurai and Peasants only Peasants, and never the twain shall meet. This obviously must have resulted from similar research done by both the authors but was more annoying than practical to me. I mean even in real life, if all the Samurai on one side are killed then a Samurai is inevitably going to have to fight a Ronin or Peasant

anyway, unless they always run away or he commits "seppuku" ("ritual suicide"). In addition, neither of these rules felt "complete". The Road to Osaka seems to end prematurely leaving you wondering what do you do now. While, Katana, on the other hand literally contains more scenarios than 'rules'.

What I'm Going to Do with These Rules - I really wanted to like both of these games, especially since I always thought Clan Wars would be much better as a skirmish game than a mass combat game. actually think Katana would be worth playing out the scenarios, if for nothing else since they are well written and feature entertaining titles like "If I Kill You, It Will Hurt" and Running to Join Your Revered Ancestors". Unfortunately, the rules to both of these games just didn't seem to take hold. I think the authors did a great job of researching the period but just failed to properly incorporate all of their research effectively into the games in a smooth, playable format. I'll probably use both as solid references for any gaming I do in the future in this period and may even try to combine the best elements of each of them into an interesting medieval-Japanese campaign. Until next time...



Reference chart from The Road to Osaka





When last we checked in with Witch Hunter Revenant he was on a rescue mission to retrieve Inquisitor Skopje from the grubby hands of some dirtbag mutants. Everything started off going very well, but things got really screwed up really fast and now we need a rescue for the rescuer. See last issue for more details of those goings on. The last episode ended with Max Payne, that traitorous (we didn't find out during the game though) bastard, getting off free and clear, while the Witch Hunter and Inquisitor both ended the game unconscious and bleeding. We had a couple of ways to go with the story and it will take more than a single report to get into all of them so we'll be doing them in pieces, each as their own battle report.

This issue we check in with a rescue team that is being in to save the original rescue team. Unbeknownst to Witch Hunter Revenant's superiors, the mercenary Max Payne was actually working for LaklLakl the whole time and sat idly by and watched him and Inquisitor Skopje fall back into mutant hands. LaklLakl, the mutant second in command that is now actually in command finds himself with two prisoners, a dead former leader and no mercenary to assist with the rest of his grand plan. If you remember from last issue LaklLakl had a side deal going with Max Payne to turn on Revenant and Skopje after Urak, the former mutant leader, was killed. LaklLakl would then publicly denounce the deaths of the Imperials and take credit for bringing their killer, Urak, to quick justice. Urak did want the Imperials killed, but he'd really rather not do it himself and letting more people in on his plan has additional problems. One huge problem right now is that Max Payne is running around with full knowledge of recent events. LaklLakl has gone to great pains to cover his tracks with a scheme that just might get him the political clout that he is looking for. To ensure that Max keeps his mouth shut, permanently, LaklLakl has made sure that (phony) evidence of Max being involved with Urak (now killed by LaklLakl and the mutants that he now leads that seek a peaceful coexistence with the purebloods). Additionally, LaklLakl has further embellished the story to include that Max has sold both Imperials to a sprouting chaos cult that plans to sacrifice them to gain favor in the eyes of their dark gods. Basically, LaklLakl has lied and implicated who he was working with (Max Payne) and has also sought to eliminate another blemish that could affect his aspirations as a leader. Mutants are

not at all unlikely to be seen in the company of suspected cultists and eliminating the cult before they get too big and further influence pureblood's opinion of the mutants is a good thing. LaklLakl was actually the one that sold the Imperials to the cult, but it was through one of his most trusted lieutenants. He'll have to figure out a way to eliminate him soon too. Ah, politics.

All of this information has lead a small Imperial team into a hellish industrial complex whose machinery has long fallen silent, but the chanting of cultists can be heard echoing through the corridors. They mean to sacrifice both With Hunter Revenant and Inquisitor Skopje tonight in an attempt to summon a demon to do their bidding. This cannot be allowed to take place. To that end two battle hardened warriors are being dropped into the industrial complex with order to kill everything other than Revenant and Skopje.

First on the strike team is Brother Marine Archon. To keep things simple, and also because I had never used a marine character before, I used Artemis out of the Inquisitor book as my base for Archon, but replaced his power sword with a chainsword because that's what I did with my marine model. I also reduced the number of grenades that he was carrying, but kept his main weapon as a bolter.

For the second character I tried to expand on the idea of the arco-flagellants. I liked the remorseless close combat machine that just went berserk after a command word was uttered, but I wanted to build a short range version of this kind of monstrosity. So, I came up with MDT614. In his day he was a veteran Imperial Guardsman with a rather nasty disposition. After scores of battles, hundreds of confirmed kills, and countless unconfirmed kills, he was incapacitated by a blow to the head that left him unable to continue his glorious work of leaving bloody corpses in his wake.

Not content to leave this instrument of death as a rotting piece of meat on the battlefield he was scooped up and stitched back together, but not entirely like before. His vision had been left as nothing more than blurs of shadow and light so bionic replacements had been fitted that would allow him to once again visualize the carnage that he was so proficient in brining forth. His normal vision was not the only thing that suffered

though. What precious little humanity was still swimming around in his head had now been completely lost. Leaving him to his own devices surely meant allowing a murderous psychopath loose and that surely would not do. He was little more than a rabid dog that had periods of calm and understanding followed by a whirlwind of blood and gore.

When not dropped into an enemy hot-zone, MDT614 was restrained and an endless loop of a song called "Beautiful People" by a group of forgotten 20th century musicians was fed into his auditory receptors. Enough to drive any sane person completely bonkers, but strangely just what was needed to keep this monster sedated and calm.

Before his services were to be called upon a video feed would be hooked up to his new bionic eyes. A single image would be flashed again and again and again. MDT614 would recognize Brother Marine Archon as a non-threat and would even follow his directions, well maybe.

MDT614 was built around the base of an arcoflagellant, but one made for close ranged combat rather than a hand-to-hand assault. He was armed with an automatic shotgun (with reloads), a revolver, and a very bad attitude. He was fully expected to find as many cultists as possible and send them off to the afterlife via a shotgun blast to the head. Chris had a very cool idea of using blips to represent movement of enemies (like in Space Hulk and Aliens) that we could track, but not be fully aware of until we established LOS. I'd encourage Inquisitor GM's to give this a try as it sets up a bit more suspense than just having bad guys pop up from around the corner.

The two Imperials started the game on the west side of a large very run down series of city blocks. Fires were burning in dilapidated and crumbling buildings that were in dire need of being bulldozed and barrels of toxic waste littered the area. Briefings before or drop into the area gave us the location of Witch Hunter Revenant and Inquisitor Skopje. The former was secured at the top of a building and the latter was being offered up as a sacrifice just east of a makeshift temple.

Our initial deployment and starting enemy locations can be seen on the map below.



Each small green circle represents a barrel of some kind of toxic waste.

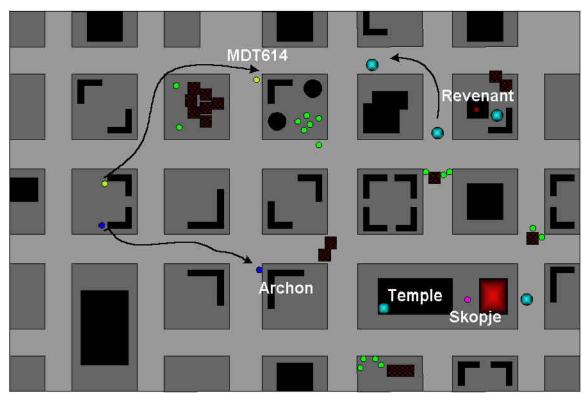
The red/black areas are areas of debris that must be crossed.

Large blue circles are movement blips that will turn into actual figures once detected.

Black areas are walls or buildings. Revenant is being held at the top of a building in the NE.

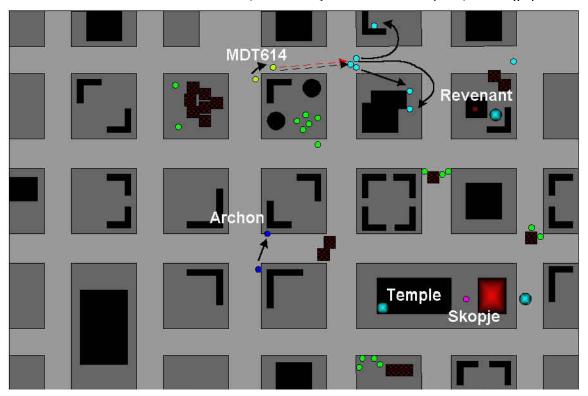
The large red area in the SE is where the summoning is to take place.

Turn one had a decent burst of movement out of the marine MDT614. and In an effort to scout out the enemy forces they temporarily split up with MDT614 taking a look around the north end of the area and Archon seeing what could be found down south. Some movement was picked up as our motion trackers began beeping as one the blips started moving.



Both Archon and MDT614 took a second to cover the street in front of them in case any unfriendlies decided to jump out. On turn two MDT614 came around the corner and found that it was three mutants setting off the tracker. He unloaded with two shots from his autoshotgun and one found its target, blowing a nice chink out of the mutants left arm. Archon, startled by the

sudden gunfire took a few steps towards MDT614's position up north. The three mutants that were fired upon scattered for cover behind buildings and walls, ducking and weaving as they went. In the commotion MDT614 spotted another mutant, this one carrying a gun unlike the other three that were armed with simple hand weapons, moving up from the east. No other



movement was detected and the chanting in the temple just kept on going. Sounds of periodic gunfire and fighting must be commonplace in this hell-hole.

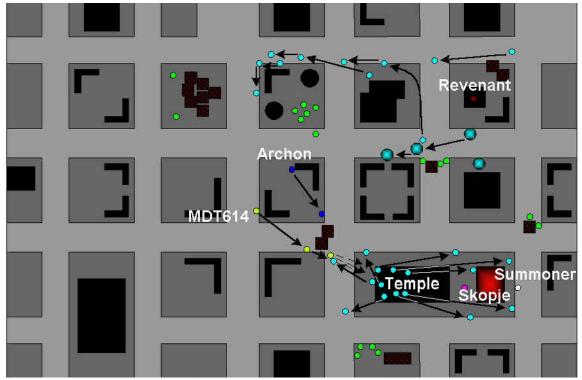
Turn three (page 32 top) saw an increase in the number of threats that were detected. Archon ran up by some ruins to get a better view of the temple and got

a view of three mutants that were part of the ceremony, but his tracker was still showing more in the **MDT614** area. decided to head back to where the marine was. "Yeah, let them know where they are and then bring them to me. Thanks a lot!" The mutants that he had shot at got their nerve back and started moving toward the Imperials. As luck would



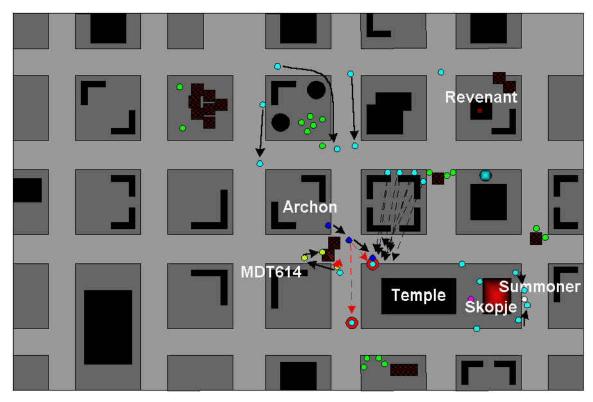
Have it, MDT614 saw the mutant guard with the gun motion into the shadows and right after that we picked up some movement from the blip in the area of Witch Hunter Revenant. Turns four didn't see much action except for a bit of movement on everyone's part, but turn five saw business pick up. As Archon was taking careful aim on one of the mutants in the temple,

MDT614 thought he was taking entirely too long so he moved around the barricade and opened up on the kool-aid drinkers. A total of four deafening shots rang out and not one hit. What did happen is that we really announced our presence to the whole group. Some of the mutant cultists moved east to guard the Summoner while others rushed towards us. Our motion trackers



Showed not only movement from the blip that we knew about, but an entirely new one appeared on our scanners. Also, the mutants that had already been revealed kept moving in an effort to surround us. One of the cultists did manage to charge MDT614 but dodging and backing away kept him safe for now.





cover offered by the ruins and his thick armor only one shot hit him. It did make him sweat for a second though as it was a shot to the groin. Yikes!

There was not a lot of moving around going on with the mutants, but one of them up north could be heard cussing up a storm, probably getting all hopped up and ready to fight.

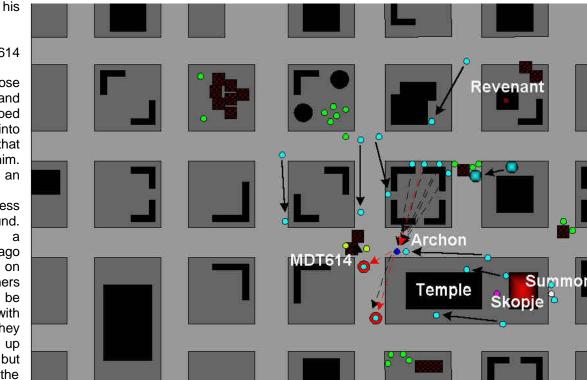
Gunfire erupted from the bolter that Archon was carrying as he moved up towards the cultists. In an awesome dis-play of combat maneuvering he nearly shot off the arm of the cultist that was closest, then nailed the one down south (a massive bleeding gutshot) and then charged the first one and cut him down

The seventh turn began and unless we took out a lot of the mutant opposition we would quickly be on our way to being overrun. MDT614 ended up doing what was probably the worst possible thing given the situation. In an attempt to jump over the barricade and shoot the crap out of anyone within range he managed to trip as

Then, MDT614 disengaged from close combat and pumped then two shots into the one that charged him. He was left an unconscious bleeding mess on the ground. What just a second ago was a blip on scanners our turned out to be four cultists with shotguns. They all opened up on Archon, but between the

with

chainsword.



He's trying to clear the barricade and falls flat on his face. He does manage to get up though. Archon deposits one shot into each of the cultists closest to himself and MDT614 blowing great big holes in them. One cultist gets really brave and charges the marine who parries his attack and strikes back tearing the cultists abdomen open and knocking him to the ground. The shooting gallery of mutants behind the ruins again let fly against the marine and out of lots and lots of shots only one manages to penetrate and cause a wound to his right leg. Many of the remaining mutant cultists move up to end the turn.

Turn eight begins and things officially go from bad to worse. MDT614's piece of crap auto-shotgun jams and he spends the rest of the turns trying to clear it. Archon swings his chainsword down at the cultist that he just eviscerated and proceeds to nearly cut his right leg off. The jammed auto-shotgun and beating the hell out of an already wounded cultist is the good news for this turn.

The turkey shoot continued, but now two shots were sent MDT614's way and both connected for wounding hits. Archon got peppered by shots that each seemed to be just enough to get through his armor. Individually, they were all almost insignificant, but even mosquito bites can add up.

The mutant that started spazzing out earlier charged Archon, who blew his parry, and got through his armor

iniure his right arm. Another mutant also charged the marine. This time Archon parried swung and back but missed and was hit once, but without enough force to even be felt.

Oh, that sucking sound that you hear, that's Inquisitor Skopje's sould being sucked into the warp and being replaced with a summoned demon.

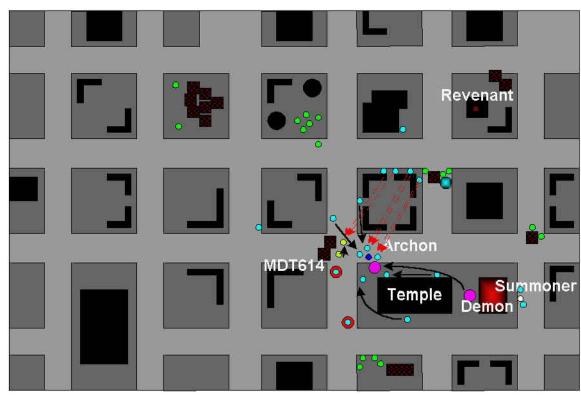
On the same turn as being summoned the demon charges Archon and if it was not for his power armor it would have probably pulled his arm clean off and beaten him to death with it. He was lucky to get off with massive damage to the arm and was even luckier to hold on to his bolter.

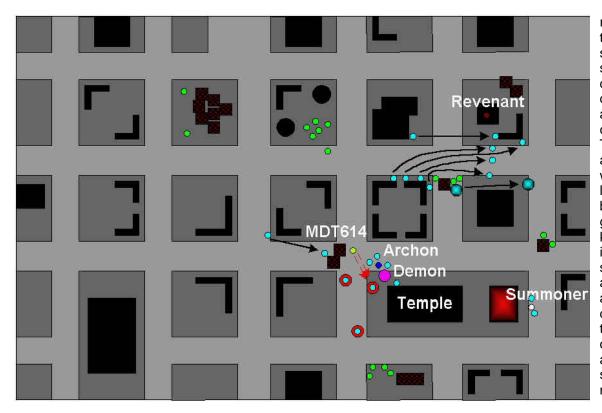
The turn after the demon was summoned (page 36) two things happened, one very surprising and one not very. The guys with guns that had been peppering the marine apparently had not signed on for any demon summoning nonsense and had just been there for guard duty against the very likely Imperial retaliatory strike. They decided that right now would be a great time to make themselves scarce and took off for the eastern edge of town.

Archon, fueled by the spirit of the Emperor, stood fast and connected with two hard shots that sent the hellish fiend crashing to the ground. It was still very alive and now very pissed off. The demon rose and bellowed in rage as it drove its demon weapon into the marine, not once, but twice. Blood poured from the marine and the cultists howled with glee.

MDT614 pumped two shells into the closest cultist that was not engaged with the marine and nearly tore him in half with two massive shots to the abdomen.

While one unengaged cultist advanced towards MDT614 and the carnage that was unfolding, another

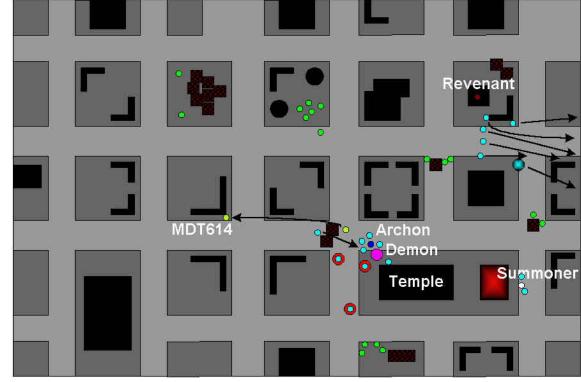




righteous rage the marine stood up and swung at the demon. The demon parries and then counter attacks. The marine's is torn armor wide open leaving him back on the ground trying to keep his intestines from spilling too far away. He fights against the darkness that is trying to him overtake and keeps from succumbing, for

could do nothing but stand by, absolutely awestruck as the mighty minion of chaos tore into what was one of the finest warriors on the planet. The other cultists tried to join in the beatdown, but either could not hit the fallen marine or could not penetrate his armor. A feat the demon had not found too difficult. The remaining cultists swarm the marine and in the final turn MDT614 is able to get to safety, but Archon is ripped to shreds while the cultists dance in the blood soaked street and the Summoner cackles uncontrollably. The demon has acquired a taste for

The next turn of the encounter saw **MDT614** take a course of action similar to the cultist that had been shooting at them. He moved as quickly as possible back to the west in hopes of escaping and reporting the very bleak news. The demon struck at the marine twice, but missed once and one that would have hit was dodged. Filled with



human blood that will need to be satisfied.

Two days later further satellite reconnaissance revealed that Witch Hunter Revenant had also been sacrificed and now several demons were seen in the area.

AND SO IT ENDED...

...with me taking a royal beating. I could not have planned a worse drubbing if I had tried. In fact, maybe I had. I walked right in and just expected to unleash all kinds of hell on the bad guys and walk around like the Jolly Green Giant. Did I take just a few minutes to rescue Witch Hunter Revenant first? Heck no! Did I spread my guys out at the beginning and draw all sorts of attention to myself? Absolutely! That was probably the worst, and most deserving, ass-kicking that I've taken in a long time.

Just by taking a minute to evaluate the situation I could have come out much better and at least had a chance to save one of the captives and quite possibly both of them. Saving Revenant first was a no-brainer, unless of course you donate your brain to science for a few hours and walk in shooting up the place like Rambo. No, actually Rambo would have come up with a much more sneaky plan that would not have alerted the whole place to his presence as quickly as possible.

Not ever using a Marine before worked against me as I listened to every story about how invincible they are and just got Archon stuck in way too deep to get out. OK, having a demon pop up and treat him like an old toy. I swear that I could hear "Smack My Bitch Up" playing somewhere in the background. I still like the idea of a shooty arco-something-or-other, but his performance left a lot to be desired. I'm sure that my flawed game plan had a lot to do with that.

Looking back I'm pretty confident that I could have rescued Revenant with few problems, and certainly without alerting the guys in the temple to our presence. From there the three characters would have stood a much greater chance of freeing Skopje or at least battling the demon. By freeing Revenant first we would have dealt with those guarding him and not both groups of bad guys all at once. The dog-pile on Archon right at the end was a bit of overkill, but I can see a bunch of crazed each wanting to get their shot in. In reality the demon would have been more than enough to make hamburger out of him. Where's a marine with a Las Cannon when you need one?



BUT IS IT REALLY OVER?

Well, the rescue plan was a miserable failure and even though MDT614 is bringing back information about the demon infestation and cult activities he'll probably be deactivated and ground up into a protein shake for not sticking around and facing death like a true psycho agent of the Emperor.

The cultists didn't get killed off like LaklLakl had hoped, but they have no doubt attracted a whole pantload of Imperial attention and likely see a huge hammer coming their way soon. It's probably a safe bet that whoever gets sent there to eliminate them will not be asking many questions as the bullets fly. His dealings with the cult might very well go undiscovered. "Cleanse with fire!" are likely to be the last words that the cultists hear.

That does leave some unfinished business between Max Payne and the mutants though. I doubt that Max will sit idly by as his already sullied name is dragged further through the mud.

But that's a battle for another day.

GAME REVIEW



Sadly, the original Chainmail rules by TSR was never part of my game collection. Very likely not part of yours either. I think I'll do some searching on-line and see if I can track down a copy. Until then we'll take a look at one of the newest offerings by Wizards of the Coast, their updated/new version of Chainmail.

BASICS – Chainmail comes packaged as a rather small box (ABOUT 9" x 6"), but despite its diminutive size, as far as boxed miniature games go, it's pretty weighty. Inside you'll find eight miniatures, four Thalos and four Naresh (more on them later), a model description booklet, a rulebook, one d20, four terrain cards, two starter (cheat) sheets, and two small card sheets of punch-out counters.

Since you get eight individual, no duplicates, metal miniatures in the box I'll go through each of them here.



First up is the Thalos Human Paladin. Fully one-fourth of the models in the starter set are female and she's the first. The figure comes as a two-piece model with the sword/hand as a separate piece. The mold line was easily visible and

took a few minutes to get rid of, but there were no defects and just a bit of other flash to clean up. She's wearing plate armor and carries an ornate shield in her left hand, but does not wear a helmet. A long sash is tied to her waist and a very nice scabbard for her sword is on her back. A very nice addition to this model lies in your base being partially pre-textured for you. Her left foot is standing on a rock. The only thing I don't like about her is the haircut. I know she's a paladin and all, but she could have done without the Joan of Arc Flowbee ® haircut.

The next Thalos model is a Gnome Infiltrator. He's wearing very little in the way of armor, just a padded leather vest. His hair is tied back into a ponytail and he's also got on a pair of glasses. Unlike many figures in the line he has a couple of



pouches around his waist. For weapons he is carrying what looks like a self-loading crossbow and there is a small scabbard on his right side. No mold line to clean up and just a tiny bit of flash saw him as the cleanest figure right out of the box. The bow part of the crossbow comes as a separate piece so I'm expecting it to need repairs after breaking off sometime in the future. The arm and crossbow as its own piece might have been better.



The Human Glaiver is also wearing plate armor and comes as a two-piece model. One for the body and one for the weapon and hands. Cleanup was more significant for this model. His glaive also had to be worked a bit because it got bent

in the box. It had to be straightened out and rotated a little to fit properly with the arms. Not a huge amount of work or anything, but he was the figure needing the most work. A separate sword is also included that goes on his right side. He gets a sash like the paladin, but he's also wearing an open helmet which shows decent facial detail.

The last of the Thalos from the starter set is a Human Marine. He's wearing about nothing in the way of armor, but he is wearing the same kind of sash as the glaiver and paladin. When painting up the warband the sash can serve as the



unifying element while allowing you to go to town on each model, painting them each as individuals. He's a little less detailed than the others, but still quite passable. He's carrying a crossbow and a quiver of bolts, but no visible hand-to-hand weapon. He's got a scruffy 'Grizzly Adams' look to him with his hair tied back into a ponytail. Cleanup was about as much as with the paladin and only took a few minutes. Like the gnome, the bow part of his crossbow comes as a separate piece which is just begging to break off if he gets knocked over accidentally.



On to the Naresh models. The Demonic Gnoll Adept is the commander model and is really nice. This is a four-piece model that stands head and shoulders above normal human models. She, yes a female gnoll (she has six, well, you get the idea) has a separate tail, shield and weapon arm, a flail, that needs to be glued to the body. For a model with so many crevices there

was very little flash and hardly any mold line to be cleaned. I didn't notice until closer inspection, but she has one cloven hoof and one foot that looks like a bird's. I guess that her evil magic has corrupted her in mind and body. I repositioned her flail arm a little (an easy process) just to make her look a little different. The shield is adorned with little skulls, a severed hand and other odds and ends. My favorite model from the box.

A second gnoll is included, a Gnoll Trooper. He's quite tall, just like the adept, and is really howling at whomever he's about to cleave. The head and shield hand are separate pieces which both fit into place easily. A large axe is held above his head, which I rotated back slightly. He's wearing armor on his upper half and over his 'vitals'.





The last two Naresh models are a bit on the small side, probably making up for the significantly larger gnolls. The Abyssal Maw is a giant walking mouth with hands and eyes sticking out in random places. It's definitely something that I'd run

away from. The body comes as two halves and it fit together fine. There are also two separate arms that went right into their sockets. Cleanup was negligible and one of its feet is standing on a small clump of rocks.

The last Naresh model from the starter set is a Hyena. This is not some little pound puppy! Since gnolls are based on something of an evolved hyena it makes perfect sense to drop one of these into the warband. I spent about thirty



seconds on cleanup. It's wearing a couple of spiked harnesses and is baring its teeth in a wicked snarl.

PRESENTATION – All of the books in the set are a tiny bit smaller than half-size and everything is in color on slick paper. All of the text is very easy on the eyes and there are pictures everywhere. The pictures included color drawings and pictures of painted figures and very few plain line pictures. The line drawings were in the model description book next to figures that have not been released yet. Diagrams are laid out on a green background with white text and white/gray model pictures and are very easy to follow. There are diagrams for just about everything.

STORYLINE - The background as presented in the rulebook takes up all of four pages. What's presented there is not bad though. Basically, long ago the gods walked the earth and interacted to a certain degree with the lowly mortals. After the Demon War the gods left for the heavens. All except one that is. Startis, the god of war stuck around and generally got his jollies by causing all sorts of chaos and destruction. Finally, to end his reign of terror a handful of heroes gathered up some artifacts and beat Startis like a junkyard dog. As he was dying Startis revealed that the world would know not a moment of peace until a new god of war rose. So, their plan backfired and now all of the factions are fighting each other. With miniature wargames the storyline has always been secondary with me. Yeah, it's nice to have a good one, but I'd rather have a good game that's fun to play. storyline here is certainly passable, but it's not going to make me run out and buy any Chainmail novels when/if they start cranking them out.

RACES – Even though you only get models from the Thalos (human) and Naresh (gnoll) factions the rulebook gives background info on the other four factions which include Drazen's Horde (hobgoblins) is a brutal hand-to-hand army that includes Orc Berserkers, War Apes, and Owlbears (be very afraid!) in its army; Mordengard (dwarves) is made up of dwarves, minor elementals, and some creatures; Ravilla (elves) has elves of many different flavors as well as centaurs and drakes; and Ahmut's Legion (undead) includes death clerics and multiple types of zombies and skeletons. Thalos also gets a wizard and a small iron-golem(ish) construct and Naresh benefits from several types of creatures from the abyss. I've heard some rumblings on-line about the possibility of Drow and Yaun-Ti being next in line for armies, but I would put as much stock in these as with any other online rumors. I'd really like to see Yuan-Ti though.

GAME – If you're at all familiar with the d20 system then you're already familiar with Chainmail. Everything is based around the new D&D3E combat system, but

simplified a bit. A single d20 is all that is needed to play. Each turn/round players roll to determine their initiative with the player rolling highest going first. Players then alternate activating and resolving model's A neat twist allows players with larger warbands to activate more models before the action turns back to their opponent. Large, high point value creatures could find themselves getting mobbed. What your models can do depends on how close they are to a commander. If they are in command range then they can do much more than those that are too far away to get directions from their leader. Attack and damage is pretty straightforward. Every model has an Armor Class (AC) and attack modifiers. When all is said and done if your d20 attack roll, plus modifiers, is equal to or greater than your target's AC then you hit him and cause damage that is taken away from his health. If his health drops to zero they are knocked over and if it is taken to less than zero they are killed. This is very similar to D&D3E where you fall unconscious and are dying at zero hit points and then die at -10. There are many abilities and spells and for the most part they have their roots in the skills, feats, and spells of D&D3E, but are simplified. Most games are going to be played on a 4' x 4' table and probably using 5-15 models per side. This is definitely a skirmish game where games can be resolved in 30-60 minutes without too much trouble. This size would lend itself very well to tournaments. The rulebook includes several scenarios, many of which are pretty standard offerings (Standard Skirmish, Kill the Leader, Capture and Hold, etc...). Rules for more than two players is also present and doesn't require look like it requires anything more than some very simple modifications. There are rules devoted to building your own creatures, transferring monsters and heroes from D&D3E to Chainmail. This is all fine and good until it comes to assigning a point value. All of the conversion stuff will help people flesh out any creature that their heart desires, but just telling people to look at a creature of about the same power and assign your new creature a point value either a little higher or lower is pretty weak. I'd almost rather that they had left out the conversion rules or devoted another page or two for a point system. There are rules for bidding on new creatures to see who gets to use it, but that can run into lots of problems.

ARMY LISTS – OK, here is my problem with the game. Actually, it's more of a problem with the packaging and release of models. You do not get even rudimentary army lists as part of the started set. Each model's stats are presented on a card, which is fine, but you only get stats for the eight models in the set. What if I want to use an Abyssal Ravager in my Naresh army? Go out and buy the blister and after opening it find out what this guy can do. Yes, the stats

are on the web now in various places, but if you don't have web access you're screwed. Buying all of the models in a faction is not a good way of getting players the stats of their troops. This is my one gripe with the game. This sucks!

THEATRE OF WAR – This should be about the same as in D&D3E. Fighter types heading into the fray while the archers and spell casters toss in support from the back lines. Fast moving creature will disrupt this, just like they will in the role-playing game. I'd say that heavy emphasis on hand-to-hand combat with support coming from standard and magical missile fire is the way things will play out most of the time.

VALUE – The Chainmail starter set will set you back about thirty bucks. Quite worth it if you ask me. Purchased separately the figures alone would run you more than that and they are all metal. A definite plus. If you are not a miniature gamer there is still a lot of value here. The figures could find a home in virtually any D&D3E campaign and the Chainmail rules can be easily used as a quickened mass combat system if you want to drop your party into the middle of war. Hmm, what a good idea! As a wargame, Chainmail may or may not set the world on fire, but it will lend itself well to running tournaments even with large numbers of players. I dislike the card system as they have no use in the game itself except as being a handy way to keep your army list together. I'd have much rather have seen even a basic army list for each faction so I could choose an army to play and then start picking up figs. This is not bad enough for me to say stay away, but I would be much more enthusiastic if a quick stat reference card had been included. The model description book gives a stat here or there, but not enough to base a decision on. To me, the terrain cards are pretty much a throw away item. I think that anyone picking up the set and sticking with the game will either have terrain of their own already or put some together. The conversion rules are a decent start, but they don't get finished. Without someone running a Chainmail campaign or league that has final say over new creatures and point values I cannot see it being used too much, which is a shame. All of the models that I got in the starter set were of very good quality and hopefully this will give Wizards of the Coast an excuse to put out high quality models of all of the creatures in the 3E Monster Manual. On a simple 'yes' or 'no' I say YES, Chainmail is definitely worth a look. I can think of many other ways to throw away thirty dollars that won't get me a handful of good figures and potentially a game that I'll like. If WOTC puts their support behind this with leagues for Magic and product support for D&D3E you could see a lot of Chainmail real soon. I'd like that. Just give me real army lists.

GAME REVIEW

Ah, you gotta love differing opinions. Last issue, J. Michael Tisdel reviewed the new Deluxe Ogre set from Steve Jackson Games. Michael is an old-school Ogre player and wasn't exactly thrilled with the new box set. This issue we have another Ogre player from 'back in the day', Joe Schirmer, who will be taking a look at Deluxe G.E.V.

Deluxe G.E.V. is the sequel to **Deluxe Ogre** that was reviewed in the last issue of *Fiction Reality*. Both games are reprints of the classic games first published in 1977. But these deluxe versions use 1/285-scale miniatures instead of cardboard counters. **G.E.V.** is still a great game nearly 25 years later mainly because it has a depth of tactics to it that few games even today can match.

Presentation

The presentation of **Deluxe G.E.V.** (Paneuropean starter set) is much like its predecessor, **Deluxe Ogre**, coming with three plastic VHS tape boxes with foam inserts to store the miniatures, box labels, Complete **G.E.V.** rules, a 38"x32" map that comes in two parts. The cardboard game cover has the 4 train counters printed on it that need to be cut out for use in "The Train" scenario in the rulebook. So be careful not to throw that away or to tear the cover in your eagerness to unwrap the game.

The maps are bigger in this edition, hexes being 50mm side to side, but are not on the same as the miniatures. (The hexes would have to be much too large or the miniatures much too small for the map/miniature scales to be equal) But the game system only requires that the miniatures fit in a hex.

The rule booklet comes with a handy identification chart to help identify the miniatures that come with the



game and their combat/movement values. Otherwise the rules haven't changed from the cardboard counter version of the game.

The Miniatures

The starting 46 piece Paneuropean force that come with the game include a command post, 6 G.E.V.s, 6 light G.E.V.s, 1 Superheavy Tank, 4 Heavy Tanks, 4 Missile Tanks, 4 Light Tanks, 1 Howitzer, 1 Mobile Howitzer, 18 Infantry with 8 Infantry bases. The Infantry bases hold 3 infantry figures each but you should only glue down one of the Infantry figures so that you can remove the other two for casualties.

The quality of the castings is good with few exceptions. My set had one G.E.V. and one Light G.E.V. that were missing a bit on the casting which meant that some of the detail was lost on the rear of the models.

Background

There is not a lot of background storyline included in this set, but over the years fiction and background storylines have emerged. The following is a short



Mobile Howitzer



Command Post



Howitzer

summary of the major powers in the G.E.V. universe but isn't included in **Deluxe G.E.V.**

In the second half of the 21st century there is a single order and a single superpower that dominates the western hemisphere from the frozen Arctic to the jungles of Central America. It is called the North American Combine. It is rigidly authoritarian, uniting the continent under one law, one order, and one language. No one goes hungry and everyone gets all of the education they can absorb. The Combine rewards ambition and talent, ignoring race, sex, parentage... ignoring everything except political deviation.

Unstoppable juggernauts, called Ogres, spearhead attacks into any state foolish enough to rebel, such as the Quebecois who were unwilling to lose their French heritage and language. Mechanized armies and infantry in battle suits support these nearly unstoppable monstrosities into the next logical target for the Combine, South America, was still rich in natural resources. Only aid from the Paneuropean Federation kept the Combine from swallowing these nation whole.

The Paneuropean Federation controls Europe from Brittany to beyond the Urals, and from the Mediterranean to the Arctic. This is a state of contrasts, the gulf separating the very rich from the very poor is vast, where the Combine was born of standardization, Paneurope valued variety. This was due to both the natural diversity of Europe and the failed Soviet experiment from the 20th century. The economic magnates were the new aristocracy, their command of the European markets the only source of stability in an otherwise fragmented and stratified society.

And some old conflicts were never forgotten. The Balkans still remembered their independence and the uninvited "stabilization" of their homelands. Eastern Germans distrusted their counterparts from the old Soviet Union, who in turn fought for Mother Russia first. All feared the fanaticism of the Vatican divisions.

The Ukrainian and Georgian Free States were technically independent allies of the Federation, but in truth, they soon became little more than agricultural slave territories. Occasionally these old prejudices broke into violent conflict, with Paneuropean forces turning against each other. Yet, overall, the Paneuropean military had very high morale and were highly efficient, setting aside their differences in the face of aggression.

The major powers from the rest of the world include the Arabian Confederation, Austria, the Chinese Hegemony, Great Britain, and the Nihon Empire.

The Game System

G.E.V. hasn't changed much since it was first published in the mid 70's. All units have attack, attack range, defense, and movement values. Combat is resolved by figuring the attack/defense ratio rounded down to the closest value on the included combat table. Units are the either not affected, disrupted, or destroyed. In the older rule set the cardboard counters would be flipped to designate a disrupted unit. No method of marking disrupted miniatures is given in the new rule set. I created a set of "disrupted" markers for use during my games.

The only problem with this boxed set is that it doesn't have enough miniatures to play any of the scenarios in the book. You need to buy more or find a friend who has bought enough units to play. Preferably the other units should be from **Deluxe Ogre** or one of the other Combine reinforcements sets.

Army Lists

There are two types of units in this game, infantry and armored. All scenarios in the book require a fixed number of infantry units and armored units. The choice is limited for infantry that come in units of one, two, or three men in powered armor. The basic threeman unit may be built up from, or broken down into one, or two man units. Infantry is slow moving, but its defense strength is doubled in forest, swamp or town hexes.







19

Armored units make up the rest of the units included in the game. G.E.Vs (Ground Effect Vehicles) are the units that the game is named after. They are lightly armored and have a medium attack values, but they are the fastest units in the game, getting two movement phases. This gives them the unique ability to move into position, fire at an enemy, and the move into more defensive terrain. They also move over bodies of water as if it were a road. But G.E.V.s tend to stay away from forest and swamp hexes as they might become disabled in such terrain. Light G.E.V.s are just smaller weaker versions of the regular G.E.V.

Tanks come in different variants, Missile Tanks, Light Tanks, Heavy Tanks, and Superheavy tanks. The Light, Heavy, and Superheavy all being variants on the same type of unit, each being more heavily armored, deadlier, and slower as it increases in size. The Missile Tank being the only exception, being stuck somewhere between the Light and Heavy tank, but

being armed with longer ranged missiles.

Howitzers offer long range and deadly attack strength in a stationary platform, and as a result are only used by defensive forces. Mobile Howitzers are able to move very slowly at a sacrifice of attack range, but do offer the tactical advantage of a moving defense.

The only other type of unit in the game is a Command Post. The Command Post has no attack strength, no defense strength, and no mobility. They are used as objectives in the game, with one side needing to destroy it in order to win the game.

Value

Considering the game came with 46 miniatures, large (38"x32") colorful maps, and three storage boxes for the miniatures with labels it is a great value at a suggested retail price of \$59.95.



Super Heavy Tank



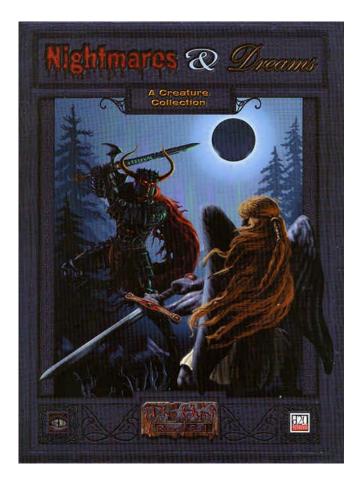
Heavy Tank



Light Tank



D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



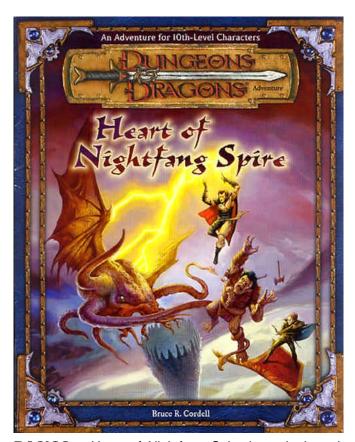
BASICS – Nightmares and Dreams is a D20 support product that is published by Mystic Eye Games (www.mysticeyegames.com) out of Austin, Texas. It is a 72-page perfect bound soft cover book black/white interior art and color covers. It's billed as a 'creature collection' and a 'core book' for their own world, The Hunt: Rise of Evil. Retail price of Nightmares and Dreams is \$10.95.

PRESENTATION – All of the text is easy to read. All of the monster entries include a picture of the beastie. Adequate is how I'd describe almost all of the artwork. It's all passable, but very few of the pictures actually stand out. Heck, I'd have trouble drawing a stick-man, but unless I'm trying to sell you a drawing of a stick-man I'll lay off of drawing. As you'll see later, the monsters described are creatures that inhabited the, you guessed it, Nightmares and Dreams of regular folks. This helps rationalize some of the more bizarre looking monsters (I'd probably wet the bed if I dreamed about some of these), but I'm looking forward to an improvement in the artwork in future releases.

STORYLINE – I've already told you that the monsters described come from the farthest reaches of your sleeping mind. This is a pretty cool concept and works well. All of the monsters here could easily be dropped into an existing campaign. I have a few personal favorites that I'll be menacing my players with. The Bloated, the Incinerated, the Evil Clown Doll, the Visceral Mass and Marionette number in the ones I liked the most. The Boated and Incinerated are undead and as you can guess the Bloated are ready to bust open and spread yucky stuff all over the place while the Incinerated are very burned up dead bodies. Anyone that has seen the Puppet Master movies will probably have a soft spot in their heart for the Evil Clown Dolls. A whole troupe of these causing havoc in the town where a party came to rest between adventures would make for a nice little side adventure. The Visceral Mass will find its way into my campaign pretty soon. It's basically a big slimy pile of guts and other internals that have been spilled out on the ground. The slime is the creature though, not the host's remains. There is a short story to go along with each entry and some are good, some are ok. They do help set up a feeling for each monster, but a fantasy creature attacking your party that was dreamed up by some kid in a coma in modern-day Kansas is a little bit of a stretch. Of course, you could use any of these creatures in a modern D20 setting and then this problem goes away entirely. I haven't seen the book for The Hunt: Rise of Evil, but I'm betting that everything in this book has a place in that campaign world. A lot of it could also be used in a Ravenloft © campaign with little or no modification at all.

VALUE - For under eleven dollars this is a good volume to pick up if you'd like a set of non-standard monsters to drop on your players. If you'd rather stick to more standard monsters then I'd say look elsewhere because not much in the book is very standard. A fantasy-horror or modern day horror campaign could benefit from this book though. The addition of a load of extra adventure hooks and items is a nice bonus. I really liked the Haunted House template that is presented as a creature. It's not just a ghost or zombies in the house it is the house itself that is going to eat you! The downside here is definitely the artwork. After thumbing through the book for the first time I found that the entries themselves were of more value than the artwork. There is also a second Nightmares and Dreams in the works. You can get more info on this and other related products on the Mystic Eye Games website.

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS – Heart of Nightfang Spire is a site-based D&D3E adventure published by Wizards of the Coast. It is a stand alone module that can easily be dropped into pretty much any existing campaign. It's a 32-page staple bound module with black/white interior artwork and color covers. The inside covers have very clear drawing and maps of the adventure areas. It retails for \$9.95. I wish I could remember what modules cost back when I was playing Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (1st Edition) but it couldn't have been too much less than this.

PRESENTATION – I haven't found a WOTC D&D3E product yet that has lacked great layout and presentation. I can't truthfully say that I've looked at each and every product that they've put out, but I've spent quite a few dollars on WOTC D20 stuff and haven't been stuck with a lemon yet. The same holds true here. The text reads very easily and there are numerous sidebar notes that give extra explanations about the goings on of the module. My group just got done playing the Forge of Fury module and one thing that was a very welcome sight in that module was the

inclusion of stats for all of the monsters, regular and named creatures, that appeared in the module. This information does not replace the basic need for a DM to own the Monster Manual, but it made my job much easier. In Heart of Nightfang Spire entries are only made for the named creatures, NPC's, and a new monster.

STORYLINE – Without giving too much away here's the skinny on what's going on. Your party gets hooked into the adventure and soon finds themselves in a small city called Drylake where they get information / hear rumors about a haunted tower that may be the lair of a dragon. Things never being exactly as they seem your party will find the tower to be more of a dungeon crawl than a haunted house. Exploring the spire and catacombs will reveal to the party the true nature of its inhabitants and there is a very interesting opportunity for the party going through the spire to make some powerful allies, or get a Congo-style beating.

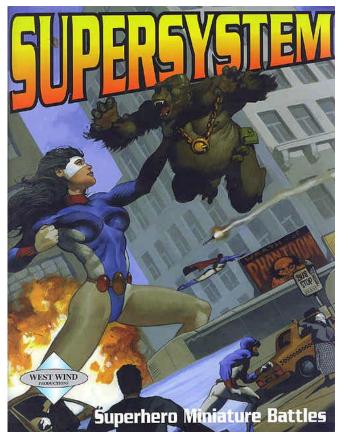
VALUE – For ten bucks there's a lot of good here. The spire and catacombs underneath can easily be used as for an adventure written by your DM. While some of the encounters are going to be a cake walk for a 10th level (recommended level) party there are more than a handful that can light them up right away. The conclusion is a doozy. I really liked that there are some cool monsters used in this module that make good use of the monster templates in the new Dungeons and Dragons game. The amount of treasure that characters will walk away with is good, but not obscene. They can pocket a very nice amount of money, but they won't get loaded up with lots of items that are would be out of place for their level. In fact. I'd expect to find many of the magic items here around the waist or in the hands of characters a couple of levels lower than those recommended. If a party of four 10th level characters makes it all of the way through the adventure they could rise through 11th level and possibly settle into 12th level. If they survive, that is. I would not be surprised if the party lost a member or two before it was all over. Hopefully I've been clear about liking this module so your DM can take you for a ride without giving away too much.

This module was provided for review by...

www.rpgshop.com



GAME REVIEW



Basics

Super System is a stand-alone system for reproducing battles between guardians of truth and justice and their arch-rivals bent on ruling the world. It comes as a single 64-page softcover book published by West Wind Productions and retails for \$20.00 USD.

Presentation

The front and back cover of the book depict super heroes and villains engaged in combat (see above) and match comic book art very well. All of the interior art is black & white and is also done in what you might call a 'traditional' comic book style. Not at all unlike comic books that I grew up with as a kid. That is to say that it's not like a lot of graphic novels that you'll come across, but more old-school. There is a table of contents that clearly lists where to find each section of the book and even shows the page of each individual power. Text is laid out in two columns of an easy to read font and special examples are boxed and shaded

to make sure that you don't miss them. The book starts off with a quick three page mini comic book that introduces you to a few of the major heroes and a villain. The front and back inside covers are also used effectively as mini catalogs, showing black & white photos of twenty of the figures made especially for the game.

Storyline

The background for Super System is covered in five pages of text in the center of the book. Just after World War I two earthquakes rocked the planet (Four-Color Earth) and heralded the (re)appearance of the islands of Atlantis and Lemuria. Contact was extremely limited with the new island cities and to add to their mystery they began moving through the waterways of the world, but always stayed a safe distance from each other. Unknown to the population of the Four-Color Earth they were actually seeding the planet in preparation for the Age of Heroes. Two years later 'supers' began emerging from the populace. As people are apt to do, some began forces of good while others decided that being bad was just too good to pass up. The rest of history mimicked our own fairly closely with 'supers' taking up both sides of many causes. As an example, World War II was still fought and won by the Allies, but with 'supers' on each side.

Races

There are no established races in Super System. Sure, most of the heroes are what you could call humans, or mutants, or super soldiers, or whatever, but you could easily play with a group of borg-like cyborgs or hellish demons or modern-day samurai with laser swords. Since it's a super hero/villain game pretty much anything goes.

Game

Every hero and villain (there are also rules for groups of agents or minions) is described by four attributes (Strength, Agility, Mind, and Resolve), their powers, and their Vitality. They are also rated according to their Build Points (BP) and Action Points (AP). Build points are the final point cost of the hero/villain and allow you to balance games like in other war games. Action Points measure how much you can do in any single turn. Each type of action has an associated point cost. For example, moving costs 1 AP per inch and a close combat attack will run you 3 action points.

Actions in Super System are handled through Goal Rolls. Some of these rolls are unopposed (jumping a chasm) while others are opposed by your enemies attribute (hitting someone in close combat). 'success' is measured by a 4+ on a d6. fighting in hand-to-hand and I score more successes than you then I smack you up. Additionally, I get to add the difference in our rolls to my damage rolls. There are several combat options besides just hauling off and clobbering someone. You can fight defensively or smack them with a telephone pole or a dump truck if you want to and are strong enough. Every point of damage caused takes one point off of your opponent's Vitality rating and once it hits zero they must make a KO check or take a nap. Unless you have some kind of healing powers you are pretty much going to be out of the game once you get KO'd. Powers are listed alphabetically and range from Armor (extra dice added to your damage reduction rolls) to Vitality Drain (kind of like a vampric health theft). Henchmen must operate in groups and are eliminated from combat in much shorter order than heroes/villains. What, you thought that they'd be the stars of the show. Rules are presented for fighting one-off games or a series and also for earning and spending experience points.

Army Lists

Lists are presented for each of Four-Color Earth's major heroes and villains. The Shock Force seems like kind of a 'super' A-Team (oh the horror of the 80's) from Canada that now lives in the USA. The Atlantean Front is lead by the evil genius Dr. Simian and the S-Men are their version of the X-Men that work with the FBI. The Sons of Poseidon are really neither heroes villains as they fight both for Lemuria. VanG.U.A.R.D. is lead by a gadgeteer named Rigger and is made up of a bunch of spares that couldn't really cut it on their own, and the Red Patriot Movement is made up of a bunch of commies that couldn't come to grips with the end of the cold war. What would a super hero combat game be without a build system so you could bring your favorite heroes in for a little beat-down? Not much of one, and Super System provides you with just such a system so you can build to your heart's content. While nowhere near as complex as Champions (The older version, not the fuzion thing.) you should be able to build whatever you like. A normal game would run about 500 points per side and get you about 5 characters and a team of henchmen. This comes out to around 85 points per character, which is right about where all of the characters presented in the book clock in. Bearing in mind that some powers will make some characters more effective in hand-to-hand or ranged combat or give them the ability to absorb more punishment, it also makes it seem like everyone in the book is just

average when compared to everyone else in the book. I would have liked to have seen their version of Superman (on the way high end) or some of the New Mutants (on the lower end). What about the heroes that are only cool enough to stop bad guys that are robbing taco bell or the villains that think that knocking over a Dairy Queen is a major score?

Theater of War

Imagine any comic book you've read and there you go. Lots of buildings with cars to toss around and pedestrians to get in the way would be very cool. But don't be limited to just city blocks to tear up. You've probably read comics with fights going on in just about every conceivable location and they would all work well

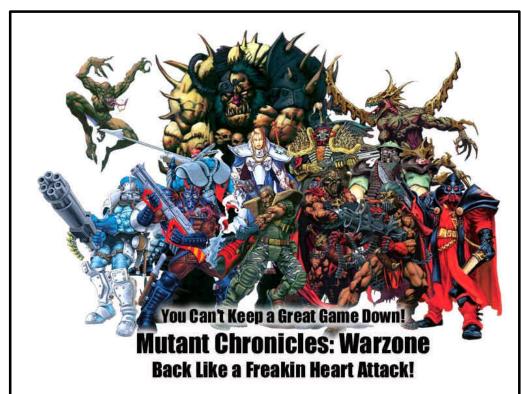
Value

For a mere twenty bucks you can start reliving all of the fights you read about as a kid in comic books or those that you've already fought when playing Champions or some other 'super' game. The rulebook includes several scenarios to get you started and the game can easily be played without a GM. If you're a fan of comics or a player of any of the many past or present 'super' games then Super System is certainly worth a look. You can bash it out in quick skirmishes and not get into any role-playing. Unfortunately, if you are not a fan of comics or super hero games in general then Super System, or any other 'super' game for that matter, is not likely to change your mind.

www.superfigs.net

!!! FREE STUFF!!!

Ok, just for the asking we have two copies of Cry H.A.V.I.C. and two squads of ten troopers. Just drop an e-mail to m.theurer@att.net with 'Hook Me Up' as the subject and wait for the good news.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

On the Warzone side of the street we take a look at the new Eradicator Deathdroid AV. If you remember back to the 1st edition of Warzone you that Cybertronic know commanders could arm Eddy's with varied weapons. Well, it's back...and with actual parts! The variant Eddy comes with a Titan Megablaster and AR3002 Assault Rifle to go along with its standard rocket launchers. Except for the new weapons the model is the same as the old EDDY and comes as





ten separate parts together that go without problems. A couple of the 'pegs' would benefit from being trimmed and mold lines were visible and needed to be cleaned up on all of the pieces. When assembled, the EDDY stands about 4" tall

and makes for an imposing figure on the battlefield. A couple of them will surely cause your opponent to use some of his more colorful language. The two new weapons fit well with the model and Cybertronic commanders will welcome this guy into the fold without question. \$19.95 it costs as much as the regular EDDY and is reasonably priced for a model this size. I'd have liked to have also seen a re-worked base with maybe a new leg pose, but the extra firepower is welcome sight.

With the Swamp Goblins you'll get four of the Headhunters or Webmasters for \$9.95.

With two poses per troop of (mostly) awesome models you cannot go wrong. The Headhunter Leader will set you back \$3.95, which is average for their leader/special troops. Four dollars for a goblin may strike you as a bit high, but the detail on these guys, especially the hero/specials is awesome and makes them worth every penny. Also, these guys are cheap enough and cool enough to use in games other than Chronopia. The would work well in miniature or role-playing wargames games. They will make awesome feral goblins in my

Dungeons and Dragons campaign. Oh wait, maybe I've said too much. Any players in my campaign disregard that last sentence.

In addition to new models, the guys at Excelsior have been working on new rules. Check out the 'COMMUNITY' section of their website (Rules & Info) for details about their new double-blind deployment system.

www.excelsior.cc



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