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www.mj12games.com

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www.kryomek.com

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www.crocodilegames.com

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www.rackham.fr

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Mark Theurer & J Michael Tisdell

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www.reapermini.com

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www.thunderboltmountain.com

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www.magnificentegos.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

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www.jeffvalentstudios.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

Maidenhead Miniatures

www.xxx.com

Reviews by Clay Richmond

Kryomek USA

www.kryomek.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

Luftwaffe 1946 Miniatures

www.luftwaffe1946.com

Reviews by J Michael Tisdell

Adiken Miniatures

www.adiken.com

Reviews by Clay Richmond

Excalibur Miniatures

www.excalibur-miniatures.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

Privateer Press

www.ikwarmachine.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

Pinnacle/Great White Miniatures

www.peginc.com

Reviews by Mark Theurer

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Magnificent Egos

www.magnificentegos.com

Written by Mark Theurer and Chris

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www.rackham.fr

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www.excelsiorentertainment.com

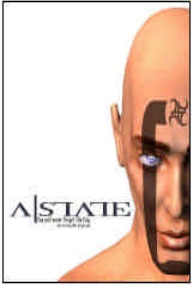
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Written by Excelsior Staff

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RPG REVIEWS



BASICS

A|State is produced by Contested Ground Studios and is a 254-page hardcover book. It's described as a gothic-horror science-fiction rpg, something that could turn out to be quite interesting. It has a retail cost of \$40.00 US and is intended for more mature audiences.

THE SETTING

A little more than half of the book (*The Preface, The Precepts, The Place and The Power*) goes into great detail about the setting of the game. The Preface is a piece of fiction that is only five pages in length and I really got a good initial feel for the rather bleak world. After reading the introduction my summing up would be something of a cross between Necromunda/Mutant Chronicles/The Fifth Element/Demolition Man, well something like that but not too much like any of them. Either way, I liked the intro fiction. The world of A|State is one of futuristic flying cars and people killing each other with rusty blades for a scrap of food. The City, where our adventures/lives take place is made up of many distinct differences in technology, transportation, status, accommodations, etc...that there are almost endless possibilities for play. *The Precepts* presents lots of information about The City, some coming from simple text on how television works, and is controlled, in the world of A|State, but also in the form of short stories that do a lot to bring the world to life. *The Place* gives a map of The City along with a very nicely detailed section on what you'll find crawling around through the alleys and tenements and who you'll meet. *The Place* is not a short read at over 60 pages but it was very interesting and tons of what is presented there could be 'ported over to other futuristic settings if you like. *The Power* is just under 40 pages in length and really gives you a good sense for who, organizationally, is doing what in The City. Criminal organizations, governmental entities, corporations, religious organizations are all presented with enough detail to use them in an adventure but also leaving room for a GM to add some of his own personality to. There is a mysteriously supernatural element to the game in the form of the Shifted. There are many theories about the shifted but none can really tell the whole story about them. Are they aliens, monsters, some other kind of horrors? None or all of the above? There are five races or types of Shifted presented, from the ghost-like Drache to the monstrously horrific Ubel that are described as having skeletons made of rotting wood with exposed muscle and sinew and wearing tattered rags for clothing and carrying rusty blades to hack their victims into pieces. I found the background to be disturbing enough to want to explore and play in but not enough to be a turn off.

CHARACTERS

As you would expect, characters start off with a set of stats (Strength, Agility, Dexterity, Health, Awareness, Intelligence, Willpower and Personality). Most are self explanatory, but Agility differs from Dexterity in that the former deals with "large-scale body movements" and the latter with "fine manipulation". The higher the better with a rating of 90 in an attribute is awesome. When building a character you start off with points to buy attributes and skills. Attributes cost 1:1 until you get up to 70

and then they increase to x2 cost all the way up to x4 cost when in the 90-100 range. Age can affect the number of points you have for attributes/skills so you'll have to decide if you want to play a young buck full of piss & vinegar or an old geezer who's seen everything...or somewhere in between of course. Your character concept (advantages and disadvantages) can also add/subtract from your attribute/skill points with which you'll build your character, in a similar fashion to how they work in Champions. Finally, your upbringing play a factor in how you turn out, giving you attribute bonus(es) and extra skills. So, you're a collection of attributes, skills, and quirks that make you stand out against the crowd. Nothing too earth-shattering but also nothing out of whack, which leaves character creation as a pretty simple affair, but *The Players* section came after *The Procedure* section and I'd have rather the order was switched so the book talked about skills, attributes and characters before getting into what rolls are made.

SKILLS & COMBAT

The rules pertaining to the mechanics of "how" you do what you want, whether that be rendering first aid, trying to bribe an official or splattering some guy's brains against a wall, are handled in *The Procedure* (for info on die roll, modifiers and effects) and *The Players* (regarding specific skills and their use) sections and require a percentile (d100) roll to check for success. This roll starts off at your skill level and let's say you're firing a pistol with a skill of 50 at close range. Your range modifier is 00% (that's a good thing!) but let's say you are walking (-10%) in a poorly lit room (-10%). You're suddenly down to a 30% chance to hit, but you can aim to improve your chances but that will take time and if you're spotted you might have wished you'd shot first. Called shots are also allowed (-20%--40%) but aiming for an unarmored area might just mean the difference between life and death. If you don't take a called shot your hits are allocated to a random area. Combat rounds last 1-second so expect a lot of lead to be flying around over the course of a short period of time. If you hit someone and they have armor it might reduce the damage or then again the hit might just come straight through. Shock Points help determine how hurt you are but how many you take from a hit is determined by comparing the damage of the hit to your Resiliency (Health/10) and then comparing that to the hit location to see how many SP's you take. If you accumulate more SP's than your Resiliency you might go unconscious and at SP's equal to your Resiliency x1.5 you're about to die. Of course, a Serious head shot will also kill you. The system starts off pretty easy with a d100 roll but does get into a few look-ups and comparisons, but should flow pretty easily after a few times through it.

STUFF

The Product is about 30-pages long and describes the weapons and equipment that you'll want to buy. Since this is a UK production (printed in Canada) I was not surprised at all to the costs in Pounds. Not everything has an illustration to go along with it but those that are here are very well done computer generated images. In fact, all of the images in the book are computer generated and were very well done.

THE END

The book ends in an adventure that spans fifteen pages and includes information (somewhat brief) on running a game of A|State and several adventure seeds that can set up many new games with some of the prep work already done for the GM. If you've read any of my previous reviews you'll know that having an introductory adventure included in a book is a big plus and this one will set the mood of the game and involve characters right away. I like that it's scaled for 3-6 players so smaller groups will get immediate use out of it also. There are two appendices at the back of the book, one dealing with the timeline of the game world and the other with a glossary of terms that will come up in common conversation. A set of tables is also here to keep page flipping to a minimum, but I'd suggest just photocopying them and the character sheet to keep out on the table. Curiously, I only found a permission statement allowing the copying of the character sheet, but not the tables. Everything wraps up with an Index and a few ads. The index is very welcome but could have been a bit more complete. As an example, I was searching for information on Resiliency, but it was not listed in the index. I found it in section where it should be but some page flipping and skimming could have been avoided had it been in the index.

VALUE

First off, the "mature" tag is warranted but I was not offended by anything here. One thing that I really, really liked about A|State is that even though it's a thoroughly bleak and dark world that the characters find themselves, they are heroes and are expected to do good. I don't mean namby-pamby everyone hold hands and pretend that things don't suck, but actually being good guys, helping people out and giving a sense of hope in what otherwise is a rather hopeless situation. Forty bucks is a bit higher than you might normally pay for a book this size, but it's a hardback and that almost always pleases me. I found the setting very playable and the I did like the percentile mechanic for determining success/failure. Definitely take a look at the demo version (a 1.2MB PDF) available at their website (www.contestedground.co.uk) first but I think that if you like that you'll love the book and it will be well worth the price.



CHARACTER SHEETS FOR
PLAYER CHARACTERS

BASICS

Rap Sheet is a character folio, or "Player Resource Kit" as it's labeled, for Haven: City of Violence by Louis Porter, Jr. Design. It's 16 pages (including a single advertisement page) is bound with a soft cover depicting the skyline of Haven. It will set you back five bucks.

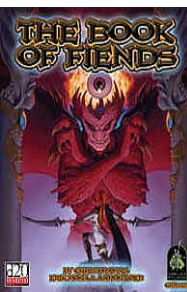
INSIDE

The first three pages cover your basic character information like attributes, skills, special abilities, etc... and also has spaces for your three most-used firearms, something good to have on-hand and easy to find. For those that are artistically inclined there is a spot to sketch out your character. Two more pages are devoted to contact lists, which you'll probably accumulate a decent number of. If you live long enough, that is. Living long enough is a whole other story in Haven, though. The next two pages are reserved as an adventure log with enough space to write notes about six blood-soaked adventures. There's enough space here to write down some basics but not much more than that. In my adventure group, regardless of what game we're

playing, we always have one person that volunteers to be the scribe (or report writer) for the current adventure. They usually use at least two pages for a single adventure so I'd say that the amount of room provided here is only adequate for some very limited amounts of information. If you're part of a "crew" or organization there is a page for you to detail a pretty fair amount of information about it. For the dog lovers out there, no not that kind of dog lover but I'm sure they're floating around Haven somewhere, you get a whole page for man's best friend. Make sure it's a bad-ass pit-bull or rottie that's hard as nails and willing to jump in front of a bullet for you. Then write up a new one. If you're into, well your character anyway, better living through chemistry there is a page for you to list your three most used drugs and their effects. For the kung-fu fighters out there, you get a page for HTH combat maneuvers and training. Another sheet for firearms, one for vehicles, one for movement values / environmental tolerances / hit locations and finally one where you can draw out your crib.

VALUE

Everything in the Rap Sheet was easy to read and all of the spaces were large enough to write in without having to resort to a microscopic script. If you're a big fan of Haven it's likely that you've already gone to the trouble to writing all of the stuff contained herein on your own so in that line of thinking you might not get a lot of use out of the Rap Sheet. Along another line, it's really, and I mean really, easy to become a greasy red stain on the ground in Haven and you might not want to go through writing and erasing exercises too often. Actually, at lower (and sometimes higher) experience levels in any game you can get really dead really quickly so that's really a drawback to any character folio, not just this one. The biggest problem that I have with the Rap Sheet is it's very like to be obsolete soon (or maybe already depending on when you read this review) because Haven is being ported over to d20 Modern. My feeling on the transfer of Haven to d20 Modern is that it will be great because there are undoubtedly more d20 Modern players out there than Haven players and bringing the setting to d20 Modern will bring a well fleshed-out modern dark action setting to one of my more liked games. So, for Haven in general it's a great move and a good amount of the old material can be transferred across without too much trouble but products like the Rap Sheet are pretty much out of luck, except for players of Haven that want to stick with the original system. Sure, there will be some out there but they will start to fade away if/when all haven support goes in the direction of d20. If you're old-school and plan to stay that way then the Rap Sheet can have some use for you but some pages might go unused if you don't have a dog, use drugs, etc... For me, I'll be waiting for the d20 version with bated breath so I can unleash it in my d20 Modern campaign.



BASICS

The book of Fiends is put out by Green Ronin Publishing. The book is actually a compilation of three works, two of which have previously been published, *Legions of Hell*, and *Armies of the Abyss*. The new work, which they added, is *Hordes of Gehenna*. This was originally scheduled to be published as a stand-alone book, but when D&D version 3.5 came out, it was decided to put all three into a single tome and provide the needed updates to make all compatible with edition 3.5. It is a hard-

DARWIN'S WORLD

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"I do not know what
weapons will be used
in World War III,
but I assure you that
World War IV will
be fought with stones. "

-Albert Einstein



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bound book of 224 pages. The book's retail price is \$34.95 USD.

The cover art is quite good, and the black and white ink drawings throughout the book are several cuts above the norm. As a whole I really like the artwork and layout of the book. It's well-organized and easy to use, and its even fun to page through just looking for quick ideas. Like the MMs, there is something for everyone in this book. For the serious campaigner there is a new class of demon worshiper called a Thaumaturage that casts divine spells and descriptions of the many of the rulers that can be found in the different layers of the abyss. Of if you prefer to just hack away at a few monsters, there are plenty provided to choose from.

For someone like me, a DM always on the lookout for more bad nasties to throw at the good guys, I think that this compendium of evil is a gold mine. In total there are over a hundred forty devilish monsters that range on challenge rating from one half all the way up to forty (though the vast majority have challenge ratings below twenty-five). There are also twenty-one Demon Prices detailed (and another ten on a side bar) that can be used as deities for the Thaumaturages. The Tables of Contents is very detailed making everything easily accessible without a lot of page flipping and in the back there is even a nice index. The most pleasant of surprises is found in the back: an appendix with a table ranking the Monsters by challenge rating. Whoo hoo! Why more people don't do this is beyond me. For DMs this is a real time saver. Thank you Green Ronin!

BETWEEN THE COVERS

As mentioned above, the book is divided into three main parts. I found it interesting that the three parts coincides with the three aspects of evil. Chaotic Evil is covered in *Armies of the Abyss*, Neutral Evil by the *Hordes of Gehenna*, and the *Legions of Hell* closes the loop by covering the Lawful Evil side.

The first section is the *Armies of the Abyss* and it spans four chapters. It is in this section that the Thaumatures are introduced. Unlike many new Classes that you find, this class comes complete with a VERY detailed description, new feats, new domains, new spells, and even new diseases (just what every player character looks forward too). My favorite new spells are Phantasmal Lover and Phantasmal Orgy. If you have to be beat up in a battle, these spells look like a great way to get back into fighting condition. I will have to make sure the party cleric adds these puppies to his repertoire next time. In total, this new class is detailed over a good eleven pages, so there is plenty of detail to really do a good job in creating a Thaumaturage either as a player character or as an enemy non-player character.

This section is also where the Demon Prices of the Abyss are detailed. There is a complete pantheon of evil provided giving Domains, Favored Weapon etc. for each Demon Prince. One of the more entertaining things to read is the paragraph called "Obedience" at the end of each description. In this paragraph, it is laid out in gory detail what the Thaumaturage must do every day to replenish his allotment of spells. I don't know, maybe it's just me, but reading what these guys have to do every single day just to have the honor of spreading their demonic master's influence would convince me to find a different career.

Finally, the greater part of this section is given to detailing the creatures found in the abyss. There are forty-two monster descriptions and one monster template (the Abyssal Dragon). As one might expect, most of these monsters are the stuff of nightmares. Most are demons, and all are chaotic evil. I have to say that the mind that these monstrosities sprung from just might be as twisted as my own.

The second section of the book is the *Hordes of Gehenna*. It is the smallest of the three sections and spans two chapters. The first chapter gives a description and background of Gehenna, which is a new realm of evil souls that is separate from the abyss. The second chapter covers the greater part of this section and details the creatures that inhabit this realm. There are forty-four monsters detailed here and most of these creatures are Daemons that are neutral evil rather than chaotic evil. Again these bad boys are not the kind of dudes you want to bring home to

mom, and its possible that these are even more twisted than the ones from the previous section.

The last section covers the *Legions of Hell*. This section has three chapters, but the first chapter is only a couple pages long where there is a brief description of the nine circles of hell and the devils that lord over them. The second chapter contains the meat of this section with fifty four monsters (a couple of them actually being templates). This crew is mostly Lawful Evil devils, and you will see some of the more familiar hell spawn creatures here, but there are plenty that are new as well. You may even see some here that will remind you of evil creatures from other miniature games you may have played.

The final chapter offers up a few prestige classes for lawful evil sort. Again, these are well fleshed out classes and every thing you need to play a character in one of these classes is spelled out for you. I personally don't see these classes used in a party, at least no in a party that I like to run in, but I definitely can see these guys as being a lead bad guy in an adventure or campaign.

The book ends with four appendices. The last one I already mentioned in the ranking of monsters by challenge rating. The other three cover things possibly of use to DMs building campaigns where the forces of organized evil have a prominent role. There is even a brief description and a map of two fiendish cities, but these appear to be there to wet the appetite more than anything. Also presented in an appendix is the new class of *Unholy Warrior*, which is another great class for bad guys. This class seems to be the exact opposite of the Paladin class, and there is even a handbook put out by Green Ronin (cleverly called the *Unholy Warrior Handbook*) that covers this class in far more detail, but all the essentials are given here.

VALUE

I think this book is a great buy. It's very well done and has all levels of material available. There is plenty of plug and play stuff that the normal DM can use, and then there is an abundance of material that the more industrious DM can use to build adventures or campaigns around. The span of material here also insures that there will always be something available to slaughter a party of any level.

I give *The Book of Fiends* high marks for artwork, organization, originality, usefulness and playability. Try as I might, I would be hard pressed to come up with any complaints about the book.



BASICS

Corwyl – Village of the Wood Elves is the companion book to Green Ronin Publishing's *Bow & Blade*. Like all Green Ronin books, this one is designed to drop easily into any fantasy campaign setting. It is fully compatible with the 3.5 revision of the *Dungeons & Dragons* rules set. This remote tree-top village can make an excellent home base for wilderness-oriented campaigns or an interesting place for characters to visit. This tome describes the current political and religious crisis surrounding Corwyl, which, in turn offers a beginning for play. Also, the many adventure seeds and plot hooks ensure that Corwyl will remain a place of interest over the course of a campaign.

PRESENTATION

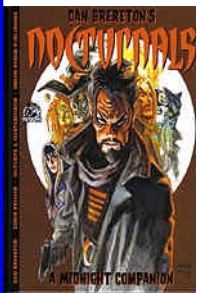
Where to start? The first thing that jumped out at me as I scanned this book was there were more gray boxes than normal for a Green Ronin publication. Normally, the gray boxes give level statistics for new classes or similar information. I read a few of these "new" boxes. Then I read a few more. What I found was an interesting and useful device. These boxes each contained tidbits of knowledge that would make the job of a game master much easier. At the top of each box was either the name of a magic item or the words "Interaction Seed." Below these titles are descriptions of the hook or the background and game stats of the magic item.

What next? Well, there are 45 NPCs that can be used to interact with players, including Lavenzel, a 370-year-old female greater treant. She has 180 hit points! So, players will probably want to stay on her good side. Now, on to a Green Ronin books usual substance: their writers are always able to come up with scads of new skills, feats, spells and classes. *Corwyl* is no exception. In chapter three the reader will find only one new skill, but there are twenty-two new feats. Yes, faithful reader, I said "twenty-two." The most intriguing feat is one called Tree-Linked. As the title implies the character has a tie to a particular tree. And the longer this bond lasts the more abilities the tree imparts upon the player; from *Intuit Location* all the way to *Awaken*. This last ability endows the tree with sentience. As if that was not enough, there are sixty-six new spells. My personal favorite is Arboreal Archer. When cast on a tree it pelts the target with sticks and acorns. I just like the mental picture that goes with that description. What am I forgetting? Oh, yes...new classes. Two new core classes and two new prestige classes. The core classes are the Ancestral Speaker (sorcerer-like) and the Terellian Knight (ranger-like). Animal Master and Tree Maiden are the two new prestige classes. Animal Master has a pretty self-explanatory title and the Tree Maiden (Tree Master if male) is the guardian of forests and sacred groves.

Corwyl – Village of the Wood Elves, like all Green Ronin books is very well put together and edited. Everything is clearly laid out and easy to use. I have only a single disappointment with this particular book: the artwork. "I may not know art, but I know what I like." (to quote The Joker) I did not care for the pictures used in this tome. The cover art is the best of the lot and it does it's job of giving a visual impression of the village. It conveys a look similar to what Peter Jackson gave us in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Several different artists made contributions to this book. Some of their drawings I liked while others just did not impress me. But, I can't draw a stick figure, so what do I know? I'll leave the art critique to the individual.

VALUE

As with all of the Green Ronin books that I have reviewed the buyer will get plenty of value for his/her hard-earned dollar. *Corwyl – Village of the Wood Elves* is a 96-page, soft cover, perfect bound book. With a MSRP of \$19.95 that comes out to only about 15 cents per skill/feat/spell/npc. That's a bargain in any gaming endeavor. So, if you look at this book via my gaming economics then the rest of the knowledge enclosed within it is practically free. You can't get much better than free. Can you? Buy it. Read it. Use it. You will not be disappointed.



BASICS

Nocturnals: A Midnight Companion is the next supplement for Green Ronin's super hero game, Mutants & Masterminds. It's a 160-page hardcover book that retails for \$29.99 USD and boasts a color cover and tons of color and black/white interior artwork. This supplement brings to life the comic book world of Doc Horror and the rest of the Nocturnals (along with their friends and foes) and is quite

a departure from the regular super hero world that you might be used to.

INSIDE

The first thing I did when I picked up this book was to page through it looking at all of the artwork. I've not been disappointed with any of the Mutants & Masterminds book's artwork so far, but this one really did blow all of the others away. That's not meant as a knock on the other books because they are damn fine, but this one seems like you really got your full two scoops of raisins and then some! The whole book is printed on great paper and the production values of the whole thing are top notch! After looking at all of the artwork I did wonder if there was more artwork put in as filler to pad the page count but once I started reading all about Doc Horror and his crew I found this to not be the case at all. I came into this book just knowing bits and pieces about the Nocturnals from what I'd read on the Mutants & Masterminds forums but I walked away with a pretty thorough understanding of the setting and it made me want to start picking up some Nocturnals comics.

There are nine chapters in the book, starting with the *Introduction* that's only two pages in length but it not only gets the M&M gamer up to speed but it also explains to non-gamers who might happen to be Nocturnal fans why this book would appeal to them. For the comic book fans this game supplement explains (according to Mr. Brereton, the creator) more of the character's origins than in any of the comics that have come out. For the gamer, you can look at this supplement in one of two ways (ok, three but I'll save that for later). First, it can be used as a stand-alone M&M campaign to play in. Keep everything in Pacific City (home base of the Nocturnals) and pretend that it's like Halloween every night of the week.. Or, you can just drop in Doc, Pacific City and the rest of the spook-fest into a regular M&M campaign for whenever you need a quick trip into the surreal. Either way would work fine in my eyes.

The eight pages in *The Story So Far* it was enough information to keep me glued to the book without giving everything away all at once. If you're a fan of the comics you already have a head start so no need to get you up to speed and for the gamers I don't really want to spill too many beans here because I enjoyed reading it so much and I think that you will too. No, Doc Horror is not from around here. Yes, he and his daughter Evening (Eve) come out there somewhere. Yes, the rest of the folks involved come from the ranks of the undead, mutants, humans and just about everything in between.

In *Meet the Family* we hook up with Doc's rather bizarre comrades, see lots of artwork of each of them and learn about how they came to be and who they are today. This section is all background information and contains no stats or rules at all. It's a bit

of a change from an M&M book like villains where you get a picture, some background info and then a stat block. I had to get into straight reading (for content) mode here but it really paid off as each character in the troupe is unique and worth reading about. They are; Doc Horror, Eve Horror (his daughter), The Gunwitch (an undead gunslinger), Polychrome (a sexy female wraith), Starfish (possibly the last remaining living example of an aquatic race), Firelion (a former cop whose brain and spinal column are housed in a cybernetic body), Raccoon (a bipedal intelligent raccoon hybrid) and Komodo (a reptilian hybrid). This chapter was an outstandingly interesting read and set up the possibility for lots of role-playing if your group decides to take on the roles of the Nocturnals themselves.

Eighteen pages gets you the background of *Pacific City* and several of its local residents and hangouts. Pacific City is located on the California coastline but it's definitely not the kind of place that's likely to be on any guide of places to see. It's the kind of place that most people drive through because they have to so they can get where they are really going. It's a perfect setting for the Nocturnals but it felt kind of small to me. Of course, it's not supposed to be a huge metropolis. The included map did help me to visualize it as being a bit bigger than say, Mayberry from "The Andy Griffith Show" but maybe not too much bigger. On second thought, being about the size of Mayberry or Smallville is probably just about right. Enough large-ish buildings for enough business to keep the city going (and keep the mob in town), enough locals to buy and sell everything, a bunch of secret places thrown in to make a mess of things once in a while and people coming through town that really shouldn't be just to stir things up a bit more. Maps of the Nocturnals headquarters, appropriately named The Tomb (this definitely isn't the Avenger's mansion), and Grimwood Cemetery are also provided. There's definitely enough to fill your plate but there's also room to add on some more if you like.

Beyond Pacific City is one of the longer sections of the book coming in at 22 pages and it gives more details about where Doc came from and also lots of information about the other inhabitants of the campaign. Other local cities are described but not in the same detail as Pacific City along with other groups of good and bad guys. One constant is that pretty much everyone that's not your standard beat cop or high-school kid has some kind of horror theme to them. Horror may not be the best word to use here. Spooky might be better.

Next up is a Nocturnals story in comic book / graphic novel format. Reading about them in the background text was very informative but it was great to "see" them in action and get a little better feel for how they interact with each other.

I'm going to jump ahead to the last section of the book for a second where all of the stat blocks for over fifty characters are presented. All of them are easy to read, as you'd expect.

Ok, we're going backwards to look at *Freaky Talent* and *Carpe Noctem, Nocturnals 101*. In these two chapters we're given great information for players and GM's. For players, we find altered versions of each of the Nocturnals in case you don't want to play Doc Horror but want to play something similar. In that case you can suit up as Professor Raincrow. Each of the Noc's have an alternate version that has at least some resemblance to the origi-

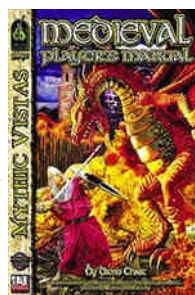
nals on which they are based. A full-blown character generation process is also presented which was welcome. Twenty-Two new feats are also found here along with many guns. Yes, guns. Two pretty significant changes from your regular super hero campaign, other than being much spookier of course, are that guns are a very present addition to nearly everyone (hero/villain/regular) but the average Power Level is also lower. Think of starting out in the PL6 range instead of PL10 and don't be surprised if some of the really reality-altering powers are not allowed.

Carpe Noctem is something of an inspirational section where you'll find out how to make the setting your own but still keeping it true to its origins. Everything from pulp fiction to cheap westerns to 50's horror movies is here and each has a place in Nocturnals. Sure, there are (and should be) horrific themes in a Nocturnals campaign but I didn't really think of this setting as "Call of Cthulhu meets the Super Friends". Sure, there are lots of Cthulhu throwbacks here. Of course, there are chainsaw wielding maniacs running around the streets. Damn right, the hellish and damned come out at night to wreak havoc, but this just didn't strike me as a blood 'n guts setting. You could certainly splatter someone's insides all over the outside like in Friday the 13th or A Nightmare on Elm Street and that would be ok if that's what you want but I got a much more Nightmare Before Christmas feeling from Nocturnals.

VALUE

Even though this setting is pretty far removed from your standard

M&M game I liked it a whole lot. If you're a Nocturnals fan I think you'll like the book without the game and if you're an M&M player you'll probably like it because it's tied to an awesome super hero game and definitely lives up to Green Ronin's mighty high production standards. What's missing? Well, to be honest a mini-adventure would have been nice. The inclusion of the comic was very nice, but I'm not entirely sure if it suitably took the place of a starting adventure. Earlier I mentioned two ways to use Nocturnals in M&M and indicated that I also had a third way so here it is. Pacific City and their residents (pretty much all of them) could easily be dropped into a d20 Modern game where your PC's investigate the strange, bizarre and unusual. This book has great cross-platform appeal for me and I can highly recommend it. What do I want to see next? How about a Mr. Monster or Elementals supplement for Mutants & Masterminds. Yeah, that's the ticket!



Medieval Players Manual by Green Ronin Publishing is a 128-page soft-cover supplement for d20 fantasy campaigns that retails for \$22.95 USD. The book presents information necessary to set a campaign in a fantastic medieval Europe.

BASICS

Medieval Players Manual includes six chapters and an appendix. The first chapter presents the historical medieval world. The second covers an alternate magic system specific to the setting, including new classes, monsters,



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Two or more players slip into the role of one wizard each, creating and controlling creatures by weaving spells. The one managing to destroy his opponent's protective shield wins. It is possible to attack your opponent(s) with huge masses of creatures, because spells are casted every turn ...

<http://www.Magic-Challenge.com>

and magic items. Chapter three covers divine powers, classes and relics. Chapter four covers other classes based on the church, including new classes, while chapter five covers royalty, including historical characters. The last chapter covers general medieval culture - peasants, towns, nobility, law and some non-royal characters.

ANALYSIS

The Medieval Players Manual is designed for GMs who want to set their campaign in medieval Europe - specifically England. No, not a Tolkien-type fantasy world, but the historical medieval Europe. Yes, we're talking about having your party walking around the streets of Medieval Paris, or Antwerp, or Rome!

This, of course, is a significant change from your normal d20 settings like Faerun. The first chapter addresses the general differences - specifically covering religion, women, race, historical accuracy, and magic. In addition certain character classes aren't supported - the Druids and Rangers are right out since they are based on natural magic and the monk class is definitely based on oriental monks instead of their occidental counterparts.

The second chapter takes the magic angle and builds upon it. There are three groups of magic as practiced in ME Europe - Alchemy, Astrology, and Astral Magic - these are your scholarly magic types. In addition, there is the natural magic of folk charms and the spirit-based magic of Theurgy.

For each of these types of magic, this book presents feats, skills, and magical classes - Cunning Men, who are your village wise folk, Natural Magicians, who study astrology and alchemy, and the Theurge, who practice Theurgy and are deemed sinful by the Church. There are also prestige classes, such as the Necromancer and Theophanist.

The setting also limits what standard d20 magic can be practiced. For example, there are none of the classic wizards. Sorcerers and, with regard to their magic potential, bards are a special case and left up to the GM. There are also whole classes of inappropriate spells - anything dealing with the outer planes is out as are summoning spells. The former don't exist and the later are handled by Theurgy.

After turning magic on its head, the chapter does the same for monsters - creating a new template for "Beings of an Unknown Form" - which are not monsters per se, but earthly manifestations of spirits suspended between heaven and hell.

Chapter three does for clerics what chapter two did for wizards. First and foremost, the chapter covers medieval theology including God, creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, sin and forgiveness. On this basis, the chapter presents a new priest core class - based on the priests of the Church. On top of this are added prestige classes of the Crusader and the Templar.

Divine spells are replaced by miracles - and there are some classic d20 cleric spells which are not available. However, these are replaced with charms. And there is the Saint core class and Hermit and Mystic prestige classes which take advantage of the charms.

Finally there are relics, which replace your standard magic items. Oh, and did I mention demons and angels? Yep, they're here too.

The next two chapters present non-magical classes both royal and common. The common classes include the non-magical roles in the church, such as bishops and cardinals, as well as philosophers and painters. For the various core classes there are associated prestige classes. Chapter Four also includes some campaign guides for abbey-based and court-based campaigns.

As for nobility, there is not much given for players other than a historical timeline of England and important characters such as Geoffrey of Mandeville and Henry Plantagenet.

The books wraps up with information on Medieval culture. Here is presented peasant life, towns, governance, money, trades and crafts, agriculture, property, fiefdoms, manors and castles, chivalry, law, courts, and of course penalties. There are also some non-nobility characters of note - such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Anselm of Canterbury. an appendix listing the feats is the final part of the book.

VALUE

If you've read this far, you're probably wondering why anyone would want to play in this setting. Most all of the fantasy elements are gone - no wizards, barbarians, illusionists, or any kind of real magic. Plus, there's no really interesting sounding places - just the old familiar London and Paris.

Well, this is definitely not the setting for everyone; however, don't dismiss it too quickly. It is a low magic setting, but it really isn't England and Europe of the history books. No, this is more like the Europe of "The Song of Roland", "Beowulf", and "La Mort d'Arthur". You don't have Castle Greyskull, but you do have Chaucer's train of pilgrims. And who's to say that the Nunne Priest is not really a Theurgist and her tail is more magic than art?

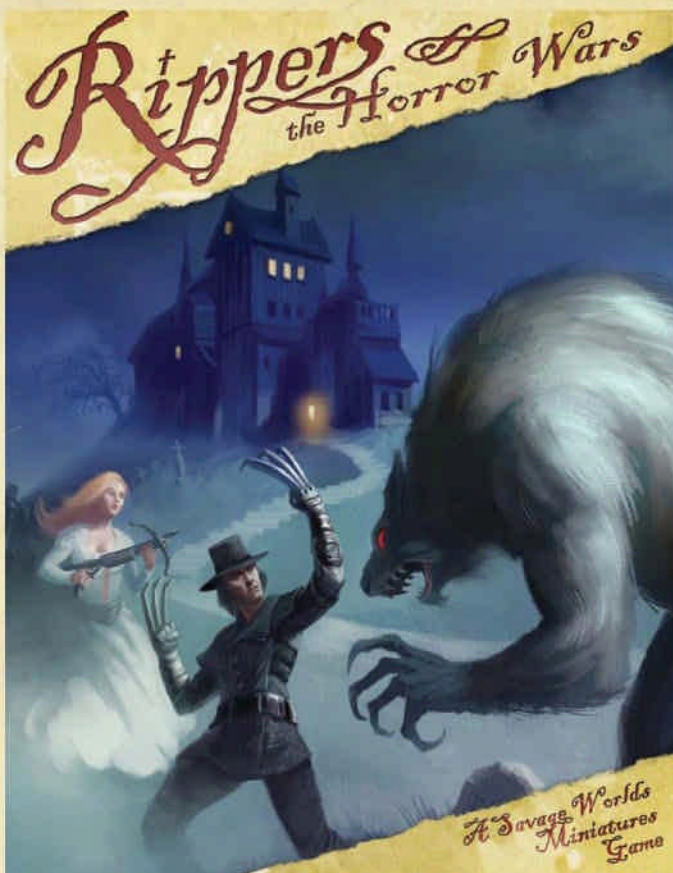
If you're interested in the history of the middle ages or you're a fan of the period romances, then what better setting is there? Also, if you're tired of the high-fantasy settings - why not try a trip through merry old England, stopping by Salisbury plain to marvel at Stonehenge and to flee from the Necromancers? Or, maybe your purse is lightened while traveling to Nottingham by a rogue and his band of men? If you're tired of the run of the mill d20 setting, come back to medieval Europe!



The latest book in the critically acclaimed 'Races of Renown' series fully details aasimar and tieflings, as well as half-fiends, half-celestials and many of their cousin races. If you've been looking for an easy way to integrate planar elements into your campaign, look no further. This is your one stop shop for planar adventuring. Bursting with new rules and options, this book gives you all the tools needed to build and play planetouched characters and to take your campaign to the planes. MSRP \$19.95

BLACK AND WHITE

Firstly let me mention the eye candy, we are treated to an absolutely stunning cover illustration and after having read the contents, I am even more impressed. In lavish colour and high gloss,



TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!

The monsters have lived among us for thousands of years, preying on the weak. The helpless.

But mankind discovered a new weapon to fight the creatures of darkness. “Dr. Jack” developed a way to tear the very essence of these horrors from their undead flesh and graft it into living blood and bones. For many years, the “Rippers” took back the night, and the hunters became the hunted.

The vile fiends of the world were backed into a corner, but under the leadership of Dracula himself, formed a “Cabal” of evil to combat those who hunted them. Their timing was perfect—for the essences the Rippers stole from their prey eventually corrupted the monster hunters. The very men who created the Rippers—Moreau, Frankenstein, and even Dr. Jack himself—went mad and joined the Cabal!

Now Abraham Van Helsing and his mysteriously adopted son, Johann, the Harkers, Witch Hunter Serious Chapel, and a handful of other stout hearts are all that remain of the Rippers. It is their lot to carry on the Horror War.

Rippers: The Horror War is a complete miniatures skirmish game. The *Savage Worlds* roleplaying game is NOT required. Look for miniatures wherever you bought this book, or at www.greatwhitegames.com.



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this opening offering comprehensively portrays the entire subject matter, both in feel and in content. The internal illustrations are of a consistently high standard, are mood setting and informative, as all good gaming illustrations should be. The incidental illustration is minimal but the layout is un-cluttered and well presented.

And so we come to the contents, beginning with a short introduction to the planes, from their many splendid inhabitants, to their multifarious interactions, archetypes and core class possibilities. This is followed by an in-depth look at our two main protagonists, namely the Aasimar and the Tiefling, their physical appearance, their traits, cultures and even their preferred character classes. There are eight other planetouched races introduced and the half-outsider Cambions and Nephilim, there is even a system introduced, for building planetouched versions of any race, even those of your own creation.

Next up are the predictable new feats, prestige classes and spells, some forty-three, nine and sixty-five respectively. Interspersed with these is a guide to planar nomenclature, encompassing planar types, planar relationships and planar travel. There are also two alternative magic mechanisms offered, for planetouched characters and NPCs casting within the planes, planetouched ancestry magic and coterminous conduits. This is followed by the, again inevitable, magic items, a broad spectrum offered here with both generic and specific items included. Fourteen new monster types are expounded upon and all the above are rounded off with Typical NPC information for Aasimar, Tiefling, Cambions and Nephilim.

GOOD AND EVIL

The cover artist is to be commended, the art director, on the other hand, should receive a smart rap across the back of the hand, for although the cover illustration is magnificent, commissioning a piece entitled Aasimar and Tiefling and producing an epic portrayal of the inter and intra-planar enmity and conflict between an Aasimar and a...wait for it...a Cambion, or more accurately an Alu-demon, is just unforgivable. This is the kind of priceless gaff I seem to collect. The aforementioned art director does redeem himself with the interior design and illustration, although again we have an anomaly. This time there are at least two of the interior illustrations whose artist does not receive an official credit. Strange but true nonetheless. One minor point, for some unknown reason I find some of the chosen typescript to be a little difficult to decipher but as I say, this is a minor point.

Yes we do have the seemingly endemic d20 typos but for once, these are not glaringly obvious and do not greatly detract from the work as a whole. One thing that is a little worrying is the seemingly wholesale repetition of information regarding the new planetouched races. Six pages from chapter one, 'Children of the Planes' are repeated in chapter six, 'Planar Perils'. It is only four or so pages, minus the illustrations, but if all such productions repeated 5% of their content I think we would all mark it as unusual.

I find the clarification of classification and the planar types and relationships quite informative and very useful. The class possibilities were a welcome guide, well argued and balanced. The new races are very interesting, opening up all manner of possible plot threads but I did find the 'guide to building your own half-breed' rather complicated and furthermore, one of the stated ex-

amples does not concur with the table provided. Which is correct? Your guess is as good as mine. Some of the multitude of feats and spells are interesting, to say the least and one or two of the prestige classes would be a worthy inclusion to a trans-planar based campaign, even as NPCs, but it did seem more like "Oh we must have a planar version of all the main character classes". There are exceptions to this and the Ethereal Pilot is, to my mind, a particularly promising example. From the new monsters I find the organ thief particularly beguiling and I shall waste not time introducing this little beauty into a campaign setting. The alternate magic mechanics are thought provoking, novel and worthy of at least a trial. The typical NPCs information was a boon, as it presents full progression charts, priceless if you do wish to include these exotic and esoteric personalities into your campaign world.

TRUTH AND DECIET

I am very wary of using such terminology but I find the planetouched and half-outsider character classes a rather exciting prospect. If you are interested in all things extra-planar, you will count this is a high value product. If, however, the inner and outer planes are new ground for you, this is a useful introduction but its true value lies in interweaving the planes into one endless gaming canvass.



BASICS

R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars: Enchanted Locations* is a soft cover book published by Fast Forward Entertainment. The front and back covers are full color while internal illustrations are black and white. This 128-page volume is a d20 System campaign setting book that retails for \$24.99.

INSIDE

R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars: Enchanted Locations* consists of 9 chapters including a preface and an introduction. The preface, written by Thomas Reid (who was also the co-author of the *DemonWars Campaign Setting*) is about the process of discovering the detailed world of Corona. R.A. Salvatore's richly detailed *DemonWars* novels are the basis of the *DemonWars Campaign Setting* and associated books.

The Introduction talks about what is needed to play a *DemonWars* campaign: The Player's Handbook, The *Dungeon Masters Guide*, the *Monster Manual*, and the *DemonWars Campaign Setting*. The introduction also includes a bridge adventure which is really an adventure concept for incorporating the *DemonWars Enchanted Locations* in your world. All of the following chapters include the following sections: Introduction, History, Today, Layout and Bridge Adventure.

The first chapter is entitled St. Mere-Abelle. St. Mere-Abelle is a monastery and home to over 900 monks. It is considered the single most important religious site of the Abellican Church in all of Honce-the-Bear. It is also the largest repository of the precious ring stones, the magical gems that fall from the heavens as proof of the one deity's favor upon the Abellicans. This serves to remind us that in the land of Corona, magic is scarcer than other locales in the D&D world.

The second chapter is called Andur'Blough Inninnes. It is the

mystical valley of the elves of Corona. Andur'Blough Inninnes - "The Forest of Cloud" in the language of the Elves is home to about 100 of the Touel'alfar. The bridge adventure in this chapter is an outdoor adventure, naturally.

Chapter three is entitled The Barbacan. The Barbacan is a place of unspeakable evil and miraculous good. It is a mysterious mountain setting with unpredictable weather and even more unpredictable encounters. The Barbacan is the original home of the Demon Dactyl, from whom the DemonWars saga is named. The adventure in this chapter includes a classic dungeon crawl with underground tunnels and tombs. It also includes a few significant outdoor encounters and a magic weapon to be found.

The next chapter is called Tymwyvenne. It is the home of the lost race of elves called the Doc'alfar. These elves are dark-haired compared to their fair-haired cousins the Touel'alfar. The woods surrounding Tymwyvenne are one of the most mysterious and dangerous places on Corona. Very few travelers that enter the area live to see their homes again. The woodlands are swamp-like and filled with monstrous undead and a guild of shaman who create hordes of undead to kill or capture unwary travelers.

Chapter 5 is entitled Path of Starless Night. The Path of Starless Night is a long and winding maze of tunnels, warrens, caverns and even worked halls that stretch for miles beneath one of the largest mountain ranges on Corona. As a matter of fact, the Path is the only method to travel from one side of the range to the other. Among the inhabitants of the Path is a Gargantuan Dragon, a village of powries and many other creatures.

The last chapter is called Walk of Clouds. Walk of Clouds is a monastery of the Jhesta Tu, mystics of Corona. The locale sits high on the sides of a narrow gorge. It is a series of cliff dwellings built into the very sides of the mountain. The inhabitants are a peace-loving people who prefer to convince their enemies of the truth of the Jhesta Tu way rather than fight them. But the monks of Walk of Clouds are formidable fighters indeed. The appendix is a compilation of the creature summaries found throughout the book.

VALUE

This tome is a necessary addendum to the DemonWars universe. While the original campaign setting was indeed interesting, it did not have enough fully fleshed-out locations or detailed characters to enable a dungeon master to create an interesting campaign. That has all changed with this book. There is enough detail in this book to keep a party busy for years. This volume provides so much detail, very little in the way of adventure creation is required. Previous reviews of the DemonWars Campaign Setting mention a disturbing lack of magic in the environment. That is an issue that is not resolved with this book, but there is more than enough detail in the Enchanted Locations volume to ensure quality gaming for months and months.



BASICS

R.A. Salvatore's DemonWars: Gazetteer is a soft cover book published by Fast Forward Entertainment. The front and back covers are full color while internal illustrations are black

and white. This 128-page volume is a d20 System campaign setting book that retails for \$24.99.

INSIDE

R.A. Salvatore's DemonWars: Gazetteer consists of nine chapters including an introduction. The introduction talks about how to use the book and discloses what can be found in each chapter. Each chapter is about a different race or human nation within Corona. The Chapters are all formatted to include the following information: Regions, History, Outlook, Society and Culture, Relations with Other Races, Equipment, and Magic and Lore. Most chapters include a sample settlement of some sort suitable for use by Dungeon Masters looking for locales in which to set adventures.

The first chapter is Goblins. Like the Goblins in D&D, these creatures are of smaller stature with little combat ability or intimidating presence. What they possess in abundance is a willingness to do evil for the sake of evil and sheer overwhelming numbers. Goblins have several special weapons and a few new feats, which are fairly interesting. The most interesting feat is Incredible Dodge, a +3 dodge bonus against a single foe in combat.

The next chapter is Powries. Powries are the Dwarves of Corona. And they are not your father's Dwarves. They are evil and hold most other races in contempt. They wish to be the supreme race on Corona and it is the Humans that have provided the most resistance to that goal. There are a few racial traits, feats and items listed in the book, but none worthy of mention here.

The third chapter is Elves. There are two different races of Elves: the Touel'alfar and the Doc'alfar. The Touel'alfar have fair-hair, bright, golden eyes and possess wings. The Doc'alfar have dark hair and eyes and are without wings. There are many racial feats available to Elves. The Touel'alfar wings are usable and several feats revolve around their use. There are extended descriptions of the magical abilities of the Elves, too numerous to list here.

The next chapter is Giants. Giants as a whole are a large, brutish race. Just like in D&D, there are several sub-species of giant. They worship the Demon Dactyls and will act on their behalf whenever asked. They lust for vengeance and warfare. Giants rarely have magical abilities and rely on brute strength to defeat their foes. Accordingly, there are few magical abilities available to giants. There are several magic items though and they are formidable indeed.

The next three chapters are of Humans. The chapters are divided into regions. The first region is Alpinador. Alpinador is a remote and forbidding northern region. Population centers in this region can rarely be classified as cities, but are more like villages. While Southern Alpinador is more densely populated than the northern section, because it is such a difficult region in which to scratch out a living, the warriors are hardy and capable. Alpinadorans are considered barbarians by humans in other more sophisticated regions. Throughout Alpinadoran history, the use of magic has always been associated with evil. Therefore there is a total lack of magic in any form in this region. An Alpinadoran would rather die than be healed by magic; would rather die than be aided by magic and would never willingly use magic in their

own defense.

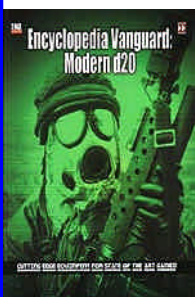
The sixth chapter is Honce-the-Bear. Honce-the-Bear is the most advanced and powerful of the human regions. It is possible to experience all climates within this country. Communities range from small rural villages to large cities. The largest of these cities is Ursal, which is also the seat of the king. The population of Ursal contains three distinctions: Royalty, the common men and the Abellican Order, the clerics of Corona. All magic and equipment available on Corona can be found somewhere in Honce-the-Bear. Humans receive no special racial traits or feats and there are no specific equipment or weapons listed for this region.

The next chapter is Behren. A land of nomadic wanderers and desert oasis kings, Behren is a theocracy disguised behind a simple outward look. A nomadic existence is required to survive in this dry, barren land. The city of Jacintha is both the religious and political capital of the country. It is ruled by Yakim Douan, Chezru Chieftain and God-voice of Behren. It has been ruled so for 850 years. The explanation for this is interesting and contained within the text. There are several specialized equipment items and racial feats available to humans of this region.

The last chapter contains brief descriptions of several other creatures including Centaurs, demons, Magma Wights, Mountain Yeti, and several others. These descriptions are of a more general nature. The applicable monster could probably be adapted from its Monster Manual counterpart, but it is not included in this tome.

VALUE

This is a very valuable book if you are interested in the DemonWars Campaign Setting. The *DemonWars: Enchanted Locations* book (also reviewed in this issue) is another great and necessary book if you are interested in this setting. Unfortunately, I have realized that without these books, a campaign set in this environment would have to be almost entirely created. This book adds much needed detail in the creation of a fully-formed campaign and is a necessary addition to a Dungeon Master's library.



BASICS

Encyclopedia Vanguard: Modern d20 (EVM20) is a soft cover book published by Fast Forward Entertainment that describes the groups involved in the ongoing real-life war on terror and the equipment, weapons and vehicle systems that they use. It sports a night-vision (ish) cover and grayscale interior art that is computer generated. A \$24.99 USD price tag accompanies this volume.

INSIDE

EVM20 is broken into eight sections (Intro, US/Allied Weapons, Terror Weapons, US Special Ops, Foreign Terrorists, Munitions, Chem/Bio Weapons and Tables). I was kind of surprised to find information on Night-Vision and equipment and Laser Rangefinders in the introduction but I definitely learned something from reading about them, including d20 Modern game rules for them that will translate into any modern campaign, not just a military one.

The next two chapters have weapon and vehicle descriptions that range from the M16 (assault rifle) and M9 (semi-automatic pistol) all the way up to the M1 Abrams (Main Battle Tank) and the Nimitz (Aircraft Carrier). The weapon/vehicle stat lines are familiar and easy to read and the computer generated graphics are crisp and well done and have sort of a technical-manual appearance in my eyes. To be honest, I don't see many modern games needing the stats for a Nimitz-class carrier but it's in there if you do. On the other hand, having a missing (or rogue) M1 tank as the objective for the group could work itself into a very fun scenario. The Terror Weapons Systems section is almost half the size of the US/Allied one but it is done in the same format; name, picture, up to a couple of paragraph description and a stat line. Out of all the vehicles I think the lighter ground vehicles and helicopters will be the most useful and can be used in any modern campaign setting. I have a vision of an Ogre-Rambo hanging out of a Black Hawk helicopter firing a heavy machinegun and blowing the crap out a bunch of terrorists.

The US Special Operations Forces chapter comes in at just two pages and served to whet my appetite more than satiate my hunger. A couple of paragraphs each describe the Army Rangers, Army Special Forces, 160th SOAR, SEALs, Marine Recon, Air Force Spec Ops and Delta Force and while these briefs are well done they didn't give me enough. I think that information on running a campaign using one of these groups as your PC's or some prestige classes would have been awesome, but unfortunately it's not in there.

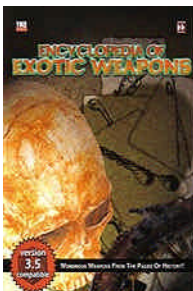
The Chapter on Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) was similar in presentation to the US Special Operations Forces but I see this chapter's function completely differently. It should be, and is, an overview of almost 40 organizations that the US has identified as FTOs. I didn't expect prestige classes here and wouldn't have really wanted them. Yes, I know we're all playing a game here but I'm very glad that information about how to play a member of the IRA or al-Qa'ida was left out. Will someone who wants to do this work it out on their own, of course. Again, I saw no reason for it to be included here and I'm glad that Fast Forward did the same, or at least didn't have room for it.

The last three chapters (Munitions, Chem/Bio Weapons and Tables) give some more technical specs on the munitions that some weapon systems use. The Chem/Bio section give a good breakdown of some of these nasty agents in d20 Modern terms. It's not exhaustive, but it didn't really need to be. It covers the more well-known stuff like Anthrax, Smallpox, Sarin and Chlorine (and others) well. The tables do a lot of "summing-up" of the previously read weapons and is a nice addition.

VALUE

While it does contain good information on terrorist and the military forces that combat them I found the book as a whole to be less useful than I had expected, for my d20 Campaign anyway. Everything presented in the book was well done, but kind of left me wanting something more. Like the section on the US Special Forces. At two pages it gave a nice brief overview of each of them but no Prestige Classes or maybe some campaign ideas on how to run a Delta Force campaign. Also, any kind of a mini-adventure would have been welcome. The section on Foreign Terrorist Organizations, however, was quite good in my eyes and will prove as a good starting point for a GM that wants to have

their party of heroes go up against some of these real-life evil-doers. If you're running an Urban-Arcana modern campaign then I'm afraid that you're not going to get a lot of bang for your buck here. If you're wanting to start off a modern campaign in the real world fighting real enemies then you'll want to take a look.



BASICS

The Encyclopedia of Exotic Weapons is a full size softbound book that sports over a hundred new weapons for d20 RPG games. The book is 128 pages with each weapon normally being given a full page of description. Simple pen and ink drawings accompany the description of each weapon and the cover is adorned with a full color cover. The book is published by Fast Forward Entertainment and is 3.5 compatible.

All of the weapons provided in the book are actual weapons gleaned from history. The periods of history that these weapons come from are widely varied going from ancient times to relatively modern pre-industrial times. In addition to the weapons and their descriptions, *The Encyclopedia of Exotic Weapons* has a short section in the front where there is an introduction to the book and how the entries are laid out, additional rules are introduced, three new weapons categories are given, a new skill, and five new feats. Most of the new rules, skills, and feats are related to weapons that use gunpowder. The book's retail price is \$24.99 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The one hundred seven weapon entries (and by the way, over a dozen of these entries detail more than a single variant) are organized in alphabetical order. A very detailed Table of Contents in the front makes it a breeze to find any particular weapon you are looking for. The entries themselves are organized in a way that I personally like. First there is the general description giving a physical description and some general facts about the weapon giving you an idea of what part of the world and perhaps what time period the weapon is from. The second part is the historical description. Here, more detail is given describing when and where the weapon was used and by whom. Sometimes it even goes into why the weapon was developed in the first place. The third section gives the fantasy background of the weapon. Here a possible history is presented to allow the weapon to fit easily into any RPG game that is based in a fantasy setting. Included in the background are the races that use it and parts of the world where this weapon might be found. This section I thought was a lot of fun to read and have to give the authors credit for a job well done. For many of the weapons the fantasy background also includes enchanted versions of the weapon that again are well done. I found myself wishing that they had added even more. The last section of the entry gives details concerning game rules that apply to the weapon for those weapons where there are additions or modifications to the normal rules.

After all of the weapon entries, there are several pages of tables. The tables are broken up into weapon types light-melee, one-handed, two-handed, ranged, gunpowder, and siege & cannon weapons. In addition there are a few small tables for reloading time, crew requirements and siege engine construction. The tables are more than a little useful, as I don't know how we would have survived without them. Speaking from experience, if you

glance through the tables some of the entries you will more than likely want to look up and read to see why some of the numbers seem out of place (for instance there is one sword that has unremarkable characteristics, but has a price tag of 5,000 GPs!) I thought it was a typo, but after reading the entry for the weapon, found that it was indeed accurate.

The one thing that you will either find of concern or as a pleasant surprise is the presence of gunpowder weapons. Somewhere close to a quarter of the weapons presented in the book use gunpowder. The guns in this book are nowhere near the quality of modern firearms and are along the lines of the blunderbuss, flintlock, and matchlock for the most part. However since gunpowder may not be in the run of the mill fantasy RPG game, a decision will have to be made whether or not to allow its introduction into the game. I will say that having these weapons is not exactly free of risk. Included in the book are fumble tables for gunpowder weapons, and if you fumble with one of these things there is a chance that it could ruin your whole day (for example, let's say a cannon decides to explode in you face).

VALUE

This book is well done and easy to use. It has something for gamers and an extra something for history buffs like me. But whether or not you might be interested in dropping the money for this book is a toss up. When push comes to shove, although the weapons in the book may be cool and fun to add here and there, I can't see that there is a whole lot of value added to your average game. The one aspect of the book that I can see being of definite value is the gunpowder weapons, since rules and tables for their use might be completely new to some fantasy campaigns. However, it is those very sections that would also be the least used by GM's that do not wish to add gunpowder to their world just yet. I guess the bottom line for me would be deciding if you were interested in using gunpowder weapons. If the answer is yes, then I believe you would find this book very useful and worth the cost. If the answer is no, then I think the it's usefulness would be limited, and thus not make it to the top of my "to buy" list unless of course you have a special flare for the exotic.



Published by Fast Forward, the "Book of All Spells" is 448-page soft-bound source book for d20 fantasy games. The book contains an alphabetical list of spells from the d20 core rule-books as well as other sources. It will set you back \$34.99 USD.

BASICS

"The Book of All Spells" is just that - a big book of nothing but spells. Did I say this book had spells? Anyway, there are both arcane and divine spells - and a lot of them. There are lots of spells and then, there are more spells. I've not seen this many spells since the grand international spell convention where all the spells were listed - and this book has more. This, by the way, is a book of spells. Lots of spells. Yep, there are a lot of spells in the Book of All Spells.

ANALYSIS

The book is broken down into two major portions - and introduction which lists all the spells by core class, level, and for Sorcerers and Wizards, by school. Spells from the Players Handbook are listed in normal type, and spells from other sources are listed

in Bold Face. In addition to the PHB, "The Book of All Spells" includes spells from:

Encyclopedias Arcane... by Mongoose Publishing

Illusionism
Elementalism
Enchantment
Battle Magic
Chronomancy
Constructs
Shamans

Quintessential... by Mongoose Publishing

Cleric
Druid
Paladin
Witch
Wizard

Complete Monstrous... by Fast Forward Entertainment

Fighter's Compendium
Undead Compendium
Wizard's Compendium

And also from Fast Forward Entertainment

Cloud Warriors
Encyclopedia of Demons and Devils II
Devils Player's Guide

From Alderac Entertainment Group

Dungeons
Evil
Gods
Good
Undead
Mercenaries

From Sword and Sorcery Studios

Relics and Rituals

From Sony Entertainment

Everquest Role Playing Game Player's Handbook

From Paradigm Concepts

Forged in Magic

From Bastion Press

Spells and Magic
Villains

From Fantasy Flight

Spells and Spellcraft

In short - this book has tons of spells that are not restricted by license.

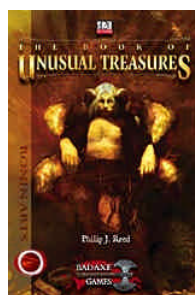
After the first section comes the meat of the book - the alphabetical listing of spells. The back cover says that there are 1,700 spells in here. I believe them, though I wasn't about to count 'em. Each spell is presented in the "new" 3.5 format. This was the only change that the editors made to the spells they transcribed.

There is no index, but with the spells listed in alphabetical order, there's no need. A table of contents gives the pages where each letter starts.

VALUE

This book has a lot of spells in it. I don't know if I've said that before, but it bears repeating. As such, this book is not of interest to pure fighters and rogues. But, if you're a spell slinger of any kind, then this book is an excellent reference work. It had just tons of spells in it. This book is definitely a reference work - it will be used between games by GM's to create adventures and by players to advance their characters. It is too cumbersome for use during a game. Once I realized this, it made me start to wonder if publishing this in book form was the best idea.

Given that this is basically a database of spells - and a large one at that; did I say this book has a lot of spells? - it would have been better in an electronic format. In a database format, you could pop the disk into your computer and search by class, level, school, key word, component, casting time, range, target, or anything else. If you were luck enough to have a laptop, you could have it under the table for a quick look-see in the middle of a game. This book is a good value for spell slingers and GM's, but an electronic version would be a must have for everyone!



The Book of Unusual Treasures, by Badaxe Games, is a 94-page soft cover supplement for d20 fantasy RPGs that provides an immense assortment of unusual treasures, all with a retail price of \$13.95 USD.

BASICS

"The Book of Unusual Treasures" has five chapters and six appendices. The chapters focus on the different types of unusual treasures

while the appendices provide supplementary material. First off, this book is not simply a list of miscellaneous magic items like Alexander's Amazing Ambidextrous Articulated Arachnid*. This book has many mundane and magic items that are unique. Not everything here could be the object of a quest, but almost everything is interesting. The treasures are organized by type and each is presented with a short write up that covers its appearance, special features if any, and base value.

ANALYSIS

The first chapter is composed of books - mundane, spell, and special. The books range from a 600 gps mundane blank book of excellent workmanship to the special Book of Bows, which is valued at 61,000 gps for its instructions on how to craft five different magic arrow types (Arrow of Animate Dead, Arrow of Domination, Arrow of Multiple Strikes, Explosive Arrow, and Arrow of Internal Agony). The spell books provide more character than just finding a magic scroll - for example there is Sumarlidi's Workbook which includes Fire Shield, Grease, and Guards and Wards among other spells.

Chapter two is the largest in the volume and deals with arcane spell components. These are supplementary spell components; ones which are not required to cast a spell, but which add damage, range, duration or other effects to spells. Some examples are Flesh of a Drider, which can double the duration of a spell, or Dirt from a Grave, which adds a 1d4 Constitution loss to a spell's

SHE'S ONE IN A BILLION.



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effect. The spell components are subdivided by alignment and type, such as force, language, or kind.

Chapter three covers arms and armor - most of which are non-magical. What's unusual about any flavor of +2 armor? For each entry, there is a appearance description, value, special rules, as well as appraisal information. The appraisal information is meant to be used by the GM to help magnify the mystery of the unusual item. Why go to the trouble of including a different kind of breastplate if you're only going to let the PC's read about it on the label?

Chapter four presents clothing and jewelry. Yes, Virginia, there is more to treasure than weapons and gold. Like the arms and armor, these descriptions include appraisal information. There are coats, dresses, jerkins, scabbards, tunics, boots - you name it!

Chapter five ends the treasures with a miscellaneous section. This is where everything that was a book, clothing, armor, weapons, spell components, or jewelry is presented. The list includes scroll cases, other kinds of books, goblets, musical instruments - everything one would find in a Bazaar of the Not At All Ordinary.

The appendices cover information related to the treasures. Appendix One lists over sixty new spells, and one new summoned creature, that are associated with some treasures. Appendix two includes over twenty new feats - my favorite is Dwarven Mug Fighting. Appendix three presents unusual poisons and appendix four is unusual materials. The final appendix includes four new skills. The book ends with a complete listing of all the treasures by value.

VALUE

If you're a DM who likes designing your own adventures - or at least heavily editing published ones, then this volume is a must have. These items are usual, and in most cases, unique. The will add a whole new dimension to your encounters - one that until now was only present when you rolled a new item on the Miscellaneous Magic items table in the DM's Guide. Oh, if you're a player - stay away. Your DM will definitely be picking this book up and you don't want to spoil the surprise.

* Alexander's Amazing Ambidextrous Articulated Arachnid - This item appears as a heavy, brass trimmed leather backpack. It is covered with many small pockets on the outside, but does not have a single large flap. When the activate word is spoken, eight brass legs extend out from the backpack which allow the wearer to climb as if under a "Spider Climb" spell cast by a 9th level wizard. Value: 12,000 gps.



"Charge! A Military Rules Supplement" by Living Imagination, Inc. is a 128-page soft-cover supplement for d20 fantasy campaigns. The book presents rules and information for incorporating military campaigns and wars in a d20 adventure. It is published by Living Imagination with a retail price of \$19.95 USD.

BASICS

The book includes three new base classes - the Soldier, the Mariner, and the Monarch. To these classes, it adds thirteen new prestige classes - Bounder, Centurion, Chaplain,

Conquistador Cossack, Cuirassier, Dragoon, Gurkha, Housecarl, Keshik, Lancer, Landesknecht, and Trench Fighter. To round out the character class chapters, there are over fifty martial feats for both soldiers and sailors. With the characters out of the way, the book turns to a treatment of warfare in a fantastic setting. Chapters in this section include Magic in Warfare, Culture and Economy in Warfare, and Presentations of War and Tactics. The final chapter addresses the role of player characters on the battlefield.

ANALYSIS

"Charge!" is not a set of miniature rules that can be incorporated into a role-playing game. It is not a "Warhammer" or "Warmachine". If you are looking for that, there are plenty of other supplements and systems out there. No, "Charge!" is something completely different. It sets out to capture the feel of a war or a campaign season for a role playing game. This book is written for the Role Player who doesn't want to get involved in a tactical miniatures game - one who would rather live the story than move the models. The purpose of "Charge!" is to make warfare more important to player characters and to make the player characters feel that they are part of a Grand Armee.

The authors have done an excellent job of analyzing ancient and medieval warfare and how a fantasy setting would affect things. Incorporating historical armies into a fantasy setting can quickly result in a relatively low level character wiping out entire regiments of troops with a simple Fireball spell. Something more is needed to keep a siege the size of Helm's Deep from becoming a trivial encounter. While the authors have provided quite a bit of information on martial classes and prestige classes, the real value of the book is in how they have handled war in a fantastic realm. For example, there is a detailed discussion of permanent fortifications and how they would function in the fantasy world. While you might imagine your castle to look like Neuschwanstein (<http://www.hohenschwangau.de/323.0.html>), what does it matter to a high level Druid with a ready Rock to Mud spell?

The chapter on Magic and Warfare not only addresses these issues, it also provides new spells - pre-battle rituals such as Mass Magic Weapon or Teleportation Guard. Who wants a Conan wannabe to appear in the midst of the Praetorian Barracks? In addition to the military arts, the book addresses the unique social aspects of a d20 game and how they affect armies and warfare. For example, what is it like to serve in a Lawful Good army? Or, for that matter, a Chaotic Evil raiding force? Though not romantic to movie makers, logistics play an important part of any campaign - either military or role play. How does one feed an army of dryads and treants? Is there a Miracle-Gro (R) Commissariat among the camp followers?

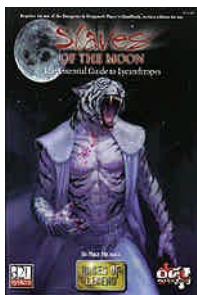
There is also the society that exists in an army on campaign. The dark alleys of an ancient city pale in comparison to the debauchery and evil available in the train and tents of the camp followers. If your player characters are part of an army, fighting the enemy may be the small part of their adventures - there are the harlots, the pimps, the black market, and worse. Finally, the book takes a close look at actually running battles in a way that is more narrative than tactical. A way in which the PC's have a role to play, but they aren't the Manhattan Project of the Roman Legion equivalent.

VALUE

I've been playing RPG's for decades. The romance of the War Against the Darkness has always sparked my imagination but I've never had it successfully incorporated into a campaign. Either the PC's wiped out the enemy's army single handedly, or the troops were simply spectators as the PC's fought the Necromancer or Demon Prince. Sometimes I would try to convert the PC's into table top generals, but then the limitations of the table top game would remove all the character from the characters.

The authors of "Charge!" obviously had this same experience. The difference, however, is that they saw a third option - and that is what they have presented in this book. For both players and GM's who wish to have their own "Battle of the Five Armies" or a fantastic version of "Austerlitz", this is the one must-buy supplement of the year.

"Slaves of the Moon: The Essential Guide to Lycanthropes" is 96-page soft cover supplement for d20 fantasy campaigns that provides rules and background for different lycanthropes. It is published by Paradigm Concepts and has a retail price of \$19.99 USD.



BASICS

"Slaves of the Moon" provides a detailed description of lycanthrope player characters. The shape changes included in this volume are Werebears, Wereboars, Wererats, Weretigers, and, of course, Werewolves. In addition, there are 13 Prestige Classes, new feats, magic, magic items, and lycanthropic magic items. There is also information about the various cultures of the lycanthropes, lycanthropes and

the moon, as well as how to include lycanthrope characters in your campaign.

ANALYSIS

Inga: "Werewolf!"

Dr. Frederick Frankenstein: "Werewolf?"

Igor: "There."

Dr. Frederick Frankenstein: "What?"

Igor: "There wolf. There castle."

-- "Young Frankenstein"

The introduction to "Slaves of the Moon" gives a quick historical overview of lycanthropes in myth and legend - from the romantic werewolf through the more obscure Polynesian man-shark. The term "lycanthrope", of course, refers to werewolves but Dungeons and Dragons has historically used this to refer to all manner of man-animal shape changers. This volume uses the D&D meaning of the word.

The first part of this volume covers the culture of the different lycanthropes types in detail. This includes information on the culture, their history, philosophy, organization, as well as religion. Quite a bit of thought went into this part of the book - as each type has its own feel - from the noble guardian Werebear (like Beorn in "The Hobbit") to the secretive Wererat (like Master Splinter of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles").

This initial information is then used as the basis for the various Lycanthropic characters. Lycanthropic PC's are obviously more

powerful than their "normal" comrades. As such, the different types are presented as a character class rather than a template or a prestige class. The innate abilities of the lycanthrope are gained through level advancement. This is done rather than using the Effective Level mechanism employed in other D&D manuals. Probably the central aspect of the lycanthrope PC is how he gained this ability. "Slaves of the Moon" presents three different mechanisms. The first is the common affliction method where the character has contracted and adapted to the Lycanthropy disease - I guess they didn't "stay off the moors!". There is also the natural lycanthrope - where the ability breeds true like in the movie "Underworld" as well as the tainted bloodline where only certain offspring have the shape changing ability. The GM is free to choose which of these would best fit into the campaign.

After dealing with the genesis, "Slaves to the Moon" presents the abilities common to all lycanthropes followed by details on each class. After the base classes, the volume gives prestige classes; some are available to any lycanthrope, such as the Bestial Warmaster, while others are restricted to one of the types, such as the Emerald Claw for Weretigers. While the base classes are interesting, it is the prestige classes that really build upon the background and society presented earlier in the book. After the prestige classes, there is a list of twenty-five lycanthrope specific and general feats - from Armored Shapechange and Feral Rage to Material Transform and Reduce Size.

Then the ticklish issue of Magic and lycanthropes is addressed. I say ticklish because how does a werebear cast spells with verbal and semantic components when in bear form? After addressing this issue, "Slaves to the Moon" lists twenty-four new spells for and against lycanthropes. Not surprisingly, there are quite a few Druid spells in the mix. The character section is rounded out with a discussion of magic items for and about shape changers.

Most of "Slaves of the Moon" is directed at players, but the last sections are for GM consumption. No, its not super-secret information, but it is a frank discussion of how to incorporate the lycanthrope into the campaign as players rather than monsters. Topics covered include the lycanthrope's role in society, how they interact with the humanoid races, as well as the perils and pitfalls of including them in a campaign.

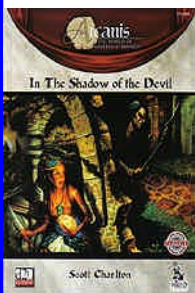
The book ends on the Moon and how it effects lycanthropes. Various magical powers or general effects are provided so that the "Blood Moon" is something more than just a really colorful lunar event. My advice is to hide.

VALUE

Man, what other review will you read this year that has references to "The Hobbit", Polynesian mythology, "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles", numerous werewolf movies, and a Mel Brooks movie?

Along with Vampires, Werewolves and similar creatures are the most popular gothic monsters. There are movies, books, and quite a bit of information for RPGs. This book is not exhaustive - there are quite a few man-animal hybrids that are not covered - but it does an excellent job of setting up the lycanthrope PC and integrating it into the d20 system.

If you're a fan of Lon Chaney Jr, then I highly recommend this book. For those who are looking to add a gothic feel to their campaign but are tired of more vampires, then this book is an excellent way to do that. And, in closing, I'll just quote Warren Zevon - "I saw a werewolf drinking a pina colada at Trader Vik's - and his hair was perfect!"



BASICS

"In the Shadow of the Devil" is a 80-page soft-back d20 fantasy adventure for 4 to 6 players of sixth to eighth level by Paradigm Concepts, with a retail price of \$17.49 USD. If you are a player who may be going through this adventure, please go read another review. This will be a spoiler rich review.

SYNOPSIS

A party of adventures are hired to insure the delivery of a valuable present to a royal wedding. The present is delivered and then stolen, so the party follows after the thief. Hot on the trail of the thief, the party soon learns that all is not what it seems. Hounded by vampiric forces, the party learns that the present is actually a key to an ancient ritual which will defeat the growing evil power.

DETAILS

"In the Shadow of the Devil" is set in the world of Arcanis, described by the "Codex: Arcanis" also published by Paradigm Concepts. This adventure is the second module in the "Coryani Chronicles" series.

Over half of the book is dedicated to supporting information for the adventure. This includes 4 detailed maps, 6 fully documented NPC's, 5 new monsters (including a new vampiric monster), a new prestige class, new magic items, new weapons, and new rules. In addition to all of these, there are full descriptions sites and denizens of the town of Dhakavaar as well as for the sites of interest in the adventure.

The adventure is laid out with two kinds of encounters - hard points and soft points. The hard points are the pivotal and required encounters. The soft points flesh out the adventure or provide interesting diversions for the players. Depending on your time and interest, this adventure can be stretched out over many sessions, though it will take a minimum of three to cover all the hard points if you're going for an average role-playing kind.

And this is definitely not a "hack and slash" adventure - it starts out as a simple guard job but quickly turns into a horror story. Good role playing and atmosphere can make this a much more interesting adventure than just killing vampires.

The vampires in this adventure are not your typical "LeStat" undead. They are more lupine than normal. Careful attention to the differences of the Ekimu from regular Vampires can keep the players from knowing what they are facing too soon. Personally, I'd play up this angle and try to give the players the idea they're facing an invisible Vampire faction and an apparent lycanthrope faction. Personally, I can't leave a printed adventure alone, I've got to tinker with it.

Though set in the world of Arcanis, the adventure can be adapted to almost any campaign. "In the Shadow of the Devil" fits in

tightly with the Arcanis world, so it will take some work to adapted it. Given the amount of world detail that fits into the surrounding campaign, the more time spent "wiring " in this adventure, the better it will be.

The end of the adventure is final - there's really not a continuing threat or story line. However, there is enough information here to build a continuing story, if you're so inclined. You could also play the other modules in this series.

VALUE

This is a detailed adventure that has a good hook and twist to it. The change from a simple guard mission to a horror story line can make for an interesting adventure for a normal d20 campaign. If you're running a long-term, epic-scale campaign, this would be a good diversion. Or, if you're looking for a short, self-contained adventure as a break from other gaming, this is an excellent choice.



BASICS

Doom Striders is a 128-page soft cover book by Bastion Press for D&D 3.5 that brings lumbering war machines of magic and metal to your campaign. It's color cover depicts two of these mighty machines in combat with the rest of the normal sized army coming in from the distance. It will cost you \$22.95 USD to bring these giants to your game.

INSIDE

Doom Striders is broken up into five chapters (Campaign, Construction, Combat, Captain & Crew and Allies & Adversaries) and an introduction. The intro is a quick two pages that starts to set the stage for the incorporation of mechanized walking war machines into your D&D game, but the Campaign chapter (coming in at fourteen pages) is where you (as the GM) will be able to get your players into some really heavy metal. The easiest ways to incorporate Doom Striders is to have your players form a mercenary unit that hires themselves out to whomever can pay their fees (of course they could also be more restrictive in whom they sell their services to) or working directly in the service of the military of wherever they call home that happens to employ this new technology.

Doom Striders can vary in size from medium all the way up to colossal, with those on the smaller end of the spectrum really being worn like an oversized suit of armor (albeit, a considerably powerful suit of armor) and the larger ones being large constructs that are crewed by multiple operators. The construction section, about thirty pages, was a welcome read for me (an old Car Wars number cruncher) and did a good job of detailing how to put together one of these bad boys. When building a strider you'll first select a type of construction material and a torso size torso depending on how large you want the final construct to be and how many crew you want to need to operate it. Medium, large and huge striders have space for 1 crew each and I expect them to be the most playable in the smallish skirmishes that are prevalent in most D&D combat situations. Construction materials can range from Adamantine to Necrotic Tissue and each has their own benefits and place in the game depending on the background of your party or the armed forces for which they might be working. Limbs are then selected (legs, arms and tails) depend-

ing on the size and how many weapons you want to be toting around. Then it's on to armor and defenses; stuff like ablative shielding, energized armor and a reinforced infrastructure, and then choosing a set of controls and miscellaneous equipment. Of course, you'll need to pick an energy source (arcanofurnaces, prayer engines, vampiric harnesses and more to choose from) and then kit it out with weapons before marching off to war.

Of course, the real reason that you're putting together a strider, or multiple striders, is to go kick some ass so as you'd expect the combat chapter is next. Unlike the constructs in Warmachine, Doom Striders are piloted and doing damage to the machine also impacts the wearer (or pilot). They are not lumbering expendable hulks. If one or more fighter types in your party are wearing single crew striders then it is most definitely them, and not some summoned (or built) construct that will be wading into the ranks of the enemy. Sure, they'll be putting heads to bed, but they are by no means indestructible. You'll be keeping track of two sets of hit points (captain/wearer and the strider itself). The strider's hit points will be a multiple of the captain's/wearer's so I don't expect to see legions of standard goblins running around in lots of big metal gobbo suits. Of course, a goblin hero might be able to convince his chieftain to put him into one, but the rather considerable expense and technical expertise that is required is likely to preclude tribal societies from using them. Hit point multiples range from 1 to 8 times those of the captain/wearer. Combats involving a Doom Strider will not be overly difficult to manage for a player controlling a single character but might bog down if you're playing out a session where all of the PC's are suited up and are confronting a similarly armed/armored enemy force. Of course, we're treading into wargame territory now and a dose of heavy tabletop combat can be a nice departure every once in a while. Several new feats, three skills and two new prestige classes (Doom Strider related of course) are presented in the Captain & Crew chapter, which takes up seven pages. The eighteen pages that make up the Allies & Adversaries chapter detail six Doom Strider units of various sizes (number of characters and size of their machines) and philosophies (from seeking the destruction of all magic users to dungeon exploration to blood-thirsty mercenaries). The book ends with 23 record sheets for existing striders and blank sheets for you to use to build your own.

VALUE

When I first paged through Doom Striders I got the thought of Adeptus Titanicus crossed with Dungeons & Dragons that wouldn't immediately go away. Even with the varying size of striders I still had this feeling after reading the book in greater depth. I liked the technological advances here as I didn't find them to terribly upset the fantasy elements that most of us are used to but if you're a strict sword & sorcery purist you might be put off. I was not. In fact, I would not be opposed at all to one of the fighter-types in my D&D campaign to suit up. All of them would be a bit of a stretch for me though. The artwork on the inside is mostly very nice with the actual strider pictures being the best of what's in there. This is one of the rare books that I've seen where artwork on the inside is better than that on the cover. I'm surprised that a battle scene featuring more of the medium-large-huge striders fighting amongst standard sized troopers was not used. I ended up liking this supplement and will definitely offer it up for inclusion in our game, but a sticking point is going to come up in regards to miniatures. Of course, your first thought is

probably the same as mine and that would be to bust out some Warmachine figures and that's a very reasonable solution unless Bastion Press decides that they want to put together more elaborate tabletop rules and produce miniatures to go along with it. No, I'm not suggesting that is what is (or is not) taking place, I'm just saying that it would be pretty darn cool and with miniatures being produced for some existing Bastion Press creatures already in the works, who knows?



BASICS

Man & Machine: Cyberware (M&M:C) is the most recent sourcebook for *Shadowrun, Third Edition*. It's an all encompassing look at advanced cyberware and implants for your Shadowrunner. The 160 page, softback book is part compilation of out-of-print material, and part new and updated information. As with the other recent Shadowrun releases from WizKids and Fanpro, the book is glossy covered, with black and white interior art. It retails for \$24.99.

INSIDE

M&M:C compiles previously published material from the following books: *Shadowtech*, *Cybertechnology*, *Neo-Anarchist's Guide to Real Life*, *Corporate Security Handbook*, *Cyberpirates*, *Lone Star*, *Renraku Arcology: Shutdown*, and *California Free State*, all updated for 3rd Edition where necessary. Additionally, there is a decent amount of new material. The subjects covered are:

Cybertechnology

The first and largest section of the book, Cybertechnology, lists all the types of cyberware available, rules for their use, and what it costs in Essence and NuYen to acquire them. There are close to 100 different enhancements, including cyberlimbs that can be upgraded without further Essence cost. Additionally, the Essence concept is defined.

Cybermancy

This chapter covers the biological, technological, and arcane methods required to exceed the Essence limits of cybertechnology, and still remain alive. Exceeding the limits allows more cyberware than would be normally possible to be installed, but the costs and penalties are severe, and detailed here.

Biotechnology

Rather than mechanical upgrades, this section covers flesh upgrades. How to get, how to use, and the costs of enhanced flesh parts are all covered. There is also some information on the major players in the implant business.

Nanotechnology

Unlike portions of the previous and following sections, this subject is new to Shadowrun. Everything you need to know to include molecular machines in your character is detailed. The concept, history, sources, uses, and gear are all covered, as well as some reasons why (or why not) to use this stuff.

Chemistry

This section is dedicated to drugs, gases, chemical weapons and gear, poisons and toxins, explosives, and magical chemical compounds. Additionally, rules for addiction and chemical dependency are included, just in case some shadowrunners cross the "better living through chemistry" line too often.

Damage & Healing

As you can guess from the chapter title, this section is all about the effects, both short and long term, of damage to cyberware,

bioware, and physical bodies. The concepts of Stress and Wounds, as they relate to installed devices, are discussed, as are advanced rules for healing, doctoring, optional damage, and first aid.

Surgery

The final section deals with the environments and trials associated with cyberware and bioware upgrades, surgical necessities, and emergency medicine. There is a good amount of background information on how various grades of surgeons operate, from the exclusive and illegal, high tech, black clinics to the emergency services of a DocWagon.

VALUE

Man & Machine: Cyberware is first and foremost, a rulebook, as opposed to a background sourcebook. It very functionally compiles a dearth of previously published material, from many out-of-print sources, and smoothly integrates it into 3rd Edition. Unfortunately, the efficiency that makes it a valuable rulebook also leaves it a remarkably dry read compared to other recent Shad-

owrun releases. The included backstory and flavor are all good, but quite minimal compared to the volume of rules. The information presentation is very straight forward. None of the stories, pseudo chatroom dialogs, or color commentary of other recent releases are included.

All of that said, M&M:C is a good rulebook. Runners updating 2nd Edition characters will be pleasantly surprised with the reduced Essence costs of many items now updated for 3rd Edition. The authors worked very hard to integrate all of the previously published and new information into the Essence and Stress concepts, while remaining grounded in medical reality. Most of the good selection of art is pen & drawings, rather than rendered pieces, but the majority is high quality. And finally, a point I consider crucial to a good rulebook, M&M:C has a full index and a reference appendix of tables. I'd recommend M&M:C to any potential shadowrunner or GM with even a slight interest in cybering up. Just don't expect to fill any campaigns with story details from this one.

OTHER GAME REVIEWS



"Abuse: The Final Insult" is a card game for 2 to 4 players where each tries to score points by playing the longest string of insult cards against his opponents. The box contains 80 cards and two pages of rules. Eos Press is the publisher and it retails for \$9.95 USD.

GAME PLAY

Each player has a starting hand of seven cards.

The object of the game is to be the first player to empty your hand. The other players score points for the cards in their hands. At the end of 5 rounds, a standard game, the player with the lowest score is the winner. The top card on the deck is turned over and the game begins. Each turn, the active player may choose the face up card or draw the one from the top of the deck. If the active player doesn't choose the face up card, then one of the other players may draw it, but then the must also draw an additional card. The cards are one of four types: Starts, Links, Specials, and Ends. Each card has a numeric value on it. These are used when totaling up penalty points for the round. The active play may then lay down a sentence starting with a Start card and ending with an End card. Other cards may be included in between as long as the arrows on the cards all line up

and are the same color. Then, the active player reads the sentence, prefacing it with the name of another player. Finally, the active player may discard one card. Play proceeds to the left.

There are four "furthermore" cards which can be placed between and end card and another start card to string two sentences together. There are eight blank cards that can be used as Start, End or any link cards. They cannot be used as special cards, like "furthermore". When reading a sentence with a blank in it, supply your own words. "Comeback" cards can be played when a player has been insulted by the active player. The active player must pick up his sentence, put it back in his hand and draw another card. Finally, there are "one-liners" which are single card sentences - they are both a Start and an End and may be linked with a furthermore card as normal.

VALUE

"Abuse" makes for a nice 4-player party game. It is definitely meant to be played in a spirit of fun. I'd even go so far as to say that it would be more enjoyable to play it without profanity. The game plays fast and can be a nice warm up while you're waiting for that last straggler for your weekly RPG session.

FICTION

Keretaka Korporation Presents: Karetaker Security Walkers (KSW)

You're a busy Exec faced with dozens of decisions every day. The last thing you need to worry about is facility security. Unfortunately, lawless elements and corporate rivals are increasingly well-equipped and more destructive than ever. Demand has driven the cost of human security troops sky high, while the Nexus Military still refuses to release Helcat or Talos CBUs for commercial use. How can you ensure site security while meeting those tough budget goals? By using the latest cybernetic security device from Keretaka Korporation, the Karetaker®. Using a bi-

pedal chassis for maximum flexibility and mobility, Karetakers® are loaded with the latest high tech security devices, at bargain prices. There are five basic models, described below, ready for immediate delivery. Don't see the exact features that your Security Chief wants? We'll customize your Karetakers to fit your exact requirements.

KARETAKER STANDARD CHARACTERISTICS

- * Height: an awesome 4 meters, to intimidate rioters and vandals
- * Mass: 4
- * Size: 8

- * Control System: Karetaka SCM Mk I (Security Combat Matrix)
- * Chassis: Karetaka BSC Y-2
- * Armor: Iridio-Steel Plated Weave-Shell (AC-6 Soft)
- * Propulsion System: Randall-Hollings Mk XX Fuel Cell

URBAN ENFORCER (KSW-U1) (catalog #KSW-001)

Designed to handle those tough urban environments where insurgents used rooftops and upper stories to remain out of reach of security forces, until now. The Urban Enforcer has a high-angle LMG, ready to take out those vandals throwing rocks from the roof. For crowd dispersal, the Enforcer carries twin heavy flamers up front, with plenty of flame-gel. A chin mount grenade launcher can fire tear gas, stun gas, or any standard grenade payload. Our innovative auto-magazine allows instantaneous selection of grenade type. In addition to the impressive internal sensor suite, an external 300 degree sweep multi-spectral camera is mounted beneath the Urban Enforcer's cabin, to identify and record any perpetrators in the security zone.

- * 2xHeavy Flamers
- * Grenade Launcher
- * Vehicle LMG (high angle fire only)

K-SCOUT ALEPH (KSW-S1) (catalog #KSW-002)

How do you patrol the perimeter of a facility located in rough, desolate terrain? Call in the K-Scout, that's how! Carrying extra sensors to ensure immediate detection of threats, the K-Scout

has been lightened to have the extra mobility needed in uneven terrain. Armed with an LMG, the real business of the Scout is detection, with two external multi-spectral cameras, an onboard sensor suite second to none, and a hi-gain data antenna to ensure that security central gets all the data it needs to evaluate the threat.

- * Vehicle LMG

K-SCOUT BETA (KSW-S2) (catalog #KSW-003)

Faced with patrolling the perimeter of a facility located in rough terrain with special sensor requirements? The K-Scout Beta has an upgraded sensor array to meet those special requirements. Carrying an advanced electronic sensor array in the rear, the array can be programmed to detect specific threats at long range. Armed with a Chain Gun, the K-Scout Beta can handle any local threats, while using its hi-gain data antenna to ensure that security central gets all the data it needs to identify more dangerous threats.

- * Vehicle Chain Gun

K-GUNNER (KSW-G1) (catalog #KSW-004)

What happens to your facility when that rioting mob of laid-off workers comes to call? The answer used to be a burned out, vandalized facility that was off-line for months. Not anymore! Not when you can call up the firepower of the K-Gunner, the ultimate crowd dispersal Karetaker®. Four hip-mounted Chain Guns provide enough firepower to sweep the streets clean. Up front there's a flex mounted Chain Gun for selected targets. That's five Chain Guns spewing out thousands of rounds per minute. No crowd of rioters is going to stand up to that firepower. Twin external multi-spectral cameras provide solid evidence of the damage caused by the criminals before the K-Gunner provided the deadly force needed to protect law-abiding citizens and property. The K-Gunner, think of it as the key to a peaceful night's sleep.

- * 4x Chain Guns
- * Chain Gun (flex)

KANNONEER (KSW-G2) (catalog #KSW-005)

Some security problems can only be solved by massive firepower. That's when you call on the Kannoner. Using the same efficient, easy to maintain chassis as the rest of the Karetaker® line, the Kannoner has been substantially up-gunned to take care of a variety of threats. Hip-mounted Gauss Cannon provide the heavy hitting power required to take care of trespassers wearing body armor, while the LMG has the rate of fire to handle any crowds. Coupled with a chin-mounted grenade launcher capable of firing a plethora of ammunition types, the Kannoner can go from non-lethal to guaranteed deadly at the push of a button. Carrying the standard Karetaker® sensor suite, the Kannoner can also take care of routine patrol duties. Upgrade your security team and get a good night's sleep, the Karetakers® are watching over you!

- * 2x Gauss Cannon
- * LMG
- * Grenade Launcher

Karetakers®, they stay alert so you don't have to!



RPG ADVENTURE



INTRODUCTION

"Chariot of Tanith Ebar" is a fantasy d20 adventure (Very Suited for Dungeons & Dragons) for four 4th-level characters. The difficulty of this adventure can be adjusted by changing the difficulty of the encounters. See table 4-1 on page 101 of the Dungeon Masters Guide for information on how to change the difficulty.

The adventure is set near the ancient ruined city of Hue. The adventure may be adapted to any setting with a ruined city. This is a simple adventure with a twist at the end. It should be playable in a single setting either as a break between adventures in a long campaign or as a one-off session.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The party has been hired by Eregion, a famous wizard, to venture into the catacombs below the ancient city of Hue and retrieve the golden chariot of the warrior king Tanith Ebar.

BACKGROUND

Thousands of years ago, Hue was a friendly city state that had good trade relations with its neighbors for hundreds of years. That all changed when Tanith Ebar ascended to the throne. In the space of four years, Hue turned into a military powerhouse and conquered all the other cities and kingdoms for a thousand miles. After the first few fell, cities would surrender on the site of Tanith Ebar leading the Army of Hue from his Golden Chariot.

Eregion has been studying Tanith Ebar and Hue for decades and now he thinks he has the key to the old king's power. However, the wizard has grown frail over the years of study and cannot go into the catacombs of Hue. That is why he has hired the party.

REQUIRED REFERENCE WORKS

This adventure references creatures and traps from the following books:

"Into the Black: A Guide to Below" by Thomas Knauss, Bastion Press, 2003.

"Monstrous Compendium: Monsters of Faerun", James Wyatt and Rob Heinsoo, Wizards of the Coast, 2001.

"Book of Unusual Treasures", Philip J. Reed, Badaxe Games, 2004.

START

The party arrives at the entrance to the Catacombs of Hue with the wizard. The wizard gives the party the following instructions before sending them off into the depths.

"Enter the catacombs through this opening. Once inside, you should head north or south when you can and east when you

must. When you come to a domed room draped in tapestries, go down behind the stag and find the secret door to the south. Behind this door is the treasure room of Tanith Ebar and inside is his chariot. Bring it back to the entrance and then come get me. Be careful in the catacombs for Tanith Ebar was a crafty man and who knows what surprised he left for tomb robbers. Bring the chariot to me undamaged and I'll pay you each the agreed upon price of 1,000 gps. You may keep any other treasure you pick up." With that the wizard retires to the wagon to wait for the party.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Inside the catacombs (encounter areas 2 - 20) the walls are covered with a pale plaster. As it has dried, it has dropped a fine dust over the entire area. The corridors have an arched ceiling that starts at 8' and reaches a maximum of 15' high. Every 10' along the wall are torch holders but there are no torches. The doors are brass bound wood and are easily opened unless otherwise noted. There is no breeze in the catacombs and the whole area has a dry, dusty smell to it.

TREASURE AND EXPERIENCE

Suggested treasure is listed for each encounter. This is usually based on the tables from the Dungeon Master's Guide. Adjust this treasure as appropriate for your campaign. The purpose is that the party will receive equitable compensation for their time and trouble, but not much more.

Some treasures are from "The Book of Unusual Treasures". The gp value of these treasures is listed in case you don't have access to this volume.

Experience is not listed. This is left up to the DM to calculate based on his party.

ENCOUNTERS

1 Entrance (EL 0)

The entrance to the catacombs is a pit that is 3' in diameter. A simple ladder of a pole with cross-members nailed to it is stuck in the hole. The hole goes down 20' and opens into a rough-hewn circular room.

In the south-eastern wall, about 2' off the floor, is a 3' wide circular tunnel that leads off to the east. The sides of the tunnel are smoother than the other stone work. The tunnel runs eastward for 30' before turning north east for 10 more feet.

There are mining tools in this room and a spot check (DC 20) will reveal that they have not been here long. A Knowledge: Mining check (DC10) will show that the hole, this room, and tunnel that lead out of it were recently created by dwarven miners.

Treasure: None.

2 Catacomb Room (EL 0)

The tunnel opens ten feet off the floor in a 30' square room. The room itself is 20' high and the walls are covered with small niches about 4' x 2' x 1'. Inside each of these niches are cloth-wrapped skeletons.

This is the burial room of the scribes of Tanith Ebar. Each skeleton was interred with a quill pen, vile of ink, and six pages of parchment. Over the years, the pens have rotted, the ink has evaporated, and the parchment has been eaten by moths.

There are, however, 57 Ghost Weevils in and around the various corpses. If captured and return to an outfitter, these can be sold for 3 gps each. For more information on Ghost Weevils, see page 34 of "Into the Black: A Guide to Below".

Treasure: 171gps (Ghost Weevils).

3 Pit (EL 4)

Outside the burial room of the scribes is a 15' wide corridor running east. The walls were once covered with a pale plaster, but over the years, it has fallen off in places and now bits of plaster and dust cover the floor.

At the end of the corridor, where it turns south, there is a small alcove 2' from the floor. The back of the alcove is carved with a scene of a army lead by a heroic figure in a chariot.

Just in front of the alcove is a 10' x 10' x 80' deep pit that is covered with a very thin sheet of parchment. The parchment blends into the floor so it can not readily be seen.

Pit Trap (80' deep) CR 4, No attack roll necessary (8d6), Reflex Save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: 100gps in leather purse, Bag of Holding.

4 Moldy Room (EL 5)

A steeply sloping hallway leads into this octagonal chamber. When the party enters the room, they notice a significant change in humidity. The plaster on the walls here has not fallen off, but it is spotted with mold.

The floor of this room is covered in white tile which is also covered with mold. A successful Spot check (DC 15) will reveal that the mold on the tiles is always in the center of the tile. A close examination of the tiles will reveal a 1/4" diameter hole in the center of each tile.

Two brass ships wheels are mounted in the middle of the north and south walls. The purpose of these wheels is to flood the room. Turning the wheel requires a Strength check against DC 10. The wheels are equipped with a ratchet so they may only move a quarter turn clockwise at a time and may not turn counter-clockwise at all. The position of the wheel determines what happens; please refer to the table below:

Position	Result
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<u>3 o'clock</u>	A sliding stone drops over the door.
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<u>6 o'clock</u>	Water begins to enter the room through
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the holes in the floor tiles.

A trapped spell goes off

The water stops flowing in and drains away or the door opens.

Each of these events is explained in detail below.

3 o'clock - Turning either wheel to the 3 o'clock position will cause a large slab of rock to drop and block the door into this room. A character adjacent to the door when the slab starts to descend may attempt to cross the threshold (in or out) by making a Reflex save against DC 18. The mechanism that holds the door in place is very complex (Open Lock DC 30). If the second wheel is turned to the 3 o'clock position, nothing happens.

6 o'clock - Turning one of the wheels will start a flow of water through each hole in the floor. The water will rise at a rate of 1" per round. If both wheels are turned, the flow rate doubles, rising at a rate of 2" per round. It will take 300 rounds (30 minutes) to completely fill the room.

9 o'clock - Turning the wheels will fire off a bound spell. Each wheel is different. The north wheel causes a Darkness spell to be cast, centered in the middle of the room. The south wheel causes two Silence spells to be cast, centered on each of the wheels.

12 o'clock - Turning the north wheel will shut off the flow of water and cause it to drain back through the holes. Turning the south wheel will raise the stone blocking the door. Note that the south wheel won't open the door unless the flow of water has been shut off.

Treasure: None.

5 Armory (EL 2)

The stairway enters this room in the north-west corner. There is a stair leading up to a ledge along the south wall. In between are fifteen racks of various weapons, including bronze spears, kopeshes, and axes. The weapons are of good quality but are brittle (being bronze). When using one of these bronze weapons, the weapon will break when the wielder rolls a natural 1. Each of the weapons is worth about 1 sp on the open market and there are 100 weapons of the various kinds in the racks.

There are two Night Hunter Bats ("Monsters of Faerun", page 18) lurking against the ceiling. They will attack the party when the first member steps on the stairs leading up to the ledge. The Night Hunters will attack whom ever is on the stairs, shrieking as they dive down.

Night Hunter Bats - HD 2d10+2 (13 hp each), Initiative +3 (Dex), Speed: 10 ft (50 ft fly perfect), AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 Natural), Tail stab +1 melee (1d6), Bite -4 melee (1d6), Claw +0 melee (1d4), Frightful Presence (Creatures with less than 2 HD within 30' of screaming Night Hunter must make a Will save DC 10) or be shaken for 5d6 rounds. A shaken character suffers a -2 morale penalty to attack rolls, checks, and saving throws); Fort +4, Reflex +6, Will +0, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Spot +5; Multiattack.

At the top of the stairs is a 10' wide ledge which ends in an iron bound door on the east. The door is stuck and will require a bit of

effort to open (DC 15). Note if the party attempts to open the door and fails, then the wight and ghoul at 6 will be alerted to their presence and will have surprise on the party.

Treasure: 100 sps of ancient weapons, 80 gps in a small scrimshawed ivory chest; chest is worth 10 gps.

6 Decaying Antechamber (EL 4)

The corridor leading away from the armory is made of the same decaying plaster. At the end of the corridor, is a small antechamber 20' x 20'. The plaster has completely fallen from the walls and domed roof, giving a dusty coating to piles of rotten furniture.

Rooting through this furniture are a wight and a ghoul. If the party was able to open the door in the armory on the first try and came down the hallway without a light source, then the party will surprise the wight and ghoul. If the party did not open the door on the first try, then the wight and the ghoul will hide and be ready for the party and will surprise them. The wight will hide just inside the south corridor and let the Ghoul attack before jumping in.

Ghoul - HD 2d12 (13 hp), Initiative +2 (Dex), Speed 30 ft, AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), Bite +3 (1d6+1 & paralysis) melee, 2 x Claws +0 (1d3 + paralysis), Paralysis (Fort. save DC 14 or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes), Create Spawn (Humanoid slain by a ghoul but not eaten will rise as a ghoul in 1d4 days unless a Protection from Evil spell is cast upon the body), Undead (immune to mind-influencing spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, or disease. Not affected by critical hits, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage); Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5, Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7; Multi-attack, weapon finesse (bite).

Wight - HD 4d12 (26 hp), Initiative +1 (Dex), Speed 30 ft, AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 Natural), Slam +3 (1d4+1) melee, Energy Drain (Living creatures hit by a Wight receive 1 negative level. Recovery FORT DC 14), Create Spawn (Any humanoid slain by a wight becomes a wight in 1d4 rounds under the command of the slaying wight), Undead (immune to mind-influencing spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, or disease. Not affected by critical hits, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage); Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5, Climb +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Spot +8, Blind Fighting.

Treasure: 205 gps simple gold band (pg 56, "The Book of Unusual Treasures"), 15,000 cps in an old barrel.

7 Burial Chamber (EL 4)

The door opens into a small area (5' x 10') that is 5' below the floor of the rest of the room. A pile of rotten lumber shows that there used to be a short wooden stair here.

The room itself is 20' high and the walls are covered with small niches about 4' x 2' x 1'. The corpses that would normally be in these alcoves are haphazardly piled around the room. As the party moves into the room, have them make a spot check against the Otyugh's Hide +8. Any who succeed will not be surprised when the Otyugh erupts out of one of the piles of corpses.

Otyugh - HD 6d8+6 (33 hp), Initiative +0, Speed 20 ft, AC 17 (-1

size, +8 natural), Attacks: 2 x tentacle rakes +3 (1d6) melee, bite -2 (1d4) melee, Reach 10 ft (15 ft for the tentacles), Improved Grab (With a successful tentacle hit, the otyugh will get a free grapple check), Constriction (a grappled enemy receives an automatic 1d6 damage), Disease (A victim of a bite attack might catch Filth Fever: Fort DC 12, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d3 temporary Dex and 1d3 temporary Con), Scent, Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6, Hide +5/+8, Listen +6, Spot +9, Alertness.

Treasure: 370 gps Tentacle Ring (pg. 56, "The Book of Unusual Treasures"), 18,000 cps in a barrel.

8 Greater Throne Room (EL 3)

The walls of this room are not covered in plaster, rather they have been faced with marble. The columns are sheathed in brash, engraved like the trunks of trees. There is a heavy marble throne with jade inlay at the western end of the room (300 pounds, 2,500 gps base price).

A successful listen check (DC 15) will note a moaning sound coming from the far eastern end of the room. A Walking Dead (see page 45 of "Into the Black: A Guide to Below") will notice the party and shamble towards them. An unsuccessful listen check will result in the party being surprised by the advancing monster.

Walking Dead - HD 4d13+3 (29 hp), Initiative +2 (Dex), Speed 30 ft, AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), Attack: 2 x claw +6 (1d6+4) melee, bite +4 (1d4+2 + Bite of Despair), Bite of Despair (Will save DC 14 or bitten victim imagines himself buried alive in a coffin, trying to escape. The victim will drop to the ground and start to act as if he's in the coffin. The victim will also begin to suffocate and after 2 round/CON, he must make a CON check DC10 or lapse into unconsciousness. On the second round after failing the CON check, the victim goes to -1 hp, and dies from suffocation on the third round), Darkvision (60'), Passwall (the walking dead may move through material like a Passwall spell cast by a 9th level wizard but the material is limited to that of the Walking Dead's original crypt - stone for this situation), Undead (immune to mind-influencing spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, or disease. Not affected by critical hits, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage); Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +7, Hide +4, Intimidate +2, Listen +7, Move Silently +3, Spot +8.

Treasure: 17,000 sps in two large oak chests, 2,500 gps Jade Throne.

9 Long Pit Trap (EL 4)

Outside the throne room is a 15' wide corridor running north. The walls were once covered with a pale plaster, but over the years, it has fallen off in places and now bits of plaster and dust cover the floor.

Halfway up the corridor is a 15' x 30' x 80' deep pit that is covered with a very thin sheet of parchment. The parchment blends into the floor so it can not readily be seen. Pit Trap (80' deep) CR 4, No attack roll necessary (8d6), Reflex Save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

There is a old skeleton at the bottom of the pit - one of the original miners.

WARLORD

BATTLES IN WAR-TORN TALTO

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Treasure: 105 gps black flute (pg. 57, "The Book of Unusual Treasures"), 500 gps in a leather sack.

10 Fire Pit (EL 2)

At the end of the corridor there is a door unlike any other encountered so far. It is a large brass door with a carving of a salamander on it. The door is heavy and locked (Open Locks DC10). The door weighs about 500 lbs but is worth 5,000 gps for the workmanship of the carving.

Inside the room there is another brass door in the eastern end of the north wall and a third in the center of the south wall. Both are locked in the same manner as the first door.

When the players first enter the room, they are assailed with a strong odor of kerosene. Any player failing a Fort save (DC 10) will begin coughing and having his eyes water (-2 to all actions requiring site). The odor will dissipate in 2 rounds as will its effects.

This room is 50' wide and 30' long. A successful Spot (DC 10) will show that the middle third of the east and west wall as well as the ceiling between these two parts show signs of scorching. A further successful Spot (DC 15) will reveal that the floor is darkened between these two points.

A successful Spot check (DC 20) will reveal that there is a small handle to the left of the door in the south wall. Note that this spot check has a DC 25 if it is made after the kerosene has been lit, and it has a DC 10 if made from the other side of the fire. This level will reset the fire trap. Disable Device DC 30.

The first player to step on the middle third of the room will trigger a mechanism which will pull the middle third of the floor back and ignite a pool of kerosene underneath. A successful Reflex save (DC 15) will allow the player who tripped the trap to jump off the moving floor. If the player fails the Reflex save, he will fall into the burning kerosene and take 1d6 damage per turn until he is pulled out. Any flammable materials he is wearing (i.e. cloth, paper, foot) will be consumed by this fire.

A successful Spot check (DC 15) will reveal that not all of the floor has pulled back. A small section of the floor remains - acting as a bridge across the flames. The bridge is 1' wide and runs at a 45 degree angle from one side to the other in the middle of the room.

To cross the bridge, a player must make a Balance check or a Dexterity check (DC 10). The player's armor penalty applies to the check. If the player fails his check, he can't move for 1 round; if he fails by more than 5, he falls into the burning kerosene and suffers the effects mentioned above. For each round that a player stays on the bridge after the first one, he takes 1d3 damage.

Treasure: 15,000 gps doors.

11 Pit (EL 4)

Outside of the fire pit room is a scribes is a 10' wide corridor running east. The walls were once covered with a pale plaster, but over the years, it has fallen off in places and now bits of plaster and dust cover the floor.

Thirty feet down on either side are 20' wide alcoves. There are 24 burial niches in each alcove. In each niche is a skeleton in a bronze breast plate and helmet. The breast plate and helmet are of superior workmanship, but they are brittle and they will shatter if hit by a natural 20 (and provide no armor protection). Each breastplate is worth 200 gps and each helmet is worth 50 gps.

Just in front of the alcoves is a 10' x 10' x 80' deep pit that is covered with a very thin sheet of parchment. The parchment blends into the floor so it can not readily be seen.

Pit Trap (80' deep) CR 4, No attack roll necessary (8d6), Reflex Save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Another skeleton of the original works is here.

Treasure: 200 gps in a leather sack; 212 gps Ancient Book of Prayer (pg 57, "The Book of Unusual Treasures"); 100 gp Book of Dirty Poems (pg 57, "The Book of Unusual Treasures").

12 Audience Chamber (EL 5)

The door to this room opens behind a large brass statue of Tanith Ebar. The room-side of the door is almost invisible, as the carved decorations make it hard to find.

This room is ornately furnished with brass-covered columns and marble walls and floor. At the north end of the room, in front of the statue, is an ornate marble and jade throne (300 lbs, 1,000 gps) though not as ornate as the one in the Greater Throne Room.

In the middle of the south wall is a large brass-bound oaken door. The door is hard to open, due to debris on the other side, and requires a Strength check (DC 10) to open.

Unlike the other rooms in here, this one has very little dust. In places it looks like it was swept clean. This is a result of an Ochre Jelly. When the party enters, the jelly will be covering the statue and will swing out at the first person through the door. Have the first character through the door make a Spot check against the Ochre Jelly's Hide check. If the Ochre Jelly's result is higher, then it gain surprise against the party.

Ochre Jelly - HD 6d10+27 (60 hp), Initiative -5 (Dex), AC 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex), Attacks: Slam +5 (2d4+3 + 1d4 acid), Improved Grab (Get a free grapple check with each successful attack), Acid (+1d4 damage to each hit, only affects flesh), Constrict (grappled opponents receive automatic slam and acid damage each turn), Blindsight (no negative modifiers for attacking in the dark), Split (weapon and electricity attacks do no damage; rather the jelly is split into 2 pieces with each piece having half of the remaining hit points, round down), Fort +4, Ref -3, Will -3.

Treasure: 3,000 gps throne, 100 gps in a ivory chest, 200 gps for the chest, Golembane Scarab (iron), Ioun stone (clear spindle), Periapt of Wisdom (+2).

13 Blocked Passage (EL 0)

Beyond the door is a stairway that once lead up to the surface. Now, however, it has caved in with impassible stones. Only the first few steps are free of the rubble.

Treasure: None.

14 Statues of Guards (EL 2)

A 10' wide corridor heads south from the room. 10' after the door, two alcoves open up on either side, and 10' further on is another brass door.

In each alcove is a statue of a man in full armor of the army of Hue—featuring a crested helm, great shield, greaves, and a spear. The two statues face each other with their spears at their side. Between the two statues is another pit trap!

Spiked Pit Trap - 20 ft deep. No attack roll necessary; 2d6 +10 melee; 1d4 spikes for 1d4+2 each successful to hit roll. Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: 1,000 sps in ebony chest, 200 sps for the chest.

15 Chapel (DC 4)

Just off the corridor is a temple of spartan furnishings. The walls are bare plaster and the only furniture are some low wooden benches. At the eastern end is a huge bronze statue of Tanith Ebar holding out his hands. On either side of him are four huge bronze statues of warriors like in the alcoves earlier. A successful Spot check (DC 10) will reveal that the warrior statues are actually skeletons. If anyone approaches the statue of Tanith, the four skeletons will attack.

Large Skeleton - HD: 2d12 (13 hp), Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative), Speed: 40 ft, AC 13 (-1 Size, +1 Dex, +3

natural), Attacks: 2 x claw +2 (1d6 +2) melee, Undead (immune to mind-influencing spells, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, or disease. Not affected by critical hits, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage), Immunities (immune to cold attacks, 1/2 damage from piercing or slashing weapons), Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3, Improved Initiative.

Treasure: 200 gps in skeleton's belt pouch, 212 gp prayer rug (pg. 66, "The Book of Unusual Treasures").

16 Mirror (EL 1)

This 10' wide corridor goes for 40' before turning to the west. At the juncture, a magical mirror has been placed that will perfectly reflect anything inanimate. The mirror also reflects spells (6th level and lower) back to the caster.

The party will see their reflection in the distance just as if it were someone coming toward them. When they get close, it will appear that empty close and armor are approaching them.

The mirror can only be detected as a mirror by a successful Spot check (DC 30). The mirror cannot be damaged by non-magical weapons, and any hit by a magical weapon or attack spell, will shatter the mirror into useless pieces. The mirror is mounted to the wall by a "glue" cantrip spell. This mirror would be worth about 2,000 gps if it could be removed from the catacombs safely.

Treasure: None.

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17 Tomb (EL 4)

At the end of the hall - at the lowest point in the catacombs, is a large brass door with the crest of Tanith Ebar inscribed upon it. The door itself is locked, requiring a successful Open Locks test (DC 15) to by pass. Once done, the door swings open easily.

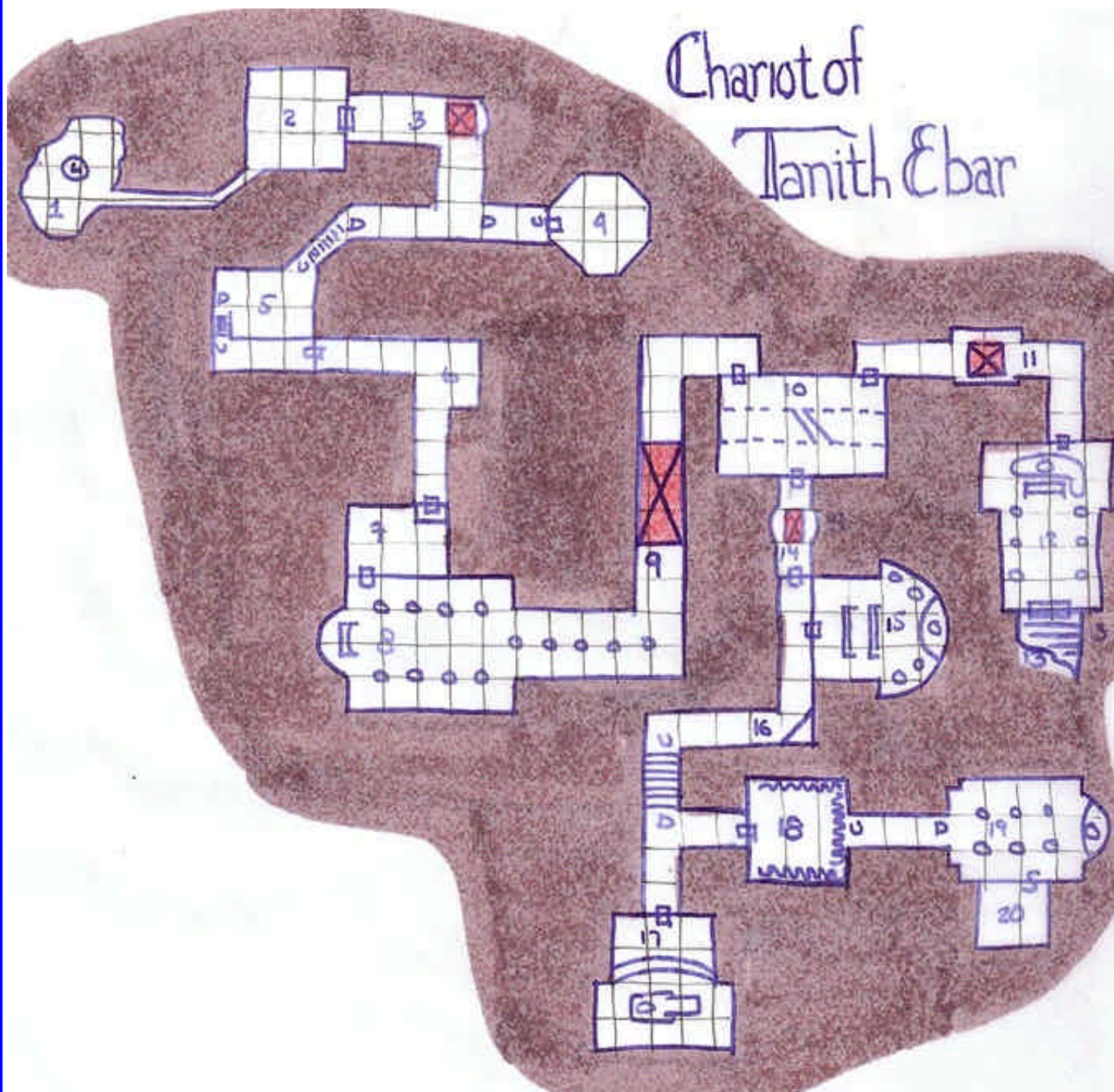
At the far end of the room is another statue of Tanith Ebar and just in front of this is a large brass sarcophagi. The sarcophagi is sculpted to appear like Tanith at rest. Both the statue and the coffin rest on a raised marble dais which covers two-thirds of the room.

The sarcophagus is actually a mimic, placed here when the catacombs were built. Tanith Ebar's body is actually in a secret compartment below the mimic.

Mimic - HD 7d8 (52 hp), Initiative +1 (Dex), Speed 10ft, AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural), Attacks: Slam +8 (1d8+6) melee, Reach 10', Adhesive (Mimic automatically grapples anyone it successfully hits. Any creature stuck to the mimic gets an automatic slam attack each round. Weapons that hit a mimic are also stuck fast Reflex DC 16 to avoid; strength DC 16 to pry it free), Mimic Shape (Successful Spot Check against Mimi's Disguise check to determine its not what it seems), Acid Immunity; Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6, Climb +9, Disguise +12, Listen +11, Spot +6; Skill Focus (Disguise)

Treasure: 100 gps in a leather purse under mimic, 652 gps Noble's Dueling Blade (pg. 48 , "The Book of Unusual Treasures).

18 Tapestries (EL 0)



This room is hung with fantastic tapestries featuring the life of Tanith Ebar, from his childhood in the streets of Hue to his seizing the throne, to his successful battles, and finally to his treacherous death by poison administered by a courtesan.

There are six tapestries, each 15' square, and worth about 2,000 gps each on the open market. Behind the two tapestries on the east wall is a 5' high, 10' wide corridor that slants down sharply for 30'. The grade is so steep that everyone must make a Dexterity or Balance check (DC 10) with armor modifiers, to keep from falling down to the bottom. The same check must be made when climbing this slope.

Treasure: None.

19 Cloister (EL 5)

This room has its walls and columns sheeted in brass. The sheeting is enchanted to make any light so bright its painful (-1 to all vision based skills and attack rolls). At the far end of the room is another statue of Tanith Ebar, this time dressed for war. When the party is 10 feet in the room, the statue will animate and attack.

Huge Animated Statue - HD: 8d10 (44), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Movement 30 ft, AC 13 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +6 natural), Slam +9 (2d6+7) melee, Reach 15', Construct (Immune to mind influencing effects, poison, disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage) Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -3.

Treasure: None.

20 Treasure Room (EL 2)

The door to the treasure room is locked (Open Locks DC 10) and trapped with a poison needle.

Poison Needle Trap - +8 ranged, (1 + Greenblood oil poison), Search (DC 22), Disable Device (DC 20). **Greenblood Oil** - Injury (Fortitude DC 13), Initial damage: 1 Con, Secondary Damage 1d2 Con.

Inside this room are various treasures (see below) and the Chariot of Tanith Ebar. The chariot is made of wood sheeted in brass. The cockpit is 4' wide and 3' deep with a 4' high barrier. The wheels are 3' around and sheeted with brass. The harness pole is 6' long and sticks directly out in front. The chariot weighs about 500 pounds and, due to its weight and shape, requires a Strength test (DC 10) to move it. Others may help, adding their Strength modifiers to the test. For each change in direction of movement, start, stop, or lift a Strength test must be made.

Treasure: 1,000 gps in brass bound chest, Horseshoes of Speed, Cloak of Resistance (+1), Pipes of the Sewers.



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FINISH

To fulfill their challenge, the party must manhandle the chariot back to room 2. It will fit through all the doors and openings up until that room. At that point, the party will find the Wizard waiting impatiently in room one. Once he sees the chariot, he will come through the tunnel and thank the party for their help. He will pull out their gold from a bag of hold he has on his hip and then take possession of the chariot.

The wizard will reach just inside the cockpit and press a secret panel. This will open a small door from which the wizard will withdraw a small scroll. He will then take the scroll, which has a map to Tanith Ebar's treasure hoard, and leave.

RPG ADVENTURE



RISE OF THE RAT KING

Man has a complex relationship with Rats. Some have them as pets, and in other countries they are common as food. Rats are the most common animals used in scientific research; with out whom countless helpful medications for man could not have been developed. Yet, rats were partially responsible for one of the most deadly plagues that wiped out nearly a third of Europe during the middle ages. From the tale of the pied piper to modern horror films, tales of these rodents fascinate and frighten us. Sometimes, that fear is well founded.

LEVELS

To organize and run the following adventure, the GameMaster (GM) needs a copy to the d20 Modern rulebook. Read through all the accompanying text and print out any of the following maps. Pay special attention to any GM characters, both their personalities and motives for non-combat characters, or any special abilities or feats for combat characters. Make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat and movement.

This scenario is a beginning adventure based for a group of 4 first level heroes. The scenario may need to be customized to fit a higher-level group or a group with more or fewer players. Text written in italics (*italics*) should be read aloud to the group. Opponent's statistics are provided in short form.

This scenario takes place in one of the poorer urban blocks of any large city. The scenario assumes that the group is working for D7, but with little modification the players could be working for any large organization or even be independent agents.

Most information provided beyond this point is not appropriate for players in your campaign reading could give them unfair advantage and potentially ruin the scenario for them.

If there are incremental skill checks for either diplomacy or gather information and the characters get a higher roll, assume that the information at the lowers checks are also available to them.

SYNOPSIS

The scenario is based on an unprecedented rat infestation in a poorer urban block of the city. Officials are slow to move, until a body shows up. Looks like the poor guy was gnawed to death. Citizens are enraged at the lack of apparent official response and violence begins to erupt. The rats aren't helping, as more bodies begin showing up. Exterminators are called in, but it isn't helping. Most are too afraid to work with the bodies piling up and those that are working, work overtime to no avail. The heroes come in to get to the bottom of this problem and resolve it before a riot begins. A balanced team of brains and brawn would best complete this scenario. Investigation will be part finding the source of this problem (so there will be plenty of room for skill

use and role playing). Fighting the rats and whatever might be controlling them will provide a couple of combat situations.

Behind the scenes of all this is the "Rat King". He is a being that shuns the world of people living on the surface, especially those who harm his precious "children". Recently he and his rodent friends have taken to theft. The first body was that of a man that discovered his larcenous activities. He was apprehensive about ordering his minions to kill at first. But the more he kills the more cavalier attitude he develops about it. He especially has no compunctions about killing the exterminators that harm his precious children.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The Characters hear about the rat infestation on the news and opt to investigate

While watching the news you hear the following:

Hello, this is Rebecca Downy Channel 5 news. I am reporting from the corner of Barron Street and Elm. We've been interviewing area residents and listening to their concerns. What has residents upset are the alarming numbers of rats invading their homes and businesses. To add to the citizen anger and resentment a body was found this morning, apparently mutilated by rats.

The characters are ordered by their superiors to investigate

Walking in with a somber look on his face. Agent Smith (not his real name of course) sat down. He is a balding man in his late forties to early fifties. At first glance he seems a fat and his plain black suit fits a little too tight, closer inspection and a keen eye reveals that he isn't. He is well muscled for his age and just plain big.

Well kids, I've got some news for ya. I know you're tired of the scenario training and textbooks. So, I've got good news. Your first mission. Don't screw it up or you'll be scrubbing toilets in the worst D7 location I can find. There's a rat infestation downtown. Some of our field agents' intel says it may not be completely natural. [He slides a folder with pertinent information towards to heroes.] The civvies are in an uproar. Investigate and if possible make this issue go away.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The heroes may decide to do some preliminary investigation before hand, or they may just jump right into the adventure. If the heroes decide to research, reinforce that time is of the essence, but some quick research (DC 15) would be available. If the heroes spend more than 3 hours researching or gathering information penalize them by -2 on all diplomacy and gather information checks for the rest of the scenario to reflect the increased agitation of the public over the rat menace. For each additional 3 hours that the characters spend increase this penalty by an additional -2. Remember that a research check takes 1d4 hours, and taking a 10 or 20 will increase the number of hours also. If the

heroes succeed, give them a +1 or +2 as you see fit in areas relevant to their research.

If the heroes requisition equipment, don't be too generous. False identification, cover uniforms, light armor, maybe a collapsible baton and a handgun is the equipment they'll really all they'll get.

A. The Alley outside of the Spunky Monkey

This is the Alleyway where the first body was found. It is littered with trash and smells horrid. There are dumpsters shared by the adjacent buildings. The Spunky Monkey is a bar attached to an apartment building, the Barren Street Apartments. The bar is a run down dive with two bouncers and 4 bartenders. A bar that traces two walls takes up most of the space. There are a few scattered tables and a raised floor that can be used for performances or it doubles, as a dance floor, as the need arises. Everywhere the Characters can hear the sound of rat squeaks, or feet scratching, but see nothing.

if the heroes search the alley they will find no little evidence that rats had ever been there (no droppings, hair, urine, or tracks except for a half paw print that has been smudges) If the heroes interrogate the bar staff no one saw anything. One of the bouncers will suggest checking with Miss Eva Green, who happens to run the Apartment building.

B. Miss Eva Green

Miss Green runs the Barren Street Apartments. It is as old as the Spunky Monkey. Fortunately for the tenets, it appears as if Miss Green takes care of the place and makes sure it doesn't get as run down as the rest of the neighborhood. Miss Green is large elderly woman who gets around fine for her age.

Providing one of the characters is polite (and makes a DC 10 diplomacy check) Green will invite the heroes into her apartment on the first floor for coffee and donuts. A spot or search check of DC 14, and the heroes will observe a large number of cartoon mouse memorabilia. A listen check of DC 18 and the hero will notice no rat noises, (strange for such a large infestation). Providing the characters remain respectful it would be possible to interview her. Note that multiple heroes can attempt to get information out of her, but each subsequent interviewer at a -4 from the previous interviewer as she is getting cranky with all the questioning.

Diplomacy check Information

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 7+ | She heard a scream last night and saw the body on the ground outside her apartment. That turned out to be one of her tenets, George Sims. |
| 12+ | She finds it strange to hear her neighbors complaining about rats, she has had any problems with them. She particularly didn't like Sims (the deceased) putting out ratttraps. |
| 17+ | She had one of her favorite tenets move out last week. He had only been there a few months, but had been so polite and kind, and seemed to genuinely like her too. Oddly enough, he always wore a large hat and kept his face covered. She assumed he had some sort of birth defect. |

As soon as they get a few feet from Green's door they will notice the rat noises again, but still see no evidence of them. If they attempt to question the other tenets, some will be frightened and others angry. The rat problem has been going on for months and only now has the city decided to do anything. Have the players make a spot check, tell the player that rolled the highest that he saw a rat out of the corner of his eye and then it disappeared. If the characters attempt to gather information from the other tenets (multiple heroes can attempt once without penalty):

Gather Info Check Information

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 8+ | Sims and the "Strange" tenant (curiously all tenants seem to use this word when speaking about him) didn't get along. "Strange" tenet spent lots of time alone and hardly spoke. |
| 13+ | Sims and "Strange" tenet argued about traps. "Strange" tenet called Sims a monster and a murderer. Sims griped out the "Freak" for breaking his traps. "Strange" tenet spent a lot of time in the Basement |
| 18+ | Sims accused "Strange" Tenet of stealing from him. An antique watch was stolen. As a matter of fact everyone seems to be missing valuable trinkets from their apartments. Nothing major, and people in this area generally don't call the police. |
| 23+ | "Strange" guys always smelled horrible and the sounds of rats were never far away from where he was. |

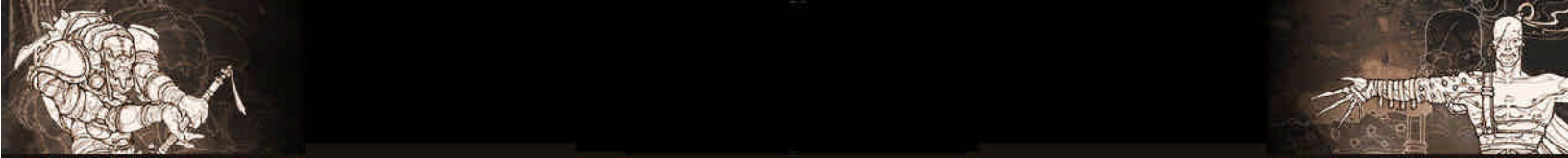
Feel free to flesh out the other tenants. Don't just present the information to the players as it is in the chart. Have GM characters reveal it to them. Checking out the apartments of Sims will reveal nothing but some old ratttraps and personal effects. The apartment of the "Strange" tenet have been reoccupied and will yield nothing either. There is some evidence that rats have been in this building (scratch marks, holes in furniture), but the heroes still haven't seen any rats.

C. The basement

The heroes should eventually decide to check out the basement. (see Basement map) If the players have trouble coming to this conclusion give them a bit of incentive, they may finally see an actual rat run into the basement, or maybe Miss Green ask them to retrieve something from the basement for her, be creative. When they arrive, they will see that it is a mess. There is shredded newspaper, tattered bits of cloth, and even dead leaves everywhere. (On a DC 17 Int check the heroes will realize that these are rat's nests).

As you enter the dank and smelly basement you notice that the whole area is illuminated by a single naked light bulb. The floor is covered in refuse. Shredded paper and cloth, even some dead leaves and what can only be described as trash litters the floor.

Each hero may make a single opposed spot or listen check, against the rats (+14) hide and move silently(+4). If the characters fail they will notice the swarms of rats when they step on them. Either way as soon as the heroes are aware that the basement has rats they will hear the basement door close and lock (normal house lock) behind them. They will then hear some squeaks and chittering from behind the door and the rats will go



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into frenzy, attacking the characters. There are 4 swarms in the basement, one at the foot of the stairs, one at each drain, and one on the farthest side from the heroes. The stats for a rat swarm are at the end of the scenario.

The heroes don't have to defeat the swarms; they can break down the door to the basement (hardness 5, hp 15) or find another way out. If the heroes defeat the swarms and search the basement (DC 15), they find in the basement many broken rat traps, some of the items that tenets were missing from their apartments, and a strange looking metal tag. If the heroes perform any research on the tag they will find that it is a common tag on drainage pipes running through sewers.

D. Downtime

After leaving the area. What happens over the next 24 hours is up to the characters. Do they inform the city that the rats a most likely coming from the sewer? (If they do be sure to give them an XP reward) Do they research the "strange" tenet? (If they do they won't come up with anything) Do they requisition more equipment to enter into the sewers themselves? (Make sure when they requisition equipment not to be too generous. A couple shotguns and handguns is all they'll get as far as weapons if they didn't requisition them in the first place. Be more generous with other items like: flashlights, pepper spray, two-way radios, chemlights, etc.). Either way in 12 hours the city begins sending exterminators into the sewers. This leads to a bigger mess as exterminators wind up dead and the infestation seems to grow worse with every passing day. As for the area immediately surrounding the *Spunky Monkey*, the rats appear to have vanished, to noises have stopped and the nests in the sewers have been abandoned.

E. Into to the trenches...er sewers

With the death toll rising. The Heroes are being pushed to resolve this as soon as possible. News reports will show riots erupting, and clashes with police will be common. Meanwhile the Rat King has scaled up his operation. He has given up on stealing from the tenets of the *Barren Street Apartments* is now stealing from jewelry stores and Pawnshops. Either on the radio or television they hear the following spot for the evening news.

Tonight at 6 on TBC 5 hear about the growing rodent problem and the outrage of local citizens. Also at 6, from our own Chuck Brown an investigative report into the Health risks associated with eating imported foods. Donna Lynn speaks with local shop owners about a string of burglaries at local pawn and jewelry stores that happened overnight that has detectives stumped. Entertainment reporter Becky Murray interviews director Jaime Vu on his next trilling action movie.

If the characters look into the burglaries, it will quickly become apparent that it is the work of the rats, i.e. nothing over a pound in weight stolen, no human DNA evidence, and rat droppings at the scene of the crime. Smith will then encourage the Heroes to investigate the area where the last exterminator died.

The heroes search will send them traveling deep into the sewers.

After an hour or so of searching the area and traveling deep under the city. By your reckoning you are 20-30 feet below street level. This is a fairly modern sewer system with computerized controls every 100 feet or so. There is red lighting every 30 feet,

but the red lights only illuminate about 4 feet around the light. You hear some faint squeaking ahead of you. You follow the squeaking as it gets louder and you hit a dead end in the drain you are in. The drain is about 8 feet in diameter. The area is covered in the trash that has settled here.

For a listen check (DC 15) the hero will notice that the noise is coming from above. On a spot check (DC 10) the will notice that part of the trash heap is fairly solid (it has a base that is 5 feet long, it is about 3 feet wide, and 4 feet tall) that appears too large to have been washed here. If the heroes step up onto the piece of concrete and search (DC 15) they will notice that part of the ceiling is false. And there is a trap door above them leading to the old sewer system. If the players don't find the trap door on their own, tell them that their investigation has led to a dead end. After a few hours back at D7, have Smith tell the characters to report on their progress. After listening to their report, he will tell them about the old sewer lines and scold them for not being more thorough.

F. The Old Sewers

The Old sewer lines are much different from the new ones. There are rats' nests everywhere. There are no red lights; the only light is what the characters provide. It is dusty and the drains are covered in cobwebs. The rat noises are quite loud, but they still don't see any. The heroes may see one out of the corner of their eye or some glowing red eyes from some dark inaccessible place. As the players turn a corner as they are searching the old sewers they see a lit area down the hall. The sewer map represents the lit area. From outside the lit area it appears empty and the rat noise is quieter as they approach it. The lit area is accessible by a round entryway. After all heroes have entered the lit area (from the left), a metal door will slide in locking the heroes in the area. At the exit on the right they will see thousands of red eyes peering at them in the darkness. Seconds later 6 swarms of rats will come in to attack. The rats will enter from the top right corner of the map (crossing the water). There is a mechanical switch to open the door (Spot DC 15 to notice) between the steam vents. Four swarms will attack the heroes and two will go to the switch to defend it only leaving the switch after being attacked. The switch is broken and a repair check (DC 15) will repair it. After 5 swarms are defeated, if any other swarms remain they retreat. After 5 swarms have been defeated:

The red eyes begin disappearing, the shrieks of rats is almost deafening. There are a lot of small splashes coming from the far room as well as a faint low cloud of dust.. In the distance you can hear screaming, you faintly make out "Murderers, Murderers, you will pay".

If the characters investigate the room ahead of them (where all the red eyes were) they will find a few pieces of jewelry and hundreds of small holes where the rats would have escaped. Also a search check (DC 14) will reveal two medical kits with enough equipment for one use out of each.

G. The Trap

The Rat King is furious now, not only is his base of operations being compromised but also his precious children are dying by the hundreds. The Heroes should notice no more rat noises. The Rat King decides to make his final play before he makes his exit. He is dropping hints (i.e. loot from the thefts) to guide the heroes

into his lair to spring a trap. It should be obvious that the Rat King is leading them into a trap. The heroes may want to rest up a bit and heal before the final confrontation. When they arrive in the Rat King's lair it looks almost identical to the room the fought in before.

You arrive in the lair of the rat king. It is a room not unlike the one you fought in previously except there are rats' nests everywhere and in the opposite corner from where you enter is the Rat King. He is dressed in rags from head to toe, and he has a wide brimmed hat covering his face. He sits on a primitively fashioned throne; the throne appears to be made of trash and scrap metal. There is a tattered lanyard hanging from the ceiling beside him. He snarls at you.

"So you are the ones who have caused me so much trouble. You'll pay for your meddling, murderers"

At that the Rat King leaps up and pulls the rope beside him. He runs through the door, as soon as he crosses the threshold, two giant rats enter the room. Then he slams the gate shut and locks it. Dire Sewer Rats are savage looking creatures at least 4 feet long, not including the tail. They have matted black fur with fleshy pink tails, their eyes glow red, and drool leaks from their vicious maws. They take one look at the heroes and glance at one another and pounce into the attack.

The heroes can try to make a break for it, but the Dire Sewer Rats can out run them with no problems. After each rat is down to 2 hit points they will attempt to retreat into the water, where there is a drain there they can swim into to escape.

CONCLUSION

If the heroes go searching for the Rat King they won't find any trace of him. They will find a large portion of the items that were stolen, but still can't find about 1/4 of it. Agent Smith will congratulate them on a successful mission. Within a few hours the rat problem has subsided to normal levels. So what happened to the Rat King, well the answer to that question can be a whole adventure.

NEW CREATURES

Rat Swarm

A rat swarm is a swarm of 15-20 rats. Depleting the hit points of the swarm doesn't kill all rats in the swarm, just enough to make them ineffectual as a swarm. Swarms will exist due to over population, Summoning, or a Control: Rats FX type ability.

Rat Swarm (Tiny Animal, swarm); CR1 HD 3d8 ; hp 10; Init +2; Speed 15'; climb 15'; Defense 14 touch 14, flat-footed 12(+2 size, +2 dex); BAB +2; Grap N/A; Attack: swarm (plus disease); Full Attack: swarm (plus disease); Special: Disease, distraction; Face/Reach 10'/0'; Special Qualities: Half damage from ballistic, slashing & piercing weapons, low-light vision, scent, swarm traits; Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2;

Skills: Balance +10, climb +10, hide +14, Listen +6, Spot +7, Swim +10

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse (swarm)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary, Pack (2-4 swarms) or infestation (7-12

swarms)

Combat

A rat swarm seeks to surround and attack any prey or food source it encounters. It will avoid humans, Fire, and loud noises unless controlled. (As the swarms in this scenario are.) A swarm deals 1d4 points of damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever—swarm attack, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 12 Will save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Wisdom-based.

Skills: A rat swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Balance, Climb, and Swim checks. A rat swarm can always choose to take 10 on all Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. A rat swarm uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb and Swim checks. A rat swarm has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line

Dire Sewer Rat

Dire Sewer Rats can either be scientific experiments gone wrong, visitors from another world, or a prehistoric creature from our own world that has avoided discovery. These creatures are omnivorous scavengers, which will retreat unless controlled or defending their nest. A Dire Sewer rat is about 5 feet long (8 feet with tail) and weighs 150-300 pounds.

Dire Sewer Rat CR3 (Medium-size Animal); HD 3d8+3 ; hp 16; MAS 12; Init +3; Speed 40'; climb 20'; Defense 15 touch 13, flat-footed 12(+2 natural, +3 dex); BAB +2; Grap +2; Attack: +4 melee (d6+1, bite) Full Attack: +4 melee (d6+1, bite); Special: Disease ; Face/Reach 10'/0'; Special Qualities: low-light vision, scent; Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2;

Skills: Balance +3, climb +12, hide +8, Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +12

Feats: Alertness, Toughness, Dodge, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary or pack (2-10)

Advancement 4-5 (Medium); 6-10 (Large)

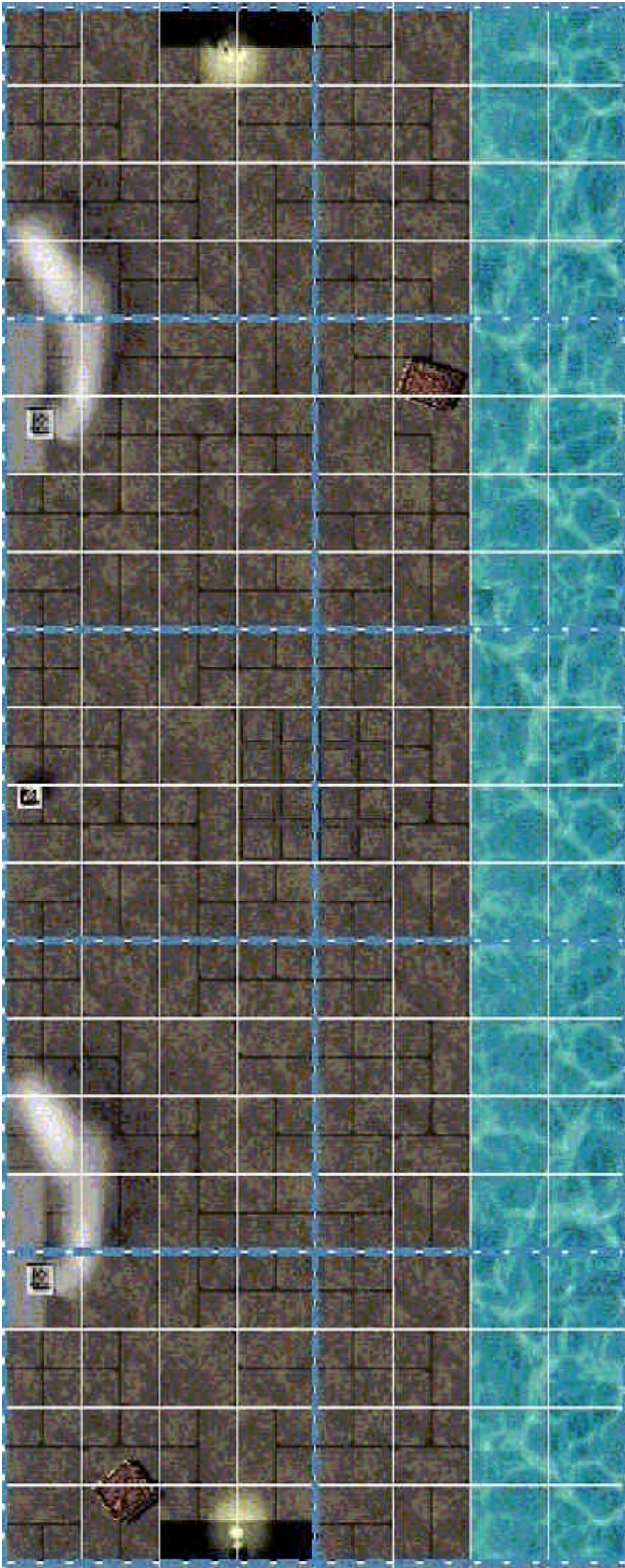
Combat: unless controlled or defending its nest the Dire Sewer Rat will avoid combat with creatures it does not view as food. When attacking, members of a pack will simultaneously attack different targets in hopes to overwhelm its prey.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever--bite, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

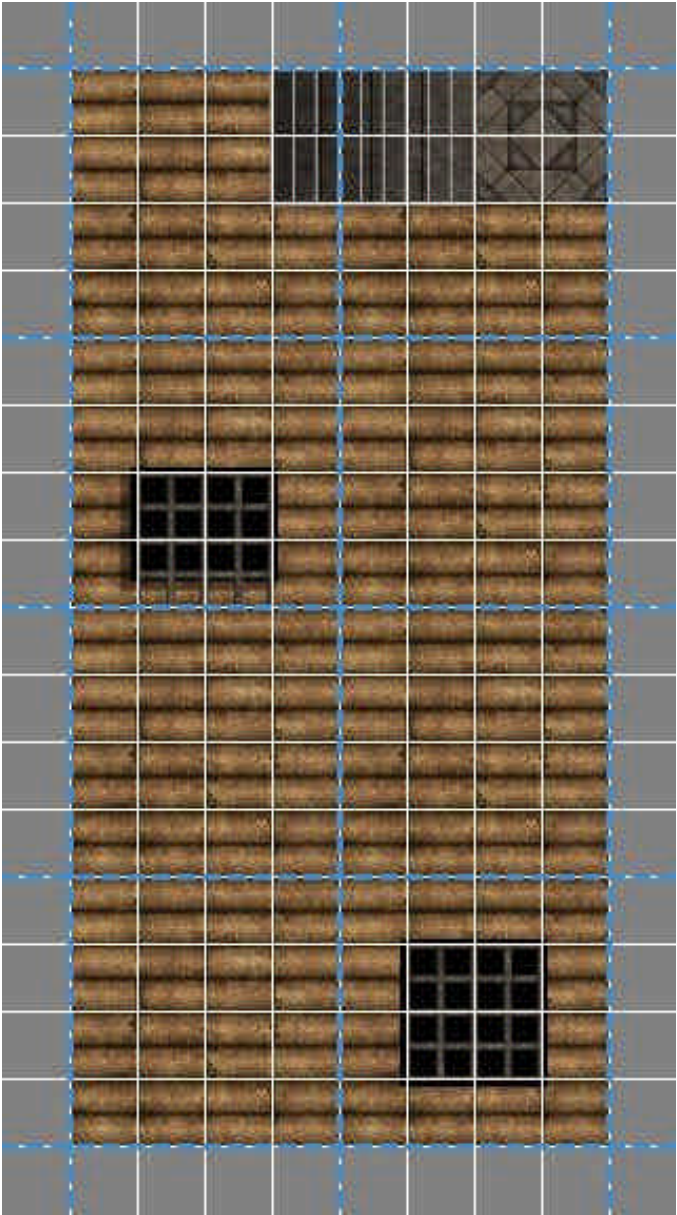
Skills: Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks. Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Dire rats use their Dexterity modifier for Climb and Swim checks.

SEWERS



BASEMENT



WARGAME REVIEWS



BASICS

Savage Worlds Showdown is Pinnacle/Great White Games rules for competitive tabletop skirmish wargames in their Savage Worlds settings. It is an 18-page (including cover, two pages of templates and one “what’s next” page) free PDF (2.03Mb) download that is available from their website (<http://www.greatwhitegames.com>)

THE RULES

If you’re already familiar with the Save Worlds RPG then you’ll also already have an idea of how things work in Showdown. Also, if you played the Great Rail Wars miniature game you’re also already a bit ahead of the curve when it comes to learning the rules for Showdown, but we’re not talking about a game that reads like a technical manual here so it won’t be too much of an advantage, it will just be more immediately familiar to you. All figures have traits (stuff like Agility and Strength) which have a die type assigned to them based on how good, or bad, you might be in a particular area. A die that has a higher possible roll is best. When trying to carry out an action you roll the appropriate die and compare the result to the Target Number (TN) that was required to succeed. TN’s start at 4 and are modified based on the situation at hand. If you max out your die roll you get to roll again adding your new result to your previous roll. Wounding is also pretty easy to take care of as it’s a simple comparison of stats (along with a die roll) which appear on your unit cards. The basic meat of the rules takes up just four pages and this covers the turn sequence (using a deck of cards), how to resolve actions, combat, damage and morale.

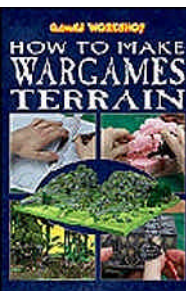
There are eight pages of “Special” rules which cover things like spells, vehicles, and combat options like Called Shots and Firing Into a Melee. Everything in this section added to the game but did not really raise the level of complexity beyond the basics presented in the first couple of pages. Vehicles get four out of these eight pages but still didn’t seem cumbersome. Of course, they are not detailed like in Car Wars either so if you’re expecting that level of detail you’re looking at the wrong game here. The magic and vehicle rules are all built around the fast paced and easy to jump into premise of the whole system.

VALUE

Ok, so what’s missing? Well, troops, characters, vehicles to name three. The game will be supported through the release of scenarios, which contain troop cards, on the website. I’m all for free releases so this is a great thing, but having enough out there fast enough to keep people interested might be a problem. Right now, there is one scenario release that has rules for troops from the 50 Fathoms game; pirates, octopons, etc... Since Showdown is supposed to be a set of competitive rules that will work across the board I’m hoping for two things in the near future. First, the release of more scenario booklets/unit cards. I figure that a Showdown booklet for each Savage Worlds book will come soon as well as a quick porting of the Great Rail Wars unit cards too. If you can’t wait for Pinnacle/Great White to release scenario books you can find a Java based troop builder in their forums and you

can also find some Savage Worlds build rules in the download section of their website. I’d doubt that any home-brewed units would be tournament legal though unless you are hosting the tournament and building all of the units yourself as the GM. Second, I’m hoping that units from one scenario/world will be balanced against ones from another, completely different world. Having gunslingers from the Great Rail Wars square off with futuristic cyberpunks or spaced-out aliens would be cool indeed.

As far as overall value goes, Showdown rates pretty highly, primarily due to it being released as a free rule set that provides an easy way to throw down a skirmish game that is not overly complex but still allows for tactics, strategy and maneuvering. If you want a highly detailed game that boils things down to the n^{th} degree then Showdown is not for you. Another thing that I liked quite a bit from their first scenario booklet is the inclusion of model standees that you can print off and use if you don’t have appropriate miniatures or don’t really want to invest in more. It’s definitely worth downloading and taking for a test drive.



BASICS

How to make Wargames Terrain is a 128 page full sized soft cover book put out by Games Workshop. It is basically a reference book on how to build a large variety of terrain pieces that can be used in most any tabletop wargaming scenario. The terrain types, understandably, are geared towards Games Workshop products, but terrain is terrain and it can obviously be used with any game and even has non-gaming uses (like model railroads and such). The scale of the vast majority of the terrain shown is in the 28mm range and the examples are mostly restricted to fantasy settings and science fiction settings. But again, the techniques shown are pretty much the same for any scale (though some of the raw materials might differ somewhat) and/or setting. The entire book is typical Games Workshop high quality paper with color pictures brimming over on every page. The book covers the basics for building just about any kind of terrain feature you can imagine, and plenty of ideas for things you may not have previously imagined. In the back there is even a series of inspirational pictures of different terrain types (some of the pictures being from the sets used the Lord of the Rings movies). There are also short sections on building materials and tools that a terrain builder might need. The book’s retail price is \$25.00 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

One of the advantageous aspects of this book is that it appeals to both the beginning terrain builder and the experienced terrain builder, though I think it does lean towards the beginner somewhat. The book is organized in sections with each section even having its own color tab. The sections include things like playing board, hills, woods, water features, roads, obstacles, and buildings. There are four others sections that talk about planning, finish work, terrain boards, and finally the “tools of the trade”. Unfortunately the table of contents does not get much more specific than that, so there will be page flipping if you want to look up specific projects.

The directions for each or the individual projects are pretty sketchy, but truth be told, it's probably best that way since the really important part of a book like this is the pictures. And the pictures are good... really good. In fact, a danger I see as being a possibility for beginning terrain builders is that seeing this book might get someone excited about going out and quickly building up some awesome terrain. But speaking from experience, making it look like the pictures is a whole lot harder than it sounds, and a result of any sort is not to be come by "quickly" (at least in the way I define the word).

Besides the pictures, which I list as by far the greatest strength of the book, the best thing I like about the book are the building tips that can be found not only in the text itself, but also sometimes off to the side in a window labeled with the type of tip it is. Right in the front of the book they list four kinds of tips that they call out throughout the book. The "construction tips" and the "painting tips" seem to be the most plentiful, and in my opinion the most useful, though all are definitely worth a read to both the beginner and the advanced terrain builders.

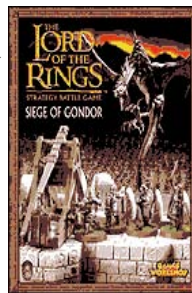
All in all, this book will give you more than enough information to build up a very nice terrain set, without boring you with tons of intricate details. Even old salts in the terrain building arena will find some new ideas, tricks to make realistic looking terrain and probably provide everyone a large dose of inspiration (a for sure by-product of the detailed pictures). I personally consider myself an experienced terrain builder, and I found at least a dozen new ideas that I now want to try out.

VALUE

How to Make Wargames Terrain is a great guide for beginners and a very nice reference and idea book for those who are no stranger to terrain building. I think the target audience that will find this book of the greatest value, are people that have perhaps tried making a few terrain pieces, found that they like it, and want to graduate to the next step. This book will definitely get you that coveted "Terrain Building" diploma.

For those looking for a book that will give detailed instructions on "how to build a widget". Then this book may not be for you. For the most part, though there are exceptions, instructions are quick and dirty without a lot of "hand-holding". For those who would rather get down to the business of building terrain rather than read through long instructions, then I highly recommend this book. For a great many of the projects, little more than seeing the pictures and the materials used, is needed to figure out what needs to be done.

For the money, I have to say that the pictures alone are worth it if you want to build quality looking terrain. If you don't see yourself as being an avid terrain builder, then I don't really see what benefit the book will do you as its entertainment value just for the sake of reading is more than a little limited. That is of course unless you like flipping through checking out pictures of well done terrain (have I mentioned that there are a lot of good pictures?).



WHAT THEY SAY

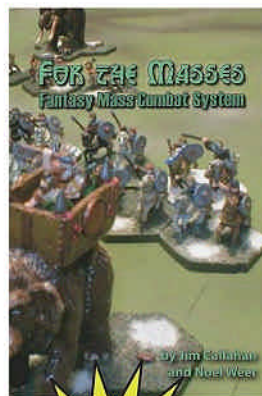
The Siege of Gondor is an invaluable supplement for gamers looking to expand their armies beyond small skirmishes and into larger scale battles. This 64-page full-colour book will augment the rules, with sieges, war machines and more, reflecting the kind of large-scale battle seen in *The Return of the King*. Players will also get rules for new war machines, for both Gondor and Mordor, to augment their armies, plus new characters and key locations of combats. This supplement is an invaluable guide to collecting, modelling and gaming with the Lord of the Rings miniatures. Within its colourfully illustrated pages you will find essential rules, information, and inspiration to bring the battles of Middle Earth to your own tabletop. Although there is no stated MSRP on this product, the US and UK websites state \$15.00 and £8.00 respectively.

WHAT YOU SEE

The first thing that is immediately evident about this offering is the production quality. We are treated to full-colour throughout, well-photographed vignettes and individual figures, nicely designed layouts and all neatly presented in high quality ink and on high quality paper. This is what we have come to expect from Games Workshop you might say and rightly so, but worthy of mention nonetheless.

There is a very enthusiastic introduction from the author, telling us how wonderful his offering is and how he hopes we will feel the same way about it. We are then treated to a very detailed history of Gondor and its interaction with the events of the War of

Now Available from Majestic Twelve Games



For The Masses is a complete fantasy mass-combat wargame system. But it is also much more: The flexibility of the system allows players to use any fantasy setting and armies to play out famous fantastical scenarios and ancient epic battles. Several sample army lists are included in the book but the real strength of *For the Masses* is the unit creation system. This system encourages players to be creative, use their imagination and have fun, which is the way wargaming should be.



The staff here at **Majestic Twelve Games** is dedicated to providing low-cost adventure games that are easy to learn, quick to play, and above all, fun! Many of our games can be sampled for free; simply select one and download the appropriate demonstration version. If you like it, you can order the complete version right here on our web site.

www.mj12games.com

the Ring. There is a very well written and informative chronology, supplemented by a particularly fine map.

We are offered a beginners guide to castles, their structure and descriptions of the various architectural parts of a castle and how these relate to both siege warfare from without and hand-to-hand combat within. New troop types are introduced, together with new heroes, or should that be new versions of old heroes or, as the Battle for Osgiliath pre-dates the Ring Trilogy movies, perhaps I should say original versions of already established heroes. I'm getting dizzy now, where was I? Oh yes! Rules, for all the siege engines and their modified variants, defensive values for castle structures and rules for moving and fighting both within and on the castle walls.

The final offering is a series of six linked, or stand alone scenarios, recreating the desperate battle for Gondor as Sauron sends forth his legions. We are taken from the struggle for Osgiliath, to the battle in the streets of Minas Tirith. In the appendix, two additional scenarios allow players to re-enact the tense and dramatic siege of Helms Deep. Interspersed with the scenarios are hobby tips and model-making guides, with detailed advice on how to create your own siege towers, fortress walls and battlements.

WHAT YOU GET

The need for the authors' sales pitch of an introduction is in itself, a tad worrying. Interestingly, as far as rules go, the author states most of the siege rules are simply 'lifted' from the pages of the 'Two Towers' rulebook. Hmm...then why the need for this supplement? Well, apparently siege engines haven't been covered yet, so those Uruk-hai ballistae from the 'Helms Deep' expansion were just for show! Aha! I hear you say, it's a newly released figures showcase. Perhaps this is the case, perhaps not. I assume most of the history lesson will already have appeared in earlier tomes, as it encompasses much of the history of Middle Earth, regarding the end of the Second Age and the coming of the Third but I can see that its inclusion here is no doubt for the uninitiated.

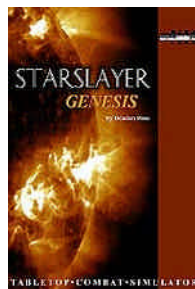
The new castle movement and fighting rules provide a good mechanic but such retro additions and amendments must be a considerable slap of the wrists, for the original designers and play-testers. Yes, this is an opportunity to re-visit Helms Deep but why was the original bereft of exploding Orcs et al. Are we to now believe the original rules weren't good enough and need to be updated, or were the first set of rules rushed into production, at the cost of completeness and balance. I will leave you to decide that one.

Don't get me wrong here, I am not generally a GW detractor after all I have Citadel and White Dwarf to thank, for almost single-handedly keeping my hobby of choice alive during the eighties and a large part of the nineties, in my home country at least. It's just that upon reading this supplement I was struck by such an overwhelming sense of Déjà vu. 'Warhammer Skirmish' I hear someone cry, indeed a so-called rules supplement which was no more than a collection of scenarios and for its rules content, merely stated the relevant pages to read from an earlier rulebook. But let this not detract from the scenarios presented within this book, for they are well written, well balanced and thoroughly enjoyable, every one of them. Especially when the scenarios are played in sequence and in fairly quick succession, perhaps over

the same weekend, they provide interesting situations for both forces and manage to generate a suitable atmosphere.

WHAT IT MEANS

As a rules supplement, Siege of Gondor is virtually a non-starter and definitely over-priced, regardless of the quality of production. As a collection of linked, pre-determined scenarios however, it is a worthy effort and reasonably good value for money. Such a pity the publisher did not market it as such.



BASICS

Starslayer: Genesis is published by Majestic 12 Games and has a regular retail price of \$19.95 USD. A demo version of the game is available for free in PDF format from their website and you can check it out before putting down your money. The printed version is a 128-page perfect-bound book with a color cover and black & white interior artwork. It is described as a skirmish level "Tabletop Combat Simulator" for

use with any range of 28mm figures that you want to drop on the table. I'd expect that it would also be perfectly usable with 15mm figures if you want to go that route instead.

INSIDE

The book is divided into seven specific "chapters", a unit control sheet and an index. The first chapter, the INTRODUCTION, is only a little over five pages long and starts off with a short description of the terminology that you'll see later in the rules and gets you familiar with the basic concepts of the game.

Next is STARSLAYER BASIC which takes up the bulk of the book. I wouldn't look at the *basic* rules as being inferior to the advanced rules in any way. They are what will get you going as a base set of rules and while they are complete and playable on their own they are missing some of the bells and whistles that you'll find in the *advanced* section. The basic rules contain all of the stuff to make the other guy's guys dead and also have rules for Mecha (walkers) and light vehicles like bikes, jeeps, speeders, etc. Heavier vehicles are in the *advanced* section.

In the STARSLAYER ADVANCED chapter we get into Covert Operations, heavier vehicles (armored transports and tanks), advanced morale rules and tournament rules. You and your opponent(s) will choose any or all of these to add to your games and tournaments should specifically indicate which rules from the advanced section will be used.

One of the real shining moments for Starslayer comes in the next two chapters, the TROOP BUILDER and the VEHICLE BUILDER. If you're a fan of Car Wars or Champions and are also a sci-fi miniature gamer then these sections will really get your juices flowing. If not, then you're still in luck, but maybe not quite as jazzed, because you'll be able to 'port over your models from any other game into Starslayer using an established build system. Just so I don't have the legal department of various game companies come knocking at my door I won't list the names of my (and probably your) favorite sci-fi miniature games here, but if you want your Sp@ce M@rines to square off against my Bl*at Beret\$ and then toss in some Gr*wlers for good measure then you have what you need right here.

If you don't want to go through the build system, yes it does require you doing some math, you can always choose to use troops from one of the five army lists, from the chapter of the same name "ARMY LISTS", in the book.

Two SCENARIOS are presented in the last chapter of the book and while most of the work of deciding *why* our armies are out there trying to kill each other at least they are a good starting point and do give some historical perspective that is worked into the game's background. Even with a system that allows for *generic* or 'ported armies there is a background provided for the armies that come stock with the game. The background section is mixed in with the regular rules text of the game in shaded columns so you can skip over it if you want or read it at your leisure. I decided to forego reading the fluff text until I had completed my first full read of the rules.

THE GAME

Starslayer is based around a d10 roll deciding the outcome of most events. Hitting/Wounding an enemy model is taken care of in a single roll that is determined by range first and then is modified by cover, armor that the target is wearing, and other modifiers. As an example, if I'm firing an infantry weapon at a guy and after checking range it's determined that I need a 7+ to hit him and I roll an 8. Ok, so far so good, but let's say that he's wearing heavy powered armor and has an Armor Rating (AR) of -2. My roll of 8 is modified to a 6 and I miss, but missing by exactly one

point he has been "tagged" and has to make a morale test. In addition to physical armor troops can also wear fields which give a non-modified roll to save. Of course, there are armor and field penetrating weapons out there so keep your head down just to be safe. Hand-to-Hand combat is also resolved on a d10. After determining who strikes first (a Reflex roll with modifiers, highest strikes first) you get one or more d10 to roll when attacking and a base number "to hit". The more dice you roll, the better your chance of bonking the other guy on the head.

Morale is very important in Starslayer (so much so that it is discussed before ranged combat or hand-to-hand), but failing a morale single test is not immediately disastrous, but is heading down that road. Morale tests are taken by individual figures when "tagged" in ranged or hand-to-hand combat and when charged, for example. If an individual model blows this test, which is based on the quality of the model, they become *shaken* and must immediately go prone and head for cover. They can be rallied but if they fail another morale test they are eliminated. Units take tests when their number falls below a set minimum, also determined by the quality of the troops. Failing a unit test causes the whole group to become *broken* and failing another morale test before being rallied will eliminate the unit. Unit coherency is different from other tabletop games in that figures in a unit can pretty much be as far away from each other as they like but different units cannot cross through each other's coherency. Elites are immune from this though, and while they are purchased in units they can act independently.



The game is broken up into three phases (Command, Active and Resolution) and activation of units is based on assigning each unit a card from a standard deck of playing cards and when it comes up is, for the most part, when they get to do their thing. Commanders can add cards to particular units to increase their chance of being drawn to activate, but uber-characters (even Starslayer heroes) are not necessarily game breakers. Sure, you can custom build some elite troops to be awesome at just about everything but you'll be severely outnumbered and will have to withstand a withering amount of fire from the enemy.

The build rules allow for lots of flexibility but there are limits, of course. I was able to sit down and in a few minutes cobble together some standard runt infantry, guys in power armor and elites in super-heavy power armor. I didn't find costs for special powers like drinking your victim's blood to regain wounds or killing everyone in hand-to-hand on alternate Tuesdays (ok, an exaggeration there) but Starslayer is more of a *Hard* science game than fantasy sci-fi, but that doesn't preclude you from using figures from any manufacturer. You'll just be playing a game that is missing some of the "flavor of the month" stuff that some people like and lots of people gripe about. Vehicles were also pretty easy to use. Missing are psychic/magic powers, but like I said, this is less of a fantastical sci-fi game than some others out there.

VALUE

For twenty bucks there was a whole lot that I liked in Starslayer and very little that I did not. To be honest,

the only thing that I didn't take a shine to was most of the interior artwork. Much of it was more sketches than finished pieces, in my opinion. I'm all for seeing concept art and images of works in progress but in a finished product like this I'd have liked the interior artwork to be a bit more polished. Other than that I can highly recommend you dropping the twenty dollars that it will set you back. For the cost of a handful of figures you'll be getting a flexible system that allows you to build the troops that you want. Yes, absolutely recommended for any fan of sci-fi tabletop miniature games.

"For The Masses: Fantasy Mass Combat System" is a soft bound set of fantasy miniature rules for use with 15 mm figures on a hex-grid table. It's published by Majestic Twelve Games and has a retail price of \$19.95 USD.



BASICS

"For The Masses: Fantasy Mass Combat System" presents rules for large battles in a generic fantasy setting. The game is played on a 45" x 68" area. This playing area has a 40 mm hex grid superimposed upon it. Figures are mounted on hexagonal bases. Most units are composed of one to three figures per base. Characters and monsters are mounted one to a base, while cavalry are mounted two to

a base and infantry is mounted three to a base. Artillery and larger monsters are mounted on multi-hex bases. The rule book includes rules for formations, movement, terrain, weather, spell casting, melee, ranged attack, and morale. In addition, there are army lists for the five major kingdoms as well as basic and detailed scenarios.

ANALYSIS

"For The Masses" is a generic fantasy game. By "generic", I mean that there is not a dedicated line of 15 mm fantasy figures. In fact, at the end of the book is a list of various manufacturers of 15 mm fantasy models. While this is normal for most historical miniature games, it is certainly unique in the fantasy miniature field. This game is more like a board game with miniatures rather than a normal table-top game. "For The Masses", like "Demon World", "CAV", and "Classic Battletech", is played on a hex-grid table. Units are moved like counters in a board wargame across the hex grid. The game can be played without the hex grid, but the rules do not recommend it. In addition to the figures, "For The Masses" requires a range of polyhedral dice, markers or tokens, and unit cards. None of these are provided with the game.

As with most fantasy game, each unit is described by characteristics. The characteristics provide ratings for defense, melee and ranged attack, movement distance, number of wounds, moral level or, for leaders, command points. For magicians, there is a Magic Energy rating. Some units also have special abilities or rules that make them unique. Most of the characteristics are simple numbers, but the attack and ranged attack characteristics are types of dice - from d4 to d12. The higher the die type, the more powerful it is in combat. Units with magical ability are also rated by die type. A unit is composed of one or more stands of models. Units are one of five types - personality, monster, artillery, cavalry, and infantry.

Each turn of the game is divided into three phases. In the Com-

mand Phase, both players roll up their command points for the turn. These are used to give orders to the units on their side during the Action Phase. The player that rolled highest activates his first unit. Each action of a unit costs command points - the more actions, the more command points used. The first action costs 1 point, the second action of the same unit costs 2 and so on. Command points cannot be saved from one turn to another. When the first player finishes with his first unit, then the second player can activate a unit. This alternating activation sequence continues until there are no more units to move or there are no more command points to spend. The actions that a unit may take are dependent upon what formation the model is in and if it is in combat or not. Units in regular formations can do more than ones in irregular formations.

Combat is resolved by the attacking unit rolling a number of dice equal to the number of the melee attack rating. The target number to score a hit is one-half the attacking die type plus the target's Defense value. This base die roll is modified by terrain, flanking formation, and elevation. If the target unit survives the attack, it may counter attack. Ranged attack is handled in a similar manner, but there is no counter attack. Units that suffer casualties must also take morale tests. These tests are modified by the number of casualties the unit has taken. A morale failure results in additional casualties.

Magic is handled in a manner similar to command points. Each magic unit has a set number of die that are rolled for the number of magic points to spend. Each spell costs a certain number of points to cast. Spells effect various game situations - such as allowing a defending unit to strike first in combat. "For The Masses" presents formulas for creating units. These formulas were used to create the army lists for the five kingdoms - barbarians, fairy-folk, empire of men, orcs, and elves. There are also example orders of battle for each kingdom. The book ends with a list of scenarios - generic ones for pick up games and detailed ones to recreate "historical" battles.

VALUE

"For The Masses" is not designed to as an introduction to miniature games. The rules are detailed and provide for many different situations. In addition, there is a wealth of material for players to design their own kingdoms, units, and spells. Finally, the lack of a dedicated miniatures line points out that this is a game by grognards for grognards. If you're interested in getting started in miniature games for the first time, I would recommend you start with another system - say "Warhammer" or "Chronopia" or "D&D Miniatures". Get some experience under your belt and them come back to "For The Masses". However, if you're a veteran of many a campaign against the forces of dark lords or necromancers or a general in command of Three Hundred Spartans, and you are looking for something on a new scale, then "For The Masses" is definitely worth a try. The fact that you can craft your own units is most appealing to the experienced gamer. The range of units and types makes this game superior to "Hordes of Things".



The Classic Battletech Dropships, Jumpships and Warships Technical Readout 3057 Revised is a selection of both Clan and Innersphere naval craft for use with Classic Battletech and

WAR GODS



Priestess of Isis



Basti Warrior

"It is the Antediluvian Age... the time after the fall of Atlantis and before the destruction brought about by the Great Flood. It is a time when the Children of the Gods still walked the earth, and fought great wars for their creators. To lead them in battle, the gods invested certain mighty mortals with a portion of their own power—the Harbingers.

On the bright sands of ancient Egyptus, the Harbingers and their armies made war."

WarGods of Egyptus is the miniature wargame of ancient battles in the world of Egyptian mythology. This hardcover book includes everything needed to play the game, including game rules for the Children of the Gods, Harbingers, Sorcerers, over 140 spells and powers, campaign rules and ideas, a color gallery of miniatures and terrain, and 2 sheets of full-color of Command Counters!



Anubi Hero

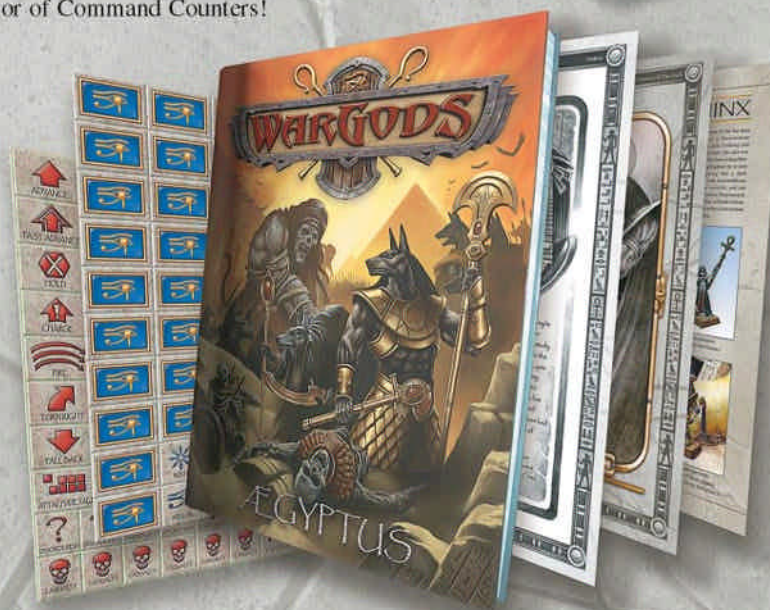


Sebeki Hero

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AeroTech 2. While the complete scope of every naval craft in existence in the Battletech universe is impossible to print, the Technical Readout gives a wide selection of ships available during the time of the Clan occupation after the return to the Inner Sphere. The Readout also includes information on so called "lostech" which is being discovered in increasingly larger amounts in remote regions of space. The largest of which is loaded with stripped down warships and naval vessels of all types and is called the Ruins of Gabriel.

Following the Battletech Timeline, the use of naval warships is currently nowhere near the once great navies of the Star League. Only recently after the Clan invasion have the great ships started appearing in number again and even then they are held in reserve or used for transport or protection of valuable properties or units. While the Clans hold the greatest number of craft these warships are ancient Star League era vessels that have been mothballed since Kerensky's great Exodus. The Clans never found a use to support large navies and the technology to actually build the craft has been lost to them as well. The Successor States of the Inner Sphere on the other hand, though they have long been without warship technology, are now discovering at astonishing rates long lost caches of naval technology hidden for generations. For once the Inner Sphere are finding themselves in an equal if not superior position over their invaders. Naval battles are once again being waged with differing doctrine on both sides. While the Clan tend to throw their assets into combat with little regard for survivability, the Innersphere use their warships sparingly and to greater tactical advantage.

During the Star League Period General Kerensky began building a large complex of space stations where he began producing and stocking huge amounts of supplies and technology. The construction was done in great secrecy and speed and soon large fleets of warships were based and operated from this facility. Before his Great Exodus to the Clan homeworlds Kerensky stripped and abandoned this complex, however the vast size of the stations left it impossible to take everything with him, and documents, technical readouts and even stripped down warships were left floating in space for years and years. The Exodus took the bulk of available warships and existing techs able to maintain them on their journey leaving the Star League. Once he reached the Clan Homeworlds the warships and transports were abandoned and placed into storage. No further construction or research and development was done on the aging fleets. It was not until the Clan invasion that the warships were used again in small numbers.

The book is broken down into ship classes separated into Inner Sphere and then their Clan counterparts starting with Dropships. Dropships are the first link in interstellar travel. These vessels transport mechs, vehicles, troops and supplies to and from the battlefields. The Clan dropships are more advanced than the Innersphere models but recent developments have driven the production of Inner Sphere manufacturing. All dropships of both sides are generally well armed and considered high value targets. They are usually well protected. Dropships exist in large numbers in the Battletech universe being the method in which mechs and equipment are transported to a planet from orbit. Clan dropships are more advanced than Inner Sphere units, but the technology gap is quickly closing.

Jumpships are next. Jumpships are huge vessels that provide the only means of travel across long distances of space, capable of interstellar leaps of 30 light years at a time. For years jumpships were immune to the dangers of being attacked during war. Considered Lostech these vessels were spared destruction during combat because it was impossible to produce more. After the clan invasion jumpships have become more and more of a target. No longer can the jumpship sit in space without fear of attack or reprisal. They have now become just as big a target as the units they transport.

Clan and Star League Warships make up the next chapter of the technical readout. The Warship is a heavily armed and armored jumpship capable of interstellar travel. As of this time the only warships in any numbers are in the hands of the Clans. Each Clan deploys an average of 18 warships. Most of the warships involved in the invasion have returned to the Clan held Pentagon worlds. Although the Clan warships are of the Star League era they are still more than a match for anything the Inner Sphere has put to space. This is rapidly changing with the afore mentioned discoveries of lostech and entire mothballed fleets found in space. The Technical readout details several warships from the corvette size to the top end cruisers and battleships. These vessels are bristling with weaponry and aerotech support.

Small craft are next. This is the most diverse group of naval vehicles. This class comprises all craft under 200 tons not including aerospace fighters, which are in a separate group. Small craft include life boats, escape pods, shuttles, busses, landing craft, and smaller "battle taxi's" or troop transports. Most of these units are more suited to larger mechwarrior style campaigns than for use in a battletech combat scenario.

Finally the next section deals with Space Stations. Space Stations and Orbital facilities serve many different uses throughout the inner sphere. They are divided into three broad groups: low-orbit, geosynchronous orbit, and stable-point stations. Most of these facilities are used as supply depots, orbital headquarters, and deep space base of operations. These units also are more suited for mechwarrior campaigns but can be used in combat when groups of combat vessels engage nearby. This section also includes orbital factories, habitats, recharge stations, shipyards, and system defense stations.

The final chapter of the book deals with "lost" warships. This section deals with ships found within the cluster of space stations recently found which have been dubbed "the Ruin of Gabriel". This is the secret base constructed by General Kerensky before the great Exodus. The warships found here are the most ancient of those ever constructed. They are no match for the Clan warships but in the hands of a mercenary company or a rogue state they could turn the course of almost any conflict. The most commonly found vessels are mentioned in the readout. All are capital vessels from surveillance craft and corvette classes up to battleships.

Overall the Technical Readout Revision was very useful. We ran a small campaign over three sessions that involved the hunt of an Inner Sphere battleship by two Clan cruisers. In the first encounter an Inner Sphere Battleship of the Monsoon class, which weighed in at 1,310,000 tons and carried a small compliment of aerospace fighters was engaged by the first Clan Liberator

Cruiser. The Clan in their usual over zealous combat doctrine swiftly engaged the larger and more heavily armed and armored ship. At first the cruiser with its advantage of movement appeared to have the upper hand dealing out volley after volley of gauss rifle fire, but an error in maneuvering left the lighter vessel well within the shortest ranges of the Battleship's larger array of naval autocannon. After 5 rounds of volleying back and forth the cruiser slipped away damaged to wait on a second approaching Clan vessel that we had set up for our second game.

The second encounter involved the Clan cruiser meeting up with a second Cruiser of the same class and trailing the escaping Battleship as it made its way back to its homeworld. The cruisers had caught the fleeing vessel and the fresher of the two Clan cruisers opened the attack again from maximum range with its lighter autocannons while the second cruiser still damaged from the first engagement went in for the kill. The Battleship deployed 3 medium aerospace fighters which immediately engaged the limping Clan vessel and began slowly taking out its weapons. While the undamaged Clan cruiser delivered round after round of damaging attacks the Battleship slowed and turned for the burning Cruiser. Once again caught in a deadly barrage of naval autocannon volleys the captain (and everyone else at the table) finally realized he was more suited to piloting a mech on some backwater planet. The Cruiser was lost. The Battleship recalled its remaining fighter and continued on as the second and more cautious cruiser stopped to salvage ammo and weapons from the burning hulk of its sister ship.

The third and longest session involved the remaining cruiser once again catching the significantly shot up Battleship. This battle involved another aerospace fighter attack on the cruiser which was successfully defended. The Cruiser, more confident in this engagement closed and the carnage ensued. While the two vessels stood at broadside and pounded away at each other another battle began when the Cruiser landed 2 lances of Elemental soldiers on its battered hull. The Battleship deployed 3 mechs from delivery doors on its hull and with a few hastily modified rules we had a combat going on within a combat. I'm still not sure if it was the skill in maneuvering, the outright higher armor values and weapons of the battleship, or just unlucky dice, but the battleship won the day.

I found the Technical readout more useful for Battletech combat than I have so far for Mechwarrior. The book certainly has plenty for both. I intend to build a mechwarrior campaign around an orbital headquarters where warships routinely moor and resupply. There are plenty of ideas about boardings and combat inside the decks of the warships as well as plans for some larger scale fleet battles. The artwork in the book is generally the same quality of all the others, which are basically line drawings of the ships being described. Each ship has a picture to go with its description. I would like to see at least one inside deck plan even a general one. There are plenty of examples of each class of vessel. The addition of the space stations and orbital facilities was interesting and very useful in planning future games and encounters. Overall I found it very useful and have added it to our regular playtimes.



"Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" is a set of miniature rules from MSD Games designed for fighting land-based company to brigade sized engagements. The game is for 1:285 scale miniatures, such as GHQ's Micro Armour. The rules refer to counters to represent infantry.

BASICS

The Frontlines Combat series provides rules that chronicle the evolution of armored combat, from this inception to the current day. Other titles in the series are "Iron Dawn" for World War I, "Mekong... Vietnam" for Vietnam, and "Sand, Oil, and Blood" for the First and Second Iraqi-American wars. Future titles will cover World War II, the Indo-Pakistan wars and the Arab-Israeli wars. "Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" includes an 88-page soft back rule book with two acetate sheets of templates and three game reference cards. The rule book includes information on 1950's ground combat, organization charts for over thirty combat units, and 4 scenarios.

DETAILS

First off, "Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" is a detailed set of rules. The book is divided into sections - rules, army lists, and scenarios and other information.

The sequence of play is ten phases long and includes two movement, two fire and two melee phases. These phases are structured so that each player acts in each. So, in the First Movement Phase Player A moves his units then Player B. In the Second Movement Phase, the order is reversed. In addition, the turn includes order writing for artillery strikes and off-board unit orders. There is a single aircraft phase, artillery phase, morale phase and a place/remove smoke phase. All this equates to about 5 minutes of "real time".

Movement is simple. Infantry move 1" in open ground and less than that in terrain. Infantry may also ride on vehicles. Vehicles and boats have their movement value printed on their vehicle data cards. The rules specify many kinds of terrain, including berms, rice paddies, and salt marshes, in addition to the more mundane woods, hills, and buildings. These are all representative of the terrain to be found on the Korean peninsula.

There are rules hidden units. It is suggested that 1/2" unit counters be used for each unit or fire team. These are deployed face down along with dummy counters. Hidden units may not be fired upon until spotted - unless using the "recon by fire rules".

The rules provide for direct fire and its effects against vehicles, boats, and infantry. Direct fire is categorized as either cannon fire and small arms fire.

Direct fire does not include melee - which has its own section. A melee is defined as combat between units in base combat, and the rules address the special conditions encountered in infantry vs armor melees.

The rules for aircraft include altitude, conventional (i.e. High Explosive) bombs, Napalm, air-to-surface rockets, and strafing attacks. There are also rules for anti-aircraft fire, flak suppression, and air-to-air combat.

Like aircraft, artillery has its own rules section. Rules for both on-board and off-board indirect fire are included. These rules cover call for fire, opportunity fire and pre-planned fire, as well as shift and correction fire. In addition, there are rules for bar-rages and ammunitions types - White Phosphorus, Armor Piercing and Smoke.

"Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" includes detailed rules for smoke - including smoke grenades, direct fire smoke, artillery smoke, and vehicle exhaust. There are also rules for command and control, buttoned up fire, final-protective fire, over watch fire, combat engineering, and airborne assaults.

The data card section includes information on vehicles from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the communist forces. There are data cards for vehicles, aircraft, and boats. After the data card section is the force organization section - what is more commonly known as army lists. However, unlike most games, this is not a points-based system. Rather the authors have presented historical TO&E charts for the major combatants.

The rule book includes suggestions on creating scenarios. Four scenarios are provided to get you started. These are Scenario 1 "Task Force Smith" 6/5/50 covering the first contact between the US and NK forces, Scenario 2 "Tank Action at Chongju" (10/29/50) covering the engagement between the NKPA and the 27th Commonwealth Brigade after the fall of Pyongyang, Scenario 3 "Han River Crossing" 3/7/51 covering a UN force attempting to take river crossings held by PRC forces, and Scenario 4 "Task Force Smith - What If?" which is a hypothetical treatment of Scenario 1. The book ends with historical notes on the Korean War as well as a recommended bibliography.

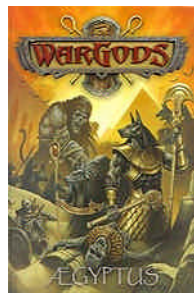
ANALYSIS

Korea has often been called "The Forgotten War" - just try to find a movie about it. However, it was certainly not forgotten by MSD games. This is an exceptional work covering an interesting period in the 20th century. Much of this game reminds me of "Advanced Squad Leader" - and that is a good thing. There are many game mechanics in "Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" that resemble those in ASL; there are certainly similar terms. The later is not surprising as both are detailed historical games.

That being said, this is definitely not a rules set for someone who is new to miniature gaming. If you've got a historical interest but are new to miniature gaming, try "Flames of War" first. That game assumes no prior experience. For the experienced gamer, "Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" is an excellent game. Rule mechanics that might be overwhelming to the neophyte will please the experienced gamer who is looking for more detail reflecting how weapons and warriors acted in this war.

There are some production issues with the rules. The rule book is not bound well. While preparing for this review, pages separated from the spine near the bottom. The rules were shrink wrapped and the book was visibly bent in this packaging. This mangled the acetate template sheets on the left side. Including a cardboard sheet as a backer board in the packaging would fix this.

If you've got an interest in this period of history, and you've got a few game systems under your belt, then I suggest you give "Frontlines: Korea 1950-53" a try. It will definitely be worth it.



BASICS

WarGods of Aegyptus is Crocodile Games' fantasy mass combat miniature game set in the world of Egyptian mythology. It is presented as a 288-page hardback book that sports a beautiful color cover. There are also several pages of color photographs of miniatures being played with along with tons of black and white artwork. The book has a retail price of \$29.99 USD and is available now.

INSIDE

The book is broken down into nine chapters and a set of reference sheets. The introduction to the game is ten pages long and only scratches the surface of the large amount of fluff in the rest of the book. If you're a fan of the setting (Egyptian mythology) then it's worth reading just for that. As a gamer, I found myself quickly immersed in a new and interesting world to play in. In total, the rules section is about sixty pages, but as you'll see below, the basics are laid out over just a part of that and are easy to grasp. The rest of the book details each of the different armies in the game, creation of your warband/army, campaign rules and ends in almost twenty pages of further detail of the world, including maps, that will make any role-player that also happens to play wargames hope for an rpg supplement to come out soon.

THE GAME

This is actually the second edition of WarGods of Aegyptus, but it's my first foray into the bloody sands of mythical Egypt so I won't be referencing any changes (if there any) from the 1st edition of the game.

WarGods of Aegyptus is based around a 10-sided die and all combat, saves, spell casting, etc... is determined by starting at a base success number and then adjusting it on a couple of variables. Melee combat involves a roll to hit (base - Defender's rating + Attacker's rating) and then a save roll if the blow struck true. Missile combat is handled similarly and both are resolved quickly without much fuss at all. The basic rules governing combat, morale, armor saves, etc... only took up about twelve pages and were very easy to read and understand. Just once through and I felt confident enough to hit the table and probably wouldn't have to reference the rulebook for resolving combats.

Coming into WarGods as a complete nubie I had two preconceived notions about the game.

- 1) I have to admit that I did partially expect the game to play a lot like Warhammer Fantasy. After all, it had troops set up in rank/file formation, characters wandering around on their own and attached to units, and chariots rolling around the field of battle. Ok, I don't think that I could have been more wrong. The only thing that I found that really harkens back to Warhammer Fantasy is that some (but definitely not all) units can (not must) be in rank/file formation. After that, meaning when I sat down to read the rules, my eyes got wider and wider and I saw more and more that I liked.

First, while it's a mass combat game, it uses alternate activation of units, but with a twist. I'm a huge fan of alternate activation but in WarGods there is a prelimi-

nary roll each turn, actually it's the *INITIATIVE* roll, and the winner gets to choose between 1-3 units to activate before anything else. That's 1-3 (depending on how much you win the roll by) of anyone's units. If you want to really press your advantage, and swords, into the enemy then you'll want to pick a handful of your units to kick off the turn. On the other hand, you could be waiting to suck your opponent into some cunning trap and force him to go first. Things alternate pretty regularly from there, but the ability to nominate your unit or your opponent's is a staple of the game.

Beyond just the activation and initiative rules you also assign commands to each of your units before the activation for the turn actually starts. These commands range from Advance to Fast Advance to Charge to Fire and more. I found that it added a very welcome level of strategy to the game but did not bog things down. Giving orders might add five minutes, at the most, to an average game which is just about negligible in my book. If your unit is attacked before their turn to activate comes up their order, unless it's Fall Back, is discarded in favor of striking back at the enemy.

Yes, you're still moving around blocks (usually) of troops around the battlefield and the to-hit rolls could be put into a matrix that Warhammer players would be more familiar with (using a d10 instead of a d6 of course) but the game *felt* completely different and the extra decision making (issuing of commands) was something that I liked a lot.

- 2) My second misconception was that playing in the Egyptian (Aegyptian?) mythos would limit the diversity available to each army, but there is mixing and matching to be done, to a certain extent. There are common troop types that almost any army can make use of and depending on your Harbinger (army leader) you'll be able to bring troops of another god. Not every Harbinger can make use of all of the troops, but you are definitely not locked into just one type of troop. As an example, a Harbinger of Set will easily allow a unit of Sebeki to join his warband, but you'll never find minions of Set in an army of Osiris. This, along with lots of special character types lead me to find more variety than I had originally expected.

Ok, so both of my preconceived notions were pretty much shot down in short order and I was happy to see both of them cast away.

The rules concerning construction of your Harbinger and their warband take up about 100 pages but it's not due to the complexity involved. Far from it. It's actually pretty easy to put together an army but this section of the book is chock-full of options and details and an example of warband construction. Spell casting is handled simply by expending points and doing your voodoo. Just about as simple as everything else in the game.

The campaign rules provide a path for your Harbinger to gain power and glory over time. Also included are suggestions for different styles of games. We've all played friendly games and

lots of us have packed our bags and headed off to tournaments. This section briefly discusses the differences between them for the uninitiated who might be reading the book or playing a wargame for the first time. The book doesn't assume that everyone reading is a long-time wargamer, but also doesn't talk down to the more experienced player either.

There are several great ideas for campaigns, large and small, and special scenarios that not only will work for the wargamer but also the rpg enthusiast. Even though I don't think it was designed with this in mind, I see this book pulling a lot of double duty when paired up with a rpg GM who also happens to play miniature wargames.

The book ends with record sheets for your Harbinger, their warband and a quick reference sheet. None are perforated, but all bear the 'permission' note that will allow you to take it to your favorite copy shop without someone throwing a fit. After reading through the book once I felt that I could sit down and play a game, without using magic, and only have to reference the book for specific morale rules. That's after one reading.

VALUE

The price tag on WarGods of Aegyptus, just thirty dollars, is super considering that it's a hardback book with a very good binding (it lay flat wherever I opened it and I haven't had any problems with it yet) that is printed on great paper and is a joy to read and look at. After reading it I paged through it several more times just to get another look or two at the artwork. I was also very pleasantly surprised with the system itself. It's very much a mass combat game but it felt very much like a skirmish game in how it is played.

I found the game to be simple, but not simplistic. I did not find WarGods of Aegyptus to be a watered-down war game with pretty figures. It's a nicely detailed game, (yes, with pretty figures) that has a fast-paced alternative activation sequence that I liked a lot.

The setting is a bit niche but I think that it is deep enough to offer players enough variety to keep them enthused. Also, WarGods of Olympus is coming out next and promises to be fully compatible with WarGods of Aegyptus, can't wait!



BATTLE REPORT



Well, it's been longer than I'd like to think about since I last sat down to play Warzone. With the release of the *ultimate* edition of the game I could think of nothing better to do except play a game. Before sitting down to play Clay and I did some quick reviewing of the new rules, but still expected that there might be a minor mistake or two during the game. We were pretty ok with that as this was our first real game with the new edition of the rules.

I asked Clay to set up the battlefield before I arrived to play and I wrote up four different army lists for us to play with; Demnogonis, Muawijhe, Bauhaus (Richthausen) and Mishima (Lord Heir Maru). We decided to pit the festering and pustulent forces of Demnogonis against a very shooty Bauhaus army.

The Demnogonis army consisted of:

Grunts

- Blessed Legionnaires lead by a Spawn of Demnogonis and accompanied by a Curator.
- Last Ritesmen
- Undead Legionnaires lead by a Necromutant
- Necromutants

Individuals

- A Nephrite of Demnogonis armed with a Plaguebringer Cannon and three dark powers (The Wasting, Cloud of Flies and Fountain of Filth)
- Mortis the Virulent armed with an Azoghar and a single dark power (Spray of Putridity)
- A Centurion Perceptor armed with a single dark power (Aura of Darkness)
- Another Centurion Perceptor, also armed with a single dark power (Aura of Darkness)

Support

- A Praetorian Behemoth

I hoping that the Praetorian Behemoth would crash into the lines of Bauhaus troops and tear them limb from limb while the undead masses waded in and were followed up by the Nephrites tossing all sorts of smelly, rotten, puss-filled things around.

Over on the Bauhaus side there was:

Grunts

- Ducal Militia with a Rocket Launcher Spe-

cialist and Sergeant

- Hussars with an HMG Specialist and Sergeant

Elites

- Jeagers with 2 HMG Specialists and a Sergeant
- Blitzers with a PGL Specialist and a Sergeant

Individuals

- Hussar Kaptain
- Blitzer Kaptain
- Jeager Kaptain
- Kommandant

After doing a quick survey of the board we removed a bit of terrain here and there to create a few more viable landing spots for the Blitzers. Normally, I'm of the opinion that the more terrain on the board the better but you have to balance that a bit. Now, I don't mean that every board setup should cater to each and every army that just might happen to play on it. Just be reasonable. Also, we hadn't decided who would be playing each list and I could be left with Blitzers that had no place to land!

We did decide to have Clay use the Bauhaus since that was one of the armies that he'd played in 2nd edition and I did have more playing time with the Dark Legion, especially Demnogonis, in both the 1st and 2nd editions of Warzone.



Next on the agenda was to place deployment cards and get down to business of kicking the tires and lighting the fires in our first game of *Warzone: Ultimate Edition*!

For each turn we've listed troop activations in the order that they occurred and what they did along with a summary of the action by both player.

TURN 1

Mark Blessed Legionnaires

With a shamle worthy of any zombie movie the blessed ones moved forward towards the Bauhaus troopers, hungry for human flesh.

Clay Ducal Militia

Seeing a few of the walking corpses come into view the Rocket Launcher specialist fired off several rounds in their direction. The first deviated off of the lead legionnaire and landed in range of the Curator and blew him to bits. So much for "healing" any of the undead that fall for the rest of the battle. The second shot also deviated but managed to turn one of the legionnaires into a fine red/green mist and the last rocket flew wildly into the woods and only served to anger some environmentalists. A few of the militia went on "wait" as their last action.

Mark Last Ritesmen

Head 'em up and move 'em out. Forward, march!

Clay Kommandant

Moved up towards the woods and waited for an opportunity to show how cool he is.

Mark Centurion Perfector

Move up towards the Blessed Legionnaires to bolster their forces now that the Curator was no more.

Clay False Lead

Mark Necromutants

Headed up towards the narrow opening between the forest and a cliff wall and took some shots at the Ducal Militia. A perfect shot from one of the

Necromutants was answered with a perfect save from a militiaman and several shots from waiting status peppered the woods and cliff, but none managed to hit any of the advancing Necromutants.

Clay False Lead

Mark Mortis the Virulent

Mmmm, warm flesh. Must move closer so we can eat them and make pretty pictures in the dirt using their insides for colors.

Clay Hussars

The Last Ritesmen and Blessed Legionnaires took on lots of fire from the Hussars but already being dead helped a lot as save 'a plenty were made and one Last Ritesman fell to the ground.

Mark False Lead

Clay Hussar Kaptain

Not at all pleased to see so many corpses and other monstrosities still walking towards his troops he moved up and fired at a Last Ritesman, but failed to drop him.

Mark Praetorian Behemoth

Having a nice piece of wood between the Hussars and Ducal Militia and himself the giant beast surged forward towards them in relative safety.

Clay Jeagers

The Last Ritesmen had not moved over enough to reveal the deployment card that represented the Jeagers so they sprang forth and they shot the crap out of the Last Ritesmen. By the time smoke cleared and the last shell casing hit the ground all of the Last Ritesmen had been killed and three of the Blessed Legionnaires lay on the ground motionless. A mighty, "Hurrah!" could be heard from the Jeagers.

Mark Undead Legionnaires

A lot of moving up and a few shots resulted in, well, a lot of moving up and a few shots that didn't

Clay Jeager Kaptain

Seeing his boys do so well he strode up and took a shot at an advancing Undead Legionnaire but the shot passed through the walking corpse without slowing it down at all.

Mark Centurion Perfector

Did like his counterpart and move up to bolster the Undead Legionnaires.

Clay Blitzers

With the ground rushing up to meet them the Blitzers came rushing down to the battle. Things did not start off too well as the Sergeant slammed right into a short wall.





All except the PGL Specialist deviated but they did manage to cause a disruption in the Demnagonis troops. In showers of machine pistol fire another Blessed Legionnaire hit the ground and a Centurion and the Nepharite of Demnagonis both took a wound. The PGL specialist took unloaded in the direction of where Mortis was standing but nothing hit home. Scattered like sticks in the wind came to mind when looking at the final position of the Blitzers.

Mark Nepharite of Demnagonis

Moved towards the Blitzers in hopes of firing with his Plaguebringer Cannon very soon.

Clay Blitzer Captain

He landed on target and fired his Gehenna Puker at the Centurion, enveloping him with flame but he lived through the rather drastic increase in temperature.

Mark False Lead

Mark's thoughts on Turn 1

As I expected, turn 1 ended up being kind of slow, but considering that we had to take care of deploying all of our troops and resolved the Blitzers landing on the table it wasn't too bad at all. Up until the Jeager's came out to play I was feeling pretty good about getting into the faces of the Hussars but they had to go and mess it all up. Dang, if they don't turn out to be the MVP's of today's game for the Bauhaus army I'd be very surprised. In general, I was very pleased with how much damage the undead troops could take before hitting the ground, but I think that in the future I'll be taking more Curators just in case one tries to play catch with a rocket.

In the picture above you can see the battlefield from the Hussar's point-of-view with the Blessed Legionnaires to their left and the advancing Undead Legionnaires on the right. The Last Ritesmen had been ahead of the Undead Legionnaires before the Jeagers tore them apart. You can see the Jeagers peeking out from be-



hind the giant skull on the right. Towards the rear of the picture you can see most of the Blitzers. One is barely visible behind the Undead Legionnaires and a tree on the right side of the picture. Also, out of view on this picture, but visible in the previous one, is the Praetorian Behemoth further to the left of the Hussars just behind the tree line. He can also be seen in the picture at the bottom of the previous page with the rest of the Demnogonis troops. Yes, unpainted miniatures! Oh, put away your torches and pitchforks. We wanted to play dammit! Also, you'll pick up a few Undead Legionnaires in the ranks of the Necromutants. I ran out of freakin' Necromutants, so sue me, they're on my "need to buy" list.

Clay's thoughts on Turn 1

For being a first turn, this was a pretty wild turn. With infiltrating Jeagers, and para-deploying Blitzers, I expected us to be mixing it up early but this was even more than I had expected. Mark had a two prong attack, the main attack funneling through a break between two wooded areas. The bulk of his front line troops were involved in this thrust and he seemed intent on bowling me over with sheer numbers. I have to admit that on first glance, I thought it was going to work too. His second thrust was centered around his Behemoth, which I was **VERY** worried about. He was able to approach my lines keeping behind a line of trees so that I was unable to get any shots off on him. Looking forward, it looked like I would have very little time for me to react once it came through those trees, and it reached my lines, I had nothing to fight it with. But that was a worry for another turn.

The turn started as about expected with my Hussars and Militia holding the line and trading a few shots with the advancing horde. The real gore started when the Jeagers, who happened to be in a perfect location to flank the main attack, opened up. Between the two HMG,s and six assault riffles at close range, a literal wall of lead shredded Mark's first wave. Even him rolling off a series of perfect armor rolls couldn't save his shambling horde. Of course, the fact that my Jeagers seemed to have just gotten off the target practice range and could hardly miss a shot, helped quite a bit. A whole squad of the Dark Legion disappeared in a storm or shredded flesh while the Jeagers stood untouched.

The Blitzers were not quite so awesome to watch. They tried to drop in a beautiful spot right behind the Dark Legion's advancing line but due to bad landings, were scattered over 18" of board space with several of them laying on the ground trying to figure out which way was up. They did get a few shots off, but did little real damage. The only good thing is that Mark can hardly afford to let these guys regroup back there behind him. He will have to divert some forces to take care of them. Sorry guys, I'll notify your next of kin.

Marks second prong I could do nothing about at this point. My Ducal Militia could see little of the advancing Behemoth except for the occasional swinging fist over the treetops. The Kommandant paced up and down the lines ensuring the troops that it would only hurt for a second.

Turn 2

As with Turn 1, Clay won the Initiative roll, but instead of having me go first he took the opportunity to keep up the pressure.

Clay **Blitzers**

Figuring that the amount of time they had left to live was rapidly diminishing they decided to blaze away with their machine pistols. Lots of shots resulted in a wound on the Nepharite, a couple of dead Blessed Legionnaires and a dead Centurion.

Mark **Nepharite of Demnogonis**

He strode a bit closer with his Plaguebringer Cannon and reduced the Blitzer Kaptain and the PGL specialist to mounds of goo.

Clay **Jeagers**

The can of whoop ass that they opened last turn kept on flowing as the Undead Legionnaires were just decimated. A few were left but their numbers were severely reduced.

Mark **Blessed Legionnaires**

They tried the shamle forward while firing trick and accomplished zero. Ok, they needed ridiculously low numbers to hit. The Spawn of Demnogonis fared a bit better by charging a Blitzer and killing him. Now, just wait a turn and there will be a fresh (or not so fresh) Blessed Legionnaire rising up in his place.

Clay **Jeager Kaptain**

He very quickly put two more Blessed Legionnaires out of action.

Mark **Undead Legionnaires**

Pulled back out of their advance by the woods and attacked the Blitzers. Between some pretty ineffec-





tive shooting and some decent hand-to-hand action two of the Blitzers were killed.

Clay Hussar Captain

He tagged a Blessed Legionnaire with a perfect shot, and the zombie followed up with a perfect save. Nya nya!

Mark Centurion Perfector

Feeling all manly, or realizing that they were getting chewed up and their ranged fire was all but ineffective, he charged a Blitzer and managed to kill him.

Clay Ducal Militia

Sprayed the area where the Necromutants were pushing through with lots of ineffective fire and then waited for the rush that they knew was coming.

Mark Mortis the Virulent

Charged a remaining Blitzer and in impressive fashion missed all of his hand-to-hand attacks. Wuss!

Clay Kommandant

Took three shots at the Necromutants and managed to kill one of them.

Mark Necromutants

Rushed through the opening between the cliff face and the woods and took several shots from the waiting Ducal Militia. Amazingly, none of them hit and a few even blew their LD test to be able to fire. Return fire from the Necromutants killed one of the Ducal Militiamen.

Clay Hussars

They opened up on the Necromutants and Blessed Legionnaires that were in sight and killed one of the former and two of the latter.

Mark Praetorian Behemoth

He crashed through the woods and right into the wait fire of the Hussars. No hits were scored and one Hussar was obviously too scared to pull the trigger. The beast moved up and fired a shot that soared over the heads of the Bauhaus troops.

Mark's Thoughts on Turn 2

Let's talk about the pictures first because I'm ready to cry about how much turn 2 sucked for me. On the previous page you can see the first shot of the Praetorian Behemoth pushing through the woods (from the Militia's POV) and then over to the left you can see what the Hussars saw coming at them. Below is the remnants of the Undead Legionnaires. If I have to say something nice I guess it was good to see Mortis the Virulent polish of the Blitzers. Oh wait, he didn't do that because my friggin' dice are cursed. Oh, man! I guess turn 1 was the dinner and turn 2 was the warming up activities. I better get ready for a visit from Dr. Jellyfinger on turn 3.

Clay's Thoughts on Turn 2

Well I got lucky again. I got the initiative allowing the Blitzers one turn to do some damage before becoming part of the terrain. Unfortunately, they were not nearly as good of shots as the Jeagers and did little more than kick up dust around their targets as if they were shooting at James Bond or something. As expected, the Dark Legion turned their loving attention towards the unlucky troops behind them and proceeded to rip them apart. Only one Blitzer survived the turn, and the Captain went down without ever getting to use his flamethrower. So sad, it would have been glorious.



Although the Blitzers went down in a hail of glory, they had done their duty. They caused enough confusion in the Dark Legion's rear that the killing field in the center of the board continued for another turn essentially unopposed. The Hussars and Jeagers spent another turn mercilessly pouring lead into the gap, making the ground look more like the floor beneath a meat grinder than a battle field. A huge portion of Mark's troops fell trying to get through that gap to no avail. Again, the Jeager's only concern was whether or not their ammo would last. The Militia had little to do now but to await the oncoming Behemoth with the troops that were sure to

be supporting it. They could do little but wait and try not to watch the gruesome carnage going on just to their right. Right at the end of the turn the Behemoth burst through the trees in plain sight with a bunch of Necromutants at its side. Judgment time was coming.

Turn 3

Guess what? Clay won the Initiative roll and went first.

Clay Hussars

They unleashed a wall of lead and dropped the damned giant beast where he stood.

Mark Necromutants

Woo hoo! Shots a plenty and two dead Ducal Militia. Hey, I can turn this around.

Clay Blitzer

Get this, he hits the Nepharite twice in hand-to-hand but I beat the odds (my odds today anyway) and save.

Mark Mortis the Virulent

Completely out of character he manages to kill the last Blitzer.

Clay Jeagers

They open up on the Spawn of Demnogonis and splatter him all over the field. After that they added insult to injury by also killing Mortis.

Mark Nepharite of Demnogonis

Moved and dropped a *Fountain of Filth* on the Jeagers, killing the sergeant and two others.

Clay Jeager Kaptain

Not wanting to let his boys have all of the fun he took shots at the Nepharite and killed him. Argh!

Mark Undead Legionnaires

The zombies and Necromutant leader came up around the woods and took some shots at the Jeagers. Surprisingly, one Jeager hit the dirt but the rest held their ground. I think even a middle finger shot up in defiance by the Bauhaus boys. (No, Clay did not flip me off.)

Clay Ducal Militia

With the Behemoth now a smoking pile of very dead flesh they turned their full attention to the Necromutants and wiped them out.

Mark Centurion

Decided to head for the hills, or more appropriately, hard cover.

Clay Kommandant

Moved up.

Mark Blessed Legionnaires

The two risen Blessed Legionnaires stood up and did...nothing!

It's a big internet out there...

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Clay Hussar Kaptain

He killed the Necromutant that was leading the Un-





dead Legionnaires so they were pretty much dead in the water.

Mark's Thoughts on turn 3

Turn 3? There was a turn 3? Sometimes you're driving the car and sometimes you're under the car. Today, I'm the guy under the guy who's under the car. What can I say, momma said there'd be days like this.

In the picture above you can see the Centurion who scurried back to some hard cover and the Ducal Militia who will no doubt head over there to finish him off. At the bottom of the previous page you'll see the remaining zombies who have nobody to led them.

Clay's Thoughts on turn 3

Well I guess I got my share of luck for this game. So goes the winds of war. I got initiative again and this was definitely going to be the final nail in the Dark Legion's coffin. The Hussars opened up on the Behemoth with everything they had. I was more than surprised, and not at all upset, to see the towering beast do a face plant in the ground right in front of my lines. As I wiped the sweat from my brow, I knew the battle was won. The Surviving Necromutants were able to take out much of my Militia, but not before the rocket Launcher fired off a close range volley and blew them away.

The Jeagers continued their onslaught but now since all the front line troops were annihilated they start concentrating on the characters in the back line that were still finishing off the last Blitzer. These stalwart fellows finally started to take some return fire and even sucked up a spell that wiped out a bunch of them, but by this point it hardly mattered. By the time the smoke settled on this turn, there was not a whole lot of enemy still standing. Clean-up operations could now commence.

Turn 4

Remember those clean-up operations that Clay just got done talking about? That would be turn four. My ass, his foot. Nuff said.

Mark's Post-Battle Thoughts

Oh, now that turned out to be completely FUBAR now didn't it?!? Those Jeagers sure did earn a drunken night out on the town! They were definitely the stars of the show for this game. I was a bit disappointed in the Praetorian Behemoth getting mowed down like that but I did roll extraordinarily poorly on his saves (to counter all of the perfect saves that I rolled with the zombie troopers) and I tried to use him as I would have in 2nd edition, which would be to just walk out in front of massive firepower

and shrug off most of the hits. I'll definitely be a bit more cautious next time around.

Even though it was in my plan to close with him and get nasty in his face it became imperative for me to do so quickly after he started chewing into my front lines. The good lines of fire that he set up with the Hussars, Ducal Militia and Jeagers kept me pretty well trapped. End result, extreme cases of lead poisoning all around!

After a few days rest and recuperation I'll be ready to play again. Like I said, sometimes things go your way and sometimes they don't. This was one of those bad days and I'm not easily discouraged. I'll sit down and point up a new force and be ready to hit the table again soon.

Clay's Post-Battle Thoughts

Well that was a bloody game. In previous versions of Warzone I rarely would take Jeagers, but I have suddenly developed a keen appreciation for them. Being able to infiltrate two HMGs can definitely change things on the battlefield, especially when they can cover nearly all of the usable space on the board. The way the battlefield developed was so much to my advantage that Mark would have been hard pressed to change the outcome even if I wasn't hitting so well. In our deployment, both of us put all our false leads on the same side of the table, effectively reducing the battlefield to about half the size. Then throw in the facts that a large impassable cliff face in the center of the table made it nearly impossible for either force to expand into the unused portion of the board and that neither side had any highly mobile forces, suddenly the board was very small indeed. This took maneuverability essentially out of the equation causing it to come down to sheer weight of bullets vs. sheer weight of bullets. Now this may be my first game with the new Warzone rules, but it's been my experiences then when it comes to sheer weight of bullets, Bauhaus are hard to beat.

The Para-Dropping troops are definitely a way to throw uncertainty into the game. I would recommend that if you are going to para-drop, do it with large squads. Being spread over a large area with a small squad is nearly useless (though it does still tend to cause panic in the rear). The biggest disadvantage to para-dropping is being able to find a suitable landing area. Between enemy troops, and terrain, finding a clear place to land could be a serious problem. One of the biggest changes to this edition of Warzone over 2nd ed is the Close Combat. Well in this game we didn't get to test that much. The few times my Blitzers were forced into Close Combat, it was only because they failed to shoot the guy coming at them in time. I inflicted zero wounds in close combat. Well, who brings a knife to a gunfight anyway, right?

A change I really like is the new "Fumble/Perfect" rules. For instance instead of auto-wounds when a "1" is rolled when shooting, it increases the damage of the weapon by 4. Several of the other changes are more along the lines of Chronopia than they used to be which is also okay by me. They did not add running like they did in Chronopia, but since the average model has three actions, running may change things way too much. All in all it was a good first game (for the Bauhaus guys anyway) and I look forward to exploring the different troops types and force compositions.

BATTLE REPORT



Michael and I both go way back in our Confrontation-playing lives, starting off years ago trading people in Europe for cards and miniatures when all we could get a hold of was French stuff and then translating it to English so we could play. Then, Michael really got the Confrontation bug really bad and the rest is history as you're all probably aware of the huge amount of work he did in translating all of the rules and really being a driving force behind Confrontation over here in the USA. When we were discussing what battle reports to put into this issue of Fictional Reality and Michael suggested Hybrid I definitely wanted to take a crack at it. I'd seen Hybrid at GenCon SoCal in December and really struggled in making a decision on whether to buy it or not, but other new toys eventually won out mainly because I didn't have Dirz or Griffin armies in Confrontation and I've been trying to get off of the "start a new army" drug for a while now. Before the actual game that Michael and I played for this battle report we ran through the first scenario in the book so I could get a better feel for the rules. Up until then I had only read the rules but never played. Michael had played a handful, or so, of games of Hybrid but I didn't expect this to give him too much of an advantage. I chose to play the Dirz in this game and set out to pick my

forces. Michael had picked up a few more blisters of troops for the Dirz (Keratis Warriors and Skorize Warriors) but neither group had been painted yet so I decided to use only troops that Michael had a chance to paint. I could bring eight models with total ranks of eight also. My troops consisted of two Pests of Flesh, three Hybrid, one Neuromancer and one Aberration. I could have taken two more Pests of Flesh in place of the Neuromancer but I was eager to see his powers in action as I'd heard they could be quite powerful and I was more than a bit skeptical about the usefulness of the pests. I drew Adrenaline Injectors and Blood of Darkness as my mutations.

Michael's Griffin Pre-Game Analysis

This is a snatch and grab scenario with a bit of a twist towards the end - that of the random exits. Therefore my basic plan is to grab the gem and get to one of the "Griffin-side" exits before they close up.

I know what Dirz models Mark will be bringing - simply because there aren't many choices. We are playing with my set - and since I'm just starting my Scorpion army, I've only got the Hybrid models plus the Neuromancer painted. That means Mark won't have access to the Keratis and Skorize models. He'll have to bring the Hybrids and the Aberration - the number of Pests of Flesh depends on if he brings the Neuromancer or not. In this scenario, the Aberration is restricted to hanging around the Dirz deployment zone and guarding exit # 4. It won't take part in the battle proper. That means I'll be running a Power Play for most of the game.

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Here's my force:

- * Venerable Ambrosious - He can snipe and he has auras. I'll run him in the middle of my forces to beef 'em up and hopefully shoot at anyone he can see.
- * Misericord - Mira's Second Incarnation is one of the best fighters for you can field in Hybrid. She will be my close combat muscle against the Hybrids. Though the Exorcist is an attractive offer, he can't shoot and he doesn't have Huata-claire, Misericord's sword.
- * Phidias - Phidias is my Sensechal stand in - he's stats are almost as good and he's only a Griffin Level 1.
- * Two Purifiers - these are my regular troops.

For my Auras I drew Aura of Renunciation, Aura of Luck, and Aura of Bliss. I discarded Aura of Renunciation, and kept Aura of Luck (useful in a tight jam) and Aura of Bliss (the +1 to the NV is always a good thing to have). Now, my plan. I'll run in with my force and grab the gem with Phidias or one of the Purifiers. Ambrosious will stay close and Misericord will look for a chance to take the Hybrids down. Get in fast and get out through the closest door. If that fails, then kill Dirz but the Aberration and then head for the 'back door'. Snipe at the big brute until he's dead and then walk out. The configuration of the boards and the doors are very important to this scenario - study them closely to see which ways are the fastest and where there care be kill zones set up with Skilled Firing.

Right, for the Glory of Merin!

Presentation Notes

This battle report lists each turn's activation in the order it occurred using G# or D# to indicate who is activating what figure. In addition, a the name of the model activated is listed as well as it Action Mode. This is followed by a description of what the model did. For example, Misericord activating first and taking skilled firing after moving up to a door would be represented:

G1 - Misericord - Skilled Firing

Misericord moved up to the door, opened it, and prepared to shoot anything that came down the corridor.

For simplicity in detailing movement, each board has been assigned a number:

Deployment

The Griffin models were deployed in a group facing the small door to the size of their deployment zone. Moving up through the side is much quicker than advancing down the main corridor. The Dirz deployed everyone outside of the lab - except the Aberration, who was deployed in its scenario-designated location.

Turn 1

For Initiative, the Griffins rolled a 2 and the Dirz a 6. The Dirz placed their activation order markers first and the Griffins acted first.

Activation Sequence

G1 - Purifier 1 - Basic Move

The first Purifier in the line opened the door and moved out and toward the gem by way of a side passage.

D1 - Aberration - Basic Move

With a growl, the Aberration moved as far as it could onto board 2, knocking down all the doors in his way. It then sat down in front of the third door.

G2 - Purifier 2 - Basic Move

The second Purifier followed the first up the side passage.

D2 - Hybrid 1 - Basic Move

Hybrid 1 entered the lab and made his way toward the dark gem. The race is on!

G3 - Phidias - Basic Move

Phidias followed the Purifiers

D3 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Move

Hybrid 2 followed Hybrid 1.

G4 - Misericord - Basic Move

Lather, rinse, repeat.

D4 - Pest of Flesh 1 - Basic Move.

The first of the walking grenades made for the shelter of the Aberration.

G5 - Ambrosious - Basic Move.

Ambrosious chose to activate no aura this turn. He is the slowest of the Griffins, so he brings up the rear - right behind Misericord.

D5 - Pest of Flesh 2 - Basic Move.

This little bugger followed behind Hybrid 2.

D6 - Hybrid 3 - Basic Move.

The last of the Hybrids entered the lab and moved to support the Aberration.

D7 - Neuromancer - Basic move.

The Neuromancer didn't try any psychic powers this turn. He did move up and adjacent to Hybrid 3.

Well, the Wacky Race is off. The Griffins are moving out in force, all bunched up next to Venerable Ambrosius. No one is in LOS, so no one is at a disadvantage for running (i.e. Basic Move). The Dirz have split their force - half of it to go and try to grab the jewel and the other half to guard the back door. If the Griffin get the jewel first, the first group of Dirz can cover the other two exits - and slow the Griffin down until these close.

Turn 2

The Dirz rolled a 6 for Initiative and the Griffins rolled a 10; the Griffins got to deploy their activation counters first.

Activation Sequence

D1 - Hybrid 1 - Basic Move

Hybrid 1 lead the strike force of the Dirz almost to board 4 by way of the side passage. Along the way, he opened two doors.

G1 - Purifier 1 - Skilled Fire

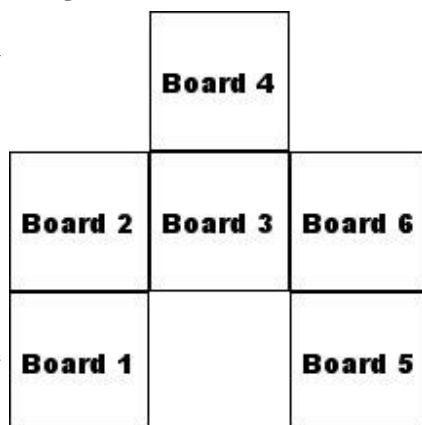
Purifier moved onto board five and positioned himself so he was covering the single door that lead to the Dirz deployment areas.

D2 - Pest of Flesh 2 - Basic Move

The Pest of Flesh 2 followed Hybrid 1.

G2 - Purifier 2 - Basic Move

The second Purifier moved out onto board 5 and headed toward the Gem. Along the way he triggered the first event marker. It wasn't a trap and he drew the Luck Star event (gives 1 re-roll per turn).



D3 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Move

Hybrid 2 followed Hybrid 1.

G3 - Phidias - Basic Move

Phidias moved out and took up a position on Purifier 2's left hand side.

D4 - Abomination - Basic move

The Abomination got in front of the exit and scratched itself.

G4 - Misericord - Basic Move

Misericord moved to Purifier 2's right hand side.

D5 - Pest of Flesh 2 - Basic Move

The second Pest of Flesh also moved to follow Hybrid 1.

G5 - Ambrosious - Basic Move

Ambrosious did not start an aura this turn either. he moved up behind Purifier 2.

D6 - Hybrid 3 - Basic Move

Hybrid 3 followed Hybrid 1.

D7 - Neuromancer - Basic Move

The Neuromancer rolled to activate a psychic power and succeeded. However, he did not choose to activate one this turn after he followed Hybrid 3.

The mad dash for the gem continues with each side dropping off some folks to guard the rear. One thing we noticed is that when the activation counters are flipped over on a game board, they are almost impossible to see against the illustrations.

Turn 3

The Griffins rolled a 4 for initiative and the Dirz rolled a 6. The Dirz got to place first.

Activation Sequence

G1 - Purifier 2 - Skilled Fire

The Purifier moved onto board 4 and within site of the dark gem.



As he didn't have enough movement to get the gem and get away, he positioned himself to cover the gem incase anyone else tried.

D1 - Hybrid 1 - Basic Move

The Hybrid moved on toward the dark gem, stopping only long enough to activate an event counter - it wasn't a trap, so Mark took the card and continued his movement. The Hybrid stopped at the door to the dark gem and opened it.

G2 - Phidias - Nothing

As soon as Phidias was activated, Mark played his event. "Wandering Spirit" meant that Phidias could only move this turn and take no special action. So Phidias moved onto board 4 just insight of the dark gem.

D2 - Hybrid 3 - Basic Move

Hybrid 3 followed Hybrid 1.

G3 - Misericord - Skilled Firing

Misericord moves up next to Phidias and covers the Dark Gem.

D3 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Move

Hybrid 2 lines up behind Hybrid 1.

G4 - Ambrosius - Basic Move

Ambrosius engages the Aura of Bliss, giving a +1 NV to all Griffin with in 2 squares of him. He then moves up next to Misericord and Purifier 2.

D4 - Pest of Flesh 2 - Basic Move

The Pest moves up and adjacent to Hybrid 1.

G5 - Purifier 1 - Skilled Firing

The Purifier doesn't move and keeps covering the door.

D5 - Neuromancer - Basic Move

The Neuromancer opens the door and moves back to confront Purifier 1; only a door stands between them.

D6 - Pest of Flesh 1 - Basic Move

The Pest of Flesh follows the Neuromancer.

D7 - Abomination - Basic Move

The Abomination continues to scratch itself.

Well, things are at a stand off. The Hybrids are hiding just out of line of sight of the Griffins, waiting to pounce if anyone grabs the gem. The Griffin are back with their guns trained on the gem, ready to blast anyone who comes out. Meanwhile, the Neuromancer decides to open a second front and the Abomination starts to get bored.

Turn 4

For Initiative, the Dirz rolled a 4 and the Griffin a 5, the Griffin place their activation markers first and the Dirz move first.

Activation Sequence

D1 - Neuromancer - Skilled Strike

The Neuromancer fails to activate his psychic powers, but opens the door anyway. Everything happens at once!

First, both players turn over their first racial event card - since this is first contact. The Griffin player gets "Consecrated Armor". A model with this armor ignored the first wound that would kill him.

Secondly, Purifier takes his skilled shot at the Neuromancer. The Griffin player may play one action card, a plays a + 3. The Dirz player then plays an action card to cancel the +3 and one action cards for a -4 modifier.



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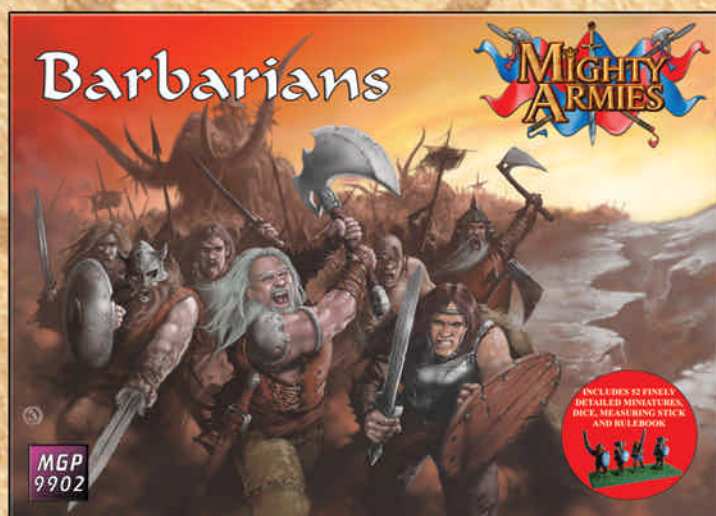
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The Purifier's NV is 3. He gets a -4 for the action cards, +2 to shooting for being a Purifier for a total of $3 + 2 - 4 = 1$. The Purifier rolls a 5 and misses.

Now, the Neuromancer engages the Purifier in close combat. The Dirz plays 2 action cards a +2 each while the Griffin plays two action cards at -2 each. The Neuromancer's NV is 3, +1 for being a Neuromancer, and +1 for Prestige for a total of $3 + 1 + 1 = 5$. His first roll is a 4, which scores a wound on the Purifier. His second attack, due to Skilled Strike, is a 1. The critical hit does 2 more wounds and kills the Purifier.

Grumbling, the Griffin player draws his First Blood event card, Adjusted Shot that gives +3 on a single shot, and a new action card.

G1 - Phidias - Skilled Fire

Phidias slides over one square - remaining out of sight of the Hybrid behind the door, and covers the gem.

D2 - Pest 1 - Basic Move

Since the Purifier is dead, the Pest of Flesh scampers across Board 3, and hunkers down just behind the door leading to Board 4.

G2 - Misericord - Skilled Fire

Misericord follows Phidias lead by sliding over and covering the gem.

D3 - Pest 1 - Basic Move

The Pest, not wishing to get shot to pieces, stays next to Hybrid 1.

G3 - Purifier 2 - Skilled Fire

The remaining Purifier maintains cover on the gem.

D4 - Hybrid 1 - Skilled Fire

Taking a clue from the Griffins, the foremost Hybrid covers the dark gem.

G4 - Ambrosius - Skilled Fire

Ambrosius maintains the Aura of Bliss and turns a quarter turn to his right so he can cover both approaches. At this point, the Neuromancer is too far away for Ambrosius to see him.

D5 - Hybrid 3 - Basic Move

Hybrid 3 leaves Hybrid 1 to cover the gem and moves to support the Neuromancer.

D6 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Move

Hybrid 2 follows Hybrid 3.

D7 - Abomination - Basic Move

Really bored now, the Abomination roars.

In this turn, something actually happens! The Neuromancer goes mano-a-mano with the Griffin rear guard and, as a result, places himself between the Griffin and their exit. I spend the turn moving around. Last turn's event on Phidias meant that I couldn't get them set up the way I wanted, so I took another turn to do it.

Turn 5

The Dirz rolled a 1 for initiative and the Griffin rolled a 4. The Griffin placed activation counters first and the Dirz moved first.



Activation Sequence

The Griffin player places the Consecrated Armor on Phidias. He now ignores the first killing wound he takes.

D1 - Hybrid 3 - Basic Shot

The Hybrid moves out adjacent to the Neuromancer to take a pot shot at the Purifier. The Purifier has LOS to the Hybrid and so his Skilled Fire shot goes off.

The Griffin player plays an action card to force the Dirz player to discard all his Action cards. Doh! The Dirz player had none! The Purifier's NV is $3 + 1$ for his natural ability +1 for Consecrated +1 for Aura of Bliss for a total of 7. He rolls a 2 and scores a single wound. He maintains Skilled Firing.

The wounded Hybrid's NV is $3 - 1$ for his wound for a total of 2. He rolls a 3 and misses.

G1 - Phidias - Novice Firing

Phidias moves toward the Dark Gem. Hybrid 1 snaps off his shot as Phidias moves into view.

The Dirz player plays no action cards, but the Griffin player plays one to give a -1 NV modifier. The Hybrid has an NV of $3 - 1$ for the action card for a total of 2. He rolls a 8 and misses.

Phidias completes his move, picks up the gem and moves toward the exit. He stop with LOS to the Pest of Flesh 1. I play Adjusted Shot event and fire at the Pest. Phidias has a NV of $3 + 2$ for his ability, -1 for the Pests' Velocity, +1 for Consecrated, +1 for Aura of Bliss, and +3 for Adjusted Shot for a total of 9. I roll a 6 and the Pest is liquidated. Mark draws an action card and his first blood event card.

D2 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Shot

Hybrid 2 moves next to Hybrid 1 and snaps off a shot at Phidias. No action cards are played and the Hybrid misses his roll.

G2 - Ambrosius - Expert Firing

Ambrosius keeps up the Aura of Bliss and moves within range of the Hybrids and Neuromancer. I play the Lucky Star event to give me 1 re-roll per turn just before Ambrosius shoots at the Neuromancer.

Ambrosius NV is $3 + 2$ for his innate ability for a total of 5. Ambrosius does not get the benefits of his auras. I roll a 7, which is a miss. On the re-roll, I score a hit with a 2. The Neuromancer takes a wound.

D3 - Neuromancer - Basic Firing

The Neuromancer again fails his psychic power roll, but he does get the Blood of Darkness mutation which gives him one regeneration roll a turn. The Neuromancer then fires at Ambrosius. The Neuromancer's NV is $3 - 1$ for a wound +1 for innate ability for a total of 3. He does not get his Prestige bonus since he's been wounded. He rolls a 7 and misses. At the end of his activate, he also fails to regenerate his lost wound.

G3 - Misericord - Basic Move

Misericord now advances toward the line of Dirz. She stops just 2 squares away, and within 3 of Ambrosius. She then lets loose with Justice of Fire - once per game, all models within 2 squares

of Misericord have to make a SL +2 roll or suffer one wound. The Neuromancer and Hybrid 1 both save, but Hybrid 2 takes a wound.

D4 - Hybrid 1 - Expert Strike

Hybrid 1 rushes out of the room to engage Phidias. As soon as he comes into view, the Purifier lets off with a shot. Needing a 7 to hit, I roll an 8 and miss.

The Hybrid's NV is 3 +2 for Expert Strike, +2 for his innate ability +1 for striking Phidias in the back, for a total of 8. The Hybrid rolls a 3 and Phidias takes a wound.

G4 - Purifier - Expert Firing

The Purifier steps back and fires at Hybrid 1. Needing a 7 to hit, I roll a nine and miss.

D5 - Pest of Flesh - Basic Move

The remaining Pest of Flesh runs follows Hybrid 1 out of the room and gets adjacent to Phidias and Ambrosious. He detonates and wound both of them.

D6 - Abomination - Basic Defense

Bored to sleep, the sounds of gunfire wake the huge beast.

The stalemate breaks this turn. I pick up the gem and move toward the exit while sending my forces out to break the defensive line the Mark has placed in front of me. Meanwhile, in the back-field, Phidias the running back loses two wounds. it doesn't look good.

Turn 6

The Dirz win initiative again with a 9 to the Griffin's 10. The Griffin place first and the Dirz move first. I also roll to see if the exits outside the Dirz deployment zone close off - they don't this turn. Whew!

Activation Sequence

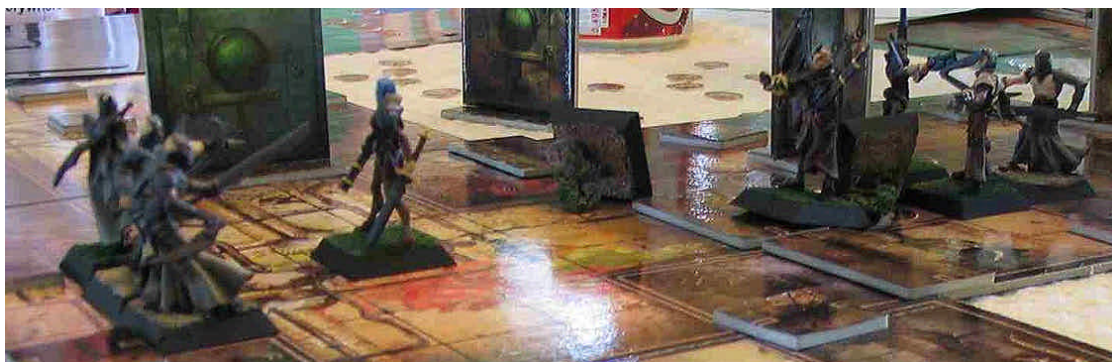
D1 - Hybrid 1 - Skilled Strike

Hybrid 1 presses his advantage with Phidias. Mark plays the Adrenaline Injectors mutation which improves the Hybrid's skill level and gives him a +3 to his NV for one turn. Mark follows this up with the Predator's Instinct event, giving the Hybrid +2 movement and +3 to his NV for the game. The Hybrid must only choose Offensive Combat modes for the rest of the game.

The Hybrid's base NV is 3 +2 for innate ability, +3 Adrenaline Injectors, +3 Predator's Instinct for a total of 11. He makes his first attack roll and hits with a 71. The Consecrated Armor nullifies the wound and therefore the Hybrid doesn't get his second shot.

G1 - Misericord - Skilled Strike

Misericord engages the Neuromancer. Her base NV is 3 +3 for Hauteclaire, +1 for Prestige for a total of 7. I roll a 6, which causes a wound. Since I caused a wound, I roll my second strike and with a 3 the Neuromancer is dead.



D2 - Hybrid 3 - Skilled Strike

Hybrid 3 engages Misericord with the Skilled Strike. He rolls two successful wounds and Misericord is on her last wound.

G2 - Ambrosious - Basic Fire

Ambrosious maintains the Aura of Bliss and advances on the Dirz line. He shoots at Hybrid 2 and scores a wound.

D3 - Hybrid 2 - Basic Strike

Wounded Hybrid 2 engages Misericord to deliver the coup-de-grace, but misses with a 9.

G3 - Phidias - Basic Defense

Phidias, with the gem in hand, scampers toward the exit.

D4 - Abomination - Basic Defense

The monster roars in its impotence.

G4 - Purifier - Basic Shot

The Purifier moves forward and fires at Hybrid 2. He misses, but with his re-roll, he drops the clone.

Wow! Lots of carnage! Two of my three characters are on their last legs - and there are still Hybrids to deal with. It doesn't look good!

Turn 7

For Initiative, I win with a roll of 3 to Mark's 10. However, I flub the exit roll and all the exits, other than the one guarded by the abomination, close.

Activation Sequence

G1 - Misericord - Novice Strike

Misericord activates Hauteclair's "Mercy of the Virtuous" - which allows her to heal one wound per game. She then swings at Hybrid 3. She misses with a roll of an 8, but the re-roll of a 4 hits. Hybrid 3 takes a wound.

D1 - Hybrid 1 - Expert Strike

The Hybrid continues his assault on Phidias. Mark plays the Luck event, allowing him to roll two dice and pick the best. He easily scores a hit and kills Phidias - the gem drops to the floor.

G2 - Ambrosious - Basic Move

Ambrosious maintains the Aura of Bliss. Ambrosious, seeing Phidias fall, scoops up the gem and runs away from Hybrid 1. He makes it through the doorway and heads towards the only exit left, and the Abomination.

D2 - Hybrid 3 - Basic strike

Hybrid 3 swings at Misericord and misses.

G3 - Purifier - Novice Fire

The Purifier moves to block the door that Ambrosius moved through and turns to fire at Hybrid 2. He hits and scores another wound. The Hybrid dies.

D3 - Abomination - Basic Move

The Abomination sits up as he sees an old man approaching. Lunch!



Phidias dies, but passes the gem to Ambrosius. The Venerable one scampers toward the only exit and the Purifier covers his retreat. Misericord prepares to sell her life dearly. Not great, but dramatic I'd say.

Turn 8

My initiative luck continues and I win the roll 2 to 10. Mark places his activation counters first and I move first.

Activation Sequence

G1 - Misericord - Novice Strike

Misericord moves to engage the unwounded Hybrid 1. For the first time in a few turns, I play an action card to force Mark to discard his only action card. Then Misericord misses her swing.

D1 - Hybrid 1 - Skilled Strike

Hybrid 1, with the Predator's instinct, needs a 8 or less to hit Misericord. He misses with a 9.

G2 - Ambrosious - Basic Fire

Ambrosious maintains the Aura of Bliss - and takes a pot shot at the Aberration. He misses - even with the re-roll.

D2 - Aberration - Basic Defense

The Aberration looks at the hole in the wall made by Ambrosious and giggles like a school girl. (Hey, I'm doing the write up, so it giggles.)

G3 - Purifier - Basic Fire

The Purifier leans out the door and snaps off a shot at Hybrid 1, scoring the first wound on this clone.

Misericord hangs on by a thread, and Ambrosious can't hit a creature the size of a small bus.

Turn 9

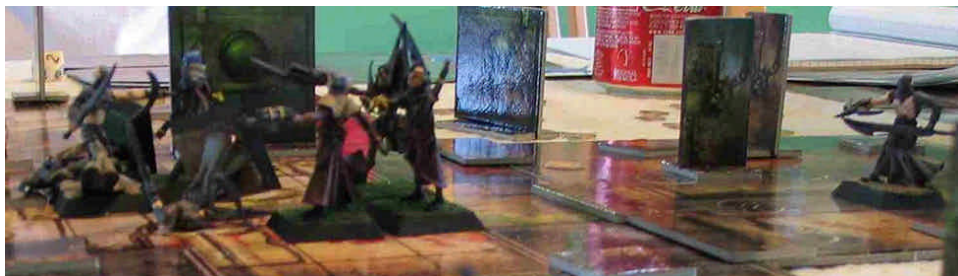
With a roll of a 5 to Marks roll of a 7, I get initiative for the turn.

Activation Sequence

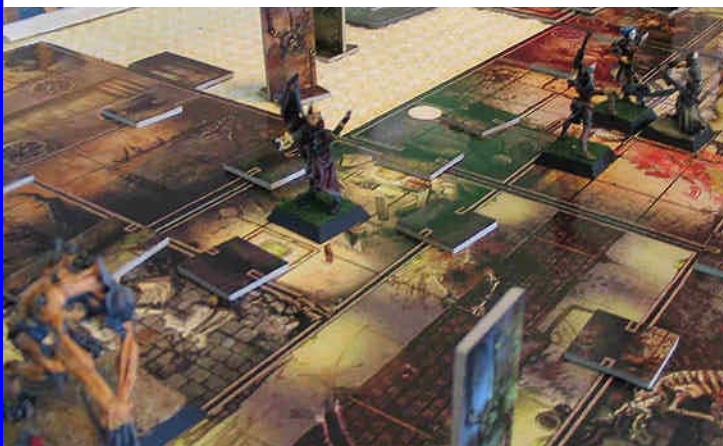
G1 - Purifier - Expert Fire

Taking careful aim, the Purifier shoots at the Hybrid. I roll an 1 and do double damage. This kills the Hybrid.

With the death of the last Hybrid, the game is over. Though Mark still had the Aberration, it could not get to any of my models.



And all of my remaining models had guns. It was only a matter of time now.



Michael's Post-Game Thoughts

Well, that went about as well as can be expected. I was able to stick to my plan and, except for that one event that slowed Phidias down, I was able to keep on my time table. This is a very interesting scenario - yeah its a capture the flag variant, but the closing exits makes it tough for the Griffin.

Looking back, I think the Griffin power play advantage was pivotal. Mark was playing with one hand tied behind his back. He almost made up for it with how he maneuvered to get his forces between me and the exit.

Before I play this scenario again, I will definitely have my other Scorpion models painted up.

Mark's Post-Game Thoughts

Argh! Ok, I'm going to talk about the game as a whole before getting into my issues with how it ended because I did have a lot of fun with Hybrid. I was pretty pleased with how splitting my forces worked out. The Pest of Flesh that was accompanying the Neuromancer really should have just run into the group of Griffin and taken its chances being shot at instead of waiting around the corner to be put down. Running in would have at least given me the opportunity to sacrifice him and cause some wounds. Bad play on my part but I was really pleased at how well (some of it luck of course) the Neuromancer did on his own in that first combat. Actually, him doing so well is what made me decide to run the Pest of Flesh up their on its own.

Oh well, lesson learned is that the pests are primarily walking grenades and that's about it until I see differently. For the most part, my Hybrids performed pretty well and even though I toyed with some ranged fire I'll stick to hand-to-hand with them from now on. A good skill level and a nice bonus in Offensive Combat will make them a staple in future Dirz armies that I play with. I was surprised that we had as long of a standoff as we did up around the gem. I figured that I, with rather lackluster ranged combat ability and Michael having far superior shooty bits, would end up watching him set up and send one guy in to grab the gem and scoot out of there. Somehow, he did not feel too confident in that right away and I'd say that it cost him a turn's worth of other activity. After playing "chicken" for a little while I decided to pull back half of the watching force and leave just

one Hybrid and the other Pest of Flesh up top around the gem. My pull-back worked fairly well in slowing down Michael and the Hybrid that was all high on some Dirz version of PCP really went to town!

Michael and I talked about the game afterwards. A little about what I liked and didn't like about the game itself and then about the scenario. In our first "test" game I mentioned that I was not too fond of their being no breakaway rules or rules similar to many of those found in Confrontation. On further thought this did not bother me as much once I got out of a Confrontation state of mind and looked at Hybrid as more of a board game in the Confrontation universe that simply uses miniatures that are perfectly suited for either game; Hybrid being sort of a gateway drug to Confrontation.

I liked how the game played and for the most part liked how your skill level in a certain ability allows you to do different things, based on your assessment of the situation at hand (like really needing to get two wounds on somebody right now) and the abilities of your troops. I liked, very much in fact, the staggered activation and that you had to try and plan out your turn ahead of time. I was not too fond of the glossy card where you keep track of wounds. I'd rather have a printout, like an army list, where I can just mark them off myself and also have all of my troop stats in one place. Of course, anyone playing Hybrid can do this themselves and in the future I think I will just to keep less clutter on the table.

Ok, here's my gripe, and it has to do with the scenario itself not the game. The way that the doors are set up for this scenario there was no way for the Aberration to get into combat unless Michael decided (or was forced) to come to me. He was forced to come in the direction of the beast, but once there he had the option of either taking shots until it was dead if I decided to block the exit or he could just stack the corridor and rush through to the exit if I backed off. Had Michael been playing the Dirz I'm sure that he'd have felt the same way. I really feel that this scenario is rather unplayable given only the models that are in the Hybrid box. Access to other Dirz that don't come in the box set would have helped but I feel that what comes in the box (scenarios and miniatures) should be playable as is.

Even with that said I did have a lot of fun playing Hybrid and would definitely sit down at the table for another game. After playing the game a few times I do think that it's made my list of "stuff to buy". I just have to think of all the models as playing pieces in a board game and not that I'm starting up two new armies for Confrontation!

TERRAIN BUILDING

Fantasy Buildings – Part I

One of the many reasons that I love gaming with miniatures is that it's not just a game, but a full fledged hobby. The four aspects of miniature gaming that I really love, and I personally enjoy them all equally, are; 1) Collecting and painting the pieces, 2) Building the terrain, 3) Writing the scenarios and of course 4) Playing the game. Every once in a while something exciting happens in one of these four areas that is cool enough to really turn my head. About five years ago, something happened in the terrain building arena that in my humble opinion has yet to be matched, and that was the appearance of Hirst Arts. Bruce Hirst, owner and founder of Hirst Arts, designs and produces molds for plasters and resins. With these molds the innovative terrain builder can make ruins, buildings, dungeons etc. that, simply put, are awesome center pieces of any gaming table. Not only does Hirst Arts make a product that I have yet to see a decent rival, but Bruce also goes the extra mile to make a web site that makes it possible for even the greenest of novices to build a variety of building and terrain pieces. There is something for all levels of expertise on his site, and even though I have been a regular visitor over the years, I still never fail to pick up a few more skill points every time I go rummaging through his extensive "Tips and Tricks" pages. Bruce says that so far they have sold molds to customers in 36 different countries. I guess he is starting to get around.

"While growing up, I wish someone would have told me how to make molds. Making your own special pieces (and duplicates of them) is a great way to personalize your own projects. There are many pieces that I won't get around to making, so the least I can do is show other modelers how to make some of their own items."

Bruce is an ex-school teacher and a country boy from the little town of Buckner Missouri. He started his business of mold making after he was introduced to Games Workshop miniatures by a student. Soon he was playing Warhammer and wanted to make castles for use in the game. He says that he went through several different techniques, but he finally perfected the block making process after about a year of work. After that he started his mold making business as a sideline, and it wasn't long after, that he decided to go into it full time. He and his wife still make everything and run the business out of their home. He also learned web design along the way (again from a student I might add) and handles his web site himself too. Since Hirst Arts has started, it has grown to what it is today with a current repertoire of over sixty different molds available.

GETTING STARTED

Not being the first project Fictional Reality has engaged in using these molds, I wanted to do something a little different this time. Last time the goal was to use as few molds as possible to build a rendition of Castle Liechtenstein. For this project I decided not to limit myself to how many molds I was going to use, and to even try and see how far I could take some of the shapes pro-

duced by the molds. I also want to illustrate the usability of Bruce's web page by using some of his designs as a base line, and modifying them to fit into my projects. Lastly, I want to do something a little farther off the beaten path just to show that these molds provide someone with an active imagination nearly an unlimited variety of possible projects (in fact only a couple of months ago my son won first prize in the artistic category by decorating his cub scout pinewood derby with pieces mostly from the Dragon's Teeth Accessory Mold #80).

I did however set limits for myself using a few guidelines. The reason I like building this stuff is so that I can use what I build in games. Therefore playability plays a very large roll in my designs. Through trial and error, I have found that there are some rules for construction that I generally like to follow in order to enhance the building's use in play. Rules such as

Floors/Levels of a building are 3" tall each (roofs are the possible exception) – This helps in storage and in the "un-stacking" of the levels during play.

Overall dimensions should not exceed 12"x12" if possible – This keeps the weight reasonable and makes it so that more terrain than just the building can be on the gaming table. Storage is also an issue.

Counting the roof, try not to exceed 4 levels – During play, stacking and un-stacking multi-level buildings can be cumbersome. The fewer the better. Not only that, but I have found that when a tall building is in a game, the upper levels are often completely ignored unless you have a scenario that forces players to use the whole building.

A model with a 1" base should be able to stand in all usable parts of the building (for the most part this means stairs have to be wider than they would be if built to scale". The exception to this is the actual doorway itself.

Have multiple doors/access points into a building. I have found that even though very defensible buildings might be desirable in real life. They tend to make for boring games.

Try not to have any rooms smaller than 3"x3" – Model maneuverability becomes very limited in rooms smaller than this.

Try and not have any hallways/passageways smaller than 1 1/2" wide and preferably 2" or wider. – Again for reasons of model maneuverability, and for preserving the painted job on the building. Putting 1" bases in a hallway that is 1" wide has a tendency to scrape the offending walls clean of paint.

Keeping to all these design parameters is not always easy, and I often break one or more of them in my designs. But every time I do, I remember the reason why I had the rule in the first place when it comes to game time. There are several cases where I will sacrifice realism for the sake of playability because that is where my personal priorities lie, but most of these sacrifices are usually limited to the stairwells and the multiple accesses into a building.

What I didn't want to do was duplicate information that can be easily found on the Hirst Arts web site. Therefore things like how to use the molds and how to prepare the bricks for use I generally avoided. I will say though that to do a project like this is more

than a tad labor intensive. Even so, I always have a blast with projects like this.

DESIGN THE PROJECT

The step of designing a project is a crucial step that can sometimes be very time consuming depending on how much detail you put into it. The larger the project, the more crucial it is to have a well thought out design. That being said, I should also point out that working with Plaster of Paris bricks is about the most forgiving media that a person can work with. With a little cutting with an exacto saw, or a little sanding, just about anything can be done with these bricks with relatively little effort. Often you can even break off portions of a building that you didn't like and repair it without leaving any signs of you having done so. Notice here I say "often" and not "always". There have been times when I have tried to make modifications where I have found it less time consuming to simply start over. The down side is that you waste bricks doing this and going back to the molding process after you thought you had enough bricks has on occasion, shall we say, been frustrating.

When trying to come up with what to build for this project, I thought big. I really enjoy playing games where the terrain is in all three dimensions, so when coming up with what I should build, I decided that whatever it was, there would have to be a bridge connecting two buildings. Unfortunately, the planned length of this article will only accommodate one of the buildings, but who knows, perhaps I'll do future article to finish it up. In total there will be three separate structures that use a wide variety of molds. The first structure (the one I will build in this article) I will call the Minotaur Keep". The other building will be called the "House of the Dark Master" and the two will be connected with a "Sky Bridge". The theme for this ambitious project, as the names might imply, will be a sinister looking domicile that would suit a sinister fellow (i.e. the Dark Master). The keep will be where the Dark Master houses his minions. Since I recently purchased a few Minotaurs, I objectively picked Minotaurs to be the minion of choice. Hence the building will be called "Minotaur Keep". Due to the challenges that I saw in the Minotaur Keep building,

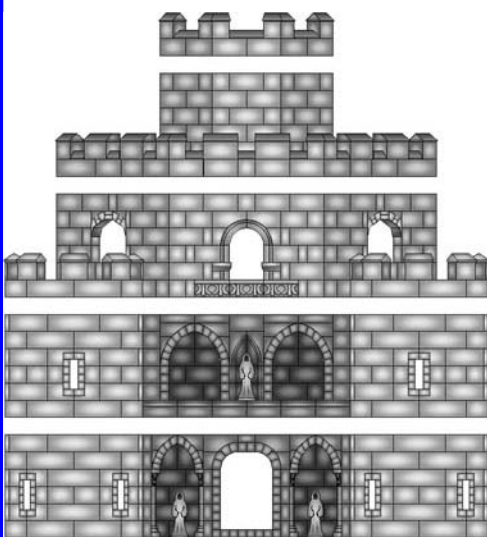
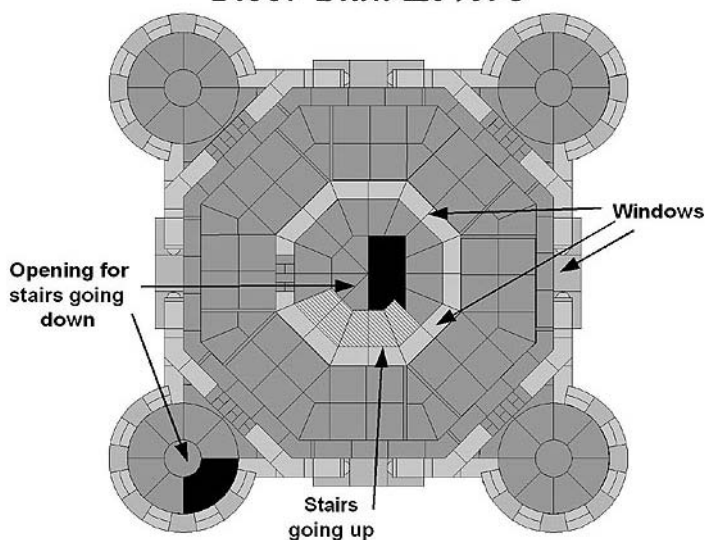
I decided to build that one first.

In designing my projects, I have found that using a good software package really helps. Using a simplistic CAD-like program I can stack my bricks on the computer screen and get a real good idea of how things will look and fit together without ever wasting my bricks in failed "trial and error" efforts. The down

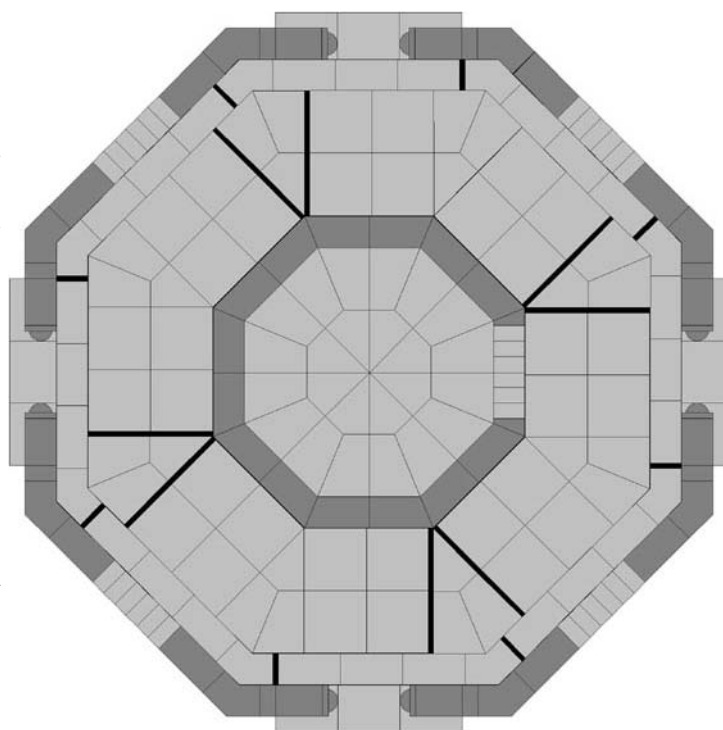
side to this is that it takes time to make sketches of some of the more complicated blocks, but with me being a geek and all, I have found that going through the trouble of making accurate building blocks was worth the effort.

Well, now that I have detailed the general rules that I like to design by, I will start off with a building where I have broken at least two of my own rules. First of all, the overall dimensions of the bottom level are about 14.5" x 14.5". Although this is a couple inches over my normal maximum size, I couldn't really shrink it down and keep my octagon inside an octagon idea. So that rule had to give. The next rule I broke was that I have five levels (counting the roof) which is one more than I like to go. Again, due to the concept of the building I had floating in me head; I just couldn't see getting rid of one of the levels. I'm sure I will pay for breaking these rules when it comes time to pick up this monster and put it on the gaming table.

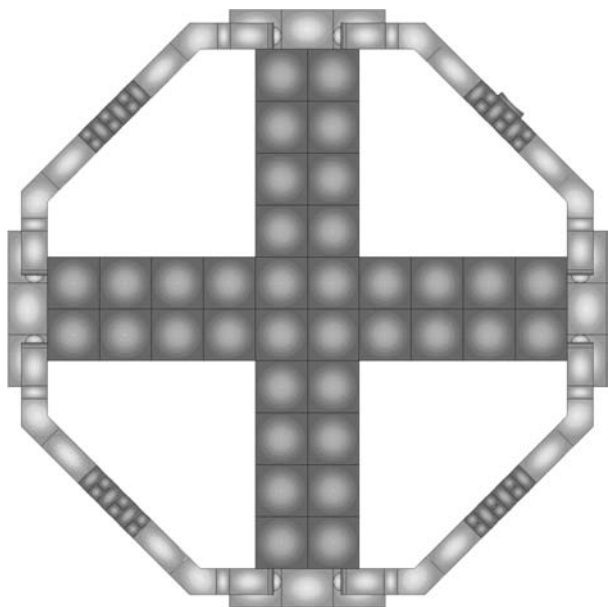
Floor Plan Level 3



Minotaur Keep

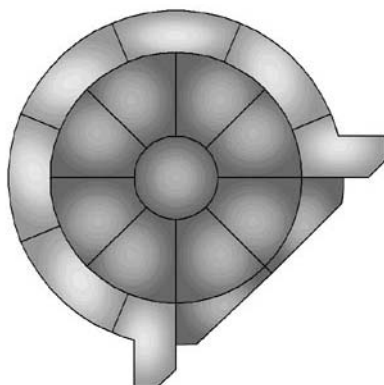


To begin this building I decided to start construction with the third level. I did this since I knew the large octagonal shape was going to be tricky, and I could then build the lower levels to match any changes I might be forced to make. The floor plan was simple in concept, but pretty tricky to build. The exterior wall would be a large octagon, with a small interior octagon that housed the stairwells up and down. Four of the exterior walls would have a window, and the other four walls would have doors that led out to circular balconies. The finished size would have to match the final shape and third level is where that finished size would be determined. For the overall dimensions of the outside octagon, I had to get out my handy dandy calculator to figure out what the best increase of the dimensions might be to minimize the number of "specialty" blocks I would have to make. The magic number I landed on was 2.5". That meant that each side of the large Octagon I increased by 2.5". To within a few hundredths of an inch, this makes the overall width of the Octagon an even 11", a six inch



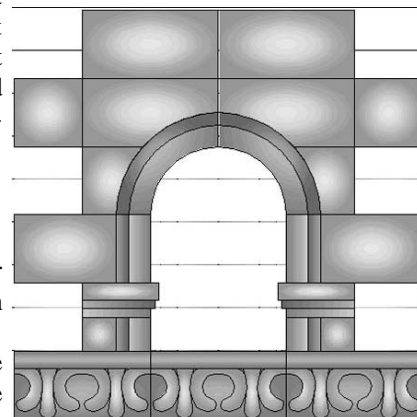
computer showed be that there would still some "hole filing" that would be needed, but I decided that this was an acceptable amount of touch-up work. It was also apparent that since the inside blocks would not be a perfect fit, I would have to start with the outside wall and then build the interior. I did this by assembling the eight sides separately, and letting them dry thoroughly before going on to the next step. After they were good and dry, I glued them together using a 10" by 10" cross of floor tile to help hold its shape. After this dried I removed the floor tiles and started the interior work.

The Interior room I built as if I were building the Octagonal tower on the Hirst Arts web page, and then added to the outside on it by building sections of squares and wedges. As for the hole in coming up from



increase over the original. Building the floor on the center staircase, I determined that it would be easier to simply cut it out after I finished since the hole would not run along brick edges at a couple points. The final ring of half inch wide floor tiles that goes around the entire perimeter, I went with smooth tiles since I found that the corner decorative trim pieces provided with the octagonal tower mold fit the corners nicely (after sanding off the decorative part of course). To finish off the floor I had to go back and fill in the gaps. The dark areas on the figure to the right indicate places where I had to place small shims in to fill the holes on the interior floor.

The next step was to add the four corners. This was an easy step but I wish I could have come up with a better way to tie them into the main structure. I was a little concerned about strength, but found that what little tie in I had seemed to be enough. Notice that one of the corners has two missing floor tiles for the stairs that come up from the level below. After assembling the corner as shown, I sanded down the open edge flat. As you see, there are a couple more holes to fill, but these





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Glue the blocks with wood glue

Be sure the blocks are completely dry first. Elmer's wood glue works fine, but my favorite glue is "Aleen's Tacky Glue" which you can find in the craft department at Wal-mart. It's usually used to glue cloth.



Paint the model with latex paint

Exterior latex house paint works the best. You can also use acrylic craft paint that you would find in the craft department of most stores.

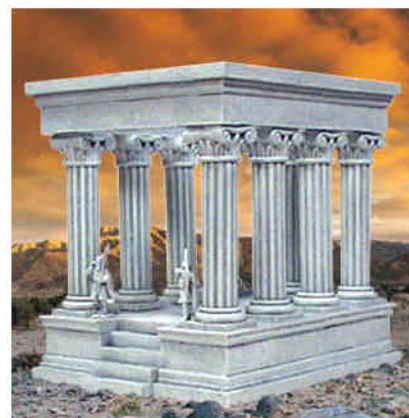
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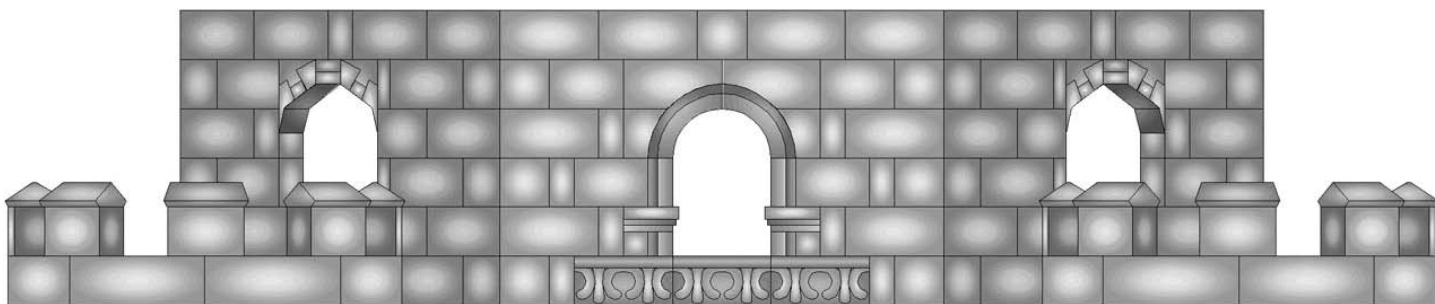


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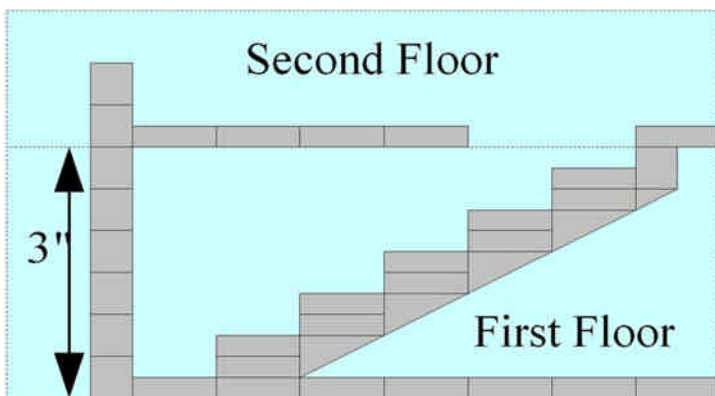
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holes were pretty easy since with only a tad sanding, the small triangular floor tile block from mold #201 fit the hole nicely. For the outside holes I sliced off the tips of the corner fitting blocks in mold #110, and these fit perfectly into those holes.



For the Window design I chose to do a round 1" window using arches from mold #121, edging from mold #170, and a trim piece (the one I used came from Mold #55, but there are several other that work just as well. Under the window I put three decorative blocks found in Mold# 55. You might notice that this window design looks mysteriously similar to Bruce's example windows he uses for his 100 series molds. For the doorways I used the same design as used for the normal octagonal tower, except I made it a half inch wider. This made it easier to center on the wall, and also made it so that it would accommodate the larger Minotaur model. It is supposed to be a Minotaur keep after all. Finishing up the level was the easy part. Building up the walls (final height being 3") and adding the crellenations to the balconies. When building the walls on the interior octagon, I decided to throw in a couple interior windows (the ones normally used from the octagonal tower mold) as long as they didn't interfere with the stairs. I found that putting in two windows, each two walls away from the entrance, worked well with the stairs.



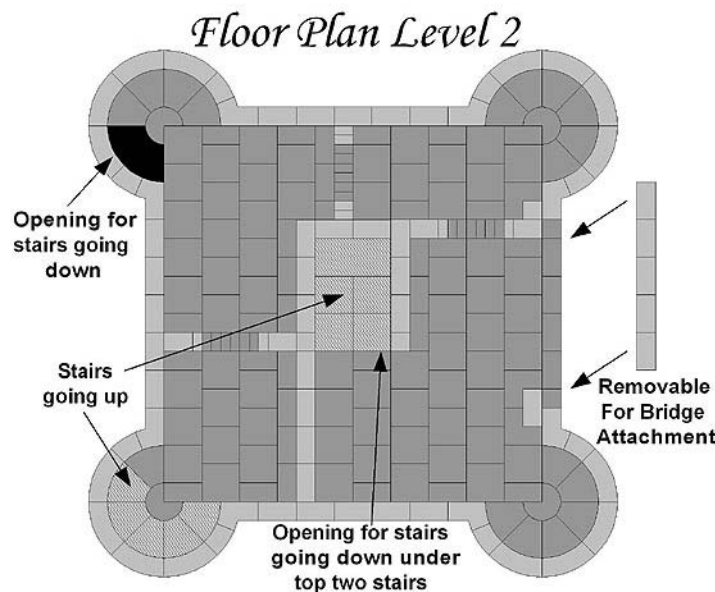
The final steps involved cutting the hole in the center, and adding a staircase going to the next level up. Doing the stairs I used a similar idea you find on the instructions for the octagonal tower, except that I didn't use the pre-fab stair case. Instead I made the stairs wider to allow for model to stand on them. For the supports under the suspended stairs I used two of the small circular arches found in the Dragon's Inn mold. In general, all my staircases have five steps, each step is large enough to hold a model, and the top of each step is a half inch higher then the previous step (or floor as the case may be). For the Floor above the staircase, I remove the floor tiles above the last two steps. This general concept I used throughout this project, though the shapes of the steps and/or staircases as well as their supports may differ. When using the octagonal floor tiles to build the stair case, the

steps prove to be slightly narrow, but still able to balance a model with a 1" base.

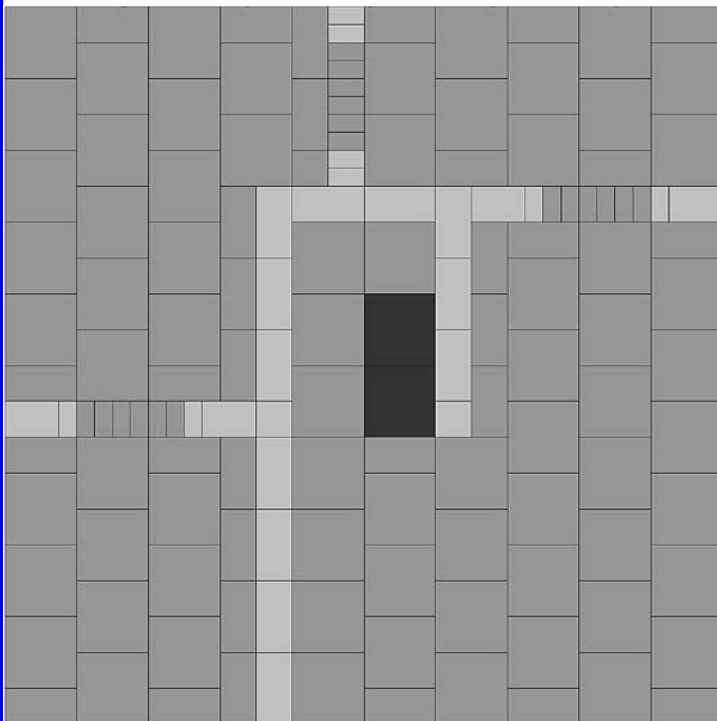
As a final touch I added the decorative faces from mold #44 on either side of the Balcony doors, and decorative scones (complete with flames) from mold # 45 to the outside of the interior room on three of the walls (three of the five that did not already have a window or a door).



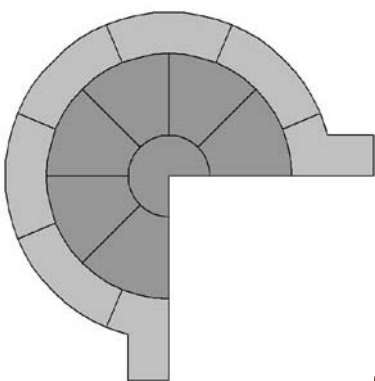
The next level I wanted to tackle was the second level, the one that would go below the level I just finished. This way I could use the level I just finished as a guide to insure all the walls lined



up the way they were supposed to. To start the level I did exactly the opposite of the previous level and start from the inside and worked out.

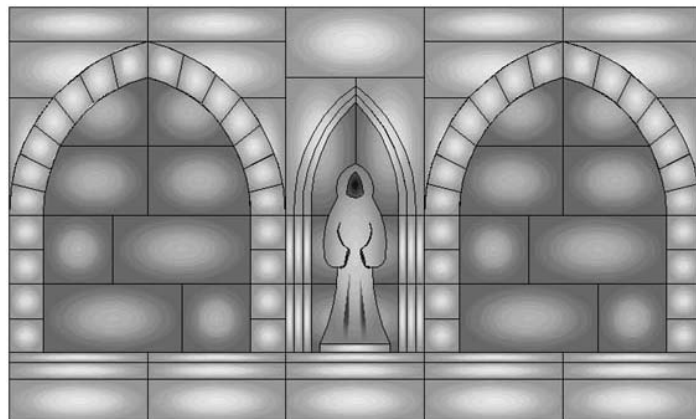


First I laid out the interior 10"x10" floor plan, but the interior walls I only put in two bricks high to start. The hole I left in the center is for the staircase coming from the level below. The doorways I made a half inch wider than normal by making them one and a half inches wide. After that, I added the corners in a similar fashion as the previous level. This time the geometry was a whole lot easier. The center piece (the three quarters of a circle tile) was the only challenging pieces that I had to custom make. One of the corners I assembled not gluing two of the tiles to once again leave an opening for the stairs that would come up from below.

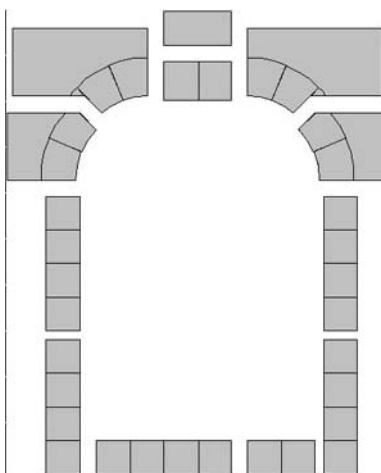


At the same time that I was assembling the four corners, I also assembled the wall section that would fit between the corners. The design I used for the wall sections combined the bricks from several different molds but it fit into my concept that I had floating around in my head. The interior recessed arch comes from the Bell Tower mold (#55) and the cloaked figure is from mold #43. The exterior recessed arches are from Mold #44, though I also needed to use bricks from mold #45 to complete the filler for the recessed section. The base is made from the base blocks used in the gothic church mold (#54). The basic blocks that run along the top are found in a variety of molds. Three of the wall sections are identical, while the fourth section I wanted to be removable so the bottom brick I split into two different bricks. That way I could make the bottom quarter inch permanently attached to the main floor, and the rest of the wall section could

then be removed. The reason I want the section to be removable is to allow me to put in my "sky bridge" at some point, but that will be a different project. To add strength, and allow the removable wall a snug place to sit when it is being used in lieu of the bridge, I added a couple of support that sit behind the wall section and connect to the corner sections.

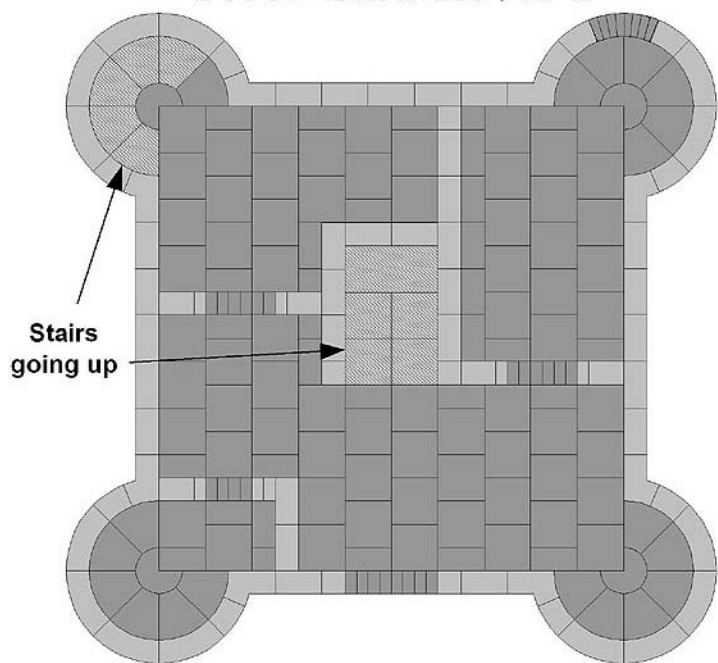


The last step was putting it all together. I glued on the corners and worked my way around the building adding a wall section and then a corner. I would build up the corners and the interior walls to the standard 3" height as I went. I did add arrow slits, two to each corner, as part of the wall. These are the only windows on the entire level. This part actually went fairly fast, and there were no custom bricks needed. The interior doors I made in the same manner as used in the Dragon's Inn on Hirst Arts except that I enlarged the door to accommodate the larger inhabitants of the keep. For the final touches I added a stairway going up in the center stairwell, and another in the bottom left circular corner. For both these I used the same concepts as I discussed in the previous level. The shapes of the stairs were really the only change (I did have to sand off some offending corners of the supports I



used for the circular staircase). In the center stairwell, the highest two steps are directly over the hole leading down.

Floor Plan Level 1



Keeping with my “working backwards” theme, I of course started on level one next. The real reason is that this level is very similar to the previous level and so while everything was still fresh in my little head I thought it best to “use it or lose it.”

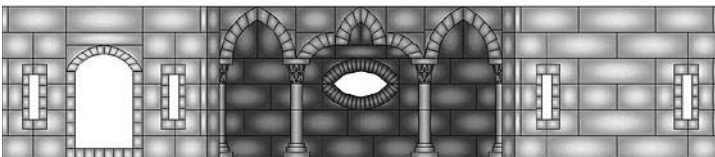
Most of the steps I described for Level 2 are exactly the same for this level with only a few differences. The two large doors or done in the same manner, but the smaller door (I figured this room to be for human sized slaves and/or main courses, that the Minotaur might want to keep around) is the same as used in the Dragon’s Inn without modification. Another minor difference is that on this level I put three arrow slits per corner rather than one (this way they don’t line up).

Also, since this is the ground floor, and I don’t have and level underground, there are no holes for stairwells going down. The only other real differences on this level are the designs I used for the wall sections and the fact that there is a back door in one of the corners. The back door was easy and I used the same plan as found on Hirst Arts for the 4” circular tower (those particular plans also happen to have a section on how to use the connector blocks which would help you out if you were going to duplicate this plan).

I am afraid I used bricks from a few different molds for the wall sections again, but this time not quite so many. To make matters worse, I even used three variations of the design depending on

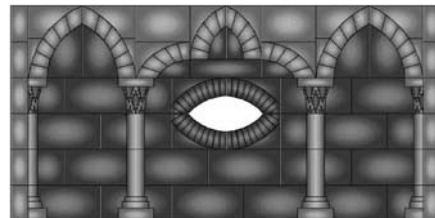
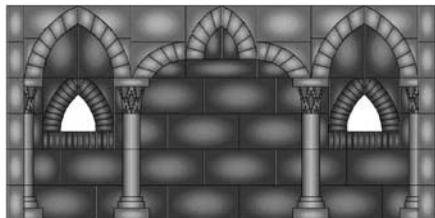
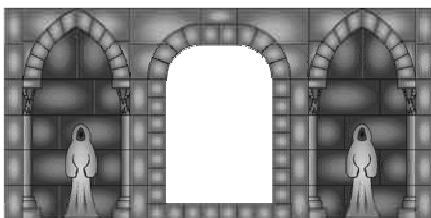
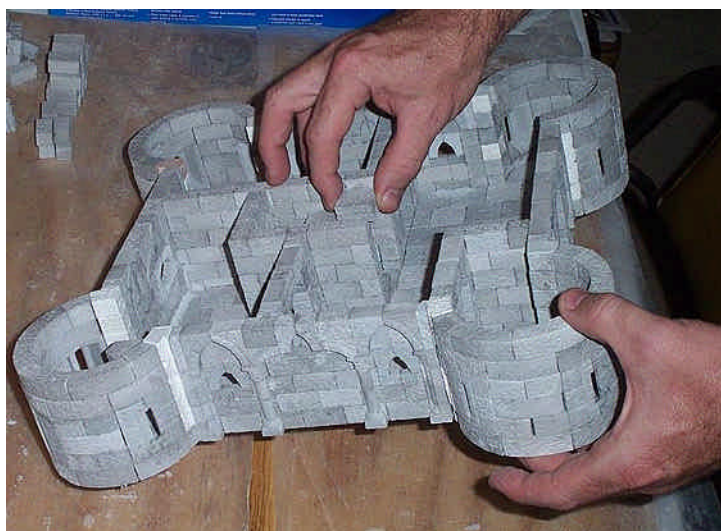
which wall it was on. The front wall section had to accommodate the door of course. The two side section I put small peep-hole windows using small bricks from mold # 250. Then for the back wall I did something similar but put a single “eyelid” window instead of the two peep-hole windows. The same arches from mold # 250 were used for the “eyelid” window, but the lined blocks under the peep-hole windows were not necessary.

The Pillars and Arches (not counting windows and doors) all came from mold #45. The front door design is the same basic concept as used for the interior doors. For all the wall section except for the one with the door, there is a small ¼” x ¼” x1” block under the center arch. This can be either custom made, or it also happens to be a block from mold #201.



Once all wall sections were dry, I flipped over the ones where I used bricks from mold #250 for some touch-up work. Those bricks are the only ones used in these sections where the back side is smooth rather than textured. This was easily remedied with a sharp metal tool (like an awl or dental pick). I simply did a little scratching until they too were textured. I have found that this process might not look perfect at first, but after you paint it and do the dry brushing, it blends right in.

The finishing steps for the level were the same as for level two, and since I didn’t have to worry about a removable wall, this level went together faster and easier than either of the previous two. I added the two staircases and “wha la” three out of five levels are done.



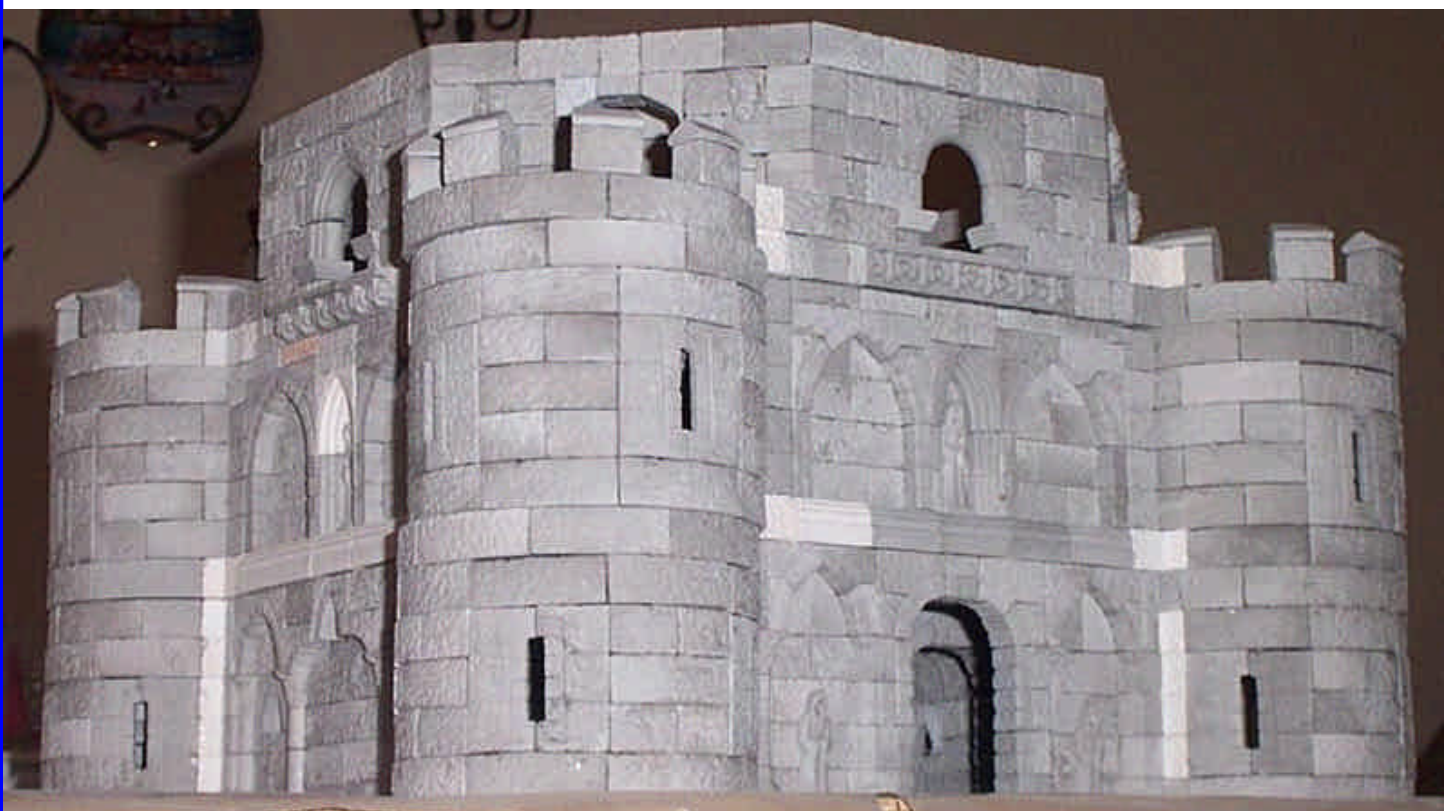
In the pictures you may notice that not all brick seem to be the same color. That is because I have for some time been adding powdered paint to my plaster giving a gray hue. This is so that chips and scraps will not be so obvious. However I still have some of the stark white bricks lying around and I use them when needed.

LOOKING BACK

So far I really like the way the project is progressing and there have not been too many surprises. The biggest thing that I would do differently, if I where to do it all over, is to start with building level 1 first. I thought that it would be easier to conform the outside shape of the lower levels to level three than the other way around. After going through it once, I have reversed my opinion. It proved to be far easier to build up from an existing level that to build down. For levels one and two its not all that important since they are the same basic layout. For level three however, to get the outside walls to line up perfectly with the lower levels takes some work. I think it would have been easier to do it if level two was already made so that I could



use it as a guide. Oh well, live and learn. In part II (i.e. next issue) I'll complete the final two levels, and then go into the fin-



MINIATURE REVIEWS



2808 Taryn, Spearmaiden \$3.99 Bobby Jackson



Once long ago, I was told by Ed Pugh that the design idea behind the Dark Heaven line was for folks who didn't want to assemble their models. Taryn is the third of the Dark Heaven miniatures reviewed here that is a multiple part model. I guess

the single-piece restriction has been lessened. Taryn is a dynamically posed model. She is squatting on her right leg with her left extended. She holds her spear over her head. The second part, her hair, attaches to a bob on the back of her head. This model looks good with or without the hair piece. If you don't want the Taryn to have flowing tresses, you can easily leave it off. Kudos to the sculptor for making it work this way. If you do attach the hair, I would recommend pinning it as the attachment point is very small.

2810 Hyrekia, Sorceress \$3.29 Werner Klocke

Hyrekia, Sorceress, is another two-part Dark Heaven figure. The right hand and wizard's staff are a separate piece. The piece attaches at the wrist and is very small. This should definitely be pinned. There is quite a bit of detail in the model's clothes - especially in her bodice. For contrast, she is wearing a rather plain, long skirt. This sets off nicely the detail on the bodice and arms. Finally, Hyrekia is not sculpted with overly large breasts - which is a nice change from Bay Watch style fantasy figures.



2811 Dain Deepaxe \$3.99 Werner Klocke

Dain Deepaxe is an amazingly detailed dwarf warrior. Like all Dark Heaven models, Dain has an integrated base, but unlike the other models, it is a two-part model. The dwarf's left arm and shield are separate,



attached to the base by a tab. Just cut it off and glue it into place. The model has lots of detail, especially in his beard and his back pack. The shield has a very intricate raised knot pattern, which fits into the entire Nordic theme of the model. This model would make an excellent dwarf fighter character or a champion for a unit of dwarf axe men.

2813 Reaper-War \$9.99 Werner Klocke



This rather large fighter (over 2.25" from the bottom of his base to the tips of his horns) comes in four pieces (body, right and left arms and helmeted head) each of which needed at least some cleaning along the mold lines but there were no defects with any of the pieces. The body of the figure is dressed in heavy plate and scale armor with

many spikes, and while they are not overly exaggerated they do maintain a threatening appearance. The base is nicely detailed with bits of skulls, animal horns and even a small animal skeleton which is pretty intact. He is wearing a large bearskin cloak that uses the bear's paws as clasps and also has a large sword strapped to his back. There was a small bend in the hilt of the sword but this probably occurred during travel.

Each arm has just a tiny bit of flesh showing and they are similarly armored with heavy spiked plate gauntlets and shoulder pads. The shield (left hand) is engraved with what looks like a wild boar's head or some similar beast. There's not too much detail on the shield to make it difficult to paint, but enough so that you can definitely make him stand out. Of course, being over 2" tall will help him stand out too. His right hand carries a massive double-headed battle axe that is also nicely detailed with engraving that will be pretty easy to pick out when painting. I wouldn't call him pin-headed but the seems just a little smaller when compared to the rest of the body. Not a big issue but it was noticeable to me. The helmet is probably the least detailed part of the model. It didn't really need much more than the two massive horns, though. The eyes and cheeks are visible inside the helmet and these bits of flesh will help to contrast the large amounts of armor on this model. If you're looking to use him as a player character model it will probably have to be used in representation of a half-ogre or maybe even a smallish hill giant that has a reason to don heavy spiked armor. Of course, you could say, "forget that" and toss him down as any sort of barbarian leader type, and he would do quite well in that role. I see him mostly as a good figure for a lead villain or he could also serve perfectly well as a general in a Chaos army for Warhammer Fantasy Battles.

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2816 Thomas Hammerfist \$3.49 Sandy Garrity

Thomas is a big, strapping, armor clad, hammer wielding, shield bearing, bearded man who really has no interest in getting in touch with his feminine side. Yep, it's a head-bashing fighter. The model has the integrated base of the Dark Heaven line and is a single piece.

The model has quite a bit of detail on it. His armor is has many straps and details. The greaves are especially detailed with a spiral motif. The shield has a raised emblem of a mailed fist holding three lightning bolts - I guess that Thomas Hammerfist is a member of the Strategic Air Command.

2817 Moor Hound \$6.99 Ben Siens

I have to be honest that one of the first things that ran through my head when I saw the Moor Hound was its striking resemblance (to me anyway) to the Dirz Tigers in Confrontation. Upon further examination of the figure I determined that the similarity in my mind was mostly due to the pose and maybe the rather

well done musculature on each model, but this one is definitely a massive (dire maybe) canine and not a rip-off of the Dirz Tiger. The Moor Hound comes in two pieces (left front leg is separate from the rest of the model) and it did need just a bit of trimming to get it to sit in place perfectly. The rest of the model just needed the mold line cleaned up a bit and really had no flash to speak of. Going back to the muscle detail for a second. Dang! This dog doesn't have a six-pack, he's sporting a whole case. He's ripped, and it doesn't stop just with the abdominals. The front legs are just massive and make the rear legs look small in comparison, but if you look at them on their own they will tear you to shreds too. The snout and stubby tail really seal the canine appearance for me. This figure could be used well as a large hell hound, a dire wolf (or dire hound) or even the wolf form of a larger than normal werewolf. Kind of specialized uses to be sure, but worth exploring for a nice model like this.

2818 Bugbear Warriors (2) \$10.99 Jason Weibe

I first grouped up several of Reaper's bugbears for use in a Dungeon Monster themed Warlord army and was quite happy with those original models. So, what do they go and do? Produce more bugbears for me to add to the hoard! The only thing that disappointed me when I saw these two new brutes was that I would have to try and remember the exact colors I used on the first batch. This blister contains two unique bugbear warriors,

each armed with maces and carrying shields but not too much else in the way of armor. The originals were sculpted by Ben Siens but I don't think that these will have trouble fitting in at all.



Each did need a few minutes of cleaning, both in regards to flash and cleaning up some mold lines. Average height of these guys was right around 1.5" from bottom of base to top of head and you should be able to work them onto a square metal base (or plastic if that's your thing) for a more uniform look when playing Warlord. Each carries several belts, pouches and other bits of stuff like one shoulder pad or different styles of boots. Muscle and facial detail were very well done and they will be a welcome addition to my band of beasties that comes out of the dungeons every once in a while to wreak havoc. Very good figs.

14080 Guardian Angel \$7.99 Sandy Garrity



The Guardian angel is my personal favorite (Clay's favorite) of the models I have looked at for this issue. He is wearing royal roman style plate armor with long flowing robes coming from beneath the armor. The robes are formed below him to hold him off the base to give the illusion that he is in flight. Though I have to say that his uses may be

somewhat limited in your run of the mill RPG game, I think this guy is worth writing into an adventure or campaign just because he so cool. He comes in two pieces; the wings and the body and neither piece needed any straightening on my part. There was limited flash and mold lines that were easy to clean up. The base is metal, presumably to lower its center of gravity making the model stable despite its looks. But I do recommend that you make sure his body is straight up and down when you glue him to the base, or you can forget what I said about it being stable. In total, this model stands about two and three quarters of an inch tall and has a wing span of about three and a quarter inches.

14089 Corrupted Elf Female \$3.99 Werner Klocke

This new Warlord figure looks to me to be a very versatile figure. She comes in two pieces plus a base. The left arm, with the weapon it's holding, needs to be attached. The model is called a "Corrupted Elf", but the only visible indication that she is an elf is the tip of one ear coming through her hair (and possible the shape of her eyes) and the only real indication that she is "corrupted" is the wicked looking tomato slicer in her left hand. Although she is very cool as she is, she could easily be made into

a number of other characters either human or elf. She is well armored and holds her longsword behind her in a fighting stance. She has a head full of hair that is swung to the side as if she is in the middle of battle and her fine facial features have an expression of deep concentration. This model had slight mold lines and just a bit of flash that had to be cleaned off, but besides that, I think this is an excellent model with a large variety of uses.



too busy back there. That being said, I like the armor style and I think the model is a very striking figure.

14096 Reptus Shaman, Female \$5.99 Chaz Elliot

I'll take Reaper's word that this model is a female because I could not tell. Then again, I've never seen a real-life reptus so I'd say they're right on the money. She comes in two pieces (head and rest of body) and attaches to a plastic slottabase. Argh! Another that I'll have to rebase. I'll have to invest in a nice box of those metal bases. Damn, I do like them a lot! The shaman is showing a lot of flesh (again, not enough for me to be able to pick out any obvious female parts if you know what I mean) and is wearing a feathered collar along with pieces of cloth wrappings and bits of armor. Clearly not a frontline fighter but the very spiny armored head does give her a fearsome appearance. In her right hand she carries a wand that looks like it has some kind of crystal or precious stone on each end and in her left hand she carries a gnarled piece of thorny wood as a staff. I did get a chuckle when I looked at the ornamentation on the staff and it reminded me of those gold crown air freshener (I think) things that I've seen in the rear windows of some cars. I'll suppress the urge to paint it to match that though. A few of the mold lines might be a bit hard to get to, like those in the folds of a scroll on her left side. It's a great piece of detail but I just know that I'm going to cut myself trying to get the already very faint mold line that is there down to nothing. Maybe I'll be better off leaving it alone. If you can be careful not to break it her tail can be bent a bit into a new pose, just to make yours stand out. This is definitely a centerpiece character that will look very well next to the Reptus Warlord. Excellent figure!



14090 Wraiths (3) \$11.99 Tim Prow

There are lots of undead figures out there, but few wraiths. While there are tons of skeletons, zombies, ghouls, and vampires, there are just not a large number of wraiths. That is understandable as



wraiths are like ghosts - invisible. How do you, within reason, make an invisible model? Most times, its done by having the wraiths wrapped in cloaks. The War-

lord wraiths are like this. There are three models in the blister. Two of them come as two part models - the wraith and a scythe. The third model is a single piece. Each model is sculpted with the cloak wrapped around an invisible body. The cloaks are plain and without wear. The effect is very nice - the wraiths appear to be in mid-strike. The models are 28mm and would fit in either an undead army or as a really bad surprise in a dungeon.

14091 Black Legionnaire Sergeant \$3.99 Chaz Elliot

Another cool looking Warlord model. This guy is another figure that can be used as either a good guy or a bad guy. The package calls him a Black Legionnaire, but the website calls him an Overlord Sergeant, so don't get confused. Though he comes in a single piece, there is some straightening I had to do of the sword and the long spear. There was also flash and minor mold lines that needed to be cleaned up. The heavily armored model sports an uplifted longsword in his right hand while holding the haft of a long spear behind him. The spear gives the model a heroic or



ceremonial feel to it as it is more ornate than a normal spear and even has a long banner running down its shaft. Also behind him is the scabbard to his sword which sits on top of both the spear shaft and the attached banner. I personally would have preferred leaving off the scabbard as it makes it a bit

14097 Nefsokar Grunts (3) \$9.99 Julie Guthrie



These faceless creatures are an interesting bunch. They are wearing very ornate cloths with lots of detail, and their weapons are also very ornate with fancy gilding. Their faces however are intentionally left completely without detail. Three come in a package and they are each cast as a single piece. The three are also all in different stances. These decked-out automaton-looking troops would obviously do well performing guardian functions or some other high profile but mindless job. The flash and mold lines on these three was very limited but there was some minor weapon adjustments that were required.

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#8023 Wood Elf Noble Oak \$8.00

The first of the three selections from Thunderbolt Mountain is the wood elf noble of Oak. Sculpted like their other elves in a true 30 mm scale the detail that Thunderbolt Mountain can put into their figures is impressive. The Noble pack include both a mounted and standing version of the noble along with a choice of sword or spear to arm them with. The two figures appear identical from the waist up, which I find a plus. The helmet is adorned with an oak leaf, and the face has a slight alien look to it.



Thunderbolt mountain elves have high cheekbones and more almond shaped eyes. They do not look like humans with pointy ears, but truly a different race of creatures. Where the spearmen and archers are lightly armored the Noble Oak has is armored in plate mail. The cloak, armor, and clothes are all decorated with oak leaves. He shield is curved and with the placement of its filigree resembles an oak leaf. The horse is galloping with his mane and the oak leaves weaved into it blowing back. When all of the flash is cleaned the horse will only be connected to the base by his right rear leg. Depending on your plan for using this figure I would recommend considering leaving one of the leg's flash as the entire weight of the figure and all of its force of being bumped will rest on one rather skinny leg.

#8021 Wood Elf Noble Water Lily \$8.00

The second of the Wood elf nobles is the Noble Water Lily. First glance notices the same elvish features described above. The Noble Water Lily's helmet has a flower that I take to be a water lily. (After searching online I can confirm that this is a water lily. My apologies for my lack of horticulture.) The Noble Water Lily comes in both mounted and non-mounted sculpts, and like Thunderbolt Mountain normally does they are packed together. The Noble Water Lily is armored in a scale mail with the scales shaped like water lily leaves. The cloak's trim contains the same leaf design.

The Noble Water Lily is sculpted to be raising his weapon in his right hand. Both a sword and a spear are packaged to choose from. The shield attaches to a post on his left hand and is sculpted in the shape of a leaf. The Noble Water Lily has a more passive feel to him than the Oak. The horse has three of his hooves on the ground and when put together with the rider it all



combines to give the imagery of ordering a charge. Like the other horse leaves are woven into the mane of the horse.

#8025 Wood Elf Noble Hawthorne \$8.00

The third of the wood elf nobles is my favorite. The Noble Hawthorne is the usual 30mm elf, but unlike much of Thunderbolt Mountains elf line the Noble Hawthorne is helmet less. His wavy hair falls below his shoulder, but allows for a better view of his face than a helmet. Noble Hawthorne is armored in chain mail and his cloak has a weave trim not a leaf pattern that is present on the other nobles. There is more of a difference to the mounted and standing version of the Noble Hawthorne.

The standing Noble Hawthorne is resting his left hand on an empty scabbard, while the mounted versions left hand is a little bit higher and the scabbard contains a sword. The shield for the Noble Hawthorne is in a leaf shape, but is more stylized than the other ones. The Noble Hawthorne's horse has a few leaves in his mane, and is galloping. He connects to the base via his hind legs, and is more stable and secure than the Noble Oak.



I really like the quality of Thunderbolt Mountain miniatures, but as always there is some room for improvement. Their miniatures

are always cast very delicately. The spears and swords bend very easily. This is a function of the thinness of the weapons and the metal that they use. I wish that they could find a way to fix this. The swords are almost paper-thin, and I can honestly say without exaggeration that there were pieces of flash thicker than the swords. I recommend people arm them with the spears rather than the swords. This being said, I would rather the weapons bend than break off. There was also more flash on the mounted nobles than I am used to with Thunderbolt Mountain miniatures, but it was easily removed. I know the pictures do not do them justice, but rest assured that the facial features and little detail work spattered throughout the figures is very impressive.



MAGNIFICENT EGOS

From not too far away from us here at Fictional Reality we have a selection of miniatures from Magnificent Egos in hand to take a look at. If you remember, last issue we had several “greens” to drool over but now we have actual metal to touch.



First on the list is Baldorf the Brave (10002), a gnome cavalier that is riding a gnu (a largish African antelope). Baldorf comes in several pieces (Baldorf, his gnu, both hands and a spear, a mace and a shield). Baldorf and the gnu each needed a little cleaning along the mold lines and there was a small amount of flash on each model. You'll need to be careful with the spear so you don't bend it but it really is the perfect size for the model. Baldorf is wearing heavy plate armor, a winged helmet, a cape and has a pleasant look on his face. He doesn't strike me as a stern, “old-time-religion” type of

paladin or cavalier, but more happy to be on his lifelong mission. Stirrups are molded onto his boots and are a nice touch. The gnu wears a saddle with several straps but no barding. The flesh and muscles on it were well done and the face/heads looks good too. While not exaggerated in any way Baldorf will make for a very unique character model. When seated and based Baldorf comes in just a bit taller than regular human-sized models, which is pretty much on the mark for a smallish mount and his rider. The only issue that you might have with him (them) is the regular price of \$14.99 USD which is a bit on the high side.



Torej, Master of the Bullwhip (10011) is next and at \$8.99 his price is a tad higher than other single character models, but this is a very well done figure. Torej carries two whips, the one in his right hand significantly longer than the other, and is wearing leather, plate and chain armor. He was cast as a single-piece model and needed a bit more cleaning than Baldorf, but there were no flaws on the model. Most of the flash was along the whips and was taken

care of pretty easily. His mold line was all but undetectable. Torej is fairly slim but not weak-looking at all. He looks very fit and athletic even with armor/clothing covering almost all of his body. His head is hooded with just his face visible and this was very well done, including a goatee. The armor looks very nice

and while you'll need to use at least three different colors on it (leather, plate and chain) it should come out looking very nice with not too much detail to give you fits but enough that can easily be picked out to look good. He also carries a single pouch on a strap over his left shoulder. A very unique figure here, but one that could have an interesting character or npc built around.



Waldorf, Gnome Gadgeteer (10007) also comes in at \$8.99 USD and comes as two pieces (gnome and his backpack). Waldorf is wearing a heavy leather apron that is stuffed with tools and pouches and carries a wrench in his left hand and is having his sword placed into his right hand. It's very clearly not quite in his grip and that's the intent here. His backpack has some kind of mechanical device that draws his sword from the scabbard and places it into his hand when needed, or also takes it back out

of his hand and puts it away I guess. The sword has some runes inscribed in it and should be easy to bring out with an ink wash. Waldorf is also wearing pretty regular clothing, gloves, boots and goggles. His backpack holds his scabbard, a hammer, a couple scrolls and his sword-drawing device. The arm of the device had to be bent just a bit to get it to line up with where it grabs the sword but this was easy to take care of. As soon as I saw this figure I thought to myself that I've found another Chief Mechanic for my Warmachine Cygnar army. Of course, he's not human like the original Mechanic but he was too cool to pass up for this role and he'll soon be leading a second group of gobbos in my Cygnar army.



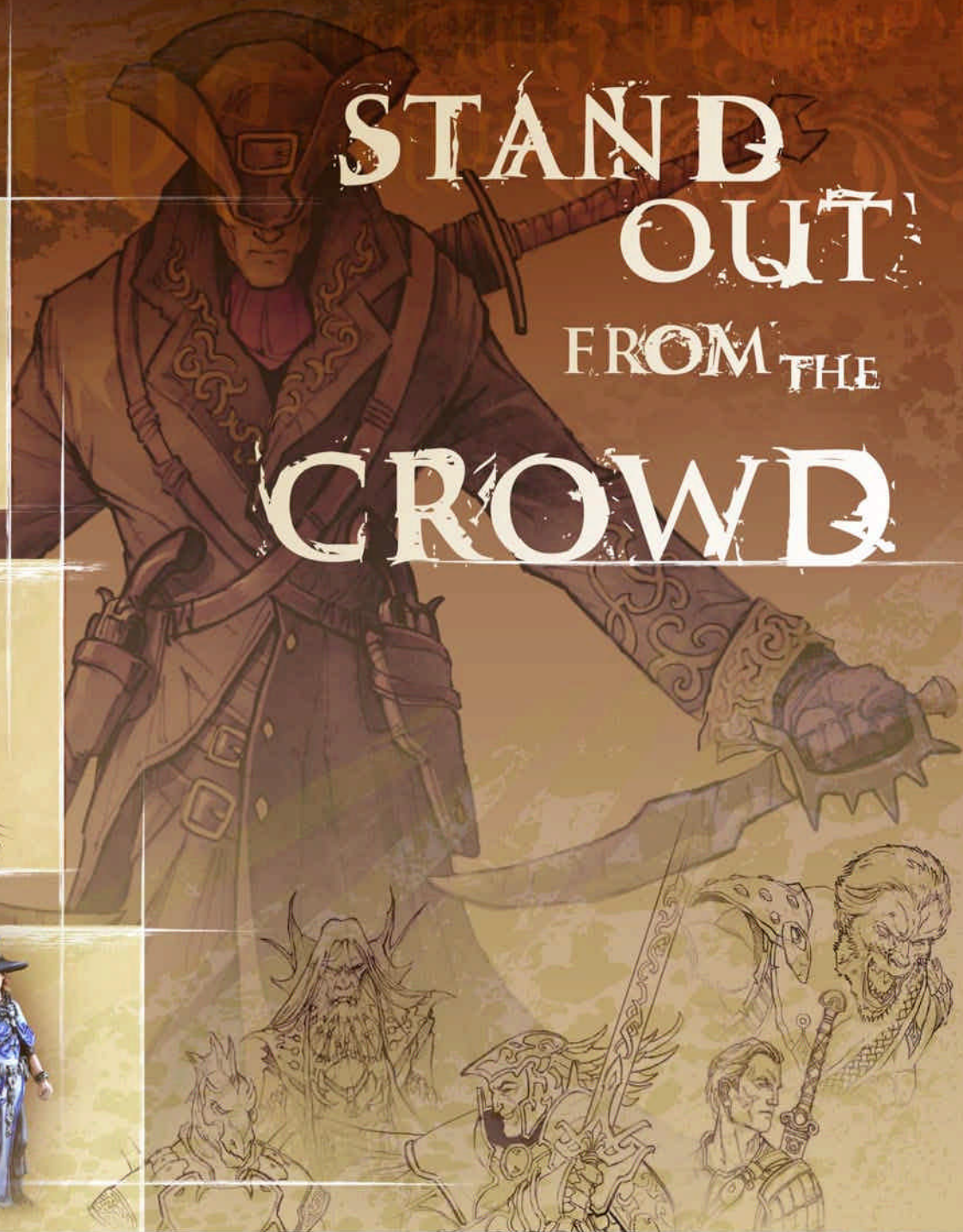
Pincushion the Dart-Throwing Assassin (10009) will set you back a dollar more than the previous two models at \$9.99 USD. He is dressed in very light armor but carries more weapons than I think I've seen on any single figure. Two bandoliers of darts cross his chest along with more darts on each thigh and on each forearm. He also has a dagger on his belt and two more (possibly short swords) on his back. Counting the four

darts that he holds in his hands I came up with 76 weapons on his person! I thought the facial detail was pretty well done and he looks like a hardened killer that really doesn't give a damn about much. His hair is a messy mop that looks a little blown back by the wind. His hands, carrying the darts, needed the most cleaning on this figure, but the rest didn't need much attention at all.

Before getting to our last character model we have a few spell effects to take a look at. First up are two Lesser Helping Hands (30003) that retail at \$5.99 USD for the pair. Each hand is about

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the height of a goblin and has a magical trail flowing out from its wrist area. One looks more like flowing robes while the other has a fiery appearance to it. Each needed just a tiny bit of cleaning but just about anyone running a mage character could make use of these.



The Flaming Sphere (30004) is a model that I was very glad to see. From an aesthetic point of view I tired of using my red d12 to chase monsters around a battle map. It's a bit larger than I had envisioned the spell (and bigger than my d12 too) but I've never actually seen a flaming sphere so I'll defer to the artist's representation here. It

comes in two halves and might need just a bit of putty work in a few places but you could probably just glue it together, grab the primer, and be ok. At \$6.99 USD you might find it a bit expensive but any mage with this spell would be happy to have one and DM's with enemy npc spellcasters would also benefit from it. I can't wait to drop it on the table and chase something around.



The Levitating Disk (30019) is the final spell effect and it didn't have a suggested price at the time of this review. It has a solid surface with a wispy swirling cloud effect holding it up. Yes, it's uses are certainly limited to spellcasters but I do like

the idea of models to represent things like this, especially since our gaming group is very big on using miniatures in pretty much all of our role-playing games.

Last up is the Magnificent Ego (10000) himself. He'll set you back about ten bucks but it's a pretty darn cool figure. He's an elven mage/rogue and will do a splendid job representing just that. He could also easily work as a half-elf or human too. He comes in three pieces (body, right hand and cloak) and went together pretty easily. The separate cloak piece is actually the bottom half of the garment that hangs down his back and over the sword that he carries on his back. It will be a bit more work to paint and was certainly more work to sculpt this way but he'll also stand out more than if it was just molded as a single piece. There is also some detail work sculpted into the cape that will be easy to pick out when painting. He is wearing very light clothes just as you would expect for a spellcasting thief. There is a lot of detail sculpted on the figure, especially on the front side of his cloak and his sash. He'll definitely take longer to paint well but it will be worth it in the end. His right hand is bent as if he's examining his nails to make sure that they are properly manicured and this does add to the character of the model. He does look the part of a pompous



ass. His hat is wide brimmed and holds two feathers and his long hair trails down just past his shoulders. He looks tall and thin like Torej but not unnaturally so. On his belt is a small pouch and what looks like a carrier for spell components.



JEFF VALENT STUDIOS

The next three figures, from Jeff Valent Studios, may not exactly be *new* releases but you may not have come across them yet. They are from the Great Rail Wars range of figures and also appear on the Pinnacle/Great White Games webstore.

The first, sculpted by Tim Prow, is a Wendigo (GRW1236) that has a retail price of \$9.95 USD. It comes in just two pieces (right arm and rest of the body) with a 40mm square plastic slotta-base. The right arm went easily into the socket on the body and does have a bit of pose-ability if you want to break out the green putty. If not, it's fine as is. There was a bit of flash between the legs and pretty much every finger had flash that needed to be cleaned.

The Wendigo has a very furry coat that is fairly short over most of his body but becomes shaggy and long from his knees on down. Muscle detail was noticeable beneath the fur but was not over exaggerated. The focal point of the figure will be the face/head. Man, this guy has a mouth full of teeth! They are so large that they'd always be exposed. We're talking at least several inches in scale length, actually, maybe closer to a foot in size when you consider that the Wendigo himself is ogre-sized. He also has two bug-like eyes and really no noticeable nose. The head is the only part of the model that is somewhat out of place. It's not that it's damaged or anything. It just reminds me a bit of an underwater monster and I don't think it fits quite right with the rest of the model.



Another big boy, the Sasquatch (GRW1235) comes in at \$12.95 USD. He is larger than the Wendigo and also comes on a large base. The Sasquatch was also sculpted by Tim Prow and he comes in five pieces (body, arms and half a log, other half of log, and two log ends). From first look I liked the Sasquatch a bit more than the Wendigo but when I put him together this faded a bit. He just did not



want to go together without a fight. Nothing seemed to fit right. The two arms holding the bottom half of the log left a gap at the elbows that will need putty and the top half of the log didn't quite line up right along the seam that faces the rear of the model. Neither of the log ends fit well either. Both left gaps and will need putty work to be made right. Flash was at about the same level as the Wendigo, not too much but enough that it will take you a few minutes to get rid of it all. With that said, I still like this model, I'm just frustrated by it. The body and fur are similar to the Wendigo, down to the shaggy legs, but the face is much more suited to the figure. It's menacing and ugly (not badly sculpted, just ugly) with a couple of teeth jutting out at odd angles. He has a large bulbous nose and sunken eyes that lie between prominent cheeks and eyebrows. I like that it was sculpted with a big log to pitch at someone but wish that the execution of the model had been better.

Last from Jeff is a Werewolf (GRW1228) that will set you back \$9.95 USD. He comes in two pieces (upper and lower halves of the figure) and is posed hunched over ready to launch himself forward at a soon-to-be victim. He's relatively recently transformed as he's still wearing torn pants and shirt. I really like the pose of the figure, but the two halves did not fit together perfectly. A very noticeable gap was left between the halves when it was put together. You'll either need to use putty to fill the gap or trim the pieces where they fit together. I'll take him apart and do some cutting and trimming as I think a putty job here will be easy to spot. Flash was present on various parts of the model and the mold line was most prominent on this figure, out of the three. Muscle detail was very good and I really liked the head/face. It's lips are pulled back in a vicious snarl with many teeth exposed and a long tongue hanging out. It comes on an integrated oblong base, that I'll end up trimming to have it closer to a 25mm square or round base. Out of the three I favor the Werewolf, but that probably has something to do with me wanting to add him to my "Were" army in the Dungeons & Dragons miniatures game.



Feral Elves Heavy Infantry

These models, simply put, are very cool. Not only is the craftsmanship and the detail outstanding, but they are creative and original. These ladies are wearing a little bit of fur that covers the more "sensitive" areas. The fur is then covered with armor that consists of bone and scales. The ladies themselves have

horns (of the bighorn mountain sheep variety) and cloven hooves giving them a fairly bestial appearance. They have leather leggings that cover from about mid thigh down to their cloven hooves, and leather bracers. At the knees and shoulders there are pads that are reinforced with bone. In general, the heavy infantry has three types of models, each with three figures;

The first warrior is raising her heavy mace over her head with her other hand balled into a fist at her hip. At first glance it appears that she is resting the mace on her thigh, but closer inspection shows that the butt of the half is actually behind her leg and not on it. There was no flash on the model and I was hard press this find even a hint of a mold line under her upraised arm.



The next warrior (actually called warrior 5 in the heavy infantry listing) is holding her heavy mace in the "forward march" position as she advances. For this one, the mold line under the chin and on the club was a little more pronounced, but again the model was free of flash. The part of the haft behind her hands was bent and will need to be cut free of her body to be straightened. One thing I really like about these models in the facial detail, and this one is a good example. With her pronounce cheek bones and lips, her face will be relatively easy to highlight.



The last of the heavy mace models is listed as warrior 6 in the heavy infantry rolls. She is standing like she means business like, and has the facial expression to match it. Holding her heavy mace at the ready she appears to be about ready to deal out some punishment. There was a bit of flash between the body and the lower arm, but not even a mold line anywhere else. Again, I thought her facial detail was great!



The next type of warrior in the heavy infantry repertoire is the Great Axes. The spiked axes appear to be made of crudely shaped stone, but I'm betting they can put the hurt on anyone catching these babies in the teeth. This model has her mouth open in a battle yell as her stomach muscles strain to deal the death blow on some poor victim. There was no flash on the model and the only mold line was on the haft of the axe.

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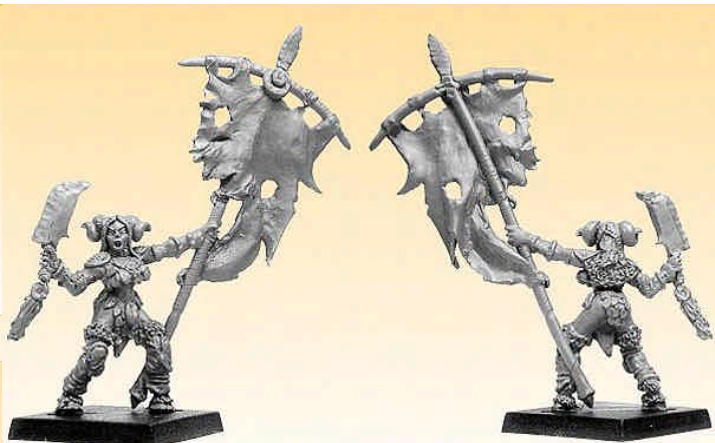
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Feral Line infantry standard bearer By Alejandro Gutiérrez Franco



The next Great axe wielder appears to be in a more defensive stance as she leans or moves to her right. This model had more flash on her than her compatriots and the haft of her axe has a slight curve to it that will be hard to remove since it's against her body. Still, the detail on the model is really superb.



The next model in the command and control section is the standard bearer. She sports a stone sword in one hand and a well worn battle banner in the other. Like her leader, her brow is furrowed as she appears to be yelling encouragement to her sisters. There were a few small bits of flash on the banner, and the bottom of her sword but besides that she was clean.



The final model of the Axe wielding variety is called out as warrior 4 on the heavy infantry lists. She strikes me to be the youngest of the warriors in her entourage. I'm had a rough time putting my finger on what gave me this impression, but I think it might be that her horns are not quite as developed as her fellows. It might also be that she seems to be holding her axe with a little less familiarity than the others. Even her facial expression has the determined look of someone fresh out of boot camp that doesn't yet know the mess they have got themselves into. As for flash, there was some under her left arm and there were no mold lines that I could see.

The leader of these fearsome ladies is a model that comes in two pieces. The second piece that glues on to her back looks



like ornamental wings, though the wings appear to be bat like or insectoid in nature. With her mace held over her head with one hand, she points off into the distance with her other while yelling orders presumably to her troops. She came free of flash and no mold line was visible, but there was a bit of flash on the wing tips. Her mace came bent, but was easily straightened. Once again, the detail on this model really makes it a nice piece.

The final heavy infantry model for the feral elves is a musician. This is the second of the two models that come in two pieces. For this one, the second piece in the part of the horn that loops behind her back. The musician is obviously a much younger elf than her warrior brethren. Her horns have barley begun to develop, and her hair is cropped shorter than the others. Though her armor is the same as the others, she is not wearing a helmet, nor is there a weapon visible (though I guess a whack with that horn of hers might smart). There was no flash or mold lines anywhere to be found on her.



We've got a pretty good number of figures from Kryomek USA to take a look at this issue so let's get started. First up is a group of five security walkers, each retailing for \$9.95 USD. All five come with two legs and a central body unit and carious pieces of weaponry.

The Urban Enforcer (KSW-001) is armed with two roles in mind. First, it has two forward mounted flame throwers that are molded to the body unit for street level pacification and a light machinegun on a upward pointing turret to take care of any rooftop snipers. The body was well centered when cast and did not have any



'shift'. There was some flash and a slight mold line but no defects here. All of the legs on all five models are the same and each fit into place easily and I did not see a need to pin them.



The next two (above, KSW-02 and KSW-03) are designed for more light duty like scouting or industrial center perimeter defense.



The K-Gunner (left, KSW-04) is the most heavily armed bunch if dealing solely with infantry threats, and comes with a total of five chain guns, two on each side and one center-mounted. Like the others, it went together easily enough.

Last of the security bots is the K a n n o n e e r (center, KSW-05)

that comes armed with two gauss cannons, a light machinegun and a grenade launcher. Definitely designed to deal with a variety of threats from infantry to light armored vehicles.



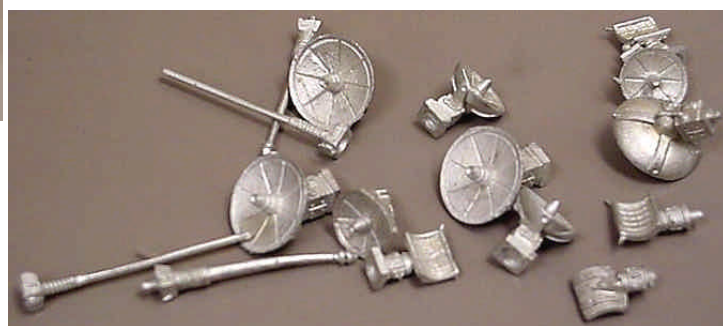
Most of pieces of these five security walkers were well molded but two of the body pieces were off center and required a bit of repair work on my part. I have no doubt that Martin at Kryomek USA would graciously replace any if you came up with one that was mis-cast. The body and legs did have flash that needed to be cleaned also but after a few minutes spent on each model they were ready for assembly and primer. Each one also comes with a metal base.

Uses for these obviously include hitting the table in Kryomek in support of human units but I see them soon seeing service in my d20 Modern game as security robots threatening my players. Warhammer 40K Imperial Guard players could probably also find use for them as alternate Sentinels. Players of human forces in Kryomek will definitely get



value for their ten bucks, and if you're not playing Kryomek you can also find good uses for them if you try.

Above is a set of vehicle weapons (\$6.95 USD) ranging from single and double chain guns to heavy cannons and roof turreted light machineguns like those on the security robots we just took a



look at. I counted thirteen weapons in the pack and if you're into kit-bashing vehicles they will certainly find use in your hands. To go along with the weapon systems there is also a set of antenna and communication dishes (also \$6.95 USD). You get a nice selection of large and small dishes and I'd actually find more use for these than the weapon pack as addition of a radar dish here or an antenna there is more cosmetic than anything else and is not likely to provoke a question from your opponent about some new weapon system that you've tacked onto a model. Both are good sets but I think this one is the more immediately useful of the two.

Ok, on to something a bit different. Below are some aliens and bar patrons. Of course there are drunks in the far future! These four guys didn't have a lot of flash to clean and made me think

about all of the different races present in the cantina scene in Star Wars. These would find great use in the Star Wars or Traveller²⁰ role-playing games and the latter is exactly where I plan to drop them in. Use as random citizens wandering around a battle in Kryomek, Warhammer 40K, Warzone (or whatever else you like) is also a great use for them. If you're into sci-fi games then these are pretty immediately useful in my mind.



The last Kryomek miniature (and the word "mini" belongs nowhere near this figure) is that of a Kryomek Swarm Master. This is a resin model that comes in six pieces but other than some Forge World and Armorcast stuff for Warhammer 40K I do believe that this is easily one of the largest figures that you'll plunk down on the game table. Its six pieces in-

clude a textured base that measures close to 3" x 7" and it bears an inscription showing that the model was originally sculpted by Bob Olley back in 1996 and is just now being put into production. The top picture is that of the assembled Swarm master by itself and the one on the bottom shows it in comparison to some other figs. The Bio-Giant (by Excelsior Entertainment for Ultimate Warzone) stands about 5.25" tall from bottom of base to the tip of his tallest spike, the Cygnar Warjack (by Privateer Press for Warmachine)

comes in at about 2.75" tall and the Simian Gladiator (by Black Orc Games for 100 Kingdoms) is also a burly lad, standing 2.5" tall when measured to the top of his feathered helmet. All of these look downright puny when compared to the Swarm Master. I could never imagine a scenario where I would call a Bio-Giant puny but here it is.

The base of the Swarm Master has some well detailed large



rocks on it and the remains of a power-armored human trooper that didn't fare too well when confronted with this monstrosity. That leaves five pieces to the actual model, but I do like the inclusion of the base as part of the model. I suppose you could glue it down to a CD if you wanted a circular base instead but then the job of texturing it, which was very nicely done here, is left to you. There are three sections that make up the "body" and each fit together well but each also needed some minor cleaning.



Luftwaffe 1946 Miniatures



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The resin casting was well done and there were no defects on these pieces. Most of the cleaning was just trimming of very thin webbing between some of the parts of the model that stuck out away from the body. In the pictures you can make out where the pieces connect, but I don't think that any of these connection spots will need any putty. Once it's primed and has a base coat on it I think they'll disappear. The two piece of the head (top and bottom) went together easily enough. The top piece needed the most cleaning of any part of the model. It just had a few more points that needed to be trimmed. They looked like areas where the resin was pored in, but hey what do I know about manufacturing resin models? For a model this size it's very lightweight, which is what you'd expect for being made out of resin. Being this light and well balanced I went for straight super glue on assembly. I seriously doubt you'll need anything stronger and I quickly discounted any thoughts of needing to pin the pieces in place. Being a resin model you'll also want to wash all of the pieces in some soapy water before assembly.

This model will set you back a pretty penny. In fact, 12,500 pennies, that's \$125.00 in real money. If you're a Kryomex bug player then you probably have some drool to clean off of your keyboard. They (Kryomex bug players) are the biggest target for this model and rightly so. Damn, it's just super huge and will likely cause a serious pucker factor when put out on the table! For everyone else it's going to need to fill some double (or triple) duty functions, I suspect. As a Dungeons and Dragons DM (and player) some of my first crossover thoughts were to use the Swarm Master as a giant Purple Worm. Sure, there are some models out there of head sections of giant worms pushing up through the ground, but this one's all the way out and will also induce that "pucker factor one-million" thing, so that's good. A Frost Worm is also another use, but then you'll be torn on how to paint it. At least I would be. Maybe a very pale purplish-white, yeah that's the ticket. I'm sure that enterprising Warhammer 40K Tyranid players that are not afraid to experiment and branch out beyond the codex (with their opponent's permission of course) could find a use for it. If you're using bug-like miniatures in one of the several 'generic' sci-fi games out there then this would also make a good addition to your army. It provides some nice armored support and shock value to these types of armies.

Luftwaffe 1946

"Luftwaffe 1946" is an alternate history setting by MSD Games in which the Second World War did not end in May of 1945. Rather due to changes in the outcome of certain key events, the war drags on. "Luftwaffe 1946" is a 1/300th air-to-air miniatures game. Each Luftwaffe package includes two aircraft miniatures for \$5.00. No base or flying stand is included in the package.

P-51D Mustang (US-003)

The two miniatures in this pack have a little flash on the rear port stabilizer and just under the propeller housing. Other than that, the miniatures are clean with good detail. The wings and tail are detailed with lines denoting the location of the flaps on the top



but not the bottom. The engine exhausts are also molded on the side of the fuselage. This is a useful plan for either "Luftwaffe 1946" or a historical WWII air combat game.

Typhoon Mk IB (UK-009)

As dependable as the Mustang, the Typhoon was an excellent end-of-war fighter for the RAF. On the two models I reviewed, there was no visible flash, though the port wing was rough on the trailing ledge. Like the Mustang, the Typhoon has its control surfaces denoted. The leading-edge wing guns are well defined. This is an excellent model for any WWII air combat game.



Focke-Wulf FW-190A (GE-004)

Not as famous as the Messerschmitt Me 209, the FW-190A is considered by many to be the best German fighter of World War II. The two models have more flash than the Typhoons but not as much as the Mustangs. The control surfaces are outlined as were the others. Like the Typhoon, the leading-edge guns are well defined. I would say this would make an excellent model for WWII air combat games, but then I'd be in a bit of a rut.



Messerschmitt ME-262 Shwabe (GE-007)

Right, so much for the regular planes, now come the interesting one. The first up is the ME-262, the first in-service jet fighter. The Me-163 Komet did fly earlier, but it was a rocket plane. The 262 models are slightly larger than the other miniatures. It has the same level of detailing but the least flash of all the miniatures so far. The fact that these are the first jet fighters just gives them a bit more "cool factor" than the others. I see that it is these and the other advanced technology fighters that will fire player's imagination.



Gotha Go-229 (GE-022)

I've saved the coolest for last! The Gotha Go-229 was the first turbojet flying wing - for all the cool history bits, check out <http://www.geocities.com/nedu537/go229/>. At first glance, this model looks like a B2 bomber. Given that the B2 is the great grandchild of the Gotha, this is fitting. The model has more flash than the others, but the detail is still sharp. Yep, if the Me-262 is the first of the interesting ones, this one will be first of the cool ones.

In general, all of these models are well cast and reasonably priced. If you play a WWII era combat game, either "Luftwaffe 1946" or another one, these would be excellent choices.





(with the accompanying hand) comes detached. This long legged model is rather delicate in form but still it does not suffer from any strength issues that I could detect. Even though she is up on one leg, and the other leg is lifted in the air, the model is quite sturdy. For armor she has a couple strategically placed strips of cloth, a small wooden shield, and anklets. This is a really nice model, but I'll bet that in battle distracting enemy warriors may be her prime advantage.

For me, the four Adiken models that I reviewed this quarter was my first exposure to Adiken products. I have to say that I was suitably impressed. They have obviously taken a few extra steps to make their product noticeable, and as far as I'm concerned, they succeeded. First of all, all four of these 28mm models had absolutely no flash and even the mold lines were rare and difficult to detect when there were any at all. Second of all, the model came on an attached oval base that fits nicely into a molded plastic square base if you prefer "base" mounted pieces. The bases have a oval depression so that the model's base is flush with the plastic base. Also, the bases are solid plastic rather than the standard hollow ones giving the base a tad bit more weight, and giving the model a good feel in general. In fact, three of the four models came ready to paint or play right out of the package (the fourth came in two pieces and required her spear to be glued on prior to use). The metal used in the figures appears to be a higher quality than that which you normally find on 28mm playing pieces, and has much more strength to it. The down side to this is that it may be that the metal is more brittle and harder to make "modifications". But this is just a guess at this point because there were absolutely no bent or broken parts on these four models (another indication to me that the metal is higher than normal quality) so I did not have the opportunity to test this theory (and I wasn't going to fix something that wasn't broke).

AF032 Rogan, Dwarf warrior with 2 Axes

Rogan is a top of the line model. I think that this little guy is one of the best Dwarven figurines that I've seen to date. He has an axe in each hand and appears to be in the midst of battle. He is well armored with chain mail, helmet, bracers, and shin guards. His determined looking bearded face is even ruddy in appearance as if he likes to spend his off time checking out the local taverns for health violations in the brewery department. I think this model would be excellent for an RPG character model.



AF033 Morfiwel, Dragon Tamer

Morfiwel is another great addition to the Adiken line. Like their other models, the detail on this one is great. On her extended left hand sits a tiny dragon, and in her other hand she holds a hefty looking staff that is topped with the head and neck of another dragon. She wears a scaled dragon cloak, a plain breast plate, or rather as plain as they get on ladies, ornate boots, and a large dragon skull g-string (looks very cool, but I'll bet going for a jog would be rather painful). I think this model would work well as an exotic ranger, druid, mage or as an NPC. Her general looks could put her either with the "good guys" or the "bad guys" so I think she is a pretty versatile model.

AF030 Kurtz, Squire Bowman

As was the case with all the Adiken figures, the detail and craftsmanship of this model are great. The livery the squire is adorned in is quite detailed and very well done. He carries a plain long bow in his left hand while his right hand is reaching back to draw an arrow from his hip mounted quiver. His facial detail is very good, but his expression is kind of odd. I can't tell if he is totally grossed out by what is in front of him, he



just took a big bite of a really juicy lemon, or perhaps he is determinedly controlling his fear as he steps forward into battle.

AF031 Qanghee, Amazon with Spear

Of the four Adiken models reviewed in the issue, this was the only one that was not molded as a single piece. The spear



We have three models from Excalibur-Miniaturen over in Germany to take a look at so let's get to 'em.

First is a 28mm model of a Medusa (3011 / 2,95Euro) that comes as a single piece. She is standing; well whatever half-snake women do, with the underside and back of her tail exposed. The underside is definitely smoother than the scaly top and this contrast works well. The scales look quite good and should paint up nicely. An ink wash on them will really make the individual scales stand out. She has a bare top so you might want to rate this model PG-13 (or so) and I wouldn't blame you if you did. If you don't find it suitable for the young 'uns I understand. The face looked a little wide to me but this added a bit to her monstrous appearance. Her snake-hair is pretty well done and you can make out some single snakeheads on a few of them. She is armed with a bow and holds a quiver of arrows in her right hand. There was a decent amount of cleaning needed with her, mostly flash or bits of metal webbing between her arms. There was a bit of extra metal on the tip of her tail that had to be clipped away. All in all a good model that I'll be adding to my D&D campaign as a monster and to various D&D Miniatures armies.



The Ogre Boss (3020 / 12,90Euro) comes in three pieces (base, head/belly, and the rest of the model). The head/belly piece fits on to the rest of the body, which is

hollow, fairly well but I'll definitely need to use some putty to fill a void around the neck and right collarbone area. There were bits of flash that needed cleaning, but it only took a couple minutes to get all three pieces ready for assembly. This is definitely not a sophisticated (domesticated?) ogre as he's wearing a patchwork of torn clothes and various bits of armor here and there. A torn shirt and studded leather breast-

plate doesn't do much of a job containing his ale-belly. Both arms are very well muscled with the right carrying a large hammer and in the left is an axe. Both weapons are well worn and dinged, which implies lots of use. He also has a small dagger on his backside that probably doesn't get a lot of use. The head is well done with the mouth opened in a loud yell. His two largest bottom teeth, that you'd expect to be large and jutting out of his mouth, have both been broken off in previous battles. Even with a bit of cleaning and some putty work I did like this ogre quite a bit and he'll add some more variety to my already pretty decent collection of large smelly brutes.

The next figure is a large Female Giant (2306 / 11,50Euro). She is larger than an ogre, around 54mm in height and comes as a single piece model with a textured metal base. She is wearing thigh-high boots and a selection of very skimpy clothes on her upper torso. Her right side is partially covered by what looks like a large fishing net, but can be seen through. It's not as exposed as the Medusa but it's still there. She has bits of armor and other clothing but is pretty un-armored. A large axe is held in her left hand and the handle rests on her hip. The sculpture was very clean and will paint up easily. The face and hair are also quite crisp and well done. There is a slight mold line that will clean up easily but no other defects or flash that needed to be cleaned. This will make a third female giant (both Reaper, one female Frost Giant and Sophie the Succubus that I painted up as a Frost Giant in the last issue of Fictional Reality) and I plan to use all three of them in an upcoming Warlord army.



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Our selection of figures from Privateer Press for their game Warmachine starts off with a little goblin named Reinholdt (PIP41006). He comes as a single piece model and has a retail price of \$4.99 USD. Reinholdt is wearing a long trench coat that goes past his feet and drags on the ground. He's carrying a bag that is slung over his left shoulder and has a spyglass in his left hand while carrying a pocket watch in the right. As a very nice detail the hands on the face of the watch have been sculpted so they will be easy to pick out. He's wearing heavy oversized shoes or maybe he just has big feet. I wonder what they say about goblins with big feet? He's also wearing shorts so a slave to fashion he is not. A bowler style hat rounds out his ensemble nicely. The only skin that is to be painted is his face/head, hands and from mid-thigh to mid-shin on his legs. Not a lot of exposed green-flesh for a goblin.



The casting was very well done and cleaning consisted of trimming some tiny bits of flash here and there. To me, the overcoat is the main focus of the figure, but the face was also very well done. I'm thinking of painting mine up with a more faded yellow-green flesh color than the more standard goblin green. The mold line was just about invisible. Most people thinking about picking up Reinholdt will be doing so to add him to their Warmachine army as a mercenary character, but he would also do remarkably well as a non-combat oriented player character model in any fantasy rpg. At five bucks he's a bit more than the per-figure cost on many rank & file goblins but it's not too high for consideration even if you don't play Warmachine. If you do plan on picking him up for Warmachine do be aware that he will not work for Cryx or Menoth armies. Good figure with definite uses outside of Warmachine.



The Gun Mages of Cygnar box set (PIP31017) has a retail price of \$24.99 and contains six models (5 troopers and 1 leader). There are three different poses of Gun Mage troopers. One with pistol held out and sword at the ready, one a more closed pose with the right hand holding a pistol while the other is either reaching for something or holding their cloak back and the third holding the pistol upright in both hands. With these three poses you get three pretty different actions taking place. One in combat and firing, one taking careful aim and one at the ready. Along with the leader who has a pistol in his right hand and using his left to cast a spell you get a nice assortment of figures that all obviously go together to form a unit but also a nice variety of poses.



Each model needed some attention in the cleaning department. This ranged from very little for the leader who had no flash and just a minor mold line that needed cleaning to a few of the troopers that had more pronounced mold lines and bits of flash. None were miscast though.

All six models are wearing long overcoats, hats and boots that come up to their knees. Each also has two holsters for pistols and a sword. The detail on the cuffs of their coats, their pistols and ornamentation was well done, but not they did not go overboard to the point of making them hard to paint. Half of them are wearing spectacles which was a nice touch and should be easy to paint. I did notice that their heads seemed a



little smaller than some other human-sized models. For example, if you put a Gun Mage right up against the Journeyman Warcaster you will be able to notice a difference in the size of their heads. I compared the Gun Mages to the Long Gunners and found them to be closer to their size, but not exact. This is not a huge deal. I'm not trying to say that they have tiny little pin-heads. Not by any means. It was just noticeable to me that there was a slight difference there.

If you're not a Cygnar general but still wanted to make use of these figure you could very easily use them as Reapers of Alahan in Confrontation or as npc's in an Iron Kingdoms based game of D&D. The leader model is far and away the most suited for use as a gun tottin' spellcaster player character model.

The Cygnar Journeyman Warcaster (PIP31016) has a retail price of \$7.99 and comes in two pieces, the bulk of the figure and a

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steam backpack piece. He is wearing very heavy full plate armor and carries a sword in his left hand. There was a little bit of flash to be cleaned but like with Reinholdt his mold line was almost undetectable. He has a very good stern look on his face. I expect him to paint up pretty easily considering he's almost all armor. There's a sash and a pistol to pick out but they should go easy.



As a player character model outside of the Iron Kingdoms he could be used for a fighter or paladin type very easily, but the gun and steam-pack might not be appropriate for all settings.

As an addition to my Cygnar army he was really a no-brainer to pick up, but coming in at eight dollars you'll need a specific use for him if you're not a Cygnar general like me, but it's a very well done figure either way.



From over at Pinnacle / Great White Games we have two blisters of figures that are designed for use with their *50 Fathoms* setting using the Savage Worlds rules.

The first blister (Octopons, \$15.95 USD 1O374) contains four figures that are each pretty significantly bulkier than standard human models. Three are identical copies of the monster below-left (standard Octopons) and then there is also a single Octopon



Warlock included in the blister. The tentacles on the three standard monsters can be carefully bent into slightly different positions to add some variety to the poses but be careful that you don't break them. The Warlock is pretty much "as-is" as far as the pose goes but you could alter the angle of his posture a bit but

this might end up looking unnatural. All four of the models needed at least a little cleaning but they all had very good detail and are very unique figures. These very unusual creatures could easily fit into a marine-themed Dungeons & Dragons adventure or you could pretty convincingly drop them into a sci-fi game. Both the standard guys and the Warlock are pretty dynamic looking but their uniqueness could also work against them a bit as you'll really need to have a specific use in mind for them to pick them up.

The piratey types to the right (Ugaks, \$15.95 USD 1U) are red-ish skinned in the *50 Fathoms* universe but I have to admit that the first thing that crossed my mind when I saw them was orc pirates. As you can see they are pretty sparsely dressed in leggings and a sash for the most part but this is very appropriate for their seagoing nature. Like the Octopons, they come on pre-molded metal bases but I'd suggest re-basing them on slightly wider bases to alleviate any balance issues. This was mostly apparent with the one holding the sword and the one with the hammer but I'd re-base them all just for uniformity. You could bend their legs a bit but this would still leave them on pretty small bases.



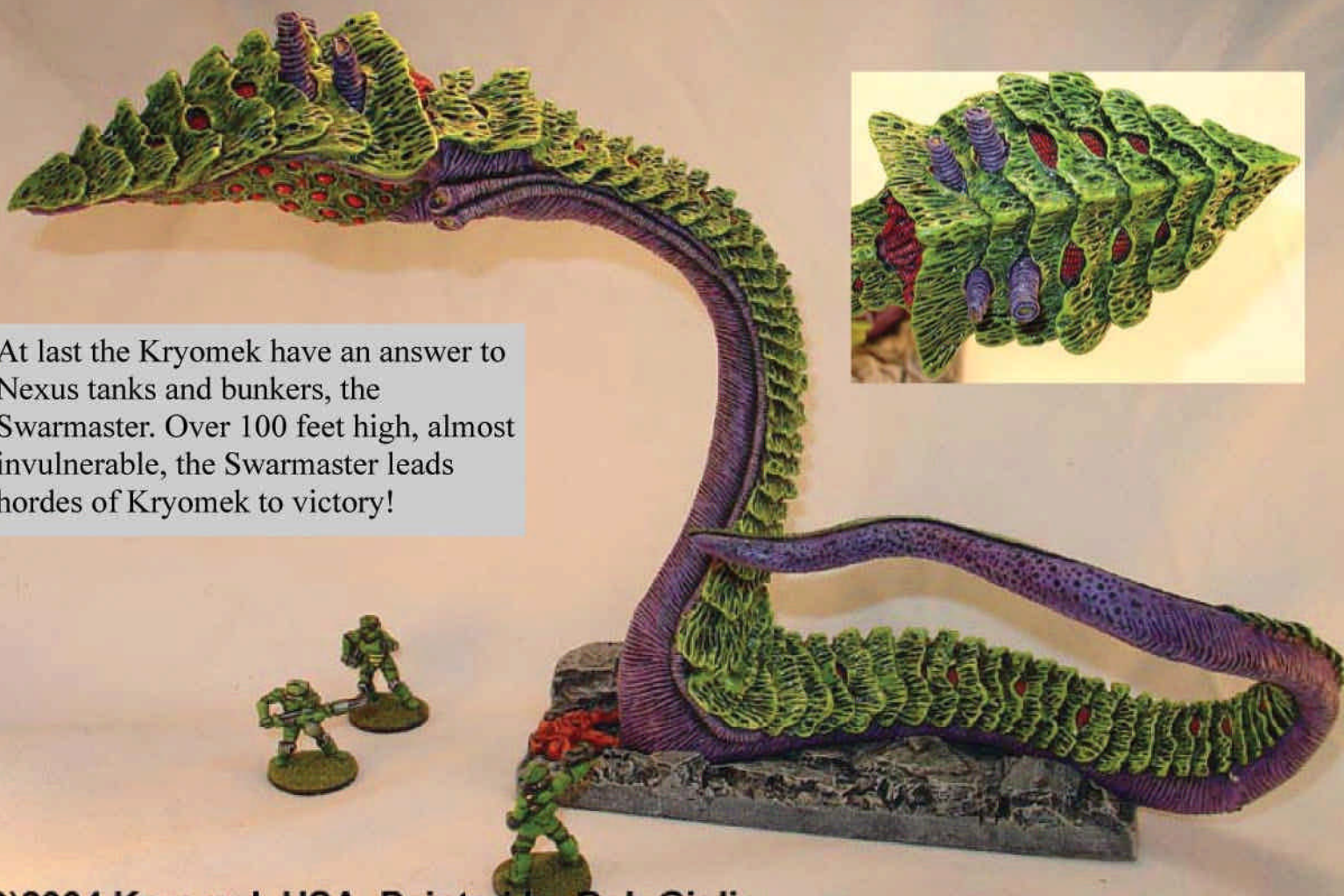
Even with this slight issue I liked this group of figures very, very much. The mold lines were all but invisible and there was just a little bit of flash on each of them that needed cleaning. If you're playing *50 Fathoms* (skirmish or rpg) then these guys have pretty immediate appeal but I also think that they would fit about perfectly into a Dungeons & Dragons campaign set in Freeport or some other pirate-themed location.

Very good figures here with multiple uses if you're willing to

think outside the box just a little bit.



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20 QUESTIONS



Recently, I had the opportunity to pick the brain of Chris Clark of Magnificent Egos and below you'll see the result of the twenty questions with which he was peppered.

1. Who is Magnificent Egos?

We are a little itch in the back of my head that grew wildly out of control like a skin fungus. No, really, this all started when I was at Gen Con last summer. It was my first time there so I transformed into the biggest fanboy you can imagine. I was running around trying to meet all the industry people I could and discovered that quite a few were likable people and more than willing to stay in touch with me.

As it turned out, the people I spent most of my time with were miniatures people. I spent quite a bit of time talking to Jim Johnson, Drew Williams, Kevin Contos and Clint Staples, and I spent a ridiculous amount of time hanging around Sue Wachowski and Jennifer Haley. Neither will ever let me live down painting Confrontation figures by dry-brushing with craft paint. I also met Jason Engle there and started an ongoing discussion about custom art work with him.

Well, I returned from Indy with a pocket full of business cards and so many miniatures that I actually had to purchase a new bag to get them all home in. As I gleefully unpacked and started assembling my new purchases (many still await in their boxes nearly a year later), my wife prayed that my obsession with miniatures had piqued. As I "played" with my large and growing collection, I realized there were things I would like to change about some of them. I also was continually running into the problem of having a thousand miniatures, but none that came close to player characters or important NPCs in my role playing games. I now had the contacts and the cash to get Jason to draw some pictures and some of the sculptors I knew to do some custom stuff for me, and being obsessive and spoiled, I went for it. When I figured out I could sell a few figures online to cover my cost, I set up my little company. When the response to our stuff became overwhelming, I decided that maybe we should do a few more and see what happened. Things just spiraled out of control from there. Thus, Magnificent Ego's.

2. What is your philosophy or guiding principle about what kind of miniatures to make?

Our main goal is to be unique and barrier breaking while still appealing to the fantasy gamer and painter. I believe we still have a way to go to reach the pinnacle, but we are getting closer with each new design. Our philosophy with figure design is to make it as outrageous as you can, then take it up one more level. On the other side, I push the sculptors who work for me. We hand them detailed concept art and pages of guidelines. Then we tell them that what they have is considered the minimum for the piece and they are challenged to make it their own. The guide-

lines we give them do contain engineering specifications that need to be met by each piece, but most of the content is basic standards and suggested steps to free the sculptor to use their imagination as much as they like. For instance, rather than telling them what to do, we give them a list of what not to do which includes things like stereotypical gear, rank troops, basic monsters and static poses.

3. Speaking of sculpting philosophy and figure design, which current miniature gamers/enthusiasts do you see being most drawn to the ME line of figures, and why?

Well, I'm mainly hoping to catch the attention of the painters and hobbyist who collect, model and paint miniatures that ignite their imagination. I also hope to attract role-players with the character and style of our figures. I am not ignoring anyone group, but these two are my focus at the moment.

4. Are Magnificent Egos miniatures the precursor to a ME miniatures game or are they really intended for use in your favorite rpg or miniatures game, whatever that may be?

Yes!

5. Will there be Magnificent Egos rank & file troopers or just individual characters?

Yes and no. We are committed to making each piece we do unique and will never produce generic bowmen or spearmen for example. However, there is a game in the works that will allow for our characters to be grouped into small units for skirmishing and we will be producing support troops for this, only in the form of less experienced characters.

6. Lesser experienced character, hmm. Sounds sort of like a dungeon-crawl type game with parties of characters and hirelings. Close?

But no cigar. Actually, it's really too early for me to know.

7. Who are some of the sculptors that are working with Magnificent Egos?

Deep inhale: Sandra Garrity, Chaz Elliott, Drew Williams, Gael Goumon, Sylvain Quirion, Tim Prow, Bobby Jackson, Jim Johnson, Kevin Contos, Todd Harris, Jason Wiebe, Gene Van Horne, Tom Mason, and the list keeps growing. Seriously, I have been blessed to get to work with such a tremendous group of talented people.

8. What made you want to start a miniatures company?

Insanity? Megalomania? Selfish desire to see my own ideas brought to life? The world and my wife may never know.

9. What has the response been to Magnificent Egos so far?

It has really been great. Sales are not quite where I would like them to be, but that is never the case. However, fan support is

tremendous. I've received comments, compliments and orders from seven different countries. When we opened for business, we started taking pre-orders and had a great showing. A few major problems slowed our production to a standstill, so we offered refunds to those who were waiting for their minis. We had only one taker, and he re-ordered within a few days.

The industry seems to be welcoming us as well. We've gotten interest from retailers and distributors in several countries and online and I've received shows of support from just about every miniature company in the US as well as a number of game publishers.

10. So, when will we see an aged human wizard in flowing robes wearing a pointy hat?

The answer is never. You will see a young wizard in no beard and wearing pants though. You might even see a war wizard in armor. But there will be nary a pointy hat to be found.

11. Any interesting horror stories about going into the miniature business that you can share with our readers?

Never get into a land war in Asia. Never go in against a Sicilian, when *death* is on the line. Never outsource your business when quality and time commitments are important to you. There are some talented and honest people in this business, but there are also some hacks. Just be careful.

12. Since experiencing some "outsourcing" dilemmas early on what changes have taken place in the production of ME miniatures?

Well, everything is officially in-house. The only thing we don't do ourselves now is printing (and I even do some of that at home). That way we have full control from start to finish and can guarantee the highest quality and control on our own time tables.

13. Do you plan to do any sci-fi or modern era miniatures?

Will Steam-punk do for now?

14. Steam-punk? That will do very well...for starters ;) Any clues as to the first figure concept in this line of miniatures?

Well, he has a steam-powered arm...

15. Do you see ME figures being on the higher side of the price spectrum being a problem?

Not really. First off, the increase in metal prices has hit everyone. Price Creep will be a trend this year, I suspect. Second, we priced the way we did based on a couple of factors: we spend a great deal of time and money developing the figures before they come to production and we need to recoup our costs in fewer sales than a larger company might. That aside, I set our base prices by comparing our figures to character figures from popular games and don't see much discrepancy there. Also, you will find that our larger figures are very competitively priced. Our Mal-ryte figure is the same price as some smaller figures put out by larger companies.

16. How did the deal with Bastion Press come about?

Pretty simply. Last year, while I was still just a fanboy, I pestered Jim and Steve to find someone to make miniatures for them. They admitted that they were interested, but had not been able to make a deal. When I decided to do my own figures, I just called Jim up and offered the partnership. He agreed and the rest is history to be made.

17. Are there plans to increase the line of Bastion Press figures to include more of their monster types?

Absolutely. Bastion Bestiary figures are scheduled to release at the rate of 4 every other month with two larger boxed sets, including a favorite monster, planned later this year.

18. Will it become standard for more characters to have sidekicks?

Yes. Every mage has a familiar. Every druid or ranger has an animal companion. Knights will come with mounted conversions. Lycanthropes with all of their stages... Maybe we should stop somewhere. We'll see how the Cappibarra familiar goes over.

19. Are you leaning more towards characters on foot versus those on mounts?

As I said above, characters who would fit with mounts are being produced with mounted conversions. Look for our paladin at GenCon for our first release like this.

20. What are ME's plans for GenCon Indy this year?

We will have a 400ft booth celebrating our introduction. We will be premiering a number of new figures including two huge dragons, a new licensed line supporting a new game publisher and an miniature available only for Gen Con 2004 that is a conversion of one of our most popular pieces. We will also be presenting a manufacturers award at the painting competition. We will also be hosting quite a few talented sculptors in our booth doing demos. I don't want to give anything away, but the initials are SG, BJ, GV and one or two more.



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TERRAIN PLACEMENT SEQUENCE

Here's the sequence for terrain placement. Details of each step are covered later in this article.

1. Both players make an Aggression Roll to determine the invading force.
2. The invader first places a road, river, or objective terrain piece.
3. The defender then selects a number of additional terrain pieces to deploy.
4. For each of these terrain pieces, the defender randomly determines the location of each piece.

AGGRESSION ROLL

The Aggression Roll is handled in the same way as the Tactical Roll. Each player makes a Discipline test. The winner may choose to be the invading force or the defending force.

The invader chooses which side of the table will be his and the defender takes the opposite side.

INVADER'S TERRAIN PLACEMENT

The Invader is assumed to pick their route into the defender's country. The invader may place one of three types of terrain:

- * A river
- * A road
- * An objective

These pieces are placed according to the following restrictions.

River Placement

The river must be placed so it flows from one player's end of the board to the other. It may curve back on itself and/or it may cut across the center of the board.

Road Placement

A road must be placed so it connects one player's end of the board to the other. Like a river, it may curve back on itself and/or it may cut across the center of the board.

Objective Placement

If the scenario to be played has a physical objective, it must be placed in the geometric center of the board.

DEFENDER'S TERRAIN PLACEMENT

The Defender is assumed to pick the most defensible spot along the line of invasion.

The Defender selects a number of terrain pieces that he will deploy. He may choose not to deploy any terrain pieces. Note that the terrain pieces are chosen before any are put on the table.

The Defender divides the table up into six numbered regions. Each region must have at least one board edge in it. For example:

Sector Selection

For each terrain piece, the Defender rolls a d6. The result is the sector of the board where the piece must be deployed.

Sector Placement

The Defender then rolls a second d6. If the result is 1, 2, 3, or 4, then the terrain piece must be placed so that it touches one of the edges of the sector. If the result is a 5 or 6, the piece must be placed inside the sector.

1	4
2	5
3	6

Placement Restrictions

A new terrain piece may only be placed on top of a hill, otherwise re-roll the second d6.

When placing a terrain piece, at least two-thirds of it must be in the sector rolled.

If the Defender places a river, it must start from one of the neutral board edges. If the attacker did not place a river then the Defender's river must end at the opposite neutral board edge. If the attacker did place a river, then the Defender's river must end by connecting to the existing river.

OPTIONAL RULES

This section includes other rules for terrain placement. These do not have to be used with the rest of the random placement rules, but they add a little more character to the board.

Terrain Elements

Terrain is classified by the area it encompasses. A single element of terrain is between 50 sq cm and 150 sq cm. An element of terrain that is less than 50 sq cm is considered a half an element while an element that is more than 150 sq cm is considered a double element.

The Defender nominates the total number of terrain elements he will deploy instead of features. The defender may deploy two half elements as one of the terrain elements he will deploy. The Defender may deploy one double element for two of the terrain elements he will deploy.

Deploying Half Elements

Half elements must be deployed in pairs and in the same sector. The Defender rolls the sector as normal. Both half elements will be deployed in this sector. Roll a d6 for each half element to determine where it will be deployed in the sector.

Deploying Double Elements

Double elements must be deployed in adjacent sectors. The Defender rolls the sector as normal. Instead of rolling the location in the sector, the Defender rolls a d6 to randomly select the adjacent sector. The double element must be placed so that half of it is in each of these two sectors.

Terrain Types

Terrain is divided into the following general categories. Note that this is an expansion on the basic terrain types listed in the Confrontation rulebook.

Difficult: Difficult terrain reduces movement by half and may block line of sight. Examples of difficult terrain include a rocky outcrop, a farm field in season, an orchard, a vineyard, or a swamp.

Rough: Rough terrain reduces movement by half but does not block line of sight. Examples of difficult terrain include a dier, a marsh, a plowed field, a graveyard or an area of brush.

Linear: Linear obstacles provide cover and reduce movement. If a linear obstacle is at least half as tall as a figure, then it must be climbed; otherwise it reduces movement by half. Examples of linear obstacles include a wall, a fence, a hedge, a rampart, or a bocage.

Water: A water obstacle may either reduce or block movement, depending on its depth. Bridges or fords may cross water obstacles. Examples of water obstacles include river, sea, pond, flooded marsh, or lake.

Hill: A hill is an obstacle that blocks line of sight and might reduce movement. A gentle hill does not reduce movement but a steep hill reduces movement by half. A hill may have a cliff side, which must be climbed.

Road: A road neither blocks line of sight nor reduces movement. If any other terrain feature is placed on a road, then the road cuts through that feature. Movement along the road through such a feature is not subject to movement reductions.

Building: A building is a man-made structure that blocks line of sight. Buildings may be entered or climbed. Buildings include shacks, mausoleums, shrines, temples, houses, forts, and ruins.

Required Terrain Types

Each race in Confrontation has a list of terrain types that characterize the area in which they

live. When a race is the Defender, they must include at least one piece of this type of terrain.

The list of the required terrain by race is given below:

- * Undead: Graveyard, ruin, or marsh.
- * Alchemists: Dier, hill (dune), wadi (linear), or sand (rough going).
- * Drones: Rocky outcrop (difficult), hill, or woods.
- * Mid-Nor Dwarves: Rocky outcrop (difficult), ruin, or hill.
- * Tir-Na-Bor Dwarves: Hill, crag (difficult), road, or wall.
- * Wolfen: Wood, river, or hill.
- * Orc: Dier, wadi (linear), dune (hill), or sand (rough going).
- * Goblins: Woods, marsh, swamp, or hill.
- * Devourers: Woods, ruins, hill, or marsh.
- * Lions: Building, road, woods, or field.
- * Griffons: Shrine, road, wood, wall, or field.
- * Sessairs: Wood, river, or hill.

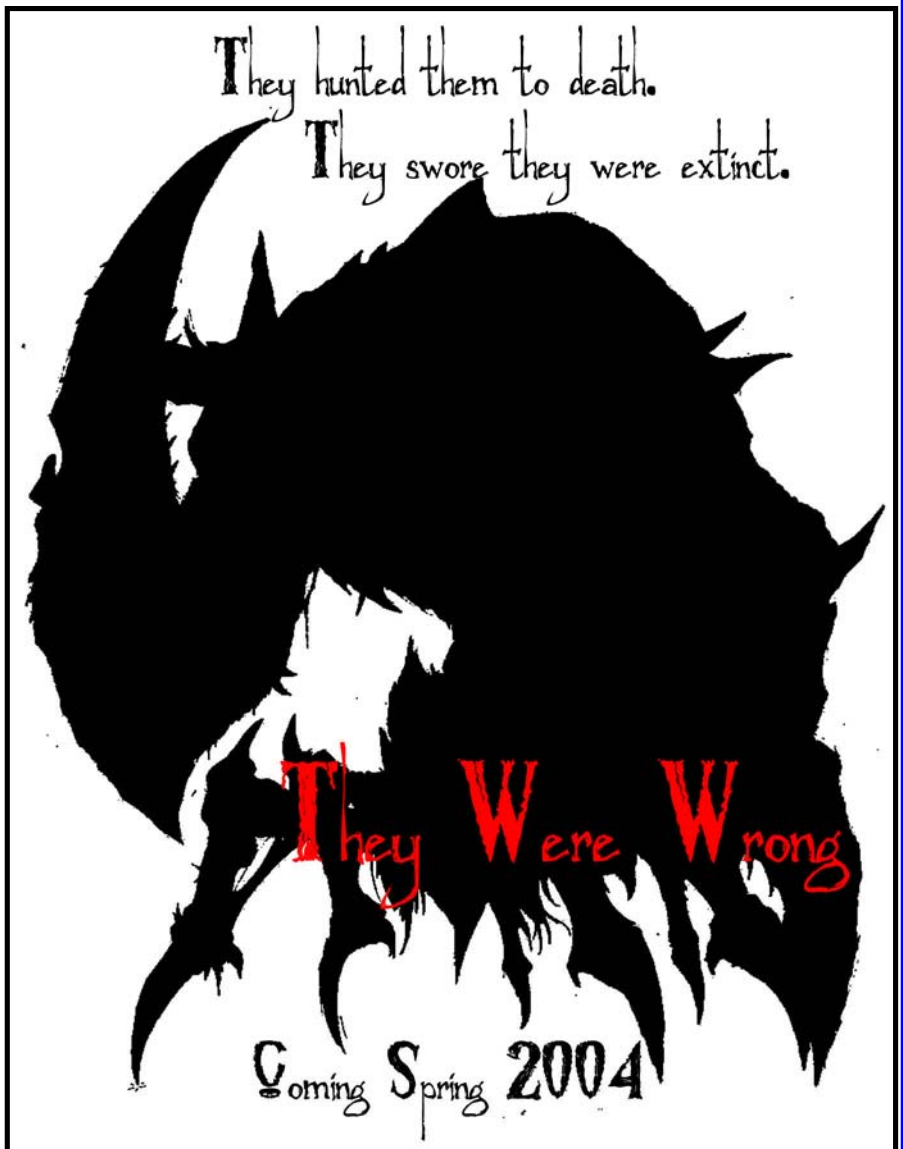


FIGURE SCULPTING



We get a lot of questions at the studio from visitors about how our models are made. It's a common question and one everyone who visits seems to want to see. Of course, looking at Thom's sculpting desk will irrevocably scar most curious onlookers so we generally prefer to simply tell them without the shocking visuals.

Thankfully, Thom documents all aspects of a miniatures progress (except his own) and we can now show someone who asks exactly how this is done. This may be one of those times a certain someone's anal retentiveness may actually pay off (he doesn't read this e-zine does he Mark?).

Rather than focus on an older model, we thought it would be fun to look at one of the "just released" models from the Chronopia line. This bad boy from the Devout army was wonderfully whipped up by our own sculptor/ teacher Matt Beauchamp. That's him at the left (the lower image).

So, without further adieu, let's look at the evolution of an evil model....

Getting Started:

The first thing you'll want to do is gather up your sculpting tools. There are many types of instruments that you will need, dental tools being the most prevalent. In addition to these you will need the items on the list to the left. The important thing to remember is that you will be taking small steps as your model evolves. That said, you will want to take it slow and use small amounts of the mixed putty.

Once you have gathered your tools you will need to examine your reference art. This is very important! The piece you end up with should be as close to the reference art as possible. For the Shadow Stalker, we have this wonderful work by Adrian Smith to work from. While the art is top notch, it could translate better into 3D with some adjustments in its pose. This is done at the armature phase.

ARMATURE PHASE

Twist the wire into a "stick man" and make sure that the feet end in straight points which you will embed in the cork. This cork will enable you to handle and position your piece as it develops without touching the model itself. As putty will retain finger prints, this is important. You do not need to add the arms at this point.

At this point, you should have some fun deciding how the pose will end up. Position the wire until you find that dynamic position you want.



What You Need to Get Started!

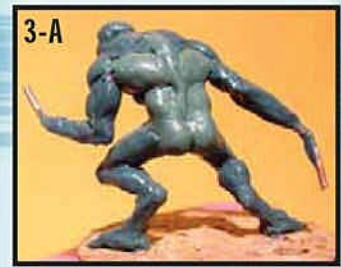
- 1) Copper or steel wire
- 2) Pliers and metal snips
- 3) Corks
- 4) Green Epoxy Putty (Kneadatite)
- 5) Brown Epoxy Putty (Titanium Kneadatite)
- 6) Various sculpting tools
- 7) Low temperature oven (desk lamp)
- 8) Reference Art
- 9) PATIENCE!!!!

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point. With some protruding wire, insert this end into the shoulder and build up the arm from the shoulder down to the wrist. You should also begin blocking in the head of the Stalker at this point too. (see pictures 3-A & B)

At this stage of the game it would be wise for you to check on the progress of your model. By this we mean making sure your model is in relative scale to other models of his same size. In the instance of the Shadow Stalker, Thom's directions were that he should be slightly larger than a human (Firstborn model) and smaller than a Dark Eyes Warrior (a Devout model).

You can see how the scale check came out in picture 4-A.



Once you have verified the scale, you should double check the sword you started earlier. Is it big enough? Too small? Does it fit correctly? Temporarily affix it to the model to see as in picture 5-A. Often this is an overlooked step but scale is very important. Keeping it unified is one of the chief goals of any sculptor.

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS!

Up until now, the Shadow Stalker project has been in the formative stages, with only rudimentary details. Now, having blocked in all the basics, it is time to focus on the details. The armor is added (note the use of the Titanium Kneadatite) and smoothed into position. By referencing the art constantly, it becomes obvious where the plates will need to go, where the protrusions must be, etc.

Once the armor is in position, you can go back with your green and add in some overlaid details. It is important at this point to keep the armor smooth and even. While the armor sections cure under the lamp, we turn our attention to the other hand, the one with the wicked weapons coming off the wrist, a Devout version of the X-Man Wolverine in my opinion.

Using a straight wire armature, the Titanium is added over the wires to make the blades. The green putty is used to block out a fist once this has set. In between the fist and the armor we go back and add more details to the putty. (see pictures 6-A, B & C) You'll note how closely Matt stayed to the drawing!

THE DEVIL YOU SAY!

Now that the details have been started, now comes the fun part, the part where the model starts to come to life. In Picture 7-A thru F, we see how these details evolve. Spikes are added to the armor, leg grieves molded into place, the loin cloth added into place, and the details to the face added.



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At this point make sure you have extra length on your arms, you'll see why shortly, and also make sure you have added in the extra joints a Shadow Stalker has in the legs.

Once you have the wire in the position you want, you will start adding putty to the wire frame. This is the only time when you can work with larger amounts of putty as the details are saved for later. You will want to block out the basic form of the model, adding in the basic musculature. (see picture 1-A)

While you are blocking out the body, you should also start on the sword. Taking a straight wire and bulking it up with Titanium Kneadatite, you will be able to get a jump start on the sword as well. Why a different kneadatite? Basically, the Titanium sets stronger and more rigidly and when filed (to create edges), it retains the shaping and holds the edge better than the green. (see picture 1-B)

LET THE BUILDING COMMENCE

Now its time to slow down with the amount of putty you are using. You'll want to add small amounts onto the bulked out model you have forming, small amounts that will set up the muscles and define your model. As you add putty and shape it into position, you will use some water to keep your tools wet and prevent them from pulling on your model (the putty does tend to get tacky).

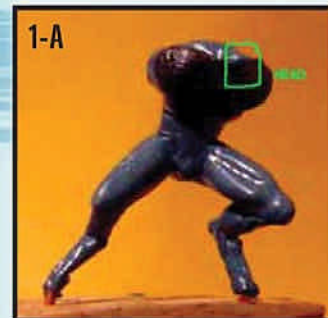
Some modelers use saliva at this point (ugh!) to keep their tools from dragging on the putty. Thom prefers Vaseline. Whatever you find most convenient, make sure it handy.

In between applications of putty, place your model under your heat lamp. This allows the putty you worked with to set. Kneadatite sets when exposed to heat so you should always store it in a cool, dry place when you are not working on it. As most people never finish a model in one sitting, you will no doubt need to store your putty (at least for a short while).

ABOUT YOUR KNEADATITE: There are numerous types of Kneadatite on the market and sculpting is only one of the applications these two-part epoxies are used for. When sculpting models, we always recommend you use the **GREEN** epoxy for nearly all your work. Alternately, when you are working with weapons, vehicles and such, you will want the added rigidity of the **TITANIUM**. We never recommend you use the **BLUE** Kneadatite for modeling as it never really gets rigid and hence will not support paint all that well.

When you get to the ankles you should start creating the feet. It will spread out over the cork as if this was the ground beneath its feet. Another thing to remember is that the back of the model will be wearing a great cape. Because of this you need not spend a lot of time sculpting the details on the back, you will only be covering them up later. (see pictures 2-A, B & C)

Once you have this level of work completed you may start adding on the arms. Again, you will want to not worry about their length at this



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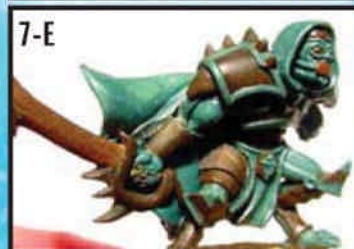
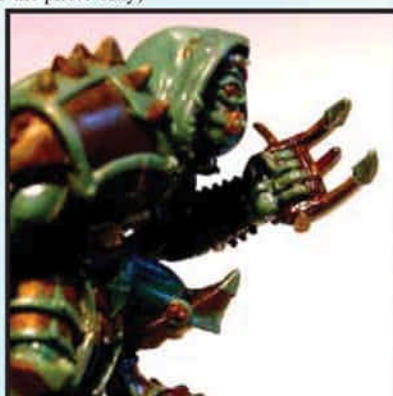
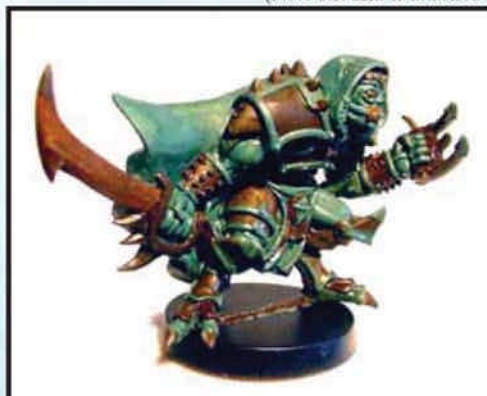
This is a fun period, and as I am told, some of the most rewarding in the sculpting process. While the new details cure, our attention turns back to the sword and wrist blades, adding more details to those.

Now is a good time to add in the cape, since it covers so much of the back side of the model the cape will determine what details are really needed in the wrist and arms. The cape is also an important piece as the fluidity transmitted in the cape is important to reinforcing the dynamic position of the model (or at least that's the sculptor-babble Thom tells us).



FINAL PRODUCT

(Note left hnd is attached for the photo only)



Here are some tips Matt suggested while doing this piece.

- 1) Use small amounts of putty (pea-sized)
- 2) Mix putty and then let set for 5 minutes before applying to the miniature.
- 3) Work from the inside out (muscles, skin, clothes, armor, then fine details)
- 4) Use a heat lamp to cure putty.
- 5) Multi-task whenever possible.
- 6) Create definition with differences in raised detail.
- 7) Strive for variation of textures (smooth, fur, scales, etc)
- 8) Remember to be patient!

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